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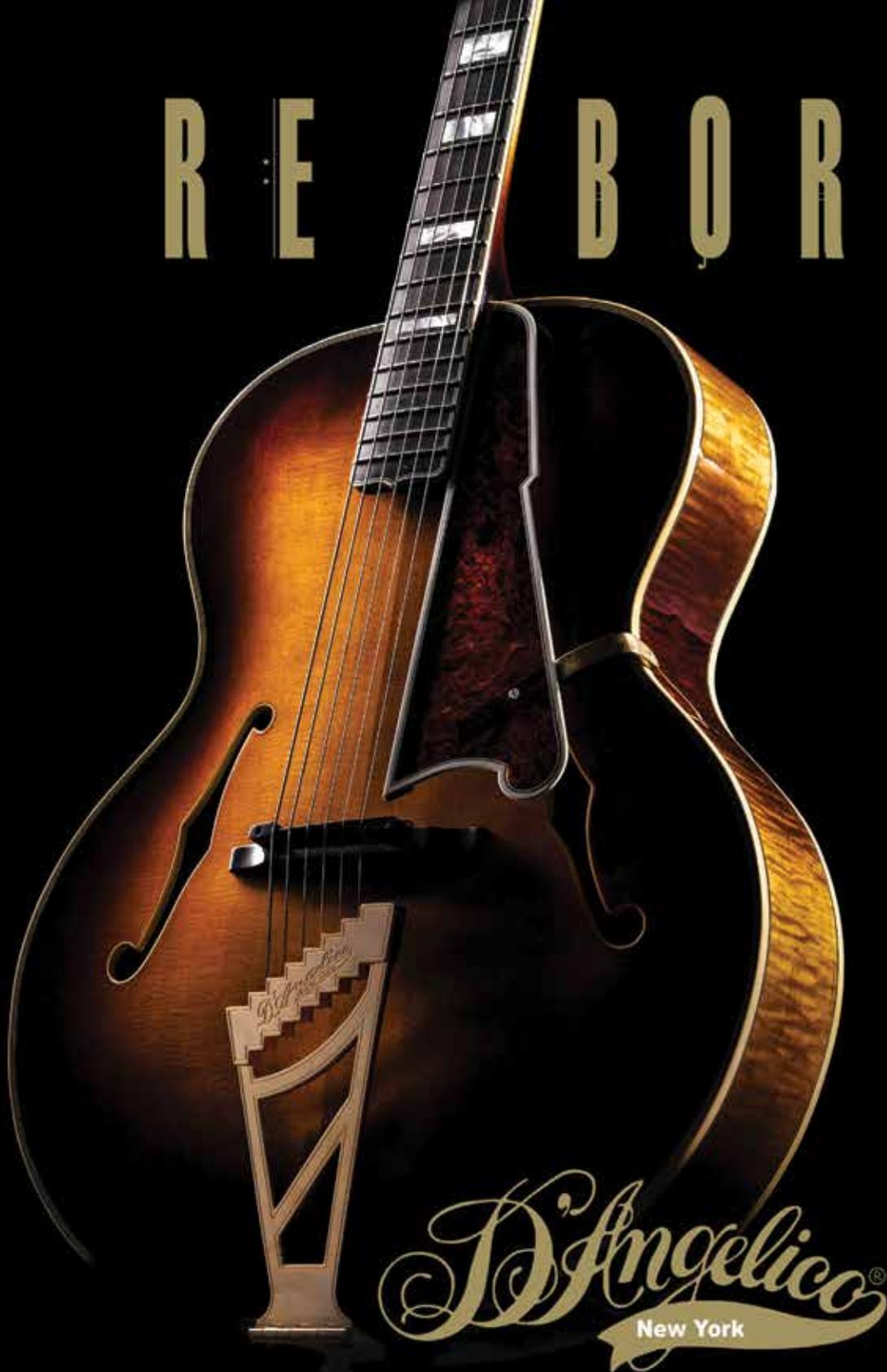
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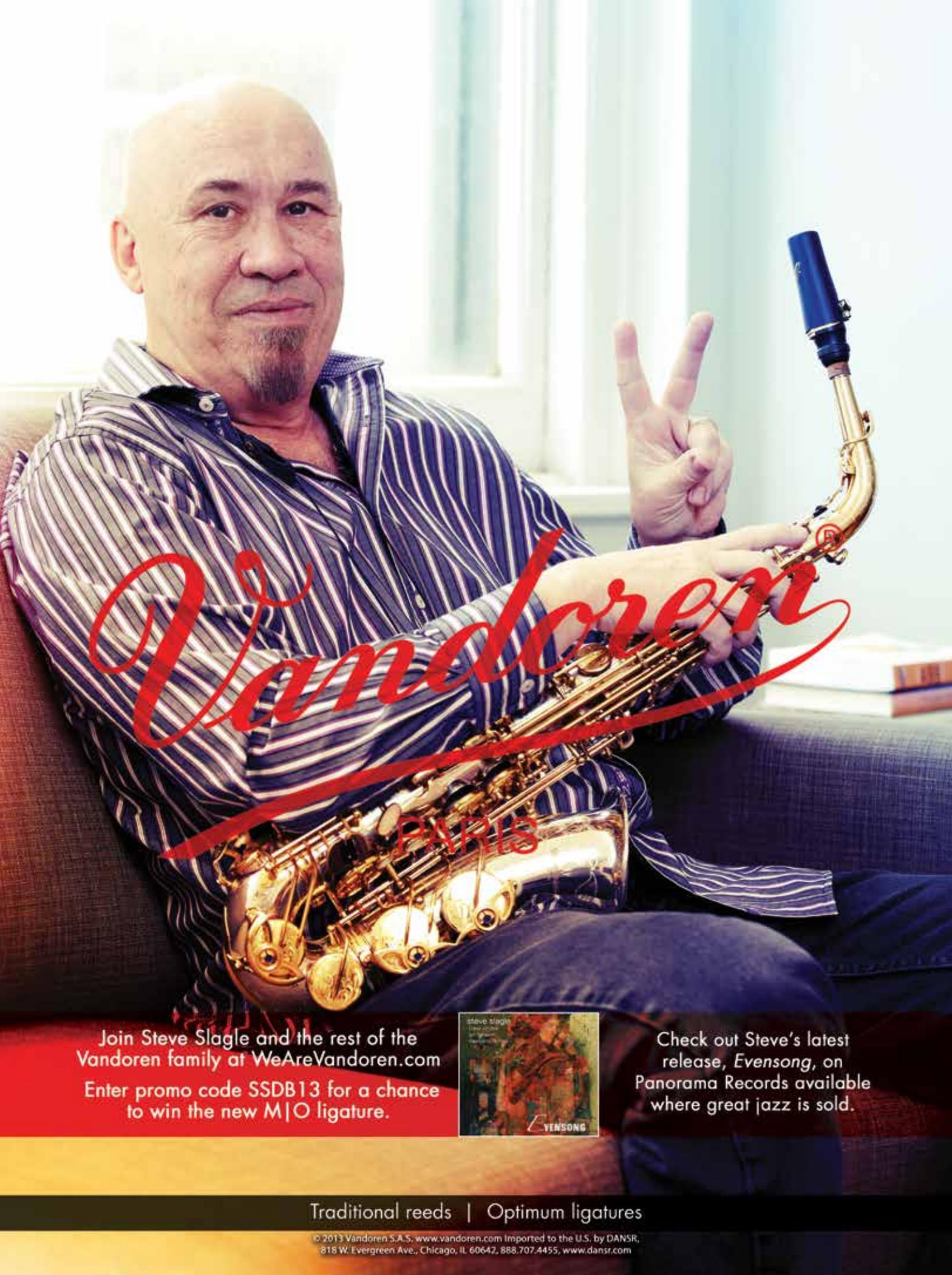
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A photograph of Steve Slagle, a bald man with a goatee, wearing a blue and white striped shirt and blue jeans. He is sitting in a chair, holding a gold saxophone with a blue ligature. He is making a peace sign with his right hand. The word "Vandoren" is written in large, red, cursive script across the middle of the image. Below it, the word "PARIS" is written in smaller, red, block letters.

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Gary Peacock double-bass Marilyn Crispell piano



Lucian Ban / Mat Maneri
Transylvanian Concert

Lucian Ban piano Mat Maneri viola



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The Gift

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Quercus

June Tabor voice Iain Ballamy saxophone Huw Warren piano



Stefano Battaglia
The River Of Anyder

Stefano Battaglia piano Salvatore Maire double-bass Roberto Dani drums

JULY 2013

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BY DAN OUELLETTE

Underlying all of guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel's musical endeavors are his dreams. Not just quaint aspirations or romantic quests, but real, deep-to-the-marrow dreams that have significantly shaped his artistry.



Cover photo and above photo of Kurt Rosenwinkel in New York City by Jimmy and Dena Katz

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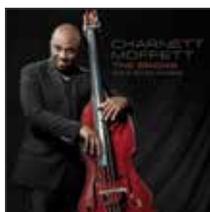
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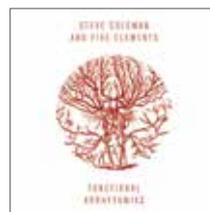
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First Take > BY BOBBY REED



The Best of Both Worlds

JAZZ FANS LOVE BLUE NOTE. OF ALL THE RECORD LABELS IN HISTORY, Blue Note—founded in 1939 by Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff—is one of the most revered. The label is legendary for both its music and the elegant design of its LP jackets (and today, its CD covers and digital artwork). The list of iconic artists who have recorded for Blue Note includes Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Thelonious Monk, Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Herbie Hancock and Dexter Gordon, just to name a few.

The current Blue Note roster is an eclectic mix that has jazz greats such as Wayne Shorter, Joe Lovano, Jason Moran and Terence Blanchard, as well as genre-blending artists such as Norah Jones, Gregory Porter and José James.

In May the label announced a progressive new chapter in its ongoing evolution. Blue Note has formed a partnership with ArtistShare, which was founded in 2003 as the Internet's first fan-funding platform. Using crowd-sourcing to pay for recordings is a widespread practice today, especially among jazz artists. Musicians who have released albums through ArtistShare include Jim Hall, The Clayton Brothers, Chris Potter, Maria Schneider and Ryan Truesdell.

Under the new business arrangement, Blue Note will be involved in the selection of artists, and it will lend its logo and promotional support to the finished album. Blue Note also will offer the potential to "upstream" the artist to the official Blue Note Records roster for future releases.

The Blue Note/ArtistShare plan seems to offer the best of both worlds: Artists will have creative freedom and can retain full ownership of their master recordings. They'll also benefit from the promotional prowess of Blue Note and the instant recognition that comes with the famous Blue Note logo. And artists will continue to foster a strong relationship with their committed fans who, after all, are incredibly important in this scenario because they help fund the recording sessions and other aspects of production.

Truesdell is one of the ArtistShare success stories. In May of 2012, Truesdell released the ArtistShare CD *Centennial: Newly Discovered Works Of Gil Evans*. Truesdell brought to light some previously unheard works that Evans (1912–'88) had written. *Centennial* is an ambitious project that merges the creativity of Evans with the talents of Truesdell, who conducted all the music, enlisting 35 players for the sessions, including Lewis Nash, Donny McCaslin and Frank Kimbrough. In February, a track from the album, "How About You," won a Grammy in the category Best Instrumental Arrangement. Evans (a member of the DownBeat Hall of Fame) wrote the arrangement, so he won his third Grammy posthumously, in addition to the two he won during his lifetime.

Artists like Truesdell make big, bold, intricate plans, and sometimes they need financial support from fans in order to turn a vision into a reality.

As the music business continues to shift in the digital age, there will be even more developments in terms of intriguing models for getting music to fans. We're eager to hear the music that will be generated through the Blue Note/ArtistShare plan, and we're excited about the possibility of other, similar endeavors. Creative freedom combined with smart marketing sounds like an ideal recipe for success.

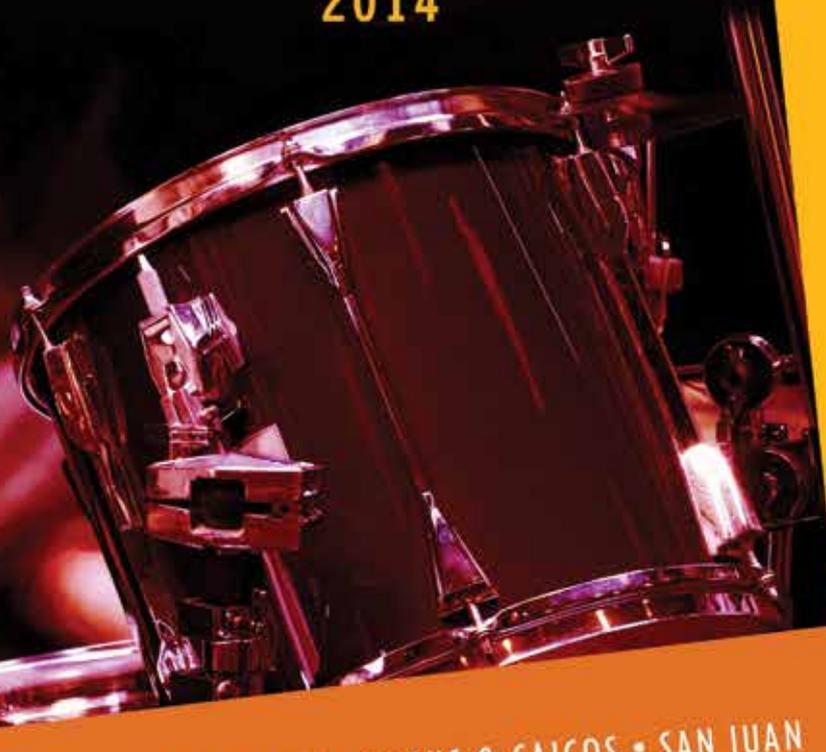
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Chords & Discords

No Surrender

I love DownBeat and have been a faithful reader since 1974. In the last few years, however, I've been dismayed by the Blindfold Tests. The range of music choices has become rather narrow—even rote and predictable—like a solo with few surprises. Great musicians have big ears. They're not just influenced by those who play the same instrument they do, and they certainly don't just listen to their contemporaries.

If you're testing a drummer, then sure, most of the music should be drummer-led. But *c'mon*, throw in a left-fielder on occasion. In a hypothetical Blindfold Test with Antonio Sanchez, for example, I wouldn't want to hear him react solely to other drummers on the scene today. Get creative. What does Sanchez think of Sid Catlett or Buddy Rich? And how about other classic instrumentalists? Miles or Ornette? And what would he say to a track by Jane Bunnett, David Binney or Keith Jarrett?

The Blindfold Test has always been one of my favorite features in DownBeat. Here's hoping that writer Ted Panken and the others who nobly perpetuate Leonard Feather's great idea start mixing it up again. The last thing that a magazine about jazz needs to do is to surrender to a formula.

BEN MURRAY
 EDMONTON, ALBERTA
 CANADA



Charles Mingus, taking the Blindfold Test back when Leonard Feather used an actual blindfold

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

On the Money

Bill Milkowski's feature on Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Max Roach ("Money Jungle: 50 Years After the Summit," June) is like these musicians' *Money Jungle* album itself: worthy of a 5-star rating.

DENNIS HENDLEY
 MILWAUKEE, WIS.

No Strictures

In contrast to Mark Barosko's letter about stories on non-jazz artists ("Harpooning Harper," May), I want to say I'm thankful that DownBeat includes articles on artists from outside the jazz genre. The first issue I received as a subscriber was the February 2010 issue, with a Buddy Guy cover story. Since then, DownBeat articles have taught me to appreciate other genres of music and to learn about the roots that made jazz what it is today. Being strictly jazz or strictly *anything* blocks the path to discovering great new music. If artists such as Christian Scott and Robert Glasper only listened to and studied "jazz" publications, they might never put out innovative albums that give new meaning to what jazz can be. Barosko's purist attitude is not only restrictive but also crippling to the society of jazz. Please keep the diverse articles coming.

JAKOB YANSEN
 MOUNT VERNON, WASH.

Corrections

There were several errors in the Student Music Awards section of the June issue.

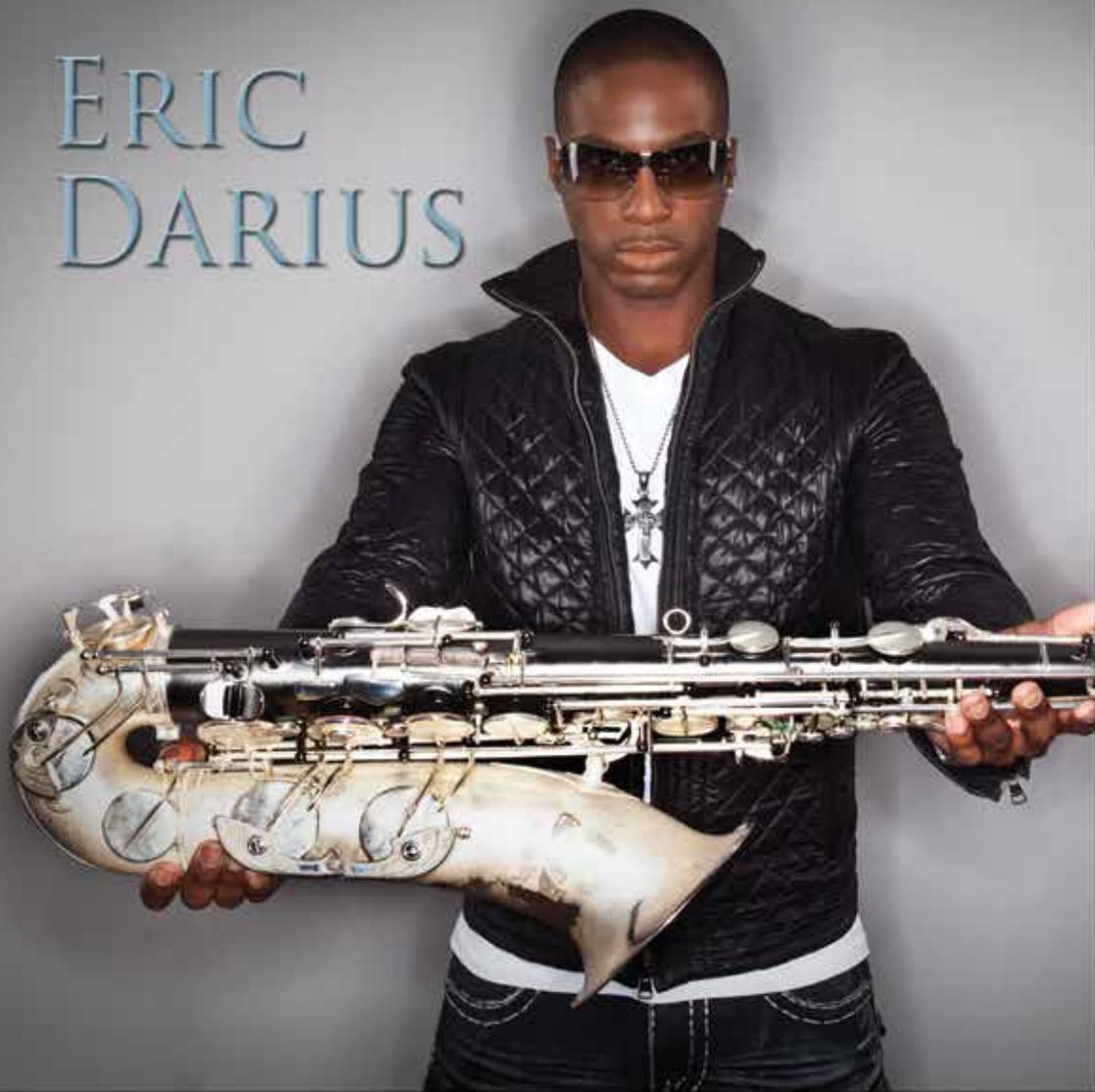
- In the category Jazz Group—Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances, Houston's HSPVA Jazz Combo I under the direction of Warren Sneed and Dallas' BTW Jazz Combo I '13 under the direction of Bart Marantz were our honorees.
- In the category Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble—Performing Arts High School Winner, MSA Jazz Choir, from Marin School of the Arts in Novato, Calif., should have been listed as being under the student direction of Laila Smith.
- In Jazz Arrangement—Graduate College Outstanding Performances, Nathan Tanouye should have been listed as the sponsoring faculty member for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas entry of John Summers, who arranged Michael Brecker's "African Skies." In Large Jazz Ensemble—Graduate College Outstanding Performances, Tanouye and David Loeb directed UNLV's Jazz Ensemble I.

- In the June issue, the review of *Milagre* (Zoho) by Maucha Adnet and Helio Alves included misspellings of both artists' names.
- In the May issue, the review of Steve Slagle's *Evensong* (Panorama), indicated that Slagle plays alto saxophone on the track "Shadowboxing," but he plays soprano sax on it.
- In the International Festival Guide section of the May issue, the dates for the Jazz at the Bowl concerts in Los Angeles should have been listed as July 10–Sept. 11 (hollywoodbowl.com).

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

Have a chord or discord? Email us at editor@downbeat.com or find us on Facebook & Twitter

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Beat

Todd Barkan's Iridium Series Revives Keystone Korner's Community Vibe

Todd Barkan was in his element, a lone figure dispensing aphorisms to a room of jazz fans. No matter that the room was the Iridium and not Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, Jazz at Lincoln Center's über-nightspot, where Barkan had ended an eight-year run as director of programming and de facto presenter-in-chief six months earlier. The message he offered had not changed since he owned San Francisco's storied Keystone Korner back in the day: "Take care of the music and the music will take care of you."

The occasion was an April installment of Keystone Korner Nights, a series intended to revive the spirit of the old club, where, from 1972 until it closed in 1983, Barkan provided both a stage and a sense of community for Miles Davis, McCoy Tyner, Mary Lou Williams and many other leading lights. The Iridium series is Barkan's first major venture since leaving Dizzy's, and if the heat generated on that April night was any indication—by set's end, blues belter Brianna Thomas had raised the packed room's temperature several degrees—the venture is destined for a long run.

Last October, Barkan's situation seemed less certain. Newly separated from his full-time gig at Dizzy's, he said, his feelings were "bittersweet." He said officials from Jazz at Lincoln Center had told him that the organization intended to restructure, an explanation that Jason Olaine, JALC's director of programming and touring, confirmed in an interview. The move, Olaine said, did not signal a basic change of direction for Dizzy's. Rather, he said that "the position was eliminated."

Barely a month later, however, Barkan was back on his feet. Ellen and Ron Sturm, the Iridium's owners, had called to propose a new series—"a godsend," Barkan said of the call—and Keystone Korner Nights was soon in full swing, drawing on an eclectic group of players, ranging from those in late career, like alto saxophonist Lou



Donaldson and drummer Jimmy Cobb, to those on the way up, like Thomas and pianists Christian Sands and Gerald Clayton.

The programs are not adhering to any formula. Some are relatively free-form, including Thomas' set, which featured tunes by Hoagy Carmichael, Duke Ellington and Stevie Wonder. Other programs hew to a theme, such as one scheduled for July titled "The Blues Broads," an exploration of the blues form by veteran singers Dorothy Morrison, Tracy Nelson, Angela Strehli and Annie Sampson.

The shows are not that different from those Barkan programmed at Dizzy's. What is differ-

ent is the ambiance. Dizzy's, with its dazzling views of Central Park as seen from the glass-and-steel Time Warner tower at Columbus Circle, can inspire awe. But the Iridium, a basement tucked beneath a diner the Sturms also own on Broadway at 51st Street, has an earthier vibe—a plus for a series that hopes to recall Keystone Korner, which, for all its distinction as a stage, doubled as a North Beach hangout reflecting Barkan's easygoing manner.

That manner has a way of insinuating itself, and Barkan has been called back to consult at Dizzy's at least once, for a February tribute to Dexter Gordon, a onetime mainstay at Keystone. Still, Barkan has come to terms with, even embraced, his role outside Dizzy's. "It is wonderful," he said, "that I've been able to broaden the ways I've been able to help the music. That's my life's work."

Intent on mining the Keystone legacy, he has produced a new recording, *The Magic Of 2: Live At Keystone Korner* (Resonance), from tapes of solo and duo performances laid down in 1982 by pianists Jaki Byard and Tommy Flanagan. And he is dipping into what he calls a more "elegant" brand of jazz, shaping programs at 54 Below, where a cabaret crowd generally holds sway.

Meanwhile, Keystone Korner Nights is settling in, which Barkan said could have broader implications, refocusing the Iridium more on jazz after a period in which the club, playing on a longtime association with Les Paul, has become something of an all-purpose guitar room. Such a change would help advance the ongoing process of expanding the locus of jazz in Manhattan from the Village to Midtown and the environs of its former epicenter on 52nd Street.

"It's not about shifting the center of gravity," Barkan said, "as much as broadening the base."

—Phillip Lutz

Riffs

B.B. King



Reds, Whites and Blues: Guitar icon B.B. King has released a line of signature wines. King's Signature Collection, which has been sourced from Spain, pays tribute to his all-star "Guitar Legends" concert series in Seville in 1991. The wines first debuted in Memphis and Nashville, Tenn., and will be available throughout the United States and in King's namesake clubs.

Digging Driggs: A photo archive assembled by Columbia Records producer and writer Frank Driggs has been donated to Jazz at Lincoln Center. Driggs, who died in September 2011, left behind eight filing cabinets in his Greenwich Village home containing more than 78,000 photographs, including 1,545 images of Duke Ellington, 1,083 shots of Louis Armstrong and 692 pictures of Benny Goodman.

International Jazz Day Delights in Turkey



UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (left) with Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock during the International Jazz Day opening ceremony in Istanbul, Turkey

Jazzahead! Grows to Global Proportions

THE NORTHERN GERMAN CITY OF BREMEN was once known as the home of Beck's beer and the site of a historic 1973 Keith Jarrett live recording. Now, it's internationally known in jazz circles as the home base of jazzahead!, which took place April 25–28 at the Messe Conference Centre. The self-described "TradeShowCaseFestival," founded in 2006 by artistic directors Peter Schulze and Ulrich Beckerhoff, celebrated eight years of jazz advocacy this year.

"We can proudly say that Bremen is now part of the map of jazz," said Hans Peter Schneider, managing director of the Messe Conference Centre.

Jazzahead! has been growing by the year; what began as an attempt to promote German jazz talent has gone global. Schulze, the former artistic director of the Berlin Jazz Festival, explained that while there have been jazz conventions in Europe previously, the distinction with jazzahead! is its international eye.

"Our observation is that, in times of digital communication, meeting face-to-face

fosters a different energy among all participants," he said. "We feel the strong need of people to connect."

The event was initially a showcase of talent and a symposium on various topics. Since its inception, jazzahead! has grown from 90 exhibitors and 800 industry professionals to nearly 600 exhibitors and 2,500 professionals, including more than 200 festival directors.

"We observed that at other music conventions, jazz always was an initial part [of the event], but over the years a vanishing one," Schulze said. "From the beginning, we wanted to go another way. We put jazz in the center and try to take it from there."

Dozens of 30-minute showcase sets by emerging and bookable artists, broken up into "Israeli Night," "German Jazz Expo," "European Jazz Meeting" and "Overseas Night," also kept the musical pace pulsing. This year's national showcase focused on Israel, following past emphases on Spain and Turkey.

Israeli facilitator and Red Sea Jazz Festival director Dubi Lenz posed the musical question of the week: "What is Israeli jazz?"

"It is like slow cooking," Lenz said. "We are an immigrant nation with 80 different nationalities. Each musician brings their own spices and ingredients to the stew, and jazz audiences are open-minded to what results."

The selection of Israeli showcase artists ranged from vocalist Ilana Eliya, who channeled her Kurdish heritage, to the Yemeni stylings of Ensemble Yaman, the captivating duo Malox and soprano saxophonist Daniel Zamir. For a special off-campus Israeli concert, bassist Avishai Cohen's trio held forth at the delightful '20s vintage concert hall Der Glocke (where Jarrett's famed concert was held).

Among other highlights at the Conference Center venues and the nearby Kulturzentrum Schlachthof (a hip, radically reformed slaughterhouse) were Albanian-born folk-meets-jazz singer Elina Duni and two contemporary-minded piano trios: the introspective Norwegian Helge Lien Trio and the witty De Beren Gieren from Belgium. The irrepressible, swing-infused veteran drummer Han Bennink received the jazzahead!-Škoda-award.

Another fine, buzz-making performance was the refreshing and assured Toronto-based singer Chloe Charles; rumors of a star-in-the-making quickly made the rounds at the convention. The next afternoon, co-director Beckerhoff mentioned that Charles immediately got offers for festival gigs and other engagements after her set. "That's what is great about this format of showcases," he said. "Artists can get immediate results."

Through jazzahead!, Bremen's musical culture is on an upward trajectory.

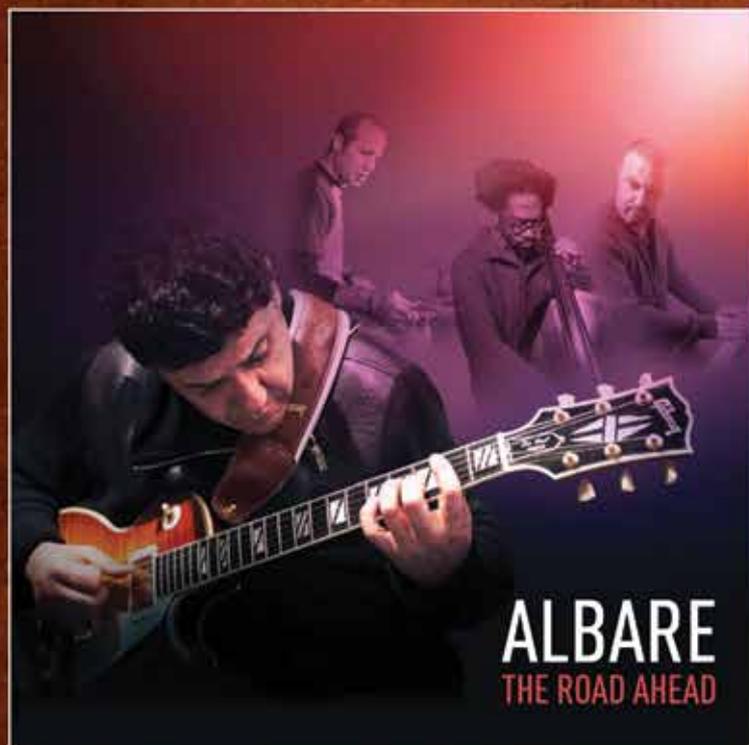
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For his latest CD, Albare fuses his Moroccan roots effortlessly with six-string influences ranging from Wes Montgomery to George Benson, drawing on elements of blues and soul, fueled by infectious grooves.

Albare collaborated with Phil Turcio, the pianist of the quartet, to compose most of the songs on this new album. Four of these came directly from Albare's pen. The lone cover track on *The Road Ahead* — Stevie Wonder's *Overjoyed* — was arranged by Albare and Phil.

Albare
The Road Ahead

enja

ON TOUR

Albare and his fantastic new band will tour throughout the United States beginning June 13th in support of their new album, *The Road Ahead*. Albare is joined by Moroccan pianist Amino Belyamani, Cuban bassist Yunior Terry, and Venezuelan drummer Pablo Bencid.

June 13	Minneapolis	Dakota Jazz Club
June 16	New Orleans	Snug Harbor
June 19	Boston	Regatta Bar
June 22	Indianapolis	Jazz Kitchen
June 23	Portland	Blue Monk
June 25	Los Angeles	Catalina
June 27	Seattle	Triple Door
June 28	Oakland	Yoshi's

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Trombonist Without Borders

TROMBONIST AND COMPOSER

Samuel Blaser was born and raised in the town of La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, and he's lived in Berlin since 2009. But if you scan Blaser's expanding discography, you might think he's American, or at least based in the United States. He credits the three years he spent in the States—starting with the Fulbright grant he earned in 2005 and his studies at SUNY Purchase under John Fedchock, Jim Pugh and Hal Galper—with significantly altering his conception of music.

"New York totally changed the vision I had for jazz and improvised music," Blaser said. "The energy there is unique and really inspiring. My playing and my writing completely metamorphosed."

Blaser, 31, was taken with the trombone at the tender age of 2, picking the instrument out of a local brass ensemble during a parade. Growing up in a musical household, he was exposed to opera, jazz and popular music. His two brothers also played instruments, so he had ad hoc bands during childhood. He ended up in the town's conservatory, where he played in the Swiss Jazz School Orchestra and shared the stage with titans such as Clark Terry and Phil Woods.

Blaser also played with the Vien-



na Art Orchestra and worked in various big bands and New Orleans-style groups, but it wasn't until 2006 that he formed the first band under his own name—a quartet with guitarist Scott DuBois, bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Gerald Cleaver that played on his debut album, *7th Heaven* (Between the Lines).

That disc established the trombonist as a force to be reckoned with, merging post-bop fundamentals with heady exploration and an unerring ear for harmony.

"Those years were amazing be-

cause I got to meet so many great musicians and friends," he said, noting that most of those relationships have carried on. While his current quartet is an international affair, featuring Cleaver, French guitarist Marc Ducret and Swiss bassist Bänz Oester, he maintains a collaborative ensemble with the Brooklyn-based bassist Michael Bates, which just released the terrific album *One From None* (Fresh Sound New Talent).

Blaser said he has always liked adventurous players such as Eric Dolphy, Albert Mangelsdorff and Ray Anderson, "but it was only when I moved to New York that I really showed a strong interest for free music."

As *The Sea* (Hatology), the strong second album by his quartet, vibrantly displays his penchant for extended improvisation within his own rigorous suite-based writing.

"I actually don't really have any specific aesthetic concerns," Blaser said. "My interests in music are manifold, and I would like to keep this open-mindedness as much as possible. In fact, I believe this flexibility contributes to the richness of my playing and writing."

Indeed, his band Consort in Motion employs a much different con-

cept than his quartet. The group's 2011 eponymous debut album featured Morgan on bass, Russ Lossing on piano and the late Paul Motian on drums, melding improvisation with the Baroque music of Monteverdi and Frescobaldi. A second album due this fall from Songlines Records—with Lossing, bassist Drew Gress, drummer Gerry Hemingway and Belgian reedist Joachim Badenhorst—moves the project toward the music of medieval French composers Guillaume de Machaut and Guillaume Dufay.

"Some of the works here are so far removed from the originals that it is impossible to recognize the source materials, while for other works I sought to remain faithful to the scores," Blaser said.

The project that most excites him, however, is a forthcoming solo effort made with Swiss producer Martin Ruch. Blaser cites Mangelsdorff, Conny Bauer, Paul Rutherford and George Lewis for their pioneering efforts with solo trombone music, but he sees his contribution as unique.

"The richness and the variety of different qualities of acoustics of [Berlin's Funkhaus Studio] offers an incredible playground for experimental recordings," he explained. "The characteristic of the recording was to include motion as an extended form of expression." **DB**

Real Gone Reissues Chet Atkins/Les Paul Classic

THOUGH GUITARISTS CHET ATKINS AND

Les Paul have passed on, their camaraderie and friendly one-upmanship are alive and well on the Real Gone Music label's April reissue of *Guitar Monsters*. This is the first time that album has gotten its own CD release (it has been re-released before but always as part of a compilation). Remastered by engineer Mark Wilder, *Monsters* sounds tremendous and is ready for a second take.

"You got great guitar playing, you got a couple of characters—two legends—and the repertoire is reflective of their diverse backgrounds," said Real Gone Co-President Gordon Anderson. "For anybody who loves guitar or those guys in general, it's a hoot."

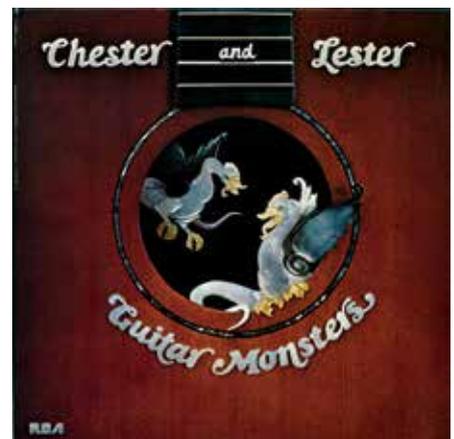
Recorded in Nashville in 1977 and filled out by a rock-solid rhythm section, *Monsters* pits Paul's rippling, exuberant leads against Atkins's more restrained, elegant riffing. But it does so in a variety of contexts, from jazz standards ("I Surrender Dear")

to country ("Give My Love To Nell") to pop ("Over The Rainbow"). Some of the tunes receive unexpected stylistic surprises: The ballad "Lazy River" gets fairly funky in the middle. Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Meditation" starts out among the tumbleweeds of Tennessee but winds up back in Brazil.

"[*Guitar Monsters*] defies easy characterization of its genre," Anderson said. "Is it a jazz record? In some respects it is. But at the same time, it's got some elements of country and old-timey music. It's *sui generis*. You can't really classify it very easily."

Monsters is also frighteningly funny. There's a dirty Dolly Parton joke; Paul lets out a mischievous "Ohhh, yeahhhh!" at the end of "Nell"; on "I'm Your Greatest Fan" the ax-slingers famously praise each other for guitar riffs they didn't write. *Monsters* bassist Joe Osborn remembers the comical atmosphere.

"Les Paul was trying to figure out a part and he looked at Chet and said, 'Play some rhythm,'"



Osborn recalled. "Chet said, 'I'm not gonna play rhythm for you. I'm a legend!' That kind of humor."

In the end, the true allure of *Monsters* lies in the music itself. On "I Want To Be Happy," after the twin guitars play the dancing melody together for the first time, Atkins asks, "That's pretty, ain't it?" The answer is obvious. —Brad Farberman

The Big Horse Rides Away

Paquito D’Rivera Remembers Pianist Bebo Valdés
(Oct. 9, 1918–March 22, 2013)

Bebo Valdés was an in-demand artist during Havana’s vibrant musical life B.C. (before Castro), not only for his extraordinary charisma and personal sympathy, but also for his versatility and technical knowledge. Bebo could be heard leading his jazz trio with Orestes Urfé on the contrabass and the legendary Guillermo Barreto behind the drums, as well as the house pianist for the Armando Romeu Orchestra at the Tropicana, or in recording studios with figures such as Benny

the sidewalk.

In 1997, the Cuban exiled writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante came to Madrid to receive the prestigious Miguel de Cervantes Prize from the King of Spain himself. To celebrate the occasion, jazz promoter Javier Estrella organized a duo recital in the intimate theatre at Circulo de Bellas Artes.

“From the first moment, I knew that the best possible concert to dedicate to Cabrera Infante would be to call two of his favorite friends—Bebo and Paquito,” Estrella wrote. “They would take the novelist on a journey back to his beloved Habana, where they three left behind those sad tigers.” [Estrella alluded to *Tres Tristes Tigres* (literally “three sad tigers”), Cabrera’s foremost novel.]

The previous afternoon, we had arrived from New York and Stockholm [where Bebo lived since early 1960s]. Bebo’s suitcase had gone to Samoa or Timbuktu, leaving him with only the clothes on his back. Luckily, the pianist was always prepared and came as usual, impeccably dressed with his inseparable ocean blue blazer, white shirt and tie. He looked more like an aristocratic Italian gent who had sunburned too much than a Caribbean pianist.

