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A full-page photograph of Bob Reynolds, a young man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing a grey zip-up hoodie over a white V-neck shirt. He is holding a P. Mauriat tenor saxophone. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and some foliage.

Artist, composer, and educator Bob Reynolds joins the P. Mauriat Family. The tenor saxophonist plays P. Mauriat's new un-laquered **System 76 2nd Edition** because it's simply "a player's horn," says Reynolds. "It has a clear voice and fluid keywork. I was drawn to the sheer amount of fun-factor it offers. This horn is pure joy."

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APRIL 2012 Inside

ON THE COVER

26 **Robert Glasper's Big Experiment**

BY SHAUN BRADY

In Robert Glasper's view, jazz could learn a thing or two from hip-hop. Not just musically—though the pianist has increasingly worked to meld the two genres over the course of his career—but also in its attitude. “I feel like jazz needs a big-ass slap,” he says. “Slapping hurts, but at some point it’ll wake you up.” Expect Glasper’s boundary-crossing CD *Black Radio* (Blue Note), the first full album by his Experiment band, to sound the alarm.



Robert Glasper at Brooklyn Recording

Cover photography and above image shot by Jimmy and Dena Katz at Brooklyn Recording in New York

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First Take | BY BOBBY REED



Indy Music

Indianapolis has been overlooked as a music center for far too long. That might change now, thanks in part to the Super Bowl. Indiana's musically rich capital city proudly hosted this year's Super Bowl. And a great deal of preparation was required. Indy—like any city that hosts a major sporting event or global conference these days—embarked upon civic improvement and beautification projects to spruce things up for the thousands of tourists who came to town for the big game (not to mention the millions who watched it on TV).

One such project is *46 for XLVI*, a murals program that is a partnership between the Arts Council of Indianapolis and the City of Indianapolis. Of particular interest to DownBeat readers is artist Pamela Bliss' *Indiana Avenue Jazz Masters*. This mural depicts the young trombonist (and future educator) David Baker—who turned 80 on Dec. 21—and three iconic DownBeat Hall of Fame artists who are no longer with us: trombonist J.J. Johnson, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard and guitarist Wes Montgomery. When Bliss was designing the mural, she referred to vintage photos taken by Indianapolis jazz documentarian Duncan Schiedt. Bliss' stunning mural is on the side of the Musicians' Repair & Sales building at 322 N. Capitol Ave. (DownBeat thanks contributor Mark Sheldon for telling us about the series of 46 murals, and for providing the photo that illustrates this column.)

The title of Bliss' mural nods to the same historic music district that is referenced in the title of a new Wes Montgomery album, *Echoes Of Indiana Avenue*, which is a collection of previously unreleased recordings issued by Resonance. This album celebrates the guitar virtuosity that was present even during Montgomery's early years, and it shines a spotlight on a city whose musical legacy deserves wider recognition. The beautiful packaging of the *Echoes* CD (also available as a double LP) includes 16 vintage photos, including works by Schiedt and family snapshots provided by Ann Montgomery. Some of those images illustrate our feature on the legendary guitarist (see page 32). Our article includes insightful interviews with Baker, record producer Michael Cuscuna and guitarist Pat Martino—all of whom contributed fascinating essays to the liner notes for *Echoes*.

Montgomery died in 1968, but his shadow continues to loom over a diverse array of guitarists. Two examples are in this issue of DownBeat: guitarist Rez Abbasi (page 23) and the trio New West Guitar Group (page 25). These two acts play very different styles of music, but both cite Montgomery as a key influence.

Our cover story is an eyebrow-raising interview with the captivating, outspoken pianist Robert Glasper. Plus, we've got tons of love for trumpets and trombones in this annual Brass School issue, featuring Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith, Orbert Davis, Wayne Wallace, Kirk Garrison, Daniel Rosenthal, a Wynton Marsalis transcription and more.

So whether you're into brass, guitars or keyboards, we know you'll find something memorable in this issue. Thanks for your support, and please keep on reading.

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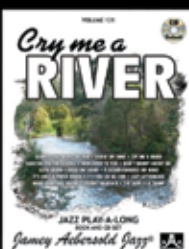


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Chords & Discords ▶

Woods' Mastery and Integrity

I was very pleased to see Phil Woods on the cover the February issue. We've lost most of the bebop masters, and now many of the hard-bop masters are leaving us. Thankfully, Woods is very much in the present and still performing well. If ever the term "jazz giant" can be applied, it most certainly can be placed next to Phil's name. He is one of the two or three most important alto saxophonists of the past half-century. The very hip, intelligent and soulful lines he spins from his horn are instantly identifiable as his alone. Moreover, his lead alto is immediately recognizable when heading a big band saxophone section; his important work with the bands of Oliver Nelson and Quincy Jones attests to that. Over his long career, Woods has not once compromised his music or integrity. He has always been committed to the jazz tradition and respectful to the masters from whom he has learned.

BILL BENJAMIN
BILTMORE LAKE, N.C.

Henderson's Influence

As a fairly regular subscriber since the late '50s, I wish that old habits would subside and eventually disappear—but no such luck. I'm referring to the tendency of critics to pick out darlings, which is to the detriment of other worthy players. A case in point is in the Reviews section of your March issue: the 3-star rating by critic Shaun Brady for Melissa Aldana's *Free Fall*. Brady's typical comparisons to Trane and Newk seem to shout that this scribe cannot hear Aldana's most obvious influence, which is Joe Henderson. While critics fawn over Grace Kelly and Anat Cohen, they give short shrift to such richly talented players as Aldana and Sharel Cassity (just to name two). However, it was nice to see that a true, hardcore jazz album slipped in among all the other genres DownBeat covers these days.

LARRY HOLLIS
LHOLLIS@COX.NET

Editor's Note: *Sharel Cassity was profiled in our June 2010 issue. Her saxophone work was dazzling at the Vandoren VandoJam during The 2012 NAMM Show (see photo and caption number 14 on pages 72–73).*

Friendship with DownBeat

When I arrived in this country over 30 years ago, one of the first decisions I made was to go see live music as much as possible. (At the time, there wasn't much happening in Mexico, where I'm from.) Since then, I've been lucky enough to catch a lot of great music here in the Boston area. That's what has kept me going. Along the way, DownBeat has kept me informed—just like a friend who gives great advice. My greatest memory was seeing Miles Davis perform when he came back from "retirement" and



played a warm-up concert here at Kicks, a venue that's long gone. You can hear some of that music on his 1982 album *We Want Miles*.

JORGE CASAS
DORCHESTER, MASS.

Jazz DJ Research

To assist with a research project on jazz radio, I'm currently seeking information, particularly broadcast airchecks, of classic jazz disc jockeys from around the country and the world. (In the case of international DJs, English speakers, such as Willis Conover, are preferred). Examples of classic jazz DJs include such masters as Oscar Treadwell, Mort Fega, Sid McCoy, Ed Beach, Chuck Niles, Holmes "Daddy-O" Daylie, Billy Taylor, Al "Jazzbeaux" Collins, Harry Abraham, Symphony Sid, Yvonne Daniels and Rick Holmes. I'm also interested in unsung voices from your community's history whom you consider "classic" representatives of the genre. If you have any printed information (such as playlists, newsletters, articles, etc.) and/or broadcast airchecks that you might be interested in sharing—I'll pay for copies where necessary—please contact me at the email address below.

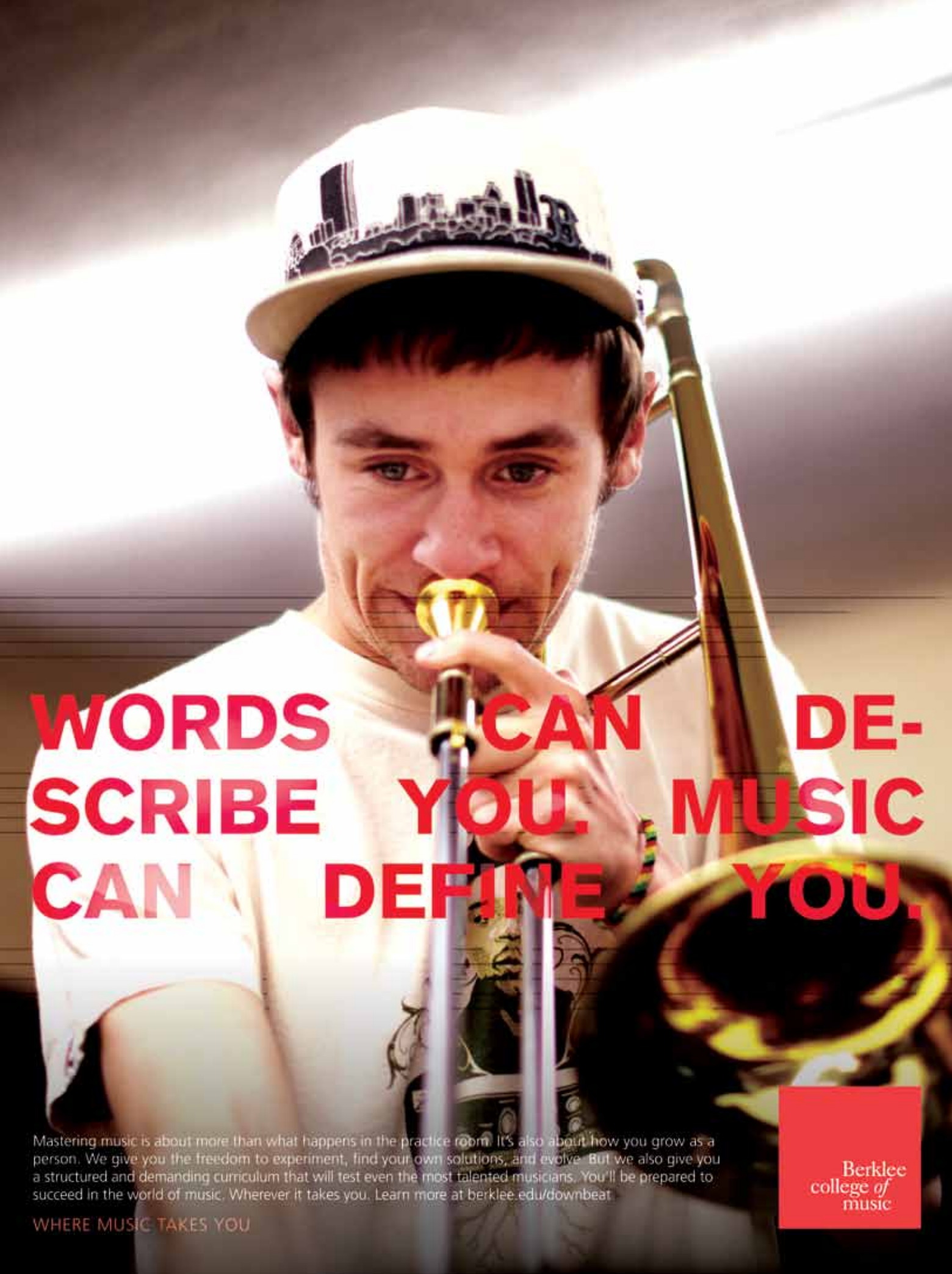
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Corrections

- In our March issue, a review of the album *In Praise Of Shadows* by the Le Boeuf Brothers did not identify the record label as Nineteen-Eight Records.
- Elsewhere in our March issue, a review of the album *On Target* by the John Colianni Quintet misspelled the name of the record label Patuxent.

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Beat

A Conversation with Christian

Christian McBride won't be classified by genre. In September, he released the big band album *The Good Feeling* (Mack Avenue), which won a Grammy in the best large jazz ensemble album category. In November, he put out a diverse collection of duets, *Conversations With Christian* (Mack Avenue), on which McBride is billed alongside both jazz mainstays and pop icons. And as the host of "The Lowdown: Conversations With Christian" on Sirius/XM Radio's Real Jazz channel, McBride has conducted interviews with Roy Hargrove, Bill Charlap and Angelique Kidjo. It's hard to define the virtuosic bassist, and in a recent conversation with DownBeat, McBride says he prefers to stay that way.

How were the creative processes different between *The Good Feeling* and *Conversations With Christian*?

Obviously you're writing for a group of improvised musicians as opposed to two people. With the duets project, I worked with 13 musicians, so you have 13 different personalities, 13 different concepts, 13 different ways of communicating. But at the end of the day, it's still kind of in the same family because it's all based around my musical conversation with my partners. I've been fortunate enough to work in so many different so-called genres, so it's not that alarming to me. I enjoy it. People say, "What's it like working with Sting one day and Benny Golson the next?" As long as you know both playbooks, you just go in there and do what you're supposed to do.

Are your conversations more about finding a common groove and synching up, or is it more of a contrapuntal back and forth?

It depends on who you're working with. Take the Chick Corea duet, for example. We didn't speak about anything beforehand. I told Chick, "Let's go make up something," and Chick said, "Great!" I like those situations where you have no idea what you're going to do. That's a lot different than playing with Hank Jones, who said, "Let's play a standard the standard way." And that's cool, too. So in terms of being the best musician you can possibly be, it's a matter of learning as much as you possibly can. Finding a common groove doesn't necessarily mean a groove in the musical sense. It's just about finding more of a common ground.

What made you think that pieces like "Shake N' Blake" and "Science Fiction," which were written for small combos, would work as big band pieces?



[With] "Shake N' Blake," I just felt that the melody was such that if I expanded it and blew it out, it would make sense as a big band tune. And with "Science Fiction," I actually didn't know if that was going to work. I always knew, even when I originally wrote it for my small group, that there was something bigger surrounding it. So for the big band version, I wrote this new intro and put this middle section in. I tried to get into my cinematic head.

In the liner notes of *The Good Feeling*, you called "Broadway" a "natural habitat." What is your natural habitat, musically?

I tend to gravitate toward that sort of tempo. I told someone the other day that even when I'm not thinking about music, I tend to snap in that tempo [laughs]. That's just my natural body rhythm. I just like music that has a real hard, strong groove. It could be a swing, funk or Latin groove. But as long as that pulse is really strong, I like it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21



New Jacket: Yellowjackets' founding member and bassist Jimmy Haslip announced that he will be taking a yearlong hiatus from the group. Felix Pastorius, son of legendary bassist Jaco Pastorius, will be filling in for Haslip during his time away from the group.

Virtual Venue: SFJazz launched "Are You Listening?," an online concert hall that will provide intimate portraits of jazz artists and forums for fans to discuss and support the music. McCoy Tyner, Savion Glover and Rebeca Mauleón are among the first artists to be featured within the online venue.

Miles Mail: The U.S. Postal Service announced the joint issuance of Miles Davis and Edith Piaf stamps with the French postal service, La Poste, in June. Designed by Art Director Greg Breeding, the Davis stamp is based on a 1970 black-and-white photo of Davis by David Gahr.

Artsy App: New York multidisciplinary arts institution Symphony Space has created a mobile app for iOS and Android that will stream hundreds of recorded performances at the venue. The free app has included concerts from Jenny Scheinman, Arturo O'Farrill with the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra and Leonard Bernstein.

Composing Clinics: Ottawa JazzWorks at CAMMAC Music Centre in Quebec has expanded its Composers' Symposium to three- and five-day workshops. On Aug. 14–19, instrumentalists and vocalists can immerse themselves in composition and arranging workshops taught by John Geggie, Dave Restivo, Frank Lozano, Jim Lewis and special guest Ted Nash.

Jodie's Farewell: Pianist Jodie Christian died on Feb. 13 at the age of 80. Christian, a beloved Chicago figure whose career spanned more than 60 years, worked with such artists as Stan Getz, Coleman Hawkins and Benny Carter. He also co-founded the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians in 1965.

Caught

New York Winter Jazz Fest Reaches Creative Peak

Now in its eighth year, the New York City Winter Jazz Fest seems caught between its status as a small jazz festival and a major one. On one hand, the annual event is only two nights long and takes place across five small-room venues, all within a two-block radius in Greenwich Village. After viewing it strictly on a calendar, anyone might conclude that it was a trifle.

Yet into a tiny window of time on Jan. 6–7, the 2012 festival packed in a whopping 63 performances, not to mention 4,000 concertgoers. The sellout crowd braved too-cold weather and often-too-crowded venues. Each night, the Bleecker Street ticket office turned away scores of would-be patrons due to the shortage of tickets. By either standard, major or minor, Winter Jazz Fest qualified as a success.

This success was not only numerical but creative as well. The festival was rife with outstanding artists, most of whom skewed a younger demographic with a contemporary, innovative edge. (There were exceptions, notably David Murray's Cuban Ensemble and its tribute to Nat "King" Cole.) Perhaps the most talked-about performance of the fest was the Friday late-night set by ERIMAJ, drummer Jamire Williams' experimental combo. Playing at the legendary folk club The Bitter End—in a six-piece configuration that included two bassists, Vicente Archer on upright and Burniss Travis on five-string electric—ERIMAJ exuded the vibe of a laid-back hang. Most of the members played sitting down, wearing flannels, hoodies and other casual winter garb. Their sound was also outwardly casual, unified by a stoned, mellow groove that masked the fierce fusion of jazz with soul, r&b and hip-hop. However, Williams broke the mood with a thrilling-yet-brief drum solo during the band's performance of its 2011 single, "Conflict Of A Man."

With his specially formed Winter Jazz Fest Quartet, Rudresh Mahanthappa drew a full house at Kenny's Castaways on Friday evening—so full that venue staffers had to force spectators off the stairways near the stage. Known for his juxtaposition of Indian and jazz elements, Mahanthappa and his band subserviated those techniques into full-on hard funk in a distillation of his current release, *Samdhi* (ACT). Tunes from the album, in fact, constituted the bulk of Mahanthappa's set. The center of a rhythmically aggressive matrix, Mahanthappa tended to ride on the grooves in his improvisations, rather than drive them. He left the pilot's seat to bassist Rich Brown and drummer Rudy Royston as he and guitarist Rez Abbasi con-



centrated on melodic work demonstrative of their Indo-Pakistani heritage.

Mostly Other People Do the Killing, the playful free-jazz quartet led by bassist Moppa Elliott, held court at Kenny's Castaways on Saturday night. Suffused in a sense of inspired glee, the set functioned on the interaction between the band members and their rather elastic tension. The front line of tenor saxophonist Jon Irabagon and pocket trumpeter Peter Evans was oriented toward melody. Irabagon blew skewed-but-friendly angular phrases on the chords, and Evans ornamented the themes with flourishes and the odd substitution. Tunes like "President Polk" easily could have been played straight, but Elliott and drummer Kevin Shea had none of it, turning the set into a frantic workout. Shea, in particular, swung violently and made novel rhythmic shifts on his hi-hat.

The event was a thoroughly postmodern conception, one that could stand as a symbol for the entire festival. One thing was for sure: Major, minor or somewhere in between, New York Winter Jazz Fest felt like the zeitgeist. —Michael J. West

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Saxophonist Mikko Innanen Traverses the Jazz Spectrum

When Mikko Innanen was young, his father regularly tinkered with different instruments. But when a friend lent him a saxophone to toy with, it was his son who connected with the horn.

Innanen was only 10, but said he “got stuck” on it, leading him to explore his father’s jazz record collection. At the time, the family was living in the Finnish coastal town of Loviisa, where jazz had no presence.

“I was really the only one interested in this music when I was young,” Innanen said. “It’s such a fertile age for discovering something.” He quickly began taking private lessons from the leader of a local winds ensemble.

Innanen developed a deep adoration for bebop and hard bop, particularly the music of Charlie Parker and early John Coltrane. Within a couple of years, he knew he wanted to be a professional musician. At the age of 14, he attended a prominent Finnish summer jazz camp, where he studied with mentor Jukka Perko. Even before finishing high school, Innanen began to study at the prestigious



Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. He stayed at the school for nearly a decade, earning both undergraduate and graduate degrees.

These days, Innanen leads several discrete bands and plays as a trusted sideman in several more, from a group led by acclaimed Finnish guitarist Kalle Kalima to the Charles Mingus repertoire band Tonight at Noon. Whether he’s engaging in formal experiments with contact microphones, making noisy solo recordings, playing free improvisation—particularly in his duo with drummer Mika Kallio—or delivering buoyant free-bop in his Finnish-Danish collective Delirium,

Innanen’s range never sullies his deep fluency in swing-based jazz.

“I was listening to late Coltrane and some Ornette Coleman stuff when I was 12 or so, and I never felt there was a difference between that and the earlier periods of jazz,” he said. “I was improvising freely—say, playing along with a Thelonious Monk record—because I didn’t really know what I was doing.”

As heard on last year’s superb recording *Clustrophy* (TUM), Innanen’s best, most comprehensive vehicle is his band Innkvisitio with drummer Joonas Riippa, synthesizer player Seppo Kantonen and a revolving cast of guest reedists (Germany’s Daniel Erdmann and Sweden’s Fredrik Ljungkvist play on the latest record). The music richly runs the gamut from bebop to free-jazz. Innanen tosses in splashes of Art Ensemble of Chicago collectivism and post-Amsterdam humor along the way, and the record is as entertaining as it is serious.

Innanen’s nonchalant range and curiosity become more explicit the deeper one digs into his voluminous discography, but he said it isn’t calculated.

“I think it’s just something that happens,” he explained. “It’s more about the people you work with. You meet somebody that you like and you start doing something together, and it goes a certain way. When I started Innkvisitio seven years ago, it was more deliberate than some of my other projects, but we really developed our sound by playing together.”

Indeed, Innanen has a deep pool of collaborators around the world, including musicians from the United States (a trio with bassist Joe Fonda and drummer Lou Grassi), Denmark (his old group Triot recorded with John Tchicai) and more (a great trio with Dutch drummer Han Bennink and Estonian guitarist Jaak Sooäär).

“About a decade ago, I felt frustrated about trying to find my own sound or whatever you want to call it, but I realized there’s nothing you can do about it,” Innanen said. “All I can do is just to work on the music and play with different people and try to stay true to what I like and what I don’t like so much. Things just happen, and I kind of like that.” **DB**

Etta James Remembered: Portrait of a Musical Legend

Etta James, one of the stellar American singers of the past half-century, lost her long battle with leukemia, kidney failure and other ailments on Jan. 20. She was 73.

James was a strong-willed woman whose voice powerfully conveyed feelings of pain, anger, desire, tenderness and joy. Perhaps best known for the 1961 hit “At Last,” James received numerous accolades during her long career, including a Recording Academy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003 and induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993. James sang soul, r&b, blues, gospel, jazz and even country with equal grit and understanding.

Born Jamesetta Hawkins on Jan. 25, 1938, James was brought up in a Baptist church choir in Los Angeles. Discovered by West Coast r&b bandleader/impresario Johnny Otis (who preceded her in death by three days), James was signed to the Modern label in 1955. At 17, she hit it big on the r&b chart with the sexy “Roll With Me Henry” (pop radio stations played a sanitized version by white singer Georgia Gibbs). In 1960, James began a 15-year affiliation with Chess Records, which produced one r&b hit after another, including “Something’s Got A Hold On Me” and “Pushover.”

James was in her glory when Chess sent her to Fame Studios in



Muscle Shoals, Ala., in 1967. The rip-snoiting soul single “Tell Mama” was a crossover smash, but it was the flip side, a ballad titled “I’d Rather Go Blind,” that stands the test of time as her masterpiece. Her commanding vocal delivery packed anger and guilt into lyrics that metaphorically addressed her ongoing struggle with hard drugs.

James went on to have various successes in the 1970s and 1980s—touring with the Rolling Stones, performing at the Olympics in Los Angeles, cutting albums with Allen Toussaint and Jerry Wexler and kicking her habit. The 1988 album *Seven Year Itch* (Island) was an artistic triumph that reunited her with keyboardist Barry Beckett and other Muscle Shoals musicians.

“After ‘Tell Mama’ I wasn’t singing,” she said at the time. “I was doing more hollering. I wasn’t putting a story over. Now I do understand how singing is supposed to be done. There’s a time to sing, a time to holler, a time to moan.”

The singer steered a steady course thereafter, earning many awards and co-authoring her life story with David Ritz in the 1995 memoir *Rage To Survive: The Etta James Story*. One standout album was 1994’s *Mystery Lady: Songs Of Billie Holiday* (Private), earning her a Grammy in the best jazz vocal performance category. —Frank-John Hadley

Golia's West Coast Label Throws Caution to the Wind

When you think of jazz hot-spots, several cities come to mind—New York, New Orleans, Chicago, even Montreal. But few people would venture “Los Angeles” or “Portland” when asked where the good stuff is coming from. Composer and multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia wants to change that.

Golia's label, Nine Winds Records, is the oldest artist-run, non-van-ity label on the West Coast, and his mission is clear: Get Pacific-coast artists the nationwide exposure they deserve.

“Jazz is not just a one-town music,” Golia said. “Most of the critics are based back east, but every major city has a gigantic culture of musicians who can hold their own.” In terms of coverage, Nine Winds' powers of distribution are its greatest resource. And aside from their spectacular skill level and the underdog status inherent in their coast of origin, Nine Winds artists have another silver bullet: They all produce original music.

“[Jazz] is fueled by composer/performers,” Golia explained, “and so are we. Almost everyone on the label performs the original music they've written. Even some of the bop guys who usually play with more mainstream cats—they'll play their own tunes on Nine Winds.”

The label was born in 1977, when Golia decided to record some of the music he'd been writing. Now on the faculty at California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, Golia specializes in a variety of woodwinds. “I was playing with Bobby Bradford and a lot of first-string guys, but when it came to my own music, I figured no one knew who I was. I thought, ‘Why not just put it out on my own label?’”

The plan was simple—Golia would produce one recording of his own original work each year. “I was right on track until year three, when the distributors said I might want to put out someone else's music,” he said.

It was with this suggestion that Nine Winds took on the collaborative character for which the label is known today. “People started to say, ‘Hey, why don't you put this out?’ It was hard to find a reason why not, so Nine Winds became more of an artists' cooperative than a traditional label.”

Though most of Nine Winds' energy is spent on other artists, Golia still records and performs regularly with his own ensembles. The Vinny Golia Sextet recently performed at the L.A. venue Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock, the first show the group had played since recording its latest album. After a tightly composed atonal set dotted with pockets of free-jazz, the band members opened up about working with Golia.

“We recorded from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. this time,” said trumpeter Daniel Rosenboom, who released his own album on Nine Winds last year. “It can be a marathon, but we're happy to do it.”

“Vinny's charts just keep getting harder and weirder,” added guitarist Alex Noice, “but no matter the situation, you know he'll take it somewhere magical.”

—Zoe Young



Vinny Golia

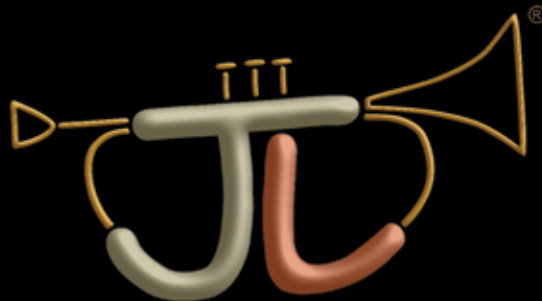
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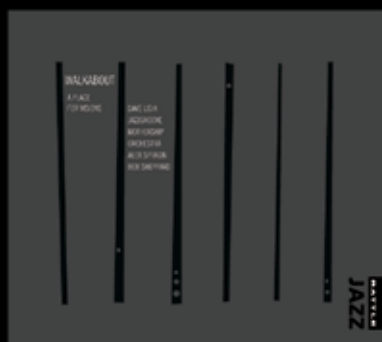
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Downstage, from left: Jeff Clayton, Wycliffe Gordon and Houston Person



Caught

Claytons, Igoe Navigate Jazz Cruise Jam Sessions

This year's edition of The Jazz Cruise, which took place from Jan. 29–Feb. 5, started with a look to the past. An hour after setting sail from Florida aboard the Holland America *Westerdam*, pianist Shelly Berg welcomed eager passengers into the spacious Vista Lounge, one of four venues of varying sizes that would be used throughout the voyage. Joined by a revolving cast of horn players, Berg ran through an aural tour of movie standards. The retiree-heavy audience responded to the nostalgic romp with enthusiastic applause.

Aside from the opening show, much of the cruise stayed current, with many of the 15 featured ensembles performing original compositions. A 30-musician cast of all-stars—artists who were placed in different configurations for jam sessions—and big-band musicians brought the number of professionals on board to more than 90. Every artist played four two-set shows, usually with their own groups, but occasionally in new settings. Kurt Elling, Anne Hampton-Callaway and John Pizzarelli each took time away from their combos to hook up with the big band during nightly showcase concerts.

Some of the more interesting pairings occurred in shows with such names as “Keyboard Capers,” which featured a cross-section of the pianists. Emmet Cohen, a recent Monk Institute International Jazz Piano competitor from the University of Miami, and pianist Gerald Clayton teamed up for an impressionistic, haunting piece. In a separate recital, pianists Bill Charlap and Renee Rosnes created achingly beautiful and technically impressive duets. At the week's closing jam session, a large handful of drummers, each with a snare, tom-tom or

hi-hat in hand, performed a raucous version of “Salt Peanuts.” This performance was the comedic highlight of the cruise.

Throughout the week, the Clayton Brothers Quintet performed with energetic abandon, whether in the small club quarters of the Queen's Lounge or swaying atop rough seas in the Crow's Nest on the 11th deck. Trumpeter Terell Stafford, who also sat in with the big band, never held back, blowing with all his might on nearly every solo, and Jeff Clayton matched his intensity on alto saxophone.

Drummer Tommy Igoe's sextet, a distillation of the big band he leads at Birdland in New York, proved to be the sleeper pick in a cruise full of renowned names. If the artists on the Jazz Cruise had an overall sound, Igoe's configuration was definitely far from center. Propelled by Latin and world rhythms, saxophonist Nathan Childers and trumpeter Nick Marchione navigated fragmented melodies in the upper range of their instruments. Their solos were tinged with the avant garde.

The Jazz Cruise, which included Aruba, Curaçao and Half Moon Cay as ports of call, provided a staggering amount of music—a setup definitely not for the casual fan. On the first night of the festivities, one third-year cruiser said that attendees are so passionate about jazz that if the boat journeyed only a few miles off the coast of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., set anchor, and then came back a week later, nobody would care.

By mid-week, many of them had already taken the time to reserve a cabin for next year's voyage.

—Jon Ross



From left: The Soul Rebels' Marcus Hubbard, Paul Robinson and Corey Payton

Soul Rebels Turn Brass into Gold

The first thing you'll notice about New Orleans' Soul Rebels Brass Band isn't the lineup of six horns and two drummers, nor is it the incorporation of contemporary style with brass-band tradition. It's the band's sheer tightness—just ask Metallica.

When the metal legends' 30th anniversary festivities got under way at San Francisco's Fillmore on Dec. 7, it was this ensemble of jazz-trained brass band players who, without the help of a single chordal instrument, kicked out the inverted power-chord jams of Metallica's monster hits "Creeping Death," "Enter Sandman" and "One." That blast of methodically perfected staccato notes and lightning-fast drum beats quickly became one of the most inspired—if unlikely—headbanging sessions in metal history.

Outside of their Metallica relationship, which burgeoned last year when the groups shared a stage on the TV show "Later ... With Jools Holland," the Soul Rebels don't make a habit of playing metal. But they do approach their music with the kind of creative open-mindedness and technical precision that made their sets at the Fillmore so memorable.

"We'll take a chord and break it down, and each one of us will play a note, so when we play together, we sound like that chord," said bass drummer Derrick Moss, who has co-led the band with snare drummer Lumar LeBlanc since the early '90s. "I think that's what sets us apart from other brass bands."

That approach to writing and arranging—along with a hardcore work ethic and vast supply of talent—has helped the Rebels maximize a slew of high-profile gigs, including a slot on the London Jazz Fest roster. In the past

year, tunes like "Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)"—an arrangement of the Eurythmics' 1983 classic—have helped them find audiences beyond jazz or brass-band funk. Meanwhile, originals such as New Orleans homage "504" are local favorites that have become part of the entire brass band community's repertoire.

Both tracks appear on *Unlock Your Mind* (Rounder), the Rebels' first nationally distributed album, which landed Jan. 31 and includes cameos by Galactic saxophonist Ben Ellman, longtime Soul Rebels proponent and percussionist Cyril Neville and Meters guitarist Leo Nocentelli. The disc will continue the band's uptick in exposure, as will their heavy spring and summer touring schedule.

"We always wanted to be on a level where we could make [our] music relevant to pop culture," LeBlanc said. "To do that, you have to assimilate some of what pop culture has to [offer]." The jazz-centric music education that LeBlanc and his bandmates received has given the band a solid foundation for experimenting with other concepts and styles.

The Soul Rebels' musical journey began somewhat surreptitiously. LeBlanc and Moss were early members of a traditional brass ensemble, Dejean's Young Olympians Brass Band. They toured each summer, playing traditional tunes under the direction of Milton Batiste, but moonlighted under the Soul Rebels moniker with a funkier original sound. Whether they're playing jazz-based solos or D.C. go-go-inspired rhythms, the message behind the Soul Rebels' music is constant.

"Don't be afraid to open your mind and step outside the box," Moss said. "Have fun, and do what pleases your soul." —Jennifer Odell



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Chucho Valdés (second from left) with Concha Buika and the Afro-Cuban Messengers

Caught

Chucho Valdés Welcomes Concha Buika at Carnegie

On the night of Chucho Valdés' first Carnegie Hall appearance since 1978, New York's Afro-Caribbean music aficionados had other options, including a gala anniversary concert by the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra at Symphony Space and a Jazz at Lincoln Center tribute to Israel "Cachao" Lopez at the Rose Theater. Still, several thousand turned out to hear the iconic Cuban pianist-composer with his Afro-Cuban Messengers.

The event jump-started the group's monthlong U.S. tour in support of the Grammy-winning album *Chucho's Steps* (E1). An added attraction was the sublime Afro-flamenco singer Concha Buika, with whom Valdés collaborated on 12 songs associated with Mexican diva Chavela Vargas on *El Ultimo Trago* (Warner-Spain).

