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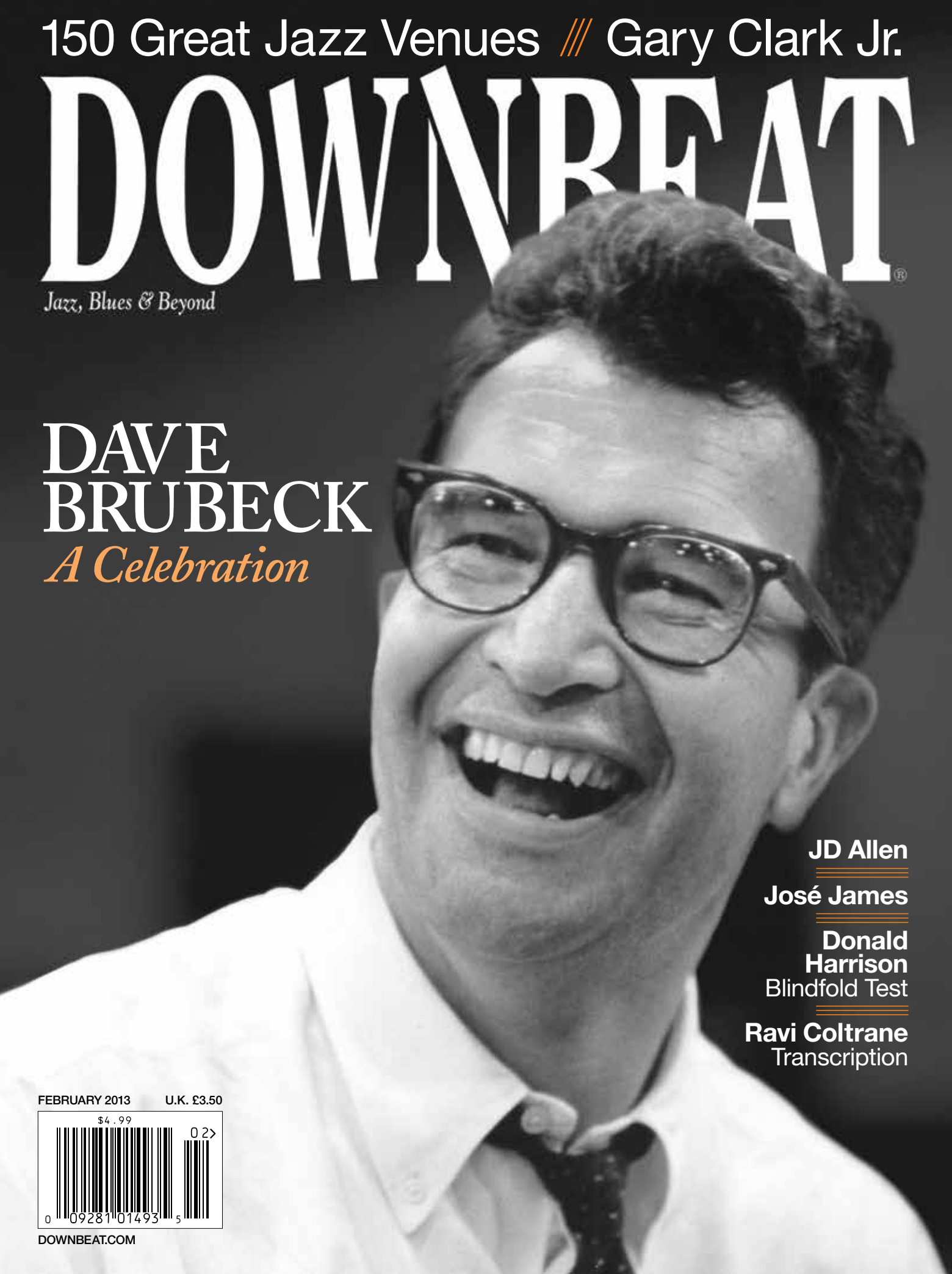

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The great Dave Brubeck (1920–2012)

Cover photo and image above: DownBeat archives

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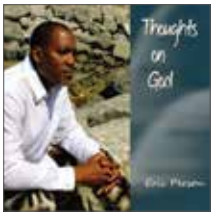

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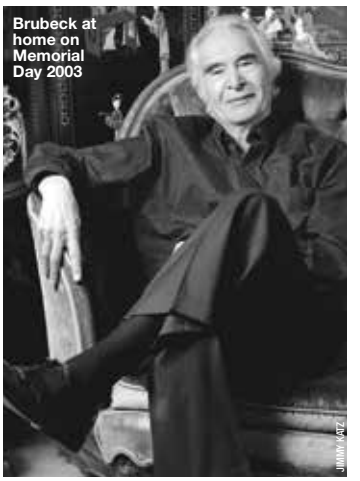
First Take 〉 BY MICHAEL BOURNE

Five Takes of Dave

You don't always recognize a turning point in your life—especially not in the moment when you actually turn. I would have lived the last 50 years quite differently if not for Dave Brubeck.

Two guys in my high school chemistry class were always excitedly talking about jazz. I'd never actually heard any jazz, so I finally asked, "What jazz record should I get?" One of them said, "*Time Out* by the Dave Brubeck Quartet!"


Brubeck at home on Memorial Day 2003

I bought the vinyl LP at an A&P grocery store. The opening track, "Blue Rondo À La Turk," was thrilling, a musical whirligig. And then came "Strange Meadowlark." Brubeck's piano prelude sounded like impressionistic piano classics of Ravel or Debussy. I was already enraptured when the alto sax of Paul Desmond swooped in. I picked up the needle and again played Desmond's lovely lyrical breeze. I was drowning in the delight of Brubeck's music. And I hadn't even heard the third track, the immortal "Take Five."

The next day I went back to the A&P and bought Brubeck's *Countdown: Time In Outer Space*. I started listening to jazz obsessively. I began writing about jazz, starting in 1969 with pieces for DownBeat.

While pursuing a doctorate degree in theater at Indiana University, the school's classical radio station asked me to fill in as a jazz DJ. The first record I played on WFIU? "Strange Meadowlark." Instead of becoming a professor, I kept playing jazz on the radio. Jazz became my vocation, now going on 30 years broadcasting from Newark, N.J. First record I played on WBGO? "Strange Meadowlark."

I have so many memories of Dave. I spent Memorial Day 2003 with him at his house in Connecticut. Sitting at his piano, Dave played as he reminisced about growing up as a cowboy on his father's cattle ranch in California. He played music he'd composed to the rhythms of his horse's hooves. Music had saved his life, he said. During World War II, instead of likely being killed with Gen. Patton's troops, the day before the fighting he was asked to play piano in an Army band. He played for me tunes inspired by truck wheels rolling on pontoon bridges across the Rhine. Just as a painter sees the world in lines and images, Dave heard the world as melodies. Most memorable that day, Dave played for me "Strange Meadowlark," and my life came blissfully full circle.

When the DBQ celebrated the 50th anniversary of *Time Out* in 2009 at the Montreal Jazz Festival, Dave reminisced with me for a broadcast. What surprised me most was that he had never played "Pick Up Sticks" (on the LP's second side) since the recording session.

I loved watching him play. Even in his latter years, when walking across the stage was often arduous, once he sat down at the piano, all the pain and years fell away. Dave always looked to me like a child first plinking at the keys. He'd play and then laugh in joyful amazement.

One of the coolest things Dave ever said was in response to a concert review that alleged he had played some wrong notes: "If I make mistakes, it's because I tried something that didn't work. I'd rather make mistakes than play safe, than play the same solos every night."

And the best life lesson I learned from Dave Brubeck came in a message he sent me after I'd undergone heart surgery: "From one triple bypasser to another: Always do what you love … *quickly*!" **DB**

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Jazz Cowboy

Dave Brubeck was one of my all-time heroes. As a kid, I played his LP *We're All Together Again For The First Time* so often that I had to buy a fresh copy due to all the scratches that accumulated on the vinyl. Dave was a fearless improviser and innovator willing to experiment with huge chords, pounding rhythms and unusual time signatures. He was also a decent human being. His pioneering efforts with jazz worship inspired me to pursue the same. Plus, because I'm a horseman, it also mattered to me that a jazz musician could grow up on a ranch. Thank you, Mr. Brubeck, for your continued inspiration.

BRADLEY SOWASH
INFO@BRADLEYSOWASH.COM

Editor's Note: Thanks for sharing your personal reflections on Dave Brubeck. Please see the First Take essay (page 10) and the cover story (page 26) for our celebration of an artist whose music will live on for centuries.

The Sound of Rivers

Thank you for the article on Pi Recordings' release *Reunion: Live In New York* featuring Sam Rivers, Dave Holland and Barry Altschul (The Beat, December). We're glad that DownBeat agrees that this is a historically significant release of a band that was woefully underdocumented in its time. The article, however, may give the impression that the recording suffers from poor sound quality. While that might have been true of the original rough mix that the musicians first heard, we took painstaking care to make sure that the final product is every bit up to our label's usual high sonic standards. It crackles the way a good live recording should and we feel more than successfully captures what we and the rest of the audience heard on that special evening.

SETH ROSNER AND YULUN WANG
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS, PI RECORDINGS
NEW YORK CITY

Seeking Arbiters

I think it was Duke Ellington who said there are only two types of music: good and bad. However, we divide music into genres to help us distinguish different sounds when talking about them. But who are the arbiters of what music belongs to which genre? If they were the readers of DownBeat, then jazz would be struggling more than it already is.

As good as they might be, I fail to see any argument as to how the latest albums by Esperanza Spalding, Trombone Shorty and even Tony Bennett constitute jazz. And yet, they all made the Top 10 in the Jazz Album of the Year category (Readers Poll, December). Perhaps somebody who voted for them could enlighten me.


Dave Brubeck

SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT/TOON HUNSTEIN

KEITH PENHALLOW
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

Beyond Fandom

Adriano Pateri's letter ("Forget Beyond?" in Chords & Discords, January) has inspired me to comment on DownBeat's category of Beyond music. I appreciate (and welcome) Mr. Pateri's viewpoint, but the Beyond portion of DownBeat's coverage is a key factor as to why I've been a longtime subscriber to the magazine. While Jazz and Blues form my musical "home base," I enjoy many other types of music. My current iPod mix owes a great debt to the Beyond coverage in DownBeat, as well as to the musical exchange I've had with my teenage and twentysomething-age children over the past few years. For me, it's "Jazz, Blues & Beyond." Keep up the great work on all those musical fronts.

JOE FRANK
JDFRANK@VERIZON.NET

Corrections

- In the December issue, the headline for the review of the album *Drop It* (NoBusiness Records) by the band Mockūno NuClear misspelled the group's name.
- In the November issue, The Hot Box chart on page 49 should have listed 4 stars for John Corbett's review of the album *Be Still* (Greenleaf) by the Dave Douglas Quintet.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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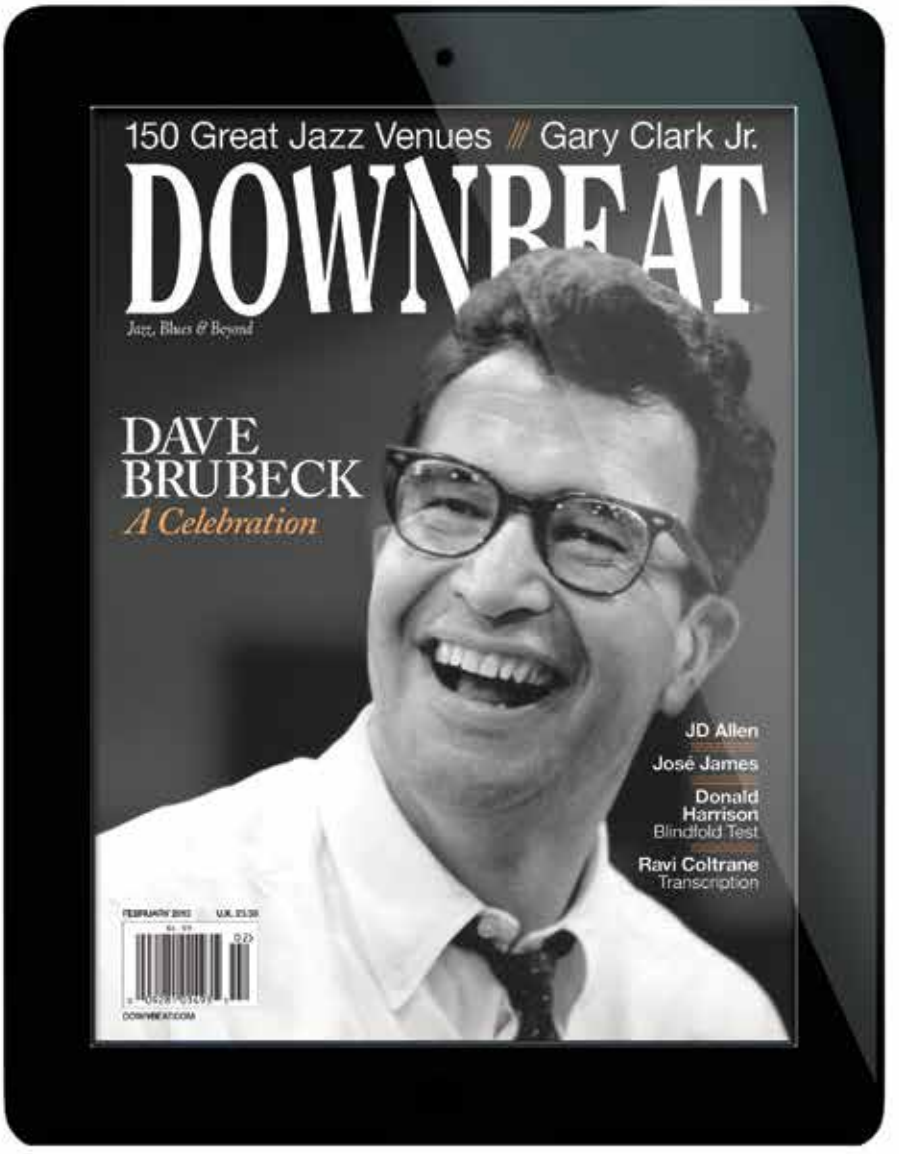

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The Beat

Inside

Playscape Releases Rare Chapin Quartet Recordings

Playscape Recordings has released *Never Let Me Go: Quartets '95 & '96*, a three-disc volume of rare quartet recordings from the late alto saxophonist Thomas Chapin.

The first two discs feature the working quartet Chapin founded in the early 1990s—pianist Peter Madsen, bassist Kiyoto Fujiwara and drummer Reggie Nicholson—during a date in Queens, N.Y. The third disc finds Madsen and Chapin at the Knitting Factory joined by bassist Scott Colley and drummer Matt Wilson; it was the saxophonist's final New York performance before he died of leukemia in 1998 at age 40.

Chapin is better known for his trio work, and there are only a few studio recordings of his early quartet, making these live recordings a rarity, according to Michael Musillami, Playscape's founder. Because of this, he spent two years trying to bring Chapin's quartet sound to a wider audience, first working with Chapin's widow, Terry Chapin, to secure the music from her personal holdings. He then had to toil over mid-'90s recording technology, working to get a clean, balanced ensemble sound. (The Knitting Factory concert had been taped on a cassette.) Musillami worked at it, however, because he believed he had something special.

"There's a lot of [unreleased Chapin material] out there that hasn't come to the forefront. But not like this," he said. "The quartet stuff was hard to find."

Musillami has a long history with Chapin's music. He first met the saxophonist in 1983 and soon established a lasting musical friendship that included a number of studio releases. Deciding to produce the package wasn't that difficult, he said, because presenting the material in a live setting allows for a fuller picture of Chapin as a musician. The lengthy tunes contain extended Chapin solos both on alto saxophone and flute.

"Thomas could read anything at sight; he could play through changes at any tempo, any key. He could play out without sounding like he was playing patterns," Musillami said. "He was just a very, very open player. His sound was, I think, a singular sound."

This versatility is apparent on *Never Let Me Go*. Though not as free as his trio recordings, Chapin nonetheless moves fluidly between tunes with chord changes and less-structured explorations. Pianist Madsen remembers that this fluidity and accessibility came across in Chapin's stage personality.

"When he was playing on stage, nothing else mattered to him but connecting with the audience and the musicians playing with him," Madsen said. "Thomas was always into the energy of the people at a performance. He thrived on this live energy."


Thomas Chapin

COURTESY OF AKASHA, INC.

Chapin had been pursuing quartet work in addition to his trio jobs as another way to present his music; the saxophonist thought rounding out his quartet with Wilson and Colley, with their jazz cachet, might better entice record label executives, Madsen said. When he got sick and had to stop playing, Chapin had gigs in Europe lined up for the quartet and was working on finding additional opportunities. The quartet was working a lot in New York City, and Chapin was trying to interest labels in further projects because the quartet was also a somewhat easier sell than the trio, the pianist recalled.

And though Chapin was concentrating on establishing his quartet at that time in his life, that didn't mean he was abandoning his early trio playing. "Adding harmony to his band gave him more colors to play with," Madsen said. "Thomas didn't want to be pigeonholed into one thing. He wanted both groups to be working. He wanted to have both groups to write for and to give him different musical inspirations." —*Jon Ross*

Riffs

Danilo Pérez

Perez for Peace: Director General of the The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Irina Bokova has designated pianist Danilo Pérez as a UNESCO Artist for Peace. UNESCO works with the Artists for Peace to heighten public awareness regarding key development issues and to inform the public about the Organization's action in specific fields. Pérez was honored at a ceremony in Paris on Nov. 20.

Ax Invasion: Eric Clapton has announced the dates of the 2013 Crossroads Festival, which will visit more than a dozen cities beginning March 14. The festival will culminate in its first live performance at New York's Madison Square Garden on April 12–13, starring more than 30 guitarists, including B.B. King, John Mayer, Jeff Beck and Gary Clark Jr. The event will also feature a "Legends Guitar Walk" of collectible axes.

Miller Injured: Bassist Marcus Miller and several members of his band were injured in a fatal crash when the group's private bus overturned on a Swiss highway on Nov. 25, killing the driver and injuring the passengers onboard. The German-registered bus was on its way from Monte Carlo to Hengelo, The Netherlands. The vehicle was carrying 13 passengers, including 11 members of the Marcus Miller Band.

House Music: On Nov. 28, the Library of Congress made a series of 25 artist interviews conducted by record label president Joe Smith available to the public. Smith recently donated the recordings, which include candid conversations with Tony Bennett, Paul McCartney, Yoko Ono, Ray Charles, B. B. King, Bo Diddley and Linda Rondstadt.

Kyle Eastwood (left) performing with his quintet

LUIS GAZABAL

Caught

Miami Nice Jazz Fest Holds Surprises Good and Bad

Conceived as a sister-city cultural event by promoter Philippe Pautesta-Herder, and aided in part by France's Nice Jazz Festival, the two-night Miami Nice Festival traded *pan bagnat* and *pastis* for Cuban *medianoche* sandwiches and *mojitos* at the exquisite Olympia Theater of the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts on Oct. 26–27.

British singer Sally Night adroitly sang her own compositions and standards, backed by the Florida International University jazz band. Bassist Kyle Eastwood, son of well-known jazz lover Clint Eastwood, led his fine quintet through original compositions.

The disappointment of the festival came an hour after singer Dee Dee Bridgewater was to go on in her tribute to Billie Holiday. With the Miami mayor and the French consul in the audience, Bridgewater said her contract had not been respected and refused to play. Promoters scrambled to give refunds and replacement tickets to the following night's performances.

One of many pleasant surprises came from the jazz-rock quintet TROC, led by French drummer André Ceccarelli, whose vocalist, Alex Ligertwood, used blue-eyed soul voicings in his full range while the band locked in behind him. Later, pianist Eddie Palmieri forcefully launched his five-song set with "Picadillo." His regular sextet included timbales, conga, bongo, bass and two horns—trumpeter Brian Lynch and Louis Fouché on alto sax. It was classic Palmieri: intense, dissonant, exciting and still completely danceable.

Many players showed up for a jam late into the night at recently renovated club Avenue D. The high turnout of horn players made for a thundering herd, clearing away the previous night's issues. "For someone to bring the festival here now is wonderful," Palmieri said. "If they ask me to come every year, I'll come every year." —*John Radanovich*

New York Musicians Paint the Town

ADAM MICHELCHUK

Pianist ELEW dazzles passersby with his eccentric performance style at the Jazz & Colors event in New York's Central Park on Nov. 10. The event featured 30 acts all playing the same set list throughout the park.

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Ben Allison

GREG NELLO

Compositional Risk-taker

The Bassist Reflects on the Composers Collective's 20th Anniversary

When I was 25, I had a few realizations that continue to guide my musical life two decades later. In order to find your voice as a musician, you have to take risks. You have to pursue your music with energy, passion and a healthy disregard for the status quo. And it really helps to surround yourself with like-minded artists who share those ideals.

These thoughts inspired me to form the Jazz Composers Collective—a nonprofit, musician-run organization dedicated to new music. In the summer of 1992, I, along with pianist Frank Kimbrough, saxophonists Ted Nash and John Schroeder, and later saxophonist Michael Blake and trumpeter Ron Horton, set out to provide ourselves and other musicians with opportunities to develop and present our music on our own terms and, at the same time, build new audiences for jazz. It was a fairly simple mandate based on collaboration and self-empowerment. At the heart of this effort was a desire to carve out one corner of our musical lives in which we could be idealistic.

The Collective's annual concert series, which was a mainstay of New York's creative music scene from 1992 until 2005, featured the work of 50 composers, the participation of more than 250 musicians and the premiere of over 300 new works. It was a tremendous outpouring of creative energy that resulted in more than 40 albums, countless national and international tours, residencies at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), an annual festival at the Jazz Standard in New York, collaborations with the 80-piece Jazz Sinfonica orchestra in Brazil and partnerships with the U.S. State Department, as well as lasting friendships and lots of great memories.

Last fall marked the 20th anniversary of our first concert, which got me thinking about those early years. Back then, I was itching to get my music career going, but was frustrated by the lack of opportunities to do so. There were some clubs where I might land a weekday set with my band, but too few to sustain any kind of momentum. I had been organizing a weekly session in the basement of a music school where I was teaching. The price of entry was an original piece of music. Someone might bring in a fully realized score, another a deck of cards and a concept. Those were some very experimental sessions. And I loved them.

As a kid, I listened to rock, ska, punk, blues and whatever else felt raw and had an edge. When I eventually discovered jazz as a teenager, I was drawn in by musicians who, to my ears, had a renegade spirit—Ornette, Mingus, Monk. These musicians taught me that jazz could and *should* be dangerous.

The sessions at the school allowed us to experiment without fear. We could bring in a crazy idea with the assurance that everyone would work hard on it. Sometimes the ideas would lead nowhere or epically fail. We'd just laugh and move on to the next one. Gradually, some amazing music started to emerge. We each had begun to find our voices as composers.

After a year or so, we decided to bring it all out of the basement. We rented a hall and presented our first concert in October 1992. We drafted a mission statement and published our first newsletter, which contained articles written by the composers about their music and processes. We put together a business plan, raised funds and filed for nonprofit status. In 1996 we moved our series over to the performance space at the New School University's Jazz and Contemporary Music Program, where we remained until we decided to dissolve the Collective in 2005. Simply put, we felt we had fulfilled its mission.

Our 20th anniversary festival at New York's Jazz Standard this fall marked a milestone. Over the course of six nights, we presented 11 bands. Among the compositions we premiered were five previously unknown Herbie Nichols tunes we recently uncovered. Given the state of the music industry today, the DIY ethos and collaborating to present jazz as ever-evolving music is more relevant than ever. **DB**

VISIT BEN ALLISON ONLINE AT BENALLISON.COM

Waclaw Zimpel (right) and Pawel Posteremczak

KRZYSZTOF PENIARSKI

Caught

Krakow Jazz Autumn Flexes Free-Jazz Muscles

As its moniker suggests, the scrappy, intimate Krakow Jazz Autumn festival stretches out over the entirety of fall, bringing together leading lights and rising voices in improvised music. For its seventh edition, there was a concentrated burst of activity in the middle of the season, with nine acts performing on Oct. 28–Nov. 1. The festival is the brainchild of Marek Winiarski, owner of the Not Two label, and it echoes both the emphasis on cutting-edge sounds released by the imprint, and a probing, aesthetic purity.

At the cozy, subterranean, brick-walled space of the Kazimierz café called Alchemia, the compactness of the room negated the need for a P.A. system. That situation allowed saxophonist Mats Gustafsson of The Thing to blow coruscating but groove-oriented tenor lines without amplification, and drummer Paal Nilssen-Love to deliver a blur of polyrhythm and visceral explosions in the most direct ways. The trio, which also includes bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, opened with an infectiously fierce two-set performance.

Slovenian percussionist Zlatko Kaucic assembled a picnic blanket filled with traditional and unconventional percussion devices and gave a solo performance as charming as it was virtuosic. Chicago drummer Tim Daisy played his own solo drum show, with each of his loosely constructed pieces dedicated to different inspirations; a trio set with Daisy and Ukrainian bassist Mark Tokar failed to take off due to a constraining diffidence in the playing of Krakow baritone saxophonist Paulina Owczarek.

At the Manggha Museum, German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann played galvanizing sets with the Turkish group Konstrukt and The Damage Is Done, his collective with multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee, drummer Michael Zerang and bassist Kent Kessler. Kessler returned the following night for a rare performance with DKV Trio, the visceral, free-blowing trio with drummer Hamid Drake and reedist Ken Vandermark, which has thankfully seen an uptick of activity of late; the set supported an extravagant box set of live performances just released by Not Two.

The true revelation of the festival, however, was the knockout set by Hera, a sextet led by Warsaw clarinetist Waclaw Zimpel—a member of Vandermark's Resonance Ensemble—which forged an utterly gripping, trance-inducing sound marked by a stunning ensemble approach. The set was billed as a collaboration with Drake—who merged easily yet forcefully with Hera's regular drummer Pawel Szpura, and who dominated one piece with gorgeous vocal chants and frame drum playing—but Hera certainly has the power and ingenuity to thrive on its own. The sextet's pieces draw heavily from international folk modes, layering slow-moving melodies traced in unison by Zimpel and fellow reedist Pawel Posteremczak over the hypnotic grooves meted out by Szpura and bassist Ksawery Wójcinski.

Equally vital to the group sound is the indefatigable electric guitar counterpoint meted out by Raphael Roginksi, a virtuoso of knotty accompaniment who drew inspiration from Jewish and Saharan music as much as jazz, while the remarkable hurdy-gurdy player Maciej Cierlinksi embellished his luxuriant drones and nasal harmonies with snaking melodic accents. Hera played a new strain of ecstatic music, building spiritual flurries from simple ostinato grooves that were an eastern European equivalent to Albert Ayler's late groups with violinist Michael Samson.

—Peter Margasak

Jason Kao Hwang Unleashes the Improvisors

In describing his work as a composer and bandleader on recordings that mix carefully notated passages with free playing, violinist Jason Kao Hwang says, "I'm trying to control the improvisers—I'm trying to unleash them so the music has the full benefit of their language, history and emotions."

A violin player since childhood, Hwang, 55, began listening to jazz in high school, but majored in film production at New York University. While in college, though, he met Leroy Jenkins, "and that pulled me in," he says—to the rich, spectral Downtown music scene in the late 1970s, where jazz, punk and No Wave artists mingled. Hwang also began to frequent the Basement Workshop, where the "identity movement" was at an early stage, with dancers and writers looking to Asian sources as a part of themselves that had been repressed by mainstream society.

Best known for performing and co-arranging the score for the Tony Award-winning musical *M Butterfly*, Hwang has appeared on numerous recordings, both as a leader and sideman, since the early 1980s, when he was a member of the avant-garde jazz quartet Commitment, featuring bassist William Parker and sax and flute player Will Connell Jr. Hwang's new CD, *Burning Bridge* (Innova), is a multifaceted and wholly absorbing reflection on his mother's life; the music draws on both Chinese and Western musical styles. It was recorded with the members of Edge (Taylor Ho Bynum on cornet and flugelhorn; Ken Filiano on bass; and Andrew Drury on drums), Hwang's regular band, plus Joseph Daley on tuba and Steve Swell on trombone, along with Sun Li on pipa and Wang Guowei on erhu, the Chinese two-stringed "spike fiddle."

With the support of Chamber Music America, Hwang has staged and recorded an opera, *The Floating Box*, and completed other projects as well. Presently, he is finishing two new recordings: a duo date with guitarist Ayman Fanous and an album from Local Lingo, another group Hwang leads that features Parker and saxophonist Joe McPhee.

Since 1989, Hwang and his wife have lived in Jersey City, N.J., where this interview took place in the basement music studio of his home there.


Jason Kao Hwang

JEAN-BAPTISTE GUILLEMIN

Did you grow up in a musical family?

My parents did not play music. They came to the United States from China in the 1940s. They listened to Chinese opera; we'd go as a family, and of course it was a strange experience to me. My parents took pleasure in speaking their native language (a Hunan dialect of Mandarin). Of course, when they wanted to discuss something that they didn't want their kids to understand, they would speak in Chinese. Chinese is very tonal and full of all kinds of musical inflections. I think that's my musical experience.

I think we construct our identities. I try to think about why I play the way I play or hear the way I hear. I examine my childhood and think that the only musical experience in the home was language. That's why on *Burning Bridge*, with the inclusion of Chinese instruments—again, in the construction of my identity—it's not an innate capacity to have a greater understanding of Chinese instruments than anyone else of any other race. Because of who I am and my history, I imagine those sounds have a particular meaning to my history. So, when I combine the sounds, it's almost like the vibration of that biography.

How much did the work of other violinists influence your own playing and musical direction?

I started listening to everybody—horn players, trumpet and trombone players. Of course, I listened to violinists. I played with Billy [Bang] and Leroy [Jenkins]—they were older than me, more mature and farther down in their journey. They had a strong sense of their individualism while I was budding. It's not that I play like them, but the possibilities of doing something individual was inspiring. Same with some of the great bass players I have worked with: William Parker, Reggie Workman and Butch Morris.

Your work certainly brings to mind similar progressive jazz avant-gardists, like Henry Threadgill and Butch Morris, both of whom you have worked with. Have they helped you in your own compositional or conceptual development?

I think so. They are both from a different generation than mine. But with Butch, I've played in all of his conductions and every one of his door gigs in New York until he started getting better gigs in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s. What he was trying to do in conducting improvisations definitely was a foundation for what I did on *Symphony Of Souls*. In his lexicon of hand cues, I used some of his and developed my own for the record. Others who work in conducting improvisations, like J.A. Dean and Adam Rudolph, have been a help to me as well. We have all been dealing with this issue of how to sculpt and control—or not control—the material, and how to create flow. I eventually found my own through it.

Henry, too—and Fred Hopkins, who I've also played with—they're powerful individuals to me. Henry's sound has a searing, angular intensity that is soulful and inspiring. His compositions are uniquely personal, and fun to play. He has a steely determination, and a lot of people feed off that strength.

In the liner notes of your 2010 Spontaneous River recording, *Symphony Of Souls*, where you lead a 35-member strong orchestra, you talk about framing "improvisations within an improvised structure."

When people think about improvisation without notation, they think "chaos." This, though, is the art of improvisation. If I ask the violins and violas to sustain a chord, now there will be a color, and someone may hear the B flat diminished or E minor flat 5, and someone else may improvise over that and play another harmonic suspension above it, but they have to hear that—and that's where their skill comes to bear. Although the improvisation is a way to unleash this force, the layer of interpretation is gone and they are feeling in the moment as fully as they can.

Your compositions typically feature sections of formal written notation and sections of improvisations. What brought you to this exploratory realm of musical performance and composition?

Everyone in the band is very creative and a composer themselves. When they are given this free space, they are mindful of the composition and the motifs that were played before or the rhythms that were outlined, so when they depart from them, the music will launch them into directions I can't imagine. That's what is exciting: the process of mutual discovery, even though the identity of the composition is always there.

—Tom Staudter


Jane Bunnett

ATEAL WEISSMAN

Bunnett Summons Havana Spirits

Jane Bunnett's saxophones and flutes are extensions of her slender frame, but her musical notes and melodies are larger than life itself. On Oct. 20 at Toronto's Koerner Hall, Bunnett offered the joyful noise of Cuban mambo and bolero plied into the dramaturgy of jazz idiomatic musicology. Bunnett and Larry Cramer, her husband and trumpet-playing producer, have reconstituted her band, The Spirits Of Havana. She presented music with two legendary pianists and one budding one: Chucho Valdés, Hilario Durán and David Virelles, who was positively aglow on Silvio Rodriguez's "Rabo De Nube."

Bunnett, with her flair for the theatrical, introduced Valdés to the audience in the majestic venue. Before launching into the first chart, she opened an innocuous box sitting under a Steinway grand, revealing a Grammy statuette that Valdés won for his exquisite 1979 record, *Live In Newport*, but was never allowed to leave Cuba to receive. The award was held in his honor by EMI Canada and Bunnett for 33 years, but would now go home with Valdés.

Valdés' long fingers caressed the notes of the piano as he launched into a sublime version of his classic "Mambo Influenciado." Durán and the ensemble joined him in a celebration of the song's magnificent rhythm. Here Valdés demonstrated his enormous reach and a classical touch that was interspersed with percussive passages. Durán, who engaged in conversation with Valdés, is not to be outdone. As in the proverbial and friendly cutting contest, Durán threw fireballs back at Valdés, with his own dramatic arpeggios and fiery runs.

One highlight was when Bunnett played a "trompeta-china," a 19th-century Chinese cornet, in the second set, leading a fabulous new Cuban-Canadian vocal and percussion folkloric group, Iyá Iré, on to the stage. The ecstatic abandon of this music gave rise to "Comparsa De Los Hoyos" and "Guararey De Pastora," a *changüi* song written by legendary tresero Roberto Baute Sagarra. The aching beauty of this music left the gracious audience gasping. —*Raul da Gama*

Laurence Hobgood
Stepping Out

Last spring, Laurence Hobgood—a pianist and composer best known for his ongoing 18-year stint as the musical director for singer Kurt Elling—could not be blamed if he was a bit out of breath.

Hobgood had just wrapped a headlining tour of original music with his trio, bolstered by tenor saxophonist Ernie Watts. In April, the pianist traveled to Los Angeles to perform material he had written for a jazz tribute to Jimi Hendrix. Then, after playing his arrangements for Elling's tribute concerts to Frank Sinatra in a string of dates, Hobgood went into the studio to record Elling's album *1619 Broadway: The Brill Building Project* (Concord). In one five-week period, Hobgood estimates that he composed more than 125 pages of music and arrangements.

Even with that growth of activity, Hobgood's primary job has been making someone else's music. His partnership with Elling—one of the most significant pairings in modern jazz—is a gig he cherishes, but it means he hasn't historically had much of a jazz identity of his own. A mix of increased opportunities and newfound successes has the pianist slowly inching toward the front of the stage.

"I'm not sure how many artists there are out there like Kurt, who have a regular collaborator to the extent that the person is starting to have a little name recognition themselves," Hobgood says. "I'm in a unique position because on one hand, I'm not known as a leader, but on the other hand, I'm associated with a quality artist. So that's a wonderful thing."


JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

Hobgood's busy schedule includes promoting *POEMJAZZ* (Circumstantial), a collaboration with former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky. The disc is a hat-tip to bohemian poetry happenings, with Hobgood improvising as Pinsky reads 14 poems. The work is intimate and approachable; the solo piano music feels tailor-made for Pinsky's articulate phrasing.

Hobgood and Pinsky have been giving live performances whenever there's a spare moment; the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) conference in March in Boston is one of their biggest performances yet. But Hobgood will be touring in Europe with Elling at the time, so the pianist will fly back Stateside for the conference and then make a quick turnaround in order to miss as few of the vocalist's concerts as possible.

Hobgood first met Elling in the early 1990s at Chicago's Green Mill jazz club. The singer was sitting in with the house band, and he remembers being "knocked out" by Hobgood's playing. Through the years, that aesthetic has helped define Elling as an artist.

"The sound you hear on a Kurt Elling record is, of course, my voice, but is, in my mind, Laurence Hobgood's orchestral sense and his ability and his gift," Elling says. "It's a pleasure, entirely, to sing his arrangements. Night after night, it makes it possible for me to be as inventive-seeming as I am."

This creativity actually spawned *POEMJAZZ*. When performing with Elling, Hobgood frequently accompanies the singer's spoken-word introductions to tunes. Elling says he can give Hobgood a vague direction for one of these stories, and eight times out of 10 it will be exactly what he wanted. In fact, the accompaniment will probably be something Elling has never heard before.

"That's a very interesting and peculiar gift to have," Elling says. "It's improvisation as composition, just as much as it is improvisation as accompaniment."

In between his performances with Elling, who has a busy 2013 schedule, Hobgood plans to pursue new projects. The pianist has been thinking of bringing the jazz trio format, and perhaps his experience writing for string quartet, to Appalachian folk music. Hobgood plans to continue the *POEMJAZZ* concept as well; he and Pinsky have talked about keeping the thread going by recording actual compositions for the poems, not simply improvisations.

The future looks very bright for this busy pianist. Hobgood has been approached by violinist Regina Carter and a few vocalists about writing arrangements for upcoming recordings. Working on material for different artists is still somewhat new. Hobgood previously felt that other musicians saw him as fitting into a certain aesthetic, and that he might only be able to write in an Elling-like fashion. But he can't really blame people for making assumptions. Touring with Elling is how Hobgood honed his approach to jazz, and that lengthy musical and personal friendship is likely to lead to wider recognition as a bandleader. —*Jon Ross*

Magnus Lindgren
Everything Combined

Every time you turn around, the multi-talented Magnus Lindgren is doing something else, somewhere else. The reedist's diverse discography includes the big-band outing *Paradise Open* (2001); the head-turning CD/DVD release *Music For The Neighbours* (2005), with a jazz quartet and symphony orchestra; *Batucada Jazz* (2009), recorded in Rio de Janeiro with top-name Brazilian players; and his new, highly charged quartet date, *Fyra* (Gazell), featuring bassist Palle Danielsson.

