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APRIL 2011

VOLUME 78 - NUMBER 4

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# APRIL 2011 Inside

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BY JIM MACNIE

The Marsalis clan—patriarch Ellis and his sons Branford, Wynton, Delfeayo and Jason—were named Jazz Masters this year by the National Endowment for the Arts. On the day of the awards-presentation ceremony, DownBeat grabbed the guys for a roundtable discussion about family dynamics and the way jazz has impacted their lives.



From left: Wynton, Jason, Ellis, Delfeayo and Branford Marsalis

Cover photography by Jimmy Katz shot on location at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, located in Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

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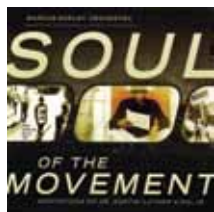
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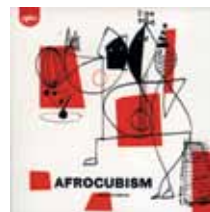
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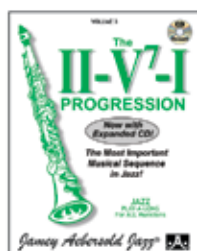
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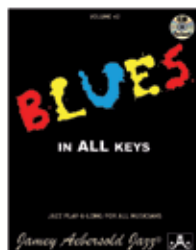


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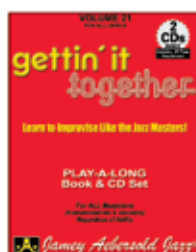
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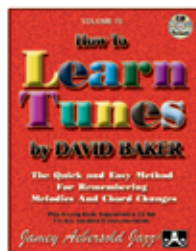
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## First Take | BY JOHN McDONOUGH



## Honoring Jazz's Historic Sweethearts

If this were the radio, the air would be ablaze with blast of a swing band, circa 1945, in full battle mode on “Bugle Call Rag” or “Lady Be Good.” You would surely be thinking vintage Count Basie, Benny Goodman, or maybe one of great Harlem outfits like Lucky Millinder. But, alas, you would have succumbed to my little trap: All that abandon and grit was the work of an all-girl band—the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. You’d be surprised, and at the same time reminded that the last frontier of pre-judgment in jazz remains the most deeply rooted: gender.

For nearly a decade the 17 young ladies of the ISR crisscrossed the country, often breaking attendance records set by the big name man-bands. Its history is being honored this March by the Smithsonian Museum of American History, whose Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM) is examining the legacies of women in jazz.

Sadly, the Sweethearts’ surviving footprint in jazz history remains as tiny as Snow White’s slipper: only five commercial records, a few Soundie films and about a dozen broadcast performances (all gathered on a single CD, *Hot Licks*). Back in the ’40s DownBeat was no help. In February 1938 this otherwise progressive magazine ran a story explaining “Why Women Musicians Are Inferior.” It virtually ignored the ISR in its day, as it did female bands.

The ISR was organized in 1937 by Laurence Jones to raise money for the Piney Woods Country Life School in Mississippi, which Jones had founded in 1910 as a foster home and trade school for poor black children. With the rise of a few popular all-girl white bands in the late ’30s, Jones decided to organize his best female music students into a dance band. After a couple of years of touring, it began to find its footing. By 1941 Piney Woods was netting about \$3,000 a month from its concerts.

But as the Sweethearts grew increasingly professional, the rank and file grew restless. It wanted to see some of that money for itself. Tensions with Piney Woods sharpened. Finally, in the late spring of 1941, the band revolted and literally escaped to Washington D.C. There it found a sponsor and, more important, a noted musical director: Eddie Durham, who had come up with the early Count Basie band. By September 1941 the Sweethearts were playing to cheering crowds in Harlem. But the ISR’s success in performance failed to translate into the usual parley of radio and record deals.

Several alumnae of the ISR are expected to appear March 29 at a JAM launch event, an initiative of the Smithsonian Institute Museum of American History. They include Willie May Wong, Johnnie Mae Rice (both of the charter 1937 band), and Ros Cron (one of the first white Sweethearts). Helen Jones, daughter of Lawrence Jones, is also expected to attend.

DownBeat’s appreciation of women active in jazz today, as well as a preview of JAM 2011, begins on page 30.

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### Missing Moody

I know there must be dozens of James Moody stories, but here's mine. About 10 years ago I stopped by Moody's house to borrow some photos for a jazz drum book I had been working on. Moody greeted me with a bear hug, told me he was practicing the flute. "My flute chops are so bad, I have to start with the basics again," he explained. Oh yeah, I thought. Before his wife Linda arrived to help me with the photos, he tried like the most enthusiastic waitress in the world to serve me. He asked me if I drank coffee (I did, he didn't), so he literally tore the pantry apart to find the drink. He gave me a banana, and told me it was good for me. I cannot remember Moody not smiling, and I'm sure everyone else who knew him felt the same. John McDonough's (February) article title is certainly appropriate: "Moody: A Hard Man Not To Love."

JAMES MORTON  
LAKESIDE, CALIF.

### Marians: In The Now

It's amazing to read that Marians Jazzroom in Bern, Switzerland, has been the spot to catch visiting American stars ("150 Great Jazz Rooms," February). More amazing would be to read that Marians has been for years and still is the leading jazz haunt in Switzerland, with Joey DeFrancesco, Steady Bob Margolin, Hiromi, Cyrus Chestnut, Warren Vaché and many others having played there recently, not only for one concert, but for the whole week, which means 10 acts from Tuesday to Saturday.

ULRICH ROTH  
BERN, SWITZERLAND

### Missing Cities

I was very disappointed that one of the most vibrant jazz communities with one of the finest jazz clubs was missing in the list of 150 great jazz rooms. There have been very few venues that really capture the jazz ambiance as does Jimmy Mak's here in Portland, Ore. This club that repeatedly attracts many musicians who appear in your Critics and Readers Polls was not mentioned. Jimmy Mak's also regularly features the many great established musicians who call Portland their home and has been a great place for some of the finest rising young musicians to hone their skills.

LARRY FONTES  
LAFONTES@COMCAST.NET

Here in Baltimore we have three great jazz rooms: Caton Castle, An Die Musik (a concert hall above a record store) and Jazzway 6004 (a house concert venue), along with plenty of other



James Moody

venues. Baltimore may not be the great jazz city of yesteryear, but we're still in there swinging.

BOB JACOBSON  
BALTIMORE

### Hot Box Credibility

I have wondered about the selection of CDs for The Hot Box reviews. While I am unclear how these individual discs are selected, I would like to offer a new approach. This relates to those CDs receiving 5 or 4½ stars. Such CDs should automatically be included in The Hot Box extended commentaries. This would add to the depth of analysis of these undoubtedly high quality and special performances. It would also further add to the legitimacy of the Hot Box concept.

BRIAN VINCENT  
WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

### Real World Words

What's this about letters to DownBeat saying they can't stand the bad language ("Chords & Discords" January)? Words fail me, and I want to give them a few choice Anglo-Saxon phrases. Don't worry—DownBeat is not vulgar, it reflects life. You are not becoming a porn baron. I just signed up for another year, despite the profanities.

KEITH COCKETT  
KEITH@TUNNELND.COM

### Correction

- The photograph of Roberta Gambarini in the March issue Blindfold Test should have been credited to Mark Sheldon.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

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# The

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# Beat ▶

## Reorganized and Revitalized

*Jazz Education Network looks to the future at New Orleans conference*

The second annual Jazz Education Network (JEN) conference was held Jan. 5–8 at New Orleans' Roosevelt Hotel. Its organizers expressed optimism for its mission, while separating themselves from the network's predecessor.

In April of 2008, International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) board president Chuck Owen announced that his organization, which had helmed the world's largest annual jazz conference for 40 years, was filing for bankruptcy. Though his explanation of the group's financial insolvency was murky, Owen was clear in his determination that the jazz world would bounce back with a "rekindled ... new vision for the future." He named two possible leaders, noting that board member Lou Fischer was "fielding inquiries" about the possibility of a meeting to replace the canceled 2009 conference, and that IAJE president-elect Mary Jo Papich was committed to meeting the jazz community's needs with a new organization.

One month later, a steering committee met in Chicago to determine how to fill the void created by IAJE's sudden dissolution.

"We left with mission statement, a name, a set of bylaws and a plan," Fischer said. "There would be a conference, a jazz camp, a magazine, and we'd start partnering with individuals around the world to bring the jazz culture together globally."

Armed with the mission of advancing music education, promoting performance and developing new audiences for jazz, JEN launched into action quickly under the leadership of co-founders Papich, who became the group's first president, and Fischer, who was its second. About 1,100 people attended JEN's inaugural conference last May in St. Louis. The New Orleans conference drew approximately 2,300 participants, despite competition with APAP and Winter JazzFest, which ran during the same week in New York.

In some ways, JEN's convention mirrored its predecessor, with an exhibit hall featuring many of the same companies and schools that had attended IAJE for years. The program was also familiar: activities were divided into panel discussions about music education and jazz industry concerns, clinics and performances, while evenings were dedicated to big-



Lou Fischer and Mary Jo Papich (center) with members of the South Africa Committed Artists for Cultural Advancement Ensemble

ger name sets and a nightly jam that lasted into the wee hours.

Although the format was analogous to that of IAJE's conference model, the New Orleans event helped JEN establish itself as a new entity with a rejuvenated focus on music education. In one panel discussion, Jazz at Lincoln Center presented an approach to teaching the history of democracy alongside the development of jazz in the United States. In another, saxophonist Tia Fuller guided an audio tour of the history of female instrumentalists. Industry-oriented clinics tended to offer advice on music business for emerging artists. And a panel about the Smithsonian's new jazz anthology, which could easily have been all about rights clearances and other label concerns, zeroed in on the collection's use in classrooms.

Other conference events, such as daily open board meetings, highlighted the organization's commitment to transparency.

"Last year, we started last year having open board meetings because I want people to believe in us and trust in us," Papich said. "Once you join, you have access to our financial records and minutes." (Fischer noted that both the St. Louis and New Orleans conferences "paid for themselves.")

JEN also staged its annual members meeting, which took place on Jan. 8, as an open session, inviting all conference-goers to attend. More of a presentation than a meeting, the "JENeral Session" featured the presentation of scholarships, a quick update about plans for the next conference (Jan. 4–12, 2012 in Louisville, Ky.), and an address from U.S. Representative John Conyers (D-Michigan) about his legislation declaring jazz a national treasure. In his talk, Conyers also warned that the young jazz players in the room probably wouldn't get rich or be eligible for health care through their

Sarah Wilson



**Wilson Awarded:** Trumpeter Sarah Wilson has been awarded a Composers Collaborative grant from the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The \$75,000 grant will fund her composing new music for *Off The Walls*, a premiere music production combined with aerial dance at San Francisco's De Young Museum in 2013.

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

**Piano Prize:** The American Pianists Association will hold finals for its competition in Indianapolis during the city's Jazz Discovery Week, April 10–17. The five finalists will be judged in concert in venues throughout the city, including the Indiana State Museum, the Athenaeum and the Jazz Kitchen. Semi-finals will take place over two sets on April 15 at The Jazz Kitchen, and the final round will be judged on April 16 at The Athenaeum. The winner will receive a \$50,000 cash prize and a two-year career-assistance fellowship.

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

**Kneebody Launch:** Trumpeter Shane Endsley has released his disc, *Then The Other*, on his band Kneebody's newly established label, Low Electrical Records.

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

**Allison Residency:** Bassist Ben Allison will perform every Tuesday night this year at New York's Kush. He will also release his 10th album, *Action-Refraction* (Palmetto), on April 12. Details: [benallison.com](http://benallison.com)

**Chamber Grants:** The New York-based organization Chamber Music America (CMA) has announced that it will award \$285,000 in grants to 23 jazz artists, ensembles and presenters in the United States and France.

Details: [chamber-music.org](http://chamber-music.org)

**Saturn Tales:** DownBeat contributor John Corbett has co-edited *Traveling The Spaceways* (WhiteWalls), a book of essays and artwork devoted to Sun Ra's impact on visual culture. Details: [press.uchicago.edu](http://press.uchicago.edu)

chosen profession, saying this is part of why jazz needs protecting.

When he finished, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu gave a surprise speech that took Conyers' point one step further. Music and other elements of Louisiana's indigenous culture have contributed \$9.6 billion to the state's economy, Landrieu said, "that's why every school ought to have a core curriculum in art and music." The room burst into applause. "Music is not just about the front of the house. It's about the back of the house, the musicians on the stage, the cultural economy."

A few local musicians complained that New Orleans music venues weren't included in the conference festivities, with the exception of Dave Liebman's Snug Harbor set. But the decision to keep the late-night shows inside the hotel meant more students would be able to see them: as well as New Orleans-based groups including Astral Project, the Dirty Dozen, Dr. Michael White and Donald Harrison Jr.

It was important to JEN's planners that their host city be well incorporated into the program as well.

"We wanted to have best representation in terms of jazz culture from New Orleans as we could have," Fischer said. "And we wanted it to represent the entire history of the music there, not just one element of it."

To that end, the Jazz and Heritage Foundation provided funding for the Don Vappie and Donald Harrison concerts and JEN collaborated with the Thelonious Monk Institute to send musicians af-

filiated with the conference into public schools and other local venues. Community radio station WWOZ also broadcast live each day from the conference.

However, the short planning phase—both of JEN's conferences took place in the space of seven months—seemed to have been a stumbling block.

"They ultimately gave a lot of local people the opportunity to perform," said local guitarist Reid Wick, who is also Senior Project Manager for the Recording Academy on the Gulf Coast. "But they only called a couple meetings of local folks. They came to us saying, 'We need your support in finding volunteers.' But I had people say they offered to volunteer and never got a call."

Wick also noted that the conference would have benefitted from additional marketing, pointing out that "IAJE had state chapters so they could disseminate information through an established system," unlike JEN, which did little in the way of advance marketing in its host city.

Papich and Fischer both acknowledge that there's room for improvement.

"Now we're in stage two of development," says Fischer. "We want to hear ideas from our membership. JEN is not a group of 15 people that sit in a room and make guidelines. The membership speaks, we listen, consider it all and do what we believe is the best we can with our resources."

The group is currently focused on increasing its offerings for teachers and students at the elementary school level, increase membership, develop its website and diversify the demographic of its leadership.

—Jennifer Odell

## Anthony Braxton's Tri-Centric Foundation Launches Website

With close to 300 items in his discography, and extensive writings elucidating his aesthetics and intentions, Anthony Braxton, now 65, does not lack documentation. Over the years, Braxton has, however, lacked a stable infrastructure by which to actualize his projects, and even in the age of file-sharing, his recordings—issued on several dozen American and European labels, some extant, some not—are scattered and often out of print.

After receiving a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1993, Braxton—a professor of music at Wesleyan University—formed the not-for-profit Tri-Centric Foundation, through which, among other things, he staged the opera Trillium R and established a label, Braxton House, that issued nine CDs. The entity went dormant around 2000, when money ran out.

In March, the Tri-Centric Foundation relaunched as a website ([tricentricfoundation.org](http://tricentricfoundation.org)). As before, its primary mission will be to produce Braxton's most ambitious, least commercially viable large-scale project, but it will also serve as digital sales and distribution platform: subscrib-



ers can download two new recordings a month on the New Braxton House label, purchase back catalog and get free "liberated bootlegs" of concerts available online. In addition, TCF will be an umbrella organization for the 60-member Tri-Centric Orchestra.

"We'd rather people investigate Anthony's work through the context of our website than just grab stuff on the fly," said trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum, the Tri-Centric Foundation's president. "Anthony is at an age where he is aware of his own mortality," Bynum said. "He wants to get this work out there. I want to do anything I can to help realize that."

—Ted Panken



## Led Bib Challenges Mass Audience In British Media Spotlight

In the United States it's a minor miracle when any sort of jazz heavier than Kenny G's codpiece makes it onto prime time network television. Occasionally, as on the annual Kennedy Center Honors, a deserving jazz legend like Dave Brubeck or the late Benny Carter gets feted, but the average viewer would be staring at a lot of snow before getting a glimpse of some contemporary iteration of jazz on the boob tube. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom the fiercely adventurous London quintet Led Bib got to strut its stuff for millions of viewers in September of 2009 on the BBC after its album *Sensible Shoes* was nominated for the country's prestigious, high-profile Mercury Prize—akin to a Grammy, but with greater emphasis on art rather than commerce.

The band has just released its fifth and best album, *Bring Your Own* (released, like its predecessor, by the Maryland-based Cuneiform label), and while the visibility bump provided by the Mercury nod may be over, the band is poised to build on its new audience. The quintet was formed in 2003 by drummer and composer Mark Holub—a New Jersey native who moved to



the U.K. for school—as a master's project at Middlesex University in London. From the start the lineup has also included bassist Liran Donin, keyboardist Toby McLaren, and alto saxophonists Pete Grogan and Christ Williams. While the band's earliest music was rather fussy and constricted in its keen desire to bring hard-rock energy to raucous improvisation, the group's last few albums have witnessed a

more confident, naturalistic outfit.

"When we went into record [our second album] *Sizewell Tea* we mapped out who was going to solo on this or that," Holub said. "It gave a more prescribed sound, and that's not how we play the music live, where we just go with what happens. So that's what we wanted to do with *Sensible Shoes*, to make it like a gig."

But the band put so much pressure on themselves to replicate that live energy that the music rippled with an intensity even greater and more relentless than what Led Bib delivered on stage. "For this record we used a residential studio in Wales in the countryside and we really tried to let go and just play," Holub said.

The new album was recorded and mixed by Head, a rock engineer best known for his work with P.J. Harvey, and while it is clearly Led Bib's most charged, high-octane effort yet, it also sounds like its loosest and most organic outing.

"We've developed a language together," Holub said. "On those early records you can hear me really trying to push the band in a certain direction, which I think was

me not being that confident. I'm able to take a backseat now, because I know that they're going to play great."

The introduction to a tune like "Hollow Ponds," which features a lovely, deeply woody upright bass solo by Donin followed by a stately articulation of the pretty theme by the saxophonists, clearly connects Led Bib to a progressive post-bop foundation, but Holub and his crew generally push the music much harder, with McLaren sticking to over-modulated Fender Rhodes and the bassist laying down a distorted churn. That rock component has seen the British jazz press have a field day with describing the band's sound; post-jazz, punk-jazz, and death-jazz-cum-math-punk are just some of the terms used to tag them. Holub understands that such efforts are intended to help parse the quintet's music for the average listener, but he simply prefers to call what Led Bib plays jazz. "I think it probably frustrates musicians a bit because you end up being pigeonholed and you have to talk about what the music is called," he said. "Can't we just play music and not worry about its name?" **DB**

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## Smithsonian Steps Up with New Jazz Anthology

For those who enjoyed Martin Williams' *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* (1973), Smithsonian Folkways' release of a new, definitive *Jazz: The Smithsonian Anthology* is a call for celebration. A seven-year labor of love, involving key figures in the arts and culture at the Smithsonian Institution, this landmark six-disc box set contains 111 of jazz's most historically significant cuts.

The set opens with Scott Joplin's jaunty "Maple Leaf Rag" (1899) and closes with Tomasz Stanko Quartet's swinging "Suspended Night Variation VIII" (2003), one of eight tracks from non-United States musicians. The set also includes another version of "Maple Leaf Rag" by revolutionaries Anthony Braxton and Muhal Richard Abrams. The usual suspects are in there, too, with Miles Davis, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong most prominent.

"The earlier album was organized around specific recordings which Martin thought should be canonical," said John Edward Hasse, curator of American Music at the Smithsonian. "He ended up with eight tracks each by Armstrong, Ellington and Charlie Parker. We asked the question: What 100 or so recording artists should a listener be exposed to? The main result is that we limited most artists to one track. The earlier album pretty much ended its survey in the early 1960s. We've extended the story into the 21st century."

"Given the importance of the Martin Williams set to educators and jazz aficionados alike along with the fact that nearly 40 years of jazz evolution has taken place since it was first published, we knew it was time for the SCCJ to be redone," said Dan Sheehy, director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.



John Edward Hasse (left), Richard Burgess, David Baker, Jose Antonio Bowen and Daniel Sheehy

Sheehy, who co-produced the set with Hasse and Richard James Burgess, points out that, despite the fact that it was the "gold standard" for jazz education when the record label published it, The Smithsonian Collection of Recordings went out of business more than a decade ago and the SCCJ went out of print in 1999.

More than 50 jazz educators and scholars chimed in on track suggestions, with 35 writers contributing to the accompanying 200-page book. A five-member executive committee included Dan Morgenstern, David Baker, Alyn Shipton, Jose Antonio Bowen and Hasse. They distilled the track list down to works "selected for their influence and iconic nature in jazz history." Hasse said, "One way of talking about the differences in content would be to say, simply, we've made the selections considerably more inclusive and brought the coverage much more up-to-date."

—John Ephland

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## David Amram Reaches For Higher Level at 80th Birthday

Just before his 80th birthday, multi-instrumentalist David Amram celebrated his musical life with a gathering of his friends and family Nov. 11 at Symphony Space in New York at a birthday tribute, "David Amram: The First 80 Years."

"My hope," Amram said, "is that some kid will come to the concert and say, 'Hey, I want to play jazz! My career counselor tells me it's hopeless, but that old guy is having such a good time, maybe jazz is good for your health, good for your life!' Jazz is on a higher level. Jazz teaches you spirituality, and hang-out-ology!"

Amram's three children joined in, but the youngest spirits on the stage were Amram and the great conguero Candido, who first played with Amram alongside Charles Mingus in 1955. Candido, soon to be 90, and timbalero Bobby Sanabria energized "En Memoria De Chano Pozo," the orchestral tribute Amram composed and first performed in Havana in 1977.

"David never stops," said actor Keir Dullea in welcoming everyone to the tribute. Mark Morganelli of Jazz Forum Arts produced the concert. The Queens College Orchestra played Amram's re-creations of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" as if they were musical interludes from Guthrie's travels across America, Mexico and the Caribbean.

"When he wrote the song, Woody's daughter Nora told me, he lived in New York, and he used to walk through all the neighborhoods," Amram said.

Amram has played jazz mostly on the French horn, especially since the '50s with Mingus and Oscar Pettiford, Kenny Dorham and Dizzy Gillespie. He also plays piano, guitar, a world of rhythm instruments, and he's especially virtuosic on the pennywhistle, sometimes playing two at once, harmonizing and wittily counterpointing himself. "I was playing French horn and Latin percussion with Dizzy, and he liked the pennywhistle," Amram said. "Dizzy used to say, 'Man, bring those whistles!'"

During the tribute, Pete Seegar and Arlo Guthrie appeared via video salutes (Amram's tribute benefitted Seegar's Clearwater and the Guthrie Foundation). Willie Nelson, also on the screen, thanked Amram for his involvement with the Farm Aid concerts. Phil Meyers of the New York Philharmonic, for whom Amram composed a "Blues For Monk," sent thanks on his French horn.

Each section of the concert also remembered Amram's friends and collaborators. "In Memory Of Jack Kerouac" featured actor John Ventimiglia reading the end of Kerouac's *On The Road*, remembering the jazz and poetry sessions Amram played with Kerouac in the '50s. "In Memory Of Joseph Papp" featured a video Lawrence Kraman filmed of a recent performance (at Louisiana State) of an opera Amram composed of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

"Essentially I'm a composer," Amram said. "I was so influenced by my uncle. He took me to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra, and then he took me to hear Duke Ellington. I've been playing jazz since I was 12, loving it, appreciating it, never dreaming that I would come to New York as a 24-year-old hayseed and play with Charles Mingus, and have my whole life opened up when I met Thelonious Monk and Miles and Gil Evans. It's not a question of being eclectic. It's having that open door that jazz gives you towards creativity, respect for all music, respect for all people, and being able, for every second of your life, to improvise."

—Michael Bourne



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## Winter Jazzfest Proves New York Jazz Scene's Strength in Numbers

New York's Winter Jazzfest requires a physical stamina rarely asked of jazz fans. Drink minimums and hushed crowds give way to wrist bands and a sea of shoulders, each pair supporting a much-needed winter coat. For its seventh year, the festival presented 68 acts on five West Village stages (Le Poisson Rouge, Kenny's Castaways, Sullivan Hall, Zinc Bar and Bitter End) to more than 4,000 attendees on Jan. 7 and 8.

Drummer Chico Hamilton, who was about to turn 90, helped kick off the festival at Le Poisson Rouge with a comparatively youthful septet. Amid countless jokes about his age, Hamilton displayed an effortless mastery of his kit, proving himself as relevant as the bandleaders one quarter his age. At the close of his set the crowd moved en masse across the street to witness Charles Gayle's fiery saxophone at Kenny's Castaways, his big tone filling the kitschy venue with squealing flights, while bassist Larry Roland and drummer Michael T.A. Thompson clattered with intensity alongside him. More subdued in decor but no less in sound was Zinc Bar which featured exquisite performances from Aaron Goldberg's trio and Marcus Strickland's quartet.

Saturday night expanded from three venues to five—selling out by 9 p.m. Le Poisson Rouge had one of the more disparate booking sequences. Charlie Hunter played his seven-string guitar to a talkative crowd, laying down intertwined blues riffs in his split-brained style. Following his straightforward set was Stained Radiance featur-

ing Nels Cline's lurking guitar, looping through feedback and fire, providing the soundtrack to Norton Wisdom's rapidly transforming backlit paintings. Organist John Medeski had a rock 'n' roll-like following with various camera phones pointed his way throughout RedCred's set of wailing funk and klezmer soul-jazz. Later in the evening the Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey brought its pointillistic bravado to a diminished but enthusiastic crowd. The quartet made the most of the venue's sound system, turning on a dime while Chris Combs' slide guitar and Jeff Harshbarger's bowed bass-lines arrived in thunderous waves.

Kenny's Castaways hosted a couple of heavy tenor saxophones on its cluttered stage. Donny McCaslin's quartet, aided by Uri Caine's raspy Rhodes, blazed through a handful of breathless originals, sheet music fluttering in their wake. A few sets later powerhouse trio Athereal Bace hit the stage missing one of two drummers, but saxophonist Abraham Burton and drummer Nasheet Waits generated enough hurricane forces to rattle the walls on their own.

Sullivan Hall, the most remote of the venues, was where everyone was discreetly partying, with DJs premiering unreleased recordings between sets and nearly every other person in the room carrying an instrument case. The tuned-in crowd ran at capacity all night on sleepy Sullivan Street. Maurice Brown brought his power-

ful chops and effortless showmanship, while the Robert Glasper Experiment dealt in heavier grooves with the crowd sweating and swaying along.

At the Bitter End, the American Midwest-meets-Africa dance band Nomo crammed onto the tiny stage for a surging crowd, heating up the room with rapid-fire horn solos and polyrhythmic dance beats while Noah Preminger's saxophone eloquently ushered in Sunday morning as Frank Kimbrough wrestled with the house's wobbly tuned piano.

—Sean O'Connell



The problem was somewhat resolved a week later with one consequence: Ribot decided to forego a solo set. Not that the audience needed a warmup to fully appreciate Sun Ship, his relatively new, bracingly powerful Coltrane tribute quartet. Though it was possible to be roused by the ensemble's seamless without knowing any details about the namesake Coltrane album, familiarity definitely added to the thrill, putting you in touch with how natural the band's radicalism actually is. The most obvious difference, the twin-guitar attack, meant that Ribot and tag-teamer Mary Halvorson could litter the set opener, Coltrane's meditative hymn "Dearly

Beloved," with angles that weren't so much sharp as complementary. Coupled with the explosive sound of the rhythm section (bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Chad Taylor), the sonic character of pieces such as "Sun Ship," "Amen" and "Attaining" approached rock without coalescing into anything that resembled a straight groove. One indication that it was jazz in clever disguise was the extensive solo space given to Taylor and Grimes, the latter of whom put down the bass at one point to play chattering violin. When Ribot called a blues by Gene Ammons to close the set, it was a marvel of pacing, guilelessness, showmanship. —*K. Leander Williams*



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## Guitarist Marc Ribot Holds Court in Greenwich Village Residency

Now that the digital-music marketplace has been sliced and diced within an inch of its own survival, musicians like Marc Ribot are a reminder that fragmentation isn't the natural order of things. This was apparent within the first 15 minutes of the solo-guitar set that kicked off his weekly January residency at New York's all-purpose basement space Le Poisson Rouge.

Seated in a crouch that at times placed his left ear at odd angles with the fretboard, Ribot allowed two strummed pastoral melodies to twist and turn before giving the crowd a reason to exhale: Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now." Each Wednesday evening he promised to riffle through a different chapter of his multifaceted career, but his readings—fast, slow, transparent, opaque—were clearly from the same book. He

would get to John Coltrane's "Sun Ship" and another intimate casual from his recent solo disc *Silent Movies* before sitting in with two vibrant bands, one Peruvian (led by cajon specialist/singer Cotito) and the other New York-based Colombians (La Cumbiamba eN-eYé), that pushed his solos well into psychedelia. Were it not for the intermittently audible sound bleed coming from a dance party in Le Poisson Rouge's adjacent space (at one point, Ribot stormed off the stage to complain about it), the entire evening might have approached the sublime.





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## Lizz Wright Shows Beauty of Restraint on Tour's Opener

Four albums into her career as jazz vocalist, Lizz Wright has moved from a talented—if unsure—ingenue who dabbled in styles to a full-fledged artist. Her recent *Fellowship* CD takes a core ingredient, gospel singing, and brings it to the forefront, both in the style and content of her new songs. She emerges as a soloist who would have earned a spot on some of the legendary "gospel caravan" mega-shows of 50 years ago.

Wright opened an intensive two-month tour at Hollywood's Roxy on Jan. 26, and if there was any doubt that night, she confirmed her status as the foremost gospel-informed jazz singer of her generation. Her voice is sure and strong, with a compact power that never strains into nonmusical sounds; this is a singer, not a screamer. She's not an ornamental soloist in the way that Mahalia Jackson would suddenly soar to the vertical with spiraling turns. Instead, Wright is more likely to project vocal arcs that gain slowly in force and canopy the room. Dressed in a long halter-top dress, she carried the air of a rustic elegance—simple and direct, yet full of meaningful portent.

If her fans expected a live reiteration of the new album, Wright threw them a bit of a change. She worked with a rhythm section that weighted her accompaniment to the instrumental, as opposed to vocal. Electric keyboards, guitar and bass enlarged the funk arrangements of the tunes. Thankfully, neither Wright nor the band operated at self-defeating high volume. The funk beat of Me'Shell N'Degeocello's "Fellowship" was taken at a dynamic level where discreetly added reverb could be discerned in her held notes. When the instruments subsided and her voice—dark and majestic—rose above the ensemble, Wright's potent essence filled the room.

"I Remember, I Believe," a Bernice Reagon/Wright collaboration, was cast in the Sweet Honey in the Rock vein. Sung without backing vocals,



Wright imparted a resolved calm. She pulled Neil Young's "Old Man" from the deeper recesses of her book, with Robin Macatangay's resonant guitar chords supplying bedrock. Steve Winwood's churchy "In The Presence Of The Lord" was an affirming surprise. Two backup singers fortified the funk chart of the Gladys Knight anthem "I've Got To Use My Imagination." Drummer Rocky Bryant demonstrated his solid dependability here and throughout. Even on a secular tune like this, Wright wasn't far from the stained glass aura.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was the venerable blues "Easy Rider." Sung with intensity, she was carried by Glenn Patcha's simple but effective use of ascending keyboard figures. Actually, a strong cord of folksiness ran through the music that night. Her own "Song For Mia" (used in *The Secret Life of Bees*) underscored this. Wright recognizes the value of breathing space. A judiciously placed hum, so resonant and loaded with implication, says more with less. When she did get fancy—on her own "Stop"—the gentle arabesques sounded completely natural. Running an hour-and-a-quarter, her "opening night" looked and sounded like midseason form. Audiences down the line must have some spectacular performances coming their way. —Kirk Silsbee

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## Matthew Rybicki ▶ *Creatively Supportive*

Whenever a musician breaks out on the scene, one question inevitably rises to the surface: Why did you pick that instrument to play? For bassist Matthew Rybicki, the choice emerged almost by necessity. “Strangely enough,” he recalls, “it was a passing decision to pick up the instrument as friends in middle school were starting a band and they needed a bassist.”