Trim and elegant in a blue velvet suit, Valdés, 70, brought forth florid Tatumesque variations on "Prelude To A Kiss" and cued the ensemble into a cha-cha-to-montuno-to-rumba arrangement of "Satin Doll." He then set up idiomatic solos on "In A Sentimental Mood," featuring Carlos Manuel Miyares Hernandez on tenor saxophone and Reinaldo Melián Álvarez on flügelhorn. Valdés' brief piano solo bridged into "Caravan," which featured a formidable four-conga solo by Yaroldy Abreu Robles. "Duke's Place" evoked a swing feel, and Valdés' bluesy interlude quoted from "Route 66" and "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart."

Expertly performed and more than a little cheesy, this suite, titled "Ellington," prefaced a kaleidoscopic, tightly choreographed two-hour set. During the performance, Valdés displayed complete command of his material and an Ellingtonian sense of larger picture, honed by his early experience in the clubs of late-1950s Havana.

It didn't take much imagination for the

band to conjure up a production-style number on the Irakere-evoking "Yansá." An irresistible bass tumbao by Lázaro Rivero Alarcón, fluid batá beats and chants from Dreiser Durruthy Bambole and a descending horn unison drawn from Irakere's *Homenaje A Beny Moré* set up a piano solo that was cold perfection. Valdés alternated atonal clusters over shifting meters with long chromatic lines that showcased his exquisite interdependence before a concluding raise-the-spirits chant over the batás.

"Yansá" appears on *Chucho's Steps*, as does "Zawinul's Mambo" (an homage to "Birdland" featuring Valdés' by-the-numbers solo over an abstraction of the groove that Cachao invented and that his father made famous); "Begin To Be Good" ("Begin The Beguine" meets "Lady Be Good," a showcase for Álvarez's chops); and the title track (an original long-form theme, featuring a Michael Breckerish solo by Hernandez).

Buika, who was co-billed but underutilized, came onstage to a huge ovation. Barefoot, in a long, belted black dress, she melted hearts on "Soledad" and scatted like an ecstatic horn on "Santa Cruz." During the number, she channeled memories of Celia Cruz with a mesmerizing blend of raw emotion and high craft, a richly textured voice, spot-on intonation and impeccable diction. Everything that followed seemed anticlimactic until the first encore, when Buika returned for "Andonegro," raising the roof with exultant, intervallic leaps.

After disappearing into the wings just long enough for patrons to put on their coats, Valdés returned to play a solo Gershwin melody, again channeling his inner Art Tatum as he limned the harmonies of "Embraceable You," "Summertime" and "The Man I Love." He rose from the piano and capped the evening with "Siboney," danzon-style.

—Ted Panken



Which of the two albums is the more accurate reflection of where you are creatively these days?

Oh, I'm all of those people. The big band writer, the duets guy. I'm still very much a funk and soul and r&b electric bass player as well. I like to wear all those hats. I get so much joy spanning the musical globe.

Do you have an Achilles' heel?

As a trained musician, you really try to get all of the tools you possibly can. So no matter what situation you're in, you can thrive. If I've ever been in an uncomfortable situation, it's never been so much [a question of] "Am I able to?" It's a matter of confidence, ego. All of that is intertwined. Man, especially when I'm playing classical. A few times this year, I did performances with the Shanghai Quartet. I find that playing classical music has nothing to do with the instrument or the technique or the music, but it's a head thing, like, "What are these classical musicians going to think of me?" I've got to get out of that. That's a mental, personal hang-up. I've got to stop doing that and just play the music the same way as I would anything else.

Because you're an artist who also hosts a radio show, you've done interviews from both sides of the microphone. What have you learned about the art of conducting an interview?

Besides music, I've thoroughly studied talk show hosts, because I've always enjoyed that. I love politicians at press conferences, even two people having a regular conversation, or conversational chaos, like five people in the room—you've got three different conversations going on simultaneously. I've always paid close attention to that. I think when you interview somebody, it's the exact same thing as playing music with that person. You feel their personality really quickly. You feel their vibe. Since I'm the one who's the host, I navigate where I think it should go, and then I follow that person to see if they agree with me. I just keep feeling them out. You should always have a format. You should always have a plan, but you should also be able to still operate if that plan doesn't go as planned.

Do you have any dream interview subjects?

You know who I interviewed for my second season? It hasn't been released yet, but I'm editing it right now, it's Quincy Jones. That was a big thrill. I find that almost anybody who ever interviews Quincy Jones, they always talk about his early years or the pop life. I specifically wanted to ask him about jazz and orchestrating and arranging, getting into Hollywood in the '60s—

all those things that no one ever thinks to ask him. I had a chance to interview him about a year ago, and it wasn't long enough. I had a chance to talk to him for about an hour, and I thought, "Man, I need like *four* hours."

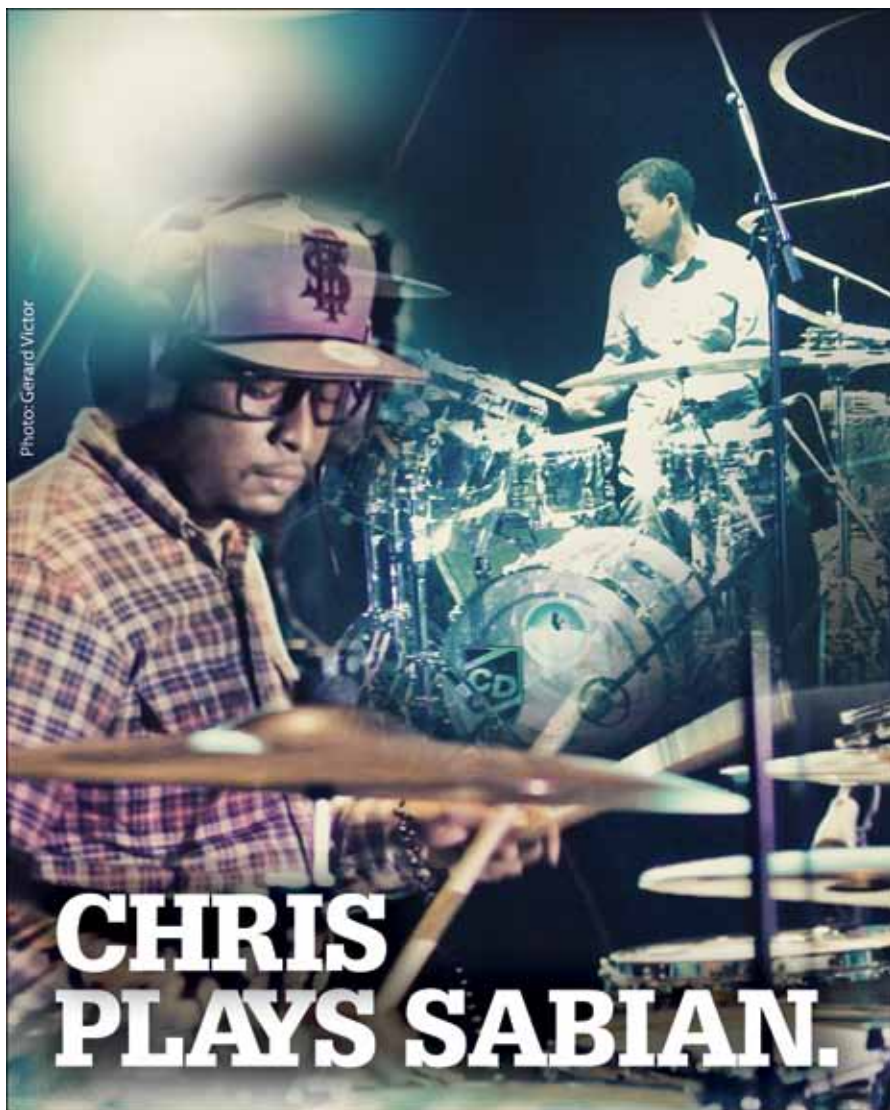
Are you reaching a broader audience with the show, so far as spreading the gospel of jazz? Who is the audience?

That question is different nowadays. It's a Wild West world with the Internet and who you're able to reach. I don't really know who my core audience is, aside from jazz lovers,

but I have been able to find some new fans outside the jazz world, be it in pop, sports or local politics. There's a great level of diversity in my audience, and I hope I can keep that up.

So is the most effective route going outside the realm of jazz?

All of us should be doing that every day. Just because you reach out doesn't mean you should lose your core. I think that's a general rule of everyday life, no matter what endeavor you're in.
—Hilary Brown



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Daniel Rosenthal *Rural-Urban Mix*

Daniel Rosenthal's *Lines* is not a typical debut by a trumpeter in his 20s. For one thing, there's little emphasis on speed for speed's sake; chops generally play a subordinate role to the compositions. The album's title comes from the horizontal nature of his tunes: He writes strong melodic lines, even if they come with odd meters, odd intervals and odd numbers of bars. The striking title track, for example, contains five different themes, which are 29, 22, 18, 14 and 14 measures long. And yet each of those themes is not only melodically striking but also emotionally focused.

"I just sat at the piano writing that tune," the 29-year-old member of the Either/Orchestra says, "and let it go as far as it needed until it reached a natural conclusion. Most of the time when I'm writing, I'm not making it a certain number of measures. I keep writing until I go, 'Oh, that's the end of the tune.' I let it surprise me. It's like a story: If you cut it off too soon, it's not going to make sense. You know when enough has been said."

To make it easier for these lines to go wherever they wanted, he composed the tunes for a piano-less, guitar-less quartet—also somewhat atypical for a brass player's debut. On *Lines*, the trumpeter is joined by alto saxophonist Rick Stone, bassist Kendall Eddy and drummer Austin McMahon. Sometimes the two horn players pursue parallel lines; sometimes they offer counterpointed lines; and occasionally one is comping while the other solos. But with their horizontal thrust, the single-note lines define the changes, rather than the other way around.

"I like the freedom without the piano or guitar," explains Daniel, whose father, Phil, is also a musician. "The horn is more in charge of the melodic direction and the harmonic direction. I've always loved the Ornette Coleman Quartet, the Gerry Mulligan-Chet Baker Quartet and the Steve Lacy Trio. It's fun to fill in those chords with another horn player when there's no piano. I was taking lessons with Steve Lacy at the New England Conservatory, and for a whole year we would spend the last hour of the lesson playing Monk tunes with just bass and drums." (*Lines* includes interpretations of the Thelonious Monk compositions "Reflections" and "Skippy.")

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of this debut is the presence on four tracks of banjoist Wes Corbett from the string band Joy Kills Sorrow. Though Daniel's first jazz hero, Louis Armstrong, played with banjoist Johnny St. Cyr on the Hot Five sides, one doesn't expect a Steve Lacy protégé to be trading licks with a banjo player. Thanks to his father's career,



however, Daniel grew up amid bluegrass and old-time music. In the late '70s and early '80s, Phil was a singer and guitarist for the popular bluegrass band the Seldom Scene, and he still plays banjo, mandolin and acoustic guitar.

Daniel was born in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, where the Seldom Scene was based. When he was 5, his father left that group and moved back to Guilford, Conn. The family lived in the woods down a dead-end road—a perfect setting for the string-band music Phil played around the house. Daniel's mother played upright bass, and his sister sang and played acoustic guitar. As a child, he took piano lessons with little enthusiasm. But when a guest musician demonstrated the trumpet at Daniel's school, the 10-year-old boy was captivated.

"When he came home and said, 'I want to play the trumpet,' we were surprised," Phil confesses. "I said, 'Really?' The trumpet?" I had visions of him playing the dobro in the family band. But once we recovered, we encouraged him. My wife found out about a community jazz band and signed him up for that. He formed his own band at [age] 13 and started getting gigs. I bought him a Louis Armstrong CD because I thought that would be a good place to start. He obsessed about that and educated himself—and educated us in the process."

Daniel and Phil are working on a duo album that will incorporate compositions from

both father and son, as well as some traditional tunes and trumpet/banjo instrumental duets. The album will be released, as was *Lines*, by Phil's long-standing label, American Melody.

Whether Daniel is leading his own Boston-based jazz quartet or joining the Either/Orchestra in backing up Ethiopian legend Mulatu Astatke to explore Caribbean sounds, the trumpeter's tone retains a folkloric feel that echoes his upbringing. With his patient, rounded phrasing, Daniel is part of a generation of players following the trail blazed by producer Manfred Eicher, whose ECM Records has proven that jazz can be equally powerful with the open, organic sounds of a pastoral setting—rather than the urban vibe and jittery syncopation that have been part of the genre's sounds since its origins.

"I like that ECM sound; it's a direction I'm pursuing," Daniel says. "It's a blending of jazz with a folk sensibility, which reflects my own background. Hard-driving jazz is great, but there are other streams that are also viable. Growing up in the countryside changes how you hear music. I played a lot with my father and his friends, and his friends would yell at me, 'Play the melody, play more simply.' That seeped into my sensibility. Ironically, at the NEC, Steve Lacy and Bob Brookmeyer were always after me to streamline my playing, to say more with fewer notes, which is pretty much the same thing." —Geoffrey Himes

Rez Abbasi

Chromatic Composer

Rez Abbasi follows a self-imposed mandate to balance the heartfelt and the theoretical on his 2011 album *Suno Suno* (Enja). “If it ventures off too much either way, it loses me,” says the guitarist. “I like being right in the middle.”

Abbasi recorded the album with his Invocation quintet: Rudresh Mahanthappa (alto saxophone), Vijay Iyer (piano), Johannes Weidenmueller (bass) and Dan Weiss (drums). The seven-tune suite contains much high-brow bedrock and fierce blowing, blending the grooves and scales of Indian *qawwali* music (think Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan) with the structural language of modern jazz.

“Anybody can hire great musicians and call it a group,” Abbasi says. “These guys internalize all kinds of music, and I want to use that as much as I can. I also want to project upon them my own concept. Here I wanted the grooves to inform the full composition—something I’ve learned from listening to *qawwali*. Writing is the one element that I can take my time with and remanipulate as many times as necessary before presenting the compositions. Then I want them to do what they do—to interpret it any way they want.”

On both *Suno Suno* and the 2009 Sunnyside CD *Things To Come*, the guitarist’s detailed scores facilitate improvisational derring-do. “The compositions are quite intricate, with the piano part entirely written out, down to the voicings I play,” Iyer remarks. “Some pieces are episodic—the notated material moves it through two or three different zones, with shifts in tempo and underlying groove. And when Rez improvises, he’s deeply in the moment, fluid and responsive—you hear melisma on the fretted instrument, a continuous rather than discrete approach to melody.”

Before a CD-release gig at New York’s Jazz Standard in December, Abbasi—fresh from a three-week sojourn as music director-guitarist for his wife, the vocalist Kiran Ahluwalia—decided he had to go deep in the shed.

“My music is highly chromatic,” Abbasi says. “Most of Kiran’s music is raga-based or scale-based; you can’t veer too much, and I yield to that approach. From that discipline comes a great deal of character. But when I play solos, I don’t like to think too much. It’s got to be free. So when I got back, to get out of those trenches, I practiced chromaticism.”

Born in Karachi, Pakistan, and raised in Los Angeles, Abbasi, 45, heard Indian music early on—his father, a doctor, liked to sing *ghazals* around the house; aunts and uncles sang at weddings. At age 16, the Van Halen-



obsessed rocker converted to jazz after hearing Joe Pass play with Ella Fitzgerald. Abbasi assimilated the vocabularies of George Benson, Pat Martino and Wes Montgomery, and then pledged allegiance to Jim Hall for his compositional approach to improvising. Abbasi attended the University of Southern California, studying guitar, conducting and orchestration, and then enrolled at Manhattan School of Music.

At 18, he met tabla master Zakir Hussain at a house party; at 20, Abbasi started investigations into Indian classical music that included a year in India observing Hussain’s father, Ustad Alla Rakha, and another year studying tabla with one of Rakha’s disciples. However, as indicated by the absence of overtly Indian elements in his recordings until 2003’s *Snake Charmer* (Earth Sounds), Abbasi was “apprehensive about applying Indian music to jazz” during his first decade in New York.

“It had to be on a different level than John Coltrane, who did the modal application of Indian music as well as it can be done—or Alice Coltrane or Shakti,” Abbasi explains. “If you don’t have a fresh concept, what else do you have? I continued to study it because I love it.” He decided to let his knowledge surface after seeing Mahanthappa and Iyer perform as a duo—as well as a couple of groups doing drum-and-bass themed Indian music—in the early ’00s.

“I felt validated,” he recalls. “OK, these guys are doing a good job at it, and I’ve got my own ideas—and what am I waiting for?” When I met my wife, it was even more validation.

“Coltrane and Keith Jarrett are the pinnacle because they’re not limited. They can play one note at a time or a thousand notes. It’s not about technique or playing fast. It’s about expression.”

—Ted Panken

Fabian Almazan *Promoting Individuality*

His quiet demeanor betrays him. Sitting across from 27-year-old pianist Fabian Almazan, you'd think this soft-spoken New Yorker was all composure. The modest sense of home he's created in his upstairs Harlem flat suggests an uncomplicated, straightforward life.

However, great complexities abound in *Personalities* (Biophilia), Almazan's debut CD. The array of styles expressed by his trio with bassist Linda Oh and drummer Henry Cole, along with an occasional string quartet (playing Shostakovich, no less) and the use of electronics, makes it tough to categorize Almazan stylistically. *Personalities* is emblematic of the pianist's composure, but there's flamboyance as well.

When discussing his influences, Almazan states, "Carlos Varela, to me, is not what you would consider a typical Cuban singer." Indeed, Varela's beautifully romantic "Bola De Nieve"—a song filled with longing, and one of three non-originals on *Personalities*—speaks to that singer's fiery independence.

Likewise, for the young pianist, identity respects no borders. "People may come from a certain country, but we're all individuals," he says. "I've had a lot of pressure from people to be a Cuban pianist, to play in a certain way. I don't see the point of somebody pretending to be someone they aren't."

Almazan was born in Havana and started taking piano lessons at age 7. He lived in Mexico and Miami before arriving in New York.

Playing gigs with Ambrose Akinmusire has been key to Almazan's development, but his most important collaborator has been another trumpeter, Terence Blanchard: "I learned a lot at Manhattan School of Music, but I couldn't have learned what I learned with Terence."

Almazan, who has a keen interest in film music and orchestration, was recently a fellow at the Sundance Institute's Composers Lab. He also traveled to Prague, where Blanchard scored executive producer George Lucas' film *Red Tails*. "It was amazing to see that collabo-



ration," he says. "George Lucas knew what he didn't want, and Terence knew how to provide what he wanted that he didn't know he wanted." (Almazan's piano playing can be heard in the film and on the CD soundtrack.)

In 2012, Almazan will perform with Blanchard's quintet and headline his own gigs. With his astounding chops and serene charisma, Almazan is a star on the rise. —John Ephland

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From left: Jeff Stein, Perry Smith and John Storie



New West Guitar Group *Industrious Attitude*

The do-it-yourself concept has become a glaring reality for many working musicians today. The members of New West Guitar Group know all about the DIY approach, and their hard work has paid off. This young, innovative trio is making its mark with intrepid live performances and an industrious attitude.

The West Coast-based group blossomed out of the University of Southern California's guitar program. Perry Smith, John Storie, Brady Cohan and Matt Roberts were all guitar students with a love for straightahead jazz. "Part of getting a degree [involved playing] in the guitar ensemble. So they put Perry and me together with these other two guys," says Storie. "At first, I thought this was gonna be silly—four guitar players and no rhythm section. But then it actually clicked for us and we started doing a lot of arrangements, standards and transcriptions of solos."

The quartet began composing material. They used money from the coveted USC Thornton Protégé grant to fund their first full-length album, 2005's *Introducing New West Guitar Quartet*. On the strength of that CD, the group toured Japan and, with assistance from the university, developed a relationship with the Los Angeles Bureau of Tourism. Networking with the bureau got them work throughout Europe. They also kept active by doing sideman and session gigs on the L.A. music scene.

One of their biggest challenges came when they were devising a promotional model shortly after their debut. "We were trying to figure out how to describe this group," explains Storie. "We wanted to create a new, original sound for guitars. In 2007 we released *Wide Awake*. We featured acoustic guitars on that album, so we

worked that into the description of the group."

The musicians, who are influenced by Wes Montgomery, Grant Green and Bill Frisell, incorporated elements of folk, classical, country, blues and rock into their ample repertoire.

After the *Live At Rosalie And Alva's* DVD for Mel Bay Productions in 2008, Roberts left the group. The remaining members recorded the all-acoustic album *Sleeping Lady* in 2009.

"We realized right away that [as a trio] our sound was easier to balance, and the arrangements were a little cleaner in the solo sections," explains Smith. "The dynamics were better, and I started writing with the acoustic being the main rhythmic element in the band, working almost like the drummer's ride cymbal."

Cohan left at the end of 2009 and was replaced by current member and fellow USC alum Jeff Stein. The next milestone was their 2011 Summit Records release, *Round-Trip Ticket*.

"We knew we wanted to put this current record out on a label that would get our music in front of some new listeners," Storie explains. "It's worked out great. They're like a chamber group label that has a lot of brass quintets. And we are sort of a chamber group."

"*Round-Trip Ticket* is the first record that truly represents how we sound live," says Stein. "The compositions are there to serve a true composed effect instead of [being] simply head-solo-head. There are a few tunes with some stretched-out solos, but for the most part, the solos are built into the compositions for the bigger scheme of propelling the tunes forward. And that's more [like] combining chamber or classical writing with jazz music."

—Eric Harabadian

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ROBERT GLASPER'S **BIG EXPERIMENT**

By Shaun Brady

Photography by Jimmy and Dena Katz
at Brooklyn Recording

In Robert Glasper's view, jazz could learn a thing or two from hip-hop, not just musically—though the pianist has increasingly worked to meld the genres over the course of his career—but also in its attitude.



"I'm waiting for somebody to get shot, some beef, something," Glasper jokes, recalling infamous hip-hop feuds that crossed from talk to violence. "I've gotten bored with jazz to the point where I wouldn't mind something bad happening. Slapping hurts, but at some point it'll wake you up. I feel like jazz needs a big-ass slap."

Glasper hasn't taken to packing heat quite yet, but he is offering his own wake-up call via *Black Radio* (Blue Note), the first full album by his Experiment band. The disc features a host of hip-hop and neo-soul vocalists sitting in with the quartet, including rap superstar Lupe Fiasco, soul crooners Ledisi, Bilal and Musiq Soulchild, Mint Condition vocalist Stokley Williams and rapper/actor Mos Def, for whom Glasper has worked for five years as music director. More than just borrowing elements from other genres, *Black Radio* fully embraces them, resulting in an album that might sit more comfortably in an r&b record collection than in a jazz one.

"I'm a big house of many rooms," Glasper says. "Jazz is one of them, but there's a lot of other stuff in there. This is my way of putting all my rooms together and making a thought, and whatever you determine that thought should be called, I don't really care. I'd rather somebody not be able to totally define stuff that

I do, because that brings a certain normalcy to it. And jazz could use some abnormal shit, to be honest."

There's certainly nothing "normal" about an album by a jazz pianist that begins with soul songstress Erykah Badu's blissed-out rendition of "Afro-Blue" and ends with Experiment multi-instrumentalist Casey Benjamin's vocoder gloss on Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," with soaring, powerful backing vocals by Lalah Hathaway. In between, the Experiment tackles material by Sade and David Bowie, along with originals crafted with the same improvisatory looseness that has marked the band's groove-heavy, genre-mashing gigs at New York's Blue Note. Glasper understands that there are those who feel that jazz artists have no business expanding their boundaries into these areas. He's more than ready to face an ensuing controversy over the album; he actually seems eager for it.

"I hope people *don't* like this record," the native Houstonian laughs between bites of Texas-style brisket at a Manhattan barbecue joint. (The conversation is frequently punctuated with laughter as Glasper chuckles at his own audacity.) "I hope I ruffle the jazz police's feathers," he says. "Throughout history, everything new ruffled feathers, so if what I'm doing isn't jazz anymore, so be it. I'm just progress-

ing, as a person and as an artist. For those people who think like that, jazz would have stopped at Charlie Parker. There would be no *Birth Of The Cool*, there would be no hard bop, no *A Love Supreme*. There would be no Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, Herbie. The evolution of music would stop if those people have power. Luckily, I was born in a time period when there was a lot of dope music around, and I'm a product of that."

While *Black Radio* is the furthest Glasper has ventured from traditional jazz, it makes sense given his continual evolution. His 2007 trio album *In My Element* included "J Dillalude," an homage to the late, hugely influential hip-hop producer J Dilla, as well as a version of Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" hybridized with Radiohead's "Everything In Its Right Place." Over the course of a conversation, Glasper drops names like Billy Joel and Bruce Hornsby as piano heroes as readily as he mentions Mulgrew Miller.

His sidemen in the Robert Glasper Experiment come from equally eclectic backgrounds. Fellow Houstonian Chris Dave has played with Kenny Garrett and Pat Metheny, served for a time as a member of '90s r&b hit-makers Mint Condition, and is currently in rehearsals for the long-awaited comeback tour of eccentric soul singer D'Angelo. "Every time



he sits down, he does something I've never seen a drummer do," Glasper says. "He's our Tony Williams, in my opinion."

Bassist Derrick Hodge has performed and recorded with Terence Blanchard and Terrell Stafford as well as hip-hop giant Kanye West and gospel singer Donnie McClurkin. He recently relocated to Los Angeles, where he's concentrating on film scoring. "He's extremely versatile," Glasper says. "Within a week, he'll be in the studio with [neo-soul singer] Maxwell, do a hit with Common, and tour with the London String Orchestra. This cat has sat on my couch and wrote out string parts for shows while watching TV. Who does that?"

Glasper refers to Benjamin as "a monopoly in himself," adding that "nobody does what he does." That includes playing saxophone, flute, synthesizer and vocoder, at times simultaneously, for Q-Tip, Mos Def and Stefon Harris.

The band made its recorded debut on the pianist's last album, 2009's *Double Booked* (Blue Note), which was split evenly between Glasper's acoustic trio and the electric Experiment. "That's where I was in my career at the time," Glasper recalls. "I was literally playing at the Vanguard but sneaking over to the Blue Note under an alias to play late nights with my Experiment band and Mos Def as a guest. Or I'd be on the road with Maxwell but doing trio gigs or Experiment gigs on my days off."

Black Radio is Glasper's most fully integrated distillation of the various influences that have colored his work. On the surface, it's a departure, a vocal-centric collection of radio-friendly songs featuring some of the biggest names in mainstream and underground soul and hip-hop. Scratch that surface, however, and Glasper's jazz identity emerges, in the concise but meaningful interjections of the keyboardist and his Experiment bandmates and in the overall sense of improvisation, an in-the-moment immediacy that can't be faked.

The album is named after a song Glasper wrote with Mos Def. The chorus says, "*Big bird falling down on a mountain pass / Only thing to survive the crash / Black radio.*" The reference is to the black box, the cockpit recording device meant to survive airplane crashes and relay vital information to investigators. The obvious double meaning, however, is to the coterie of urban radio artists who are guests on the album, which is a virtual spin around an imaginary, particularly hip FM dial.

"When all the music around us gets wack and horrible and crashes, great music lives on," Glasper says. "We can always go back to a Donny Hathaway record or a Michael Jackson record; Marvin Gaye, Isley Brothers, Earth, Wind & Fire, whatever. I feel like this album is one of those records that will live on when everything else crashes around us."

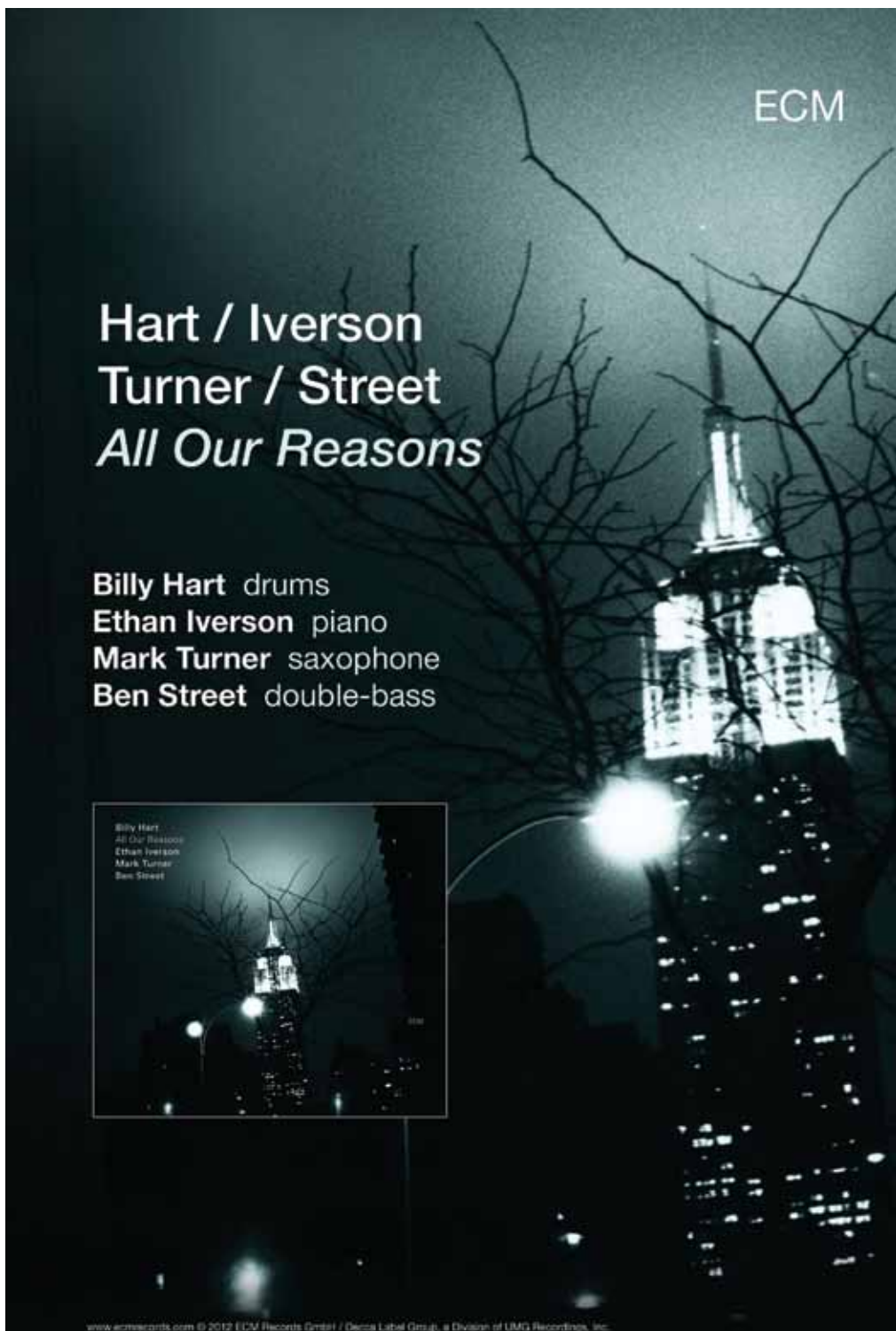
Iconoclastic bassist and singer Meshell Ndegeocello, no stranger to boundary-blurring herself, sees the title also reflecting a lineage to which Glasper belongs. "Black radio used

to be this interesting place where you heard so many different types of music and so many different musicians," she says. "I think Robert's done a great thing by carrying on what I feel Miles Davis and other people were trying to say—which is that all music is improvisational, no matter what so-called genre you need to put it into."

Glasper does recognize differences between his various incarnations: Of his regular ensembles, the trio is a traditional acoustic lineup, while the Experiment finds him playing Rhodes and other keyboards, Hodge playing

electric bass, and the addition of the multi-faceted Benjamin. When Glasper is accompanying singers or rappers, he takes on more of a sideman role, a variation of which he assumes on *Black Radio*. Solos are scarce on the record, so Glasper and his fellow Experimenters assert themselves in brief statements, interacting with the featured vocalists rather than taking the spotlight for themselves.

"All of my guys are extremely musical and very restrained," Glasper says. "The guys in my band can play faster than most people, and they have as much harmony as most people, but



they leave so much space, which shows a greater appreciation for music and vibe. They don't feel the need to harmonically or technically masturbate all over the place."

The same sentiment is reiterated, in the opposite direction, by Glasper's bandmates. "The Experiment is about freedom," Hodge says. "People latch onto something that they believe is real and coming from an honest place. Rob thinks of music in a way that people can relate to without dumbing it down. The intellect is there, the study's there, but he's comfortable going out into a room full of piano players and just playing grooves."

Glasper credits his expansive view of musical expression to his mother, a fellow "musical mutt" who sang and played piano on jazz, r&b and country gigs and was the music director at the family's church. Watching her regular accompanist play piano at the family home turned Glasper on to jazz and led to his enrollment at Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts—after a year of pursuing another dream. "I wanted to play basketball at a regular high school. I sat on the bench all year and realized I wasn't gonna make it to the NBA, so I just dragged that bench over to the piano."

At New York's New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, Glasper met many of the artists he would work with in the ensuing years. While he entered college with more of a straightahead jazz path in mind, his diverse tastes and the common background he shared with classmates like future Experiment saxophonist Casey Benjamin and neo-soul vocalist Bilal steered him onto a more idiosyncratic course.

Longtime friend and collaborator Bilal sees Glasper's ascension to becoming hip-hop's pianist of choice as an acoustic flipside to the role of a hip-hop producer: "From a producer's standpoint, hip-hop mixes a lot of different styles and concepts, but you're just putting it inside of a machine. Rob thinks that way as well."

