Yellowjackets @ 30 | Vernon Reid Blindfold Test

DOWNBEAT

Blues & Beyond

Marc Ribot & Nels Cline

GARGANTUAN IMPACT

Wessell Anderson
Tales of "Warmdaddy"

Gerry Hemingway

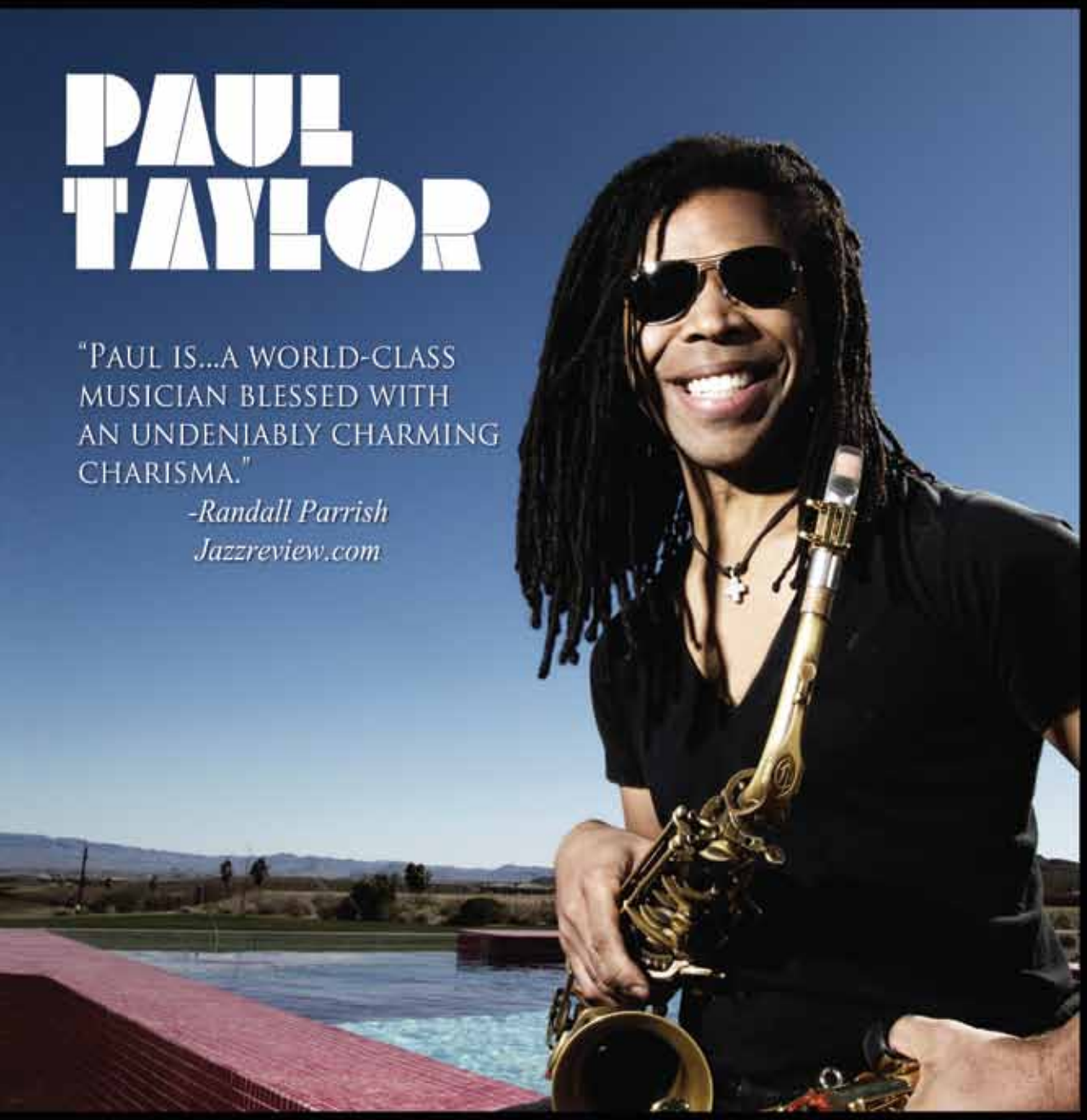
GUITAR SCHOOL

Dave Stryker
Master Class

John Abercrombie
Transcribed

DOWNBEAT
MARC RIBOT & NELS CLINE // YELLOWJACKETS // WESSELL ANDERSON // GERRY HEMINGWAY // VERNON REID
JULY 2011

PAUL TAYLOR



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DOWNBEAT (issn 0012-5768) Volume 78, Number 7 is published monthly by Maher Publications, 102 N. Haven, Elmhurst, IL 60126-2970. Periodicals postage paid at Elmhurst, IL and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: $34.95 for one year, $59.95 for two years. Foreign subscriptions rates: $56.95 for one year, $103.95 for two years.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: DownBeat, P.O. Box 11688, St. Paul, MN 55111–0688. **CABLE ADDRESS:** DownBeat (on sale June 14, 2011) Magazine Publishers Association.

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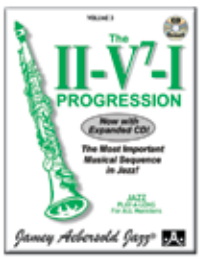

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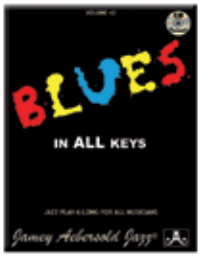

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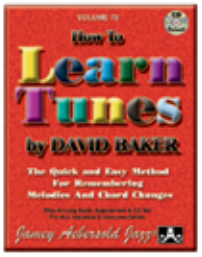

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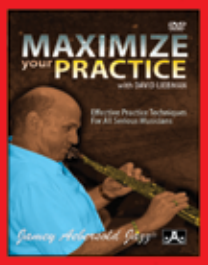

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ON THE COVER

Marc Ribot (left) and Nels Cline

Cover photography of Marc Ribot and Nels Cline shot by Jimmy and Dena Katz on location at Le Poisson Rouge, New York City.

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As music geeks, our extended community includes professional musicians, educators, record store clerks, instrument manufacturers, music publishers, record label staff, managers, promoters and publicists. It also includes millions of fans. While some of them are merely causal music consumers, other fans can be categorized as music geeks.


Stevie Ray Vaughan
DON HUNSTEIN/SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

The fact that you're reading this column means there's a good chance you're one of us. Take this quiz and score one point every time you answer yes: 1) Do you listen to music every day? 2) Do you spend a significant portion of your income on albums and/or concert tickets? 3) Have you ever run out of storage space for your music? 4) Do you decorate your living space with images of musicians? 5) Has a friend or family member ever complained about your obsession? (e.g., *"Do you really need all these CDs?" "We can't afford to hire a band for the party." "You left your iPod in the bathroom again." "Could we do this* without *listening to music?"*) If you scored three points or higher on the quiz, then glance in a mirror and spot the music geek.

My personal evolution toward geekdom was completed in 1984. That year, as a collegiate journalist, I was given an assignment to review a Stevie Ray Vaughan concert on campus. Seeing Vaughan's performance—particularly his rendition of Jimi Hendrix's "Third Stone From The Sun"—was a transformative experience. I've been fascinated by mysterious, otherworldly guitar sounds ever since.

So it was a thrill and an honor to help assemble the editorial content for this guitar-themed issue of DownBeat. The artists in our cover story, Marc Ribot and Nels Cline, have spent decades exploring the sonic possibilities of the guitar. Putting these two eloquent musicians together with journalist Jim Macnie resulted in a conversation that is thoughtful, revelatory and wildly entertaining. (*Spoiler alert*: There's an appearance by a wax-loving dominatrix.)

Elsewhere in this issue, Vernon Reid takes the Blindfold Test, Dave Stryker provides a Master Class, a John Abercrombie guitar solo is transcribed, and guitar gear is the focus of the Toolshed section. Plus, Bill Frisell and Al Di Meola are in The Hot Box. The Caught section highlights concerts by Jeff Beck, who saluted guitar innovator Les Paul during a spring tour, and Eric Clapton, who recently collaborated with Wynton Marsalis at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

But if a six-string isn't your thing, don't fret. We've got great features on saxophonist Wessell "Warmdaddy" Anderson and drummer Gerry Hemingway, as well as a look at the 30-year career of Yellowjackets, who have welcomed drummer Will Kennedy back to their lineup.

One final note about that 1984 concert review: My college newspaper ran it with a photo of the opening act rather than the headliner. That has always bothered me, so above we have included a photo of the late, great Stevie Ray Vaughan. Somehow, that just feels right.

Thanks for supporting geeks like us, and please keep on reading. **DB**

JamesCarter

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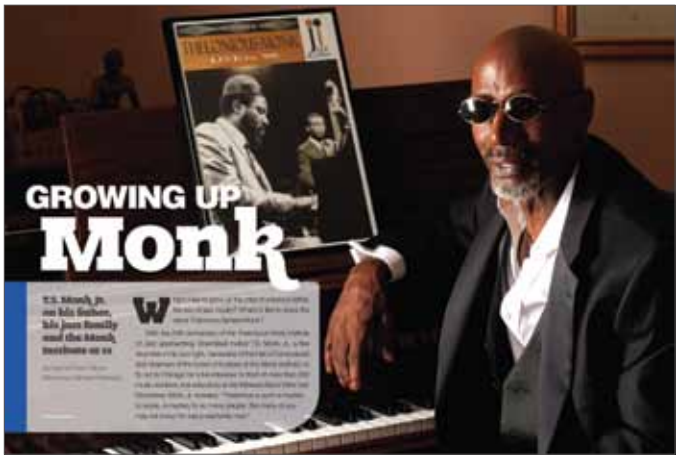

The issue featuring T.S. Monk was great reading ("Growing Up Monk," June). His comments on jazz education (or rather the institutionalization of jazz) were right on the mark. In today's programs, there is little or no discussion on the origins of jazz and its relation to a segregated America. The fact that jazz originated with African Americans who had to create this music in many cases under a Jim Crow–type system usually never comes up for discussion in the mostly white jazz programs of today. It's just the way it is in America!

DARRYL LYNN
RICHMOND, VA.

St. Olaf Marches Forward

Thank you for the Student Music Award to the St. Olaf jazz band ("34th Annual Student Music Awards," June). The article on the band is wonderful, and I appreciate the fact that it focuses on the students, since they are who make things work. The impact of this has been immense, both on campus and off. I've been hearing from all over the country from friends of mine, as well as getting some media attention here in Minnesota. This tremendous boost is an affirmation of what we are doing here, and most certainly will help us to get more prospective students interested in the program so we can keep moving forward.

DAVID HAGEDORN
DIRECTOR OF JAZZ ENSEMBLES
ST. OLAF COLLEGE
NORTHFIELD, MINN.

Editor's note: St. Olaf College's Jazz I was the winner for Large Jazz Ensemble, Undergraduate College.

Where Was Weston?

How did your reviewer totally miss Randy Weston, the one bona fide jazz master who played the recent Portland Jazz Festival ("Caught," May)? And in a rare solo piano appearance no less! Given the struggles of that festival, which your reviewer notes, it seems a more complete review would have been illuminating—testifying more to the breadth of Bill Royston's impressive artistic vision—and more educational for your readers.

WILLARD JENKINS
MUZIKMUSE@COMCAST.NET

More Winners!

In the 34th Annual DownBeat Student Music Awards in the June issue, the winners of the Vocal Jazz Group, Graduate College, did not get published due to a communication breakdown. The winner in that category is Extensions from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami. Under the direction of Larry Lapin, the group consists of Tyler Bernhardt, Tim Buchholz, Bridget Davis, Michael Gullo, Kathleen Hollingsworth, Alessandra Levy, Taylor O'Donnell, Vivian Ortega and John Splithoff.

Also, in the same category, Afro Blue from Howard University won an Outstanding Performance Award. Under the direction of Connaitre Miller, the group includes Mariah Maxwell, Tonya Khakazi, Integriti Reeves, Shacara Bradham-Rogers, Rochelle Rice, Trenton Cokley, Devin Robinson, John Kenniebrew and Reginald Bowens.

Congratulations to both groups. DownBeat regrets the omission.

Corrections

- The feature on Monty Alexander ("One World Of Music," May) misidentified the drummers on his album *Harlem-Kingston Express* (Motéma). They are Obed Calvaire, Karl Wright, Desmond Jack Jones and Frits Landesbergen. Drummer Herlin Riley appears on Alexander's album *Uplift* (Jazz Legacy Productions).
- In the Summer Festival Guide in the May issue, there was a misspelling in the name of the Les DeMerle Amelia Island Jazz Festival (ameliaislandjazzfestival.com), which runs Oct. 2–9.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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Inside

Months Of Miles

Chicago celebration honors Miles Davis, reworks classic recordings

Chicago's oldest concert hall, the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, has hosted everyone from Theodore Roosevelt to Mikhail Baryshnikov and Jimi Hendrix, as well as a celebrated trumpet player born in Alton, Ill., 85 years ago, Miles Davis. A tribute to the jazz icon ran throughout the city during the first four months of the year.

The Miles Davis Festival included more than 16 Chicago club shows and three Auditorium performances running from January through April, culminating in the April 16 premiere of choreographer Frank Chaves' *Simply Miles, Simply Us*, a graceful and hip suite of dances from River North Dance company set to "So What," "Bitches Brew," "Blue In Green" and "Half Nelson."

Another festival highlight was the March 31 summit at the club Martyrs' that Davis' nephew, Vince Wilburn Jr., assembled to honor *Bitches Brew*. With Davis' son Erin and daughter Cheryl Davis in attendance, the phenomenal Bitches Brew Remix 40th Anniversary Band included drummer Wilburn alongside a dream team of percussionists—Mino Cinelu, tabla master Badal Roy and Munyungo Jackson on congas. The concentration of Miles Davis' '80s cohorts included bassist Darryl Jones, tenorist/flutist Gary Thomas, guitarist Blackbyrd McKnight and keyboardists Baabe Irving and John Beasley, with DJ Logic added on turntables for a contemporary edge. "The event was inspired by Miles Davis touching each member's life," Wilburn said. "We wanted to say, 'Thanks, Chief, we miss you!'"

Despite boasting a host of bandleaders in the ranks, the group played with restraint and vibe-over-histrionics, keeping the brew on simmer rather than boil. Trumpeter Nicholas Payton picked choice moments for singular emphatic statements, a trait that separated Davis from the pack. Along with "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down," Joe Zawinul's "Pharoah's Dance" and Wayne Shorter's "Sanctuary," other interpretations included "Jack Johnson," "Nefertiti" and the popular live jam "Jean Pierre."

Jones noted backstage that Davis encapsulated the Spanish term *duende*—that he was original in many aspects of his style. "If he handed you the salt one way, he'd find a different way to hand you the pepper," he said.

Jones first heard Davis at the Auditorium in the early '80s, and waited in the backstage alley after the show. "He passed six feet in front of me," Jones said. "I remember feeling nearly lifted off of my feet just being that close to him." A couple years later Jones would be in the band and performing alongside Davis at the Auditorium.

Trumpeter Orbert Davis has performed the Miles Davis/Gil Evans' suite *Sketches Of Spain* numerous times with the Chicago Jazz Ensemble. For the first half of his presentation "Sketches Of Blue" at the Auditorium on April 14, Davis revisited *Kind Of Blue* alongside tenor saxophonist Ari Brown and alto saxophonist Ernest Dawkins, bassist Stewart Miller, drummer Ernie Adams and pianist Ryan Cohan. Though the sextet hued closely to the track order of the 1959 album, Dawkins' edgy articulation differed markedly from Cannonball Adderley, and his frequent upper-register rasps pushed the dynamic in a more emotionally charged direction. Brown conjured something of the searing impact of his playing without aping John Coltrane, expertly editing breath gaps in his solo on "Flamenco Sketches" to grapple with a sticking pad on his horn. The second half of the concert, which featured the 19-member Chicago Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble, revealed a different level of involvement with the source material.


Nicholas Payton
MICHAEL JACKSON

"I replaced his second, third and fourth movements with an adaptation of the second movement, having the entire ensemble improvise spontaneously," Davis said. "And I added a new composition, 'El Moreno,' which celebrates the North African and Moorish influence on Spanish culture."

"El Moreno" made use of Latin music specialist Steve Eisen's dramatic tenor saxophone solo, Nicole Mitchell's snake-charming flute, and percussion effects from Sarah Allen on martial snare drum and Suzanne Osman on doumbek, djembe and oud.

—Michael Jackson

Riffs


Aaron Diehl

MARK SHELDON

Diehl Wins Fellowship: Aaron Diehl won the American Pianist Association's Cole Porter Fellowship Award on April 16 at the Athenaeum Theatre in Indianapolis. Judges for the competition included Geri Allen and Danilo Pérez. In addition to pocketing a check for $50,000, Diehl will also receive that amount in in-kind career development assistance.

Details: americanpianists.org

New England Home: The New England Jazz Alliance has announced that the radio station WICN in Worcester, Mass., will provide a permanent home for the New England Jazz Hall Of Fame. Work on the facility is slated to begin this summer.

Details: nejazz.org

Johnson Celebration: The centennial for blues icon Robert Johnson includes new reissues of his recordings and a limited-edition beer. Sony/Legacy is releasing *Robert Johnson: The Complete Original Masters–Centennial Edition* in CD, DVD and vinyl packages. Sony/Legacy is partnering with Dogfish Head Craft Brewed Ales to produce Hellhound On My Ale, a citrus-infused beer that takes its name from Johnson's 1937 song "Hellhound On My Trail."

Details: legacyrecordings.com

Mexican Reinterpretations: Singer Magos Herrera has released *Mexico Azul* (Sunnyside), which features her interpretations of songs from vintage Mexican films and television shows. Saxophonist Tim Ries produced the disc, which also includes trumpeter Tim Hagans and guitarist Adam Rogers. Herrera will perform at the Montreal Jazz Festival on July 2 and the Vail Jazz Festival in Colorado on July 21.

Details: magosherrera.com

RIP, Zim Ngqawana: South African saxophonist/flutist Zim Ngqawana died in Johannesburg on May 9 after suffering a stroke. He was 52. Along with touring the world with his band, Ingoma, Ngqawana directed the 100-person Drums For Peace Orchestra at Nelson Mandela's 1994 inauguration.


Preservation Hall Jazz Band performing at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art

ERIKA GOLDRING

Ogden Museum Celebrates Preservation Hall

Preservation Hall in New Orleans has long served as a gathering place for visual and performing artists, as well as a living homage to one of America's most prized art forms. So it's fitting that the Ogden Museum of Southern Art's new exhibition honoring the venue traces not just half a century of New Orleans jazz, but also the community that supported it.

"Art and Jazz: Preservation Hall at 50," which runs through mid-July, features photographs, instruments, concert posters, recordings and other artifacts that highlight the lives and work of the people who made the venue what it is today. The exhibit focuses on Allan and Sandra Jaffe, who breathed new life into what had been a gallery that hosted jazz concerts. They opened the building at 726 St. Peter St. as Preservation Hall on June 11, 1961.

"My parents preserved the experience they had the first time they entered that space," said their son, Ben Jaffe, who has managed the Hall since 1993, chatting between sets by the Preservation Hall Band at the show's opening in April. He added, "In 1961, it seemed like we were just figuring out what it meant to be American. They were in the center of it."

Indeed, the Hall became a place where music and art flourished, and where lasting relationships formed between artists—and between generations.

Discussing the exhibition's cornerstone, co-curators Bradley Sumrall and Libra Lagrone both pointed to Noel Rockmore's portraits of the Jaffe family, which illustrate what Sumrall calls "the emotional, personal history of the Hall."

—Jennifer Odell

Houserockin' Alligator Label Celebrates 40th Birthday


Kelly Littleton (left), Pookie Young, Bruce Iglauer, Lil' Ed Williams and Michael Garrett

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTORESERVE

Anyone who thinks that modern blues has been incapable of producing records of lasting merit should spend time with the Chicago-based record company Alligator's new *40th Anniversary Collection*. Thirty-eight album tracks by as many roster notables offer a glance into a catalog of 242 releases since the label was founded in 1971.

"I'm very proud of the history of the label," said Bruce Iglauer, who started Alligator to record his favorite barroom guitar brawler, Hound Dog Taylor. "But I didn't just do this collection to look backward. This is not a closing statement."

Alligator also manages musicians' careers, and this was particularly true with the late Koko Taylor. "Koko was family," Iglauer said. "She and I worked together for 35 years, and I was with her in some very dire circumstances with her health. Her last album, *Old School*, was such a triumph—for her to come back from literally being at death's door." Guitarist Lil' Ed Williams is close kin, too. "I've nurtured Lil' Ed from the very first time he ever saw a recording studio. Ed has said more than once publicly—and it chokes me up—that I'm the closest thing he ever had to a father."

The anniversary year also includes a new album from Gulf Coast pianist Marcia Ball, *Roadside Attractions*. Iglauer gave her total creative control over it. Ball, in turn, said she appreciated her affiliation with Alligator: "Bruce has always been completely faithful to his mission of presenting and promoting blues, and supporting and sustaining blues artists."

—Frank-John Hadley

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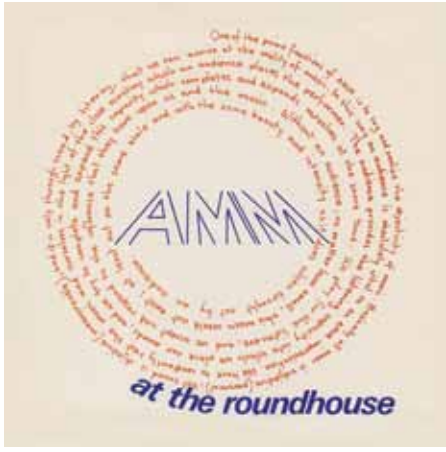

I've been thinking about jukeboxes lately.

Strictly in terms of musical selection, my iPod now does the job of a jukebox. A sort of hyper-juke, in fact, given that I have about 15,000 songs loaded up and can simply put it on "shuffle" and let my little selector do all the work, keeping me entertained for hours at a stretch, consistently teasing my brain by introducing impromptu Blindfold Tests into my day. But shuffle only really works for me if I pay attention to it. If it's just background, it takes all the interest away and can homogenize even the greatest music. If I need background, I prefer to listen to something more concentratedly programmed, like an album or an artist or even just a genre.

On the other hand, by shifting my attention, the activity of shuffling can take on a different significance. In recent months, I've taken to pretending that my iPod is a disc jockey. That way I can judge its performance. Sometimes it's in the zone, and sometimes it loses the thread. But when I attend to the iPod as a sort of miniature DJ, there's something at stake in its juxtapositions, transitions, good choices and fumbles. My colleagues might think I'm weird when I blurt out: "iPod is on fire today!" But that's how I feel when it abuts two things that somehow work but would never have seemed like a match.

Looking through my singles recently, I thought a little about how much jukeboxes were like that, how they were harbingers of the possibility of random play, the idea that a machine could make cool decisions. Here you have a format, the 7-inch single, which is a standard unit. Anything could be put on it; wildly divergent music could be programmed using the same automaton. Two record covers caught my attention, and I immediately imagined them played back to back on a jukebox. Here's the Red Garland Quintet, with the beautiful graphic of a record profile, with a nifty arrow pointing down into the groove like a stylus. Super bad hard-bop, with a top-flight lineup, Blue Mitchell's trumpet, Pepper Adams' baritone sax, along with Sam and Philly Joe Jones on rhythm along with their leader. It was, quite literally, music made for jukeboxes, a black-and-white picture sleeve released alongside the color LP version.

Now switch radically to a beautiful, extremely rare single by the British improvising group AMM. This gem, which, like the Garland, has been reissued on CD, featured short excerpts from a 45-minute performance by the duo version of the group, with Lou Gare on tenor saxophone and Eddie Prévost on drums. I love the idea of a groovy jazz session interrupted by a spacious, noisy spate of freely improvised music. It's the kind of thing that my iPod might kick up, but there's the added thought of the actual vinyl whirling around in the juke, the heavy tone-arm slapping down on the disc, the vinyl living its ephemeral life, serving its life's purpose—to make us listen, to entertain us, maybe to make us think and feel something we haven't thought or felt before. **DB**

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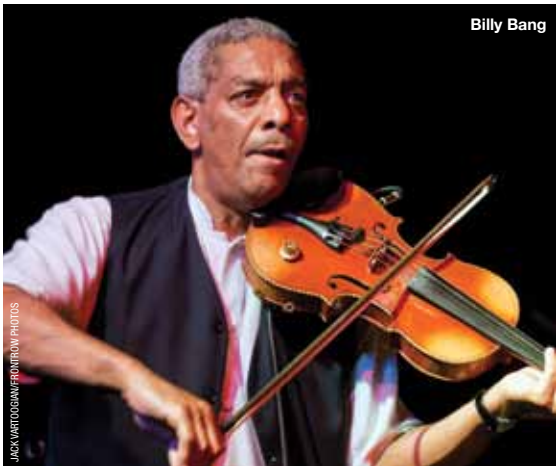
More than 60 years separate the first jazz recording in 1917 and the introduction of the CD in the early '80s. In this column, DB's Vinyl Freak unearths some of the musical gems made during this time that have yet to be reissued on CD.

Billy Bang's Energy, Compassion Won Over Listeners and Musicians Alike


Billy Bang

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROW PHOTOS

Violinist Billy Bang's music came from contrasts: He delved into his instrument's history in swing while creating a new mingling of free improvisation within a chamber ensemble. He also recorded serene hymnals that reflected his harsh memories of serving in the Vietnam War. Optimistic to the end, Bang died at age 63 in New York on April 11 of complications from lung cancer.

"That celebration in Billy's sound made him such a charismatic performer, people just got happy hearing him," said violinist Jason Hwang. "He would win over the musicians in the band and the audience just because of that transcendent kind of enthusiasm."

Bang was born in Mobile, Ala. (as William Walker), but moved with his mother to New York's Harlem shortly afterwards. Although Bang studied violin and flute and played drums informally while he was growing up, he didn't actively pursue a career in music. Then he was drafted and served as an army combat squad leader during the war.

Returning from Vietnam and struggling with post-traumatic issues, Bang picked up the violin after hearing Ornette Coleman play the instrument. He studied intensely with Leroy Jenkins and became prominent in New York's 1970s loft scene along with such longtime friends as William Parker. Hwang saw what made Bang's sound distinctive.

"He loved to use ricochet bows percussively, when the bow bounces against the string—playing the violin like a drum," Hwang said. "It would be like the left and right hand of congas. He would make a note sing, which was his very personal use of vibrato. Where and how much he let a note bend and then resonate with vibrato was like a great singer. You could hear Leroy Jenkins, Stuff Smith—Billy was aware of all the history, but he was by no means derivative."

In 1977 Bang co-founded the String Trio of New York with guitarist James Emery and bassist John Lindberg. The group featured new compositions for the format that combined the musicians' jazz experiences with their own takes on classical inspirations. Bang began recording more actively under his own name in the 1980s, including such discs as *The Fire From Within* (Soul Note), and served in Sun Ra's Arkestra as well as Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio in the '80s and '90s.

"I always felt a sensitive collectiveness with Billy," El'Zabar said. "He was a dynamo who could share on the stage and encourage other people to shine."

During the past few years, Bang revisited his experiences in Vietnam for such recordings as *Vietnam: Reflections*, *Vietnam: The Aftermath* (Justin Time) and *Prayer For Peace* (Tum).

"There was an intensity to him, and he would talk about his time in Vietnam," said trumpeter James Zollar, who played on *Prayer For Peace*. "But he was gentle. Billy was proud that he went over there the first time with a rifle, and returned there years later with a violin." —*Aaron Cohen*

Wynton Marsalis, Eric Clapton Pairing Falls Short of Sparks


Wynton Marsalis (left) and Eric Clapton

JULIE SKARRATT

Wynton Marsalis may be all jazz all the time in his philosophical musical stance, but in recent years he's been increasingly open to crossing over, albeit with an infusion of swing and blues utmost in his delivery at the house that he built. Case in point: his beyond-category collaborations with Willie Nelson and Norah Jones (documented on the live album *Here We Go Again: Celebrating The Genius Of Ray Charles*), which magically melded jazz, country and the blues. However, even though batting .500 would be a phenomenal average in baseball, it's not so great when it comes to staging big-name events. The unlikely Marsalis summit with blues guitar icon Eric Clapton that took place April 9—the final show of a three-night stint at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theater—proved to be a bust, with only two musically successful tunes in the hour-plus set. (Granted, the April 7 opening night show and gala raised more than $3.6 million for the JALC educational fund.)

The prospects of hearing the searing guitar sting of Slowhand, who came up in the British electric blues scene with both the Yardbirds and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in the mid-'60s, mix it up with the trumpeting jazz statesman in a full-fledged performance were indeed promising. But soon, it became apparent that the show was a home-turf affair. Both dressed in suits with ties, the amiable pair talked about how the on-stage meeting for unveiling the relationship of the blues to jazz had been in the works for some seven to eight years. Just before playing their first notes of the evening, Marsalis reminded the crowd that they were being welcomed "to the house of swing." In other words, don't expect too much outside of that zone.

Backed by the fine, albeit predictable, Marsalis crew—trumpeter Marcus Printup, trombonist Chris Crenshaw, clarinetist-soprano saxophonist Victor Goines, pianist Dan Nimmer, banjo player Don Vappie, bassist Carlos Henriquez and drummer Ali Jackson, augmented by keyboardist Chris Stainton and solo opening-act star Taj Mahal—the musicians launched into a New Orleans brass band–like zip through "Ice Cream," with everyone getting equal solo time, including the guest, who made the most of his few bars with his signature low-smudged notes. OK, we had the Big Easy-styled blues to begin the proceedings, which then turned into a down 'n' dirty, blistering blast on Howlin' Wolf's "Forty-Four," with Clapton's extended—and exciting—run of high-pitched bent notes above the horns' coloring.

Lest the crowd get too excited by this raucous change in pace, Marsalis quickly announced the next tune by saying that this would be in "a different vein." Up next came W.C. Handy's "Joe Turner Blues," another old-timey delivery where the horns obliterated the sound of Clapton's guitar. And from there on, that tenor banjo rhythm continued unabated for the rest of the show, with few exceptions, thus undermining the expansive range of the blues.

Clapton was pleased to be playing in a jazz setting, he said, noting that it was a challenge for him to "play my little jingly stuff" in the midst of musicians who had so much "sophisticated depth." But it was a brilliantly slowed-down take on the Derek & the Dominos' hit "Layla" that trained the spotlight on his emotionally raw guitar styling. The song earned Clapton, Marsalis and company its first standing ovation, before the show returned to an old-time blues setting.

Overall, this collaboration felt one-sided. Marsalis said that Clapton picked the tunes, but the arrangements were in the trumpeter's camp, which boxed in the guitarist. It was disappointing that the full scope of the blues was not revealed. Where was the Delta slide guitar? What about a duo of guitarist and trumpeter where the band left the stage and let the two greats converse together? The show, full of high expectations, turned out to be a major disappointment.

—Dan Ouellette

Masada Marathon

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

John Zorn (right) conducted his Bar Kokhba Sextet with guitarist Marc Ribot, violinist Mark Feldman, cellist Erik Friedlander, percussionist Cyro Baptista, bassist Greg Cohen and drummer Joey Baron to perform music from his "The Book Of Angels" at "Masada Marathon—The Book of Angels" at New York's Lincoln Center on March 30. As part of the event, Zorn also led his Electric Masada and Dreamers bands.

Jeff Beck Revisits The Music Of His Youth


Jeff Beck (left), Darrel Higham and Imelda May

ANDY ARGYRAKIS

Jeff Beck can do whatever he wants. The British guitar wizard, who helped popularize jazz-rock fusion with his '70s albums *Blow By Blow* and *Wired*, has won eight Grammy awards. He has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice—first as a member of the Yardbirds, and then as a solo artist and bandleader.

Beck, still youthful at 67, has nothing left to prove. Free from commercial pressures, he can go wherever the muse takes him. So in the spring, he hit the road with Irish singer Imelda May and her backing band of rockabilly revivalists. During the April 2 show at Chicago's posh Cadillac Palace Theatre, the set list adhered closely to the track listing on Beck's recent live album and DVD *Rock 'n' Roll Party (Honoring Les Paul)*.

