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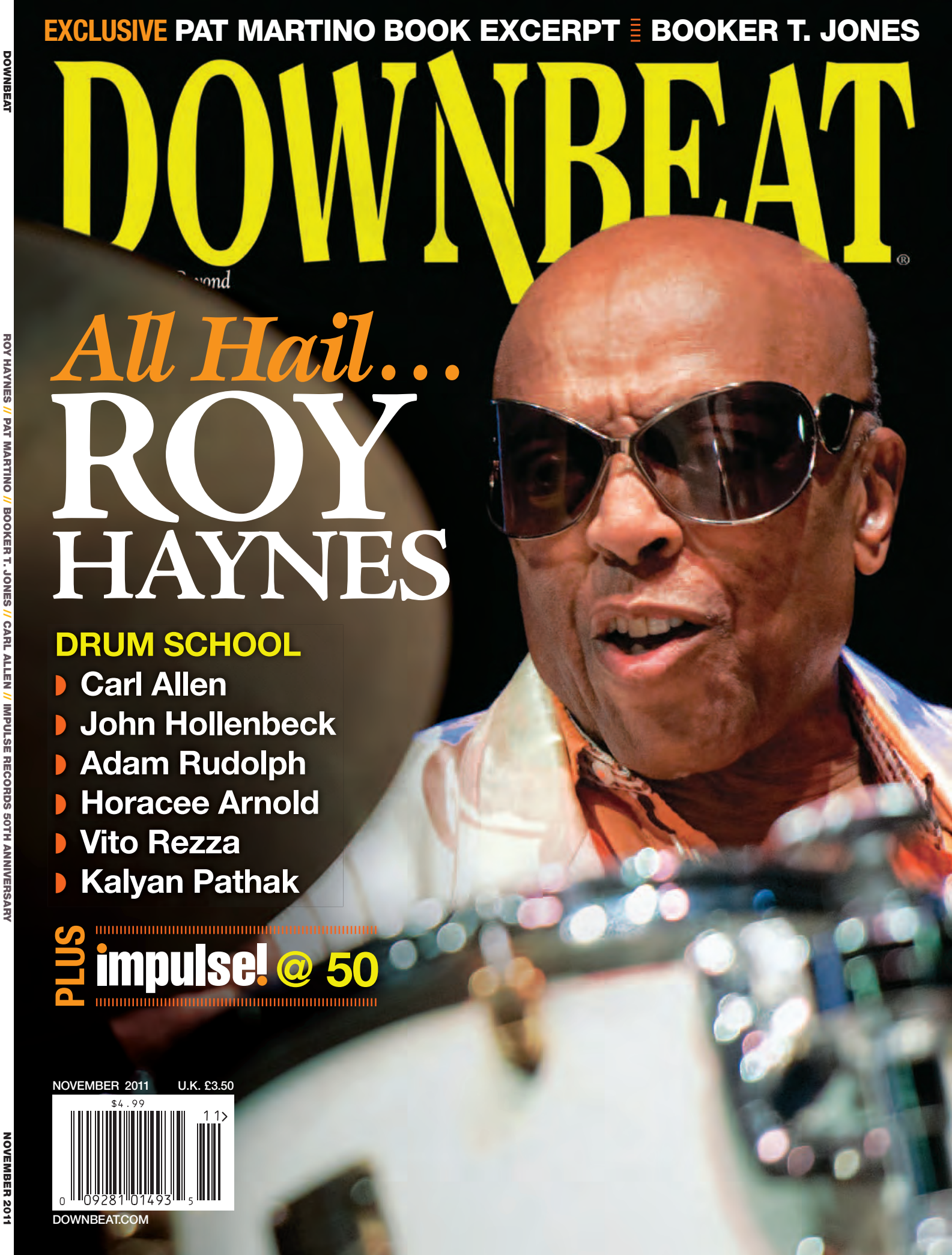

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VOLUME 78 – NUMBER 11

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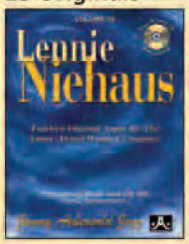

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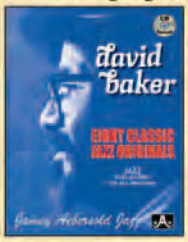

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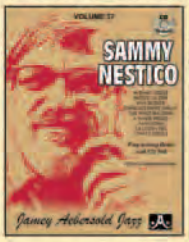

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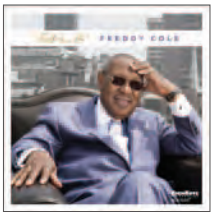

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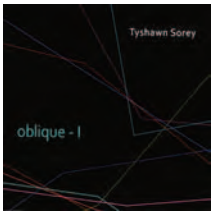

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Roy Haynes
STEVEN SIEGMAN

Still, it took a long time for folks to properly recognize the eternal hipness of Roy Haynes. Let's just say the critical community took Haynes for granted for a long stretch of his career, which Pat Metheny correctly notes in our cover story, beginning on page 26.

I'll take my share of the blame. We published a short piece about Mr. Haynes in 1990, my first year at DownBeat. It was the year *Question & Answer* (Nonesuch) came out—the amazing trio record where Metheny, Dave Holland and Haynes created a jam session for the ages.

After seeing the band at the Jacksonville Jazz Festival that year, I met Mr. Haynes at a hotel bar. We struck up a conversation that I'll never forget.

"When are you going to write about Roy Haynes?" the drummer asked. I got excited because I had a copy of the November 1990 DownBeat in my hands, and I opened it to page 24, where his feature appeared.

Roy just shook his head. "Poor Roy Haynes," he said. "Only gets a half a page in DownBeat magazine." He was right. I vowed to do better.

Three years later, journalist Bill Milkowski and I went to The Village Vanguard in New York to check out Haynes. (As a side note, Milkoswski worked with guitarist Pat Martino on his new autobiography, *Here and Now!*, and we've got a terrific excerpt beginning on page 46.) The show was smokin'. Afterward, Bill and I chatted with Roy, who asked, "So, when are you going to write about Roy Haynes?" A few months later, Milkowski wrote an excellent Haynes retrospective in our October 1993 issue to celebrate the drummer's upcoming honor of receiving the Jazzpar Prize from the Danish Jazz Center. I called Mr. Haynes to see if he liked the article.

"It's pretty good, pretty good," he sighed. "But poor Roy Haynes, only gets a feature in DownBeat magazine. Does Roy Haynes have to die to get on the cover? What does Roy Haynes have to do to get some respect?"

Again, he was right, of course. And again, I vowed to do better.

Spin ahead to 1996. Haynes had been playing drums professionally for more than 50 years. It was time for that cover. Writer Howard Mandel got the assignment. Jeff Sedlik took the photos. Their only direction was to make sure Roy Haynes looked like the baddest man on the planet. It didn't take much extra work, and both men delivered. That November 1996 cover is still one of my favorites—Roy, standing in front of a wall of cymbals, drumsticks centered in his hands.

The headline? One word, all caps: "RESPECT." It should have said, "Overdue Respect," but it wouldn't have had the same impact. RESPECT rang true. (Check out that '96 cover in our Haynes time line on page 30.)

In 2004, the critics voted Mr. Haynes into the DownBeat Hall of Fame. And, in 2011, he belongs in the all-universe Hall of Fame, tearing it up with his Fountain of Youth band and releasing *ROY-alty* (Dreyfus Jazz), his new CD—all of this at the ripe young age of 86.

So, this cover is dedicated as a reminder to all. From the DownBeat family to one of the greatest drummers of all time, with this issue, we pay continued, massive respect to the incomparable Roy Haynes. **DB**

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Hall of Fame Blues

How could anybody who is considered to be a critic on the Veterans Committee vote for Robert Johnson or Muddy Waters for the DownBeat Hall of Fame? So many more deserving jazz legends—Don Byas, Sonny Stitt, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Kenny Dorham, Israel Crosby—have been left out ("DownBeat Hall Of Fame," August). DownBeat does provide news and information on music other than jazz, such as blues, but it has always been predominantly a jazz magazine. Having been a subscriber to DownBeat for over 50 years, I know that the Hall of Fame was established for jazz musicians. Except for Frank Zappa and Jimi Hendrix, all of the 127 musicians in the DownBeat Hall of Fame are jazz musicians. I recommend that in the future DownBeat allow only jazz musicians to be considered for the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

JIMMIE JONES
BETTENDORF, IOWA


DOWNBEAT HALL OF FAME

Editor's note: *"Jazz, Blues & Beyond" is the phrase printed on the cover of our magazine, and we feel that influential blues musicians deserve a spot on the ballot.*

Bird Flew with Soupy

I enjoyed your feature on Dick Hyman ("Subjective & Personal," September), but I have a quibble. The article says that Charlie Parker's "only known television appearance" was with Hyman in 1952. That got my mind wandering back to the 1950s when, in Detroit, comedian Soupy Sales had two TV shows. In addition to his well-known midday show for kids, he had a late-night show that often featured musicians who were playing in local clubs. Could I have only imagined seing Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and other such luminaries on that show? The memories are clear, but I had to check. A Google search led me to a New York Times online piece by Ben Ratliff, written in October 2009 on the occasion of Sales' death. In it, Ratliff confirms Parker's appearances with Soupy. Sadly, apparently there is no existing footage of Bird on the show.

MICHAEL WESTON
M-WESTON@NORTHWESTERN.EDU

Editor's note: *Thanks for pointing that out. Sales was a jazz supporter. Ratliff reported that Sales used Parker's "Yardbird Suite" as his theme song on his late-night show,* Soupy's On.

Completionist Approach

For years and years, the DownBeat polls have been reported in the same way: There are articles about winners, and the categories they won are printed with the text of the article ("59th Annual Critics Poll," August). When a reader gets to the list of winners, these "winner areas" are not repeated, so the list of winners does not seem to be complete. I think, as a completist, that the full list of winners should have that—*all* the winners. It wouldn't cost you an editorial minute, it would cover a bit more paper, and it would prove that you are listening.

KEITH COCKETT
KEITH@TUNNELEND.COM

Editor's note: *We are listening. The Readers Poll results in the December issue will be presented in the style that you suggested.*

Remembering Cornell Dupree

Regarding your obituary on guitarist Cornell Dupree ("Bluesy Dupree Dominated Sessions By The Thousands," August), his best work can be found on the live Atlantic LP *Blues At Montreaux* by King Curtis & Champion Jack Dupree, released in 1973. It is stunning!

DENNIS HENDLEY
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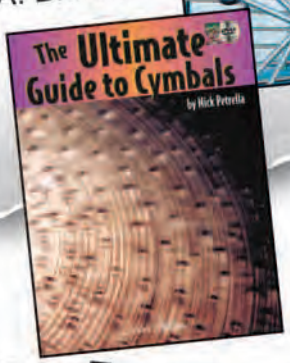

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The Beat

Inside

Changing of the Guard

Don Was To Oversee Blue Note Label

No matter how resilient jazz seems, it continues to be susceptible to the vagaries of major record companies. The latest development comes from legendary Blue Note Records, owned by EMI.

Blue Note named pop music producer Don Was chief creative officer in August. Was will oversee talent development and album production for Blue Note and sister imprint Manhattan Records.

The co-founder of '80s avant-funk group Was (Not Was) boasts an extensive resume as producer, helming Bonnie Raitt's *Nick Of Time* (1989), the Rolling Stones' *Voodoo Lounge* (1994) and a trio of 2011 albums. He comes from a jazz background, playing bass in Detroit-based groups and immersing himself in everything from John Coltrane to Charles Lloyd.

"They were making music that no one had heard before," Was said, noting that he'd like to do the same for Blue Note's repertoire.

"Reinforcing the label's commitment to jazz is first and foremost," he said, but added that he'd like to see the catalog further evolve. Was emphasized the release of Robert Glasper's next album, a collaboration with Mos Def that he described as "jazz like no one has done before."

"Jazz fans will not be disappointed, but expect the music to not adhere to a narrow vision," Was explained. "We're hoping to double, triple, quadruple our audience. I appreciate the core audience, but Blue Note has to reach out to more people."

In 2011, Blue Note has released albums from actor Jeff Bridges, singer-songwriter Amos Lee and trumpter Ambrose Akinmusire.

Nearly concurrent with Was' appointment were reports that pop producer/composer/songwriter David Foster had been pegged to take over Verve Records, owned by Universal Music Group. While Foster's appointment has yet to be announced officially, reports claim that he will shift the focus at Verve—home to the Impulse and GRP imprints—to contemporary pop. Foster, who is famous for his work with Josh Groban, Michael Bublé and Andrea Bocelli, is expected to come onboard sometime later this year. He was unavailable for comment.

So what's to become of such Verve jazz artists as Herbie Hancock and Diana Krall?

"UMG remains committed to jazz as a genre," said one Universal source, who cited tentative "new jazz albums from Krall, Melody Gardot and Trombone Shorty, as well as a John Coltrane celebration this year in honor of his 75th birthday."

Journalist Ashley Kahn, author of *The House That Trane Built: The Story Of Impulse Records* (2006) and associate producer of this year's CD collection *First Impulse: The Creed Taylor Collection*—celebrating the imprint's 50th anniversary (see page 32)—worries about the future of the label group, especially Impulse.


Blue Note's Don Was

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

"David Foster was a wonder boy when he was at Warner," Kahn said. "He has a very consistent track record in the pop world. But he has no jazz pretensions. Nothing's guaranteed about reissues. I wish I could see a bright light on the horizon, but this is all tied to the unfortunate state of the music business. As the water rises, jazz is always on the lowest rung. We sink first." Kahn also said he hopes that indie labels will step in to license the richness of the Verve vaults.

Was, on the other hand, is upbeat about the future. He said he is "honored" to be working with such Blue Note artists as Joe Lovano and Dianne Reeves, and added that the "first order of business is to not only serve the artistic vision of the label but also the musicians' artistic visions."

"Anyone who thinks this is the death knell for jazz is 180 degrees off the mark," he said. "I believe a jazz label should behave like a soloist. The aesthetics run deep. It's all about improvising, adapting and overcoming."

—Dan Ouellette

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Riffs


Warren Wolf

ANNA WEBBER

Good Vibrations: Vibraphonist Warren Wolf has been selected as the recipient of the Baltimore Jazz Award for Musical Excellence. Wolf accepted the award at the 2011 Baltimore Jazz Awards on Aug. 18. The Baltimore native currently leads his own project and plays with Christian McBride's Inside Straight band, and he released a self-titled debut album the week prior to the awards.

Music Central: The Ellis Marsalis Center for Music opened in New Orleans on Aug. 25, three days before the sixth anniversary of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Located in the heart of the Musicians' Village in the Upper Ninth Ward and funded by private donations, the center is equipped with state-of-the-art classrooms, performance spaces and recording facilities in order to preserve the development of New Orleans music and culture.

Otis Fest: Bluesman Otis Taylor has announced the lineup for his Trance Blues Jam Festival, which will take place Nov. 25–27 in Boulder, Colo. Artists scheduled to appear include Bob Margolin, Tony Trischka, Don Vappie, George Porter Jr. and more. The festival will also host a variety of workshops and clinics, many of which will be moderated by Taylor himself.

Swing Vote: Terence Blanchard is now a voting member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Blanchard, who has composed over 50 feature film scores, is currently working on music for the highly anticipated George Lucas film *Red Tails.* He has also been commissioned by the Opera St. Louis for a project that will premiere in 2012.

Streaming Sax: David S. Ware's original short-form documentary, *A World Of Sound*, is now available online. Directed by Amine Koudier, the film discusses Ware's beliefs about Transcendental Meditation and its relationship to music. It also features concert footage from Ware's home and music from his 2010 disc, *Saturnian* (Aum Fidelity).

Dr. John (left) and George Avakian

ZACK SMITH

CAUGHT ▸ Definitive Armstrong Box Set Unveiled at Satchmo Summer Fest

In 1959, a young music fan named Richard Havers picked up his first Louis Armstrong record, "Ain't Misbehavin'," at a yard sale. More than 50 years later, the award-winning music author worked with Universal London to produce *Satchmo*, which the label has called the most comprehensive collection of Armstrong recordings ever released.

On Aug. 4, Havers debuted the 10-disc box set at Satchmo Summer Fest in New Orleans. The festival—a weekend packed with free seminars, films and live performances honoring Armstrong—kicked off with a keynote discussion about the new collection on what would have been the trumpeter's 110th birthday.

"I thought that Satchmo Fest would be the perfect place to launch the project," Havers later said. "I was also aware that it was the 80th anniversary of Louis Armstrong's return to the Crescent City as a star in 1931."

The addition of Armstrong's Sony recordings was key to completing a truly definitive compilation, Havers explained.

Louis Armstrong House Museum archivist Ricky Riccardi also pointed out that Universal's 2001 *Ultimate Collection* neglects Satchmo's recordings for Columbia, RCA Victor and Okeh.

The set includes such superfan-friendly extras as a recording of Louis and Lucille Armstrong with Dan Morgenstern and Jack Bradley. During the recording, the foursome engaged in more than an hour of musical banter over a bottle of brandy. Another rare, unreleased treat is a live concert by Armstrong's band, recorded by Norman Granz on Aug. 15, 1956, at the Hollywood Bowl.

Before playing a clip of "My Bucket's Got A Hole In It" from the show, Riccardi noted that the ensemble was without Velma Middleton that night. Instead, they had a female singer named Ella Fitzgerald. The very next day, the group went into the studio and recorded the very first Louis and Ella record.

Presenters also shared pages from the 200-page book that accompanies the box set. It includes rare photos and sheet music, such as the original vocal part for Gordon Jenkins' arrangement of "Blueberry Hill," and original band parts from the 1930s.

"It frames [Armstrong's] whole story," Havers said, adding that his goal for the book was "to give an idea about the world the artist was living in."

Following the box set presentation, French Quarter Festivals Executive Director Marci Schramm introduced Armstrong's longtime producer, George Avakian, and Dr. John, who was seated next to him in the front row. Avakian went on to announce a new project: an Armstrong tribute album entitled *Night Tripper*.

"We began doing it last week, here in New Orleans," Avakian explained. "And you're not going to just hear a copy of Pops playing his great favorites. You're going to hear something new and different. Dr. John has an imagination that won't quit."

The next day, Riccardi, whose encyclopedic knowledge of Armstrong's music was tapped to finalize the Universal box set, offered a full afternoon of free seminars about his new book, *What A Wonderful World: The Magic Of Louis Armstrong's Later Years* (Pantheon), which includes rare footage of Armstrong from throughout his life.

That evening, the "Satchmo Club Strut" down Frenchmen Street provided a more raucous—and steamy—look at Armstrong's influence on contemporary music. The Treme Brass Brand braved nearly triple-digit temperatures, leading a second line past the street's many jazz venues, while Allen Toussaint, Jason Marsalis and Donald Harrison primed festivalgoers for two more days of free music. *—Jennifer Odell*

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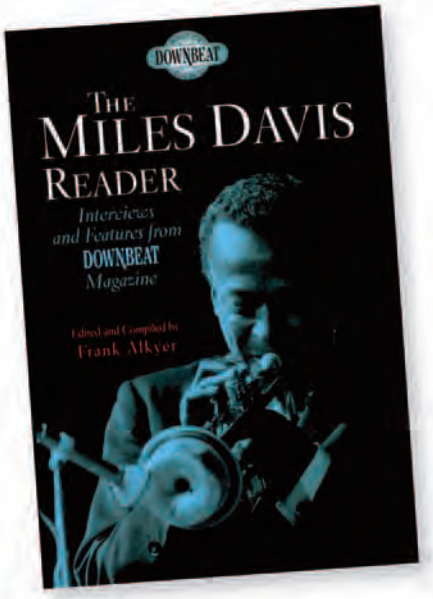

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CAUGHT ▸ DC Jazz Crowd Digs Underground Loft Series

During the first two weeks of June, the 2011 DC Jazz Festival continued its mission of providing star-studded mainstream jazz in the nation's capital, hosting marquee acts like Bobby McFerrin, Eddie Palmieri and Roy Hargrove. But for those yearning for left-handed curveballs, the new addition of the Loft Jazz Series was the ideal ticket.

Sponsored by Hipnotic Records and curated by Luke Stewart and Giovanni Russonello of Capitalbop.com, the Jazz Loft Series ventured underground without any commercial nods to the pop market. It brought a much-needed cool factor that had been missing in the eyes of the city's young hipster crowd and older avant-garde stalwarts.

Rather than posh environments like Bohemian Caverns or the Warner Theater, where the main attractions held court, the Loft Jazz Series packed the houses of secretive dives like the Fridge, the Red Door and Subterranean A. These makeshift art-studios-turned-performance-spaces attracted multigenerational, multiracial crowds who eagerly applauded a crop of such jazz renegades as JD Allen, Darius Jones and Tomas Fujiwara and the Hook Up.

"It was basically something that DC could really benefit from in terms of providing places, something outside a club where a more diverse audience could come and enjoy the music," Stewart said. "I think we've been successful at that."

Fujiwara kicked off the series with an impressive set at the Fridge, focusing on material from his 2010 disc, *Actionspeak* (482 Music), as well as his forthcoming disc. The drummer/composer bristled with a mélange of modern jazz that accentuated his propulsive, multidirectional drumming. His finely etched compositions, such as the haunting, Mingus-esque "Questions," showcased hometown hero Brian Settles' whiskey-sour tones and corkscrew improvisations on tenor saxophone. Settles shared the front line with trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, who alternated between flugelhorn-like smoothness and crackling ruggedness. Prog-rock bassist Trevor Dunn and vibraphonist Matt Moran fleshed out the ensemble on such songs as the silvery, delightfully enigmatic "The Hunt" and the spry "Should I Do." Prior to Fujiwara's enchanting set, Settles proved his mettle as a bandleader, opening the evening with an equally intrepid trio that included electric bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Tiacoh Sadia. Celebrating music from his fresh-from-the-factory indie disc *Secret Handshake* (Engine Studios), the free-form, blues-based improv group scorched, stretched and solidified various grooves that sometimes dissipated as soon as they started dancing inside the listener's head.


JD Allen

CARLYLE V. SMITH/CAPITALBOP

Tenor saxophonist Darius Jones delivered a smoldering set at the Red Door the following week despite the near-suffocating heat inside the poorly ventilated building. Jones, bassist Adam Lane and drummer Jason Nazary wickedly deconstructed Billy Strayhorn's "Take The 'A' Train," which was damn near indecipherable due to Jones' burly eruptions and fissured grooves. He dove into turbulent free-jazz waters on provocative tunes like "Chasing The Ghosts" and "Forgive Me," both of which recalled the mesmerizing intensity of Albert Ayler. The evening, however, seemed to be cut short because of the dangerous heat. Jones struggled throughout the set, trying humorously to deal with the heat wave that wreaked havoc on Washington, D.C.

JD Allen faced a similar challenge at Subterranean A two days later. He and his pick-up trio mates, bassist Michael Bates and drummer Jeremy Clemons, soldiered on admirably as they focused on Allen's recent Sunnyside discs, *Victory, Shine*! and *I Am, I Am*. The performance was rhythmically and improvisationally sound, but Allen wasn't nearly as seamless as he is with his regular trio mates, bassist Gregg August and drummer Rudy Royston. Once again, the stifling heat dampened Allen's energy level. "People were sweating," Stewart admitted. "But everybody stayed. We had a lot of people coming out to every show." *—John Murph*

Jazz Illustrator Examines Eric Dolphy Frame by Frame

At the heart of every classic comics franchise, from Batman to Spiderman, is a complex character sketch. Jazz illustrator Keith Brown created *Eric Dolphy: His Life And Art* in that same vein.

Due out this holiday season, the 74-page graphic novel illuminates the dichotomy between the multi-instrumentalist's quiet, unassuming personality and his bold, unrestrained playing style. It treats Dolphy as more than just a "finger-snapping jazz musician" and explores his humanity, Brown said.

The Dolphy book is Brown's first foray into the graphic novel medium. The one-time illustrator at Marvel Comics and professed comics nerd shifted his collecting energy from comics to jazz albums once he heard Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue*. The jazz neophyte soon started exploring the genre's unsung heroes.

Formerly the creative art director at Jazz at Lincoln Center, Brown painted this year's Jazz Appreciation Month poster for the Smithsonian and has illustrated album covers for a handful of musicians, most notably Christian McBride.

Dolphy turned out to be a tough sell, however. Publishers weren't enamored with a novel about an esoteric musician, so Brown turned to Kickstarter.com and crowdsourced printing, binding and distribution costs. He raised $8,000 in two months by soliciting friends and such acquaintances as pianist Eric Reed.

Before his Dolphy novel was even complete, Brown started looking for his next subject and landed on Albert Ayler, another jazz musician with a rich back story. This next graphic novel, he said, will be more interactive and offer an online component.

"Books as we know them aren't going to be around much longer, so I want it to be more interesting," Brown explained.

The Ayler project will be another complex character study—a portrait of the free-jazz musician as an individual and not simply an artist—though due to Ayler's untimely death, the book will contain some mature material.

"He's another inspirational guy who very few people outside of jazz know about," Brown said. "It will probably be more of an adult book, though." *—Jon Ross*

Weston's '60s *Blues* Recording on Trip Label Spotlights Obscure Player

Sometimes, a long-held question gets answered as soon as it's asked. During a recent panel discussion, saxophonist Geof Bradfield mentioned pianist Randy Weston's State Department-sponsored trip to Africa. He asked whether there was any documentation of the music Weston made with a small group in the '60s that included tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan and drummer Edward Blackwell—we on the panel had no idea. No more than 30 minutes later, we stood at the back of the room with Weston, who told us about tapes he has of the concerts. One, in particular, included a spectacular New Orleans-style solo by Blackwell. The reel-to-reels apparently need some conservation, but probably nothing a crusading little tape freak couldn't handle.

In lieu of that intriguing possibility, another Weston session exists from around the same period, a recording that managed to find its way briefly—and dubiously—onto vinyl. It appeared on the Trip label, a budget outfit from New Jersey that seemed to specialize in bootleg or near-bootleg releases. I remember having a Jimi Hendrix rarities LP from Trip as a kid. Later, knowing a bit more about the complexities of licensing, I wondered how this could have come to pass. Along with whatever murky deals they may have made, Trip issued things on the cheapest quality vinyl with cut-rate design and nonexistent, incomplete or misleading documentation. On the plus side, they always made a point of releasing everything on 8-track tapes, so you can't say they didn't have the choosy consumer in mind.

Occasionally, Trip issued great music, like this Weston sextet material, *Blues*. Unlike the better-known Weston records from the same period, notably *African Cookbook* (issued by the pianist on his own Bakton label in 1964, reissued in 1972 on Atlantic), the personnel didn't feature tenorist Booker Ervin, whose career as a leader had started to take off. Other Weston regulars are there—Ray Copeland on trumpet, Vishnu Bill Wood (listed as Bill Woods) on bass, Lenny McBrowne on drums, Big Black on congas—but the tenor seat is taken by an obscure fellow named Frank Haynes.

I recall Haynes' name from some Grant Green records, on which he sounds quite good. He also made appearances on outings with drummer Dave Bailey, trumpeter Kenny Dorham and guitarist Les McCann, among others. He died not long after the Weston session, in his early 30s.

Blues features three Weston originals, all of them wonderful. On "Blues For Strayhorn," Haynes steps into the spotlight, and it's enough to make one sad he didn't live longer. Against magisterial, bittersweet chords, with a surprising melodic up-tick, Haynes is vulnerable yet forthright, his soft touch and unsentimental tone evincing just the right Ellingtonian mood right up to a brilliant cadenza. The atmosphere is relaxed, informal—perhaps 20 people in the audience—and plainly but nicely recorded, evoking a live feel. Weston is beautiful as always, filtering Monk through Ellington using big chords and ultra-sensitive timing. Copeland is featured on "Sad Beauty Blues," a darker composition taken at the same slow tempo. The trumpeter, who surgically flutters and parses the harmonies, is also wonderful.

The track "Afro Blues," properly known as "Afro Black," takes up the full 18 minutes of the other side. McBrowne digs into the kind of snare parade that evokes Blackwell. The track's calypso atmosphere overcomes the sorrowful blues of side A. Weston contributes tersely Ellington-like piano as percussionist Big Black performs a long solo, snugly pulling tight the two sides of the hyphen "African" and "American." **DB**

EMAIL THE VINYL FREAK:
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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.


ENJA'S Mattias Winckelmann (left) with pianist Antonio Faraó

PATRICK HINELY

ENJA Records Expands Scope for Anniversary

To commemorate its 40-year anniversary, Munich-based ENJA Records hosted a series of star-studded concerts at the city's Unterfahrt Jazz Club and an even larger Oct. 20 show at the Gasteig Cultural Center. But according to founder Mattias Winckelmann, the most exciting event for ENJA this year is the label's global and digital expansion.

The 41st year of business for ENJA will give way to nearly 15 diverse projects and releases, including the Florian Weber Quartet and the Malcolm Braff Trio, and an upcoming Nels Cline reissue.

ENJA also plans to increase its worldwide distribution. Winckelmann recently signed an agreement with an independent label/distributor in China, which will allow ENJA to release much of its material to a broader international audience.

"In the old days, you did more construction for a project, putting together groups that might play together for the first time," Winckelmann said. "Now, you talk to established units and try to find a common ground interesting for both artist and label."

This year, ENJA's burgeoning online presence will also make albums more accessible to audiophiles. Through Kontor Records' worldwide aggregator and a high-def audio portal called Charlie and Friends, fans can digitally download hard-to-find ENJA material.

Winckelmann has been transforming the label since cofounding it with Horst Weber in 1971. The two became intensely involved with recording visiting U.S. artists in European club and festival settings. Though they eventually split as business partners, the label continued to extend its reach. ENJA has cataloged classic sessions by such jazz icons as Chet Baker, Charles Mingus and Elvin Jones, and historically releases an average of 30 albums annually. Winckelmann would eventually venture outside of the jazz realm as well, adding the Tiptoe and Blues Beacon imprints to the ENJA repertoire. *—Hilary Brown*

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CAUGHT

Jimmy Heath Rails About Potential Jazz Masters Cuts


Jimmy Heath leads his powerful big band during the Litchfield Jazz Festival

ADAM DEPAZ

Jimmy Heath was hopping mad. On Aug. 7, during the Litchfield Jazz Festival in Kent, Conn., the 84-year-old saxophonist and band leader joined saxophonist Joe Lovano and drummer Matt Wilson for a freewheeling conversation. He was at the fest to lead his mighty big band that night, but during the live interview, Heath railed against potential cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters program.

"They're talking about cancelling that," Heath said incredulously. "Everybody should write their congressman."

Heath, who was named a Jazz Master in 2009, noted that the award wasn't a great deal of money to begin with, but that simply cutting the program is not acceptable.

"Now, I pay a whole bunch of taxes, and I expect that they give some money to Joe Lovano as a jazz master because he hasn't received it, and my brother [Tootie Heath] hasn't received [the award].

"Now, when Dizzy [Gillespie] and Ornette Coleman and those guys got it, I think it was about $5,000," he said. "When Roy Haynes got it, it may have been $10,000. When I got it, it was $20,000. I told them people, 'This is ludicrous. You give me $20,000 for a life achievement award? Get outta here.' [*laughs*] So the next year, they went up to $25,000. Last year, everybody who got it got $25,000. But respect is what we want. We're gonna work for our money, but it's nice if you get the respect from your government as an artist."

Lovano added that funding from sources such as the NEA is essential to high art.

"I think that's why there are things happening around the world—because there is more support for the arts and for this amazing music all over Scandinavia and all over the European countries," he said. "That's what funds a lot of these tours that sustain us through the years."

Wilson agreed, noting that the NEA gets pennies from the average person's tax dollars. "So, how much of that goes to the NEA Jazz Masters, if you divide that up?" he asked. "I think [the Jazz Masters] should get $20,000 a year for every year they've been doing this."

Wilson then turned to Heath and asked, "Did you get back pay when they raised it?"

"I asked, 'Can I get five grand retroactive?'" Heath chuckled. "He said, 'No, Mr. Heath.'"

Beyond the initial grant, the NEA does help Jazz Masters tour. The Jimmy Heath Big Band's performance at Litchfield, for example, was partially funded by a grant from the NEA.

—Frank Alkyer

Thunder Soul Strikes Historical Chord


Conrad Johnson (left) and Kashmere High School band member

During funk's golden age in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Conrad Johnson, a music teacher at Houston's Kashmere High School, emboldened students to embrace James Brown's chart-topping single: "Make It Funky." Their resulting jazz-funk repertoire and supernova spirit are the subjects of the documentary *Thunder Soul* (Roadside Attractions), which premiered in theaters on Sept. 23. The film is a part of a companion set to the Kashmere Stage Band's CD/DVD titled *Texas Thunder Soul, 1968–1974* (Now-Again), which first appeared five years ago to an unexpectedly warm reception.

Directed by Mark Landsman, the Jamie Foxx-produced documentary garnered mass appeal at the Los Angeles Film Festival and South By Southwest. The film describes the journey of the high school band as they transitioned into a multicultural funk powerhouse. Johnson, an adept jazz saxophonist, makes the decision to choose family life and hometown teaching over the life of an itinerant professional musician. He sharpened the musical skills of his stage band through serious rehearsal, while at the same time commanding their respect.

More than 30 years later, 14 stage band alumni reunited on camera for a concert performance in honor of Johnson. Now middle-aged men and women, the former students spoke highly of their beloved "Prof" in the film. Johnson himself also speaks quietly about his funk-jazz journey, many of his wise observations taken from the 1973 short film *Prof And His Band*.

Thunder Soul offers an overview of black culture and the Civil Rights gains of the time as well, emphasizing the social significance of black musicians in a high school music program. The film comes alive as the Kashmere kids evidence their mega-watt energy, technical acumen and outlandish showmanship, flooring past conventional high school bands and attaining national recognition. Though it receives limited time in the film, the grand finale reunion concert includes the Kashmere High School Stage Band flag-waver "All Praises," with a stirring solo moment from saxophonist and former Stage Band member Bruce Middleton.

"That was a wonderful thing, wasn't it?" said Johnson, who despite his frail health was able to attend the reunion performance. "I've never seen anything like it!" *–Frank-John Hadley*

Johnny Otis Film Depicts Artistic Beginnings, Social Rifts

Johnny Otis paved the way for r&b and rock 'n' roll in the late '40s and early '50s. He remade the big band, amped up the blues and discovered an array of Los Angeles talent. But a documentary-in-progress, *Every Beat Of My Heart*, shows how music was just one side of Otis' multidimensional life.

"Johnny could pretty much hold his own with anybody about anything," said director Bruce Schmiechen. "He's a restless guy in terms of his intellect. He always had a deep interest in everything."