Sitting backstage during the 2012 Stockholm Jazz Festival, Lindgren is eager to discuss his recordings. "The idea to make *Music For The Neighbours* came after I wrote and performed three pieces at the Nobel banquet in 2003," he says, referring to a first-ever request for jazz from the famed institution. "We decided to make it with the Malmö Opera Orchestra, my quartet and Rigmor Gustafsson on lyric vocal, with Hans Ek conducting. We had one concert in the Stockholm Concert Hall, where it was recorded and filmed by Swedish radio and broadcast to many European countries."

Referring to a November performance, Lindgren adds, "I made arrangements for a concert at the Berliner Philharmonie in Berlin." Unlike the recording, though, he says, "I was not playing myself, only arranging. It's one of my biggest passions to arrange or compose for classical ensembles with jazz." (In late 2012, he would be in Munich, playing with trumpeter Till Bronner, while, away from the stage, composing large-scale material, this time about his hometown of Västerås, the music titled *Black River*.)

"My father was a musician," Lindgren explains. "For many years, he had a dance band. And, parallel to the dance band, he had a music store. So, between [ages] 10 and 14, I had the chance to borrow instruments from his store. And I played in his band. It was a dream. I started on guitar when I was 6. But interest faded out, and when I was 11, I started with drums; at 12, my dad showed me the album with The Buddy Rich Big Band, *Mercy, Mercy*. The drumming and that big band sound—I played it over and over again. I was playing the drums, and then I borrowed the tenor sax from the shop, and I started to learn that melody. That was a door.

"Drums, piano, bass and guitar," he notes. "But suddenly, I thought the saxophone had everything combined. With the drums, there were no notes, of course, and with the piano there were too *many* notes. So, for me, it was like the best of every world. Also, my father had great saxophone players in his band who inspired me."

When Lindgren was 17, his parents divorced and a "black hole" opened up for him—one that was filled, to a large extent, by his moving to Stockholm and entering a new world of music. "Every person I saw was like a new role model," he remembers. He found himself gigging a lot, and within the first year was performing with Herbie Hancock at the Stockholm Jazz Festival, eventually touring with him in 1994 for a week in a Swedish band.

At Stockholm's Royal Academy, he worked hard with saxophone teachers and arranging/composing teachers, and he learned how to play flute and clarinet. Plus, he was gigging. After completing his studies, the offers started coming in, with Lindgren joining, among others, the Stockholm Jazz Orchestra. At age 23 he formed his first big band, and then went on to win the prestigious Jazz In Sweden award. That led to his first CD, 1999's *Way Out*, written for rhythm section, French horn, two trumpets and trombone. By 2000, he had performed at Carnegie Hall.

With his other albums being, as he puts it, "so complicated," the straightahead, two-days-in-the-studio *Fyra* was "pure joy" in the making, with Lindgren playing tenor saxophone, clarinet and flute. Having first worked together in 1999, Lindgren's connection with Danielsson is now an occasional one.

Talking about that initial contact, Danielsson remembers, "It was very nice to hear Magnus. He was so natural despite his young age. He has a beautiful sound, no matter the instrument he's playing."

—John Ephland

Armand Sabal-Lecco

Science and the Soul

Bassist Armand Sabal-Lecco is not just a purveyor of jazz: He's a cultural ambassador.

DownBeat caught up with Sabal-Lecco in June 2012 at the Brazilian beach destination Rio Das Ostras, hours before he performed at the town's namesake jazz and blues festival. He was there to promote his leader debut, *Positive Army* (Pantuma Track). To illustrate a point, he drew a map of Africa in the dirt, gesturing toward his birthplace of Cameroon.

"Anthropologists don't talk about Cameroon or Mali," he said. "They refer to the country by its ethnic groups. The borders are the scars of history."

Sabal-Lecco projected a commanding authority and comforting humility as he navigated the map's topography. It's his simultaneous grasp of—and openness to—concepts that makes him an in-demand session bassist. Among the world-class artists with whom he's collaborated are Paul Simon, The Brecker Brothers, and fellow bassists John Patitucci and Stanley Clarke.

Now, as a leader, Sabal-Lecco has become jazz's diligent anthropologist—rejecting the concept of genre borders in favor of an all-out cultural immersion.

"I grew up mixing musics and cultures," said Sabal-Lecco, the son of diplomat Félix Sabal-Lecco and a speaker of five languages, many of which he featured on the new album. "I don't amputate myself with styles. To stick to a style is musical racism and prejudice." Ironically, Sabal-Lecco did not readily incorporate African beats into his repertory until his relocation to Europe. (He's currently based in Barcelona.)

Positive Army not only reflects Sabal-Lecco's optimistic state of mind; it also fuses his rich upbringing with his lifelong musical odyssey. The amalgamation of European and African techniques coexists alongside a thoughtful blend of indigenous practices and contemporary concepts in the studio.

"I really wanted it to feel as organic as when the inspiration comes," Sabal-Lecco said. "But later, I had to dress it up and make it all work together. That's where the production and more of the architecture came in."

On "Maliwood"—the tile of which alludes to the commercialization of West African music—the bassist combines Western melodic lines and hooks with African rhythms. The disc's first two tracks, "Ali" and "Gizga," intertwine effervescent synth tones and quick-stepping drum 'n' bass with traditional instrumentation (whale calls, kora and bouzouki), funk undertones and unorthodox time signatures. His ensemble is equally diverse: Spanish multi-instrumentalist Gorka Benítez, French keyboardist Jean-Phillippe Rykiel, Cuban percussionist Walfredo Reyes and musicians from Africa and South America. "I wanted to do a United Nations of sorts," he joked. And all of it is propelled by Sabal-Lecco's multifaceted ability to slap, fingerstyle and percuss his way into any mix.

"The more you get into the album, the more intricate it becomes," he said.

Collaborating with Simon—who gave the bassist a big break by hiring him to play on the 1990 album *Rhythm Of The Saints*—was one of the key experiences that has shaped his approach to style and composition. "We spent hours traveling, listening to stuff," Sabal-Lecco said. "It really opened my mind and my heart to some of what he does and his world of understanding jazz. Watching him put that together was amazing because he showed me the balance of science and the soul."

On the new album, Sabal-Lecco embraces various concepts of the African diaspora and religion with care, but he leaves windows open for his fellow musicians to contribute. "I muted things to open up the creativity," said Sabal-Lecco, who sent incomplete tracks to the musicians, inviting them to simply play what they felt. "It was about the flow of inspiration, rather than going with a plan. You kill the muse if you start to think too much." *—Hilary Brown*

Caroline Davis

Psychological Advantage

When Caroline Davis played the 2012 Chicago Jazz Festival, she had to compete with some outside elements. A big band on a nearby stage bled intrusively into her quartet's performance area. Then, as raindrops started to fall, the sound team began draping tarps over the mixing board and speakers. But the show went on, with Davis' dark-toned alto saxophone gently spinning pensive melodic lines, her rhythm section providing subtle, understated support.

Davis has been on Chicago's music scene since 2004, when she began work on a Ph.D. in Music Cognition at Northwestern University. "I'm interested in how people hear music and what associations are formed in their minds," said Davis, who studied jazz and psychology at University of Texas–Arlington. "When you play with a group of people on a consistent basis, they all tend to form the same associations. I'm fascinated with that aspect of musician life—how people constantly shift in and out of these circles, and what that does to your mental state."

Davis herself has shifted among various camps, fitting in with straightahead players and "out" cats alike, many of whom she interviewed for her dissertation. She met her quartet's guitarist, Mike Allemana, and bassist Matt Ferguson—both featured on her new album, *Live Work & Play* (Ears & Eyes Records), along with drummer Jeremy Cunningham—at jam sessions led by the late saxophonist Von Freeman. She has played in the free improvising trio Pedway and with the reggae/r&b outfit Fatbook. Her years in the Windy City have been mind-expanding.

Another learning experience for Davis has been her time spent at the Litchfield Jazz Camp in Connecticut, which she first attended 10 years ago, and where she's now a junior faculty member. Her teaching style stems directly from her psychology background: "I play certain tonalities, or certain sequences, and I ask my students, 'What are you hearing?' Afterward I teach them what we call these things. I try to come at it from a bottom-up approach."

Davis took a similar approach in learning how to improvise, having studied theory in college but never applying it until she started gigging. "I think it's better to listen to the records, play along with them and then try to determine what it is posthumously," she said. "You take your mind out of it, and I find the more I try to do that, the better I play." *—Ed Enright*


MICHAEL JACKSON

Dave Brubeck at home, 2007

The Amazing Life & Times of DAVE BRUBECK

By John McDonough /// Photo by Jimmy Katz

On Dec. 5, a grim-looking George Wein, 87, sat in a TV studio, gathered his thoughts, and performed a familiar duty.

"You go back a long way with Dave Brubeck," said "PBS News Hour" broadcaster Jeffrey Brown. "I gather he was playing until very recently, even for you."

Brubeck had died earlier that day from heart failure in woodsy Norwalk, Conn.—a day before his 92nd birthday and hours before he was nominated for a Grammy Award (for Best Instrumental Composition, for Music Of Ansel Adams: America, *written with his son Chris). Once again, Wein was the man being asked to serve as eulogist and coin a coda to a legendary jazz career.*

"Very sad," Wein said. "Dave was at [the Newport Jazz Festival] in 2011. His sons were playing and Dave came, hoping to play with [them]. We met in the car and I had got a call that Dave wasn't feeling well. We sat there for 20 minutes and just talked—about anything. And he said, 'George, if I can't play up to the standards that I believe in, then I can't play. So I'm not going to play anymore.' I think that was the end as far as his [performing] career." (That fall Brubeck did appear at the Blue Note in New York, but the Newport incident was an indication that his days as a concert performer were coming to a close.)

There's nothing tragic, of course, about a man who dies after a career of more than seven decades rich in family, fame and fortune. But Wein could be forgiven for his sense of passage as he reflected on the dimming of one of the brightest musical lights of his generation. He had been there when the lights started to go on 60 years earlier.

It was 1952. Brubeck had risen to place a respectable fourth that year in the Piano category in the DownBeat Readers Poll. But he was still largely unknown to America. Many of his 276 DownBeat votes had come from the San Francisco Bay Area, where he had become a local favorite at clubs like the Geary Cellar, the Black Hawk and the Burma Lounge in Oakland. What national reputation he'd achieved had leaked out through a series of singles his trio and quartet had made for Fantasy Records, also based in San Francisco, and a couple of New York dates in 1951.

Late in 1952 the quartet was booked into the Blue Note in Philadelphia and Birdland in New York with four dead weeks in between. Brubeck's agent called Wein, whose Storyville had become an important jazz club in Boston, and offered him a bargain price. The Brubeck Quartet with Paul Desmond on alto saxophone settled into Boston in late September and through October for a princely $800 a week, out of which Brubeck had pay for hotel rooms, transportation costs and even his agent's commission.

Wein was more confounded by the musicians than their modernity. Brubeck and Desmond wore horn-rimmed glasses, dressed alike, and had similar builds and sloping foreheads. "For the first few nights," Wein later wrote, "I couldn't tell them apart." Charlie Bourgeois, Wein's elegant friend and publicist, recorded the group at Storyville in October, producing its first live album (*Jazz At Storyville*) for Fantasy. "When the group started to play," Wein recalled in his memoir *Myself Among Others*, "their sound created a musical alchemy that everyone could feel … . Word quickly got around. After three or four nights … the club was filled."

Brubeck's music could be light, airy and spacious; then dense and percussive with heavy, 10-finger boulders. He and Desmond wrapped around one another in delicate dialogs of counterpoint. If the manner was modern, however, the material was largely traditional. Most of the quartet's Fantasy and early Columbia albums offered familiar standards that general audiences found hospitable.

By the time the quartet left Boston, as Ben Ratliff wrote in the Dec. 5, 2012, New York Times, it "had become one of jazz's greatest combinations." Within three years, Wein would bring Brubeck to the second Newport Jazz Festival in 1955. In the years ahead, he would play Newport more than any other performer in music.

David Warren Brubeck, who was born Dec. 6, 1920, was arguably the only young, postwar jazz instrumentalist to achieve major popular stardom in the 1950s and hold his headliner rank in major venues well into the 21st century. Because longevity alone doesn't guarantee an audience, this makes him unique in the jazz world, notwithstanding the later successes of Stan Getz, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and even Miles Davis, who never had a smash hit like "Take Five" that he could point to.

As popular music figures go, Brubeck achieved first-stage fame relatively late, in his early 30s. It didn't come overnight in one bold stroke of destiny. But still, it gathered swiftly enough in 1953 and 1954, once he graduated from the Fantasy Records boutique of San Francisco to the national marketing engine that was Columbia Records. The label quickly certified Brubeck's celebrity quotient by engineering his famous Time magazine cover in November 1954. To millions who rarely listened to jazz, Time made him the personification of everything that was modern about modern jazz. To some of those who did listen, it made him suspect, if not guilty by association with Time's cartoonish prose—"a wigging cat with a far out


MICHAEL WEINTROB

George Wein with Brubeck at the 2009 CareFusion Jazz Festival in Newport, R.I.

wail." Once those embarrassments had passed, Brubeck found himself secure in a fame that would be remarkable in its perpetual stability, right down to the page-one New York Times obituary at the end and the quartet's number-one position in the 2012 DownBeat Readers Poll. He may have been the last jazz musician in the world whom *everybody* knew and liked.

That first decade at Columbia provided an enormous thrust that would build and sustain the Brubeck brand. It became so deeply rooted in the American experience of the '50s and '60s that its momentum would carry him for decades largely on the sheer power of reputation and nostalgia. This was a rare phenomenon for a jazz musician in the '50s, long after the swing era had lost its authority to invest lifelong stardom on jazz artists like Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and others. Brubeck continued composing, creating and recording, of course. But his constant flow of new work seemed more a personal quest of his own private artistry. The many Concord and Telarc recordings, fine as they were, did not materially affect his late-career popular profile. They merely reaffirmed its active status.

Few jazz musicians are lucky enough to produce a work that they absolutely *must* perform every night. Brubeck was blessed with Paul Desmond's composition "Take Five." Any time he wished, he had only to start hammering out that famous vamp and a roar of recognition would roll across the house in a wave of Pavlovian thunder. I witnessed it many times, and it continued long after the alto chair had passed from Desmond to his proxy, the excellent Bobby Militello. Who could possibly tire of that, I always wondered. For 50 years, that song—along with "Blue Rondo À La Turk," "The Duke" and a few others—were the familiar calling cards that gave Brubeck perpetual permission to present any new music he might wish, and the people would readily listen. They might not love it, absorb it or relate to it. But they would give it their attention because it was Brubeck.

Jazz is typically slow to metabolize in the system. "The Duke," which originated on the 1954 album *Red, Hot And Cool*, crept up on the world in slow, tiny steps until finally, without ever becoming a hit, it was familiar to everyone. Even "Take Five" had a long fuse. Brubeck began performing it in his concerts in 1958 and first recorded it at the Monterey Festival that summer. This was a nearly year before he made it for the *Time Out* album in July 1959. The LP was issued in January, but Columbia was slow to gauge its potential, even after several disc jockeys began converging on "Take Five" as a likely breakout hit. Finally, in June 1961 it was released as a single and became a familiar theme that summer, even though it never charted higher than No. 27. *Time Out* would become one of the classic, groundbreaking albums of the genre, not only because of its use of unusual time signatures, but also because it was the first jazz LP to sell over 1 million copies.

Brubeck had been prepared for stardom by a mother who immersed him in music in the rural isolation of the California wine country east of San Francisco. The rural life extended to high school in Ione, Calif., where his father managed a huge cattle ranch. He studied veterinary medicine briefly in college, and then switched to music before enlisting in the

BILLY COBHAM IS

OBSESSED

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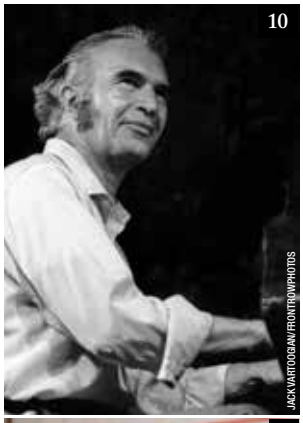
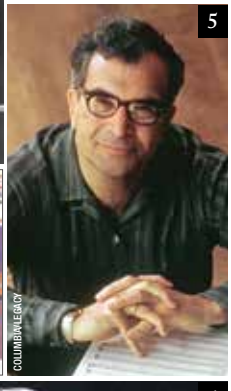
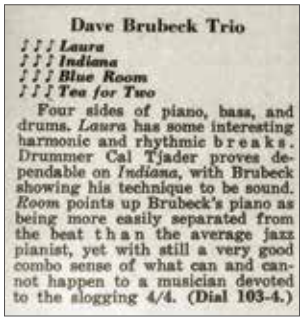




(1) The pianist's fleet fingers in flight. **(2)** The composer checks over his work. **(3)** The Dave Brubeck Quartet with (standing, from left) alto saxophonist Bobby Militello, bassist Michael Moore and drummer Randy Jones. **(4)** Cannes, France, 1978. **(5)** Brubeck poses with his music manuscripts. **(6)** A joyful moment from 2003. **(7)** Several of Brubeck's children grew up to be professional musicians. **(8)** Brubeck enlisted in the U.S. Army and led a service band during World War II. **(9)** The Kennedy Center Honors gala in 2009. **(10)** Onstage in 1970. **(11)** The "classic" Dave Brubeck Quartet included, from left, drummer Joe Morello, bassist Eugene Wright and alto saxophonist Paul Desmond. This lineup recorded **(12)** *Time Out*, the first jazz LP to sell 1 million copies.

Army in 1943. Around that time, he first met Desmond in a brief but otherwise unnoted encounter in an Army band that played at Camp Haan in Southern California. After World War II, Brubeck attended Mills College in Oakland on the G.I. Bill and studied with the French modernist composer Darius Milhaud. At the time, Brubeck's ambition was to become a classical composer. But Milhaud, whose own favorites included Ellington and Gershwin, encouraged him to follow his jazz instincts and be inclusive. "I still follow his advice," Brubeck told "Fresh Air" radio host Terry Gross in 1999.

Milhaud's classical fingerprints were evident on some of Brubeck's early work with a low-key octet, whose soft, pillowy harmonies prefigured Miles Davis' cool nonets to come and the "Third Stream" divertimenti after that. The Jazz Workshop Ensemble was mostly a Saturday rehearsal group made up of Milhaud's students. But it began to build a local audience for Brubeck in the Bay Area. In 1949, the DJ Jimmy Lyons installed the Brubeck trio on his KNBC radio show, "Lyons Busy." His music was self-consciously alternative, as distinct from older swing and Dixieland styles as it was from the omnipresent modernism of bebop that everyone was arguing about. Its restrained manner suggested a serious, methodical search for new paths. Brubeck, who was also teaching a jazz survey course at the University of California, emitted a sense of erudition and scholarship that was quietly outlining a new alternative hipness in jazz, one that suggested the legitimacy of a finer art, not just "jazz."



Dave Brubeck Trio

♪♪♪ *Laura*
♪♪♪ *Indiana*
♪♪♪ *Blue Room*
♪♪♪ *Tea for Two*

Four sides of piano, bass, and drums. *Laura* has some interesting harmonic and rhythmic breaks. Drummer Cal Tjader proves dependable on *Indiana*, with Brubeck showing his technique to be sound. *Room* points up Brubeck's piano as being more easily separated from the beat than the average jazz pianist, yet with still a very good combo sense of what can and cannot happen to a musician devoted to the slogging 4/4. (Dial 103-4.)

The Dave Brubeck Trio's first DownBeat record review, Jan. 27, 1950

An early Brubeck Quartet LP on Fantasy

Not everyone was convinced. DownBeat's renaissance man in San Francisco, the esteemed Ralph J. Gleason, had little esteem for Brubeck. "For fervid lovers of the 'where jazz is wending' school," he wrote with a condescending sneer in January 1950, "there is the Dave Brubeck trio … . The group does not swing and is, frankly, entirely too earnest for these ears. [But] to those who like him, Brubeck is God [and] extremely popular with the crew-cut set." Clearly not one of the "crew-cut set" himself, Gleason was put off by the high seriousness that the select few found compelling.

Brubeck recorded four trio singles in September 1949 for a local label soon to become Fantasy. In January DownBeat gave them three out of four "notes," the rating system that preceded the stars. By then Paul Desmond had returned to San Francisco and fallen in with Brubeck's posse of young modernists. "I went down and sat in," he told Marian McPartland in a 1960 DownBeat profile, "and the musical rapport was very evident and kind of scary." More than a year went by before Desmond made the trio a quartet. It debuted at the Black Hawk on July 2, 1951, and would continue, with various changes in the rhythm section (bassist Eugene Wright arrived early in 1958), until December 26, 1967.

Desmond's impact was not lost on the leader. His light, powdery alto swung with a blithe and clever grace. He gave the group a voice and Brubeck a foil. Both clicked. "I don't know what's happened," an astonished Brubeck told DownBeat in October 1951, "but they seem to like us. They actually applaud after every number. We even get requests. It's amazing." The quartet made its first records that August and was off to the races.

It's important to understand that Brubeck and Desmond were not unique voices in a solitary bohemian abyss. The jazz underground was actually crowded with young players, many of similar style and tranquil temperament: Lee Konitz, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Warne Marsh, Shorty Rogers, Stan Getz, Lennie Tristano and more. They were all of a piece. Their music was driven by intelligence, not passion—or, more precisely, a passion for

Brubeck in His Own Words

Few artists in jazz have been more closely associated with DownBeat than pianist Dave Brubeck. Below is a selection of Brubeck's writing and quotations that have appeared in the pages of DownBeat over the decades.

In the Feb. 10, 1950, issue Brubeck wrote: "Jazz has taken into itself characteristics of almost every type of folk music which can be heard in America. It absorbs national and artistic influences, synthesizes them so that they come out in the jazz idiom and no longer typify just New Orleans, the South, the Negro or the Italian street song which may have inspired it—but American music."

"Since we're constantly improvising, a critic should spend, say, 30 nights in a row seeing us in a club. I know that's impossible. But fans do it, night after night. And that's the only way the critics could get a thorough idea of what we're doing … ."
(Aug. 10, 1955)

"When I learned something, I could use it that day or that night. … The reaction has gone on ever since I was a kid: *What the hell is he doing*? And it's a common experience for me. I was always experimenting on the job. Most musicians don't like that. … And from the beginning, I've always tried to superimpose on the known and what's going on around me. And when I started using polytonality in jazz (some people say I used it before I heard of [Darius] Milhaud—*I* think that maybe I was influenced by Milhaud), I always figured you weren't stepping on the other musicians' toes if you were superimposing something that wouldn't clash—either polyrhythmic or polytonal. That's really been the styles you could identify me with. And it started, I would say, when I was 18 years old. Fundamentally, it's the style I'm using now."
(Aug. 8, 1957)

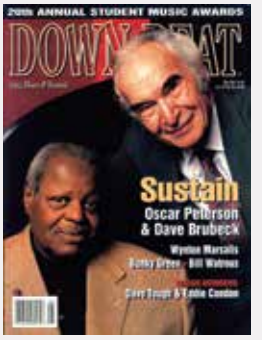
"The problem is to swing *and* create. The piano men who swing the most are usually the ones who don't play creatively, compose, experiment, or try to understand the scope of jazz. In their self-imposed technical trap they crystallize, and, on the altar of swing, sacrifice their future creative ability in order to gain a perfection of performance. I admire this type of instrumentalist, but he isn't my idea of a complete musician."
(June 22, 1961)

"A man has to have a screaming compulsion and need to get something down; he must have certain doubts about whether he's up to it. There have been times where I've said to myself, 'No, I can't do this.' You need this stimulus. I have a feeling when I listen to Gil Evans, for instance, that he suffers through each note before it goes down on the paper."
(June 30, 1966)

"Some of the most beautiful things I heard were when a guy knew he had eight bars to do it, or one chorus. My favorite records are still the 3-minute things; you bought the record just to hear one guy play eight bars and really make it."
(May 25, 1972)

"At times a drummer can explode behind you in a fill, when you are taking a musical breath, and help you do something bigger. But nine times out of 10 they will destroy where you are going. Then you go their way for a while, trying to get the line back, recovering. I hate the idea of recovering. I don't think any soloist should have to recover from anyone else. A soloist is leading the way and the rest are all supportive. He should predominate, his ideas, his mood and emotion has to be sensed by everyone else."
(March 25, 1976)

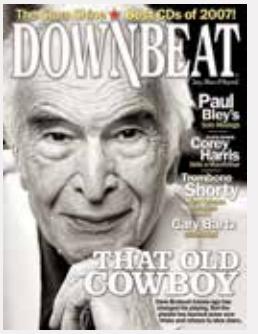
"There were times in my career when I couldn't feed my family or pay my band that the idea of returning to that ranch sounded awfully good to me."
(December 1994)



"I remember the first time I went to hear Art Tatum. I think it was called The Streets of Paris in Hollywood. I was the only person in the club, and the bartender. And here's the greatest player in the history of jazz. And there's nobody there." *(May 1997)*

In the February 2001 issue, Brubeck wrote: "In its most pure form, jazz is being saved by the very institutions that condemned it 50 years ago."

"I wouldn't play unless it was integrated. We canceled a lot of dates, and we integrated a lot of schools by just refusing to play until they allowed us all to play. Eugene Wright would be the first black who performed with the group. It was before basketball and football players were integrating schools. The quartet integrated a lot of schools, and it wasn't just the South. There were plenty of places that had segregation in the North."
(September 2003)



"Hardly a week goes by that I don't lose an old friend, or somebody close to me is having a heart attack. I couldn't tell you how many great pianists are having physical problems—guys who I've admired my whole life. What's happening to us? We've always been strong and could take a lot—a lot of hard life, and bounce back and go the next day. I can't accept it. I can't accept that I'm not strong. So you play a little differently when you're not as strong as you used to be."
(January 2008)

"I just wrote a new arrangement today. And it made me laugh when I played it because it made so much sense and had so much surprise in it. I figured, well, I'm not through yet. You wonder if you can keep up the pace you've set for yourself. And I didn't think I could until today. Son of a gun, I thought, everything's going right."
(December 2010) **DB**

intelligence. The music cultivated an air of serene indifference and did not overtly solicit public favor. The common sensibility was a cool, spacious, California modernity whose passive emotional fiber was mirrored on the literary side by the Beat writers and poets.

Both were responses to the times. If '30s modern was a futuristic Art Deco fantasy of the imagination, '50s modern was a here-and-now, Formica-and-fiberglass reality one actually could move into for no money down. As economics answers to its "invisible hand," art also responds to a hidden spirit that brings collective unity to individual choices. This is why music, architecture, literature, graphics, film, design and other arts all quietly speak to each other subliminally to produce a coherent period culture. It is why the dry, pastel textures of West Coast Cool both reflected and observed the civility of consensus and conformity that was a part of America in the 1950s.

Brubeck may have been the last jazz musician in the world whom everybody *knew and liked.*

Why, then, did Brubeck become its ambassador-and-chief to the wider world? In two words, it was Columbia Records. George Avakian, the courtly head of the label's pop album division, was eager to reestablish the company's jazz roster to its prewar glory. If it was modernity he wanted, Avakian had many choices: Mulligan, Getz, Rogers or any one of the new contemporary cool-meisters. But Brubeck offered some singular advantages. First, he had a road-tested working group. Second, the musicians didn't have any drug problems; Avakian wanted no junkies. Third, Brubeck had an open and welcoming personality. (Hiring Wright, who was African American, illustrated Brubeck's egalitarianism during the early days of the civil rights movement.) Fourth, he had let it be known that he wanted to make a move from the Fantasy farm system.

Avakian signed him at the Black Hawk early in 1954. Brubeck asked for a $6,000 advance on his future 5 percent royalties in order to pay off his house. He not only got his $6,000, but the services of Columbia's marketing factory and its dynamic publicist Deborah Ishlon, who immediately went to work on Time magazine. From then on, Brubeck no longer belonged to the San Francisco cellar set, the inner councils of the jazz world, or to the critics, who felt cuckolded by his sudden notoriety. "They resented my popularity," he told me in 2010. "They often put down my lifestyle. It wasn't like a jazz musician's lifestyle." Perhaps it wasn't, but he was a jazz musician who now belonged to the world.

Brubeck would remain with Columbia for 17 years and then migrate to Atlantic (1971–'74), Horizon, Concord (1979–'87), MusicMasters (until 1992) and finally Telarc. He worked with Mulligan for five years, then with his sons. He returned to the quartet format with Militello, who came from the Maynard Ferguson band. Militello's muscular brawn cut Brubeck's ties to '50s cool, but he never escaped—or resented—the shadow of Desmond that persisted. "Forever the Brubeck Quartet is with Paul Desmond," Militello told me in 2010. "He was the star. It doesn't diminish anything Dave has accomplished to say that there isn't anyone who wouldn't get compared to what the group was with Paul. And God bless 'em, they should. I'm good with that."

The last time I saw Brubeck was in June 2011. It was a Father's Day concert with his sons. As if to complete a circle, it was on the same stage on which I'd first seen him as an eighth-grader in 1956: Ravinia Park near Chicago. He looked thin but eager as he was helped onto the stage by sons Chris and Dan. But the evening had the character of a valedictory—which now it has become. After the rousing finale, "Take Five," Brubeck remained onstage alone for a final solo encore. It was Brahms' "Lullaby." Like the best goodbyes, it was brief, to the point, and final. **DB**

GARY CLARK JR.

'I'M NOT SCARED OF THE BLUES POLICE'

By Shaun Brady /// Photography by Frank Maddocks

It's hardly controversial to declare, as Gary Clark Jr. does, that blues is "the foundation of American music."

What's considerably less common is the abandon with which Clark explores the hallways of the building that's constructed upon that foundation. Where many an "authentic" bluesman takes pride in lingering in the basement, Clark hops straight into the elevator, punching the button for every floor.

Blak And Blu, Clark's full-length debut album for Warner Bros., boasts several moments that induce listeners to reach for their iPods in surprise, just to double-check they haven't inadvertently hit "Shuffle." After the Stax grooves of "Ain't Messin' 'Round" and the Stevie Ray Vaughan-esque lament "When My Train Pulls In" establish his blues bona fides, Clark suddenly transforms into a soul crooner in the D'Angelo mode on the title tune.

The cautionary tale of "Bright Lights" would have the denizens of any Chicago blues club nodding in approval, but the abrupt shifts into the rockabilly rave-up "Travis County" and especially the laid-back Sublime vibe of "The Life" might induce whiplash in those same patrons.

The eclecticism of *Blak And Blu* is fully by design, according to Clark. "Basically, I wanted to come out of the gate with an album that went in all of the directions I wanted to go," he says. "I wanted to be an all-around artist rather than just coming out with a blues record or a rock record or a soul record. So I put my takes on all of them on one album."

Of course, in today's musical environment it would be impossible for any 28-year-old, even a Texas native like Clark, to have been raised on a sonic diet solely consisting of the blues. Outside of the aging British rockers who re-imported the music to America for popular consumption, blues rarely enters the consciousness of the modern audience. When it does, it's often in the form of history lesson or mythology, rarely as vital new music to any but a select cadre of devotees.

Clark is fast becoming the rare exception to that rule. His distinctive sound has garnered critical accolades and endorsements from a growing list of impressive names. His six-string pyrotechnics led the New York Times to crown him "the next Hendrix," and he spent 2012 playing various festival stages, from Bonnaroo to the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, Metallica's Orion Fest to Jay-Z's Made in America Festival. Clark joined The Rolling Stones onstage in December, and he's slated to play this year's edition of Eric Clapton's Crossroads Festival at Madison Square Garden. He previously played the 2010 Crossroads Festival in Chicago.

"Just a few years ago, I was watching those guys on TV or on my VHS recorder on *Austin City Limits*," Clark says. "So to be invited to get up and play with some of the guys whose posters I had on my wall: That was like, Wow."

Clark's boundary-leaping style has caught the ear of superstars outside of the blues world as well. He's recently shared the stage with The Roots, worked with rapper Nas on music commissioned by ESPN for its NFL coverage and recorded with r&b singer Alicia Keys for her album *Girl On Fire* (RCA). "I'm a fan of music and a fan of great artists, no matter what genre," he says. "If I get to hang out in a room and vibe with them, I'm all about the experience."

He also made a fan of the leader of the free world, playing a White House command performance for the Obamas on a bill that also included Mick Jagger, B.B. King, Jeff Beck and Buddy Guy. The president gave his stamp of approval, calling Clark "the future."

"It was probably the most nervous I've been," Clark says of the White House gig. "I just thought, 'You're here, man—you better show up and impress these folks.' It was a great experience."

Clark grew up no differently than his peers, hearing classic rock on the radio, seeing grunge conquer the pop charts, listening to hip-hop with friends and his father's smooth jazz records at home. The music that he makes now is shaped not by some experimental stab at fusion but by the fact that he never felt the need to shed his musical past like a snakeskin in order to play the blues.

It was also crucial that he was raised in Austin, which is both a mecca for the blues aficionados who haunt the clubs on Sixth Street, and an oasis of eclecticism as showcased annually by the wide-ranging SXSW festival.

"I know I'm a product of my environment, and that's Austin, Texas," Clark says. "I grew up in the blues scene—that's where I cut my teeth, where I learned how to perform, where I learned how to improvise, and where I learned my music theory, if I learned any at all.

"But at the same time, when I'd hang at this blues joint and we'd take a break, I'd go next door and there'd be a reggae band. One door down from that there'd be a jazz band. Then there'd be a hip-hop artist across the street with a drummer and a trumpet player. They would be mixing and matching all kinds of things together. That's where I grew up. That was my introduction to music. So it wasn't a big deal to cross genres and

jump from one thing to another. It seemed very natural to me."

Though he's become known for his guitar wizardry, Clark began singing well before he ever picked up an instrument, following his older sister into the high school choir. "My sister would bring home all these trophies from competitions," he recalls, "and I didn't have any trophies. So that was basically it: I wanted my parents to be proud of me, too, so I started singing."

Clark convinced his parents to buy him his first guitar at the age of 12, and he largely taught himself to play. "I checked out some books from the library and was playing along with everything on the radio," he says. "My friend gave me a Hendrix album, my dad was into smooth jazz and would blast it on the radio and bring music home for me. All of that was cool, but when I got to that blues stage I was like, 'This is where it's at.'"

Where family led him into music, friendship ushered Clark into the blues world. For her 15th birthday his close friend Eve Monsees, who had begun playing guitar a year earlier than Clark, wanted to celebrate at a local blues jam. He joined her onstage to play the only two blues tunes he'd learned: Vaughan's "Pride And Joy" and T-Bone Walker's "T-Bone Shuffle." Impressed at the youngsters' enthusiasm for the music, several members of the local blues community immediately took Clark and Monsees under their wings.

"I jumped into that scene not really knowing what I was getting into," Clark says. "But it was the only outlet that I was aware of where I could get up and play guitar and express myself. When I was a young kid that was major for me. I felt like I found the scene where I needed to be."

Before long, Clark caught the eye of the late Clifford Antone, founder of the renowned Austin blues club Antone's, who had also played a key role in the careers of Stevie Ray and Jimmie Vaughan along with many others. Antone introduced Clark to legends like Hubert Sumlin, Pinetop Perkins and James Cotton, and would book him to open for headliners like Doyle Bramhall.

"I was just this young kid hanging around and was fortunate enough to be welcomed into this clique with the coolest guys on the planet," Clark says. "Antone's is where I got my musical education, so it will always be a special place for me."

Through his apprenticeship under such giants of the music, Clark not only honed his chops on the bandstand and received firsthand history lessons, but he was granted license to forge his own path forward.

"Every now and then I would pull out a song that wasn't straightahead I-IV-V, and these guys would hear me and say, 'That's cool,'" Clark explains. "They told me, 'You've got to be true to yourself.' I look up to these guys. They're my heroes, so I'd listen to pretty much anything they say, and they encouraged me to branch off and do different things. That encouraged me to step out of that blues purist zone. I'm not scared of the blues police. To hear from the guys who created it, 'Just do your thing'—that meant everything to me."

While making the rounds at SXSW, Clark was discovered by director John Sayles, who cast him in the 2007 film *Honeydripper*. The movie is set at the crossroads of blues and rock in 1950s Alabama, when a club owner played by Danny Glover hires Clark's character, a brash young electric guitarist, to revive his foundering venue. It was Clark's first acting gig aside from a middle school musical, and it threw him into the deep end alongside acclaimed veterans such as Glover, Stacy Keach and Mary Steenburgen, not to mention fellow blues modernist Keb Mo.

"The first day was a disaster," Clark recalls. "I'd never done anything like that before, and everybody on the crew could read how nervous I was. And the *last* thing they wanted was a nervous actor who would show it on screen, but I

was tripping out—my first scene was with Danny Glover, who I'd seen in a bunch of movies since I was a kid."

Another actor in the cast, Brent Jennings, generously pulled Clark aside and coached him through a crash course in acting for the camera: "He told me to just get over myself and be in the moment. After that, I shook off the jitters and jumped in." The experience went well enough to convince him to pursue more acting gigs, but thus far to little avail.

"I actually went on a few auditions and failed them horribly," he laughs. "I caught the acting bug, but just because you feel like you can do it doesn't mean that you can."