The concert was a retro-oriented journey that took Beck back to the days of his early childhood, when he heard songs like Les Paul and Mary Ford's "How High The Moon" on the radio. During his 100-minute performance in Chicago, Beck often fulfilled the role of sideman, graciously yielding the spotlight to the charismatic May.

This was especially true during a seven-song segment of tunes associated with Paul and Ford. In a fitting homage to Paul (who died in 2009 at the age of 94), Beck masterfully played a sunburst Les Paul guitar on a charming rendition of "Bye Bye Blues." In a similarly fitting homage, May bolstered her powerful lead vocals by singing along to her own prerecorded harmony vocal tracks, following a technique that Ford used.

During a version of "Mockin' Bird Hill," Beck's guitar briefly mimicked the sound of chirping birds, and on "Tiger Rag," he and May engaged in a call-and-response routine wherein she repeatedly chimed "Meow" while his ax purred like a feline.

This segment of the show was interrupted by an unusual incident. Apparently May's concentration was broken by an unruly male fan, so at the onset of "Vaya Con Dios," she abruptly stopped singing and demanded that the band stop playing. Addressing the problematic fan, May chided, "If you don't like it, you can leave. Nobody's making you stay." Sensing that May was upset, Beck stormed to the front of the stage, glared aggressively at the fan and then turned his backside toward him, crouched down and pointed toward his own buttocks in a gesture that succinctly conveyed the message, "You can kiss my ass." Unfazed by this episode, Beck continued to provide a virtual clinic in pop and early rock guitar styles.

The concert also nodded to a 1956 film that had a profound impact on an adolescent Beck — *The Girl Can't Help It*. Beck's set list featured a few songs from that film's soundtrack, including "Cry Me A River," "Rocking Is Our Business" and the title track (sung by Little Richard in the movie). Beck's version was anchored by the booming, boisterous lead vocals of singer/guitarist Darrel Higham, who is May's husband.

Two key highlights were a taut reading of James Brown's "I'll Go Crazy," which was sung by May and augmented by a punchy horn section, and an epic rendition of The Shangri-Las' 1964 hit "Remember (Walking In The Sand)" that found May pressing both palms against her temples as she dramatically emoted. Meanwhile, Beck gracefully built tension using subtle techniques, such as finger-tapping, before transforming the song into mighty maelstrom.

Whether he was delivering potent slide guitar licks on "Poor Boy" or working the whammy bar on the instrumental "Apache," Beck proved that he remains just as fascinated by complex guitar sounds today as he was when he was a lad growing up in England. *—Bobby Reed*

Brad Shepik
A Consistent Variety


CAROLINE MARTOOK

It's no accident guitarist Brad Shepik bears the mark of so many music styles. On a Saturday afternoon in late March, he retrieved a stack of CD wallets from the downstairs room of his apartment in Brooklyn's Prospect Heights neighborhood. He found a jumble of albums by George Benson and Georges Brassens, Dorothy Ashby and Chet Atkins.

"Great cataloging," Shepik cracked. He played several tracks from a laptop computer, where much of his CD collection—roughly 1,500 recordings—is stored. The small sample included syncopated Ethiopian Tigrigna music from a compilation series called *Ethiopiques*, then classical guitarist John Williams' reading of Augustín Barrios Mangoré's *La Catedral*. "I wish I could play like that," he said.

Not long after Shepik started middle school, he began signing out records from libraries and taking buses to record shops scattered in and around Seattle. He not only discovered jazz, but also folkloric music from overseas that would introduce him to odd meters and exotic scales. An album cover depicting an oud or a lute invariably piqued his interest. "Some of it I couldn't quite get my ear around," recalled Shepik, 45. After a few months, he added, he would listen to the music again and start to appreciate it.

Shepik's exposure to a wide spectrum of music in the '70s and '80s anticipates the varied nature of his career: He's at home performing Great American Songbook standards; he tours overseas alongside musicians from Eastern Europe and the Middle East; and he doubles on traditional instruments like the tambura, oud and saz.

The new Brad Shepik Quartet album, *Across The Way* (Songlines), displays little of this cross-pollination. Shepik composed the music in 2008 during a German tour with drummer George Schuller's group, Circle Wide. The tour highlighted music that Keith Jarrett recorded in the first half of the '70s with his American quartet.

Before recording *Across The Way*, Shepik experimented with groups that included organ, drums and several different saxophone players. Saying he found the format "confining," Shepik replaced the organ and reeds with vibraphone player Tom Beckham and bassist Jorge Roeder; Mark Guiliana plays drums. "I wanted to hear more of the harmonic material that was in the tunes," he said. The music, he added, "is pretty uncomplicated, so it really allows people to stretch and be themselves."

The album is by turns quiet and intense. The group often maintains a cool veneer while adhering to a strict dynamic range. Playing with a clean tone, Shepik avoids blues licks. But his double-time solos turn up the heat on tracks like "Down The Hill" and the syncopated "Marburg." An attractive groove highlights "Mambo Terni," and "Your Egg Roll" includes multiple key signatures. "As with a lot of Brad's music, there's a folk element to it," said Beckham, a longtime collaborator. "Because of his body of work, I think that [many critics] don't quite know that he's also an amazing jazz guitarist."

The tracks on *Across The Way* are more streamlined than on 2009's conservation-themed *Human Activity Suite*, which is busy and eclectic. Shepik offered his perspective over dinner at a Mexican cafe near his co-op building.

"I just try to absorb music and see how it comes out," he said. "It's not really interesting or necessary for me to know where everything comes from or what's influencing what." Yet his large palette of influences, he conceded, has distinct advantages: "Maybe it's the idea that you have to bring something of your own to the table. You can't just play it the way the other guys played it."

Shepik earned a music degree from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle before moving to New York in 1990. He established a profile on the city's adventurous downtown scene while completing a master's degree at New York University. His fondness for world music found a supportive environment at clubs like the original Knitting Factory and Tonic. By the mid-'90s he had received exposure in several groups—Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio, Pachora and the Paradox Trio—that drew inspiration from the music of Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

These days, Shepik focuses on electric guitar, specifically a vintage Gretsch Tennessean he's played since 1998. He sticks to standard tuning and uses a pick, although he sometimes plays fingerstyle or with just his thumb. He prefers tube amps and uses effects pedals for distortion or delay.

While embracing a variety of music and instruments, Shepik's approach has remained remarkably consistent. In particular, he continuously listens to a hodgepodge of music. "I consider myself still learning," he explained. "I try to hear new things all the time in my favorite recordings. And I often revisit music that puzzles me." *—Eric Fine*

Eli Degibri ▸ *Old In A New Way*

Few saxophonists possess the mojo to convene Brad Mehldau, Ron Carter and Al Foster as a one-off rhythm section. Even fewer possess the sufficient maturity and soulfulness to convey their vision in a way that allows each virtuoso to fulfill the team-player function while also expressing individuality within the flow.

Eli Degibri accomplishes precisely this on *Israeli Song* (Anzic), directing the band through six of his originals, a composition from each sideman and two standards. Degibri creates an ambiance of risk-taking and dramatic tension, projecting an attitude that, to cite pianist and longtime bandmate Aaron Goldberg, "is less about playing a lot of stuff over the changes than trying to tell a story every time he puts a horn in his mouth." Whether playing tenor or soprano, Degibri has a warm, old-school sound, and, in deference to Carter and Foster, postulates a swing feel more on *Israeli Song* than he did on his Fresh Sound releases *In The Beginning* and *Emotionally Available*—on which Goldberg, bassist Ben Street and drummer Jeff Ballard were his partners—or the more experimental *Live At Louis 649* (Anzic), with organist Gary Versace and drummer Obed Calvaire.

"Not every saxophone player can interact the way Eli does with a rhythm section," Goldberg said. "You feel he's hiring you not because you're playing a certain functional role in the music, but because he loves you and your spirit."

After graduating from the Thelma Yellin High School of the Arts in Tel Aviv, Digibri enrolled in Boston's Berklee College of Music in 1997. One day at Berklee, after a solo on Wayne Shorter's "Yes Or No" on a session with Hal Crook, the professor stopped the music. "Hal said, 'You play old in a new way,'" Degibri recalled. "That one phrase is basically my motto."

Degibri left Berklee after a semester to attend the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance, where he studied with Carter. He graduated in 1999 and joined Herbie Hancock, with whom he toured for 30 months.

After leaving Hancock, Degibri formed a quintet in New York with guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, Goldberg, Street and Ballard, and he started writing music. "If there's one thing I'm proud of, it's my composition," he said.

Nine years ago Degibri began his ongoing collaboration with Foster, as documented on *Love, Peace And Jazz!* (Jazz Eyes). "Al always says, 'What's wrong with telling a story?'" Degibri said. "At first he gave me so much shit, yelling that I'm not playing the right stuff. It made me a better musician."

Next on Degibri's docket is a studio date with his organ trio and a project with Brazilian singer Fabiana Cozza. "To me, 'modern' means today, and it's important for me to be part of today's music," Degibri said. "This is where we are, and I want to be part of that family." —*Ted Panken*

Greg Ward
Forward Motion


MICHAEL JACKSON

On a rainy evening in Evanston, Ill., alto saxophonist Greg Ward was playing with drummer Ted Sirota's Rebel Souls. Normally a quintet, the band had contracted to a trio, which allowed Ward to fully express himself. Attendance was sparse. I asked Ward, given the vicissitudes of the jazz life, what were its imperatives, to which he responded with a confident smile, "Excellence!"

Such upbeat determination was evident that night as Ward tore passionately through "In A Sentimental Mood," ceaselessly mining the harmony with corkscrewing lines, notes almost ghosted in a subtle dynamic.

Ward—who hails from Peoria, Ill., but is currently based in New York—honed his craft fronting jams at Fred Anderson's Velvet Lounge while attending Northern Illinois University during the early aughts. Local tenorist Doug Stone helped broaden Ward's listening, turning him on to players like Joshua Redman and Mark Turner.

After he met trumpeter Maurice Brown, the two would often call each other and trade favorite licks over the telephone. Ward was partial to Kenny Garrett, but by the time his imitation of Garrett had become credible, Brown informed him that was no longer the goal—he had to start sounding like himself.

Although the intensity, altissimo cry and relentless forward motion of Garrett influenced Ward, today his style resists comparisons.

Alongside jazz, Ward followed classical and contemporary music during weekly visits to the Chicago Symphony Center. Witnessing Daniel Barenboim perform a piano concerto had a profound effect. "A moment took my breath away, a drone in the low strings and a descending scale in the upper register," recalls Ward, citing the inspiration for "Like Mozart" from his debut CD, *South Side Story*, recorded with the Chicago-based quartet Fitted Shards. Such fascination led to studies with orchestrator Cliff Colnot and composition teacher Sebastian Huydts.

"University Of Opportunity" from *South Side Story* speaks of Ward's eagerness to grow through challenges. "Studying with Cliff was like kung fu lessons—he breaks you down and builds you up," said Ward, who valued succinct advice from Colnot after a commissioned piece flopped in performance.

"I had written for an ensemble including vibraphone, string quintet, trumpet, bassoon and DJ. It sounded fine on the computer, but didn't translate live. Cliff pointed out a few things that all made sense; you take risks, fall on your face, then pay attention to the lesson."

Ward has become a prolific composer and arranger—no small feat given the hours of practice necessary to maintain his level of instrumental virtuosity. Phonic Juggernaut, his New York trio with bassist Joe Sanders and drummer Damion Reid, has a record in the works. When he's off the road, pride doesn't impede Ward from quartet gigs in Central Park, taking music to the people. But he still has strong connections to Chicago and groups such as Mike Reed's People Places and Things, Loose Assembly, post-rockers Tortoise and rapper Lupe Fiasco.

He returned to the Chicago area in mid-April at the invitation of Highland Park High School (HPHS), as part of the school's ambitious Focus on the Arts event. Ward had all manner of other gigs lined up, including a hit at the Green Mill with the Chicago Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble, a recording session with drummer Charles Rumbach and a CD release party with the band blink. At HPHS, Ward didn't spare the horses for his lunchtime concert with Fitted Shards—which followed a setting of his piece "Adrenaline" with students the night before—generating a sweat during a rip through his climactic all-or-nothing manifesto "All In." Before the bell for afternoon classes clipped the group's last number, Ward mentioned how his apprenticeship at the Velvet Lounge, on Chicago's near South Side, had inspired the title for *South Side Story*, released by 19-8 Records.

Though his manner is gallant and humble, Ward takes the implications of his talent seriously. "You work so hard for so little that you have to look past material matters," he said. "I feel a responsibility for this gift I have been given, to be nothing less than excellent and put all my heart into it. If you believe in what you do, then it has some value and you can touch people and make a difference. Good art will find its place."

—Michael Jackson

Yaron Herman ▸ *The Endless Path*

Yaron Herman didn't start playing piano until he was 16. He's just turned 30, and his journey continues to be anything but orthodox. The Paris-based pianist has just released his fifth album, the trio date *Follow The White Rabbit*, his debut for the ACT label. And, like the ones that have preceded it, there's a lot of unconventional and interesting interaction, this time between him and bassist Chris Tordini and drummer Tommy Crane. Is it due to inspiration, or to something else?

"I don't want to rely only on inspiration," Herman explained. "I want to know how the machine works, what laws, if you apply them at the right time and order, will create structure and logic. In a normal compositional process, one can take his time, look back and erase, modify and do all kind of changes. But what happens when it's all happening in real time? That's why I'm trying to find formulas that could create continuity and structure in my playing, especially when playing totally free."

Indeed, Herman springs from a fountain of knowledge that touts a different vibe about creativity and expression. After a brief stint at Berklee College of Music, Herman sees it this way: "I never went to jazz school, which has its bad and good parts," he said. "It's bad because it took me a while to study all the theoretical stuff, especially because I started to play really late for a pianist. So I had to find a way of learning all that by myself, through listening to the masters, transcribing and books. The good part is that I was never formatted, never told I couldn't do something, never got under someone's influence to change my playing to fit a certain ideal. I was always free to play what I wanted, and free to not sound like others."

The Tel Aviv native does confess to influences, though. "I was always fascinated by Keith Jarrett, and other great improvisers, such as classical composers, to create structures in real time and to improvise works that seemed to be composed in advance. And even though they were spontaneous improvisations, they had a logic and the intellectual rigor of written compositions."

Stating that he initially had no desire to become a professional musician, Herman says, "I just wanted to be able to play a little." And that trip down the rabbit hole of theory and creativity eventually led to his search for a teacher. Meeting Opher Brayer was significant.

"He made me discover jazz and got me into improvisation immediately," Herman said. "He had developed an incredibly creative approach to music teaching, based on mathematics, inspired by the writings of Joseph Schillinger and psychology. He always adapted to the rhythm and personality of his students and kept weaving the study of music with personal development and the maximization of one's creative potential." Sounding profound beyond his years, Herman added, "In jazz, more so than in any other music genre, you play who you are. Therefore, you have to work on your being and not just accumulate technical knowledge with things like phrases, licks, knowing styles. It's an endless path."

When asked why he chose the piano-trio format for his new CD, Herman said, "As a jazz pianist, you cannot ignore the beauty of the trio formation, or its history. I started thinking about the trio when I met [drummer] Gerald Cleaver, who is definitely one of my favorite musicians, and then later, [bassist] Matt Brewer. They both made me want to get into a room and start playing." Herman's other trio dates include *A Time For Everything* and *Muse*.

Herman composes all the time, even when he's on a plane or in a hotel. "I always carry this black music notebook with me, and whenever an idea arises I immediately write it down," he said. "It can be two bars, a chord or whole tune that somehow writes itself out as a whole. I also like sitting at the piano inventing musical games, limiting myself to one element that I commit myself to developing and manipulating. Make a lot out of a little—it's a good exercise."

Though Herman cites Paul Bley, Lennie Tristano, Art Tatum, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk as some of his favorite pianists, he said that non-musical influences have had a more profound effect on his artistry. "Something that has to do with a quest that can be related to one's roots, origins or identity—I think that's more important than music," he said. "Grow as a human being, and your music will grow. It's a mathematical law of nature." —*John Ephland*

Marc Ribot & Nels Cline
GARGANTUAN IMPACT

By Jim Macnie ❙ Photography by Jimmy and Dena Katz

At the entrance to the New York music venue Le Poisson Rouge, two fat goldfish swim around a massive tank. Sometimes they dart, sometimes they glide, sometimes they float. The foyer lighting is a bit crazed, so their allure has a psychedelic tinge. Off to the side, Marc Ribot and Nels Cline ham it up a bit for a photo session, wielding their guitars in a variety of ways. They, too, know about unpredictable motions. For the last 30 years each has proven himself an eloquent experimentalist, moving from skronk to rock with equal aplomb—darting, gliding and floating through an array of projects, associations and solos. The allure of their oft-frenzied art has a psychedelic tinge to it as well.

Marc Ribot (left) and Nels Cline at Le Poisson Rouge, New York City

Ubiquitous New Yorker Ribot leads a bevy of bands. Ceramic Dog is an aggressive trio with a dreamy side. Spiritual Unity is an Albert Ayler homage that searches for ecstasy in a series of explosions. Sun Ship features guitarist Mary Halvorson and parallels John Coltrane's rugged intensities. The Majestic Silver Strings aligns him with Bill Frisell and leader Buddy Miller, while providing a chance to sing "Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie." His latest disc is *Silent Movies*, an acoustic affair built on lyricism and poignancy—two elements this occasional wiseacre holds dear.

Of course, Ribot is known as a hired gun in the pop world as well. A cagey colorist, he's responsible for vivid work with Elvis Costello, Tom Waits and Robert Plant, dodging the obvious at every turn and placing inspired filigree into their tunes.

In Los Angeles, Cline created a similar career arc, moving through scads of ventures that found him broadening the guitar lexicon and refining an initially outré viewpoint. The Nels Cline Singers—which, despite the name, actually has few vocals—is a trio responsible for a constantly morphing songbook. On 2010's *Initiate*, there's a surging excursion here, and a mysterious valentine there; breadth is the band's essence. BB&C, a hookup with Tim Berne and Jim Black, recently dropped a gnarly free-improv onslaught, *The Veil*. Cline can also lay claim to some impressive hi-jinks with Jenny Scheinman's group Mischief & Mayhem.

But it's *Dirty Baby*—a provocative collaboration with visual artist Ed Ruscha and poet/producer David Breskin—that's had tongues wagging of late. The elaborate project, which finds Cline and Breskin providing a soundtrack for Ruscha's paintings, is a whirl of ideas that never fails to fascinate. The guitarist is an insightful orchestrator of ephemera, uniting myriad echoes, buzzes and beats. Since 2004 he's also applied such skills as the lead guitarist of Wilco. Of late, he's been working with his wife, Yuka Honda, in the duo Fig.

Concocting a steady stream of soundscapes is job one for both of these guys. Odd then that they barely knew each other before DownBeat suggested this chat. But call them fast friends now. Their mutual respect was obvious from the start, and by the time the interview closed, they promised to set up some sort of working relationship in the near future.

DownBeat: You guys have met, but don't really know each other, right?

Nels Cline: We've never hung out. We had lunch with Elliott Sharp eight or nine years ago.

Marc Ribot: I was aware of your playing. There are a lot of freaky parallels between us. We've arrived at some similar places because of thought and experience.

What was the name of your first bands?

Cline: In elementary school it was Homogenized Goo.

Ribot: I didn't get my band together until junior high. One was called Mirage, after the film. Then we changed the name to Love Gun. It's symbolic of something…you'll have to ask Robert Plant or Sigmund Freud about its larger implications.

Cline: My twin brother, Alex, and I had bands since we were 11 or 12. Psych, blues, rock, whatever. At one point, the music was instrumental. We'd drone and make stuff up; it sounded like the Stooges without a vocalist, or the first Wire album. Texturally and compositionally, it became more interesting as we got higher aspirations. We tacked on things without knowing what we were really doing. In junior high, we had a band I sang in. It was called Toe Queen Love, which was a name taken from the inside of the Fugs album *It Crawled Into My Hand, Honest*.

Do you remember trying to figure out the instrument back then?

Ribot: I took classical guitar lessons, but otherwise I'm self-taught. Years later I took 10 lessons with a bebop guy, but I was basically on my own.

Cline: Until high school I played everything with just two fingers. My dad showed me an E chord and of course the next day I had a drone song with just an E and tons of fuzz. In his autobiography, Keith Richards insists you should start with acoustic to get the feel. I think he might be right. But that's not the way I did it.

Ribot: Oh, I think there are no rules.

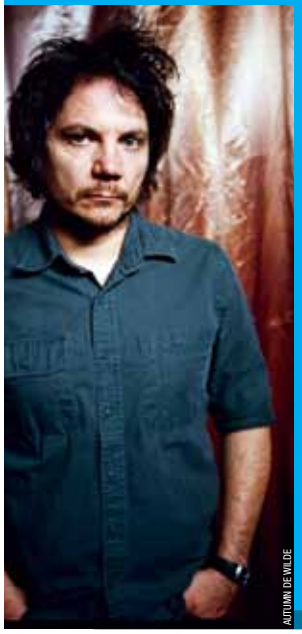
Cline: Kids coming out of schools these days are kind of taken with the sound of distortion. It would take 'em awhile to come around to what Keith's saying.

Ribot: I think the opposite is true. Anyone studying classical guitar needs to spend a year

ELVIS COSTELLO
on Marc Ribot

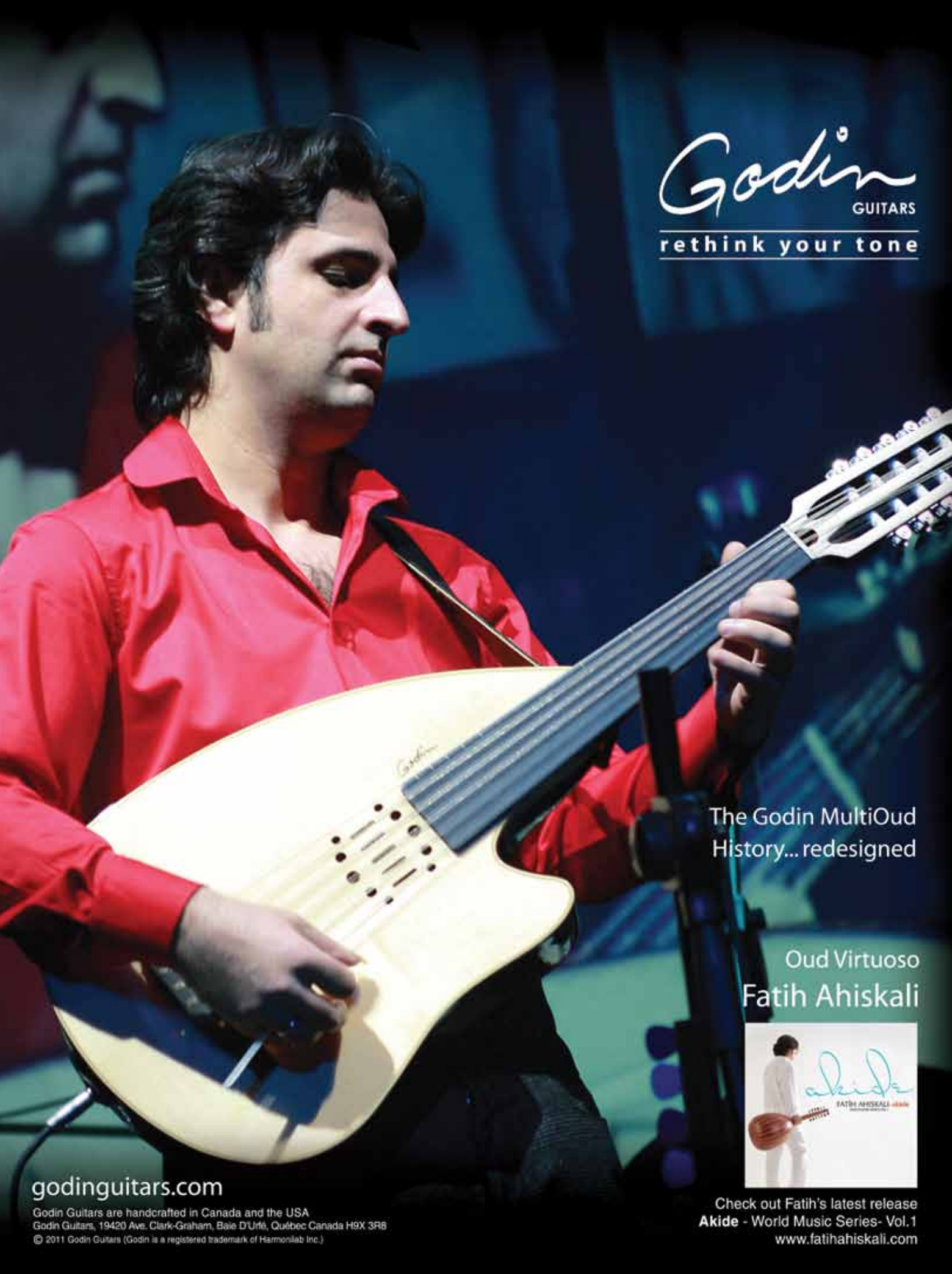
"After playing with so many people, Marc's sonic palette has gotten broader and broader. He has stretched from the angular, aggressive style he's associated with in one context, to beautifully voiced, beautifully expressed stuff you can hear on my 'Jimmie Standing In The Rain.' There's musicality in all of it—I understood that the moment I heard him play years ago. He's never going for shock value, or playing for effect."


JAMES O'MARA


AUTUMN DE WILDE

JEFF TWEEDY
on Nels Cline

"Nels can play anything. We struggle with his spot in the band sometimes, but we always come to a place that's unique and interesting because we *did* struggle, we *did* think it through. The commitment we have to finding moments for each person to express himself really pays off. On the new record we have places where Nels can do his thing and other places where maybe you don't know that Nels is doing his thing, but if you took it away it would make a big difference. He's behind a lot of stuff on a lot of songs. My 11-year-old son listens to rough mixes on the way to school, and he says, 'I'm always pretty sure that if I can't tell what it is, it's Nels.'"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playing with reverb and distortion—feeding back in general. That will improve their worldview considerably!

Cline: I used to be a bit perplexed by reading interviews with jazz guitarists in the '70s that said, "When I play, I'm thinking of a piano or a horn." Fine, but I've always been a fan of the guitar's idiomatic sound in terms of timbre and all, even though I do lots of things with gadgetry, or as I like to call them, "gimmicks." Someone once saw my pedals on the floor and pointed down, yelling, "Gimmicks!"

Ribot: [*laughing*] I like that. I feel a new album title coming on.

Have either of you ever reached a point where you became saturated with electronic effects?

Cline: I stopped playing electric guitar for years. I had an acoustic quartet with my brother. In the '80s, I was playing with Charlie Haden in the Liberation Music Orchestra, and used nylon strings with that. I was completely torn up by the dichotomies between jazz and rock and electric and acoustic. I almost gave up completely. I was listening to Joe Pass and Pat Martino, but still interested in Hendrix and Steve Howe. I didn't know how to merge these sensibilities.

Ribot: On one side there are these bebop guys with thick, flat-wound strings, and on the other side there are guys with lighter strings who could bend notes without having muscles on their index fingers. Hmm…to me the language of jazz guitar is a very sonically constricted language. Sonically minimalist, you might say—which is an artistic choice. Jim Hall could go get a fuzz box just as easily as I can, but he doesn't.

Cline: He actually does use a whammy pedal, the harmonizer part.

Ribot: Wait, he does? No way. Gimmicks! But on the other side is a much richer sonic language that does not rely on the kind of harmonic development that gives traditional jazz its "go." In other words, the "event" in a trad jazz tune is going to be a harmonic event or a tempo event. Whereas the event in rock will be sonic. Were you trying to reconcile these two sets of rules?

Cline: I had a neurotic propensity to dichotomize the rules rather than merge them, which is what I wanted to do. It only changed in the late '80s, when I formed my trio and said, "Screw everything, I'll do what I want." I'd been in these democratic bands where I contributed, but I wasn't making any major aesthetic decisions as a leader. That's when I finally loosened up.

You guys have tried your hands at all sorts of various styles, from straight jazz guitar to—

Ribot: I would not say that bebop guitar is my forte. The most I can say is that I've tried it.

Cline: Nor mine.

JENNY SCHEINMAN
on Nels Cline

"You can rely on Nels to commit completely to the playing, to take the music as deep and far as possible. He's never distracted or critical. He's totally positive about what he's bringing to the show, or to the song. Plus, there's the super-fast mind, quick reflexes and fearlessness. He'll jump off the cliff with you and build a helicopter out of an eggbeater before you hit the ground."


MICHAEL WILSON


AMAW WILLETT

MARY HALVORSON
on Marc Ribot

"Getting to work with Ribot solidified what I always kind of thought about him. He's one of the most in-the-moment musicians I know. He will switch gears or do something out of left field if the idea strikes him. He'll plan out a set, but completely derail if he wants to go somewhere else altogether. You're always on your toes, not falling back on anything."

But in terms of free improvising, you're both experts at filling in a blank canvas.

Ribot: *Literally* in Nels' case. I saw that show.

With the painter Norton Wisdom, at Le Poisson Rouge in January.

Ribot: I was blown away by what both of you did. That's another parallel you and I have. Around the time you were getting that together, I was starting to tour with Chaplin's film *The Kid*. The idea of doing something with a living artist is the next step in that audio-visual territory, because the advantage of a live artist is he can respond to you. No matter what I do, Charlie Chaplin does the same thing to me every night—the motherfucker just doesn't give. But really, it seems to be a moment where we're reconsidering what live shows mean. Audiences are hungry for things that can happen in the room in real time, like collaborations with artists.

Cline: The reaction to my work with Norton is unexpectedly strong. He's charismatic, but there is some zeitgeist in the air as well. It's helpful to have something else to draw people in besides a dude pushing buttons and plucking strings. I'm going to do a sound and sonics digital workshop with [Wilco drummer] Glenn Kotche.

Ribot: It's a very deep area.

Cline: You starting wondering, particularly with a silent film, how can you make something as old as the hills sound fresh. You wonder about use of space, dynamics and melody as related to motion.

Ribot: Those are classic film score functions. Did the audience come away sincerely believing that they saw what they actually heard? You show a shot of an actress, the orchestra changes chords, and the audience believes that the actress became sad. This weekend I'm doing a film noir project at the New School. I've come to realize that from looking at noir I can say everything I want to say in music.

Cline: I'm a noir fan, too. Making *Dirty Baby*, we had to come up with the idea of "cityscapes," these "censor-strip" pieces, and had discussions about the titles, which are all threats, some from noir. Long talks about what elements from the stylistic pantheon should be used to create a sense of dread, pure tension, etc. Beethoven and Brahms were mercilessly ripped off by film composers, so the dimin-

ished chord is forever attached to the suspense thing in movies…

Ribot: The original impetus for using classical composers in cartoons was to introduce kids to the music. Now you can't hear "The Anvil Chorus" without seeing a cartoon image in your mind.

Cline: "Rabbit of Seville."

Let's talk about improvisers playing in a pop setting. What are the demands of those gigs, the process of bringing an improvisational mindset to a rock song? Are the languages similar? Do you feel like you fit in?

Ribot: Waits sat in with the Lounge Lizards. He heard me with those specific sounds. He was interested in them. I wasn't going in improvising *sui generis* on Tom's pop tunes. Plus, I have an interest in pop music that predates having ever heard any form of improvised music. Waits is basically a guy who has the intelligence and grace to feel an anxiety of influence about being a white blues musician, and it's that terror, and guilt and intelligence, that make the music interesting—along with his many gifts as a songwriter. His approach drives the music to a place where I almost *had* to find a new sound, or I'd be shamed. That music was so conflicted and constricted that it demanded a guitar counterpart.

