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Reviews Editor	Aaron Cohen
Contributing Editors	Ed Enright Zach Phillips
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Production Associate	Andy Williams
Bookkeeper	Margaret Stevens
Circulation Manager	Sue Mahal
Circulation Assistant	Evelyn Oakes

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Record Companies & Schools
Jennifer Ruban-Gentile
630-941-2030
jenr@downbeat.com

Musical Instruments & East Coast Schools
Ritche Deraney
201-445-6260
ritched@downbeat.com

Advertising Sales Assistant
Theresa Hill
630-941-2030
theresah@downbeat.com

OFFICES

102 N. Haven Road
Elmhurst, IL 60126-2970
630-941-2030 / Fax: 630-941-3210
<http://downbeat.com>
editor@downbeat.com

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CONTRIBUTORS

Senior Contributors:

Michael Bourne, John McDonough

Atlanta: Jon Ross; **Austin:** Michael Point, Kevin Whitehead; **Boston:** Fred Bouchard, Frank-John Hadley; **Chicago:** John Corbett, Alain Drouot, Michael Jackson, Peter Margasak, Bill Meyer, Mitch Myers, Paul Natkin, Howard Reich; **Denver:** Norman Provizer; **Indiana:** Mark Sheldon; **Iowa:** Will Smith; **Los Angeles:** Earl Gibson, Todd Jenkins, Kirk Sillsbee, Chris Walker, Joe Woodard; **Michigan:** John Ephland; **Minneapolis:** Robin Jannes; **Nashville:** Bob Doerschuk; **New Orleans:** Erika Goldring, David Kunian, Jennifer Odell; **New York:** Alan Bergman, Herb Boyd, Bill Douthart, Ira Gitter, Eugene Golovinsky, Norm Harris, D.D. Jackson, Jimmy Katz, Jim Macnie, Ken Micallef, Dan Ouellette, Ted Panken, Richard Seidel, Tom Staudter, Jack Vartoogian, Michael Weintraub; **North Carolina:** Robin Tolleson; **Philadelphia:** David Adler, Shaun Brady, Eric Fine; **San Francisco:** Mars Breslow, Forrest Bryant, Clayton Call, Yoshi Kato; **Seattle:** Paul de Barros; **Tampa Bay:** Philip Booth; **Washington, D.C.:** Willard Jenkins, John Murph, Michael Wilderman; **Belgium:** Jos Knaepen; **Canada:** Greg Bulium, James Hale, Diane Moon; **Denmark:** Jan Persson; **France:** Jean Szlamowicz; **Germany:** Detlev Schilke, Hyou Vielz; **Great Britain:** Brian Priestley; **Japan:** Kiyoshi Koyama; **Portugal:** Antonio Rubio; **Romania:** Virgil Mihailu; **Russia:** Cyril Moshkov; **South Africa:** Don Albert.

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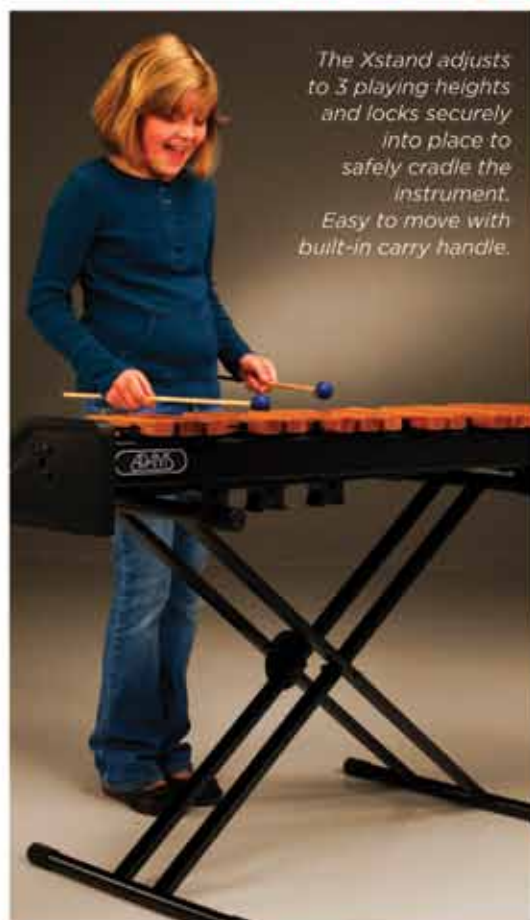
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BY DAN OUELLETTE

The Detroit-bred, New York-based alto and soprano saxophonist talks about his deep-rooted artistic cultivation, specifically as it relates to *Seeds From The Underground*, his new CD on Mack Avenue Records.



Cover photography and image above shot by Jimmy and Dena Katz at The Iridium in New York City.

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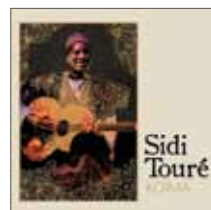
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Musical Roots

Artists respond to the sights and sounds they observe in nature. Evidence of this can be found throughout history, from Paleolithic cave paintings to Web-based sitcoms. Images from nature influence every type of artist working in every kind of medium today, and jazz musicians are no exception.

Many people think of jazz as music of the city—an urban art form resulting from streets and steel, brass and glass, bricks and sidewalks, subways and buses. That is certainly true, but jazz players in cities like New York, Chicago, New Orleans and Los Angeles are sensitive to the natural wonders in their environment: bodies of water, clouds, rain, birds, soil, flowers and trees. Nature surrounds us. Watering a jade plant on a high-rise windowsill isn't the same as hiking through the Rocky Mountains, but it's still an interaction with the natural world.

This issue of DownBeat includes features on saxophonist Kenny Garrett and drummer Ralph Peterson—two artists who utilize images from nature. Garrett, who is our cover subject (page 26), has a new Mack Avenue album titled *Seeds From The Underground*. This powerful collection of 10 original compositions was inspired by people who have shaped Garrett, both personally and musically. Writer Dan Ouellette discussed the concept with Garrett at The Iridium, a club where the saxophonist has performed many times. Garrett told Ouellette, “This is an album about the planting of seeds and how that’s impacted me.”

Garrett landed on the cover of DownBeat’s Sept. 1997 issue, and 15 years later, he’s still making fantastic music. We’re proud to present an article on such a thoughtful, brilliant musician. (Fans can catch Garrett at Blues Alley in Washington, D.C., on June 8–10.)

For our profile of Peterson (page 40), writer Ted Panken conducted a wide-ranging interview in which the drummer made a few references to botanical imagery. The cover illustration for his new album, *The Duality Perspective*, depicts a tree with branches, each of which is labeled with the name of a musician with whom Peterson has collaborated. Just as importantly, the illustration contains six tree roots, and they represent the people who were mentors to Peterson in his formative years.

In a discussion about how one musical form can influence another, Peterson said, “Don’t check out the thinnest, newest branch on the tree. If you dig into the root instead of being dis-

tracted by the fruit, the root will teach you what the fruit means.”

The Duality Perspective contains a song called “Bamboo Bends In A Storm,” which is yet another example of how art can use images from nature to help us gain a greater understanding of our place in the universe.

As these features on Garrett and Peterson demonstrate, a magazine profile of a musician can be about much more than merely the tracks on his or her latest album.

Month after month, in print and online, DownBeat provides insight on “Jazz, Blues & Beyond” and examines the personalities of the creative artists who make improvised music.

So how are we doing? Let us know by sending an email to editor@downbeat.com, and please put the word *Chords* or *Discords* in the subject line. Tell us what we’re doing right, and where we could improve. Be sure to visit our website, downbeat.com, which has exclusive content. Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, which contains reviews, news, Toolshed and a Classic Interview—all free of charge. One of the most popular pages on our website is the monthly Editors’ Picks album reviews, which also appear in our e-newsletter (but not in our print edition). This is another forum for us to provide commentary on albums that we feel are worthy of your attention.

As you read a print or digital edition of DownBeat, or a story on our website, take a moment to send us your reaction. Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. We’re eager to read your thoughts, and we love publishing your emails (or old-fashioned letters). It’s always rewarding and informative to interact with readers, musicians and educators who are just as passionate about jazz as we are.

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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, which is un-lacquered and has a dark finish. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. 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-lacquered **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."

Bob Reynolds

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Creativity at 70

I am a longtime reader of DownBeat, and I hadn't seen many articles on members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in recent issues. So I was delighted to read the feature on Anthony Braxton in your March issue ("Music as Spiritual Commitment"), and writer/photographer Michael Jackson's in-depth article on Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith in your April issue ("Looking for the Diamond Fields"). The interview with Smith and the quotes from his colleagues were revealing. Plus, I enjoyed the photographs. What an outpouring of creativity from a man turning 70! Please keep featuring artists of this caliber—who are often little known outside the mainstream but who deserve our attention.

REGINA JENKINS
HAUPPAUGE, N.Y.

Memories of Chase

In response to your question "Does anyone out there remember Chase?" (First Take, March), yes, of course I remember Chase. Lately I've been listening to 1974's *Pure Music*—on which Bill Chase plays electric horn with wah-wah and other effects—because I recently resurrected my Barcus-Berry pickup for trumpet for a '70s fusion revival with my band, The Naked Ear. If fusion is now retro, what does that make swing?

I also appreciated the article on trumpeter Enrico Rava ("Cosmic Balance," March). Rava is 72, which gives me renewed hope for my future, since I hit 70 this year.

GORDON LEIGH
REALJAZZERWOCKY@HOTMAIL.COM

Editor's note: Chase's self-titled album was voted the pop album of the year in the 1971 DownBeat Readers Poll. Below is a letter from another reader who remembers Chase.

Chasing History

In the late '60s and early '70s, several horn groups that had roots in straightahead jazz appeared, but they were an amalgam of jazz and rock music. The main groups like this were Chicago; Blood, Sweat & Tears; Chase; and Ten Wheel Drive. Chase's bandleader, trumpeter Bill Chase, had been a member of Woody Herman's band and worked with Maynard Ferguson. Bill and three other members of Chase were killed in an airplane accident while



en route to an engagement in 1974.

ADOLPHUS B. WILLIAMS
ABWILL1701@AOL.COM

The Value of Criticism

John Ephland's 4½ star review of The Dave Brubeck Quartet's *The Columbia Studio Albums Collection 1955–1966* (Historical column, May) was as refreshing as a free full tank of gas.

DENNIS HENDLEY
MILWAUKEE, WIS.

Corrections

- In the April issue, a photo caption in our Wes Montgomery feature misidentified the drummer Sonny Johnson as Paul Parker. Also, we misspelled the name of photographer Duncan Schiedt.
- On page 15 of the May issue, the photo caption misidentified drummer Michael Griener.
- In the May issue, a review of the album *Prime Of Life* by Pete Zimmer did not list the correct catalog number. It is Tippin' Records TIP1108 (tippinrecords.com).
- Also in the May issue, the personnel listing for the review of *All Ya Needs That Negrocity* by Burnt Sugar omitted the names of bassists Jared Michael Nickerson, Jason DiMatteo and Michael Veal.
- Our Festival Guide (in May) correctly indicated that Terence Blanchard is the artist in residence for the 33rd annual Detroit International Jazz Festival, but this text was omitted: This year's festival highlights the roots of traditional jazz. To unite the jazz community and honor Detroit's jazz heritage, the 2012 event brings together world-renowned artists who have performed across the globe (detroitjazzfest.com).

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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Beat ▶

Jazz Bakery Rises Again

Moveable Feast Finds a Permanent Venue

Ruth Price was playing a constant waiting game when it came to securing a second site for her suspended Jazz Bakery.

The waiting game entered a new phase after Price received two generous gifts: an unsolicited \$2 million donation from the Annenberg Foundation and a permanent venue site within the limits of Culver City, Calif.

Price's hand is also strengthened by the recent addition of the Bakery's new Executive Director, violinist Jeff Gauthier. Gauthier, who helms the esteemed West Coast jazz label Cryptogramophone, also works with artistically ambitious Angel City Arts organization, which books cutting-edge musicians and the forward-thinking Angel City Jazz Festival.

Price is unequivocal in her praise for Gauthier. "I love having him aboard," Price said. "I've known him for a long time and I've always respected him as a musician. We did a paid search for an executive director and he was the choice; I was thrilled."

In 2009, Price's landlord unceremoniously terminated the lease on her club's original Culver City home, and she's since been an impresario without a permanent venue. Price was far from idle during this setback and managed to book an ongoing schedule of tantalizing shows at various locations around Southern California, all under the Bakery banner of "Moveable Feast."

Even during this limbo-like holding period, Price has fulfilled the important role of presenting quality artists in Los Angeles: Trio M (with Myra Melford, Mark Dresser and Matt Wilson), guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkle, pianist Chano Domínguez, guitarist Pat Martino with pianist Eldar Djangirov, violinist Regina Carter's Reverse Thread band and singer-guitarist Dori Caymmi.

Still, the frustrations of booking—inclimated weather, venues with subpar equipment—are magnified as Price continuously deals with these many sets of variables while also keeping an eye on the ongoing progress of the Bakery's new Culver City home. But as nerve-wracking as her post-eviction life has been, Price counts the great blessings that have come to her, including renowned architect Frank Gehry's offer to design the forthcoming building.

"He came to the Bakery a couple of times," Price recalled. "I didn't



know who he was. He was usually with Herbie Hancock and he didn't say much. He told me later that when he heard we lost our lease, that he thought about helping us in some way."

"It was almost a shock," she added, "when he came to us and offered his services on the first of the year. He said, 'I'm doing this for two people—Sydney Pollack and my wife, Berta.' It turns out she was a frequent visitor to the Bakery, as was Sydney."

The Jazz Bakery will co-produce the Angel City Jazz Festival this year. Though Gauthier will be stepping away from his position at Angel City Arts, he will participate in the programming of the festival with Price and ACA founder Rocco Somazzi.

Gauthier is extremely enthusiastic about the collaboration between the Bakery and the Angel City Jazz Festival. "I saw this as an opportunity to bring the two organizations closer together and help realize the Bakery's vision for a beautiful new center for jazz in Culver City," he said. "I've been creating opportunities for music and musicians for a long time in L.A., and I saw this as a once in a lifetime opportunity to really make an impact and advocate for jazz and creative music in Los Angeles."

Gehry's involvement already has Price and Gauthier's artistic wheels turning. "Frank has asked to consult with several musicians before putting the finishing touches on the room," he reveals, "so he really wants to have a dialogue with musicians. We'd like to ask four different jazz composers to write a suite inspired by the new building and have it performed by an all-star group of L.A. players during the first season. Wouldn't that be something?"

—Kirk Silsbee

Norah Jones



Norah's Return: Norah Jones recently premiered a series of music videos off her latest album, *Little Broken Hearts*, a collaboration with producer Danger Mouse that was released on May 1. The video for the song "Happy Pills" was broadcast on VH1 on April 7, and the song "Say Goodbye" was featured on the NPR weekly podcast "All Things Considered." Jones also made several TV appearances in support of her album release.

Axe Auction: The Les Paul Foundation partnered with Julien's Auctions for an auction of guitars, equipment and musical artifacts that belonged to the late Les Paul. The sale is set to take place on June 8–9—the weekend of the guitarist's birthday—and will include memorabilia spanning Paul's expansive career, from his days as Rhubarb Red to his Monday night residency at The Iridium Jazz Club.

Leaving Leon: Jazz organist and composer Leon Spencer Jr. passed away on March 11 at age 66. Spencer joined lifelong friend Melvin Sparks as the rhythm section at Prestige Records in the 1970s, and he also performed and recorded with Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, and Lou Donaldson. He also spent his later years as a music promoter and writer.

Hail the King: Concord Music plans to release Albert King's *I'll Play The Blues For You* as part of its Stax Remasters series on May 22. Enhanced by 24-bit remastering, four previously unreleased bonus tracks, and newly written liner notes by music journalist and roots music historian Bill Dahl, the reissue spotlights one of the most entertaining and influential blues recordings of the 1970s four decades after its release.

L'Orchestre de Contrebasses du Québec



Caught Bass Fest Embraces Roots

It was all about bass at Jazz en Rafale, a Montreal festival spanning March 21–24 and March 29–31.

The 12th edition featured more than 100 bassists over 24 concerts. Headliners included several Canadian bassists—Alain Caron, Brandi Disterheft, Alain Bédard and Fraser Hollins—and saxophonist Remi Bolduc's quartet featured longtime Oscar Peterson collaborator Dave Young. Opening night act L'Orchestre de Contrabasses de France employed not only dazzling pizzicato, bowing, tapping and occasional vocals, but also choreography, including tunes with upside-down basses.

The most rewarding, eclectic night included two very different bassists: Omer Avital and Ben Allison, whose band featured Steve Cardenas and Brandon Seabrook on guitars and Rudy Royston on drums. Creating intriguing soundscapes, the group explored Allison's distinctive compositions, including the infectious "Platypus" and installments of

his Dick Cheney suite. The temperamental Man Size Safe built from a hushed bassline to full-on instrumental explosion. Allison jumped and danced with his bass as guitars thrashed and Royston unleashed an incendiary solo.

At the famed Upstairs jazz club, Avital presented his superb quartet of saxophonist Joel Frahm, pianist Jason Lindner and drummer Johnathan Blake, who brought their own flavor to Avital's sumptuous compositions. The memorable tune "Free Forever" illustrated the Israeli-born bassist's unique way of coalescing jazz with his Moroccan-Yemenite roots. The burning "Blues For Tardy" blazed as the band's spirited synergy permeated the audience.

L'Orchestre de Contrebasses du Québec—six of the province's best bassists—closed with pieces by Montreal trombonist/composer Jean-Nicolas Trottier, and Rufus Reid's Out Front trio offered a poignant finale of Eubie Blake's "Memories Of You." —Sharonne Cohen

The Meeting of the Secret Society



Darcy James Argue returned home to Brooklyn to conduct his esteemed big band Secret Society at the multidisciplinary Galapagos Art Space. The March 6 program combined traditional and contemporary compositions from Argue's 2009 New Amsterdam release *Infernal Machines* and a suite from his latest album, *Brooklyn Babylon*.



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Umlaut Founder's Career Punctuated by World Travels

Swedish bassist Joel Grip didn't grow up in a musical household, but he says both of his parents encouraged him to pursue his instrument when he first picked up the bass as a teenager. But when one examines Grip's accomplishments over the last decade or so, it's his mother's organizational skills that become clear.

"I think I learned that from her," Grip said. "From a young age I realized that if you want something to be made, you better do it yourself. You can't sit around and wait for someone to call you."

In 2002, at the mere age of 20, Grip started Hagenfesten, a jazz and improvised music festival in the rustic Swedish village of Dala-Floda (population: 90). The event will celebrate its 11th edition in August of this year. A few years later, while studying at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, he launched Umlaut Records, which has quietly become one of Europe's most interesting free-jazz labels. Grip also founded Public Health Music, a social initiative aimed at using the arts to save homeless kids from a life of crime and drugs.

For Grip, it all started with play-



ing music, a practice he remains deeply involved in by playing regularly in numerous configurations.

As a teenager, he said he struggled with the rigid orthodoxies of music education but he experienced a sense of liberation after encountering the music of Swedish reedist Mats Gustafsson when he was 16.

"I felt a joy and a freedom in his playing that really opposed what I had been taught in school," Grip said. Not long after finishing high school, Grip heard a solo album by fellow bassist Michael Formanek. After an initial email exchange with Formanek, Grip decided to head to Baltimore to study with him. Spending two years in Baltimore

opened up Grip's musical horizons, and the first Umlaut recordings included musicians that he met there. The label's first release was a trio recording featuring Grip, saxophonist Gary Thomas and drummer Devin Gray. Grip left in 2005 and spent the next three years traveling the globe with his bass.

"I think it was the most important part of my education—although I think I'm still learning and I hope I always will be," Grip said. He spent time in Japan, China, Costa Rica, across the United States and in Eastern Europe. Many of the people he met remain close collaborators, whether they are butoh dancers or noise musicians.

In 2008, Grip finally settled in Paris, where he eventually developed a large-enough cast of collaborators to run Umlaut as a collective. Umlaut boasts bases in Paris, Stockholm, and Berlin, has presented festivals in each location and has produced two dozen releases thus far.

"When I play, and it feels very good, it's the feeling of just taking part in something," Grip said. "You're not controlling and the

improvisation is just happening by itself. Your presence is important, the audience is important, your playmates are important, and it's collective work, just like running this label."

In addition to releasing new music—including Grip's new solo bass album *Pickelhaube* and *A Nest At The Junction Of Paths*, a superb collection by the New Songs which features singer Sofia Jernberg and guitarist David Stackenäs from Sweden, pianist Eve Risser from France, and guitarist Kim Myhr from Norway—Umlaut has also started issuing some archival titles, including a brilliant four-CD box of music by pianist Per Henrik Wallin and Sven-Åke Johansson, and a forthcoming set by Johansson and German pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach.

Despite the growing notice—both for the label and his playing—Grip refuses to take it easy. "We like to play in places where this music usually isn't played," he said. "I've noticed people are so much more receptive in places like Serbia, Kosovo, Ukraine or Poland, with an energetic audience."

Caught

Bold Risk-taking Elevates Vossa Jazz

Voss, a lovely and humble lakefront- and fjord-hugging town in western Norway, remains a critical feature on the Norwegian jazz cultural landscape.

In this year's Vossa Jazz program, the fifth run by director Trude Storheim, matters of artistic balance, of carefully blending commerciality and artistic chance-taking, were in typical high form. This festival doesn't always have a strong American jazz presence, and this year's New York link rested solely on Marc Ribot's feisty, tough and riffy band Really the Blues. What Vossa Jazz does specialize in is Scandinavian jazz offerings hard to catch stateside. The high points from that geo-cultural quarter this year included the electro-acoustic ambience of Norwegian trumpeter-textualist Nils Petter Molvær. Molvær's trio (with guitarist Stian Westerhus and drummer Erland Dahlen) created an epically atmospheric, voodoo-Miles-



goes-Nordic sonic canvas.

For this year's commissioned work, saxophonist-composer Karl Seglem unveiled his long, impressionistic-waxing suite *Tingings-verket 'Som Spor'*, which massaged the ear nicely but lacked much substance.

Opening the festival proper was another Scandinavian admixture, with fine and flexible Danish pianist Carsten Dahl joined by

Norway's bassist-of-note Arild Andersen and drummer Jon Christensen. If there was a prominent unsung-hero performance this year, it had to be the rare appearance of seasoned and mysterious Finnish saxophone legend Juhani Aaltonen, whose show in the intimate Osasalen room (in Voss' Ole Bull Music Academy) was a stunner, in ways cathartic and contemplative. —Josef Woodard

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Julian Lage

Circa 2012: New Connections, New Collaborations

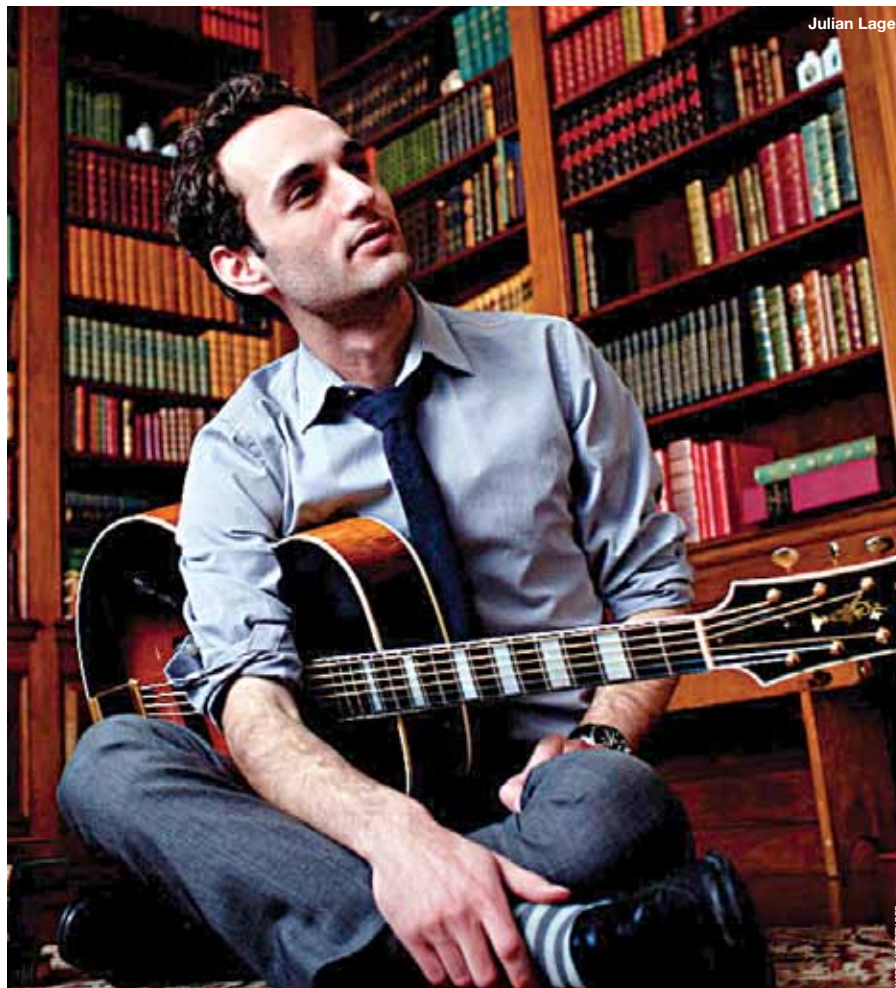
The year 2011 was a good one for guitarist Julian Lage. His innovative album *Gladwell*, which garnered an Editor's Pick at DownBeat.com, was hailed as one of the year's best. Lage, 24, also made some noise throughout the year and across the globe in the New Gary Burton Quartet, which also featured bassist Scott Colley and drummer Antonio Sanchez. And his trio with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Eric Harland had some celebrated concert dates, including one at his alma mater, Berklee College of Music, for NPR's "Toast Of The Nation." Speaking of NPR, he appeared in January with new "Piano Jazz" host Jon Weber. The biggest news, though, comes from the formation of his new group, with Grenadier and Harland as well as saxist Dan Blake. More on that below. This year also promises to see more touring with the Burton group, dates with pianist Fred Hersch and guitarist Jim Hall, and Lage serving as artist in residence for the 2012 Crown of the Continent Guitar Foundation Workshops in late August.

How's the new group with Larry Grenadier, Eric Harland and surprise guest Dan Blake coming along?

We've done two shows together already. I've stayed away from a more traditional jazz band orchestration in the past, more unorthodox, you know, like with cello and percussion. So, I had an opportunity to put together a different band, and I was thinking of bass, drums and sax. And those guys are each very important to me. I don't know, it feels very straightforward compared to what I'm used to, but it packs a different kind of energy that I'm really kind of fond of. The plans for that band are still in the baby stages, but my hope is to work more and do a record. As for playing, we were doing mostly my tunes from my recent albums, some of the more folk-based music; there's a lot of crossover from my band, but there's also more straightahead jazz and playing standards.

In a related vein, what is it about each member that made them your picks to form this new group?

Larry, I first played with him when I was about 12. It was a benefit for Billy Higgins at Yoshi's. He's always looked out for me, been very kind and generous with his time. And, over the years we've been able to play together. He's been very supportive, and that comes through in his playing, in his conception of tone and I think the acoustic quality. Harland, he's also family; I don't know when I first started playing with him,



but we played together in Taylor Eigsti's quartet and quintet. Yeah, it's all about grounding, support, unconditional love ... anything you want to do, he'll put the fire behind you. He so sensitive, and that's really important for the kind of music we're doing. And Dan, he's like my musical soul-mate. He joined the Lage group about two or three years ago, at a time when we were transitioning from a kind of old paradigm of the band to a new one that was more composition-based and more ensemble-specific. A certain incarnation, with a little more "Here I am and I want to put some stuff around me." Dan is one of the most brilliant musical minds I've ever encountered, from an improvising point of view, definitely, but equally compositionally from a musical scholar point of view. He brings to the band a kind of co-leadership in that sense.

What was it like being on the new "Piano Jazz" program, with Jon Weber? Had you been on with Marian McPartland before?

Yeah, I did it with Marian when I was about 17. Jon's great. You couldn't say anything wrong. It was like the best interview, and he gets you inspired to say things you wouldn't normally articulate. Jon has that ability. I'm so happy he's doing that show.

In terms of collaborations, you've been ac-

tively engaged with Gary Burton, and now Fred Hersch and Jim Hall.

Gary, he's been by far the most influential musical force in my life, from a professional point of view and from a studying point of view. Working with Gary, it's something that it's not exactly what it was when we first started. When I started out, it was like, "OK, now I'm playing with Gary." And then it kind of evolved into being partners in crime, contributing different ideas. With Fred, there's a conversational chemistry that exists that I've never felt with anybody. It's very liberating, very in tune with where I see the direction of jazz guitar going. And Jim Hall ... Jim Hall, he's my hero, since I was 8 years old. I still feel the awe, in a way, maybe with a little bit more perspective. We just started last week, playing duets at his house. It's a bit unreal, playing some of his stuff and some of mine. I think at our core, Jim and I both have a real fondness for tweaked-out guitar, you know, whatever you think is normal ... two or three degrees left of that.

Finally, I want to mention that the project that's kind of a through-line for this year is a solo-guitar project. I've been playing shows in New York, solo guitar maybe every couple weeks, just to work out new material, with the intent on making a record this year. With everything going on, I love it. I feel very lucky.

—John Ephland



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Several times a season, the Los Angeles Philharmonic kindly opens the portals of its grand home base, Walt Disney Concert Hall, to jazz programming. On March 11, programmers served up a hearty and varied gathering of artists who tilted away from the mothership of jazz in any mainstream sensibility.

Pianist Billy Childs' quartet collaborated with new music group Kronos Quartet on "Music For Two Quartets," a 2010 commissioned work for the Monterey Jazz Festival. It's another brave attempt in the pitfall-prone business of bridging jazz and classical worlds, though not entirely successful or fluid.

Though Bill Frisell's lean-yet-rich Beautiful Dreamers were the opening act, in some ways they were more assured and artistically focused than Childs' group. Frisell, violist Eyvind Kang and drummer Rudy Royston boasted an advancing maturity, suggesting this is one of the guitarist's more intriguing groups.

Frisell's trio is a familial extension of his genuinely gossamer and irrepeatable years with Paul Motian and Joe Lovano. Though Kang leaned lower in range than most violinists and Frisell sometimes kicked in an octave divider for phantom bass tones, the lack of bass presence is part of this group's definition. Royston applies the perfect touch, never over-



playing to fill the space and handily shifting between timekeeper and coloristic accentuator.

Frisell managed to personalize and revise everything he touched, including a few originals, the folk classic "Hard Times," a surreally jaunty "Tea For Two," and, from his recent John Lennon project, "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Give Peace A Chance."

Pop snuck into the night's mix when the Kronos Quartet delivered the chugging, minimalism-meets-rhythm-section boiler room brawl in the alluring piece "Ahem" by Bryce Dessner of The National. Childs' top-

notch quartet with drummer Brian Blade, bassist Scott Colley and saxist/flutist Steve Wilson offered the closest thing to textbook-approved jazz with "Aaron's Song" and "Hope In The Face Of Despair." Having already heard Childs' "chamber jazz" experiment Music for Two Quartets in an al fresco context, it was interesting to note the warring factors of jazz and classical thinking shifted in a new setting. Here, the classical factor nudged its way higher in the aesthetic mix, perhaps partly due to the environmental association. —Josef Woodard

AUM Fidelity Artists Take the Stage as Label Turns 15

The Charles Mingus album *Mingus Ah Um* stands as a landmark where the bassist integrated adventuresome concepts and spiritually fired practices. Brooklyn-based label AUM Fidelity does not invoke this precedent lightly. Since its inception, it has advocated for a small cadre of mostly New York-based musicians with evangelical fervor, and in June, will celebrate its 15th year at two major festivals.

Bassist William Parker, one of the label's original artists, will present three of his ensembles, including his new big band Essence Of Ellington, at Montreal's Suoni Per Il Popolo festival, and saxophonist Darius Jones will also perform with his quartet. Jones, Parker and saxophonist David S. Ware's Planetary Unknown quartet will convene on June 12 at New York's Vision Festival for the fest's first-ever label showcase. And AUM Fidelity's forthcoming summer releases by Planetary Unknown and the trio of Joe Morris, William Parker and Gerald Cleaver will bring the label's history full-circle.

AUM Fidelity is essentially a one-man operation. Owner Steven Joerg moved to New York after college in 1989 to work for the indie-rock label Bar/None. He took over the management of another underground rock label, Homestead, around the same time that he began encountering free-jazz musicians at



the Knitting Factory venue.

"I was utterly transported," he said. "No other band in the world that I'd ever heard made music close to this." Joerg released records on Homestead by Ware and Morris, who followed him to AUM Fidelity in 1997. His collaborative, profit-splitting business model is similar to smaller rock labels, resulting in open but enduring relationships with musicians. Though they work with other labels, they keep coming to AUM Fidelity.

AUM Fidelity enables its musicians to practice ecstatic free-jazz, but also branch out. Parker's explorations of the Curtis Mayfield songbook on *I Plan To Stay A Believer* and ancient African and

Latin folk music on *Long Hidden: The Olmec Series* are among the label's most rewarding and affecting releases. Little Women, another collective that features Jones, Travis Laplante, Andrew Smiley and Jason Nazary, fuses free-jazz and hard rock at their most aggressive.

"I believe in the idea of focus, quality over quantity," Joerg said. "I've remained devoted to artists that I've worked with since launching the label because they are on the top tier of creators of this music. For a man to spend most of his time and money over the past 15 years on an endeavor, the work that is created must mean something very special to him." —Bill Meyer

Gerald Albright

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Tom Kennedy

It's All Swing

Tom Kennedy opens his third album as a leader, *Just For The Record*, by running his electric bass in dizzying circles around Dave Weckl's bouncy drums. "Breakneck" is a short, bubbly exercise in speed, the musicians playfully sparring with their instruments. It showcases Kennedy's prodigious abilities, but also highlights the friendships and strong musical relationships that have defined his career.

Weckl and Kennedy first met at a summer camp in 1975 when they were both high-school freshmen. Another childhood friend, Jay Oliver, splits keyboard duties on the album with Charles Blenzig. The session's guitarist, the iconic Mike Stern, is a newer acquaintance who has nonetheless counted Kennedy as a musical ally for years.

These associations, both new and old, are an inexorable part of music-making that Kennedy views counterintuitively as a way to keep his music sounding new. The musicians on his latest disc have performed in varied configurations countless times, but they don't find themselves navigating the same ideas or re-treading tired territory.

"It's fresh, and I can count on it at the same time," Kennedy says, his demeanor echoing the unbridled energy in his bass playing. "It's not about being old or stale. I base my favorite musical relationships with people who keep it new—that are always advancing, trying different things."

Weckl counts the relative ease of recording as one of the benefits of musical kinship with Kennedy. When laying down tracks on *Just For The Record*, the two didn't have to navigate through a belabored setup of the music and instead simply started playing. "When you've spent so much time listening, talking and playing together, it all just happens so much quicker," Weckl says. "[Friendship] generally adds to the overall vibe—unless there's a spat going on!"

As a bassist, Kennedy has spent a lot of time playing for other people. He spent three years backing up guitarist Al Di Meola, and lately he's been working with Stern and Lee Ritenour's bands. Kennedy is so busy, in fact, that it's hard to catch him at a hometown gig in New York City. This frenzied work schedule was developed by expanding his circle of friends and never burning a bridge. "So much of it in this business is about networking—just knowing as many players as you can in as many parts of the world as you can," he says.

Kennedy plays electric bass on his latest recording, but in his mind, electric and acoustic are almost interchangeable. During a hectic week spent backing numerous all-star groups



and serving in the house rhythm section on the 2012 Jazz Cruise in early February, Kennedy never played staid walking patterns on his acoustic bass. He injected his own carefree style into each accompaniment, creating musical lines that bounded up and down the neck.

Playing both electric and acoustic has helped inform his approach to jazz, he says. This manifests itself in his walking bass playing on electric, which is derived directly from his experience on the acoustic instrument. As he was playing acoustic on the cruise, many of his solos sounded as if they were first mapped out on an electric fretboard. The bassist has no preference as to which instrument he'd rather use on any given day; it simply depends on his mood and the demands of the individual session.

"Usually when I'm playing one type of thing, I long for the other, which is normal. I love the feeling of an acoustic hard swing when you're playing a straightforward kind of thing, as well as a real intense fusion groove or a funky kind of thing [on the electric]," he says. "It's all swing to me."

Kennedy first glimpsed the acoustic bass at age 8, when his older brother lugged the instrument home from school band practice. His attraction to the bass's resonance was immediate and unrelenting. A decade later, Kennedy became just as fascinated by the electric when a patron tested out an instrument at his father's music shop. Ever since, he's been performing double duty in a range of musical contexts.

His next project, in fact, will be on the upright, he says. Since *Just For The Record* is an electric album, he wants to balance out his catalog with a collection of swing tunes on acoustic bass. Additionally, Kennedy is considering putting a touring band together.

Kennedy's childhood connections, mixed with newer professional allegiances, mean that the bassist is busier than ever. In fact, even in this down economy, he thinks there's more demand for musicians in general, and he's found himself working more often. And when the next gig comes, chances are Kennedy will have a solid relationship with at least one of the members of the band.