That doesn't seem to be a problem for Clark the musician. He plays the part of a number of very different musical stylists on *Blak And Blu* without ever seeming contrived. There are elements of his blues mentors freely blended with influences as diverse as Kurt Cobain, Prince and Stevie Wonder throughout the album. Hints of Lenny Kravitz shine through "Glitter Ain't Gold," while "Things Are Changin'" is a doo-wop throwback that could be mistaken for a Smokey Robinson outtake. "Numb" reimagines The Beatles' "Come Together" as a B.B. King riff covered by a heavy metal band. Clark's most direct mash-up is the album's sole cover, fusing Albert Collins' version of Little Johnny Taylor's "If You Love Me Like You Say" with Hendrix's "Third Stone From The Sun."

Some of the songs on *Blak And Blu* had previously appeared on Clark's handful of independent releases but are reinvented here. While those earlier efforts were solo projects featuring Clark playing every instrument, his major label debut was more of a collaborative effort. He worked with producers Mike Elizondo, whose credits range from Dr. Dre to Fiona Apple to metal band Mastodon, and Warner Bros. chairman Rob Cavallo, who has worked with Green Day and the Dave Matthews Band.

"I'd always been apprehensive about working with somebody else," Clark admits. "When I was doing my records independently I was a complete control freak. But I got to give it up to Mike: He was really dedicated to this project. He followed us to all of our West Coast shows and wanted to capture what we did live and bring that into the studio setting."

Elizondo says that experiencing those live performances became crucial to finding the right setting for Clark in the studio. "His live performances were what I'd imagine it would be like getting to see Coltrane play, someone who just transcends their instrument," he recalls. "I wanted to figure out a way to get the magic he brings across the stage onto a recording."

The more radio-friendly elements of the album may seem like impositions from the label to purists, but Clark says that Elizondo actually encouraged him to rein in his eclecticism.

"We had to figure out how to make this weave together the best way possible—seeing as how the music was all over the place. Elizondo said, 'This is going from one extreme to the other on one album,' and I was like 'Yeah, so?' But he's a true pro, so I followed his lead. He's cool with expediting the process with as little drama as possible, which was a dream come true for me."

According to Elizondo, the ultimate goal for *Blak And Blu* was to set up a career for an artist who really has no boundaries. "So no matter what he wants to do on future records, there isn't going to be this shock," he says. "Now I think people are going to expect Gary to do anything."

Clark is still adjusting to the attention and acclaim that has greeted the album's release. The near future, he says, will be mainly taken up with touring, but he's looking forward to tackling collaborations with artists from every corner of the music scene. Bringing styles together is, he insists, what makes him the artist he is.

"I was a young kid in high school listening to hip-hop, r&b, rock and punk, and then I'd go out and play these I-IV-V blues shows, then go home and make beats and be stomping on distortion and fuzzboxes at the house. At some point I realized I've got to put all this together and be true to myself. I got more confident as a young man, and that spilled over into my musical confidence.

"I'm still trying to figure it out, keep it moving and get better. That's the whole point." **DB**

JD Allen
The Matador

By Allen Morrison Photo by Adam McCullough

Here's how a performance by the JD Allen Trio starts: Two very serious young men in white shirts, dark ties and jackets take their places behind the drums and double bass. The leader and tenor saxophonist, similarly attired and as unsmiling as a toreador about to do battle in the bullring, steps up to the mic. He blows a brief, simple, bracingly modern melody—announcing his arrival, in effect. As he steps away from the mic, all hell breaks loose—a disciplined explosion of drums and arco bass that begins at a fever pitch and grows from there. By the time JD Allen comes back into the spotlight to repeat the opening statement, there is a drama and ferocity to this music that has spread from the stage to the audience. He holds the crowd as if in his fist.

The JD Allen Trio, with Gregg August on bass and Rudy Royston on drums, has one of the most urgent, furious, muscular sounds in jazz today. Something of a high-wire act—like that of Phillipe Petit, about whom Allen wrote a song on a recent album—the trio plays Allen's open compositions almost exclusively. Most of them leave large amounts of unscripted space for August and Royston, both classically trained composers in their own right, to improvise.

In performance and on its four albums, the trio is inventive and telepathic. As DownBeat's Frank Alkyer said in his review of the trio's recent album, *The Matador And The Bull* (Savant), Allen and company make music that's "searching, searing and personal."

Outside the context of his trio, Allen displayed flexibility and deep understanding of older jazz idioms at two unusual gigs in New York recently. The first was "Jazz & Colors," an outdoor event in Central Park at which 30 jazz groups, dispersed at various locations around the massive park, played the same two sets of standards with New York and autumnal themes. Hearing this committed modernist have his way with tunes like "Manhattan" and "Autumn In New York" revealed an easy mastery of more traditional song forms—lyrical, melodic and sweet-toned. It sounded almost too easy for him.

Allen's soloing gifts were even more evident at shows he played the following weekend as a guest artist during the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra's "The Best of Blue Note Records" tribute concert. There, trombonist/arranger Vincent Gardner remarked on Allen's beautiful timbre and called him "a pleasure to play with."

Born and raised in Detroit, the 39-year-old Allen knew early on that he wanted to be a jazz musician, studying with fellow Motor City resident James Carter and gigging with his friend, drummer Ali Jackson. He started college at Hampton University on a marching-band scholarship, coming to New York to attend Betty Carter's "Jazz Ahead" program for promising jazz students. Later he left school altogether when Carter hired him to play tenor with her band. After moving to New York in the 1990s, he spent two decades developing his own sound.

"JD always had a very commanding sound," says bassist Eric Revis, a longtime friend since their apprenticeship with Carter. "He was and still is one of the few guys who can truly play a ballad. He embodies what a tenor saxophone is supposed to be in jazz. He is also a true conceptualist, with a very wide command of jazz lineage and its trajectory."

If Allen's sound is easily identifiable today, it's due in part to his unique voice as a composer. For JD Allen, composition is king. He favors short-form jazz, tunes of 3–5 minutes, as illustrated by the 12 tracks of all-original material on *The Matador And The Bull*.

DownBeat caught up with Allen on the Sunday after those concerts, over lunch at the Brooklyn Museum, near his home. Despite the fierce demeanor he adopts in some of his publicity photos, he is open and friendly, laughing often and heartily.

JD Allen performing at the “Jazz & Colors” event in New York’s Central Park on Nov. 10

What did it mean to you to be asked to be a guest soloist at Jazz at Lincoln Center?

That was a shock. When I got the call, I couldn't believe it. Although I kinda know the guys in the band, being in New York; and I grew up with Ali Jackson, the drummer, but I was so far removed from that [scene]. Even when I was in the dressing room, I kept saying to myself, "Man, what the hell am I doing here?" They really took care of me, and I felt very at home. But to be invited there was strange. I always thought of myself as a "wild" player, in a sense.

In what way?

Well, [The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra] is such a well-oiled machine. It's very precise. And I'm so very un-precise [*laughs*]. I kinda like not knowing what's gonna happen. I normally don't go for this type of [repertory] stuff, and I tend to shy away from saxophone tunes. That situation is great. I admire it, and I know how important it is for them to hold up the banner. But that is not my objective at all, to do tributes to anyone other than trying to be honest to JD Allen and try to find what the hell I've got to say.

Before the JLCO show, you said it would be a challenge to play this gig and not sound like you were imitating great Blue Note tenors like Joe Henderson and Sonny Rollins.

You gotta listen to the music. If it comes naturally, if I feel like I could hear Dexter Gordon on this, then, OK, he's gonna come out. But that's not my objective. I think that's why Betty Carter was so adamant about us writing our own music—we had to really get into composing. It was her belief that was the way to get to yourself.

I love the audience, and I appreciate anybody who comes out to hear me. But at a certain point, [an artist] has to say, you know, I don't give a damn about who's hearing me—I have to be honest. I'm not gonna flash and dazzle people—although I could—for the sake of doing acrobatics, and people will say, "Wow, he was all over the horn." People *like* that, they love glitter. But can you walk away remembering what was played? Did it touch you in some way? You know, stories are not usually told very fast.

At the Lincoln Center concert, Sherman Irby's solo on Lou Donaldson's "Blues Walk"—talk about not trying to dazzle with flash or acrobatics. He had the audience eating out of the palm of his hand.

Yes, that was complete mastery. I was backstage checking it out. Hey, contortionists have a heart also; they love somebody, they hate somebody. And there's beauty in that. But a ballerina—there's grace in the move of an arm or a leg. They're both beautiful. Art is beautiful—the sun is not better than the moon. I'll tell you, when you write your own love letters, and people understand it, they dig that shit. I mean, you can recite Shakespeare, and people dig that, too, and maybe they'll say, "Wow, you seem like a learned man." But when it comes from the self—there's a little more. I really like to be in charge of this shit, personally [*laughs*]. I love to be the director.

What music did you hear growing up, and what influenced you?

In my household, we weren't allowed to play hip-hop. My father didn't want us listening to that.

Did that make it more attractive to you?

No! I didn't know what the hell was going on—I totally missed out on it. I was listening to Sly Stone and maybe a little Prince, Marvin Gaye. That was some great stuff! But [my father] didn't like the content of rap. He was like, "Don't play that shit in my house." He didn't see the art in it. Now that I'm older, I see the art in it. Taking the King's language and swinging it is hip. How direct can you get? You can't get any more direct than talking to a person.

I first got really into jazz through Albert Ayler—I kinda came in backwards. I had started at 9 with clarinet, then alto saxophone, then tenor. I started listening to [jazz] when I was about 14. I guess the first guy I heard was Sonny Rollins, but by the time I met James [Carter], I was listening to Frank Lowe, Albert Ayler.

Avant-garde stuff.

But the thing was, the guys who were teaching me said, "We want the feeling. Don't worry so much about the notes." And at that time for me, that was great. I could put all this energy and anger I had into this horn. I finally felt like I could speak. And then I got a recording of Ornette Coleman's *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*. I had read about him and how "out" he was. And when I listened to it, I said, "Man, this isn't 'out,' this doesn't sound like Albert Ayler!" I couldn't figure it out—that he could do it with actual notes.

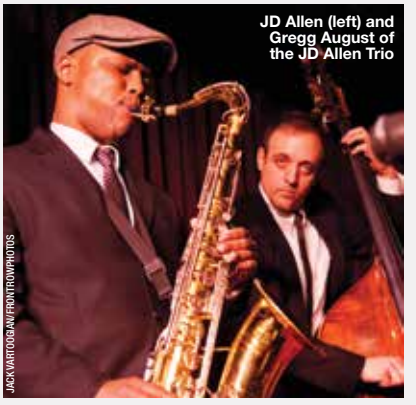
Good Chemistry

In 2006, the Juilliard-trained bassist Gregg August was playing a regular Thursday gig at Fat Cat—a New York jazz club, pool hall and hangout that encourages jazz musicians to try out new material. August had recently become acquainted with an up-and-coming tenor saxophonist named JD Allen who lived near him in Brooklyn and often showed up at the same sessions. He invited Allen to join his experimental Thursday-night jam.

"We started playing and realized that we had good chemistry together," August recalled. "He mentioned he had trio music that he wanted to try out, but he was looking for a drummer. Around the same time, I had met [drummer] Rudy Royston at Fat Cat. He came up to me at the break and said, 'I like your music and would love to play with you.' Usually that means a guy can't really play. But I kept seeing him everywhere, at jam sessions at Smoke and other clubs, and I saw that, man, this guy can really play." August recommended him to Allen, and the trio formed: "Rudy and JD came over to my house and we jammed, and it was great—like we had always played together."

August is a multi-dimensional musician and composer who has established himself as a classical bassist with the Brooklyn Philharmonic as well as in Latin jazz, playing regularly with Arturo O'Farrill's Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. August's latest album as a leader is the quartet/sextet project *Four By Six* (Iacuessa), which includes Allen and Royston on the sextet tunes.

Over the years, August has played with some saxophone titans, including Ornette Coleman and James Moody.



JD Allen (left) and Gregg August of the JD Allen Trio

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

What's special to him about Allen?

"JD has a personal, beautiful sound, and he knows how to use it," the bassist explained. "He doesn't always have to play a lot of notes. You fall in love with the color that he produces on the horn."

August is equally pleased to be working with Royston: "Rudy tunes the snare drum really high, which allows the bass sound to come through. His entire sound, from the highs to the lows—the way he hits the drums and tunes them—allows my bass sound to emerge. He leaves sonic room for me. I've played with other drummers with JD, but it's not the same."

Plus, August appreciates the saxophone/bass/drums trio format. "A lot of it is the freedom you get," he said. "If you bring in a piano player, then you're kind of locked into what the piano player's laying down. In a lot of our music, even though there's a specific chord structure, JD still has the freedom to go outside it." *—Allen Morrison*

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Did Ornette sound conservative to you?
He sounded very conservative. He sounded "in" as hell to me [*laughs*]. Which he is, when you really look at him. He plays forms that are very intelligent. Then Wynton's *Black Codes* album came out. And I saw these young guys playing jazz. And that made me want to investigate a little deeper. So I progressed from Albert Ayler to Coleman Hawkins.

It's hard for me to imagine a 14-year-old kid digging Albert Ayler.
Yeah, that was the thing in Detroit at that time. It was a time when we would have jam sessions with the avant garde and bebop all in one. I met [drummer] Ali Jackson around this time. Ali had a brother who played trumpet. He comes from a musical family. We formed a group called Legacy—we were playing music and started working at around 15 years old. And I met Wynton and Branford around this time, too.

Where did you meet Wynton Marsalis?
He would come to Detroit all the time and give clinics and concerts. He would come over to Ali's house and play basketball. We were these little scruffy kids and would gather around him. I was always the quiet one. He would give master classes and tell us what we should be listening to. [He and Branford] were young jazz musicians doing what we wanted to do, so we looked up to that. And it was a cool thing to be a musician.

You've said that Dexter Gordon was a big influence. What did you like about Gordon's playing?
Well, first of all, his sound. His tone and his precise ideas—no fluff. His playing is very logical, intelligent. And nothing to hide. Very direct.

The same's been said of you.
Oh, I hope so. That is my goal. I imagine that, if I was a saxophone being played by Dexter Gordon, I would think, "I have nothing to hide, I have a beautiful sound and I'm gonna use it." Kinda like Muhammad Ali when he got older: He couldn't move as fast, but you really got to see the intelligence of his boxing. He was a master of the mental part. That's Dexter Gordon for me.

Tell me about Betty Carter.
Betty Carter was my school. She took me on the road; I was about 20. We couldn't even listen to other [music]. She didn't want that. We couldn't play standards. We had to write our own stuff. She didn't want to hear anybody she knew. She was looking for original compositions. When I was in the band, we would play originals, but she wanted you to know the standards also.

Did you feel you had made the big time?
Not really. I used to feel so bad after the job. I always thought I was gonna get fired any minute.

Why?
Because I wasn't ready. I probably knew two scales. I probably played her whole book by ear.

What types of music, other than jazz, do you listen to? Do you learn anything useful from them?
I do. I listen to Charles Ives, Shostakovich, Prokofiev. Sometimes I check out rap, see what's going on on the radio—Lupe Fiasco, Kanye West. What I learned from other music is that jazz recordings have a tendency to be too long. That's probably why people won't take the time to listen. If you go to the gig, that's one thing. But to sit down and listen [to a record]—people don't do that anymore. So you have to get this shit [done] in 4 minutes, 5 tops.

In the jazz world, who are your current favorites?
Bill McHenry—his music is very poetic. Marcus Strickland. Chris Potter, because I know that he's a big influence for a lot of young musicians. But if everybody's going in that direction, then I gotta figure out how to go left. Grant Stewart, Stacy Dillard. I listen to Robert Glasper's music. I'm not one to jump on the bandwagon, but if you don't know what the bandwagon looks like,

how are you gonna know what kind of car you're gonna drive so you can be a little different?

The titles of your albums—*In Search Of JD Allen*, *I Am I Am*, and *Victory!*—suggest a kind of mission to stake out your unique identity. Do you feel that you're there yet?
I feel like I'm closer. I don't think I'm "there." I'm healthier mentally and more together. I think I'm at the point where I'm being honest with myself.

Your music has a serious, spiritual element to it. Is that your intention?
I think that's my gift. I play my best when I'm playing about something [that] has a personal meaning to me. I'm not a technician; I won't lay claim to being a great musician. These are personal stories for me. "Victory" was about overcoming some very difficult situations, against all odds, with the help of God. It is a spiritual tune.

How do you create a new tune for the trio? You bring a tune to them ...
... and I don't tell 'em what to do. I give it to them, and I might say, "Here's what I'm thinking." But in this last recording, we did not do, like, tunes. We played a gig in the studio. Set one, straight through. Set two, straight through. I just played all damn day, the same tunes, until they found what they could add.

On *Matador* and your other CDs, I hear Middle Eastern motifs, a hint of Arabic or Hebraic scales. Where does that come from?
It's deliberate, but I don't understand why I'm fascinated with it. It's like playing a blues scale, but not a blues scale—I hear that as another brother's blues.

Why the interest in bullfighting? What made you want to do an album with that theme?
Sometimes when I play, I think of myself as a matador, honestly. I was thinking about mortality, man. I got into watching bullfights on YouTube. And I felt bad about it—I'm not into the blood sport of it. But I'm into it—it's kind of like man against himself. I think that's what that album is about. It's like you have a direction that you can go in that's a good direction; then you have your wild side. And I think every man should come to a point where he doesn't do the things he used to do. Because they aren't good for him and aren't taking him to a better life and better direction. So he has to destroy that.

So you see it as a metaphor for your life?
I do. And I no longer want to be in this matador and bull situation. I guess because I'm 39 now, there comes this stage when you look back and you look ahead—that was the matador and the bull for me.

You said in a radio interview three years ago that you were planning a quartet album of standards with a piano.
I never did it, because these damn trio songs would not stop coming to me. Now I want the piano. I have an idea of how I want to use it. I want something shocking, more along the lines of contemporary classical. But I also want the urban, gritty side of the trio, and I want to marry these two together. I've been listening to [composer Arnold] Schoenberg and those guys. The destruction of triadic music—I want to investigate that in a small group.

What role would the piano play?
The piano is the only thing that can help me do that. It's great for creating dissonance. So that's my goal with the next album—to get to that kind of harmony in a small group setting—and it swings. I'm excited about this, and afraid at the same time. And I think that if I have this harmony with a conflict in it, and I have a beautiful melody on top of it—beautiful and strong and simple—it probably can work.

Do you know who the pianist will be?
Eldar [Djangirov]. He's so bad, he's got one name [*laughs*]. He has a classical sensibility, and he can swing, too. I recorded with him on Ali Jackson's record, and we felt a connection. He's the guy. **DB**

JOSÉ JAMES
Genuine Expression

By Michael J. West /// Photo by Janette Beckman

José James has made a decision: He doesn't want to be a "jazz singer" anymore.

Oh, he still sings, and for that matter he still sings jazz. But that's not enough for the 34-year-old Minneapolis native, whose musical interests are much wider than that. So how does he see himself instead? "I see myself as an artist," he replies, his smooth baritone resonating through the conference room at EMI's Manhattan offices. "Artists do a lot of things; one of the things I do, and I think I do well, is sing jazz. But only calling myself a jazz singer was really limiting. Not just creatively, but in the industry."

In other words, James wants to make room for a wider range of artistic possibilities. But one listen to his disc *No Beginning No End*—his fourth, though to James' mind it's only his second—makes it clear that he's already made room for them, without waiting for conventional genre categories to catch up. The album owes an obvious debt to jazz, but equally obvious are elements of neo-soul, r&b, hip-hop, rock, electronica and singer-songwriter folk—James even supplements his soft, deep croon by playing acoustic guitar, something he has done for years but has never before committed to record.

Nor has this direction isolated James in the record industry. *No Beginning No End* found a home at Blue Note Records, the most famous and prestigious jazz label in the world. Blue Note, too, has expanded its palette significantly with releases such as Robert Glasper's *Black Radio*, Van Morrison's *Born To Sing: No Plan B* and Norah Jones' *Little Broken Hearts*. Bringing in James wasn't a stretch. "José filled in all the blanks," says Don Was, Blue Note's president. "He had a very specific musical idea and he went out and created it. There was no guesswork; it didn't call for an intuitive gamble on our part. He walked in with a record that clearly embraced tradition—in fact embraced several traditions—and yet was decidedly futuristic."

The payoff has been exactly what James, or any artist, would most hope for: He's connecting with a broad array of listeners from all walks of life. "I have a great audience," he says proudly. "I found that when I just play my stuff, it attracts *everybody*, the most diverse crowd I've seen at any show—for any artist—[in terms of] age, culture, ethnicity. There's no all-black crowd or all-white crowd. It's all mixed. Latino, black, white, Asian. There are a lot of girls, which is great because it's sexy music. And jazz people like it; the old soul people like it; people who grew up on r&b stuff, they like it. And then young kids like it, too.

"So that's really what I'm shooting for: I don't wanna get stuck into anything."

Getting stuck was a real concern for James when he was a kid in Minneapolis, a person of color (his father, a saxophonist also named José, was a black Panamanian) living in an area with little ethnic diversity. "It was tough. Really tough," he says. "I had tons of problems growing up, and it sucked."

Musicians of color had even less of a foothold there. As James tells it, there was Prince, and little else. "Yeah, we had Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, but I don't think anybody knew they were actually in Minneapolis unless you were in the industry," he says. "It wasn't like there was a big presence, you know?" Instead, for a boy who wanted to pursue music and singing, there was operatic training, pop choruses and the church choir at his Catholic high school—along with the jazz and hip-hop on his Walkman.

Jazz musicians, however, often toured through Minneapolis. Many large corporations based there would exploit the tax benefits gained from sponsorship and grants to the arts. James recalls meeting and being inspired by members of the Chicago-based

Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) who performed in the Twin Cities. He himself would take advantage of those same arts funding programs when he started a band just after graduating from high school.

"My first group was myself on vocals, plus drums, tenor sax, cello," he says. "We were really into Eric Dolphy, and all that modern jazz that was, like, a little different. Pretty avant-garde for a high school kid."

Too avant-garde, perhaps, for Minnesota. James spent a few years performing in local ensembles, including the jazz-and-poetry project Ancestor Energy, but then moved to New York City with a scholarship to study at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. His teachers there included drummer Chico Hamilton and pianist Junior Mance (the latter with whom James would make the 2007 album *Live At Café Loup*). Still, it took a trip out of the country for him to get attention in the industry. While James was in London for a jazz vocals competition in 2006, the famed DJ Gilles Peterson heard him singing a vocalese rendition of John Coltrane's "Equinox." Impressed, Peterson signed James to his Brownswood label, where his first recording was a version of "Equinox."

James' first album, *The Dreamer*, featured Mance and a number of the singer's classmates from the New School's jazz program. It also included a Rahsaan Roland Kirk cover—and on some editions, the standards "Moanin'" and "Body And Soul"—as well as originals by James and his band members, and was warmly embraced by the jazz world in 2008. Even then, however, James was crossing stylistic lines in his music. He covered a tune by the '90s rap collective Freestyle Fellowship. The rhythm tracks were often hip-hop beats, and his melodies and delivery often owed as much to soul and r&b as to the bebop tradition.

While critically acclaimed, *The Dreamer* wasn't released in the United States as a physical CD, though it was available on iTunes. It made James something of a sensation in Europe, however, and after touring the U.S. jazz circuit, he moved to London at the end of 2009. James had previously been a regular visitor, thanks to his business at Brownswood. The prolonged exposure of living in London, however, profoundly altered his perspective.

"I can't overemphasize how important London has been, and continues to be, for me musically," he says today. "It's such a small scene for the world market, except for the big pop stuff, obviously. You could just miss it if you don't know where to look. But all the trends in [American] pop right now—dub step, all that electronic stuff—you were hearing them two or three years ago in London. And having access to Gilles Peterson, his friends, his world, was really influential. It brought me out of my New York jazz mind-set."

James credits Peterson for some of his artistic evolution. "He's a visionary. He connects the dots," says James. "He really can get away with playing Art Blakey and then Bat for Lashes in the same set. Not many people can do that—and with taste, you know what I'm saying? His world is big enough for The Roots, for James Blake and José James." Peterson was the driving force behind James' release *Blackmagic*—one that's far more apparent in its r&b and electronica influences, and which the singer doesn't actually regard as an album. "I don't want to call it a mixtape, but I call it a DJ compilation," he explains. "Really, Gilles put it together, and he produced it, made the track choices—so it really feels like a DJ playlist, as opposed to an album."

Blackmagic is a clear departure from the jazz-dominated vibe of *The Dreamer*—the link, as it were, between that sound and the shape James' music is now taking. "*Blackmagic* was half-production and half-band," James says. "It was me leaving the comfort of the band, the jazz quartet or quintet, and working with Flying Lotus, DJ Mitsu the Beats, Taylor McFerrin—all these producers who sometimes use live instrumentation, sometimes don't in their production. It was very different to me because I'm writing to a track, rather than at a piano with a band. It was more electronic, more hip-hop. So that's where that kind of gestation happened."

Despite this, he doesn't regard *Blackmagic* (or its follow-up, *For All We Know*, a collection of standards on which James shares billing with Belgian pianist Jef Neve) as canonical in documenting his music. They're more like homework assignments, obligatory exercises he had to complete to get from one point in his creative path to another. "Obviously there are four, but in my mind, I consider *The Dreamer* my first album as an artist, and *No Beginning No End* my second album as an artist," he says.

As he was formulating the concept for the latter album, Don Was arranged for a meeting. He'd been turned on to James' music by a publicist friend shortly after arriving at Blue Note in 2011, and had been impressed by "Trouble"—a track intended for *No Beginning No End* that James had posted on his website. "He was on this trajectory," says Was. "Sometimes people have talent but no vision, but José, he's got a very clear vision, and he's got a real point of view. And in many ways that's part of his appeal.

"We had a meeting, and I understood exactly where he was coming from," Was adds. "'How are you going to flesh that out into an album?' That was my question for him. And he knew the answer to it—and he just went out and did it. The next time

Finding the Right Room

José James' artistic success in blending, and bending, musical genres has not been without its challenges. In particular, live performance of his material has been a complicated endeavor—particularly in the United States.

"Venues are really hard to work out," he explains. "I'm making decisions right now about where my tour's gonna go. It's not hard in Europe; it's not hard in Japan; it's hard in the U.S. A perfect example is in Brussels—I talk about this place all the time—a place called Ancienne Belgique, or AB. And looking at their lineup, it's ridiculous. They'll have hip-hop, a Belgian pop band, a French folk artist, Jimmy Cobb and metal, all on back-to-back nights. It's just good music, and it has a great audience. Spaces that just emphasize good music are pretty rare in the U.S."

The difference, James says, is in the regions' approaches to performing arts: "Europe has more funding for the arts, and that's the crucial ingredient. American venues have to make money. They don't want to take a risk, so it kind of breaks down into, 'We do country; we do heavy metal; we do jazz.' Everybody is fighting for survival instead of just being able to program cool stuff. I mean, for me to play Bowery Ballroom in New York—everybody'd be like, 'Oh. That's kinda weird.' But why? It's just a room."

It's not just a matter of rooms that won't have him, though, but of making the smart choice among the rooms that will. Picking the wrong place, James notes, is devastating. "There aren't that many choices, so you have to choose right for that market," he says. "And often the only option is playing these arts theaters and sit-down presentations. I've had some really successful stuff, and obviously it's better money, but it's a little boring. I'm used to seeing young people come to my shows, stand up and have fun."

Those observing James say he's able to transcend those boxes, despite efforts to force him into them. "I saw José play the Monterey Jazz Festival, where at 60 years old I'm one of the younger people in the crowd," recalls Don Was, president of Blue Note. "No one knew who he was. When he started out, the crowd was kind of sparse; they didn't know what to make of him. And by the end of the show, the place was packed and he'd totally won this audience over.

"Two nights later, I was with him in London, where he played the hippest little club," Was adds. "And he got the same response out of a totally different audience."

Bassist Pino Palladino, who co-produced James' CD *No Beginning No End*, has seen the singer connect with a variety of audiences. "He's a talented guy, very together, very intuitive," says Palladino. "He does what he sets out to do." —*Michael J. West*

I talked to him, he'd done it."

James' answer to Was' question involved recruiting a diverse cast of musicians from a variety of contexts. In addition to several of his regular band members—including trumpeter Takuya Kuroda, trombonist Corey King and guitarist Jeremy Most—he brought in London-based hip-hop/electronica drummer Richard Spaven; French-Moroccan singer Hindi Zahra, with whom James performs a duet on "Sword & Gun"; and Kris Bowers, the pianist who won the 2011 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition.

James also brought in a handful of musicians with whom to collaborate more extensively. Keyboardist Robert Glasper, whose equal chops in jazz and hip-hop are unimpeachable, plays Fender Rhodes on the album and wrote the music for the track "Vanguard." Singer-songwriter Emily King, whom James calls "a modern-day Carole King," wrote two songs for *No Beginning No End* ("Come To My Door" and "Heaven On The Ground") and plays guitar on both. For the album's primary bassist, James recruited Pino Palladino—one of the U.K.'s most sought-after and versatile session musicians—who not only co-wrote a track ("Make It Right") with James but ended up co-producing the album with him and studio wizard Brian Bender.

James credits Palladino with helping to craft the album's direction. Palladino, though, downplays that role, citing in James the same clarity of vision that Was found. "José's a very together guy, and by the time we went into the studio to record some of these things, he'd pretty much mapped out exactly how he wanted it to work," Palladino says. "My role was more important and active in the way I'd be talking to him all the time, just staying in touch with him through the whole process, and talking things through.

"It was a very natural process," Palladino adds of his experience making the album. "We just rolled through. When we actually got to cutting the tracks, it was a very cool process, normally one or two takes."

The finished product, *No Beginning No End*, is an amalgam of jazzy harmonies with r&b textures, funk and hip-hop rhythms, and the kind of thoughtful, sensitive melodies and lyrics that are associated with both singer-songwriter folk-rock and neo-soul. "I was really interested in this little window in American music, late '60s/early '70s, where you had Aretha Franklin singing Carole King," James says. "You had Laura Nyro with Labelle. You had Roberta Flack singing Leonard Cohen. To me that's so cool, and so strong. It felt very authentic."

But "authentic" is a loaded word in the arts, and in music in particular. Blue Note Records, a label whose brand is largely predicated on notions of "jazz authenticity," has already taken some criticism from purists for its work with artists like Morrison, who aren't generally categorized as jazz musicians.

Was, however, doesn't buy it. He explains the label's embrace of hard-to-categorize artists, such as James, by reading a quote from Blue Note founder Alfred Lion's original 1939 mission statement:

"'Any particular style of playing which represents an authentic way of musical feeling is genuine expression. By virtue of its significance and place, time and circumstance, it possesses its own tradition, artistic standards and audience that keeps it alive.' Even over Alfred's period of time, that varied stylistically. But the common link is authenticity. I don't think we have to be stuck in the 1960s to be true to jazz's premium music label. So that's how we're looking at it."

James, for his part, expected a bit of furor when he unshackled himself from the title of "jazz singer." Thus far, however, the so-called jazz police have left him alone.

"I always expect to run into that, and then I don't," he says happily. "I find that jazz audiences want to be challenged. They love the older stuff, the masterworks, but I think they know that people were taking risks then. So I feel like, whether they can articulate it or not, they know when you are taking a risk, and you are doing your thing." **DB**

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(212) 242-1063
jazzgallery.org
Home to the "Steve Coleman Presents" series on Monday nights, this nonprofit facility is a valuable space for new jazzers to hone their chops.

Jazz Standard
116 E. 27th St. New York NY
(212) 576-2232
jazzstandard.com
The Standard is home to many things: great sound, the Mingus Big Band and the best meal you'll have at a New York jazz club.

Le Poisson Rouge
158 Bleecker St. New York NY
(212) 505-3474
lepoissonrouge.com
In the same Bleecker Street building that once housed the Village Gate, LPR books left-of-center, welcoming artists like Peter Brötzmann.

Roulette
509 Atlantic Ave. Brooklyn NY
(917) 267-0363
roulette.org
This hotspot just celebrated its one-year anniversary of moving to Brooklyn, and in that time, its adventurous program has piqued the interest of jazz aficionados.

ShapeShifter Lab
18 Whitwell Place Brooklyn NY
(646) 820-9452
shapeshifterlab.com
Owner and bassist Matt Garrison books top-notch jazz acts in this interdisciplinary space, as well as recording work and art exhibits.

Smalls
183 W. 10th St. New York NY
(212) 252-5091
smallsjazzclub.com
The grounds where Jason Lindner and Kurt Rosenwinkel trained, 60-seat Smalls keeps the bebop flame lit.

Smoke
2751 Broadway New York NY
(212) 864-6662
smokejazz.com
This Upper West Side outpost counts soulful players such as organist Mike LeDonne and guitarist Peter Bernstein among its regulars.

The Stone
Avenue C at 2nd St.
New York NY
thestonenyc.com
John Zorn's experimental-music temple the Stone conjures up magic six nights a week.

Village Vanguard
178 7th Ave. South
New York NY
(212) 255-4037
villagevanguard.com
One of New York's best-sounding venues, the Vanguard summons big

Brooklyn: Scene and Be Seen

Brooklyn has been home to countless jazz musicians for a long time, but up until a few years ago, it lacked commensurate venues. That has changed, and a sense of grassroots musical community beckons over the bridge.

The crown jewel is Roulette, a stunning 400-seat room just four blocks from the new Barclays Center. Roulette received generous funding from the city to relocate from SoHo, and since 2011 has been presenting experimental music of all stripes, including jazz. One of its first series was a focus on adventurous jazz composers writing for mid- to large-size ensembles.

A mere 10 blocks away is ShapeShifter Lab, a sprawling loft-like room in an industrial area of Gowanus, created by bassist Matt Garrison and business partner Fortuna Sung. This is the only venue in Brooklyn presenting forward-looking jazz on a nightly basis. Artists like Uri Caine, Kenny Werner and Oliver Lake are doing residencies there.

Just down the street is a plucky, funky space called the Douglass Street Collective. A dozen or so musicians banded together a few years back to use this room for rehearsal and teaching, but concerts pop up there quite often. Across Fourth Avenue in Park Slope is Barbes, a tiny back room with music of outsize quality.

The Tea Lounge in Park Slope sports a different big band every Monday night, courtesy of composer/conductor J.C. Sanford. Korzo, a back room in "South Slope," is programmed by pianist James Carney on Tuesdays. Other great spots are the restored Firehouse Space in East Williamsburg, Sista's Place in Bed-Stuy and The Sycamore in Ditmas Park.

The Brooklyn scene has become a creative incubator; but inspired as it is, it remains a work in progress, prone to the same winds of discontent that howl through all the marginalized arts. One simple antidote is this, dear tourists: When you visit our art-soaked city, please hop on the subway and head to Brooklyn. *—Joel Harrison*

leaguers such as Dave Douglas and Christian McBride to its hallowed stage.

Philadelphia

Chris' Jazz Café
1421 Sansom St.
Philadelphia PA
(215) 568-3131
chrisjazzcafe.com
The only full-time jazz club left in the city, Chris' presents local and national artists six nights a week, with late-night jams on Tuesdays and weekends.

Deer Head Inn
5 Main St.
Delaware Water Gap PA
(570) 424-2000
deerheadinn.com
This site of the well-known live recording by Keith Jarrett's trio is located two hours from Philly. It's home base for a coterie of nearby residents such as Phil Woods.

Painted Bride Arts Center
230 Vine St.
Philadelphia PA
(215) 925-9914
paintedbride.org
The city's longest-running jazz series is housed here. This venue favors multicultural fusions and large ensembles.

Pittsburgh

MCG Jazz
1815 Metropolitan St.
Pittsburgh PA
(412) 323-4000
mcgjazz.org
MCG Jazz presents artists in its 350-seat venue who bolster and engage with its educational mission. Last year's performers included Pat Metheny, Béla Fleck and Eliane Elias.

Rhode Island

Sidebar Bistro
127 Dorrance St.
Providence RI
(401) 421-7200
sidebar-bistro.com
This underground restaurant and club has a warm ambiance. Performers include Duke Robillard and Ken Vario.

Washington DC

Bohemian Caverns
2001 11th Street N.W.
Washington DC
(202) 299-0800
bohemiancaverns.com
Bohemian Caverns updated its booking to attract a multicultural audience and has become the city's No. 1 jazz spot.

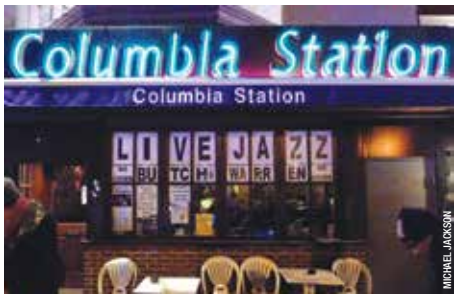
Blues Alley Jazz Supper Club
1073 Wisconsin Ave. N.W.
Washington DC
(202) 337-4141
bluesalley.com
Jazz still glimmers a bit when the club hosts its own youth orchestra and the annual Big Band Jam jazz festival.

Columbia Station
2325 18th Street N.W.
Washington DC
202) 462-6040
columbiastationdc.com
This Adams Morgan venue delivers nightly jazz alongside Southern-fried, all-American fare, without the flash—or a cover charge.

Twins Jazz Lounge
1344 U Street N.W.
Washington DC
(202) 234-0072
twinjazz.com
The U-Street club often promotes the city's riskiest lineups, including artists visiting from Scandinavia and Brazil.

Jazz Capital

MICHAEL JACKSON



MICHAEL JACKSON

MICHAEL JACKSON

After blasting through a scalding rendition of "The 9," trumpeter Christian Scott welcomed a packed audience to Bohemian Caverns. "I know that we're supposed to say this, but this is real talk," Scott said. "I love playing here. I just love the vibe and the people here!" He went on to perform music from his latest disc, *Christian aTunde Adjuah* (Concord).