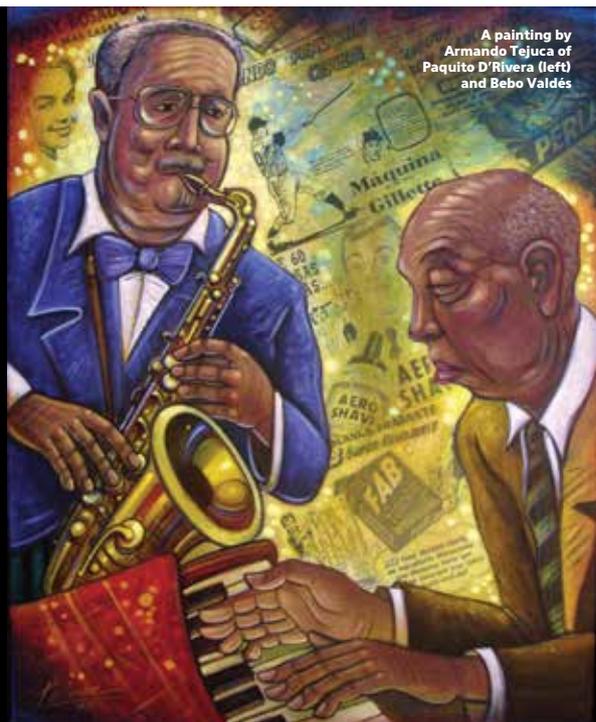
At about 8 p.m., we met at a beautiful apartment overlooking the Parque del Retiro. My friend the writer Carlos Alberto Montaner and his enchanting wife, Linda, had invited us for dinner in the gracious company of Patricia and Alvaro Llosa, wife and son of Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa.

Although the conversation was animated and the food was delicious, who

stole the show but the 4-year-old granddaughter of Linda and Carlos, when with a mixture of ingenuity and devastating logic, she timidly asked her grandfather if “el Señor Bebo was an African King.” We all laughed loud at the little girl, because of the way “El Caballón” (or Big Horse, like his friends affectionately called him), standing all the way up at 6 feet 6 inches tall, must have looked to her—like the king of the world.

Now that he’s not among us, I still can see and feel the noble spirit of that gentle giant, a real King of Hearts. Bebo was wise, sweet, mythical and very simple at the same time. I can also say with humble pride that one of the most gratifying moments in my entire career was when in 1994 I convinced Götz Werner from the German label Messidor to produce *Bebo Rides Again* after an absence of more than three decades from the recording studios.

Having undergone much neglect during that time, Bebo’s unique personality still epitomized, both humanely and musically, that rare elegance of the Cuban musician, coming from a period unfortunately lost in time and space in our impoverished island for the past 50 years or more. **DB**

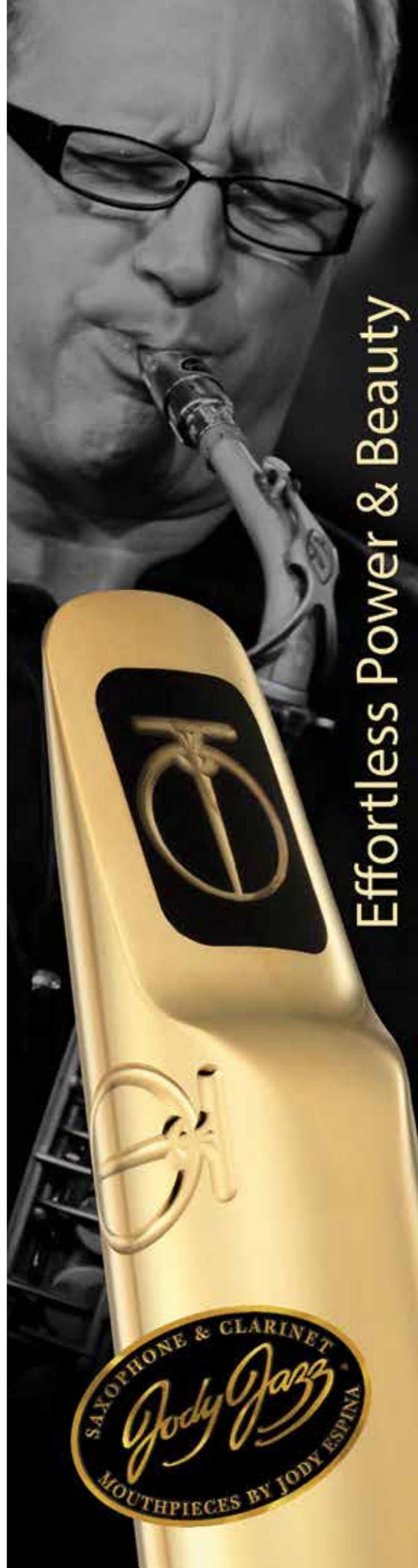


A painting by Armando Tejuca of Paquito D’Rivera (left) and Bebo Valdés

Moré, Celia Cruz or Nat “King” Cole, including a couple of productions for Norman Granz.

The last Cuban image of Bebo I had in my memory was on local TV. Bebo wore an elegant gray silk tuxedo, fronting his big band Sabor de Cuba. Sitting at the piano was a tall, skinny, young black man with a thin mustache and a very serious face. It was his son, Chucho, who would become one of my close collaborators, a very dear friend and one of the most positive influences in my career. It was 1960. After that, I did not see Bebo again until the summer of 1978 from the Carnegie Hall stage when we performed with the Irakere band as part of the Newport Jazz Festival.

Bebo, who was coincidentally visiting his sister in New York, had bought seats in a box, where my mother and father—old friends from his youth—were also sitting. At the end of the concert, Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz, David Amram, Maynard Ferguson, Bruce Lundvall and Mario Bauzá came to greet us backstage. It had been 18 years since the father and son had spoken to each other, and as Bebo told me later, when the opportunity arose, they only exchanged a few words on



Effortless Power & Beauty





Omer Avital

Omer Avital Finds Common Ground

Last year, Omer Avital's vibrant and sensuous CD, *Suite Of The East* (Anzic), graced DownBeat's "Best CDs of 2012" list. The busy bassist/composer/oud player is increasing that momentum with an upcoming studio CD recorded in France and a string of dates in Europe, Asia, Mexico and the United States. Featuring trumpeter Avashai Cohen, reedist Joel Frahm, pianist Omer Klein and drummer Daniel Freedman, Avital's quintet continues to passionately mine the deep interconnections between jazz and the music of the Middle East and North Africa.

He also continues his fruitful partnership with classical mandolin virtuoso Avi Avital, often billed as "Avital Meets Avital." The quartet—including pianist Omer Klein and percussionist Itamar Doari—showcases a different shade of Omer's compositional palette with its chamber jazz/classical/Middle Eastern sounds. This summer and through next year, they'll tour the major classical festivals and will release a recording.

In addition, Omer is the main composer and musical director of The New Jerusalem Orchestra, a 20-plus Israeli multicultural ensemble. "It's a new take on that region's music and the future of that style," he said. Further large-scale concerts in Israel are on the orchestra's docket as well as a U.S. tour next spring.

DownBeat spoke with the itinerant bassist upon his return from Amsterdam's "A Night in Tel Aviv" festival.

We've seen "East meets West" concepts in jazz before but many have seemed somewhat forced, with the elements merely heaped upon each other. The Eastern-ness of your music is intrinsic; the East/West elements can't be specifically isolated.

I don't consider myself a "world music" musician. I have nothing against the term. But I'm basically a jazz musician. I'm not quite a "fusion" artist, either. For me, it's very simple: each musical style has its traditions and that's where all the goodness comes from. Jazz has its wonderful blues and swing, which I've studied thoroughly and am still a student of. Similarly, North African music from each region has its own thing, as does the Middle East. It's an ongoing life journey for me.

My ability as a jazz musician is the key because jazz is probably the most advanced musical art form so far in terms of bringing diverse styles together. I always say that jazz is a "world classical music." Obviously, its roots are American and African-American specifically. But it became a universal art form because it deals with everything.

***Suite Of The East* was recorded following a period of three-and-a-half years spent back home in Israel studying European classical composition as well as maqam music theory, an Arabic microtonal system. Did you apply any of the maqam rules literally to your compositions?**

Not in a strict way. *Maqam* is a mode. In Arabic, it literally means "a place." There are different *maqamat* (plural) for different situations. It's important that each mode evoke something—perhaps connected to a season or a color. It's not like the well-tempered system. In jazz, we may not talk about it specifically but we realize that each key and each mode has a certain quality.

The blues is very microtonal in a way. I'm already naturally using those elements in my writing. For instance, the tune "The Abutbuls" is very close to a Moroccan mode and song form. Jazz musicians can adapt to it all because we play blues and our ears are very flexible.

You said that "Song For Peace" has "Middle Eastern desert phrasing." Can you be specific?

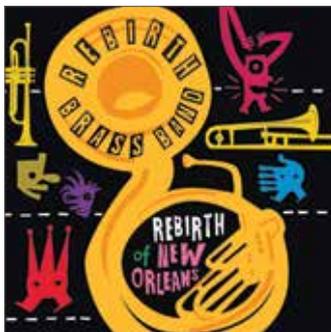
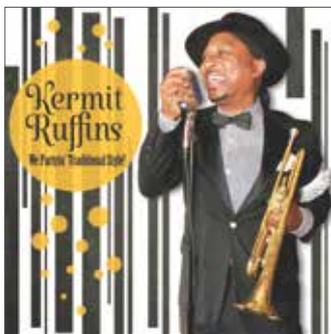
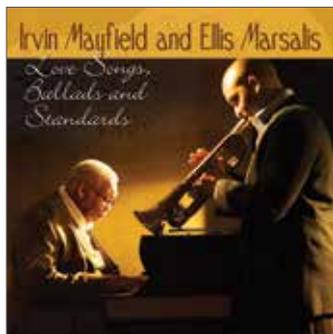
If you know that desert atmosphere, you can hear it in the laid-back groove that Daniel [Freedman] sits on. It's a behind-the-beat feel, a little sloppy, very soulful. The band and I search for the connections. The fact that Daniel truly knows those rhythms and that we have a 20-year musical relationship really helps.

You've stressed that the East/West connection is most importantly about feel rather than theory.

There are so many connections between music and musical feelings around the planet. But not in a cheesy "world music" or "new-age-y" sense. It's in the actual undercurrent: the spiritual and historical connections. Basically you're trying to find a new way of saying the same thing. That's my search.

It's not about searching for more "out" chords or more odd meters. I want to reach out to those cultures that are great, that are mine, and are very connected and relevant to who we *all* are.

In Eastern music there's a word we use: *tareb*. It's the feeling of ecstasy. I often compare Arabic music to blues because it's about feeling. If you don't feel it, nothing has happened. You have to convey that essential feeling to your listener or you haven't completed your task. This music is about the spirit just as jazz is about that feeling: to lift your soul or take you somewhere. —Jeff Potter



Basin Street Records Turns 15

WITH AN IMPRESSIVE LINEUP OF INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED, locally based talent, New Orleans label Basin Street Records celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. Basin Street was born in 1998, a time when music was transitioning from physical to digital formats, but founder and President Mark Samuels has always maintained a star-studded roster and a steady flow of projects.

"I don't know if you could pick any 15-year period in the music industry that has gone through as much change as this last one," Samuels said. "I have watched two-thirds of independent retailers and chains go out of business."

Samuels worked in the business technology consulting and energy fields before devoting himself full-time to Basin Street. The inaugural Basin Street release came about when trumpeter/vocalist Kermit Ruffins' manager, Tom Thompson, approached Samuels about putting out a recording. *The Barbecue Swingers Live* was released in early 1998, with *Los Hombres Calientes* (featuring trumpeter Irvin Mayfield, drummer Jason Marsalis and percussionist Bill Summers) following it up that summer.

When Basin Street Records was launched, Samuels produced 1,000 cassette tapes to accompany the CDs for the label's first two releases.

"Basin Street has always been representative of my music tastes and who I want to work with," said Samuels, a Crescent City native. "I am the A&R department of Basin Street, and I'm a music fan who goes out and hears music."

Though Basin Street's recording artists all have strong ties to New Orleans, there's no limitation in terms of musical style.

"You take any one of our artists, and they cross multiple genres—not one or two but three or four or five," Samuels said. "[Singer-songwriter] Theresa Andersson is on one end of the spectrum and [clarinetist] Dr. Michael White on the other."

The Basin Street roster also includes Grammy winners Rebirth Brass Band; pianists Henry Butler, Jon Cleary and Davell Crawford; trumpeter Jeremy Davenport; The Headhunters (with Summer, bassist Paul Jackson and drummer Mike Clark); trumpeter Mayfield; and the Jason Marsalis Vibes Quartet's new album, *In A World Of Mallets*.

"There's so much talent here that I don't know if I need to reach beyond New Orleans," Samuels said. "But it's also how I prefer to do business—nearby."

Dr. Michael White added that Basin Street is also good for New Orleans' business community. "It promotes the music for both commercial purposes and the general good," he said.

—Yoshi Kato

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CÉCILE McLORIN SALVANT

Jazz as Expression



After an hour of charming conversation with singer Cécile McLorin Salvant in an East Village coffee shop, we hit upon a common enthusiasm—a 1933 performance of Louis Armstrong singing “Dinah,” filmed in Denmark. On what seems like an electric high, Armstrong pushes his players as if he were fronting a punk-rock band, his virtuosity complete but barely containable. Just mentioning this “Dinah” spurs McLorin Salvant’s voice to rise.

“Oooh, that is my jam!” enthuses the vocalist, who turns 24 in August. “The first time I saw that clip on YouTube, it f’ed me up: It’s so out, so wild, so free that you just know something’s happening. The combination of gut-level and sophisticated in that performance is something to aspire to.”

McLorin Salvant—who was the winner of the 2010 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition and who released her first high-profile album, *WomanChild* (Mack Avenue), in May—keeps returning to a dichotomous ideal when discussing the aims in her music. Inspired by the classic blues of Bessie Smith and the contemporary art-pop of Fiona Apple alike, McLorin Salvant is keen to mix the refined and the volatile, the feral and the feminine.

Apily, a highlight of *WomanChild* is “You Bring Out The Savage In Me,” a number that Valaida Snow—a singer, dancer and multi-instrumentalist whom Armstrong called the “world’s second-best trumpeter player”—cut in 1935. McLorin

Salvant’s version, the first on record since the original, is a modernizing tour-de-force of pitch-perfect theatricality. The rhythmic elasticity of McLorin Salvant’s phrasing is a delight, and her intonation is as pure as crystal whether she’s down low or up high. Moreover, it’s an interpretation that turns the racialist “jungle music” stereotypes of Snow’s age inside-out with knowing playfulness.

Elsewhere on the album, the vocalist—backed by pianist Aaron Diehl, bassist Rodney Whitaker, drummer Herlin Riley and guitarist James Chirillo—turns “What A Little Moonlight Can Do” into a sensualist fantasia. Accompanying herself at the piano, McLorin Salvant even enlivens “Jitterbug Waltz” so that its suggestive romance travels beyond era or idiom. The singer wrote the words and music of the title song (one of her three originals on the album), channeling a bit of Abbey Lincoln in order to sum up that juxtaposition of “the sleek and the naïve” she’s out to express.

McLorin Salvant was born in Miami to a Haitian father and a French mother, with the family speaking French at home. Her mom’s album collection (which included Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson and Dinah Washington) was part of her childhood soundtrack, but the young singer only took up jazz after years of classical piano and chorus. Following graduation from high school, she went to France and studied classical voice at a conservatory in Aix-en-Provence, drawn to Baroque repertoire and the tradition of French art song, or

mélodie. She initially sang for the school’s jazz teacher—saxophonist-clarinetist Jean-François Bonnel—as a lark, but his enthusiasm changed her trajectory.

“Bonnel said, ‘You could do this—as a career,’” McLorin Salvant recalls. “It surprised me, but I thought I’d try it, you know, ‘We’ll see’” But Bonnel was “relentless,” she says, giving the singer stacks of records so that she could bone up on the deep tradition and realize her affinity for it.

The work of Bessie Smith was an epiphany. “Bessie became a fundamental part of how I approached singing this music, her balance of vulnerable and strong,” she says. “Her technique floored me—the power, the real blue notes. Bessie was totally self-possessed as a black woman. That inspires me. And what a lot of her songs say about women and sex—following the rules or breaking them—still seems deep.”

With Bonnel’s philosophy of “just do it” in mind, McLorin Salvant made a self-released album with Bonnel’s Paris Quintet. It’s an irresistible affair, including swinging, spacious, virtually scat-free versions of hits by Duke Ellington, Cole Porter and Betty Carter. Much of McLorin Salvant’s individuality stems from the fact that her guru in jazz is an instrumentalist, not a vocal teacher. She explains: “I never had anyone telling me that I had to use vibrato this way or that I had to end my phrases that way. I learned jazz as expression.”

One of McLorin Salvant’s famous fans is Wynton Marsalis, who suggested Diehl as a musical foil. The pianist, who’s just a few years older than the singer, has become a fan, too: “Cécile is as flawless a musician as I’ve ever encountered. She has such an acute ear, grasping so many things in the jazz language right away. And she’s so curious. A lot of people know their Ella, their Sarah, their Billie. But she’s into Edith Piaf and Blossom Dearie, too.”

Another admirer of McLorin Salvant is pianist Jacky Terrasson, a fellow Monk Competition winner. He recruited her to sing two songs on his new album, *Gouache*: French composer Erik Satie’s fin-de-siècle *mélodie* “Je Te Veux” and the touching John Lennon/Yoko Ono ballad “Oh My Love.” McLorin Salvant says, “I have a big pile of songs I save for a rainy day, and ‘Oh My Love’ was one. We recorded it at 1 or 2 o’clock in the morning, the arrangement made up on the spot.”

The singer admits to being “deeply nostalgic” when it comes to art, people and relationships. But, she says, “nostalgia can be dangerous,” adding that she wants to explore more contemporary material as well as write songs that address her concerns about living as a woman today.

“Following all the great vocalists in this music, how do you make it your own? That question can weigh you down,” she says. “You have to keep remembering yourself in the music—express *your* thing. Writing songs is part of that, but I find something of me in the old songs, too. I’ve never danced the jitterbug, but ‘Jitterbug Waltz’ is about how the party’s over but you don’t want to go—and I know all about lingering at a party. ‘John Henry’ is on the album. Although I’ve never worked on a railroad, there’s a black pride, ‘stick it to the man’ element to the song’s story that I identify with. The same goes for the romance in ‘I Didn’t Know What Time It Was.’ The times change, but emotions don’t. That’s a lot of what jazz singing is about.”

—Bradley Bamberger

Players >

JOSHUA KWASSMAN

Transporting the Listener



CHRIS KLEMMENS

Joshua Kwassman says the goal of his music is to tell a story that has emotional resonance. “If it doesn’t move me to my core, I cannot use it,” he says. The composer and woodwind player has a harrowing story to tell on his debut CD, *Songs Of The Brother Spirit* (Truth Revolution Records).

Although wordless, the album has a narrative arc, culminating in the three-part autobiographical suite “The Nowhere Trail,” which traces a traumatic journey Kwassman took during his senior year of high school, along with a friend he idolized. The pair bicycled from Connecticut into the wilderness of New York’s Adirondack Mountains, hoping to reach a spot where their families had once vacationed together.

Trusting blindly in his friend to do all the planning, the teenage Kwassman hadn’t prepared his bike nor trained for the physical challenges of such a rigorous trip. About 80 miles into the first day’s ride and nowhere near their target, the enormity of his mistake began to sink in. They never reached their intended destination (hence the suite’s title). Eventually the pair made it home on blown tires but were lucky to survive.

In a larger sense, *Brother Spirit* describes a

journey from childhood to adulthood. Kwassman, 24, has achieved unusual acclaim for his age, earning two ASCAP Young Jazz Composer awards for two of the songs featured on the album.

Although he thinks orchestrally, Kwassman produces the album’s big sounds with a versatile sextet in which he plays alto, soprano and tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute and melodica. Providing strong support are soprano Arielle Feinman—whose wordless vocals often double Kwassman’s melodica—pianists Adam Kromelow and Angelo Di Loreto, bassist Craig Akin, drummer Rodrigo Recabarren and guitarist Jeff Miles (who plays on one track). Guitarist Gilad Hekselman, a fill-in for an ailing Miles, contributes quicksilver runs that dot the spacious landscapes depicted in the music.

Fresh out of New York University’s jazz program, where he earned a master’s degree, Kwassman has already developed a relatively mature musical identity. He worked through blues, swing and bebop styles during his undergraduate years at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, only to discover that his real gift was for composition. “The New School was really mind-blowing,” he says. “I feel extremely fortunate that I went there. But I was almost lost for the first two years. I was always searching, trying to do what others did, and that failed miserably, but in a good way. I tried to emulate what was around me, as well as transcribe everything I could get my hands on.”

Realizing he wasn’t destined to be primarily a soloist was an epiphany. “That was a thing I struggled with constantly,” he admits. “Because Coltrane was my ultimate hero in terms of playing, and I thought, ‘I don’t think I’ll ever get to that level.’ And I tried and tried. So eventually I stopped worrying about the horn so much and started focusing on the composing.”

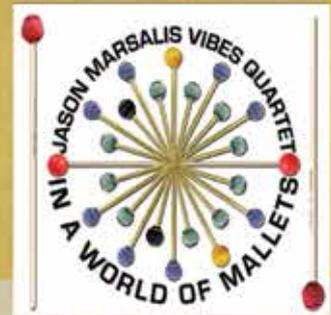
So why does Kwassman want to tell a story with his tunes? “It’s just the way the music felt to me,” he explains. “It felt episodic. I realized that these pieces weren’t just exploring an abstract concept—they had a beginning, a middle and an end. My goal was always to transport you. I didn’t want it to be something you could just groove to, or ignore. I wanted it to be something you paid attention to because it took you somewhere.”

The pieces came out of improvisations, he says, citing the aphorism that “composition is just improvisation slowed down.” On the new album he estimates that “about 97 percent was written out, with maybe 3 percent improvisation.” Isn’t that a high percentage for music that calls itself jazz? “Absolutely,” Kwassman says. “But I think the music is in the spirit of jazz because the musicians are all *killing* jazz players, and they respect me enough that they wait for me to say, ‘OK, you get this, you understand the rules, now you know how to move in and out of them.’”

The album’s raw emotionality—influenced, he says, by Rachmaninoff—evokes a feeling of yearning for the security and sense of belonging that childhood represents. Now Kwassman seeks to build that family vibe in his own group. “Brian Blade’s Fellowship Band has been a huge inspiration to me,” he says. “When I heard them for the first time, it completely changed my idea of what jazz could be. They are such a family up there. It’s a group mentality and something I wanted to achieve with my own group.”

—Allen Morrison

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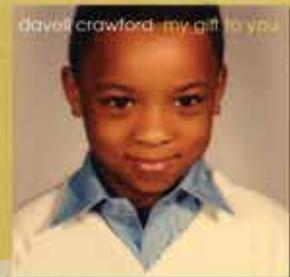
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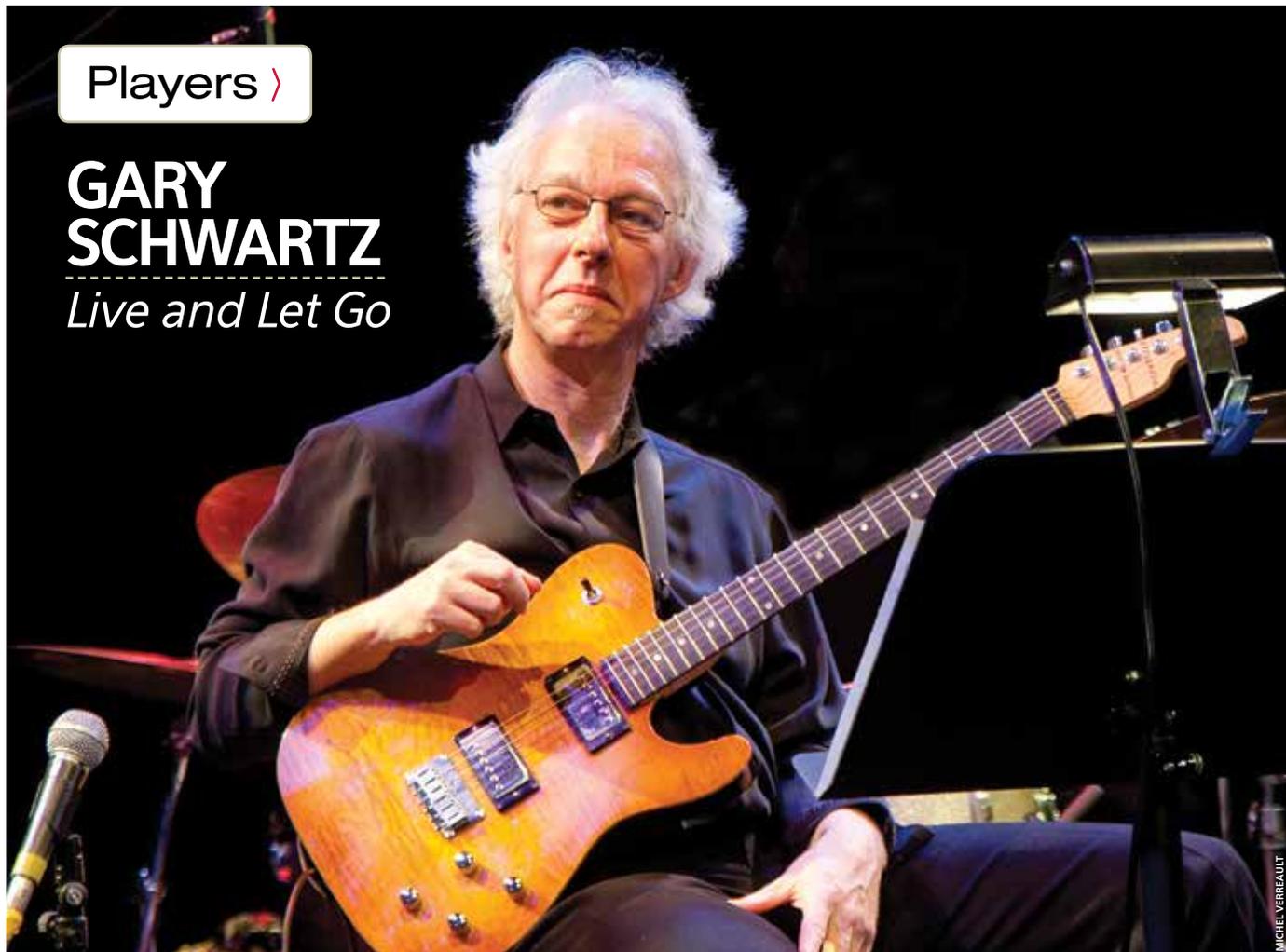
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Players >

GARY SCHWARTZ

Live and Let Go



MICHEL VERREAU

Drawn to an open, “elastic” conception of music, Montreal guitarist and educator Gary Schwartz dedicates his latest project—LETTINGO—to the music and influence of Ornette Coleman. Having assembled an 11-piece band of Montreal musicians several years ago to interpret Coleman classics and present original pieces inspired by the pioneering saxophonist, Schwartz recently released *LETTINGO Live*.

Schwartz, who has taught theory, improvisation, guitar lessons and jazz ensembles in the Music Department of Concordia University since 1979, maintains a busy schedule. He has worked in various groups (organ trios, big bands and pop, blues and funk bands), played with the Montreal Symphony and McGill Chamber Orchestra and led his own projects (Between The Lines, Public Transport Project, Inside/Out).

Schwartz began playing classical guitar at age 10, joined his school band (guitar was not an option, so he picked up the baritone horn and tuba) and spent his teens gigging with various pop and blues bands. Idolizing Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass, by age 14 he was studying transcriptions of Sun Ra and John Coltrane in the pages of *DownBeat*.

A self-declared “harmony maniac,” Schwartz possesses unique, clear tone and articulation. “Miles’ *Four & More*, Bill Evans at the Vanguard, Monk—they changed *everything*,” he said. Schwartz credits Ed Bickert for making counterpoint an integral part

of his guitar playing, citing Jim Hall as another key influence: “I really connected to the way he played the guitar—much more legato, much more guitar.” Schwartz often has been compared to guitarist Bill Frisell, both stylistically and as a leader concerned with a collective dynamic. “[John] Abercrombie, Frisell, [John] Scofield and [Pat] Metheny paved the way for a new guitar era, with players like Ben Monder, Kurt Rosenwinkel and Brad Shepik,” he said. “Things are opening up a lot more.”

It’s been more than 50 years since Coleman (who turned 83 in March) rocked the scene with *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*. Schwartz got into Coleman decades ago, seeing him live for the first time in 1988 at the Montreal Jazz Festival; his idea for a Coleman project began to take shape in 2008, within the framework of a Concordia jazz combo. Following a residency at Montreal’s Théâtre La Chapelle and several well-reviewed concerts in 2009 and 2010, Schwartz received the 2011 Opus Award (highlighting excellence in Québec concert music) in the category Concert of the Year in Jazz/World Music.

The project’s title, LETTINGO, reflects Schwartz’s artistic vision. “Ornette’s approach [is to] let go all the time. That’s how I thought of the name,” he said. “People play better when they go for it. I just read something Charlie Haden said about Ornette: that one of the most important things he learned from him was that there were no ‘bad’ bass notes. If that’s not letting go, I don’t know what is.”

The LETTINGO band (which includes three former students) features a distinct instrumentation of 11 musicians, including two keyboard players and two drummers. A relaxed leader, Schwartz possesses a keen understanding of each player’s unique quality, offering ample space for individual expression. The ensemble convened for the album launch in January at the quaint La Sala Rossa venue (where this CD was recorded), kicking off a performance series supported by the Montreal Arts Council. The evening featured Coleman’s stop-start “Law Years,” some hard swinging on “Broadway Blues” and keyboardist David Ryshpan’s skilled arrangements of “Check Up,” “Latin Genetics” and “School Work,” the latter opening with a signature Schwartz solo.

“Gary’s take on Ornette’s music places emphasis on multiple time feels, and I wanted to play off of that,” Ryshpan explained regarding his lush, Coleman-inspired composition “Hivemind.” Saxophonist Alexandre Côté’s arrangement of another Coleman classic, the evocative “Lonely Woman,” closed the set, and the audience clearly enjoyed the band’s democratic exchanges. Evoking what he called “Ornette’s softer side,” Schwartz’s tender “Between The Lines” was presented as an encore.

Offering more than merely a performance of Coleman’s tunes, Schwartz and his ensemble captured the essence and feel of Coleman’s work in a program of expertly arranged, constantly challenging yet accessible music. —Sharonne Cohen

Players >

HELEN GILLET

Anew in New Orleans

JASON KRUPPA



On a blue-skied afternoon in March, a mass of music fans congregated inside the Marigny Opera House, a crumbling, 160-year-old church in New Orleans. Before them, cellist Helen Gillet and bassist James Singleton made last-minute preparations to record their first duo album. It was a milestone for Gillet, who this year marks a decade-long working relationship with the Astral Project founder, a mainstay on the New Orleans jazz scene for more than 30 years.

“Human existence is welcome,” Gillet announced, referring to the likelihood that the audience would be audible on the album, now titled *Ferdinand* and slated for a September release.

It was an appropriate way to begin the recording. New Orleans’ creative jazz community is defined by human interaction, repeated collaborations and a passion for musical risk-taking. Its communal aspect is essential to its creative output, and no matter how “out” things may get onstage, there always seems to be room for a blues-based motif, some humor or shades of deep emotion. Gillet’s music exudes these qualities, making her an integral part of the city’s improvised music scene.

The room went silent for a beat before Gillet kicked off the first tune with a low, Mingus-like invitation to Singleton. The pair traded riffs, alternating between richly bowed harmonies and fast-paced pizzicato. The sound of the strings—and thumps, squeaks and slaps of hands on wood—soared above the building’s exposed beams.

“Helen is an embodiment of the new spirit of New Orleans,” said Singleton. “She’s also one of the best musicians in town—and that’s saying a lot.”

At a cafe a week before the concert, Gillet sparkled with energy despite a schedule that’s included months of near-nightly performances—either solo, leading her French chansons-inspired Wazozo Zorchestra or improvising with groups like her *Running Of The Bells* trio featuring saxophonist Tim Green and drummer Doug Garrison.

Gillet said she’s “busy,” and that’s an under-

statement. After the Singleton album, she plans to record with the Zorchestra, and a label is interested in recording her Other Instruments band, a quirky ensemble of rotating artists that has included a kora, vibes, washboard, hosaphone and theramin. There was also a Kennedy Center gig on the books.

“This is also totally ridiculous, this time line,” she said. “But this seems to fuel me, these sort of high-pressure, do-it-all-yourself situations.”

Gillet, 34, is no stranger to excelling in new environments: Born in Belgium, she lived in Singapore before finishing high school in a suburb of Chicago. Along the way, she was classically trained, learned the art of Indian ragas and decided that after completing her master’s degree in performance at Loyola University New Orleans, she wanted to pursue avant-garde improvisation.

“I don’t know if *bored* is the right word, but I definitely wouldn’t feel right being limited,” Gillet said, regarding her musical interests.

That type of thinking might explain one of her biggest influences: An early fascination with cellist Ernst Reijseger initially set her on a path of playing more cerebral jazz.

“I wanted [his] level of freedom with the instrument,” she explained. “I was very hard-headed about it for four years. And then I realized I can’t just separate this one aspect of who I am with everything else about who I am. So I started merging them, and I’m much happier and I think I’m a better artist. But I needed to go through it.”

Soon, Gillet began incorporating French songs she’d learned as a child in Belgium into her repertoire, and she started writing highly personal lyrics for her original compositions. Gillet credits her adopted hometown for “molding her” by encouraging her to take risks and find her own voice.

“I had heard something about New Orleans,” she recalled, looking back on the last 10 years of her career. “It will spit you out right away or it will welcome you with open arms. I got lucky.”

—Jennifer Odell

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Kurt Rosenwinkel *Dreamer*

It's Sunday afternoon, and Kurt Rosenwinkel is in his East Side Manhattan hotel suite still basking in the glow of the previous two evenings at Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival, a six-string extravaganza that took place at Madison Square Garden on April 12–13. The proceeds of the sold-out shows benefited the Crossroads Centre, a drug treatment facility in Antigua that Clapton founded. In addition to stars such as B.B. King and Jeff Beck, some up-and-comers and less well-known guitarists also took the stage. Rosenwinkel was among them.

By Dan Ouellette 🍷 Photography by Jimmy & Dena Katz



Kurt Rosenwinkel in
New York City

Wearing one of his trademark brimmed hats (not a baseball cap, he stresses) and a casual combo of red flannel shirt and worn blue jeans, Rosenwinkel, 42, talks about his friendship with Clapton as well as his latest release, the double-CD set *Star Of Jupiter*, recorded with his steady quartet: pianist/keyboardist Aaron Parks, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Justin Faulkner. Rosenwinkel's 10th album as a leader and his fourth on the Word of Mouth Music label, *Jupiter* captures him delivering a compelling summary of his musical life, with its manifold modes of expression. At turns meditative, reflective and hot-grooved, the album exudes radiant energy as well as luminous transcendence. The title track is a gleeful jaunt fit for a rock arena, while the waltz "Heavenly Bodies" slowly spins out as an 11-minute muse of soft-toned guitar lyricism and piano sprinkles.

In 2000, Rosenwinkel told me that every period of growth in an artist's career must go through some stage of instability: "You start off not knowing what you're doing, then you organize things so they become ordered. Then when that order becomes static, you have to break it up to create another state of instability, which in turn throws you back into chaos. That's what continuing on to the next step is all about."

For the past seven years a resident of Germany, where he teaches at the Jazz Institute of Berlin, Rosenwinkel has certainly experienced a fair share of chaos, especially with the *Jupiter* project.

But he's ready for even more in the near future, including an improvisation-infused solo album based on the concerts he's been doing alone, a five-years-in-the-works adventurous ensemble album titled *Caipi*—which he likens to his 2003 Q-Tip

co-produced album *Heartcore* (Verve)—and a rock 'n' roll album. "All the rock songs are written and recorded with me singing lyrics for the first time," he says. "But we have other fish to fry first. I have so much music that I want to get out there. Piles and piles. I need to clear the deck."

Underlying all of Rosenwinkel's endeavors are his dreams. Not just quaint aspirations or romantic quests, but real, deep-to-the-marrow dreams that are resonant, poignant and revelatory. Two dreams in particular, which occurred more than two decades apart, have significantly shaped his artistry. "Dreams have always been a big part of my life," he says. "Certain powerful dreams have been important. They've given me information. They've shown me life lessons."

Our conversation begins with Rosenwinkel vividly recounting a mid-'90s dream.

Dream No. 1: The Voodoo Priest

It's the city at night and I'm in a limo. It pulls up to a banquet hotel, where all these other limos are arriving. I get out, and everyone—the super rich, the super famous, the super celebrities—is going to a gala dinner. And I'm thinking that this is such rich bullshit. Inside I hear something. It's Bobby Hutcherson playing the vibraphone down a small flight of stairs. Oh man, I thought, This is great. My attention was drawn away from the dinner. Then I see a pygmy dude, and he's holding vibraphone mallets, too. But he's playing in the air, and he starts edging Bobby off the vibraphone. The pygmy is striking the mallets in the air, but the vibraphone is still playing. He works the music up in a crescendo until it's a feverish pitch and then bang! A shot of flames flies out of his chest and catches the banister on fire. Holy shit! And I'm the only one who notices it. I get up and go toward the bathroom, which is down a hallway. On my right, there's a room that is like a dark, dilapidated New Orleans bedroom with a jet-black, bare-chested voodoo priest in a bed. He has a candle on his chest. I keep walking toward the bathroom. I walk back and look in, and he motions for me to come into the room. I kneel down next to the bed. He says, "Come here, I want to tell you something," then continues, "What you saw when the flames were shooting out and catching the banister on fire—that's not the hard part. The hard part is increasing your energy little by little every day, so that in the end things like that are inevitable and just happen. Now, that's the hard part."

DownBeat: Does this dream still manifest in your life?

Kurt Rosenwinkel: Absolutely, with all the things that have happened to me in my career. They're a result of this long-game dedication. Crossroads is a good example of the flames shooting out of my chest.

The newspaper amNewYork previewed the lineup of the guitarists that Eric Clapton had assembled for the benefit shows, with "the stars" being Jeff Beck, John Mayer and Buddy Guy, and the "keep an eye on..." column with your name included with Sonny Landreth and Gary Clark Jr. How did you get on this bill?

About a year ago, Eric texted me and asked if I would be available. I replied, That could be arranged . . . [He and I] do a lot of texting back and forth.

When did that start?

Eric came to see me play at the Village Vanguard last year. He had seen me play in the documentary *Icons Among Us: Jazz In The Present Tense*, during a segment where I was playing with the Brian Blade Fellowship at the Newport Jazz Festival. Clapton saw it on the television in England, and that's when he got interested in my music. He investigated my albums and eventually made it a point to see me live.

Did you know he was coming to the Vanguard?

Yeah, his people called ahead to request seats for him and [producer] Russ Titelman. They paid for the tickets. So, I thought, Wow, cool. It was a surprise and a real treat to meet him. We talked before the set and then he hung out backstage after. I immediately felt very comfortable with him. We had some kind of chemistry that feels like we're friends. He's totally cool and down-to-earth and straight-up and honest. No trips. He's very unassuming. Sometimes you have to remind yourself how big he is and how he's such a fundamental root of rock music . . . Even Jimi Hendrix went to see Clapton in London. Jimi knew all his songs and wanted to play with him.

How did your relationship develop?

We kept in touch and shared music. He gifted me a playlist on iTunes of some of his favorite tunes. There were 20 songs, including a wonderful version of "The Folks Who Live On The Hill" by Peggy Lee, and I absolutely fell in love with "Let's Not Forget" by Curtis Mayfield. I sent him a track from Kevin Eubanks' *Opening Night*, which is one of my favorite albums. I included two Billie Holiday Decca tracks, "Deep Song" and "No More," plus a George Russell piece, "Odjenar," with Miles and Lee Konitz in the band. I also sent Felicia Sanders' version of Kurt



Weill's "Speak Low," which is a rare gem I found by looking through record bins when I was younger. So our friendship started very simply, with two musicians sharing with each other. He treats me like a brother. We have a soul connection.

During the Crossroads rehearsals and after the shows, did you spend much time with Clapton?