—Jon Ross

Scott Tixier

Feeling Rhythms

For someone who demonstrates such a strong acumen for penning compositions bursting with singable melodies, sly counterpoints, vivacious rhythms and sterling harmonies, 26-year-old violinist Scott Tixier says that he doesn't overthink his tunes. In fact, he argues that for his music, improvisation ranks above compositional guile in terms of importance. "Improvisation is something that I really like to put up front," he explains. "So when I compose, I think about the same things while I'm improvising, except that I can go back and change things. The main thing is that I use my ears first. When I try to analyze too much, the music usually isn't anything that I want."

On a blustery late-February Saturday afternoon at Colson Patisserie in the Brooklyn neighborhood Park Slope, Tixier, with violin case in hand, has to rehearse later in the day for a weekly burlesque show at the supper club Duane Park. Since arriving in Brooklyn from Paris in 2008, Tixier has made the most of his new home. His debut, *Brooklyn Bazaar* (Sunnyside), deftly captures the cosmopolitan character of the borough with a set of nine original compositions that optimize gripping grooves and sophisticated interplay. He fronts an emphatic quintet of Brooklyn-based musicians, whom he says he recruited because they lived in his Prospect Park neighborhood.

Some of standout selections include the Afrocentric "Bushwick Party," on which Tixier's violin dances across Arthur Vint's jubilant drum patterns and Jesse Elder's punchy piano accompaniments; the mesmerizing "Arawaks," where guest vocalist Emile Weibel applies her ghostly wordless vocalizations parallel to Douglas Bradford's feather-light guitar lines; and the r&b-laden "Elephant Rose," in which Massimo Biolcati's initial bass line resembles that of Stevie Wonder's "I Can't Help It" (made famous by Michael Jackson and recently recorded by Esperanza Spalding).

Tixier recalls that when he first penned "Elephant Rose," his piano-playing twin brother, Tony, told him that the song sounded too much like the 1979 Jackson recording. The violinist theorizes that because he and his mother, a modern jazz dancer, used to dance to Jackson's material, the bass part probably came to him by osmosis. When he speaks of his mother's profession as well as his own tenure as a modern dancer, the rhythmic spark in his material makes all the more sense.

"Rhythm is something that I really dig but not in an intellectual way," Tixier explains. "Even for the song that's in 7/8, I'm not trying



to play those rhythms because I want to sound smart; it's because I feel them. When I feel the rhythmic flow of a song, I feel really free to improvise in any key."

Tixier grew up in Montreuil, a suburb east of Paris. Along with his brother, Tixier began studying classical music when he was 5 years old. But it wasn't until he was 13—when he attended a music festival in southern France—that the jazz bug bit him. Soon after, Tixier absorbed a lot of Stéphane Grappelli and eventually discovered Stuff Smith and Jean-Luc Ponty. When Tixier was 14, he met Ponty, who encouraged him to leave Paris for the United States in hopes of gaining more performance opportunities. "He was my sponsor; he wrote the letter for immigration," Tixier says. Ponty then suggested Tixier to a litany of jazz stars such as Marcus Miller, Stanley Clarke, Pat Metheny and Chick Corea.

Before Tixier got settled in New York, he stayed with another leading violinist, Mark Feldman, to whom Tixier pays homage on "Shopping With Mark F." Tixier crashed in Feldman's office room for two days upon his arrival in the States; he now says that it was a great learning experience. "I heard him practice from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day," Tixier remembers.

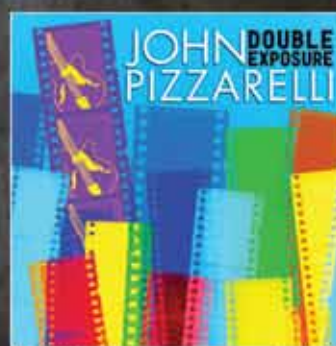
Tixier is still delving deeper inside the New York jazz scene, playing frequently with the likes of Lonnie Plaxico, Anthony Braxton and Sheila Jordan. In addition to that and promoting *Brooklyn Bazaar*, he has his sights on the follow-up disc, one that'll involve his twin brother as they'll investigate a batch of jazz standards.

—John Murph



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Mike LeDonne *Smokin' in NYC*

As any veteran musician knows, you have to learn how to play the house.

"We had a lot of empty tables with candles on them," says keyboard vet Mike LeDonne, commenting on his early career gigs. "I was just hitting and missing, trying to figure out what my direction was gonna be. But that club really solidified my direction playing live and making it on this record."

The club in question is the historic Smoke Jazz Club in Manhattan; the record is LeDonne's latest, the veritably smokin' *Keep The Faith* (his sixth for Savant). It features his "Groover Quartet" with tenorist Eric Alexander, guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Joe Farnsworth. "Now, I know that if it works at Smoke," LeDonne adds, "it's gonna work with the general public. That's the beauty of having a gig like that. Some of the things I bring in, I only play it once, and you never hear it again. But some of them, first time, you can tell right away, that it's a keeper. So, when I make these records, they're all keepers."

Although LeDonne started recording in 1988, he wasn't playing organ in the studio back then. "On organ as a leader, this is only my fourth organ/leader date," he notes.

Which brings us to LeDonne's backstory. We sit at his dining room table, with an expansive view from his Midtown high-rise living-room window, a view that winds upward toward Harlem, and beyond. LeDonne is the quintessence of a man on the musical make, ready to take on all comers, a hustler in the best sense of the word. A graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, he grew up in a musical household—his father was a guitarist (with whom LeDonne played gigs starting at age 10) and owner of a music store. After moving to New York City, the Bridgeport, Conn., native started as a pianist playing with, among others, Benny Goodman, Sonny Rollins, Art Farmer, Dizzy Gillespie, Panama Francis and the Widespread Depression Jazz Orchestra. An eventual gig with Milt Jackson proved particularly formative, and he developed a long relationship with Benny Golson, which is ongoing.

LeDonne was working strictly as a pianist in 1990, when saxophonist Jim Snidero got him to sit in on organ with Brother Jack McDuff at a place called Dude's Bar in Harlem. From there, it was just a matter of time before LeDonne formed his own band around his Hammond B3 organ. The real beginning took place at Smoke



on the occasion of a tribute concert to organist Charles Earland, not long after his death in late 1999. LeDonne played one tune, and the reaction was so positive that he landed a series of Tuesday night gigs and put his band together. He's been there since 2000. The regular nature of the gig solidified the group, which has since toured worldwide.

"*Keep The Faith* was kind of a 'part-two' for me, because *The Groover* came out in 2010, and that was the same format," LeDonne explains. "It's what I do at Smoke, basically. I try to include tunes that are from the pop repertoire, but I don't know if I'd call them covers because I work hard on not making them covers. I work hard at making them vehicles for jazz, and they swing. And that's not easy. It means not losing the personality of the tune. I work on that because when I work at Smoke, I know it's not all jazz aficionados who come in there. It's a lot of young kids from Columbia [University] and places like that. They're not gonna be listening to me play 'All The Things You Are'; but if you play 'The Way You Make Me Feel' by Michael Jackson, they suddenly say, 'I know this.' And then you're swinging and they're listening to the solos and next thing you know, they're coming back every week. That's how we've lasted there all these years."

Indeed, playing the house means working the house. "When I made *The Groover*," LeDonne says, "I thought, 'What kind of organ record would I want to buy and listen to?' I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel. But I do want to put my stamp down. And it's all over these records."

—John Ephland

Kresten Osgood

The Energy of the Situation

Performing deep in the twilight hours of last year's Copenhagen Jazz Festival, at the city's rebel enclave of Freetown Christiania, drummer/composer Kresten Osgood led a rowdy crowd of drug abusers and aging hippies through a torrid drum solo. But he wasn't playing it. Germany's Günter Baby Sommer bashed the skins while Osgood gleefully agitated the crowd, one minute ripping the electric bass, the next approximating a Zoot Sims saxophone solo, the next beating the floor with mallets and metal drumsticks. Through a cloudy haze of (legal) herbal smoke, Osgood and Sommer worked the room like it was the veritable gateway to hell. But this was a typical performance for the 35-year-old Danish musician.

"My approach developed when I was a teenager," Osgood recalls. "Me and my cousin, who was a piano player, were isolated on the west coast of Denmark. So we developed a post-Dada way of improvising that was completely our own. When we came to the city,

we found no one was even close to this type of expression. We were limited in certain playing skills, but we were very abstract. We could play something that sounded like Wynton Marsalis in 1992, but when we ran out of ability, we would go into avant-garde theater. We'd run around the room or throw things at the audience."

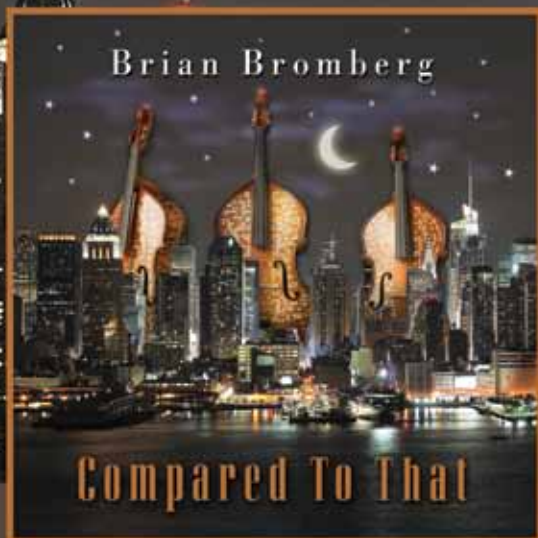
One of the most prolific musicians in Denmark, Osgood's lengthy discography includes such diverse recordings as *Violet Violets* (with bassist Ben Street and the late reedist Sam Rivers), *Florida* (a duo recording with pianist Paul Bley), *Tattoos And Mushrooms* (with trumpeter Steven Bernstein and tuba player Marcus Rojas) and *Hammond Rens*, an ongoing project with organist Dr. Lonnie Smith that reinvents the organ trio as a time-traveling vehicle hitting Mach 5.0.

Osgood never lets ego, or his own personality, obscure the music. Even if it's working, be sure to break it—that seems to be his motto.



"Sometimes in my groups, we compose music that is too hard for us to play," Osgood laughs. "But we always go for the spirituality or the energy of the situation more than playing it right. When playing with my friends in New York, they usually try to show that they know what they're doing—to keep the gig or to impress the bandleader. That mentality, we don't have so much in Denmark. We don't have to survive the same way; we're not depending on a good reputation to sustain us." —Ken Micallef

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Kenny Garrett at The Iridium in New York

KENNY GARRETT DIGS DEEP

By Dan Ouellette | Photography by Jimmy and Dena Katz at The Iridium

SAXOPHONIST KENNY GARRETT IS BACK WITH A NEW DISC, *SEEDS FROM THE UNDERGROUND*, BACK IN THE SPOTLIGHT AND BACK ON THE COVER OF DOWNBEAT

By Kenny Garrett's own account, it was preordained that he would become a jazz saxophonist. "I tell people that I didn't choose the sax," he says. "It chose me."

Sitting in The Iridium in New York—the setting of his 2008 live album, *Sketches Of MD*, and the club where he'd play a four-night stint with his quintet a couple months hence—Garrett laughs at his fate, which has placed him in the upper tier of alto saxophonist leaders and made him a go-to sideman who, in recent years, spent a long stretch in Chick Corea's Five Peace Band and in his Freedom Band.

Garrett has a concise answer as to why he has become such a force in the jazz world—especially with young saxophonists who emulate his sound in their aspirations to jazz prowess—and how he found his way: "I was always in the right place at the right time."

On a spring-like afternoon in the midst of a mild Northeastern winter, it feels more like planting time than digging out from the cold. And today that's what the 51-year-old Detroit-bred, New York-based artist is eager to talk about: his deep-rooted artistic cultivation, specifically as it relates to *Seeds From The Underground*, his 18th album as leader and his sophomore CD for Mack Avenue Records. With

spirit, grip and grit leading the way, he assembled the quintet of pianist Benito Gonzalez, bassist Nat Reeves, drummer Ronald Bruner and percussionist Rudy Bird, plus vocalist Nedelka Prescod on a couple of these 10 original compositions. All these musicians complement Garrett's beautiful work on alto and soprano sax. It's his first studio and acoustic recording in six years, and arguably the most melodic outing of his career.

And Garrett is proud of it. "You want to see growth in each album you record," he says. "There was a time when I was playing for security, doing gigs with different musicians and playing in Broadway shows. But then one day I decided, 'I want to play.' Before you know it, 20 years have gone by, and you're trying to play this music you always dreamed of playing."

Donning one of his trademark African caps (a subtle, print style today), a dark-green shirt, and matching jacket and slacks, Garrett speaks shyly, yet he's eager to fill in the historical gaps in his touring biography—from Mercer Ellington to Art Blakey to Miles Davis.

Although Garrett's discography includes a couple of tributes—an homage to Trane on 1995's stunning *Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane*, and contributions as a sideman on Roy

Haynes' triumphant salute to Bird, 2001's *Birds Of A Feather: A Tribute To Charlie Parker*—he is careful to point out the different intent of the wide-ranging *Seeds*. "I like to think of everything on this album as seeds," he explains. "They could have been small, could have been big. People were planting these seeds all along the way—the musicians I played with and the musicians I talked with a lot, like Roy, who I give a nod of thanks to on the song 'Haynes Here,' and Jackie McLean, who I pay respect to on the tune 'J. Mac.' This is an album about the planting of seeds and how that's impacted me."

In scientific terms, a seed is the fertilized, ripened ovule of a flowering plant containing an embryo and capable normally of germination to produce a new plant.

By using this botanical metaphor, Garrett expands the concept of acknowledging respect in a rich way while simultaneously testifying about how talent is nurtured. Just like the associations of the word *seed*—fertilized, flowering, embryonic, germinating—Garrett's new album is indeed an inspired new creation steeped in the saxophonist's historical pathways. It's a field of dreams made manifest.

Plus, it's indelible music, with a verdant crop of shout-outs to a rich array of sowers,

ranging from Garrett's high school mentor Bill Wiggins ("Wiggins," which starts in the balladic zone before revving up, with the alto saxophonist dancing in the grooves) to a musician he has only met briefly twice but has long admired for his lyricism, Keith Jarrett ("Ballad Jarrett," with its quiet melody played on soprano saxophone). Also in the mix are Duke Ellington, Woody Shaw and Thelonious Monk, together, on "Do-Wo-Mo" ("I heard all of their voices when I was writing this," says Garrett) and his hero Joe Henderson, on an iTunes-only track, "Joe Hen's Waltz."

A more nuanced influence is on exhibit via John McLaughlin, with whom Garrett played in the Five Peace Band. *Seeds* features a flurry of odd time meters. "I'm always challenging myself," says Garrett. "I started to play with that band, and John would be playing in 15. A minute later he's playing in 6. So that influenced my writing, which I've been doing more on the piano. On the saxophone, the odd times allow me to phrase differently. I figure, if you don't usually play in odd meters, well, go ahead and try that."

To illustrate the point, Garrett singles out his odd-meter deliveries on the title track (which features him quoting from Nat Adderley's "Work Song"), "Haynes Here" and "Lavisio, I Bon?" (inspired by Guadeloupean guitarist Christian Lavisio).

MUSICAL CHILDHOOD

The new album opens with the spirited "Boogety Boogety," buoyed by a catchy melodic head, clipping percussion and Garrett playing rhythms on his saxophone toward the charged close. If Top 40 AM radio were still around, this would be an instrumental hit. The seed? Garrett's father, who drew his son in close to the magical wonders of the saxophone.

"This comes from way back," he says, noting that his father (actually, his stepfather) was a tenor saxophonist who practiced regularly. "The strongest thing about me being interested in the saxophone was that I loved the smell of my father's case. It was an old case with a velvet cover. I'd sit and listen to him practice. I loved the sound of the saxophone, but it was the smell that kept me there."

Garrett's dad recognized his son's interest and gave him a plastic sax for Christmas when he was 7 years old. Seeing that little Kenny was expressing more than a fleeting desire to play the instrument, his dad upgraded him with his first alto saxophone. "Someone had shot it with a bullet," Garrett laughingly recalls. "But the hole was soldered and it played well. My father taught me the G scale, and that was the beginning."

As for "Boogety Boogety," Garrett says it

comes from the sound of quick-clopping horse hooves, which he heard when watching Westerns with his father. "I like melodies," he says. "When I played with Miles, we played melodies every night. I like to write melodies that people can remember. 'Boogety Boogety' is a different kind of melody for me, but when I wrote it, it reminded me of the galloping horses. And I was thinking about dancing. There are harmonic things going on in this song, but it's basically about having fun."

When Garrett started his secondary education at Detroit's Mackenzie High School, athletics was a focus for him. He was interested in playing his saxophone on the side and practicing on his own, but he devoted a lot of time to football, tennis and track. He would carry his alto saxophone to school in its case, which one of the teachers noticed. "Mr. Wiggins was a friend of my father's," Garrett says. "Our school didn't have a band, so Mr. Wiggins was determined to start a stage band and a concert band. He'd always ask me, 'When are you going to join the band?' I told him I wasn't interested."

But one day in the school hallway, Wiggins approached Garrett again and pushed him. "When are you going to join the band?" he asked. Garrett resisted, and Wiggins pushed him again. "The next thing I knew I was in



Garrett inside The Iridium on Feb. 26, with photos of Les Paul in the background

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the band,” Garrett says with a smile. “And we became the best of friends. It was his way of saying, ‘I need a saxophone player.’”

While Garrett was tempted to transfer to Cass Tech because of its rich jazz legacy (“That was the prestigious place to be,” he says, “with its history of Ron Carter and Geri Allen and others graduating from there”), Wiggins convinced him to stay at Mackenzie. “He had gone to Cass Tech and assured me that he could teach me whatever I needed to know,” says Garrett. “Mr. Wiggins was really the first person who realized I had talent.”

A veteran saxophone sideman with the likes of soulsters Aretha Franklin and Jerry Butler, Wiggins fed Garrett a wide range of music. “He would invite me to listen to [Franklin’s and Butler’s] rehearsals because he wanted me to know that part of the music,” says Garrett. “He wanted me to listen to classical music, and he introduced me to the music of Keith Jarrett playing with Jan Garbarek. I had never heard of them, so Mr. Wiggins said, ‘Check it out.’”

Wiggins gave Garrett daily exercises for the saxophone and instilled in him the joy of playing. He also encouraged his young student to explore the richness of the city’s club scene.

“Mr. Wiggins was so instrumental in my development,” he says. “The song [“Wiggins”] on *Seeds* gives me the chance to say goodbye to him. He passed away when I was on the road. That’s why the song goes into a groove, but then there’s melancholia. It gives me closure with him.”

One of the key players Wiggins introduced him to on the Detroit scene was trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, who was fronting a big band. Garrett joined in. “They already had five top saxophone players in the section,” he recalls. “So I had to sit in the trombone section, playing my sax but reading the trombone parts.” Belgrave, who enlisted Garrett to also play in his smaller bands, proved to be another mentor—and a seed sower. There’s a nod to him on another *Seeds* melodic beauty, “Detroit,” with wordless vocals by Prescod and a background scratch of an LP that is skipping. “I was trying to put in my thanks to Marcus as well as tenor saxophonist Lamont Hamilton and David Swain’s 2-5-1 Band, which I played in,” he says. “But I also wanted people to hear the pain and the suffering of the city today.”

GRADUATION FROM DETROIT

Various short biographies of Garrett cite his playing with the Duke Ellington Band, then directed by Mercer Ellington, but they rarely explain how he scored that gig. While Garrett had plans to attend Berklee College of Music to further his career, the Ellington band trumped that. As it turns out, the 18-piece jazz orchestra was in Detroit and its alto saxophonist disappeared. It needed a replacement *tout de suite*. “By that time, I was an up-and-coming alto player in Detroit,” Garrett says. “They

heard about me, and so they called me to play a couple of gigs. That turned into three-and-a-half years of touring around the world and opening my mind to all kinds of things. I had never been out of Detroit up to that point. If you don’t travel, it really limits you. I was young and going all over the place, even if I didn’t quite know what was going on.”

The Ellington gig, starting in 1978, ran its course when many musicians from the big band settled into New York to perform in the Broadway play celebrating Duke, *Sophisticated Ladies*, which ran from 1981 to ’83. Garrett had a choice: move home or try his hand in New York, rooming with pianist Mulgrew Miller—also an member of the Ellington band who had left in 1980 to join up with Betty Carter—in his Brooklyn apartment in Flatbush.



Garrett on the cover of the Sept. 1997 DownBeat

“Kenny and I have a long history,” Miller says. “When I was with the Ellington band in Detroit, we all went to see Marcus Belgrave, who had also spent time with the Ellington band, at Cobb’s Corner. Kenny was just out of high school, and we noticed him right off and were impressed. Certain things were already in place in his playing. He had an unbelievable sense of time and was already playing with an assuredness. So, the next day, I got on the bus and there was Kenny. I said, ‘Aren’t you that guy from last night?’ He didn’t talk very much. He just nodded. We ended up often rooming together on the road.”

Once Garrett had sunk his roots into New York, one of the first people to befriend him was saxophonist George Coleman, who was playing at the Tin Palace in the Bowery.

“I was a newcomer, so I didn’t know that whenever you went out to a club you should have your horn with you,” Garrett says. “I talked with George, and he asked me if I wanted to sit in. He was in the midst of playing ‘Green Dolphin Street’—in all the keys. So I ran to the

subway, went to Brooklyn, got my saxophone and ran back just as he was finishing the tune. That was good because I only knew the song in two keys: C and D-flat.”

Garrett played on a couple of other songs with Coleman that night and realized that the players in the band were far more technically accomplished than he was. “To get to that level, I knew I had a lot of growing to do,” he recalls. “When you encounter George Coleman, you realize you have to step up and start practicing.”

Garrett took some lessons from Coleman and then gradually began to make acquaintances around town, which led to more gigs. He had already met Freddie Hubbard through Belgrave in Detroit and worked with him, as well as Dizzy Gillespie; he took clarinet lessons from classical player Leon Russianoff; and he landed a saxophone chair in the Mel Lewis Orchestra.

Playing with Hubbard was particularly important. “Freddie inspired me to want to play,” Garrett says. “He was a character, but when we got to the stage and played, he never had to say anything; it was all about the music. To hear someone play at that level every night...” He shakes his head and smiles.

By the time he was 24, Garrett had developed a strong enough reputation to record his debut as a leader. Criss Cross Jazz released *Introducing Kenny Garrett* in 1984, with a quintet comprising Miller, bassist Nat Reeves, trumpeter Woody Shaw and drummer Tony Reedus. *Garrett 5*, on the Japanese label Paddle Wheel, followed in 1988.

In 1987, Garrett got the call from Miles Davis to join his electric band. This invitation happened partially because of a film audition.

While he was playing with Art Blakey, Garrett auditioned for a French movie about a saxophonist; his friend Gary Thomas was also trying out. Thomas told him that Davis was looking for an alto player and encouraged him to get in touch with the trumpeter. “I decided to call, of course, because it was Miles Davis,” Garrett says. “I called, and I think it was his valet who answered. He said Miles was out but would call back. Later that day, Miles called. I actually thought it was Mulgrew Miller because he’s good at [imitating] Miles’ voice. I thought, ‘OK, he’s playing a good game with me.’ But then I realized it was Miles, and he asked me to send him some music. I sent him some music from my Blakey shows.”

Within a week, Davis called Garrett back and told him, “Kenny, you sound like you’re wearing Sonny Stitt’s dirty drawers.” Garrett chuckles and says, “That was the start.”

There’s another layer of intrigue to the anecdote: Garrett has heard that Davis had been secretly looking for him after hearing him perform at the Berlin Jazz Festival in a band that included Hubbard and Shaw, with Gillespie sitting in. “Somebody told me that Miles was watching,” he says. “He was looking for me, but ended up finding me through another direction.”

Garrett was still playing with Blakey, but



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went out with Davis for three gigs in Chicago, Minneapolis and Ann Arbor, Mich. The leader sent him a tape and asked him to learn the melodies of the songs in the set. There were no rehearsals and only a short sound check before the first show.

Garrett wore sunglasses in his attempt at looking hip like Davis. For his first two gigs with the icon, he believes that the microphone he was using wasn't working. By the third night, Garrett was audible.

He recalls, "After my first solo, Miles came up to me, took off my glasses and said, 'What?' It was like he couldn't believe what I had played. He put my glasses back on and that was it. The rest is history."

A three-night tryout ended up lasting five-and-a-half years. Was the experience initially intimidating? "No, not at all," Garrett says. "I had been playing with Art, so, of course, I had heard all the Miles Davis stories. It was interesting playing in the style that Miles was into then, the J.B. and Prince stuff that had nothing to do with what he heard me playing with Freddie or Art. With Miles, I never tried to play anything more than what the music demanded, except after a few years I worked in some harmonic devices. But it was a great experience for me—this kid from Detroit playing with Miles, and it was all good."

SOLO CAREER

During his tenure with Davis, Garrett graduated to the big time as a recording artist of his own, signing with Atlantic Jazz and releasing *Prisoner Of Love* in 1989 and *African Exchange Student* in 1990. (I reviewed the latter in the January 1991 issue of *DownBeat*, giving it a four-and-a-half-stars and noting that "there's not a cliché within earshot in Garrett's playing as he expressively sputters, screeches, wails, pouts and squeaks unusual sax tones.")

Pianist Donald Brown, also a Blakey alum during Garrett's run, produced *African Exchange Student*, resulting in another longtime musical friendship that continues today. *Seeds* was co-produced by Brown and Garrett. "When we first start working together, we formed a mutual admirers' society," says Brown, who has been teaching music for 23 years at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. "Kenny and I talked all the time and had wide-open conversations about all kinds of music—not just jazz but music from our backgrounds, because he was from Detroit and I was from Memphis. We were into jazz, r&b, funk."

Over the years, the two produced other albums together (including Garrett's Warner Bros. debut, *Black Hope*, in 1992 and *Trilogy* in 1995), so it pleased Brown that he was once again brought on board for *Seeds*. "I can hear so much growth in Kenny, harmonically and melodically," Brown says. "He has such a great, unique voice on the saxophone, and there are few musicians as excited about life and music



On *Seeds*, Garrett plays alto and soprano saxophone

as Kenny. And as a composer, I wish I had written a couple of the tunes Kenny did on the new album, like 'Ballad Jarrett' and 'Detroit.'"

Garrett's praise of Brown has to do with his ears—and his compositions. "Donald's been an inspiration for a long time," he says. "I aspire to be able to write like him. So I'd present to him new songs I had written to see what he thought, because he understands where I'm coming from. I want him to listen and talk to me about what he's hearing."

Also along for the *Seeds* adventure is another longtime friend and bandmate, Nat Reeves, who has known and performed with Garrett since the early '80s, including working in Shaw's band. Based in Connecticut, where he teaches at The Hartt School at the University of Hartford, Reeves says that he continues to be impressed with Garrett's ability to push forward as a creative artist. "I can't stop listening to the new record," Reeves says. "There's so much variety in the music. He's always drawing from different types of music, from different cultures. He's not just playing jazz."

Reeves says that Garrett called him up often during the embryonic stage of *Seeds* to play him a song on the piano that illustrated the bass lines. "When Kenny writes, he keeps his band in mind," says Reeves. "In my case, it's making sure that the bass fits in with the melody. He's not only been a dear friend over the years, but I've learned so much from him as well. Kenny's

a real genius. I wish people knew how much time he spends working on the music before he records."

"Kenny always had a great sound from the very beginning," Miller adds. "He had his own unique sound, but now, that sound has transformed to a more captivating and lyrical voice. I dare say, Kenny Garrett is one of the most imitated alto saxophonists. I hear little Kenny Garretts everywhere I go on the planet."

So it's no wonder that Berklee bestowed upon Garrett an honorary doctorate and asked him to give the commencement address at its May 2011 graduation ceremony. Four thousand people attended the event, which honored the school's largest graduating class (908 students).

Garrett did his own planting of seeds in his commencement speech, telling graduates, "I'm hear to testify that dreams are possible, but there's work that has to be done to accomplish those dreams. As you stand on the shoulders of our forefathers, try to raise the bar as high as you can."

In reflecting back on the speech, Garrett smiles and says, "All I told them was my own story, which is [that] no one ever told me what I couldn't do. If someone tells you that you can't do something, you go out and do it. There are all types of possibilities. It's not just rhetoric. If someone is telling you that you can't do it, they've already planted a seed. And that kind of seed is an obstacle."

DB



Dear George, Bob, and John,

You guys have given us so much music and inspiration.
The Fringe is a shining light of what true artists do. You'll never
know how much you have influenced me and so many others.

With love and respect,

Jody Espina

**JodyJazz Congratulates George Garzone &
The Fringe On Their 40th Anniversary**

Photo By Jody Espina

40 Years on THE FRINGE

By Claire Daly | Photography by Kelly Davidson

An avant-garde chordless trio with a steady gig for 40 years? Nearly unimaginable, yet this Boston-based trio has maintained a remarkable dedication to the music for four decades—with only a single personnel change. Each member is a virtuoso musician and formidable educator, and the three of them come together weekly to embark on a sonic adventure.

“I think what has made the band survive so long is that we aren’t doing tunes and we aren’t responsible for writing tunes to keep the band fresh,” said saxophonist George Garzone. “The ‘fresh’ is just the improvisation, and that’s what keeps it alive. We go there and play whatever we want. That’s what developed the sound. You never know what’s going to happen.”

Garzone has taught at New England Conservatory, New York University, Manhattan School of Music, The New School and is now exclusively at Berklee College of Music. Drummer Bob Gullotti and bassist John Lockwood (who joined The Fringe in 1984) are on the Berklee faculty. The Fringe’s original bassist, Rich Appleman, will retire this year as the head of Berklee’s bass department. The trio has worked all over the world in various settings, but Monday nights are an event that is never predictable. Like any long-term relationship, the dynamics shift and grow, but their dedication to the music overrides any problems that arise.

Describing the music of The Fringe is challenging. Yes, it’s avant-garde, but it’s also remarkably accessible. At times, the music will soar. All three players will stop and restart together on a dime, astounding listeners. The music breathes, races, pushes, pulls, screams, seduces, taunts and heals—all on its own terms. Seasoned musicians and guys in business suits can be heard screaming to the primal call of The Fringe. Any style of music can weave its way into the set and take over. Acclaimed musicians such as pianist Kenny Werner, saxophonist Dave Liebman or reedist Frank Tiberi might sit in or just hang in the audience to listen.

Fans of The Fringe are plentiful, from teenage students to the biggest names in jazz. In a conference call with DownBeat on March 30, bassist/singer Esperanza Spalding (who graduated from and taught at Berklee) talked about the trio: “The Fringe really are an institution of the avant-garde. They represent the epitome of cultivating something because you believe in it. They all have to be there for the music, and I know they don’t get what they deserve. I love The Fringe. They’re just so important in that they’ve existed for 40 years. When music students are in Boston, they know they can hear the real avant-garde.”

The trio is driven by pure musicality. There has been no business plan. They are on a life mission to serve the music, and what happens around that seems almost incidental to them. If there is a festival audience, or a small room with a few listeners, they go to the same edge of the music. Always searching. Their work has been documented on nine albums, including 2005’s *The Fringe Live At The Zeitgeist*, with guest saxophonist Joe Lovano.

Examining my life as I packed up to move from Boston back to New York in 1985, I wrote that one of my main reasons for being in Boston was to experience the music of The Fringe. They had, at that time, been playing together at Michael’s Pub every Monday for about a decade. As a young saxophonist, I had heard the band for many of those years. In fact, I took the bartending job after having been there every week for a year. When Michael’s closed, they moved to The Willow in Somerville, where they played for 17 years, followed by a stint at the Lizard Lounge. They currently play Mondays at the Lily Pad in

Cambridge, sharing the night with saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi’s quintet.

At times, The Fringe has even shared the bandstand with Bergonzi’s band, creating a massive collective dubbed “Gargonz,” which includes two bassists, two drummers and two tenor players. The last time this occurred, the group played two different tunes at the same time.

“The Fringe has created history,” Bergonzi said. “Everybody who’s been in this city—every student, every musician—has heard The Fringe, and when they have, they’ve had their minds blown. Every time I hear them, I have a belly laugh and I very rarely get that. It’s outrageous—the audacity—I can’t believe it. I get so inspired when I hear these guys. They’re my heroes.”

Garzone, Gullotti and Lockwood sat down for an interview at Garzone’s house on Super Bowl Sunday.

DownBeat: What do you remember about the beginning of The Fringe?

Gullotti: Junior year at Berklee, I met George on an r&b gig. We played together in that band for about a year. I had a nice little apartment with a deaf landlord, so we could play at my apartment and I’d have sessions all the time. That’s how The Fringe started. A lot of times there’d be piano players and guitar players, and vibraphonist Tom van der Geld would come quite often. A few times we couldn’t get a chordal instrument, so we would just play trio. It just started to get a sound of its own, so I stopped inviting others and we developed this trio. We ended up playing on WBUR radio. Saturday night late, like midnight to 4 a.m. on Rob Battles’ show.



The Fringe at the Lily Pad in Cambridge, Mass., March 26



George Garzone



John Lockwood



Bob Gullotti

Garzone: When I met Bob, I was 22 or 23. I would drive down to Rich Appleman's house in Jamaica Plain, and we'd jump in his Checker cab and drive to Waltham to play at Bobby's house. They were a year ahead of me, but this whole youthful thing was about following these guys and seeing what they did. I'm pretty good at picking things up, so what they'd play, I would play. Bobby knew more about the history of jazz than I did, so I learned a lot from the records that he listened to. Rich was the valedictorian of our class. He became the head of the bass department [at Berklee] like the moment he graduated, and he's retiring this year. You've got to have your own thing together, but if you're around people who know what's going on, it's easy to grow.

Those cats literally taught me that there was a whole other thing out there. We went from playing "Blue Bossa" and "Recordame" to taking a hard left into the outside world, and it was just something that happened. We didn't decide, "Let's play free." The music just took us. We never talked about it or questioned it. These guys were so connected to everything—intuitive—they just went with it. Then we got the gig at Michael's. Once we started playing there, all the cats in town felt the place was cool, so the likes of Mike Stern, Jerry Bergonzi, Alan Dawson, James Williams, Bill Pierce started playing there.

When I met Frank Tiberi, it was the first time I had ever heard anyone play something that was completely unrelated. He actually came and sat in with The Fringe in the late '70s. Frank comes down and we're playing free. I said, "Frank, what do you want to play?" He said, "Let's play 'Giant Steps.'" I couldn't play it at that time, so I said, "Frank, you go up and play it." He went up and played 'Steps' and laid this content over that tune



From left: Garzone, Gullotti and Lockwood

like nothing I'd ever heard. I knew that's what I wanted to sound like. Something in that pocket. So we started to hang and Frank liked me, which was great. I've spent [the years from when] I was 28 until the present hanging out with him, just trying to understand what that sound was about.

Lockwood: I was always into playing a little different. Rich Appleman was the original bass player, and he was starting to do a lot of shows so often that they'd call me to sub. That's how it evolved. Then Rich got so busy with the shows and teaching, he didn't want to travel too much, I guess. Around '84 he decided to cut out, and that's when I became the official bass player.

What did you listen to before The Fringe that prepared you for it?

Gullotti: I was listening to a lot of the avant players of the period—Air, The Art Ensemble, Sun Ra, late Coltrane, Ornette, of course—but also straightahead stuff.

Lockwood: One thing that was strange about growing up in South Africa was we had three radio stations and no TV. The hit parade would have something like the Supremes, then you'd have Frank Sinatra singing "My Way," then Booker T & the MGs playing "Green Onions," then the Vanilla Fudge. There was one hit parade, so we listened to everything. After I got into the bass, we'd listen to a lot of the Miles stuff. Someone gave me a reel-to-reel tape at slow speed, so I got to know all this stuff but I didn't know who it was. I came here and people were like, "Do you know this?" I'd say, "I don't think so," but then I'd hear it and go, "Oh, I know that." I was listening to everything. Classical music, Shostakovich, you name it, across the board.

Before you joined the band, you were gigging a lot?

Lockwood: I'd been pretty lucky because I'd done some tours with Joe Henderson, Gary

ORIGINAL FRINGE BASSIST

Rich Appleman, the original bassist of The Fringe, will retire this year as the head of the Bass Department at Berklee College of Music, where he has taught since 1972.

Appleman started playing trumpet after seeing Louis Armstrong perform on "The Ed Sullivan Show." When he was in junior high, the band director gave Appleman a sousaphone because he was big enough to carry it. By high school, he had picked up the upright bass. In a conversation with saxophonist and educator Claire Daly, he reminisced about his younger days:

"I got out of high school in '64 and the Vietnam War was going on. My band director said, 'You

could go in the Navy band and play music.' From 1964-'68 I was in the Navy, so when I got to Berkeley, I was a little older and met my wife. I decided to stay in Boston.

"The vibes player Tom van der Geld had a group called Children At Play. I went to sub there, and he put some notes in front of me and said, 'This is the tune.' I said, 'What's the form or the changes?' He goes, 'No, no, we just play.' That led me to Ornette Coleman, and I loved Charlie Haden in those '60s groups where he was just sort of walking. No real changes, but it was definitely swinging, and no piano.

"I remember listening to Coltrane, Roland Kirk and Albert Ayler [records] at Bob's [apartment]



while we were sessioning there.

"My first apartment was near Michael's Pub. I remember seeing posters of people playing there. We talked to [the venue] and start-

ed the every-Monday-night thing. I was doing a lot of theater work at that time. We had kids in '74 and '77. Many times, the theater gig was six nights a week and I'd be at Michael's on Monday, so my wife really raised the kids.