Every Beat Of My Heart includes Otis' beginnings as a jazz drummer and vibraphonist. He modeled himself after Count Basie in the 1940s until the population started to change, according to Schmiechen.

Johnny Otis (center) with Esther Phillips and Charles Brown

"Tastes were changing," he said. "In Los Angeles, you had people from the South who wanted to hear funkier stuff."

Otis worked with Charles Brown and subsequently crafted tracks like the infectiously syncopated 1958 hit "Willie And The Hand Jive." But he also recruited musicians with whom he stuck for decades, like saxophonist Big Jay McNeely and singer Esther Phillips. While leading classic r&b revues—recording *The Johnny Otis Show Live At Monterey!* in 1970—he also became a renowned television show host, radio DJ, ordained minister, political candidate, organic farmer, cartoonist, author and educator.

Schmiechen attributed Otis' combination of musical and social justice roles to his deliberately blurred racial identity. The son of Greek immigrants, Otis was always eager to pass for African American.

"In a weird kind of way, he had to make some kind of choice and that colored his whole perspective—on the world, politics and religion," Schmiechen said. "In a different way than black people. Since he could pass either way, he was never not aware of both sides of that mirror. He got caught right in the middle of one of the biggest moral, social and political centers of American society."

Sometimes Otis' different roles collided in unexpected ways.

"He told me in the early 1960s, he was part of this civil rights group in Los Angeles," Schmiechen recalled. "And he said that Malcolm X came and talked to them, and he realized he remembered him from Harlem when [Malcolm X] was selling weed."

Most of the interviews with Otis, now 79, were conducted around 2000. Schmiechen said he was fortunate that friends donated time to work cameras and sound. He's slowly getting money togetto finish the project, searching for more archival material and completing additional interviews.

"Trying to get the rights to use musical clips is like tying a stone to your leg," Schmiechen said. "People need to connect with Johnny. It's crazy when you think of all he's done. I've never met a more multifaceted guy than him." *—Aaron Cohen*

Horacee Arnold
Percussive Resurgence

Columbia Records producer John Hammond became a legend by bringing little-known talents such as Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin and Bob Dylan to international attention. Hammond also gave Horacee Arnold his big break, and although the jazz drummer never quite achieved global fame, he justified Hammond's musical judgment one more time.

The two albums that Arnold released for Columbia, 1973's *Tribe* and 1974's *Tales Of The Exonerated Flea*, bridged the divide between fusion and bop, as well as between bop and free-jazz. Arnold, who composed 12 of the two albums' 14 tracks, could play freely enough to accommodate a John Coltrane acolyte such as Billy Harper on the first album, and could groove enough to accommodate fusioneers such as Jan Hammer and John Abercrombie on the second. But on both discs, Arnold would suddenly steer his bands into hard-swinging passages that reflected the influence of his mentor Max Roach.

"John Hammond came from a well-to-do family, but he knew this music," Arnold says during a phone conversation from his apartment in Manhattan. "He knew all the players and had a feel for what was genuine and what wasn't. He was a no-bullshit person, and he was willing to say what he really felt. He said, 'I've heard how you put these arrangements together, so I want you to produce.' He'd sit in the studio with his Wall Street Journal and say, 'Horacee, that was a little rough. Let's do another take.' But that's as much as he would say."

The two releases never sold much, but they retained a fervent underground reputation, and that word-of-mouth was enough to get them reissued this year—in the spring as a two-disc set by Germany's MIG Records and in the fall as two separate discs (with one bonus track on *Exonerated Flea*) by the CD-reissue label Wounded Bird. And that revival of interest has stimulated Arnold to finish his first new album as a leader in 37 years, *All Times Are In It*, and prepare it for release early next year.

"The gap between records was self-induced," Arnold, 74, admits. "The closer I got to the industry, the more I got disillusioned—partly by racism and partly by where the industry was headed. I had a couple of people managing me, and it wasn't pretty. So I backed off. It was frustrating to write a lot of music that I never got to record or to play in public. I regret that, but there's still time. I have a decent backlog of pieces I've written. I'd like to play the old music, because the public has never really had a chance to hear it. I did one light tour with Jan after *Tales Of The Exonerated Flea*, but he was committed to Mahavishnu [Orchestra]."

Arnold, who is currently a faculty member at both William Paterson University and The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, grew up near Louisville, Ky. It was there he met Roach, while the latter was on tour. Roach urged the youngster to come to New York, telling him, "You're not going to grow till you get to a place where you can grow." Arnold moved there in 1960, and Roach helped his protégé land gigs with Charles Mingus, Sarah Vaughan and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It was Ailey's 1962 tour of Asia that got the drummer interested in the third-world flavors that mark his music. "That was an eye-opener," he explains, "because I realized that music was broader than just jazz."

Back in the States, Arnold began playing with a younger generation of musicians who were trying to escape the shadow of the bop and free-jazz giants and create their own sound. The drummer proved a crucial contributor to such landmark albums as Chick Corea's *Sundance*, Sam Rivers' *Crystals*, Billy Harper's *Awakening* and Sonny Fortune's *Serengeti Minstrel*. Harper returned the favor by playing on *Tribe*, and Fortune contributed to *Exonerated Flea*.

Arnold's new album revisits the lively "Banyan Dance" from *Tribe* and the African-flavored "Serengeti Minstrel" from Fortune's album, as well as a major new composition, "Night Nuances," which transplants the atmosphere of a classical nocturne to a swinging jazz number. The band includes bassist Buster Williams, saxophonist Antoine Roney, pianist George Colligan and guitarist Vic Juris. As on his earlier records, Arnold eschews the familiar head-solo-solo-solo-head format in favor of multipart arrangements that shift tempo and mood from section to section.

"I love Gil Evans' colors and the way he orchestrates his ensembles," Arnold says. "Like him, I try to use several different approaches to each piece, so my writing won't be one-dimensional."

Arnold came up with his unusual first name when he got out of the Coast Guard and started gigging around Louisville in 1959. "I went to join the musicians' union," he remembers, "and the man said, 'What's your stage name?' I said, 'I don't have a stage name.' He said, 'You have to have a stage name.' I said, 'What do you mean? My name is Horace. I don't want to change my name.' I went home and talked about it with my mother. She said, 'Your middle initial is E; just slide it over to your first name.' So I became Horacee. I guess it gives me some kind of distinction."

—Geoffrey Himes

Adam Rudolph
Global Rhythms


OZIER MUHAMMAD

At a time when exotic hand drums were largely unavailable, Adam Rudolph was eager to educate himself about a wide variety of instruments. Then an Oberlin College junior, the ethnomusicology major ventured to New York to study tabla and djembe with visiting masters. He then saved the money to travel to Ghana in 1977, where he realized that "learning drum patterns was not the most important part of the experience." Rudolph would accompany a master drummer to religious ceremonies outside Ghana's capital, Accra, and in the country of Togo.

"The music was being played," Rudolph explained, "to call down spirits to the people for healing, for funerals, for naming ceremonies and harvesting." He added, "Music, dance and singing [were] in the fabric of everything that had to do with how life was lived."

Rudolph has traveled to such places as India, Brazil and Indonesia, often returning with instruments from fellow musicians. There is evidence of this bounty in Rudolph's setup at his Essex County, N.J., studio: A djembe (West Africa) and three congas (Cuba) stand in front of five small tajiras (Morocco), which are positioned alongside a doumbek (Middle East), two cymbals, a cowbell and a large can. On the floor is a zabumba (Bahia), a two-headed Brazilian parade drum.

"He's in one part of the world, and two seconds later he's in another part of the world—with his own voice," said Cuban pianist Omar Sosa, with whom Rudolph collaborated on 2004's *Pictures Of Soul* (Meta).

In the late '70s, the Chicago native formed the Mandingo Griot Society with Gambian kora player Jali Foday Musa Suso. Over the years, he has performed with Yusef Lateef, Pharoah Sanders, Wadada Leo Smith and Sam Rivers. Rudolph currently leads the rhythm-heavy Moving Pictures octet, whose sideman double up on diverse instruments, from bamboo flute to kalimba to oud to slide guitar.

His new album, *Both/And* (Meta), pairs Moving Pictures with the 11-piece Organic Orchestra Strings, for which Ruldolph has conducted several editions. He bases the 10 tracks on "matrices," which are special arrangements of intervals derived from a 12-tone system.

"The thing that's amazing about jazz is that it's a multicultural music," he noted. "It has this amazing ability to embrace and integrate so many different kinds of music." *—Eric Fine*

Aurora Nealand
Crescent City Attitude

It takes guts to take on Sidney Bechet. The New Orleans native often has been called the premier soprano saxophonist, and his innovations changed the way jazz is played. New Orleans reedist Aurora Nealand is an ambitious musician, and her new disc, *A Tribute To Sidney Bechet: Live In New Orleans*, shows that she was up for the challenge of Bechet's music and legacy. The record features Nealand and her septet, The Royal Roses, playing versions of Bechet's best-known tunes, including a beautiful version of "Petite Fleur" and a slinky take on "The Mooche."

"Bechet is the man who ushered solo playing into jazz," Nealand says over the phone from New York, where she was traveling in August. "Before, it was more ensemble playing and not individual solos. That interests me, the individual voices."

Part of the challenge of playing Bechet is to make his music, recorded over half a century ago, relevant to contemporary listeners. Nealand has strong feelings on the topic: "The spirit of what he is doing and the strong individuality of his recordings and soloing speak to me. I think that New Orleans allows this music to live. The way that the music is presented in New Orleans and the way it is woven into the social fabric, that makes it live."

The desire to cut loose, and a tremendous respect for individual artistry, have made New Orleans a hotbed of creativity—from Bechet's era all the way to the present day. Nealand says, "For me and the guys I'm lucky to play with, before every gig I turn to them and say, 'Everyone, do whatever the fuck you want to do.' And that has kind of become our motto, but not in a bad way."

In performance, Nealand brings an effervescence to her presentation whether she's sitting onstage, standing on the street, or marching in a parade. Her eyes light up as the music ignites, and her smile encourages other musicians to play their best, and the audience to get into it and dance, bounce, or sway. It's obvious that she takes the music seriously, but that having fun while playing it is an aesthetic priority. That's one of the reasons she recorded this project live at the venerable Preservation Hall.

"I like the energy of playing for people," she explains. "It's hard to capture that in a studio. Sometimes I consider myself a risky player, which is a euphemism for saying I make mistakes a lot." Nealand laughs before continuing, "It's a tribute to Sidney Bechet. I think the way he plays is fierce and a little reckless and it's about the feeling. It doesn't matter if you make mistakes. I wanted to put all these players in a room and play the music. And let the mistakes be the music."

Although Nealand is best known for her traditional leanings, she plays a variety of styles of music. She grew up in a musical family in California and studied composition at Oberlin College, as well as theater and sound installation. After biking from San Francisco to St. Louis with a friend, she continued on to New Orleans and never really left. Trombonist Jeff Albert first heard her at the local festival Chazfest. "I walked in," he remembers, "and heard what sounded like a regular New Orleans r&b thing going on, and this saxophone came in and it sounded like Ornette."

Albert is also impressed by Nealand's attitude. "I was getting a quintet together for an radio pledge drive, and I got Aurora to come play," he recalls. "I emailed everyone and said, 'I'd like to have a rehearsal because some of this music is kind of hard. And I realize that calling a rehearsal for non-paying radio gig is kind of jive, but I'd like to not suck on the radio.' And she emails me back, 'I'm a big fan of rehearsal. I really like not sucking.' She puts that positive spin on things."

Nealand has done gigs with everyone from rockers Johnny Sketch and The Dirty Notes to the avant-garde big band The Naked Orchestra. She also has made several appearances on the post-Katrina HBO series *Treme*.

Balancing all these different gigs might be hard, but Nealand says, "It keeps me sane. Once I get there and I'm playing music, I don't find it difficult. But I'm not a purist, so I'm not super concerned. I'm lucky in that the music that I play is very much an approach of, 'Sound is fun—let's go out tonight and make some interesting sounds.'" —*David Kunian*

Bernie Williams
Yankee As Guitarist


Bernie Williams

STUART ROBERTSON

Bernie Williams has all the fame any New Yorker could ever want.

After patrolling center field for the New York Yankees for 16 years, Williams could easily rest on the laurels of four World Series championships, five All-Star teams, four Gold Gloves, a Most Valuable Player award and a batting title.

But Williams won't rest. While he hasn't picked up a bat for the Yankees since the 2006 season, Williams continues to pursue his other love—the guitar.

His latest recording, *Moving Forward* (Reform) from 2009—featuring an all-star cast that includes Bruce Springsteen, Jon Secada and Dave Koz—was nominated for a Latin Grammy award. He's also become an outspoken proponent for music education, and this summer, released a book, *Rhythms Of The Game*, co-written with Dave Gluck and Bob Thompson (with a forward by singer/songwriter and Yankee fan Paul Simon).

We caught up with Williams at Summer NAMM in Nashville in July, where he was playing guitar and promoting his new book. Here's what Williams told us:

I remember my dad bringing in a guitar from Spain when he was serving as a Merchant Marine. He played some of the Spanish, Flamenco-ish kinds of things. That was my first memory of hearing a musical instrument, in this case a guitar. I asked my dad to teach me how to play. And he did. He taught me a couple of chords, and that started a lifelong love affair with music and playing the guitar.

I had this great opportunity to go to a performing arts high school down in Puerto Rico. It was called Escuela Libre de Música. That's where I learned a lot about music, about the guitar, the classical guitar, with aspirations of maybe going to a conservatory.

They were very wise, my parents, in designing a program to keep us busy. We were too tired to go out and hang out. During a typical day at my high school, we would wake up at 5:30 a.m. We would have to drive an hour to go to our school in the capital, because we lived in the countryside of Puerto Rico in a town called Vega Alta. We would go to school until 12:30 p.m., and then we would have our instrument classes or our ensemble classes. And then we would go on to play sports. By the time we got home, it was 8:30 or 9 p.m. We'd do our homework, eat and get ready to do the same thing all over again the next day.

When I started playing baseball, coming to New York, I was exposed to a lot of great musicians. I went to a Yamaha showroom in the city and started playing with all the choruses and distortions and thought, "This is cool." So I was drawn to rock and blues, but then I started gravitating to jazz. I was intrigued by the improvisational aspect of the music. I started listening to guys like Pat Metheny and Mike Stern and Scott Henderson, and blues guys like Eric Clapton and B.B. King.

I always had a guitar with me. On all the teams I played, they knew I always had a guitar. I got better over the years. After my high school experience, I didn't have any teachers. It was just listening to music and listening to the guys who I was admiring, and learning the way they approached music.

Once I stopped playing baseball in 2006, I was kind of grieving a little bit, not being able to play. I missed the game. It was part of my life, and to have that taken away all of a sudden left a big void. So I was trying to find ways to keep myself occupied, but more important to find challenges. So I decided, "You know what? I'm going to go back to school," and I went to the Conservatory of Music at SUNY–Purchase. My studio composition professor was Dave Gluck, a pretty good drummer in his own right. We started talking about being in the zone and what that meant, talking about the preparation it takes, the work ethic, the consistency, not dwelling on your mistakes. At some point he says, "You know, we have a lot of information here. Why don't we write a book about this? I think it would be a very interesting read for people to learn from somebody who has done both." That's the premise of the book.

—Frank Alkyer

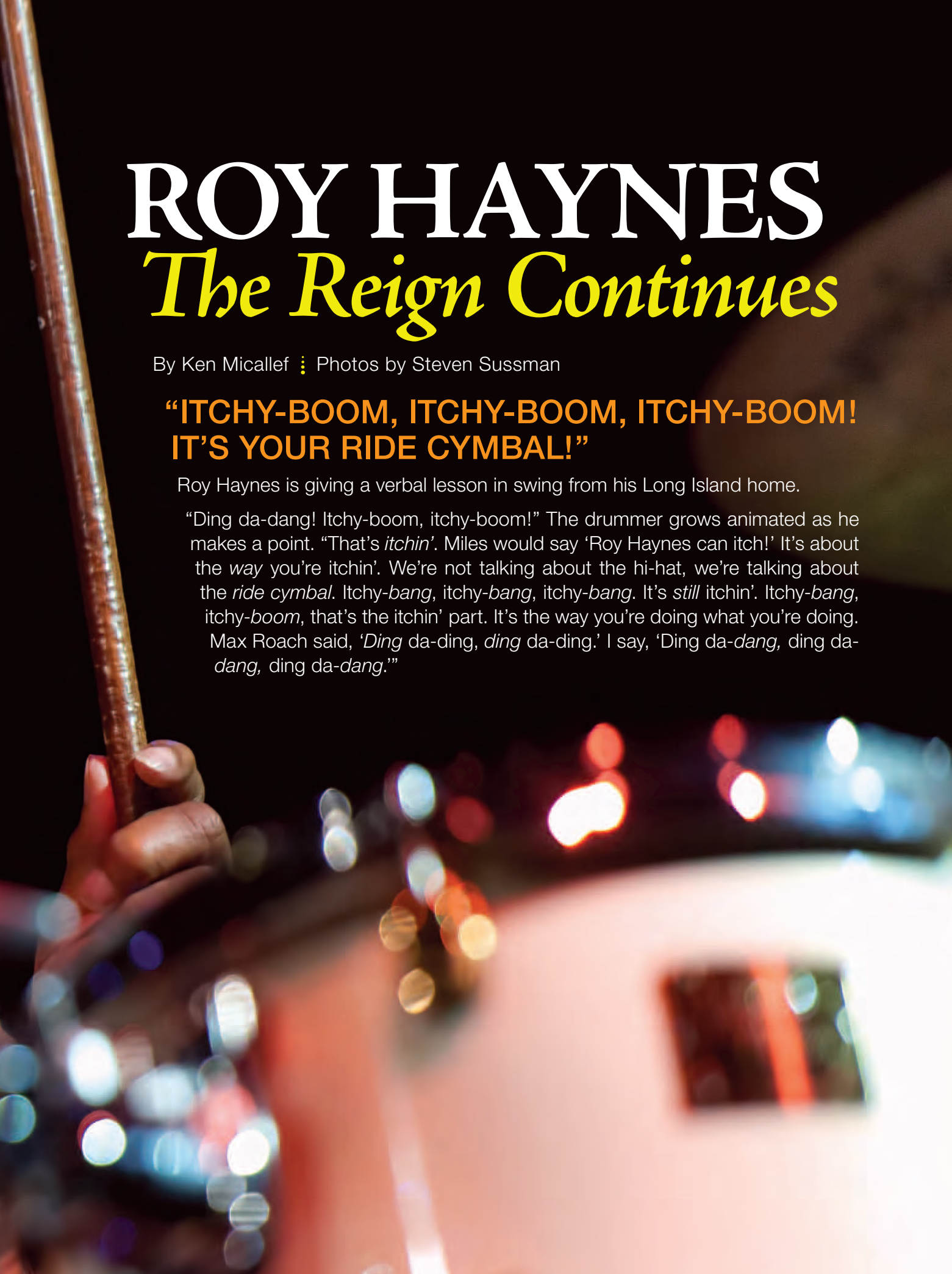
ROY HAYNES
The Reign Continues

By Ken Micallef ⋮ Photos by Steven Sussman

"ITCHY-BOOM, ITCHY-BOOM, ITCHY-BOOM! IT'S YOUR RIDE CYMBAL!"

Roy Haynes is giving a verbal lesson in swing from his Long Island home.

"Ding da-dang! Itchy-boom, itchy-boom!" The drummer grows animated as he makes a point. "That's *itchin'*. Miles would say 'Roy Haynes can itch!' It's about the *way* you're itchin'. We're not talking about the hi-hat, we're talking about the *ride cymbal*. Itchy-*bang*, itchy-*bang*, itchy-*bang*. It's *still* itchin'. Itchy-*bang*, itchy-*boom*, that's the itchin' part. It's the way you're doing what you're doing. Max Roach said, '*Ding* da-ding, *ding* da-ding.' I say, 'Ding da-*dang,* ding da-*dang,* ding da-*dang*.'"



In addition to Miles Davis, other titans such as Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins, Bud Powell, John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk all enjoyed Roy Haynes when he was scratching his itch.

Haynes is seated at his dining room table, where he conducts business (including interviews). His comfortable, two-story home is situated on a leafy green street in a quiet neighborhood. It's sunny outside, but the vertical blinds keep the dining room cool. On a nearby fireplace mantle are numerous awards and photos. The table in front of Haynes is covered with drumsticks, letters from drum and cymbal companies, and of course, multiple pairs of brightly colored sunglasses. The master percussionist is ready to talk.

"When I joined Lester Young in 1947, that is the thing that captured him right away," reflects Haynes—an 86-year-old phenomenon still on the move. "That captured a lot of players. They'd say 'Yeah, you got that thing.' The first couple tunes I played with Lester Young he dug that feeling, that swing thing. That ride cymbal. Back in those days, some drummers didn't play solos. Your job was to make the band sound good. Even now, man, it's not to play a drum solo, it's to make everybody sound good. That's what I had and what I still have!"

Watching Haynes propel a band of musicians young enough to be his grandchildren (as he did recently at the Litchfield Jazz Festival in Connecticut) would be a shock if it weren't such a common event. Haynes has supported and swung younger musicians for decades with his physicality and energy, with his abstract articulations, with drumming that comes from all directions. While most of the great jazz drummers have a cumulative sound, an identifiable personality that can be quantified—Elvin Jones' enormous triplet expansions, Billy Higgins' bright ride-cymbal beat, Tony Williams' explosiveness, Max Roach's missile-like precision—it is difficult categorize Haynes. He's always been an eloquent, original thinker, as evidenced by the elements of his drumming: the nontraditional hi-hat phrases, the surprising bass drum accents, the across-the-bar cutting/spraying snare-drum commentary, the ride cymbal that alternately recalls the wind (Miles Davis' "Morpheus"), a rainstorm (Haynes' "Snap Crackle") or scalding punctuation marks (Chick Corea's "Matrix"). The result is an omnidirectional approach to rhythm that sounds fresh on recordings dating from the '40s through the present day.

A Life In Time (Dreyfus Jazz), the 2007 four-disc overview of Haynes' brilliant career, gives a glimpse of the drummer's contributions to jazz, from early recordings with Parker and Lester Young to '60s classics with Coltrane, Monk, Etta Jones (the gold-selling single "Don't Go To Strangers"), Jackie McLean and Andrew Hill, plus excerpts from Haynes' 1962 masterpiece *Out Of The Afternoon*. It surveys his '70s work with his Hip Ensemble and includes video footage with his current Fountain of Youth band (Jaleel Shaw, saxophones; David Wong, bass; and Martin Bejerano, piano). He exemplifies the ultimate in endurance and jazz hipness, but not everyone has always been hip to Haynes.

"I always refer to Roy as the 'father of modern drumming'," Pat Metheny wrote via email. "Almost all of the drummers I have played with a lot, from Jack DeJohnette and Bill Stewart to Antonio Sanchez, while being wildly different from each other, all have a deep connection to Roy's thing. [But] at the time when Roy and I recorded *Question And Answer* [with Dave Holland, 1989], it seemed to me that Roy was not regarded as highly by critics and [the] general jazz public as musicians all knew he was. Max Roach, who of course was also great, seemed to always get the most attention of that generation of drummers during that period. Roy [told] me that record seemed to do a lot to draw attention back to him, which has always been gratifying to me. I do think it is one of the best records to really check out Roy's thing in detail—the drums are really mixed in front, and with just guitar and bass there is a lot of room in the band for his thing to be front and center.

"On the level of microscopic musical detail," Metheny continued, "Roy has always had the hippest phrasing, the best feel, the magic component of heart and soul that puts him at the highest echelon of what one can achieve in this music."

At the Litchfield fest, Haynes, dressed regally and wearing his trademark bug-eyed sunglasses, held court with his Fountain of Youth Band, playing selections from their new CD, *ROY-alty* (Dreyfus Jazz). Performing in a converted hockey rink, Haynes' swing was ferocious, his mallet solo a lesson in dynamics, his expressions joyous. But it was a pre-concert interview with artist-in-residence Matt Wilson that revealed part of Haynes' thought process. While Wilson and the SRO audience focused on the drummer's career—Wilson playing two Ray Charles tracks that featured Haynes' mighty pulse—the drummer's thoughts were elsewhere. After a particularly funny Haynes response and the ensuing laughter, Haynes suddenly stopped and pointed to the sky. "Hear that?" he asked. As a summer downpour pounded the tent that covered Haynes, Wilson and the audience, the drummer's ear caught nature's rhythm, which epitomized "Snap Crackle," the term bassist Al McKibbon coined to describe Haynes' sizzling, everywhere-at-once drum sound. "Doesn't that sound great?" Haynes mused. The audience was silent. Everyone was listening to Roy, but he—as usual—was listening to the beat of his own, very different drummer.

Memorabilia worthy of a king fills the wood-paneled basement of Haynes' home: DownBeat awards, Grammys, the Les Victoires du Jazz 2008 award, the 2007 Friends of Charlie Parker award, a drum set, a photo of Tony Williams and Haynes embracing, a well-stocked bar and a deluxe in-wall sauna. Haynes' famous Bricklin sits covered under a tarp in the driveway. His current ride of choice? A silver Dodge Magnum, fittingly.

Is he always in the moment? "Sometimes I'm ahead of the moment!" he laughs.

"That's the way my life is, anyhow," Haynes continues. "I don't dress like a guy who was born in 1925. And I don't act like it. I am not a run-of-the-mill type of individual. I don't know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Roy Haynes
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where it comes from; it comes from heaven. I know if they put ten people together I will be one of the different ones. Or maybe when they are talking, my mind is somewhere else. That's the way I was in school."

Roy Owen Haynes was born in Roxbury, Mass. His father played organ in church, and his mother was a strict Pentecostal who never saw her son perform in a jazz club. Roy studied drums briefly with local legend Herbert Wright, who taught him the double stroke roll. But Haynes didn't really need a teacher.

"This was a God-given thing to me," he says. "I had the feeling for it from day one, even before I had any drums. I didn't even have drumsticks. I'd be drumming on the wall, on the mirror, anything that felt good or sounded slick. My mother's dining room dishes. I never had any cymbals. I didn't have any drums. I would break up all my mother's expensive dishes.

"And I didn't know anything about rudiments," Haynes adds. "I never was a rudimental drummer. I was a natural drummer. But I had that ding ding da-ding thing. Couldn't get that out of no book. Not that way. I had that from listening to Papa Jo [Jones]. I had the shit out of that! In fact, my first night with Lester Young he said, 'You sure are swinging. If you have eyes, the gig is yours.' That was an expression in the '40s. I played with Lester for two years."

Before Lester Young, Haynes worked with the Luis Russell's big band, arriving at New York's Savoy Ballroom in September 1945. By 1947, Haynes was in the thick of it, the gig with Young leading to Parker, Davis and Monk.

"My first time working with Charlie Parker was in 1949. You ever hear him talk? The voice and the words that he used sounded like a professor. A helluva speaker. A helluva person, man. Miles had just quit playing with Parker. Back then Miles and Max Roach were like twins, then something happened. Miles was getting ready to have a group, and he came over to hire me. He lived at 147th Street and Broadway; I was at 149th. (Haynes recorded with Davis on the early '50s albums *Blue Period, Conception* and *Miles Davis And Horns*.)

"Miles was related to that rhythm thing from Lester Young, although Miles was a younger guy," Haynes continues. "A lot of stuff came from Lester Young as quiet as it's kept. Not only saxophone, but his whole feeling for different things. He never would describe anything or try to tell you what to do. He had a weird way of moving on stage. He had his own way of talking. His own way of dressing, his own way of playing. He was an original motherfucker. He called everybody 'Lady.' When Leonard Feather came along he'd say, 'Here comes Lady Feather.' I'd be Lady Haynes. He named Billie Holiday 'Lady Day.'"

Haynes also played plenty of Swing Street gigs. "I did Monday nights at the Downbeat club, my first steady gig. I played with Kai Winding at the Three Deuces. Then [in 1953] I went with Sarah Vaughan for five years." After recordings with Bud Powell, Nat Adderley, and Milt Jackson, and his own albums *Jazz Abroad* and *We Three,* Haynes recorded with Thelonious Monk. Released in August 1958, *Thelonious Monk Quartet Live in New York, Vol. 1* was one of the drummer's first recorded interactions with the pianist and composer: two rhythmic giants swinging on a higher plane.

"When I played with Monk—are you kidding? That shit was on. It was slick to play with Monk. I loved it. You can hear it on those live dates with Johnny Griffin [*Thelonious In Action*]. I enjoyed every moment with Monk. Subconsciously, I'm still with Monk [*laughs*]. Playing with Monk maybe I wouldn't do a lot of the same things I would usually do. Even though I had played with Bud [Powell], there was something about that guy. He respected Roy Haynes. I didn't make no money with Monk. I don't want to tell you what we made per week. But he was a different type of guy."

Haynes' youngest son Craig (also a drummer) shows him the album cover for *Forty Fort* by jazz quartet Mostly Other People Do The Killing. The image is an exact replica of Haynes' landmark 1962 album, *Out Of The Afternoon,* right down to the physical placement of each musician against a woodland background. "That's a bitch!" Haynes yells.

Then, as fate would have it, Haynes' voice booms from a small radio sitting nearby. In a prerecorded station I.D., Haynes announces, "Jazz has a permanent home at WBGO, Newark Jazz 88.3FM." The announcement is followed by Eric Dolphy's version of "On Green Dolphin Street" (with Haynes playing drums).

"Ain't that a trip?" Haynes laughs.

"*Out Of The Afternoon* was my first big record!" he adds. "But my first recording date as a leader was done in Paris, not the United States. *Jazz Abroad*, one side is Quincy Jones, the other side is me. But *Out Of The Afternoon* was big. [Rahsaan] Roland Kirk was getting hot. I handed Henry [Grimes, bass], Tommy [Flanagan, piano] and Roland [saxophones,

ROY HAYNES THROUGH THE DECADES

MARCH 13, 1925
BORN ROY OWEN HAYNES IN ROXBURY, MASS.

1949-'52
PLAYS WITH CHARLIE PARKER

1962
RELEASES *OUT OF THE AFTERNOON*

FEB. 1980
COVER OF DOWNBEAT

1995; 1996
NEA JAZZ MASTER; NOV. 1996 COVER OF DOWNBEAT

2011
WINS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FROM RECORDING ACADEMY; RELEASES *ROY-ALTY*

DEC. 15, 1966
COVER OF DOWNBEAT

1989
WINS GRAMMY FOR VARIOUS ARTISTS ALBUM *BLUES FOR COLTRANE: A TRIBUTE TO JOHN COLTRANE*

AUG. 2004
INDUCTED INTO THE DOWNBEAT HALL OF FAME

flute, stritch, manzello] some sketches. Back then there wasn't a chart; the chart was within you [*pats his chest*]. I would describe the direction I wanted it to go."

In 1963, Haynes stepped in for Elvin Jones with John Coltrane, performing a version of "My Favorite Things" that would appear on *My Favorite Things: Coltrane At Newport*.

"Playing with Coltrane felt like I was in heaven," Haynes recalls. "So much feeling. He would come to a climax, then come to another one! The drummer from Detroit that was playing with Trane who got a lot of credit was listening to Roy Haynes before some people even realized. Some people say, 'How is Roy Haynes going to sub for Elvin? He don't have that thing.' But a lot of that thing was coming from here [*chest thump*]. Elvin had that.

"One time Trane picked me up in his station wagon when I lived in Hollis, Queens," he recalls. "We were going to Chicago. We didn't talk much. Trane was a quiet person. He pulled over in a gas station somewhere in Ohio. He said, 'Roy I'm a little tired.' I knew what that meant. Either I had to sleep in the car or drive the rest of the way. We never rehearsed, and we never talked about what we would play. One time he said, 'This song is similar to 'My Favorite Things.'' Charts? What kind of chart? The chart is in your head. There were no words."

Though initially reticent, Haynes agrees to listen to a few tracks that feature his drumming. First up, Sarah Vaughan's "Shulie A Bop," its madcap Haynes solo introduced by Sassy's declaration: "Roy…Haynes." He instantly responds to an unusual bomb in the drum solo.

"Boom! That was a big bass drum." Haynes replicates a snare drum phrase, tapping it out on the table in response. Then he plays along with his solo. "I never repeated that solo with Sarah. No. Noooo. Noooooooo. It's a funny thing. I was up in Harlem once. They had that song on a jukebox at this place where we'd eat after the gig. When Sarah Vaughan said, 'Roy,' everyone in the restaurant would turn around and shout, 'Haynes' along with the record."

"Snap Crackle" (from *Out of the Afternoon*) features an unusual melody/rhythm played in unison, its intro nearly impossible to count.

"That is a lick that the brass section of the Basie band would play behind a singer," Haynes says. "But I altered it a little [*sings the melody*]. I added ba-bah! Like a Bud Powell thing. Basie's band would do a little slower tempo. The first note is short, like a grace note. Ba-bat! Ba-bang! The second one is open."

