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# JARY 2011

#### ON THE COVER

#### 24 Bunky Green & Rudresh Mahanthappa **Breaking Free** Of The System BY TED PANKEN

Though the feeling they generate is best described as "free," alto saxophonists Bunky Green and Rudresh Mahanthappa both work within strongly conceptualized structures that leave them plenty of space to soar. A seemingly odd pairing on the surface, the two share a common passion and stimulate each other to extremely high levels of creativity, as heard on their latest CD project as coleaders, Apex.

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#### First Take | BY AARON COHEN

## **Rudresh's Mission**

bout 15 years ago, I went to Chicago's Green Mill jazz club for a different sort of gig. The event was a CD-release party that a group of master's degree candidates at Chicago's Columbia

College's arts, entertainment and media management program organized to celebrate a release on their own label. AEMMP Records. While indie record labels had a better chance for success-actually, survival-in the mid-'90s than they do today, this was still a quixotic venture coming from a group of students. AEMMP was even more idealistic in that their signing was a young, and uncompromising, jazz alto saxophonist named Rudresh Mahanthappa.

Needless to say, Mahanthappa has come a long way since the release of his debut disc, Yatra. But even back then, his assertive tone and unique way of combining jazz with South Asian music revealed that he had an original vision and determination



that would take him far in any art. He's also always had a deep respect for the traditions he chose to investigate, and that includes the work of jazz elder Bunky Green, who shares Ted Panken's cover story with Mahanthappa for this issue.

In talking with Mahanthappa this past week about when I met him at the Green Mill in 1996, he said that the career he's built for himself was always the dream, but, of course, it's never guaranteed. He also is thankful for the opportunity that the upstart label gave him. Having a disc in hand was a valuable calling card when he moved to New York the following year and began encountering the heavier hitters in the media (this was an era before downloads, or e-mailed mp3s). All of which reaffirms that the dreams of a group of Midwestern students should never be taken lightly.

The reason why AEMMP signed Mahanthappa, and held its party at the Green Mill, was because of one particular student, Michael Orlove, who was handling the label's a&r. Then—and now—Orlove has kept his ear toward finding sounds from around the city and around the planet that Chicagoans need to hear. Orlove is currently senior program director for the city's department of cultural affairs. He's been the driving force for the city's stellar world music festival, as well as excellent free events yearround at the Chicago Cultural Center. The Green Mill and the Chicago Cultural Center are included in this issue's venue guide: this club and civic institution show that it takes a combination of smart entrepreneurs, public programs and educational efforts—often, working together—to build a lasting audience for such artists as Mahanthappa.

This issue also includes a memorial tribute to the wonderful saxophonist/flutist James Moody, who died on Dec. 9. Along with his beautiful melodic feel and warm sense of humor, he and his wife, Linda, were tireless advocates for jazz education. For information on how to donate to the James Moody Scholarship Fund, go to his website, jamesmoody.com. DB

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#### Chords & Discords

#### Making McLaughlin's Day

I just got home yesterday evening after six weeks in the United States, and the DownBeat Readers Poll award had arrived vesterday morning! Good timing! I just wanted to thank you and the staff at DownBeat for providing musicians and music lovers with such a great magazine over the years. I've been reading DownBeat since the mid-'60s and to win an award from DownBeat has special significance to me. The plaque will occupy a special place in my home. JOHN MCLAUGHLIN MONACO

#### Stop Thieves!

Thanks very much for the article on Internet piracy of music publications ("Thief!," January 2011). I would like to make it clear that Sher Music Co. is still very much in the business of selling our world-class jazz fake books. My statement that "We are out of the fake book business" referred to

the great difficulty in justifying the production of new fake books when we know they will be scanned and distributed free of charge all over the Internet. My hope is that people reading your article will be made aware of the serious negative consequences of illegally downloading books and refrain from this unethical practice.

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#### Clean Language, Please

I must agree with Kevin McIntosh's letter ("Chords," January) concerning cursing in your interviews. I host a jam session for students once a month, and encourage kids to take copies of your magazine (which DownBeat very graciously provides). I often think about a parent's reaction if they ever pick up the magazine and read something like that. Surely the language can be edited or bleeped. As a subscriber since 1977, I know you used to do that. What changed? Students get enough of that kind of "education" in their daily lives. Better to have them focus on the music. MIKE EBEN READING, PA.

#### Jamal Deserves Honor

It's amazing that DownBeat readers almost voted master pianist/trio trailblazer Ahmad Jamal (#2) into the Hall of Fame themselves, instead of the DownBeat critics, who, to their embar-



rassment, have left this undone for decades. Jamal waits, while Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, all employees of Miles Davis, went in ahead of the man who influenced him (and that's no disrespect to their individual talents). Let's hope the Veterans Committee won't have to do it. I wonder just how many of Davis' pianists were told, "Play like Ahmad Jamal." RON SEEGAR EL PASO, TEXAS

#### Erskine Nails It

Peter Erskine's "Woodshed" (November) is right on the money. I am 75 and have been around the drum scene for 60 years. Not only does his article apply to the ride cymbal, but it can also be adapted to brush works and drum solo patterns. I recommend it to young drummers who are trying to get the clutter out of their playing and play in a way that moves the tune forward.

ORMOND BEACH, FLA.

#### **Correction**

The title of Ernie Krivda's disc in "Best CDs of 2010" (January) was incorrect. It should have been written as *November Man* (CIMP).

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

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#### Moody's Mood For Life Friends, colleagues celebrate James

Moody's magical personality

S axophonist/flutist James Moody died on Dec. 9, of pancreatic cancer, at 85 near his home in San Diego, Calif. His career stretched back across nearly 65 years of jazz history, and while it was a somber end to a life of ebullient music making, his friends and colleagues chose to celebrate his life—not his passing—during the days that followed.

"It's nothing to mourn about," Sonny Rollins said. "It's not that I'm not sorry we won't get a chance to hear him play any more or be in his company. That's true. But it's also really a joyful moment because he was here in this life and look what he left people, a legacy of wonderful music and the memory of a wonderful person. To know him and think about him brings light to me. We can't feel sad or sorry. We have to feel good about a man like Moody."

Moody was born in Savannah, Ga., on March 26, 1925, and raised in Newark, N.J. He converged with Dizzy Gillespie's first big band in the summer of 1946. His earliest work can be heard on Dizzy Gillespie: Showtime At The Spotlite (Uptown). Gillespie became a mentor to the youthful Moody, a role that in some ways made brothers of them for life. The early band was a hive of musical energy. That's when saxophonist Jimmy Heath first met Moody (he would join the band several months after Moody left), and began a life long friendship. In 2005 Heath described his friend in the lyric he wrote to "Moody's Groove" ("Moody has more kisses than Hershey's..."), which the two performed in the Gillespie All-Star Big band.

"He is an original," Heath said. "No one else in the world is like Moody, one of the greatest human beings I ever met. We called each other 'Section' because we played in the saxophone section. Everybody remembers how he outgoing he was, and he was always that way, I think, though the kissing he might have picked up in Europe."

In the Gillespie band of 1946–'48 Moody helped set the bar for a coming generation of young saxophonists who would shortly consolidate the foundations of modernism. One of them was alto saxophonist Phil Woods.

"I loved Moody," Woods said. "His joy and energy were contagious. And he was one of the best improvisers ever! No one ran the changes like Moody—nobody! And there was never a more spiritual man than Moody. His horn and, indeed, his very persona exuded warmth and love. He was the only man whose kisses I welcomed. When he entered a room he kissed



everyone in it—and did the same when he exited. There was only one James Moody. I will miss his music and I will miss his kiss."

The eras of Moody's career can be sliced in several ways: by decade, by group, by association. He converted to Baha'i in the early '70s, following Gillespie, and some regard that as something of a watershed. But to friends like Woods, he was a fundamentally spiritual person, before and after his conversion to Baha'i, with or without the patina of an official faith.

"He was one of the most humanistic people I ever knew," noted Todd Barkin, producer and owner of the Keystone Club in San Francisco, where Moody played often in the '70s. "I think that Baha'i just completed the circle, and Dizzy, too. They were naturally predisposed to that view of life. It just fit."

Moody came to wide prominence in the early '50s with a vocalese version of his 1949 solo on "I'm In The Mood For Love," revised by King Pleasure as "Moody's Mood For Love."

"It became a big seller in the black community," Rollins said. "When we heard it, it wasn't Charlie Parker or Dizzy, so it didn't have the impact on us—meaning my younger colleagues who were interested in bebop. But I'm glad it gave him some prominence and he soon transcended that in his other work."

Throughout much of the 1960s, he worked with Gillespie and his own groups, many of which included bassist Bob Cranshaw.

"He was the best," Cranshaw said. "I enjoy Moody because he was serious about music but he had fun doing it. He kept you on your toes and kept your laughing. He put a lot into his work, and working with him was a joy. When I came to New York around 1960, his was one of the first gigs that I got. I was with Moody around the time he became a Baha'i, and all I can say is that it made him even more loving. He kept a wonderful atmosphere around him."

Moody and Rollins never played together, but their groups played joint gigs during the '60s in the Jazz Gallery in New York. But Rollins was unusually coy in remembering those days. He volunteered an event of some importance to him, then having brought it up, said, "I'm not going to reveal the incident, but it was between us and it was very educational and informative for me and helped me grow up. I'll leave it at that because the details are a little too embarrassing to me." What was the lesson then? "That's what I don't want to be specific about," Rollins said as he laughed. "But we've been close friends since then. Maybe when I'm past being active in the world, I might relate it."

Moody's career touched successive generations over six decades, most recently the brilliant young singer Roberta Gambarini, who first saw Moody in Italy with her parents when she was nine. They met again in Cape Town after a performance in 2002.

"When I got off the stage and I came down the stairs," Gambarini said, "his arms were stretched out for a big hug. He loved to hug everybody."

Throughout the last decade, their musical relationship has become something close to a partnership.

"He was just one of the most amazing human beings who ever walked this Earth," she said. "He had an endless source of life and joy. There was



an aura about him, a special light. He had a gigantic heart as a man and a musician, and also one of the most inquisitive minds that you could find. Until the end he had an incredible interest in younger players. I remember once he went up to a wonderful young saxophone player, and he said he loved what he was doing and could he check out how he was doing it. And the player said, 'But Moody, I got it from you.' He was always on the search. He took the language and stretched it.''

As a young person working with a veteran, Gambarini was constantly aware of how Moody connected her to the history of the music.

"One night we were playing at Lincoln Center," she recalled, "and I was standing next to him listening and thinking this is what it must have felt like to be in those days with the vibration of Charlie Parker and all the other giants. He brought that with him when he played."

-John McDonough

## Moody: A Hard Man Not To Love

n the fall of 1976 James Moody was in Chicago to tape a "Soundstage" program for PBS. "Dizzy Gillespie's Be-bop Reunion" was a big affair. In addition to Moody, there was Sarah Vaughan, Milt Jackson, Kenny Clarke, Al Haig, Joe Carroll, some others and, of course, Gillespie. The taping was scheduled for two consecutive days. But by the end of day one, a suspicious-looking sore had flared on Gillespie's upper lip. A doctor looked at it and told Gillespie not to play until a biopsy could be done. Word spread quickly.

That evening I found myself with a dozen or so musicians from the program at a neighborhood restaurant. We occupied four or five booths and tables, and I was sitting in one across from Gillespie, mostly listening. Moody came over at one point, eager in his concern for Gillespie's lip. The conversation went something like this: "Your lip," asked Moody, "how is it?" "Ahhh, nothing to worry about," Gillespie said.

"Look, this may seem a little strange," Moody said, "but it can't hurt. OK?"

"What?" Gillespie asked.

"Just hold still a minute. Be still. Don't move." Moody then leaned into the booth, placed two fingers on Gillespie's upper lip, and held them there for 15 or 20 seconds. It seemed longer. Nobody said a word. A few quietly traded perplexed glances. Finally Moody lifted his finger.

"That's it, " he said. "That's all. We'll see. Right? OK? Say nothing more." Gillespie smiled, clutched Moody's hand for a second, and that was it. "Let's see what happens," Moody said returning to an adjoining booth.

As one who floats somewhere between neutrality and skepticism on matters spiritual, I

see such expressions of "belief" from the perspective of an outsider. Yet, I couldn't help feeling a little moved by the utter ingenuousness and innocence of Moody's little deed and the spirit that rooted it. No hint of moral authority; no adulteration of ritual, fanfare, pretense, preaching or even promise. Like he said, "It can't hurt."

The lip sore soon passed. I don't know whether Moody's healing energy intervened. But the purity and unselfconsciousness of it all struck me as uniquely heartfelt. It was an openness Moody seemed to spread compulsively in all directions. I didn't know him well, but when I would see him from time to time over the years, he not only seemed to recognize me. He would greet me with a big bear hug that often left the pungent scent of gardenia cologne clinging to me for the next hour. James Moody remains a hard man not to love. — John McDonough

#### Riffs 🕨



Moers Return: Ornette Coleman will headline the 2011 Moers Festival, which runs June 10–12. He had previously appeared at the German event in 1981 with Prime Time. Tickets are available. Details: moers-festival.de Alligator @ 40: Chicago-based blues label Alligator is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a slew of historic releases. Company president Bruce Iglauer has selected and remastered tracks for the two-disc *The Alligator Records 40th Anniversary Collection*. The label is also releasing vinyl editions of its back catalog, including Buddy Guy and Junior Wells' *Alone & Acoustic*.

#### Details: alligator.com

Caine Fellowship: Pianist Uri Caine received a \$50,000 United States Artists fellowship grant on Dec. 7. Details: unitedstatesartists.org

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**Blues Home:** Memphis-based Blues Foundation will begin moving into its first permanent home in March. The 4,000-square-foot location at 421 S. Main St. will centralize the foundation's educational, audio-visual and retail opportunities, in addition to housing its staff and operations. **Details: blues.org** 

Bayou Download: The New Orleans Musicians' Clinic has released a digital download of *Down On The Bayou II Live Jam From New Orleans*. Participants include Ivan Neville, Luther Dickinson and Gov't Mule. All proceeds from the sale will benefit the clinic. Details: neworleansmusiciansclinic.org

Chicago Matinees: Chicago's Old Town School Of Folk Music has announced a new series of matinee performances of jazz composers at its 909 W. Armitage Ave. location on the first Sunday of each month.

#### \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Musical Community Restores Nicole Mitchell's Flutes, Faith

N icole Mitchell was riding an emotional high on Sept. 14 after a soldout performance at the MITO Jazz Festival in Milan, Italy, but everything came crashing down after a post-concert meal. Despite assurances from her driver that the band's belongings would be safe, the car that transported her band to dinner had been burglarized. Among the stolen items was a bag containing Mitchell's flute (which she'd only recently finished paying off) and piccolo, along with her sheet music for the group. She was understandably devastated by the theft, losing the tools of her livelihood. She spent most of the night in a local police station before rushing to the airport for a flight back to Chicago. Once home she received more bad news: her home insurance policy wouldn't cover the stolen instruments.

Word quickly spread in Chicago about the crime. Drummer Mike Reed, a long-time collaborator of the flutist, quickly came to Mitchell's aid. "Last year my brother needed help getting a new car, and I think of Nicole as family, too, so what would be the difference?" he said. "I told her it was ridiculous for her to be a professional musician without a professional instrument."

Mitchell says she was "flabbergasted" by the offer. She says she's long depended only upon herself to get by, so even considering such a proposal was difficult. She held off making a decision. She worked in the coming weeks with borrowed instruments as well as an old flute of her own that proved unreliable. "I had a concert with the Chicago Sinfonietta and my old flute broke during the concert, so I had to borrow the flute player's flute next to me for my solo and then put it back in her lap," she said.

Soon thereafter a supporter, Floyd Webb, told her that he wanted to organize a fundraiser to purchase new flutes, but Mitchell didn't feel comfortable looking for contributions at a time when so many people were struggling to survive. A veteran saxophonist and mentor to Mitchell, who insisted on anonymity, ended up sending her his old flute, another gesture that moved her. "All of the responses and people reaching out to me during that time period was a real blessing because it made feel like I wasn't alone," she said. "That was the most beautiful thing about it."

On the night of the theft Mitchell's European agent Ludmilla Faccenda had told her that it was time to secure an endorsement deal, and within a month she succeeded, landing an arrangement with the prestigious Powell Flutes.

"We've been classically oriented, but there's no reason a Powell flute player can't play jazz or any other genre, so we've been branching out recently," said Roberta Gillette, a sales advisor for the company, who negotiated the endorsement deal. "Nicole being a composer and having so many facets was very interesting for us."

Powell has provided Mitchell with new, custom-made flute and piccolo at a significant discount, and she ended up turning to Reed to cover the balance on the instruments. "She really helped bring me into a different world of music," Reed said. "She extended an invitation that was huge, a big deal for me, and no one could pay for that with money." —*Peter Margasak* 

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#### European Scene | BY PETER MARGASAK

#### Lithuanian Label Contradicts Nation's Aesthetic Status Quo

For many years jazz was cultural contraband in the Soviet Union, so it makes plenty of sense that many of its underground practitioners were musical radicals. No group to emerge from the Soviet era was better or more influential than the Ganelin Trio, a product of Lithuania. Yet as jazz lost its subversive status, commercial treacle came flooding in.

"Festival organizers started bringing in more mainstream, fusion and smooth jazz or world jazz groups to Lithuania," said Danas Mikailionis of the Vilnius-based label No Business Records. "The vast majority of listeners [here] tend to listen to easily acceptable and superficial jazz."

Since forming in 2008, No Business has combated this status quo, releasing music by American and European players, and in the case of the superb reedist Liudas Mockunas, local musicians who



fly in the face of those toothless sounds. The label's appearance was long in coming, emerging from Thelonious, a Vilnius record shop that Valerij Anosov started in 1997 and coming on the heels of an important concert production concern that's brought people like Matthew Shipp, William Parker, Howard Riley, Barry Guy and Joe McPhee to the city.

"The concerts we organized became a great introduction to

the music industry and they gave us brilliant musical material that could not just be left on the shelf," said Mikailionis. "But the real inspiration was Mats Gustafsson. Mats encouraged us to go ahead with the label, and the first recordings we released involve his solo and group improvisations with the best contemporary Lithuanian jazz musicians."

While a sizable chunk of the label's expanding catalog, which alnumbers nearly three dozen titles, were made from live recordings of concerts they had presented in Vilnius, No Business branched out with new studio projects as well as archival releases from American and European players."We never saw the goal of the label in just documenting the jazz activities taking place in Lithuania," he said.

In 2010 the imprint came into its own, offering historic anthologies from groups like Commitment, Jemeel Moondoc's Muntu and Amalgam, as well as acclaimed new recordings by drummer Harris Eisenstadt, trumpeter Kirk Knuffke and bassist Joe Morris. This year looks even ambitious, with archival releases—boxed sets of Parker's Centering Recordings, Billy Bang's Survival Ensemble and solo work of pianist Howard Riley—and new titles by Tarfala Trio (Gustafsson, Guy and Raymond Strid), Thomas Heberer and John Butcher.

Mikailionis said he would love for No Business to release more work by Lithuanians, but with the exception of Mockunas he feels that most local musicians haven't appealed to the label's aesthetic. "Each year during the Vilnius Jazz Festival you can listen to young musicians from the Music Academy that have some good potential," he said. "But after they finish their education it seems like their energy vanishes."



#### Caught 🕨

#### AfroCubism Reconnects Cuba, West Africa in New York

Despite its Grammy win, record-setting sales and enormous critical praise, 1997's *Buena Vista Social Club* was only half the project it was intended to be.

World Circuit's Nick Gold had initially planned to gather a group of prominent Cuban and African musicians for a recording session, but the Africans were unable to secure their visas, leaving Gold and his producer, Ry Cooder, to do a little improvising of their own by inviting a few more players from Havana to round out the record. The monster success of the resulting album was serendipitous, if accidental.

More than a decade later, Gold's complete vision came to fruition with the recording of AfroCubism, a marriage of music from Cuba and Mali, countries that share similar rhythmic traditions and proclivities for improvisation—not to mention political ties that have caused cultural cross-currents since the beginning of the Cold War. The group, which features Buena Vista tres guitarist Eliades Ochoa and his band, Grupo Patria, and Malian kora legend Toumani Diabaté performed the second stop on their North American tour at Town Hall on Nov. 9.

The highly anticipated show kicked off on a sour note when Dan Melnick announced that visa problems had left the ngoni player, Bassekou Kouyate, stuck in Canada. But that road bump turned out to be the show's only impenetrable musical border, as Ochoa and Kasse Mady Diabaté helmed nominal leadership duties that often melded their similarly wistful, emotioncharged vocal contributions, despite the language differences.

Collaboration and cross-pollination were the





main message of the evening, even as Diabaté peeked out from behind his kora to drop the occasional zinger, at one point teasing that New York might not be as rich in culture as it is financially.

In "Mali Cuba," solos changed hands swiftly and succinctly, with balafon player Lassana Diabaté's agile and chromatic lines balancing out the more soothing kora swells. Grupo Patria's unison horn section added a sunny layer of salsa to even the more traditional, Malian-leaning tunes, not unlike the lineup in Toumani Diabaté's Symmetric Orchestra.

Despite the abundance of marquee names onstage, guitarist Djelimady Tounkara emerged as an unexpected star of the evening. His bluesdrenched solos and playful, rock-infused vamps harkened back to his days with Salif Keita's Rail Band from the '70s. Near the end of the show, he teased Ochoa and Toumani Diabaté as they made their way through the Cuban classic, "Guantanamera," while the audience alternately sang the chorus and giggled as Tounkara coyly challenged his bandmates with a few mean calland-response riffs until Ochoa finally surrendered and led everyone back to the bridge.

In fact, the balance of spotlight sharing was almost as remarkable as the way the two musical cultures complemented each other. The hollow, spare sound of the balafon accented the Cuban polyrhythms in songs like the Cuban hit "La Culebra," putting a new spin on a Latin classic. Meanwhile, Tounkara's rolling, danceable guitar riffs on the more Malian-led "Nima Djala" became a comfortable vehicle for Ochoa's tres support.

In the end, encores of "Bensema" and "Para los Pinares Se Va Montoro" roused the audience to stand up, dance and cheer—as much, it seemed, for the music as for Toumani Diabaté's demand that it's time to "stop stigma and discrimination." — Jennifer Odell

#### Impassioned, Playful AACM Anniversary Celebration Enhances Its Mission

C hicago's Association For The Advancement of Creative Musicians held its 45th anniversary celebration with particularly fascinating events at the University of Chicago and the city's Museum of Contemporary Art.

An event at the university's Mandel Hall on Nov. 11 coincided with AACM trombonist/conceptualist George Lewis' residency at the institution, where he had taught a graduate seminar "Improvisation as a Way of Life" with philosophy professor Arnold Davidson. Lewis played with German pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach plus another piano prepared with one of Lewis' pioneering computerized systems programmed to permit interaction with live performers. After an intense sonic dialogue, during which fragments of Schlippenbach's playing were reconstituted and fed back to him by the futuristic player piano, Lewis, the pianist and Davidson led a discussion about man, machine and the broader social model suggested by the art of improvised music. The night concluded with a rousing set from the 27-member AACM Great Black Music Ensemble.

Douglas Ewart's set at the museum on Nov. 19 with his 11-piece "Inventions" was contoured via stentorian cues from Ewart's sopranino, cathartic blowing from tenorist Ed Wilkerson (also on didgeridoo) and subtle drumming and marimba from New York branch member Thurman Barker. Mankwe Ndosi, Duriel Harris and Kahari B's poetic and lyrical contributions were also salient. The latter emceed, trying to whip the thin turnout into a party atmosphere, stressing reciprocation as inherent to the occasion.

The committed mentoring component of the AACM became underlined during its prime elder's closing concert. Multi-instrumentalist Kelan Phil Cohran recalled the stirring contemporary speech of Frederick Douglass and recited Laurence Dunbar's patriotic "Columbian Ode." Insisting that music spoke louder than words, Cohran spurred his 17-piece Vocal Ensemble with relentless zithering harp, electrified sanza,

#### David S. Ware Proves Unstoppable at Umbrella Festival

Musicians representing 10 European countries converged on Chicago for this year's Umbrella Music Festival, which ran Nov. 3–7. But saxophonist David S. Ware's unaccompanied performance at Elastic on Nov. 5 left the deepest emotional impression.

Since recovering from a kidney transplant in the spring of 2009, Ware's performances have been understandably rare. And it took considerable strength for him to appear onstage without a rhythmic section's support. He didn't need one. During his one-hour set, Ware's tenor playing retained its enveloping heft, and his lengthy passages still retained all of their interwoven nuances. Switching to soprano, he reaffirmed his mastery at circular breathing. His energy transcended any physical limitations.At the conclusion, Ware asked the audience for questions. He used the opportunity to reassure everyone of his health, and that he kept eating his vegetables.

Umbrella's first night included multiple artists in different combinations throughout the Chicago Cultural Center, with dozens of international consulate officials in the house. Dutch trombonist Joost Buis' ensemble (seven Chicagoans made up the nonet) put the focus back on tunes and swing with drummers Mike Reed and Charles Rumback delivering consistently intertwined beats for baritone saxophonist Dave Rempis, cornetist Josh Berman, tenor saxophonist Keefe Jackson and alto saxophonist Jorrit Dijkstra to play behind. Songs were dedicated to a unique range of influences-Captain Beefheart and Harry Carney. For Spanish pianist Agustí Fernández hour-long solo concert, he initially only used the piano's keys to cue up a bowed ukelele and cornet.

During Renee Baker's innovative Brass Epiphany set, she sent seven wildly enthusiastic trumpeters into the crowd. Blowing at full tilt, they elicited a stunning metallic reverberation around the walls. Save for an antiphonic "Jingle Bells," which, a week before Thanksgiving, induced wincing, Baker proved herself, along with drummer Mike Reed, as the latest AACM visionary. Baker yoked symphonic professionals with less tempered AACM regulars and revealed a grand vision for her massive 35-piece aggregation, facing a posse of standing trumpeters with the ragtag vibe of a maverick New Orleans brass band, opposite an obediently seated string section, underpinned by three contra basses injecting Afro spiritual heft via hypnotic ostinato.

-Michael Jackson



one or two-note launch for his forays into the instrument's strings, at times making them resemble a harp before moving into percussive waves. But when Fernández sat down at the bench, he displayed a formidable, and still unconventional, technique, particularly with his array of continually stunning bass passages. Earlier that night an Italian duo of pianist Alberto Braida and tenor/soprano saxophonist Edoardo Marraffa began their set with a quiet dialogue that quickly shifted to an almost pummeling crescendo with Marraffa's circular breathing and then pivoted back again.

Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith closed the festival in a set with German drummer Gunter "Baby" Sommer at the Hungry Brain as the duo Touch The Earth II (the original group was a trio with the late bassist Peter Kowald). The performance reveled in contrasts. While Smith preferred coolly elongated lines, Sommer (like Han Bennink) couldn't be tied to the kit, as he continually leapt up to make the entire stage his percussion arsenal. Even with his unrestrained exuberance, his rapid timing was always perfect.

-Aaron Cohen



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#### John Hébert Cerebral Grit

In 1996, his third year in New York City, John Hébert's roommate nicknamed him "the janitor."

"He'd hear a voicemail on our old answering machine—'Hey, John, so-and-so just bailed; can you make this hit tonight?" Hébert recalled. "I'd be out the door. 'Unh-oh, the janitor mopping up."

Now 38, Hébert is one of New York's first-call bassists, boasting a reverberant tone, supple time feel and melodic sensibility in both solo and accompanying functions, bedrocking the package with a solid foundation in hardcore mainstem jazz. Able to cerebrate with grit, he is a consequential figure on scenes that infrequently overlap. "When I moved to New York I thought you had to do everything," he continued. "It's true—that's how you learn. But although I work in many different styles, I'm still playing the way I play."

It was Hébert's first off-day in a while; his recent itinerary reflected his breadth. The previous evening at the Jazz Gallery, Hébert had played two sets of high-concept speculative improvisation with pianist John Escreet and drummer Tyshawn Sorey, making the hit shortly after completing a four-hour drive from a Wednesday one-nighter with drummer Owen Howard's band in central Pennsylvania. This followed a Tuesday-night concert at Poisson Rouge to observe the release of Enescu Reimagined (Sunnyside), comprising Hébert's and pianist Lucian Ban's deconstructive arrangements for violin (Joyce Hamman), viola (Mat Maneri), trumpet (Ralph Alessi), tenor saxophone (Tony Malaby), drums (Gerald Cleaver) and percussion (Badal Roy) of the corpus of 20th century Romanian composer Georges Enescu. He would play on Saturday with saxophonist Adam Kolker's quartet at Cornelia Street Café, and was preparing to fly to New Orleans-of Cajun descent, he's a son of the Crescent City and Baton Rouge-to play a duo with guitar-electronics improviser Terence McManus.

Late the previous week, Hébert had returned from several gigs in France with his own threesax-and-woodwinds (Malaby, Michael Attias, Kolker) and two-percussion (Nasheet Waits, Satoshi Takeishi) unit that appears on Byzantine Monkey (Firehouse 12), named eponymously for the group. Recorded in proximity was Spiritual Lover (Clean Feed), a recital of Hébert's trio music with Benoit Delbecq on piano, synth and clavinet, and Cleaver. Other recent dates featuring Hébert's compositions are Book Of Three (Rogue Art), a sonically nuanced trio with Cleaver and trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum; Attias' Renku In Coimbra (Clean Feed), in trio with Takeishi; Pollock (Pirouet), by pianist Jurgen Friedrich's trio; and Lineup (Hatology), an informed dialogue by Hébert and pianist Russ Lossing. Additional side-



man dates of note are *Whirl* (Palmetto), Hébert's recorded trio debut with Fred Hersch, an employer for several years, and *Dragon Fire* (Firehouse 12), on which he and drummer Ches Smith animate a 10-piece suite by guitarist Mary Halvorson.

In forming his sensibility, Hébert took early cues from Bill Huntington—a gut-string-bass veteran with an ancient-to-future orientation whose credits include steady work with Ellis Marsalis and James Black—during a 1990–1992 matriculation at Loyola University. During this period he accrued extensive bandstand experience, playing standards with singers on five-night, four-set hotel dates and original music with world-class Crescent City elders like Tony Dagradi, Steve Masakowski, Michael Blair, John Vidacovich, David Lee and generational contemporaries Jon Cowherd and Brian Blade.

Once in New York, Hébert spent much of the '90s "floating around, questioning myself," dayjobbing on the 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift at a coffee house, attending sessions in the afternoons, and making high-content, low-remuneration gigs at night in restaurants and creative music venues like the Internet Café, where he played with Malaby, Lossing and trumpeter Ron Horton. Occasionally, he subbed with Maria Schneider's big band. The transformative moment occurred when, in 2001, pianist-composer Andrew Hill called, on the recommendation of Horton and Schneider's band pianist Frank Kimbrough.

"Everything felt right," said Hébert, who played on Hill's last recording, *Time Lines*. "Playing four-on-the-floor and walking wouldn't work—you'd expand and contract the time within the pulse. Vidacovich talked about thinking of time as waves of water crashing against the shore. Rather than subdivide the beat, go to the largest ratio possible."

He also drew inspiration from Hill's minimalist compositional strategies. "Andrew might create a beautiful 20-minute tune from just a measure," Hébert said. "If you have the right chemistry, you don't need a lot of complex stuff. Rather than dictate, I prefer to let the musicians compose around it on the spot, so it's different every time.

"To be able to react intuitively on stage to someone of that eminence, from that generation, and have him say, 'John, that sounds great, let's do it again,' helped me start being comfortable with who I am. Maybe other people started jumping on board: 'If Andrew thinks he's good, then maybe he's good.' The cream rises to the top eventually. Sometimes it takes 20 years." *—Ted Panken* 

## James Falzone > Subtle Infusions

Clarinetist and composer James Falzone contemplated moving to New York after graduate school at Boston's New England Conservatory, or perhaps Europe, as he felt a strong affinity with the European creative music scene. But he opted to return to the Chicago area he had left behind.

He describes that decision as one of the most fruitful of his life. Since the improvised and experimental music community in Chicago had grown so exponentially in the last 10 years, it was the perfect place for him to be.

Falzone feasted in the academic environment of NEC, taking courses in Medieval music, Indian ragas and Turkish traditions, klezmer with Hankus Netsky's ensemble, even a class zoning in on Billie Holiday. He now teaches an interdisciplinary seminar at Chicago's Columbia College that has as much to do with the visual arts and literature as music.