And that’s all it took. “Once I began playing and learning more,” Rybicki adds, “I identified more and more with the role of the instrument. I’ve always been attracted to the grounded, root aspects of a given thing. And, while some may shy away from the instrument’s primarily supportive role, I enjoy working to be an excellent accompanist. There’s something often overlooked in the beauty and creativity necessary to be in the background. I tend to focus on the offensive or defensive line-men in football for example—no glory for them, but there’s a certain kind of honor in doing the quiet, hard work of being part of the team but not in the spotlight.”

And yet, the spotlight is where Rybicki finds himself, at age 38, on the occasion of his self-released debut album, *Driven* (CD Baby). Having worked with such established artists as Wynton Marsalis, Terrell Stafford and Nnenna Freelon, Rybicki’s CD features a crack band of some of New York’s finest straightahead players, including drummer Ulysses Owens Jr., trumpeter Freddie Hendrix, saxist Ron Blake, pianist Gerald Clayton and trombonist Michael Dease. And with nine of his own originals, along with covers of the standards “Secret Love” and “Yellow Bird,” the leader had his work cut out for him, directing not only his sextet, but—on the more world-music-oriented tune “Nouackchott”—guest singer Selloane Nkehla and percussionist Matthew Baranello as well.

Owens played a special role on *Driven*. “Ulysses Owens and I met at Juilliard,” Rybicki remembers. “And soon after graduating we began a deep musical connection. His actions as producer were also phenomenal, and his playing is unbelievable ... so that was a no-brainer. As for Ron, Freddie and Gerald, they were all on a sort of fantasy list for me. Although I knew them all to varying degrees, I wasn’t sure I’d be able to put them all together for the project. I wanted them specifically for their all-around musicianship. It wasn’t just a session for them—they were interested in creating something at the highest level.”

Dease was another Juilliard classmate of Rybicki’s. “Michael not only helped as session-producer,” says Rybicki, “but is such a monster player that I couldn’t imagine having him in the studio and not have him as part of the music directly. And Matt Baranello and I have been long-time friends from when I first moved to New York City. He was in the world-music band that I was with for five years and has an intimate and profound knowledge of African and Afro-Cuban music. With the vibe on ‘Nouackchott,’ I felt he’d be perfect.

“And Sellone,” he goes on to say, “was a last-minute addition, thanks to the hard work of Ulysses and Michael. They suggested vocals at the last minute—I had not written a vocal part—and were able to bring her in. Ironically, I’ve subbed in *The Lion King* on Broadway many times but it wasn’t me who brought her in.” (She plays Rafiki in the show.)

Speaking of Rybicki and Broadway, it wasn’t long before the New York transplant found himself working in pit bands as well as at Radio City Music Hall. But before he landed in the Big Apple in 1995, Rybicki, who grew up in Cleveland, made an important stop along the way. “I think that going to Boston first was a great mid-point change before New York City,”



he says, referring to his studies at Berklee. “I don’t think that I would have been able to cope with the city without having the experience of the smaller, more manageable aspects of Berklee and Boston. Additionally, I came to jazz late in the game—when I began Berklee—so it was very helpful to be in that learning environment as a novice.

“I hadn’t planned on making a move to New York after Berklee,” he adds, “but a variety of factors allowed me to do so. And it’s been 15 years now, so it really feels like home. Once I became interested in having a career in jazz, I knew that New York City would be the best place to pay my dues.”

And, as part of that process of developing a career, Rybicki has had his share of playing experiences. Recording credits include the CD *Common Journey* by trombonist Barry Cooper and trumpeter Kris Johnson, as well as *Love Walked In*, the debut CD from vocalist Charenee Wade, a second-place winner in the Monk Competition. Gigs have included working with Walter Blanding Jr. at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola in a band that features Audrey Shaker (his mother, an accomplished visual artist), Marcus Printup, Jack Glottman and Willie Jones. Rybicki notes that the recordings from that week will be made into a CD in the near future.

As for *Driven*, the unamplified sound of his acoustic bass permeates the balance of ballads, blues and irresistible swingers on such tunes as “Lisa’s Song,” “Lowcountry Boil” and “A Mean Lean,” respectively. The lyrical yet percussive Rybicki alludes to dance when talking about his music. “I just love having a feeling of bounce and groove with the music,” he says. “So much of jazz has been about playing for dancers, and the dancers have influenced the music in some ways, too. Even if an audience isn’t literally dancing, I want to play in situations as often as possible that at least make folks want to snap their fingers.”

—John Ephland



## Patrick Cornelius ▶ *Up To The Challenge*

As his latest release, *Fierce* (Whirlwind Recordings), gives notice, Patrick Cornelius belongs to a sharp crop of alto saxophonists worth watching for in New York—despite the fact he's been in the jazz capital a decade now. "The alto, perhaps more than the tenor, seems to be the saxophone of choice amongst promising players at the moment in New York," reflects Cornelius from his home in Astoria. He trots out a list of names including Jaleel Shaw, Lars Dietrich, Will Vinson, Logan Richardson, not to forget Miguel Zenón, who impressed Cornelius in a Berklee big band. Cornelius respects Zenón's advanced concepts of form and development and has bagged plaudits for his own writing, including a succession of ASCAP Young Composer prizes for tunes from his self-produced debut, *Lucid Dream*.

Dubbed the Chordless Group due to the absence of piano or guitar resulting from gigs at Manhattan's intimate The Bar Next Door, Cornelius' trio initially explored standards in the protracted manner of Sonny Rollins and Joe Henderson before he determined to assemble a book of originals.

The strong presence of London-based bassist Michael Janisch on *Fierce* (Whirlwind is Janisch's label) hints at traces of Dave Holland in Cornelius' writing, and he acknowledges the skillful counterpoint of sax and trombone in the Holland quintet, a combination he uses on *Fierce* alongside valve trombonist Nick Vayenas. Cornelius cut his first demo CD at Berklee with Vayenas and met Mark Small, guest tenorist on the new record, in Boston too. "I wrote 'First Dance' with Mark in mind. His approach is the perfect foil for mine. Where I am full-on and Cannonbalesque, he takes his time, with style and panache."

Still mining small-group songform, Cornelius writes to set himself challenges. Thusly "New Blues" is inspired by "All Blues" but in a less familiar meter (the head juxtaposes 11/4 and 5/8). Using the fulcrum of Janisch's bold time and Jonathan Blake's snappy modernity, Cornelius takes a rangy and perkily rhythmic solo, packed with fluency and feeling. More of the same inhabits "Two Seventy-Eight," an aggressive homage to the madness of the Brooklyn/Queens Expressway that he navigates several times a week to make his day gig in a private school.

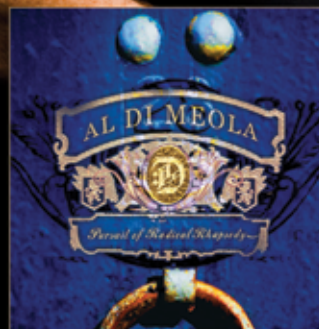
Cornelius' next CD is a quintet outing for the Los Angeles-based Posi-Tone label recorded last May, featuring pianist Gerald Clayton, bassist Peter Slavov, guitarist Miles Okazaki and Berklee buddy Kendrick Scott on drums. "It's less playful, more introspective," confesses Cornelius. The mellower vibe of the quintet CD may be an offshoot of becoming a father and his tendency to hear darker sounds and harmonies when writing for piano. Attending Berklee straight out of high school followed by graduate studies at the Manhattan School have leant his playing sheen and composure, but compositional smarts and a centered warmth in his attitude mark him out.

—Michael Jackson



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## Ryuichi Sakamoto ▶ *Dual Fascination*

An introduction to pianist/composer Ryuichi Sakamoto will invariably mention the many musical genres he has explored.

The diverse cast of musicians and artists with whom he's collaborated—a list that includes Tony Williams, Alva Noto, Youssou N'Dour, Adrian Belew and Caetano Veloso—will likely be brought up, as well. But while the branches and fruits of his career are indeed many, it's perhaps more instructive to drill down to his musical roots.

The 58-year old Tokyo native went from taking piano lessons at age three to studying composition for seven years beginning in fifth grade—“very academically classical,” Sakamoto recalls. He also channeled his other musical interests in the unique ensemble he led in high school. “We were a strange band,” he admits, on the eve of the night of the penultimate show of his 2010 North American Playing the Piano tour. “We only played free-jazz and bossa nova. No standard jazz.”

A disciple of Debussy and other Impressionism-inspired composers of the era, Saka-



moto's ears were blown wide open upon graduating from high school. “At university, that was the first time I encountered synthesizers,” he says. “I entered in 1970, and at that time, it was really rare to have these big synthesizers like the Moog and ARP in the classroom.

“But also, I became very passionate about ethnic music,” he continues. “So I had to study ethnic music and also something very futuristic at the time. That was synthesizers, because it gave us an opportunity to make totally new

sounds, new timbres—a new way of thinking and a new way of making music.”

The founts of indigenous music and emerging music technology provided the twin inspirations that continue to fuel him.

After earning an MFA in electronic and ethnic music, he co-founded the techno-pop outfit Yellow Magic Orchestra in 1978. In its five-year existence, it became the Japanese equivalent of The Beatles in terms of popularity and cultural impact, exporting their sound to England, Europe and the United States.

Though the members fully harnessed the music technology of the time—synthesizers, sequencers, drum machines—YMO (as it would later get shortened to) was at heart a futuristic piano trio fueled by three accomplished instrumentalists, with Sakamoto frequently playing keyboards, Haruomi Hosono on bass guitar and Yukihiro Takahashi atop the drum throne.

Sakamoto's solo pursuits have progressed on a similarly eclectic trajectory. From experimental rock, sophisticated dance pop and global pop to acoustic Brazilian, contemporary classical and electronic ambient, his canvas has ranged from three-minute songs to feature film scores (including *The Last Emperor*, for which he won an Oscar and a Grammy).

His two most recent albums were packaged by Decca for a North American double release and continue to build on his dual fascination with nature and technology. *Playing the Piano* is an unaccompanied album in which he re-examines songs, compositions and film score themes from throughout his career. On *Out of Noise*, his piano is at the roots of the pieces. Collaborators such as guitarist Keigo Oyamada (of Cornelius fame) and guitarist-laptop artist Cristian Fennesz then placed textures atop the source material. Arctic sounds he recorded while he was in Greenland with the Cape Farewell Project were also manipulated and incorporated.

“Like fishing, you never know when you can get a good sound,” he says, of his chilly southern expedition. “So you have to wait for many hours.”

—Yoshi Kato

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## Jen Shyu ▶ *Transcending Technique*

A decade ago, Jen Shyu, an up-and-coming Bay Area singer-pianist, started to feel “a little lost.”

“I was a good imitator,” Shyu recalled. “Even in college when I sang with a jazz combo, I was wearing dresses and sequins. I latched onto Sarah Vaughan, like, ‘OK, I’ll be a jazz singer,’ without understanding the tradition at all.”

Born in Peoria, Ill., Shyu is the first generation child of a Taiwanese engineer and an ethnic Chinese mother from East Timor. As a high-schooler, she attained sufficient pianistic prowess to work towards an international Bach competition, but scaled down her studies after getting “distracted” by community musical theater and jazz singing. She attended Stanford, spent much of a six-month stay at Oxford singing professionally in several choirs and considered training for an opera career.

Encouraged to look inward by saxophonist Francis Wong, co-founder of San Francisco’s Asian Improv label, Shyu incorporated Taiwanese folk songs into her repertoire. “It became clear that the key was to be informed by your ancestry,” she said. “Francis suggested that to get inside these folk songs, it would be valuable to go to Taiwan and hang out.” While the notion marinated, Shyu recorded a CD, *First Song*, comprising 10 deconstructed standards and a single Taiwanese piece. On a New York visit a few months later, drummer Dafnis Prieto—they’d met at the Stanford Jazz Workshop—invited her to a Steve Coleman concert at Tonic. She gave her CD to Coleman, then looking for vocalists for his *Lucidarium* project. Later, he remarked, “You have a nice voice, but do you want to sing standards the rest of your life?”

She took the leap in 2003, flying to Taiwan for the first of five fieldwork expeditions. She expanded these investigations with 2008 and 2009 sojourns to Beijing and a long 2010 residence in her mother’s homeland. Most widely known during this timeframe for her virtuosic voice-as-instrument work in Coleman’s Five Elements group, she gradually evolved a personal conception, blending the indigenous songs of her bloodline, contemporary classical dissonances, microtonal pitches, complex rhythmic cycles and much improvisational ensemble space to frame her own fluid, resonant, spot-on contralto.



She unveiled her hybrid sound on the 2008 date *Jade Tongue* (Pi), with charts scored for her voice and a sextet of ready-for-anything New York improvisers. Two August 2010 digi-releases document Shyu’s interest in finding “ways to approach the organic effect one sees in a ritual.” She sings much folkloric repertoire on *Inner Chapters*, a solo project, accompanying herself on piano, erhu and moon lute, a two-string guitar from East Timor, eschewing “pretty singing” for a more functional approach. “I’ve learned with Steve that you don’t wait until you have it perfect; you’ve got to be bold and let it go.”

She channels this attitude on *Raging Waters, Red Sands*, a multi-disciplinary opus on which a mime-dancer and an ensemble signify on Shyu’s readings—in Portuguese, Tetum, English, Taiwanese, Mandarin and homegrown scat “informed by syllables from the indigenous music that fascinates me”—of poetry by Patrícia Magalhães.

“A lot of my scatting is influenced by having to create a language to sing Steve’s horn lines, because *bah-daht-buh-dop* is not going to cut it,” Shyu said. “Though I’m experimenting with the syllables, it sounds like a language. The lines blur when you go into these ancient songs.”

Shyu acknowledged that she’s also influenced by the avant garde, “Bartok—things that are obscured, but beautiful; they all kind of swim around,” she said. “I like to take people places, and allow them to imagine their own worlds or meaning. I want to reach the stage where I’ve transcended to such a state of performance that people are not complimenting my technique. It’s like I’m trying to shave away all the stuff, while using all that training to get the message across.”

—Ted Panken

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# TEAM MARSALIS

# All In The Family





By Jim Macnie // Photography By Jimmy Katz

**J**ason Marsalis looks serious as he fiddles with his drum sticks at Manhattan's Apple Store. He's sitting at his trap set, paces away from his dad, pianist Ellis, getting ready to hit. But then again, Jason often looks serious. Perhaps the snap he brings to his music demands it ... or perhaps not. As the father and son start to ignite with bassist Jason Stewart, the drummer begins to get his grin on. The spry way he delivers his swing pretty much demands a smile or two. Goading his dad's glide over the keys, he helps bring an elan to the room. The Marsalises have a way of quickly connecting.

But with five busy careers in play at once, the Marsalises don't manage to connect all that often. So this evening is somewhat special. During an informal set celebrating the iTunes arrival of Ellis' *An Open Letter To Thelonious*, the pianist's other sons jump up and blow a bit as well. Trombonist Delfeayo, saxophonist Branford and trumpeter Wynton arrive at the store one by one, taking the stage in a casual way, and enjoying the heck out of standing shoulder to shoulder while kicking around some standards. All of a sudden, those grins are everywhere.

The quintet did something similar in a much more formal setting two summers ago at Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center, a show that was turned into *Music Redeems*, a live disc benefiting the nearly complete Ellis Marsalis Center for Music back in their home town of New Orleans. That was a year-and-a-half ago, and the five musicians haven't been in a performance together since. This little Apple gathering, which found Delfeayo throwing down some exquisite 'bone lines, came about because they were all in town to participate in the National Endowment for the Arts' Jazz Masters ceremony. Along with Hubert Laws, Dave Liebman, Johnny Mandel and Orrin Keepnews, the five Marsalis were receiving the prized designation and performing at a high-vis concert the following night at Lincoln Center. You could call this a rehearsal of sorts. And, yes, it was worth it. They rather killed with some high-flying polyphony when the big night came and they smoked their way through Jason's "At The House, In Da Pocket."

During this two-day stretch, all the award-winners, especially Team Marsalis, were part of panel discussions, photography sessions and interview spots that examined the impact of their careers. DownBeat thought it was a great time to grab the guys, who span in age from Ellis' 76 to Jason's 34, for a chat about family dynamics and the way jazz has impacted their lives. Convened in a meeting room adjacent to Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, the guys laughed and chatted. Ultimately, it turned into a trip down memory lane while managing to include a bit of controversy, too. I began by addressing Ellis as "Master Marsalis," echoing a fawning audience member who made a mark at the panel discussion the day before. Some brothers cracked up, some winced. Dad had the final word, though. "It's cool if you call me that ... as long as I don't believe it."

**DownBeat:** *You guys went to the funeral service for Dr. Billy Taylor last night. Was it thought-provoking?*

**Wynton:** I thought it was extremely soulful. The diversity of the people who showed up? Wow. He did a lot to unite people. I knew him, but I didn't have a real understanding of the ways he touched people until I saw that community come together.

**Branford:** When you grow up in New Orleans, people talk about death all the time. Some of my boys used to go and hang out at the St. Louis Cemeteries in the middle of the city, and ponder why roaches used to sit on the sides of the tombstones, you know? We're not afraid of death. When people die in New Orleans, it's like, "Say, you heard so-and-so died? You going to funeral? Alright." Bands playing, guys getting paid. When I moved up here, it was like death was a taboo subject. But it doesn't bother me. It's what it is, and it's coming for all of us.

**Ellis:** Plus, the culture I grew up with in New Orleans has the tendency to reflect the Christian concept of death: "rejoice when you die." They believe the person has gone to a better place.

That's what the second line celebrates. I remember a friend of ours passed away, and I was talking to one my classmates, and the expression they'd use was, "Yeah, man, he had a great send-off." Like there was a kind of acceptance of the idea that he was gone, and that was cool.

**DownBeat:** *OK, let's talk family. You guys don't share the stage all that often. What's the chemistry when you get together to perform?*

**Ellis:** That's kind of hard to describe. See, we don't do this enough for it to get to be routine by any means. But one important thing is that everyone has maintained a level of excellence on their instrument, so everyone can stand on their own two feet. And me being the elder statesman, I'm happy not being dragged along.

**Branford:** When I share the bandstand with Wynton, I can read his thoughts. But that's no surprise: We lived in the same room together for 19 years. Jason is 17 years younger than me. And Delfeayo is five years younger. When we were growing up, it was me and Wynton, and Ellis and Delfeayo. Even though Ellis doesn't play an instrument, those two have chemistry together. Now that we're older, we have a thing; people who have brothers know this. Even when you can't stand your brother, there's a weird family energy at work. Wynton and I have a bond.

**DownBeat:** *What about roughhousing?*

**Branford:** We had this one thing we did: playing football in the living room—me and Wynton vs. Ellis and Delfeayo, and Jason was the football, literally. We'd say "hike" and Jason would move forward; we'd be blocking, pushing the furniture around. When my mom found out, she was not very pleased.

**Ellis:** Hahahahaha.

**Branford:** And I think that those kind of things actually aid in playing music. They have nothing to do with music, but everything to do with music.

**Wynton:** Branford and I would play a lot of gigs together. It was the early '70s when Earth, Wind & Fire was coming out. We'd write out the notes to their tunes in words like "F-sharp, G" instead of the notes themselves. And sometimes our father would let us play with him on the bandstand. They could play; we couldn't. We were sad, you know, but he encouraged us. We have as much dysfunction as any family, maybe a bit more. The first time we all got together to play [as adults], I was thinking, "Oh man, we're gonna have to deal with some things here," but what shocked me turned out to be the fact that it wasn't like that at all. It went well. I think it was mainly from the respect we had for my father. We all know he had a time out there. He was struggling to feed us and play this music. When we come together, the amount of respect is overwhelming.

**Branford:** When I was in Wynton's band, we'd always be fighting over some stupidity. I remember one day he was going to do push-ups or something and kick my butt. We'd fight during the day, but by the time of the gig, when the music would start, we'd turn to look at each other and it would be gone.

**Wynton:** When you play with someone as good as Branford, it's different—it's not just that we're brothers. I was spoiled by playing with him. We came to New York, and every gig I got on, I tried to get him on. "You gotta call my brother, man. My brother can play." I told Herbie [Hancock] and them, "What about my brother? Get him on this gig." Used to beg Woody Shaw: "This is the cat, check my brother."

**Branford:** And they were like, "To hell with your brother."

**DownBeat:** *Sounds like in the back of your mind you knew that's what your dad would've wanted you to do: take care of family.*

**Wynton:** Nah, he wasn't like that. My daddy's not the type of person to force you to do stuff. He did what he was doing. He was a man and you were a boy—it was always clear. He wasn't going to live his life through you. Like, "You do your thing, I'm doing my thing, and good luck. If I can help you, I will. If not, God bless you."

**Ellis:** No, I was never a stage-door dad. I'm not sure what conditions would have had to existed for me to be a stage-door dad. If the music we were trying to play had been in a popular vein, say like Joe Jackson and the Jackson 5, and money was involved, well, who knows?

**Wynton:** Damn sure there was no money with us. There was less than money. We were cheap labor, the guys who carried the Fender Rhodes. Like, "OK, pick up this end, let's move this thing."

**Ellis:** People used to ask all the time: Why don't y'all have a family band? I never wanted no family band. And sometimes it sounded like, "Oh man, you're jealous of them." But that's not what it was about.

**DownBeat:** *Ellis, do you remember these guys playing together?*

**Ellis:** I used to go to some of those gigs.

**Wynton:** He sat in. It almost killed him.

**Branford:** He'd just sit and laugh. It was at my high school. We were playing the Crusaders, "Keep That Same Old Feeling."

**Wynton:** He came up and played it with us and we'd hit the bridge with all these changes on it, and we'd be bullshitting on the changes and he'd be like, "Oh, no, no, that's not the way it goes. You gotta deal with these changes, baby, here it is ..."

**Everyone:** Hahahahahaha!

**Wynton:** Cats would say, "Yeah, man, your daddy can play!"

**DownBeat:** *Were you guys wincing, embarrassed that he was in your space?*

**Wynton:** We were so happy to see him show up a gig. And the cats in our band were happy. "Get him to play with us!" They loved it.

**Branford:** That's what I didn't understand, that strange thing I'd see on TV all the time, like, "Jesus, dad, what are you doing here?" We didn't have that vibe with our parents. We were happy to see them.

**Wynton:** Plus, when he sat in, he made something clear.

**Branford:** Yeah, "I can play, and y'all can't."



**DownBeat:** *When did you truly realize that he was heavy?*

**Branford:** When I was 1 year old, 2 years old.

**Wynton:** We always knew he could play—that was never a question. He'd practice. Plus, when we started playing ourselves, and realized what it actually took, we *really* knew he could play. Because you hear *him* and you could hear yourself. No comparison, right? And he was cool about it, so you'd had to be cool, too.

**Ellis:** I think that a lot it had to do the philosophy of teaching that evolved over a period of time ...

**Wynton:** This is *before* the teaching. I remember clearly. It was the '60s, and I remember a gig with the Xavier University band and he played bass on the gig. The bass player didn't show and they called him up. I might have been 9 years old, and we were sitting in the audience because [trumpeter John] Fernandez had some fine daughters, so we were always there.

**Branford:** He sure did ...

**Wynton:** And we'd be the only kids at the concert. We said, "Damn, man, Daddy's playing bass!" I remember it like it was yesterday.

**Branford:** Yesterday Cedar Walton told me: "The first time I met Ellis he was playing bass and I was playing piano. It was in 1951." He can play sax, too.

**Wynton:** I remember being in the bathroom one day and hearing a horn playing Charlie

Parker. I said, "Damn, Branford finally learned how to play that thing?" I came into the living room and it was Daddy.

**Branford:** Lots of kids would say, "Hey, my dad's a drag." I'd say, "My dad's kind of cool."

**DownBeat:** *Ellis, you were known for trying to play modern jazz in a world where trad was king.*

**Ellis:** I remember a banjo player named Albert French, "Papa." He played with the old guys. His oldest son was around my age. I knew the family from when we lived in Gert Town. We ran into each other occasionally, and once I saw Papa French and he said, "You guys need to come out and learn how to play this music. Some of these old guys are passing on, and the younger folks don't know how to play it." And I said, "Yeah, Papa French, you're right." But to myself I was saying, "I don't want to play that crap." I was about 40 years old before I really understood the connection between early jazz and what we were trying to do in a more modernistic vein. It wasn't really that far apart, but when I heard it at the time, well ... let's just say you want to deal with your peers.

**DownBeat:** *Artistically, you don't want to look over your shoulder.*

**Wynton:** You have to be of your time. You might be the kid who says, "Let's study something [old]," but you're still of your time, because your relationship with others is going to be based

on all them saying, "No, let's not."

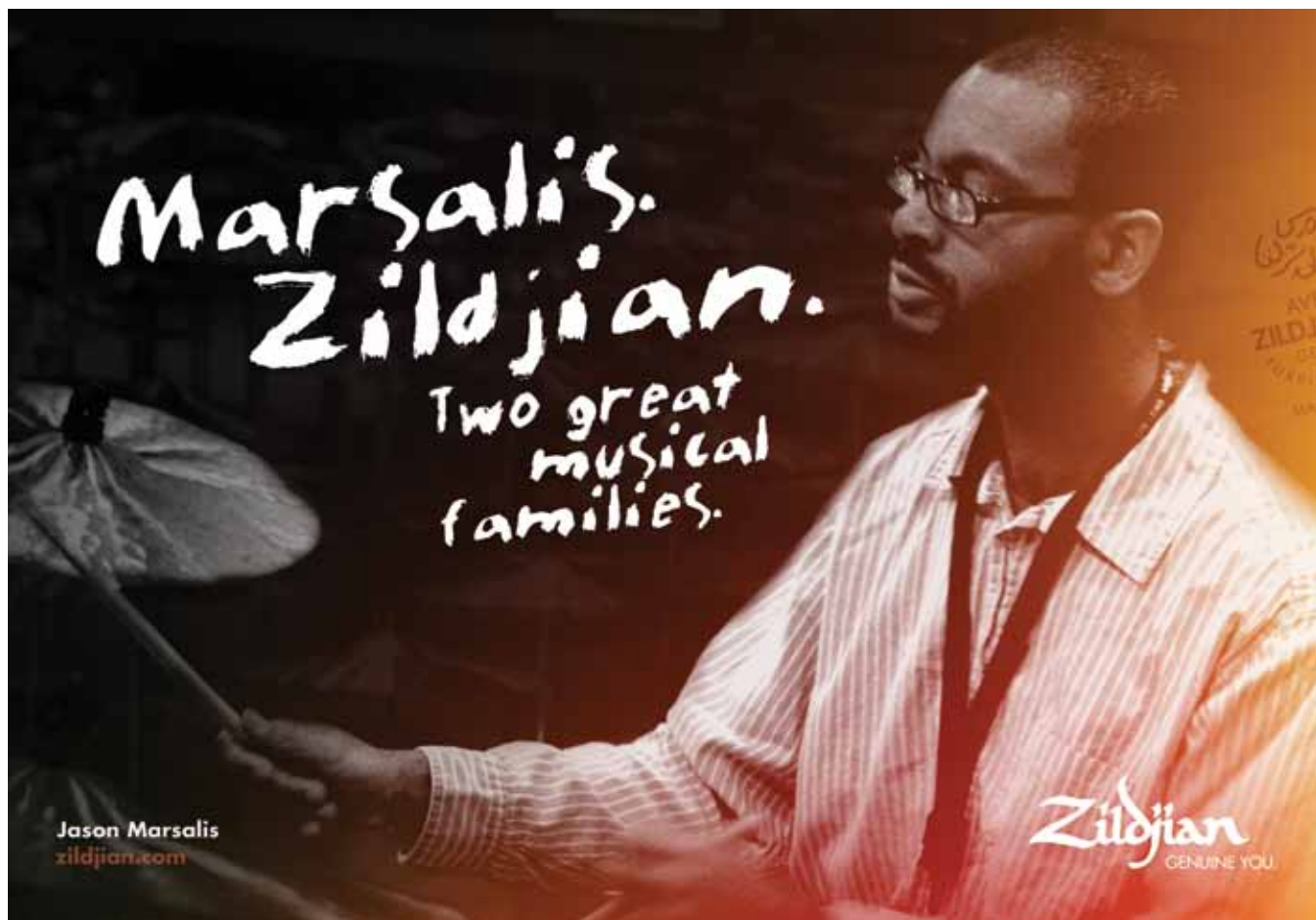
**Branford:** If you start listening to Sidney Bechet, they can't say you're stuck in the '20s. My outlook centers on what's taking place *now*. I just use older music to make myself better.

**Ellis:** I remember being in Japan with Wynton one time and the interviewer asked, "Why are you not in your son's band?" I said, "For me to play in Wynton's band would put a date on what he's doing. He needs to have people with him who have ideas that make it possible for growth. That wasn't something I could do. It wasn't whether I could play or not. It had to do with the evolution of what takes place when people get together at a particular time and start to play. I wasn't a part of that scene. I was a part of something that came before.

**DownBeat:** *You guys don't play together all that often. Do you ever surprise each other on the bandstand?*

**Wynton:** I know what Delfeayo's playing sounds like. I know what Jason's playing sounds like. Everyone is going to play something you don't know on the bandstand. That's part of the fun. But I know how they play.

**Ellis:** When you're in a jazz situation you access a common language. Of course, there are some people who aren't interested in that. I remember I said to Wynton [when he was growing up], "Man, you gotta learn how to play 'I Can't Get Started.'" And he didn't like that tune at all.



But that's one trumpet players *need* to know. Last night at the Apple Store, we played common form tunes. The standard things, "Sweet Georgia Brown" and such. If people know them, there's no problem.

**DownBeat:** *What about you, Jason? You and your dad play together a lot.*

**Jason:** It was very different by the time I came along. I lived in the house with him. He'd use me on his gigs. I've enjoyed playing with him for years. But it took me a long time to understand how to play with him. It wasn't until I started listening to trio records that I figured it

out. I grew up with combos and quintet records: Clifford Brown Quintet, Miles Davis Quintet. But when I got into the Oscar Peterson Trio and Ahmad Jamal Trio it was, "Oh, OK, *this* is how it works." I figured out how to play behind him and really do it right. After a while I knew his playing better, and knew how to communicate with him.

**DownBeat:** *Delfeayo, you've produced recordings for your father, Branford and Wynton. What's that like?*

**Delfeayo:** Well, as a kid I remember lying under the piano while my dad played, think-

ing how great it would be to actually capture the way I felt and transfer it to a recording. His tone was warm and his playing was smooth—it had an inviting quality. My first understanding of production came from Branford, who taught me how to create a feedback loop on Dad's old Tascam reel-to-reel. When transferring old records to tape, he'd mix his voice over the music first, introducing the songs and musicians, fade the music out and then transfer the entire record. That started me thinking about how the music was presented. Later, Wynton challenged me to use a \$10 Radio Shack mic and \$40 tape deck to make his demo tapes sound like Maurice André's classical trumpet recordings. I started experimenting in different rooms or outdoors, with mic placement and distance, not knowing about large halls, recording studios, reverb or high-end equipment. The great part about working with Dad, Branford and Wynton is that they allowed me to experiment. It didn't always yield the best results, but I learned what worked and what didn't in various situations.

**DownBeat:** *Let's talk NEA: Yesterday Dave Liebman was emphatic about it being the government's job to support the arts. You guys agree? Should funding for arts come right along with defense and infrastructure? Should art be supported by tax payers?*

**Ellis:** I was on the panel when the first Jazz Masters [grants] were introduced. At the time, the government had given money to the NEA, but our portion of the jazz grant was a total of \$276K to be divided by 50 states. So we had to go to the meetings and bring the grants. The people on the East Coast had developed a system, so they got most of the money because there were people in other parts of the country that didn't even know how to write a grant. I thought that was ridiculous. We should have had millions of dollars to spend.

**DownBeat:** *A recent column by jazz journalist Nate Chinen commented on the wisdom of including the entire Marsalis clan—all five of you—in the Jazz Masters acknowledgement. The crux of the query was whether the designation shouldn't be exclusively for Ellis, a musician who's lived a long life as an artist and educator, rather than his kids, whose impact likely hasn't been felt in its entirety yet.*

**Wynton:** I didn't even see that. But I agree with it. I don't know about Delfeayo [and Jason], but me and Branford talked about it.