Two weeks after the disc's July 30 release date, Scott chose Washington D.C.'s historic Bohemian Caverns as one of the major venues to help support it by performing there for four nights. Judging from the sold-out, multigenerational, multi-ethnic crowd, it makes perfect sense why it's an ideal launching pad. The enthusiastic audience was as indicative of the District's thriving jazz scene as it was of the exhilaration of Scott's music. Since the arrival of owner Omrao Brown in 2006, the 86-year-old Bohemian Caverns has recaptured the shine of its significant historical past and has become one of the major jazz clubs in the country.

Not only does Bohemian Caverns attract major headliners; it provides a viable platform for the city's bustling local jazz scene. Mondays with the Bohemian Caverns Jazz Orchestra is one of its biggest regular nights. The 17-piece big band, led by Brad Linde, plays an expansive repertoire that stretches from Count Basie and Mary Lou Williams to Maria Schneider and Darcy James Argue. "I thought it would be challenging to get people out on Monday night to hear a big band," Linde said. "We've been selling out every Monday for the past three or four months. That's a reception that I hadn't anticipated."

Before the Bohemian Caverns Jazz Orchestra formed in 2010, another large ensemble, led by trumpeter Thad Wilson, held court there for the previous three years. When Brown first invited the Thad Wilson Jazz Orchestra to perform at Bohemian Caverns, he was trying to restore its legacy, which he said had been marred more recently by his predecessor. "From a business perspective, it's not an easy goal to say, 'OK, we're going to be keep losing money every Monday for three years, then at some point, the thing turns.' A lot of people don't love the music enough to do that. It's been a long road, but our Monday nights do very well," noted Brown.

Bohemian Caverns' comeback is only one factor in the District's rejuvenated jazz scene. In the late '90s, a frightening lull took hold with the closing of the nightclub One Step Down, the end of District Curator's annual Freedom Jazz Festival and the booking changes at Blues Alley and Twins Lounge.

Last year, jazz programming got a major shot in the arm when the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts named Jason Moran as its artistic jazz advisor and the DC Jazz Festival expanded its stylistic reach by incorporating CapitalBop's (led by young mavericks Luke Stewart and Giovanni Russonello) risk-taking Loft Jazz Series. Other important developments included the reopening of the Howard Theatre and the arrival of the Atlas Performing Arts Center's jazz series, curated by Linde.

All of this new activity is built atop an already rich foundation that includes other performance centers and major institutions such as the Strathmore, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, HR 57 and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz; educational institutions like the Duke Ellington High School of Performing Arts, Howard University and the University of Maryland; and radio station WPFW-FM, which still programs jazz locally. One can't ignore the illustrious list of jazz stars that the District has produced, from Duke Ellington, Jimmy Cobb and Shirley Horn to breakout sensations such as bassist Ben Williams and saxophonist Brian Settles.

Moran is currently researching some of that history for the Kennedy Center jazz series. "It's interesting that a lot of the [comedy] records that I've been listening to lately were recorded in D.C.," Moran said, mentioning albums by Patrice O'Neal, Moms Mabley and Dewey "Pigmeat" Markham. "It may be to tangential to jazz, but any of these creative art forms that have been documented can find new inspiration years later."

In addition to its vibrant and knowledgeable jazz audience, another key component to D.C.'s thriving jazz scene is the area's spirit of community and partnership. "There's a collaborative spirit in this town," said Sunny Sumter, executive director of the DC Jazz Festival. "I think that energy is what's driving a lot of it."

This summer, the DC Jazz Festival celebrated its eighth and most successful year yet. Instead of having the National Mall as its outdoor centerpiece, the festival effectively used the Hamilton restaurant and lounge, delivering performances by trumpeter Roy Hargrove, pianist Monty Alexander and local artists such as the Jolley Brothers and Akua Allrich. It also included jazz performances at established jazz clubs and major institutions as well as a few unlikely places such as the Faith Presbyterian Church and the Westminster Church with its "Jazz in the 'Hood'" concert series.

"We expanded into 21 neighborhoods," Sumter said. "People of all walks of life participated in the festival. You really saw people come to see the festival; it wasn't just people coming to the mall."

The city's jazz scene coincides nicely with the District's growing young population. That demographic is felt not only in some of the musicians but also in the audience. New arrivals such as CapitalBop's Jazz Loft Series and the Atlas Performing Arts Center have played a huge role in bridging the generational gap.

"Our audience is extremely diverse. If I had to guess, it's a function of cultural sensitivities from a standpoint of just being welcoming to everyone," Brown said, adding that Bohemian Caverns doesn't have a minimum like many other jazz clubs.

He said that without a minimum fee, Bohemian Caverns opens greater opportunities for cash-strapped college students to check out the music. "We're not here to be a money sponge; we're here to be a part of the community. That overall might be the difference." —*John Murph*

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618 Frenchmen St.
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(504) 942-3731
dbabars.com/dbano

Of all the bars in the "504," d.b.a. is certainly one of the more eclectic offerings, stirring up a versatile stew of local brass bands, NOLA-style jazz and blues. The large beer and whiskey selection is just as diverse.

MICHAEL JACKSON

Atlanta

Churchill Grounds

660 Peachtree St.
Atlanta GA
(404) 876-3030
churchillgrounds.com

Churchill Grounds is the most recognizable name in Atlanta. Weekends are for larger acts.

Twain's Billiards and Tap

211 East Trinity Place
Decatur GA
(404) 373-0063
twains.net

Twain's is the best bet for jazz in the Atlanta area on Tuesdays. The jams attract top-tier talent.

Austin

Elephant Room

315 Congress Ave.
Austin TX
(512) 473-2279
elephantroom.com

A classic basement club blocks away from the Texas state capitol, the Elephant has become the epicenter of the local scene, presenting live jazz every night of the year.

Dallas/Fort Worth

Scat Jazz Lounge

111 W. 4th St.
Fort Worth TX
(817) 870-9100
scatjazzlounge.com

A stylish subterranean jazz bar, the Scat Jazz Lounge provides fans with a music-focused refuge in historic Sundance Square.

Florida

Fox Jazz Club

5401 Kennedy Blvd. Tampa FL
(813) 639-0400
foxjazzclub.com

If five nights of jazz a week isn't enough for West Florida jazz enthusiasts, patrons can venture in between two simultaneously running stages.

Heidi's Jazz Club

7 N. Orlando Ave.
Cocoa Beach FL
(321) 783-4559
heidisjazzclub.com

The Space Coast is a prime destination for Sunshine State jazz, and Heidi's delivers five nights a week, along with top-notch German cuisine.

Houston

Cezanne

4100 Montrose Blvd.
Houston TX
(832) 592-7464
cezannejazz.com

An art-filled upstairs listening room with an unusually attentive and enlightened audience, Cezanne is sublime for experiencing music up-close and personally.

South Carolina

The Jazz Corner

1000 William Hilton Pkwy.
Hilton Head Island SC
(843) 842-8620
thejazzcorner.com

Regional and national musicians stop here regularly for weekend gigs. Motown and r&b rules the roost on Sundays.

Nashville

F. Scott's Restaurant and Jazz Bar
2210 Crestmoor Rd.
Nashville TN
(615) 269-5861
fscotts.com
This 40-seat lounge is paired with an upscale eatery, and the vibe is equally elegant during solo-piano or combo sets.

The Jazz Cave Nashville Jazz Workshop
1319 Adams St.
Nashville TN
(615) 242-5299
nashvillejazz.org
The Workshop is an educational, community-oriented space for jazz performance.

New Orleans

Fritzel's
733 Bourbon St.
New Orleans LA
(504) 586-4800
fritzelsjazz.net
Fritzel's is Crescent City history, staking claim as NOLA's oldest jazz club and serving traditional musical fare.

The Maison
508 Frenchmen St. New Orleans LA
(504) 371-5543
maisonfrenchmen.com
The Maison boasts three stages, each of which touts a mix of Latin jazz and brass acts.

The Maple Leaf Bar
8316 Oak St. New Orleans LA
(504) 866-9359
mapleleafbar.com
A pressed-tin ceiling, verdant backyard patio and consistently memorable shows like Rebirth's legendary Tuesday-night stand make this cozy Uptown haunt a favorite.

Palm Court Jazz Cafe
1204 Decatur St.
New Orleans LA
(504) 525-0200
palmcourtjazzcafe.com
Nina Buck's French Quarter restaurant is a prime destination for lovers of the New Orleans sound.

Preservation Hall
726 St. Peter St. New Orleans LA
(504) 522-2841
preservationhall.com
This barless, humble former art gallery in the Quarter has helped sustain traditional New Orleans jazz for more than 50 years.

Spotted Cat
623 Frenchmen St. New Orleans LA
(504) 943-3887
spottedcatmusicclub.com
A cozy Frenchmen Street hideaway, the Spotted Cat presents local jazz and blues acts from Washboard Chaz to Meschiya Lake with no cover.

Snug Harbor
626 Frenchmen St. New Orleans LA
(504) 949-0696
snugjazz.com
Modern jazz and an upscale vibe reign here. Two seating levels offer prime views of artists such as Herlin Riley and Nicholas Payton.

Three Muses
536 Frenchmen St. New Orleans LA
(504) 252-4801
threemusesnola.com
Featuring multiple live acts each night, no cover charge and delicious small plates, Three Muses is a prime destination for hungry music lovers.

Tipitina's
501 Napoleon Ave. New Orleans LA
(504) 895-8477
tipitinas.com
This historic Uptown music mecca presents brass bands, jazz, funk and rock acts, while its affiliate foundation helps fund local music education.

Midwest

Hungry Brain

2319 West Belmont Ave. Chicago IL
(773) 709-1401
umbrellamusic.com

This avant-garde space features offshoots of the Umbrella Music Fest and a Sunday Transmission series.

Chicago

Andy's Jazz Club
11 E. Hubbard St.
Chicago IL
(312) 642-6805
andysjazzclub.com
This lively downtown bar and restaurant successfully draws an after-work clientele by presenting many of the Windy City's best young and established jazz artists seven nights a week.

B.L.U.E.S.
2519 Halsted St.
Chicago IL
(773) 528-1012
chicagobluesbar.com
The Lincoln Park neighborhood houses one of Chicago's finest blues establishments, serving up sizzling ax-slingers since 1979.

Elastic
2830 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago IL
(773) 772-3616
elasticrevolution.com
This multidisciplinary space is often shared by the Chicago improv community, including Evan Parker and Matthew Shipp.

The Green Mill
4804 N. Broadway Ave.
Chicago IL
(773) 878-5552
greenmilljazz.com
In keeping with owner Dave Jemilo's philosophy for a proper mix of down-to-earth friendliness and class, this historic jazz joint maintains the authenticity of the 1940s.

Jazz Showcase
806 S. Plymouth Ct.
Chicago IL
(312) 360-0234
jazzshowcase.com
The current incarnation of Joe and Wayne Segal's venue is perhaps its best ever in terms of sound, sightlines and ambiance.

Katerina's
1920 W. Irving Park Rd.
Chicago IL
(773) 709-1401
katerinas.com
From fast-and-loose bebop to authentic gypsy jazz, this venue's eclectic program aims to please a bevy of listeners.

Old Town School of Folk Music
4544 N. Lincoln Ave.
Chicago IL
(773)728-6000
oldtownschool.org
Though not a club per se, Chicagoans often venture to this 425-seat auditorium for stellar sound and performers like Stanley Jordan and The Bad Plus.

SPACE
1245 Chicago Ave.
Evanston IL
(847) 492-8860
evanstonspace.com
At this North Shore haunt, it's the sparkling acoustics that make SPACE a bona fide jazz destination.

Cleveland

Nighttown
12387 Cedar Rd.
Cleveland Heights OH
(216) 795-0550
nighttowncleveland.com
Inspired by James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Nighttown's part-Irish, part-New York vibe has a strong menu component. The remodeled music room has featured Ahmad Jamal, Kurt Elling and the Count Basie Orchestra.

Detroit/Ann Arbor

Baker's Keyboard Lounge
20510 Livernois Ave.
Detroit MI
(313) 345-6300
theofficialbakers keyboardlounge.com
Since 1934, Baker's has been the hub of Detroit's jazz scene, featuring the city's top artists in regular jam sessions and extended residencies.

Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe
97 Kercheval Ave.
Gross Pointe MI
(313) 882-5299
dirtydogjazz.com
Artists on the Mack Avenue label often perform in the confines of this English pub

with tantalizing small plates.

Kerrytown Concert House
415 N. 4th Ave. Ann Arbor MI
(734) 769-2999
kerrytownconcerthouse.com
The Kerrytown Concert House's intimate 110-seat venue presents jazz, classical and cabaret. Home to the fall festival Edgefest, Dave Douglas, Allison Miller and John Hollenbeck, have all graced the stage.

Indianapolis

Chatterbox Jazz Club
435 Massachusetts Ave., Indianapolis IN
(317) 636-0584
chatterboxjazz.com
Smack-dab in the "Crossroads of America" is this friendly venue, which has featured jazz jams and special events for nearly three decades.

The Jazz Kitchen
5377 N. College Ave. Indianapolis IN
(317) 253-4900
thejazzkitchen.com
With a Latino/New Orleans fusion-type menu, the Kitchen features regional and national jazz entertainment, private events and Latin dance nights.

Kansas City

The Blue Room
1616 E. 18th St., Kansas City
MO (816) 474-2929
americanjazzmuseum.com
The American Jazz Museum's 1930s-inspired room presents a "Jammin' at the Gem" series, evoking the 18th & Vine jazz district.

Milwaukee

Jazz Estate
2423 N. Murray Ave. Milwaukee WI
(414) 964-9923
jazzestate.com
This vintage '50s hipster scene sports jazz showcases five nights a week. Talents like Cedar Walton, Clyde Stubblefield and Louis Hayes appear opposite local heroes such as Don Trudell and Berkeley Fudge.

Minneapolis/St. Paul

The Artists' Quarter
408 St. Peter St. St. Paul MN
(651) 292-1359
artistsquarter.com
Harry "Sweets" Edison called it "just like New York." Roy Haynes has recorded live here, and it's the choice after-hours destination for fans and performers from the Twin Cities Jazz Festival.

West

Denver

Dazzle
930 Lincoln St.
Denver CO
(303) 839-5100
dazzlejazz.com
The walls of the Dazzle Jazz Showroom are acoustically treated, and seating is strategically arranged, ensuring an optimal listening experience.

San Francisco Bay Area

Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society
311 Miranda Road
Half Moon Bay CA
(650) 726-4143
bachddsoc.org
Nestled in the sand on Miramar Beach, this nonprofit organization has been presenting jazz since 1964.

Kuumbwa Jazz Center
320-2 Cedar St.
Santa Cruz CA
(831) 427-2227
kuumbwajazz.org
Swahili for "an act of spontaneous creativity," Kuumbwa supports community-based groups.

Yoshi's Oakland Jazz Club
510 Embarcadero West
Jack London Square
Oakland CA
(510) 238-9200
yoshis.com/oakland/jazzclub
The most venerable jazz club east of the Bay Bridge, Yoshi's Oakland has been serving up world-class jazz and traditional Japanese fare for 40 years.

Yoshi's San Francisco Jazz Club
1330 Fillmore St. San Francisco CA
(415) 655-5600
yoshis.com/sanfrancisco
Designed by award-winning architect Mori Moto, this state-of-the-art venue is San Francisco's jazz jewel.

MICHAEL JACKSON

The Baked Potato
3787 Cahuenga Blvd.
Studio City CA
(818) 980-1615
thebakedpotato.com
Founded in 1970 by keyboardist Don Randi, the Baked Potato is a landmark, if agreeably funky and homegrown, Los Angeles jazz room. It was a workshop/hang zone for Larry Carlton, The Crusaders, the LA Express and, more recently, Kevin Eubanks.

Los Angeles/Southern California

Anthology
1337 India St. San Diego CA
(619) 595-0300
anthologysd.com
Jazz is on the diverse musical menu at this prime showcase club and eatery. National artists, including Chick Corea, have graced the place.

Blue Whale
123 Astronaut E S Onizuka St., Ste. 301
Los Angeles CA
(213) 620-0908
bluewhalemusic.com
This new-ish jazz haunt in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo is a hidden jewel with an open-minded booking policy.

Catalina Bar & Grill
6725 W. Sunset Blvd. #100,
Los Angeles CA
(323) 466-2210
catalinajazzclub.com
A stopover for touring legends and locals, Catalina Bar & Grill is the longstanding oasis on Sunset Boulevard, tucked into an unassuming building.

Lobero Theatre
33 E. Canon Perdido St.
Santa Barbara CA
(805) 963-0761
lobero.com
A true jazz room, this historic 19th-century theater has hosted many a fine jazz concert. Charles Lloyd and Horace Tapscott recorded here.

Steamers Jazz Club and Cafe
138 W. Commonwealth
Fullerton CA
(714) 871-8800
steamersjazz.com
A half-hour drive from Los Angeles, Steamers is a well-established haven for SoCal's finest players.

Vibrato Grill Jazz
2930 N. Beverly Glen Circle
Los Angeles CA
(310) 474-9400
vibratogrilljazz.com
Vibrato is a welcoming continuation of the restaurant/jazz club tradition begun as Rocco's, now owned by Herb Alpert.

Walt Disney Concert Hall
111 S. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles CA
(323) 850-2000
laphil.com
This Frank Ghery-designed gem is home to the LA Philharmonic, but Keith Jarrett and Ornette Coleman have visited.

Portland

Jimmy Mak's
221 NW 10th Ave.
Portland OR
(503) 295-6542
jimmymaks.com
Portland's signature club in the artsy Pearl District is a spacious, handsomely appointed room hosting national and local acts.

Seattle

Boxley's
101 North Bend Way
North Bend WA
(425) 292-9307
boxleysplace.com
This Cascades logging town hosts a lively jazz room with bookings by Seattle's Pony Boy label.

Dimitriou's Jazz Alley
2033 Sixth Ave.
Seattle WA
(206) 441-9729
jazzalley.com
Seattle's premiere jazz club for 30-plus years, spacious Jazz Alley offers A-list artists like Roy Hargrove, great sightlines and stupendous sound.

Egan's Ballard Jam House
1707 NW Market St.
Seattle WA
(206) 789-1621
ballardjamhouse.com
Started by a jazz mom, Egan's is a small black box with a bounty of spirit. It's one of the few places in the country that welcomes student groups.

Lucid
5241 University Way NE
Seattle WA
(206) 402-3042
lucidseattle.com
This U-Street hang is off the beaten path and only seats about 50; a rare find for the university crowd and local jazzers.

Tula's
2214 Second Ave.
Seattle WA
(206) 443-4221
tulas.com
Owned by former Navy band trombonist Mack Waldron, Tula's is Seattle's welcoming bebop hang. It's a common place for locals to congregate, and out-of-town acts occasionally blow through.


An artist rendering of the outside of the new SFJazz facility

MARK CAVAGNERO

San Francisco

SFJAZZ: Through the Looking Glass

The new SFJAZZ facility promises to be one of the most stunning jazz venues in the world, but in early October the corner of Franklin and Fell Streets was still a jumble of scaffolding and concrete. A herd of people waiting on the street was ushered in through a chain-link fence, fedoras came off so hardhats could go on, and founder and executive artistic director Randall Kline began the tour.

SFJAZZ is a nonprofit organization that has presented live jazz and hosted its own collective since 1983. Now, after nine years of planning by architect Mark Cavagnero, theater designer Len Auerbach, acoustician Sam Berkow and lead contractor Hathaway/Dinwiddie, the institution has finally established its own home after 30 years of wandering through a desert of rented venues and practice spaces.

Opening Day:
Jan. 21, 2013
(Martin Luther King Day)

SFJAZZ Center
201 Franklin Street,
San Francisco, CA 94102
(866) 920-5299
sfjazz.org

Kline led the group into a long, concrete space dubbed "the ensemble room" with glass and temporary plastic sheeting in place of an outer wall. "The theme of the building is transparency and permeability," Kline said. "The idea is for the space to blend with the street so that it instantly becomes a part of the community."

But the space has far more than a pane of glass to make it feel accessible. "This is where our high school and community bands will rehearse," Kline went on. "We plan on having programming in the ensemble room most nights of the week. Everything from stage placement to capacity [65–100] can change based on the performers' needs."

"We're going for 'glowing orb of vitality,'" said Director of Education Rebecca Mauleón, referring to the entire building. "A physical space that draws you in and makes you realize that this is a living, breathing art form and a living, breathing community that supports its artists with a vengeance." Mauleón explained that her goal is for a San Francisco resident to walk by the building and see a familiar face playing sax, or at the very least think, "Wow, that's somewhere I want to be."

The next stop on the itinerary was The Robert N. Miner Auditorium, the 700-seat "big, concrete box that is the physical and metaphorical center of the building," Kline said. This is where Executive Operations Director Felice Swapp took over the narration, guiding the group through a second opening in the concrete wall. "There will be a glass door in this space, and because the outer wall is glass, from one angle you'll actually be able to see the stage from the street."

"Our jazz version of right field at AT&T Park," added Kline. Inside the Miner Auditorium was a maze of scaffolding reaching all the way up to the 90-foot ceiling, with the tiered skeleton of the amphitheater rising below.

Swapp stood on the concrete stage, which she explained was in its smallest position and could hold eight musicians comfortably. Depending on the size of the ensemble, the stage can grow in increments of 3 feet by 6 feet, but conceivably accommodating a complete symphonic orchestra at its fullest extension.

"When we talked to our musicians about what they wanted in a performance space, they all emphasized audience connection," Swapp said, "the importance of looking into someone's eyes instead of looking down on them. So our goal became building a space that feels good and engaging at 300 seats or 700."

Audience engagement is one of many commitments about which SFJAZZ is very serious. Wood-paneled dividers will lower from the Miner Auditorium ceiling to effectively make the balcony disappear for more intimate shows. Even removable seats are comfortable and supportive, and the room measures approximately 90 feet by 90 feet by 90 feet, the same dimensions as Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in suburban Chicago, considered the perfect scale for a jazz gathering space.

"At its core, the biggest objective for this space has always been, of course, community ... but if the music doesn't sound good, there's not much point," Swapp said. Every brick in the Minor Auditorium is a mix of concrete, wood and other acoustical materials for sound absorption and reflection; an absorptive panel at the back of the hall can drop down for a large, percussion-based ensemble or anything particularly loud; every pipe and piece of mechanical equipment in

The SFJAZZ facility under construction, late 2012

HENRIK KAM

An artist rendering of the Robert N. Miner Auditorium

MARK CAVAGNERO

the building is acoustically insulated; and, most importantly, the sound-control station is in the hall itself. In addition to this fine-tuning, every room is wired with fiber conduit, so that sound and video can be transmitted from one room to another or to a location outside the building.

But the heartbeat of SFJAZZ is the music. The season is arranged around four-night blocks or "performance weeks" curated by one artist.

"The idea is for artists and audiences to dig in and explore new aspects of the music each night," Kline said. "The cornerstones are the performance weeks of our five resident artistic directors [Regina Carter, Bill Frisell, Jason Moran, John Santos and Miguel Zenón]."

If anyone takes full advantage of this phenomenal space, it will be the resident artistic directors. For his performance week, Moran will go from intimate solo performance, to The Fats Waller Dance Project with a dance floor, to a multimedia piece involving skateboarders for which SFJAZZ will be building a half-pipe in the theater.

With an ensemble room, three practice rooms and a digital lab, a grand staircase hung with naval-grade steel, two bars and two cafés, a hydraulic piano lift and a lineup that will be the envy of the hemisphere, the SFJAZZ Center is shaping up to be a fine destination for any night of the week. *—Zoe Young*

International

Argentina

Notorious
Av. Callao 966 (C1023AAP)
Buenos Aires
54 11 4814 6888
notorious.com.ar
Here, patrons can scope albums in this Barrio Norte venue's attached music store or stroll through its scenic, music-filled garden.

Thelonious Club
Jerónimo Salguero 1884
12 Floor, Buenos Aires
54 11 4829 1562
thelonious.com
The biggest nights at this Palermo club are weekends, but contingents of South American free-jazz musicians hold court Wednesday–Sunday.

Austria

Blue Tomato
Wurmserg 21, A-1150
Vienna
43 1 985 5960
bluetomato.cc
Those in search of experimental jazz need look toward this intimate space, which attracts a global array of avant-gardists.

Jazzit
Elisabethstraße 11
5020 Salzburg
06 62 883264
azzit.at
Salzburg's noted jazz organization Jazzit was a moveable feast until securing its own location in 2002, and also boasts its own label.

Jazzland
Franz Josefs-Kai 29
1010 Vienna
43 1 533 2575
jazzland.at
This cellar club is 200 years old and features a wealth of regional artists, but American musicians venture through on occasion.

Stockwerk Jazz
Jakominiplatz 18, Graz
43 676 31 59 551
stockwerkjazz.mur.at
This boldly going jazz club hosts international acts and jazz players from the region in a comfortable setting.

Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill
1254 MacKay St.
Montreal QB
(514) 931-6808
upstairsjazz.com
An extremely well-managed basement room, Joel Giberovitch's club has developed a strong reputation as a great listening venue.

MICHAEL JACKSON

Australia

505
280 Cleveland St.
Surry Hills, NSW, 2016, Sydney
61 422 583 190
venue505.com
Sydney's only six-night-a-week, artist-run jazz club presents jazz in a wide variety of styles, ranging from rising stars to established greats.

Bennetts Lane
25 Bennetts Lane
Melbourne, VIC 3000
61 3 9663 2856
bennettslane.com
Melbourne's oldest full-time jazz venue is also home to the more experimental Melbourne Jazz Co-op, featuring a long-running Monday night with drummer Allan Browne.

The Sound Lounge
City Road and Cleveland St., The Seymour Centre
Chippendale, NSW 2008, Sydney
61 2 9351 7940
sima.org.au
The Sydney Improvised Music Association presents contemporary jazz and improvised music, both Australian and international artists, on Friday and Saturday nights.

Brazil

Bourbon Street Music Club
Rua dos Chanés, 127,
Moema—São Paulo-SP
11 5095 6100
bourbonstreet.com.br
Brazil may be known for samba, but Bourbon Street is where the locals go to catch a hearty mix of blues and jazz at the piano-shaped bar.

The Maze
Rua Tavares Bastos 414
Casa 666, Rio de Janeiro
55 21 2558 5547
jazzrio.com
Venture into the favelas of Catete and you'll spot this gem, which houses live acts and breathtaking views.

Miranda
Avenida Borges de Medeiros
1424, Piso 2, Lagoa
Rio de Janeiro-RJ
21 2239 0305
mirandabrasil.com.br
Nestled in the heart of Rio is one of its most promising venues, which not only hosts locals, but more recently, Omar Sosa and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band.

Canada

Cellar Jazz Club
3611 West Broadway Street,
Vancouver BC
(604) 738-1959
cellarjazz.com
Open since 2000, saxophonist Cory Weeds' club showcases mainstream jazz, a counterpoint to Vancouver's improvised music scene.

L'Astral
305 Ste. Catherine St. West,
Montreal QB
(514) 288-8882
sallelastral.com
Owned and operated by the Montreal International Jazz Festival, L'Astral is a 320-seat, two-tiered venue with state-of-the-art sound.

Largo Resto-Club,
643 St. Joseph St.
East Quebec City QB
(418) 529-3111
largorestoclub.com
Located in a bohemian neighborhood outside the tourist mecca, Largo doubles as a first-class Italian bistro and intimate jazz venue.

The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar
194 Queen St. West
Toronto ON
(416) 598-2475
therex.ca
The trendy Rex is a haven for local students, but it's a sure-fire bet for quality acts seven days a week, including weekend matinees.

Trane Studio Jazz Lounge
964 Bathurst St.
Toronto ON
(416) 913-8197
Housed in this red-brick establishment is a wordly mix of classic jazz, crossover and world-music acts.

Yardbird Suite
11 Tommy Banks Way
Edmonton AB
(780) 432-0428
yardbirdsuite.com
Open since 1957, the highlight of the Edmonton Jazz Society owned-and-operated haunt is its impressive Tuesday-night jams.

Barcelona, Spain

Spanish Conquest

During Tough Economic Times, Barcelona's Musicians Still Thrive


Gorka Benítez

JOSE TOMÁS

During November in Barcelona, no subject was more in play than politics (a late-month vote on a proposal that Catalonia secede from Spain) and the economy (40 percent unemployment and a wave of housing foreclosures). A general strike shut down the city on Nov. 14. Two days prior, saxophonist Gorka Benítez sat in the lobby of the Gran Havana Hotel, discussing the effects of the economy on his peer group.

"Culture is the first thing that everybody is going to cut," Benítez remarked. "Of course, people won't have money to pay for a ticket to hear music. Even in the school where I teach, we earn much less. We have to move our asses more and find out different ways to try to do our things."

Benítez, 46, was preparing to fly to Argentina the following evening—beating the strike by a day—to begin several weeks of concerts in the Americas with singer-guitarist Paco Ibáñez. He enjoys wide respect in Barcelona and elsewhere for his ability, as saxophonist Bill McHenry puts it, "to let you know what he thinks and feels by what he plays," with tunes that blend an exhaustive knowledge of post-bop with melodic and tonal elements drawn from his Basque heritage. His discography includes six leader recordings spanning 1998 to 2008 for the Barcelona-based Fresh Sound label, and, more recently, *A Marte Otra Vez* (Artimaña), documenting an intense, lyric duo with Barcelona drummer David Xirgu, a longtime partner with a similar individualistic spirit.

"We are very independent," said Benítez of his Basque brethren. "Here, in Barcelona, people are maybe more intellectual. In the Basque country we have something here"—he pointed to his head—"but we are more about acting. If someone wants to listen to Gorka Benítez, he has to listen to Gorka Benítez, with his good things and with his bad things."

That this self-assessment translates into Benítez's musical production is evident from guitarist Ben Monder's remark that "Gorka has assimilated a lot of the 'modern saxophone language' convincingly, and he's harmonically interesting, but there's also a real emotional rawness about him."

Benítez began his musical journey on indigenous Basque instruments: the *txistu*, a three-hole pipe flute; the *danbolina* (tabor); and the *alboka*, a double hornpipe analogous to the clarinet. He soon graduated to the Western flute, and, at 16, the tenor saxophone. In 1989, he attended Barcelona's Taller de Musica, where the faculty included top-shelf Valencian alto saxophonist Perico Sambeat, Brazilian percussion master Zé Eduardo and American expat guitar virtuoso Sean Levitt.

"The mood was open, very serious, and the teachers dealt with the language you have to learn," Benítez said, describing his preparation for a 1992–'95 stint in New York. While there, he worked day jobs while studying at Barry Harris' Jazz Cultural Theater and at Saturday-morning master classes in Harlem with Cecil Bridgewater. In the evenings, he soaked up the music of his American contemporaries—among them McHenry and Monder—at small local rooms.

"New York taught me that you have to learn all these things to later on be yourself, to have your own voice and develop it," Benítez said. "It was everything for me, but I realized it's not my culture. I thought it would be a good time to return to Barcelona, where I think the music is more serious than in Madrid, and develop my bands and write music."

His Barcelona return coincided with an influx of such New York masters as McHenry, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Jeff Ballard, Ben Waltzer, Reid Anderson and Joe Smith to Spain, attracted by the possibility of teaching gigs at, in McHenry's phrase, "the tons of little music schools around Barcelona and Valencia," by the Mediterranean lifestyle and by an opportunity to document their musical production on Fresh Sound.

"To be able to see these guys—or people like Jorge Rossy and Guillermo Klein—play, to talk and share music and be friends with them, was important to us," Benítez said. "You learn a lot, musically and spiritually. Barcelona is at the top of the level in jazz music."

Benítez opines that Barcelona's creative musician pool—which includes such world-class figures as Rossy; pianists Chano Domínguez, Omar Sosa, Albert Sanz, Sergi Sirvent, Emilio Solla and Agustí Fernández; guitarist Dani Pérez; trumpeters Raymond Colon and Felix Rossy; saxophonists Sambeat and Martí Serra; drummers Xirgu and Marc Miralta; and bassist-composer bassist Giulia Valle—will thrive.

Why? "We're talking about some *great* musicians," Benitez said, summing it up in a sentence.

—Ted Panken

Czech Republic

The Jazz Dock
Janáckovo nábrezi 2,
150 00 Prague 5
42 7 7405 8838
jazzdock.cz
The variability of the indoor and outdoor areas of this modern club accommodates chamber-like concerts for seated audiences and lively events where the conventional tables disappear to accommodate larger turnouts. The club endeavors to present a diverse array of genres, and multiple bands and artists perform each night.

Denmark

Copenhagen Jazzhouse
Niels Hemmingsens Gade
10, 1153 Copenhagen
45 7015 6565
jazzhouse.dk
After a flood interrupted the long history of this Danish jazz landmark, it was renovated and reopened in 2012, with a new concert hall in tow. Jazzhouse is a must-visit stop for any jazz artist, or fan, in the region.

Jazzhus Montmartre
St. Regnegade 19A
1110 Copenhagen
45 3172 3494
jazzhusmontmartre.dk
History happily reinvents itself with the reopened jazz club of great repute in Copenhagen, from 1961 to 1974—hosting the likes of Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz and others—and in its second phase, from 2010 on.

Finland

Arrhytmia Club
Saastopankinranta 6
Helsinki
358 20 7424240
juttutupa.com
Since 1977, "Rytmihairioklubi" has been an important part of the jazz scene in Helsinki and a platform for young Finnish jazz. From mainstream to free-jazz, emerging bands and renowned legends of Finnish jazz complement the likes of Tim Hagans, Marc Ducret and Anders Jormin.

France

Duc Des Lombards
42 Rue des Lombards, Paris
33 1 4233 2288
ducdeslombards.fr
This cabaret-style space is decked with memorabilia and albums from the jazz greats, and the programming is equally as memorable.

Le Caveau de la Huchette
5 Rue de la Huchette, Paris
33 1 4326 6505
caveaudelahuchetter.fr
Sidney Bechet once played this storied jazz hole, which was a dungeon during the time of Robespierre. It's lively and atmospheric with dancing permitted.

The New Morning
7-9 Rue des Petites Ecuries, Paris
44 1 4523 5141
newmorning.com
With a 500 capacity, this Château D'Eau mainstay, which opened with Art Blakey in 1981, is as much concert hall as club, blending jazz, blues and world music under the artistic direction of Eglal Farhi.

Germany

Aufsturz
Oranienburger StraBe 67, 10117 Berlin
49 30 2804 7407
aufsturz.de
The avant-garde is prominent at this Berlin hang, as is an extensive menu of top-notch German beers.

B-Flat
Rosenthaler Ste. 13
10119 Berlin-Mitte
49 30 2833 123
b-flat-berlin.de
Folks in the know head to B-Flat for its modern local players, who perform in front of the venue's floor-to-ceiling glass facade.

Quasimodo
Kantstr. 12A, 10623 Berlin
49 30 312 8086
quasimodo.de
At capacity, this space accommodates nearly 400 patrons, and is ground zero for great music during the Berlin Jazz Festival.

Stadtgarden
Venloer Straße 40, 50672 Köln
49 221 952 9940
stadtgarten.de
Set in a lush garden compound, this venue includes a concert hall and nightclub, with jazz still at the core and philosophical heart of its otherwise varied programming.

MICHAEL JACKSON

Storyville
Museokatu 8, Helsinki
358 50 3632664
storyville.fi
The upstairs Tin Roof piano bar is lively but the New Orleans-styled basement is the main room where guests include Ray Gelato's Giants of Jive, Crescent City musicians Greg Stafford and Wendell Brunious plus local clarinetist Antti Sarpila. The historic swing-style music venue turns 20 years old this year.

Unterfahrt
Einsteinstrausse 42
81675 Munich
49 08 9448 2794
unterfahrt.de
Munich's primary jazz club covers a gamut of musical styles and approaches under the jazz umbrella, hunkered in underground quarters that add to the embracing jazz basement club spirit of the place.

Great Britain

The 606 Club
90 Lots Rd, London SW10
44 20 7352 5953
606club.co.uk
A treasured Chelsea haunt now accessible by Imperial Wharf overground train (Fulham Broadway tube is 15 mins walk), the Six presents the finest UK straightahead, including veterans Pete King and Bobby Wellins.

Café Oto,
18-22 Ashwin St.
Dalston, London E8
44 20 7923 1231
cafeoto.co.uk
Close to the Dalston Kingsland or Junction tube stops, Oto hosts U.S. notables Roscoe Mitchell, Joe McPhee and Wadada Leo Smith, plus local percussionist Steve Noble. Also great for exotic teas and whiskey.

Jazz Café
7, Parkway, London NW1
44 20 7485 6834
venues.meanfiddler.com/jazz-café
This trendy club caters to soul, blues and acid-jazz with Roy Ayers, Bettye LaVette and Jamaican perennials Ernest Ranglin and Lee "Scratch" Perry as fixtures.

Pizza Express Jazz Club
10 Dean St., London W1
44 20 7437 9595
pizzaexpresslive.com
This SoHo mainstay is a must-see for fans of the mainstream, not to mention lovers of Italian food and artists on the international club circuit.

Ronnie Scott's
47 Frith Street, Soho London
44 20 7439 0747
ronniescotts.co.uk
Though droll raconteur and saxophonist Scott has been gone 17 years, the legacy of this world-renowned late night room remains steadfast under owners Sally Greene and Michael Watt.

The Vortex
11 Gillett Square London N16
44 20 7254 4097
vortexjazz.co.uk
Irrepressible Babel label honcho Oliver Weindling runs the progressive booking here, as likely to include Ken Vandermark as locals Gilad Atzmon or Stan Tracey.

Hungary

Budapest Jazz Club
Hollan Erno Utca 7
1136 Budapest
06 30 3429 303
bjc.hu
This Budapest club presents a diverse mixture of Hungarian and international artists. With its palace-like interior, this classy venue is known for its high-quality sound, HD video system and Steinway B piano.