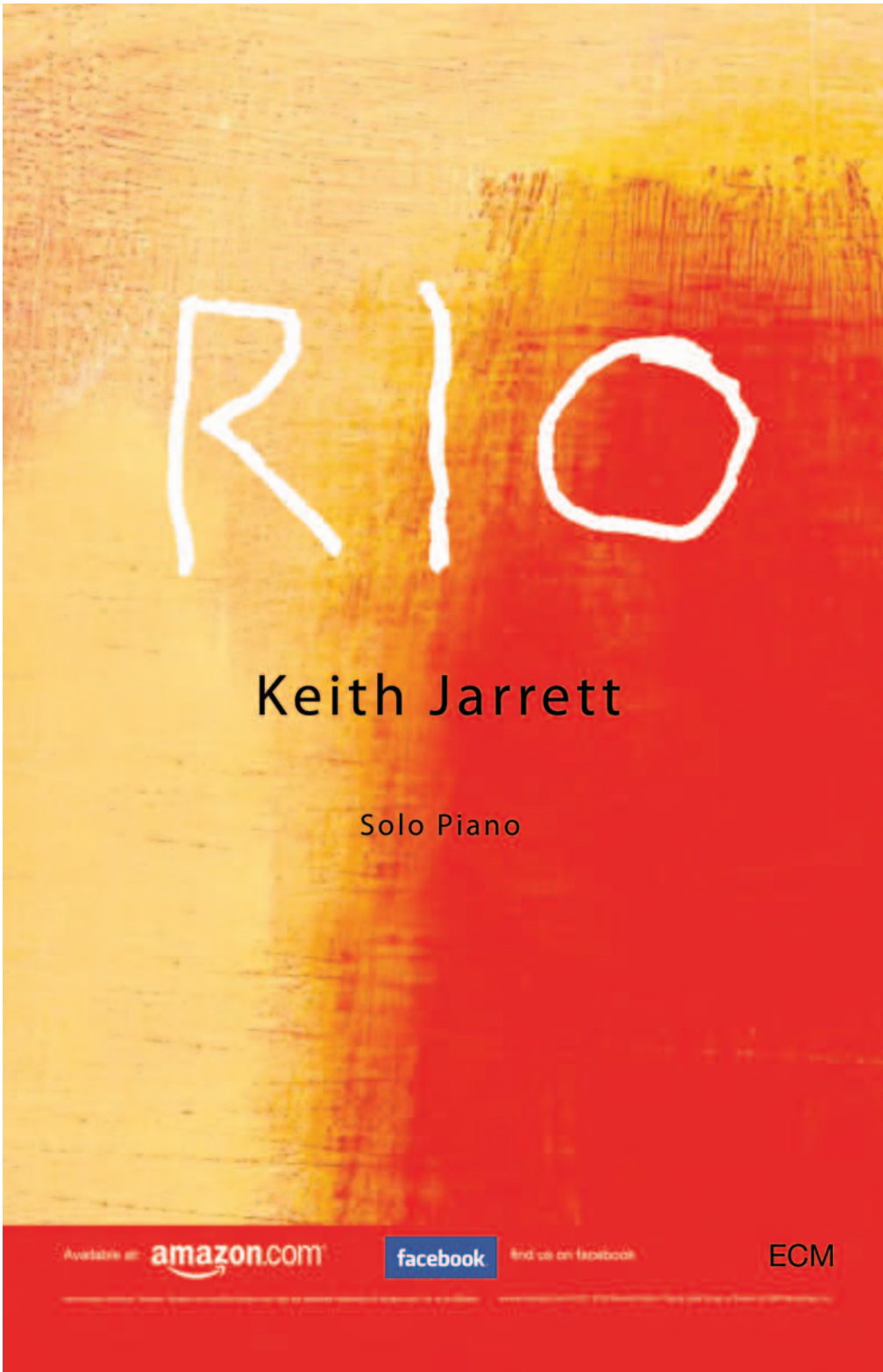
Haynes' snap crackle surprise on Chick Corea's "Matrix" (on *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*) sounds as telepathic, fiery and explosive now as the day it was recorded in 1968.

"There's that flat ride, one of the first ones," Haynes notes. (He has preferred a flat ride for much of career, aiding his clarity and articulation.) "Ah! Oop-bap-dap-badat! Damn! That hi-hat! Cymbals sound so good. Chick and I always had that hook-up. It's something to listen to something you did a long time ago. What was I thinking about? "

Scholars might point to Haynes' reign as the longest in the history of jazz. But like most great artists, he detests nostalgia. (Hence his resistance to listen to old jazz by dead jazz stars.)

When this interview began, Roy Haynes acted miffed. He said he had too much to do. But his mood soon changed. His energy, good humor and passion for life became apparent. Roy Haynes' fountain of youth springs eternal.

"I don't' know what I would have done if I wasn't playing this music and loving it," he says. "It's something a lot of people would have loved to have done. To play with Sarah Vaughan—one of the greatest vocalists ever! She was a genius. I played with geniuses. Lester Young, Charlie Parker. Sarah Vaughan. That's a motherfucker, man. Sarah could tell if the piano was playing the wrong changes. A lot of people who call themselves musicians can't do that. I'm bragging about my career. It's like being in a different world. And I'm still active today. And when I get with the right people, I can create and play some shit I've never played before, when I'm inspired. It ain't over until it's over." **DB**



By Ed Enright

IMPULSE 50!

The name Impulse is iconic. The logo is iconic. The orange and black packaging is iconic. And, of course, the music is iconic. Some of the most important albums in all of jazz history are on Impulse.

Started by musician and producer Creed Taylor in 1960 as part of ABC-Paramount, the esteemed label has released timeless jazz albums by the likes of John Coltrane, Ray Charles, Oliver Nelson, Charles Mingus, Archie Shepp, Sam Rivers, Albert Ayler, Freddie Hubbard, Sun Ra, Benny Carter, Quincy Jones, Ahmad Jamal, Sonny Rollins, Keith Jarrett, Michael Brecker and Diana Krall. As Impulse celebrates the 50th anniversary of its first album releases with a spate of reissued and repackaged recordings, a special box set, a traveling exhibition and one-of-a-kind live concerts, the label aims to reintroduce itself to longtime listeners as well as recruit new ones among today's jazz consumers.

A highly successful brand with remarkable staying power, Impulse had a great initial run of some 330 albums through 1977, when ABC, in response to a changing marketplace, began making plans to sell the imprint to MCA (a steal of a deal—only $30 million—that was completed in 1979). Impulse was re-launched by MCA in 1986, but then taken over by GRP in 1990. It has since come under the umbrella of Universal Music Group, which made the brand part of its Verve Music Group, where Impulse continues to reside today.

Impulse's most significant albums were recorded by cutting-edge players and well-established jazz artists of the '60s and '70s. The label has continued to release notable recordings on an on-again, off-again basis throughout the corporate mergers it has endured. Today, Verve applies the imprint, albeit quite sparingly, to new releases that merit a distinct, dignified designation. The Impulse catalog has been mined smartly, yielding some of the best jazz reissues and box sets to hit the market in recent times. To put it simply, Impulse is a treasure chest of jazz history that still shows signs of vitality.

The label's towering longevity begins with the foundation laid by Taylor, who conceived Impulse as a way to present sophisticated jazz in an appropriately produced package to the listening public. Taylor's previous experience as

a trumpeter and as a producer for ABC (as well as the independent Bethlehem label) prepared him well for the execution of his vision.

"I always had a copyist who copied the parts for the arrangements make a booth part for me, a musical roadmap, so my experience as a musician before I got into this activity was invaluable," said Taylor, who produced the first six Impulse titles before moving on to Verve, A&M and eventually CTI. "I can speak to the arranger, anybody. I had a phone in the booth with a direct line to the conductor's stand in the studio, so I never had to enter the studio itself during a recording. It made things go smoothly; there was hardly ever a disruption."

Taylor's contribution to Impulse can be experienced via *First Impulse: The Creed Taylor Collection*, a beautiful new four-disc set containing the albums *The Great Kai And J.J.* (Kai Winding and J.J. Johnson), *Genius + Soul = Jazz* (Ray Charles), *The Incredible Kai Winding Trombones* (Winding), *Out Of The Cool* (Gil Evans), *The Blues And The Abstract Truth* (Oliver Nelson) and *Africa/Brass* (John Coltrane Quartet). A salute to these six seminal albums took place April 20–24 in the form of live concerts at New York City's Jazz Standard featuring headliners Ravi Coltrane and Dave Liebman, Roy Hargrove, Henry Butler, Ryan Truesdell and Robin Eubanks.

Credit for continuing the Impulse legacy goes to subsequent producers Bob Thiele (who stayed onboard until 1969), Ed Michel and Esmond Edwards, as well as Michael Cuscuna, the man responsible for overseeing many of the Impulse catalog reissues. Thiele in particular had a powerful influence that reflected the breadth of his passion for jazz.

"Thiele had an all-inclusive strategy, so there were really two facets to Impulse" under his watch, according to author Ashley Kahn, who has done exhaustive research on the label. "It had the Andrew Hills and the Ornette Colemans and the Cecil Taylors of the mid-'60s, but it also had that sort of boogaloo side that came after Lee Morgan's *The Sidewinder* [a 1964 Blue Note release]. Impulse didn't really care what was commercial or what was not—it didn't have to care because it was operating within a major record company."

Many classic titles produced by Thiele and others are part of an extensive list of two-for-one Impulse reissues that have come out this year. "It can be so difficult, especially with the lack of physical retail out there these days, to reintroduce to people some of the real hallmark titles from the Impulse catalog, and we thought, What better way than to give them a really good value on it by putting two records by the same artist together in one package and not pricing it exorbitantly," explained Jamie Krents, Verve's vice president of marketing. "Some are not necessarily their best-known records, but records we feel are underappreciated or that need to be out there."

Other 50th anniversary activities include a traveling exhibition of photographs and classic Impulse LP covers that visited the North Sea and Monterey Jazz Festivals this summer, as well as the marketing of a new John Coltrane T-shirt designed by the company Friend or Foe.

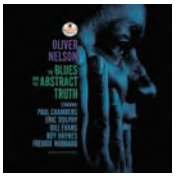
For a complete history of Impulse, see Kahn's book *The House That Trane Built: The Story of Impulse Records* (W.W. Norton & Co.), which contains the label's entire discography through 2006 (its year of publication).

DownBeat asked several of today's stars to discuss their favorite Impulse albums, and we're proud to present their illuminating responses on the following pages. **DB**

ROY HAYNES

The Blues And The Abstract Truth (1961)

Oliver Nelson



Oliver Nelson was a special cat. *The Blues And The Abstract Truth* was a good record. He was a good writer, and when the musicians played his music, you would see him beaming. He liked a lot of the stuff that I did—you'll notice that I got on some more records with him. A lot of [composers] wanted a Grady Tate-type guy; in fact, Grady told me that Impulse wanted Grady Tate to sound like Roy Haynes on a lot of stuff, but they didn't want Roy Haynes particularly. Grady told me, "They want me to sound like Roy Haynes." But I don't think they wanted Grady for *The Blues And The Abstract Truth*. That album got a lot of good attention. Oliver Nelson became pretty popular; he was very important. The label was happy. We didn't rehearse the day before; it wasn't that kind of shit. We did a few takes on most of the songs. Oliver had good charts.

NASHEET WAITS

Crescent (1964)

John Coltrane Quartet

The first time I went overseas, in 1992, I was carrying around a cassette player. And one of the cassettes that I had was *Crescent*, and on the other side was *'Round About Midnight* (Columbia), Miles Davis with Trane. I remember going to sleep almost every night listening to *Crescent*. It made a serious impression on me and was so meaningful to me, not only in a musical sense but also in a personal sense—because it was my first time on a tour of Europe, and it was comforting in a lot of ways. I didn't have that many options; it wasn't like now with your iPod where you have thousands of things to listen to. I had a few, and that was the one I had with me for like a month. I especially listened to "Crescent" and "Wise One," and I would repeat those tunes over and over again during the course of that tour with Jacky Terrasson, Antoine Roney and Clarence Seay.

It's a pre-*A Love Supreme* kind of energy, in terms of the level of peace, the way it feels to me. That was impressed upon me. The tunes have a meditative quality—like "Bessie's Blues" or even "The Drum Thing"—a meditative, almost melancholy sort of energy. It's breathtaking in a way, and I was emotionally connected to it. For a musician, or for anybody, that's the portion that's the most striking and what communicates to people. Music is about communication, not only between the people on the bandstand or in the recording studio, but how it affects the people who are listening to it. And this particular one had a strong effect on me beyond the music, a very emotional and spiritual type of resonance.

A drummer and educator in high demand, Waits has been a member of Jason Moran's Bandwagon for more than 10 years. He also leads the group Tarbaby with Eric Revis and Orrin Evans, which will record a new CD with Oliver Lake and Ambrose Akinmusire later this year. Waits also performs with Kurt Rosenwinkel, Tony Malaby, William Parker, Scott Colley, Dave Douglas, JD Allen and many others.

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STEVE TURRE

Proof Positive (1965)

J.J. Johnson

It was my sophomore year of college, 1967, when I discovered this album, and it blew my mind. It wasn't just because of his speed or harmonic intricacy, although it was all innovative and superior. It was because of his sound; his tone quality touched my heart. It was a beautiful sound, like when you hear Johnny Hodges or Ben Webster play a ballad. But boy, that sound messed me up! How do you get a sound like that on a trombone? He got as big a sound as any symphonic player, but he played jazz.

Different cuts on *Proof Positive* had different people. Most of the record was Harold Mabern on piano. McCoy Tyner played on one or two cuts. Arthur Harper played bass on most of the record, and on one or two cuts Richard Davis played—the cuts with McCoy. Elvin played on those cuts, too.

I wore one copy out, and I bought another one. I kept putting the needle back on my favorite tracks, or if I was trying to learn one of the solos, I put the needle back in the middle of the thing. I used to try to play along with it, not just to get the notes but to get the sound. It was magnetic. It drew me in. With everything J.J. did, every note meant something. He didn't play any superfluous stuff. It was just perfection, not only of sound and technique and rhythm, but conceptually.

J.J. was amazing, not just as a trombonist, but as a composer, arranger, the whole nine yards. Since he left, they don't even talk about him anymore. I do. I'm gonna talk about him every chance I get because he was good to me. He not only inspired me when I was young but later on became a friend. He even played on one of my records, and that's the biggest honor for me.

Currently a professor of trombone at The Juilliard School, Turre recently played an Art Blakey tribute in Europe with Javon Jackson, Eddie Henderson, Buster Williams, Benny Green and Lewis Nash. The trombonist/seashellist continues to lead his own groups, including a quintet that just completed a new recording for release on HighNote in January. The new album will feature guest trumpeters Jon Faddis, Wallace Roney, Claudio Roditi, Freddie Hendrix and Alfredo "Chocolate" Armenteros.

ROBERTA GAMBARINI

Further Definitions (1962)

Benny Carter

Benny Carter's masterpiece *Further Definitions* is one of those immortal recordings able to alter and define a listener's entire perception of music the very first time the piece is heard. The Impulse vinyl recording has been part of my parents' collection for many years. It comprises the work of a session recorded in 1961: eight incredible tunes performed by a four-saxophone dream lineup featuring Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Rouse, Phil Woods and "The King" himself, plus a rhythm section driven by drum genius Jo Jones. I remember listening to this record on my dad's turntable when I was a child, and being completely transfixed. I used to dance freely to it around our apartment, picturing each horn solo as a speaking character in a fairy tale.

As I grew up, I realized that this is one of those rare, seminal recordings that defines the essence of jazz—past, present and future—in all its elements: the beauty of each individual horn's sound; the magic and spontaneity of narrative (each solo on the record is a concise, exquisite and incredibly expressive "short story"); the deep swing created by a stellar rhythm section; and, most of all, the exceptional quality of Benny's arrangements, all so tightly and masterfully executed.


BEN HUGGLER

The simple fact is that this recording strikes the perfect balance between spontaneity of improvisation and majestic beauty of musical architecture. Benny's arrangements show us that truth lies in distilling the essence (there's not one note more than what's needed; not one less), and that simplicity is the epitome of sophistication. The horn section is astonishingly tight, and it's made up of players who own some of the most gorgeous instrumental sounds in the history of jazz. Together, they create a signature texture that is rich and full of harmonics and, at the same time, supple and agile.

This album is the embodiment of effortless delivery. It demonstrates that relaxing into the joint vision is an essential part of swinging. The solos are direct and powerful—these giants tell the truth in a few bars. There are many epochal musical moments in these recordings, and some have proven indelible to me through the decades, a source of constant inspiration: Quincy Jones' "The Midnight Sun Will Never Set," beautifully arranged and with a gorgeous solo by Benny; and Benny's treatment of "Body And Soul," built around his harmonization of Coleman Hawkins' seminal 1939 solo.

There are many beautiful compositions on this record, from classics like "Cotton Tail" and Don Redman's signature song, "Cherry," to originals of Benny's. My favorite is Carter's lovely "Blue Star" (also known as "Evening Star" in its vocal version). But if I had to choose one tune that synthesizes the complex poetry of this album, it would be another of Benny's compositions, "Doozy." The horns breeze through this wonderful chart propelled by the swinging rhythm section (with Papa Jo on drums), then launch into a series of amazing blues form solos, two choruses each. I especially love Coleman Hawkins' improvisation—so powerfully built, with quotes from Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy."

In the year 2000, a friend of mine who was very close to Benny Carter played him my demo. Imagine my astonishment when I received an invitation to Los Angeles to visit with him and his wife, Hilma! It was the beginning of what became one of the most important, beautiful experiences in my life. Benny honored me with his friendship until the time of his death in 2003, and was a mentor and a lasting inspiration. To me, this album is "the furthest definition of perfection."

Vocalist Gambarini has performed around the world as a leader and has worked with Michael Brecker, Ron Carter, Herbie Hancock, Slide Hampton, Roy Hargrove, Jimmy Heath, Hank Jones, Christian McBride and Toots Thielemans, among many others. Her latest CD, the Grammy-nominated *So In Love* (Groovin High/Universal) featuring Hargrove and the late James Moody, was released in 2009.

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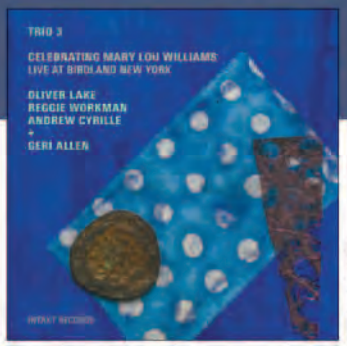

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MARCUS STRICKLAND

The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings (1997)

John Coltrane

The first time I heard *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings* was during high school, the first time I went to Chicago. I visited their famous Jazz Record Mart for the first time, and they were blasting "India." I was fascinated with the sound of Coltrane's soprano and Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet on top of the drone. It was the perfect soundtrack for the perfect moment. I was in jazzhead heaven: surrounded by vinyl, tapes and CDs of seemingly everyone and anyone I wanted to check out, and *the* persons to check out were blaring in my appreciative ears. It was a highly spiritual moment for me, and I, of course, bought this four-disc box set as soon as I could. I can't begin to describe how much this recording influenced my whole approach to playing: I try to touch people versus impress people, all because of the feelings this recording evoked in me.

Saxophonist Marcus Strickland, whose professional career has just passed the 10-year mark, released *Triumph Of The Heavy Vol. 1 & 2* (StrickMuzik) this fall featuring his new quartet with twin brother, E.J. Strickland, David Bryant and Ben Williams. The double disc includes tracks recorded both in the studio and onstage during an engagement at the Firehouse 12 venue in New Haven, Conn. Strickland has a covetable list of recording and performing credits, having collaborated with Wynton Marsalis, Tom Harrell and Dave Douglas, but his longest and most impressionable working relationships include two of the most influential drummers ever to play the instrument: Roy Haynes and Jeff "Tain" Watts.

E.J. STRICKLAND

Live At Birdland (1964)

John Coltrane

That was the first live recording I ever owned, and I loved the *intensity* of this group (John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones) when they played together, which translated over even better on a live recording. To point out something very specific about the recording: At the beginning of the last track, "Your Lady," Jimmy Garrison plays a droning ostinato on the bass in 4/4 that puts the listener in a trance, then Elvin comes in dancing on top of Jimmy's groove in an intense 3/4 waltz. The rhythmic tension of these opposing elements continues for a minute, then Coltrane comes in singing a playful melody of beauty on his soprano saxophone! Eventually, Tyner chimes in with his lush chords to add more color. The moment I first heard this was one of the most exciting musical experiences I've *ever* had. I remember I had a *big* smile from ear to ear."

In addition to performing in a quartet with his saxophonist brother Marcus, drummer E.J. Strickland leads the E.J. Strickland Quartet and the E.J. Strickland Project. He is also a regular member of Ravi Coltrane's quartet. His discography includes appearances on more than 25 album titles by various recording artists. His debut album *In This Day* (StrickMuzik) was released in 2009.

TOMASZ STANKO

Africa/Brass (1961)

John Coltrane Quartet

Live At The Village Vanguard (1962)

John Coltrane

I'll always remember it. In the gray communist Krakow, in the early 1960s, in the apartment of my friend, whose relatives in the U.S., at our request, sent him Coltrane's current releases: *Live At The Village Vanguard* and *Africa/Brass*. It was a revelation for us—the music and the albums. Nobody in Poland had known Coltrane well then. It was a discovery for me. His music was fascinatingly beautiful. In Poland at that time, jazz albums were almost unavailable at all, and Impulse LPs were extremely elegantly issued. Thereafter, whenever I had a chance, I'd buy Impulse records blind.

Like his hero Miles Davis, Polish trumpeter Stanko has an impressive record as talent scout and mentor, and his latest ensemble pools young players from the north of Europe. His smouldering Slavic soul music and grainy-toned trumpet finds a new context on his latest CD, *Dark Eyes* (ECM), featuring Jakob Bro, Alexi Tuomarila, Anders Christensen and Olavi Louhivuori. The album features fresh Stanko compositions, including "The Dark Eyes Of Martha Hirsch," inspired by an Oskar Kokoschka canvas, plus a new version of "Last Song" from Stanko's 1975 ECM debut, *Balladyna*. Stanko won the European Jazz prize in 2002.

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON

Impressions (1963)
John Coltrane

It is really difficult to pick a favorite Impulse record, as the concept of picking favorites of anything is philosophically not where I dwell. But that being said, John Coltrane's *Impressions* is at the top of my list as one of the most inspiring recordings I "vibed" heavily with as a teenager learning and appreciating great jazz. Discovering that album in my father's collection (and the John Coltrane Quartet) was a defining moment for me as having gotten bitten by the "jazz bug." When I heard this, I knew this was how I wanted to play—not exactly like Elvin Jones, but I wanted to capture the spirit like they did and wanted to be able to be as open and, in a way, transparent as they were, putting all the passion I had built up in my life so far into music and playing the drums, and having the courage to wear it on my sleeve.

"Up 'Gainst The Wall" was the perfect tempo to examine the triplet vocabulary that Elvin was so well-known for. And that track helped solidify for me that as groundbreaking as that band was, it was just as hip and fulfilling to un-patronizingly come back to the blues with joy and respect.

It was also the first time I recall hearing melodies and harmonies in jazz that were Eastern-influenced (on the track "India") or hearing jazz music that felt spiritual ("After The Rain"). Though I had no idea why it sounded that way to me, it started my journey on discovering the meeting place between outward creativity and inward spirituality.

Listening to the track "Impressions" was and still is very much like a religious experience for me because it touches something mystic—inexplicable and thought-provoking, yet at the same time cleansing and meditative. Also, the rhythm, timing and phrasing of all the players epitomized what I felt jazz to be, capturing the dance in swing that makes me want to move my body. And on the studious side, at this brisk tempo, Elvin showed his roots in bebop, with more eighth-note phrasing opposed to triplet phrasing due to tempo. He maintained an amazing intensity on this track without a lot of bombastic crashes and fills, mainly keeping time and comping with single-minded determination that transferred onto the recording in such a way that one feels in the room with them. I am transported to the Village Vanguard every time I hear this and imagine myself sitting at those little tables. And when I play the club, I can't help but think about this recording. It has had a major effect on me that I am grateful for.

For more than two decades, drummer/producer/vocalist Carrington has crafted an eclectic brand of jazz that incorporates elements of bebop, soul, funk and more. Since her debut in 1989, she has established a reputation for assembling artists of varying perspectives to create music that adheres to the traditions of jazz yet speaks to a broader audience. Carrington brings this same diverse sensibility to her new recording, *The Mosaic Project* (Concord Jazz).

BOOKER T. JONES

MODERN SOUL

By Aaron Cohen ⋮ Photo by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

Fifty years ago, Booker T. Jones, then a teenage prodigy in Memphis, worked two jobs. As a member of Booker T. & The MG's and playing on a string of sessions at the Stax record company, he helped define instrumental soul, especially on the organ. His other gig was delivering newspapers.

Jones' recent *The Road From Memphis* (Anti-) draws on both of those experiences, among others, to look back on his origins. On "Representing Memphis," the tone is tough and wistful, yet never succumbs to mere hometown nostalgia. Continuing that theme, "Down In Memphis" features Jones quietly displaying his vocal prowess in a song that suggests scenes he's always kept with him. Musically, the entire disc reflects the jazz he has heard since childhood and the r&b he crafted as a young adult. Drummer/co-producer Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson (of The Roots) doesn't so much bring hip-hop and contemporary soul to Jones, even when he covers Lauryn Hill's "Everything Is Everything" or the Gnarls Barkley hit "Crazy." Instead, the disc reaffirms how comfortably modern Jones' aesthetic has always been.

Shortly before Jones' two June 11 concerts at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music, he spoke with the kind of affable confidence of someone who doesn't mind if he may be giving away secrets. Like how he picked up his keyboard "crawling" technique from an early piano teacher.

"I was taught that if you hold an F with your middle finger, you have the higher G possible there, and you can begin holding that with your thumb," Jones explained. "So you can create melodies that wouldn't be otherwise possible because of the way the hand is constructed. My teacher called that crawling. I could be playing a G and hold that F, so the possibilities are unlimited. I love to do it, like on 'Time Is Tight.' You can play the long beautiful melodies on the organ that you can't play on the piano because you don't lose the note. You can hold a note for eight beats on an organ, but you can't do that on a piano. Sustain will just not last that long, so you get the beauty of it and give it more life than you'd have if it wasn't electronic."

That paper route helped pay for those early lessons. As Jones made deliveries, he would ride past the home of

Memphis' brilliant jazz pianist Phineas Newborn Jr.

"He was the second house on my route," Jones recalled. "I didn't know who he was at first. I'd hear the piano and that great music coming through there, and I found out later it was him. It wasn't jazz at all, it was just music."

Like Newborn, Jones began as a multi-instrumentalist, conversant on an array of brass, reed, string and keyboard instruments while in high school. When that accomplishment is brought up nowadays, he just laughs about mistaking the C and D fingerings on the clarinet. But his dexterity impressed another musician who started looking up to him in their teenage band, drummer Maurice White (who would later found Earth, Wind & Fire). Jones' dedicated practice regimen didn't prevent him from sneaking into Memphis clubs, especially the Flamingo Room, where he checked out visiting jazz organists, particularly the "intense and dedicated" Brother Jack McDuff.

"Jack McDuff had his own voice. He wasn't Jimmy Smith, he wasn't Bill Doggett or any of those kinds of fancy kinds of guys like that," Jones said. "He was straight ahead—not very much vibrato, just straight tones."

Jones didn't have to sneak into the burgeoning Stax record label. He walked in through the front door a couple years after it got off the ground. By 1962 he had become central to the house band, along with guitarist Steve Cropper and drummer Al Jackson Jr. One day he and Cropper were trading a riff that featured Jones' cool strut of a keyboard line, which would suddenly stop for the guitarist's cutting, bluesy lick. The riff evolved into "Green Onions," which quickly turned into a worldwide smash in 1962. At the time, Jones was 18 years old.

"Stax was friendly, it was my family and I was part of the genesis of it," Jones said. "But it was also a job. It was get there a certain time, get my papers thrown and get over there. And leave at a certain time for a certain amount of money. But the money was real good for a high school kid—$15 a day sometimes."

Rob Bowman's definitive history of Stax, *Soulsville, U.S.A.* (Schirmer Trade), describes the rise of Booker T. & The MG's—and Jones' success with band members Cropper, Jackson and bassist Donald "Duck" Dunn—alongside their work behind such powerhouse vocalists as Otis Redding, Sam & Dave and Carla Thomas in the '60s. Detroit guitarist Dennis Coffey (who plays on *The Road From Memphis*) marveled that this small band sounded as full as the orchestras he worked with at Motown. Jones accomplished all this while he was splitting his time between writing and producing hit records and studying classical composition at Indiana University.

"There was no question that I would do both," Jones said. "There was no question that I had to work at Indiana because I was unable when I got there to facilitate my own musical musings. I couldn't write what I was hearing in my mind. I couldn't play what I was hearing, so I had to learn to do that. I had to learn how to transcribe to get that out of me. I had to get that to a point where it was manifested, real. I would have been able to hear the arrangements, but I wouldn't have been able to express it on paper. I would have had an inkling, but I wouldn't have known how to write it down.

On the other hand, the stuff that was going on in Memphis was just as undeniable," Jones continued. "Or maybe even more undeniable, because I was playing with Steve Cropper, Al Jackson and Duck Dunn. I was expressing myself there and making money to pay for Indiana, and the music was getting released. It was fun, it was amazing, and it was my life."

Because Jones' off-campus band was so prominent, he could've been excused from participating in university-sanctioned activities. But he eagerly dove in to the school's musical ensembles, playing trombone in the jazz group along with trumpet student Randy Brecker, where they performed Stan Kenton and David Baker's charts. (Brecker has said he felt like the Big Man On Campus when driving with Jones.) Jones also joined Indiana's Marching Hundred, saying the exercise of performing at football games was good for his knees.

> "The money was real good for a high school kid—$15 a day sometimes."

Jones applied the intensive musical lessons from Indiana to Stax, and his more sophisticated chord voicings can be heard on such Booker T. & The MG's songs as "Hip Hug-Her." His indelible, staccato string arrangement on Eddie Floyd's "I've Never Found A Girl (To Love Me Like You Do)" contrasted with the declarative vocals and Stax signature horn lines. At the dawn of the '70s, the MG's reached an artistic pinnacle with the film score *Up Tight*, the Beatles tribute *McLemore Avenue* (which Concord recently remastered and reissued) and *Melting Pot*.

Up Tight may be best known for its hit single ("Time Is Tight"), but recording this soundtrack album presented a different challenge when Jones had to construct the music while watching the film as it was projected on a Paris soundstage. A crash course from Quincy Jones guided him.

"I had no idea what film was about," the keyboardist said. "I just had a Super 8 camera, but Quincy explained it was 30 frames per second: 'You get your tempo and I'll send you a chart, a book to match the tempo to the frames.' He was my godfather for that."

With 1970's *McLemore Avenue*, Booker T. & The MG's recorded what remains the most unique album-length Beatles interpretation. Jones picked up *Abbey Road* when it was released, and he was inspired to stretch out the melodic themes of the record's songs and medleys, sometimes changing keys and reworking tempos. Using the name of the street where Stax was located (rather than calling it, say, "Booker T. & The MG's Do *Abbey Road*") personalized it even more. Still, Jones did not intend to transform the original.

"The point was to pay tribute to the music," Jones explained. "Here was a band that did all sorts of rock and roll music, and could have just stopped, but instead they made this beautiful, creative piece after all these years. It was such a work of art."

Yet just as The Beatles' greatest creative moments came when they were breaking apart, the expansive *Melting Pot* in 1971 was the last Booker T. & The MG's album before their split. The group had completely absorbed different ideas for structures, chords and improvisation throughout the record but Jones said, "That was the result of frustration. By the time we reached that place, everything we played sounded the same. I couldn't believe that would happen with Booker T. & The MG's. That album was the answer. It was frustrating, but that's what we got out of it."

By that point, Jones had moved to southern California (where he still resides) and began exchanging ideas with rock and jazz musicians like Neil Young and Earl Klugh. He also turned his attention toward producing other artists, such as Bill Withers, who credits Jones with having him keep the plaintive "I know, I know" refrain in his iconic hit "Ain't No Sunshine" on his 1971 debut, *Just As I Am*. The line sounds like a saxophone coda, but Jones said that he just recognized the singer's inherent strength.

"Bill's a smart man, but his mode was simplicity, and that's what we tried to continue with on the album," Jones recalled. "He didn't see the beauty of it, but I did. There's no polish; the way he repeated that phrase he would've done at home by himself, and that was the beauty of his art. I was able to take a real snapshot."

One wildly successful project sprung from a casual meeting. After jamming with Willie Nelson (who was his downstairs neighbor in Malibu, Calif.), Jones and the country star went into the studio in 1977. The result was Nelson's classic album *Stardust*. Produced by Jones, this collection of Great American Songbook tunes was recorded at a time when performing standards was hardly a pop-culture trend.

While Jones own late-'70s and early '80s albums, like *Try And Love Again* and *The Best Of You*, had inspired moments, he sounded lost during disco and its immediate aftermath.

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"I was misplaced; I was out of place," Jones said. "I was doing what was natural to me then. But the business was really beginning to change."

Still, Jones kept forging ahead, reuniting with Cropper and Dunn for the 1977 disc *Universal Language*. (Jackson was mysteriously murdered in 1975.) Nowadays they perform as Booker T. & The MG's, according to Jones, "when something comes up that we all want to do—there's no set parameter." He also renewed his working acquaintance with Young, who joined Jones and The Drive-By Truckers for the Grammy-winning, 2009 album *Potato Hole* (Anti-). As an instrumental rock performance, the album was a departure from Jones' previous work, but he always appreciated this kind of attack—and proved it onstage at the Old Town School when he strapped on an electric guitar.

"Neil's big rock guitar sound is what you're hearing on *Potato Hole*," Jones said. "Organ and rock guitar just seemed to mesh onstage. Steve Cropper never did quite turn up loud enough to be thought of as a rock player, but he came up with some of the original lines that rock music patterned itself after. 'Knock On Wood' and 'In The Midnight Hour' would have been rock songs if they came out now. And Cropper would have played a little louder."

While *Potato Hole* emphasizes the connection between organ and guitar, the funkier *The Road From Memphis* seems built around organ and drums. The percussive sounds on tracks like "Walking Papers" and "Crazy" are so strong that the snare and cymbal fills resonate even on measures when they're *not* played.

"The Roots is a hip-hop band that knows my music from the '60s and plays real instruments," Jones said. "They're not drum-machine guys, so it was an opportunity to get more ideas out. Questlove understood Al Jackson, but he wasn't doing Al Jackson. He was doing quite a bit more. Al would've played more simply on this album. Questlove added a New Orleans groove, or Philadelphia. If you look at the true essence of the band, it's more like a New Orleans groove, more like The Meters. But perfect for the ideas I had."

Jones admits he initially felt out of place when the recording industry began emphasizing digital production, but his classic Hammond organ sound is what contemporary musicians with a firm sense of history and an analog focus, like The Roots, have sought. To capture it accurately, they went back to an earlier method of recording, even though Jones is no purist.

"We recorded *Road From Memphis* analog, all in one room, the way we recorded in Stax. [Engineer] Gabe Roth is almost like [renowned Atlantic Records producer] Tom Dowd in the studio. Everything was experimental with different mics. It could have been a 1967 session. We didn't have any computers in there, although we mixed with computers. There's room for all that."

Essentially, Jones has found the balance between his own musical signature while using digital instruments and software that allow him to work more efficiently.

"I have a few Korg synthesizers, but the digital equipment I use is Ableton Live. Now [that] I'm learning Logic and I use Sibelius for writing music, I threw out my manuscript paper. All the time it would take me to write out all the staffs—strings, horns, flute, I could write a page of music just in the time to write the key signature, with sharps, flats. Takes me all that time and a tired hand.

I'm still trying to figure out how to make a synthesizer that will enable me to continue my own sound," Jones added. "Most people can tell, fortunately, that it's me. But with synthesizers you run the risk of sounding like [the person] who made the synth, or somebody else. So I'm trying to figure out a synthesis so I can make my own sounds and make music that's unique. Just like with digital, I'm having to learn how to program filter, how to use the oscillators, how to make it all work."