Eric and I talked, and he showed me one of his Stratocasters. I said that I had been thinking about getting one. He asked me if I was going to get a new guitar or if I wanted one of his [laughs]. The next day at soundcheck his guitar tech asked me for my address. Why? "Because we're going to ship you one of the Strats." Really? Wow! The next day Eric texted me and asked which one I wanted: the Porsche Atlas Gray or the Ferrari Gray. I looked the colors up, and they're car paints. So I chose the Ferrari



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Gray because it's darker. He explained that he likes fast cars. He said, "When I bought my Ferrari, they gave me extra paint. So I had Fender make the guitar using Ferrari paint." So it's a one-of-a-kind guitar.

What was it like to play?

Well, the first time I ever played a Strat was at the grand finale of the second Crossroads evening. During the concert, Eric asked me to come to his dressing room and he gave me his Strat. He signed it for me and told me if I were ever homeless and needed some cash ... [laughs]. The guitar just oozes quality. It really is a Ferrari of a guitar. It's going to open new sonic territory for me.

At Crossroads, were you intimidated playing before such a huge crowd and among such all-star guitarists?

I've played at outdoor festivals where there'd be 18,000 to 20,000 people, but the largest indoor space I think was 5,000 to 6,000. So 18,000 at the Madison Square Garden was a big difference. But I didn't feel nervous and overwhelmed by the others. I enjoyed every minute of it. It was a thrill, a deep experience. I wasn't uncomfortable, because I feel comfortable with what I'm doing as a musician.

There was also the spirit of camaraderie that emanated from Clapton. The whole experience felt so cohesive from start to finish.

Were there any guitarists you linked up with who were special?

I shared a dressing room with Sonny Landreth and we talked about guitars and robotic tuners, and his style of playing the slide. I also saw Derek Trucks backstage and he said he's a fan. He told me he'd sneak into the Vanguard to hear me play.

For the finale, Gary Clark Jr. and I had to share an amp. I would take a solo, and then hand the cable to Gary. I could see Clapton looking over at us. After the show, he came over and said, "That's so sweet, sharing an amp. That's what it's all about." It was a good moment that tied everything together, like a good story.



LARGER THAN LIFE: Guitarist Allan Holdsworth (left) and Kurt Rosenwinkel onstage at Madison Square Garden on April 12

LARRY BUSACCA/2013 GETTY IMAGES

In Feb. 28, 2012, Eric Clapton arranged to attend a Kurt Rosenwinkel show at New York's Village Vanguard during his weeklong engagement at the historic club. Backstage, the guitar god met the new jazz guitar star and offered some words of encouragement. "He said he liked my sound and then he put his hand on his heart," recalled Rosenwinkel. "That meant a lot to me. If there's anybody who knows guitar sound, it's Eric Clapton."

Slowhand was so impressed by Rosenwinkel's six-string prowess that he invited him to perform at the Crossroads Guitar Festival benefit concerts, held on April 12–13 at New York's Madison Square Garden (MSG). The event featured blues elders such as B.B. King and Buddy Guy, youngbloods Gary Clark Jr. and 14-year-old phenom Quinn Sullivan, and country stars Keith Urban and Vince Gill, as well as Jeff Beck, Taj Mahal, John Mayer, Jimmie Vaughan, Derek Trucks, Warren Hayes, Robert Cray, Keb Mo and Sonny Landreth.

Rosenwinkel opened his 25-minute set on

April 12 with the beguiling jazz waltz "Heavenly Bodies" from his 2012 album *Star Of Jupiter* (WOMMUSIC), quickly establishing his legato lyricism with this blues-hungry crowd. Next, he introduced special guest guitarist Allan Holdsworth, who joined the band on a scintillating romp through "Gamma Band," also from *Star Of Jupiter*. For Rosenwinkel, it was a personal milestone. "Allan, for me, is the apex of linear language and harmonic language on guitar," he said.

"Allan has invented his own linear language but it's also very relevant to anybody who is trying to deal with the technical challenges of John Coltrane's music. He has figured out how to play the guitar on a level that is comparable to, technically and in terms of vocabulary, what Coltrane achieved on his instrument. For me, he transcends any idiomatic context. The things that he's been able to achieve can inform anybody on any instrument. So it was a great honor to share the stage with him and wonderful just to hang with him and develop a friendship. When a guy like that actually respects

what I'm doing, that's really encouraging to me. He even asked me to play on his next record."

As Holdsworth left the MSG stage to wild applause, Clapton joined the band for a moody take on the jazz standard "If I Should Lose You"—which Rosenwinkel had recorded on 2005's *Deep Song* (Verve)—before heading into Tommy Johnson's "Big Road Blues," giving Kurt a rare opportunity to wail on the pentatonic scale. While some of the audience may have been perplexed by Rosenwinkel's jazzy fusillades, they definitely grabbed onto that earthy shuffle blues.

"The whole experience of playing at the Crossroads Guitar Festival had a big impact on me," said Rosenwinkel the following week from his home in Berlin. "Just sharing the night with all those great, great blues guitar players. It stirred something in me that doesn't get activated very much in my life. Now I'm going back and listening to Son House and Bukka White and feeling the potency of the blues, and guitar blues especially. I can feel the significance of the event resonating within me." —Bill Milkowski

Dream No. 2: The Star of Jupiter

Everything is true,' the voice rings out like the voice of God. Then the world and everything in it starts to dissolve and fall downward in streaming lines of colors and schmear textures. Reality is falling away through space and time. In the midst of this I'm handed what looks like an astronomical instrument. I'm told this is the star of Jupiter—the key to lead us out of the cycle of forms, illusion, fear and perceived enemies. As the world falls away, I ascend to the celestial heavens, where I find myself sitting upon a throne among an infinite number of thrones extending in both directions forever. Suspended among the stars and planets, the view is spectacular. A golden lion with its back toward me stands guard. It's like a statue that then comes to life, turns its head back and winks to me. Now I'm in a state of peace like I have never known.

Did that dream cause you to wake up?

I shot up in bed. In that state of peace, I woke up but my body didn't. It was almost like a death peace. I was in Tel Aviv. The Jupiter story is not over with the dream, which is what makes it so wild.

Is that what inspired the album *Star Of Jupiter*?

In a way. I didn't have the dream and then say, I'm going to make an album about it. The songs were already written. But the recording of them was definitely influenced by the dream.

So how does Jupiter factor in?

At first, I thought, What is the star of Jupiter? It's not a star but a planet. So I Googled it and came across an article by an astronomer about how Jupiter relates to biblical events. I read that Jupiter was almost a star because it had such a large mass. When you see it in the sky, it's like a star. It also does something strange. It moves retrograde at rare times. Supposedly it happened when the three magi were led to Bethlehem and the infant Jesus. They saw a sign. And the astronomer figured Jupiter was in retrograde then.

And the lion?

I was in a car the next day, and I looked out and saw the brightest star I've ever seen in my life. Could it be a star? Or a helicopter? Or a drone? It seemed too bright. I was with a friend who is an orthodox Jew. I told him my dream, and he said the lion was the Lion of Judah. I later found out that is another name for Jesus. So, I'm freaking out, and I'm still seeing the star—this time when I was home in Berlin.

How did the star of Jupiter lead to the album?

I flew to New York to record it. I played for a week at the Vanguard, and I went to Smalls to hang with [club founder] Mitch Borden. And I saw the star again. And Mitch said, "That's Jupiter." So I was thinking this is some kind of deep communication. This is what led up to the recording, and I realized what I needed to be doing creatively. That's when I knew the title of the album. The last part was when we went upstate to Clubhouse Studio in Rhinebeck, New York, to record the album. We arrived at 10 p.m. and I walked out to the bluff of this beautiful field, and there's Jupiter. Then a meteor streaked all the way across the sky slower than I've ever seen. It had a green flame at the tip of it. And I was thinking, Is this a Spielberg movie?

So how did the dream influence the sessions?

We had an incredible recording experience. It's what the star of Jupiter represents—the key to lead us out of the cycle of forms, illusion, fear. It's about transcending the mundane plane of worldly existence and going into the celestial sphere where you can survey the cosmos. I felt a sense of destiny and help from the universe.

You start the album off with a gleaming number, "Gamma Band," and end it with the equally luminous title tune. Is this the star at work?

I think so. "Gamma Band" is a wonderful song I wrote off the cuff when I had an ensemble and didn't have anything for them to play. It's got repetitive ostinatos. I like starting with this because it sets the tone of the album. I like the way it greets the listener to the journey, which goes through many different feelings and places. *Star Of Jupiter* has every part of who I am as a musician. I'm very happy with that. What could be separate aspects of my music are all unified here.

You also tip your hat to influences such as pianist Elmo Hope on the swinging, happy-go-lucky "Mr. Hope" and Mitch Borden on the bebop-infused "Homage A'Mitch."

Yeah, I love Elmo's phrases and rhythms and songwriting. "Mr. Hope" is for him. There's a peace to it. As for Mitch, he's a perennial presence in my musical world. He'll always be a true hero for me personally and for so many people. That time in the '90s when my band played every Tuesday night was a foundation for my growth as a musician. And the scene: I learned so much from all the musicians there during that time. Mitch was our patron saint. The content of my song has a lot of Smalls in it. It's a bebop house that also welcomes all idioms of jazz, which for me ranged from the very experimental to the very rocking. But the bebop tradition is the center, the root of my music. It's a magical language, not a dogmatic, objectified music.

The only song that's not new is your speedy run through "A Shifting Design," which is from your 2001 album, *The Next Step*. Why revisit it here?

I wanted to re-record it to show the different perspective on the song. It's not a better version but a completely different version. For example, it was originally recorded with an alternate guitar tuning, but this is in regular guitar tuning. And it shows the hard swing aspect of the band, which I wanted to be represented on the album.

DB

Band Chemistry

BELOW IS A ROUNDTABLE INTERVIEW WITH Kurt Rosenwinkel and the musicians who recorded *Star Of Jupiter*: keyboardist Aaron Parks, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Justin Faulkner. The interview was conducted by Dan Ouellette.

Kurt, is there a song that you feel particularly close to on *Star Of Jupiter*?

Rosenwinkel: "Spirit Kiss" because it has a quality that I haven't heard lately in a song. It's a very rare song—and I'm speaking about all the music I've ever heard, mine or someone else's. The song is a living thing created by the four of us playing off each other. Each person brings everything to the table, expressing themselves and making the song something that is completely something else.

Parks: "Spirit Kiss" feels like a special song. It coalesced in a way that hadn't happened before we went into the studio, and we were lucky enough to capture that moment.

Revis: Structurally, it's more of a tone poem. It's a song that cuts through the bullshit. You have to either make music with it or fail abjectly.

Faulkner: "Spirit Kiss" is one of my favorite songs on the recording. Playing it allowed each of us to tell our stories in a sincere and honest way. The entire song makes me feel like we are in a shipwreck and stranded on an island after swimming to safety. As the solos progress, we are finding ways of surviving and advising each other on where we should turn as we explore.

Band chemistry seems to be an important factor on *Star Of Jupiter*.

Rosenwinkel: The band has a chemistry that is rare in my experience. The interrelation of all aspects of music is flowing and is understood by all equally, even as each member has his own unique perspectives and gifts. Aaron, who's 28, and Justin at 22 are extremely talented and advanced young players, wise beyond their years. Eric has the wisdom, experience, intelligence and deep musical gifts that bring a soulful foundation to the band. Eric and I share what will always be called old school—a fierce dedication to the fundamentals of touch, sound, groove, harmony and aesthetic beauty regardless of considerations of style, trend or commerciality.

Revis: Kurt and I got to New York around the same time in the early '90s. We ran around a lot of the same circles but didn't really know each other. We started playing together in the early '00s, and I'm very glad we can dance on this plane together. I'm looking forward to experiencing where the combined personalities of this group will lead.

Parks: I started playing in bands led by Kurt six years ago. This band's chemistry is getting better as we play together more. Everyone in the band is working hard independently—evolving and maturing. The record came out well, but the way the songs are sounding now when we play them is different.

Faulkner: The entire [*Star Of Jupiter*] session was a spiritual journey. Kurt told us about his dream, and for me it was just a dream at first. Then soon after we started touring again, it began to make more sense. I have no idea why, but there was a spiritual awakening in the band that made me wonder about... the power of that dream.

DB

Bobby McFerrin LYRICAL & SPIRITUAL

By Allen Morrison *✎* Photography by Adam McCullough

For years he's sung mostly songs without words, or in improvised languages of his own invention, as if mere words were inadequate to express what was in his head and heart. Now, 11 years after releasing an album titled *Beyond Words* and after many albums in which formal lyrics were the exception, Bobby McFerrin has returned to singing the type of songs in which the lyrics are as essential as the music, with words that express his deepest yearnings: spirituals.

On the exhilarating new album *spirityouall* (Sony Masterworks), he has reinvented seven classic Negro spirituals and composed five new songs. There is also one cover, a moody, searching version of Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Released." The songs, McFerrin writes in the album's liner notes, "are based in my Christian faith but acknowledge and reflect the spirit of *YOUALL*, wherever your particular faith and journeys may take you."

The album represents another significant departure: After many discs in which McFerrin expanded his musical palette to incorporate styles beyond jazz and pop, including classical, Middle Eastern, African and Indian, his new offering is, in the truest sense of the word, Americana. It embraces folk songs, country blues, swampy blues rock, and church music of both the African-American and Anglo variety. And there are two bluegrass-flavored tunes, including "Rest," an irresistible hoe-down in 11/8. Despite plenty of jazzy grooves and changes, as well as some typically inventive and acrobatic scat-singing, this album is not about jazz. It's about the songs—the faith, courage and wisdom embodied in the spirituals, which are, after all, a uniquely American invention. McFerrin explores this tradition with joy and reverence.

The album also honors the legacy of his father, the great baritone Robert McFerrin Sr., the first African-American to sing a leading role at the

Metropolitan Opera House; he also dubbed the singing voice of Sidney Poitier as Porgy in Hollywood's version of *Porgy And Bess*. In 1957, the elder McFerrin recorded *Deep River*, an album of classic spirituals that he learned from the famed choral conductor Hall Johnson.

Bobby McFerrin has previously recorded and performed with Chick Corea, Yo-Yo Ma and Yellowjackets, among many others. But for this project he has assembled a band he can call his own, with the help of arranger and co-producer Gil Goldstein, who plays keyboards and accordion throughout. Actually there are two bands, one on the album and one for the tour, both led by Goldstein and both impressive. On the recording, the group includes Esperanza Spalding, who sings and plays bass, alternating with Larry Grenadier; Ali Jackson and Charley Drayton on drums; and Larry Campbell, who delivers exceptional performances on acoustic and resonator guitars, fiddle, pedal steel, mandolin and cittern.

The touring band, meanwhile, includes Goldstein and other top-shelf players: David Mansfield on assorted strings, Armand Hirsch on acoustic and electric guitar, Louis Cato on drums and percussion, and the 30-year McFerrin veteran Jeff Carney on upright bass. McFerrin, who started out in 1979 as a singer/pianist, plays keyboards on one track and, as the spirit moves him, in concert.

Before McFerrin arrived on the scene, there were jazz singers, there were singer-songwriters, there were scat singers and there were band singers. But when he rose to prominence in the early '80s, his four-octave range and uncanny ability to sing all the parts of a tune simultaneously—bass, melody, harmony and percussion—instantly put him in a category by himself. Still, he was mostly a jazz phenomenon until 1988, when "Don't Worry, Be Happy" became the first a cappella song ever to reach No. 1 on the Top 40 charts, winning three Grammys, including Record of the Year. What may have struck some initially as a kind of jazz vocal novelty act—the beatboxing, radio dial fiddling, backwards guitar effects, muted trumpet, gargling, and kazoo sounds, all of which were in evidence on his 1984 solo tour de force *The Voice*—was just the initial flash of an exploding talent that has since then radiated more profound musical invention and joy in singing.

Goofing around at a soundcheck at Long Island's Adelphi University recently, the athletic McFerrin, 63, bounds around the stage like a kid in a playground. Dressed in jeans and a charcoal sweater, he looks like a man in his forties. A grandmaster of microphone techniques, he scats and makes various sound effects (cars, trains, toy trumpets). He uses his torso as a drum, frequently striking his upper chest just below the clavicle—a



Bobby
McFerrin
onstage at
the Adelphi
University
Performing
Arts Center
in Garden
City, N.Y.,
on April 16

trademark percussive technique that accompanies his vocals. Warming up with the great gospel song “Every Time,” he interrupts himself to emit a high-pitched bark at a little dog sitting in a visitor’s lap in the front row. He goes back to scatting, his fingers plying imaginary holes in the microphone.

Backstage in his dressing room, eating a plate of strawberries and kiwi slices, he reflected on his musical journey, speaking in quiet, even tones so as not to tax his voice before the nearly two-hour concert he would deliver.

DownBeat: Spirituals are obviously a very important part of your childhood and musical identity. Tell me about your relationship with these songs, and with the Bible.

Bobby McFerrin: My father had a deeper relationship with them. But I love these pieces, and I love what these songs say. They say it simply, beautifully. Sometimes it’s very difficult to sing them

because a lot of them came from slavery. But a song like “Every Time I Feel The Spirit” is a wonderful reminder for me to pray. Sometimes I use them as prayers. And when I sing them, I *mean* them. I’m not just being a singer singing a song, trying to entertain people. In fact, the difficulty for me is trying to get the focus away from me and onto the pieces. Being a performer on stage, everybody’s looking at you and thinking about you as a performer. A lot of times, they don’t think about what you’re actually singing about. So my difficulty with these pieces in a concert setting is making sure that God gets the glory and I don’t.

There’s always a special moment for me in every performance that’s unique and authentic. The spirituals are authentic pieces of music. I can remember when I was a kid, probably about 8 years old, my father was studying these spirituals with Hall Johnson, who did arrangements of some of them. His grandmother was a slave. So he

heard them sung in the genuine renditions: how the phrasing went, the pronunciation of the words, stretching and singing over the bar lines. I can see Hall Johnson leaning over my father at the piano and teaching him how to sing these pieces. So my father got the authentic sounds down into his voice, the authentic feeling. He sang them with deep, deep feeling. He meant every single word that he sang. He always ended his recitals with a set of spirituals. I went to many of them, and at some of them my mother was my dad’s accompanist.

It’s hard to find the recordings of your father singing spirituals, but his singing on the soundtrack of *Porgy And Bess* was magnificent.

Best baritone ever, as far as I’m concerned. Rich tone, very round. Whenever I work with choirs, I always go for his sound. I try to get them to sing with that rich, warm tone that my father had.

As a child, did you try to emulate that sound?

No, I don’t think I ever tried to sound like my dad. In performances I do sing in an operatic voice from time to time, just as a form of entertainment—sing the baritone, the soprano.

Did you have a feeling that the world of opera wasn’t your world?

Oh, I knew it right off. Instinctively, I just thought, “Oh, this is lovely, it’s wonderful, my dad’s great at it, but it’s not for me.” I knew that in my teens. I started playing in bands when I was 14, and got into jazz when I graduated from high school.

What kind of songs were you playing between ages 14 and 18?

We’d do Top 40 things at high school dances; anything that was on the radio. We played “96 Tears” [*imitates organ riff*] “Dee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee.” We played “House Of The Rising Sun” by The Animals; we even did Bob Dylan’s “Like A Rolling Stone.” I was in three bands. I had my own jazz quintet, The Bobby Mac Jazz Quintet. And two rock bands that played the Top 40, *The Viscounts* and *The Fascinations*. I’ve been a working musician since I was 14 years old; we’re talking almost 50 years.

Did your parents have an opinion about you becoming a musician?

Just be a good one.

You had the idea for this album of spirituals 20 years ago.

Oh, at least 20 years ago. But at the time, I wasn’t thinking about including the spirituals. I was thinking basically about doing original material of mine. I did different experiments, going into the studio with various musicians to try things out. But it just never panned out.

Why?

It seemed like something was blocking it, or some other gig opportunity would come up and mess with the timing. And also, I was just experimenting—I think I wasn’t quite focused enough to complete the idea of [what became] *spirityouall*.

When did you get the idea to include the old songs,



Making *spirityouall*

Bobby McFerrin’s *spirityouall* is an album of spirituals old and new. Co-produced by the singer’s manager/producer Linda Goldstein and arranger/keyboardsist Gil Goldstein (no relation), the album contains inventive arrangements of historic Negro spirituals—such as “Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”—alongside McFerrin’s original compositions, like “Gracious” and “Jesus Makes It Good.” McFerrin, who sings much of the material in his soulful baritone register, went into the studio with a brilliant, handpicked acoustic band that covers a wide variety of Americana styles, including blues, folk and Appalachian fiddle sounds.

Gil Goldstein recalls that McFerrin had very specific ideas about what he didn’t want. “We met—Bobby, me and Linda—and did a quick session together about a year before we recorded. I had already done a couple of arrangements. I played one of them for Bobby, and he said, ‘Um ... I don’t think so. Too jazzy. This is not a jazz record.’ I said, ‘I just thought these would be nice changes for you to solo on.’ And he says, ‘I don’t want any nice changes to solo on—that’s jazz. This has to come more from the material.’ He also wanted everything to sound ‘made up.’ I had to arrange with an open-ended spirit so that it could seem improvised.”

A mainstay of the *spirityouall* band is multi-instrumentalist Larry Campbell, famous for his work with Bob Dylan, Levon Helm and many others. McFerrin remembers an experimental first session with the band. “There’s a solo piece I wrote called ‘25:15.’ It’s something I came up with when I was trying to memorize this Bible verse. Most times, when I’m trying to memorize anything, I’ll sing it. That’s how ‘Don’t Worry, Be Happy’ came about: I saw this phrase while walking down the street one day in New York, and I just started singing it. Same thing. So I went into the studio and started singing [sings], ‘You know my eyes are ever on the Lord.’ Larry was there, and his ears are incredible—he just picked it up right away. For folk and blues, he’s the guy.”

The Recording Academy, which has given McFerrin 10 Grammy awards, might have a difficult time categorizing *spirityouall*. Linda Goldstein says, “With the previous album, *VOCABULARIES*, the [Recording Academy] didn’t know where to put it. The New Age people wanted it, and the jazz people wanted it. Eventually they decided to put it in ‘Best Classical Crossover.’ This one could be [categorized as] Americana, it could be Folk. He is all music and every music. And he has extraordinary freedom. With a lot of jazz singers, you can sort of map their licks. With Bobby, you never know where he’s going to go. He loves to play with expectation and surprise.” —Allen Morrison

the spirituals you heard growing up?

About a year ago . . . I'm always trying to think of the next thing that I want to do. Spirituals was always on the list. Then I thought, maybe I should just take some of the spirituals my dad did on his recording and just re-interpret them with a band, and see what that's like. And that's when it just seemed to work.

And these songs veer off in a direction I haven't heard you go before.

Well, they're songs with words, for one thing, which I rarely sing. I rarely spend most of the time [singing] in my chest voice, my baritone voice; it's taken me a little time to get used to that. I'm still learning how to sing this way.

On your 2010 album VOCAbuLarieS, the song "Say Ladeo" contains these lyrics: "Time for taking words away/ The melody will tell the story." The new album is your first one to really emphasize lyrics.

Someone once asked me why most of the time I don't sing songs with words. And I said... If I sing a song with words, everyone has the same experience. But with songs without words, people bring their own stories to the song. And I love to improvise, and with my technique, it's a lot harder to sing that way with lyrics, than without. With spirituals, I'm telling a story... but every night I change them a little. I like to play with the form.

You haven't toured with a band of your own since early in your career. How are you enjoying it?

I like it. It's fun. One of the best things about it is that everybody gets a chance to play, and I get to sit back and listen for a while. You know, when you're onstage by yourself, and all you hear is yourself, it's nice to add other colors. The band provides another color palette.

What was it like working with Gil Goldstein as your arranger on this album?

I gave him carte blanche: I said, "Arrange them the way you hear them." And he would. He'd come up with something, and we'd go into the studio. He'd play the arrangement, I'd sing along and say, "Yeah, this works, I like it." But there were other things I didn't like, and I'd say, "Gil, I don't like this" [laughs]. No, I didn't say I didn't like it; I'd say 'I don't feel it.' And he was totally easy to say that to.

Where does the Americana and even bluegrass influence on the album come from?

I wanted something like that. I wanted an all-acoustic band, a little folksy, bluegrassy, jazzy combination. I wanted a steel guitar, I wanted slide, I wanted fiddle, and Gil knew that when he was putting this together. This is the first band of this sort I've ever worked with, with this kind of sound palette.

You once told an interviewer that your style of improvisation was directly influenced by pianist Keith Jarrett.

I was really moved by what Keith was doing in his solo concerts. It was so vulnerable and so complete. He was going on the most private journey,

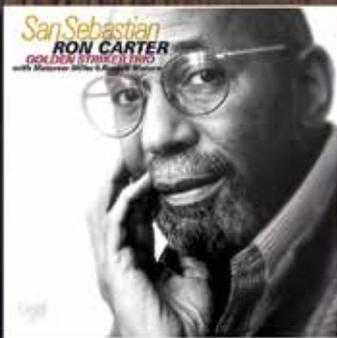
trying to stay absolutely true to the music he was hearing in his head, to share that with us. I wanted to do that, too.

Some critics seem perplexed when you venture outside the walls of what they consider "jazz," which you do regularly. Obviously you can't please everybody, but do you think those critics are focusing on the wrong things?

Hey, that's their job. I leave it to them to think and talk about what fits where, what's worthwhile, and how it all relates to each other. My job is to make music, and the only way I know to do that is to stay true to what I hear. I've been influenced by all kinds of music. If I have to choose a label it would be folk—I'm influenced by all the folks around me, all the music I've heard.

But of course some of my most powerful listening and collaborative experiences came out of the jazz tradition. The first time I heard Miles live, I felt like my whole body had changed at a molecular level. Seeing Herbie Hancock and the Mwandishi band changed me, changed my whole idea of what improvisation could be. Playing with Chick Corea is one of the joys of my life. And I still like to play rhythm changes—it's exhilarating. I know there are musicians who feel that their mission is to honor that tradition, move it forward. Mine is something else. It's not about genre at all. It's not even about technical virtuosity or using the voice to map out harmonies and rhythms in ways that people didn't expect. It's about communicating. It's about joy and freedom and making stuff up. **DB**

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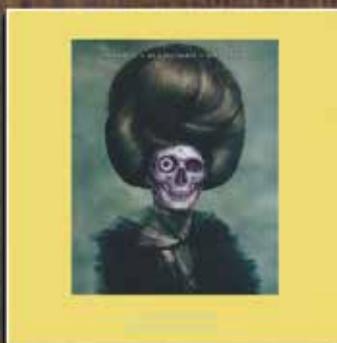
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Then & Now

ONE OF TODAY'S TOP GUITARISTS
INTERVIEWS THIRD STREAM PIONEER
GUNTHER SCHULLER AND CHECKS IN WITH
OTHER GENRE-MIXING ARTISTS

The word *eclectic* has lost much of its meaning as it pertains to jazz. Today's music takes innumerable shapes and forms as it spreads across the world, and practically defies labeling or description. That was not always the case.

Some 65 years ago, with the swing era in decline and bebop in bloom, jazz and classical music were worlds apart—in culture, in race and in sound. But there were a handful of people intent on bringing down the walls between the two genres. Foremost among them was Gunther Schuller, who is now 87 years young. He and John Lewis, Jimmy Giuffre, Gil Evans, George Russell, J.J. Johnson, Bill Russo and others sought to build a bridge (or one might even say a *détente*) between classical and jazz. In our current era—when genre definitions are fluid and many artists freely blend a variety of styles—it's important to realize just how radical these ideas seemed at the time.

When I entered Schuller's spacious home in Newton, Mass., he was dressed in his bathrobe, hunched over a score. He was working on one of seven current commissions, a new orchestration of Scott Joplin's obscure opera *Treemonisha* from 1901. His desk was littered with music paper, pencils, pens, water bottles and correspondence. MSNBC blared from a TV, and seesaw stacks of music loomed from every corner.

Schuller sat down and recounted some of the battles that he and his fellow composers fought over the decades. But he began by describing his artistic development.

"Jazz was all over the radio stations in the '30s and '40s, and I had the radio on all the time," he said. "I'm sure I had heard jazz before, but one night I was doing my homework at about age 12, and I recall hearing some music and feeling as if I had never heard anything so wonderful. It was Duke Ellington and his orchestra, live from the Hurricane Club on Broadway and 49th Street, and I just had to stop my homework and listen. At that time, I was already beginning to

compose, and I was deeply fascinated by the classical orchestra. [Schuller's father was a violinist in the New York Philharmonic.] The sound of jazz was so different than the symphony. Ellington's orchestra, so full of fantastic musicians, played ensemble and blended beautifully, but when they got up to solo, each soloist was *totally* different. That's what got to me.

"I woke up the next day and said to my pop, 'I heard some wonderful music last night, and I feel that this music in the hands of the best musicians is as great as anything of Bach or Brahms.' Well, my poor father nearly had a heart attack. He was worried I had gone off the deep end, because jazz was considered a bad, degenerate music."

By age 17, Schuller was playing French horn in major U.S. orchestras and immersing himself in the history of European music. He simultaneously sought out jazz, frequenting nightclubs after his evening performances. He spent days transcribing Ellington scores (as well as Alban Berg's violin concerto), increasingly compelled to bring about a stylistic marriage—not a pastiche, but a deep, sincere and authentic communion.

A watershed moment occurred on June 6–7, 1957, when Schuller organized concerts at Brandeis University involving six commissions, three for classical composers (Milton Babbitt, Harold Shapero and Schuller himself) and three for jazz composers (Jimmy Giuffre, Charles Mingus and George Russell). At those concerts he coined the phrase "Third Stream" to describe this new synthesis of jazz and classical music. Subsequently, he was attacked on all fronts.

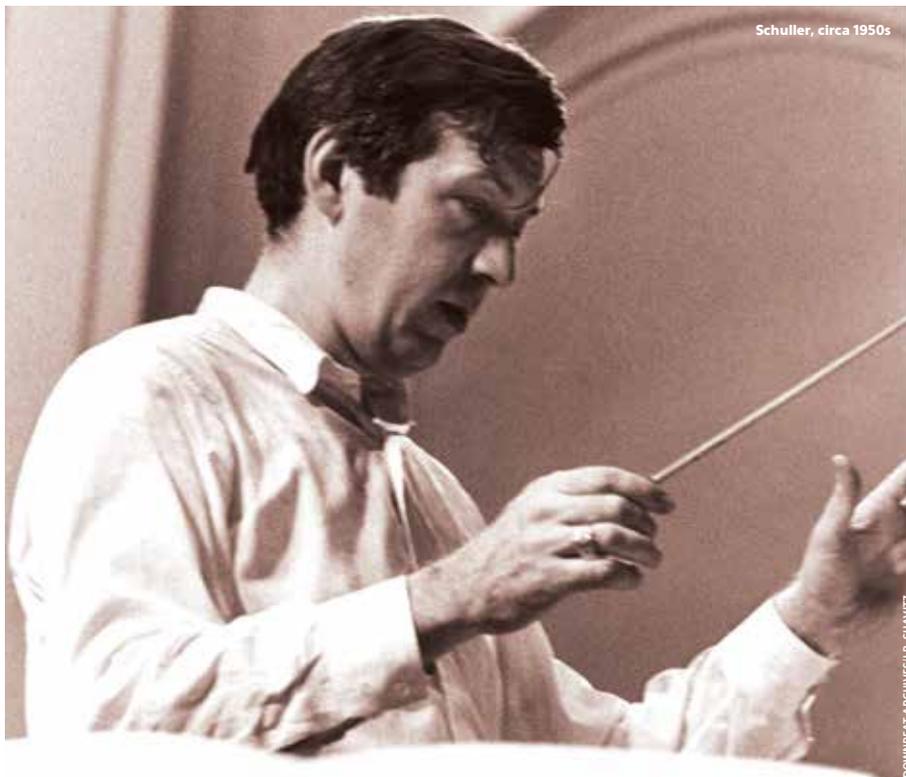
"Both sides felt that I was going to contaminate the music, stultify or codify it," Schuller said. "Jazz people thought I'd take the soul from their music, while universities and symphonies rejected jazz with persistent racism and elitism."

I asked Schuller what compositional challenges arose from the first Third Stream efforts.

"At first it was very difficult to find jazz musicians who were comfortable in this new, strange context, especially, in my case, when the language was atonal," he responded. "I recall when J.J. Johnson wrote what was in effect a concerto for Dizzy Gillespie [1961's *Perceptions*]. I can't tell you how uncomfortable Dizzy was at times, and of course this is one of the great instrumentalists of the era. On the other side, it was next to impossible to find classical players who could swing, much less improvise. In the 1950s the supply of musicians who could authentically do this 'combining' was very small. For instance, I discovered bassist Richard Davis, who had played with the Chicago Youth Symphony and could do anything, but if he was unavailable, I was out of luck. Those single options slowly began to increase, but in the meantime there was great condemnation from, for instance, *DownBeat* magazine. As always, we musicians paid no attention to the critics and continued on our way.

"We started a workshop every Wednesday where Lee Konitz, Bill Barber, John Lewis and others would work out our new ideas. Someone might take a Debussy piece and jazz it up, or I might take a Bach prelude-and-fugue and orchestrate it for the group. Our first efforts were modest. We were finding our way."

On the West Coast, a young Dave Brubeck (influenced by composer/teacher Darius Milhaud) was doing the same thing, but apparently the two



Schuller, circa 1950s

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES/L.B. SHAVITZ

parties did not yet know about each other's efforts. The tide of influence had, in fact, been flowing between the two genres for some time, but it was happening on the individual, underground level, not on the institutional level.

The rhythmic vitality and the spontaneity of jazz had enthralled many Western composers since the '20s, including Stravinsky, Varese, Stefan Wolpe and Lukas Foss. However, their work generally did not feature jazz instrumentalists (with the exception of Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto* of 1945, composed for Woody Herman's band). Schuller became an important intermediary between the two worlds. He was able to instruct classical string players, for instance, in how to bow a passage so it would swing more, while also schooling jazz players in the minutiae of classical performance. "That's what someone like [jazz woodwind player] Eric Dolphy was so much involved with," said Schuller. "He was very aware of modern classical music, wanting to know and do more with it. I stayed with him for a week in his apartment in Brooklyn. His apartment was pretty pitiful, by the way. He had no money, and he ate mostly beans. I heard him practicing, in effect, things he had heard from Schoenberg or Bartók. And, of course, Miles was the same way, always inquisitive about this music."

Schuller continued with a poignant story about saxophonist Charlie Parker: "There were these endless gatherings at the Baroness Koenigswarter's palace on the Upper West Side, and there were mattresses along the floor where people would hang out. Bird came down and sat next to me one night, and he was in a very sad mood. He said, 'I've been wanting to talk to you, because maybe you can help me. ... I know there is this incredible music out there, and I want to study with you and learn about it.' I guess he'd heard that I was teaching a lot of jazz musicians. Anyway, Bird was almost crying in desperation, and I guess he knew he wasn't well, and that he might not

make it much longer ... That was the last time I saw him; he died a little while later [on March 12, 1955]."

I asked Schuller to paint a picture of the times. How did it feel to his comrades to be in the midst of this movement?

"It was such love, and enthusiasm, and excitement, because we *knew* we were breaking important ground," he said. "The jazz composers would run up to Juilliard every chance they could get to see something by Hindemith or Stravinsky. As the rest of the field began to follow along—whether Bob Graettinger or Woody Herman—I sat there smiling because it was all happening. Still, it took almost 10 years before the controversy over this died down in America, while in Europe there was never any controversy. They jumped on the idea from the beginning."

One of Schuller's best-known early attempts to give shape to his vision is 1960's *Jazz Abstractions*, which featured the Beaux Arts String Quartet in tandem with Dolphy, guitarist Jim Hall, saxophonist Ornette Coleman and bassist Scott LaFaro. The string quartet had most of its parts notated, but there were sections in which they were given thematic motifs to improvise on. Schuller never asked them to swing, as he knew that was beyond their reach. The jazz musicians were given written parts of varying difficulty, a spectrum whose far end gave Coleman almost total freedom.

Meanwhile, George Russell had written his groundbreaking masterwork *All About Rosie*, Giuffre had penned 1959's *Mobiles* for strings and improvising clarinet, and Mingus was writing *Revelations* while Stan Kenton was confronting the dense, complex works of Bob Graettinger. The tide was turning. At New England Conservatory (NEC), Schuller started the first accredited jazz studies program in 1969; he hired Russell to teach jazz composition and he also recruited the young iconoclast Ran Blake. "My idea," Blake has stated,



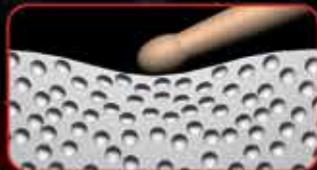
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“was to gather a student body of talented and eclectic improvisers, each of whom would attempt to forge a unique personal improvisational style from a synthesis of his or her stylistic roots. I soon came to include world music of all kinds.”

Blake became an influential teacher, providing an environment where Coleman, Messiaen, Mahalia Jackson and Squarepusher are all fair game for study.

During a recent interview, Blake said, “What an incredible teacher Gunther has been for me—having exposed me to so much music and encouraging me to veer off the straight course, having me share away all the extraneous jive.”

INTEGRATING EVERYTHING

Today, because the genre distinctions between jazz, classical and other styles are no longer rigid, the term “Third Stream” might seem quaint. The concept of synthesizing jazz and classical music is commonplace. In short, Schuller has been vindicated. Many jazz composers today feel fully able to write music of *any* sort, across any stylistic spectrum. The Maria Schneider Orchestra and the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble, for example, are groups that gracefully integrate jazz and classical elements. In fact, it would be difficult to find a young big-band com-

poser these days who *doesn't* have classical chops in his or her toolbox.

Meanwhile, the youthful NEXT Collective has put out an album of jazz arrangements of hip-hop songs. Many 21st century jazz musicians create “outside the box” because they simply ignore the concept of the box.

“Smashing of genres and styles has never been the goal for me,” said trumpeter Dave Douglas. “I certainly look for fresh sounds, and I’m trying to expand my voice, but the meeting of musical worlds happens subservient to that search.”

The type of criticism Schuller faced is gone, and composers now have access to a growing pool of instrumentalists who are both stellar readers and improvisers.

For saxophonist Ben Wendel from the group Kneebody, no friction between genres has ever existed. He grew up with hip-hop, jazz and classical music, and they flow together naturally for him.

But if you reach back to an older generation—those who are younger than Schuller but older than Wendel—you see that the road toward this worldview was curved, not straight. W.A. Mathieu, 75, was present in the '50s as Schuller's developments were entering the field. He was writing charts for the Stan Kenton band, learning Bartók and Bach, and moving toward his own synthesis.

“Some early Third Stream works felt forced,” Mathieu said, “because they tended to be more of an idea that was being pushed into existence than a natural byproduct of a lived-in experience. Yes, it was radical, but naturally the style hadn't matured. Slowly, as things changed, the radical became an everyday reality. What was futuristic then has become the cultural norm.”

Reedist Henry Threadgill discussed the parallel world that existed in Chicago in the '60s where AACM members found their own route toward unity. “Third Stream struck me for having a new personality, new orchestration and a distinct point of view,” Threadgill said. “In that moment there seemed a world of possibilities; we were influenced by the music that was happening at the University of Chicago by people like Ralph Shapey, Boulez and Stockhausen. Between that, Ornette and Cecil [Taylor], I began to hear what my own voice might be. I wouldn't say our goal was any sort of hybrid; it was more like we knew we could integrate everything we heard into our own unique sound.”

Saxophonist/clarinetist Marty Ehrlich, who studied at NEC in the mid-'70s, added, “When I got to the conservatory, I had already been involved with people from BAG [the Black Arts Group] in St. Louis. Much of what I began to learn about modern classical music reminded me of what I had explored through group improvisation with people like Oliver Lake. Certainly there were differences between these worlds but not nearly as important as they were made out to be. There were a lot of breakthroughs in combining the performance practices of Euro- and African-American music.”