Italy

Alexanderplatz
Via Ostia, 9, 00192 Rome
06 3974 2171
alexanderplatz.it
One of the famed and older underground jazz clubs in the world, this is a spot for jazz lovers to haunt when in Rome.

Cantina Bentivoglio
Via Mascarella, 4/b, Bologna
31 51 265 416
cantinabentivoglio.it
The nightly menu of jazz at this hip wine bar is served in the ambient atmosphere of a medieval palace cellar. Don't forget to try the food.

La Salumeria Della Music
Via Pasinetti 4, Milan
39 2 5680 7350
lasalumeriadellamusica.com
Pairing jazz with fine deli meats sounds unusual, but at this charcuterie extraordinaire, the repertory of Bill Frisell and decadent cuisine proves to be noteworthy.

Japan

Alfie Jazz House
6-2-35 Roppongi, Tokyo
81 3 3479 2037
homepage1.nifty.com/live/alfie/
The late great drummer TOKO (Terumasa Hino's brother) opened this intimate spot in 1980. His widow kept its jazz spirit. You're guaranteed to get the freshest jazz in Japan.

Body And Soul
6-13-9 Minami Aoyama, Tokyo
81 3 5466 3348
bodyandsoul.co.jp
Even after 30 years, Body And Soul remains a go-to locale for music enthusiasts seeking a refined jazz program in the heart of Japan's capital city.

Shinjuku Pit Inn
2-12-4 Shinjuku,Tokyo
81 3 3354 2024
pit-inn.com
Established in 1965, Pit Inn is a Japan's answer to Village Vanguard in New York. A full English website will give you everything you need. The evening set regularly features top names.

Mexico

Zinco Jazz Club
Motolinía 20 Centro
Cuauhtémoc, 06050
Mexico City
52 55 5512 3369
zincojazz.com
If you're craving avant-garde, cutting-edge acts and a happening young crowd, look no further than this South of the Border club, located in a basement vault of Mexico City's Historic Center.

The Netherlands

Bimhuis
Piet Heinkade 3, Amsterdam
31 20 7882188
bimhuis.nl
Dating back to 1974, Amsterdam's celebrated Bimhuis is not only a stalwart center for jazz and improvised music, but a progressive-minded institution with a beautiful architectural grace on its side.

Jazz Cafe Altó
Korte Leidsedwarsstraat
115, Amsterdam
31 20 626 3249
jazz-cafe-alto.nl
Don't let the cozy ambience of this Amsterdam club fool you. This 50-plus-year-old venue boasts a vast musical history and clientele, including Chet Baker, and its seven-day-a-week jazz offerings are no joke.

Norway

Nasjonal Jazz Scene
Karl Johans Gate 35, Oslo
47 23 896 923
nasjonaljazzscene.no
Norway's best and most interestingly programmed jazz venue offers a consistently colorful mix of touring artists, along with a top program of the country's mainstream and avant-garde sounds.

Portugal

Hot Clube de Portugal
Praca da Alegria 48
Lisbon
351 13 467 369
hotclubedeportugal.org
Jazz started in Portugal during the late '40s in this small Lisbon club, which is now back in business just two doors down from its original location, destroyed by a recent fire and flood. The club also runs a respected jazz school where many Portuguese jazz musicians have honed their skills.

Russia

The Hat
Belinsky St., 9
St. Peterburg
7 812 329 33 02
This new after hours, no cover hit is owned by musician Billy Novick and run by Alexander Butkeev. Open every night til 3 a.m. it's the default for students at Mussorgsky college or State University; a fine stop for vodka, dark beer and up and coming jazz.

Igor Butman Jazz Club at Chistye Prudy
Ulansky Lane, 16
Moscow
7 495 632 92 64
butmanclub.ru
Russia's answer to Wynton Marsalis and a friend of the trumpeter, saxist Butman opened his first club in 2006 in the Ulanskaya hotel downtown. It accommodates his outstanding jazz orchestra as well as such artists as Pat Martino and pianist Ivan Farmakovsky.

Igor Butman Jazz Club at Sokol
Lisa Tchaikina St, 1
(in the 5 Ocean Hotel)
Moscow
7 499 151 01 97
butmanclub.ru/sokol
Launched in 2011, this is more cozy than at Chistye Prudy and showcases singers and small acoustic groups, including those led by Butman's brother, drummer Oleg.

JFC Jazz Club
Tapestry, 33 (Metro: Chemyshevskaya)
St. Petersburg
7 812 272 9850
jfc-club.spb.ru
An intimate, respected room for nearly 20 years, JFC is programmed by local pianist Andrei Kondakov, who has recorded with Eddie Gomez and Lenny White. Everything from rock-jazz to "spaghetti jazz" is accepted, but high quality is standard; music finishes around 10 p.m.

South Africa

The Mahogany Room
79 Buitenkant St., Cape Town
27 76 679 2697
themahoganyroom.com
The owners of this fresh, young jazz club took notes from venues such as Smalls, the Village Vanguard and Ronnie Scott's, but the vibe here is innately South African, and the program is always a creative concoction of genres.

Spain

Café Central
Plaza del Angel 10, Madrid
34 91 3694 143
cafecentralmadrid.com
This informal art deco cafe near the Plaza del Angel has been one of the few Spanish clubs offering extended engagements for journeying European and American musicians.

Harlem Jazz Club
Carrer de Comtessa de Sobradiel, 8, Barcelona
93 310 07 55
harlemjazzclub.es
Often a contender on best jazz club lists, the musical offerings at this venue are vast, as is the diverse global crowd that frequents the winding Barri Gòtic neighborhood.

Sweden

Fasching
Kungsgatan 63
Stockholm
46 8 53482960
fasching.se
Headquarters to the Stockholm Jazz Festival, Sweden's best spot for jazz and world music has been wowing music lovers since 1977. With local and national talents galore, this Blue Note-style club's forte is presenting folks like Robert Glasper, Gregory Porter and Christian McBride.

Glenn Miller Cafe
Kaivokatu 21
Stockholm
48 8 100 322
glennmillercafe.com
Don't let the name fool you: This cozy restaurant and bar (with an emphasis on good food) is one of the best places to hear both up-and-coming post-bop and free-jazz from Scandinavia.

Switzerland

Marian's Jazz Room
Engestrasse 54, CH-3012
Bern
41 31 3096 111
mariansjazzroom.ch
Open since 1992, this Bern venue is a concert club catering to jazz artists well-known, obscure and emerging, and is nestled cozily downstairs in the Innere Enge hotel. Check out Sunday's jazz brunch.

Turkey

Istanbul Jazz Center
Çirağan Caddesi Salhane
Sk. No. 10 34349
Ortaköy–Istanbul
90 212 32 5050
istanbuljazz.com
Featuring a beautiful Yamaha C7 grand piano, "JC's" is an ideal venue for acoustic jazz and fine dining. The room hosts jazz history seminars every Saturday afternoon.

LISTING COMPILED BY SHAUN BRADY, HILARY BROWN, PAUL DE BARROS, ED ENRIGHT, JOHN EPHLAND, BRAD FARBERMAN, FRANK JOHN HADLEY, JAMES HALE, PHILLIP JOHNSTON, MICHAEL JACKSON, KIYOSHI KOYAMA, JOHN MURPH, JENNIFER ODELL, MICHAEL POINT, JON ROSS, JOSEF WOODARD AND ZOE YOUNG.

Chucho Valdés and the Cuban Institute of Music warmly invite you join the Official Havana International Jazz Festival Tour from Sunday 15 to Monday 23 December 2013.

Jazz cuba .com

Reviews

Joe Lovano Us Five
Cross Culture

BLUE NOTE 38761

★★★★

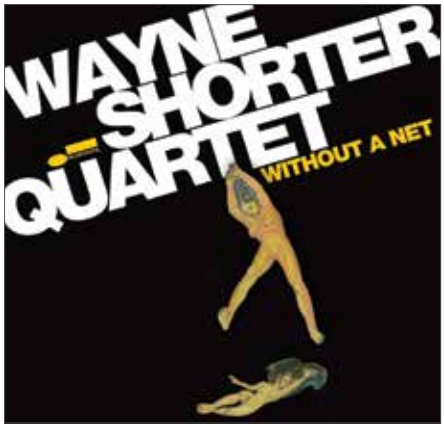
I was going to start this review with a mention of Joe Lovano's searching sound. In various places on Us Five's third disc, the leader's yen for discovery is one of the music's prominent elements, and you can hear it keening forth. It's always been there—Lovano's records are invariably dotted with inquisitions, and *Cross Culture* is no exception. But by the fifth or sixth spin it became obvious: A tone of authority actually trumps that seeker's vibe. Lovano may be on a perpetual hunt, but his craft is so deep at this point, he invariably sounds like he knows where he's going.

Case in point: the album's title track and the emotional variety it generates in six-and-a-half minutes. There's something sketchy and elusive to the piece, which skulks along on an offhanded vamp that hints at M-BASE strategies while nurturing a noir-ish tinge. Lovano the bandleader is obsessed with rhythm, and a steady series of role reversals help make this unit unpredictable. First pianist James Weidman is the engine while dual drummers Otis Brown III and Francisco Mela aerate the action with press rolls and cymbal sizzle. Then guitarist Lionel Loueke, a guest on several tracks, pecks his way into a percussive role. Then the boss's tenor ducks out and his G mezzo soprano quacks its percussive salutations. The music's bubbling saunter hints at an excursion through the desert, like "Caravan" for the new millennium.

The track's hallmarks—its elbow room and intra-band élan—are juice for the disc's entire program. On paper, "In A Spin" is the opposite of "Cross Culture," a boom-boom-boom anthem that turns typewriter staccato into fetching polyphony. That's paralleled in "Drum Chant," where Lovano grabs a Nigerian slit drum to beef up the flow. Each track could be deemed an experiment, but the collective chemistry brought to bear by Us Five gleams with a knowing nature.

That expertise spills over to the lyrical side of things as well. The sleek nu-bop of "Royal Roost" finds the leader blowing breezy, and when he turns to "Star Crossed Lovers," the album's only non-original, his horn contours Billy Strayhorn's bittersweet theme with just enough poise to make you think that the offhand phrases were fully plotted for optimum balance beforehand. That's not how Lovano rolls, of course. It's just that he and his outfit are connected enough to make each of their gambits feel genuinely momentous. —*Jim Macnie*

Cross Culture: Blessings In May; Myths And Legends; Cross Culture; In A Spin; Star Crossed Lovers; Journey Within; Drum Chant; Golden Horn; Royal Roost; Modern Man; PM. (61:47)
Personnel: Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; James Weidman, piano; Esperanza Spalding, bass (1, 5, 8,10); Peter Slavov, bass (2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11); Otis Brown, drums; Francisco Mela, drums.
Ordering info: bluenote.com



Wayne Shorter Quartet
Without A Net

BLUE NOTE 79516

★★★★

Without A Net marks Wayne Shorter's triumphant return after 43 years to Blue Note but also a profound departure from the recent platform of his live sets, which have coursed through seamless streams of snippets and abstract allusions to familiar tunes. The disc, recorded live in Europe in 2011, features six new songs and takes a step to the left, as its title implies, into free improv. *Without A Net* also privileges the rhythm section, particularly drummer Brian Blade, whose halting thumps toward climax often define the thrilling emotional arc of each track. Though at 77 minutes the disc is too long, it's intensely satisfying music played at the highest level.

The album kicks off with the familiar "Orbits," the saxophonist scampering on soprano like a man half his age and engaging the quartet in an intense tangle. "Plaza Real," the other old fave, prods the crowd to shout along as Shorter moves from stately grace to a digressive soprano solo with scribbling afterthoughts and a few (out-of-tune) altissimo shrieks. "Starry Night," romantic and rubato, evokes vastness and wonder in that deliberately childlike way Shorter conjures so well. "The S.S. Golden Mean," which starts with Shorter playing the opening riff from Dizzy Gillespie's "Manteca" over a smashchord series by pianist Danilo Pérez that keeps sounding like it's going to turn into "Seven Steps To Heaven," goes airborne with excitement.

Inserted into this live program is the beautiful and intriguing 23-minute composition "Pegasus," recorded in the studio with the Imani Winds, who bring accuracy and élan to Shorter's lovely, Poulenc-meets-Gil Evans writing in the opening and ending sections. The middle is a study in contrasts between ominously thumping drum and piano and lightly fluttering winds. Directly after "Pegasus" comes an eccentrically slowed-down and somewhat overblown rendition of "Flying Down To Rio," which could easily have been omitted to cut the album down to a more amenable length.

—Paul de Barros

Without A Net: Orbits; Starry Night; S. S. Golden Mean; Plaza Real; Myrrh; Pegasus; Flying Down To Rio; Zero Gravity; UFO. (77:08)
Personnel: Wayne Shorter, tenor and soprano saxophone; Danilo Pérez, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Brian Blade, drums; The Imani Winds (6): Valerie Coleman, flute; Toyin Spellman-Diaz, oboe; Mariam Adam, clarinet; Jeff Scott, French horn; Monica Ellis, bassoon.
Ordering info: bluenote.com

Manu Katché
Manu Katché

ECM 2284

★★½

Drummer Manu Katché came out of the pop world with a classical percussion background, and you can hear something of both of those sensibilities in his eponymous fourth effort for ECM. Ten original, very simple tunes are fleshed out by a quartet featuring saxophonist Tore Brunborg, fellow Norwegian Nils Petter Molvaer on trumpet and electronics, and Jim Watson on keyboards.

Katché's playing is snappy, with a rolling, popping, splashing fusiony slickness and heavy reliance on rimshots. In a stadium rock event context, it's probably sensational, but in a contemporary jazz context it lacks depth and texture. I hear some swing feel problems on "Short Ride"; put it on next to a Jack DeJohnette record and you'll hear what I mean. A tune like "Beats & Bounce" is as prosaic as its title, making a space where lyrics might otherwise go. There's a nice cyborg quality to the Molvaer/Brunborg combination, one electronic and one organic, but they don't have a ton to work with, in terms of material, elaborating on the vampy compositions. Molvaer continues to put Jon Hassell's basic electric trumpet methodology to work, and Brunborg manages to push out a solid sound despite a palatial mix. The CD's best moments are ones where Watson breaks out the B3, adding some Miles Davis juice and a surging bass to the proceedings. *—John Corbett*

Manu Katché: Running After Years; Bliss; Loving You; Walking By Your Side; Imprint; Short Ride; Beats & Bounce; Slowing The Tides; Loose; Dusk On Carnon. (52:14)
Personnel: Manu Katché, drums; Tore Brunborg, tenor and soprano saxophone; Nils Petter Molvaer, trumpet, loops; Jim Watson, piano, Hammond B3.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Stanley Cowell
It's Time

STEEPLE CHASE 31740

★★★½

After a recording career spanning more than 30 years, Stanley Cowell went silent as a leader at the end of the 20th century, as if there was nothing he wished to say to the 21st. With *It's Time*, he breaks his silence after a nearly 13-year gap, not counting a handful of sideman cameos.

Cowell has produced a dozen varied trio pieces, 10 of his own imprint, that range from reflective to softly venturesome, including two suites. What he calls "Civil Rights Suite," however, would be more honestly described as a medley, since its three pieces have no common history, composer or initiating relationship. What he has done is aggregate two songs expressing civil rights themes and add a third of his own. "It's Time" comes from the 1962 Max Roach Impulse! LP of the same name and conveys a percussive insistence between bright bebop interludes. "King" is a pretty melodic piece from 1991 by the late saxophonist Roland Alexander, while Cowell's own "We Shall 2" follows the chords of the famous anthem without suggesting the song. "Asian Art Suite" is more conventional grouping and all Cowell, who focuses on India and China.

The CD opens with Cowell's upbeat "Cosmology," which uses a series of ascending eighth-note arpeggios broken by the splash of a chord or symbol crash. "El Space-o" is a dark and roomy piece that lopes at its own easy pace, while "Abstrusions" has a funky feel that grows out of a persistent ostinato or vamp figure. Both reach back to Cowell's earlier years on Galaxy and Atlantic. "Brawl Inducer" may be the most surprising new work. Against Chris Brown's relentless press rolls, it begins with a laconic twinkle, then goes on to flip off unexpected non-sequiturs that seem to come from early Cecil Taylor. It's utterly charming and dares to end by simply stopping. *—John McDonough*

It's Time: Cosmology; El Space-o; Asian Art Suite: India [Vishnu on the Serpent; Krishna]; Asian Art Suite: China [Glass Ball & Couch Red]; Brawl Inducer; I Never Dreamed; Civil Rights Suite [It's Time; King; We Shall 2]; Long Vamp; Abstrusions. (69:40)
Personnel: Stanley Cowell, piano; Tom Dicarlo, bass; Chris Brown, drums.
Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

The Hot Box

CD / Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Joe Lovano *Cross Culture*	★★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★½
Wayne Shorter *Without A Net*	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Manu Katché *Manu Katché*	★★★½	★★½	★★★	★★½
Stanley Cowell *It's Time*	★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Joe Lovano, *Cross Culture*

Lovano's quest takes few straight lines or easy paths. Instead, a zigzag brinkmanship twitches in asymmetric splatters. Eccentricity moderated by brevity offers intrigue and charm. "Lovers" and "Roost" are mainstream sanctuaries. But the flinty modernity, while bracing, is a bit isolating. *—John McDonough*

Lovano in expansive mode, looking towards jazz outside narrow confines, inviting Lionel Loueke to join the two-drummer interplay. Works well, for the most part, maybe least so on the rhythmically open "Journey Within," best on "In A Spin," where the guitarist helps build urgency. *—John Corbett*

Great idea, embracing rhythmic and melodic ideas from other continents, though some tracks feel more like sketches than fully developed pieces. Lovano sounds most animated on bop-driven swingers like the opener and the straight-to-the heart ballad "Star Crossed Lovers." Bassist Esperanza Spalding just gets better and better. *—Paul de Barros*

Wayne Shorter, *Without A Net*

If patience is the price into the finer points of this often shrill, fragmented and joyless noodling, time may prove redeeming ("Golden Mean"). The stabbing soprano thrusts certainly provoke audible fervor. But incoherence settles over the endless "Pegasus," while "Flying/Rio" stalls on takeoff. A weak sequel to the weak *Beyond The Sound Barrier*. *—John McDonough*

Ebulliant live set from the elder statesman of oblique. Blade is ferocious, the band is hilariously together, there's an almost giddy vibe. Shorter's saxophone playing is pointed and, given that he's nearly 80, sounds strong. The between-set studio piece, with killer chamber group, feels like an ornamented version of the live music. *—John Corbett*

This band is a marvel of the era, and interplay is paramount on its agenda. That's fully apparent on this live date, where the churning of ideas never takes a breather, and the material is in constant evolution. There are actually moments where the attack seems overwrought. *—Jim Macnie*

Manu Katché, *Manu Katché*

Katché brings animation to these mostly placid watercolors that spring briefly to life with "Short Ride" and "Bounce." The pastel textures blend Molvaer's cool, emotionally apathetic transparency and Brunborg's more full-bodied tenor. Together and overdubbed, the music has a dispassionate, poker-faced ECM elegance. *—John McDonough*

Instrumental pop can be rather blah, and the acclaimed leader is more adept at drumming than he is composing. But he hedges his bets wisely on this one, bringing moodiness and aura to the foreground to make up for the rather ordinary writing. Secret Weapon: Nils Petter Molvaer. *—Jim Macnie*

Is "Short Ride," with walking bass and swinging tenor sax solo by Tore Brunborg, a bone thrown to old-timers, who will probably find the rest of this atmospheric, minimalist mood music the Nordic equivalent of smooth jazz? If so, it works, though "Loving You" is pretty and "Beats & Bounce" features a fine piano solo by Jim Watson and some compelling trumpet loops by Nils Petter Molvaer. *—Paul de Barros*

Stanley Cowell, *It's Time*

Deceptively deep piano trio starring a figure who's become legendary in hipster circles for his Strata-East label, as well as for his own ingenious music. Dominated by two suites, it shows off Cowell as imaginative composer and perceptive pianist. Dig "El Space-o" with its bad-ass bassline. *—John Corbett*

Addictive stuff, in the way similar to Andrew Hill's sage blend of in and out. Cowell's canon warrants more critical dap, and this latest disc sits proudly in his array of dates for the label. I can't get enough of the feisty wobble that drives his lines in "Brawl Inducer." *—Jim Macnie*

Cowell's velvet touch and technical mastery are everywhere evident on this subdued, occasionally quirky CD of mostly originals. "Cosmology" and the sweet ballad "I Never Dreamed" showcase a warmer, mellower pianist than the sometimes clinical one who shone in earlier decades. The gorgeous ballad "Glass Bell & Couch Bed" offers a spotlights on excellent bassist Tom DiCarlo. *—Paul de Barros*

Dutch Improvisational Reinventions

Few musicians get more mileage out of the template forged by the classic Ornette Coleman Quartet than cornetist Eric Boeren, who interprets a couple Coleman tunes on his latest album, ***Coconut*** **(Platenbakkerij 003; 58:55 ★★★★)**. He also steeps his own pithy originals in that sound. Joined by reedist Michael Moore, bassist Wilbert de Joode and drummer Han Bennink (who limits himself to snare drum), the band imbues the related, improv-propelling episodes of each composition with palpable joy, but it's in the spaces between those written passages where the music takes flight on the wings of deep rapport. Ultimately, the improvisational imagination, personal style and high-level interaction of the players transcend the Coleman influence—one of the year's best.

Ordering info: subdist.com

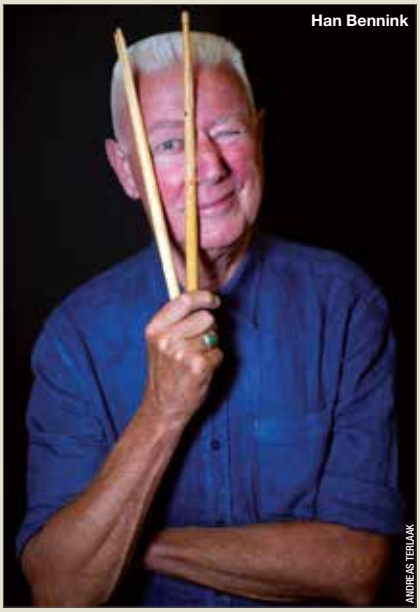
Bennink also only plays a snare on ***Bennink # Co.*** **(ILK 192; 45:14 ★★★★)**, the second album with his excellent trio featuring Danish pianist Simon Toldam and Belgian reedist Joachim Badenhorst. Quicksilver improvisation dwells at the heart of the group's aesthetic, which reflects the drummer's nonchalant juggling act between deep-seated swing and chaotic prankishness. Throughout the record the trio teases lyric phrases and simpatico ensemble gestures out of spontaneous pieces and trips up the melodies and rhythms in tunes composed by Toldam or a standard like "Meet Me Tonight In Dreamland," an approach long practiced by Bennink with his Instant Composers Pool colleagues going back five decades.

Ordering info: ilkmusic.com

Flutist Mark Alban Lotz and bassist Meinrad Kneer document the ongoing improvised music series they started in Utrecht 2007 with ***U-ex(periment)*** **(Evil Rabbit 17; 54:19 ★★★)**, which features them anchoring 26 bracing tracks with a slew of Dutch guests including violist Mary Oliver, bassoonist Dana Jessen, trumpeter Felicity Provan and singer Han Buhrs, among others. The core duo have a clear rapport and sonic identity marking their abstract improvisations with a frictive astringency, which their disparate array of guests easily fit within.

Ordering info: subdist.com

On its eponymous debut, the scrappy trio ***Opositor*** **(Trytone 559-046; 51:42 ★★★)** unravels the tightly coiled, craggy compositions of reedist Natalio Sued, an Argentine expat who also plays in the superb improvising quartet Ambush Party. The French-German guitarist Rafael Vanoli alternately functions as


Han Bennink

ANDREAS TERLAAK

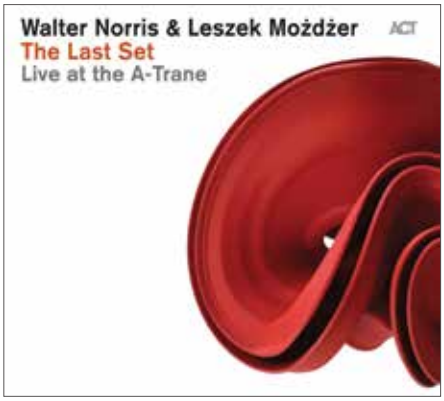
the outfit's musical tendons, flexing riffs and clenching acid tones, and its skeleton, tracing out the shapes of the tunes, while the explosive drummer Gerri Jaeger is the one often putting meat on the bones, with skittery, gut-punching patterns and jagged rhythms. Sued's attractively grainy tenor sax tone veers between tartly melodic exposition and expressionistic mayhem, but Opositor works due to meticulous balance and precise execution, colliding post-bop moves with post-rock grooves.

Ordering info: trytone.org

Pianist Nico Huijbregts engages in a series of terse improvised duets with fellow Dutch musicians (with the exception of German pianist Laia Genc) on his double CD ***Dialogue Dreams*** **(Vindu Music 20121; 32:59/34:01 ★★★)**, where he splits the difference between a post-classical sensibility and a free-jazz touch. When joined by the singer Simin Tander on "Tookoolito Tale," he waxes lyrical, caresses her prettily smudged delivery with gently melodic accents, while on "To Lose Low Trek's Pycnodysostosis Toes," he counters the metallic, crashing guitar of Jasper Stadhouders with clanging runs and ruminative flurries.

It might seem odd to write elaborate, chamber-ish compositions when your band includes top-flight improvisers like trumpeter Axel Dörner and reedist Ab Baars, but violist Ig Henneman strikes a meticulous balance with her sextet on ***Live @ the Ironworks Vancouver*** **(Wig 21; 48:25 ★★★★)**, where the personnel brings electricity to her writing. At its best the group—which also includes bassist de Joode, clarinetist Lori Freedman and pianist Marilyn Lerner—dissolves the lines where the austere arrangements and post-Morton Feldman composing ends and the group improvisation begins. **DB**

Ordering info: subdist.com



Walter Norris & Leszek Możdżer
The Last Set

ACT 9540

★★★★½

Besides being one of the finer jazz piano duo albums in recent memory, this meeting of bright and probing pianistic minds also serves to cast due attention on two players deserving more credit and ears.

Leszek Możdżer is a dynamic and sensitive Polish pianist, while Walter Norris, who passed away in 2011, was one of the greatest and smartest American—or at least American-born, having lived in Europe for years—jazz pianists on the scene, his relative obscurity notwithstanding. Those who knew, knew, and are beautifully reminded with this live recording.

On Nov. 2, 2008, the mutually admiring and musically empathetic pair lived up to an idea to perform together, at the jazz haunt the A-Trane, in Norris' adopted home of Berlin. *The Last Set*, cleanly recorded and beautifully played and intuited by the duo, serves as a valuable document of that meeting,

Możdżer originals frame the set, from the opening classically tinged character of "Tactis" to the ruminative, concentrically harmonic piece "Tsunami," more about the artful, gradual build and ponder than thunderous energies. Tunes from Norris' intriguing songbook include the hard-bopping turf of "From Another Star" and "Spider Web" and the self-evident introspective glow of "Reflective." Outside of their own compositional space, the pianists meet and gently soar on the by-now classic yet still quixotic strains of Wayne Shorter's "Nerfertiti." By contrast, that tune is followed by an alternately abstract and saucy treatment of Norris' brainy blues number "Postscript Blues."

Throughout the set, we get the palpable sense of two compatible and like-minded modern jazz pianists reveling in each other's powers and creating that certain third collective "voice" between their individual input.

—Josef Woodard

The Last Set: Tactics; From Another Star; Head Set Trance; Reflective; Spider Web; Nefertiti; Postscript Blues; Tsunami. (51:15)
Personnel: Walter Norris, piano; Leszek Możdżer, piano.
Ordering info: actmusic.com

Naked Truth
Ouroboros
RARENOISE 029
★★★★½

Naked Truth comes from different parts of the world, but musically, the chemistry that results in their sound is a bit of aftershock Weather Report, hints of King Crimson, Bill Laswell's rock and ambient-based music and some kind of all-out rock 'n' roll playing.

Ouroboros is the group's second release for RareNoise, the most obvious contrast being the addition of cornetist Graham Haynes in for original trumpeter Cuong Vu (heard on their first one, the electronica-infused *Shizaru*). With final touches and mercurial mashups at Laswell's New Jersey studio, the disc plays like a live recording. That's apart from the recorded textures that were brought to the fore by various members of the band, including bassist/band initiator Lorenzo Feliciati, who had a major hand in post production and pre-mixing.

Perhaps the key to their being a band to watch has to do with their raw yet sophisticated mix of harmonics with grooves and the unexpected. Drawing on sources from post-*Bitches Brew* Miles Davis, the aforementioned Weather Report, some Pat Metheny and Pink Floyd, the members all come from original sources, having played with some of the cited influences. This curious mix barges in and retreats, virtuosity resting at the seat of an organized brand of chaos. The opening chimes from keyboardist Roy Powell suggest a fairy tale before the full-frontal onslaught of all members amidst what sounds like an open-ended rumble of rock, ambient, expressionist yet very tuneful playing with "Dust." A fitting title, Haynes' cornet is recorded with sonic touches that breach the divide across mono to stereo. There's a rock beat, but it keeps floating. Powell's snarly electronics threaten the proceedings, but in a tasteful way.

"Dancing With The Demons Of Reality" veers closer to a suspected outcome of what a band with the name Naked Truth might sound like. A bit campy, it feels like the slime you generate on a humid summer day, but it's Halloween, and the middle of the night. Dig Powell's creepy Hammond by song's end. With "Garden Ghosts"anything's possible: the roaming, serene and spacious mood having everyone in float mode, with no beat to be heard and no aggression; it's just Haynes' soaring horn drifting over the slowly emerging groove that heats up but remains aloof to an otherwise predictable rock cadence. The moody "Orange" remains in that harmonic and melodic field, combining a slow, grinding beat with fetching lines, Feliciati's bass guitar climbing and descending, helping to define the groove, Powell's synth percolating just so. "Right Of Nightly Passage" conjures up images of 1980s Davis, its driving rock groove a simple progression with Haynes' unadorned lines flying overhead contributing to a combustible, danceable brew. *—John Ephland*

Ouroboros: Dust; Dancing With The Demons Of Reality; Garden Ghosts; Orange; Right Of Nightly Passage; Yang Ming Has Passed; In A Dead End With Joe; Neither I. (49:51)
Personnel: Graham Haynes, electric cornet, trumpet; Pat Mastelotto, acoustic and electronic drums, percussion; Roy Powell, Hammond B3, Fender Rhodes, prepared piano; Lorenzo Feliciati, electric bass, electric guitars.
Ordering info: rarenoiserecords.com

Elina Duni Quartet
Matanë Malit
ECM 2277
★★★

Had ECM released this album 20 years ago, the industry buzz would be that the label was poaching on Windham Hill's territory. Were the latter imprint responsible for Albanian singer Elina Duni's album, the party line would be that Windham Hill was tapping into the emerging world music market and finally attaining a measure of soul.

Duni has taken traditional Albanian folk themes and rearranged them with a minimalism that gives her voice maximum exposure. She's got a pure, plaintive alto that carries a lot of implied emotion. The pitch control alone that she exhibits on pieces like "Unë Ty Moj" are impressive. These are contemplative, often dirge-like songs, and singing melodies at such laggard tempos without excessive vibrato is a feat. Duni's playful rhythm on "Erë Pranverore" reveals a reserve of jazz technique that she doesn't feel she has to flaunt. The recessed rhythm section, led by pianist Colin Vallon, support her selflessly. The lively "U Rrit Vasha" yields one of the few instrumental solo stretches, with a harmonically intriguing piano solo over brisk brushes. The stark chordal solo on "Ka Një Mot" with a soaring wordless obbligato is haunting. Most of these pieces are quite slow and they require full attention. —*Kirk Silsbee*

Matanë Malit : Ka Një Mot; Kjani Trima; Kur Të Kujtosh; Vajzë E valëve; Unë Ty Moj; Erë Pranverore; Çelo Mezani; Ra Kambana; Çobankat; Kristal; U Rrit vasha; Mine Peza. (46:29)
Personnel: Elina Duni, vocals; Colin Vallon, piano; Patrice Maret, acoustic bass; Norbert Pfammatter, drums.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Eric DiVito
Breaking The Ice
PIONEER JAZZ COLLECTIVE 0111
★★★½

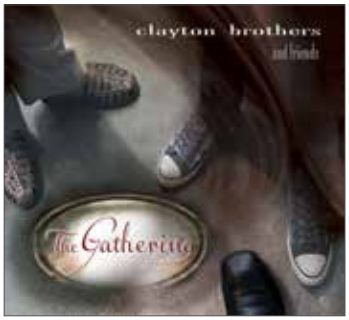
Like the disc's title suggests, this is an introduction to Eric DiVito, a remarkable guitarist, who hones a burnished, amber tone, and who knows how to couch his commendable virtuosity into melodically cogent improvisations. He also exhibits a head-turning gift for penning originals that deftly balance the heart with the head.

Except for the glowing rendition of Bill Evans' "Time Remembered," all of the songs here are originals. Some of the best moments occur on the gorgeous ballad "For Maria," on which DiVito intertwines lazy melodies inside Jake Saslow's sleek and deliberate tenor saxophone passages and Motohito Fukushima' shadowy electric bass counterpoints. He hints at blues and funk on the otherwise breezy "Layin' It," which also more explicitly showcases DiVito's improvisational prowess. DiVito offers plenty to delight on the lightly shuffling "From An Old Sketch," featuring drummer Nadav Snir-Zelniker's stellar work on brushes, and on the suspenseful "Tango," which shifts back and forth from the reflective to the restive.

Everything on *Breaking The Ice* indicates DiVito as someone who's smart enough to place higher premiums on ensemble rapport and solid, engaging material than on forgettable grandstanding. —*John Murph*

Breaking The Ice: Like Minded; Layin' It; Breaking The Ice; For Maria; From An Old Sketch; Time Remembered; Pass' Time; Tango; Shoot The Messenger; Her And Hymn. (53:56)
Personnel: Eric Divito, guitar; Jake Saslow, tenor and soprano saxophones; Corcoran Holt, upright bass; Motohito Fukushima, electric bass; Nadav Snir-Zelniker, drums.
Ordering info: pjcrecords.ca

Clayton Brothers
The Gathering
ARTISTSHARE 118
★★★½



John Clayton has called this release "a brand new Clayton Brothers sound." That doesn't mean the group's lost the bright, warm and easygoing interplay that have characterized John and his brother Jeff's quintet for years. On their new disc those elements are as strong as ever—just heightened by the addition of Wycliffe Gordon and Stefon Harris.

Much of this album, which features more originals than their 2008 release, *Brother To Brother*, is heavy on the groove, with tracks like the soul jazz-oriented "This Ain't Nothin' But A Party" as much as announcing that intention from the outset. A less funky, more swinging swagger turns up on "Friday Struttin'." But the slow burners here are hardly peripheral. Jeff Clayton's woozy grace on "Don't Explain" counters the dark-tinged piano and bowed bass solos that follow in a way that perfectly expresses the conflicted emotions at work in the original's lyrics. On the crepuscular bossa nova "Touch The Fog," Jeff Clayton and Terell Stafford's flugelhorn and flute combo subtly reflects the way Harris and Gerald Clayton move together from a cerebral conversation to a rumbling finish. Strong teamwork shows up again in "Coupe De Cone," which, despite being a spotlight for Gordon, also features a lovely moment where the brass reins in its force to give the bassline equal footing. —*Jennifer Odell*

The Gathering: Friday Struttin'; Tsunami; Touch the Fog; This Ain't Nothin' But A Party; Stefon Fetchin' It; Don't Explain; Coupe De Cone; Somealways; Souvenir; Blues Gathering; Simple Pleasures; The Happiest Of Times. (71:37)
Personnel: Jeff Clayton, alto saxophone, alto flute; John Clayton, bass; Terell Stafford, trumpet, flugelhorn; Gerald Clayton, piano; Obed Calvaire, drums; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Stefon Harris, vibes.
Ordering info: theclaytonbrothers.com

New Zion Trio
Fight Against Babylon
VEAL 07
★★★

Keyboardist Jamie Saft has earned a reputation for unpredictability, and it makes sense that he's part of John Zorn's inner circle; they both flout expectations, following their diverse interests rather than stylistic orthodoxy. In New Zion Trio Saft collides two such obsessions, bringing shimmering jazz improvisation to the grooves of reggae and dub. Sometimes, as on the opening track, he slows down the tempo to a crawl, giving the music an almost psychedelic tint, his grand piano phrases splitting apart into the ether, while on the loping "Slow Down Furry Dub" he suggests Vince Guaraldi at his most grandiloquent, baked on syncopation.

Much of the credit belongs to the imperturbable rhythm section. Drummer Craig Santiago is steeped in reggae grooves, balancing pinpoint cymbal patter, rim shots and well-placed snare bombs, but jazz bassist Larry Grenadier, in a virtual act of negation, plays the ultimate minimalist, maintaining fat yet spacious lines unerring in their obdurateness. When Saft switches from acoustic to Fender Rhodes he summons the spirit of '70s-era Bob James, but with a more expansive, impressionist vibe perpetually reined by the rhythm section.