Cline: Before Wilco I was playing with the Geraldine Fibbers, which wasn't about guitar solos; it was about the band sounding like an orchestra. In a certain sense, so is Wilco. As a kid I wanted to be a hippie, but I was too young. But hippies like all sorts of stuff. The mixed concert bills: Charles Lloyd, B.B. King and The Seeds playing together. Coming out of that, I knew there were lots of options. But working with a rock band is about using a different brain. It's not about stuffing an improvising methodology into the music. The music has its own demands. I don't feel inhibited by fitting into what makes a song communicate itself. To me it's like method acting. People, and sometimes Jeff [Tweedy], will frequently ask me to play in a certain way. There's a color he's looking for.

There's good candor between you and Tweedy?

Cline: Absolutely. Yes, he wants to honor my style, but I don't want to have a style. What I need to do is to have the song sound the way it wants to sound. I'll do whatever it takes to communicate the essence of the song.

Ribot: That's a key point. I just finished a gig with Buddy Miller and Bill Frisell, to launch the *Majestic Silver Strings* record. We did an interview and I realized at the end that the one thing the three of us had in common was a respect for the song. Because that record could have been an attempt to be a shredder record. That's what people might have expected from three guitarists, like a long-playing version of *Deliverance*. I don't want to impose some agenda on a song. I respect the ability to read the song, to figure out the song's intentions. Chops need to be in the service of meaning. People who don't get that are…dumb.

Cline: I think that's something you're very good at, and something I'm still learning. Carla Bozulich of the Geraldine Fibbers once asked me to take a solo and play it like a really earnest 14-year-old in his bedroom. I tried it, but I didn't really get it quite right. My take was wacky, crazy, not poignant enough.

Ribot: That's hard.

What kind of language works the best with you guys? How do you talk about this stuff?

Cline: Mike Watt uses metaphor. "Bicycle chains!" "Propellers!" That drives my ideas.

Ribot: Waits works a lot with metaphoric instructions, too. But I need to qualify what I said. Placing the needs of the song first does not necessarily mean placing the desires of the

songwriter first. I've found that with some songwriters, I sometimes disagree about the meanings of their songs, or the meanings I want them to have. Usually I win. Well, when they don't fire me, I win.

Do the pop gigs sharpen any muscles? Do they make you better at certain things?

Cline: I'm still in need of help. Working on this new Wilco record, I find that I get to a point where I started to do something that might be for an instrumental break, and Jeff will come in and say, "Man, will you just play that on the chorus?" And it becomes the signature sound of the track. Putting it all together is rather amazing.

Ribot: There's a certain discipline in pop. My aunt would say, "Where's the hook?" And a hook can be anything! A hook is a funny thing.

Cline: The tiniest sound can have a gargantuan impact.

You've both been involved in repertory to some degree—Nels with John Coltrane's *Interstellar Space* and Andrew Hill's songbook, and Marc with Spiritual Unity and Arsenio Rodriguez. Marc's '90s ensemble Shrek even made hay with The Modern Jazz Quartet's "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise." What's the worst crime a modern interpretation of a classic piece can make?

Ribot: To fail to interpret. To have a reading that doesn't add anything. Not that there's not a place for repertory. Museums and history serve a valuable function. But an interpretation has to re-inscribe the original with a new meaning. Be of its time, or project into the future or create a new level of meaning. If it fails in that—I don't know about a crime, but it's probably the crime of boredom.

Cline: I made the Andrew Hill record because I'd just joined Wilco and all eyes were on me all of a sudden, and I wanted to point my finger somewhere else. The idea was, "You think that there's something going on here? Well, check *this* guy out." I thought Andrew was great, and generally underappreciated. I chose his music because it's very open. It wasn't going to have to be a vernacular experience. We weren't going to blow over killer changes with a Blue Note sound. I could change the instrumentation to be somewhat untraditional, like Rova [Saxophone Quartet] had done with *Ascension*. Strangely, the reaction to it was, "I don't know about this, there's no piano." Which I found odd, because this music is in the world to be interpreted. That's the point. People didn't write Tin Pan Alley songs thinking improvisers were going to play instrumental solos over the changes. Can't we do what we want with it? The fun was to take a living tradition approach. Jazz isn't my tradition to protect. These records were tiny little pleas for flexibility rather than mothballing.

Ribot: You talked about taking traditional jazz instrumentation and providing something that is *not* trad jazz, but more narrowly than that, I've had an interest in taking things that were done in traditional jazz instrumentation and re-inscribing them as guitar music. I feel there are certain commonalities between free-jazz and punk rock and certain parts of the rock tradition. I feel they're both part of great black music, a form that has included many excellent white players over the years. The connection becomes audible. On your recording of the Coltrane piece, I'm sure it worked for you on electric guitar, but I'm not sure it could work with any instrument.

Cline: The sound of an overdriven guitar and a tenor saxophone are similar. But it hadn't really dawned on me, until I was playing that with Gregg [Bendian].

Ribot: I think there's something about the way I'm playing the guitar on an Ayler piece, or you're playing, or when Robert Quine plays a solo. You get the feeling that he's not playing a guitar so much as he's trying to strangle a live snake that's going to bite him and kill him. I never heard Albert Ayler live, but it's what I hear in his music.

Was there a time when you didn't know how to listen to free-jazz, or you didn't understand it? Was there an "a-ha" moment for either of you?

Cline: I had to have an a-ha moment about Ornette [Coleman]. Being a Coltrane devotee, and loving the deep voice of pieces like "Alabama," there was something that sounded too happy about Ornette's music. I couldn't connect with it. I thought it was novel, energetic, fascinating and at times comical. A wild piece like "Moon Inhabitants," say. It was only later that I found the way to play free from listening to Ornette, actually.

Ribot: I have a continual series of a-ha moments listening to Ayler. And I remember hearing *Sun Ship* in high school and it having a religious impact. And when I came back and listened later, from the mid-'80s until recently, my a-ha moment was their compositional smarts. It was like, "Fuck, these are compositions! This isn't just a bunch of people blowing their brains out; it's a set of improvising rules and strategies and whole new set of parameters being laid out."

How important is fun?

Ribot: I don't have any other ambition. I can't think of any other motive. It's the only impulse I trust.

Rhythm has become more a part of your work of late. You're both working with joyous grooves.

Ribot: Well, I've always tried to rock the house. The most rabid free-prov playing has its groove. I am not a friend of rubato. It doesn't interest me. Pulse, forward motion. That's me.

TOM WAITS on Marc Ribot

"Ribot has as much respect for and affinity with noise and distortion as he does with Segovia or Solomon Burke. He is comfortable with crunk, filk, Ezengileer (Tuvan xoomi, like galloping horses), Detroit blues, funeral doom, Danzón, dabke (Palestinian wedding music)…even furniture music! Although he categorizes himself as a 'soul man,' he is the Lon Chaney of the guitar. He is a gypsy, a killer, a nervous teen, a professor, a stripper or a slave and like Lon Chaney, he does all his own makeup and is a man with a thousand faces. You can evoke a metaphor from practically anywhere… you can say, 'Hagfish, Rod Steiger, Sterling Holloway, the Contortions,' you can use animals of the forest or something from a dream. He responds to suggestions like a man under hypnosis. He challenges you to show him material that is worthy of his interest. He usually knows what a song needs whether you agree or not."


MICHAEL O'BRIEN

Cline: I thought it was rather risky to deal in grooves, because someone could point a finger and say, "This is an Ali Farka Touré beat," or, "This is a Brazilian rhythm." When I finally decided to do my own stuff, I wanted it to be free playing meets garage rock or King Crimson, something I thought was authentically white suburban stuff. Can't say why. Plus, I wasn't happy. Things were good, but I felt a sadness about other stuff. I thought of my love for Brazilian pop. Finally I said I want some joy. For some reason when Joe Zawinul died, something about the joy in his best music really hit me. Breskin said that Gunther Schuller said that Zawinul threw away a concert career for a riff. Which is exactly what I love about him! Killer riffs. C'mon, the guy wrote "Country Preacher." I wanted to find some celebratory energy, too. So after tossing this into the universe, I just went for it, and my life changed. Fell in love with Yuka. Happiness and groove go together. In the '80s, I played tons of funk rhythm guitar. Sometimes I wanted to be Roger Troutman from Zapp or Prince or Nile Rodgers.

Ribot: I think that describes how I feel as well. Going forward means going back to some degree. I trust that desire to go back and find fun.

Cline: The Postizos records you made have emboldened me. You've done this killer grooving, and I wrote a piece based on those records. It's still on the cutting room floor, but it's there. "Revenge Of The Piñata."

Let's talk about a dream project. What do you lie in bed and hope to accomplish?

Cline: A mood music record called *Lovers*. Mood music except that the romance is more dark and twisted, and not in a negative way. It's songs by other writers, reinvestigated and at the same time honored. "Touching" by Annette Peacock, "I Have Dreamed" from *The King and I*. "Snare, Girl" by Sonic Youth. Something like those Jackie Gleason 1000 Mandolins discs—not as lame as that, but you should be able to put it on in your bachelor pad.

Marc, what haven't you gotten out of your system?

Ribot: I felt like I got something out of my system with *Silent Movies*. I have a lot of things to do, but one would be Ceramic Dog. We have such a fantastic time playing together, laugh our heads off and play amazing things, and my big ambition for the next year is to translate that into a record that causes listeners to react just as strongly.

You guys have been everywhere. What's the wildest thing you've ever seen from the stage?

Cline: I didn't see the wildest thing I ever saw. I was on stage with Gregg Bendian doing *Interstellar Space* in Portland, and I was so completely lost in my world, I missed a woman on the other side of Gregg's drums, knocking over all Gregg's water and masturbating on stage. They carried her out on a stretcher later. I didn't even notice.

Ribot: Well, I would say that's one of the highest compliments to your solo that I could ever imagine. That gives me a new ambition. Mine will pale in comparison. You have a choice, actually. What do you want, the night the piano fell on Evan Lurie, or the night after the Shrek show in Tokyo where the dominatrix was dripping hot wax onto her victim laying on the floor? The best is probably me, Shahzad [Ismaily] and Ches [Smith] playing behind Iggy Pop at a festival in the Ruhr Valley [in northwestern Germany]. We convinced Iggy to do "Mass Production" in a restored theater that was once a factory that had poured the molten steel for Nazi tanks. He was there without his shirt on, wrapping the mic around his neck, encouraging people to have a riot on stage. The mental snapshot and soundtrack to that is one of the stranger things I've experienced. But it's still not as good as that orgasm. **DB**

Perfect Unison

30-Year-Old Yellowjackets All Abuzz Over the Auspicious Return of Will Kennedy

By Ed Enright

If there was ever a buzz surrounding Yellowjackets, it's right now.

The high-flying quartet turns 30 this year, a milestone marked by the release of *Timeline*, its 21st album to date and the first of two Yellowjackets CDs the group will record and produce under a new arrangement with the Mack Avenue label.

Biggest news of all: Drummer Will Kennedy is back in the band, having rejoined his old cohorts of a dozen years last summer after spending a decade away working on television sets (including the "Wayne Brady Show"), producing various recordings and raising his son, Joshua, now 7. Kennedy replaces outgoing drummer Marcus Baylor, a longtime band member who is currently pursuing his own original projects.

Electric bassist Jimmy Haslip and pianist-keyboardist Russell Ferrante—both founding members—are playing in top form, as always. And reedman Bob Mintzer, with the band 20 years now since the departure of original saxophonist Marc Russo, continues to tear it up and swing hard on tenor and soprano sax, bass clarinet and EWI.

Yellowjackets' repertoire is expansive after so many years writing and performing together. A band of equals, they've been tight in recent live performances, from their high-power concert on the main stage of the 2010 Detroit International Jazz Festival to an intimate engagement in April at Jazz at the Bistro in St. Louis, where they played from entirely different set lists every night.

In St. Louis, the band sizzled as one through the complex, angular unison passages that mark the heads of many Yellowjackets compositions and stretched out with individual solos that showcased each member's unique melodic, harmonic and rhythmic personality. The loyal Jazz at the Bistro audience expressed strong approval of the group, a house favorite for many years, seemingly thrilled with the familiar configuration of musicians on stage.

Indeed, with Kennedy back onboard, Yellowjackets appear to be completely reinvigorated. They've got plenty of sting to back up the media buzz they're generating nowadays.

"Every band has kind of a sweet spot," Mintzer said. "If you think of the John Coltrane Quartet—I mean, Elvin Jones, John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner were a team, they were a unit. Miles Davis in the early 1960s with Tony Williams on drums—it was a certain particular thing, and I think a lot of the music in this band was fashioned around Will Kennedy's drumming. It's just this fit that is somehow meant to be. Not that there was anything wrong with anything that was a happening prior, but it became apparent on some level that this music called for Will Kennedy, and it just seemed like that was the direction in which to go."

"I think everybody that's been in this band has been a valuable commodity, but we are very excited about having Will

Yellowjackets, clockwise from front left: Will Kennedy, Jimmy Haslip, Bob Minzter and Russell Ferrante

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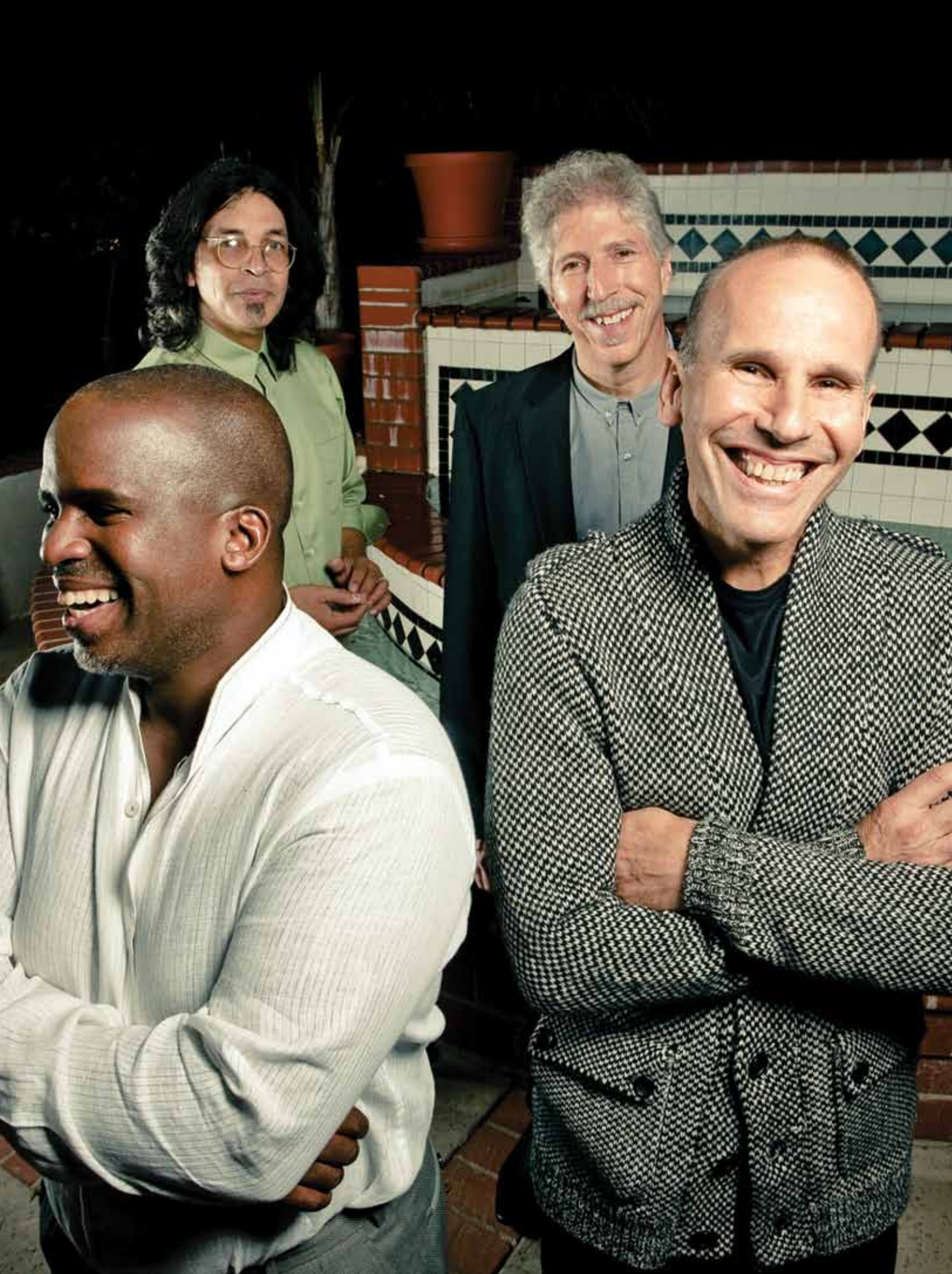

back," Haslip said. "There is a definite chemistry there between him and me. And I think in this band the body of work that Will was involved with was a pretty major part of the band's history. We're glad to have him back in the fold, and this new record shows a really nice side of what the band is all about. Our fans spoke up about that as well. They were very happy to have Will back. And if you look at the records that William was involved in, like *Politics*, for example, which won a Grammy [in 1988], he had a lot to do with composition on that record as well."

On the afternoon of their final Jazz at the Bistro show, the guys got together to discuss the creation of *Timeline*. Comfortably seated in a hotel business center near the famous Gateway Arch of St. Louis, they joked about the amount of preparation required to learn some of the complex melodic lines, unconventional chord changes and odd meters—signature elements that make the new CD yet another ultra-ambitious Yellowjackets project.

"I think some of this music was among the most challenging," Ferrante suggested. "At least the songs that Bob wrote."

"My fault," Mintzer deadpanned.

Ferrante assumed a slightly less accusing tone: "There were some really difficult things that didn't lay well on the instrument."

"That's Russell talking," Kennedy teased.

"And that's Bob trying to defend himself," Mintzer mumbled.

"Russell is guilty of it as well," Kennedy added. "We are all still doing the homework to pull these tunes off live."

"In all honesty, I wrote some quirky melodies with large interval skips in there," Mintzer admitted.

"With the advent of notation software, you can write some really crazy stuff that sounds great when the computer plays it in perfect time," Ferrante observed. "But how does it translate when real guys are trying to play it?"

The guys said they prepared the *Timeline* material individually, sharing music files and demo tapes of compositions they had been working up on their own. They met up later to play through the material together during some jam sessions at Ferrante's garage in California before going into the studio to record.

"The emphasis in this collection of music was us playing together and Will being there," Mintzer said. "And the things I wrote, I thought, 'How would I most like to play with this band, with these people, and in what fashion?' And I just kind of constructed these tunes around that. I knew what everyone did, and I just brought [the compositions] in, and we started playing them. But the unknown is always how people interpret whatever you bring in and change things, and it's always a great adventure to see where the tune winds up. Everyone here writes, so it's really great to get all of these different perspectives, but somehow at the end of the day, it sounds like a Yellowjackets recording, whether it's electric, acoustic or whatever."

The group is augmented on one track by guitarist Robben Ford, who has a history of performing and recording with the group and who last appeared with them on 1994's *Run For Your Life*. Two cuts feature guest trumpeter John Diversa, an educator and bandleader in Los Angeles who also plays in Mintzer's highly acclaimed big band.

"I remember we specifically thought about it: This is going to be a band record," Kennedy said. "The main focus was going to be the four of us, with me returning, and trying to capture that original group sound."

Meanwhile, on stage again with his once and future bandmates, Kennedy was hard at work trying to capture the proper feel and form of Yellowjackets repertoire he inherited from the Baylor era.

"Every drummer has a fingerprint in the setup that he has," Kennedy said. "There's a certain way of tuning and arranging the kit that's unique to that person. I'm sure there are qualities of that in every chair. But somehow the way Marcus kind of angled and played things was unique to him, and I actually have a unique way of playing as well: I'm physically left-handed, but my strong foot is my right foot, so I'm playing with the ride cymbal on

the opposite side. So there are things that Marcus and I are doing behind the drum kit that are much different from each other, and to make that connection, that relationship behind the kit, it took a minute to really get that going. But I feel comfortable now. There's a lot of stuff in our live performances that Marcus played originally, and I feel completely at home with it now."

"When you have a group of musicians who are together for a long time and then one person leaves or you have to sub a person for a gig, it really flips the whole picture," Kennedy continued. "There's a fair amount of adjustment that occurs when somebody goes away."

"How many leaderless bands are there?" Mintzer asked. "Not so many, I think. By virtue of the fact that there is no leader and there are four equal members, each member's input is profound, and when you remove one of those members, it's like taking this big chunk of the inner workings of the music away."

"You kind of reinvent the situation," Haslip observed.

"When Will left, it was like I felt like an arm had been torn off in some strange way," Mintzer said. "We had played with a lot of stellar drummers, but this whole language and vocabulary had been developed based on Will being one-quarter of this whole."

"I'm trying to remember," Ferrante chimed in, listing the various drummers who have played with the band at one time or another. "There was Peter Erskine, who played for a year. Then we did gigs with Terri Lyne Carrington, Greg Hutchinson, Vinnie Colaiuta, Alex Acuña. We had some fantastic musicians. But it sort of goes beyond a person's musicianship when you've spent all that time together and have this chemistry. A similar thing happens on occasion when we have to sub out a gig—sometimes Bob or Jim will have a conflict, and we'll have to get someone to fill in on that chair. Certainly the people can learn the notes and learn the songs, but that's only the beginning, right? Even something that's as simple as, How does someone shape their solos? We're so used to knowing how to accompany one another when we play. You just kind of know that energy, and you can tell when it's getting ready to go to the next gear. When we're playing with other people, you're guessing a lot, which can be cool, too. What's gonna happen? But it's not this solid thing that's really secure and moving forward. You're kind of wobbling a little bit."

"And you can liken that back to the John Coltrane Quartet again," Mintzer noted. "The way McCoy Tyner accompanied John Coltrane was very specific—it just fit together so splendidly. And when you remove McCoy Tyner and put another piano player in there, it offsets the whole equation and it sounds totally different."

"Each thing makes sense because of the other things that are happening with it," Ferrante summarized. "That's the strength of the music when it's a band."

This once-electric and now more acoustic-leaning band has seen its share of changes over the decades. Yet it continues to find its path—and its motivation—every step of the way.

"I think it became more of a jazz band than in the early days when we brought a lot of equipment and we had a big crew," Ferrante said, remembering grandiose past Yellowjackets tours with a laugh. "There were times we brought backdrops with [lighting] scrims and risers and all this stuff. Now, it's like we carry our instruments onto the airplane, and we come to the place, and it's really on the strength of the music now if we live or die."

"Another thing that radically changed was the exposure of this music in the media," Mintzer said. "There's hardly any radio stations that play the music that we do, which is kind of in the cracks. Some pieces are more acoustic, some pieces might veer more toward the electric. But it's not comfortably smooth jazz at all, and it's not totally to the liking of acoustic aficionados since we have electric bass and we use synth. So we're in the cracks. There used to be stations that would play it a lot, but now … it seems like what's taken up the slack is YouTube. So if we play a concert somewhere in Europe, the next

day, or later that night, you can go on YouTube and watch that concert. You can see the concert verbatim. And I think that affords bands that have past history and fans the opportunity to keep what we're doing out there and in view. With the demise of the record business and record stores, what it really comes down to now is going out and playing. Whatever it takes—if it means getting up there on YouTube, so be it. We want to go out and play."

Yellowjackets have found that one good way to maintain a presence, so to speak, is by taking their act into schools while they're on the road. A prime example would be their recent visit to St. Louis' Normandy High School arranged by Jazz at the Bistro, which is supported by a grassroots organization with powerful educational outreach.

"We can do a concert with the school big band, and we can do a concert with the four of us, which will generally raise a crowd," Mintzer said, noting that the group offers workshops for students of all ages. "It's great to teach with the whole group because it covers a lot of territory. You have four fairly savvy, experienced musicians here who have played with everybody, and there's really a lot to offer aspiring musicians in the way of inspiration and information.

"Frequently we'll do a concert at a college, and part of the deal is we speak to the student body for a period of time. I remember back when I was in high school and Jazzmobile came to my school—Billy Taylor, Ron Carter, Harold Land and Blue Mitchell—that made a huge impression. So it's great that we have an opportunity to do that, to share our experience and get these kids maybe interested in pursuing what we do."

The band is maintaining a high profile this summer with appearances at the Rio das Ostras Jazz & Blues Festival in Brazil on June 24–25, as well as four big gigs with vocalist Bobby McFerrin, who tapped Ferrante, Kennedy and Haslip for his own *Bang Zoom* project back in 1995 and appeared on Yellowjackets' *Dreamland* album the same year.

"Being an instrumental band, there's plenty of room to collaborate with a variety of artists," Kennedy explained. "We all work with other people, so the concept of hooking up with somebody is right there in front of you."

"The fact that we're involved with outside things, that also feeds the creative fire of this band," Haslip said. "You learn stuff when you work with other people that maybe you wouldn't learn if we stayed in a bubble and just worked with the four of us and didn't venture off into anything else. Once you go out and start working with people from all over the world, then there's new ideas, new perspectives, all kinds of things start happening, and you come back into the fold with the four of us and have all this new experience at hand that we're all willing to share. That can only bring positive things to the table. It all adds to the individual, makes the individual stronger with experience, and when the four of us come together it makes that even more intense."

All four Yellowjackets are involved in outside musical projects, not to mention teaching gigs, that add dimension and depth to their lives and careers. This particular arrangement is special, the ultimate reward for three decades of hard work and heartfelt commitment.

"These musicians playing this music, which was crafted based around these four players, is something totally unique," Mintzer said. "I've never experienced this before; I don't know if I ever will again. There's a certain chemistry here that's profound. There's something that happens when you're together all these years and you're playing on an ongoing basis that won't happen, no matter how great the musicianship is, if you're not playing together that much. And every year I grow to appreciate it more. I think we all want to keep doing it."

Ferrante wrapped up the hour-long conversation as the others indicated they were ready to head out to the gig: "It's a cliche, but it is like a family," he said. "If it wasn't, we couldn't have survived the 30 years because the friction would build up. We've spent a lot of time together on airplanes and buses and trains, hanging out in terminals and hotels, on the bandstand, eating. So you've really got to feel like you're connected to the other people to have it all really work." **DB**

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GERRY HEMINGWAY
Pluralistic Attitude

By Ted Panken

Gerry Hemingway is a collector with purpose. In addition to teaching percussion, improvisation and composition in the music department of Hochschule Luzern in Switzerland since 2009, the acclaimed drummer is also an obsessive collector and archivist. Which is why, in early January, near the end of a two-week stateside visit undertaken with the intention of selling his New Jersey home and 1913 Steinway B piano, he expressed relief that, after a year's separation, he would soon reunite with his holdings.

"When the job was offered, I told them that moving would be difficult because I've accumulated so much stuff," Hemingway said over dinner in Brooklyn. "It's my resource, and I can't really work without it."

With teaching chops honed from two decades of leading ad hoc master classes and workshops, Hemingway codified a pedagogy during his 2004–'09 tenure at the New School, where he inherited a class called Sound in Time from bassist Mark Dresser. There, Hemingway became an adept lecturer, adding Contemporary Jazz History and World Music History to his teaching portfolio. "These are large lecture classes, and I had to engage the students," he said. "To find out about the Art Ensemble of Chicago or Ayler, or Coltrane, they need to see them, get a real feeling for what went on in the '60s. I got as much footage as possible, did tons of research and accumulated a strong body of work."

Hemingway has spent decades collecting a wide array of sounds and experiences. He explained the circumstances by which he joined the faculty of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the differences in maturity and purpose between European and American students, and the complexities of connecting his charges to the diverse flavors of the jazz timeline. He observed that, although teaching now occupies about half his time—after a 30-year stretch devoted almost exclusively to playing—he is currently experiencing an extraordinarily prolific period of performance, composition and recording.

Hemingway sat alongside a bulging knapsack and cymbal case, which he would later lug on the subway to the East Village apartment where he was spending the night. In the morning, he would reconvene with violinist Mark Feldman, pianist Sylvie Courvoisier and bassist Thomas Morgan, with whom he had rehearsed for the previous six hours, to record *Hôtel Du Nord* (released in April by Intakt), a followup to last year's *To Fly To Steal*. He betrayed no signs of fatigue.

"All of us are sensitive to a notion of transparency in music, where all the elements can speak," Hemingway observed. "Mark thinks acoustically, with many leanings—as Sylvie also has—to the nuance of chamber music dynamics or control, which I have a lot of experience with. Sylvie and I have a compatible concept of what I call 'negative space'—how you organize the space between the notes—that forms an interesting tapestry of rhythmic tension. That way of thinking has roots in the traditions of modern classical music, serialized rhythms and things of that nature."

Tropes of abstraction are less prominent on two 2009 studio recordings. On the nine episodic originals that constitute *Riptide* (Clean Feed)—performed by his current quintet (Ellery Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Oscar Noriega, alto sax and clarinet; Terrence McManus, guitars; Kermit Driscoll, electric bass)—he distills a boutique homebrew from a congeries of stylistic ingredients: postbop, Aylerian freedom, Stockhausenish sound and space rubatos, electronica, pastorales, the blues, reggae, funk. He seasons them with a metrically modulated, global array of beats (there are hints, more implied than in-your-face, of West Africa, Indonesia and New Orleans), much polyphony and constant melodic development. That the feel is suite-like may stem from Hemingway's intention to "weave each musician's sound, their idea, their way of playing not just into the improvising, but into the material itself."

On both *Riptide* and *The Other Parade* (Clean Feed), an earthy recording by BassDrumBone—a collective trio with trombonist Ray Anderson and bassist Mark Helias that has operated, off and on, since 1977—Hemingway propels the flow with an idiosyncratic pulse and precisely executed attack. He tends to eschew a drums-as-orchestra approach, instead favoring minimalist strategies, by which he elaborates rhythmic designs on the drum kit's discrete components.

Released on Auricle (Hemingway's own imprint) is a series of scratch-improvised duos with Eskelin, McManus, *komungo* virtuoso Jin Hi Kim, extended-techniques saxophonist John Butcher and synthesizer player Thomas Lehn. Sometimes augmenting his drums with vibraphone or electronics, Hemingway unfailingly addresses and dialogues with his partners' postulations, extracting maximum juice from core motifs.

He follows more expansive paths on *Affinities* (Intakt), culled from 2010 concerts with pianist Marilyn Crispell. But in Hemingway's view, his summational recording of recent years is *Old Dogs (2007)* (Avant/Mode), on which he and Anthony Braxton, who employed Hemingway and Crispell from 1983 to 1994, engage in four separate, no-roadmap, timed-to-the-hourglass musical conversations.

"It's a heavy piece of listening," said Hemingway, who utilized his "full orchestra"—drums, mallets, vibraphone, marimba, two versions of an electronic setup, percussion odds and ends—for the epic event. "But if you get through the four hours, the experience might give you the largest insight into who I am. We go through a very broad world, and the depth of interaction is profound—we seem to know where the other is going in every nanosecond.

"It also amazes me how things move harmonically between us. Of course I hear rhythm and melodies, but I'm really listening to the pitches and frequencies that everybody is playing, and connecting and interrelating my instrument primarily from that perspective. It seems crazy, because the drums are limited in their pitch production, but I don't see it that way. I'm able to propose and initiate a huge host of pitches by using my hands, or tubes and other devices, or different sticks and pressures. This was always my orientation, but I only recently noticed that I think this way."

There is a geography-is-destiny quality to Hemingway's backstory. It begins in New Haven, Conn., where his family—his father is a banker who, earlier in life, studied composition with Paul Hindemith—had laid firm roots. There, Hemingway, as a self-described "wild and woolly hippie," developed 360-degree interests spanning electronic music and the timeline of jazz drums. In the fall of 1972, Hemingway ran an ad for "a Chick Corea-Keith Jarrett style piano trio." It was answered by pianist Anthony Davis, then a Yale undergraduate, four years his senior.

"I was raving about Leo Smith, Coltrane's *Expression*, Eric Dolphy's *Last Date*," Hemingway recalled. "Anthony was like, 'How did you get on to all this stuff?' That was my way. I was always exploring. I was way ahead of the curve, and I seem to remain there even now."

Davis informed Hemingway that Smith was, in fact, living in New Haven, and made introductions. An unlikely friendship ensued. "I hung out at Leo's house, and we listened to everything together—the Peking Opera, the Burundi beat, Cage and King Oliver, who he was deeply into then," Hemingway said. "He was tremendously generous in sharing his thinking. He was experimenting with ideas, and I was helping him experiment."

