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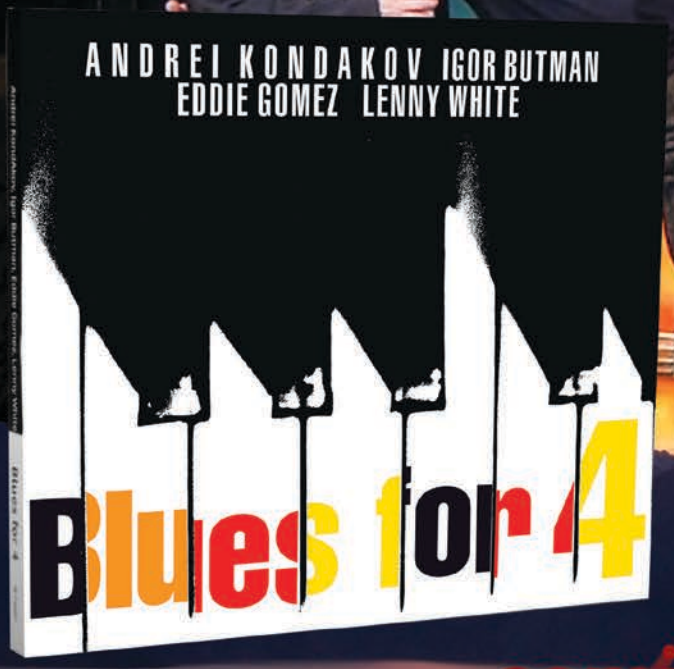

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ON THE COVER

24 Keith Jarrett
Goes Classical
BY ETHAN IVERSON

Jarrett is committed to exploring certain long-term relationships—in life, on the concert stage and in the studio. The legend sits down with The Bad Plus pianist to discuss Bach, Bernstein and 30 years of sharing the bandstand with Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette.

Cover photo and above photo of Keith Jarrett by Henry Leutwyler

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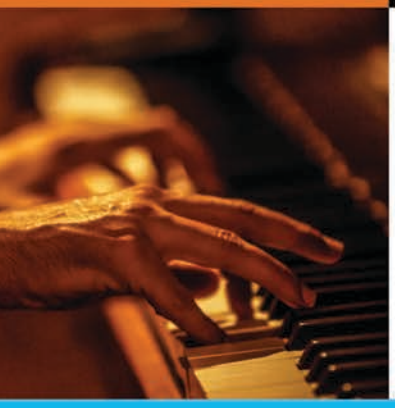

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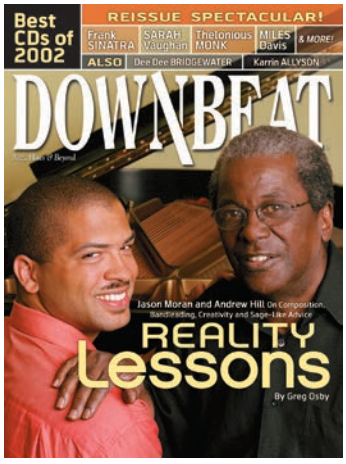
Meeting of the Musical Minds

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT MUSICIANS LOVE TO PERFORM. BUT IF THERE'S one thing they love almost as much as playing music, it's hanging out with other musicians and *talking about* music.

Over the decades, DownBeat has frequently recruited musicians to interview fellow musicians for the pages of this magazine. Marian McPartland crafted a classic when she profiled Paul Desmond in our Sept. 15, 1960, issue. Mel Tormé interviewed Buddy Rich (Feb. 9, 1978), and Jon Faddis sat down with Milt Jackson (November 1999).

In our July 2013 issue, the gifted guitarist-composer-bandleader Joel Harrison interviewed Gunther Schuller about his groundbreaking contributions to the development of Third Stream music. DownBeat readers always respond positively to these artistic "meetings of the minds."



Our January 2003 cover

In this issue, we're proud to present a conversation between two extraordinary pianists. For our cover story, Ethan Iverson—the pianist in the trio The Bad Plus—sat down with DownBeat Hall of Famer Keith Jarrett to discuss his new album of Bach sonatas, as well as his ongoing, 30-year stint in his "Standards Trio" with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette. Fans of Iverson's blog Do The Math are well aware that he's a thoughtful, perceptive musician, and this interview reflects that. From both an aesthetic and a technical perspective, the legendary Jarrett discusses his music in a way that only a musician could have inspired. (Turn to page 24 for the terrific results.)

DownBeat also has a long tradition of presenting moderated conversations, and we've got a superb example of that in this issue. We flew esteemed journalist Josef Woodard to New Mexico so he could interview longtime collaborators Eddie Daniels and Roger Kellaway about their new duo album, *Duke At The Roadhouse: Live In Santa* Fe (IPO). We chose to interview the clarinetist/tenor saxophonist and the pianist together because they have now released three concert albums as a duo. The rapport that these two virtuosos enjoy onstage clearly translates to their conversations away from the bandstand.

Sometimes these moderated conversations morph into lively dialogs between the musicians—and the journalist essentially becomes a "fly on the wall." Contributing Editor Ed Enright experienced that firsthand when he sat down with alto saxophonists Hank Crawford and David Sanborn for our October 1994 cover story. Using his own well-known skills as an interviewer, Sanborn asked Crawford a variety of questions, clearly relishing the opportunity to spend time with one of his heroes.

The cover story of the January 2003 issue of DownBeat presented one of the most memorable highlights in our long history of such summits: Saxophonist Greg Osby moderated an interview with pianists Jason Moran and Andrew Hill. In his On The Beat essay in that issue, DownBeat Editor Jason Koransky wrote, "Prominent musicians interviewing other prominent musicians ... elicits a level of musical comprehension—an affinity for a shared cause—that makes for fascinating reading." Amen.

Visit our website (downbeat.com) to read other Classic Interviews, and while you're there, be sure to vote in our 78th Annual DownBeat Readers Poll. This is your opportunity to let us know who your favorite artists are. The results will be published in our December issue. We want to hear from you! **DB**

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The Great Gunther

I got such a warm feeling after reading the article on Gunther Schuller and his contributions to Third Stream music ("Third Stream: Then and Now," July). The fact that Schuller, at age 87, is currently working on seven commissions is, to me, the epitome of what jazz is all about: the journey of constantly learning, exploring and contributing to the history of music. Thank you for reminding us of Schuller's tremendous contribution to American music. He is a national treasure.

MICHAEL BENEDICT
GREENVILLE, N.Y.

Lobbying for Norvo

I'm writing to offer a respectful "thank you" to the members of the DownBeat Veterans Committee who voted for Red Norvo for the Hall of Fame (61st Annual Critics Poll, August). He received 57 percent of the Veterans Committee vote. I encourage the committee members to vote for Norvo in the next Critics Poll, and Readers Poll voters should consider him, too.

His innovations as a mallet instrument player in the 1930s were ahead of his time. Norvo consistently encouraged young musicians throughout his career, and he led one of the greatest small groups of all time.

MARSHALL ZUCKER
WANTAGH, N.Y.

Lobbying for McLaughlin

My plea to all is to vote for John McLaughlin for the DownBeat Hall Of Fame. The guitarist is one of the most prolific composers of our time and richly deserves this recognition for a lifetime of dedication to both creating and pushing the boundaries of music.

LLEWELLYN THOMAS
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Editor's Note: We're always happy to hear from readers who are passionate about improvised music. Visit downbeat.com to vote in our 78th Annual Readers Poll, and then check out the complete poll results in the December issue.

Know Your Heritage?

While I enjoyed the article "The Art of the Archtop" (July), I found it unbelievable that Heritage Guitars was not included in this story. Those luthiers have built thousands of guitars since they started with Gibson in the 1950s and later on their own as Heritage in the '80s. Them not being mentioned at all is a travesty.

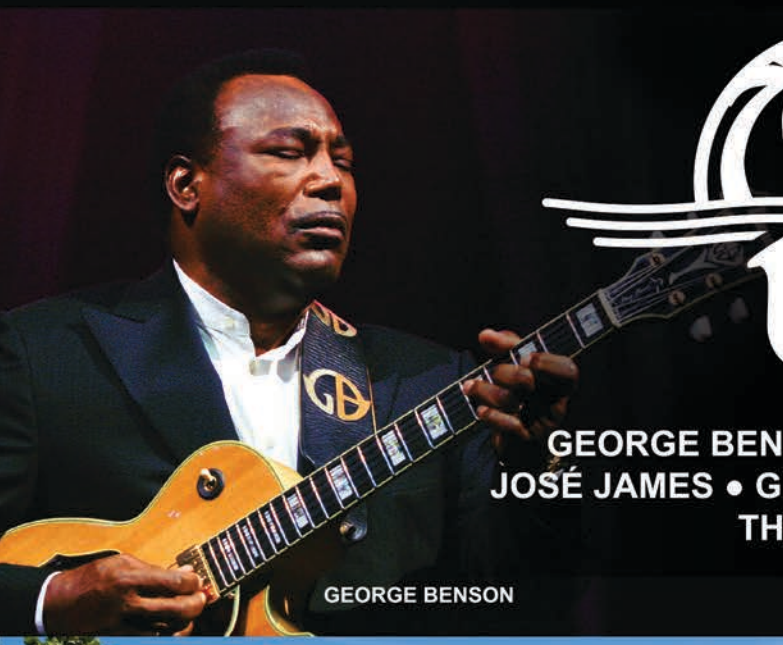
HENRY JOHNSON
SONHENJZ@GMAIL.COM

Corrections

- In the print edition of the August issue, a review of the album *Melba!* (Origin) by Geof Bradfield should have stated that he is based in the Chicago area.
- In the July issue, the article "The Art of the Archtop" misstated the names of guitar models offered by luthier Claudio Pagelli. The models are the Massari, the Jazzability and the Tim Ray.
- In the June issue, two photo credit lines were missing. The photo in the feature about the Kadima Collective ("Give It Your All") was taken by Francois Lagarde. The photo of Charlie Haden in the Transcription section is by Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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



GEORGE BENSON

Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival Aruba

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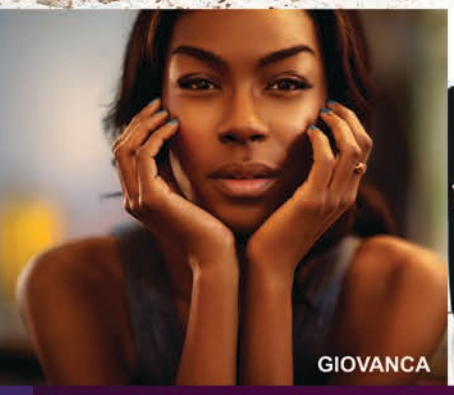

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The Beat

Inside

Delmark Keeps Documenting at 60

Scads of newspaper and magazine clippings somehow make room for piles of books, LPs, 78s and tapes in Bob Koester's office at Delmark Records in Chicago. Blues singer Toronzo Cannon is recording in the nearby studio with producer Steve Wagner, and the sound reverberates throughout this former film warehouse. One could compare the organized chaos to the early jazz that Koester grew up following, or the free-jazz he recorded in the mid-1960s. Either way, he's kept managing it all as his jazz and blues label celebrates its 60th anniversary.