—*Peter Margasak*

Fight Against Babylon: Slow Down Furry Dub; Niceness; The Red Dies; Gates; Hear I Jah; Ishense; Lost Dub; Fire Blaze. (58:23)
Personnel: Jamie Saft, piano, Fender Rhodes; Larry Grenadier, bass; Craig Santiago, drums.
Ordering info: vealrecords.com

Avishai Cohen
Triveni II
ANZIC RECORDS 0039
★★★★½

You can count the number of great trumpet/bass/drums trio records on three-and-a-half pairs of hands; add *Treveni II* to that short-ish list. Ripping and combustible, Cohen's trio of bassist Omer Avital and drummer Nasheet Waits rest on and propel time and tradition, drawing on their shared history, and perhaps most revelatory, the ecstatic drumming of Waits, who plays here with such incredible passion and understanding that he encompasses not only the work of his late father, Freddie Waits, but Max Roach, Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins. Of course, while this trumpet-led excursion delivers occasional New Orleans-styled expressions, gutbucket fury and a mighty swing assault, Cohen and Co. improvise together so wonderfully, they often sound shocked at their collective inventions.

Cohen is a versatile, modern master. He revels in tradition on *Treveni II*, a stark contrast to his previous albums, and a joyous one at that. "Willow Weep For Me" becomes a sassy bump and grind, a relaxed commentary that expresses lighthearted form with serious intent. "Woody 'n' You" bounces, breaks up and hovers; Ornette Coleman's "Music News" also hovers, but it's more cerebral, with greater dissections and stop-time convulsions. "November 30th" is the album's dark message, a ruminative articulation of a cryptic title. —*Ken Micallef*

Treveni II: Safety Land; BR Story; November 30th; Music News; Willow Weep For Me; Woody 'n' You; Portrait; Get Blue; Following The Sound; Art Deco (alternate take). (52:06)
Personnel: Avishai Cohen, trumpet; Omer Avital, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.
Ordering info: anzicrecords.com

Carol Saboya
Belezas
AAM 0704
★★★★

After establishing herself in the Brazilian and Japanese markets, singer Carol Saboya makes her opening bid to the American audience with this, her ninth album. She essays the songs of Ivan Lins and Milton Nascimento in her small, girlish voice with its bell-like upper register. A pixie on one cut, seductress on the next, ingénue on another, Saboya alternates between Portuguese and English. Her rhythmic aplomb and melodic élan mark her as a treasure. The flawless enunciation of tongue-twisting lyrics to "Bola De Meia, Bola De Gude" amount to an unassuming tour de force.

Her father, guitarist Antonio Adolfo, crafted production that puts her in the middle of an animated ensemble equally fluent in jazz and Brazilian. This album merits a listen for the supportive yet spirited band alone. The guests spice the mix: Soprano saxophonist Dave Liebman spins curlicue obbligati behind her on the vivacious "Tristesse" and boudoir tenor sax on the ballad "Tarde"—both by Nascimento. Harmonica epigrams and a narrative solo by Hendrik Meurkins add a layer of pathos to Lins' "Doce Presença."

As with the best singers, listeners needn't understand the lyrics to be moved; her emotional transmission takes care of that. Make room for another fine Brazilian songbird. —*Kirk Silsbee*

Belezas: Bola De Meia, Bola De Gude; Who Is In Love Here (A Noite); Abre Alas; Tristesse; Beleza E Canção; Anima; Soberana Rosa; Doce Presença; Tarde; Três Pontas; Velas Içadas; Estrela Guia. (52:06)
Personnel: Carol Saboya, vocals; Hendrik Meurkins, harmonica (8); Dave Liebman, soprano and tenor saxophone (4, 9); Antonio Adolfo, piano; Claudio Spiewak, acoustic and electric guitars; Jorge Helder, acoustic bass; Rafael Barata, drums, percussion.
Ordering info: aamrecordings.com

Mod Meets Trad

Gary Clark Jr.: *Blak And Blu* (Warner Bros. 531981; 67:04 ★★★½) Gary Clark's blues as a composite music form shares common ground with modern r&b and soul, 1960s riff-based blues-rock and garage rock, even bits of 1950s doo-wop and Chuck Berry-inspired boogie. On his long-awaited debut, the 29-year-old muscial phenom from Austin, Texas, sings assuredly and throttles his guitar with a healthy mix of irreverence and traditionalism. Clark's songwriting is still taking shape. His coupling of Jimi Hendrix's "Third Stone From The Sun" with the Albert Collins-identified "If You Love Me Like You Say" is ingenuous. Just a little strain shows in his efforts to connect with young listeners while also appealing to older supporters who are familiar with his rite of passage as a solid blues performer. Stay tuned.

Ordering info: warnerbrosrecords.com

Louisiana Red: *When My Mama Was Living* (Labor 7085; 66:37 ★★★½) Louisiana Red's death last year (at 80) spurred his friend Kent Cooper into digging up these lost masters and alternate takes from New York recording sessions in the mid-1970s, including one that yielded the good LP *Walked All Night Long.* Always open to new influences, Red on vocals, self-taught guitar and harmonica evinces downhearted emotion in the letter and spirit of such legends as Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins and John Lee Hooker (in his Detroit years). Guest hobo-singer-harp player Peg-Leg Sam gets two tracks of his own, and Lefty Dizz sparks another pair with his South Side guitar.

Ordering info: laborrecords.com

Eddie Shaw & The 757 Allstars: *Still Riding High* (Stringtown 001; 48:32 ★★★½) The estimable Chicago bluesman, now 75 and still singing with real grit and blowing his saxophone with the verve of a houserocker, connects with singer Jackie Scott and a bevy of other Virginians to freshen up the genre once dominated by his former employers Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters. Eddie Shaw's ironic end-of-the-line vocal about choosing soul food over other earthly pleasures gives a wicked Mississippi hill country kick to his boogie "Black-Eyed Peas & Fatback." But it's Scott who owns the tortured ballad "Blues Dues." Her expressive powers are so strong that she never betrays the slightest hesitation when stretching a syllable or sliding to the top of her range.

Ordering info: eddieshawsax.com

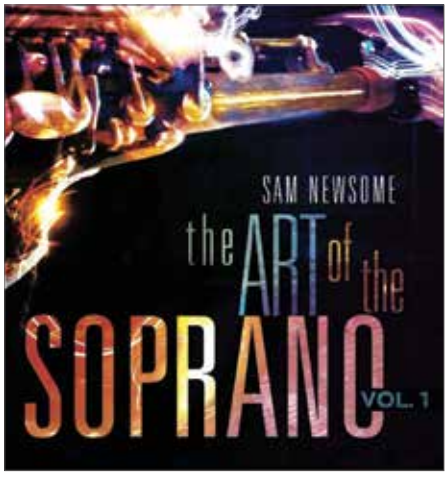
Soul Vaccination: *What Is Hip?* (Soulvax 001; 60:33 ★★★½) Securely grounded in blues and jazz, the dozen members of this Portland, Ore., juggernaut express a genuine commitment to funk on this super-charged club gig. Aided by Tower of Power's bluesy

inclined guitarist Bruce Fonte, this group personalizes songs that are also associated with Johnny "Guitar" Watson, Sly Stone, Stevie Wonder and Tom Browne without ever stooping to nostalgia. The horn section provides the ensemble's signature sound, with bandleader-trumpeter Dave Mills' arrangements offering an outstanding asset. Singers Paul Creighton and Mark Wyatt are more assured than Gigi Wiggins with their assertive take-charge attitude.

Ordering info: soulvax.com

Various Artists: *The Return Of The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of* (Yazoo 2203; 71:22/70:56 ★★★½) The second two-disc volume in this series, likes its predecessor in 2006, salutes the fanatics who tracked down rare rural blues and country music 78s from the 1920s and 1930s. A 54-page illustrated booklet gives you the skinny on their self-aggrandizing quests. The sheer tactile musical presence of these 46 tracks (now sporting cleaned-up sound) trumps all that. Frightening with his harsh hell-fire voice, the legendary Charley Patton rages over the historic flooding of the Mississippi Delta in 1927 ("High Water Everywhere, Part One"). Furry Lewis, Blind Blake, Bukka White and Tommy Johnson are present, and so are the forgotten including Ishman Bracey and Henry Thomas. All of these singers had the capacity to live and possess their songs. The same can be said about the two dozen or so rural country music and folk performers of Anglo, Irish, Scottish, French or Polish stock. Seizing a listener's attention this time around are the Virginian string band Fiddling Powers & Family, Cajun country's Leo Soileau & Mayuse Lafleur and the curiously named, and relatively unknown, Fruit Jar Guzzlers. **DB**

Ordering info: yazoorecords.com



Sam Newsome
The Art Of The Soprano, Vol. 1

SELF RELEASE

★★★★

From the first percussive, multiphonics-flecked and hollow-toned sounds of "In A Mellow Tone," opening Sam Newsome's latest foray into the solo soprano format, we're in a special musical place, where traditional rules of order don't necessarily hold sway. It's not that Newsome doesn't abide by the jazz conventions of the swing imperative and rhythmic/harmonic logic in the lingo, but he focuses the elements of his artistic statement on the distinctive context of unaccompanied soprano sax.

With this latest album, the soprano saxophonist continues a unique series of solo investigations, on the heels of *Monk Abstractions* and *Blue Soliloquy.* On the new recording, Newsome ushers in reconsiderations of Duke Ellington in his "The Ellington Medley" and dares to take on the John Coltrane opus *A Love Supreme*, with some original folkish-sounding Africana in the form of his "Soprano De Africana." By interweaving those sources, Newsome creates a tapestry effect, non-linear yet cohesively packaged into a multi-referential suite. In the case of his Coltrane tribute, the weaving approach helps to diffuse the sense of his doing a straight-on redux of *A Love Supreme*.

Then again, there's nothing straight about Newsome's solo ventures. Expanding his expressive palette, but always organically and without additives, Newsome deploys extended techniques, especially with his array of percussion-like tonguing sounds, piled-up partials via multiphonics and the filigree of arpeggios. He also achieves the glistening harmonic effect of playing into a piano with the pedal down. But these effects are ever in the service of an abiding musical statement. —*Josef Woodard*

The Art Of The Soprano, Vol. 1: The Ellington Medley: In A Mellow Tone; Soprano de Africana: Burkino Faso; A Love Supreme: Acknowledgment; Soprano de Africana: Sub Saharan Dialogue; The Ellington Medley: In A Sentimental Mood; Soprano de Africana: Zulu Witch Doctor; A Love Supreme: Resolution; The Ellington Medley: Caravan; Soprano de Africana: FELA!; A Love Supreme: Pursuance; A Love Supreme: Psalm. (45:33)
Personnel: Sam Newsome, soprano saxophone.
Ordering info: samnewsome.com

Getatchew Mekurya & The Ex & Friends
Y'Anbessaw Tezeta

TERP 21/22

★★★★

The first time you hear saxophonist Getatchew Mekurya, you'll likely think of free-jazz musicians like Albert Ayler. He plays hard, with a vibrato wide enough to hide a caravan of trucks. But it doesn't take long for that comparison to fall apart. Ayler's tunes abstracted the cadence and delivery of African-American church music into pure sound; the melodies that Mekurya plays come from his Ethiopian homeland's popular and traditional music, and his elaborations upon them respond to the songs' lyrics. Still, there's enough similarity for him to have made common cause with The Ex, a Dutch quartet that has transcended its punk origins to become one of the most original and stylistically omnivorous rock bands on the planet. In 2011 Mekurya tapped them to back him on what he believes may be the final album of his career.

Y'Anbessaw Tezeta is clearly a labor of love. The Ex have quelled their rawer, more rocking impulses to provide sympathetic backing on its 10 instrumentals, most of which will be familiar to anyone who has sampled a few of Buda Musique's Ethiopiques series. With the

guitars turned down to a simmer and drummer Katherina Bornefeld alternating between stark waltzes and urgent martial tattoos, much of the ensemble's color comes from a horn section of crack improvisers from North America and Europe; in particular, trombonists Wolter Weirbos and Joost Buis shine whenever their sinuous, muted lines rise to the top of the mix. They don't solo like they might in their own bands but create a rich backdrop for Mekurya's full-throated exhortations. For a man who is starting on his fourth quarter-century, he has impressive lungpower and control, and his playing betrays none of the fatigue you might expect from a guy who has been playing these tunes for decades.

The album comes with a bonus disc that is less cohesive but every bit as powerful. It rounds up concert performances with the ICP Orchestra and The Ex. The recording may be rougher than the first disc's well-registered studio sound, but the music is at least as invigorating. Even better are a pair of 50-year-old tracks of large bands that feature Mekurya dominating both the orchestra and the wretched recording quality with the extravagant emotionalism of his playing. The colorful 40-page booklet could have been better proofread, but that's a minor complaint in the face of its wealth of personal anecdotes by the participating musicians and striking illustrations. —*Bill Meyer*

Y'Anbessaw Tezeta: Disc One: Ambassel; Tezeta; Bertukane/Yematebela Wof/Shegitu; Bati; Ene Eskemot Derese; Yegna Mushera; Aha Gedawa; Almaz Men Eda New; Abbay Abbay/Yene Ayal; Zerafewa/Eregedawo. (49:39) Disc Two: Yene Hasab Gwadegna; Aha Gedawa; Shellelle; Yegenet Musica; Ambassel; Lale Guma (Aha Begena); Yaf Zemed Mech Teffa (From Hinge Perspective); Bati; Shellelle/Fukera; Ambassel. (57:56)
Personnel: Getatchew Mekurya, alto and tenor saxophone, clarinet; Arnold de Boer, trumpet, vocals; Andy Moor, guitar; Terrie Hessels, guitar; Katherina Bornefeld, drums; Rozemarie Heggen, double bass; Xavier Charles, clarinet; Ken Vandermark, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Brodie West, alto saxophone; Joost Buis, trombone; Wolter Weirbos, trombone; Colin McLean, bass (Disc 1); Joe Williamson, bass; Misha Mengelberg, piano (Disc Two, 1–3); Han Bennink, drums (Disc Two, 1–3); Mary Oliver, viola (Disc Two, 1–3); Tristan Honsinger, cello (Disc Two, 1–3); Ernst Glerum, double bass (Disc Two, 1–3); Michael Moore, alto saxophone (Disc Two, 1–3); Tobias Delius, tenor saxophone (Disc Two, 1–3); Thomas Heberer, trumpet (Disc Two, 1–3); Cor Fuhler, organ (Disc Two, 1–3); Jaap Blonk, Introduction (Disc Two, 1); Asagedetch Mekonnen, vocals (Disc Two, 9–10); Mekonnen Mersha, vocals (Disc Two, 9–10); Wedajeneh Filfilu, clarinet (Disc Two, 9–10); Police Orchestra, (Disc Two, 9); Haile Selassie I Theatre Orchestra (Disc Two, 10).
Ordering info: terprecords.nl

Paul Lytton/Nate Wooley
The Nows
CLEAN FEED 260
★★★★

Twenty-seven years separate the British percussionist Paul Lytton and American trumpeter Nate Wooley, with the former helping to define the language of free improvisation starting in the late '60s and the latter doing his best to reshape and extend its language over the last decade or so. But as reinforced on their latest collaborative effort, they share a certain spirit; they both came out of the jazz tradition, and no matter how far afield they've pushed their work, that jazz foundation informs it in the best possible ways. This latest salvo devotes one disc each to two excellent live performances in New York and Chicago in March of 2011, with electronic music experimenter Ikue Mori joining for half the performance on the first part, and reedist Ken Vandermark sitting in for part of the second.

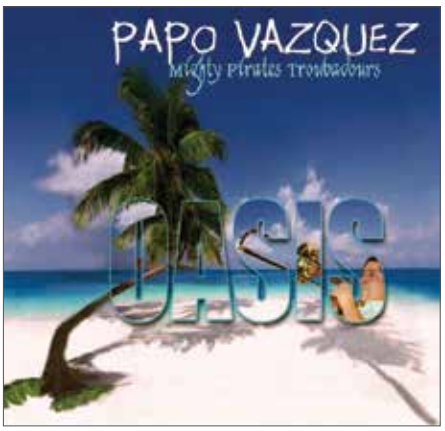
The epic and aptly titled 35-minute "Free Will, Free Won't" opens the collection with a magnificent, richly varied display of sensitive give-and-take. Parsing the myriad shapes and directions here would take too much space, but the music veers from the most texture-oriented passages, with Wooley blowing astringent unpitched breaths over Lytton's elusive scrapes and sibilant friction, to explosive sallies of sanguine, brassy blurts and harsh, low-end rumbles of twisted metal and wood, to twitchy spasms of teakettle steam and train trolley clatter. It's all so much bigger and peripatetic than those examples convey, but through it all the music always moves. Even at its most abstract and billowy, there's an inextricable sense of motion. Mori's liquid, skittering shapes fit in easily, filling in cracks and complementing the various whinnies and abrasions, with her partners redirecting their machinations toward a gentler but no less rigorous attack. Vandermark pushes the duo toward more familiar free-jazz turf, benefiting from high-level interaction and push-pull movement. The three musicians lock in from the start. This is improvised music that steamrolls idiomatic limitations. —*Peter Margasak*

The Nows: Disc One: Free Will, Free Won't; Abstractions and Replications; Berlyne's Law (60:43). Disc Two: Men Caught Staring; The Information Bomb; Automatic; Destructive to Our Proper Business; The Ripple Effect (48:24).
Personnel: Paul Lytton, percussion; Nate Wooley, trumpet, amplifier; Ikue Mori, computer (Disc One, 2, 3); Ken Vandermark, bass clarinet, clarinet, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone (Disc Two, 3, 4, 5).
Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

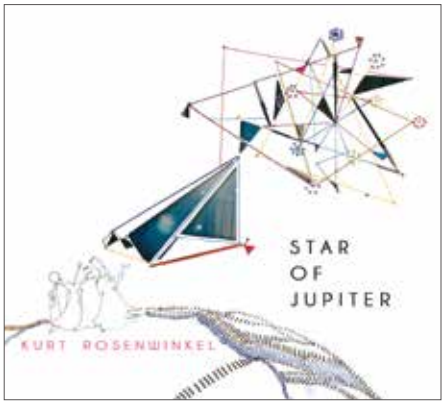
Papo Vazquez Mighty Pirates Troubadours
Oasis
PICARO
★★★★

Latin jazz master trombonist Papo Vazquez frequently turns up on lists featuring underrated artists. *Oasis* should help him get the credit he has long been due. The centerpiece of his latest effort is the title track. The tune's scene is set with waves of percussion that evoke a jungle—a spooky calm that's later spiked with a prickly string section (featuring Regina Carter), upping the ante of dramatic tension.

The contemplative "Redemption" has a similarly theatrical quality, while the more laid-back "Sol Tropical" and "San Juan De La Maguana" (featuring Wynton Marsalis) bask in lush orchestration, buoyant horn lines and Vazquez's energetic solos. "Plena Drumline" bookends *Oasis* with an onslaught of hard-edged drumming and hypersonic horn lines, broken by a cymbal crash that sets free the bird-like percussion that swirled over the title track. Instrumental lines are drawn so vibrantly they seem to elicit animated impressions of themselves. That's partly an effect of Vazquez's liberal use of Afro-Puerto Rican folk forms, plena and bomba, historically used to convey messages about popular life. It's also simply how Vazquez writes and plays: with an unbridled lust for life matched by an unmatched ear for moving music. —*Jennifer Odell*



Oasis: Manga Larga; Sol Tropical; Danzaon Don Va'zquez; Que Sabas Tu; Psalm 59; City Of Brotherly Love; Oasis; Redemption; San Juan de la Maguana; Igors Mail; Verdura De Apio; Plena Drumline (76:55).
Personnel: Papo Vazquez, trombone; Willie Williams, tenor sax; Rick Germanson, piano; Dezron Douglas, bass; Alvester Garnett, drums; Anthony Carrillo, percussion; Carlos Maldonado, percussion; Regina Carter, violin (7); Wynton Marsalis, trumpet (9, 11, 12).
Ordering info: papovazquez.com



Kurt Rosenwinkel
Star Of Jupiter
WOMMUSIC 004
★★★

Kurt Rosenwinkel's layering of wordless vocal melodies atop songs on his new double disc evokes another artist whose interjections require similar acclimation: Keith Jarrett. The legendary pianist is also evoked during *Star Of Jupiter* via the graceful, fluid manner in which Rosenwinkel's support trio blends with the leader, achieving symbiotic interplay that allows the foursome to riff on a phrase for several minutes without sacrificing purpose or inviting fatigue. For all the talent, however, it is difficult, at times, to look beyond Rosenwinkel's processed shadings as being much else than distracting artifice—or the new-agey soundtrack to a space-travel attraction at Epcot Center.

Inspired by a dream, the album revels in the sort of peaceful atmospheric escapism that normally accompanies gazing at galaxies through a high-powered telescope. The salt-bathed compositions are treated as vehicles in which phosphorous landscapes move into view, revolve and slowly fade away. Meanwhile, the more the band repeats a pattern, the closer such alien environments become. Nothing is hurried, no rhythm ventures far from the main theme and repetition rules. Tones meander as they glow, sparking with modal and pop embers. Fusing instrumental joints and delivering warm, gravity-free sensations take priority. "Something, Sometime" flirts with swing and bop; "Heavenly Bodies" relaxes with inhale-exhale patterns; several pieces could pass for smooth jazz.

Rosenwinkel's ethereal fills and effects-pedal choruses dart and dive, yet it's pianist Aaron Parks who largely steers the music away from philosophical gridlock. Without him, *Star Of Jupiter* loses its orbit. —*Bob Gendron*

Star Of Jupiter: Disc One: Gamma Band; Welcome Home; Something, Sometime; Mr. Hope; Heavenly Bodies; Homage A'Mitch. (42:50) Disc Two: Spirit Kiss; kurt 1; Under It All; A Shifting Design; Déjà Vu; Star Of Jupiter. (48:46)
Personnel: Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar, voice; Aaron Parks, piano, Rhodes, organ, Wurlitzer, tack piano; Eric Revis, acoustic bass; Justin Faulkner, drums.
Ordering info: wommusic.com

Living By Lanterns
New Myth/Old Science
CUNEIFORM 345
★★★★

In his group People, Places & Things drummer Mike Reed has dealt at length with overlooked classics from Chicago's late-'50s hard-bop era, but when he was approached by Experimental Sound Studio to create a project based on materials from the Sun Ra/El Saturn Audio Archive housed at the space and dating from around the same time, he opted for a less repertory-oriented approach. Enlisting regular collaborator and vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz, the pair created music built from fragments of a rehearsal tape marked "NY 1961"—featuring only Ra with bassist Ronnie Boykins and tenor saxophonist John Gilmore—and the vibist wrote gorgeous arrangements for a 10-piece Chicago-New York group that premiered the music at the 2011 Chicago Jazz Festival.

There are parts of pieces that recall the heyday of Sun Ra's Arkestra, such as the post-swing groove and elegant blend of horns with Tomeka Reid's bowed cello on "Shadow Boxer's Delight" or the way Reed and Tomas Fujiwara forge the same sort of buoyant sea of polyrhythms that Ra's multi-drummer lineups did. But this group uses historical detritus to serve its own needs, creating vibrant and flexible new work in its own, muscular image. The music swings with ever-changing harmonies and instrumental hues, creating mobile, detail-rich settings for inspired improvisations that emerge from the din naturally rather than dutifully, like bas-relief eruptions that both complement the surroundings and draw sustenance from them. On "Grow Lights" harp-like ripples from guitarist Mary Halvorson, unpitched breaths by cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum, and shimmering chords from Adasiewicz embroider an extended solo by Abrams. —*Peter Margasak*

New Myth/Old Science: New Myth; Think Tank; 2000 West Erie; Shadow Boxer's Delight; Forget B; Grow Lights; Old Science. (44:30)
Personnel: Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Taylor Ho Bynum, cornet; Ingrid Laubrock, tenor saxophone; Tomeka Reid, cello; Mary Halvorson, guitar; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Joshua Abrams, bass; Tomas Fujiwara, drums; Mike Reed, drums, electronics; Nick Butcher, electronics (1, 4).
Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

Beyond / BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY


Mildred Gay (left), Donald Gay, Geraldine Gay and Evelyn Gay
GOSPEL FRIEND RECORDS

Traditional, Modern Spirits Rejoice

Recorded first in the early years of the Golden Age of Gospel (1948) and then sporadically until the mid-1970s, the Gay Family (sisters Evelyn, Mildred and Geraldine, their brother Donald, sometimes their mother, Fannie) brought the vigor of black church singing to bear on the sacred songs collected on ***God Will Take Care Of You*** **(Gospel Friend 1507; 78:36 ★★★★½)**.

The performances punching the Gays' tickets for entry into heaven were cut in the 1960s. And it's Evelyn who most poignantly takes a closer walk with thee. Featuring a strong, limber voice and a gift for blues piano and organ playing, she has the presence of a sanctified soul diva; her "Heavenly Home" and "From The Depths Of My Soul" are sublime. Other transcendent treats include Fannie surrendering to His will on "New World In My View." Geraldine reveals jazz as the cornerstone of her spirited piano playing. While the Gays may not have gotten a fair shake in the music business, they succeeded in squaring their faith with an earnest sense of conviction.

Ordering info: gospelfriend.com

Like the Gays, sightless Texan singer-pianist Arizona Dranes wielded a righteous power that now is getting noticed after decades of indifference. ***He Is My Story: The Sanctified Soul Of Arizona Dranes*** **(Tompkins Square 2677; 50:00 ★★★★)** combines a 44-page biography by Michael Corcoran with a CD of 16 songs waxed either in 1926 or '28. Not the wild speaking-in-tongues performer one might expect of a Pentecostal worshiper, Dranes controls her passion with a prudent deliberation. Formally schooled in classical music but savvy about the blues, boogie-woogie and especially ragtime, she has no doubts about the bliss awaiting her in the afterlife. Usually alone, Dranes is aided on a few songs by several apostolic singers and a worldly mandolin player.

Ordering info: tompskinssquare.com

Recent gospel recordings can't hold a candle to the aforementioned sets but a few of them merit notice. Polish blues woman Magda Piskorczyk transmits the affection she feels for the great Mahalia Jackson all through her tribute, ***Mahalia*** **(Artgraff 005; 65:05 ★★★)**. She's in good voice and her delivery purposeful, opening up "Get Away Jordan" and 13 other consecrated songs (plus "Summertime") to blues and soul.

Ordering info: artgraff.pl

Not impeded by an "in house" pop-r&b band, which at times deserves exile to a circle in Dante's Inferno for its secularized artificiality, the 33-member Shekinah Glory Ministry gets the emotional core of new spiritual songs recorded live at their home church in the southern suburbs of Chicago. ***Surrender*** **(Kingdom 3050; 75:58 ★★½)** benefits from the excitability (and occasional calmness) of Rev. H. Daniel Wilson and various lead singers, whose exhortations spur SGM to peak after peak of religious rapture.

Ordering info: kingdomrecordsinc.com

Singer and organist Moses Tyson Jr. is totally believable with the gospel feeling he displays on ***Music Re-Mastered & Sacred Organ Music*** **(TYMO Gospel Music 8172; 71:57/48:45 ★★★½)**. The first disc, an album released in 1999, is divided between r&b-gospel band tracks and solo instrumentals in which his gospel-cum-jazz Hammond reflects a controlled grace. The second disc is freshly recorded solo organ. "Precious Lord" and 11 more Sunday-morning favorites further attest to Tyson's virtuosity and emotional strength.

Ordering info: mosestysonjr.com

On ***Amazing Grace*** **(Tyscot 984197; 51:42 ★★★)**, Bishop Rance Allen—a pioneer of gospel/soul/rock—works his voice hard to convey good original songs in praise of his Maker. His outpourings of warm spirit are set by musical director Chris Byrd to passable pop-r&b. But strings and programmed drums spoil Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready." Bonus: a high-quality DVD documentary. **DB**

Ordering info: therance allengroup.com

Denise Donatelli
Soul Shadows
SAVANT 2117
★★★½

Critic John McDonough once stated that vocalist Denise Donatelli "slides between the role of singer and musician with the cool acrobatics of an athlete"—and Donatelli's latest release, the coolly adventurous *Soul Shadows*, shows that she remains in Olympian form.

From the album's floating and sparsely arranged opener "All Or Nothing At All" to the bittersweet closer "Too Late Now," her tonal consistency, phrasing and sense of time are all polished and expressive. Donatelli seems committed to serving each song through her vocals, rather than employing the song as a vehicle for virtuosic bombast. A philosophical distinction, perhaps, but one that makes *Soul Shadows* infinitely more enjoyable than it could have been if captained by an equally skilled, yet less mature and sensitive, vocalist.

Arrangements and music direction on *Soul Shadows* come courtesy of Geoff Keezer, who also contributes buoyant solos and comping on piano. Keezer clearly knows Donatelli's voice well, giving her enough instrumental support for the tracks to feel full, but leaving her ample space to ply her craft. Ramon Stagnaro's acoustic guitar contributions are notable as well, adding intrigue and bounce to the bossa-flavored title track, among others.

Donatelli and her cohorts take risks with song choice and arrangement, and that's mostly a good thing. "When I Looked Again" melds fluidly with Donatelli's vocal approach, and the melodies of the wistful "Ocean" seem to blend effortlessly with Keezer and Stagnaro's accompaniment. "Postcards And Messages" hits on interesting themes of tech-tweaked communication, dances on a lively arrangement with strings and percussion, and features an assured guest vocal from Peter Eldridge, but feels like it's trying too hard thanks to cumbersome lyrics. —*Michael Gallant*

Soul Shadows: All Or Nothing At All; No Better; Another Day; A Promise (Someplace Called Where); Soul Shadows; Ocean; Postcards And Messages; When I Looked Again; Ange; Too Late Now. (50:07)
Personnel: Denise Donatelli, vocals; Geoffrey Keezer, piano; Peter Sprague, electric and acoustic guitar; Ramon Stagnaro, acoustic guitar; Carlitos del Puerto, bass; Alex Acuña, percussion; Walter Rodriguez, percussion; Nicholas Stoup, percussion; Tim Garland, soprano sax; Steve Huffsteter, trumpet; Peter Eldridge, vocal duet, "Postcards and Messages"; Yutaka Yokokura, background vocal (5, 9); Sarah Thornblade, violin; Songa Lee, violin; Alma Lisa Fernandez, viola; Matt Funes, viola; Giovanna Clayton, cello; Susan Wulff, double bass.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Paul Kogut
Turn Of Phrase
BLUJAZZ 3395
★★★½

Guitarist Paul Kogut left New York academia to build his playing and recording profile in Chicago. On this third outing of mostly original pieces he's joined by two of New York's finest: bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash. The unassumingly swinging Kogut is a clean player, picking with his thumb and dealing out single-note phrases. When he drops occasional chords into his phrases and lines, it's a tonic for a uniformly low-key outing. Mraz's virile support and lyrical solos and Nash's invigorating drumwork supply creative tension.

Kogut's approach to phrasing is distinctive. He takes his time, lets final notes ring and doesn't resort to filler. He's also lyrical; his entire meditation on "Body And Soul" could have come out of the mouth of a singer. But at nearly 10 minutes in length, Kogut defies Dizzy Gillespie's dictum that if it can't be said in three choruses, it can't be said. The rhythmic fours that Kogut exchanges with Lewis' peppery snare work on "Days Of Wine And Roses" show that he's thought long and hard about the metric possibilities of guitar. As prolix an improviser as Kogut is, his attack and dynamic level remain mostly level throughout this album. As Mraz and Lewis bubble up underneath him, they probably wanted to be let out of their cages. —*Kirk Silsbee*

Turn Of Phrase: So That Happened; About You; Know It? I Wrote It!; Body And Soul; Days Of Wine And Roses; Sister Cheryl; Wayne Shorter Solo Medley; Back-Woods Song/Ramblin'; Especially When It Rains; Turn Of Phrase; Blue In Green. (72:12)
Personnel: Paul Kogut, electric and acoustic guitars; George Mraz, acoustic bass; Lewis Nash, drums.
Ordering info: blujazz.com

Paul Giallorenzo's Gitgo
Emergent
LEO 641
★★★

Paul Giallorenzo wears his influences on his sleeve. Immersed in the Chicago improvising scene, the pianist has processed quite a few lexicons that have been the focus of musicians who have gravitated around that musical sphere.

Emergent is therefore imbued with some key sources of inspiration. The influence of Steve Lacy is most obvious on Giallorenzo's protean and effective writing. The three pieces in question go as far as featuring Mars Williams on soprano saxophone, although the reed player stays true to himself. The other references are mostly local. "Spatialist" is a mournful and respectful tribute to a revered Chicago figure, the late Fred Anderson, and its slow pace tactfully recalls the way the legendary saxophonist enjoyed developing his ideas. Ken Vandermark's shadow hovers over "Improgaf," and Giallorenzo's occasional use of vamps is in a similar vein as that of another overlooked Chicago band, Herculaneum. To round out the set, the pianist indulges into a nod to the tradition with the old-fashioned "The Swinger."

What is most intriguing about this project is that most of the artists who have informed Giallorenzo's expression have little use for the piano (by design or necessity). His challenge then is to find a place for his instrument. He does so through a non-virtuosic approach that lets him inhabits the landscape without drawing too much attention to himself. And one has to look towards Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg or Thelonious Monk to find affinities.

As a leader, Giallorenzo elicits fully adequate performances from his teammates, but knowing what they all are capable of, they sound a tad too constrained. More personal material or at least the integration of influences in a less obvious fashion might have helped open up the whole process. —*Alain Drouot*

Emergent: On Your Marks; Want It; Slowed Roll; Spatialist (for Fred Anderson; Obelaskism; Improgaf; The Swinger; Spring Chicken. (53:16)
Personnel: Paul Giallorenzo, piano; Jeb Bishop, trombone; Mars Williams, saxophones; Anton Hatwich, bass; Marc Riordan, drums.
Ordering info: leorecords.com

Felipe Salles
Departure
TAPESTRY 76020
★★★★

On his fifth leader outing, saxophonist Felipe Salles combines the influences of his native Brazil with compositional techniques gleaned from 20th-century classical composers such as Béla Bartók and Arnold Schoenberg. It's a combination that sounds like it absolutely shouldn't work, but Salles manages to navigate those treacherous shoals, crafting pieces that juggle intriguing complexity with buoyant rhythms and lush colors.

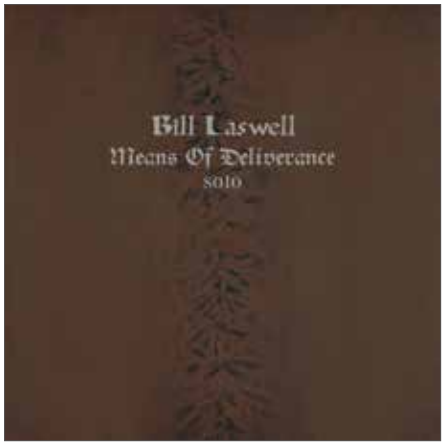
The disc begins with the title tune, where the composer weaves a tense minor-key tapestry from the combination of his own multitracked voice with those of his bandmates. His flute see-saws the opening melody with Keala Kaumeheiwa's bass and Laura Arpiainen's violin; his tenor soars in tandem with Randy Brecker's trumpet; his bass clarinet swerves alongside Kaumeheiwa through sudden turns of phrase during Brecker's solo.

Both of those modernist mentors are paid explicit homage: Bartók on the mesmerizing "Béla's Reflection," which showcases Salles' serpentine soprano in a reedy Middle Eastern dance with Nando Michelin's piano; and "Schoenberg's Error" takes the legendarily austere composer's concepts for a muscular spin full of jittery percussion from Bertram Lehmann and some fierce blowing by the leader.

In the past, Salles has explored this conjunction of styles with a larger ensemble, which has granted him the breadth of sound and color necessary to embody his jazz, Brazilian and classical inspirations. What's most fascinating about *Departure* is his success in translating that approach to a more nimble small band without losing any of the richness or diversity.

—Shaun Brady

Departure: Departure; Seagull's Island; Béla's Reflection; Maracatu D'Orleans; Awaiting; B's Blues; Schoenberg's Error; Adagio Triste; Natural Selection. (67:28)
Personnel: Felipe Salles, tenor and soprano saxes, flutes, bass clarinet; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Nando Michelin, piano; Keala Kaumeheiwa, bass; Bertram Lehmann, drums and percussion; Laura Arpiainen, violin.
Ordering info: sallesjazz.com



Bill Laswell
Means Of Deliverance
INNERHYTHMIC 024
★★★★

Many people who've heard the name Bill Laswell may have forgotten that his main axe has been the plugged-in bass, not the studio. With both hats, Laswell's sonic vocabulary has transcended so many styles and idioms, he is without peer when it comes to not only production work but overall musical design and playing. Which is what makes *Means Of Deliverance* sound so radical. Here's his first acoustic solo bass recording. Laswell's excursions float somewhere between the meditative and simple folk material.

Laswell's jazz cred is solid but only shows its face here and there as he riffs and improvises on the melodies he devises. The flowing "A Dangerous Road" is anything but. Built around a basic progression, this medium-tempo song allows for space and room as Laswell's impeccably recorded bass roams, pauses, returns to the melody. "Ouroboros" carries the gait of a surfer tune along the lines of "Pipeline," the song's lilt furthered by Laswell's adept use of harmonics and string pops, single lines wafting over the bottom not unlike a breeze or the sound of a car driving by an open window late at night. This all seems possible because Laswell can make magic in the studio but also because of his Warwick Alien fretless four-string acoustic bass guitar. From start to finish, *Means Of Deliverance* has no overdubbing; perhaps an occasional loop with digital pedal.

The modal "Bagana/Sub Figura X," along with using a sample of an Ethiopian stringed instrument, presents Ethiopian singer Ejigayehu "Gigi" Shibabaw, her high pitch moving around and along Laswell's ostinatos and filigrees like water over rocks in a stream. The album's centerpiece of calm, "Aeon," proffers reassurance and more floating lines.

