Money Jungle Revisited: Ellington, Mingus & Roach

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

# **Travels**

## Darcy James Argue

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## Jane Monheit

Charlie Haden Transcription

*36th Annual* Student Music Awards



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# JUNE 2013

#### **ON THE COVER**

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AS TOLD TO FRANK ALKYER

Trumpeter and Greenleaf Music label head Dave Douglas discusses the struggles, joys and triumphs of taking the creative path less traveled. Douglas, whose new quintet album is *Time Travel*, aims to celebrate his 50th birthday by embarking on a U.S. tour that will include stops in all 50 states.

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## Honoring Musical Heroes

**AT PRESS TIME, THE DOWNBEAT STAFF WAS BUSY TABULATING** the results of our 61st Annual Critics Poll. The results will be published in our August issue, but there is one winner we can announce now. Our Veterans Committee has elected blues icon Robert Johnson (1911–'38) into the DownBeat Hall of Fame. This induction, which we feel is welcome and overdue, speaks to the importance of blues as an American art form that has spread across the globe, and it honors Johnson's oeuvre a key influence on jazz, rock and other types of improvised music.

Here's some "inside baseball" info about the induction process: In addition to voting in the other categories of the Critics Poll, the Veterans Committee participates in a separate round of voting for the Hall of Fame. Candidates must receive at least 66 percent of the Veterans' votes to be inducted.

In the 2012 poll, Johnson received 52 percent. In 2013, he earned 69 percent to push him across the finish line. Welcome, Mr. Johnson.

Johnson—whose recordings of "Cross Road Blues," "Hellhound On My Trail," "Sweet Home Chicago" and "Rambling On My Mind" have influenced generations of musicians—joins Bessie Smith, Frank Zappa and Jimi Hendrix as one of the very few members of the Hall of Fame who is not generally categorized as a jazz musician.



The Veterans Com-

mittee was founded in 2009 with the intention of honoring great artists who helped shape the direction of the music DownBeat readers love. The candidates on this ballot are either 100 years past the anniversary of their birth or 50 years past the anniversary of their death. These are candidates who, for a variety of reasons, had not been inducted in years past via either the Critics Poll or the Readers Poll, but that we feel are important musical pioneers.

Prior to this year, the veteran critics had inducted nine great jazz artists: Oscar Pettiford, Tadd Dameron, Baby Dodds, Chick Webb, Philly Joe Jones, Billy Eckstine, Paul Chambers, Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt. Now Johnson joins the elite club. Of the 133 members of the DownBeat Hall of Fame, some were inducted while they were still active and their careers were thriving. But others had to wait.

Drummer Max Roach (who is discussed in our *Money Jungle* feature on page 32) was elected into the Hall of Fame via the regular Critics Poll in 1980. The following year, drummer Art Blakey was voted in via the Readers Poll. But the great Philly Joe Jones wasn't inducted until 2010, and his route was via the Veterans Committee vote.

The DownBeat Hall of Fame is an important ledger that helps current and future generations understand, appreciate and celebrate the artists who have helped make improvised music the grand, diverse melting pot that it is.

That *Money Jungle* feature includes a lot of great details on a couple of other jazz musicians who permanently altered the path of the music: Duke Ellington (Readers Poll inductee in the Hall of Fame in 1956) and Charles Mingus (Readers Poll inductee, 1971).

Just mentioning those artists' names can inject an air of reverence into a conversation. But listening to their music can change your life.



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## Strictly Commercial?

As a DownBeat subscriber, my excitement over seeing Frank Zappa's name on the cover of the May 2013 issue was severely tempered by the article itself. Journalist Geoffrey Himes' article "A Serious Man" focused considerable attention on Zappa's whining widow and her tiresome complaints about how everyone is ripping off her late husband's legacy. Frankly speaking, the only folks making a fortune off Zappa's good name are the litigious Gail and her bloated trust-fund offspring.

Not only does Gail Zappa want a substantial piece of every Zappa-related dime, she now apparently wants to dictate how his compositions are played: note for note, as they were originally written. And that's the way her devoted son

#### **Political Jazz Weasels?**

I'm writing to comment on Mark Barosko's Chords & Discords letter in the May issue ("Harpooning Harper"), and its accompanying Editor's Note. Barosko has a point, so don't brush him off. I agree with him that the Ben Harper/Charlie Musselwhite article ("Dancing Around the Bones," March) had no place in the pages of DownBeat. That article would have been a better fit in a newspaper's Sunday supplement. Barosko's assertion was basically "DownBeat is a *jazz* magazine, and let's keep it that way."

But then Barosko (who is a jazzer but no politician) mentioned a few jazzers, which gave the managing editor (who is a politician but no jazzer) a way to weasel out by citing DownBeat's coverage of some of those jazz musicians. There have been some articles recently (such as those on Bobby Hutcherson and Charles Lloyd) that continue the DownBeat standard.

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> Editor's Note: Our staff worked hard to ensure that the articles on—and photographs of—Bobby Hutcherson ("California Dreaming," April) and Charles Lloyd ("Tender Warrior," May) were of superior quality. We did the same thing for the cover story on Ben Harper and blues icon Charlie Musselwhite. We're not politicians. We're jazzers who are following the DownBeat motto to cover "Jazz, Blues & Beyond."



Dweezil performs them, albeit slowed down a bit so the young lad is able to play them proficiently. But the capper has to be the dutiful Dweezil having the audacity to justify his mama's decree by equating Zappa to Beethoven. I mean, I love Frank's music, but Beethoven ... *really*? Shame, shame, shame.

GORDON WEBB SANTA CLARA, CALIF.

#### **Next Generation Thrives**

One of the big reasons I dig DownBeat so much is your emphasis on the kids coming up, like those I saw at the Next Generation Jazz Festival, presented by the Monterey Jazz Festival (MJF) in the first week of April. Three of the excellent jazz educators at the fest were Doug Tidaback, Thara Memory and Keith Johnson. These cats are the gods of why jazz is still very, very much alive and well today. What joy these three—and all the other greats in the education systems—have given us over the years! And, again, *thank you* to DownBeat for your incredible coverage of their scene. I'll see y'all in September at MJF to re-up my subscription to the hippest magazine going.

ROBERT A. HOWE HOWESTHIS1@YAHOO.COM

*Editor's Note:* The DownBeat 36th Annual Student Music Awards (page 97) are one of the key ways that we work to support young musicians and the educators who guide them.

#### Corrections

- In the May issue, a photo illustrating a Caught review of the Portland Jazz Festival did not correctly identify multi-instrumentalist George Colligan.
- In the April issue, the review of the selftitled album by Pretty Monsters misspelled the name Owen Stewart-Robertson.
- In the January issue, a Caught review of the Stockholm Jazz Festival misspelled the name Jon Fält. Also, the review implied that Marius Neset is Swedish, but he was born in Norway.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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## New York Voices Celebrates 25 Years with First Live Album

**F** or decades, vocal jazz groups have fought for recognition in the music marketplace and even among some jazz fans. A new live album by New York Voices celebrating the group's 25th anniversary, however, may attract some new converts to the genre.

The Grammy-winning quartet has never enjoyed the mass audience of previous generations of vocal jazz groups—from the Hi-Los and Four Freshmen in the '50s and '60s to Manhattan Transfer in the '70s. With the current vogue for tight harmony singing, as seen in the huge popularity of college a capella groups and TV shows like "The Sing-Off" and "Glee," New York Voices—and vocal jazz groups in general—are ready for a comeback.

On Live With The WDR Big Band Cologne (Palmetto), their first full-length live album, the Voices—Darmon Meader, Peter Eldridge, Kim Nazarian and Lauren Kinhan—shine as soloists and in luscious four-part harmonies, in which they function as an additional "section" of veteran arranger/conductor Michael Abene's first-rate big band. The set was recorded in Cologne, Germany, in 2008.

"For this show, we picked songs that represent our history and mixed in a few new tunes as well," said Meader, NYV founding member, musical director and tenor saxophonist. "Michael's charts are insane, so they give the older tunes a fresh take.

"We also transitioned many years ago from a quintet to a quartet. In the process, our old charts never got re-voiced in a way that works well for four singers. So we decided to revisit those arrangements." One example is a moody reading of Oliver Nelson's classic "Stolen Moments," which the group hadn't performed in years. "We dropped the key down a step and voiced it out for four," Meader said, "so that it works for us now."

Other standout tracks include a hard-swinging "Darn That Dream"; unorthodox versions of two Paul Simon songs, "Baby Driver" and "I Do It For Your Love"; a jazz treatment of Annie Lennox's song "Cold"; and compelling NYV originals, including the lilting, Brazilian-inflected "The World Keeps You Waiting," written by Kinhan and Eldridge.

NYV's members lead busy lives. As a group, they gig regularly at clubs and festivals all over the world. They have collaborated with vocalist Bobby McFerrin, reedist Paquito D'Rivera, guitarist Jim Hall and the Count Basie



Orchestra. They frequently perform at symphonic concerts with the Boston Pops and other major orchestras. They are finishing up a holiday album, to be released later this year.

Meader, Eldridge and Kinhan have issued solo albums, and all the members compose, arrange and teach, including an annual vocal jazz camp the group leads each August at Ohio's Bowling Green University.

"It's challenging at times to balance all this, but it's one of the reasons the group has lasted 25 years," Meader said. "We've had slow and steady growth. In a typical year we do 60 or 70 concerts. That way, we're not getting burnt out on [Voices] ... and the solo projects help keep us musically stimulated, which brings fresh energy back to the group."

Their schedule this year includes several joint appearances with Manhattan Transfer, a group they once idolized. "As one of the closers we sing an eight-voice version of 'Birdland," Meader said. "Even as long as they've been in the business, when we're together, we kick each other in the ass a little bit. Everybody wants to be on their game, in a really good way. It's such a gas to be singing one of the tunes that influenced us greatly."

-Allen Morrison

## Riffs )



#### Porter Patrol:

After vocalist Gregory Porter's April 6 performance at the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, he participated in an autograph-signing event that was abruptly halted by officials. According to manager Paul Ewing, Porter was chased to the side of the festival's Exhibitor's Hall by Stalls Security under the premise that he had unknowingly violated the festival's autograph policy.

**Capital Soul:** Booker T. Jones served as the music director and bandleader for the "In Performance at the White House: Memphis Soul" event, which was hosted on April 16 by President Barack Obama. The celebration featured performances by Mavis Staples, AI Green, and Ben Harper and Charlie Musselwhite, and was streamed live on the official White House website.

Freedom Finalist: Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith was named a Pulitzer Prize finalist in Music on April 15 for his civil rightsinspired album *Ten Freedom Summers* (Cuneiform). Smith presented his New York premiere of the project at Brooklyn venue Roulette on May 1–3.

Spirited Performance: Pianist Marcus Roberts premiered his first piano concerto, "Spirit Of The Blues: Piano Concerto In C Minor," on April 4–6. Roberts dedicated the piece, which was co-commissioned by the Savannah Jazz Festival and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, to collaborator Seiki Ozawa. He performed with bassist Rodney Jordan and drummer Jason Marsalis.

## Caught

San José Winter Jazz Fest Offers Crossover Favorites

**LIKE A SILICON VALLEY TECH COMPANY THAT** spins off a subsidiary, San José Jazz launched its leaner Winter Fest in 2011 as a complement to its broadly programmed summer festival. The festival gained momentum last year with bookings such as a special duo concert with trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and pianist Gerald Clayton as well as a performance by alto saxophonist Grace Kelly's quintet. For the 2013 Winter Fest on March 6–15, San José Jazz pulled off an impressive hat trick with sold-out shows by José James, The Robert Glasper Experiment and the Vijay Iyer Trio.

James kicked off the weekend, headlining the 180seat Theatre on San Pedro Square, a black box space that has previously hosted revues and Stephen Sondheim musicals. The jazz-informed singer/songwriter proved to be the perfect choice for a Friday night, stretching seven songs out over a more than twohour set.

James joked that he was thrilled to play a city whose occupants knew how to pronounce his first name—and elevate him to sainthood, too—at the conclusion of "Blackmagic," which featured an interpolation of Marvin Gaye's "Mercy Mercy Me" and a classicallly toned solo from trumpeter Tatsuo Kuroda. Bassist Solomon Dorsey and pianist/keyboardist Kris Bowers boasted a particularly tight connection on songs like "Trouble" and "Do You Feel." James also pointed out that British drummer Richard Spaven was playing his first U.S. show of the group's current tour that evening.

The Robert Glasper Experiment performed two sets the following night, and spirits were still high on the bandstand as well as in the audience when the latter show started. Featuring saxophonist/Vocoder-processed vocalist (and crowd favorite) Casey Benjamin, bassist Derrick Hodge and drummer Mark Colenburg, the Experiment predictably sizzled on reinterpretations of Sade's "Cherish The Day" and Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" as well as on "Ah Yeah," a track from the group's 2012 Blue Note release *Black Radio.* 

Glasper's trademark sense of humor was on display—as heard during an instrumental medley interlude of popular favorites including Mike Post's "Hill Street Blues" TV theme, Sondheim's "Send In The Clowns" (appropriately enough given the setting) and Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time," which turned into a communal sing-along.

José James

Organist Tony Monaco held court at the same space the following afternoon, leading a trio that featured locally based guitarist Barry Finnerty and drummer Akira Tana. Performing standards such as "The Very Thought Of You" and an incendiary version of his mentor Jimmy Smith's "The Sermon," Monaco was engaging and informative when addressing the crowd in between numbers. Originals such as "I'll Remember Jimmy" and "Indonesian Nights" were also preceded by generous back-stories.

One-time Bay Area resident lyer concluded Winter Jazz Fest the next Friday with a program that challenged, rewarded and delighted the crowd. The interplay between him, double bassist Stephan Crump and drummer Tyshawn Sorey was sublime at times and playful at others. Starting with a pair of abstract vignettes (including the title track from his 2012 ACT album *Accelerando*) and stretching to pieces as diverse as Heatwave's "Star Of The Story," Henry Threadgill's "Little Pocket Size Demons" and Herbie Nichols' "Wildflower," the three performed with a remarkably explorative spirit.

Winter Fest was planned so guests could also attend concerts at the nearby and more spacious San Pedro Square Market as well as three other eating establishments all on the same block (and a fourth one street over). Whether it was organist Brian Ho taking a request for "Autumn Leaves," Amy Dabalos singing "Lullaby Of Birdland" or the San José State University Jazz Orcehstra taking on a Lennie Niehaus arrangement of "One Mint Julep," a broad range of music persisted over five nights and an afternoon.

For the first time, San José Jazz broadened the scope of its extra-musical offerings to the general public with educational seminars. Glasper's master class was broad and had a biographical angle, while Monaco had 10 organists in the audience and gave a more traditional one. In a locally appropriate context, lyer presented a Thursday night multimedia Techxploration talk and brief solo piano performance at the PayPal campus in San José. His subject, "The Sound of Bodies in Motion," was based on his dissertation from the University of California at Berkeley. —Yoshi Kato

CHRIS DAVE

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he NEXT Collective challenges preconceived notions about standards. The ensemble's impressive debut, *Cover Art* (Concord), has generated a buzz among critics and fans with its jazz interpretations of songs from the worlds of hip-hop, r&b, pop and indie rock.

The project began as a way to promote three newly signed Concord artists—tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III, guitarist Matthew Stevens and alto saxophonist Logan Richardson—and in the process of reworking contemporary compositions, the members of the NEXT Collective developed a cohesive, cooperative vision.

DownBeat sat down with the members of the NEXT Collective—Richardson, Smith, Stevens, pianist Gerald Clayton, bassist Ben Williams, drummer Jamire Williams and special guest trumpeter Christian Scott (Christian aTunde Adjuah)—shortly after wrapping up their sound check at New York's Le Poisson Rouge. Pianist Kris Bowers, who is currently touring with vocalist José James, was linked into the conversation via Skype. For the full interview, visit DownBeat.com.

## This album seems like a rite of passage. What has it been like to come together on this project?

erald Clayton, Walter Smith III, Ben Willi

**Kris Bowers:** We have such strong ideas of who we are musically and what we're into. At the same time, we're very selfless with the way we approach music. That comes from being a leader. These guys have found a way to be that way with their own bands. They all brought that to the session.

## How did Jay-Z & Kanye West's "No Church In The Wild" become a part of this project?

Christian Scott (Christian aTunde Adjuah): When I heard what most of the other guys were doing, some of it was indie rock stuff, and I had dabbled in that. I wanted to go in a bit of a different direction. When I first heard that bass line and realized what key it was in, I didn't really want to move it. But I found out Ben Williams was on the [track] so I knew he was going to be able to chop that up.

It was interesting to see how Ben navigated the line and to see what Jamire was putting on it because that line has a lot of momentum. It had looseness from listening to a lot of the other material.

## How did you choose to interpret D'Angelo's "Africa"?

**Gerald Clayton:** We could have tried to go to a completely different place, but it would have maybe been a little bit forced. There's some bootleg versions going around [with] just D'Angelo playing the piano and singing it—a closer interpretation of how he thought of it. It's stripped down, with a beautiful chord progression and him just singing his message about Africa. I just wanted to keep it kind of what it was.

#### Matt, much of your work has combined your rock influence with jazz, giving you a unique niche on the album. Was that a conscious decision you made as a guitarist?

Matthew Stevens: It's sort of like being a writer, like that cliché, "If you don't write what you know, then it's fairly obvious." It's great to be open-minded, to expand and to get better. Something that I really admire about each of [the band members] is that they're really committed to improving. They're demanding it of themselves rather than other people demanding it of them. I got to be true to who I am; to deny those influences would just be really unnatural. You would smell it a mile away, and it would suck.

You can hear these wonderful influences from the 1970s soul-jazz era, with artists such as Roy Ayers and Johnny Smith, on the Stereolab track "Refractions In The Plastic Pulse." Did they or similar artists inspire your arrangement?

Jamire Williams: Not while I was arranging it. I wanted to do something just off the radar, so I had them playing doubles—Logan playing flute and Walter playing incredible bass clarinet. I'm proud about that. I wanted to get that vibe where you could just put it on and chill to it, that you could ride to it. I think that's the only song with electric bass on it, so it added to the variety of the whole record.

#### This project seems to addresses a controversy about the void of inspiration and deep meaning in today's popular music. Did that factor into what you were trying to do?

**Ben Williams:** It kind of proves a point about popular music and our standards on how we measure what's good and what's bad. This makes everybody reconsider what they think of as good music and what's worthy of presenting on certain stages. A lot of people in the jazz world wouldn't think of Jay-Z and Kanye West as something musical, but we found an element that we did our thing with. Some of the artists that we picked are a bit obscure. I think [our album will] help people take a closer listen to the pop music that's out there.

**MS:** I hope this is ongoing, where we can come back together every couple of years and do another set of songs. It could be a really cool thing to do in addition to everything that everybody's doing individually.

-Shannon J. Effinger



## Motian Saluted at Symphony Space

Thill his early forties, drummer Paul Motian (1931–2011) was almost exclusively a sideman. Motian then acquired a grand piano from then-employer Keith Jarrett, took composition lessons, made his first leader records (*Conception Vessel* and *Tribute*) and launched a second career as a bandleader. "I began to realize that you could write little ideas and have people interpret them," Motian said in a 2001 DownBeat profile.

Those ideas blossomed into an extraordinary tribute concert at New York's Symphony Space on March 22. The evening's co-curators, guitarist Bill Frisell and saxophonist Joe Lovanotwo-thirds of the Paul Motian Trio from 1984 until the drummer's death-convened a group of musicians who had either played with Motian or paid close attention to his musical production. Drummers Joey Baron, Andrew Cyrille, Billy Hart, Dave King and Matt Wilson rounded out the program. Each performer's intuitive juxtaposition of tonal personalities made each unit seem like part of a meta-ensemble. Vibrations of love and high artistic intention permeated every note. Perched on a cymbal stand, Motian's whitebrimmed fedora stood watch.

"You can't talk about Motian's music separately from his playing style," said The Bad Plus bassist Reid Anderson, who functioned as an informed rhythm section for Lovano and saxophonist Ravi Coltrane on "Abacus." Anderson added that Motian "opened up rhythmic flow in a way that isn't grid-based but is very compositionally connected," presented "a personal way of structuring freedom and phrasing that hadn't really been done" and possessed "a beautiful, mysterious melodic and harmonic sense, a deep pop sensibility that our generation related to."

As the proceedings transpired, the most palpable impression was the unitary strength of Motian's pieces, how their melodic integrity and internal logic made his absence almost immaterial to successful interpretation.

The audience felt Motian's presence as Lovano and Frisell opened invocationally with "Conception Vessel," the title track from Motian's first ECM release. The drummer also seemed to be on Baron's shoulder as he propelled soprano saxophonist Billy Drewes, bassist Ed Schuller, Lovano and Frisell—four-fifths of Motian's '80s quintet-through the intense, interactive tune "Dance."

There were no fallow moments, and many memorable ones. Masabumi Kikuchi, Motian's pianist of choice since the early '90s, conjured up two poetic improvisations: a minimal, overtone-rich solo, and a fulsome call-and-response with bassist Gary Peacock, who executed crystalline lines with clarity and force. Peacock's master skills also emerged in two duos with pianist Marilyn Crispell, one a spare, delicate reading of "Etude," the other a bracing tour through "Cosmology," a spiky, atonal dance. Lovano and Cyrille joined in on the rollicking "Mumbo Jumbo," which Cyrille transformed into his own argot as Lovano tranced out on the melody and Crispell soloed turbulently.

After a welcome-the-spirits drum duo with Cyrille, Hart stayed for "Olivia's Dream," with saxophonist Greg Osby, bassist Larry Grenadier and pianist Geri Allen. Spurred by Wilson, an alumni edition of Motian's Electric Bebop Band (Drewes, Chris Cheek, Bill McHenry, saxophones; Steve Cardenas, Jakob Bro, Ben Monder, guitars; Jerome Harris, Grenadier, bass) interpreted "Mesmer" as a peaceful Aylerian hymn. Frisell then joined the guitars for a ravishing "Lament."

Osby and Frisell duetted like long-standing partners on "Sunflower" and "Last Call." Saxophonist Tim Berne—who recruited Motian for three of his early '80s LPs—illuminated "Psalm" with huge sound in duo with pianist Matt Mitchell. Allen and Frisell played the spectral, contrapuntal theme of "Fantasm" with transparent grace before Lovano and Coltrane ratcheted up the intensity. McHenry played the tone poem "Endless" and the jammish "Morpion" with Monder, Anderson and Cyrille.

After reading a valedictory note from her ailing father, bassist Charlie Haden, Petra Haden sang "The Windmills Of Your Mind"—the title track of Motian's final album, on which she performed—without affect or embellishment. Frisell and Lovano took a trip with the elegant melody of "It Should've Happened A Long Time Ago," the title track of the Paul Motian Trio's 1984 debut recording. For the finale, nearly 20 musicians collectively navigated Motian's own perennial set-closer, "Drum Music," with a luminous, "Ascension"-like feel. —*Ted Panken*  Newport Jazz Festival

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## Sweet Home New Orleans Empowers Musicians

rescent City's cultural communities are slowly sustaining themselves—not by receiving handouts or emergency grants, but by learning to treat what they do like a business.

That's the concept driving the Economic Empowerment Education Program at Sweet Home New Orleans, a non-profit musicians' aid organization created to bring home musicians displaced after Hurricane Katrina. As artists, Mardi Gras Indians, and social aid and pleasure club members gradually returned in recent years, Sweet Home reacted to its clients' changing needs, offering financial, legal and social service support while meticulously tracking their income, employment, health insurance and other census-like statistics in an annual State of the Music Community Report.

Years of analyzing data about the city's cultural economy and how its leaders are faring financially showed organizers that the most productive use of their resources would be "to empower and educate musicians as business people," according to Sweet Home's mission statement. The non-profit launched its first series of free courses for musicians in February.

Students who are enrolled in the class "Accessing Current Revenue Streams" meet for two hours every other week in the computer lab at the new Ellis Marsalis Center for Music in the New Orleans Habitat Musicians' Village. Each session focuses on a different royalty-collecting performance rights organization, such as ASCAP and SoundExchange.

In the past, Sweet Home has sent numerous clients to an entertainment law team willing to handle cases on a pro bono basis. "But they don't need to go a lawyer," Program Director Sarah Gromko asserted. "They should just have this arsenal of knowledge."

Though forward-thinking, the shift in Sweet Home programming has added new financial challenges to a non-profit suffering from a drop in expected donations.

"It's hard as we try to communicate the transition from assistance to empowerment, and to connect empowerment to overall sustainability," said Sweet Home New Orleans Development Director Isaac Netters.

Difficult, maybe, but not impossible: Shortly after kicking off the new education program, Netters and his colleagues rolled out a fundraising campaign that earned more than \$20,000 in just a few weeks.

Classes are small, but the application process is designed to keep the student body diverse, and the participants are people considered to be, according to Netters, "influencers in their niche," so that they can spread the information they learn to others.

"If I can learn and educate my peers and further my own understanding as well as generate revenue, I'm all for it," said hiphop bandleader Renard "Slangston Hughes" Bridgewater, who enrolled in the February session. "I can go in meetings and not be on the outside looking in."

Other courses in the Economic Empowerment Education Program will serve artists with different levels of professional needs. A course in selfmanagement and another in social media/fan engagement are on tap for the summer, while a fan-fundraising workshop is scheduled to begin this fall. —Jennifer Odell

<image>



## Caught

## Windy City Free-Jazz Lives in Houston

**THE FREE-JAZZ EXPERIMENT THAT** roared out of Chicago is almost a half-century old. The avantgarde movement is a well-established musical approach with virtuosic veteran practitioners and an element of surprise still at its core, sustaining the movement as a vital and vibrant means of jazz expression.

This jazz truism was enjoyably affirmed as two of its most accomplished masters, saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell and drummer Alvin Fielder, played a standing-room-only concert on March 27 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, demonstrating the continuing evolution of the music. Their succinct but satisfying rendition of the musical method was, at least on this night, one with more focus on shape and use of space than on the pure sound and fury that once dominated the approach. And, ultimately, it made for music that was more a definitive statement of purpose than one just searching for something to say.

Mitchell and Fielder have known each other since their days at the birth of the music in Chicago when both were early members of the barrierbusting Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). They recorded together on Mitchell's debut album, the historic free-jazz landmark *Sound* in 1966, but hadn't performed together publicly since 1973 before this concert.

Fielder said there was absolutely no problem in resuming the musical interaction. "I think our experiences have obviously given us more expertise, but our musical sensibilities really haven't changed that much in all this time," he explained. "It's just like resuming a conversation with an old friend. We just do it musically in front of an audience."

Mitchell opened the first piece with a gentle soprano sax awakening featuring a series of breathy upper-register squeaks and sonic punctuations before conjuring up intriguing mid-range phrases and lines delivered in characteristic nonstop style. Fielder confined himself primarily to his drum kit instead of utilizing the exotic percussion paraphernalia that often colored the original AACM efforts. By doing so, he allowed Mitchell sufficient room for exploration but operated as an equal, not just as an accompanist.

Fielder provided a solo introduction for the second piece with a four-beat figure meant to echo Mitchell's name and moved into bebop mode before ranging wide and free, reprising Mitchell's "Mr. Freddie" as his core inspiration. His encyclopedic knowledge of the history of jazz drumming was easily evident, but it was his grasp of the styles and ability to fuse and transpose them that was most impressive.

Mitchell, who had remained seated during Fielder's opening statement, rose to perform his most engaging segment of the concert. A flurry of alto sax flights showcased his ability to generate lengthy sustained notes of pristine purity. Fielder, temporarily abandoning the drum kit in favor of bells, let him soar untethered to a traditional beat.

The concert concluded with Mitchell taking to the sopranino for some additional experimentation, featuring more forced air than notes and some movement of sound as he waved the instrument in different directions. Fielder's most extended soloing came during this piece, and it was full of unexpected rhythmic tangents and quotations. Like the entirety of the concert, it was a mini master class of the quintessential jazz dichotomy of control and experimentation. Mitchell returned to finish the piece with some more energetic alto work, and class was over. The crowd buzzed about the still very contemporary sound of this music more than 50 years after its birth. *—Michael Point* 



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## Players >

## **BEKA GOCHIASHVILI** *Momentous Arrival*

ith keyboard demons getting younger and younger, it's growing tougher to separate the prodigy from the merely gifted. But the rare bird whose youthful abilities rise above the prodigious is easy to spot, and teenage pianist Beka Gochiashvili, a native of the former Soviet republic of Georgia, is decidedly one.

That was the assessment of drummer Lenny White as he observed Gochiashvili at the grand piano on a quiet afternoon in March at Birdland in Manhattan. Birdland is a setting of note for the pianist, who already counts among his achievements some sizzling sets there with high-flying artists like White. Recalling those dates, Birdland's owners agreed to make the club available for some off-hours music and conversation.

Seated at the piano, Gochiashvili cut the wiry, even hungry figure of one who had been caught up in the painful adjustments of post-Soviet society, not least the transformation from a culture in which jazz was forbidden to one in which it was allowed to grow. Days short of his 17th birthday, he appeared wise beyond his years.

His playing revealed a mature sensibility, which for White invited comparison with that of a 17-year-old wunderkind from the past: Tony Williams. "When [Williams] came on the scene, everybody recognized that," White said. "They'll do the same with Beka."

Such heady talk is nothing new for Gochiashvili. By age 11, he was drawing raves and disarming listeners, including White, who first heard him play during a workshop at the 2007 Saulkrasti Jazz Festival in Latvia, where the drummer was appearing. White said he put Gochiashvili through his paces, inviting him to sit in with his band as it ran through "All The Things You Are." Gochiashvili contributed with subtlety and sophistication to the group, a top-flight aggregation that included saxophonist Benny Maupin and bassist Victor Bailey.

"Showing that kind of knowledge at such an early age was remarkable," said White, who stored the information for future use before heading back to the United States.

After the Saulkrasti moment, Gochiashvili said, he "was in heaven," But that was not his only brush with fame in 2007. Already a pintsized fixture in the clubs of Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, he had come to the attention of local government officials, who introduced him to then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. An amateur pianist, Rice was reportedly so captivated by his playing that she added her support to that of Georgian authorities, who, viewing him as a valuable cultural export at a time of increasing tension with Russia, helped stake him to a trip to the United States in July 2008, a month before war broke out between Russia and Georgia. The trip proved a turning point; he auditioned for Juilliard and was accepted to the school's precollege division, where he began studying with pianist Frank Kimbrough.

Despite that acceptance, life in the United States at first seemed harsh. He was separated from family, friends and hometown fans. "I was sad and depressed, but jazz saved me," Gochiashvili recalled. In 2010 he reconnected with White and began mixing with two other charter members of Return to Forever: Stanley Clarke and Chick Corea, a strong influence on his evolving style. Gigs followed, including a string of performances with Clarke's trio last year, with a stint at Manhattan's Blue Note being one of the key highlights.

This year, Corea asked him to be part of a performance in May at Jazz at Lincoln Center, along with heavyweights like trumpeter Wallace Roney and bassist John Patitucci—both of whom played on Gochiashvili's eponymous debut CD, released last year under the Exitus label and produced by White. The album stands out for its personal statements, highlighted by the opening number, "Un Gran Abrazo," an evocative tribute to Corea that Gochiashvili first performed in a solo turn at the Blue Note in November 2011 at Corea's request during his 70th birthday bash.

Gochiashvili takes such gestures in stride, projecting an understated confidence. Asked to explain the process by which he works, he plays down the impressive assortment of tools he has so rapidly acquired and focuses instead on the emotional demands of the art form.

"There's nothing to know in jazz," he said. "There's something to *feel*."

Having led groups at Birdland in 2010 and 2011, he will return there in June, with a hiphop-leaning quartet complete with turntablist. He also plans to continue his acoustic efforts in a variety of formats. The road beckons and well-heeled backers are said to be waiting in the wings, though he is wary about being swept up in the touring life before he knows himself better, lest he risk closing down the channels that have fueled his creative growth.

"Concerts are not the main thing in my life," he said. "The main thing is keeping my availability for improvising." —*Phillip Lutz* 



he term "old soul" seems to be the default description when saxophonist Noah Preminger's elders discuss his tonal personality. Consider, for example, pianist Frank Kimbrough's account of Preminger's comportment at the 2007 recording session that produced his eclectic debut, *Dry Bridge Road* (Nowt). Fresh out of New England Conservatory, Preminger was 21 at the time.

"I thought this kid would be nervous, and we'd have to do a bunch of takes," Kimbrough recalled. "What blew us all away is that from the first note he was just one of us, remarkably self-assured without being cocky. He got the job done, and his playing was mature."

Kimbrough spoke the day before he and the tenorist, now 26, would record a duet collaboration. "With Noah, everything is about *process* as opposed to product, which is how so many young musicians think," he said, referencing Preminger's manner when leading the recording sessions for his 2011 Palmetto album *Before The Rain*—a quartet project that included Kimbrough, bassist John Hébert and drummer Matt Wilson. "We called tunes and recorded the whole thing with no rehearsal in three-and-ahalf hours. I don't like that science-projecty shit where you rehearse a lot and it's too complicated to wrap your head around."

On Preminger's new Palmetto release, *Haymaker*—recorded with guitarist Ben Monder, bassist Matt Pavolka and drummer Colin Stranahan—the proceedings diverge from the open, freebop-to-floaty feel of *Before The Rain*, incorporating poppish melodies, rockish straighteighth beats, soaring jams, odd-metered vamps and virtuosic solo digressions by tenor and guitar. Nonetheless, the ensemble, bolstered by a prior European tour with stops in Switzerland and Spain, follows Preminger's relaxed approach.

"This is New York and everybody can play," Preminger remarked. "There's no ego bullshit; just 'Let's go do our thing.' It's all about intuition. That's how it should be."

The title track was inspired by Preminger's

former boxing coach at the Manhattan gym where he trained for several years. When Preminger hit a sparring partner with a right cross that propelled him across the ring, his coach said, "You hit him with a fuckin' haymaker, man!" Shortly thereafter, the coach died of an aneurysm. "At the funeral," Preminger said, "his son told me that his dad had talked about the haymaker and me on his deathbed."

Preminger perceives no incongruity between his love of adrenalin-inducing activity—he also skydives and skis—and the reflective quality of his caress-all-the-notes approach to saxophone expression. "Boxing is a great sport," he said. "It teaches patience and respect and composure and breathing. I feel I need to live a full life and incorporate my experiences in music. I prefer to play grittier, dirtier stuff, and I want to have fun."