"I'd always go away with the family in August for two weeks. All of a sudden, this two-week gig in the Azores came up at the same time. We had to do it. I did it, but I felt it tore me between everything else that was going on. But it was time for a change. It just got to the point where we said it was a mutual agreement to find someone else [to play bass for The Fringe]. It was definitely a hard time leaving it because it was family. We've all been through things like that."

FORTY YEARS ON THE FRINGE

The Fringe are Berklee faculty members
George Garzone on tenor, John Lockwood
on bass, and Bob Gullotti on drums.



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Burton, stuff like that. Then Alan Dawson and I were the rhythm section for a lot of names that came through town—Eddie Harris, Herb Ellis and others. We played with Joe Williams, Toots Thielemans. It was a much bigger scene in those days. I'd been playing and traveling a lot. When I joined The Fringe, I was doing some stuff with Freddie Hubbard, too. It's always been like that—if you have other gigs on the road, you'd go off and someone else will come in, but that core group is always there. Most of us teach all day on a Monday, and you go [to the evening gig] and that's your relief.

Let's talk about the experience of being in The Fringe.

Gullotti: The group sound has gotten real strong by such constant, steady work. We've had some big gigs, real big, so called, but for me, if we're playing for 25 or 2,000 people, it's the same once you start playing. When I start to play and we get into our thing, it really doesn't matter where or how much of an audience is there, as long as we can help the music grow. That's why for this band, steady employment has been one of the keys to keeping it together. Now, it's like going to a shrink. Monday nights—*whew*—and I'm cool for the whole week. I can get everything out in a non-ego environment, so I can deal with anything I have to deal with, physically and personally. It's very important.

It's funny—I always said the same thing about hearing you. I would go home feeling that everything was going to be OK.

Garzone: Reflex time is really important, especially when you're playing free because you don't have anything that you're drawing off of, except the rhythm of the moment. Sometimes a lot of that gets missed because people are just too busy thinking about what they want to play and then get out. But with these cats, from playing together so long, the phrasing and breathing together is what mystifies people. Sometimes the shit just stops in midair, and you don't get that with young bands unless they write music that sounds free; whereas with those guys, they're creating and writing the music right there. That's hard to do unless you've been playing together a long time.

Lockwood: It's a marriage. It's the same—you get over those plateaus and dips. There are certain things you do together and you think, even after this amount of time, "Wow, how did that happen?" When you have those kinds of nights, it's beyond explanation. We never talk about anything. For me, that's the great thing because I hate rehashing gigs. It's history, so I'd rather leave it alone. We've gone through a lot of changes over the years musically. It's gone to different areas, and you just play. You become almost like the audience in a sense because you don't know what's going to happen. It could be pretty raw sometimes, and it can sound like a tune. We're as much the listeners as the audience

in a way. It's difficult for some people, but I think if people let themselves go, they can get into it.

The rapport that you guys have seems effortless. I say "seems" because it's from 40 years of gigging together.

Garzone: You've got to tough it out. It's not easy because musical development—to develop things from nothing—you've got to look inside your soul to find it. Sometimes you've got to dig it out, flush it out, then you work at it and you're stuck—and you're stuck and you're stuck—and then all of a sudden, it explodes and *then* it comes across. Then you're cool for another hour. It's interesting how many nights I'd go down there and be so tired from teaching and we'd start playing and [suddenly] I'd just re-energize. Over those 40 years of doing that every week after teaching, it's a lot of stamina and a lot of input and output.



What strikes me is the level of commitment that you've all had to the group for all these years, through all of life's challenges. No matter what else is happening, you guys come together once a week and do this thing. It's extraordinary.

Garzone: I think the big thing is that we all play with enough people and enough groups to know that this is a once-in-a-lifetime thing. When this band is gone, there's never going to be another Fringe. What keeps it together is the fact that we know that if we don't do it and it ends, that's the end of it. I'm not getting on my horse about it—I'm just saying there's nothing like it out there.

I credit The Fringe with helping me to further what I do and what I'm about. Without that band and without playing with them, my life and the way I play would be much different.

Few bands other than the MJQ or the Rolling Stones have been together [this long]. I'm sure they can attest and agree to what I'm saying about what you go through when you've been together for 40 years: We've experienced everything, like the deaths of our parents, divorces, ups and downs within ourselves. But we still hang because the music is so powerful. We know it would never break us, and we know that no matter whom we play with—which is great, we play with everyone out there—there would never be anything as powerful as this force that we have now.

Sometimes this band scares people because when they go see us play it's like seeing a reflection of themselves. It reflects who you really are, and some people don't want to know who they really are for their own reasons. Even myself, sometimes if I'm not in the right reflection, this shit brings it right up.

Gullotti: The aspect of how we've kept this group together is two main reasons: One, the friendship. We are really close friends and there's no negative ego on the bandstand. Secondly, I've developed my individual voice by way of a collective. During one period in my career, I had a lot of styles I could emulate. Someone would say, "Bob, this is kind of Elvin-ish" or "Bob, this is kind of Tony-ish." I was pretty good at emulating those feels because I studied those guys so much. At some point, you have to play just yourself and in your own way: allowing your influences to be heard without copying.

With The Fringe, I had the opportunity to develop [without] having to worry about whether someone liked it or not. If George or John doesn't like what I'm playing, they let it be known musically but without any verbal abuse. George will put his horn up to my nose and blow "Wwwwwhhhhaaaa" in my face, and I'm like "OK, I'll change." Garzone and I have done thousands of duets over the years just working on aspects of the music: "Let's play some uptempo until your arm falls off or my lip breaks." For me, that's the main thing about the group—the close friendship and the fact that we've grown individually because of the collective.

Lockwood: When I first got in there, for some reason I was playing with a lot of electronics and stuff. That kind of drifted in a little bit but it got to be a pain carrying it around. Then it went almost—I don't want to say straight-ahead—but a little bit more that way. It's hard to say, but it went in that zone more. Now, it's kind of a mix. It's constantly changing. There are certain things we might fall into for a while. There was a time we were almost playing three different times running parallel. It wasn't conscious; it just evolved. That's how it felt. When you know people well, it adds to the mix. There's a certain comfort zone. It's like when you go home: You know the smells, you know the food and all that. There's a certain comfort to all that—it's great.

Once I was in Switzerland, and there was this river. I love swimming and I'm pretty good.

But everyone said it's dangerous because it's got these little whirlpools, but every day I wanted to go in. Finally, I jumped in, and it was amazing. I got carried way the hell down and there were all these rapids and it was freezing, but I came out euphoric. I think of *The Fringe* in the same way in that you kind of jump in—you just rely on your instinct and hope for the best and you're in there. If you have an idea of what you're going to do, maybe it's not as much fun.

Gullotti: If a film scorer gets a call to do music, he watches the film and creates. He writes music. An improviser should be able to do the same. A lot of times, what I do with students and myself is to visualize something and try to be the soundtrack to it. That has helped me open up. If you have a specific story: "What if there was a soundtrack to that?" I try to be that soundtrack.

That can open people up from getting away from playing "right" or "wrong" creatively. But again, with more background, more stuff behind it, knowledge behind it, it solidifies it more. I used to turn the sound off on movies, especially Alfred Hitchcock movies, and I'd try to play the soundtrack. Try to make sounds that would make sense, especially if I knew the film. That opened me up somewhat, and I have my students do that. I tell them, "Here's your assignment for this week: You're gonna follow a river. Be the soundtrack to that. It helps, but then work on a Charlie Parker head. Cover both ends and you'll find your way."

I really study straightahead. I work with the *Charlie Parker Omnibook*. I have students and myself play Bird solos on the drum set. I also use the whole Coltrane transcription book, playing Trane stuff because I'm trying to be as melodic as possible. I don't try to emulate the pitches, but the rhythmic aspect of those guys was ridiculous! You learn the tunes. I really study "inside" because that helps my "outside," and I think when we're really on, we don't even sound like we're playing free. Some people ask, "What was that tune you played?" No tune.

John has such [great] ears that he can hear where George is going harmonically. I can hear where George is going rhythmically, and it sounds like we're playing straightahead, but we're improvising completely. I think one helps the other. The more I know about compositions, the more I know about forms, then I have more of a way of not doing it, of playing around it or implying form; therefore, form gets created on its own. We make our own compositions as we go.

Garzone: It's a good atmosphere because everyone's really friendly and it's high level. I go to hear Jerry because he is one of the masters. I sit there and I know my ears are getting refueled. I'm into what he does and he's into what I do, and sometimes he gets up to play with *The Fringe*. I've always felt lucky to be around these players. There was a time when I was still learning, and I was amazed that these guys would [even] talk to me because I couldn't hang the way they could hang. But they could sense what was gonna hap-

pen down the road. I'll always credit them for keeping me under their wing until I could get going because guys like Tiberi, Joe [Lovano], Jerry—they were blowing back then.

When were you a student at Berklee?

Garzone: We all graduated in '72. I started teaching there in '75 and I never left. It just felt like a good place to be. They took care of me right from the beginning. No one ever said, "You're teaching some crazy shit and you need to water it down." They never hassled me about it. I wanted to stay. I enjoyed New

England Conservatory and The New School and NYU and Manhattan School, and everyone was great, but my gut feeling was that toward the end, when you need to start cutting down teaching, I knew Berklee would be the one to take care of me.

You've carried on the work done by master teacher Joe Viola, with whom you started studying at age 15.

Garzone: That's a heavy statement for me to hear because he's still a god to all of us. I mean, even to walk in his footsteps—that's deep. **DB**

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RALPH PETERSON

PROTECTING THE TRUTH

By Ted Panken | Photo by Veronika Morscher

Toward the end of the '80s, Ralph Peterson related, Art Blakey—who first employed him as second drummer in the Jazz Messengers Big Band in 1983—came to his house repeatedly for dinner and a chance to bounce Peterson's daughter, Sonora, on his lap.

"He liked my curry," Peterson recalled. Dressed in sweats and sneakers, he sat on a piano bench in a compact Times Square rehearsal studio, directly opposite the former karate champion Anthony "Mafia" Holloway, his companion on the ride in from the Boston suburbs. They would continue on to Philadelphia, where, the next morning, Peterson—who recently earned his third-degree black belt—would referee and Holloway would senior-arbitrate a sport karate tournament.

Peterson cupped his belly. "You can see I'm still good at cooking," he joked. He has a Thanksgiving custom of inviting students at Berklee College of Music, where he is professor of percussion, to his house for dinner. "I cook for days in advance," he said. "Last time, after we played, I started wondering why I was looking to New York for the next crop of talent. I'm sitting here in the incubator! The apprenticeship system in New York is different than when I got here, when you could still develop in bands and clubs. That's fine—God gives you lemons and you have to make lemonade. You've got to try to carry on this tradition and protect the truth about what the music is from wherever you are on the playing field of life."

To demonstrate his thoughts on the subject, he opened a MacBook and pulled up the artwork for *The Duality Perspective*, the second release on Onyx, his imprint. It follows *Outer Reaches*, an organ-and-two-horns program that's a fresh, ferocious-to-reflective meditation on the legacies of organ visionary Larry Young and trumpet prophet Woody Shaw and the drummers who propelled them—Elvin Jones and Tony Williams, in particular—refracted through Peterson's across-the-timeline drum conception.

The *Duality* cover features the yin-yang symbol—one side black, the other white—with Peterson's profile nestled in the crook of a tree amid branches that spread out, tagged with names of the current personnel for the two primary groups that he has used for decades. The branches shooting rightward represent his sporadically working sextet (Sean Jones, trumpet; Tia Fuller, alto and soprano saxophone; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone; Zaccai Curtis, piano; Luques Curtis, bass); the sprigs on the left signify his Fo'tet, comprising Berklee wunderkinds Felix Peikli on clarinets, Joseph Doubleday on vibraphone and Alexander Toth on bass, plus special guests Bryan Carrott (marimba) and Reinaldo De Jesus (percus-

sion). Six roots at the bottom are for mentors from Peterson's early years—Blakey, Jones, Michael Carvin, Paul Jeffrey, Walter Davis and Bill Fielder.

"You could lend either color to either band," Peterson remarked. "I'm the common element that binds them—the solid high-impact of the sextet and the almost translucent sound of the Fo'tet, which someone once described as a steel fist in a velvet glove."

Both sounds entered the jazz lexicon via five individualistic albums recorded between April 1988 and August 1990 for the Japanese label Somethin' Else and issued domestically by Blue Note, which, as part of its mid-decade relaunch, assembled the hand-picked "young lion" sextet OTB (Out Of The Blue), for which Peterson propelled three dates with a big beat so evocative of Blakey's that insiders dubbed him "Baby Bu." (A decade later, Jones himself cosigned Peterson's authoritative assimilation of his language when, coming off surgery, he called the acolyte to cover for him—"just in case"—during a week at Manhattan's Blue Note.)

On *V* and *Volition*, Peterson presented his quintet music with trumpeter Terence Blanchard, saxophonist Steve Wilson, pianist Geri Allen and bassist Phil Bowler. The songs contained striking melodies and meaty harmonic structures that inferred the most progressive thinking of the '60s. Peterson animated them with a host of rhythmic strategies, articulating thick, four-to-the-floor swing, asymmetrical meters at once highbrow and elemental, ebullient Afro-Beats and an unorthodox conception of the second line groove—Peterson calls it "funk with a limp"—that he'd developed prior to OTB with the Harrison-Blanchard Quintet. Throughout the proceedings, he displayed high musical acumen, sustaining consistent dialogue with the soloists, responding to their twists and turns while also anticipating their next moves.

These albums were influential amongst Generation X-ers, as was *Triangular*, an interactive trio recital with Allen and bassist Essiet Okon Essiet that Peterson describes as "part Monk, part Bud Powell and part Eric Dolphy, while reflecting my love for Jaki Byard and Andrew Hill."

"They profoundly affected me and a lot of people I was coming up with," said bassist Eric Revis, who played in Peterson's quintet between 2001 and 2003 with trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, saxophonist Jimmy Greene and



pianist Orrin Evans. “The seminal record of that time had been [Wynton Marsalis’s] *Black Codes (From The Underground)*, but this was different, with all these different time signatures, beautiful melodies and an attitude that was so in-your-face. A lot of records then had not-very-good tunes and cats who could play the hell out of their instruments. This was one of the few where everything fell together.”

“That quintet was the next sound,” said drummer Eric Harland. “I liked the way Ralph and Geri would weave in and out of odd meters without it feeling as if you were counting to, say, an Indian raga or *tal*. He was just allowing himself to exist within the music. On those OTB records, he was playing over the stuff like a piano player. I loved Ralph’s fluidness, that he wasn’t bound by the theory of jazz drumming. His approach sounded organic, not patternistic; he was playing what he heard.”

In 1989 and 1990, Peterson established the sonic template he would chase for the next decade with *Presents The Fo’tet* and *Ornettology*. Joined by Don Byron on clarinet and bass clarinet, Bryan Carrott on vibes and marimba and Melissa Slocum on bass, he drew on lessons learned during late-’80s engagements with older experimentalists like Henry Threadgill and David Murray, constructing programs that involved “looser interpretation, less harmonic constraint and giving free rein to the primal elements of music.” Toward that end, Peterson orchestrated the interpretations—the repertoire mixed venturesome tunes by Fo’tet personnel with challenging items by Billy Strayhorn, Wayne Shorter, Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman—with rubato drums-and-cymbals tone poems and, as he puts it, “deep grooves that make you want to dance but you trip over yourself because it’s not quite symmetrical.”

“Within my generation was this notion that swing only moved a certain way, in a certain time signature, with a certain feel,” Peterson said. “People who said that didn’t know jack about the way music swung in Trinidad, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, or Brazil. If you listen and your body starts moving beyond your conscious control, you are under the influence of

swing. It doesn’t have to be based on *ding-ding, da-ding-ding, da-ding*.

“An element of the ultra-conservative approach was too pristine for me. It didn’t have the energy of the motherland and the fire and fury of what we’ve survived as people in the Middle Passage. On the other hand, while I appreciated having no holds barred, I was also taught the importance of being able to express that level of freedom within the harmonic construct. I was looking for something that would be a little bit of both.”

As this period of creative efflorescence was unfolding, Peterson was beginning to unravel. As he puts it, his use of mind-altering substances “stopped being cute” and “the darkness of it accelerated.” He made several attempts to reverse the implosion, documenting his recovery efforts via the Fo’tet—with Wilson playing soprano sax—on *The Reclamation Project*, a 1994 session consisting of original music, and 1995’s *The Fo’tet Plays Monk*, comprising creative treatments of nine of the pianist’s gnarlier lines.

“I don’t hide my addiction and what I’ve overcome from my students,” said Peterson, who traces his sobriety to May 24, 1996. “Students have come to me because they feel safe. Once you build that kind of trust, you can teach something about music, too. That’s the way I trusted Walter Davis.”

A contemporary of Sonny Rollins, Walter Davis Jr. was a pianist who was close to Bud Powell, and whose tunes were staples of the Messengers’ book. Davis hired Peterson soon after he’d graduated from Rutgers University. “Walter taught me the tradition of Bud and Monk,” Peterson said. “He thought of trio in a triangular manner, not that the bass and drums lay down a carpet, but always a three-way conversation.”

Peterson also garnered bandstand experience on gigs with Davis and Rutgers professor Paul Jeffrey, a saxophonist who music-directed for Monk in the ’70s. (Peterson played Monk’s funeral with him in 1982.) The young drummer took full advantage of Rutgers’ superior music faculty. “All the music from *V* and *Triangular* were writing assignments from my keyboard harmony class with Kenny Barron,” he recalled. “Through Bill Fielder I gained a fascination for how McCoy Tyner seemed to speak in a language

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all his own, for how could I get all of my music to sound different and the same at the *same* time. Certain harmonic passages were therapeutic. They could change the way I feel. Whenever I found something like that at the piano, I wrote it down, and it became part of a composition.”

The son of a police officer who rose to be mayor of Pleasantville, N.J., Peterson took up trumpet in fourth grade. He describes his early drumming personality as a self-taught “basement experience.”

Peterson initially was a trumpet student at Rutgers, but he quickly persuaded drum professor Michael “Thabo” Carvin to take him on, beginning a profound master-apprentice relationship.

“Michael told me to pick someone and make him my guy,” Peterson said. “He’d watch me sit in their space as long as I could, as deep as I could go. Then he’d tell me to divorce myself—‘Don’t play that anymore when you come into my room.’ That forced me to learn somebody else. When I came back to my guy, the two were connected. It’s the process Tony Williams referred to in his 1979 Zildjian Day interview, when he was asked if he had his own style. He said that he was just playing what he thought Max Roach and Art and Elvin would be playing if he were them.

“That’s what I teach my drummers now. They name guys who are younger than me, and I say, ‘OK, but do you know who *they* listened to? How can you effectively copy them if you don’t know where they came from? Then you’re tracing a lineage.’ That’s what some young players don’t understand about the importance of music as art, as opposed to as popularity and product. One is not going to be around in 50 years.”

Reinforcing that sensibility were components of Carvin’s pedagogy that transcended technical particulars. “Thabo taught me that all drumming is sleight of hand, like a magic show. If you watch videos of Papa Jo Jones, it doesn’t look like he’s playing the things he’s playing. Before I knew who Papa Jo was, Carvin took me to his apartment—we’d clean it, and he’d fix some eggs. Later, it registered how important those moments were.”

Closing in on his 50th birthday and his 16th year of sobriety, Peterson talked the talk of someone comfortable in his own skin.

“I almost killed myself trying to be somebody else,” he said. “I failed miserably in every conceivable aspect. Trying to figure out how not to be completely swallowed by my love for Art Blakey. Having the same experience with Elvin. Where do I fit in? Am I swinging hard enough?

“Now I’m not making things happen; I’m letting them happen. I’ve stopped trying to be the mighty oak. There’s a tune on my new record called ‘Bamboo Bends In A Storm.’ I’ve started to fold my arms and let storms in life blow over. As my musical IQ increased, my desperate need to cover shit up with velocity and pyrotechnics has rolled out like the tide. The dialogue is multi-directional within the group, not binary with soloists. It’s more thoughtful. It’s more considerate. But I still push music to the edge of the energy envelope, because I believe that’s where creativity is.”

Those dynamics mark Peterson’s playing with Zaccai and Luques Curtis on the sextet tracks of *Duality Perspective* and on their 2011 release *The Completion Project* (Truth/Revolution), which offers him the opportunity to lock in with percussionists Pedro Martinez, Rogerio Boccato and Reinaldo De Jesus. It’s evident that the drummer—who played alongside percussionist Pernell Saturnino during a 1999 engagement with David Sánchez—has devoted much energy toward assimilating the fundamentals of Afro-Caribbean drum dialects.

“Pernell pointed out that the first word in ‘Afro-Caribbean’ is not ‘Caribbean,’” Peterson said. “I started to feel clarity—that I have a relationship to timbales and music of the Afro-Caribbean culture because I was *born* into it. Instead of trying to be the African American who was attached to the Caribbean piece, it’s OK that my grandmother was born in Trinidad and raised in Barbados. A thread runs through the music of that region back to West Africa. I may not play the Afro-Cuban grooves in 7 and clave the way the Cuban purists believe it should be done. But it didn’t start in Cuba. It actually started in Guinea and Senegal. My affinity for loving Art and Elvin is born of that same thread. So I’m accepting me.

“Why you play something is more important than what you play. Don’t check out the thinnest, newest branch on the tree. If you dig into the root instead of being distracted by the fruit, the root will teach you what the fruit means. Then you can push forward.”

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HUMAN VOICE

The harmonica virtuoso discusses his long-awaited debut album

By Ken Micallef | Photo by Ingrid Hertfelder

Jazz is an art form that has always adopted and adapted instruments associated with other, older, musical styles. The xylophone and marimba are centuries-old orchestral instruments, as are the saxophone, concert snare drum and violin. But the harmonica, with its roots in German beer-hall bands, has only recently been considered a true jazz instrument.

Toots Thielemans, Larry Adler and Howard Levy brought the harmonica to public consciousness working in the realms of jazz, pop and soundtracks. Beginning in the late 1990s, Grégoire Maret infiltrated New York jazz circles, bringing flawless technique, emotional weight and unique style to the recordings and performances of Cassandra Wilson, Jeff “Tain” Watts, Pat Metheny, Marcus Miller, Herbie Hancock, George Benson, Lionel Loueke and Meshell Ndegeocello, to name a few. Whether he’s creating warm textures, improvising at an almost telepathic level or performing blazing solos, Maret is a master musician, and practically without peer on his instrument.

“I wouldn’t draw a direct comparison, but the contours of some of the things Grégoire likes to do are reminiscent of the twists and turns of line favored by Steve Coleman, whom we have both worked with,” pianist Andy Milne says. Milne and Maret recorded the duo album *Scenarios* in 2007. “But the flip side that is slightly different is that Grégoire has this strong thread of lyricism that goes all the way through his playing to someone like Toots Thielemans.

“The harmonica is so complex in terms

of the micro aspect of the mechanism itself,” Milne adds. “It’s not a big instrument, and the slightest movement, and different ways of playing it, call upon the musician to listen closely. Grégoire can be almost quiet in his observation of what he’s going to contribute because he is thinking about how he’s going to transport that into the moment. There aren’t so many examples of how to contribute to the music on his instrument.”

After some 50 recordings as an accompanist, Maret’s self-titled debut on eOne Music is a mature musical statement, as individualistic, soulful and thematically concise as his contributions to the many musicians who stock his resume. Some of those musicians appear on his debut in various forms: Maret covers Pat Metheny’s “Travels,” he creates a brilliant arrangement of “The Man I Love” for guest vocalist Cassandra Wilson, and an equally unique version of Stevie Wonder’s “The Secret Life Of Plants.” Maret includes bassist Marcus Miller in “Crepuscule Suite,” and duets with his hero Toots Thielemans on Ivan Lins’ “O Amor E O Meu Pais.” A thread of world music romanticism is interwoven throughout Maret’s music: warm-blooded percus-

sion that recalls Weather Report’s Manolo Badrena and Alex Acuña, stylized Brazilian rhythms and compositional references to the music of Argentina, Cuba and American jazz. Like his harmonica playing, Maret’s music is lush, rich and heartfelt.

Entering a Brooklyn diner, the Swiss-born Maret appears almost slight, his small, athletic frame, shaved skull and soft demeanor giving him the air of a Sufi mystic. Deep-set eyes and a placid smile further the impression that Maret is a reflective musician. His harmonica playing—which is often greeted with surprise, given its context—is equally thoughtful.

“I think I was almost made to play harmonica,” he says. “I have a real connection to it, and it feels like it’s my voice. It’s really my instrument. There’s nothing else that I feel so close to.”

Maret, 37, thinks he knows why the harmonica touches everyone, regardless of their musical tastes.

“The harmonica is very, very close to the human voice,” Maret says. “In the womb, the first thing you hear is the heartbeat of your mother and the sound of her voice. The harmonica resonates in everyone’s soul; it’s



really deep. I'll see the reaction of the audience to my solos and it's always different. It's the same reaction when you get close to the drums: People get really excited. It's going back to their core. The harmonica is very close to the voice so it goes to that same very sensitive spot."

Maret's style is often sweet and soulful, but as can be heard on other artists' albums, and on his leader debut, the harmonica can also be a bold improvisational instrument—light years removed from the folk, easy-listening and campfire tunes that some people associate with the instrument. In the hands of a virtuoso like Maret, the harmonica is by turns sorrowful, mysterious, intense and inspirational.

"The most important part of jazz improvisation is to have a solid rhythmic base," Maret says. "If your rhythm is weak—no matter how sophisticated you are harmonically and melodically—it's not going to sound that good."

"The problem with the harmonica," he continues, "is the delay between the note that you play and when that note comes out. It doesn't come out right away sometimes. That's really challenging to master in terms of being able to play solos and to be precise rhythmically. It's quite a skill. That was the most difficult thing to master. Then it was just about finding the freedom where I could play whatever I heard."

Maret's mother is from Harlem, and his father is from Geneva, where he was born

and raised. When not traveling to his father's Dixieland gigs where he played banjo, Maret was listening to his large record collection, which included Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, King Oliver, the Beatles and the Eagles. By the time he arrived in high school, Maret was playing harmonica, mostly the blues. Luther Allison, Junior Wells, James Cotton, Sonny Boy Williamson, and eventually, Thielemans and Stevie Wonder, all became his heroes.

"Stevie and Toots created a world that didn't exist before on the harmonica," he says. "I love Stevie's 'Fingertips, [Parts] 1 and 2.' That was his first hit when he was 12, just him and his harmonica and an orchestra. His harmonica is so close to his voice, the way he sings. So whatever he plays, I just love. Toots is the same. Now he's got less chops and he's older, but he can play one note and it's the only note that's essential, and it will be way more meaningful than if he'd played 10 notes."

When Maret enrolled at the Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique de Genève, he was required to learn the classical repertoire. With no precedent or method for translating dense orchestral scores to the harmonica, Maret spent a year learning single pieces of music by Bach and Chopin. In doing so, he also had to master the chromatic harmonica, replacing his standard B-flat, or blues, harmonica.

"If you want to get to other notes that are

not in standard tuning on the B-flat harmonica, you've got to bend the notes and work on the reeds," Maret explains. "You have to force the harmonica to give you those notes. With the chromatic harmonica, you have every note available. Then you can also bend the notes, but it's already chromatically tuned. With the diatonic harmonica, with each key you basically change the harmonica. On the chromatic, you can automatically play all 12 keys."

After conservatory, Maret attended New York's New School. Often practicing his tone for two or three hours a day (typically playing one note), he also devoted a year to learning John Coltrane's "26-2," a combination of Charlie Parker's "Confirmation" and the changes to "Giant Steps."

"I practiced exercises that I created just to have fluidity on the instrument," Maret recalls. "I studied with George Garzone, Gary Dial and Steve Coleman. I also practiced for specific gigs. When Steve Coleman called me to record, I had to find a way of playing with him that made sense for his music. I was basically relearning each gig to find new ways to play each time. With Charlie Hunter, I had to learn how to fit into a horn section, and with Pat Metheny, you have to fit his aesthetic. Herbie Hancock never said anything. I felt totally at home. I had grown up with Herbie [by] listening to Miles Davis."

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At the beginning of his recording career, Maret appeared on albums by Leon Parker, Jimmy Scott and Jacky Terrasson, as well as on Jeff “Tain” Watts’ 2002 disc *Bar Talk*.

“On my early records I put together a core band, then I wanted to include other people, and Grégoire was everywhere then,” Watts recalls. “He definitely made *Bar Talk* special for me. There’s a certain natural friendliness to the harmonica that is universal. I hadn’t thought of using harmonica, because it’s so rare that someone has a great sound and great phrasing but can also improvise so it’s not just a gimmick. There aren’t many people who’ve really mastered the chromatic harmonica and dealt with chord changes. Grégoire is one of that handful, and he has this beautiful energy off the stand that makes him so cool.”

The buzz on Maret led to work with the jazz elite, and he repays the privilege with an album of virtual tributes. But far from a simple homage, he weaves his aesthetic through the guest commentaries and cover material. Throughout his album, his unique voice and personality permeate the music. The album’s lineup includes Watts and Clarence Penn on drums, producer and keyboardist Frederico G. Peña, bassist James Genus, guitarist Brandon Ross and percussionists Bashiri Johnson, Alfredo Mojica and Mino Cinelu.

“I thought about the album for a long time,” Maret comments. “I wanted to explore the idea that the harmonica is so close to the voice, and also using the voice as an instrument rather than like a singer singing a song. That’s why I have the song ‘Prayer’ with Take 6, where they sing chords, and again on ‘Children’s Song,’ where Gretchen Parlato sings a counter-line with the harmonica. There are beautiful textures that I wanted to explore. People will talk about world music, but I don’t think like that. I love certain African music from Senegal, from Brazil, from places in Northern Africa. I love all the beautiful ways people play percussion in different parts of the world, and I wanted to bring that to this record. That’s a major part of the compositions and the arrangements.”

Maret’s arrangement of “The Man I Love” for Cassandra Wilson blends a simmering Latin groove with an unusual bridge delivered via a string section and change of tempo.

“I wrote that arrangement for Cassandra before I played with her, when I was still in school. I always loved the way she sang and her arrangements and compositions. I really heard her singing that song. It’s very simple; she’s following the leading tones of the harmony. But the song doesn’t resolve; it keeps vamping on E-flat. I set up a totally different tempo for the bridge, so it’s a real shock. I wanted something that sounded almost opposite so I went with a slower tempo. There is a mathematical relationship—it’s not random.”

“O Amor E O Meu Pais” contrasts Maret’s and Thielemans’ differing styles against a lush orchestra and percolating Latin percussion.

“I wanted to express how much I admire and love Toots, but at the same time, it was important to make sure you can hear our separate identities. It’s an arrangement that I didn’t try to force; you can hear that we are ourselves. I recorded the piece with an orchestra in Warsaw, then Toots recorded later in Belgium. He did it pretty quickly, interacting with me in an amazing way. I was impressed with his counter-lines.”

Maret constantly composes music, and he already has enough material for two more albums. The next record will be an orches-

tra and harmonica recording, the other a more song-focused work.

Maret’s description of “Children’s Suite” from his current record is an apt depiction of the feeling one gets listening to his warm-hearted music: “It’s about that time between day and night. Dusk to dawn. To me it’s a magical time. It’s not the day, it’s not the night, it’s this mystical crazy time. It’s not clear or defined. I wanted to look at that song almost as a period of 25 hours where you get the whole night, and then the moment where it’s the exact opposite. You see the day, but not quite.”

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HAILEY NISWANGER

The Right Direction

By Michael J. West

Alto saxophonist Hailey Niswanger didn't have a regular gig, or even a one-off date, waiting for her when she moved to New York in January. Relocating was, she says, "just the natural progression of things."

Niswanger, 22, came to the Big Apple from Boston after graduating from Berklee College of Music in 2011. By any measure, she's at the beginning of her career, but she's by no means unaccomplished. Niswanger, who was born in Houston but grew up in Portland, Ore., won the saxophone competition at the 2008 Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival. The next year she became the first-ever female member of the acclaimed Either/Orchestra, which she is only now departing. Last fall she recorded *The Keeper*, her second album, for an April 24 release on her own Calmit Productions record label.

Coming to New York simply made sense after that—even without work lined up, she explains over coffee at Linger, a brunch spot in Brooklyn's Boerum Hill neighborhood. "I didn't want to stay in Boston," she says. "It's a good city for education, but not for gigging. Moving back to Portland wasn't an option; not enough people to play with. And I'm not an L.A. girl. A lot of people who graduated from Berklee had moved here, and they were people I wanted to play with. So this is the place to be."

It's no coincidence, then, that *The Keeper* is entirely populated with friends from Berklee. Accompanying Niswanger (who plays soprano sax in addition to alto on the disc) are pianist Takeshi Ohbayashi, bassist Max Moran and drummer Mark Whitfield Jr., all of whom graduated in 2010 or 2011. Also appearing on three tracks is trumpeter Darren Barrett, not only a graduate of Berklee, but currently an associate professor in its Ensemble department who taught Niswanger in a quintet context.

"Hailey's a great talent, and very dedicated," says Barrett. "And since we'd already learned how to phrase together, she left it up to me to phrase it how I heard it. It's beautiful when there's that trust in playing her music."

Her music, indeed. Niswanger's first album, 2009's *Confeddie*, comprised seven standards and the self-composed title track, but eight of the 11 tunes on *The Keeper* are hers. "She's a won-



derful composer who writes beautiful tunes," says Barrett.

"There's something about having your own writing that really brings about your own voice in jazz," adds Niswanger.

The path to that voice has been short, but eventful. A former student of music educator Thara Memory (who also mentored another Portlander, Esperanza Spalding), Niswanger was an 18-year-old high school senior when she won the Mary Lou Williams competition in Washington, D.C. That victory earned her a featured artist spot at the following year's festival. From Niswanger's perspective, it also lit a fire under her, in terms of artistic ambition. "My whole purpose for getting *Confeddie* out

was that Mary Lou Williams show," she recalls. "I was like, 'Oh my God, I've got this headlining gig. I guess I should have something—not so much to sell, but to show for myself and to have people take away from that performance.'"

If necessity breeds invention, it also breeds speed. Niswanger, by then a freshman at Berklee, decided to make a CD in January 2009; she recorded it in March with some classmates, and in May, with the help of her parents, had *Confeddie* pressed, packaged and ready for sale. It became available that month on the Internet (through Niswanger's website as well as Amazon, iTunes and CD Baby) and at the Mary Lou Williams Festival concert.

Confeddie was never meant to be a revenue stream, but rather something to break her to the jazz audience. "I didn't make a whole lot," she admits, "but I sold a lot." In fact, before 2009 ended, the teenager's self-produced venture had cracked the Billboard, JazzWeek and CMJ jazz charts, gotten airplay on more than 100 radio stations and received glowing critical acclaim that even extended to some year-end top 10 lists. Among those who heard it was Either/Orchestra leader Russ Gershon. At the time, he was looking to replace the departing Godwin Louis as his ensemble's alto saxophonist. (E/O's alto chair is something of a star-maker: Occupants have included Miguel Zenón, Andrew D'Angelo and Jaleel Shaw.)

"I said, 'Hmm, interesting—a girl!'" Gershon chuckles. "We'd never had one of those in the band before!"

He sent Niswanger an e-mail expressing interest. She responded favorably, and Gershon gave her some music to study and invited her to audition. "It was the first and last audition," he says. "She did her homework, played the stuff great. There was nothing meek about her playing; she went for it all the way. And so, she was in the band."

It was a steady enough gig that Niswanger held it for two-and-a-half years, remaining in Boston after graduating from Berklee. It was

during those first months out of school, however, that she decided to make her second solo recording—this time with mostly original tunes and without her parents' financial assistance.

That meant taking more time, planning carefully and finding inexpensive methods. For starters, she made use of her comrades-in-arms. "It was an all-friend project," Niswanger explains. "The musicians who played on it were friends. The recording engineer was actually one of my friends from Berklee as well, so he gave me a good deal." In addition, she planned to do the recording session in a small room at Emerson College that was mostly used for live audio and video broadcasts. Using that room, without studio separation, allowed the musicians to get 12 hours of recording time for less than \$200. They paid \$300 for the engineer.

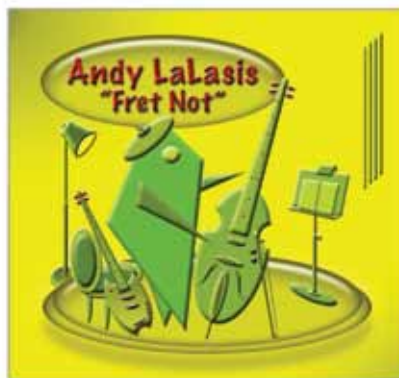
Still, there were the costs associated with pressing, packaging and distributing the disc, including a distribution arrangement with CD Baby. She also hired publicists for radio and press, which significantly increased her expenses. To help cover the costs, Niswanger initiated an online Kickstarter campaign, aiming to raise \$16,500 in donations just to break even on the venture. According to a posting on her Kickstarter page, she met the funding goal in early April, thanks to 206 backers.

Niswanger has little concern for making a big paycheck from CD sales. Like *Confeddie* before it, the purpose of *The Keeper* is to generate name recognition, this time as a composer as well as a player, and perhaps attract someone other than Calmit Productions (Niswanger's "corporate" alter ego) to finance the next project. "Who knows? Maybe it's a better deal for me to have it on my own label than it would be to have it on Concord or whatever," she notes. "I'm not saying that if I ever were approached by someone that I'd turn it down, but I'd definitely think about it, and [ask myself], 'Is this actually the best thing?'"