From the outset his music has been self-produced, most recently on what he dubs his Allos Documents label. *Lamentations* (2010) features his Allos Musica trio (allos is the Greek word for "other") comprising oud player Ronnie Malley and percussionist Tim Mulvenna. The group digs deep into Arabic modes. One is a Muwashah (a courtly lovesong from Andalusia), another written by oud player Issa Boulos, but the rest of the 18 tracks are conceived by Falzone himself as laments, "a musical/poetic genre that has transcended cultures and time," as he puts it.

When Falzone was in Boston seeking out the music of Egyptian singer Oum Kalsoum, whom he likens to Holiday, 9/11 struck. Since he had such respect and awe for the culture America seemed to be retreating from, *Lamentations* is in part his reaction of frustration and sorrow to the ethnic slants of the conflict.

A gentle soul, Falzone is something of a hippie by his own admission, who home-birthed and home-schools his kids and bakes his own bread. His 2009 release Tea Music with the quartet Klang (vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz, bassist Jason Roebke, drummer Tim Daisy) makes references to varieties of the benign beverage he would sip while composing (he gave up coffee for a while due to migraine headaches). Song titles like "No Milk," "G.F.O.P" (Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe) and "China Black" have scant relevance to the superb Jimmy Giuffre-inspired music on the CD but bespeak Falzone's gourmet palate and hypersensitivity to the clarinet's timbral and tonal niceties, for which he developed an ear, aged 11, when his clarinetist uncle gave him The Jimmy Giuffre Clarinet LP.

Such nuance was evident in a spontaneous meeting with Austrian electronics musician



Christof Kurzmann at Chicago's Cultural Center last November. Thrown together with Kurzmann by curators of the Umbrella Festival, Falzone was forced to negotiate terms with a laptop musician for the first time. "You have two experienced musicians in a slightly awkward moment. It presents a wonderful balance between being yourself and being a receptacle," said Falzone. Both Falzone and Kurzmann generated a sweat during their duo and Falzone drew on a host of resources, including microtones, altissimo shrieks, didgeroo-like growls, as well as judicious use of low volume and space.

Not central to the vein of heavier-blowing horns that followed Ken Vandermark on the Chicago scene, Falzone is nonetheless a virtuoso and a brilliant strategist whose concepts can be through-composed. Though he wouldn't accept the term as a branding model, he identifies himself as a "third stream" exponent (to borrow Gunther Schuller's jazz/classical bridging term) and has found musicians, such as cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm, who can match his vision. Lonberg-Holm and Falzone are featured on Aerial Age with Daisy's group Vox Arcana, the first release on Allos Documents not under Falzone's name. The chamber-like osmosis is astonishingly good, only possible given the subtle vibrations and proximity of empathetic, versatile talent (the next record from Klang, incidentally, will include tunes associated with Benny Goodman-continuing Falzone's fascination with the blend between vibraphone and clarinet). It's like sharing the environment endemic to one of Falzone's esoteric teas: "There's this Jasmine Oolong tea from Taiwan where the tea leaves dry merely in the presence of the jasmine, absorbing -Michael Jackson its aroma."

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#### Players >

#### Andrew Rathbun > Solitary Man

Saxophonist Andrew Rathbun has recorded 10 albums of eloquent, provocative and challenging music, each with a unique angle. He catalogued the failures of George W. Bush on *Affairs Of State*, paralleled sculpture to jazz with Kenny Wheeler for *Sculptures*; improvised on Ravel, Mompou and Shostakovich (with George Colligan) on *Renderings*; and paired the poetry of Margaret



Atwood with jazz on *True Stories*. Rathbun is interested in finding new solutions to old questions, and challenging standard forms. His latest, *The Idea Of North* (SteepleChase), follows a thread left by troubled Canadian pianist Glenn Gould.

"Glenn Gould's [1967] CBC radio documentary [also titled *The Idea of North*] explored the netherworlds of Canada," Rathbun explains. "He said, 'Let's get out of the urban centers and really see what's north of the permafrost.' Some of it was just the sound of his boots crunching in the snow for six minutes. He approached these radio plays as if it were Bach, with vocal counterpoint. He'd interview someone about ice fishing, then another guy about what it's like to start your car at 40 below. He edited the two interviews together so they played simultaneously, like counterpoint. It was performance art. Gould was a nut-job, but it's an interesting way to approach spoken word."

By extension, Rathbun, also a native Canadian, depicts the farther regions of his homeland as a cold, desolate, isolated place, which mirrors, he believes, the life of the average jazz musician. The CD's liner notes ask, "What effect does solitude have on a person? What can it offer someone? How can one grow as a result of being alone?"

"That's the existence of the musician," Rathbun says. "You spend so much time working out your music. It's often a solitary life. Writing the music takes a long time, you're alone, until you join with other musicians to perform it. I was thinking, "What can all this solitude offer someone?" Basically trying to channel that into the compositions—the idea of the art as a solitary pursuit, and then the vastness of the country and how many of its residents also live a solitary existence."

The Idea Of North, performed by Rathbun, Taylor Haskins (trumpet), Nate Radley (guitar), Frank Carlberg (piano), Jay Anderson (bass) and Michael Sarin (drums), embraces the enormity of the Canadian Territories and the netherworlds of the musical mind in the titles "Across The Country," "Harsh," "Arctic," "Rockies" and "December." Wayne Shorter and Christoph Gluck material is also explored. Rathbun's compositions are alternately mysterious, cerebral and free, performed with tight execution and extreme improvisation. The group plays like a whipsaw cutting through the frigid Canadian permafrost.

"Sometimes I write music with a narrative in mind," Rathbun says, in describing his sound(s). "It's almost like scoring a movie that doesn't exist. The music that usually gets attention is either totally out, or the more inside tonally structured stuff. I think of myself as being in the middle. I love to play free; I do it all the time. But I also love structure and harmony and chord changes and standards. But I bring a different turn to that music. The guys in the middle are the guys who get ignored. But to me, the guys in the middle are making the most music. That is who I gravitate to and seek out." *—Ken Micallef* 

#### Do you Dream in color?

#### Milton Suggs Circuitous Trajectory

Milton Suggs once set his sights on being a jazz pianist; instead he became a commanding jazz singer. As evidenced by his debut CD as a leader, *Things To Come* (Skiptone Music), the 27-year-old Chicago-based vocalist made a wise decision. The disc highlights a singer steeped firmly in the tradition of crooners such as Joe Williams, Eddie Jefferson and Jon Hendricks but with mod-



ern sensibilities that put him in the company of contemporaries like Jose James and Sachal Vasandani.

Suggs powers his mellifluous baritone through vocalese treatments of Cedar Walton's "Ugestu" (recast as "Fantasy For You") and Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight," catchy originals like the forceful "My Last Goodbye" and the ballad "Seize The Moment," and glowing renditions of "We Shall Overcome" and "Lift Every Voice And Sing." He sings in an easy, conversational manner that's pliable enough to entice the jazz purist and melodically economical enough to pique the curiosity of r&b fans.

Suggs' trajectory to becoming a vocalist was rather circuitous. The son of jazz bassist Milton Suggs—who played with Mary Lou Williams, Elvin Jones and Rahsaan Roland Kirk—Suggs was born in Chicago but grew up with his mother in Atlanta. His initial career choice was broadcast journalism, which he studied at Florida A&M University. "I liked the idea of using that broadcaster's tone—using my voice in that type of way," Suggs explained. "But it started not to feel right after a couple of months."

Having studied bass and other instruments as a grade-schooler, Suggs took a renewed interest in music during his freshman year of college. "I decided to try to take some piano classes," he recalled. "I was going to try to enroll in the music program at Florida A&M, however I didn't have enough playing experience." So his mother encouraged him to visit Chicago and take lessons from his godfather—veteran pianist Willie Pickens.

Suggs journeyed to the Windy City for what at first was just going to be a summer of learning piano with Pickens. He enjoyed his studies and the Chicago jazz scene so much, he decided to stay. "[Pickens'] first mode of attack is to focus on the blues," Suggs said. "He always said that if you can play the blues and 'Rhythm' changes, then that would be your foundation." Pickens also imparted the values of listening intently and exploring different approaches to standards. "We would sit down and go slowly during practice and figure out what we were hearing. There was a lot of repetition. I would do four measures of a song about 20 times over and try to explore different options just to figure out what I'm hearing."

Suggs enrolled at Columbia College Chicago and began to hone his skills as a pianist and vocalist. He went on to get a master's degree in jazz studies from DePaul University, where he received a DownBeat Student Music Award for outstanding vocal performance. When Wynton Marsalis heard Suggs sing with the DePaul University Jazz Ensemble in 2008, the trumpeter encouraged him to focus on vocals.

When asked if he'll ever reignite his interest in jazz piano, Suggs said, "I feel like I have more of a voice as a singer than as a pianist. I felt like I didn't have anything really to say as a pianist." — John Murph



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## Bunky Green & Rudresh Mahanthappa BREAKING OF THE SYSTEM

By Ted Panken // Photography by Jimmy Katz



n the surface, they make an odd couple. Vernice "Bunky" Green Jr., 75, director of jazz studies at the University of North Florida, is African-American, born to parents who migrated from

Arkansas and Alabama during the Great Depression and settled in Milwaukee, Wis. Rudresh Mahanthappa, 39, of South Indian descent, is the first-generation son of a physics professor in Boulder, Colo. But on *Apex* (Pi), their co-led 2010 release comprising a suite of tunes that both contributed to the project, they play so synchronously that it's a challenging proposition to tell who's doing what.



Prodded by Jason Moran on piano, Francois Moutin on bass and either Jack DeJohnette or Damion Reid on drums, the two alto saxophonists blow like duelling brothers, each projecting a double-reed quality in their tones, Mahanthappa's slightly darker and tenoristic, Green's more nasal and oboeish. Both work with complex note-groupings, flying over barlines while always landing on the one. Though the feeling is "free," both work within strongly conceptualized structures that provide space to soar within the form and are thoroughly grounded in "inside" playing and the art of tension-andrelease. "It's surprising what they come up with," DeJohnette summed up. "They stimulated each other to the higher levels of creativity."

Two days into a four-night CD-release run at the Jazz Standard in October, Green and Mahanthappa convened at Green's hotel. Green recalled their first meeting, in 1991 or 1992, when Mahanthappa—then a Berklee undergraduate who was loaned a copy of Green's 1979 recording *Places We've Never Been* by his sax teacher, Joe Viola—presented the elder saxman with a tape. "Sounds beautiful," Green told him. "There's only a few of us out here trying to think like this."

At the time, a short list of those "few" included M-Base movers and shakers Steve Coleman and Greg Osby, who had discovered Green independently as '70s teenagers, and subsequently bonded in New York over their shared enthusiasm for his approach, poring over Coleman's extensive cassette archive of location performances. Many years before, in Chicago, where Green settled in 1960, Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman and Henry Threadgill, then young aspirants, had also paid close attention.

"The level of expertise [Green] displayed in his musicianship and expression were very clear from the moment I heard him," said Threadgill, after witnessing the group's final night at the Standard. He recalled a concert, perhaps in 1962, in which Green played pieces "structured in the way of free-jazz, the so-called avant-garde category." He continued: "Bunky was formidable, no one to fool with. I can't think of another alto player at a comparable level in Chicago at the time."

DeJohnette cited the "urgency, commanding presence and confidence" of Green's early '60s playing. "Everybody would talk about Bunky," he said, noting that Green had once brushed off his request to sit in during a gig at a South Side club. "He was legendary even then."

For Osby, Green was less a stylistic influence than "a guru-type figure who assured me I'm on the right track, gave me the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval that what I was doing was the right thing, not to let detractors sway me from my mission, that I was put here to establish new goals and force new paths." Ten years later, Mahanthappa drew a similar message.

"I was around lots of tenor players who sounded like [John] Coltrane and [Michael] Brecker, and alto players wanting to sound like Kenny Garrett," Mahanthappa recalled. "Bunky's voice didn't sound like anyone else. I needed that affirmation that it was OK to be an individual. I heard things—interesting intervallic approaches—that maybe I couldn't play yet, but was thinking about. But I also heard the tradition in the music."

Mahanthappa placed his hand at a 90-degree angle. "This is Charlie Parker," he said, then moved his hand to 105 degrees and continued, "and this is me. It's all the same material, just rearranged a little bit—a different perspective. I heard Bunky doing that at the highest level."

At the time, Mahanthappa, spurred by a trip to India (with a Berklee student ensemble) to begin exploring ways to express identity in music, was absorbing an album by Kadri Golpalnath, an alto saxophonist from Southern India who, like Green, had systematically worked out inflections, fingerings and embouchure techniques to elicit the idiomatic particulars of Carnatic classical music. As important, he took conceptual cues from such Coleman recordings as Dao Of Mad Phat, Seasons Of Renewal and Strata Institute. "Steve extrapolated African rhythm as I aspired to do with Indian rhythm and melody, not playing West African music, but doing something new with well-established, ancient material from a different culture," he said. "It was an amazing template. Steve doesn't need a kora player or a Ghanaian drum line to play with him, and I don't need a tabla or mridangam in my quartet. We're playing modern American improvised music."

In 1996, three years into a four-year stay in Chicago, Mahanthappa invited Green to guest with his quartet for a weekend at the Green Mill. Green declined. "It was more about trying to do something special than about the music," Mahanthappa reflected. According to altoist Jeff Newell, a rehearsal partner who had studied formally with Green, Mahanthappa "had developed a lot of the things he's doing now," projecting them with a "bright, shave-your-head sound," as though, a local peer-grouper quipped, "somebody threw lighter fluid on Bunky."

An opportunity for collaboration arose 13 years later, when the producers of Made in Chicago: World Class Jazz approached Mahanthappa-now leading several ensembles devoted to the application of Western harmony to South Indian melodies and beat cycles, each with highly structured, meticulously unfolding repertoire specific to its musical personalitiesto present a concert at Millennium Park. In addition to his blistering sax and rhythm quartet with pianist Vijay Iyer, to whom Coleman had introduced him in 1996 (he reciprocally sidemanned for years in Iyer's own quartet, and they continue to co-lead the duo Raw Materials), Mahanthappa had recently conceptualized Indo-Pak Coalition, a trio of alto, tabla (Dan Weiss) and guitar (Rez Abbasi) documented on Apti (Pi); and a pluggedin, ragacentric quintet called Samdhi, with electric guitar (David Gilmore), electric bass (Rich Brown), drums (Damion Reid) and mridangam (Anand Ananthakrishnan). Then, too, he was involved in a pair of two-alto projects: the quintet Dual Identity, which he co-leads with Steve Lehman, a fellow Colemanite (*The General* [Clean Feed]); and the Dakshima Ensemble, a collaboration with Golparnath in which Abassi, bassist Carlo DeRosa and drummer Royal Hartigan meld with Golparnath's sax-violin-mridangam trio to perform their hybrid refractions of Carnatic music, documented on the widely publicized CD *Kinsmen* (Pi).

"They wanted to present Dakshima and add some Chicago musicians, which sounded like a disaster and was budgetarily impossible,"

> "I do a lot of analyzing. Maybe I play a phrase, and some experience comes up from my life. Or perhaps I see some beauty in it and decide to keep developing it, and it leads into a song, or pathways I can utilize on whatever I'm working on. To me, a tune can't be just pretty. It has to be something that fits into the way I feel about life, so I can express it." -Bunky Green

Mahanthappa said. "But they thought Bunky was a great idea. Bunky made it clear that he didn't want to play 7s and 11s and 13s—it was more about trying to find a comfortable place that would highlight what we both do. It was interesting to compose a blues ['Summit'] and a 'Rhythm' changes tune ['Who'] that sounds like the same compositional voice I've done over the last decade. I'm trying to learn how to relinquish control of the situation and just say, 'Whatever happens, happens.''

Two of Green's new tunes, "Eastern Echoes" and "Journey," reflect his abiding interest in North African scales and tonalities, and another, "Rainier And Theresia" (dedicated to the late wife of Jazz Baltica impresario Rainer Haarmann), is the latest addition to a consequential lexicon of searing ballad features. "I didn't want to get involved in anything with a lot of changes," Green said. "I don't feel that music too much now. Our things kind of hover on the edge. There's all kinds of room in what we write, and we both like that you can take it where you want to.

"Like Rudresh, I do a lot of analyzing. Maybe I play a phrase, and some experience comes up from my life. Or perhaps I see some beauty in it and decide to keep developing it, and it leads into a song, or pathways I can utilize on whatever I'm working on. To me, a tune can't be just pretty. It has to be something that fits into the way I feel about life, so I can express it. The blues, too. It's not just a word, it's a feeling. It's something that you have, and right away, if you play the right notes, the feeling will be there. It's bending notes. It's moaning. How are you going to play about pain unless you've experienced pain? And how are you going to package it like Charlie Parker, who just cried over his horn? Those aren't notes. It's a man's life."

Green discovered Bird in his early teens, which coincided with the release of the alto legend's studio sides for Dial and Savoy. Green got them all. By the time he was 17, he said, "I could play everything Bird recorded in terms of imitating. I didn't know what the hell I was playing. I was just stretching, trying to find the notes."

Around this time, Green contracted viral pneumonia. "A doctor came to the house, and I overheard him telling my mother that he didn't think I'd make it," he recalled. "I decided that if I did live through it, all my friends would be ahead of me, so I should practice just in case-I could hear the ones in my head, so I didn't need my instrument. I took the hardest songs I could think of-'Cherokee,' 'All The Things You Are,' 'Just One Of Those Things'-and transposed them mentally through all 12 keys. The people my mother worked for brought in a famous doctor, who gave me new drugs, which knocked it out, but not until I experienced the white light at the end of the tunnel, the light closing, then fighting for air to come back, the light opening up again. When I was able to get back to my instrument, I was able to play everything I'd practiced."

While attending Milwaukee Teachers College, Green worked locally with pianists Willie Pickens and Billy Wallace, walking the bar on rhythm-and-blues jobs, soaking up Gene Ammons' spare, vocalistic approach to ballads like "These Foolish Things" and Lester Young's poetic treatment of "I'm Confessin"." He had New York on his radar, and first visited in 1957, staying at the Harlem Y across the street from Smalls Paradise, where Lou Donaldson held a steady gig. He sat in with Max Roach's quintet with Sonny Rollins and Kenny Dorham on the say-so of Wallace, then Roach's band pianist. "I was always able to play fast, especially at that time, so I was able to hang in and do it," he said. That fall, Donaldson recommended him to Charles Mingus.

The audition produced a second transformative moment, after Mingus told him, "The first tune we'll play is 'Pithecanthropus Erectus." Green continued: "I sat there, 'Hmm, pithecan … ' 'You know what that means, man?' That's the way Mingus talked. 'No, I really don't know.' 'That means the first man to stand erect.' He said, 'Play this,' and played something like *bink-dinkdom-deeenngg*. I said, 'Have you got that written down so I can see it?' Then he went off on me if he wrote it down, I'd never play it right. I said, 'Then play it again.' I was able to hear it and play it back, and he smiled, and moved on.

"Mingus validated how I was starting to feel about the music—that there must be a systematic way to break free of the major-and-minor system. He'd have you do things like take the neck off your horn and blow into the bottom part to get a very low timbre on 'Foggy Day' because he wanted you to sound like a ship out in the harbor."

Mingus brought Green cross-country to San Francisco's Black Hawk. On the return trip, he dropped him off in Chicago so that he could attend to family matters in Milwaukee, with the expectation that Green would soon return to New York for more club dates and a recording. But Green stayed home, imbued with notions of the freedom principle, with the late '50s innovations of Coltrane as his lodestar. Green continued these explorations in Chicago, where—unable "to afford New York at the time"—he moved in

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1960. He quickly made his presence felt on a scene that he describes as "very fast, but more laid back than New York, so you could do yourself in a less frantic environment." He cut a straightahead sextet date for Exodus with Jimmy Heath, Donald Byrd, Wynton Kelly, Larry Ridley and Jimmy Cobb, and a quartet side for Vee-Jay with Wallace, bassist Donald Garrett and drummer Bill Erskine. He frequently partnered with Garrett on "out of the box" projects, including an exploratory trio that did a concert—the one Threadgill attended—on which they "just started playing and tried to interact—that was the whole gig."

A third transformative moment occurred in 1964, when Green, in Morocco on a State Department tour, traveled "through the back woods" to hear a performance. "We saw three musicians sitting on the floor in a circle," he recalled. "One guy had a bagpipe, another had a small violin, and the third played a small drum that he put his hand into and played on top. I became mesmerized by the bagpipe player's skill. It blew my mind, because he put together what I was hearing in my head. No chords. There was a drone of a fifth, and you played around that fifth and resolved it within yourself. Later, I started studying it and building from it, pretty much the way Rudresh visited his culture and started drawing on it. I'm not trying to copy the sound. I'm trying to get into the essence of their phrasing and how they circle the open fourth and fifth tonal centers that they use. I had to give up the standard jazz lines in order to do that."

Ten years later, Steve Coleman, then 18, heard Green—at this point heading a newly formed Jazz Studies department at Chicago State University—either at Ratso's on the North Side or Cadillac Bob's, around the corner from his South Side house. "Bunky worked out patterns that sounded calculated, like a deliberate effort to get to his own thing," Coleman stated. "As a result, his playing is very clear, precise, direct, and I could dig into it, try to analyze it and find out what it was. I wanted him to show me what he was doing, so I asked for a lesson, but Bunky turned me down. He told me, 'I only give lessons to cats who need lessons, and you don't. You need to go to New York.' So I decided I'd listen and grab what I could.

"Although I noticed the patterns early on, Bunky used certain devices that intrigued me. He developed a special fingering to get a hiccup quality that you hear in North African singers. He also picked up a lot of augmented second intervals, as well as quartal stuff and pentatonics, from that part of the world. Whereas in those countries, the pitches stay pretty much the same, Bunky moved the intervals around in different ways. To me the blues is basically a modal music, without a lot of progression. Bird managed to put sophisticated progressions in the blues that gave it motion, but let it sound like blues, as opposed to, say, Lennie Tristano or Dizzy. Coltrane figured out a way to move the music that influenced him from Africa and India. Bunky figured out how to do this with the North African-Middle Eastern vibe."

A long with what he does on *Apex*, Mahanthappa's recent sideman work in DeJohnette's new group with David Fiuczynski, George Colligan and Jerome Harris and in Danilo Pérez's 21st Century Dizzy project (there are several open-ended Pérez–Mahanthappa duos on 2010's *Providencia* [Mack Avenue]) may go some ways towards countering a critique that his musical production—particularly the 2006 release *Codebook* (Pi), comprising original pieces constructed of intervals drawn from Fibonacci equations, and *Mother Tongue* (Pi), on which the compositions draw from melodic transcriptions of Indian-Americans responding, in their native dialect, to the question "Do you speak Indian?"—is overly intellectual and insufficiently soulful.

"Everyone I look up to is simultaneously right brain and left brain, to use a dated term, or simultaneously intellectual and seat-of-the-pants instinctive," Mahanthappa said. "Bartok played with Fibonacci equations. Bach played with Golden Section. Even Dufay's motets, if you pick them apart, have a somewhat mathematical, formal approach. 'Giant Steps' and

'Central Park West' are math jazz. A lot of non-Western music has a foot in math as well. A lot of algorithmic thought goes into the way South Indian beat cycles are constructed and played; when the players solo, they know exactly where to start this polyrhythmic thing so it lands at a certain spot two minutes later."

Throughout the recording, and on the four bonus video clips offered with an Apex download, Moran prods the flow into unexpected, "right brain" directions. He first recorded with Green on the 2004 date Another Place (Label Bleu), produced by Coleman, who persuaded Green to use him instead of the esteemed master bebop master pianist Green had asked for. "I wanted to hear someone interact with Bunky who wouldn't just lay down a carpet for him to play over," Coleman said. "Jason was one of the few piano players I could think of who had enough of the stuff Bunky wanted to hear-the sensibility of how to play a ballad, and so on-but could throw him some curveballs, push him in his thing so the album would represent something like the way he plays live.

"There's a wild element, an abandon in Bunky's playing. He lets his feelings out. It was there early on-he's one of those cats who got it young. He has a very strong embouchure, and his pitch is very centered, his alto tone is crystal-clear, nothing muscly about it. But he does false-fingerings to offset this, to get more rawness in his sound. He plays in the upper register without pressing the octave key, so he gets a throaty split-tone quality, an overtone sound, holding the pitch right in between the upper and lower registers."

Moran described his strategies. "When Bunky gets into his own language, I comp behind him in a way that uses some of what I gleaned from McCoy Tyner, not the chords or voicings, but the power," he said. "He gets to an angular sound that kind of free-floats up into the stratosphere, and what's attractive is that just when you think he has no further to go, there's like another mile-and-a-half, whether way up into the top of the instrument, or into deeper levels of rawness."

Discussing Mahanthappa's qualities, Moran referenced an old video game called Punch-out !!. "You'd press the button and it said, 'Body blow! Body blow!" he laughed, swinging his arms back and forth like a pendulum. "Or like Neo punching in The Matrix, where you saw these multiple arms hitting the same spot. Rudresh has that kind of rapid fire, and when I play with him, I punctuate and jab. It isn't just that he plays really quick ideas, but his tone and attack are very different from Bunky's-more direct, while Bunky slides more."

Both of Mahanthappa's recent employers note his open mind and fierce, unmediated execution as a selling point. "Rudresh does things that remind me of a little kid, like, 'Let's go and play," Pérez said, extending Moran's analogy. "When he develops a line, there's much excitement and raw energy, but he also improvises with great clarity."

"There was a lot of commotion about Rudresh." DeJohnette remarked. "He gets a sort of Indian flute or Arabic nai sound on the saxophone, and I've been interested in Indian scales and ragas and rhythms since the '60s, so I thought his sensibility-and the rawness he brings-would work out for my music."

"I've been dying to play with Danilo and Jack forever," Mahanthappa said. "There's a certain validation in working with them, as well as Bunky. At Berklee or when I lived in Chicago, I was inspired when people who I thought were authentic, regardless of jazz genre, would say, 'Yeah, man, keep doing what you're doing.""

Green himself intends to devote a greater proportion of the second half of his eighth decade to performing than has been his custom since the '60s.

"I've never been desperate about getting ahead," he said. "All I ever wanted was some recognition for my place in history. I believe in my heart that I'm responsible for a stylistic thing that spread all around the country, and nobody really knew the source. That's the only thing I've regretted, but now I seem to be getting credit. It always took someone else to motivate and push me. I'm not an aggressive person, and unless you're aggressive you become complacent and don't move. Maybe it would have been better for me if I had been, because I would be quite established now. But I'm going to keep pushing in terms of playing more and getting more exposureand we'll see what happens." DB

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By Dan Ouellette

hen he was commissioned by the Barcelona Jazz Festival in 2009 to be one of three artists to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue*, Omar Sosa told a Barcelona reporter that what he was being asked to do was like being thrown into a lion-packed arena at a Ro-

man circus. But the Cuba-born, Barcelona-based pianist/keyboardist/bandleader, who has recorded more than 20 albums and garnered three Grammy nominations, did his homework, studied the original compositions closely, assembled a sextet featuring guest trumpeter Jerry González to decipher his complex arrangements and held court at L'Auditori for his festival performance. Sosa, a risk-taker with an adventurous streak and a no-borders attitude, plugged in and presented an electronically hued version of *Kind Of Blue* that was more like the 1969 Davis blitzing into *Bitches Brew* than his mellow modal jazz of 1959.

Donning a white robe and a white cap, Sosa opened by fleetingly alluding to "So What," but for the rest of the evening avoided playing too close to the recognizable phrases and melodies of the classic. He coaxed drummer Dafnis Prieto to play bombastic drums in pockets, conducted waves of exclamatory horns inspirited by Peter Apfelbaum on sax, soothed González to play a sublime muted solo on a gorgeous ballad, then bubbled the proceedings with mysterious stretches that frothed into funk, balladic measures that jumped into rhythmic leaps, and strident piano and electronic keyboard lines setting up dense-to-stark passages that were both boisterous and beautiful. Each piece became a journey of tempo shifts, rhythmic vivacity, exhilarating conversations and pensive breaks of silence.

For 90 minutes, Sosa led the charge through his image of *Kind Of Blue*, which was explosively imaginative in some people's eyes but for others was an audacious affront to Davis' art. He included a spoken word sample of Davis talking from the stage at his last concert in Paris before he died. Certainly, Sosa's interpretation was markedly different from the straight-up take of original *Kind Of Blue* session drummer Jimmy Cobb's variations on the album songbook two nights earlier and Spanish pianist Chano Domínguez's flamenco-styled rendering of the album three nights later.

The next day sitting in his apartment ("my home, my temple") in the labyrinthine old section of Barcelona, filled with small altars to the gods from his Cuban heritage, Sosa good-naturedly scoffed at the critics, one of whom lambasted the show in a local newspaper. "I knew that some people were going to be negative and complain that I write complex on purpose," he said. "I knew I was going to be a target because so many people have their own perception of the album. But I say that someone can try to dance like Michael Jackson and may get his steps but never be able to truly dance like Michael Jackson. That's impossible. In the same way, I didn't want to play like Miles. I respect him, Bill Evans, John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb too much to do that. I never play standards, anyway, but I wanted to research and interpret these songs in my own way. You never play like the masters; you have your own voice."

Sosa read books on Davis' life and listened closely to the solos, the tempos, the conversations that were taking place on the album. He then combined rearranged solos and reharmonized melodies in a post-modern pastiche of suspended harmonies, rushing syncopation and snippets of lines from one song stitched into another. "What I did was a more cubist, angular style of arranging," he said. "All the album solos and melodies are in my interpretation. I just mixed them all together. If some people aren't willing to listen for it, that's not my problem. It's the way I hear harmony. And then I put in elements of Miles' later style. I was born in 1965, so I can relate to that period when he was experimenting with different tempos and colors."

One point that Sosa found particularly offensive was when the reviewer wrote that Kind Of Blue has nothing to do with Africa. Sosa commented that before he wrote one note, he was totally immersed in his understanding of how Davis possessed the spirit of Africa. "All of my music-every single note-is based on the African tradition, but some critics don't understand what the spirit of Africa means," he says. "I played a chamber music concert in Spain with my Afreecanos Quartet and a symphony orchestra. Some people complained that the evening was too refined and didn't go into the deepest spirit of Africa. What? It was as if the spirit of Africa has to be dirty, or a black guy sweating and being wild. It can't be refined and sophisticated?"

That notion of delving into the depth of his African heritage is at the heart of Sosa's Afro-Cuban-infused music. It's coursing in his blood and intertwined in his DNA. While he first studied marimba and percussion in the conservatory in his hometown of Camaguey, he switched to piano while in formal studies in 1983 at the Escuela Nacional de Musica in Havana in pursuit of the musical motherland he was drawn to. While classically trained, he had jazz albums around the house when he was growing up (including the album Pianoforte by Chucho Valdés) and listened as a student to a jazz radio program hosted by the father of drummer Horatio "El Negro" Hernandez. It was during this time that he was introduced to the recordings of Thelonious Monk, who became a major influence.

After school, Sosa began his worldwide odyssey, moving to Quito, Ecuador, in 1993, where he discovered the African-rooted folkloric music of Esmeraldas and formed a fusion group. Then he settled in San Francisco in December 1995, landing there unexpectedly. While living in Ecuador on a Cuban passport, Sosa set off to Mallorca, Spain, to do some summer gigs. When he prepared to go home, he lost his visa so he was stranded there and living illegally. Previously he had applied for an American tourist visa, which was approved. "I used it one day before it expired," Sosa said. "I got on a plane and landed in San Francisco, where I knew no one and couldn't speak a word of English."

A friend of his ex-wife picked him up at the airport, and they both bounced from friends of friends' apartments. "In one month, I lived in something like 12 houses," Sosa said. "I cried like a baby. I had no friends, no job and no money. Welcome to America."

Sosa had recorded jingles in Ecuador, with the paychecks being delivered to him in the Bay Area, which gave him three months' worth of living expenses. In February 1996, he answered a classified ad looking for musicians to be a part of a Latin combo. He joined the band and began playing Spanish, flamenco, cumbia and salsa. He showed up on albums recorded in 1996 by Pancho Quinto (*En El Solar La Cueva Del Humo*) and Carlos "Patato" Valdes (*Ritmo Y Candela: African Crossroads*), and gradually "All of my music every single note—is based on the African tradition, but some critics don't understand what the spirit of Africa means. It's as if the spirit of Africa has to be dirty, or a black guy sweating and being wild. What? It can't be refined or sophisticated?"

became acquainted with several stars on the local scene, including percussionist John Santos, who with his band Machete Ensemble was exploring the history of Cuban music.

"Meeting John moved me to another level," Sosa said, "He helped me to express myself based on what I feel. Everything took a new direction for me. He told me to stay on my own road even if it's going to be a really long walk. John knew more about my tradition than most people in Cuba. I learned how to hear my own music as well as my tradition."