Toward that end, Preminger said, he was preparing to launch a collaborative Afrobeat band that features big-sound tenorist Drew Sayers, a classmate of his at New England Conservatory and William H. Hall High School in West Hartford, Conn. A native of rural Canton, Preminger "grew up on 25 acres with a couple of dogs" and started playing music as a child. He attended jazz camp with Dave Liebman at 12, and later enrolled at Hall at the invitation of the school's band director.

"I made more money at Hall than I have since I graduated there," Preminger said, mentioning \$1,000 paychecks for gigs at local galas. "I was around guys who could really play and kick my ass." There was intellectual growth, if less remunerative work, in Boston during his NEC years. Preminger counts faculty members Allan Chase, Jerry Bergonzi and Frank Carlberg as consequential mentors, as were (following his 2007 move to New York) elders Cecil McBee, who employed him, and Billy Hart, whose skills he has retained on several occasions.

Although Preminger gripes about New York economics and quality of life, he intends to remain in Brooklyn and to have fun. "I pick people whose company I enjoy," he said. "If you happen to like assholes, go hang out with them." *—Ted Panken*  Festival NATIXIE ELGEAL ABBET MANAGEMENT August 2, 3 & 4, 2013 Featuring the

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## Players )

## **CYNTHIA SAYER** *New Territory for Jazz Banjo*

ynthia Sayer, one of the country's top four-string banjo players, originally started playing the instrument by default. "I played a lot of instruments when I was a kid, none of them very well," she says. "I wanted to be a jazz drummer and was already taking lessons. One day, I found a four-string banjo on my bed. I knew it was a bribe. My parents didn't want a drummer in the house."

Sayer took lessons with Patty Fischer, who informed her that the four-string banjo was an early jazz

instrument. Fischer played with a plectrum, and Sayer quickly adopted that style. "I like the sound of tightened chord clusters, but I originally learned to play that way to please my teacher," she says. "Jazz banjo is different from folk banjo. There's no claw-hammering or fingerpicking. The approach is similar to jazz guitar. You strum and pick, play lead and rhythm, but you can't lay down a fingerpicking groove. I can tell if another banjo player is a guitarist as well. I'm not a guitarist who plays banjo. You can hear it in my style."

In addition to her musical acumen, Sayer knows her instrument's history. "Banjo came of age in early times of jazz, and it's been stereotyped as an instrument that can only play in that rhythmic mode," she says. "What I demonstrate on my new album, *Joyride*, is that that's not the whole story. I learned the early music, its history, players and the techniques associated with it, but I don't want to recreate the sound of the past. I'm a person of today, with a broad eclectic range. If you listen to me, you'll hear the basic jazz swing, but I go off in other directions."

Sayer has a lengthy resume that includes more than a decade spent in Woody Allen's jazz band, as well as gigs with musicians as diverse as Wynton Marsalis, Marvin Hamlisch, Tony Trischka, Odetta and John McEuen of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. She brings all those experiences to bear on *Joyride*, an energetic outing that includes tangos, jazz standards and country music.

"All the arrangements are mine," she says. "I invest a lot of time and energy into them. That was the artistic challenge. How do I hear a song and how do I want to interpret it? Then I let the band take it to another level by adding their individu-



al voices. My last album, *Attractions: With Bucky Pizzarelli*, was steeped in early jazz, and in that world, there's not a lot of original music being written or played. I'm always torn between giving old songs a new life and wanting to do original songs, so this record isn't genre specific. It's a big mish-mosh to show people everything I can play."

The idea for *Joyride* was born on the night Sayer met accordionist Charlie Giordano, who plays in Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band. "My friend Larry [Eagle, percussionist on *Joyride*] asked me if I'd let Charlie sit in. The sound of banjo and accordion meshed so well, I knew I wanted to make a record with him."

The album was cut live in one room. "A live jazz ensemble creates a conversation between the players and gives you the edge you need to make a musical connection. I produced the album and the main challenge I had to face was that I'm often dissatisfied with my sound. I work hard to get a good banjo sound and a strong vocal."

Sayer's singing is as nuanced as her banjo playing, with a bright, lively vigor that makes *Joyride* sparkle with energy. She plays Hank Williams' "Move It On Over" with a hot New Orleans blues feel and adds a slithering kazoo solo to her own "Banjo Blues." The most compelling track is "I Get Ideas," a tango adapted from the Argentinean song "Adios, Muchachos."

"The arrangement was inspired by Louis Armstrong's recording," Sayer says. "[Violinist] Sara [Caswell] plays classical and jazz, and we often do concerts together. We worked out an arrangement that goes back and forth between swing and a Latin rhythm. It gives you the feeling of being suspended between those two worlds, gently swaying back and forth." -j.poet

## **ELIAS HASLANGER** *Texas Tenor*

t's an otherwise quiet Monday night in Austin, but downstairs the doorman is turning away fans, and upstairs the joint is jumping as the band rips through Texas trumpeter Kenny Dorham's "Buffalo." Tenor saxophonist Elias Haslanger, arguably the hottest horn right now in the Lone Star state, is on his home turf.

Haslanger spent a four-year stint in New York City, attending the Manhattan School of Music, touring in the Maynard Ferguson Big Bop Nouveau Band and hanging out with musical mentors. But he eventually returned to Texas, where the active and eclectic Austin scene provided opportunities to play with everyone from Bruce Springsteen to Bob Dorough while allowing him to maintain a steady gigging schedule for his own jazz groups.

"New York was obviously a great learning experience, but I'm more comfortable, personally and musically, back in Austin," Haslanger said. "I think that's given me more confidence to develop my own sound and use it to explore new types of music."

His current sextet, in which he's joined by trombonist Andre Hayward (an alumnus of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and the SFJAZZ Collective) and trumpeter Pete Rodriguez (son of salsa pioneer "El Conde" Rodriguez), is an adventurous unit devoted to original material and inspired arrangements. His previous recordings used the melodic muscularity of his distinctive Texas tenor tone for similar explorations.

But it has been the success of his recent album, the enlightened soul session *Church On Monday* (Cherrywood), that has garnered him nationwide radio play, inclusion on critical best-of-year lists and, best of all, steady SRO crowds for his residency at Austin's Continental Club.

The catalyst for Haslanger's change of pace was hearing *Hustlin*', the 1964 album pairing saxophonist Stanley Turrentine and his wife, organist Shirley Scott. "It's fun to play, especially with this band, and the sound opens up all sorts of possibility if you go with it," he explained.

Dr. James Polk, an Austin jazz icon who spent more than a decade as music director of the Ray Charles Orchestra, plays the B3 organ in Haslanger's group. The other members are guitarist Jake Langley, bassist Daniel Durham and drummer Scott Laningham. From Polk's perspective, Haslanger's success is as much a product of temperament as talent. "Elias has the technique, the tone and the creativity of a great jazz artist, but most of all he has the attitude," Polk said. "He knows he has something to say and he knows how to say it." —*Michael Point* 

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As told to Frank Alkyer 📕 Photography by Jimmy & Dena Katz

The trumpeter, at 50, discusses the struggles, joy and triumph of taking the creative path less traveled



ave Douglas is the unassuming king of independent jazz, a model of do-it-yourself moxie, initiative and artistic freedom. When he speaks, there's an air of calm confidence, but with an overriding sense of self-examination, evaluation and thoughtfulness.

"When someone asks, 'What kind of music do you play,' are you sitting next to them on the airplane, or are they *really* ask-

ing the question," Douglas said in December during a live interview in front of jazz students and educators at The Midwest Clinic in Chicago. "If you're on the airplane, you say *jazz*. And if you're in a conversation with somebody who is really curious, then we're all involved in all sorts of music and a much broader scope."

It's the kind of answer, articulate and thought provoking, that provides insight into how Douglas has navigated his music and his career.



That broader scope is what Douglas strives to latch onto and embrace. He is a musician in full control of his instrument, but still trying to find more. He is a composer who seeks his muse in the old ways and in unmapped territory, in the tradition and the avant-garde. He is a bandleader who shares the stage gracefully and powerfully with some of the strongest voices in improvised music. And he is a businessman who has taken control of his recording and publishing career by creating Greenleaf Music as a platform for his own artistry and the work of artists he admires.

These days, Douglas appears to be going through an exceptionally searching period. In September, he released *Be Still* as a loving tribute to his mother, who passed away in 2011. The album contains his arrangements of traditional hymns such as "Be Still My Soul" and "Whither Must I Wander," songs his mother had asked him to play at her funeral. Beautifully performed by the Dave Douglas Quintet—with Jon Irabagon on tenor saxophone, Matt Mitchell on piano, Linda Oh on bass and Rudy Royston on drums—it's the first Douglas recording to feature vocals, handled with a whisper and a sigh by Aoife O'Donovan of the bluegrass band Crooked Still.

On April 9, Douglas released his 40th album as a leader, *Time Travel*. Using the same personnel as on *Be Still* (but without O'Donovan), the program is an all-instrumental date of original Douglas compositions that is equally embracing but takes on a much more forward-looking approach than the preceding album.

That might have something to do with where Douglas himself is in life. On March 24, he turned 50, a time when everyone seems to take stock of where they are in life. For Douglas, that means embarking on a U.S. tour with the über-ambitious goal of playing in all 50 states.

"Me and my big mouth," he jokingly said when discussing the project, but quickly pointed out that even a musician of his stature has played in less than half the states in this nation during his career. After a set at the Elmhurst Jazz Festival in Illinois on Feb. 22, he wondered if this could actually be accomplished, but he was determined to try.

The trumpeter is particularly interested in presenting live music in unusual settings. For example, Douglas said he has played the Suoni delle Dolomiti festival in Northern Italy many times, where the band and the audience—hike two hours up to a mountain location, perform and then hike back down.

"It's a wonderful, communal experience," said Douglas, an avid hiker. "I was thinking, 'Why isn't this happening in the States?" We should be doing concerts in these wonderful national parks, along the Appalachian Trail or the Pacific Crest or you name it."

So, look out. Douglas will be coming to a theater, festival or hiking trail near you. It may be with his quintet. It may be with the Sound Prints Quintet with saxophonist Joe Lovano. There might even be a gig or two with John Zorn's Masada Marathon project.

In the meantime, DownBeat is proud to celebrate Dave Douglas at 50 with reflections on his life and career, in his own words.

**I WAS BORN** in East Orange, New Jersey. The Garden State. It was a pretty normal childhood. I'm the youngest of four. I was really blessed that there was a lot of music in the house, and nobody ever said which music was the important music.

My father had classical records and jazz records, my sisters had pop records and my brother had other kinds of pop records.

My father was an amateur musician, but thinking back on it, it was kind of amazing. He had a baroque recorder group that rehearsed at the house every Sunday. He played banjo and guitar with my cousins whenever they would come over. And also his mother was the family pianist. So, at every family gathering, she would play Tin Pan Alley songs, Christmas carols and whatever crazy campfire-type songs came around. So, all of that was going on, and I had piano lessons starting when I was 5. I very wisely switched to a brass instrument when I was 7.

**MY FATHER** found a trombone at a garage sale and brought it home thinking, "OK, I'm going to teach myself trombone now because Dave



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## VIC FIRTH 1952

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It took me two years to realize that in the school band the trombone players only had long notes and the trumpeters always had the melody. Now I wish I still played trombone because I think some of the hippest parts are happening down there.

I STARTED TO LEARN TUNES when I was really young and tried to mimic my favorite artists like Billie Holiday. She was the first performer of songs that I could identify as something to aspire to.

My father was the person who brought the music into the house and collected it. My mother encouraged me to do whatever it was that I really wanted to do. If I took on something unorthodox like, "I want to learn 'All Of Me' the way that Billie Holiday was singing it," she might not have known what that was about, but she knew it was not something that every kid would say. So, she'd give me that, "OK, this is great! Do it!" She was my encourager.

**BEFORE I GOT INTO HIGH SCHOOL,** my father bought *The Smithsonian Collection Of Classic Jazz* on LP. It was all selected by Martin Williams, a very astute collection of music from the beginning of jazz, up until the mid-to-late '60s, which was pretty amazing at that time. We're talking about 1973, and I've got Cecil Taylor in the house. I gravitated toward Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis, Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor—the last two LPs in the collection. I wore them out. I don't know why. No one was there saying, "You should listen to the modern stuff."

**WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG** and hear music, it has great meaning for you. You listen to the same songs over and over and over. And you can probably still sing the saxophone solo that you memorized from those records when you were 11 or 12.

So, for me, it was Cecil Taylor's "Enter, Evening" and Ornette Coleman's "Free Jazz." It was only later that I realized how really lucky I was being exposed to that music so close to when it was actually made. It wasn't like it was a 30- or 40-year-old document. It was really fresh.

I was listening to the early sides, too. And I think it's something particular to my generation and those who came after. When we came up hearing that complete collection, I wasn't separating it out in terms of the time periods and genres. It was like, here's Louis Armstrong and here's Roy Eldridge. Here's Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. Here's Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan. Here's Ornette Coleman. And it's all just this thing that's together.

That's something that has stuck with me in my own composing and my own vision: There's no reason that we have to separate all these different eras and genres. It's why someone like Mary Lou Williams was so important for me as an influence. She was somebody who brought together the entire history of music and really personified it.

**WE LOOK AT MILES DAVIS,** now that he's sadly gone. We can experience his whole 50 years of output in one view and see the full range of all the worlds of music that he created. It's so vast. It also *inspires* us. We don't need to be limited to one small thing. We can be wide open.

I WAS AN ATROCIOUSLY bad trumpeter, I found out, when I got to Berklee [College of Music]. I had a lot of ideas, but I couldn't execute them. It took me a long time to find a teacher who could help me get to where I wanted to go. I had a lot of teachers who would change my embouchure and suggest this or that. There were a couple of years where I was in crisis and kept thinking, "Well, it's going to be great once the new embouchure kicks in." Note that all the trumpet players in the audience just chuckled.

**I DROPPED OUT OF BERKLEE.** I had a trumpet teacher who worked with me all year and then in the final lesson said, "I don't think you're cut out to be a trumpet player. I think you should quit and take up another instrument."



I don't think it was tough love. Maybe it was. Maybe that's what I needed to hear at that time, but you can imagine how angry I was that he hadn't said it earlier.

It wasn't like I didn't care. It wasn't like I was just messing around. I was clearly working on music. So I left, and I transferred to New England Conservatory because I knew John McNeil was there. I just moved up the street to NEC, and John was incredibly helpful. It was great. I'm not putting down Berklee. I got a lot out of Berklee. Some of the things I learned in classes there, I still apply in music. The same goes for New England.

**IT WASN'T UNTIL** I was introduced to the Carmine Caruso technique by John McNeil that I was able to find a way to play naturally, without as much effort, and was able to have a full range and a full tone.

I still swear by the technique, although I do it very differently now than I did back then. I took lessons with Laurie Frink, and she was, of course, the top student of Carmine. She has carried on in his spirit, but with her own take. She's a fantastic teacher and takes every student as an individual with his or her own needs. That's what's really important.

I thought about switching to piano. It's easier to say in retrospect, but at the time, it was a complete personal crisis—practicing eight-to-10 hours a day and not making any headway. Wanting to throw the trumpet up against the wall at the end of the day. Just month after month of fighting with this thing.

I think I stuck with it because I could see that, as a composer, I was going to want to have that voice in my palette. I could see the trumpet was going to be part of that for me.

**I MOVED TO NEW YORK** in 1984. After two years in Boston, I saw so many people were practicing, [and they were] practicing so they could move to New York. I was a headstrong 21-year-old. I thought, "Why don't I just cut the circuit short? I'll just move to New York, but I'll keep practicing."

I moved and then eventually got all my credits to transfer and ended up getting a bachelor's degree at New York University as an independentstudy student. During that time, they had something called the Gallatin School at NYU, and it allowed me to take classes with Carmine Caruso weekly for credit. I studied composition and arranging for a semester with Jim McNeely. I had a semester where I studied with Joe Lovano. So, now that I'm out there playing with him, I remind him of the crazy things that he said during that time.

It's interesting: I moved to New York because I wanted to play, but as

you all know, when you break into a new city and a new scene, you don't just go out and right away and have a million gigs. So, I was invited by some friends to go out and play in the street outside The Plaza Hotel for tourists on a Sunday afternoon. This was on the first week that I moved to New York. I met this culture of street bands on that day. And a lot of the people that I met are people I'm still in touch with and became very important in my development as a musician—Vincent Herring being one. I played in bands on the street with Vincent for two or three years.

And then in '86, we both got the gig with Horace Silver at the same time, but independently, not knowing that the other one had it. Kermit Driscoll, the bass player, and Bruce Cox, the drummer, used to play out there. A great tenor player named Charles Davis, too.

IT SOUNDS FUNNY, but it's really true: When you're out there and you've played a two-hour set maybe your second one of the day—and you're still trying to bounce your tone off the Time-Warner Building or whatever is across the street in Columbus Circle, that's real-world education. That's how you develop a sound.

**PLAYING WITH HORACE SILVER** was great. I wouldn't say I was the perfect trumpet player for that group, but he was incredibly generous and patient with us younger players. He took some time to tell me what was wrong with my playing. He would go on rants occasionally about what was wrong with us young players, but it was always based in something that was real. The difference between bebop, hard-bop and modal playing for him was in the voice-leading. He felt that with younger players, we were just trying to play the hippest thing over one chord when what's really hip was how you got from one chord to the other. So he would insist on proper voice-leading.

**ONCE SOMEONE TELLS YOU THAT,** and you're on the bandstand with them night after night, you start to hear in their playing what makes them so great. We played the same set pretty often, and we pretty much played "Song For My Father" every set. It was a big hit, people wanted to hear it, and I was thrilled to play it. Horace would play a five- to 10-minute introduction to the song ... and it was different every time. And it was equally witty and brilliant. He would quote the most hackneyed, nursery-rhyme song, but in just the right spot. You're laughing, but you're getting hit in the gut at the same moment. Head and heart—that was Horace.

**THE WAY I'M TELLING IT,** it sounds like I went to NYU and I found Carmine Caruso and next thing you know I was on the road and that was it.

It was far from that easy for me. I struggled for a lot of years, not having any gigs. I think part of it was trying to play a little bit differently, not wanting to sound like every other post-bop trumpet player. But another part of it was after I played with Horace, I came back to New York. I felt like I had to start again.

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I did a lot of gigs I didn't want to do. I took some non-musical jobs, and I hated that even more. Making lemonade in a delicatessen was *not* Dave Douglas. And I wasn't any good at it either, so you wouldn't want my lemonade.

I decided whatever happened, I was going to play the horn. So I did weddings and bar mitzvahs and brises and divorces and anything that would come in the door—for a lot of years.

This was between '87 or so and '93. I was doing creative music on the side, working on my own stuff—devoting time to getting out there with different collaborative groups that I was in. I started to play with Don Byron a little bit, and do some things with Tim Berne.

As much as I didn't like doing those other gigs, I did get a lot out of it. Because so often in music, you're expected to just know everything. You're going to show up to the gig and there's not going to be any sheet music. You're going to walk in, and they're going to call off the tune.

Even if you've never even heard the name of the tune, you have to stand there and act like you know what's going on. So, you learn very, very quickly how to play something that's functional, that works, even if it's in a weird key. I HAD SOME OFFERS to make some records of standards with someone else's rhythm section, or do some sort of thing that made me say, "No, I want my first record to be my own original music, my own vision."

It's probably all that encouragement I got from my mother so early on that made me so headstrong. I felt like, "No, I'm going to do this my own way."

**IT WASN'T UNTIL** '92 or '93 that I started to lead bands and felt like I had some stuff that I had written that I was proud to present.





**I'M NOT CRAZY** about the term "downtown scene," but there was a creative thing that happened in New York at that time. It came out of people wanting to find something new to write for each other. Friends.

We wanted to play together. We liked playing "free." We liked playing tunes. But we wanted to find something of our own. How do we write something that's really fun and really challenging? How do we write something where people can play who are from different traditions and backgrounds? And how do we get to know something beyond the music that you've heard before?

#### I LEARNED A LOT FROM JOHN ZORN.

And it's still a wonderful relationship. During that time when I got my own record deal and the records started coming out, he brought me into this group called Masada. It was a big thing for me because this was a very heightened form of a lot of the elements that we've been talking about. He was looking into his own personal background, his own cultural background. He was making music that was really engaging on an improvisational level, that was really technically challenging, but that also had a lot of freedom to it, that used chords, but wasn't afraid to go other places where chords weren't happening. All of that felt like it was a dream to me. This was a band where I was pushed beyond my own capability by all the different things that I was asked to do.

John is very, very specific. I had never been asked before in an improvised context to play like Tony Fruscella. And I never had heard of Tony Fruscella, I'm embarrassed to say! So, you think, now you're playing with John Zorn, you're playing in this incredible avant-garde thing. But he's like, "On this tune, this is what I need you to play, and you have to play it like this to make the tune work."

And I'm like, "But it's my solo. I'm improvising." In jazz we're used to saying, "No, it's *my* solo. I'm going to do what *I* feel like doing."

And he was like, "You don't get it. This is the composition. And the language of the improvisation comes from the composition." It was sort of a bombshell for me, coming up a hard-core jazzer. I was thinking, "Wow, I've got to learn this other language so I can play this tune and make it work."

It was not like I was no longer improvising. It was more like I learned a new language of how to play in my own playing that would feed into this musical moment, that would make this piece come alive.

I RECORDED FOR INDEPENDENT record labels for a good number of years. Then around 1999, I got signed by RCA and made seven records for them under the RCA/Victor imprint, Bluebird and BMG Classics. They were bought by Sony, and it was right at the end of my contract.

So, the question for me was, "Do I go back to recording for independents, or do I want to own this and take charge myself?"

#### THAT'S WHEN I STARTED GREENLEAF.

Greenleaf is a name that's been in my family for centuries. I liked it because I was trying to renovate the idea of a label and supporting artists and growing something new. So, we started in '04 and we [now] have about 25 to 30 titles. Some of them are digital-only titles. We're also publishing sheet music. There is a lot of interaction with people who are listening to the music, and I like that.

I have a team working at the label. I had a very, very brilliant friend working with me when I started the label, Michael Friedman, who also does Premonition Records. He helped me form the label and did a lot to explain to me how the label should go. He was very smart guy and a really good friend. A few years ago, he decided to move to Los Angeles and minimize his involvement in the business. So, he's no longer at Greenleaf. But I have someone helping me manage it, Jim Tuerk, and I have a staff. I put in some time on the label every day, but it's not a fulltime job for me. I feel it's part of the artistic output, being involved in what your sheet music and CDs are going to look like.

**I TURN 50 IN MARCH.** When I turned 40, I did a big retrospective of all of my different

bands in New York, and it was a big page-turn for me. I had, at the time, 15 different bands running simultaneously. I thought, "This is crazy. I'm going to take this moment to retire some of these projects. We've made three or four records and we've toured and we've done it. I'm going to go in a new direction."

That was 10 years ago. I just decided that I didn't want to celebrate my birthday in this big New York kind of way. I wanted my birthday to be more about playing in different places. I realized that there have only been a few states in the United States that I've played in—and there hap-

pen to be 50 of them out there. So, I've set out on this project to play in all 50 states.

It's not going to happen during the calendar year. It's an ongoing project.

We've worked on it, and a lot of things are coming together. We'll be visiting a lot of states [in 2013]. But everyone knows the problem of not having a good network for jazz in the United States. It's an ongoing, long-term problem. Just going around, identifying where such things could happen has illuminated a lot of potential small-scale solutions that I think are the first step toward making something happen. DB





# MONEY JUNGLE So years after the summit

#### By Bill Milkowski

ifty years later, the reverberations are still being felt. This year marks the golden anniversary of the release of *Money Jungle*, the utterly audacious, cross-generational summit meeting of Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Max Roach. How the revered and courtly maestro Ellington—who was 63 at the time of this recording—got together with two such mercurial jazz rebels as Mingus (40 at the time) and Roach (38) has remained something of a mystery all these years. Who instigated this session? How did these formidable figures happen to gather in the studio on Sept. 17, 1962?

Credit goes to producer Alan Douglas, who was heading up the jazz division at the United Artists label at the time and was all of 30 when the historic session went down. Having already produced such potent UA sessions as Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' *3 Blind Mice* and the first Bill Evans-Jim Hall collaboration, *Undercurrent*, Douglas had a bit of a track record when he approached Ellington about doing a piano trio recording for the label.

"I had met Duke and Billy Strayhorn in Paris when they were writing a score for the movie *Paris Blues*," recalled Douglas in a phone interview from his home in Paris. "I was working at [the French record label] Barclay Records at the time. Billy and Duke were staying at the Hotel Trémoille, and Nicole Barclay asked me to do whatever I could to help them during their stay there. So I was with them for about a month, doing all kinds of errands and things, and became friendly with them. They had two pianos in their hotel room, back to back, and sometimes they'd play duets together. One day when I was hanging out with them I said to Duke, 'How come you never made a piano record? You're always making records with the big band.' And he said, 'Nobody asked me.' I kind of just smiled and just let it go.

"About a month later, I got a call to come to the Barclay office and meet Art Talmadge of United Artists. Nicole, who was very prominent in the record business at that time, recommended me for the job of running the new jazz department that Mr. Talmadge was setting up at United Artists. So I left Paris, came to New York and did a couple of records for United Artists. One day my secretary calls me and says, 'Duke Ellington is here to see you.' Naturally, I'm caught off guard. He came into my office, sat down in front of me and said, 'You know, you put something in my head back in Paris. I'd like to do a piano record.' I was working with Mingus at the time, or *trying* to work with him, so I said, 'Let's do it with Charlie Mingus,' because I felt Mingus was the contemporary extension of the Ellington school. And Duke said, 'Yeah! That would be interesting.' So I called Charlie and he disagreeably agreed, as usual, and he insisted that the only drummer for the session could be Max. I then went back to Duke, told him about Max and Mingus, and he was comfortable with the idea.'

Money Jungle was recorded to three-track at Sound Makers Studio in midtown Manhattan in a single day. "I tried to get them to rehearse, and all three of them said no, they didn't want to rehearse," Douglas said. "Their attitude was, 'Let's just go to studio and see what happens." And while Douglas maintains that Mingus was "a perfect gentleman with Duke at all times," he confirms that there was indeed a clash in the studio between the hot-tempered bassist and the strong-willed drummer: "Mingus started to complain about what Max was playing. Mingus was getting louder and louder as the session went on. I forget what song they were doing, but in the middle of it Max kind of looked up at Mingus and smiled and said something. And at that point, Mingus picked the bass up, put the cover on it and just stomped out of the studio."

Douglas described the scene that unfolded

on the street below after Mingus left in mid-session: "That's one of the visuals I will never forget. We were in the studio on 57th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, and I remember leaning out the window, looking up towards Seventh Avenue and seeing Duke Ellington chasing Charlie Mingus up the street. He finally caught up with him and convinced him to return to the studio. After they came back together, Mingus was very cooperative and took care of business for the rest of the session.

"Of course, Mingus idolized Duke," he continued. "And Mingus and Max knew each other

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ctor e b totruppeces withing so well that Charlie could yell at Max and it didn't bother Max at all. He just kept on playing. So there was a healthy respect for each other and eventually they got into a groove together, which you hear on the record."

Writing in the March 28, 1963, issue of DownBeat, Don DeMicheal critiqued three records in a combined review: Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins (4 stars), Duke Ellington & John Coltrane (4 stars) and Money Jungle (5 stars), which he referred to as "astonishing," describing the bassist and drummer as "some of the fastest company around." DeMicheal's prose repeatedly praised Mingus for pushing Ellington into new territory: "I've never heard Ellington play as he does on this album; Mingus and Roach, especially Mingus, push him so strongly that one can almost hear Ellington show them who's boss-and he dominates both of them, which is no mean accomplishment."

Over the past five decades, hundreds of jazz musicians have drawn inspiration from this classic album, including many of today's stars, such as drummer Terri Lyne Carrington (see sidebar on page 36) and pianist Frank Kimbrough.

"[Money Jungle] was one of those ad hoc things—they weren't a working band—so there's a lot of experimenting going on in the studio," Kimbrough said. "And of course, some of it's abrasive. But sometimes abrasive is good. Everything doesn't have to be pretty all the time because you're conveying the range of human emotions in the music. And look at what was happening in 1962. Things were coming to a boil. So that goes into the mix as well."

Indeed, the Cuban Missile Crisis was just a month away. A year later, Dr. Martin Luther King would deliver his "I Have A Dream" speech in Washington, D.C., and President Kennedy would be assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963. "The seams were getting tight at that point," Kimbrough continued. "It's like a balloon filling up with water, and *Money Jungle* happened at a point just before the balloon bursts. But for Mingus, it's gotta be the happiest day of his life, right? I mean, playing a trio date with Duke, his idol?"

Nine days after recording Money Jungle, Ellington would go into the studio to record the Impulse album Duke Ellington & John Coltrane. A few weeks later, on Oct. 12, Mingus would preside over his Town Hall concert (a musical train wreck, documented on a 1963 United Artists album). But on that historic day in September in the studio with Ellington, Mingus, Roach, producer Douglas and engineer Bill Schwartau, a certain kind of magic prevailed. "The gods were looking down on us that day," Douglas said. "It could've gone another way, but it didn't. It was a very successful collaboration. It's a great record, a tough record, and it came from no rehearsal with no previous plan to do anything in particular. Just three great spirits together in the room feeling each other out."

"Obviously, it's an important release," said pianist Fred Hersch. "I can remember buying

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the LP in Cincinnati around '73 or '74 and just putting it on and going '*Wow!*' It's such a 'wow' from the first note, like they're shot out of a cannon. Sometimes you get three or four all-stars together and they go with the common denominator and make it simple, but this was a lot of 'push me-pull you' on all parts."

Depending on one's point of view, Mingus is either the star or the saboteur of *Money Jungle*. "That's one of the first records in history that has the bass-in-your-face kind of sonority to it," said Mingus Big Band bassist Boris Kozlov, who performs with the group weekly at New York's Jazz Standard (using Mingus' famous "Lion's Head" bass). "And I keep thinking that maybe that was somehow crafted by Duke—that he wanted that."

From the opening salvo of tortured bass notes issuing forth on the first track, it is clear that this is no ordinary piano trio session. "The title track has this declamatory intensity and power and almost shock to it," observed pianist Vijay lyer. "Mingus is playing very much 'up in your grill.' He's very interactive, kind of contrapuntal with what Duke is playing, and the drums fill up a lot of the space. So it had real equanimity, much more of an even dialogue among the three, which is a little different from the kind of blowing sessions that are more representative of that time."

Ellington enters the fray on that opening track, "Money Jungle," not with his usual pianistic elegance but rather with spiky chords and a dissonant streak, as if he's dueling rather than dialoguing with Mingus as Roach cooks underneath with some hip interaction between snare, bass drum and ride cymbal.

"It's like Duke's going in this Monk-Cecil direction sometimes," said pianist Uri Caine. "It's like an experiment for him, using dissonance and other devices that he normally doesn't use. His

# CARRINGTON GETS PROVOCATIVE

o mark the 50th anniversary of Money Jungle, Grammy-winning drummer and bandleader Terri Lyne Carrington has put a contemporary spin on that fabled collaboration between Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Max Roach. Joined by bassist Christian McBride and pianist Gerald Clayton-and augmented on some tracks by saxophonists-flutists Tia Fuller and Antonio Hart, trombonist Robin Eubanks, guitarist Nir Felder, percussionists Arturo Stabile and vocalists Shea Rose and Lizz Wright-Carrington and her crew radically reimagine Duke and company on Money Jungle: Provocative In Blue (Concord Jazz).

McBride recalled, "When Terri Lyne first sent me the demo tracks, I thought to myself, 'Really!? This is *Money Jungle*, huh?' And I was teasing her, saying, 'You should just put new titles on and keep 'em as your own.' Because they're so fresh and so different. There's a little bit of overt saluting to the original recording, but as a whole it's just such a wonderfully reinvented thing."

On the opener, Carrington expounds on the political implications of Ellington's title track by incorporating audio clips from speeches by Dr. Martin Luther King, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Condoleezza Rice, along with spoken-word snippets from Peter Joseph's 2007 documentary *Zeitgeist The Movie*. On the exotic "Fleurette



Africaine," the core trio is enhanced by flutes and trombone. Clark Terry, an important mentor to Carrington, provides stream-of-conscious scatting on this atmospheric track. "My first gig was with Clark when I was 10 years old," Carrington said, "and I ended up joining his band later on when I moved to New York."

The drummer traveled to Arkansas, where the 92-yearold trumpeter currently lives, to record his vocals. "I had somebody bring a portable recording unit to Clark's house, and we captured him doing his thing to the music on the first part of the tune," she explained. "After we had packed up the gear, Clark said, 'Oh, I have one more thing to say,' and I could see it was important to him. So I just opened my laptop and pressed 'Record' into Garage Band without a microphone or anything, just a condenser mic on my laptop. I put it close to his face and he did that cadenza." As the band drops out, we hear Terry, one of the last living connections to the Ellington legacy, doing his Mumbles routine, putting a poignant finishing touch on that beautiful Ellington ode.

Wright lends her wordless vocals to a gospel-tinged reading of "Backward Country Boy Blues" with Felder contributing some Deltafied dobro playing. "At first I wasn't sure what Duke meant by that title," said Carrington. "I wondered if he was referring to somebody that's so backwards because they're so country. But then I realized that it's a blues, but it goes to the V chord first, and then to the IV chord. So they're swapped. And that's where the backward part comes in."

McBride digs deep with some virtuosic soloing on a straight-up swinging rendition of "Very Special" and on the profoundly blue meditation "Switch Blade." The trio puts a Cubanflavored 5/4 spin on "Wig Wise" and turns in a radically reharmonized, clavéfueled reinvention of "A Little Max (Parfait)." Carrington contributes two originalsthe surging "No Boxes (Nor Words)" and the funky "Grass Roots," a drum feature that incorporates clips of former President George W. Bush. Clayton adds his ballad "Cut Off," with its gorgeous allusions to Ellington's

"Solitude." On the closer, a rendition of "REM Blues," Shea Rose and Herbie Hancock share duties in reciting Duke's poem "Music."

"This was the second time I've had a chance to work with Terri Lyne on one of her recordings," McBride said. "The previous one [2009's *More To Say (Real Life Story: Next Gen)*] was another wonderfully big vision project. She aims high, and I admire that about her."

-Bill Milkowski

Terri Lyne Carrington
playing can be very angular, very sparse. Then he gets these riffs that he keeps repeating over and over, almost like the horn section of a big band. And I love that part in 'Caravan' where he's playing the melody way down in octaves and you hear these little Webern-like notes on the top where he's just sort of hitting the keys. You can tell that he's thinking orchestrally there; he's thinking like a big band. Not everybody plays the piano that way."