Those who know her have no doubt that she'll find the best thing. "She has the power to be one of the best female alto saxophonists in the country, if not the world," says Barrett. "She knows what she wants to do, and all the talent and the drive is there for success. She works her butt off. If you've got that work ethic, nothing's going to stop you."

In the meantime, Niswanger is working to establish herself in New York in a time-honored fashion: going to jam sessions, making friends and building personal connections. Her connection with Esperanza Spalding recently landed her an opportunity to sub on a rehearsal for Spalding's upcoming tour. That rehearsal subsequently led to an invitation to perform with Spalding on TV. "I am, in a sense, doing work just by going out," she says. "That's part of it: getting the scene, going out to these clubs and getting to know the people. So I'm taking a step in the right direction."

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EVAN COBB

Nashville Know-how

By Bob Doerschuk

Four years ago, Evan Cobb moved from New York City to Nashville, Tenn. His reason was as valid as any could be for a guy in his mid-twenties: He was dating a woman at Vanderbilt University. Nowadays he's happy to call Music City home.

"When I got here, people immediately started taking me under their wings," says the saxophonist and oboist, relaxing on the veranda of the Crema coffee shop, the downtown Nashville skyline towering a few blocks away. "It seemed like it was pretty easy to get along in this city. There were lots of musical opportunities. The community seemed to be more welcoming than in the great jazz world of New York, so I figured I might as well go for it."

Cobb, 31, has put together a steady routine both playing and teaching music. He admits he couldn't have done it without the training he received as an oboe student at Northwestern University and later at SUNY Purchase, where he received his master's degree. At least as important was the time he spent away from the campus, learning about professionalism, compartment on stage and other essentials by observing his teachers at their gigs.

"The faculty at Purchase was great, but everything was happening in New York City," he recalls. "That's where they conducted their business. I would see everything: how they dressed, their stage manner, how they treated the crowd and the employees at the bar. You could see when bands were happy and when they just treated it as a job."

Even earlier, while touring with a Chicago-based jam band called Buddha's Belly before enrolling at Purchase, Cobb had been thinking about how to prepare for a full-time career in music. Once he'd settled in Nashville, he assessed what the scene had to offer and did what had to be done to make sure he would survive and even prosper there, personally and creatively.

"I was lucky not to have college debt," he says. "If I had to write \$450 checks every month, with my credit going way down, it would have put me under almost insurmountable pressure. But it really took me just a couple of months to get on my feet here."

He began by setting up shop as a freelance teacher. Step one involved getting to know some local players who were already established in that area, including saxophonists Don Aliquo, Jeff Coffin, Matt Davich and Denis Solee. Word of Cobb's arrival and capabilities spread through the network quickly. "The second month I was here, Chris West was going to Europe with the



Dynamites for a couple weeks," Cobb remembers. "He got my name from Don and called me, and I did all his teaching during that time. He probably had about 20 students, and I was thinking, 'Wow, this is the way to go!'"

So Cobb got some business cards printed up and dropped in on a meeting of the Middle Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Association. "I swallowed my pride, introduced myself and got a bevy of my own schools where I could teach," he says.

Cobb's website and his CD, *Falling Up*, also function as calling cards for peers as well as audiences. A tech-savvy friend helped him set up the elegantly designed EvanCobbJazz.com, which provides easy access to his blog, biography and photos. Cobb updates it periodically through WordPress and calls his friend no more than once or twice a year for technical help. And *Falling Up* was released physically as well as digitally for specific business reasons, paid for with about \$4,000 raised at Kickstarter.com.

"I did hire a publicist, who distributed [*Falling Up*] to a good radio list," he notes. "It's gotten some radio play, which is nice. Yes, the business is changing, but just about everybody you're going to want to have your music is going to want your CD. Just last night, I went out to [bassist] Victor Wooten's camp to observe and hang. Bob Franceschini, this big-time saxophonist, was there, and I was ready with a copy of the CD to give him. I'm not going to say, 'Give me your email and I'll send you a link.' You don't want to make anybody do any extra work."

With teaching providing a significant part of his income, Cobb built his other activities around its seasonal nature. "You know you'll have spring breaks and when they come, depending on which county the school is," he says. "And my [number of] lessons goes from about 30 to six in the summer, so I've really got to budget. Luckily, most of these schools also do band camps, so I'll get hired for a week or two as an instructor. I'll also book more funk band road stuff in the summer and plan to get more of my own creative projects done at that time."

While conceding that jazz gigs are scarcer in Nashville than in many larger cities, Cobb points out that there's a flip side to that situation. "There are fewer places to play in the standard jazz quintet mode, but there aren't fewer musical opportunities," he observes. "For example, I play with the Nashville Symphony. I would never, ever get called to play with the New York Philharmonic. But here, I've gotten to play classical concerts. I played the *Bolero* solo this summer under Giancarlo [Guerrero, musical director of the Nashville Symphony], which was incredible. I even played Jazz at Lincoln Center just this past winter, and that wouldn't have happened while I was living there."

If there's one lesson to draw from Cobb's varied accomplishments in Nashville, that would be to put a huge amount of energy into networking. "Playing well is such a small part of the gig," he reflects. "Getting on people's call lists isn't just about, 'Hey, listen to me play "Giant Steps."'" You might be an incredible player, but you have to earn your way onto the list by being a strong musician, well-rounded and approachable—somebody who's not just a soloist but who knows how to make the whole band better."

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Valuable Art

By Bobby Reed

Luke Kaven is a one-man record company, which means that multitasking is a way of life for him. “There are cases where I wore every hat, from being the recording engineer to the photographer to writing the liner notes and designing the packaging,” said Kaven, president of Smalls Records. “There are other projects in which a few close associates offer up their services at a good rate for the sake of getting great music out there.”

Kaven founded Smalls Records in 2000 and released the label’s first CD four years later. Today, its catalog includes 52 titles from artists such as drummer Dan Aran, bassist Omer Avital, saxophonist Alex Hoffman, bassist Neal Caine and the late pianist Frank Hewitt, whom Kaven credits as being one of his key inspirations for starting the label.

In the 1990s, Kaven spent many late nights at the New York jazz venue Smalls. Amazed by the music he heard, and sensing how fertile the scene was, Kaven felt it was important to document the work of Hewitt and other artists who performed regularly at the West Village venue. Through negotiation with the owner of the club, Kaven was given permission to use the name Smalls for the label Smalls Records. (The label Smalls Records predates the formation of a different label, SmallsLIVE, which is run by the current ownership of the venue.)

One of the most popular titles in the Smalls Records catalog is guitarist Gilad Hekselman’s *Split Life*, which was recorded over the course of two nights in 2006 at the New York club Fat Cat. Smalls Records has released studio dates as well, including Harold O’Neal’s solo piano album *Marvelous Fantasy*.

Running a label with limited resources is a challenge, and Kaven has considered the possibility of changing to become a 501(c)(3) organization. Despite the obstacles of running an indie label in a troubled economy, Kaven remains deeply committed to nurturing jazz.

“Most labels that undertake original productions have either shrunken or folded,” he said. “The only profitable model that I know of these days is licensing, which involves taking recordings that artists have already made and produced on their own, and licensing them for a positive cash outcome. In a case like that, the label takes very little risk, does real work, and assures itself that it gets paid. There’s a benefit to that kind of a label, but it creates an environment in which the most promising artists—who are not necessarily the ones with money to fund their own productions, or the ones who are technically or otherwise adept enough to undertake that as a project—are going unrecorded and unheard. That is stifling the development of the music. What I want to do is to



raise the level of social awareness, particularly among buyers, and encourage them to take on these independent labels as arts projects that need their support in order to survive.”

Kaven, a graduate of Hampshire College who studied music theory with Dr. Roland Wiggins, added that Smalls Records has released titles using both approaches: original productions and recordings that were licensed to the label.

For the recording session for *Marvelous Fantasy*, Kaven obtained use of a rare instrument, which he described as “a Civil War-era Steinway in perfect regulation.” O’Neal was thrilled to play the instrument, and he enjoyed working with Kaven, who produced the album.

“It’s not what Luke necessarily did with the label; it’s what he *didn’t* do,” O’Neal said. “He didn’t get in the way of the artistic approaches, as far as what takes or what songs would go on the album. I had the freedom to do what I wanted to do. With that kind of label, that’s one thing I greatly appreciate—an opportunity where they say, ‘We’re going to provide a vehicle for you to create, but it’s your say, your choice.’”

Kaven, who is an accomplished profession-

al photographer, has shot numerous covers for Smalls Records, but he had something special in mind for *Marvelous Fantasy*. He enlisted the renowned photographer Larry Fink—whose books include *Social Graces* and *Somewhere There’s Music*—to shoot the album cover and images for the CD booklet.

Bassist Ari Roland, who has appeared on many Smalls Records albums as a sideman and as a leader, is adamant about setting up recording sessions with all the musicians in a single room, with no booths or dividers between them—a request that Kaven gladly accommodated.

“There has not been a single thing that I wanted to do where Luke said, ‘No, I can’t do that’ or ‘I don’t want to do it that way,’” Roland recalled. “It comes from having the same vision about music. Luke has ideas about jazz that are much more hardcore than most people in the recording industry. He believes that if the music is really good, it will attract an audience. It may not attract as huge an audience as some other kind of jazz, but if it’s really great, it will always attract some audience—and historically, it will become more and more valuable.”

DB



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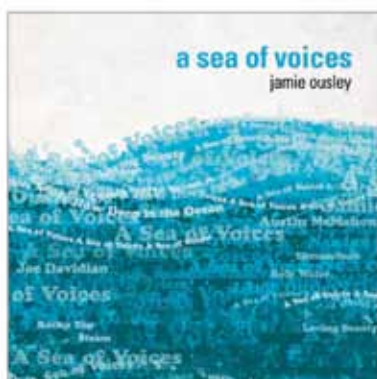


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Ted Nash *The Creep*

PLASTIC SAX RECORDS 1

★★★★½

Saxophonist Ted Nash has forged a compelling identity as a leader outside his more familiar role as utility man in the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. His most recent album takes him further afield. It's a surprising disc, since the hallmark of Nash's playing is dazzling accuracy and immaculate execution. Here, Nash plunges into territory identified with Ornette Coleman (and, peripherally, Eric Dolphy, who in some ways seems to suit Nash's

sensibility even better). The project, he explains in his liner notes, is a spinoff from a stage role in which he composed and played music by a character loosely based on Coleman. Though Nash doesn't project the darkness and fire at the heart of this inspiration, his piano-less quartet produces swinging music of startling clarity and force. Listening to the sequence of nine tunes is a bit like viewing a series of black-and-white abstract paintings that employ the same primal elements in different combinations.

Among the most compelling tracks is the opener, with its underpinning of nervous, thrumming

double stops from bassist Paul Sikivie and a melody whose unison horn line, angular trajectory and rhythmic change-ups suggest Coleman, as does the combination of tension and blues crying in Nash's full, throaty tone. The jaunty line of "Plastic Sax" lands squarely on a fat, half-step dissonance upstairs, and Nash, in his solo, gets off a spinning, curlicue phrase worthy of Dolphy himself. Alto saxophonist Sherman Irby's "Twilight Sounds," a clever mashup of "Hot House" and "Yardbird Suite," is also a highlight, projecting the cacophony of the urban night. Trumpeter Ron Horton falls easily into the

spirit, especially on Nash's "Minor Adjustment," where Horton's fat middle register and randomly linear ideas are unpredictable and logical.

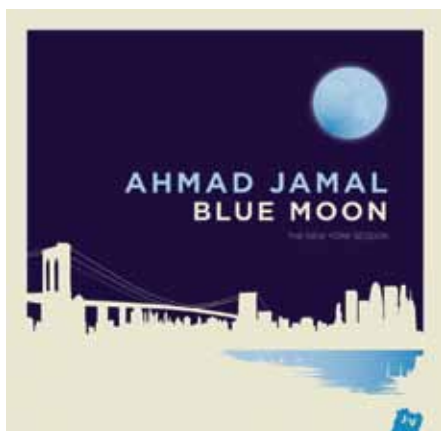
Still, a pleasure of Coleman's music is the feeling that everything might suddenly teeter over the edge at any moment. By contrast, this music is a bit tidy and reserved. "Cabin Fever," a potentially scary mystery, comes off more like noir lite. That said, there is still plenty to like here.

—Paul de Barros

The Creep: Organized Crime; Burnt Toast And Avocado; The Creep; Plastic Sax Rumble; Plastic Sax Lullaby; Cabin Fever; Twilight Sounds; Minor Adjustment; Kaleidoscope. (53:59)

Personnel: Ted Nash, alto saxophone; Ron Horton, trumpet; Paul Sikivie, bass; Ulysses Owens, drums.

Ordering info: tednash.com



Ahmad Jamal *Blue Moon*

JAZZ VILLAGE 570001

★★★★

If you could illustrate Ahmad Jamal's latest, *Blue Moon*, as a map, it would be a lunar landscape of mansion-sized mountains adjoining sudden little outcroppings small enough to trip over, booming valleys and oases of florid rain forests. Jamal moves through these attractive scenic contrasts on roads paved with clear intentions and a sense of direction.

The selections are pulled from movies, the stage and the early bebop songbook, as well as

Jamal's own. But the flashes of familiar melody, while providing occasional signposts of orientations, don't matter that much. Restraint is only one of his gambits, used mainly to make more striking the breach of dynamics between the restrained Jamal and the more magnified one. "Autumn Rain," which he recorded in 1986, begins with an ascending crescendo of chords that thunder, then atomize into a dewy spaciousness and make way for the main theme. After a few bars of quick, sparse chords, the arpeggios roll out like a lava flow, then stop as Jamal pounds out a rigid, percussive bass figure and starts mixing in more swirling right-handed mayhem. That dissolves into a lyrical reverie, interspersed with more terse percussion.

His "Blue Moon" introduces a little four-note riff (C-D-C-E) that becomes an insidiously catchy recurring refrain, in a way not unlike the device that made "Poinciana" so beguiling many years ago. It brings a measure of unity to the many contrasting moods, all of which are ambitious but few of which really swing much. But then that's not really his purpose. He swings when he chooses. "Laura" (originally recorded in 1992) is relatively straight-forward and intimate in its reserve and never becomes unnecessarily overloaded with ambition. —*John McDonough*

Blue Moon: Autumn Rain; Blue Moon; Gypsy; Invitation; I Remember Italy; Laura; Morning Mist; This Is The Life; Woody'n You. (76:02)
Personnel: Ahmad Jamal, piano; Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley, drums; Manolo Badrena, percussion.
Ordering info: jazzvillagemusic.com



Jeff Hamilton Trio *Red Sparkle*

CAPRI 74114

★★★

Don't give up on the "straightahead" approach to piano trio just yet. If the trend of ever-shifting time signatures that has cropped up in the last few years is feeling a bit too mathy for you, there's a refreshing focus found in blues-based romps and instantly catchy melodies. Usually crisp, occasionally sassy and often stressing pith, this is the turf that Jeff Hamilton's trio works on a regular basis.

Red Sparkle picks up where 2009's *Symbiosis* left off. Hamilton and associates—pianist Tamir Hendelman and bassist Christoph Luty—arrive with well-polished arrangements in their pockets, and breeze through them with a contagious oomph. A certain obviousness marks the leader's work: There's always a bit of tail-wagging going on in these tunes. But that has its perks, too. The hard hustle of "Too Marvelous For Words" may sound a tad anachronistic, but it generates an entertainment vibe that deserves cachet forever. Brushing his way through the piece, the drummer exudes grace and animation.

The trio also likes to wax clever. Their romp through "Bye-Ya" alludes to rumba while keeping Thelonious Monk's ingenious counterpoint alive. Hendelman is a facile mechanic with a nice touch for dynamics. Hamilton himself knows about texture. His reclamation of Stephen Bishop's schmaltzy "On And On" starts the same way Ed Blackwell's might: a tender tom-tom pattern milking pulse for all it's worth. The drummer never gets heavy-handed. A revered brush man, his nuances speak volumes. The first few moments of "A Sleepin' Bee"—a curt exchange with Luty—set the tone for the entire track. Innovative it's not, but when there's this much finesse in the air, some kind of ground is being gained.

—*Jim Macnie*

Red Sparkle: Ain't That A Peach; Bye Ya; On And On; Hat's Dance; Too Marvelous; Laura; A Sleepin' Bee; Red Sparkle; I Know You Oh So Well; In An Ellington. (57:35)
Personnel: Jeff Hamilton, drums; Tamir Hendelman, piano; Christoph Luty, bass.
Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Marlene Rosenberg Quartet *Bassprint*

ORIGIN 82604

★★★★

A stalwart member of the Chicago scene, Marlene Rosenberg has made infrequent trips to the studio as a leader. *Bassprint* is her first CD in a decade, but it's well worth waiting for, and perhaps it shows the value of patience and persistence. Rosenberg is assured at the helm, nothing to prove, no chip on her shoulder.

Aside from two tasty tunes by Kenny Barron, all the music is original, showing the bassist's interest in oblique, harmonically intriguing material. Several titles—"Wayne-ish," "Eyes For Shorter"—wink openly at their source inspiration, the latter a lovely ballad that reworks Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes." Rosenberg knows how to get juices flowing without using harsh or edgy materials. "L.J." is a buoyant, mid-tempo tune with the leader's beefy bass and a funky undertow providing a springboard, urging on Geoff Bradfield's probing, prehensile tenor. The spring-like "Tale Of Two Monk Keys" features a sweet, lithe, skipping line that's gleeful grist for both Bradfield and guitarist Scott Hesse, a contemplative counter-line casting things in a darker shade.

Hesse is terrific: great ears and crazy chops. Comping, he's inventive, offering sug-



gestive and unexpected colors, sometimes spidery, fingered chords; when he cuts loose, his lines can be thrilling. Bradfield is one of the few tenor players who don't make me cringe when heading for the soprano. He's sensitive without being florid or icy, playing with grit over the funky, sunny beat on Barron's "Sunshower" (marred only by the unwelcome idea of multi-tracking arco and pizz bass) or laying a gentle line over the urgent rimshots of "Spare Parts."

—*John Corbett*

Bassprint: Tale Of Two Monk Keys; Almost April; Wayne-ish; Spare Parts; L.J.; Prelude-Bassprint; Lullaby; Sunshower; Eyes For Shorter; Thus And So; One False Move. (66:47)
Personnel: Marlene Rosenberg, bass; Geoff Bradfield, tenor and soprano saxophone; Scott Hesse, guitar; Makaya McCraven, drums.
Ordering info: origin-records.com

The Hot Box

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

Ted Nash <i>The Creep</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
Ahmad Jamal <i>Blue Moon</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★
Marlene Rosenberg Quartet <i>Bassprint</i>	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★½
Jeff Hamilton Trio <i>Red Sparkle</i>	★★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Ted Nash, *The Creep*

Nash serves a quirky, strutting, sometimes surprising dish here, whose message may be, "while the pianist's away, the cats will play." No chords, no safety nets. It's been done before, of course, but Nash's talent makes such flings safe for a bit of self-indulgence. Horton is an invigorating foil.
—John McDonough

Freebop in Ornette quartet mode (sans harmonic comp), though more tightly choreographed. Lots and lots to chew on, including Horton's infinitely flexible trumpet and the rollicking Owens on drums. Like James Carter, Nash can do anything on the horn, here alto only. Superhero pantheon-wise, he's more Elastic Man than Creep.
—John Corbett

At some points it seems like an Old And New Dreams nod, and we can always use that. But singularity emerges thanks to Nash's writing and playing. His personae are many, but this freebop character is really compelling. Secret weapon: Ron Horton!
—Jim Macnie

Ahmad Jamal, *Blue Moon*

Maestro of ostinato and denizen of deep dynamics, Jamal continues to make killer CDs. Here the presence of Badrena on percussion has more than just a coloristic effect on the proceedings. It makes things denser, sometimes a thicket, but also gives Veal and Riley lots of ideas to bounce off of. Jamal can go from sensual to stark in a heartbeat.
—John Corbett

The way he splashes over a vamp is genius, and this enticing date finds him challenging his nimble rhythm section's every move. A formula is intact: A parade of singular phrases do battle with their surroundings. But the music is so vital that hardly matters.
—Jim Macnie

Yes, that "Blue Moon," which almost feels like a parody of Jamal's pretentious penchant for investing triviality with gravitas. All the faux classical runs in the world won't make his florid octaves, portentous vamps and melodramatic tremolos less clichéd, though "Invitation" builds some honest interest.
—Paul de Barros

Marlene Rosenberg Quartet, *Bassprint*

Nicely crafted, low-key quartet, led softly from behind, or beneath as it were. Bassist and composer-in-chief takes a front line position without displacing the main horns, who carry the lead positions with a warm, thoroughly adept restraint on tenor/soprano and guitar within the standard post-bop syntax. A practiced but not standout foursome.
—John McDonough

I like the way they treat classicism with a bit of daring, meaning their sideways glance at "I Remember April" is a joy. The bassist and her crew mess around with each other; a little push 'n' shove, a little hide 'n' seek. A minor disc, but fun nonetheless.
—Jim Macnie

I hope Rosenberg's sound isn't as rubberband-y live as it is on this album, but either way her solo ideas are uninspiring. Her tune "Lullaby" has a quietly mysterious appeal, though. Solid mainstream guitarist Mark Hesse steals the show.
—Paul de Barros

Jeff Hamilton Trio, *Red Sparkle*

Leader's rhythms flutter, swish, snap and crack in a sung, effervescent patter within this tightly knit, well-traveled trio. Group's hard swinging, middle-of-the-road center pretty much belongs to Handelman, who delivers an agile take on the Peterson tradition. Not a lot of surprises, but style and authority are their own pleasures.
—John McDonough

Hamilton leads this taut trio from the kit through a mostly keen, swinging, no-nonsense set. With locked hand runs, Handelman is a bit flamboyant sometimes, but enjoyably so in this context. Top-shelf piano bar music is interrupted by "On And On," a window on the '70s I'd hoped would stay shut.
—John Corbett

Though Hamilton's outlook is deeply conservative, his muscular, little-big-band approach to the piano trio builds a groove so deep you could get the bends coming up out of it. As on the previous album, pianist Tamir Handelman is particularly emotive on ballads, in this case, one by the trio's inspiration, Ray Brown, "I Know You Oh So Well."
—Paul de Barros



GUILLERMO KLEIN & LOS GUACHOS CARRERA
SSC 1286 / IN STORES May 22

Klein's new recording with Los Guachos, *Carrera*, proves significant for a number of reasons. This recording is a collection of compositions generated prior to and after Klein's return to his birthplace Buenos Aires from Barcelona, a move that has had a tremendous impact on the composer and his family. The songs on the recording contain strong messages that Klein feels need to be heard. And most importantly, the recording demonstrates the tremendous bond that continues to grow amongst the members of Los Guachos.

Photo © 2012 Andrea Boccalini

Available on iTunes
iTunes.com/GuillermoKlein



Fredrik Kronkvist *New York Elements*

CONNECTIVE 36528

★★★★

By all appearances, another straightahead jazz date is something to (hopefully) enjoy but not something you expect to be blown away by or even impressed with nowadays. Especially when it's somebody you've never heard of before, with the kind of undramatic look that suggests recital more than statement. Alto saxophonist Fredrik Kronkvist doesn't look the part of a jazz upstart, but he plays it.

Perhaps *New York Elements* is a case study in how to get name players and make something happen. The disc isn't about reinventing the wheel, but it is honest, spirited and sometimes quite inspired. Apart from Kronkvist's lyrical and usually expressive wailing is pia-

nist Aaron Goldberg's pleasantly distracting piano playing. It seems that on each tune there is something new to discover, even on the early, brief "Interlude/Wind," which seems to suggest things to come.

New York Elements plays like something from the '60s, when hard-bop had become a tad more angular, more in control of its emotions even as it spoke more ferociously. Kronkvist must know it's always been more than just about chops, shedding. That's where Goldberg comes in. Partway through the robust swinger "Woody's World," he slows everything down, his cool solo a kind of artful shift away from the leader's bold, preceding solo statements. Goldberg has bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Gregory Hutchinson in his back pocket, providing just the right amount of kick and swagger to suggest an element of danger as well as surprise and musical cohesion. Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" is the only non-original here, and it's arranged and played as if Kronkvist's taking his cue from Tony Williams' original freeing rhythm, which veers off from its stated waltz figure into a more driving straight-four feel.

On the one hand, this is complex music, and alien from today's more straightforward sounds. On the other hand, its straightahead message is simple, almost unadorned and innocent.

—John Ephland

New York Elements: Connected Souls; Interlude/Wind; Woody's World; Piece Of Time; Earthtones; Interlude/Earth; Footprints; Divine; First Sight; Interlude/Writer; Perspectives; Instant Bag; Outro/Fire. (69:31)

Personnel: Fredrik Kronkvist, alto saxophone; Aaron Goldberg, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums.

Ordering info: connectiverecords.com



Brian Charette *Music For Organ Sextette*

STEEPLECHASE 31731

★★★½

Brian Charette is out to prove that the Hammond B3 ain't just for flexing your funk chops. His latest CD, *Music For Organ Sextette*, serves as a demo reel of the divergent directions the soul-jazz standby can explore.

Charette has assembled an ensemble with four horns fronting the rhythm section of himself and drummer Joechen Rueckert. "Computer God" offers each member the opportunity to introduce himself, the angular head opening into their solo spaces. The album then takes its first swerve, beginning "Fugue For Kathleen Anne/Ex Girlfriend Variations" with a mock-Bach flute/tenor miniature that then transposes the idea of interlacing voices into a modern context, as the ensemble improvises in flowing, overlapping lines.

The reggae riddims of "The Elvira Pacifier" at first seems a cute step too far on the path toward genre-hopping for genre-hopping's sake, but it's pulled back by Jay Collins' mysteriously intoxicating flute solo and John Ellis' sinuous bass clarinet insinuations. "Prayer For An Agnostic" puts scare quotes around its gospel feel but proves that the spirit is possible even without the faith. "Mode For Sean Wayland" reaches into even less familiar directions, a discordant nod in the direction of avant-garde composition with a collage of ideas and areas of free improvisation.

Charette's deviation from the B3 tradition isn't complete, however. "Late Night TV" is a funk burner, while "Equal Opportunity" is a Lennie Tristano-inspired swinger and "Tambourine" is a deceptively bubbly pop anthem that hides within it another example of the horns' contrapuntal possibilities.

—Shaun Brady

Music For Organ Sextette: Computer God; Fugue For Kathleen Anne/Ex Girlfriend Variations; Risk; The Elvira Pacifier; Equal Opportunity; Prayer For An Agnostic; Late Night TV; French Birds; Mode For Sean Wayland; Tambourine. (67:32)

Personnel: Brian Charette, Hammond B3 organ; Jay Collins, flute, baritone saxophone, tambourine; Mike DiRubbo, alto and soprano saxophone; Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone; John Ellis, bass clarinet; Joechen Rueckert, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

Mark Weinstein *El Cumbanchero*

JAZZHEADS 1187

★★★½

Flutist and former trombonist Mark Weinstein's 1967 game-changer *Cuban Roots* marked a turning point in Latin jazz in the way it used Cuban folk rhythms. Four-and-a-half decades later, Weinstein sets his sights on 1940s-era Cuban charanga. Here, he sculpts the traditional form to accommodate his own interests and strengths as a player and serious student of Cuban music's history.

Weinstein eschews the wooden, five- or six-holed flute that supports the high-register notes traditionally associated with charanga. Instead, he sticks to his usual assortment of instruments with magical results. Case in point: Weinstein's extended solo on the title track. Fast and dramatic, the conga number turns on a tension between the breakneck-speed percussion rhythms and the classically minded string section.

Weinstein's post-bop-rooted solo burns away the chasm between the two, deftly balancing the agility of one with the theatricality of the other. The arrangements come cour-



tesy of Aruán Ortiz, who was responsible for the difficult harmonies that make much of this album so compelling. Weinstein and his band also shine within slower tempos, such as on "Dona Olga," which brims with romantic emotion and a swaying melody. —Jennifer Odell

El Cumbanchero: El Cumbanchero; La Mulata Rumbera; Dona Olga; Aruanco; Av. Pintor Tapiro; Perla Marina; Armoniosos De Amalia; Danzon De Liz; Contigo En La Distancia. (53:52)

Personnel: Mark Weinstein, concert, alto, bass flutes; Aruán Ortiz, piano; Yunior Terry, bass; Mauricio Herrera, timbales, conga, guiro; Yusnier Sanchez Bustamante, conga (1, 2, 4); Marc Szammer, violin (3, 7, 8, 9); Elena Rojas Crocker, violin (3, 7, 8, 9); Francisco Salazar, violin (1, 2, 6); Everhard Parades, violin (1, 2, 6); Samuel Marchan, viola; Aristides Rivas, cello (3, 5, 7, 8, 9); Brian Sanders, cello (1, 2, 6).

Ordering info: jazzheads.com

Michael Gibbs and the NDR Big Band



New Big Bands Recharge Traditions

While some people might believe that starting a big band with the economy and the recording industry in the doldrums might be foolhardy, Angelinos Pete Christlieb and Linda Small are bucking the tide. And, with arrangements by Bill Holman and some of the most experienced section players in California onboard, who's to argue with them? **High On You (Bosco Records; 53:06 ★★★★★)** swings hard and glides with style on nine pieces by the likes of Bob Brookmeyer, Billy Strayhorn and Holman.

Ordering info: petechristlieb.com

Recorded with the NDR Big Band between 1995 and 2003, **Back In The Days (Cuneiform 322; 65:42 ★★★★★)** provides a broad look at Michael Gibbs' songbook and arranging talent. Three pieces from the earliest date—recorded at a Herb Pomeroy tribute—feature Gary Burton, Gibbs' best-known student. The other standout player is the superb German tenor saxophonist Christof Lauer, who gets three feature spots.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

If you believe that free music is greatly enhanced by watching the interaction between the players, this film of Barry Guy's **Harmos: Live At Schaffhausen (Intakt DVD 151; 46:28 ★★★★★)**, shot in 2008, will be a welcome treat. Performed by the London Jazz Composers Orchestra—with the cream of British and European improvisers—Guy's anthemic 1989 suite is powerful and moving. The photography is affected by dodgy lighting, but it captures the physicality of players as well as the passion Guy demonstrates in conducting his music.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

Centered around the recording debut of the nine-part "Black Liberation Movement Suite," **The Music Of Cal Massey: A Tribute (Mutable/Big Red Media 004; 62:51 ★★★★★½)** represents a much-welcome undertaking by bandleader Fred Ho. Commissioned by Eldridge Cleaver in 1969, the suite is a fiery, expansive collection of pieces dedi-

cated to black leaders from Marcus Garvey to Huey Newton, and while it displays the influence of Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus, it also highlights Massey's breadth and rhythmic variety. Trombonist Frank Lacy is particularly expressive on Massey's tribute to Malcolm X.

Ordering info: mutablemusic.com

A brassy big band might be the last place you'd expect to find firebrand alto player Jon Irabagon, but his presence here is a reflection of the level of musicianship that has passed through jazz educator Bob Lark's hands during his 20-plus years at DePaul University. **Reunion (Jazzed Media 1057; 68:47 ★★★★★)** brings together 20 DePaul alumni for a session that stresses relaxed swing and breezy camaraderie over complexity. Nine of the players split the task of arranging Lark's 11 buoyant compositions, adding variety to the program.

Ordering info: jazzedmedia.com

The focus of **On The Sammy Side Of The Street (Self Release; 72:03 ★★★★★½)**—featuring Sammy Nestico's all-star cast of musicians—is squarely on standards. With Vinnie Colaiuta on drums, every piece has a crisp, precise foundation, accentuating Nestico's style of squaring every corner of his arrangements. If you like a bit more of a flow, it's likely you'll find pieces like "Rose Room" and "Surrey With A Fringe On Top" overdone; they're packed with flourishes without much nuance.

Ordering info: sammynesticomusic.com

Trombonist Michael Treni assembled his big band relatively late in his career but **Boy's Night Out (Self Release; 58:54 ★★★★★)** shows that he's been thinking about how he wants his unit to sound. Influenced by Oliver Nelson, he keeps his tempos lively and his orchestrations relatively spare. With only 16 players, the band is light enough on its feet not to overpower Leonard Bernstein's "Something Coming," yet Treni also likes to layer colors to generate gauzy depth.

Ordering info: bellproductionco.com

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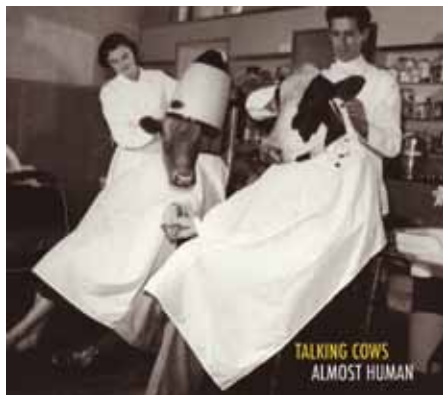
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FIGURATIONS
SSC 1312 / in Stores May 8

The music of guitarist/composer Miles Okazaki is highly conceptual and stylized. It is also extremely engaging, absorbing listeners as the compositions send the performers through an obstacle course of rhythmic traps and harmonic hurdles. Okazaki showcases his proficiency as a composer, improviser and bandleader on his second Sunnyside release, **Figurations**. The recording features an amazing ensemble of adventurous musicians including saxophonist Miguel Zenon, bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Dan Weiss.

Available on **iTunes**



Talking Cows *Almost Human*

MORVIN RECORDS 5049

★★★★½

The Dutch have a canny way of marrying scholarly analysis of tradition with playful, open-ended reinvention. Broad tastes are catered for with this digestible menu of 10 originals, the writing split between the rangy talents of tenorist Frans Vermeersen and pianist Robert Vermeulen. An amusing YouTube video featuring rival farmers riffs on the band name (this group has been together since 2004). One farmer hates the CD, the other plays it in the cowshed to increase the dairy yield.

Vermeessen's opening solo reveals an unfussy articulation, rather like Wayne Shorter's in its service to fresh ideas above involuntary phraseology. Vermeessen's history

with the Willem Breuker Kollektief and Bik Bent Braam has buttressed his versatility. He can play fast and take bluesy riffing and triple tonguing into squalling abstraction, as on the punchy "A Serious Lack Of Humour," or stubbornly peck out simple rhythmic figures. Vermeulen's outing on the latter takes charge in a similar manner, a complete familiarity with the material is evident, and despite Yonga Sun's frantic tambourine and Nijland's nudging bass, the pianist rides back on the tempo between fleet runs.

"A Stroll For Gonso" is all Duke Ellington-Ben Webster, fluttery-breathy-twinkly, Sun suggesting Vernell Fournier's mallets in back. Vermeersen reminds of new fogey Bennie Wallace, sans Hawk-like arpeggios. During "Dinner Is Served," "I'm Getting Sentimental" meets Thelonious Monk-ish angularity, Vermeessen growing and vocalizing through the horn before a swinging bass release and prancing ambidextrous piano herald audience applause (one of two live cuts). "Hang Glider" hovers cliff edge before Vermeulen finds a thermal and Sun cuts loose.

"Mooing Around" has a "Straight No Chaser" vibe, Vermeulen comping circuitously before a sparkling solo driven by the hard-swinging rhythm section. "Two Guys And A Beer" smacks of a clean-cut Billy Taylor anthem, but with Dutch courage.

—Michael Jackson

Almost Human: Hurdles In Three; Serious Lack Of Humour; A Stroll For Gonso; Dinner Is Served; Not Yet; Most Deft; Hang Glider; Mooing Around; Two Guys And A Beer; Hop On, Hop Off. (61:35).

Personnel: Frans Vermeersen, tenor saxophone; Robert Vermeulen, piano; Dion Nijland, bass; Yonga Sun, drums.

Ordering info: morvinrecords.nl



Jeff Lorber Fusion *Galaxy*

HEADS UP 33173

★★★

Far too often fusion and its bastard offspring smooth jazz are dismissed out of hand without being given the benefit of a fair hearing. Prejudice can cloud the critical faculties to the point where players are written off entirely—regardless of their abilities. Jazz purists should note the presence of trumpeter Randy Brecker, altoist Eric Marienthal and guitarist Larry Koonse before turning their noses up at this release.

Keyboard/guitar polymath Jeff Lorber might not win any new converts with this release, a Jimmy Haslip production. His tunes are long on tight dance rhythms and interlocked instrumental riffing, short on compositional arc, breathing space and dynamic variety. Dave Mann's horn charts and their electronic realizations add judicious washes of color. "Horace" doesn't touch on the sanctified church funk of Horace Silver's essence, though it bops along nicely. "Montserrat" is an uptempo funk groover, with whiplash horn lines worthy of Tower Of Power.

The soloists are on short leashes here, but showing out nonetheless. Haslip's short bass break on "Rapids" could've gone longer to better effect. Marienthal's swaggering alto has the run of "City," one of the more interesting tunes for its ascending and descending writing. Marienthal's soprano sax and Lorber's Rhodes trade engaging fours at the end of "Singaraja." Koonse's compact and well-considered contributions brighten like sunshine, especially his nylon-string outing on "The Samba." One wishes that Vinnie Colaiuta and Dave Weckl could momentarily step away from timekeeping duties.