Parallel influences entered the mix. Hemingway played in Davis' group, Advent, with bassist Wes Brown and trombonist George Lewis of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Yale faculty member Willie Ruff brought Papa Jo Jones, Willie "The Lion" Smith and Duke Ellington to campus for concerts. Reedmen Dwight Andrews and Oliver Lake and bassists Helias and Dresser were in town. Meanwhile, Hemingway, who attended Berklee College of Music for the fall 1973 semester before opting for the autodidactic path, studied privately in Boston with drum master Alan Dawson, and with members of Wesleyan University's ethnomusicology department, including—on an informal basis—Ed Blackwell.

Hemingway moved to New York in 1977. By then he had thoroughly assimilated the AACM precept that the most efficacious paths to self-definition are composition and solo performance.

"Many things shape you, and one of them is the pure serendipity of the people you meet," Hemingway said. "Until I met Anthony, this badass piano player who also composed, I never really thought about writing music. Then it made perfect sense, even though I didn't know a damn thing about it. Leo was thinking globally, about the relationship and communication between the different traditions. We weren't scholars of the things we were listening to, but we transcribed them, analyzed them, digested them, and found salient points to incorporate into 'your sound,' this somewhat nebulous term. It opened up another option, another way of thinking. My whole life, I've dealt with all kinds of different cultures, and hung out many different ways in many different places. So in the end, yes, I have a pluralistic attitude."

The AACM's example helped Hemingway devise ways to build a viable career within the creative music subculture. "I think that more than almost anywhere else in my life, I can really channel what I feel through what I play," he explained. "When I realized that life is not worth living unless you're engaged in some direct way with what you care most about, I started to ask myself: 'If I want to do this great, how do I make a living? How do I pay the rent?' I took the question seriously. That's partly why pretty immediately I shunned going to schools. I fought to be able to make a living as a musician. It takes tenacity. The AACM guys have tenacity forever."

Other conceptual options emerged during his decade with Braxton, who required band members to sight-read complexly notated scores and develop their improvisations upon the ideas contained therein. Hemingway refined his ideas through the '90s and '00s, writing increasingly ambitious quintet and quartet music for several configurations. Some included Americans (his personnel has included Anderson or Robin Eubanks on trombone, Herb Robertson on trumpet, Don Byron on clarinet, Eskelin on tenor sax-

ophone and Dresser on bass), but Hemingway drew particular inspiration during most of the '90s from an Amsterdam-centric group built around Michael Moore on alto saxophone and clarinet, trombonist Wolter Wierbos and cellist Ernst Reijseger.

"I was attracted by the elastic capability of these musicians," he said. "They tended to bring in the European classical 20th century tradition a bit more than showed up in other places, but with the visceral strain of Ayler and Coltrane, too. We could talk about Wagner and Bechet at the same time. It was all relevant. That broadness of thinking is the mentality that's emerged. When a drum student comes to me, we're going to talk about Xenakis as much as Baby Dodds. We're going to integrate the whole story."

Hemingway moved to Switzerland with the intention of staying. "I stipulated that it needs to be a permanent job," he said in April in New York, where he performed at The Cornelia Street Café with his quintet, and in trios with McManus and Eskelin. Over the foreseeable future, he'll try to maintain equipoise between teaching and breathing new life into various projects, including European units such as the WHO Trio (with pianist Michel Wintsch and bassist Baenz Oester) and bands led by saxophonist Frank Gratkowski and pianist Georg Graewe, as well as his American ensembles.

"I can take the train to do one gig and come back," Hemingway said. "I'm trying to get to New York to perform as much as I can, even though it's almost impossible to earn enough to pay for the plane ticket. But I'm comfortable in European culture, and I feel as at home there as I would here. It works well for me."

Admired by associates for his comprehensive logistical competence and single-minded determination to realize projects, the 56-year-old artist seems unlikely to slacken the pace of his musical production. "Moving through time, you let go of the filigree and begin to get closer to these basic essences that are the most important materials," Hemingway said. "You tend not to be frivolous. You learn how to save. You learn how to finish a story. I guess the cliche is that there's not a whole lot of time left. You want to make sure you get your idea out there.

"I always had to do it myself. This is important work, and the only way it's going to happen is if somebody like me steps up to the plate. It's stressful and exhausting, and sometimes I work a little too hard. But it comes down to the bottom line. I often ask all my students: 'What did you run into recently that blew your mind?' If you don't know, then you're not yet in touch with being in the arts. That's your guide to sift through this mountain of information and get some sense of how to navigate it and eventually formulate who you are within it. That was key for me when I did it alone. Not that I didn't get help from institutions, but I initiated the relationships and did it more or less on a one-on-one basis. That was my way, which really can't be duplicated anymore." **DB**

Wessell Anderson Tales of "Warmdaddy"

By Ted Panken

In late March, Wessell "Warmdaddy" Anderson arose at dawn in his home in East Lansing, Mich., and caught an early flight to New York. After checking in at his Upper West Side hotel, he caught a cab down Broadway to the Time Warner Center, where Wynton Marsalis was leading a run-through of his septet repertoire in Jazz at Lincoln Center's rehearsal space for a three-night stint at the Rose Theater.

Things proceeded efficiently, and the members dispersed at 2 p.m. "We know this music," Anderson said. In contrast to his casually dressed colleagues, he wore a tailored brown jacket, a lavender dress shirt, tan slacks and custom-made, alligator skin loafers with running-shoe soles. "We worked three weeks every month for four or five years straight," he noted. "People grew up and left the band, but whenever we come back together, it's the same."

At this moment, Anderson—who is about 6 feet 4 inches tall and looks more like a left tackle than the world-class alto and sopranino saxophonist that he is—was hungry. He donned his black porkpie and knee-length black overcoat, picked up his sax case and headed downtown to Manganaro Foods, an old-school emporium on Ninth Avenue that serves Italian provisions and sandwiches in the front and home cooking in the back. During a lunch that included a bocconcini-and-tomato salad and linguine with clams, "Warmdaddy" reflected on his life and career.

"It's been a good month," he said. "I've had a chance to come out and let people hear me after my stroke." Without prompting, Anderson, 46, offered the details of the catastrophe that befell him in July 2007, a couple of years after he had ended a 17-year run with Marsalis to assume a faculty position at Michigan State University. "My left side was weak—my hand, my foot, my lip, which was the last thing that healed. During rehab, I'd come in early every day to get in the pool. They said, 'Why are you here early?' I said, 'I want to play.' They said, 'You'll play some day.' I said, 'No. I'm going to play tomorrow. You don't understand me. Even if I'm in a wheelchair, as long as my lip and fingers can move, I'm OK.' That December, Wynton asked me to do a Christmas show. I said, 'If it don't look right, don't have me do the show.' He said, 'No, you're all right.'"

Anderson suddenly turned his attention to the Manganaro's proprietress, who had just presented a complimentary cannoli. "He cheated on me by getting married," she bantered. "Don't be mad," he beamed, flashing a warm smile worthy of his memorable nickname.

Returning to his anecdote, he said, "I lost the get-up-and-go to want to stay at school," he continued. "My son was in 10th grade when I left Lincoln Center. I was working a lot, making great money, but my wife asked me to come home. I said, 'I'll give you whatever he needs.' She said, 'He needs you.' I liked being inside a jazz environment and being able to come home every night. But after the stroke, my son had graduated and decided he wanted to be a musician. I realized that he wasn't seeing a professional musician anymore, but just a teacher. I decided that if I made it back to school, I'd try to work more. Then work started coming, and it reached a point where I always had to check with someone to do it. I felt like I was in a box. The pay is good. The benefits are great. But I'm not satisfied."

So when the semester concluded, Anderson relocated to Baton Rouge, La., the city where, in 1982, he had enrolled at Southern University to study with clarinetist Alvin Batiste. Already working a fair number of weekends and one-offs in the Midwest and the South, he hit the road full-stride, ballyhooing the gigs with the 2011 album *Warmdaddy Plays Cannonball*, his fifth as a leader. On the CD, a sextet of four young, New Orleans-based musicians—among them his son on trombone—and veteran bassist Harry Anderson (Southern University's current director of jazz studies) interpret six Cannonball Adderley staples in a modern Crescent City manner.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, the son of a working drummer, "Warmdaddy" started soaking up Charlie Parker at 14, and was sufficiently conversant with modernist vocabulary to play Thelonious Monk's "Played Twice" for his audition tape.

"I was raised with older musicians," he explained. "I carried my dad's drum case to gigs. He took me with him when he went to Philly Joe Jones' loft on the Lower East Side for a lesson. At the time, Philly was making his

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stick book, and he and my dad practiced on his bar. Then he took me to see Elvin Jones. Elvin would squeeze the heck out of me. When he saw me later, he said, 'Oh, I see you're big now. Don't think I can't pick your big ass up!'—and he picked me up. These people were like family."

Anderson transcribed numerous Bird solos by ear, internalizing Parker's attack, the way he breathed, his alternate fingerings. He took private lessons with Eddie Daniels and Walter Bishop Jr., attended Jazzmobile workshops led by Charles Davis and Frank Foster, and had university-of-the-streets experiences sitting in with pianist Gil Coggins and Sonny Stitt in outer-borough clubs. He also attended sessions at the Star Café, then a serious hang for New York's bebop-oriented musicians. "My dad said, 'Watch yourself in there; they're drinking and smoking—it's bad stuff you want to stay away from,'" Anderson related. "But people knew my father, and they didn't bother me."

The summer before his senior year, Anderson joined a friend at Grant's Tomb to hear a concert by Art Blakey and a new edition of the Jazz Messengers featuring Wynton and Branford Marsalis (then playing alto saxophone). Later, they went to the Lickity Split in Harlem for a jam session. "I loved what Branford was doing," Anderson recalled. "He sounded like a latter-day Cannonball. At the club, I was playing with my eyes closed, and my friend told me to open them. Branford was standing there, looking right at me. I got nervous. He said, 'No, keep playing; I like it.'

"Later Branford asked where I was going to school. I told him I was thinking about Berklee—I had a full scholarship. He told me I needed to go study with Alvin Batiste. I'd never heard of him. He said, 'That's the cat who taught me.' I said, 'Whoever taught you, I want him to teach me.' He told me he was getting ready to leave Art and asked, 'Are you ready?' I told him no. He said, 'Donald Harrison's about to start—check him out, too.' 'Who's Donald?' 'That's my man from New Orleans.' I put two and two together. I wanted to go where I thought the young musicians were, and New Orleans seemed like the right direction."

Batiste's practicum included switching Anderson to a double-lip embouchure and eliminating any possible tendencies of being "too hip for the room," as the saying goes. "When I got there, Alvin said, 'I see you've been saturated with bebop. We have to go back in the history.' I said, 'This *is* history.' He said, 'Oh, no. You're already playing modern. I know what I'm going to do with you.' He sent me on the Greyhound to New Orleans to a gig with Doc Paulin's Marching Band for Mardi Gras. He said, 'Wear black pants and a white shirt, have your ax and be ready to march.' Next thing I know, we're marching around a hotel, going from one conference room to another, playing 'Little Liza Jane' and 'Down By The Riverside.' I didn't know how to play inside a second-line band, but after six hours of marching, I figured it out. When I got back, Bat said, 'Did you understand the polyphony?' I said, 'Yeah, everybody was playing something different.' He said, 'That's three-part harmony.' Then he started playing some music with Sidney Bechet, and then Louis Armstrong.

"He said, 'You've got to figure out how to make everything modern. Just because it's old doesn't mean it's *old*. Check out those solos; people still can't play them.' He was right, because Sidney Bechet's solos are harder than Bird's."

Within a few years, Anderson had transitioned to a more ensemble-oriented, multidirectional conception of musical production that, he would soon discover, paralleled the direction Wynton Marsalis was beginning to move toward in 1986, when he came to Baton Rouge to do a workshop.

"Whenever someone was soloing, I came up with different licks for the saxophone section," Anderson said. "Wynton looked perplexed, like, 'These country musicians don't know how to play a solo, but they come up with very good licks in between—how is this going on?' Everybody pointed to me."

Soon thereafter, Marsalis brought Anderson to Cleveland for a tryout week with Marcus Roberts, Bob Hurst and Jeff "Tain" Watts. "He was still doing 'Black Codes' and 'Knozz-Moe-King,' playing the same way

Woody Shaw had been doing, but different forms played by younger people," Anderson said. "It was exciting, and I loved it. Wynton told me, 'You sound good, but you're not ready yet. Go in the shed, and we'll get back together.' [I thought,] 'Yeah, that's probably the last time I'll see you.' Two years later, he called me back. I said, 'You're never going to use an alto.' He said, 'It's a different instrument, but I like the way *you* play.'

"It was a big challenge, but Wynton makes the challenge work *for* you. He said, 'You need to listen to stuff you don't know.' I'd checked out Benny Carter, but I didn't know Johnny Hodges. I had to play a lot of Johnny Hodges' music, and I had to figure out what I was going to do with it. And I had to learn how to lead the section."

Toward this end, Marsalis suggested that Anderson observe Norris Turney, who had filled Hodges' chair with Duke Ellington after Hodges died in 1970, and was fulfilling the lead alto function in the first iteration of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO). "Norris told me that the feeling of the music has to go *through* you. He said, 'It's all right to read what's written, but make them move with the feeling.' He'd play turned to the band, with his back to the audience. He said, 'That's love, baby. You play for the band first, *then* you play for the audience.' By being around a musician like that, I understood. When he left, Wynton said, 'You'd better move over.' I said, 'I don't know if I'm ready.' He said, 'You'd better be.'"

In 1987 Anderson played his first Lincoln Center concert, a Charlie Parker tribute with elder Birdologist Charles McPherson. "I knew about him, but I didn't know until I got on the stage how bad he'd cut me up," Anderson remarked. "Wynton said, 'Well, you learned.'"

Some years later, Anderson and McPherson matched wits on Monk repertoire. "The same thing happened," Anderson said. "I wasn't ready."

Two weeks before our lunch conversation, Anderson had experienced his third "dueling altos" encounter with McPherson, which was also his first solo appearance at the Rose Theater since the stroke. More than 20 years had passed since their first battle, and Anderson demonstrated just how ready he now was. The repartee began about 45 minutes into the first set, devoted primarily to less-traveled Parker tunes. Propelled by a first-class bebop rhythm section of Ehud Asherie on piano, Ben Wolfe on bass and Victor Lewis on drums, Anderson pranced through "Cardboard" with high poise, creating fresh, thematic lines that he phrased on the beat in a way owing much to his assimilation of the Benny Carter-Cannonball Adderley playbook, in contrast to McPherson's swooping, barline-crossing, Bird-like arpeggiations. On "Another Hair-Do," McPherson ratcheted into a supersonic opening solo, soaring through the changes, cramming note clusters, quoting Parker licks in unexpected places. When it came his turn, Anderson waited a few measures, quoted "Red Top" and, with due deliberation, built a long, ascendant solo in which melody was paramount—as Sonny Stitt used to do in his prime—before engaging in a stimulating series of exchanges.

The altoists assumed similar characters on the second set, which paid homage to Parker's *Bird With Strings* oeuvre. The program included once-commissioned, never-recorded charts by John Lewis and Gerry Mulligan, lyric Anderson features on "Repetition," "Laura" and "Rocker" and an intense dialogue on "What Is This Thing Called Love."

Thinking back on his time onstage with McPherson, Anderson joked, "I said, 'As long as I'm bleeding, I'm going to have some of your blood on me, too.' Charles is going to play like Charlie Parker, so it doesn't make sense for me to do it." Again, Anderson referenced his attitude toward interpreting Johnny Hodges features with JLCO. "The first thing I decided was not to play like him. But playing his tunes actually explained to me how to make a ballad sound beautiful, but my way."

This is precisely the dictum to which Anderson hews on his new recording, which gestated in a series of "Wess Anderson Presents" appearances at Snug Harbor in New Orleans devoted to repertoire by John Coltrane, Monk and, most recently, Adderley. "Most of my records have been original music, and I thought people might like something different," he said, en route from Manganaro's to a nearby cigar store to stock up on hand-rolleds for his New York week. "People say, 'I remember hearing you with Wynton years ago.' I say, 'Thank you very much. Check out what we're doing now.'" **DB**

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Reviews

COURTESY OF NONESUCH

Joshua Redman/ Aaron Parks/ Matt Penman/ Eric Harland
James Farm

NONESUCH 526294

★★★

Who or where is James Farm, I wondered as I sliced open Joshua Redman's new co-led quartet disc, which arrived in a plain brown wrapper without explanation. I trust there's a great story to be told about why he chose the name for this combo, which makes its CD debut here. Alas, perhaps it's a story more interesting than I found on some of the music.

James Farm calls itself a collaborative band, a term intended to suggest an absence of hierarchy—that each member is of such special merit that none could presume to be boss. It also implies that each player is a composer, an easy term to appropriate but a rather pointless one until *other* people play your music. After all, though, James Farm is still a contemporary acoustic quartet and Redman is still its star.

Yet, in the 10 original titles here, the musicians seem to be talking more to each other than to an eavesdropping audience. Redman remains commanding and fastidious, but he hides behind complex masks of his own creation. The material derives from many global sources. It has an aloof but challenging chill that surges and ebbs according to an unpredictable but formal rigor, relying on tempo shifts, swooping double-time flights and similar devices. Some seem gratuitous. The steep pick-up halfway into his composition "Star Crossed," for example, sounds tacked on, as if everyone just got bored poking along.

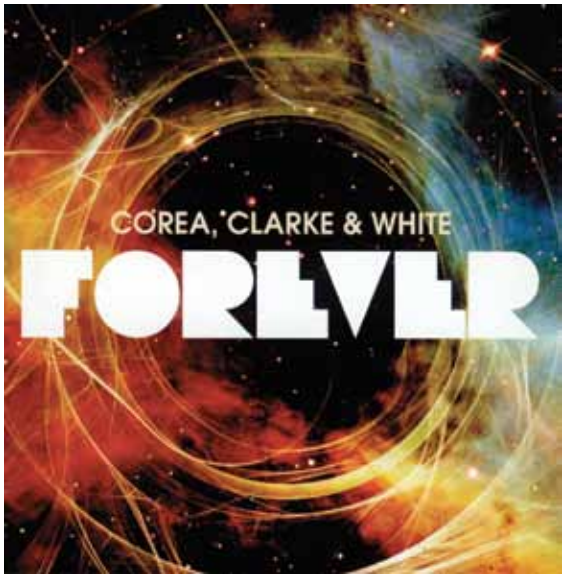
In its particulars, there are moments to be esteemed. But overall the music and time signatures are too busy and austere to swing. Pianist Aaron Parks' "Chronos," for instance, is a rather interesting minor-key melody that exudes the kind of intrigue that could extract a snake from a basket. Exotic in the manner of Juan Tizol's "Caravan," it becomes haughty, hard and impersonal in performance. To some degree, this is built into Redman's unromantic sound. He's such an accomplished player that one almost wishes he wasn't such a captive of post-'60s tenor. But that's the dominant contemporary language.

Bassist Matt Penman's "Coax" opens on a simple interval that Redman builds into a lean but insistent trance-like mantra and soon melts into a sleepy piano meditation by Parks. When Redman returns to re-stir the piece, his lines seem less an improvisation than a rather mechanical roller coaster over a series of shifting scales. It leaves little behind, even after repeated auditions. Penman's "Low Fives," with its long, meandering bass intro, sounds indolent until Redman takes over on soprano.

—John McDonough

James Farm: Coax; Polliwog; Bijou; Chronos; Star Crossed; 1981; I-10; Unravel; If By Air; Low Fives. (69:00)
Personnel: Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Aaron Parks, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Eric Harland, drums.
Ordering info: nonesuch.com

Corea, Clarke & White
Forever
CONCORD 32627
★★★★



In Chick Corea's notes for this much-anticipated album, he says that he had always hoped to do an acoustic tour with Stanley Clarke and Lenny White—the trio at the core of his '70s supergroup Return To Forever—but never got around to it. Finally, in the fall of 2009, he did. Along the way, tape was rolling. Six sound captures were made at Yoshi's, in Oakland, as well as one each at Seattle's Jazz Alley and Tokyo's Blue Note. The three seasoned veterans sound wildly happy to be playing together again, as if the 30-plus years between the old days and the new had simply fallen away.

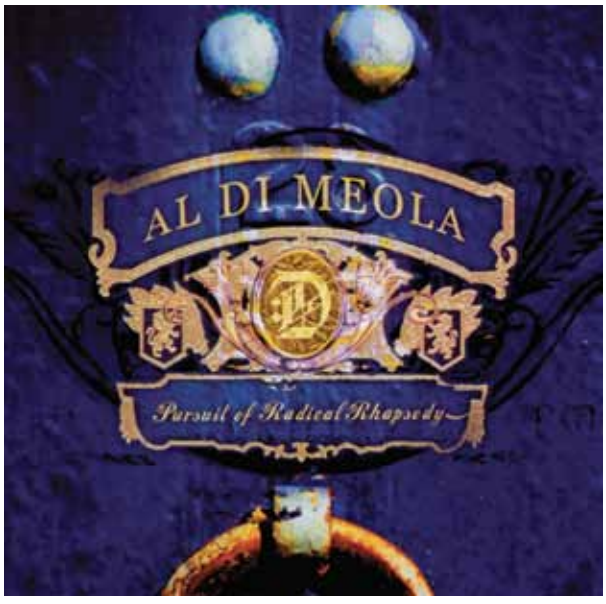
RTF always had a brisk, eager, alert quality, as if the players were standing on the edge of a cliff preparing to hang-glide. Man, did they soar, catching the rhythmic updrafts and reveling in the free falls, drifts and switchbacks. That exhilaration is still evident here, as are the crisp optimism and occasional dark throbs of the Spanish tinge that characterized the group. At the heart of the sound, of course, are Corea's childlike dreaminess, crunchy attack and fearless technique. From the first creamy notes of "On Green Dolphin Street" and "Windows," there's no doubt about who's playing piano, as Corea obliquely circles the edges of the tune then darts into his smart lines. Clarke—quick as ever, but with a slightly nasal tone that recalls the '70s in a bad way—finds a clever descending trail on an uptempo "Waltz For Debby," boldly rethinking the rhythm in his solo, though his percussive exhibition on "La Canción De Sofia" comes across as a crowd-pleaser. Corea's composition for a master, "Bud Powell," highlights Chick's hard clarity of mind, and the trio exudes pure joy. White steps out on Thelonious Monk's "Hackensack" with a martial snare, brilliantly riffing on angular fragments of the tune. The main disc closes with a long jam on "Señor Mouse" that draws you into the exuberant spirit of these performances.

There's a second, mostly electric disc with this album, but calling it a "bonus" is a misnomer; only diehard nostalgists or collectors are likely to enjoy it. With the exception of the last live track, it's a rehearsal recorded in a Los Angeles studio before a performance at the Hollywood Bowl and features guest appearances by Bill Connors, Chaka Khan and Jean-Luc Ponty. The violinist plays with wonderful verve and abandon, and a take of "Armando's Rhumba" achieves an attractive, stately feel, but most of the tracks feel like what they were—generic warmups—and Khan's shrieks are just dreadful.

—Paul de Barros

Forever: Disc One: On Green Dolphin Street; Waltz For Debby; Bud Powell; La Canción De Sofia; Windows; Hackensack; No Mystery; Señor Mouse. (72:52) Disc Two: Captain Marvel; Señor Mouse; Crescent; Armando's Rhumba; Renaissance; High Wire—The Aerialist; I Loves You Porgy; After The Cosmic Rain; Space Circus; 500 Miles High. (66:14)
Personnel: Chick Corea, piano and keyboards; Stanley Clarke, acoustic and electric bass; Lenny White; drums; Bill Connors (Disc Two: 2, 7, 8, 9), electric guitar; Jean-Luc Ponty (Disc Two: 4, 5, 7, 8, 9), violin; Chaka Khan (Disc Two: 6, 7) vocals.
Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Al Di Meola
Pursuit Of Radical Rhapsody
TELARC 32835
★★★



We all know the primary bugaboo with most Al Di Meola records, right? Too many notes. From "Race With The Devil On Spanish Highway" back in 1977 to "Flesh On Flesh" a few years ago, the guitarist has filled his tracks with great sprays of athletic licks. In the large, they're bravura turns that saturate the music at hand. Happily, on this new disc, Di Meola hits the brakes a bit, giving his itchy, pan-cultural pieces a chance to breathe, even when they're barreling along. It's a move that bolsters the music's lyrical nature, and it makes the album one of his strongest statements yet.

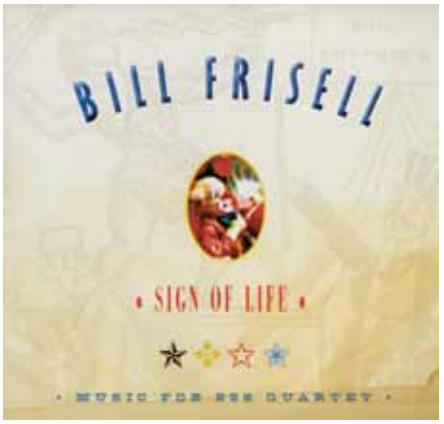
A blend of flamenco, tango and Caribbean strains inform the charts. Di Meola's World Sinfonia ensemble is well aware of the music's nuances. When the tempos ignite, a commitment to subtlety can be heard in their rich blend of electric and acoustic instruments. A Gypsy essay like "Full Frontal Contrapuntal" impresses with explosive moments of darting runs, but the band's exacting approach makes the speediest sections more than just parades of flash. Same goes for "Destination Gonzalo," which finds pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba sitting in, and the leader pining in the upper register à la Carlos Santana.

When the group turns to ballads, like the romantic "Bona," that lyricism is nudged even further to the front. Di Meola has a sweet sound on a nylon-stringed instrument. A fluid phrase, a breath of air, a lingering note that's fretted over—it makes for a dreamy package. Back on electric, there's "Paramour's Lullaby," a mid-tempo reflection with ballad tendencies. The blend of the leader's guitar and Fausto Beccalossi's accordion creates a fetching swirl.

Two pop surprises arrive at the end of the program, and each tilts towards the precious side. "Strawberry Fields" is played with little embellishment and filled with Baby Boomer sentiment, but not as much sentiment as the accompanying "Over The Rainbow." With Charlie Haden plunking somberly and a string quartet glistening in the background, Di Meola's farewell to Les Paul is too mushy by half. It's also revealing: Who knew Mr. Muscle was so taken with melancholy?

—Jim Macnie

Pursuit Of Radical Rhapsody: Siberiana; Paramour's Lullaby; Mawazine Pt. 1; Michelangelo's 7th Child; Gumbiero; Brave New Word; Full Frontal Contrapuntal; That Way Before; Fireflies; Destination Gonzalo; Bona; Radical Rhapsody; Strawberry Fields; Mawazine Part 2; Over The Rainbow.
Personnel: Al Di Meola, acoustic and electric guitars, percussion, keyboards; Fausto Beccalossi, accordion; Kevin Seddiki, 2nd guitar parts; Gumbi Ortiz, percussion; Peter Kaszas, drums, percussion; Victor Miranda, acoustic upright baby bass; Charlie Haden, acoustic bass (13, 15); Peter Erskine, drums (4, 10, 12); Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano (5 10, 12); Barry Miles, string arrangements, additional keyboards; Mino Cinelu, percussion (3, 4, 13, 14).
Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com



Bill Frisell
Sign Of Life
SAVOY JAZZ 17818
★★★

This is droll music. It's quietly humorous, slightly cute, self-effacing and sometimes sneakily substantive. There's a tipping point with some droll music, however, a place where it moves from being laid-back to lacking gumption. Frisell is playing on that line on the short cuts on his *Sign Of Life*, and here and there he and his wonderful 858 Quartet arrive at a place that lacks the verve of other related efforts.

The material is cut from familiar cloth, the Americana quilt that the guitarist has been creating for quite awhile. In the most engaging passages, the music succeeds in evoking a particular atmosphere, rich in associations and connotations, from country, blues and bluegrass to Copeland and Dvorák. It's music that would suit a soundtrack perfectly, like behind scenes from "Deadwood." And the America that Frisell posits is a sort of imaginary 19th century soundscape of gently humorous scenes. There's dissonance, of course, and when it arrives, it comes as a relief from lots of rather similar optimistic or melancholic harmonic material. "Teacher" contains beautiful tandem lines by all the bowed strings.

Cellist Hank Roberts sounds great here. Violinist Jenny Scheinman is perfectly suited to Frisell's compositions, which relate closely to her own. She and Eyvind Kang (viola) share Frisell's whimsical, muted sense of humor. When the music seems about to break into a square dance, as on "Suitcase In My Hand," they all cut loose, but most of the time the players show great restraint, keeping the expressive quality in the details. There are minimalist selections, like "Sixty Four" and "Wonderland," disturbing the homey vibe with stasis and repetition, breaking with the pastoral for a hint of the urban.

—John Corbett

Sign Of Life: It's A Long Story (1); Old Times; Sign Of Life; Friend Of Mine (1); Wonderland; It's A Long Story (2); Mother Daughter; Youngster; Recollection; Suitcase In My Hand; Sixty Four; Friend Of Mine (2); Painter; Teacher; All The People, All The Time; Village; As It Should Be. (53:31)
Personnel: Bill Frisell, guitar; Jenny Scheinman, violin; Eyvind Kang, viola; Hank Roberts, cello.
Ordering info: savoyjazz.com

The Hot Box

	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Joshua Redman/Aaron Parks/ Matt Penman/Eric Harland *James Farm*	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Corea, Clarke & White *Forever*	★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★★
Al Di Meola *Pursuit Of Radical Rhapsody*	★★★½	★★	★★★	★★★★
Bill Frisell *Sign Of Life*	★★★★	★★★	★★★½	★★★½

Critics' Comments

Joshua Redman/Aaron Parks/Matt Penman/Eric Harland, *James Farm*

Willing to go in an unexpected direction or toss in a surprising sound without making a fetish of it, this democratic foursome makes unassuming and very satisfying music. Takes a minute to catch how unusual it is, but James Farm is such a good vehicle for Redman, the best I've heard. Harland and Penman are dreamy and precise, and Parks offers super-hip details. *—John Corbett*

I definitely like the players, I kind of like the tunes, but the music seldom soars—it's lacking a certain performance spark. Maybe it's the rhythms. Sometimes the pieces sound like unplugged fusion tunes. That said, the notion that the band can allow all of its members to have a say singularly and collectively remains impressive. *—Jim Macnie*

Four stellar players here, no doubt, with the fluid and evocative pianist Aaron Parks clearly the standout ("Bijou"), but it's not clear if the pervasively subdued and pensive mood is where they want to live or a prelude to something more explosive and coherent to come—the latter, one hopes. *—Paul de Barros*

Corea, Clarke & White, *Forever*

Forever trades youth for wisdom, and is better for the bargain. With the politics of Scientology and the bombast of fusion behind them, this trio finds its roots in crystal-clear, hard-swinging jamming. Quickly transcends the justifications of nostalgia and asserts its own authority. Bonus CD adds some finished rehearsals with guests. *—John McDonough*

Corea and White make the transition from fusion speedboat to acoustic Sunfish smoothly. Clarke is typically audacious and hard-swinging, but he burdens the date with too much of a clanky, '70s over-amped sound—particularly untoward in the more sensitive moments, like those on "La Canción De Sophia." *—John Corbett*

You can hear the years of chemistry-building in the interaction of the acoustic disc, but there's something a tad heavy-handed in the delivery. Corea seems as spry as ever—his music always has some kind of lilt—but the rhythm section italicizes their moves too much. The "guests" disc gets over on agility, making odd time signatures flow smoothly. *—Jim Macnie*

Al Di Meola, *Pursuit Of Radical Rhapsody*

Di Meola's magnificent guitar playing is its own best reward in this set that seems to meet the basic definitions of jazz without exactly feeling like a jazz set. Its heart is in the world pop arena of Latin and flamenco, with its terse, complex rhythms. Di Meola's at his best on the soft, intimate "Bona." *—John McDonough*

Spoiler alert: There is nothing radical here. A flamencoid world blend melée, making space for the flashy flourishes that give it Di Meola's trademark. In the realm of world-flash, I'll turn to my old Egberto Gismonti or Shakti records instead. *—John Corbett*

After years of tossing aside Al Di Meola albums with the reasonable assumption that they would be tasteless displays of obsessive technique, I was absolutely delighted to hear this jaunty, sweetly woven ensemble of folky, Mediterranean beats. Fausto Beccalossi's accordion is a special treat. Lovely project. *—Paul de Barros*

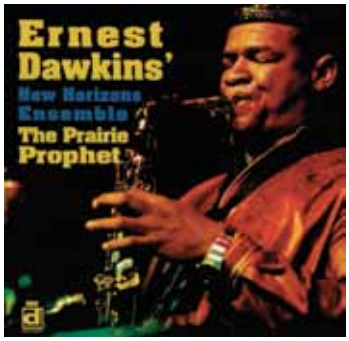
Bill Frisell, *Sign Of Life*

More a collection of atmospherics than songs, though there are a few melodies of great rural poignancy. "It's A Long Story" calls to mind Ken Burns' Civil War series. Some, e.g. "Sixty Four," are minimalist sketches in the tonalities of tension, more appropriate for a Hitchcock film. But there is an overriding bucolic beauty that links the cameos. *—John McDonough*

The esprit is here, the whimsy is here, and they both service a nimble interplay that gives this oddball string quartet a natural gravitas. Frisell's version of waxing pensive delights in lyricism and fetching dissonance. *—Jim Macnie*

Though I confess I kept wishing the arrangements were a little meatier, the disarming, Stephen Foster-like simplicity and succinctness and the simple luxuriance in string sounds of each cut have grown on me. Even those who have become tired of Frisell's cartoonish Americana should ask themselves: How many jazz composers write songs that sound absolutely personal but also like they've always been there? *—Paul de Barros*

Ernest Dawkins' New Horizons Ensemble
The Prairie Prophet
DELMARK RECORDS 598
★★★★



After a five-year hiatus from recording, Ernest Hawkins' New Horizons Ensemble returns with another splendid example of free-bop—music nudging toward the edges of modern bop, flirting intermittently with free jazz, yet never fully abandoning the cohesive momentum of swing.