Santos recalls first meeting Sosa when he subbed in a band that the conguero often performed with at the Elbo Room in San Francisco. "We were connecting all night," he says. "It's as if we were thinking the same things at the same time. Omar spoke no English, and my Spanish is OK but it's not my first language. But what was cool was that we both knew Afro-Cuban folkloric music, which I had been exploring my entire life. We started playing together more and we knew the same musical language. In Omar's melody line I could hear the Cuban music, so I would respond with my congas. That would set him off, so he would respond with another melody that would get me driving. Omar made me play stuff that I never thought of playing."

They first played a duo concert together in 1997 at KCSM radio's Jazz on the Hill festival at the College of San Mateo and later performed concerts throughout clubs in the Bay Area, including La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley, where they recorded the album *Nfumbe*, released in 1998.

Another key person to Sosa's growth was saxophonist Peter Apfelbaum, at the time one of the most important jazz artists in the Bay Area. In one of the first shows he attended when he arrived in San Francisco, Sosa went to a small club on Market Street, The Upper Room, and caught Apfelbaum playing with his band. "Peter instantly became one of my heroes," said Sosa. "I saw him play the keyboards, then jump onto the sax, then jump over to the drums. He started singing and doing spoken word. I didn't know who he was, but I thought, this is the music that I want to do. It was multikulti with a lot of tradition, and it was crazy."

The pair officially met a few years later when Sosa was playing a gig at the Great American Music Hall with drummer Josh Jones, a veteran of Apfelbaum's big band, Hierogylphics Ensemble. "Omar and I felt a common bond," says Apfelbaum, now based in New York. "I started out when I was young drumming and listening to a lot of African music, so rhythm became a big part of what I do. It's the same with Omar. He approaches his music with a rhythmic foundation, and when I play with him, he always encourages me to improvise on my saxophone over the Afro-Cuban rhythmic foundation he lays."

As Apfelbaum got to know Sosa better and participated on many of his projects, he became impressed with how many trails the pianist was blazing. "Omar is one of those idea guys," he says. "He's prolific, which I admire. Some people work hard, but never really change what they play. But Omar is constantly changing because he has so many ideas of what he wants to do."

Another key Bay Area contact was Scott Price, a former newspaper publisher who oversees Sosa's career to this day. He created Otá Records exclusively for the pianist to pursue his multifarious projects (the label is part of the Harmonia Mundi distributing network) and to help manage his career, even to the point of occasionally working as a road manager on the pianist's 150-dates-a-year tours, which included a gig at the Highline Ballroom in New York in October 2009. "I wanted to give Omar the opportunity to record widely and frequently," Price said over coffee at Union Square's Joe's Art of Coffee cafe. In fact, since his first album, Omar Omar. Sosa has recorded a whopping total of 23 albums, including his upcoming solo piano album, Calma (to be released March 8) and the much-heralded Across The Divide: A Tale Of Rhythm & Ancestry, a 2010 Grammy-nominated album in the Best Contemporary World Music category that was an unusual collaboration with New England vocalist/banjoist/American folk ethnomusicologist Tim Eriksen. Produced by Jeff Levenson, the CD was released by Half Note-the only Sosa disc not on the Oaklandbased Otá label.

Even though Sosa has released multiple albums within a year's time on a couple of occasions, he sells well, especially in France. While his Grammy-nominated 2002 CD *Sentir* is arguably his top seller (an estimated 30,000 copies worldwide), Price reports that today with digital distribution, the sales figures are more difficult to calculate.

**S** osa, who has been living in Barcelona for some 12 years and has two kids (ages 5 and 8), is planning to record his *Kind Of Blue* arrange-

ments in New York in May (he also performs a week at the Blue Note, from May 3–8) with his Afro-Electric quintet including Apfelbaum, German trumpeter Joo Kraus, bassist Childo Tomas, drummer Marque Gilmore and a special guest, 78-year-old South African vocalist David Serrame. Known for changing his material up improvisationally, Sosa will be delivering a different session than the show at Barcelona. The tentative title is *Alternative Africa*, and the CD will be issued late this year or early 2012.

Meanwhile, Sosa is immersed in another exuberant project that he unveiled for Spanish eyes at the 2010 Barcelona Jazz Festival: his big band adventure with the NDR Bigband of his originals arranged by Brazilian great Jaques Morelenbaum. The album of this material, Ceremony, was released early in 2010. Sitting in the lounge area of the Gran Hotel Havana a few days before the performance at the majestic Palau de la Música, Sosa, draped in a baggy pants and vest suit, with a blousy white shirt and dangling bracelets with shells on his wrists, says that the experience of the recording was a dream come true. The opportunity came about because of a scheduling glitch when he was touring with his quartet in Europe.

"I was performing in Germany, then needed to leave that night to play in Poland the next day," says Sosa. "We didn't know we needed visas to travel there, so we were forced to miss our plane and stay overnight. So we hung out in a restaurant and drank a lot of wine. Stefan Gerdes of the NDR band asked me if I'd like to do a big band album some day, and if so, who would I want to arrange the music. So, I said Jaques, who is another one of my heroes because of all the work he had done with Brazilian musicians."

Off to Poland the next day, Sosa forgot about the exchange. But Gerdes did not. He contacted Morelenbaum, who had first become exposed to Sosa when he heard the pianist at the New Morning jazz club in Paris. He was impressed. In the liner notes of Ceremony, he writes that the project was a dream gig for him, too: "I could not imagine I was going to meet an artist capable of making a complete and natural synthesis of what music is today on this planet. From that moment on, I began to dream about sharing the music that emanates from Omar with such expressiveness. Now, here he comes, offering me not only his music and his freedom, but also the chance to listen to my arrangements performed by the fantastic ensemble."

Meanwhile, once Morelenbaum signed on to the project, Gerdes contacted Price, who relayed the news to Sosa. "Wow, I could hardly remember that conversation," he says. "But thank God and all the spirits of my life. It turned out to be an amazing project. Jaques and I became good friends, and I learned so much about arranging from him. He sent me titles of my songs he wanted to arrange, and I wrote two new pieces. I gave him the scores and said, 'Fly.' The result is that my music sounds so different with all the complexities and voicings but still maintains who I am. Funny thing is, Jaques told me that this was his first all-instrumental big band album."

Apfelbaum marvels at Sosa's eclectic oeuvre. "The vocabulary Omar uses is broad," he says. "That's something that I find is a reflection of the time we're living in, but that many musicians are not recognizing even though there is a lot more harmonic advancements and wider rhythmic variety than there was 30 years ago. The way Omar structures music is universal, but the foundation is always very Africa."

Santos, who continues to tour and record with Sosa on occasion, says, "Omar has an insatiable appetite for music. He's like a creative sponge. He's doing exactly what he set out to do: travel the world and play for many different audiences. He's restless. He always has a new project he's working on. And he attracts the most esoteric and creative people in the world, whether it's in Europe, Africa or the Middle East. We toured together in the Caribbean, Spain and Italy, and he mesmerized the audience in every show. He's a magician. He brings magic to each project."

Certainly Sosa's recording output reflects his passion for diversity, with dates with a range of performers, including Venezuelan percussionist Gustavo Ovalles, L.A.-based percussionist Adam Rudolph, clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera and trumpeter Paulo Fresu (a duo album is now in the works). Another idea that Sosa was planning to embark on after his big band date in Barcelona was his Africa tour where he was going to visit nine countries and record with traditional musicians from each. "The album will be called Deeper Into The Tradition, which means we'll be going deep," says Sosa. "It's going to be interesting. For example, we're going to Sudan, which is the tenth largest country by area in the world, but they only have three pianos there, and all uprights. So that's what I'll be playing."

With a dance-like bounce to his step and rapid-fire zeal in his voice, Sosa is in surge mode, yet he has yet to fully break through in the U.S. market. During his time in Barcelona, Sosa knew that Chano Domínguez was close to signing with Blue Note to record his *Kind Of Blue* rendition. Is a major label deal something that he'd be interested in?

Usually voluminous in his responses to questions, Sosa shakes his head and bluntly says, "No."

Why not? "The way I look at the picture is that if I feel something musically, I try to put that out as a recording," he says. "It's a blessing to have my own label. I can put out whatever I want to, whenever. I record every message that comes to me. That's why I have more than 20 records in a decade-and-a-half, and I own 100 percent of my publishing. I want my legacy to go to my kids, not to a record company. Maybe I would have a higher profile if I did a record on a major label, and I'd get more publicity and attention. But I figure the more you control your own music, the more opportunities you can have in the future."



By Jim Macnie

hey come each week, and each week they make you chuckle. Sometimes they read like this: "Wednesday is Tiki Barber's birthday. To celebrate, the band is moving to an earlier start time of 8:30. In addition, the audience will be asked to participate in blocking and tackling drills between sets. Shoulder pads will be provided, but everyone should bring their own helmet and cleats. No wagering."

ry of the official opening of the Eiffel Tower, the band will present works the last." by French composers such as François Rosolineau, Thelonious-Claude LeMonk and Jean Coltraigne. There's no minimum, so pay a cover, hang out for three sets and have some brie. Or some epoisses. Scratch that: epoisses smells like death, so vile that it's actually illegal to carry it on the Paris Métro."

They're header paragraphs of invitations to see John McNeil's various bands at Puppets, a Brooklyn jazz club. The trumpeter doesn't like to do anything without giving it a bit of flair, so for several years now, his weekly gig reminders have been crazed and cool. On his 61st birthday, the text promised a red velvet cake so good, "It will make you slap your grandma."

Ask anyone who knows McNeil, and they'll mention the fact that he's part wag, part wiseass and all wit. A string of quips often shoots from the bandstand when the now-62-year-old brings his freebop antics to an audi- calls Chase. "I said, 'John, what's that mean?' 'Chet and Gerry on acid,' ence. He's just as quick with a snarky comment as he is with trumpet flour- he deadpanned." ish. The first time I saw him play, he intro'd Russ Freeman's "Batter Up" with a gleefully sarcastic mention of how lame the Mets were. After an ects McNeil has helmed for the last few years. His latest Sunnyside alimpromptu gig with other New York jazzers last spring, while everyone from Tony Malaby to Rob Garcia was congratulating each other for some nifty coordination during a totally abstract piece, McNeil told his mates with a smile, "You guys were lost a lot of the time, but yeah, it was cool." They expected nothing less. Everyone knows that he's a guy who has levity for lunch.

"When we made East Coast Cool," says saxophonist Allan Chase, "we took fun photographs of ourselves dressed in suits, acting like Chet and Gerry. When it was time to decide which of the shots to use, John has earned the trumpeter wider visibility. A few years ago the New York started sending me these PhotoShopped variations of the cover with the Times proclaimed the pair's weekly interpretation of such jewels to be most hilarious fake album titles, many of them quite obscene-about 25 "one of the best jazz events in the city."

And sometimes they read like this: "To celebrate the 120th anniversa- came through before he was done, and each was more outrageous than

The 2006 record Chase alludes to was a novel date, opening the door to a new slant on the 1950s West Coast sound, which is often typified by the darting interplay of the musicians he mentioned, Mr. Baker and Mr. Mulligan. McNeil conceptualized the approach, putting a modern spin on an orthodox repertory. He's long appreciated the lithe intricacies of cool jazz, having shared bills with Baker and done time in Mulligan's large ensembles. But he also digs the open territories of free-jazz, and has lots of skills when it comes to launching investigatory solos. East Coast Cool's blend of chipper melodies and mercurial improvs was unique. Its tunes, mostly written by McNeil to bridge the particulars of each element, ingeniously straddled the two approaches.

"When he handed me my music folder, the cover title read 'CGOA,' re-

A similar whimsy has been driving the otherwise serious music projbum, made in collaboration with tenor saxophonist Bill McHenry, is called Chill Morn, He Climb Jenny (yep, it sounds dirty, but it's an anagram of their names). Like Rediscovery, the disc that preceded it, the program contains a scad of unique spins on actual West Coast nuggets that the pair have refined during the last few years. Freeman is a central figure here: Everything from "Band Aid" to "Happy Little Sunbeam" to "Bea's Flat" is part of the McNeil-McHenry book. Those titles are surrounded by Wilber Harden, Jimmy Van Heusen and George Wallington ditties. It's a tack that



### John McNeil PLAYS P. MAURIAT TRUMPETS

"Many horns force their sound and personality on the player, but from the first moment I played a Mauriat it was <u>my</u> sound and personality that came through." - John McNeil

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www.pmauriatmusic.com service@pmauriatmusic.com Composer Nicholas Urie has been arranging some of McNeil's tunes and co-leading a big band with him. "There are two types of older people," he says, "those who look forward and those who look back. John, as a rule, looks forward. One the most effective ways he does it is by putting himself in situations where he might not know entirely what's going to happen. Some people his age get confrontational when it comes to doing things in a way other than the norm. He's interested in reimagining his career and the way he relates to improvisation and jazz in general."

Rolling through the book at Manhattan's Cornelia Street Café (where *Chill Morn* was recorded live), the group, which features bassist Joe Martin and drummer Jochen Rueckert, recently found ways to balance their materials. McHenry is utterly willing to stroll down avenues where anything goes. His solos, often fascinating, have a private feel, sometimes taking a few seconds to reveal their inner logic. His exchanges with McNeil are deft; their camaraderie is such that the counterpoint demanded by the arrangements is dead-on. The two weave in and out of each other, offering a sweet symmetry. McNeil is agile as he moves around his horn. His solos can be sly or puckish. Seldom are they arcane, though. The relative simplicity of the melodies gives even the most complicated maneuvers a breezy quality.

"Those West Coast tunes are relentlessly cheery," says McNeil, "you never hear any *sturm und drang* coming from out there; it's sunshine, optimism, vitamin D. In many of these tunes there's almost a Mozartian lightness." He starts singing *Nachtmusic*'s "Allegro," and segues it into Baker's "A Dandy Line." "Back in New York, everyone is in a minor key, everyone thinks they're going to die. But not out there. I wonder if [Charles] Mingus brought his own cloud with him when he moved to Mill Valley—that's a very bucolic place. 'Think it's going to rain?' 'Maybe; I see lightning right above Mingus' house.' Even the California song titles were cute: 'Shank's Pranks' and things like that. Back East we'd have titles like 'Black Death' or 'Relentless Cough.'"

McNeil knows a tad about bad weather. He's spent a good chunk of his life battling the constraints of Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, which affects the body's muscles by messing with its neural system. As a kid in Yreka, Calif., he wore braces all over his body. Taunts from bullies were the norm, and McNeil believes that some of his humor was sharpened by the guys who teased him. He took some punches, both verbal and physical, and gave back a few as well. He saw his wit as an armor of sorts. "Being handicapped in a small town doesn't get you far," he says. "It's better to be funny."

As a child he came across Louis Armstrong on TV, was swayed by the charisma and got himself a trumpet. When he was in his mid-teens, the CMT's impact subsided. Befriending a local newspaper editor who had once gigged with Red Nichols, McNeil received encouragement for his own playing. He connected with big bands and fell deeper into jazz. He tended to like the new stuff. He believes he was the only person in Yreka who bought Miles Davis' *ESP* the week it was released.

He's a brainiac, and after hitting a home run on his SATs, IBM tried to recruit him. McNeil decided to stick with jazz because there were more opportunities to connect with the opposite sex. He hit New York in the early '70s, snuggled into the Thad Jones–Mel Lewis Orchestra and played a bit with Horace Silver. He started getting his own gigs, too. Being in shape became a priority. When he first met his longtime sweetie, Lolly Bienenfeld, she lived on the 43rd floor of a Manhattan high-rise; McNeil would run up the stairs to stay in shape.

One day, out of the blue, the CMT emerged again. This time the disease had snuck its way into his face and his diaphragm. He made physical changes to keep his chops together, but it was an uphill battle. Another blow was struck when he discovered that two of his spinal vertebrae had disintegrated. Can you say massive, constant pain? A 14-hour operation helped save him from death, and afterwards the proud surgeon presented him to colleagues as part of a "here's what's possible" medical forum. Time for a victory dance, right? Wait, we're not done yet.

In the mid-'80s the trumpeter lost control of his right hand and couldn't finger the horn with any accuracy. Fellow musicians told him that should be the final straw, but with Bienenfeld's support and a sense of determination honed during his childhood days, he learned to play the trumpet with his
left hand (he's since gone back to his right). Saxophonist Noah Preminger, who has collaborated with the trumpeter, deems that accomplishment "outrageous and fantastic." McNeil explains it in simple terms. "I wanted to play. I could have quit, but there's no mystery in that move. I want to see what would happen if I tried to actually do it."

Every week McNeil heads to Boston for two days to teach at the New England Conservatory. He's been in front of classes since the mid'80s, and according to a handful of his peers, he's one of the school's most respected educators. Chase, NEC's former head of jazz studies and the current chair of the Ear Training department at Berklee, assures that he's "a fantastic resource to the students, and a big believer in learning." McNeil's courses concentrate on jazz theory and jazz repertoire, and his vast knowledge of songs and their inner workings makes him a go-to guy. Preminger is in awe of his pal's work ethic. "He doesn't stop," says the saxophonist. "It's idea after idea after idea. He used to call me up all day and night to bounce new stuff off of me."

Chase concurs: "He's wildly fluent—that makes him popular with the students. And the way he gets them to pay attention is key. He's very motivating, and operates without bullshit. He always goes the extra mile, and writes new arrangements for each group rather than opting for the standard stuff. The reason I'm emphasizing his diligence is because he's so funny you might think that humor is what he's riding on. Nothing could be further from the truth. He can have people on the floor, but they respect him because he's a hard worker and real bandleader."

Dave Douglas knows McNeil's clout when it comes to the horn. They were once neighbors, and the younger trumpeter would often solicit his friend's opinion before releasing a new album. Their exchange of ideas is deep and ongoing. "I would go over to his house frequently to hang out and play," recalls Douglas. "I loved hearing him play and felt like he had a keen sense of what ideas I was trying to go for. His hands-on knowledge of so much music was always an inspiration."

McHenry agrees. "When he does a gig as a sideman—he once subbed for Duane Eubanks in my band—he rewrote out all my charts in his own hand, just to make it clearer for himself, and then memorized 'em by the time of the gig. And guess what, he played his fucking ass off. He always does."

A t a weekly jam session in Brooklyn, McNeil stresses his skills as both curator and traffic cop. Up-and-comers populate the place, and he tries to give each a chance to blow on a tune or two. It starts with a learnby-listening session. He and trombonist Mike Fahie bounce through a short set to get a vibe going. Then the revolving doors open. One recent evening was marked with timid trumpeters and brazen alto players. A dude who looked like an insurance agent blew a decent tenor on "I Remember You."

"Who knows 'JuJu'?" asked McNeil. Some did, some didn't, so he helped the needy with the design of Wayne Shorter's nugget, and in a few minutes everyone was off. "Deluge" surfaced later in the set.

"I occasionally have to be the bad guy," he explains. "Last week I had to tell someone that he was no longer invited to play. It happens."

But people flock to McNeil because he's the good guy, the entertaining guy. He's the subject of a forthcoming doc by filmmaker James Lester, who made a gorgeous 2007 short on Sal Mosca. Lester caught a Puppets set one night and was really taken with the trumpeter's charisma. "When I told him what I did, he said, 'Why don't you make a film about me?' Now we're doing it. I felt a passion about the Sal piece, and though we've just started, I'm getting that same feeling with John. He really draws you in."

McHenry is psyched when he learns that his pal is going to be in front of a camera. "That's way overdue," the saxophonist says. "I've always thought John would make an incredible subject. The humor endears people to him."

In fact, McHenry has recorded McNeil's on-stage patter in numerous situations, and he promises that he's going to compile several of the quips and put them on YouTube. Which anecdote is most memorable? "I'm not going to spoil it here, but get him to tell you about the time he met John Coltrane at the Vanguard ..."



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# Kevin Eubanks Shapes His Post-Leno Career

t's 10 a.m. at Paty's, a popular breakfast destination in Toluca Lake, Calif. Much of its business comes from the people who work in nearby Burbank, where Disney and NBC are headquartered. In a booth by the window, guitarist Kevin Eubanks—casual in his sweatshirt and baseball cap—has made short work of his morning meal. His day began at 5:30; he's already got an "Access Hollywood" taping under his belt. Last night he rode down Hollywood Boulevard in the Santa Claus Lane Parade, a fair barometer of SoCal celebrity status.

After 18 years—as both a sideman and a leader—Eubanks has left "The Tonight Show" to try his own wings. It might be tempting to say that he has arrived. In fact, he's been a part of the larger jazz consciousness since the early 1980s, when Bruce Lundvall signed him to the Elektra/Musician label. Maybe it would be more accurate to say that the non-jazz audience is coming to Eubanks.

He left the show several months ago and has been navigating his way through a career transition: weighing offers, floating trial balloons, and rightfully proud of his new album and label association. *Zen Food* on Mack Avenue is a solid instrumental collection that has more virtuosity, variety and ensemble empathy than many of the self-conscious concept albums and recorded "projects" that regularly issue these days.

His "Tonight Show" collaborators (saxophonist Bill Pierce, keyboardist Gerry Etkins, drummer Marvin Smith and bassist Rene Camacho) surround Eubanks on the album. "I've been with these musicians for so long that when I write, they're the voices that I'm writing for; I know that they'll be playing it," he says. "So it's an easy fit. I think we all learn from each other. And sometimes I think they kind of look to me to say, "What do you think here?""

Yet the recording didn't come together

effortlessly. "The one inherent problem you can have is if you try to record music like this before it's reached the shape you really want it to be. Sometimes you have to play it in a club and reach an emotional climax a few times before you realize that's the shape of the song. Sometimes you realize we're just not there yet. And that's actually what happened with this record. We tried to record the songs earlier and we didn't really get it; we realized it just wasn't done yet."

A couple of miles away on Cahuenga Boulevard in North Hollywood is the Baked Potato, Eubanks' club of choice. Owned and operated by legendary session pianist Don Randi, it's a real musi-



cians' club. That's where Eubanks has gone to hone his chops in a way that he couldn't on the studio set. "The Baked Potato is exactly the kind of place I'm talking about; it has got a great history," Eubanks says. "They let you be a musician there. You can just concentrate on the music when you go in there, just let it hang out. If it splats against the wall, that's where it is and you have a blast doing it. Then you get that out and it's, 'Oh, I remember this feeling.' The places where you can get to that core energy are somehow overlooked by everybody other than the musicians, but they're invaluable."

Did Eubanks see his job on "The Tonight Show" as enlarging the jazz audience? "The show was not the place to hold up pictures of Miles and Trane and try to convert people to jazz. It's a classic rock demographic, and you can't make that leap in that setting. But when they followed us to the club and heard us, then they learned something new. People would say, 'Oh, I didn't know you played this kind of music.' I'd say, 'What did you think I play—Rolling Stones songs?' But then you can direct them to someone they should discover."

There's a fair amount of writing on *Zen Food*, like the multi-layered "Los Angeles." Eubanks grins when he's complimented on the piece's complexity. "Most of the time," he explains, "the songs get titled afterward. That piece has a lot going on in it, and it came to me that it was like this city. People from back East think it's all relaxed and slow-paced out here. But all it takes is a phone call to change your life and all of a sudden, you're moving at top speed in an entirely new neighborhood."

The years of acting as comedian Jay Leno's musical foil have imparted some valuable knowledge and sensibilities to Eubanks, but it didn't come without growing pains. "The hardest thing for me to get used to," he confesses, "was not to take it personally when I didn't get reinforcement in the way I was used to getting it. Nobody pats you on the back and tells you you're doing a good job; you're just one of many people and you're all expected to do your job. In that corporate system, their way of acknowledging my work was when contract negotiations came up. Then you could say I'd like this or I'd like that, and you came to an agreement. That's how they show appreciation in TV."

"I feel like it's easy to be myself in the TV studio. Even though it's going out to untold numbers of people, I'm in this recording studio, if you will. Everybody in the place is after the same objective, even though it's a whole organization of people. And they're all just pulling for you because they're all part of the production. It feels like everybody's pulling for you; you're not competing against anybody. The show is the star."

His on-camera chemistry with Leno was

easy and familiar, though ironically, the two men are quite different. Leno collects automobiles, and Eubanks finds no romance in cars. Kevin's passion is the music he lives, and Leno wonders, in all sincerity, if anything has happened in music since 1969. "He doesn't even have a CD player in his car," Eubanks says, incredulously. "When you can drive a stick shift," Leno has offered to Eubanks, "I'll get a CD player."

Their bond was in their selflessness to the production and their ironclad work ethics. "I complimented Jay once on how much he gives to the show and he said, 'Me? What about you? Have you even missed one day of work?" In fact, Eubanks had a perfect attendance record. "You work off of your passion," he points out, "and then when things get rough and there are problems to solve, that's when your work ethic kicks in and you see it through."

Eubanks' long tenure with the show is studded with great musical memories, and it's imparted respect for other musical forms. "I love playing with Willie Nelson," he says. "What you hear in him is the essence of country—on every note. Dolly Parton's like that, too. Underneath all the big hair and everything else is an everyday person who's a big talent."

He's especially going to miss the interaction with guitarist B.B. King, a "Tonight Show" regular. "When I told B.B. I was leaving," Kevin says with gravity, "I could see some disappointment



on his face. He said, 'I always thought you'd be there for me,' and it broke my heart. I had to tell him, 'No, B.B.—if it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be here.' But in those few moments, it kind of encapsulated the whole experience for me."

Does he see himself as a collaborative artist rather than an autonomous one? Eubanks affirms, "I've been asked to step out more, but I like comping behind other soloists. I learn a lot from doing that. The first time I realized that comping was a great source of energy and a learning tool was the two years I played with Sam Rivers [in the early 1980s]. The music we played was free, and I realized how much the comping made the ebb and flow of the musicup, down and moving around. Sam and I would talk about it, and he said, 'Comping is like the tail of a comet-the comet is all the force, but the tail gives it the lift. The tail always follows the comet to where it gives the comet some mobility.' And I was like, 'Yes!'"

"If you play with Sam in his free modes, you still get all the intellect, all the creativity, all the theory. All of that's in it because it still has to make tremendous sense in order to have the depth. I think one of the reasons I enjoyed it and got so much out of that experience was because I had just played with Slide Hampton and Roy Haynes a few years before I hit with Sam. I was actually living in Slide's house in Brooklyn, playin' with him. We were playing all straightahead, with Slide doin' the arrangements, and then Sam called me. Playing Sam's suites and pieces just took on extra meaning because I had been exposed to all the form and the shape of Slide and Roy, and then Sam added this free dimension. When I was done with that experience, it just elevated my comping to another level."

If an offer for a TV or movie soundtrack fell into his lap, would Eubanks take it? "I'd love that," he declares. Talk of the great jazz composers who wrote for Hollywood soundtracks (Benny Carter, Gerald Wilson, J.J. Johnson, Quincy Jones and Benny Golson among them) elicits a fan's note from Eubanks. "With all due respect," he begins, "the baddest TV theme in history is the "Mission: Impossible" theme that Lalo Schifrin wrote. What he did with just an alto flute and some percussion was amazing. You can hear that right now and it's as hip as anything. I can hear Miles improvising on that thing. When I met Lalo for the first time, I said, 'I know you get this all the time, but I just have to say..."

Eubanks will stay in Los Angeles for the time being. He was reared in Philadelphia and he's proud of his civic, familial and musical roots. "There's something about the Philly players," he enthuses, "that you hear immediately. I can't describe it, other than to say that it's a vibe or a feel. People seem to recognize it everywhere, even if they don't know it comes out of Philly. But if you were brought up playing there, you'll always have it." How does he see the City of Brotherly Love figuring into his new career plans? Eubanks is uncharacteristically hesitant and he chooses his words carefully. "Tve been thinking about that," he replies tentatively. "Of course, I have family there but I haven't yet decided how it will work into my musical plans.

"After 18 years of doing 'The Tonight Show," he volunteers, "I realize I like doing TV. From doing it five days a week, I know a lot about what goes on around a set. There's a lot of moving parts, but when I walk into a studio I feel really, really comfortable. So I don't necessarily want to escape from this thing that I've learned so much about."

What did he do on "Access Hollywood"? "I made cookies," he proudly smiles. "Low-sugar,

low-sodium and low-fat cookies." A vegetarian since age 18, Eubanks is a health and fitness buff who will extol the virtues of lowering one's sodium intake ("I lost weight, I sleep better, I have more energy, and I haven't had a cold since").

His personal health inquiry figures into a career goal. "What I'd love to do," he says, leaning forward, "is host a cooking show that focuses on healthy cooking and recipes, geared to people over 45. There'd be music too, but I think this is something that's not being done by anybody." Holding up a copy of *Zen Food*, he clarifies, "Just as long as I still get to do this."





# **150 Great Jazz Rooms** DownBeat's International Jazz Venue Guide

Jazz can be heard in almost every corner of the world. So, wherever your travels may take you, here are some spots to check out what's best in the worlds of jazz, blues and beyond.

#### EAST COAST: BOSTON

#### The Acton Jazz Cafe 462 Great Road, Acton MA

#### (978) 263-6161 // actonjazzcafe.com

Two dozen miles west of Boston, this suburban club books talent from the metropolitan area. Music nightly except Monday and Tuesday.

#### Chianti Tuscan Restaurant & Jazz Lounge 285 Cabot Street, Beverly MA

#### (978) 921-2233 // chiantibeverly.com

North of Boston, near the site of the legendary club Sandy's Jazz Revival, Rich Marino's elegant Italian restaurant has a strong music calendar highlighted by North Shore Jazz Project-sponsored gigs.

#### Lilly Pad

#### 1353 Cambridge Street, Cambridge MA (617) 395-1393 // lily-pad.net

The Inman Square hot spot for innovative jazz is home to the long-existing trio The Fringe and welcomes visiting notables like Toronto trumpeter Lina Allemano.

#### Regattabar

#### 1 Bennett Street, Cambridge MA (617) 395-7757 // regattabarjazz.com

Overlooking Harvard Square, this high-end club at the Charles Hotel, now in its 25th year, hosts worldclass artists as well as local luminaries like the Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra. All ages welcome.

#### **Ryles Jazz Club**

#### 212 Hampshire Street, Cambridge MA (617) 876-9330 // ryles.com

This two-floor venue in Inman Square has quality area musicians—trombonist Dan Fox, tenorman Mike Tucker, others—and visitors like Taylor Ho Bynum downstairs on the Mainstage. Latin Caribbean dance parties upstairs.

#### Sahara Club & Restaurant 34 Bates Street, Methuen MA (978) 683-9200 // jockosjazz.com

A half-hour drive northwest of the Hub, this Middle Eastern restaurant presents Jocko Arcidiacono's Tuesday night jazz series.

#### **Scullers**

#### 400 Soldiers Field Road, Boston MA (617) 562-4111 // scullersjazz.com

Opened in 1989 and long booked by jazzman Fred Taylor, the mahogany-walled music room in the Doubletree Guest Suites Hotel features top touring and regional artists of various jazz styles.

#### Wally's Cafe 427 Massachusetts Ave., Boston MA (617) 424-1408 // wallyscafe.com

This South End landmark, run by the Walcott family since its opening in 1947, is the "training ground" for Berklee and New England Conservatory students.

EAST COAST: NEW JERSEY

#### Shanghai Jazz Restaurant & Bar 24 Main St., Madison NJ

#### (973) 822-2899 // shanghaijazz.com The 85-seat North Jersey club boasts a dining room with an unobstructed view of the stage, a pan-Asian menu and a roster of artists culled from New York's metro area featured five nights a week.

EAST COAST: NEW YORK

#### 55 Bar 55 Christopher St., New York NY (212) 929-9883 // 55bar.com This former speakeasy on the ground floor of a Sheri-

dan Square brownstone boasts a thriving jazz and blues menu of under-the-radar artists.

#### 92nd Street Y

#### 1395 Lexington Ave., New York, NY (212) 415-5500 // 92y.org

92Y's renowned jazz series continues to present some of the finest improvised music in the city, with Dave Brubeck and others on the calendar for 2011.

#### **Birdland**

#### 315 W. 44th St., New York NY

(212) 581-3080 // birdlandjazz.com Near Times Square, Birdland has great sightlines and

acoustics. The club attracts locals and out-of-towners with its top-notch weeklong acts of world-class improvisers and weekly hits with area big bands.

#### Blue Note

#### 131 W. 3rd St., New York NY (212) 475-8592 // bluenote.net

An expansive music policy features festival headlineers, jazz legends, elite Latin acts, hardcore big bands and high-visibility younger artists.

#### Cornelia Street Café 29 Cornelia St., New York NY (212) 989-9319 // corneliastreetcafe.com

The excellent menu is fusion (American-French-Asian), and so is the eclectic entertainment on the small stage, located in the basement of a distinguished Greenwich Village restaurant/cabaret.

#### Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola Broadway at 60th Street, 5th floor, New York NY

(212) 258-9595 // jalc.org/dccc/ Dizzy's offers the best view of any New York jazz club:

Dizzy's offers the best view of any New York jazz club: overlooking Columbus Circle and Central Park. The 365-nights-a-year component of Jazz at Lincoln Center, Dizzy's was designed for jazz.

#### Fat Cat

#### 75 Christopher St., New York NY (212) 675-6056 // fatcatmusic.org

A West Village space for rising-star locals, Fat Cat usually features two jazz acts a night and a late-night jam that runs until 5 a.m.

#### Iridium

#### 1650 Broadway, New York NY (212) 582-2121 // iridiumjazzclub.com

The site of Les Paul's weekly gig until his passing last year, Iridium draws crowds for its top-flight jazz acts. The weeklong stints feature a range of hard-core jazz, often with international names attached.

#### **Jazz Gallery**

290 Hudson St., New York NY (212) 242-1063 // jazzgallery.org

This invaluable not-for-profit venue has presented cutting-edge bookings since it opened its doors in 1995.

#### **Jazz Standard** 116 E. 27th St., New York NY

(212) 576-2232 // jazzstandard.net The Jazz Standard is one of the most comfortable rooms in New York to see jazz. Downstairs from the Blue Smoke BBQ restaurant, it features acts such as Dave Douglas and Anat Cohen.

#### Joe's Pub

#### 425 Lafayette St., New York NY (212) 539-8778 // joespub.com

Joe's Pub mirrors the inclusive intelligence of its founder with a trans-genre calendar, from pop to world to jazz. It's the Manhattan showcase room of choice, with one-of-a-kind jazz acts.

#### Miles' Café

#### 212 E. 52nd St., 3rd floor, New York NY (212) 371-7657 // milescafe.com

A new Midtown jazz venue with great acoustics and an 1888 Steinway grand, Miles' Café provides two shows almost every night, featuring music by some of New York's premier artists.

#### Smalls

#### 183 W. 10th St., New York NY smallsjazzclub.com

Smalls offers superb bookings, with two or three groups performing each night. Priding itself in featuring cutting-edge music, it also hosts after-hours jazz jams that often attract local and visiting luminaries.

#### Smoke

#### 2751 Broadway, New York NY (212) 864-6662 // smokejazz.com

The Uptown room south of Harlem features straightahead groups, B-3 organ shows and Latin jazz. The inside is decked out in antiques, and the club hosts open jam sessions and strong marquee acts.

#### The Stone

#### Avenue C and 2nd Street, New York NY thestonenvc.com

John Zorn serves as artistic director and visionary behind a space that gives 100 percent of the door to the musicians. The Stone features cutting-edge experimental jazz artists presented by guest curators.

#### **Village Vanguard**

#### 178 Seventh Ave. South, New York NY (212) 255-4037 // villagevanguard.net

A living legend, the Vanguard is a cramped, triangular basement room that has served as a cornerstone of modern jazz since the mid-1950s. On Mondays the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra holds forth.

#### Zinc Bar

#### 90 Houston St., New York NY (212) 477-8337 // zincbar.com

One of the few New York venues that presents third sets nightly, the narrow, low-ceilinged ground-floor bar offers a steady diet of African, Brazilian, Afro-Caribbean bands and groove-oriented jazz units.

#### EAST COAST: PHILADELPHIA

#### Chris' Jazz Café 1421 Sansom St., Philadelphia PA (215) 568-3131 // chrisjazzcafe.com

Fresh off of its 20th anniversary, Chris' continues to present local and national artists six nights a week.

#### Le Cochon Noir 5070 Parkside Ave., Philadelphia PA (215) 879-1011 // lecochonnoir.com

This new BBQ joint offers a blend of jazz, blues and r&b, mostly culled from the ranks of locals like singer Denise King and the Jump City Jazz Orchestra.

#### **Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts** 260 S. Broad St., Philadelphia PA (215) 893-1999 // kimmelcenter.org

The home of the Philadelphia Orchestra hosts two jazz series, one for major touring artists like Dave Brubeck and the Wayne Shorter Quartet, the other curated by pianist Danilo Pérez.

#### Painted Bride Arts Center 230 Vine St., Philadelphia PA

(215) 925-9914 // paintedbride.org The city's longest-running jazz series is housed in this multi-use arts space, which also presents theater, dance and world music events.

#### Philadelphia Museum of Art

#### 26th Street and Ben Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia PA (215) 763-8100 // philamuseum.org

The PMA's Great Stair Hall is a stunning (albeit soundswallowing) site for its Friday-night Art After 5 series.

EAST COAST: PITTSBURGH

#### MCG Jazz 1815 Metropolitan St., Pittsburgh PA (412) 322-0800 // mcgjazz.org

The jazz arm of the multi-disciplinary nonprofit arts organization Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, MCG presents artists in its 350-seat venue who bolster and engage with its educational mission.

EAST COAST: WASHINGTON, D.C.

#### **Birchmere Music Hall** 3701 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria VA (703) 549-7500 // birchmere.com

Located right outside of Washington, D.C., this popular roadhouse presents a fairly regular lineup of talents in its multifaceted programming.

#### **Blues Alley Jazz Supper Club** 1073 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington DC (202) 337-4141 // bluesalley.com

One of America's oldest, continuously running jazz supper clubs, Blues Alley is open 360 days a year and features traditional and contemporary talent. In addition, the club hosts its own youth orchestra, summer jazz camp and annual Big Band Jam jazz festival.

#### **Bohemian Caverns** 2001 11th Street N.W., Washington DC (202) 299-0800 // bohemiancaverns.com

After a rather dubious comeback a decade ago, this legendary jazz club, located in the historic U Street corridor, has finally gotten its groove back, attracting a multi-generational and multi-ethnic audience.

#### The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts 2700 F. Street N.W., Washington DC (202) 467-4600 // kennedy-center.org

While sometimes a bit stuffy for bristling jazz concerts, Kennedy Center nevertheless excels at programming jazz concerts with fairly wide-ranging tal-



## 2011 LINEUP

Brian McKnight Dave Holland Quintet Pieta Brown John Scofield Kurt Elling feat. John McLean Lizz Wright fore at www.dakotacooks.com





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The nation's finest jazz supper club! – The New York Times

### Upcoming Artists:

#### David Sanchez



Eddie Palmieri & Brian Lynch Stanley Jordan Kevin Eubanks Keiko Matsui Lee Ritenour Phil Woods Dave Brubeck

#### Blues Alley

1073 Wisconsin Ave. NW Washington DC 20007 (202) 337 4141 www.bluesalley.com



ents. Other major highlights include its annual Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival, the Thelonious Monk Institute International Competition finals, and NPR's Piano Jazz Christmas concert.

#### The Music Center at Strathmore 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda MD (301) 581-5200 // strathmore.org

Located right outside of Washington, D.C., this posh performance center aims to compete with the more established Kennedy Center. And while the jazz programming hasn't quite caught up in terms of regularity, the Strathmore nevertheless presents some engaging A-list talent.

#### Twins Jazz Lounge 1344 U Street N.W., Washington DC (202) 234-0072 // twinjazz.com

Twins Jazz promotes the city's riskiest lineups for better or worse, providing a nice platform for newer talents to emerge while also offering a hub for slightly underradar talents to perform.

#### **Warner Theatre**

### 1299 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Washington DC (202) 347-4707 // warnertheatre.com

Nestled in downtown Washington, D.C., this popular theatre isn't known as a primary hotspot for jazz. But when it does open its doors to the music, jazz luminaries such as Cassandra Wilson, Chucho Valdes and David Sanborn usually grace the stage.

#### SOUTH: ATLANTA

#### Churchill Grounds 660 Peachtree St., Atlanta GA (404) 876-3030 // churchillgrounds.com

Churchill Grounds is the perennial favorite for newcomers seeking an introduction to Atlanta's scene, offering straightahead jazz five to six nights a week.

#### Twain's Billiards and Tap 211 East Trinity Place, Decatur GA (404) 373-0063 // twains.net

Twain's range of freshly brewed beer might be enough for some patrons, but the bar also convenes Atlanta's best free jam session every Tuesday.

SOUTH: AUSTIN

#### Elephant Room 315 Congress Ave., Austin TX (512) 473-2279 // elephantroom.com

A classic basement club that presents live jazz every night of the year, the Elephant Room is the epicenter of a surprisingly active local scene.

#### SOUTH: DALLAS/FORT WORTH

#### AT&T Performance Arts Center 2100 Ross Ave., Dallas TX (214) 880-0202 // attpac.org

The AT&T Performing Arts Center (formerly Dallas Center for the Performing Arts) is an exhilarating place to experience music and theatre, with plenty of jazz concert offerings. The center will present an expanded jazz season this year.

#### Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center 2301 Flora, Dallas TX

#### (214) 670-4334 // dallasculture.org/ meyersonSymphonyCenter

The Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center has been a crossroads of artistic excellence ever since it opened in September 1989. In March, trumpeter Chris Botti will perform with the orchestra.

#### Scat Jazz Lounge 111 W. 4th, Fort Worth TX (817) 870-9100 // scatjazzlounge.com

CFF.

IVOGLIO.IT

Open just a few years, this basement club in the heart of Forth Worth's Sundance Square usually features

local and regional talent with a primary focus on straightahead jazz.

SOUTH: NASHVILLE

#### F. Scott's Restaurant and Jazz Bar 2210 Crestmoor Road, Nashville TN (615) 269-5861 // FScotts.com

The lounge seats 40 and hosts local talent, with solo piano Mondays and Tuesdays and combos Wednesdays through Sundays. Cover is never charged.

#### The Jazz Cave: Nashville Jazz Workshop 1319 Adams Street, Nashville TN (615) 242-5299 // NashvilleJazz.org

The Jazz Cave features local and touring artists approximately four nights a week in an intimate, 72-seat setting. A modest cover is charged.

#### **Ryman Auditorium**

#### 116 5th Avenue North, Nashville TN (615) 458-8700 // Ryman.com

This former tabernacle offers occasional concerts by artists such as Tony Bennett and Herbie Hancock.

SOUTH: NEW ORLEANS

#### **Blue Nile**

#### 532 Frenchmen St., New Orleans LA (504) 948-2583 // bluenilelive.com/

Prepare to shake a tailfeather with a mish-mash of college students at this funk mecca, where super groups and Neville-peppered outfits are the norm.

#### Chickie Wah Wah

#### 2828 Canal St., New Orleans LA (504) 304-4714 // chickiewahwah.com/

Catch a dose of traditional jazz vocal harmony, courtesy of the Pfister Sisters, whose three-part classics cast a '40s vibe on this Mid-City room once a month.

#### d.b.a. 618 Frenchmen St., New Orleans LA

(504) 942-3731 // dbabars.com/dbano/ A mixed music bag, d.b.a.'s whiskey worshipping walls are often lined with sweaty fans, devouring the club's locavore rock bills. But when the vibe mellows, sweet spots often include sousaphone-washboardguitar trio The Tin Men, vocalist John Boutte and blues legend Walter Wolfman Washington.

#### The Maple Leaf 8316 Oak St., New Orleans LA

#### (504) 866-9359 // mapleleafbar.com/

Brass band fans and funksters sweat it out nightly under the Leaf's pressed tin ceiling, while less rambunctious listeners enjoy the show from beneath the banana palms out back.

#### Irvin Mayfield's Jazz Playhouse 300 Bourbon St., New Orleans LA (504) 553-2331 // sonesta.com/RoyalNew Orleans/index.cfm?fa=restaurant2.home

Harkening back to the days when Bourbon Street was all about music, this elegant space inside the Royal Sonesta presents the city's leading modern jazz players at no cover charge.

#### Ogden Museum of Southern Art presents Ogden After Hours 925 Camp St., New Orleans LA (504) 539-9600 // ogdenmuseum. org/ogden\_after\_hours.html

The museum casts an educational net on music lovers at this weekly, family-friendly, 6 p.m. series focused on introducing both emerging and veteran southern musicians to new audiences.

#### Palm Court Jazz Café

1204 Decatur St., New Orleans LA (504) 525-0200 // palmcourtjazzcafe.com Old world New Orleans lives on at this sometimes tour-



isty but undeniably charming Creole restaurant and traditional jazz venue.

#### **Preservation Hall**

#### 726 St. Peter St., New Orleans LA (504) 522-2841 // preservationhall.com

The Hall has kept the traditional New Orleans jazz flame alive since 1961 with a house band featuring a host of esteemed local players.

#### Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro 626 Frenchmen St., New Orleans LA (504) 949-0696 // snugjazz.com

An intimate room with great acoustics, this downtown classic presents two straightahead New Orleans jazz shows nightly, featuring names like Ellis Marsalis, Herlin Riley, the Thelonious Monk Institute Young Lions and Astral Project.

#### The Spotted Cat

#### 623 Frenchmen St., New Orleans LA (504) 943-3887 // spottedcatmusicclub.com

Roots-influenced jazz dominates this airy, Frenchmen strip room. Stop by to catch Brett Anderson's daily 4 p.m. solo piano set.

### Sweet Lorraine's Jazz Club

### 1931 St. Claude Ave., New Orleans LA (504) 945-9654

For a somewhat formal experience in a classic New Orleans environment, get a little gussied up and head to the 9th Ward to catch world renowned bandleaders like Nicholas Payton, or the Sunday jazz brunch.

#### **Three Muses**

#### 536 Frenchmen St., New Orleans LA (504) 298-8746 // thethreemuses.com

This newbie tapas joint and jazz club is somewhat more serene than many of its frenzied Frenchmen Street neighbors.

#### **Tipitina's**

#### 501 Napoleon Ave., New Orleans LA (504) 895-8477 // tipitinas.com

What began as a fan-made venue for Professor Longhair now pays homage to the greater music community through a variety of jazz-influenced bookings and a foundation devoted to supporting the local culture and music education.

#### Vaughn's Lounge

#### 4229 Dauphine St., New Orleans LA (504) 947-5562

The music happens barroom-style at this low-key corner spot in the Bywater. Mayor Kermit Ruffins and the Barbecue Swingers preside on Thursday nights.

#### SOUTH: SOUTH CAROLINA

#### The Jazz Corner

### 1000 William Hilton Parkway, Hilton Head Island SC (843) 842-8620 // thejazzcorner.com

Weeknights at the Jazz Corner are for long-standing gigs. Trumpeter Bob Masteller, the club's owner, im-

bues Tuesdays with New Orleans jazz for \$5, and singer Bobby Ryder and his big band swing two Wednesdays a month. Regional and national musicians take over on weekends.

MIDWEST: CHICAGO

#### Andy's 11 E. Hubbard St., Chicago IL (312) 642-6805 // andysjazzclub.com

A congenial spot just north of Chicago's Loop and one block away from the Jazz Record Mart, the downtown workforce can take advantage of its lateafternoon sets and dinner menu. Still, the club is serious about presenting a range of local jazz musicians late into the night.

#### Buddy Guy's Legends 700 S. Wabash, Chicago IL (312) 427-1190 // buddyguys.com

The world's pre-eminent blues guitarist opened his own Chicago club 20 years ago, and moved into this upgraded sprawling location last spring. Buddy Guy, who has a residency here every January, says that jazz groups will start performing here this year.

#### Chicago Cultural Center 78 E. Washington St., Chicago IL (312) 744-6630 // chicagoculturalcenter.org

Thanks to the city's active department of cultural affairs, this downtown venue brings a host of local and international jazz artists to perform free sets throughout the building.

#### Evanston SPACE 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston IL (847) 492-8860 // evanstonspace.com

This cozy acoustically pristine 250-seat room is making its case through presenting a great range of jazz and blues artists, including Allen Toussaint, Jennifer Scheinman, Bobby Broom and Dave Specter.

#### Green Mill 4802 N. Broadway Ave., Chicago IL (773) 878-5552 // greenmilljazz.com

This Uptown landmark feels relatively unchanged since the '20s, but the mix of jazz artists presented here looks towards the future.

#### Jazz at Symphony Center 220 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago IL (312) 294-3000 // cso.org

The home for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra also hosts an ongoing Friday night jazz series. This is the place to catch the big names when they make their Midwestern swings.

#### Jazz Showcase 806 S. Plymouth Ct., Chicago IL

#### (312) 360-0234 // jazzshowcase.com

Joe Segal has been presenting jazz since 1947 and his current space in Dearborn Station may be his bestsounding room.

#### Old Town School Of Folk Music 4544 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago IL

(773) 728-6000 // oldtownschool.org

Since 1957, the Old Town School has offered classes in all kinds of music (and dance). Its great-sounding auditorium hosts an array of top jazz stars to complement its courses, including John Scofield and Kurt Elling.

#### Velvet Lounge 67 E. Cermak Rd., Chicago IL (312) 791-9050 // velvetlounge.net

The late saxophonist Fred Anderson established this venue in the early '80s, where he provided space for AACM veterans and upcoming musicians to test show off their mettle in performances and regular jam sessions. While the club has remained open since his death in June, its future is uncertain.



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It was a pleasure to perform in the Jazzclub Unterfahrt Munich. Ralph Towner

The musicians have always appreciated the hospitality of the Unterfahrt and the receptivity of the public there. It is a special place to hear and play music. Uri Caine

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#### MIDWEST: CLEVELAND

#### Nighttown

#### 12387 Cedar Rd., Cleveland Heights OH (216) 795-0550 // nighttowncleveland.com

This traditional Irish bar, which is more than 40 years old, has featured live jazz since 2001. Nighttown features local as well as national acts, who usually perform four nights a week.

MIDWEST: DETROIT/ANN ARBOR

#### Baker's Keyboard Lounge 20510 Livernois Ave., Detroit MI

(313) 345-6300 // bakerskeyboardlounge.com As one of the world's oldest jazz clubs, Baker's, since opening in 1934, has seen the history of the music unfold on its stage. It's the hub of Detroit's jazz scene.

#### Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe

#### 97 Kercheval Ave., Grosse Pointe Farms MI (313) 882-5299 // dirtydogjazz.com

The Dirty Dog specializes in live jazz and a sophisticated small-plate dishes in an old English pub setting. The venue presents local, national and international artists, many from the Mack Avenue label.

#### Kerrytown Concert House 415 N. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor MI

(734) 769-2999 // kerrytownconcerthouse.com The Kerrytown Concert House is an intimate 110-seat venue that presents a wide range of musical styles. It is home to the acclaimed festival Edgefest.

MIDWEST: INDIANAPOLIS

#### Chatterbox

#### 435 Massachusetts Ave., Indianapolis IN (317) 636-0584 // chatterboxjazz.com

This club in the heart of Indianapolis' Massachusetts Ave. Arts & Theatre Cultural District has presented jazz for more than 25 years.

#### The Jazz Kitchen

#### 5377 N. College Ave., Indianapolis IN (317) 253-4900 // thejazzkitchen.com

As its name implies, this Indianapolis club combines great food with an array of local, regional and national jazz acts.

#### Madame Walker Theatre Center 615 Indiana Ave., Indianapolis IN (317) 236-2099 // walkertheatre.com

One of Indianapolis' cultural landmarks, this 1927 theater hosts an array of arts events, including a regular jazz series. Its Jazz On The Avenue is presented every fourth Friday.

#### Palladium Center For The Performing Arts

#### 335 W. Center Dr., Carmel IN (317) 660-3373 //

#### thecenterfortheperformingarts.org

This 1,600-seat venue is scheduled for completion early this year. Along with musical performances, the center will also house a museum displaying manuscripts related to the Great American Songbook.

MIDWEST: KANSAS CITY

#### The Blue Room 1616 E. 18th St., Kansas City MO

(816) 474-8463 // americanjazzmuseum.com As part of the American Jazz Museum, the Blue Room is

designed to resemble a nightclub from the 1930s. Also located within the museum is the historic Gem Theater.

#### Folly Theater 300 W. 12th St., Kansas City MO

(816) 474-4444 // follytheater.org

The non-profit Folly's annual jazz series spotlights top touring acts; the 2011 lineup so far includes Joe Lova-

no Us Five, Ellis Marsalis, Arturo Sandoval, Earl Klugh, Karrin Allyson and Sachal Vasandani.

MIDWEST: MILWAUKEE

#### Jazz Estate 2423 N. Murray Ave., Milwaukee WI (414) 964-9923 // jazzestate.com

The Jazz Estate is modeled on a '50s style club, and has been booking jazz since the '70s. Milwaukee native Brian Lynch has worked the club, as has nearby drummer Clyde Stubblefield.

MIDWEST: MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL

#### The Artists' Quarter 408 St. Peter St., St. Paul MN (651) 292-1359 // artistsquarter.com

Close, warm and welcoming, the Artists' Quarter's intimate basement is a favorite among local and national acts. Roy Haynes has recorded live here, and Harry "Sweets" Edison called it "just like New York."

#### Dakota Jazz Club & Restaurant 1010 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis MN (612) 332-1010 // dakotacooks.com

Jazz and non-jazz lovers have enjoyed the Dakota's noteworthy local and national jazz acts. The upscale venue has an open atmosphere, with a wood and brick interior as the backdrop.

#### Walker Art Center 1750 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis MN (612) 375-7609 // walkerart.org

The Walker offers Twin Cities audiences some of the most original and daring live performing art experiences available anywhere in the world.

MIDWEST: ST. LOUIS

#### Jazz at the Bistro 3536 Washington Ave., St. Louis MO (314) 534-3663 // jazzstl.org/jazz-bistro

Jazz at the Bistro's prime music season runs September through May showcasing top-name artists including Houston Person, Jane Monheit and Chris Potter.

WEST: BAY AREA

#### Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society 311 Miranda Road, Half Moon Bay CA bachddsoc.org

In terms of locale for a jazz (and sometimes classical) venue, it's tough to beat the Douglas Beach House on Miramar Beach. That's the spot for Sunday afternoon concerts by the likes of Hendricks & Ross and Terence Blanchard.

#### Coda

#### 1710 Mission Street, San Francisco CA (415) 551-2632 // codalive.com

San Francisco's Fillmore district has gone through demographic transformations. A "live music supper club," Coda reflects all of these residents with upscale dining and live music (from jazz and Latin to Afropop and r&b) six nights a week.

#### Kuumbwa Jazz Center

#### 320-2 Cedar Street, Santa Cruz CA (831) 427-2227 // kuumbwajazz.org

A proper jazz club with a community center's inclusive atmosphere, Kuumbwa is equally beloved by patrons and musicians, including Branford Marsalis and Bobby Hutcherson. Concerts are typically presented Mondays and Thursdays, with snacks, drinks and meals always available.

#### Savana Jazz

#### 2937 Mission Street, San Francisco (415) 285-3369 // savannajazz.com

This street level club has the atmosphere of a basement



joint, with concerts held Wednesday through Saturday and instrumental or vocal jam sessions on Sundays.

#### Yoshi's (Oakland)

#### 510 Embarcadero West, Oakland CA (510) 238-9200 // yoshis.com/Oakland

The elder Yoshi's offers seven nights and a Sunday family matinee of jazz, Latin and occasional hip-hop/soul.

#### Yoshi's (San Francisco) 1330 Fillmore St., San Francisco CA

### (415) 655-5600 // yoshis.com/sanfrancisco

It's rare that a venue's associated restaurant and bar are as much as an attraction as its music. But the fledgling Yoshi's attracts foodies, bar hoppers and music fans.

WEST: DENVER

#### Dazzle

#### 930 Lincoln St., Denver CO (303) 839-5100 // dazzlejazz.com

The nicely appointed and intimate music/dining room comfortably seats 100. The musical menu is as tasty as the food, blending touring artists with area-based players presented in intriguing contexts.

WEST: LOS ANGELES

#### **Blue Whale**

#### 123 Astronaut E S Onizuka St. Ste 301, Los Angeles CA

#### (213) 620-0908 // bluewhalemusic.com

This new-ish haunt, in the Little Tokyo area of downtown Los Angeles, has been generating a good buzz for its vibe, its "hidden jewel" status, and its openminded booking policy, including generous nods to some of LA.'s riches in the left-field jazz department.

### Café Metropol

#### 923 E 3rd St., Ste 101, Los Angeles CA (213) 613-1537 // cafemetropol.com

Settled in the funky-but-not-too-funky downtown L.A. artist district, Café Metropol is a popular eatery and all-around hip hang zone, and the place has ushered into its mix of offerings a weekend jazz booking policy which has ranged from the adventurous end to promising up-and-comers.

#### Catalina Bar & Grill

#### 6725 W Sunset Blvd #100, Los Angeles CA (323) 466-2210 // catalinajazzclub.com

Catalina Bar & Grill is the longstanding go-to jazz club in the city. Major acts settle in for multi-night runs in the room, now an oasis on Sunset Boulevard tucked into a utilitarian-looking office building.

#### **Charlie O's**

#### 13725 Victory Blvd., Van Nuys CA (818) 989-3110 // charlieos.com

Although Charlie O's founder, Charlie Ottaviano, passed away in 2008, this hot spot in the San Fernando Valley continues to host strong local players with some visitors from afar filtering through.

#### Hollywood Bowl

2301 North Highland Avenue, Los Angeles CA (323) 850-2000 // hollywoodbowl.com During the summertime concert season in this outdoor amphitheater, a few evenings of jazz sneak into the mix of classical music, pop and "world music," starting with the annual two-day Playboy Jazz Festival in June.

#### Jazz at the Athenaeum Athenaeum Music & Arts Library 1008 Wall Street, La Jolla CA

(858) 454-5872 // Ijathenaeum.org/jazz.html This thoughtful series presents jazz with the seriousness and dignity becoming the art form. In the past, jazz concerts have taken place in the Neuroscience Institute theater, but have recently returned to the historic and intimate Athenaeum Music & Arts Library.

#### Lobero Theatre

33 E. Canon Perdido St., Santa Barbara CA

#### (805) 963-0761 // lobero.com

California's oldest, continuously operating theatre (founded in 1873) has been a great place to hear live jazz concerts during the past 10 years, with headliners including the likes of Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Charles Lloyd, Dave Brubeck, John Scofield, McCoy Tyner and Bobby McFerrin.

#### Los Angeles County Museum of Art 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles CA (323) 857-6000 // lacma.org/ programs/JazzatLACMA.aspx

Although its music program is a shadow of what it once was, the campus of LACMA still hosts jazzusually fine locals from various attitudinal corners, mainstream to avant-garde-on early Friday evenings April-November, outdoors in the Central Court.

#### Steamers Jazz Club and Cafe 138 W. Commonwealth, Fullerton CA (714) 871-8800 // steamersjazz.com

One of the better L.A. jazz clubs is not in L.A., proper, but in Orange County, a half-hour drive from downtown L.A. Steamers, a humble club and eatery in Fullerton, is a well-established haven for some of the finest players Southern California has to offer.

#### **Vibrato Grill Jazz**

#### 2930 North Beverly Glen Circle, Los Angeles CA (310) 474-9400 // vibratogrilljazz.com

Nestled up in the twining terrain just below Mulholland Drive, Vibrato is a welcoming continuation of the restaurant-jazz-club tradition begun as Rocco's. It is now owned by Herb Alpert.

#### Walt Disney Concert Hall 111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles CA (323) 850-2000 // laphil.com

Since opening in 2004, the Frank Ghery-designed Disney Hall has been touted as an architectural marvel and one of America's finer concert halls. The LA Philharmonic organization takes care to host several jazz concerts each season. The finest jazz hall in town, especially in all-acoustic settings, memorable examples being Ornette Coleman and Keith Jarrett.

#### WEST: SAN DIEGO

#### Anthology 1337 India St., San Diego CA 619 595 0300 // anthologysd.com

This supper club features some enticing jazz. The 3,000-square-foot room has featured Dave Liebman, Peter Escovedo and Tuck & Patti, tucked into a roster of pop and r&b.

WEST: SEATTLE

#### **Bake's Place**

#### 4115 Providence Point Dr. S.E., Issaquah WA (425) 391-3335 // bakesplace.org

Seattle's only cabaret/supper club isn't in Seattle, it's

across Lake Washington in the recreation hall of a gated community in the hills of suburban Issaquah. Locals are featured most of the time, but about once a month a fine vocalist such as San Francisco's Madeline Eastman or New York's Daryl Sherman drops by to help you enjoy a nice meal by the fireplace.

#### Boxley's 101 North Bend Way, North Bend WA

### (425) 292-9307 // boxleysplace.com

North Bend, 45 minutes up the Cascade Mountains from Seattle, is probably best known as the place where "Twin Peaks" was filmed, but this decidedly unmysterious logging town now hosts a bustling, lively and very large jazz room. Boxley's can get a bit loud, but the vibe is friendly and the music—drawn in large part from the stable of musicians who record for Seattle's Pony Boy label—is first-rate.

#### Dimitriou's Jazz Alley 2033 Sixth Ave., Seattle WA (206) 441-0729 // jazzalley.com

Seattle's premiere jazz club for more than 30 years, spacious and upscale Jazz Alley offers A-list artists, from Roy Hargrove to Chick Corea, great sightlines, tasteful decor and a stupendous sound system. With its loft seating, the room can accommodate a concert-sized crowd of more than 400.

#### Egan's Ballard Jam House 1707 Northwest Market St., Seattle WA (206) 789-1621 // ballardjamhouse.com

Started by a jazz mom, Egan's is a miniscule black box with a bounty of spirit that belies its size. One of the few places in the country that welcomes student groups, Egan's also provides a venue for veterans to try out new things.

#### Triple Door 216 Union St., Seattle WA (206) 838-4333 // thetripledoor.com

The Triple Door presents all kinds of music, from blues and folk to jazz and world, but whatever it does, it does it well. Carved out of an ancient, below-ground burlesque hall, the room has a gigantic proscenium stage, tiered booth seating, a dazzling lightshow backdrop and top-flight Asian fusion food.

### Tula's

#### 2214 Second Ave., Seattle WA (206) 443-4221 // tulas.com

Seattle's casual bebop hang, Tula's is the place locals congregate, though acts from out of town occasionally pass through. Owned by former Navy band trombonist Mack Waldron, Tula's welcomes musicians as friends, pours a stiff drink and serves a killer hummus from Mack's wife's Greek menu.

#### CANADA

#### Casa del Popolo 4873 St. Laurent Boulevard, Montreal QC

(514) 284-3804 // casadelpopolo.com A funky vegetarian restaurant that holds only 55 people, since opening in 2000 the Casa has become the spiritual heart of Montreal's vibrant alternative art scene.

#### Cellar Jazz Club 3611 West Broadway Street, Vancouver BC (604) 738-1959 // cellarjazz.com

The site of numerous live recordings produced by club owner and saxophonist Cory Weeds, the Cellar opened in 2000 and provides a mainstream counterpoint to Vancouver's woolly improvised music scene.

#### Diese Onze 4115 St. Denis Street, Montreal QC (514) 223-3543 // dieseonze.com

A newcomer on Montreal's scene, Diese Onze doesn't have the best sightlines, but the vibe is friendly, and the atmosphere akin to an art gallery.



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#### Largo Resto-Club

#### 643 St. Joseph Street East, Quebec City QC (418) 529-3111 // largorestoclub.com

Located in a bohemian neighborhood outside the tourist-friendly old city, Largo doubles as both a firstclass bistro and intimate jazz venue. The club regularly features the cream of Montreal's jazz scene, with occasional special events starring international artists.

#### L'Astral

### 305 Ste. Catherine Street West, Montreal QC (514) 288-8882 // sallelastral.com

Owned by the team that manages the Montreal International Jazz Festival, L'Astral is a two-tiered venue with a capacity of 350–600 and a state-of-the-art sound system.

#### National Arts Centre Fourth Stage 53 Elgin Street, Ottawa ON

(613) 947-7000 // nac-cna.ca/en/fourthstage A basement room with a seasoned sound crew, the Fourth Stage is frequently used by the Ottawa International Jazz Festival for off-season bookings by artists like Holland's ICP Orchestra. It's also home to a monthly series curated by bassist John Geggie.

#### The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar 194 Queen Street West, Toronto ON (416) 598-2475 // therex.ca

The kind of workingman's tavern that draws students and hipsters, The Rex also just happens to feature a steady stream of top-notch bands, every night of the week. An average of 1,000 acts are featured each year, and at about two-thirds of these shows the musicians pass the hat rather than charge at the door.

#### Trane Studio Jazz Lounge 964 Bathurst Street, Toronto ON (416) 913-8197 // tranestudio.com

A gorgeous red-brick room with a pressed-tin ceiling, the Trane specializes in soulful jazz and r&b. Each October, Toronto-based trumpeter Brownman Ali hosts a multi-era tribute to Miles Davis.

#### Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill 1254 MacKay Street, Montreal QC (514) 931-6808 // upstairsjazz.com

A well-managed basement room, Joel Giberovitch's club has developed a reputation as a venue for listeners, where you can catch a combination of Montreal's best young players and the occasional import from New York City.

#### Yardbird Suite 11 Tommy Banks Way, Edmonton AB (780) 432-0428 // yardbirdsuite.com

Canada's oldest jazz club, the spacious Yardbird Suite is operated by volunteers of the Edmonton Jazz Society.

#### AUSTRIA

#### Jazzland

#### Franz Josefs-Kai 29, Vienna (43) 1 533 25 75 // jazzland.at

This 36-year-old club, in a 200-year-old cellar, hosts mainly local gigs, but American musicians play frequently. Photos of past performers adorn every wall.

#### Porgy & Bess Riemergasse 11, Vienna (43) 1 503 7009 // porgy.at

This 17-year old room can take in up to 500 patrons. It features jazz from the U.S. and Europe, with regular jam sessions and a willingness to stage big bands.

#### DENMARK

#### Copenhagen Jazzhouse Niels Hemmingsensgade Gade 10, Copenhagen (45) 7015 6565 // jazzhouse.dk Denmark's leading club is cozy for big bands and small

combos. Visiting American jazz stars and up-andcomers pass through here, too.

#### FRANCE

#### Le Caveau de la Huchette 5 Rue de la Huchette, Paris +33 (0)1 43 26 65 05 // caveaudelahuchette.fr

This lively venue in the Latin quarter has a 60-year history of presenting jazz, embracing dixieland, jazz manouche (Gypsy jazz), swing and blues.

#### Duc des Lombards 42 Rue des Lombards, Paris

#### +33 (0)1 42 33 22 88 // ducdeslombards.fr

This classy jazz club, located on the corner of Rue des Lombards and Sebastopol, was founded in 1984 and recently renovated.

#### **The New Morning**

#### 7-9 Rue des Petites Ecuries, Paris +33 (0)11 45 23 51 41 // newmorning.com

Perhaps Paris' most enduring jazz club, the New Morning is larger than most but unprepossessing. American stars visit as well as musicians from north and central Africa.

#### GREAT BRITAIN

### The 606 Club

#### 90 Lots Road, London SW10 +44 (0)20 7352 5953 // 606club.co.uk

This basement joint close to Chelsea Harbor is a great place to dine at reasonable prices and enjoy an intimate environment close to the musicians.

#### Pizza Express

#### 10 Dean Street, London W1

#### +44 (0)20 7437 9595 // pizzaexpresslive.com

This Soho basement, enlarged and refurbished in recent years, originally hosted Bud Freeman, Earl Hines and Stan Getz. Current regulars include locals Dave Newton and Ian Shaw with annual residencies from Mose Allison and Scott Hamilton.

#### **Ronnie Scott's**

#### 47 Frith St., Soho, London

#### +44 (0)20 7439 0747 // ronniescotts.co.uk

Since 1959 Ronnie's has presented top-tier U.S. jazz with support from U.K. groups. The upscale room (though dress code is casual) is an institution, open from 6 p.m. to 3 a.m. with late bar and kitchen.

#### **The Vortex**

### 11, Gillette Square, London N16

+44 (0)20 7254 4097 // vortexjazz.co.uk The Vortex is a long-running North London haunt friendly to a wide variety of jazz, post-bop to avant garde, seven nights from 8 p.m.-midnight.

#### GERMANY

#### Domicil

#### Hansastr. 7-11, Dortmund (49) 231 8629030 // domicil-dortmund.de

Having moved into a new location a few years ago, Domicil has continued its progressive booking policy.

### Quasimodo

#### Kantstr. 12a, Berlin (49) 30 312 8086 // quasimodo.de

The lively jazz cellar holds 400 when busy, which it often is. Prog-rock and even disco are on offer here along with blues and world music.

#### Unterfahrt

#### Einsteinstrausse 42, Munich (49) 08 9448 2794 // unterfahrt.de

Presenting mostly European musicians that range from avant-garde to traditional vocalists, Unterfahrt has offered adventurous programming and regular jam sessions for close to 30 years.

#### Alexanderplatz Via Ostia, 9, Rome (39) 063 9742 171 // alexanderplatz.it

Italy's oldest jazz club attracts its own breed of pilgrims: lovers of food, vintage wine and great music.

#### **Cantina Bentivoglio** Via Mascarella, 4/b, Bologna (39) 051 265416 // cantinabentivoglio.it

Located near the historic center of Bologna, this popular wine bar and restaurant presents jazz nightly in the restored cellar of a medieval palace.

#### La Salumeria Della Musica Via Pasinetti 4, Milan (39) 02 5680 7350 //

#### lasalumeriadellamusica.com

The keeper of the jazz flame in Italy's media, fashion and finance capital is also delicatessen with a musical menu ranging from Phil Woods to Bill Frisell.

#### Panic Jazz Club

#### Piazza degli scacchi, Marostica (VI) (39) 0424/72707 // panicjazzclub.com

This club not only features a fine restaurant, but it is also connected with a recording studio and hosts such Italian musicians as saxophonist Michele Polga as well as an ongoing gospel series.

**NETHERLANDS** 

#### **Bimhuis**

#### Piet Heinkade 3, Amsterdam (31) 20 788 2188 // bimhuis.nl

It moved to a new and improved multi-use arts facility in 2005, where its maintained the same progressive booking policy that it started in 1974. The best of the Dutch scene meets with other European, American and African artists at this thriving institution.

#### NORWAY

#### Bla

#### Brenneriveien 9C, Oslo (47) 22 20 91 81 // blx.no

Ensconced in a former factory, Bla is Oslo's prime source for jazz discoveries. The 300-seat club knits a multitiered daily offering of domestic and international jazz and related sounds.

#### PORTUGAL

#### Hot Clube De Portugal Praça da Alegria, 39, Lisbon

#### (351) 13 467 369 // hotclubedeportugal.org

Jazz started in Portugal during the late '40s in this small basement in Lisbon. It's open nightly from Tuesday through Saturdays.

#### SPAIN

#### Café Central Plaza del Angel 10. Madrid

#### (34) 91 369 4143 // cafecentralmadrid.com This informal art deco cafe close to the Plaza del An-

gel has been one of the few Spanish clubs offering extended engagements for journeying European and American musicians. Ben Sidran has been a regular.

#### SWEDEN

#### Fasching

#### Gamla Brogatan 44, Stockholm (46) 8 534 829 60 // fasching.se

Fasching's excellence lays in the eclecticism of the programming, while retaining a solid base in reflecting the whole spectrum of the Stockholm jazz scene.



#### SWITZERLAND

#### Marian's Jazz Room Engestrasse 54, CH-3012 Bern (41) 31 309 61 11 // mariansjazzroom.ch

This exclusive club is located in the downstairs of the Innere Enge hotel. Marian's has been the spot to catch visiting American stars, like Dianne Reeves and Jon Faddis. It also offers a jazz brunch on Sundays.

### (41) 44 276 80 00 // moods.ch

Moods is located in the Schiffbau, an old industrial building which has been transformed into a cultural center. The club offers a program of European and American jazz stars and newcomers, and also has its doors open to funk and soul acts.

#### The Basement 29 Reiby Place, Sydney (61) 2 9252 3007 // thebasement.com.au

The Basement is situated in prime real estate in Sydney's Circular Quay. The club has been around since the 1970s and has hosted international jazz talent as well as local acts that can draw a crowd.

#### **Bennett's Lane**

#### 25 Bennetts Lane, Melbourne (61) 3 9663 2856 // bennettslane.com

A bona fide, revered jazz haunt, Bennett's Lane is a 200-capacity backstreet joint that has hosted Harry Connick Jr. and Wynton Marsalis but also supports local heroes.

#### Alfie Jazz House 6-2-35 Roppongi, Tokyo (81) 3 3479 203 //

### homepage1.nifty.com/live/alfie/index.html This club in a high-rise in the heart of Roppongi per-

ceives itself as sophisticated and not just the hang for jazz "otaku" or nerds, but its clientele usually know who they've come to hear.

#### **Blue Note Tokvo** Tokyo 107-0062 (81) 3 5485 0088 // bluenote.co.jp

#### The club is a large, theater-like jazz cabaret (300 seats) that serves as one of the most popular nightlife attractions in the stylish Aoyama area with some of the top jazz artists in the world coming through.

LISTINGS COMPILED BY PAUL DE BABBOS, SHALIN BRADY AARON COHEN, ROBERT DOERSCHUK, ED ENRIGHT, FRANK-JOHN HADLEY, JAMES HALE, MICHAEL JACKSON, YOSHI KATO, JOHN MURPH, JENNIFER ODELL, JON ROSS AND JOE WOODARD



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Randy Weston and his African Rhythms Sextet *The Storyteller* MOTEMA 51 \*\*\*1/2

R andy Weston, 84, is that rare bird—an original, creative voice—though he has always identified with tradition: namely, the spirit of his African ancestors. But Weston, a gentle giant of a man, has always embraced opposites easily. As a pianist, his orchestral approach and fondness for color owe a lot to Duke Ellington. Yet his pared-down melodies, judicious use of dissonance and disjunctive trains of thought—jumping in a trice from thunder to light rain—are more like Thelonious Monk.

This live recording of Weston's African Rhythms Sextet, the first since 1999, is timely, as the pianist recently published a welcome as-told-to autobiography with the same title. As a composer, Weston tends to revisit and rework seminal pieces again and again, but the reward is not so much in the intricacies as a spiritually incandescent mood. A creator of shape-shifting atmospheres, Weston's band conjures spirits the way an African lithophone player calls out to various gods with different scales, hoping for a visitation.

Unsurprisingly, the album has an autumnal as well as celebratory feel, reinforced by the passing of Weston's longtime trombonist Benny Powell shortly after it was made. The music is lovely, but does not always catch fire and a few tracks go on a bit long. Weston's stream-ofconsciousness solo style sometimes crosses the line from brilliance to noodling. His opening solo, dedicated to the great Afro-Cuban drummer Chano Pozo, has some fine, dancing moments, with wisps of



pretty melancholy threaded throughout. It segues directly into "African Sunrise," in which the band explores the Afro-Cuban fusion Pozo brought to life with Dizzy Gillespie. Bluescrying alto saxophonist T.K. Blue's allusions to "Hot House," "Night In Tunisia" and "Manteca" are nice touches. Weston's music never strays far from the blues; Powell is down with the program on this soulful outing on "Jus' Blues," the aptly titled second movement of "The African Cookbook Suite." Weston rumbles up a fine mess here himself, a sort of work song with quartal underpinnings. Bassist Alex Blake has a fine run in the third movement, "The Bridge," thrumming a flamenco feel.

Weston's more recent, ceremonially slow composition "The Shrine" offers haunting voicings for flute, trombone and piano, and the witty, Monkish "Loose Wig" offers Weston's only splashy, carefree moments, ending with an animated conversation between all the instruments. Weston gets into some gliding stride on his classic "Hi Fly," also taken very slowly, followed by a speedy coda, "Fly Hi," and ends his set as he traditionally does, with the great Ghanaian drummer Guy Warren's "Love, The Mystery Of," explaining to the crowd that the band has tried to "capture the spirits of the ancients."

> From time to time, they do. —Paul de Barros

The Storyteller: Chano Pozo; African Sunrise; The African Cookbook Suite: Tehuti, Jus' Blues, The Bridge; The Shrine; Loose Wig; Wig Loose; Hi Fy, Fy Hi; Love, The Mystery Of. (74:18) Personnel: Randy Weston, piano; Benny Powell, tombone; T.K. Blue, alto saxophone, flute; Alex Blake, bass; Neil Clarke, percussion; Lewis Nash, drums. Ordering info: motema.com

#### Charlie Hunter Public Domain SPIRE ★★★★

Call it the gramophone approach. The physical disc of Charlie Hunter's second solo guitar album has the resonance of a shellac 78, even allowing its needle-riding grooves to be discernible to the touch. This packaging parallels the ancient material the perpetually modern improviser essays this time 'round. Curated by Hunter's 99-year-old grandfather, *Public Domain* is a yesteryear romp that accounts for 1920s foxtrots, Al Jolson nuggets and nods to an era when the

Ziegfeld Follies ruled the entertainment roost. Because of its dedication to focus and celebration of bounce, the entire thing is a hoot.

Hunter, whose fanciful excursions into the stratosphere are well documented (don't be afraid to revisit Groundtruther's *Come In Red Dog, This Is Tango Leader*), plays things relatively straight here. Rather than abandoning the melodies for parts unknown, he hovers around them, nudging nuanced variations into the foreground. "Meet Me In St Louis" could be a sing-a-long; the tune's infectious nature speaks for



itself. That's how it is on "Avalon" as well: The curt romp leaps from the speakers while the guitarist restacks the theme in a couple different ways. Thanks to his dexterity, he winds up conjuring the Atkins/Paul rendition on the classic Chester & Lester date.

This abracadabra interplay comes from Hunter using his thumb as a rhythm section. There's a dash of syncopation to several tracks, and his seven-string instrument allows an array of bass patterns to bubble up. The opening lines of a droll saunter through "Indiana" are individualistic enough to actually feel like a duet is going down. There are moments in the program when the thumb-pluck technique gets a bit predictable, and actually tilts towards the tedious. But for the most part—on the carousel frolic of "Meet Me In St. Louis," where he attempts to get a little Blind Blake going, say—it's a nice way to paint yourself out of a rhythm sectionless corner.

Just because the guitarist keeps these performances on a tight leash doesn't mean he banishes expressiveness. The liquid tone of the single-note foray on "Limehouse Blues" is loaded with personality. And one of the most fascinating spins is "Low Bridge Song (15 Miles On The Erie Canal)," which sets its melody in a series of ominous taps and plinks that make you forget previous versions by Burl Ives and Bruce Springsteen.

Hunter brings the sweat of barge work to the table, and as the whispery track unfolds, you start thinking that the famed waterway should actually be deemed "eerie." Though he spends much of *Public Domain* applying for a job as the new Mitch Miller, on this one Hunter seems more like the old David Lynch. *—Jim Macnie* 

Ordering info: charliehunter.com

#### Paquito D'Rivera Panamericana Suite

MANCHESTER CRAFTSMEN'S GUILD 1026 ★★★

P aquito D'Rivera's contrasting aspirations shift with all the suddenness his prodigious crossover skills allow in this 2008 Pittsburgh concert (and his fifth for the MCG label), which offers a performance arc from fierce, small group exactitude ("Fiddle Dreams") to rather heavyhanded operatic pretense. In showcasing his range as performer and composer (five of the pieces are his), he has deployed and mixed elements that would seem better left to their own respective classical and jazz realms. Even his jazz phrasings (on clarinet at

least) often sound touched by a stately rectitude characteristic of a classical temperament.

D'Rivera's "Panamericana Suite" promises rhythms and styles from all over Latin America, but that's insufficient to sustain the curious 11-minute opus that follows. After a rather ominous indigenous chant by Pedro Martinez and a brief fanfare, soprano Brenda Feliciano offers a soft, sweetly voiced spoken introduction in praise of "one awesome mass of soil." A little geological pride is fine, but a moment later she



opens fire in full operatic mode. Her rich coloratura power would be impressive in its proper element, but is thoroughly jarring and almost ostentatious here, vastly out of scale and purpose with the surrounding environment. It's a performance that sucks in all the surrounding oxygen. A second semi-operatic fling, "Song For Peace," is more in the art song mode, but burdened with pious cliches like "together we can make the world a better place." The effect is one of unmitigated pomposity and failed seriousness, otherwise known as camp.

Among the instrumentals, "Serenade" is a lovely piece in which D'Rivera's elegant clarinet glides with an 18th century Mozartian grace, complete with tremolos and flitting classical filigrees. Perhaps the most invigorating turn comes in D'Rivera's "Fiddle Dreams," a work of steely intelligence performed as a tightly wrought ensemble piece with pianist Alon Yavnai and the rhythm section. Written for violin, it provides a fine vehicle for D'Rivera's spotless clarinet virtuosity without bogging down in affectation. Its brittle rhythms and phrasings are a glass menagerie of sharp, thin, dense, angular and tinsel strands. But the threads never snap.

"Waltz For Moe," "Con Alma" and "Tojo" find D'Rivera on alto and are squarely in the Latin jazz pocket. The yeoman solo work is fittingly fiery without being especially surprising, though Edmar Castanada stands out on "Moe" in a rare and nimble spin on the harp, an outlier even in the "miscellaneous instrument" category. "Preludio N. 3" is an attractive tango with elements of a minuet. *—John McDonough* 

Public Domain: Ain't We Got Fun; Alexander's Ragtime Band; Avalon; Cielito Lindo; Danny Boy; Low Bridge Song (15 Miles On The Erie Canal); Indiana; Limehouse Blues; How You Gonna Keep Em Down On The Farm?; Meet Me In St. Louis; St. Louis Blues. (37:54) Personnel: Charlie Hunter, seven-string guitar.

Panamericana Suite: Waltz For Moe; Con Alma; Preludio No. 3; Tojo; Panamericana Suite; Fiddle Dreams; Serenade; Song For Peace. (68:37)

Personnel: Paquito Rivera, clarinet, alto saxophone; Diego Urcola, trumpet; Dana Leong, trombone, cello; Henderson, trumpet, flugelhom; Dave Samuels, vibraphone, marimba; Edmar Castaneda, harp; Alon Yavnai, piano; Oscar Stagnaro, bass; Mark Walker, drums; Pernell Saturnino, percussion; Andy Narell, steel pans; Hector del Ourto, bandoneon; Pedro Matinez, batas, timbales, vocals; Brenda Feliciano, soprano vocal (5, 8). Ordering info: mcgiaz.org



Avishai Cohen Introducing Triveni ANZIC 5103  $\star \star \star \star \frac{1}{2}$ 

Tt's turning out to be a very good time for the Ltrumpet. From Peter Evans and Josh Berman to Magnus Broo and Roland Ramanan, there is a wealth of different approaches and aesthetics in creative music today, enough to remind one of what a shock it was when Dave Douglas appeared on the scene with his startling chops and inventiveness. In a way Douglas set the bar higher, and now a wave of practitioners is jostling around that bar.

Anyone interested in these developments who's looking for something to get excited about should take careful notice of Avishai Cohen. He's got everything-terrifying control, great taste and personal style. With no fellow horns, no harmonic safety-net, Cohen's completely exposed. But he doesn't need any cover, he's utterly capable, so unforced and relaxed that it's slightly dizzying. He covers a Don Cherry tune, "Art Deco," but really steers clear of direct reference, instead whirling, dipping and leaping joyously, never showing off but never backing off either, transforming Cherry's melody completely into his own music.

The young Israeli-born trumpeter has chosen his partners carefully. Bassist Omer Avital is also stunning here, and drummer Nasheet Waits continues his impressive and versatile work, sympathetic in every way. After a brooding intro by the rhythm section, Cohen kicks into John Coltrane's "Wise One" radiantly, his soft, but acute tone navigated through a penetrating theme and solo. Though the setting is very open and unconfined, Cohen stays away from the noisier parts of the contemporary trumpet vocabulary, preferring melodic challenges to textural ones. His own compositions are excellent foils, the lovely "Amenu" showing what he can do with a mute, which is plenty, and "October 25th" introducing a gnarly bit of funk, without any dopey affectations. - John Corbett

Triveni: One Man's Idea: Ferrara Napoly: Art Deco: Mood Indigo: Wise One; Amenu; You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To; October 25th. (57:18)

Personnel: Avishai Cohen, trumpet: Omer Avital, bass: Nasheet Waits drums Ordering info: anzicrecords.com



Critics' Comments >

#### Randy Weston, The Storyteller

Familiarity breeds fervor in this gem of Afrocentric nostalgia. The lineup goes back nearly 20 years and a couple of the tunes, more than 50. The oldest, a Monkish "Loose Wig," sounds the most contemporary, but Weston goes at it all with a boyish passion for discovery moving between restraint and thunder.

-John McDonough

Another satisfying chapter in Weston's lifelong exploration of Africa via jazz, with drummer Lewis Nash added for extra juice. Bittersweet dedication to the late Benny Powell, whose big, conch-like trombone was a voice in the Weston band's signature sound for such a stretch. Weston's brilliant elementalism still commands attention. -John Corbett

A nice little document of what the mighty pianist's interactive ensemble is all about. The restless forward motion, the attention to atmosphere, the dedication to dynamics. Jim Macnie

#### Paquito D'Rivera, Panamericana Suite

I sometimes prefer the discrete moments of Americana here to the panoramic experience. Edmar Castaneda's blazing harp solo on the opener, for instance, doesn't need a syncretic subtext (or anthemic text) to be worthy. But D'Rivera and his orchestra mix and match South and Central American and Caribbean musics along with North American jazz to respectfully reveal their commonalities and distinct personae.

John Corbett

I warm up when a waltz is turned into a whirl by Andy Narell's pans. I drift off when the soprano's voice gets operatic and the band goes into prayer mode. There's something unfocused about the entire outing. –Jim Macnie

Paquito's been exploring classical music of late and he's assembled an impressive all-star band here to play the music of the Americas. But the result feels a bit like musical tourism. The best moments are the classical cello/piano piece "Serenade" and Paquito's nimble, matchless clarinet, on the choro-inspired "Fiddle Dreams." -Paul de Barros

#### Charlie Hunter, Public Domain

Hunter's down-to-earth simplicity is likably subversive. But he largely smothers the promise of these oldies under sluggish tempos. "Farm" shows some life. But jazz staples like "Indiana" are frozen in stiff, lumbering straightjackets that tramp along to a rigid quarter-note trudge. Next time, loosen it up and swing. –John McDonouah

The one-man-band is best comprehended sans accompaniment, solo. So it is on Public Domain, my new favorite Charlie Hunter outing. Perfectly droll selection and even more perfect approach-laid-back as possible, gently over-driven sound, amusing and enlightening inventions. –John Corbett

Charlie Hunter's an amazing musician, never less than funky, but this playful solo collection of old American favorites is pretty forgettable, seemingly done more to amuse the guitarist and his granddad-who chose the tunes-than anyone else. -Paul de Barros

#### Avishai Cohen, Introducing Triveni

Cohen comes out of the gate with such a sense of focus and drive on "One Man's Idea," the rest of the CD never quite catches up with itself. Without any sensational tricks up his sleeve, though, his crisp mid-range attack and clear lines sustain with exceptional strength and coherence in a lean, pianoless trio format. -John McDonouah

One of the most engaging trumpet trio discs I've ever heard, it's based on a balance of fervor and lyricism. Co-hen's invention is front and center throughout. As he messes with melody, he also finds ways to invite textural variations into the action. The rhythm section is deeply on the case. —.lim Macnie

Cohen has a bold, round tone, fine sense of a phrase, great swing feel and crisp articulation. Lyrical, too. But there's something instinctively conservative about his playing with this planoless trio, a feeling that didn't become apparent until they got to the Coltrane tune "Wise One," which invites a musician to become possessed. —Paul de Barros

#### **James Cotton** Giant ALLIGATOR 4940 \*\*\*

here's good news and bad news on the James Cotton front. The good news is that the 75-year-old blues veteran is playing harmonica almost as well as he

ever has. The bad news is that he's no longer singing. While he's in good instrumental company on this album, the vocals don't hold up as well as the playing-a mixture of old and new material. Cotton can certainly be forgiven for relinquishing vocal chores. As far back as Living The Blues from 1994, he was rasping hoarse. The man gave at the office.

Cotton has led some fine bands over the years, and this is a solid one. It tears through various speeds of shuffles ("Buried Alive In The Blues," "Going Down Main Street" and "With The Quickness,"), funk ("Change"), middlingto-slow rhythm numbers ("Heard You're Getting Married," "Let Yourself Go") and real slow blues ("Sad Sad Day," "How Blue Can You Get?" and "Since I Met You Baby"). The two-guitar lineup of Slam Allen and Tom Holland provides a simpatico team that trades lead and rhythm du-

#### **Tyler Blanton** Botanic OTTIMO MUSIC $\star \star \star \frac{1}{2}$

he debut release from vibraphonist Tyler Blanton begins with an upbeat head arrangement that sounds like something Billy Taylor or Milt Jackson might have penned years ago. "Already Here," featuring the trio with bassist Dan Loomis and drummer Jared Schonig, is a cantering swing through uncomplicated blues cliches. The title track is similarly wholesome, hinting at Blanton's green, organic outlook. Schonig is a splashy, but crisply detailed, energetic drummer and works well behind the authoritative tenor of Joel Frahm who completely takes charge with a resolutely conceived solo that takes time to dance with the beat and take other audacious rhythmic liberties, shadowed by Schonig. Blanton has a nice sense of equilibrium and paints pellucid tones with his mallets, always attentive to the contours of his compositions and comping.

'Good Ol' Joel" seems written with Frahm's quicksilver soprano saxophone technique in mind, though Blanton takes the first solo, elements from which are picked up by Frahm to build his own pithy exploration. "Foreshadowing" is more somber and reflective, chordal rather than trickily melodic. Loomis is dropped in for a solo before rasping tenor from Frahm and some busy but tight interplay between Blanton and Schonig, the latter always injecting textures and ideas.



ties, exhibiting taste throughout. Allen handles most of the vocals. He shares a range and tonal similarity to B.B. King, minus the soul-shaking shouts at the end of his lines. The slow numbers betray his voice, as he lacks the drama to fill the spaces. But Kenny Neal Jr.'s tight drum support is particularly gratifying: a third-generation

bluesman, he's extending the line.

Cotton's solos are forceful, if measured (seldom more than a chorus) and as an accompanist he's a pungent commentator, squarely stabbing the notes and chords. His phrases are shorter than they once were, but they're full of tonal variety, summoning a steamship, a train whistle, a saxophone, a hurricane and an octave-jumping bird. When he switches to the chromatic harp on "Sad" and "Blues For Koko," it spreads warmth throughout the tune. The tour de force tribute to Koko Taylor signifies that Cotton's not through creating by a long shot. -Kirk Silsbee

Giant: Buried Alive In The Blues; Heard You're Getting Married; Find Yourself Another Fool; Sad Sad Day; Change; How Blue Can You Get?; With The Quickness; Since I Met You Baby; Go-ing Down Main Street; That's All Right; Let Yourself Go; Blues For

ing Down Man Street; That's All Right; Let Yourself Go; Blues For Koko. (49:27) **Personnel:** James Cotton, harmonica; Slam Allen, guitar, vocals; Tom Holland, guitar, vocal (4); Noel Neal, electric bass; Ronnie James Weber, electric bass; (4); Kenny Neal Jr., drums. **Ordering info: alligator.com** 



"Mellow Afternoon" is indicative of the chill temperament endemic to musicians drawn to the vibraphone's delicate resonance, Frahm's drive on soprano like a darting bird over the placid lake pictured on the back cover of the CD. "Little Two" shifts metrically but like all this music is cute, clean and impeccably articulated, with more space for the inventive Schonig. The quartal theme of "Hemming And Hawing," with Loomis pushing the action this time, draws out more intensity that is carried through to the urgent closer, which displays a little more attitude and thrust from this promising young leader than -Michael Jackson the opening tracks.

Botanic: Already Here; Botanic; Good Ol' Joel; Foreshadowing; Mellow Afternoon; Little Two; Hemming And Hawing; Vestibule.

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Tamir Hendelman **Destinations RESONANCE 1017**  $\star\star\star$ 

n Tamir Hendelman's innately impressive new album, the Israel-born and Los Angeles-based pianist demonstrates the undeniable depth and technical mastery of his approach to his instrument, putting him in the company of such young jazz dazzlers as Eldar. In powerful trio collusion with Italian bassist Marco Panascia and New York drummer Lewis Nash, Hendelman takes care to cover many stylistic bases and musical terrains on the album, bringing his fervent keyboard attack and arranger's touch.

In general, the recording presents Hendelman as a wowing, wash 'n' wear virtuoso, with the ability to unleash dexterous energies in multiple stylistic directions. The album's subtitle could be "derivations," as he works his way through standards, Braziliana, a pinch of classical and high-wire bebop, with a version of Charlie Parker's "Anthropology" which layers the classic serpentine head with the pianist's own new, intertwining layer of contrapuntal cerebration. On somewhat mellower turf, Hendelman's two originals, "Israeli Waltz" and "Babushka" suggest bittersweet Israeli folk tunes pressed into the service of jazz.

The album's much-needed moment of soulful probity comes with Hendelman's sensitive take on Keith Jarrett's "My Song." Hendelman slows down and heeds the delicate beauty at hand, while sneaking in a few elbowing syncopations, as is his wont.

Amid the furious, serious musical flow of Destinations, at times, an instinctive response of "how'd he do that?" mixes in with "where is he coming from?" One could wish for more questioning and lyricism in his approach to the music, and less pyrotechnical, chest-thumping declarations. Nonetheless, Hendelman is clearly a musical force to reckon with and keep tabs on.

-Josef Woodard

Destinations: Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams; Passarim; Soft Winds; Le Tombeau de Couperin; My Song; You Stepped Out of a Dream; Israeli Waltz; Anthropology; Babushka; On the Street Where You Live; BQE; Valentine. (71:49)

Personnel: Tamir Hendelman, piano; Marco Panascia, bass; Lewis Nash, drums. Ordering info: resonancerecords.org

#### Mina Cho Originality MINA CHO MUSIC \*\*\*\*

riginality isn't about introducing Mina Cho as a young firebrand. The impression here, more difficult to attain, is that she is a musician of the first order and can already take her place as a significant player.

Throughout this collection of instrumentals and one marvelous vocal song ("Because You Are Looking At Me"), the South Korean pianist generally executes the parts she assigns to her instrument. When backing a soloist, she plays full, rich chords and figures, often with tremolos or bristling interactions between her hands.

Her voicings can be dense, but she positions them almost cautiously, never nudging or jabbing but rather changing the texture, like a lighting director for actors playing their roles onstage.

When Cho takes the spotlight, she reveals an assured technique. She can spin fleet lines in her solos, but her preferred mode of expression is more compositional. "Can I?" is in 3/4 but divided into clever sub-rhythms that inject a feeling of delightful imbalance. In this con-



text, Cho begins her solo thoughtfully, stating a theme in sync with Sam J.C. Lee's marvelously subtle pattern. From here she nurtures the idea through a gradually unfolding stretch across the keys through which a montuño feel briefly blossoms, only to dovetail perfectly into the top of Andrew Halchak's alto chorus. And when the meter switches to 4/4 for an unexpected, swirling finale, Cho plays carefully pedaled chords in rapid triplets; the effect is similar to

what some pianists accomplish with forearms and fists, though in her case every note remains clear within the climactic wash.

Given the sophistication of this material, it's tempting to say that Cho is primarily a composer with accomplished instrumental chops. But the truth is more impressive: She is a fully integrated artist, with every element of expression in balance. Like many from her generation, Cho creates by drawing from eclectic influences. Her process, though, lacks any sense of the exotic. On "A Shy Angel, Cheyenne," when she brakes from a rhythmically vigorous opening section and eases into a lush, rubatoinflected solo piano episode in waltz time, and from there into festive joropo that gradually absorbs a sharp funk strut into the beat, Cho and her group make every transition feel logical and expressive. Even when adding accordion and acoustic guitar and playing largely from a choro foundation on the title cut, one of Cho's preferred accompaniment devices-chords pulsing restlessly between the beats-imposes her already distinctive brand. -Robert Doerschuk

Originality: Corea: Can I?; A White Lion; A Shy Angel, Cheyenne; Originality; Maria; Choro No. 2; I Like A Turtle; Because You Are Looking At Me. (58:09) Personnet: Mina Cho, piano; Andrew Halchak, soprano and alto saxophones; Shu Odamura, electric and acoustic guitar; Pier Luigi Salami, accordion; Sam J.C. Lee, bass; Mario Rodriguez, drums, percussion; David Thome Scott, vocal. Ordering info: minachomusic.com



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Cecil Tavlor/ Tony Oxley Ailanthus/ Altissima: bilateral dimensions of 2 root songs TRIPLE POINT 037 \*\*\*\*

The British percussionist Tony Oxley ranks

as one of Cecil Taylor's most trusted drummers; the pair have collaborated regularly since 1988, when the pianist spent a month in Berlin, when they recorded the classic release Leaf Palm Hand (FMP), most steadily in the Feel Trio with bassist William Parker. The astonishing music on Ailanthus/Altissima, an expensive and highly limited-edition double vinyl set, packaged with a lovely booklet featuring poetry by Taylor and paintings by Oxley, was recorded during a weeklong Village Vanguard stint in 2008, and marks their first duo release since the pianist's German residency 32 years ago. Despite their ages-Taylor is 81 and Oxley, 72-the performances here reveal undiminished powers, and while the pianist generally eschews his most volcanic



machinations, there's nothing remotely relaxed about these performances.