**Branford:** Yep, I agree with that.

**Wynton:** We didn't really want to [go along with it], but we didn't want to seem ungracious.

**Branford:** If I was the NEA and I had an opportunity to create a certain kind of "market share" for lack a better term, I'd ... Hey, I said it in 2005: you get any of us to play a concert in D.C. and, well, Wynton could conceivably sell out the Kennedy Center. The rest of us could not. You put all of us on the stage at one time? Bam: Sold out. So it seems to me that if I was living in D.C. and I went to that Marsalis family concert last June, and I saw all those people

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who went to it who normally wouldn't go to a jazz show, I might want to keep us all together. I was in New Orleans and I met [Republican National Committee Chairman] Michael Steele at a hotel, and Michael Steele didn't know who I was from Adam. I said, "Hi, yeah, my name's Branford Marsalis." And he said, "Oh yeah, the musician." And he had an aid who's a true Republican with a blue suit and red tie, and he said, "Yeah, man, you guys did that concert in June. That was the greatest jazz concert I've ever been to in my life." Now, if that concert has that kind of impact on people who wouldn't be caught dead near jazz, it makes perfect sense to use it as a way to build better awareness for the award, and from that angle it's clearly succeeded. Because a whole bunch of people are talking about the Jazz Masters awards who didn't know it existed beforehand. Is it fair? No. But is it reality? Yeah. Given that, we said, "Hey, OK, let's do it." The money goes to my dad, so the only thing we get is the title. And like I asked the NEA guy, "Since I'm not a master, when I actually become a master, does that mean I get another \$25 grand?" He basically said, "No." He turned the corner and said, "Yeah, I'm looking forward to seeing you ..." [laughing] So I'm actually getting screwed here. But it's all good.

**DownBeat:** Don't be tapping dad for the loot, now.

**Wynton:** Oh, we've tapped him plenty of

times.

**Branford:** But, really: The amount of collective griping that goes on is funny to me. I didn't ask for the award, just like I didn't ask for that record contract when they gave me one. And when a very successful jazz musician came up to me and said, "You don't deserve that contract," I said, "I know I don't, but they gave it to me—what was I supposed to say, 'no'?" And after tonight, we'll have this NEA thing.

**Delfeayo:** It reminds me of when Wynton and Branford first came out and people were upset at their success and said they hadn't paid their dues, and they're just neo-classicalists bringing jazz backwards, and blah blah blah. It just gets old.

**Branford:** Yeah, it's terrible, isn't it? The funny part is that he's still here.

**Wynton:** [puts on a faux haughty voice] Ahem ... As I was saying, "the good time has already been had." But, you know, there's nothing wrong with talking about stuff like this. It's a dialogue. Talk it up, man!

**DownBeat:** Ellis, your new iTunes record is all about Monk. What's the toughest thing about getting Thelonious right?

**Ellis:** At first it was intimidating; I avoided him for a while. But as I got older and started listening more, it became less so. When Miles did "Straight No Chaser," he had it in the wrong key. We all learned it wrong from that. On [the

new] record, we fixed it. It's in B-flat. But [it's not as if] people play a lot of Monk now. When Branford and Wynton were young, and I first told 'em about Monk, they went, "bharrg-ghh." They didn't want to hear nothing about it. I said, "That's OK, we ain't gonna argue about it. You'll see." A Monk tune that's hard to crack is "Crepuscle With Nellie"—"Evidence," too. That's not ordinary stuff. It was Jason's idea to do the Monk. Listen to what he's doing on that CD, man.

**DownBeat:** Let's close by explaining the thrust of the Center.

**Ellis:** Branford and Harry Connick came to New Orleans after Katrina and saw the devastation up close. They decided to do something to help, and hatched a plan to make a musician's community center. They raised the money, and decided they'd name it for me. As it stands, it's due to open this summer. It's a community center with an emphasis on music. It's necessary to have a cohesive artistic experience, and as Delfeayo can tell you, trying to find a venue to do something in is tough. Delfeayo worked with young kids, and he had the Uptown Music Theatre and Uptown Jazz Orchestra. Trying to find a space to consistently do the work is difficult. This center will go a long way of solving that problem. It's not a concert hall, it holds about 250. Theater, dance—lots of people can use it. We're hoping it helps a community that really needs it. **DB**

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# EQUAL TIME

## On the Strength of Women in Jazz Today, Gender Lines Are Finally Being Erased

By John Ephland

**A**s this piece began to unfold, one question emerged: What is it about a story on women in jazz that is both appealing and also repugnant? After all, the face of the music has changed dramatically over the past generation. At many if not most venues, it is no longer a novelty for women to make up more than half of what a music fan witnesses on any given bandstand. And that significant musical contributions keep coming from women of all ages and on every instrument available should no longer be surprising. A look at the Critics and Readers Polls in DownBeat also signifies that the macho thing in jazz is a dated and outworn notion.

Contemporary names like Carla Bley, Maria Schneider, Geri Allen, Diana Krall and Cassandra Wilson have long since joined the ranks of masters such as Mary Lou Williams (see adjoining story), Marian McPartland, Billie Holiday, Shirley Horn and Ella Fitzgerald. But they've also joined the ranks of those other guys we always talk about. You know, people with names like Bird, Diz and Duke. And, today, there are scores of other women who are making names for themselves, playing alongside and behind others as well as fronting their own bands and projects. Not included here (perhaps because of unavailability or recent previous coverage, let alone space!) but also worthy of mention are such significant artists as Renee Rosnes, Myra Melford, Allison Miller, Esperanza Spalding, Cindy Blackman, Jamie Baum, Terri Lyne Carrington,

Claire Daly, Jane Bunnett, Karrin Allyson, Rebecca Martin and Regina Carter.

Which brings us full circle, so to speak. While a gender-free music is an indication that women have "arrived," jazz may have embraced this change more gradually than other musical genres. Yet the spirit and heart of jazz have always required nothing less. This new, more mature jazz confirms the music's mandate that an open and robust search for great music, regardless of the sex of that musician (and regardless of that musician's country of origin), usually leads to foot-stomping, heart-rending and sometimes life-changing creative expression. Indeed, jazz is and always has been an international, deeply human language, where, more and more, gender, nationality, sexual orientation or style take a back seat (if





Jane Ira Bloom



Lynne Arriale



Nicole Mitchell



Ingrid Jensen



Rachel Z



Linda Oh





they're on the bus at all). In the end, jazz remains the music of freedom.

Nonetheless, the theme of "women in jazz" is significant enough to garner the attention of one of the country's leading cultural institutions. Washington's Smithsonian Institution has declared April as Jazz Appreciation Month

2011. On this, JAM's 10th anniversary, the Smithsonian will (as its website notes) "examine the legacies of jazz women, and their advocates, who helped transform race, gender and social relations in the U.S. in the quest to build a more just and equitable nation."

Artists who contributed here perform in a

## Mary Lou Williams: Woman Of All Eras

By John McDonough

In October 1978 Mary Lou Williams made a unique claim for herself on Marian McPartland's first Piano Jazz program. She said that she was the only musician who had played all eras of jazz. Others may have lived through them, she admitted. But only she had actually played them, from Pinetop Smith and Fats Waller to Cecil Taylor.

But her point seemed less about longevity than openness. Whether spoken with literal or allegorical intent, it was more than enough that Williams had fully engaged her times, responded to them, and embraced waves of change with a welcoming curiosity.

This month Williams is both honoree and poster woman for Jazz Appreciation Month at the Smithsonian American History Museum, which this year is saluting distinguished women in jazz history. The JAM poster, created by artist Keith Henry Brown, is based on a photo of Williams at the keyboard, circa 1940, and is available free from the Smithsonian website [jazz@si.edu](http://jazz@si.edu). Williams is also represented in two tracks on *JAZZ: The Smithsonian Anthology*, the new six-CD survey of jazz history.

Born Mary Elfrieda Scruggs in May 1910, she later took the name of her stepfather, Burleigh, and finally became Mary Lou Williams with her marriage to saxophonist John Williams in 1927. Like her marriage, life came early to her. After passing through a child prodigy period, she settled into life as a working musician and was a veteran at 20.

She soon found other strengths in herself. Williams made her way to Kansas City in 1929 where she joined her husband in the Andy Kirk band. It would be a provident partnership. Almost immediately she began creating an original book—nothing unusual at first. But by the mid-'30s she had turned the clunky Kirk unit into a light, lithe and supple swing band. Unfortunately, with the band out of the studios for more than five years, this remarkable growth spurt went unrecorded. All we know is that the band ended 1930 as a somewhat stiff period unit and re-emerged in 1936 as a sleek zephyr of an orchestra.

What her fellow musicians recognized, however, did not translate into a popular public profile. Her name never surfaced in the Readers' Polls, perhaps because she never cultivated such favor. She left Kirk in 1942 (in part because the band had become too commercial), worked with Duke Ellington briefly, then composed and recorded her magnum opus, *The Zodiac Suite*. She also turned her attention to bebop.

The arc of her range can be traced in three recordings of one of her earliest compositions taken at roughly 10-year intervals. Listen to "Mary's Idea"—first, the rather primordial Brunswick version of 1930, then the elegant 1938 treatment for Decca, and finally the bebop edition seasoned with unexpected dissonances by Benny Goodman's 1948 septet with Williams, Red Rodney and Wardell Gray. Each is totally at home in its time.

Williams also collected her share of honors, including a Grammy nomination for a 1971 performance with Dizzy Gillespie and Bobby Hackett, a combination that attested to her open embrace of all jazz eras and styles. Norman Granz brought her into his family of Pablo artists where she recorded with Cecil Taylor. She also performed at the White House in 1978.

By the time of her death in 1981, she had lived long enough to look back on the breadth of her experience with the eye of a scholar, historian and teacher—and still a musician with things to say.



This year's Jazz Appreciation Month poster, created by artist Keith Henry Brown, is based on a photo of Mary Lou Williams at the keyboard (circa 1940) and is available free from the Smithsonian website [jazz@si.edu](http://jazz@si.edu).

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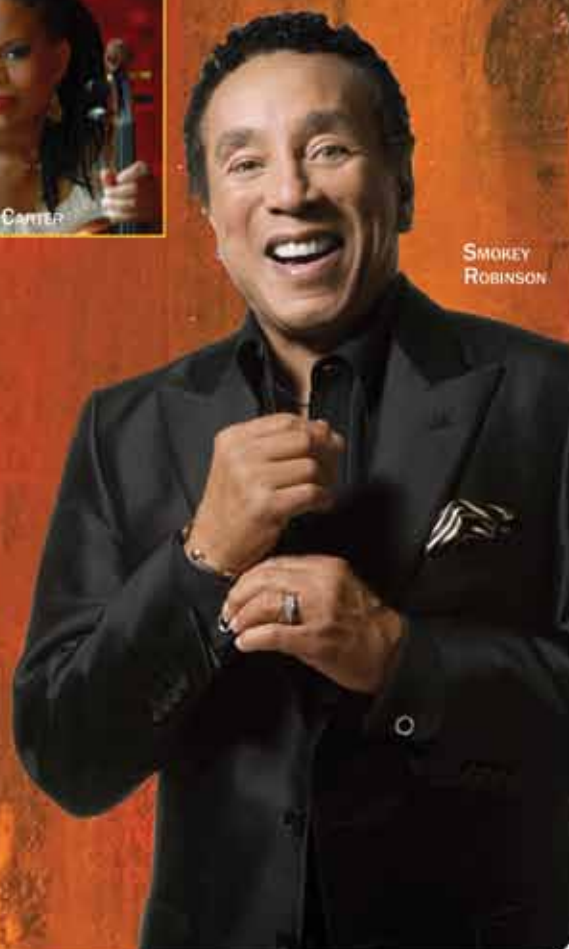
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variety of styles, reflect a range of instruments played and have been leaders in their own right. They include Jane Ira Bloom, Lynne Arriale, Nicole Mitchell, Rachel Z, Linda Oh and, serving as inspiration for the emerging theme of this story, Ingrid Jensen. Incidentally, when I asked each of them for current and upcoming news, I realized there wouldn't be room to give much more than a hint at how active each of them are.

Given trumpeter Jensen's influential take on the subject, it seemed fitting that we begin with her. Despite being somewhat dismayed at the original idea for the story, she was more than

effusive when recounting a recent and relevant musical event that served to illustrate her main points about women, jazz and where she fits in all this. Jensen—whose latest CD is the quintet Nordic Connect's *Spirals* (ArtistShare) by the band she co-leads with sister/reed player Christine—seems justly proud when she recounts: "I just played at the Stockholm Concert House with Hakan Hardenberger, one of the greatest classical trumpet players in the world.

"I was playing at almost six months pregnant," says Jensen proudly, "and he never mentioned it once in the context of all of our re-

hearsals and musical discussions. Nor did the musicians or the audience when they mobbed me afterwards to thank me for my contribution and for matching the sound and musicality of their homeland hero, but from the jazz side of things."

A recent posting on her Facebook page came from fellow musician Dwayne Burno, who wrote to Jensen, "Happy birthday, Ingrid ... my friend over these last 22 years. I've listened to you develop into a bitch of a musician. I remember that quartet tour of '96 when I learned how much stronger and more solid you are as a trumpeter and musician than the vast majority of highly touted male trumpeters."

Soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom's innovative playing has yielded some unconventional results. Among the highlights thus far in her career, she mentions "the experience surrounding being commissioned by NASA and having an asteroid named 6083Janeirabloom, albeit with a somewhat eccentric orbit." Bloom, whose latest CD is *Wingwalker* (Outline), adds, "Another highlight is being the namesake of the first Bloom Festival in Brooklyn, featuring cutting-edge women, new music artists and having the pioneering work that I've done held as a model for young women leaders."

Bloom has worked most often with men (including current band members bassist Mark Helias and drummer Bobby Previte), but notes that in recent years she added keyboardist Dawn Clement to her group. Perhaps indirectly commenting on Clement, Bloom says, "The thing that heartens me the most about watching young women entering the jazz world today is how comfortable they are with themselves, their ability and who they are as women. They just seem at ease with themselves and their status in the music world. That's the way it should be."

Flautist/composer Nicole Mitchell, 2010 Artist in Residence for the Chicago Jazz Festival, wonders how much has changed for women in jazz. "Once," she recalls, "I was at a soundcheck with a big band I was playing with, and the leader told me point blank that we weren't going to play my piece at the concert. I silently thought to myself that we had rehearsed my piece along with everyone else's, and I was the only woman in the band. I thought about Mary Lou Williams and wondered what her challenges were in her time, and I thought about the fact that this was the 21st century. So when we sat down to start the performance, I looked the leader dead in the eye and smiled, and said, 'You're gonna play my song.' And he did." Mitchell will be premiering her first work for orchestra in June at Columbia University's Miller Theater in New York City with the American Composers Orchestra. She remains active with, among others, her Indigo Trio, Black Earth Strings, Truth or Dare, Anthony Braxton and the AACM.

Pianist/composer/arranger Lynne Arriale recently performed two Jazz Meets the Symphony concerts in Johannesburg and Durban for the Jazz Foundation of South Africa. The 20-year veteran, whose recent CDs include the quartet

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albums *Convergence* and *Nuance: The Bennett Studio Sessions* (both on Motema, a label co-founded by two women), is optimistic about the current state of jazz and women. "I never think about gender in relation to jazz unless I am asked about it," says Arriale. "I'm not even sure that it's a topic of conversation among jazz listeners. It seems to be more of an issue from the business side of the industry. Talent is not monopolized by gender or race, nor has great music ever been defined by such narrow or shortsighted metrics. The feedback I get from audiences is that they are thrilled to see more women jazz musicians attracting so much media attention and filling large venues.

"That being said," she adds, "there are still so many highly gifted women players who have yet to get the recognition they deserve. It is my hope that they stay the course, maintain their focus on the music and their own personal growth as performers."

Bassist Linda Oh is like most women in jazz who see things "evening out" when it comes to perceiving women not as novelties but as essential members of the musical community. Noticing a change in herself, she points out, "I used to be very pro-'Women in Jazz'—I even had an all-female big-band in my hometown—and now I'm just pro-'People in Jazz.'" And Oh makes a strong point when she says, "Musically, if one were to listen to a recording, it would be impossible to identify a male instrumentalist from a female instrumentalist."

Oh's well-received *Entry* CD is being followed up with a quartet recording due out later this year. In addition, along with backing such artists as Kenny Barron, Oh also heads up the Sirius String Quartet.

When asked about her experiences with gender discrimination and if that might have been a roadblock to a career in jazz, Oh states, "It's definitely something I think all females in jazz have had to deal with, though it's never given me reason to doubt my career in jazz. Last month I was at Michiko Studios for a rehearsal, carrying my bass, and a sax player asked me, 'So, are you a singer?' We may get the occasional 'Can she really play?' But being female does have its advantages at times—maybe being female is more marketable and allows us to stick out somewhat." Almost as an aside, she adds, "Though, when I look around there are so many amazing female musicians, you can't get away with just being female and maybe looking good."

Keyboardist Rachel Z has made a name for herself backing up such artists as Wayne Shorter in his Highlife band as well being a key member of Mike Mainieri's Steps Ahead and playing with, among others, Peter Gabriel. And, with her Trio of Oz band with drummer Omar Hakim and bassist Solomon Dorsey, Z remains busy touring the new CD of the same name. As for women in jazz, she sees the gender issue in more expansive terms. "Women players are generally seen as just as smoking as the guys," she said. "Lately, I have used many females on bass

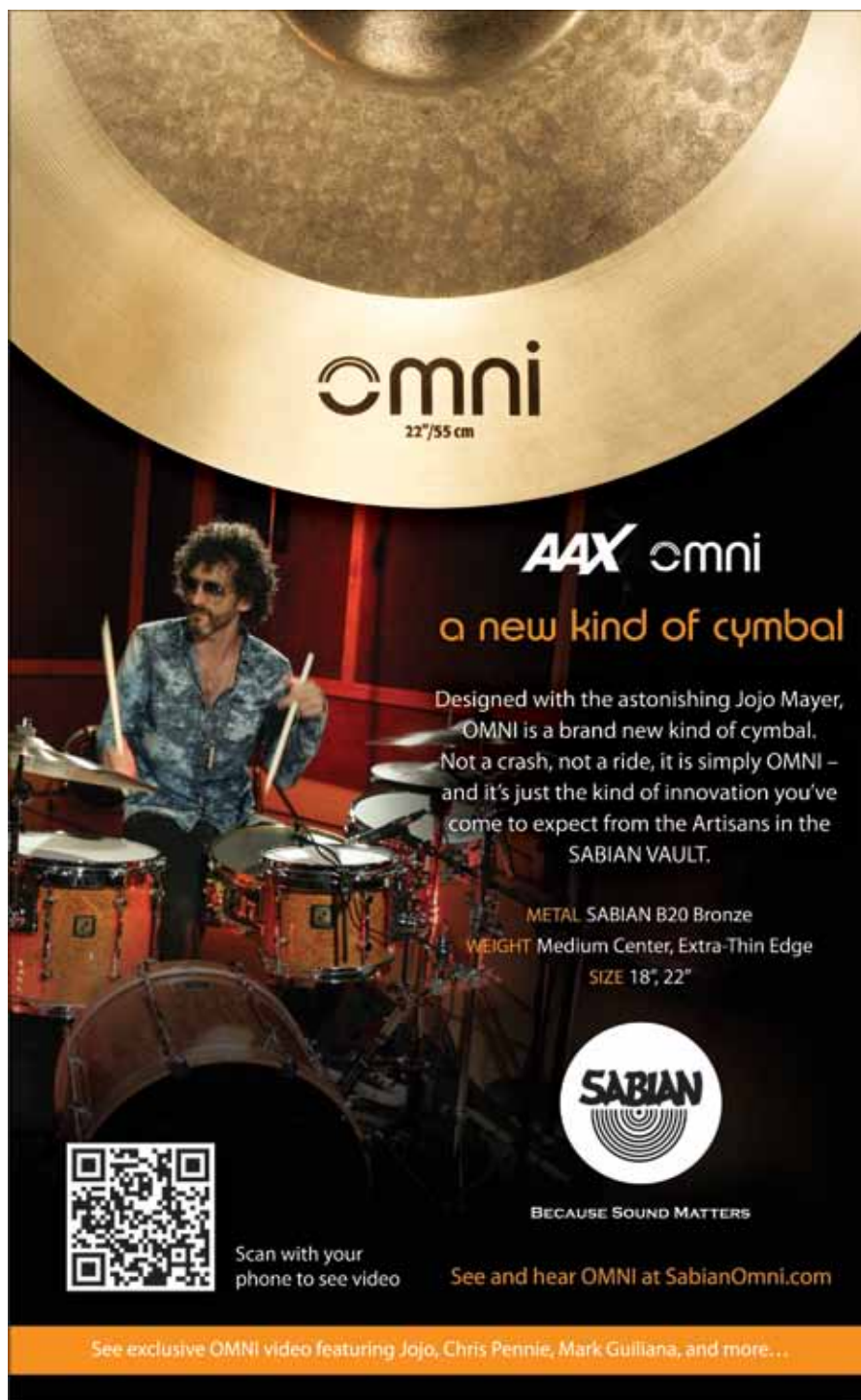
in my trio projects, mostly due to their supportive nature and grounded bass style. Nicki Parrott, Maeve Royce, Tracy Wormworth all have a special groove."

Her optimism is somewhat muted when she considers age and the media. "I feel that the critics and older generations of men have trouble seeing women musicians as major important figures in jazz. The elite jazz press—the most important major publications such as *DownBeat* and the *New York Times*—often make it clear in their reviews of women's projects that they don't take women seriously at all as innovative or important

figures in jazz. In the online blogging community, however, the press seems much more open and fair-minded."

While she seems to have transcended the whole notion of gender, she still remembers that, yes, even as they are jazz musicians first and foremost, men and women are different in certain respects. Putting a vibrant spin on the subject, Rachel Z suggests, "It's very important for women in jazz to have a sense of humor and not lose their sense of deep feminine power. Keep the sexy in jazz! The yin and yang can be very powerful in a band."

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# Kurt Elling Invitation To Epiphany

By Ken Micallef

**O**n his latest recording, *The Gate* (Concord Jazz), perennial DownBeat poll winner and recent Grammy Award winner Kurt Elling invites the listener on a journey. That's standard patter for any artist intent on capturing, holding and increasing an audience, but from Elling the invitation is altogether something different. Something meaningful. When Elling sings, you hear the weight of experience, the weight of his life, behind every syllable. Sure, he swings. But this intellectual, who studied religious philosophy at University of Chicago's School of Divinity, who cut his chops at the city's famous Green Mill, who can speak as eloquently about the Kol Nidre, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as he can about Duke Ellington, is that rare being in U.S. culture: a thinking man's artist who bows to the visceral and hails to the spiritual.

"*The Gate* [implies] a threshold," Elling says from Manhattan. "I think about the gateless gate that you see in Japan, the beautiful Shinto Shrine gates. It's a Zen tradition of meditation. They remind people that you pass through any moment of the day between the scared and the profane, between one consciousness and another, between power and powerlessness. All these different aspects that are in seeming opposition, but are just one step away from each other at any moment. The next corner you turn, the next pothole you step into are all tied together but you're

still passing through thresholds with every step. And of the course, *The Gate* means the jazz thing—swings like a gate. *The Gate* represents a passage into another thing, and every time we make a record there's a new passage and a new step into some new direction. I hope that we're ascending."

Elling has made bold records before, but *The Gate*, which tempers pop songs with a jazz approach and jazz material with an otherworldly approach, is a daring album, a life-affirming recording, a work that challenges the very notion

of what constitutes the idea of "a jazz singer" in today's genre-fragmented, non-jazz-friendly world. *The Gate* recalls Joni Mitchell's *Court And Spark*, another album of seamless, effortless, beautiful genre bending. *The Gate* also challenges preconceived notions of jazz instrumentation, of possibilities with pop material, and finally, it explores vocal areas that few, if any "jazz" singers, have dared to imagine, much less achieve.

"On the inside it feels like a natural progression," Elling says. "I can hear its roots in past records, things that we were trying to do on a smaller scale. We've certainly experimented with our share of compositions from pop music, and from other genres, so that's nothing new. Every once in a while I've done multi-tracking of the voice. So I can't point to an ingredient that we haven't at least tried out before. It was a matter of finding the right people, the right team, the right energies coming together in the right way with enough confidence and enough maturity, both musical and human, to produce something that is as coherent and as far reaching as I hope this recording is."

Produced by Don Was, *The Gate* features Elling's longtime collaborator and pianist, Laurence Hobgood, with guitarist John McLean, drummer Terreon Gully and bassist John Patitucci. Their freedom and belief in the music can be heard on every track. For the first time, Elling dives into obvious pop material from Stevie Wonder ("Golden Lady"), Joe Jackson ("Steppin' Out"), The Beatles ("Norwegian Wood") and Earth Wind & Fire ("After The Love Is Gone"). Miles Davis' "Blue In Green" and Herbie Hancock's "Come Running To Me" also get the treatment. But there is no dividing line between pop and jazz, between a standard treatment and one that defies expectation and





brilliantly, passionately soars into the future. Elling and Hobgood dissect, rearrange and expand on the material in unheard-of ways, whether it's Elling's mind-meld harmonies undulating over daring rhythms in "Norwegian Wood" and "Blue In Green," the simple yet essentially spiritual version of King Crimson's "Matte Kudasai," or the odd-metered funk flow of "Golden Lady" (whose 7/4 pulse was initially met with derision by Elling's record label). *The Gate* sounds pre-meditated, but it was in large part developed in the fission of nightly performance, on the road. Elling displays an "aw shucks" attitude towards praise, but *The Gate* is an achievement of the highest order, and alters the jazz landscape for those with ears to hear. Ask Elling to explain, and he'll pass the ball. To producer Don Was, who has worked with everyone from The Rolling Stones to Bob Dylan to Lucinda Williams.

"Don Was brought love into the room," Elling says. "Love and respect and no-bullshit support for anything I wanted to try. Don loves music, and he goes all the way with that love. He'd sit there with headphones listening to a fourth pass of a percussion track with the same smile on his face as he would listen to the final mix of any of the cuts. He's in love with the process and the musicians. It was the big brother, father, collaborator you've always wanted to have in the studio. It was a real shot in the arm for everybody."

Kurt loves Don. Don loves Kurt. And love conquers all.

"I was driving to the studio one day, listening to KJazz," Was recalls from his home in Los Angeles. "They played that Sondheim song from *Flirting With Twilight*, 'Not While I'm Around.' I was awed by Kurt's phrasing. How he infused every syllable with meaning, and how he cut to the essence of the song. But he did it unlike anyone else has done. I work with singers all the time, and that is the ideal, to find someone who brings truth to every line and not fall back on technique or chops or ephemera. There's no flotsam and jetsam with Kurt, he doesn't waste anything."

"Couple that with the cats we had in the room," Elling continues. "Patitucci, his level of command and his confidence, Terreon is killing, and McLean we knew from the Green Mill days. I invited those guys specifically because we'd made personal connections on the road. They were enthusiastic about the hit. When we got into the studio, I said, 'I don't know where I want this to go, here's the song, here's a set of emotions and I don't know what we should do.' In the case of 'Matte Kudasai' in particular. I brought these musicians in because I needed them to help me invent something. I had to bring my A-plus game."

Recorded at New York's Sear Sound, with overdubs at LA's The Village, *The Gate* goes

from strength to strength. Elling's spine-tin-gling, modulating harmony extensions on "Come Running To Me," the luxurious hipness of "Steppin' Out," the stillness of "Matte Kudasai." "Come Running To Me," originally a funky '70s track, is re-imagined into a meditation. "Norwegian Wood" floats, then flies, Elling layering scats, harmonies and digging deep over Gully's storming sticking, the song giving way to McLean's foray into psychedelic darkness. It's the kind of fusion that celebrates music as life-giver, sustaining the original while extending its wingspan. "Blue In Green" is a shock. Think Doug and Jean Carn's 1972 version (*Spirit Of The New Land*, Black Jazz) shorn of its soothing splendor and infused with hallucinogen-worthy dread. Hobgood is magical here, painting an intro ostinato as Elling coaxes the melody, the band soaring like Bass Desires of old, Gully flying, Patitucci plucking, Elling multi-tracking lyrics about "A Love Supreme," then taking it out, way out, the group catching his fire and improvising with shades of electronic music delays, weeping guitar tones and possible levitation.

"That was not something we had a lot of pre-meditation about," Elling explains. "We'd used 'Blue And Green' as a third set alternate at the Green Mill when we were too creatively tired to think of anything complicated but we still wanted to play something of quality. It's good for stretching out, and it's a cool space to get



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into. Laurence invented that piano ostinato. He thought, 'Let's stretch the melody this far.' That's all the direction we had in mind. And all the direction we gave the cats. We thought we were going to do a fade after my little area of soloing, but with digital you can just keep stuff running. That whole secondary section where the rhythm section explodes into a volcanic moment—that was just an organic thing that happened in the studio. They were all feeling it and listening. The vocal harmonies, I took a week off and listened to it and figured them out, then Laurence and I harmonized the solo section in the studio. We don't even have a chart on that, it's just Laurence listening and Patitucci extending the idea in response to what I came up with as a solo. We tried to enhance the music with surprises and with epiphanies of possibility."

Don Was concurs regarding "Blue In Green," and Elling approaching the sublime.

"As it was going down, I knew something was happening there that had never been captured before, that I had never heard before," Was says. "It hit another plateau. That's the first take. I don't think it will alienate old fans; it's not inaccessible. It's pleasing to the ear. But if you stop to examine what's going on there, they've really upped the ante on the definition of jazz singing. The relationship between Kurt and Laurence, it breaks down previous definitions of the vocalist-arranger relationship. It reminds me Mick and Keith in the Stones. Usually the guitarist plays in the holes, but they're often playing the melody together, though they don't phrase in the same place. Same with Kurt and Laurence, their roles are interwoven."

With the assurance of a Grammy win for 2009's *Dedicated To You* CD behind them ("It humbles and touches me," the formerly soul-patched singer confides, "but I can't say it's gotten me any specific gigs"), Elling and Hobgood can continue with the business of making music—a business that is in dire straits. With the crush of the marketplace jazz feels the pinch, its vocalists especially. Too many play it safe, covering the standard repertoire, cutting less than top-notch tracks and ultimately robbing the music of its future. Elling can "overflow the boundaries" as he puts it, but lesser vocalists without his skill, much less his vision, bring everyone down.

"How many truly great jazz singers have there ever been?" he asks. "And how many people do we have playing at jazz? They're using the touchstone of jazz and the material to play an identity game that doesn't have much to do with the basic premise of jazz, which is innovation and improvisation and risk-taking. They just don't have the concepts of the forward-thinking, always grasping, potentially pitfall-filled nature of jazz music. So the concept isn't there in many cases, and yet there's this sort of cultural cache about this faint echo of what it means to be a jazz singer: wearing the clothes, singing in a club of a certain size with a certain kind of microphone, there's a lot of playing at jazz. That clutters the space. How many people are really willing to in-

vest the work to get beyond the facade, to get to the real work, to burrow in? It's hard. There's no part of this that's easy. The sacrifices you have to make to master your instrument, to master yourself, to really listen to the material, to pay homage to the past not with just lip service but through the engagement of the essential innovative act. It's a real challenge."

Elling points to a handful of vocalists who are stepping out—Sheila Jordan, Nancy King, Kate McGarry, Becca Stevens, Theo Bleckmann, Jo Lawry and JD Walter—and who perhaps share his goal to reach musical nirvana.

"There is a transcendent intention behind the singing," Elling says. "I grew up with music being tied to the consciousness of moving people to a higher plane of experience. Of ecstasy if possible, of healing, of feeling better and being reminded of the humane possibilities. Music should move people to higher planes of consciousness. And help them forget their troubles. One of the definitions of happiness is a feeling of losing your self-consciousness. You're here now. You fall in love with music because you get in the swing of it and you forget everything but the present moment. That means you're happy." **DB**

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By Dan Ouellette

# BENNY GREEN PURIFIED FOCUS

**K**eyboard velocity knocks 'em dead. Pyrotechnics on the ivories wakes the crowd up. It, in turn, roars in applause when the speed display is complete, and the set settles down momentarily, poised for more fast-zone action. The “wow” factor is repeated over and over and over again, but at some point it devolves into vapidness. Technique over substance. Dazzle over glow. Gluttony over sustenance. Listeners are stuffed instead of satiated. They walk away from such a spectacle with a vacancy inside—as if the pianist has zapped their energy instead of revitalized the spirit.