With *The Prairie Prophet*, Dawkins pays homage to the late saxophonist, cultural progenitor and fellow AACM member Fred Anderson. Just as Anderson was, Dawkins is capable of addressing a broad jazz vocabulary as a player and composer—a talent that's made clear from the get-go as the disc opens with the South African-inflected "Hymn For A Hip King" and then shifts into "Sketches," which expands and constricts between avant-garde and modern big band swing with hints of blues shouts and country music.

The disc showcases a slightly new front-line lineup with new trumpeters Marquis Hill and Shaun Johnson joining Dawkins and trombonist Steve Berry. Both newcomers deliver delectable solos, whether on the surging political statement of "Baghdad Boogie" or on "Mal-Lester," a lovely tribute to Lester Bowie and Malachi Favors Maghostut. Each member plays extremely well with a focus on group empathy, as demonstrated on Berry's gorgeous "Mesopotamia" or when delivering individual solos, such as guitarist Jeff Parker does on the boisterous "Sketches."

When Dawkins solos, like on the opening "Hymn For A Hip King" or the roiling "Shades Of The Prairie Prophet," he shows great command on alto and tenor saxophones. Without attempting to make grandiose statements, *The Prairie Prophet* illustrates the excellence of Dawkins as a consummate jazz figure.

—John Murph

The Prairie Prophet: Hymn For A Hip King, Sketches, Balladesque, Mal-Lester, Shades of the Prairie Prophet, Mesopotamia, Baghdad Boogie. (64:50)
Personnel: Ernest Dawkins, alto and tenor saxophones, percussion, vocals; Marquis Hill, flugelhorn (1), trumpet (2, 3, 7); Shaun Johnson, trumpet (1, 2, 4); Steve Berry, trombone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Junius Paul, bass; Isaiah Spencer, drums, percussion.
Ordering info: delmark.com

Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra
India & Africa: A Tribute To John Coltrane
WATER BABY RECORDS 1110
★★★½

Unincorporated, independent large ensembles or big bands such as Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra serve myriad purposes. Founded in 1997, the ABAAO is a showcase of all-star Bay Area-based musicians. It places Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Iranian instruments alongside brass and reeds and has performed and recorded its own arrangements of selections from the likes of Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus, as well as its members' original works.

For *India & Africa*, drummer/percussionist/composer/scholar Brown culled Spanish- and (as the title lays out) Indian- and African-influenced pieces that John Coltrane was exploring in the latter part of his career. The album is sourced from a pair of concerts held, appropriately enough, at both the San Francisco and Oakland locations of Yoshi's nightclub.

"Living Space" opens the program with an unexpected twin presentation of the Japanese shakuhachi flute and the Chinese sheng mouth organ, recontextualizing Coltrane's underexposed composition that was recorded with his classic quartet in 1965. Appealingly dense arrangements of the title tracks are sequenced second within each section, with a short reprise of each closing out both.

Two original works—Kenneth Nash's deeply felt vocal and percussion "Exaltation" and Nash and Brown's dual "Percussion Discussion" — further personalize "Suite: Africa." A spirited reading of "Afro Blue" seems somewhat aesthetically out of place as the final number, until one reads the track listing and realizes it was done as an encore; in that context, it makes perfect sense.

—Yoshi Kato

India & Africa: A Tribute To John Coltrane: India: Diaspora Living Space; India; Olé; Tabla-Sarod Duet; India-Reprise; Suite: Africa: Exaltation; Africa; Liberia; Percussion Discussion; Dahomey Dance; Africa-Reprise; Encore: Afro Blue. (59:19)
Personnel: Anthony Brown, drums, percussion, conductor; Danny Bittker, baritone sax, contralto clarinet, soprano saxophone; Mark Izu, bass, sheng (Chinese mouth organ); Henry Hung, trumpet, flügelhorn; Masaru Koga, soprano and tenor saxophones, shakuhachi; Richard Lee, bass trombone; Melecio Magdaluyo, alto, tenor and soprano saxophones; Marcia Miget, flute, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones; Kenneth Nash, African, American and Indian percussion; Pushpa Oda, tambura; Steve Oda, North Indian lute; Dana Pandey, tabla; Glen Pearson, piano; Geechi Taylor, trumpet, flügelhorn; Kathleen Torres, French horn; Wayne Wallace, trombone.
Ordering info: anthonybrown.org

Paul van Kemenade
Close Enough
KEMO 09
★★★★★

Ever heard a jazz CD open with Gregorian chant? A composition involving a Renaissance vocal ensemble, flamenco guitar, Senegalese percussion and jazz quartet also has to be a first. Further listening reveals rich variety and surprising homogeneity, driven with deep conviction from the leader, already confirming this as one of my albums of the year.

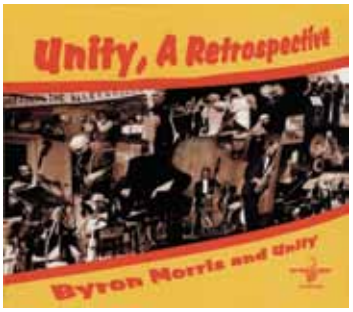
Dutch saxophonist Paul van Kemenade's expressive alto and bluesy feel betray a likely debt to David Sanborn and Maceo Parker, but might also have been distilled from Bunky Green, Johnny Hodges or Amsterdam-based saxophonist Michael Moore. Clawing for precedents ends there, since this is a unique record. Contexts are ingenious, from three horns plus bass, to duo with cello, to big-shot quintet with Ray Anderson, Ernst Glerum and Han Bennink. The latter plays snare with brushes, contributing to an overall chamber-like vibe. Collaborations with Angelo Verploegen and Louk Boudesteijn suggest a regular band given the perfect tonal overlay, bassist Wiro Mahieu as a fine counterweight.

The leader's "Close Enough" and "It Is Never Too Late" whiff of rhapsodic ballads and detour into peculiar polyphonic places, the former fragmenting into spacious abstraction. His alto darts and dives luxuriously, a rainbow feathered bird of paradise riding to the stratosphere. Speaking of birds, "Cuckoo," with Ernst Reijseger plucking and strumming cello and guffawing like a tipsy woodchopper, is brilliant and hilarious. Despite the alto's distinct pump in the mix, there is great sensitivity to dynamics and a lovely hover betwixt classical, composition and improv.

—Michael Jackson

Close Enough: Fantasy Colors; Close Enough; Lapstop; Take It Easy; Cool Man, Coleman Part 1 & 2; Cuckoo; It Is Never Too Late; Gathering For Alto And Cello; Vormärz. (51:59)
Personnel: Paul van Kemenade, alto saxophone; Ernst Reijseger, cello; Han Bennink, snaredrum; Ray Anderson, trombone; Cappella Pratensis, vocals; Frank Möbus, guitar; El Periquín, guitar; Ernst Glerum, bass; Serigne Gueye, percussion; Wiro Mahieu, bass; Eckard Koltermann, bass clarinet; Stevko Busch, piano; Achim Kramer, drums; Benjamin Trawinski, bass; Angelo Verploegen, flugelhorn; Louk Boudesteijn, trombone.
Ordering info: paulvankemenade.com

Byron Morris and Unity
Unity, A Retrospective
BY-MOR MUSIC 004
★★ ½



Like many others in the 1970s, Byron Morris is a remarkable jazz talent whose name often falls through the cracks. The saxophonist mostly steered clear of fusion, opting to follow John Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders' artistic trajectories. But he didn't forsake funk, soul and blues; at their best, his LPs evoked the sounds established by labels such as Strata-East and Tribe. As the title of *Unity, A Retrospective* suggests, the material largely consists of compositions that have long been in Morris' repertoire. Morris zeroes in on a comfort zone in which his ensemble plays with decided ease. Morris' alto and tenor saxophone melodies are bluesy and solid, but neither he nor the rest of the artists work up much of a sweat. The rhythm sections keeps the pace locked in a clunky mid-tempo groove. But on the Morris original "ERAA" bassist Frank Clayton and drummer Tyrone Walker ignite a comparatively spirited rhythm that propels Morris' coiling tenor saxophone improvisation and Vincent McEwan's clarion trumpet flights. But vocalist Jay Clayton takes the most striking solo with a soaring, sometimes skittering excursion.

—John Murph

Unity, A Retrospective: Sunshower, Eyewitness News Bluze, Goodbye Pork Pie Hat, Entrenched In The Blues, Lay It On The Line, Balls Groove, ERAA, Suite To Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Lonely Woman. (61:28)
Personnel: Byron Morris, tenor and alto saxophones and flute; Gene Adler, piano (3, 7); Alonzo Bailey, trumpet (9); Stanley Benders, congas and percussion (1, 2, 4, 5, 8); Frank Clayton, bass (3, 7, 8); Jay Clayton, vocals (3, 7); David Fuller, drums (1, 2, 4, 5); Hakim Jami, bass (9); Cedric Lawson, piano (1, 2, 4, 5, 6); Lenny Martin, electric bass (6); Vincent McEwan, trumpet, flugelhorn, kalimba, claves (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8); Kevin Parham, electric bass (1, 5); Don Pate, bass (1, 2, 4); Richard E. Spencer, drums and percussion (3, 8, 9); Tyrone Walker, drums (3, 6, 7, 8); Tony Waters, congas, percussion (6).
Ordering info: bymormusic.com

Eric Bibb
Troubadour Live
TELARC 32760
★★★★

More than a few road warriors in roots music call themselves troubadours. Nearly all are delusional. Eric Bibb is not. Traveling constantly from his home base in Finland, Bibb fits the bill as the rare solo performer of graciousness and refinement whose blues has a lyric poetry.

In concert at a venue in Sweden, making his third live album, Bibb displays his inclination for entertaining. The sage deliberation of his singing and his delicate, beguiling touch on acoustic guitar, evidenced on fine new and old songs, would be enough to recommend the album, but further appeal comes from the presence of Staffan Astner. The Swede's electric guitar brings a rougher aesthetic to Bibb's music, positively subversive as a runaway train in "Walkin' Blues Again." With pianist Glen Scott of the Psalm4 gospel trio joining the pair onstage, Bibb does some of his best, truest singing on "Connected." Here he delivers an unstuffy message on the importance of individuality within the framework of human interaction. Toward the end of "Connected," Psalm4's Andre De Lange surprises everyone by singing in Zulu. Psalm4 singer Paris Renita also joins the bunch and helps locate sunshine in a dimming world, exulting "Thanks For The Joy."

—Frank-John Hadley

Troubadour Live: The Cape; Introducing Staffan Astner; New Home; Troubadour; Shavin' Talk; Walkin' Blues Again; Tell Riley; Connected; New World Comin' Through; Thanks For The Joy; For You; Put Your Love First; If You Were Not My Woman. (53:40)
Personnel: Eric Bibb, acoustic guitar, vocals; Staffan Astner, electric guitar; Psalm4, vocals (9, 10); Paris Renita, lead vocal (11); Glen Scott, keyboards (8, 12, 13), background vocals (12), electric guitar, bass, drums (13); Troy Cassar-Daley, vocal (12), mandolin and 12-string guitar (12); Erik Arvinder, string arranger, conductor (13).
Ordering info: telarc.com

Tiempo Libre
My Secret Radio
SONY MASTERWORKS 8458520
★★★★

Consisting of keyboardist Jorge Gómez and seven more Cuban emigres in Miami, Tiempo Libre brings lessons learned in Havana classical conservatories to an exciting confluence of Afro-Cuban rhythm, modern jazz harmonies and Cuban cancion. These timbreros have been emphasizing the Baroque side of their sound recently, particularly the album *Bach In Havana*. *My Secret Radio* marks their return to the dance timba of their mid-2000s albums, *Arroz Con Mango* and *What You've Been Waiting For*. The title refers to listening to outlawed pop and r&b when the group was growing up in repressive Cuba.

On "Lo Mio Primero," Joaquin Diaz sings heartily as the others channel surges of instrumental and vocalized timba in celebration of both their Caribbean heritage and the personal freedom found in their adopted country. "Mujer De Fuego" spontaneously combusts with groove, brass flourishes and vocal shouts. "Prende La Radio" injects strong funk into timba, while "Ahora Te Quieres Ir" modifies the funk-timba intensity when Diaz shares the heartbreak he feels over a soured romance. Latin jazz-funk instrumental "Aceite" is the band's fiery salute to Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo's "Manteca."

Tiempo Libre's radio signal doesn't always come in loud and clear. Guest Albita's dramatic vocal on the danzon ballad "Como Hace Años" is appropriate for lyrics about love-sickness but her passion is at odds with the bleached-out electronic keyboards. Like all the songs on this album, Tiempo Libre's cha-cha makeover of Earth, Wind & Fire's "After The Love Is Gone" succeeds in celebrating the human spirit even if listeners have to cope with Rachelle Fleming's self-conscious singing. —*Frank-John Hadley*

My Secret Radio: Lo Mio Primero; San Antonio; Como Hace Años; Prende La Radio; La Gente; Aceite; Mecánica; Mujer De Fuego; Ahora Te Quieres Ir; After The Love Is Gone; Mi Antena. (55:38).
Personnel: Jorge Gómez, keyboards, vocals; Joaquin Diaz vocals; Leandro Gonzalez, congas, bongo, vocals; Tebelio Fonte bass, vocals; Luis Beltran, saxophone; Armando Arce, drums, timbales, congas (4, 11); Raul Rodriquez, trumpet; Chad Bernstein, trombone (4).
Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

Come Sunday
Crosscurrents
CSJ 101
★★★

An explicit connection between two musical worlds, the group Come Sunday bridges the gap between the blues and gospel on *Crosscurrents*. With an innovative mix of group singing and group interplay, Come Sunday balances the deft touch of jazz and blues with some traditional church singing, all of it performed in a relatively light-hearted, uplifting spirit.

The most interesting and moving pieces are the ones that take the traditional gospel approach and uplift it with guitarist Mike Allemana's novel jazz arrangements. Indeed, for anyone not particularly interested in gospel or religious music, per se, *Crosscurrents* can almost pass as lounge music if you don't listen too closely. Made up of four singers—Bill Brickey, Lindsay Weinberg, Alton Smith and Sue Demel—as well as the rhythm section of Allemana, bassist Al Ehrich and drummer Lenny Marsh, the ensemble moves through a mix of 13 traditionals along with covers of songs by Duke Ellington, Stevie Wonder and Alex Bradford (his "Too Close To Heaven" takes us out of the church and into a blues bar, almost).

Some of those novel approaches include the mournful, reggae-flavored, jazzy waltzing of the traditional "Trouble Of The World," a Latin samba-imbued "Down By The Riverside" and

a slightly funky "Wade In The Water." There is also a mix of vocals and solo voices on different tracks, as when we hear either Weinberg or Demel evoking what amounts to a kind of lullaby/lament on Ellington's "Come Sunday." With Allemana's sympathetic stylings helping to keep things intimate, if a bit more jazzy than traditionalists might expect. "Come Sunday," with its pared-down, simple approach, signifies how *Crosscurrents* is as much about reinterpretation as it is emulation.

It may not be "church," but the vibe is sincere and worthy of a close listen. —*John Ephland*

Crosscurrents: Keep Your Hand On The Plow; Jesus Gave Me Water; Trouble Of The World; Down By The Riverside; Come Sunday; Wade In The Water; Heaven Is 10 Zillion Light Years Away; I'm On My Way To Canaan's Land; Too Close To Heaven; The Christian Testimony; Just A Closer Walk With Thee; My Rock; Deep River. (60:20)
Personnel: Bill Brickey, Lindsay Weinberg, Alton Smith, Sue Demel, vocals; Mike Allemana, guitar; Al Ehrich, bass; Lenny Marsh, drums.
Ordering info: comesundayjazz.com

Cuong Vu 4-Tet
Leaps Of Faith
ORIGIN 82585
★★★★

Trumpeter Cuong Vu moved back to his native Seattle in 2006 to teach, but five years later he's still working with the members of his long-running New York trio, drummer Ted Poor and electric bassist Stomu Takeishi. But on *Leaps Of Faith*, a gorgeous live recording made in Seattle in April 2010, he brings in second electric bassist Luke Bergman—a former University of Washington student of his who's now a regular bandmate in the quartet Agogic—to cohere Vu's bicoastal reality. But the lineup does much more than provide a nice symbol. Neither bassist is content with serving up simple lines, and through various effects and varied techniques their instruments are veering between sources of melody, atmosphere, color and harmony, rumbling and soaring with low-end authority.

After spending his career writing original music, Vu tackles standards and modern pop tunes here, all of them with the kind of smoldering, unhurried melodies perfectly suited to the group's slow-burn attack, with each player seeming as if carving lines from huge slabs of sound. There's a deeply sculptural feel to the improvisations, and when Vu finally unveils the melodies to pieces like "Body And Soul" and "My Funny Valentine" after blowing billowy abstractions, it almost feels like he's wrestled them to the ground. Sometimes the music floats with an ethereal grace, while at other moments the finely wrought lyricism glides over heavy turbulence, but in every case the results are seriously transporting. This is the finest manifestation of Vu's post–Miles Davis originality. —*Peter Margasak*

Leaps Of Faith: Body And Soul; All The Things You Are; My Funny Valentine; Leaps Of Faith; Child-Like (For Vina); Something; I Shall Never Come Back; My Opening Farewell. (69:00)
Personnel: Cuong Vu, trumpet; Luke Bergman, Stomu Takeishi, electric bass; Ted Poor, drums.
Ordering info: origin-records.com

Distilling Beauty From The Low End

Bottom heavy—with Michael Blake's bass clarinet and two grinding electric guitars joining Ben Allison's bass—***Action-Refraction*** **(Palmetto 2149; 43:32 ★★★)** shares a fondness for the forms and bombast of prog-rock with The Bad Plus. The comparison is most apt on pounding versions of Donny Hathaway's "Some Day We'll All Be Free" and PJ Harvey's "Missed" and an arch rendition of Paul Williams' "We've Only Just Begun." Balancing that tendency to build dense sonic walls is an ultra-minimalist take on Neil Young's "Philadelphia," which sounds achingly beautiful.

Ordering info: palmetto-records.com

More mash-up than album, bassist Greg Byers' ***Some Dark, Beautiful Morning*** **(self-release; 35:31 ★★)** begins with a lushly textured blend of dark strings and then veers into techno, ersatz Frank Zappa and sludgy jazz-rock fusion. It hits its nadir with a self-indulgent piece called "Snake Tail" that is rife with banal lyrics and terrible singing by Byers. There is no question he has big ears when it comes to influences, and his instrumental work has some interesting moments, but it sounds like Byers might have benefitted from an outside producer who knows when things are going over the top.

Ordering info: gregbyersmusic.com

One of Europe's most prolific improvising artists, Joëlle Léandre stretches out with two different bands on ***Can You Hear Me?*** **(Leo 594/595; 53:53/46:58 ★★★★)**, recorded live over two nights in 2009. Her string-heavy tentet sounds like it could use either more rehearsal time or a tighter course to follow; its movements are somewhat predictable and the parts seldom coalesce into a larger whole. Her trio, on the other hand, with pianist John Tilbury and vibraphonist Kevin Norton, expands textural shards into a piece of extraordinary beauty and tenderness. Slow to unfold and highly gestural, the trio's improvisation shifts and turns to both catch the light and reveal a darker core.

Ordering info: leorecords.com

Moon And Sand **(Tosky 004; 55:49 ★★★½)** begins so off-handedly—with a three-minute solo piano intro to Alec Wilder's title composition—that the contrast to the hard bop take on Billy Strayhorn's "Johnny Come Lately" is extremely stark. Leader Michel Rosciglione is a sturdy bass player with an attractive tone, but he dodges the role of composer, instead favoring Kenny Kirkland (two pieces), Christian McBride and John Coltrane. Bandmates Vincent Bourgeyx and Remi Vignolo get a slot each, leaving the listener wondering just what Rosciglione imparts. No matter, both the trio and quintet versions of his group sound confident and practiced.

Ordering info: toskyrecords.com

Exceptionally self-effacing as a leader, bassist Sean Smith gives so much of ***Trust*** **(Smithereen 1001; 69:38 ★★★½)** over to guitarist John Hart and saxophonist John Ellis that the quartet sounds like a co-operative band. Hart's attack is taut and incisive, particularly on "Wayne's World," and Ellis' soprano dominates "Occam's Razor." But, while Trust is a pleasant outing by a quartet that sounds more than competent, there is a certain lack of distinctive character. On tenor, Ellis rarely digs any deeper than mid-register, and Smith's compositions bear few unique signatures.

Ordering info: seansmithjazz.com

Featuring three separate sextets anchored by bassist Charles Thomas, ***The Colors Of A Dream*** **(Sea Tea 104; 68:01 ★★★)** is a hard-boppers' fantasy, rife with unison horn lines and sturdy rhythm sections. The raucous Latin beat of "Sunburst" and the loping pace of "The Blue Sea" are attractive, and the crisp trumpet of Mike Olmos on the storming "Git Wid It" and "Pride's Glide" is a clear instrumental highlight. Less winning is the leader's wobbly vocal outing on "My Foolish Heart" and the obvious technical inequality between the three saxophonists who are featured. **DB**

Ordering info: charlesthomasmusic.com

Brian Carpenter's Ghost Train Orchestra
Hothouse Stomp: The Music Of 1920s Chicago And Harlem
ACCURATE 5062
★★★½

Seabrook Powerplant
Seabrook Powerplant II
LOYAL LABEL 009
★★★½

Brian Carpenter, who leads and plays trumpet in Ghost Train Orchestra, is not a devoted revivalist or a fevered student of traditional jazz. When not leading the experimental rock band Beat Circus he's been making a documentary about Albert Ayler. But when he became musical director for a vaudeville project in celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Regent Theater in Arlington, Mass., he dug into the past, and the giddy performances on *Hothouse Stomp* are the fruits of his explorations. The album looks at lesser-known bands of the '20s from New York and Harlem.

Carpenter leads a superb band of New York-based vanguardists, and while most of the solos ditch period authenticity and employ a vocabulary that contains ideas from the next 90 years of jazz history, his sharp arrangements retain the contrapuntal flash, sweet voicings and fiery rhythms of the original era, from the manic, percussive strumming of banjo whiz Brandon Seabrook to the fat puffing lines of tubaist Ron Caswell. The group highlights the quirkiness of tunes like Parham's otherworldly "Voodoo," dropping in a saw solo by violist Jordan Voelker.

Seabrook shows off his trad chops on tenor banjo in Ghost Train Orchestra, but in his own knotty power trio, Seabrook Powerplant, he puts it to more extreme use, crafting a tough mix of prog, metal, punk and noisy experimentalism. He circumvents the banjo's lack of sustain with furious runs and riffs to simulate a ringing presence, exploiting the instrument's spiky, percussive possibilities, and even uses bowing on a track like "I'm Too Good For You." The whiplash opener "Lamborghini Helicopter" is one of his episodic blowouts, switching tempos, groove, mood and density with ADD rapidity and tossing in some sharp wordless vocal clusters courtesy of microtonal specialist Judith Berkson. On half the tracks he busts out an electric guitar, emphasizing metal roots—made extra clear on "0515," which salutes Van Halen.

—Peter Margasak

Hothouse Stomp: The Music Of 1920s Chicago And Harlem: Ghost Train (Orchestra); Mojo Strut; Stop Kidding; Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You?; Voodoo; Blues Sure Have Got Me; Hot Bones And Rice; Dixie Stomp; Lucky 3-6-9; The Boy In The Boat; Slide, Mr. Jelly, Slide; Hot Tempered Blues. (38:44)
Personnel: Brian Carpenter, trumpet, harmonica (1), voice (5); Dennis Lichtman, clarinet; Andy Laster, alto saxophone; Matt Bauder, tenor saxophone (3–9, 12), alto saxophone (11), clarinet (1, 2, 10); Curtis Hasslebring, trombone; Mazz Swift, violin, vocals (4, 6); Jordan Voelker, viola, saw (5, 6, 10); Brandon Seabrook, banjo; Ron Caswell, tuba; Rob Garcia, drums.
Ordering info: accuraterecords.com

Seabrook Powerplant II: Lamborghini Helicopter; Black Sheep Squadron; The Night Shift; I'm Too Good For You; Kush Lamps Ablaze; Sacchetto Mal D'Aria; Forcep Perfection; 0515. (36:56)
Personnel: Brandon Seabrook, banjo, guitar; Tom Blancarte, bass; Jared Seabrook, drums; Judith Berkson, vocal (1).
Ordering info: seabrookpowerplant.com

Noah Haidu
Slipstream
POSI-TONE 807
★★★

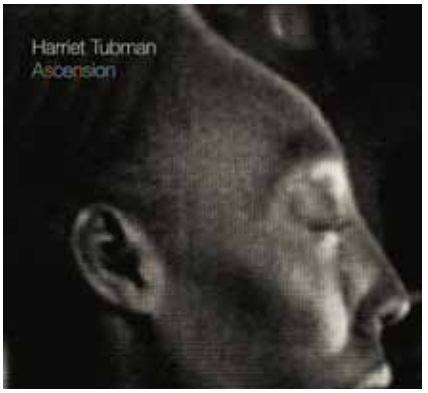
What's in a name? In the case of pianist Noah Haidu's *Slipstream*: an apt description of one of his album's chief virtues as well as its greatest flaw. Haidu's compositions progress with a forthright liveliness and ease that belies the commanding skills that the players exercised whilst negotiating them. Take the title track's head: It requires trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and saxophonist Jon Irabagon to execute a tricky unison and then pitches them into a series of succinct, headlong solos before they hand the melody over to its composer, who digs into the fleet rhythm before contributing some quick and elegant right-hand figures. "Break Tune" follows up that act with elaborate, pointed exchanges between the horns as they dance upon an acoustic funk groove.

However, isn't the slipstream also the place where a racer hangs when he doesn't want to take the lead? The rhythmic choices in "Break Tune" are as close as this music comes to breaking out of a template established before most of these musicians were born. Sure, Horace Silver and Wayne Shorter made great music, but do we really need to hear it recapitulated quite so specifically as Haidu and company do on "Soulstep" and "Where We Are Right Now"? While beautifully wrought, this record feels like it is in a holding pattern.

—Bill Meyer

Slipstream: Soulstep; Where We Are Right Now; Slipstream; Break Tune; Float; Take Your Time; Just One Of Those Things; The Trouble Makers. (49:14)
Personnel: Noah Haidu, piano; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Jon Irabagon, alto saxophone; Chris Haney, bass; John Davis, drums (2, 4, 5, 7, 8); Willie Jones III, drums (1, 3, 6).
Ordering info: posi-tone.com

Harriet Tubman
Ascension
SUNNYSIDE 1274
★★ ½



Harriet Tubman comes with more firepower than ever on its third disc, beefing up the arsenal into a double trio. DJ Logic, DJ Singe and trumpeter Ron Miles join the already incendiary triumvirate of guitarist Brandon Ross, bassist Melvin Gibbs and drummer J.T. Lewis.

At the beginning, *Ascension* recalls Graham Haynes' 1996 masterpiece *Transition*, which is no mere coincidence considering that both Ross and Logic played splendidly on that disc. Also, like Haynes did with John Coltrane's adventurous "Tradition," Harriet Tubman takes an equally aggressive route with Coltrane's "Ascension." This time though, it's Miles' clarion trumpet soaring above turbulent waves of jangly guitar riffs, pounding drums and searing sonic textures. Perhaps another reason why *Ascension* bears resemblance to the late-'90s is that it was recorded in September 2000, live at the Knitting Factory.

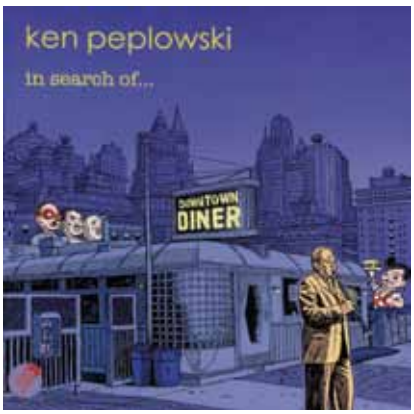
Chalk this up as "canned heat," because its lengthy time on the shelf hasn't diminished any of its intensity. Gibbs' subsonic bass creates a menacing evocation throughout as does Ross' apocalyptic guitar chords and slashing riffs. The dueling DJs certainly feed the fire, creating cacophonous soundscapes that add rhythmic friction and even more humid chords.

Still, *Transition* invites more repeated listening than *Ascension*, not only because Haynes allotted more studio post-production finesse to the earlier album, but also because it featured more durable material. As fascinating and energetic as Harriet Tubman pieces like "Down Shift/Ascension" and "Stellar Attraction" are, hardly anything sticks because Harriet Tubman consistently favors sonic textures over conventional songcraft. Pieces like "Plasmaroid" and "Sidereal Flux" start out promising with a funky riff or an entrancing mood, but soon overheat into melodic-deficient pools of harrowing sound. Toward the end, the relentless sonic assault leads to listener fatigue with too few hooky memories.

—John Murph

Ascension: Ascension; Ritual Rubbin'; Down Shift/Ascension; Night Master/Ascension; Ascension; Stellar Attraction; Probe; Sidereal Flux; Plasmaroid; Widely Known. (51:45)
Personnel: Brandon Ross, guitar; Melvin Gibbs, bass; J.T. Lewis, drums; Ron Miles, trumpet; DJ Logic, DJ Singe, turntables.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Ken Peplowski
In Search Of…
CAPRI 74108
★★★★



As you might expect from a veteran who's counted the varied likes of Benny Goodman, Leon Redbone and Mel Tormé as collaborators, Ken Peplowski's tastes run the gamut here from Beatles interpretations to torch songs to obscure ballads. But start to finish, the common denominator on his latest release is beauty, pure and simple.