Hersch admires Ellington's authoritative playing throughout Money Jungle: "I think it's some of his best playing on record. The other Ellington trio albums [1953's The Duke Plays Ellington and 1961's Piano In The Foreground] are pretty manicured, in a way. The tracks are short and they're a little more polished. But Money Jungle is great because Duke stretches in a way that he doesn't on the other trio albums. Because Duke wasn't totally in control, it brings out something in his playing that's very special. He had to come up with it on the spot, and it reveals Duke as more of a fearless improviser than any of his other trio projects."

Pianist Matthew Shipp is also impressed by Ellington's playing on the disc. "There's a very dark grittiness and beauty to the harmonic language that Duke employs that's a full flowering of a piano language," Shipp said. "There's something so integral about the space-time that he generates .... Every little architectural detail is carved to the Nth degree. It's one of the greatest examples of piano playing I've ever heard.

"Interestingly enough, there are aspects about that album that are almost completely free," Shipp continued. "That version of 'Solitude' ... Duke's playing free on that! And his orchestration on 'Caravan' is otherworldly. I mean, it's 100 percent the tune-the materials engender everything that's going on-but there's nothing rote about his playing on either of those familiar tunes. Actually there's nothing rote about any aspect of this album. It has none of that feel of when you're throwing people together in the studio and you're just going through the motions, because the tension was palpable. I find it an album of utter vitalism, unlike a lot of straightahead albums of that time."

Kozlov compares the conversational playing on Money Jungle to the Bill Evans Trio with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian. "Just conceptually and functionally, there's this heavy counterpoint, this polyphony going on," he said. "Earlier trio records that Mingus played on with Hampton Hawes and Dannie Richmond and another one from much earlier with Bud Powell and Roy Haynes are pretty straightahead. You still know it's Mingus, but it takes maybe 20 seconds to figure out that it's him. On Money Jungle, it takes five seconds."

The bassist plays with uncanny force on that edgy opener, practically mugging his instrument by thumping a single note repeatedly, then literally pulling the string off the fingerboard at one point. Ellington holds his ground in the face of Mingus' volatile statements, responding in kind



she has operatic range and amazing control, lacing a passage with a sly twisted note, an edge of vibrato, or a sudden swoop to the stratosphere, then landing right back on target, but she makes it all seem effortless, even casual." (fred kaplan, stereophile)

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149 West 46th Street New York, NY 10036 Toll Iree: (888)-7676-SAX Phone: (212)-391-1315 with some rather 'out' proclamations of his own. In Caine's view, "Duke is being very fatherly to Mingus in the sense of saying, 'I'm going to let you be obstreperous there; you can do your thing and I'm going to hold it down for you. Next time you do it, I'm going to go out, too.' There's a lot of psychology going on in this session."

The final minute of the title track has Mingus muscling his bass once again, bending strings with such force that he makes the instrument sound like a cross between a berimbau and a Delta blues guitar. "If they did nothing else but record that opening track, it would [still] be notable," said Hersch. "It's just so extraordinary."

But of course, there's much more to *Money Jungle*. The hushed, stark beauty of "Fleurette Africaine" is equally extraordinary but with a wholly different dynamic than the rambunctious title track. With Mingus gently trilling like a hummingbird on his bass and Roach underscoring the proceedings with sparse use of mallets, Ellington paints a portrait of an exotic flower deep in the jungle that has never been touched by human hands. It's as delicate and mysterious as "Money Jungle" is brash.

"Certainly Mingus is the wild-card of the session," Hersch said. "On the first tune he's playing this insistent high note through the whole track and it's kind of not functional either harmonically or rhythmically. Yet, he's sort of stubbornly up there and Duke is filling in the blanks. On 'Very Special,' Mingus decides to play more functionally, and it totally changes the vibe. There are certain tunes where Mingus played more compositionally and others where he plays more functionally. So it's a pretty schizophrenic session. It's almost like two different trios going on. And really, the person who decides whether it's going to be one or the other is Mingus."

Bassist John Hébert, a member of Fred Hersch's trio and a leader in his own right, noted, "There's not a lot of sections where Mingus is just playing walking time. There's a lot of broken playing and really melodic playing behind what Duke's doing. It's like they're always blowing together. That was fascinating to me back when I first heard *Money Jungle* and that's how I want to play now—be in the pocket but at the same time be really elastic with the time and the feel."

"Everybody's kind of doing their thing, but they're together," added drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. "And that predates Keith Jarrett's way of doing things and in a way even Wayne Shorter's way of doing things with his current quartet. They have a much freer way of doing it, but everybody's kind of in their own zone and yet they're definitely playing the composition in tune with each other, just like Duke and Max and Mingus were doing on *Money Jungle*."

The original United Artists recording had seven tracks, including the loosely swinging blues "Very Special," a gorgeous reading of "Warm Valley" (which Ellington had famously recorded in 1940 as a feature for Johnny Hodges), a hard-driving "Wig Wise," a unique interpretation of Juan Tizol's "Caravan" and Ellington's exquisite solo piano reading of "Solitude," which Mingus and Roach only enter in during the final minute of the tune.

The 2002 Blue Note CD reissue (programmed by Michael Cuscuna) contains a string of blues-drenched numbers wherein Mingus is turned loose to testify on his bass. Along with two potent takes of "Switch Blade," the bear-like bassist reaches deep into a gutbucket vibe on two takes of "Backward Country Boy Blues." There are also a two takes of "REM Blues," which sounds like an answer to Mercer Ellington's "Things Ain't What They Used To Be," and two takes of the Roach showcase "A Little Max (Parfait)," a buoyant, Latin-flavored piece that features some slick fills on the drum breaks.

Part of the enduring legend of Money Jungle lies not just in the quantity of musicians who embrace it, but also their diversity. The members of Medeski, Martin & Wood acknowledge the album as a touchstone for their own cutting-edge explorations. "It is one of my favorite records of all time," said drummer Billy Martin. "The personality is just so fucking strong. To me, it's almost like punk rock. They're virtuosos but they're approaching it in such a raw way. It's just so rich and intense and raw compared to the more refined, classic piano trio recordings of the time. That blend of personalities, where everybody brings their own dimension to it, was something we related to deeply. You listen to those cats and they each have such a strong footing that it's just undeniable. So it gave us more juice to keep going."

MMW bassist Chris Wood recalled that the album title became an adjective for the group: "We'd be rehearsing and someone would say, 'Do that *Money Jungle* thing,' which meant don't groove perfectly, don't be too tight, keep looseness, create that tension.' Marc Ribot has this phrase for stuff like that. He calls it 'wrong and strong.' If you're gonna do it wrong, do it strong! And Mingus' playing on the title track, which is awesome, is a perfect example of that. He's not slick. Even though he's technically incredible, he's not afraid to be raw. He sounds more like a Delta blues guy on that track, like the Son House of bass."

MMW keyboardist John Medeski said, "Money Jungle, to me, was sort of the pinnacle of grooving jazz trio interplay. No one needed to be supportive because they're all playing beyond the forms, beyond the style, beyond everything. It's contrapuntally interactive like the Ahmad Jamal Trio or the Bill Evans Trio, but in a much more aggressive, more powerful way. There's a certain intensity and intention to this recording that is just incredible. There's a lot of space for the energy of the communication to be the focal point, not necessarily the notes or the melodies. And that, to me, is the real spirit of jazz. It's improvised communication, a conversational way of playing. That's what this album is all about. Hopefully that's coming back in recording, especially for those who call themselves jazz musicians." DB

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# DARCY JAMES ARGUE A Fable Grows in Brooklyn by brad farberman

THE BEST WAY TO BURROW INSIDE Brooklyn Babylon (New Amsterdam), the second CD from composer-conductor Darcy James Argue's 18-piece big band Secret Society, is to listen to it. The second best route is to hear out Argue on what's missing from music today. "When someone calls a blues at a jam session," he said, "it's not likely to be a deep, emotional experience for everyone." With his writing for Babylon, Argue tried to "create a sense of audible unity, which is weirdly something that has been out of favor in classical music." Emotion and "audible unity" are things that Babylon has to spare, making the album honest, intimate and larger-than-life. If you want something done right, do it yourself.

Or, to be more precise, do it with one other person whom you admire and trust. Though all of the music for *Babylon* was composed by Argue, the project was a true collaboration between the Secret Society leader and graphic novelist Danijel Zezelj, who created the visuals that accompanied its 2011 live premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) and conceptualized the fictional story it tells. Despite being completely instrumental, *Babylon* communicates the tale of carpenter Lev Bezdomni, who has been asked to construct a carousel at the top of a proposed Tower of Brooklyn. Once built, the structure would be the tallest on Earth.

"We talked about, in very broad strokes, what kind of story we might want to tell," Argue recalled about his first meeting with Zezelj in 2009. "Some kind of story about Brooklyn. Some kind of story that combined past, present and future. That had some kind of resonance. And then the next time I met with him, he had come up with this detailed urban fable about this carpenter, Lev Bezdomni, and his granddaughter, Mara, and Lev's carousel-building workshop, and this invitation from the mayor to build the carousel that will crown the tallest tower in the world. It was all there. I saw this synopsis of what the story might be like [and] I was like, 'This is *amazing*. There's so much musical potential built into the motifs that he's laid out here."

Of course, Argue, who was born and raised in Vancouver but has lived in Brooklyn since 2003, was interested in more than Zezelj's narrative ideas. The visual artist's dark, bold images struck a chord with Argue right away.

"Immediately, what attracted me to the art was the design sense," said Argue. "All of his panels are framed really beautifully in and of themselves. And they convey story and motion and energy and all of the things you need in order to flow from panel to panel. Sometimes people compose beautiful images but there's no dynamism to it. But he was able to do both, which is so rare in graphic-novel storytelling. It's the same skill as a great cinematographer. That degree of dynamism plus design appealed to me and resonated with what I want to do musically. But also the fact that [Zezelj] is able to com-



bine so many influences from different periods: medieval woodcuts, Soviet-era propaganda posters,





(1) Darcy James Argue's Secret Society performing Brook/yn Babylon in 2011. (2) Composer, conductor and ringleader Argue. (3) Danijel Zezelj's artworl is projected on a screen behind the musicians. (4) Argue (far right) leading the 18 musicians. (Photos 1–4 by James Matthew Daniel. Portrait of Argue on page 41 by Lindsay Beyerstein.) and the second

old, expressionist silent movies, and graffiti, and none of it's a pastiche. It's all folded into his own personal style in such a unique way. It's informed by the past but it really feels of the moment. And it's incredibly distinctive. You see one of his images and you know instantly who it is."

With a partnership in place and a commission from BAM procured in February 2010, the real work began. But instead of splitting up to create their respective halves of the production, they engaged in a back-and-forth collaboration to make sure the piece would feel logical and natural.

"As I was building the story through images, Darcy was creating music, chapter by chapter," said Zezelj, a Croatian who has lived in Brooklyn since the early 2000s. "Eventually both elements, images and music, merged into a final piece connected by the narrative line, timing and rhythm. It was inspiring to witness Darcy's skill in

creating complex and powerful music and having it executed by such a large orchestra. His ability to capture the story's atmosphere and follow specific story lines without losing any musical integrity [or] beauty was stunning."

For Argue, some parts of the process were easy, but others were difficult. For example,



Illustrations from Danijel Zezelj's graphic novel Babilon

Zezelj let Argue take the lead on how long the sections of *Babylon* would last. But fitting music to visuals was a new frontier for the conductor, and he had to make adjustments.

"When I began to work on the music, [Zezelj] sent me this long collection of images," Argue explained. "But they hadn't been assembled into animation yet. So the timing of it was entirely up to me: how long I wanted each image to last before transitioning to the next one, and at which point in the music I wanted to correspond to the key frame that I had. So that gave me a lot more freedom than I would have had if I had been presented with preexisting animation and



told, 'OK, now you need to write a cue that is 26 seconds long.' Or three-and-a-half seconds long. Instead, he gave me a structure, and I knew there were certain moods I had to hit and certain times where I wanted to reinforce what was happening in the narrative—and other times where I wanted to *contrast* what was happening visually and musically. Times where we might want a music cue to overlap the visual cue and the transition between the visuals and the music to happen at a different time than when we wanted things to land exactly. All of these things that I never had to worry about before when I was just writing music."

Argue's days of "just writing music" weren't exactly carefree, though. The composer has worked hard to get where he is today. After studying music at both McGill University and New England Conservatory-the latter institution provided an apprenticeship with the late valve trombonist and arranger Bob Brookmeyer-Argue landed in the Carroll Gardens neighborhood of Brooklyn, where he still lives. On May 29, 2005, the five reedists, five trumpeters, four trombonists, four-man rhythm section (bass, guitar, piano and drums) and single conductor (Argue) known as Secret Society debuted at the CBGB Lounge, on a triple bill with the Mary Halvorson/Jessica Pavone duo and a free-improv quartet featuring guitarist Bruce Eisenbeil and saxophonist Scott Robinson. Four years, a European tour and a record contract later, Secret Society released its debut album, Infernal Machines. Full of swaggering drums, rock guitar, Latin influences and thick horn lines that ranged from haunting to threatening, Infernal Machines was startlingly original and critically well-received.

"I had no reasonable expectation that starting a big band would be in any way a viable career path," Argue said. "In some ways it still isn't, really. And if there had been some other path open to me, it would have been a much better path for me to take. But I found myself in this really stubborn and irrational position of only being able to do this one thing. This one thing that's very bad for you, which is trying to run a contemporary big band [*laughs*]. But for some crazy reason it has worked out OK so far. Although every day I wake up and expect the whole edifice to come crashing down and be like, 'That was a good run of it. Guess it's time to find a real job now."

Brooklyn Babylon feels authentic. Touching on multiple genres, the album is as varied as the musicians who live in its namesake borough. Marked by tough, plodding bass lines and insistent, staccato horn attacks, "Prologue" and "Interlude #6: Arise" nearly burst with busy Balkan beats. "Interlude #5: Unmoored" seems to originate in Southeastern Europe, too, but from a quieter corner. A gorgeously melancholy miniature, "Unmoored" is arranged for solo acoustic guitar and performed with feeling and taste by Society six-stringer Sebastian Noelle.

"The Balkan music obviously comes from the fact that my co-creator is born in Croatia of mixed Serbian and Croatian parents," explained Argue. "The only literal folk song quotation comes right in the middle of [the album], in 'Interlude #5,' which is an arrangement of this Croatian folk tune, 'Cveti mi fijolica.' I did a lot of research. I met with an expert on Croatian music who gave me a lot of recordings to check out. And I found a lot of stuff on my own. The thing that really stuck with me was just this one song that I discovered, after, is kind of popular with jazz musicians, because it's so beautiful. But it's just this unaccompanied voice. It's from an area of Croatia that borders on Romania, so there's a bit of a Gypsy influence to it. It's this very lyrical and beautiful song. So I took that and then took some of the chord progressions that I had been using elsewhere [on *Babylon*] and used those to harmonize this melody, because initially it's just an a capella, single-line folk song."

Funk and disco also rear their heads on *Babylon*. Thumping electric bass, hissing hihats and warm, buttery tenor saxophone from John Ellis are in effect on "The Neighborhood." And around two minutes into "Construction + Destruction," a similar groove materializes, this time bolstered by a sharp, mean guitar tremolo. To Argue, it's merely trumpeter Thad Jones— and the 1970s—creeping in.

"People think about the '60s [Thad Jones] records as being the most influential, but



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there's also this [1974] record called *Potpourri* that has Thad's arrangement of the O'Jays' 'For The Love Of Money' and a couple of Stevie Wonder tunes on it," Argue said regarding the Jones tones that influenced *Babylon*. "People hate that record. But it's awesome. And his *Suite For Pops*, which is just incredibly joyful. That sound to me is the sound of community celebration. In a big way, it's the sound of the '70s. And also on the avant-garde end of things, the Keith Jarrett American quartet and especially what Dewey Redman brought to that. And Old and New Dreams. And just that joyful, full-throated saxophone sound."

Elsewhere on the album, Brooklyn could be mistaken for a grungy rock club. Argue points to the sludgy, distorted first half of "Builders" as the most metallic passage on the album, and credits some of the ache and gloom found there to Ingrid Jensen's sinister, unhinged trumpet solo.

"For that one, [Argue] did more than on the first record, when I played [a solo] on 'Transit," said Jensen, who has been with Secret Society since its first gig. "['Transit'] just sets its own vibe, and it's all about playing a certain way. On 'Builders,' it took us a minute. We had to really discuss what he was looking for electronically. I'm not a real computer whiz, so my setup is pretty organic. Pretty basic. I had a distortion pedal and a wah-wah, and I used a volume pedal to bring it in and out. We discussed in the studio, as well as for the gig, how much the effects should dominate or not. We just discussed finding the right balance between that really nasty sound but also retaining some beauty in there."

Ugly beauty is also present in the beginning of the album-opening "Prologue." One of the unique aspects of *Babylon* is its use of field recordings that Argue made around Brooklyn.

"I had a recorder, and I went out with a tripod, and I went outside Danijel's studio, where he spent a year painting all of the paintings that would go into the animation in *Brooklyn Babylon*," Argue said. "Set that up and started recording. I moved to a few other spots. I went underneath the Gowanus Expressway. I went by the Smith and Ninth subway bridge. And I went to the Lowe's parking lot. There's a demolished building across the Gowanus Canal from the Lowe's parking lot, and there were cranes that were taking these big clumps of debris from this demolished building and dropping them onto a barge in the canal, which both symbolically and sonically turned out to be the perfect sound for the record. So it's sort of a soundscape woven from all of these disparate locations."

As a composer, Argue is adept at connecting seemingly different worlds. On "Grand Opening," for instance, he ties together an old-timey march, epic rock chords, a forlorn trombone solo, minimalist piano, a nervous waltz section, noise and a trip to a serene, flute-heavy mountaintop. That's a lot of twists and turns for just one tune, but Argue is a slave to his imagination. In fact, he sees no way out.

"I'd become addicted to big band," Argue confessed about the result of having worked with Brookmeyer at NEC. "Just the sound of it. It's like being at the center of a maelstrom—there's all this air coming at you from all directions. It can be incredibly chaotic; as a conductor, you're constantly at risk of everything flying completely off the rails, and everything is hinging on you to keep the band together. It's this incredible thrill, a very high-stakes situation. But it's also so rewarding when things are right, everyone's feeling the groove the same way and everyone's in the pocket. There's a spell that it casts on the musicians—and on me, and on the audience—that can't be replicated any other way. It's a fix you can't get anywhere else. So I'm stuck with it."

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#### By Allen Morrison 🥗 Photography by Timothy Saccenti



inger Jane Monheit, whose natural beauty requires very little embellishment, is nevertheless wearing more makeup than the occasion demands. Looking up from her smartphone in a bistro near her home on Manhattan's Upper West Side, she offers an apology. "Normally for an interview I wouldn't be so made up," she says. "I don't usually wear false eyelashes." She has just come from an audition for a Broadway musical, she explains, adding, "I won't tell you what it is, because I probably won't get it." She made a quick stop at home to change into jeans, a T-shirt and a gray silk scarf adorned with fuchsia flowers. Even in casual attire, she looks glamorous.

Monheit, 35, is especially radiant these days. She exudes contentment. Happily married to drummer Rick Montalbano, who has been in her band since 2001, she is the proud mother of 4-year-old Jack, now a seasoned traveler who accompanies his parents to concerts and festivals around the world.

She's also never sung better or with more conviction, belying the conventional wisdom that the best art rises from the ashes of misery. Her new album, The Heart Of The Matter (Emarcy/Decca), takes big risks, goes for big emotions and cheerfully disregards genre. It was produced and arranged by the formidable arranger/keyboardist Gil Goldstein.

The Broadway audition is a natural extension of Monheit's retro leanings and theatrical flair. Her musical theater ambitions are not surprising, considering the essential conservatism of her approach to jazz.

In an era in which many singers try to define themselves by writing original material, deconstructing familiar songs beyond recognition or blending musical genres, Monheit remains old-school. She's built a catalog of 10 albums by interpreting great tunes, mostly standards, in the tradition of such jazz singers as Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Irene Kral; Broadway icons like Barbara Cook; and Brazilian songbirds such as Elis Regina.

Just like her idols, Monheit starts from a place of respect for the original song. As her longtime accompanist and arranger Michael Kanan puts it, "These days everybody is concerned with doing something 'different.' I don't think that Jane is necessarily trying to find something new. She's trying to find something truthful."

It's ironic that one of the most transporting moments of the new album, which is devoted to lyrical interpretation, is a wordless, soaring vocal improvisation. The inspired scatting comes at the end of Ivan Lins' "A Gente Merece Ser Feliz (People Deserve To Be Happy)," an irresistible samba, and one of two songs on the album by Lins, a frequent collaborator whom she calls her favorite songwriter. As arranged with great panache by Goldstein, Monheit's vocal is supported brilliantly by Brazilian guitarist Romero Lubambo and complemented by two flutes, which, thirds apart, repeat an altered arpeggio that rises and falls like a swimmer bobbing in the surf off Ipanema.

Compared to her previous album, *Home* (Emarcy)—a relaxed romp through a set of road-tested jazz standards—the new project is more ambitious. It also contains less jazz. She calls it her most personal album, reflecting her eclectic musical tastes and, in several standout tracks, her delight in motherhood. Although there are fewer standards than in past outings, the set includes jazz, pop, folk, Brazilian, lullabies and a Broadway tune thrown in for good measure ("I Wanna Be With You" by Charles Strouse and Lee Adams, from the 1964 musical *Golden Boy*).

"Every song was chosen for the lyrics," she says. The cinematic arrangements are informed by jazz but also draw on traditions as diverse as chanson, Brazilian and chamber music, making ample use of flutes, cellos and Goldstein's evocative accordion, in addition to Monheit's longtime band (pianist/arranger Kanan, drummer Montalbano and bassist/arranger Neal Miner). The stylistic diversity includes a Beatles medley ("Golden Slumbers" paired with "The Long And Winding Road"); "Close," a lovely ballad by Larry Goldings and Cliff Goldmacher; and three lush, Brazilianinspired arrangements, including one of Joe Raposo's classic "Sing," which was featured in the children's TV series "Sesame Street" and converted into a 1973 pop hit by The Carpenters. The program also has two jazz lullabies, one of which is "Night Night, Stars," the first song recorded by Monheit for which she wrote both the music and the words.

At the onset of her career, Monheit took flak from some critics who described her as "too perfect," emphasizing technique over interpretation, but there is scant evidence of that nowadays. Certainly after the new album, in which her voice sometimes breaks with pathos, no one will accuse Monheit again of singing with too little feeling.

"Early on, Jane said she wanted to do songs that were simple and had a lot of emotion in them," Goldstein said on the phone from Ogden, Utah, where he was touring with Bobby McFerrin. "I think she's very *present* on the record. Every time I hear it, I feel Jane *figuring out* the song and being in the moment ... . She brings us along, sets up our expectations, then changes her mind or comes in a little after the beat. That's what makes

a good singer and a great artist—when we feel that process unfolding. We feel that they are in the moment, and they invite us into theirs."

Between sips of tea, Monheit recalls how she and Goldstein selected the songs. "Gil came to me with a bunch of ideas. It's funny because they were all songs that I already knew and loved," including the album's opener, "Until It's Time For You To Go," written by Buffy Sainte-Marie. "I loved Roberta Flack's [1970] version but hadn't thought about it in years," she says.

"Gil also came to me with Bill Evans' 'Two Lonely People,' and I'm an Evans fanatic, so I said, 'Definitely!'" The song is devastatingly sad, a virtuoso piece that Monheit performs in a stark setting with flutes and Goldstein's moody electric piano. "There are also songs we play with the band that I've wanted to do for a long time," such as an exceptional reading of Mel Tormé's "Born To Be Blue." "That tune does not babysit you!" she says. "You gotta work at it. I really love Mel. Growing up, he was someone I heard constantly."

Goldstein also suggested a favorite of his, "Little Man, You've Had A Busy Day." "I heard that song on a Sarah Vaughan record when I was about 10," he said, "and I've loved it ever since. Before this, I never found the right person or place to record it."

Raposo's "Sing" is a tune that Monheit often croons to her son. "I've wanted to do a Brazilian version of it for a million years," she explains. "And now that I've been doing it live, I see a lot of smiles break out when people recognize the tune." At the suggestion that she might sing it on "Sesame Street," however, she demurs: "Oh, I wish! I'm not famous enough for 'Sesame Street.' But I loved the Lena Horne version when I was a kid, and still do. I've played it for my son a thousand times."

The arrangements are not the only diverse aspect of *The Heart Of The Matter*. "The album runs the gamut of lyrical experiences," Monheit says. "There are the uplifting songs, like "Sing" and Ivan's song "Depende De Nós." Then there are the super-personal songs—'Until It's Time For You To Go,' which is not what it seems, or the song I wrote for my son, 'Night

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#### Night, Stars,' or 'Little Man.""

Monheit and Goldstein also chose to include some darker songs that don't reflect her happy life. "I've been married for 11 years," she reflects. "I have this beautiful child ... . I have a lot of wonderful things in my life to sing about. When you have that sort of happiness, it's easy to extrapolate a little bit and imagine what it would be like if all of those things were gone. And that can take you deeper into the sad songs.

"I also think it's so interesting and fun to play characters here and there. For instance, the recording of "What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life?"—we're doing this incredibly dark version of the tune," she says, in which the character could be seen as a stalker. "Another song from the record that I have not lived—and hope never to live—is 'Two Lonely People.' I wanted to include these [character songs] as well, instead of having the whole album just be a big old confessional, because I'm boring! I need to get some darkness in there."

#### Whitney, Bluegrass & Eldridge

Since Monheit began her recording career at the tender age of 20, winning first-runner-up at the 1998 Thelonious Monk International Jazz



Vocals Competition, her voice has been celebrated for a bell-like purity that calls to mind Barbra Streisand, combined with the swing and sophistication of a Sarah Vaughan. She is a marvelous scat singer who can sound like Ella when she so chooses.

Her musical education began at home in Oakdale, on New York's Long Island: "Every day of my life I had jazz, bluegrass and good musical theater, like original cast recordings of Rodgers musicals. And the music of my own generation oh man, I wore out my Whitney Houston tape. And modern musical theater—Sondheim—I loved *Into The Woods*. I had all of this happening at once, every day." Monheit's parents are music lovers with eclectic tastes; her father is a banjo player who took her to bluegrass shows.

So why didn't she become a bluegrass artist? "I thought about it," she says. "In my teens, really from the time I was born, I knew I was going to be a singer. When I was a little kid, I wanted to be a jazz singer. Then, as a teen, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be cool to be signed with Rounder and make records and have Béla Fleck play on them?' Then I wanted to be on Broadway."

She performed in musical theater in high school but had no private voice lessons until college. "My voice teachers were the records I listened to and sang along with," she says. "My mother made sure that I listened exclusively to singers with good vocal technique—so that, with all my copying, I wouldn't learn problems that would cause trouble later on. I sang along to Ella, Sarah Vaughan, Tormé, Judy Garland. And folksingers like Joni Mitchell and Maura O'Connell. But I also heard a lot of great musical theater singers like Barbara Cook, Rebecca Luker and Judy Kuhn."

A chance visit to her school by the vocal group New York Voices changed the course of her life, when she met singer Peter Eldridge, her future voice teacher. "I applied to Manhattan School of Music because he was there. I put all my eggs in Peter's basket," she says. "And when I got to college and started lessons with Peter, he said, 'Oh, OK, we're in good shape here."

Still, acceptance in New York jazz circles didn't come so easily. "For a long time I was trying to prove myself as a musician with knowledge and ears and the ability to execute all of the stuff I know. You come into New York at 17 as a girl singer, and you run into a lot of 'Oh, your boyfriend is the drummer? Well, OK, I *guess* she can sing.' I had to win everybody over one by one."

Monheit released her debut disc, *Never Never* Land, in 2000 and followed it up with 2001's *Come Dream With Me*.

"When the records came out, there was a lot of imaging where I was, you know, very glamorous and pretty, and all that." She shrugs. "All that kind of stuff is fun for me. I enjoy that kind of thing. No one had to force me to put on high heels and a pretty dress! But when all that happened, it was still like, 'Oh, well, we bet she's not *really* any good.' So [I] was proving, proving all the time."

Having a child has relieved some of that pressure and freed her to express herself more. "You know how it is," she says. "You have your child, and this is the most important thing in your life. And work becomes secondary. It allows me to say, 'If I sing a bad note, or say the wrong thing in this interview, well, it's just not the end of the world.' I can lighten up, loosen up and be myself, say what I think, onstage and off, sing the way I want to sing, and choose whatever weird song I want to choose. And not worry about being the perfect little princess anymore. It's way more fun. And it's made me a much better singer."

Pianist Kanan agrees: "Over the years, I've seen her get more comfortable at being herself. There's more of her in everything she's singing."

#### **Beautiful Flaws**

Although Monheit's vocal technique is still flawless when she wants it to be, she agrees with those who say that sometimes in the past it was a little too polished.

"Yeah, I was a little stiff," she says. "It was scary at the beginning [of my career]. I felt I had to be perfect all the time. I used to worry about every note. I would go back and fix things a million times. Now I'm more worried about the message getting across. I know I can sing perfect notes if I need to. Perfection is kind of boring, isn't it?"

Like many singers in the studio, she will "comp" together takes to address flaws. But she expresses horror at the idea of using Auto-Tune technology for pitch correction: "I would never! If I needed that, I wouldn't be doing my job, now, would I? I mean, if you can't sing in tune—work on it! Don't just rely on a machine to fix it for you. That's ridiculous. Sing in tune, have good time, communicate a lyric. *Bang!* Now you get to be a singer! [Vocalists] get a bad name because of people who have low levels of musicianship."

Monheit is proud of her evolution as a recording artist. She feels she is now better able to bring to the studio more of the spontaneity and feeling she conveys in her live shows. "I've learned how to communicate in the studio the way I can [in concert]. For so long, it was hard for me to record and not worry about sounding perfect. I had to accept the fact that flaws are going to be there. Flaws are there live; flaws are *interesting* and beautiful. And you can't get a truly emotional reading on anything and have it be perfect. Those two things don't really go together."

Monheit no longer has a need to prove herself. "I have gotten to the point where I don't care about being perfect, because I'm a mother, and I'm 35, and I realize how unimportant all of this stuff is," she explains. "Am I singing good songs? Yes. Am I emotionally connecting and making people feel something? Hopefully. That's the best that I can do. I don't need to worry about what anybody thinks of me or how they classify me. I've heard people say, 'Aw, no one should do standards anymore,' you know? There's so much fuss all the time about everything—it's silly. I just want to sing good songs and make somebody feel better. That's the point."

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Jean Claude Jones is a true representative of the artistic and improvisational spirit of the independent jazz musician. He has made his mark on the world as a first-call bassist, composer, educator, bandleader, recording engineer/producer and record label owner. And he's accomplished it all against incredible odds.

Jones was born in Tunisia and raised in France, which remained his home base from 1966-'76, when the seeds of his career were planted and nurtured. He began on electric bass and guitar, performing at various halls and special events with pop groups dedicated to the French and British hit parade of the day. His ear for picking up material quickly became an asset when he crossed over into doing more jazz gigs in southern France, throughout the Mediterranean and in northern Europe. Jones attended Berklee College of Music, and after graduating in the early '80s, his taste for the experimental side of jazz was piqued. "I played in jazz groups with a free twist," he explains. "This was my Ornette/ electric Miles period. There were lots of jazz standards, with a Scofield sound and inspiration."

Jones continued to alternate between working in the United States and Europe but was feeling like he was at a crossroads in his personal and professional lives. In November 1983, while studying at the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles, he read an article in the Los Angeles Times about music in Israel and the newborn jazz scene that was happening there. "I arrived in Jerusalem in December of '83 as a fresh electric guitar and bass jazz-playing immigrant," he recalls. "I became involved with the music scene, playing with some of the musicians I had read about back in L.A., and others, like guitarist Steve Peskoff and reed player Steve Horenstein. It was an exciting time, and I was playing jazz five nights a week. I was very much in demand."

In the summer of 1985, Jones was riding a successful wave of live performance in Israel that culminated with the opportunity to meet and perform with Stan Getz. He was still playing electric bass at the time and, after a reevaluation of his tone and choice of instrument, eventually gravitated toward purchasing his first acoustic bass in 1987. Little did he know that it would set him on the path to artistic revelation.

On the recommendation of a colleague, Jones was approached by the Jazz Department of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance to teach electric bass and guitar. The academic environment provided him opportunities to develop his own double bass skills and meet inspirational artists of all types. "In 1988, I invited visiting artist Dave Liebman to share the stage with my trio," says Jones. "He urged me to find my own voice on my instrument. In 1991 I met pianist/composer Slava Ganelin, who blew me away with his rhythmic concept, reinforcing my own sense of time awareness. I also started forming bonds with the dance community as well."

By the early 2000s, Jones was well estab-

lished in Israeli jazz and art circles. He was expanding his palette as a free-jazz improviser and had a cadre of musicians who shared his passions and musical vision. "It all started in 2004, with the recording Jean Claude Jones With Friends, made possible thanks to the Jerusalem Culture Department," he explains. "I brought in a studio to record free-improv music with a few of my new friends-all volunteers-and published the title under no label. After one year of hardship and failing to find a proper label to endorse the album, I decided in 2005 to create Kadima Collective Recordings. I involved local and international artists in co-producing their work and publishing it on the label, set up a website and worked out an agenda of recordings."

The name Kadima is somewhat based on the Hebrew word "kedma," which means to move on or proceed. Its conception took on much significance for Jones. Professionally, "proceeding" was what he desired for his own career, his fellow artists and the record label at large. His personal life, however, has had its own set of challenges as the bassist has struggled with Multiple Sclerosis for nearly 20 years. "I am physically very handicapped with chronic secondary MS and T-cell lymphoma [a rare form of skin cancer], both incurable diseases," Jones says. "My condition aggravates a little more each year. Fatigue and pain prevent me from playing [certain] gigs in Israel, where I know that accessibility is problematic for me. Even driving a distance of one hour is becoming more difficult. But when I am onstage, all sense of discomfort goes away and music takes me wherever it goes."