Meanwhile, Jones continues influencing a new generation of musicians. One of them is his daughter, Liv Jones, who co-wrote two tracks on the new CD: "The Bronx" (featuring vocals

by Lou Reed) and "Representing Memphis" (which features vocals by Sharon Jones, of Dap-Kings fame, and Matt Berninger, from rock band The National). Her lyrics on those two songs convey an ideal mix of poignant insight and street-smart attitude.

"She's a great writer, and she's going to be doing some great stuff in the future," Jones said of his daughter. "I wish we had known this when she was living with us, but she kept her ideas to herself. I went with her when she was working with a band, saw how she came up with lyrics, saw how much she loved doing it, so I asked her to come up with stuff for this album. I sent her some music from the airport in San Francisco when I was flying out to New York. By the time I got to New York, she had already e-mailed me some ideas."

Jones recently recorded with singer Kelly Hogan, whose fourth solo album is slated for release next year. Both Jones and Hogan believe that performers should serve the song itself, and she marvels at how much the keyboard virtuoso brought to his role.

"For a lot of these songs, they just had the demos for a little while, and Booker thinks about the lyrics, not just the music, not just his part—he thinks about the whole thing," Hogan said. "He understands music from all different angles. We did 15 songs in five days, and all the songs are different styles. We tried for an hour one way, then a different way, and he kept a wide scope, a 360-degree view. He's like the Internet, a tasteful and discerning Internet, but not without a silly cat video or two in there."

Hogan also mentioned that while they were working on her album, their food breaks consisted of vegetarian meals at Jones' behest. Even though "Representing Memphis" praises deep frying and he sings about gin-soaked street denizens on "Down In Memphis," Jones has always been vigilant about his own health. Those '60s workouts with the Indiana University marching band have evolved into his current Twitter feeds about his yoga and gym regimen. But that doesn't mean Jones proselytizes.

"Some musicians have come up with incredible music [while] living the worst lifestyles I could possibly imagine," Jones said. "I can't say what's right for me is right for anyone else. To think of Bobby Bland, Ray Charles, James Brown living the most secular lives you can imagine, but the music was just out of sight, so it's gotta be right."

Every so often, Jones returns to Memphis, mostly to visit family or for a reunion with the MG's. He also goes back to reconnect with the city's legacy. He saw one of his inspirations, trumpeter Rudy Williams, perform on Beale Street just before his death in May.

"The attempts to capitalize on the history have created a downtown that's reminiscent of New Orleans," Jones said. "There's no way they could re-create the original old Memphis, so it came out like New Orleans with the horses and carriages. But the spirit is still there." **DB**

JOS L. KNAEPEN

Pat Martino
The Kid Branches Out

An exclusive excerpt from the guitar guru's fascinating memoir

Pat Martino's career began in Philadelphia, where, as a youngster, he met Wes Montgomery and John Coltrane. When he was still a teenager, he moved to Harlem and started gigging at Small's Paradise, as he describes in this exclusive excerpt from *Here and Now! The Autobiography of Pat Martino* (Backbeat Books), written with Bill Milkowski. Over the course of his storied career, Martino has released 24 albums as a leader, in addition to appearing on dozens of recordings as a sideman. His latest album is the appropriately titled disc *Undeniable: Live At Blues Alley* (HighNote). It's a quartet project that features the guitarist playing his Benedetto Pat Martino Signature Model alongside Eric Alexander (tenor saxophone), Tony Monaco (organ) and Jeff "Tain" Watts (drums).

DownBeat is proud to present this excerpt from Chapter Four, titled "The Kid Branches Out," along with a sidebar (see page 50) from the book, containing George Benson's memories of meeting Martino back when they both were prodigies.

I started playing in Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson's band in 1962, when I was still 17 years old. For three or four months during the winter, Willis would work at Small's Paradise in Harlem, and then in the summer he worked at Club Harlem in Atlantic City. These were two big places that were really great rooms. Small's Paradise, which was owned by Wilt Chamberlain, was on 7th Avenue at 135th Street, maybe 40 feet from the corner on the southwest side. You would walk into Small's and to your left was a large bar. On the right side of the room was the stage, which was large enough for a Hammond B-3, a set of drums and the members of the quintet. If you kept walking in the same direction from the entrance, you would then walk into the back room, which was the large room where the larger show bands would perform. We played with Willis' group on the small stage, prior to entering the back room. There were no tables in the front room, just the bar. The tables were in the back, for the show bands.

Willis was a kind of larger-than-life figure; literally a leader, both on and off the bandstand. In fact, he made sure that he appeared as the leader by providing the group with specific uniforms while he himself wore the finest suits and ties and shirts. He definitely stuck out to the crowd. He appeared with a significant difference from the members of his ensemble, and we played the

part as sidemen. We wore tuxedos with satin oval lapels and little thin bow ties, and Willis would wear a Botany 500 suit with a custom-made shirt and beautiful silk tie, with diamond studded cuff links. That was Willis Jackson, a total leader in every level of that format, projecting that image. Being on stage was a matter of pride for him. And being on time was a significant demand. He was a very strict bandleader, very serious about taking care of business on stage. But he had his rapport with the audience, which was filled with fans and followers. He was something else.

At that time, I was known by my real name, Pat Azzara. But being young and very small in stature and weight, they used to call me The Kid. People were very amused that a youngster of this capacity would have the nerve to come in and try to put roots there, but I was absorbed into the culture. Racially, there were no problems. In Harlem, jazz was one of the cultural priorities at that time. Therefore, whoever came into that area of activity was accepted immediately.

Every night I would walk with my guitar from the place where I was staying in Harlem and head up 7th Avenue toward 135th Street, where Small's was located. And in that environment, I was surrounded by a different culture, different people with different likes and dislikes than I was accustomed to in Philly. And these things truly affected me by participating not only in the community, but also even in terms of diet. The food was an enjoyment…one of a kind. Sometimes I'd stop in at a friend's house on my way to the gig and have dinner there, and I would deeply enjoy some collard greens and some chitlins or some ribs. This was part of the culture, it was part of the people. And when I would arrive at Small's Paradise, the same thing was in play—it was about the people. And the music that we played was affected by all of these factors—the food we ate, the people we encountered on the street on the way to the gig, and the way they walked and talked, then the people at the club. All of it amounted to a rich cultural experience in Harlem at the time, and it directly affected the music that we played at the gig. The musicians were an extension of that life. They were living it, not studying it.

By contrast, what I often hear today is the lack of authenticity on the basis of serious individuals who are studying jazz and who are studying it with the expectation of reaching a point of absorbing its essence with regards to its authenticity. I don't think that's possible because the culture has changed that surrounds that. And because of that, authenticity is very elusive. And it's invisible in most cases, because it doesn't exist anymore. You go up to Harlem now, you get to 135th and 7th and you don't see Small's Paradise anymore; you see the International House of Pancakes sprawled out on that same block, in the same architectural structure that used to be a significant mecca for jazz. And Count Basie's at 133rd and 7th is now nothing but a metal screen with a gate on it. That's where Miles and Dizzy and Wes Montgomery played, and now it's an empty lot with weeds growing there. And now you have serious students who are studying the recordings of jazz that took place when it was what it was—a vital form initially in that moment in time. And they're studying it on the basis of scales and modes and harmony and theory—curriculums that have nothing to do with the people and the culture that surrounded it and gave it significance.

So what you have now is the study of music as a science, as a series of formulas and responsibilities with regards to concrete intellectual awareness, among the players themselves, which is actually a lot closer to a classical music aesthetic. In fact, I think a lot of the younger generation nowadays has shifted over into classical forms of expression. Whereas then you had Wes Montgomery and you had Grant Green and some of the other players throughout all of the instruments that were at a street level. They were singing the song that would be the outcome of the culture, of the events that took place to a person who lived within it. So, that did something to me with regards to the

essence of what music truly is when it's alive, and not when it's studied from a book. There is a significant difference. And I think it really comes through in terms of communication, the nature of how aggressive a player can be.

I noticed that even in what we generally refer to as "jazz guitarists"…the initial players that I was exposed to as a child were very different from the players I encountered in Harlem. For example, Johnny Smith, who I extremely admired and respected…why did I respect him? I respected him because of his precision, his perfect pitch and how accurate he was as a technician. And I noticed there was a difference between that quality, which to me was an extremely intellectual power, gift, blessing…and Wes Montgomery and Grant Green, who had that street level communication. And I think the difference is very close to what I just described about Harlem itself and the outcome in terms of artists who are the extension of living directly in that culture and not studying it from afar.

I remember a time in 1963, I was still working with Willis Jackson at Small's then, when Wes Montgomery was playing just a couple of blocks south at Count Basie's on 133rd and 7th Avenue. And I made a point of telling Les Paul, who I knew very well at that point, to come and check him out. Les was always involved in so many darn things as a player and an inventor as well, and he was always interested in what was going on in the outside world, especially with regards to guitar players on the scene. So this particular night, Les would come out to Small's Paradise, where I was playing with Willis Jackson. And at the end of one of our sets, I took him down the street to meet Wes for the first time. Wes was playing there with Jimmy Cobb on drums and Melvin Rhyne on organ, and Count Basie's was packed that night, which was appropriate because as we walked in they were playing "Full House." At the end of the set, as we stood at the bar, Wes came over and joined us. After watching them introducing themselves to one another, I heard Wes say to Les, "My two favorite guitarists were Charlie Christian and you. I'm a big fan of yours, and it's really great to finally have a chance to meet you."

I had to return to Small's for the next set or risk getting fired by Willis for being late, but at the end of that night when the playing was done, I came back to Basie's, where I had left Les. And as I crossed 7th Avenue from the west to the east side of the street, I happened to notice that standing outside of Count Basie's were four guitarists—Wes Montgomery, Les Paul, Grant Green and George Benson. I joined with them to make it five guitar players, just standing on the corner at three in the morning. And the five of us went to a place called Wells' and had breakfast and talked about guitar playing until the sun came up.

At some point during the time that I was playing with Willis Jackson at Small's, I took up residence at the President Hotel on 48th Street between 8th Avenue and Broadway. From that point, I would take the subway up to Harlem for the gig every night at Small's. We played seven days a week, seven sets a night in the usual 40 minutes on, 20 minutes off format. Can you imagine how sharp your chops become if you play that much?

By the fall of '64, I began to work with the great organist Don Patterson. Now, Don had a magical hookup with the great drummer Billy James. When I joined Don and Billy, I was under the impression that this was a greater organ-drums team in terms of the repertoire and in terms of the facility of these two players together as one. And I wanted to be part of that. Working with Don and Billy was something else. Billy James had that beautifully organic swing feel on the kit that you just can't teach. He was authentically an extension of the Hammond B-3—where the two instruments work together as one. And that came from Don and him co-relating to a statement that was theirs alone. That's the same thing that Jack McDuff had with Joe Dukes. It wasn't an organist and a drummer, where a great drummer had to take the place of another great

George Benson Remembers

I was playing in Jack McDuff's band when I first saw Pat Martino play in 1962. I had been on the road with Jack for maybe a month-and-a-half before we finally made it to New York, the hub of the music industry on the East Coast. I was still living in Pittsburgh at the time and actually had no real address of my own in New York.

But whenever I came to town with Jack, I stayed with my cousin who lived in Spanish Harlem. That was a whole different vibe, man, but it helped me to get to know New York. I did a lot of walking then. I didn't like subways and I didn't have money for cabs. I would walk 20–30 blocks at a clip. And this particular night I walked over to Small's Paradise in Harlem to see what was happening. When I got there, I noticed on the outside of the club a sign that said: "Tonight! Willis Jackson!" And I remembered that Willis Jackson was the man who gave my boss at the time a job. So I said to myself, "Well, let me see who Willis Jackson is," and I went in there.

Way before I got into the club I could hear the energy of the band. It was really hot! They were playing something with an uptempo backbeat and I said, "Man, I gotta get in here. This sounds great!" But the place was so packed that you could only see the tops of the heads of the band, until you got right near the stage. And when I finally made my way up closer I noticed they had this kid on stage, very thin. Nice-looking young fella, but he looked a little bit anemic. And I thought, "I wonder what *this* guy's gonna do. He's just a kid!" His complementary licks were outstanding and I thought, "Wow, this guy's good." But then the band went into a two-bar break during the song where the guitarist started to play his solo, and they left him a little space to get started. And boy, did he light that space up! Nobody could believe what came out of that fellow's guitar. And I was shocked more than anybody because I thought I was the hottest young fella in New York at the time but when I heard this kid tear up those two bars, and then they went back to the rhythm and he was playing the changes—I was flabbergasted, man! He was so outstanding! It was the last thing I expected from a fellow that looked like him. Very mature sound, like he had been playing guitar for 30 years. And power. Energy. I never heard any energy like that. And it was clean as a whistle, he didn't miss one note. I just couldn't believe what I was hearing. So I had to meet him.

When the set ended I went over and asked him his name and hung out with him, told him who I was. And I think he had heard about me—somebody told him about me. But I found out he was only 17. And I thought I was the phenomenon at 19. So we were the new thing in New York at that time. There were others who later popped their heads up, but we didn't know about them then. So I said, "Man, you got a few minutes?" He said, "Yeah." We jumped in a car and went to a club on 142nd Street and Broadway called The Staghorn, where I introduced him to Grant Green, who was my favorite guitar player at the time. He had been in Jack McDuff's band before me and he was a cult hero. And I had been listening to Grant for a couple nights in a row and admired him very much, so I took Pat Martino up there to meet him. And during a break I said, "Grant, you gotta hear this fella play guitar, man." I introduced him, they shook hands, and so Grant gave him his guitar, and Pat took that guitar and started lighting it up, man. He played some incredible stuff. This was not on the bandstand. The amp was turned off and he was just playing acoustically to us standing right beside him. And Green looked at him for a few minutes while Pat was playing, and then he grabbed the neck of the guitar and he said, "Hold it, man, hold it!" Pat looked up and Grant said, "You gonna burn all the frets off my guitar."

Everybody was aware of Pat after that. He became a cult hero too, just as Green had been. At that time we both didn't have any works of our own that we could allude to or tell people about…. It was later that we started racking up stacks of albums that people could relate to. And through the years, I would see Pat every now and then; our paths would cross. But he stayed on my mind all the time, because I knew that there was another standard out there that all guitar players had to recognize, and he was setting it. He showed us that there was much more to the guitar than what we were hearing. We could actually set our own tone; we didn't have to be 30–40 years old to make an impression. You could do it *now*! So that's how I met Pat Martino and that's how we became friends.

We were friendly rivals on the scene back then. But when people would talk about young guitarists, they would talk about Pat because he was such a genius. Whenever you talk about guitar, you're going to end up talking about Pat Martino. Because he had made that kind of impression. And then…I knew that if I ever left Jack's band that he was going to be the next guitar player in the band. Because he liked Jack McDuff's music. So when I left the band, it was no surprise to me that Jack called Pat. And it was kind of a sad day for me, because I had been in Jack's band for almost three years, and now I was being replaced by a *better* guitar player. And so it made me believe that my career was going to go downhill. In my mind I was saying, "Well, I guess that's the end of my career. He has *the* guitar player, the [one] Jack should've had all the time." I was happy for Pat because I knew he wanted the gig but sad because my reputation had come up quite a few points by playing with Jack McDuff's band. Now that was all over, I was starting from scratch.

After I left McDuff's band in 1965, I was promised another gig with the organist from Philadelphia, Don Patterson. But he forgot he even hired me. I drove all the way from Pittsburgh to New Jersey and when I got there for the gig he said, "George, what are you doing here?" And I said, "Man, you don't remember telling me to show up this evening, that you were going to start a gig and that you hired me?" And he said, "Man, I forgot all about it." Instead he had hired Sam Rivers, the great saxophone player. So I didn't contest that. I left it alone. I sent my new wife home, back to Pittsburgh by bus and she cried, and I told her, "This is fine because it forces me to do what I know I should do… start my own band." And that's what I did.

One last thing: I wanna say how proud I am of Pat Martino. Even though we've been rivals of a sort, I've always been proud of him because he set a pace and he showed us what we could do on the instrument. He didn't put any limits on himself, and I think that's so important. He's always been very outspoken and sure of himself as a musician. And that's what it takes to accomplish anything. You gotta believe in yourself. Pat believed in himself, and he had the credentials in terms of his chops, his knowledge of guitar. And boy, I've always been proud to know him as a person. He's one of my favorite people I've ever met. And I want to make sure that the public gets that point. I sure love that fellow. I've always appreciated him as a person. And his musicianship has always been impeccable. He's a fellow that I've admired from day one, and I still do. **DB**

drummer, and took his place and was just as good. It wasn't that at all. The two of them as one created a third instrument which can never be reproduced. That was what Don and Billy had too.

I had that rapport with Don and Billy, and I certainly had it with me and Willis Jackson. That's the first thing that I'm looking for…the rapport. Don was a complete original. Me and Billy used to call him Duck. You'd see Don sometimes in a long wool coat in winter, all buttoned up. You'd see him silently standing up with something on his mind…and for some reason or another your attention then caught his pocket in the coat. And there in his pocket was a hamburger that was wrapped in the wrapping that you got when you ordered it… and every once in a while he'd reach in his pocket and take it out and take a bite, and he'd put it back in his pocket, and all the grease was coming out and would be absorbed into the coat. There was something about Don that was just so free of even being concerned about what normal people are judgmental about and critical about. Don was Don. And his playing was just overwhelming. What a great player! What a great person…


George Benson and Pat Martino, New York City, June 30, 1973

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but really street level. When I say a great person, I'm not talking about the Dalai Lama, I'm talking about a down on the ground guy that is at a street level of social position. Never really made a lot of money. Just doing as many gigs as he could get. But what a formidable player!

And when I entered that scenario, I learned something else. Don Patterson during those earlier years was addicted to codeine. In fact, the player who I replaced in the Willis Jackson group, the left-handed guitarist Bill Jennings, was also addicted to codeine…cough syrup, which a number of individuals in music were addicted to in those days. I remember on more than a few occasions before a set would start, me and Billy would be standing around inside the club, waiting for Don to appear. And I'd say, "Hey Billy, we're late to go on. Where's Don? Hey, come on, let's go see if something's wrong." And we'd go outside and walk down the block and we would find Don in a doorway, overdosed. Now we had to carry Don back into the club and up to the bandstand. We sit him down at the B-3 and his head is nodded down close to the keyboard. Then the first tune is counted off and suddenly his playing is incredibly powerful, but his eyes are still closed.

In terms of my facility, my responsibility… look what happened there. What was most important, the music? No. The music was second nature. Either you know how to play or you don't know how to play, and if you can't play, you don't deserve the position to be here. Something else is much more important here than technical ability to be a guitar player. So these are some of things that are meaningful to me that go so far beyond the craft. **DB**

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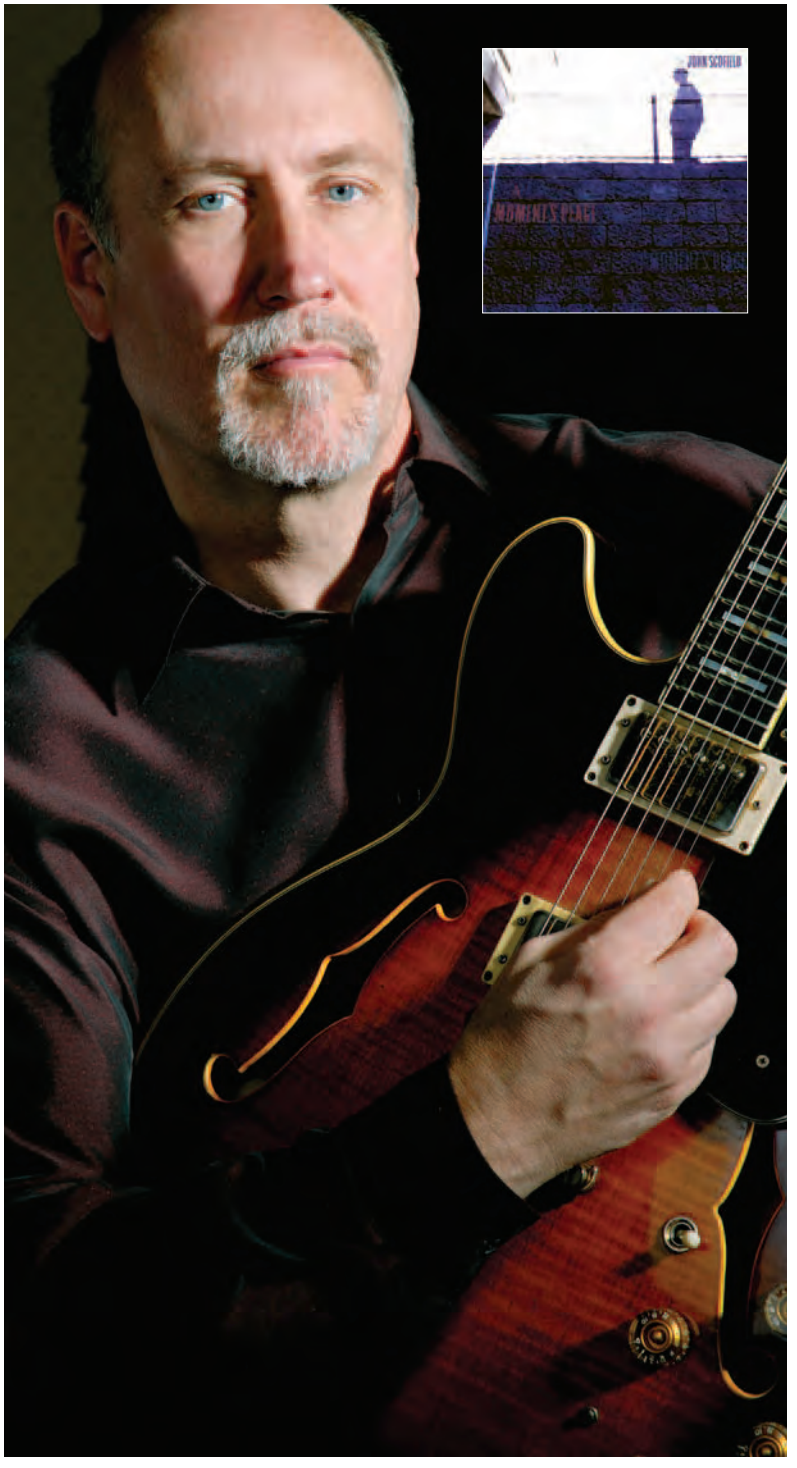


John Scofield
A Moment's Peace

EMARCY 15590

★★★★

Refinement comes with age, and although John Scofield has all the imagination and chops necessary to capitalize every letter in e-x-t-r-a-p-o-l-a-t-e and shoot 'em all right through the sky, he's also wise enough to know that pith has power. That's what this relaxed jaunt through a batch of resonant chestnuts and catchy originals is all about. Illustrating the subtle side of ardor, *A Moment's Peace* finds grace jumping behind the steering wheel, and lyricism calling shotgun.

This approach has previously highlighted the depth of the guitarist's art. His *Quiet* is an overlooked jewel that orchestrates a series of hushed environments, and on early nuggets such as "Beckon Call" he demonstrated how oomph can be injected into the ballad format. The tunes on the new disc are essentially ballads as well. "I Want To Talk About You," "You Don't Know What Love Is" and "I Loves You Porgy" are all ostensibly slow-moving and romantic. But Scofield and his quartet—drummer Brian Blade, keyboardist Larry Goldings and bassist Scott Colley—bar undernourished phrases and wan interplay from the door, meaning there's always a bit of muscle popping into these performances. This makes their saucy spin through "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You" a low-key wonder, drenched in the blues, but rendered with gentle fireworks.

Scofield's long been one of those players who can throw curveballs into a solo without hamming up the flow. On the Beatles' "I Will" some gorgeous corkscrew phrases parallel the human voice in a novel way. Further, Carla Bley's "Lawns," a wry ode to suburban serenity, is rendered with plainspoken eloquence. The guitarist and his band put full trust in the melodies they've chosen; exposition comes one breath at a time and the music feels all the more natural for it.

The self-penned pieces rival the classics for beauty. "Johan" is both delicate and luminous, with Blade's brushes fluttering and the boss's lines breathing sigh after sigh. "Plain Song" sounds like a nod to both Bill Frisell and Pat Metheny, conjuring tumbleweeds and sundowns. Together with the action on Abbey Lincoln's "Throw It Away," it makes a case for poignancy being paramount, and it comes with a lesson: There are many ways of dispensing ardor, and sometimes exclamation feels like being nuzzled behind the ear.

—Jim Macnie

A Moment's Peace: Simply Put; I Will; Lawns; Throw It Away; I Want To Talk About You; Gee, Baby Ain't I Good To You; Johan; Mood Returns; Already September; You Don't Know What Love Is; Plain Song; I Loves You, Porgy. (64:38)
Personnel: John Scofield, guitar; Scott Colley, bass; Brian Blade, drums; Larry Goldings, piano and organ.
Ordering info: emarcy.com

Jim Snidero
Interface
SAVANT 2113
★★★

Jazz has no shortage of accomplished veterans whose names we hear about or read in the polls too rarely. Impressively precocious, they drew prompt attention and recognition among their peers but stalled somewhere in the rank-and-file tier of the music's hierarchy of celebrity. Yet, it's a plateau where many have dropped their roots and quietly built successful careers.

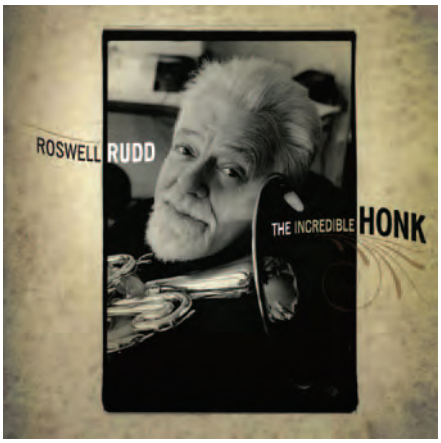
Jim Snidero's qualifications have been evident since the mid-'80s, when his solos began popping out of Toshiko Akiyoshi's reed section as well as on a procession of his own sessions for small labels—16 according to the notes. The altoist has built a durable reputation as a polished player in the crowded post-modal hard-bop field, where he can brandish the requisite penetrating alto sound while remaining anchored in the modern mainstream idiom.

All the tunes here are Snidero's own, but the forms and designs have a welcoming familiarity. "One By One" is a warm bosa nova that ends with echoes of "The Girl From Ipanema." Elsewhere, he seems to like stop-time themes. "Fall Out" and "Viper" use it prominently. The former builds on a few two-bar snippets wedged between soft, feathery guitar breaks. The rhythm continues the three-beat breaks softly as Snidero and guitarist Paul Bollenback play right through them, creating a subtle counter tension. But as bass and drums grow eager, the energy mounts until shortly after the two-minute mark, when the bassist Paul Gill switches into a battle-speed 4/4. "Viper" languishes in a long, irrelevant introduction before getting to the business of its call-response theme broken by a short bridge. Gill gets plenty of space before Snidero comes roaring in for a braying rant. Bollenack echoes the leader's energy.

On ballads Snidero can be soft and attractive but not sentimental or particularly romantic. That said, he's created some nice pieces. "Silhouette" suggests "Lover Man" before finding its own path, while "After The Pain" has a patient, loping sense of movement and an attractive simplicity. —*John McDonough*

Interface: Interface; Silhouette; Fall Out; One By One; Aperitivo; Viper; After the Pain; Expectations. (55:24)
Personnel: Jim Snidero, alto saxophone; Paul Bollenback, guitar; Paul Gill, bass; McClenty Hunter, drums.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Roswell Rudd
The Incredible Honk
SUNNYSIDE 1279
★★★★½



I can't recall having heard such a project as beautiful, open hearted and convincing as *The Incredible Honk* in a long time. In its multi-directionality, it's a singular achievement, a testimonial to how Roswell Rudd is musically imbued down to the tiniest microbe.

Broadmindedness has served Rudd well over the years, playing Thelonious Monk's music with Steve Lacy and making his own wild and wooly records. Here he goes more expansive than ever, touching on Cajun, blues, Cuban, Korean, Chinese and Malian music, emphasizing soulful songfulness throughout. In every one of these contexts, Rudd sounds at ease.

Anyone who knows Rudd's sweet, smeary signature can imagine him making hay with "Danny Boy," even if Wu Tong's sheng (bamboo mouth organ) comes as a surprise. The same trio, with bassist John Lindberg, investigates the traditional Chinese song "Blue Flower Blue," Rudd's multiphonics and powerful open blowing meeting Tong's startling singing head on. Cuban singer and guitarist David Oquendo's encounter with the 'bonist glows, reminding how close the horn is to the human voice.

It's all wonderful, but the most magical track here features BeauSoliel, the legendary Cajun band playing an adapted version of "Jole Blon," to which Rudd has put words by poet Paul Haines, sung perfectly by his daughter. —*John Corbett*

The Incredible Honk: Feeling Good; Dame La Mano; Berlin, Alexanderplatz; C'etait Dans La Nuit; Arirang; Waltzin' With My Baby; Blue Flower Blue; Alone With The Moon; Kerhonkson: The Museical; BRO; Ngoni Vortex; Airborne; Danny Boy. (64:42)
Personnel: Roswell Rudd, trombone; Aaron Comess, drums (1); John Lindberg, bass; Richard Hammond, bass (1); Arne Wendt, organ (1); David Oquendo, guitar and vocals (2); Ken Filiano, bass (3, 5, 8, 9); Lafayette Harris Jr., piano (3, 5, 6, 8, 9); Michael Doucet, fiddle and vocals (4); Jimmy Breaux, accordion (4); Billy Ware, percussion (4); Tommy Alesi, drums (4); Mitchell Reed, electric bass (4); David Doucet, acoustic guitar (4); Emily Haines, vocals (4); Sunny Kim, vocals (5, 8, 9); Wu Tong, sheng and vocals (7, 13); Verna Gillis, vocal (9); Bassekou Kouyate, Omar Barou Kouyate, Fousseyni Kouyate, ngoniba (10, 11, 12); Henry Schroy, electric bass (10, 11, 12); Moussa Bah, ngoni bass (10, 11, 12); Alou Coulibaly, calabash (10, 11, 12); Moussa Sissoko, yabara (10, 11, 12).
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Warren Wolf
Warren Wolf
MACK AVENUE 1059
★★★

I saw Warren Wolf years ago at the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival and was knocked out by his snappy flow, amazing technique and natural sense of swing. Nothing on this album contradicts that first impression, but for all its facility, the music here has an oddly staged quality that suggests Wolf has not yet found his emotional core. He dives in with seeming abandon, per his model, Milt Jackson—bluesy, agile and with 100 percent commitment to swing—but the net result sounds more like a fascination with genre and style than passion. The exception is on Wolf's "Katrina," a dark, minor tune with a low-slung lope that conveys an urgency and originality absent elsewhere.

It could be that the 31-year-old vibraphonist simply isn't interested in digging deeply into the earlier styles he invokes. "427 Mass Ave," with its vigorous trumpet-saxophone horn line over a bed of Fender Rhodes and an edgy vamp, and "Sweet Bread," with its sinuous hard-bop line, suggest jukebox soul, but with the bristles clipped. Ballads such as "Natural Beauties" and "How I Feel At This Given Moment" skirt the boundary between dreamy romance and adult-contemporary schlock. The overdubbed vibes and marimba parts on "Señor Mouse" are a pleasant tour de force, but Johnny Mercer's "Emily" sounds merely ingratiating. Hats off to everyone, though, for "One For Lenny," which takes off at a blazing fast tempo.