In Search Of... spans material from two very different sessions. Tracks 1–9 were recorded in February 2010 and heavily influenced by the audibly symbiotic relationship between Peplowski and pianist Shelly Berg, who also composed "In Flower" and "Peps." The pair's interaction plays out like a ballroom dance on "With Every Breath I Take," as the clarinet's steady lead gives Berg's delicate piano work plenty of room to trace delicate, right hand–driven twirls before dipping into the reed's rich lower registers. They ultimately balance each other's playfulness on "The Thespian." At first, Peplowski breathes with such sublime analogue softness that every movement his mouth makes on the reed seems perceptible, while Berg's tiptoeing fingers match nostalgic drum patterns. But the tune transcends its ballad beginnings, climbing into an uptempo showcase for symmetrical concepts.

The final three tracks are self-produced, unreleased material from 2007. Runs of Eastern-style percussion reformat the entire album's vibe on the George Harrison-penned "Within You And Without You." The spare but swinging "No Regrets" works its way into your head by way of your tapping foot. Finally, a unexpected duet rendition of "Rum And Coca-Cola" hits the listener with Peplowki's Professor Longhair-like agility and peerless foray into the clarinet's upper register.

—Jennifer Odell

In Search Of…: The Thespian; Love's Disguise; When Joanna Loved Me; Falsa Baiana; A Ship Without A Sail; With Every Breath I Take; In Flower; Peps; This Nearly Was Mine; No Regrets; Within You And Without You; Rum And Coca-Cola (60:49).
Personnel: Ken Peplowski, clarinet and tenor saxophone; Jeff Hamilton, drums (1–9); Tom Kennedy, bass (1–9); Shelly Berg, piano (1–9); Greg Cohen, bass (10–12); Chuck Redd, vibraphone (11) ; Joe Ascione, percussion (11, 12).
Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Strength in Diversity

Johnny Rawls: *Memphis Still Got Soul* (Catfood 008; 40:01 ★★★★) Owning a rich and distinctive voice, Rawls sings as if he were experiencing wonder over his discovery of Southern soul-blues. Actually, he's been a leading exponent of the style since the late-1970s, at his best in the studio the past few years with bassist Bob Trenchard's unobtrusively powerful gang of Texans called the Rays. Also cutting a fresh and satisfying groove on the new album are drummer Dan Nichols and his Montanans. Rawls and his aides write memorable songs in thoughtful, plain spoken language. Listeners not familiar with the Mississippi-born singer (and part-time guitarist) will be caught by surprise at the depth and degree of his authority.

Ordering info: catfoodrecords.com

Tab Benoit: *Medicine* (Telarc 32823; 50:17 ★★★½) The singer and guitarist from Louisiana delivers just the right prescription—a mixture of bayou blues, rock and r&b that has a core of emotional authenticity only suggested sporadically on his many previous albums. It helps to have Anders Osborne present as a punch-in-the-gut co-producer and a collaborating tunesmith. Cajun fiddler Michael Doucet is a marvel contributor to three tracks, especially "Long Lonely Bayou," where he and Benoit color their phrases with an indelible ache beyond treatment.

Ordering info: telarc.com

Magic Sam Blues Band: *West Side Soul* (Delmark 615; 44:38 ★★★★½) First issued in 1967, this monument of Chicago blues finds Sam grounding his thrillingly high singing and his cataclysmic guitar riffs in life experiences, those of a Delta-raised young man in the big city who'd spent time in an Army brig. He grasps for greatness and gets it—despite blemishes in technique. "All Your Love" and the rest stand the test of time. Sam's colleague Luther Allison used to say, "Blues should make you want to cry a little and then get up and shout." Thunderous shouts, right here.

Ordering info: delmark.com

Marion James: *Essence* (Eller Soul 1103-0002; 68:00 ★★★) The long-serving "Queen of Nashville Blues" exudes unfeigned spirit when she roars or worries over originals and smartly chosen Southern soul gems like Benny Latimore's "Let's Straighten It Out." James almost bursts a blood vessel smacking some two-timer in "You're History, Baby." In contrast, showing a sense of style and decorum, James follows a balladic jazz direction with classy pianist Beege Adair. There's also an "interview" track with James seated at the piano for two songs and talking about local r&b history.

Ordering info: ellersoulrecords.com


Johnny Rawls

JAMES GREGUS

miX & dorp: *blues + beat* (Black & Tan 036; 64:16 ★★★) Give Dutch guitarist Jan Mitterdorff credit. Like the Europeans Ramon Goose and Eric Bling, he brings imagination and a sense of cockeyed purpose to his stomping electronic makeovers of the blues. Without debasing or trivializing tradition, loops and beats explode with kinetic, rhythmic energy in tracks by Boo Boo Davis, George Jackson, Harrison Kennedy and two other American blues singers. Good funk guitar interjections, too. Only some Howlin' Wolf-on-the-prowl jive and John Lee Hooker-ish boogie are trite.

Ordering info: black-and-tan.com

The Paul Speidel Band: *Retrorocket* (PSP Recordings 1007; 59:48 ★★★½) Ronnie Earl and Matthew Stubbs aren't the only blues-and-beyond guitarists in southern New England making strong instrumental albums. On his own material, Speidel shines with calibrated, elevated playing that draws on his muse and on a congenital sense of what makes sense musically. Fortunately, he doesn't feel compelled to show off his technical skill. "Transatlantic Beat Exchange," one standout, makes fascinating connections to Nigeria's Fela Kuti. **DB**

Ordering info: paulspeidelband.com

Matana Roberts
Live In London
CENTRAL CONTROL 1014
★★★

Matana Roberts
Coin Coin Chapter One: Les Gens De Couleur Libres
CONSTELLATION 079
★★★

Matana Roberts' early appearances at Fred Anderson's Velvet Lounge in Chicago and initial recordings with Sticks And Stones served notice that she was an alto saxophonist with a knack for strong melodies and a tone that traversed the pitch range from menthol sharpness to melted-butter warmth. But her work since leaving the city suggests that she wants to be a multidisciplinary artist. Roberts made *Live In London* at the Vortex, and it has been the site of several superb live CDs. Despite that, the sound is a tad flat. Roberts apparently did not have the opportunity to rehearse with her combo, and it shows in their deference to her. Bassist Tom Mason's playing is solid but anonymous, and drummer Chris Vatalaro only asserts himself near the end of penultimate tune, a rather too circuitous improvisation that resolves into Duke Ellington's "Oska T." Only pianist Robert Mitchell steps up and challenges Roberts, who plays with plenty of stamina but runs out of ideas during the more lengthy pieces.

Engagement is not the issue on *Coin Coin Chapter One*. Recorded before an invited audience with musicians she's know for up to a decade, it is a committed performance that combines theater and music to address the common heritage of African Americans, particularly slavery. There's a lot to appreciate here. The opening alto/piano duet has a bracing immediacy that would have done *Live In London* a world of good, and there are moments where Roberts' arrangements strike a balance between pungent horns and unbridled, emotional strings that recalls Don Cherry's work with the Jazz Composers Orchestra. The beautiful, churchy cadence of the a cappella "Libation For Mr. Brown: Bid Em In" bolsters the power of Roberts' lament for her ancestors' suffering, but her overwrought vocalizing turns parts of "Pov Piti" and "I Am" into unintentional parodies. While Roberts is to be commended for her ambition, one hopes she'll find a producer who will challenge her to only include the good stuff.

—Bill Meyer

Live In London: My Sistr; Pieces Of We; Glass; Turn It Around; Oska T; Exchange. (73:16)
Personnel: Matana Roberts, alto saxophone; Tom Mason, bass; Robert Mitchell, piano; Chris Vatalaro, drums.
Ordering info: centralcontrol.co.uk

Coin Coin Chapter One: Les Gens De Couleur Libres: Rise; Pov Piti; Song For Eulalie; Kersalia; Libation For Mr. Brown: Bid Em In; Lulla/bye; I Am; How Much Would You Cost? (61:15)
Personnel: Matana Roberts, reeds and voice; Gitu Jain, voice; David Ryshpan, piano and organ; Nicolas Caloia, cello; Gordon Allen, trumpet; Fred Bazil, tenor saxophone; Jason Sharp, baritone saxophone; Xarah Dion, prepared guitar; Marie Davidson, Josh Zubot, violin; Lisa Gamble, musical saw; Thierry Amar, Jonah Fortune, bass; David Payant, drums and vibes.
Ordering info: cstrecords.com

MSG
Tasty!
PLUS LOIN MUSIC 4537
★★★

Few improvisers are working at the prodigious pace set by alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa. Known for navigating the intersections of India's Carnatic tradition and Western jazz, the New York City–based reedist and educator proudly wears those influences on his sleeve in the several working groups that he juggles. And while he's not the leader of international combo MSG per se, he's nevertheless brought in more than half the tunes for this trio session, recorded in 2006 but only recently released.

So it's fitting that a passion for South Indian classical music also happens to be the common thread between Mahanthappa, Dutch drummer Chander Sardjoe and Irish bassist Ronan Guilfoyle. Fusion in every sense, their collective bow, *Tasty!*, teems with serpentine sax work that transcends a glut of showy, mechanical percussion, leaving the acoustic bass guitar to anchor odd-time workouts like the rigid funk of "Groove Band Rebellion" and the nimble "Waltz For The Anatomically Correct." Guilfoyle and Mahanthappa are in lockstep throughout the brisk swing of "Traditional" while the former easily keeps pace with the latter's chromatic hoop-jumping on "Installation." By contrast, the saxophonist's "Chant" arrives like a breath of fresh air simply for its relative restraint and amorphous textures. In fact, the washy tune's practically cathartic following the dense and knotty flights consuming the majority of the disc.

If its pun-evoking moniker—the collected initials of the members' surnames—tells us anything, it's that this is a group having fun during its brief time together. But the titular wordplay is also telling in another regard. After all, the word "tasty" is most often deployed in reference to chops, and in that department this album does not come up short.

—Areif Sless-Kitain

Tasty!: Blackjack!; Sucking Stones; Installation; Guile; Groove Band Rebellion; Traditional; Chant; Waltz For The Anatomically Correct. (48:57)
Personnel: Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; Chander Sardjoe, drums; Ronan Guilfoyle, bass.
Ordering info: plusloin.net

Darius Jones and Matthew Shipp
Cosmic Lieder
AUM FIDELITY 066
★★★★

Matthew Shipp first invited Darius Jones to make a duo record several years ago, when Jones was still relatively new to the New York jazz scene. The project was worth the wait; on *Cosmic Lieder*, it's easy to hear why Shipp was so taken with the young saxophonist. Jones speaks through his alto in an original and unforced language, conversing easily with Shipp in a dialog of equals.

Given the generational difference between the two musicians, it would be easy to expect a student-master relationship to come through in the music, but if anything the opposite is true. Shipp lets Jones take the lead, responding to the saxophonist's searching phrases with great sensitivity. The pieces are short and to the point, each originating with a statement from Jones and proceeding down a dual stream of consciousness. Some break down into sparse desolation, others build to Igor Stravinskian overload, with Shipp's lower-register block chords shuddering as Jones ties himself in knots. Most are left harmonically unresolved. Exquisite opener "Bleed" finds Jones moving fluidly from droning, ney-like phrases into unexpectedly sweet melody while Shipp frames the shifts almost telepathically.

Even when the duo squeaks and pounds its way into a seemingly inescapable corner, the album's structure allows them to simply stop and head in another direction. The brevity of Cosmic Lieder lends it the sense that this is just the beginning of the conversation and that there's much more left to explore. —*Joe Tangari*

Cosmic Lieder: Bleed; Ultima Thule; Zillo Valla; Multiverse; Mandrakk; Overvoid; Weeja Dell; Motherboxxx; Black Lightning; Nix Uotan; Jonesy; 4-D Vision; Geh-Jedollah. (39:55)
Personnel: Darius Jones, alto saxophone; Matthew Shipp, piano.
Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

Tedeschi Trucks Band
Revelator
SONY MASTERWORKS 8142023
★★★★

Susan Tedeschi and Derek Trucks set aside their solo endeavors for a collaborative project that finds them leading a little big band made up of friends like keyboard player Kofi Burbridge (Derek Trucks Band) and jazz trumpeter Maurice Brown. To help out with songwriting, they looked to the band and eight others, including Gary Louris and singer-guitarist Sonya Kitchell. Mr. and Mrs. Trucks might have settled for a genial mix of blues, funk and Southern soul that signified their contentment with marriage, parenthood and careers. But no, they don't play it cozy and safe here; instead, they champion generosity of spirit and a sense of adventure.

Tedeschi is in particularly fine voice, singing sweet or rough with authority at a level once occupied by foremothers Bonnie Raitt and Tracy Nelson in their prime. She stirs the soul, whether calling out for a shoulder to lean on in "Don't Let Me Slide" or appraising dizzying romance in the Otis Redding–type ballad "Until You Remember." Her repertoire of expression sheds favorable light on all the songs. For his part, Trucks, a prince to his queen, makes a strong impression throughout the album, even though he's constricted by tidy, tight song arrangements. The pony-tailed slide guitarist rebels against creative stagnation as naturally as he breathes. When the bandleaders sublimate their self-interest in service of superior image-laden material, as on backup singer Mike Mattison's "Midnight In Harlem" and "Bound For Glory," their air of emotional candor is downright disarming. Trucks' interest in Indian classical music is reflected by the overdubbed sarod and tabla that contribute to the poignant mood of another ace ballad, "These Walls." —*Frank-John Hadley*

Revelator: Come See About Me; Don't Let Me Slide; Midnight In Harlem; Bound For Glory; Simple Things; Until You Remember; Ball And Chain; These Walls; Learn How To Live; Shrimp & Grits; Love Has Something Else To Say; Shelter. (65:37)
Personnel: Susan Tedeschi, vocals, guitar; Derek Trucks, slide guitar; Oteil Burbridge, bass; Kofi Burbridge, keyboards, flute; J. J. Johnson, Tyler Greenwell, drums; Maurice Brown, trumpet; Saunders Sermons, trombone; Kebbi Williams, tenor saxophone; Mark Rivers, Mike Mattison, Ryan Shaw, harmony vocals; David Ryan Harris, lead vocal (12), harmony vocals; Eric Krasno, guitar (8); Alam Khan, sarod (8), Salar Nadfer, tabla (8).
Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

Classic Salsa Explosion

Chicago has never been a salsa town, but leave it to the Numero Group, the meticulous reissue label, to uncover another lost chapter in the city's history with ***Cult Cargo: Salsa Boricua De Chicago*** **(Numero Group 036; 69:45 ★★★)**, which chronicles the work of the obscure imprint Ebirac. That label grew out of a Puerto Rican social center run by Carlos "Caribe" Ruiz that lasted through the mid-'80s. The material here covers a wide range of styles, from brassy Fania-style traditionalism to post-Santana fusion to heavy tres-driven burners; some of it is superb (especially La Justicia), some mediocre, but all of it is largely unknown to anyone who didn't witness it first hand. The thick booklet with Rob Sevier's liner notes and abundant photos might be the most valuable part of the gorgeous package.

Ordering info: numerogroup.com

Blazing a path for salsa in Chicago—and just about everywhere else in the world—was Machito, who formed one of the first and most influential Afro-Cuban jazz outfits in New York in the early '40s, the decade that marked his finest, most original work. But he continued much longer, and ***El Padrino: A Man And His Music*** **(Fania 508008; 71:39/67:55 ★★★)** packs two CDs with 44 recordings made between 1955–'68, ranging from ultra-brassy mainstream mambo and cha cha cha to rather schmaltzy stabs at exotica and wan bossa nova cash-ins. Luckily, most of this stuff kills, with fiery singing from Graciela, airtight arrangements designed for maximum punch, and sharp solos. The decent liner notes include terrific archival photos and original album covers.

As good as the new collections Fania has been assembling are, there's still no comparison with the straight album reissues like the eponymous debut ***Tipica '73*** **(Fania 509058; 44:28 ★★★★)**, from a group centered around five breakaway musicians from Ray Barretto's powerhouse band that quickly took on a life of its own. Fronted by the superb singer Adalberto Santiago and featuring pianist Sonny Bravo and the explosive timbalero Orestes Vilató, the group saluted the music's Cuban roots more than a lot of other New York bands, including covers of classics by Miguel Matamoros and Arsenio Rodriguez (the band would soon add a tres player Nelson González to its lineup).

Ordering info: fania.com

On his new self-titled album ***Sammy Ayala*** **(Candela 01; 50:13 ★★★)**, the veteran Puerto Rican singer who worked with Cortijo and Ismael Rivera meets a variety of young admirers. The album was cut in San Juan with an old-school, if slightly ragged, salsa band, but on five tracks producers like Quantic, Nickodemus and Matthias Heilbronn complement the mix with modern beats. I think his avuncular charm is better served by the traditional arrangements, but he capably handles most of the nu-grooves.


Curro Fuentes

BRIAN CROSS

Ordering info: cdbaby.com/cd/sammyayala2

While cumbia ruled the dance scene in Colombia, there's no missing the impact of mambo and early salsa on ***Cartagena! Curro Fuentes & The Big Band Cumbia And Descarga Sound Of Colombia 1962–72*** **(Soundway 026; 68:15 ★★★★★)**, a knockout collection focusing on productions by José Maria "Curro" Fuentes—part of the Discos Fuentes dynasty. These insanely buoyant tracks (which employ other dynamic rhythms like porro, mapalé, fandango and gaita) bristle with sharp, contrapuntal arrangements that pit various horn clusters in cubist configurations, often allowing a wild, wayward clarinet to dance deliriously atop the searing grooves. It's mind-boggling that this stuff isn't standard curriculum, but Soundway is changing the situation.

Aqui Los Bravos! The Best of Michi Sarmiento Y Su Combo Bravo 1967–77 **(Soundway 028; 52:35 ★★★★)** digs deeper into the Discos Fuentes legacy, with 16 killer tracks by the titular saxophonist and bandleader, whose father was the label's in-house arranger. These scrappy tracks opt for a more explicitly Cuban and contemporary sound, with a boogaloo presence, more ferocious grooves, and electric guitar and piano (natch, cumbia is still heavily in the mix). **DB**

Ordering info: soundwayrecords.com

Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya
Sotho Blue
SUNNYSIDE 1276
★★★★

The beauty of *Sotho Blue* isn't in its breadth. In terms of dynamics, tempo and timbre, it's actually cast narrow. Except for a moment here and there, everyone plays quietly. No one is in a rush.

Nor should they be. Within these constraints, *Sotho Blue* blooms in beautiful muted hues. Ibrahim and the Ekaya ensemble have a history of working together. The wind instrumentation leans toward lower registers, where tenor and baritone saxes establish a sonic foundation that's sturdy and tactile. Trombone and alto sax either reinforce or add a sheen to this mix. It's a gorgeous weave, made expressive through rich harmonies and/or gospel voicings.

Each member of Ekaya solos with intelligence, taste and understatement—except for drummer George Gray, the only one who doesn't get his turn in the spotlight. But Gray is critical. On "Calypso Minor" he taps out a basic kick, closed hi-hat and snare pattern, keeping fills minimal in order to anchor the bass figure that threads throughout. He plays more freely on "Nisa" to balance the horns, which lock onto a rhythm reminiscent of Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage."

Ibrahim keeps his presence low, too, preferring to let his compositions speak for themselves. He allows himself one unaccompanied performance, "Abide," a meditation rich in gospel reverie. Perhaps the greatest of the many great moments lie in the album's sole cover. Again with bass and drums absent, Bud Powell's "Glass Enclosure" becomes a dialog between horns and piano. The former consists of block chords with a few unison or octave lines; though not in steady tempo, there is a sense of movement as the changes unfold. Ibrahim answers these with dissonances and empty spaces suggesting that mysteries persist even within illusions of order.

—Bob Doerschuk

Sotho Blue: Calypso Minor; Sotho Blue; Abide; Nisa; The Mountain; The Wedding; Glass Enclosure; Star Dance; Joan Capetown Flower (Emerald Bay) (48:55)
Personnel: Abdullah Ibrahim, piano; Cleave Guyton, alto saxophone, flute; Keith Loftis, tenor saxophone; Jason Marshall, baritone saxophone; Andrae Murchison, trombone; Belden Bullock, bass; George Gray, drums.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Trio Dolce Vita
Amarcord
JAZZWERKSTATT 082
★★★★ ½

For anyone familiar with the works of Nino Rota, *Amarcord* is bound to prick up one's ears. But the trick in this kind of situation is to get over with anyone, not just those familiar with such themes at the title track or "Padrino" (from *The Godfather*). And even though it isn't a jazz album, per se, Trio Dolce Vita pulls off a rare admixture of semi-classical with pop, jazz and more world-music- type flavorings.

The trio's magical yet modest blend of instrumentation is easy on the ears, at times soothing (when it isn't more lively and a tad wild), with an execution that makes it obvious these guys know their Rota. While the music is less swinging and light on blue notes, the jacket does attest to the music being "elaborated by Trio Dolce Vita." In other words, the "jazz" is in the details of interpretation. "Padrino" takes a normally mournful dirge and turns it into a festive romp, while "La Strada" eventually gets a hoedown makeover, complete with the CD's longest stretches of improvisation.

Johannes Fink's full-bodied bass notes and expressive arco treatments buttress everything here, and Jorg Brinkmann's cello counterlines add depth when he isn't also adding some electronics. The strings are the "surround" sound for Claudio Puntin's signature clarinet voice, and he adds bass clarinet, glockenspiel, "toys" and a Hohner organa 30 here and there. This interaction can be heard with "Cantilena," where the simple lines expressed by all carry this delicate and beautiful melody. One of the more true-to-form renditions comes with the danceable "L'Acrobata," a lively waltz that's over before you know it. "La Dolce Vita" is jazzy, breezy, a lazy walk through a bed of flowers. "Fellini's Waltz," a light-footed, more brisk swinger, is a showcase for Brinkmann's cello playing. Full of life, the cellist is very at ease with this carefree interpretation.

But the more telling and enjoyable treatments are heard on creative reinterpretations of such imaginative melodies as "Canto Della Buranella," with Brinkmann's subtle, tasteful effects helping to lift the music into another realm, as Puntin's toys add texture next to the slightly restless cello lines. There is an almost ethereal sense of disorientation with this track that keeps you guessing where the melody went, until the end. The closer is filled with dreams, both classical and folk-like, reminding us of Rota's way of making music sound like the aural movie it is.

—John Ephland

Amarcord: Amarcord; Padrino; Cantilena; L'Acrobata; Canto Della Buranella; La Dolce Vita; Fellini's Waltz; La Strada; L'Intermezzo Della Mantide Religiosa. (45:45)
Personnel: Claudio Puntin, clarinet, bass clarinet, glockenspiel, toys, Hohner organa 30; Jorg Brinkmann, cello, electronics; Johannes Fink, bass.
Ordering info: records-cd.com

Youn Sun Nah
Same Girl
ACT 9024-2
★★★

German label ACT has earned a reputation for producing artists or projects on the outer margins of jazz. This opus by Korean singer Youn Sun Nah is no exception. With source material ranging from heavy metal titans Metallica, folk-rock icons Pentangle, traditional Korean music and singer-songwriter Randy Newman not to mention originals by both Nah and Swedish guitarist Ulf Wakenius, nothing can stand in the way of the vocalist. In this endeavor, she gets great help from Wakenius, who displays a versatility that will surprise those who are mainly familiar with his work alongside pianist Oscar Peterson.

Because Nah's voice does not have the depth or warmth of Cassandra Wilson, she is more reminiscent of Patricia Barber—just to mention two prime examples of jazz singers who have looked for inspiration outside the jazz realm. Nah compensates with a wide range of intonations, as well as inflections that sound neither forced nor mannered. Moreover, she has a strong instrument and enough confidence to work with minimum backing.

The often bare accompaniment that she opted for was a wise decision. With her kalimba for sole accompaniment, she puts her own stamp on "My Favorite Things." With Wakenius' fierce support, Metallica's "Enter Sandman" takes her in a totally different direction and echoes British rock singer PJ Harvey—she's not afraid of sounding like a banshee.

Her two compositions show two quite dissimilar sides of her personality as well as her talent as a songwriter. The plaintive "Uncertain Weather" offers quite a contrast to the jagged "Pancake," a humorous wink at fast-food habits that also brings a ray of sunshine to a rather mournful collection.

—Alain Drouot

Same Girl: My Favorite Things; My Name Is Carnival; Breakfast In Baghdad; Uncertain Weather; Song Of No Regrets; Kangwondo Arirang; Enter Sandman; Same Girl; Moondog; Pancake; La Chanson D'Hélène. (47:12)
Personnel: Youn Sun Nah, vocals, kalimba, music box, kazoo; Ulf Wakenius, guitars; Lars Danielsson, bass, cello; Xavier Desandre-Navarre, percussion; Roland Brival, narration (11).
Ordering info: actmusic.com

Anthony Branker & Ascent
Dance Music
ORIGIN 82579
★★★ ½

On his third Ascent project, Princeton University educator Anthony Branker challenges preconceptions that a composer's erudition might impinge upon accessibility. From the hummingbird-paced piano and horn vamp that opens the rousing "The House Of Brotherhood Of The Black Heads" to Tia Fuller's blistering solo on "The Renewal," Branker inspires buoyant, animated performances from his sextet.

Bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Adam Cruz guide each other into the pocket on the title track: Cruz then steps out of it to support an onslaught of percussive tenor lines, each of which creates a metered tension that turns rapturously free. When he's not slapping the swing out of his instrument, Davis shows off his tender side, finding a pillowy bottom on "A Beautiful Life" and balancing out piano interludes with a gentle yet dynamic solo on "A Smile Awaits." Estonian singer Kadri Voorand crafted lyrics for four out of the disc's tracks. Her words reflect her reaction to Branker's music, as her phrasing plays hide-and-seek with melodies. The effect can be over-the-top, though a few uncomfortable notes barely blemish an otherwise moving listen. *—Jennifer Odell*

Dance Music: The Renewal; Mysterious Ways; Dance Music; A Smile Awaits; Asking Answers; The House Of The Brotherhood Of The Black Heads; The Holy Innocent; A Beautiful Life; Truth; Depende. (60:00)
Personnel: Anthony Branker, musical director; Kadri Voorand, vocals (2, 5, 7, 8); Tia Fuller, alto saxophone; Ralph Bowen, tenor and soprano saxophones; Clifford Adams, Jr., trombone; Jonny King, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Adam Cruz, drums; Freddie Bryant, guitar (9).
Ordering info: origin-records.com

Brian Lynch
Unsung Heroes: A Tribute To Some Underappreciated Trumpet Masters
HOLISTIC MUSICWORKS 1
★★★★★

Brian Lynch's *Unsung Heroes* honors the legacies of 10 underrated trumpet players. The series is more than a tribute; it's an effort to preserve and perpetuate the bop legacy. Lynch, who performed and recorded in the final edition of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, exhibits a full sound, good range and a bop-inspired style. *Unsung Heroes* features his peers and proteges performing a trove of obscure compositions. The opener, Joe Gordon's "Terra Firma Irma," closely resembles Donald Byrd's "Jeannine," albeit with a distinct turnaround of descending chords—Lynch and his sidemen take full advantage. Lynch is also in fine form on his tune "Further Arrivals." His intense solo on Tommy Turrentine's "Big Red" provides a nice contrast to the track's relaxed swing. But the album isn't just about Lynch. Veteran alto player Vincent Herring and tenor player Alex Hoffman also pitch in. So does pianist Rob Schneiderman, an unheralded veteran whose resume includes work with J.J. Johnson and Art Farmer. The set closes with a fast reading of Louis Smith's challenging "Wetu." While releases like *Unsung Heroes* appear with some frequency, few sound as accomplished or exuberant. *—Eric Fine*

Unsung Heroes: Terra Firma Irma; I Could Never Forget You; Further Arrivals; Saturday Afternoon At Four; Household Of Saud; RoditiSamba; Big Red; Unsung Blues; Wetu. (68:22)
Personnel: Brian Lynch, trumpet, flugelhorn; Vincent Herring, alto saxophone; Alex Hoffman, tenor saxophone; Rob Schneiderman, piano; David Wong, bass; Pete Van Nostrand, drums; Vicente "Little Johnny" Rivero, congas (tracks 3, 6).
Ordering info: hollisticmusicworks.com

Autodidact Bill Dixon Wove Singular Orchestrations


Bill Dixon

In June 1980, Giovanni Bonandrini, the proprietor of Black Saint/Soul Note, drove from Milan to Verona to hear trumpeter Bill Dixon—who had contracted with Bonandrini to do one recording—play a concert opposite Andrew Hill. After the show, Bonandrini asked Dixon to record two LPs worth of material, countering Dixon's protestation of unpreparedness with a sizable advance.

The ensuing recordings, *In Italy Volume 1* and *Volume 2* the fourth and fifth in Dixon's discography, launched an 18-year Dixon-Bonandrini relationship that generated six sessions and nine albums. Documented on **Bill Dixon: *The Complete Remastered Recordings On Black Saint & Soul Note* (CamJazz 1009 41:38/41:31/79:15/64:12/39:21/77:40/69:59/68:45/72:41 ★★★★)**, it's a fascinating corpus, tracing Dixon's conceptual evolution from formal notation and precise interpretation to a process-based approach. Going forward, he would endeavor to transcend the trumpet's theoretical limitations in order to project upon it, as Taylor Ho Bynum wrote, "the full timbral, dynamic and register range of an orchestra." Dixon had played for dancers from the early '50s, and knew how to bob and weave impeccably within long-form non-metered and rubato time feels. He also abstracted the flow with multiphonics, sound-silence contrasts and liberal use of delay and reverb—always landing on the one, wherever it was.

Dixon admired the "floating cloud" sound of Claude Thornhill's four-French horn band of the '40s and Gil Evans' subsequent iterations of those possibilities in Miles Davis' *Birth Of The Cool* nonet. He strove for Davis' architectural precision, authoritative intention and fluidity of line. His voice referenced Duke Ellington's frameworks for Rex Stewart's quarter-valvings, George Russell's showcases for Dizzy Gillespie's intervallic audacity, the somber formalism of Arnold Schoenberg and Karlheinz Stockhausen's sonic extravagance. The resulting brew toggled between stark lyricism conveying transcendentalist aesthetics associated with New England, where Dixon lived for the last 37 years of his life, and ferociously sardonic explosions denoting imperatives that animated New York's black intelligentsia.

Dixon began to develop his mature voice in the '60s. His 1964 recording, "Winter Song," is a stiff, conventional septet performance, but the 1966–'67 RCA session ***Intents And Purposes* (International Phonograph; 32:24 ★★★★)**, recently reissued by International Phonograph in facsimile mini-LP format with fabulous sound, contains the seeds of everything that Dixon would subsequently do.

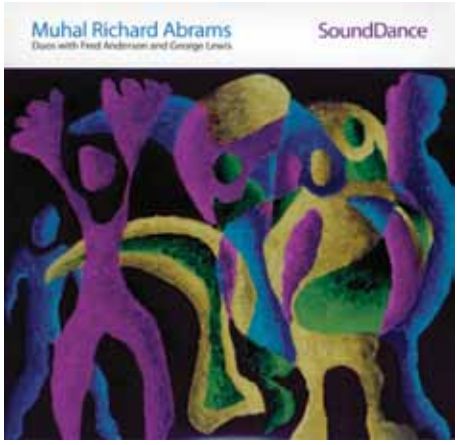
Several duets with bassist Alan Silva on the *In Italy* dates illustrate how exhaustively Dixon had worked during the years following *Intents And Purposes*—spent in the isolation of academe—on refining a solo trumpet language. He plays piano on the ensemble tracks, ceding solo duties to a well-trained front line of trumpeters Stephen Haynes and Arthur Brooks and tenor saxophonist Stephen Horenstein.

A second Italian tour with bassists Alan Silva and Mario Pavone and drummer Laurence Cook resulted in *November 1981*, on which Dixon synthesizes technical particulars into an authoritatively executed argot. Less satisfying is *Thoughts*, a sloppy 1985 concert at Bennington (where Dixon taught) on which tubist John Buckingham and bassists William Parker and Peter Kowald join the quartet. On the ensemble-oriented *Song Of Sisyphus*, a 1988 Milan studio encounter with Buckingham, Cook and Pavone, the improvisations proceed along statelier, more tectonic lines. Recorded in 1993, *Vade Mecum* and *Vade Mecum II*, document Dixon's work with bassists Barry Guy and Parker along with drummer Tony Oxley. Rather than orchestrate the bass parts, as on *November 1981*, Dixon expresses his intentions on the horn and has the collaborators fuel high-level spontaneous composition.