"We're lucky that Bob's mode of operating hasn't changed," said cornetist Josh Berman, who released *There Now* on Delmark in 2012. "We go in and he just trusts what's happening. You can't underestimate the value of that."

This endeavor goes back to Koester's time in St. Louis during the early 1950s, when he took it upon himself to record the city's traditional players. He released his first record, from The Windy City Six, in 1953.

"I'm a documentarian," Koester said of his role, then and now. "My job is to stay out of the engineer's way."

When Koester moved to Chicago five years later, he continued documenting traditional jazz musicians. He also sold 78s on consignment and then bought the store Seymour's Record Mart in the South Loop in 1959.

"I thought I was buying a pretty dead business and I'd have trouble getting $150 a month in rent," Koester recalled.

The store survived and Koester renamed it Jazz Record Mart, which is now located at 27 E. Illinois St. Some of its staff have become Delmark artists (like Berman). Another former employee, Jazz Showcase owner Joe Segal, turned him on to bebop.

Koester also relied on local jazz critics and trusted advisors when Delmark started documenting artists affiliated with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, such as Anthony Braxton, who recorded *For Alto* in 1969.

Trumpeter Josh Berman (left) and Delmark's Bob Koester

STEVE WAGNER

The label has continued releasing discs from the organization's members, such as saxophonist Ernest Dawkins and flutist Nicole Mitchell.

"Bob Koester was the only man crazy enough to put out a two-LP set of solo alto saxophone music that was guaranteed to sell only three copies," Braxton said. "And I would be the guy to buy those three copies. He is a national treasure."

While in the '60s Koester felt most electric blues players sounded over-amplified, he enjoyed Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters. After Waters introduced Koester to Junior Wells, he recorded the harmonica player's *Hoodoo Man Blues* in 1965. The LP remains Delmark's biggest hit and sells roughly 6,000 copies annually.

"*Hoodoo Man Blues* was the first time a working blues band went in the studio to make an album without trying to do singles," Koester said. "Buddy Guy's presence doesn't hurt, and it's a damn good record."

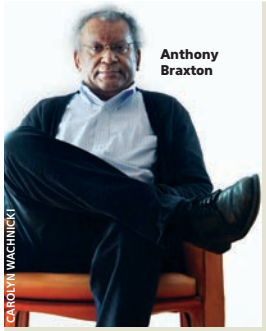
Sales from the Jazz Record Mart's retail space and website (jazzmart.com) have helped keep nearly all of Delmark's 500 titles in print. Other revenue streams include licensing tracks for films (including *To Live And Die In L.A.* in 1985) and commercials. Koester adds that the recent success of the revivalist group Fat Babies' *Chicago Hot* reaffirms that there is an audience for his aesthetic.

"In recent years, jazz fans have approached the music as a whole," Koester said. "They're not bebop fans, or Dixieland fans, or swing fans. They like all of it, and have discriminating taste."

Chicago has celebrated Delmark's anniversary with concerts throughout the year. On Aug. 23, Cannon, Lurrie Bell and other blues artists will perform for the occasion at EvanstonSPACE, in nearby Evanston. These events are not valedictory.

"If I were to quit, what would I do with all those records?" Koester said. "I'd have to pay storage fees, and that would be stupid. And I'm too stingy to let stuff go in the trash." —*Aaron Cohen*

Riffs


CAROLYN WACHNICKI

Anthony Braxton

Mastery Recognized: The National Endowment for the Arts has named Keith Jarrett, Anthony Braxton, Richard Davis and Jamey Aebersold as 2014 NEA Jazz Masters. Recognized for their lifetime achievements and exceptional contributions to the advancement of jazz, they will each receive a one-time award of $25,000. Look for a full article on the newest class of NEA Jazz Masters in the Beat section of our October 2013 issue.

Medals of Arts: On July 10, President Obama awarded the 2012 National Medal of Arts to trumpeter Herb Alpert and pianist Allen Toussaint. Albert was cited for his varied contributions to music and the fine arts, and Toussaint was acknowledged for his contributions as a composer, producer and performer.


CURTIS THOMSON

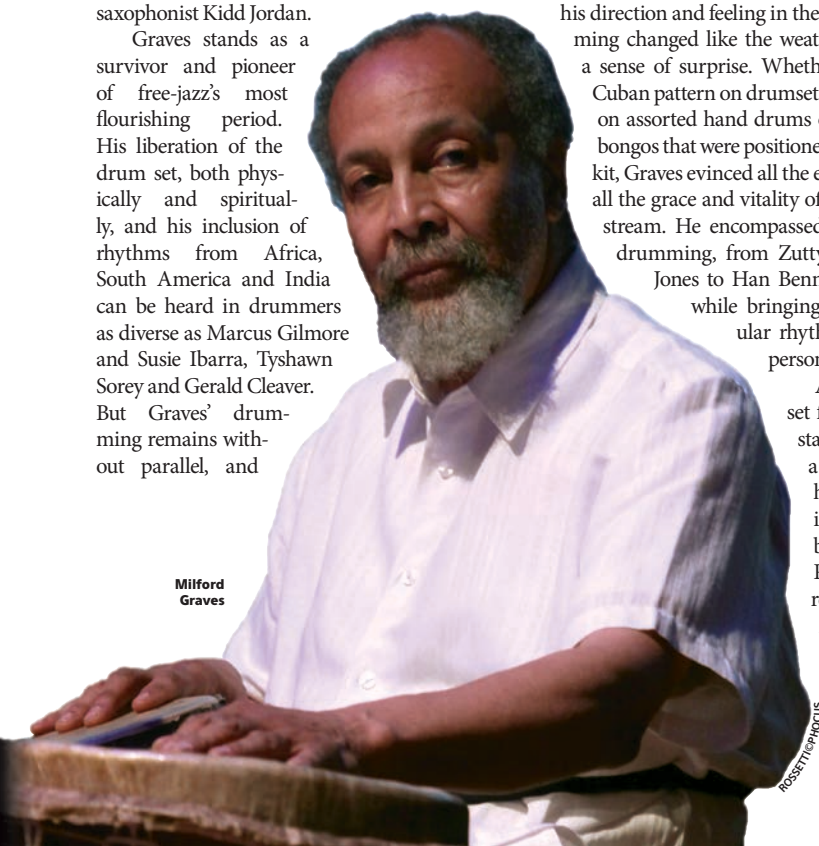
Healdsburg Hails Haden

Bassist Charlie Haden made his comeback to the concert stage with several performances at this year's Healdsburg (Calif.) Jazz Festival, including this June 2 set with his triplet daughters Petra (left), Rachel and Tanya and guitarist Bill Frisell.

Graves Celebrates a Lifetime at Vision Fest 18

DURING A THREE-HOUR-PLUS CONCERT TO celebrate Milford Graves' career, the 72-year-old drummer-percussionist held court, achieved rhythmic ecstasy and wore out anyone unable to match his "stallion"-like energy, to quote tenor saxophonist Kidd Jordan.

Graves stands as a survivor and pioneer of free-jazz's most flourishing period. His liberation of the drum set, both physically and spiritually, and his inclusion of rhythms from Africa, South America and India can be heard in drummers as diverse as Marcus Gilmore and Susie Ibarra, Tyshawn Sorey and Gerald Cleaver. But Graves' drumming remains without parallel, and practically without comparison.


ROSSETTI©PHOCUS

Milford Graves

In each of the three groups that accompanied him on the opening night of Vision Festival 18, which took place June 12–16 at Roulette in Brooklyn, Graves lit a fire and transformed the music to follow his direction and feeling in the moment. His drumming changed like the weather, but always with a sense of surprise. Whether playing an Afro-Cuban pattern on drumset, setting up the music on assorted hand drums or accenting the two bongos that were positioned on either side of his kit, Graves evinced all the energy of a storm and all the grace and vitality of a flowing mountain stream. He encompassed the history of jazz drumming, from Zutty Singleton to Elvin Jones to Han Bennink, in every stroke while bringing his uniquely irregular rhythms and undeniable personality to every bar.

Announcing the first set from the back of the stage, where he played a small collection of hand drums, Graves introduced the members of Afro Cuban Roots, whose music recalled the drummer's earliest days in New York as an Afro-Cuban percussionist. This was a full-on Latin jazz jam, and the joy was contagious. The group included pianist David Virelles, bassist John Benitez, alto saxophonist Román Filiú and percussionist-vocalist Roman Diaz. The communication between Graves and Virelles was particularly thrilling, the pair egging each other on, Graves eyeing the younger Virelles as he supercharged the rhythms and offered melodic and rhythmic counterpoint.