Jones' recording projects often are a mixture of art, science and social causes. One in particular is the Myelination disc. "The Myelin Project was initiated in 2006 by rocket scientist Andy Shipway and me," says Jones. "It enables an unusual and evocative window into Multiple Sclerosis." The myelin sheath is the protective insulating cover of the nervous system. For this recording, the sheath's vibrations were analyzed using quantum mechanics and captured audibly. Jones and many of his frequent collaboratorssuch as clarinetist Harold Rubin, saxophonist Ariel Shibolet, percussionist Haggai Fershtman and poet Jake Marmer-improvised over these chemical sounds. 2009's Deep Tones For Peace is presented in a triptych package that contains a CD, DVD and booklet. This assemblage of world-renowned bassists started as a peace rally idea by bassist Barre Phillips, Jones and bassist/ composer/conductor Mark Dresser. It brought together more than a dozen musicians from Jerusalem and New York who recorded utilizing teleconferencing hardware via the Internet.

Phillips has released a number of his own projects on Kadima, including a recent triptych titled Traces. "It seems to me that Jean Claude developed the idea of documenting the world of the contemporary double bass as far as his means would allow," explains Phillips. "A couple of years ago, he presented a handful of us bass players-me, Mark Dresser, Joëlle Léandre, Burt Turetzky and [others]-a concept of publishing that would allow us to express ourselves artistically and informationally in ways that normally would not be available to us in the recording or publishing business. Jean Claude offered us a rare opportunity. Subsequently, I proposed to him to change the format slightly by actually making a book as the basic part of my project."

The Kadima Collective catalog features a series of releases by some aforementioned artists in solo, duo and ensemble settings. Jones' releases *Hosting Myself* and *Citations* offer solo experiences where his mix of acoustic bass and electronic sounds is spacey and visceral. Frequent woodwind collaborator Vinny Golia's duet recordings include *The Ethnic Project* (paired with bassists Phillips, Turetzky, Léandre and Lisa Mezzacappa). There are a number of other releases planned for 2013, including a follow-up to the *Myelination* project and new triptychs by Léandre, Dresser and bassists John Eckhardt and Irina-Kalina Goudeva.

"One has to acknowledge the enormous investment in work, spirit and finances that JC Jones has invested in Kadima," observes Phillips. "His desire to document a certain style of music and musicians is very unusual. It is a true act of philanthropic activism. I feel that for him it is a matter of life and death as much as it is for us when we go onstage to perform. It is today—*this* performance—that is the most important one in your life. Give it your all." DB



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# JAPONIZE ELEPHANTS NO PARAMETERS By j. poet

axophonist/guitarist Sylvain Carton chose Japonize Elephants as a band name to prepare listeners for the playful harmonic pandemonium that's the band's stock in trade. "Dave Gantz and I started the Elephants after listening to Almanach by the French folk-rock band Malicorne," Carton said. "We began busking on the streets in Bloomington, where I was studying music at Indiana University. As we crashed party after party with our music, other friends joined us. The size of the group, which can range from four to 16, made it necessary to develop inventive arrangements. The eclectic nature of the Elephants gave me a chance to experiment with different types of voicings and non-standard textures."

Describing the band's second album, *Mélodie Fantastique*, as "eclectic" is an understatement. There is a core of improvisational music, but it supports a kaleidoscope of sounds, including crazed clawhammer banjo that's part Old Time, part bluegrass; Mariachi horns; klezmer; surf guitar; swing; spoken word; blues; Asian tonalities; and Spaghetti western twang. "We all have dif-

ferent backgrounds," said pianist/saxophonist Mitch Marcus. "Sylvain loves French music and bluegrass, Dina [Maccabee] plays classical and pop viola, and I was into jazz and classical, so we mixed it all together. The only parameters are that there are no parameters."

The music on *Mélodie Fantastique* was recorded over a five-year period. "Because band members were spread between San Francisco, New York, Indiana and Colorado, we recorded this album ourselves, giving us more flexibility and freedom in the process," Carton explained. "We strayed from our original idea of recording live in one room to be more experimental. I set up a home studio so we could track the entire rhythm section plus one melody instrument at once."

During the process, tragedy struck. Bassist Evan Farrell died in a house fire in 2007, so the project was postponed. When the band decided that *Mélodie Fantastique* would pay tribute to Farrell—a musician of diverse talents who also performed with Rogue Wave and Magnolia Electric Co.—it changed the significance of the music. "We recorded in our living rooms, bedrooms, closets, stairwells, hallways, kitchens and a ballet studio," Carton said. "It was more like a good hang than a studio session and was a great way to remember and honor Evan. Not one session went by without funny stories and fond memories of him."

Maccabee, who sings and plays fiddle and viola, agrees. "[Japonize Elephants] are as much a community as a band," she said. "We all play a variety of styles, and rehearsals are a good excuse to hang out."

*Mélodie Fantastique* has 20 tracks that nod to the 20 players who have drifted through the band's ranks since 1994. To complete the project, the group launched a Kickstarter campaign, raising enough to hire a publicist and cover mixing, mastering and CD and LP production. "Like everyone in the digital age, we maintain a website, a Facebook page, a mailing list and do the Twitter thing occasionally," Carton said.



Carton has become adept at describing the band's sound and evolution: "Our music has a hard-core driving rhythmic underbelly with florid Far Eastern cinematic melodies winding around bacon- and whiskeyfueled songs. After moving to San Francisco, even more people joined the band. Eventually, half the people moved to New York, so we now have an East Coast band and a West Coast band, but when we can get everyone together at once, it's fantastic."

All the members earn a living through music, whether it's by doing session work, teaching or playing in multiple bands. Carton performs with his own quartet, dedicated to creating sonic environments for improvisations; Space Blaster, a surf-metal combo that lets him wail on electric guitar; and the Mitch Marcus Quintet, which plays "outside" jazz. He's also active in Carolyna Picknick, a group he started with Maccabee that veers between French café tunes, klezmer, gypsy jazz and tango. As a sideman in Beats Antique, a world music outfit, he plays clarinet and baritone saxophone through an array of pedals and effects. "The biggest, most powerful sound I've ever made on any instrument is using the bari with an octave pedal and some distortion," he said.

Marcus believes Carton is breaking new musical ground: "Using a custom-made mic and pedals, he takes the sounds of the sax into new territory. At times, you don't even realize it's a saxophone."

Carton also works as an endorser and artistic advisor for Vandoren. "I help clarinetists and saxophonists find mouthpiece, reed and ligature combinations that allow them to get the most out of their sound and playing experience," he said. "I never limit myself to one kind of music. I've played and toured with jazz, indie rock, Afro-beat and electronic bands. As long as you like the people you're with—and the music you're making—then you're headed in the right direction. It's still a tough way to make a living, so you'd better at least be enjoying it."



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#### **INDIE LIFE**

# THE OATMEAL JAZZ COMBO **BUILT ON** TRUST By Thomas Staudter

Tristan Eggene

ince graduating from New York's Stony Brook University in 2009 with a degree in economics, drummer-composer Leander Young has worked as an investment banker, been laid off, suffered the death of his mother from a rare neurological disease, worked as coach for several youth soccer teams and made some money day-trading. He has also served as the leader and guiding force behind The Oatmeal Jazz Combo-a septet of cohorts from or connected to Stony Brook's wellregarded music program-and released the band's two CDs on his own LGY Records label.

All the while, he has been fiercely committed to the idea that The Oatmeal Jazz Combo will find success if given more exposure. With more than \$10,000 of his own money already invested in the cause, Young is making plans to record a third album soon, possibly in the summer, when all his bandmates will be available. Like many musicians who juggle the responsibilities of diurnal duties with the mostly nocturnal joys of gigging and jamming, the Oatmealers have found that simply getting the band members together in one room can be a challenge. It doesn't help that the seven musicians are now spread around the country.

Young, 25, resides at home with his father (a retired orthopedic surgeon) in a tableau that could inspire a good TV sit-com. As he focuses on the band's future, he also looks back at his Stony Brook years as the most formative in his musical career. That's when he developed a bandstand rapport with trumpeter Hardin Butcher, trombonist David Peterson, reedist Scott Litroff, pianist Andrew McGowan and bassist Tristan

Eggener. At one time or another during the mid-2000s, nearly all of the combo mates were associated with the school's doctoral program or big band, which is guided by trombonist Ray Anderson. The Oatmeal Jazz Combo's other trombonist, James Hubbard, has been hard to reach because he's been accepted into the prestigious Heritage of America Band stationed at Langley Air Force Base near Hampton, Va., and recently relocated to San Antonio to complete his basic training.

All the group's members (including Hubbard) will gather for a recording session slated for this summer. Like Young, two of the bandmates live in the New York metropolitan area: Litroff teaches music as an adjunct professor at three colleges and universities on Long Island, and Butcher-at age 38, the oldest band member-lives in Yonkers, N.Y., and subs in Broadway pit bands. McGowan, who is a member of guitarist Cliff Hines' quartet, plays in New York City occasionally, but he mostly earns a living in his hometown, New Orleans. Eggener has a tenure-track professorship at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, and Peterson divides his time between two college teaching jobs in Minnesota's Twin Cities, where he grew up.

During a phone call from Durant, Okla., Eggener admitted that being in a band with far-flung membership is "not ideal," but he added that everyone keeps in touch and relishes the idea of recording another album. Although Butcher was brought into the band around the time of the May 2010 record-



ing sessions for their eponymously titled debut album, a close fraternity was created among all the Oatmealers during countless hours spent in the Stony Brook music department's basement rehearsal space. (The "oatmeal" in the group's name refers to the beige-colored soundproofing substance that covers the rehearsal space's walls.)

The punchy horn and ensemble arrangements found on the first CD and on the band's 2012 disc, All Stirred Up, are the result of "a natural togetherness and a lot of diligent practicing while we're apart," Litroff explained. "Other groups

may work hard to get that feeling of closeness, but we have the trust part down and are able to move through any issues that come up. It also allows [us to have] a streamlined approach in the studio."

When the first album was recorded, Young had booked only five hours of studio time, so the musicians had one practice run-through for the program, and a maximum of two takes per song, with no overdubs. "It was sight-reading, basically," the drummer said. The second CD was also cut on a shoestring budget with a modicum of time, but the band definitely had made progress, which resulted in a stronger album.

Each of Young's combo mates appreciates his efforts to keep the band moving forward, but he feels that his work is merely part of a commonsense approach to making a mark in the music world. "In college and afterward, I saw all these musicians who are amazing, and they all struggled and struggled to get heard," he recalled. "With the guys [in The Oatmeal Jazz Combo], there is this chemistry, and the music is unique because people came from different parts of the country and got different training. My confidence in what we're doing builds each time I listen to one of our CDs."

"Playing in this band is great because we all developed technically and artistically with or around each other," Peterson said via phone from Minnesota. "Logistically, I hope it all works out for this summer. I'm definitely ready."



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#### Ron Carter Golden Striker Trio San Sebastian IN + OUT RECORDS 77103-9

★★★½

This elegant, supple, sometimes playful recording made at the 2010 Jazzaldia Festival in San Sebastian, Spain, showcases Ron Carter's Golden Striker Trio, with pianist Mulgrew Miller and guitarist Russell Malone, last heard on the far less remarkable Blue Note recording of 2003 called The Golden Striker. The trio's name comes from John Lewis, whose catchy tunes are long past due for a serious tribute. While Carter (like Lewis) could be prone to priggishness, this July evening in the Basque country seems to have inspired him to loosen his collar. Though the program is carefully arranged-and with some nice touches, too, including adjoined treble piano and guitar lines and guitar and piano cast over insistent, wowing bass vamps-the trajectory ranges far from Nat Cole/Oscar Peterson territory into more modern, spontaneous improvisation, in which all three instruments dance as equals.

The most scintillating track is an 11-and-ahalf-minute romp through "Samba De Orpheu" featuring Carter gamboling over Malone's feathery bossa beat, delivering chorus after chorus of impeccably crafted lines in his familiarly fat, blunt tone, culminating in an astonishing string of double stops. The trio's swinging jaunt through "The Golden Striker" is another highlight, with muscular Mulgrew snatching a quote from "St. Thomas" and skittering over the keyboard. Carter's slow, sumptuous waltz "Candle Light" inspires a lovely "three for all," with Malone spitting out jumpy intervals then offering a surprise segue into "I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face."

On the accompanying DVD in the "Limited Deluxe Edition," Carter appears to archly, if good-naturedly, note Malone's digression by saying, in the introduction to "My Funny Valentine," that the virtue of announcing a song is that the band then has to play it. Miller pores over the gorgeous melody of "Valentine," alone, note by note, as if he were composing it and later explores the tune with the trio as if he were looking for something he'd lost inside it. *—Paul de Barros* 

San Sebastian: Candle Light; My Funny Valentine; Saudade; Samba de Orpheu; The Golden Striker (55:49) Personnel: Ron Carter, bass; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Russell Malone,







Nicole Mitchell's Ice Crystals Aquarius DELMARK 5004 \*\*\*\*

When flautist Nicole Mitchell left Chicago for a teaching gig in Southern California last year, she deprived the city of one of its leading lights. Fortunately, the deep roots she planted in the Windy City remain—she's still a core AACM figure and her primary accomplices are Midwestern. On *Aquarius*, Mitchell works with a team of Chicagoans by turns gritty and graceful, long-term colleagues with whom she has an easy rapport and who understand her music thoroughly.

Mitchell is a stellar composer, and while her work for a larger ensemble has revealed much about her musical personality, it's nice to hear how she manages things in a cozier

#### Rebecca Martin Twain SUNNYSIDE RECORDS 1330

When Diane Keaton sang "Seems Like Old Times" in *Annie Hall*, she created a kind of intimate still life stripped of anything that might intrude between song and listener.

A similar simplicity permeates Rebecca Martin's austere 13 songs on *Twain*, discreetly accompanied by bassist (and husband) Larry Grenadier, Peter Rende, Don Rieser and her own acoustic guitar. She makes simplicity a virtue. It's a person-toperson performance style that's equally at home in the cabaret and the coffeehouse.

Martin hovers somewhere between jazz and folk—too melodically complex for folk, too personal and ruminative for jazz, but with ties to each. Her voice moves smoothly over a wide range, but with coarse little patches of sand that give her soft readings an unstudied but subtle emotional volatility. The only standard on hand, "Sophisticated Lady," may reach toward the jazz world and suggest how she sees herself. But it's an anomaly. The other dozen pieces are Martin's own, each finding its own form setting, where the written and the improvised fuse quite completely. Logical points of reference include Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch*, but this music has a softer edge and more crossfading between events than hard cuts.

Drummer Frank Rosaly helps immensely to provide a welcome vessel, his energy propulsive rather than demarcating. Bassist Joshua Abrams sounds gorgeous, too, with a very natural sonority and brilliant time feel. On "Yearning," they move fluidly into a gentle Afro-groove, Mitchell and vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz covering the upper spectrum. Adasiewicz, who is another of the breakout Chicagoans, is a tad less punchy here than he tends to be with Rob Mazurek or on his own wonderful records; that just shows his range, since this ensemble calls for more restraint.

As a player, Mitchell has managed to make interesting an instrument that I find very difficult. She's not strictly a sound improviser—indeed, she works melodically and often rhythmically, with intensity and rigor. Mitchell's got an incredible set of ears, as you can hear on the more fragmentary "Diga, Diga," where she explores textures and high harmonics. And when she kicks into an earthy funk, like she does with electronic assistance on "Adaptability," Mitchell's a star whose radiance you shouldn't miss.

#### -John Corbett

Aquarius: Aqua Blue; Today, Today; Yearning; Aquarius; Above The Sky; Diga, Diga; Adaptability; Expectation; Sunday Afternoon; Fred Anderson. (69:06) **Personnel:** Nicole Mitchell, flute; Jason Adasiewicz, vibes; Joshua Abrams, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums; Calvin Gantt, recitation (10).

er Ordering info: delmark.com

according to the requirements of the material. New songs connect (or don't) in ways that can never be predicted or understood. These titles are attractive weaves of chords, melody and poetry. But I can't single out any as having potential endurance. *—John McDonough* 



#### John Medeski *A Different Time* OKEH 887654424624 ★★★½

Versatility has been one of John Medeski's signature traits ever since he and his pals in Medeski, Martin & Wood veered through King Sunny Ade and Bob Marley tunes. But it's true: Between the scorched-Earth organ adventures and the kaleidoscopic funk, we pretty much know what to expect from the skilled keyboardist—he likes to plug in and blast off. That's why *A Different Time* is a genuine surprise. Medeski has made a true zig-zag, ditching his norm for a solo piano date that stresses reflection.

Last year's Piana, Medeski's solo interpretation of piano tunes by Gregory Rogove, might have forecast what's offered on A Different Time, but those steely miniatures aren't as delicate as the originals and covers that Medeski has marshaled for his own outing. This new program reads like a suite, with a yen for upperregister fancies that have a bittersweet vibe. Plenty of sustain pedal, a commitment to rumination, parallels regarding tempo and tone-the nine pieces on this short affair may boast individual personalities, but they're part of a familv. That means the dour dream of "Gravevard Fields" has something in common with the rumination of the title cut, which itself is a gorgeous prelude to Willie Nelson's "I'm Falling In Love Again." Nuance drives the performances, and also informs the tone the pianist gets from the 1924 French Gaveau instrument he chose to play while recording in a church located in New York's leafy Hudson Valley.

Medeski has said Arthur Rubinstein's excursions through Brahms and Chopin were in his mind while recording, and the personality of the Gaveau impacted the performances as well. So, perhaps, did Ran Blake, the pianist's colleague at the New England Conservatory. "Ran" is a pithy glide through noir territory flecked with the kind of ominous phrases that mark the elder statesman's work. *—Jim Macnie* 

Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

Twain: To Up And Go; Beyond The Hillside; Some Other Place, Some Other Time; Sophisticated Lady; On A Rooftop; In The Early Winter Trees; Don't Mean A Thing At Al; God Is In The Details; Safe This Time; Beholden; Oh Welt; A Place In The Country; Honesty. (43:20)

Personnel: Rebecca Martin, vocals, guitar; Peter Rende, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Don Rieser, drums. Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

A Different Time: A Different Time; I'm Falling In Love Again; His Eye Is On The Sparrow; Ran; Graveyard Fields; Luz Marina; Waiting At The Gate; Lacrima; Otis. (41:35) Personnel: John Medeski, piano.

The BOX				
Critics >	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Ron Carter Golden Striker Trio San Sebastian	***	***½	***	***½
Nicole Mitchell's Ice Crystals Aquarius	***	****½	***	***½
John Medeski A Different Time	***½	***½	***½	**
Rebecca Martin Twain	***	***	***	**1⁄2

#### **Critics' Comments**

#### Ron Carter Golden Striker Trio, San Sebastian

Strikes out as a trio. But as a series of leisurely showcases for its premium cast, it's fine. Malone is plush on "Candle Light" and an unbilled "Accustomed To Her Face." Miller dominates the center 22 minutes, while Carter locks up "Samba." But only on the title cut does the trio muster the expected ensemble sparkle. There's more on a companion DVD. —John McDonough

Carter's wielding a more natural setup than he did in the '70s and '80s, woodier, friendlier on the ears, more forgiving intonation-wise. Hard to fail with Malone and Miller; they shoot sparks in this intimate and subdued setting. —John Corbett

I've always dug the meticulousness of Carter's work, and this trio's collective virtuosity is put to good use. That said, this album is about arrangements as much as it is solos, and the grace that comes from this approach is its own reward. —Jim Macnie

#### Nicole Mitchell's Ice Crystals, Aquarius

A pleasant, if discursive, lace of flute, vibes and rhythm whose airy, transparent textures wind from petite, sometimes swaggering little melodies to ambiguously abstract scraps and loose threads. Overall tone is more important, though. Mitchell and Adasiewicz pull the needlepoint together nicely. *—John McDonough* 

The front-line combo of flute and vibes has a singular impact, making this a memorable sound. Plus, the improvisers have their chemistry on lock, so even the most excursive moments arrive with an enviable focus. —Jim Macnie

Mitchell's fluttering hippie mysticism would be merely tedious if she hadn't so obviously absorbed the rudiments as well as the idealism of her inspiration, Eric Dolphy, and if she didn't swing so damn hard, though her celestial seasonings can be just shy of over the top. Love the bass figure on "Adaptability," bursts of flute light on "Sunday Afternoon" and the paean to Fred Anderson. —Paul de Barros

#### John Medeski, A Different Time

I find myself using the word "introspective" too often these days. But despite its unceasing solemnity, Medeski's Keith Jarrett trip finds conspicuous solo beauty in Willie Nelson, "Luz Marina" and others. You have to keep alert, though. The hushed atmospherics, whether lean or lush, can numb you into a daydream. —John McDonough

Extraordinary solo piano recording, beautifully sound-staged, amazing-sounding instrument, creaky pedal and all. Medeski works in a contemplative mode, sure to confuse fans of his funkier side; it has a dark character that's appealing, avoids fussiness and unnecessary sentimentality, and genuinely seems inspired. —John Corbett

This daringly dreamy, self-reflective solo recital finally kicks in on the sixth track, the gorgeously passionate "Luz Marina," but that's a bit long to be stuck in the waiting room. Though not a drop of pretention falls anywhere (a problem we've seen lately with other solo piano albums), it makes you appreciate yet again how difficult it is to play solo well. —Paul de Barros

#### Rebecca Martin, Twain

I like these stripped-down songs, with Grenadier's bass taking a major role. But if what they say about imitation and flattery is true, Sam Phillips should feel very good. A little too close for comfort. —John Corbett

I'm occasionally wishing that the songs were a bit more memorable, but I'm also applauding their pliability and open arms when it comes to the steady parade of improv moments. One thing's for sure: The gentility of the interplay between husband and wife is central to the disc's charm. —*Jim Macnie* 

Martin's quietly observed plainsongs, enigmatic lyrics and keen eye for nature place her in an impressive lineage, from Emily Dickinson to Lorine Niedecker (with a little Robin Holcomb thrown in). But Martin's dynamic range is so narrow and her delivery so flat that, except on "Sophisticated Lady," where she cleverly starts the vocal on the bridge, and the haunting, Leonard Cohen-ish "God Is In The Details," I found my attention wandering. —Paul de Barros



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Bobby Matos Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble Mambo Jazz Dance LIFEFORCEJAZZ 1052 \*\*\*\*1/2

Like jazz itself, the term "Latin jazz" means different things to different people. Timbales player Bobby Matos has stocked his band with players who have substantial jazz profiles around Los Angeles. The result is a little different from a standard Afro-Cuban or Puerto Rican-derived Latin jazz group.

New Yorkers may recall pianist Theo Saunders (who contributes "Mambo Chris" and "Huevos Rancheros") as Teddy Saunders of 1972's *Living Time* album by Gil Evans and George Russell. Dr. Bobby Rodriguez heads the trumpet unit of UCLA's jazz program and is a walking catalog of Latin music styles. Reed

#### specialist Pablo Colagero can be heard with the left-of-center Leimert Park aggregations. Violinist Harry Scorzo might be heard playing Stravinsky's "Histoire Du Soldat" elsewhere.

Taken from two live recordings, this small ensemble set carries many delightful pleasures, some unexpected. You can almost see the sunset behind the palms on Lalo Schifrin's stately bolero "Recuerdos," with a dreamy Saunders outing. Weinstein's charanga violin is indispensable to "Oiganlo." Rodriguez plays incisively throughout-whether muted and late-'60s Miles Davis or open and forte. Colagero's snaky tenor's wide vibrato and chordal complexity suggest early '60s John Coltrane in a Latin band, occasionally flaring into multiphonics. His flute solos can likewise overblow into Roland Kirk split-tones. A floating, notime interlude that occurs in "Amancer" shows smart programming instincts.

As a timbaléro, Matos mostly minds the clavé. Don't expect blazing, rim-bending fusillades à la Tito Puente igniting a 1950s Palladium crowd. He's tasty and judicious with his solo outings, and any spotlight turns are melodic—meshing with the montuno. His recitation on the spacey "New Woman" is graceful text that would be right at home in a Nuyorican Poets format. —*Kirk Silsbee* Mambo Jazz Dance: Mambo Chris; Anna; Marna Coolbeans; The New Woman; Baha; Recuerdos; Huevos Rancheros; Olganlo; Mas Bejo part 2; Amancer; No Me Diga "Na", (60:33) Personnet: Bobby Matos, timbales, vocals; Harry Scorzo, violin

Bajo part 2; Amander, No Me Diga TNa. (oU:33) Personnel: Bobby Matos, timbales, vocals; Harry Scorzo, violin (9–11); Dr. Bobby Rodriguez, trumpet; Gabriel Rosati, trumpet, trombone (9–11); Dan Weinstein, trombone, violin; Pablo Colagero, tenor saxophone, fluter, John B. Williams, bass; Robertino Melendez, conga, vocal; Jud Matos, guiro, cowbell, percussion, vocal; Ismael Carlo, percussion, vocal (9–11). Ordering info: bobbymatosmusic.com

#### Peter Knudsen Eight Sagas Of The Present CAMJAZZ 3314 \*\*\*1/2

With his project for the Italian CamJazz label's emerging artist showcase, young Swedish pianist Peter Knudsen moves into some savvy, tastefully venturesome and warming turf. Beyond the tapestry of the sound and compositional intelligence, he presents a fine example of resourceful arrangement-oriented thinking and what can be done in the format of an octet. The seven alluring pieces making up *Sagas Of The Present* trigger echoes of artists from the past and present, including Gil Evans, Bill Evans, Ravel and Maria Schneider.

Knudsen works well in metric areas divisible by three, from the serpentine luster of the opening "Kalejdoskop" to the tender closer "Wedding Waltz." Angst and knotty energies sneak into the restless spirit of "Nuked Present," but more often, impressionistic elements of harmonic color and movement figure into the writing, often adhering to a gently melancholic, medium heat emotionality. But Knudsen also folds in elements of contrasting dissonance and cross-linear traffic among the



parts to juice up the musical intrigue. Where most of the pieces err on the side of relative compactness, the leader ventures into a minisuite form on the narrative-like 11-minute "The Emperor Of Portugallia," hinting at more ambitious efforts. *—Josef Woodard* 

Sagas Of The Present: Kalejdoskop; The Emperor Of Portugalla; Winter Walk; Sagas Of The Gingerbread Castle; Nuke Present; Aurora Borealis; Wedding Waltz. (48:24).

rora Borealis; Wedding Waltz. (48:24). Personnet: Emil Strandberg, trumpet, flugelhorn; Andreas Gidlund, saxophone, clarinet, flute; Gustav Rådström, saxophone, clarinet; Thomas Backman, saxophone, bass clarinet, flute; Lisa Bodelius, trombone; Peter Knudsen, piano; Pär-Ola Landin, bass; Sebastian Voegler, drums. Ordering info: camjazz.com

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Larry Coryell The Lift WIDE HIVE 0309 \*\*\*<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

The second track from *The Lift*, the latest album from guitarist Larry Coryell, is a slow, probing piece colored by the leader's delayed, shimmering leads. It's called "Arena Blues." And the third-to-last tune on the LP is a macho r&b number sportingmesmerizing rhythm guitar. That one's named "Stadium Wave." So, going by his song titles alone, Coryell is not thinking small here. But, for the most part, the music matches. On *The Lift*, the sixstringer and his associates—organist Chester Smith, bassist Matt Montgomery and drummer Lumpy—make large music.

Take the album-opening "Going Up," for

#### Odean Pope Odean's Three IN + OUT 77112 \*\*\*\*

At 74, Odean Pope is a warrior who has not received the attention he deserves. His vocal tenor saxophone sound, percussive attack and evolved lyricism are all inviting elements, but aside from acclaimed work with Max Roach in the '80s and '90s he hasn't had a high profile. *Odean's Three* provides the breadth and format to change that. Brimming with energy and showcased in a power trio, Pope has never had a better setting in which to shine.

The architecturally exciting "Phrygian A'Trois" sets the stage perfectly—from Lee Smith's rumba bass line to the cry of Pope's tenor, alternating between circular breathing and rhythmic thrusts. It's almost possible to overlook Billy Hart's outstanding-yet-understated drumming on the piece. There's no overlooking Hart on "Fresh Breeze," "Almost Like Pt. One" and "12th Night," where the trio locks tightly together to charge through the spiraling themes that Pope favors, nor on "You And Me," where the drummer dominates the three



example. A crunchy, in-your-face riff in 7,

"Up" is all attitude and power, a steamroller

threatening to flatten any meek compositions that get in its way. "Rough Cut," by Lumpy, lurches along in much the same fashion, taking its power from an unshakeable odd-meter beat and its author's propulsive percussion.

Other pieces derive their bigness from

what can only be described as jam-ready classic-rock grooves minus the vocals. The title track's unrelenting bass line sounds like something the Allman Brothers could have whipped up, and it supports a game of catch between Coryell's clean licks and Smith's enthusi-

astic, bubbling-over organ. On "Lafayette," Montgomery rolls out a pushy, rumbling lowend carpet for the leader to dance on and Smith

to drill into. And Coryell's "Wild Rye" is blue-

sy and fuzzy with a dash of country, a formula

that could also describe much of what was on

orders his band mates to lay out altogether.

The soothing but focused "Clear Skies" finds

the leader overdubbing acoustic Gypsy-jazz-

like runs on a track of his own acoustic rhythm

guitar. And the album-ending "First Day Of

Autumn," by Coryell's wife, Tracey, is a gen-

tle, smiling nature walk, again arranged for

two acoustic guitar tracks. But these cuts only

appear small in comparison to the other, full-

The Lift: Going Up; Arena Blues; The Lift; Lafayette; Clear Skies; Rough Cut; Alternative Recollection; Broken Blues; Counterweight; Stadium Wave; Wild Rye; First Day Of Autumn. (52:18) Personnel: Larry Coryell, guitar; Chester Smith, organ; Matt Montgomery, bas; Lumpy, drums. Ordering info: widehiverecords.com

-Brad Farberman

Things only really get little when Coryell

rock radio in the '60s.

band performances.

independent lines of improvisation.

At the center of the set stands "Blues It," Pope's tribute to the legendary Philadelphia pianist William Langford (a.k.a. Hassan Ibn Ali). Following Smith's resonant intro, Ali's composition is marked by a melody that doesn't quite resolve, and Pope uses the final beats of Hart's lengthy drum solo to fashion a dramatic, anthemic coda. *—James Hale* 

Odean's Three: Phrygian ATrois; Fresh Breeze; The Garden Of Happiness; Good Questions Two; Blues It; Blues For Eight; Almost Like Pt. One; 12th Night; You And Me. (68:49) **Personne**: Odean Pope, tenor saxophone; Lee Smith, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: inandout-records.com

## Jazz / BY BILL MILKOWSKI

## John Zorn Remains Fierce and Prolific

A remarkably prolific and fiercely independent force in contemporary music for more than 30 years, John Zorn has amassed more than 400 recordings in his Tzadik catalog. To commemorate his 60th birthday in 2013, Zorn will participate in global career retrospectives. Here is a recent sampling from Zorn's prodigious output—all of which he composed, arranged and conducted last year.

Mount Analogue (Tzadik 7394; 38:23  $\star \star \star \star \star \cdot \cdot \cdot$  is named for a novel by René Daumal and further inspired by the G.I. Gurdjieff book Meetings With Remarkable Men. A collection of 61 musical fragments, randomly composed and then falling into place, this stirring, uninterrupted work conveys a sense of mystery and spiritual quest. Performed by percussionist Cyro Baptista's Banquet Of The Spirits guartet and augmented by Kenny Wollesen on vibes and chimes, the music travels from stark minimalism created by pianist Brian Marsella's glistening arpeggios to dreamy interludes crafted by Wollesen's floaty vibes work to mesmerizing Moroccan and Middle Eastern flourishes, courtesy of Shanir Blumenkranz's gimbri and oud playing, to touches of Balinese gamelan in Wollesen's chimes.

On the other side of the accessibility coin is **Templars–In Sacred Blood (Tzadik 7398; 43:14** ★★★). A white-hot cauldron of ominous music intended to call in darker spirits, it features Mike Patton's banshee vocals against the backdrop of Joey Baron's power precision drumming and Trevor Dunn's raging fuzz bass lines. John Medeski provides churchy organ drones and eerie swells throughout. Their collective explosive bursts of grindcore cacophony, as on "Prophetic Souls" and "Secret Ceremony," are heavier than anything. Patton's creepy, cryptic, close-miked recitations and Gregorian chanting on "A Second Sanctuary" and "Evocation Of Baphomet" are the perfect soundtrack for a haunted house party.

The equally bombastic **Nosferatu (Tzadik 7397; 61:14** ★★**1/2**), with drummer-vibist Kevin Norton, bassist Bill Laswell and keyboardist Rob Burger, has Zorn playing potent alto saxophone on the ballad "Fatal Sunrise," then overblowing with blast-furnace intensity on the cathartic onslaught "The Battle Of Good And Evil." "Vampires At Large" and "Death Ship" are features for Laswell, and "Stalker Dub" is a bit of ambient trip-hop that will appeal to the stoner set.

**Pruflas: The Book Of Angels, Vol. 18 (Tzadik 7396; 46:35 ★★★★)** is a vehicle for clarinet virtuoso David Krakauer. The group interprets Zorn's Masada compositions in a brilliant blending of new and old, with Krauker blowing klezmerstyled lines against Bailey's crunchy distortion-laced guitar and Michael Sarin's powerhouse drumming. On the jazzy "Vual," they engage in unadulterated swing, paced by Jerome Harris' insistent walking bass lines, Sarin's syncopations and Sheryl Baile's



clean, Pat Martino-inspired guitar work. Krakauer wails over the top; more Sidney Bechet than Naftule Brandwein. "Egion" is a klezmer-punk-funk manifesto with sonic embellishments by laptop programmer Keepalive. Zorn makes an uncredited appearance on alto saxophone on the klezmer-fueled blowout "Tandal."

Virtuosity abounds on **The Concealed (Tzadik 8304; 62:41 \*\*\*\*\***), an exotic and engaging chamber jazz project featuring violinist Mark Feldman and cellist Erik Friedlander with Zorn's resident all-star ensemble of Medeski on piano, Baron on drums, Wollesen on vibes and Dunn on upright bass. Aside from the stunning sextet pieces, Friedlander turns in a poignant solo cello reading on "The Silver Thread," while Medeski melds Professor Longhair's rumba boogie with klezmer scales on his rollicking solo piano piece "The Way Of The Sly Man."

Abraxas: The Book Of Angels, Vol. 19 (Tzadik 8302; 44:06 \*\*\*\*) is a showcase for Blumenkranz. Here he exclusively plays the deep-toned gimbri, a three-stringed Moroccan instrument, in the context of compositions featuring the twin six-string assault of Eyal Maoz and Aram Bajakian against the slamming backbeats of drummer Kenny Grohowski. Picture a Sephardic Jimi Hendrix on holiday in Fez. Meanwhile, The Gnostic Preludes: Music Of Splendor (Tzadik 7395; 48:03 \*\*\*\*<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>) is an uncommonly beautiful, graceful encounter among guitarist Bill Frisell, harpist Carol Emmanuel and vibist Wollesen.