In all of this, the composer has had a critical, yet often overlooked, role. “From the beginning,” said Schuller, “I was distraught that the composition part upon which jazz was being improvised was never talked about. It is always the soloist and never the composition that is discussed. I also felt that jazz improvisation often paid too little attention to the composition. I was longing for some

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38 DOWNBEAT JULY 2013

ACCLAIMED THIRD STREAM ALBUMS

Gunther Schuller/George Russell/Harold Shapero/Jimmy Giuffre/Charles Mingus/Milton Babbitt, *Modern Jazz Concert* (Columbia), 1957

Gunther Schuller/Jimmy Giuffre/John Lewis/J.J. Johnson, *Music For Brass* (Columbia), 1956

The Modern Jazz Quartet and Guests, "Conversation" from *Third Stream Music* (Atlantic), 1960

John Lewis, *The Modern Jazz Society Presents A Concert Of Contemporary Music* (Verve), 1955

John Lewis Presents *Contemporary Music: Jazz Abstractions—Compositions By Gunther Schuller And Jim Hall* (1960) (Atlantic LP) (Also available on Collectables CD *The Golden Striker/Jazz Abstractions* (1999) and the Ornette Coleman 1993 box set *Beauty Is A Rare Thing* ("Abstraction" and "Variants On A Theme By Thelonious Monk" only)

Various Artists, *Mirage: Avant-Garde And Third-Stream Jazz* (works by Schuller, Lewis, Blake, Mingus, Duke Ellington and others) (New World Records), 1977

Larry Austin, *Improvisations For Orchestra And Jazz Soloists* (Columbia), 1961

Jimmy Giuffre, *Piece For Clarinet And String Orchestra/Mobiles* (Verve), 1959

Stan Getz, *Focus* (Verve), 1961

Ornette Coleman, *Skies Of America* (Columbia), 1972

kind of integration where the thematic or rhythmic material of the tune might show up in the soloing."

Pianist/composer Billy Childs, who feels a direct linkage to Schuller in his chamber-jazz projects, agrees that "composition has always played a key role in combining genres, and that sometimes the work of the composer is overlooked in jazz." This fact was probably compounded as popular jazz of the '70s and '80s moved toward rock and funk rather than the concert hall.

Nonetheless, Third Stream's legacy continues to influence composers, including J.C. Sanford, who pointed out that—despite all the synthesis—record labels, promoters and critics still tend to

divide music into boxes.

The distinction between a jazz, classical and many other "streams" of music becomes less recognizable every year. Threadgill summed it up best: "When I'm writing, it's all one."

Undeterred by age, fashion or opinion, Schuller continues to compose. His recent piece *Encounters*, for a large big band and a huge orchestra, demonstrates that his all-encompassing vision has not flagged 56 years after the Brandeis premieres. For Schuller, there is no rest. "Curiosity and imagination, which are both all too lacking today, are the key," he said. "All the schooling in the world can't make up for lack of those two things."

I asked how he felt about the legacy of Third Stream and NEC. "Part of my thinking in starting a jazz department was that I knew the whole school needed to know this music, and I saw over time that the whole conservatory was integrated into one family. From the beginning, I believed that any music could coexist in the hands of a skilled craftsman, whether from New Guinea, India, Africa or America. Jazz and classical was just the beginning—the Third Stream has become 5,000 streams." **DB**

Note: The author would like to thank Gunther Schuller's son—the jazz drummer and composer George Schuller—for his valuable assistance in writing this article.

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John Murph, DOWNBEAT

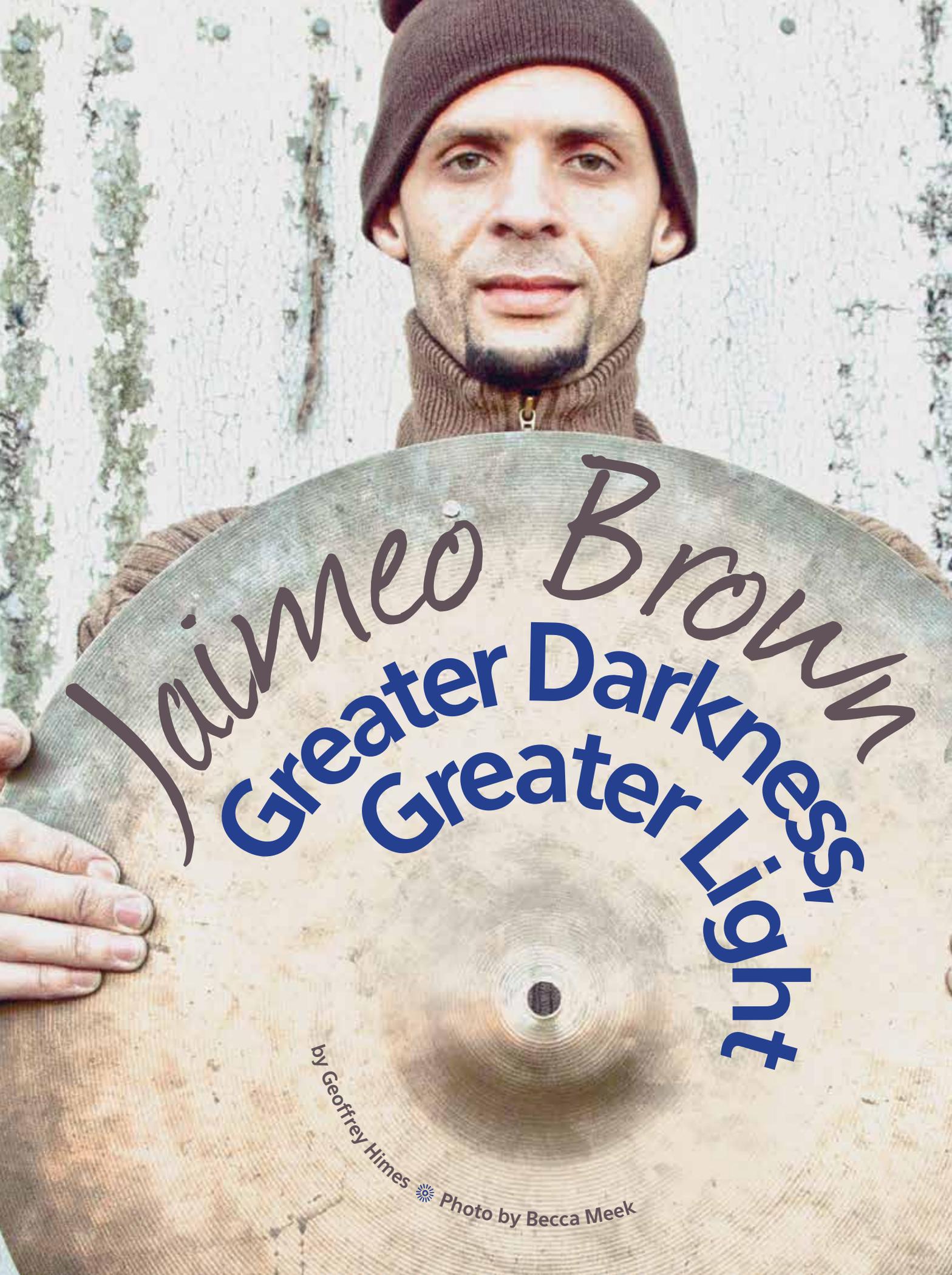
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Jaimeo Brown
Greater Darkness,
Greater Light

by Geoffrey Himes  Photo by Becca Meek



MOST PEOPLE WHO ARE AWARE of Gee's Bend, Ala., know the African-American community for its quilts. Two different exhibitions of the brightly colored, geometric bed coverings toured museums in New York, Washington, Houston and elsewhere in the '00s. What most folks don't know is that the quilters often sang a cappella hymns as they sewed. It was a recording of that singing that Jaimeo Brown first encountered before he ever heard of the quilts.

Samples from those hymns serve as the connecting tissue on Brown's remarkable debut solo album, *Transcendence* (Motéma). On half of the disc's dozen tracks, the sound of women and men sitting around a rectangular quilting table, singing in a kind of moaning joy, rises out of a buried past to be seized and improvised upon by Brown's drum kit, Chris Sholar's electric guitar and JD Allen's tenor saxophone. Brown and Sholar, the project's co-producers, are big hip-hop fans, and they use that genre's audio-collage techniques as the adhesive to bind those 19th-century blues harmonies, odd meters and gospel lyrics to 21st-century jazz.

It all started in 2004, when the then 25-year-old Brown and his Bay Area pal Howard Wiley, the saxophonist, would get together to play blues records for each other. One day Wiley brought in an album he had found at El Cerrito's Down Home Music Store, and as soon as Brown heard the Gee's Bend Singers, it immediately became his favorite record. Since that day, he never goes into a recording session without first pulling that record out and listening to it again.

"There was something about their voices that expressed faith in the face of pain," Brown says, "that expressed a love that comes from real sacrifice. The music told a lot of my own story and confirmed where I was going. It was meatier than modern gospel music, more purified, less watered-down, less lukewarm. All black music today comes from a source, and this music sounded closer to that source than other things I was hearing. It came from a time when the church was more the center of the black community. It came from a time of greater darkness, but it produced a greater light.

"Revil Mosely, one of the Gee's Bend singers, told this story of how they'd be out in the field picking cotton, and even there they'd be singing and some of them would be completely overcome by joy. She called it 'the good, old, hard times,' and her emphasis was on both the 'good' and the 'hard.' There's something that happens in the middle of struggle that can be extremely bright and valuable. In my own experience, some of the greatest strength and hope can come out of the hardest times."

The "hard" can be heard on "Mean World," the opening track on *Transcendence*. It begins with Frank Titus' unaccompanied voice singing, "This world is a mean world to live in." Before long the shudder in the man's 1941 lament is echoed by the 2012 tremble of Brown's cymbals and Sholar's sitar-like guitar drone. "No mother, no father, no sister, Lord, no brother," Titus adds, tallying up an orphan's losses, and 71 years later Allen answers him with a Coltrane-like cry of pain and prayer.

"Being jazz musicians allowed us to be free within the structure of those samples and to let the unexpected happen," Brown says. He's sitting in the atrium on the fifth floor of Jazz at Lincoln Center. Needle-thin sideburns stab down his jawline toward a chin beard; he's wearing a black T-shirt under a black coat. The wall of windows behind him offers an IMAX-like view of the traffic on Manhattan's Columbus Circle, but

Brown is lost in thoughts of his first live show with the Gee's Bend samples: "We knew the box would be there; we knew the samples would be triggered at certain points; we knew we had a rough road map to follow. But we also trusted each other enough that we were able to experiment. The common denominator among us is that we all like to take risks."

"The improvisation was approached the same way as if we were improvising on a jazz standard," confirms Sholar. "You pick up little hints in the theme and extend them."

"It's the same as playing with a live band," Allen says. "In a band you respond to the theme or someone else's solo; with these samples you respond to the

singers and what they're singing about."

Brown—who's been a drummer for Pharoah Sanders, Kenny Garrett and the Mingus Big Band—is the son of two jazz musicians, bassist Dartanyan Brown and flutist Marcia Miget (both make guest appearances on *Transcendence*). He showed little interest in his parents' music or playing an instrument until he was in middle school. That's when he noticed that some of his favorite hip-hop artists—especially Guru, J. Dilla and the band A Tribe Called Quest—were using samples from Donald Byrd, Joe Pass, Roy Ayers and Branford Marsalis. When he tracked down the source records, Brown found he liked the original music. He started taking lessons

from Sly Randolph, a Bernard Purdie protégé, and was soon drumming in Bay Area bands led by Bobby Hutcherson and Marcus Selby.

When Brown moved to the East Coast in 1998, one of the first people he met was Sholar, a fellow music student at William Paterson University. They were both jazz musicians who had never spurned the hip-hop they loved as kids. Sholar noticed that Q-Tip, who had just left A Tribe Called Quest, was lurking in the audience at Robert Glasper and Kurt Rosenwinkel shows. Before long Q-Tip hired Sholar as his music director and took him on the road.

"I went to school for jazz," Sholar says, "but meeting Q-Tip was like going to school for hip-hop. Q-Tip wasn't a student, but he would get these jazz musicians together to jam. I was playing rhythm like you'd hear on a Parliament-Funkadelic track, and Kurt Rosenwinkel was playing his usual stuff. It worked because we never got in each other's way. Those were the years I learned the most about music, going to school in the morning and hanging out with those guys at night. I watched Q-Tip chop up these samples for his records; I learned how he did that and applied it to what I was doing. I produced *Transcendence* the way a hip-hop producer would."

Soon after arriving in New Jersey, Brown suffered what he calls his "wilderness season." Most of his possessions were stolen; his car flipped twice on the Garden State Parkway; relationships fell apart and he even had a patch of homelessness. Music and religious faith helped pull him through.

"I began to dig deep into how much I could be thankful for, even in the midst of all that," Brown recounts, "and I found joy in that. Whenever I look back on that time, I can draw strength from the spiritual muscles I developed then. I began to read the Bible and to play the drums six-to-eight hours a day. Practice became a place of sanctuary. A byproduct of that was I really developed on my instrument."

He graduated from William Paterson and earned his master's degree from Rutgers University by writing a thesis on how the black church affected jazz. Soon he was back on the scene, playing with trombonist Steve Turre, saxophonist Greg Tardy and vibraphonist Joe Locke. He was practicing so much that a next-door neighbor in a New Jersey apartment complex grew curious.

"I'd hear him practice," Allen recalls, "and I'd think, 'Man, that guy is serious. I got to get up on my horn and practice, too.' When I started practicing, I could hear him pick up the sticks and start to play, too. That went on for a couple of months. Finally one of us knocked on the other's door and said, 'Hey, man, I know what's going on.' What clicked before we even picked up our instruments were the conversations we had. He was checking out Indian music and the Gee's Bend Singers and trying to connect it to his own music."

Brown, Sholar and Allen started getting together to play along with the samples of the Gee's Bend Singers. Each one would try to grab hold of a melodic scrap, a rhythmic phrase or an emotional moment. The digital boxes operated by Brown and Sholar became the fourth and fifth instruments in the group, and the two co-producers developed a feel for when to trigger musical fragments and when to shut them off.

"I know which song is going to require certain samples," Brown adds, "but within that there's a lot

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Brown's Drums

JAIMEO BROWN WAS STILL IN HIGH school when he attended a jazz camp at nearby Stanford University (in Stanford, Calif.), where he bonded with master drummer Tootie Heath.

"I got tight with him, and he gave me a lot of wisdom," Brown recalls. "At the end of his residency, he made it possible for me to purchase this high-end Sonor drum kit at a super-low price. It was like getting a Mercedes Benz for a thousand dollars. I still have that kit at my family's house in California, and I've used Sonor ever since."

Brown, who endorses Sonor, keeps two more of the company's kits in New York: one with a big bass drum for rock and hip-hop gigs and one with a smaller kick drum for mainstream jazz gigs.

But the drum kit is just one of the two instruments that he plays nowadays. The other is a Roland drum machine that he has customized so he can trigger a wide variety of sounds and samples with his sticks.

"It's an instrument that I practice every day," he says, "the same way I practice the drums. Now that I have some skill on it, I can improvise on the Roland box just like I improvise on the Sonor kit." —Geoffrey Himes

of freedom. The way a song goes on a particular night may change which samples I use. Every song in jazz has a certain structure that the musicians agree on, but they can use the structure differently each time. What's more important is the question of what's *not* free, because once you figure that out, everything else is free. And it's the things that aren't free that create the unity."

While this was happening, Brown also became interested in the Carnatic music of South India. He had been studying tabla when he got hold of a tanpura, a stringed instrument. When he played it with the Gee's Bend samples, the two musics resonated in a way that Brown enjoyed. Then he heard Indian vocalist Parveen Sultana sing in New Jersey, and it affected him much the same way the Gee's Bend Singers had. Sultana wasn't available to join his group, but Falu, a younger singer in the same vein, was. Falu contributes to four tracks on *Transcendence*.

Around the same time, pianist Geri Allen heard Brown's early experiments with gospel samples and hip-hop soundscapes and was so impressed that she invited his trio to play with her at the Apollo Theater. Then she invited Brown to weave his Gee's Bend samples into a track on her 2011 Christmas album, *A Child Is Born* (Motéma). Allen adds her distinctive piano touch to two tracks on *Transcendence*.

One week before going into the studio to record *Transcendence*, Brown traveled to Ghana for the Accra Jazz Festival with the Kelvin Sholar Group, led by Chris Sholar's piano-playing brother. The musicians got to visit the holding cells and loading docks where slave ships had left Africa for the Americas. Moved by the experience, Brown and Kelvin Sholar composed and recorded "Accra." The song backs a cathartic drum crescendo with ghostly synths.

"I'm trying to discover the common denomina-

tor for all black music," Brown says, "and the closer I get, the more excited I get. When I hear those early guitar styles in African-American music, I can almost hear the instruments they left behind in Africa. When I discover these things, I feel like I'm discovering something about myself, because so much of my family tree is back there. I wish recording had been invented a century or two earlier, because we'd know a lot more about those instruments."

Many attempts to create cross-cultural fusions between jazz and hip-hop or jazz and world music have been embarrassing flops. Too often, the different genres are awkwardly stuck together.

"The sound has to come first," Brown says. "If I

added one kind of music to another, it was always because I heard the sound they made together and liked it so much I had to keep them together.

"In my compositions, I was trying to emulate what the Gee's Bend Singers were doing—not just melodically but also in tonal quality and spiritual quality. Sitting around a table working on a quilt and singing without an audience creates this communal music that encourages each other and builds up a sense of community. The reason *that* music sounds the way it does is because of its function. That approach to making music was something I wanted to capture. If we start from that place, all these other questions will take care of themselves." **DB**

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Jaki Byard (left) and Tommy Flanagan

Tommy Flanagan/Jaki Byard *The Magic Of 2*

RESONANCE 2013

★★★★★

The pleasure of two pianists in tandem ideally comes in the ricocheting tension of contrasting identities engaging one another in close-quarter debate. Think of the Count Basie-Oscar Peterson Pablo duets of the '70s. And now this 1982 meeting of Tommy Flanagan and Jaki Byard in San Francisco's Keystone Korner

When the contrasts come, they are not so much between the players as within them. Especially Byard. He serves up such an aggressive vocabulary of piano styles, he can turn a relatively brief tune into a procession of keyboard reference points. In three minutes of "Land Of Make Believe," he leads us through a brooding romanticism, a zig-zag whirlpool of prickly arpeggios, expansive chords, rumbling tremolos and a quick and witty endpoint. "Sunday" suggests a modern take on Fats Waller first, then at around the two-minute mark drops behind the beat in the Erroll Garner manner. He loves quick changes in temperature and a strong, sometimes rolling left hand. Flanagan is the less melodramatic, eccentric and percussive of the two. His solo features favor the Duke Ellington/Billy Straythorn book, which embody adult romance without the pastel sentiments. Even inside "Chelsea Bridge," he can't resist a brief quote of "Lush Life."

Where Byard can be acerbic and bold, Flanagan tends toward a clever and poised elegance. But such contrasts are slightly smudged here. Only five of the 11 pieces here are duets; six are stand-alone solo features. More important, the original Keystone tapes, otherwise excellent, deny each player his own physical space and discrete identity. So the listener has to reach out for that sense of duality and conversation, particularly on "Just One Of Those Things" and "The Theme," where the players volley eights to one another like a couple of tennis masters on the same side of the net. Both these men were (and remain) master modernists whose reputations have grown posthumously. But they play to one another's most natural instincts when the material is transparent and second nature.

—John McDonough

Magic Of 2: Scrapple From The Apple; Just One Of Those Things; Satin Doll; Something To Live For; Our Delight; All Day Long; Sunday; Chelsea Bridge; Land Of Make Believe; Theme. (56:56)

Personnel: Tommy Flanagan, Jaki Byard, piano.

Ordering info: resonancerecords.org

TOM COPP



Christian McBride & Inside Straight *People Music*

MACK AVENUE 1070

★★★★½

On this warm, soulful, swinging outing of straight-ahead jazz by bass virtuoso Christian McBride and his acoustic group, Inside Straight, the music bristles with muscular energy imparted with a great array of rhythmic variation.

"Listen To The Heroes Cry" is a dark, John Coltrane-derived driver with a spiritual pulse, cleverly shifting to walking bass on the bridge, letting air in the way a key change might and also

making it clear from the get-go that the bass man's at the helm. The band repeats the short melody of "Fair Hope Theme" between every solo; the quick triplets and agitated arpeggios of vibes man Warren Wolf's "Gang Gang" distinguish it as kin to Latin and classical music; the churning current of "The Movement Revisited" underscores its Civil Rights message; and on "Unusual Suspects," pianist Peter Martin spices up a Horace Silver-like blues by casting it as 12 bars of a 6/4 pocket.

Saxophonist Steve Wilson's impressionistic homage to Maya Angelou, "Ms. Angelou," is a standout for its passion and warmth. Wilson plays lovely soprano on this cut and on the soulful elegy for Whitney Houston that closes the set, "New Hope's Angel," but his alto saxophone sound is even more remarkable for its burly heft, easily mistaken in places for a tenor. But all the soloists shine, getting in and out, two choruses max, and saying what they have to say with clarity and punch. Wolf, especially, has mastered the art of varying phrase lengths and groupings so there's always a feeling of buoyant surprise and a logical arc to the story he tells. McBride, of course, is an incomparable technician, whether he's running high up the neck on "Heroes" or vamping down low on "New Hope's Angel." —Paul de Barros

People Music: Listen To The Heroes Cry; Fair Hope Theme; Gang Gang; Ms. Angelou; The Movement Revisited; Unusual Suspects; Dream Train; New Hope's Angel. (55:42)

Personnel: Christian McBride, bass; Steve Wilson, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone (4, 8); Peter Martin, Christian Sands (1, 7), piano; Carl Allen, Ulysses Owens Jr. (1, 7) drums; Warren Wolf, vibes.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Terence Blanchard *Magnetic*

BLUE NOTE 75419

★★★★½

Sometimes you just want a big blast of head-down, hard-driving swing rather than elaborate designs and intricate time signatures. Terence Blanchard has always been reliable when it comes to delivering that kind of thing. Three tracks into *Magnetic* he drops "Don't Run," the kind of jaunty escapade that gives his remarkable muse plenty of elbow room. For seven-and-a-half minutes, the group whisks you away to a place where everyone has their say. Guest saxophonist Ravi Coltrane pecks around until it starts to rain torrents. Guest bassist Ron Carter reminds us how forceful elan can be. And the trumpeter arrives to dispense one of his most hurdling solos in recent memory.

Magnetic has its intricate/elaborate/spacy moments, but the art of blowing pretty much defines the date. Even when funk gets filtered through the rhythm section, like on "Pet Step Sitter's Theme Song," there's an anything-goes vibe with which Blanchard's outfit approaches its work. It suits the pieces, which pretty much adhere to the trumpeter's formula of post-hard-bop with progressive wrinkles. "Hallucinations" could be one of the Art Ensemble's straighter ECM ballads, and the loping groove it creates in order to set a mood signifies thanks to the band's terrific chemistry. Even with the guests, that personalized interaction is unmistakable. Saxophonist Brice Winston's "Time To Spare" has an Ornette Coleman-like glee, and drummer Kendrick Scott's "No Borders Just Horizons" is one of those pot-boilers that finds everyone peppering personal ideas while acting in full coordination. Even the ballad "Jacob's Ladder" is calibrated to create a group hush.

Magnetic isn't a major statement or a turning point, just a series of well-aligned tracks that Blanchard injects with his usual panache. But in this case, that's just enough to carry the day.

—Jim Macnie

Magnetic: Magnetic; Jacob's Ladder; Don't Run; Pet Step Sitter's Theme Song; Hallucinations; No Borders Just Horizons; Cornet; Central Focus; Another Step; Time To Spare. (68:00)

Personnel: Terence Blanchard, trumpet; Brice Winston, saxophone; Fabian Almazon, piano; Joshua Crumby, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums; Ravi Coltrane, saxophone (3, 4); Ron Carter, bass (3); Lionel Loueke, guitar (5).

Ordering info: bluenote.com

Joshua Redman *Walking Shadows*

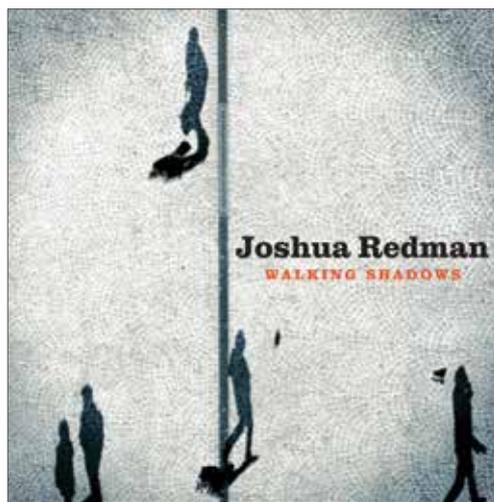
NONESUCH 532288

★★★★½

In the 1950s, this record might have been titled *The Mellow Side Of Joshua Redman*. Producer and pianist Brad Mehldau aimed at showing Redman to be a master storyteller, assembling an array of ballads in various settings, from lush and tender to lean and tremulous. Indeed, the saxophonist narrates beautiful, often stirring tales, backed by Mehldau and the classic rhythm team of bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Brian Blade, adding orchestral backgrounds on six tracks.

Conducted by Dan Coleman, the augmented cuts are more thoroughly thought out than many "plus strings" projects. The opening strains of "Easy Living," for instance, have a real darkness, deeply dissonant, Romantic arrangement like some great lost West Coast session by Hal McKusick. Patrick Zimmerli's arrangement of "Lush Life" floats the orchestra over a lite pop beat, to surreal effect; Mehldau's details are, as usual, worth listening for, and his composition "Last Glimpse Of Gotham" is one of the record's high points. All along, Redman plays with insight and authority. The most winning moments are ones without the added instrumentarium, like a gorgeous Bach addagio (go, Grenadier!).

Two tracks suggest a possible alternate title, *Calculatin' With Joshua Redman*. Covering The



Beatles' "Let It Be" disrupts an otherwise fascinating program, as does John Mayer's forgettable "Stop This Train," which has the unfortunate sound of a saxophone tooting along like it's trying to sing the words. Lovely as some parts are, I still prefer Redman in a more original, less retro setting.

—John Corbett

Walking Shadows: The Folks Who Live On The Hill; Lush Life; Stop This Train; Adagio; Easy Living; Doll Is Mine; Infant Eyes; Let It Be; Final Hour; Last Glimpse Of Gotham; Stardust; Let Me Down Easy. (57:20)

Personnel: Joshua Redman, tenor and soprano saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Brian Blade, drums; orchestral arrangements (1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 12).

Ordering info: nonesuch.com

The Hot Box

Critics >	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Tommy Flanagan/Jaki Byard <i>The Magic Of 2</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★
Christian McBride <i>People Music</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½
Terence Blanchard <i>Magnetic</i>	★★½	★★★★	★★★★½	★★½
Joshua Redman <i>Walking Shadows</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★

Critics' Comments

Tommy Flanagan/Jaki Byard, *The Magic Of 2*

A 30-year-old document that lives up to its hype. The pianists work together with a fluidity and ease that's hard to imagine, and their very different approaches make them perfectly complementary. Can imagine that Barkan's been listening to this all these years wondering when he could share it with everyone else!

—John Corbett

You can feel the fun in the air as the two maestros roll through each other's lines. Though literally a novelty, a palpable communion comes to the fore by the end of the set, bringing new meaning to their pal Monk's phrase "played twice."

—Jim Macnie

This 1982 retrieval from San Francisco's fabled Keystone Korner is one of those "wish I coulda been there" albums. Two masters of the keyboard—one elegant and svelte but always swingin' (Flanagan), the other iconoclastic, jumping up and down with ideas from stride to outside (Byard)—jousting for joy. The duets can get a little jumbly, but thankfully most of the album features each man playing solo.

—Paul de Barros

Christian McBride & Inside Straight, *People Music*

A fairly standard set of bright originals from some of the busier members of the contemporary New York establishment. Highlight is Wolf, who out-swings everyone in sight. Pianists Martin and Sands are in close pursuit. Solos move mostly in a crisp and relaxed 4/4 drive.

—John McDonough

Bassist in mentor mode on a couple of tracks, aided and abetted by his core crew on the rest; unenviable position for Owens, drawing comparison with Allen, but he holds his own with a light touch and drive. No big surprises, but extremely well made mainstream music, up to McBride's high standards.

—John Corbett

Big ups to the craft of this ultra-tight action. Team McBride tackles each of these tunes with finesse. But there's a touch of foregone conclusion in the air, too. It seems you can guess where each of these performances will end up.

—Jim Macnie

Terence Blanchard, *Magnetic*

The best track by far is "Don't Run," a snappy spree for Coltrane's soprano and Carter's walking bass, with Blanchard liberated from the strained seriousness elsewhere and rediscovering the first-rate jazz musician in him. One of his perennial mannerisms, the choked note, seems happily retired.

—John McDonough

An impressive group effort successfully bridging stylistic modalities. The most outre track ("Another Step") is least successful, feels a bit of a dalliance, but the bristling post-bop and mature contemporary mainstream components are beautiful and full of Blanchard's personal touch.

—John Corbett

Never mind the electronics and chorused-up trumpet, there's something theatrical about this music that, with the exception of the aptly titled "Central Focus," makes it feel fictional, like it's coming less from real life than from fantasy. But Blanchard's heroic chops and intensity are real as rain, and Kendrick Scott's free sense of time fits the trumpeter's fluid impressionism to a T.

—Paul de Barros

Joshua Redman, *Walking Shadows*

Strings can be a deceptive foil. If they are everything that jazz is not supposed to be, then why the eternal flirtation? Redman offers the same answer as Charlie Parker 50 years ago in these warmly turned ballads: strings as a compelling counterpoint. They offer a centered romantic cushion without inhibiting the soloists' range or intent. A winner.

—John McDonough

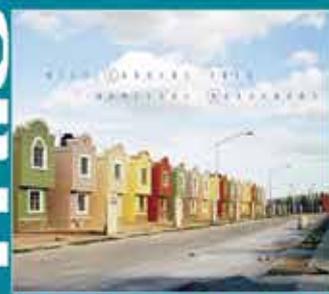
A sage mix of arrangement and improv makes Redman's first strings experiment both an arc of sentimental moods and forum for some keen lyricism. On an album rich with sound, he's positioned the negative space with masterful touch.

—Jim Macnie

Stan Getz's *Focus*, it's not, though there are a few moments on this string job ("Lush Life," "Easy Living") where the arrangements do more than sweeten and soften. The stringless "Stardust" is a real gem, but most of the rest is pretty dull.

—Paul de Barros

NICK SANDERS TRIO



NAMELESS NEIGHBORS

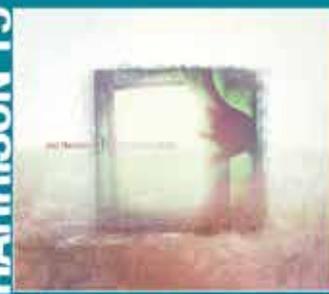
NICK SANDERS piano
HENRY FRASER bass
CONNOR BAKER drums

SSC 1340 / In Stores June 4

It was a chance meeting with pianist Danilo Perez at the New Orleans jazz institution Snug Harbor that would change his trajectory. Sanders had been studying classical piano at the famed New Orleans Center for Creative Arts and asked Perez's opinion on when and if he should change to the school's celebrated jazz program. Perez's answer was, "Now! Do it!" Sanders followed the advice.

His unique sound is profound, soulful and rich, resonating with the moody isolation that characterizes so much of modern life, yet also with our deep yearning for human connection ... both sentiments clearly expressed in *Nameless Neighbors*.

JOEL HARRISON 19



INFINITE POSSIBILITY

ELECTRIC GUITARIST JOEL HARRISON WITH A NINETEEN PIECE ORCHESTRA, CONDUCTED BY JC SANFORD

SSC 1366 / In Stores June 18

Guitarist and composer Joel Harrison has never shied away from a project. Over his career, he has continually reinvented himself and dove headfirst into a wide assortment of diverse musical enterprises, spanning genre and size. *Infinite Possibility* is Harrison's first attempt at writing and arranging for a large jazz ensemble. With his well-selected, nineteen-piece orchestra, Harrison presents a program of original pieces that are equally inspired by jazz, blues, and modern classical composition.



iTunes.com/NickSanders
iTunes.com/JoelHarrison
sunmynidersrecords.com



MICHEL CAMILO

WHAT'S UP?



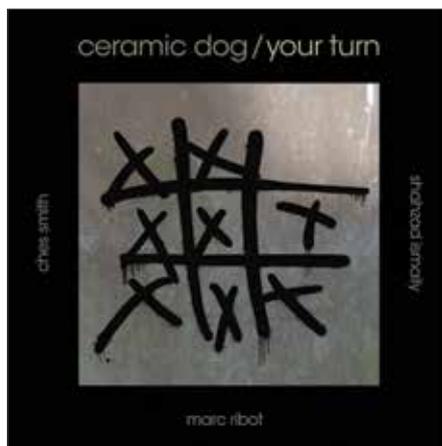
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Ceramic Dog *Your Turn*

NORTHERN SPY 38

★★★★½

Marc Ribot is pissed off. That's the overweening takeaway from *Your Turn*, the second CD from the guitarist's art-punk power trio, Ceramic Dog. Over the course of 13 songs, Ribot sprays his scattershot anger in every direction, never pausing to take aim but flailing away with blunt force at whoever stands in his way.

The targets are often political—"Avanti Popolo," a traditional folk song adopted as the

anthem of the Italian labor movement, is a parade march into the laid-back populism of "Ain't Gonna Let Them Turn Us Round," whose beach-front vibe makes Ribot sound like the resident Socialist in Margaritaville; the early 20th-century labor anthem "Bread And Roses" is rendered as a primal garage-rock howl.

The trio adds its own working-man's protest to the mix with "Masters Of The Internet," an attack on the culture of free downloading with Ribot bellowing, "Download this music for free/We like it when you do/We don't have homes or families to feed," while bassist Shahzad Ismaily and drummer Ches Smith bludgeon a militant mechanistic beat like krautrock snake charmers.

Like Ribot, Ismaily and Smith are skilled musicians able to disregard their own chops in favor of an artful devolution, a dichotomy vividly illustrated by their blistering, live-wire dismantling of "Take Five." When they manage to meld the virtuosic with the vigorous, Ceramic Dog can be an exhilaratingly raw gut-punch; at other times, their intentional primitivism can feel put on, a too-precise pastiche of imprecision.

—Shaun Brady

Your Turn: Lies My Body Told Me; Your Turn; Masters Of The Internet; Ritual Slaughter; Avanti Popolo; Ain't Gonna Let Them Turn Us Round; Bread And Roses; Prayer; Mr. Pants Goes To Hollywood; The Kid Is Back; Take 5; We Are The Professionals; Special Snowflake. (51:58)

Personnel: Marc Ribot, vocals, guitar; Shahzad Ismaily, bass, electronics; Ches Smith, drums; Eszter Balint, vocals (1, 6, 10), melodica (9), organ (10), violin (13); Arto Lindsay, guitar (10).

Ordering info: northernspyrecords.com

Charnett Moffett *The Bridge (Solo Bass Works)*

MOTÉMA 66

★★★★

Playing solo for an entire disc can go south pretty quickly. When you're the only soul stirring, there's no one to let you know if you're rushing, jamming too long, or playing too much or too little. But on *The Bridge (Solo Bass Works)*, bassist Charnett Moffett makes all the right moves. Things happen naturally and at their own pace. Each of the album's 20 tunes is less than four-and-a-half minutes long. And Moffett seems to have no agenda; he simply offers up what the music is asking for.

Moffett's takes on standards are potent. Charles Mingus' "Haitian Fight Song" is performed with speed, aggression and depth, qualities that likely would have pleased the tune's composer. "Monk Medley," a collection of Thelonious Monk's pieces, seamlessly weaves together "Well You Needn't," "Rhythm-a-ning" and an initially obscured "Round Midnight." And "All Blues" finds Moffett overdubbing a ghostly, bowed interpretation of the melody on top of the composition's iconic, moseying bass line. The leader's originals are affecting, too. One of the longer tunes, "Kalengo," moves between rhythmic riffing and gorgeous, uplifting bowing. And the ominous "Free Your Mind" places anguished Middle Eastern bowing over a deep,



pulsing drone. The bassist also nods to his former employers. McCoy Tyner's "Walk Spirit, Talk Spirit" is wise and contemplative, with big bursts of energy. Wynton Marsalis' "Black Codes (From The Underground)," gritty and funky, brings things full circle: While touring with the trumpeter as a teenager, Moffett had one of his first experiences playing solo bass for an audience. —Brad Farberman

The Bridge (Solo Bass Works): Caravan; Eleanor Rigby; Black Codes (From The Underground); Fragile; Haitian Fight Song; Kalengo; Bow Song; Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho/Rolling In The Deep; Skip Hop; The Slump; Monk Medley; Oversun; Swinging Etude; Walk Spirit, Talk Spirit; Truth; The Bridge (Solo Bass Works); Nature Boy; Things Ain't What They Used To Be; All Blues; Free Your Mind. (55:30)

Personnel: Charnett Moffett, bass.

Ordering info: motema.com

Giacomo Gates
*Miles Tones: Giacomo Gates Sings
 The Music Of Miles Davis*

SAVANT 2124
 ★★

Giacomo Gates has been around long enough to know what's what when it comes to jazz and jazz singing. This disc, based in Miles Davis repertoire, could be heard as a followup theme album to his 2010 release *The Revolution Will Be Jazz* (that one referencing the late Gil Scott Heron).

Gates' rich baritone delivery is best when he's singing the lyrics (as opposed to scatting), as he does with a typically lanky stroll through Davis' "All Blues." From here listeners are led into a variety of muted colors that span the corpus of the trumpeter's career, from a revisiting of "Boplicity" with "Be-Bop Lives" through to another take on Marcus Miller's "Tutu" with "Long Come Tutu," both songs played straight down the middle, no fancy upending of the tempos, moods or styles (although Gates' lower-register delivery on "Four" is a minor twist). Except for Gates' lyrics for "Milestones," they're all received lyrics, with nothing that hasn't been sung before.