It was through his work on Bilal's demo tape—which got the singer signed to Interscope Records for his 2001 debut, *1st Born Second*—that Glasper gained entree into the world of hip-hop and r&b. The two traveled to Detroit to work with J Dilla, who later introduced Glasper to rappers Q-Tip, a co-founder of the groundbreaking group A Tribe Called Quest, and Common, who became Glasper's piano student briefly when the two were neighbors in Brooklyn. Glasper has gone on to tour as Q-Tip's pianist and work with numerous other rappers, like the chart-topping Grammy-winner Lupe Fiasco.

"Rob is a bridge between the two worlds," Fiasco says. "He understands that a hip-hop artist or a soul artist needs to do what they do best, but at the same time, he's not shy about making sure that his music stays authentic to his jazz roots. So it feels like you're listening



to both, not like a rapper trying to rap over a jazz record or a stuffy, straight, standardized jazz record."

Singer Ledisi calls Glasper a chameleon. "There's nothing he doesn't listen to, and you can hear that in his music," she says. "It's as natural as breathing for him. I'm glad he keeps pushing the envelope. If we don't let the music grow into something else, we're disappointing the people before us."

Fiasco, like many progressive hip-hop artists, is a fan of jazz, and he sees more ties between the genres than might be immediately evident. "I think they have some of the same roots, some of the same struggles, and in some instances, they came out of the same places," he says. "I think they've always rubbed shoulders along the way as hip-hop was coming up. But Robert is the epitome of how it's done."

Glasper's most high-profile role in recent years has been as Mos Def's music director. The rapper, who recently changed his stage name to Yasiin Bey, has also found fame

as an actor, having portrayed Chuck Berry in *Cadillac Records* and starred in films as diverse as *Be Kind Rewind*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* and *The Italian Job*. He's currently appearing regularly on the Showtime serial killer series *Dexter*. Despite the headliner's star power, however, Glasper enjoys immense freedom when playing with Mos Def.

"We do a completely live show," Glasper says. "Mos is extremely jazzy, off the cuff, and he loves to cover. You almost have to make him do his hits. He'll bring in an Eric Dolphy tune or a Tony Williams tune, obscure stuff that he wants to do. We've literally gone from Cyndi Lauper's 'Time After Time' into a Ghostface Killah cut and right into an Eric Dolphy joint. That's how random he is. You have to be like, 'Yo man, let's do [the Mos Def hit] 'Umi Says' because the crowd is freaking out.'"

That same approach went into the selection of material for *Black Radio*. "Letter To Hermione," a track from Bowie's 1969 album *Space Oddity*, reimagined as a vehi-

cle for Bilal, follows an opened-up cover of Mint Condition's "Why Do We Try" featuring that band's lead singer, Stokley Williams. But whether the music was conceived in collaboration with soul trio KING while Glasper washed his clothes at their house during a tour stop, or by giving Ledisi 20 minutes to write new lyrics to "F.T.B.," a piece from 2007's *In My Element*, spontaneity was the guiding factor, a looseness that translates to the vibe of the album as a whole.

"I didn't ever know what we were going to do until we got into the studio," Glasper says. "I just knew that something good was going to come out of these musicians. The jazz spirit is the spine for this whole record."

Dave likens the *Black Radio* sessions to a party, while Benjamin refers to Glasper as "a comedian" for his whip-smart sense of timing. What comes across from speaking with Glasper's collaborators is the balance he strikes between his sense of humor, the playfulness and spontaneity, with his keen ear and astute sense of what works and what doesn't.

"He's kind of a dichotomy," says Lalah Hathaway. "He's a real serious jazzhead, but then he's a real serious goofball. There's always this duality between playing some real serious shit and playing something that a civilian, a person who's not a musician, can understand. He's like an old man playing; he's like my mom playing in church; he's like a young dude playing. He can go any number of places, but his touch and the rhythm and the information that he gives you is still very much Glasper."

Every guest on the album is someone Glasper already knew. In most cases, he had previously worked with the guest, either in the studio or onstage in New York. Glasper personally texted each singer with his initial request to record for the project. While he envisions a possible sequel with some less-familiar participants folded into the mix, the idea this time was to keep everything in the family. The atmosphere in the studio was kept open and embracing so that everyone involved could feel comfortable being themselves, not forced to work outside of their comfort zone but rather blend into a mellifluous, stylistically fluid whole.

For the most part, vocalists joined the Experiment live in the studio, with exceptions made for the busy schedules of Badu, KING and the reclusive Ndegeocello. ("He knows I'm not really people-oriented," she admits.) Tunes were selected at the last minute, and in at least one case—"Always Shine" with Fiasco and Bilal—suddenly switched on the day of the recording session. Each song was tailored to the vocalist. Hathaway's seductive power lets loose on Sade's "Cherish The Day," and Ledisi was asked to bring her usual uplifting approach to lyricizing Glasper's "F.T.B."

Glasper sees his selection of repertoire not as bucking tradition but as advancing it, maintaining the forward-looking spirit of his predecessors. "Everybody's running around here

asking where the audiences are, but they're not playing anything relevant to the society of now. They're playing stuff relevant to a society of 1960 or 1940. 'Stella By Starlight' does nothing for this crowd. 'My Favorite Things' was a song from a musical that was popular at the time when John Coltrane did it. I'm doing nothing different than that by doing Radiohead or Coldplay, Björk, Kurt Cobain, Michael Jackson."

Unlike those who shun mainstream recognition as a sign of "selling out" or a lack of seriousness, Glasper readily admits his desire to

achieve a higher crossover profile.

"I want to be on everybody's iPod," he says. "The average person's iPod probably won't have any jazz on it, or maybe it has *Kind Of Blue* or a John Coltrane record that someone told them to get. I'm trying to change that around. My campaign is not to convince everybody to love Wynton Kelly. There's a generational gap; just like old people don't like hip-hop, young people probably aren't going to like jazz. I'm not mad at that. I just want them to like whatever I'm bringing to the table, whether it's jazz or not."

DB



Masabumi Kikuchi Trio

Sunrise



Masabumi Kikuchi piano
Thomas Morgan double-bass
Paul Motian drums

WES MONTGOMERY BACK HOME ON INDIANA AVENUE

By Aaron Cohen

A NEW ALBUM SHEDS LIGHT ON THE EARLY WORK OF THE ICONIC JAZZ GUITARIST

The exact dates the mysterious tapes rolled to capture Wes Montgomery and his group are not known—it was probably sometime in 1957 or 1958. The three settings of the recordings are also unclear. Some were recorded in an unidentified studio, and others in a club. The tapes were most likely made in his hometown, Indianapolis. Why they were recorded (and what happened to them in the decades that followed) remains open to conjecture. But one thing is certain: Montgomery offers a sound on these recordings that is unmistakably his own.

Now released as *Echoes Of Indiana Avenue* (Resonance), the recordings show the guitarist at a time when he was making a pivotal transition. Montgomery already had developed a distinctive approach to the guitar, shortly before record labels began calling. The disc also offers a compelling snapshot of a still-underappreciated jazz scene in a city that was removed from what were then the major musical hubs. Some critics have claimed that because Montgomery was away from the pressures, and influences, of the music industry of the late 1950s, he was free to experiment. Indianapolis offered a strong musical community, which included his brothers—pianist Buddy and bassist Monk—alongside such empathetic colleagues as pianist/organist Melvin Rhyne, bassist Mingo Jones and drummer Paul Parker, all of whom are on the tapes that became *Echoes*.

In the late-'50s, Indianapolis had its share of challenges and obstacles. Decades later, so

does the story of how this album came into being. *Echoes* (available as a CD or double-LP) sheds important, new light on Montgomery, who was voted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame in 1968, the same year that he died.

INDIANAPOLIS, 1957-'58

Montgomery could have chosen from a number of different routes when he returned to Indianapolis in 1950. He had just come off of a two-year stint touring with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton in a big band that also included bassist Charles Mingus and trumpeter Fats Navarro. But the notably clean-living guitarist also had a wife and children to support. As he told Bill Quinn in the June 27, 1968, issue of DownBeat, "What I wanted to do didn't matter as much as what I had to do." So he would wake up early to begin an eight-hour shift at a radio parts factory starting at 7 a.m., which did not

prevent him from working on the Indianapolis club scene at night, at venues such as the Hub-Bub, Turf Bar and Missile Room.

While Montgomery was regularly holding multiple jobs during these 14- and 16-hour workdays, he was being noticed far from Indianapolis. At the end of 1957, he recorded with Buddy and Monk—and a young hometown trumpeter named Freddie Hubbard—for sessions that would be released the following year as *Fingerpickin'* (Pacific Jazz). The record didn't make a huge dent in the jazz marketplace, but it could have contributed to the interest that musicians like saxophonist Cannonball Adderley and composer Gunther Schuller began taking not just in the guitarist, but his Midwestern city, too. They had a lot to observe there, according to the musicians who worked with the Montgomery brothers at its Indiana Avenue clubs.

Jones was one of the musicians who had

Photos on opposite page: (1) Wes Montgomery at the Essex House Hotel in Indianapolis, 1959. Photo by © Duncan Schiedt. (2) From left: Paul Parker, Wes Montgomery and Melvin Rhyne at the Essex House Hotel, 1959. Photo by © Duncan Schiedt. (3) From left: Wes Montgomery and Buddy Montgomery at the Turf Bar. Photo courtesy of Ann Montgomery. (4) From left: Willis Kirk, Monk Montgomery, Wes Montgomery and Buddy Montgomery, performing in Indianapolis. Photo: DownBeat archives. (5) Wes Montgomery, Buddy Montgomery and others at a Halloween party at the Turf Bar, 1955 or '56. Photo courtesy of Ann Montgomery. (6) From left: Monk, Wes and Buddy Montgomery. Photo courtesy of Ann Montgomery. (7) Wes Montgomery, smiling and playing at the Essex House Hotel, 1959. Photo by © Duncan Schiedt.



been active on that street since he left the Army, where he doubled on trumpet in military bands and served in the Korean War. He recalled that the Indianapolis club scene also emphasized a strong sense of discipline.

"Indiana Avenue had clubs wall to wall, and they were not just clubs—they were nice, clean clubs," Jones said. "The musicians who came there had to be dressed properly, and they had to play well. The clubs didn't accept no half-job; you had to be on time. Most club owners wanted to make money, and you can't make money if you're not organized. These

guys who came on the avenue had the chance to learn how to be great musicians. They were also helping younger musicians to study and learn what being a musician was all about."

Those thriving clubs, such as George's Bar, Henri's, Mr. B's and the 16th Street Tavern, were located in the city's predominantly African American neighborhoods. *Echoes Of Indiana Avenue* commemorates this time and place through the photographs and essays in its liner notes. Educator/bandleader David Baker has said that there were around 20 small theaters, bars, bistros and other venues where jazz

flourished at the time. He made the rounds there as a young trombonist, trying to soak up as much as he could at jam sessions that the Montgomery brothers and their contemporaries were running.

"As a player in high school, I had to draw a mustache on with a pencil so I could get into the clubs," Baker said. "And I'd wear my Dizzy Gillespie glasses, which had no glass in them. High-schoolers like me would wait for Tuesday nights so we could go from club A to club B to club C, and I believe we were playing the same solos at the last one that we did at the first one. But since you couldn't be in two places at one time, we had some kind of anonymity. When you got these places to play, and you're not going to make any money anyway, this is the time to hone your skills."

This supportive community thrived even though racial discrimination was about as pro-

"He was harmonic and melodic and swung like hell."

—MICHAEL CUSCUNA

nounced in Indiana as it was in Southern states during the era just before the civil rights movement. After mentioning this history, Baker added, "Let's just say that segregation was less flagrant among musicians than it was in the town at large." He also noted that there was an unintended, positive consequence to the restrictive codes that kept Indianapolis' Crispus Attucks High School an all-black institution.

"When you place all these people who are extremely talented in one place, the likelihood of you coming out with a gold piece now and then is more likely than if we were dispersed," Baker said.

Talented high school students like Baker and Hubbard also had the Montgomery brothers as after-hours teachers. Sometimes their lessons amounted to letting the protégés know what they had to study for themselves.

"Buddy was a fearsome piano player—he taught himself and it never occurred to him that there were things that he couldn't do," Baker said. "He had Bud Powell under control the way he played. But there were some other circumstances. Monk was a little more adventure-some. I remember he was a mentor. We were playing in midtown Indianapolis, which was unusual because of the segregation. We were playing 'Darn That Dream' and I was playing piano, or I should say playing *at* piano, and we came to the second chord, which I would miss, and Monk said, 'No, that's a B-flat.' I said, 'That's what I'm playing.' He wouldn't tell me the quality of the chord—that it was a B-flat

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minor or major. Monk was also one of those people who was very aware of his physical prowess. If anything happened, he could take care of it. The most deadly words you could hear as a novice were Wes saying to you, 'What are the changes?' Because then he'd say, 'You'll hear it,' which meant, 'Go home.'"

Toward seasoned musicians, Wes Montgomery in particular was remembered for being especially generous. In the late '50s, Jones was playing at Andre's when bassist Leroy Vinnegar recommended him to the guitarist.

"Although Wes had great talent, he was a regular, loving guy, and he would always help you," Jones said. "When guitar players came to town, he'd go up to them and he'd introduce himself. He was just that type of person. Even after he had got famous, he'd come to town and stop by my apartment. Wes would come by and talk about his experience on the road, and say he'd wished we'd all been together. But the way it happened, everything went smooth."

In that 1968 *DownBeat* interview, Montgomery credited Adderley for raving about him to Riverside Records founders Bill Grauer and Orrin Keepnews—leading to the prominent record deal that would take him out of Indianapolis a decade earlier. That was when

the guitarist was holding court at the Missile Room on Indiana Avenue. In the liner notes to *The Wes Montgomery Trio*, Keepnews claimed, "I first heard about Wes in no uncertain terms and twice on the same day: to be precise, on September 17, 1959." He went on to add that the same day Adderley "charged into the Riverside office" urging him to sign the guitarist, Keepnews read Schuller's article, "Indiana Renaissance," published in the September 1959 issue of *The Jazz Review*.

Schuller was effusive in describing Montgomery's playing, describing techniques that have since become familiar to every jazz guitarist. As Montgomery performed without a pick, his solos would move from introducing a single-line melody to using octaves as a way of playing in different registers simultaneously and then concluding with block chords—all of which were tied together with a perfect sense of form and executed relatively quietly. Varying accounts mention that Montgomery's subdued volume derived from his not wanting to disturb either his wife, or his neighbors, while practicing.

Schuller wrote, "In its totality, it is playing that combines the perfect choice of notes—i.e. purity of creative ideas—with a technical prowess

that the jazz of yesteryear, the jazz of the jam sessions and cutting contests had, but that, I'm afraid, the jazz of today has almost completely lost."

What's striking is that Keepnews and Riverside worked quickly enough to sign Montgomery and bring him, along with Rhyne and Parker, into the studio in only three weeks to record *The Wes Montgomery Trio* (aka *A Dynamic New Sound*) in October 1959. Considering how disciplined and industrious the guitarist was, he must have prepared himself for this transition onto a larger jazz playing field. That's where the recordings that make up *Echoes Of Indiana Avenue* come in.

Producer Michael Cuscuna, who would play a significant role in finding and helping release the recordings decades later, believes that the tapes were made as audition reels for Montgomery. It's likely, then, that they would have been circulating the following year.

"They were [recorded] live, but done professionally live," Cuscuna explained. "It wasn't a small reel-to-reel at a table in the back of a club. So they were done for Wes, his manager, or whoever. They sound like they were made with the idea of getting Wes a record deal."

The performances on *Echoes Of Indiana*

SCHOOL OF WES

Two of Wes Montgomery's guitar disciples, Pat Martino and Russell Malone, share their excitement on hearing *Echoes Of Indiana Avenue* and describe what its release means for understanding his legacy. Both guitarists were interviewed by Aaron Cohen.



PAT MARTINO

The dexterity that Wes has on this series of takes is overwhelming. I remember as a teenager sitting in front of a record player and copying Wes' solos and wondering what the next album was going to be like. I would go from album to album. Recently, when I heard these [*Echoes*] cuts, it brought me back to the state of mind I had as a child. It's so authentic and goes with the culture. Since those years, our culture has changed drastically. There

were many things involved with this recording that could never be replaced.... Unlike some of the other records that Wes did with studio players who were artists in the label's roster, when the Montgomery brothers played together, it was something special. *Groove Yard* (Riverside) was a great example. There are cuts on this album where they're playing together that remind me of that. The first cut embodies that, "Diablo's Dance"; the way they sound together is just superb. The cuts all produce a completely different aura from Wes. "After Hours Blues" captures a style I never heard from him before. It seems as if it came from a prior time, a time prior to the hard-bop years. Goes back to something extremely exciting and important in terms of his evolution as an artist.



RUSSELL MALONE

I don't think he ever played a bad note in his life. Always at a high level, swung. The thing that caught me off guard was "After Hours Blues." It's amazing to hear him play like that, but I'm not surprised, either. Why *wouldn't* he be able to play the blues? He didn't play octaves as much as he did later on, but they were definitely there on this recording. You can tell those guys had spent a lot of time together, and you can hear some of the

same changes and harmonies that were on *A Dynamic New Sound*. Wes sounds more boppish on this recording; he was speaking that language of bebop. I remember reading an article where he said that he was more influenced by horn players than guitar players, and you can hear that language here, especially in the phrasing. On "Diablo's Dance" and "Straight No Chaser," you can really hear it. It reminds me of Clifford Brown a little bit. When [Montgomery] played ballads, he was never in a hurry. You rarely heard him double-time on ballads, and a lot of guitar players tend to double-time instead of allowing the notes to breathe and develop. On "Darn That Dream" and "Round Midnight" in particular, it's beautiful the way Wes takes his time and allows his solo to develop.

Avenue illustrate what Schuller described in that 1959 article, though it doesn't take too deep a listen to discern the congeniality that Indianapolis veterans remember. On a terrific interpretation of "Round Midnight," Montgomery builds up from a deliberate pace alongside Rhyne's organ lines, and their blend continually stops and starts in unexpected moments, yet the constant surprises conclude with a perfect sense of resolution. At other times, like on "Take The 'A' Train," Montgomery delivers his uncanny technique at a tempo that remains startling. *Echoes* concludes with "After Hours Blues," an apparently spontaneous jam in front of a club audience where Montgomery revels in strong chords and distorted effects. Whoever is in the audience clearly loves it all.

And then the tapes vanished for 50 years.

CONNECTICUT, CALIFORNIA AND CYBERSPACE, 2008-'09

As a producer for Mosaic Records, and instigator of many historical releases, Cuscuna has seen not just his share of important albums, but also numerous projects that never moved past the idea stage. In 2008, someone told

him that guitarist Jim Greeninger had put up early tapes of Montgomery for sale in an eBay auction. The tapes went unsold, but Cuscuna was excited about what he heard, particularly because unreleased Montgomery tapes are such a rarity.

"What was evident was that without any identifying mannerism, here was a guy who could just burn," Cuscuna said. "He was harmonic and melodic and swung like hell. What comes through here is a musician who is a full-throttle improviser, who is accomplished on his instrument, and has a great range."

Cuscuna bought the tapes from Greeninger with the intention of passing them on to Blue Note for a release. But his timing was not ideal.

The private equity company Terra Firma had bought Blue Note's parent company, EMI. "Everything there slipped into complete dysfunction," Cuscuna said.

"Terra Firma disconnected catalog from each of the labels, and tore the labels apart," he added. "We'd go to meetings and people would discuss it or forget to discuss it, and the layers of bureaucracy were just getting worse."

So Cuscuna offered the tapes to George Klabin and Zev Feldman at Los Angeles-based Resonance Records. All of them worked to nail down the details of the sessions. They called in additional experts, like Baker, who helped

point out the other musicians.

"We had good luck identifying the players simply because there was a limited number of people who were playing at Wes' level at that time," Baker said. "Part of it is simply knowing their associates, knowing who they normally play with, and knowing the idiosyncrasies of the players themselves. I recognized Sonny Johnson on drums, and Mingo would have been more likely to play something more advanced than swing, more repeated notes from time to time."

Montgomery's estate was eager to get on board with the project. Buddy Montgomery's widow, Ann Montgomery, has expressed that she's glad this release provides another example of all three brothers' musical accomplishment.

Cuscuna contends that in the future, independent labels like Resonance will have more flexibility than the majors in terms of clearing all the legal hurdles required to issue such previously unavailable recordings.

The surviving participants on *Echoes Of Indiana Avenue* are just excited that it is out there and presents the personality that they always will remember.

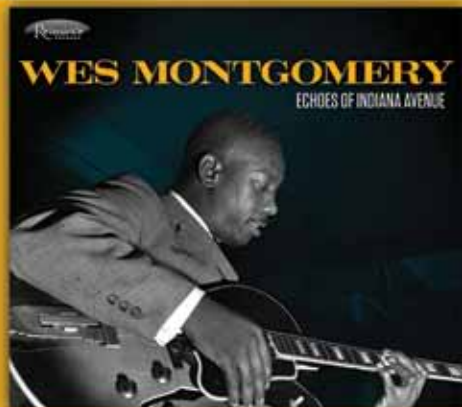
"Wes was a person who never stopped," Jones said. "He played for everybody, and he loved everybody. He would always have a smile and was always there for you."

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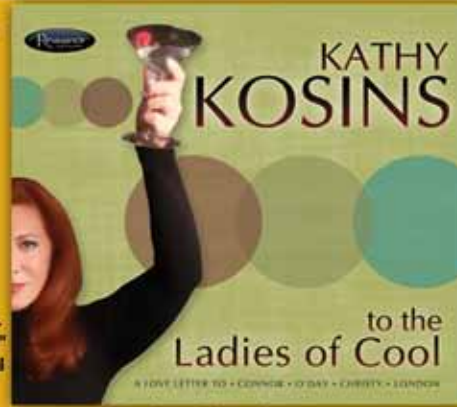
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ISHMAEL WADADA LEO SMITH

Looking for the Diamond Fields

Article and Photography by Michael Jackson

At Brooklyn's Roulette in December, on the second night of an ambitious, two-night, six-set stand in celebration of Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith's 70th birthday, the first group took the stage half an hour late.

Smith had more than 30 performers to corral for that particular show. On the previous night, things had been punctual. Finally, Smith addressed the audience in front of his Golden Sextet, announcing a further delay: "Just tryin' to find the *space* right now," he said with gravitas. After a meditative pause, he added, "If you are getting ready to make an apple pie, then you better not rush it, or no one will want to eat it."

This display of grace under pressure illustrated the focused aura that the Mississippi-born trumpeter commands.

The same centered vibe was evident at Los Angeles' Red Cat six weeks prior when Smith coordinated another outsized project, his five-hour civil rights opus *Ten Freedom Summers* (set for release in May by the Cuneiform label as a four-CD set).

Smith's measured mien doesn't mean he fails to break a sweat. At Roulette, in a hunched posture reminiscent of Miles Davis, dreadlocks masking perspiring brow, Smith delivered high-pressure, unhurried blasts from his trumpet, often muted, and vintage flügelhorn.

Despite orchestrating a panoply of music, Smith steadily remains the unblinking eye of the cyclone. Mbira—his trio with percussionist Pheeroan akLaff and pipa player Min Xiao-Fen—segued to string quartet, thence to the 23-piece Silver Orchestra, culminating in a multimedia rock fusion nonet show with Organic, featuring his grandson Lamar among the three guitarists.

Smith's prolific output and raft of associations demonstrate a talent for bringing people into his orbit while helping them discover their own path. His work reflects a strong element of

freedom combined with a fierce artistic commitment, whether he's composing a project deploying his specific theoretical strategies, or cueing directions for his musicians via authoritative hand signals.

The range of Smith's oeuvre is remarkable. He has recorded for ECM with Lester Bowie and Kenny Wheeler; composed music for chamber formats, gamelan ensembles, and multiple harps; investigated Noh traditions in Japan; and collaborated with musicians in Iceland. He has made numerous solo recordings, as well as duo projects with such diverse artists as Jack DeJohnette, Günter "Baby" Sommer and lap-top musician Ikue Mori. Smith has filtered the influence of reggae and the Shona culture of Thomas Mapfumo's Chimurenga music, and dropped flame-throwing electric fusion with Henry Kaiser's Yo Miles! project. Another fruitful recent hook-up was with the guitar and harmonica of John Coxon, from the U.K.-based group Spring Heel Jack.

Smith resists classification as a chameleon or dilettante. The indelible stamp of his klaxon trumpet bores to the heart of the matter, without sentimentality or artifice.

After a somewhat rebellious time in several Army bands and stints backing blues/soul hero Little Milton (a casual guest in the home of Leo's stepfather, bluesman Alex "Little Bill" Wallace), Smith became a valued member of the fledgling Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in Chicago in 1967, forging a tight bond with saxophonist Anthony Braxton and violinist Leroy Jenkins.

Smith, Braxton and Jenkins, along with drummer Steve McCall, formed the Creative

Construction Company, which used Paris as its base in 1970. Smith was key to Braxton's audacious Delmark debut, *Three Compositions Of New Jazz*, contributing one of those compositions. During his school days, Smith, nicknamed "Schubert," was fascinated by composition and early on began formulating a music system dubbed "Ankhrasmation" or "Ahkreation," (derived from the ancient Egyptian term *ankh*, or life force). Aside from graphic scores and other insinuations of where the music should go, his "rhythm units"—non-metrical divisions of sound and silence—can involve staff-bound note stacks of varied duration as a guide to the performer. For Smith, issues of equality and self-determination are paramount. He is a devout improviser—a point made clear in his 1973 manifesto *Notes (8 Pieces) Source A New World Music: Creative Music*.

Since 1993, Smith has been on the faculty at the Herb Alpert School of Music at California Institute of the Arts, where he is the coordinator of African American Improvisational Music. Smith is also a poet, visual artist and activist through music, au courant with shifts in the behavior of the populace. One composition, premiered at Roulette and recently recorded with a 22-piece pan-Scandinavian orchestra in Finland, is titled *Occupy The World For Life, Liberty And Justice*.

In a conversation outside the Walt Disney Concert Hall—mere blocks from the Occupy Wall Street encampment near Los Angeles Town Hall—and in subsequent email correspondence, DownBeat asked the thinking man's improviser about his work.



Smith outside the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, October 2011

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— Wadada Leo Smith



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— Anthony Davis

Wadada is one of the most imaginative and explorative composers in creative music. His vision is uncompromising, his methods holistic and mystical. His playing is consistently brilliant and his sound is personal, with a clarity of tone recognizable after one note. His compositions have a special focus combining improvisation with written passages of extreme sensitivity and beauty... He is a National Treasure. — John Zorn

photo: M. Jackson

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DownBeat: Your 1973 manifesto referred to improvisation as "a vital art form with a future as absolute as the mind." When you direct musicians, they are not required to surrender to the whole. You wrote that "individual centers" needn't respond to "the total creative energy of the different units," thus freeing "the sound-rhythm elements in a improvisation from being realized through dependent reaction." Do you not espouse basic subjugation of the Self in performance?

Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith: What I want from the creative artist, the composers/performers in my ensembles, is a complete contribution, creating music that is multi-dominant in all qualities. Each performer has equal rights in shaping the music-object with personal creative energy independent of others. The overall awareness of the performer must be deeply connected in the ensemble form, but in a more spiritual way, closer to meditation. Dependent reaction will reduce creativity in a music-object...then redundancy becomes the norm, value as an art-object is lost.

Do you revoke the colonial rule of count-ins, time signatures and key transposition?

I do use these elements when needed to achieve an idea, or when I invest in melody or sonic form. That is always a creative decision not set from custom or tradition. Feeling is more important to me. Like, how does the performer know to play the figures in a score without using beating or counting? He or she must [embed] within themselves a psychological knowledge of form and structure, commit to an understanding of how the shapes and spaces work in a figure, then realize those figures in relation to the horizontal and vertical dimensions in the composition. It's not to give up any of the musical elements but to express what I feel. True inspiration must emanate from musical work, giving me, the artist, and others a place in the creation to know ourselves.

After studying ethnomusicology at Wesleyan, you took studies into the field, investigating belief systems as an undercurrent to musical tradition. Has being married four times to women of diverse cultural origin and the switch from Rastafari to Islam affected your attitude toward artistic pursuit?

The world is a large family. Having a life that has crossed many cultural and spiritual paths, I am growing into the best I can be. I learned from Rastafari how to use philosophical and mystical views of Christianity to discover a new spiritual reality of life mixed with the revolutionary fire and vision of art as a force for change. As Bob Marley said, "Natural mystic blowing through the air, and if you listen carefully you will hear."

Before Islam I'd looked into many religions: the Christians, Buddhism, Zen and their mysticism. But when I read the Qur'an to learn some of the teachings of the proph-

et Muhammad, my heart opened and I found a connection with truth and the path toward home. Having already taken the name Ishmael, the choice was confirmed when I was leaving the Grand Mosque of Mecca [which has many doors]. I looked up to see where I was exiting from—it was the door of Ishmael.

During your Rastafari phase, you countenanced the word *Jahzz*, but you generally reject such categorizations of creativity.

Yes, because that word in-housed *Jah*, which comprised the idea of the "word, sound, power" of Rasta, and not jazz as a music reference.

How did such acknowledged antecedents as Joe Smith, Fats Navarro, Booker Little and Lester Bowie affect your outlook?

Smith, Navarro and Little, all three great improvisers, formulated a language unlike any before. Little was a brilliant composer, and to this day no other artist has found the language he used in composition. Others have tried to go there but have not been able to touch the language that Booker created.

Lester was a composer/performer and the perfect trumpeter of improvisation, with the ability to create high-quality music using harmonic progression and creative free-improvisation. Unlike Little, Lester lived long enough to transform his community; we will remember him forever. The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians is still the planet people have heard about. Some have experienced the uniqueness of these creative artists, but who we are and what our music is about is still largely unknown.

Your trumpet lines are laconic statements, sonic blasts into the air alternating with internalized gasps and poised long-tones, rather than extended melodic lines. You seem preoccupied with some definition of primal human energy, beyond the breeding of earworms.

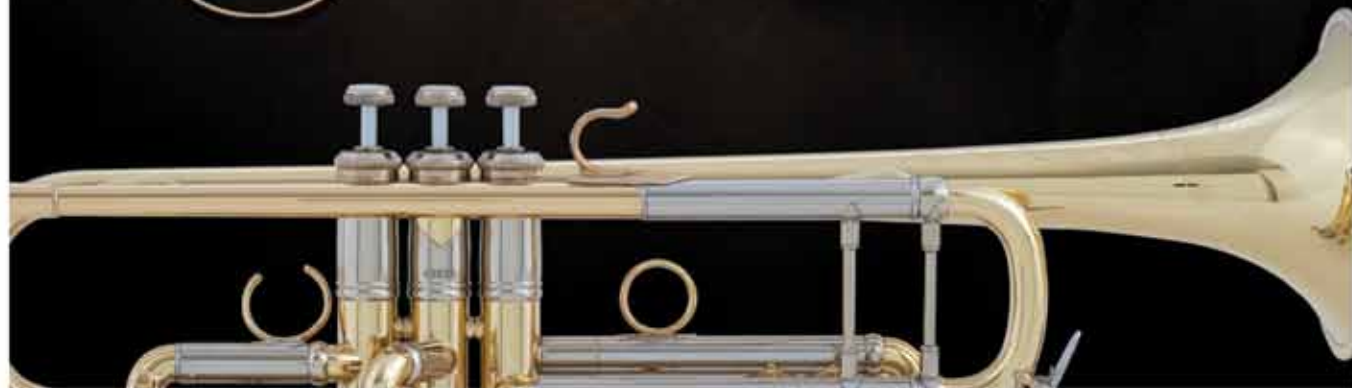
No, my trumpet improvisations include structure, space and silence, rhythm and sound. If we hear the way the music develops, taking these elements and sound as its realized form, then it is an extended musical improvisation.

You write music by hand, monk-like—the *Ten Freedom Summers* manuscript is over 200 pages—you illustrate graphic scores, and incorporate videography and poetic ruminations. Is the symbolism in Ahkreenvention specific, or does it have kinship with the "total art" term *Gesamtkunstwerk*?

I handwrite my scores because of the direct power this act releases into my being. I touch the paper as the ideas and inspiration flow through me. I spread the score onto the floor and walk through it. Viewing structured elements from different positions gives me a feeling about balance, form, clarity of intent. I will change any part that doesn't feel right,

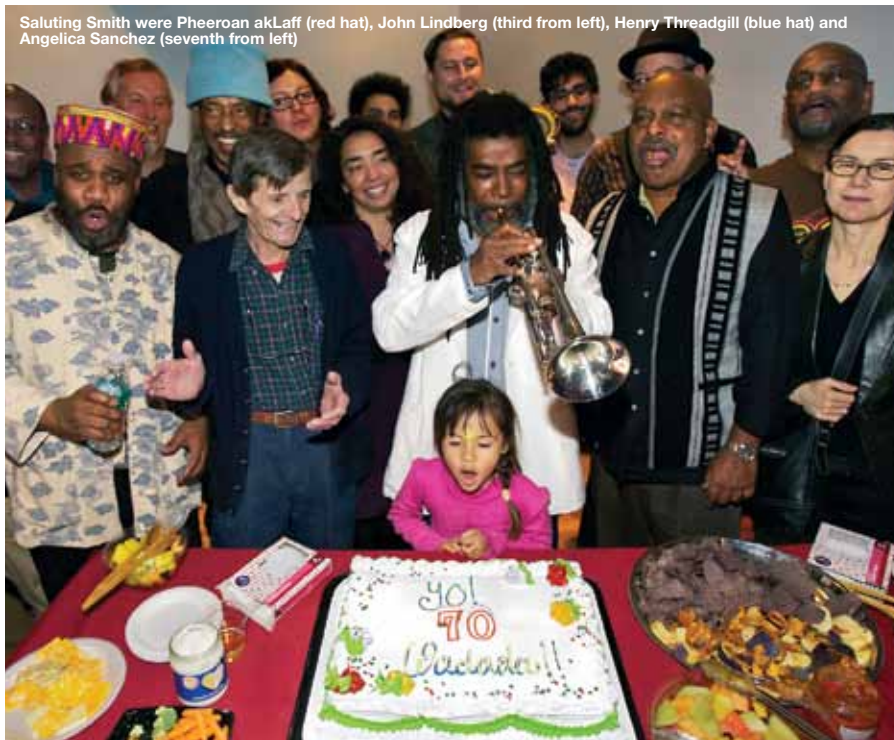


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Celebrating with Friends

Ismael Wadada Leo Smith celebrated his 70th birthday in style. After performing for two nights with six groups at New York's Roulette, he served cake to his audience and cast of musicians on Dec. 16, blowing out his birthday candles with trumpet blasts. Below are quotes from musical collaborators who were in attendance, as well as John Zorn, who has issued several Smith albums on the Tzadik label; plus violinist Shalini Vijayan, who played on *Ten Freedom Summers* with Southwest Chamber Music.