—Kirk Silsbee

Galaxy: Live Wire; Big Brother; Montserrat; Singaraja; Galaxy; City; Horace; The Samba; Rapids; Wizard Island; The Underground. (54:44)

Personnel: Jeff Lorber, Fender Rhodes, guitars, piano, Mini Moog, synth bass, loops; Randy Brecker, trumpet (4, 11); Eric Marienthal, soprano saxophone (11), alto saxophone; Michael Thompson (1, 2, 3), Andree Theander (1, 4), Larry Koonse (1, 4, 8), Paul Jackson Jr. (2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11), guitars; Jimmy Haslip, bass, percussion (8); Vinnie Colaiuta, drums; Dave Weckl, drum engineering (5); Lenny Castro, percussion; Dave Mann, horn arranger (6, 7, 9, 10).

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Tom Wetmore *The Desired Effect*

CROSTOWN RECORDS

★★★

It's an interesting that Tom Wetmore restricts himself to Rhodes electric piano on his debut. Maybe he just digs that old-school Rhodes tone. For listeners who share that enthusiasm, *The Desired Effect* celebrates it generously.

For all the beauty that this vintage instrument offers, the Rhodes sus pedal is basically either on or off. As a result, one has to think carefully about moving chords on it with the pedal down, to avoid turning everything to mud. This becomes an issue in Wetmore's unaccompanied intro to "With Woven Wings." He handles these issues adroitly throughout this brief extemporization, particularly in terms of pedal release. Still, there's no sense of dynamic contrast here or elsewhere throughout the album. His keyboard limits the band's range, except when one of the guitarists steps out for a chorus, as on "The Rub," where drummer Garrett Brown ups his aggressiveness at the end of Wetmore's solo to mirror the attack of the guitar's entrance.

With two sax players and two guitarists, there's some potential for contrast and arrange-



ment. Still, while Brad Williams and Justin Sabaj turn the last moments of "Falling" into a charming interplay, evoking the tiny chimes of a wind-up ballerina toy, most of the time everyone seems more bent on complementing the Rhodes, which as a result casts the album in a gray sonic mist.

—Bob Doerschuk

The Desired Effect: Red Lights; Wild Card; Good And Plenty; A Blessing; The Desired Effect; With Woven Wings; Falling; The Rub; More Matter. (52:10)

Personnel: Tom Wetmore, electric piano; Jaleel Shaw, alto sax; Eric Neveloff, alto and tenor saxophones; Brad Williams, guitar; Justin Sabaj, guitar; Michael League, bass; Garrett Brown, drums.

Ordering info: crosstownrecords.com

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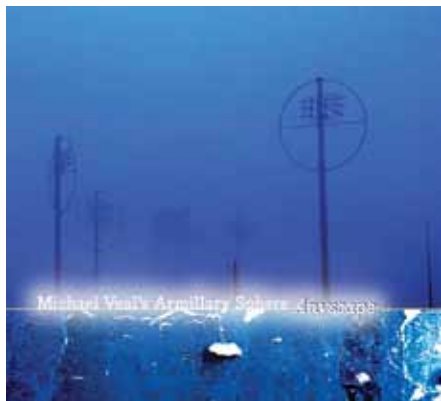
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Michael Veal & Aqua Ife
Michael Veal & Aqua Ife, Vol. 1
 NEKTONIC NKCD 001
 ★★½

Michael Veal's Armillary Sphere
Anyscape
 NEKTONIC NKCD 002
 ★★½

Fascinating is the best way to describe the musicality of Michael Veal. On these two distinct discs, he plays mostly electric bass and guitar on one then showcases his skills on the soprano saxophone on the other. More revealing, though, is his knack for writing evocative compositions that contain a wealth of global perspectives.

With the two-song EP, featuring Aqua Ife, Veal delves into Ghanaian music, bolstered

by polyrhythmic grooves, marked by ease and oomph. The bassist and electric guitarist—along with two other guitars, a drummer and Ghanaian percussionists—lays danceable bedrocks while various horn players, including the incomparable soprano saxophonist Sam Newsome and baritone saxophonist Alex Harding, blow passionate improvisations. At times, Aqua Ife recalls David Murray's excursions into the music of Guadeloupe and Senegal, but somehow Veal's music yields fresher, less over-cooked results.

Veal not only effectively switches gears on *Anyscape* by playing just soprano saxophone; with his comparatively scaled-down Armillary Sphere, he ventures into realms mapped out by Sun Ra and George Russell. The music often takes on celestial cinematic qualities as Veal powers his coiling saxophone lines through soundscapes that sometimes hint at electronica. Yet the music retains the bristle of hands-on acoustic instrumentation. Like the other disc, Veal also displays a smartness to inch away from his obvious influences. —John Murphy

Michael Veal & Aqua Ife, Vol. 1: Djemma New Drum Chant; Late General (Chief Odapa), (20:34)

Personnel: Michael Veal, electric bass, electric guitar, talking drums; Mike Rodriguez, trumpet; Albert Leusink, trumpet; Brad Mason, trumpet; Sam Newsome, soprano saxophone; Matthew Clayton, alto saxophone; Avram Fefer, tenor saxophone; Lauren Sevan, baritone saxophone; Alex Harding, baritone saxophone; Steve Lantner, rhythm piano; Bennett Paster, electric organ; Trevor Holder, drums; Felix Sanabria, congas and percussion; Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng, Ghanaian hand percussion.

Anyscape: HLB-SR (short version); Impluvium; Curis; Dune; Angelus Novus; Oculus I, (26:11)

Personnel: Michael Veal, soprano saxophone; Bennett Paster, electric piano; Nika Workman, 5-string electric bass; Trevor Holder, drums; Rene Akhan, electric guitar (4); Chris Lightcap, acoustic bass (4).

Ordering info: cduniverse.com



Jeff Parker Trio
Bright Light In Winter
 DELMARK 2015
 ★★★★★

It had been six years since the remarkable trio that produced Jeff Parker's now-classic 2003 debut *Like-Coping* had played together, but on *Bright Light In Winter* it's clear that they've lost none of their intuitive connection. The group reunited for a concert in the 10th anniversary series of Chicago's Hungry Brain last November, and Parker decided to use the occasion to take bassist Chris Lopes and drummer Chad Taylor into the studio.

All three musicians brought compositions to the sessions, but there's a stunning cohesion and group identity to the album, with its lean, deceptive simplicity: Each track is sparked by an air of spontaneity, whether the trio is riding out a preset plan or shape-shifting on the fly.

Taylor's "Mainz" features a typically beautiful melody, deeply etched by Parker within several discrete groove schemes, with the guitarist shifting from elegant, cleanly articulated single-note melodies to effects-controlled tone masses sculpted like clay to splatters of nicely dubbed-out pointillism.

A piece like Parker's "Freakadelic" is more indicative of the general course, where the rhythms stick to a relatively consistent feel with subtle yet steady accents and pattern tweaks supporting masterfully constructed solos by Parker, which build not only as melodically sophisticated marvels but also as ingenious narratives. On "The Morning Of The 5th," Lopes sets aside the bass and shapes his pretty melody on the flute, as his partners deftly cradle his gentle lines, while on "Istvan" he subs in a Korg MS-20 synthesizer. While the trio may have convened as if it was a pickup gig without a lot of preparation or planning, there's nothing boilerplate nor conventional about the way they rip through each piece. —Peter Margasak

Bright Light In Winter: Mainz; Swept Out To Sea; Change; Freakadelic; The Morning Of The 5th; Occidental Tourist; Bright Light Black Site; Istvan; Good Days, (48:25)

Personnel: Jeff Parker, electric guitar and effects; Korg MS-20 monophonic synthesizer; Chris Lopes, acoustic bass, flute, Korg MS-20; Chad Taylor, drums.

Ordering info: delmark.com

Mary Stallings
Don't Look Back
 HIGHNOTE 7224
 ★★★★★

These days the jazz audience seems to have a bottomless appetite for female jazz singers—seemingly the younger, the better. Mary Stallings is a senior whose professionalism and assurance affirm a place for elders. She's secure in who she is and what works for her, with unshakable comfort.

She has a scoped contralto whose timbre brings to mind Carmen McRae. But where McRae often isolated her words on slow tempos, Stallings always retains the connective tissue of the music in her phrasing. They also share the ability to find out-of-the-way material. Stallings also cleverly conjoins two great pieces: Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye" and Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye."

Her faithful pianist, Eric Reed (who produced the album), is so spare in his accompaniment that they must communicate telepathically. He suggests with a chord, waits for her to sing and underlines or maybe rests. Then he'll play a discreet comment on her phrase.

Would-be jazz singers should know there's



not a note of scat on this album. Stallings invests the songs with feeling, avoiding histrionics. A held note here, a behind-the-beat take-off there, a little sassy blues feeling, or a judiciously placed octave jump—she knows just what each song needs and where to place it.

—Kirk Silsbee

Don't Look Back: When Lights Are Low; The Way You Love Me; Night Mist Blues; Goodbye Medley; Every Time We Say Goodbye; Goodbye; Is That...? (This Love); Don't Look Back; Love Me Or Leave Me; Don't Misunderstand; Key Largo; Soul Eyes; Nappy Blues; People Time (Forever Mine), (55:13)

Personnel: Mary Stallings, vocals; Eric Reed, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Carl Allen, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

International Relations

Luca Giordano: *My Kind Of Blues* (Audacia 8034; 76:13 ★★★★★) There's something enthralling in the way Italian guitarist Luca Giordano has internalized the playing of Otis Rush, Ronnie Earl and other masters to summon up his own personal distillation of those sources. An occasional visitor to Chicago clubs, he's become a talisman of tone, discipline, phrasing and swinging spirit. A listener can almost reach out and touch the intimate feeling the 30-year-old injects into his mentor Carlos Johnson's ballad "Hello There," Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?" and a dozen more sturdy tunes. Tradition goes hand-in-hand with inspiration. Comporting themselves well in the front line are Pippo Guarnera (piano, organ) and American guests Chris Cain (vocals, guitar), Bob Stroger (vocals, bass) and Gordon Beadle (saxophone, horn arrangements).

Ordering info: lucagiordanoband.com

Lisa Mills: *Tempered In Fire* (Really 'n' Truly; 49:31 ★★★½) A native of Mississippi long now located in England, Lisa Mills is a solid belter who offers up genuine excitement by being confident about her understanding of lyrics. This bluesy album, her second with wide distribution, hooks her ample spirit to flattering songs she wrote herself or borrowed from Welshman George Borowski and several Alabama good ol' boys, the band Wet Willie and ex-Gatemouth Brown guitarist Robbie Fleming. She even succeeds in locating the pain and longing of the Otis Redding opus "These Arms Of Mine." The supporting musicians, including her regular sidekick Ian Jennings on basses and guest Andy Fairweather-Low on guitar, creditably mix grit and suavity.

Ordering info: lisamills.com

Layla Zoe: *Sleep Little Girl* (Cable Car 0311-36; 47:33 ★★★★★) In a German studio, Layla Zoe lets loose her unsparing lust for life on tunes with apt titles like "Let's Get Crazy," "Give It To Me" and "Singing My Blues." In the latter, the Canadian emotes, "But I always listen to my heart and the voice down deep in my soul." Don't doubt this contemporary blues Amazon for an instant. Despite hollowly ardent blues-rock guitar by Henrik Freischlager, Zoe's album gets to places others can't reach.

Ordering info: layla.ca

Ramon Goose: *Uptown Blues* (Blues Boulevard 250300; 56:17 ★★★★★) Ramon Goose's best creative outlets are his unconventional NuBlues band (new album out soon) and his collaboration with West African griot Diabel Cissokho. Still, the Brit's solo album merits listening for his solid guitar work in respective straightahead blues, blues-rock and swinging jazz grooves. He's a serviceable songwriter, and for outside material he goes to



Lisa Mills

Hound Dog Taylor ("Give Me Back My Wig"), Jimi Hendrix ("Little Wing") and the Isley Brothers ("Testify"). Vocally, Goose has occasional problems with intonation.

Ordering info: music-avenue.net

The Blues Band: *Few Short Lines* (Repertoire 1149; 57:48 ★★★★★) Performing mostly mediocre material like the moldy zydeco novelty "My Toot Toot," these long-in-the-tooth British bluesmen amplify the generic blandness of their name with unexceptional singing on their latest record. But there's an upside: Dave Kelly's slide guitar flares with vitality, and the group hits its stride reconditioning Kim Wilson's "I Believe I'm In Love With You."

Ordering info: thebluesband.com

Various Artists: *African Blues* (Putumayo 317; 41:51 ★★★★★) The label's head man Dan Stroper gets the artist selection and the song flow right in this showcase of modern storytellers whose singing of tribal life combines with irresistible grooves to conjure the benign specter of John Lee Hooker...wearing a Tuareg traditional desert robe. Adama Yalomba and Issa Bagayogo are among the Malians represented. From the sands of the Sahara come Tinariwen and Koudede. The soulmates from outside the continent are Taj Mahal and Ramon Goose. Cause for complaint—just 10 tracks.

Ordering info: putumayo.com



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Eri Yamamoto Trio *The Next Page*

AUM FIDELITY 071

★★★★½

There's an interesting twist to the Eri Yamamoto Trio's track sequence on *The Next Page*. Between the sixth and eighth selections, there's a stretch of silence with its own title: "Thank you, we'll be right back for the second act."

While not essential and arguably kind of gimmicky, this pause does serve a purpose. Much of the music that precedes and follows it includes ample empty space. Except for the closing track, a simmering 6/8 finale named "Swimming Song" featuring a fluid solo by drummer Ikuo Takeuchi, silence is arguably an indispensable element of each composition.

Steve Lehman Trio *Dialect Fluorescent*

PI RECORDINGS 42

★★★★★

Steve Lehman's gotten plenty of notice for the outside ideas that he has imported into jazz. On his last recording for Pi, *Travail, Transformation, And Flow*, he made both the rhythmic notions of the Wu-Tang Clan and the timbral and harmonic advances of spectral composition fit with Swiss-watch precision into the template of little big band jazz. *Dialect Fluorescent* is an inside move.

Working within the confines of the trio format, Lehman has turned his tart tone and probing attack to standard material by John Coltrane, Duke Pearson and Gene Wilder. The utter security with which he negotiates fiendishly convoluted variations on "Pure Imagination," a tune once voiced by Willie Wonka, establishes Lehman as a true 21st century bebopper. Likewise, he brings adroit muscularity and nimble mobility to "Mr. E," which he took from the book of his early mentor Jackie McLean. He references McLean's pinched sound, but makes it his own by giving it a strongly centered but ever-changing

Pick any bit of music on *The Next Page*. Odds are it will be built around a simple theme, sometimes involving just three or four notes played in the midrange of the piano by Eri Yamamoto. This theme is written to be repeated, like a fragment from a familiar nursery rhyme. On the verses it will be consonant, most often in a major mode. Then, on the bridge, the theme, while still elementary, wanders through a few gentle dissonances. These feel more like Erik Satie than post-bop jazz. And everything resolves with a return to the opening structure in the next verse.

Yamamoto and her group use this approach to great effect. They play with thoughtful deliberation yet communicate easily with each other. There's something cerebral about their execution but not to the extent that it ever sounds unemotional. Truthfully, they conjure delicacy and beauty, qualities enhanced by the sensitive miking of their instruments. Now and then they heat things up, generating small crescendos on "Up And Down" and "Dark Blue Sky," for instance.

If there's any down side to *The Next Page*, it's that there doesn't seem to be a next page. Aside from time signatures, which range from standard to a funk-flavored 15/8 on "Waver," Yamamoto offers no dramatic changes in mood. She plays pretty much in the midrange of her instrument, never indulges in thick chord movement or even thick chords that much.

—Bob Doerschuk

The Next Page: Sparkle Song; Whiskey River; Just Walking; Night Shadows; Green Grows; The Next Page; Up And Down; Dark Blue Sky; Waver; Catch The Clouds; Swimming Song. (70:40)

Personnel: Eri Yamamoto, piano; David Ambrosio, bass; Ikuo Takeuchi, drums.

Ordering info: aumfidelity.com



groove. Bassist Matt Brewer shines throughout, contributing astute counterpoint without ever dropping that essential pulse, no matter how elaborately Reid drums around the beat. Lehman also brings some of his own compositions, and it's telling that his "Foster Brothers," with its succinct progressions and unpredictably dimensioned silences, is as compelling as any of the standards.

—Bill Meyer

Dialect Fluorescent: Allocentric (Intro); Allocentric; Moment's Notice; Foster Brothers; Jeannine; Alloy; Pure Imagination; Fumba Rebel; Mr. E. (45:30)

Personnel: Steve Lehman, alto saxophone; Matt Brewer, bass; Darnion Reid, drums.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



Toronzo Cannon *Leaving Mood*

DELMARK 817

★★★★½

These days, audiences can almost take it for granted that contemporary blues is influenced by '60s/'70s-era classic rock and funk. It's not rare to hear a blues bar band whip out a Jimi Hendrix cover version in mid-set, or the bass player in said band to start thumping his axe with his thumbs. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some of the most tired music on the market.

But Chicago native Toronzo Cannon is better than all that. While the rock/funk is clearly audible in his music, Cannon has a little something called "taste," which is in too short supply these days. Drummer Marty Binder and bassist Larry Williams set up some solid, smart rhythm pockets that never let Cannon and company down. It helps that Cannon, an adept songwriter as well as singer/guitarist, gave them some great songs.

Cannon came up through the usual system, playing behind local musicians and showing his face at jam sessions, steadily working his way up to being a headliner. After a self-released debut in 2007, this followup also features a sound reminiscent of mid-period Son Seals. The funk and the rock are meeting the straight blues sound head-on, but not enough to hurt.

The highlight is the spooky "Open Letter (To Whom It May Concern)." With his voice distorted as if he were coming in over the phone, Cannon sings not of love lost, but of blues-club politics, complete with false friends and shady club owners making cameo appearances.

Another exceptional original is "Leaving Mood," which sounds like a more earth-bound Hendrix, just wallowing in paranoia.

—James Porter

Leaving Mood: She Loved Me; Chico's Song; Come On; I Believe; Hard Luck; Open Letter (To Whom It May Concern); I Can't Take Her Nowhere; Leaving Mood; She's Too Much; You're A Good Woman; Earnestine; Do I Move You?; Baby Girl; Not Gonna Worry. (60:17)

Personnel: Toronzo Cannon, vocals, guitar; Lawrence Gladney, rhythm guitar; Roosevelt Purifoy, piano, organ; Rhodes electric piano; Carl Weathersby, guitar (5, 11); Matthew Skoller, harmonica (2, 6, 9); Larry Williams, bass; Marty Binder, drums.

Ordering info: delmark.com

Classical Innovators

Chris Brown is a veteran of the Bay Area new music scene and a co-founder of the computer network band the Hub, but the three pieces on **Iconicities** (New World 80723; 52:14 ★★½) explore a heightened interaction between percussion and electronics/live processing; the great William Winant is featured on all of them. "Stupa" is richly resonant dialogue between piano and vibraphone, "Gangsa"—named for the Filipino gong—features ringing and pinging metallic figures performed by Winant's four-member group processed in hall-of-mirrors digital refractions by Brown, and on "Iceberg" Brown does something similar with Winant's crotales, glockenspiel and hi-hat. The pieces are rooted in heavy theoretical ideas, but the results speak for themselves.

Ordering info: newworldrecords.org

There's little wonder why the Chicago Symphony Orchestra just signed on London native Anna Clyne to her second two-year term as Mead Composer-In-Residence. On her first collection, **Blue Moth** (Tzadik 8084; 60:09 ★★★★★), she showcases a vibrant engagement with sound, colliding noise and processed samples with deft melodic shapes and texture-rich abstractions. Although she's created purely acoustic work elsewhere, each of the seven pieces here feature inventive electro-acoustic elements, whether brittle whooshes tangle with the upper-register clarinet squalls of Eileen Mack on "Rapture" or the way the sweet murmurs and gasping breaths of Caleb Burhans and Martha Culver and the violent machinations of the string quartet Ethel are fused electronically on "Roulette."

Ordering info: tzadik.com

Soviet composer Galina Ustvolskaya, a student of Shostakovich who began working as a freelancer in the midst of an official emphasis on populist music, didn't end up publishing many works before dying in 2006, but those she shared with the world demonstrated an austere, steely vision. **Composition No. 2 "Dies Irae"** (Wergo 67392; 52:01 ★★★★★) is one of three dramatic pieces included here, as eight massed contrabasses engage with piano and a struck wooden cube in jarring collision of darkness and light. "Sonata No. 6" is one of her last works, from 1988, but it's just as dynamic as the earliest piece, "Grand Duet," performed magnificently by cellist Rohan de Saram and pianist Marino Formenti.

Ordering info: wergo.de

Claire Chase is known as the founder of International Contemporary Ensemble, one of the world's best and most adventurous new music groups, but she's also a striking flutist. **Terrestre** (New Focus 122; 48:54 ★★★★★) is a stunning second solo album, and it noncha-



Anna Clyne

lantly displays her easy virtuosity and empathetic approach. Kaija Saariaho's swooping title piece finds Chase breathlessly interweaving vocal interjections and fluid flute lines without seams, backed deftly by a quartet of ICE members with translucent brilliance. The middle of the album features two duets with pianist Jacob Greenberg and one with clarinetist Joshua Rubin on works by Donatoni, Carter and Boulez, while the collection closes with the premiere of Dai Fujikura's bass flute meditation "Glacier."

Ordering info: newfocusrecordings.com

The spectral Japanese mouth organ called the shō is at the center of the four compositions by Toshio Hosokawa on **Landscapes** (ECM 2095; 55:52 ★★★★★), where the instrument's slow-moving lines and rich harmonics are both presented as sole voice on "Sakura Für Otto Tomek" and are simulated by hydroplaning strings on "Ceremonial Dance." On the opening and closing pieces the shō, played throughout by the brilliant Mayumi Miyata, echoes and refracts lines shaped by the Mühener Kammerorchester. Perhaps due to the shō's restricted mobility, these pieces occupy a narrow sonic range, but within that palette the sounds are ethereal, haunting and rich.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

The music of Polish composer Joanna Wozny, who studied under Beat Furrer in Austria, achieves a thrilling dynamism on her recent collection **As In A Mirror, Darkly** (Kairos 0013192; 62:41 ★★★★★), where micro ideas provide the starting point for her writing. The title piece, for example, was derived from the notion of how tiny particles or "impurities" can affect how we see things, like a speck of dust on a film print, while "Loses" is concerned with how isolated sound ideas change nature when put through various collaged permutations. Five different ensembles are featured, including the superb Klanforum Wien, conducted by Enno Pope, on the title piece, and each brings a stunning clarity to her abstract ideas.

Ordering info: kairos-music.com



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—George Fendel,
Jazz Society of Oregon

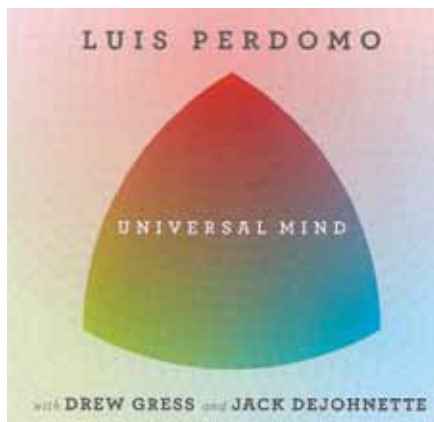


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Luis Perdomo *Universal Mind*

RKM 1164

★★★★★

Pianist Luis Perdomo raises the bar significantly on this scintillating trio outing by connecting with one of his all-time heroes—Jack DeJohnette. Throughout the disc, the two exhibit a flinty accord that suggests that they've been playing together for at least two consecutive decades. Nevertheless, this is their first meeting. And what a spectacular one, best illustrated on "Unified Path I" and "Unified Path II." Both cuts are completely spot-on improvisations with Perdomo pecking out a fetching melody that blossoms into a wondrous exploration filled with jarring harmonies and dramatic momentum underneath DeJohnette's equally inventive and melodically cogent rhythmic

counterpoints.

Bassist Drew Gress functions as the propulsive glue between Perdomo and DeJohnette. It helps that Gress has already established winning rapport with them in separate ensembles. And while invigorating improvisations distinguish much of *Universal Mind*, Perdomo doesn't rely upon that alone. He comes with a solid collection of originals and two keenly chosen standards. The disc blasts off with a quicksilver rendition of Joe Henderson's "Tetragon" that finds the trio developing a joyous, elastic swing that propels Perdomo's granite-hard melody and labyrinthine improvisations. The trio also refurbishes DeJohnette's "Tin Can Alley" marvelously. Its 1980-recorded version showcased a slower tempo with saxophones, clarinets and cello. Perdomo's scaled-down makeover is decidedly leaner and swifter, with Perdomo's nimble piano improvisations racing across DeJohnette's lacerating polyrhythms and Gress' jutting bass lines.

Perdomo delivers some noteworthy originals, too, particularly the lovely "Langnau," which discreetly shows both his Latin roots and his debt to McCoy Tyner, the danceable yet adventurous "Just Before," and "Above The Storm," a gorgeous ballad that comes with an instantly singable melody. On the latter tune, Perdomo also reveals that he can elicit musical sparks while lowering all the feisty friction to a glimmer.

—John Murph

Universal Mind: Tetragon; Langnau; Rebellious; Contemplation; United Path I; Just Before; United Path II; Tin Can Alley; Above The Storm; Gene's Crown; Dance Of The Elephants; Doppio. (60:13)

Personnel: Luis Perdomo, piano; Drew Gress, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

Ordering info: rkmmusic.com

Roscoe Mitchell *Numbers*

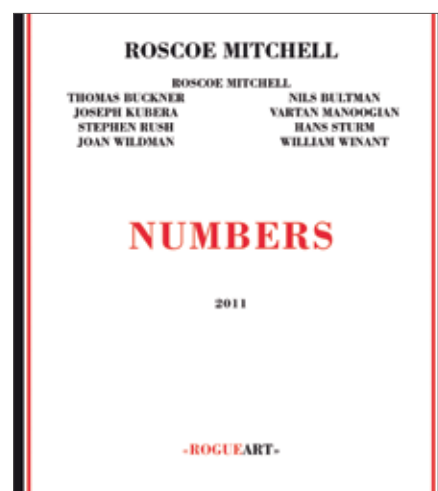
ROGUE ART 0036

★★★★½

In Bill Shoemaker's liner notes, he argues that music appreciation is a matter of context. It is also a question of experience and references. Therefore, *Numbers* should not be viewed as a new chamber work for the reason that most of the musicians performing these solo and duo pieces by reed player Roscoe Mitchell come from a particular musical sphere. They have also tested the improvised music and jazz waters.

In the jazz realm, Mitchell has developed a reputation for pushing the envelope. As a result, this collection of works can appear fairly academic. Still, their relative classicism should not overshadow the pure pleasure they provide. Moreover, the composer's musical idiosyncrasies still transpire through pianist Stephen Rush's rendition of the three movements of "8/8/88" that can be best described as dissonant boogie; or through the sorrowful "Sketches," whose romantic aspirations are torpedoed by bass player Hans Strum.

The three-part "Bells For New Orleans" provides an unexpected sonic diversion while



three poems by e.e. cummings expressively sung by baritone Thomas Buckner find their roots in the Lied tradition.

—Alain Drouot

Numbers: Bells For New Orleans (prelude); 9/9/99; Sketches; Because It's; This; Dim; Bells For New Orleans; WR/C 2A Opus I; 8/8/88 1st Movement; 8/8/88 2nd Movement; 8/8/88 3rd Movement; 9/9/09; Bells For New Orleans (postlude). (65:10)

Personnel: Roscoe Mitchell, alto sax (8); Thomas Buckner, baritone (4, 5, 6); Joseph Kubera, piano (2, 4, 5, 6); Stephen Rush, piano (9, 10, 11); Joan Wildman, piano (3); Nils Bultmann, viola (12); Vartan Manogian, violin (2); Hans Strum, bass (3); William Winant, tubular bells (1, 13), orchestra bells (7), vibraphone (8).

Ordering info: roguart.com



Marisa Monte *O Que Você Quer Saber De Verdade*

BLUE NOTE 27208

★★★★½

The last time we heard from Brazilian vocalist Marisa Monte, she gave us two full albums. That was six years ago, and now she's returned with a more modest but no less compulsively listenable offering that finds her working with a large cast of collaborators.

The album's title means "What You Really Want To Know" and any language barrier melts for the music. Though she's classically trained, Monte has become one of the most significant inheritors of the legacy of Música Popular Brasileira, the strain of pop that grew out of bossa nova in the late '60s. Here, her take on the genre is elastic, incorporating lush orchestration from three different arrangers, backing from Argentinian tango group Café de los Maestros on the cinematic "Lencinho Querido (El Panuelito)" and a bit of clavinet from Bernie Worrell.

It always sounds and feels fundamentally Brazilian, though, and a little samba slips into the rhythm of the accordion-driven "O Que Se Quer." If the record has a flaw, it's that it is fairly uniform in tone—the tidy production could stand a few woolier edges. —Joe Tangari

O Que Você Quer Saber De Verdade: O Que Você Quer Saber de Verdade; Descalço No Parque; Depois; Amar Alguém; O Que Se Quer; Nada Tudo; Verdade, Uma Ilusão; Lencinho Querido (El Panuelito); Ainda Bem; Aquela Velha Canção; Era Óbvio; Hoje Eu Não Saio Não; Seja Feliz; Bem Aqui. (45:19)

Personnel: Marisa Monte, vocals, percussion, ukelele, guitar, melódica, harmonica, Hammond organ, steel drums; Dadi, ukelele, percussion, bass, electric piano, guitar, Hammond organ, pignose guitar, Rhodes, vibraphone, mandolin; Thomas Bartlett, piano, Rhodes, keyboards (1, 3, 4); Pupillo, drums; Lucio Maia, guitar; Dengue, bass; Waldonys, accordion (5, 6, 12), percussion (5); Bernie Worrell, Hammond organ (2, 3), Clavinet (2), Moog (2); Gustavo Santaolalla, ronroco (9, 12), nylon string guitar (9, 14), sitar guitar (12), pump harmonica (14); Miguel Atwood-Ferguson, violin (2, 3, 7), viola (2, 3); Marty Ehrlich, bass clarinet (1), alto flute (11); Joyce Hammann, violin (1, 10, 11); Cornelius Dufallo, violin (1, 10, 11); Lois E. Martin, viola (1, 10, 11); Erik Friedlander, cello (1, 10, 11); Domenico Lancellotti, drums (2); Vinicius Cantuária, percussion (2); Money Marc, Wuritzer (10), Rhodes (11), Hammond organ (11); Andricka Hall, backing vocals (3); Renee Terrier, backing vocals (3); John James, backing vocals (3); Jesse Harris, guitar (4); Rodrigo Amarante, guitar, keyboards, bass, drum machine, percussion (5); Robby Marshall, clarinet (7); Cezar Mendes, nylon string guitar (7, 12); Fernando Suárez Paz, violin (8); Raúl di Renzo, violin (8); Sergio Polizzi, violin (8); Cláudio Melone, viola (8); Miguel Angel Vervelo, bandoneon (8); Anibal Kerkel, keyboards (9); Maico Lopes, trumpet (9, 13); Adriana Morejon, bassoon (11); Arnaldo Antunes, lead vocal (12); Pedro Babysnaker (13); Daniel Jobim, piano (14).

Ordering info: bluenote.com



FLY Year Of The Snake



Mark Turner tenor saxophone
Larry Grenadier double-bass
Jeff Ballard drums

ECM

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Joel Harrison 7

Search

SUNNYSIDE 1300

★★★★

Joel Harrison/ Lorenzo Feliciati

Holy Abyss

CUNEIFORM RECORDS 334

★★★

Search begins with minimalism. Cello and violin saw eighth notes like lumberjacks cut logs, creating a rough aural plane for a chordal piano intro on “Grass Valley And Beyond.” When Donny McCaslin comes in for the saxophone melody, the background drops to a whisper, but the strings, beefed up by offbeat chords on the guitar, remain a constant pulsing presence. And just like that, any pretext toward minimalism is gone, and guitarist Joel Harrison moves to layering dense sections of interlocking, moving sound on top of one another.

It is, of course, no surprise that guitar plays a major role in Harrison’s latest classical/jazz compositional exploration—he wrote most of the tunes himself—but the guitar’s timbre is usually wrapped into the entire sonic picture, beneath interlocking textures of violin and cello.

“Grass Valley And Beyond” and the 15-minute “A Magnificent Death” start the record on a somber note, with lugubrious strings and pondering melodies. “Magnificent Death” is a tribute to a friend who passed away from cancer, and Harrison even uses the friend’s voice in the middle of the piece, amid thorny music that demands an active ear.



Harrison wrote in the liner notes that he included the Allman Brothers’ “Whipping Post,” for which Gary Versace breaks out the Hammond B3, as a way to break up the severity of the album. Here the tune gets a rock drum beat and some more bluesy playing by Harrison, but the piece is still in keeping with the blend of classical and jazz that carries the album.

Search ends with a short solo piano coda, heavy on the sustain pedal, by Versace. The disjunct melody moves rapidly over the keyboard in a simple sendoff to a hamornically rich album. Versace never stops to take a breath, constantly moving forward, echoing the underlying pace of “Search.”

Holy Abyss, on the other hand, is much more of a combo record and is billed as a col-

laboration between Harrison and bassist Lorenzo Feliciati. The guitarist is on equal footing with the rest of the band—and his guitar, distorted or with a clean tone, leads the way, usually mimicking Cuong Vu’s muted brass. Compositionally, Harrison also is an equal player, offering three tunes out of the eight total tracks (Feliciati and Vu also write a few tunes). The songs are much less dense than on *Search*, and many of them are imbued with an atmospheric, dreamscape quality. —Jon Ross

Search: Grass Valley And Beyond; A Magnificent Death; All The Previous Pages Are Gone; The Beauty Of Failure; Whipping Post; O Sacrum Convivium; Search. (58:08)

Personnel: Joel Harrison, guitar; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Gary Versace, piano, organ; Christian Howes, violin; Dana Leong, cello; Stephan Crump, bass; Clarence Penn, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Holy Abyss: Requiem For An Unknown Soldier; Saturday Night In Pendleton; Small Table Rules; Faith; Solos; North Wind (Mistral); Old And New; That Evening. (53:22)

Personnel: Joel Harrison, guitar; Lorenzo Feliciati, bass; Cuong Vu, trumpet; Roy Powell, piano; Dan Weiss, drums.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

Josh Ginsburg *Zembla Variations*

BROOKLYN JAZZ
UNDERGROUND 030

★★★★½

The title of bassist Josh Ginsburg’s debut CD pays tribute to his Brooklyn neighborhood by way of a Valdimir Nabokov novel set in a strange, not-quite-real country. The eight original compositions don’t deviate from the known in quite such a radical manner, but Ginsburg discovers ways to rethink the familiar in much the same way that the constantly self-reinventing borough does.

“PushBar (For Emergency Exit)” begins the disc with Ginsburg’s distantly pulsing bass and an introspective statement of the melody by saxophonist Eli Degibri; this dream-like introduction dissipates as quickly as it appeared, replaced by a much more forceful and surging restatement of the same basic material.

Ginsburg writes in a way that asserts himself as leader while maintaining a group identity for the quartet. He doubles Degibri’s tenor with bowed bass on the slinky lines of “Koan” and supplies an elastic bounce to “Gently,” complementing George Colligan’s shimmering Rhodes and Rudy Royston’s subtle rhythmic buoyancy. The bassist leaps into a muscular walk on the penultimate track, “Red Giant,” a welcome acceleration given the mid-tempo concentration of much of the disc. Still, this disc veers away from the visceral in favor of the cerebral, revealing itself in gradually unfolding layers. —Shaun Brady



Zembla Variations: PushBar (For Emergency Exit); Zembla Variations; 10,000 Leagues; Koan; Gently; Oxygen; Red Giant; Jakewalk. (58:47)

Personnel: Eli Degibri, tenor and soprano saxophone; George Colligan, piano, Fender Rhodes; Josh Ginsburg, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: bjurecords.com

Sidi Touré *Koïma*

THRILL JOCKEY 301

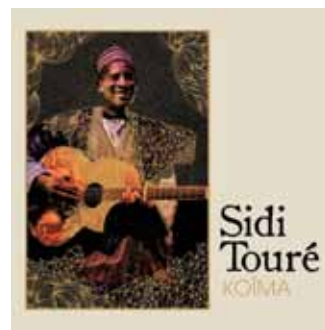
★★★★★

On last year’s *Sahel Folk*, Mali’s Sidi Touré took an exceedingly simple approach, pairing himself with friends for each song and recording everything in a house in one take.

For *Koïma*, Touré takes a different course, assembling a band with two guitars, bass, percussion, the violin-like sokou and a female backing vocalist. With a consistent cast in place for every song, the album is definitely a band record, with a distinctive sound.

Touré’s voice and cycling rhythm guitar are still at the heart of the group’s music, but the band is dynamic. Lead guitarist Oumar Konaté plays acoustic, but his style is often reminiscent of the electric players of Mali’s great dance orchestras, with fluid phrasing and complementary rhythm playing that bounces cleanly off Touré’s solid ostinatos. The rhythm section’s main job is to hypnotize, and they lock into patterns early in each song that are rarely broken.