The depth and breadth of Zorn's artistry is further represented by his tributes to French writer Arthur Rimbaud—*Rimbaud* (Tzadik 8301; 47:24  $\star \star \star 1/2$ )—and poet-painter-philosopher William Blake—*Vision In Blakelight* (Tzadik 8303; 50:20  $\star \star \star \star 1/2$ ). The former is purely experimental and stridently avant garde, while the latter is one of the more enchanting and lyrical offerings in Zorn's massive catalog, with the sole exception of the urgently burning free-bop romp "Marriage Of Heaven And Hell." **DB** Ordering info: tzadik.com



#### JOEY CALDERAZZO TRIO LIVE

JOEY CALDERAZZO piano ORLANDO LE FLEMING bass DONALD EDWARDS drums SSC 1368 / In Stores May 21

For over two decades, pianist Joey Calderazzo has been unassumingly, yet assuredly, impressing listeners with his informed and refined playing. Using elements of style from his musical heroes as a springboard, the pianist has developed his own take on the tradition, which he happily shares on his new recording, Joey Calderazzo Trio Live, recorded during a performance at Daly Jazz in Missoula, Montana. The industrious trio performs a mixed program of Calderazzo's compositions and a number of choice standards.



#### CORNUCOPIA SSC 1354 / in Slores May 7

The way Ivan Lins and the SWR Big Band combine two different musical worlds on the new recording Cornucopía has the implements to become a milestone. According to the Brazilian legend, the recording might be the best he has ever made. This applies to the SWR Big Band and conductor/arranger Ralf Schmid, who are in the uncompromising pursuit of their very own musical mode of expression, which includes electronic elements. It is a grandiose mélange from Brazil and Rio de Janeiro to Stuttgart – home of the SWR Big Band.

Cornucopia - that is Ivan Lins and the SWR Big Band, conducted by Ralf Schmid. With guests Paula Morelenbaum, Joo Kraus, Portinho, Nilson Matta, and Themba Mkhize & South African Choir.



Nicholas Payton #BAM Live At Bohemian Caverns BMF RECORDS 001 \*\*\*\*/2

#BAM Live At Bohemian Caverns begins with Fender Rhodes chords, played with finesse in the left hand, quickly oscillating below an almost hammered melodic exploration issuing from the right.



When Nicholas Payton picks up his trumpet for the melody, he plays double duty-one hand on the keyboard, another on his horn. The conceit behind Live At Bohemian Caverns-that of Payton wielding his primary melodic instrument even as he provides harmonic backing for his songs-is more than a mere trick. His accompaniment more than suits the mood. The idea of him playing multiple instruments is a continuation of his 2011 work Bitches, on which he provided most of the instrumentation and vocals. That album skewed heavily toward r&b and hip-hop, and while Bohemian Caverns is more jazz than not, the live album carries his new approach forward. This is the first release on Payton's new imprint, BMF Records, and he's willing to break out of traditional molds, blending pop, funk and rock into this offering. That original tune that begins the album, "The Backward Step," moves from tentative exploration into fiery raucous playing, backed by Lenny White's crashing cymbals and Vincente Archer's playful bass interjections. -Jon Ross

#BAM Live At Bohemian Caverns: The Backward Step; Drad Dog; Catlett Out Of The Bag; Pannonica; The African Tinge; The Return Of The African Tinge; Frankie And Johnny. (79:31) Personnel: Nicholas Payton, trumpet, Fender Rhodes; Vincente Archer, bass; Lenny White, drums. Ordering info: nicholaspayton.com

Benoît Delbecq/ Fred Hersch Double Trio Fun House SONGLINES 1600



Frenchman Benoît Delbecq and his American counterpart Fred Hersch are among the most talented pianists of their generation, and the

idea of a double trio is a source of great expectations. Unfortunately, *Fun House* somewhat leaves a taste of unfinished business. Delbecq contributes all of the material with the exception of "Tide," co-written with drummer Steve Argüelles, and a cover. The compositions are loose and abstract. No instrument seems to have a specific role. The players create a maze—their lines intertwined or interlocked—and weave a dense musical fabric. Because the pieces bring the composer's intellectual side to the fore, the results tend to be overly dry. This is reinforced by the lack of change of pace. Only "Night For Day" seems to challenge the status quo with its oblique drive and Thelonious Monk accents.

Delbecq opted for the double trio because he had recorded piano duos with pianist Andy Milne and wanted to explore a different route. The beautiful and personal rendition of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" as a duet is reason to hope that he will return to that format. Delbecq's mastery of extended techniques combined with Hersch's acute sense of harmony is a pleasure to hear. —*Alain Drouot* 

#### The Kahil El'Zabar Quartet What It Is! DELMARK RECORDS 5002 \*\*\*

Kahil El'Zabar moves toward the center this time around and releases one of his most accessible discs yet. The adventurous drummer and bandleader steers an impressive quartet, com-



posed of some of the newer generations of the AACM, and emphasizes blues, swing and groove.

The disc kicks off with the strutting original "The Nature Of," which showcases impressive solos from each member, with keyboardist Justin Dillard in particular getting major points for his mastery on the Hammond B3 organ. The blues albeit modal component underscores the haunting "Song Of Myself" as tenor saxophonist Kevin Nabors and Dillard run mysterious parallel lines across bassist Junius Paul's ominous ostinato and El'Zabar's dancing ride cymbal rhythms, as well as the John Coltrane-inspired closer "Kari," which features Dillard pounding out some gorgeous block chords underneath Nabors' declarative tenor saxophone melody. Stripped-down West African rhythms and percussion always play a central role in El'Zabar's music. Here, he employs them ingeniously on the funky "What It Is!" which hints at Chicago's deep house music. —John Murph

What It IsI: The Nature Of; Impressions; What It IsI; Song Of Myself; Central Park West; From The Heart; Kari, (59:13). Personnel: Kahil El'Zabar, drums, kalimba; Kevin Nabors, tenor saxophone; Justin Dillard, piano, Hammond B3 organ, Fender Rhodes; Junius Paul, bass. Ordering info: delmark.com

Pedrito Martinez Rumba De La Isla CALLE 54 88765406072

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Fans of Pedrito Martinez's current group should prepare to have some of their expectations blown on *Rumba De La Isla*.

There's a different energy at work on the Cuba-born rumba master's interpretation



of the work of Spanish flamenco great Cameron de la Isla. Martinez shares de la Isla's forward-thinking approach, though his aim here seems not to be finding common denominators between the different rumbas that exist in Cuban and flamenco music. Instead, Martinez processes the music through a lens of his artistry that seems to have been created specifically for this project, which makes the results that much more impressive. His take on "Yo Vivo Enamorao," for example, shifts the intensity that de la Isla's voice reflected-through raspy cries and the downward curled edges of certain lyrics-from emotive vocals to evocative percussion. Martinez's own clarion voice sweeps along improvised lyrics, calm and unwavering, as thick layers of rhythm intimate de la Isla's passion. "Dos Estrellas Relucientes De Las Alegre Primavera" also underscores the mellow beauty Martinez can unearth through this approach, as his soft touch on the congas and call-and-response vocals build against violinist Alfredo de la Fe's moments of electrified frenzy. –Jennifer Odell

Rumba De La Isla: Que a Mi Me Vio De Nacer; Yo Vivo Enamorao; Dos Estrellas Relucientes De Las Alegre Primavera; Solo Vivo Pa'quererte; Volando Voy; Quiero Quitarme Esta Pena; No Naqueres Na'De Mi; Gitana Te Quiero; Homenaje A Camaron. (50:15) Personnel: Pedrito Martinez, composer, arranger, chekere, congas, cowbell, vocals: Román Díaz, bata, colmo, sponse vocals, Ibón Bartizer, basez Piraña, cajero, Niño, Lesela, quitar, bandedapoino;

Fun House: Hushes; Ronchamp; Strange Loop; Fun House; Le Rayon Vert; Night For Day; One Is Several; Tide; Two Lakes; Lonely Woman. (52:36) Personnel: Benoît Delbecg, piano; Fred Hersch, piano; Jean-Jacques Avenel, bass; Mark Helias, bass; Stave Aurilalles, during destructions: Care Manipaume, during.

bass; Steve Argüelles, drums, electronics; Gerry Hemingway, drums. Ordering info: songlines.com

Personnel: Pedrito Martínez, composer, arranger, chekere, congas, cowbell, vocals; Román Díaz, bata, cajon, spoons, vocals; John Benítez, bass; Piraña, cajon; Niño Josele, guitar, handclapping; Alfredo de la Fe, electric violin; Xiomara Laugart, backing vocals; Abraham Rodríguez, backing vocals. **Ordering info: calle54records.com** 

## Blues / BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY



## Blues and Pop Heroes Touched by Soulful Sounds

Eric Burdon: 'Til Your River Runs Dry (AB-**KCO 8927: 55:05 \* \* \* \*)** Fans of 1960s British blues know Eric Burdon of The Animals was a singer of distinction. After about 40 years largely out of mind and sight, he's back with a vengeance—and with all his natural authority intact. Projecting overtones of blues and soul music, his strong and highly individuated voice carries a visceral conviction that enriches new good songs he wrote himself or with a colleague like bassist Terry Wilson. Burdon gives us the the lowdown on mortality, anarchic spirit, Memorial Day, the sacred vs. the profane and his hero, Bo Diddley. The faultless West Coast supporting musicians supply the punch of an iron fist in a velvet glove. Ordering info: abkco.com

Southern Hospitality: Easy Livin' (Blind Pig 5152; 60:37  $\star \star \star \frac{1}{2}$ ) Six tracks into its debut album, this Floridian band ascends far above its entertaining if unremarkable Little Feat-influenced grooves into the sublime with a version of the Afro-Cuban jazz classic "Fried Neck Bones & Home Fries." Here Damon Fowler and JP Soars trade lead guitar lines of spontaneous rapture for nearly eight minutes. Sharing singing duties with third key member keyboardist Victor Wainwright, Fowler and Soars grant distinction to the ballad "Sky Is What I Breathe."

Ordering info: blindpigrecords.com

Swamp Dogg: Total Destruction To Your Mind (Alive 0141; 37:35  $\star \star \star \star$ ) In 1969, for his debut record with backing by bassist Pops Popwell and other Macon soul-blues heavies, Swamp Dogg (a.k.a. Jerry Williams) hollers in a tense and constricted way that suggests his throat was jammed with nuclear lava fresh out of a reactor core. That voice is a minor miracle, whether putting over one of his own bizarre tunes or songs snatched from songwriter Joe South.

Ordering info: alivenergy.com

Ernest James Zydeco: 3 Steps From La La (Jam Rat 003; 45:18 \*\*\*) An accordion player and vocalist based in Kansas City who has family ties to Louisiana, Ernest James Zydeco lets loose with the soaring melodies of his own red-pepper zydeco tunes. As passionate about Chicago blues as he is about rural Louisiana music, the bandleader mixes things up on his third fun album with shuffles and a gospel offering called "Glory Glory." Ordering info: ejzydeco.com

Boz Scaggs: Memphis (429 Records 17889; 47:37 ★★★½) Boz Scaggs has long been a smooth-operating singer in the pop world, yet he's always shown a genuine affinity for jazz, blues, r&b and soul. So it makes sense that he would spend time in Willie Mitchell's Royal Studios in Memphis, assisted by storied musicians such as Charles Hodges and Lester Snell. Confident with his pacing and unsentimental in his phrasing, he successfully personalizes old standbys that link back to Ray Charles, Willy DeVille, The Moments and the country blues tradition. Ordering infc: 429records.com

BeauSoleil: From Bamako To Carencro (Compass 4591; 48:45 \*\*\*\*) Cajunized blues has been one of the key ingredients in BeauSoleil's jambalaya since its founding by fiddler Michael Doucet in the mid-1970s. The bandleader's wailing vocal in the murder tale "Carencro" derives from some forbidden crossroads at midnight in the Louisiana swamps, and the ever-so-spirited string-and-percussion band reinvents James Brown's "I'll Go Crazy" and John Coltrane's "Bessie's Blues" as Cajun dancehall frolics. They cast a mournful martial spell over Mississippi John Hurt's "You Got To Move." Ordering info: compassrecords.com

Jesse Dee: On My Mind/In My Heart (Alligator 4952; 43:06 ★ ★ ★) As the most promising young r&b/soul singer out of Boston since Eli "Paperboy" Reed, Dee combines melodic invention and conventionality both at once on an entertaining second release that has him probing 21st century romance. Dee can sound callow or over-extended at times, and some of his production moves (sound effects, use of female singers) don't work, but stick with him. DB Ordering info: alligator.com



#### HUSH POINT

JOHN MCNEL trumpet JERENY UDDEN alto sexophone ARYEH KOBRINSKY bass VINNIE SPERRAZZA drums SSC 1358 / in Stores May 21

Fortunately, you can still find bands who invest the time to evolve as a unit. Trumpeter John McNeil and saxophonist Jeremy Udden established Hush Point as a group that does just that. Also including bassist Aryeh Kobrinsky and drummer Vinnie Sperrazza. Hush Point is a working and rehearsing ensemble, and on their new self-titled album, Hush Point, the group shows a cohesiveness of concept that is only achieved through hours of practice, performance and experimentation. The wide stylistic range of their repertoire is immediately striking to the listener.



#### SPIRIT OF THE GARDEN SSC 1353 / in Stores May 7

It was in the Japanese Tea Garden at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden where cellist/vocalist/composer Jody Redhage had the inspiration to embark on a musical project that would pay homage to these oases of tranquility. It would take her some time and a fortunate turn of events for the project to come to a head as an all woman ensemble called Rose & the Nightingale and their recorded tribute to botanical gardens, Spirit of the Garden. Violinist Sara Caswell, vocalist Leala Cyr and Leita Cyr (voice and trumpet) along with Redhage are Rose & the Nightingale.





THE new face



#### Nilson Matta Nilson Matta's Black **Orpheus** MOTÉMA 103 **★**★<u>\*</u>½

Reimagining classic works can yield dicey results, because the refurbished version will always be measured against the original. But Nilson Matta's wistful take on the 1959 movie



soundtrack Black Orpheus works to his advantage.

Matta benefits from a 50-year distance from the original as well as his nostalgia for that music. While he keeps the original feel of classic bossa nova intact, the bassist takes discreet liberties with the programming of the compositions, and even adds some original interludes and tunes. With Klaus Mueller's lush orchestrations and Matta's diaphanous arrangements, the disc evokes a cinematic splendor, starting off on the wide-screen treatment of Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Overture" to the sauntering "Hugs And Kisses," one of the fantastic originals. The disc also hits high marks on the gentle "Vasa De Eurídice," which features Gretchen Parlato's lissome soprano mostly in tandem with Guilherme Monterio's spidery guitar. The sensual "Manha De Carnival" places the spotlight on Kenny Barron's impeccable piano improvisations. The bristling yet too-brief original "Ascend, My Love" is a percussive workout that recalls Matta's early '90s work with Don Pullen. -John Murph

Nilson Matta's Black Orpheus: Overture; Repinique Interlude; Samba De Orfeu; A Felicidade; Cuica Interlude; O Nosso Amor; Manhā De Carnival; Batucada I; Eu E O Meu Amor/Lamento No Morro; Frevo De Orfeu; Vasa De Eurídice; Ascend, My Love; Um Nome De Mulher; Batucada II; Se Todos Fossem

Jguais A Vocé; Violão Interlude; Hugs And Kisses. (58:25) Personnel: Nilson Matta, bass; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Kenny Barron, piano; Anne Drummond, flute, Klaus Mueller, piano; Guilherme Monterio, guitar, Alex Kautz, drums; Anat Cohen, clarinet; Fernando Saci, percussion, cuica, pandeiro; Leny Andrade, vocals; Gretchen Parlato, vocals; Erivelton Silva, drums; Alfredo Cardim, piano. Ordering info: motema.com

#### Gene Bertoncini/ Mike Mainieri/Michael Moore/Joe Corsello Reunion

AMBIENT RECORDS 009 \*\*\*

If you visited the tiny Italian restaurant Zino's in New York during the 1980s, you no doubt enjoyed the frequent duet performances of



guitarist Gene Bertoncini and bassist Michael Moore. The pair practically ran the joint. This was years after Bertoncini made his mark recording with Luis Bonfa, Hubert Laws, Michel Legrand and Paul Desmond. Similarly, Moore is a session mainstay with immaculate credits.

Reunion brings the guitarist and bassist together with Mike Mainieri and Joe Corsello. Recorded in super-high-resolution format, the musical performances are of a similarly premium quality, Corsello's drums revealing every cymbal glance, every brush stroke with pristine distillation. Beyond sonic swoons, the music is classic Bertoncini/Moore: standards greeted with sublime relaxation, fingerings delivered with all the assurance of a master carpenter oiling his wood, or a fine winemaker basking in the sun as the vines ripen. There's no need to hurry, time will take care of itself; swing, harmony, and rhythm too. Mainieri relives his early days as a warmblooded vibraphonist here, and as the perfect melodic foil for Bertoncini's gracefully flowing lines. Reunion doesn't roll in the fast lane, but it certainly owns the road. –Ken Micallef

Reunion: Besame Mucho; Somewhere; Strollin; Soul Eyes; The Lilter; Reunion; Embraceable You; Personnel: Gene Bertoncini, guitars; Mike Mainieri, vibraphone; Michael Moore, acoustic bass; Joe Corsello, drums, Ordering info: ambientrecords.com

Sexmob Cinema, Circus & Spaghetti THE ROYAL POTATO FAMILY 1304 \*\*\*

Mood is a central concern of slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein. To his quartet Sexmob, for instance, a boisterous, celebratory vibe is seemingly as important as any purely musical detail. So it makes sense that



Bernstein is into film music, and that *Cinema*, *Circus & Spaghetti*, which arranges Federico Fellini composer Nino Rota's music for Sexmob, is hardly the brass player's first tribute to an agent of atmosphere. The spirit of New Orleans looms large on "Volpina (Amacord)." That tune includes a persistent second-line groove headed up by Wollesen, not to mention a theme that, in one place, friskily recalls "Down By The Riverside." And "La Dolce Vita" also swings down to the Crescent City, due mainly to the sweet and greasy interplay between Bernstein's singing hybrid trumpet and saxophonist Briggan Krauss' tough bari. Punk-rock makes its presence felt, too. The last 40 seconds or so of the aforementioned "Volpina (Amacord)" toss a throbbing bass riff and bashing drums underneath Krauss' maniacal, animalistic wailing. The crazed surf beat of "Nadia Gray (La Dolce Vita)" is abused by squealing horns and a clobbering drum solo.

Cinema, Circus & Spaghetti: Amacord; II Teatrino Delle Suore (Juliet Of The Spirits); La Strada; Volpina (Amacord); Paparazzo (La Dolce Vita); Toby Dammit's Last Act (Spirits Of The Dead); La Dolce Vita; Zamparo (La Strada); Nadia Gray (La Dolce Vita); The Grand Hotel (Amacord); Gelsomina (La Strada); I Vitelloni. (62:37) Personnel: Steven Bernstein, slide trumpet, hybrid trumpet, alto horr; Briggan Krauss, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone; Tony Scherr, electric bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums, gongs, log drum, waterphone, vibraphone. Ordering info: royalpotatofamily.com

Champian Fulton Sings And Swings SHARP NINE 1049

Jazz has always had the dialectic tension of art vs. entertainment. There's usually been room for both, but either can be taken to an extreme. Pianist and singer Champian Fulton is intent on knocking herself out to



entertain. Her playing on "I Cover The Waterfront" can nimbly move like Erroll Garner, yet it falls into cocktail excess. Maybe worse is that she sometimes sees each sung word as an opportunity for melisma. The songs seem to have no interest for her past what she can put on them.

Fulton's playful reading of Bud Powell's "Celia" dances and twirls amiably. Yet on "It's Alright With Me," she rifles through a mercurial right-hand solo, then sings as if trying to get it over with as fast as possible. A bright reading of "Samba De Orfeo" diagrams Fulton's strengths and weaknesses. Scatting throughout, she sings in unison with her piano runs. While it's technically impressive, by the end of the tune it smells like shtick. Father Stephen Fulton tries to cram a whole resume into his flugelhorn solo, overstaying his welcome. Their "Summertime" is all over the scale, with little thought to the story of the tune. Eric Alexander brings much-needed clarity of purpose. Though he only appears on four tracks, he's authoritative and cogent—using space to his advantage, and making it count within the space of a chorus.

Sings And Swings: Tenderly; You're Getting To Be A Habit; It's Alright With Me; I'd Give A Dollar For A Dime; I Cover The Waterfront; Samba De Orfeo; It's Too Late; (Baby It's Too Late; Foolin' Myself; I'm Gonna Sitt Right Down; The Shadow Of Your Smile; Cella; Summertime; (Sci4:1) Personnel: Champian Fulton, piano, vocals; Stephen Fulton, trumpet, flugelhorn (2, 3, 6, 9); Eric Alexander; tenor saxophone (2, 3, 7, 10); Hide Tanaka, bass; Fukushi Tainaka, drums. Ordering info: sharphine.com Cécile

McLorin

Salvant



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"Yes, she's as good as you've heard, but perhaps the best thing about Ms. Salvant is that her mere existence underscores that there is a vital, florid, and growing group of young jazz singers making themselves known all over the city" – *The Wall Street Journal* 

"The swinging singer Cécile McLorin Salvant, who has a vocal warmth to match her rhythmic ease, is a vibrant neo-traditionalist who makes the old new agam." – The New Yorker

"She has poise, elegance, soul, humor, sensuality, power, virtuosity, range, insight, intelligence, depth and grace; Yeah." - Wynton Marsalis

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Nobuki Takamen Three Wishes SUMMIT RECORDS 594 ★★★½

On the opening track to *Three Wishes*, Nobuki Takamen's fourth album as a leader, the guitarist serves up roller-coaster, angular melodies, played with care on a clear guitar, picking out one crisp note at a time, letting it ring out before moving to the next. He occasionally moves to a vertical approach, playing short chordal phrases, but he mostly sticks to horizontal movement, his somewhat disjunct playing pulling the song forward.

The next tune, "Freddie's Mood," presents an entirely different Takamen. Heavily syncopated funk chords set the mood over a martial snare rhythm by drummer Akihito Yoshikawa. Even Takamen's solo is more liquid, with figures flowing together in short runs and fewer large leaps between the notes. He's still the same player, of course, but this different approach highlights his reluctance to play in a singular style.

He slows the mood down considerably on a handful of tunes as well. "Underground Theme Song," after a funky solo bass intro, morphs into a fragile tune based on soft chords and a quiet melody. "Greenwich Village Sometimes" has the same overall delicate feeling to it, but stands as one of the two times piano is added to the mix. Takamen is best, and is likely most comfortable, in a simple trio setting, but the addition of another harmonic instrument adds a rich layer to the compositions.

One of the standouts on the album is Takamen's arrangement of "Scarborough Fair," which begins with haunting, ethereal chords before evolving into a breakneck piece of swing. Just like "Scarborough," his closing number, "Homeward Bound" begins as a hopeful ballad, then, seven minutes in, Takamen throws in a hard-rocking coda to give the song the twist he seems to add to every composition on the album. *—Jon Ross* 

Three Wishes: A Long Way Ahead; Freddie's Mood; Underground Theme Song; Jim's Swing; Greenwich Village Sometimes; Three Wishes; Scarborough Fair; Let's Get Five; Homeward Bound. (60;12)

Personnel: Nobuki Takamen, guitar; Toshiyuki Tanahashi, bass; Naoki Aikawa, Akihito Yoshikawa, drums; Hitoshi Kanda, piano. Ordering info: nobukitakamen.com

#### Beyond / BY PETER MARGASAK

## John Cage's Lasting Vision

The year 2012 was the centennial of iconoclast John Cage's birth, and the year brought forth a veritable deluge of archival material and new recordings of the composer's sprawling compositional output.

One of the most fascinating documents is a three-CD series that chronicled Cage's first visit to Japan in 1962—all of the music, recorded during two concerts that October, was previously unissued. Each of the three separately available volumes of *John Cage Shock* (Em 1104; 40:02 \*\*\*\*/Em 1105; 44:23

★★★★/Em 1106; 39:27 ★★★★) features a single bristling performance of one of his works (such as the electronically ripping take on his "Variations II," on volume one) played by various combinations of the composer himself, his long-time associate and pianist David Tudor, and some of their Japanese hosts—Toshi Ichiyanagi, Kenji Kobayashi and a very young Yoko Ono. Each title is rounded out by other contemporary works performed during the visit, from Stockhausen's "Klavierstrücke X" (on volume two) to Christian Wolff's "Duo For Pianist & Violinist" (on volume one) to work by Ichiyanagi and fellow Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. Cumulatively, they paint a vibrant picture of a musical world opening up (with graphic notation, aleatoric music, electronics), swallowing up oceans separating three continents with boundary-destroying art. It's a rich artifact, especially since the music sounds totally fresh five decades later.

#### Ordering info: forcedexposure.com

Tudor's performance of Cage's landmark early 1951 experiment with chance procedures, **Mu**sic Of Changes (Hat Art 173; 44:34 ★★★★), also sounds thoroughly contemporary. Recorded in Cologne, Germany, in 1956, the pianist's reading brings a bristling edge to one the composer's earliest efforts employing the *I Ching*. Nearly every detail from pitch to note duration to tempo was mapped out by using the book, but the final score left nothing to chance (unlike later work that relied on the performer to make decisions). It's a knotty, difficult piece of music marked by randomly generated but meticulously played episodes, and few could or can match Tudor's empathy and precision. Ordering info: hathut.com

Pianist Alexi Lubimov and singer Natalia Pschenitschnikova both met Cage on his 1988 visit to the Soviet Union, where, according to the pianist's liner notes, the composer participated in lively conversations about food and foraging as much



as music. On *As It Is* (ECM 2268 476 4933; 71:31  $\star \star \star \star$ ), they bypass the work he'd been creating during his visit in favor of 21 early pieces, most written before 1950. Included are numerous settings for the poetry of e.e. cummings and Gertrude Stein, meditative prepared piano pieces and several compositions written for the choreography of Merce Cunningham. It's a lovely, restrained collection, focusing both on Cage's lyric side and his interest in Far East sonorities.

#### Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Etudes Australes (Wergo 6740; 261:54 \*\*\*\*) was composed in 1974, with Cage in the midst or returning to conventional instruments, as a four-book piano study that used a collection of star maps called the "Atlas Australis" as structural objects and the *I Ching* to translate the positions of the constellations in the Southern Hemisphere. He wrote the exceedingly difficult music separately for right and left hands, with chance procedures producing alternately jarring and gorgeous harmonies and jagged, challenging lines. Pianist Sabine Liebner brings a dazzling clarity to this rarely performed epic. Ordering infc: harmoniamundi.com

Cage's own organization issued the doozy of them all with a lavish rendering of his prepared piano masterpiece Sonatas And Interludes (John Cage Trust 433-2012; 63:17 \*\*\*\*) spread over three 45-rpm audiophile vinyl discsit's a limited edition of 433 copies. The piece is performed nicely by Nurit Tilles-a veteran member of Steve Reich's ensemble-and while there are other versions I prefer, she finds a pleasing middle ground between introspection and aggression. The records are housed in a glossy cardboard box and packaged with a beautiful 40page book that includes notes by Mark Szwed and photos of various objects used along with vintage instructions by the composer himself. DB Ordering info: forcedexposure.com





## Die Enttäuschung Vier Halbe

The collage art that graces each of Die Enttäuschung's albums is an apt illustration of the music contained within. The German quartet delights in witty, startling juxtapositions, creating a vivid modern sound out of fragments from vari-



ous eras of jazz history pasted together without much concern for letting the seams show.

*Vier Halbe*, consists of 21 short, sharp excursions (only one exceeds five minutes). At 70 minutes, the disc threatens to become too much of a good thing, but that terseness is essential given the tension between freedom and synchronicity that characterizes the group's sound. Trumpeter Axel Dörner and bass clarinetist/baritone saxophonist Rudi Mahall work together like two satellites locked into an erratic orbit; they sustain an elegant waltz together while engaged in a constant push-and-pull. Bassist Jan Roder and drummer Uli Jennessen drive the proceedings with an off-road swing, a constant momentum undeterred by the jolts and bounces of rough terrain. Dörner's "Verzählt" is a round-robin of minute bursts; Roder's "Das Jan Vom Stück" contrasts a meaty rhythm with Dörner and Mahall's squirreling, darting sonic doodles. Mahall's opener "Die Übergebundenen" cubes the jaggedness of Thelonious Monk's "Evidence." *—Shaun Brady* 

Vier Halbe: Die Übergebundenen; Verzählt; Aqua Satin Flame; Das Jan vom Stück; Falsches Publikum; Vermöbelt; Jitterbig Five; Gekannt; Trompete für Fortgeschrittene; Wie Axel; Eine Halbe; Hereich; Hello My Loneliness; Vier Halbe; Children's Blues; Möbelrücken; The Easy Going; Verkannt; Trompete für Anfänger, Trompete für Profis; Schlagzeug für Anfänger. (71:31) Personnel: Rudi Mahall, bass clarinet, baritone sax; Axel Dörner, trumpet; Jan Roder, bass; Uli Jen-

nessen, drums. Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

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#### Roscoe Mitchell Roscoe Mitchell WIDE HIVE RECORDS 0311

The latest from Roscoe Mitchell opens with "The Horn," two minutes of textural washes featuring chimes, bells and gongs, drums and various other "little instruments" that the avant polymath helped introduce to jazz and con-



temporary music nearly a half century ago. At around the 90 second mark, the titular instrument appears—in the form of one honk of a bicycle horn. It is a fitting beginning. Joined by trumpeter Hugh Ragin and multi-instrumentalist Tyshawn Sorey, these 11 tracks run the gamut from Mitchell's aforementioned spatial solo excursions to rollicking ensemble playing.

Mitchell's latest puts him in the position of performing with two succeeding generations who have followed his lead. Notable cuts include the trio's fierce, cat-and-mouse chase of split-tones and drums on "Scrunch" and the glacial tone shifts of "Waves," which soon develop into a rolling tumble of group improv. The trio's contemplation of the three-note motif of "Chant" seems to split the difference between two disparate worlds, conjuring both the spirit of Albert Ayler and the digital soundtrack of smart phones and alarms that surrounds us in the 21st century. It also appears that Mitchell never really left the universal foundations of blues and jazz. More remarkable still upon hearing this latest is the realization that Mitchell continues to find new approaches of playing experimental and truly free music. —Daniel A. Brown

Roscoe Mitchell: The Horn; The Way Home; Bells In The Air; Out There; Scrunch; A Cactus And A Rose; Chant; Meadows; A Game Of Catch; Waves; Windows With A View. (66:41) Personnel: Roscoe Mitchell, saxophones, flute (3), percussion; Tyshawn Sorey, percussion and piano (2, 9); Hugh Ragin, trumpet. Ordering info: widehiverecords.com



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David Weiss & Point Of Departure Venture Inward POSI-TONE 8104 \*\*\*\*

David Weiss, the innately talented trumpeter, is one of those hybrid-intensive jazz figures whose identity can be at once slippery and multifarious. The mystery and mastery continue on his latest release. Among his handful of ensembles and projects, the band Point Of Departure takes as its point of departure a historicist mindset that also manages to be rooted in the notion that modernist energies have been bubbling in past paradigms for decades in jazz.

To put a finer point on it, this particular subtle and fiery quintet, formed in 2006 and just now releasing its first studio recording, proudly treads boldly in the wake left by such models as the great mid-'60s Miles Davis Quintet. Loosely in the vein of that classic band's front-line fervor with Davis and Wayne Shorter, Weiss and tenor saxophonist JD Allen issue assured and never merely showboating soloing and ensemble senses, over drummer Jamire Williams' soft-sell propulsive swing and bassist Laques Curtis' righteous feel (and feel for for what's right). The Davis analogy breaks down, but only slightly, with spareminded and spidery fine guitarist Nir Felder in place of spare-minded pianist Herbie Hancock in the original, but the comparison stands, respectfully.

Perspective-wise, Venture Inward goes backward and forward, simultaneously. It gains freshness and purpose by drawing on lesser-known song turf, such as the brightspirited opening with Hancock's "I Have A Dream" and the coolly urbane moxie of Tony Williams' "Black Comedy." Weiss, whose passion for icons and underdogs of jazz past led him to enable and embrace Freddie Hubbard's last phase of activity before his death, also takes care to bring into the repertoire fold music by artists deserving wider recognition. He includes Detroit trumpeter Charles Moore's intriguing tunes "Number 4" and "Snuck In" alongside Andrew Hill's compositions. Weiss and company give heat and gleam to Hill's aptly named title track and take a sad and lovely balladic detour with Hill's "Pax," which is wisely arranged by Weiss with an ear for unusual harmonizing with his saxophonist foil.

In all, *Venture Inward* sounds positively now, while paying due respects to the attitudes and linguistic manners of then. It adds up to a matter of artistic continuum. *–Josef Woodard* 

Point Of Departure: I Have A Dream; Black Comedy; Number 4; Venture Inward; Pax; Snuck In. (57:00) Personnel: David Weiss, trumpet; J.D. Allen, tenor saxophone; Nir Felder; guitar; Luques Curtis, bass; Jamire Williams, drums. Ordering info: posi-tone.com



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Joshua Abrams Quartet Unknown Known ROGUE ART 0045

#### David Boykin Trio Live At Dorchester Projects SONIC HEALING MINISTRIES 009 \*\*\*

It's hard to look at the title *Unknown Known* without thinking of Donald Rumsfeld's infamous defense of going to war in Iraq in the absence of any evidence that the given reason for the invasion ever existed. It's hard to escape the conclusion that Rumsfeld really wasn't listening. Whatever Chicago-based bassist Joshua Abrams thought about the war, he and his musicians do listen.

Abrams is a versatile instrumentalist, as persuasive laying down swinging rhythms for Nicole Mitchell or Jason Stein as he is playing no-net free improvisation with Axel Dörner and Peter Brötzmann. He's also a composer and bandleader with catholic interests, as evidenced by the Saharan-influenced grooves of his ensemble Natural Information Society. His three accompanists on Unknown Known all appear on the Society's last record, but that's about all that the two endeavors have in common. The intention here is to showcase Abrams' compositions using a jazz-rooted vocabulary. The album leads off with two lengthy tracks built from contrasting passages, which the group executes with discipline and precision; "Boom Goes The Moon" opens with a simple, shimmering reverie, then lurches into a droll shuffle that could come from the pen of Henry Threadgill. It then dissolves into a tumbling phrase that the group sustains until you wonder just when they're going to hit the ground. The record also includes some shorter tunes that cohere around a single concept; "Look Through It" brings to mind the yearning way that the John Coltrane Quartet had with a ballad (circa 1963).