Saluting Smith were Pheeroan akLaff (red hat), John Lindberg (third from left), Henry Threadgill (blue hat) and Angelica Sanchez (seventh from left)

"Wadada and I first met in Chicago in 1969, recording together on [Muhai Richard Abrams'] album *Wise In Time*. We played in the U.S.A. and Europe during this period. For as long as I have known Wadada, he has been striving for a language of his own, as were my other AACM associates. I am truly happy and inspired when I hear his present work." —Henry Threadgill

"I started working with Wadada 40 years ago. Yikes, almost as long as Johnny Hodges with Duke! There is a deep code embedded in Wadada's music that never fails to unlock new revelations for the performer. His music is an antidote to cliché and habit. For classical and improvising musicians alike, his music always makes us thinking musicians."

—Anthony Davis

"Wadada has a close relationship to the drums and rhythm. He loves thunder but also space and gesture. His percussion and drum notation revolve around polymeters, shifting meters, rhythmic units, velocities. His intricate system of notation respects each performer as an individual and allows him to create great beauty within the ever-changing complex music inside his scores."

—Susie Ibarra

"Working with Wadada has been mind-opening. I play within different styles in contemporary classical music, using extended techniques, but the sound world Wadada brings is more open and free. It was liberating in solo

passages, and even in the large ensemble, to be able to make real choices about where the piece was going, in terms of sound and color. After working on his string quartets in the past, it was interesting how his musical ideas translated into a larger ensemble in *Ten Freedom Summers*. It was a lot of work to put together, but the payoff was tremendous."

—Shalini Vijayan

"Wadada called me in the spring of 2010. It's one of those calls you always hope for. He asked if I would play in his Golden Quartet. I was thrilled. Wadada's compositions and way of playing are unique. He has really created his own language. Each piece has real meaning, and I don't always know where something is going until we get there. Playing with Wadada has been a true inspiration."

—Angelica Sanchez

"Wadada introduced me to his rhythm-unit method in 1975 when I was 20, impressionable and raw. It was exactly the ammunition I needed coming into New York. It helped me develop a signature sound, like a salmon swimming against an ocean of drumming styles."

—Pheeroan akLaff

"Ever since we began playing together in 1978, a central dynamic has been that you bring everything you have and give it all you've got—every time, regardless of circumstance. A striking representation occurred during a summer

duet performance. We were [playing] on a lawn under a huge tree, to a less-than-focused audience [that was] milling about, eating, drinking and talking. This tree was filled with inchworms, which literally rained on us during the performance, crawling through our hair, over our clothes and the instruments. Never did a consideration of stopping happen. You keep going, no matter what, giving this music every last drop of energy, expressing the truth of who you are in conjunction with your kindred spirits. Key to the correct performance of Wadada's work is [the idea] that every version will sound different; to offer the vitality it deserves, you can never be afraid of mistakes."

—John Lindberg

"Wadada is one of the most imaginative and explorative composers in creative music. His vision is uncompromising, his methods holistic and mystical. His playing is consistently brilliant and his sound is personal. His compositions have a special focus combining improvisation with written passages of extreme sensitivity and beauty. The writing and improvisational moments are so organically linked that it is often impossible to tell which notes are predetermined and which improvised on the spot. He has introduced a unique sense of space and timing into creative music, and his silences are just as intensely felt as his sounds. His system of notation, along with esoteric rehearsal practices, lead the performer into a magical, intensely personal world. He is a national treasure."

—John Zorn

connect and have meaning. You could use the term *Gesamtkunstwerk*—it may give one an idea about my form for the large multi-movement work *Ten Freedom Summers* but not the meaning. No words are sung, no action takes place onstage. It is a psychological interpretation of the events pertinent to the civil rights struggle, not a pictorial or cinematic treatment that musically describes each event, though it uses videography. It reflects spiritual conditions and cultural attitudes surrounding incidents that changed American social history. My work is in the tradition of Duke Ellington's Sacred music, *Love Supreme* and *Meditations* by John Coltrane, or George Russell's *Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature*.

Ankrasmation is a symbolic language employing rhythm-units, sound-units, improvisation-units, colors, shapes, lines, musical towers and symbolic-units. A large body of works exists in this idiom. *Tastalun* [ECM Records, 1979], *Akhreanvention* [Kabel, 1981], *Luminous Axis* [Tzadik, 2002] and *Kosmic Music* [not recorded] are a good representation.

You included the unscripted "Black Hole" from *Kosmic Music* with your Silver Orchestra at Roulette. The score looked outrageous—a big black circle on the page.

"Black Hole" (event/dynamical horizons) is from a collection of 17 Ankrasmation panels—a music that could be performed for months

with any number of performers. It employs the scientific information that Hopkins, Carter, Bardeen and other scientists used when talking about this phenomenon of the stellar regions of space. In composing/constructing a panel of Ankrasmation symbolic music, each panel of the score must be researched, the principles discovered used alongside the language and principle of Ankrasmation. Sometimes I use the panel and the tower. The tower is a panel that adds structure to the melodic-units and forms, helping the development of horizontal motion. All my compositions are created through inspiration I receive and research, allowing me to approach each moment with its own field identity unique to the composition.

Your recent output includes the Cuneiform double CD *Heart's Reflections* from your electric group Organic; a duo set with South African drummer Louis Moholo; the TUM record *Dark Lady Of The Sonnets* with Mbiru; the release of your 1986 duo with the late drummer Ed Blackwell; and the documenting of *Ten Freedom Summers*. What else are you working on?

The recording of my nine string quartets.

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DB

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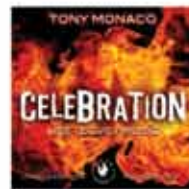


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**How a Top-Tier
Trumpeter Makes
Artistry & Advocacy
His Business**

By Ed Enright ; Photography by Michael Jackson

Orbert Davis surrounds himself with talent. From his quintet sidemen and the members of his 57-piece Chicago Jazz Philharmonic (CJP) to the teachers and staff who execute his music outreach programs, the trumpeter keeps highly skilled, passionate people close to him at all times. He needs them to help him pursue his mission, a personal ministry to create bigger audiences for jazz and classical music—and improve the lives of youngsters.

Pictures of music students adorn the walls of his downtown Chicago office, serving as a constant reminder of the inspiration he draws from working with underprivileged kids in schools across the city. Posters and playbills from his musical performances fill every corner of the suite, which serves as a center of gravity for a multifaceted universe of musical activities he spearheads. Welcome to Orbert Inc.

Davis has invented his own career and pursued his dream to the extreme, reaping the rewards of personal satisfaction and critical acclaim. He is a man of big ideas with a heart to match, and people love him for it. Even his name—unorthodox yet perfectly matched to his powerful personality—is an instant hit with everyone he meets.

Seated at a modest office table, casually dressed in colorful clothes, Davis comes across as a man who's infinitely comfortable in his own skin as he reflects on a life dedicated to artistry and advocacy. And he never stops smiling.

Davis, 52, acknowledges that he has ascended to a high point of cre-

ativity and productivity. Within the last year alone, he has won an Emmy award, served as artist in residence at the Chicago Jazz Festival and twice performed a two-part tribute to Miles Davis with his CJP in major Chicago-area concert venues. His educational organizations—Jazz Alive, the outreach arm of the CJP; Discover Music: Discover Life, which teaches life skills to disadvantaged children through general music instruction; and an annual jazz camp week he leads at University of Illinois at Chicago, where he serves as a clinical associate professor—are all gaining momentum.

“Orbert has an enormous impact on the students who participate in the Jazz Academy at UIC,” said Nicholas Carlson, Jazz Academy coordinator at University of Illinois at Chicago. “He supplements music programs where there is great need in underserved communities, bringing middle school and high school students to a university campus and treating them as future college students. He provides them with successful learning modes that serve their entire educational and person-



al development. The far-reaching effects of this program will be felt for generations.”

Davis continues to produce new episodes of his radio show, “The Real Deal,” which is broadcast weekly on WDCB 90.9 FM, streams online and has a podcast. And this winter, he was busy researching, arranging and composing in preparation for a March 31 CJP concert tribute to Ella Fitzgerald at Chicago’s Auditorium Theatre.

Davis has help getting it all done. He credits his business partner Mark Ingram, his best friend for more than three decades, with handling the business end and many of the administrative duties required to keep all of the projects afloat. Together, they are owners and co-founders of Orbark Productions, an umbrella organization formed in 1999 that encompasses pretty much everything that Orbert does.

“It’s day-to-day madness, but it’s really about taking care of business on each level,” Davis says. “If it weren’t for Mark, I wouldn’t be able to be creative. I’m more of the visionary, and I try to create new opportunities. Whenever opportunity comes, as a team we dive into it, and whatever we can’t get done, we try to find someone to help make that happen.”

Together, Davis and Ingram have built the trumpeter’s career into a highly visible brand. They think big and share a mindset that anything is possible as long as they’re able to access the right combination of musical, educational and financial resources. The success of the CJP, which presents an amalgamation of straightahead jazz and classical music, is a testament to the greatness they’re capable of achieving.

The CJP started when Davis was invited by the Jazz Institute of Chicago to perform at the 2004 Chicago Jazz Festival and was encouraged to present something innovative on a large scale. He came up with a huge ensemble that included classical strings, brass, woodwinds and percussion combined with a traditional jazz combo. Its auspicious debut launched the CJP on a trajectory that has included several high-profile performances, recordings and commissions. Among its more notable gigs, the orchestra played Davis’ “Hope In Action” suite to an audience of 8,000 on the occasion of Nelson Mandela’s 90th birthday in 2008. The group’s 2009 CD *Collective Creativity*—which featured the commissioned work “Fanfare For Cloud Gate,” composed in 2005 for the official dedication of Anish Kapoor’s work of modern sculpture in Chicago’s Millennium Park—garnered critical acclaim nationwide.

Davis’ original score for the national PBS documentary *DuSable To Obama: Chicago’s Black Metropolis* premiered in 2010 and featured members of the CJP. The Chicago/Midwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences presented Davis and Ingram with an Emmy for *DuSable To Obama* (in the category Outstanding Crafts Achievement Off-Air—Musical Composition/Arrangement). Davis has since released a soundtrack CD of the program on his 3Sixteen label.

“To tell you the truth, I didn’t realize it was an Emmy until we got there and they put this trophy in my hand,” Davis says. “That project wrote itself. I just composed from the Civil War until today, and they edited the film around my music. I think this is where the jazz and classical experience works for me, in that some of it is composed, and we did that session in a half-day, done. And the other part was, ‘Turn the red light on and let’s go.’ I did a series of pieces called ‘60s Heat.’ It was basically the pivotal point of the civil rights struggle in Chicago, totally improvised. I said, ‘It’s 1960, Miles has just recorded *Kind Of Blue*, inside we’re feeling great about ourselves and our music; outside, all hell is breaking loose. And we just went, first takes on everything. The one thing I can take credit for is [that] I wrote a theme. I took Obama as my theme, and I watched footage of his speeches. I was thinking John Williams, but I also wanted a *Superman*, movie-ish theme, and it also has to say African. It’s all emotion—I always use that when I compose.”

Looking ahead to the Fitzgerald tribute, Davis says he plans to write an overture inspired by the legendary jazz singer’s personality and history. “I envision the introduction having something to do with Chick Webb, and then it will grow into this piece that will be five to seven minutes long,” he says. “The rest of the concert will be my arrangements of songs that she performed regularly. I’m spending a lot of time

researching, connecting the dots. I’m reading a biography of Ella, picking out the pieces I know we’re going to play, the Nelson Riddle repertoire and so on.”

The ambitious Davis simultaneously focuses on immediate plans and long-term goals: “The reason I’m doing all the writing right now is [because] it’s creating a brand, the brand of the orchestra, and part of that concept is based around me as a jazz artist, shedding that skin and now being the classical composer. We thought about that long and hard—whether we should make the CJP more of a workshop kind of thing where we get people to bring us their arrangements, but we decided that at least for the first 10 years of the orchestra, it should be one composer, one vision before we open up.”

“Whenever opportunity comes, as a team we dive into it, and whatever we can’t get done, we try to find someone to help make it happen.”

Davis holds a bachelor’s degree from DePaul University and a master’s in jazz pedagogy from Northwestern University. But he believes he gained most of his composing and arranging skills in a non-academic setting: the real world of the working musician.

He began performing professionally as a high school student in Mokena, Ill., a town 50 miles south of Chicago. Davis was recruited by Ingram, a trombonist and vocalist four years his senior who needed a trumpeter for a Top 40 covers band called Vice-Versa. When Davis moved to Chicago to attend DePaul, Ingram followed him soon afterward. Together they formed the funk/r&b band Grand Staff, which lasted for 14 years and frequently required Davis to condense big band tunes for a four-piece horn section. While still in college, Davis found his way into the commercial jingle industry, playing trumpet and ghost-writing material for sessions. When assignments would come in late, he found himself writing and arranging jingles overnight.

“I became proficient at writing for horns with the pop band, and then someone called me to do a string arrangement, and it was terrible,” Davis says. “I was thrown into the fire, trial by fire. I would just study, read lots of books, the Don Sebesky book and the Sammy Nestico book. And any time I’d have a project, I would just read everything and study. When I started doing jingle recording sessions in college, I would always turn and watch the strings record [in the studio], just see how things were going. I learned so much just by soaking everything up.”

For 10 years, Davis and Ingram were heavily involved in the house music genre, which emerged in Chicago in the ’80s. Davis worked as an arranger for producer Marshall Jefferson, one of the godfathers of Chicago house music, who frequently used full string sections and horns on his recordings. “When I first started, I was so naïve and scared because I didn’t have any formal training,” recalls Davis. “But we hired the best of the best, and I just watched them work. I started taking more chances, and eventually I started to get it.” Davis notes that he further increased his knowledge of arranging for string instruments in a class at DePaul and became even more familiar with the nature of strings while at Northwestern, where he gave jazz improvisation lessons to violinist Zachary Brock, with whom he frequently performs today.

Davis' star continued to rise after college, and he became established as a first-call session man on Chicago's then-thriving jingle scene. He was a featured soloist in Bill Russo's Chicago Jazz Ensemble, an acclaimed repertory band with which he performed for 14 years. Davis' debut album, *Unfinished Memories*, was released in 1994, followed by a Cognac Hennessy National Jazz Search award in 1995. His second CD as a leader, 2001's *Priority*, was ranked among the top 50 most frequently played recordings on national jazz radio in 2002. He appeared on Ramsey Lewis' disc *Urban Nights V*, a 2003 showcase of smooth jazz all-stars. In 2004 Davis released his third small-group CD, *Blue Notes*, which showed off his skills in a variety of commercial and straight-ahead jazz styles. All three recordings include performances, and in some cases compositions, by tenor sax guru Ari Brown.

In 2006, Davis was featured in the documentary *Beauty Rises: Four Lives In The Arts*, produced by the Illinois Arts Council and public TV station WTTW. The following year, Davis composed "Concerto For Generation I," a work inspired by the Infiniti G35 sedan that was commissioned for advertising purposes. In 2010, Davis received the Arts Legend award from Arts Alliance Illinois, a statewide advocacy group, recognizing his accomplishments in performance and education.

Davis has done work in movies as well, serving as jazz consultant for Oscar-winning director Sam Mendes' 2002 film *Road To Perdition*, starring Tom Hanks. Other feature-film credits include director Penny Marshall's *A League of Their Own* (1992) and Arthur Hiller's Babe Ruth biopic, *The Babe* (1992).

Davis has written compositions and arrangements for performances by symphony orchestras other than CJP, including the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Poznan Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra, University of Louisville Symphony Orchestra, Grant Park Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta and Fox Valley Orchestra. More composing and collaborating with other organizations is in store for the next two to three years.

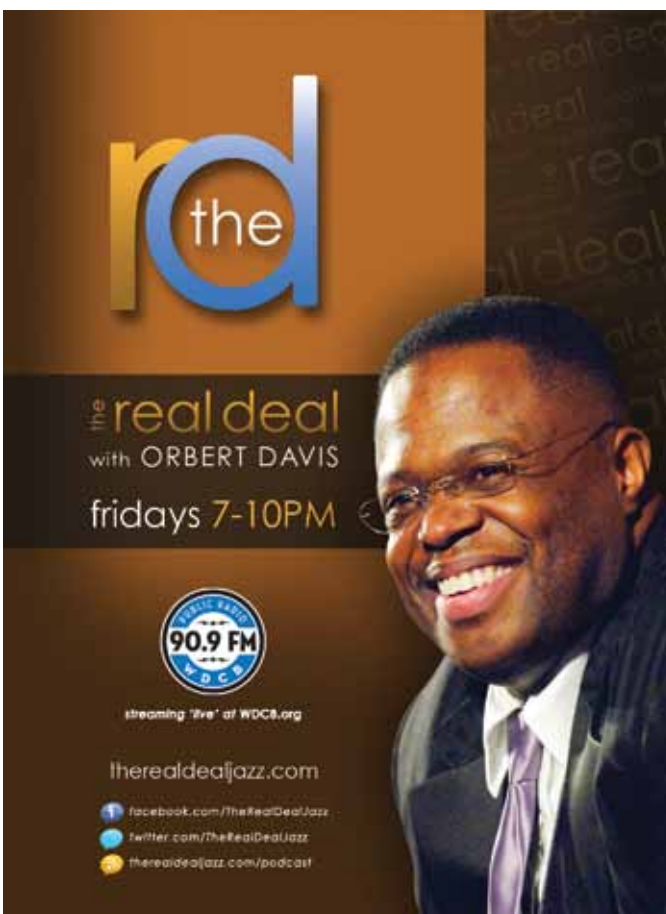
But the main thing Davis is looking forward to this year is getting back into the studio with his small group, which currently includes pianist Ryan Cohan, bassist Stewart Miller, drummer Ernie Adams, Brown on tenor and a few other collaborators with whom he regularly surrounds himself. "It's been on hold for two years," Davis says of the group, which often features a revolving cast of guest instrumentalists. "It's going to be quartet/quintet stuff, maybe a sextet, and we'll be going back to the roots of serious swinging. There's going to be some variety. I've got to bring Zachary and [pianist/keyboardist] Brandon McCune in to do some performing on this recording."

It's all coming together nicely for Davis, who manages to keep his chops in shape on an as-needed basis despite all the time he spends composing, researching and teaching. "I'm living the culmination of everything," he says. "A while ago, it seemed like everything was moving in 20 different directions. But I really feel now that it's all pointing in the same direction. The programs are running smoother. I used to have to put out fires, go talk to funders and do all these things that are so foundational, but now I don't do as much of that as I used to. It's a well-oiled machine that's taking care of itself. And the other thing is the press—this is where the Emmy doesn't hurt. It opens a few doors, where people are at least open to listen to what you have to say. It's a negotiating boost. The danger, of course, would be to do things in efforts to get the award. It would be very hard to top *DuSable To Obama*."

Davis firmly believes that the types of opportunities he's embraced as an artist and advocate are available to all musicians, jazz or otherwise. In fact, he thinks it's essential for all professional players, composers and educators to think that way from the onset of their careers.

"You have to dream," he says. "I've been working directly on what's my passion. It's not just an opportunity that I stumbled on or that came to me. This is it. And the great thing is that I still get to play. I'm doing exactly everything I've always done as an artist. It's just that I have more purpose doing it."

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Vijay Iyer Trio *Accelerando*

ACT MUSIC + VISION 9524

★★★★½

Vijay Iyer is part of a venerable tradition that includes Anthony Braxton and George Lewis of musician-scholars in the creative music lineage. Visit his web site and you can find essays he's written for *Journal of Consciousness Studies* and *Music Perception*. There are plenty of folks who swap those terms around the scholar-musicians hyphen but in Iyer's case the starting point is the playing; theorizing comes out of direct experience.

Accelerando may well help us understand Iyer's theoretical work

on temporality in improvised music, but is first and foremost a terrific trio recording. Iyer revives his version of Michael Jackson's "Human Nature," which he debuted on his 2010 CD *Solo*, this time breaking up and reconfiguring the piece with his trio.

The eclectic nature of the program is clearest, perhaps, in the sequence of covers that follows "Human Nature": Herbie Nichols' jumpy "Wildflower," treated with a reverent bounce and spring-loaded soloing by Iyer, directly into "Mmmhmm," a sweet melody with perky digitoid rhythms by electronica guru Flying Lotus, and the classic "Little Pocket Size Demons," from the essential Henry Threadgill

LP *Too Much Sugar For A Dime*, an appropriately devilish, driving piano motif kicking into one of the composer's anthemic, shifting tunes. It's an ingenious trip through genres, with a consistency of invention and interplay that keeps the through line clear. Iyer also adapts "The Star Of A Story" by Heatwave, which shows off the impressive cohesion nurtured by bassist Stephan Crump—wonderful, natural sound—and drummer Marcus Gilmore, who is as crisp as early Jon Christensen and as potent as Billy Higgins.

Iyer's compositions—five of them here—are *Accelerando*'s glue. The title track, written to accompany a dance performance, starts

with an electronic drum part, gaining speed and steam. It's a tack the leader sometimes takes: accrete sound in layers, building density to a peak. But he knows how to keep the whorls from putting a drag on momentum. You can hear an M-Base connection in the lean rhythmic complexity of "Actions Speak" and "Lude," bass and drums fitting together in an extrapolated funk, amassing energy, then suddenly breaking down, dub-style. The program ends with a sly nod at Duke Ellington. —John Corbett

Accelerando: Bode; Optimism; The Star Of A Story; Human Nature (Trio Extension); Wildflower; Mmmhmm; Little Pocket Size Demons; Lude; Accelerando; Actions Speak; The Village Of The Virgins. (59:55)

Personnel: Vijay Iyer, piano; Stephan Crump, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.
Ordering info: actmusic.com

Tim Berne *Snakeoil*

ECM 2234

★★★★

It was gnarled momentum that initially made me fall for Tim Berne's music. Some of the cresting swells of early albums like *7X* and *Mutant Variations* helped sell a compositional style that values kinetic crescendos. Because he's a texture fiend, the saxophonist has left plenty of room for sounds that up the ante viscerally as well. From *Fractured Fairy Tales* to *Bloodcount*, his bands have been expert at throwing punches while galloping by.

So I'm wondering why I'm so smitten with the utter grace of Berne's latest outfit, Los Totopos. He hasn't made any stylistic switch-ups for his first ECM disc, but the level of refinement that this new music boasts is unmistakable. Surrounded by Oscar Noriega's clarinets, Ches Smith's drums and Matt Mitchell's piano, the leader's alto patterns have moved from tumbling to swooping. That momentum mentioned above is still there—parts of *Snakeoil*, like the drive towards oblivion at the end of "Scanners," come on like a locomotive—but the group's unity bevels the tur-



bulence. One of the program's strong points is the ensemble's ability to be diffuse yet determined. From the opening speculation by Mitchell to the dreamy investigations the band renders on "Not Sure," Los Totopos concoct the kind of formal informality that the Art Ensemble claimed as their own. The start of "Spare Parts" offer jitters inside a feathery reflection. The tune's mid-section finds everything on constant simmer, waxing supple and prickly.

Noriega's pulpy tone is a rich foil for Berne's signature tartness. Smith's deep palette of pummel options dodges cliché at every turn. Mitchell, who studied the bandleader's music as a student, deploys the kind of whimsy that's imbued with gravitas. Along with Manfred Eicher's meticulous production, these singular skills help Berne reshape his sound. Together, they've landed on a method of presenting architectural idiosyncrasies in a truly engaging way.

—Jim Macnie

Snakeoil: Simple City; Scanners; Spare Parts; Yield; Not Sure; Spectacle. (68:34)

Personnel: Tim Berne, alto saxophone; Oscar Noriega, clarinet, bass clarinet; Matt Mitchell, piano; Ches Smith, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Matt Wilson's Arts & Crafts *An Attitude For Gratitude*

PALMETTO 2154

★★★★

Even before I found out the back story to this album, I was seduced if somewhat surprised by the music's guileless joy, daring simplicity and playful charm. Matt Wilson's economical, melodic yet never simplistic approach to the drum kit allows for plenty of air between the instruments.

Keyboardist Gary Versace establishes a chipper, bouncy tone on the opening track as Wilson clangs the cans with subtle wit. Versace is all over the place, offering funky organ ("Little Boy With The Sad Eyes," "Teen Town"); keening accordion ("Bubbles") and streamlined, Horace Silver-like piano ("No Outerwear"). Terrell Stafford, of the buttery flugelhorn and Clifford Brown-like trumpet, jokes around on John Scofield's "You Bet," quoting from the Cuban anthem, "The Peanut Vendor," then giving a winking nod to "Salt Peanuts." Bassist Martin Wind's warm sound and legato attack recall Charlie Haden on Wind's lyrical waltz, "Cruise Blues," but he rocks, too, on Jaco Pastorius' "Teen Town."

But the message here isn't about virtuosity, it's about ensemble empathy and plain-spoken emotion. Stafford delivers a gorgeous, muted-trumpet take on the ballad "There's No You." Stafford purrs through the melody, straight, and Versace plays "Bridge Over Troubled Water" with quiet, grace-noted dignity. When all this pathos is followed by a song like "Bubbles," a setting of a Carl Sandburg poem, there's no doubt something personal is percolating behind this music.

And, indeed, there is. Wilson's violinist wife, Felicia, recently survived leukemia and this album is Wilson's way of saying "thank you." What a great deal that this music is part of the bargain.

—Paul de Barros

An Attitude For Gratitude: Poster Boy; Happy Days Are Here Again; Little Boy with the Sad Eyes; You Bet; Bubbles; Cruise Blues; No Outerwear; Teen Town; There's No You; Stolen Time; Bridge Over Troubled Water. (59:23)

Personnel: Matt Wilson, drums and vocals; Terrell Stafford, trumpet, flugelhorn; Gary Versace, piano, organ, accordion; Martin Wind, bass.

Ordering info: palmetto-records.com

Chano Dominguez *Flamenco Sketches*

BLUE NOTE 87517

★★★

Once the world discovered that inside the mood-music veneer of *Kind Of Blue* there lurked the makings of a revolution, the album began to acquire the fabled unity of an indivisible work whose moving parts are as connected as the movements of a symphony. This is the way pianist Chano Dominguez treats them in this CD, recorded live in New York's Jazz Standard.

In reshuffling the original order, Dominguez ordains "Flamenco Sketches" as the keynote piece and then proceeds to take the title far more literally than Miles Davis did. Dominguez is a native, and he refashions much of the music very much to his own sensibility, complete with side orders of tapping heels, clapping hands and a few rather jarring vocal interpolations.

Working solo at first, then joined by bassist Mario Rossy and percussionist Israel Suarez, Dominguez's piano follows a path similar to spare romantic rectitude of the original, a bit



more ornate but never lacking in elegance. Vocalist Blas Cordoba's non-verbal cries are just painful to hear. His sound, pitch and intonation materialize as a writhing bundle of raspy microtones that strike the unsuspecting ear as excruciating and strained. Dominguez re-emerges with a less introspective and more buoyant intentions, as his rhythm

cooks nicely and he tosses off a quote from "St. Thomas." He's soon joined by flamenco dancer Tomas Moreno, though all that comes through here is a lot of heel clicking. "Freddie Freeloader" finds its groove in a bass vamp that recalls Duke Ellington's old blues, "Dooji Woogi." Whatever "Freddie" may have been in *Kind Of Blue*, it's just a blues, and Dominguez tears into it with style and spirit. "All Blues" develops into a percussive run that tends to swallow its distinctive theme but inspires some of Dominguez's most hard swinging playing.

—John McDonough

Flamenco Sketches: Flamenco Sketches; Freddie Freeloader; Blue In Green; So What; All Blues; Nardis; Serpent's Tooth. (61:10)

Personnel: Chano Dominguez, piano; Mario Rossy, bass; Israel Suarez, percussion; Blas Cordoba, vocals.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

The Hot Box

CD ▾ Critics ▶ John McDonough John Corbett Jim Macnie Paul de Barros

Vijay Iyer Trio <i>Accelerando</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★
Tim Berne <i>Snakeoil</i>	★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Matt Wilson's Arts & Crafts <i>An Attitude For Gratitude</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Chano Dominguez <i>Flamenco Sketches</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Vijay Iyer Trio, *Accelerando*

Ambitious, restless, in motion, but easily lured into big, forte maelstroms of churning horsepower, sometimes sealing off all the exit routes ("Star Of The Story"). Iyer's big-footed, tramp-tramp attack has bulk and torque that keeps the rubber burning. The better moments are the jaunty ones in between. Group rapport is in sync.

—John McDonough

Culling from various sources is supposed to be a commonplace these days, but it's thrilling to hear this piano trio roll from an electronic dream to a syncopated maze when they make the Flying Lotus/Zooid transition. Brilliant stuff.

—Jim Macnie

Haunted and obsessive, this zoom-focused, throbbing music—jazz meets drum'n'bass?—feels driven by volcanic emotion, even while its organization feels cerebral and its mood, occasionally, dreamy and lyrical. The playful take on Herbie Nichols' "Wildflower," "Mmmhmm"'s atmospheric agitation and the title tune's succinct force are highlights.

—Paul de Barros

Tim Berne, *Snakeoil*

An experimental formalist of 35 years standing and stern virtuosity, Berne expresses the irony of the vanguardists: overturning other peoples' norms while re-enforcing their own. To wit, anxiety, ambivalence, uncertainty expressed in a flinty European impressionism. Here its virtues are arresting, but discrete and momentary, not sustained.

—John McDonough

No compromise on this outing. Long, involved, compositionally complex tracks, with hardcore improvised extrapolation and points of miraculous convergence. Bass-less quartet nevertheless totally grounded, love the Noriega/Berne combo sonority. Mitchell can be melodically pretty without wimping out.

—John Corbett

Berne's angular, aggressive patterns of seemingly random melody notes leaping over wide intervals are instantly recognizable, and that's an accomplishment. But as with Anthony Braxton, one of Berne's inspirations, it's easier to admire what he does than to take much pleasure in it. That said, Berne's collaboration here with the marvelous Oscar Noriega on clarinet projects a less nervous vibe than usual.

—Paul de Barros

Matt Wilson's Arts & Crafts, *An Attitude For Gratitude*

All hands pitch in, but Stafford's the backbone in this remarkably assertive turn. "Sad Eyes" begins as a hymn, then shifts to a shuffle that invites the kind of hot, impassioned trumpet sound that vanished in the '50s. Great bass dialog too. Wilson crowds him on "Stolen Time," but Versace atones for his organ and accordion fetish on "Bridge"

—John McDonough

Wilson's buoyant, positive spirit carries over into every cranny of this CD. He can be jokey, but with such serious musicality and swing that it doesn't thin out. Versace's up for the eclectic component, adding the quirky "Poster Boy" and some good fun organ and accordion alternatives, while Stafford is the big surprise here, ready and willing to get in the playpen and frolic.

—John Corbett

I hear it as a suite, every cymbal shimmer connecting to every trumpet purr connecting to every bass stroll and every piano foray. The bandleader's expert in building positive chemistry. Unity and spirit dominate here

—Jim Macnie

Chano Dominguez, *Flamenco Sketches*

Extrapolated Miles Davis, re-imagined as flamboyant, two-fisted piano numbers, infused with traditional flamenco, high energy, different in spirit from the starting point, counterposed with impressionistic down-tempo tracks only slightly closer to their port of origin.

—John Corbett

Fun stuff, more so during the uptempo pieces, where the informal zest of flamenco gives the classic material a refreshed approachability. The ballads offer a nice dynamic shift, but aren't as individualistic. Hero: bassist Mario Rossy.

—Jim Macnie

Dominguez has been fusing flamenco and jazz piano for some time now with an unforced touch that feels almost off-hand, so this Miles Davis-focused project is a welcome one. But with the exception of "Freddie Freeloader" the tracks don't arc to the kind of passionate climax one hopes for.

—Paul de Barros



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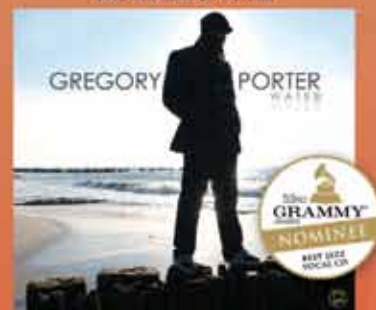
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Amy Cervini *Digging Me, Digging You*

ANZIC 0034

★★★★

Loved by some, overlooked by many more, vocalist Blossom Dearie remains one of the most singular artists in a genre dominated by distinctive performers. Calling her an acquired taste seems a bit mean; she was more like a rare delicacy best enjoyed in small doses. Toronto native Amy Cervini doesn't sound much like Dearie—does anyone?—and she avoids the pitfalls of many tribute recordings by interpreting the songs in ways that suit her own characteristics. Those strengths include crystal-clear diction and an unaffected, direct style that draws

the listener into these quirky songs.