The Dixon-Soul Note relationship ends in 1998, with *Papyrus Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*, on which Dixon, playing piano and both acoustic and electronically processed trumpet, and Oxley, playing drums, percussion and electronics, engage in 22 beyond-category sound paintings, masterfully executed. **DB**

Ordering info: camjazz.com; internationalphotographinc.com

Muhal Richard Abrams
SoundDance
PI 137
★★★★



Now into his ninth decade, pianist Muhal Richard Abrams hasn't surrendered an ounce of his resoluteness. You can hear his singular, sober style dominating the two duet performances presented on *SoundDance*, both with longtime colleagues from his Chicago days. "Focus, ThruTime…Time" was recorded live in October of 2009, one of the last recordings by tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson, who was by the side of Abrams when the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians was founded. The two icons engage in a battle of wills guided by a communal artistic vision; they find ways to make their disparate improvisational approaches work, and in those differences it's easy to notice how attuned to one another they are. Anderson's telltale licks and melodic structures are clearly heard, but Abrams forces the reedist to modulate and reshape familiar phrases, rechanneling the usual rangy intensity into something more simmering and concentrated. At the same time Anderson's rhythmic steeliness keeps the pianist from growing too contemplative. Together, they deliver generous give-and-take and ebb-and-flow distinguished by exquisite detail within each interaction.

The second disc contains a September 2010 concert with George Lewis, alternating between laptop and trombone, and here there's a much greater use of space, silence and drift. Lewis employs electronic textures that range from serrated long tones to sibilant flurries to quasi-orchestral masses, but each synthetic tone rolls quickly into a new episode. These sounds give Abrams plenty of space to work with, which allows him to grow both meditative and brooding. When Lewis picks up his horn—he sounds as sharp, melodically generous and rhythmically deft as ever—the interactions are a bit more conventional, yet hardly predictable. Age obviously hasn't slowed down Abrams at all.

—Peter Margasak

SoundDance: Disc One: Focus, ThruTime…Time: Part 1; Part 2; Part 3; Part 4 (38:10). Disc Two: SoundDance: Part 1; Part 2: Part 3; Part 4 (45:14).
Personnel: Muhal Richard Abrams, piano; Fred Anderson, tenor saxophone (disc one); George Lewis, laptop, trombone (disc two).
Ordering info: pirecordings.com

Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra
40 Acres And A Burro
ZOHO 201102
★★★★½

The disc's title may initially come off as humorous, but a sharp socio-political message lies underneath, one that involves how many compositions within the Latin jazz idiom have yet to gain the same recognition as the ones that fall in the big band or bebop categories. Now going on three years since splitting with Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra plays as if it has an understandable chip on its shoulder and its energy never lets up.

O'Farrill makes a strong case for Afro-Latin jazz pieces that are worthy of more canonical exploration, particularly his ensemble's spirited take on Astor Piazzolla's "Tanguango" and an enchanting reading of Hermeto Pascoal's avant-samba "Bebe," as well as boisterous originals such as O'Farrill's swirling "A Wise Latina," his homage to Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and his dramatic title track, which features Charles Mingus-like vocalizations. Each song brims with bravura polyrhythms pulsating forward and various soloists delivering pyrotechnical fireworks.

The disc is most winning on the soothing "She Moves Through The Fair," which features Heather Martin Bixler's rich violin melodies intertwined with Peter Brainin's raspy tenor saxophone essay. *—John Murph*

40 Acres And A Burro: Rumba Urbana; A Wise Latina; Almendra; Um A Zero; El Sur; She Moves Through The Fair; Ruminaciones Sobre Cuba; Tanguango; Bebe; A Night In Tunisia; 40 Acres And A Burro. (69:04)
Personnel: Arturo O'Farrill, piano; Ricardo Rodriguez, bass; Vince Cherico, drums; Roland Guerrero, congas; Joe Gonzalez, percussion; David DeJesus, Bobby Porcelli, alto saxophone; Peter Brainin, Ivan Renta, tenor saxophone; Jason Marshall, baritone saxophone; Seneca Black, Michael Philip Mossman, Jim Seeley, John Walsh, trumpet; Reynaldo Jorge, Tokunori Kajiwara, Earl McIntyre, Gary Valante; trombone; Sharon Moe, Jeff Scott, French horn (2); Pablo O. Bilbraut, güiro (3, 6); Paquito D'Rivera, clarinet (4, 9); Guilherme Monteiro, guitar (4); Yuri Juárez, guitar (5); Freddy "Huevito" Lobatón, cajón, cajita, quijada (5); Heather Martin Bixler, violin (6).
Ordering info: zohomusic.com

Oliver Lake/Christian Weber/Dieter Ulrich
For A Little Dancin'
INTAKT 172
★★★½

Because the debut album by this trio featuring stalwart alto saxophonist Oliver Lake in company of Swiss musicians Christian Weber on bass and Dieter Ulrich on drums is branded as a communal effort, it will draw comparisons to Trio 3, the project Lake has been spearheading with bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Andrew Cyrille for more than 20 years.

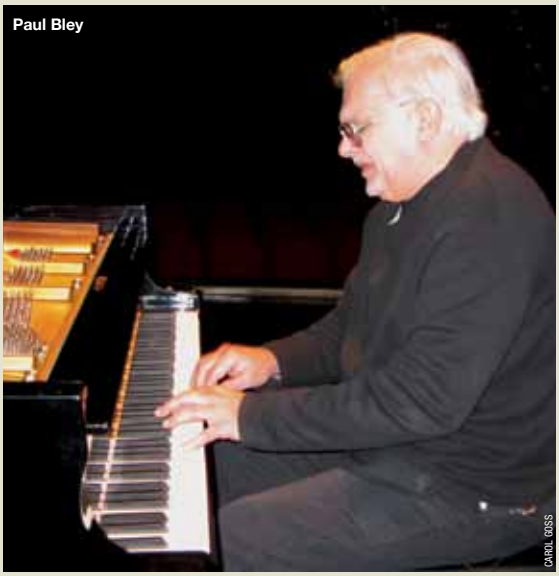
But this new group has its own idiosyncrasies. The music concocted is more straightforward and less cerebral. A sprightly atmosphere often pervades. The fresh setting seems to have given Lake a renewed sense of discovery, allowing him to play with impressive verve and focus. And there is much to say about the interaction between the three musicians. Even though Lake penned all but one of the pieces, those renditions remain the result of a collective effort.

Lake's sinuous lines occasionally punctuated by screeches or strangled notes, get prime support. Weber can deliver an effective ostinato or cleverly shadow the altoist, and Ulrich is a fine player who is just as adroit with sticks, brushes, or mallets and can bring his bass drum to the fore to create an original syncopation.

The clarity of the delivery throughout *For A Little Dancin'* makes it a convincing first statement that might not only put the spotlight on two deserving European musicians, but also make new Lake converts, which would be quite a feat at this stage of his career. *—Alain Drouot*

For A Little Dancin': Marion Theme; "Z" Trio; Rollin' Vamp; Art 101; In This; Spring-Ing Trio; Spots; For A Little Dancin'; Spelman; Backup. (53:37)
Personnel: Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Christian Weber, bass; Dieter Ulrich, drums.
Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

Pianist Arrigo Cappelletti Traces Paul Bley's Work and Life


Paul Bley

CAROL GOSS

"It's okay to steal, but only from oneself." That's pianist Paul Bley commenting on the nature of "total improvisation." Beyond his own words, Bley emerges from the pages of musician/author Arrigo Cappelletti's ***Paul Bley: The Logic Of Chance*** **(Vehicule Press)** as a quixotic, almost mercurial figure, one playing his music somewhere between the wild expanses of free-jazz and its opposite world of tradition, including the blues. This is not a unique view: Bley's 1999 autobiography, *Stopping Time: Paul Bley And The Transformation Of Jazz*, and Norman Meehan's oral history *Time Will Tell: Conversations With Paul Bley* (2003) help complete this picture.

Translated from the Italian by American pianist Gregory Burk, *The Logic Of Chance* is more analysis and history than a speaking biography, with Bley's own words about his music and life taking a back seat to Cappelletti's engaged writing style. In what is perhaps a telling signal as to the nature of the author's relationship to his subject, the last chapter is a seven-page interview from 2002 conducted via e-mail between Cappelletti and Bley (and wife Carol Goss). Toward the end of the interview, the author, more often than not, has more to say to his subject than the subject seems willing to share. For example, after cataloging a long list of notable musicians Bley has worked with, Cappelletti goes on to ask him, "Can you think of an example of this collaboration which has influenced your musical evolution?" Bley responds, "Playing with Charlie Parker showed me how much I didn't know." That's it.

That said, Cappelletti—author of *Il Profumo Del Jazz* in addition to being a pianist, music journalist and professor of jazz at the Conservatory of Venice—clearly knows his subject, packing a lot of information into this concise paperback. A 71-page "musical biography" covers the basics: born in Montreal in 1932, violin studies at age 5, on to New York, studied composition at Juilliard, and played with, among others, Parker, Charles Mingus, George Russell, Lester Young, Ornette Coleman, Jimmy Giuffre and Sonny Rollins. Also covered are his novel use of keyboard synthesizers and video (with Goss), starting the Improvising Artists label and Bley's lasting presence on the European scene. A chapter that includes musical analysis of five compositions by former wife/collaborator Carla Bley supposedly showcases Paul Bley's affinity with her music. But one is left wondering, are these in-depth analyses of his methods and approaches or just descriptions of the songs themselves? While Cappalletti's "Critical Reflections On Paul Bley's Music" in the chapter "Notes For A New Poetic Of Improvisation" can make for fascinating reading, it has little or no direct reference to Bley or Bley's music: The reader is left to connect the dots. Cappelletti does a good job of addressing Bley's essential, creative use of time and rhythm as a means to getting at such musical notions as movement, duration and silence. In the author's plainspoken words, for Bley "stopping time" refers to "the idea of breaking away from a regular and defined meter."

Burk's translation can be choppy at times, and the book could have used a good copy editor. Cappelletti's writing style can also take some getting used to: Frequently, he moves from citing "Bley" to "Paul" to "Paul Bley" to the one being talked about and back again. Similar to his tendency to speak generally, Cappelletti likes to expound. When discussing "Paul Bley and the art of the trio," he begins with a brief discussion of a incident in 1965 when Bley performed with (supposedly) drummer Barry Altschul and bassist Steve Swallow at a concert in Dalmine, Italy. After two paragraphs, Cappelletti uses this performance as a launching pad for a direction that has more to do with the author's musings than with Bley (e.g., text about dreams, "what Italo Calvino says about speed" and "the careful search for the right partner"). This isn't necessarily bad writing, but rather, a style of writing that ends up saying more about the writer than the principal subject. **DB**

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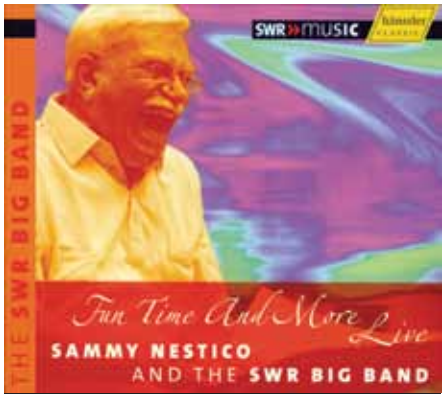


Sammy Nestico And The SWR Big Band
Fun Time And More Live

SWR MUSIC 93.271

★★★

If you became a DownBeat reader while playing in a high school or college jazz ensemble any time during the last 40 years, you probably developed a musical relationship with Sammy Nestico. Few could make it through any top performance curriculum without playing some of the Nestico charts that found their way into the jazz education establishment, many by way of the Count Basie band.

The SWR Band is a superior German unit that throughout the past 15 years has put itself at the disposal of a procession of arranger/conductors, some with Basie links, including Nestico, for whom this is a fourth collaboration. Given the huge size of Nestico's output, it's surprising that he chose to repeat at least three charts previously recorded by the SWR. But given the CD's limited availability here, redundancy won't be an issue for most.

Nestico's specialty is lightly swinging originals punctuated by punchy brass hits and playful dynamics. His ensemble voicings are generic, without the identifiable shadings of, say, prime Gil Evans. His writing for reeds was inclined to be a bit lazy, subordinated to the brass and sketched in unison combinations, sometimes flavored with a flute voicing. One delightful exception here is the swinging "Dimensions In Blue."

A couple of charts come with heavy mileage. "Fun Time," and "Samantha" were recorded and are still performed by the Basie band, and "Satin 'n' Glass" was recorded by the Frank Capp Juggernaut band. It's a measure of the SWR Band that these performances never disappoint. One surprise is "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," a swinging take on an old warhorse modeled on the spirit, if not the letter, of Louis Armstrong's great 1938 record. —*John McDonough*

Fun Time And More Live: Fun Time; Not Really The Blues; Celebration; A Song For Sarah; Blue Samuel; Samantha; Rare Moment; A New Day; A Pair Of Aces; Struttin' With Some Barbecue; Orchids And Butterflies; Satin 'n' Glass; Dimensions In Blue. (66:28)
Personnel: Felice Civitareale, Martin de Laat, Ralf Hesse, Karl Ferrent, Rudolf Reindl, trumpets; Marc Godfroid, Ernst Hutter, Ian Cumming, Georg Maus, trombones; Karus Graf, Joerg Kaufmann, Steffen Weber, Andreas Maile, Pierre Paquette, saxophones; Klaus Wagenleiter, piano; Klaus Peter Schopfer, guitar; Decebal Badila, bass; Guido Joeris, drums.
Ordering info: haenssler-classic.com

Tim Brady Bradyworks + Martin Messier *24 Frames Scatter + Trance*

AMBIENCES

MAGNÉTIQUES 206

★★★½

Canadian guitarist Tim Brady has had a remarkably fertile career as performer, conceptualist, concert promoter and cultural magpie. Brady lived in Toronto in the mid-'80s, creating unusual settings like "Sound Off," for massed sections of saxophones, brass and bass drums; and "Visions," featuring trumpeter Kenny Wheeler with string orchestra. During a sojourn to London, he played with U.K. jazz musicians and began to hatch a concept that would embrace all his influences—improv, jazz, rock, minimalism, orchestral and chamber music, electronics—yet focus in on his guitar prowess. A succession of solo guitar records ensued along with a fusion of electric guitar and contemporary chamber orchestra under the banner The Body Electric. Brady has also investigated the music of Kurt Cobain, Les Paul and The Guess Who and created a song cycle/theater piece exploring the life of Marie Curie. But *24 Frames Scatter + Trance* may be his most ambitious project to date.

The first of the three CDs comprises six duos with members of his Bradyworks ensemble, which includes voice, viola, baritone sax, bass clarinet and bass trombone. "Frame 1" opens with the ethereal voice of Karen Young navigating a reverberating cavern, the voice looped and processed, then interrupted by elastic textures, including slap bass guitar and a shearing effect. Nylon strings herald ominous noise that spills into industrial shred, somewhat similar to early John McLaughlin. "Frame 2" twins Brady's clanging ax with baritone saxophonist Jean-Marc Bouchard in a brash unison best described as heavy metal pointillism, reminiscent of King Crimson's darker moments.

The dozen miniatures on disc two, all approximately three minutes long, are for solo guitar, the first three using an alternate tuning known as scordatura. "Azure" from "Five Colours" is loud with spiralling rock riffs, while "Sienna," "Lava" and the suitably subtle "Discretion" are jazzily acoustic in a Goodrick-like introspective way. "Clouds" is awash with reverb and cross-fading shimmers, whereas "Pursuit" suggests the guitarist is being stalked by a factory monster fashioned from shattered glass. The third CD includes a DVD illustrating nine tracks with animated interpretations of the music by video artist Martin Messier. Listening to the brew of overdubbed guitar orchestra and electronics is best done while enjoying Messier's varied graphic depictions, starting with the black and white linear overlaps of "Trance," which look like an update of "Dr. Who" titles from the '60s in collision with the futuristic drawings of architect Zaha Hadid. "Trance" hits heavy, referencing the genre where techno, industrial, house, ambient and perhaps the Mahavinshnu Orchestra intersect, amplifying the whole through a battery of vintage tube mics, preamps and guitar amps augmented by digital technology. The final 15-minute opus, "57 Ways Of Playing Guitar," culminates in an apocalyptic concoction of chopper sounds, dull implosions and distant sirens foregrounded by frenetic, dueling guitar tracks. —*Michael Jackson*

24 Frames Scatter + Trance: Disc One: Scatter Six Duos: Frame 1, Scatter; Frame 2, In Almost Unison; Frame 3, Canonic Strategies; Frame 4, Still; Frame 5, Shadow; Frame 6, Four Elements. (56:39) Disc Two: Scatter, 12 Miniatures: Threefold Scordatura Frame 7, Push; Frame 8, Pull; Frame 9, Hold; Delay Tactics Frame 10, Clouds; Frame 11, Discretion; Frame 12, Pursuit; Frame 13 Slant; Five Colours Frame 14, Azure; Frame 15, Sienna; Frame 16, Lava; Frame 17, Harlequin; Frame 18, Tenne. (41:23) Disc Three: Frame 19, Trance; Frame 20, Sul A; Frame 21, Switch Seconds; Liquid; Leaps; Singularity; Melismatic; Frame 22, O Is For Ostinato; Frame 23, Invisible Quartet; Frame 24, 57 Ways Of Playing Guitar. (59:39)
Personnel: Tim Brady, electric guitar, electronics; Karen Young, voice; Jean-Marc Bouchard, baritone saxophone; Lori Freedman, bass clarinet; Pemi Paull, viola; Trevor Dix, bass trombone; Catherine Meunier, percussion.
Ordering info: actuellecd.com

The 'Minor Sub' Approach To Improvising Over Dominant 7ths

When improvising over a dominant seventh chord (V7), there are plenty of chord and scale substitutions that you can use to achieve a more interesting, jazzier sound. I personally like to think of the minor scale that relates to the dominant chord, the II minor.

To properly apply this substitution, I play the minor scale starting a fifth above (or a fourth below) the root of the dominant seventh chord. For example, on an F7 chord, I think of the C dorian scale. A dorian scale is a minor scale with a raised sixth. If you play an F mixolydian scale starting on the fifth note, you will also get a C dorian scale.

I first heard this "Minor Sub" approach when I started getting into jazz as a teenager listening to improvising guitarists like Wes Montgomery, Grant Green and Pat Martino. It seemed more like a certain "sound" they used, and I also heard that same sound on the Blue Note records of saxophonist Hank Mobley, trumpeter Lee Morgan and many other great improvisers.

I'd like to stress how important it is to listen to the masters if you want to learn the language of jazz. The fastest way to improve your playing is by listening to records and transcribing solos. When transcribing, I suggest you listen to the solo over and over to soak it in.

Once you can sing along with the recorded solo, then it's time to proceed with learning it on your instrument, paying close attention to the exact rhythmic phrasing of the notes. Don't worry about not being original. Certain ideas of the masters that speak to you will eventually be absorbed into your playing, and over time your own sound will start to emerge organically.

Example 1, top right, is a quick demonstration of playing the relative II minor (a C minor line) over a dominant F7 chord.

Example 2 is the same line, extended over a couple more bars.

Example 3 is a nice II–V–I run in B♭ starting on a C minor.

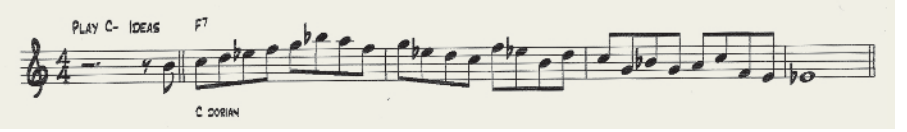
Play through each of these examples on your instrument, all the while keeping the sound of the dominant chord (F7) of the key (B♭) in your head.

Once you start to get the feel for how the Minor Sub approach works in improvisation, you can begin to incorporate it into your own solos and make it part of your own sound.

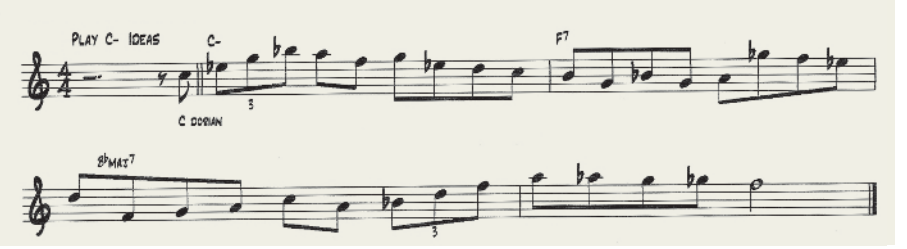
Example 4 is an original solo titled "Minor

Example 1

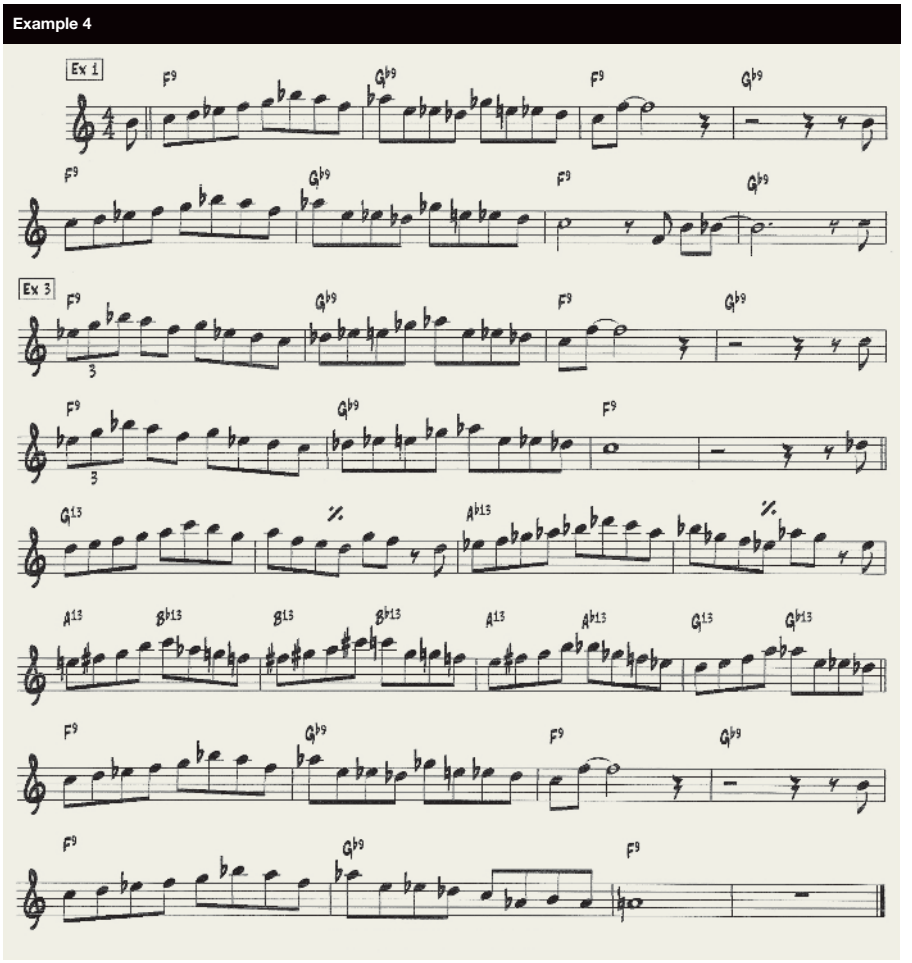
Example 2



Example 3



Example 4




Dave Stryker

JIMMY KATZ

Sub Improv" that I've written over a progression of well-known bebop changes using the Minor Sub approach to improvisation. On the bridge, my solo follows the chord substitutions that Miles Davis came up with when he performed his version of the popular jazz standard.

Play my written solo on your instrument until you start to hear how the harmony fits the chord changes. Notice how I start the C minor line from Example 1 on the first chord/first measure F9, but finish it by moving it up a half-step (D♭ minor) on the second measure when the chord moves up to G♭9.

In the second eight bars of the AABA form, I employ the same idea, only using the first measure of Example 3.

On the bridge, I use Example 1 in D minor for the G13 chord and E♭ minor for the A♭13 chord. I continue with the Minor Sub approach for each dominant chord in an ascending and descending pattern as the chords move to two beats each on the last four bars of the bridge.

This approach helps to define the harmony as the chords move in half-steps. You can also use the F blues scale on the first 16 measures if you want to open it up in that way. Mixing these two approaches will help you create a more interesting solo.

Good luck, and remember: The best way to learn is by listening to and transcribing the masters. **DB**

GUITARIST DAVE STRYKER'S 22ND CD AS A LEADER, *BLUE STRIKE*, WILL BE OUT IN NOVEMBER ON THE STEEPLECHASE LABEL. STRYKER ALSO RECORDS AND HAS A LONG-RUNNING GROUP WITH SAXOPHONIST STEVE SLAGLE CALLED THE STRYKER/SLAGLE BAND, WHOSE LATEST CD IS CALLED *KEEPER*. ON THE NEW YORK SCENE SINCE THE 1980S, STRYKER GOT HIS START WORKING WITH JACK MCDUFF AND STANLEY TURRENTINE. HE CURRENTLY TEACHES AT JAMEY AEBERSOLD'S SUMMER JAZZ WORKSHOP, THE LITCHFIELD JAZZ CAMP AND THE CALI SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY. MUSICAL EXAMPLES 1–3 ARE EXCERPTED FROM *DAVE STRYKER'S JAZZ GUITAR IMPROVISATION METHOD* (MEL BAY). STRYKER'S CDS AND INFO CAN BE FOUND AT DAVESTRYKER.COM.

How To Transcribe Jazz Solos From Recordings

I've been transcribing solos for quite a long time, and have had many of those transcriptions appear in this very magazine. I've found it to be a great method for improving multiple aspects of one's musicianship. For those of you who wish to improve your transcription ability, or who just need a push to start transcribing, here are what I hope will be some helpful pointers.

The first "mistake" I notice people make when starting the transcribing process is to go way beyond their level. John Coltrane's "Countdown" doesn't have to (and likely shouldn't) be your first transcription. Start with something you feel you could accomplish.

One of my first transcriptions was guitarist Jimmy Page's solo on the Led Zeppelin song "Tangerine." It's only eight measures long and consists mostly half and whole notes. Don't feel pressured to do an entire solo, either. Just a chorus or an eight-measure phrase can provide huge benefits.

Once you've decided on something that you want to transcribe, start by figuring out just one note. It could be the first note, but I'll often start with whatever note is clearest. If there's a string of 16th notes that lead to a held note, I'll likely start with the held note and then work backwards. Often the highest note in a phrase may stick out for me, and I'll start with that.

I find it helpful to listen to the note I'm targeting—pausing the playback right after this note—and then sing it to myself. Then I will determine what pitch it is, usually by playing it on an instrument simultaneously with the recording for verification.

In my early days I would do this note by note, but as one accumulates experience, it becomes easier to hear notes in groups, and you may find that you are able to hear and figure out phrases fairly quickly.

Once you've got a note, you can figure out the next note (or previous note, if you're starting in the middle of a phrase) intervallically. If you're not at the stage where you can readily identify intervals (which is where I started; transcribing helps with this in a hurry), take a guess. Is it a step or larger? Does it sound larger than a fifth? When you've made your guess, play the note you figured out and then what you believe to be the next note. If it's incorrect, is the interval larger or smaller than you had guessed? Repeat this process until you've got the right sound. Then play that along with the recording to check it.

As you get better at intervals, you may want to start working on phrases or groups of notes. Before determining pitches, establish the sound: Is it pentatonic? A mode? An arpeggio? Chromatic? If you find you're incorrect, don't let that get you down. You're actually learning more this way than when you are correct, because your ear is getting familiar with a sound it didn't fully recognize before. If you're stumped as to what it is, go back to the note-by-note method.

I used to start by finding out the key and chord progression, but I've found that it saves time to do that afterwards. This is because if the soloist does something unexpected (or if I'm wrong about the changes), I sometimes waste a lot of time checking the note over and over. There was a transcription I was doing where the soloist leaned on a C natural against an Emaj7 chord, and my left brain kept insisting that that couldn't be the note. So I spent a lot of time trying notes on either side of the C to see if they were better, only to discover that the C was indeed the correct note.

After finding the notes, we need to write them down, which requires knowing what the rhythm is. This is the part people find to be the most difficult. In this case, you do need to determine what time-signature and subdivision the song is based on before you start. I just tap my foot and count along until the cycle sounds like it's reached "one." I may then count along for a while to make sure I'm correct (and that there are no odd measures or time changes). Just like with phrases, you develop the ability to recognize what 4, 3, and even 5 and 7 feel like with enough experience.

After the meter, I'll next determine if the song has an eighth-note, 16th, or triplet feel by counting subdivisions along with it and see which one feels right. Don't worry too much about this, as it's not uncommon for a soloist to change what subdivisions they're basing their phrases off of as they play.

After that, I use a similar "start simple" approach for determining rhythms: I start with either the first note or a note that has a clear rhythmic attack, then I count along with the track and listen for what count I'm on when the note is struck. If it's in between the subdivisions I'm counting, then I know I need to count a different subdivision for that rhythm. As with notes, at first you may need to find what part of the measure every single note is on, but with experience you will start hearing rhythmic phrases and be able to write out entire measures without the need to count every note.

When I've got a phrase written down, one way I'll check myself is to play the phrase as if I've never heard it and am sight-reading it. If either rhythmically or melodically it doesn't sound like what's on the recording, I'll examine whatever it is that sounds "off." If the rhythm sounds wrong, I'll listen for what sounds different. Are some notes played earlier or later than what I wrote? I'll use the same technique that I use for figuring out the initial rhythm to fix those errors.


Jimi Durso

There is plenty of software that can help with transcribing. One useful tool is anything that can slow the playback down, especially if it doesn't change the pitch (in my youth I used a vari-speed tape recorder, but changing the speed also changed the key, so after figuring out a slowed-down phrase I would then have to transpose it to the original key). Also, I no longer do transcriptions by hand; I type them into music notation software. A big advantage of this is the software will play back what I have typed in, and I can simply listen to check if I have transcribed it correctly. I don't use this in place of playing it myself, mainly because playing it improves my technique and helps put the sounds and ideas under my fingers, so they're not just theoretical concepts that I can't execute. I strongly recommend playing through everything you transcribe, and along with the recording. This not only puts the licks into your vocabulary, but also the feel (whether it's behind the beat or ahead of the beat, which our system of musical notation doesn't allow for) and dynamics. I also find it to be a lot of fun. **DB**

A GUITARIST AND BASSIST BASED IN THE NEW YORK AREA, JIMI DURSO FREQUENTLY CONTRIBUTES SOLO TRANSCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSES TO DOWNBEAT'S WOODSHED DEPARTMENT. VISIT DURSO ONLINE ON JIMIDURSO.COM.

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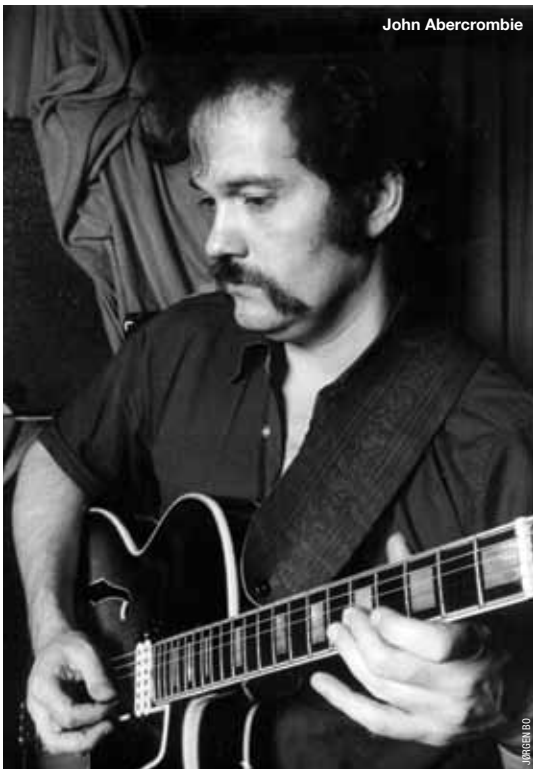
John Abercrombie's Modal Guitar Solo On 'Timeless'


John Abercrombie

Recorded in 1974 for the ECM label, guitarist John Abercrombie's debut album as a leader featured him in an organ trio setting with keyboardist Jan Hammer and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The title track, "Timeless," consists of patterns of stacked fifths within a structure that is 14 beats long, divided into two measures of four and one measure of six.