To be fast or not to be? And what lies beneath that blur? Throughout his career, that's been a concern for Benny Green, who can play in the high-tempo lane with the best of them but manages to curb the excesses, maintaining a subtlety of swing. The secret ingredient is the soul that he pours into the clusters of notes he delivers. “The truth of the matter is that I know for sure certain things I can play, in a general sense, that will get attention,” says Green, an unassuming, even shy artist who exudes extreme passion for the music. “I can do all sorts of flashy things. But I'm always trying to resist the tendency to get a reaction just for the sake of getting a reaction. It's a challenge to the ego.”

In years past, there were times when he enjoyed that attention. But for Green—who's not only releasing his first leader project in seven years, *Source* on JLP Records, but also reuniting with rhythm mates bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington—it's all about the music, not the cheers. “Music that speaks to me deeply needs to be spoken from a place where you have nothing to prove,” he says. “If you're looking for applause, you run the risk of having a performance that's obvious, cheap.”

With the new album, an elegant, refined and spirited collection of swinging tunes by the likes of Sonny Clark, Donald Byrd, Bud Powell and Horace Silver, Green is pleased that his pianism serves the songs he plays. “When I listen to the playback, I can hear my self-restraint, which I'm happy about,” he says. “Younger players know me as a pianist who can play double octaves fast. But I like to be known as someone who can really swing.”

He'll get no argument from Kenny Washington. “When I first heard Benny in the early '90s when he came to New York, he knocked me out,” the drummer recalls. “Most of the pianists then were coming out of Herbie [Hancock] and McCoy [Tyner] and Chick [Corea]. But here was Benny into Bud Powell, Elmo Hope, Herbie Nichols and Sonny Clark. And today, a lot of the music young pianists play, well, it's not people-friendly. You can't snap your fingers to it. It doesn't have that feeling that Benny puts into his music. Over the last 20 years, he's continued to grow musically. He was great when he moved to New York; now he's a million times better.”

**L**ife has come full-circle for Green. Born in New York and raised in Berkeley, Calif., the pianist fully came of age back in his birthplace, where he moved when he was 19. In his 24 years there, he worked under the tutelage of Betty Carter, Art Blakey and Ray Brown, as well as led his own

bands. It was a dream come true. Reflecting back on those experiences, he says, “I have been to the mountaintop. I was privileged to learn from the masters, and I'm always aware of how much more work I still have to do.”

Today Green has returned to the West Coast, a couple of houses away from where his mother still lives. Green's grand piano, which he first bought in California, has been with him for all his bi-coastal stops, including a two-and-a-half-year sojourn in Portland, Ore., after he left New York and before he moved back to Berkeley early in 2009. On the eve of the release of his new *Source* album—his first leader project since 2004's *Bluebird*, a duo disc with Russell Malone—being “home” conjures memories of the early gravitational pull of jazz.

For Green, who gigged with local jazz vocal hero Faye Carroll, Eddie Henderson and in a big band led by Chuck Israels, many of his most memorable listening experiences as a teenager took place across the bay at San Francisco's vital jazz outpost, Keystone Korner. While acoustic jazz at the time was near its nadir in popularity, Green caught Horace Silver, Cedar Walton, McCoy Tyner, Woody Shaw, Joe Henderson, Bobby Hutcherson and Freddie Hubbard, who had the youthful Billy Childs on piano, in the warm confines of 750 Vallejo St. But by far the biggest revelation Green experienced was seeing Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, with James Williams on the piano. “I knew Art's Blue Note records and had a feel for his groups,” Green says. “But seeing him was so magical, so powerful that I knew I wanted to be a part of that band. I was 16 or 17 at the time, but I began visualizing playing with him.”

Green was impressed by the acoustic piano playing of younger musicians on the scene, including Williams and Childs and soon after Mulgrew Miller, who were not succumbing to the temptation of plugging in with a synth. Green notes, “Billy especially was a huge inspiration to me, as a kind of musical role model—a young guy who was playing hip and fully inside of the concept of Freddie's band.”

Green knew then that his destiny was set: “It became abundantly clear to me that it was time to move to New York and get to where all this fire was coming from.”

While still a teenager, Green set off to seek out Blakey, catching him playing at the Jazz Forum at Bleecker and Broadway. In New York the drummer had a brand-new group, including Terence Blanchard, Donald Harrison and Johnny O'Neal on piano. Green sneaked a Walkman into

the club, recorded the set and went to sleep listening to the music on headphones. "The next day, I practiced the music all day long," he says. "It was my mantra. It gave me a sense of purpose."

Green soon became friends with O'Neal, who introduced him to Blakey. "Art looked me up and down and asked me how long I had been in town," Green says. "I told him, six weeks; he told me, you need more time. So I set out to practice a lot."

In early '83, Green sat in with Blakey at the Blue Note on the tune "Ms. B.C." He knew the form and the changes, channeled the playing of Kenny Kirkland and Mulgrew Miller, and made an impression on the bandleader. "Keep doing what you're doing," he said. "I'm going to need you some day." Green practiced more than ever.

But before his time with Blakey could become a reality, Betty Carter scouted him when he was accompanying a vocalist at a club in Long Island. Everyone was whispering that Carter was in the audience; nevertheless, Green was surprised when she tapped him on the shoulder during intermission. "I like the way you play," she said. "I'm having auditions for a new pianist this week and I'd like you to come."

Again, Green did his homework, buying the LP *The Audience With Betty Carter*, recorded live at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco with John Hicks on piano and Kenny Washington on drums. "I listened to the special musical communication between John and Betty," Green says. "You could hear it. There was powerful chemistry. So I set out to do my best to emulate that, to interpret how he played with her. Betty told me, 'You sound like you're having fun.' She hired me. At my first rehearsal, she called a ballad and told me to play it thinking about the last time I made love. I had the look of a deer in headlights. She then said, 'Just use your imagination.'"

Green joined Betty's band in April 1983 when he just turned 20 and played with her for the next four years until April 1987. Ironically before his first gig with Carter, he was called by Blakey to fill in for O'Neal for a gig in New York. After he played, he was offered the piano chair. But he had

already made a commitment to Carter. "If I burned a bridge with Betty, my name would have been mud in New York," Green recalls.

As it turned out, Blakey asked again four years later, Carter gave her blessing and Green continued to pursue his dream of being a Jazz Messenger. "I wouldn't have had a chance to be a Messenger if not for my time with Betty, playing every tempo in every key and performing a lot of concerts without a lot of sleep," he says.

Even so, when Green joined Blakey's band he knew that "the sound was so powerful, that I'd immediately have to swim or sink. The groove was so deep that if you weren't in the pocket, you'd get completely submerged. It was fantastic. Art put the fire under all of us. But he also had a great dynamic range. It wasn't all intense and loud. He was fond of saying, 'I want you to play so soft that you can hear a rat piss on cotton.'" Soon after, Green became the pianist in Freddie Hubbard's quintet, and a few years later in 1992, he took the place of Gene Harris in the Ray Brown Trio. He toured and recorded with the bassist until 1997. Meanwhile in 1993 Oscar Peterson singled Green out as the first recipient of Toronto's Glen Gould International Protégé Prize.

During his sideman duties with Blakey, Green launched his own career as leader with two albums for Criss Cross (*Prelude* in 1988, which included Peter Washington, and *In This Direction* in 1989), and then was signed in 1990 by Blue Note—a run that yielded seven albums in a decade and featured a long-standing rhythm relationship with Christian McBride.

Based on his newfound friendship with Peterson, the pair recorded *Oscar & Benny* in 1997 for Telarc. That opened the door for Green to record for the label after he left Blue Note. In 2000 he recorded the trio date *Naturally* (enlisting, as he had done on his final Blue Note date, *These Are Soulful Days*, McBride and Russell Malone) and in 2001 *Green's Blues*, his first and only solo date. Rather than return to the trio setting after that, he connected with Malone for a pair of Telarc duo recordings, *Jazz At The Bistro* (2003) and *Bluebird* (2004).

In 1995, Green's trio was on a double bill in Canada with Diana Krall's

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trio, in which Malone played. “Benny had this portable keyboard that he kept in his room,” says Malone. “During the daytime we talked about the music, then we played together. It felt right.”

After playing in Green’s trio, Malone was eager to “investigate the future,” as he calls their connection as a duo. He and Green developed a songbook, and they debuted publicly at the North Sea Jazz Festival in 2001. The gig lasted five years. “Benny’s very passionate about jazz,” Malone says. “He knows the history and tons of songs.” As for his trademark speed, Malone scoffs. “There’s way too much emphasis on this. He plays fast passages, but he swings it into a pocket. He’s also a great ballad player and knows how to accompany a singer.”

Remarkably, after Green’s second duo album with Malone, he disappeared from the recording world. He continued to perform internationally and teach workshops. The stint in the ’90s with the late bassist Brown was “musically the best thing that ever happened to me,” Green says. But he adds, “Career-wise, it might not have been the best thing for me. To promoters it was as if I had taken a step down from being a trio leader. Professionally I think I might have lost some of the momentum I had going for myself.”

Added to that was the frenetic New York City environment. Green began to think about relocating, as long as a decade ago. “New York is jazz heaven,” he says. “Living there was so powerful—the clubs, the museums. It’s all love. But after living there for so long and dealing with all the pushing and shoving, life there got harder, not easier. I wanted to be more relaxed and make every note count. I needed to purify my focus as I was striving to make music become more precious, more dear to me.”

The genesis of Green’s return to the studio as a leader was a 2009 sideman gig in Japan for Japanese guitarist Satoshi Inoue with Peter Washington and Kenny Washington. The quartet played several dates, and then at the end of the tour, Green and the rhythm section did some shows as a trio. The chemistry was strong.

“I told Benny that he had to keep this trio together,” says Kenny, who has history with Green (they played together on saxophonist Ralph Moore’s 1985 debut, *Round Trip* on Reservoir, as well as on Moore’s next two albums for Landmark, *Images* and *Furthermore*, along with Tommy). “On our first rehearsal as a trio in Japan, Benny suggested we play Coleman Hawkins’ ‘Bean And The Boys.’ I knew right then and there at the first note that this would work.”

Green concurred and linked up with his old friend bassist John Lee, who founded his own label, Jazz Legacy Productions, in 2007. Green was enthusiastic at the prospect of returning to the recording scene with Lee as producer. As it turned out, he says, “This is the very first record I’ve made as a leader where the producer did not dictate who I played with or what style I should play.”

As for the 10 songs on *Source*, Green largely sticks to the music of yesteryear, yet steers clear of the standards, opting instead to savor the music that doesn’t get heard all that often. “When I was hanging out with Peter and Kenny, I kept a notebook,” Green says. “They mentioned so many records that I had never heard about. Or they’d remind me of songs I hadn’t heard in a long time, like Kenny suggesting that we try ‘Born To Be Blue.’ So I listened to it on Tommy Flanagan’s *Moodsville* album and Grant Green’s *Born To Be Blue* album with Sonny Clark and Ike Quebec. As I thought about the music we could play, I realized that I wanted to focus on songs that come from the source of jazz—compositions by Clark, Kenny Drew, Bud Powell, Horace Silver.”

While *Source* includes two slow-tempo numbers, the bulk of the album features the trio swinging with spirited bebop gusto—including a speedy romp through Donald Byrd’s “Little T,” a drum-charged spin through Powell’s “Tempus Fugit” and a blues-steeped sway into Duke Pearson’s “Chant.”

As for Green deciding to not include any originals, he says, “I love to feel like I’m getting closer to what artists like Monk and Bud Powell and Kenny Drew got. I want to embrace the music that I love. I don’t have any pretense of becoming an innovator. Some are called. John Coltrane didn’t try to innovate. He did so because he had to. If I tried to innovate, it would just be me trying to prove something. I love jazz. I’ll never master or perfect it, but I’ll continue to explore.”

DB

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# Reviews ▶

## Ambrose Akinmusire *When The Heart Emerges Glistening*

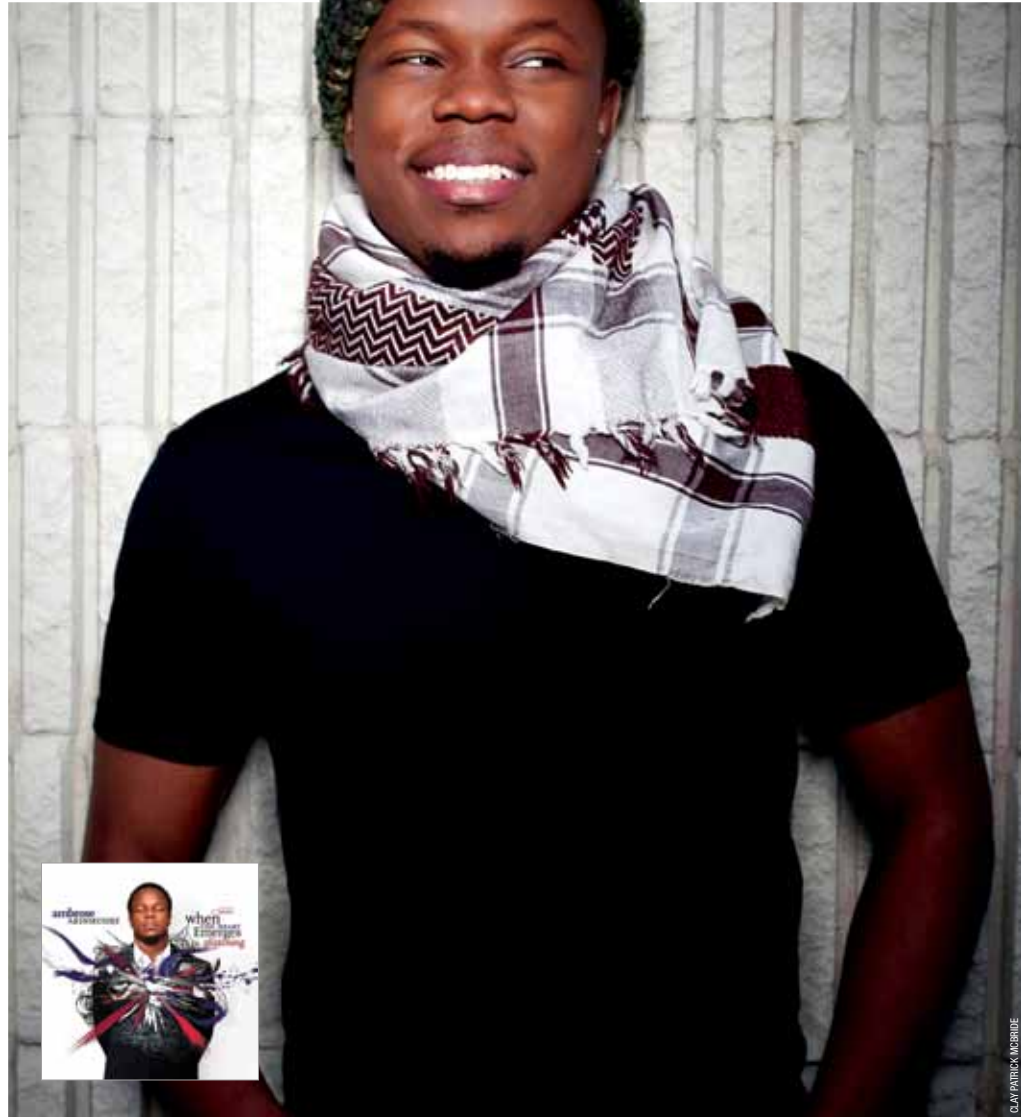
BLUE NOTE 70620

★★★★

Happy day, it's another entry in the great-time-for-trumpets column. Ambrose Akinmusire's forceful outing is as noteworthy for the strength of the overall concept as for the individual accomplishments of its leader, head-turning as they are. With folks like Steve Coleman and co-producer Jason Moran playing a guiding role, no wonder there's a more perspicacious mindset at play.

Let's start with Akinmusire's playing, just to get that on the record. He's pretty spectacular and not at all shy—muscular, driving, with a forward sound, pliant phrasing and a penchant for intervallic leaps. He's nimble, but hard, and especially fluid in the lower register. On airier tunes he can get breathy, but refuses to lose focus. With Moran setting up harmonic fields on Rhodes, on "Henry" trumpet melds with Walter Smith III's tenor saxophone, another lovely young feature of the band; the two horns intertwine alone at song's end, landing on a dissonant interval, which they drone out. On the tender but compelling "With Love" or the lone standard, "What's New," Akinmusire's tone grows more singing, though he kicks off "The Walls Of Lechuguilla" with startlingly original guttural sounds with vocalizations, leading puffingly into an accelerando, a truck engine turning over. When the tempo and/or temperature rises, Akinmusire is right there, urging the emotional "Confessions To My Unborn Daughter" from expository to explosive.

There are faint M-Base touches here and there—a zig-zagging line pivoting around longer than



CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE

expected—and the spirits of another generation of Blue Note innovators from Andrew Hill to Sam Rivers are clearly welcomed at Akinmusire's table, but the music and the band vibe are wonderfully original and current. On "My Name Is Oscar," Akinmusire recites a simple text based on the story of Oscar Grant, a young African-American man who was

shot and killed by a policeman in 2009, with Justin Brown's hard-hitting drumming as lone accompaniment. Juxtapose this with "Ayneh (Cora)," on which the trumpeter plays celeste in a duet with Gerald Clayton's sensitive piano. Clearly something very special and personal is at work here, a vision of jazz that's bigger than camps, broader and more intellectually

restless than blowing sessions, but is still firmly rooted in the grand tradition.  
—John Corbett

**When The Heart Emerges Glistening:** Confessions To My Unborn Daughter; Jaya; Henry Bass Intro; Henry; Far But Few Between; With Love; Regret (No More); Anyeh (Cora); My Name Is Oscar; The Walls Of Lechuguilla; What's New; Tear Stained Suicide Manifesto; Anyeh (Campbell). (53:43)

**Personnel:** Akinmusire, trumpet (1, 2, 4-7, 10-13); celeste (8); voice (9); Walter Smith III, tenor sax; Gerald Clayton, piano; Jason Moran, Rhodes (4, 12); Harish Raghavan, bass; Justin Brown, drums.

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**Charles Lloyd  
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★★★★

Charles Lloyd has been recy-  
cling the same five or  
six John Coltrane licks for  
four decades now, yet some-  
how he always comes out say-  
ing something personal, origi-  
nal and moving. How does he  
do it? Conviction, certainly,  
and an apparent total immer-  
sion in whatever he's playing,  
whether it's Thelonious Monk  
or the Beach Boys, so that,  
true to the ideal of selflessness  
he paraphrases from the *Bhagavad Gita* at the  
end of this album, his presence somehow re-  
cedes to a sort of evanescent absence. A whis-  
per that shouts. It doesn't hurt that he has amaz-  
ing sidemen. Jason Moran, Reuben Rogers and  
Eric Harland step forward here with assertive-  
ness and equal presence, even when they're just  
setting up a tangled groove.

The quartet's first album, *Rabo De Nube*,  
was a hard act to follow, but the group is up to the  
challenge. The program is a poignant mix of ten-  
der romances and transcendent spirituals, which  
suggests that, like the Sufis, Lloyd finds no con-



tradition between sacred and secular love—but,  
on contrary, celebrates and exalts both as perhaps  
manifestations of the same devotion. How else  
to explain an album that moves seamlessly from  
the sentimental musings of “I Fall In Love Too  
Easily” to a syncopated “Go Down Moses” with  
a consonant, singing resolution? Or that embrac-  
es both Brian Wilson’s lament for lost innocence,  
“Caroline, No,” and the traditional spiritual “The  
Water Is Wide”—in the finger-popping pocket—  
complete with a hilarious allusion to “Bye Bye  
Blackbird”? It’s a nice ride, with Big Feelings  
flowing everywhere, especially on the tradition-

al Spanish “La Llorona (The Weeping Woman).”

Lloyd’s alto saxophone sound—an added at-  
traction here—is unusual, the lower register  
sounding like something you might hear com-  
ing through a hollow tusk, the upper, plaintive-  
ly Ornette Coleman-ish. He’s warm and chip-  
per on the pretty “Desolation Sound” but often  
merely decorative as a soloist, tracing the lines  
of his tunes but not really transforming them.  
By contrast, Moran works his way to the edge  
of the harmony on “Mirror,” rises up to crunchy  
declarations on “Desolation” and clangs big,  
splayed chords on “La Llorona.” Rogers is viv-  
id on “Water” and dances gracefully with Lloyd  
on the rippling, floating “Being And Becoming.”  
Harland pulls a masterful range of sounds from  
his kit, mixing and matching with a great feel-  
ing for texture as well as setting up a pulse while  
keeping things wide open and suspended.

The quartet goes straight to the heart of the  
two Monk tunes—the brown study of “Monk’s  
Mood” and heart-on-sleeve vulnerability of  
“Ruby, My Dear”—but I found myself hungry  
for more, on both. Still, whatever its shortcom-  
ings, *Mirror* draws the listener into an immedi-  
ate, palpable world of feeling and meaning.

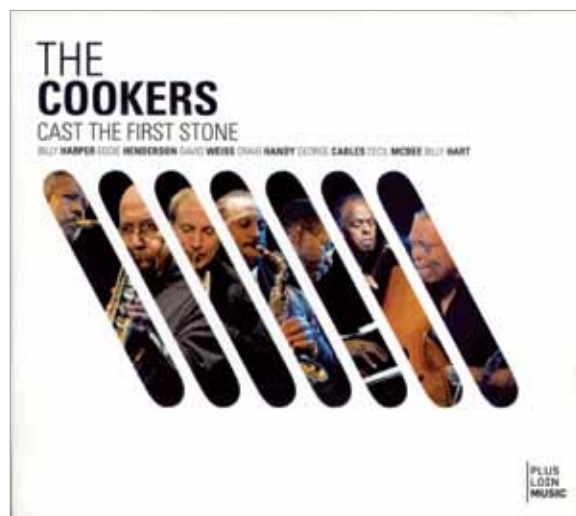
—Paul de Barros

**Mirror:** I Fall In Love Too Easily; Go Down Moses; Desolation  
Sound; La Llorona; Caroline, No; Monk’s Mood; Mirror; Ruby, My  
Dear; The Water Is Wide; Lift Every Voice And Sing; Being And  
Becoming; Road To Dakshineswar With Sangeeta; Tagi. (72:58)  
**Personnel:** Charles Lloyd, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone,  
voice; Jason Moran, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Eric Harland,  
drums.  
**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

**The Cookers**  
*Cast The First Stone*  
PLUS LOIN MUSIC 4536  
★★★★½

In their second CD in about a  
year The Cookers begin and  
end at a boil but largely simmer  
in between, a crock pot of smart-  
ly seasoned but slower cooking  
preparations of earlier recipes.  
Inspired by the 1965 Freddie  
Hubbard-Lee Morgan album  
*The Night Of The Cookers*, this  
is a septet steeped in the hard  
bop of the ’60s as it made ten-  
tative approaches to the avant  
garde without actually consum-  
mating an engagement. To the  
extent that its heart is in the music of that peri-  
od, it is retro. On the other hand, that spirit has  
never departed the scene, so it’s also thoroughly  
contemporary. Despite the veteran talent, this is  
no preservation hall unit. It works with the peri-  
od, never re-works it.

Musical director David Weiss has created a  
lively playground for renewing old partnerships.  
Billy Harper, Eddie Henderson, George Cables,  
Cecil McBee and Billy Hart all have long his-  
tories with each other, as well as with most of  
the major leading players of the period. Harper



and Henderson, who are the backbone of The  
Cookers, have been making music on and off  
together for more than 20 years. Both first ap-  
peared in that transitional period of the ear-  
ly ’70s. Harper emerged in the first post-John  
Coltrane decade and carries the characteristic  
marks in his hard sound and thrashing passion.  
Henderson came up about the same time when  
Miles was off in fusion land and Woody Shaw  
was the talk of the town. Tenor Azar Lawrence,  
who guests on four tracks, worked with McCoy  
Tyner in the early ’70s. The two tenors go up

against one another in a hard-swinging run  
through “The Chief.” Each is such a match as  
they skip along scanning the changes, the con-  
trast gap is slim, although Harper has a bit more  
bark in his sound.

The title track begins with a brief ensemble  
punctuation, then a strained, almost grinding  
howl from Harper, as if suddenly jarred from  
some inertia. He sounds disoriented, as if grab-  
bing for some point of reference. After a few  
bars, it’s clear we’re into something of a New  
Thing tirade in which brutal passion momen-  
tarily displaces ordered content. It’s a famil-  
iar strategy: a sequence of shouts mingled with  
twisted clusters of rock-hard notes that gush,  
soar, dive and swarm. After about a minute  
some ensemble lines stabilize matters briefly  
before Harper returns, blowing every note at fe-  
ver pitch.

The music then mellows out as it explores a  
series of more lyrical but never sedate pic-  
es, sensitively orchestrated to frame the solo-  
ists. Henderson’s command refuses to show the  
years, while Craig Handy’s younger but thor-  
oughly seasoned alto provides welcome ballast  
to the tenors.

—John McDonough

**Cast The First Stone:** Cast The First Stone; Peacemaker; Look-  
ing For The Light; The Seventh Day; Croquet Ballet; Think Of Me;  
The Chief. (61:21)  
**Personnel:** Craig Handy (1–5), alto saxophone; Billy Harper,  
Azar Lawrence (3, 4, 6, 7), tenor saxophone; Eddie Henderson,  
Davis Weiss, trumpet; George Cables, piano; Cecil McBee,  
bass; Billy Hart, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [plusloin.net](http://plusloin.net)





## Jim Hall & Joey Baron *Conversations*

ARTISTSHARE 0111

★★★½

Ghostly strums, soft feints, weighty whis-pers—they're all floating through this exquisite duet by guitarist Jim Hall and drummer Joey Baron. The pair has shared many stages during the last two decades, and here, as usual, they make hay in the rather stark atmosphere that's become the 80-year-old string icon's home turf. But few of Hall's previous outings are this arid. *Conversations* is all about micro maneuvers that spotlight the power of silence. From a splash cymbal to a clutch of strings gently flicked, the program is built on a parade of subtleties.

It may begin with "Bag's Groove" and place "St. Thomas" near its conclusion, but es-saying standards isn't what this disc is about. "Pollock" is a spray of sound that blends Hall curlicues and Baron clanks. "Monet" is similar, albeit with gentler edge. These approaches have more in common with those famed Derek Bailey and Andrea Centazzo hook-ups than the sumptuousness of Hall's duos with Bill Evans or Ron Carter.

Respect for open territory has always been part of the guitarist's agenda, but he's never dedicated this much time to free-range action. The title cut finds him at his most mercurial and inventive, stitching discrete phrases with the help of Baron's cymbals. Here, juxtaposition is treated as a game strategy; one cluster of notes might suggest decorum, a follow-up phrase might be created to serve the interests of contrast.

Baron is an ideal duet partner for Hall. His opening of "Safari" sets a deep mood that the guitarist stretches further. On the same track a single tom-tom thud leads to the trap set becoming a battery of hand percussion—diversity of textures is another of the program's strengths. By the time the duo settles into the expanse of "Travelogue," it becomes clear that *Conversations* is a testament to rapport that celebrates the profound impact of pith and the rich possibilities of exploration.

—Jim Macnie

**Conversations:** Bag's Groove; Reinhardt; Pollock; Conversations; Ballad Painting; What If?; In Repose; Uncle Ed; Safari; Monet; Travelogue; At Sea; St. Thomas; Pocketful Of Change; Time. (49:53)

**Personnel:** Jim Hall, guitar; Joey Baron, drums.

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

# The Hot Box

	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>Ambrose Akinmusire</b> <i>When The Heart Emerges Glistening</i>	★★★	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★
<b>Charles Lloyd Quartet</b> <i>Mirrors</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
<b>The Cookers</b> <i>Cast The First Stone</i>	★★★½	★★★½	★★★½	★★★
<b>Jim Hall &amp; Joey Baron</b> <i>Conversations</i>	★★½	★★★½	★★★½	★★★

## Critics' Comments →

### Ambrose Akinmusire, *When The Heart Emerges Glistening*

If you listen through the hype that accompanies this artist's arrival on a big label, you'll hear a skilled if not singular player with a penchant for stroking a rich, low, patient purr from his horn. His wilder flings seem more muscle than design, while the lyrical sometimes borders solemnity. "What's New" catches the warm center of his talent.

—John McDonough

The tone of the tunes positions this as a serious date. The New York trumpet newcomer and his acclaimed producer are looking for the impact a big dollop of thoughtfulness can have. And it's here. The ballads glisten with romance, the rave-ups put passion in the center of their squalls. Great first step.

—Jim Macnie

Akinmusire and crew play with the kind of bristling conviction, passion and energy I associate with Art Blakey, though stylistically they're more abstract. The big-toned, muscular trumpeter has a great conversation with himself on "Confessions," darting from low to high and Gerald Clayton's gliding stride on "What's New" is a nice surprise.

—Paul de Barros

### Charles Lloyd Quartet, *Mirrors*

Finding the hidden alto in his tenor, Lloyd wafts with a cool and diaphanous grace over some mixed ballads, a few spirituals and one nearly comatose drone of poetry at the end. But the standards and especially Monk draw Moran out nicely, and Lloyd's dusty-dry sound is an amalgam of romance and stoicism. Mostly, very good music.

—John McDonough

The repositioning of Lloyd from slightly outside centrality to a place of such regality has been fascinating to watch, in part because his most recent slate of records so firmly justifies it. Wonderful program, from Beach Boys to spirituals; the band continues to be splendid, especially Moran, who has entered a Midas-like phase.

—John Corbett

Each of his recent ECM discs takes the notion of silvery beauty to another level—on his best days, Lloyd may well be our most eloquent tenor saxophonist. The interplay of his ensemble is keen, no doubt. But throughout this program I can't take my ear off of his bittersweet horn lines.

—Jim Macnie

### The Cookers, *Cast The First Stone*

Beefy music from mid-sized band spotlighting hardcore mainstream statesmen. No giant surprises, very '70s, but Billy Harper always delivers and Azar Lawrence takes some keening tenor solos. The way he tucks in, I bet you could bounce a quarter off Billy Hart's bedsheets.

—John Corbett

Sometimes just hearing the ardor a band brings to the table is enough to generate a goose bump or two. Without overlooking the smarts of the music itself, that's the case here. From Billy Harper's zeal to Billy Hart's finesse, the collective vehemence is palpable throughout.

—Jim Macnie

"Playing hard and meaning it" is the watchword of trumpeter/arranger David Weiss, who continues his homage to '70s blowers with a great ear for underplayed tunes from the era. But with the exception of "Croquet," Weiss' arrangements have so little air between the parts, I found myself waiting for the crowd to disperse so I could hear soloists like Eddie Henderson and Billy Harper.

—Paul de Barros

### Jim Hall & Joey Baron, *Conversations*

More small talk than conversation. Hall and Baron engage tentatively, often in fragments. A caressed chord, the rustle of a cymbal or tom-tom in search of a subject. Baron is open and laconic; Hall, probing, unexpected, but inconclusive and fleeting. "St. Thomas" is charming. But overall too little thematic binding.

—John McDonough

Two aces of economy, making more out of less. Where they expand, so does the fascination—take "Travelogue" or the beautiful "bonus" track "Time." One observes the back and forth of great musical repartee. Some short cuts (seven under two minutes) feel more like starts than miniatures, and we're left wondering where they would have gone had they lingered.

—John Corbett

Hall and Baron are two of my favorite players of all time, but this unusual excursion is a bit oblique—not to say precious and refined—for my taste. Though when the pair does make contact in ever so subtle and surprising moments, as they do on "Pollock," "Safari" and "St. Thomas," it's sweet, to be sure.

—Paul de Barros

## Smalls' Big Noise

Small is beautiful. Smalls, that is; Smalls the Manhattan club of choice for many a jazz musician and fan. This selection from pianist/producer Spike Wilner's Live At Smalls series is a sampling of performances that reflect the excitement and diversity of talent that courses through this Greenwich Village haunt.

Lovely and easy on the ears, Wilner's **Solo Piano (SmallsLive 0016; 58:26 ★★★★★)** travels through 13 familiar tunes with one original. Not a stylist per se (his book on Willie "The Lion" Smith is a clue), Wilner still has the capacity, patience and technique to breathe new energy into a series of chestnuts, from a delectable "Poor Butterfly" to hearty yet composed renditions of classics by James P. Johnson, Smith and Scott Joplin, including Joplin's "Elite Syncopations." The magic Wilner conveys comes through his subtlety and ability to transform material that's set in stone into fresh musical excursions, his "Bodhisattva Blues" also showing his way with another time-tested style.