The album closes with another romance, "Intimate Dance," a waltz with a warm glow that may, ultimately, suggest Wolf's direction, which is more about a singing, mainstream sound than the killer jazz his technique suggests he's capable of. —*Paul de Barros*

Warren Wolf: 427 Mass Ave; Natural Beauties; Sweet Bread; How I Feel At This Given Moment; Eva; Señor Mouse; Emily; Katrina; One For Lenny; Intimate Dance (60:25)
Personnel: Warren Wolf, vibraphone, marimba (4, 6, 8); Tim Green, alto saxophone (1, 3, 5, 8, 9), soprano saxophone (2); Jeremy Pelt, trumpet (1, 3); Peter Martin, piano, Fender Rhodes (1); Christian McBride, bass.
Ordering info: mackavenue.com

The Hot Box

CD / Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
John Scofield *A Moment's Peace*	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★
Warren Wolf *Warren Wolf*	★★★½	★★★½	★★★	★★★
Roswell Rudd *The Incredible Honk*	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★½	★★★★
Jim Snidero *Interface*	★★★	★★★★	★★½	★★★½

Critics' Comments

John Scofield, *A Moment's Peace*

Scofield's got the relaxed sound down pretty tight, so much so that this outing with fellow heavies sometimes loses a sense of productive tension, and thereby interest. Beatles covers are very hard to pull off, to whit, this version of "I Will." Some of Scofield's own tunes, like the lovely "Johan," and Carla Bley's terrific "Lawns," suit the chill vibe without seeming trite. —*John Corbett*

A tempting CD to dismiss for its flat-lining prettiness. Five originals mix with enough underheard obscurities so as not to sully the pastel homogeneity with too much recognition. Lazy or merely restrained? The playing is thoughtful, but more engaging selections might have raised the pulse of inspiration. —*John McDonough*

Apart from the pleasant surprise of hearing Scofield embrace my favorite John Coltrane ballad of all time, "I Want To Talk About You," and a version of "I Loves You Porgy" that illuminates how quirky that melody is, this slow, sleepy set mostly made me feel like I was looking through the wrong end of a telescope, with everything at the other end tiny, fragile and very far away. —*Paul de Barros*

Warren Wolf, *Warren Wolf*

A bright debut as leader for Wolf, whose mainstream malletry leaves no tempo untested. "Lenny" is so fast it doesn't so much swing as vibrate. Chick Corea's "Señor Mouse" is as beautifully placid as a pastoral still life, with vibes overdubbed on marimba. In between "Sweet Bread" hits the sweet spot. —*John McDonough*

The straightahead material here is sturdy, not always exceptional, despite the great lineup; the whorl of "One For Lenny" is a gale-force exception, showing Wolf's chops in choppy winds. The vibraphonist shines best unaccompanied on Chick Corea's "Señor Mouse," where his fluidity and facility are filtered through a rather soft, pretty, and distinctive personality. —*John Corbett*

Interesting record that walks the line between being too shiny for its own good and being utterly smoking. The vibraphonist's group has these tunes down, no question, but as they play the hell out of 'em, there are several moments that seem a bit too pat. —*Jim Macnie*

Roswell Rudd, *The Incredible Honk*

Varied groups and titles are anchored in Rudd's gruff, growly lyricism, whose broad slurping slurs are as far away from the '60s art scene as a Kid Ory solo. The focus here is on the primal: blues, hillbilly, folk, and yet to be named ("Kerhonkson"). Lots of trad swagger and several beautifully boisterous moments. At 75, still the tailgating avantist. —*John McDonough*

It plays out as a mix-tape travelogue that stretches from the sidewalks of Cuba to the dance halls of Mamou, and it does so without putting its thesis in big bold letters. Hats off. Better yet? The lyrical bluster of Rudd's horn is a natural fit in most of these tracks. —*Jim Macnie*

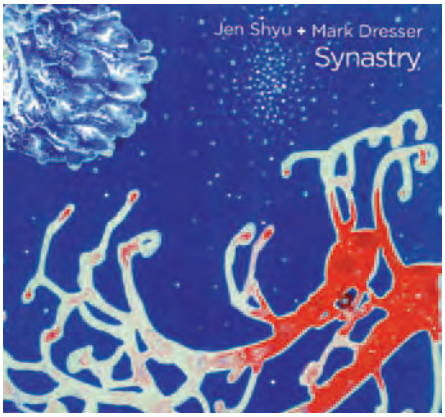
Other than Charlie Haden, it's hard to think of another jazz musician who could make something work that was this crazy and all-over-the-map. But Rudd, who at 75 still plays big and deep and rich, has an infallible GPS, as he careers through slinky New Orleans, Afro-Cuban scat, Cajun, Korean folk, Chinese reed harmonica, Malian ngoni and, finally, "Danny Boy." Lovely stuff. —*Paul de Barros*

Jim Snidero, *Interface*

Snidero pulls out some big John Coltrane Quartet moves on "Viper," Bollenback effectively playing his McCoy Tyner—it's pretty thrilling, as are many tracks on *Interface*. The guitarist and saxophonist make a sleek team; nice variation to have guitar rather than piano in this mainstream context. Hottest cut: "Fall Out." Rhythm section as rip-tide. —*John Corbett*

The leader boasts lots of skills on the horn, but there's an academic tinge that seeps into some of the performances here. The ones that do wax poetic are the most sparse and the most romantic. His interplay with Bollenback shines when they're in a pas de deux. —*Jim Macnie*

Snidero plays old-school bop with absolute conviction and clarity of line. He's not going to set the world on fire, but who cares, when the music is as tasty and tart as ripe lime and salt on the lip of a cold beer? Bollenback's rich, slightly fuzzed guitar on "Fall Out" is the perfect foil for Snidero's crisp twists. —*Paul de Barros*



Jen Shyu + Mark Dresser
Synastry
PI 39
★★★★

Sharing the honors of being, respectively, the first female and singer and the first bassist to lead a session for Pi, Jen Shyu and Mark Dresser also share a vivid, intimate rapport on this multi-hued duo release. The pair find a wealth of colors and moods within the seemingly limited palette of voice and bass.

Shyu sings in both Mandarin and English but primarily in an invented vocalese. The opening track, "Slope A Dope," presents an almost conversational example, her sinuous voice soaring upwards in a fluttering lilt buoyed by Dresser's woody tone.

The veteran bassist plays with a focused reserve throughout the disc's 11 tracks; with no solos to speak of, the album is concentrated fully on the interaction between the two. They combine to evoke haunting shadows on "Midnight Of Quietness, Recovery Of Life" or sun-dappled landscapes on "Floods, Flames, Blades." Dresser's severe bowing creates a razor-wire terrain for the absurdist text of filmmaker Sarah Jane Lapp's "Mattress On A Stick," a poem full of bizarrely incongruous images that Shyu twists like taffy.

Beyond Shyu's recitations of Chinese poets like Li Po and Ge Hong, several pieces draw on Asian influences. Japanese inflections emerge from Dresser's surging "Mauger Time," while the bracing title track conjures impressions of Chinese opera with the bassist's ascetic strikes and scrapes and Shyu's dramatic leaps.

The vocalist's control is remarkable, weaving odd serpentines from low, guttural plunges to the crystalline shimmer of "Kind Of Nine." The crepuscular, wordless opening lope of "Lunation" gives way to Dresser not just walking but occasionally skipping or hopping, an odd gait around which Shyu traces strange contours. *—Shaun Brady*

Synastry: Slope A Dope; Midnight Of Quietness, Recovery Of Life; Mauger Time; Synastry; Floods, Flames, Blades; Mattress On A Stick; Chant For Theresa Hak Kyung Cha; Lunation; Kind Of Nine; Telemotions; Night Thoughts. (58:40)
Personnel: Jen Shyu, voice; Mark Dresser, bass.
Ordering info: pirecordings.com

Shawn Maxwell
Urban Vigilante
CHICAGO SESSIONS 16
★★★

From the looks of it, one might think *Urban Vigilante* is music designed to keep you up all night, awake if not on the edge of your seat. Alas, Shawn Maxwell's 11-song (apparent) reverie to the city night is more tuneful, musical and friendly than the scary, Halloween-ish illustrated cover might suggest. As with practically everything the Chicago Sessions label puts out, *Urban Vigilante* (Maxwell's fourth as a leader) has a homemade feel to it, the acoustics suggesting something along the lines of a club/you-are-there feel. This is particularly true with Maxwell's alto saxophone, but also in the way Brandon Dickert's drums are recorded.

Again, looking at the titles here, one would think, as a jazz outing, that we'd be visited, perhaps, by some free-jazz zombies or music akin to atonal bats in the belfry. Instead, "Monster Shoes," for example, is about as chummy as you can get, what with its easygoing soft-rock feel and hummable melody. The straightahead swinger "Yo Gabba Blues" introduces us to Maxwell's sparring partner in pianist Matt Nelson, who threatens (if that's the right word) to steal the show overall with his very musical, inventive solo work and nice touch as a rhythm section mate. Joining Nelson is bassist Bob Lovecchio, who, along with Dickert, help make for a complete band within a band. The title track, once again, is a very tuneful cut, one of Maxwell's best: simple, direct, its 6/4 medium-tempo gait and straightforward chord changes open enough for the leader and Nelson to solo at length. (Lovecchio also gets in a well-placed spot.) "Starscream," far from being a howl at the moon, is, rather, a spritely uptempo samba. "Boots" lets us hear Maxwell's style on alto, the song's slow-waltz feel allowing for a sense of his ease with a melody, his range (wide) and his tone (which tends toward the lyrical but includes hints of a honker). Nelson also turns in a strong, almost dreamy solo, full of chords, with a bit of soul and delicate single notes.

Maxwell's songs cover all the bases, and, in the end, are fairly mainstream with nothing terribly strong to recommend them. That being said, there's always room for music played by a tight-knit group that knows each other's moves, with studio sessions that play like a club set. Incidentally, when one reads the liner notes, it becomes obvious that Maxwell's a cartoon fan and a dad, and that his kids had more than a hand in the characterizations employed on *Urban Vigilante*. *—John Ephland*

Urban Vigilante: Monster Shoes; Yo Gabba Blues; Urban Vigilante; Starscream; Boots; Charlie Work; Big Hurt; Beyond Infinity; The Sixth; Juggernaut; Special Order. (65:23)
Personnel: Shawn Maxwell, alto saxophone; Matt Nelson, piano; Bob Lovecchio, bass; Brandon Dickert, drums.
Ordering info: chicagosessions.com

Sei Miguel/ Pedro Gomes
Turbina Anthem
NOBUSINESS RECORDS 29
★★★ ½

Trumpeter Sei Miguel has been honing a personal fusion of the aesthetics of Chet Baker, Miles Davis and John Cage in Lisbon, Portugal, since the '80s. He has worked with musicians who are well versed in his combination of severe lyricism and vast silences. Guitarist Pedro Gomes, 20 years Miguel's junior, is a recent addition to his circle.

The album opens with a series of long, serene trumpet tones. Gomes joins in with acoustic fingerpicking that owes more to American folk guitar than jazz. Then, after two of the loveliest minutes in Miguel's discography, they break the spell with a harsh smack of brutal sound. Massively distorted, Gomes sounds more like he's rubbing his strings against rough surfaces than plucking them. But while Gomes' taste in tones is far different from the trumpeter's usual accompanists, he still understands the importance of open space. The way his granite crunches, broken bedspring reverberations and joint powdering clicks shape and divide quietness is as important as the fact of their uncompromising presence.

Miguel seems quite unfazed by his colleague's impetuosity, responding either with delicately stated phrases or succinct, forceful fragments. His fidelity to his aesthetic is admirable, but he seems to be holding his own territory rather than engaging his partner on common ground. The album proceeds in an essentially bipolar fashion, shuttling between the eggshell fragility of the five "Pale Stars" and the cataclysmic force of the other pieces. What's here is quite good, but I wish there was more meeting in the middle. *—Bill Meyer*

Turbina Anthem: The Pale Star I. Manhã Da Noite; Spoon; Two Faces: O Deus-Martelo; Ascent; The Pale Star II. Cãnone; African Raincoat Primeira Canção; Blue Blade Raga Rag; The Pale Star III. Imaginary grass; Bright Star Anyway; The Pale Star IV. Das Cinzas; Jura; Segundo Canção; The Pale Star V. Firmamento. (50:08)
Personnel: Pedro Gomes, guitars; Sei Miguel, pocket trumpet.
Ordering info: nobusinessrecords.com

Leading From Behind The Kit

There's an immeasurable gulf between the stage and the studio that many musicians simply can't navigate. Turkish drummer Ferit Odman bridges that divide effortlessly on ***Nommo*** **(Equinox 104-3; 48:55 ★★★½)**, a studio recording that channels enough live-band energy that the absence of post-solo applause comes almost as a shock. It doesn't hurt that Odman has assembled a cast of dependable veterans for the occasion; a debut record could do worse than to feature trumpeter Brian Lynch, altoist Vincent Herring and bassist Peter Washington (the lineup is completed by Odman's countryman Burak Bedikyan on piano). The leader keeps things surprising on this set of lesser-known hard bop tunes by the likes of Sonny Stitt, Jymie Merritt and Tadd Dameron. Witness the chattering, birdsong cymbals gilding the opening moments of Larry Willis' "To Wisdom the Prize," or the steel-driving tandem he forms with Washington.

Ordering info: equinox-music.com

If it weren't already obvious by track five, drummer Jochen Rueckert and bassist Matt Penman take the opportunity on "Delete Forever" to show off their ebullient rapport with an elusively shifting duet. That's just one of the delights on ***Somewhere Meeting Nobody*** **(Pirouet 3055; 56:55 ★★★★)**, which finds the rhythm duo in the complementary company of saxophonist Mark Turner and guitarist Brad Shepik. Turner provides a direct link to Kurt Rosenwinkel's quartet and the tenorist's own trio Fly, both of which boast a sense of strength unmoored from mundane gravity. The mostly original material is diverse enough to encompass the percolating swing of "The Itch," the spiraling "Dan Smith Will Teach You Guitar" and the exquisite "Buttons," so ethereal that Shepik's whispered guitar and Rueckert's caressing brushwork threaten to dissipate entirely.

Ordering info: pirouet.com

Voyager: Live By Night **(Sunnyside 4510; 78:03 ★★★½)** leaps out of the gate with the tautly coiled "Treachery" and doesn't let up. The in-demand Eric Harland steps into the lead role for the first time for this exuberant if unpolished live disc, with sidemen as game for the high-octane as he is. The velocity begins to wear after a while, and aspects like the jarringly abrupt fadeout on Sam Rivers' "Cyclic Episode" lend a tossed-together feel to the album. But Walter Smith III is just the saxophonist to bulldoze through such a blowing session, while guitarist Julian Lage and pianist Taylor Eigsti both provide moments of delicacy.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

For the sixth CD by his 5 After 4 ensemble, ***Rome In A Day*** **(Alma 62112; 71:47 ★★½)**, veteran Toronto percussionist Vito Rezza discards the laundry list of all-stars from his previous outing to concentrate on a core quartet. The result is a set of laid back, Rhodes-driven funk—a bit too much so at times, as tunes like the nearly 12-minute title track lock into pedestrian grooves lacking in vitality. At his best, Rezza leads from the kit with subtly shifting rhythms that alter the character of a piece without calling attention to his virtuosity, as on the sunny, African-inspired "And The Children Sing" or the elastic anthem "Balena."


Ferit Odman

EQUINOX MUSIC

Ordering info: almarecords.com

The onomatopoeic title of Swedish drummer Jonas Holgersson's leader debut, ***Snick Snack*** **(Moserobie 015; 46:30 ★★★)**, is instantly echoed by the rattle-trap solo that opens the album. It sets the stage for the playful, loose-limbed approach of the trio, completed by saxophonist Karl-Martin Almqvist and bassist Christian Spering. In the spirit of the comic book panels that grace the cover, each piece is its own mini-artwork, full of color and motion, from the slinky unreeling of "Low 5" to the airy idyll of the soprano and mallet work on "Danish Steel."

Ordering info: moserobie.com

Art Blakey exited the world before Bryan Carter was even born, but that fact doesn't stop the 20-year-old prodigy from debuting with a Messengers-style collection of bright-eyed post-bop originals. The self-released ***Enchantment*** **(48:18 ★★★)** finds Carter steering a gentler course on the skins than the whip-cracking Blakey, but he powers his tight quintet with an upbeat swing belying his years. Jeremy Viner (tenor) and Matthew Jodrell (trumpet) make for a well-oiled frontline, while Donald Vega's tasteful piano work adds a level of understated intelligence. **DB**

Ordering info: bryancartermusic.com

Felice Clemente Quartet
Nuvole di Carta
CROCEVIA DI SUONI RECORDS S005
★★★★

Italian saxophonist Felice Clemente's *Nuvole di Carta* is a hip and fresh take on contemporary post-bop playing. His eighth recording under his name—featuring pianist Massimo Colombo, bassist Giulio Corini and drummer Massimo Manzi—accomplishes that difficult feat of presenting complex music in a way that sounds natural and easy. The first two cuts, "The Courage To Try" and "Paradossi," navigate irregular meters effortlessly. To complicate matters further, Manzi is an expert at disguising meter, putting fills and kicks where one might not expect them. In this way he recalls Paul Motian's work with Bill Evans, in that Manzi does not always give the listener something tangible to grasp onto; it's a bit like being taken into deep waters.

Clemente, who has garnered much critical acclaim in Europe, plays soprano on five cuts and tenor on four. His soprano tone is mellow, relaxed and a bit dry, especially on "Paradossi," on which he incorporates flutter-tonguing into the melody. Evoking John Coltrane, Clemente meditates with his soprano playing over the roiling and tumbling rhythm section on Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Young Prince And Princess." On the title track, a slow waltz, his tenor is warm and inviting as he churns out highly nuanced and melodic lines. The album closes with Colombo's "Bastian Contrario," a duet between Corini and Clemente on tenor. Clemente goes from floating over Corini's walking lines to dancing in and out of the bassist's broken and staccato figures.

Nuvole di Carta is an excellent record that demonstrates that Clemente and his peers deserve wider recognition in the United States. —*Chris Robinson*

Nuvole di Carta: The Courage To Try; Paradossi; Nuvole di Carta; To MJB; Aneddoti; Inside Changes; The Young Prince And Princess–Theme from Sheherazade; Lost In Blues; Bastian Contrario. (56:09)
Personnel: Felice Clemente, soprano and tenor saxophone; Massimo Colombo, piano; Giulio Corini, bass; Massimo Manzi, drums.
Ordering info: croceviadisuonirecords.com

Maraca and His Latin Jazz All-Stars
Reencuentros
DESCARGA SARL
★★★★★

Harold López-Nussa Trio
El País De Las Maravillas
WORLD VILLAGE 479061
★★★★

It's been more than 20 years since Cuba's best-of-times/worst-of-times musical renaissance astonished everyone who was paying attention. In that time, Cuba has been fully reintegrated as a world capital of music, and a transcendental generation of players who emerged at the end of the '80s and beginning of the '90s—in Cuba, from Cuba, or connected to Cuba—has progressed from prodigy status to being mature, mid-career masters.

Luxurious and lively, flutist Orlando "Maraca" Valle's *Reencuentros* shows him at a new level of artistic growth. It's an international dream Latin jazz band—the "all star" billing is no hype—coupled with a marvelous, really-existing 18-piece Cuban string orchestra.

Part of the dreamlike quality of the project is to hear Puerto Rican, U.S.-based Cuban and Cuban-Cuban playing together as if there were no obstacles. They've been putting their heads together whenever they get the chance, and the mutual admiration illuminates the music.

Horacio "El Negro" Hernández pushes Maraca like no previous drummer I've heard. With Giovanni Hidalgo on congas, and bassist Feliciano Arango (who powered the colossal NG La Banda), the tumbaos are deep. Cuba's best-known güirero, septuagenarian Enrique Lazaga, scrape-drives "Danzón Siglo XXI." It's not a salsa band; it's orchestral Cuban jazz, combining Maraca's flute with tenor (David Sánchez), trumpet (Julito Padrón), trombone (Hugh Fraser), and violin (the Cuban-trained Sayaka Katsuki), along with a synth player (Yusef Díaz). Pianist Harold López-Nussa is a rising star, but more about him in a minute.

The tunes stretch out, sometimes to double-digit minutes. The recording is live, in front of a packed-out Cuban audience, and comes packaged together with an impressively produced DVD of the entire two-hour concert, which took place at Havana's Gran Teatro.

The opener is a number that has in the last few years accomplished the uncommon feat of becoming something of an orchestral standard: Tchaikovsky Conservatory graduate Guido López-Gavilán's "Camerata en Guaguancó," better known in its version by Havana's Camerata Romeu. Maraca's compositions are excellent, and they also play "Manteca" (with Maraca on piccolo and Giovanni Hidalgo in the Chano Pozo role) and Ignacio Cervantés's "Serenata Cubana," turned into a bluesy solo vehicle for David Sánchez on tenor.

This album's 28-year-old pianist, Harold López-Nussa, is attracting a lot of attention these days. On *El País De Las Maravillas*, his fourth date as a leader, he displays his version of the toolkit Cuban pianists have developed: conservatory touch, jazz extemporaneity, effortless metrical gymnastics and juggling of polyrhythm and counterpoint, a studied approach to form, awareness of history, impeccably cosmopolitan taste—and the ever-present expectation that the player might decide to bust a montuno and make everybody dance.

This is López-Nussa's gigging trio, plus tenor guest David Sánchez on four cuts. He was trained as a "classical" performer before switching to jazz, and he clearly knows 19th-century Cuban, Spanish and French piano music. The telepathic drummer is brother Rui Adrian López-Nussa, and the bassist is Felipe Cabrera, who in the late '80s provided support for a young Gonzalo Rubalcaba. Both contribute one tune, while most of the rest of the compositions are López-Nussa's. He's a skilled composer, and this is a repeatably listenable, well-thought-out record. —*Ned Sublette*

Reencuentros: Camerata En Guaguancó; Afro; Danzón Siglo XXI; Noche De Batá; Manteca; Serenata Cubana; Parque Central. (63:58)
Personnel: Orlando "Maraca" Valle, flute; Horacio "El Negro" Hernández, drums; Giovanni Hildalgo, percussion; David Sánchez, tenor saxophone; Hugh Fraser, trombone; Harold López-Nussa, piano; Feliciano Arango, bass; Julio Padrón, trumpet, flugelhorn; Yusef Díaz, keyboards; Enrique Lazaga, güiro; Sayaka, violin; Orquesta de Cámara de la Habana.
Ordering info: cdbaby.com/cd/maracahislatinjazzallsta

El País De Las Maravillas: Guajira; Caminos; Interludio; El País De Las Maravillas; La Fiesta Va; Perla Marina; Pa' Gozar . . . Y No Parar!; A Camilin; Bailando Suiza; E'cha; Volver; Amanecer. (48:31)
Personnel: Harold López-Nussa, piano; Felipe Cabrera, double bass; Rui Adrian López-Nussa, drums and vibraphone; David Sánchez, saxophone.
Ordering info: worldvillagemusic.com

Freddy Cole
Talk To Me

HIGHNOTE 7225

★★★★

Like his celebrated brother Nat, singer and pianist Freddy Cole has always had a modest voice. But he has distilled his work down to great time, pinpoint emphasis, behind-the-beat phrasing, effortless swing and an understated mastery.

Never one to overplay his hand, Cole has become quite the minimalist. On slower ballads—like "After All These Years" and "Mam'selle"—his work is very close to recitation. He uses that fine-sandpaper Cole family timbre especially well on those glacial tempos. But on rhythm tunes he'll hold his notes, as he does effectively over the exotic beat of "Can We Pretend?" He rides the bounce of "Lovely Day" with matter-of-fact majesty. On Little Willie John's heartfelt "Talk to Me," however, Cole is a little melodically deficient; his notes flatten out to sameness.

The band is Cole's working unit, augmented by trumpeter Terrell Stafford. Arrangements aren't credited, though ensemble and soloists are well apportioned. John di Martino's supportive piano and Randy Napoleon's golden-toned guitar lines carry Cole or frame him in all the right places. Stafford and tenor saxophonist Harry Allen don't take long solos, but they spice the sonic mix. *—Kirk Silsbee*

Talk To Me: Mam'selle; Lovely Day; You Just Can't Smile It Away; I Was Telling Her About You; Can We Pretend?; Talk To Me; Speak To Me Of You; My Imagination; My First Impression Of You; Come Home; After All These Years. (46:55)
Personnel: Freddy Cole, vocals; Terrell Stafford, trumpet, flugelhorn; Harry Allen, tenor saxophone; Randy napoleon, guitar; John di Martino, piano; Elias Bailey, bass; Curtis Boyd, drums.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Deborah Pearl
Souvenir Of You

EVENING STAR 115

★★½

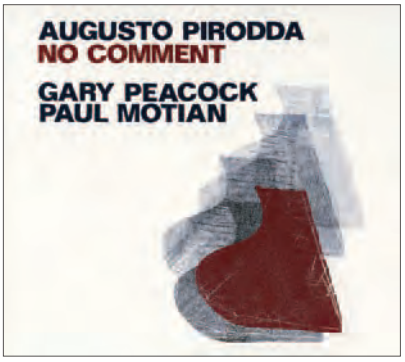
Benny Carter represented the gold standard for swing-era composers. Screenwriter and singer Deborah Pearl has written lyrics to 13 Carter instrumentals. While Pearl's love for the material is evident, her intensity and energy don't always serve the music well.

She's got a take-it-or-leave-it contralto. The middle register is nice, but her low notes can be husky and goony. She'll occasionally jump octaves and hit a shrill note like a car alarm. But credit where it's due: Pearl hits the notes. On a bright tempo, she can be overbearing, congesting the lines with more words than are necessary, like on "Scattin' Back To Harlem." Pearl grafts a verse onto a late Carter orchestral recording—"Anniversary Dance"—and sings over it. The tune begs for a more melodious voice. Her ballad reading on "Johnny True," while sparing of words, is intense. The rhythm section led by pianist Lou Forestieri supports Pearl beautifully. He's particularly sensitive on "People Time" and swings firmly on "Doozy Blues." Would that they had been given more solo space. Carter knew how to let the song and band breathe.

—Kirk Silsbee

Evening Star: Happy Feet (At The Savoy); Wonderland (Isle Of Love; People Time (Forever Mine); Doozy Blues; Sunday Morning Comes; Scattin' Back To Harlem; Again And Again (I Try To Pretend); Anniversary Dance; Johnny True; Sail Away With Me: An Elegy In Blue; Sky Dance For Two; Souvenir Of You. (62:00)
Personnel: Deborah Pearl, vocals; Lou Forestieri, piano; Chris Colangelo, Jimmy Wild (1, 2, 4, 5) bass; Dave Karasony, Jimmy Branley, drums (1, 2, 4, 5); Benny Carter, alto saxophone (1, 8).
Ordering info: deborahpearl.com

Augusto Pirodda
No Comment
JAZZWERKSTATT 113
★★★★



When it comes to hearing Gary Peacock play, his bass has usually sauntered between the surly edges of freedom and the mainstream swing we most often hear when he's in the pocket with the Standards Trio alongside Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette. You could say the same thing about drummer Paul Motian, but Motian's been more of a trailblazer with his own bands, and his style is recognizable no matter who he's playing with, including the occasional gig with Peacock and Jarrett. His presence with them transforms the group's sound even as they generally adhere to Jarrett's agenda.

Alongside Peacock and Motian, pianist Augusto Pirodda is the relative young one here, helping to transform this music in his own way: open, loose, interpretive, quizzical. His catalog of musical experiences includes duo, trio and vocal trio work in Europe along with a growing discography. Pirodda's style meshes beautifully with the others. This is one of those Peacock dates that veers off from the standard changes and allows us to hear his probing, conversational instrument brushing up against the other two but sometimes floating as if in a space all its own. The group's "soundcheck" improv "It Begins Like This ... " and Pirodda's "Seak Fruits" are good examples.

Pirodda's composition "Brrribop!" injects some rare spritely uptempo-less fun that plays to strengths both familiar and refreshing in the drummer and bassist. It's as if Pirodda's writing is his way of telling Peacock and Motian he knows their music. And yet, the bouncy "Brrribop!" and its stripped-down frame allow all three musical personalities to solo alongside each other without stepping on each other's musical toes. The title track, written by Manolo Cabras, returns the group to simpler, dreamier terrain, Peacock's measured bass solo eventually leading to Pirodda's most lyrical solo, full of gentle, mercurial single lines and well-placed chordal clusters. Likewise with the lush, tuneful "So?"—its crawl of a tempo still managing to ooze out some understated, unconventional swing, Peacock and Pirodda see-sawing Pirodda's simple melody like two dancers, Motian the chaperone.

Pirodda joins the ranks of other great pianists who, over the years, have successfully tapped into those quixotically musical minds of Peacock and Motian. *—John Ephland*

No Comment: It Begins Like This ... ; Seak Fruits; Brrribop!; No Comment; So?; Il Suo Preferito; I Don't Know; Ola. (49:17)
Personnel: Augusto Pirodda, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Paul Motian, drums.
Ordering info: jazzwerkstatt.eu

David Weiss & Point of Departure
Snuck Out
SUNNYSIDE 1261
★★ ½

David Weiss' profile as an arranger almost certainly eclipses his reputation as a trumpet player. Weiss' arranging credits extend from "The Cosby Mysteries," a mid-1990s television show starring Bill Cosby, to a pair of joint releases by the late Freddie Hubbard and Weiss' New Jazz Composers Octet. Weiss' seventh album, *Snuck Out*, quashes any sense of his day job: The charts are bare-bones, and the solos carry nearly all of the weight.

The live recording (and sequel to 2010's *Snuck In*) spotlights Weiss' Point of Departure, a working quintet. The set recalls the 1960s in spirit, and the repertoire of Charles Tolliver's "Revillot" and Wayne Shorter's "Paraphernalia" bears out this allegiance. In addition, the two compositions credited to Charles Moore originate from the late-1960s Blue Note albums of the group Kenny Cox and the Contemporary Jazz Quintet.

Snuck Out's first three tracks are quite long, with few harmonic guideposts and no riffs or interludes to break things up. There's just the rumble of the rhythm section beneath the rise and fall of solos divided mostly among tenor player JD Allen, guitarist Nir Felder and Weiss. The tracks are less band recordings than a jam session.

By contrast, Weiss' "Hidden Meanings" and Moore's "Snuck In" offer more compelling chord changes and solos that achieve greater coherence. "Snuck In," the up-tempo set closer, represents the album's lone studio track, and Allen and especially Weiss deliver impressive solos. The quintet has potential, but it would benefit from tightening things up on its next album release. *—Eric Fine*

Snuck Out: Revillot; Gravity Point; Paraphernalia; Hidden Meanings; Snuck In. (62:39)
Personnel: David Weiss, trumpet; JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Nir Felder, guitar; Matt Clohesy, bass; Jamire Williams, drums.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Dominick Farinacci
Dawn Of Goodbye
EONE 2113
★★★★

Despite an album package that threatens to overdose on sentimentality, the latest release from 28-year-old Juilliard grad Dominick Farinacci is the intricately executed, gorgeously phrased work of an artist with a keen sense of why cerebral and emotional music need not be mutually exclusive.

The lush opener, "You Don't Know What Love Is," concocts an atmosphere of heady romanticism that's temporarily broken by a variety of shape-shifting drum and percussion movements. Both Farinacci and pianist Dan Kaufman keep things moving by exploring multiple moods before returning to the sultry timbre of the song's first section. The entire band burns on a blazing rendition of Cole Porter's "It's Alright With Me."

Of the three originals, "Midnight Embrace" stands out as the most creative. A tango featuring trumpet and flugelhorn, the tune winds through what feels like a series of narratives, with the rhythm section alternately buoying the trumpet's sinewy lines or teasing new moods out of the evolving melody.

At times, it feels as if the band might be auditioning a new soundtrack for an old Tennessee Williams play. It's not hard to imagine Stanley Kowalski smoking under a streetlight to the sound of the steamy "Dom's Blues," but the track functions as a sexy, dramatic pause in the album as a whole, so it works. The title track, meanwhile, is among the album's less memorable features.

Sophisticated and soulful throughout, Farinacci's third U.S. studio effort makes good on early pronouncements about this rising star's serious chops and bright future. *—Jennifer Odell*

Dawn Of Goodbye: You Don't Know What Love Is; It's Alright With Me; I Concentrate On You; Dom's Blues; Midnight Embrace; Lover Man; Willow Weep For Me; Windshadow; Dawn Of Goodbye; You Made Me Love You; Work Song. (66:12)
Personnel: Dominick Farinacci, trumpet, flugelhorn; Dan Kaufman, piano; Jonathan Batiste, piano (4, 7); Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Ben Williams, bass (4, 7); Carmen Intorre, drums; Keita Ogawa, percussion; Guilherme Monteiro, guitar (3).
Ordering info: eOneMusic.com

Marcus Strickland
Triumph Of The Heavy, Vol. 1 & 2

STRICK MUZIK 005-6

★★★★½

Blame our collective short attention span or a jazz variation of the star-making machinery that dominates mainstream pop music, but it seems we always have space for just one or two saxophonists in the spotlight. That needs to change, and there's no better example of why than Marcus Strickland. Even with high-profile gigs with leaders like Dave Douglas and Roy Haynes, he's flown a bit under the radar. This double CD—his fourth release on his own label and seventh overall—should serve notice: Marcus Strickland is a major talent as both an instrumentalist and a composer.

Divided into studio and live sets, *Triumph Of The Heavy* is notable for the Strickland's recording debut on alto—his first horn—and a DIY ethic that finds him writing all but two of the 17 compositions, mixing the audio and designing the artwork. The flyspeck font he chose for his liner notes is one of his few missteps.

The live set, a highly varied 70 minutes recorded at Firehouse 12 in May 2010, showcases the hand-in-glove movement of Strickland's regular trio: twin brother E.J. on drums and Ben Williams ("our missing triplet") on bass. Piano-less/sax-led trios will always draw comparisons to Sonny Rollins', but, although he can go there—an outrageously over-the-top soprano solo on Jaco Pastorius' "Portrait Of Tracy" is perhaps the closest—playing against that stereotype are the moody, dark-hued "A Memory's Mourn" and the meaty, rangy "Prime," with an outstanding solo from Williams. What strikes most here is the trio's ability to seem drumhead tight yet very loose, and to appear like they are simultaneously telescoping and collapsing genres. On "Surreal," for example, Williams swings deep while E.J. smashes cymbal sprays and Marcus pulls out soprano lines that reference bop, free-bop and urban-inflected timing.

In the studio eight months later, Strickland adds pianist David Bryant, who introduces himself on the hard-charging "Lilt" as a cross between McCoy Tyner and Jason Moran—very percussive, with some interesting harmonic ideas. Right away, the leader changes things up, serving an unexpected, short ballad as a second course—a delicious tenor and arco bass duet at the center of it. Equally novel, and brief, is "Virgo," featuring a chorus of overdubbed clarinets and saxes. Time and again, it's Strickland's ability to defy expectations and change his approach that is so winning. The slow, rolling and soulful pace of "Dawn," with an ideal amount of wide vibrato on the soprano sax is the perfect balance for the bold alto and multiple tempo changes of "A Temptress' Gait."

—James Hale

Triumph Of The Heavy, Vol. 1 & 2: Disc One: Lilt; Za Rahula; A World Found; A Temptress' Gait; Dawn; Bolt Bus Jitter; Virgo; Shapes; Set Free; 'Lectronic. (50:41); Disc Two: Mudbone; Surreal; Gaudi; A Memory's Mourn; Prime; Portrait Of Tracy; Cuspy's Delight. (69:42)
Personnel: Marcus Strickland, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, clarinet; David Bryant, piano (1–10); Ben Williams, bass; E.J. Strickland, drums.
Ordering info: strickmuzik.com

Blues

BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY


Bob Bogdal (left) and Elam McKnight
BIG BLACK HAND

Mighty and Front-Porch Friendly

Mighty Sam McClain & Knut Reiersrud: *One Drop Is Plenty* (KKV 369; 53:48 ★★★★) Important to any self-respecting soul-blues singer is the need to communicate with displays of true feeling. No one succeeds at it as well as this Louisiana native who convincingly affirms his gospel origins in humble supplications and cries of deep anguish or rapturous optimism. McClain's latest album, made with Norwegian musicians including decent guitarist Reiersrud and an intrusive drummer, attests to his powers on mostly slow-paced numbers that sometimes require extra turns of expressivity from the singer because of crossed-eyed lyrics on that he was handed by two Scandinavians. McClain's close studies of the Jerry Rogovoy gem "You Don't Know Nothing About Love" and his own ballads "Learn How To Love Again" and "Open Up Heaven's Doors" boom forth from his heart like cannonballs.

Ordering info: mightysam.com

Buddy Guy: *Buddy & The Juniors* (Hip-O Select; 42:09 ★★★½) Back in 1969, Buddy Guy and Junior Wells were able to get past differences that had shattered their blues partnership and record under the watchful eye of young producer Mike Cuscuna. This album has been disparaged by many, but it's really good. Wells' harmonica prose is stirringly vivid and Guy's acoustic guitar is masterly. Their singing holds absolute conviction. The acoustic duets "Talkin' About Women Obviously" and "Riffin'" are small marvels of free association and empathy. The addition of hard bop pianist Junior Mance—raised up on stride, blues and boogie-woogie—has the three getting the wind at their backs and in their sails to triumph on "Hoochie Coochie Man" and two more.