The band on *Miles Tones* lacks sizzle with no real surprises. As much as each of these players must have really felt the music as played, there's a predictable-ness about the way each song unfolds, the head-solos-head format typical from beginning to end. Freddie Hendrix's trumpet finds its



way into the mix in ways that offer not so much a mimicking of Davis as a contrast, while John Di Martino's piano playing with Dave Stryker on guitar provide solid if ineffectual support. And the groove/vibe/pocket offered by bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Vincent Ector sounds a bit stiff, not loose or truly swinging. —John Ephland

Miles Tones: Giacomo Gates Sings The Music Of Miles Davis: All Blues; Be-Bop Lives (Boplicity); Four; Round Midnight; I Fall In Love Too Easily; Long Come Tutu; Milestones; You're My Everything; So What; Walkin'. (48:43)

Personnel: Giacomo Gates, vocals; Freddie Hendrix, trumpet; John Di Martino, piano; Dave Stryker, guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Vincent Ector, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Mauro Ottolini Sousaphonix
Bix Factor

PARCO DELLA MUSICA 041
 ★★½

Mauro Ottolini is a versatile trombone player from Italy, and his recent two-disc *Bix Factor* should not be construed as the work of a pure revivalist. The project aims to infuse a modern sensibility to pieces that were mostly part of cornetist Bix Beiderbecke's repertoire, the only major exceptions being an Ottolini original in the same vein as the source material and a movement from Igor Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*. It is conceived as a fantasy where the participants are supposed to play the role of musicians and other artists. The fictional aspects are underlined by the inclusion of that Stravinsky and voodoo queen Marie Laveau. Keeping the project's goal in mind, the

second disc happens to be the much more successful of the two. The instrumental take on "I'm Coming Virginia" is propelled by a steady rock beat and showcases Enrico Terragnoli's mordant electric guitar, and "Singin' The Blues" is given an intriguing music-box treatment. Vocalist Vincenzo Vasi is also responsible for the zaniness that breaks out occasionally. Of the three singers Ottolini recruited, the most successful is Stephanie Océan Ghizzoni, whose rugged delivery is ideal to her role as Marie Laveau. Vasi, who is supposed to incarnate Louis Armstrong, instead comes across sounding like a hybrid of Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen. And Vanessa Tagliabue Yorke as Annette Hankshaw leans toward the blander side. The modern spin that pervades the second part of the program is sorely lacking in the first disc, where the band delivers fairly conventional yet spirited renditions of those classics. But the lasting impression is that this project might produce more effective results as a live performance rather than as a recording. —Alain Drouot

Bix Factor: Disc One: Ebony Concerto "Andante"; Tiger Rag; Westlawn Dirge; All The Same; Buster Keaton Blues; Davenport Blues; Buddy Bolden Blues; Bay Mir Bistu Sheyn; Lawd, You Made The Night Too Long; Lover Come Back To Me. (42:49) Disc Two: I'm Coming Virginia; Someday Sweetheart; St. James Infirmary Blues; Soul Of A Man; Aunt Hagar's Children Blues; Hong Kong Blues; Changes; Singin' The Blues; Clarinet Marmalade. (42:21)

Personnel: Mauro Ottolini, trombone, sousaphone, vocals (Disc Two, 4); Vanessa Tagliabue Yorke, vocals (Disc One, 5, 7, 10; Disc Two, 1, 2, 6, 8, 9); Stephanie Océan Ghizzoni, vocals (Disc One, 4, 7, 8; Disc Two, 1, 3, 5, 8), washboard; Vincenzo Vasi, vocals (Disc One, 7, 9; Disc Two, 7, 8), theremin, nasal flute, toys; Paolo Degiuli, cornet; Mauro Negri, clarinet, alto sax; Dan Kinzelman, tenor saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Paolo Botti, viola, dobro; Enrico Terragnoli, banjo, guitar; Franz Bazzani, piano, harmonium; Danilo Gallo, bass; Zeno De Rossi, drums.

Ordering info: egeamusic.com

TRILOK GURTU
 SPELLBOUND
 SSC 1355 / In Stores June 4

Spellbound is by no means a typical album for the percussionist Trilok Gurtu. After a long time, Trilok Gurtu has returned to improvised music, though all his life the concept of "jazz" has always been far too restrictive. But, just like his one-time mentor and friend Don Cherry, with whom Gurtu started playing just a few years after their first encounter in Italy, Gurtu is not concerned with style boundaries. The music on the album has succeeded in something that has become increasingly rare, it has built a bridge between the continents and cultures. The album features trumpet players from many places and cultures: From Norway Nils Petter Molvær, from Italy Paolo Fresu, from Germany Matthias Schriefel, the Lebanese Ibrahim Maalouf, the Turk Hasan Gözeltik, the young American Ambrose Akinmusire, and the German classical virtuoso Matthias Höfs.

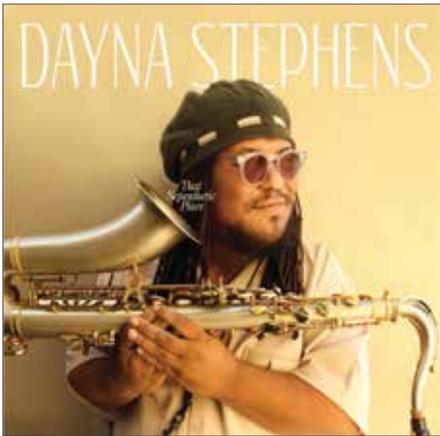
KENNY BARRON
 & THE BRAZILIAN NIGHTS
 SSC 3093 / In Stores June 18

KENNY BARRON: PIANO MAURICIO EINHORH: HARMONICA IDRISS BOUDRIOUA: ALTO SAX LULA GALVÃO: GUITAR SERGIO BARROZ: BASS RAFAEL BARATA: DRUMS + CLAUDIO RODITI: TRUMPET

Kenny loves Brazilian music; he'd played it with Dizzy, and he'd done several great albums including one with the Trio da Paz – Duduka da Fonseca, Nilson Matta, Romero Lubambo –, The Brazilian Knights... of New York! Mauricio Einhorn, Idriiss Boudrioua, Alberto Chimelli and Lula Galvão all dreamed that one day they'd be playing with one of their idols, Kenny Barron. When it comes to Brazilian Jazz, there is nothing like recording it "on location". Kenny and the Knights had a ball bringing you this music full of joy and emotions.

iTunes.com/TrilokGurtu
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summysiderecords.com

Available on iTunes



Dayna Stephens
That Nepenthic Place

SUNNYSIDE 1306
★★★★½

Dayna Stephens writes twisting, layered pieces of bebop, sprinkling in a few fresh interpretations of old music. To bring his visions to reality, he surrounds himself with top-flight musicians ready to help him bring excitement and tension into his work. It all seems very simple when written out, but with *That Nepenthic Place*, the tenor saxophonist worked tirelessly to create a thoroughly enjoyable new entry in the modern jazz lexicon.

Frank Vignola & Vinny Raniolo
Melody Magic

AZICA 72248
★★★★★

East Coasters Frank Vignola and Vinny Raniolo are acoustic guitar virtuosos who execute cleanly and display an admirable sense of swing, even at slow tempos. They've adapted a number of popular classical themes for two guitars and, as the title signifies, they deal out with a surplus of melody. They can also alter known material in surprising ways: Turning Tchaikovsky's "dying swan" piece into a bluesy lament is imaginative.

Presumably it's Vignola doing the lead on this jazzing-the-classics excursion, though the sleeve gives no clue. He flatpicks the themes to Beethoven's Fifth, Bizet's "La Habanera" from *Carmen*, Bach's "Violin Partita #2" and other overly familiar fare, then inserts solo sections. He can play subtle games with phrasing: Where the Fifth is on the beat, he'll syncopate the solo sections. Raniolo supplies a strong, chorded rhythmic foundation throughout. The Hot Club treatment of Beethoven's Fifth is a highly charged string tour de force. Violinist Zack Brock skirts Stephane Grappelli comparisons by being himself on four cuts; his brief but fluid "Dust In The Wind" turn begs for another chorus.

At times the playing is almost astonishing: Some of the fast unison passages—like "Eye Of The Tiger"—are rollercoaster rides. The treatment of the songs, though, can sometimes verge

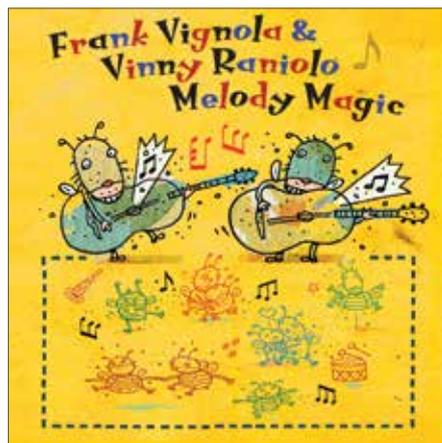
Stephens plays his tenor in a somewhat muted, reedy tone, cautiously drawing out simple phrases during his solos before exploding like a firecracker for a fast, vertiginous run of notes. Elsewhere on the album, he continues his careful approach, never playing more notes than are needed—except in occasional instances, like when he channels John Coltrane on "Impressions." On that tune, he transforms the opening notes into a drawn-out, ephemeral melody atop a drone-like piano vamp. One of his strongest and most exciting pieces, the opener "Dah-Dot Dah" is based on a rhythmic three-note phrase repeated in different forms throughout the melody. The faster-paced tune contrasts wonderfully with slower fare like the tender "Nepenthic" and the playful "A Walk In The Parc." In the midst of such a fulfilling album, Gretchen Parlato's breathy performance of "But Beautiful" seems a bit incongruous. Most of Stephens' compositions lie in the midtempo-and-below range, showing that the saxophonist doesn't need to write fast-paced, manic bop to get his point of view across. These pieces might keep their slow pace or could unfurl as the tune progresses, growing in dynamics as they ramp up in tempo, but whatever happens, these tunes are never boring and sit on the album as fully formed, well-reasoned pieces of music.

—Jon Ross

That Nepenthic Place: Dah-Dot Dah; Full Circle; Nepenthic; Common Occurrences; A Walk In The Parc; But Beautiful; Wink Wink; American Typhoon; Impressions; Dr. Wong's Bird Song. (69:23)

Personnel: Dayna Stephens, tenor saxophone; Taylor Eigsti, piano; Joe Sanders, bass; Justin Brown, drums; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Jaleel Shaw, alto saxophone; Gretchen Parlato, vocals.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



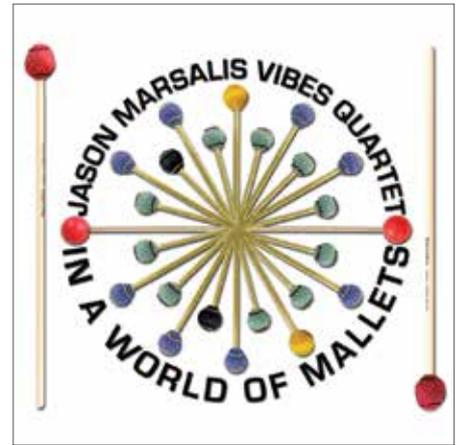
on restaurant fare: The whole-note picking on "Scheherazade" brings to mind the "mood music" of Los Indios Tabajaras. And while the two Beatles tunes are wisely played to let the songs' melodies shine, the choice of "Dust In The Wind" is a case of adding great musical strength to a simple tune through arrangement and improvisation.

—Kirk Silsbee

Melody Magic: Beethoven's Fifth; Carmen Habanera; Scheherazade; Morning; Beatles Medley; If I Fell, Here There And Everywhere; Dust In The Wind; Violin Partita #2; Violin Concerto; Swan Lake Scene 1; Eye Of The Tiger; Walking On The Moon. (71:05)

Personnel: Frank Vignola, Vinny Raniolo, guitars; Zack Brock, violin (3, 6, 10, 11); Mark Egan, bass guitar (1, 2, 4, 8, 9); Julien Labro, accordion (3, 6, 7, 10); Cassidy Holden, bass (3, 10, 11); Matt Wigdon, bass (6).

Ordering info: frankvignola.com



Jason Marsalis Vibes Quartet
In A World Of Mallets

BASIN STREET RECORDS 0303
★★★★★

Earlier this year, vibraphonist Jason Marsalis told the New Orleans Times-Picayune that he wants to "add to the vocabulary" of his instrument. He made this point because he believes that the vibes can offer more unexplored musical terrain than the drums, where he began his career. In fact, on his second album as a leader on vibes, Marsalis does a fine job of expanding his own musical vocabulary in a much broader sense.

Edgier than 2009's vibes-led release, *Music Update*, the new disc has two title tracks featured overdubbed mallet instruments. "Discipline Discovers A World Of Mallets" begins cautiously, a tinkling convergence of soft tones and hard angles wrought by Marsalis on marimba, glockenspiel, tubular bells, vibes and xylophone. A pause focuses the intent and register of sounds, boiling things down to a quirky yet controlled motif. The dreamier "Discipline Gets Lost In A World Of Mallets" closes the album, the same instruments employed here to a groove-accented finish.

The meat of the album is a collaborative effort between Marsalis and his band members, each of whom contributes a composition to a selection of music that includes new versions of three tunes from *Music Update*. Pianist Austin Johnson's swinging "Louisiana Gold" is laid-back, with solos from Johnson and Marsalis getting plenty of symbiotic comping. "Blues Can Be Abstract, Too," meanwhile, sounds like a nod to Oliver Nelson in title and form, as Marsalis toys with meter and energy, expanding the role of his instrument. Later, the Brian Coogan-penned "The Nice Mailman's Happy Song To Ann" showcases the deftness with which Marsalis can marry incandescence and tightly rendered single notes. On "Whistle For Willie," Marsalis warbles through an airily whistled solo to introduce a ballad that's as complex as it is endearingly oddball.

—Jennifer Odell

In A World Of Mallets: Discipline Discovers A World Of Mallets; Blues Can Be Abstract, Too; Ballet Class; Characters; Blues For The 29ers; My Joy; Ill Bill; Louisiana Gold; Big Earl's Last Ride; The Nice Mailman's Happy Song To Ann; Nenhum Talvez; Closing Credits; Whistle For Willie; Discipline Gets Lost In A World Of Mallets. (60:03)

Personnel: Jason Marsalis, vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel, tubular bells, xylophone; Will Goble, bass; David Potter, drums; Austin Johnson, piano.

Ordering info: basinstreetrecords.com



Stephan Crump and Mary Halvorson

Clean Toned and Ever-Searching Strings

Masterful Bostonian guitarist Eric Hofbauer has made something of a personalized specialty in the rare and difficult realm of solo guitar work, as heard on his trilogy of albums *American Vanity*, *American Fear* and now the final act of the series, ***American Grace* (CNM 022; 58:26 ★★★★★)**. Grace comes in many forms, from the dark lyricism of his original "In Memoriam" to experimental interludes "Pocket Chops" and "Ghost In The Machine," to beautifully re-inventive arrangements of The Beatles' "Dear Prudence" and Ornette Coleman's "Peace."

Ordering info: erichofbauer.com

Horvitz is a family name familiar in jazz circles, via keyboardist Wayne and guitarist Bill, and with his latest recording, the latter Horvitz pays tribute to another brother, Philip, who worked in dance and theater and died unexpectedly at age 44. With his 17-piece group, the Bill Horvitz Expanded Band, the leader largely plays the conceptualist-leader role in the left-of-traditional big band suite he calls ***The Long Walk* (Big Door Records; 57:29 ★★★)**, featuring solid Bay Area players. Themes run light, dark and pictorial, from the aptly named "Funk Side Story" through the quirky "Child Star" and the sadly ruminating finale, "The Long Walk."

Ordering info: billhorvitz.com

Musical cultures and sensibilities cross, evocatively, on the debut album by Finnish guitarist Jussi Reijonen, ***Jussi Reijonen: Un* (unmusic; 59:59 ★★½)**, on which influences from Northern Scandinavia easily merge with elements of music and musicians from Turkey, Palestine, Sweden and Spain, without blinking or apologizing. His fresh version of John Coltrane's "Naima" simmers mystically, its melody taken leisurely on the leader's fretless guitar.

Ordering info: jussireijonen.com

Noteworthy and new-sounding Turkish guitarist Timuçin Sahin has ears bending in multiple directions and comes equipped for the varietal multi-tasking with his unique double-neck electric guitar—one with frets, one without. On his impressive, visceral yet also cerebral quintet album

***Inherence* (Between the Lines 71233; 49:39 ★★½)**, Sahin keeps stellar, sympathetic company, including trumpeter Ralph Alessi and muscular tone-poet drummer Tyshawn Sorey—both of whose Steve Coleman affiliations come to bear on Sahin's rhythmically and harmonically restless pieces, opening with the title track and into the feisty "My Left Foot."

Ordering info: challengerecords.com

Clean-toned "jazz box" guitarist John Stein goes more or less down the middle with a slight detour or two on his unpretentious quartet date ***Bing Bang Boom* (Whaling City Sound 062; 54:15 ★★★)**, with echoes of Grant Green and Tal Farlow in his rough-and-ready fretwork.

Ordering info: whalingcitysound.com

Defying the notion that those who can't play an instrument could end up making them, the Irish luthier and jazz guitarist John Moriarty makes an excellent case for his life as a guitarist worth checking out on his debut recording, ***Echoes* (Lyte Records; 53:00 ★★★★★)**. An excellent player, dynamically varied and adventurous within his chosen idiomatic domain, Moriarty made this fine album on one day while in New York in the summer of 2012. In a set framed by versions of the standards "Yesterdays" and "Moonlight In Vermont," Moriarty demonstrates technical prowess but no compelling urge to show off said chops.

Ordering info: lytorecords.com

A power of an empathetic two to suggest a larger, third entity underscores the enlightened free-play between rugged bassist Stephan Crump and innovative guitarist Mary Halvorson on their album ***Super Eight* (Intakt 216; 42:38, ★★★★★)**. These 14 pieces organized into three sets find the inspired pairing demonstrating an essence of a contemporary improvisatory vocabulary. Crump abides by the arsenal of bow, strings and percussive effects, while Halvorson offers her signature tough, lovingly intimate, big hollow-body sound with sprinklings of reality-bending effects, at once assured in its identity and on the lookout for new corners to turn.

DB

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

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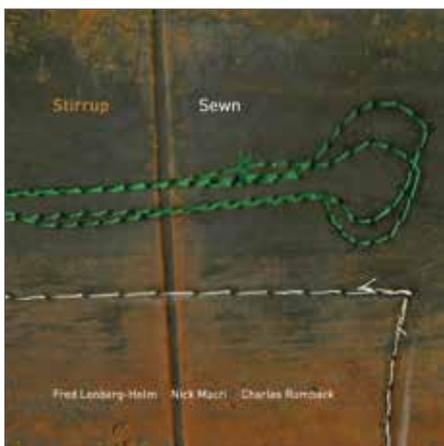
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Stirrup Sewn

482 MUSIC 1084

★★★★½

Chicago cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm has deep roots in the jazz avant-garde. He's studied with Anthony Braxton and recorded with John Zorn, Ken Vandermark and Mats Gustafsson. But he's also worked with Kaki King and Superchunk, and played cello on Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. So he's familiar with the rock/pop world. Perhaps that planet was one of the inspirations for *Sewn*, the debut album from Stirrup. Rounded out by bassist Nick Macri, drummer Charles Rumback

and Lonberg-Holm's spirited tenor guitar playing, *Sewn* is a psychedelic horseback ride stitched together using bass ostinatos, supportive drumming and exploratory guitar and cello solos.

There's a trance-like quality to the album. Save for a few bridges here and there, those aforementioned ostinatos never let up, and Rumback's tasteful, subtly pushing percussion provides a cushion for them to rest on. "In Zenith I" and "In Zenith II" are built on a soothing but insistent low-end line, like something the rock band Yo La Tengo would come up with. Early on in "Zenith I," Lonberg-Holm's scratchy cello licks become electronic bleeps and robotic messages, then switch back. "The Profit Of Field Stripping" opens on soulful bass rumbling, expressive drums and a bagpipe-like cello drone. Then a snare-heavy New Orleans beat kicks in, over which Lonberg-Holm's cello sings and prays. "Song For Salim" is a focused, bustling number colored by, at first, curious, wandering guitar. Around three-and-a-quarter minutes in after a few easy moments of just bass and drums, Lonberg-Holm switches to cello and comes back in searing. The mellow "Super Seeded" examines Rumback and Macri on their own for a bit longer than "Salim," but neither musician improvises very much. Sometimes there's no need.

—Brad Farberman

Sewn: In Zenith I; Floating Melody; The Profit Of Field Stripping; Super Seeded; Song For Salim; Insen For Yonsei (For The Chicago Resettlers And DK); Convulsive; In Zenith II. (55:42)

Personnel: Fred Lonberg-Holm, cello, tenor guitar; Nick Macri, bass; Charles Rumback, drums.

Ordering info: 482music.com

Edward Simon Trio Live In New York At Jazz Standard

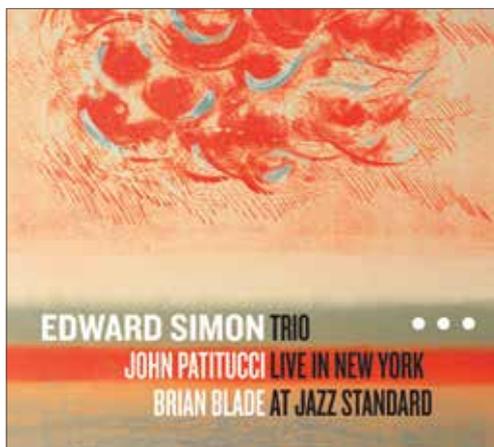
SUNNYSIDE 1343

★★★★

Edward Simon has made a name for himself as a sideman, notably with saxophonists Bobby Watson and Greg Osby as well as trumpeter Terence Blanchard. But, as a leader, the pianist has already quite a few recordings under his belt even though this is his first live outing. Because studio versions of all the selections already exist, these takes caught in the moment provide new insights into Simon's approach to music making.

The pianist, bass player John Patitucci and drummer Brian Blade form an impressive and airtight unit. They have performed together for more than 10 years and, in addition, his two band mates have deepened their relationship within the Wayne Shorter Quartet. Their interaction works best when they subtly build up a tension ("Pathless Path") to reach a climax, the musicians at times operating simultaneously at different tempos.

Patitucci has modernized the classic role devoted to the bass by constantly shifting his patterns or motifs, and also by projecting himself in a meaningful fashion. Blade's playing has become much less clinical over the years. He is able to rein and contain the trio's exuberance without forgetting to explode when the time is ripe. As for the harmonically advanced Simon, his effortless, fluid



and lean touch is evinced in the romantic "Poesia," the reflective and melancholy "Pathless Path" and the playful "Pere." The trio also presents a slower and reharmonized rendition of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" and applies an odd meter to Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Chovendo Na Roseira" that gives the composition an unusual rolling movement. It is somewhat unfortunate that the prevailing classicism and the decision to only present midtempo pieces underplay the many qualities of a set that will be best sampled one tune at a time.

—Alain Drouot

Live In New York At Jazz Standard: Poesia; Chovendo Na Roseira; Pathless Path; Giant Steps; Pere. (59:30)

Personnel: Edward Simon, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Asuka Kakitani Jazz Orchestra Bloom

NINETEEN-EIGHT RECORDS 1025

★★★★★

This ambitious 19-piece big band's debut has been produced with subtlety and precision by ascendant Japanese composer-arranger Asuka Kakitani and her partner and co-conspirator JC Sanford. Sanford provided opportunity for the orchestra to flourish as part of his Monday night big band showcase at Brooklyn's Tea Lounge in the past couple years, and flourish it has. Though Kenny Wheeler is credited for his inspiration, surely somewhere in there, if indirectly, must be the influence of Maria Schneider, whose buoyant, pastel charts are a blatant precedent. The beautiful CD photography features Kakitani's shallow-focus studies of plants, and the opening track illustrates burgeoning flora with telescoping horns, outwardly shooting dynamics and exploratory solos from trumpeter John Bailey and saxophonist Jason Rigby. Kakitani's text rhapsodizes about pink coneflowers and bumblebees and the overflowing world of inspirational melody. Her sensitivity and humility have proved as successful as nectar in attracting a raft of fine New York musicians, including vocalist Sara Serpa.

The sumptuous positivity and organic flow of the writing indicate a natural process and breezy abundance of expression. Tumbling rhythmic devices on "Electric Images" and the presence of Rhodes recall Chick Corea's flamenco fancies. Peter McCann's guitar owes significant debt to Pat Metheny; Serpa's choral accompaniments, magnified by woodwinds and brass, also put Metheny in mind. The tentative lines of "Bumblebee Garden" have a classical purity and sense of expanding wonder. "Opened, Opened," a traditional Japanese refrain, shares the simplicity of Gregorian chant, and Kakitani allows petals to unfold without force around the butterfly of Kenny Berger's bass clarinet.

—Michael Jackson

Bloom: Bloom; Electric Images; Bumblebee Garden; Dance One; Opened Opened; Dragonfly's Glasses; Islands In The Stream; Skip. (65:35)

Personnel: Asuka Kakitani, composer, arranger, conductor; John O'Gallagher, Ben Kono, alto and soprano sax, flute; Jason Rigby, Mark Small, tenor sax, clarinet; Kenny Berger, baritone sax, bass clarinet; Jeff Wilfore, David Spier, lead trumpet, flugelhorn; Matt Holman, John Bailey, trumpet, flugelhorn; Mark Patterson, Matt McDonald, Jacob Garchik, trombone; Jeff Nelson, bass trombone; Peter McCann, acoustic and electric guitar; Mike Eckroth, piano; Rhodes; Dave Ambrosio, acoustic and electric bass; Mark Ferber, drums; Sarah Serpa, voice.

Ordering info: nineteeneight.com

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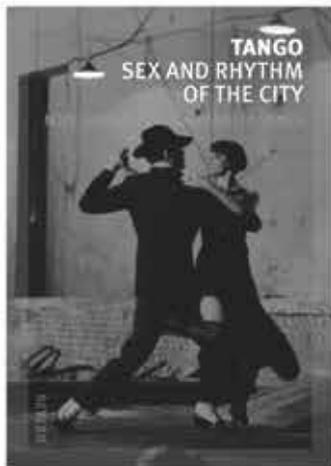
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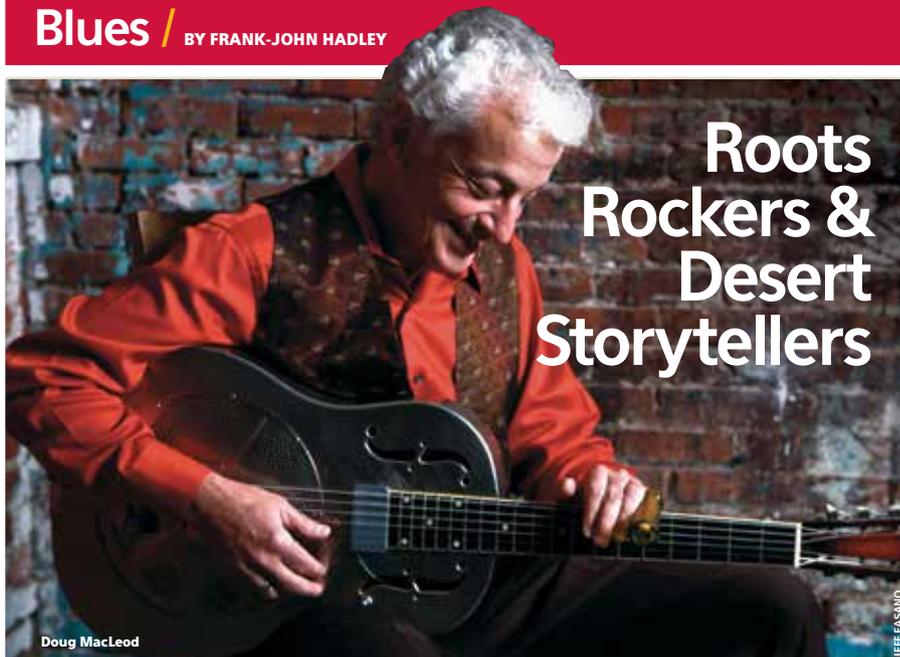
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Blues / BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY



Roots Rockers & Desert Storytellers

Doug MacLeod: *There's A Time* (Reference 130; 58:00 ★★★★★) Unlike any of his previous 19 studio albums, Doug MacLeod made this one "live" on a soundstage in a circle with a string bass player and drummer (no headphones, no overdubs). It's a spare, intimate and inspired performance. The Californian's casually confident singing and quiet yet powerful bottleneck or fingerstyle guitar playing (he favors museum-quality old guitars) convey a sense that his true stories about colorful characters he's met on the road and his own emotional responses to life situations hold insights for listeners. High points: "I'll Be Walking On" and "Ghost," in which he lays his burdens down.

Ordering info: referencerecordings.com

Sid Hemphill: *The Devil's Dream* (Global Jukebox 1013; 48:02 ★★★★★) Folklorist Alan Lomax's 1942 Library of Congress tapings of blind elder Sid Hemphill singing and tooting his unusual panpipes at home in the Mississippi hill country are special. Now cleaned up in sound and compiled for the first time, these breakdowns, fife-and-drum marches and blues ballads show the man had an astute instinct for sensing how to please country folks at fish fries and other outings.

Ordering info: globaljukeboxrecords.com

Dave Widow & The Line Up: *Waiting For The World To End* (WM Records 007; 57:05 ★★★★★) Journeyman Dave Widow, in front of consummate pros like B3 player Mike Finnigan and drummer Gary Mallaber, has enough going for him as a singer and a guitarist to put over his processed, appealing synthesis of rock, blues and soul. His best songs are bunched together at the start of the album, among them the miraculously catchy "Long Gone."

Ordering info: davewidow.com

Nicolas Repac: *Black Box* (Naïve 20; 46:38 ★★★★★) Nicolas Repac, laboring in his Paris studio, follows two muses here. He mediates between samples of Alan Lomax's old field recordings (singing convicts, Georgia Sea Island Singers) and his own modern configurations of sounds, successful-

ly simulating the warm incantations of the blues. He also fares well matching his machine-made grooves to freshly recorded vocals by Africans Bonga and Cheikh Lo. He resurrects Bo Diddley on "Bo's A Lumberjack." But the drama in the gruff, ramshackle singing of Blind Willie Johnson works at cross purposes with the tooled rhythmic track. Worse, Brad Scott jibberjabs his way through "Voodoo Blues."

Ordering info: noformat.net

Various Artists: *Live From Festival Au Desert* (Clermont Music 2013; 73:46 ★★★★★)

The spirit of the last year's Saharan music festival in Timbuktu, held just before the violent Islamist rebellion, was complex. Fear and tension balanced uneasily with hopefulness and solidarity in the blues-aligned music of 17 African acts, including stars Tinariwen and Habib Koité and a raucous Berber group, Imharhan. The performers, every last one of them, appear to be in communion with the happy/anxious audience.

Ordering info: clermontmusic.com

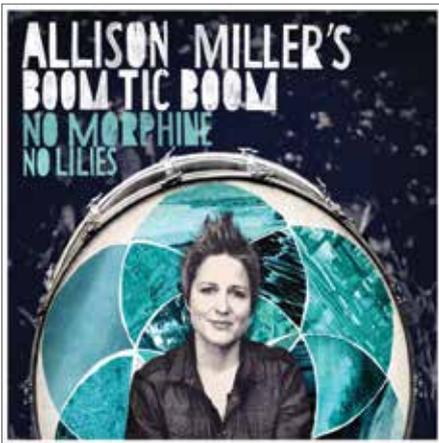
John Fries: *U. S. 50* (TBTS Music 171; 32:41 ★★★★★½) Grown up on blues and soul music, John Fries fills his album with a fresh and distinct brand of roots rock that shows he operates on an uncommonly high plateau of maturity and talent as a singer, a guitarist and a songwriter (most of the seven songs address relationships). Deserving of wider attention, this Connecticut-based trio leader sometimes waxes lyrical on his old '62 Hot Rod Stratocaster.

Ordering info: johnfriesmusic.com

The Slide Brothers: *Robert Randolph Presents* (Concord 34262; 51:11 ★★) These advocates of the horizontal steel guitar have plenty of conviction all right, but that isn't enough to recommend a set of ecumenical traditional songs, blues identified with Elmore James and Tampa Red and more recent material from various sources. The boogie grows wearisome quickly, with solos going no place in particular.

DB

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com



Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom No Morphine, No Lilies

ROYAL POTATO FAMILY 1308

★★★★½

Not a set of songs, per se, nary a typical number in sight, its title might be giving something away. *No Morphine, No Lilies* suggests literal things, both in the negative. Stated positively, another title might read *Today's Allison Miller Experience*. Across 11 pieces, it's a brew that's strewn together not so much by the drummer's heft behind the set as teased through a kind of thematic thread, one that suggests a story more than a showcase for talent.

And yet, talent Miller surely brings to these proceedings, her drumming, pen and drive only (major) parts of the story. The usual suspects remain noteworthy: pianist Myra Melford, Todd Sicksafoose on bass, with selective spots for special guests trumpeters Steven Bernstein and Ara Anderson along with cellist Erik Friedlander and singer Rachel Friedman. The most notable other voice here is violinist Jenny Scheinman.

Everything seems to break with convention. This, no doubt, is a reflection of the fact that Miller spends time playing with all manner of musician: Her cred and her credo simmer around her various musical desires and experiences, backing up such notables as Natalie Merchant, Ani DiFranco and Erin McKeown. As a result, we get to hear not just some very fine, tasty and powerful drumming, but spots where drums take a back seat, Miller getting Melford out in front, playing melodic one moment, more frenetic and free the next. Indeed, one of the hallmarks to *No Morphine, No Lilies* is the element of surprise, the story unfolding before your ears in ways that break with those conventions, hinting at subterranean psyches.

Scheinman sneaks up behind Melford here and there, her spots positioned seemingly at random, like when she takes her usual grace and finesse, not to mention intensity, to feed the flames during the dizzy closing to an otherwise swinging rocker in "The Itch." Her colors are significant to the overall sound and mood of this band, a welcome reminder of Boom Tic Boom's self-titled debut from 2010. Elements as diverse as tango, country, not to mention pop and jazz, pay visits through the sonic sheens to *No Morphine, No Lilies*, Scheinman's way with the bow and finger a vital signature, the drop-dead rubato of

"Spotswood Drive" a haunting, plucky example. Truth be told, Miller's exchanges with Melford and Sicksafoose drive everything, with something beautiful, eloquent and inconclusive as "Waiting" a delightful contrary yet typical example.

Tributes also play a role here, as the spirits of Paul Motian, Eddie Marshall and Walter Salb—all major influences on Miller's musical life—are invoked on different pieces. Miller also honors Ornette Coleman with a spritely, beboppy arrangement of "Six Nettes," composed by Lisa Parrott. Somehow, Miller manages to slot them into this complex mosaic, which also gathers writ-

ing by others, including Melford's "The Kitchen," a kind of rowdy, expressionist tune that lets the players flex their muscles in different, other outward-bound ways. And the lilting waltz "Once," written by Jessica Lurie, includes singer Friedman in an intimate, quasi-country setting with the quartet.

—John Epland

No Morphine, No Lilies: Pork Belly; Early Bird; Waiting; The Itch; Speak Eddie; Six Nettes; Spotswood Drive; Once; The Kitchen; Sun Comes Up On The Reservoir; Nuh-Uh, No Sir. (50:50)

Personnel: Myra Melford, piano; Jenny Scheinman, violin; Todd Sicksafoose, bass; Allison Miller, drums; Steve Bernstein (5, 11), Ara Anderson (4), trumpet; Erik Friedlander (2), cello; Rachel Friedman (8), vocals.

Ordering info: royalpotatofamily.com

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& The Rhythm
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*Oye!!! Live In
Puerto Rico*

MIEL MUSIC
★★★★★

After a couple of intriguing concept albums, it's refreshing to hear Miguel Zenón cut loose on a live date. His alto saxophone improvisations remain steely, and the material for the most part illustrates his gifts as a modern jazz composer, capable of infusing Caribbean and African rhythms.

It's a delight to hear him employ those patented silvery tones and incredible improvisation brio on "Oye Como Va." Zenón doesn't just skate over the surface of the piece, though; he and his dynamic ensemble fully explore the song, as he constantly breaks up the melody unexpectedly, while percussionist Reynaldo de Jesús and drummer Tony Escapa accelerate then decelerate the groove with precision and caprice. On the exuberant "El Necio," Zenón uncoils a breezy West African-sounding melody that almost could pass as jazz pop, if not for his diamond-hard tone and unexpectedly improvisational twists. As the tune progresses, Zenón's passages become more involved as he articulates them with intermittent cries and wails, underneath a sweeping rhythmic undercurrent. M-Base influences filter through "Hypnotized" as the rhythm section plays a chant-like rhythm underneath Zenón's languid yet circuitous improvisations.

—John Murph

Oye!!! Live In Puerto Rico: Oye!!!; Oye Como Va; El Necio; Hypnotized; JOS Nigeria; Double Edge; The Edge (Outro). (65:04)

Personnel: Miguel Zenón, alto saxophone; Tony Escapa, drums, Aldemar Valentin, electric bass; Reynaldo de Jesús, percussion.

Ordering info: miguelzenon.com



Kris Davis
Capricorn Climber

CLEAN FEED 268
★★★★★

There's an almost ghostly architecture to Kris Davis' compositions, as if the infrastructure of a building had been spirited away, leaving its decorative elements suspended in air. The Canadian-born pianist grants her quintet considerable freedom, yet maintains an austere aesthetic.

Davis' band features her frequent collaborator, saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock. The two share a reserve that checks their combustibility within a straining quietude. Laubrock's husband, drummer Tom Rainey, has a charged lyricism that bridges uneasy serenity with the assertive force of Trevor Dunn's bass. The lineup is completed by violist Mat Maneri, a master of harsh, shimmering textures and haunting atmospheres. *Capricorn Climber* gets off to an imposing start with the monolithic crashes and teeth-clenched tension of the deceptively whimsically titled "Too Tinkerbell." The guard is let down with "Pass The Magic Hat," which opens with Davis' serpentine soloing over a slinking, shifting groove. After a false ending, the entire group seems to hold its collective breath, broken by Maneri's long, slow exhale of a solo, pained and mesmerizing. The sound of the quintet conjures a chamber ensemble in a state of decay, their grace and elegance evident but their tensions being revealed in enlightening fashion.

—Shaun Brady

Capricorn Climber: Too Tinkerbell; Pass The Magic Hat; Trevor's Luffa Complex; Capricorn Climber; Bottom Of A Well; Big Band Ball; Pi Is Irrational; Dreamers In A Daze; Too Tinkerbell Coda. (60:13)

Personnel: Kris Davis, piano; Mat Maneri, viola; Ingrid Laubrock, saxophone; Trevor Dunn, double bass; Tom Rainey, drums, glockenspiel.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



Jacky Terrasson
Gouache

SUNNYSIDE 3092
★★★★★

Yes, Jacky Terrasson reworks the monster Justin Bieber hit "Baby" on his new album. No, you should not fast-forward past the track. In Terrasson's hands, what hit the airwaves in 2010 as a simmering tune with a vapid chorus becomes dynamic and witty, shaped as much by Terrasson's playful virtuosity as by his appreciation of pop music's value.

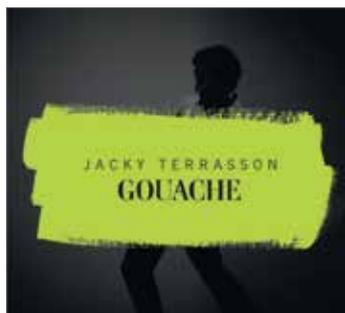
Lively, bright and full of sunshine throughout, *Gouache* finds common ground between a mix of Top 40 hits, bop and even a classic rock ballad. It's par for the course for an artist and arranger whose last album included a medley of "Body And Soul" and Michael Jackson's "Beat It." Terrasson also has some fun with "Rehab" by Amy Winehouse, casting it as a coy, subdued and swinging stage for both his Rhodes and acoustic piano work, which he uses to explore the melody and meter from a variety of angles. The album's second half is less pop-oriented and spritely, hitting its apex at the warm and slow-burning Terrasson original "Happiness." But perhaps the most memorable highlight aside from Terrasson's arrangements and lightning-quick dexterity at the keys comes in the form of vocalist and 2010 Thelonious Monk Competition winner Cecile McLorin Salvant, who lends her soft control and shimmering yet spare vibrato to Erik Satie's well-matched "Je Te Veux" and in English on John Lennon's "Oh My Love."

—Jennifer Odell

Gouache: Try To Catch Me; Baby; Je Te Veux; Rehab; Gouache; Oh My Love; Mother; Happiness; Valse Hot; C'est Si Bon. (50:46)

Personnel: Jacky Terrasson, piano, Fender Rhodes; Burniss Earl Travis II, double bass, electric bass; Justin Faulkner, drums, percussion (10); Minino Garay, percussion; Cecile McLorin Salvant, vocal; Michel Portal, bass clarinet; Stéphane Belmondo, flugelhorn, trumpet.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



**Madeline Eastman
+ Randy Porter**
A Quiet Thing

MAD-KAT RECORDS 1012
★★★★½

In a perfect world, we'd be listening to this 14-song set of lesser-known ballads in a dimly lit nightclub, a scotch close by to catch any stray teardrops. *A Quiet Thing* is an intimate duo record, with a wide range of emotion despite its small scale.

Stephen Sondheim's tricky little poem-song "I Remember" gets a locked-in, minimalist treatment, with Eastman bringing plaintive emotion to a string of short lines. Together with pianist Randy Porter's scattered chords, the sum is a bittersweet piece of perfect cabaret song. On Jerome Kern's usually bouncy "Pick Yourself Up," Eastman and Porter tease out the melancholy between the lines, somehow looking back at the hurt that caused all the trouble in the first place.