Ari Hoenig's **Punk Bop (SmallsLive 0013; 73:14 ★★★★★)** is an altogether different take on jazz. The drummer steers his quintet through six originals that typically play with meter, melody and rhythm, the arrangements intricate, engaging, giving a sense of this band's cohesion. "Birdless" opens with uptempo swing alternating with some double-time and waltz figures, setting the stage for even more adventurous "punk bop" (e.g., the use of electronics). Jonathan Kreisberg plays all over his guitar on another involved, robust and at times quiet number with "Rapsallion Castle." Pianist Tigran Hamasyan works selectively, forcefully, his more chordal style complementing Kreisberg's, with altoist Will Vinson equally up to the task of executing Hoenig's at times topsy-turvy arrangements. While the themes may not be memorable, the way this band stretches out can make for fun, unpredictable listening.

The quiet and relative repose of Wilner's outing becomes an even more distant memory with **Omer Avital Quintet (SmallsLive 0014; 71:04 ★★★★★)**. Avital's eight originals can be turbo-charged with more exacting arrangements, featuring fiery solos all around and exceptional blasts of rhythmic urgency from drummer Johnathan Blake. When the dust does settle, as with Avital's eloquent bass playing on "D-Bass" and the more meditative gospel-inspired closer that still manages to heat up "Just Some Small Time Shit" (echoes of the chanting side of Charles Mingus are



Omer Avital

heard), a contrast emerges. It becomes obvious that the pacing in this set and unity of this band—with equally strong playing from Avis-hai Cohen on trumpet, pianist Jason Lindner and tenorist Joel Frahm—reflects the kind of top-tier programming a certain jazz club is capable of staging.

**Ben Wolfe Quintet (SmallsLive 0015; 61:12 ★★★★★½)** keeps the pressure on from the git-go, swinging hard and fast with "Block 11." One starts to get the impression that Smalls is home, more often than not, to high-octane musical experiences when, all of a sudden, "Block 11" suddenly downshifts. "For The Great Sonny Clark" follows with a typical tribute to the late hard-bop pianist, with mellow charts and a lanky swing. With the tempered, mainstream feel of "Telescope" the listener starts to get a sense that this band, like the others, has strength at every position. This all-Wolfe program, generally more easygoing, is right down the middle.

The **Jimmy Greene Quartet (SmallsLive 0012; 62:47 ★★★★★)** disc starts out channeling the John Coltrane quartet with all its combustible intent. With saxophonist Greene blasting off with pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Gregory Hutchinson, the band blows through five Greene originals and Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty." The aptly titled "Sense Of Urgency" tears the head off the music as the opener, its uptempo gait, stop-and-mostly-start arrangement the perfect vehicle for all onboard, Hutchinson's solo, in particular, a seamless, musical and explosive part of everything. The pause comes with the Thelonious Monk ballad, played true to form, patiently, lyrically, Greene's sweet soprano recalling another great, the former Monk colleague Steve Lacy. The heat returns with Greene's uptempo, quasi-rock/Latin "Soul Music," a tune that reflects his more composerly side, with less blowing and more dancing all around through a tighter arrangement. **DB**

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



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**Moon Hotel  
Lounge Project  
Into The Ojalá**  
MONTONAGE MUSIC  
★★

Journalists who venture into the field of making records have about as solid of a track record as movie stars who chase the same pursuit. Tom Moon served as the chief music critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer for nearly two decades and authored *1000 Recordings To Hear Before You Die*. An insightful scribe, Moon, who graduated from the University of Miami's School of Music, stumbled upon the concept behind *Into The Ojalá* while visiting upscale accommodations. It's easy to surmise that saxophonist Moon reveled in their homogeneous smoothness, languid calmness, and balanced neutrality. Aside from a cover of the gospel spiritual "Rock Of Ages," the lush album wants for energy, soul and color. Occasional bursts of liveliness—the heel-clicking pulse of "What You Had When You Knew You Believed," funky kick and brief interplay on "Rumi We're Losing," tempo detour mid-way through "Seed The Future"—stave off the tendency to ignore what's transpiring. Hints of bossa nova rhythms and Spanish-influenced forays aren't enough to salvage a sleepy listen that unfolds as harmless background fare.

—Bob Gendron

**Into The Ojalá:** What You Had When You Knew You Believed; Powerful Tonic; See The Future; Scaffolding; How To Dismantle; Rock Of Ages; Thank The Eyes; Ronnie Waltz; Strength Found In Treetops; Ojalá In The Kingdom Of Longshots; Rumi We're Losing. (50:10)

**Personnel:** Tom Moon, tenor saxophone; Kevin Hanson, acoustic and electric guitars; Mike Frank, acoustic piano and Rhodes; Jim Stager, acoustic and electric bass; Erik Johnson, drums; Behn Gillette, vibraphone; Josh Robinson, percussion.

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



**Marcus Shelby  
Orchestra  
Soul Of The Movement:  
Meditations On Dr.  
Martin Luther King Jr.**  
PORTO FRANCO 024  
★★★★

Through spirituals, original compositions and bluesy arrangements of an era's anthems, bassist Marcus Shelby weaves a narrative of hope into a musical retelling of the civil rights movement. He delivers a masterpiece that balances the exalted glory of church music with swing's proclivity for fun without compromising the equally required somber tone.

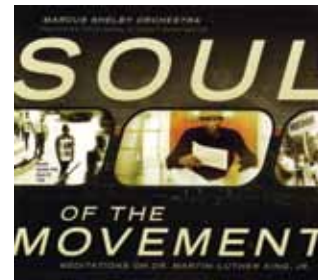
In the haunting narrative, "Emmett Till," a sleepy, meandering piano and softly bristling bass suggest the carefree expectations that the child and his mother may have had for his fatal trip to Mississippi. Slowly, a horn theme shrouds the piano's innocence with foreboding waves of darkness. Meanwhile, the up-tempo "Black Cab" is pure pride and joy, as Shelby's orchestra celebrates the drivers who helped sustain the Montgomery bus boycott. Faye Carol and Kenny Washington's soul-shattering performances on "Take My Hand Precious Lord" may be the consummate embodiment of music as a beacon of hope born out of pain.

—Jennifer Odell

**Soul Of The Movement:** There is a Balm in Gilead; Amen; Emmett Till (Bobo); Black Cab; Fables of Faubus; We Shall Overcome; Trouble on the Bus (Freedom Rides); Birmingham (Project C); Go Tell It On The Mountain; We're A Winner; Memphis (I am a Man); Take My Hand Precious Lord. (74:53)

**Personnel:** Gabe Eaton, alto sax; Marcus Stephens, alto sax; Sheldon Brown, clarinet/tenor sax; Evan Francis, tenor sax/flute; Fil Lorenz, baritone sax; Joel Behrman, trombone; Rob Ewing, trombone; Mike Rinta, trombone; Louis Fasman, trumpet; Scott Englebright, trumpet; Mike Olmos, trumpet; Darren Johnston, trumpet; Mark Wright, trumpet; Adam Shulman, piano; Sista Kee, piano; Matt Clark, B3 organ; Jeff Marrs, drums/percussion/vocal; Faye Carol, Jeanine Anderson, Kenny Washington, vocals; Marcus Shelby, acoustic bass, conductor; Howard Wiley, soprano sax (11), tenor sax (10, 12).

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



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## Nationwide Rediscoveries

**Roy Gaines: *Tuxedo Blues* (Black Gold 001237; 65:15 ★★★½)**

In a happier world, septuagenarian guitarist Roy Gaines, who's accompanied everyone from Roy Milton and Ray Charles to Quincy Jones and Stevie Wonder, wouldn't have had to spend his life savings making this career-capping album with a swinging Count Basie-like big band of Los Angeles musicians (Joe Sample on piano). But be glad he did. His fairly strong singing, more highbrow than down-home, has some of the liftoff of Jimmy Rushing and Big Joe Turner, while his guitar usually possesses the cool, calm lucidity of a winning style indebted in part to Wes Montgomery and T-Bone Walker. The 12-song program is split evenly between original compositions—none better than "Outside Lookin' In," arranged with panache by the estimable jazzman Leslie Drayton—and loaners such as finger-snapping "Route 66."

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

**Charles "Big Daddy" Stallings: *Blues Party* (Tai Jeria 3867; 79:57 ★★★)** Charles Stallings, in a Maryland studio, configures his third release as a backcountry North Carolina "good time," complete with verbal exhortations and IDs of the members of his cracker-jack band. He sings from the gut and plays passable guitar as he personalizes straight or jazzy blues, James Brown funk and Latin dance music. This middle-aged raconteur only falters when he lecherously addresses sexuality ("Horny Bee" and silly "Old Folks," no nectar in either place).

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

**Kirsten Thien: *Delicious* (Screen Door 0002; 56:44 ★★★)** In New York, Kirsten Thien's stock in trade is modern blues infused with soul and rock. She's a lithe, composed vocalist, inclined to use her attractive voice to elevate rather than plumb lyrics in songs she's written about sensual love. There's a layer of honesty about the redhead's music, even when she forces the emotion in "I Ain't Superstitious" and other places. Boldly dropping her band, she comes up trumps singing and strumming acoustic guitar with ace Memphis harmonica player Billy Gibson on Ida Cox's "Wild Women Don't Have The Blues." Band performances "Please Drive" and "Love That's Made To Share" profit from solos by the great guitarist Hubert Sumlin.

Roy Gaines



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

**James Kinds: *Love You From The Top* (Delmark 811; 61:21 ★★★)** James Kinds, a rising star on the 1970s Chicago scene but little heard from since, finally gets his day in the sun with a release on a well-respected label. The plaintive wail of his high singing voice is something like Jimmy Johnson's, and his guitar work and songwriting point to Magic Sam. Original songs, four of which have guest Eddie Shaw adding his spirited saxophone, are loaded with the usual complaints about complicated relationships. Kinds, who plays Iowa clubs these days, is the real thing.

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

**Wayne And Wildroot: *One Hell Of A Ride* (Reconciled 1000-7; 40:21 ★★★½)** Soul-blues singer Bobby Wayne has never enjoyed even a sliver of the national attention he's deserved since the 1960s (soul fans in England and Japan adore him). On this rip-roaring album, he falls in with guitarist Jimmy Wildroot Dolan and a cortege of Pittsburgh-based musicians, including the four-piece Midnight Horns. Wayne brings gravitas to the ballad "One Way Ticket" and drives the lickety-split romp "Saturday Night." Wildroot's slide guitar flays off the skin of your ears when listening to "Gold Standard." Wildroot does all the songwriting, take a bow, and trumpeter Danny Donohoe provides the tight, colorful horn arrangements. These guys share DNA with Sweet Pea Atkinson & Was (Not Was).

DB

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



## Ralph Bowen *Power Play*

POSI-TONE 8073

★★★

Saxophonist Ralph Bowen's *Power Play* is a solid and straightahead album that juxtaposes fearless up-tempo playing with pensive introspection. Bowen, who has chops galore, displays his mastery of tenor, alto and soprano throughout. On tenor, which he plays on all but three cuts, he's synthesized stylistic elements of several past masters, including John Coltrane and Michael Brecker. His focused and pure tenor sound is unique, although his ballad approach comes close to Coltrane's on "My One And Only Love," the date's only non-Bowen composition. Bowen displays a virtuosity, especially on the up-tempo "Two-Line Pass," that's similar to Brecker's. Bowen shifts stylistic gears when pulling out the alto on "Drumheller Valley," as he takes a more measured and bluesy route. On "Jessica" and "A Solar Romance" his soprano tone, as well as his note choices and phrasing, occasionally closely resemble those of Branford Marsalis.

Although the album almost entirely focuses on Bowen, his bandmates impress as well. Pianist Orrin Evans bends notes like Wynton Kelly and his impressionistic solos on "Bella Firenze" and "Jessica" give nods to Bill Evans. Bassist Kenny Davis walks up and down the entire range of his instrument, his rhythmically varied playing on "Walleye Jigging" is inventive, and he uses plenty of space on his solo on "Jessica," letting his pretty tone ring.

—Chris Robinson

**Power Play:** K.D.'s Blues; Drumheller Valley; Two-Line Pass; My One And Only Love; The Good Shepherd; Bella Firenze; Jessica; Walleye Jigging; A Solar Romance. (54:52)

**Personnel:** Ralph Bowen, saxophones; Orrin Evans, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Donald Edwards, drums.

**Ordering info:** [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com)



## Sonic Liberation Front *Sonic Liberation Front Meets Sunny Murray*

HIGH TWO 027

★★★

Legendary free-jazz drummer Sunny Murray's first encounter with percussionist Kevin Diehl is the stuff of pure chance. Murray dialed another musician whose phone number was one digit different from Diehl's, got the right wrong number, and they've been talking—and playing together—ever since. Diehl is now the leader of Sonic Liberation Front, a Philadelphia-based ensemble of shifting size and composition that combines outward-bound jazz with Afro-Cuban percussion. Murray joined them for a spell in 2002, and the popularity of bootlegged concert recordings from his sojourn led them to try a studio recording six years later. Either they waited too long or this is just hard stuff to bottle, because this CD represents neither party at its best. Murray often melts into the ensemble drumming, which is neither as tight nor as compelling as it is on SLF's last album, *Ashé A Go Go*. It falls to Diehl to engage directly with the horns and bass, whose keening improvisations seem to coexist with the drum choir as often as they mesh with it. Sometimes this works; on "Knowledge Of The Sun," cornetist Todd Margasak and saxophonist Terry Lawson's mournful unisons seem to drift over the slowly undulating percussive figures like a rain cloud over an arboreal canopy.

—Bill Meyer

**Sonic Liberation Front Meets Sunny Murray:** Init; Knowledge Of The Sun; Meaningless Kisses; Cosa De Grupo; Ochun Libre; Some Other Times; Nomingo; Under The Wave Of Kanagawa. (69:46)

**Personnel:** Sunny Murray, drums; Kevin Diehl, drums, percussion, bata; Chuck Joseph, bata, iya, conga; Terry Lawson, tenor saxophone; Okonko Adwoa Tacheampong, bata (1–5); Shawn Hennessy, bata (1–5); Matt Engle, bass (1–5); Todd Margasak, cornet (1–5); Nichola Rivera, itolele, conga (6–8); Joey Toledo, okonkolo, percussion (6–8); Adam Jenkins, alto saxophone (6–8); Kimbal Brown, trumpet (6–8); Fahir Kendall, bass (6–8).

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



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## Serious Soul

Bliss comes to serious fans of soul music with the colossal Syl Johnson boxed set **Complete Mythology** (Numero Group 032; 48:02/ 51:10/68:38/53:20 ★★★★★). Four CDs and six LPs, plus a 52-page book insert, honor a first figure of the second level of leading soul singers in the 1960s and early 1970s. Initially issued on Federal, Twinnight and other labels, 81 tracks have Johnson in all his glory. (His Hi sides aren't included, no great loss.) Listeners unfamiliar with Johnson—still performing at age 74 and proud-as-a-peacock of the attention paid him by rap samplers—may think his high tenor is shrill and narrow, but if you spend time with his songs, he'll likely win you over with displays of honest depth and equal-part mixtures of sensual-ity and redemption.

Mississippi-born Johnson doesn't care to be categorized a bluesman, preferring an association with soul, yet there's no denying the ability he shows playing blues guitar with a diabolical edginess on his early-'60s records. After all, he was a denizen of Chicago blues joints, working with Junior Wells, Magic Sam, other aces. Over time Johnson's full-tilt and mid-tempo music follows the stylistic trajectory of r&b morphing into soul. He's right on the money emoting dance hits "C'mon Sock It To Me" and "Dresses Too Short" or amplifying black pride social concerns on the caustic, funky 1970 LP *Is It Because I'm Black*. "We Do It Together" and other delicious songs find Johnson's quavering vocals buttressed by plush strings-horns-chorines arrangements compliments of soul giant Donny Hathaway; it's Windy City soul-music on a par with the best offerings out of Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff's Philadelphia.

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

Slow melodic ballads weren't to Johnson's liking, but they were central to Percy Sledge's artistic sensibility. The gospel-trained singer, whose tenor was richer than Johnson's, gets the red carpet rolled out for him with an elegant, clothbound four-CD and 48-page book set, **The Atlantic Recordings** (Rhino 526138; 76:37/79:45/75:03/79:06 ★★★★★). Foremost to his 1966-'73 stay with Atlantic was his first record, "When A Man Loves A Woman," the blockbuster ballad that Peter Guralnick called "the quintessential soul sound." On 104 tracks, the former gospel choir member from



Syl Johnson

Alabama experiences successful, failed or mixed romantic regeneration, always mindful of a certain border of discipline never to cross (unlike Johnson or Otis Redding). Sledge even draws sincere feeling from schmaltzy lyrics belonging to the occasional lame country tune. Sometimes Sledge's backup singers leave their mooring in church music for an insipid pop drift, but that's just a minor distraction. The Atlantic Recordings is manna from heaven for soul music enthusiasts, and a lodestone for novitiates wanting more than his chart hits.

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

The welcome appearance of the Tammi Terrell collection **Come On And See Me (Hip-O Select 80014792; 72:47/64:55 ★★★★★)** sheds light on her long-shadowed singing career before partnering with Marvin Gaye for sky-high chart success in the late 1960s. Not unctuous like Diana Ross or overwrought like Martha Reeves, the young Philadelphian defines the possibilities of romantic love with a precocious strength within mostly delightful songs written and performed by the Motown varsity teams. The appropriately named 1969 solo LP *Irresistible* is here, along with pre-Motown releases on Wand and James Brown's Try Me label. Among 21 enjoyable rarities are Terrell's only known concert tapes. Her beauty left the world too early, from a brain tumor, at age 24 in 1970.

DB

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



## Gerald Cleaver Uncle June *Be It As I See It*

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 375

★★★★★

On his third album as a leader, drummer Gerald Cleaver looks inward, reflecting on the struggles and victories of his family's part in the Great Migration from Mississippi to Detroit. The leader eschews any narrative structure, period pieces, or forced symbolism, instead reveling in diverse but masterful flexibility. The scramble of moods and styles mirrors the scrappy resourcefulness and improvisational wit demanded by the jarring changes of northern migration.

Cleaver doesn't merely employ his vast family of musical collaborators, but he also brings in his father, John Cleaver, for the terse recitation on the flinty, rock-driven "To Love," while his wife, Jean Carla Rodea, delivers the abstract words behind "He Said." The centerpiece of the album is "Fence & Post (For Mom & Dad)," a five-part suite that veers from chamber-like serenity to post-Sun Ra space-outs (with Craig Taborn expertly serving up Saturn-style synthesizer squiggles) to a Duke Ellington-worthy tone poem to grooves percolating into chaos to a tempo-shifting post-bop fantasia. The influence of the AACM—gleaned directly from his long association with the reedist and composer Roscoe Mitchell—along with Sun Ra hangs heavy over the proceedings, but Cleaver filters them through his own gauzy sensibility, accenting dissonance with a judicious silkiness. The recording captures a deep ensemble effort, but there are astonishing solos from reedists Tony Malaby and Andrew Bishop, violist Mat Maneri and Taborn. Cleaver has established his bona fides as a top jazz drummer; now it's time to recognize his skills as a conceptualist, composer and leader.

—Peter Margasak

**Be It As I See It:** To Love; Charles Street Sunrise; Fence & Post (For Mom & Dad); Alluvia; The Lights, Lee/Mae, Statues/UmbRa, Ruby Ritchie/Well; He Said; Gremmy; Charles Street Quotidian; 22 Minutes (The Wedding Song); From A Life Of The Same Name. (54:01)

**Personnel:** Jean Carla Rodea, voice (4, 7); Gerald Cleaver, drums, percussion, voice; Andrew Bishop, flute, soprano and bass clarinets, soprano and tenor saxophones; Tony Malaby, soprano and tenor saxophones; Drew Gress, bass; Mat Maneri, viola; John Cleaver, voice (1); Craig Taborn, piano, keyboards; Andy Taub, banjo (7); Ryan Macstalker, guitar (1, 4).

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





## Luther Hughes and the Cannonball-Coltrane Project *Things Are Getting Better*

PRIMROSE LANE MUSIC 014

★★½

Going concern for nearly a decade, Luther Hughes and the Cannonball-Coltrane Project is past the point of tribute ensemble status. Formed in 2002 after Hughes drew inspiration from listening to 1959's *The Cannonball Adderley Quintet In Chicago*—the only set on which Adderley and John Coltrane appear together outside of the pair's efforts with Miles Davis—the quintet is now recording as many original compositions as it does interpretations.

*Things Are Getting Better* divides its attention between preexisting classics like “Softly As In a Morning Sunrise” and homage-paying, original pieces such as the aptly coined “Trane And Wayne” and “McCoy.” The group prefers a straight-up approach, ignoring both the later-period avant-garde experimentation pursued by Coltrane as well as the funkier shadings concocted by Adderley. Performances are consistent and solid, and each instrumentalist knows his respective place, seldom stepping out for anything more than a brief solo. And that's part of the problem.

In spite of the spot-on melodies and traditional bop takes, a majority of the 12-track record comes across as excessively safe and smooth. Bassist Hughes and his mates click when the two saxophones harmonize, aim skyward and scrape stardust off the ceiling (“McCoy,” “Jive Samba”). Brimming with life and big, bacon-fat grooves, the persuasive title track romps and even exhales hints of gospel hallelujahs. Yet such energetic, freewheeling moments are too rare. Pianist Ed Czach provides an array of strolling right-hand runs that should serve as cues to turn up the heat, but his colleagues opt to keep it cool. A few samba touches and rhythmic swells prevent the mellowest material from doubling as live background fare one could encounter in a Nordstrom's department store. —*Bob Gendron*

**Things Are Getting Better:** Jive Samba; Glo In The Dark; McCoy; Primrose Star; Softly As In A Morning Sunrise; Sunset At Hermosa; Blue Daniel; Samba Para Um Dia Chuvoso; Trane And Wayne; Things Are Getting Better; Green Bananas; Take The Coltrane. (71:05)

**Personnel:** Luther Hughes, bass; Glenn Cashman, tenor saxophone; Bruce Babad, alto saxophone; Ed Czach, piano; Paul Kreibich, drums, percussion.

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

## Lynne Arriale *Convergence*

MOTEMA 54

★★★★

One of the many things one anticipates with every new Lynne Arriale release is a mix of original compositions with delightfully unexpected covers. So it is with *Convergence*, though, as with her other albums, there is much more than song selection to commend it. There is, first of all, her superb choice of musicians. Bassist Omer Avital and drummer Anthony Pinciotti share an exhilarating communication and a clear understanding of Arriale's vision. Their interactions invest each track with a powerful and dynamic momentum, even—perhaps especially—on the slower tempos. It takes real musicianship to make spacious ballads bristle with energy while maintaining a reflective character, as they demonstrate repeatedly.

A number of tracks feature Bill McHenry on tenor. While he blows authoritatively and plays the pivotal role in the car-crash, dissonant climax of the title cut, the most illuminating moments come when the trio is on its own, focusing not on backing the soloist but on creating as equal partners. Several of these 11 performances burn, though except for “Convergence” they too are played at a restrained volume. The feel is introspective and intimate, with plenty of space that allows details and nuances to speak eloquently.

This is clear throughout the Arriale composition “Dance Of The Rain.” A North African oud states the theme. Whoever is playing it sets a richly exotic mood, amplified by Pinciotti's hand drums and Arriale's solo, which extemporizes a beautifully conceived melody. A similar feel guides her on other tracks, with flatted-second



and major thirds suggesting a Middle Eastern modality on the title song as well as her reworking of the Rolling Stones' “Paint It Black.”

And that takes us to the covers. Arriale offers a lovely arrangement of “Here Comes The Sun,” whose airy texture and minimal input from the trio does conjure a sunrise in the misty dawn; Sting's “Sister Moon,” with a dreamy I-V verse that suggests a slightly bluesier Bill Evans; Blondie's “Call Me,” with McHenry joining in on a loose, underplayed saunter; and Trent Reznor's “Something I Can Never Have,” on which the drone function is assigned, cleverly, to McHenry, who repeats the fifth of the I chord as the group lays out the tune.

Arriale's “The Simple Things,” ends the album with a hush, its triadic voicings and folk-like theme making the case that playing minimally but listening to what's going on around you is often the key to artistry. —*Robert L. Doerschuk*

**Convergence:** Elements; Here And Now; Here Comes The Sun; Sister Moon; Call Me; Dance Of The Rain; For Peace; Paint It Black; Something I Can Never Have; Convergence; The Simple Things. (51:50)

**Personnel:** Lynne Arriale, piano; Bill McHenry, tenor sax; Omar Avital, bass; Anthony Pinciotti, drums.

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## Diego Urcola Quartet *Appreciation*

CAMJAZZ 5041

★★★★

Fluid and full-bodied, trumpet-er Diego Urcola maintains constant momentum throughout the nine originals included on this collection. Regardless of the tempo—which ranges from the balladic crawl of “Deep,” a piece inspired by Miles Davis and Astor Piazzolla, to the bravura bow to Freddie Hubbard on “The Natural”—Urcola remains in control.

If, in boxing terms, Davis saw himself as Johnny Bratton—a lithe boxer with a stealthy style—Urcola is more of a light-footed dancer with a killer punch. He never stops moving, and never telegraphs when the next aggressive rip or upper-register run will land. Even on the relatively mellow “Guachos” he unleashes some impressive high sustains, and on “Woody ‘n Diz” his rippling high notes are muscular and focused. On the loping “Senhor Wayne” he switches to valve trombone for a more burnished sound, and he closes with a restrained tribute to John Coltrane.

As a composer, Urcola stretches himself in paying homage to 11 of his heroes, and fills out his quartet’s sound on “Super Mario Forever” and “Guachos” by doubling his trumpet in key spots. Still, *Appreciation* would benefit from more variety in its arrangements; too often, the bass and piano solos follow Urcola’s opening statement with predictable timing. Only those trumpet fireworks surprise.

—James Hale

**Appreciation:** The Natural: El Brujo; Milonga para Paquito; Super Mario Forever; Guachos; Deep; Senhor Wayne; Woody ‘n Diz; Camila. (54:33)  
**Personnel:** Diego Urcola, trumpet, flugelhorn, valve trombone; Luis Perdomo, piano, Fender Rhodes; Hans Glawischning, bass; Eric McPherson, drums; Yosvany Terry, chekere (1, 8).

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



## Endangered Blood *Endangered Blood*

SKIRL 015

★★★★

In the latest band to feature reed-ist Chris Speed and drummer Jim Black, long-time cohorts going back to their youth in Seattle, their yin-yang relationship has never sounded more natural. They’ve worked together in countless contexts over the decades and they seem wired despite the stark aesthetic differences on the surface. Their seemingly oppositional approaches make sense. Speed and fellow reedist, the criminally underrated Oscar Noriega, use a variety of gambits to shape the latter’s elegant, serpentine melodies; sometimes they weave in buoyant counterpoint, sometimes they serve up rough unison passages, and sometimes they blow fleet inverse patterns of the other; there is effective prodding of one another and pre-written ostinato prompts during improvised sections.

Few drummers enjoy disrupting their own flow—or creating that illusion—more than Black, who’s always tempered the winding legato constructions of Speed in joint projects with brilliant chaos. Bassist Trevor Dunn doesn’t need to knot things up further, but his thick, muscular tone presents a delicious contrast to the lithe horn lines. All of the tunes are Speed originals—save for a wonderfully chunky take on Thelonious Monk’s “Epistrophy”—and they stand as his most melodically generous, accessible and warm batch of compositions he’s yet to produce.

—Peter Margasak

**Endangered Blood:** Plunge; Rare; Epistrophy; Elvin Lisbon; K; Tacos At Oscars; Iris; Uri Bird; Valya; Andrew’s Ditty Variation One. (51:03)

**Personnel:** Jim Black, drums; Trevor Dunn, bass; Oscar Noriega, alto saxophone and bass clarinet; Chris Speed, tenor saxophone.

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



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## Jeremy Pelt *The Talented Mr. Pelt*

HIGH NOTE 7216

★★★★

Jeremy Pelt’s *The Talented Mr. Pelt* is a sly and nuanced record that took quite a few listens before I started to dig it. It appears on the surface to be a fairly straightforward post-hard-bop record, but there’s a ton of complexity in the composition’s forms, their changes and the group’s approach to time. Pelt wrote five of the progressive album’s eight compositions, which depart from the melodic and harmonic structures of the tried-and-true 32 and 12-bar forms. The quintet shows how naturally an 11-bar form that includes a bar of 7/4 can lay on “Only.”

Drummer Gerald Cleaver takes a loose approach to the time keeper’s role, in that tempos, meter, and portions of form are eligible for tinkering. This is especially the case on “Paradise Lost,” which takes some effort to identify as a waltz. Cleaver is a master of color, strategically switching cymbals and drums and is hyper-sensitive to the soloist as well, by way of his perfectly placed kicks and countermelodies. His work with Allen, whose dry tone and smoothly surging lines recall Wayne Shorter, on the disc’s closer “David And Goliath” demonstrates this perfectly. Pelt is fire-brand and sensitive balladeer: his muted work on “All My Thoughts Are Of You” and open flugelhorn on Blossom Dearie’s “In Love Again” are quite poignant, as are pianist Danny Grissett’s solos. Bassist Dwayne Burno holds everything together, no matter how complicated things get.

—Chris Robinson

**The Talented Mr. Pelt:** Pandora’s Box; All My Thoughts Are Of You; Paradise Lost; When The Time Is Right; Pulse; In Love Again; Only; David And Goliath. (52:31)

**Personnel:** Jeremy Pelt, trumpet, flugelhorn; JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Danny Grissett, piano; Dwayne Burno, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

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





**Oliver Lake  
Organ Quartet  
*Plan***

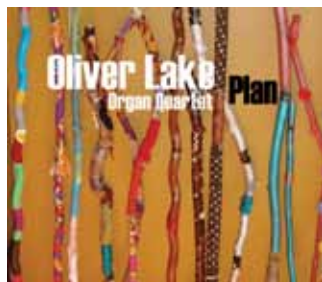
PASSIN' THRU 41226

★★★★½

**Gene Lake  
*Here And Now***

PASSIN' THRU 41227

★★



The proverbial “cut” associated with groove certainly presents itself on several occasions on *Plan*, but Oliver Lake doesn’t simply lay in the cut. Instead, he skids across it and skulks underneath it.

The veteran alto saxophonist advances the suspense from his previous 2008 organ quartet disc, *Makin’ It*. Lake comes out explosively from the opening title track, on which he employs his acerbic tone and sidewinding phrases in union with trumpeter Freddie Hendrix before blasting off into a vigorous improvisation. Adding to the restive energy is Jonnathan Blake’s propulsive drumming and Jared Gold’s squawking, almost pianistic approach to the Hammond B3. When the quartet explores a groove as on the bluesy “Backup” or the Latin-tinged “After Touch,” the rhythmic and harmonic foundation shifts unexpectedly and the front-line horns soar.

Lake’s son Gene Lake also has a gift for goading a groove with extraordinary flair. Unfortunately on *Here And Now*, Lake’s distinctive drumming gets lost in a gloss of over-production. Decidedly more r&b and pop than jazz, the disc features professional playing, but the material is weak. The electric keyboards on such tunes as “Get Away,” “The Dance” and the title track forge a dated mid-’80s sound, heard on George Duke’s Elektra albums—but without Duke’s pop craftsmanship.

—John Murph

**Plan:** Plan; Backup; Ta, Ta, Ta; After Touch; In This; Spring-ing; 2 Parts Air; Dance Two. (48:30)  
**Personnel:** Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Freddie Hendrix, trumpet; Jared Gold; Hammond B3 organ; Johnathan Blake, drums.

**Here and Now:** Get Away; MM; Spiritual Walkers; The Dance; RedZone; Here and Now; A Warm Place; Remember When; Heaven On Earth; Libra; Over And Over; Here Comes The Sun. (64:31)  
**Personnel:** Gene Lake, drums; David Sanborn, alto saxophone (9); David Gilmore, rhythm guitar (2); guitar (3); David Fiuczynski, guitar solo (5); guitar (10); Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone (2, 12); Gregoire Maret, harmonica (6, 9); Nat Janoff, acoustic guitar (4); Freedom Bremmer, vocals (1); Mitchell Wright, guitar (1); Scott Brown, keyboard solo (2); Alex Han, alto saxophone (2), alto saxophone solo (5); Steve Jenkins, lead bass (2), electric bass (melody) (5); Vadim Zilbershtein, guitar (3); Federico Gonzalez Pena, piano (7); Ricky Peterson, organ (9); Nicky Moroch, rhythm guitar (9); guitar (13); James Genus, bass (12).