Ordering info: hip-oselect.com

Jimmie Vaughan: *Plays More Blues, Ballads & Favorites* (Shout! Factory 826663; 46:58 ★★½) This follow-up to Vaughan's return to the studio last year (he'd been away nine long years) furnishes more evidence that he is a fine Texas-bred guitarist and a less than compelling singer who's bereft of volatile immediacy. Vaughan inserts his persona into mawkish and flat cover versions of Gulf Coast pop and r&b songs from the distant past (his heroes include Bobby Charles and Jivin' Gene Bourgeois).

Ordering info: shoutfactory.com

Samantha Fish/Cassie Taylor/Dani Wilde: *Girls With Guitars* (Ruf 1166; 44:48 ★★★½) Proving modern blues-rock isn't entirely the domain of testosterone-driven males, these three—Wilde hails from England, the others are American—signal how far they've come as singers, songwriters and, you bet, hot guitarists. They sound like they mean it. Career breakouts are likely sooner than later. Showstopper: Wilde's "Are You Ready?"

Ordering info: rufrecords.de

McKnight & Bogdal: *Zombie Nation* (Desert Highway 0004; 42:09 ★★★½) The real strength of this album by Nashville singer-guitarist Elam McKnight and harmonica-guitarist Bob Bogdal rests in the pair's dedication to finding new toughness and agitation in the Delta and Hill Country styles. Mission accomplished. Their well-played original songs, including the roadhouse rave "Mojo's Place" and the wry apocalyptic stomp "Zombiefication," are shot through with the authentic emotional heat of the music they love.

Ordering info: bigblackhand.com

Watermelon Slim & Super Chickan: *Okiesippi Blues* (Northern Blues 0061; 49:45 ★★★½) Front porch-friendly Slim and Chickan whip up a suspenseful and intriguing onslaught of electric string sounds as they throttle West African zithers on the centerpiece track "Diddley-Bo Jam." Out of the ordinary, too, is Slim's nimble-fingered kalimba treatment of George Harrison's "Within You Without You/Dinde." Just as impressive, this time within the conventions of traditional blues, is the Slim jailhouse psalm "Thou Art With Me." **DB**

Ordering info: northernblues.com

The Deep Blue Organ Trio
Wonderful!
ORIGIN 82595
★★★ ½

Kimberly Gordon Organ Trio
Sunday
THE SIRENS RECORDS 5018
★★★

Earlier this year, the SFJAZZ Collective reminded listeners of the incredible flexibility Stevie Wonder incorporated into so many of his hits when the group named the legendary singer and songwriter as its muse for its album and tour. Attention-wise, that fact may overshadow the new Wonder homage released by Chris Foreman's organ trio—but it would be a shame. The trio, which has been together for more than a decade, plays together every Tuesday at Chicago's Green Mill club, where they bring together their wealth of experiences. Guitarist Bobby Broom has worked with Sonny Rollins and Dr. John. Both Broom and drummer Greg Rockingham worked with organist Charles Earland.

Even without the addition of their own Wonder-inspired pieces, Foreman, Broom and Rockingham have surpassed the "tribute album" moniker here, opening up both classics and lesser-known material to coax new layers of meaning from within the canon of popular music.

"My Cherie Amour" begins cautiously, as a ruminative Foreman skips lightly over the melody with one hand while laying down an almost dark series of rich chords with the other. Steady and serious, with plenty of attention paid to the lower register, he slowly builds his way to the carefree and joyful feel of Wonder's original tune. Trading solos with Bobby Broom, the pair toys with Wonder's changes until, finally, Foreman burns his way into a bursting-at-the-seams climax to counteract the tune's sparse and controlled opening.

More often than not, though, Foreman, Broom and Rockingham operate as a tight unit, the result of decades spent working together. They unfurl "Tell Me Something Good" as a team, with Rockingham shaking the tune's rhythm like a pan on a stove as Foreman and Broom set the stage for one of the disc's funkier numbers.

Another highlight, "Golden Lady," shines a light on Foreman's reverence for his instrument's roots in the church, although it's Rockingham's rhythms that leave a residue once the song concludes.

While his Wonder tribute underscores teamwork, Foreman steps back on his new release with singer Kimberly Gordon, letting her powerful voice soak up the spotlight. Along with sharing the Green Mill stage, Gordon has been a veteran of Chicago clubs since the 1990s. The results on this effort are mixed. Gordon is a talented singer with a compelling sound that's earned her well-deserved staying power. Her sharp phrasing allows her to bounce airily over difficult passages, as she does on "I'm Confessin'," decisively holding each appointed note, her voice ebullient, never rigid as they soar over Foreman's warm foundation.

"I'm Beginning To See The Light" is perfectly suited to this ensemble, which is rounded out with guitarist Andy Brown, whose rhythmic playing here allows both of his bandmates to stretch out a bit. By the end, Gordon shows off her improvising skills, a nice complement to the track and a promise of creativity to come.

Things go a bit south with her scatting on "So Danco Samba." Gordon's precision feels too intense for the ethereal and soft melody, and not quite flexible enough to balance rough edges with bossa-tinged breathlessness.

"Dream A Little Dream" ushers the whole band back into its usual high standing, though, and by the end, "Love You Madly" puts Gordon's range—and scatting skills—back in a higher echelon of musicianship. *—Jennifer Odell*

Wonderful!: Tell Me Something Good; If You Really Love Me; Jesus Children Of America; My Cherie Amour; Golden Lady; You Haven't Done Nothin'; It Ain't No Use; As; You've Got It Bad Girl. (62:12)
Personnel: Bobby Broom, guitar; Chris Foreman, Hammond B3 Organ; Greg Rockingham, drums.
Ordering info: origin-records.com

Sunday: Sunday; I'm Confessin' (That I Love You); I Sold My Heart To The Junkman; I'm Beginning To See The Light; So Danco Samba; Ordinary Fool; Robbins Nest; Dream A Little Dream Of Me; Bein' Green; Love You Madly. (52:24)
Personnel: Kimberly Gordon, vocals; Chris Foreman, Hammond organ; Andy Brown, guitar.
Ordering info: thesirensrecords.com

Samuel Blaser
Consort In Motion
KIND OF BLUE 10046
★★★★½

There is so much baggage attached to the concept of jazz-classical fusion, so many dead ends along the Third Stream, that it's almost a disservice to Samuel Blaser's brilliantly realized new CD to refer to it in those terms. The conservatory-trained Swiss trombonist reaches back to Italian composers of the Baroque and Renaissance, recontextualizing centuries-old themes and melodies via modern improvisation, more an act of resurrection than archaeology.

The austerity with which Blaser and his stellar quartet approach these pieces at times suggests that we're hearing the ghosts of long-forgotten performances, howling remembered scraps of melody amidst their laments. The graceful opening cascade of Russ Lossing's piano and Paul Motian's cymbals on Biagio Marini's "Passacaglia," for instance, is soon scarred by a brief knocking from Thomas Morgan's bass and Blaser's pained, breathy squeal, before the ensemble combines for a dirge-like procession.

The bulk of the album focuses on the work of Claudio Monteverdi; the "Ritornello" from his early opera *L'Orfeo* is visited twice, recalling the way in which its sweeping melody recurs throughout the original opera. The first instance abstracts the piece over seven minutes, Blaser growling over Motian's most bop-inflected rhythms while Morgan and Lossing walk over the keys. The pianist's solo, which follows a particularly crisp, resonant burst from Motian, merely suggests the actual melody, hinting at it cleverly in fragmented and refracted form. The brief, second iteration finds Blaser and Morgan trading the explicitly-stated melody back and forth in a stately duet.

This is such an expansive take on the source material that the quartet seems to occupy a space surrounding the compositions, intersecting and deviating from them and each other at will. Where Blaser can tend towards the morose in his plaintive moans, Lossing cuts through the darkness like vinegar, suddenly erupting in frenzied outbursts or dense clusters. Motian is an inspired choice at the kit, bringing his signature amorphous style to Blaser's open-ended interpretations, meeting the leader's multiphonic bellows with sharp bursts or carpeting a sparse Morgan solo with insistent snare rolls. The bassist proves an intriguing foil for the veteran drummer, able to slyly slip in and out of time and idiom. —*Shaun Brady*

Consort In Motion: Lamento Della Ninfa; Reflections On Piagn'e Sospira; Reflections On Toccata; Passacaglia; Ritornello; Si Dolce è l'Tormento; Balletto Secondo–Retirata; Reflections On Vespro Della Beata Vergine; Ritornello; Il Ritorno D'Ulisse in Patria–Atto Quarto, Scène II. (58:13)
Personnel: Samuel Blaser, trombone; Paul Motian, drums; Russ Lossing, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass.
Ordering info: kindofbluerecords.com

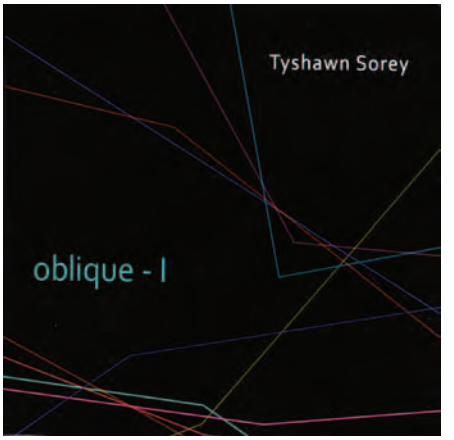
John Brown Trio
Dancing With Duke: An Homage To Duke Ellington
BROWN BOULEVARD RECORDS
★★★

Bassist John Brown's *Dancing With Duke* is a sophisticated and attractive set consisting of some of the most recognized compositions from the Duke Ellington songbook. One of the album's highest points is "In A Mellow Tone," which opens the album. It begins softly, with pianist Cyrus Chestnut playing the head delicately, with drummer Adonis Rose on brushes. Rose changes to sticks behind Chesnut's solo, which slowly builds and climaxes with a series of big tremolos, rapid right-hand lines and thunderous left-hand rumbling. Chesnut, who generates as much excitement as a big band at full power here, finishes his solo off with an Ellington-esque cascade of descending arpeggios that lead into Brown's solo. Brown has a rich, full sound, and he shapes each note. His lengthy solo on "Pie Eye's Blues" is a fine example of his musicianship, as is his melancholy arco playing on "Solitude."

Brown and company offer a couple twists to this familiar material. "Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me" is lovely as a waltz, and "Isfahan" lays in five so effortlessly you'd think it was written that way. "I Got It Bad," "Solitude" and Billy Stayhorn's "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing" are grouped together into what Brown calls the "Sweet Ballad Suite." These ballad performances are excellent and full of meditative introspection, especially the glacially slow reading of "Solitude." Brown would have done well to vary the arrangements a bit, though, as the album can be a little predictable and repetitive at times.

—*Chris Robinson*

Dancing With Duke: In A Mellow Tone; Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me; Perdido; Pie Eye's Blues; Isfahan; I'm Beginning to See The Light; A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing; I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good); Solitude; It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing). (69:21)
Personnel: John Brown, bass; Cyrus Chesnut, piano; Adonis Rose, drums.
Ordering info: brownboulevard.com



Tyshawn Sorey
Oblique–I
PI RECORDINGS 40
★★★★

Tyshawn Sorey's previous two albums as a leader showcased him as a budding composer, which wouldn't haven been frustrating were he not so startlingly gifted behind the drums. 2009's *Koan* was more indebted to minimalist crusader Morton Feldman than anything found within the pages of Modern Drummer. In that regard, *Oblique–I* is a mild revelation—the first full-length to feature him wearing both hats. Here we get a taste of the lean and lightning quick stickwork deployed as a member of bands lead by both Steve Coleman and Steve Lehman, yet its Sorey's compositional skills that unequivocally remain the focus. On one tune, "Eighteen," he sits out completely, instead entrusting his ideas to alto saxophonist Loren Stillman.

That's not the only track on which traces of his last album linger. "Eight" is similarly spare from the onset, punctuated by pianist John Escreet's dissonant chords, chiming like a broken alarm clock as Stillman's alto warbles tenuously. The Derek Bailey-esque shards of Todd Neufeld's acoustic guitar on "Seventeen" are no less ominous. Stoking the suspense with meticulously choreographed shifts of mood, the supporting cast carries out these often affectless meditations like marionettes bound to Sorey's drumsticks.

The current Ph.D candidate built a repertoire for this quintet over a period of four years, collected under the unambiguous banner 41 Compositions, and the ten numeric titles included here give some sense of the academic weight they contain. Drums are used to accent and color these knotty improvisations but never anything more than necessary.

Sorey wants it known that he's a conceptualist first and a percussionist second.

—*Areif Sless-Kitain*

Oblique–I: Twenty; Eight; Thirty-Five; Eighteen; Forty; Twenty-Four; Seventeen; Twenty-Five; Fifteen; Thirty-Six. (76:29)
Personnel: Tyshawn Sorey, drums; Loren Stillman, alto saxophone; Todd Neufeld, electric and acoustic guitars; John Escreet, piano, Fender Rhodes, Wurlitzer piano; Chris Tordini, bass.
Ordering info: pirecordings.com

Beyond | BY JOE TANGARI

Beirut

Horns, Pigs & Violence

Zach Condon's Beirut project has built its acoustic indie rock sound around the rhythms and horn styles of the Balkans, France and Central America. On its third album, ***The Rip Tide*** **(Pompeii POMP 003; 33:11 ★★★)**, the band's lush horn arrangements are intact, but they've dialed back the ethnic flavor of the music in favor of something less wild and more pop-oriented. Shedding their most volatile aspects will likely help the band play to a more general audience, but fans who were originally drawn to them for their exotic flavor may find themselves wishing for a bit of the old Balkan horn attack.

To find that wildness and exploratory spirit Beirut has left behind, look no further than ***Cervantine*** **(l.m. Duplication LM003; 40:19; ★★★½)**, the fifth album by A Hawk And A Hacksaw. Bandleaders Jeremy Barnes and Heather Trost played on Beirut's first album, and the love of Turkish and Romani music they brought to it is on full display on this mostly instrumental CD. Whirling strings, fast trumpets and faster accordions meet on a field laid in equal parts by Dave Tarras, Bulgarian wedding bands, itinerant Lăutari musicians and Sufi orchestras in Istanbul. No drum kits allowed: The group uses only the dumbeks, riqs, bass drums and cymbals of the traditional music that informs their own.

Ordering info: midheaven.com

Improvisatory flair and sudden left turns have long been the currency of North Carolina's Ahleuchatistas. Formerly a trio, the band, whose name is a portmanteau of Charlie Parker's "Ah-Leu-Cha" and Zapatista, has pared down to a duo of guitarist Shane Perlowin and drummer Ryan Oslance. The new sound heard on ***Location Location*** **(Open Letter 002, 45:14 ★★★★)** has less of the Captain Beefheartian twitch and instability of their older material and a much greater emphasis on ragged, high-tempo garage-prog brutality and spine-chilling soundscapes. Perlowin's other duo, Doom Ribbons, with drummer/vocalist James Owen, takes a different tack on its debut, ***The Violence, The Violence*** **(Open Letter 003, 41:03; ★★★½)**. Owen's use of samples casts the music into a sort of robotic naturescape, and Perlowin's playing is much gentler. Orchestration on the album's second half expands the band's palette.

Ordering info: openletterrecords.com

Originally formed from the ashes of improv-rock band Laddio Bolocko, The Psychic Paramount released its first album six years ago. The delayed follow-up, ***II*** **(No Quarter NOQ026, 40:14; ★★★★)**, makes up for the wait with complex, propulsive and heavy experimental rock that sparks with palpable energy. The band's psychedelic tendencies are anchored by its rhythmic precision, and the the result is a cosmically huge sound that nevertheless feels grounded and easily approachable. The songs progress less through melody than from changes in texture, harmony and density.

Ordering Info: noquarter.net

Oneida has similarly mastered the tension between psychedelic sprawl and rhythmic intensity. ***Absolute II*** **(Jagjaguwar JAG190, 40:14; ★★★★)** is the final entry in what the band calls its "Thank Your Parents" triptych (previous entries were 2008's *Preteen Weaponry* and the 2009 triple album *Rated O*). Absolute II plays like the background radiation left over from the Big Bang of its sprawling predecessors. It decays from a buoyantly rhythmic and darkly layered opening to a stark and minimal, atmospheric ending, bringing satisfying closure to an impressive series.

Ordering info: jagjaguwar.com

Finishing his own trilogy of albums is British electronic experimentalist Matthew Herbert. The first two albums in the series, *One One* and *One Club*, were built from sounds he generated and those recorded on one night at a German nightclub. As its title implies, ***One Pig*** **(Accidental 48; 43:40 ★★★★)** uses samples and field recordings to follow the life of one pig, from the moment of its birth past the end of its life, to the moment it is cooked and eaten. Herbert turns the sounds of this pig's life into rhythm and builds soundscapes around them that matter-of-factly present the realities of the pig's life, with the side effect that they also suggest the industrial horrors of modern animal farming. It's a strange and oddly affecting listening experience. **DB**

Ordering info: accidentalrecords.com

Michel Camilo
Mano a Mano
DECCA/EMARCY 15904
★★★★

It's been a few years since Michel Camilo released a trio album, so why not mark the occasion with something special? That's just what he did with *Mano a Mano*, not only because all three participants perform with a kind of offhand virtuosity and interaction, but also because a complement of percussion takes the place of the usual trap set.

This twist in instrumentation would dramatically affect the sound of any three-piece, most likely in nudging the feel of the album into Latin territory. But with these musicians in particular playing with extraordinary individual and collective inventiveness, the results are consistently breathtaking. This is particularly evident in the interactions between Camilo and the amazing Giovanni Hidalgo.

Not surprisingly, they lock together at up tempos, each igniting the other with myriad sparks of inspiration. They don't trade fours much; more often Camilo solos over constantly shifting rhythms. When Hidalgo does step out, it's usually in passages where the arrangement gives him space between sharp, stabbed chords and unison lines from piano and bass, as in the last half of the opening track, "Yes."

What bears special mention is how they work together on the ballads. "Then And Now" conjures a desert-like ambience. Over a slow-motion piano figure, Hidalgo plays very sparely, softly tapping the drums and intensifying the atmosphere with occasional wind chimes. Camilo develops this feel with a slow, extended solo, which slithers over minor seconds, major thirds, minor sixths and major sevenths—an exotic, hypnotic modal landscape. Later, on Ariel Ramírez's "Alfonsina y El Mar," they achieve an equally compelling synchronicity, with Camilo's delicately reflected playing, kept from total weightlessness by the anchor of Charles Flores' bass, wafts over an occasion brush of wind chimes, a ting of a bell and isolated cabasa whispers. This is a gorgeous marriage of silence and beautifully recorded instruments.

Mention must be made of Flores' role as a partner to Camilo on unison fast passages, as a contrasting sonic presence and especially of his own fluent improvisation. When he enters after the achingly romantic solo piano intro on "Rumba Pa'Tí," it's like the crack of a starting gun and a rush of stallions from out of the gate. But the supreme achievement of Mano a Mano is in the union of these three spirits and the refreshing variation on the trio format they provide. —*Bob Doerschuk*

Mano a Mano: Yes; The Sidewinder; Then And Now; Mano a Mano; You And Me; Rice And Beans; Naima; No Left Turn; Alfonsina y El Mer; Rumba Pa'Tí; About You. (61:05)
Personnel: Michel Camilo, piano; Charles Flores, bass; Giovanni Hidalgo, percussion.
Ordering info: emarcy.com

Francisco Mela & Cuban Safari
Tree Of Life
HALF NOTE 4549
★★★★

Is Francisco Mela the most dangerous drummer in jazz? He's certainly one of the most passionate, definitely the most primal. Recalling a bubbling stew of Airto Moriera, Tony Williams and Idris Muhammad, the Cuban-born Mela extracts hundreds of shapes and sounds from his kit, each one earthy, dark, and charged with life. On his past records, Mela sounded constrained by his surroundings, manifesting little of the power of his live performances.

Perhaps it was due to the studio environment, or lack of likeminded musicians. Which makes *Tree Of Life* such a shock. Mela's fire is contagious here, his powerful band (including Esperanza Spalding on vocals) surging, quaking and generally clinging tightly to the drummer's swirling vortex of sound. Mela's drums are like no other in jazz: his snare drum a dry whap, his cymbals percolating like Williams on *Four And More*, his bass drum and toms like hollow logs being pounded in the rainforest. But it's *Tree Of Life*'s compositions and performances that really thrill. At times stoking straightahead flames, other times seemingly aiming for Mwandishi-like funk and fusion, *Tree Of Life* is messy, combustible and streaked through with Jimi Hendrix like guitars, distorted synthesizers, cooing flutes and Mela's sweet vocals, which are reminiscent of Charles Aznavour by way of Havana. Mela's aim is high, to fuse the music of Weather Report, Chucho Valdés, Irakere and Miles Davis' Live-Evil band. The tiny drummer practically pulls it off, if those stars in sky fell to earth and mixed with blood, fire and ice. —*Ken Micallef*

Tree Of Life: Retrograde; Africa En Mis Venas; Toma Del Poder; Yadan Mela; Classico Mela; The Nearness Of You; Yo Me; Just Now; Fiesta Conga; Gracias A La Vida. (49:21)
Personnel: Francisco Mela, drums, vocals; Elio Villafranca, Leo Genovese, piano; Uri Gurvich, Jowee Omicil, saxophones; Ben Monder, guitar; Luques Curtis, Peer Slavov, bass; Arturo Stable, Mauricio Herrera, percussion; Esperanza Spalding, vocals.
Ordering info: halfnote.net

Thomas Heberer's Clarino
Klippe
CLEAN FEED 226
★★★

The German-born, New York-based trumpeter Thomas Heberer often plays the straight man in the ICP Orchestra, the riotous and idiomatically omnivorous Dutch ensemble led by Misha Mengelberg. No matter what manner of tomfoolery happens to be playing out around him, he plays beautifully, treating the music with absolute seriousness. He approaches his own music with a similar gravity. Although he gives the musical method he pursues with his own trio a playful name, Cookbook, ICP's playfulness is rarely in evidence.

Cookbook is a system of notation and rules of engagement that uses the practice of "instant memory"—the memorization of improvisations, which can then be reintroduced into the music—in order to give maximum freedom to the musicians without yielding the composer's control. It puts a lot of responsibility for the outcome in the players' hands, and Heberer has selected musicians closely attuned to his intentions. They are both, like him, Europeans transplanted to New York, but more importantly both sound as comfortable negotiating the interactive nuances of chamber music as they are the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic requirements of jazz. Franco-German bassist Pascal Niggenkemper has the patience and timing to keep thing moving without rushing the unhurried tempos, and the way he blends his bowed strings with Heberer's sliding tones on "Luv Und Lee" is quite gorgeous. Belgian clarinetist Joachim Badenhorst shares Heberer's penchant for combining tonal adventure with exacting precision. What this session lacks is some sugar or spice that would make the austerity appealing or at least shake things up. This record is for when you want things just so, but won't do the trick when you want things to just go. —*Bill Meyer*

Klippe: Törn; Mole; Insel; Stapellauf; Luv Und Lee; Kleiner Bruder; Rah; Blanker Hans; Einlaufbier. (40.31)
Personnel: Thomas Heberer, trumpet, quarter-tone trumpet; Joachim Badenhorst, clarinet, bass clarinet; Pascal Neggenkemper, double bass.
Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

Jimmie Lunceford Set Against Expectations

To many older historians who were witness to the pre-war swing scene, Jimmie Lunceford's band was the one. "There was never anything like it," Ralph J. Gleason wrote, "a dream band." To George T. Simon, who saw Count Basie, Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington at their height, it was simply "the most exciting big band of all time, without a doubt."

That would make Lunceford pretty terrific. But was he? I must dissent. Coaxed by a mix of well-intentioned nostalgia and superlatives, a kind of Lunceford legend took posthumous root, one nurtured in part by a relative scarcity of reissues, which might have proved a sobering intrusion. Like Proust, I find Lunceford easier to praise than to examine. So in the cold light of ***The Complete Jimmie Lunceford Decca Sessions*** **(Mosaic 250; 55:06/71:26/57:63/68:34/63:54/65:35/52:34 ★★★)**, it's hard to miss the doubts.

Lunceford's was a show band, and it put on a great show. But much of what beguiled contemporary audiences was designed as much for the eye as the ear—the band's stage presence, the shine of its instruments and the flamboyance of its eye-catching chorography. Above all, it was praised for its showmanship, its precision, its well-drilled martial discipline.

What seems less elusive today is the band's calculated embodiment of a black bourgeoisie reaction against the presumed vulgarity of hot jazz and its racial stereotypes in the '30s. Lunceford moved against expectations. His style was soft, solicitous, sometimes fussy. It was polite and dance-friendly, rarely driving or assertive. Above all, it was commercial, shaped to the most middlebrow market forces of its time. When it swung, it did so lightly, avoiding Ellington's earthiness and Cab Calloway's Harlem swagger. Formed before the swing era took wing, its quiet, two-beat precision sounded counter-revolutionary if not Victorian in its seductive gentility. This is what those who love Lunceford love in his music. And at its laid-back best on "Dream Of You," "Four Or Five Times" and "Organ Grinders Swing," it has a distinctive and subtle charm.

But what comes with it is a body of work torn between arch schmaltz and flashes of imaginative orchestration. No one who's written about Lunceford has had anything good to say about the simpering vocals by Dan Grissom and Henry Wells. But this doesn't mean they can they be brushed off as passing anomalies. They were baked into the Lunceford brand and ceaselessly rendered in a cringing, over-articulated sentimentality, without a glint of irony. None is more appalling than Grissom's "Charmaine," which ends on a sharp falsetto leap worthy of a castrato. This accounts for about a third of the repertoire. Another third rests on whimsical novelties from Sy Oliver, Trummy Young and a vocal trio more appropriate to Kay Kyser than a Harlem legend. The rest is instrumental.

If the band had a model, maybe it was Paul Whiteman, who had something for everybody. Dependent on his arrangers, Lunceford was a CEO with a huge baton and a clear vision who offered many flavors, jazz one among them—but typically blended and almost always muted. In search of freshness, his arrangers often settled for clever kitsch—the tiptoeing clarinets on "Hell's Bells," the talking trumpets on "Runnin' Wild," or showy flourishes of collective virtuosity that offered momentary dazzle but little aesthetic logic. The reeds on "Sophisticated Lady" and "Sleepy Time Gal" demonstrate the best and worst of these earmarks. Their double-time staccato pirouettes aspire to Benny Carter and are jaw-dropping feats of section acrobatics. But they also show a forced fixation on art nouveau ornamentation that sounds prim and prissy in its decorative superficiality.

As Sy Oliver evolved and Eddie Durham found his footing, the band seemed game to explore. Durham's 1937 "Pigeon Walk," which cannibalizes his intro to Basie's "Time Out," takes the band about as close as it would come to the pre-war swing model. Soon after, it left Decca for Columbia/Vocalion where Durham helped move the band from its two-beat lope to a simpler, more kinetic excitement that it would bring back to Decca, 1941–'45. Gerald Wilson's "Mazurka" and "Strictly Instrumental" come almost as atonements for all the Grissom vocals. And Mosaic has made sure the old Deccas never sounded more alive, and backed them with authoritative notes from Eddy Determeyer, Lunceford's biographer. The question is if Lunceford's lofty reputation survives it all. **DB**

Ordering info: mosaicrecords.com

Vince Mendoza
Nights On Earth

HORIZONTAL JAZZ 092-011-1
★★★½

Vince Mendoza waves his wand over exquisitely unadorned darkling moods of shadow and repose. He draws on subtle Latin melodies with wisps of bolero and tango tinges. Excitement peaks early—flamenco flashes on "Otoño," taut, epic vocals for Brazilian Luciana Souza and Malian Tom Diakité, a trumpet cameo for Ambrose Akinmusire, and lofty musings for saxophonists Bob Mintzer or Joe Lovano over Metropol strings. Guitarists John Abercrombie, Romero Lubambo, Nguyên Lê, and John Scofield carve brief moments, too, though none as punchy as Mendoza's collaboration with the latter on the 2010 album *54*. Mid-set fades into a swoon of bittersweet, languid odes for Hector del Curto's bereft bandoneon with string quartet and Fred Sherry's august cello. Mendoza's hushed textures and cool palette soars highest when heat warms its bones, felt most in occasional percussion fillips and Lovano's excited flurries on "The Stars You Saw" and "Beauty And Sadness." —*Fred Bouchard*

Nights On Earth: Otoño; Poem Of The Moon; Ao Mar; Conchita; The Stars You Saw; Addio; Shekere; Beauty And Sadness; The Night We Met; Gracias; Everything Is You; Lullaby. (70:53)
Personnel: Metropol Orchestra members (2, 3, 5, 7, 8); Luciana Souza (3), Lorraine Perry (10), Tom Diakité (7, plus kora), vocals; Jim Walker, flute (2, 11); Joe Lovano (5, 8), Bob Mintzer (3, 11), Stephane Guillaume (4, 7), reeds; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet (3); Rick Todd (1, 4, 11) French horn; Jim Self, tuba (1, 4); John Abercrombie, electric guitar (2, 5, 8), John Scofield, electric guitar (3, 10), Nguyên Lê, electric guitar (1, 4, 7); Romero Lubambo, acoustic guitar (3), Louis Winsberg, acoustic guitar (1); Alan Pasqua, piano (1, 3, 4, 9–11), Kenny Werner, piano (2, 5, 8); Larry Goldings, organ (1, 4, 10); Michel Alibo, electric bass (7), Jimmy Johnson, electric bass (1, 3, 4, 9–11); Peter Erskine, drums (1, 3, 4, 9–11), Greg Hutchinson, drums (2, 5, 8), Karim Ziad, drums (7); Alex Acuna, Luis Conte, Christo Cortez, Rhani Krija, Miguel Sanchez, percussion; Hector del Curto, bandoneon (6, 9, 12); Fred Sherry, cello (12); Marcia Dickstein, harp (2, 11); Andy Narell, steel drums (4); Judd Miller, synthesizer programming (7, 9); Vince Mendoza, keyboards (7, 9).
Ordering info: horizontaljazz.com

Mike Garson
The Bowie Variations

REFERENCE RECORDINGS 123
★★★½

From Björk and Radiohead to Joni Mitchell and Nick Drake, the songbook from the latter half of the 20th century has been filling up with worthy non-Beatles material. Surprisingly, David Bowie's work hasn't been explored nearly as thoroughly. Mike Garson is the perfect and logical candidate to delve into his music. The pianist first played on Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* tour in 1972 and recorded with him through the mid-'70s and again from the mid-'90s to the mid-oughts. His doing so as a solo (though sometimes overdubbed) piano album makes the project that much more personal.

The first of two interpretations of Bowie's initial calling card, 1969's "Space Oddity," opens the album, with elegant arpeggios replacing the tense uncertainty of the original. The piano overdubs on two of Bowie's best-known numbers, "Heroes" and "Let's Dance," create a bustling, interweaving hymn out of the former and an escalating stride showcase from the latter.

On the "Battle For Britain/Loneliest Guy/Disco King," Garson culled solos he played on those late-era Bowie album cuts into an emotionally far-reaching medley—*The Garson-Bowie Variations*, so to speak. The album's sole original, "Tribute To David," flows with an impressionistic fluidity that mirrors Bowie's career. —*Yoshi Kato*

The Bowie Variations: Space Oddity; John, I'm Only Dancing; Life On Mars; Heroes; Ashes To Ashes; Variations On "Changes"; Let's Dance; Battle For Britain/Loneliest Guy/Disco King; Tribute To David; Wild Is The Wind; Space Oddity—Take 2. (49:51)
Personnel: Mike Garson, piano.
Ordering info: referencerecordings.com

Marquis Hill
New Gospel
SELF-RELEASE
★★★

Melvin Vines
Harlem Jazz Machine
SELF-RELEASE
★★ ½

Melvin Vines, a veteran of the New York circuit, is celebrating his sixth year leading his own group, the Harlem Jazz Machine. Marquis Hill is a 24-year-old Chicago musician a few years removed from his studies at Northern Illinois University. While the trumpeters are very different players, both have immersed themselves in hard-bop.

Vines' *Harlem Jazz Machine* is a recorded evolution of a group born from semiweekly gigs at St. Nick's Pub in New York City. After assembling what he calls his dream band and heading into a marathon six-hour recording session, Vines emerged with eight short tunes, and while this mad-dash recording technique gives the disc a live energy, it leaves the music a bit loose and frayed at the edges. Everyone gets ample solo time on the disc, but the improvisational standout is alto saxophonist Yosuke Sato, who plays with a bright, pliant tone that perfectly fits his smears and quick, acrobatic runs. Of the three originals, pianist Chip Crawford's "84" is the most polished. Vines contributes "Ske" and "Kay," both medium-tempo, groove-based tunes; he also pays tribute to his trumpet influences, picking a few lesser-trod compositions by Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard and Hugh Masekela.

Harlem Jazz Machine is progressive in its approach to bop, mixing in world music and other styles. A few replacement players were called for the date—tenor saxophonist Tivon Pennicot and drummer Taru Alexander stood in for musicians who couldn't make the session—but the band moves as one. With the addition of a percussionist to the band's three-horn front line, however, there's a lot going on, and some of the melodic lines get a bit muddled.

Partly due to how it was recorded, *New Gospel* is a tighter overall effort—the studio-tracked music is sharp; the lines are clean, and the band is locked in. Hill takes eight original, relatively compact tunes to introduce himself as a composer, one who writes short melodies and provides plentiful solo time for his capable band.

Hill seems comfortable in a variety of tempi, and unlike the relatively lively tunes on *Harlem Jazz Machine*, *New Gospel* includes a few slower offerings. Hill maintains a vivacious energy through a downtempo introduction to "The Believer" before it turns into a medium, sidewinding adventure, and John Tate holds the ballad "Autumn" together with his steady bass. The simplicity of the tunes is refreshing; they aren't weighed down by too many moving parts. As on *Harlem Jazz Machine*, Hill's saxophonists are fierce competitors for the spotlight. Chris Madsen takes an expert solo turn on "Law And Order," and Christopher McBride's alto approach, though wholly different than Sato's, is no less thrilling.