The more complicated tunes, in fact, are the most pleasurable. Even on repeated listens, I'm still not sure what "Alfie," the lengthy lead cut, was meant to be all about. Randy Newman's "I Think It's Going To Rain Today" seems heartfelt but doesn't reach the emotional payoff his best tunes can offer. And something's amiss with the mix—Porter can sound muffled.

For an intimate and worldly wise evening of songs, though, look no further. "Spring Can Really Hang You Up" takes us on a lengthy psychic exploration; if April is the cruelest month, Eastman seems to know why. Less than a minute into the tune, a hypnotic melancholy settles in, coating the song with sadness. As with the rest of the disc, though—this being cabaret stuff, after all—it's always balanced with wry perspective.

—David Zivan

A Quiet Thing: Alfie; Pick Yourself Up; Sea Journey; Spring Can Really Hang You Up; A Face Like Yours; I Remember; The Bad And The Beautiful; All Of Us In It; I Never Meant To Hurt You; You Are All I Need; It's A Quiet Thing; I Think It's Going To Rain Today; With One More Look At You; God Only Knows. (60:00)

Personnel: Madeline Eastman, vocals; Randy Porter, piano.

Ordering info: mademusic.com



Vinicius Cantuaria
Indio De Apartamento

NAÏVE 621811
★★★

Blink, and you might miss Vinicius Cantuaria's *Indio De Apartamento*, on which laidback atmosphere trumps compositional concern. More than half of the tracks are less than three minutes long; three tunes don't even reach the two-minute



mark. Too often, the Brazilian multi-instrumentalist dabbles in sketches instead of creating finished pieces. Intimate and delicate with light bossa nova accents, the acoustic-minded record comes across as a tranquil come-down designed to be played in a private flat during the wee hours of the morning after a night of clubbing. Unspoken commands to relax—inferred via float-in-the-ether guitar picking and nimble piano

lines—also convey a European sensibility. Guest artists hint at Cantuaria's collaborative history. Outside of guitarist Bill Frisell and vocalist Jesse Harris, whose duet on the romantic "This Time" yields needed contrast, they seem to operate independently of the leader. —Bob Gendron

Indio De Apartamento: Humanos, Moca Fela, Purus, Acorda, Um Dia, Quem Sou Eu, This Time, Chove la Fora, Indio de Apartamento, Pen a Estrada (29:54)
Personnel: Vinicius Cantuaria, guitars, vocals, drums, keyboards, percussion; Jesse Harris, vocals (7); Ryuichi Sakamoto, piano (2, 4); Norah Jones, piano (6); Mario Laginha, keyboards (1); Bill Frisell, electric guitar (7, 8, 10); Liminha, electric bass (7); Dadi, electric guitar (10); Oliver Glissant, electric piano (5).
Ordering info: naive.fr



Little Women
Lung

AUM FIDELITY 076
★★★★★

Little Women ended its first album, *Throat*, with the group's four members screaming at the top of their lungs. *Lung* opens at the other end of the spectrum, with a minute of silence giving way to the sounds of quiet breathing. The music rises in a crescendo so slow that you don't even hear a guitar or horn until four minutes have passed. When they do enter, it's not with the wall of broken sound that dominated *Throat*, but with braided melodies so sweet that you might wonder if it's the same band.

But Little Women has not gone soft; the band has simply broadened its dynamic reach. When the hammer comes down, it comes down hard, and it strikes again and again. Stylistically, the musicians don't so much combine lyric free-jazz, wordless chant and sharp-angled rock as shove them into the ring and let them duke it out. It's what I'd like to think a band that includes Arthur Blythe, Pharoah Sanders and This Heat would sound like. But it's more. Little Women is a composing and playing collective, and the contrasts of mood, timbre and style that occur throughout *Lung* are quite thoughtfully placed. The effect is exhausting and exhilarating, an impressive expansion of the monolithic wooliness that Little Women indulged on its debut. —Bill Meyer

Lung: Lung, (42:13)
Personnel: Darius Jones, alto saxophone; Travis LaPlante, tenor saxophone; Jason Nazry, drums; Andrew Smiley, guitar.
Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

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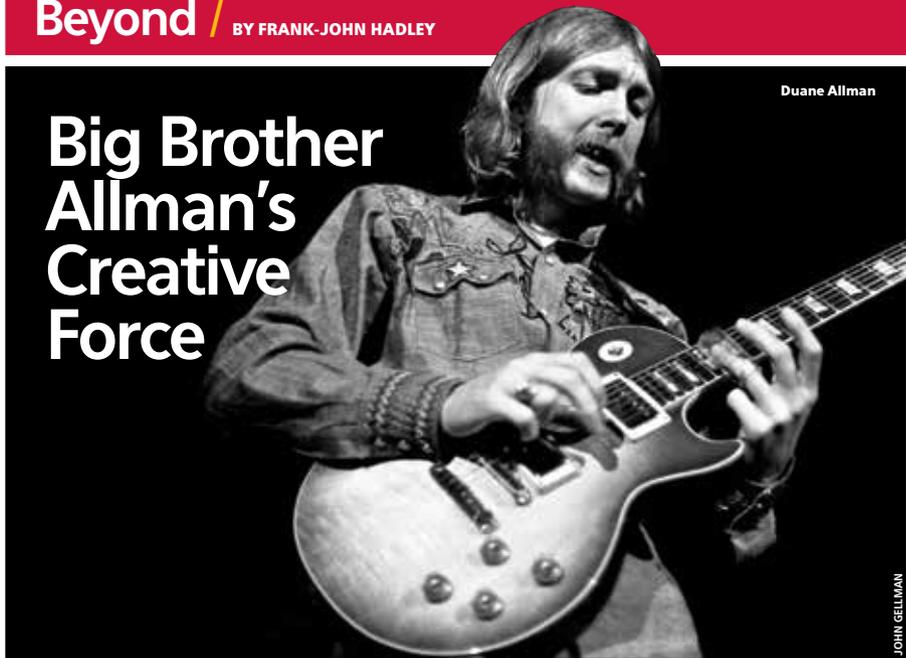
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Beyond / BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

Big Brother Allman's Creative Force



March 23, 1969, is an important date in American rock history. That's when a two-and-a-half-hour jam loosely organized by a 22-year-old hippie guitarist named Duane Allman took place in Jacksonville, Fla. Inspired by the extemporized shuffles, Allman placed phone calls to his younger brother Gregg, a singer and organ player trying to make it big in Los Angeles. Gregg agreed to return home to Florida, and before long these longhairs moved to Macon, Ga., and signed a record deal with Capricorn. Within two years, the Allman Brothers Band, with Duane at the helm, was hailed by the press as the top rock group in the country. But shortly before the hard-living sons of the South achieved massive popular success with a hit record, Duane perished in a motorcycle accident.

Even before the band took their vow to blues-rock, Duane Allman was established as a first-call session player in Muscle Shoals, Ala., and he had a professional relationship with Jerry Wexler at Atlantic. Almost 90 tracks from 30 or so various album sessions appear on the outstanding box set **Skydog: The Duane Allman Retrospective (Rouner 11661; 77-47/74-23/76-46/77-07/78-32/79-34/76-04 ★★★★★½)**. Little concerned with alternate studio takes and blind to many existing concert bootlegs, compilers Galadrielle Allman (Duane's daughter) and Bob Levenson also selected 21 Allman Brothers studio or live tracks, with disc one given to Duane's earlier bands. Showcased throughout the box is the sheer force of the guitarist's tremendous creative development.

Duane Allman was possessed of a fortissimo freedom of expression. Wearing a small glass medicine bottle on the ring finger of his left hand, the peerless slide player understood that technique was a means rather than an end as a soloist and accompanist. Tracks belonging to the mother lode of his brilliant playing are Clarence Carter's "The Road Of Love," soul screamer Wilson Pickett's version of "Hey Jude" and Boz Scaggs' extended 6/8 blues "Somebody Loan Me A Dime,"

which originated with Chicago blues great Fenton Robinson. Just as valuable is his playing on Aretha Franklin's rendition of "The Weight" and on Otis Rush's "Reap What You Sow." His seven-note riff on "Layla," by Eric Clapton's Derek & the Dominos, is, of course, world-famous.

A natural lefty who learned the guitar right-handed, Allman improved all record dates through creative acts of eminent domain: working with Clapton-sponsored Delaney & Bonnie, cult favorite Laura Nyro, his soul saxophonist friend King Curtis, roadhouse rocker Ronnie Hawkins, Otis Redding's protégé Arthur Conley, grit-voiced Laura Lee, the forgotten Bobby Lance, on and on. He even upgraded a Herbie Mann session.

Songs credited to Duane's pre-Allman Brothers groups reveal that even in his mid-teens he had the sense of self and ability to take lessons learned from close appraisals of blues and rock record albums and sift them through his own artistic imagination. Entertaining music came from the r&b-garage band Escorts, psychedelic Allman Joys and commercially DOA Hour Glass.

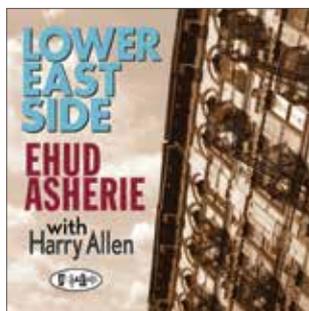
Beside his every-note-matters solos, the Allman Brothers' studio and concert tracks have much to offer: Duane Allman and guitarist Dickey Betts playing together in harmony, Berry Oakley's melodic bass, Gregg Allman's distinctive vocals and organ, the interplay of the drummers Jaimoe and Butch Trucks. The band reached a zenith at the Fillmore East in early 1971. "In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed" seems to have taken the musicians into an otherworldly, incredible zone of modal improvisation.

The Long Island concert tracks that close the chronologically ordered song collection are far less thrilling than the four taped Fillmore performances due to the weariness shown by several band members. Tours and drugs had taken a toll on the group. Duane Allman came out of rehab ready for more music, but his days were numbered. One of rock's saddest was his passing on Oct. 29, 1971. **DB**
Ordering info: rouner.com

Ehud Asherie with Harry Allen
Lower East Side

POSI-TONE 8103
★★★★½

Joy abounds on this bracing saxophone-piano outing. Harry Allen powers his hearty tenor saxophone improvisations atop and aside Ehud Asherie's expressive piano accompaniments on a snappy program of show tunes. The two exhib-



glee club member

then blasting off into a swag-

gering improvisation. Asherie returns to favor by pounding out a crisp, stride piano improvisation, marked by thick harmonies and percussive rhythm. The duo brings just the right amount of intrigue to Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Portrait In Black And White," with Allen's raspy saxophone alternating between whispers to declarative statements underneath Asherie's empathic accompaniment.

—John Murph

Lower East Side: S'posin'; Hallelujah!; Portrait In Black And White; Hey There; Thou Swell; Some Other Time; Thanks A Million; 'Deed I Do; Loads Of Love; Always; When I Grow Too Old To Dream. (58:46)
Personnel: Ehud Ashere, piano; Harry Allen, tenor saxophone.
Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Craig Taborn Trio
Chants

ECM 2326
★★★★½

The songs on Craig Taborn Trio's latest CD, *Chants*, have titles, but they don't have borders, or ordinary structures, or typical narrative flow. The songs are positively shimmering, immaculately detailed, prismatic and very improvisational. But they don't live quickly or land easily; they flutter and spiral, bend and float, and constantly surprise.

The opening track, "Saints," engrosses with its sense of forward motion, like a bicycle race through hilly countryside—but as quickly the song drops back into a lithe funk groove, retakes the road, then it's over. "Beat The Ground" percolates incessantly, deconstructs for a moment, then continues flight. You hear strains of Keith Jarrett, Paul Bley's rambles and Paul Motian's trios, even the urgency and repetition of some electronic music, but *Chants* is original to its core. And lovely, as in the lullaby like stillness of "In Chant," Taborn's stately, sad acoustic piano lines wrapping around double bassist Thomas Morgan's lyrical lines and Gerald Cleaver's sizzling brush strokes. "Hot Blood" rumbles like an earthquake, an anticipatory funk groove rattling the trio's innards like a mechanical-bird feeding frenzy. These songs sprout suddenly and bloom, then evaporate, into stillness.

—Ken Micallef

Chants: Saints; Beat The Ground; In Chant; Hot Blood; All True Night/Future Perfect; Cracking Hearts; Silver Ghosts; Silver Days Or Love; Speak The Name. (64:55)

Personnel: Craig Taborn, piano; Gerald Cleaver, drums; Thomas Morgan, double bass.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

"ONE OF THE GREATEST AND MOST UNDEREXPOSED MUSICIANS IN THE HISTORY OF JAZZ."
—HANK JONES

Backed by an all-star cast, Bob Mover shines with extraordinary artistry as both saxophonist and vocalist on this stellar double-disc collection.

Featuring: Kenny Barron, Bob Cranshaw, Steve Williams, Josh Evans, Steve Hall, and Victor Lewis.

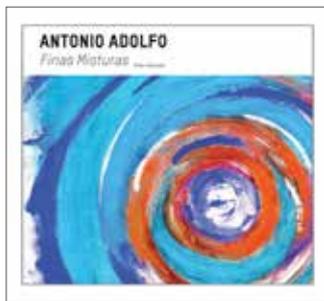
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A MOTEMA TENTH ANNIVERSARY RELEASE

Antonio Adolfo
Finas Misturas
(Fine Mixtures)

AAM 0705
 ★★★★★



Pianist Antonio Adolfo appears as a Brazilian mystic on this deceptive disc of jazz standards and original material. At first recalling a side order at some smooth-jazz brunch, *Finas Misturas* deceives with its coolness, its dance-like rhythms and sense of weightlessness. But these masters know the power of subtlety, the magic of restraint. This isn't apparent until Adolfo's lithe version of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps," which seems an odd choice for a Brazilian sextet of two guitars, piano, tenor, bass and drums. Opener "Floresta Azul" twinkles and coos, its flute melody insinuating a sticky sweetness. The gentle cascade of piano notes that introduces the following "Balada" retains the "Bambi in the wood" mood. So it's a knockout when "Giant Steps" surges forth, the declarative melody and bubbling rhythm performed with vigor, drive and control. This is Coltrane elevated to cerebral intuitive force, the melody relayed with delicacy and power, its energy and interplay culminating in a delicious vamp laced with chattering conga and two-and-four fortification, and finally, sudden release. "Con Alma" is similarly recontextualized, Leo Amuedo's blissful electric guitar and Adolfo's piano figures creating an elastic tension. Adolfo's version of Bill Evans' "Time Remembered" is as clear as cut glass and jewel-like, its melody sculpted via piano and flute.

—Ken Micallef

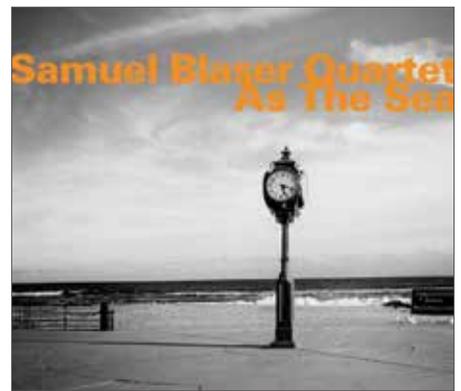
Finas Misturas: Floresta Azul (Blue Forest); Balada (Ballad); Giant Steps; Con Alma; Misturando (Mixing); Memories Of Tomorrow; Naima; Tres Meninos (Three Little Boys); Crystal Silence; Time Remembered. (57:25)

Personnel: Antonio Adolfo: piano; Leo Amuedo: electric guitar; Claudio Spiewak: acoustic guitar; Marcelo Martins: tenor saxophone, flute; Jorge Helder: double bass; Rafael Barata: drums and percussion.

Ordering info: aamusic.com

Samuel Blaser Quartet
As The Sea

HATOLOGY 718
 ★★★★★



Trombonist Samuel Blaser knows when he has a good thing going. The quartet that he first convened on his 2010 CD *Boundless* lived up to the album's title; whichever direction he wanted to go, they made it easier for him to get there.

Blaser has wisely taken this as license to raise the bar. Where *Boundless* was open-ended, garnering most of its excitement from the heat generated by players responding to each other, on *As The Sea* he's applied their talents to more complex compositions. A melody may be expressed not from one player's playing, but from the tones implied by twined guitar and trombone lines; productive tensions arises from the disorientation generated by guitarist Marc Ducret playing some rock-ish chords very quietly behind Gerald Cleaver's surging drums. The execution of these dynamic challenges is even more impressive because, according to the liner notes, they group had virtually no opportunity to rehearse. If the players made any missteps, they exploited them so adroitly that they became essential parts of the music.

Cleaver's playing is a marvel, managing the music's energy flow with the precision of a flight controller orchestrating a stacked-up formation of airplanes ready to land. Bassist Bänz Oester supplies a mixture of solid, unshowy support during ensemble passages and the tense but sure-footed sequence of unaccompanied strumming he uses to launch "Part 3." Blaser's own playing tends towards bold lines; even his textural growls impart essential melodic information. And in Blaser, Ducret has found a complementary partner who makes sense of his shifts between brute force and slippery filigree. This is a band to keep watching.

—Bill Meyer

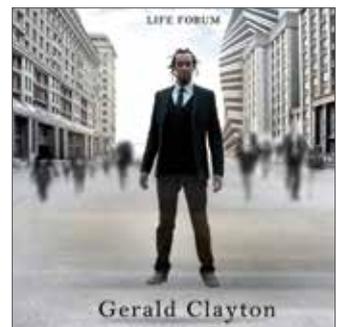
As The Sea: As The Sea, Part 1; As The Sea, Part 2; As The Sea, Part 3; As The Sea, Part 4. (51:14)

Personnel: Samuel Blaser, trombone; Marc Ducret, guitar; Bänz Oester, double bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

Ordering info: hathut.com

Gerald Clayton
Life Forum

CONCORD JAZZ 33770
 ★★★★★



In contrast to the gentle tone-poem bookends of "A Life Forum" and "When An Angel Sheds A Feather," most of pianist Gerald Clayton's third album as a sole leader teems with variegated ideas. While Clayton pursues writing for a mid-sized ensemble, the result is sometimes so busy that you yearn for an unadorned statement. At his best, Clayton can create a powerful group sound. "Some Always," which flows out of a blending of voices electronically tweaked to resemble an old radio, combines all the elements, with Ambrose Akinmusire playing a tart solo over the ensemble. More often, compositions like "Sir Third," "Future Reflection" and "Shadamanthem" seem like a series of rhythmic gestures and slippery tempos. *Life Forum* finds its gentle heart on "Deep Dry Ocean," a gorgeous combination of Gretchen Parlato's whispery vocals and the core trio, and on "Like Water," which features the disc's most fully realized melody.

—James Hale

Life Forum: A Life Forum; Future Reflection; Shadamanthem; Sir Third; Deep Dry Ocean; Dusk Baby; Mao Nas Massa; Prelude; Some Always; Like Water; Unbidden; When An Angel Sheds A Feather. (59:54)

Personnel: Gerald Clayton, piano, electric piano, organ, vocals; Gretchen Parlato, Sachal Vasandani, vocals; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Logan Richardson, alto saxophone; Dayna Stephens, tenor saxophone; Joe Sanders, bass; Justin Brown, drums; Carl Hancock Rux, spoken word.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

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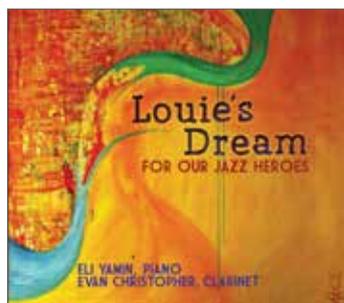
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**Eli Yamin/
Evan Christopher**
*Louie's Dream—For Our
Jazz Heroes*

YAMIN MUSIC 37574-8

★★★★



The trailblazing clarinet master Sidney Bechet, in his autobiography, *Treat it Gentle*, offered this advice about playing music: “You gotta mean it. And you gotta treat it gentle.” In these duets, New York-based pianist Eli Yamin and New Orleans clarinetist Evan Christopher do both.

The album is a loving tribute to the spirits of great, mostly departed jazz men and women—Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Mary Lou Williams and Barney Bigard among them—by two players who are steeped in the music’s roots. Yamin is a tradition-minded jazz/blues pianist, composer and educator; Christopher is a superb clarinetist whose rich, highly expressive playing shows the influence of Bechet (minus the deep vibrato) and Bigard. The duo format is a real test of rhythmic chops, which these two troupers pass easily. In the title cut, “Louie’s Dream,” a late Armstrong composition that establishes the set’s gently swinging tone, Yamin supports Christopher’s sweet melodicism with meaty chords and propulsive walking bass. It is followed by a rousing rendition of Duke Ellington’s “The Mooche”; it’s dedicated to Bigard, but Christopher’s swooping intro is reminiscent of Benny Goodman. Christopher’s own tune, “You Gotta Treat It Gentle,” a melancholy throwback to a bygone, pre-Katrina era, proves that sometimes they do write them like they used to. This grab-bag of an album also includes two ragtime-flavored songs from Yamin’s jazz musical *Holding the Torch for Liberty* (about the women’s suffrage movement) and a Thelonious Monk-inspired tribute to Amiri Baraka. Most rewarding of all is the seldom-recorded Ellington tune “Azalea,” which he wrote for Armstrong decades before they recorded it together. Its unforgettable melody and distinctive chromatic harmonies will be a revelation to many listeners.

—Allen Morrison

Louie's Dream—For Our Jazz Heroes: Louie's Dream; The Mooche; You Gotta Treat It Gentle; It's The Way That You Talk; Don't Go Back On Your Raisin'; What's Your Story Morning Glory; Azalea; My Jazz Hero, A Poem By Eli Yamin; Baraka 75; Let His Love Take Me Higher; Impromptu; Dancers In Love; Louie's Dream Reprise. (52:06)

Personnel: Eli Yamin, piano; Evan Christopher, clarinet.

Ordering info: eliyamin.com

Quest
Circular Dreaming

ENJA 9594

★★★★



It’s not unusual to hear bands play the songs composed—primarily by Wayne Shorter and Tony Williams—for Miles Davis’ mid-’60s quintet. But it’s rare to hear peers of Davis’ band members perform a full set of them, and do it this well. Billy Hart, Richie Beirach, Ron McClure and Dave Liebman each came of age during the heyday of Davis’ second great quintet, and Liebman went on to assume the saxophone chair with Davis. These songs, and the way the quintet stretched and manipulated them onstage, form a big part of their foundation. Approaching them as a co-operative quartet means channeling the music through five decades of collective experience. This results in non-reverential treatment of “Paraphernalia,” with frantic tenor, piano and drum solos, and “Footprints,” the rendering of which is closer in spirit to how Shorter’s current quartet performs it than how Davis recorded it. Liebman’s own “M.D.,” a tribute written while he was in Davis’ employ, is also spare and mysterious.

—James Hale

Circular Dreaming: Pinocchio; Prince Of Darkness; Footprints; M.D.; Hand Jive; Vernetta; Nefertitti; Circular Dreaming; Paraphernalia. (59:56)

Personnel: Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; Richie Beirach, piano; Ron McClure, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: enjarecords.com

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Stan Killian *Evoke*

SUNNYSIDE 4012

★★★★

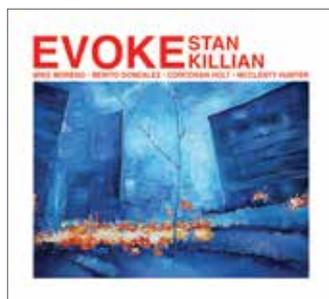
Stan Killian sounds older than his years. While the 32-year-old saxophonist had a keyboard-playing dad, Killian's alternate star here is guitarist Mike Moreno, who helps accelerate the mainstream vibe. Pianist Benito Gonzalez, like Moreno, shows up in ample fashion on the first cut, Killian's "Subterranean Melody," a kind of soft-rock melody that leaves lots of room for improvising, Gonzalez's turn coming during the band outro.

Killian seems to be an unabashed tenor player who likes to delve—as in group vibe but also just because he's a tenor player. The title track is a ballad that allows for more room, Killian's full-throated tenor less aggressive and more contemplative. It's a younger generation playing it straight-up, with no fancy, overly evocative turns, no switcheroos. "Echolalic" hints at a Pat Metheny tune, Moreno's guitar entry sending the song into its swinging waltz and Killian's mellow horn overtly stating the melody. —*John Ephland*

Evoke: Subterranean Melody; Evoke; Echolalic; Kirby; Beekman33; Observation; Hindu. (43:53)

Personnel: Stan Killian, tenor saxophone; Mike Moreno, guitar; Benito Gonzalez, piano; Corcoran Holt, bass; McClenty Hunter, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Michael Gallant Trio *Completely*

GALLANT MUSIC 003

★★★★

Midway through pianist (and DownBeat contributor) Michael Gallant's infectious and captivating *Completely*, a sizzling blend of jazz, funk, rock, r&b, a little pop and a dose of Baroque, the album puts one foot firmly in the 1990s. At the beginning of the tune, Linda Oh's popping, guttural electric bass takes off like a shot, and Gallant immediately turns up the tempo on Pearl Jam's "Go," giving the original, monotone melody propulsion and depth with quick hammered strokes on his electric piano. The boisterous approach is worlds away from how Brad Mehldau tackled a similarly anthemic grunge masterpiece, Soundgarden's "Black Hole Sun," but is no less effective. Mehldau took a path of deep melancholy and haunting reflection; Gallant's rocking "Go" is simply fun laid atop a base of exceptional musicianship.

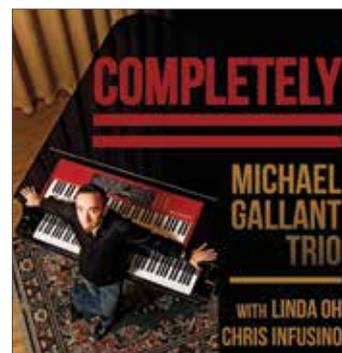
Gallant, Oh and drummer Chris Infusino have assembled a sound that can be both quirky and serious, soulful and light. "Go" is the only rock piece on the disc, but most of the originals avoid easy genre classification. The disc jumps from "Greens," an acoustic blues accompanied by churning bass and rock drumming, to the sensual "Cornelia Street Tango," with a halting rhythm in Gallant's left hand as he moves through a deliberate, stepwise melody with his right. "The Real Maria" opens with a slow funk groove driven by acoustic bass and scintillating snare drum hits, Gallant's bubbling piano and bright chord changes leading the way.

Gallant's soloing also morphs throughout the album. While he generally has a heavy hand on the piano, he might begin with sharp, single-note punches on the piano, developing into rubato bebop runs and finally finishing by percussively attacking the piano with a quick succession of ascending chords. —*Jon Ross*

Completely: Greens; Roundabout; Lightbulb; Go; Cornelia Street Tango; Problem With The Game; The Real Maria; Completely; Love You Better; Candlelight. (55:36)

Personnel: Michael Gallant, keyboards; Linda Oh, bass; Chris Infusino, drums.

Ordering info: gallantmusic.com



Scott Robinson *Creative Music For 3 Bass Saxophones*

SCIENSONIC

LABORATORIES 5503

★★★★

What might a curious listener expect from this captivating title? Surely not a Nick Brignola/Pepper Adams-like baritone summit bebop blowout; a bass sax ain't a bari. Perhaps a hearty, galumphing get-together, peppered with thoughtful moments amid swing and hard-sock passages? But, no: Robinson, a reedy polymath and devoted student, unfolds his paean to the endangered bass saxophone as a ruminative rhapsody, a meandering meditation.

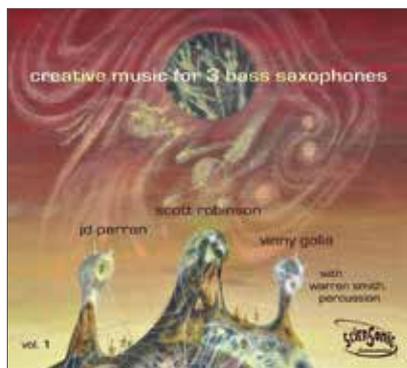
Mournful, introspective, prayerful, his largely through-composed elegy seems to both celebrate and mourn these noble creatures of a bygone era, earthy mastodons in the mist. He takes sweet time unveiling a breathy genesis before unleashing bellows from the deep: After all, Adolph Sax did not create this brass beast in a day. This perhaps excessively ruminative approach allows for neither grooves nor "classical" solo improvisations; there's little initial blending of the three horns, as if tetchy in close contact, like hippos in heat.

As the great creatures slowly awaken they string out cranky solo cadenzas (or creaky, grumbling recitatives) and slap-tongued baby elephant patter. When the three finally get to twining bottom melodies—"Interlude," halfway through—sparks do fly, abetted by Smith, whose wide kit provides throughout discreet foils in shimmering vibes, tricky pick-up-sticks, cymbal sheens. And the players certainly educe a marvelous, rarely heard curio-box of whinnies, grunts and adenoidal cantabiles from their grand horns, more from the school of Anthony Braxton than Vince Giordano. A socking, stuttering finale gives way to stunned applause at the Jazz Museum of Harlem, and a terse "Encore (Prayer)" regroups the three in a chorale. Saxophone mavens must have this disc; others may be grudgingly charmed by it. —*Fred Bouchard*

Creative Music For Three Bass Saxophones: Soliloquy; Prequel; Creative Music For Three Bass Saxophones: (Intro, #1, Interlude, #2, #3, #4a, #4b); Encore (Prayer). (49:47)

Personnel: Scott Robinson, J.D. Parran, Vinny Golia, bass saxophones; Warren Smith, drums.

Ordering info: sciensonic.net



Joe Clark Big Band *Lush*

JAZZED MEDIA 1060

★★★★

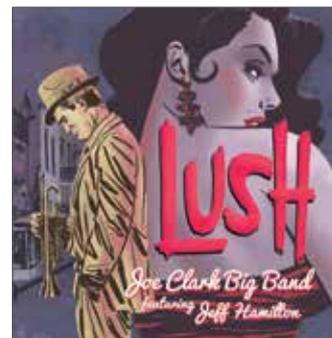
Five decades of listening to big bands have made one thing clear: If you don't have a kicking drummer, you don't have much.

Joe Clark Big Band, meet Jeff Hamilton. Clark, a Chicago arranger-for-hire, compares recording his debut big band album to pulling off a heist—with every member of the gang playing a specific role. Hamilton's role is akin to the veteran safecracker who can coolly suss out the successful combination regardless of how much noise is going on around him. The drummer propels "Well You Needn't" with a rippling second-line tempo, displays sharply percussive brushwork on "Samba De Martelo" and swings stealthily on Clark's nod to film noir, "Femme Fatale." Clark favors brassy assertiveness over darker subtlety, and you can hear the pull of Nelson Riddle in his range between stoic melancholy and exuberant release. —*James Hale*

Lush: Well You Needn't; Red Sky; Lush Life; Samba De Martelo; Free-Wheeling; Femme Fatale; Tenderly; Yesterday's Gardenias. (52:04)

Personnel: Brent Turney, Chuck Parrish, Victor Garcia, B.J. Cord, Joe Clark, trumpet, flugelhorn; Andy Baker, Tom Garling, Bryant Scott, trombone; Tom Matta, bass trombone; Corbin Andrick, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, clarinet; Dan Nicholson, alto saxophone, flute; Chris Madsen, Anthony Bruno, tenor saxophone, flute; Mark Hiebert, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Mike Pinto, guitar; Ryan Cohan, piano; Joe Policastro, bass; Jeff Hamilton, drums.

Ordering info: jazzedmedia.com



Jack Mouse Group Range Of Motion

ORIGIN 82633

★★★★

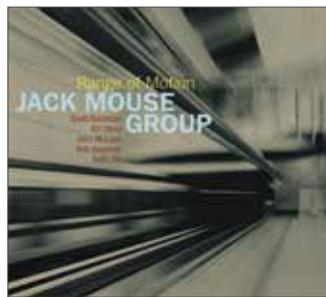
Drummer Jack Mouse's credits are a mile long, and the breadth of styles he has played is just as wide. Many of those styles are on display on his debut album as a leader. The album opens with a crisp ting-a-ling from Mouse's cymbal in homage to multi-reedist John LaPorta. His eight measures of unapologetic swing set the tone for much of the album. Tenor saxophonist Scott Robinson takes a breathless solo over guitarist John McLean's chordal support while trumpeter Art Davis introduces himself with a brief blast. Without benefit of piano, McLean's guitar is a constant presence and unfortunately so is his tone. He applies a chorus effect that can be an immense distraction to an otherwise organic sound from the rest of the band. "Hip Check," Mouse's homage to hockey great Bobby Orr, indulges McLean's spacey effects to maddening consequence, while "Manne-rism" is the most devoid of foot-driven guitar work. Mouse sets the pace with a little brushwork before the horns dance on a quick line.

—Sean O'Connell

Range Of Motion: LaPorta; Slow Helen; Winterset; Hip Check; Raucous Caucus; The Breezeling; Mean Streak; Prairie Dance; Manne-rism; Loose Weave. (63:07)

Personnel: Scott Robinson, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Art Davis, trumpet and flugelhorn; John McLean, guitar; Bob Bowman, bass; Kelly Sill, bass; Jack Mouse, drums.

Ordering info: origin-records.com



Marc Cary For The Love Of Abbey

MOTÉMA 122

★★★★

The raw emotional depth of Abbey Lincoln's music can be so intense as to render a listener sentient putty in her hands. Three years after her death at age 80, the first recording to honor her legacy wields a similar emotive capacity.

For his first-ever solo recording, the fiercely creative Marc Cary—Lincoln's pianist, arranger and student for more than a decade—revisits the Lincoln songs that he says in the liner notes "stuck with" him most. And while he successfully coaxes heaping doses of her lyrical meaning and her unique phrasing out of the keys, part of what makes the record so compelling is the absence of her voice on songs that are so recognizably hers. The result is a powerfully personal sonic representation of the relationship between two friends and collaborators; where Lincoln's spirit is audible, so is Cary's immense loss.

At the same time, *For The Love Of Abbey* (the title is a play on the title of her 1968 film *For The Love Of Ivy*) is about Lincoln's legacy, which thrives here in the fiery boldness of Cary's take on "Music Is The Magic" and in his pared-down delivery of the cosmic musings that drive "Conversation With A Baby." On "Who Used To Dance," Cary's performance shimmers with a Lincoln-esque ability to tackle nostalgia without sentimentality, sculpting blue chords and richly layered textures to reference the essence of the song's author while imbuing the music with his own rhythmic dynamism.

Rounding out the selections from Lincoln's catalog are Duke Ellington's "Melancholia" and two nimbly wrought Cary originals, "For Moseka" and "Transmutate," a short, contemplative piece that metamorphoses from a haunting and hovering low-register riff into a lighter and fluttering right-hand close. Birdlike, that penultimate track sounds like the act of letting go.

—Jennifer Odell

For The Love Of Abbey: Music Is The Magic; Down Here Below; Melancholia; For Moseka; Who Used To Dance; Should've Been; My Love Is You; Love Evolves; Throw It Away; Another World; I'm Called Home; Conversation With A Baby; Transmutate; Down Here Below The Horizon. (65:39)

Personnel: Marc Cary, piano.

Ordering info: motema.com



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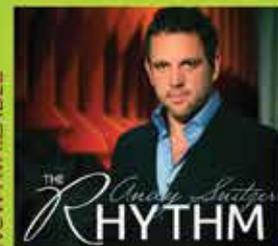
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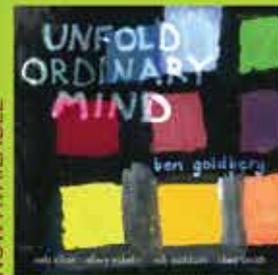
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Kaki King *Glow*

VELOUR 1206
★★★★

Glow is an apt description of what this music does, a sonic alliteration of the universe that seems to seep out of Kaki King's storied and studied relationship with her guitars. *Glow* offers no real breaks from previous works, like *Red*. Instead, what is offered are more in-depth meditations on what a virtuoso can and does do with her instruments, which include not just her guitars, percussion and "things," but, by extension, musical colleagues on such varied instruments as EVI,

bagpipes and the string quartet ETHEL (on half of the tunes here).

Playing Ovation guitars and a curious mix of chords and single notes, her writing somehow allows her to play both without leaning on convention, the music many times like a soundtrack as much as a song, at times feeling like thought fragments as well as mood pieces.

"Great Round Burn" is all strumming, the music forthright, furthered along by the vibrancy of the quartet. Insistent, it becomes a great opening only to be swallowed up by the true tenor of *Glow* with the dreamy cadences of "Streetlight In The Egg," a hint of that initial energy still driving everything, laced by Dan Brantigan's backgrounds on EVI. "Cargo Cult" is an echo of previous efforts, what with its soft rhythmic propulsion and chords, the seemingly weightless fretboard work, her gait-like percussives a fresh addition. "Kelvinator, Kelvinator" gives us more of those ins and outs to King's writing and arranging, the strings keeping close cover as more percussion and atmospherics envelope the stops and starts, the nooks and crannies, these latter two tunes played with open tunings. —John Ephland

Glow: Great Round Burn; Streetlight In The Egg; Bowen Island; Cargo Cult; Kelvinator, Kelvinator; Fences; No True Masterpieces Will Ever Be Complete; Holding The Severed Self; Skimming The Fractured Surface To A Place Of Endless Light; King Pizel; The Fire Eater; Marche Slav. (41:57)

Personnel: Kaki King, guitars, percussion, things; Dan Brantigan, EVI (2); Richmond Johnston, bagpipes (10); ETHEL (1, 5, 7, 12); Ralph Ferris, viola; Dorothy Lawson, cello; Tema Weststein, Patti Kilroy, violin; D. James Goodwin, additional sounds.

Ordering info: kakiking.com



Lucas Santtana *The God Who Devastates Also Cures*

MAIS UM DISCOS 014
★★★★

On most of the albums he's made since first emerging in 1999, Brazilian pop polymath Lucas Santtana has set intriguing contexts in which to create music—whether that meant building his tunes around funk, dub, or making every non-vocal sound using only an acoustic guitar. For his terrific new album, Santtana dropped the conceptual underpinnings, and he's delivered a modern gem of the sprawling genre known as Brazilian Popular Music.

Supported by some of his homeland's most versatile and creative musicians (drummer Marcelo Callado and bassist Ricardo Dias Gomes have been regular sideman with Caetano Veloso, and Kassín is one of Brazil's most inventive producers), Santtana couches his catchy melodies within dynamic, detail-rich arrangements. While certain tunes cling to samba and bossa nova, Santtana's gently insinuating vocals almost always embrace the latter form's emphasis on sophisticated phrasing and meticulous pitch control, whether he's experimenting with reggae or rock, frevo or brega. On a cover of Tom Zé's "Músico," Santtana's gets sensual support from Céu's languid backing vocals and jacked-up electronic beats from Curumin, while woozy chopped-up strings punctuate melancholy falsetto balladry of "Jogos Madrugais," which fades away into dubby waves of sound. —Peter Margasak

The God Who Devastates Also Cures: O Deus Que Devasta Mas Também Cura; Música; Jogos Madrugais; É Sempre Bom se Lembrar; Tanto Faz; Ele é Belém; Vamos Andar Pela Cidade; Now No One Has Anything; Se Pá Ska S.P.; O Paladino e Seu Cavalo Altar; Dia de Furar Onda no Mar; Para Onde Irá Essa Noite? (48:13)

Personnel: Lucas Santtana, vocals, harmonium, edits, flutes, monome, acoustic guitar, synthesizers, cavaquinho, xylophone, melotron; Ricardo Dias Gomes, bass (1, 3, 9–12); Marcelo Callado, drums (1, 3, 4, 9–12); Marcos Lobato, Fender Rhodes, vibraphone (1, 4); Bruno Buarque, drums, MPC (2, 5, 7, 8); Marcos Gerez, bass (2); Gustavo Ruiz, guitar (2); Mauricio Fleury, synthesizers (2, 5, 8); Gustavo Benção, guitars, bass (3, 9–12); Lucas Vasconcellos, synthesizers, harp, organ (3, 9–12); Ceu, vocals (2); Curumin, MPC (2); Kassín, acoustic bass, synthesizers (4); Gui Amabis, bass (4); Caetano Malta, bass, acoustic guitar (5, 8); Gilberto Monte, electronic programming (6); Nairo Elo, octapad (6); Lucas Martins, synth bass (8); Andre Becker, flute (1); Claudia Sales, bassoon (1); Pedro Robertto, clarinet (1); Jão Teoria, flugelhorn (1); Josely Saldanha, horns (1); Gilmar Chaves, trombone (1); Adailson Rodrigues, bass trombone (1); Hudson Lima, cello (4); Guizado, trumpets (7); Ely, trombones (7); David Cole, EFX (9); Moroto Slim, guitar (9); Leandro Joaquim, trumpet (9); Marco Serragrande, trombone (9).