Milford Graves Transition Trio opened the next set with a resounding solo assault from pianist D.D. Jackson, all registers of his grand piano ringing from top to bottom, his playing all tumult, crescendo and chordal clusters. Graves and Jackson flew into outer space together, their combined flurries a rolling, tumbling exploration of musical possibility. Graves worked his entire set, his left-hand snare-drum jabs created with odd arm positions, his right hand playing the ride cymbal bell with intensity yet creating an oddly gentle rhythm. At set's end, saxophonist Jordan seemed truly exhausted. Graves did not.

Milford Graves NY HeArt Ensemble closed the night with a lineup that included bassist William Parker, tenor saxophonist Charles Gayle, trombonist Roswell Rudd and poet Amira Baraka. Two-thirds of this group were in the original New York Art Quartet, but the NY HeArt Ensemble's performance made that group's 1965 debut album sound closer to the Modern Jazz Quartet. The trio of Gayle, Parker and Graves turned the amplitude and energy of the night increasingly turbulent, Gayle's incantatory, wailing cries breaking through Graves' urgent, titanic rhythms, the music stretching higher and higher into the realms of the ecstatic. —*Ken Micallef*

ESP-Disk at 50:
Taking the Temperature of the '60s

If you live long enough, history will find you. These days Bernard Stollman, 84, is enjoying the rewards of survival and the perspective of age, which can now bring some shape and definition to what once seemed naïve, chaotic and crazy. Fifty years ago he founded ESP-Disk, a fiercely independent record label that came to define itself against all that was comfortable, popular and "acceptable." Its sales were tiny, but for anyone who wishes to take the cultural temperature of the '60s and early '70s avant-garde today, ESP is a vital primary source.

Stollman and ESP are properly celebrated by Jason Weiss in his new book *Always in Trouble: An Oral History of ESP-Disk, the Most Outrageous Record Label in America* (Wesleyan University Press).

Outrageous it was. But ESP was also an extension of a long tradition in jazz: The independent record label nurtured on conviction, not cash. Think Commodore, Keynote, Dial, Clef, Transition, Prestige and many others. Some grew up, some didn't. Each was a projection of its founder's tastes and personality. But none was as liberated, open and seemingly shapeless as ESP. It began as a public relations gambit for Esperanto, the international language that gave the label its name. With $103,000 in seed money from his mother and a nebulous business plan, Stollman and ESP were off.

"It reflected my awareness that something was happening," Stollman said from his home in Hudson, N.Y. "In the '60s, a generation was emerging into adulthood and was ready to be heard. I saw myself as a mentor. Even though I was groping, I felt I was on to something. The analogy I would suggest was the south of France when the Impressionists were all shunned by the Paris establishment. I saw what I was recording as an art movement, though I couldn't define it. It was not pleasure or entertainment."

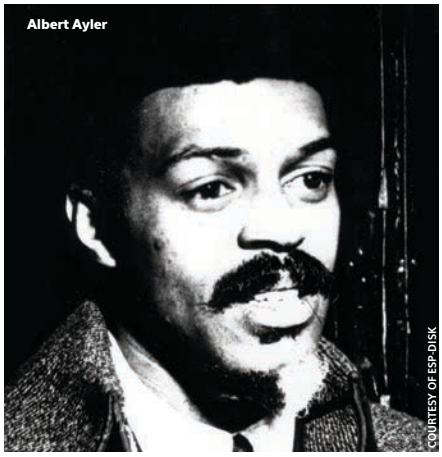
Unlike other independents, where men such as Milt Gabler and Norman Granz shaped the content of their catalogs, Stollman ruled with a helium hand almost never seen in the studio. "I didn't want to be in that control booth," he said, "because I didn't want to risk intimidating the artists with my presence. So I didn't even attend sessions. Most of what ESP released was recorded directly by the artist."

Stollman's libertarian style left the door open for anything. He recorded The Fugs, and early anti-war rock band that gave ESP early commercial credibility. But when his taste for pariahs led him to release *Charles Manson Sings* in 1971, many retailers refused to stock it. If the timing had been better by a couple of years, I asked him, perhaps you would have considered an Adolph Eichman LP? Stollman thought a moment. "Possibly," he said. "I think humankind should be exposed to the fulminations of these twisted and tormented individuals."

Twisted and tormented were words some critics were applying to much of the new music of the '60s, including such ESP discoveries as Pharoah Sanders, Burton Greene, Albert Ayler and other artists on the progressive edge. Along with Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, Paul Bley and Charles Tyler, they would define ESP's esoteric profile in the jazz world.

With no one to consult or please but himself, Stollman embraced it all, not because he liked it—"It was not my purpose to criticize or make judgments," he said—but because it seemed to "come from some truth." "When I heard Pharoah Sanders, I simply heard a melodic and beautiful music. I heard Albert Ayler very naively, but had no reservations at all. I didn't listen to it politically or contextually—just viscerally. I heard something I'd never heard before." Stollman's contracts were terse one-off affairs that provided only for joint ownership of the masters, song publication rights and no term agreements.

Much of ESP stood in the shadow of John Coltrane and Bob Thiele's Impulse! Records. But Stollman didn't see him as a competitor, even


Albert Ayler

COURTESY OF ESP-DISK

though Sanders and Ayler worked for both labels. "Thiele was very remote from what I was doing," Stollman said. "He had a strong view of what music should be. I didn't think in terms of what the public wanted or even what I wanted. Ayler, like all artists, had total authority over what to do and put out on ESP. But I've been told that Bob insisted that Albert sing [on the 1968 LP *Love Cry*]."

Despite some commercial success with The Fugs, ESP pressings were being skimmed off. Records were in the stores but ESP wasn't seeing its money. "We were out of business by 1968," Stollman said, "but I continued to make albums until 1974. I was out of my mind." European licensing generated a sporadic revenue stream thereafter, he said.

For the next 30 years ESP was in sleep mode. In 2005 the label was revived with a combination of reissues and new releases, which today number nearly 100 (and are sold at espdisk.com). "I have no financial security outside of Social Security and a pension," Stollman said. "Yet I have a string of new ESP releases coming out. My distributor pays the pressing costs, but I have no income from it. You're talking to someone who's profoundly deluded. I think I'm nuts."

In other words, after 50 years, the situation remains normal. *—John McDonough*

Intakt's Landolt Takes Long-Term Approach to Avant-Garde

OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES, few European record labels have chronicled the totality and adventurousness of the avant-garde like Zurich, Switzerland's Intakt. Since the company was launched in 1986 by Patrik Landolt, artists from both sides of the Atlantic—Barry Guy, Oliver Lake, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Elliott Sharp, Aki Takase, Cecil Taylor, Die Enttäuschung and others—have enjoyed fruitful relationships with the imprint, which sees itself as something more than a traditional record company, working with its artists over the long term to produce carefully curated editions. Intakt's catalog now boasts more than 220 releases.


Patrik Landolt
F. MEINBERG

"Our ideal is the good editor of books who follows writers and their work over years and stays in an intense discussion about the work," said Landolt. "I'm not interested in running a label which brings out this and that and collects, more or less, interesting recordings. I like to follow, accompany and supervise the artists over years, and hopefully I'm able to support him or her and their music and assist them in developing a musical work and biography."

Landolt, a former journalist, became seriously involved in jazz at the start of the '80s, co-founding the cultural organization Fabrikjazz with pianist Irène Schweizer and Remo Rau and soon thereafter starting the Taktlos Festival, in January 1984. It was due to high-quality festival recordings made by Swiss Radio that Landolt was eventually inspired to start the label. "Irène Schweizer was internationally known at this time, but her music wasn't well documented," he said. "I decided to bring out the first recordings as LPs, with big success." In fact, Schweizer appears on seven of the label's first 10 releases, in duets with drummers like Han Bennink, Pierre Favre, Andrew Cyrille and Louis Moholo, and with a group featuring George Lewis, Maggie Nicols and Günter "Baby" Sommer.

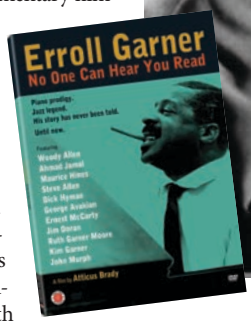
Landolt had modest expectations from the beginning, but his initial title ended up selling 2,000 copies in just one month, and since then Intakt has grown steadily, both in terms of releases and artistic reach. "It was and still is a learning process, searching and hard work," he said. "I never made a financial plan for Intakt, but I worked step by step, led by my love for this music, my interest, my knowledge and my serious commitment to the musicians."

Intakt has adjusted to the changing calculus of the record industry and made its catalog available as digital downloads, but Landolt rejects an all-digital future. "Ten years ago everybody told me, 'The CD is dead,' but it's still living. I like to produce a CD with a booklet, liner notes, beautiful artwork."

While recording Swiss artists is important for Landolt—and a recent state grant to support four annual releases by Swiss musicians will help ensure titles from lesser-known musicians like pianist Gabriela Friedli and reedist Christoph Irniger—he sees defining the imprint by its nationality as a negative practice. "I love the statement of Nobel-winning writer Derek Walcott: 'My nation is imagination,'" he said. Intakt's future releases perfectly reflect this borderless thinking: a third recording by Trio 3 (Reggie Workman, Oliver Lake and Andrew Cyrille) with a guest pianist (Jason Moran), a solo recording from Sommer, a Takase quartet outing with French players including Louis Sclavis and Vincent Courtois, and the first orchestral recording by saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock. **DB**

Documentary-Maker Seeks Wider Audience for Erroll Garner


Erroll Garner
DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES



Hoping to bring a wider audience to pianist Erroll Garner's works, filmmaker Atticus Brady has released the independent documentary *Erroll Garner: No One Can Hear You Read*. The movie, released in April by First Run Features, has earned awards from the Ojai Film Festival, the Philadelphia Independent Film Festival, the Northampton International Film Festival and a number of other events. It is now available on DVD.