While Hill presents straight-forward compositions and Vines overlays multiple voices into a thick stew, both trumpeters have a similar outlook to playing. In their trumpet tones—an almost muted, molasses-like sound—groove-based tunes and short melodies, both pay homage to the past while staying cognizant of the future. —*Jon Ross*

New Gospel: Law And Order; The Believer; New Gospel; Autumn; A Portrait Of Fola; The Thump; Bass Solo; Goodbye Fred. (36:39)
Personnel: Marquis Hill, trumpet and flugelhorn; Christopher McBride, alto saxophone; Chris Madsen, tenor saxophone; Joshua Moshier, piano; Kenneth Oshodi, guitar; John Tate, bass; Jeremy Cunningham, drums.
Ordering info: marquishill.com

Harlem Jazz Machine: Ske; Kay; 84; My Heart Belongs To Daddy; Our Man Higgins; Udwi; Sky Dive; Totem Pole. (55:34)
Personnel: Kay Mori, Makane Kouyate, vocals; Chip Crawford, piano; Yosuke Sato, alto saxophone; Tivon Pennicot, tenor saxophone; Aaron James, bass; Taru Alexander, drums; Roland Guerrero, percussion.
Ordering info: melvinvines.com

Etienne Charles
Kaiso
CULTURE SHOCK ECOO3
★★★★

Nowadays, young jazz trumpeters are releasing fewer truly "feel good" albums—those that don't hit the listeners over the head with lip-bursting virtuosity or willfully oblique compositional structures while also not delving into mawkish pop jazz.

But Etienne Charles delivers the goods handsomely with his winning third disc, *Kaiso*. This disc follows suit of the 28-year-old Trinidad native's previous two discs, *Culture Shock* and *Folklore*, in that he places a strong emphasis on calypso rhythms. But instead of focusing on mostly original compositions, Charles takes a decidedly curatorial route on *Kaiso* by shining the spotlight on the classic calypso repertoire of his homeland, notably the songs of Lord Kitchener, Mighty Sparrow and Roaring Lion.

Much of the disc's appeal comes from Charles' lyrical approach on the trumpet. He hones a velvet, supple tone that's as melodically captivating as it is rhythmically agile. When it comes to uptempo songs like the infectious "J'overt Barrio" or the humorous "Ten To One Is Murder," Charles delivers his ebullient improvisations with the elegance of a world-class ballet dancer. No matter how knotty his essays may become, there's always a gracefulness to Charles' playing that's immediately pleasing.

Charles excels on ballads, too, as demonstrated on the orchestral arrangement of Slinger Francisco's "Teresa," on which he displays a soulful maturity in terms of phrasing and timbre control that often doesn't come quickly to trumpeters his age.

Charles also chose well-picked bandmates to help give *Kaiso* its modern zeal. Bassist Ben Williams and drummer Obed Calvaire drive the grooves splendidly, while alto saxophonist Brian Hogans and tenor saxophonist Jacques Schwartz-Bart join the trumpeter on the frontline, creating silvery harmonies. Sullivan Fortner Jr. and the legendary pianist Monty Alexander divide the duties on the piano chair, both delivering delectable, upbeat accompaniments and bright solos. Percussionist Ralph MacDonald contributes his calypso breakdowns on the sauntering "Kitch's Bebop Of Calypso" and the festive "Sugar Bum Bum," then shows his sensitivity on the gorgeous ballad "Rose."

The ensemble also engages in sparkling interactive dialogue that prevents Charles from merely skating over the surface of bustling rhythms and singable melodies. With nary a boring moment on *Kaiso*, this captivating disc will help Charles gain wider recognition. —*John Murph*

Kaiso: Kaiso; J'overt Barrio; Russian Satellite; Congo Bara; Ten To One Is Murder; Teresa; Kitch's Bebop Of Calypso; Rose; My Landlady; Margie; Sugar Bum Bum. (60:10)
Personnel: Etienne Charles, trumpet, flugelhorn, cuatro, percussion, vocals; Brian Hogans, alto saxophone, piano (6), vocals; Jacques Schwarz-Bart, tenor saxophone, vocals; Sullivan Fortner Jr., piano, vocals; Ben Williams, double bass; Oden Calvaire, drums, vocals; 3canal, vocals (2); Monty Alexander, piano (5, 7, 9, 10); Ralph MacDonald, percussion (6, 7, 8, 11); Lord Superior, vocals and guitar (7, 9); Richard DeRosa, orchestra conduction.
Ordering info: etiennecharles.com

Parco Della Musica Jazz Orchestra & Maurizio Giammarco
Open On Sunday
PARCO DELLA MUSICA 26
★★★★

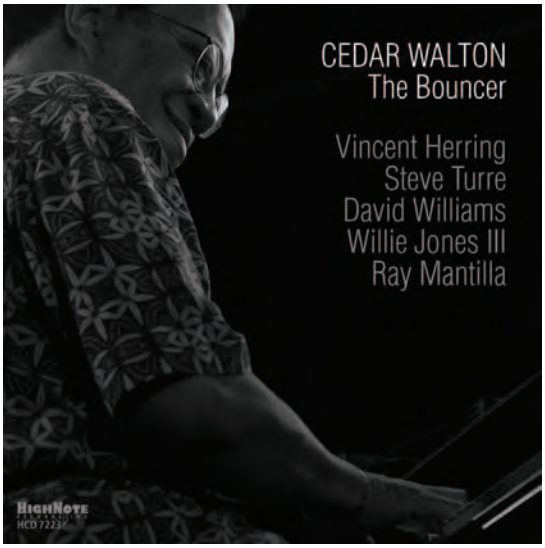
Rome-based PMJO boasts a half-dozen fine composers and arrangers. The cumulative musical profile is that of a brainy organization whose writers reach for the difficult and demanding but never lapse into the unmusical. Contrapuntal brass and reeds, rhythmic complexity, rising and falling lines, the ability to let the rhythm section play alone—and the pieces to therefore breathe—are some of the PMJO's hallmarks. Composer/arranger Maurizio Giammarco emerges as the strong horse. His "Blues & Violets" is a marvel of cyclical, interlocking lines and sections. The stop-time reed/brass waterfall on Giammarco's otherwise swinging "G. Pleasure" is brief but galvanizing.

The band is stocked with capable musicians. Execution is uniformly clean and played with great verve. If the composite writing outweighs the solos, there are also first-rate instrumental voices. Giammarco's vibrato-laden tenor sounds a little quaint on Mario Corvini's "Ellos Quedan." Trumpeter Claudio Corvini's renders a soulful statement on the former, bops admirably on "G. Pleasure," and sings beautifully over Mario Corvini's floating, pastel reed charts on "Red Wine." Pianist Pino Iodice's swinging workout on "New Identity" begs for a trio setting.

Programmatically, the second disc drags a bit. Meandering themes and middling tempos don't make for exciting listening. The funk bite of "Aires Pics" busts out of the doldrums as Luca Pirozzi's churning electric bass underpins the punching brass. Trombonist Massimo Pirone turns in a near-galvanizing feature on Giammarco's "Vortex Waltz," an intricate theme whose interlocking sections conjure a Piranese labyrinth. —*Kirk Silsbee*

Open On Sunday: Disc One: Blubber; Red Wine; Duru Duru Song; New Identity; Blues & Violets; Ellos Quedan; G. Pleasure (40:20). Disc Two: G. Pleasure; Call; Roman Shades; Aires Pics; Vortex Waltz; It Don't Mean A Thing. (51:15).
Personnel: Maurizio Giammarco, conductor, tenor saxophone; Fernando Brusco, Claudio Corvini, Giancarlo Ciminelli, Aldo Bassi, trumpets, flugelhorns; Mario Corvini, Massimo Pirone, Luca Giustozzi, trombones; Roberto Pecorelli, bass trombone, tuba; Gianni Oddi, Daniele Tittarelli, soprano and alto saxophones, clarinets, flutes; Gianni Savelli, Marco Conti, soprano and tenor saxophones, clarinets, flutes; Elvio Ghigliordini, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, flute; Pino Iodice, piano, Fender Rhodes; Luca Pirozzi, double bass, electric bass; Pietro Iodice, drums.
Ordering info: auditorium.com

Cedar Walton
The Bouncer
HIGH NOTE 7223
★★



For years, Cedar Walton topped my list of favorite players. Funky, inventive, tasteful: All the right adjectives applied in the recordings and live appearances I was privileged to experience from the 1970s onward.

The bugaboo that can raise its head even in the work of supreme performers usually makes its presence felt subtly, in nuances of what were once exquisitely executed phrases and inspired inventions. This is the impression left by *The Bouncer,* a set of solid and swinging tracks that nonetheless lack something of the spirit that was always central to Walton's work.

This perception stems first from Walton's fidelity to the midrange. Whether the tune is a ballad or up, he settles around four octaves rooted on middle C. This creates an impression of sameness—more critically, it diminishes the expectation that something really unexpected is going to happen. On J.J. Johnson's "Lament," only a couple of scampering runs toward the high notes nudge him out of the clusters and fragmentary figures he otherwise confines to a more limited range. In moving to the final verse at 7:47, Walton's elaboration on the tune feels a bit muddy, with several notes fudged on the way down.

That solo also includes a triplet descending figure that Walton falls back on elsewhere. He starts his solo on "Martha's Prize" with some nice developmental ideas and a pretty clean articulation, but then he repeats the same triplet downward spiral in the second verse that he played in the first, and by the time he plays it again three minutes in, he sounds like he's grasping for ideas. There is plenty of thoughtful structure in his solo, but the impression lacks fire. And listeners will hear a variation on this lick several times in "Underground Memoirs," to the point that anyone could become aware that we're making more than a few trips to that particular well.

The group plays well throughout *The Bouncer*, though they seem more intent on laying down the backup parts than taking off on unexpected ideas that Walton tosses their way. Trombonist Steve Turre enervates a couple of cuts, blasting into his choruses on the title track like a scene-stealer. But his decision to use a mute on "Underground Memoirs" is puzzling; the buzzy timbre is distracting, where a more open tone might have fit better.

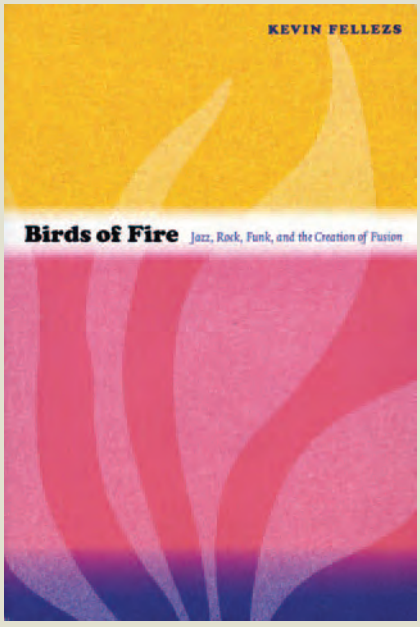
This would be good stuff by anybody's measure but Walton's. The impression this disc makes rests above all on the listener's expectations. *—Bob Doerschuk*

The Bouncer: The Bouncer; Lament; Bell For Bags; Halo; Underground Memoirs; Willie's Groove; Got To Get To The Island; Martha's Prize. (54:22)
Personnel: Cedar Walton, piano; Steve Turre, trombone; David Williams, bass; Willie Jones III, drums; Ray Mantilla, percussion.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Fusion's Origins, Endgames

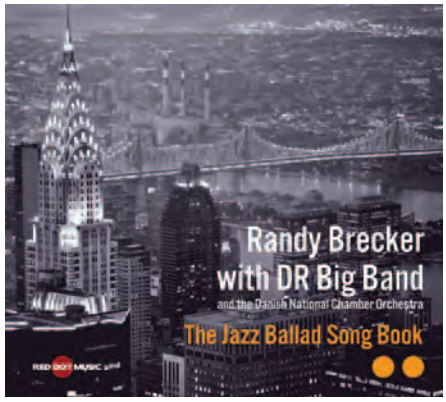
Kevin Fellezs' meticulous study of the origins and endgames of '70s fusion, ***Birds Of Fire: Jazz, Rock, Funk, and the Creation of Fusion*** **(Duke University Press)**, is a well-researched, highly academic and tightly knit tome that should be welcome by anyone still entranced by the genre that exploded post-*Bitches Brew* before limply vaporizing by decade's end. A professor of music at the University of California, Fellezs approaches fusion from myriad angles. Focusing on four principals: Tony Williams, Herbie Hancock, Joni Mitchell and John McLaughlin, Fellezs discusses the musical, social and, all too frequently, racial components, from which fusion drew and soon challenged. Fellezs asks, "Can fusion be heard as a strategy by [Tony] Williams to make visible the racial assumptions behind genre categories? Was it his desire to transform the racial logic of genre into something more representative of the diversity subsumed under rock's (white) universalism…?"

At times, *Birds Of Fire* is more concerned with the politics that surrounded the music than the music itself, such as when he writes, "As a fan of the MC5, Williams was conceivably aware of this band's association with the white radical group the White Panthers." So what? Even if this were true, when great musicians play, they aren't thinking politics. But Fellezs enjoys spinning such provocations, though he always returns to the music, and that's when *Birds Of Fire* becomes essential. Fellezs offers fascinating biographical detail and the kind of serious critical overview that the music has long deserved. His knowledge is impressive, his perspective thought-provoking, reflected in fascinating historical tidbits and observations. How many recall that pre-Head Hunters/post-Mwandishi, Herbie Hancock-scored TV commercials, once using "Maiden Voyage" as the background for a cologne advertisement? Also of note, Fellezs creates the term "broken middle" to describe fusion as "a distinct idiom moving between jazz and other genres," framing the music as a renegade child that was accepted neither by parents nor siblings, but which innovated nonetheless.



While labeling a new genre with as clumsy a term as the "broken middle," it well describes the untrammeled path those musicians took. Residing literally between genres, neither rock nor jazz, but succinctly gathering energy, melody, improvisation and power, respectively, from both, this "broken middle" music remains broken to this day. Fellezs' sometimes circuitous conjecture and academic-speak ("for the most part, rock discourse on authenticity stresses a certain lack of technique, but, like any other idiom, maintains various internal markets to register technical competence") can be maddening, as is his total failure to examine Weather Report, fusion's most brilliant and wide ranging group. But *Birds Of Fire* remains one-of-a-kind, critical reading. **DB**

Ordering info: dukeupress.edu



Randy Brecker with DR Big Band
The Jazz Ballad Song Book

HALF NOTE 4547

★★½

Guest soloist gigs are nearly all about marketing. Whether the genre is straight classical, so-called "pops" or jazz, the idea of having a star instrumentalist drop in is almost always aimed at attracting new listeners for the local orchestra. That's not to say that good music can't also be a byproduct.

Randy Brecker plays some exceptional trumpet here; no surprise, given his track record. Occasionally, as in moments of "Someday My Prince Will Come," the DR Big Band—conducted by Michael Bojesen and complemented by the Danish National String Orchestra—swings in support of their guest. The first third of Gordon Jenkins' "This Is All I Ask" combines Brecker with spare backing. But, more often, the band lumbers, often under the additional weight of a full string orchestra. The arrangements play a big role. Two charts by Vince Mendoza—of Brecker's compositions "Foregone Conclusion" and "I Talk To The Trees"—leave more breathing space, although they don't do anything to rein in hyperactive drummer Søren Frost. Other arrangements pile on the instruments as thick as a Phil Spector recording session.

From the inclusion of tunes like John Barry's "Goldfinger" to the way arrangers Peter Jensen or Jesper Riis stack the horns, this recording sounds like a throwback to the time when big bands didn't know how to be light on their feet. That's not to say that every big band has to soar like Maria Schneider's or be edgy like Darcy James Argue's, but if mass is to be used, it's best to swing it like Count Basie or Buddy Rich, not just layer it on. —*James Hale*

The Jazz Ballad Song Book: All Or Nothing At All; Cry Me A River; Someday My Prince Will Come; Foregone Conclusion; Goldfinger; Skylark; I Talk To The Trees; This Is All I Ask; The Immigrant/Godfather; 'Round Midnight. (70:39)
Personnel: Randy Brecker, Anders Gustafsson, Christer Gustafsson, Thomas Kjærgaard, Mads la Cour, Gerard Presencer, trumpets; Vincent Nilsson, Steen Hansen, Peter Jensen, Annette Huseby Saxe, Jakob Munck, trombones; Nicolai Schultz, Peter Fuglsang, Lars Møller, Uffe Markussen, Pelle Fridell, reeds; Henrik Gunde, piano; Per Gade, guitar; Kaspar Vadsholt, bass; Søren Frost, drums; with the Danish National String Orchestra.
Ordering info: randybrecker.com

Gojogo
28,000 Days
PORTO FRANCO 29
★★★★

Adding up the diverse backgrounds of the members of Gojogo hints at the San Francisco collective's enchanting intersection of Middle Eastern traditionalism and avant-garde jazz classicism. On the largely instrumental *28,000 Days*, the melodic fusion makes for a rewarding exercise in which the cerebral material doesn't consume the listener in an extroverted manner. Rather, the quartet's textured compositions force you to come to them.

Apart from the measured performances of its participants, the key to Gojogo's elegance resides with production values and patient tempos that prize tonal nuance. A majority of the understated pieces incrementally unfold, taking small steps that shade honeyed romantic themes and cautiously optimistic moods. Free of humor, songs nonetheless steer clear of the type of intellectual seriousness that often arises in such hybrid works. Percussionist Elias Reitz employs electronic washes and exotic percussion—including a double-headed north Indian drum called the *dholki*—to paint background canvases with swirled colors and multi-dimensional strokes. The latter contrast chamber-like string fare and acoustic bass grooves, bonding together arrangements ranging from gypsy ballads to cinematic dreamscapes.

The only occasion on which the group sounds forced comes during a version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Bali Hai." Guest Will Sprott's vocals are out of step with the creeping vibe and subtract from the experience. A one-off with Stuart Bogie's tenor saxophone during "Hide" proves much more successful, extending the swing-rock territory Morphine bridged two decades ago.

—Bob Gendron

28,000 Days: Tale Of Tales; Ebb; Escapist; Yekermo; Turbines; Bali Hai; 28,000 Days; Firebird; War Waltz; God Doesn't Make Junk; Hide; Reselection. (59:15)
Personnel: Sarah Jo Zaharako, violin/vocals; Roger Riedlbauer, guitar; Elias Reitz, percussion/electronics/guitar; Eric Perney, bass; Gabriel Robinson, tabla (2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12); Tim Strand, drums and percussion (3, 8, 11); Aram Shelton, bass clarinet (3); Will Sprott, vocals (6); Alex Kelly, cello (6); Stuart Bogie, tenor saxophone and flute (11).
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Composing From A Drummer's Perspective

There have been many great drummer/composers in jazz: Denzil Best, Joe Chambers and Tony Williams, to name just a few. I am sure it took arduous study of the principles of pitch-based music, composition and theory to get to their level of excellence. There is a tremendous amount of study that composition requires, yet I encourage any drummer at any level to at least try to start composing immediately—if only because you will undoubtedly learn a lot during the process that will make you a better musician.

Composing makes you think about all aspects of music, which in turn can help you in your role as a drummer. A great drummer is one who can shape and instantly transform the music as it's played in the same way a composer shapes and transforms a piece as it's being written. The difference is the amount of time you have to do it: The composer works in slow motion and has a lot of time to process and develop ideas, while the drummer has to make quick decisions based on what is occurring in the moment. The drummer who practices the slower process of composition will cultivate new skills that enable one to make quick and effective "compositional" choices during live performances.

I know from experience how intimidating it can be for a drummer to compose for musicians who have an advanced harmonic understanding. Most drummers simply don't feel familiar with the world of pitches because they are not dealing with them like their friends who play a horn, piano, guitar, etc. "Pitch content" is a topic young drummers who are interested in composing often ask me about. I recommend that all drummers study music theory and piano at the very least, as it can only add depth to their playing.

Despite my own trepidation at the beginning, I knew I just had to go for it—even with my limited knowledge, I just decided to compose to see what would happen. One helpful technique I used was to think of each compositional attempt simply as an experiment. In this way I wasn't attached to composing a great piece and could see that even my "failures" were successes in that I could learn more from a failure than from a success. Learning what doesn't work can be more helpful and give one more options than learning what does work. Once I found something that did work, I did not want to reuse or rehash it, so that idea had a limited life, whereas all the ideas that did not work led me again and again to explore different options. So all of those failures ultimately challenged me to find something that was new and different to me.

I am most likely biased on this point, but I believe rhythm is the most universal and accessible element in music, so it can be an advantage to approach composing from a drummer's perspective. I can use my working knowledge of rhythm, form and "the big picture" (i.e. what a composition is about, what emotion or message is being conveyed) to develop a piece. In my experience, non-drummers often think of pitches first, and therefore the rhythmic element and "the big picture" are secondary. It does take me longer to write a piece than a non-drummer because I can't fall back on scales or licks as some who have practiced pitch-based exercises extensively do. I find, though, that this can be an advantage because I may have a better chance of coming up with pitch material that is in some way fresher in that I don't have those familiar pitch-based practices to fall back on or rely on.

Earlier on in my studies, I tried two experiments to explore my theory about the importance of rhythm. I wrote a piece with only rhythm, making sure it had a good structure and form without any pitches. Then I added pitches to it. (I used this technique again recently with the piece "Praya Dance" on the ONJ *Shut Up And Dance* album.) I also transcribed a great Max Roach solo, "Conversation," and orchestrated it for ensemble.

Structurally and rhythmically, I knew that Roach's solo worked, and I kept at my own piece until I was happy with it. (There is no substitute for experience, which is how you learn when something "works"—every time you hear something that works, you are building an experiential catalog for future use). When I added pitches to these rhythmic pieces, it only increased the effectiveness and color of the overall composition.

Aside from dealing with "pitch content," I am often asked the following questions by young musicians who are thinking about composing: How do I start composing? And what do I do once I have something that seems like it could be the beginning of a piece?

I have heard two of my favorite composers, Bob Brookmeyer and Muhal Richard Abrams, say that you only need one short entity, a cell or seed, to start a piece. It could be a chord, a pitch series, a melody or a non-musical cell like a phone number. (My new phone number was the seed of The Claudia Quintet piece "Be Happy.") I've come to realize that I can prepare for future pieces by brainstorming and creating ongoing lists of idea seeds that help me in times of creative dryness and keep numerous possibilities floating somewhere in my consciousness.

Before I used this approach, the main method I used (and I think many others use) was to go to the piano and improvise until the gods of creativity threw me a little nugget that I could identify as "something" and a possible beginning of a piece. This method works, but I quickly realized that my pieces were destined to sound like other pieces of mine, and perhaps pieces of others that I liked and could play on the piano. Also, my hands seemed to be the chief decision-makers, as opposed to my ears or heart. For this reason, I put that method away knowing I could always go back to it and decided to use alternatives instead.

I remember Abrams teaching that a cell could be absolutely anything. Realizing that it could be musical but also non-musical was a freeing experience for me. After thinking for some time about musical cells, such as a melody, pitch series, chord progression, vamp and rhythm, I then started my list of non-musical cells, such as words, numbers, poems, movies, paintings and experiences. Of course, you then have to translate these items into music at some point, but this can be an incredibly fun and creative way to integrate extra meaning into your pieces. Luckily the first seven or eight (depending upon what language you use) letters of the alphabet also correspond to pitches, so that is one place to start. The numbers 1–12 (or 0–11) are all the chromatic pitches in an octave, so you can play with arranging numbers that are personally meaningful to you in a composition and see if you like the translated pitches.

My next step in the process is to think about other tools that I can use to compose. In my list of tools there is the piano, the drums, my voice, various keyboard percussion instruments, melodica, the computer (and all the associated programs on the computer), a recording device and paper (musical staff paper or just regular paper). How you use these tools and in what order can greatly affect the content of your pieces. I often use combinations of these tools during the process to create a balanced piece.

Once I have "something," I make a concerted effort to listen to the material and let the material tell me what it is and what it wants to be. I know that might sound esoteric, but give it a try—allowing yourself to be open to this may be the key to hearing the composition's needs. In addition, for me it is helpful to think about "composition" versus "song." Some material has in it something that can be developed into a multilayered, complex composition. Other material simply wants to be presented as a song. And some material can be both.

At this point in the process, it is important to remind myself to not get attached to the material and to let go of its label (e.g., melody, bass line, chord progression, etc.). This way I can play with the material in a very slow type of improvisation (also known as "composing"). If I find something that works well as a bass line, I say, "This could be a nice bass line, but let's play with it and see what else it could be." I like to think of the material I have as liquid and pliable, and I do not want it ever to truly solidify. Playing with the material is how I develop what I have, how I allow it to be what it naturally wants to be.

Early on, knowing just a little bit of theory was really helpful to me in this process. Basic techniques such as transposition, inversion, retrograde and augmentation can be used on any material. What is really interesting to me is that by using these techniques on the material, I immediately see the structural integrity of it. If, for instance, I play it backwards (retrograde), and it still sounds good to me or even better than the original, I take it as a good indicator that the material has the right quality to be developed. Experience (from your own attempts and from studying other pieces) can help you build your intuition, which helps you choose which processes to use and how.

Sometimes I'm lucky and a composition just comes out quickly and naturally, but more and more I use the lists of idea seeds and tools to help me get through that "staring at blank music paper" moment. This method also helps make each piece sound independent of past and future pieces because each one comes from a different type of seed and with a different sequence of tools utilized. The process I'm writing about would take pages and pages to fully describe, but I hope this article can give you, if you need it, the inspiration and motivation to begin experimenting with composing. **DB**

GRAMMY-NOMINATED DRUMMER, COMPOSER AND BANDLEADER JOHN HOLLENBECK IS A PLAYFUL VIRTUOSO FOREVER SEEKING TO SURPRISE HIMSELF AND HIS AUDIENCE. HOLLENBECK HAS RELEASED 11 CDS AS A LEADER AND HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS AWARDS FOR HIS MUSIC, INCLUDING A GUGGENHEIM FELLOWSHIP. HOLLENBECK SERVES AS A PROFESSOR OF JAZZ DRUMS AND IMPROVISATION AT THE JAZZ INSTITUTE BERLIN. VISIT HIM ONLINE AT JOHNHOLLENBECK.COM.

Demystifying The Tihai

Formulas For Syncopation In Indian Rhythms

In demystifying the Tihai, my goal is to first examine the rhythms, phrases and Tihai formulas from Indian music as explained by traditional masters. Then, beginning on the next page, we will distill and express this knowledge from the Western musical perspective, creating new conceptual material using Western notation. The purpose of these exercises is to make the Indian rhythmic knowledge accessible to musicians working in many genres of Western music.

Going to an Indian percussion master and learning Indian rhythms in person—by clapping hands to keep the time and tala cycles while speaking syllables—can be an amazing experience. These rhythms are best learned and experienced in the presence of a master teacher who can instill the Indian syncopation and feel to your musical abilities. It's a proven method of aural and oral tradition that I recommend to every serious student of Indian music, as there is no substitute for it. However, I also do believe that the knowledge of Tihai formulas, syncopation and rhythms from India can be broken down and understood with equivalent Western music patterns and examples (beginning on page 77)—which are easy to incorporate into modern musical education.

What is a Tihai? Here is my basic definition: "An identifiable phrase repeated three times asymmetrically over the bar lines, creating a syncopation where the final repeated phrase's last beat becomes the downbeat of a new bar going back to the groove." Listeners of Indian music may have noticed phrases being repeated three times, resulting in interesting rhythmic tension and release. This usually happens in the cadences or transition points.

In this article we will look at playing a three-over-four feel (three equal beats felt/played over four equal beats) and learn the phrasing of a Tihai formula based on this feel.

Here is a short guide of several steps that a traditional Indian master might take you (the student) through during an in-person lesson.

Indian Master Lesson

1) First, the master would establish a comfortable pulse around 60–80 bpm by clapping his/her hands and singing the syllable "Ta" for each beat. Then the master would ask you to clap with and sing with him/her. Four beats in Indian notation may look like (___ ___ ___ ___), where each dash line is a beat of the main pulse.

With the syllable "Ta" filled in for each beat, the exercise could be represented as such:
(Ta Ta Ta Ta)

2) Next you may be asked to speak the syllables "Ta-Ka-Di-Mi" (in Carnatic music), "Ki-Tu-Ta-Ka" (Hindustani Pakhawaj) or "Dha-Ti-Gi-Na" (Tabla bols) evenly over each pulse or clap, to indicate a grouping of four. In this article we will use syllables that are from Carnatic music. Evenly spoken over each beat, it would be:
(Ta-Ka-Di-Mi Ta-Ka-Di-Mi Ta-Ka-Di-Mi Ta-Ka-Di-Mi)

3) Then speak the syllables "Ta-Ki-Tu" in exact triplets over each pulse or clap. This would be called "Tisram" or "Tisra":
(Ta-Ki-Tu Ta-Ki-Tu Ta-Ki-Tu Ta-Ki-Tu)

4) Now for the tricky part: Stay in Tisra over each beat, but replace speaking "Ta-Ki-Tu" a total of four times by speaking "Ta-Ka-Di-Mi" over it three times:
(Ta-Ka-Di Mi-Ta-Ka Di-Mi-Ta Ka-Di-Mi)

5) At this point, if your claps and voice are in total sync with the master's claps and voice, you are beginning to get the feel for three phrases played evenly over four beats.

6) Next, the master may ask you to speak only "Ta," "Ka" and "Di," and omit speaking "Mi" where I have put in a zero (0). The master may refer to as a "Bal," "Oosi," or simply a "gap," which Western musicians can refer to as a rest:
(Ta-Ka-Di 0-Ta-Ka Di-0-Ta Ka-Di-0)

7) Next, the master will only speak the syllable of "Ta" and omit speaking "Ka" and "Di," thus creating a three pulse with the "Ta" syllable over the four pulse of the hand claps (students of Western music would recognize quarter-note triplets spoken as "Ta" over the main pulse where you are clapping four beats):
(Ta-0-0 0-Ta-0 0-0-Ta 0-0-0)

8) The master will replace the syllables of "Ta-Ka-Di" with "Ta-Ki-Taam," where the held vocal sound "am" replaces the (0). Using "Taam" is important for the next step, when we finally speak and execute a Tihai:
(Ta-Ki-Ta am-Ta-Ki Taam-Ta Ki-Taam)

9) To create a Tihai, the master will ask you to speak this phrase a total of three times, but with another added value of zero (0) after the first and second phrase. So now you are speaking "Taam" where you are replacing the original value of zero (0) and adding another gap or rest between the phrases:

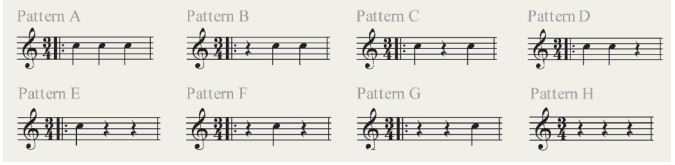
(Ta-Ki-Ta	**am-Ta-Ki**	**Taam-Ta**	**Ki-Taam,**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**
0-Ta-Ki	**Taam-Ta**	**Ki-Taam**	**Ta-Ki-Ta,**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**
am-0-Ta	**Ki-Taam**	**Ta-Ki-Ta**	**am-Ta-Ki)**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

Taam

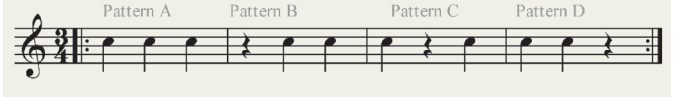
1 (downbeat of the new bar)

10) In the final version of the Tihai, the

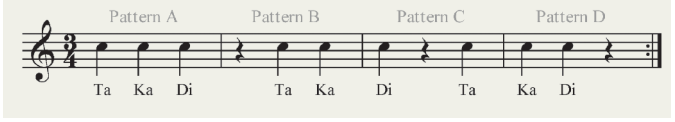
Western Patterns



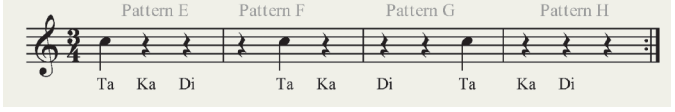
Western Example 1



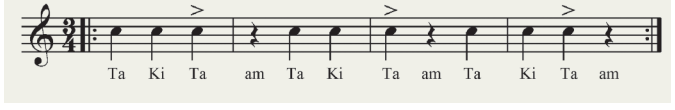
Western Example 2



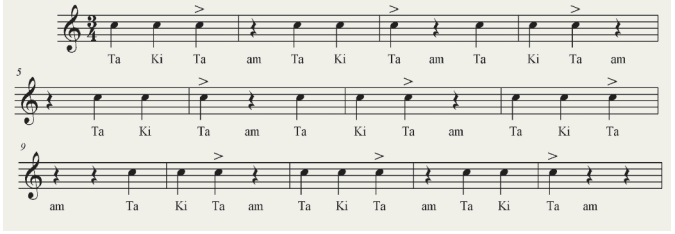
Western Example 3



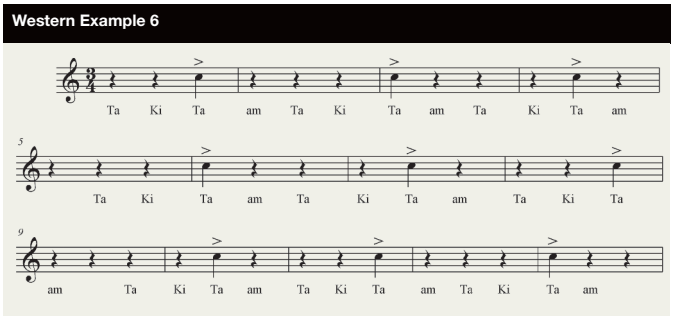
Western Example 4



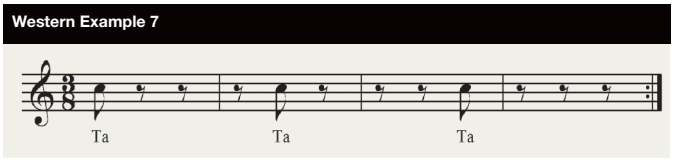
Western Example 5



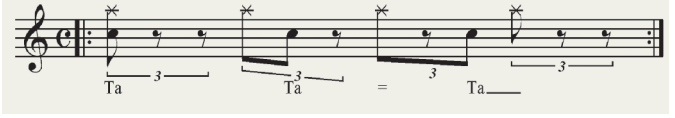
Western Example 6



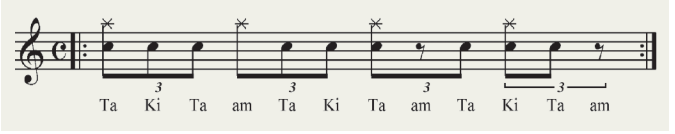
Western Example 7



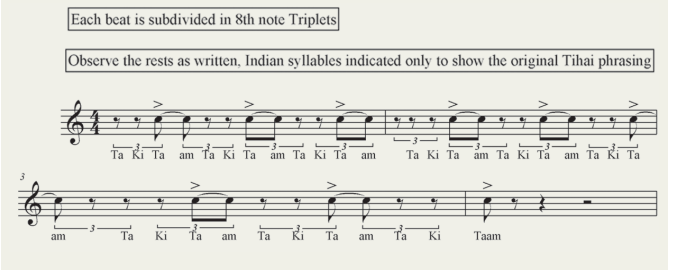
Western Example 8



Western Example 9



Western Example 10



master will only speak the syllable of "Taam" in each phrase, making it a Tihai using three-over-four feel.