Ordering info: [passinthrough.org](http://passinthrough.org)

**Weasel Walter/Mary  
Halvorson/Peter Evans  
*Electric Fruit***

THIRSTY EAR 57196

★★★★



The eclectic drummer Weasel Walter might have hit the jackpot when his path crossed guitarist Mary Halvorson and trumpeter Peter Evans. Despite having different backgrounds and styles, the three musicians share a vision on this excellent effort.

Their tight partnership means that none of the musicians is assigned to a specific role; each can take the lead or make a suggestion that will spur a creative surge. This also explains why there is no sign of self-indulgence and no solo in a traditional sense. Nods to minimalism and fearless free-jazz, are used as transitional devices to introduce new chapters in their improvisations. Halvorson alternates jagged or angular lines with distorted notes and chords; Evans draws from an impressive array of extended techniques; and Walter keeps things moving with his bustling activity. Together, their greatest strength is their ability to combine all those elements into a cohesive and meaningful amalgam that is neither purely visceral nor cerebral and progresses organically.

—Alain Drouot

**Electric Fruit:** Mangosteen 3000 A.D.; The Stench of Cyber-Durian; The Pseudo Carp Walks Among Us; Scuppernong Malfunction; Yantok Salak Kapok; Metallic Dragon Fruit. (54:41)

**Personnel:** Mary Halvorson, guitar; Peter Evans, trumpet; Weasel Walter, drums.

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

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## Matthew Rybicki *Driven*

SELF RELEASE

★★★★

Assist Matthew Rybicki, a perennial sideman, went the DIY route for his debut. Rybicki solicited donations for recording costs on Kickstarter.com, a social media platform that connects donors with personal causes. He achieved his monetary plateau, and has presented a solid 11-track package.

The recording's homemade fundraising aesthetic is nowhere to be found on *Driven*, which features developed, mature tunes and is a solid introduction to Rybicki's playing and compositional style. He has a knack for instantly singable melodies. "The Slow Stride" is a smooth groove, moving along at an easy pace, led by Freddie Hendrix's trumpet. "Seventh Sun" immediately forces the band out of the previous tune, establishing an almost-manic swing from the start. As a bassist, Rybicki is at home in the pocket and is content to lean back and let the music progress at its own pace. It helps that his tunes are in capable hands. Pianist Gerald Clayton provides the glue to hold these pieces together, and Ron Blake excels on soprano and tenor saxophones. Rybicki can even incorporate world music into his own voice, as on the closer, "Nouakchoott." What starts as a bass vamp constructed of harmonics gives way to an indigenous chant courtesy of vocalist Selloane Nkehla. It's a beast of a tune that eventually leaves Nkehla's voice behind in favor of well-constructed solos, but ultimately arrives back at the start.

—Jon Ross

**Driven:** The Slow Stride; Seventh Sun; A Mean Lean; Yellow Bird; Lisa's Song; Big Money and the Left Side; Someday I May Be Far Away; Driven; Lowcountry Boil; Secret Love; Nouakchoott. (67:05)  
**Personnel:** Matthew Rybicki, bass; Ron Blake, saxophones; Freddie Hendrix, trumpet and flugelhorn; Michael Dease, trombone; Gerald Clayton, piano; Ulysses Owens, Jr., drums; Matthew Baranella, percussion; Selloane Nkehla, vocals.

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



## Eli Degibri *Israeli Song*

ANZIC RECORDS 3002

★★★★

It's rare that the notoriety of each sideman on a record outshines the bonafides of their leader—but that's the situation on Eli Degibri's fifth recording. The Israel-born saxophonist welcomes two of his mentors—bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster—to the band along with pianist Brad Mehldau. It's an intimidating group of heavyweights, but Degibri is the star here, leading the group through originals, standards and three pieces by the rhythm section. Though the members of the band shine during their individual solos, the musicians are deferential to Degibri's spirited tenor and soprano playing.

Degibri finds a way to perform each of tunes from his sidemen as if they were written with him in mind. On Carter's "Third Plane," Degibri finds the heart of the fun, playful song, keeping the disjunct leaps intact but molding the tune into a saxophone feature. Degibri handles the melody with skill, exhibiting a range that sounds equally full in all registers. "Unrequited," Mehldau's offering, is given a more heartbreaking reading than the original, its bubbly piano accompaniment slowed down to an introspective lament. On soprano, Degibri affects a longing, pleading tone before picking up the pace and delivering an angry tirade of notes.

Degibri and Mehldau take on the sparse titular track, which closes the album. After a slowly unfurling a capella intro, Degibri moves into the gorgeous melody supported by Mehldau's slow chordal accompaniment.

—Jon Ross

**Israeli Song:** Unrequited; Mr. R.C.; Judy The Dog; Jealous Eyes; Manic Depressive; Bebop; Liora; Look What You Do to Me; Third Plane; Somewhere Over the Rainbow; Israeli Song. (56:52)  
**Personnel:** Eli Degibri, saxophones; Brad Mehldau, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Al Foster, drums.

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



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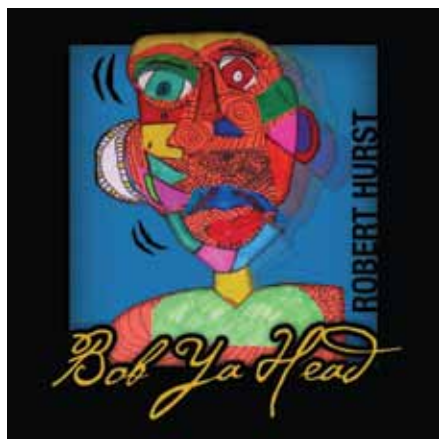
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**Robert Hurst**  
*Unrehurst,*  
*Volume 2*

BEBOB RECORDS 11113

★★★★½

**Robert Hurst**  
*Bob Ya Head*

BEBOB RECORDS 11132

★★★★½

Surpassing three decades now, Robert Hurst has been a go-to bassist for many outstanding straightahead recordings. But as a leader, his discography is shamefully small. Two recent discs prove that Hurst needs more opportunities.

*Unrehurst, Volume 2* picks up where its 2002 predecessor left off with Hurst lending his vigorous bass playing to a trio setting with Robert Glasper. Whereas *Volume 1* featured Glasper's former drummer Damion Reid, this new record features Glasper's Chris Dave.

While the group dynamics are undoubtedly Glasper-esque, especially in how the pianist hammers a repetitive figure then builds a delightful solo or how he slyly quotes hip-hop and deep house songs into the mix, Hurst gets his voice in clearly and forcefully—as on the adventurous deconstruction of Cole Porter's "I Love You," on which he and Dave drive Glasper's crisp improvisations with shifting rhythmic passages. They give "Monk's Dream" a funky 21st century jazz makeover with hip-hop snaps and breaks without neglecting mid-'50s swing.

Hurst plays wonderfully throughout, sometimes showcasing his stout bass lines with melodically cogent solos and thrusting accompaniments. He also shines as a composer with the intriguing "Bob's 5/4 Tune," which finds him dropping skulking bass lines underneath Dave's hyper-kinetic beats and Glasper's graceful melody. Unaccompanied at the beginning of his "Bob's Blues," he displays his mastery as building rich solos, brimming with both melodic and rhythmic ingenuity, before Glasper and Dave enter the fray with a groove reminiscent of Duke Ellington's "C Jam Blues."

*Bob Ya Head* is a studio date that features Hurst more on electric bass with a larger en-

semble. The music veers from the contemporary straightahead idiom, but Hurst excels at leaping into the electric fusion better than many of his contemporaries. He underscores it all with socio-political overtones by inserting overlapping pre-recorded dialogue of President Barack Obama and former President George W. Bush on the restive "Unintellectual Property," which also features sonic bombs dropping onto of Hurst's burbling electric bass improvisation. Hurst gets the same compelling results mixing pre-recorded dialogue and music on the hypnotic yet brisk "X Static." Political ambitions don't get the best

of him. The joyous "Optimism" with its West African influenced melody and Hurst's fluid electric bass playing is yearning for other musicians to explore.  
—John Murph

**Unrehurst, Vol. 2:** I Love You; Truth Revealed w/Intro; Bob's 5/4 Tune; Monk's Dream; Bob's Blues. (53:37)

**Personnel:** Robert Hurst, acoustic bass; Chris Dave, drums; Robert Glasper, piano.

**Bob Ya Head:** Obama Victory Dance; Optimism; X Static; Comes You Comes Love (Intro); Comes You Comes Love; Forty Four; Da, Da, Da, Dah; Munyungo In Da Jungle (Intro); Munyungo In Da Jungle; Oral Roberto; Alice and John; Unintellectual Property; When Drums Stop. (46:24)

**Personnel:** Robert Hurst, acoustic and electric bass; Marcus Belgrave, trumpet; Scott Kinsey, keyboards; Darryl "Munyungo" Jackson, percussion; Sy Smith, vocals; Vincent Bowens, tenor saxophone; Karriem Riggins, drums.

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

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## Bill O'Connell *Rhapsody In Blue*

CHALLENGE RECORDS 73302

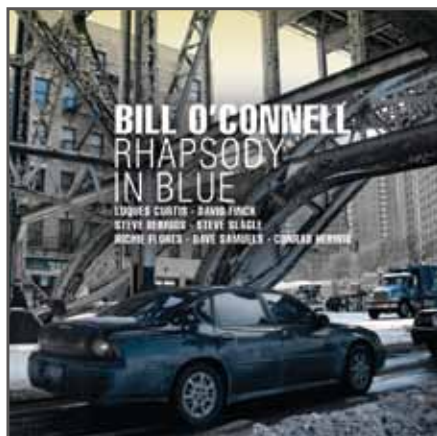
★★★

For years, Bill O'Connell has staked out his territory right on the line between jazz and salsa. But this flexibility comes with a price in that his identity is perhaps less familiar than that of some of his peers who adhere more to a single genre or school.

This impression grows throughout *Rhapsody In Blue*. He's got a terrific band here; its members deliver consistently solid solos and play the written lines in tight sync. His sure hand as an arranger is evident on the covers in particular. Much of the original material, though, is more functional than substantive, pieced together from turnarounds, quick rhythmic transitions and open stretches.

The differences in classic and self-written material become hard to ignore. The best example presents itself in the title cut: O'Connell lays out the Gershwin opening motif in a laid-back Latin feel, which then picks up into a more aggressive presentation. The band articulates that motif together, in straight eighth-notes for two bars and then breaks it up with a salsa groove on the last two and into the solos. It's a genuinely fresh take on the tune, especially when the B section hits with the magnificent closing theme of "Rhapsody," this time played over a swirling 6/8 backdrop.

Other covers aren't as ambitiously set but are nonetheless played with sensitivity to the familiar content. "It Never Entered My Mind" sounds more or less jammed out top to bottom, but Steve Slagle's plangent soprano sax caresses the melody at the top and O'Connell follows with an equally expressive chorus. A little more thought



is put into switching between Latin and swing sections on "Bye Bye Blackbird"; O'Connell's ventures outside the changes, Curtis' inventive shifts in and out of walking and playing counter-figures seem to draw from the Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock playbook.

There's one impressive original tune as well; its title, "Monk's Cha-cha," sums up the game plan, more or less transplanting a head similar to "Well You Needn't" onto a medium-tempo samba. O'Connell takes the idea into his solo too, with some licks that spice up quick-spinning triplets with Thelonious Monkish flat-fives. Little else is as compositionally arresting, however, leaving us with the lesson that when one is raised on the standards, that's often where one plays with the kind of inventiveness and expression that's hard to conjure in simple blowing sections.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

**Rhapsody in Blue:** Monk's Cha-cha; Pocket Change; Rhapsody In Blue; It Never Entered My Mind; J-Man; Off-Center; Two Worlds; Log-a-rhythm; Rose Hill; Bye Bye Blackbird. (60:03)

**Personnel:** Bill O'Connell, piano; Steve Slagle, saxophones; Conrad Herwig, trombone; Dave Samuels, vibraphone; Luques Curtis, bass; Richie Flores, percussion; Steve Berrios, drums.

**Ordering info:** [challenge.nl](http://challenge.nl)



## Clazz Ensemble *Adventures*

CLAZZ MUSIC 001

★★★

As the band's name suggests, the Clazz Ensemble aims to bridge the classical and jazz worlds. The idea has been a longtime obsession and considering the renewal that big bands have enjoyed in recent years, this Dutch project does not exactly stand out or break any new ground, which does not mean that it should be dismissed.

At their best, the compositions are quirky as well as mysterious and include colorful voicings and shadings. The band also applies the necessary rigor to negotiate tricky arrangements with flying colors. The only exception to well-defined structure is "Slijkstraat," a composition penned by Michael Moore, the most recognizable name in the personnel and an artist who has earned a solid reputation as a member of Clusone 3 and the ICP Orchestra, among other outfits.

Those soloists have other opportunities to shine. Moore's thoughtful clarinet and strident alto bring additional power to the opener and closer, respectively, which happen to be the most engaging pieces. Nils van Haften's baritone sax is used most effectively on the uproarious "Pimpin'" which can be described as a soundtrack to half-sung/half-spoken dialogues that would have the FCC up in arms.

Unfortunately, towards the middle of the program, the Clazz Ensemble experiences a lapse in inspiration while trying to bring some diversity. The ballad "Eyes To Wonder" teeters on the verge of maudlin and the hodgepodge of styles that populate "Blue Angels" does not seem to elicit much conviction from the band members. Despite its flaws, *Adventures* has enough material with staying power to make it a valid addition to the Dutch jazz landscape.

—Alain Drouot

**Adventures:** Bill's Big Hat; Donkerblauw In Rok; Pimpin'; Eyes To Wonder; Blue Angels; Slijkstraat; Shit Happens; Clazz System. (72:28)

**Personnel:** Michael Moore, alto sax and clarinet; Dick de Graaf, tenor and soprano sax; Arno Bornkamp, tenor, alto and soprano sax; Nils van Haften, baritone sax and bass clarinet; Martijn de Laat, trumpet and flugelhorn; Frank Anepool, trumpet and flugelhorn; Gerard Kleijn, trumpet and flugelhorn; Ilja Reijngoud, trombone; Koen Kaptijn, trombone; Kris Goessens, piano; Paul Berner, double bass and electric bass; Joost Kesselaar, drums; Bas Wiegiers, repititor.

**Ordering info:** [clazzensemble.nl](http://clazzensemble.nl)

## Matt Bauder *Day In Pictures*

CLEAN FEED 210

★★★★½

Matt Bauder is a New York-based associate of Anthony Braxton and Rob Mazurek who has a gift for isolating a musical language, mastering it and then introducing a personalizing twist. He's done it to doo-wop and the Beach Boys with his combo White Blue Yellow And Clouds, to minimalist process music in a duo with bassist Jason Ajemian and electro-acoustic improvisation with the trio Memorize The Sky. His quintet Day In Pictures zeros in on the modern jazz of a half-century past, with an instrumental lineup and compositions that echo classic efforts from the Prestige, Columbia and Blue Note catalogs with nary a whiff of condescension or dabbling. But rather than merely recreate the music of some golden age, Bauder and company use its



familiar forms as launching points for contemporary explorations.

"Cleopatra's Mood" opens the record with a sumptuous rhythm that reconciles the groove concepts of Horace Silver and Mulatu Astatke and horn charts that a man of a certain age would be happy to play for his father. But after taking gorgeous, idiomatic solos, Bauder and Wooley weave ribbons of in-

creasingly grainy sound around each other's figures. Bauder runs his signal through a music stand full of delay units, while Wooley is fully conversant in the radical techniques that have transformed trumpeting in the past decade. But neither seems to want to defy their source material. They want to bring it into their time, intact but renewed.

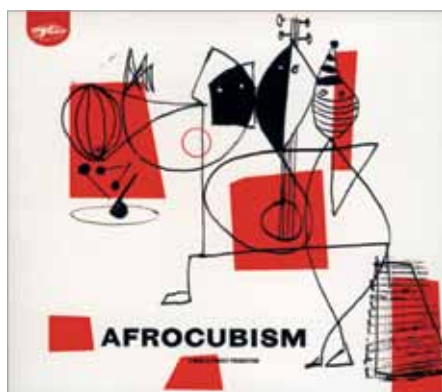
—Bill Meyer

**Day In Pictures:** Cleopatra's Mood; Parks After Dark; January Melody; Reborn Not Gone; Bill And Maza; Two Lucks; Willoughby. (54:37)

**Personnel:** Matt Bauder, clarinet and tenor saxophone; Nate Wolley, trumpet; Angelica Sanchez, piano; Jason Ajemian, double bass; Tomas Fujiwara, drums.

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





## AfroCubism

WORLD CIRCUIT/NONESUCH 525993

★★★★½

In 1997, Nick Gold produced an enduring Cuban masterpiece with *Buena Vista Social Club*. That wasn't his original intent. The plan initially was to bring Malian musicians to Cuba for a trans-Atlantic session highlighting the musical ties connecting the two nations. Travel problems nixed the project then, but now Gold realizes his initial plan on *AfroCubism*.

The great Cuban guajiro Eliades Ochoa and his band Grupo Patria are united with some of Mali's greatest players, and their sounds blend with hardly a hiccup. Toumani Diabaté's kora wraps warmly around Ochoa's rural Cuban guitar, and the powerful griot singer Kasse Mady Diabaté (no relation to Toumani or Lassana) complements Ochoa's bellow with melismatic fluency.

The opening mission statement, an instrumental version of Toumani Diabaté's "Mali Cuba," sets the scene by casting Malian instrumentation in a decidedly Cuban context, but from there, the album is a swirl of rhythms and textures from both countries. Djelimady Tounkara's brilliantly phrased, crystal-toned lead guitar provides an electric foil to the otherwise acoustic arrangements and is a constant highlight. On "Nima Diyala," his rhythmic interplay with Lassana Diabaté's hyperspeed balafon provides some of the album's most breathtaking moments.

That the popular music of post-War Mali draws heavily on Cuban forms to begin with is surely a factor in the ease of this marriage. More important, though, is how giving the musicians are with each other, focusing on interplay rather than showcases for their virtuosity.

—Joe Tangari

**AfroCubism:** Mali Cuba; Al Vaivén De Mi Carreta; Karamo; Djelimady Rumba; La Culebra; Jarabi; Eliades Tumbao 27; Dakari; Nima Diyala; A La Luna Yo Me Voy; Mariama; Para Los Pinares Se Va Montoro; Benséma; Guantanamera. (58:42)

**Personnel:** Eliades Ochoa, guitar, vocals; Kasse Mady Diabaté, vocals; Lassana Diabaté, balafon; Toumani Diabaté, kora; Bassekou Kouyate, ngoni, ngoni ba; Djelimady Tounkara, electric guitar; José Ángel Martínez, double bass; Jorge Maturé, congas, bongos, cowbell; Baba Sissoko, talking drum; Eglis Ochoa, maracas, guiro, chorus vocals; Fatoumata Diawara, chorus vocals; Osnel Oditi, chorus vocals, acoustic guitar; Luis Bargaza, chorus vocals; Jesús Bello Díaz, chorus vocals; Virgilio Valdés, chorus vocals, maracas; Alain A. Dragoni, trumpet; Lenis Lara, trumpet; Gabriel Fonseca, violin.

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## Teddy Wilson's Smooth Mastery

In the late 1930s Teddy Wilson was the most influential jazz pianist alive, spawning so many imitators his touch and style seemed to become as generic as Scotch Tape. In some ways he became lost in the magnitude of his impact, remembered today more as an adjunct player in the theater and legend of Billie Holiday than as a singular pianist.

Wilson came out of Fats Waller and Earl Hines to become the perfect transitional figure into early modern jazz piano. Maybe more important, the smooth, orderly flow of his solos suggested both refinement and virtuosity. Unlike Art Tatum, whose technique defied the known physics of the keyboard and insulated him from imitators for a generation, Wilson offered a model that many were eager and able to master.

**Teddy Wilson: Solo, Big Band** (Storyville 1088607; 78:19/77:09/72:12/77:46/64:06/69:24/67:55/67:32 ★★★★★) is an unorthodox but interesting career retrospective. Its eight CDs and one DVD cover nearly 50 years, but are silent on his defining partnerships, Benny Goodman and Holiday. Without access to those Columbia and Victor masters (easily available elsewhere), this leaves a big hole. So producer Anders Stefansen took an alternate route, gathering much fresh material from Wilson broadcasts, transcriptions and other sources. This is the way Wilson may have preferred: Part of him resented being thought of as a co-star in the careers of others.

The collection begins with Wilson's 1939 big band, represented in a sparkling "America Dances" broadcast from that August. Edger Sampson and Buster Harding gave Wilson a smart, swinging, but not especially distinctive book modeled on the work they were also doing for Chick Webb and Count Basie. But Wilson's solos are sleek, trim, horn-like flights, linked by gliding, Tatumesque arpeggios. And the reed section has Ben Webster, whose muscular tenor enriches five of the nine pieces.

This period also yielded definitive solo transcriptions for Keystone, which complement the commercial sessions done for Columbia. Wilson's solo style leans toward a more filled-out and formal approach. The lilting octaves and chords can grow a bit staid, and the two-to-four chorus routine (depending on tempo) becomes formulaic. But whatever the tempos, there is an intimate civility to his touch that generates a serene relaxation, a lower temperature, and none of the impulsive iconoclasm of Earl Hines, his main antecedent.

In the '40s Wilson worked with some



Teddy Wilson

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

wonderful sextets, two of which are heard in non-commercial transcription sessions. One has Edmond Hall, whose growling, Websterish clarinet conveyed an almost indecent passion next to Wilson's methodical poise—the cool center of the heat. Small band swing gets no better than this. The other with Charlie Shavers, Red Norvo and guitarist Remo Palmieri is closer in spirit to the Goodman sextet, with Shavers' exactitude in the clarinetist's role. Wilson's repertoire is by now a procession of swing era staples, some homages to the Goodman days ("China Boy"), others ("Lady Be Good," "I Got Rhythm") the basis of the new bebop, which he would never embrace.

The '50s sessions include several armed forces radio programs in which the Wilson Trio (with Jo Jones) host such guests as Coleman Hawkins, Dizzy Gillespie, J.J. Johnson and others. The performances are controlled but meaty, proving that Wilson often profits from stimulation. Occasional new tunes ("Love," "Strollin'") tend to be an odd mix of lounge keyboard and unexpected abandon.

Taken in quantity, Wilson's trios isolate him in a comfortably constricted format. By the last three CDs, which focus on 1979-'83, the touch and technique remain intact. Wilson never became a captive of decline, only of a basic rule of physics: all motion is relative. By standing still, he moved backwards. Much respected and honored, the orderly virtuosity no longer offered surprises and was increasingly characterized by critics as "cocktail" piano. But audiences interested in bearing witness to the most influential pianist of the swing era were never disappointed.

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

DB



## Ernestine Anderson Nightlife

HIGHNOTE 7213

★★★½

For this collection, the veteran singer Ernestine Anderson was recorded on three successive yearly visits to Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, 2008-'10. To call her a casual performer is to indulge in gross understatement. She's as comfortable and cocksure with her material and players as a rabbit in a briar patch. Anderson might not give much thought to interpreting lyrics, and she might slur a few words these days, but does she ever have a lot of fun. Just when you think she'll let intonation, fidelity to songs or sloppy phrasing get too far out of hand, she'll pull a string of blues stanzas out the air on a brisk tempo and it's clear she's quite in control.

The ballads—"Since I Fell For You" and "Only Trust Your Heart"—are sung for rhythmic content and phrasing possibilities rather than dramatic content. The latter is turned into a playful bossa. The former is a loose-as-a-goose slow blues, replete with improvised lyrics, cracked-voice yodels and exuberant barroom preaching by both Anderson and the great tenor saxophonist Houston Person. Their interplay on "Fell," another tantalizingly slow "All Blues" and a popping "Goin' To Chicago" amount to a textbook of singer/saxophonist blues interplay. The mutual prodding, commentary, rhythmic assurance and lyrical invention used to be coin-of-the-jazz realm but are now a treasured rarity.

There are some instrumental personnel variations here, but the important constants are pianist Lafayette Harris Jr. and Person. Harris could have been better miked, which is a pity because he's a thoughtful accompanist who clearly is there to enhance Anderson and the music. On "Love Being Here," Anderson tosses off an aside: "Tryin' to get my party thang together here." Did she ever.

—Kirk Silsbee

**Nightlife:** I Love Being Here With You; Since I Fell For You; All Blues; Goin' To Chicago Blues; Nightlife: Only Trust Your Heart; Falling In Love With Love; Never Make Your Move Too Soon. (50:27)

**Personnel:** Ernestine Anderson, vocals; Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Lafayette Harris Jr., piano; Chip Jackson, bass (4-7); Lonnie Plaxico, bass (1-3, 8); Willie Jones III, drums (3); Jerome Jennings, drums.

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





## Soft Machine *NDR Jazz Workshop*

CUNEIFORM 305/306

★★★★½

## Soft Machine Legacy *Live Adventures*

MOONJUNE 36

★★★

**N**DR Jazz Workshop is a treat because not only do we get to hear Soft Machine live but there's a DVD of the show from a May 1973 television broadcast. This is the first time the program has been released since it originally aired on German television. A treasure trove for Soft Machine fans, *NDR Jazz Workshop* stands in somewhat marked contrast to Soft Machine Legacy's *Live Adventures*, recorded in 2009 and featuring two former members of the famed 1970s British rock-jazz assemblage.

For those unfamiliar with Soft Machine, *NDR Jazz Workshop* gives a good view into their sound. The slinky 5/4 "Down The Road" and the subtly frenetic "Stumble" offer two contrasting approaches to their unique takes on arrangements and improvisation, one more trance-like, the other more aggressive and fanciful, bassist Roy Babbington and drummer John Marshall setting the rhythmic paces. "Riff" and "Riff II," on the other hand, sound more like early Weather Report, a la *I Sing The Body Electric* or *Sweetnighter*, Mike Ratledge's keyboard work piercing and definitive. Added bonuses: selected cuts with guest artists Gary Boyle on guitar, saxist Art Themen and former member Hugh Hopper on bass and tapeloops, along with the only known live recording of Hopper's "1983" as well as an encore combined improv-and-reprise of "Stumble." The *NDR Jazz Workshop* DVD gives us a superb look at the band and how they put their music together across the television stage, the filming gradual as opposed to jerky, with pristine visual clarity and excellent sound.

NDR mates Babbington and Marshall are back on Legacy, now joined by Theo Travis on tenor sax and flute and John Etheridge on guitar for two live shows from Austria and Germany. While "Has Riff II" was written by earlier mem-

bers as well as members here, it bears no resemblance to the "Riff"s from the NDR session, but instead tips us off to a side of the "legacy" that was (and is) more free-form, atmospheric. This dreamy-turned-Pink Floyd-ish beginning soon gives way to a more conventional fusion sound with "Grapehound," the pattern esthetic returning with Etheridge's guitar driving the song. The slower "The Nodder" plods along, despite some fiery playing from Travis inside the incessant, repeated note patterns, while "In The Back Room" sounds like the most dated cut here, another plodding beat a bit funky with sleepy horn/gui-

tar lines.

—John Ephraim

**NDR Jazz Workshop:** CD: Part I: Fanfare; All White; Link 1/Link 2; 37½; Link 3; Riff; Part II: Down The Road; Link 3a; Stanley Stamp's Gibbon Album; Chloe And The Pirates; Gesolreut; E.P.V.; Link 4; Stumble; One Across; Riff II. (78:45) DVD: Part I: Fanfare; All White; Link 1/Link 2; 37½; Link 3; Riff; Part II: Down The Road; Link 3a; Stanley Stamp's Gibbon Album; Chloe And The Pirates; Gesolreut; E.P.V.; Link 4; Stumble; One Across; Riff II. (104:59)

**Personnel:** Roy Babbington, bass guitar; Karl Jenkins, oboe, soprano sax, tenor sax, baritone sax, recorder, electric piano, piano; John Marshall, drums; Mike Ratledge, electric keyboards, organ; Gary Boyle, guitar (7-16, 7-16 and 18 on DVD); Art Themen, soprano sax, tenor sax (7-16, 7-16 and 18 on DVD); Hugh Hopper, bass, tapeloops.

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

**Live Adventures:** Has Riff II; Grapehound; The Nodder; In The Back Room; Song Of Aeolus; The Relegation Of Pluto/Transit; Gesolreut; Facelit; The Last Day. (58:10)

**Personnel:** John Etheridge, guitar; Theo Travis, tenor sax, flute; Roy Babbington, bass guitar; John Marshall, drums.

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

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## Trumpeter Sandke Challenges Jazz Narrative

In a single anecdote, Randall Sandke sums up the stupidity of stereotyping musicians on the basis of skin color. "There is a well-known story concerning an untalented black drummer who sat in with Roy Eldridge's group," Sandke writes in *Where The Dark And The Light Folks Meet* (The Scarecrow Press). "After one painful tune, the trumpeter called a break and said to his musicians (most of whom were white): 'We all got rhythm? Bullshit!'"

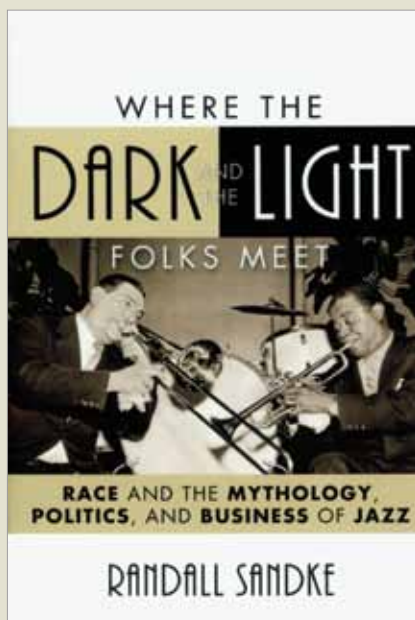
History bears the mark of the folks who chronicle it, and jazz is no different. The first part of Sandke's book ascribes an activist agenda to the white critics covering jazz in the 1930s. Writing for the American Communist Party newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, left-wing magazines like *The Nation*, and also *DownBeat*, these critics purposely traced the origins of jazz to Africa. They did so as a means to counterbalance centuries of racism that had exiled black America to society's margins.

Subtitled *Race and the Mythology, Politics, and Business of Jazz*, the book challenges the born-in-Africa jazz storyline. Sandke is white; he's also an accomplished trumpet player who appears on dozens of recordings. If he has a chip on his shoulder, it's not apparent. The book is less about black music and black musicians than their dubious public profiles that Sandke attributes to scholars and media critics.

While some aspects of jazz reflect indigenous African drumbeats, Sandke writes that its rapid evolution was the result of harmonic and melodic developments that looked beyond the scope of African music. These included the growing sophistication of the American popular song in the first half of the 20th century, and the use of advanced chord substitutions in mid-1940s bebop and modal scales beginning in the late 1950s.

Critics like John Hammond and Leonard Feather deserve credit for their attempts to demystify an emerging art form. But except for Feather, a pianist and composer, these folks knew as much about chord progressions as they did about, say, paleontology. Their perspective on jazz was often static. Many dismissed the work of Louis Armstrong in the late 1920s and Duke Ellington in the mid-1930s for incorporating mainstream influences that appealed to white listeners.

The most glaring oversight on the part of 20th century critics, Sandke writes, was to exaggerate the significance of rhythm. During the civil rights era, this myth found new voices to carry it forth in prominent black writers such as Amiri Baraka and Albert Murray. Much like their white predecessors, Sandke



writes, neither had studied music. Thus, jazz continued to be portrayed as rhythmic music of African heritage, rather than harmonically advanced African-American music. The critics who highlighted its African roots frequently singled out white musicians for their alleged failure to grasp the nuances of rhythm. "If we accept the common stereotype," Sandke writes, "it's hard to explain why Duke Ellington and Count Basie hired so many white drummers," including Louie Bellson, Buddy Rich and Ed Shaughnessy.