Another obvious strength is a supporting cast that includes players as talented as Anat and Avishai Cohen, and Matt Wilson. The arrangements by Oded Lev-Ari, who also produced, treats the soloists as spices that are added at key times: Anat Cohen's clarinet providing woody counterpoint to Josh Sinton's burnished baritone on "May I Come In," Avishai Cohen's muted trumpet juxtaposed against fast piano work by Bruce Barth on "Down With Love." The Cohens combine clarinet and trumpet on the samba "I'm Shadowing You." The core of the album—a trio of songs that includes Dearie's own love song for John Lennon—maintains a minimalist approach, which serves Cervini's highly musical voice the best. Elsewhere, particularly on a swinging "Everything I've Got," "Rhode Island" and "Once Upon A Summertime," the singer is buried by the massed instruments—especially egregious when the lyrics are everything to the material. Cervini saves the best for last: an intriguing four-cello arrangement of Bob Dorough's tone poem "Figure Eight." Dearie fans will be delighted.

—James Hale

Digging Me, Digging You: Everything I've Got; I Like You, You're Nice; Rhode Island; May I Come In?; My Attorney Bernie; Hey John; Down With Love; Once Upon A Summertime; Doodlin' Song; I'm Shadowing You; Tea For Two; The Physician; Figure Eight. (47:18)
Personnel: Amy Cervini, vocals; Avishai Cohen, trumpet; Jennifer Wharton, bass trombone; Anat Cohen, clarinet; Jeremy Udden, alto saxophone; Josh Sinton, baritone saxophone; Jesse Lewis, guitar; Bruce Barth, piano; James Shipp, vibes, percussion; Yair Evnine, Rubin Kodheli, Yoed Nir, Jessie Reagan, Alex Waterman, cello; Matt Aronoff, bass; Matt Wilson, drums.

Ordering info: amycervini.com

Rob Garcia 4 *The Drop And The Ocean*

BJU RECORDS 028

★★★★½

Drummer Rob Garcia's fourth album is full of stops and starts, melodies floating over metrically modulating meters, and haunting question-and-answer themes that tug at the ear. In "River," Garcia parlays a dancing 6/8 rhythm into a simmering juggernaut over which his working band of saxophonist Noah Preminger, pianist Dan Tepfer and bassist John Hebert perform circular melodies that rise and fall like phases of the moon. Recalling Wayne Shorter's *Night Dreamer* in spirit, Garcia mines a similar vein of shadows and light, dark tension and release throughout *The Drop And The Ocean*.

Garcia's drum solos are capsules of intricate rhythms and complex, heated patterns. Prodding and pushing whether accompanied or purely solo (as in the drum vehicles "Flash #1," "#2" and "#3"), Garcia is a drummer of invention, grace and considerable fire. In the uptempo "Crash," Garcia drills a Tony Williams-ish rhythm that flutters like a bat with defective radar.

As he percolates through snare drum jabs and broken cymbal patterns, Tepfer fol-



lows suit, sputtering piano lines and spiraling rhythms a la a young Herbie Hancock. The song's closing drum solo is all Bill Stewart styled eruptions, with Garcia's melodic gifts as clear to follow as an ice flow.

Garcia's band definitely follows the Miles Davis mid-'60s quintet for direction and sustenance, but never resulting in a dull homage. Theirs is a successful evolution, an engrossing listen that seers the senses.

—Ken Micallef

The Drop And The Ocean: Will, Boundaries, Flash #1, Lost by Morning, The Drop Pt. 2, River, Flash #2, Humility, Crash, String and Poise, The Return, Flash #3. (62:55)

Personnel: Rob Garcia, drums; Noah Preminger, saxophones; Dan Tepfer, piano; John Hebert, bass.

Ordering info: bjurecords.com



Matthew Shipp Trio *Elastic Aspects*

THIRSTY EAR 57202

★★★★

Turning 50 can make a man reflect, and this impulse was evident on Matthew Shipp's last album, *Art Of The Improviser*, a double CD that crystalized his current approach to the piano and debuted his new trio. *Elastic Aspects* can be seen as a companion piece to its predecessor in the way that it very explicitly breaks down the components of his trio music and isolates how they interact.

You don't even hear Shipp on the opening number, "Elastic Aspects" just the melancholy bowed bass of Michael Bisio coursing through Whit Dickey's eerie cloud of cymbal tones. The next track, "Aspects," is Shipp alone, and it lasts just 27 seconds, but that's long enough to present a complete melodic, harmonic, and emotional statement. They come together for the first time on "Psychic Counterpoint," a Thelonious Monk-ish shuffle that depicts the restless shifts required from the rhythm section in order to make Shipp's mercurial tangents swing.

Shipp has never been shy about displaying the influence of European classical music upon his playing. On "Raw Materials," he begins alone, executing Bach-like contrapuntal figures. Then Bisio steps in, dancing freely rather than walking, and his third voice seems to invite Shipp to reconsider, to pirouette, and then to draw the threads tight once more. The pianist acknowledges his past penchant for wall-flattening assaults on "Explosive Aspects," but this piece also shows how his music changed. In the David S. Ware quartet his tone clusters contributed both weight and chaos, but now they're bounded by space and elaborated by his sidemen's exquisite details. The musicians' attunement to Shipp's structural and relational concerns renders his ideas with immaculate clarity.

—Bill Meyer

Elastic Aspects: Alternative Aspects; Aspects; Psychic Counterpoint; Frame Focus; Flow Chart; Mute Voice; Explosive Aspects; Raw Materials; Rainforest; Stage 10; Dimension; Elastic Aspects; Elastic Eye. (48:46)

Personnel: Matthew Shipp, piano; Michael Bisio, bass; Whit Dickey, drums.

Ordering info: thirstyear.com

Chick Corea/Eddie Gomez/Paul Motian
Further Explorations

CONCORD JAZZ 33364

★★★★

When I was about 14, I discovered *Lord Of The Rings*. After just a few minutes on first book, I was hooked. Right after that, I decided to restrict myself to reading just one chapter each night. This allowed me to get immersed one section at a time.

I was about halfway through *Further Explorations* when that memory popped into my mind. This trio's two-week run at the Blue Note, from which these live tracks were recorded, was an epic in its own right. One expected as much given these three giants' shared history. Eddie Gomez and the late Paul Motian were associates of Bill Evans. And Chick Corea always counted Evans as an inspiration.

On this gig, they played a number of his songs as well as material he had performed himself, along with other repertoire. So *Further Explorations* is a tribute, but not so much for these reasons. By approaching each number as an adventure rather than a recitation of something familiar, Corea et al. pay homage to that same spirit as manifested by Evans.

At 70, Corea maintains the same sense of curiosity that guided him even as an apprentice to Miles Davis years before. He seems incapable of playing a standard without reassembling its elements and discovering new insights in the process. In their rendering of the Evans tune "Laurie," the group plays in free tempo, allowing Corea freedom change tempos constantly to facilitate his endlessly inventive variations on the composition.

Gomez and Motian adopt roles that complement each other as well as Corea, in part by inverting the traditional roles of bass and drums.



Like Corea, Gomez is—no secret—a monster, if we define monstrosity as having a technical command at one's disposal so that no barriers exist between what can be imagined and what can be played. Listen to "Turn Out The Stars": Gomez opens with a solo statement, in which he pulls rich timbres from every range of the bass through rapid bowing, resonant open strings anchoring quick repeated figures, intervals and other devices. Then, as he bows the tonic, allowing the tone to feed back a bit, Corea enters with a sprinkle of upper-register notes.

As Gomez drives the groove engine, Motian mainly comments on the momentum, settling into the driver's seat only occasionally. His playing is spare, but on his cymbal work he proves himself a master of timbre. On "Alice In Wonderland" Motian is primarily a colorist, expressing beautifully shaded nuances with each splash of his cymbals. —*Bob Doerschuk*

Further Explorations: Disc One: Peril's Scope; Gloria's Step; They Say That Falling In Love Is Wonderful; Alice In Wonderland; Song No. 1; Diane; Off The Cuff; Laurie; Bill Evans; Little Rootie Tootie. (73:35) Disc Two: Hot House; Mode VI; Another Tango; Turn Out The Stars; Rhapsody; Very Early; But Beautiful-Part 1; But Beautiful-Part 2; Puccini's Walk. (63:26)

Personnel: Chick Corea, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Paul Motian, drums.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Cynthia Felton
Freedom Jazz Dance

FELTON ENTERTAINMENT 0003

★★★

Singer Cynthia Felton begins this collection with an a capella song fragment rendered by her soaring alto/soprano.

It's an impressive display, but it's almost her entire vocal arsenal. She likes to sing head tones, and the octave leaps, like on "My Funny Valentine," can just keep climbing. Held notes and crescendo endings abound here. Her bracing "Lost In The Stars," minor struggles with the phrasing of "Take Five" and Judy Garland vibrato on "Nature Boy" suggest that Felton might be better appreciated in the musical theater than a jazz setting.

She's surrounded by a fine array of some of the best Los Angeles jazz musicians, alongside pianist Cyrus Chestnut and trum-



peter Wallace Roney. Nolan Shaheed's terra firma trumpet counterbalances Felton's stratospheric ramblings to "Better Than Anything." John Beasley is wonderfully manic on a "Cherokee" modeled after Sarah Vaughan's signature version, and Patrice

Rushen spreads a plush carpet of chords before her on "Nature Boy." Felton has a superlative instrument; she just needs to find a more suitable context for it. —*Kirk Silsbee*

Freedom Jazz Dance: Oh Freedom; Take 5; My Funny Valentine; Better Than Anything; My Love Is; Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love; Close Your Eyes; Nature Boy; Lost In The Stars; Cherokee; What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life?; Freedom Jazz Dance. (45:55)

Personnel: Cynthia Felton, vocals; Wallace Roney (3), Nolan Shaheed (4, 10), trumpet; Ernie Watts (2), tenor saxophone; Carol Robbins, harp (9); Ronald Muldrow (3, 7), guitar; John Beasley (2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12), Donald Brown (3), Cyrus Chestnut (4, 7), Patrice Rushen (8), piano; Edwin Livingston (2, 6, 9, 10, 11), Robert Hurst (3, 4, 7), John B. Williams (5), Tony Dumas (8), Ryan Cross (12) bass, Lorca Hart (2, 5, 6, 9, 10), Yoron Israel (3, 4, 7), Terri Lynn Carrington (8), drums; Derf Reklaw (2, 4), Munyungo Jackson (5, 8), percussion.

Ordering info: cynthiefelton.com



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Antonio Adolfo *Chora Baião*

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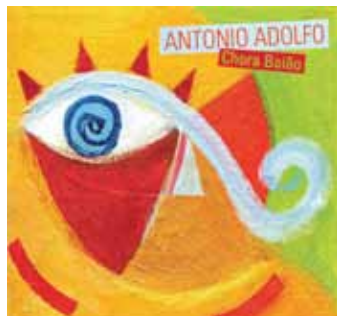
★★★★½

Pianist Antonio Adolfo steps back into the studio with his daughter, vocalist Carol Saboya, to honor the 19th century Brazilian rural folk music forms, chora and baião.

Adolfo's synergistic approach to the two-beat music forms focuses on the work of composers Chico Buarque and Guinga. But the spotlight goes to Adolfo's curatorial expertise and insightful arrangements, which help shape the entire album into a lesson on the relationship between Brazilian folk styles and contemporary jazz. Guinga's upbeat, percussion-heavy "Dá O Pé, Loro" gets things started in the baião vein, featuring a complex intro by Marcos Suzano on pandeiro, zabumba and triangle. A chorus by Guinga follows, featuring less traditional rhythms that resonate within the Adolfo-penned title track, a marriage of the two musical styles. The ephemeral "Você, Você" serves as the central balancing point for the album. Adolfo's arrangement includes an interlude lifted from one of his own songs, while Saboya's seemingly airborne phrasing softly flutters around the melody. Buarque's "A Ostra E O Vento" is another highlight, benefiting as much from Adolfo's waltzing interpretation of the original tune as it does from Saboya's bossa-scented delivery.

—Jennifer Odell

Chora Baião : Dá O Pé, Loro; No Na Garganta; Chora, Baião; Você, Você; A Ostra E O Vento; Chicote; Choroza Blues; Gota D'Água; Di Menor; Catavento E Girassol; Morro Dois Irmãos. (46:40)
Personnel: Antonio Adolfo, piano; Leo Amuedo, guitar; Jorge Helder, double bass; Rafael Barata, drums; Marcos Suzano, percussion; Carol Saboya, vocals.
Ordering info: antonioadolfo.info



The Wee Trio *Ashes To Ashes*

BIONIC RECORDS 5

★★★★½

The concept behind this "David Bowie Intraspective" is that songs by an artist who's a rock icon would be re-contextualized by free spirited musicians who are also stylistically eclectic. The results are satisfying as a tribute album and a lean vibraphone trio recording.

Though the cover of *Ashes To Ashes* is a nod to Bowie's 1973 *Aladdin Sane*, the album covers a span of 32 years of material. "The Battle for Britain," originally an album track from 1997's *Earthling*, opens with drummer Jared Schonig intensifying the drum & bass-influenced rhythms of Bowie's version. Vibraphonist James Westfall's warm yet clean mallet work brings out the melodicism in the Bowie vocal line.

Haughty glam rocker "Queen Bitch" is transformed into a nimble journey with constant shifts in tempo and dynamics, while the at-times ultra-dramatic "The Man Who Sold The World" almost takes on a noirish quality through restrained playing. Bassist Dan Loomis' nimble playing is highlighted on the former number—"funk to funky," indeed—with the empathetic group interaction shining on the latter. "Sunday," which opens Bowie's *Heathen* from 2002, closes *Ashes To Ashes*. The Wee Trio's version translates the same sense of mystery but through subtle percussion work instead of electronics.

—Yoshi Kato

Ashes To Ashes: Battle For Britain; Queen Bitch; The Man Who Sold The World; Ashes To Ashes; 1984; Sunday. (35:47)

Personnel: Dan Loomis, bass; James Westfall, vibraphone; Jared Schonig, drums.
Ordering info: theweetrio.spinshop.com



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Big Winds Blow Lowdown Tones

You don't often hear a baritone saxophonist fronting a classic jazz organ trio, but on **Smul's Paradise** (Capri 74113; 52:42 ★★★★★), Gary Smulyan takes us on a low-down trip through his own personal paradise. The close friends featured in this quartet—which also includes organist Mike LeDonne, guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Kenny Washington—had never played together as a group and recorded the CD with no rehearsals time. Three of the tracks pay tribute to the legacy of B3 legend Don Patterson, including Smulyan's original "D.P. Blues." Dig the sweet bari-guitar unison lines on the pop standard "Sunny," the soulful, swinging soul of Patterson's "Up In Betty's Room" and the bebopping bite of Rhonda Scott's "Pistaccio," George Coleman's "Little Miss Half Steps" and Smulyan's "Heavenly Hours." The baritone king's soul-bearing cadenza at the end of Patterson's "Aires" is one of this session's many high points.

Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Baritone saxophonist and bass clarinetist Brian Landrus makes the low, heavy horns float on air. On his quartet outing **Traverse** (BlueLand BLR-2011A; 42:17 ★★★★★), Landrus demonstrates the tonal nuance, melodic sense and instrumental command that set him apart from his peers on the big pipes. Landrus plays with gentle authority, his pliable, distinctive tone built on expressive devices like vibrato, multiphonics and pitch bends. He has a way of connecting notes with subtle slides and graceful glisses, embellishing melodies with turns and trills that steadily build momentum and scream good taste. Landrus' bandmates on *Traverse* include sensitive pianist Michael Cain, who co-wrote three of Landrus' seven originals presented here; drummer Billy Hart, whose light-touch but complex cymbal work deepens the music significantly; and bassist Lonnie Plaxico, who contributes an essential pulse that keeps the dreamy-sounding material on course.

Ordering info: bluelandrecords.com

Bass clarinetist Jeff Kimmel and tenor saxophonist Keefe Jackson go head-to-head on Kimmel's **Charm Offensive** (Ormolu Music 001; 31:02 ★★★★★), an energized quartet date marked by unison-line melodies, wide-interval harmonies and plenty of improvisational skronk. A spirit of freedom prevails, as both reedmen—complemented by bassist Devon Hoff and drummer Marc Riordan—venture far beyond the thematic heads that bookend each of the CD's six original compositions. Jackson plays a brawny tenor, while Kimmel stretches the timbral possibilities of the bass clarinet. One moment, the reedmen deploy postmodern devices such as split tones, growls and



squeaks that take the proceedings beyond the realm of traditional harmony, while the rhythm team punctuates with pointillistic dings, dongs and scrapes; the next, everybody swings. Contains highly listenable free-jazz that fans of post-bop can definitely enjoy.

Ordering info: jeffkimmel.blogspot.com

Wycliffe Gordon plays trombone, trumpet, sousaphone and even sings on **Hello Pops!** (Blues Back; 64:45 ★★★½), an homage to Louis Armstrong featuring a mix of his own compositions as well as Satchmo-affiliated standards like "Dream A Little Dream," "Hello Brother," "Up A Lazy River" and "I've Got The World On A String." Gordon's trumpet work is impressive, and his bubbling, barking sousaphone accentuates the lively second-line backbeat propelled by drummer Mario Fielder. Anat Cohen provides the hot clarinet this NOLA-inspired music demands, and vocalist Nancy Harms sings with old-school style and charm on two tracks. Gordon's vocal impression of Armstrong is a dead ringer—he nails the legendary singing trumpeter's signature rasp, inflection, accent and tendency to scat.

Ordering info: wycliffegordon.com

Sousaphone also plays a key role on The Soul Rebels' **Unlock Your Mind** (Rounder 11661-9117; 57:54 ★★★★★). This well-produced recording takes the brass band concept into the modern era, as lush vocal harmonies and uplifting raps join the blazing horns and dancing drums in one big street parade of soul. Guest baritone saxophonist Ben Ellman tears it up on "I'm So Confused," and Trombone Shorty enlivens the opening track with a ripping solo. The repertoire is refreshing, too, with the Eurhythmics' "Sweet Dreams Are Made Of This" and Stevie Wonder's "Living For The City" among several unexpected titles. **DB**

Ordering info: rounder.com



Paul McCartney *Kisses On The Bottom*

HEAR MUSIC/CONCORD HRM-33369

★★★★

Paul McCartney's *Kisses On The Bottom* doesn't seem to be making any big statements about genre or generations, or even about what may or may not be a "classic" or "standard" song. McCartney is simply revisiting—with obvious affection—music that moved him as a kid, suggesting a continuity rather than a rupture between old and new pop.

Pairing McCartney with Diana Krall was a brilliant move. Though Krall comes from the jazz side and McCartney from rock, they sound utterly at home on the lush, sophisticated pop terrain Nat "King" Cole inhabited so well.

McCartney sounds best riding light and high. He makes the soft-shoe brushes'n'bass of "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter" all his own. (The album's unfortunate title comes from a line in this song.) Aided by guitarists Bucky and John Pizzarelli and the lively fiddle of Andy Stein on "It's Only A Paper Moon," the ex-Beatle brings plausibility to a world of fantasy. Likewise, on "The Glory Of Love," he makes us feel he believes every earnest word. His lush, sad, deliberate take on "Bye Bye Blackbird" is quite moving.

But when the singer tries to blow up his voice to crooner proportions, he sounds artificial, whether it's on Johnny Mercer's "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive" or his own yearning ballad "My Valentine." And while Eric Clapton burns on "Get Yourself Another Fool," McCartney plays it disappointingly straight (especially by comparison to Sam Cooke).

—Paul de Barros

Kisses On The Bottom: I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter; Home (When Shadows Fall); It's Only A Paper Moon; More I Cannot Wish You; The Glory Of Love; We Three (My Echo, My Shadow And Me); Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive; My Valentine; Always; My Very Good Friend The Milkman; Bye Bye Blackbird; Get Yourself Another Fool; The Inch Worm; Only Our Hearts. (49:18)

Personnel: Paul McCartney, vocals; Diana Krall (1–13), Tamir Hendelman (14), piano; Robert Hurst, (1–4, 6–9, 11, 13), John Clayton (5, 10), Christian McBride (12), Chuck Berghoffer (14), bass; Karriem Riggins (1–4, 6–9, 11–13), Jeff Hamilton (5, 10), Vinnie Colaiuta (14), drums; John Pizzarelli (1–4, 6–9, 11, 13), Bucky Pizzarelli (3, 6), Anthony Wilson (5, 10, 12), Eric Clapton (8, 12), John Chiodini (14), guitar; Mike Mainieri, vibraphone (2, 4–6); Andy Stein, violin (3); Ira Nepus, trombone (10); Stevie Wonder, harmonica (14); London Symphony Orchestra (2, 8, 9, 11, 12).

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

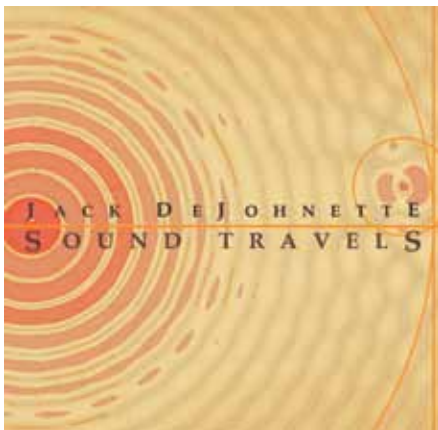
Jack DeJohnette *Sound Travels*

ENTERTAINMENT ONE 2403

★★★★½

With Jack DeJohnette in charge, you never know what you'll get. But one constant has been his love of collaboration: He finds ways to produce recordings that sound unified and not scattered, the music fresh and unpredictable without coming across as an experimental grab-bag.

Add *Sound Travels* to that catalogue. The leader (sole composer for everything but one track) somehow manages to get a group sound and vibe despite the revolving door of name talents on board. That's not when DeJohnette's going it alone, as he does on the opening and closing tracks—"Enter Here" (lyrical, serene) and "Home" (peaceful, gospel-derived)—where DeJohnette's special talents at the piano mingle with another one of his passions, music for meditation (he plays it on practically everything here). Overall, though, the vibe referred to is about fun, *Sound Travels*, produced by Robert Sadin, feeling more like a party than a recording session. Just check out the loose and funky "The Dirty Ground," co-written and performed with pop/jazzster Bruce Hornsby, with Lionel Loueke playing some mean, bluesy guitar lines. The singing and quirky meter



in 7, the medium-tempo gait and the song's message all combine to give off a scent of Mardi Gras.

That's not to say there isn't some serious playing here, especially on the tracks that put the emphasis on another of the man's musical passions and the most visited style on *Sound Travels*—namely, Latin music or thereabouts. Bassist Esperanza Spalding, heard on seven cuts, guests (and sings) on the tribute to percussionist Luisito Quintero "Salsa For Luisito," a song played right on the heels of the peaceful, fading-bell vibrations of "Enter Here" and featuring a drums/timbales conversation with Quintero. Likewise, the calypso-

flavored "Sonny Light," a nod to Rollins with a title that says it all, evokes images of street dancers, lots of musical interaction between players, DeJohnette's self-effacing style allowing everyone to shine—including Loueke on nylon-string guitar—as he plays the quintessential leader from behind even. Trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and saxophonist Tim Ries provide the horn heft here. The short title track plays like a part two to "Sonny Light," extending the percussive jam a wee bit more.

Even the more serene, almost mystical "Oneness" with Bobby McFerrin carries the Latin tinge, its gentle rhythmic cadence with light percussive touches mingling with McFerrin's cooing voice and DeJohnette's spare yet cozy accompaniment on piano. "New Muse" and "Indigo Dreamscapes" offer more percussive tinges but are also more jazzy, the improvisations and loose grooves that swing letting us hear DeJohnette the drummer really play. Hence, they're the strongest cuts here overall, combining the best of everything in an album that risks much in terms of musical and stylistic reach.

—John Ephland

Sound Travels: Enter Here; Salsa For Luisito; Dirty Ground; New Muse; Sonny Light; Sound Travels; Oneness; Indigo Dreamscapes; Home. (46:18)

Personnel: Jack DeJohnette, piano, keyboards, drums, vocals, resonating bell; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Tim Ries, tenor, soprano saxophones; Lionel Loueke, guitar; Esperanza Spalding, bass, vocal; Luisito Quintero, percussion; Bruce Hornsby (3), Bobby McFerrin (7), vocals; Jason Moran, piano (8).

Ordering info: eone.com

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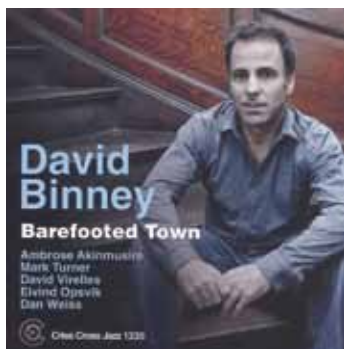
David Binney *Barefooted Town*

CRISS CROSS JAZZ 1335

★★★★

Alto saxophonist David Binney doesn't get the recognition he deserves. *Barefooted Town* should bring him increased attention, given the strength of its playing and compositions. That being said, perhaps it's the challenging, complex, and at times abstract nature of his music—all qualities found in abundance on *Barefooted Town*—that prevent him from garnering wider acclaim.

One couldn't ask for a better frontline, as Binney, trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, and saxophonist Mark Turner turn in consistently inventive solos. Along with pianist David Virelles, their abilities to present stimulating antecedent and consequent phrases is astounding. While Binney's acidic tone might be a turnoff for some, there's no denying his monster chops and creativity. His solos always map out new territory, and his melodic approach is more vertical and angular than horizontal, although his bittersweet solo on "Once, When She Was Here" is very lyrical. Turner displays his wealth of ideas and immaculate control on



three tracks, and his exclamatory solo on "A Night Every Day" provides perfect contrast to the piece's delicate contrapuntal head.

Virelles, bassist Eivind Opsvik and drummer Dan Weiss handle the rhythmic and metric complexity of Binney's music with aplomb. On "Dignity" they change grooves several times over the course of Binney's and

Akinmusire's solos, which is a bit like watching a Calder mobile: The shifting structure forces the viewer to perceive the whole in new ways.

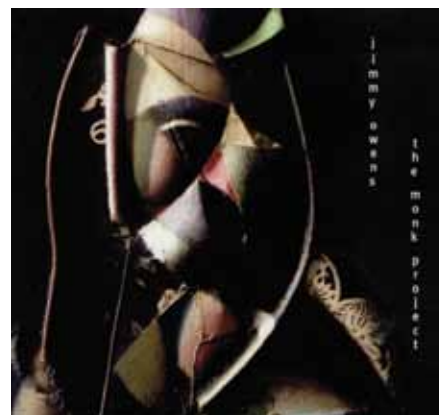
Binney's compositions, such as "The Edge Of Seasons," are often sectional, and his tunes and solos exude a sense of the steady, inevitable progression towards an unknown future. This is certainly the case on the title track, which is grounded by a continuously repeated piano chord that propels Turner's probing improvisation. *Barefooted Town* is challenging, but it's worth investing the effort required to meet the challenge.

—Chris Robinson

Barefooted Town: Dignity; Seven Sixty; The Edge of Seasons; Barefooted Town; Secret Miracle; A Night Every Day; Once, When She Was Here, (55:21).

Personnel: David Binney, alto saxophone, voice; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone (4, 5, 6); David Virelles, piano; Eivind Opsvik, bass; Dan Weiss, drums.

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com



Jimmy Owens *The Monk Project*

IPO RECORDINGS 1022

★★★★

Last year I blinked in semi-disbelief when I made reference to legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini and found it unrecognized on the ears of a classically trained student at a major university.

Even after a century of recording, a great performance is still in the moment while the composition and composer are often forever. It explains why Thelonious Monk remains such a powerful imprint in jazz today. Every Monk tribute that comes along makes it stronger. Jimmy Owens and company nourish Monk, and Monk frames their work in a much-honored identity.

If Owens seems to be looking back, he's doing it through a very special lens that sees around period incidentals. Then again, Monk himself looked back through his own lenses. "Bright Mississippi" condenses and collapses "Sweet Georgia Brown" into a series of clipped stepping stones. Owens makes it a brisk mid-tempo swing. "Blue Monk" is a simple line so remote in antiquity, it eludes authorship entirely, though Charlie Shavers copyrighted it in 1938 as "Pastel Blue" with a slight variation. Normally played in slow legato drawl, here it's more staccato with a strong shuffle and after-beat that's catnip for Wycliffe Gordon's audacious plunger snarls and whoops.

Owens never recorded with Monk. But he brings the experience and understanding of a first generation disciple. Gordon, Marcus Strickland and Kenny Barron know where all the treasures are squirreled away. Owens and Gordon make a striking blend duetting on "Reflections." Halfway into "Brilliant Corners" Owens surpasses himself, soloing with deep feeling on the tune's tricky contours.

—John McDonough

The Monk Project: Bright Mississippi; We'll You Needn't; Blue Monk; Stuff Turkey; Pannoincia; Let's Cool One; It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing); Brilliant Corners; Reflections; Epitaphy, (75:01)

Personnel: Jimmy Owens, trumpet; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Marcus Strickland, Howard Johnson, saxophones; Kenny Barron, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Howard Johnson (1,7), tuba; Winard Harper, drums.

Ordering info: iporecordings.com

Michael Musillami Trio + 4 *Mettle*

PLAYSCAPE RECORDS 070111

★★★★

Guitarist Michael Musillami knows about the art of mustering up a full sound in lean circumstances, as the head of a trio for a decade now, with comrades Joe Fonda on bass and drummer George Schuller. But for Musillami's new project with his "trio + 4" congregation, *Mettle*, the canvas goes large and the plot thickens, texturally and arrangementally, with the addition of three horns and vibist Matt Moran. Most of the material for the album, which opens a bit deceptively with the nervous guitar trio scampering of the first part of "Piana Dei Greci," is his ambitiously multi-limbed, ten-part "Summer Suite: Twenty Ten."

Musillami's suite illustrates the leader's flexibility as a musical thinker, and the varying ambiances become apparent in such subtitles as the tango-fied "Piazzolla On The Porch" and the open-spirited Americana airs of "Nebraska." "High Likeability Factor" is a showcase for a nimble outing from Fonda, and "Liv's In Beantown" is a bumptious collective scrambler.

For the occasion, his "+ 4" players—Moran, reed players Jeff Lederer and Ned Rothenberg and trumpeter Russ Johnson—



adapt and cohere on the compositional turf laid out, and soloing ranges from agreeable to inspired, the latter especially relevant to Johnson's trumpet work. Musillami's echo-flecked tone and angular approach falls between mainstream jazz guitar and scruffy prog-rock. All in all, *Mettle* tests Musillami's larger-scale music thinking and emerges as a fresh-sounding little big band adventure, a model worth with gracing with further testing and exploration.

—Josef Woodard

Mettle: Piano Dei Greci; Iceland; Bald Yet Hip; Piazzolla On The Porch; Nebraska; High Likeability Factor; Liv's In Beantown; Moe; Barnstable News; Thuggish Mornings, (68:00)

Personnel: Michael Musillami, guitar; Joe Fonda, bass; George Schuller, drums; Matt Moran, vibes; Russ Johnson, trumpet; Jeff Lederer, tenor saxophone and clarinet; Ned Rothenberg, alto saxophone and clarinet.

Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com

Steppin' Out and Shoutin'

Howlin' Wolf: *Smokestack Lightning: The Complete Chess Masters, 1951-1960* (Hip-O Select/Geffen 0015309; 73:20/73:53/76:52/68:59 ★★★★★)

All hail the fearsome Howlin' Wolf and his remarkable packs of the 1950s, including the one with blues-jazz electric guitarist Willie Johnson that wreaked holy havoc in Sam Phillips' Memphis studio. There's a supernatural dimension—lycanthropy—to Wolf's big, expressive gargle-with-lye voice on 96 tracks spread across the four discs of this compendium. He throttles familiar sacred text like "Moanin' At Midnight" as well as a dozen studio-provocations never before issued in the States. The only speed bumps for listeners are the flow-clogging alternate takes on the fourth disc. The 41-page book-like set has informative essays by Peter Guralnick and Dick Shuman.

Ordering info: hip-oselect.com

Mark Nomad: *Torch Tones* (Blue Star 100111; 43:38 ★★½)

Don't let Mark Nomad's affected singing on the opening track "Love U Truly" turn you off from hearing the rest of his seventh and best album. On good straight-up or funky blues originals (plus Magic Sam's "What Have I Done Wrong?"), his vocals show real emotional engagement with lyrics about difficult romances. The high value of Nomad's guitar playing is no more obvious than when he aggressively furrows the rich soil of his cranked-up Delta blues, "Poetry In Motion." Texture and nuance aren't lost to sheer force.

Ordering info: marknomad.com

Paul Mark: *Blood & Treasure* (Radiation 5901; 46:35 ★★½) Like fellow New Yorker David Johansen, Paul Mark takes inspiration from old-school blues and r&b to ennoble his particular blend of blues, rock and even country. A talented singer, guitarist and writer, he injects "Lotta Things To Say" with a Chuck Berry spirit, takes his cue from Tom Waits tugging the heart on the saloon ballad "Extraordinary Measures," and pulls off a tour de force of blues guitar with the instrumental "Ruff House." His writing of lyrics disclose a strong-minded wit and intelligence.

Ordering info: paulmark.com

Dave Keller: *Where I'm Coming From* (Tastee Tone 3039; 40:46 ★★) Schooled in the soul-blues rudiments by Ronnie Earl and Mighty Sam McClain, Dave Keller lets his humanity and character come through warmly when he sings his revivals of material by past luminaries like O. V. Wright, Robert



Howlin' Wolf

FRANK OREGES

Ward, James Carr, and Arthur Alexander. Not pretending to improve on the originals, he appears happy getting glimpses of the exceptional beauty at the core of great old records. Only Alexander's "If It's Really Got to Be This Way" exceeds the range of his voice and understanding. The Brooklyn-based Revelations band shares Keller's integrity.