(0-0-Ta	**am-0-0**	**Taam-0**	**0-Taam,**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**
0-0-0	**Taam-0**	**0-Taam**	**0-0-Ta,**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**
am-0-0	**0-Taam**	**0-0-Ta**	**am-0-0)**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

Taam

1 (downbeat of the new bar)

In this Indian lesson, the master is teaching an abstraction of a three pulse over a four pulse phrasing, and not any exact time signature such as 3/8, 3/4, or 4/4 shuffle. The focus here would be to accurately speak and/or omit certain syllables over a steady pulse and phrase over the bar lines. The layered syncopation is created between the sounds of the vocal part and the hand claps.

The Western Lesson

In the Western system I have come up with, we will focus on playing one bar at a time on a single pitch of your instrument. The goal is to internalize the visual memory with the sound of the rhythm of each bar. You will need your normal practice setup: a metronome and your choice of instrument, tuned and ready to play.

Let's play a bar of 3/4 with the metronome set to 140–160 bpm. We will call this pattern A (see diagram above). We want to play all the notes with equal sound and value, without any accent or lilt. If we insert one quarter-note rest in each bar, we get new patterns of B, C and D. Using two quarter-note rests per bar, we get the patterns E, F and G. Pattern H has three quarter-note rests—a bar of silence.

It is important to realize the specific sound and feel of each pattern in 3/4 time, as later you will apply the same patterns to 3/8 and 4/4 time signatures.

Example 1 above is a four-bar progression of playing patterns A, B, C and D for one bar each. You will notice that the quarter-note rest moves from beat to beat in each pattern. Can you play combinations of the patterns from memory, or start on any bar and play the phrase

as a loop such as BCDA, CDAB or DABC?

In **Example 2**, we apply the Indian syllables from Step 6 in the Indian master lesson.

In **Example 3**, we put together patterns E, F, G and H to get a phrase that corresponds with Step 7 in the Indian master lesson. *(Note: Syllables/lyrics under the rest values do not imply playing a musical note over a rest. The syllables are indicated to show the correlation with the syllable phrases of the Indian master lesson.)* Can you start on any bar and play the phrase as a loop? Can you play combinations of the patterns from memory, such as GHEF, HEFG or HFGH?

Example 4 consists of patterns A, B, C, D again with syllables from Step 8 of the Indian master lesson—the phrase for Tihai. We are adding the element of accents in this phrase.

Example 5 is the Tihai from Step 9 of the Indian master lesson. Do you recognize that this Tihai formula is ABCD, BCDA, CDAB, with an additional bar of downbeat (pattern E) where the Tihai ends? Apart from the new element of accents shifting in each bar, you will recognize that we are still playing our familiar patterns of A, B, C and D.

Example 6 corresponds with the final Tihai in Step 10 of the Indian master lesson, where the master will only ask you to speak "Taam." Even if one does not memorize the pattern letters for the above, one can recognize that the above Tihai is made up of the patterns GHEF, HEFG, HFGH and E, which are combinations that we saw in Example 3.

In the Indian master lesson, the challenges were presented in terms of an aural/oral rhythmic exploration of time and feel that led to Tihai syncopation. But in the above six examples in Western notation, by exploring, identifying and learning to play *all* the possible quarter-note rests within a bar of 3/4, memorizing each bar as a sound, we can now play the Indian Tihai syncopation by focusing on reading each bar from visual-aural memory. The phrasing of a three-over-four feel becomes the byproduct.

After mastering the above examples, you can then transfer your knowledge to 3/8, 6/4, 6/8 and 4/4 shuffle time or jazz swing by adjusting to the base note and rest values in each time signature—but the basic math remains the same. See if you can follow Examples 7, 8, 9 and 10 and still recognize the same material studied above in the first six examples.

In **Example 7**, we take the content of Example 3 and express it in 3/8 time.

Example 8 is similar to Example 3 but in a 4/4 time signature where each quarter note is subdivided into eighth-note triplets. Here the syllable "Ta" is where you would play your instrument, but the X notehead shows the four beats of 4/4 that will be on the metronome set to 80–90 bpm or higher (depending on your comfort level). Try playing the rhythms of both noteheads if your instrument allows it.

Example 9 is patterns A, B, C and D again, but expressed in a 4/4 time signature with the syllables for the single phrase of Tihai. Stick or mallet players can try to play the rhythms of both noteheads.

Example 10 is the final Tihai with only the syllable "Taam" played in 4/4 time, where each beat is subdivided into eighth-note triplets. Set the metronome at 80–100 bpm or higher.

I hope that you've enjoyed working on the examples and lesson presented here. After mastering the concepts, you will eventually be able to play three-over-four phrasing, which you can then apply to your own improvisations and compositions. **DB**

BORN IN AHMEDABAD, INDIA, KALYAN PATHAK WAS FORMALLY TRAINED IN HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL TABLA FROM YOUNG AGE AND BECAME A FREELANCER PLAYING DRUMSET AND PERCUSSION IN THE MUMBAI MUSIC INDUSTRY IN THE LATE 1980S. SINCE MOVING TO CHICAGO IN 1991 ON A SCHOLARSHIP FROM ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY (BA IN JAZZ STUDIES), PATHAK HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER VIRTUOSO MULTI-ETHNIC PERCUSSIONISTS IN THE COUNTRY. HE HAS PERFORMED AND COLLABORATED WITH MANY INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS INCLUDING ARETHA FRANKLIN AND SHANKAR EHSAAN LOY. PATHAK HAS ALSO APPEARED AS A SOLOIST WITH THE ELGIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, FULCRUM POINT NEW MUSIC PROJECT AND SAN FRANCISCO BALLET AND IS A COLLABORATIVE GROUP MEMBER WITH FAREED HAQUE, HOWARD LEVY AND ALBERTO MIZRAHI. EMAIL HIM AT KALYANPATHAK@COMCAST.NET.

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Vito Rezza's Staggered-Feeling Drum Solo On 'Rome In A Day'


OLIVIA CARDINALI

"Rome In A Day" is the deepest and most meaningful track on the new album *Rome In A Day* (Alma Records) from my band 5 After 4. When I originally composed the track, it was called "Veets Don't Fail Me Now," but thanks to the collaborative nature of 5 After 4—featuring Matt Horner on keys, John Johnson on winds and Peter Cardinali on bass, horn arrangements and production—the track evolved into what became "Rome In A Day."

I wanted to create a pedantic, staggered feeling during the drum solo and stay away from playing an obvious first beat of every bar. The solo is deliberately sparse, starting in 7/8 time, then moving to 4/4 and finally back to 7/8. You'll notice that in most measures I let the band play the ostinato pulses on beats 1 and 3 before making any moves on the drums. I wanted to capture the feeling of walking through a new city, in this case Rome, and marvelling at the extraordinary architecture built some 2,500 years ago. That empty space in the drums evokes that feeling of wonder and awe.

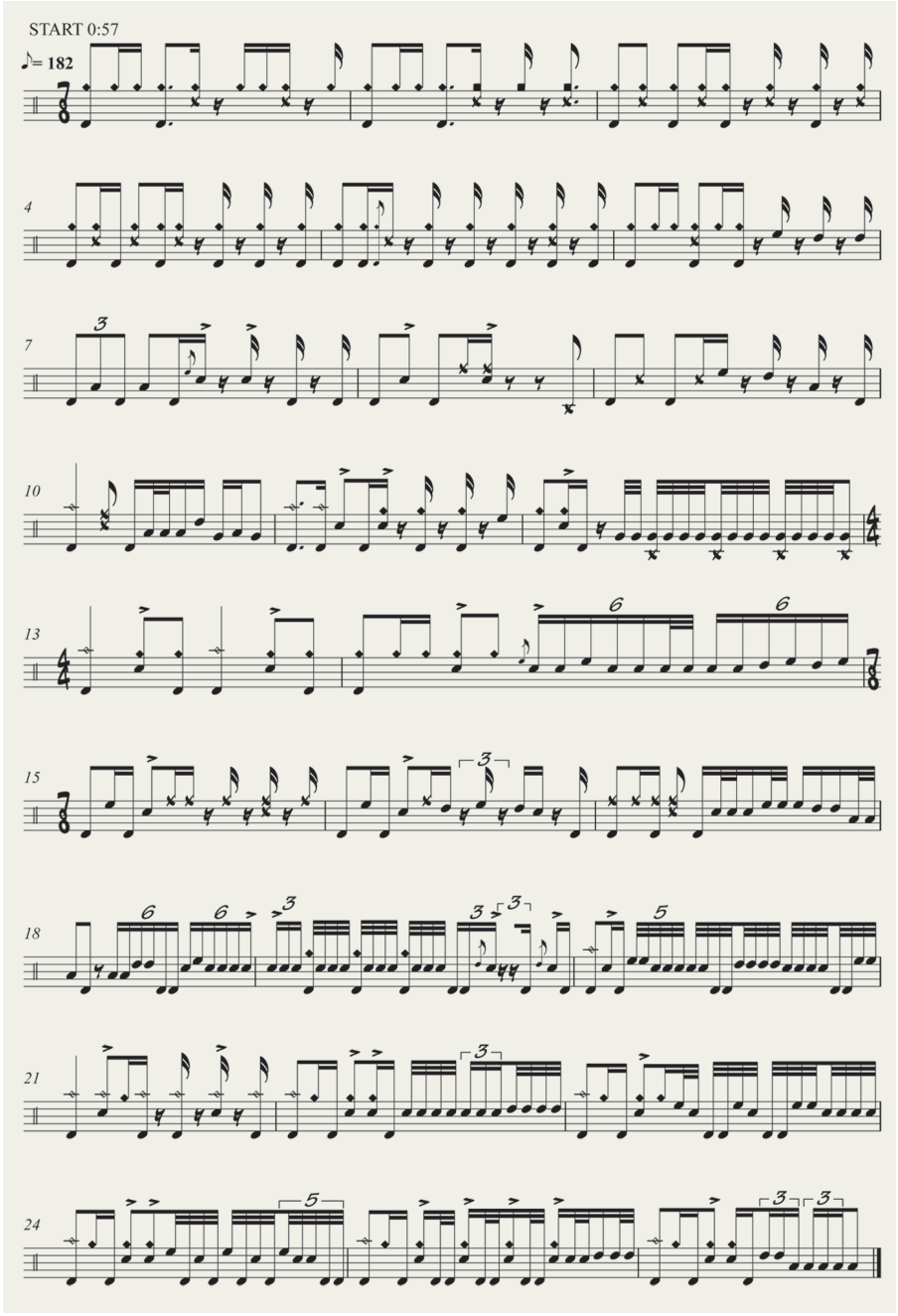
The sound sources I use in bars 1–6 are the basis of the whole piece. The bass drum, ride cymbal and cross stick seemed to clock softly in anticipation of what would come next. I used these initial bars as a thematic introduction of what would take place once the solo began to grow and unfold. It's like a tightly wrapped gift waiting to have the tape removed.

At first I pulled back. I limited the use of the bass drum in bars 1–4 as well. Bars 1 and 2 each feature only two bass drum hits along with two cross stick hits. Bar 3 ups it a bit: four kicks and four cross sticks in an odd-numbered meter (7/8). My focus was on making it feel even in an odd world. Bar 5, which is seven upbeats, sounds like a conclusion to the staggered-sounding initial four measures.

Bar 6 features three bass drum hits and three snare shots. Even though you hear the kick on the first beat of the bar, it is actually coming off the phrase from the fifth bar. I always subdivide my phrases instead of simply looking at the time signature so I can join bars to create longer increments. For example, two bars of 7/8 can be looked at as 14 beats. Sometimes I will play four groups of three beats with two beats left over. Or, three groups of fours with again two beats left over. If you want to engage in some real ear-opening fun, play two groups of five with four beats at the end of that phrase. It's not rocket science—it's way more fun.

Another recurring theme in this piece is the last three beats of bars 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 (where the sound source is slightly modified). You can see these figures again in measures 9, 11, 15 and 16 with a slight rhythmical addition on beat 6.

At bar 14, the first "movement" of the drum solo concludes. Back in 4/4 time, the tension from the first movement lessens, bringing some release to the listener. You have to let the listener's ears off the hook for a moment or two. Bar 15 presents almost the identical rhythmical content as bar 1, and bar 16 is similar to bar 2, but here I make it clear that it's time to get busy. Bar 18 brings it to an interesting place in that it plays like a bar of 4/4 including the first three beats of bar 19. This is an example of the subdi-



vision process I mentioned earlier. The rest of bar 19 would feel like a 6/8 bar.

At this point, looking at bar 21 you will see a consistent theme with bars 1 and 15. I also want to point out that bars 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 all begin with identical rhythmical figures.

I hope you have enjoyed my attempt at trying to intellectualize and explain something that comes from the soul. I have never before had to describe what I felt at the time of artistic conception and put it into words. It's like seeing the color of one's emotions—quite a challenge, for me at least. I give my most appreciated thanks to Marc Atkinson, who transcribed this solo. He is an amazing musician as a drummer, orchestrator and transcriber. **DB**

A SOLO ARTIST, WRITER, ARRANGER AND EDUCATOR, VITO REZZA FIRST MADE HIS NAME AS A DRUM PRODIGY IN TORONTO. HE HAS SINCE DRUMMED WITH THE LIKES OF JOEY DEFRANCESCO, MICHAEL BRECKER, SCOTT HENDERSON, FRANK GAMBALE, ABE LABORIEL, JONI MITCHELL, GINO VANELLI, TOOTS THIELEMANS, RICHARD BONA AND VINNIE COLAIUTA, AMONG MANY OTHERS. HE HAS ALSO PERFORMED IN NUMEROUS TV SERIES AND FILMS AS A MUSICIAN ON SOUNDTRACKS AND AS A CHARACTER ACTOR ON SCREEN. TO CONTACT REZZA, EMAIL INFO@ALMARECORDS.COM.

Gretsch Renown57 Drum Set

Warm, Punchy & Present

"That great Gretsch sound" is a phrase familiar to drummers of all stripes since the 1950s, when Gretsch first came to prominence as the instrument of choice for such innovators as Art Blakey and Max Roach, continuing through the '60s with Elvin Jones and Tony Williams, and up through the present with artists like Stanton Moore and Bill Stewart. Gretsch drums are known for their warm, fat tone, ease of tuning and versatility in different musical applications.

The Renown57 is Gretsch's latest entry in its Renown line. Inspired by the great American car manufacturers of the 1950s, the kits come in Motor City Blue or Black, with white panels set apart by chrome chevrons and embossed chrome Gretsch badges. The shells are Gretsch USA Rock Maple with 30-degree bearing edges, die-cast hoops and GTS suspension mounts on the mounted toms. Sizes are 18- by 22-inch bass, 8- by 10-inch and 9- by 12-inch mounted toms, and a 16- by 16-inch floor tom. Included are reinforced floor tom legs, double tom holder and a matching Gibraltar throne at no extra cost. The kit comes fitted with coated Evans G1 heads on the snare and toms, and an Evans EMAD clear head on the bass drum. There's a Gretsch-logo front head on the kick, and single-ply clear resonant heads are on the tom bottoms. A clear Ambassador-type snare side head is also included.

I tested these drums in three different situations: in my studio, onstage at a large outdoor gig and in a club. In the studio, the drums sounded great—warm, punchy and present among many tuning ranges. I even put them up along side my Gretsch kit of similar proportions from the mid-'80s, and the toms and kick were comparable in sound. This particular kit's sizes seem to lend themselves to more of a rock, fusion or funk/r&b application, so that's the direction I took them in live.

The first gig was a large concert with a huge band doing all Bruce Springsteen tunes. The bass drum had a pillow inside, and the front head had a mic hole. The bass drum was punchy and warm, the toms full-bodied and cutting with little to no muffling, and the snare provided a nice crack at a medium/high tuning. The snare detuned a bit during the show, but this is to be expected on a long, heavy-hitting gig like this.

The next gig was in a 350-capacity club with the same band, this time doing all Elton John material. I mention both bands because in both scenarios, this kit had to help me drive ensembles that were more than 20 pieces all in. The drums more than fit the bill. Here I was going for that low, fat '70s sound to replicate the classic recordings John did with Nigel Olsson. I added the 10-inch tom to round out the kit, and all the toms were tuned *low*, with some Moongel for muffling. I also followed suit with the snare—a low, floppy tuning with Moongel muffling. These drums *rocked* it. Fat, warm tones that were still punchy blended perfectly with the band.

The hardware on this kit performed admirably as well—no problems with tom mount slippage or floor tom legs, something that used to be a bit of a sticking point with Gretsch kits of old. Overall, I found this to be an excellent kit in both sound and appearance. MSRP is $3,010. *—Dan Leali*

Ordering info: gretschdrums.com

Zildjian Sticks

New Takes on Classic Designs

Zildjian has introduced several exciting new stick offerings, including a 5A Maple, 5B Maple and Super 7A Maple. Also new are a Jazz Maple stick, the Danny Seraphine Artist Series and the laminated birch Heavy Super 7A.

The maple 5A and 5B are lighter than their more dense hickory counterparts. Both have little to no varnish on them and are very well balanced, contributing to a nice feel in the hands. An egg-shaped bead gives the cymbals a darker, woodier, more organic sound than hickory. A short shoulder taper allows for beefy crashes and powerful bell sounds. They also produce a full, meaty sound out of the toms and an authoritative crack out of the snare. The 5A is light enough to handle lower-volume situations with ease. The 5B is slightly larger in diameter and heavier than the 5A, making it ideal for higher-volume applications.

The maple Super 7A is slightly smaller than the 5A, making it ideal for small-group jazz and lower-volume applications. It features a small ball-shaped tip with a short shoulder taper. The small tip helps with controlling volume in softer playing situations. Zildjian's Jazz Maple stick is a slightly more specialized version of the Super 7A. It features a small egg-shaped tip that is ideal for stick definition and crisp, warm tones from cymbals. It has a longer shoulder taper, giving the stick a lighter feel at the end of the stick. Both the Super 7A and Jazz Maple are well balanced and have a light finish on them, providing a great feel in the hands.

The Heavy Super 7A is identical in shape and size to the Super 7A, but the construction of this stick is laminated (plied) birch, giving it a stiffer feel and making it heavier and extremely durable. Expect bright sounds out of cymbals, loud cracks from the snare and huge sounds from the toms. If you're looking for a smaller stick that packs a wallop, these are definitely it.

The Zildjian Danny Seraphine Artist Model features a unique notched grip, providing the player with better grasp and comfort at higher volumes. The notch was less distracting than I thought it would be, and it is indeed very comfortable. They are a variation of a 5A in size. The tips are acorn in shape, and the shoulder taper is long and gradual. Excellent stick definition can be expected from cymbals, and deep sounds out of toms. Hickory construction provides a brighter sound and increased durability.

Zildjian has some great takes on some classic designs. The Danny Seraphine and Heavy Super 7A are the most specialized, whereas the 5A, 5B, 7A and Jazz Maple models are all very versatile and will work well in a variety of applications. *—Ryan Bennett*

Ordering info: zildjian.com

Sabian OMNI

Radical Cymbal Rethink

It's not quite a crash, but not exactly a ride, either—the AAX OMNI is a new type of cymbal from Sabian developed for Swiss drummer Jojo Mayer. The vision for OMNI was to create a cymbal with strong sonic contrast when played on its own or with other cymbals.

"Our 30 years of innovative cymbal-making really served us well here," said Master Product Specialist Mark Love, noting that the versatile OMNI required a radical rethink of the architecture and construction of a cymbal.

A medium-weight center in brilliant finish and an extra-thin, natural-finish edge make for a cymbal that's striking in appearance. Made of B20 bronze, it is available in 18-inch and 22-inch models, and it's covered by Sabian's two-year warranty. *—Ryan Bennett*

Ordering info: sabian.com

Vic Firth Sticks, Brushes, Caddy

Pro Gear for Jazz Drummers

Vic Firth has released some excellent products for the jazz and professional markets.

The company has introduced a new Peter Erskine Big Band stick, which the drummer helped design for playing with his large ensemble. It combines the shaft dimensions of a 5A and a 5B with a long taper. Another new Signature Series stick, the Russ Miller Hi-Def, features a "half acorn" wood tip for incredible cymbal clarity and has a logo located on the "sweet spot" for perfect cross-stick tone.

Three new, unique brushes are also available from Vic Firth. The Russ Miller HD Sweep/HD Ride package includes one brush for each hand: a medium gauge wire for a smooth sound, and a tight spread and heavier gauge for projection. The Legacy features a retractable medium-gauge wire brush with an infinitely adjustable spread and a wood handle for a natural feel. The Live Wires are retractable brushes featuring a small round bead on the tip of each wire for an added sharp snap on cymbals and drums.

Vic Firth's solid steel Stick Caddy will never move out of place once the drummer picks a convenient position and screws down the clamps. It will lock onto any part of the kit—from a skinny tom leg to a wide hi-hat stand—and holds about three pairs of 5A sticks. *—Ryan Bennett*

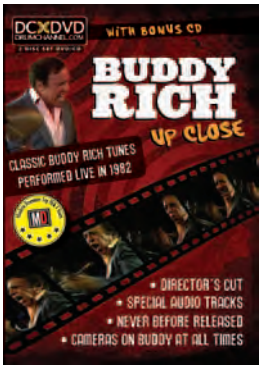
Ordering info: vicfirth.com

BOPPIN' BEATS

Gon Bops' new Mariano series bongos and congas are constructed from sustainable Durian hardwood. They feature the same traditional counterhoops, side plates, reinforcing metal hoops and authentic Gon Bop cowhide heads as classic models. The natural heads make for a full-bodied, authentic sound. **More info:** gonbops.com

SNARE RUCKSACK

Protection Racket's new Rucksack Snare Drum Case features 10 different sizes, two of which include rucksack straps and concealed shoulder straps, as well as the standard carrying handle. The bags feature fleece lining surrounded by a near-bombproof flexible exterior with zips and fasteners. Adjustable straps create a customized fit for optimal comfort. **More info:** protectionracket.com



DRUMS ON VIDEO

Drum Channel has just released a special edition of the *Buddy Rich Up Close* DVD that includes a previously unreleased CD of the show. The company has also released two new drumming DVDs: one by guitarist Gannin Arnold with five different world-class drummers, and another with jazz artist Peter Erskine. **More info:** drumchannel.com

MICS ON HOLD

Big Bang has introduced the Mic Holders drum mic mounting system. Mic Holders features a choice of drum- and stand-mounted models that are height- and position-adjustable. Each holder features a noise-cancelling shock mount microphone attachment and eliminates the clutter of individual mic stands. **More info:** bigbangdist.com

DRUM SIGHTLINES

Photographer David Phillips puts a visual slant on drummers with *A Drummer's Perspective*, published by A&R Marketing Limited. Featuring an introduction by Terry Bozzio, the 160-page book provides a photographic insight into the world of drummers and features dozens of close-up action shots, with plenty of kit detail. **More info:** music-images.co.uk

DRUMMER HEADPHONES

Pearl has introduced Precision Drum Monitors (PDM-250), professional studio-quality isolation headphones engineered for drummers. Featuring an over-the-ear noise-cancelling design, the headphones give drummers crystal clear, full-bodied sound. Based on the Beyerdynamic DT770 Pro, the PDM-250 has been custom engineered for recording studios, post production, or broadcasting situations. Featuring 250-ohm drivers with a gold-plated 3.5mm stereo jack and 1/4-inch adapter, these headphones can isolate ambient noise up to 35 decibels. **More info:** pearldrum.com

BACK IN THE GROOVE

Carl Fischer Music recently published the book/CD *I Used To Play Drums: An Innovative Method For Adults Returning To Play*. The CD contains audio MP3s of full-band performances for each song, with and without drum set. **More info:** carlfischer.com

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Red Hot Chili Pepper's drummer, Chad Smith, performed for over 1500 students at PMC's 2010 PITS assembly at Peters Township High School in McMurray, PA.

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Keith Hall Drum Camp's Five-Year Groove

At Western Michigan University (WMU) in Kalamazoo, Mich., the popularity of the Keith Hall Summer Drum Intensive (KHSDI) is feverish. This year, it was so feverish that Keith Hall had to extend the curriculum from one week to two.

With KHSDI, the WMU drum instructor found a way to connect with drum enthusiasts from as young as 11 to as old as 60. The five-year-old program provides meals and dorm rooms to overnight campers, who participate in a weeklong series of drum-related activities.

Conducted by a staff of past and present Keith Hall drum students, each program is tailored to meet each participant's musical needs, with Week 1 designated for Beginner-Intermediate players and Week 2 for Intermediate-Advanced drummers.

Using the guidance of such pro rhythm sections as Tri-Fi—Hall's New York City trio—and Skype sessions with former Shirley Horn drummer Steve Williams, students conclude their camp experience with a live performance at the Union Cabaret and Grille in downtown Kalamazoo.

Though the camp is geared around drum technique, Hall explained that it also places a special emphasis on musicality as a whole.

"We talk about form, melody, playing with clarity, serving the song, interaction with the rhythm section and soloist, playing with confidence and having fun," Hall said.

With degrees from WMU and Queens College in New York, Hall has studied with Jimmy Cobb, Carl Allen and the late Ed Thigpen. His wealth of experience includes regular session and touring work singer Curtis Stigers. The author of *Jazz Drums Now!* (Keith Hall Music) has also performed with Sir Roland Hanna, Mark Murphy, Wynton Marsalis and Betty Carter. But as Hall's longtime mentor and KHSDI instructor Billy Hart explained, it's his "special spirit" that contributes to his skill as head of the camp.

"His knowledge projects a certain contagious enthusiasm," Hart said. "He's a great teacher, as well as being a helluva drummer."

One of the most memorable—and most demanding—events during camp week is the Drum Choir, a concept Hall adopted from his studying with Hart in the early '90s. During Drum Choir, participants gather together and perform with their their respective drum sets in a roughly circular fashion.

"Everyone splits up into drum choirs that consist of five drummers each," Hall explained. "Billy taught us about the importance of learning the melodies around the drums, reflecting the harmony and learning classic jazz drum vocabulary," Hall said. "We also provide master classes each day on different subjects ranging from drum tuning, how to practice, Afro-Cuban and Brazilian rhythms, to New Orleans second line drumming, solo concepts, transcribing, and exposure to the great jazz drummers and brushes."

Barbara Hibiske, a participant from Week 1, decided to take up the drums after playing four other instruments for over three decades. "I was looking for a fun way to accelerate my drumming knowledge and was excited to experience the enthusiasm for percussion that Keith and his team provide," Hibiske said.

For Alex Snyder, a high school junior who's now taken four camps, this year was a real growth experience.

"On Tuesday, the second full day of the camp, I rehearsed with Tri-Fi and basically crashed and burned," Snyder said. "All week, Keith and his staff claimed that I was going to 'get my butt kicked.' And that's what happened. My coaches Jay Sawyer and Ryan Andrews didn't sugarcoat anything. But the next time I sat down at the drums, everybody said that I sounded completely different, but in a good way.

"I needed that brutal honesty," he added. "That's why I'm going back—because they know exactly what each students needs to experience in order to improve." *—John Ephland*

School Notes

Head Of The Class: Reginald "Reggie" Thomas joined the Michigan State University faculty as professor of jazz piano. Thomas worked for the Essentially Ellington Program and Band Director Academy at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and taught for 20 years at the University of Southern Illinois–Edwardsville.
Details: msu.edu

Top-Notch Faculty: Flutist Nicole Mitchell has joined the faculty at the University of California at Irvine's Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT) program. Beginning this fall, Mitchell will assume the role of assistant professor of music, teaching classes in composition, jazz history, improvisation and contemporary cultural practices.
Details: uci.edu

Piano Prize: The Juilliard School pianist Kris Bowers has won first place in the Thelonious Monk International Piano Jazz Competition. In addition to a $25,000 prize, Bowers also received a recording contract from Concord Music Group and performed with such jazz greats as Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Dianne Reeves and Kurt Elling.
Details: monkinstitute.org

Special Delivery: The Horns to Havana organization delivered a planeload of 120 instruments to Cuban music academics on Sept. 4–11. The organization, which consists of several professional musicians and repair technicians, sent the instruments to facilitate a greater cultural exchange between the U.S. jazz community and Cuban music students.
Details: hornstohavana.org

Emerging Contest: Vandoren has announced a call for auditions for its Emerging Artist Competition, which aims to jumpstart the careers of young classical and jazz saxophone and clarinet players. Winners of the competition will perform at the Music For All National Festival and work with an all-star roster of Vandoren artists.
Details: whyvandoren.com

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Blindfold Test | BY TED PANKEN

Carl Allen

Less omnipresent on bandstands in recent years due to his obligations as Artistic Director of Jazz Studies at The Juilliard School, 50-year-old drum master Carl Allen remains at the top of his game—a fact made evident on the 2011 duo release *Work To Do* (Mack Avenue), recorded with longtime cohort Rodney Whitaker.


MITCHELL HADDAD

Cedar Walton

"Plexus" (from *Seasoned Wood*, HighNote, 2008) Al Foster, drums; Walton, piano; Vincent Herring, tenor saxophone; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Peter Washington, bass.

Al Foster. You can tell by his snare drum and the ride cymbal. I was listening for his signature half-open hi-hat. This is when he was using Paiste cymbals, not from the past few years. Oh, it is? Normally, Al's snare drum is looser, and you'll hear the open hi-hat. I know the tune, not the record. Ah, there's the hi-hat! That's Vincent playing tenor. The trumpet player is coming out of Freddie. Jeremy Pelt? The bass player's beat has a forward motion like Ron Carter, but the tonality doesn't sound like Ron. Not Doug Weiss. Not Peter Washington. The piano player is coming out of Cedar. It is Cedar! That's not David Williams, though. The bass player is stumping me. Al is so creative. It's incredible how he inverts rhythms, gives the role of the bass drum to the hi-hat or the ride cymbal or the left hand. His drums sound a little different than on his '80s and '90s records with Tommy Flanagan and Joe Henderson, where he tuned the toms much lower. 5 stars.

The Jeff Hamilton Trio

"Fascinating Rhythm" (from *Symbiosis*, Capri, 2009) Hamilton, drums; Tamir Hendelman, piano; Christoph Luty, bass.

[*immediately*] Jeff Hamilton. "Fascinating Rhythm." Is that his record? Tamir Hendelman playing piano? Jeff is an unsung hero. As you can tell by the brushes and the way he tunes his toms and bass drum, he was really into Mel Lewis. He shares Mel's concept of the big band as an extended small group. Notice the balance between his limbs—the left hand doesn't get in the way on the ride cymbal. There's a great deal of clarity. You can always hear the end of his phrases on the lower end of the kit. It takes amazing control to go from brushes to sticks like that. I love the interplay on that track. It was very traditional, with the conversation mainly between the drums and piano, and the bass in a more supporting role. 5 stars.

Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band

"Omni" (from *Season Of Changes*, Verve, 2008) Blade, drums; Myron Walden, alto saxophone; Melvin Butler, tenor saxophone; Jon Cowherd, piano; Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar; Chris Thomas, bass.

Brian Blade. I know his cymbal sound. That's Kurt Rosenwinkel. I wonder if the alto player primarily plays alto or tenor. In that register, it sounds like he's been influenced by Kenny Garrett. These are great musicians, younger guys—late twenties, thirties. I like the tune. It's a mood piece, conceptually coming out of a Pat Metheny thing, which is cool. Kurt's colors and textures work great for where Blade is coming from. 4 stars. Blade is one of the few who has come up with his own sound and vocabulary in a natural, organic way. Years ago, he was heavily into Elvin, but he evolved into his own thing. Part of that comes from his eclectic taste.

Ralph Peterson

"Johnny Come Lately" (from *The Fo'tet Augmented*, Criss Cross, 2004) Peterson, drums; Don Byron, clarinet; Bryan Carrott, vibraphone; Belden Bullock, bass.

[*after eight bars*] Ralph Peterson. I can always tell by his brush style. The Fo'tet. "Johnny Come Lately." That stop-and-start thing is Ralph's signature. Ralph has incorporated a lot of elements from Monk in the way he plays and orchestrates. We came up in an era where you're supposed to sweat. Everybody was take-no-prisoners. Ralph was in Harrison–Blanchard before me, but our conceptual approaches are very different. [*during solo*] That cross-stick is Ralph's Max Roach influence, from the snare drum to the stick. I like the arrangement and the communication. You don't hear that conceptual approach much anymore—highly intelligent, very well-thought-out and going for broke. 4 stars.

Dr. Lonnie Smith

"Tyrone" (from *Rise Up!*, Palmetto, 2009) Herlin Riley, drums; Smith, Hammond B-3; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Peter Bernstein, guitar.

[*immediately*] That's Herlin Riley. Dr. Lonnie. Is that Donald Harrison? Herlin is one of the most natural-feeling drummers. That second-line thing—when I heard the cowbells, I knew it was him. His playing has a happy feel that reminds me a bit of Billy Higgins. You can't sit still. I always loved second-line drumming, because I grew up in drum-and-bugle corps, and I saw a correlation to, say, Max Roach, who had what I'd call a military, rudimental style, a lot of which came from Papa Jo Jones. You can't play second line and have it feel stiff. It's about dancing, about people, about joy, about connecting lives through the music. 4½ stars.

SFJAZZ Collective

"Yes And No" (from *Live 2008: 5th Annual Concert Tour*, SFJAZZ Records, 2008) Eric Harland, drums; Stefon Harris, vibraphone; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Miguel Zenón, alto saxophone; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Renee Rosnes, piano; Matt Penman, bass.

This is SFJAZZ Collective. Eric Harland. Stefon. Is that Dave Douglas? Joe Lovano. A lot of people may not hear an extension of him in Chris Potter, Mark Turner, or even Josh Redman, but there was a movement among tenor players 15 years ago of playing in the upper register. It's interesting to hear how Eric's playing has evolved. He came up playing in the church, and when he started, I was hearing that more than straightahead influences. But over the last few years, I've heard him take that funk/gospel/hip-hop tuning and bring it into the straightahead genre—his own conceptual approach. I can hear some Ralph Peterson influence in Eric's playing—Ralph's able to go through these different metric modulations and imposing figures on top of other figures seamlessly. Is it Eric's arrangement? I dig it. 4½ stars. Classic Eric Harland playing. **DB**

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

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