The two suite-like pieces wax and wane with stunning beauty, each building out from terse little crab-stepped phrases shaped by the pianist into masterfully controlled, rhythmically phantasmagoric starbursts; the music exhibits a feverish volatility

and while Taylor is clearly in the driver's seat, Oxley's imagination seems hard-wired to his partner's every impulse, as the drummer perfectly limns, rhymes, or girds every movement without a hint of latency. Although the intensity ebbs and flows, the duo never engages in simple acceleration and deceleration; instead, Taylor is forever looking on the horizon, pushing the music into consistently new terrain, and while his language and phrasing may be familiar here, his drive and invention sounds as fresh and vital as anything he's done in decades. A late-career gem. -Peter Margasak

Ailanthus/Altissima: Ailanthus; Altissima. (83:85) Personnel: Cecil Taylor, piano; Tony Oxley, drums. Ordering info: triplepointrecords.com

#### Mike Reed's Loose Assembly Empathetic Parts 482 MUSIC 1074 \*\*\*\*

rummer/promoter Mike Reed, the éminence grise of progressive Chicago music due to his bolstering of improv venues and

the Umbrella Festival, flew in Roscoe Mitchell at the last minute to guest with his quintet at woodsy Chicago bar The Hideout for a concert in 2009. I attended the gig, which was remarkable for several reasons, not least the appearance of band members, save Mitchell, in blue worker overalls with colored armbands. Inspired by strategies of local creative musicians, including Fred Lonberg-Holm's Lightbox Orchestra, Reed devised a system of colored paddles to signal changes of texture and note value. Despite this artifice, the music comes across with a strong narrative arc rather than as an aleatoric collage.

Reed starts with nothing in particularcymbal shimmers, mallet taps, snare smudgesthen an ominous collective intro phrase precedes a clang-tipped sustain spilling into false-fingered squalls from Mitchell. Richly textured cello from Tomeka Reid precedes an eerie collective hum and another clanging checkered flag, or rather colored paddle, for Mitchell. Reed clatters busily behind Mitchell's cycle breathing, then everyone hangs like owls on tree branch-



prey. All aware this is time for suspended longtones, Abrams stomps off like a three-legged bear. Mitchell switches to flute, Adasiewicz twinkles stars, Reid's plucked cello plays cub following Abrams. Ward's feverishly investigative alto heralds further wheeling soprano before Reed's ride

es, scouting for midnight

cymbal and Abrams kick into urgent swing, under-painted with pools of watercolor vibraphone. The fever subsides, Ward skitters like an owldodging mouse before an arco sawing impasse which prompts Reed to rattle around furiously, moving things forward with lumberjack-meetsflamenco bass. Mitchell's soprano sounds naively unaware of the dangers of the forest with alto creeping behind, not to mention chiming, cuckoo vibes. Soprano is strangled to the dismay of cello and guilt of alto, then they all get the hell out ... to wild audience applause.

The second piece, from drummer Steve McCall's unknown catalogue, features an inadvertent "Sophisticated Lady" fragment from Mitchell before a gorgeous entry into the melody from all. A stop about four minutes in heralds new melodic segments, beautifully framed by Ward and Adasiewiscz. - Michael Jackson



#### **Roscoe Mitchell and** The Note Factory Far Side ECM 2087 \*\*\*\*

Recorded live in 2007, Far Side documents a "new" version of Roscoe Mitchell's double quartet, a band that includes two of the most prominent young piano players in jazz today, Craig Taborn and Vijay Iyer. It is rounded out by rising star Corey Wilkes on trumpet and a core of longtime associates, bass players Jaribu Shahid and Harrison Bankhead (who doubles on cello) as well as drummers Tani Tabbal and Vincent Davis.

One of the main interests of this recording resides in how Mitchell structured his compositions. Each piece works as a suite with each part featuring a different band configuration. Some of the compositions' titles are indicative in this respect ("Quintet 2007 A For Eight" or "Trio Four For Eight"). This approach often produces arresting moments. In particular, the string instruments provide a wonderful warmth to material that could otherwise easily pass for brainv or stark.

Those outcomes also illustrate Mitchell's talent at getting the best out of his musicians. Once again, evidence is given that Wilkes never sounds better than under his leadership. Ample opportunities are provided for everyone to shine.

At this time in his career, Mitchell's music seems to reveal more conceptual or sonic connections to other Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians luminaries, such as Anthony Braxton or Henry Threadgill. That being said, the recording remains quintessential Mitchell. His ability to create a maelstrom powered by his dazzling circular breathing technique, his keen interest in textures or his use of extremely sparse notes are all highlighted and, as a result, Far Side is a fine addition to his somewhat inconsistent discography. -Alain Drouot

Empathetic Parts: Empathetic Parts; I'll Be Right Here Waiting. (41.58) Personnel: Mike Reed, drums, percussion; Roscoe Mitchell, alto and soprano saxes, flute: Careg Ward, alto sax; Tomeka Reid, cello; Jason Adaslewicz, vibraphone; Joshua Abrams, bass. Ordering info: 482music.com

Far Side: Far Side/Cards/Far Side; Quintet 2007 A For Eight; Trio Four For Eight; Ex Flover Five. (65:57) Personnel: Roscoce Mitchell, saxophones, flutes; Corey Wilkes, trumpet, flugelhorm; Craig Taborn, piano; Vijay Iyer, piano; Jaribu Shahid, bass; Harrison Bankhead, bass, cello; Tani Tabbal, drums; Vieneet Deuis drumso. Vincent Davis, drums, Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

### Jazz Byjames Hale

### **Six-String Magicians**

Smooth, round and sweet, Russell Malone's tone might be what catches the ear first, but it's his ability to vary his attack and timing that maintains interest. On Triple Play (MaxJazz 607; 60:52 ★★★★), his first trio recording, he showcases the full range of the voice that has made him a busy musical accomplice for the likes of Ron Carter and Diana Krall. Mining the horn-like melodic tradition that stretches back to Charlie Christian, Malone is always ready with a slightly tart aside or rhythmic twist. Bassist David Wong and drummer Montez Coleman are ideal partners for him, working hand-in-glove and mirroring him closely. A more chordal take on "The Kind Of Girl She Is" and a ripe, solo interpretation of "Unchained Melody" complete the picture of Malone in his prime.

#### Ordering info: maxjazz.com

Recently, Joe Morris has been exploring the double bass more than his signature dry-toned electric six-string, but Camera (ESP-Disk 4063; 50:22 \*\*\*1/2) finds him contrasting his regular axe against violin and cello. With Luther Gray on understated drums-with cymbals that sound as arid as Morris' guitar-the string trio is front and center. Katt Hernandez's violin explores impressionistic, microtonal territory, while cellist Junko Fujiwara Simons plays acerbic washes under Morris' typically skittery lead lines. The combination of fine-grained guitar detail and more gauzy string textures highlights the link to the photographic theme, and it's not difficult to visualize street scenes-both stark and abstract-to accompany Morris' six compositions. Ordering info: espdisk.com

Desert Island Dreamers (Arbors Jazz 19412; 63:40 \*\*1/2) would've been a stron-

ger recording had Bucky, John and Martin Pizzarelli obeyed the "no 'Stairway'" rule from *Wayne's World* and steered clear of the Led Zeppelin classic. That's not the only programming decision that makes you wonder what other options were in play. "Over The Rainbow," "Danny Boy" and "Moon River" surely deserve a rest, and poet Rod McKuen's "A Man Alone" is a slight thing. There is no shortage of instrumental prowess here, but the choice of material—maudlin and overused in the main—makes it seem like an easy-listening session rather than anyone's idea of an essential collection.

#### Ordering info: arborsrecords.com

Although amplification helps, making a guitar heard in the context of a 16-piece, brass- and reed-heavy band represents a challenge. Composer-arrangers like Maria Schneider and Darcy James Argue often



employ electric guitar as an additional color rather than as an ongoing lead voice. With his signal processed into a rich, piping tone, Kurt Rosenwinkel more than holds his own with Portugal's Orquestra Jazz Matosinhos, performing seven of his own compositions on *Our Secret World* (Word Of Mouth Music 00003; 66:13  $\star \star \star \star 1/2$ ). The band's three arrangers find ways of making him an integral element. On "Dream Of The Old," Carlos Azevedo's chart has Rosenwinkel soaring over the band with a sound so large that it seems to be as broad and rich as the entire horn section.

#### Ordering info: wommusic.com

Veteran guitarist and educator Rolf Sturm steps away from the band he coleads with his bassist brother and delivers 10 solo acoustic performances that resonate with verve. Balance (Water Street Music 124; 50:59 \*\*\*\*) is divided between jazz standards like "Stella By Starlight" and "Out Of Nowhere" and an equal number of originals that take whimsical anagrams as their titles ("Alone Together" becomes "To Get Her Alone," for example). Sturm's style encompasses elements of classical, American roots music and flamenco, and he mixes them so seamlessly and constantly that they become their own anagram. Regardless of his approach, each piece is suffused with tremendous energy and movement. DB

#### Ordering info: waterstreetmusic.org

### JOEL HARRISON String Choir The Music of Paul Motian

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#### JOEL HARRISON guitar LIBERTY ELLMAN guitar CHRISTIAN HOWES violin SAM BARDFELD violin MAT MANERI viola PETER UGRIN viola DANA LEONG violoncello

Reinterpretations of iconic composers rarely share the energy or the vision of the original material. Guitarist/composer Joel Harrison goes far to not only pay homage to legendary drummer/composer Paul Motian but to also invest his own invention and passion into the material performed on this new Sunnyside CD. This recording presents the guitarist's arrangements of signature songs of Motian performed by an ensemble of stringed improvisers, featuring guitarist Liberty Eliman, violinists Christian Howes and Sam Bardfeld, viola players Mat Maneri and Peter Ugrin, and cellist Dana Leong. The music remains familiar, but is renewed through Harrison's personal and spirited perspective on Motian's music.

www.sunnysiderecords.com

#### Lew Soloff, Steve Richman and the Harmonie Ensemble of New York *Sketches Of Spain* SHEFFIELD LAB 10089

Suzanne Pittson Out Of The Hub: The Music Of Freddie Hubbard VINELAND RECORDS 7757

W hy bother? This is the most obvious, if simplistic, question to ask of a tribute album. And if the project is worthwhile, the artists probably have answers. For Steve Richman, the conductor of the Harmonie Ensemble of New York, the 2008 performance of *Sketches Of Spain* with Lew Soloff was a passion project and a story of family friendships. Its recent recording and release also happens to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1960 masterpiece, offering a new perspective from which to consider the masterful arrangements, world music-tinged solos and unmatched collaborative efforts of Gil Evans and Miles Davis.

While Soloff understandably makes the conservative choice to stick closely to Davis' original trumpet part, Richman's orchestra softens and rounds out some of the edginess of that first recording. The castanet is muted, while Francois Moutin's bass comes closer to the surface on "Concierto De Aranjuez." In a darker version of "Solea," Soloff's lines harken back to the wooziness of "Will O' The Wisp," rather than adhering to Davis' tendency to bend notes to their breaking points. The end result is a faithful, if conservative, tribute to one of the most endlessly fascinating collaborations in the music's history.





Suzanne Pittson's Freddie Hubbard tribute, on the other hand, is anything but conservative. As she did on her 1999 release *A Remembrance Of John Coltrane*, Pittson bravely uses her voice to pay homage to the work of one of the most important figures in hard-bop. Covering tunes from across Hubbard's catalogue, the vocalist—along with her husband and pianist, Jeff, and Evan Pittson—pens new lyrics for about half of the tracks. And for the most part, she doesn't waver even when facing a vocal reinterpretation of some of Hubbard's trickiest and bestknown solos, from "Byrd Like" to "Crisis."

The band complements her soprano beautifully on tracks like "Gibraltar," with Jeremy Pelt helping

to set a swinging vibe from the outset, and John Patitucci keeping the bottom intact on tunes where Pittson's soprano threatens to overwhelm things.

At times, the singer's chordal leaps and otherwise pristine phrasing feel a bit forced and unstable. But on tunes like "Out Of The Hub," she recovers gracefully, thanks in large part to a scat that jives more naturally with Hubbard's music than her often poetic (but sometimes saccharine) lyrics.

If the answer to "Why sing Hubbard?" is about creative risk and originality, then Pittson's project succeeds despite its hiccups. *—Jennifer Odell* 

Sketches of Spain: Concierto De Aranjuez; Will O' The Wisp; The Pan Piper; Saeta; Solea. (41:02) Personnel: Lew Soloff, trumpet; Steve Richman, conductor; Harmonie Ensemble of New York: Dominic Derasse, Kenny Rampton, Joe Giorgiannai, Marc Osterer, trumpets; Mike Setzer, Earl McIntyre, trombones; R.J. Kelley, Doug Lyons, Vincent Chancey, french horns; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Ed Joffe, Ralph Olsen, Rick Heckman, Charles Pillow, Ron Jannelli, reeds; Stacey Shames, harp; Francois Moutin, bass; Jim Musto, drums; Jon Haas, Erik Charlston, percussion. Ordering info: sheffeldab.com

Out Of The Hub: The Music Of Freddie Hubbard: Our Own (Gibraltar); Up Jumped Spring; Out Of The Hub (One Of Another Kind); Bright Sun (Lament For Booker); True Visions (True Colors); You're My Everything; We're Having a Crisis (Crisis); Moment To Moment; Lost And Found (The Melting Pot); Like A Byrd (Byrd Like); Betcha By Colly, Wowl (45:07)

(Eyro Like): SetCata by Golly, Wowl (45:07) Personnet: Suzanne Pittson, voice; Jeremy Pett, trumpet, flugelhom; Steve Wilson, alto and soprano saxophones; Jeff Pittson, piano, Fender Rhodes electric piano; John Patitucci, bass; Willie Jones III, drums. Ordering info: suzannepittson.com

## Ingrid Laubrock Anti-House

The liner notes put it so well, there's no point saying it any other way; this music is information-dense. Even when saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock plays with essential restraint, it has a heft that makes casual listening pointless.



This is the German-born musician's first effort under her own name since leaving London for Brooklyn, and she has surrounded herself with accompanists who realize her music with unstinting commitment. No one trifles or coasts. John Hébert and Tom Rainey sound extraordinarily assured articulating "Quick Draw's" rapidly changing rhythmic terrain. Mary Halvorson shifts with aplomb from hushed, baleful ambience to caroming, crushed-metal chords. And Kris Davis exercises unbearable restraint on the creeping "Big Crunch." Laubrock ranges just as freely on her horns, sounding like a microtonally mindful Paul Desmond on the stealthy ballad "Tex & Clementine" and plumbing the spiky introduction to "Funhouse Glockwork" with Bhob Rainey-like gulps and gargles.

The more time one spends with this record, the more it impresses. Beyond the rigorous playing, each of its 14 tracks abounds with surprise changes in shape and direction. But while it commands admiration, it's hard to love; the contrasts and complexities don't really add up to some greater whole. -Bill Meyer

Anti-House: Slowfish Glowfish; Flowery Prison Cell; Messy Minimum; Quick Draw; Funhouse Glockwork; Tex & Clementine; Anti-House; Is Life Anything Like This; Big Bang; Big Crunch; Betterboon; Tom Can't Sleep; Oh Yes; Mona Lisa Trampoline. (72:45)
Personnel: Ingrid Laubrock, tenor and soprano saxophone; Mary Halvorson, guitar; John Hébert, base; Tom Beinay, drams, dockaersiel; Kis Davis, anano, and Stanger, John Stanger, St

Personnel: Ingind Laubrock, tenor and soprano saxophone; Mary Halvorson, guitar; John Hebert, bass; Tom Rainey, drums, glockenspiel; Kris Davis, piano. Ordering info: intaktrec.ch Marty Ehrlich Fables TZADIK 8155 \*\*\*

The Ray Anderson– Marty Ehrlich Quartet Hear You Say: Live in Willisau INTUITION 71303 ★★★



Arty Ehrlich begins *Fables* by overdubbing several wind instruments on the same track: an unaccompanied bass clarinet ostinato, then clarinet, flute and soprano saxophone over it. Hankus Netsky's accordion brightens the somber mood while providing at least a sense of improvisation. Ehrlich titles the composition "Scroll No. 1"; it's the first of three "scrolls" appearing on the album, and it's played straight. There's no rhythm section, and the 10 compositions often have more in common with chamber music than jazz.

Ehrlich's sensibility is unsurprising. He aligns himself with the progressive strains in jazz that break with convention while incorporating music styles another generation would have ignored. Here, he draws from not just classical music, but also Jewish and eastern European music. For the most part it's not the lively dance music of the klezmer, but rather the more solemn music that originated in the synagogue.

Yet Ehrlich, the composer and the instrumentalist, sheds this cool veneer often enough. Ehrlich plays a swinging clarinet solo on "The Thimble And The Thread," a tune that sounds well-suited to musical theater. The unusual trio features tuba player Marcus Roja and Netsky on piano. "The Lion's Tanz" features the same sidemen, but Ehrlich plays alto on a tune that becomes increasingly heated with each chorus. Ehrlich's tone becomes first edgy, and then coarse; the harmony and structure all but disappear by the end of the song.

"The Lion's Tanz" also appears on *Hear You Say*, a live recording from an August 2009 booking at a Swiss festival. It features a quartet Ehrlich coleads with trombonist Ray Anderson; the rhythm section includes drummer Matt Wilson. Ironically, the tune features less structure than the version appearing on Ehrlich's *Fables*. Describing the beginning as rubato would be generous. The drumbeat, closer to a march, provides the underpinning for a collective freak-out.

The tune, though, is not only the shortest of the seven compositions; it's also the only one in which the quartet avoids even the slightest reference to traditional fare. The opener, "Portrait Of Leroy Jenkins," begins as a blues; the similarly long "Hot Crab Pot" has a boppish feel, and the deliberate "My Wish" recalls Thelonious Monk.

"Alligatory Rhumba" sounds like the most enjoyable. Over a playful rhythm, Ehrlich's alto and Anderson's trombone shadow one another while trading licks, riffs and vocal effects for the better part of the 11-minute track. Betraying an affinity for the swing era, the performance also demonstrates continuity: Even as these folks look to the future, they keep in touch with the past. -Eric Fine

Fables: Scroll No. 1; The Thimble And The Thread; Es Felt; Wednesday's Waltz; Rozo D'Shabbos; Scroll No. 2; The Mirror Waltz; The Lion's Tanz; I'm Growing Into My Hat; Scroll No. 3. (45:34)
Personnel: Marty Ehrlich, clarinet, bass clarinet, flute, alto and soprano saxophones; Hankus Netsky, piano, accordion; Marcus Roja, tuba (2, 8, 10); Jerome Harris, acoustic bass guitar (3).
Ordering info: tzadik.com

Hear You Say: Portrait of Leroy Jenkins; Hot Crab Pot; My Wish; The Lion's Tanz; The Git Go; Alligatory Rhumba; Hear You Say. (63:08) Personnel: Ray Anderson, trombone; Marty Ehrlich, clarinet, alto and soprano saxophones; Brad

Jones, bass; Matt Wilson, drums. Ordering info: allegro-music.com



#### Lauren Sevian Blueprint INNER CIRCLE MUSIC 004 \*\*\*<sup>1</sup>/2

A release on Greg Osby's hip Inner Circle label, this disc debuts a rising talent on the baritone saxophone. Sevian guested with the Count Basie band as a teenager, studied with Mark Turner, Donny McCaslin

and Joe Temperley and has been anchoring such groups as Travis Sullivan's Bjorkestra and the feisty Mingus Big Band. The latter group's bass player Boris Kozlov joins her here, with a crack rhythm section of pianist George Colligan and indemand young drummer Johnathan Blake.

"Blueprint" opens with the band in deep swinging flow before Sevian's throaty bari twists through a sinewy minor blues, making clear she has bags of energy and lots to say. The chorus trades at the end feature Blake's elastic beats. The ballad "Elusive Illusion" sounds as wandering as the title suggests, though Kozlov does his best to sculpt something out of it, with Colligan injecting glissandi. "Not So Softly" is another matter, Sevian gripping the furious tempo with great au-

SFJAZZ Collective Live 2010: 7th Annual Concert Tour SFJAZZ RECORDS \*\*\*\*

S FJAZZ Collective embraces the ideal that each player can express individual creativity in a leading role, with the rest of his mates falling in line in support in order to accomplish interactive synthesis. The concept sounds great on paper. Putting it into practice in an octet is another matter: The prospect of eight prominent instrumentalists/composers achieving all-forone group mentality seems as likely as bipartisan Congressional agreement on issues pertaining to the American economy.

Given their cohesive performances on *Live* 2010: 7th Annual Concert Tour, a three-disc celebration of Horace Silver works and related originals captured during a spring 2010 tour, the members of the SFJAZZ Collective should consider running for office. Unison melodies dominate the arrangements, replete with improvisational flights, ostinato passages and sympathetic interaction. Despite the talent involved, at no point does the ensemble stray from its core philosophy; this is a team on which no single member steps out as the star. Competition and overshadowing take a back seat to setting moods, extrapolating themes and teasing out the colors of the material at hand.

Witness the percussive textures and hardbop threads sewn throughout drummer Eric Harland's treatment of Silver's "Senor Blues."



thority, breaking fluid mid register bop lines with rhythmic skips and occasional bagpiping higher register excursions. Colligan and the boys eat it up; an exciting track. Elsewhere on this hour long CD, Sevian pays tribute to bari king Cecil Payne and tenorist John Stubblefield

and negotiates denser harmony alongside partner Mike DiRubbo on alto ("Gesture Of No Fear"), where she again relishes the challenging tempo. On the darkly funky "Outline" Sevian's tone includes Pepper Adams-style low register pops. The slower track "Intrepid Traveller" is less convincing but the craggy, precipitous "The Free Effect" kicks hard, Sevian broadening her palette with overblowing, Colligan painting abstract and Kozlov briefly attempting to rein his relentless swing. —*Michael Jackson* 

Blueprint: Blueprint; Ellusive Illusion; Not So Softly; One For C. Payne; Gesture Of No Fear; True; For Mr Stubb; Outline; Intrepid Traveler; The Free Effect. (64.33) **Personne**: Lauren Sevian, baritone saxophone; George Colligan, plano; Boris Kozlov, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums; Mike DiRubbo, alto saxophone (5). **Ordering info: innecriclemusic.net** 



The piece alternately spins, dances and broods as flaring horns brawl with hesitant, shifting beats in a back alley. Spaciousness and impressionism reign here. In particular, Stefon Harris' vibraphones function as a bonding agent. He and pianist Edward Simon occasionally marshal the parade, hitting stride with gospel-laden rhythms and impromptu solos, yet they more frequently serve as accessories to cinematic mise en scene.

On Simon's "Collective Presence," an atmospheric introduction gives way to subtle, introspective devices that float within a vertigo-inducing twilight zone. —Bob Gendron



#### Nik Bärtsch's Ronin Llyria ECM 2178 \*\*\*\*

The titles to each piece here may indicate the sameness the songs share from track to track. But it's program music played unprogrammically. Pianist Nik Bärtsch and crew deliver a "standard" ECM date, complete with atmospheric reverb, a sense of the jazz haunt, overall mood-making. In fact, the material is structured around motifs, patterns and waves of instrumental expressions. The music swings in its own funny way, as we hear on "Modul 48," Bärtsch's eight-note sequence framing this midtempo piece that falls between smooth rockish exposition and a more loose jazzy syncopation, Sha's reed playing helping to set the pace.

This is a rhythm-section band replete with structure and in complete support of Sha's and Bärtsch's occasional meanderings. And yet, the rhythm section itself becomes part of the show because so much of this music is based on meters, cycles and patterns, not to mention grooves. Featuring bassist Bjorn Meyer, drummer Kaspar Rast and percussionist Andi Pupato, Ronin's tempos vary, the arrangements slightly different from track to track, the potential for a kind of boring sameness threatening to mar the proceedings. And yet, it's Bärtsch's writing and a tight band that keep things interesting, pulsating. Some of the material becomes repetitive to a fault, like "Modul 52," where the pattern idea is a tad lifeless. Ronin can seem like a soundtrack in search of a movie, "Modul 52" being a perfect example. And yet, it is the execution and sense of direction and purpose that underlie this music that keep it affecting. "Modul 55" takes that same incessant formalism and yet somehow makes it more of an engaged listen, the interweaving patterns and alternating senses of pulse a kind of aural illusion keeping one off-balance, but in a pleasantly disorienting kind of way. -John Ephland

Live 2010: 7th Annual Concert Tour: Disc One: Cape Verdean Blues; Lonely Woman; More Than Meets The Ear, Collective Presence; Harlandia. Disc Two: Suite For Ward Martin Tavares; The Devil Is In The Details; Sister Sadie; Peace; Triple Threat; Song For My Father. Disc Three: Senor Blues; The Lady From Johannesburg; The Mystery Of Water; Brothersister II; Baghdad Blues. (52:13/60:41/52:52)

<sup>(3213/00.41/02:32)</sup> Personnet: Miguel Zenon, alto saxophone; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Avishai Cohen, trumpet; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Stefon Harris, vibraphone; Edward Simon, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Eric Harland, drums. Ordering info: sflazz.org

Llyria: Modul 48; Modul 52; Modul 55; Modul 47; Modul 53; Modul 51; Modul 49\_44, (56:08)

Personnel: Nik Bärtsch, piano; Sha, alto saxophone, bass clarinet; Bjorn Meyer, bass; Kaspar Rast, drums; Andi Pupato, percussion. Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

### Blues By FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

### Harmonicats Unleashed

Tad Robinson: Back In Style (Severn 0050; 47:21 ★★★½) Robinson, here on his fifth album, is one of those rare soulblues singers who manages to finesse the sense of wonder at the heart of assertions on the power of love. His vocals and harp playing are personalized and immaculately ordered into arrangements of quality songs mostly written by him and bassist Steve Gomes. The supporting studio band, featuring guitarist Alex Schultz, is with Robinson all the way, though a cheesy electric piano does their Memphis soul approximations no favor. Ordering info: severnrecords.com

Bob Corritore & Friends: Harmonica Blues (Delta Groove 139; 72:40  $\star \star \star 1/2$ ) Impresario Corritore collects 15 tracks that he recorded in the studio the past few decades with veterans gigging at his Rhythm Room club in Phoenix. Big Pete Pearson

dredges up true grit singing "Tin Pan Alley," Eddy Clearwater cuts a swath of fun through "That's My Baby" and Little Milton, on vocals and guitar, takes listeners to school with his "Six Bits In Your Dollar," a bad-feeling-thismorning lesson. These guys, along with Nappy Brown, Koko Taylor, Pinetop Perkins and the rest, may be past their prime but they're blessed with unconquerable spirit. They're also comfortable with the house band helmed by Corritore, a damn good harp player with a lively sense of history.

#### Ordering info: deltagroovemusic.com

The Chris O'Leary Band: Mr. Used To Be (Fidellis/Vizztone 001; 40:10 \*\*\*<sup>1/2</sup>) O'Leary, formerly with Levon Helm's Barnburners, is a more than capable singer and Chicago-style harmonica stylist; the proof comes in the shuffles and jump numbers he handles with suave assurance on his debut recording. It's really the slow tempo of "Blues Is A Woman" that draws out his best singing, reminiscent of Jimmy Witherspoon. His Hudson Valley-based cohorts stir up the all-original material without faltering. Young guitarist Chris Vitarello merits notice for his technical powers and imagination, his reach extending to rockabilly and swinging jazz.

#### Ordering info: vizztone.com

Tas Cru: Jus' Desserts (Crustee Tee 1001; 47:35  $\star \star \star 1/2$ ) Cru, a sometimes facetious and other times serious storyteller in rural New York State, gives the engaging original songs of his second album a comfy, intimate



feel with his distinctive singing voice and his prowess on harmonica and guitar. He's ably supported by a keyboards/drums/bass/second guitar team of a similar stamp. Ordering info: tascnu.com

Mitch Kashmar & The Pontiax: 100 Miles To Go (Delta Groove 140; 50:24 \*\*\*) This reissued 1989 album by the California jump-blues band features Kashmar, then in his late 20s, on still-ripening vocals and harp. He conveys motion and force, especially effective when his tin instrument emits flows of graceful notes. Now-deceased harmonica marvel William Clarke quests on "Horn Of Plenty." Two bonus tracks made at a studio reunion just a few months ago, the swamp-sodden "When You Do Me Like That" and mildly political New Orleans romp "Petroleum Blues," have Kashmar showing more assurance and having fun, though neither tune soars. Ordering info: deltagroovemusic

Swississippi Chris Harper: Four Aces And A Harp (Swississippi 2010; 72:40 \*\*) Harper, a Swiss, bankrolled this part-Delta acoustic and part-Chicago electric album and got to live out his fantasy of tooting his Marine Band (reverentially) and singing (awkwardly) on "Eyesight To The Blind" and other classics in the company of real-deal bluesmen Jimmy Burns, John Primer, Willie Smith and Bob Stroger. Singer-guitarist Burns and guitarist Primer have their moments, but they can't save this album from the discard pile. DB Ordering info: swississippi-records.com



REZABBASIACOUSTICQUARTET

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REZ ABBASI accostic guitars BILL WARE vibraphone STEPHAN CRUMP bass ERIC McPHERSON drums

Talented guitarist and composer Rez Abbasi has taken a new approach to his music. On his new Sunnyside CD. Natural Selection, he has ditched his electric guitar and convened the Rez Abbasi Acoustic Quartet, a new ensemble made up entirely of instrumentalists. **RAAO** features the talents of vibraphonist Bill Ware, bassist Stephan Crump, and drummer Eric McPherson on the leader's adventurous compositions and some thoughtful covers.

www.sunnysiderecords.com

#### Band Of Gypsys Reincarnation 40 Years After INTER-YOU KFT 01 \*\*\*\*

Y ou hear this band's take on Jimi Hendrix's "If Six Was Nine" and you think: "Man, Hendrix's music really was set up to

play jazz." Turning this song into a quasi-Latin piece that ends up swinging, with jazz chords to boot, makes you miss the original a bit less. The same could be said for the Band of Gypsys Reincarnation's "Manic Depression," which is recognizable but also imbued with a unique flavor. Taking the rock contours of this classic, their version becomes a bona fide jazz waltz. At times recalling the fiery expressiveness of Jean-Paul Bourelly, leader Laszlo Halper's adherence to rock and jazz energies is on full display with the dervish-y, swinging reinvention of "Voodoo Chile." And his mesmerizing use of the wah-wah is reminiscent without being imitative.

Halper's essentially Hungarian band creates, in his words, "a bridge between the musical world of Jimi Hendrix, the jazz played by Hungarian Gypsies and traditional Gypsy music." What he's been able to pull off includes the strange mixture of American trumpeter Randy Brecker on four tracks in addition to a cut with guitarist Tibor Tatrai on a very funky, pleasant-

#### The Dymaxion Quartet Sympathetic Vibrations SELF RELEASE ★★★½

Inventor Buckminster Fuller has recently spawned some interest in jazz circles from the Rova Saxophone Quartet to composer Darcy James Argue. Now enters The Dymaxion Quartet, a piano-less foursome led by drummer Gabriel Gloege, who strives to apply Fuller's concept of "dynamic maximum tension" to the field of music. In addition, Gloege's nine compositions are inspired by photographer Asca S.R. Aull's pictures.

There are two types of drummers/bandleaders. Those who feel the need to populate every tune with a drum solo and those who understand that the role of their instrument is to support and serve the music. The band's debut, *Sympathetic Vibrations*, clearly shows that Gabriel Gloege belongs to the latter category.

As a bandleader, Gloege has already learned how to present a balanced program and found how to mix tempos and moods. His freebop leanings create a proper environment for collective cohesiveness and invention. A real treat is the near constant dialogue between trumpeter Michael Shobe and tenor saxophonist Mark Small. Counterpoint, shadowing, or echoing are part of the arsenal they use to build and main-



ly plodding "Purple Haze." And from a 2004 concert, and also on one track, are (it appears to be) the late piccolo bassist/vocalist Jackie Orszaczky, groove box player Zsolt Kosztyu and percussionist Janos Paczko helping to creatively reinvent "Crosstown Traffic." If that weren't enough, Halper inin with a guitar paraphrase of

serts a bit of Chopin with a guitar paraphrase of the composer's "Prelude In E Minor."