Ordering info: davekeller.com

Samba Touré: *Crocodile Blues* (Riverboat 1059; 65:51 ★★★★★) No one will ever replace Ali Farka Touré but the sting of his absence today is lessened some by the vibrant trance-blues of his protégé Samba Touré, whose second U.S.-distributed album is as enjoyable as Songhai Blues was in 2009. His cadenced singing in Songhai dialects combines with his tart-toned guitar, Baba Simaga's bass and four friends' percolating percussion on intoxicating songs about his love of family and his appreciation of women in Malian daily life.

Ordering info: worldmusic.net

David Maxwell/Otis Spann: *Conversations In Blue* (Circumstantial 001; 58:52 ★) It takes a titanic ego to tamper with old records by a blues giant. Here, David Maxwell pastes his Chicago-style blues piano to Otis Spann's celestial work on four songs recorded in 1960. One of Spann's original album tracks, "Great Northern Stomp" remains unsullied and kicks to the toxic trash pile the 10 solo performances of machinelike Maxwell pounding the keys. **DB**

Ordering info: circumstantial.com

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—Jean Luc Ponty

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BARCELONA-BASED PIANIST CHANO DOMINGUEZ has brilliantly fused flamenco with jazz to cook up *Flamenco Sketches*, a stunning new interpretation of Davis' seminal music. It was commissioned by the Barcelona Jazz Festival in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of "Kind Of Blue" and was recorded live at Jazz Standard in New York in 2009. The seven-song collection features all of the "Kind Of Blue" tunes augmented by two of Davis' most popular songs, "Nardis" and "Serpent's Tooth."



Charlie Haden & Hank Jones *Come Sunday*

EMARCY 16390

★★½

There's an elegance to these renditions of familiar classic spirituals, hymns and folk songs. Hank Jones and Charlie Haden teamed up in February of 2010 for what was to become Jones' last recording. A followup to their 1995 album *Steal Away*, there is also a simplicity to these versions that almost belies the character of each musician.

Indeed, one might consider this more a church album than a collection of spiritual songs played by jazz musicians. Alas, on the whole, *Come Sunday* is uneventful, the performances generally lacking the richness that comes from interpretation, not to mention much in the way of improvisation. "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," clocks in at a mere two and a half minutes, and represents an average length to these selections.

The two play the thematic material and that pretty much does it. It wouldn't be so ineffectual if Haden or Jones imbued the song with more spirit and less solemnity. "Blessed Assurance," goes through the melody, but here one might feel that the pianist and bassist were playing for a Sunday school class or a retirement home. While "Down By The Riverside" and "Give Me That Old Time Religion" are relatively uptempo takes, with some actual swing and improvising, the songs are over before things lift off.

Harmonically, the songs that stay with you are "Going Home" and Duke Ellington's title track. "Going Home" is given a subtle sheen that allows the players to delicately affect the stirring melody, playing it reverently, but with touches that evoke more feeling. As for "Come Sunday," Jones' chords shimmer while Haden's evocative bass lines anchor everything, his sense of time impeccable. —John Ephland

Come Sunday: Take My Hand, Precious Lord; God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen; Down By The Riverside; Going Home; Blessed Assurance; It Came Upon A Midnight Clear; Bringing In The Sheaves; Deep River; Give Me That Old Time Religion; Sweet Hour Of Prayer; The Old Rugged Cross; Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?; Nearer My God To Thee; Come Sunday. (43:34)
Personnel: Hank Jones, piano; Charlie Haden, bass.

Ordering info: deccarecords.com

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African Classics Uncovered

Jonathan Ward is the type of music enthusiast who is usually referred to as a crate digger. A researcher and writer, the Californian founded Excavated Shellac, a Web site dedicated to rare and international 78-RPM sides. With the four-disc box **Opika Pende: Africa At 78 RPM (Dust To Digital 22 74:56/73:18/73:03/68:29 ★★★★★½)** Ward has compiled one of the most encompassing, enterprising and literate collections of African music ever assembled. Exhaustive in scope and zealous in detail, the 100 songs span 1909 through the mid-1960s and traverse performances from more than a dozen countries. Bottle-percussion blues from Ghana (Kamkam's "Okafu Nyi"), syn-copated Creole dance via Réunion (Orchestre Andre Philippe de St. Pierre's "Cuisine Roulante!"), solo-guitar satire from Zimbabwe (Josaya Hadebe's "Yini Wena Funa"), and vocal mbaqanga out of South Africa (Flying Jazz Queens' "Siyahamba") provide examples of the copious dialects contained within. Instrumental prowess abounds, as do the vernacular sounds of Kenyan ankle rings (ndekweinek), Guinean bow lute (pluriarc konou), and Moroccan one-string fiddle (ribab). Ward's glorious descriptions and histories, paired with period images and record-sleeve photos scattered throughout the included 112-page book, function as incisive tour guides.

Ordering info: dust-digital.com

Akin to Ward, Samy Ben Redjeb, founder of the imprint Analog Africa, strives to resuscitate gems from the continent's yesteryears and shed light on forgotten artists' careers. His label's electrifying tenth set, **Bambara Mystic Soul: The Raw Sound of Burkina Faso 1974-1979 (Analog Africa 70 79:46 ★★★★★½)**, delves into highly rhythmic and deftly textured tunes by some of the landlocked region's finest bands—all practically unknown outside of the area. While Western (namely, funk and Stax-styled soul) and Cuban influences infuse a majority of the selections, traditional drum patterns and needle-pointed guitar motifs stamp the music with nimbleness absent from that of its neighbors—Congolese, Nigerian or otherwise. Amadou Ballaké, a well-traveled artist, is featured on a half-dozen tracks. His is natural, effortless, and debonair voice, handling frisky horn-spiked anthems ("Oye Ka Bara Kignan") with the same adeptness as formal, tropicalia-laced ballads ("Baden Djougou"). Joyful Mandingue dance, roll-and-tumble psychedelia, and organ-drenched high-steppers by Ballaké peers increase the percolating clatter and trance-like vibe. A superbly annotated 44-



Lijadu Sisters

page booklet puts everything in perspective.

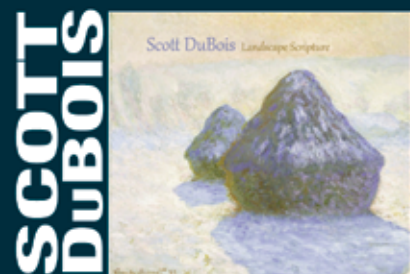
Ordering info: analogafrica.blogspot.com

In the mid- and late 1970s, few African territories boasted the creative fertility of Nigeria. Cousins of afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti, the Lijadu Sisters stood as one of the few female names to break through the region's male-dominated market. Sidelined after Kehinde suffered a spinal injury, the long-dormant twins are receiving recognition via an overdue reissue series. The harmony-driven duo's **Danger (Knitting Factory 1118 32:33 ★★★★★)** and **Mother Africa (Knitting Factory 1119 38:03 ★★★★★)** share direct simplicity and spare instrumentation. Each album feels contemporary. The amplified *Danger* subscribes to English lyrics, a largely upbeat pace, and deep-soul grooves—a combination personified on the rocksteady reggae beats on "Bobby" and dip-and-dive flow of the protest "Cashing In." No shrinking violets, the Lijadu Sisters speak their minds, favoring messages of hope and peace. Fuzz-guitar lines trace the rims of close melodies on several compositions on the 1977 follow-up, a more intimate and mellow affair tethered to Yoruba-language singing, bulbous talking drums, and acoustic picking.

Ordering info: knittingfactoryrecords.com

Documented in 2008, **I Have My Liberty! Gospel Sounds From Accra, Ghana (Dust To Digital 23 53:26 ★★★)** portrays a cross-section of the do-it-yourself choirs, bands, and preachers that are currently worshipping in the country's countless Christian churches. Call-and-response rejoinders, distorted keyboard passages, flesh-smacking handclaps, and traditional cries convey undying passion. Alas, the compilation is fragmented by brief snippets and decontextualized edits that diminishes the performers' overall impact.

Ordering info: dust-digital.com



SCOTT DuBOIS LANDSCAPE SCRIPTURE

SSC 1309 / in Stores March 13

Guitarist Scott DuBois has made a concerted effort to create a focused ensemble with a sound custom fit for his emotive compositional voice. He has found the perfect foils in reed player Gebhard Ullmann, bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Kresten Osgood.

These masterful musicians are featured on his new album *Landscape Scripture*, which also includes a suite inspired by the legendary painter Claude Monet's series of haystack paintings. The impressive program is usually brazen, occasionally discreet but always openhearted.



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ABOVE ALL

SSC 1301 / in Stores March 27

The most important aspect of music making for pianist Jonny King has been the collaboration between musicians. On his first recording as a leader in over a decade, King chose two musicians who he feels have provided the best dialog in an ensemble through the years. His new CD *Above All* features inspired readings of all new King originals performed alongside bassist Edward Howard and drummer Victor Lewis.



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Kirk Whalum *Romance Language*

RENDEZVOUS MUSIC 5148

★★★★

Tenor saxophonist Kirk Whalum bares his amorous soul with this enticing treat that'll have some listeners rethink their perceptions of his artistry.

Oftentimes musicians such as Whalum get unfairly lumped into the anonymous smooth jazz category for focusing less on intricate modern jazz with a noticeable debt to bebop and more on pop gloss. Here, Whalum proves some naysayers wrong by looking at John Coltrane's 1963 landmark duet LP with Johnny Hartman as a launching pad. Six of the 10 songs on *Romantic Language* come directly from that album in the same sequence.

On *Romantic Language*, Whalum pairs his saxophones with respective brother and uncle, Kevin and Hugh "Peanuts" Whalum to share the role of Hartman. But the singers approach that duty with enough ingenuity and smarts to not try to come off as bad imitators. Kevin Whalum who takes on the lion's share of vocal duties imbues classics such as "Dedicated To You" and "Lush Life" with equal parts reverence and refreshment; he hones a satiny baritone that recalls Al Jarreau. Hugh sings only on "Almost Doesn't Count," a recent r&b hit for Brandy. On this wistful ballad, he brings a more weathered intimacy to the song.

The saxophonist avoids Coltrane mimicry; he animates his playing with a bright, peppery tone that leans more toward alto saxophonist Hank Crawford, and with a succinct melodicism that's more r&b-based. Whalum also stays true to himself with the arrangements, giving "My One And Only Love" a bossa nova zeal and recasting "You Are Too Beautiful" as a late-night slow jam.

—John Murphy

Romance Language: They Say It's Wonderful; Dedicated To You; My One And Only Love; Lush Life; You Are Too Beautiful; Autumn Serenade; Almost Doesn't Count; I Wish I Wasn't; I Wanna Know; Spend My Life With You. (55:05)

Personnel: Kirk Whalum, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Kevin Whalum, vocals; Hugh "Peanuts" Whalum, vocals (7); Marcus Finnie, drums; Braylon Lacy, bass; Kevin Turner, electric guitar; Michael "Nomad" Ripoll, acoustic guitar; John Stoddart, piano, keyboards, organ (10), backing vocals (9); Bashiri Johnson, percussion (1, 5, 7, 8, 10); Javier Solis, percussion (1, 3, 6, 9); George Tidwell, flugelhorn and trumpet.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

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Jenny Scheinman *Mischief & Mayhem*

SELF RELEASE

★★★★

Jenny Scheinman seems to reinvent herself with each album, which may be a byproduct of the violinist's varied sidework. Yet it's her frequent work with Bill Frisell, who shares Scheinman's interest in exploring the intersections of improvisation and Americana, that likely informs *Mischief & Mayhem*, her eponymous band's debut.

An emboldened Scheinman splashes around flurries of skronk alongside guitarist Nels Cline, though more often they swim in an ominous, atmospheric wash. In between that push and pull, bassist Todd Sicksafoose and drummer Jim Black lay down a simmering, straight-time pulse, powering the genre-blurring results forward. Emerging from an autumnal haze toward the end of "Devil's Ink," the rhythm section shifts gears into a staccato funk and Cline's guitar twists free from the rest of the band, spinning furiously backward in a loop before the band locks into the tune's hairpin turns.

Scheinman and Cline swap counterpoint on "Ali Farka Touché," a mesmerizing tribute to the Malian guitar master, where Scheinman's lyricism is on vivid display. "The Mite" opens with a steady pulse over which Schienman's violin swells before erupting into a fireball of high frequency squeals in unison with Cline.

—Areif Sless-Kitain

Mischief & Mayhem: A Ride With Polly Jean; Sand Dipper; Blues for the Double Vee; Devil's Ink; The Audit; Ali Farka Touché; July Tenth in Three Four; The Mite, (43:33)

Personnel: Jenny Scheinman, violin; Nels Cline, guitars; Todd Sicksafoose, bass; Jim Black, drums.

Ordering info: jennyscheinman.com



Michael Pedicin *Ballads ... Searching For Peace*

JAZZ HUT 0003

★★½

The importance of narrative in ballads is part of what makes them so captivating, and it's the ability of the best jazz balladeers to tell of heartache, joy and love that allows them to connect with their audience. When ballads lack narrativity they can fall short of their full potential to communicate, which is one of the weaknesses of tenor saxophonist Michael Pedicin's *Ballads ... Searching For Peace*.

Pedicin didn't make things easy for himself by opening with "You Don't Know What Love Is," which Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane both recorded. Upon Pedicin's opening cadenza one hears his serious chops and stylistic debt to Coltrane, but despite his full sound, fluid phrasing and agility, his solos seem to lack focus. In general, the ends of Pedicin's phrases often trail off, preventing him from building a direction and narrative arc. When the rhythm section is on, it's a highly interactive unit that responds to Pedicin quickly. However, it often feels a bit flat. After a few tracks it seems as if the group is telling the same story in a fairly similar, yet somewhat ineffective way. Taking nothing away from the group's talent and hard work, this is an attractive, but lackluster album.

—Chris Robinson

Ballads ... Searching for Peace: You Don't Know What Love Is; Blame it on your Heart; Home at Last; Few Moments; Virgo; Tell Me; Search for Peace. (55:15)

Personnel: Michael Pedicin, tenor saxophone; John Valentino, guitar (all except 7); Dean Schneider, piano (1, 3, 5, 7); Barry Miles, piano (2, 4, 6); Andy Lalasis, bass; Bob Shomo, drums.

Ordering info: michaelpedicin.com



KENNY GARRETT

SEEDS FROM THE UNDERGROUND

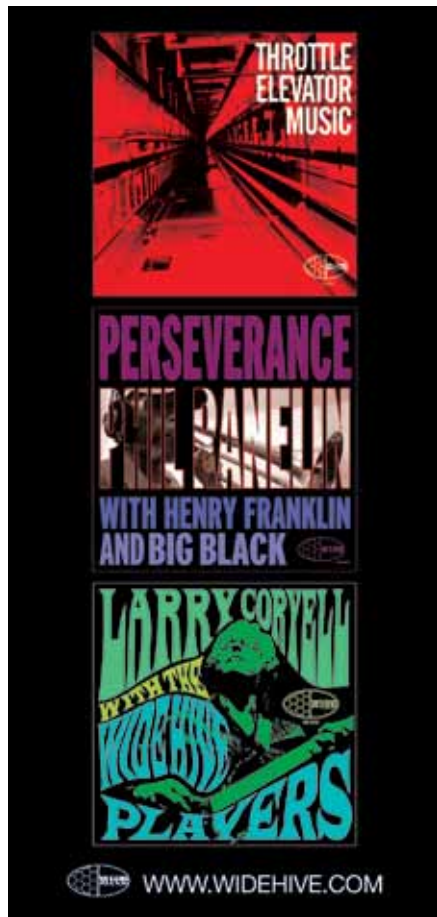
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Historical | BY JOHN EPHLAND

CTI Reissues Celebrate Soul Jazz

Hard to believe, but the legendary CTI Records (now under the Masterworks Jazz moniker) continues with a 40th anniversary. Sadly, no bonus tracks in sight with these four (skimpy) reissued Kudu/CTI titles, but the heavy-duty production values endure.

Esther Phillips' delivery was suited for the music CTI put down with 1974's **Performance** (Masterworks Jazz 94375; 39:40 ★★★½). With equal doses of sass, heart and soul this singer took her robust, curlicue voice and somehow managed to sing and almost rap her way through anything they put in front of her. Chris Smithers' "I Feel The Same" opens things and puts all the best elements together, Charlie Brown's talking electric guitar, Hubert Laws' mentholated flute and a lowdown-and-dirty rhythm section crawling in unison. With a full orchestra and background chorus, along with session greats at her feet (Bernard Purdie, Steve Gadd, Pee Wee Ellis on chimes!). But the ammo is dished up discreetly: Allen Toussaint's title track laced with Eric Weissberg's steel guitar, the church organ of Richard Tee, all of it played with a gentle waltz sway. The disco funk of "Disposable Society" is enhanced by Phillips' reverbed voice, her singing loaded with attitude and the fire of protest. Dr. John's "Such A Night" and Jerry Jeff Walker's "Mr. Bojangles" offer lightweight covers that serve more as curiosities but still work. Jon Sholle's solo on Isaac Hayes/David Porter's gospel-derived "Can't Trust Your Neighbor" makes you forget you're not listening to Eric Gale.

Johnny Hammond, likewise, is given the royal treatment with extra session players on 1971's **Wild Horses Rock Steady** (Masterworks Jazz 94380; 38:00 ★★★½). Produced and conducted by Bob James, there's a full horn section and eight violinists, the strings offering a lush counterpoint to Hammond's greasy organ, Eric Gale's funky guitar, Grover Washington's soulful tenor sax and Bernard Purdie in-the-pocket drumming. Indeed, producer Creed Taylor has Hammond start it right with a slow, deliberate rendition of Aretha Franklin's "Rock Steady." The Latin-flavored "Who Is Sylvia?" is more orchestral, with Hammond on cool electric piano before switching to his hot organ following another turn for Washington once things heat up. The sliding bass of Ron Carter is all over an upending of Cat Stevens' "Peace Train," this one an uptempo swinger, drummer Billy Cobham likewise all over his set. Strange choices come with dated, valiant covers of "I Don't Know How To Love



Him," "It's Impossible" and The Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses."

Lonnie Smith, before the "Dr." and turban, was having some fun early on with 1971's **Mama Wailer** (Masterworks Jazz 94704; 35:20 ★★★½). His title track features him on clavinet as well as organ, some uncharacteristic funky bass from Ron Carter and more signature licks from Billy Cobham on drums. Not as big a cast here, but still some heft at all positions (everything but strings heard). Smith's "Hola Muneca," another medium-tempo funk tune, features Smith's organ cutting through with delicious lines (beautiful sound!). Despite some cookin' riffs, trendy covers of Carole King's "I Feel The Earth Move" and Sly Stone's "Stand" offer some corn. That said, past the perky theme statement, the 17-and-a-half-minute "Stand" slows the groove down and we get to hear guitarists Jimmy Ponder and George Davis wail opposite Smith's electric-organ en route to a quickened pace with more wailing, this time from Grover Washington on tenor and some trippy organ.

Before there was David Sanborn there was Hank Crawford. Maybe a testament to his soul, but **Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing** (Masterworks Jazz 94374; 35:00 ★★★★★) meets the pop-cover challenge head-on, alto man Crawford and his extended crew (huge!) taking two Stevie Wonder classics and turning up the heat. There may be a larger-than-life cast, but it doesn't feel crowded with great playing and arrangements of Wonder's title track and "All In Love Is Fair" along with Crawford's lovely, heartfelt "Jana" (Richard Tee on organ), the elegant swing (too short) of "Groove Junction" and the (almost 13-minute) funky romp "Sho Is Funky" with arranger/conductor Bob James.

Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

DB

Harry Allen *Rhythm On The River*

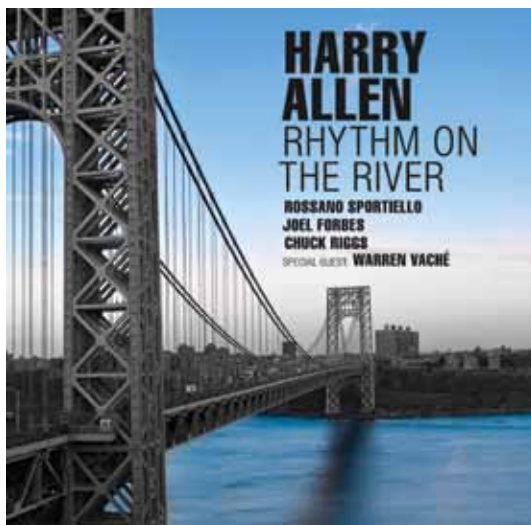
CHALLENGE 73311

★★★★

Old movie buffs may recognize "Rhythm On The River" as a 1940 Bing Crosby hit written by Billy Wilder. But this CD has little to do with Crosby and much about rivers. But such quaint contrivances have never stopped saxophonist Harry Allen from digging perfect little pearls from what might appear to be a plate of unpromising oysters.

Allen is a stalwart soldier in that somewhat contemporary jazz underground—classic mainstream—where all the experimenting takes place off stage. It holds forth in George Wein's always swinging little all-star bands, and sometimes in such uptown New York venues as Feinsteins' or the Carlyle. You find it south of 14th Street in an alternate underground inhabiting a parallel time zone along side the more common avant garde lofts. This is the niche in which Allen lives. He belongs to the school of the great tenor balladeers, who balanced the power romance and rhythm in equal measure. Warren Vaché, his opposite number on cornet, sits in on four numbers here.

The kickoff is "Riverboat Shuffle," which is



the most irredeemably traditional of the selections, though Allen and Vaché give it a nice twist near the end with an unexpected modulation. Still, it's a little misleading. This is not a trad CD. Allen is well practiced at patrolling the outskirts of obscurity in search of forgotten scraps of old Tin Pan Alley, the ones with possibilities. It's a useful strategy for freshening up a set, and probably better than laboring over new pieces almost guaranteed to go nowhere. Everyone seems to do that. Besides, if no one's heard it, it's new.

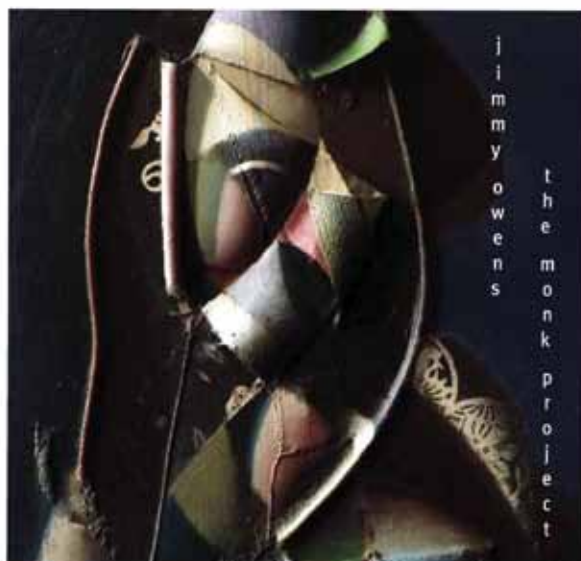
So mixed in with familiar standards like "Lazy River" and "Swanee River" are some "new" discoveries in the river genre. You may know Julie London's "Cry Me A River," purred by Allen a la London in whispered pillow talk. But it would take a song detective to know about such lovely late '20s fare as "Blue River," "Weary River," "Ready For The River," and the short "Sleepy River." They show no evidence of ages here. Almost as arcane is the CD title song, which was marginalized by bigger hits from the Crosby film, but its reference to "Muskrat Ramble" in the bridge is clever.

Allen is so consistently composed in his controlled exuberance, you almost wish for a misplaced note or tripped phrase just to see what he might do with it. His playing is so supremely poised and paced, it tends to conceal its spontaneity—bouncing along at an even stride, then catching fire at just the right point. His phrasing is strategically predictable but tactically full of little surprises. If only he could make it look harder. —John McDonough

Rhythm On The River: Riverboat Shuffle; Cry Me a River; Rhythm on the River; Lazy River; Roll On, Mississippi, Role On; Down By the River; Walking By the River; River Stay Way from My Door; Blue River; Weary River; Old Folks at Home; Ready for the River; Sleepy River; (67:43)

Personnel: Harry Allen, saxophone; Warren Vaché (1, 4, 8, 11), cornet; Rossano Sportiello, piano; Joel Forbes, bass; Chuck Riggs, drums.

Ordering info: challenge.nl



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Owens
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Otis Taylor *Otis Taylor's Contraband*

TELARC 33188

★★★★½

Otis Taylor is an American music original with a jazzman's sensibility for not doing anything twice the same way.

He inhabits a remarkable if peculiar subdivision of modern blues, shading into deep eclipse original songs consisting of a catchy riff and a repeated chord that sound challenging, sometimes dangerous. Strong-willed and uncompromised in artistic purpose, Taylor is incapable of surrendering to the least bit of sentimentality.

Otis Taylor's Contraband points to an artist at the peak of his powers, someone who says his lyrics come to him in flowing patterns upon awakening from sleep, someone

who realizes his music is an emanation of primal power. Fascinated with African-American cultural history, Taylor is personally caught up in the drama of the compelling stories he's relating. This truth-teller identifies with the emotional and psychological distress of, say, a victim of old South racial prejudice ("Open These Bars"), a poor man harboring unattainable wishes ("Yellow Car, Yellow Dog"), a heart-sick lover ("Yell Your Name"). He employs coded language—fragments of personal epigrams as clues—for ambitious listeners to sort out in meaning. Taylor's strong yet soft voice and deceptively nonchalant delivery suit his astringent lyrics.

Grooves, meant to induce hypnosis, are always central to Taylor's blues; if that of "The Devil's Gonna Lie" doesn't yank you into the rhythms, the half-wicked and half-sanctified "Banjo Boogie Blues" likely will. His distinctive individuality also finds him hurling us curve-balls, like Indo-Aryan violin in the title track and a pedal steel guitar, a gospel choir and African percussion elsewhere. With his friend Gary Moore now deceased, he calls on Jon Paul Johnson to play electric guitar solos, little harm that they don't rise above the routine.

—Frank-John Hadley

Otis Taylor's Contraband: The Devil's Gonna Lie; Yell Your Name; Look To The Side; Romans Had Their Way; Blind Piano Teacher; Banjo Boogie Blues; Two Or Three Times; Contraband Blues; Lay On My Delta Bed; Your 10 Dollar Bill; Open These Bars; Yellow Car, Yellow Dog; Never Been To Africa; I Can See You're Lying. (58:25)
Personnel: Otis Taylor, vocals, guitar (1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14), electric & acoustic banjos (3, 6, 10, 12); Cassie Taylor (3-5, 8-14), bass; Todd Edmunds (5, 7), bass; Larry Thompson, drums; Jon Paul Johnson, electric guitar (4, 8, 11, 13, 14); Chuck Campbell, pedal steel guitar (1, 6, 10); Brian Juan (1, 4, 9, 14) organ; Sheryl Renee Choir, vocals (1, 6); Ron Miles (1, 2) cornet; Fara Tolno (1, 4, 10, 13) djembe; Anne Harris, violin (5, 8, 12).
Ordering info: telarc.com



Juma Sultan's Aboriginal Music Society *Father Of Origin*

EREMITE 54-56

★★★★

This extravagantly packaged set pulls back the curtain on one of the more intriguing and forgotten figures from the earliest days of New York's loft jazz scene. Juma Sultan moved to New York in 1966 from California. He gravitated to Woodstock, where he established a kind of artists' residence: organizing concerts, playing music and building a recording studio. He presented jam sessions with musicians well outside of the jazz world—from folk singer Tim Hardin to his friend Jimi Hendrix. In 1970 he ended up back in New York City where his Aboriginal Music Society began performing frequently. His open-ended group never released a recording during its decade-long history, which ended in 1978.

Father Of Origin includes two vinyl records and a CD of music drawn from three different heavily improvised sessions. Sultan and his musical partner, the percussionist Ali Abuwi, lay down thick but open African-derived grooves in lengthy collective jams. The earliest material, from 1970, features intense, post-John Coltrane blowing from trumpeter Earl Cross and reedist Eugene Dinwiddie with fierce percussive reinforcement by Philip Wilson.

A second session from 1971 puts a young Frank Lowe front and center. The best stuff features musicians from St. Louis' Black Artists Guild—Julius Hemphill, Charles "Bobo" Shaw, and Abdul Wadud—navigating the dense rhythmic thickets. The music subscribes to a strong ensemble orientation—it's all improvised, and there's no grandstanding.

—Peter Margasak

Lorraine Feather *Tales Of The Unusual*

JAZZEDMEDIA 1956

★★★★

Prolific is a good word for Lorraine Feather. She earned her vocal stripes long ago in the retro ensemble Full Swing and elsewhere, and she's made a good living in the interim as a lyricist for Disney and other productions. She's pursued a parallel path of self-produced jazz albums, grafting words to songs by Ellington and others. This offbeat collection of art songs contains nice musical touches of Kurt Weill ("I Took Your Hand") and other quality creators. But the pungent lyrical brevity of a Johnny Mercer—for one—is often missing.

The songs are often crammed with words; it's difficult to absorb one after another. There are gothic touches, but without the Tim Burton/Danny Elfman terror, some Tom Waits noir, but not so savage. Her lyricized Nino Rota ("Ahh") has the requisite dreamy fairground feel. Feather has some smart lines. Her clever noir ditty "Usual Suspects," nods to hard-boiled character actor Richard Conte.

Her pleasing alto fairly floats through these tunes and Charles Bisharat's violin is a good



melodic partner. The vocalese to Ellington's steeplechase "Jubilee Stomp" (retitled "Indiana Lana") is out of place, but pianist Russ Ferrante plays it like a champ. These are highly personal statements and as such, not likely to be widely performed.

—Kirk Silsbee

Tales Of The Unusual: The Hole In The Man; Off-the-Grid Girl; Where Is Everybody?; The Usual Suspects; Five; Sweet Miriam; Out There; Get A Room; Cowhide; I Took Your Head (Fellini's Waltz); Indiana Lana; Ahh. (61:04)
Personnel: Lorraine Feather, vocals, background vocals; Charles Bisharat (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11) violin; Russell Ferrante, piano (1-6, 9, 12, 13); Shelly Berg, piano (7, 8, 10, 11); Grant Geissman, guitar (1, 12); Mike Miller, guitar (7, 8); Michael Valerio, bass (1, 10, 12); Michael Shapiro, drums (1, 12); Gregg Field (6, 7, 8, 10), drums; Carlos Del Rosario (background vocals).
Ordering info: jazzedmedia.com

Father Of Origin: LP One: Fan Dance part I; Fan Dance part II; Fan Dance part III; Ode To A Gypsy Son. (Approx. 40:00). LP Two: Untitled; Sundance. (Approx. 25:00). Disc: Untitled; Untitled part II. (47:40)

Personnel: Ali Abuwi, hand drums, percussion, flutes, oboe; Earl Cross, trumpet, E flat mellophone, piano; Gene Dinwiddie, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Juma Sultan, bass, hand drums, percussion E flat alto saxophone; Ralph Walsh, guitar; Philip Wilson, drum kit; Frank Lowe, tenor saxophone, percussion; Julius Hemphill, alto saxophone; Rod Hicks, bass; Charles "Bobo" Shaw, hand drums, percussion; Abdul Wadud, cello.
Ordering info: eremite.com

**Marty Ehrlich's
Rites Quartet
*Frog Leg Logic***

CLEAN FEED 242

★★★★

Julius Hemphill couldn't have asked for a better executor of his musical legacy than Marty Ehrlich. Ehrlich was in high school when he met the alto saxophonist and clarinet player in St. Louis. After Ehrlich moved to New York he played in Hemphill's big band, and he's never stopped playing it since the man's death in 1995. The Rites Quartet is named for a tune from Hemphill's *Dogon A.D.*, and it re-creates the album's unusual instrumental line-up and its pungent feel.

But Ehrlich also understands that to pay tribute to an original, you have to show some originality yourself. On *Frog Leg Logic*, the quartet's second recording, they deliver enough Hemphillian funk to let you know where they're coming from: like in the quick-stepping groove, intricately entwined lines, and grit on "You Can Beat The Slanted Cards." But the muted popping that Hank Roberts' cello and Michael Sarin's drums push up through James Zollar's breathy sound effects creates a mystery-laden maze for Ehrlich to negotiate. "Solace" combines bluesy melancholy with a chamber music feel; the way Zollar's muted trumpet harmonizes with Ehrlich's flute is exquisite.

—Bill Meyer

Frog Leg Logic: Frog Leg Logic; Ballade; You Can Beat The Slanted Cards; Walk Along The Way; Solace; My Song; Gravedigger's Respite. (51:01)

Personnel: Marty Ehrlich, alto and soprano saxophone, flute; James Zollar, trumpet; Hank Roberts, cello; Michael Sarin, drums.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



**Joep Van Leeuwen
and Gero Körner
*Jazz Guitar Meets
Church Organ***

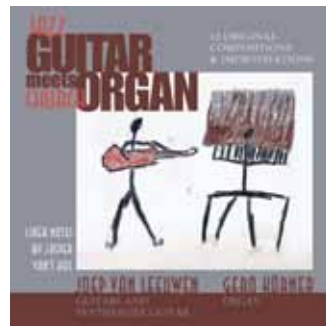
ORGAN PROMOTION 8010

★★★★

The church organ in question is from the 18th century and resides in Saint Apollinaire church in Bolland, Belgium. With its 23 registers intended to imitate such sounds as the human voice, trumpet, flute, even "effect d'orage" (storm effect), the church organ was the synthesizer of its day.

The two musicians here are a couple of decades apart in age, but the two have a lovely artistic equilibrium and have delved deeply into the connotations of this nonpareil pairing. Seven of the compositions are Van Leeuwen's, with a couple from Körner and three improvised interludes which may be the highlight of the set. The guys have a little joke on their concept, interpolating the ominous, instantly recognizable quote from J.S. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor during the funky "Johnny B.'s Good" and Körner's "Shall We Beloved?" sounds like some Tudor-era waltz updated for pipe organ. Van Leeuwen's guitar synth battles against nave-filling power chords from the organ on "And Then Some." Ultimately the guitar's deployment of Virus synth, oscillators and filters prevails but the two combatants are beautifully matched on the closer "Dance To This."