Brady said he embarked upon the documentary to unearth more information about Garner's life and works. He also wanted to create a film where jazz fans interested in Garner could learn about the man and hear his music all in one place.

"Nobody knows about Garner anymore—it's really a shame," he said. "I don't know why certain jazz figures in history never seem to be in danger of fading. But other musicians are in danger of that, and Garner is one of them."

Brady came to Garner through the pianist's 1954 recording of "Misty." Until hearing that tune, which he described as "the sexiest music I had ever heard in my life," he was a 17-year-old film student who studied classical piano on the side.

"I heard that version of 'Misty,' and I freaked out," he said. "At that point, all my classical training went right out the window, and I started playing jazz standards and trying to play them in the bouncy, high-spirited Garner style."

He soon ran into an utter lack of information about the pianist, who died of a heart attack in 1977 at age 53. Looking to break into documentary filmmaking as a college student in 1996, he contacted Garner's family, fellow musicians and admirers, put them in front of the camera and got them to start talking.

He tracked down two of Garner's siblings and spoke to them about home life and growing up in Pittsburgh, and he talked with a number of musicians about what exactly Garner was doing harmonically and melodically. Finally, he secured an interview with Kim Garner, Erroll's daughter, who had never before talked on camera about the pianist. "She speaks very touchingly and movingly about having a father who had to disappear from her life because his career was so frantic," he said.

Brady completed a number of interviews in 1996 and started editing his tape. But he ran out of funding, so the project was put on the shelf for 14 years.

In 2010, Brady conducted a number of interviews with Ahmad Jamal and other musicians, looking for more explanation about Garner's style and what made him important. This time around, buoyed by technological advances in film editing, Brady finished the piece.

Plans are in place to get the documentary into schools, screened at jazz institutes and possibly even broadcast on television. If he can get it to a wider audience, Brady knows the legacy of Garner won't be forgotten. "The music is very much in danger of being completely hidden," Brady said. "People are missing out."

—Jon Ross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Regina Carter (left) and bassist Chris Lightcap at the Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival

MARGOT SCHULMAN

Mary Lou Williams Fest Drops Gender-Specific Mission

Cécile McLorin Salvant embodied all the virtues of the Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival. On May 18, just shy of two weeks before the release of her major-label debut, *WomanChild* (Mack Avenue), the singer fronted a trio in the Kennedy Center's Terrence Theater and investigated a set of intriguing, sometimes long-forgotten, tunes.

After an 18-year run, this marks the last year that the festival will carry the "Women in Jazz" tagline—a change that riled this year's host, Dee Dee Bridgewater, who had to bite her tongue to mask her consternation.

According to the Kennedy Center, the festival will continue as the Mary Lou Williams Festival but will start incorporating male leading jazz artists. That said, the festival ended its singular focus on female jazz musicians fabulously, amounting to the most adventurous edition in its history. The three-day event (May 16–18) featured two AACM members, pianist/vocalist Amina Claudine Myers and flutist Nicole Mitchell; legendary vocal experimentalists Sheila Jordan and Jay Clayton; and violinist and 2006 MacArthur "genius" grant recipient Regina Carter, among others.

Salvant began her set with the self-penned titled track of her new CD, an apt choice considering the festival's mission. She stretched her expressive vocals across a mid-tempo groove powered by drummer Rodney Green, bassist Paul Sikivie and pianist Aaron Diehl. Salvant allotted plenty of room for band mates to shine, particularly Diehl, whose sleek yet orchestral pianism complemented her voice perfectly. The 23-year-old singer exuded an old soul who favors the canon of early 20th century jazz, yet she brought a modern vitality to the fore without desecrating the material.

Salvant, winner of the 2010 Thelonious Monk International Vocals Competition, has chops to spare and an expansive vocal range, but she never let her dexterity get the best of her. Not once did she scat her way through a song to reap applause. Instead, with crisp enunciation, keen control of dynamics and sterling displays of tension-and-release, she zeroed in on the melodies, lyrics and emotional intent of the songs. She uncoiled all the sensual sadness of Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye" and the dramatic daffiness of Sam Coslow's "You Bring Out The Savage In Me," a tune recorded in 1935 by female trumpeter Valaida Snow. Even more impressive was Salvant's treatment of Bessie Smith's "Haunted House Blues," on which she startled the audience with a holler worthy of Screamin' Jay Hawkins before singing about unfaithful lovers and possible domestic violence. Another obscure blues Salvant delivered was Blanche Calloway's (Cab Calloway's sister) randy "Growlin' Dan."

A day before Salvant's performance, the 2004 Monk Vocals Competition winner, Gretchen Parlato, performed in a trio setting with fellow singers Becca Stevens and Rebecca Martin, billed as Tillery. Maximizing spatial awareness as well as bracing three-part harmonies, Tillery accompanied themselves with guitar, ukulele and the charango, giving the music a folky airiness. Tillery opened with two eyebrow-raising covers: Prince's "Take Me With U," from his 1984 landmark LP, *Purple Rain*, and the Jacksons' "Push Me Away," a bossa nova from the group's 1978 LP, *Destiny*. The latter song was an ideal vehicle for Parlato, who demonstrated a strong affinity for Brazilian music and whose billowy soprano accentuated the unrequited longing associated with the late King of Pop. From there, the group traded lead vocals and explored a repertoire of epigrammatic originals, such as the tranquil "No More," the questing "The Space In A Song To Think" and the lamenting "To Up And Go."

Mitchell's delightful set, which opened the festival's final evening, was a performance that would usually prove too jarring for those Kennedy Center season-ticket buyers who prefer their artists, particularly women, to be even-keeled. Nevertheless, Mitchell transfixed the audience, which repaid her with rousing applause. She focused on works from her new disc, *Aquarius* (Delmark), as she and her Ice Crystal quartet ventured into a sonic realm that recalled Eric Dolphy's iconic 1964 LP, *Out To Lunch*. Mitchell's full-bodied flute tone meshed superbly with vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz's restive accompaniment and counterpoints, notably on the capricious "Aqua Blue" and the stomping blues romp "Sunday Afternoon." The two created jolting timbres and intertwining melodies, propelled by Frank Rosaly's loping, sometimes multi-directional drumming and Joshua Abrams' assured, groove-laden bass lines. Mitchell's husband, Calvin Gantt, even came out to give a spoken-word performance on the anthemic "Fred Anderson," Mitchell's touching tribute to the late saxophonist and AACM patron saint.

Other highlights included Carter's evocative Reverse Thread ensemble, which explored traditional Malian music, and drummer Cindy Blackman Santana's Explorations, which closed the festival. Both women have become regulars of the festival, and one hopes that they will return when the annual event begins to present headlining artists of both genders. —*John Murph*


Pharoah Sanders

ERICH HABESOHN

Homegrown INNtöne Festival Presents Handpicked Players

COULD YOU IMAGINE HAVING TWO OR three thousand people over for a long weekend? Well, that's pretty much what Austrian trombone player Paul Zauner has been doing since 2002 when he had to find a new place to host the INNtöne Festival, an event he launched in 1986.

From May 17–19, fans got to hear a wide range of jazz on Zauner's organic pig farm in the hilly confines of Diersbach, Austria. As usual, the trombonist handpicked the musicians, and this year's stunt was Pharoah Sanders' presence. Following a soulful tone poem and an epic version of "Jitu" where the legendary saxophonist's quartet got to stretch out, tuba player Howard Johnson and vocalist Dwight Trible joined in. If one might have been chagrined about Sanders taking a back seat, watching the saxophonist work the crowd and beat his chest was nothing short of uplifting.

Trible's own set consisted of a duo with pianist Bobby West. His impressive operatic range—he can move from a whisper to a deep bellow at the drop of a dime—also means that his style can at times seem over-the-top or too mannered. But Trible's command of the stage, great control and literate lyrics clearly made up for any excesses.

Chicago guitarist Bobby Broom and his trio delivered one of the most focused and convincing sets of the festival. Broom won't barnstorm—it's just not his style—but, behind a deceptive nonchalance, he displayed a rare melodic sense that shone during a refreshing version of "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top" as well as his own "D's Blues."

Texas-based Brad Leali clearly struck a chord. The bright-toned alto saxophonist has a knack for details and nuances. Leali's and pianist Claus Raible's compositions belong to a different era, but the pieces were rendered with a rare honesty thanks to a terrifically engaged rhythm section. The same could not be said of the passionless Italian players who backed tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and detracted from his warm, unctuous tone and careful delivery.

Since his association with Zauner, vocalist/percussionist Mansur Scott has become a festival fixture. His quartet was joined by Johnson, whose two tubas and baritone sax supplied different hues. Scott appeared to be so taken by the lyrics that one would have believed he had actually witnessed what he narrated.

Jerry Gonzalez Y El Comando De La Clave blended standards with Afro-Cuban music and other Latin rhythms. In pianist Javier Massó, electric bassist Alain Pérez and drummer Kiki Ferrer, Gonzalez has found the perfect ensemble to give life to his concept.

European acts were symptomatic of a new problem for musicians of the Continent. Emancipated from their American models, they have created a new tradition that they can't easily break away from. The all-star band of bassist Günter Lenz, pianist Patrick Babelaar, drummer Wolfgang Reisinger and flugelhornist Herbert Joos was often steeped in German romanticism, and Joos' cloudy tone ended up being the main attraction. Drummer Uli Soyka's sextet Lila Lotus owed a debt to the ECM aesthetic and roster. The atmospheric compositions, with their free and dissonant interludes, however, sounded too formulaic.

More successful was German trumpeter Matthias Schriefl. His sextet/septet loosened up to explore the connections between alpine music and other genres: waltz, polka, circus music and Balkan folk. One highlight occurred when Schriefl and tuba player Johannes Bär picked up a couple of alpenhorns.