The core band includes a radical and inspired choice in cimbalom player Miklos Lukacs, whose soloing is ferocious and full of heart, whether he's checking in on another funky rendition of, in this case, "Fire," or adding otherworldly touches to "Voodoo Chile." Brecker's Freddie Hubbard-flavored solo on "Fire" confirms that even the trumpet can nail Hendrix's music. Drummer Imre Koszegi contributes a sound that's nowhere near what Mitch Mitchell or Buddy Miles put forth but a beat and vibe that help to drive this band's sound and pulse, clearly more jazz than rock. *—John Ephland* 

40 Years After: If Six Was Nine; Manic Depression; Purple Haze; Fire; Hey Joe; Who Knows; Voodoo Chile; Crosstown Traffic; Prelude in E Minor-paraphrase; Medley: Little Wing, Third Stone From The Sun-part I; Third Stone From The Sun-part II. (59:16) Personnet: Laszlo Halger, Tibor Tatrai (3), guitar; Inrer Koszegi, drums; Miklos Lukacs, cimbalom; Peter Olah, double bass; Istvan Fekete (3, 5, 6, 8, 11), Randy Brecker (1, 2, 4, 7), trumpet; Jackie Orszaczky, piccolo bass, vocal (8); Zsolt Kosztyu, groove box (8); Janos Paczko, percussion (8).



tain momentum. Bass player Dan Fabricatore supplies quite a chunk of melodic content and Gloege succeeds in not drawing too much the attention to himself, which is a compliment.

In the end, the references to Fuller and Aull might set too many expectations and be a disservice to the music, which does not need those references to be enjoyed. Ultimately, it's the compelling tunes played with conviction, the intriguing role-switching process and the stimulating interplay that captivate. The Dymaxion Quartet is a band to watch. -Alain Drouot

Sympathetic Variations: At One; The Kiss; Night Market; Spring Equinox; Summer's End; The Boat; Wollman's Rink; Midnight Mass; Fulton Fish Market. (55:05) Personnel: Michael Shobe, trumpet; Mark Small, tenor saxo-

phone; Dan Fabricatore, bass; Gabriel Gloege, drums. Ordering info: dymaxion.bandcamp.com



Ted Hearne Katrina Ballads NEW AMSTERDAM RECORDS 011 \*\*\*1/2

I n the days following Hurricane Katrina, the world endured a media monsoon of horrific images in an effort to understand what went wrong in New Orleans. Anderson Cooper asked viewers to steel themselves to accounts of death and destruction because it was our duty to know what was going on. Composer Ted Hearne's treatise on the disaster demands something similar.

By setting media-derived, post-Katrina soundbytes to a dizzying array of juxtaposed musical forms, Hearne creates a sonic narrative that taps into the fear, confusion and deep pain caused by the storm and by the George W. Bush administration's stagnating response. The disc opens with the piercing sound of Abby Fischer's mezzo-soprano shrilly announcing that "New Orleans is sinking," her vibrato jarring your eardrums into high alert.

Nathan Koci's horn takes center stage on track two, which plays out like the day after Katrina struck. A solo horn calls out, as if looking for survivors. The response is frantic, grim, high-pitched. The clash of metal on metal conjures a broken home's door; a man searches for his wife's body.

In the next confluence of music and media clips, Hearne deftly continues to retell the story, but now his tone is one of appropriate mocking. Bush's infamous "heck of a job, Brownie" remark becomes surreal fodder for lyrics.

Compositional feats aside, this is no bel canto. A slew of bleak soundscapes and dissonant refrains marshals so many negative emotions that you may not know if you should cry, scream or just turn the stereo off—like the experience of watching the news right after Aug. 29, 2005.

-Jennifer Odell

Katrina Ballads: Prologue: Keeping Its Head Above Water; When We Awoke, It Was To That Familiar Phrase: New Orleans Dodged a Bullet; Hardy Jackson: 8.30.05; Interlude 1; Dennis Hastert: \$3.1.05; Bridge To Gretna; Anderson Cooper And May Landrieu: 9.1.05; Brownie, You're Doing A Heck Of A Job; Interlude 2; Barbara Busi: 9.5.05; Kanye West: 9.2.05; Ashley Neslon. (62:59) **Personnel:** Abby Fischer, mezzo-soprano; Ted Hearne, tenor; Isaiah Robinson, tenor; Allison Semmes, soprano; Anthony Turner, baritone; Chris Coletti, trumpet; David Hanlon, piano; Kelli Katham, flute; Nathan Koci, horn; Taylor Levine, electric guitar; Batya Macadam-Somer, violin; Teleen Mack, clarinet, bass clarinet; David Medine, viola; Jody Redhage, cello; Kris Saebo, bass guitar; Ron Wiltrout, drums, percussion. **Ordering info: katrinaballads.com** 

### Beyond | BY JAMES PORTER

### Riding The 'Soul Train' Bails

For 35 years, Don Cornelius' "Soul Train" was the premier television showcase for contemporary black music in America. Almost every significant soul artist who came along between 1971 and 2006 appeared on the program, superstars and onehit wonders alike. This wasn't the first show devoted solely to soul, nor was it even the first national soul showcase (that honor would go to "The !!!! Beat"). But unlike that show, "Soul Train" was black-owned, black-oper-

ated and black-hosted. From small beginnings in 1970 as a local program in Chicago, Cornelius took the franchise to Los Angeles the following year and had a hit on his hands. Just about every major development in '70s-'00s black music was showcased: funk, disco, hip-hop, new jack swing and quiet storm. Jazz artists who dabbled in soul like Herbie Hancock, Ramsey Lewis and the Crusaders were featured. Blues acts like Little Milton, B.B. King and Bobby Bland got screen time. Even black rock 'n' rollers like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Lenny Kravitz and the Bus Boys occasionally rode the rails, as did white performers like Elton John and David Bowie. While the program covered a ton of ground in four decades, the show still remains identified with the afropick era of the '70s. The Best Of Soul Train (TimeLife 25658 180:00/155:00/155:000 ★★★★) DVD set collects 16 episodes, all but one from that decade.

Barry White, The Isley Brothers, Jackson Five, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Teddy Pendergrass, Sly & The Family Stone and others are all shown in their prime, or close to it. But it should be noted that the episodes have all been edited somewhat. The opening of one episode from October 1972 promises Gladys Knight & the Pips, the O'Jays and Major Lance; as it turns out, we don't get to see Lance's performance. Even if he wasn't quite the hitmaker he was in the early part of the '60s, the entire show should have remained intact. A nice bonus (unannounced on the cover) is the addition of some of the original commercials for Afro-Sheen and Ultra-Sheen, generally seen only during Soul Train but fondly recalled by those who were there.

The format was generally lip-synched performances, but unlike predecessor Dick Clark's "American Bandstand," Cornelius' show would have the acts play live when possible. About half of the performers do their thing live on this DVD, including James Brown



with the JBs and Barry White with his massive Love Unlimited Orchestra. One memorable 1973 show had Curtis Mayfield singing along to a censored "Pusherman" (with lines from the song edited to cover the drug references). On the DVD, Mayfield mouths to the original unvarnished version.

What's also interesting about the set is watching the kids change along with the times. On the earliest shows here (1972-'73), the dancing is every bit as wild as the fashions, and the kids are genuinely happy to be seen on nationwide TV. By the disco era (1978-'79), the mode of dress has gone conservative and although there is more room to dance, the steps are a bit more subtle, not quite as acrobatic as before. There is one token post-'70s episode: Stevie Wonder is shown in 1991, doing a medley of his hits with the "Soul Train" dancers singing along. Although the kids are enthusiastic, by this time they were more jaded and less surprised about being in front of the camera. Their facial expressions seemed practiced for this moment, and they may have shoved some people out of the way for this exposure. This is in stark contrast to Wonder's appearance on the same show in early '73 (not included on this DVD) when he's sitting at the piano singing a song about "Soul Train" that he composed specially for the occasion. Rather than jockeying for position, the dancers merely get in where they fit in, laughing with genuine excitement. The 1973 crowd were just kids having fun; the 1991 audience may as well have been extras auditioning for a job in a video. Yet Cornelius remained cool as a cucumber, and Wonder will always be Wonder.

Other features include interviews with Cornelius, Smokey Robinson and Brian McKnight. Even if the episodes were altered, this DVD set gives a fair picture of why they called themselves "The Hippest Trip In America." DB Ordering info: timelife.com



#### www.AnzicRecords.com



#### Anat Cohen Clarinetwork Live at the Village Vanguard

Anat Cohen's Clarinetwork Live at the Village Vanguard, inspired by Benny Goodman and celebrating his centennial, is a

musical tour-de-force. Cohen leads an all star rhythm section (Benny Green, Peter Washington, Lewis Nash) on this exquisite live recording that returns the clarinet to its rightful role at the forefront of jazz. \*\*\*\* DownBeat Magazine.



#### Avishai Cohen introducing Triveni

introducing Triveni, features longtime collaborators Omer Avital on bass and Nasheet Waits on drums. Drawing from hard-bop, funk, and avant-garde, introducing Triveni

takes on music from the Great American songbook to Cohen's original compositions, and his provocative and always soulful playing has never sounded so assured.

FRATURING JOEL FRAMM
LITTLE BLACK BIRD
mit

#### Ernesto Cervini Quartet Little Black Bird

Young composer and drummer Ernesto Cervini collects compositions like others collect seashells, or snapshots. Cervini's sophomore release includes a riveting

program of mostly originals played by a fiery ensemble featuring saxophonist Joel Frahm (Brad Mehldau, Jane Monheit) and Cervini's engrossing drumming. "...Cervini exemplifies 'float like a butterfly; sting like a

"...Cervni exemplifies Joan ince a bunerity; sting like a bee ""★★★★ - DownBeat Magazine.



#### Amy Cervini Lovefool

The Amy Cervini Quartet (ACQ) effortlessly journeys through an eclectic mix of songs from The Cardigans, Depeche Mode, and Jack Johnson to American Songbook favorites. With

guest appearances by Joel Frahm (Tenor), Marty Ehrlich (Bass Clarinet), and String Nucleus. Includes Fred Hersch's never before recorded composition "Lazin' Around." "... a thoughful and broad-minded jazz singer..." - New York Times

### Historical BY JOHN MURPH

### CTI Flexed '70s Muscles

In addition to the four-disc set *CTI: The Cool Revolution,* Sony's Masterworks Jazz commemorates the label's 40th anniversary with a spate of reissues that epitomized CTI's signature sound and nearly defined mainstream jazz in the '70s.

Initially, label founder Creed Taylor demonstrated a fondness for bossa nova by releasing timeless recordings by Antonio Carlos Jobim, Milton Nascimento and Tamba 4. So it makes sense for Jobim's 1970 album *Stone Flower* (CTI/ Masterworks Jazz 77682; 39:53

\*\*\*\*) to be among the first reissues. That album's posh allure continues to hypnotize as it showcases Jobim's manicured keyboard work on the whistle-friendly "Children's Games" and sauntering "Brazil." As a producer, Taylor demonstrated his gift for packaging jazz—or in this case, high-end instrumental music—in a manner that didn't insult jazz fans but wasn't too bristling to put off pop lovers. Not a note, beat, harmony or melody seem out of place.

CTI's lacquered production sheen and wide-screen orchestrations, often provided by Don Sebesky, tended to neuter the emotional immediacy of some records. Such is the case with Kenny Burrell's 1971 God Bless The Child (77681; 49:52 \*\*\*1/2). Whether intentional or not, the music lacks the urgency of the LP cover, which depicts a helicopter hovering over a war-torn forest in Vietnam. Burrell's blues-drenched, elegantly understated guitar takes center nearly throughout, serving up nice grooves on "Love Is The Answer" and "Do What You Gotta Do" and glowing balladry on "Be Yourself" and "God Bless The Child." Still it's a disappointment that he never engages in any heated dialogue with his stellar band mates. such as trumpeter Freddie Hubbard or keyboardists Hugh Lawson and Richard Wyands.

Sebesky's rich orchestrations also insulate flutist Hubert Laws on 1972's *Morning Star* (76833; 35:50 \*\*\*\*). Here, though, the pairing seems more ideal as on the evocative title-track, which showcases Laws' dynamic flute improvisations as well as some engaging accompaniment from keyboardist Bob James, drummer Billy Cobham and bassist Ron Carter. When the tempo slows down as on the beautiful "Let Her Go," Laws' flute leaps forward from the thick orchestrations, wonderfully.



and the cinematic title-track, on which Baker turns in a stunning vocal performance. He and Laws handle Hank Mobley's "Funk In Deep Freeze" admirably, too. Still there's a slickness to this date that almost makes much of the playing go unnoticed.

Some musicians did manage to ruffle the satiny textures of CTI's soundscapes while still fitting with the label's overall aesthetic. Hubbard's 1970 **Red Clay (76822; 68:20 \*\*\*\****\*<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>) is a perfect example. The trumpeter spits out his fiery, hard-tongue improvisations over a buttery groove on the title track, which also showcases spirited solos from Herbie Hancock and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson. Basically a continuation of the hard bop and soul jazz that distinguished much of Hubbard's Atlantic LPs after he left Blue Note, *Red Clay* remains essential.

Stanley Turrentine's 1970 release **Sugar** (76826; 59:16  $\star \star \star \star \star \prime 2$ ) is another case in which the artist cut through the gloss. Turrentine's honky-tonk tone and razor-sharp phrasing refuse to fade into background, especially on the swaggering title-track and his organdriven take on John Coltrane's "Impressions." Also commendable are band mates Hubbard, guitarist George Benson and electric pianist Lonnie L. Smith, who goad Turrentine to highoctane improvisations.

The double-disc California Concert: The Hollywood Palladium (76405; 77:50/76:06 \*\*\*\*) makes for a great celebration because it's the first time it's been released on CD. The July 1971 concert gathered a dream team of Benson, Laws, Carter, Hubbard, Cobham, Turrentine, percussionist Airto Moreira, saxophonist Hank Crawford and organist Johnny Hammond for a scintillating performance included takes on Coltrane's "Impressions" and Miles Davis' "So What" as well as enchanting readings of Laws' "Fire And Rain" and Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke's "Here's That Rainy Day." The disc also dispels recent notions that acoustic jazz faded completelv in the '70s. DB Ordering info: ctimasterworks.com



Alan Broadbent Trio Live At Giannelli Square: Volume I CHILLY BIN RECORDS  $\star \star \star \frac{1}{2}$ 

Teteran pianist Alan Broadbent is part of a vanishing breed: musicians steeped in mid-20th century bop that lately receives more exposure on campus than onstage. Broadbent's credits include the best-of-the-best among his Los Angeles brethren, notably Warne Marsh, Chet Baker, Bud Shank and Charlie Haden. The pianist is yet another West Coast musician who's never received his due. Broadbent's Live at Giannelli Square typifies a veteran's album. A live date recorded early last year in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, it features a program of mostly standards and a rhythm section well-versed in the art of brushes and walking bass lines. The trio's varied approach transcends the narrow scope of the repertoire. The opener, "Lullaby of the Leaves," features Broadbent's two-handed runs and rubato passages. The pianist then cruises through the up-tempo "I'll Be All Right," his tribute to Bud Powell. By "Alone Together," though, the rhythm section begins to loosen its grip, with drummer Kendall Kay's steady patter becoming increasingly busy and unpredictable.Broadbent is good at any tempo, but I would have preferred to hear fewer ballads. The extraverted reading of "I'll Be All Right" early in the set whet my appetite for more of the same. "My Foolish Heart" follows; as much as I like it, it drags by comparison. To Broadbent's credit, he ratchets up the tempo on his tune "Now And Then" to accommodate his bop-inspired solo. The set concludes with a rousing version of Miles Davis' "Solar," the trio's most compelling performance. The more prominent use of dynamics, counterpoint and rhythm that Broadbent displays here would have benefitted the other tracks. The same holds true for the elastic pocket created by bassist Putter Smith and Kay.

#### -Eric Fine

Ordering info: alanbroadbent.com

Live At Giannelli Square: Volume 1: Lullaby Of The Leaves; I'll Be All Right; My Foolish Heart; Alone Together; Now And Then; You And You Alone; Ghost Of A Chance; Solar. (65:34) Personnel: Broadbent, piano; Putter Smith, bass; Kendall Kay, drume



Dave Frank Portrait Of New York JAZZHEADS JH1181 \*\*\*

Dave Frank identifies himself unequivocally on his website as a solo player. A specialist in a generalist's age, he sets the bar high. And on *Portrait Of New York* as on previous projects, he mostly clears it, though he might have set it on a different set of bars.

The most obvious reference point in Frank's performance is the late Dave McKenna, whose mastery of the left-hand walking bass made solo performance his strongest metier. This is obvious on the first track, "Full Force NYC," which opens with a long string of low-register eighth-notes. But where McKenna typically dug into the keys with an intensity that pulled his performance way off tempo in a long but irresistible acceleration, Frank paints almost an abstract picture. His tempo slows slightly down as he scatters fleet single lines and a few chords after bringing in his right hand. This, plus a few breaks where the bass line morphs momentarily into quizzical dissonances or simply stops, undercuts his momentum. Though the performance is built on the concept of a swinging groove, it comes across as oddly academic. Despite the title, the song sounds an awful lot like "Tangerine."

Frank channels this spirit more persuasively when he mixes it with another inspiration on a track whose title says it all. "McKenna/ McCoy" opens with a pair of sturdy fifths in the left hand, a foundation for a harmonic elaboration that brings McCoy Tyner quickly to mind. From here, a fusion of aesthetics begins, with voicings, rhythmic placements and a modal flavor to his solo developing over an alternation of prowling bass, jabbed and softer accents, and silences below. This interplay catches fire now and then, though again the positive impression is more conceptually interesting than viscerally exhilarating.

There is much more range than this in Frank's playing. "Manhattan By Moonlight," an original, is a lovely miniature, played rubato, opening over a delicate tonic note with a figure that suggests a distant carillon chiming the hour. From the simplicity of this beginning, Frank expands gently into moodier chords, darker with blues insinuations and played with gorgeous restraint. His approach to "My Man's Gone" is similar, though he allows a little more dynamic contrast particularly in the middle of the tune. These changes are handled with taste and feeling.

The boogies and blues that fill much of this *Portrait* seem relatively undeveloped, with the exception of "Times Square," another Frank tune whose left-hand ostinato, built on alternating bars of eight and nine, sets an intriguing stage for the brisk lines and clustered chords in his right hand. Rather than act as a thinking man's McKenna, Frank may find his truest muse is as an interpreter of intriguing and often ballad-oriented originals. *—Robert Doerschuk* 

Portrait Of New York: Full Force NYC; Broadway Boogie-Woogie; This Nearly Was Mine; Midtown 9 AM; Perdido; My Man's Gone; Lower East Side Shuffle; McKenna/McCoy; Manhattan By Mooniight; Bowery Blues; You And The Night And The Music; Times Square. (50:45) Personnel: Dave Frank, piano. Ordering info: jazzheads.com





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#### Wyatt/Atzmon/ Stephen For The Ghosts Within DOMINO 271 $\star \star \star \star \frac{1}{2}$

n the wake of co-found-Ling England's pop group The Wilde Flowers, Robert Wyatt went on to co-found the progressive jazz-rock (then fair-

ly psychedelic) band Soft Machine in 1966 as a drummer. Since leaving SM in 1970, this innovative, restless force has taken many of his jazz roots and recombined them with a series of ever more startling collaborations, spearheaded by his singing voice and ongoing outward-bound proclivities.

For The Ghosts Within is another one of those collaborations, this time between Wyatt (who, apart from his singing, some trumpet and composer credits, adds percussion/brushes and a bit of whistling), saxophonist Gilad Atzmon and violinist/composer Ros Stephen, whose Sigamos String Quartet serves as the instrumental backbone to the recording. Bassist Richard Pryce augments the group. Throughout this set of standards mixed with originals are special instrumental and repertoire choices that keep the program always a little offbeat even as it remains thoroughly lyrical and listenable.

With a title like this one and with Wyatt on board, the chances of the proceedings sounding more wistful than not are good. This despite the sunshine offered to such material as Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" (an uplifting whistle instead of a lyric), pop-rock rap with the politically themed, at times cartoonish-sounding "Where Are They Now" and the perennial half-



glass-full, gets-'em-everv-time anthem "What A Wonderful World," A sense of melancholy tends to predominate, as Wyatt and company revisit classic heartbreakers like "Laura," "Lush Life" and "What's New?" In each case, Wyatt's crooning and the arrangements (by Stephen, with two from Jonathan Taylor)

lend a kind of delicacy unique to the material at hand with Atzmon's soulful reed playing tipping the music ever more toward a jazz vibe here and there. Atzmon's production (which pulled Wyatt and his serene, thin yet totally evocative voice in from another studio) adds reeds, electronics and accordion. Wyatt's wife, Alfie Benge, also gets into the mix with tender lyrics to "Lullaby For Irena" as well as contributing to the uncharacteristically raucous, haunting title track (complete with vocal chorus and some harrowing hornplaying from Atzmon), the lyrics inevitably serving to further Wyatt's emotional and sonic reach.

A tad sentimental here and there, For The Ghosts Within manages to carry within each song great care, delivered as a package, giving one the sense that this music was made all in one day, and all in one place, even though it wasn't. A cozy arrangement, indeed. -John Ephland

Personnet: Robert Wyart, Volce, brusnes, backing vocais, percus-sion, whistling, frumpet; Gilad Atzmon, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet, accordion, Palestinian shep-herd's flute, backing vocals; Sigamos String Quartet: Ros Stephen, violin, viola (backing vocals), Tom Piggot-Smith, violin, Rachel Rob-son, viola, Daisy Vatalaro, cello; Richard Pryce, double-bass; Frank Harrison, keyboards (3, 4, 6); Stormtrap (Abboud Hashem), voice (4); Yaron Stavi, double bass, electric bass (4); Julian Rowlands, bandoneon (10). Ordering info: dominorecordco.us

#### Stephan Crump/ James Carney Echo Run Pru CLEAN FEED 199 \*\*\*\*

hese two musicians know how to sail confidently in mainstream as well as uncharted waters; collectively their as-

sociations include Michael McDonald and Ravi Coltrane as well as Liberty Ellman and Nels Cline. Although these two pieces were freely improvised, with a consequent lack of rigid structure, they unfold with a clarity that draws on the full breadth of their experiences. While Carney spends considerable time playing under the lid of his piano, pulling and slashing at the strings as though he's applying Derek Bailey's guitar attack to a harp, he's also quite willing to state a bold melody and let it flow. Crump's technical range is similarly wide open, encompassing bongo slaps



and fleet, propulsive runs.

More impressive than the breadth of their resources is the intelligence they exercise in selecting from them. Whether contrasting inside-piano buzzing with an elegantly descending pizzicato figure or finding concord in a passage of delicate beauty, they make music that intuitively makes sense; if this

were science, one would say that it has face validity. The self-sufficiency of this effort bears notice; Crump recorded the music in Carney's Brooklyn loft, achieving impressive clarity and presence using one stereo microphone and a portable digital recorder. Most likely the absence of outsiders and familiarity of setting also contributed to the intimacy of this excellent performance. -Bill Meyer

Echo Run Pry: Rodeo Gwen; Wood Genre. (48:54) Personnel: Stephan Crump, double bass; James Carney, piano. Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

For The Ghosts Within: Laura; Lullaby For Irena; The Ghosts Within; Where Are They Now?; Maryan; Round Midnight; Lush Life; What's New?; In A Sentimental Mood; At Last I Am Free; What A Wonderful World. (56:06) Personnel: Robert Wyatt, voice, brushes, backing vocals, percus-



#### **Kneebody** *You Can Have Your Moment* WINTER & WINTER 910 165 ★★★<sup>1</sup>/2

n its third album, the hard-hitting quintet Kneebody invests heavily in groove, which isn't such a difficult thing to do when your postbop is already so deeply inflected with postrock, fusion and rhythmic ideas nabbed from hip-hop. (On the other hand, it might be a little strange when you consider that its 2009 collaboration with vocalist Theo Bleckmann scored a Grammy nomination in the classical crossover category for a collection of Charles Ives songs). My initial impression of the music left me focusing on the gritty, intensely cohesive ensemble work-I could barely remember that there were plenty of solos-which in this case is a positive accomplishment. The rigorous compositions from the band's members generally weave multiple sections together with seamless vet bold transitions, and with most of the tunes by trumpeter Shane Endsley and keyboardist Adam Benjamin there are subtle variables and cue systems that give the pieces an alluring flexibility when performed live.

Drummer Nate Wood, electric bassist Kaveh Rastegar and keyboardist Benjamin carve out huge, steadily morphing grooves that usually support plangent, sophisticated melodic shapes that give up their essence calmly. The horns of Endsley and reedist Ben Wendel frequently provide contrapuntal richness and additional harmonic depth, with improvised passages perfectly woven into the fabric of ensemble sound. While Kneebody really digs tricky, rhythmically disorienting grooves like the ones on "No Thank You Mr. West" or "Nerd Mountain," they can also handle more gentle ones with the requisite patience and sensitivity. I could use a bit more space in the thick arrangements, but sounding gauzy couldn't be further from Kneebody's concerns here.

-Peter Margasak



L ike his mentor Fred Hersch, Jeremy Siskind likes to tread the ground between jazz and art music, unafraid to wear his heart on his sleeve or to subjugate swing in favor of languid lyricism. On "Little Love Song"—one of three pieces to feature vocalist Jo Lawry—Siskind melds a ripe melody line with lyrics that remind you that he has a master's in English. It seems to be something that might've come out of a Stephen Sondheim musical, yet Siskind's trio—which plays on half the recording—features Chris Lightcap and Ted Poor, two of the most interesting rhythm section players in contemporary improvisation. He wraps everything up with a seemingly unironic take on "The Candy Man."

The paradox of Siskind's ability to shift shapes and dodge expectations lingers throughout his sophomore recording, but there is also a sense of purpose, which keeps it from sounding like a pastiche by a prodigiously talented young musician.

As a soloist, Siskind is impossible to pigeonhole, delving into stride on "The Inevitable Letdown," exploring some pretty, quiet counter-movement on "Venice" and channeling Glenn Gould (down to the glottal noise) on the wistful "Audrey's Song." Fronting his trio,

he sounds more modern, building to muscular climaxes on the title composition and "A Single Moment" and riding herd over a relentless martial rhythm on "Firstness."

From Brad Mehldau to Ethan Iverson, plenty of younger pianists tread similar territory, but Siskind distinguishes himself in his duo work with Lawry. In that setting, he seems even less wedded to the jazz continuum. "Hymn Of Thanks" draws on English church tradition, and their work on "Six Minute Tango" would fit well in a cabaret. In the end, Siskind seems happy to go his own way. —James Hale

Simple Songs For When The World Seems Strange: Venice; The Fates; Hymn Of Thanks; Firstness; Audrey's Song; Six Minute Tango; The Inevitable Letdown; Simple Song (For When The World Seems Strange); A Single Moment; Little Love Song; The Candy Man. (55:39)

Man. (55:39) Personnel: Jeremy Siskind, piano; Jo Lawry, vocals (3, 6, 10); Chris Lightcap, bass (2, 4, 8, 9, 11); Ted Poor, drums (2, 4, 8, 9, 11). Ordering info: bjurecords.com





You Can Have Your Moment: Teddy Ruxpin; Held; The Entrepreneur; No Thank You Mr. West; You Have One Unheard Message; The Blind; You Can Have Your Moment; Desperation Station; Nerd Mountain; Call; Unforseen Influences; High Noon. (55-16) Personnel: Adam Benjamin, Fender Rhodes, effects; Shane Endsley, trumpet, effects; Kaveh Rastegar, electric bass, effects; Ben Wendel, saxophone, melodica, effects; Nate Wood, drums. Ordering info: winterandwinter.com

Amy Cervini Lovefool ORANGE GROVE 1103 \*\*\*\*

A my Cervini is one of many young jazz singers trying to expand the range of acceptable material beyond the hidebound Great American Songbook; if you count its cutoff point at about 1965, its latest songs are about 50 years old. Here she addresses latter day music by singer/songwriter Jack Johnson, Green Day, the Cardigans, Willie Nelson and Depeche Mode. Her trio of pianist Michael Cabe, bassist Mark Lau and drummer Ernesto Cervini works hand-in-glove with her natural, unforced singing. Guest appearances by Joel Frahm's tenor, Marty Ehrlich's bass clarinet and String Nucleus lend well-placed tang and textural variety.

She has a small, attractive voice that's suretoned and swings easy. Cervini uses Johnson's "Upside Down" as a playful rhythmic playground, while Blossom Dearie and Jack Segal's "Country Boy" gets a much deeper lyrical reading. Nelson's flat-footed "Sad Songs And Waltzes" and the tongue-in-cheek tango title track are slyly quirky and fun, while the French lyrics on "Quand Je Marche" make for lush sultriness. Cervini's own, dreamlike "Lonely Highway" sublimely hovers in the realm of art songs. The one false note is Nellie McKay's backhanded slap against marriage and mother-

Tarbaby The End Of Fear POSI-TONE 8069  $\star \star \star \frac{1}{2}$ 

T arbaby is lots of things. The collective's sophomore outing, *The End Of Fear*, is by turns scattered, focused, even jarring. But never dull. The dozen tracks feature pianist Orrin Evans, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Nasheet Waits, in addition to several well-known horn players. The tracks are fairly brief, suggesting the musicians are still gathering themselves: trying something and then, for better or worse, moving on.

The blueprint tries like crazy to create common ground for both tunes and free-jazz. It succeeds, but the group needs to refine this difficult concept. On "Heads," a voice sample of Duke Ellington defines jazz as "freedom of expression"; as if to demonstrate, trumpeter Nicholas Payton sprints out of the gate over a jittery rhythm section. The trio, sans horns, brings similar swagger to "Sailin" On," a minute-long cover of a song originated by the punk band Bad Brains in 1982.

While the group's go-for-broke spirit is admirable, the more conventional tracks stand out. Revis' "Brews" owes a debt to Thelonious Monk, but the performance is quite good. A deliberate



hood, "I Wanna Get Married." Snarkiness, no matter how sweetly sung, is still snarky.

Don't be fooled by Cervini's song choices. Savvy treatments of her most "standard" material (like "Comes Love," Fred Hersch's "Lazin' Around" and "The More I Go Out") use tasty phrasing choices, discreet octave jumps, melisma and glisses. Her choice and abilities leave no doubt that she's a real jazz singer, and one who can gently yet firmly reshape material.

-Kirk Silsbee

Lovefool: Bye Bye Country Boy; Upside Down; Sad Songs And Waltzes; Good Riddance; Lovefool; Quand Je Marche; I Wanna Get Marride; Enjoy The Silence; Lazin' Around; Comes Love; Lonely Highway; The More I Go Out. (51:20) Personnel: Army Cervini, Vocals, melodica (6); Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone (1); Marty Ehrlich, bass Clarinet (5, 11); Michael Cabe,

y migriway; ine More I Go Out. (51:20) Personnet: Amy Cervini, vocals, melodica (6); Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone (1); Marty Ehrlich, bass clarinet (5, 11); Michael Cabe, piano, Fender Rhodes (6, 8); Mark Lau, bass, background vocal; Ernesto Cervini, drums, percussion, accordion (6, 11), background vocals; Earl Maneein, violin (5); Matt Szemela, violin (5); Jon Weber, viola (5); Jessie Reagen, cello (5). Ordering info: amycervini.com



reading of Fats Waller's "Lonesome Me" spotlighting tenor player JD Allen provides a respite from the tumult and eclecticism. Another quartet features alto player Oliver Lake performing his composition "November '80," a study in freedom and control. The track succeeds where others like Andrew Hill's lugubrious "Tough Love" lose their footing. While *The End Of Fear* lacks consistency, the potential for great music is arguably present. —*Eric Fine* 

The End Of Fear: E-Math; Brews; Heads; Utility; Jena 6; Sailin' On; Lonesome Me; November '80; Hesitation; Tails; Tough Love; Abacus. (51:36) **Personnet**: Orrin Evans, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Natheet Waits, drums; JD Allen, tenor sax; Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Nicholas Payton, trumpet. Ordering info: posi-tone.com



#### Ab Baars *Time To Do My Lions* WIG 17 \*\*\*\*

n his first solo album since *Verderame* from 1997, Dutch reedist Ab Baars sounds more jagged, intense and exploratory than ever. His work has always been smart and marked by meticulous care, but as he's aged he's increasingly channeled his ideas into concentrated, perfectly pitched excursions that focus on specific notions, without wasted notes. Best known for his longrunning membership in the ICP Orchestra, Baars, who turned 55 this November, is second only to the group's co-founder Misha Mengelberg when it comes to staunch modernism, and it makes sense that he revisits his wonderfully herkyjerk homage to the pianist "Gammer" (it translates as "donkey-like") on zigzagging clarinet scuffed by upper-register multiphonics and lowend squawks; the original tune first appeared on Baars' previous solo outing.