Saxophonist David Boykin, who plays on Unknown Known, leads his own trio on Live At Dorchester Projects. This community arts center in Chicago was founded by sculptor and urban planner Theaster Gates. Boykin had a sojourn as an artist in residence at the center, resulting in this disc. His trio held a week of open rehearsals, and this record was made at a couple of them. Boykin's music incorporates crisp funk beats and functional, clearly stated melodies. These don't sound like compromises so much as sturdy structural elements, which handily frame Boykin's fluid altissimo explorations and forays into rich multiphonics. Alex Wing is no stranger to Boykin's music, and he works a fair bit of melodic adventure into his vamping; the two men's fluent soloing is the best thing about this record. But James Woodley seems not to be quite in sync with Wing; the music pulls him along, when it should be the other way around.

- Bill Meyer

Unknown Known: Unknown Known; Boom Goes The Moon; Settle Down; Look Through It; Eeavening; Pool. (49:37) Personnel: Joshua Abrams, double bass; David Boykin, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Frank Rosaly, drums.

Live At The Dorchester Projects: Walk, Turn, Bat, Shimmy; Blast Off! For Love; Try Harder; Blue Lotus; Star Book; Late Night With The David Boykin Tho Theme. (22:30)

Personnel: David Boykin, saxophone; Alex Wing, electric bass; James Woodley, drums.

Ordering info: rogart.com; sonichealingministries.com



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#### Jan Gabarek/ Egberto Gismonti/ Charlie Haden *Magico: Carta De Amor* ECM 2280/81 \*\*\*

Recorded live in Munich in April 1981, *Magico: Carta De Amor* is a live double album from three musical comrades at the tops of their games. The discs meld Latin,

Indian and other world sounds with contemporary jazz. The jazz is very of a period, but still holds up well today. Musically, the trio can be soft, gentle and subtle, as on "Carta De Amor," or almost prog-rockish in its approach to unison, vertiginous melodies. Intense outbursts of musical display are contrasted with more reserved performances. On "Spor," Jan Garabek makes his saxophone bend and sway, while bassist Charlie Haden and guitarist Egberto Gismonti bang on their strings, molding an otherworldly accompaniment. Gabarek is a perfect fit for the dark timbres in the rest of the group. His bright, somewhat adenoidal, soprano saxophone brightens up the dark presence of Haden and Gismonti. The saxophonist even leads the way on playful exchanges, bending notes almost to their breaking point or blithely pushing forward with aggressive displays of 16th notes.Gismonti ranges from careful accompaniment to pointillistic joy in the varied tunes, performing able fingerpicked support when switching to guitar. Haden is solid, but brilliant, as the imposing anchor of the group. -Jon Ross

Magico: Carta De Amor: Disc One: Carta De Amor; La Pasionaria; Cego Aderaldo; Folk Song; Don Quixote; Spor. (64:16) Disc Two: Branquinho; All That Is Beautiful; Palhaco; Two Folk Songs; Carta De Amor Variation. (44:38) Personnel: Jan Garbarek, tenor and soprano; Egberto Gismonti, guitar, piano; Charlie Haden, bass. Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

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#### Ellen Robinson Don't Wait Too Long EMR 003 \*\*\*\*1/2

There's nothing extraordinary about Ellen Robinson's voice. It's an alto comfortable in the middle dynamic. But turn her loose on songs that have interesting harmonic content and need emotional interpretation,



and Robinson uses her modest voice to great advantage. She swings easily, always sounds relaxed and knows how to subtly phrase to present the material in the best light.

Recorded live, Robinson shines on Great American Songbook tunes like "Dance Only With Me," "But Beautiful" and "Be Careful, It's My Heart." She's smart enough not to embellish the melodic lines of a good writer, and she doesn't fill up space with meaningless noise. Pianist Murray Low's agreeably dislocated solo on "Almost Like Being In Love" adds an intriguing otherworldly touch and marks him as a candidate for his own recording. Dead-slow tempos can bog Robinson down; she sounds best with a little rhythm going on. When saxophonist Kristen Strom takes one of her well-executed solos on one of these meditative pieces, it's almost a tonic. The grafting of music onto the Kipling poem "If" points out dichotomies. The words are poetry for the page and don't lend themselves to musical phrasing. But bassist Sam Bevan turns in an ace performance, and Strom dances on soprano. When Robinson wings a tag line, that's when she cooks, albeit briefly. —*Kirk Silsbee* 

Don't Wait Too Long: Dance Only With Me; Soon; If; Almost Like Being In Love; The Storm; You Must Believe In Spring; Tick Tock; Be Careful, It's My Heart; Our Day Will Come; Calling You; But Beautiful; Don't Wait Too Long. (71:58)
Personnel: Ellen Robinson, vocals; Kristen Strom, soprano and tenor saxophones; Murray Low, piano, keyboards; Sam Bevan, bass; Dan Foltz, drums.
Ordering info: ellenrobinson.com

Jaleel Shaw The Soundtrack Of Things To Come CHANGU RECORDS 002 \*\*\*1/2

Self-expression and self-reflection aren't necessarily a package deal. But when they do come wrapped together, it can be a heady combination. A prime example is Jaleel Shaw's third album as a leader. It's a person-



al collection of original compositions that reflect a year's worth of the artist's rumination on loss, art and spirituality. Featuring a heavier focus on the propulsive qualities of rhythm and melody and fewer forays into the atmospheric, tunes on *The Soundtrack Of Things To Come* are constructed differently than those on Shaw's last release, *Optimism*, which shone a bright light on Robert Glasper's airy Rhodes work. As Shaw mines experiences ranging from deaths in the family and unfulfilled dreams to compelling pieces of visual art and dance, his tone remains warm and engaging, even during the muscular crescendos on "I Wish I Didn't Know." Pianist Lawrence Fields' steadfast comping is calm and contemplative amid Shaw's storm of agitation, slow ruminations anchoring moments of unwanted prescience. "Conclusions" also grapples with a musical expression of difficulty: A plaintive horn part seems to find gradual comfort as the rhythm section echoes its motif. *—Jennifer Odell* 

The Soundtrack Of Things To Come: I Wish I Didn't Know; Conclusions: Ballerina; The Wheel Of Life; The Understanding; Ohroma; Sister; Leel's Tune; Song For Sid; Faith. (77:57) Personnel: Jaleel Shaw, alto and soprano saxophone; Lawrence Fields, plano; Boris Kozlov, bass; Jonathan Blake, drums. Ordering info: jaleelshaw.com Samuel Yirga Guzo REAL WORLD 190 \*\*\*\*

Once, people outside the Horn of Africa would have lacked a frame of reference for a young Ethiopian pianist who blends his soul and jazz influences with the music of his homeland. Buda Musique's Ethiopiques series has spent years



filling in the context, though, and it's possible to hear Guzo in a historical context. It stacks up well next to the best music of Swinging Addis. This is Samuel Yirga's second solo album, recorded in Addis Ababa and London with collaborators ranging from Ethiopian folk musicians to a Cuban choir to fellow members of Dub Colossus. Yirga knows his way around the left side of the piano; his heavy low-end playing grounds the full-band pieces with a pleasingly dark undercurrent as saxophone and the fiddle-esque *messenqo* swirl above, engaging his right hand in fiery debate. His three solo piano pieces show huge range: "Drop Me There" is crystalline and delicate, "Yeh Bati Koyita" is Ethio-blues and "Dance with the Legend" is as fluid as Keith Jarrett in Köln. -Joe Tangari

Guzo: Abet Abet (Punt Mix); Tiwista (Tinish Mix); Firma Ena Wereket; Ye Bati Koyita; Nou Se Soleii, I Am The Black Gold Of The Sun; My Head; Drop Me There; The Blues Of Wollo (Dessye Mix); African Diaspora (bonus track). (63:04) **Personnet**: Samuel Yinga, piano, Hammond organ, Fender Rhodes, keyboards, whistling; Missale Legesse, kebero; Endris Hassan, messengo; Frew Mengiste, bass; Yonas Yinman, percussion; Genet Masresha, vocals (10); Tewodros Atula, trumpet; Yishak Dawit, trombone; Aklilu W/Yohannes, tenor sax; Ben Somers; tenor and baritone saxes, flute; Bernard O'Neill, double bass; Creole Choir of Cuba, award? O'Abud Tesperchet mer (20); Wishak Dawit, torsbore; Aleidu Tesperchet mer (20); Weith the barding the vocals; Clark Tracey, drums (2); Dubulah, guitars, backing vocals, programming; Feleke Halu, tenor saxophone; Greg Freeman, hand percussion; Jonathan Radcliffe, trumpet, flugelhorn; Mel Gareh, vo-cals (6); Nicolette, vocals; Neil Waters, trumpet, flugelhorn; Nick van Gelder, drums, cuica; Paul Chivers, congos, percussion; Robert Dowell, trombone; Toby Mills, tambourine, claps, congas, djembe; Winston Blissett, bass. Ordering info: realworldrecords.com

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Emilio Teubal Musica Para Un Dragon Dormido BJU RECORDS 037 **★**★**½** 

Emilo Teubal's Musica Para Un Dragon Dormido sounds as multicultural as the lineup responsible for its creation. Comprising musicians native to Spain, Japan and



United States, the ensemble treats the effort as a globe-trotting escapade. Strong hints of Argentinean influences flavoring Teubal's previous works appear throughout. Teubal treats formalism as entrances for surprise and the occasional improvisational burst. He tends to take minor steps in walking out a song's progression. As such, it's easy to mistake the record's patient elegance for overt smoothness. Spaciousness-and Teubal's relaxed command at the piano, granting cohorts openings to color delicate textures and dance-baiting time signatures-belies the slight temptation to think the fare belongs in the easy-listening category. The group rarely gets noisy, but a loose friskiness keeps balances interesting. And Teubal uses codas as a race-car driver would a manual gearshift. They allow tunes to angle, turn, accelerate and coast in numerous ways prohibited by a straightforward approach. On "Un Simple Objeto," vibrant exchanges beget a percussive parade that evokes the slinky movements of the beast referenced in the album title. -Bob Gendron

Musica Para Un Dragon Dormido: Un Simple Objeto; The Constant Reinventor; El Tema De Lud-mila; El Acrobata; Un Dragon Dormido; La Espera; Nikko; La Perla; Milonga Para Terminar. (50:33) Personnel: Emilio Teubal, piano, Korg SV-1; Sam Sadigursky, clarinet, tenor and soprano sax, bass clarinet, fittie; John Hadfield, percussion; Moto Fukushima, six-string electric bass; Erik Friedlander, cello; Satoshi Takeishi, percussion, cajon. Ordering info: bjurecords.com

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### Historical / JOHN MCDONOUGH



## Satchmo's Sounds for the Ages

When Louis Armstrong dumped his big band in 1947, it was no surprise. *Everybody* was dumping their big bands then. For some swing-era stars it was a demotion to the low-rent combo district of the business. For Armstrong, though, was it an opportunity—a return to the classic form that had shaped his legend, then disappeared too soon.

Satchmo At Symphony Hall/65th Anniversary: The Complete Performances (Hip-O Select 602537038213; 62:00/56:20 \*\*\*\*) catches the primal vigor of his new "concert group" three months after it became a working unit. Recorded by impresario Ernest Anderson in November 1947, it was released by Decca in 1951 shortly after Benny Goodman's Carnegie Hall LPs had whetted the appetite of major labels for live recordings. Armstrong could not have hoped for a greater partner in his front line than trombone giant Jack Teagarden, whose bobbing counterpoint laces Armstrong's lead with elegant filigrees. If you want to understand why he was the greatest pre-bop trombonist in jazz, these and other early All-Stars concerts showcase his unique voice and attack beautifully. Nor could Armstrong have had a more responsive drummer than Sid Catlett, who could italicize the subtlest space or turn of phrase with the ring of a rim shot or a nonchalant swish of a cymbal backbeat. His performance flexes and breathes. Listen to his long, patient solo variations around the beat on "Steak Face."

Armstrong sounds superb. Inspired by the pliant recoil of Catlett's relaxed power, he is loose, strutting and full of crackle—though his content by now was often locked in the unchanging matrix of muscle memory. It's as if he had one master blues solo out of which all others were constructed. Compare the excellent "Muskrat Ramble" here to one he made eight years later for the *Ambassador Satch* LP, and you'll hear many of the same licks and ensemble riffs. Audiences at Symphony Hall perhaps doubtless believed they were in on a jam session. But, in fact, they were hearing arrangements, some of which had not changed significantly in years. Though only together for three months, the All-Stars were already a tight act, having adopted little pieces of stage business that charmed as well as excited.

The original Decca issue contained 18 songs. This edition has eight more, though only four complete performances. Three are well worth having: a predictable but bravado set piece on "Back O' Town," a lazy figure-skate through "St. James Infirmary" featuring Teagarden and a jaunty duet on "Jack Armstrong Blues." Dick Cary's piano solo on "Royal Garden," cut from the original issue, is also restored. The rest is concert ambiance: assorted introductions, brief theme statements, even musicians tuning up. Unfortunately, the production is unusually careless for a major label. Two tunes are cut, along with several of the announcements. While applause should have provided unbroken continuity from one tune to another, each title is abruptly cut off without even a fade. Ricky Riccardi provides an informative essay updating the original notes.

Some of the repertoire the All-Stars played in 1947 originated during the period covered in Louis Armstrong: The OKeh, Columbia & RCA Victor Recordings—1925–1933 (Sony/Legacy 88697945652; ★★★★★), a 10-CD set that is the most comprehensive collection ever assembled of Armstrong's most decisive and innovative years. Though it contains no "finds," it brings into one compact box the 174 sides he made as leader (plus five accompaniments) from his arrival at OKeh with his Hot Five to his departure from RCA as a fully settled and mature artist. It's a brief but epic journey that charts the emergence of jazz, led by Armstrong, from the ensembles of New Orleans tradition to a solo art to be shaped by a handful of individuals. Armstrong himself grows into a great dramatist, finding that even something as simple as a static blues can have the grand emotional arc of a heroic story with a beginning, middle and climactic end ("Tight Like This," "West End Blues"). More than that even, beginning with his "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," these records seal the historic convergence of jazz and the American Song Book and the future of jazz as a major art form.

Ordering info: hip-oselect.com; legacyrecordings.com

Ben Sidran Don't Cry For No Hipster NARDIS \*\*\*\*

Some Boomers may claim Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell or Smokey Robinson as the voice of their generation. Jazzers of a certain age might well find themselves

drawn to Ben Sidran to fill that role. He mixes the right amount of cynicism and self-satisfaction in this strong state-of-the-hipster document.

Like Dave Frishberg and Mose Allison, Sidran makes great use of contemporary concepts to take swipes at where senior citizens find themselves. On the grooving "Private Guy" he rejects the dominant tellall culture in favor of quietly getting on with things. This introspection might be a bit too solipsistic were it not for the sly humor in Sidran's voice. The band also shines, particularly guitarist Will Bernard, who weaves funky lines through the largely instrumental "Can We Talk" and burns in an understated style on "Private Guy." Sidran explores a less ironic side with a bluesy take on spirituality ("In The Beginning") and a straightahead interpretation of Thelonious Monk's "Reflections." Best of all is Sidran's swaggering take on "Sixteen Tons," which tops Tennessee Ernie Ford's signature version of the song and positions it as a timeless view of the hipster's eternal struggle. *—James Hale* 

Don't Cry For No Hipster: Back Nine; Brand New Music; Don't Cry For No Hipster; At Least We Got To The Race; Can We Talk; In The Beginning; It Don't Get No Better; Dying Anyway; Private Guy; Reflections; Take A Little Hit; Sixteen Tons; Rich Interior Life; Hooglin'. (54:23) **Personnet**: Ben Sidran, piano, electric; piano, organ, vocals; Will Bernard, guitar; John Ellis (2, 5, 14), Mark Shim (4, 10, 14), tenor saxophone; Tim Luntzel, Orlando Le Fleming (4, 8 11), bass; Leo Sidran, drums; Moses Patrou, percussion; Trixie Waterbed, vocals. **Ordering info: bensidran.com**  Maucha Adnet/ Helo Alves *Milagre* ZOHO 201302 \*\*\*\*

Muacha Adnet's third album as a leader groups together a number of Brazilian jazz tunes, pairs her with longtime collaborator Helio Alves and lets the duets speak for themselves. *Milagre* presents a

jazz vocalist at the height of her powers supported by a superlative soloist and encouraging accompanist. The two seem at home together, with Adnet's deep alto dancing lightly over Alves' precise rubato rhythms.

The two give intimate, superb performances of compositions penned by Antônio Carlos Jobim, Gilberto Gil and other masters. Adnet picked up her innate understanding of the music while touring with Jobim for more than a decade, and her close study and countless performances are stamped on each tune. "Waters Of March" stands out as one of the only English tunes on the disc but is also notable for the casual ease of tempo. The tune's accompaniment skips along, never rushing, and Adnet is able to lay on the back of the beat, nearly creating a rhythmic tension that makes the song one of the best on the record. The two also perform lesser-known numbers, such as the playful "April Child" and the breezy title tune. They seem to work best at a fast clip of a tempo, and the disc is full of uptempo, danceable music, but ballads like "Desafinada" are also beautiful in their slower pace. —Jon Ross

Milagre: O Cantador; Eu Vim Da Bahia; Waters Of March; Gabriela; Retrato Em Branco E Preto; Coracao Vagabundo; Caminhos Cruzados; Vale Do Ribeira; Desafinada; Amor Infinito/Bons Amigos; Milagre; Tico-Tico No Fuba; Canto Triste; April Child. (57:26) Personnel: Maucha Adnet, vocals; Helio Alves: piano. Ordering info: zohomusic.com



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#### Akiko Pavolka & House of Illusion Mahoroba FRESH SOUND/NEW TALENT 409 \*\*\*1/2

With Mahoroba, the Japanese-born and New York-based singer/pianist Akiko Pavolka has conjured up a culture-stitching sound. With her understated vocals, she wraps her timbre around distinctive melodies off to the side of pop and jazz structures and harmonies. Her Japanese lyrics somehow convey strong emotive moods despite our lack of contextual understanding.

The company she keeps contributes greatly to the whole of the musical character here. Her band, known as House of Illusion, does much to fill in the colors and textural diversity of the sound, between alto saxophonist Loren Stillman's and guitarist Nate Radley's supple and limber solo turns, and the tasteful dynamics of bassist Matt Pavolka and drummer Bill Campbell. For extra texture, Guillermo Klein abets the leader's foundational acoustic piano parts with washes of Wurlitzer electric piano.

Elements of worldly influences beyond Japan and New York figure into the album's palette. With "Alfama," Pavolka pays tribute to the rambling old quarter of Lisbon, a home of the plaintive fado, and there is a mournful patina to the song that makes it sound vague-



ly fado-related. "Macaroni Western," despite its cheeky Ennio Morricone-esque title, is less campy than hypnotic, with its brief vocal part segueing into an extended instrumental section in a cycle of 11 beats. The epic "Immigrants," which grows from an ambient opening to an intensifying song structural arc, refers to her own itinerant life, and migrates in musical terms. The closing title track, "Mahoroba," has a few Kurt Weill-ish melodic twists in a melody laid out over a sensuous series of tolling piano chords. -Josef Woodard

Mahoroba: Alfama; Child Of Summer; Immigrants; Macaroni Western; Tangc; Pulse; Mahoroba. (47:46) Personnel: Akiko Pavolka, vocals and piano; Loren Stillman, alto saxophone; Guillermo Klein, wurlitzer electric piano and vocal (7); Matt Radley, guitars; Matt Pavolka, bass; Bill Campbell, drums. Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com





#### BOOKS / BY JENNIFER ODELL

## Life of an Overlooked Bandleader

The way the story of early New Orleans jazz is often told, there's a gap between Buddy Bolden, whose brief career ended with his institutionalization in 1907, and the recordings made by Joe "King" Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong in the early '20s. What gets glossed over are key facets of the music's development: With Bolden suddenly out of the picture, how did his danceable blues and gutbucket wails continue to inspire bands to play "hot," polyphonic music interspersed with solos? What made that music catch on and spread beyond race lines and outside of the Crescent City? What legacies from this early period later contributed to the death of the Jazz Age?

As John McCusker writes in **Creole Trombone: Kid Ory And The Early Years Of Jazz (University Press Of Mississippi)**, the life of one largely overlooked bandleader is a testament to this turning point in jazz that helps answer these questions. McCusker states, this is the "story of a jazz musician arriving on the scene at the same time as the music itself. The man and the music came up together, reached maturity together and, ultimately, faded from the scene together."

A longtime photojournalist for the New Orleans Times-Picayune who moonlighted as a jazz history tour guide, McCusker's pursuit of information about Ory began in the mid-'90s after someone in his group challenged his dismissive remarks about the trombonist's importance. Mc-Cusker consulted with Bruce Raeburn at Tulane University's Hogan Jazz Archive, who agreed with the tourist, positing that Edward "Kid" Ory's career was vital to the development of jazz. Raeburn's suggestion prompted a 15-year research odyssey for McCusker, who worked through and in part, inspired by—the loss of his home and possessions in 2005, and of his wife just a few years later.

Using oral histories, recordings and what he describes as "loose pages" from an unfinished Ory autobiography, McCusker pieces together the story of a driven young musician who helped usher in the era of so-called "hot" playing, cherry-picked and nurtured the talents of Armstrong and Oliver, and eventually made the first recordings by an all-black New Orleans jazz band. Ory's early recordings, both as a leader and in bands led by Armstrong and Morton, are covered here (along with an in-depth discography), as is his role in the 1940s revival of traditional New Orleans jazz. But the picture McCusker paints of Louisiana's music scene from 1900–1919 is the book's highlight.

An early follower of Bolden and an astute student of both the music and the music business, Ory's path was self-determined. He formed a band in his rural hometown of LaPlace, La., with



homemade instruments and wrangled gigs at fish fries and picnics until he could buy real instruments for his young group, who frequently stole off into the night in search of visiting bands such as those led by Bolden or John Robichaux.

Ory showed leadership skills from the outset, taking careful notice of variances in style, set-building techniques and, in McCusker's words, the "cutthroat and bargain basement" nature of New Orleans' music scene. He combined the most successful elements of everything he learned and plowed ahead with a business acumen as sharp as his musicianship.

During "cutting contests," where wagons carrying bands to advertise shows would battle one another with music, Ory became notorious for pushing his group to win. He promoted his own shows, finding crafty ways with few resources to cut out competition. His tenacity in playing for diverse audiences helped him create what Armstrong called "one of the hottest jazz bands that ever hit New Orleans." (Giving Satchmo his first steady gig didn't hurt.)

McCusker also offers an honest picture of the murky meanings of the term "Creole" from one parish or one New Orleans neighborhood to another during that time. Sight-reading Creole musicians in places like the Seventh Ward, for example, played a different style than the Uptown players Ory identified with, despite his own mixed-race heritage.

*Creole Trombone* fills a needed hole in research about one of the period's most important bandleaders. But the story of Ory's success and, after his move to California in 1919, his slow movement out of the picture until the 1940s tells as much about the artist as it does about the development of the music and of New Orleans as a cultural center, making it a crucial text in the canon of Crescent City jazz history. **DB Ordering info: upress.state.ms.us** 

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Jimmy Herring Subject To Change Without Notice ABSTRACT LOGIX 025 \*\*\*\*1/2

While a small tag on the back of this CD reads "File Under Rock," this ambitious all-starladen outing by the pyrotechnic six-stringer falls more into the "Beyond" category. A former member of the Allman Brothers Band and current lead guitarist for the popular jam band Widespread Panic, multifaceted virtuoso Herring demonstrates a solid command of Western Swing ("Red Wing Special"), greasy '70s funk (a blues-drenched take on Jimmy McGriff's "Miss Poopie") and Indian-flavored exotica (a brilliant cover of George Harrison's mysterious "Within You Without You" that has him channeling his inner Allan Holdsworth on

#### an adventurous solo).

Herring's striking originals like the psychedelic, Mahavishnu-meets-Dixie-Dregs jam "Kaleidoscope Carousel" and the moving, gospel tinged "Aberdeen," which recalls the lyrical lift of some of Eric Johnson's more rhapsodic instrumentals, demonstrate the scope of his open-minded musicality on his second release as a leader. He switches to steel string acoustic guitar for the affecting ballad "Emerald," which is underscored by John Keane's atmospheric pedal steel work, then nonchalantly blows over a myriad of changes on the uptempo burner "12 Keys," which is paced by Matt Slocum's hard-driving organ, Etienne M'Bappe's urgently walking electric bass lines and Jeff Sipe's insistently swinging pulse on the kit. One-time Mahavishnu Orchestra member Bill Evans contributes potent tenor work on an interesting interpretation of John McLaughlin's opus "Hope," which has Herring flashing mondo chops. The guitarist brandishes some mean flat-picking technique along with some Merle Travis licks and Jimmy Bryantstyled countrified Telecaster twang on the brisk hoedown "Curfew," which also features an appearance from banjo ace Béla Fleck. And he pulls out his nastiest toe-curling licks on the funky closer "Bilgewater Blues." A revelation -Bill Milkowski from the great beyond.

Subject To Change Without Notice: Red Wing Special, Kaleido-scope Carousel; Aberdeen; Within You Without You; Miss Poopie; Emerald Garden; 12 Keys; Hope; Curfew; Bilgewater Blues. (60:38) **Personnel:** Jimmy Herring, guitar; Neal Fountain, bass; Etienne M'Bappe, bass; Jeff Sipe, drums; Matt Slocum, organ; Bill Evans, Ironor sax; Béla Fleck, banjo; Tyler Greenwell, drums; Carter Herring, cello; Nicky Sanders, fiddle; Ike Stubblefield, organ; John Keane, perdal stele pedal steel. Ordering info: abstractlogix.com

#### Alex Cline For People In Sorrow CRYPTOGRAMOPHONE 146 $\star\star$

Alex Cline's heart is in the right place. The percussionist heard the Art Ensemble of Chicago's "People In Sorrow" in high school and credits the piece for helping him get him through a trying period. Having contemplated staging an interpretation for years, he realized his dream in 2011 at the Angel City Jazz Festival, which is documented on this combination CD/DVD package.

Cline's reading acknowledges passages in the original version and adds new elements. Prefaced with a poem by Larry Ward, the rendition tacks on more than 20 minutes to a piece that already asks large demands of the listener. The biggest deviation comes courtesy of a mystic Buddhist chant by Sister Dang Nghiem. Intended to reinforce spiritual undercurrents, it distracts, contributing to the sense that Cline tries to do too much. Multiple sequences of "People In Sorrow" invite freeform playing yet lack cohesion. An urge for spontaneity runs up against the need to obey the conductor's directions. Saving grace arrives via recur-



rent themes that cycle throughout, allowing for soloing from each instrumentalist. G.E. Stinson's growling guitar lead at the midway point, a short percussive flurry and wailing horn swell provide highlights. They exude a fire that occurs too infrequently over the course -Bob Gendron of this performance.

For People In Sorrow: A Wild Thing; People In Sorrow. (67:44) Personnel: Oliver Lake, saxophones, flute; Vinny Goila, wood-winds; Dan Clucas, cornet, flute; Dwight Trible, voice; Jeff Gauthier; electric voilin; Maggie Parkins, cello; Mark Dresser, bass; Myra Mel-ford, piano, harmonium; Zeena Parkins, harp; G.E. Stinson, electric within; electronical, Mark Dersser, David, Debiano guitar, electronics; Alex Cline, percussion; Sister Dang Nghiem, hant, bell; Larry Ward, recitation; Will Salmon, conductor Ordering info: cryptotv.com



Stefano Battaglia Trio Songways ECM 3724554 \*\*\*1/2

Hang around the art museum and it's likely you'll hear someone express opinions about one or another work through analogy. A monumental painting might be compared to a symphony, an M.C. Escher engraving to a dissonant fugue, a Jackson Pollock to the abstract intensities of a Cecil Taylor improvisation.

These sorts of comparisons probably reflect an intention to invest such works with the energy of movement. For all the activity splashed across a canvas, that canvas ends up locked in a frame and hung on a wall. Even so, it might stir ideas of movement in the viewer's mind, whether literally as in Marcel Duchamp's famous "Nude Descending A Staircase, No. 2" or through William Turner's violently poetic storms at sea.

What, then, can one say about the reverse—about music that feels motionless? Listening to ECM veteran pianist Stefano Battaglia and his trio on *Songways*, the words that come to mind suggest visual more than than musical references. When there is movement, it is like shadow wafting across an otherwise unchanging landscape. More often, the sound hangs in the air, a suspension of fifths, spare drum taps and cymbal rolls, with isolated bass notes delineating a slow flow of chords, passing like clouds.

The picture, or the music, is breathlessly beautiful. There's ample open space, thanks to Battaglia's extremely restrained performance. This makes every element in the mix as critical as each dot in a Georges Seurat composition. You hear every cymbal ting, muffled tom thump and tiny bell chime played by drummer Roberto Dani; on "Vondervotteimittis" and elsewhere, he adds some noises that suggest dragging something metallic across a couple inches of concrete floor. Their mystery adds a small but dramatic color to the trio's overall palette.

On most of Songways, Dani's drums are the

most dynamic element, aside from moments where bassist Salvatore Maiore steps forward. When he does so about five minutes into the title cut, Battaglia and Dani fade so far back that for a while the bass stands alone in a space where time itself has stopped.

This sense of stasis permeates even "Armonia," a 13-minute tour de force with a chorus, if that's the right word, in which a series of I–IV chords descend, with a surprising and satisfying major third triad in its midst. Yet even this movement passes like a brief lift in a breeze.

More often, in Battaglia's bare-bones accompaniments or exotically evocative themes on pieces such as the Iberian-inflected "Ismaro," it feels more like listeners are on a hilltop, taking in the panorama on a windless day—or taking the time at a gallery to appreciate a painting, enigmatic but beautiful. That is never a bad place to be at all.

#### -Bob Doerschuk

Songways: Euphonia Elegy; Ismaro, Vondervotteimittis; Armonia; Mildendo Wide Song; Monte Analogo; Abdias; Songways; Perta; Babel Hymn. (78:08) Personnel: Stefano Battaglia, piano; Salvatore Maiore; bass; Roberto Dani, drums. Ordering info: ecmrecords.com







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Rob Mazurek Octet Skull Sessions CUNEIFORM 349 \*\*\*\*

Chicago cornetist Rob Mazurek has formed numerous ensembles with shared personnel and musical concepts, retrofitting compositions and structures for different settings. *Skull Sessions*, recorded live in São Paulo, Brazil, is billed to the Rob Mazurek Octet and it deftly demonstrates this almost modular approach, bringing together players from his Chicago-based outfits Starlicker, Exploding Star Orchestra and Sound Is with his South American unit São Paulo Underground. Some of the five compositions here were repurposed from some of those other ensembles, but ultimately the material has been so reconceived it may as well be all new.

Mazurek has become focused on ultra-saturated canvases of sound, directing his bands to create loud, dense, resonant and collision-prone collages that achieve a cumulative power, and this configuration brings remarkable firepower to that concept. The band was assembled to perform in conjunction with an interactive art exhibition devoted to Miles Davis called "We Want Miles," but the cornetist eschews any direct tribute apart from a loose affinity for the trumpeter's late electric music. Most of the pieces are episodic with discrete sections emerging in thick masses of sound-there are passages where one or two instrumentalists occupy the front line, such as the braided flute of Nicole Mitchell and electric guitar of Carlos Issa on "Voodoo And The Petrified Forest"-but within regular accretion and subtraction all of the musicians are engaged in rigorous improvisation most of the time. Mazurek's bright melodic instincts are routinely scuffed up and darkened by the thick, roiling action, but here and there his love for the folk-like melodies of Don Cherry can't be suppressed, as on the opening section of "Skull Caves Of Alderon," a generous, irresistible line over a churning synth-fueled groove that opens up in a stomp encrusted with layers of sound like the external walls of an old building thick in disparate colors of paint. -Peter Margasak

Skull Sessions: Galactic Ice Skeleton; Voodoo And The Petrified Forest; Passing Light Screams; Skull Caves Of Alderon; Keeping The Light Up. (65:41)

Personnel: Rob Mazurek, cornet, ring modulator; Nicole Mitchell, piccolo, flute, voice; John Herndon, drums; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Mauricio Takara, cavaquinho, percussion; Guilherme Granado, keyboards, electronics; Thomas Rohrer, rabeca, C melody saxophone; Carlos Issa, guitar, electronics. Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

#### Sean Nowell The Kung-Fu Masters POSI-TONE 8106

\*\*\*½

Sean Nowell is an enterprising tenor saxophonist from Birmingham, Ala, Based in New York, this is Nowell's fourth Posi-Tone release. It hits with a thrilling acid-jazz smackdown on Jimi Hendrix's "Crosstown Traffic," although the band prefers the trendier term "jazztronica." The initial taste drums up the Greyboy Allstars or one of Karl Denson's projects. Nowell's electrically modified tenor quacks out a funky solo before Adam Klipple's percussive organ. It's tight and exciting. Subsequent tracks are Nowell originals with the brass section, and saliently, trombonist Michael Dease, sprouting out from Evan Marien's suspended bass groove on "In The Shikshteesh." The keyboard players jockey between organ, Fender Rhodes and effects, and the vibe percolates under call-and-response fanfares before breaks that remind fleetingly of the Average White Band's "Pick Up The Pieces."

Suggested by Nowell's lotus stance on the cover, the leader is partial to sustaining the equilibrium of the septet's varied elements. The head to "Mantis Style" is more chop-



sy with a deft quote from "Invitation" kicking off the keyboard solo. Nimble bassist Marien and energetic drummer Djordjevic are integral. The ominous grind and metallic effects of "The Outside World" are not the stuff of the Shaolin Temple. *—Michael Jackson* 

The Kung-Fu Masters: Crosstown Traffic; In The Shikshteesh; For All Intensive Purposes; Mantis Style; The Outside World; Prosperity; The 55th Chamber; Uncrumplable; Song Of The Southland; Can Do Man. (51:24)

Personnel: Sean Nowell, tenor saxophone; Brad Mason, trumpet; Michael Dease, trombone; Art Hirahara, keyboards; Adam Klipple, organ and keyboards; Evan Marien, bass; Marko Djordjevic, drums. Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Rusconi Revolution BEE JAZZ 056 \*\*\*\*

At first, this group reminded me of the quizzical renegade trio The Bad Plus (with a nod to E.S.T.). But, as I ventured forth into this program, I realized that Rusconi's *Revolution* comes across more as a storybook and less as a collection of quirky, trailblazing songs, quite unlike those aforementioned notables. Yet even though there are nine pieces here, where they begin and end wasn't so clear.