The festival program extended beyond jazz with the avant-folk of local hero Peter Mayer, the rock-tinged blues of Otis Taylor, Brazilian accordionist Renato Borghetti and Ghanaian singer Rocky Dawuni. *—Alain Drouot*

Players ⟩

MICHAEL DEASE

Well-Versed in the Lineage

After submitting final grades for his students at Michigan State University, Michael Dease—not wanting to miss a breakfast appointment the following morning in Astoria, Queens—packed his car and drove through the night from East Lansing.

Ensconced in his favorite bagel shop a half-hour after parking, Dease discussed his recipe for wakefulness. "I listened to a bunch of my friends' albums," he says. "Sometimes I forgot I was listening to jazz. There's a trend where people, to be innovative or get some spotlight, push away the elements that make jazz so special. I don't like to eschew the traditions. I like to carry them forward and make something of them."

The 30-year-old trombonist fulfills that mandate on *Coming Home*, his fifth leader CD. It's Dease's debut on his imprint, D Clef, which has isssued nine Dease-produced albums by generational peers. Here, Dease prods alto saxophonist Steve Wilson, pianist Renee Rosnes, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Ulysses Owens to unleash their creative powers on five originals and six elegantly reharmonized covers. Harmonic vibrations evoking Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Woody Shaw and Jimmy Heath are palpable, and the leader rises to the challenge. On Oscar Peterson's "Blues Etude" and Hubbard's "Take It To The Ozone" he articulates the warp-speed changes with precision and logic, illuminating the lines with a luminous, smeary tone that also entextures his slipping-and-sliding declamation on the ferocious, original 5/4 blues "Solid Gold."

Initially a saxophonist, Dease, out of Augusta, Ga., developed his capacious ears and deep groove as a teenager, absorbing the Charlie Parker and Sonny Rollins lexicons and playing horn lines with Augusta resident James Brown's band members at local clubs. His "conversion experience" occurred at 17, when a friend played him John Coltrane's 1957 album *Blue Trane*.

"I couldn't believe a trombone could sound so pretty," Dease recalls of Curtis Fuller's contributions to the classic Blue Note LP. "I didn't play saxophone again until I was about 26."

Having taught himself the slide positions and much trombone language, the teenage Dease entered Florida State University on scholarship. Looking for a more jazz-centric curriculum, he transferred after one semester to the brand-new Jazz Arts program at The Juilliard School of Music.

Trombonist Wycliffe Gordon—a fellow Augusta native—encountered Dease as a 13-year-old aspirant with an off-the-charts work ethic at his local music school, and facilitated his move north. Gordon said that Dease "has a personality that can take in a lot right away." At Juilliard, Dease would deploy that attribute in constructing a style that refracts voices from a broad influence tree—universal building blocks like Fuller, J.J. Johnson and Frank Rosolino, modern masters like Steve Turre and Steve Davis (both direct mentors), '50s swing-to-boppers Jimmy Cleveland and Bennie Green, suave prebop growlers Vic Dickenson and Dicky Wells, and Ellington plunger masters Booty Wood and Tyree Glenn.

"Once I identified this connection with trombone, I became as well-versed in the lineage as I could," Dease explains. "I learned solos by ear; since I couldn't write music then, I wrote letters in the shapes of the lines. Transcribing was the gateway to playing like my favorites."

This process accelerated after Dease joined the Illinois Jacquet Big Band at the end of 2002. "It kicked my ass because Illinois operated at such a high level of mastery, and I wanted to be that much better every time I played," Dease recalls. "J.J. Johnson was his first trombone player, and I was his last. I wanted to have that level of communication."

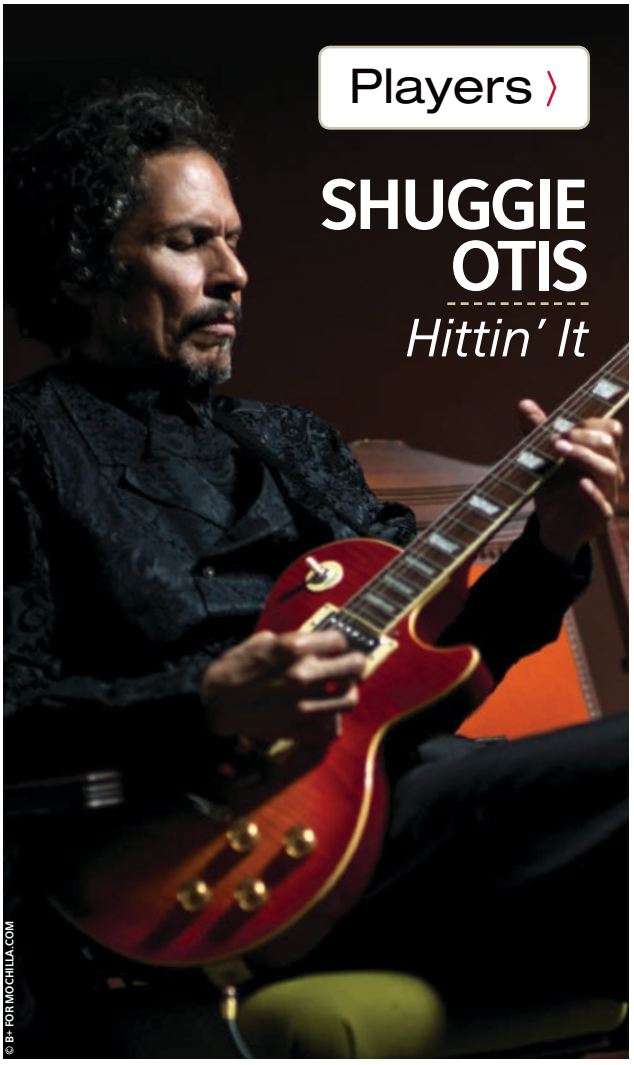
In 2006, Dease overnight-FedExed his second CD, *Clarity* (Blues Back), to Slide Hampton, who phoned the next day with an offer to join a Trombone All-Stars week at the Village Vanguard. Faced with Hampton's "super-hard, extremely high" parts in the lead chair, Dease recalls, "I was able to dig down and play things that I might not have played since." In the audience were John Lee—who recruited Dease for the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band and to Lee's JLP label as a leader, sideman and producer—and Roy Hargrove, who invited him to join his big band. The trombonist subsequently landed engagements with McBride, Charles Tolliver, Nicholas Payton, the Heath Brothers and Claudio Roditi's quintet, in which Dease doubled on tenor saxophone.

"People who know me well tell me to relax," Dease says, noting that sleep deprivation would not interfere with afternoon preparations for a Brazil-oriented recording session the next day and a weekend engagement with his big band. "I get it, but I always kick my own ass. That's what keeps me improving." —*Ted Panken*

Players ⟩

SHUGGIE OTIS

Hittin' It



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A look of mild shock blends into a wide grin when Shuggie Otis is handed a long-forgotten article from the early days of his career. It's a two-part Blindfold Test from the May 27 and June 10, 1971, issues of DownBeat that featured the singer-songwriter (then age 17) alongside his father, the late r&b legend Johnny Otis. Then he's asked about what that teenager thought about himself.

"He was on top of the world," Otis said just before his April 17 concert at Chicago's Lincoln Hall. "It was a very happy time for me back then. It's very similar to the way I feel now—as odd as that may sound."

Otis refuses to play into the image of a neglected and reclusive artist who stages a comeback after years in seclusion. That description would be too easy. In 1974, Otis released *Inspiration Information*, a multilayered blend of ethereal r&b with electronic flourishes and classical influences that foreshadowed much of today's soul. Despite that work—and writing The Brothers Johnson's hit "Strawberry Letter 23"—he just had a devoted niche audience. The album was reissued in 2001 (on Luaka Bop) but its creator did not capitalize on that release. Now it's included in *Inspiration Information/Wings Of Love* (Epic/Legacy), a two-disc set that includes previously unreleased tracks he had recorded mostly during the 1970s and '80s. This time, Otis won't let any opportunities slip away.

"The reason I want to stick with music on a steady basis is [that] I'm older now, so I don't think like a 19-year-old—that you have all the time in the world," Otis explained. "I don't want to stop touring for the rest of my life. All I want to do is tour, record and write."

While destiny may have sparked Otis' life in music, having a father who was a bandleader and DJ definitely helped. A host of musicians came through the family home, as did recordings. During his childhood, Otis looked up to T-Bone Walker and absorbed his father's Debussy and Beethoven albums. Early rock 'n' rollers Don & Dewey inspired the 11-year-old Otis to pick up a guitar. Five years later, he was featured on such albums as *The Johnny Otis Show Live At Monterey!*

Back then, Otis certainly could have served as a link between his father's generation of blues musicians and his own contemporaries who were avidly following Jimi Hendrix. He just didn't see himself that way.

"I came out playing blues, and they thought I would stay in that direction and maybe become a blues-rock star," Otis recalled. "But by the time it came around to *Inspiration Information*, I did not want to be a blues-rock star. So there are not a lot of guitar solos and not a lot of guitar out front. I don't think a lot of people cared for it. It was too new."

Part of that innovation came because of Otis' interest in technology. Around 1971, he heard Sly Stone using a Rhythm King drum machine and started experimenting. He has also always preferred producing himself. Otis still records in his home studio outside Los Angeles, but he limits his tool kit nowadays.

"My studio is pretty elaborate for a home studio," he said. "I have a 32-track board, and I love working with a board. I can't work with a mouse and a computer. I'm 'old school,' as they say, and I love it."

Last fall, Otis put together his touring band, which, like a vintage family r&b revue, includes a horn section as well as his brother Nick on drums and son Eric on guitar.

"This is too important and too much fun, so why think about the past? I'm thinking just about good things now, and I'm trying to be as positive as I can. You just hang in there and go with the flow, keep your fingers crossed, say a prayer and hit it."