Ordering info: maisumdiscos.com

Miho Hazama *Journey To Journey*

SUNNYSIDE 1344
★★★★

The unconventional big band—featuring instrumentation beyond the prevailing brass and reeds, and rhythm that floats and roils as well as swings—is on the rise. Contemporary bandleader/composers like Darcy James Argue and John Hollenbeck have broadened the landscape, and *Journey To Journey* illustrates that Japanese pianist Miho Hazama has joined their ranks.

A graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, Hazama includes a string quartet as a core element of her ensemble, and constantly juxtaposes horn lines against thorny string harmonies and stuttering tempos. When she does resort to them, standard big band techniques—like the dramatic, staccato build at the end of "What Will You See When You Turn The Next Corner?"—sound fresh. Her arrangement of Lady Gaga's "Paparazzi" is a showcase of Hazama's diversity, with Cam Collins' bluesy alto contrasted against dark-hued French horn and James Shipp's vibes solo taking flight above a charging bass line.

As a composer, Hazama is somewhat more orthodox, although her scope extends to jazz and contemporary classical traditions. Her "Hidamari," with its underlying ostinato and yearning melody, displays a pop lyricism, while "Believing In Myself" has the kind of fragmented



phrasing and rapid motion favored by numerous composers of modern string pieces. Like many debut recordings by ambitious artists, *Journey To Journey* contains a panoply of ideas. To her credit, Hazama makes it cohesive. —James Hale

Journey To Journey: Mr. O; Tokyo Confidential; Blue Forest; Journey To Journey; Paparazzi; Believing In Myself; Ballad; What Will You See When You Turn The Next Corner?; Hidamari. (65:51)

Personnel: Miho Hazama, conductor, piano (4, 6); Ryoji Ihara (1–5, 7–9), flute, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; Cam Collins (1–5, 7–9), alto saxophone, clarinet; Steve Wilson (4), alto saxophone; Andrew Gutauskas (1–5, 7–9), bass clarinet, baritone saxophone; Philip Dizack (1–5, 7–9), trumpet, flugelhorn; Bert Hill (1–5, 7–9), French horn; Mark Feldman, Joyce Hammann, violin; Lois Martin, viola; Meaghan Burke, cello; James Shipp (1, 3–5, 7–9), Stefan Harris (2), vibraphone; Sam Harris (1–3, 5, 7–9), piano; Sam Anning (1–5, 7–9), bass; Jake Goldbas, drums; Chris Reza (4), conductor.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Jack DeJohnette

ANDREAS GEMASSIGN RECORDS

Jack DeJohnette Strutted Through Early Editions

The early 1980s may be best remembered for the rise of tradition-minded Wynton Marsalis, but it was also a fertile time for creative ensembles deftly balancing the composed and improvised. John Carter, David Murray and Anthony Davis had their different octets, the World Saxophone Quartet was going strong and Jack DeJohnette had his celebrated Special Edition. Their first four 1979–1984 albums are collected as *Special Edition* (ECM 2296–99; 39:31/47:32/39:53/42:47 ★★★★★½). The first was an instant classic, the fourth nearly as good, and the others have their moments.

The debut Special Edition laid out most of the possibilities: infectious riffy tunes (“One For Eric,” “Zoot Suite”), two hot saxophonists ready to bat lines back and forth (the young David Murray on tenor and bass clarinet, late bloomer Arthur Blythe on alto), a great drum and bass tandem (DeJohnette and the already seasoned Peter Warren, mistaken for a newcomer in the notes; Warren delivers an earworm of a descending bass line on “Zoot Suite”). There were also episodes when DeJohnette picked up electric melodica to fill out the winds, Warren bowed his bass or cello and the band morphed into a chamber quartet, as on a pastel setting of John Coltrane’s ballad “Central Park West” and the long final episode of “Journey To The Twin Planet.” The latter is a prime example of minimalism’s influence on jazz as the ‘80s dawned: the slowly overlapping rhythm cycles and repeated phrases owe more to ‘70s Steve Reich than catatonic riffing r&b, even with Blythe improvising free obbligatos on top.

Warren was back for 1980’s *Tin Pan Alley*, with young lions Chico Freeman and John Purcell on reeds and flute, and at least one more memorable anthem (the title track) and tone poem (“Pastel Rhapsody,” with a fetching Freeman solo—he learned more than a little from his papa Von). As before DeJohnette and Warren (who penned the catchy “Riff Raff”) make a superb, springy rhythm

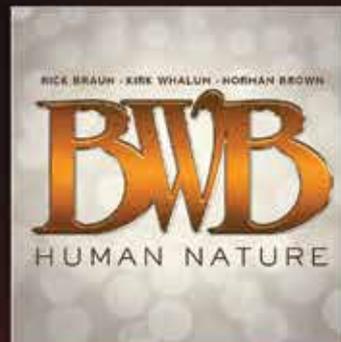
section, clearly marking out the forms even as they prod the horns. The backbeat-driven “I Know” with Purcell riffing on baritone swaggers like vintage World Saxophone Quartet, but it does go on and on, the back half padded out with DeJohnette’s rambly/mumbly verbal interjections and canned applause. DeJohnette’s overdubbed percussion and organ hoedown “Gri Gri Man” feels like filler.

There were more loose jams and laggard moments on ‘82’s *Inflation Blues*, the weakest of these discs, with Warren out and the equally reliable Rufus Reid in and Baikida Carroll often joining in on trumpet. As in DeJohnette’s mostly forgotten early ‘70s band Compost, he occasionally felt the urge to sing, reviving that band’s “Inflation Blues” with a dub reggae beat, though as blues singer and lyricist he comes off like an even feebler John Mayall. “Ebony” with one of Jack’s maddeningly memorable hooks is the keeper.

Album Album from ‘84 marked a return to form, with three horns this time: Purcell on alto and soprano, Murray returning on tenor and Howard Johnson on bari and tuba. “Ahmad The Terrible”—for Ahmad Jamal, another Chicagoan who knows about smart grooving jazz with poppy appeal—pinpoints one compositional element the drummer was fond of: reprising a previously heard section at a different tempo. (He’d used it on “One For Eric.”) The pungent close voicings blaze brightly, not least on the jolly “Festival,” another Compost retread, abetted by DeJohnette’s loopy synth overdubs. Johnson’s poignant setting of Thelonious Monk’s “Monk’s Mood” for three saxes, melodica and bass is a springboard for Murray’s tough/tender solo. The tenor saxophonist sounds better still on yet another catchy strut, “Third World Anthem,” where at one point his fellow horns yelp like cowhands headed for town. “Zoot Suite” comes back to let us hear how Murray has grown in five years, and to give Reid a crack at that classic scalar bass line.

DB

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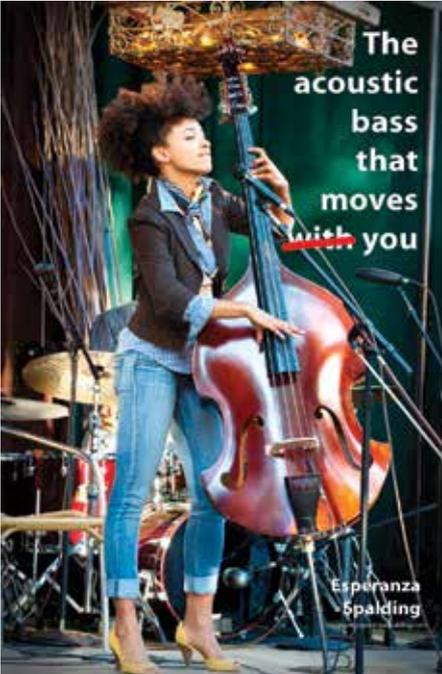
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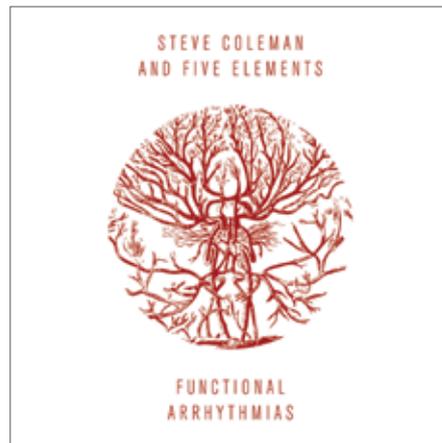
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Steve Coleman And Five Elements
Functional Arrhythmias

PI RECORDINGS 47
★★★★½

It would be nearly impossible to come up with a more literal embodiment of the twin virtues of head and heart in music than the concept behind Steve Coleman's latest CD. On *Functional Arrhythmias*, Coleman takes inspiration from the irregular rhythms of the human heartbeat, which he develops into typically cerebral, contortionist compositions.

The latest version of Coleman's long-running band Five Elements retains trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, who has proved particularly adept at navigating the tricky bends in the composer's stream-of-consciousness melodies. The pair can intertwine like a double helix and then unravel, darting and weaving in an intricate and inexplicable dance. They're joined by bassist Anthony Tidd and drummer Sean Rickman, both veterans of the group's late-'90s incarnation making a welcome return. Tidd has long split his time between leading-edge jazz and hip-hop, producing high-profile acts like The Roots and The Black-Eyed Peas; his restlessly wandering bass lines often serve as the elastic spine for these pieces, lending them a throaty vigor and an elusive funk core. Rickman is constantly shifting and evolving to keep the tunes aloft; he courses and bursts with the tidal pulse and violent unpredictability of waves breaking on rocks. The quartet is supplemented on five of the tracks by guitarist Miles Okazaki, whose taut contributions are as textural as they are fluid: rough-hewn silk on "Lymph Swag (Dance of the Leukocytes)," bristling and curt on "Adrenal, Got Ghost." Most of the compositions on *Functional Arrhythmias* were transcribed from Coleman's improvisations, so the generally brief pieces seem to accrue layers of spontaneity, the melodies as daring and unpredictable as the improvisations.

—Shaun Brady

Functional Arrhythmias: Sinews; Medulla-Vagus; Chemical Intuition; Cerebrum Crossover; Limbic Cry; Cardiovascular; Respiratory Flow; Irregular Heartbeats; Cerebellum Lean; Lymph Swag (Dance Of The Leukocytes); Adrenal, Got Ghost; Assim-Elim; Hormone Trig; Snap-Sis. (63:45)

Personnel: Steve Coleman, also saxophone; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Anthony Tidd, bass; Sean Rickman, drums; Miles Okazaki, guitars (tracks 2, 6, 8, 10, 11).

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Soul-Blues Singers Redefine, Reinvalidate Their Legacy

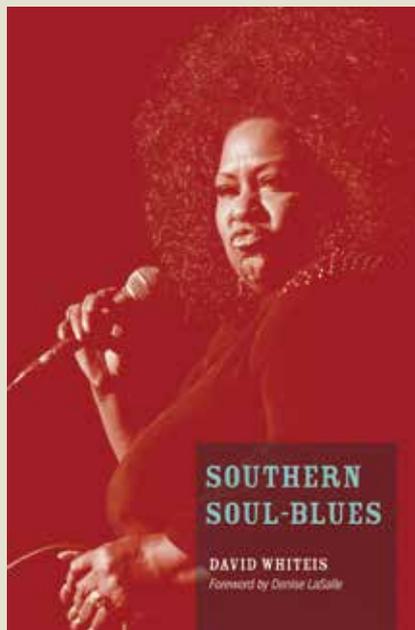
Singers like Z.Z. Hill, Willie Clayton, Peggy Scott-Adams and Denise LaSalle are part of a movement called "soul-blues," a genre misunderstood by many. Fans of one think it's too much of the other. Mary J. Blige's contemporary soul audience might think it's too down-home. Stevie Ray Vaughan's blues-rockin' listeners consider it too slick (and wonder where the guitar solos are). Even the performers themselves always had doubts about the genre: Chicago-based Tyrone Davis famously proclaimed to all that he was "not a blues singer," even though his predominantly black following disagreed. When you've got one foot on both sides of the line, not everybody "gets" it. David Whiteis does a solid job examining the phenomenon in his new book, *Southern Soul-Blues* (University of Illinois Press).

Whiteis has covered juke-joint soul-blues extensively for magazines like *DownBeat*, the *Chicago Reader* and *Living Blues*. He's always aware that there was more to the blues public image than a Flying V guitar cranked up to ten. The soul-blues, or "Southern soul" world, centers not only around the vocalist, but the stories told. While songs about infidelity are commonplace, there is room for mature insights into romantic relationships and the world in general. Through a series of interviews with the genre's major players, Whiteis reveals what makes the genre tick, from the audience to the record labels.

While Whiteis does discuss longtime veterans like Louisiana native Bobby Rush and Tennessean Latimore, to his credit he spends significant time on the relative up-and-comers. Modern Southern soul has long been a refuge for r&b acts who no longer get major-market airplay, but there are younger performers coming up in the style as well, like Sweet Angel and Sir Charles Jones. Both singers obviously grew up in a hip-hop universe, but were enthralled by the sounds of the juke joint. Whiteis rightfully concedes that a niche-based genre like Southern soul is the music of usually small independent labels (the late Marvin Sease being a notable exception, as just about all of his product appeared on actual mainstream majors like London and Jive). But he also notes that this music does not have the trendy cachet of indie-rock or dance music, pushing it farther back in the corner.

Even with this going against it, there still is a sizable industry behind the sound. Trends are noted, younger acts try to connect Southern soul with the mainstream world, and in some cases, younger artists are rejected by older label heads. Sir Charles Jones recounts how, at the age of 26, he was rejected by Malaco Records for not sounding anything like Johnnie Taylor; this condemnation led to Jones creating a newer kind of sound—drawing on r&b influences as he interpreted them—that he claims spans the

generations. Although this could be seen as the extension of the same sound, Jones was forced



to call his music "Southern soul," partially to defend himself from unfair comparisons to older performers, but also to draw younger faces to Southern blues revues.

"You can go to my show and see an 80-year-old lady and her daughter, or a niece, or her grandchild might be sitting next to her, she might be 19 or 20," Jones said. "It started a new trend, brought a lot of the younger generation over to what we do. That's the reason why I said 'Southern soul' instead of 'soul-blues.' Just to give it a new flavor, let 'em know it's more youth, too, enjoying this music."

So far he, and similar performers, have succeeded, but it should be mentioned that the appeal appears to be strictly regional, heard mainly in the South and Midwest. While Southern soul probably won't knock Rihanna off the radio, the music does incorporate just enough of a current influence.

In these times, the blues world is wide-ranging enough to incorporate quite a few diffuse influences. However, there is no doubting that the black and white blues crowds are two different worlds. Nowadays there are exactly two acts who attract both whites and blacks equally: Otis Clay (covered in the book) and B.B. King. When blues is dealt with in the media, it's usually slanted toward the higher-profile acts (both black and white) that appeal to Caucasians. *Southern Soul-Blues* proves that African-Americans have not deserted the blues, but rather redefined it for newer eras.

DB

Ordering info: press.uillinois.edu



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São Paulo
Underground

"Rob Mazurek returns to Brazil and floats his cool blue cornet over a spellbinding collage of saturated textures, syncopated rhythms and sundry electronics." — *Time Out Chicago*



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Bassekou Kouyate & Ngoni Ba
Jama Ko

OUT HERE 021
★★★★

On the eve of recording his new album, Malian ngoni master Bassekou Kouyate and his fellow musicians got word that Bamako had experienced a military coup and that Kouyate's good friend, President Amadou Toumani Touré, had been stripped of power. The musicians were shocked and unsettled, but they carried on with their recording plans even if the intensity and volume were driven up by the tension. Montreal producer Howard Bilerman had flown in for the ses-

sions, and while he and some fellow Canadian musicians play on a handful of tracks, he exerted a light touch, only capturing the rich lattice of stringed instruments with more clarity and depth than ever before.

Jama Ko features a new Ngoni Ba lineup, now with two of Kouyate's sons on board, but the basic sound hasn't changed much, although the kit drumming of Andrew Barr on three songs definitely jacks up the energy. Deep, cycling grooves, extended improvisation on a range of ngonis and declamatory singing pulse at the center of the sound field, with a variety of instrumental accents giving the recording extra flavor—from some subtle organ swells by Dominic "Mocky" Salole or buzzing balafon and doun doun inflections by Basidi Koné. On "Wagadou," a sparse array of strings during the verse releases tension in the instrumental chorus with a unison strike of piano and glockenspiel notes. —Peter Margasak

Jama Ko: Jama Ko; Sinaly; Dankou; No Me Fatigue Pas; Kele Magni; Madou; Kensogni; Mali Koori; Wagadou; Djadje; Segu Jajiri; Poye 2; Moustafa. (58:01)

Personnel: Bassekou Kouyate, solo ngoni; Amy Sacko, vocals; Abou Sissoko, ngoni medium; Moustafa Kouyate, ngoni ba; Mamadou Kouyate, ngoni bass; Moctar Kouyate, calabash; Mahamadou Tounkara, yabara, karingam, tama; Zoumana Tereta, vocals (3, 7, 8); Kassé Mady Diabaté, vocals (2); Khaira Arby, vocals (5); Harouna Samaké, kamele ngoni (3); Lassana Diabate, balafon (2); Basidi Koné, balafon, doun doun (8); Mah Sourmano, backing vocals (2, 4–6, 11); Diarmy Sacko, backing vocals (1, 2, 4, 6, 11); Madou Koné, tama (1, 7); Dominic "Mocky" Salole, organ, glockenspiel, piano, drums, double bass (4, 9, 12); Andrew Barr, drums (1, 4, 11); Brad Barr, guitar (11); Howard Bilerman, cymbals, tambourine, (1); Taj Mahal, vocals, guitar (12); Fousseyni Kouyate, ngoni ba (1, 9); Abou Sissoko, ngoni solo, vocals (2, 5, 13); Bina Diabate, ngoni ba (3, 5–7, 10); Moussa Sissoko, yabara (9); Alou Sangare, calabash (9, 12); Moussa Ba, ngoni bass (9, 12).

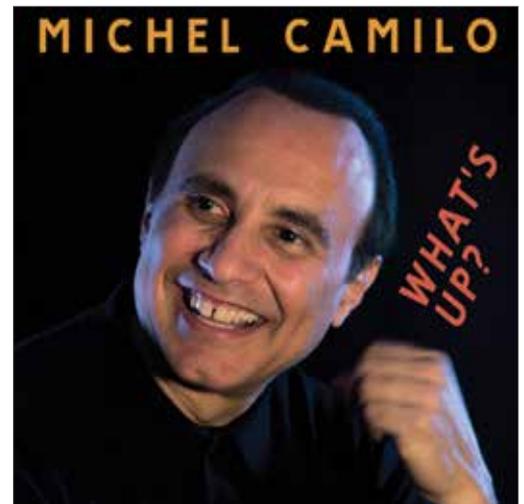
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Michel Camilo
What's Up?

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★★★

Michel Camilo established himself as a leader and composer 28 years ago. Over the subsequent 18 albums he released, Camilo recorded as the leader of his own trio, at the helm of larger ensembles and in duet configurations. But he only approached the solo genre once. In 2005, on his first recording without a backing band, Camilo performed a range of original compositions, relying heavily on well-trod standards, giving bluesy, stride inflections to George Gershwin, Antônio Carlos Jobim and others.

Despite the nearly decade-long intermission between solo performances, *What's Up?* is as fiery as his previous unaccompanied release. He leans more on original work this time around, but sprinkles in faithful readings of "Take Five" and "Love For Sale," his crisp, deliberate attack fully articulating familiar melodies. This methodical approach to swing can sometimes sound a bit stuffy, but his solos prove Camilo is a master technician. On "Take Five," he roams up and down the keyboard in dizzying arrays of 16th notes while keeping a steady ostinato in his left hand before a segue into hammered-on chords through a percussive attack on the keyboard. Rhythm and percussion are at the root of everything he plays, and he imbues every passage with a forward, rolling motion.



Camilo's renderings of uptempo tunes are lively enough to compensate for his lack of a band, but on ballads, the omission of complementary instruments creates a set of fragile, gentle tunes. "Sandra's Serenade" is an intimate, cautious piece where Camilo's gentle touch and use of rubato make keys ring out like bell tones. Slowly interlocking passages blend together, creating a lush sonic landscape compressed into a quiet dynamic range. —Jon Ross

What's Up?: What's Up?; A Place In Time; Take Five; Sandra's Serenade; Island Beat; Alone Together; Paprika; Love For Sale; Chan Chan; On Fire; At Dawn. (52:47)

Personnel: Michel Camilo, piano.

Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

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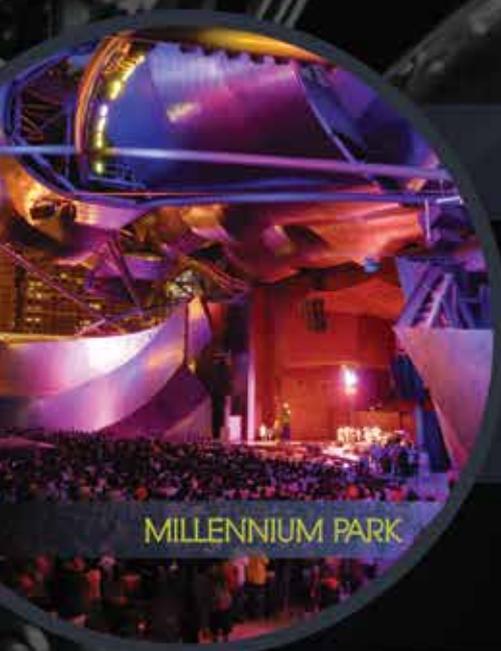


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The ART of the ARCHTOP

A Classic Design Endures as the Choice of Jazz Guitarists

By Keith Baumann

THE ORIGINS OF THE MODERN GUITAR CAN BE TRACED BACK HUNDREDS, if not thousands, of years. But for many jazz players, the most important date in the instrument's long history is 1897, when Orville Gibson introduced the first carved archtop guitar. Since then, the archtop has made an undeniable impact on the evolution of jazz and popular music. Surviving radical shifts in musical taste and huge technological advancements, this uniquely American innovation has steadily held its own and continues to maintain a fiercely loyal following among players and luthiers who appreciate its strong tradition and also understand its continually evolving and limitless potential.

Gibson broke new ground when he applied traditional Italian violin-making techniques to the construction of fretted instruments in order to achieve greater clarity and projection. In the early 1900s, the newly formed Gibson Company produced guitars and mandolins that featured carved tops and backs, X-pattern bracing, floating bridges and an oval-shaped sound hole. In 1922, hoping to boost sagging sales, Gibson hired acoustic engineer Lloyd Loar to redesign the company's offerings. Loar made several key modifications to Orville's original designs, adding violin-style f-holes, parallel bracing bars, elongated fingerboards and tap-tuned carved tops to maximize responsiveness. Although he was with Gibson for a few brief years, Loar's two instruments, the F5 Master Model mandolin and the L5 Master Model archtop guitar, became part of the fabric of American music—with the F5 mandolin sculpting the sound of bluegrass music in the hands of Bill Monroe and the L5 guitar becoming the de facto standard for jazz guitarists worldwide.

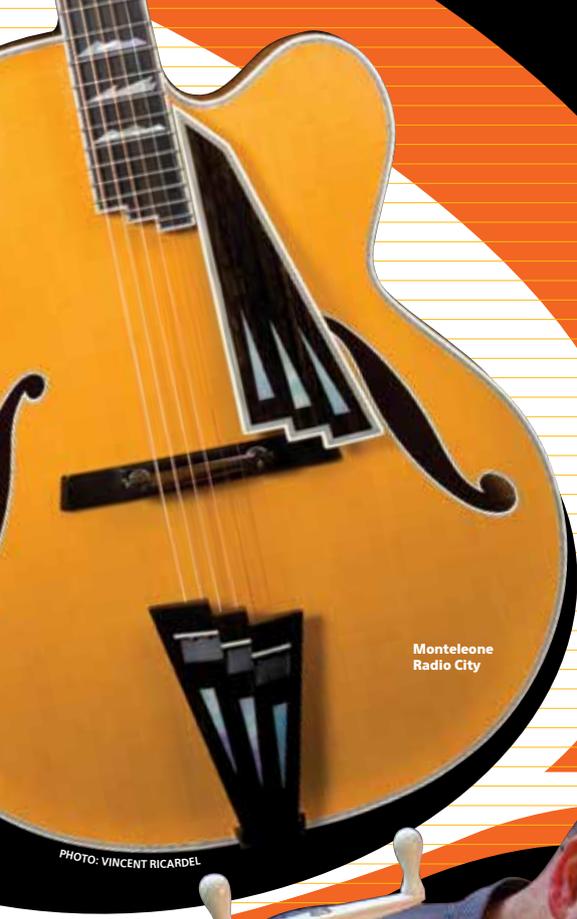
Engineered to cut through the volume of a large orchestra, the L5 was designed as an acoustic rhythm instrument. It was so successful that with-

in a few short years the archtop had completely replaced the tenor banjo as the jazz musician's rhythm tool of choice. Gibson and other manufacturers continued to refine the archtop by increasing body size for more volume and adding cutaways for higher fret access. Eventually magnetic pickups were added to the archtop, allowing it to be featured as a solo instrument. The unique tone produced by amplifying a fully acoustic guitar endures to this day as the heart and soul of the jazz guitar sound.

Many guitar builders have followed in Gibson and Loar's footsteps over the last 116 years. Numerous manufacturers and luthiers simply copied the original Loar designs, but others took their own paths, creating instruments tailored to the needs of the constantly evolving jazz musician. New York's John D'Angelico and his apprentice Jimmy D'Aquisto were among the most well-known and respected luthiers who pushed the envelope of modern archtop design, inspiring a whole new generation of builders.

Even though the archtop represents a relatively small niche in today's overall guitar market, there is a surprisingly large number of luthiers current-





Monteleone
Radio City

PHOTO: VINCENT RICARDEL

Frank Vignola
plays a Thorell
FV Studio.

PHOTO: RAY TIGGART



Wilkie 16-inch
Northern Flyer



PHOTO: EMILY CHARETTE



Bob Benedetto
literally wrote the
book on how to
build an archtop.
Left: carving a
45th anniversary
Benedetto guitar
headstock.





ly devoted to the art of hand-building custom archtop instruments. In addition, several established guitar manufacturers now feature a selection of archtop models within their product lines. To gain insight into the instrument's subtle nuances and long-lasting appeal, we interviewed some of the finest master archtop builders and a few select factory builders. Although each luthier strives to place his individual stamp on each guitar, they all share a set of core values that define what the archtop guitar is all about.

The luthiers we spoke with expressed strong feelings of respect for the tradition created by the builders that have preceded them. They are also aware of the significant role that players occupy in influencing the evolution of archtop design. From the first rough cut of the tonewood to final finishing and setup, luthiers are absolutely in love with the process of building a guitar.

Monteleone

JOHN MONTELEONE IS ONE OF THE MOST respected builders in the business today. Known for his innovative design work and amazing tone, Monteleone considers his acoustic archtop guitars to be works of "playable art." Monteleone is primarily self-taught but credits much of his experience to his years as an instrument repairman. He began his building career by making F5 mandolin copies, and after growing tired of cloning Loar's work, he completely redesigned the F5, resulting in a new model, the Grand Artist. Monteleone introduced his first archtop guitar, the Eclipse, in 1978 and has gone on to create an array of stunning instruments, including his acclaimed Radio City archtop, with its Art Deco-influenced architectural motif.

Monteleone is a custom builder and cites D'Angelico as a major influence. "You could really sense the skill and personality in his guitars," he said. Monteleone is also a big fan of the original Orville Gibson guitars and utilizes oval-shaped sound ports in several of his models. According to Monteleone, an archtop should have a clear, brilliant tone with a nice balance and plenty of cutting power that allows you to hear the wood and not just the strings. "One of my goals has always been to

produce treble tones that are sweet and lyrical like a human voice," he said. Monteleone attributes the endurance of the archtop to its inherent beauty along with its ability to function as an acoustic, electric or combination of both.

Benedetto

BOB BENEDETTO IS A NAME that comes up frequently when talking with other luthiers—no surprise, since he literally wrote the book on archtop guitar building. Aspiring builders around the world have used his book, *Making An Archtop Guitar*, to kick-start their own careers. Benedetto has been in the business for 45 years and has grown from a one-man shop into a small manufacturer. He is mostly self-taught and has a background in repair as well as violin making. Right from the beginning in 1968, he focused on archtop guitars, citing a strong influence from Gibson and D'Angelico. Benedetto feels that the strength of the archtop lies in its unrivaled sound and unique feel, and he considers himself a refiner of the guitar, not a re-designer. "It is mostly the maker and not the wood that makes an instrument," he said.

Benedetto wholeheartedly embraces the traditional and sees no need to stray too far from time-honored designs. His refinements are in the fine details, such as tap-tuning and subtle neck improvements. "The real challenge is using the same design parameters to create a wonderfully voiced instrument," he said. Although the company has expanded into a staff of 10 and produces a large selection of models, Benedetto's involvement remains mainly with the high-end hand-carved archtops. Benedetto Guitars offers archtops in a variety of styles and price points and does custom one-off work. The Flagship Series features the carved models, and the Professional Series includes laminated and solid chambered bodies.

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Claudio Pagelli in his workshop in Switzerland

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Campelleone
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archtop in 1980, he was instantly hooked. Campelleone has an art background, which he feels has been beneficial to his guitar building. He offers a select line of hand-carved archtops in his Standard, Deluxe and Special Series. Campelleone's premier guitar is his Cameo, and he also offers a 15-inch design in his EP Series. His primary goal has always been to build a traditional

Loar-style archtop, and he said that his attraction to the guitars stems from the beauty of the instruments, which are like sculptures to him. In terms of why the archtop has endured for so many years, Campelleone pointed out that the unique sound of the amplified acoustic guitar has never been duplicated in a solid body.

Thorell

UTAH LUTHIER RYAN THORELL FEELS rhythm playing and note separation are the heart of the archtop guitar, which he considers to be the "sound of jazz" and "a living American tradition." Thorell started building guitars in 1996 and carved his first archtop in 2005. He is a huge fan of the Lloyd Loar archtops and is also influenced by the New York school of D'Angelico and D'Aquisto. A true hand-builder, Thorell feels the archtop's appeal lies in its limitless potential and ability to produce a consistent tone from the lowest to highest notes. The Sweet E and FV (Frank Vignola) are some of his better-know models, but Thorell enjoys building custom instruments that can be individually voiced for a particular player. Although he maintains a strong respect and love for the tradition, Thorell considers his craft to be a vibrant process that is constantly evolving. He often experiments with sound port placement and utilizes a subtler arch on his guitars' tops to produce a richer tone, which he feels has become more important than generating sheer volume.

Campelleone

EAST COAST BUILDER MARK CAMPELLEONE started out building electric basses and doing repair and restoration work. But when he built his first

Wilkie

WYATT WILKIE OF WILKIE STRINGED Instruments summed up his infatuation with archtop building when he said, "I can't help myself." Wilkie started out as a mandolin maker and got his initial exposure to archtops through his association with Calton Cases, where he had to examine and measure instruments for clients ordering custom flight cases. Wilkie was fortunate to apprentice with Benedetto and recalled how "that changed everything." He hand-builds two basic models in his British Columbia workshop: the Northern Flyer and the Strathcona. He also does custom orders. "The mystery of acoustic tone is so alluring," said Wilkie, noting that it's all about the wood. "Acoustic music in general has endured longer than amplified music, and it's about the feel as much as it is the tone."

Marchione

STEPHEN MARCHIONE OF TEXAS GOT HIS start as a violin maker and has been building guitars full-time since 1990. He gained a deep respect for the instrument during his college years while playing in big bands and bases most of his designs on the classic archtops of D'Angelico and D'Aquisto. Marchione pointed out that "the archtop is a transcendent thing that rises above being a simple instrument." As a



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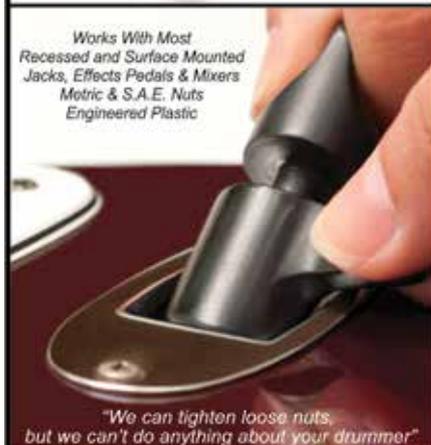
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player himself, he feels that these guitars are extremely compelling and deeply satisfying to hold and play, and that hand carving is the only way to truly voice an instrument. "You really have to listen to the wood," he said. Marchione offers hand-built archtop models that range in size from a 15-inch up to an 18-inch and even include a 7-string and baritone design.

Andersen

SEATTLE'S STEVEN ANDERSEN has been building guitars since high school. After starting his own shop, Andersen began to focus on building F5 mandolins and doing repair work. The opportunity to examine and work on a wide variety of classic archtop instruments was a significant factor in sparking his building career. Andersen built his first archtop in the late 1980s and considers himself to be mostly self-taught. "James D'Aquisto was a big inspiration, particularly his innovative cutting-edge guitars, which inspired me to create my own designs," he said. Regarding his personal building style, Andersen noted, "There is always room for innovation and experimentation." A true artisan who builds each guitar one at a time, by hand, Andersen said that he senses a deep emotional connection

with the player who relates to the feel and unique acoustic properties of the guitar. He offers three models in his Premium line and three models in the Standard line. In addition, Andersen builds a line of Specialty models.

D'Lorenzo

SCOTT LAWRENCE OF D'LORENZO Guitars in Oklahoma tries to stay "at the intersection tradition of and innovation." Lawrence warmed up on a few flat-top guitar kits before building his first archtop in 2003. His background includes experience as an instrument repairman as well as furniture building and cabinet restoration. Lawrence used the Gibson ES-175 as a take-off point for his first archtop but utilized a hand-carved top instead of the usual laminate to increase acoustic responsiveness. He also cites Benedetto's book and CDs as learning tools and draws inspiration from D'Aquisto's innovative attempts at improving acoustic tone. Lawrence summed up his attraction to the archtop by saying, "It is classy, beautiful and graceful even without ornamentation." As a builder, he is constantly evolving and taking chances, which he feels is the only way to innovate. Lawrence shoots for a different tone, searching for some-

thing between an archtop and a flat top with lots of warmth and a longer note sustain. He puts his personal stamp on his guitars with custom cutaway profiles, beautiful comma-shaped f-holes and utilization of non-standard woods such as mahogany, rosewood, cedar and walnut. Two basic models are available directly from D'Lorenzo Guitars: the fully acoustic NCAT (New Concept Arch Top) and the Blue Flame Electric Archtop.

Laplante

JEAN-PIERRE LAPLANTE IS A Canadian luthier who wants to push the archtop in new directions. Mainly self-taught, he built his first Telecaster-style electric guitar in 1993 but began his love affair with the archtop in 2003 when he was commissioned to build a guitar in the L5 style. Laplante immediately realized how much more rewarding this process was for him compared to building solid-body electrics. He is highly influenced by Benedetto for the basics but cites Monteleone as a major inspiration for innovation and design: "He is so creative and inspired me to move away from the tradition, and [Monteleone] showed me there is still room to take the guitar somewhere else," he said. Laplante enjoys the challenge of building and hopes to push the envelope of the archtop and expand its audience. His feeling on the appeal of the guitar is that each one has its own personality, and from the player's perspective, it makes you want to play differently and inspires new ideas and creativity. He addresses the archtop's ongoing evolution with several design changes, including lighter bracing techniques and redesigned soundhole placement. Laplante produces numerous archtop models from his one-man shop, and he noted that the 16-inch dual pickup laminate models like the Springtime and Summertime are the bread-and-butter of his business. He also offers several fully carved models.

Pagelli

CLAUDIO PAGELLI, WHO BUILDS his guitars in Switzerland, also utilized Benedetto's book in developing his craft. He loves the old Epiphones and Strombergs but goes his own way with designing archtops for open-minded players. Several of his models feature a radical departure from standard archtop designs, and he prides himself on improving upon the ergonomics of the guitar. Pagelli describes his guitars as "Swiss precision with an Italian flair." He feels he has an advantage living close to the Swiss Alps, where some of

the finest spruce tonewood is grown. Pagelli offers several archtop models, including the Patent, Traditional, Jazzability and Ana Sgler, and also does plenty of custom work.

Sadowsky

ROGER SADOWSKY BEGAN HIS journey with repair and restoration work. Realizing that to be a great builder you need to be around the great players, he relocated to New York. Although he considers himself self-taught, Sadowsky spent two years as an apprentice to Augustino LoPrinzi. As a repairman, Sadowsky became aware of the problems associated with amplifying an acoustic guitar. He also spent 15 years servicing jazz legend Jim Hall's D'Aquisto archtop. These experiences set him on a mission to design and build a road-worthy instrument that could be easily amplified. Sadowsky worked closely with Hall in developing his



first archtop guitar, which, like Hall's D'Aquisto, was a laminate. "I was trying to build a guitar that Jim would be comfortable with," Sadowsky said. The resulting guitar was the Jim Hall model, his premier archtop.

Sadowsky's archtops are made in Japan, where he also manufactures his Metro Line of basses. He does the final fretwork, electronics and setup at his shop in New York. Sadowsky's main goal is to produce guitars for gigging musicians, and all his models feature a special laminate top that not only offers resistance to feedback but responds well acoustically. He sees a current trend toward smaller body sizes and shallower depth and reflects this in many of his guitars. Affordability is also a top priority for Sadowsky. In addition to the Jim Hall, Sadowsky Guitars now offers a wide range of archtop models, including the Jimmy Bruno, the LS-17 and SS-15, plus a semi-hollow model.

Godin

GODIN GUITARS WAS A WELL-ESTABLISHED company before it released its first archtop guitar. Robert Godin, a jazz player, felt there was a lack of decent affordable guitars, so he decided to fill the void with the 5th Avenue, an all-acoustic laminate archtop fea-

turing Canadian woods and built entirely in North America. According to Godin, value and innovation are keys to the success of the company's archtops. He feels that demand for archtops is high with many musicians discovering jazz and taking it in new directions. Godin archtops are manufactured using CNC machinery and laser cutters, techniques that play a major role in allowing them to offer consistent quality at attractive prices.

D'Angelico

D'ANGELICO GUITARS OWNS THE exclusive rights to use the name of the world-renowned guitar maker (who passed away in 1964). Initially offering only inexpensive import copies of the legendary archtops, D'Angelico Guitars has recently undergone significant changes, revamping its import line and introducing a new USA Masterbuilt Guitar, which is an entirely hand-crafted clone of a 1943 Excel. According to Sales V.P. Adam Aronson, D'Angelico Guitars used the original blueprints and an MRI machine to reproduce an Excel as closely as possible. "D'Angelico was a major player and was known for quality," Aronson said. "We want to live up to the name." D'Angelico's standard line is manufactured in its

Korean factory and features the EXL-1, EX-SS and EX-SD.