If there's a downside to *Means Of Deliverance*, it has to do with stretches that sometimes sound more like sketches, the material mirroring itself from track to track. But Laswell also communicates real life here, full of memories and incredible ease and comfort. —*John Ephland*

Means Of Deliverance: Against The Upper House; A Dangerous Road; Ouroboros; Buhala; Bagana/Sub Figura X; In Falling Light; Aeon; Epiphaneia; Lightning In The South; Low Country. (45:05)
Personnel: Bill Laswell, acoustic bass guitar, effects; Ejigayehu "Gigi" Shibabaw, voice (5).
Ordering info: innerhythmic.com

Kenny Drew Jr.
Coral Sea
RANDOM ACT RECORDS 1009
★★★½

In his first pure trio recording in more than a decade, pianist Kenny Drew Jr. selected a group who had never recorded together. The results, though, are more intimate than would be expected.

Drew's "Coral Sea," which first appeared on 1998's *Rainbow Connection*, is livelier this time around, but still carries the same weight. His 1992 composition "This One's For Bill" is given a similar update. Aside from these two originals, the group turns to standards, interpreting everything from Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" to Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-ning." His reading of the Monk classic is a bit frenetic, with Drew's melody leading into a roiling drum solo before the pianist hits overdrive with a bubbly, frothy solo.

Most of the disc sits in the mid- to up-tempo range, with Drew decelerating a bit. The penultimate track, a medley of Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Eu Te Amo" and "Someone To Light Up My Life," is Drew's most exposed turn, where he rejects the bombast favored on the

other tunes for an introspective performance. Even then, though, a big crescendo leading to musical fireworks isn't far away. The disc ends with Cole Porter's "Dream Dancing," with drummer Marty Morrell laying down a splashy swing beat, moving to the ride cymbal for a bluesy, rousing solo by Drew. —*Jon Ross*

Coral Sea: In Your Own Sweet Way, Very Early, Coral Sea, Minor Sights, Gloria's Step, My Love, Ryhthm-a-ning, This One's For Bill, Eu Te Amo/Somone To Light Up My Life, Dream Dancing. (65:39)
Personnel: Kenny Drew Jr., piano; Jon Burr, bass; Marty Morell, drums.
Ordering info: randomactrecords.com

Roger Davidson Trio
We Remember Helen
SOUNDBRUSH 1024
★★★

The promoters, producers and presenters who work to make sure jazz musicians find and connect with their audience usually only find acknowledgment on the inner sleeves of CDs, somewhere in the thank-yous and credits that get skimmed over on the way to finding personnel and liner notes.

Helen Keane garnered a greater fame than most of her compatriots, mainly through her 17-year role as Bill Evans' manager, which ended with the legendary pianist's death in 1980. She also served as a producer and advocate for countless others prior to her own death in 1996, including Art Farmer, Chris Connor and Barbara Carroll. Another musician was classically based pianist Roger Davidson, whose first trio session she produced in 1991. That album remained on the shelf for many years—until it was finally released as *Ten To Twelve*—but Davidson never forgot the part she had played in his nascent career, and 20 years after they worked together he entered the studio to honor her.

It was on that trio date that Keane introduced Davidson to bassist David Finck, with whom he's worked extensively ever since. Finck is on hand for *We Remember Helen* along with Lewis Nash, and the trio's homage reflects on Keane with a set of warm, tender swing.

Evans is represented by "Waltz For Debby," with its original, delicate lullaby form intact, leant added poignance by its suggestion of a final slumber, especially through Finck's weeping bowed solo. Davidson contributes two original compositions dedicated to Keane.

The relaxed "A Time For Helen" was penned shortly after their initial collaboration, while the elegiac title tune was created just after her memorial service. —*Shaun Brady*

We Remember Helen: Yesterdays; What's New; Whisper Not; Charade; A Tune For Helen; We Remember Helen; Beautiful Love; How Deep Is The Ocean; Soul Search; Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho; Dance Of Faith; The Way He Captured You; Early Autumn; All The Things You Are; Waltz For Debbie. (67:22)
Personnel: Roger Davidson, piano; David Finck, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.
Ordering info: soundbrush.com

David Hazeltine
The New Classic Trio
SHARP NINE RECORDS 1048
★★★★

Fifteen years ago pianist David Hazeltine released *The Classic Trio*, his first of several recordings for Sharp Nine. Now comes *The New Classic Trio* with bass great George Mraz and Hazeltine's longtime partner in the co-op band One For All, drummer Joe Farnsworth. On these outings Hazeltine has tweaked well-known standards with some clever harmonic and rhythmic twists, rather than radically reinventing them, while also paying tribute to some important piano influences and mentors.

This time out, he tips his hat to pianists Cedar Walton (on a lyrical treatment of his beautiful ballad "I'll Let You Know"), Bud Powell (on a vibrant, Latin-tinged rendition of his "I'll Keep Loving You") and his Milwaukee mentor Buddy Montgomery (on Montgomery's jaunty blues stroll "Hob Nob With Brother Bob"). A brisk rendition of Rodgers and Hart's "My Heart Stood Still" features Hazeltine and Farnsworth engaging in rapid-fire call-and-response that has the drummer channeling his inner Ed Thigpen with slick brushwork. The leader's jaunty "Blues For Sharpie" and his "The Rebound" adhere to the Sharp Nine swing credo, while his "Bossa For All" is underscored by Farnsworth's "Poinciana" beat on tom toms and incorporates a snippet of Clifford Brown's "Daahoud," further revealing Hazeltine's roots.

Mraz turns in stellar solos throughout and is showcased in a relaxed, midtempo rendition of the Harold Arlen-Johnny Mercer classic "Come Rain Or Come Shine." Drummer Farnsworth, who is fast becoming the Jimmy Cobb of his generation in terms of being a steadfast, reliably swinging presence on any bandstand, proves to be both a sensitive accompanist and inventive soloist whose penchant for melodicism on the kit never fails to surprise. —*Bill Milkowski*

The New Classic Trio: My Heart Stood Still; I Wish I Knew; Hob Nob With Brother Bob; I'll Let You Know; Blues for Sharpie; I'll Keep Loving You; Another Divergence; Bossa For All; The Rebound; Come Rain Or Come Shine. (57:21)
Personnel: David Hazeltine, piano; George Mraz, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums; Jose Alexis Diaz, conga (2, 6).
Ordering info: sharpnine.com

Historical / BY JOHN EPHLAND

Brecker Brothers Offered Their Own Trajectory Through '70s Sessions

A confession: I never listened to the Brecker Brothers' albums back in the day. So, hearing this package now, it's all those amazing collaborations reed player Michael Brecker and trumpeter Randy Brecker were on all before, during and after these recordings were made, that suddenly came rushing back. Their sounds were definitive as players, their take on the post-hard-bop-jazz-becoming-jazz-rock world capable of transcending genres and helping to lay the groundwork for all manner of session players in and outside of jazz.

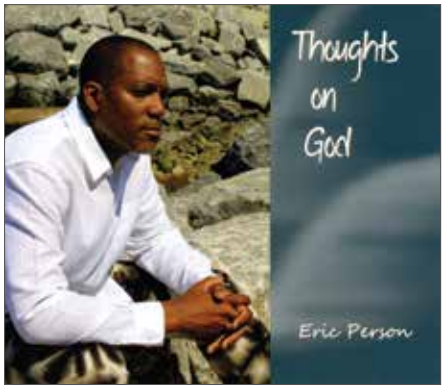
The Brecker Brothers: The Complete Arista Albums Collection **(Arista/Legacy 88697979622; 45:48/48:44/41:37/42:25/43:37/44:45/52:29/39:15 ★★★)** mines the vaults of so much 1970s soul/pop/funk/disco/dance music, the last two live discs from the 1978 Montreux Jazz Festival, an amalgam of the Brecker Brothers Band and Mike Mainieri's White Elephant band. The catalog of Brecker Brothers Band albums spans the years 1975 to 1981. This is a rare, important and illuminating document of a great band that was better live than in the studio.

Randy and Michael Brecker's presence on an album spelled magic, distinctive voices adding heft wherever they showed up, regardless of idiom. And yet, as the *Complete Arista Albums Collection* reveals, when the two of them were in charge, the material, beyond the first album, oftentimes risked becoming background music, their own voices strangely sublimated in ways they weren't when the two of them were on other people's sessions. In not a few places, the brothers bury their horns beneath a series of harmonically and even rhythmically uninteresting tracks that seemed designed for radio play.

Here and there in the studio, the brothers do "speak up," heard to great effect on *Heavy Metal Be-Bop* (half of it live, from 1978) and their last album, the redemptive, very player-friendly, personality-driven *Straphangin'* (1981), featuring hot percussive outlays from Sammy Figueroa, Manolo Badrena and Don Alias. From the git-go, you're reminded of the brothers' great session work with fellow Dreams bandmember Billy Cobham (not here) on the first track from their self-titled first album with Randy's playful, aptly titled "Some Skunk Funk." It's a magic formula: crisp charts, a driving yet loose beat and room for Randy and Michael to maneuver. Ditto Randy's even more driving "Rocks." The heat lingers throughout this strong yet uneven debut release and continues with cookers like the funky uptempo "Slick Stuff" and sly-groovin' dance number "Grease Piece" from *Back To Back* (1976), only to be slowly dissipated later on as oppressive disco beats and insipid vocals take over.

By the time the set gets to *Blue Montreux*, the music's been turned inside-out, the voices of Randy and Michael emerging in creative and novel arrangements that forsake the bump and grind, going for the loose and the interactive. Joined by Larry Coryell, Warren Bernhardt and Eddie Gomez, the 12 tunes are all originals, and include a variety of moods. Steve Khan's "Candles" is unlike anything else in this set, with Michael crying on soprano. Mainieri's funky "Blue Montreux" and a reprise of an even funkier "Rocks" serve as a stylistic bridge from early Brecker Brothers music into the more fusion-y and jazzier stuff that surfaces later. **DB**

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com



Eric Person
Thoughts On God
DISTINCTION RECORDS 4008
★★★★½

Thoughts On God could be the career-defining album that Eric Person needs to garner greater recognition.

When Person first emerged on the scene in the mid-'80s, he wielded a hard, acerbic tone on the alto sax that aligned him with the likes of Steve Coleman and Greg Osby. Almost a decade later, his piercing sound and elliptical phrases made him an ideal choice for the World Saxophone Quartet during the ensemble's initial personnel shakeups. Person has since softened his tone without sacrificing the urgency of some of his melodicism. His compositional acumen has also excelled. With the large ensemble, loaded with bass and woodwinds, played by such stellar musicians as tenor saxophonist and clarinetist Patience Higgins, trumpeter James Zollar and baritone saxophonist Scott Robinson, the music exudes majestic ebullience.

With shades of Duke Ellington, Mary Lou Williams and Julius Hemphill, *Thoughts On God* hits some of its high points on tranquil pieces like the "Soothes The Soul," which features a delightful clarinet solo from Higgins, and "Never Far From His Grace," a haunting ballad marked by another magnificent solo from Higgins, this time on tenor saxophone. Person, on soprano saxophone, gets improvisational spotlight on the Caribbean-flavored "The Blessing," on which he unravels a brief aside reminiscent of John Coltrane.

The disc shines during many of its driving moments, too, especially "Joy Complete," where drummer Shinnosuke Takahashi and bassist Adam Armstrong steer the horn section with quicksilver momentum. The song also showcases a nimble piano solo from Adam Klipple and soulful, almost honky-tonk essay from tenor saxophonist Sylvester "Sly" Scott. Person reveals some of his Wayne Shorter influences during the initial blast of "Back To Center." —*John Murph*

Thoughts On God: All Those With Ears Hear; And Then There Was Light; Creation Celebration; Soothes The Soul; Never Far From His Grace; Back To Center; Song Of Praise; Joy Complete; The Blessing; The Lighted Way; Gratitude; Faith Forward. (75:06)
Personnel: Eric Person, alto and soprano saxophones, flute; Craig Bailey, alto saxophone and flute; Patience Higgins, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Sylvester "Sly" Scott, tenor saxophone and flute; Scott Robinson, baritone saxophone; James Zollar, trumpet, flugelhorn; Duane Eubanks, trumpet, flugelhorn; Curtis Hasselbring, trombone; Isrea Butler, trombone, bass trombone; Bryan Carrott, vibraphone; Adam Klipple, piano; Adam Armstrong, bass; electric bass; Shinnosuke Takahashi, drums.
Ordering info: ericperson.com

Harry Allen & Scott Hamiltlon
'Round Midnight
CHALLENGE 3348
★★★★

Here's a serving of gourmet comfort food heated to perfection. The recipe is a classic one—two tenors stirred into a lean and limber rhythm section—but not one we hear much of these days. Maybe we can trace it to the pre-War Count Basie band when the world began to notice the contrasts between Herschel Evans and Lester Young. Competition matured into conversation with the Al Cohn-Zoot Sims partnership in the '50s and '60s, then seemed to disappear. Scott Hamilton emerged in the '70s just in time to collect the blessings of his surviving predecessors and solidify his own keeper-of-the-flame eminence.

Since then he has found few peers. One is Harry Allen. Twelve years Hamilton's junior, he arrived too late for any professional overlap. But his touch and tone are as sure and rooted as Hamilton's, and they have engaged on three previous CDs since 2003. They exchange sentences with a fluency and clairvoyance so rhythmically seamless, their identities often

seem interchangeable. Hamilton offers the more piping, clean-shaven sound, while Allen still has a bit of Websterish stubble in his bark. Look for it in the occasional hot, throaty growl that was common in the classic big-tone tenor sound of Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Illinois Jacquet and just about any r&b tenor who ever played. —*John McDonough*

'Round Midnight: My Melancholy Baby; Great Scott; How Am I To Know; The Opener; Baubles, Bangles And Beads; Hey Lock!; Lover; Flight Of The Foo Birds; 'Round Midnight. (66:22)
Personnel: Scott Hamilton, Harry Allen, tenor saxophone; Rossano Sportiello, piano; Joel Fobbes, bass; Chuck Riggs, drums.
Ordering info: challengerecords.com

Enrico Zanisi Trio
Life Variations
CAM JAZZ 3313
★★★½

The first sound on Italian pianist Enrico Zanisi's deeply satisfying trio CD is the resonant, woody bass of Joe Rehmer. Unaccompanied and playing almost to himself, he lays down a short, four-bar phrase of loping quarter and half notes, a figure that bleeds over bar lines and establishes a smooth, easy feel to the tune. Zanisi, who can bring a subtle touch to his piano for one phrase and then sharp, steady accents the next, echoes the line with his left hand while drilling eighth-note chords to move the piece along. What once was drifting now has a groove, aided by Alessandro Paternesi's funky kit work, and "Life Variations" takes off.

As on the title track, Zanisi is the star of the disc; he takes beautiful solo turns on the baroque-turned-scintillating slow jam "Carosello/Troppo Scuro" and the orchestral "Inno." But his trio music is as much about the band as it is about Zinisi himself. The group creates delicate soundscapes, with Zanisi painting broadly with gradual contrasts in dynamics and accents, as well as minor tweaks in rhythm.

For the most part, the tunes don't start off as aggressive or loud, but Zanisi can get confrontational in his deliberately articulated solo runs, and most of the tracks contain an orchestral swell to a climatic crescendo. Zanisi's tunes are about the slow build. His modern original pieces—in which blues, bebop, swing and classical music coexist—are thoroughly complete compositions.

Such range in a band needs to be recorded with care, and this step is evident, giving Zanisi's piano a singular presence in solo introductions, but letting all the instruments shine equally in a bright, lively environment. *Life Variations* shows the 22-year-old Italian pianist on the rise, aware of his classical past, but dedicated to his future in jazz. —*Jon Ross*

Life Variations: Life Variations; The Artisan; Lied; Spread; Inno; Il Popolo Sovrano; Carosello/Troppo Scuro; Piciula Song; Aufklarung; The Fable Of Mr. Low; In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning. (52:41)
Personnel: Enrico Zanisi, piano; Joe Rehmer, bass; Alessandro Paternesi, drums.
Ordering info: camjazz.com

Ernest Dawkins
Afro Straight
DELMARK 5001
★★★½

Going straight through the middle is sometimes the most provocative route a jazz musician can take, especially if one has made a legacy of skirting along the edges. Saxophonist Ernest Dawkins used that strategy splendidly on his refreshing new disc, *Afro Straight*.

He eschews from the often heady concepts and far-flung improvisations that typify his work with his longtime combo, the New Horizons Ensemble, and with the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble, for a program of standards that in lesser hands would appear to be hardly more than a quick blowing sessions. Sure, other avant-garde-leaning musicians in the past have cut the surprising straightahead record—especially some of Dawkins' AACM companions—with mixed results, many of which coming out as obligatory dates to silence naysayers.

Dawkins brings sly ingenuity to the fore without sounding as if he's trying to deliver unnecessarily complicated makeovers for the sake of callow exercise. The gospel take of Billie Holiday's "God Bless The Child" is one of the most rewarding renderings to come along in a long time. Here, he articulates the melody with little embellishments by way of his brawny tone on the tenor saxophone, allowing the plaintive melody to luxuriate inside Ben Paterson's glowing accompaniment on Hammond B3 organ. Elsewhere, Dawkins gives Wayne Shorter three shout-outs with bracing readings of "United," "Footprints" and "Juju." On all three, he incorporates rugged Afro-Latin rhythms, brought to life by drummer Isaiah Spencer, bassist Junius Paul and percussionists Ruben Alvarez and Greg Penn. They propel Dawkins' rough-hewn improvisations to great heights, especially on the delightful "United" and the blistering "Juju."

—John Murph

Afro Straight: Mr. PC; United; Afro Straight; Central Park West; Woody 'n' You; Softly As In A Morning Sunrise; God Bless The Child; Footprints; Old Man Blues; Juju. (59:29)
Personnel: Ernest Dawkins, alto and tenor saxophones, percussion; Corey Wilkes, trumpet; Willerm Delisfort, piano; Junius Paul, bass; Isaiah Spencer, drums; Ruben Alverez, congas, bongos, chimes, shaker (3, 4, 8); Greg Carmouche, congas (1, 6); Greg Penn, congas (3, 10); Ben Paterson, Hammond B3 organ (7).
Ordering info: delmark.com

Raynald Colom
Rise

JAZZ VILLAGE 9570003

★★★½

Rise, the fourth album from French trumpeter Raynald Colom, is, in a word, generous. In under an hour, it offers quintet tracks, orchestra pieces, spoken word showdowns and a collaboration with captivating chanteuse Sofia Rei. One could argue that Colom is suffering from an identity crisis, but it's more likely that he merely has a lot to say.

Rounded out by pianist Aruan Ortiz, bassist Rashaan Carter, drummer Rudy Royston, and searching tenor saxophonist Jure Pukl, Colom's acoustic five-piece is at the center of *Rise*. Besides backing Rei and hip-hopper Core Rhythm, the combo offers three tunes on its own, the most interesting of which is "La Llegada." The key moment comes after the head, when the rhythm section is left on its own to engage in a slippery conversation fueled by bright, fluid keys work, clever, skittering percussion and greasy, woozy bass. Potent and passionate, the passage argues for a trio album from Ortiz, Carter and Royston.

The spoken-word tracks are similarly scintillating. New York's Core Rhythm testifies in a voice both detached and focused, playing it cool but never skimping on seriousness. "Rise up, live strong, all life must be right to grow," declares Rhythm over the lurching, reflective groove of "The Rising." It's a simple sentiment, but it matches the straightforward agenda.

The album's orchestral moments—a pair of interludes dubbed "Hope" and "The Journey"—are some of the best places to hear Colom play. Over the majestic strings and insistent hand percussion of "Hope," the trumpeter is clear and cutting, like a ray of light breaking through the clouds. And "The Journey," which bears more than a passing resemblance to Radiohead's "Pyramid Song," sees Colom coiling and unspooling augustly over just strings. Backed by the quintet, Rei emerges halfway through the album for "Avec Le Temps," a somber ballad by Leo Ferre. Deep and sensitive, Rei's performance is matched only by Colom's trumpet, a force of spirit and feeling. *—Brad Farberman*

Rise: Ouverture; El'Baka; Interlude #1: Hope; La Llegada; Avec Le Temps; Interlude #2: The Journey; In A Mist; The Rising. (53:45)
Personnel: Raynald Colom, trumpet; Jure Pukl, tenor saxophone; Aruan Ortiz, piano; Rashaan Carter, bass; Rudy Royston, drums; Sofia Rei, vocals (5); Core Rhythm, spoken word (2, 8); Philippe Colom, bass clarinet (3, 6, 8); Roger Blavia, percussion (3, 8); Eclectic Colour Orchestra (3, 6, 8).
Ordering info: jazzvillagemusic.com

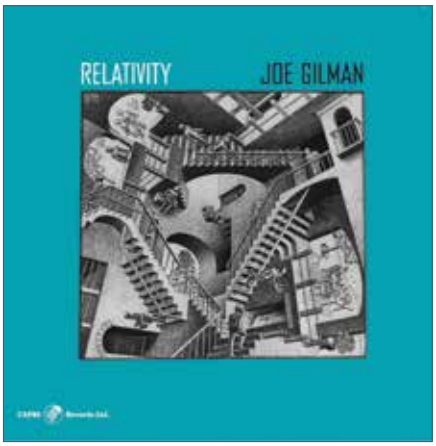
Joe Gilman
Relativity

CAPRI RECORDS 74119

★★★

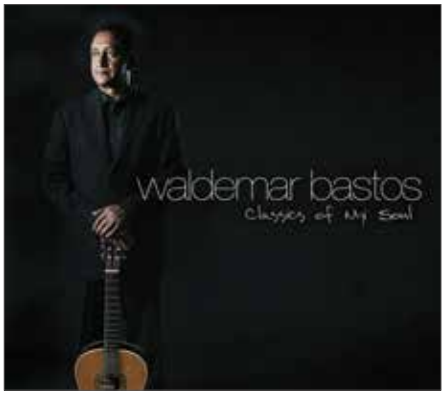
Joe Gilman loves art—or maybe he's just engaged by multi-layered pieces of expression. The pianist's last disc, 2010's *Americanvas*, used 20th Century paintings as objects of inspiration. With *Relativity*, he's focused on artist M.C. Escher, paying tribute to his works by building intricate, geometric compositions.

"Waterfall," the second track on the disc, uses the complex geometric construct from the beginning, as Gilman creates a space where the lone trumpet of Nick Frenay moves into a quasi-fugue, a dissonant entanglement with the superb tenor saxophonist Chad Lefkowitz-Brown. The entire time, as the tension rises, Gilman is a calming presence with lush chords, occasionally echoing the melody for added support. In fact, Gilman exudes this subtle power throughout most of the disc, providing a grounding force for the horns when needed. On the fragile ballad "Three Worlds" *Relativity* turns into almost a trio, with Lefkowitz-Brown only providing counterpoint on clarinet toward the end. In notes to the composition, Gilman explains



that the piece revolves around the number three, a guiding principle for everything from length (33 measures) to the harmonic approach. For that much complexity, the tune is a gentle respite for the puzzles about to come—up-tempo, frenzied exercises that have all the musicians playing at full bore. *—Jon Ross*

Relativity: Three Spheres; Waterfall; Three Worlds; Smaller And Smaller; Covered Alley; Encounter; Snow; Day And Night; Sky And Water; Dewdrop; Ascending And Descending. (63:24)
Personnel: Joe Gilman, piano, Fender Rhodes; Nick Frenay, trumpet, flugelhorn; Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Zach Brown, bass; Corey Fonville, drums.
Ordering info: caprirecords.com



Waldemar Bastos
Classics Of My Soul

ENJA J-9584

★★★½

In his native Angola, singer/guitarist Waldemar Bastos built himself into a versatile musician by playing whatever the occasion called for, from foreign rock to local folk. It was a trial that positioned him well to step seamlessly into the then-emerging stream of syncretic global music when he moved to Europe in the early 1980s.

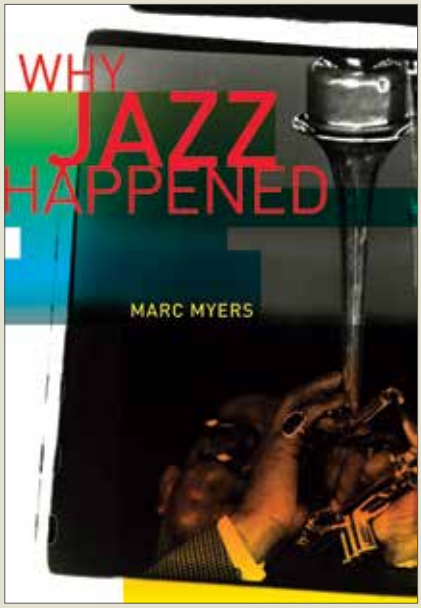
Since that time, Bastos has made a handful of energetic and engaging albums, smearing the lines between African, Latin American, European and North American forms into one big rhythmic smudge that's quite distinctively his own. *Classics Of My Soul*, as its title implies, is a departure from that norm, leaving aside the beat for a collection of darkly tinged, reflective ballads, complete with understated appearances from the London Symphony Orchestra.

The songs, nearly half originals, were chosen for their personal meaning to Bastos; his notes position it as a record for Angola, where he remains well-loved. Bastos revisits his 1983 debut album three times, and the sleek new reading of "Teresa Ana" directly highlights the uniqueness of this album in his catalog, holding the original's samba-esque rhythmic thrust in reserve for fully half the song.

Bastos is nearing 60, so this album's quiet reflection on where he's been seems appropriately timed, even as his skills remain sharp. His guitar playing is more fluid that ever, and his voice, a low and powerful tenor, is expressive and clear, a fine match for the subdued music. Fans may need to adjust their expectations going in—this album is less eclectic than his previous output and less electric as well—but there is plenty to love about Bastos' quiet side. *—Joe Tangari*

Classics Of My Soul: M'biri! M'biri!; Humbi Humbi Yangue; Teresa Ana; Tata Ku Matadi; Pôr Do Sol; Aurora; Muxima; Calção Roto No Rabo; Perto E Longe; N'Duva; Velha Xica. (59:58)
Personnel: Waldemar Bastos, vocals, acoustic guitar; Derek Nakamoto, acoustic piano, B3, synth bass, synthesizers, rhythm loops; Mitchell Long, acoustic guitar; Brad Cummings, bass (1, 3, 7); Reggie Hamilton, bass (9); Rob Chiarelli, bass (5); Luis Conte, percussion; Valerie Pinkston, backing vocals; Lynne Fiddmont, backing vocals; Fred White, backing vocals (3, 7, 9); Emiko Susilo, backing vocals (2, 11); Sal Cracchiolo, trumpet (4, 7); Ira Nepus, trombone (4); Bill Brendle, accordion (8); Larry Corbet, cello (6); Darrin McCann, viola (6); Nick Ingham, conductor; Keiko Matsui, piano (10).
Ordering info: enjarecords.com

Social History of Jazz Takes On Broad Scope



Marc Myers' chronicle ***Why Jazz Happened*** **(University of California Press)**—an exploration of the social, economical, demographic and business roots in jazz history—might more appropriately be titled *How Jazz Evolved*. The author parses major non-musical events that occurred during the development of different subgenres, but aside from the opening chapters that introduce a bit of why jazz occurred, the book aims to dissect what was happening offstage and how changes in the broader cultural and political zeitgeist propelled the music forward.

Myers—an established critic and the man behind the excellent online jazz resource jazzwax.com—paints a picture, starting at the 1917 recording of the Original Dixieland Jass Band, of a music that progressed and adapted to the times due to more than simply the wherewithal of the musicians. This first jazz recording, made possible because smart engineers at Victor knew how to successfully record the Original Dixieland Jass Band's cacophonous sound where Columbia Records had failed, started this nearly 100-year evolution. Myers traces how competition among record companies, battles over copyright restrictions and the evolving technology of recorded sound helped jazz reach more people. The civil rights movement and myriad other social changes helped transform how jazz sounded.

A lot of chapters focus on the swing and bebop eras because the music, and the world around it, was changing so dramatically at that time. The rise of DJs, promoters, record labels and legislation that helped nurture musicians, like the G.I. Bill, all get full billing in the pages of *Why Jazz Happened*. He deals with the rock 'n' roll boom—which musicians first decried, then reluctantly embraced and finally used as inspiration—and the effects r&b had on jazz. Through it all, Myers talks with musicians who were there. The late Dave Brubeck is a particularly important source in talking about the broad impact of the G.I. Bill and West Coast jazz.

One of the more interesting sections of the book details the transition from 78 RPM records to LPs. This new technological innovation allowed jazz musicians to record longer tracks and feature improvisations on recordings. Myers writes in depth about the shift from bite-sized consumable jazz to the fully conceptualized album, which was something to be welcomed into the home and cherished. While this involved discussion of the recording industry, and how it changed the music, is interesting, some of his explorations seem a bit much. Occasionally, Myers' painstaking attention to detail leads him to discussions, which while interesting and informative, only cloud his goal.

Chronologically ascending up to the birth of fusion, each new subgenre in jazz is treated within the social and political constructs that made it happen. The last chapter, "Jazz Hangs On," tries to confront everything that changed jazz from 1972 to the present day. In such a vividly detailed and well-researched book, the last 40 years seems like an afterthought. This, however, does not detract from the comprehensive and compelling nature of the preceding pages and the story it tells of the outside forces that made this music flourish.

At the end of this concluding chapter, the book turns into a first-person postscript, with Myers taking a journey to search for the building where musicians from the Original Dixieland Jass Band helped jump-start the jazz age with no real blueprint for what they were about to do. He rides the elevator, thinking back to what it was like to be a nervous, anxious performer about to start a new genre.

Myers easily finds the New Orleans group's original recording space, which is now occupied by a men's accessory retailer. In a neat, tidy coda to *Why Jazz Happened*, he pops a disc of the Jass Band into a CD player and sits there, listening with the bemused owner of the business. This is one of the most musical points in the book. It's somewhat ironic, though, that to cover the highly energized and explosive genre of jazz, Myers has to turn the music down and look beyond the bandstand. **DB**

Ordering info: ucpress.edu

Using Classical Guitar Techniques in the Jazz Idiom

Most skilled guitarists have some knowledge of classical guitar techniques, and many players utilize them naturally without even realizing it.

I encourage any jazz guitar player to become familiar with classical guitar repertoire and the various techniques involved in performing it. Even if you don't intend to perform the repertoire, many of these techniques lend themselves to the jazz idiom quite well. Knowledge of classical guitar repertoire can make you a more creative jazz player.

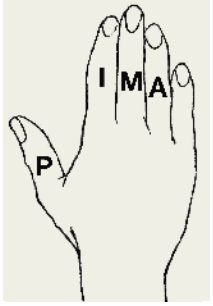
Let's begin by focusing on right hand technique. In classical guitar playing, the fingers of the right hand are used all the time, so developing independence for each finger is important. While using a pick allows for a more articulate attack as well as increased fluidity for single-line playing, it also has many limitations. These often tend to be in the areas of harmony and texture, as the number of notes we can play separately is limited by the use of the pick. Furthermore, using a pick can sometimes cause guitarists to ignore many other textural and musically interesting aspects of the instrument.

The technique known as "pulsing" is ideal for achieving good volume and a full tone on the guitar. This involves plucking the string by moving from the base knuckle of the right hand and following through with a quick relaxation of the finger immediately after releasing the string. The wrist should also stay straight to ensure that one pulls across the string at an angle, avoiding "snapping" it up against the fretboard.

The first application of right hand technique we'll explore is playing three- and four-note chord voicings using the fingers instead of a pick. Note that we designate the letters "p" for the thumb, "i" for the index, "m" for the middle and "a" for the ring finger. See Example 1.

Example 2a begins with eight bars of a familiar jazz chord progression. It is a very basic comping pattern of whole notes on each chord using the pick. These are shell voicings that consist of only the root, the third and seventh of each chord—the most essential harmonic information. The spacing of the notes and the need to mute strings make it difficult to execute with a pick. Now try playing these same chords without the pick, but instead using the fingers "p," "i" and "m" of the right hand as shown in Example 2b. Notice how using the fingers to pluck the notes makes it much easier to deal with the string spacing and the muted strings. It also enables you to avoid certain notes of the chords you otherwise couldn't if using the pick (particularly the fifths). In addition, using the fingers offers more control and precision because you are more "connected" to the chords. Now try playing Example 2c, which expands these chords to four-note voicings.

Example 1: Right Hand



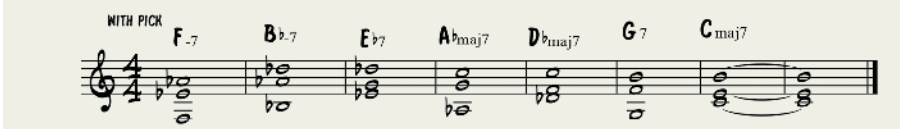
Here's where things get more interesting. Let's embellish and add some harmonic and rhythmic variety to the Cmaj7 chord in bars 7–8. First, diatonic chords are added to the Cmaj7 chord, which increase the harmonic rhythm (the ii and iii chords, Dmin7 and Emin7). Then rhythmic motion is added by applying different arpeggios instead of just whole notes. Arpeggiating these chords in four- or six-note patterns is much easier to do using the right hand fingers than with a pick, as shown in Examples 3a and 3b. These arpeggio patterns, which are only applied to the Cmaj7 here, can be added to any of the chords to increase motion and thicken the texture.

Example 4 is an eight-bar arrangement of the chord progression with melody notes added in the top voice, arpeggios underneath and additional harmonic embellishment. This type of texture is much easier when playing fingerstyle and is great as a solo arrangement.

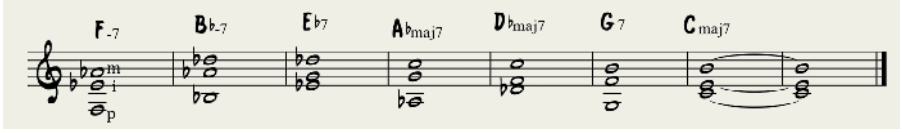

Eric DiVito

One technique jazz guitarists use frequently

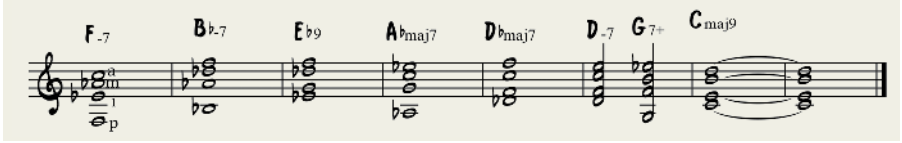
Example 2a



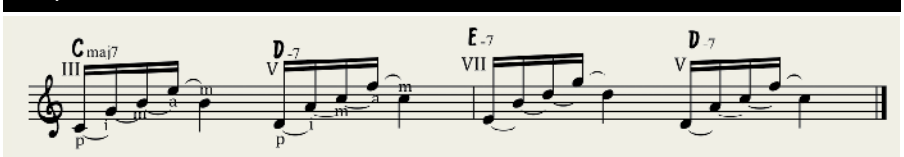
Example 2b



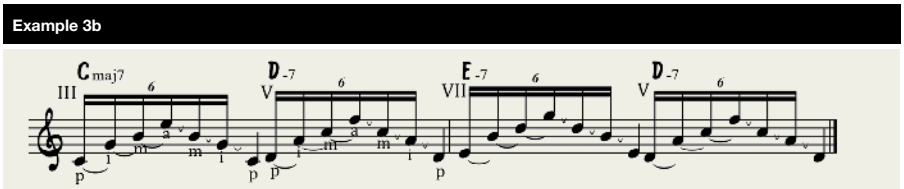
Example 2c



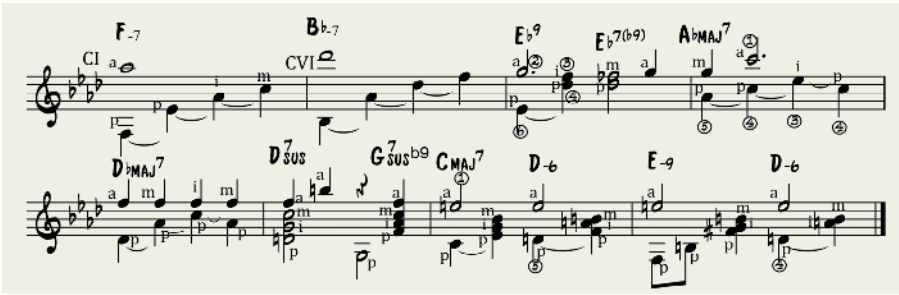
Example 3a



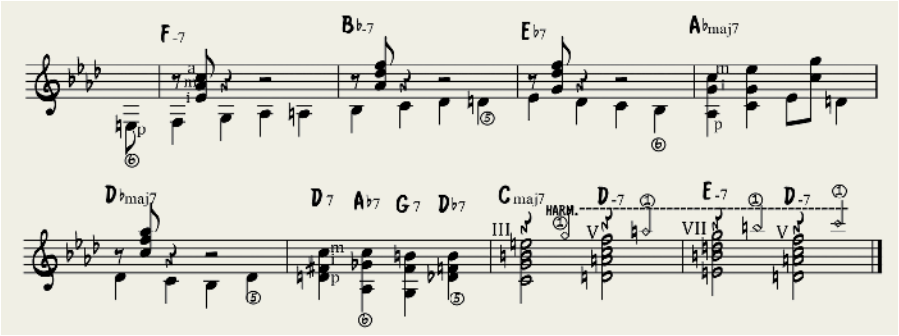
Example 3b



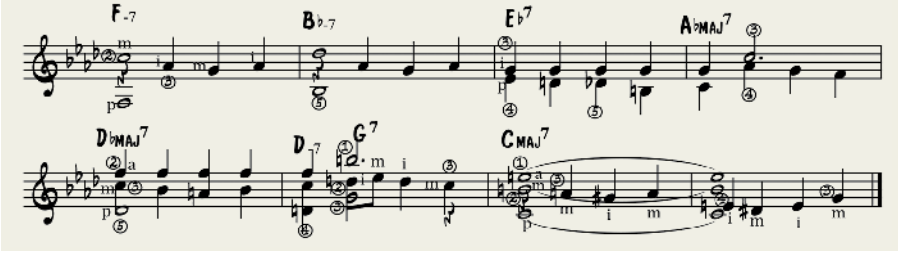
Example 4



Example 5



Example 6



in solo settings is comping with bass lines. In Example 5, this concept is applied to the same progression. The thumb ("p") is used to play the bass line while "i," "m" and "a" play the chords. Using the fingers is an easier and more precise way to handle the independence of the walking bass line and the chords above it. There is also more harmonic and rhythmic motion here, as well as some artificial harmonics at the end. These are played by fingering the notes normally with the left hand and touching the string with the "i" finger of the right hand 12 frets above the written pitch while plucking that string with the "p" or "a" finger. This would be impossible to execute with a pick.