—Aaron Cohen

Players ⟩

CECILIA PERSSON

Independent Thinker


MIKI ANAGRIUS

Enjoying the comfort of Fasching's backstage drawing room during the Stockholm Jazz Festival in October, pianist Cecilia Persson was the picture of contentment. She had been pregnant for months, motherhood not far from her mind. (She gave birth to a girl in February of this year.)

Based in Stockholm, Persson, 31, grew up south of the city, in the town of Skane. Music was an integral part of her childhood.

"We had a piano at home, and even though my parents didn't play it, I got into that very, very early," she said. "There is a big tradition of choir in Sweden, so I went to music school when I was 10, where you have a lot of choir. And I always enjoyed it. The more difficult it was, I liked it more. That was six years, with choir and a lot of ear-training. It wasn't until I started high school that I got into jazz music or improvised music. I played classical music until I was 18, but I never really got into it; it felt more like doing your homework.

"But after 18," she added, "I met people who listened to jazz, and they inspired me. It was a musical challenge to hear all these tones and different spaces. I couldn't understand it. In the beginning, everything piqued my interest. But then you go through all the traditional jazz, and I liked that. But then, after a few years, I started with the modern, also Nordic music, and a lot of Norwegian musicians."

Persson attended Stockholm's famous Royal Academy, but before that she attended arts camp after high school, for three years. "I felt that was the most important time, because you could do anything," she recalls. "In six weeks you have to have a concert, you have to find out what to do. It encouraged independent thinking. When you got to the academy, it was a little bit more structure[d]. And that's good in other ways. But you have to fight a little bit more to get your own thing."

Besides leading a trio and quintet, Persson is in the larger group Paavo, which has been around for 10 years. She also has her own project, *Open Rein* (Hoob Records), with various instruments and a combination of trio, quintet, sextet and nonet pieces, scheduled for release in November.

Paavo's third album is the CD-and-DVD set *The Third Song Of The Peacock* (Found You Recordings). "The CD is the new Paavo trio, recorded at Stockholm's Atlantis Studio [where ABBA used to record]," she said. "We recorded the DVD live in the north of Sweden in a very nice, nature kind of place, in a cabin.

"Pavo is Latin for *peacock*," Persson explained. "But we spell it with two A's, like in the Finnish name. We took the name because the sound of a peacock is quite special and nice. Weird also.

"I use a lot of notation for all the instruments. And I think about who's going to play that instrument. I know certain qualities about that person. But the most important thing is to have parts where you don't know what to do at all—where it's all empty. And it goes back and forth between those notations and free improvisation, because I like mixes, notes where it's very particular and set, and then you have to shut your mind and see what's happening." —*John Ephland*

Players ⟩

URI GURVICH

Cultural Synthesis

Jazz is an indigenous American art form, but it is also a thoroughly global enterprise. And few of the music's practitioners embody its universality more completely than saxophonist Uri Gurvich. A native of Israel, Gurvich, 31, has fashioned an ensemble that weaves elements of the American vernacular with a range of disparate national traditions. The result: a common musical language.

It is a graceful feat of cultural synthesis, one that has been making waves in the hippest of Manhattan haunts—among them The Stone in Loisaida, where, on a Thursday night midway through a weeklong residency in May, Gurvich's band presented a characteristically wide-ranging set, opening with strains of American funk, closing with some Cuban-inflected fireworks and, in between, serving up the sounds of Arabia and Argentina before landing on the leader's home turf with a Sephardic wedding song. For that number, the band rendered a jaunty group vocal.

Featuring music drawn from Gurvich's new CD, *BabEl* (Tzadik), the set reflected a carefully calibrated balancing act in which Gurvich allowed each of his bandmates—Argentine pianist Leo Genovese, Bulgarian bassist Peter Slavov and Cuban drummer Francisco Mela, augmented by Moroccan oud player and percussionist Brahim Fribgane—enough room to express himself without dominating the proceedings.

"My main goal is that none of the elements in the band should be jeopardized," Gurvich said.

That attention to balance has been central to Gurvich's musical life since his days growing up near Tel Aviv. His parents, who had emigrated from Argentina to Israel, made sure that Argentineans like Gustavo Leguizamón and Astor Piazzolla enjoyed equal time on the household turntable with Israelis like Sasha Argov and Americans like Cannonball Adderley. By the time a teenage Gurvich entered Israel's Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, his ears were wide open and his sensibility already mature.

He was, in fact, well prepared when the time came for his own emigration, in 2003, to Boston. There, having won a scholarship to Berklee College of Music, he cultivated relationships with like-minded expatriates, including Genovese, Mela and Slavov, who was then part of the house band at the landmark Wally's Café, where Gurvich made an immediate impression in open jams.

"His playing touched me like few others' has," Slavov said. "It was about good taste and balance."

After establishing themselves in Boston, the four musicians separately took the oft-traveled route to New York, coming together there in 2009 for Gurvich's first CD, *Joseph The Storyteller* (Tzadik). Three years later, the musicians—by then a working unit—produced *BabEl*. The disc reveals a deepening of the band's interpersonal relationships and an expansion of its global reach with the addition of Fribgane. By adding Fribgane, a largely self-taught artist, to the mix, Gurvich has reached outside his circle of formally educated musicians to bring some bright North African color to the front line—and, in the process, to shake things up a bit.

"He comes from a completely different place," Gurvich said. "He changes the dynamic."

Gurvich seems intent on employing Fribgane as the music dictates and the economics allow, shifting the band's artistic center of gravity more toward the Middle East. The change would be an organic one; both Fribgane's improvisations and Gurvich's compositions draw liberally on raw material from that part of the world.

But even if the Middle East orientation becomes more pronounced, it is unlikely to alter the band's basic stability. Built on relationships dating back a decade—and modeled on principles that reach back to Gurvich's days as a boy in Israel—the band should withstand any attempt to draw it too far in any one direction.

"I try to make sure that each element in the mix has a part," Gurvich explained, "and doesn't overcome the other."

—Phillip Lutz

KEITH JARRETT GOES CLASSICAL

By Ethan Iverson / Photo by Henry Leutwyler

THE LEGEND SITS DOWN WITH THE BAD PLUS PIANIST TO DISCUSS BACH, BERNSTEIN AND 30 YEARS OF SHARING THE BANDSTAND WITH GARY PEACOCK AND JACK DEJOHNETTE

Keith Jarrett is committed to exploring certain long-term relationships. The most exposed is a simple triangle with piano and an audience, where for over 40 years Jarrett has kept discovering what else can be new in an improvised solo recital. He has also displayed an amazing stability and loyalty when collaborating with other musicians: While fellow star jazz pianists McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea have hired dozens of bassists and drummers over the decades, Jarrett has had only three of each since *Life Between The Exit Signs*, his first album in 1967.

Another important partner is Manfred Eicher, the head of ECM, who has recorded Jarrett since 1971. Four years later, when Eicher released *The Köln Concert*, it bolstered Jarrett's reputation worldwide, and it helped establish the fledgling ECM as an important label.

Keith Jarrett in his studio on June 10

Makarski and Jarrett have recorded the Bach sonatas BWV 1014–1019

Besides two new discs—the jazz trio concert *Somewhere* and a studio traversal of Bach chamber music—ECM has recently released two archival gems. *Sleeper* is a scalding document of Jarrett's "European Quartet" with Jan Garbarek, Palle Danielsson and Jon Christensen from 1979, and *Hymns/Spheres* is the first full CD release of a mysterious 1976 album of Jarrett's organ improvisations.

When recording classical music, Jarrett's favored composer has been J.S. Bach, whom he plays in a restrained and rhythmically alert fashion on both piano and harpsichord. Since 1987 he has tracked both books of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, *The Goldberg Variations*, *The French Suites*, the *Viola da Gamba Sonatas* with Kim Kashkashian, six sonatas with recorder player Michala Petri and now *Six Sonatas For Violin And Piano* with Michelle Makarski.

Makarski (who, like Kashkashian, has recorded several projects for ECM unconnected to Jarrett) is making her second recording with the pianist. The first occasion was 1993's *Bridge Of Light*, where she played Jarrett's Elegy for Violin and String Orchestra and Sonata for Violin and Piano. Makarski is equally vibrant and stylish in baroque music, new music, or unclassifiable circumstances alongside jazz musicians like Tomasz Stanko and John Surman. I asked her about the new Bach record, which is Jarrett's first recording of classical repertoire since a second volume of Mozart concertos in 1998.

"The whole thing developed spontaneously after Keith and I renewed our friendship in late 2008," Makarski said. "Christmas that year, we decided to play something together; it turned out we read through the Bach sonatas. We loved it so much, every time I was able to visit, we'd play them. Sometimes this happened every couple of weeks, sometimes not for months. We'd just play and marvel at the music. Every time we'd do this, the results were very different. Even after deciding we'd like to record, the process didn't much change. What you have is a window on an organic, long-term process of exploration and deep listening. [It's] a kind of momentary document of a joyously renewed friendship—not a strategically planned project."

I have interviewed Jarrett before, and I always notice his hands: While surprisingly small, their rough-hewn solidity suggests immense potential energy.

Ethan Iverson: You've made quite a respectable contribution to the Bach discography by now. But this is your first recording of Bach on piano since the first, *The Well-Tempered Clavier* in 1987. Let's start back there: When did you learn *The Well-Tempered Clavier*?

Keith Jarrett: I learned selected ones when I was very young, more of them in my twenties. I just kept doing them, and *The Goldberg Variations*, too. Making the first *Well-Tempered* album took a lot of work.

The second book I played on harpsichord because I thought a lot of the pieces are much more for that instrument … . We recorded it right here at my studio: I was the tuner, getting each key right, which was also a lot of work.

When I got my harpsichord, the local guy came in a hearse. It's a great car to carry harpsichords in, I guess. But the electronic machine that he had along to tune the instrument was a failure. It didn't know anything, of course … . [T]he instrument was very temperamental. So I took over tuning it.

You must have decided that the harpsichord had something to teach you.