—Michael Jackson



Jazz Guitar Meets Church Organ: Three Part Jazz Fugue; Where, Oh Where?; Interlude I; Who's on First?; Gentle Clash; Interlude II; Shall We Beloved; Johnny B.'s Good; Interlude III; Moonrise: And Then Some; Dance To This. (53:38)

Personnel: Joep Van Leeuwen, guitars; Gero Körner, organ.

Ordering info: organpromotion.org

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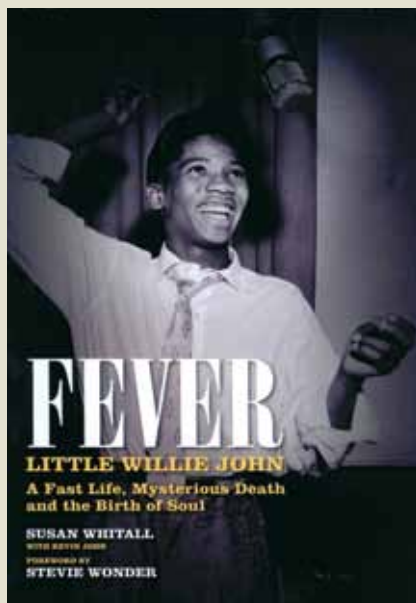
victo 25 years!

Little Willie John's Tragic Life Left Soul Legacy

For a man who experienced as much success as he did in the 1950s and early '60s, Little Willie John's career has not been explored in depth as much as his contemporaries in the field like Sam Cooke and Jackie Wilson. With his slight 5-foot 4-inch frame, he looked considerably younger than his years. But his vocals revealed that he was no inexperienced kid, and if he hadn't spent the last years of his life in prison, he might have played a prime role in the 1960s soul explosion. Author Susan Whitall, together with Kevin John (one of Willie John's sons), explores the life and time of this rhythm & blues pioneer in *Fever: Little Willie John—A Fast Life, Mysterious Death And The Birth Of Soul* (Titan). The book is named for one of his signature songs, the oft-covered "Fever," which did cross over to the pop charts, but was an even bigger hit for white pop chanteuse Peggy Lee. While he did have a significant number of r&b hits (some of which did cross over into pop), his influence has been overlooked by several music historians. Whitall, a Detroit music and feature writer who formerly edited the legendary rock magazine Creem, worked closely with the John family in digging up factoids about a man who history books usually confine to a couple of hits and a premature, tragic death.

John was a natural extrovert, dodging his parents to make the rounds at the local talent shows in Detroit. It didn't take long for his charisma and confidence to win a substantial following, in light of the other great singers making the rounds in the same circles, including his childhood friend Levi Stubbs (later the lead voice with the Four Tops). After a spell singing with Paul Williams' band, John came to the attention of King Records and producer Henry Glover, scoring a hit the first time out with "All Around The World," an r&b smash in 1955, just in time for rock & roll's eventual dominance. His hit streak continued straight through 1961 and Whitall's book elaborates in great detail about the fast cars and even faster women that he enjoyed during his heyday.

Far from a flash in the pan, the book captures him running in the company of such high-rolling performers as Jackie Wilson, James Brown, B.B. King, Clyde McPhatter, and even middleweight boxing champion Sugar Ray Robinson, whose flamboyance impressed John. Through it all, his unpredictability is a running thread—even if he was friends with a popular headliner offstage, he made it crystal clear that onstage he would do anything to steal the show. John wore stardom like a crown, according to the many musicians and fans who Whitall interviewed. Whitall also



makes copious use of newspaper and music trade journal accounts, as well as record company studio logs.

He was also keenly aware of ongoing musical developments. When the first r&b records were issued with full string sections, John wanted in on that bandwagon early. A request to have the Cincinnati symphony on his next record resulted in "Sleep," which turned out to be his highest-charting pop record. But the newness of success eventually wears off. Whitall alleges that his glory years were slowly ending, with cancelled dates at prestigious venues, and then there was a tragic incident where he stabbed a man in 1964.

At an illegal house party in Seattle, John was holding court with two female friends. An ex-convict on a work gang named Kendall Roundtree sat in a seat temporarily vacated by one of the women. After John suggested that the 200-pound Roundtree yield the seat, it started an altercation that wound up with Roundtree clocking John square on the mouth. John retaliated by stabbing him with a butcher knife.

Roundtree was pronounced dead that night, and John went straight to prison (prosecuting attorney Art Swanson implies in the book that John should have been acquitted). Except for a brief respite in 1966 to record a few sessions for producer David Axelrod and arranger H. B. Barnum at Capitol Records, this was where he would stay until his death in 1968. Since then, although his influence always appeared to be underplayed, there has been more than one generation of soul singers who acknowledged his influence at every opportunity. Whitall's tome does a great job of explaining the reasons why, next to the recordings themselves. **DB**

Ordering info: titanbooks.com



Hans Glawischnig *Jahira*

SUNNYSIDE 1310

★★★★

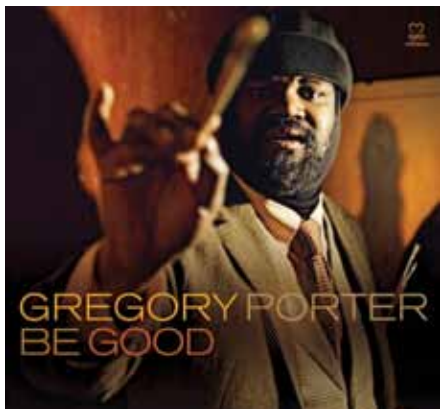
One glimpse at the cover of Hans Glawischnig's *Jahira* conveys his musical approach. He is seen intensely playing an acoustic bass guitar with a picture of Louis Armstrong in the background, indicating that Glawischnig is conscious of the past while he is simultaneously looking forward. *Jahira* is Glawischnig's acronym for "jazz history roundabout," which informs his aesthetic: everything in the music's past is worthy of inspiration and transformation into inventive reinterpretations and new constructions. *Jahira* also marks the debut of Glawischnig's use of the acoustic bass guitar as a leader. He began playing it in Ray Barretto's band, and finds the instrument valuable because it combines the flexibility and melodic capabilities of the electric with the sound of the upright.

Glawischnig, along with saxophonist Samir Zarif and drummer Eric Doob, incorporate numerous influences including bebop, mid-'60s John Coltrane, funk and hard rock. The trio intersperses the opening figures of Bud Powell and Miles Davis' "Budo" into Bud Powell's "Celia." The group plays the head in unison, with Doob using his brushes melodically. "Calabria" is marked by mediation that nearly exists out of time and space, Doob occasionally lays down a funky backbeat on "Shock Value" and "Crow Point" concludes with a restrained yet heavy rock drive.

Glawischnig's playing throughout often uses funk and rock bass lines, and his approach leans idiomatically more towards the guitar than the bass. Zarif's melodic and sound concepts are unique. He develops short motives and wastes nothing, engaging in virtuosic flurries only when necessary. His sound is slightly grainy and his tenor has an almost bassoon-like tone on his catchy "Once I Hesitate."

—Chris Robinson

Jahira: Once I Hesitate; Jahira; Ballad No. 2; Crow Point; Calabria; Celia; Alondra; Beatrice; Shock Value. (63:18)
Personnel: Hans Glawischnig, bass; Samir Zarif, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Eric Doob, drums.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Gregory Porter *Be Good*

MOTÉMA 75

★★★★½

New York-based singer Gregory Porter not only escapes the dreaded sophomore jinx with *Be Good*, he gives further indication of being a major jazz talent on the rise. As illustrated on his sumptuous debut, *Water*, Porter is a double-threat: a superlative singer, honing a burly, thoroughly communicative baritone, and a gifted songwriter, who knows how to balance material with personal references and universal truths.

Much of the power of Porter's originals derives from the fact that he doesn't seem to concern about being too original. He's not intent on concocting newfangled, obtuse song structures filled with hermetic verses and willful vocalese weirdness. His material is instantly relatable and heartfelt.

Porter does cover some standards—"Work Song," "God Bless the Child" and "Imitation Of Life"—with the veracity of a seasoned singer. But it's Porter's soulful originals, which makes *Be Good* such a must-have disc.

On the sterling "When Did You Learn," he sings of joys of finding a romance that has no reservations of being in a relationship. Underneath Porter's soulful baritone and pithy phrasing, the ensemble propels a forward-motion groove that recalls Donny Hathaway's mesmeric songwriting on *Extensions Of A Man*. Indeed, Hathaway and Bill Withers are some of Porter's most noticeable lodestars with regards to delivering deceptively simple lyrics and melodies that are instantly memorable.

Other highlights include the sweeping, "On My Way to Harlem," a post-Motown bop lament on gentrification and cultural displacement; the somber cautionary tale, "The Way You Want To Live," a ballad that Porter sang in tribute to the late Amy Winehouse; the dazzling "Bling Bling" a plea of a man filled with love but with no one to give it to; and the ruminative "Mother's Song."

In addition to Porter's superb songs—many of which have the potential to be this century's new jazz standards—*Be Good* comes alive

because of the accord that he ignites with his band members. He leads the same band as before, augmenting it on a few selections with more horns.

It's a strategy that works to his advantage, given that many producers would have probably surrounded him with big-marquee names. But producer Brian Bacchus and mentor Kamau Kenyatta (who produced *Water*) recognized the deep connection that Porter had developed with these musicians—particularly pianist and music director Chip Crawford and the rhythm section—from years of playing with

them on Tuesday nights at Harlem's influential, though now-defunct, St. Nick's Pub.

If *Water* is considered Porter's inauguration as a jazz talent to watch, *Be Good* signals the arrival of a great jazz artist with long-range staying power.

—John Murph

Be Good: Painted On Canvas; Be Good (Lion's Song); On My Way To Harlem; Real Good Hands; The Way You Want To Live; When Did You Learn; Imitation Of Life; Mother's Song; Our Love; Bling Bling; Work Song; God Bless The Child. (62:09)

Personnel: Gregory Porter, vocals; Chip Crawford, piano; Aaron James, bass; Emanuel Harrold, drums; Kamau Kenyatta, soprano saxophone (1); Yosuke Sato, alto saxophone (2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11); Keyon Harrold, trumpet (2, 3, 4, 8, 11); Tivon Pennicott, tenor saxophone (2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11).

Ordering info: motema.com



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Harold O'Neal *Marvelous Fantasy*

SMALLS RECORDS 51

★★★

This solo album from pianist Harold O'Neal is a pleasure to hear, although it might be best to give it a spin on a rainy, gray afternoon.

Essentially, he cultivates an introspective sound through his writing and performances. All nine tracks have a similar feel, though some show evidence of the pianist's facility with sophisticated, funk-tinged blues and others are virtually

jazz- and blues-free.

Several classical references appear throughout O'Neal's oeuvre. Though the sensitivity of his pedaling brings to mind aspects of Claude Debussy interpretation, more significant are the influences of Erik Satie and minimalism. The former comes to mind through O'Neal's frequent use of movement between two chords as a foundation, over which an enigmatic melody might unfold. This happens on "Miya," which at times reduces down to only the dominant note being sounded in the left hand. At the same time, a series of right-hand chords repeat in gentle 16th-note sequence, which is a minimalist compositional conceit. Throughout this piece in particular, O'Neal holds down the sostenuto pedal, in effect pulling the music into shadows.

The opening track, "Atanos," is almost identical in conception and execution. Here, too, there is a chord being repeated in 16th notes, setting a pulse that allows O'Neal to slip into a 7/8 section without leaving a ripple in its wake. The abrupt ending is a familiar Philip Glass device too.

Absolutely nothing in these two works has anything in common with jazz writing or execution. But elements do crop up elsewhere. On "Foi Felto De Vera," O'Neal begins in the same vein as on "Atanos" and "Miya," but then he starts emphasizing details in his upper mid-range patterns through extraordinary pedal work, at times barely raising the dampers in order to sharpen the sound of particular notes. Gradually he complements these treatments by raising his volume, hardening his attack and then moving fully into a jazzy improvisation, tumbling fluently around blue notes.

In every setting, O'Neal likes to either stick with or slowly alter the overall timbre. The first approach is capable of inducing something like a hypnotic trance, complementary in its nature to the tranquil state one can settle into during one of those drizzly, gray days alluded to earlier.

More of a feeling of movement derives from the second, especially when O'Neal underscores it with a shift toward a jazz sensibility, as on "Foi Felto De Vera" and, in a more muted fashion, the dreamy 5/4 of "Trieste."

There is one moment on the album where O'Neal dramatically and unexpectedly slams out one loud, angry-sounding chord. That happens in the midst of the title cut, and it feels like being surprised by a slap in the face while contemplating a gentle sunset.

That moment is a reminder that although the pianist (who is also an accomplished dancer and martial artist) speaks eloquently throughout *Marvelous Fantasy*, he likely has much more to say, in ways not addressed here.

—Bob Doerschuk



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Marvelous Fantasy: Atanos; Miya; Foi Felto De Vera; Trieste; Marvelous Fantasy (Roughenstein); The Lovers; Mr. Piccolo; Dance From The Night In Gales; Little Ones (70:31)

Personnel: Harold O'Neal, piano.

Ordering info: smallrecords.com

Ehran Elisha/Roy Campbell *Watching Cartoons With Eddie*

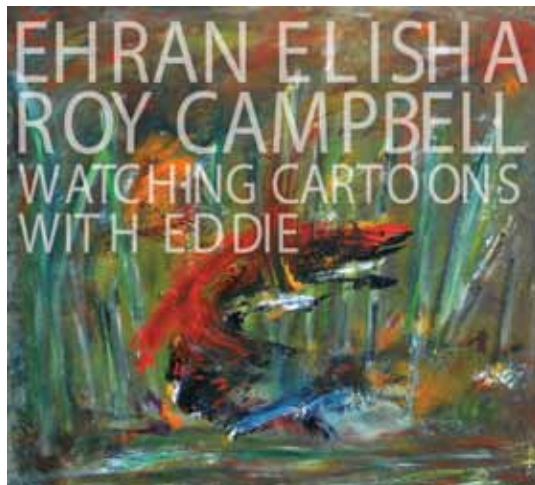
OUTNOW RECORDINGS 004

★★★★

During Brooklyn-based drummer Ehran Elisha's time at Wesleyan University he was not only Ed Blackwell's student, but his neighbor. Proximity led to familiarity, and the two men spent several afternoons sitting in Blackwell's house playing videotapes. First they watched cartoons, then John Coltrane or Thelonious Monk, and after the tapes were done came precious private lessons. The title of this duo CD, one of two that Elisha has released on a new Israeli label, memorializes these episodes of low-key mentorship.

The invocation of Blackwell's name and the trumpet-drums line-up invites comparisons to *Mu* and *El Corazon*, his fabulous duets with Don Cherry, but even a cursory listen will reveal profound differences between those historic sessions and this one. Cherry and Blackwell first celebrated their discovery of the world's musical traditions, then brought them back to jazz.

This set does honor several august figures who loom large to Elisha and trumpeter Roy Campbell; Max Roach Dizzy Gillespie, and



Bill Dixon both get shout-outs, and the album's programming, which is paced like a double LP, recalls another epic duo recording, Roach and Archie Shepp's *The Long March*. One should not dismiss that programming as a mere gesture of nostalgia for the LP age; this music is best digested in twenty-minute helpings.

But for every moment like the opening minute of the title track, which features a theme so Cherry-like that it had this writer scouring old records to find the one from which it was lifted (turns out the piece is an original composition), there are a dozen more that are all about

the connection that Elisha and Campbell have built up over nearly two decades of working together. Campbell has an egg-shell lyricism all his own, delicate and cracked around the edges; his muted playing on "Interlude, Dude" feels like a precious thing that you find by accident in the back of a second-hand shop. Elisha's beats fall around his melodic course like a light rain, adding as much atmosphere as rhythm. They can also play big and bluff; in the middle section of "Faith Offers Free Refills" Campbell starts with Iberian phrases, then stretches and twists them with good-natured playfulness over drumming that surges like a big, surfable ocean wave.

Elisha is his own man on drums; although listeners can hear a bit of his mentor in the varied tones he obtains from his toms, his reliance on a bright halo of high cymbal frequencies is not something that one would associate with Blackwell. But what stands out most is the way he and Campbell complement each other; it takes time and chemistry for them to sound so comfortable together. —*Bill Meyer*

Watching Cartoons With Eddie: They Enter Through The Ears; Watching Cartoons With Eddie; For BD; Aesthetic Encounters, Part One; Interlude, Dude; Aesthetic Encounters, Part Two; The Dizzy Roach; Faith Offers Free Refills; October. (71:22)

Personnel: Ehran Elisha, drums and percussion; Roy Campbell, trumpet, pocket trumpet, flugelhorn, flute and percussion.

Ordering info: outnowrecordings.com



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MUSICIANS' GEAR GUIDE

Best of The NAMM Show 2012

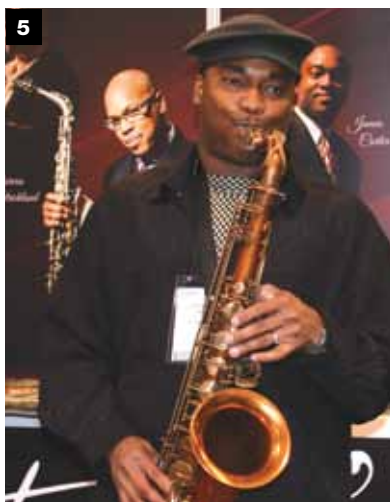
The NAMM Show brings together the entire musical instruments industry for four days of product showcases, business-to-business marketing, inventory ordering and plenty of joyful noise every winter. This year's event, held Jan. 19–22 at the Anaheim Convention Center, saw the release of thousands of new instruments and audio equipment—some of which shows promise to become essential gear for players at all levels. Dozen of great players were present as well—some of them as endorsers and demonstrators for various manufacturers, others as performers at the convention's numerous after-hours concerts and parties. It all made for a very musical, and at times decibel-raising, event. In the following pages, DownBeat offers the inside scoop on the big show, which is not open to the general public.

1. George Benson talks about his new Ibanez LGB300 hollow-body guitar; 2. Mike Portnoy announces the winners of the Players' Choice cymbal contest at the Sabian booth; 3. Stevie Wonder greets fans outside the Marriott Hotel; 4. Ali Ryerson plays her signature Brio! flute at the Gemeinhardt booth; 5. James Carter honks and wails at the P. Mauriat exhibit; 6. Vandoren holds its annual VandoJam at Ralph Brennan's Jazz Kitchen in Downtown Disney: Vandoren artists Eric Marienthal (left), Jerry Vivino and Gary Smulyan take the stage to kick off the event; 7. Mindi Abair (left) and Dave Koz perform at Audio-Technica's 50th anniversary concert, held at Disneyland's California Adventure; 8. Bob Mintzer (left) checks out new saxophone models with Andreas Eastman's Qian Ni and Roger Greenberg; 9. Warwick artist Bootsy Collins (left) celebrates the unveiling of his custom Space Bass with CEO/founder Hans Peter Wilfer and Marcus Spangler from Warwick's custom shop; 10. Dr. Lonnie Smith demonstrates the new SK2 organ at the Hammond booth; 11. Don Braden plays a Virtuoso tenor saxophone at the RS Berkeley exhibit; 12. Joey Heredia (left) and Ignacio Berroa stop by the Sabian booth; 13. John Piasano (left) and Pete Christlieb pay a visit to the Cannonball Musical Instruments exhibit; 14. Sharel Cassity takes her turn to burn onstage at VandoJam; 15. Tony DeSare demonstrates the NU1 hybrid piano during Yamaha Keyboard Division's dealer meeting; 16. Terry Bozzio makes a special appearance for Sabian's 30th anniversary.

REPORTING BY FRANK ALKYER, HILARY BROWN, ED ENRIGHT, KATIE KAILUS, ZACH PHILLIPS AND BOBBY REED.



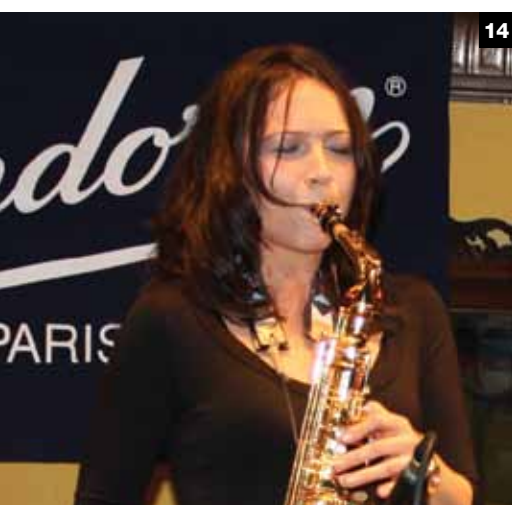
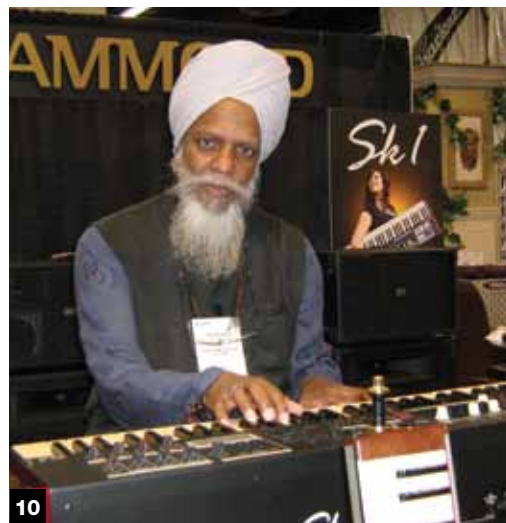
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5



6



BAND & ORCHESTRA

{1} COLORFUL BONES

Conn-Selmer is now the global distributor for the new pBone, a plastic trombone officially endorsed by jazz musician Jiggs Whigham that puts an intriguing twist on the traditional trombone. Originally developed in the U.K. for classroom use by beginning students, this is a phenomenal-sounding, lightweight trombone that costs only \$150 and is available in red, blue, green or yellow. **More info:** conn-selmer.com

{2} WICK'S LATEST

Vandoren distributor Dansr Inc. showed Denis Wick's new American Classic trumpet mouthpieces and super-sturdy System X adjustable instruments stands from Hamilton. Vandoren also released a new Hygro reed case that keeps saxophone and clarinet reeds in optimal humidity conditions. It's available in two sizes: one for tenor/baritone/bass clarinet reeds and another for alto/soprano/clarinet reeds. **More info:** dansr.com

{3} SIGNATURE FLUTE

Jazz flutist Ali Ryerson worked directly with Gemeinhardt's designers and engineers to create a professional signature version of the company's Brio! step-up flute. The Brio! Ali Ryerson Signature Flute has an NG1 headjoint with a shaped lip plate and a gold riser for ease of response, and the keywork has been modified to tighten up the scale. **More info:** gemeinhardt.com

VINTAGE APPEAL

P. Mauriat received positive response to its cognac-lacquered 66R tenor saxophone and its unlacquered System-76 series tenor. "What I like about the various finishes we offer is that they're different enough where they create different sound profiles," said P. Mauriat's Craig Denny. **More info:** pmauriatmusic.com

LIVING LEGEND

RS Berkeley and Drake announced the new David Liebman Living Legend series soprano saxophone mouthpiece. **More info:** rsberkeley.com

{4} GRENADILLA CLARINET

Antigua has not offered a wooden clarinet until now, with the release of an instrument designed by Morrie Backun. The CL3230 clarinet is made of grenadilla that's aged 25



years or more and is provided by Backun from his Canada-based company's stash of high-end woods. **More info:** antiguawinds.com

{5} LEGENDARY STREET

Andreas Eastman named its new 52nd Street alto and tenor saxophones after the legendary New York City strip where jazz clubs thrived during the 1950s. Features include soldered-on rolled toneholes, a large bell, adjustable palm keys and double-arm key bracing. **More info:** eastmanmusiccompany.com

{6} RESONANT MANTRA

Mouthpiece maker Theo Wanne has entered the saxophone

market with the Mantra tenor, an innovative horn designed to be incredibly solid and resonant. Nothing is soldered to the neck of the Mantra, so there's no damping effect. **More info:** theowane.com

FUNKY ZONE

JodyJazz rolled out the DVD *In The Funk Zone With George Garzone*, which teaches musicians how to use the minor pentatonic scale for simple to advanced soloing techniques. **More info:** jodyjazz.com

VOLUME CONTROL

David Gage and Ned Steinberger have released the Realist Docking Station, a universal volume

attenuator that works with virtually any acoustic bass pickup.

More info: realistacoustic.com

SUPER SAX

Powell Flutes used the vintage King Super 20 as inspiration for a new line that marks the company's first foray into saxophones. The flagship model features a sterling silver bell, toneholes and neck. **More info:** powellflutes.com

TRUMPET VIBRATIONS

Buffet Group's 334 Xtreme lightweight trumpet features two tuning slides and cornet-style bracing. **More info:** buffet-group.com

PRO AUDIO

{1} iPad Mounting

On-Stage Stands left no iPad mounting option unexplored. The company showed the new iMount System, a suite of products that includes a tablet mount, stand and compact stand, each sold separately. With the tablet mount, there's no need to remove an iPad from its cover—the mount itself is the cover. **More info:** onstagestands.com

{2} iPad Mixing

Mackie's DL1608 combines a 16-channel live digital mixer with the control of an iPad. What does this mean? Total mix tweakability from anywhere in a venue, huge portability and a bevy of touch-sensitive plug-ins. **More info:** mackie.com

{3} iRig Stomping

IK Multimedia's iRig Stomp gives players the ability to integrate iOS signal processing apps into an existing pedalboard setup. Based on IK's AmpliTube iRig interface, the unit is compatible with any iOS guitar, amp or instrument app and comes with the free AmpliTube app. **More info:** ikmultimedia.com

SMART EFFECTS

With Digitech's iStomp guitar stompbox, players can dial in any of 24 Digitech pedal tones using their iPhone, iPad or iPod and a special Stomp Shop app. The company is including its Total Recall Delay and Redline Overdrive effects for free with the purchase of the pedal. **More info:** digitech.com

{4} LIVE MIXING

Line 6 unveiled two techno marvels, both of which can work alone or together for extra power. The StageScape M20 mixer breaks with the standard live mixing paradigm with touchscreen control instead of faders, letting users mix from an intuitive graphic display of a stage setup. Using an iPad, users can mix and make tweaks from anywhere in a venue. Connect StageScape M20 with Line 6's new StageSource speakers (pictured), and the system automatically configures stereo signals and effects. **More info:** line6.com

{5} i RECORDING

Blue's Mikey Digital is an external condenser microphone that transforms an iPad, iPhone or iPod into a high-quality stereo record-

ing device. Mikey Digital features automatic and manual gain control, along with an auxiliary input for direct recording. **More info:** blue.com

{6} RECORDING APP

A companion to Tascam's iM2 stereo mic and iXZ mic and guitar interface, the PCM Recorder Application turns an iDevice into a stereo recorder that's based on the company's DR-series. **More info:** tascam.com

{7} POWERED SPEAKERS

The DXR and DXS series put Yamaha in the powered speaker business. These economical,

bang-for-the-buck models deliver high-fidelity sound even when cranked. **More info:** yamaha.com

{8} WIRELESS PACKS

Sennheiser's entry-level XS Wireless Series, which features four distinct packs, gets users into a Sennheiser wireless system for less than \$500. The transmitters boast a battery life of up to 10 hours, and a switching bandwidth of up to 24MHz allows for flexibility in frequency choices. The systems are also easy to use: They automatically search for free frequencies, and transmitters are synchronized with

their receivers through a wireless link. **More info:** sennheiserusa.com

{9} 2 MICS IN 1

Samson's CS (Capsule Select) series offers essentially two mics in one via interchangeable vocal and instrument mic elements. Both capsules feature a supercardioid pickup pattern but can support different miking applications. The CS1 vocal mic delivers clear vocals, minimal handling noise and a 60Hz–18kHz frequency response. The CS2 instrument mic offers wide frequency response on the low end for capturing most instruments. **More info:** samsontech.com



GUITARS

{1} VINTAGE VOX

Vox has unveiled the new Limited Edition Custom Series AC30C2-BL and AC15C1-BL, and a new addition to the all-tube line, the AC4C1-BL. Each recreates a vintage look from Vox's history. The AC15C1-BL and AC30C2-BL amps offer two channels: normal and top-boost. Each channel is equipped with its own volume control, and the top boost channel offers highly interactive treble and bass tone controls. **More info:** voxamps.com

{2} DIGITAL BLUES

Electro-Harmonix's new Analogizer pedal gives musicians the sound and feel of an analog delay without the long delay times. It boasts a warm, organic tone. Solos can be boosted with up to 26 dB of gain. **More info:** ehx.com

{3} THE SUPER TOOL

Guitar Nomad's The Nomad Tool is an all-in-one string-, body- and hardware-cleaning tool. The washable microfiber pad cleans on top and underneath strings in seconds. The lint-free microfiber pad protects the frets and fretboard from getting damaged while cleaning them. It also cleans dust, grime and fingerprints from the instrument's body. Users can turn it around to clean dust buildup on the body, bridge, pickups, saddles, tuners and headstock.

More info: musicnomad.com

TRIPLE THREAT

Fishman's new Triple Play is a wireless guitar controller that lets users compose, perform and record. Full accurate notion gives users



the chance to share their music with members of their band. They can also integrate their guitar with any virtual instrument or hardware synthesizer for onstage access to an array of instruments. Triple Play also lets users integrate their guitar with DAW running on a PC, Mac or iPad as a music recording and production tool.

More info: fishman.com

ALWAYS IN TUNE

Peavey partnered with Antares Audio Technologies to create the new Peavey AT-200 guitar featuring Auto-Tune for guitar. The instrument electronically self-tunes and intonates continuously as you play. The AT-200 looks, plays and sounds just

like a conventional guitar. With its built-in software upgrade capability, new features from Antares can be easily loaded into the AT-200 and controlled by any MIDI source, from MIDI foot switch controllers to iPad or iPhone devices running dedicated Auto-Tune control software. **More info:** peavey.com

{4} MORE THAN A GUITAR

Roland's new VG Stratocaster G-5 incorporates a Fender Stratocaster with Roland's COSM technology. In addition to offering classic Stratocaster sounds and functionality, the G-5 provides a new world of electric and acoustic guitar tones recreated by COSM—including alternate tunings and 12-string sounds for all

COSM guitar tones. The G-5 also offers a built-in library of modeled pickup tones, and enables unique "ideal-performance" pickups, such as a humbucker with ultra-wide tone and a single coil with a bold tone. **More info:** rolandus.com

HAND CARE

GraphTech's Chops PrePlay is a hand care solution for musicians that is applied to the hands before playing a guitar. PrePlay is formulated to balance the skin's PH levels on contact, thereby neutralizing the acid and protecting the instrument. The solution contains sandalwood, lemongrass, black tea, mallow, clove, Irish moss, rosemary and chamomile. **More info:** graphtech.com

PRINT

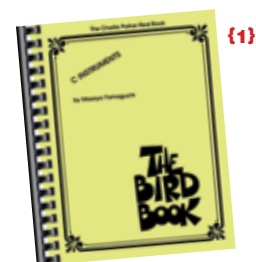
{1} BIRD REALITY

Hal Leonard's Real Book series now includes *The Charlie Parker Real Book: The Bird Book*. It offers 57 signature songs that Parker composed or co-wrote.

More info: halleonard.com

{2} PHAT AND STANDARD

Alfred has two new resources for jazz players. *Alfred Jazz Play-Along Series, Vol. 4: The Music of Gordon Goodwin* includes ar-



rangements of Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band favorites; an MP3 CD has two tracks for each arrangement—demo and play-along track. Songs in Alfred's *Jazz Real Book: Essential Jazz Standards*,

C Edition have accurate chord symbols and song verses.

More info: alfred.com

{3} IYER BOOKED

Mel Bay has published *Selected*

Compositions 1999-2008, an 80-page manuscript of small-group compositions written by jazz pianist Vijay Iyer and transcribed by Jeremy Viner.

More info: melbay.com

DRUMS

{1} DARK DREAMS

Before an extensive aging process, Dream Cymbals' Dark Matter series cymbals are tempered and fired twice, a process that contributes to their blackened look and multidimensional tone.

More info: dreamcymbals.com

{2} MODERN VINTAGE

A combination of retro-style warmth and modern specs, Remo's Vintage Emperor Clear tom heads improve upon its coated cousins with two free-floating plies of 7.5-mm clear Mylar film. More info: remo.com

{4} ACOUSTIC-TO-ELECTRONIC

Featuring the same sizes and rebound offered by an acoustic kit, Pearl's TruTrac drumhead packages allow drummers to obtain an electronic kit, and its No-Drill Adapter eliminates the need to modify your drums. More info: pearldrums.com

{3} CAJON CONGAS

Tycoon has put a spin on one of



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this year's most prominent trends, modifying the classic cajon design with a new round shape. Its 28-inch-tall cajon-conga hybrid sports a Siam oak wood body and a bubinga head. It's available in 10 1/2-, 12- and

13 1/2-inch sizes.