The book is hardly one-sided. It chronicles the long history of discrimination black musicians experienced, a practice extending from infamous bookings in the Jim Crow South to recording studios in major cities. It explores the sometimes-exploitive business relationships between white managers and celebrated 20th century musicians, notably Irving Mills and Ellington and also Joe Glaser and Armstrong.

But there are times when the narrative drifts too far from its thesis or is overwhelmed by the volume of data it attempts to distill. His criticism directed toward Wynton Marsalis is excessive. Marsalis' high-profile position with Jazz at Lincoln Center has zero impact on the pressing issues facing not just jazz, but the entire industry: illegal Internet file sharing; the dramatic decline in CD sales and live bookings.

Sandke argues that jazz's history of receiving inspiration and support from people of all backgrounds remains intact, noting the increasing numbers of jazz musicians and students from overseas. In the wake of this ongoing diversity, Sandke would like to see one aspect change. "For the future of the arts," he writes, "I can only hope that racial debates take a backseat to aesthetic concerns." **DB**

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



## Mike Pride's From Bacteria To Boys

*Betweenwhile*

AUM FIDELITY 065

★★★★

Alternating between melodicism, some infectious lyricism and rambunctious stretches of off-kilter jazz and free expressions, drummer Mike Pride's *From Bacteria To Boys* *Betweenwhile* keeps you guessing.

*From Bacteria To Boys* recalls experiments with early free-jazz a la Cecil Taylor and Paul Bley circa 1960. There's even a sense of Charles Mingus' churning swing here and there, like someone trying to punch their way out of a paper bag, but doing it rhythmically. But these guys are trying for something new and relevant. The most present soloist is pianist Alexis Marcelo, whose playing can be all over the place and all over the music. His rhythmic sense can be engaging, very listenable as with the sometimes scattered but fetching swinging blues "Rose." And his lyrical sense of beauty is on full display with the opener, a quiet trio number with a wayward theme titled "Kancamagus." We first hear altoist Darius Jones and a more pronounced Pride on drums with "Reese Witherspoon." Starting slow, the piece builds into a rock-ish jaunt with jangly chords from Marcelo and some pauses with Peter Bitenc's bass interlude before a return.

Unison lines weave their threads throughout, at times sounding almost like a jumble, but usually resulting in a release of swinging harmony and/or backbeat-driven r&b. "Bole: The Mouth Of What?" is like their kitchen sink of elements and "It Doesn't Stop" is not something you'd want to play when you first get out of rush-hour traffic, the song's repeated, insistent lines suggesting there's a skip or two or three on your CD. But then there's quiet and a gentle caress before things pick up again with another expressive solo from Pride ending the song. Not that it's all freneticism. "Emo Hope" is playful, perhaps the one you're likely to hum after things have finished.

—John Ephland

**Betweenwhile:** Kancamagus; Reese Witherspoon; Rose; It Doesn't Stop; Emo Hope; Bole: The Mouth Of What?; Inbetweenwhile; Surcharge; 12 Lines For Build; Kancamagus. (58:27)

**Personnel:** Darius Jones, alto sax; Alexis Marcelo, piano; Peter Bitenc, bass; Mike Pride, drums.

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





## Joey Sellers Solo Trombone *What The...?*

CIRCUMVENTION 083

★★★★

## Jeb Bishop Trio *2009*

BETTER ANIMAL RECORDINGS

★★★★

They claim the trombone cleaves closest to the human voice, and these two bone exponents demonstrate the truth of this with brilliant use of mutes and multiphonics.

Jeb Bishop is the most versatile, forthright and musical of trombonists. *2009* suggests an arbitrary meeting but proceedings betray clear compositional strategies. Jason Roebke's nervy skip and Frank Rosaly's clacking snare set up "900" before Bishop's blowsy entry. Bishop daubs rich, deliberate globs before smearing more wildly, giving way to remarkable poly-rhythmic display from Rosaly, a Shiva at the kit. Bishop's Teflon tone is most evident on the bruising closer "Round Two" but more intriguing is his masterful mute-work. An unconscious hint of "Stella By Starlight" drifts through the Duke Ellingtonian calm of "#3 (Cleo)" and Bishop reveals the rhapsodic propensities of cupping the bell and altering embouchure.

The stalking, unpredictable "Awomblyin'" deploys cup mute like a ventriloquist, suggesting another horn in the room. Tumbling, elastic bass from Roebke precedes a tight-yet-false ending heralding ambidexterity at the drumset before further thematic material. "Full English" is hilarious, with Bishop's ducklike diner chattering about nothing as he nibbles fried bread and black pudding. The quacking theme ends abruptly as several tracks here, spilling into a swinging blues.

With no side musicians to appease, new depths of candidness are possible in solo recordings, or what Joey Sellers refers to as his ideas about small form composition. Sellers sounds like a seasoned lone performer but apparently this experiment, "a whimsical romp through a mid-life crisis" resulted from a cancelled studio date for the Algonquin Quartet.

Sellers retains a high level of tonal control in all registers and throughout multiphonic forays. Sellers' sense of humor embraces the surreal, but is also dryly ironic as in the narrative "Apparent Sincerity," during which he postulates unfathomable feminine thought processes with parenthetical trombonism. "Squeaky Pedal Timpani Improv #3," one of 17 tracks not overdubbed, must have been hilarious to witness, Sellers simultaneously blowing trombone, eliciting cartoonish effects from kettle drum. "Tension/Release" could be more specific in its musical illustrations and the first didgeridoo-in-bell improv seems a bit pointless. There are still plenty of marvelous moments, even jazzy ones,

including multiphonic meddlings with "Monk's Dream."

—Michael Jackson

**What the...?:** Dakin Hall Blues; Apparent Sincerity; Piece For Foil Laden Trombone And Water Jug; Squeaky Pedal Timpani Improv #2; Monk's Dream; E Blues With Kazoo Mute; Improv With Didgeridoo In Bell #2; Skinny Widow Stomp; Chilled Green-Charles Bukowski; Water Music; Improv I; Tension/Release; Sans Tuning Slide; Improv With Didgeridoo In Bell #1; Squeaky Pedal Timpani Improv #1; Overdub Didgeridoo; Early Evening Algebra-Charles Simic; Improv 2 From Second Session; Overdub Microtone Triads; Squeaky Pedal Timpani Improv #3; Improv Il-Caveman Reverb; Stompin' At The Savoy. (40:33)

**Personnel:** Joey Sellers, trombone, water jug, timpani, water bowl, poetry and didgeridoo.

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

**2009:** 900; Dusk; Jacket Weather; #3 (Cleo); Awomblyin'; 11AM Verti Marte; Full English; The Elliptical Blues; Before And After; The Lateness Of The Hour; Round Two. (63:64)

**Personnel:** Jeb Bishop, trombone; Jason Roebke, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums.

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

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# Arranging For Big Band Brass Section

A trumpet is not a saxophone. I must have heard that dozens of times as a young writer when I would test the limits of trumpeters' range, endurance and technical prowess. Come to think of it, I still hear that, or variations of it, because I do like to push the limits a bit in my writing. And while I think that being musically adventurous is generally a good thing, it is always good to know the challenges these musicians face as they strive to make music out of a bunch of brass tubes.

I like to know my players, who I am writing for and what their strengths and weakness are. If you are lucky enough to have Wayne Bergeron and Andy Martin as the lead players in your brass section, as I do, you will find yourself with a fair amount of latitude. But short of that, here are a few comments. (Music examples are in concert pitch).

## Trumpet Examples

Trumpet playing is a physical endeavor, so be kind. They are not a string section, so don't treat 'em that way. Pick your spots and when the trumpets do come in, their impact will be even more effective.

Here are a few examples of trumpet section passages, in this case taken from "That's How We Roll," the title track from the latest Big Phat Band CD on Telarc, published by Alfred Publishing.

Example 1



**Example 1 (Bars 41-43):** All four trumpets are in a prime unison in their middle register, a strong sound. They split into harmony for the last note, and you can see a half step in the voicing, which works well and gives a little grind in the E7 (#9, #5) chord.

Example 2



**Example 2 (Bars 194-197):** This is the shout chorus of the chart, and the trumpets are in a high powerful register, with the 4th trumpet doubling the 1st an octave lower. This doubling gives the melody a strong presence. In bar 197 the trumpets are in a tight, closed position, which is good for faster, more mobile passages. Also note that the trumpets are playing the upper partials of the chords in bar 194, beat 2.5 (the #9, 13th particularly), which give the voicing a rich character.

Example 3



Example 3 (Bar 220):

Note how the 1st trumpet lays out until the punch at the end of the bar. This gives him a chance to set for the higher note, and the other three trumpets lend plenty of strength to the unison line.

Example 4



**Example 4 (Bars 225, 226):** These are the last two bars of the chart, and the most powerful trumpet voicings in the song. In the last note the lower three trumpets are dropped down an inversion,

which keeps the 2nd trumpet from being too high, but also gives a nice piece of aural real estate for the high A (in the 1st trumpet) to ring out.

## Trombone Examples

Example 5



**Example 5 (Bars 28-30):** The trombone section is voiced in closed position in bars 29 and 30. You can see that the bass trombone starts out playing with the acoustic bass in bar 28 and joins the section in bar 29 filling out the chords on an inner part.

Example 6



**Example 6 (Bars 91-93):** Other times the bass trombone plays the roots, especially when you want more weight to the ensemble sound.

Example 7



**Example 7 (Bars 194-197):** The trombones are voiced in a higher position during the shout chorus, which gives the ensemble a bright, mobile sound. The bass trombone here is not playing roots, but the all-important 7th in the chord.

Example 8



**Example 8 (Bars 188-189):** The trombones are in octaves here, with the bass trombone on his own in the lower register. The bass trombone, with its big sound, can easily balance against the other three trombones in the upper register.

Example 9



**Example 9 (Bars 225-226):** In the last two powerfully voiced chords, you can see a large gap between the



3rd and 4th trombones. (Although in this case the baritone sax fills in space in that register.) As the final note in the chart, the bass trombone on the low root gives the chord the power it needs. The rest of the section fills out on important chord tones, the 5th (the melody in this case) the #9 and the ♭7th.

Since this chart was written in an energetic shuffle feel, there are no real examples of more sustained and subtle brass writing. To take a quick look at that style, here is an example from another song, “Everlasting,” from *That’s How We Roll*.

**Example 10**

**Example 10 (Bars 43–46):** Check out the counterpoint between three flugelhorns and three trombones in bucket mutes in the B♭9 chord (bar 45), and note the half-step interval in the trombone section (the G and A♭). This adds a bit of mystery to the effect of the chord.

**Example 11**

**Example 11 (Bars 65–69):** This is a colorful-sounding ensemble passage, with three flugelhorns, a trumpet with harmon mute and open trombones. The root is also doubled by a bass clarinet.

Of course, looking at music is one thing, and hearing it is an entirely different thing. To hear what these examples sound like, we are offering a free download of this track! Just go to <http://topsp.in/PJPpy> for your free download of “That’s How We Roll.” Listen to the track as you look at each example and strive to hear the nuance in the voicings. Decide what you like (also what you don’t), and you will start to develop your own style and sound in your brass writing. Good luck!

DB

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## Trumpet Players & Solid Fundamentals

### *The First Steps To Avoid Fatigue, Increase Range & Improve Sound*

“My chops are shot” is a frequent statement uttered by many trumpet players. This problem is most pervasive among younger musicians who are still in an early phase of embouchure development. Teachers and professional players have various methods of dealing with this problem.

The art of playing the trumpet with the highest level of physical efficiency is elusive. Watching our most highly trained professional athletes is a terrific example of how to accomplish challenging physical tasks while appearing completely relaxed. In order to prevent premature fatigue, the first issue we must address is to examine how much energy is being wasted because of undue tension. Solid attention to fundamentals must be observed 100 percent of the time you are playing. Wynton Marsalis is a superb example of efficient and proper trumpet playing. Simply watching a video of him speaks volumes.

Proper hand position and posture when holding the trumpet seems like it should be the simplest task in the world. However, seeing hundreds of young trumpeters in clinics, festivals and my own studio, I have found this not to be true. There are few slight variations that are acceptable.

The left hand is primarily used to support the weight of the horn and to manipulate the first and third valve slides. Put your thumb in the saddle on the first valve, and place either two or three fingers above and one or two beneath the third valve slide (three up and one down, or two up and two down). Your left arm should be at approximately 45 degrees. It is very important that the left hand is positioned so the angle of the trumpet doesn't cause you to create an awkward angle to blow into the mouthpiece. If the angle of the horn is too high, the tendency is to dig into the upper lip, which causes problems with vibration.

The right hand is not used to support the weight of the trumpet. Improper position of the right hand creates a litany of problems. Rest your thumb in a gentle, relaxed position between the first and second valves just beneath the lead pipe. Your arm should be at approximately a 45-degree angle with the fingers slightly curved and the fingertips—not the knuckle—resting directly on top of the valves. The hook or ring on the top of the lead pipe is to place your pinky finger in to help hold the horn when changing mutes, turning pages and occasionally using the plunger mute. Otherwise, it should generally not be used. It is not an octave key. Placing your pinky there creates difficulty in manipulation of the valves, especially the third valve. It also causes the player to use too much pressure and dig in to the upper lip. In doing so, vibration becomes difficult because the upper lip gets trapped. There are players who do put their pinky in the hook or ring and are highly successful. However, they do not generally use the device to put more pressure on their chops.

Whether standing or sitting, proper posture is a must. A full-length mirror is an excellent tool of self examination. To achieve a comfortable, relaxed posture, set the instrument aside. Sit or stand up straight and dangle your arms loosely. Take several deep breaths and exhale slowly. Pick up your instrument, take a deep breath and play an F concert at a nice easy volume. It should feel like you are letting the air from your body pass through the trumpet and into the room. Arms are at about a 45 degree angle. If you were to draw a line from elbow to elbow, you'd have a nice equilateral triangle. The only tension on your body is where your lips buzz and the firmness of your abdomen. Arms and shoulders are relaxed, legs are not tense.



Kirk Garrison

Improper tuning of your instrument can be another cause of premature fatigue. How often has a student come to a lesson with their tuning slide far enough out to move the pitch down at least one half step, or too far in? If so, the student has become a victim of the tuning slide game. The cause is looking at the tuner while playing your tuning note. No matter how ugly the sound gets, the student tries to stop the needle at zero without moving the tuning slide. By tuning without moving the slide to the correct position, virtually every note you play will be a physical battle with intonation that you cannot win.

The proper way to tune is to first achieve a clear, comfortable, open sound. Using an F concert, take a relaxed full breath and play at an easy volume. Do not look at the tuner. Instead, listen to your sound. Don't worry about pitch yet, just try for as pretty sound as you can make while feeling comfortable. Once you have achieved a good, relaxed sound, look at the tuner. The first reading you see is where the horn plays. Adjust your slide and try again without looking. Again, after the pretty sound is achieved, take a look and see where you are. Once the horn is played where it should be, you are no longer fighting every note and will achieve greater endurance, range and a more beautiful sound.

DB

JAZZ TRUMPETER KIRK GARRISON IS AN ACTIVE MUSICIAN, COMPOSER/ARRANGER AND CLINICIAN RESIDING IN THE CHICAGO AREA. HE IS AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR AT DEPAUL AND CONCORDIA UNIVERSITIES AND IS SPONSORED BY DENIS WICK MOUTHPIECES AND MUTES/DANSR USA. FOR CLINICIAN INFORMATION PLEASE EMAIL: KIRKGARRISON@ATT.NET.

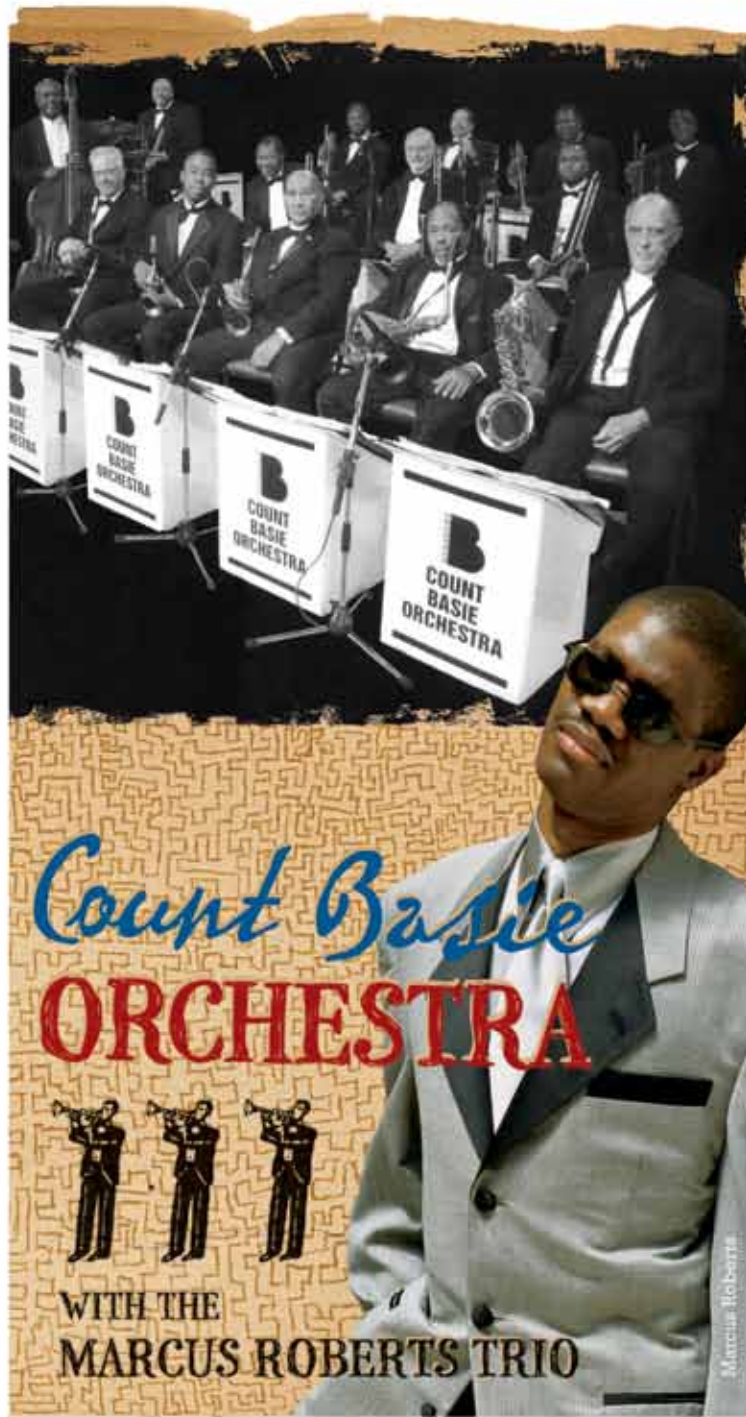




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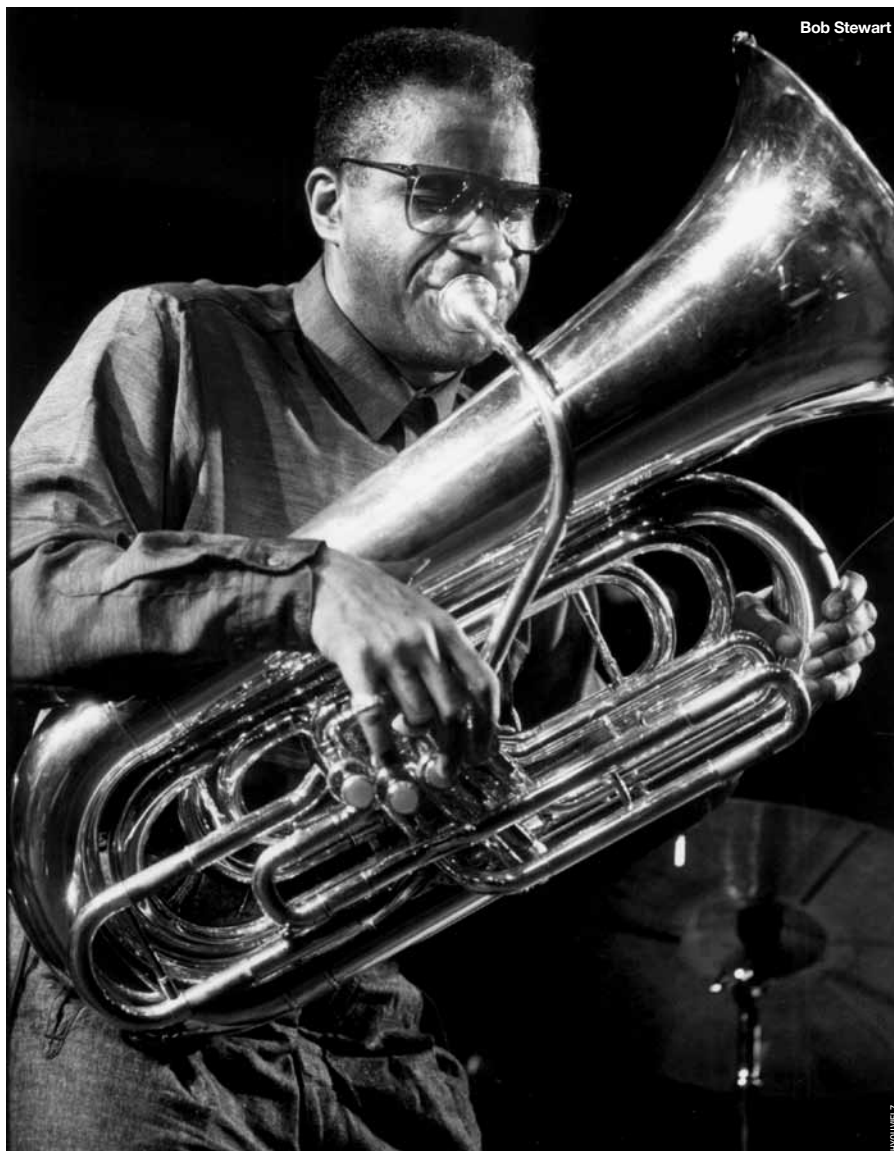
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Bob Stewart

## Bob Stewart's Tuba Solo On 'Surinam'

You don't hear tuba in jazz much these days, and when it does appear it's usually in a supportive role. On his 1988 JMT album *First Line* (reissued on Winter & Winter) Bob Stewart gives his tuba a more diverse role, as well as some solo spots, including a 62-bar solo on "Surinam."

This song is a calypso, felt in cut time (in "2"). Everyone but the drummer drops out as Stewart's solo commences. Stewart keeps the danceability of the groove in his solo by basing all his ideas off of the same rhythms he had been using for some of his earlier supportive

lines. The eighth notes of the measure are divided into 3-3-2, with attacks occurring on the one, "and" of two and four. You can see this pattern recur throughout his solo.

One of the main variations of this idea that Stewart employs is emphasizing offbeats. He alludes to this in measure 8, where after playing the downbeat, Stewart plays solely upbeats for the remainder of the bar. He develops this motif further in the string of measures from 16 through 21, where Stewart plays the majority of his notes on upbeats, with the few strong beats he plays generally landing on the one, though in



1:01 F C7 C7 F F C7

8 C7 F F C7 C7 F F

15 C7 C7 F F C7 C7

21 F F C7

28 F C7 C7

34 F F C7 C7 F F

40 C7 C7 F F C7 C7

46 F F C7 C7 F F C7

53 C7 F C7

58 F

measures 18 and 21 he doesn't even hit the one, creating a heavy syncopation.

Another variation is displacing the 3-3-2 rhythm a quarter note and starting it on the second beat (playing on two, "and" of three and one). Stewart incorporates this in measures 10, 47 and 51. It's a clever variation, as now instead of the first note being on the downbeat, it's the last note that lands on the one, making the rhythm resolve quite strongly.

At bar 32 Stewart is still playing off the original motif, but now fills in some of the eighth notes to make it busier (and funkier). The accents are still on the one, "and" of two and four, but the added eighths (on two, "and" of three and "and" of four) fill some space and provide more of a push. In fact this section, through measure 46, would also make a

great bass line. Notice also how Stewart has expanded the range of his lines here, jumping over an octave in the beginning of each measure.

After this intense section, Stewart returns to the original isorhythm, with some variation, until measure 55, where he revisits playing just the root of the V chord toward the middle of the measure, breaking the form as he did back in bars 23 through 29. Both of these sections end with Stewart walking down the scale from the V back to the I. In the earlier instance, Stewart used this to signal the guitar to enter. Now it's used to let the band know his solo is drawing to an end. **DB**

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As you pull the Lynx out of the case, your eyes are first drawn to the sleek and futuristic-looking braces that join the lead pipe to the bell. The special shape of the brace and the limited contact points to the horn are designed to be superior to the traditional “S” bracing by promoting freer vibration throughout the range of the horn. The lead pipe is fitted with a custom heavy wall receiver. This receiver helps to deliver a focused tone and is very sturdy to ensure an optimum fit of the mouthpiece with little or no change over time. The valves on the horn feel great. The monel piston valves are hand-lapped and then machine-lapped and are kept together with their specific casing from the beginning of the manufacturing process. The silver-plated

horn I played was beautifully detailed, engraved and topped off with distinctive stone valve-button tops.

The new brace design, lightweight one-piece bell and medium-large bore all combine to deliver a huge sound from a great-responding, open-blowing horn. I couldn't believe the big, brilliant sound from the first few notes I played on the horn. I was amazed at its responsiveness and the smooth, even feeling it provided from top to bottom. The intonation and slotting of notes on the horn was excellent without causing the horn to feel rigid. I was just as comfortable producing the nuanced playing required for a jazz solo as I was playing the lead trumpet lines from some of my favorite big band charts. I was most blown away by how much punch the horn was capable of providing when I really leaned into it. The initial extreme brilliance of the horn



led me to believe that the sound might spread as I gave it more air and extended the range. I was certainly mistaken and I could not believe how the horn retained its full, centered sound and focused projection. This horn will certainly take as much as you can give it.

I was very impressed with the sound from the Lynx, and I could easily picture myself using the horn in any of the jazz/pop scenarios that I perform in. The trumpet designers at Cannonball credit this characteristic ring and resonance to the special annealing process that is applied several times to each of their trumpets. The horn's unique sizzle comes from the angle of the

bell flare, which contributes to the intonation, ring, resonance and projection.

Cannonball is certainly earning the growing numbers of professional artists that are endorsing its horns. The Lynx is a fine example of a product from a budding instrument manufacturer that has its priorities in order. They seem to understand the importance of looking back and respecting the hand-crafted tradition of instrument production while also looking forward by challenging and modifying some of those traditions in order to create horns that offer a different sound and yet feel great. —Mike Pavlik

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

## Yamaha Xeno Trumpet, Z Series Trombone *High-Class Pro Brass*

Yamaha is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its Xeno line with the American debut of the limited edition YTR-8335RS20TH professional trumpet. The new Xeno trumpet features a reverse tuning slide, yellow brass bell and silver-plated finish for an optimal level of resistance with a free-blowing feel. Gold-plated finger buttons, top valve caps along with a gold-plated 16C4 Yamaha mouthpiece provide this trumpet with an elegant appearance. Additionally, the accompanying TRC-20TH double trumpet case offers a classic look.

Suitable for any performing situation, including the concert hall, recording studio or intimate jazz club, the 20th anniversary Xeno trumpet provides just the right amount of resistance, allow-



ing smooth pitch transition without overblowing. Yamaha's corrosion-resistant monel pistons enhance the valve action and long-term precise fit. Hand-lapping pistons and slides ensure a perfect fit and seal between the pistons and casing or slide parts. Such a fit helps to achieve smooth airflow and velvety action while improving the response and intonation of the instrument.

Yamaha has also released the YSL-897Z tenor trombone, which replaces the YSL-697Z. Designed

with jazz trombonists Andy Martin and Al Kay, the YSL-897Z features two interchangeable leadpipes, giving players the flexibility to cover different styles and offering a range of tonal colors. With its compact, well-centered tone and quick response, the trombone is suitable for all types of performance situations. The new trombone has the same small double bore as the 697Z and features an art deco design with lots of visual aesthetics.

Long-lasting nickel-silver tubular braces contribute to the sta-

bility of the slide and enhance slide action. Hand-lapped slides ensure a strong seal between the slide parts. Another distinct feature is a counterweight balancer located at the back of the instrument.

“The YSL-897Z records beautifully and has a great projection for solos,” said Roger Eaton, director of marketing for Yamaha's Band and Orchestral Division. “It is truly an exciting new voice for jazz and commercial trombonists.”

—Bruce Gibson

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



## Jupiter 516L Pocket Trumpet

### Well-Crafted Mobility

In the past, my impressions of, and experiences with, horns of this nature usually bordered on humorous and often ended with the ridiculous. Every one that I ever tried was a mere shadow of the instrument it was trying to emulate. But in this day and age of portability and mobility, a pocket trumpet, if well crafted, can serve a very useful purpose, especially in a marching band or with a jazz or pop ensemble that travels frequently.

For marching, a pocket trumpet offers a much lighter and well-balanced alternative to the standard B-flat trumpet. It just feels better to march with and play simultaneously. It's also a less expensive instrument to replace in the rough-and-tumble world of executing formations on a football field. Another benefit of the pocket trumpet is for the commercial band doubler—for that rhythm section player who needs a decent horn for a few tunes during the evening and needs something that plays well and doesn't take up a lot of room on the bus. And lastly, there is the traveling musician. You won't ever have a problem stowing a pocket trumpet

in an overhead luggage compartment. That has to be not only a consideration, but a real motivation to start taking the quality production of the pocket trumpet more seriously than in the past—which brings me to the real point of this review.

When I put this horn up to my chops and played the first note, I was expecting an airy, un-centered type of response. I had heard of Jupiter horns before but had never played a standard trumpet of theirs, let alone their pocket trumpet. What I felt and heard surprised me. The notes in the staff were very well centered and the pitch seemed fairly solid. Playing scales up and down the horn in the staff seemed effortless, and the horn responded well as I increased the speed of the scales. All the notes spoke well, and it had a nice warm and tightly slotted feel to it. I then wanted to see how the overtone series slotted with some slurs from the low C just below the staff to the high C above the staff. I proceeded to play each harmonic series chromatically from low C to middle G. Each note in the series spoke well, even in the upper partials, indicating to me a horn with nice, tight compression.

I then proceeded to the area that always seems to be the downfall of all “novelty” or low-end trumpets: the dreaded upper register. I can always tell when a horn is not going to respond up there. The high E-flat and E are always going to be a little airy and take a lot more effort to play. While not being a horn that I would choose to play four hours of lead trumpet in a big band on, the upper register was surprisingly more responsive than I ever imagined it would be. The notes from high C to F-sharp were very clear and responsive. When getting up to the G, I found the sound started to spread a little. It still had some sizzle to it, but not like the F and F-sharp. It could have just been my impression, but it just seemed like I had to work harder than I should have to in order to get it to jump out of the end of the horn.

The Jupiter 516L is an updated version of the company's 416 pocket trumpet. It features a .460-inch bore, a 4.8-inch bell, stainless steel pistons and lacquered brass finish



(also available in silver and black lacquer finishes). It uses a standard trumpet mouthpiece and carries an MSRP of \$985.

The Jupiter 516L pocket trumpet seems to be a fairly well put-together horn. It plays evenly and the intonation on this particular horn felt very nice. I would recommend this horn, especially as I said before, for a great alternative to standard trumpets on the marching band field. It gives a player the feel of an old-time cornet but with the projection and response of a trumpet.

—Mike Cichowicz

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

MIKE CICHOWICZ IS A FORMER LEAD TRUMPETER WITH TOWER OF POWER AND ROD STEWART. A CHICAGO-BASED ARTIST, HE CURRENTLY PERFORMS WITH SEVERAL WORKING BANDS, INCLUDING TRIBUTOSAURUS.

## Denis Wick Fiber Mute

### Pro Quality At Student Prices

Dansr has introduced the Fiber Mute, an entry-level straight mute from Denis Wick Products with a professional-quality sound.

“There has only been a small amount of student-level straight mutes available in the industry for a very long time, and there's not much quality out there,” said trumpeter Kirk Garrison, a Denis Wick artist. “So we had the idea to introduce a entry-level straight mute at a good price. It's lightweight but real durable, and if you compare it to one of our expensive professional mutes, there's not that much difference.”