In the '80s, something led me to the New Englander Carl Fudge, who built one of my harpsichords and my clavichord. In those days I sometimes tried to approach a solo concert in different kinds of ways, and there was a Bach birthday concert, where I had all the keyboard instruments from Bach's time until now on stage. It was a great idea, but I had not yet really investigated the instruments. I knew the music: Besides Bach, I was listening to William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, and other early music where there were no bar lines. But I hadn't really played them on clavichord or the harpsichord yet. I remember Carl Fudge kind of cringing when I sat down at the harpsichord: He knew I was naive.

I began the concert with the clavichord, because no one would have heard it if I had played it after anything else. Stylistically, while it was free improvisation, I ended up working my way around older and modern composers, which is challenging. Christopher Hogwood once asked me to improvise a transition between a Mozart Piano Concerto and Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, and I refused. "No, man! I can't do that, at least not on purpose."

Anyway, back to this Bach birthday concert: By the time of the intermission, I had touched all the instruments on stage. It was OK, but I had no idea what to do for the next set, and when I told my then-wife Rose Anne, she said, "Play 'Happy Birthday.'" That was a great idea, because Bach loved variations. I remember there was a Mozartean movement, and in minor keys … .

After the concert I bought one of Carl's harpsichords and began studying. The first harpsichord recording was years later. I began a musical relationship with Michala Petri; she was a fan, and came over and sight-read the Handel sonatas with me perfectly.

I've had more fun playing harpsichord than piano. Like I used to take my flutes, soprano saxophone, or guitar on tour, and you can't take pianos. Harpsichord is a little more human-sized. You have to tune and repair them yourself, [so] it's a more intimate thing.

Did you ever have a harpsichord teacher?

No, but I listened to records and listened to the instrument, too. When a harpsichord recording was coming up I would stop playing the piano or anything else.

Do you have some favorite harpsichordists?

I *used* to!

Ton Koopman?

I like him, but he's a little too ornamental. Gustav Leonhardt taught me more about how to deal with the harpsichord's lack of dynamic range: Whatever keyboard you are playing, that's the volume. My perfect pitch was affected a bit, too.

Right. Early music tuning is about a half-step lower than modern tuning.

Carl made an extra key so we could shift it to [A=] 440 if I wanted it. But eventually 415 was fine. However, I destroyed my perfect pitch, or at least made it rather elastic. While I was doing the work, I had to ask myself, "Is it worth this?"

After all these years with Bach on the harpsichord, why you are back on the piano?

When I started getting to know Michelle Makarski, I was so involved with the piano on so many levels. And I didn't know any more harpsichord technicians; some plectrums needed to be replaced.

Michelle had conceived of her version as having an organ, which I thought was a good idea, but I wasn't going to be the organist. I said, "Piano! Take it or leave it! I'll do something a little different."

The way the project developed was unusually organic. Over the course of two years, we met occasionally. She'd come out and stay, the first time was at Christmastime, and she'd say, "Is there anything you want to sight-read?" I had thought I was done

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STANDARDS TRIO
Keith Jarrett (center), bassist Gary Peacock (left) and drummer Jack DeJohnette

VERTICAL APPROACH

IN JANUARY 1983, the day before the group now called Keith Jarrett's "Standards Trio" first recorded standards, the pianist described his intentions to bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette over dinner.

Both masters had been forewarned. "Keith or his manager called to ask if I was willing to do an album of American standards with Jack and Keith," Peacock recalled. The encounter was their first since Peacock's 1977 ECM studio LP, *Tales Of Another*. "At first blush it was like, 'Standards? *What*?!' I wasn't thinking anything about that."

Upon reflection, Peacock—a one-time gigging pianist and drummer, whose 1983 résumé included stints with Bill Evans, Paul Bley and Albert Ayler—decided "that if Keith wanted to play standards, there must be something more to it, so I agreed." That decision stemmed in part from Jarrett's pitch. "I told them we'd all been bandleaders and played our own music, and the music of the other bandleaders we've worked with, but they knew how freeing it is to be just playing," Jarrett recounted in 2008. "[T]hey knew what I meant ... not to rehearse your own material, not say, 'Use brushes here, we'll go into time here,' the whole kit and kaboodle. Up until that moment, I think Gary thought I was insane. I was a young pianist and a composer. Why would I want standards?"

It was a legitimate question. Jarrett had devoted his energies to creating original music that would greatly influence the course of late-20th century jazz expression—conjuring cogent musical architecture from a blank slate as a solo artist, as on the landmark *The Köln Concert* from 1975; and leading and composing for his so-called "European Quartet," with Jan Garbarek, Palle Danielsson and Jon Christensen, and for the "American Quartet," which Jarrett established by adding Dewey Redman to his no-limits trio with Charlie Haden and Paul Motian.

Himself the leader of an Ahmad Jamal-styled piano trio during his formative years in Chicago, DeJohnette had played with Jarrett in numerous settings: in Charles Lloyd's group from 1965–'68; with Miles Davis in 1970–'71; and on their 1971 ECM duo recording *Ruta And Daitya*. He considered it no big deal to deploy the Great American Songbook "as the launching pad for improvisation" undertaken "with no preconceived ideas."

"[ECM founder] Manfred Eicher suggested a trio record with us, since we all played with Miles," DeJohnette said, before describing the trio's ongoing simpatico. "We each have a wealth of experience in a broad spectrum with the great players that we bring to the music, plus our own personal stamps of creativity. It's always fresh. There's a high level of trust, we're in service of the music and we follow where it takes us. That's been consistent, and as long as that happens, we'll continue to do it."

"We went in the studio to do one album, and ended up getting three in a day-and-a-half," Peacock said, referencing the ECM albums *Standards, Vol. 1*, *Standards, Vol. 2* and *Changes*. "From the get-go it was like, 'Whoa, what is this?' It's like you play a tune, you love it and you surrender to it. You fuckin' die to it! Then this other quality, this intimacy, emerges in such a way that it informs you what to play. We always get it. Sometimes it's so far beyond the pale it's like, 'Holy shit, what do we do *now*?'"

Such moments are abundant on the trio's new album, *Somewhere* (ECM), which documents a July 11, 2009, engagement in Lucerne, Switzerland. The proceedings juxtapose the linear, tune-playing m.o. that dominated the three prior trio albums—*The Out-Of-Towners* (from 2004), *My Foolish Heart* (2007) and *Yesterdays* (2009), each from separate concerts in 2001, when Jarrett was addressing bebop and stride with extraordinary vigor—and the more elaborate, abstract long-form inventions of *Inside Out* (2001) and *Always Let Me Go* (2002), on which the trio extrapolates Jarrett's *tabula rasa* solo aesthetic to the collective context.

"As a musician, you want to move forward," Peacock said by way of describing the trio's evolution. "But what does 'forward' mean? More technique? More craft? Doing something you've never done before? That's a horizontal approach. Our approach has been vertical—going into the depth of something, which you can't do intellectually. There's no set formula. It's like this is the first time and the last time we'll ever play together. If you've been doing it for 50 years, it's hard to turn around and try to do something else."

The trio's fall tour will include dates in Los Angeles (Sept. 28), Seattle (Oct. 1) and Berkeley, Calif. (Oct. 4), among other cities.

—Ted Panken

with learning new pieces—I was concentrating on the other things I do—but she talked me into reading the Bach sonatas. This is a real triumph for me, because I thought I was done with that world. I wasn't going to learn Ligeti or anything, and didn't feel like I needed that kind of nutrition. But every time she visited, we played it again—between dinners or whatever.

Your Bach is very pure, and very rhythmic. Do you think your jazz playing influences your Bach?

I don't know, but I do like what he said about playing beautifully: "Play the right note at the right time!" In general, I like playing classical music in time. You can take liberties, of course, but still, the right note at the right time.

Tell us more about Michelle.

Steve Cloud recommended her for the *Bridge Of Light* recording. But the reason we became serious about this recording is that we were never serious. There was no protocol. Our tempos are never the same. But we got along personality-wise, because for a classical musician she is very open-minded in that she had listened to a lot of other musics.

Then, we're both somewhat Slavic: She's Polish, and my brother says I'm Serbo-Croatian, and my grandmother said she was Hungarian. Together we got some of the dance qualities essential to these pieces. At one point, we played something in parallel thirds together, and afterward I said, "The Everly Brothers!" We cracked up.

We connect with humor, and kind of a casual approach. It was two years of fun experimenting and then making a record. Her violin is named "Vincenzo."

You used the word *nutrition* before. Is playing Bach kind of like taking vitamins for your improvising work?

Yes. Someone said about Bach, "He's nobody's fool." I can be guaranteed that anything I play by him has a deep and quick intelligence. I wonder what it was like to hear him improvise!

It's also nutritious because it's not me. I'm just throwing myself to this other guy, and asking him, "Show me something I still don't know about music."

Over the years, your improvising keeps having more color and texture. This kind of development seems like it must be connected to your commitment to practicing repertoire. The first solo introduction on *Somewhere*, "Deep Space," seems almost to be in 3-D.

"3-D" is a good way of putting it. Manfred Eicher complimented me on that introduction, too.

Is it fair to say this kind of playing is connected to practicing Bach?

No. It comes more from listening. If I'm improvising moving internal lines or something connected to fugue, then obviously practicing Bach is relevant. Bach and I agree that there aren't chords; there are moving lines.

But that introduction is maybe more like Elliot Carter showing me how many ways there are not to play rhythm, or maybe how a cluster has to come from some place you don't expect.

There are solo concerts where I try to keep everything from resolving.

That's some of your playing that I enjoy the most.

If I'm in Rio, and I know their music—because bossa-nova did infect jazz very well and will never go away—I will give them some of their music, because I love it, too. A Rio concert would never be totally abstract. But there's a 2008 Yokohama concert, which is most successful of the kind of abstract thing we are talking about. They didn't applaud between movements; it was a real workshop atmosphere. That is on my Top 3 list of solo concerts I want to release someday.