One of the most interesting elements of the band is the interplay between Touré and backing singer Leïla Ahimidi Gobbi, whose pinched vocals add a tart rejoinder to his dusty leads. Touré can really sing, too. When he cuts loose near the end of “Ishi Tanmaha,” showing off vocal power he usually plays down, it’s shocking how much volume he can summon seemingly from nowhere. —Joe Tangari



Koïma: Ni See Ay Ga Done; Maimouna; Aiy Faadli; Woy Tiladio; Koïma; Ishi Tanmaha; À Chacun Sa Chance; Kalaa Ay Makoly; Tondi Karaa; Euzo. (52:18)

Personnel: Sidi Touré, guitar, lead vocals; Oumar Konaté, lead guitar; Charles-Éric Charrier, bass; Alex Baba, calabash; Zumana Téréta, sokou; Leïla Ahimidi Gobbi, backing vocals; Douma Maïga, kurbu (1).

Ordering info: thrilljockey.com

**Chicago
Underground Duo**
Age Of Energy
NORTHERN SPY 020
★★★

The latest Chicago Underground Duo venture is a homecoming and a departure. Not only is it the first record that Rob Mazurek and Chad Taylor have recorded in Chicago in half a decade, it's the first that they have made together since Mazurek moved back to the Midwest after an extended sojourn in Brazil. But it also represents a long stride away from the open-ended but jazz-rooted improvisational language that the two men have shared since the mid-'90s. Both musicians have wielded electronics on other Chicago Underground records, but the thick textures, cycling arpeggios and stolid cadences they employ during the first 15 minutes of the lengthy suite "Winds And Sweeping Pines" have more in common with analog underground outfits like Pulse Emitter than the Don Cherry-steeped horn-and-percussion exchanges of yore. There's nothing wrong with the Chicago Underground giving jazz the slip; they've made some enduring music during their forays on the uncharted waters between genres. But this record lacks the variety of their last record (*Boca Negra*) and the sustained improvisational fire of Mazurek's fiery Starlicker ensemble. It could use a few more flare-ups to balance the passages of colorful but low-wattage atmospherics.

—Bill Meyer

Age Of Energy: Winds And Sweeping Pines; It's Alright; Castle In Your Heart; Age Of Energy, (42:29)
Personnel: Rob Mazurek, cornet, electronics, voice; Chad Taylor, drums, mbira, electronics, drum machine.
Ordering info: northern-spy.com



Ehud Asherie
Upper West Side
POSI-TONE 8092
★★★★½

If an artist is going to explore an older style that's been mined extensively, then he or she had better be able to work with that style's progenitors. On *Upper West Side*, pianist Ehud Asherie and tenor saxophonist Harry Allen demonstrate that they can more than just hang. Both men have taken certain aspects from the music's heavyweights to forge their own approach. Allen comes out of the Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins school of husky, swinging and sensual tenor players. Employing a breathy sub-tone and subtle vibrato, Allen is an expert balladeer. His first few utterances of "Our Love Is Here To Stay" are pure butter, and he coos and caresses the melody, whispering sweet nothings into the listener's ear. Allen is at his softest and most delicate on Strayhorn's "Passion Flower" and Jimmy McHugh's "I'm In The Mood For Love," where he rarely plays above a whisper. He uses various growls and scoops in an uptempo and swinging take of "I Want To Be Happy," which also features Asherie's excellent stride playing. Asherie, who has appropriated and combined elements from Basie, Ellington and Hank Jones, is equally impressive, whether soloing or backing Allen. His sense of swing and time are impeccable.

—Chris Robinson



Upper West Side: Learnin' The Blues; It Had To Be You; O Pato; Our Love Is Here To Stay; Have You Met Miss Jones?; Passion Flower; I Want To Be Happy; Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams; I'm In The Mood For Love; Love Will Find A Way; My Blue Heaven, (59:39)
Personnel: Ehud Asherie, piano; Harry Allen, tenor saxophone.
Ordering info: posi-tone.com



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George Duke's Steamrolling '70s

George Duke, in his revealing, honest liner notes to *From Me To You*, says, "The idea for this album was to merge the styles I love into one album." With a much bigger budget and more time, Duke's wide palette and far-ranging talents were clearly on display for this, his first record for Epic. Perhaps stemming from his earlier roots, working with, among others, Cannonball Adderley and Frank Zappa, and on the heels of a string of strong releases for MPS, these six titles are a mixed bag, hot stuff one moment, predictable pablum the next.

Duke's prolific pen and studio wizardry as a producer, along with being one funky player and singer, run through all of ***The George Duke Band: The Complete 1970s Epic Albums Collection*** (Epic/Legacy 88697930322; 41:25/46:41/42:39/43:17/42:17/44:15 ★★½). As for *From Me To You*, Duke notes his favorite cuts are the instrumentals, one of which echoes the '70s-era dance vibe throughout but with all those interesting signature touches that only Duke could muster. "Scuse Me Miss" is fun, and "Up With It" showcases both the leader's and Clarke's solo prowess on the album's fusion tour de force. The acoustic, lyrical "Seasons," with Clarke and guitarist Mike Sembello, registers, hearkening back to Duke's Zappa days. Throughout, regular drummer Leon "Ndugu" Chancler keeps it all moving amidst the firepower of horns and a vocal ensemble.

Reach For It, Duke's best seller, continues the love and dance feel with even more funkiness, more focus and more percussion. "Lemme At It" is a spirited romp, tuneful with a serious kick, a keeper that features Charles Johnson's sizzling electric guitar. "Hot Fire" raises the temp with Latin flavors and a disco beat with help from percussionist Manolo Badrena. The title track was a stereo store favorite, the song's seductive, slow-and-slinky beat amidst a chest-thumping electronic dynamic range (via Duke's keyboards and Miller's boss bass) and a bunch of sassy (mostly) female foreground/background vocals. The vocal "Just For You" is classic Duke ballad territory, sweet and utterly soulful. The Latin vibe returns with "Omi," featuring trombonist Raul de Souza (and an uncredited Flora Purim joining the background vocals) on this grinding, uptempo waltz.

Don't Let Go tried to maintain *Reach For It*'s success, adding singers Josie James and Napoleon Murphy Brock along with percussionist Sheila Escovedo. While this album does include nice pit stops with "Percussion Interlude" and the violin/viola duo "Preface" is more pop, the big hit "Dukey Stick" loaded up with a plodding, slinky beat and a party



atmosphere of singers and talkers. The zesty "Morning Sun," the title-track workout and "The Way I Feel," which kicks in and out of percussive high-gear, contrast with sappy love songs lacking harmonic grit.

Follow The Rainbow is another big party with lots of extra horns, inspired by Earth, Wind & Fire. "Party Down" says it all, as much a dance tune as anything. Ricky Lawson replaces Ndugu at drums and the feel is felt: more disco, less funk, less kick. The shared vocals and slow, steady beats of "Say That You Will" and "Sunrise" echo EWF big-time, the emphasis on radio-friendly music taking over this release. Vestiges of Latin and the occasional instrumental surface with the peppy, percussion-heavy "Festival."

Master Of The Game, while modeled on *Follow The Rainbow*'s personnel and vibe, has more bite. The opener "Look What You Find" uses the horn section, a spirited call-and-response vocal and hot percussion overlay to boot. Likewise, there is more EWF energy with "Every Little Step I Take" and more banter and squishy synth with the bouncy "Games." Disco breezes in with new singer Lynn Davis and her feathery, soulful falsetto (Duke solos on piano). More interesting keyboard atmospherics come in with the quickie "In The Distance," and bubble-gum fluff makes up "I Love You More."

A Brazilian Love Affair takes his love of Latin music and puts it front and center, recorded in Rio and Los Angeles with Aíto Moreira, Milton Nascimento, Toninho Horta, Roberto Silva, Flora Purim and Simone. Duke's love of harmonic twists, funky beats and lots of percussive kick combine on the engaging, disco-flavored title track, Milton's gorgeous "Cravo E Canela" and the haunting "Ao Que Vai Nascer."

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

DB



Darius Jones Quartet *Book Of Mæ'bul*

AUM FIDELITY 072

★★★★

Over the last couple of years, the galvanic saxophonist Darius Jones has made serious waves in New York, and his latest salvo reinforces why.

Not only is *Book Of Mæ'bul* another powerful addition to a body of work that he cumulatively calls a "sonic tone poem" of his life—this collection wordlessly essays the women in his life whom he's loved and had relationships with—but it shows his smarts as a bandleader. Each recording under his name has featured a different band or instrumental context, and each offered a discrete musical approach. Considering the subject material, it's hardly surprising that *Book Of Mæ'bul* is ballad-heavy, but the results are necessarily romantic.

Pianist Matt Mitchell employs an impressively light touch on the proceedings, a perfect counter to the way the leader's heavy vibrato streaks his astringent tone and sorrowful, tender melodies with an emotional weight. The rhythm section of Trevor Dunn and Ches Smith is exceptionally nimble, but that doesn't prevent it from engaging in some well-placed turbulence. In fact, many of Jones' compositions here evolve through shifting emotional states—apropos of the subject matter—without losing the thread. There are moments when the influence of David S. Ware shines through, as on "Be Patient With Me," but Jones channels such inspirations through his own sensibility; his playing doesn't sound at all like Ware's, but the gravity of his writing and the band's kaleidoscopic emotional intensity reminds of the tenorist's classic quartet. I think the full picture of Jones' talent and vision has yet to emerge, but with each new recording we're seeing another facet of a magnificently gifted musician. Here's hoping the denouement takes a while.

—Peter Margasak

Book Of Mæ'bul: The Enjoli Moon; The Fagley Blues; Winkie; Be Patient With Me; My Baby; You Have Me Seeing Red; So Sad; Roosevelt. (55:49)

Personnel: Darius Jones, alto saxophone; Matt Mitchell, piano; Trevor Dunn, bass; Ches Smith, drums.

Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

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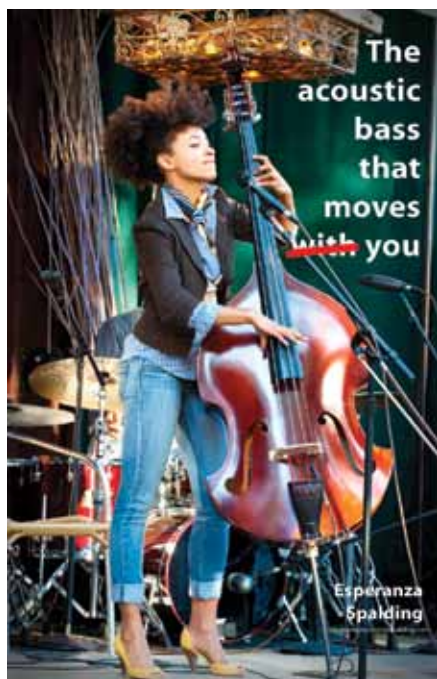


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Linda Oh *Initial Here*

GREENLEAF MUSIC 1024

★★★★

The sophomore disc from bassist/bassoonist Linda Oh features a tight quartet including in-demand drummer Rudy Royston, rangy saxophonist Dayna Stephens and Cuban pianist Fabian Almazan, whom Oh met at the Manhattan School of Music.

Oh is equally strong on acoustic and electric: Check her ferocious thrust on Leonard Bernstein's "Something Coming," then her nimble plugged-in playing on "Little House." Oh's compositions are affecting, with convincing narratives. "Desert Island Dream" relives her family's emigration from Malaysia to Australia. After a queasy sea voyage, the mel-

low haven of Perth beckons, Stephens' tenor gliding over Almazan's buoyant Rhodes—a kite in the wind. The writing cuts across a wide emotional range with fine pace, ebb and flow. "Thicker Than Water" is a haunting tribute to the leader's Chinese forbears, Jen Shyu recalling the vocal purity of Esperanza Spalding when English lyrics kick in over Oh's harmonizing bassoon, perfectly in synch with over-dubbed arco bass. "Mr M" is too balmy to conjure the turbulent Charles Mingus (Oh sounds more like Mingus on the Duke Ellington standard "Come Sunday"), but elsewhere, during "No.1 Hit" and "Deeper Than Sad," the propulsive time and ideas of bassist Avishai Cohen spring to mind. Royston splashes polyrhythms before the fade of "No.1 Hit" and contributes hip cymbal placements on the gloriously doleful closer.

Weary melismas from tenor and bowed bass over a shackled, spent piano figure on "Deeper Than Sad" set the tone, pendulous backing vocals the oarsmen on a slave ship. Stephens pipes through up top with the intense gravitas of Jan Gabarek and goes textural, inspiring bristling atonality from Almazan, interspersed with melodica. It's a powerful diminuendo, bearing a heavy weight and a heavy heart, an a propos contrast to the playful sister track "Deeper Than Happy."

—Michael Jackson

Initial Here: Ultimate Persona; Something's Coming/Les Cinq Doigts; Mr M; No.1 Hit; Thicker Than Water; Little House; Deeper Than Happy; Desert Island Dream; Come Sunday; Deeper Than Sad. (56:03)

Personnel: Linda Oh, acoustic/electric bass, bassoon; Dayna Stephens, tenor sax; Fabian Almazan, piano, Rhodes, melodica; Rudy Royston, drums; Jen Shyu, vocals (5); Christian Howes, strings (6).

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com

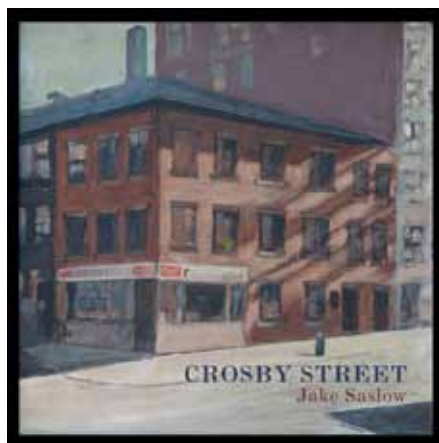
Jake Saslow *Crosby Street*

14TH STREET RECORDS 1101

★★★★½

Crosby Street runs from Howard north to Bleecker Street, through Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood. Tenor saxophonist Jake Saslow lived in SoHo as a young boy, before it became a high-rent district, but spent the rest of his childhood on Long Island. From its title to cover painting, Saslow's debut album finds him reaching back to see what he can grasp of a world that no longer exists.

He does it mostly through the lens of winding original compositions that make subtle use of unusual meters and inventive phrasing to knock the cadence of his melodies slightly off balance. The technique is most effective on the effervescently reflective pair of songs that close the album, "How Things Were" and "Until Next Time." He and his band weave through the open spaces of these compositions, threading melodies together in sensitive interplay as drummer Marcus Gilmore exhibits his impressive textural range. At the other end of the LP, faster tempos make this delicate balance harder to achieve, but Saslow's strongly written



bass patterns move things along when they get too thick in the middle.

It's interesting that Saslow chose to make most of his debut with a guitarist and pianist, given his club experience in a bass/drums/saxophone setting, but he only tries that approach on one song, rather boldly choosing Horace Silver's "Lonely Woman."

—Joe Tangari

Crosby Street: Early Riser; Taiga Forest; Lonely Woman; Lucky 13; Crosby Street; How Things Were; Until Next Time. (52:07)

Personnel: Jake Saslow, tenor saxophone; Mike Moreno, guitar; Fabian Almazan, piano; Joe Martin, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.

Ordering info: jakesaslow.com



Eric Alexander/Vincent Herring *Friendly Fire*

HIGH NOTE RECORDS 7232

★★★★½

Friendly Fire, the new live recording from saxophonists Eric Alexander and Vincent Herring, sounds like it could have been placed in a time capsule that was buried in the late '50s. Joining the saxophonists on this excellent hard-bop date are pianist Mike Ledonne, bassist John Webber and drummer Carl Allen. Recorded in August 2011 at New York's Smoke, *Friendly Fire* is aptly named, given that the soloists bring out their big guns, but rather than point them at each other they aim their sights toward making a scintillating and fun spirited album.

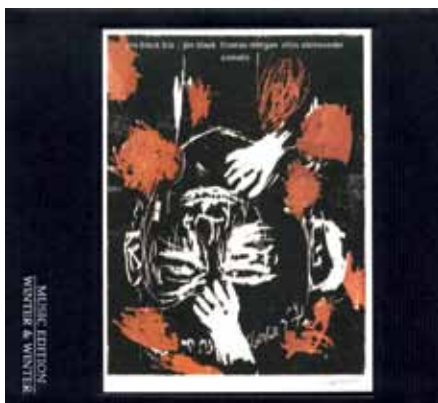
Herring has an amazing and powerful alto sound, and his approach is soulful and blues-drenched. He sounds a bit like Cannonball Adderley, but his tone has a little more edge, it's a little grainier, and his phrasing is slightly more relaxed and laid-back than Adderley's. Alexander has a somewhat bright tenor sound, amazing technique, and rips off virtuosic lines at will. McCoy Tyner's "Inception" is a perfect vehicle for Alexander's Coltrane-inspired pyrotechnics, which Herring complements nicely with long lyrical phrases. The tuneful "Sukiyaki," which has a quasi-two-beat feel, is one of the disc's highlights, as are Hank Mobley's "Pat 'N' Chat" and "Dig Dis." Each saxophonist has a brief ballad feature where they are the only soloist—Herring on "You've Changed" and Alexander on "Mona Lisa." *Friendly Fire* concludes with Herring's "Timothy," the album's lone original. Beginning with a tender ballad section by Herring, the tune goes to a medium swing for the solos and features Alexander slaloming through the changes. The rhythm section is solid and Ledonne contributes nice solos throughout, but *Friendly Fire*'s focus is placed almost solely on Herring and Alexander.

—Chris Robinson

Friendly Fire: Pat 'N' Chat; Sukiyaki; Inception; Dig Dis; You've Changed; Here's That Rainy Day; Mona Lisa; Timothy. (60:44)

Personnel: Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone; Vincent Herring, alto saxophone; Mike Ledonne, piano; John Webber, bass; Carl Allen, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Jim Black Trio

Somatic

WINTER & WINTER 910 184

★★★★★

After five albums with his dynamic, rock-driven quartet Alasnoaxis, drummer Jim Black redirects himself with this beautifully austere piano trio that scurries at the edges of swing-based jazz. Supported by the sublimely flexible and deeply musical bassist Thomas Morgan and the young, largely unknown Austrian pianist Elias Stemeseder, Black can't help but summon the spirit of the late Paul Motian, both in his wonderfully diffuse compositional slant and the melodic drive of his drumming.

With the exception of the bruising, forceful "Beariere," most of the music is lyric and gentle, but that doesn't mean the drummer has suddenly surrendered his singular, precise lopsidedness. In fact, one of the most rewarding qualities of this trio is the way it subverts the ballad-heavy program by playing just slightly out of register in the most elastic, empathetic way possible.

By playing just ahead of or behind the beat, or occasionally pulling the rug out from under it, the music gains an exquisite tension that masterfully complements the ruminative melodies. At times the music recalls a scaled-down Bad Plus, replacing muscular structures and bravado with more malleable form and wistfulness.

Yet even at its most hushed and romantic, there's a rigor that keeps this from becoming cloying or arch. Each performance progresses according to its own idiosyncratic heartbeat, rolling gracefully through peaks and valleys that seem to appear spontaneously, according to the plugged-in whims of the musicians. Black has assembled a remarkably intuitive group here that brings an effective mixture of accessibility and elusiveness to his compositions, a combination that keep the listener engaged, guessing and surprised. —Peter Margasak

Somatic: Tahre; Terrotow; Hestbak; Sure Are You; Willbee; Beariere; Somatic; Protection; Chibi Jones; Uglysnug. (51:29)

Personnel: Jim Black, drums; Thomas Morgan, bass; Elias Stemeseder, piano.

Ordering info: winterandwinter.com

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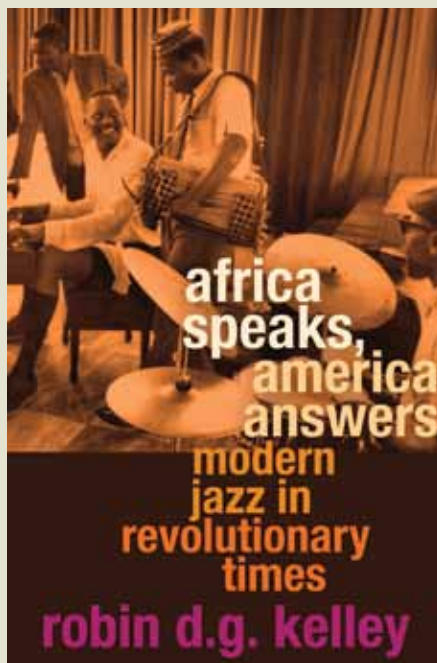
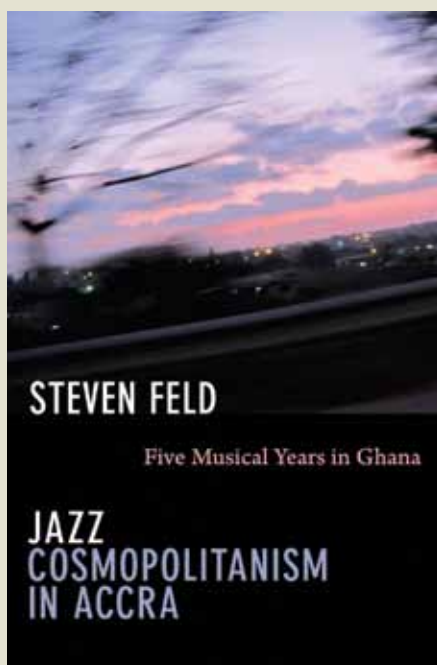
American–African Connections Forged Through Jazz

African American musicians throughout jazz history have had a deep fascination with Africa, but in two new books on jazz on the continent, Steven Feld and Robin D.G. Kelley have found that this cultural attraction is a two-way flow. Much like the exchange of goods from one country to another, musicians from Africa import American ideas into their own music, and American jazz musicians journey to Africa to add a deeper meaning to their music.

In *Jazz Cosmopolitanism In Accra* (Duke University Press), Feld—a professor of anthropology and music at the University of New Mexico, musician and filmmaker—explores this cultural give-and-take from the perspective of three African musicians and a group of lorry drivers who play music on their squeeze horns. His academic research is intimate and experiential, written as a friend and a collaborator. Kelley's *Africa Speaks, America Answers* (Harvard University Press) takes a different tactic. His book serves as a journalistic biography of two American musicians who came to Africa to connect with their homeland and an African drummer and a vocalist who both looked for greater acknowledgement in the United States. Kelley also approaches his subject from a different background than Feld. A professor of United States history at the University of California, Los Angeles, Kelley is also the author of the widely celebrated biography, *Thelonious Monk: The Life And Times Of An American Original*.

Feld's book is a collection of the research he gathered while living in Accra, Ghana, sitting down with African musicians over the course of a few years and performing in the band Accra Trane Station with two of his subjects, drummer Nii Otoo Annan and saxophonist Nii Noi Nortey. The book starts, though, with a detailed portrait of Guy Warren. The drummer immigrated from Africa to the United States in the mid-1950s, became frustrated with the racism he encountered—his sound and his look were never African enough for American audiences—and ran back to Africa, changing his name to Ghanaaba in the process. Feld's explorations into the complicated lives of these musicians is colored by his own impressions and opinions formed after working professionally with them for an extended period.

This fascinating book opens up jazz from the African perspective. Whether he's discussing with Nortey the Africanization of his saxophones and his absolute dedication to the music of John Coltrane or explaining Ghanaaba's musical relationship with Max Roach, Feld brings a full picture to the broadening cultural aspects of Africans playing their own type of jazz. He sees these musicians as true residents of the world and their music as a cosmopolitan blend of jazz



and African culture.

Taking a historical view of jazz in Africa, Kelley notes that even Africans themselves didn't at first think they had the ears for modern jazz. When Louis Armstrong came to the continent in the '60s, he writes that the audience didn't fully appreciate what Armstrong was playing. An African musician at the time said, "Jazz is not the music of West Africans."

Kelley's book starts with a more cursory discussion of Ghana, moves on to explorations of Randy Weston and Ahmed Abdul-Malik, and ends his focus on African musicians with the historically under-appreciated Samantha Bea Benjamin. Due to his subjects, Kelley's book is more political at its core than Feld's anthropological-based research. Kelley writes, "Perhaps with the growth of trans-Atlantic collaborations and dissemination of culture, we can no longer speak so confidently about jazz as an American art form, or render African jazz musicians outside the pale of the music's history."

With the 2010 publication of Randy Weston's autobiography (*African Rhythms*), much of his voice is fresh on the minds of readers, but Kelley digs a little deeper here, and his distance from his subject—Kelley mostly uses secondary sources throughout the book—makes mentioning issues glossed over in Weston's autobiography easier. As for Weston's identification with Africa, Kelley writes that he looked to Africa to instill a pride and heritage into his music. His quest was also about bringing about a difference, and his work went hand in hand with the politics of the time. One of the most significant parts of the book is the chapter on Benjamin, a musician looking to leave Africa to realize her full musical potential. She grew up under apartheid, and when she came to the United States, she experienced the same thing as Ghanaaba—she was at the same time not African enough to be a tribal singer, but too African to be taken seriously as a jazz singer. Praise from Duke Ellington gave her career a push in the right direction, but for most of her life, she lived in the background, supporting her husband Abdullah Ibrahim. She

finally broke through with records of her own and eventually became a celebrated vocalist.

Ultimately, in *Jazz Cosmopolitanism*, Nortey discussed his near obsession with Coltrane, in the process summing up perfectly how African cosmopolitanism itself connects with American jazz. He's not, as he said, "an African playing what people think of as jazz on standard jazz instruments." Nii Nortey performs African music "informed by the history of jazz and especially the spirit of Coltrane, and the politics of those times."

DB

Ordering info: dukeupress.edu; hup.harvard.edu

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Erik Charlston JazzBrasil *Essentially Hermeto*

SUNNYSIDE RECORDS 1288

★★★★½

Oscar Castro-Neves *Live At Blue Note Tokyo*

ZOHO 201201

★★★★½

In the United States, Hermeto Pascoal's music is not celebrated enough. Although he ranks high in his homeland of Brazil, Pascoal remains an enigmatic footnote in the U.S. compared to Antonio Carlos Jobim, Gilberto Gil or Caetano Veloso. Vibraphonist Erik Charlston aims to rectify the situation on his winning debut.

Charlston was savvy enough to recruit the rhythmic team of percussionist Café and drummer and percussionist Rogerio Boccato—two musicians who have worked with Pascoal. Their sublime work does magic on “Vale De Riberia” and the stunning “Essa Foi Demais.” On the front line, Charlston pairs vibraphone with reedist Ted Nash, who often unleashes serpentine lines that writhe and float across Mark Soskin's orchestral piano accompaniment and Jay Anderson's emphatic bass lines. Even though the emphasis is on compositions, Charlston's prowess as instrumentalist leaps forward on “Essa Foi Demais,” the transfixing beginning of “Hermeto” and the dazzling “Frevo Rasgado.”

Guitarist and bossa nova co-architect Oscar Castro-Neves paid homage to Brazilian composers on this engaging live date. He certainly brought firepower to the stage with the all-star lineup, which includes percussionist Airtio Moreira and vocalist Leila Pinheiro. Covering a



wealth of Brazilian standards, the performances take on an elegantly breezy nature, especially on Castro-Neves' soaring “Rio Dawning,” Edu Lobo's sexy “Ponteio” and Marco Bosco's atmospheric “Tatiando.” Castro-Neves' spidery guitar gets ample room to shine but it doesn't overwhelm the concert; it's truly an ensemble effort that's best illustrated on the ebullient rendering of Jobim's classic “Waters Of March” and on the Castro-Neves ballad “My Sweet Sweetie Pie.” —John Murph

Essentially Hermeto: Vale da Ribeira; Rebulção; Santo Antonio; Essa Foi Demais; Hermeto; Paraiba; Frevo Rasgado; Viva O Rio De Janeiro, (50:58).

Personnel: Erik Charlston, vibraphone, marimba, vocals (6); Ted Nash, saxophones, flute and clarinet; Mark Soskin, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; Rogério Boccato, drums and percussion; Café, percussion.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Live At Blue Note Tokyo: Ela é Carioca, Ponteio; My Sweet Sweetie Pie; Domingo Azul Do Mar/ Fotografia; Waters Of March; Rio; Caninana; Rio Dawning; Tatiando; Misturada/Tombo; Chora Tua Tristeza; Canto De Ossanha; Manhã De Carnaval; Deixa. (59:37)

Personnel: Oscar Castro-Neves, acoustic guitar, synthesizer guitar, vocals; Airtio Moreira, drums, caxixis (3), pandeiro and vocal solo (7), pandeiro and vocals (13); Leila Pinheiro, vocals; Marco Bosco, percussion, voice effects, birds, kalimba (9); Paulo Calasans, acoustic piano, keyboards; Marcelo Mariano, electric bass.

Ordering info: zohomusic.com



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Calvin Keys *Shawn-Neeq*

TOMPKINS SQUARE 2646

★★★★★

When guitarist Calvin Keys recorded his 1971 debut for Black Jazz, he was still near the beginning of a long career that saw him pass through the bands of Pharoah Sanders, Ray Charles, Sonny Stitt and a long list of others, including a few you might not have predicted (M.C. Hammer). All across this newly reissued record, Keys displays the fluid technical dexterity and disciplined melodicism of a man who's already played with (almost) all those people and learned well from the experience.

Shawn-Neeq was made when the free crowd was pushing further out and fusion was in full bloom, but this record swings, especially on side one. It begins with a feint toward the cosmic frontier, with Keys' acid-tinged guitar leading the band as it plays out of time, but it quickly settles into a breezy funk groove that sets the tone for the record that follows. Keys' finger-picking is precise and direct, drawing from blues as well as psychedelia, and his clear-eyed approach is nicely contrasted by electric pianist Larry Nash's billowy, cloud-like soloing.

Keys takes things further into funk and rock on side two without losing his footing and keeps everything focused with tight writing—his original compositions are memorable and reveal unexpected complexity when revisited. None more so than the title track, the weightless waltz that floats at the heart of the record.

—Joe Tangari

Shawn-Neeq: B.E.; Criss Cross; Shawn-Neeq; Gee-Gee; B.K. (37:20)

Personnel: Calvin Keys, guitar; Bob Braye, drums; Lawrence Evans, bass; Larry Nash, electric piano; Owen Marshall, flute, hose-a-phone, miscellaneous instruments.

Ordering info: tompinssquare.com



Jon Gold *Bossa Of Possibility*

BLUJAZZ 3386

★★★★½

Former Cornell chemist Jon Gold turned his attention to music years ago, and it's our good fortune in the form of this sonically rich album. Gold uses mostly Brazilian devices but puts an individual jazz stamp on the finished product. His writing is at least as interesting for the combinations of instruments as it is for the melodies and compositional arcs. But the instrumental writing always enhances the pieces, rather than call attention to itself.

He's assembled fine combinations of players and soloists: Dave Liebman alternates lyricism and angularity on "Buster"; Howard Levy's harmonica has a foro element in his foray on the title cut; Gold himself is an understated soloist, preferring to add color and nuance to the ensemble, though he gives a lovely, tender reading of "Impermanence."

Gold is capable of complex writing. "P'butu" sounds bitonal with its ongoing dissonance and overlaid linear voices. He also knows when to give the musicians room to create. The rhythm section—especially drummer Mauricio Zottarelli—foments beautifully under Howard Levy's harmonica feature on the aching ballad "AOC." —*Kirk Silsbee*

Bossa Of Possibility: Ora Bolas; Bossa Of Possibility; Bugalu 2-6-3; Theme For Impermanence; Buster; Caroline Dance; AOC; P'butu; Mineira; Mainstay; Samba Ballet; Stanley. (46:00)

Personnel: Jon Gold, keyboards; Zack Brock, violin (1, 8, 10); Lauren Riley Rigby, cello (5); Howard Levy, harmonica (2, 3, 7, 11); Tom Malone, horn; Jackie Coleman, horn (2); Jorge Continentino, flute (1, 3, 8, 9); Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone (5, 12); Jon Ibragim, alto saxophone (1, 2, 8, 9); Bryan Murray, tenor saxophone (1, 3, 6, 8, 9); Scott Anderson, guitars; Rob Curto, accordion (1, 8); Harvie S, bass; Jeff Hanley, electric bass (3, 6); Mauricio Zottarelli, drums; Adriano Santos, percussion (1, 2, 3, 10); Zé Mauricio, percussion; Briyana Martin, vocals (6, 8, 9, 11).

Ordering info: blujazz.com



Charles Gayle Trio *Streets*

NORTHERN SPY RECORDS 018

★★★★½

An arresting picture of saxophonist Charles Gayle, in semi-whiteface with Pagliacci tears graces the cover of *Streets*. This minstrel alter-ego has been parcel of Gayle's persona for years. Back in the '90s he said: "When you live in the street, it isn't like you can play at a street corner and then pack up and go home."

Gayle is also known for his solo piano, and given this self-sufficiency, it is often a matter of rhythm sections paralleling his whim. "Whim" doesn't do justice to Gayle's sonic onslaught, however, which is a wonderful ongoing catharsis, much like Albert Ayler with its quavering vibrato and refracted textures.

The central statement of this session, recorded at the fabulously named Seizures Palace studio in May 2011, the title track offers breathing space for bassist Larry Roland to play on his own, since on "Compassion I" he and Gayle seem poles apart. For a minute Gayle follows Roland rather than plowing his own furrow, and the two coincide for a demure decrescendo. A more extended phase of quietude with Roland lowing and Thompson's cymbals shimmering concludes "Doxology." "March Of April" begins with martial beats and something of an Afro-funk riff from Roland. Gayle's head is elsewhere, but there is no misinterpreting his imploring shriek at the outset of "Tribulations," which the trio takes out with a tour de force. —*Michael Jackson*

Streets: Compassion I; Compassion II; Glory And Jesus; Streets; March Of April; Doxology; Tribulations. (59:11)

Personnel: Charles Gayle, tenor saxophone; Larry Roland, bass; Michael TA Thompson, drums.

Ordering info: northern-spy.com



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Kat Edmonson
Way Down Low

SPINNERETTE 1202

★★★★★

Melissa Stylianou
Silent Movie

ANZIC 0036

★★★★½

When listening to singers who move in and out of jazz, pop and the kitchen sink, one question always lingers: Are we talking standards, or something else? In the case of singers Kat Edmonson and Melissa Stylianou, the answer for each on their new discs is somewhere in between. On Edmonson's *Way Down Low* and Stylianou's *Silent Movie* they tilt towards originals played in unconventional ways.

In Houston native Edmonson's case, don't let her pixieish, almost child-like singing fool you: Her vibe is sophisticated and unique. Her *Take To The Sky* (2009) featured a more conventional jazz personnel and mostly covers. The self-produced *Way Down Low* is loaded with varied instrumentation, occasional background vocals and acute interpretations. The attention to detail can be mesmerizing, as on her exquisite, rarified take of Brian Wilson's "I Just Wasn't Made For These Times." Edmonson's voice is on the verge of tears amidst subdued, shimmering horn charts, piano sprinklings and a gentle sway in 3/4. This song follows on the heels of three more spritely or Latin-flavored confections that suggest love and being in love. "Lucky," "I Don't Know" and "What Else Can I Do" celebrate, whereas Wilson's lament finds Edmonson venturing into more difficult terrain.

"Whispering Grass" finds the singer in the middle of a breezy meadow of sound, the emotional currents once again uneven, the song full of space, a very slow gait and moments for pianist, bassist and drummer to move in and out of the song's seemingly endless open sky. Edmonson's voice, too, drops down a bit to reflect the song's mysterious gaze. Strings, celeste and a slithering organ accompany Edmonson on the sweetly sour waltz "I'm Not In Love"; while in a playful duet with well-fitted guest Lyle Lovett, "The Long Way Home" is a whimsical, swinging ode to love, and, like everything else here, once again features the odd instrumental touch. A reprise/redo via a whispering crawl with "I Don't Know" could take your breath away.

Stylianou's *Silent Movie* begins with an incredibly slow take of her own, this time with the standard "Smile." She's close-in, too, her own version of delicate delivery disarming as she almost whispers her lines to this famous tune, accompanied by a sympathetic and supportive group. While she relies more on the occasional standard, her takes are so original you're inclined to forget who wrote it. James Taylor's "Something In The Way She Moves," Paul Simon's "Hearts And Bones," "The



Folks Who Live On The Hill" and Mancini/Mercer's "Moon River" all suggest a familiarity, a genuine connection, Stylianou's delivery at times recalling, among others, Joni Mitchell when she plays with intervals in a more natural, less affected way.

It's too bad we don't get more of her own material, the title track a narrative rich with allusions to heartbreak, the melody so sweet yet suggesting the pain that can come from intimate relationships, her voice sounding hopeful but filled with uncertainty. And her "Hearing Your Voice" (written with Vince Mendoza) and "First Impressions" (with Edgar Meyer) reinforce the impression that original material suits her. The slow and sad "Today I Sing The Blues" covers similar territory, but is delivered with less conviction, suggesting less regret.

—John Ephland

Way Down Low: Lucky; I Don't Know; Something In The Way She Moves; Silent Movie; On the Edge; Hearts and Bones; Today, I Sing The Blues; Hearing Your Voice; I Still Miss Someone; The Folks Who Live On The Hill; First Impressions; Swansea; Moon River. (54:40)

Personnel: Kat Edmonson, Lyle Lovett (9), vocals; Kevin Lovejoy, keyboards, organ, whistle; Larry Goldings, organ; Danton Boller, bass, vibraphone, vocals; Matt Munisteri, Pete Smith, guitar; Frank LoCicco, piano, glockenspiel; Matt Rey, piano; Brian Wolfe, Jeremy Carlstedt, drums; Chris Lovejoy, percussion, bass, vibraphone; Kathleen Sloan, Ina Veli, Kathleen Sloan, violin; Andrew Duckles, viola; Timothy Loo, cello; James R. Atkinson, French horn; Bob McChesney, Martin Sullivan, trombone; John Ellis, bass clarinet.