Which had me thinking about how it's got to be hard to play this kind of pop-inflected jazz with so much improv: Claudio Struby, Fabian Gisler and Stefan Rusconi must know each other's musical selves, inside and out, "Berlin Blues" starts everything with a sweet cadence before it twists sideways, then goes in another direction with some whiney voices before returning to the main theme statement; then the pretzel position returns before Rusconi's serene piano chords set the stage for the song to meander into "Massage The History Again." It's conventional-sounding instrumental pop with a light backbeat, but, based on what's already come before, you know something's going to be in arrears sooner or later.

There's a definite break after the tuneful "Massage" before listeners are treated to more acoustic piano that sounds like it's down the hall and not in the room with you on "Milk." Slightly groovy, medium-tempo stuff before it dovetails into something more raucous, the trio seems to be into dynamics, mood, a bit of lyrical playing. "Alice In The Sky" is a highlight with more patterned piano and certain studio effects that create dreamy images driven by Gisler's distortion/feedback on acoustic bass. It's more of that playing around with the rules of a supposed "acoustic jazz piano trio." The playing is straightforward, nothing flashy; it's not about chops, per se, but, it seems, about coming up with something together, based on their various influences (add the likes of Paul Bley, Flying Lotus, Miles Davis, Richard Strauss, not to mention other art forms). "Alice," with its friendly progressions, sounds like a standard in the making. To confuse things, British guitarist Fred Frith is in on the proceedings, adding aching, articulate cries subsequently and otherwise. It all fits. Saving the best for last, the closing two tracks, "Hits Of Sunshine" and "Theresa's Sound-World," are kick-ass Sonic Youth covers recorded live, giving the album another welcome dose of the unpredictable, true to the spirit of experimental rock as much as jazz.

This Swiss band of 30-somethings has four previous albums under its belt, with a certain affection for the music of Sonic Youth (check out *It's A Sonic Life* from 2010). Calling the

18<sup>th</sup>ANNUAL

CD *Revolution* may be an overstatement, but when you reflect on what's out there these days, working from the inside-out—perhaps best exemplified by the bouncy, tuneful radio hit "Tempelhof," the trio bereft of any of that jazzy, chops-laden "showing off"—sometimes simpler just might be more satisfyingly complex. —John Ephland

**Revolution:** Berlin Blues; Massage The History Again; Milk; Alice In The Sky; Kaonashi; False Awakening; Tempelhof; Hits Of Sunshine; Theresa's Sound-World. (47:11) **Personnel:** Stefan Rusconi, piano, space echo/preparation, choirs; Claudio Struby, double bass, distortion/feedback, choirs; Fabian Gisler, drum, tape, glockenspiel, choirs. **Ordering info:** beejazz.com

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## Extensions, Superimposition and Polytonality

hen Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk began emphasizing upper-structure tertian chord tones in their improvised lines and chord voicings, they were suggesting a harmonic direction for jazz that mirrored the experimentation of many of their mid-20th century classical contemporaries. These notes did not violate the rules of tertian chords but extended the chords upward to include ninths, 11ths and 13ths. Used in various combinations, the underlying implication of these choices could be the coexistence of multiple key centers or, at the very least, the suggestion of the superimposition of one key upon another.

Bird described his awakening to these possibilities in an interview in the 1955 book *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya: The Story Of Jazz As Told By The Men Who Made It* (Dover Publications): "I'd been getting bored with the stereotyped changes that were being used all the time," he said. "I found that by using the higher intervals of a chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes I could play the thing I'd been hearing. I came alive."

Parker's lines tend to follow the strong beat/ weak beat principles of melodic construction, wherein chord tones are usually placed directly on the beats in his eighth-note lines. By placing the upper extensions on the beat, he draws greater attention to those sounds than they would garner if he had used them as passing tones. In his 1942 "Cherokee" solo, you can hear him masterfully using this technique.

Building on this tradition of controlled dissonance, players in the next generation after Bird dealt with the implication of bitonality more directly, by using superimposed chords or scales. Perhaps the most detail-oriented approach was presented by Eddie Harris, in his "intervallistic system." While many contemporary players use "triad pairs" for upper-structure superimposition, Harris presented a more exhaustive method for the superimposition of triads onto seventh chords; for example, there are 17 possible superimposed triads that may be applied to a dominant seventh chord that would suggest one or more upper-structure tones, without sounding any non-chord tones. While Harris' book Intervallistic Concept: Saxophone (Charles Colin) remains a bit vague as to how to apply these triads, his playing provides a phenomenal example of the effect this shifting superimposition technique can have on an improvised line.



He goes further than Gillespie, Parker and Monk. He is not merely implying bitonality—he is using it directly and purposefully to create color and tension in his lines.

Years ago, after spending a great deal of time playing together and talking with Harris, I began to explore the possibilities of superimposing full seventh chords onto other seventh chords. While a D major triad superimposed upon a C major seventh chord strongly suggests the second key, I began to examine the possibility of including higher notes: for example, the major seventh of the D major against the C major. This more dramatically differentiates the second key. While the C# would traditionally be perceived as a nonchord tone in the key of C major, the support of the thirds stacked beneath it in the superimposed key has the effect of making it sound more tonal. In tertian terms, it might be described as a sharp 15th; however, rather than invent my own nomenclature, I thought it would be better to describe this structure as a polychord by utilizing slashchord symbols. (See Example 1.)

When improvising on traditional chord structures, I am now using such superimpositions to add color to the chords. Over time, I've worked out a system of superimposed seventh chords that include not only the commonly accepted exten-



sions, but tones that go beyond the 13th. In constructing my lines, I highlight members of both chords—the upper chord of the slash-chord and the lower chord. Depending on how I decide to use tension or release, I may begin with the upper chord and resolve to the lower, stay only on the upper chord or construct intervallic lines that move freely between members of each. (See Example 2.)

I also use this system as a method for polytonal reharmonization. I treat the lower chords as the functional changes, utilizing the superimposed seventh chords to add texture, dissonance and tension. In choosing which superimpositions to apply, I take into account not only the sound of each composite structure, but the voice-leading relationships between the upper-structure chords



Example 3 E MAJ 7(\$11) D maj<sup>7(\$11)</sup> **G**<sup>7</sup> C MAJ<sup>7</sup> D MAJ 7(11) E MAJ 7(\$11) G7 C MAJ<sup>7</sup> 0 **B**<sup>7</sup> C MAJ<sup>7</sup> F7 B<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> 0 0 B7 C MAJ<sup>7</sup> F7 B<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> 0  $\overline{o}$ 13 C#TRIAD EDTRIAD F TRIAD F<sup>‡</sup>MAJ<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>MAJ<sup>7</sup> D MAJ<sup>7</sup> D maj<sup>7</sup> F 77 **B**7 G7 A<sup>b</sup>MAJ<sup>7</sup> E MAJ<sup>7</sup> C MAJ<sup>7</sup> C MAJ<sup>7</sup> . 20. C TRIAD BTRIAD B<sup>₽</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> F<sup>\$</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> D MAJ<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> E 07 B7 G FNAI A<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> A<sup>b</sup>maj<sup>7</sup> C MAJ<sup>7</sup> • . . D MAJ 7(\$11) E MAJ 7(\$11) C7 C MAJ<sup>7</sup> A7 **G**7 25 E MAJ 7(#11) DUTRIND E TRIAD D7 G? C MAJ<sup>7</sup> 0

themselves. In this way, I've been able to achieve the effect of two progressions sounding simultaneously. On the recordings *Polytonal Dance Party* (Origin, 2008) and *Chicago Red* (Origin, 2013), I approached the issue of distribution by asking the bassist to play only the lower structure, the guitarist to play only the upper structure and the pianist to play the composite polychord. Each soloist is free to deal with the harmony as he chooses.

On the album *Tight Like This* (Delmark, 2010), I used the polytonal Ssystem to reharmonize the Walter Donaldson song "Changes." (See Example 3.) Originally a vehicle for,

and also about, Bix Beiderbecke's mastery of harmony, I enjoyed adding more changes to a tune that is already *about* changes. The "Countdown" progression on the bridge serves to take this inside joke a bit further. The top parts of the slash-chords have their own interrelationships. I encourage you to experiment with these concepts yourself. DB

Trumpeter Brad Goode served apprenticeships with jazz masters Von Freeman, Eddie Harris and Ira Sullivan. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Jazz Studies at The University of Colorado, and he freelances as a lead trumpeter and bassist. His latest recording is *Chicago Red* (Origin, 2013). Visit him online at bradgoode.com.



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## **Charlie Haden's Lyrical** Bass Solo on 'Silence'

harlie Haden's composition "Silence" must be a favorite of his. As the Invitation Series artist at the Montreal Jazz Festival in 1989, the bassist and bandleader performed the song at three of his concerts, each with different instrumental configurations. The version presented here features a trio with pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba and drummer Paul Motian; it can be heard on The Montreal Tapes: With Gonzalo Rubalcaba And Paul Motian (Polygram, 1998).

The song is an eight-measure chord sequence, played at a fairly slow tempo. After starting with block chords on the piano with minimal bass and drums accompaniment, Haden starts his bass solo at about one minute into the performance. He commences roughly a measure before the start of the form, creating a nice jump-off, and then leaves a half measure of silence at the beginning of the form, creating a musical surprise.

Haden then plays through the form five times before giving it over to Rubalcaba. Some interesting broad strokes: It's the middle chorus (number 3) in which Haden goes up into the upper register of the bass, and the highest note played in this solo (the high Fb sustained across measures 22 and 23) is in the middle of that chorus, putting this highest note at the exact midpoint of his solo. And after this chorus, Haden comes down into the middle range for the next eight bars, and then goes down to the lower range for his final eight, setting up a nice transition into the piano solo. It's also testament to Haden's fluency over the range of the bass. His solo spans almost three octaves, from the low G<sub>b</sub> in measure 37 to the extra high F<sub>b</sub> at the end of measure 22.

Also worth noting is how comfortable Haden is with different subdivisions. We hear him using straight eighths and 16ths alongside eighth-note triplets and sextuplets and even quintuplets. As testament to his fluency, check out measures 32 and 33, where he varies between duple, triple and quintuple subdivisions.

Haden's soloing is melodic and lyrical. Notice how his lines are typically scalar, with little chromaticism and mostly stepwise motion. He does vary the scales to fit the chords. Though he plays a lot of C Aeolian for this solo, his first lick is C harmonic minor, which goes well with both the Cm/E<sub>b</sub> (the key of the song) and  $G/E_b$ chords in that bar. Haden revisits this scale again in measures 12 and 25-26, the latter having the same G/Eb that makes this scale fit so well, due to the leading tone (B natural), the third of G.

The same is true of the chord progression that occurs in the fifth and sixth measures of the progression (D<sub>b</sub>m-E<sub>b</sub>7/D<sub>b</sub>-A<sub>b</sub>sus4/C<sub>b</sub>-A<sub>b</sub>m/ C<sub>b</sub>). We have the same minor chord alongside its V, which has the leading tone. And in every instance that it appears (bars 7-8, 15-16, 23-24, 31-32 and 39-40), Haden plays Ab harmon-



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#### Piano Part

Db	D0	Csus4/Eb	Cm/Eb	Cm7(b5)	F7/C	Bbsus4/Db	Bbm/Db
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0 Dbm	Eb7/Db	Absus4/Cb	Abm/Cb	Csus4/D	Dm7(b5)	G/Eb	Cm/Eb
J Grubs	de	100	28	¢₿	0	3	8
) 9:52 56	6	-	ĥ	té -	6	te P	¢

Bass Solo



ic minor (though in the first instance he doesn't play the G natural, so it's not defined as harmonic minor or Aeolian).

Haden uses a similar idea for the Cm7b5 through Bbm/Db areas of the tune, but in a very clever manner. He only uses the second, third and fourth in bars 5 and 6, so it's not clear what scale he's using. The next place these chords occur (bars 13 and 14), he fleshes out the scale more, but avoids the crucial A natural that would define it as harmonic minor. He waits until measure 22 to play this note, and he leans on it at the beginning of the bar, now giving us the full sound. The final time he plays this progression (in bars 37–38), he again gives us the full scale, but waits until the middle of the second bar to give us that A note. So he not only varies his use of scales to better match the chords, he also varies how much he defines his scale choices, sometimes creating very specific sounds but other times leaving his choices vague, creating another type of contrast.

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Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in New York City. Visit him online at jimidurso.com.

### Toolshed >

## Kawai VPC-1 Controller Comfortable &

Realistic Piano Feel

ne of the things the Kawai brand has become known for is its keyboard action, and the recent release of the VPC-1 Piano Controller shows that the company is dedicated to delivering the best possible action into the hands of pianists everywhere.

The VPC-1 is an impressivelooking piece. It's rather large for a "portable" controller at almost 5 feet long and 65 pounds, but if you are a straight-up pianist, you know the importance of heft in your controller—you don't want it moving around while you play it. It has clean lines, completely unbroken by controls except for the small recessed power button.

Kawai is clearly gunning for the purist here, someone who is not concerned with controlling his computer with anything other than the mouse. There are no CCs to be sent, no knobs or buttons to assign,



not so much as a mod wheel to clutter up your playing experience—no aftertouch either. But if you crave a rich and realistic piano feel, the VPC is a great place to start.

The VPC is built around Kawai's RM3 Grand II action, which feels wonderful. It is a little stiffer than I normally prefer, but after playing it for a while, it became very comfortable. The keys have graded hammer weights and counterweights and a let-off simulation that lends credibly to the piano feel. This action beats most pro weighted controllers easily and compares favorably with most of the high-end digital piano actions I've tried.

No sounds are included here,

and the connections on the back are minimal. There is a USB connector, MIDI I/O and two jacks to connect the included Kawai F-30 pedal unit, which includes all three piano pedals in a weighty enclosure. The unit also has a power jack and can't run off bus power. This is not a low-tech device, however, as Kawai has partnered with some of the premier piano sampling library manufacturers to offer Approved Touch Curves tailored to each of the libraries individually. Included are curves designed for Ivory, Pianoteq, Galaxy Pianos and Alicia's Keys packages. Kawai says this will lend even greater realism to these "pianos," and it was interesting to go

between them. The effect is subtle, but it definitely changed the feel of each library. Kawai also includes software that allows you to create and edit your own curves, but at this time it is PC only. You can still use the factory curves by selecting them using the keys and power button.

With a street price of around \$1,850, the VPC-1 offers very few control options other than its keyboard—but that is the point. The keyboard feel is excellent, and although I would have liked to see a few more options and curves for that price (and some Mac software, please), it truly is a pleasure to play. —*Chris Neville* 

kawaius.com

**Peter Ponzol Stainless Steel Mouthpieces** 

#### **Balancing Fundamentals with Overtones**

S axophonist Peter Ponzol is more than just a veteran jazz and studio musician whose career spans more than 40 years. He is also an expert in saxophone necks and mouthpieces who runs his own company from his home base in Woodstock, Ga. I testdrove Ponzol's entire new line of Stainless Steel saxophone mouthpieces and paid particular attention to the TM2 SL 100 and TM2 PLUS SL 100 for tenor.

Both models (with size 100 tip openings) were responsive, wellfocused and powerful. The TM2 PLUS SL 100 in particular produced clear, reliable altissimo notes, and down low it was always ready to rumble. It projected beautifully, with a discernible edge in all registers. The TM2 SL 100 responded well, too, but was a bit mellower-sounding overall. Both tenor mouthpieces had a richness to their sound, striking a nice balance between strong fundamentals and ringing overtones. With relatively small chambers and a freeblowing feel, they would be great for playing jazz, rock and commercial music.



Ponzol manufactures all of his Stainless Steel mouthpieces using CNC machines; then he personally play-tests them and makes final adjustments by hand. The tenor models come with a Rovner ligature (with a serrated, flexible rubber reed-gripper) and cap that suits them perfectly. *—Bruce Gibson* **peterponzol.com** 



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Toolshed >

## Keilwerth MKX Tenor Saxophone Modern Sound, Vintage Feel

he Julius Keilwerth line of saxophones has evolved yet again with the introduction of the MKX series—a professional instrument that combines new design elements with some tonal characteristics of the company's classic SX90R and keywork reminiscent of a Selmer Mark VI.

The concept behind the MKX series is a best-of-both-worlds scenario where the horn produces a Keilwerth type of sound yet is outfitted with mechanics familiar to players who have spent their careers playing a particular make of vintage instrument. And with suggested retail prices of \$5,500 (alto) and \$6,200 (tenor), it's targeted to compete with professional horns being produced by other major brands on the market today.

The MKX delivers. I play-tested the tenor and was immediately impressed with its fast response, precise ergonomics and strong tonal personality. This is a horn that sings with a voice all its own, and it can certainly keep up with the player on speedy musical passages. It feels like its unwavering ability to project is built right into the instrument. The MKX not only roars; it plays pretty and lively at low volumes as well.

The large bow and bell of the Germany-made MKX are patterned after Keilwerth's SX series. The body tube has been redesigned and the tone holes have been repositioned and resized accordingly, resulting in a more focused tonality that sounds noticeably different than the more spread-out, flexible tone of a Keilwerth SX. Other differences include straight tone holes rather than rolled ones and standard palm keys instead of adjustable ones. The keys of the MKX have recessed pearls that feel good under the fingers, as do the metal octave-key thumb button and the ergonomically slanted E-flat-to-low-C setup.

Keilwerth has done a good job with the extras, too. The MKX comes in a Winter Greenline case that's made from recycled materials and weighs about 3 pounds. Also included is a BG neckstrap emblazoned with the JK logo featuring a metal grappling hook with rubber lining that ensures the horn will never slip off. A microfiber swab by BG comes with it, as does a Crown Royaltype cloth drawstring bag for holding mouthpieces, reeds, necks and the like-a welcome bit of sax-minded ingenuity.

The MKX is available in two finishes: Antique Brass with black mussel-shell pearl keys and Gold Lacquer with white pearls. —*Ed Enright* buffet-group.com

## **Roberto's Winds Eric Alexander Masterclass DVD** Bunker-Buster of Sound & Improv Concepts

n the new *Eric Alexander Masterclass* DVD from Roberto's Winds, the tenor saxophonist throws what he calls a "bunker-buster" of practical concepts, patterns and exercises at his audience. He provides enough useful "stuff" for intermediate and advanced jazz saxophonists to use in the practice room and on the bandstand for years to come.

Alexander begins the 100-minute group lesson by focusing on sound and demonstrating how to practice playing subtones over the full range of the saxophone one major element that separates the worlds of "legit" and jazz playing. Still in sound-and-tone mode, Alexander suggests methods to incorporate the saxophone's overtone series into practice routines, then segues into ways to practice altissimo tones by approaching them via familiar triads and intervals.

As a chops-strengthening tool, Alexander gives a long-tone demonstration that practically comes from a brass player's handbook. The pain, he insists, is a good thing, and makes for a incredible warmup.

Alexander shifts gears at this point to get into the nitty-gritty of general practice and vocabulary building. He starts with playing the major bebop scale in all 12 keys, getting his audience of saxophonists who have assembled at Roberto's Woodwinds in New York to play along with various arpeggio patterns and licks based on the scale. He takes them through variations on



the dominant-seventh bebop scale as well, and then moves on to making adjustments to add more chromatic notes to the patterns. The material is basic, essential bebop—David Baker workouts all the way—but most important is how Alexander encourages players to challenge themselves by extending these exercises and embellishing them with their own ideas. Alexander wastes no time delving into advanced concepts like triad pairs, diminished scales and tritone substitutions. And he provides plenty of examples and practice material designed to help players learn to memorize and employ the techniques associated with them.

Other Masterclass DVDs from Roberto's Winds include sessions with saxophonists Chris Potter, Joe Lovano, the late James Moody, Dave Liebman and an upcoming release with Lew Tabackin. —*Ed Enright* robertoswinds.com

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#### **Clean Score**

DoReMIR Music Research has released ScoreCleaner Notes, an instant-audio-recognition app that makes it possible for anyone who can play, sing or whistle a tune to have it rendered instantly into proper musical notation. Users can then extend their music into a full score using the notation software ScoreCleaner Desktop. doremir.com





#### **Feeling Odd**

Odd Fedrags: A Guide To Odd-Meter Drumset Grooves (Wizdom Media), written by Italian drummer/educator Massimo Russo with drumming ambassador Dom Famularo, focuses on making drummers comfortable playing in odd time signatures. The book is divided into chapters covering different odd meters based on quarter notes, eighth notes and 16th notes, with an additional section about mixed-meter grooves. A multimedia disc with videos and eight play-along tracks is included. wizdom-media.com

alfredpublishing.com

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#### Sergio Pamies Piano

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Alto Saxophone

University of Massachusetts Amherst Jeffrey W. Holmes Amherst, MA

#### Michael Lagger Piano

University of Music & Performing Arts, Graz Olaf Polziehn Graz, Austria

#### Sam Lauritsen

#### Trumpet

University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music Philip DeGreg Cincinnati, OH

#### **Michael Fenoglio**

#### Alto/Soprano Saxophone

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#### **Greg Johnson** Tenor Saxophone

University of Southern California Thornton School of Music Bob Mintzer Los Angeles, CA

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## Jazz Instrumental Soloist

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**IF THERE'S ANYTHING TO LEARN** from this year's winners of the Best Instrumental Soloist category, it's that a solo is a state of mind.

"You really are the sum of your influences," said alto saxophonist Marc Schwartz, a graduate student at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. "Everything you've ever heard in jazz that you've loved, whether you've practiced it or not, will find a way to come out in your playing. For me, lis-

tening is the most important part of practice."

For each winning soloist the most vital listening happens on the bandstand. "Jazz teachers always talk about 'intentional space,' leaving air in a solo," said pianist Sergio Pamies, a doctoral candidate at the University of North Texas. "I've been hearing about it for the last six years. Only now am I realizing how important it is. Now when

I'm soloing, I look for harmonic targets, and the target I choose determines where I resolve my phrases. But then once I get there, I breathe and listen to what the drummer and the bass player are doing. Now, my soloing is completely different."

Tenor saxophonist Daniel Berkey, a student at New Trier High School, described a similar philosophy on improvisation.

"My entire thought process is devoted to what's going on in the music, and at that moment there's nothing else in the world," Berkey said. "It's just about what I have to say and trying to be clear about it."

Alexander Laurenzi, an alto saxophonist at Briarcliff Middle School, stressed the importance of listening to his band in addition to the greats.

The professors and teachers of this diverse crew are nurturing commitment as well as skill in these young performers. With a group this talented, that can be as simple as tracking them down or as delicate as knowing how hard to push and when to let go.

Pamies met his current mentor Stefan Karlsson through a yearly master class Karlsson taught in Barcelona, Spain, where Pamies was an undergraduate.







"The first time I heard him play, I was convinced I had to study with him," Pamies said. But he wasn't

the only one listening. "[Karlsson] heard me my sophomore year and junior year, and in my senior year he offered me a TA position at UNT to do my master's. I'm still there working on my doctoral studies."

Seventeen-year-old Aaron Shaw, a tenor saxophonist at Colburn School of the Arts, traveled to Brazil while playing with a high school band when he was 12 years old. Shaw described himself as "hooked" once he was forced to communicate using music in the absence of a common spoken language.

Equally lovely was the moment that Nic Meyer, longtime mentor and private instructor to Berkey, admitted that he had nothing left to teach him and instead helped him find a new instructor.

"It felt like he was breaking up with me," Berkey said.

Each soloist described a deep respect and lively appreciation for their instructors and the groups with which they play. But that gratitude is concurrent with an addiction to the spontaneity, the focus and the strange calm that descends when these performers close their eyes and improvise.

"I already know what I'm going to do with the rest of my life," Berkey said.

#### High School Winner

#### Jazz Ensemble

Valley Christian High School Dr. Marcus Wolfe San Jose, CA

High School Outstanding Performance

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#### Panache 8

Corte Madera School Juliet Green Portola Valley, CA

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

#### Panache 7

Corte Madera School Juliet Green Portola Valley, CA

High School Winner

#### Vocal Jazz Workshop

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

High School Outstanding Performances

#### Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Pioneer Valley High School Richard A. Hernandez Santa Maria, CA

Performing Arts High School Winner

#### LACHSA Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Pat Bass Los Angeles, CA

Undergraduate College Winner

#### Synchronicity

West Valley College Michelle Hawkins Saratoga, CA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

#### JazzaNova

Contra Costa College Dr. Stephanie Austin Letson San Pablo, CA

#### Vocal Jazz Ensemble

American River College Dr. Art LaPierre Sacramento, CA

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#### **Jazz Soloist**

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE OUSTANDING PERFORMANCE Alex Weitz, tenor saxophone Gary Keller, faculty mentor

#### Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER Johnathan Hulett, drums Steve Rucker, faculty mentor

Vocal Jazz Group GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER JV1 "Extensions" Lisanne Lyons, faculty mentor

#### Blues/Pop/Rock Group

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER Fusion/Funk Ensemble Steve Rucker, faculty mentor

#### Latin Group

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE Latin Funk Ensemble Steve Rucker, *laculty mentor* 

#### Latin Group

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER Frost Recording Ensemble Gary Lindsay, faculty mentor

#### **Classical Group**

GRADUATE COLLEGE WINNER Henry Mancini Institute Chamber Ensemble Terence Blanchard, artistic director Scott Flavin, resident conductor

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## Large Jazz Ensemble

Ellington Big Band, Tucson Jazz Instiute



## **Motivated by Passion** It isn't rivalries that inspire this year's Best Large Ensemble winners—it's dedication

**INTERESTINGLY, SCHOOLS FROM THE** West swept the Best Large Ensemble category this year, making it clear that jazz is being seriously cultivated left of the Mississippi.

Student musicians discussed the creative factors, camaraderie and inspiration they have experienced in their winning programs. Universally, students had high praise for the dedication, discipline and enthusiasm shown by their individual musical directors.

For the California State University Norridge Jazz "A" Band, community is a key factor. "Everyone is everyone's friend," said trombonist Sean Shakelford. "There's no vibing, no rivalries. It's all love." Trumpeter Lucas Arias found inspiration in director John Daversa's frequent caveat to his group to "find the humanity" in a given piece of music.

For the Ellington Big Band at the Tucson Jazz Institute in Tucson, Ariz., Director Doug Tidaback often invites guest artists to play with the band as a motivation tool so students can interact with professionals and gain confidence. Improvisation is encouraged, but Tidaback believes "matching solo style to the composition is essential to bringing the music to life." He also says that besides frequent practice, "performing is essential to see how we connect to the audience."

Director Dave Hammond of the The Denver School of the Arts said his band would typically rehearse a chart for about four weeks before it was ready to present it to the public. The band's vibraphonist, Henry Chen, speaks to the importance of team camaraderie: "The strongest jazz musicians in the group motivates others, and excites them about jazz. Without passionate peers, some members of the band—including myself—wouldn't care as much about the music."

Marcus Wolfe, the new director of Valley

Christian High School's Jazz Ensemble, from San Jose, Calif., encourages the group "to play a story," words that have made trumpet player Jordan Lief see his own development as a soloist mature. Nathan Tao, another trumpeter in the group, finds inspiration in his fellow musicians. When asked what VCHS does in preparation for competition, alto saxophonist Howard Dietz said, "We don't settle."

According to percussionist Jesse Quebbman-Turley of Brigham Young University's Synthesis Jazz Band in Provo, Utah, playing in the band was a lifelong dream. "Seeing Synthesis was one of the reasons I was interested in playing jazz in the first place," Quebbman-Turley said. Saxophonist Eric Backman says director Ray Smith "pushes us when we need it, but overall we try to be a fairly autonomous group." The group is inspired by the award and is looking forward to performing in Brazil in May.

A repeat winner in the graduate category, UNC's Jazz Lab Band I ocassionally performs music written by its students. This year music was submitted the band composed by either alumni, faculty or through a composer at the UNC Jazz Press. Director Dana Landry "runs the group as a bandleader would run a professional band," said band member Joel Harris. Staying on top of current trends, this band finds inspiration in modern groups like The Bob Mintzer Big Band, The Maria Schneider Orchestra, The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and John Hollenbeck's Large Ensemble, Band member Myles Sloniker said Landry encourages the group "to play with fire and to take musical risks.

Overall, the awards provide much-needed encouragement for students to become great musicians, collectively and individually. —Ralph A. Miriello



Graduate College Winner

#### Extensions

University of Miami Frost School of Music Lisanne Lyons Coral Gables, FL

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

#### Laura Otero & Payawarú

University of North Texas Stefan Karlsson Denton, TX

#### **Gold Company Sextet**

Western Michigan University Duane Shields Davis Kalamazoo, MI

#### Vocal Base

University of Music & Performing Arts, Graz Dena DeRose Graz, Austria

### Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Junior High School Winner

#### Panache 6

Corte Madera School Juliet Green Portola Valley, CA

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

#### Vocal Jazz 2012

Grass Valley Elementary Natalie Wilson Camas, WA High School Winner

#### Room 107

Valley Christian High School Michelle Hawkins San Jose, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

#### **Northern Voices**

Plainfield North High School Jason Hawkins Plainfield, IL

#### Impressions

Meadowdale High School Jeff Horenstein Lynnwood, MA

#### Jazz Choir I

Folsom High School Curtis Gaesser Folsom, CA

Performing Arts High School Winner

#### **MSA Jazz Choir**

Marin School of the Arts Stevie Greenwell Novato, CA Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

#### **BTW Jazz Singers**

Booker T. Washington HSPVA Kent Ellingson Dallas, Texas

Undergraduate College Winner

#### Jazz Vocal Ensemble

Santa Monica College Cindy Bourquin Dicken Santa Monica, CA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

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Mt. San Antonio College Bruce Rogers Walnut, CA

Graduate College Winner

#### **Pacific Standard Time**

California State University-Long Beach Christine Helferich Guter Long Beach, CA

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Graduate College Outstanding Performances

# **UNT Jazz Singers**

University of North Texas Jennifer Barnes Denton, TX

## Sacramento State Singers

California State University-Sacramento Kerry Marsh Sacramento, CA

# Classical Soloist

Junior High School Winner

#### Eugenea Raychaudhu Viola

Holmes Junior High School Angelo Moreno Davis, CA

**High School Winners** 

## Santino Stropoli Violin

The Masters School Dr. Nancy Theeman Dobbs Ferry, NY

# Elena Pinderhughes

Berkeley High School Sarah Cline Berkeley, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

# August Ramos

Double Bass

Brookline High School Irving Steinberg Brookline, MA

Performing Arts High School Winner

#### Ben Batalla Piano

A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts Pedro Hernandez West Palm Beach, FL

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

## Josef Samargia Vocalist

A. W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts

Dr. Susan Atherley West Palm Beach, FL

Undergraduate College Winners

#### Youyang Qu Violin

Western Michigan University Renata A. Knific Kalamazoo, MI

# Joshua Weisbrod-Torres

Texas State University– San Marcos Dr. Todd Oxford San Marcos, TX

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

# Elisha Willinger

University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music Ixi Chen Cincinnati, OH

Graduate College Winner

Jeffery Kyle Hutchins Saxophone

> University of Minnesota Eugene Rousseau Minneapolis, MN

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

#### Nathaniel Lee Tenor Trombone

University of Iowa School of Music Dr. David Gier Iowa City, IA

# Classical Group

Junior High School Winner

## **Advanced Orchestra**

Holmes Junior High School Angelo Moreno Davis, CA

High School Winners

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Wheeling High School Brian Logan Wheeling, IL 20th Anniversary SUMMER WORKSHOP WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY



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Performing Arts High School Winners

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Denver School of the Arts Dave Hammond Denver, CO

# Interlochen **Academy Orchestra**

Interlochen Academy for the Arts Dr. Duilio Dobrin Interlochen, MI

Performing Arts High School **Outstanding Performances** 

# LACHSA Symphonic Orchestra

Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Alan Mautner Los Angeles, CA

Undergraduate College Winners

## **Chamber Percussion** Ensemble

Millikin University **Brian Justison** Decatur, IL

# **Phoenix Saxophone** Quartet

Texas State University-San Marcos Dr. Todd Oxford San Marcos, TX

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

## **Oklahoma State** University Trombone Quartet

Oklahoma State University

Paul Compton Stillwater, OK

Graduate College Winners

# Symphony **Orchestra**

University of Northern Colorado School of Music Russell Guvver Greeley, CO

# **Henry Mancini Institute Chamber** Ensemble

University of Miami Frost School of Music Scott Flavin Coral Gables, FL

Graduate College **Outstanding Performances** 

## Lamont Symphony Orchestra

University of Denver Lamont School of Music Lawrence Golan Denver, CO

# Blues/Pop/ Rock Soloist

Junior High School Winner

## Anson Jones Vocalist

Spence School Marion Saunders New York, NY

Hiah School Winner

# Santino Stropoli Ukulele

The Masters School Dr. Nancy Theeman Dobbs Ferry, NY

High School Outstanding Performances

### Jesse Pitts Drummer

Home-Schooled Student Karmen Hendrv Temple Terrace, FL

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# **Composition Lead Sheet**

# Mastering the Compositional Process

# Young composers lean on influences outside of the musical realm

WINNERS IN THE ORIGINAL COMPOsition—Lead Sheet category share many commonalities when it comes to their compositional process and sources of inspira-

tion, including excellent leadership from their instructors and mentors. This philosophy is especially true for one undergraduate winner, drummer George Heid III.

"I've had the honor of studying with many masters from the time I was a child, but the man who has been most influential on my life and playing is Roger Humphries," Heid said of his former instructor. "Those who know him best lovingly refer to him as 'Dad."

Heid so admired Humphries that he even paid homage to him in one of the first songs he composed, which he titled "Dad." Humphries went on to record the student's composition on an album that featured trumpeter Sean Jones.

Guitarist Luca Ferrara, a winner in the performing arts high school category, noted that teacher Lee Secard "strongly encourages us to compose our own music." Like Ferrara, vocalist Emily Merrell attributed the high quality of her work to the high standards to which she is held by teacher Rosana Eckert.

Compositional ideas come from several different impetuses. From Merrell's vantage point, inspiration can come from sources such as lyrics, melodic content and form, but also from literature, films and other non-musical influences.

"Each time I write something new, I try to write something very different from anything I have written before," Merrell explained. Each student has his or her own



George Heid III



way of arriving at the source of the "aha" moment in composing.

Pianist Esteban Castro, winner of the junior high school category, also nodded to his influences as the foundation for getting his creative juices flowing.