Ibanez

IBANEZ, WHICH STARTED OUT by copying classic American guitars in Japan, began building archtops in the mid-1970s but really made a mark in 1978 with its first George Benson signature guitar. Ibanez later expanded the line with a Pat Metheny model. In distinguishing Ibanez from a custom builder, company spokesperson Ken Youmans said, "We build guitars for a market segment as opposed to an individual player, and even though we do production, it is still an art form to us." While archtops are not huge sellers for Ibanez, the guitars are a point of pride that's critical to the company's reputation. Ibanez currently offers three lines of laminate guitars in its archtop series. Manufactured in China, the Artcore is the most affordable line, followed by the Artstar Series. The Japanese-made Signature Series represents Ibanez's high-end offerings.

Eastman

HAVING PRODUCED A FULL LINE of orchestra instruments for years, archtop guitars were a logical next step for the Eastman Guitar and

Mandolin Company. Eastman translated Benedetto's videos into Mandarin to train the company's craftsmen. "We wanted to build guitars with the exact same methods used during the golden age of archtop design," said product specialist Mark Herring. Eastman built its flagship models, the AR805CE and AR810CE, in 2001 using traditional hand-carving techniques and established a new standard in quality from a Chinese manufacturer. Producing fully hand-carved guitars out of an Asian factory was a visionary concept and has allowed Eastman to offer professional-grade instruments at extremely affordable prices. "We walk the fine line between manufacturing and hand-crafting," Herring explained. Eastman now offers a selection of all solid-wood, hand-built archtops and recently added a laminate model.

More than a century after its introduction, the archtop guitar is still very much alive and well. Although it is always evolving, it never loses sight of its roots. While it continues to attract and inspire new fans, it never leaves behind its loyal devotees. Its magic can be found as much in the skilled hands of its dedicated builders as in the artistry of its great players. **DB**

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TWO MUSICIANS PLAY TOGETHER WITHOUT DISCUSSION OR pre-planning. One initiates with a short repetitive motif, tonal and regular. The other responds with a jagged slash that is followed by the first, echoing the slash then returning to the repetitive motif. The second repeats a fragment of the initial motif and adds a descending scalar riff in the original tonality. As they continue, they follow a protocol that has been subconsciously established, expanding and elaborating upon it. The musicians have created an internalized instruction set to structure their play, a common occurrence in free improvisation practice.

Though the internal details may vary, the structure will continue to evolve



from the first gestures while referring back to them. After the fact, this musical interaction may be scored out or codified, to be repeated or further refined. In this example, one sees the generation of a simple algorithm, a more technical term for an instruction set. An instruction set may be extremely detailed and spell out every action and permutation, or it may be more open and conceptual.

In an improvising situation, there is nothing to prevent new gestures from being introduced or a divergent path to be taken at any time. This might have the effect of injecting excitement into a predictable structure but could possibly derail a developing narrative. From attempting to balance these opposite

poles, musicians have long desired to focus on unscripted music-making to give them the sense of inevitability inherent in a well-composed piece of music but at the same time retaining the edge-of-a-cliff thrill of an improvisation. I'll describe a few of the approaches I've made use of.

While attending Cornell University between 1969–1971, I played in psychedelic rock bands replete with extended jamming and referencing Jimi Hendrix, the Grateful Dead, Captain Beefheart and Miles Davis. Later at Bard College, Roswell Rudd welcomed us into the mysteries of Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, heterophony and free improvisation. By the summer of 1973, I was living on the Hudson River in upstate New York and hammering out notation but finding greater pleasure in making graphic scores and improvising. My playing on guitars and reeds at this time was as much influenced by the flow of the nearby river and its tides; the sound and sights of the birds and insects; sunrise, sunset and stars; storms, calm and all weather in-between. To formalize these approaches, I began to develop a list of simple instruction sets, my *Hudson River Compositions*, to be used as a score for myself or other improvising musicians:

- Play as fast as possible in rhythmic unison while varying pitches and sounds.
- Branching: follow the tangential but maintain the initial impulse.
- Emulate the river: never play the same thing twice but maintain a single identity.
- Chop space into fragments; combine fragments to form a space.
- Maximize density.
- Never play at the same time as another player but build a groove.
- Slow a line to half-speed and repeat the process, again, again.
- Overtones—map speed to range.
- Hemiola: each player choose a different time signature and repeat a simple figure in that time.
- Play the opposite.
- Play what you see with your eyes open; play what you see with your eyes closed.

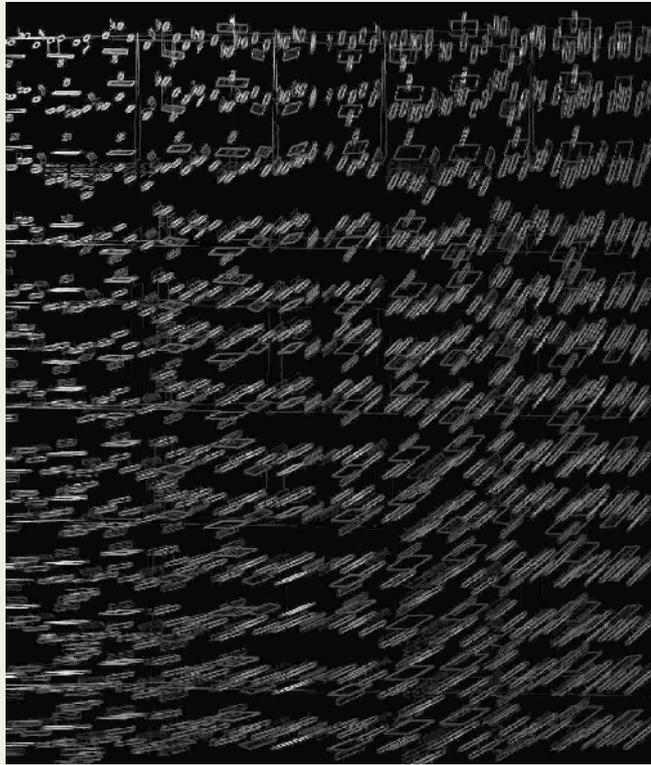
SyndaKit 01

Elliott Sharp - zOaR Music - BMI - 1998

Hudson River Nr. 2

In 1974, I moved to Buffalo to study with Lejaren Hiller, Morton Feldman and Charles Keil. Hiller was a pioneer of computer music whose *Illiad Suite* of 1956 (co-composed by Leonard Isaacson) was a set of algorithms rather than written music. These algorithms gave the computer instructions, rules for writing harmony and melody, with which it would compose music. Hiller often spoke of the “metamusic” underneath what we hear—the processes that give rise to a structure and the sounds and interactions that populate it. Hiller inspired me to think of each piece of music as an organism whose identity was clearly defined, although its development and growth could take it through many forms. While in Buffalo, I used the simple algorithms of my *Hudson River Compositions* to create pieces and form the basis of improvisations with fellow musicians.

A longtime obsession of mine since grade school had been the Fibonacci series of numbers, which is formed by summing two numbers to generate the next. Starting with (0, 1) the series yields: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89 ... I used Fibonacci numbers in my 1981 opera *Innosense* to create an overall architecture of proportional sections and in the 1982 orchestral piece “Crowds And Power” to generate rhythms and structure. In 1984, I found that the ratios of adjacent Fibonacci numbers could be used to generate a tuning for my guitar. The ratio of 2/1 is an octave, 3/2 a perfect fifth, 5/3 a Just-Intoned major sixth



and 8/5 a Just-Intoned minor sixth. The resultant tuning was clear and ringing yet ambiguous in tonality. The sound invited exploration, and combining the overtones in various locations on the neck with Fibonacci-based rhythms and structures set me on the path of composing the music for the first album by my band Carbon and my first string quartet, *Tessalation Row*.

The fascinating study of bird flocking and its relationship to African drum choirs, hunting packs and RNA duplication led me to compose *SyndaKit* in 1998. *SyndaKit* sets out to create an organism that lives to groove, to form large unisons and to mutate. Intended for 12 musicians, *SyndaKit* uses 144 composed fragments called Cores and an instruction set. The musicians may make loops from their own Cores, chain their Cores with those of other musicians, “pop out” with short improvised gestures that may then be looped and introduced into the system, and attempt to build long unisons. There is no correct or incorrect version of *SyndaKit*. In fact, using the algorithms or instruction set, players could perform *SyndaKit* without ever using any of the composed Cores and it would still sound like *SyndaKit*! It has been performed and/or recorded by my own Orchestra Carbon, Zeitkratzer ensemble in Berlin, the Beijing New Music Ensemble and various ad hoc groups of 12 guitarists, keyboards, percussionists or string players.

In the last 10 years, I’ve gone back to generating graphic scores. While I continue to create detailed, fully notated scores for string quartet and orchestras, at the same time I welcome the input of players who can use their improvisational skills to interpret music that may be more conceptual or abstract. After using electronics for decades to process the sound of instruments, I find greater pleasure and more tactility and presence in the sound of unamplified acoustic instruments. There are myriad extended techniques in use to help create unheard and exotic sounds, and the current generation of players has them at their fingertips. To help elicit these sounds, my strategy is to export my pages of composed notation from Sibelius into graphic editing applications such as Photoshop, GIMP and Graphic Converter. Using plug-ins, I can filter, modulate, chop, multiply, augment, stretch and invert, much in the same way that I used these processes with live or recorded sound. With disciplined and attentive players, these scores can generate unique manifestations. Current pieces making use of this approach include *Foliage*, *Volapuk*, *Seize Seas Seeths Seen* and *Venus & Jupiter*. **DB**

Elliott Sharp is an American multi-instrumentalist, composer and bandleader. A central figure in New York’s avant-garde and experimental music scenes for more than 30 years, he has released over 85 recordings ranging from orchestral music to blues, jazz, noise, no wave rock and techno. Sharp has composed scores for feature films and documentaries; created sound design for interstitials on The Sundance Channel, MTV and Bravo networks; and has presented numerous sound installations in art galleries and museums. Visit Sharp online at elliottsharp.com.

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Buddy Guy's Classic Guitar Solos on 'Mary Had A Little Lamb'

STILL PLAYING WITH INCREDIBLE ENERGY at age 76, Buddy Guy has been an influence on multiple generations of guitarists. His songs have been covered by many blues and rock icons, including "Mary Had A Little Lamb," from 1968's *A Man And The Blues* (Vanguard), which Stevie Ray Vaughan covered on his first release. It's a classic track, and both the middle solo and the solo on the fadeout from Guy's original are transcribed here.

The song is based on a simple eight-bar form starting on the IV chord and then proceeding to I, V and I, each chord getting two measures. Though it's in E major, most of Guy's playing comes out of the E minor pentatonic scale, which when played over a major chord progression gives us what many would say is an essential sound of the blues (this is also why the transcription is presented in E minor, rather than major). Note, however, that Guy has a tendency to bend his G naturals a bit sharp, making them a bit less minor sounding. He also often bends his A into a B \flat ; adding this flat fifth produces the sound commonly referred to as the blues scale.

Guy only starts to deviate from this sound in

measures 27–28, where he plays the A major pentatonic scale. This would be an unusual choice in E, except when you consider that he plays this scale over the IV chord, which is A major. Even when it goes back to the E chord, Guy keeps the F \sharp and C \sharp from the A major pentatonic, giving the next two measures a dorian flavor.

Guy's phrasing is a crucial part of this improvisation. For the most part, Guy's solos on this track mirror his singing: starting on a weak measure and resolving to a strong measure (as in bars 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 11–12, 15–16, 18–19, 20–21, 22–23, 24–25, 26–27 and 28–29). The only deviations from this phrasing are when he starts out on the weak bar (measures 7–9) but continues through the strong measure to resolve on the next weak one (bars 13 and 14), where he plays short one-measure ideas rather than crossing the bar line. On the fadeout, Guy starts a long phrase that covers four measures, possibly more as we can't hear where he goes after the fade.

The phrasing adds a consistency to his solos, and also connects them to the vocal line. He adds more consistency by starting most of his phrases on the "and of one" (bars 3, 5, 7, 11, 15, 18, 22, 24, 26 and 28). But so as not to get predictable, Guy varies where he ends his phrases. We hear him conclude on the downbeat (4, 19), the "and of one" (2, 6, 9, 23), the



Buddy Guy

"two" (12, 13, 21, 29), the "and of three" (25, 27) and even once on the "e of one" (16).

But in general, Guy starts his lines at the beginning of a weak measure and concludes them toward the beginning of the following strong measure, which is exactly what the lyrics do. In this manner he produces a pair of solos that develop from the song itself and evoke the same mood. **DB**

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

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Middle Solo

0:53 (8^{va}) A7 E7
6 B7 E7
10 A7 E7
14 B7 E7

Fadeout Solo

1:54 A7 E7
23 B7 E7
27 A7 E7
30 B7 E7

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"I love this guitar! Not only is it gorgeous and a joy to play, it delivers beautiful clean tones. Kick in an overdrive pedal and it'll rock your socks off."

Ibanez Pat Metheny PM200 & PM2

Old Friends, New Archtops

The relationship between Ibanez and guitarist Pat Metheny dates back to the late 1970s, when the company first approached the young artist at a concert in Japan. The resulting partnership has produced numerous Metheny Signature models over the years, and Ibanez recently overhauled those offerings with the introduction of two new Metheny archtop guitars: the PM200 and PM2.

The two new Pat Metheny Signature guitars share many of the same aesthetics and design aspects as their predecessors but are targeted at very different customers. The Japanese-built PM200 is the high-end option, with a list price of \$4,666. The PM2 is the first Signature guitar to be included in Ibanez's Chinese-manufactured Artstar line and represents the affordable alternative with a list of \$1,333.

The new Pat Metheny Signature models feature a single cutaway design with maple top, back and sides and a single neck-mounted humbucker pickup. Both instruments feature a set-in 22-fret neck with a 24 3/4-inch scale length. The inlay patterns on the ebony fingerboard and headstock are virtually identical as well. However, when playing the guitars side by side, their differences become considerably

more apparent.

There is no doubt that the PM200 is the superior guitar in terms of its playability and tone. Available for a street price of about \$3,499, the PM 200 uses a Silent 58 pickup, a Gotoh floating bridge and a solid ebony PM tailpiece. It has a body depth of 4 1/4 inches, compared to the shallower 3 3/8 inches of the PM2, and also a wider bout of 16 1/2 inches, compared to the narrower 15 3/4 inches of the PM200 model. The neck profile is slimmer on the PM200, and I found it much more comfortable to play than the slightly chunkier PM2 neck. The cutaway is deeper as well, allowing easier access to the higher frets. The tone is fat, warm and smooth, and a nice bite becomes available when you open up the tone pot.

The PM2 is solid jazz guitar, considering its attractive \$999 street price. The Super 58 pickup performs well but is definitely not as smooth or clean as the Silent 58 on the PM200. The PM2 features an Art-1 floating bridge, a KT30 wire trapeze tailpiece and, like the PM200, it also features gold-plated hardware throughout. Overall playability definitely exceeded my expectations for a guitar in this price range.

Ibanez has done a nice job in re-engineering its Pat Metheny Signature models. Both the PM200 and PM2 are quality instruments and offer a good set of options for both the serious pro and the aspiring amateur jazz guitarist. —Keith Baumann

ibanez.com



Sadowsky SS-15 Archtop

Fat Sound, Thin Package

Featuring a fully hollow body packed into a sleek thinline profile, the SS-15 from Sadowsky Guitars bridges the gap between traditional full-bodied archtops and semi-hollow instruments.

The inspiration for the SS-15 grew out of requests from customers who loved the Sadowsky Semi-Hollow guitar but wanted an acoustic version for playing jazz. Using the Semi-Hollow as a template, Sadowsky created a guitar that shared its same basic dimensions but did not utilize a center block within the body chamber. Instead, the SS-15 uses traditional tone bar bracing, leaving the guitar completely hollow inside and resulting in a greatly enhanced acoustic response.

Luthier Roger Sadowsky said he was looking to create a guitar that is easier to travel with but still maintains the traditional archtop tone and feel. In addition, the instrument needed to perform well in amplified situations. The SS-15's 14 3/4-inch body is actually 1/8 inch deeper than the Semi-Hollow and features a slightly wider 1 3/4-inch neck profile. Like Sadowsky's archtop guitars, the SS-15 is constructed from five-ply maple laminate. The appointments are straightforward and traditional, with a solid ebony tailpiece and matching abbreviated floating ebony pickguard. Basic vol-

ume and tone knobs control the single custom-wound PAF-style pickup mounted at the neck position.

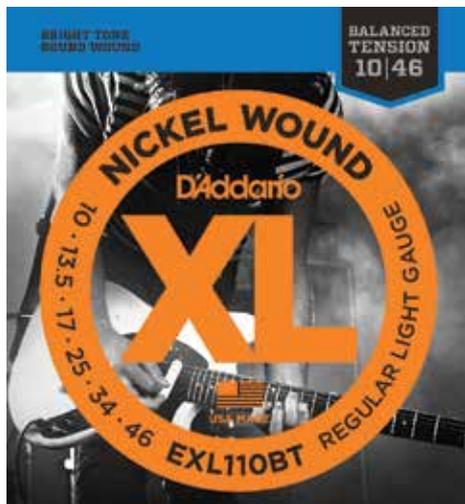
I was struck by how lightweight the SS-15 is. Playing unamplified, there is a surprising amount of acoustic resonance, with the body vibrating in response to each note. The 14-fret neck is extremely comfortable, and the wider string spacing makes the guitar great for finger-style playing.

The SS-15 features the True Tone saddle, which is a fully intonated ebony bridge top developed by Sadowsky that allows for better intonation compared to a standard archtop bridge. The SS-15 ships with two True Tone bridges: one compensated for a wound G string and a second for an unwound G. The amplified tone of the SS-15 is simply gorgeous, reminiscent of a classic archtop.

Delivering true archtop tone in a thinline body makes the SS-15 unique, and at \$4,175 it will definitely carve out its own niche in the market. —Keith Baumann

sadowsky.com





D'Addario Balanced Tension Strings

Even Feel & Dynamic Control

D'Addario has introduced XL Nickel Wound Balanced Tension string sets for guitar and bass. Balanced tension from string to string allows for greater dynamic control and eases out the physical effort required to fret, bend, strum and pick a guitar or pluck, slap and bend on a bass.

I strung sets of D'Addario EXL110BT (10-46 gauge) and EXL120BT (9-40 gauge) strings on electric guitars and a set of EXL170BT (45-107 gauge) strings on electric bass to experience the balanced tension concept firsthand. I had to make only a few minor tweaks to my instruments to allow the strings to do their thing.

The tone of the strings is bright and punchy, which is typical of any new set; however, the unwanted buzz or boom that you might get with varied tension in a regular set is missing. These D'Addarios stretched out and tuned up very well. The balanced tension was immediately apparent, especially on the three high strings (G, B, E), with both guitar sets I sampled. The top strings especially feel like they have the same weight and playability, and the touted balance is instantly noticed while fretting, bending and doing hammer-ons/pull-offs.

Balanced Tension bass strings allow for a vastly improved playing experience. Gone is the fumbling over tension differences that affect the playability of a fingered bass line. The strings allow a bass player to navigate the fretboard with more consistency, better attack and fewer sound drops between varied tensions.

These strings take some getting used to because the balanced tension forces you to be a more "honest" player. At first the strings felt harder for me to play because of the change in muscle memory and dexterity required, but in no time I was hooked on the smooth and consistent nature of the whole set.

—John LaMantia

daddario.com

Godin Montreal Premiere

Thinline Design Meets Fat Tone

For more than 20 years, Godin Guitars has built a reputation for innovative design, and the company's product line has expanded to include an arsenal of electric and acoustic models. With an array of solid-body electrics and an impressive line of archtops under its belt, Godin has taken the next logical step and introduced the Montreal Premiere, a thinline semi-hollowbody that packs some real punch.

Part of Godin's Signature Series, the Montreal Premiere is the company's second Montreal model. The first Montreal is a solid carved mahogany guitar that features a dual-voice setup utilizing magnetic pickups and piezo bridge transducers. The Montreal Premiere shares some of those design elements but takes a more traditional approach reminiscent of the classic Gibson ES-335 semi-hollowbodies. It bridges the gap between Godin's solid-body guitars and its hollowbody 5th Avenue line.

At first glance, the Montreal Premiere is an attractive guitar with an eye-catching high-gloss finish, tastefully double-bound body and chrome-plated hardware. The guitar features a single cut-away design (in contrast to the double cutaway of an ES-335). The Canadian wild cherry body is 2 inches deep with standard f-holes cut into the top. It features a straightforward design with two humbucker pickups, a three-way toggle switch and simple volume and tone controls. The guitar I play-tested had a natural finish, but Godin also offers red, sunburst and trans black options.

The true innovation of this guitar is not visible from the outside. Most semi-hollow guitars have a solid wood block running down the center inside of the body cavity. The Montreal Premiere uses what Godin calls a "breathe-through" core—a carved spruce block that has ports cut out of it, allowing sound to resonate more vibrantly throughout the entire body.

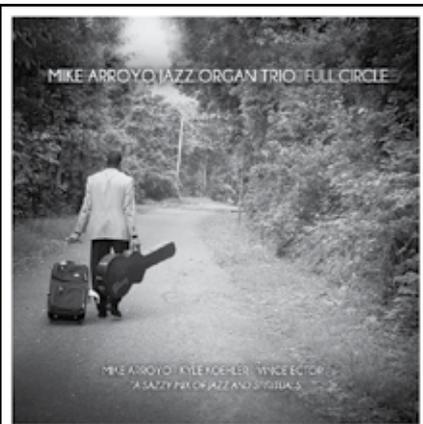
In playing the Montreal Premiere, the first thing that struck me was how light it is—an added benefit of the breathe-through core. The 24 3/4-inch scale neck is mahogany with a rosewood fingerboard, and the guitar's set-neck design is comfortable and easy to fret. It uses a stop tailpiece ResoMax bridge system manufactured by Graph Tech, and Godin also offers a Bigsby-equipped model. The dual custom Godin humbuckers really light this guitar up, delivering warmth with lots of bite when you want it. Surprisingly, the guitar is capable of very high volumes without feedback issues. Overall, the Montreal Premiere is a great-playing, versatile guitar with a wide range of tonal possibilities suitable for rock, jazz, blues, rockabilly and country. "It has a lot of personality and definitely makes a statement," said Mario Biferali, sales and marketing manager at Godin.

The Godin Montreal Premiere is definitely a pro-level instrument, but with a street price of around \$1,500 (including a deluxe gig bag), it is accessible to guitarists of all levels.

—Keith Baumann

godinguitars.com





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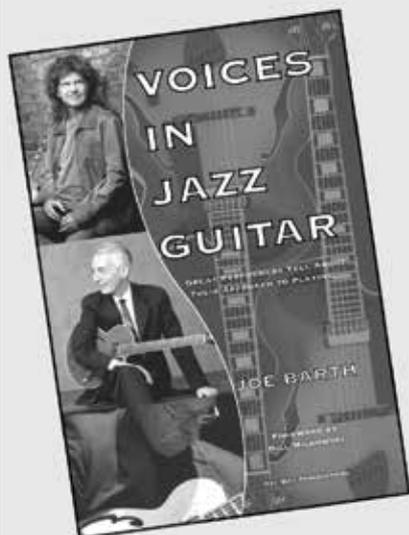
Arroyo collaborated with Kyle Koehler (Hammond B-3 Organ) and Vincent Ector (Drums) creating a collection of classic hymns.

“They certainly should bring back memories of a simpler time growing up in the traditional Church.”
—Vince Lewis

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recordingking.com



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Planet Waves has expanded its American Stage line of cables. Right Angle Instrument Cables (pictured), available in 10- and 20-foot lengths, reproduce the natural tones of an instrument with zero interference. XLR Microphone Cables, available in 10- and 25-foot lengths, feature high-quality Neutrik connectors and utilize aerospace crimp connector technology.

planetwaves.com

Melodic Arpeggios and Triad Combining for Bass

by John Patitucci



Upright Techniques

David Gage String Instruments has published *Melodic Arpeggios and Triad Combining for Bass*, a Kindle book by John Patitucci. The exercises are designed to take the tedium out of learning the crucial techniques needed to play expressively and melodically over modern harmonies.

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From left: Etienne Charles, Diego Rivera, Jerrick Matthews and Michael Dease onstage at MSU's Wharton Center for Performing Arts

Michigan State University Music School Receives \$1M Gift

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGE of Music has received a \$1 million gift from MSU Federal Credit Union. The money—the largest-ever investment in the music college's curriculum—will go toward a new jazz studies artist-in-residence program that will begin within the next year. The gift will also allow national and international artists to participate in weeklong residencies that will combine classroom work and public performances.

Rodney Whitaker, director of jazz studies in the College of Music, said the relationship between MSU and the MSU Federal Credit Union has provided a successful partnership.

"The Michigan State Federal Credit Union was started by MSU professors in 1937," Whitaker said. "Today, the credit union is still true to its university roots, as it's owned and operated by members of the Michigan State University community."

"The credit union is a supporter of arts and culture," he added. "Currently, they're the titled sponsor for the College of Music Showcase Series, Educational Institute at Wharton Center for the Arts, Eli Broad Museum and the East Lansing Summer Solstice Jazz Festival. The College of Music was encouraged by high-ranking officials at the MSUFUCU to submit a capital-campaign proposal. Dean James B. Forger and Director of Development Rebecca Surian worked with me to develop a proposal."

Asked why the proposal was for an artist-in-residence program, Whitaker said it was a student-oriented decision. "We felt that this was the greatest need for our students' development," he commented, noting that the school has its eyes on the future. "Additionally, it will assist with recruitment and professional growth."

According to Whitaker, it's still too early to say who the first list of visiting artists will be. "Although we have not committed to anyone at this time, we are interested in bringing in Barry Harris, Roy Haynes, Benny Golson, Jimmy Heath, Maria Schneider, Joshua Redman, John Clayton,

Christian McBride, Chris Potter and Marcus Roberts," he said.

Whitaker also noted that the College of Music's vision involves going beyond the university campus and embracing the community at large. The school's jazz studies program, launched in 2001, has become the arm of the MSU School of Music's outreach efforts. The Community Music School in Detroit is one example of its teaching and mentoring youth initiatives. In addition, MSU's top jazz ensemble, Jazz Orchestra I, will use the money to tour the state of Michigan with the visiting artists.

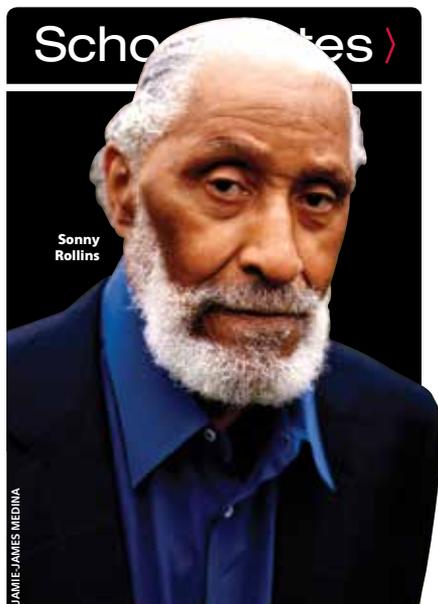
"MSU Jazz Orchestra I, our premier student jazz ensemble, will travel with the high-profile guest artists to high schools, middle schools and elementary schools in four Michigan regions, including mid-Michigan—the greater Lansing area, East Lansing and Okemos," he said. "It will also include southeast Michigan, specifically Detroit, the western Michigan areas of Grand Rapids and Benton Harbor, and northern Michigan, including Traverse City, Petoskey and Cheboygan."

Whitaker will steer the program through the College of Music along with Surian and Director of Communications Michael Sundermann.

"The MSU jazz student musicians, MSU professors of jazz and MSUFUCU distinguished guest artists will provide a captivating musical and educational experience that aims to motivate and inspire these young people in their academic as well as musical endeavors," Whitaker said. "Many of these events will also be recorded in high-definition and posted on university and college websites, extending the reach and impact of these residencies in an exponential fashion."

The faculty hopes to take advantage of this gift in order to touch the lives of more than 50,000 people. It provides yet another reason for prospective students to consider enrolling in MSU's thriving jazz studies program.

—John Ephland



Sonny Rollins

JAMIE-JAMES MEDINA

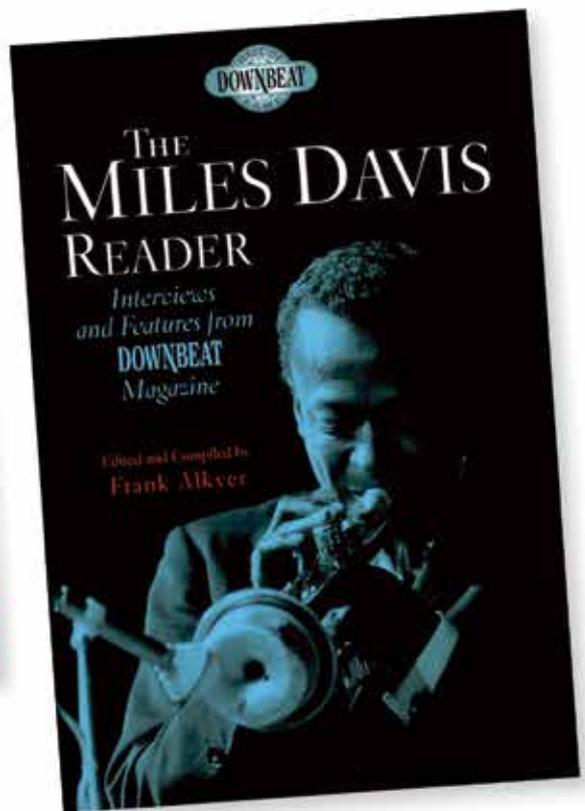
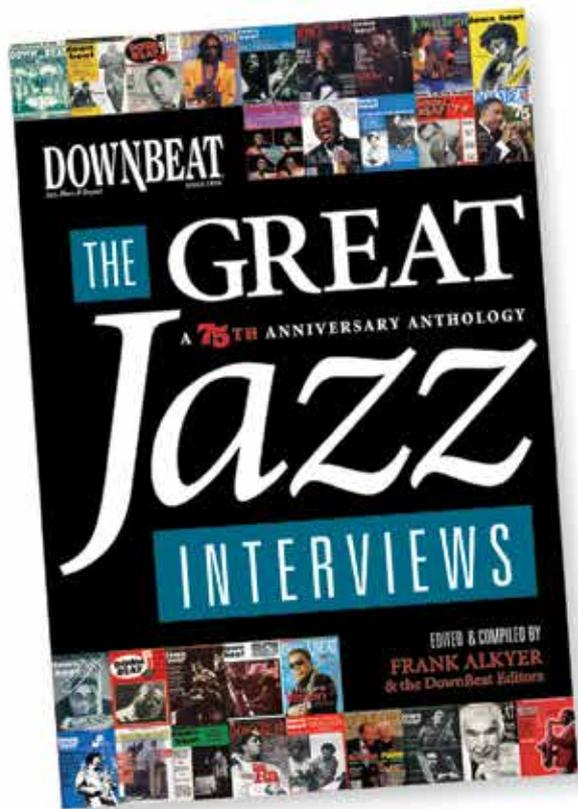
Dr. Colossus: Saxophonist Sonny Rollins was awarded an honorary doctorate of music from The Juilliard School on May 24 at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center. Also granted honorary doctorates were soprano Dawn Upshaw and pianist Alfred Brendel during the school's 108th annual graduation ceremony, which included special citations from Juilliard President Joseph W. Polisi. juilliard.edu

Uke Care: Ukulele icon Jake Shimabukuro has launched the Four Strings Foundation, a nonprofit organization that curates music education workshops nationwide and provides ukuleles, teaching materials and training tools to schools and educators. Shimabukuro's foundation also hosts concerts and lobbies to increase awareness of music education among local, state and national officials. jakeshimabukuro.com

Leopard Year: The Louisville Leopard Percussionists celebrated their 25th anniversary this year. The Leopards are a performing ensemble comprised of more than 60 student musicians ages 7–12 who attend 27 schools in and around Louisville, Ky. Founder Diane Downs started the Leopard organization as a way for local students to develop music appreciation and performance skills. louisvilleleopardpercussionists.com

Lesson in Soul: Legendary James Brown drummer Clyde Stubblefield taught a master class for School of Rock students in Chicago on April 13 at local venue Ace Bar. During the two-hour lesson, students of all instruments mastered funk groove techniques and joined Stubblefield onstage as he jammed with the Chicago School of Rock show team.

schoolofrock.com



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Ingrid Jensen

Whether leading her quartet, playing in the collective Nordic Connect or performing in the Maria Schneider Orchestra, trumpeter/flugelhornist Ingrid Jensen is one of the most proficient voices currently on the scene. This is her first Blindfold Test.

Paolo Fresu

"Fisherman, Strawberry And Devil Crab" (*Cinquant'Anni Suonati, Vol. 2*, Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso S.p.A., 2012) Fresu, trumpet; Dhafer Youssef, vocals; Nguyễn Lê, guitar; Antonello Salis, piano, accordion; Paolino Dalla Porta, bass; Stefano Bagnoli, drums.

Is that Amir ElSaffar? Cuong Vu? Nils Petter Molvaer? That breathy, airy sound. Great harmonies. Perhaps the great Danish trumpet player who worked with Miles—Palle Mikkelborg. [after] Ah, Paolo Fresu. I should have known right away, but I've heard him more on open trumpet than Harmon. I'll only accept a few guys for covering Miles, and no matter what he plays, Fresu has the space and breath, this heart that emanates from his trumpet—a vocal sound as opposed to a "trumpet" sound. That accordion is beautiful. The piece is from *Porgy*; I don't remember the name. I don't totally understand how the introduction correlates, but it's beautiful—4½ stars.

Jim Rotondi

"Bizarro World" (*1000 Rainbows, Posi-Tone*, 2010) Rotondi, trumpet; Joe Locke, vibraphone; Danny Grissett, piano; Barak Mori, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.

Someone who has done their Freddie [Hubbard] homework and figured out how to play the trumpet with a flowing ease at up-tempo. We all want to play like that. Avishai Cohen? No. Nicholas [Payton]? Jeremy [Pelt]? Sean Jones? Not the strongest melody, but too much melodic action would take away from when it's time for the solo. Well-structured. The rhythm section is solid, yet loose in a good way, with nice African elements. 4½ stars.

Philip Dizack

"Forest Walker" (*End Of An Era, Truth Revolution*, 2012) Dizack, trumpet; Aaron Parks, piano; Linda Oh, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums.

Reminds me of Kenny Wheeler. The piano player is burning! A lot of influences from a lot of places. Beautiful changes—I want to play over those. Serious control in the upper register. Gorgeous sound. Everything is amazing, but I'm missing interaction with the rhythm section, which makes it hard to hear the full personality. 4 stars.

Nicholas Payton

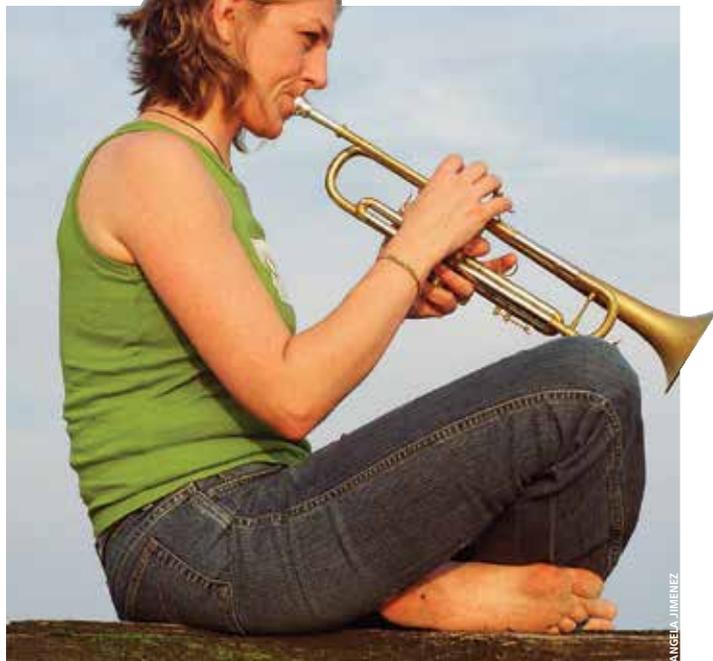
"Drad Dog" (*#BAM: Live At Bohemian Caverns*, BMF Records, 2013) Payton, trumpet, Fender Rhodes; Vicente Archer, bass; Lenny White, drums.

Simple yet sweet. Great Rhodes sound—reminds me of [Geoffrey] Keezer. Certain tunes you need to know the whole journey, the variation of turns the ensemble takes. I liked how it started slow, and then the trade—piano-trumpet-piano-trumpet-Rhodes-trumpet—and then doubling it up. The trumpeter played some magnificent linear lineage on the end! 4½ stars—it felt organic, never forced or contrived. [after] It's not overdubbed? That's crazy.

Alexander von Schlippenbach/ Globe Unity Orchestra

"Nodago" (*Globe Unity—40 Years*, Intakt, 2007) Kenny Wheeler, flugelhorn; Manfred Schoof, Jean-Luc Capozzo, Axel Dörner, trumpet; Evan Parker, Gerd Dudek, E.L. Petrowsky, Rudi Mahall, reeds; George Lewis, Paul Rutherford, Jeb Bishop, Johannes Bauer, trombone; Schlippenbach, piano; Paul Lovens, Paul Lytton, drums.

[immediately] Kenny from the '90s. [after] 2006? Amazing. We trumpet players are lucky that Kenny came along because he freed us to go for it around the changes and melodies without having to anchor into playing all the "right" notes. No unintentional moments from beginning to end. Everything was focused, fluid and dense, and then sweet in the way it released. 5 stars.



ANGELA JIMENEZ

Dominick Farinacci

"Willow Weep For Me" (*Dawn Of Goodbye*, eOne, 2011) Farinacci, trumpet; Jonathan Batiste, piano; Ben Williams, bass; Carmen Intorre, drums.

"Willow Weep For Me." I think it's a younger person with an older player's hat on. The rhythm section didn't rock my world. They were playing roles, not creating something new on a song that many people already have played well. It sounds like he's afraid to let go and leave space for interaction to send him into the land of personality. 3 stars.

Tomasz Stanko New York Quartet

"Assassins" (*Wisława*, ECM, 2013) Stanko, trumpet; David Virelles, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

The effects and clarity of some lines make me think it's a European player. [after] Oh, Tomasz Stanko! He does so much cool, greasy stuff with the horn in creating dissonance and different emotional textures. His chops are amazing. There's an intricate balance between playing the horn cleanly to get beautiful pure notes and tone, and getting these free, weird sounds—which technically require a lot of power. Great bass lines. Cool tune. 4½ stars.

Jeremy Pelt

"Butterfly Dreams" (*Water And Earth*, High Note, 2013) Pelt, trumpet, effects; David Bryant, Fender Rhodes; Burniss Earl Travis, acoustic and electric bass, effects; Dana Hawkins, drums; Jeffrey Haynes, percussion.

I don't like the coldness of the wah-wah, which sounded brittle and edgy in places, detracting from the piece's beauty. You have to be careful with foot positions on the wah. But the piece transfixed me—all the rolling sounds, the peaks and valleys, how the rhythm section flowed with the ideas in this rubato environment. 3½ stars.

Diego Urcola

"El Brujo (To Hermeto Pascoal)" (*Appreciation*, CAM Jazz, 2011) Urcola, trumpet; Luis Perdomo, piano; Hans Glawischnig, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.

"Giant Steps" in 7, but a different head. The trumpet player has some Woody Shaw in their sound, their own special way of navigating the changes, and chooses lovely notes and lines that are melodic and not derivative. It reminds me of what Claudio Roditi was doing in the '80s—happy, leapy, loping little melodies that make you want to dance, tap your foot. For the musical content, 3½ stars, because it's not an original and there isn't the interaction with the rhythm section that I enjoy.

DB

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.



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