Ordering info: katedmonson.com

Silent Movie: Smile; Something In The Way She Moves; Silent Movie; On the Edge; Hearts and Bones; Today, I Sing The Blues; Hearing Your Voice; I Still Miss Someone; The Folks Who Live On The Hill; First Impressions; Swansea; Moon River. (54:63)

Personnel: Melissa Stylianou, vocals; Pete McCann, electric and acoustic guitars; Gary Wang, bass; Rodney Green, drums; Jamie Reynolds, piano; Anat Cohen, soprano saxophone (2, 5), bass clarinet (4, 11), clarinet (9); James Shipp, percussion (2, 4, 5, 10, 11); Yoed Nir, cello (4, 10, 11).

Ordering info: anzicrecords.com

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Style-Hopping

How to Be All You Can Be

Most modern musicians tend to not be very specialized. The proliferation of music on the Internet has reinforced this trend because everyone everywhere hears everything. Studio, Broadway and club-date/jobbing musicians have always had to master multiple styles, and most bandleaders demand tremendous versatility from their backup musicians. There are still plenty of clarinet players who live for polka music, but they're probably thinking about branching out. There's no question that you should know your strengths and seek your own musical identity. But your musical palette and your marketability will be greatly enhanced if you're at least familiar with music from many cultures, past and present.

Musicians are notoriously opinionated about what they hear—occasionally because they have discriminating taste, frequently out of ignorance. I know too many “jazz musicians” who hate rock and can't play it to save their lives. I'm not suggesting that you should be all things to all people; a narrowed focus can help, especially when you make your own recordings. But the well-rounded musician *listens* to everything. *Who* is playing is more important than the type of music being played. And each musical form requires slightly different “ear criteria.”

One must study a musical genre in order to truly appreciate it, and this takes more time than most people have. Think of how few Americans comprehend jazz. You must be more thorough than your audience. Read music history. Talk to club owners, producers, engineers, DJs, students and fans about what they listen to. Utilize the Internet to hear music from all over the world. You'll probably be surprised at what you don't know.

There's nothing quite like studio work to test your musical fluency. You must be prepared for anything. Each producer, contractor, conductor, arranger, writer and recording artist has a unique way of getting the job done. Some of them will play reference material for you and ask you to sound as close to the original as possible. Some write everything out; others assume that *you* will “write” or improvise the melodic lines. The definition of “in tune” may vary. One producer will demand clean, precise ensemble work; another will go for vibe before accuracy, or may even want you to play “badly” to achieve a certain effect. Sometimes you'll have to translate ridiculously vague or inarticulate verbal instructions into a perfect musical phrase that will help sell soap. At minimum, you must be musically aware.

I frequently hear friends and colleagues complain about the dearth of great music on the radio and in the record stores. What planet are they referring to? I don't even have time to keep up with all the great stuff in my own collection, or on satellite radio and the Web. I believe that there's an unwritten cultural and artistic “90/10” rule: that 90 percent of all art is merely OK, functional or downright pathetic; that 10 percent is either good or magnificent; and that this ratio has been maintained since the beginning of time. The only fundamental differences between the present and the past are that everything moves faster now and, more importantly, that there's much more to choose from. Sorting through the rabble to get to the *crème de la crème* can be a challenge. One more thing: A great deal of today's music is so unashamedly derivative that it takes disciplined research to uncover its superior source(s) of inspiration.

Regardless of musical quality, find the intrinsic value in every recording or performance you come across. Does one musician stand out as being superior? Does it swing, even if the melody doesn't ring your bell? If the music stinks, how about the lyrics? Is there anything you can learn from the arrangement, or from the production? If nothing else, does it remind you of something else you should hear? Finally, great music sounds *inevitable*. Listen for this inevitability before you fulminate against a repetitive r&b groove or lambaste the simplicity of a heavy metal chord progression.



Dan Wilensky

The following are eight simple but important reminders that will help you to develop and deepen your musical fluency:

- 1) Do not confuse “don't like” with “can't do.” If you don't know it, learn it. At least *try* to understand it.
- 2) The song *rules*.
- 3) It's never all about you; even if you wrote the song, you are a cog, albeit an important cog, in the wheel. So make sure you're working constructively with the other cogs. Defer to and learn from colleagues, bosses and employees who know more than you about a particular musical style.
- 4) Know the role of every instrument in various contexts.
- 5) Learn to coax “extra-musical” sounds from your instrument. Make it speak.
- 6) If you find yourself playing music you don't understand intellectually or viscerally, or if you're simply not playing well, stop thinking! Consult the vast void of your subconscious. Play from the heart. Stretch, meditate, go outside—do anything to get off of the cerebral hamster wheel.
- 7) When you style-hop, *be* the music. Copy the attitude, pace, language, clothes and dance styles of the best musicians and singers who define the genre. Try to play only what is specific to the musical idiom. When you play the blues, do as the blues men do.
- 8) “Avant-garde” music becomes “cutting-edge” music, which becomes “normal” music faster than you can say “Igor Stravinsky.” Challenge your ears. Draw inspiration from unconventional “new” music. Be all that you can be.

DB

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BY JONATHAN ROWDEN

Seamus Blake's Tenor Saxophone Solo on 'Amuse Bouche'

"Amuse Bouche," from tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake's 2010 CD *Live At Smalls* (SmallsLIVE), is a long-form, up-tempo jazz waltz that consists of a series of chordal vamps bridged by chord progressions based on descending and ascending root movements. The melody is sweet and simple, and solos are over the form of the tune (with open vamps). The arc of Blake's solo is genuinely motivic, with multiple themes and variations emerging from his voice, each one leading to the next, creating a cohesive, organic whole. This brief analysis describes the arc of the solo and touches upon the harmonic, rhythmic and melodic content of the various points of reference, such as rhythmic cycles, chromatic approach notes to triadic harmony and flurries/sheets of sound. Blake's solo lasts about 281 measures, the first 90 of which are shown on the next page.

The first vamp consists of the changes Gmin7-C/E-Gmin7-C/E. Blake's opening phrase begins a rhythmic phrase (measure 1) based in the C mixolydian mode. The melody is almost static, pedaling back and forth between C and C#4 sounds, focusing on developing the rhythm. Around bar 12 he begins pedaling the note C. Measures 17-19 feel like a 5/4 rhythmic idea over 3/4, moving the top notes higher. The melody further develops, moving intervallically in fourths and fifths, creating shapes that pedal on a B \flat (bars 20-23). In bar 31, he introduces and develops a new rhythmic idea that makes use of the upbeat, moving into a scalar melody that extends into the altissimo range of the tenor (bars 41-45). The line then grows and expands into chromatic approach notes to triadic harmonies (bars 46-66). This harmonic approach introduces another element that he utilizes throughout the rest of the solo, and is even present in the blistering flurries of notes he plays (bars 59-61) and on chordal substitutions (bars 75, 77).

The second vamp consists of the changes E \flat maj7-B \flat 6-E \flat maj7-B \flat 6-F6-F6/C-F6-F6/C. Starting at measure 105, Blake introduces a string of eighth notes in groupings of four that stretch across the bar lines (occasionally interrupted), casting a fog over the meter. He uses this technique extensively across this vamp while still at times harkening back to his earlier rhythmic motif and using chromatic approach notes to triadic harmonies within each mode, including upper extensions. Blake also makes use of "flurries" that interestingly utilize very



Seamus Blake

JUAN CARLOS HERNANDEZ

similar harmonic and scalar material as the lines that led up to them. The flurries are rhythmically free, according to Blake, and he is only really paying attention to the starting and ending points of these.

The third section or bridge is a root-based chord progression that modulates from E \flat major to F# minor. During this phase of the solo, Blake seems to build to a climax, climbing into the altissimo register with a lyrical melodic line that bookends earlier material (from bars 41-49).

The final vamp alternates between F#min7 and B/D#, mirroring the initial vamp down a half step. Blake shouts in the extreme register of the horn, using familiar rhythmic material but beginning on the upbeat of 3, stretching across the bar lines and adding rhythmic tension. Blake then moves into the final stretch of the solo, using extended dominant harmonies to create tension over the vamp. Blake brilliantly ends the solo with an augmented reiteration of the original improvised melody.

DB

JONATHAN ROWDEN IS A PROFESSIONAL SAXOPHONIST AND EDUCATOR IN THE ORANGE COUNTY/LOS ANGELES AREA. HE RECEIVED HIS B.A. IN SAXOPHONE PERFORMANCE AND M.M. IN JAZZ STUDIES AT CSU FULLERTON, AND PERFORMS AND TEACHES REGULARLY. EMAIL JROWDENMUSIC@GMAIL.COM OR VISIT JONATHANROWDEN.COM FOR BOOKINGS, LESSONS AND JAZZ BLOG.

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SOLO CONTINUES...

Avid Pro Tools 10 *Snappy, Aggressive Update*

Avid has continued its more aggressive update pattern with the release of Pro Tools 10. This release is not as revolutionary as version 9 was, but it still offers some significant new capability and lays the groundwork for future upgrades.

Many users were expecting this to be the long-awaited 64-bit release of Pro Tools, but it was not to be. Avid assures us that Pro Tools 11 will be 64-bit, and although I am disappointed that we're still waiting, I can understand why this is. Pro Tools is a huge and complex code base with decades of legacy support built in, and the move to 64-bit will require a complete rewrite of all of that code.

But enough about what Pro Tools 10 is not. Let's get to what it is—an incredibly snappy update. I was excited to see Avid move away from proprietary hardware requirements in version 9, but the software was somewhat sluggish and tended to be a resource hog. Not so in the new version: Pro Tools 10 feels extremely light, and you will notice the difference immediately. All facets of the software and interface respond dramatically faster than the previous version. Avid has vastly improved automatic delay compensation in version 10, too. The HDX version includes disk caching, which can load the audio you are working with into RAM for incredibly fast response times, but at this time, you cannot get it in the software-only version unless you also buy the Complete Production Toolkit.



Some of this speed increase is due to new architecture that Avid is implementing here. No longer will you find any “Digidesign” references in your file system—this is all Avid. There’s a new file format (.ptx) and a new plug-in architecture (AAX), all aimed at fostering a more solid experience moving forward.

There is also some new terminology: regions are now called “clips.” This is pretty standard in other DAW packages, so if you use other platforms, this will be familiar. Clips carry a new feature that is going to change the way you work: clip gain. Individual clips now carry their own gain settings, which you can manipulate on a per-clip basis right on the timeline using a pop-

up fader. This can dramatically improve the way you ride a track to make it sit in the mix. This is a real-time adjustment with some nice visual feedback, so you can immediately listen and adjust. Clip gain settings are pre-fader, so they will affect the way your plug-ins react, too.

Speaking of plug-ins, there are a few new ones in version 10, but the nicest is the new channel strip. This is based on Avid’s own Euphonix 5 console, and it sounds great. It does dynamics, EQ and filtering, and you can drag things around to change the order. It’s also really lightweight: I threw it on every track in a couple of 32-track sessions and only got about a 10 percent bump in CPU. If you’re using a lot of Audiosuite plugs, you’ll be thrilled to know that you can now have multiple windows open and preserve those layouts in saved sessions.

Fades are now real-time, and are rendered directly to the audio file. No more lost fade folders when you archive your sessions, and it’s a much more intuitive and speedy way to work. Pro Tools 10 also supports 32-bit floating point sessions, and you can have files of differing types and even bit-depth in the same session—without converting them!

If you are still using Pro Tools 8 or anything before that, this upgrade is a must. If you are using version 9, a lot of the changes will be under the hood rather than in new features, but I would say it is still well worth it for the performance boost alone.

—Chris Neville

Ordering info: avid.com

Vic Firth Chameleon Sticks *Harvey Mason’s Second Signature*



It’s no stretch to call Harvey Mason a “chameleon.” How else would you refer to a first-call drummer who has been performing jazz, funk, fusion, pop and classical music with top artists for almost five decades? Not to mention the fact that Mason just happened to co-write a tune of the same name with Herbie Hancock.

The Chameleon is Mason’s second signature stick with Vic Firth, and it has some noticeable differences from his first signature stick. The Chameleon has a diameter of .540 inches (compared to .605 inches), and the length is 16³/₈ inches (compared to 15⁷/₈ inches).

Before play-testing a few pairs of Chameleons, I’d been using Vic Firth’s 8D stick for my big band gig, where I am continuously switching between small group and large ensemble passages (with some funk grooves thrown in for good measure). I had also been playing a 5A for a while but had just switched to the 8D, which is a close cousin to the 7A. Stats-wise, a 7A has a length of 15½ inches, and the 8D has a length of 16 inches. They both have the same .540-inch diameter. The Chameleon has a considerable edge on those two sticks lengthwise, and I found they provided an instant advantage with the dif-

ferent styles of music I was playing.

Also new from Vic Firth is the Essentials Stick Bag, which is just big enough to hold exactly what you need: no more and no less. It has room for four to five pairs of sticks, brushes or mallets; a little elastic holder for your drum key; a tiny internal pocket; and a hook-and-strap system that lets you suspend the bag from your floor tom. It’s a perfect item for those of us who have “kitchen sink”-type gig bags and have sworn to clean them out but haven’t quite gotten around to it yet.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: vicfirth.com

Toca Traditional Series Congas

Old-school Look, Precision Craftsmanship

Toca's Traditional series congas include an 11-inch Quinto, 11¾-inch Conga and 12½-inch Tumba. Featuring brushed chrome hardware, each drum is 30 inches tall, with six lugs on a traditional-style hoop with extended collar.

These new congas came with top-grade bison heads that snugly mounted with barely two full turns on the tension lugs. Out of the box, the drums already were showing deep resonance, rich tone and recognizable pitch when I gently tapped each of them. I decided to wait another 24 hours before I tuned or played the drums so the heads could "settle" into my music room.

My second day with the Traditional series congas began with applying one or two quarter turns on each lug while playing bass strokes to keep the head tension even. I noticed that the drums came alive immediately: I could feel the shell resonance kicking in, and each drum had a unique tone and pitch corresponding to its size. Since the Tumba head was pretty much in its range already, I played on it more than the other two drums; I waited another day before I cranked up the Conga and the Quinto heads.

On day 3, the heads were really settled, and I tightened up the tuning on each drum and played each drum by itself. By messing around with tuning (up and down by a semitone or whole tone), I checked the head response time, and the results were great. Next, I matched the pitches of the drums as one melodic instrument in order to play

Guaguanco patterns with the full set. To do this, I sat in the traditional style with the Quinto in my lap. At this point, I could really appreciate its extended collar and traditional shape.

Since I left the drums tuned overnight (usually it's recommended on any real skin drum to detune after usage), day 4 was time to really crank up the Quinto head high and to tune even higher pitches for the Conga and Tumba. These drums have the capacity to go unusually high to support open- and close-slap sounds, while the tone and bass sounds of each drum remain in the warm, resonating range. Mute sounds and finger sounds came through evenly on any part of the head, and the heads had a good ringing sound all the way to the edge of the drums.

For the next three days, I played these drums with recordings of various styles. From traditional rumba to salsa, jazz, modern rock and pop, they sounded great across all styles with a few tuning adjustments. I was able to go from the warm and tonal sounds of bass- and tone-oriented grooves to crisp slaps and high-volume playing without exerting much energy. I detuned the drums after every usage.

When I mounted them on a stand in the Afro-pop percussionist style, I found that these drums cut through just fine in terms of volume, as the open slap sound was sharp enough and still had fat, midsy tone underneath the highs.

Toca Traditional series congas are a great



balance of traditional conga drum tone, feel and looks, with precision-engineered hardware and design. Crafted from high-grade, two-ply Asian oak, they benefit from having a perfect traditional curve and premium matched bison heads. With appropriate tuning and playing techniques, these drums can match any musical situation that today's pros might face.

—Kalyan Pathak

Ordering info: tocapercussion.com

Zildjian K Constantinoples

Dark, Dry & Dirty

Sometimes you have to go back into the vault to move forward. That's what Zildjian has done with its line of K Constantinople cymbals.

The updated K Constantinoples use cluster hammers similar to the company's K Symphonic line to introduce some "dirt" into the final sound.

The 22-inch K Zildjian Constantinople was developed by bringing together aspects of different cymbals, with assistance from Adam Nussbaum. Visually, the first thing you notice is the multiple rows of over-hammering. These are spots on the top of the cymbal that have been hammered in a uniform pattern in three rows across the entire cymbal. In addition, there are four distinct cluster hammers. Each cluster has multiple hammer marks in a small radius. This helps to introduce some trash and dark overtones.

The bell is unlathed underneath, while the rest of the cymbal has a smoother lathing on both



sides, giving it excellent stick definition.

The actual playability of this cymbal is nothing short of remarkable. As the stick comes

down on the cymbal, it's almost as if the cymbal is giving the stick some bounce-back after being struck. The smooth, dark tones will not overpower in a quiet setting, and there's enough definition and grit to project in medium to loud settings.

The new 20-inch K Constantinople Bounce Ride is made in conjunction with Kenny Washington and is the natural followup to the 22-inch version. The cymbal is fully lathed with eight hammer clusters. This cymbal has more dirt and trash than the 22-inch K Constantinople due to the increase in hammer clusters. When you dig into this cymbal with the shoulder of the stick, the trashiness is exquisite and can really add some fire into the musical setting.

Rounding out the new additions are a 19-inch crash/ride, 14-inch hi-hats, and 15- and 17-inch crashes.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: zildjian.com



THE 'X' FACTOR

System-X instrument stands from Hamilton are so flexible and versatile, they can be custom fit to perfectly suit your instrument. Each saxophone stand has an adjustable bell rest and body rest and features tracked legs that let you turn it into a double, triple or even a quad setup (connectors sold separately). System-X brass instrument stands combine an adjustable bell rest with customizable bore fitting to secure the instrument. The modular stands fold small enough to fit any gig bag, and even some instrument cases. Different models have been designed to accommodate alto/tenor sax, baritone sax, trumpet/cornet/flugelhorn/soprano sax and trombone. **More info:** dansr.com



IPAD GIG BAG

Gator Cases' Tablet/Mix bag provides an all-in-one carry solution for musicians with iPads. Made of lightweight nylon, the bag has a fitted sleeve that fits an iPad, and its see-through cover allows full use of the tablet without removing it. The larger main compartment features a thick padding and is designed to hold a compact mixer or the iPad while mounted in a docking station. **More info:** gatorcases.com



JAZZ ESSENTIALS

Alfred has published *Jazz Real Book: Essential Jazz Standards*, created for individuals, teachers and instrumental/vocal groups. A professional-quality resource, it's suitable for working musicians and students of jazz. Titles include such tunes as "Giant Steps," "Lester Leaps In" and "Take Five." The book includes rehearsal letters to assist with understanding the form of every song, and suggested substitute chord progressions are also provided. **More info:** alfred.com



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Shure has created a new shock mount for its KSM353 ribbon microphone. The mount threads onto the bottom of the KSM353 and holds the mic securely, regardless of orientation or stand movement. **More info:** shure.com



VERSATILE STICK

Pro-Mark has introduced the Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez Signature drum stick, named for one of today's most versatile players. Measuring 16 inches long by 1/2 inch in diameter, the stick features a wood tip that's small and versatile enough to make it suitable for jazz, fusion, pop and r&b. Known for his stylistic diversity, El Negro has played with a wide range of leading artists, from McCoy Tyner to Carlos Santana. **More info:** promark.com

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The Greatest
Performances
& Brightest Stars
of 2012

The Golden
Achievements of
Dr. Steve Zegree

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Mary Jo Papich
& Dr. Lou Fischer
Revive Jazz
Education

PAGE 114



Booker T. Washington Jazz Trio I



New World School of the Arts Jazz Combo I

Jazz Soloist

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

Pete Miller, *piano*

John Jay Middle School
Jeff Richardson
Cross River, NY

Matthew Richards, *alto saxophone*

Walnut Creek Intermediate
Mary Fetting
Walnut Creek, CA

HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

Julian Lee, *alto saxophone*

Montclair High School
James Wasko
Montclair, NJ

Coleman Hughes, *trombone*

Newark Academy
Julius Tolentino
Livingston, NJ

HIGH SCHOOL OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES

Emery Mesich, *alto saxophone*

Rio Americano High School
Josh Murray
Sacramento, CA

Lake Jiroudek, *guitar*

Idyllwild Arts Academy
Marshall Hawkins
Idyllwild, CA

PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

Max Goldschmid, *soprano saxophone*

Tucson Jazz Institute

Doug Tidaback
Tucson, AZ

Antonio Madruga, *piano*

New World School of the Arts
Jim Gasior
Miami, FL

PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES

Max Goldschmid, *tenor saxophone*

Tucson Jazz Institute
Doug Tidaback
Tucson, AZ

David Leon, *alto saxophone*

New World School of the Arts
Jim Gasior
Miami, FL

Lucas Del Calvo, *guitar*

Colburn School of
Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNERS

Brian Clancy, *tenor saxophone*

University of North Texas
Bradford Leali
Denton, TX

David Meder, *piano*

Florida State University
Bill Peterson
Tallahassee, FL

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES

Max Acree, *trombone*

University of Cincinnati

Kim Pensyl
Cincinnati, OH

Guy Mintus, *piano*

Tel Aviv Conservatory
Harel Shachal
Tel Aviv, Israel

Jory Tindall, *alto saxophone*

University of Northern
Colorado
Dr. Andrew Dahlke
Greeley, CO

Brian Scarborough, *trombone*

University of Kansas
Dan Gailey
Lawrence, KS

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Michael Shults, *alto saxophone*

University of Cincinnati
Kim Pensyl
Cincinnati, OH

José Valentino Ruiz, *flute*

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Steve Rucker
Coral Gables, FL

GRADUATE COLLEGE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES

Quentin Angus, *guitar*

Purchase College
Todd Coolman
Purchase, NY

Karl Stabnau, *baritone saxophone*

Eastman School of Music
Jeff Campbell
Rochester, NY

Benjamin Haugland, *piano*

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Colorado
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Adam Rongo, *alto saxophone*

Michigan State University
Diego Rivera
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HIGH SCHOOL WINNER

Combo A

Berkeley High School
Sarah Cline
Berkeley, CA

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Jazz Combo

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School of Music
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New York, NY

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Tuomo Uusitalo Trio

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Performing Arts, Graz
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Zebras

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Stefan Karlsson &
Richard DeRosa
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Large Jazz Ensemble

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Caleb Chapman's Little Big Band

Caleb Chapman Music
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Salt Lake City, UT

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Folsom Middle School Jazz Band

Folsom Middle School
John Zimny
Folsom, CA

Sutter Middle School Jazz Band

Sutter Middle School
John Zimny
Folsom, CA

HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

Jazz Band I

Folsom High School
Curtis Gaesser
Folsom, CA

Jazz Band A

Buchanan High School
Paul Lucckesi
Clovis, CA

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Ellington Big Band

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Caleb Chapman's Crescent Super Band

Caleb Chapman Music
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Salt Lake City, UT

Monday Night Studio Band

The Jazzschool
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UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

University of Central Oklahoma Jazz Ensemble I

University of Central Oklahoma
Brian Gorrell
Edmond, OK

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES

NIU Jazz Lab Band

Northern Illinois University
Rodrigo Villanueva
Dekalb, IL

Get Jazz Orchestra

Senzokugakuen College of
Music
Yoshihiko Katori
Kanagawa, Japan

Elmhurst College Jazz Band

Elmhurst College
Doug Beach
Elmhurst, IL

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Two O'Clock Lab Band

University of North Texas
Jay Saunders
Denton, TX

GRADUATE COLLEGE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

UNC Jazz Lab Band I

University of Northern
Colorado
Dana Landry
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Bradford Leali

Jazz Group

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Large Jazz Ensemble

Two O'Clock Lab Band
Jay Saunders

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Trenton Hull
Rosana Eckert

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Kaela Bratcher
Jennifer Barnes

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Ashleigh Smith
Jennifer Barnes

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Sarah Kervin
Rosana Eckert

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Kathryn Christie
Rosana Eckert

Vocal Jazz Group

CircleSong
Sarah Kervin

Vocal Jazz Group

Zebras
Stefan Karlsson

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

UNT Jazz Singers I
Jennifer Barnes

Latin Group

Sergio Pamies Latin Project
Stefan Karlsson

Original Composition Lead Sheet

Drew Zarembo, "A Happy Song"

Original Composition Orchestrated Work

Michelle Alonso/Sergio Pamies, "Desabafo"
Stefan Karlsson

Jazz Arrangement

Tyler Mire, "Confirmation"
Richard DeRosa

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JAZZ

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Outstanding Performances

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Jazz Arrangement,

Undergraduate College



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Sarah Kervin

Vocal Jazz Soloist

HIGH SCHOOL WINNER

Claire Dickson

Home-Schooled Student

Aubrey Johnson

Medford, MA

HIGH SCHOOL OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Taylor Zickefoose

Meadowdale High School

Jeff Horenstein

Lynnwood, WA

PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL WINNER

Sekayi Sumbureru

Artswest School

Jeff Baker

Eagle, ID

PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES

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Marin School of the Arts

Kerry Marsh

Novato, CA

Elliott Skinner

Booker T. Washington HSPVA

Kent Ellingson

Dallas, TX

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Trenton Hull

University of North Texas

Rosana Eckert

Denton, TX

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES

Kaela Bratcher

University of North Texas

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Denton, TX

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**35th Annual
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MUSIC AWARDS**

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University of North Texas
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Manhattan School of Music
Theo Bleckmann
New York, NY

Sarah Kervin

University of North Texas
Rosana Eckert
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OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES****Kathryn Christie (Stachitus)**

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Rosana Eckert
Denton, TX

Kelly Garner

University of Miami
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Dr. Lisanne Lyons
Coral Gables, FL

Vocal Jazz Group**JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WINNER****Panache 8**

Corte Madera School
Juliet Green
Portola Valley, CA

HIGH SCHOOL WINNER**Vocal Jazz Workshop**

St. Charles North High School
Michael Molloy
St. Charles, IL

**HIGH SCHOOL OUTSTANDING
PERFORMANCE****Vocal Jazz Ensemble**

Royal High School
Bonnie Graeve
Simi Valley, CA

**PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL
OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE****BTW Lab Singers**

Booker T. Washington HSPVA
Bart Marantz
Dallas, TX

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER**Synchronicity**

West Valley College
Michelle Hawkins
Saratoga, CA

CONTINUED ON PAGE 100

Carl Allen, Artistic Director
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Original Composition – lead sheet
For his composition *Short Stop*



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Jazz Instrumental Soloist



Michael Shults



Coleman Hughes

Inspiration Wide for Today's Best Instrumental Soloists

The names of John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Bill Evans are still on the lips of young jazz players a generation after their passing, but eager ears are drawing ideas from wider arenas. And most credit family members for actively fostering interest.

Pete Miller, pianist from John Jay Middle School, credits his teachers Rusty Cloud and Nigel Hall for motivation, but says, "I'm inspired by many jazz and soul musicians. I'm lucky that my family believes in live music. My favorite concerts, so far, were my first Lettuce/Soulive show at the Highline Ballroom and Brad Mehldau at the Village Vanguard."

Julian Lee, Montclair High School's alto saxophonist, learns plenty from family, peers and pros. "I'm schooled in the jazz language by communicating with my friends, my father and brother, all jazz musicians," explains Lee. "The sense of community in all aspects of my jazz life produces an indescribable joy. Christian McBride, Bruce Williams, Freddie Hendrix, Dave Stryker and Billy Hart are musicians I play with and learn from. I feel lucky to be a young musician able to travel and perform with high-caliber bands like the Grammy Band, Monterey Jazz Festival Next Generation Orchestra and Jazz House Kids Big Band."

David Meder, pianist at Florida State University, listens with delight to pianists Keith Jarrett and Ahmad Jamal as well as Trane. "Jarrett has an incredible ability to do anything, technical or lyrical. Jamal has a great sense of space. And they both choose precisely when to use their technical abilities." Meder plans to focus in his final year on composing and arranging (citing Bob Brookmeyer and Mike Abene as favorites), then move to New York. "My goal is to make my living playing jazz, though I expect I'll have to master other skills within music—teach, compose, arrange." His instructor Bill Peterson reports that Meder recently performed in an FSU student combo at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in Manhattan.

Growing up in Hannibal, Mo., Michael Shults played alto saxophone without the luxury of a private teacher. "I'd read DownBeat to discover players," says Shults, "then look them up online. That's how I first heard saxophonists like Branford Marsalis, my former teacher Bobby Watson, Seamus Blake, Chris Potter, Jaleel Shaw." Shults quotes eminently quotable home-boy Mark Twain, who said, "All of us contain music and truth, but most of us can't get it out."

"If you're serious about jazz, you're your own toughest critic, and it's difficult to evaluate your own playing," Shults says. "It's very special for me to get a mention in DownBeat."

Some players might have a hard time pinning influences to a few names. Take Max Goldschmid, who placed first on soprano sax at Tucson Jazz Institute this year. His instructor, Doug Tidaback, shook his head. "In thirty years teaching, I've never seen a talent like Max," Tidaback says. "He'll learn a piece on one instrument and immediately translate it to seven different instruments, playing all equally well. He was first chair all-state orchestra each of the last four years on different instruments: trumpet, tenor sax, alto sax, trombone. He's also a fine pianist. But he hasn't decided yet whether he wants to go into music."

Brad Leali openly praises the talent, heart and dedication of his student, tenor saxophonist Brian Clancy. "I had to be really up for his lessons," Leali says. "He'd come back with all the work done and more. What he seeks, he can't download as an app or see on YouTube: He haunts record shops, buys CDs, knows all the personnel."

Steve Rucker shares similar sentiments about multi-award winner José Valentino Ruiz. "He's one of the most passionate, energetic and devoted musicians I've been associated with," Rucker says. "He's inspired and elevated the entire group to a new level."

—Fred Bouchard

Frost School of Music

EXTENSIONS



Congratulations!

The Frost School of Music is proud to recognize its winners from DownBeat's 35th Annual Student Music Awards

Jazz Soloist

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

José Valentino Ruiz, *flute*

Steve Rucker, *faculty mentor*

Classical Soloist

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

José Valentino Ruiz, *c flute*

Trudy Kane, *faculty mentor*

Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

José Valentino Ruiz, *fretless bass & vocal*

Steve Rucker, *faculty mentor*

Blues/Pop/Rock Group

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

José Valentino Ruiz World-Fusion Group

Steve Rucker, *faculty mentor*

Latin Group

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

José Valentino Latin Jazz Ensemble

Steve Rucker, *faculty mentor*

Blues/Pop/Rock Group

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Funk Ensemble

Steve Rucker, *faculty mentor*

Blues/Pop/Rock Group

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OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Fusion Ensemble

Steve Rucker, *faculty mentor*

Jazz Arrangement

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Ryan Andrews, "Butterfly"

Gary Lindsay, *faculty mentor*

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GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Ryan Andrews

Gary Lindsay, *faculty mentor*

Original Composition – Lead Sheet

COLLEGE GRADUATE

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Rafael Piccolotto De Lima,
"Transfigurações Brasileiras"

Gary Lindsay, *faculty mentor*

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

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OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Frost Jazz Vocal Ensemble I

Larry Lapin, *faculty mentor*

Vocal Jazz Soloist

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Portola Valley, CA

Celebration

King's Junior High
Darla Pumphrey
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**JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
OUTSTANDING
PERFORMANCES**

Panache 6

Corte Madera School
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UNC
Jazz

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Jazz Group

Undergraduate College Winner
Tuomo Uusitalo Trio
Prof. Olaf Polziehn

Latin Group

Undergraduate College Winner
Marco Antonio da Costa Group
Prof. Guido Jeszenszky

Jazz Arrangement

College Graduate Winners
Reinhold Schmölzer
"Lotus Flower by Radiohead"
Prof. Edward Partyka

Jazz Arrangement

College Graduate
Outstanding Performance
Gerd Hermann Orlter
"Weird Nightmare"
Prof. Edward Partyka

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Improvisation **Renato Chicco**
Drums **Howard Curtis**
Bass **Wayne Darling**
Voice **Dena DeRose**
Guitar **Guido Jeszenszky**
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Vocal Jazz Group

Synchronicity, West Valley College



Taking Cues from the Pros

Regardless of age, they all take their cues from the pros. And the results show in this year's best small group vocal ensemble category.

According to music teacher Juliet Green, from Corte Madera School, her 4th through 8th graders are fearless. "The great thing about kids that age," she says, "is that if you don't let on how hard the music is, they just do it. I love introducing the kids to the music of Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. Middle-school kids and bebop are a really great combination—if you can get them to sing 'Anthropology' or 'Oleo' accurately, and with great jazz phrasing, they're ready for anything."

Two of Green's students reflect their dedication directly. "I love having a middle-school jazz choir," says Shane Turner. "I love singing and playing the music that we do." Ana White adds, "I like that it's an opportunity that we have that most schools don't have."

St. Charles North High School's Michael Molloy feeds his students a steady diet of the best. "The repertoire of Vocal Jazz Workshop," he notes, "comes almost entirely from the professional literature: The Hi-Los, Singers Unlimited, New York Voices, Swingle Singers, The Real Group, Take 6, Groove Society, The Idea of North. This challenges the students' musicianship to the utmost and requires a large amount of individual work. We're also very fortunate to have forged a partnership with the New York Voices and recently hosted our Third Annual New York Voices Jazz Festival here at the school."

St. Charles North student Hannah Allison Ressler echoes these sentiments when she says, "Vocal Jazz Workshop has really opened up a whole new world of music for me, and made me fall in love with jazz. It really pushes all of us to work our hardest and be

the best we can be, while giving us opportunities to meet artists and fellow students with the same appreciation that we have."

As for Synchronicity—this year's undergrad (repeat) winners from West Valley College—music teacher Michelle Hawkins had a unique challenge for her students. "This year," she notes, "I had a student from Japan, and I thought it would be different and special for her to write a Japanese lyric to Bobby McFerrin's 'Freedom Is A Voice,' which was originally sung in a made-up language. The horrible tsunami occurred the day after she wrote it, and the song evolved into an emotional tribute to the people of Japan that the entire group embraced."

That student, Masako Okada, had this to say: "This year's group was able to perform and synchronize not only harmonically but also emotionally. I'm grateful and proud to be part of such a wonderful group who put so much effort to deliver the emotion inside the song."

Steve Zegree, who leads Western Michigan University's Gold Company, proudly points to why his groups keep winning when he notes, "The Gold Company Sextet is a select group of the most advanced and experienced students from within the Gold Company program. Their repertoire usually consists of original compositions or arrangements written by students in the ensemble, or written especially for The GC Sextet. And the last two years, the group has performed at Jazz at Lincoln Center."

"The most important lesson I have learned from this program," says Gold Company member Richard Baskin, "is that nothing in this profession is given to you. It must be earned through hard work, and only hard work. And it feels good." —John Ephland

**HIGH SCHOOL
OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES**

Kaleidoscope

Kirkwood High School
David Cannon
Kirkwood, MO

Impressions

Meadowdale High School
Jeff Horenstein
Lynnwood, WA

The Brearley B-Naturals

The Brearley School
Karyn Joaquin
New York, NY

**PERFORMING ARTS HIGH
SCHOOL WINNER**

Vocal Jazz Collective

Artswest School
Jeff Baker
Eagle, ID

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Gold Company

Western Michigan University
Dr. Steve Zegree
Kalamazoo, MI

**UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE
OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES**

Singcopation

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Bruce Rogers
Walnut, CA

Jazzmin

Belmont University
Kathryn Paradise
Nashville, TN

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Pacific Standard Time

California State University
Bob Cole Conservatory of Music
Christine Helferich Guter
Long Beach, CA

**GRADUATE COLLEGE OUTSTANDING
PERFORMANCES**

UNT Jazz Singers I

University of North Texas
Jennifer Barnes
Denton, TX

Afro Blue

Howard University
Connaitre Miller
Washington, DC

Frost Jazz Vocal Ensemble I

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Larry Lapin
Coral Gables, FL

Classical Soloist

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WINNER

Tyler Sapsford, guitar

American School in Japan
Randy Wanless
Tokyo, Japan

HIGH SCHOOL WINNER

Eunghye Cho, cello

Davis Senior High School
Angelo Moreno
Davis, CA



Tyler Sapsford

A large advertisement for North Central College. The background is a close-up, artistic shot of a person's hands playing a red electric guitar. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top, it says "At North Central College, being well-rounded doesn't mean losing your musical edge". In the middle right, it lists "2012 Visit Days: Monday, June 25; Monday, July 16; Monday, August 6; Monday, August 20 (evening)". Below that, it says "To schedule an individual campus visit call 630-637-5800 or visit northcentralcollege.edu/admission/visit-programs". At the bottom, it says "Our students choose from majors in music, music education or jazz studies and also pursue countless other passions." and "Find out more by calling 630-637-5800 or visit us online at northcentralcollege.edu." The North Central College logo is in the bottom right corner.

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Large Jazz Ensemble

Buchanan High School Jazz Band A



No Challenge Too Great

Members of this year's winners for Best Large Ensemble pay homage to the past, while keeping an open ear to both the present and the future.

When you think of America's jazz centers, you might not immediately think of Oklahoma. But this year's undergraduate big band winners are making a case for it. "The members of the University of Central Oklahoma Jazz Ensemble I understand this group is the premier music ensemble at our university—in any genre," says director Brian Gorrell. A majority of the ensemble members are upperclassmen, although it is not uncommon for standout freshmen and sophomores to be involved in the ensemble, too. Students this year have been exposed to varying repertoire, including pieces by classic arranger Bill Holman as well as modern arrangers Alan Baylock and Toshiko Akiyoshi.