Made from a high-quality fiber

with a sealed wooden bottom with no visible seams, the design took several years to perfect, according to Michael Skinner, president of Dansr. “The design is all Denis' concept,” Skinner said. “Denis is all about good quality. He's a real stickler for what has to go into a mute to make it do what it's supposed to do. It's not how quiet can the trumpet play, it's how beautiful the trumpet can sound at that level.”

The trumpet model Fiber Mute retails for \$15.99, and the trombone model is priced at \$20.99—comparable to the street price of other student straight mutes on the market.

The black-colored mutes come in

a zip-style re-sealable display bag with no staples, and they ship with a registration card for parents to fill out to help keep them involved with the Wick product line as the student progresses.

“As far as the straight mute sound is concerned, this is happening,” Garrison said, noting how well they hold up to student abuse. “I like its slightly darker sound. And it's in tune. They took a little extra time when they designed the corks, so they're contoured to fit around the end of the mute and won't chip or fall off during the first week of use.”

—Ed Enright

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





Audrey Morrison and students

### Chicago-Area Classical Academy Makes Time For Jazz Classes

About 80 years ago in the northern Chicago suburb of Winnetka, Ill., David Dushkin started a classical music school in a farmhouse. He held on to the belief that training in the art should be at a low cost, and not elitist, as that school became the Music Institute of Chicago. Currently, about 5,000 students across the Chicago area take courses at different institute locations. Last September, it expanded its programming further through offering jazz education.

"As time went on, there was a reckoning that jazz is not only a cultural treasure for the United States, but embedded in what we call classical music," said school president Mark George. "From the early stages of George Gershwin all the way through modern composers who pick and choose. To be a pro musician today means you have to be fluent in many genres."

So far, about 50 students are enrolled in the Music Institute's jazz courses, though George said that he expects the program to grow quickly because of the school's reputation and its ongoing outreach efforts. Along with its traditional base in the suburbs, the institute is partnering with schools and churches in Chicago's South and West Side neighborhoods. Audrey Morrison, director of jazz studies at the Music Institute, has been particularly active in this effort.

"Integration of different cultures into the Music Institute is the future of the school," Morrison said. "The school has been predominantly Caucasian and Asian. With jazz, blues and Latin music, I see that complexion changing."

Jazz is taught at the institute in much of the same way as its classical program: small, sometimes one-on-one, lessons with a prominent teacher. The faculty includes percussionist Ernie

Adams and trumpeter Art Davis, as well as Morrison, who plays trombone. Marcus Roberts also performed at the school last fall as a guest artist. While teaching music theory also cuts across different forms of music, the method of teaching jazz takes some adjustment.

"I'm a proponent of teaching jazz as an oral tradition," Morrison said. "Some of our students have been surprised that they're learning without written music—playing by ear, listening to tunes from recordings. Understanding that groove is the heart and soul of music. We get students singing, do the scat syllables, which they're shy to do at first. They start learning vocabulary through time feel, learning musical phrases, riffs, scales, arpeggios within that time feel."

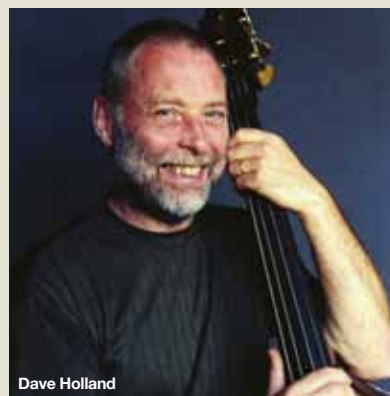
George adds that when students attend the Music Institute, they can use the lessons to support their playing in their school ensembles.

"This is the place where students can come in and we can incubate them," George said. "And make them into young musicians with confidence."

Along with providing that training, the Music Institute jazz program's ensembles perform at their own school buildings and at different community centers throughout Chicago and the suburbs. The school also has plans to start a weeklong jazz camp in the summer.

"When we were growing up, we had garage bands," Morrison said. "This is sort of like the new garage band. We're pulling students together from different areas who wouldn't be playing together. It's a wonderful way for students to learn about developing audiences for their music, and for a community to be served through their music."

—Aaron Cohen



Dave Holland

**Holland Week:** Dave Holland will begin hosting an annual weeklong residency at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music beginning in the fall. The residency will include master classes and workshops with students focusing on improvisation, composition and performance. It will culminate in a concert featuring Holland's music performed by two student jazz groups from the school.

Details: [music.miami.edu](http://music.miami.edu)

**TCU In Cuba:** The Texas Christian University Jazz Ensemble, directed by Curt Wilson, traveled to Cuba in December to play at the Havana International Jazz Festival. Along with performing at the event, the group rehearsed with members of Cuba's National Band and met with students at Havana's Conservatorio Municipal de Musica. Details: [tcu.edu](http://tcu.edu)

**Mediterranean Emphasis:** Javier Limón has been appointed as a visiting professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston during 2011–12. Limón will concentrate his efforts on teaching Mediterranean music and other styles rooted in the cultures of the Mediterranean rim. Details: [berklee.edu](http://berklee.edu)

**Bad Plus @ Duke:** Duke Performances has commissioned The Bad Plus to create a reappraisal and rearrangement of Igor Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring*. The trio will perform the piece on March 26 at the Durham, N.C., university's Reynolds Theater. The Bad Plus has also been working with Duke graduate student composers and has engaged in artists-in-residence activities both on campus and in the community. The trio's engagement with Duke graduate composition students centers on the group's reading, performing and critiquing students' original work. Details: [duke.edu](http://duke.edu)

**Haynes in Jersey:** The Roy Haynes Fountain of Youth Band will perform at William Paterson University's Jazz Room series at its Wayne, N.J., campus on March 26.

Details: [wpunj.edu](http://wpunj.edu)



Terri Lyne  
Carrington

Berklee Alumna '83



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Berklee  
college of  
music

[www.berklee.edu/downbeat](http://www.berklee.edu/downbeat)

# Musicians' Gear Guide

## Best of The NAMM Show 2011

The NAMM Show brings together the entire musical instruments industry for four days of product showcases, business-to-business marketing, inventory ordering and plenty of joyful noise every winter. This year's event, held Jan. 13–16 at the Anaheim Convention Center, saw the release of thousands of new instruments and audio equipment—some of which shows promise to become essential gear for players at all levels.

### BAND AND ORCHESTRA

#### Sax Jubilee

Selmer Paris launched its Jubilee line of Series II and Series III saxophones in celebration of the company's 125th anniversary. Also new from Selmer was the Leblanc Bliss line of student upgrade clarinets. **More info:** [conn-selmer.com](http://conn-selmer.com)

#### {1} Top Brass

Schilke is now shipping its high-end 1040 FL flugelhorn, which was shown only as a prototype last year. The company's new ST30 small-bore tenor trombone offers pros lots of tonal options by providing a choice of different bell and slide materials, in addition to three interchangeable lead pipes.

**More info:** [schilkemusic.com](http://schilkemusic.com)

#### {2} Bravo, Bravo

P. Mauriat showed its Le Bravo 200 saxophone, an intermediate horn designed for hobbyists who want professional features but don't want to spend a ridiculous amount of money. **More info:** [pmauriatmusic.com](http://pmauriatmusic.com)

#### Keilwerth's Back

Buffet Crampon has brought the Keilwerth brand back to the U.S. pro saxophone market, with a lot of attention being paid to its Vintage series. **More info:** [buffetcrampon.fr](http://buffetcrampon.fr)

#### Goin' Pro

Antigua turned heads with its Pro-One series of alto and tenor saxophones, which feature superior design and a minimum of bling.

**More info:** [antiguawinds.com](http://antiguawinds.com)

#### {3} Horn Sections

Yamaha rolled out three new pro horn lines: the Custom Z soprano saxophone, the Xeno 20th-anniversary trumpet and the 897Z tenor trombone. Each spent a long time in the development stage as the company consulted with top artists for input on their design.

**More info:** [yamaha.com](http://yamaha.com)



#### Sax Line Complete

Eastman Music added soprano and baritone models to its line of professional saxophones, available in black nickel and gold lacquer.

**More info:** [eastmanmusiccompany.com](http://eastmanmusiccompany.com)

#### Reeds On Reserve

Rico had a new offering with its Reserve Classic alto saxophone reeds, which have been winning over top classical saxophonist in large numbers with their dense cut and overall consistency from reed to reed. **More info:** [ricoreeds.com](http://ricoreeds.com)

#### {4} Sax Setup

In addition to the long-awaited Vandoren V16 mouthpiece for baritone saxophone, Dansr announced the availability of Vandoren V12 reeds for tenor saxophone as well as the Denis Wick Fiber Mute, a student straight mute with a professional sound. **More info:** [dansr.com](http://dansr.com)

#### {5} Getz Piece Blueprint

The Stan Getz Legend series tenor saxophone mouthpiece is an exact replication of the mouthpiece Getz played—including the teeth

marks—with the dynamics improved. The pieces were developed through a collaboration between RS Berkeley, Drake Mouthpieces and Beverly Getz, Stan's daughter.

**More info:** [drakemouthpieces.com](http://drakemouthpieces.com)

#### {6} Midnight Blues

Hohner has introduced the Blue Midnight harmonica, named after a blues instrumental by Little Walter Jacobs. Available in seven keys, the 10-hole diatonic harp features a Chicago-style tuning. **More info:** [hohnerusa.com](http://hohnerusa.com)



# PRO AUDIO

## [1] Computer Mics

Think of the Meteor from Samson as your all-purpose computer mic. Made for Skype, iChat, voice-recognition software and recording, the Meteor has a fold-back tripod-leg design for ideal desktop positioning. With no drivers, it operates straight out of the box and is compatible with most computer-based digital audio software.

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

A handheld quality condenser mic for iDevices, the iRig Mic from IK Multimedia is suitable for most every application—singers, composers on the move, instruments, live gigs and field recording. It features a unidirectional electret-condenser microphone capsule, three-level gain switch and rugged metal body. More info: [ikmultimedia.com](http://ikmultimedia.com)

CAD's technologically advanced line of multipurpose USB microphones grew with the U9 MiniMic. The U9 plugs directly into computers with a headphone out for playback monitoring. It features an omnidirectional condenser capsule that swivels 180 degrees for convenient positioning and an LED to indicate when the mic is active.

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

## [3] Analog Workhorse

The Workhorse from Radial is an analog recording interface that serves as a plug-and-play platform for eight 500 series modules, with the addition of a built-in mixer. Users can mix and match pre-amps, EQs and compressors to create ultra-customized channel strips.

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

## [4] Well-Connected

The ultimate MIDI interface, iConnectMIDI from iConnectivity offers plug-and-play capability between any MIDI controller device and iDevice, including iPad, iPhone and iPod touch. The unit also takes advantage of multiple new CoreMIDI music apps that let users play, record and jam. It has two mini USB ports, two in and two out MIDI DIN ports, and a USB host port. More info: [iconnectivity.com](http://iconnectivity.com)

## Portable P.A.

Fishman continued to reinvent the portable P.A. concept with its Loudbox Mini. Weighing 20 pounds, the unit offers up to 60 watts of sound and lists for \$459.95—suitable for



[1]



[3]



[2]



[6]



[5]



[4]



[7]

solo acoustic coffeehouse and club performers. The instrument channel has a three-band EQ, reverb, dual-function chorus and phase switch for fighting feedback.

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

## [5] Clear Channels

With PGX, Shure unveiled its first digital wireless microphone system. It combines 24-bit, 96kHz digital audio with extended battery life and the 900 MHz band. This keeps users from having to deal with TV channel allocations that change

depending on the city.

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

## [6] Cloud 9

Avid's new Pro Tools Version 9 offers users the choice of working with Avid audio interfaces, third-party audio interfaces or no hardware at all when using the built-in audio capabilities of a Mac or PC. New support for the Avid Eucon open Ethernet protocol enables musicians to expand control surface options to include Avid's Artist series and Pro series audio

consoles and controllers.

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

## [7] Handheld High-Def

Zoom's new Q3HD combines the company's audio recording technology with 1080p HD video. The handheld unit uses the same microphone capsules as Zoom's H4n recorder, configured in a 120-degree X/Y pattern. Setting audio levels is easy using the on-board level meters and mic gain switch with auto gain control.

More info: [zoom.co.jp](http://zoom.co.jp)

## GUITARS

### [1] Vintage Blues

Fender's G-DEC 3 Thirty practice amp is now available in three genre-specific FSR (factory special run) versions tailor-made for blues, metal and country guitarists. The G-DEC 3 Thirty Blues is a vintage-style amp that features a classic Fender look, blonde vinyl covering and chrome corners evoking an early 1960s feel. Onboard CD-quality backing track loops by dozens of top musicians give a special nod to the blues, with other tracks in various vintage jazz, r&b and soul styles and 100 tone presets appropriate to these styles. Fender is celebrating the 60th anniversary of its Telecaster and Precision Bass with two collectible models. **More info:** [fender.com](http://fender.com)

### [2] Salute to 35

To commemorate its 35th anniversary, Seymour Duncan rolled out its limited-edition 35th Anniversary JB/Jazz pickups. The pickups will be available only during 2011 and are built with long legs, butyrate bobbins and single-conductor cable, which was used in the early production of the JB/Jazz pickups. The company also unveiled the Liberator, a solderless pickup-change system for guitar and bass. **More info:** [seymourduncan.com](http://seymourduncan.com)

### [3] Versatile Vibes

D'Addario launched its Zyex Bass Strings. The strings are configured from a synthetic material and are versatile for all sorts of musical styles from classical to modern to jazz. The Zyex strings offer a warm, rich tone. **More info:** [daddario.com](http://daddario.com)

### Let it Slide

Never lose your slide again with Planet Waves' new D-Slyde. The handmade glass guitar slide features an adhesive backing so it can attach to the back of a guitar's headstock, a mic stand or an amp. MSRP: \$14.99. **More info:** [planetwaves.com](http://planetwaves.com)

### Jazz Bodies

Ibanez broadened its Artcore guitar series with two hollow bodies featuring all-maple bodies, CH-M mini humbuckers and Sure Grip III control knobs. **More info:** [ibanez.com](http://ibanez.com)

### Bootsy's Bass

Show your inner Bootsy with Warwick's latest signatures, the Bootsy Collins Artist Series. These basses

are based around the shape, look and tone on Collins' signature Infinity model. They feature a solid alder body splashed with either orange or black stars on top of a high polish finish. **More info:** [warwickbasses.com](http://warwickbasses.com)

### Safe & Sound

Gator Cases debuted its deluxe wood cases. The GW-JAG model is specially designed to fit the Jaguar, Jagmaster and Jazzmaster style guitars. The cases feature rugged plywood construction, plush-lined foam padding interior and a padded carrying handle. **More info:** [gatorcases.com](http://gatorcases.com)

### Power-Packed

Aguilar's new SL 112 bass cabinet weighs less than 25 pounds but packs a powerful punch. The cabinet features a phenolic tweeter with variable level control and a

frequency response ranging from 37Hz–16kHz. **More info:** [aguilaramp.com](http://aguilaramp.com)

### [4] Tone Library

Ernie Ball's Game Changer earns its name by giving guitarists access to a library of tones through a true analog pickup switching system. It electronically rewires a guitar or bass instantly, combining any order of pickup coils in series, parallel, and in or out of phase—without digitizing or modeling the audio signal. **More info:** [gamechanger.music-man.com](http://gamechanger.music-man.com)

### [5] The Santana Touch

PRS celebrated the artistry of Carlos Santana with its SE series. This model is the first SE to feature the same silhouette as Santana's U.S.-made guitar models. It has a maple top with flame maple veneer and a mahogany back. **More info:** [prsguitars.com](http://prsguitars.com)

### Back To Amps

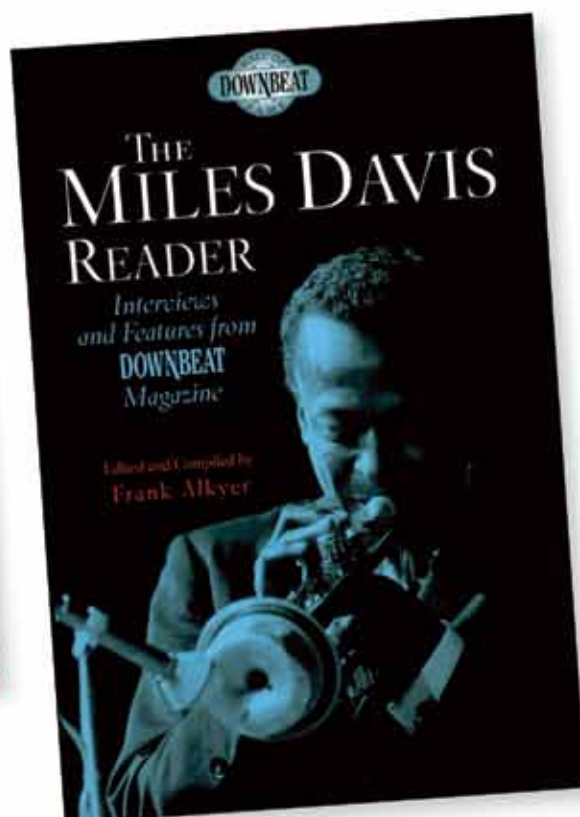
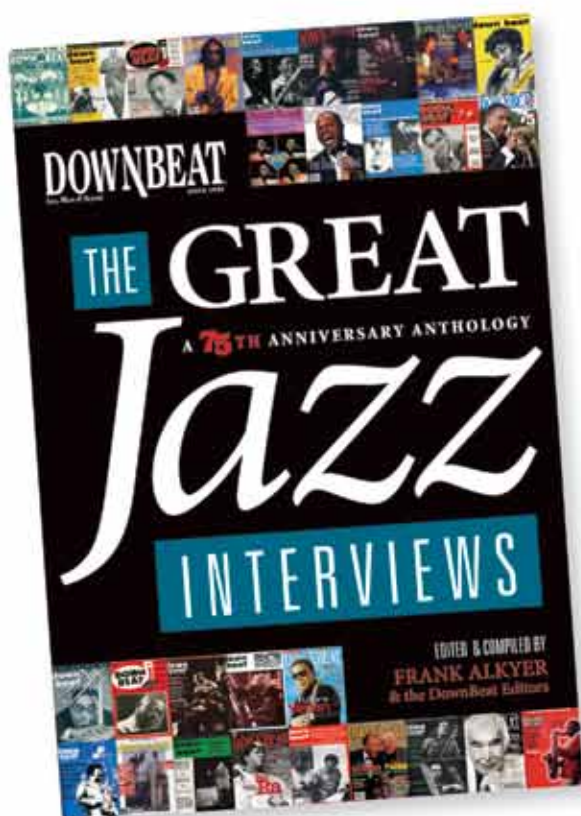
DigiTech is back in the amp business. To celebrate the occasion, the company rolled out the TH-150 two-channel guitar amp head and matching 4 by 12 cabinet with an all-tube pre-amp and power amp section. **More info:** [digitech.com](http://digitech.com)

### [6] Computer Connectivity

The GuitarLink Plus from Alesis makes recording easy, connecting guitars and other line-level audio sources directly into a computer. The GuitarLink Plus' internal analog-to-digital conversion boasts studio-quality 16-bit, 44.1-kHz digital audio. Once the guitar and computer are hooked up, the included Native Instruments Guitar Rig LE software processes the signal. **More info:** [alesis.com](http://alesis.com)







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## DRUMS

### {1} Sweet Rides

Paiste's Twenty Masters is a ride collection with versatile pro applications. The seven models and 11 sizes are deeply rooted in vintage jazz, reimagining the dark and smoky tones of the '50s and '60s. More info: [paiste.com](http://paiste.com)

### {2} Zildjian Gen16 AE Cymbal

The debut of Zildjian subsidiary Gen16 marks the birth of the acoustic-electric cymbal. Unlike electronic sample triggering devices, the Gen16 A.E. is a genuine cymbal with natural feel and responsiveness, amplified by a dual microphone and DSP engine. More info: [zildjian.com](http://zildjian.com)

### {3} Big Band Sticks

Peter Erskine strengthens his Vic Firth signature line, marrying the shaft dimensions of crossover-friendly hickory 5A's with the power and projection of 5B's. More info: [vicfirth.com](http://vicfirth.com)

### {4} Shake, Rattle & Roll

A primitive-looking piece of musical geometry, the LP Qube is the Swiss army knife of pocket percussion. Thanks to the LP Qube's internal baffle design, the multidirectional shaker emits numerous effects based on the



player's back-and-forth or circular wrist action. More info: [lpmusic.com](http://lpmusic.com)

### {5} Classic Jazz Kit

Small-gig pros have always found solace in Gretsch's go-to jazz setup. Now they can do so flaunting a brand-new finish: the lustrous-yet-subtle Galaxy Black Sparkle. The four-piece ma-

hogany shells, 30-degree bearing edges and 18-inch bass drum of Gretsch's Catalina Club Jazz kit dose up bebop-reminiscent roundness suitable for intimate venues. More info: [kamanmusic.com](http://kamanmusic.com)

### Reference Pure

Pearl's recent low-mass approach on the Reference range brings

its standout live performance kit studio-side. Reference Pure sticks to Pearl's tried-and-true recipe of task-specific birch, maple and African mahogany, as well as a triad of bearing edges, but flavors the tone using thinner plies and a more resonant 1.6-mm flange, die-cast reminiscent fat tone hoop. More info: [pearldrum.com](http://pearldrum.com)

## PRINT

### {1} Jazz Expansion

Alfred's ever-expanding Jazz Play-Along series now includes great jazz standards, books for rhythm section instruments and easy-level books. The CD or mp3 disc included with each book contains professional-quality tracks to demonstrate the melodies, interpretation and sample solos provided for each song. In addition, Alfred partnered with the Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington estates to release an arrangement of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. More info: [alfred.com](http://alfred.com)

### {2} Keepin' It Real

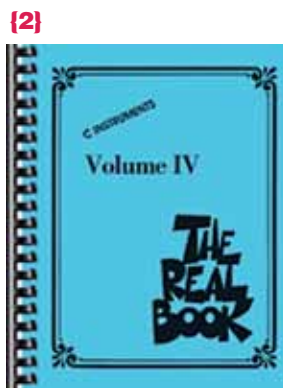
Hal Leonard expanded its now-legal Real Book series to include *The Real Book Volume IV* (also available in play-along version) as well as several new titles—*The Real Blues Book*, *The Real Bluegrass*



*Book and The Real Dixieland Book* among them. More info: [halleonard.com](http://halleonard.com)

### {3} Classics With Accompaniment

Carl Fischer now includes a piano accompaniment CD of tracks in mp3 format with its Repertoire Classics series of classic instrumental solos and other familiar titles, such



as *48 Studies For Alto Saxophone In Eb*. More info: [carlfischer.com](http://carlfischer.com)

### 3-Part Harmony

Sher Music has released *Three-Note Voicings And Beyond*, a new guitar title by Randy Vincent. The book develops a unique "dynamic" concept of harmony, where three independently moving lines team



up to create beautiful harmonies that are valuable for comping, chord melodies and chordal jazz improvisations. Sher's *Essential Grooves For Writing, Performing And Producing Contemporary Music* packs everything players need to know about contemporary styles into a reference source of audio, scores and text. More info: [shermusic.com](http://shermusic.com)



## PIANO/KEYBOARD

{1}



{2}



{3}



### {1} Keyboard Advances

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### Fred Hersch

In his first appearance at the Monterey Jazz Festival last September, pianist Fred Hersch played with his trio as well as sat down in front of a live audience in Dizzy's Den on a Saturday afternoon to be blindfolded.

### Horace Silver

"Mexican Hip Dance" (*Horace Silver Retrospective*, Blue Note, 1999, rec'd 1966) Silver, piano; Tyrone Washington, tenor saxophone; Woody Shaw, trumpet; Larry Ridley, bass; Roger Humphrey, drums.

I can't identify who this is, but I have a few observations. It's the pianist's date because the pianist has more choruses than anyone else. The tune has the same changes as Coltrane's "Afro Blue," and it's recorded in a kind of head-in and head-out, Blue Note-styled date that probably took place in an afternoon. It sounds like everyone is playing in their own world. It didn't feel like the ensemble was going anywhere, and the pianist couldn't get anything going. His left hand was completely clunky, just stabbing dotted quarter notes while he was using his right hand to do something different. But when he tried to do some interesting things with his right hand, he'd break off. So the tune never took flight. The soloists were not very impressive. It was all jazzy jazz that was OK—nothing special. If it is a Blue Note side with those easy chord changes and style of arrangement, I'd guess it could have been Horace Silver. It was? I'm sorry I dissed Horace, but it just wasn't that good. It certainly wasn't like when he played with his A-band that had Joe Henderson or Freddie Hubbard. And I wish Horace could have put his left hand on his lap or done something different with it.

### Jason Moran

"Blue Blocks" (*Ten*, Blue Note, 2010) Moran, piano; Tarus Mateen, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.

I'm hearing a heavy gospelly feel. It's an interesting composition, but I don't think the pianist negotiated the tune particularly well. There are a lot of odd lengths of harmony. It's not 4/4 or 2/4. There are a lot of meters going on. And I don't think the rhythm section is quite sure about what to do. The bass player is all over the place, which can work, but it didn't for me. It ended with a bang and not a lot of finesse. I felt the tune was elusive, and I think it would be more effective to hear the head and a separate set of chord changes to play on and paraphrase the harmonies—and not have to jump through hoops of a bar of 4, a bar of 3 and such fast harmonic rhythm like three changes in a bar. I just don't think they pulled it off. It just got louder and didn't tell me a clear story. What I liked the most was that descending piano part that opened and closed the tune. It's Jason Moran? Wow! Jason is a close personal friend and colleague. He's going to be annoyed at me, but I still have to say that this piece didn't work for me. I have a great deal of respect for Jason as a pianist and composer, as well as a conceptualist. He's a big thinker. He's a very interesting artist, and sometimes these kinds of artists take chances and pull it off—but for me this track wasn't so successful.

### Art Tatum

"Just One Of Those Things" (*The Best Of Art Tatum: The Complete Pablo Group Masterpieces*, Pablo, 1991, rec'd 1956) Tatum, piano; Red Callender, bass; Jo Jones, drums.

That's Cole Porter. The pianist is definitely a pre-bop player who is using his left hand. At first I thought Teddy Wilson, but he plays with a different energy and sound. So as a wild card, I'd say Art Tatum in a trio setting even though I've never heard him playing with a trio. You can hear the way he plays chords and the tendency to go to the full left hand. This tune is consistent with his sound, but all that I've heard of Tatum is his solo work. Is it Tatum? Well, I think it works well, but I still appreciate him as a solo pianist. He's got unbelievable command. He never flubs.



### Vijay Iyer

"Black & Tan Fantasy" (*Solo*, ACT Music & Vision, 2010) Iyer, piano

You're making this difficult for me. As a pianist, I'm very sensitive to how people orchestrate the piano. In the first section, it was thick and dramatic, then at the bridge it got really thin, then settled into a B-flat blues. The left hand is holding down the fort, while the right hand is playing "out." This piece might have benefited more by varying the left-hand pattern. And, after a while, the quality of the improvisation seemed to break down. Overall, this didn't strike me as particularly special. I'll make a guess: Marcus Roberts. No? It's Vijay Iyer? I see that now. But I enjoy his music most when he's playing with Rudresh Mahanthappa.

### Andrew Hill

"Flight #19" (*Point Of Departure*, Blue Note, 1964) Hill, piano; Eric Dolphy, bass clarinet; Joe Henderson, tenor sax; Kenny Dorham, trumpet; Richard Davis, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

This is Andrew Hill from his old Blue Note days. It could be from *Point Of Departure* and has Eric Dolphy on bass clarinet. Andrew has a singular way of playing as well as assembling music. Ironically, the trio members that I'm playing with tomorrow night here—bassist John Hébert and drummer Eric McPherson—were Andrew Hill's last rhythm section. Andrew's music is so elusive and has a sense of mystery. I like that quality. It's very unpredictable. He was very much himself. He did his thing and let the chips fall.

### Bill Evans

"Midnight Mood" (*Bill Evans Alone*, Verve, rec'd 1968)

This is Bill Evans. I know the tune. I've heard it before. Is it from Bill Evans Alone? I never met him, but I did hear him play a number of times in New York. As a solo player, he's so careful. It feels like a lot is worked out ahead of time. With his trio, he played loose. This sounds stiff, polished, but lovely. But there's not a whole lot of danger in there. I wished he would have pushed his solo playing further. I don't rank him up there with great solo piano players. I think he was good, but not awesome. I knew it was Bill from the first few bars with the voicing of his chords and the tune choice: a waltz. There's also a certain way that he played the lines with a buoyancy to his time feel that's unmistakable.

DB

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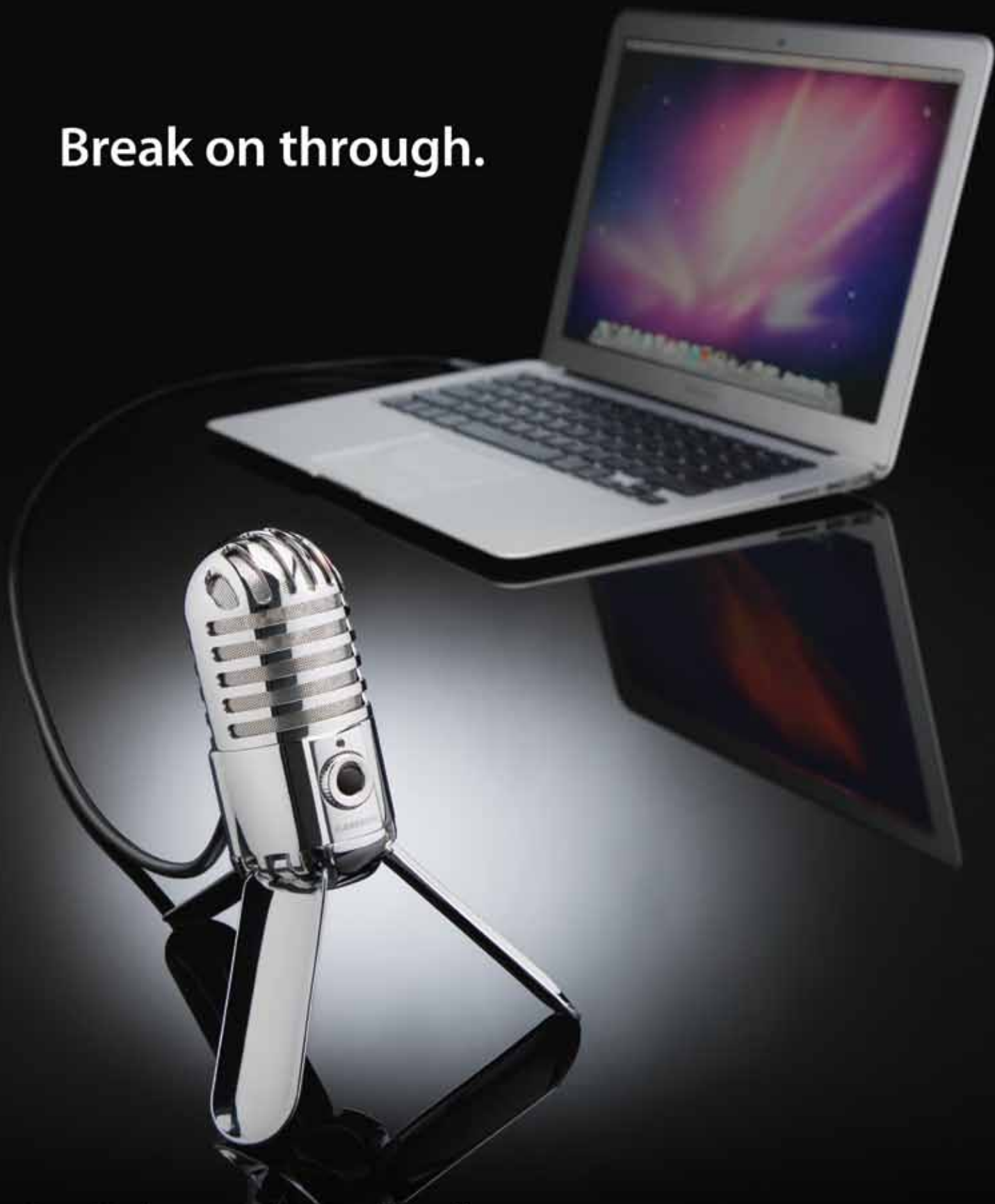
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