In terms of left hand technique, there are some things that don't belong to a specific genre but tend to be common in classical music. One example is executing the movement of inner voices to create counterpoint when playing chords or melodies. Example 6, a more complex arrangement of the same progression, contains moving lines and weaving counterpoint. This type of texture creates some beautiful and interesting polyphony. Note that the harmony written here is less literal and more implied by the voice leading, as it would be in a Baroque invention or fugue.

After trying the right hand fingerings for each example, feel free to experiment using different ones that may work better for you. The key is to take advantage of the independence that using the right hand fingers offers, as well as gain more control and a better sense of "touch." **DB**

Recommend Studying:

- *Collected Works for Solo Guitar*, Heitor Villa-Lobos
- *The Solo Lute Works*, J.S. Bach
- *Pumping Nylon*, Scott Tenant
- *120 Studies for Right Hand Development*, Mauro Giuliani
- *Complete Joe Pass* (Mel Bay)
- *Harmonic Mechanisms for Guitar*, George Van Eps

GUITARIST AND EDUCATOR ERIC DIVITO'S LATEST RELEASE, *BREAKING THE ICE* (PIONEER JAZZ COLLECTIVE), DRAWS ON HIS COMMAND OF JAZZ AND CLASSICAL STYLES. VISIT DIVITO ONLINE AT ERICDIVITO.COM.

Ravi Coltrane's Tenor Saxophone Solo on 'Search For Peace'


Ravi Coltrane
TERI WOLF

On his 1996 debut CD *Moving Pictures* (RCA), saxophonist Ravi Coltrane presents a self-penned piece, "Search For Peace," for tenor sax, bass and percussion. Though the low percussion notes are tuned to A and E, implying an A chord, both Coltrane and bassist Lonnie Plaxico freely deviate from this tonal center. Because of this, we've opted to not present chord changes here. We've also started the solo transcription at 1:05 into the piece, where the bass starts interacting more melodically with the tenor sax.

Coltrane's phrasing through this entire section is very legato, but for approximately the first half he keeps his phrasing mostly 16th-note based. Around measure 34, Coltrane ups the energy by basing his improvisation more around 32nd notes. He relaxes into 16ths again at bar 45, but then to conclude his statement gives us almost three measures of densely packed 32nds, giving a sort of punctuation to the entire section.

Though the piece is fairly free harmonically, and Coltrane's lines are mostly scalar, he does put in some arpeggios in a manner that really helps to tie this section together. The first arpeggio we encounter is in measure 7, where in the second half of the measure he hits us with an Am7(♭5).

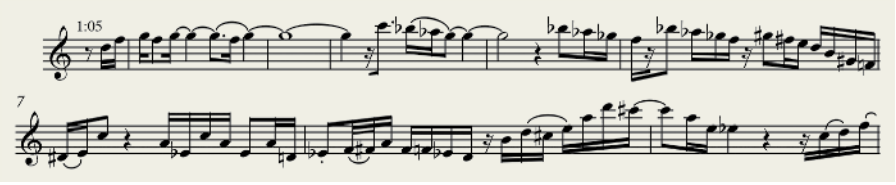
After a short scale idea, Coltrane jumps up an octave to play an A major arpeggio. With the ostinato in the percussion, his arpeggios fit over the low notes but present them in a different context, half-diminished changing to major. Coltrane brings back the half-diminished sound at the start of measure 25.

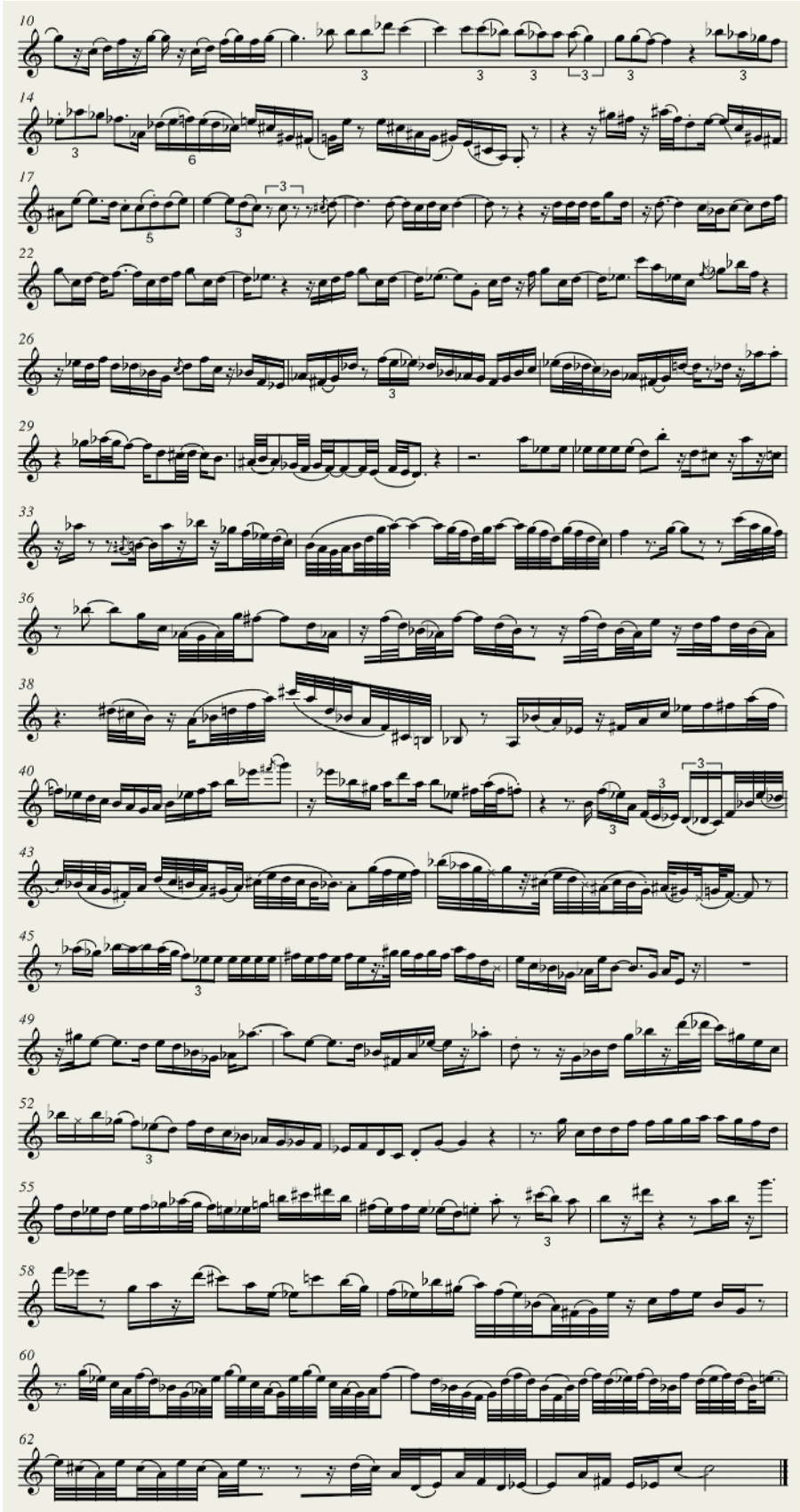
For the next arpeggio, Coltrane goes with something a bit more distant from the foundation. In bar 37 we hear a flurry of notes that create a B♭ dominant seventh chord, the A♭ and B♭ clashing with the A underneath. Of course, as a side-stepping gesture, this could resolve nicely to A. But on beat three of the next measure, Coltrane instead reuses the technique of changing the quality and gives us a B♭maj7 arpeggio, only with a #9 on the top.

Many more scalar lines occur before all of these ideas come back near the conclusion of Coltrane's solo. First, we get a hint of A7 in the middle of measure 58. Then in measure 60, Coltrane plays a string of blistering arpeggios, starting with the Am7(♭5), morphing this into an A♭maj7 (by lowering the root a half step), and in the next measure going down another half step to Gm7 and then morphing this into a B♭add11, reminding us of the B♭ arpeggios we heard back in measures 37 and 38.

He caps this off in bar 62 by returning to a straight A major triad, resolving down to the key implied by the percussionists. This could be the perfect ending for his solo, but he gives us some chromatic sounds and lands on a C natural, bringing us into a minor feel as a departure point for Plaxico's bass solo. **DB**

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





AAX Omni, B8 Pro O-Zone

Sabian's Cymbal Innovations

The AAX Omni and the B8 Pro O-Zone crash (pictured) are two new cymbal innovations from Sabian.

The AAX Omni cymbal could be described as a crash/ride, but that would compare the cymbal unfairly to all the crash/rides that have preceded it, many of which have been the result of compromise. The AAX Omni is Sabian's attempt to create a new genre of all-purpose cymbal. To quote Jojo Mayer, who helped develop the AAX Omni, "This is a go-anywhere, play-anywhere cymbal, and ultimately you can play any gig with just this one cymbal on your kit."

The Omni AAX is a medium-weight cymbal with an unlathed bell and inner half. The bell is similar to that of the AA Raw Bell Dry Ride, while the inner section has a machine-hammered finish. The outer half of the cymbal has a lathed finish that tapers to an extra-thin edge. The result is two completely different tonal areas of the cymbal with which to work—like getting two cymbals in one.

In a small-group setting, I found the cymbal to be remarkably diverse. Riding near the middle of the cymbal produced an appropriate amount of stick definition, and when I moved further to the edge, the cymbal started to get washier. I was still able to ride on the thinner, lathed outer edge, but during the louder passages I would have to move back in toward the center a bit. When I needed any type of actual crash, I moved to the edge of the cymbal and with a bit of shoulder from the stick was able to produce enough crash. The Omni AAX is on the brighter end of the spectrum, but the crashes did not overwhelm the group as long as I laid back a little while digging in. Even with the unlathed bell, I could apply a bit more velocity to the stick than I originally thought I'd be able to without upsetting the blend of the mix.

The B8 Pro O-Zone crashes are made from B8 bronze, an alloy that consists of 92 percent copper and 8 percent tin. Sabian suggests you don't think of the B8 line as an entry-level line, but rather as a line that has a different frequency response than the company's more expensive cymbals, such as the B20s.

One thing that's obvious about any O-Zone cymbal is the proliferation of large holes in its surface. For a number of years, Sabian has been pioneering the strategic placement of holes approximately 1.5 inch in diameter into perfectly fine cymbals. This effectively turns any cymbal into the trash-can version for that line, which can be a very exciting effect.

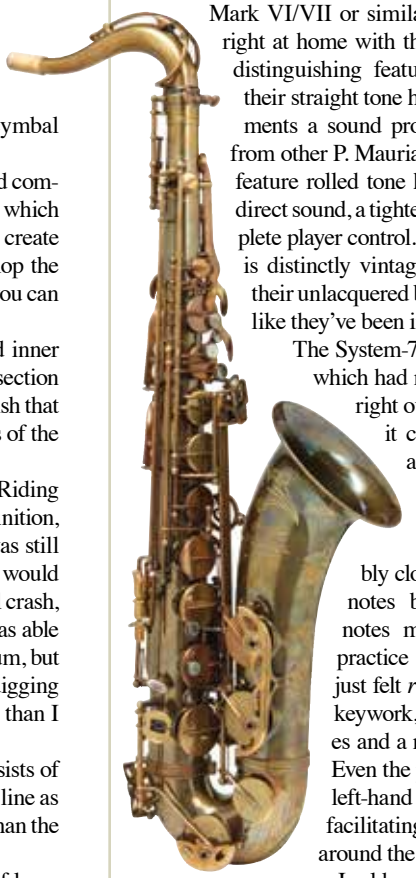
The initial attack is much less than a china-type cymbal, but the overall nature of the sound has a pleasantly dirty quality. For the size of the cymbal, the tone is higher than I was expecting. This is keeping with the B8 line's ability to penetrate in various musical situations due to its focus on the high end.

Overall, the B8 Pro O-Zones will provide you with a bright, trashy sound if you are looking for a sonic palette that can cut through the ensemble. *—Matt Kern*

Ordering info: sabian.com

P. Mauriat System-76 Tenor Sax (No High F#)

Vintage French Body



P. Mauriat now makes a version of its System-76 tenor saxophone without the high F# key. The resulting horn is astounding to play, a remarkable instrument that performs at the very highest level.

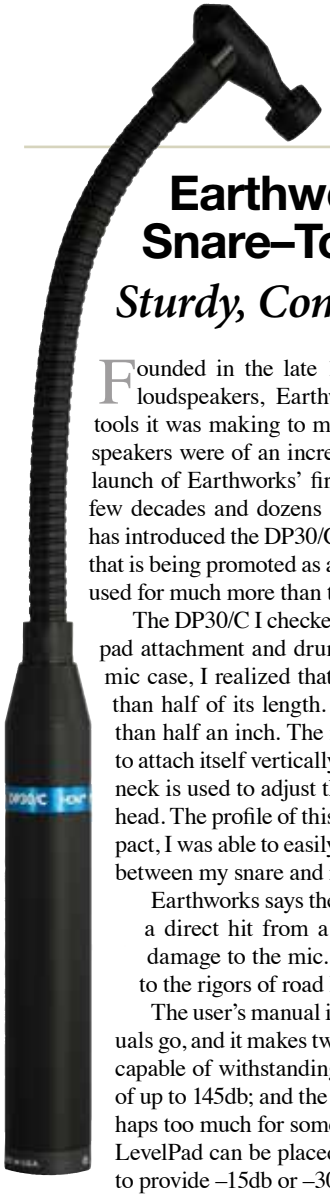
One thing that sets System-76 saxophones apart is their unique body tube design, which replicates the kind of resistance you would normally feel when playing a vintage French-made saxophone (like a Selmer Paris, Buffet or Dolnet). It makes a huge difference in the way the horns respond—if you came up playing a Selmer Mark VI/VII or similar vintage horn, you'll feel right at home with the System-76 line. Another distinguishing feature of System-76 saxes is their straight tone holes, which give the instruments a sound profile that's totally different from other P. Mauriat professional saxes, which feature rolled tone holes. The result is a more direct sound, a tighter core and a feeling of complete player control. The styling on these horns is distinctly vintage in appearance as well—their unlacquered brass bodies and necks look like they've been in service since the 1950s.

The System-76 tenor that I play-tested—which had no high F#—was gig-ready right out of the Pro-Tec fitted case it came in. Intonation was as accurate as a sax can get: Octaves lined up perfectly, and alternate fingering pitches were incredibly close to each other. Altissimo notes blew with ease, and low notes made the furniture in my practice room vibrate. This horn just felt *right*, with reasonably small keywork, well-placed finger touches and a nice tightness in the action. Even the placement and shape of the left-hand thumb rest was perfect for facilitating hand and wrist motion around the octave key.

I seldom miss having a high F# key on vintage horns. This was definitely the case with the System-76 tenor, which had no trouble producing a clean or dirty high F# fingered the old-fashioned way. One major benefit of leaving the high F# off of this particular System-76 model is the way it affects the location of overtone nodal points within the horn.

Other professional specs on System-76 saxophones include Pisoni pads, metal resonators, blued steel needle springs, headed bullet-point pivot screws and hand-engraved bells and bows. *—Bruce Gibson*

Ordering info: pmauriatmusic.com



Earthworks DP30/C Snare–Tom Mic

Sturdy, Compact & Honest

Founded in the late 1980s to design and manufacture loudspeakers, Earthworks realized early on that the tools it was making to measure audio output from its loudspeakers were of an incredibly high quality. That led to the launch of Earthworks' first omnidirectional microphone. A few decades and dozens of product lines later, Earthworks has introduced the DP30/C, an updated version of its DP25/C that is being promoted as a snare/tom mic but can actually be used for much more than that.

The DP30/C I checked out came with the optional inline pad attachment and drum mount. When I first opened the mic case, I realized that the gooseneck accounts for more than half of its length. The mic head itself is a little less than half an inch. The mic uses the optional drum mount to attach itself vertically to the rim of the drum; the gooseneck is used to adjust the positioning/direction of the mic head. The profile of this mic attached to the rim is so compact, I was able to easily place the mic in the cramped area between my snare and mounted tom.

Earthworks says the mic casing is solid enough to take a direct hit from a drumstick without incurring any damage to the mic. It feels like it could even stand up to the rigors of road life.

The user's manual is an interesting read, as far as manuals go, and it makes two important points: The DP30/C is capable of withstanding impressive sound pressure levels of up to 145db; and the output of the mic is very high, perhaps too much for some lower-end preamps. The optional LevelPad can be placed between the mic and the preamp to provide –15db or –30db of attenuation.

Sound-wise, Earthworks has made its reputation by producing microphones that deliver an honest reproduction of sound. This has to do with the microphones' extended frequency responses (30Hz to 30kHz for the DP30/C), fast impulse responses and near-perfect polar patterns.

The manual explains how the off-axis signal of the DP30/C is nearly the same as the signal from the front of the mic, and how this leads to reduced phasing problems when compared to conventional mics (which can lose as much as 10db to 20db in the high frequencies from an off-axis signal).

When I tested the DP30/C on the snare and moved it to the toms, I noticed that the rear rejection of this microphone is amazing. When using multiple mics on a kit, phase is always an issue, and the sound of toms and cymbals bleeding into mics is at the root of the problem. Whatever drum I was recording could be heard with clarity, and the bleed-through from the other toms and cymbals was minimal. It was almost as if the other drums and cymbals were in another room behind a sliding glass door.

Offering the realism that Earthworks mics are known for, the DP30/C will prove to be a useful tool in many different recording situations. *—Matt Kern*

Ordering info: earthworksaudio.com

Cort Curbow 52 Bass Guitar

Live & Responsive

Greg Curbow was a bass guitar maker known for creating unique, extended-range instruments. His basses gained popularity in the '90s, and now Cort has made his designs available to today's players. The Cort Curbow basses come in single- and double-pickup models, with four or five strings (designated as 41, 42, 51 and 52).

I play-tested a Cort Curbow 52 in brown sunburst (black is also offered). It comes equipped with two Bartolini MK1-5 pickups and a versatile Bartolini MK-1 EQ. Attractive titanium hardware comes standard. A bit smaller than your average bass, it is constructed of soft maple and sports a three-piece Canadian hard maple 34-inch bolt-on neck with a 24-fret rosewood fingerboard. These hardwoods differentiate the instrument from prior Cort Curbow basses (still available), which featured a Luthite body and Ebonol fingerboard.

I was struck by how light the 52 is—players of long shows and continuous casuals should take note. Despite the lighter weight, the construction is solid. The neck feels nice, and the bass is well balanced. I noticed the string tension right away, as the installed D'Addario EXL 170-5 strings feel buttery to the touch—not too tight, not too loose.

Time to plug in. This bass is "live" and very responsive, its tone punchy and even. In fact, the low B string is one of the clearest and punchiest I've ever played. The Bartolini MK-1 EQ features bass, mid and treble controls, pickup blend control and an EQ on/off switch. I easily dialed up punchy J-bass tones when featuring the bridge pickup, then with a few adjustments achieved full and round P-bass tones with the neck pickup. This bass also has a modern, bright "slap" sound.

You can cover a lot of ground pretty quickly with the 24-fret fingerboard and a neck that's a bit narrower than your typical five-string. Even though I'm used to the wider spacing of a P-bass fingerboard, I had no trouble navigating the Curbow 52. Though I liked the Curbow's neck, it also provided my only real issues with the instrument. After a few days of adjusting to the climate change, the action shot up considerably, and intonation issues arose. A truss rod adjustment took care of the bowing, but a professional setup and strobe tuning would have been necessary to make it session-ready.

In a small jazz group setting, I appreciated the instrument's tonal options and found soloing on it to be a blast. Next came a jobbing gig in one of the worst-sounding rooms around. This was a real test. The 52's EQ was up to the challenge, and I was able to compensate for the room's flaws simply with onboard adjustments, no sweat.

The Cort Curbow 52 is a welcome addition to the bass guitar market. With a list price of $729, and a street price of $519, this bass offers a lot of bang for the buck. *—Jon Paul*

Ordering info: cortguitars.com

TURN IT UP

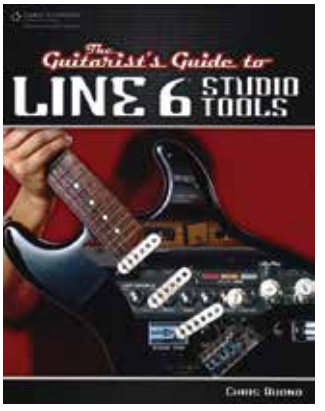
Vox's amPhones—the AC30, Twin, Lead and Bass models—are active headphones with built-in Vox amPlug guitar or bass amplifiers.

More info: voxamps.com

CRYIN' OUT LOUD

Electro-Harmonix has introduced the Crying Tone Wah line of pedals with no moving parts. The line includes volume, expression and pan pedals. None of the Crying Tone Wah pedals use a potentiometer, optics or magnetism.

More info: ehx.com



LINE 6 STUDIO

The *Guitarist's Guide to Line 6 Studio Tools* (Alfred Publishing) introduces players of all levels to the array of hardware and software products available from Line 6 and shows how to put it all to use in the recording studio. Author Chris Buono shares insightful tutorials and exclusive artist testimonials. **More info:** alfred.com

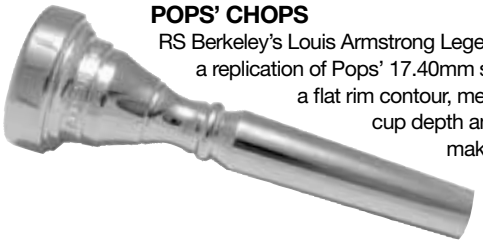
SHED SOME LIGHT

On-Stage Gear's LED509 clip-on orchestra light features nine LED lights that provide a wide area of coverage and illuminate up to four pages of sheet music. The power switch offers two brightness settings to adapt to ambient light levels. The back shade blocks glare from the audience.

More info: onstagestands.com

PLUG-AND-PLAY WIRELESS

Nady's Micro Wireless (MW) series now includes the MHT-16 for brass and woodwinds, the WHM-16 headset system and the Link-16 for microphones. All models are available with either the pedal-style MGT-16 receiver or the pocket-size MRX-16 receiver. The systems feature 16 user-selectable PLL frequencies for interference-free operation and an operating range of up to 250 feet. **More info:** nady.com



POPS' CHOPS

RS Berkeley's Louis Armstrong Legends series trumpet mouthpiece is a replication of Pops' 17.40mm silver-plated mouthpiece, featuring a flat rim contour, medium wide rim thickness, double cup depth and a 2B bore. Brass mouthpiece maker Greg Black has maintained the authenticity of the original design. **More info:** rsberkeley.com

Royal College of Music Classrooms Meet the Bandstand

During last fall's Stockholm Jazz Festival, Royal College of Music (KMH) students and graduates moved between the classroom and the stage, performing in a variety of settings and styles with the pros on hand.

Ola Bengtsson, senior lecturer in Electric Guitar and head of the Department of Jazz, said that the school's reputation for turning out professional musicians is grounded in its approaches to course and class content as well as public performance. "Teachers and students are often performing together in the area at jazz clubs and other venues," he said. "And all subjects and courses in the jazz programs are designed for the performing musician, helping him or her to be able to play, improvise, compose, produce and market their own music."

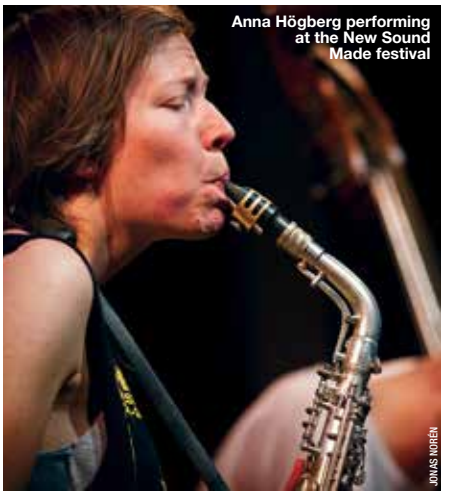
Founded in Stockholm in 1771, KMH is one of the largest colleges of music in Scandinavia. It is also Sweden's only independent, state-owned college for higher education in music, which means the education is free. Offering an average of 32 programs, with 650 students overall this year (90 in the jazz department), the school awards bachelor's, master's and Nordic Master in Jazz Music degrees.

"It's the largest school in Sweden, and probably the hardest," Bengtsson noted. "We have about 400 students applying each year, and maybe 25 get in. I've been here since the mid-'80s, five or six years after the jazz program started. A lot of the students who apply here, they've already been to several schools before this. So, they might have already had five years of music study before they come; a lot of them are already out gigging."

Four students from different grade levels have been enjoying what the school has to offer. Bjorn Arko (tenor sax), Tippan Phasuk (voice), Joel Lyssarides (piano) and Eric Petersson (Hammond organ) are all freelance musicians, with three of them actually having formed their own "company" (as opposed to being just "for hire" when playing).

"I played with Robert Glasper, in a band, when he came to Fasching last year," Phasuk recalled. And what did keyboardist Glasper do? "He played the drums," she chuckled.

"Playing with them contributes to you having the courage to be in an open jam session with them, to go up and say, 'Hey, can we jam?'" said Arko, who also participated in late-night jams during this year's Stockholm Jazz Festival. "Before we went to this school, where you meet these people in a school situation, I wouldn't have had that courage. Now, you just throw yourself in there."


Anna Högberg performing at the New Sound Made festival
JONAS NORÉN

There is a package of skills the college emphasizes. "What we try to do here is to supply what we think is needed to be a complete musician," Bengtsson said. "First, you gotta be able to compose your own stuff to really work in your style. And then you need to arrange that music, and be able to play on the music, to improvise on it. And then you have to produce it, package it, record it. Each student is working on their personal direction, with specific projects they help design."

And how has that worked for students? According to Petersson, "I think the project to find your own voice is a really good thing. You have a lot of time to really dig into what you want to do and learn something completely different. That's kind of a trademark of the school, where, as part of your studies, you discover and describe the concept yourself. And then you have personnel at the school who help you by giving you feedback. They help me find the answers inside myself: what I want to do, what do I want to sound like, what is my voice?"

"I really like the idea," said Arko. "Joel and I will have a project together, when we decide to arrange music and compose for a group. We did two concerts where we discussed how to arrange and how to compose. I feel I developed in my style and my arranging skills. So when you pick up your horn, someone can say, 'That's Bjorn. I can hear his sound.'"

Bengtsson, a graduate of Berklee College of Music and KMH, is proud of the school's connection with the larger community and how KMH ties it all together by year's end. "Each spring, the students organize and manage [the New Sound Made] festival and handle all the expenses and public relations," he said. "It's a great way for people outside the school to see what's going on, and for other teachers to see what the students are doing." —*John Ephland*

School Notes ⟩

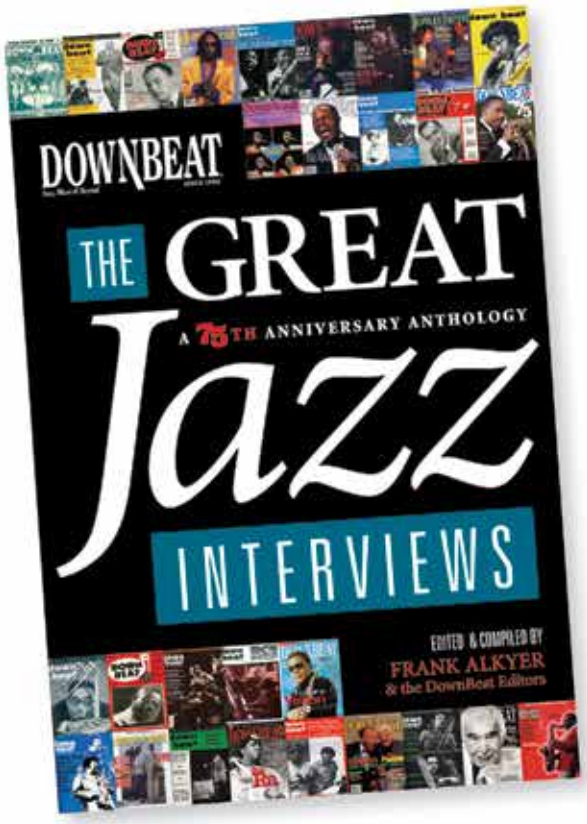

Wadada Leo Smith
SCOTT GROLLER

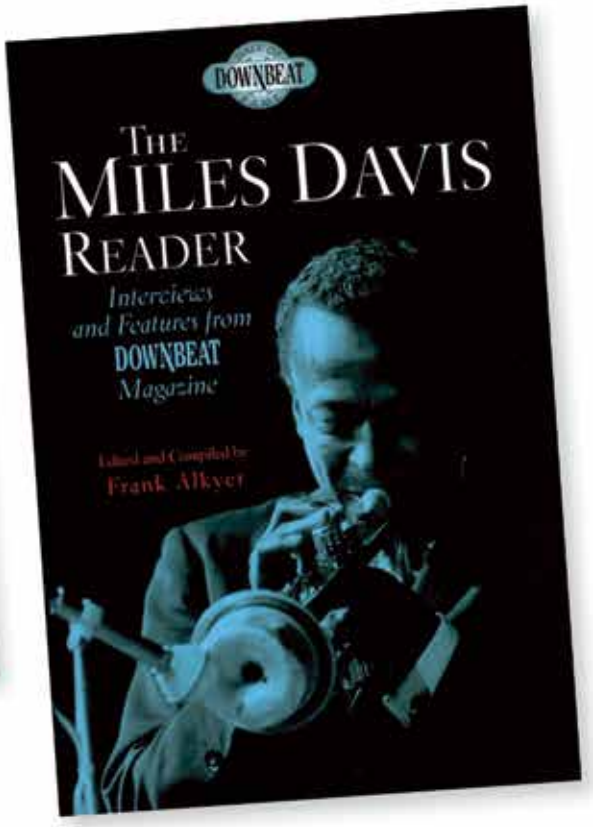
Crimson Summer: The Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University has selected trumpeter/composer Wadada Leo Smith as one of 14 composers to receive a 2012 Fromm commission. With the commission, Smith will write a new work to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Tentatively titled "The March on Washington D.C.—August 28, 1963," this will be the 22nd composition in Smith's acclaimed civil rights opus *Ten Freedom Summers*, which the trumpeter has written over the past 34 years and calls "one of my life's defining works." **Details:** harvard.edu

Double Whammy: Jazz composer, arranger and pianist Chase Morrin, a five-year double degree student attending New England Conservatory's Jazz Studies Program and Harvard University, received The Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award as well as the Jimmy Van Heusen Award from the ASCAP Foundation at its annual awards ceremony on Dec. 12. **Details:** necmusic.edu

Big Gig: University of Southern California Thornton School of Music senior trombonist Erik Hughes was offered a chair in saxophonist Bob Mintzer's big band during the group's Nov. 30 performance at the university. The program, a tribute to bandleader Count Basie, was a revisitation of Mintzer's Grammy-winning 2002 album, *Homage To Count Basie*. **Details:** usc.edu

Getting Vocal: The Indiana University Jacobs School of Music has appointed jazz vocalist and vocal jazz ensemble director Ly Wilder as adjunct lecturer in jazz voice. The appointment completes a faculty lineup that will introduce vocal jazz as a major study area in the Jacobs School. **Details:** iu.edu





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Donald Harrison


Donald Harrison taking the Blindfold Test at the 2012 Detroit Jazz Festival

JACK KARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

At the 2012 Detroit Jazz Festival, alto saxophonist Donald Harrison—who performed in several bands during the Labor Day weekend event—settled into the Talk Tent to take his first Blindfold Test. Born in New Orleans and currently based there, Harrison is known for his solo recordings as well as sideman gigs early in his career with the likes of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Harrison is also the Mardi Gras Indian Big Chief of the Congo Nation and a consultant/performer on the HBO series *Treme*.

Lee Konitz

"Subconscious-Lee" (*The Very Best Of Prestige Records: Prestige 60th Anniversary*, Concord/Prestige, 2009, rec'd 1949) Konitz, alto saxophone; Lennie Tristano, piano; Billy Bauer, guitar; Arnold Fishkin, bass; Shelly Manne, drums.

I can't tell you who this is, but I loved it a lot. It reminds me of Lee Konitz because of the texture of the tone and the knowledge. I can hear that they studied Charlie Parker, and that these guys are students of bebop but are also moving into a different direction of intervals and rhythms. They have their own way of playing it; they veer to another place. It has a cool vibe. [*after*] It's Lee? Then the pianist must be Lennie Tristano. I'm a fan of Lee and all the great work that he's done.

Miguel Zenón

"Juguete" (*Alma Adentro: The Puerto Rican Songbook*, Marsalis Music, 2011) Zenón, alto saxophone; Luis Perdomo, piano; Hans Glawischnig, bass; Henry Cole, drums.

This guy has got different elements in his music—smooth jazz, a lot from the '60s and some music from my generation, like the use of different time signatures. I hear some funk and swing in there, too. He has great command of the horn, and he sounds like he's done his homework and played with some old masters. I really liked it, but I'm not sure who it is. It sounds like a younger player. I listen to them, but I don't know them as much as I'd like to. But I think he's moving on the right path. The rhythm section is really together. It sounds like they've known each other for a long time.

Cannonball Adderley Quintet

"You Got It!" (*The Cannonball Adderley Quintet In San Francisco/Keepnews Collection*, Concord/Riverside, 2007, rec'd 1959) Adderley, alto saxophone; Nat Adderley, cornet; Bobby Timmons, piano; Sam Jones, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.

This is the Adderley brothers. For me, they're part of the continuum of the city I grew up in. New Orleans [music] is full of mind, body and soul. You can dance to this music in New Orleans, just like you can dance to Charlie Parker in Harlem. The people get up and start doing the Lindy Hop there. When I first went there, these old ladies took me to the side and danced. That changed my perspective. This music was intellectual and soulful at the same time. To me, it has the full spectrum of what life is all about … and it's swinging hard. It had the whole package in terms of great music. Only certain musicians capture the whole essence. Cannonball had this lexicon of phrases and articulations. And then there's the texture and sound on the horn. He's a mighty soul on the saxophone and personifies soul in jazz. He speaks to me.

Material

"Memories" (*One Down*, Restless/Metronome/Elektra Musician, 1992, rec'd 1981) Whitney Houston, vocals; Archie Shepp, tenor saxophone; Raymond Jones, electric piano; Michael Beinhorn, synthesizers; Bill Laswell, basses; Yogi Horton, drums.

I'm guessing the saxophonist is Archie Shepp, but this is not the context I'm used to hearing him in. It's not the notes that I'm used to hearing Archie play—his texture and concept of the saxophone. On this I'm hearing some of what Archie sounded like in the '60s and some of what he sounds like now. Having listened to Archie all these years, on this he sounds great. The song itself sounds like it's done by a pop group that is moving in a different direction harmonically. They're stretching the concept. I don't know who the vocalist is. [*after*] It's Whitney [Houston's] first recording? She sounds great.

Eric Dolphy

"Straight Up And Down" (*Out To Lunch*, Blue Note, 1994, rec'd 1964) Dolphy, alto saxophone; Freddie Hubbard, trumpet; Bobby Hutcherson, vibes; Richard Davis, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

It's Ornette Coleman on the sax. No, maybe it's somebody who likes Ornette. Is that Bobby Hutcherson on vibes? I can hear the texture of his instrument. I'm waiting to hear who the saxophonist is. I heard blues in there at the beginning, so I dug that a lot. It's part of the free-jazz movement, stretching elements, moving the harmony forward and then loosening up everything. [*after*] Eric was playing a little different than what I'm used to hearing. But I liked this a lot. I never listened to Eric Dolphy that much. I love him, but I chose not to be influenced by him.

Preservation Hall Jazz Band

"Tootie Ma Is A Big Fine Thing" (*Preservation Hall Jazz Band: The 50th Anniversary Collection*, Columbia/Legacy, 2012) Tom Waits, vocals; Clint Maedgen, tenor saxophone; Mark Braud, trumpet; Lucien Barbarin, trombone; Charlie Gabriel, clarinet; Ben Jaffe, tuba; Rickie Monie, piano; Carl LeBlanc, banjo; Walter Payton, bass; Ernie Elly, drums.

That's a song I know. "Tootie Ma" is a staple in New Orleans and written by guitar player Danny Barker. This band is playing a different kind of New Orleans beat than the one I know. But I like it, even if it is a little different. Maybe the vocalist is Dr. John or someone, but I don't know. You've really stumped me. Is this a *Treme* record? [*after*] It's Preservation Hall Jazz Band? Well, that doesn't sound like them, especially the drumming. I was thinking of them, but I didn't say anything. I didn't want to chance it. So that was Tom Waits? Maybe he's the one who made the arrangement or influenced the drumming. The song has a tiny piece of a Mardi Gras Indian chant … but it is very little because the old chants are typically call-and-response. Danny was one of the first to incorporate Mardi Gras Indian music into his stuff. **DB**

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