"Listening to records from the greats is very inspiring to me," Castro said. "They are so accomplished and have produced such beautiful music. Every note and phrase is like a treasure waiting to be discovered again and again."

It's sage advice from a musician of any age, especially someone as young as Castro. Like their heroes, the winners are accomplished musicians in their own right with goals in mind for the future; to what degree of specificity is varied.

High school winner Michael Orenstein, a pianist, said that his goal is simply "playing creative music that I like to play and to always be innovating." Heid hopes to catapult current projects that feature his writing, such as his co-led group Elevations, into the next level of performance.

In what is perhaps an effect of Eckert's lasting impact, Merrell wants to teach, in addition to record, tour and perform. "I would love to build a vocal jazz program at a university from scratch," Merrell said.



Performing Arts High School Winner

# **Mike Mitchell**

#### Drums

Booker T. Washington HSPVA Bart Marantz Dallas, TX

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

Zach Marquez Vocalist

> Caleb Chapman Music Caleb Chapman Salt Lake City, UT

#### Matthew Babineaux Alto Saxophone

Booker T. Washington HSPVA Bart Marantz Dallas. TX

Undergraduate College Winner

# Johnathan Hulett

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

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

### Bryan Blowers Guitar

Western Michigan University Tom Knific Kalamazoo, MI

Graduate College Winner

#### Aaron Hedenstrom Saxophone

University of North Texas Brad Leali Denton, TX

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Graduate College Outstanding Performances

## Greg Johnson Saxophone

. Thornton School of Music Bob Mintzer Los Angeles, CA

# Blues/Pop/ Rock Group

Junior High Winner

# Sinaloa Middle School Rock Band

Sinaloa Middle School Jason Eckl Novato, CA

High School Winner

# Last Resort

Glenbrook South High School Gary Zucker Glenview, IL

High School Outstanding Performances

# **Cary-Grove Jazz Combo**

Cary-Grove High School Patrick Whalen Cary, IL

# **SBA Soul Band**

St. Benedict at Auburndale J. Thomas Link Cordova, TN

Performing Arts High School Winner

# **BTW MIDI Ensemble '12**

Booker T. Washington HSPVA Bart Marantz Dallas, TX

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

# **Bluegrass Trio**

Las Vegas Academy Patrick Bowen Las Vegas, NV

# **BTW MIDI Ensemble '13**

Booker T. Washington HSPVA Bart Marantz Dallas, TX

Honors Ensemble Winner

# Lo-Fi Riot

Caleb Chapman Music Caleb Chapman Salt Lake City, UT

# Blues/Pop/Rock Group



# **Bending the Rules**

Winning Blues/Pop/Rock groups aren't defined by boundaries

**DON'T FENCE IN ANY OF THIS YEAR'S** student award-winners of the Blues/Pop/ Rock category. According to these bright musicians, there are no hard-and-fast rules or musical "musts" to adhere to in order to reach their desired destinations.

Though these multifaceted students range in age, musical background and location, there are striking similarities. Jazz is the biggest common denominator, as many of the students are simultaneously in their schools' jazz bands. The commonalities continue when it comes to their acute senses of individuality, dedication to the craft and approaches to bridging the gap between generations.

That's not to say that history doesn't have its place. Jason Eckl, director of Sinaloa Middle School Rock Band in Novato, Calif., gives his students a rock-solid foundation in Chuck Berry and The Beatles before they explore more contemporary groups and eventually write their own tunes. "We just take songs that we enjoy and then rehearse them," said quitarist Sawver Ikeda.

For the students at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla., original composition has driven the Fusion/Funk Ensemble for the last 25 years. Referring to the institutionalization of instruction, director Steve Rucker said, "There's that whole aspect where what we are doing [as educators] is creating rules to make the musicians sound like the musicians who didn't follow the rules."

Keyboardist Parker Grant offered another worthwhile insight from an emerging artist's perspective. "Playing your own music is great, but being able to play [fellow musicians'] music is becoming an increasingly important skill to have for jazz musicians," Grant said. "There is a lot of original music, so if there's any group that really prepares you for the reality of trying to be a jazz musician in the big outside world, this would be the one."

The students in MIDI Ensemble '12 at the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas take their knowledge from all the traditions of jazz and give it a modern twist. "We combine them all into one universal statement that anybody can dance to, that anybody can grow from," said alto saxophonist Matthew Babineaux.

With so many elements to consider in terms of how to administer and assimilate the



historic aspects of the music, how do these bands work collaboratively to make their own musical statements?

"Everyone in the band comes from extremely different backgrounds," said MIDI Ensemble '12 drummer Mike Mitchell. "When everybody sits down and organizes different sections, it creates this in-depth composition."

Being at the helm of such accomplished young players—some of who are touring professionally—is a significant responsibility, but each bandleader trusts his or her students to take what they've learned and make a mark of their own. —Angelika Beener





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DOWNBEAT



Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performances

## **Hooligans Brass Band**

Caleb Chapman Music Caleb Chapman Salt Lake City, UT

Undergraduate College Winners

# **Fusion/Funk Ensemble**

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

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

## Chamber Funk Ensemble

University of Massachusetts at Amherst Thomas Giampietro Amherst, MA

# YamaYama

University of Oregon Steve Owen Eugene, OR

Graduate College Winners

# Magnetband

Musikhochschule Basel Bernhard Ley Basel, Switzerland

# **The Refrigerators**

University of North Texas Brian Ward Denton, TX

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

# **The Sarah Kervin Group**

University of North Texas Rosana Eckert Denton, TX

# Latin Group

Undergraduate College Winner

# Latin Jazz Lab

University of North Texas Jose Aponte Denton, TX

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

# Latin Jazz Project

Millikin University Brian Justison Decatur, IL

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Constantations! Large Jazz Ensemble Graduate College Winner UNC Jazz Lab Band I Dana Landry, Director

# **Classical Group** Graduate College Winner UNC Symphony Orchestra

Russell Guyver, Director

www.uncjazz.com



# **Jazz Education Hall of Fame**

Tom Smith Ningbo University, Zhejiang, China

# **Global Jazz Ambassador**

A GROUP OF CHINESE CHILDREN stands in a classroom, hoisting clarinets, saxophones, trumpets and French horns in the air. Those without instruments jubilantly wave peace signs at the camera. In the middle of the group stands trombonist Tom Smith, who holds his instrument high above the crowd, a content smile on his face.

Smith is this year's inductee into the Downbeat Jazz Education Hall of Fame for his work as a missionary of jazz. A five-time Senior Fulbright Scholar, he was named first full-time professor of jazz studies at Ningbo University in Zhejiang, China, and has spent more than a decade advocating jazz education all over the globe.

Before Smith became China's jazz education savior and started spreading his gospel in elementary schools as well as universities, he spent time teaching jazz students in Romania, assisting at a jazz studies school in Serbia and supporting the genre in South Africa.

Vocalist Karen Gallinger first met Smith while she was on a Fulbright scholarship teaching a jazz camp in Jupanetsi, Romania. Smith was a co-founder of the first jazz program at Tibiscus University and took students to the countryside for intensive jazz study. Before his involvement with jazz in and around Tibiscus, he had spent time developing the Romanian National Jazz Ensemble in Bucharest. According to Johnny Bota, who teaches jazz at West University in Timisoara, Romania, Scott also authored the English translation of Bota's book, *Blues And Jazz In Banat*. Bota sent a letter to DownBeat endorsing Smith for the award.

Aside from teaching the students about the approach to jazz, Gallinger said she and other faculty in Jupanetsi had to confront occasional overpowering cultural differences, adding that playing jazz requires students to develop a thorough knowledge of the music. Some students at the camp didn't understand that approach initially, and when Gallinger ran into lackadaisical pupils, she turned to Smith for help.

"[The students] were not used to the kind of dedication, drive and focus needed to really master this music and play it well," she said. "[Smith] is spreading the gospel of jazz, but also spreading the gospel that this wonderful music requires hard work and focus and drive to get anywhere near being proficient."

One anecdote that speaks to Smith's dedication and energy sticks out in Gallinger's mind. On one of the last nights of the program, the faculty, Smith included, had been out late around a campfire having a good time. The next morning, which came faster than any-



"This is a wonderful honor, not just for the personal validation that comes from knowing you don't work in a vacuum, but for the very pragmatic realization that such accolades provide the needed attention that helps you keep doing what you're doing. Still, you can't build communities without people. I have been blessed to work with some of the very best in Romania, Serbia, South Africa, Montenegro, China ... and of course home base, the U.S.A. It is indeed a blessing to do for a living what you would be doing for free."

-TOM SMITH

one had anticipated, Smith was up and at 'em, blasting his trombone outside every faculty member's door.

"I don't know a lot of people who can do that and still make you smile when you think about it," she said.

Gallinger still keeps in touch with Smith, and the two are even discussing her participation in a vocal workshop in China in the future. Gallinger noted that Smith has already jumpstarted the initiative by teaching students English and jazz at the same time, having them scat common words.

The vocalist paints Smith as a committed educator who never shies away from a challenging situation. Even in Romania, if certain materials didn't show up or something went wrong, Smith would simply roll up his sleeves and look for a Plan B.

Forming musicians who can take a solid base of knowledge and expand upon it, creating a life in music when before there was only an interest, is what Smith hopes to achieve at every stop along his journey. —Jon Ross



## **UM Latin Funk Ensemble**

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

Graduate College Winner

## **Frost Recording Ensemble**

University of Miami Frost School of Music Gary Lindsay Coral Gables, FL

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

#### Laura Otero Colombian Project

University of North Texas Rosana Eckert Denton, TX

### Latin Jazz Ensemble

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Uli Geissendoerfer Las Vegas, NV

# Original Composition - Lead Sheet

Junior High School Winner

#### **Esteban Castro**

"**Painted Face**" The Spring School Oscar Perez Tenafly, NJ

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

#### **Shane Turner**

"UpBeat"

Corte Madera Middle School Juliet Green Portola Valley, CA

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Left: KU Alum Gary Foster Right: Student Winner Clint Ashlock

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### JAZZ ARRANGEMENT

Graduate College Winner Clint Ashlock, "Nebula"

JAZZ ARRANGEMENT Graduate College Outstanding Performance David von Kampen, "The Tourist"

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION – LEAD SHEET Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance Brock Chart, "Northern Lights"

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# **Jazz Education Achievement Awards**



Jamal Dickerson | Hassan Sabree | Nasir Dickerson Camden, N.J.

# Camden's Cultural Renaissance

MANY TEACHERS GO ABOVE AND beyond the call of duty. But when three young teachers want to serve their hometown of Camden, N.J., which ranks as one of the most dangerous cities in the country, that work deserves a whole other level of recognition. For Jamal Dickerson, Nasir Dickerson and Hassan Sabree, the reward comes from paying forward what was given to them.

Sabree and Jamal, both 36, met in fourth grade and have been friends ever since. Sabree, Jamal and his younger brother Nasir, 29, all grew up heavily involved in the community. While in high school, Jamal and Sabree formed the Unity Community Center, a youth organization geared towards helping inner-city youth. "When we went to college, we wanted to come back to our city and teach," Jamal said.

He and Sabree studied music as undergraduates at Morgan State University and later earned their master's degrees from Rutgers University. "We would use music as a vehicle to connect with many of the troubled youth," Jamal said. While Jamal has taught and served as band director at the Creative and Performing Arts High School since 2002, Sabree, who previously taught at Forest Hill Elementary School, now teaches at Camden High School.

Inspired by Sabree and his older brother, Nasir soon followed suit, studying music at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. According to his older brother, their mentor and former Morgan Village Middle School teacher Charles Elliott made Nasir an interesting offer. "He told INasir] that he would wait to retire until my brother graduated to take his position," Jamal said. Once Nasir earned his master's degree and took Elliott's place in 2006, the three of them set a larger plan into action: a vertically aligned music-education program.

Modeled after an educational concept found in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, vertical alignment is the consecutive instruction of one grade level to the next. "What we would do is work together and plan out the curriculum so that we know what we want them to work on from elementary to high school," Jamal said. "We would have the high school students mentor the middle school students. And then we would have the middle school students mentor the elementary school students."

The children who started out with Sabree at Forest Hill Elementary not only became familiar with their instruments but also with one another. "The most important thing was creating personal relationships with the students," Sabree said. "That's where we lose the kids since most of them are not getting a strong influence at home in terms of playing instruments."

According to Nasir, encouragement is crucial to his teaching philosophy. "We deal with students that have IEPs [Instructional Education Plans] or special needs," he said. "They're really geniuses if you take the time to work with them. I don't run from special needs classes. I actually go to them first." Nasir added that he had been classified as a special needs child while in elementary school. His parents were told that he would never learn how to read or write.

In addition to the normal school year, the trio's students take part in an after-school program, a William Paterson University summer camp and bassist Christian McBride's Jazz House Kids organization. They've also formed their own ensembles, including the Little Jazz Giants, who perform all over the country. As a result, students such as Charlene Boone, JoJo Streater and Sadayah Galloway have studied at prestigious universities such as Oberlin College & Conservatory and Berklee College of Music.

Jamal, Nasir and Sabree have helped paint a different picture of Camden, but they are still mindful of its problems. "Imagine what would happen if people were to build relationships in some of our more affluent communities, where the students and their parents are engaged in the learning process," Jamal said.

-Shannon J. Effinger

#### High School Winner

# **Michael Orenstein**

"Task"

Berkeley High School Sarah Cline Berkeley, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

# Nick Lavkulik

"B.E.T. On Yorke"

Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute Ken Hazlett Toronto, Ontario Canada

# Sam Klein-Markman

"Get Off My Lawn" Berkeley High School Sarah Cline

# Berkeley, CA

Liam Werner "S.B.K.N."

Montclair High School Julius Tolentino Montclair. NJ

Performing Arts High School Winner

# Luca Ferrara

"Gathering Of The Minions" Colburn School of Performing Arts Lee Secard Los Angeles, CA

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

### James Francies "Distant Over Time"

High School for the Performing & Visual Arts Warren Sneed Houston, TX

# Ben Hickson

"Purge Original Song" Booker T. Washington HSPVA Bart Marantz Dallas, TX

Undergraduate College Winner

# George Heid III

"Emma Rain"

Duquesne University Roger Humphries, Kenny Washington Pittsburgh, PA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Andrew LeCoche "Tarzana"

Purchase College John Abercrombie Purchase, NY

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# **Jazz Education Achievement Awards**

**Connaitre Miller** Howard University, Washington, D.C.

# **Thinking Melodically**

**IN FALL 2011, A CAPPELLA ENSEMBLE** Afro Blue pushed jazz vocal groups into primetime American entertainment. These Howard University students stunned audiences on the NBC competition program "The Sing-Off" with a jazz version of "A Change Is Gonna Come." The group's optimistic spirit also shone a spotlight on their school and their ensemble director, Connaitre Miller.

Miller's advocacy for jazz harmony singing took her from middle America to the other side of the world before she started teaching at Howard 12 years ago. Along with directing Afro Blue, Miller is also the university's coordinator of jazz studies. Because she did not originally set out to sing jazz, Miller knows that it's never too late to immerse talented singers in the music.

"Someone can sing for me and may not know a single thing about jazz," Miller said, "but I can hear that they have the potential to do this, and do it well if they're interested in putting the work into it."

While Miller describes herself as "a late bloomer" when it comes to jazz, she always was a dedicated music student. She grew up in Junction, Kan., and studied classical piano at Kansas State University. Miller took jazz band as an elective junior year, and began absorbing albums of famous pianists.

"One of the records I got was Count Basie and Ella Fitzgerald's *A Perfect Match*," Miller said. "As I was listening to him to learn how to play piano, I started singing along to Ella."

Matt Betton—who helped start the International Association for Jazz Education—was in Kansas at the time, as was another IAJE director, Bill McFarland. Miller worked with both of them and still draws on Betton's advice.

"Matt had a big thing about people improvising and straying so far from the melody you couldn't tell what tune they were playing," Miller said. "That's something that tends to be common with young players, so he would say, 'Don't forget the melody' and when you're improvising, think melodically."

Miller solidified her commitment to singing over the piano when she began teaching vocal music at an elementary school in Manhattan, Kan., while also serving as the director of the Kansas State University jazz band and an adjunct professor. She wanted to help students who had vocal issues. Miller knew that furthering her own education would be necessary and completed postgraduate work at the University of Northern Colorado's program for choral conducting and jazz pedagogy.

After completing the program, Miller began building the jazz voice program at the El-



der Conservatorium of Music, University of Adelaide, Australia, in 1994.

"The university wanted the singers to be able to do everything the instrumentalists were doing, but they didn't know how to get them to do that," Miller said. "So that's what I had to figure out."

Miller taught the singers to get their ears around pieces the way horn players bring their fingers around instruments. Along with training in arpeggios and scales, she had them transcribe solos to learn accents and articulations. After six years, she returned to the United States and taught on the West Coast at Cypress Community College and California State University, Long Beach.

When Miller began teaching at Howard, she and jazz studies director Arthur Dawkins worked to make the university's vocal ensemble as strong as its instrumental groups.

"I found singers who had top-notch voices, but didn't have any jazz background," Miller said. "I had to go back to the basics and get them all playing piano and reading from a pianist's point of view."

Afro Blue developed during Miller's second semester because she wanted a primary vehicle to teach them the works of Count Basie, Duke Ellington and other jazz masters. Its growing national prominence widens her mission.

"[Jazz] is something that should be taught in the public schools," Miller said. "All of my students are doing some teaching, and they notice jazz blending with other styles of music: hearing jazz chords in contemporary gospel and r&b singers using jazz. Jazz education is the best education they can get because of the ear training, theory and keyboard skills. Everything that you need for any style of music is there."

—Aaron Cohen

# **Brock Chart**

**"Northern Lights"** University of Kansas Dan Gailey Lawrence, KS

# **Devin Wright**

"Imploding Man" University of Kansas Dan Gailey Lawrence, KS

Graduate College Winner

# **Emily Merrill**

"Ondine's Dance"

University of North Texas Rosana Eckert Denton, TX

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

# Brendan Doshi

"Vulture"

Cal State Long Beach Jeff Jarvis Long Beach, CA

#### Laura Otero

**"Nuestra Cancion"** University of North Texas Rosana Eckert Denton, TX

# Original Composition - Orchestrated Work

High School Winner

# Sam Klein-Markman

"Get Off My Lawn" Berkeley High School Sarah Cline Berkeley, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

#### **Pete Miller**

#### "First Flight"

John Jay High School Jeff Richardson Cross River, NY

## **Nathaniel Doucette**

"The Rider"

Williamsville East High School Dr. Stephen Shewan East Amherst, NY

Performing Arts High School Winner

#### Sara Sithi-Amnuai

"Cindy's Song"

Colburn School of Performing Arts Lee Secard Los Angeles, CA

## Jeremy Corren "Mikio Inni Af Peim"

Colburn School of Performing Arts Lee Secard Los Angeles, CA

Undergraduate College Winners

## Killian Williams "Blues For Charles"

Western Michigan University Dr. Scott Cowan Kalamazoo, MI

# Drew Zaremba

"Race To The Finish" University of North Texas Richard DeRosa Denton. TX

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

# **Gene Knific**

"Music For String Quartet & Jazz Quintet"

University of Miami Frost School of Music Chuck Bergeron Coral Gables, FL

# Katherine Lott "String Theory"

Birmingham-Southern College Dr. Rebecca Remley Birmingham, AL

Graduate College Winner

## David von Kampen "Soft Glow, Sharp Edges"

University of Kansas Dan Gailey Lawrence, KS

# Graduate College Outstanding Performances

#### Jennifer Bellor "Midnight Swim"

University of Rochester Eastman School of Music Dave Rivello Rochester, NY

## Michael Nearpass "Durkees Ferry Road"

University of Indiana Jacobs School of Music Brent Kenneth Wallarab Bloomington, IN

# Jazz Arrangement

High School Winner

#### Kane Logan "If I Were A Bell"

Amador Valley High School Mark Aubel Pleasanton, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

## Howard Dietz "Fables Of Fabus"

Valley Christian High School Dave Gregoric San Jose, CA

Performing Arts High School Winner

#### Jeremy Corren "Con Alma"

Colburn School of Performing Arts Lee Secard Los Angeles, CA

1.L.



Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

## James Francies "My Favorite Things"

High School for the Performing and Visual Arts Warren Sneed Houston, TX



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Undergraduate College Winners

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**"Take The 'A' Train"** HSLU Musik Ed Partyka Luzern, Switzerland

# **Gregory Blair**

**"My Cherokee"** University of Massachusetts Amherst Dr Felipe Salles Amherst, MA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

## Jacob Mann *"It Could Happen To You"*

University of Southern California Thornton School of Music Bob Mintzer Los Angeles, CA

#### Matthew Dwonszyk "What A Wonderful World"

Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz Steve Davis West Hartford, CT

## Elijah Samuels "All Of Me"

University of Denver Lamont School of Music Malcolm Lynn Baker Denver, CO

#### Jake Chapman "Over The Rainbow"

Columbia University Steve Nelson New York, NY

# **Alexander Lewis**

"All The Things You Are" Manhattan School of Music

Elliot Mason New York, NY

# **Killian Williams**

"In Your Own Sweet Way" Western Michigan University Dr. Scott Cowan Kalamazoo, Ml

#### Annalise Stalls "Turns Out"

University of North Carolina at Greensboro Steve Haines Greensboro, NC Graduate College Winners

# Clint Ashlock "Nebula"

University of Kansas Dan Gailey Lawrence, KS

# Monica Gastelumendi "Barco Ciego"

University of North Texas Jennifer Barnes Denton, TX

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

### John Summers "African Skies"

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Dave Loeb Las Vegas, NV

# **Marc Schwartz**

"The Two Lonely People"

University of Rochester Eastman School of Music Bill Dobbins Rochester, NY

## David von Kampen "The Tourist"

University of Kansas Dan Gailey Lawrence, KS

## Michael Lagger "Precious Thinas"

University of Music & Performing Arts, Graz Ed Partyka Graz, Austria

# Jeremy Fox

"So Many Stars"

University of Miami Frost School of Music Gary Lindsay Coral Gables, FL

# **Javier Nero**

"Little Sunflower" University of Miami Gary Lindsay Coral Gables, FL

# Sarah Kervin

"Glitter In The Air" University of North Texas Rosana Eckert Denton, TX

# Andrew Janak

"**Take The 'A' Train'** DePaul University Tom Matta Chicago, IL

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# **Ned Bowen**

New Trier High School Nic Meyer Winnetka, IL

Undergraduate College Winner

# **Seth Hochberg**

University of Miami Frost School of Music Paul Griffith Miami, FL

Graduate College Winner

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High School Winner

# **Jackson Higgins**

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Undergraduate College Winners

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Miami International University of Art & Design Sebastian de Peyrecave Miami, FL

# Alejandro Yllarramendy

The Banff Centre Theresa Leonard Banff, Alberta, Canada

# JUDGING CRITERIA

#### **PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**

- 1) Overall sound
- 2) Presence or authority
- 3) Proper interpretation of idiom
- 4) Improvisation or creativity
- 5) Technique
- 6) Intonation
- 7) Phrasing
- 8) Dynamics
- 9) Accurate rhythm/time
- 10) Material

#### **ENGINEERING CRITERIA**

- Perspective: balance of channels; amount and type of reverb; blend (Do all sounds seem to have been performed at the same time and place? Do solos seem natural or do they stick out?).
- Levels: tape saturation or other overload, undermodulation resulting in excessive hiss, consistency of levels, left/right balance, etc.
- 3) Transparency and apparent transient response.
- 4) Special effects: Are they appropriate? Do they add or detract?
- 5) Extraneous noises, clicks, hum, etc. (for a non-live performance, any non-musical sound).
- 6) Professional etiquette: labeling of box for tape speed and format, labeling of cuts, leadering.

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#### JUDGES

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Janice Borla: Vocalist; Director of Vocal Jazz at

North Central College; vocal jazz camp founder. **Don Braden:** Saxophonist; Coordinator of Jazz Studies at Montclair State University; Music Director of Litchfield Jazz Camp.

Jeff Coffin: Saxophonist, composer, educator/ clinician.

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

David Demsey: Saxophonist; William Paterson University Coordinator of Jazz Studies. Les Hooper: Composer/arranger for films, TV, commercials, orchestras and records; clinician. Kevin Mahogany: Vocalist, record label

owner and educator. **Miles Osland:** Saxophonist; University of Kentucky Director of Jazz Studies.

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To apply send a 1-2 page vitae and a 1-2 page proposal describing the research project and how it will involve the Brubeck Collection. Applications will be accepted until July 31, 2013; research must be completed by September 2014. Mail to: Brubeck Collection, University of the Pacific Library, 3601 Pacific Ave, Stockton, CA 95211. Email:trichards@pacific.edu



# Fred Hersch Lives His Dreams at Columbia

n June 10, 2008, pianist Fred Hersch was placed into a two-month long, medically induced coma, where he dreamed of Thelonious Monk, tango dancers and a beautiful concert hall in Brussels. The visions would become *My Coma Dreams*, Hersch's moving stage production that he performed at Columbia University's Miller Theatre in New York on March 2.

Peppered with improvisation and Monkinspired compositions, *My Coma Dreams* featured Hersch accompanied by a 16-piece ensemble that included drummer John Hollenbeck, trumpeter Ralph Alessi, saxophonist Adam Kolker, bassist John Hébert and trombonist Mike Christianson. Presented by Columbia University's Program in Narrative Medicine, the program was written and directed by Herschel Garfein and sung by actor Michael Winther, who portrayed both Hersch and his partner, Scott Morgan.

"These dreams stuck with me for months until I was able to write them down," Hersch said. "I don't usually remember dreams, so this was unusual. As it says in the script, 'I could have dreamt these in the five seconds before I woke up or in the five seconds after I woke up.' You don't just wake up after something like this, pop your eyes open and there you are. Your consciousness takes a while to come back together."

Though it took months of rehabilitation, Hersch continued to compose after coming out of the coma. He and the ensemble, complete with a surreal video presentation, have performed *My Coma Dreams* throughout the United States, often to the medical community.

"It's helpful to see from a medical point of view because intensive care doctors tend to see people as their disease," said Hersch, a longtime AIDS/HIV survivor. "This helps doctors see both sides of the story clearly, in a way that maybe they didn't before. At Miller Theatre, there were people from Alaska and Europe. It has a wide reach. We'd like to do a broader theatrical run, but it's an odd piece. It's too much theater to be a jazz event, and not enough jazz for jazz fans. That's why we call it 'jazz theater."

The locomotion of Hollenbeck and Hébert provides supple support to the pianist's pristine, swinging, stately and beautiful playing, and the paired impact of the visuals with Winther's performance is a revelation. One of the show's most humorous moments centers on Hersch's dream of Monk.

"I am in a cage, 5 by 5 feet, so that I cannot stand straight up nor lie down all the way," Hersch described. "I have to crouch or be in a fetal position. In the next cage over is Thelonious Monk; he is in a similar 6- by 6-foot cage. A man bursts into the room and orders us to write a tune, and the first one who finishes gets released. I am frantically trying to write as fast as I can so I can get the hell out of there. I look up and Monk is taking his time while smiling enigmatically and beatifically."

Apart from the production, Hersch continues to pursue a busy schedule, which includes three upcoming releases: *Free Flying* (Palmetto), a duo with guitarist Julian Lage; *Only Many* (Cam Jazz), a duo with Alessi; and *Fun House* (Songlines), a recording by the Benoît Delbecq/ Fred Hersch Double Trio.

"I am enjoying a lot of career momentum," Hersch said. "I am busier than I've ever been, and [any] ill effects from the coma are certainly gone. I'm feeling good about my playing, about being busy, and enjoying the collaborations and lots of trio and solo work. It's all kind of miraculous." —Ken Micallef

# School Not

Piano Lessons: Keyboardist John Medeski has joined the faculty of Creative Music Studio's 40th Anniversary Workshop, which will take place at Full Moon Resort in Woodstock. N.Y., on May 20-24. Medeski will conduct intensive master classes and conduct jam sessions alongside a star-studded faculty that includes trumpeter Dave Douglas, saxophonist Don Byron and pianist Marilyn Crispell. creativemusicfoundation.org

Cuban Cuisine: Percussionist Bobby Sanabria and the Manhattan School of Music Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra paid tribute to East Harlem and the roots of Afro-Cuban jazz on March 28 at the MSM's Borden Auditorium. Along with new arrangements of compositions by Mario Bauza, Duke Ellington, Juan Tizol and Billy Strayhorn, the program included the world premiere of saxophonist Eugene Marlow's composition "Let There Be Swing!" and trumpeter Kyle Athayde's "Que Viva Harlem!" msmyc.edu

Original Art: The Juilliard Jazz Ensemble performed original, student-composed works during a concert titled "My Point of View, Part 3" on April 16 at the school's Paul Hall. The performers were coached by two of Juilliard Jazz's esteemed faculty members, pianists Xavier Davis and Frank Kimbrough. juilliard.edu

N.Y. State of Mind: The University of Kansas Wind Ensemble premiered *In The Shadow Of No Towers*, a work commissioned by composer Mohammed Fairouz, at New York's Carnegie Hall on March 26. In addition to recording the piece for release on the Naxos label this December, the group reprised the performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lawrence, Kan., on April 2. ku.edu

**Pass Dues:** Frank Potenza, chair of the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music Studio/Jazz Guitar program, has recorded a CD tribute to his friend and colleague, guitarist Joe Pass. The album, *For Joe*, includes the same personnel that Pass had on the 1964 album *For Django*. The recording will be accompanied by a documentary film to be released on DVD. usc.edu

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# Blindfold Test > BY TED PANKEN

# **Allison Miller**

*o Morphine, No Lilies* (Foxhaven), the third album by drummer Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom, reveals her exemplary chops and stylistic breadth, honed by gigs with artists as diverse as improvisers Dr. Lonnie Smith and Marty Ehrlich and singer-songwriters Ani DiFranco, Brandi Carlile and Natalie Merchant. This is Miller's first Blindfold Test.

#### **Ches Smith & These Arches**

"Animal Collection" (Hammered, Clean Feed, 2013) Smith, drums; Tim Berne, alto saxophone; Tony Malaby, tenor saxophone; Mary Halvorson, guitar; Andrea Parkins, accordion, electronics.

Ches Smith? I knew it when he brought in the metal. I love the sound of his drums—what he

does with his gongs, his springs, his different China cymbals—and his composing—and that he doesn't use a bass. That's his new record with Tony and Tim. Ches has spent years developing where he wants to go, and the music he's writing for these players shows him coming into his thing. It's repetitive, with a heavy groove, a big beat; then it loosens and goes elsewhere. He's coming from that deep, open bass drum sound that Joey Baron started years ago, like Jim Black and Tom Rainey do. 5 stars.

#### Lewis Nash

"Tickle Toe" (Stompin' At The Savoy, M&I Jazz, 2005) Nash, drums; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Peter Washington, bass.

Definitely an older drummer. So loose. I loved the melodic playing on the solo, bending the pitches. Playing his heart out, so open and creative. In the beginning, from how the bass drum kept going when it was just drums and vibes, I thought of my teacher, Michael Carvin. 5 stars.

#### Quest

"Paraphernalia" (*Circular Dreaming*, Enja, 2012) Billy Hart, drums; Dave Liebman, tenor saxophone; Richie Beirach, piano; Ron McClure, bass.

It's hard to translate live energy through recording. But despite the strange mix, with the sax so dry and up front, and the drums miked terribly—so much reverb and air around it, the hi-hats sounded like toys—I feel it happened here. The saxophone player sounded like a modern Coleman Hawkins. The looseness makes me think it's an older drummer—it was always in time, but whenever he actually hit a groove, suddenly something else was happening. Billy Hart? [*after*] The recording threw me off. It's his tuning, but not his hi-hat sound. 4½ stars.

#### **Kevin Eubanks**

"Resolution" (*The Messenger*, Mack Avenue, 2013) Eubanks, electric guitar; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums; Bill Pierce, tenor saxophone; Rene Camacho, bass; Alvin Chea, vocals.

Could be Billy Martin, from that drum sound with the tambourine on the snare while staying true to the pocket. The drums sound tiny, like a handkerchief or towel is on the heads, or he was playing the whole time with not quite a stick. With all those technical ideas around the drums during the solo, definitely not Billy Martin. Scott Amendola? Is John Ellis playing tenor? The guitarist has a ton of chops. I like how the bassist is singing the bass line, too. A separate singer? I could have sworn it was the same person. 4 stars. [*after*] The tambourine and tiny sound threw me off; for Smitty to play so minimally in the pocket is surprising.

#### Han Bennink

"Postlude To Kiefer And A Piece Of Drum" (*Bennink & Co.*, ILK, 2012) Bennink, solo drums. I loved how he started with the snares on, but they quickly went off and didn't come back. You could hear his fingertips on the drumhead, and the side stick and mallets. I'm sure he had a piece of fabric on part of the drum. I loved how he stayed on the drum through parts where he whistled—I assume he was whistling—then went to the toms, which didn't last very long, and then ended with an open, fat kick drum. Tom Rainey, Ari Hoenig and Dan Weiss come to mind—but it isn't them. 5 stars.

#### **David Virelles**

"The Executioner" (*Continuum*, Pi, 2012) Virelles, piano; Andrew Cyrille, drums; Ben Street, bass; Román Díaz, percussion, vocals.

I like the bright cymbals. At the beginning I liked the combination of pretty outside piano playing and the hybrid 6/8 Cuban groove, and how during the solo section the drummer sits in that groove with the sidestick before eventually going out of time in a musical way. The first part of the drum solo sounded derivative of Ed Blackwell's sound and ideas, but then he does those long rolls around the kit with space in between. When the congas entered, I thought it was a log drum, perhaps Adam Rudolph and Hamid Drake together. 5 stars.

#### Corea, Clarke & White

"Hackensack" (Forever, Concord, 2010) Chick Corea, piano; Stanley Clarke, bass; Lenny White, drums.

Sounds like an older Roy Haynes, the ride cymbal like skiing across a pond. No? I'm quitting! I loved the loose, creative drum solo, how the drummer went for ideas. The bass and piano were tight with the drummer, very supportive. Al Foster? The drummer keeps quoting Max Roach's "Big Sid." It's someone I know, playing a little different than normal. Lenny White or Jack DeJohnette ... but Jack wouldn't play a cymbal that washy—so Lenny. [*after*] You don't often get a chance to hear Lenny swing, but he's one of the *most* swinging drummers. The place during his solo when he plays time, while playing out-of-time patterns underneath, gave him away. We spent hours doing that in his basement. Was it with Stanley Clarke and Chick? 5 stars.

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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