His deep love and respect for jazz tradition streaks his dark sound-his authoritative tenor playing on the album opener "Day And Dream" is studded with elliptical phrases that might've been transmitted by primo Archie Shepp or Von Freeman, but rather than connecting his lines with florid embellishment and predictable turnarounds, he patiently leaves them as stark yet info-packed patterns that stand and resonate deeply on their own. The same cool thoughtfulness manifests itself differently on a couple of gorgeous shakuhachi pieces; "Nisshin Joma," named after a collection of lion drawings by the Japanese artist Hokusai, expertly uses the gossamer breathiness of the instrument to shape a series of elegant lines with the kind of spare simplicity common to so much art from Japan. Baars doesn't mimic the sound of Japan in the slightest, even when playing one of its traditional instruments, but the clarity of his playing clearly suggests an appreciation for its singular aesthetic. -Peter Margasak

Time To Do My Lions: Day And Dream; Time To Do My Lions; Purple Petal; 12 O'clock And All Is Well; Nisshin Joma; Gammer; Ritratto Del Mare A Anzio; Watazumi Doso; The Rhythm Is In The Sound; 730 Union Street. (49:37)

Personnel: Ab Baars, tenor saxophone, clarinet, shakuhachi. Ordering info: stichtingwig.com

### BOOKS BY JOHN MCDONOUGH

### Arguing The Great Voices

Twenty yeas ago Will Friedwald published Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices from Bessie Smith To Bebop And Beyond, an original, provocative, often flippant melange of fact and commentary that purveyed praise and contempt with a subjective elegance. Born in 1961, he plays the advocate from a position of scholarship without the prejudicial taints of nostalgia.

Now, with *A Biographical Guide To The Great Jazz And Pop Singers* (Pantheon), he has spread out. No more splitting hairs between jazz singers and everyone else. He tackles them all here from Eddie Cantor to Bob Dylan in a survey that covers pop, musical theater, cabaret and even a few rock singers who've traded up to pre-rock standards. The book is about singers, but the admission ticket (with few exceptions) is the common ground they share with the American songbook, a theme that excludes most contemporary singers under 50, save for Diana Krall, Michael Bublé and a few others.

The structure at first glance is standard encyclopedia form. Its first 540 pages include free-standing, alphabetically listed entries on 103 individual singers, plus another five "extras" in the final 30 pages. In between are another 240 pages of thematic essays that cover an additional 117 singers in 26 separate groupings such as "Singing Songwriters," "Female Band Singers" and "Male Band Singers."

But these essays are not bare-boned bio sketches. Each is a probing, subjective commentary, typically with an opening anecdote or observation that becomes the rhetorical trigger for his particular theme. Friedwald explores the interaction between "personas" and music and vice-versa, and how they mutually sustain or subvert illusion to create a complete performer. He argues that the controlling independence of Barbra Streisand robs her of the vulnerability necessary to validate her signature song, "People." "I remain completely unconvinced that she's a person who needs people," he writes.

His essays are rich in such juicy assertions, often tantalizing in their startling certainly but always provocative and usually plausible. He zeroes in, for instance, on two Billie Holiday air shots with Count Basie, claiming they are perhaps "the highlights of her recorded output"—a big bet to put on such a tiny sampling of Holiday's remarkable work. Paragraph after paragraph is mined with such scintillating declarations, often over similarly obscure points but engineered to invite debate. Friedwald has a broad perspective of cultural context (films, radio, social history) and a mind like switchboard. The result is unexpected cross-references that bring intellectual life to factual detail.

The scope of the book's judgments make

A Biographical Guide to the Great Jazz and Pop Singers Will Friedwald

the safety of history, where all outcomes are known and all stories told. He dismisses his own generation's cultural crucible as "the general disaster area known as the sixties and seventies." The more contemporary his subjects (Betty Carter or Cassandra Wilson), the more he seeks out specific "highlights for us more conservative listeners." Many newcomers are briskly summarized in thematic essays: "Retrocrooner Boychicks," "Contemporary Cabaret" and "Rock Goes Standards." The last is an especially skeptical chapter in which he seems to underestimate the American songbook's capacity for unexpected reinterpretation, whether by Louis Armstrong, Blossom Dearie, Carly Simon, Rod Stewart or even Linda Ronstadt.

Friedwald deals with all the greats, of course. But the book's value is the attention it brings to artists who are not written about often, mainly because they were peripheral to jazz, like Gene Austin, Buddy Clark and Perry Como. Comic Martha Raye gets a major boost as a singer based on a very limited body of work. Alice Faye "may be the single most significant female singer in Hollywood history," Friedwald writes in another surprising but wellaroued stroke.

Some singers he humbly admits to not getting. He grew into Mabel Mercer, but confesses that he still cannot hear in Helen Merrill what most of the best musicians have heard since the mid-1950s. Some singers he profiles seem a bit distant from his purpose. Eddie Cantor, Sammy Davis, Sophie Tucker and Jimmy Durante were singing entertainers who perhaps belong in a separate book.

This is still a wonderful book to read around in, and given Friedwald's instincts as a polemicist, it's also likely to become influential. **DB** Ordering info: randomhouse.com



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# **Stayin' Alive**

The trajectory of what I thought my life in music would be is not very much like what has happened, but it's not all bad news. In fact, what the jazz tradition has demonstrated over the years is an uncanny ability to address all kinds of challenges—social, economic, artistic—in order to advance this living music. The current state of the music "business" has stopped more than a few people I know, but as a creative person, I will continue to find ways to play and hear the music that I love.

Once upon a time, the norm was that major labels signed and cultivated artists they believed would last. The artist was recorded in a big, beautiful studio and promoted by the in-house team who was well connected to the powers-that-be. The tab was running and the hope was that the expenses would be recouped by the label in album sales. More often than not, the artist made a very small percentage of sales but might be lucky enough to have some tour support from the label, and their careers developed with time and exposure. Many strong relationships were built and plenty of great music was recorded and released this way, but there was more to the story.

Years ago, I read a book called *Hit Men* that chronicled the music business as a daunting tale of corruption, immorality and greed. Although it depressed many who read it, I found it liberating because it made me realize for *certain* that there was no rhyme or reason to the business. If I wanted to keep playing, I would have to use creative energy to stay in the game as well as to play the music. I identified myself as a "lifer," who would play music no matter what happened in the business.

Enter technology. New world. New game. Few rules. The Internet, where the production and distribution of music is undergoing change, is still basically the Wild West. Most music is available for downloading (free or purchased) or may be sold by someone who has nothing to do with the artist or a record company, so young music lovers have come to believe that music is free. They may never buy a CD in their life; their music is downloaded or "shared" (a.k.a stolen), and there are very few rules in place for how it is distributed on the web. Record companies have sued the fans and royalties aren't being paid. The world is upside down! Apps and technology now rule the culture more so than music. How can a musician make money anymore?

With the Internet as a global distributor, artists can find the people who like their music and service those fans on a more personal level. Instead of a record company telling them what will sell, what they should record, or with whom they should be recording, artists get to make the music they want and in their own time frame. Likewise, the fan is not being told whom they should listen to or purchase. In a strange way, globalization has brought us back to grass roots. The thing that will make people want to have your music is that it speaks to them. The people who love music will be surfing the web, looking to discover something great. If you can provide that for them, they will tell their friends who will tell their friends who will tell their friends. *It will be the music that will get people's attention*. And they will support you. Just like the old days.

I find this an inspiring idea, but it does leave many unanswered questions. For an established artist with a fan base, folks can easily find you. If you are just emerging, you may have to negotiate a number of possibilities, like how to record your music—which takes funding. The Internet has created new and interesting ways to do this. There are several sites through which you make a pitch to friends, fans and strangers about funding your project. My favorite is Kickstarter, where you set a monetary goal and a deadline to fundraise your expenses through pledges from people who want to support your effort. You can offer perks at different levels. Donors can be as involved in the project as much or as little as you want them to be. People can get advanced copies or exclusive offers for various levels of donations or go hear some music with you, come over for dinner, or anything you invent. If you don't reach your goal, nobody pays, which is an excellent



incentive to get the word out. The only cost is Kickstarter's cut, which is 5 percent. You can also put a PayPal "Donate" button on your website and fundraise through a PayPal account. Get creative!

Distribution no longer favors the business side. Now you can distribute your music from your website and from indie sites like CD Baby. No longer at the mercy of whether your label (if you had one) has good distribution and can get good placement in record stores, you will have to do what you can to be heard. Once again—get creative.

Streaming is likely to be the future of music, but will most jazz fans, who love to own whole collections of their favorite artists, settle for whatever is streamed to them? Hard to say, but the majority of even jazz fans will come to hear what they know through the Internet and streaming. Music Choice, Sirius and other subscription-based music sites have whole channels with different styles of jazz, from traditional to bebop to big band to avant-garde. Some sites have samples of tunes with links to Amazon to buy them. Everyone is trying to figure out the new game plan, and I don't think it's in place yet. Be bold if you have the stomach for it. The more we can embrace the changes, the better chance the music has of being heard and appreciated by new audiences.

In a perfect world, musicians don't have to think about anything but music. Someone else takes care of recording details and touring details and distribution/sales details so the artist can be free to create unencumbered. This world is pretty far from perfect, so if you want a life in music, I hope you can find it in yourself to be as involved in the details as you can. Optimism, improvisation and willingness to explore new possibilities help, too!

CLAIRE DALY IS AN AWARD-WINNING BARITONE SAXOPHONIST BASED IN NEW YORK CITY. SHE TRAVELS THE WORLD PLAYING MUSIC, TEACHES AT JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER MSJA, LITCHFIELD JAZZ CAMP AND PRIVATELY, AND IMPROVISES A LIFE IN CREATIVE MUSIC. CUR-RENTLY, SHE IS WRITING MUSIC TO BE PREMIERED AT THE JUNEAU JAZZ AND CLASSICS FESTIVAL IN MAY 2011.



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#### Woodshed | SOLO BY JIMI DURSO



### Jeremy Pelt's Evocative Trumpet Solo On Ralph Peterson's 'The Vicious Cycle'

rummer Ralph Peterson's composition "The Vicious Cycle," from the 2002 release Subliminal Seduction (Criss Cross), is quite a challenge to improvise on. Though the form is an even 24 bars, that may be the only thing standard about this tune. Most of the chords are inverted and in some instances are over bass notes with no relation to the triad (like the Bbmaj7/Eb in measures 3, 7, 27 and 31). Many of the chords are anticipated, coming in on the last eighth note, and in some places quarter note, of the previous measure. And though the song is based on 4/4, there are the measures of 2, 3, 5 and even 9/8 that are interspersed throughout the piece with landminelike qualities through which the soloist must navigate.

Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt not only makes it through two choruses of this obstacle course, he does so in such an evocative way as to make the piece appear to the listener to be much simpler than it is. In dealing with the rhythmic aspect, notice how Pelt's first phrases start on downbeats, making the underlying time signatures clear. It isn't until measure 8 that we hear Pelt playing over a bar line. He does this more frequently as his improvisation progresses, but he still makes it clear with his note choices where the downbeat is. For example, the descending chromatic line at the end of measure 11 lands on the seventh of the D7(#9) in measure 12 and then continues as a scalar line. From measure 12 to 13 we see a similar concept, ending measure 12 with  $E_{P}$  and F (the P9 and #9 of the current chord) and landing in between on the E natural on the downbeat of measure 13, where it is the third of the C/G chord. This not only makes the chord change clear but also emphasizes that this is the "one" of a new measure.

Pelt also shows a deftness and playfulness in dealing with the odd and sometimes ambiguous harmonies—for instance, the unusual B|<sub>p</sub>maj7/E|<sub>p</sub>, which could be thought of as an E|<sub>p</sub> lydian sound. But when this chord occurs in measures 3–4, 7–8 and 27–28, Pelt instead plays B|<sub>p</sub> major pentatonic, highlighting the upper part of the chord. And then when the chord comes up for the last time in his solo (measures 31–32), Pelt instead plays F major pentatonic. This brings out the upper parts of the B|<sub>p</sub> (the seventh, ninth and 13th), but also makes the harmony more ambiguous (like F/B|<sub>p</sub>/E|<sub>p</sub>!). He uses the same approach to the D|<sub>p</sub>/E in measure 44, playing an A|<sub>p</sub> major pentatonic line, again playing off of the fifth of the chord


to bring out the upper extensions (major seventh and ninth).

The D7(#9) that appears in measures 12, 22, 36 and 46 is another harmony that Pelt has fun with. The first time he plays a descending line that is basically D phrygian, only with the root missing. This makes it sound almost like C minor pentatonic with the sixth added, but the notes also can be heard as the alterations of the D7 chord: seventh, flat sixth, fifth, 11th, flat ninth, seventh and then sharp ninth. When the chord comes up in measure 22, however, he plays the sharp 11th, fifth and major third, two of these tones having not appeared in the previous instance. In measure 36 Pelt starts his line on the root, but the remainder of the measure is C minor pentatonic, which he had alluded to in measure 12. When the D7(#9) shows up for the final time three measures before the end of his solo, Pelt plays closer to the actual harmony by playing D minor pentatonic (though with the root missing). He uses the F, the sharp nine of the D7, as a pivot tone that becomes the third of the anticipated harmony of the next measure, and makes this clear by playing the rest of the Db triad right afterward.

It's also interesting to note that Pelt is comfortable enough with his playing that he lays out for the first and last measures of his solo, giving it space to develop and blend into the final melody. **DB** 

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



## Antigua Pro-One Saxophones Redefined Horns For Modern Players

A ntigua enlisted the help of acclaimed saxophonist and veteran technician Peter Ponzol to create a new series of professional horns, the Pro-One. The line raises the bar of Taiwan-made saxophones to a whole new level, with numerous design innovations that improve tonal quality and enhance the overall playing experience.

The first two horns in the series are the Pro-One alto (AS6200VLQ) and tenor (TS6200VLQ). Sax-section mate Bruce Gibson and I tried them both out during a two-hour test session in my DownBeat office, and we found both models to be incredibly responsive, great-sounding and easy to manage.

Key to the high performance of the Pro-One is the Ponzol-designed P1 neck, the angle of which causes the player's throat to open more easily, resulting in freer blowing, quicker response, significantly improved altissimo, precise intonation (nice octaves!) and more subtle tonal control.

Another important component of the new design is the Pro-One's well-contoured keyboard layout, also the result of Ponzol's input, which provides a comfortable feel and promotes an economy of hand motion that makes everything lay nicely on the horn. The ergonomic positioning and placement of keys makes it easier for the saxophonist to play with speed, accuracy and finesse. You get a nice even resistance from top to bottom, resulting in a consistent feel and a graceful touch. The tenor model includes two strap hooks, so you can choose the one with the best angle to suit your height, posture or embouchure.

In developing the Pro-One, Antigua conducted extensive research on the chemical composition and grain structure of the metal in some of the best professional-model saxes ever made—specifically, post-World War II Selmers. The company's engineering team found a source for such an alloy (which it termed Vintage Reserve) and came up with a computer-controlled annealing process that makes the instrument respond more like a saxophone that's been broken in and played for a while. The Pro-One even features metal thumb rests that let the player feel the horn vibrate in his hands, unlike plastic thumb rests, which tend to isolate vibrations and force the player to rely entirely on his ears for feedback.

The Pro-One has a hybrid bell diameter—one that's slightly larger than a standard bell size, but not oversized like many of the step-up horns that have been introduced in recent years. Antigua and Ponzol settled on an in-between bell size and length to help the player achieve an even timbre and balanced resistance through all registers of the horn.

Also contributing to the Pro-One's consistency of tone are drawn tone holes. The holes are rolled on the bell keys (low C, B and B-flat) and straight in all other areas, resulting in a hybrid of sorts. The rolled tone holes provide a larger contact area for the pads to seal and add strength, providing faster, more nimble response from the low notes and a deep, rich tone. The straight holes are more appropriate for the middle and upper registers of the horn, where rolled holes could have a tendency to spread the sound too much. The horns also feature high-grade Italian-made Lucien Deluxe leather pads and stainless steel tone boosters.

One of the cooler features on the Pro-One is a Ponzol-designed lifter for the G-sharp mechanism that acts like a teeter-totter and gives extra leverage to prevent sticking. The mechanism never fails, so goodbye sticky G-sharp keys. Other keywork enhancements include a little bridge between the F and F-sharp keys that facilitates faster action and response in the right-hand key section. Antigua's Trident adjustable key arms on the bell keys improve radial rigidity and feature two adjustment arms for better balance and increased strength.

The Pro-One is finished in a conservative vintage lacquer and features elaborate hand-engraving for an elegant look that suits the burnished tone of this classic-sounding instrument.

The alto carries a suggested retail price of \$3,599, and the tenor lists at \$3,999.

The Pro-One doesn't screw around. With its superior design and construction and a bare minimum of bling, this saxophone is aimed directly at the professional market. The horns exhibit an overall coherence and clarity, with a nicely colored core tone that's always present, from subtone quiet to blazing loud.  $-Ed \ Enright$ 

Ordering info: antiguapro-one.com



## Kawai MP10, MP6 Sweet-Sounding Stage Pianos

O ver the past 80 years, Kawai has delivered high-quality acoustic pianos to the Asian and American markets, and has become one of the major players in that space. The company's digital offerings have been around for more than 25 years, and Kawai has demonstrated a commitment to developing and improving them with every iteration. Kawai offers many different series of digital pianos, ranging from lower-priced student models to almost every level of home-console-style digital to a wide variety of stage pianos. Two of the newest models that fit into this last category are the MP10 and MP6. While they share the MP designation, these are very different beasts, with different target audiences in mind. We'll look at the MP10 first.

The Kawai MP10 is designed to compete in the premium digital piano space. Priced around \$2,500 on the street, this piano is designed for the serious professional pianist. It does include 27 different sounds, all in the piano, electric piano and what they call the "sub" section—which includes strings, pads and vibes—all sounds designed to complement the piano. So if you are looking for an all-in-one synth workstation, this is not for you; if you are looking for a high level piano experience, then read on.

The construction of the MP10 is solid. At 70 pounds, it comes in on the heavy side for a stage piano, and it is also pretty large—you probably won't be sliding this into the backseat of the Civic. The upside of this kind of bulk is the solidity of play it offers. If you have it on a solid stand, the MP10 feels like a piano. The MP10 includes the newest Kawai RM3 digital piano action. The RM3 action uses fully wooden keys, and a really comfortable system of counterweights—it feels great. This action was released this year as a part of the company's celebration of 25 years of Kawai digital piano actions. The keys are covered in an ivory-like material that absorbs moisture, so the feel of the keyboard is really pleasurable.

The sounds are also very strong. Each sound section (piano/electric piano/sub) has its own control section, and can be switched on and off separately for layering and splits. The pianos are gorgeous. From the rich Concert Grand to the mellow Jazz to the bright Pop—these are all really usable. The electric pianos are likewise very playable. The Rhodes is really rich and full—it definitely feels like the real thing. The Wurli also has the sound of an authentic instrument, and is inspiring to play. Kawai also included a couple of decent clavs and a DX-style digital electric piano. The Electric Piano section also includes an amp simulator that is pretty solid and adds a lot of punch to these already excellent sounds. The Sub section's strings and pads are pretty good, and there are a couple of parameters to adjust that give a wide variety of options within each sound. There are a couple of multi-effects sends and reverb on each group, and a global EQ for the entire unit.

Also included in the MP10 is a stereo line-in that will accept another instrument output, which can be separately mixed in from the front panel. This signal then gets routed out through both the 1/4-inch amplifier outs

and the XLR balanced outs (which are unaffected by the volume slider). This is a really nice touch. These ins are also recorded when you use the internal song recorder, which can hold up to 10 songs in wav or mp3 format. There is also a MIDI control section with basic features for control-ling external instruments. You can connect to your computer through the USB jack on the back to dump out and bring in setups and programs, as well as MIDI files in the SMF format. There is also a standard USB jack on the front of the unit for inserting a USB key loaded with songs. All-in-all, a very well-thought-out performance keyboard.

The MP6 lives in the mid-level stage piano market, street-priced at around \$1,500. There is a lot more competition in this space, and the MP6 has a feature set that matches up well with most of the competition. It is smaller than the MP10, but still large, although at 48 pounds it is much more manageable. It has a raised-angle front panel, which means it is not ideal for a second-tier keyboard, but it does give good access to all your controls. The action is different on the MP6, which uses the Kawai RM action. This means the keys are plastic instead of wood, and the mechanism is not as long as in the RM3 action, but it still feels very good, if not as authentic as the MP10.

The MP6 includes a much larger sound set, adding in organs, brass, vocal, guitar and more synth sounds. All are decent, although there are no real standouts here. The pianos are excellent, but the electric pianos are not the same as the ones found in the MP10, and not as good. The organs are likewise good, but not fantastic. All are pretty usable, though, and considering the lower price, there is a lot to like here.

The controls for the four zone levels, the parameter adjustments and the effects settings are arranged in a matrix with four buttons and knobs for easy access, and allow for quick edits on the fly without digging through menus. There are also four dedicated sliders for the zone levels, which make mixing layers and splits a snap.

There is also a sound recorder and a MIDI song recorder included here, but not the additional inputs on the MP10—still a nice feature, though. One of the areas where the MP6 does excel, though, is the editability of the sounds and parameters—they get pretty deep, and I suspect that with some time spent tweaking, you could get the factory sounds to sound great. There is also a lot of control over MIDI messages and CCs, which make it a very nice controller.

Kawai continues to offer good products in the digital piano market with the MP10 and MP6. The care and attention to the action is something one would hope for from a respected maker of acoustic pianos, and the playing experience was very positive. The MP10 is a gorgeous instrument, and needs to be considered if you are in the market for a high-level stage piano. The MP6 has some weaknesses, but also a number of strengths, and is definitely worth a look for the mid-level purchaser. —*Chris Neville* **Ordering info: kawaius.com** 

## Toolshed | GEAR BOX



## 1 LUXURY CASE

Protec's new Lux PRO PAC cases feature a lightweight shock-absorbent shell to protect the instrument. They also include a zippered messenger section with a built-in organizer, tuck-away padded backpack straps, a waterresistant padded ballistic nylon exterior and a removable shoulder strap. Lux PRO PAC cases are available for B-flat clarinet, German clarinet, oboe and flute/piccolo. They come in black or chocolate.

More info: protechmusic.com

## **[2] MIDPOINT MOUTHPIECE**

The M30 Lyre is the latest addition to Vandoren's French clarinet mouthpieces. This model is designed to be a midpoint between the gold-standard 5RV Lyre and the M30—its tip opening and facing length position it directly between the two. The mouthpiece is flexible with a big, round sound that's harmonically dense and easy to control. The M30 Lyre is available in Standard Profile, Profile 88 and 13 series models. More info: vandoren.com

## 3 TUNING KEY

Gibraltar's new Quick Release drum key makes tuning simple by including a knurled grip for fast, easy head changes and adjustments. The Quick Release drum key hooks onto any lanyard or carabineer clip for easy access. More info: gibraltarhardware.com

## 4 MORE COWBELL

Pearl's New Yorker Cowbells create a signature salsa sound with enough volume for any musical situation. The new line comprises three different bell sizes. More info: pearldrum.com

## **(5)** PERFECT BALANCE

The new Pro 2900 is the only open-backed headphone in Ultrasone's Pro series. Ultrasone has released both a standard, single-cable version and a balanced, double-cable version of these headphones. The Pro 2900s have a classic black design and velvet-covered black ear pads. More info: ultrasone.com

#### 6 CLIP-ON, CLIP-OFF

Barcus Berry's new Sync Clip-On Tuner is a mini-sized chromatic tuner with an LCD display and a tuning range of A0 to A6. It offers fully adjustable clip-on mounting with silica gel clip pads to protect the instrument. The Sync Clip-On Tuner also features chromatic, guitar, bass, violin and ukulele tuning selections. More info: barcusberry.com

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## Jazz On Campus 🕨

## New York Jazz Academy Expands Its Mission

S axophonist Javier Arau had a social agenda in mind when he established a youth saxophone workshop in 2009: to fill the void created by a sharp decline in public funding for school music programs.

"I felt that they were underserved," Arau said. "There are kids trying to work through jazz on their instruments, but are not having any chance to play with other kids and work with mentors. The schools have cut so many programs."

Arau leased a classroom at St. Bartholomew's Church in Midtown Manhattan, and spent heavily to advertise the weeklong program. But when the first day of the workshop arrived that July, Arau had just six students. Things worked out, though.

"They all showed up [and] we had a blast," Arau said. "We were in this hot, little room with no windows. For them it was just this remarkable intensive. I don't think any of these kids knew there was this much to playing saxophone."

Although Arau lost roughly \$400, he deemed the venture a success. "You know, I had to stop looking at any of this the way a musician looks at a gig," he said. "I was a businessman, and that was like a trial-by-fire because you have to change your mindset."

Indeed, Arau altered a subsequent business plan for a year-round program after the overwhelming response came from adults. "I'd say nine out of 10 times," he recalled, "it was an adult calling, saying, 'What about me?""

As a result, Arau's summer youth workshop grew into the New York Jazz Academy, a mostly adult program with an enrollment of roughly 200. It has also recently added introductory music courses for small children. The school opened in October 2009 at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew on the Upper West Side. A year later, it expanded to several other locations around Manhattan, in addition to Prospect Heights, Brooklyn and Mineola, Long Island. It has also launched the website nyjazzacademy.com. Its programs are affordable; typically \$30 for a two-hour class.

Arau, now 35, grew up in Sacramento, Calif., and earned degrees in jazz composition at Lawrence University in Wisconsin and New England Conservatory of Music. He

moved to Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood in September 2001, and then to Jackson Heights, Queens. Arau, a member of the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop, leads an 18-piece orchestra, serves as house saxophonist at St. Bartholomew's Church and has worked with Charli Persip's Super Band. His credits as a composer include scores for the indie film *Easy Listening* and *The Gold Wutahkee*, an Off Off Broadway musical.

The New York Jazz Academy includes combos and big bands, and weekly classes devoted to harmony, improvisation, guitar and voice. The faculty includes guitarist Brad Shepik, saxophonist Wayne Escoffery and singer Carolyn Leonhart. However, the students run the gamut: from a doctor and a minister to an assortment of college students and instructors, tradesmen and retirees. Many of the students studied music during their formative years and see the school as an opportunity to pick up their instruments again.

Trumpet player Michael Thuroff said he was first chair in New York's all-state band in 1963, and later played in a U.S. Army band and with the rock band Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels. He quit after developing embouchure problems, but began playing again in 2009. He now



spends roughly eight hours a week at Arau's academy. "I only wish I was 25 again," said Thuroff, 65, a computer consultant. "[As a young musician] I played, I played, I played; I just never learned."

Dr. Jennifer Provataris, who works in the emergency department at Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, N.Y., played alto saxophone in a high school stage band before her focus shifted to college and then medical school. Armed with the same Bundy saxophone she played in high school, she attends one of the academy's improvisation workshops. "It was kind of killing me that I wasn't doing it anymore," Provataris, 36, said. "I wish I would have done something like this sooner."

For his part Arau is pleased with the school's steady growth and the opportunity to refine his personal method for teaching jazz. But Arau's mission remains incomplete.

"We're seeing such positive results from both the teaching methods and the business model," he said. "The next step is taking this beyond New York. This whole [program] could really benefit neighborhoods everywhere, whether it's in the tri-state area, the Midwest or even abroad." When the BUDGETS get cut REALLY HURTS. That's instruction is extremely vital Half measures leave us flat. OPUS FOUNDATION INSTRUMENTS and individuals that have been by budget cuts. If WOODWIND, BRASS instruments dust, we'll gladly take the MUSIC STOPS. And it because MUSIC and ARTS for a COMPLETE education. THE MR. HOLLAND'S revides new and refurbished to qualified schools in AMERICA adversely affected you have any used STRINGED or lying around collecting them off your hands.

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## Kenny Barron & Mulgrew Miller

**S** hortly before performing their duo concert at the 31st Annual Detroit International Jazz Festival on Sept. 5, Kenny Barron and Mulgrew Miller appeared at the Talk Tent before a live audience to listen to and reflect on a range of piano-based music. The Barron–Miller performance took place on the Carhartt Amphitheatre Stage.

## Tommy Flanagan

"How High The Moon" (from Lady Be Good ... For Ella, Verve, 1994) Flanagan, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

**Kenny Barron:** The minute I heard this I could tell that this was someone who liked Bud Powell, and it sounded like someone from Detroit. I was thinking Barry Harris, but Mulgrew said no because it sounded like the rhythm section of Peter Washington and Lewis Nash. That being the case, I thought it must be Tommy Flanagan, my hero.

**Mulgrew Miller:** I thought of Tommy right away, playing "How High The Moon." I recognized his touch and that unique kind of language, vocabulary in his playing. What always gives Tommy away for me is his left hand, which is a kind of legato left hand as opposed to a rhythmic left hand. Tommy plays these sustained chords with his left hand.

**Barron:** When I was in junior high, I had an art teacher who used to bring in music for inspiration. In one class he played the Miles Davis recording of "In Your Own Sweet Way" with Tommy. I loved his touch and the way he phrased. He became an influence and continued to be an influence till the day he died—and he still is.

## Eliane Elias/Herbie Hancock

"The Way You Look Tonight" (from Solos And Duets, Blue Note, 1995) Elias, Hancock, pianos.

**Miller:** This is an uneducated guess, but at least one of the pianists is a Cuban virtuoso. I'm venturing forth with Gonzalo Rubalcaba as a wild guess, playing with either Herbie Hancock or someone influenced by Herbie.

**Barron:** I'm definitely lost, but I'll hazard a guess that this is Hiromi playing with Chick Corea. They both have a similar technique. It's not? Well, I liked this. They both stretched the boundaries. That was very interesting.

**Miller:** I liked it as well—harmonically, rhythmically, and its form. It's an adventurous version of the tune, without a straightahead swing. It's what you'd expect from a modern piano duo. They're both virtuosos with phenomenal technique and ideas. They're in tune with each other. Personally, I would have been lost in the first eight bars.

Barron: This is Herbie? Is he playing with a Spanish pianist?

Miller: Is it Herbie and Chucho Valdés?

**Barron:** Eliane? I never would have guessed that, even though I've played duets with her.

## **Oscar Peterson**

"The Sheik Of Araby" (from *This Is Oscar Peterson At The Piano*, Bluebird/BMG, 2002, rec'd 1945) Peterson, piano; Bert Brown, bass; Frank Gariepy, drums.

**Barron:** I want to defer to Mulgrew, but I do know the song. It's "Sheik Of Araby." I don't have any idea who this is, but it's obviously someone who is older. The sound quality makes it sound old, and the way the bass player plays makes it sound old.

Miller: I'm going to take a wild guess. Is this Dorothy Donegan?

**Barron:** I liked this. It's not my cup of tea, but from a piano point of view, it's great.

Miller: And the left hand is incredible.



[An audience member guesses that this is "an old, old, old, old Oscar Peterson tune."]

Barron: Wow, it was recorded in 1945? I was 2 years old.

## Abdullah Ibrahim

"Blue Bolero" (from *African Magic*, Enja, 2001) Ibrahim, piano; Belden Bullock, bass; Sipho Kunene, drums.

**Barron:** I'm stumped. It's a very beautiful piece. Whoever this is knows how to take their time and not play a lot of notes. If I would have to rate this, I'd give it 5 stars.

Miller: I have no idea, but I'll just throw something out there. Is it Dollar Brand or Don Pullen or Geri Allen? It is Dollar Brand, I mean, Abdullah Ibrahim. I guessed him because the tune has an African folk element, and it has a simplicity of harmony. Abdullah isn't into heavy improvisation. This tune stayed simple while also having a spiritual feel. That's what led me to guess him.

**Barron:** I remember seeing Abdullah playing with saxophonist Carlos Ward at Sweet Basil on Monday nights. The music was so hymn-like. It was like being in church.

**Miller:** It's funny, but at first I thought this might be Brad Mehldau, but then I could hear that the touch wasn't his.

## Fred Hersch

"I Mean You" (from *Fred Hersch Plays Thelonious*, Nonesuch, 1998) Hersch, piano. **Miller:** Again, I'm not sure, but something about it reminds me of Jaki Byard. It's the quirkiness. It sounded like someone a little older than any of the young pianists.

**Barron:** At first I thought it was Fred Hersch. It is? There was something in his phrasing. I've played duo with him on occasion. I thought it was Fred, but then it got a little busy—busier than I've heard him play. So that threw me off. But I'm glad I was right. I liked this a lot. It was very creative. This was a unique rendition of Monk.

Miller: I've known Fred a long time. We're about the same age. I was living in Boston when Fred was at the New England Conservatory of Music studying with Jaki Byard, so I was close. I'm a great admirer of Fred. He always improvises with a lot of adventure. He has a lot of imagination and creativity. He's got a lot to say.

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