The University of North Texas Two O'Clock Jazz Band took home the award for the graduate division. Under the tutelage of Jay Saunders, students of this famed ensemble are held to the highest of expectations: enforcing a no-nonsense type of attitude that demands the members act as consummate professionals at all times.

At the other end of the age range are members of Caleb Chapman's Little Big Band in American Fork, Utah. Dedicated to the roots, Chapman's youngsters are entrenched in the big band styling of such icons as Benny Goodman and Woody Herman. Beyond musical expectations, each member is afforded an early glimpse at what it means to be a professional musician. "Students are expected to be at rehearsals 100 percent of the time, in addition to having their music prepared," says Chapman. "If they can't make a rehearsal, they must find a sub." Furthermore, students in the ensemble are required to study privately, as well as take part in frequent sectional

rehearsals. With junior high students who list artists Joshua Redman and Roy Hargrove as sources of inspiration, it is little wonder why this band enjoys continued success.

The Ellington Big Band from Tucson (Ariz.) Jazz Institute was selected as this year's winner at the performing arts high school level. Having taught in a myriad of educational settings over the years, director Doug Tidaback has developed a keen eye for identifying talent early. Recent graduates of Tidaback's program have gone on to pursue degrees from colleges like Manhattan School of Music, The New School and several others.

Best Large Ensemble honors were shared by Folsom and Buchanan high schools, both in California. Folsom's Curtis Gaesser has his band perform at least 25 times a year—impressive for any big band, but particularly for a high school ensemble. "I love the challenging music that Mr. Gaesser chose for us; every song is a different style," says band member Molly Redfield. Behind seasoned experience from the band's 10 seniors, the group has worked on the music of composers Maria Schneider and Jim McNeely.

Buchanan High School Jazz Band A, directed by Paul Luccesi, also boasts an impressive diversity in its programming. Senior saxophonist Jim Nakamura attributes much of his love for being a band member to the plethora of visiting artists the band has the chance to work with, including David Binney and John Hollenbeck. "We don't just play two festivals," says vibraphonist Aaron Grisez. "We play for just about anyone that asks."

Musicians in each ensemble are seriously involved with the music and with the band. Perhaps what rings true for everyone can be found in a single statement by Buchanan High School saxophonist Josh Locher: "It's wonderful to be a part of something special."

—Adam Larson

PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL WINNER

Ana Miranda, soprano

Los Angeles County High School
for the Arts
Stephanie Vlahos
Los Angeles, CA

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Melissa Taddie, violin

Western Michigan University
Renata Artman Knific
Kalamazoo, MI

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNERS

David Crider, percussion

Ohio University
Roger Braun
Athens, OH

José Valentino Ruiz, flute

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Trudy Kane
Coral Gables, FL

Classical Group

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WINNER

Advanced Orchestra

Holmes Junior High School
Angelo Moreno
Davis, CA

HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

Symphony Orchestra

Davis Senior High School
Angelo Moreno
Davis, CA

Wind Symphony

Wheeling High School
Brian Logan
Wheeling, IL

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Las Vegas Academy
Bill Swick
Las Vegas, NV

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER

Lamont Symphony Orchestra

University of Denver
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Medford, MA

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PERFORMANCE

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Kent Denver School
Steve Holley
Englewood, CO

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SCHOOL WINNER

Laila Smith, vocalist

Marin School of the Arts
Kerry Marsh
Novato, CA

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SCHOOL OUTSTANDING
PERFORMANCES

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Caleb Chapman Music
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

Austin Allen, vibes

Booker T. Washington HSPVA
Bart Marantz
Dallas, TX

Adam Call, vocalist

Caleb Chapman Music
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

UNDERGRADUATE
COLLEGE WINNER

Matthew Landon, guitar

Western Michigan University
Tom Knific
Kalamazoo, MI

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE
OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Olga Kulchytska, vocalist

California State University
Christine Helferich Guter
Long Beach, CA

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WINNERS

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tenor saxophone**

University of Kentucky
Raleigh Dailey
Lexington, KY

**José Valentino Ruiz,
fretless bass & vocalist**

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
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OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Roland R. Davis, vocalist

New York University
Dr. David Schroeder
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Blues/Pop/ Rock Group

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Charm School

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Brian Scarborough and David von Kampen
for their 2012 DownBeat awards!



Left: David von Kampen, DMA in music composition. Winner, Original Composition-Orchestrated Work in the Graduate Division for his piece "Sneak Out."
Right: Brian Scarborough, BM in trombone performance. Outstanding Performance, Jazz Instrumental Soloist in the Undergraduate Division.

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Professor of Jazz Studies

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Listen closely and you will hear the future

Latin Group

José Valentino Ruiz Latin Ensemble



Cultural Immersion, Foreign Exchange Foster Fluency

When learning a language, it's important to immerse yourself in the culture, listen with an open ear and be perceptive of the people around you. With that in mind, the winners of the Best Latin Group category have fully grasped these concepts to master the style and flavor of Latin jazz. But with such a wide range of backgrounds and influences, each group also develops fluency in a second, more important language: the language of collaboration.

The groups are surprisingly vast, and many members hail from countries outside of the United States and Latin America. Some are bilingual or even trilingual, but most have been performing together for at least two to three years. In that time, they've taken it upon themselves to incorporate their vast cultural differences into a universal musical language.

"We are all very busy musicians," says Marco Antonio da Costa, whose self-titled group at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Graz in Austria took home the Best Latin Group prize in the undergraduate category. "We play in different projects, have different personal tastes, come from different countries and cultural backgrounds. The best way to overcome those differences is by focusing on what we have in common."

That common ground is often a shared sense of discipline. Despite busy schedules crammed with after-school gigs, other formations and assignments, many groups meet weekly, and each member is expected to arrive with a professional mindset.

"It is impossible to dive into an unfamiliar style of music without paying serious dues by listening and studying," says Caleb Chapman, director of performing arts high school category winner La Onda Caribena at Caleb Chapman Music in American Fork, Utah. Chapman

often complements the group's intensive Latin jazz listening sessions with artist-led workshops.

Mary Funk, a junior trumpeter in the group, travels hours across the state of Utah to practice. "We make sure to make this a priority in our lives," Funk says. "If someone has to miss, they are expected to get a sub just like any professional group."

For the members of the José Valentino Ruiz Latin Jazz Ensemble, this year's graduate winner from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, the most important instrument in mastering the art of Latin jazz performance is their ears. "Listening is the key," says bassist José Valentino Ruiz. "We listen so we can communicate properly. No matter what style of music we play, our mission is to perform it as authentically as possible."

In addition to absorbing individual tastes and personalities, as well as various Latin rhythms and textures, many of the musicians are also seasoned arrangers and composers, which are crucial components toward their mutual connection.

"Respect is the basis of the partnership," says Sergio Palmies of his University of North Texas Latin Project. "Rhythm section players help each other lock up, and horn players always help arrangers with their writing."

Ruiz adds that it's not only about connecting with the ensemble, but translating that same unspoken connection and Latin spirit into their live performances.

"The music serves as a medium for which we can communicate with the audience through playing and dialogue," he says, highlighting the equal importance of stage presence and enthusiasm. "We want people to hear, feel and immerse themselves in the music."

—Hilary Brown

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Tom Knific

Kalamazoo, MI

Goodnight Mr. Max

Western Michigan University
Dr. David Little
Kalamazoo, MI

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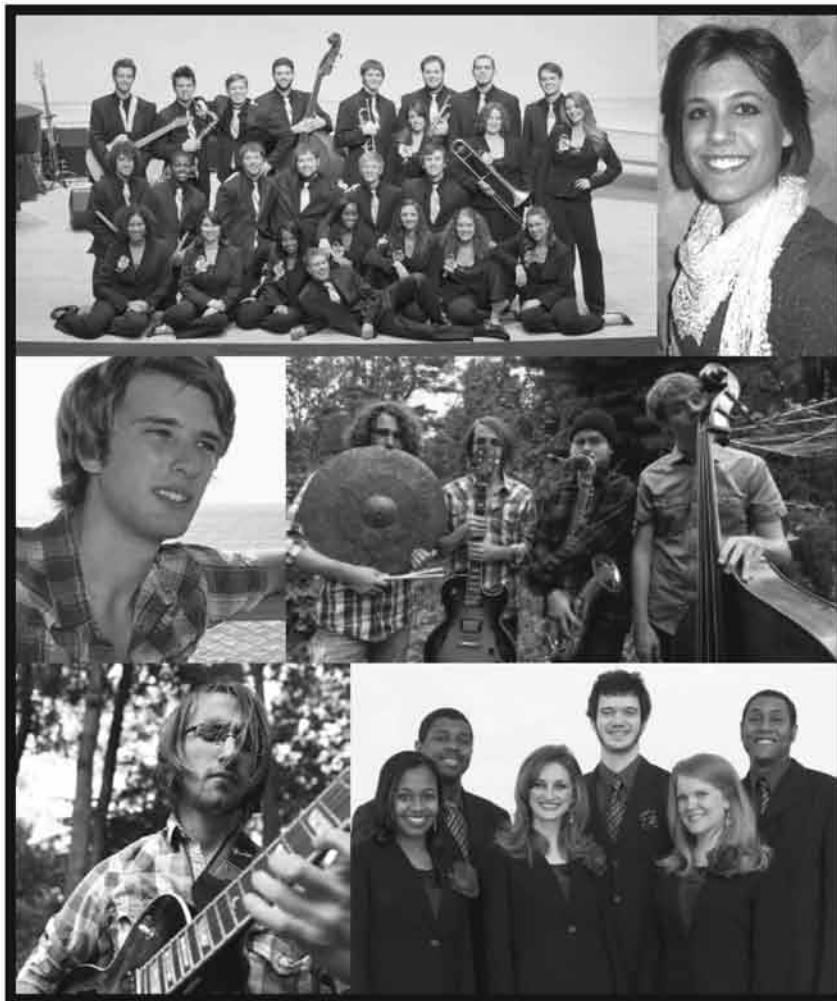
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LEFT TO RIGHT: *Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble – Gold Company; Classical Soloist – Melissa Taddie, violin*
Blues/Pop/Rock Group – Goodnight Mr. Max; Blues/Pop/Rock Group – Desolation Row
Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist– Matthew Landon, guitar; Vocal Jazz Group – Gold Company Sextet

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Jazz Education Hall of Fame

Steve Zegree: True Passion, Dedication

Pianist and choral director Dr. Steve Zegree seems to run in five directions at once. On the penultimate weekend in March, Zegree, who is the Bobby McFerrin Distinguished Professor of Jazz at Western Michigan University, welcomed 25 vocal ensembles on campus for WMU's annual vocal jazz festival. In June, he hosted a weeklong summer vocal camp. In addition to these commitments, Zegree was traveling around the world—in Mozambique one week, China the next—and, of course, teaching private lessons at the university and coaching his heralded vocal ensemble, Gold Company.

"I work hard; I put in a lot of hours, and I have a lot of energy," Zegree says. "If I average four or five hours a night, I'm feeling pretty good. I always feel chronically under-slept, but I try not to act that way."

Zegree stumbled into the job in the fall of 1978, inheriting a vocal ensemble called the Varsity Vagabonds from a retiring professor and being tasked to teach piano. Zegree already had a performing career, and he wasn't necessarily looking to give that up, but molding a glee club that dealt in show tunes into a respected vocal jazz ensemble grew on him.

"Being a college professor wasn't something that I had aspired to or was part of my life script. The opportunity came up and initially I thought, 'I'll try this out for a year,'" Zegree says.

He soon learned he had a true passion for teaching and that he enjoyed sharing his professional experiences with students. Over his 30-plus years in the WMU jazz department, he has seen students graduate into well-known performers and respected educators.

Trent Kynaston, WMU's saxophone professor, said Gold Company and other traditions Zegree has developed have boosted the school's international cache. It's also important for the students, however, that Zegree maintain an active performance and clinician schedule.

"We all feel that if we don't do what we're professing, then we're not going to be very successful," Kynaston says. "I don't know of anybody throughout the university who ends up traveling and doing as much as he does."

For all the performing he does, Zegree is dedicated to teaching. "I could walk away from my performing career in a minute," he says. "I wouldn't want to give up my commitment to students and to preparing the future generations of educators and performers."

Much of his success training musicians comes from his tireless personality, but also



from his commitment to excellence. When aspiring musicians say there isn't enough time to practice as much as he demands, Zegree gives them a lesson in time management with himself as the prime example. Though he may get disappointed with the amount of dedication his students give to their studies, he never gets mad at the students themselves.

"It's not about them; it's always about the music," he says. "If I'm saying, 'Hey, guys, this isn't meeting the standard,' I'm not saying, 'I don't like you.' I'm not saying, 'You're bad boys and girls.'"

Nich Mueller, a third-year member of Gold Company and a junior in the jazz studies program, first heard the vocal ensemble when he was in high school. He was drawn to the polished presentation and the tight sound of Gold Company, and he knew right then that he wanted to be in the group. While he has enjoyed spending three years singing and sharing a sense of community with the other ensemble members, he said it takes a serious amount of work to perform at the required level.

"It's never easy being a student of Dr. Zegree. Rising to his challenges and expectations is a constant battle, but that's what makes him such a great educator," Mueller says. "Though it is tough, when the time is right, 'Doc' is a source of support, compassion and humor."

WMU faculty member Tom Knific has seen Zegree's methods consistently yield results. The broader university administration acknowledges Zegree's work as well, and appreciates the prestige he brings to the program. "He's popular and famous," Knific says. "Sometimes I think about him in terms of some of the legendary coaches: He gets to be bigger than life at some point." —Jon Ross

Scott Bevins, "Surrealist Algebra"

Greater Hartford Academy
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Antonio Castro-Ossorio, "Nica's Dream"
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Jazz Education Achievement Awards

CHRISTOPHER DORSEY | DILLARD CENTER FOR THE ARTS, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.

Teaching from the Ground Up

For Christopher Dorsey, teaching is about having a goal. “Know what you want,” he says emphatically. “You can’t ask anything of your students until you’ve given them a target.”

After 26 years of teaching, Dorsey is currently the instrumental music director for the two jazz ensembles and orchestra at Dillard Center for the Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. “It all starts with listening, hearing the sound you want before you teach your students to make it,” Dorsey explains. “I used to listen to Count Basie religiously, then Ellington became my model.”

This makes sense knowing that under Dorsey’s watch the Dillard Jazz Ensemble has consistently brought home gold medals from the Essentially Ellington competition. “I want to know what’s going on all over the country,” Dorsey says. “If you don’t get outside your back yard, you won’t have any idea what’s around you. Ellington’s given me a lot of perspective, and the students get the opportunity to talk to people like Wynton Marsalis and Vincent Gardner and see first-hand just how beautiful the jazz community can be.”

But there are a few more steps between studying the greats and turning a group of teenagers into a big band that swings like it’s 1935, and Dorsey’s path to success was less of a straight line. “When I started out, my high school band director talked me into playing the tuba, but once I learned to play trombone, that became my primary instrument.”



After earning a bachelor’s degree in music education from Jackson State University and a master’s in instrumental music education from the University of Florida, Dorsey’s life as a musician took a turn and a new love challenged his dedication to the trombone. Dorsey found himself at a crossroads—to spend the rest of his life teaching or throw himself into playing his horn.

“It was 1989 when I got the call,” he says. “I was at Edison Park Elementary School, and just like that they invited me to play on the European tour of *Ain’t Misbehavin’*.” Dorsey took the job with the Off Broadway show, an experience that took him all over Europe. But even on the

road, teaching found its way in. “I learned all the parts in the play, and when people came to me with questions, it was really just like teaching elementary school.” Within a year Dorsey was back in the classroom, teaching at the American Senior High School in Hialeah, Fla.

Since then, he’s built programs all over the state, and now after the better part of three decades and rigorous experience at every grade level, there is one thing that Dorsey knows for sure: A teacher’s most important role is that of motivator. “No great musician will tell you they’ve arrived,” Dorsey explains. “Neither will a great teacher. You’re always tweaking and changing and re-establishing, because motivating students changes every day.”

But students also need a strong foundation from which to grow, and there is no substitute for raw material. “In 1992 I made a vow,” says Dorsey. “I would teach my students to play their instruments before I taught them to play jazz.”

Finally, a teacher needs to know where he’s going. “It’s not only about conceptualizing a sound; it’s about conceptualizing a community,” Dorsey says. “We’re trying to produce performers for the next generation, people who will listen to and support this music. I’m tired of going to concerts and seeing audiences that are mostly over 65.” In this respect, Dorsey looks to his work for hope as well as fulfillment. “I try to show my students how to love this music whether or not they stay in it. And teaching has helped me to love this music in ways I never thought I would.”

—Zoe Young

MARY JO PAPICH AND DR. LOU FISCHER | JAZZ EDUCATION NETWORK

Finding Purpose, Defying the Odds

Many in the jazz world were puzzled and wondering what would be the fate of jazz education after International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) board president Chuck Owen announced the 40-year-old jazz conference was filing for bankruptcy in April 2008.

Two individuals this news was certainly not lost on were Dr. Lou Fischer and Mary Jo Papich. Fischer and Papich are lifelong jazz educators who were regular attendees of IAJE functions and, with several decades of service to the improvised arts between them, took



personal stock in evaluating what could be done. They soon went on to form a completely new organization called Jazz Education Network (JEN) in 2009.

But how did JEN evolve, and what was the driving force in Fischer and Papich that prompted them to spearhead such an endeavor? Fischer has been Professor of Music and Jazz Studies at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, for 18 years. Prior to his years in education, he had toured as a bassist with such luminaries as Red Rodney, The Crusaders, Airto, Charlie Byrd, Andy Williams, Woody Herman, Bobby Shew and Louie

Bellson. He was also an entrepreneur, having ran a music publishing company for 13 years, owned a nightclub, worked as a booking agent and headed an event production company. But, as diversified as he was, he seemed to always have a calling in the back of his mind. "As long as I can remember, I've always enjoyed the interaction between my teachers and me," recalls Fischer of his days as a blossoming musician/educator. "Without their mentorship and people encouraging me to move forward and do well, I might still be in San Antonio, Texas, playing salsa and r&b in club bands. Not that that would be a bad thing, but I was told to go to college, and I was the first in my family to do that."

Papich is currently the Director of Fine Arts Curriculum for Niles (Ill.) District 219 and has been a band and music instructor in public schools for more than 30 years. She served eight years as Fine Arts Chair at Highland Park (Ill.) High School and coordinated Focus On The Arts, working with 400-plus volunteers and 270 artists.

When these two friends, colleagues and dedicated servants to the jazz medium got the news in 2008 about the demise of IAJE, it took an emotional toll.

"I had attended 37 of those 40 conferences," Fischer says. "Everybody I know in my life—my extended family was a part of that community. I got sick and had some serious health issues in 2006. It took me about a year-and-a-half to recover. About six months later, I realized there's a reason I'm still here, but I [didn't] know what it [was]. There was a huge void when IAJE went down. I said to Mary Jo, 'We can continue to cry in our beer, or we can do something.'"

Fischer found his purpose and, along with Papich, proceeded to create a brand-new organization that was fresh, inventive and had no association with IAJE in any way, shape or form. They came up with a sound nonprofit business plan modeled after the Percussive Arts Society (PASIC) and have been operating in the black since their inception almost four years ago.

JEN has a series of initiatives including student scholarships, mentoring programs with kids on all aspects of the jazz industry and school outreach programs for students of all ages.

"The future for JEN looks very bright," says Papich. "We've gotten a lot of support from the jazz community, and getting ready for our fourth conference in 2013 is pretty exciting. We are a very inclusive organization, and I love reaching new people who want to be a part of this."

—Eric Harabadian

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Brubeck Research Travel Grant

The University of the Pacific Library's Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections houses the papers of composer and jazz legend **Dave Brubeck**. The collection has research potential in a variety of areas, such as West Coast jazz, the civil rights movement, and the State Department's cultural ambassador programs of the 1950s. More information on the Brubeck Collection can be found at: go.pacific.edu/specialcollections

The University of the Pacific Library is offering a **\$1,500 research travel grant**. The grant is open to students, professors, and independent researchers. **To apply** send a 1-2 page vitae and a 1-2 page proposal describing the research project and how it will involve the Brubeck Collection. Applications will be accepted until **July 31, 2012**; research must be completed by September 2013. **Mail to:** Brubeck Collection, University of the Pacific Library, 3601 Pacific Ave, Stockton, CA 95211. **Email:** trichards@pacific.edu

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Orbert Davis: Trumpeter/clinician; professor at University of Illinois at Chicago.

David Demsey: Saxophonist; William Paterson University Coordinator of Jazz Studies.

Les Hooper: Composer/arranger for films, TV, commercials, orchestras and records; clinician.

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Donaldson, Gomez, Calazans Teach Louisville Students the Art of the Tribute

The Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies Program at the University of Louisville School of Music presented its 18th Annual Jazz Festival from Feb. 23–25. Veteran saxophonist Lou Donaldson, renowned bassist Eddie Gomez and Brazilian guitarist Fábio Calazans presented workshops and concerts to both students and the public. Gomez noted that jazz education has come a long way since he was in high school, when he and flutist Jeremy Steig had to sneak away to practice jazz.

U of L's strong international jazz program was highlighted the first night of the festival. The U of L Brazilian Ensemble, directed by graduate student Lourenço Vasconcellos, opened with a choro, followed by the Hermeto Pascoal composition "Suite North, South, East, West," which featured saxophonist and Jazz Studies Director Mike Tracy on tenor sax. They concluded with a maracatu by Moacir Santos and "Rio In The Summer." Calazans, accompanied by bass, cello and percussion, entranced the audience with his light touch in a program that included his interpretations of "Cinnamon And Clove" and Egberto Gismonti's "Frevo." His originals included a lullaby for his daughter, "Flowers To Laura."

Gomez performed the second night, first with his longtime pianist, Stefan Karlsson, and drummer Jason Tiemann, then with the 17-piece Jazz Ensemble I (JEI), directed by John LaBarbera. After opening with "All Blues," the trio performed Gomez's "Love Letter To My Mother And Father," rendered especially poignant by his comment that his mother had recently passed away at age 94. The arco solo introduction was gorgeous, and the switch to pizzicato when the other musicians joined in was flawless. They played Bill Evans' "We Will Meet Again" and closed with a Miles Davis song, "Solar." JEI then took the stage for one song before Gomez returned, performing Thad Jones' bluesy "Mean What You Say" and the gentle "Quietude." Dizzy Gillespie's early arrangement of "Round Midnight" provided both musicality and historicity. Gomez and the students closed with an incandescent "Fables Of Faubus," a nod to fellow bassist Charles Mingus. Throughout, Gomez displayed an unassuming virtuosity.

On the final day of the festival, Donaldson, at 85, demonstrated with strong playing and



wry humor that "age ain't nothing but a number." He joined JEI for "Moose The Mooche," receiving an ovation as he walked onstage, and wrapped the audience around his finger with his classic "Blues Walk," followed by soulful workouts on "Yardbird Suite" and more. Donaldson then upped the ante with his own band—organist Akiko Tsuruga, guitarist Randy Johnston and drummer Joe Farnsworth—burning through Nat "King" Cole's "Love." The 70-minute set included his Satchmo tribute, "What A Wonderful World," a long, slow blues medley and a 90-miles-per-hour "Cherokee," which Donaldson introduced by saying when he could no longer play it, he was going to throw his saxophone off a bridge. His encore, "Things Ain't What They Used To Be/Give Me Back My Wig," closed the festival in grand style.

Graduate student Christopher Clark said of Donaldson: "It's great to see someone in his eighties still playing so well. For him to play with us was a great experience."

Fellow student Brandon Coleman added: "It was tremendous to have musicians of such high caliber as Eddie Gomez and Lou Donaldson come and share their wealth of musical knowledge with us. Their positive energy and powerful music not only enlightened the students, it captivated and entertained the audience to a degree you don't often find in music schools." —Martin Z. Kasdan Jr.



California Concert: Saxophonist Bob Mintzer delivered a collaborative performance with students from the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts at Hollywood jazz club Catalina's on April 10. Presented by the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, the evening highlighted combo and big band performances as well as a repertoire of standards and contemporary jazz.

Details: monkinstitute.org

New Year: The New School of Jazz and Contemporary Music rounded out its silver anniversary year with a special Legacy concert on April 25. The event featured performances from pioneering jazz artists, including NEA Jazz Masters Jimmy Owens and Frank Wess. Other highlights included a student-lead tribute to Frank Foster and Benny Powell.

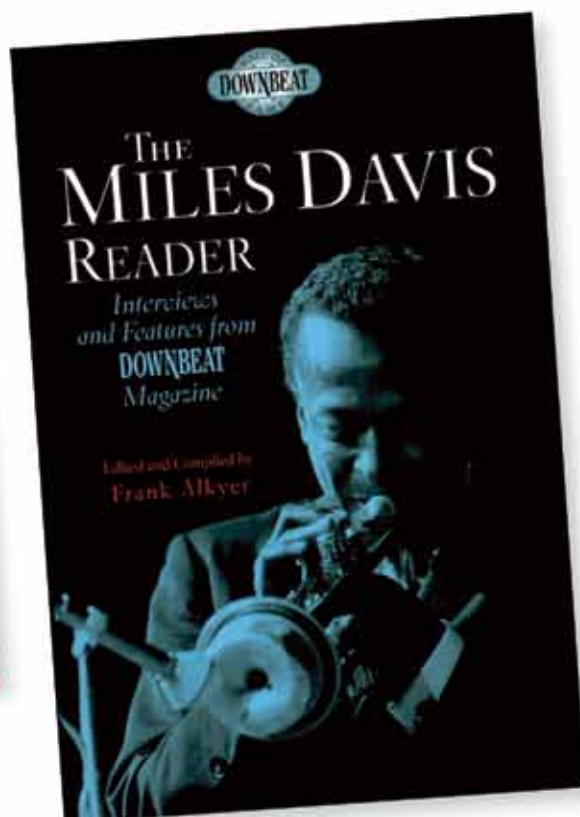
Details: newschool.edu

Havana Beats: KOSA Cuba presented its annual percussion workshop on March 4–11. The one-week intensive study program offered series of jam sessions, private lessons and conferences, including a discussion led by ethnomusicologist Dr. Olavo Alén. Details: kosamusic.com

Friendly Affair: The first University of Manitoba Jazz Orchestra and Friends concert was held on April 14 at the West End Cultural Centre. The evening spotlighted Winnipeg's most talented high school jazz musicians, including the University of Manitoba Jazz Collective, the Vincent Massey Jazz Orchestra and the Collège-Jeanne Sauvé Jazz Orchestra.

Details: umanitoba.ca

Hoosier Music: The Indiana University Jacobs School of Music celebrated Jazz Appreciation Month with a "Jazz Celebration" concert on April 21 at the school's Musical Arts Center. The event featured performances by alumni trumpeter Randy Brecker, pianist Alan Pasqua, bassist Robert Hurst and drummer Peter Erskine. Details: indiana.edu



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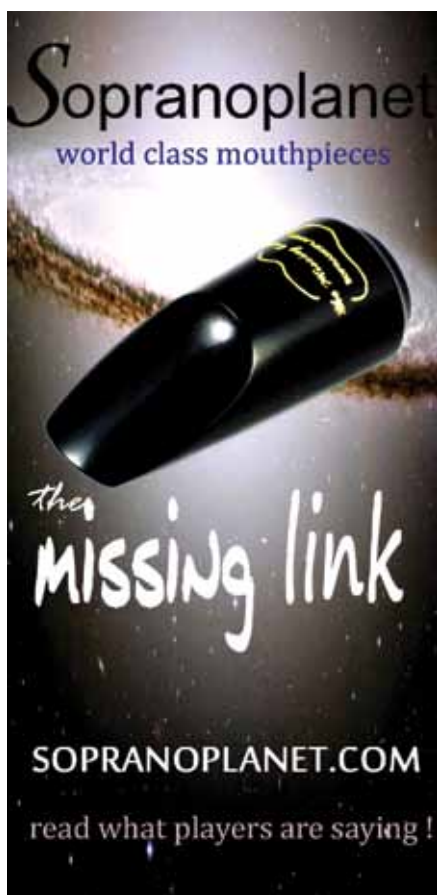

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Mats Gustafsson

Swedish reedist Mats Gustafsson has been one of improvised music's most restless and energetic figures for the last two decades, whether in ad hoc settings or with hard-hitting working bands like the Thing and Fire! He's a close collaborator of fellow reedists Peter Brötzmann and Ken Vandermark. Recent albums include *Live At The South Bank* (Smalltown Superjazz), an improvised session with the late drummer Steve Reid and laptop musician Kieran Hebden, and *Barrel Fire*, a collaboration with the Gord Grdina Trio. This is his first Blindfold Test, conducted during the 2011 Vancouver International Jazz Festival.

Julius Hemphill

"Dogon A.D." (*Dogon A.D.*, International Phonograph, 2011, rec'd 1972) Hemphill, alto saxophone; Abdul Wadud, cello; Phillip Wilson, drums; Baikida Carroll, trumpet. [Instantly] Julius Hemphill. The drumming is genius—he's like the Zigaboo Modeliste of free-jazz. There's so many grooves and standards for how to play jazz and free-jazz, and the simple fact of using the saxophone or the cello as a kind of bass—why not? It's so obvious. Any musician who doesn't like this should just stop—this is what it's all about. It's such a raw sound, right up in your face. This is the perfect introduction to someone who's never heard free-jazz before. I wouldn't mind if this piece went on for a couple of hours.

Yosuke Yamashita Trio

"Chiasma" (*Chiasma*, MPS, 1976) Yamashita, piano; Akira Sakata, alto saxophone; Takeo Moriyama, drums.

I've played this piece with the Thing. It's Yosuke Yamashita. Yeah, it's "Chiasma." This is, perhaps, the least known supergroup of jazz. This trio made a name for themselves in Europe, but the influence they had on the Japanese scene at the time was huge. The first time I heard this, it was like I was flying out of the window. The intensity. But it's totally jazz-based. I probably heard about this from working for [Stockholm record shop owner] Harald Hult. That was my school. I still help him. I've played with Sakata in Japan with the Thing, and we played with Yamashita, too. It was through the ceiling.

Lars Gullin

"Fedja" (*Baritone Sax*, Collectables, 1999, rec'd 1956) Gullin, baritone saxophone; Carl-Henrik Norin, tenor saxophone; Arne Domnerus, alto saxophone; George Vernon, trombone; Rune Öfwerman, piano; George Riedel, bass; Nils-Bertil Dahlander, drums; Rune Falk, baritone saxophone.

Ah, Gullin. You have to change the rating to 7 or something. Classic Swedish shit, "Fedja." Maybe no one can hear it in my playing, but this is my main inspiration for my baritone. I heard Gullin around the first time I heard Brötzmann for the first time, on record. It's a real shame he could never go to the States to play. He had some minor drug thing, so he could never get in. He is totally a lyrical player, with long melodic lines. For the two extremes in jazz baritone, you have Gullin on one side and then you have someone like Serge Chaloff on the other side, all rough and like, *pow!* They call this the golden era of Swedish jazz, and it's really true.

Peter Evans

"Wa" (*Nature/Culture*, Psi, 2008) Evans, trumpet.

[About one minute in] It's Peter Evans. I thought it was a saxophone, doing multiphonics and really pushing it hard. I know a lot of musicians who don't like Peter's playing because they think it's too technical. But for me, what he's doing, what he's exploring, it's because of his technique he can push it so far. If you don't have the technique, you can't reach for where you want to go. This is so filthy, so dirty. I think in the past 10 years Peter and [saxophonist] Christine Schnaoui are the best things that have happened to



the scene. They took their instruments in totally new directions, and that doesn't happen so often in jazz. I couldn't believe it the first time I heard him. He's a super great improviser, but I have to say I think I most enjoy him solo. Let's be mean to Peter and give this 4½ stars, saying that he will make his masterpiece next year.

Steve Lacy

"Stamps" (*Blinks*, Hat Hut, 1997, rec'd 1983) Lacy, soprano saxophone; Steve Potts, alto saxophone; Irene Aebi, cello; Jean-Jacques Avenel, bass; Oliver Johnson, drums. That took a while. Lacy, of course. My brain is working so slow! Immediately I thought 5 stars, but I knew I had to figure out what it was first. Must be Steve Potts, Irene and Oliver Johnson. This is about the time I first heard Lacy live, I think, in New York in 1981. It was this group with Bobby Few and George Lewis. I had heard Lacy's name before, but not his music. It was one of the concerts that changed my life. I played with him once at the old Velvet Lounge [in Chicago]. Another of those unreal experiences. I was so nervous. When we got up on stage he whispered in my ear and he said, "To tune or not to tune," and it scared the shit out of me. He's one of the few people I would consider a genius, the way he was thinking about stuff and connecting the wide perspective with poetry, art and dance.

Magnus Broo

"Thoughts Are Things" (*Swedish Wood*, Moserobie, 2010) Broo, trumpet; Torbjörn Zetterberg, bass; Joe Williamson, bass; Håkon Mjåset Johansen, drums.

[Laughs] Surprising. I have not heard this before. It's contemporary. Stupid theme. Really good trumpet player. To compare Jason Moran and this, since it's contemporary—I like the sound of this more. I really like the two bassists. Oh, it's Magnus Broo! This is Magnus at his best. Fantastic. This is as close to 5 stars as you can get. I'm glad not to make a fool of myself. It is a stupid theme, it's a little cheesy, but it makes complete sense. Magnus is such an amazing human being, and he can pull off a theme like that. I love that it's just his trumpet without saxophone or piano.

DB

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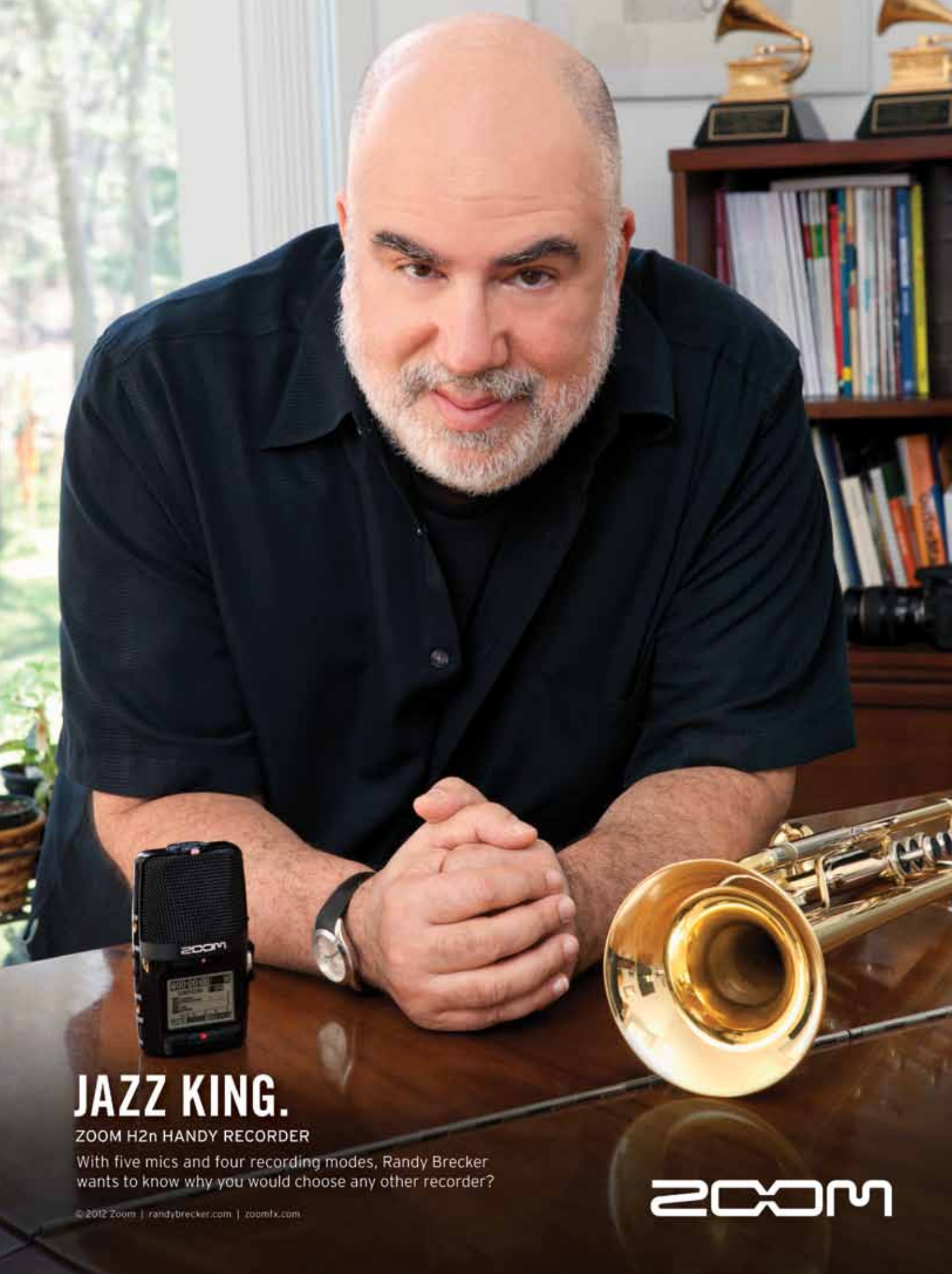
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