More info: tycoonpercussion.com

{5} TWIST & SHAKE

Each color of LP's new Twist Shakers projects a separate volume that's ideal for different applications,

whether it's a live performance, practice or studio setting. Each shaker's unique feature is its twisting lock mechanism, which lets percussionists play them individually, lock them as a pair, or even interchange them. More info: lpmusic.com

PIANOS/KEYBOARDS

{1} SUPER SYNTH

Casio is back in the pro synthesizer market. The Casio XW-P1 is a 61-key performance synthesizer loaded with 400 fully editable PCM-based sounds, such as stereo pianos, vintage electric pianos, strings, brass, guitars, basses and drums. It also has a new drawbar organ mode providing nine steps for each drawbar, vibrato, percussion and rotary speaker control. More info: casiomusicgear.com

{2} STROLLING ALONG

Take your keys with you while you walk. Roland's compact FR-1x accordion is lightweight, which makes it a great choice for the strolling musician. An addition to the V-Accordion line, it offers LED displays, an MP3/WAV player, USB ports and a new professional look. More info: rolandconnect.com

{3} AFFORDABLE POWER

With a \$199 street price, Alesis' QX61 USB MIDI keyboard controller is a bargain for the entry-level player or the working musician who needs an affordable keyboard. The QX61 is a 61-note keyboard



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controller that offers tactile control over any parameter of any music software. More info: alesis.com

{4} WHITE & BLACK

Korg's SV-1 Stage Vintage Piano now comes in a retro-look, Reverse Key Limited Edition model. The

instrument's red body and vintage reverse-color keys are reminiscent of the classic combo organs of the 1960s and '70s. More info: korg.com

{5} FEELING REAL

Yamaha's NU1 is a hybrid piano that combines the traditional sound

and feel of an acoustic instrument with advanced digital technology. Utilizing the same action and natural wood keys used in Yamaha upright pianos, the NU1 reproduces the characteristic resonance felt when playing an acoustic piano. More info: usa.yamaha.com

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Training for the Improvisation Marathon by Learning to Visualize, Listen and Sing

Improvisation can be akin to studying a foreign language. If you visit another country, a phrase book can be helpful, but you won't really communicate with the native speakers. Maybe you have taken a language course for a few months before your trip and have acquired some vocabulary, but you find that stringing an entire sentence together is nearly impossible.

While studying Spanish, I tried to learn too much at once and expected to be able to communicate in Spanish the way I do in English. This was a setup for failure. After much work with undesired results, I decided to take a giant step back and just concentrate on the first four tenses of the Spanish conjugation table instead of trying to speak in all them. I spoke out loud to myself and tried to name everything around me in Spanish. In short, I set up a personal context for how I acquired and retained information. I continued speaking and thinking like this every day. To my surprise, I learned more quickly, was able to add new elements and integrate them into my vocabulary and was better understood. By consistently speaking out loud without trying to conjugate and by internalizing the basics, it dawned on me that this was the approach I had taken while learning jazz.

Jazz stems from an oral tradition, and like a language, it requires repetition and familiarity to gain fluency. "How do I sound?" "I will never be able to play like that!" "Where do I begin?" "I'm too old to learn how to improvise," "I don't want to sound stupid"—these are some of the questions and self-criticisms that creep into the developing improviser's mind. There are many philosophies that advise the student or the beginner to "be where you are at." This is difficult for the Western mind, as much of our society emphasizes instant gratification. Jazz is a marathon. Improvisation is liberating, frustrating, exhilarating and scary all at the same time.

Personalize and Visualize

The elements I prefer to stress with beginning/intermediate improvisers are about developing an awareness of how the student learns, internalizes and retains information. Setting up a consistent personal system for building skills that develop a strong voice as an improviser is a crucial building block. Even if you have limited time to practice, it is important that you develop a solid foundation for retaining what you learn.

Start out by playing scales and chords slowly. Try to visualize them as you play through them. Here are several suggested methods:

- Visualize the notes as you would see them on a piano keyboard.
- Visualize the notes as if they were written on staff paper.
- Visualize the notes as alphabet letters (A, C#, F, etc.).

There is no wrong way to do this. Whatever *personally* gets you to visualize and connect with the chords and scales is right for you.

As improvisers, we are constantly challenged by choices that require quick decisions. It is a skill that is developed over time through internalization and building intelligent muscle memory. Try playing everything like a ballad, then gradually increase to the desired tempo. In a short time, you will feel more at ease with developing your ideas.

Play What You Hear

In Western culture, we are frequently taught to read music and are directed not to deviate from what is written down. But in jazz improvisation, the emphasis is placed on "playing what you hear." From its earliest incarnation, jazz has been about internalizing your musical environment and being rooted firmly in the oral tradition. The music demands that there be an almost instantaneous connection between your technique, what you are feeling and what you are hearing. When one hears an experienced improviser solo, it sounds and appears effortless. The melodies and ideas flow from the instrument like it's a part of his/her body. It is rarely the case that many hours of practice and thought didn't go into that solo.

Remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint. This can't be emphasized enough. Find the joy in the process. If you focus solely on the results, it can cause massive frustration and distract you from your goals. In the beginning, feel free to be wrong. Start to hear your voice as an improviser. Experiment and become familiar with the rhythmic and melodic feel of how *you* hear the music. That isn't to say that you can just play anything and call it jazz. Finding the balance between discipline and freedom is a tricky path. The style of music will always set guidelines and parameters as you go along, but first and foremost improvising should be fun.

Learn to Sing

Early jazz musicians strove to emulate the human voice with their instruments (through growls, flutter tonguing, half valves, vocalization through the instrument, etc.). The emphasis was on conveying emotion through nuance, subtlety and connection with the listener. In

Wayne Wallace



DAVID BELLOE

order to achieve this, my advice is to learn to sing what you hear and physically connect to your ideas. Sing a scale or melodic fragment while fingering the notes on your instrument (vocalists should finger the notes on the piano without playing them). This will help build your visual and kinesthetic relationship to the notes. Don't just play melodies or transcribed solos; learn to sing them. And learn the lyrics to songs and sing them until they are fully internalized. You don't have to have a great voice—just sing.

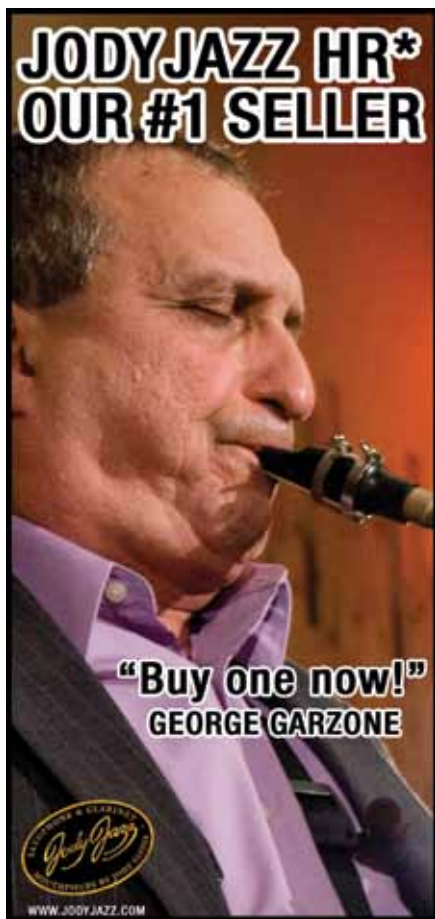
Deeper Listening

I find that great music is layered. After multiple listens to a song or improvisation I like, I usually hear things that I've missed the first few times through. When you are attracted to a particular piece of music and want to hear it again, it is usually because it resonates with your per-

sonal taste. This is where one grows as a musician by developing vocabulary and a concept for personal musical choices. When you listen to any type of music, strive to go deeper inside the performance to find the next layer. With practice, it will become second nature. **DB**

FIVE-TIME GRAMMY NOMINEE WAYNE WALLACE IS AN ACCOMPLISHED TROMBONIST, ARRANGER, EDUCATOR, PRODUCER AND COMPOSER. HE HAS PERFORMED, RECORDED AND STUDIED WITH ACKNOWLEDGED MASTERS OF THE AFRO-LATIN AND JAZZ IDIOMS SUCH AS ARETHA FRANKLIN, BOBBY HUTCHERSON, EARTH WIND AND FIRE, PETE ESCOVEDO, SANTANA, JULIAN PRIESTER, CONJUNTO LIBRE, WHITNEY HOUSTON, TITO PUENTE, STEVE TURRE, JOHN LEE HOOKER, CON-FUNK-SHUN, FRANCISCO AGUABELLA, MANNY OQUENDO AND LIBRE, MAX ROACH, THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA AND OR-ESTES VILATÓ. WALLACE IS CURRENTLY AN INSTRUCTOR AT SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY, STANFORD UNIVERSITY AND THE JAZZSCHOOL IN BERKELEY. HE HAS CONDUCTED LECTURES, WORKSHOPS AND CLINICS IN THE AMERICAS AND EUROPE SINCE 1983. HIS MOST RECENT CD, *TO HEAR FROM THERE*, IS AVAILABLE FROM PATOIS RECORDS. VISIT HIM ONLINE AT WALACOMUSIC.COM.





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BRASS SCHOOL Woodshed | PRO SESSION BY KIRK GARRISON

Trumpet Players & Solid Fundamentals

Improve Your Time Feel by Focusing on the Spaces Between the Notes

A common element recognized in the musicianship of great jazz players we all emulate is their superb sense of time. Louis Armstrong's feel, especially his treatment of the quarter note, was remarkable. Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie, Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, Chet Baker, Freddie Hubbard and a litany of jazz masters on other instruments throughout history also possessed this trait. A great time feel and sense of rhythm may be more instinctive for some, but for others it requires tremendous discipline and countless hours of practice. Serious jazz musicians, regardless of where they are in their careers, are constantly striving to improve their time.

A friend and colleague, trumpeter Forrest Buchtel, was interviewed in the May 2001 issue of The Instrumentalist magazine. In the article, he spoke at length about studying with the incredible Raphael Mendez. A key element in Mendez's teaching was not only to focus on notes themselves, but the space or silence between them. By monitoring both sound and silence and establishing a consistent relationship between the two, several musical and technical aspects will improve. Articulations become more precise, tone becomes clearer and more focused, and the tendency to rush is overcome. Phrasing, time and rhythm become refined.

The exercises presented here are helpful in achieving better time. The first steps require tremendous patience and discipline, and it is imperative that no shortcuts are taken. By starting very slowly, it's easier to identify and correct any unexpected rhythmic or technical flaws will appear. The quarter-note exercise is the most important and most helpful step to a better time feel.

Start with a metronome set at quarter note equals 60. Play all 12 major scales and major arpeggios covering at least one octave in the pattern shown. By completely filling every other beat with sound and silence, consistent note and rest length is achieved. Continue the exercises in thirds, fourths, fifths, and practice all major and minor modes in the same manner. There must be zero hesitation as all scales are played. Once mastery is achieved at this very slow tempo, increase the metronome setting by a few beats per minute and repeat the entire series of exercises until you can reach 250 or more beats per minute.

The next step is to move on to eighth-note phrases. Because of the attention given to the evenness achieved with regards to the sound and silence of quarter notes, eighth notes at faster tempos will flow more evenly. If the spaces are kept the same length as the notes, phrases will sound detached. The desire is to achieve a light

♩ = 60 - 650 + ALL KEYS AND MODES IN MAJOR AND MELODIC MINOR



legato feel in the style of Clifford Brown. As the tempo increases, try to keep the note values as long as possible as the space or silence between the notes is shortened. A very gentle "du" syllable while tonguing is the best approach. Although the relationship between sound and silence is no longer a 50/50 ratio, it must remain consistent. Airflow and breath support must be continuous. A good visual concept is to think of a golf-course water sprinkler. As the water passes, a mechanism gently bumps the stream one small space at a time, but the flow is constant. Think of the tongue bumping the air column like the sprinkler head, never stopping the stream of air.

Start eighth-note exercises at quarter note equals 60 with a legato "du" tongue. Follow the same directions as the scales with quarter notes and play through all 12 keys, thirds, fourths and arpeggios until you achieve mastery with zero hesitation. It may take some time to get comfortable as speed is increased. Staying relaxed is key. Tension will cause a litany of problems, from fingers not working (because of the "white knuckle syndrome") to the tongue getting too aggressive and making phrases sound detached. Proper airflow by playing from the diaphragm is the answer. Playing from the chops or face instead of from the body does not work. The dynamic level must be kept under control, as faster tempos are much easier to negotiate at a softer volume.

Playing jazz standards using a metronome is an excellent way to improve concepts of time. Choose a tune you are somewhat comfortable with and play a solo using only quarter notes. Depending on the tempo, find the sound-to-silence ratio that helps achieve even phrasing and time. For example, "Days Of Wine And Roses" at quarter note equals 80 works very well. At first, use the 50/50 sound-to-silence ratio with quarter notes. Then, try connecting them by lengthening the sound and shortening the silence. After quarter notes, play eighth notes, then perhaps eighth-note triplets and, where possible, 16ths. Arpeggiating the chord changes is very helpful. Later, try double-time passages. With patience, these exercises will aid in obtaining a much-improved time feel.

Here are some resources that may be helpful for improving time feel and phrasing:

- *Time Awareness For All Musicians*, by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing).
- *Note Grouping: A Method for Achieving Expression And Style In Musical Performance*, by James Morgan Thurmond (Meredith Music).

DB

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



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Wynton Marsalis

Wynton Marsalis' Delicate, Bluesy Trumpet Solo on 'First Kiss'

In 2009, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis released the CD *He And She* (Blue Note), filled with lovely songs and interspersed with poetry, all of it related to the relationship of man and woman. The track "First Kiss" is a light medium-tempo waltz, and Marsalis plays a solo as delicate as the title would suggest.

The changes behind Marsalis' solo are in F, and he starts and ends with blues licks in D (the relative minor), emphasizing the flat fifth. Not only does this provide a bluesy soulfulness to his opening and closing statements; it also serves to bookend his solo. His conclusion takes the same flat five bent to five and jumps up to the root idea he starts with. Marsalis elaborates on it by not bending the flat fifth and adding in a low F-to-low D to make the improvisation sound even more bluesy.

The connection between the opening and closing statements is quite a journey. Marsalis starts with a lot of space. In the

first five bars, he plays two notes in each measure, with the exceptions being the three notes he fits in the third measure and the single note played in the second. Bar 5 is also where he introduces notes outside the D blues sound.

We hear a B \flat from the F major scale, and then a B-natural as a chromatic passing tone into the next measure, where Marsalis explores the F major scale further, and even adds another chromatic passing tone between the low D and E. He also fills this measure with eighth notes, creating more rhythmic energy.

But then for the next four bars Marsalis is back to D blues, and more space, though not quite as much as the intro. It is portentous that he introduces the first triplet at the beginning of measure 10, the end of this D blues statement, because in the next bar he leaps into bebop-style triplet figures with much more chromaticism.

He keeps this up for the next four mea-

♩ = 120
Fmaj7/C
1:23

4 Gm7 C7

7 Dm7

10 C7 Fmaj7

13 Bbmaj7 Bm7 E7 Am7

16 D7 Gm7 Am7 D7

19 Gm7 C7 Fmaj7

tures, and returns to the D blues scale briefly in measure 16. Curiously, this isn't a D minor chord, but a D7. The use of D blues against this chord not only provides an earthier feel but also keeps the solo connected to Marsalis' opening and eventual closing.

In fact, Marsalis sticks fairly close to the D blues scale for the next two measures but adds in a B \flat on the G minor chord (the flat third) and a C# against the D7 in the next measure.

Though this might seem counterintuitive, with the C that he plays in the next measure, it's really just a variation on the bebop scale, where the major seventh is used as a connecting tone between the root and flat seven.

And when he arrives at the flat seven in measure 19, Marsalis returns to the D blues scale, though still playing primarily triplets. So he brings us to a new place rhythmically while returning us to the beginning harmonically.

Marsalis' entire solo can be viewed as D blues scale, which relates it to the key of the song, with forays into the playing the chang-

es (as in measures 5–6, 11–14 and 19). In measures 14 and 15, he brilliantly juxtaposes the two approaches. On the E7 at the end of measure 14, Marsalis plays a descending C# minor arpeggio. The first three notes spell out the E major triad, but then he ends on the sixth. Though not a dissonant tone, it's not your typical bebop sound. But in the next measure, where the harmony resolves to an Am7, he moves the arpeggio up a half step to D minor, which sets us up for the D blues scale he's returning to. Quite ingenious.

He uses a similar approach in measure 19, where he plays an augmented triad against the C7. On beat two, against the Gm7, he concludes on the fifth (the D) before jumping up to the sharp five on the C7, which happens to be A \flat .

The tritone interval of D to A \flat is a dissonance. At the same time, it fits the change of Gm7 to C7+ and also implies the D blues scale that Marsalis returns to throughout the solo.

DB

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With his affinity for 19th century brass instruments, trumpet designer and master brass technician Josh Landress of J. Landress Brass has shown that today's instrument makers have as much to learn by looking back as they do looking to the future.

"The way I look at it—why reinvent the wheel?" Landress said. "Prewar French Besson trumpets are considered the Holy Grail of trumpets by a lot of people. They were making these without computers." Landress firmly believes the hand craftsmanship involved in creating each instrument is what makes the difference in sound and playability.

All of Landress' custom trumpets are generally handmade on a per-order basis for each individual player. He makes his own bracing, bells and leadpipes from sheet brass. "I'm making an average of about five horns a year," he said. "I make instruments for the individual who's bought Schilkes, Bachs ... they've had used horns, they've had new horns, they've had things tweaked and adjusted. Now they want one horn that can do it all for that specific person." Some well-known clients of Landress include Avishai Cohen and Vincent Gardner.

The first of the two Landress trumpets I tried was a .460-inch medium-large bore horn featuring a red brass bell and mouthpiece. Landress indicated that the trumpet, similar to a Prewar French Besson, has the basic



design that is most requested at his workshop, which is based out of Sam Ash's Brass and Woodwind store on New York's 48th Street. The outer slides are nickel-silver, and the rest of the instrument is yellow brass.

The horn played spectacularly. It responded so well, it begged me to play more musically. I could not believe how much fun it was to add new levels of shading and nuance to phrases that I've played a thousand times before.

The second horn I tested was a prototype Landress made for Chris Botti, who requested a copy of a vintage large-bore Martin Committee. The horn has a .468-inch bore, a red brass mouthpiece and a yellow brass bell.

This horn was equally hard to put down once I started playing. Its response, evenness from top to bottom, intonation, slotting and the dark and smoky tonal characteristics of the old Martin Committee made it stand out from any

other horn I've played.

Landress included two mouthpiece sleeves that he has designed to fit on standard-weight trumpet mouthpieces. Hand-made from cocobolo wood, the sleeves transfer sympathetic vibrations from the cup of the mouthpiece, making the sound wave more efficient when entering the instrument. The 100 model is designed for all-around use; the 200 model has a metal band on the top and is specifically designed for lead playing by helping projection and slotting in the upper register.

I couldn't believe the difference the devices made on my playing, whether using my legit or lead mouthpieces. The effect is like putting your trumpet playing on rails, solidifying and focusing the sound, without feeling rigid or constraining as many heavyweight mouthpieces often do.

—Mike Pavlik

Ordering info: jlandressbrass.com

Andreas Eastman ETR822GS Trumpet

Locking In

Andreas Eastman has designed its 800 series trumpets as top-of-the-line instruments suitable for jazz band, orchestra, chamber music or solo settings. Originally a violin company, Eastman has been building brass instruments at its China-based facility since 2005. The company has solicited input from leading players in order to improve the line, addressing issues such as pitch, tone and mechanical concerns.

The 800 series includes four B-flat trumpet models: the ETR821S, ETR821GS, ETR822S and ETR822GS. I evaluated the ETR822GS—a silver-plated instrument with 24-karat gold-



plated top and bottom valve caps and gold-plated finger buttons—by letting a whole section of big band trumpeters try out the horn during a recent gig. Their most common responses were that the ETR822GS locked in well, felt a lot like a Bach and had a bright, vibrant tone.

The ETR822GS has a .459-inch medium-large bore and a two-piece valve casing with

nickel-silver balusters. It features a soldered and leaded wire-reinforced bell with a traditional flare and a hard-scarved gold brass bell. The bell tail and bell throat are torch-annealed. The instrument comes with a forest green case and carries a suggested retail price of \$2,120.

—Ed Enright, *Toolshed* Editor

Ordering info: eastmanmusiccompany.com

Antigua TR3580SL, TR3580SLR Trumpets

Silver-Plated & Easy-Playing

Antigua Winds has been manufacturing trumpets for more than 15 years. The Antigua TR3580SL and the recently developed TR3580SLR (pictured) B-flat trumpets prove that you don't have to break the bank to be able to afford an easy-playing, silver-plated instrument. The popularity of the TR3580SL inspired the designers at Antigua to expand the options for the horn and create a freer-blowing version by adding a reverse lead pipe (TR3580SLR) in both silver-plated and lacquer finishes.

The horns feature a .426-inch bore, a two-piece 4 7/8-inch diameter bell and stainless steel valve pistons. Both the TR3580SL and the TR3580SLR are well balanced and sturdily constructed. The valves feel great under your fingers. The horns provide an even and easy response on both classical and lead mouthpieces, and I can see how these horns could meet the needs of the semi-professional player or serious high school



student. The horns center well, and they provide excellent intonation from top to bottom.

Under the silver plating, the body and bell of the TR3580SL and TR3580SLR are constructed of yellow brass. Other features include a first-valve thumb saddle, third slide ring, nickel-silver trim and a tuning slide brace. The trumpets come with a silver-plated mouthpiece and a deluxe ABS hardshell case with flush latches.

The lightweight horns lend themselves to a brighter sound, but they certainly are within a range of color that could make them extremely versatile. Antigua designers have hit the mark at providing a trumpet for around \$1,000 that certainly can go toe-to-toe with any of the major manufacturers that are providing similarly priced instruments.

—Mike Pavlik

Ordering info: antiguawinds.com

Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Amplifier

Featherweight Beauty

When it comes to electric instrument amplification, there is no bigger name than Fender. Starting with its first models in 1946, the company has produced some of the world's most sought-after tone cabinets. In the mid-1990s, Fender entered the acoustic amp market with its Acoustasonic models. The Acoustasonic 150 is the latest evolution in the line, and this featherweight beauty represents a big leap forward in technology and features.

Roughly the same size as a Deluxe Reverb, the Acoustasonic 150 is an attractive-looking amp with a nice vintage vibe. Its tan tolex covering, brown-and-white control panel and chrome tilt-back legs are reminiscent of early '60s Fender tube amps. Overall, the 150 appears to be quite sturdy, and it weighs in at 22.5 pounds, making it incredibly easy to carry. Inside the cabinet are two 8-inch speakers and a high-frequency tweeter driven by an efficient 150-watt power amplifier. As with most acoustic amps, the Acoustasonic 150 provides two separate input channels, one for instruments and a second capable of handling either a microphone or an instrument.

One of the amp's nicer enhancements is its ability to handle both acoustic and electric instruments, making it a very versatile rig. Fender provides several voicing options that model vari-



ous acoustic guitar body styles and also includes three amp cabinet models for electric playing. Another notable innovation is the inclusion of a USB port, which provides computer connectivity for direct recording and also will allow for future firmware upgrades.

The amp's operation is straightforward. The instrument channel houses the standard treble, mid and bass controls and also supplies a feedback eliminator. Fender's voicing knob adds several modeling curves to your sound; there are options for both acoustic and electric applications. On the acoustic side, the 150 supplies a variety of parlor, dreadnought and jumbo settings.

For electrics, there are settings for blackface, tweed and British amps. The string dynamics control serves a dual function depending on the voicing option being used: With an acoustic voicing selected, the knob works as a tonal shaping tool, rolling off harsh high frequencies as you dial it in; when accessing the amp cabinet voicings, it works as a compressor. Completing the instrument signal chain is an FX section with reverb, delay, chorus and vibrato options.

Channel two of the 150 contains a combo 1/4-inch/XLR input jack and can handle either a microphone or instrument. The layout here is similar to channel one but leaves out the mid, voicing and dynamics options.

For condenser mics, there is also 15-volt phantom power available. I ran several instruments through the Acoustasonic and found the overall tone to be very crisp. The acoustic voicings were essential for dialing in a warmer sound and presented plenty of tonal options. The digital effects are quite good and also very quiet.

Fender has done a nice job with the Acoustasonic 150 from both a feature set and design standpoint. Its light weight and ability to work with both acoustic and electric instruments make it a solid choice for working musicians.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: fender.com

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Crimson Turns Blue: Harvard Jazz Bands Celebrate Blue Note History

Though the legacy of Blue Note Records thrives in books, photos and Mosaic reissues, reincarnations of performances seldom occur. The Harvard University Jazz Band (HUJB) relit the blue flame this year with campus concerts and workshops featuring trombonist Curtis Fuller and saxophonist Joe Lovano.

Tom Everett, HUJB's mastermind since 1971, was behind the university's retrospective label tribute.

"From [Francis] Wolff's photo exhibits to coffee table books of Reid Miles' covers, this revered label spanned Sidney Bechet, Albert Ammons, '50s Monk and '60s Ornette," Everett said. "[It's] sampled in pop music even today. Francis Wolff and Alfred Lion gave chances to the greats.

"I thought, 'How about a series of concerts? How about Curtis Fuller? He's '50s, hard-bop, soulful, straightahead, gospel-churchy, well-rehearsed, articulate and played with them all."

Fuller joined the Harvard bands on late '50s classics during a November performance entitled "Then And Now: Hard-Bop Legacy." Nicknamed the "Sunday" band, Harvard's varsity ensemble played Bobby Timmons' often-covered funk fave "Moanin'" as well as "Sister Sadie." Vocalist Samara Oster followed the tributes and delivered a stirring rendition of Horace Silver's "Señor Blues."

Fuller's 1957 stints with John Coltrane were recapped by an octet who played "Blue Trane." Another quintet performed "Trane's Strain," a number from a Paul Chambers date.

"They were glad to have me," Fuller said. "When [lead trombonist] Ed Huttlin wanted to relinquish his solo to me on 'A Bit Of Heaven,' I said, 'No, you solo.' I was treated with great kindness, respect and love."

During the event, students freely shared their

mutual respect and appreciation of Fuller.

"Curtis is a vital link to, and catalyst of, a time in history that the band all loves and has dug deeply into, especially Trane and Blakey," said pianist Andrew Katzenstein. Everett added, "Curtis' presence shone like a deity. He never brags, but shares endless historical tidbits."

Other events included public conversations, open rehearsals, and exhibitions of Blue Note co-founder Wolff's photographs and Miles' boldly distinctive sleeve art. Composer Fred Ho also premiered his "Soul Science Stomp," a Latin/soul/rock/hip-hop blazer à la Sly Stone that was commissioned for Program Director Cathy McCormick.

On April 14, Lovano is set to step up for the late Sam Rivers in a Harvard Yard tribute entitled "Blue Note: Then And Now," which will feature Rivers' "Beatrice" and his Rivbea Studio charts, Lovano's Blue Note pieces, and music by Herbie Hancock, Grachan Moncur, Bobby Timmons and Benny Golson.

"It's a thrill to play once again at Harvard, in celebration and recognition of Blue Note Records, the history and legacy of that great label, the work of Bruce Lundvall, and the playing of Sam Rivers, who was such a great inspiration to me and all of us," Lovano said.

An April 21 concert will explore the influences of Miles Davis during his early Blue Note years. Harvard Square's Brattle Theatre also plans to show the documentary *Blue Note Records: The Story Of Modern Jazz*. Jazz historian Michael Cuscuna of Mosaic Records will join in a special panel discussion with Harvard professor Ingrid Monson.

In related Harvardiana, trumpeter/composer Wynton Marsalis will continue his brilliant "Music As Metaphor" lecture-performance series at the university later this year.

—Fred Bouchard

School Notes ▶



Carter Party: Juilliard Jazz plans to present a birthday benefit for bassist Ron Carter on March 27. "Ron Carter At 75: A Life In Music" will feature performances by Carter as well as the Juilliard Jazz Orchestra and such guest artists as Carl Allen, Benny Golson, Hubert Laws and Christian McBride.

Details: juilliard.edu

Building Blocks: Northwestern University began construction on the new lakefront home of the Bienen School of Music on Jan. 20. Connected to the Regenstein Hall of Music and just south of the school's Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, the 150,000-square-foot facility will include classrooms, labs, practice rooms, offices, a black box theater and a 400-seat concert hall.

Details: northwestern.edu

Jazz Fantasy: Tritone Jazz has created a new fantasy camp at Interlochen Center for the Arts in Interlochen, Mich. The camp will take place on June 17–22. Two other camps, both of which include personalized musical instruction from a star-studded faculty, will be held at Bjorklunden Resort in Baileys Harbor, Wis., on July 8–13 and Nazareth College in Pittsford, N.Y., on July 22–27.

Details: tritonejazz.com

Roscoe's Debut: The music department at Mills College in Oakland, Calif., will debut the latest compositions by saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell on March 31. Presented by music professor Darius Milhaud, the performance of concert and symphonic works will include Mitchell's rendition of poet Bob Kaufman's surrealist work "Would You Wear My Eyes?"

Details: mills.edu

String Thing: Trumpeter Rick Braun performed with the Lincoln Park High School Orchestra on Feb. 17. The Chicago concert was organized in conjunction with Braun's latest release, *Sings With Strings* (Mack Avenue). It was preceded by a Feb. 16 master class and open rehearsal conducted by Braun, who welcomed guests from other public schools in the area.

Details: lincolnparkhs.org

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David Hazeltine

Pianist David Hazeltine has been held in high esteem by peers and elders ever since he emerged from Milwaukee in the early '80s. Hazeltine's distinctive persona as a composer, improviser and arranger has been documented on numerous trio records and dates by the collective One For All. This is his first Blindfold Test.

Robert Glasper

"Think Of One" (*Double Booked*, Blue Note, 2009) Glasper, piano; Vicente Archer, bass; Chris Dave, drums.

Is this an original? Oh, it's a Monk tune I don't know. Some elements in the right-hand techniques remind me of Kenny Barron, but what tells me it's not Kenny is that the pianist sounds harmonically driven. In the solo you don't hear steady streams of eighth notes, for example, but a great job playing around the harmonic structure. Outstanding technique with both hands, and isn't afraid to show it. The free stuff in the little introduction was nice. I like to call them piano flourishes. I also liked that the pianist took time to play two-handed melodic stuff, very fast, very fluent. 4 stars.

Geoff Keezer

"Araña Amarilla" (*Aurea*, Artist Share, 2009) Keezer, piano; Steve Wilson, alto saxophone; Essiet Okon Essiet, electric bass; Hugo Alcázar, cajon, djembe, quijada, palmas, percussion; Jon Wikan, cajon, palmas.

This brings Herbie Hancock to mind. The piece's variety and scope, the odd instrumentation, the hand-clapping, the simplicity of certain chords—different for jazz, like something Herbie would do just to do it. The bass line reminded me of something from *Thrust* or one of his electric records. Very tasteful. 3½ stars. [after] Geoff is a fantastic pianist. This was Keezer tamped way back. Harmonies without a lot of extensions. I'm impressed he's trying to do something different, without letting it all hang out.

Tony Williams Trio

"Farewell To Dogma" (*Young At Heart*, Columbia 1996) Williams, drums; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Ira Coleman, bass.

I like the touch, the warm sound, the two-handed harmonies. As it moved along, it sounded like Keith Jarrett, which would explain the beautiful touch. I heard some Herbie Hancock, but certain things happened too many times for it to be Herbie. Then a few things that sounded very much like what Chick Corea would do. I started thinking it might be Kevin Hays, because Kevin has all those guys in his playing—mainly Herbie, though. I liked the tune, how it goes different places, with different highs and lows—it's open enough that whatever mood you want to superimpose on the mood of the tune works at the time. Even the ending was a surprise. It kept my interest from beginning to end. The drummer did very tasty stuff with that open, straight eighth-note feel. 4½ stars.

Martial Solal

"Here's That Rainy Day" (*Longitude*, CamJazz, 2008) Solal, piano; François Moutin, bass; Louis Moutin, drums.

This pianist is melodically driven, but it's as though he or she deliberately played as far out of the box as possible, while somehow still playing that tune. From the beginning, it sounded reharmonized, but so chaotic that it was hard to tell what exactly was happening. It had a nice balance—at times he brought it back in. Not my cup of tea, but a fresh, interesting approach to a much-played standard. He obviously had chops to do what he wanted, which is what I think jazz technique is about—as opposed to classical music, where standard repertoire dictates the technique. 3 stars.



Edward Simon Trio

"Poesia" (*Poesia*, CamJazz, 2009) Simon, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

I really liked that. That's Chick Corea. No? Compositionally, the movement, the chord progressions sounded like something Chick would do. The way he played his lines sounded inspired by Chick. Also, the rhythms of the lines, the little spaces that he played in between, the left hand comping while playing the lines, reminded me so much of '70s Chick, like *Return to Forever* before they went completely electric. I like the intricate things where the bassist played little melodies in unison with the left hand. It kept my interest throughout. Everyone was interacting, very together. 4½ stars.

David Kikoski

"Chance" (*Mostly Standards*, Criss Cross Jazz, 2009) Kikoski, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

This sounds familiar, like a third-tier standard. I like the wide range of harmonic information, but also how this pianist obscured the harmony—sometimes he'd play only two notes with the left hand, or little clusters where it's hard to identify the voicing on first listening. That's David Kikoski. I respect his harmonic sophistication and touch. You hear the piece from beginning to end. It's not a beautiful arrangement of a head and then some stuff that doesn't fit with it or make sense. It's on a continuum, with an arc. Really well put-together, thoughtful music. 4½ stars.


Barry Harris Trio

"Oblivion" (*The Last Time I Saw Paris*, Venus, 2000) Harris, piano; George Mraz, bass; Leroy Williams, drums.

Barry Harris—with George Mraz and Leroy Williams. He's a genius of melody-making in the style of bebop, the style of Charlie Parker or Bud Powell. I need to keep coming back to [Harris'] music. It's so perfect but also unpredictable and imaginative, just like Bird was. Maybe some think it sounds predictable because he's remained in the bebop idiom. But his imagination within that time period and language is unlike anyone else who tried to play that music. On this piece, obviously he's not at full throttle as he was, say, 20 years ago. But it contains that same melodic integrity. 5 stars.

DB

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