For the most part, Abercrombie takes a modal approach to his solo, with a minimum of chromatic notes. Mainly centering around E aeolian (the mode of the melody), we do find a couple of instances of E dorian towards the end of his solo (measures 27, 33 and 48). All of these occur on the Gadd9 chord, where the presence of a C# creates a bright lydian sound.

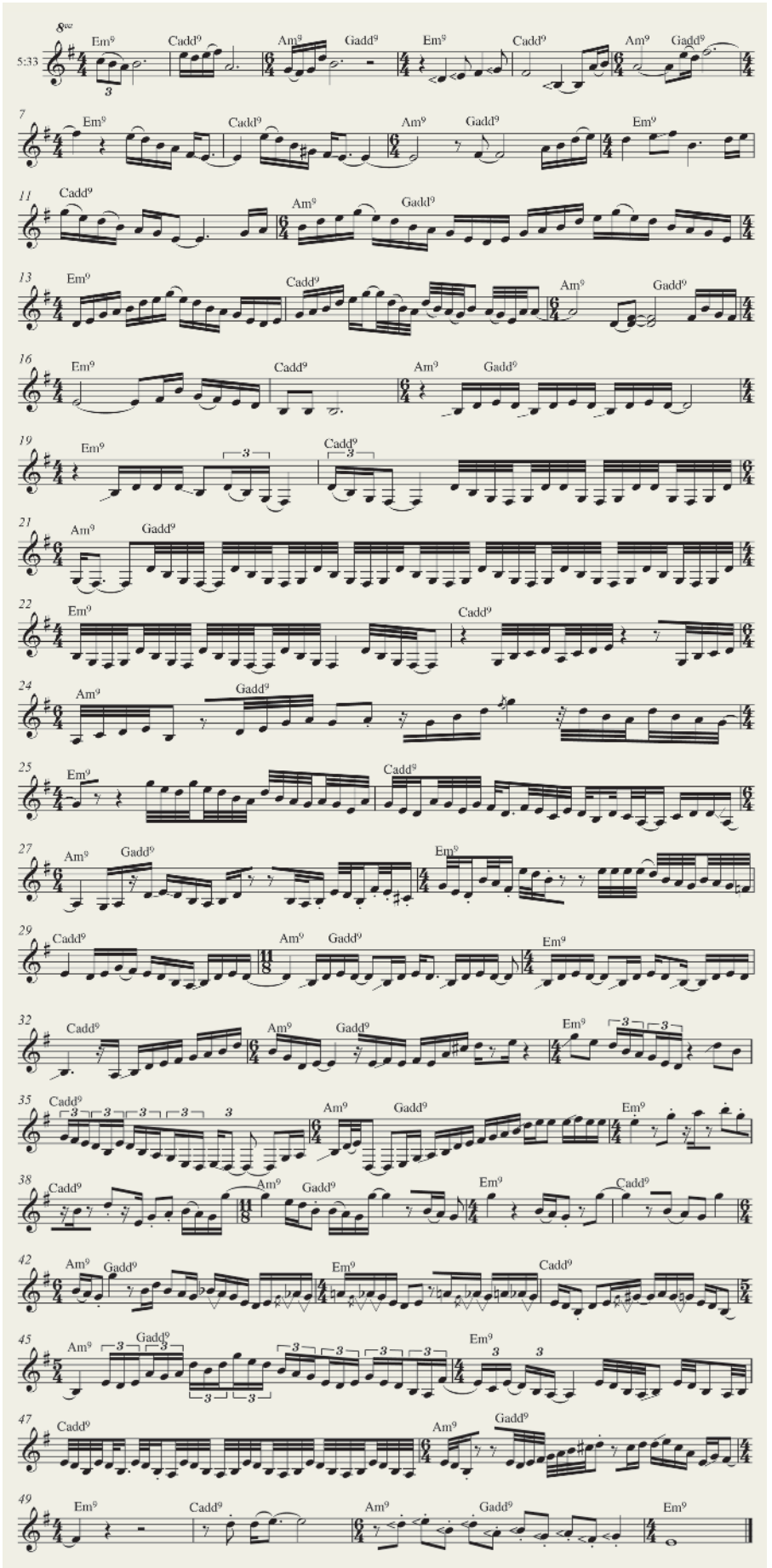
But there is also a lot of E minor pentatonic happening, which at times gives his solo a more "rock 'n' roll" attitude, especially with the bends in measures 42–44. The first instance of a purely pentatonic idea starts at the pickup to measure 11 and continues through the end of the phrase at measure 15. There also occurs an idea Abercrombie will reuse in this solo, that of note groupings inconsistent with the underlying subdivision, creating a polyrhythm. Starting with the pickups to measure 11, Abercrombie plays an ascending and descending E minor pentatonic scale in 16th notes, but it takes 14 notes before the pattern repeats. Since 16th notes are grouped in fours, the pattern repeats every three-and-a-half beats. Abercrombie plays this idea three full times, and the last time, the one that actually starts on the downbeat at measure 14, he decides to take it in a different direction on the descent, playing 32nd-note pentatonic ideas with more slurring.

In a simpler form, this occurs in measures 30 and 31. We have a four-note lick with the final note held for three 16ths, totaling two-and-a-half beats. Abercrombie starts this lick on the second beat of what should have been a 6/4 measure, but the entire trio drops an eighth note, as if they all heard the line resolve to what has become the first beat of measure 31. However, Abercrombie continues his idea with some variation three more times before resolving to the downbeat of measure 32.

The same type of idea happens almost halfway through measure 21, where in beat 3 Abercrombie plays a five-note idea in 32nds (D, B, G, F#, G). He plays this a total of seven complete times, over the barline into measure 22, where he then drops the last G note and changes the rhythm to resolve out of the polyrhythm. It's interesting to note that in each of these cases Abercrombie doesn't resolve his polyrhythmic ideas to a strong beat, as a Hindustani *tehi* would, but instead chooses to morph back into the backing rhythm.

This last example also incorporates another scalar concept we find throughout his improvisation: minor pentatonic with the second added. Though not fully a dorian or aeolian sound, it is still more than a pentatonic flavor. In fact, starting at measure 2, we hear only this sound through measure 11, where the strict pentatonic starts (with the exception of the G# that occurs in measure 8, but this was smeared through so as to be barely noticeable, and it's not even clear if it was intended). When Abercrombie leaves the pentatonic sound at measure 15, it is to return to this pentatonic-plus-second texture; he comes back to straight pentatonic at measure 18. Abercrombie's entire solo consists mainly of these two sounds, with Cs and C#s occurring rarely (bars 23, 24, 26, 27, 33, 46 and 48). That's less that 15 percent of his solo where he actually defines the mode. **DB**

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



Peterson Stomp Classic Strobotuner
No-Settle Pedal

Peterson is a familiar name among those who demand the absolute best in tuner accuracy. Famous for its mechanical strobe devices, Peterson revolutionized the industry with the introduction of the virtual strobe tuner. The latest evolution in the company's digital line is the Stomp Classic Strobotuner, a roadworthy pedal tuner that offers 0.1-cent accuracy plus some nice additional features like an onboard DI and user customization via USB connectivity.

The Stomp Classic is actually the replacement for the StroboStomp 2. According to Scott Peterson, company president, "We received a lot of feedback from our user forums and trade shows which went into the design of this pedal." The company also felt it would be great to "tap into the mojo" of one of the industry's most iconic products, the Conn ST-11, which Peterson acquired in the 1980s when it purchased the Conn company. In fact, the Stomp Classic's die-cast casing does bear a striking resemblance to the old Conn.

As with all Peterson digital strobe tuners, the Stomp Classic is extremely easy to use by simply plugging in, stomping down and tuning your instrument. The high-resolution display is large and easy to read with its backlit digitally simulated strobe wheel. The real power of the tuner can be found in the "sweetened tunings" capabilities, which utilize custom offsets for each note that insure that a particular instrument is in tune with itself. Peterson offers this feature in other products but has added sweeteners for additional instruments plus the ability to create your own via the editor software and the pedal's USB port.

The Stomp Classic's mode button not only selects the sweeteners, but also provides drop-tuning and capo settings as well as adjustments for concert pitch. As with the StroboStomp, the Stomp Classic is true bypass and also has a built-in active DI. It can handle virtually any instrument you throw at it, and I also love the ability to store custom presets, create new sweeteners and even upgrade firmware via USB.

With the Stomp Classic, it looks like Peterson has once again accomplished its goal of producing the best tuners on the market.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: petersontuners.com

Matt Raines Serena Archtop
Comfortable 7-String Adventure

Adventurous jazz guitarists will delight in the Serena, a new 7-string archtop from Matt Raines guitars, one of three in the company's Master Series collection.

Hailed as Raines' flagship archtop, this jazz box is eye-catching with its solid-carved and book-matched flame maple back and sides. Manufatured in China, the guitar has a hand-carved spruce top and flame maple neck with ebony fretboard. The tailpiece, pickguard, tuners, volume and tone knobs are also in ebony, which gives the guitar a stately consistency of dark highlighted by its nitro clear maple finish. The single-neck pickup, made by Artec, is designed to deliver an even tonal response with accentuated midrange and less bass. The Serena touts all wood multi-ply binding including the f-holes, and the overall construction is solid.

Things get real interesting with the modified dimensions of this archtop. The 25-inch scale, 20 frets and 2-inch bone nut feel right with the seven strings. The scaled-down, 15-inch lower bout with just a 2.4-inch thickness to the body really places playing comfort at a premium and allows maximum dexterity on the instrument. Matt Raines explains that he advanced the idea for this smaller archtop after noticing how fatigued his arm and shoulder became when playing a standard length, 3.5-inch-thick jazz box.

The guitar arrived already set up and in fine playing condition with spot-on action and intonation between the tune-o-matic bridge and flatwound strings. Before plugging in, I challenged the Serena acoustically, applying varied plectrum strum dynamics and fingerpicking, using the seventh string as an open A or B for bass-note complements. The smaller archtop body delivered a bright, consistent acoustic sound that maintained a classic jazz tone unplugged through the f-holes. My initial skepticism about the tonal integrity of the low seventh string on this smaller arch was pleasantly ameliorated with the acoustic projection that the body and neck delivered.

Plugging the Serena into a few classic amplifier setups, the single pickup provided a clean, open brightness on top while capturing the rolling lows of the 7-string adventure on bottom. There was just the right amount of sustain without sounding forced, and the medium "C"-shape neck is comfortable in all playing positions.

The easily accessible ebony volume and tone wheels mounted on the raised pickguard offer an additional perk if you like to employ volume vibrato or tweak your tone on the fly. I do wonder about the longterm durability of the all-in-one connection of pickup to pickguard; while this setup is a commendable customization for the jazz player, road-heavy use will require care and vigilance for this aspect of the guitar. *—John LaMantia*

Ordering info: mattraines.com

MusicCord Pro Power Distributor
Six Ways To Sound Your Best

Michael Griffin of Essential Sound Products believes that a properly engineered power cord will have a major impact on improving the performance of audio equipment, and he convinced us when we reviewed his MusicCord Pro cord (see "Toolshed" January 2009). Now with the MusicCord Pro Power Distributor, users can benefit from the ESP advantage on up to six separate components at once.

The heart of all Essential Sound's products lies in their ability to deliver a consistent and abundant power flow, thus eliminating the tonal coloration that occurs when using an inexpensive "stock" power cord. According to Griffin, the power distributor is less expensive than purchasing individual power cords and will give you most of the same benefits. "It is great for setups involving multiple components and for use with devices containing hardwired cords such as vintage amps or consumer audio gear," he said.

The power distributor is built like a tank. The unit features six isolated hospital-grade outlets with bronze contacts housed in a fully shielded aluminum chassis filled with a proprietary damping material to reduce the occurrence of any anomalies caused by vibration. To protect your gear, the distributor has both mode-1 surge protection plus an internal ceramic fuse, and it all comes together with a 2-meter, 12-gauge MusicCord Pro cable to power the unit.

The new power distributor has the majority of the benefits that you get from using the regular MusicCord Pro, even when connecting to it via a standard power cable. I ran two tube amplifiers through the distributor, and in both cases there was a definite improvement in clarity, particularly noticeable at higher volumes. Those who demand the best performance from their equipment will find it well worth the $499 price tag. —*Keith Baumann*

Ordering info: essentialsound.com

David Gage Realist SoundClip For Cello
Clean Amplifcation

David Gage Stringed Instruments has designed a Realist SoundClip pickup for cello that shares the same design characteristics as the Realist SoundClip for bass.

Machined from solid brass, the Realist SoundClip attaches to the cello bridge without any marring and is easily removed. The cable fits vertically into the jack, which was just a little snug for my taste. Two weights, one 25g and the other 50g, can be screwed separately or together onto the pickup to suppress wolf tones from the cello. Additionally, there is a volume knob on the pickup within easy reach of the player.

I tested the Realist SoundClip through a variety of amplifiers and direct into a PA system. I was consistently impressed with the clarity and warmth of sound that this pickup produces. The pickup gets a great sound with the EQ set flat. However, boosting the bass yields incredibly clean bottom end power, with no boominess. The treble is surprisingly usable as well, with warmth throughout its range. During all my tests, I was able to attain a wonderfully natural sound without the use of a pre-amp.

The jack is integral to the pickup, with no external wiring and no need for additional mounting—a huge plus. —*Erica Lessie*

Ordering info: davidgage.com

D'Addario Strings
Enhanced Acoustic, Electric & Flamenco Sets

Continuing in its efforts to answer the growing needs of the market, D'Addario has released several new guitar string sets that feature enhanced materials for better tone, and custom gauges that provide a more balanced tension and sound across your instrument.

First up are two new sets for flamenco players, EJ25B and EJ25C, which utilize D'Addario's multi-filament stranded core material wound in silver-plate. Compared to traditional nylon cores, these strings offer increased lifespan and improved intonation. The sets are available in two options, with black nylon on the EJ25B set and clear nylon on the EJ25C.

For jazz guitarists, D'Addario now offers its Jazz Medium XL set in pure nickel. In contrast to the standard nickel-plated steel used in the standard XL jazz sets, the EPN22 strings are made entirely from pure nickel reminiscent of the 1950s, when it was the industry standard. With slightly lower magnetic properties, these strings produce a warmer tone that is not as bright as steel, offering players a nice alternative.

The new EXL111 electric and EJ24 acoustic sets are what D'Addario calls "balanced tension" sets. The string gauges have been modified to result in a more equal tension across all six strings. In a standard set, the tension of the G, D and A strings can be significantly higher than that of the other three strings. By using slightly lighter gauges on these strings and evening out the tension, a more balanced tone can be achieved. Players also benefit from the ability to use a more consistent attack across the neck. The EJ24's True Medium set is phosphor bronze for acoustic players, and the EXL111 Balanced Light Gauge is nickel-plated steel for electric guitarists. —*Keith Baumann*

Ordering info: daddario.com

JACK TIGHTENER

The tedious and time-consuming process of tightening guitar/bass input and output jacks is now a thing of the past with Allparts' new LT-1400-023, the Bullet Guitar Jack Tightener. The Bullet's patented Grip-Tip holds the jack while tightening, preventing damage to wiring and solder joints. With the Bullet at your disposal, you'll never take your jack plate off again to tighten things up. Similar products require additional wrenches or tools and are made of metal, which can scratch and damage your hardware and finish. The Bullet has everything you need in a quality plastic tool that fits in the palm of your hand. Simply position the socket head around the nut on your guitar jack, firmly push the Grip Tip down onto the guitar jack opening to hold it in place and use the swivel handle to tighten or loosen the nut and the jack.

More info: allparts.com

DISTRESSED BEAUTY

Morgan Monroe has introduced the MDM-2 distressed mandolin. The MDM-2 features solid hand-carved woods, a radiused fingerboard, ebony fretboard and bridge, cast antique brass tailpiece, antique brass Grover tuning keys and 31mm nut width. It also has a custom tone bar.

More info: morganmonroe.com

MIDNIGHT TRAIN

Vox recently rolled out the Night Train 50 tube amplifier and V212NT speaker cabinet. The all-tube Night Train 50 offers two channels for a diverse range of sounds. The V212NT extension cabinet is an ideal sonic complement to the Night Train 50, which includes EL34 tubes in the power stage to produce a tight sound.

More info: voxamps.com

ANNIVERSARY AXES

Celebrating its 60th anniversary, Fender has introduced two collectible models: the Anniversary Telecaster and Anniversary P-Bass. Both models feature Blackguard Blonde thinskin nitrocellulose lacquer finishes and 60th anniversary commemorative nameplates. Plus, the P-Bass has a vintage-style pickguard, and the Tele has a new American Standard bridge and No-Load tone control.

More info: fender.com

EXOTIC PICKS

Harris Musical Products is now distributing Timber Tones, hand-finished guitar picks that have been crafted from 18 different exotic woods using end cuts from guitar manufacturers. Each pick is the same size and thickness, although each different wood has its own sonic characteristics and variations in tone.

More info: timber-tones.com

TUBE ADAPTATION

VHT has released the Special 6 EL84 adapter, which reconfigures the Special 6's 6V6 output tube socket to accept an EL84 output tube. With the adapter, players can enjoy earlier breakup, distinctive midrange complexity and top-end chime. The Special 6 EL84 also works in other 6V6 amps.

More info: vhtamp.com

Tom Everett Celebrates 40 Years Leading Harvard's Jazz Bands


Tom Everett
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The combined firepower of Benny Golson, Brian Lynch, Don Braden, Eddie Palmieri, Cecil McBee and Roy Haynes gathered at Harvard University's Sanders Theater on April 9. These jazz all-stars convened on the bandstand to help Tom Everett celebrate his 40-year anniversary as director of the university's jazz bands. Not coincidentally, these giants are also among the alumni of Harvard's Office of the Arts' (OFA) Artists In Residence Program. During the anniversary concert, Everett shunned the limelight, conducted a bit and beamed a lot.

When Everett arrived at Harvard in 1971, he was amazed to find no campus exposure to America's indigenous musical art form. He set about improving matters by recruiting jazz players from the marching band, and then inviting Carl Fontana and Phil Wilson. Soon, the OFA took interest, and the program took off. Harvard residents have included Hank Jones, Bill Evans, John Lewis, Randy Weston, Andrew Hill and Benny Carter. Harvard stays have restoked the careers of tenor giant Illinois Jacquet and trumpet legend Buck Clayton.

Resident artists who worked with students found non-music majors more interested in personal histories than ferreting out theory and niceties of technique.

"Interpreting the music of Charles Mingus and Duke Ellington sparked enlightened rehearsal moments," Everett said. "When the band steps over that bar, you realize: They are getting this! Max Roach had them on the edge of their chairs. Whether you later become a doctor or CEO, you know certain life priorities have changed forever."

Harvard jazz band members who have chosen to follow their artistic muse include Joshua Redman, Braden, Jerome Harris, Akira Tana and Aaron Goldberg.

"I regard myself as a catalyst," Everett said. "I facilitate events. The pros, the kids and the music make things happen."

Ingrid Monson, Harvard's Quincy Jones Professor of African American Music, who is tasked with expanding Harvard's jazz curriculum, added, "That's how Tom is. He acts like he does nothing, when he's actually the lifeblood of it all."

Everett actually did plenty. On campus, he directed Crimson Bands in hundreds of witty football half-time shows, inspired concert and wind ensembles, founded the pops band, and commissioned and collected manuscripts by jazz masters, along with teaching Harvard's first accredited jazz courses.

"Musical freshmen coming to Harvard find out something's happening," Everett said. "Beyond its academic credentials and amazing athletic programs, Harvard offers more music opportunities than most specialized schools: four orchestras, three bands, three choral groups, untold a cappella choruses, 'house' opera and chamber groups."

Off-campus, Everett played bass trombone in the Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey Orchestras as well as Wilson's Big Band, and gigged in Boston's pit bands. He also conducted recordings and concerts for trombone wizard J.J. Johnson. In 1972, he founded and was the first president of the International Trombone Association. His quick wit, easy humor and administrative genius haved earned him tremendous respect among music educators worldwide.

Everett's outreach also helped knit Boston's jazz community. In 1972, he and Berklee College of Music's trombonists Wilson and Tom Plsek co-founded Boston Sackbut Week, masterminding coups like 76 trombones playing opening day at Fenway Park. Crosstown exchanges featured faculty at Berklee (Herb Pomeroy, Michael Gibbs and Alan Dawson) and New England Conservatory (Jaki Byard, George Russell, Gunther Schuller and Ran Blake). Everett's acumen extends beyond jazz. He has commissioned 100 works for bass trombone, and brought to Harvard the composers Peter Schickele, Henry Brant and Vincent Persichetti.

Bringing such distinguished musicians to Harvard continues to the present day. On April 28, Wynton Marsalis began a two-year performance/lecture series. The trumpeter intends to visit the campus for two to three days at a time to discuss American music and culture. He'll also bring along dancers, his own ensembles and a New Orleans parade band to illustrate his points.

—Fred Bouchard

School Notes


Kenny Garrett
JIMMY KATZ

Dr. Garrett: Kenny Garrett received an honorary doctorate of music degree from Berklee College of Music and spoke at the Boston school's commencement ceremony on May 7. Chucho Valdés, Bebo Valdés and Mavis Staples also received honorary doctorates from the college. "I was totally elated when I was advised that I'd be receiving an honorary doctorate from the world's largest college of contemporary music," Garrett said.
Details: berklee.edu

UCLA Expansion: Music industry executive Morris "Mo" Ostin has donated $10 million to UCLA for a state-of-the-art music facility to be known as the Evelyn and Mo Ostin Music Center. The Ostin Music Center will include a high-tech recording studio, spaces for rehearsal and teaching, a café and an Internet-based music production center. Construction will begin in the spring of 2012, with a projected completion date in 2014. "Mo's magnificent gift secures UCLA's standing as a leader in music and music education," UCLA Chancellor Gene Block said. "As a cutting-edge music facility, the Evelyn and Mo Ostin Music Center will allow UCLA to provide the dynamic training ground students need to be future leaders in the performing arts."
Details: arts.ucla.edu

Usdan Grant: New York's Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts summer arts day camp received a two-year initiative grant from the Rauch Foundation's Founders' Memorial Program for a new program, "Sustaining American Jazz: Inspiring Young Artists and Audiences." The program will include scholarships awarded to promising high school students for summer jazz study at the center, commissions for new works by leading composers, collaborations with Long Island high school jazz ensembles for additional performances of the new pieces, and concerts and master classes at the center.
Details: usdan.com

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Blindfold Test | BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

Vernon Reid

Though hailed internationally as a guitarist with the rock band Living Colour, Vernon Reid has made his mark on the cutting-edge jazz, blues, and r&b scenes in New York. In addition to Living Colour, he keeps busy with the Memphis Blood Blues Band, Free Form Funky Freqs, the Bitches Brew Revisited project and the Tony Williams Lifetime Tribute Band with Cindy Blackman, Jack Bruce and John Medeski. Living Colour's latest album is *The Chair In The Doorway* (Megaforce). This is Reid's second Blindfold Test.

Bill Frisell

"It's Nobody's Fault But Mine" (from *Beautiful Dreamers*, Savoy Jazz, 2010) Bill Frisell, guitar; Eyvind Kang, viola; Rudy Royston, drums.

Wow! I love the feeling of this, the laid-back feeling of time, the way the spaces are used. I think it's Olu Dara. It's really a communal feeling. It's the opposite of "OK, we're doing this at a blistering tempo." It's thrilling to do that, but there's a fine line between whether the muse is calling for that, or whether it's manhood-proving, I-have-the-largest-male-organ-in-the-room. Bill Frisell? I should recuse myself. [*laughter*] We did the duo album *Smash & Scatteration*. [This] reminds me a little of Charlie Burnham. I'd give that 5 stars.

John Coltrane

"Blues To Elvin" (from *Coltrane Plays The Blues*, Atlantic, 1962) John Coltrane, saxophone; McCoy Tyner, piano; Steve Davis, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

John Coltrane. It's lovely to occupy a space and not be ironic or clever or arch in any way. It is what it is. It's interesting because I've had conversations with Carlos Santana just about Coltrane. Like a lot of the greatest musicians, he was outside of his time, but he really exemplified this emerging sense of exploration and freedom of the 1960s. He was part of what made the times what they were. He opened up so many people's heads at that point. He was really challenging his older audience. He broke it open to so many people to be moved by his expression, his journey, by his genius. That's fantastic. 5 stars.

John McLaughlin

"Don't Let The Dragon Eat Your Mother" (from *Devotion*, Varèse Sarabande, 2001; rec'd 1970) John McLaughlin, guitar; Billy Rich, bass; Larry Young, organ; Buddy Miles, drums.

That's totally psychedelic, with a free-form beginning and loop delays. [*He's told it's McLaughlin.*] Right. This was before *My Goal's Beyond*. I like it. John's a big influence. *The Inner Mounting Flame* was massive. 3½ stars.

Lionel Loueke

"Twins" (from *Mwaliko*, Blue Note, 2010) Lionel Loueke, guitar; Esperanza Spalding, bass and voice.

Incredible musicality. I like it. [*He's told it's Loueke.*] Aaah! This is fantastic. Harmonically, it's very sophisticated. There's a mysterious feeling to it. On the one hand, it's so sophisticated on a certain mainstream jazz level but there's also a sense of folk. The players are very, very informed. And the vocalizing is outstanding. They're of the current generation. There's also a sense of music of the world in what that is. I was very impressed with it because of the chords, the harmonies. The difference between the Bill Frisell piece—I loved it and got immediately into it—and this piece is that I was a little distanced because it's so sophisticated. So I'm kind of *wowed* by it as opposed to being part of it. I'm blown away by it because it's kind of designed to blow me away. Just for the high level of musicianship, I give it 5 stars.


BILL BERNSTEIN

Santana

"Welcome" (from *Welcome*, Columbia, 1973) Carlos Santana, guitar; Tom Coster, acoustic piano; Richard Kermode, electric piano; José "Chepito" Areas, Armando Peraza, percussion; Doug Rauch, bass.

This is Coltrane's song "Welcome," played by Santana. I'm very emotional about this music as well, particularly this period with the albums *Caravanserai, Welcome* and *Borboletta*. You can feel how open and purely loving it is. It's shockingly open. It's really beautiful, the feeling of it. This is the music that really influenced me as far as what I wanted to do with guitars. 5 stars.

Gary Lucas and Dean Bowman

"Nobody's House" (from *Chase The Devil*, Knitting Factory, 2009) Gary Lucas, guitar; Dean Bowman, vocal.

Wow! Now, wait a minute. That sounds like Dean. The guitar player is outstanding. It's Gary Lucas! I've always admired Gary's technique as a fingerpicker. He's a bad-ass. The way he incorporates looping and things like that are really nasty. It's amazing. It's a pure duo? Yeah, man. 4½ stars.

Jimi Hendrix

"Bleeding Heart" (from *Valleys Of Neptune*, Legacy/Experience Hendrix, 2010; rec'd 1969) Jimi Hendrix, vocal and guitar; Billy Cox, bass; Rocky Isaac, drums; Chris Grimes, tambourine; Al Marks, maracas.

It's funny, the introduction, the very first thing Hendrix plays, you almost think he's going to play "Sunshine Of Your Love." There are so many people who play the notes of Hendrix, but the feeling of his vibrato, his tone, the way he occupies space, that's really the thing and is very dramatic. He's the architect of a certain approach. He synthesized the emerging technology of the time with a background in r&b and blues. He took one part Curtis Mayfield's guitar playing, one part Bob Dylan's songwriting, one part Albert King's guitar playing, all of that combined, and he made something new. "Wah-wah pedal—what's this? Octavia pedal? I'll plug it in!" That's the thing about it; he just dived in. He's absolutely one of my heroes. I was too young to see him, but I can't even begin to imagine the Monterey Pop Festival, when he smashed his guitar. It was literally the concept of having your face melted and your mind blown. There was no way that you weren't transformed by it. 5 stars. **DB**

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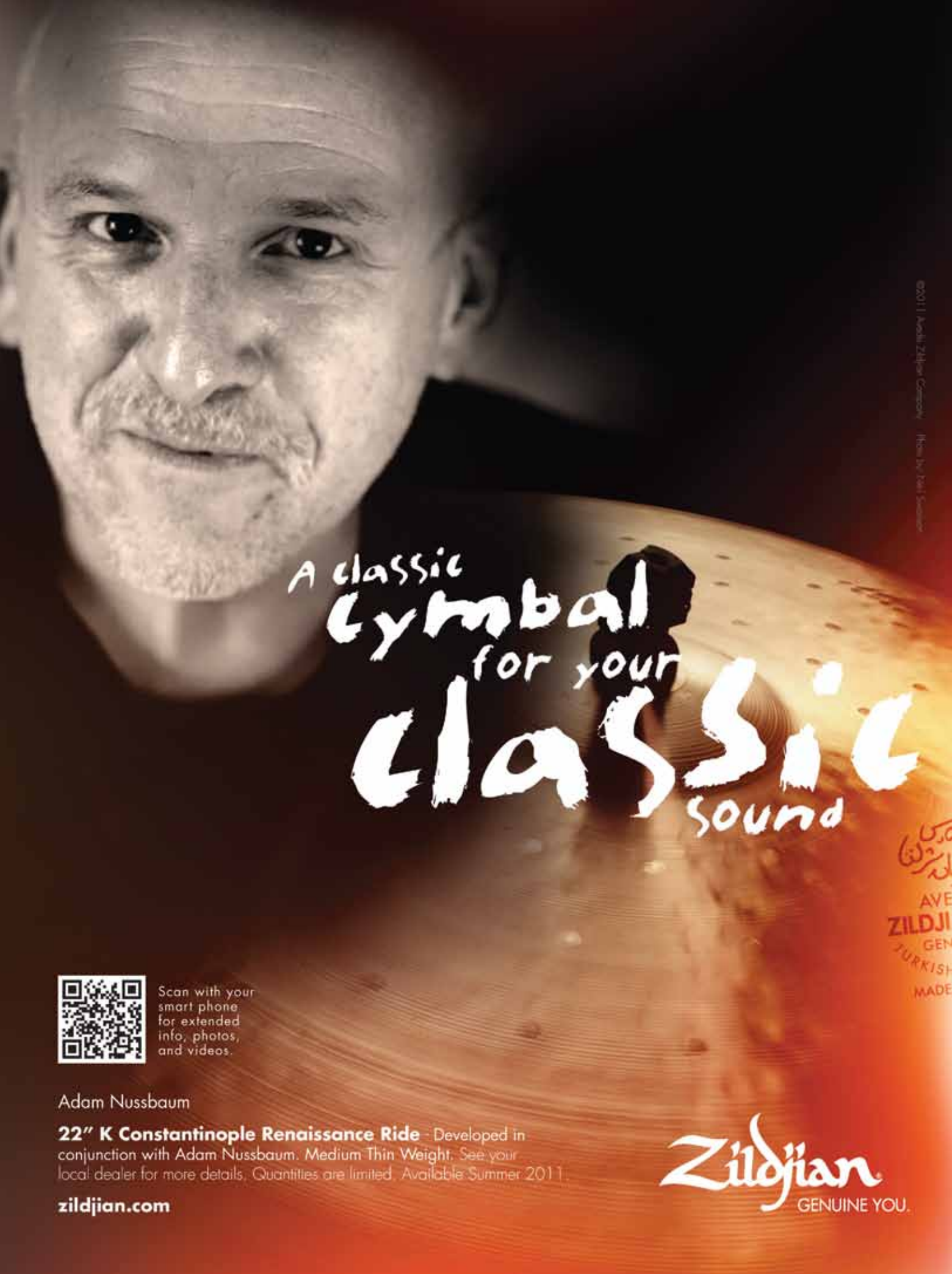
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