Let's talk about the tunes on *Somewhere*.

There's a story in the names of the title. I totally did not intend this, but someone else pointed it out. It begins in "Deep Space," then "Solar," "Stars" ["Stars Fell On Alabama"] and "Sea" ["Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea"], then "Somewhere" or "Everywhere." Finally it is "Tonight," like, take all those things and think about them, and then: "I Thought About You." It is kind of like the story of how a concert happens.

I look at this CD as representative of almost everything we do, but in small pieces. It was also a single set concert. When we have only one set, we know we have to be expansive, because we know we aren't going back out there.

I don't recall you playing Leonard Bernstein before. Why don't jazz cats play Bernstein more often?

I would guess that Bernstein's way of writing is more like a classical composer. You can't just get away with playing the block chords, or if you do that, you have to change the voicings so they make some kind of jazz sense without destroying the tune.

You put some jazz ii/Vs in there that aren't from Bernstein. You must have thought about what would be your "changes" on those pieces.

Especially on "Somewhere." On "Tonight" they are not so hard to get to. We play them differently every time, though. And there was never a vamp on a ballad before. And that really sounds like it is going "Everywhere." It is stopping, and starting, and going out, and coming back. It's very involving. When I first heard the tape I thought, "There's no way we can avoid using that one!"

"Somewhere" is such a delicate piece. If you get anything wrong, it's obvious. In fact, I played the melody really well someplace else, not on this recording. I like what I do with it here, but there was another gig that was better. Jack said afterward, "Could you play those voicings again?" and I said, "No, sorry!"

On the other hand, the ending of "I Thought About You" here is really good, probably the best we've played it. It is so heartfelt and powerful.

Does that tune have a Miles Davis association for you?

Sure. Having him play *any* song so many times is a good signal that there's something there ... and you can hear what's there!

"Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea" is an older tune, like a stride pianist might play. Do you think of it that way, as connecting to stride?

A little, but more like: If you can find the groove, it's a good melody. You can get jocular with it, and let it jump. Jack DeJohnette and I are playing games with the rhythm. We never know what we are going to play, nor do we know why we are playing it.

So you never hand Gary Peacock a chart?

Sometimes he has some music. We both have a fuzzy way of going about it. I have a big list of tunes on the piano. If nothing pops into my head, I check out the list. But Gary and I are both extremely cool with my starting something he's not prepared for.

The trio's language has been very influential, especially the idea of total spontaneity: Everywhere in the world there are trios that don't use tight arrangements in the older mold of Bill Evans or Oscar Peterson. And drummers, in particular, love your trio because of Jack. He's famous for playing very convoluted rhythms, breaking up the time. But on "Deep Blue Sea," especially, I was once again struck by the depth of his ride cymbal beat.

When the rough mixes of the record started coming, I would usually start with that tune because I wanted to hear Jack. There's a couple places where he double-times, but the rest of it is pretty simple. But being a drummer myself, I know there's nothing simple or commonplace about swinging.

You've been interviewed so often about the trio. I couldn't think of anything new to ask, except perhaps a backwards question: You could play with anybody, anywhere, anytime. Why stay with the same two guys? And only *those* two guys?

A lot of it is about magic. If you don't choose the right guys, magic will never happen. A big part of my work is intuition. You don't need much information or many clues to know if you want to play with someone. If it is really right, then clues are right in your face.

The first time we did a record, we had dinner the night before. And Gary was worried about playing "All The Things You Are" again because he had done it so much already. I told him he didn't have to

play it like he had ever done it before, and in fact, I didn't want him to.

There was no intention to be a working band. But if you find the right guys and the magic happens, then, well: Let's play a gig. Not in a concert hall, but in a club, because "All The Things You Are" in a concert seems wrong. But maybe the magic deepens so you try a small hall in Japan, then finally major halls everywhere. And you feel freer and freer within this context. If you decide to be like peanut butter and spread yourself all over the place, you might never have the experience of what happens next with those same guys.

In 30 years we never had an argument about music. We never had a dispute of any major consequence. We just show up and play. One of the concepts, if not the basic concept, is that we are all sidemen to the music.

At this point, anything else I would do would be an event. And what if it was horrible and lasted only a very short time? I'd happily go out of my career knowing I had never made that kind of mistake.

A lot of the trio's repertoire comes from musicals, like these two songs from *West Side Story*. Have you watched a lot of musicals?

Not really. I don't love musicals, although I like the music from *West Side Story* a lot. And some of Leonard Bernstein's other, more serious music I like, too.

You must be connected to the idea of "American music."

Yeah, I don't think there's European jazz, although there are lots of people trying to get the spirit. My quartet with Scandinavians was great. I love *Sleeper*, the recent discovery from that band.

But jazz is the sound of lone self-expression, of your own self. You can't disguise yourself—you speak from who you are.

I don't know if there are influences in music, anyway. After you hear music, you either imitate it or just go on being yourself. Books can be a bigger influence. I don't have as many as Umberto Eco, but I like what he said about having a big library: "You should always have more books than you can read, so you always know that you don't know everything."

What about Harold Arlen vs. George Gershwin vs. Irving Berlin: Do you think about the differences in their voices?

Not as much as I should, but at least I know the lyrics. Gary asked me, after years of playing, "Do you know the lyrics to all the songs?" and I said, "Sure." He said, "That explains it." I don't know what he meant, exactly, but … American music. Well, I think Elliot Carter is American music, too.

I'm astonished you've brought up Carter twice in this interview!

He's a recent discovery for me, somebody I learned about in the last decade. His music really gives me something. The content of his music doesn't impose new things for me—I just like the experience. He worked hard at getting several meters to happen at once, and then the whole orchestra goes, "*Brmmph*!" together. How did they do that?

The two American composers I would guess you have really checked out are Aaron Copland and Charles Ives.

Of course. Copland was more original and more important than many people realize because he's so popular. If there's an American sound in classical music, he invented it.

I went through a long Charles Ives phase, and gained a lot from him. The first time hearing him is revelatory, of course.

You worked with Lou Harrison.

Lou had something really special. One time after hearing a group play a Mozart symphony, he said, "They played it better than they could."

I was having a bit of shoulder piano trouble when he wrote me the Piano Concerto, so I asked him not to write anything percussive. Then he turns around and gives me the "Stampede" movement, which is not just banging with the octave bar but putting it down and picking it up again. He said, "Don't get muscle-bound."

But like it is hard to be a European jazz player, I think it is hard to be an American composer. It's not hard to be an American jazz player. But we didn't invent composing, and it's a tough country to draw a large-scale anything of, because everyone is so [much] themselves.

In jazz, you are not expecting anybody to do anything they can't do, and you aren't expected to be able to analyze a symphony. In jazz, you don't need much composition before you can express yourself. I was listening to the radio at Christmastime, and there were horrible jazz versions of horrible Christmas tunes. I was going to turn it off, but then Sonny Rollins came on with "Winter Wonderland." I said to myself, "There's no way I can turn it off now!"

Sonny put so much of himself into this piece. It was something that was only Sonny, and that something made the little tune transcendent. **DB**

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KERMIT RUFFINS

By Jennifer Odell / Photo by Erika Goldring

PICNIC STATE OF MIND

AT KERMIT'S TREME SPEAKEASY ON A QUIET AFTERNOON IN JUNE, THE lunch hour has come and gone but several patrons linger, using the space more as a community center than a restaurant. In one corner, a woman counsels a recent high school graduate on her career goals. In another, members of the Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans discuss how to fight a music gag rule the city recently levied on an 80-year-old venue in the Seventh Ward.

As the conversations in the dining room begin to wind down, the club's proprietor, trumpeter Kermit Ruffins, walks through the front door, bringing with him a burst of energy and chatter. He's quickly drawn into the center of the cultural activists' meeting and given unsolicited updates on the plight of the St. Roch Tavern. Smiling as he shakes every hand proffered his way, the trumpeter looks like a chef in his kitchen pants and white T-shirt; he's greeted like a de facto mayor.

Ruffins wears many hats simultaneously at home in New Orleans, where his role in the music scene extends far beyond the music itself. He is not just a bandleader; he's a cultural curator. A vocal supporter of live music, Ruffins has owned multiple clubs in Treme, using them—and his own sets around town—to showcase local artists. His restaurant's menu is a survey of foods he's been cooking since childhood. Even his participation in the city's Social Aid and Pleasure Club parades has a curatorial aspect: Armed with his iPad, Ruffins is the self-professed "go-to guy for video" at parades, making use of his lifelong obsession with video recording to capture the bands and dancers at their best and share the footage online.

The Music and Culture Coalition, or MaCCNO, formed in September 2012 after Ruffins invited musicians and club owners to a series of meetings at his restaurant to discuss restrictions on live music being implemented in the city. Since then, the group has steadily advocated on behalf of live music venues.

"I just got so upset," Ruffins says, settling into a seat in the restaurant's kitchen with a cold beer. "Why would they try to shut down a club of live entertainment? I mean, I understand—some of the neighbors complained. I also understand some of those neighbors got there *two weeks* ago."

He's referring to a controversial aspect of what some are calling "the new New Orleans." As the city rebuilt itself after Hurricane Katrina, thousands of newcomers began calling it home. Lured by deals on housing, tax incentives and a revitalized curiosity in the city's culture, they have been held largely responsible for the gentrification of downtown neighborhoods, and the subsequent changes, both good and bad.

"Some of these people are millionaires, and the average musicians aren't gonna know how to fight that," Ruffins explains. "So I thought rather than everyone trying to fight their one individual thing, let's get together to deal with it.'"

While his club helps live music thrive in the historic

New Year's Eve in New Orleans: Kermit Ruffins at the Joy Theater on Dec. 31, 2011

Treme, his new album, *We Partyin' Traditional Style!* (Basin Street), is about sustaining the spirit of traditional New Orleans jazz. To achieve that goal, Ruffins gathered players who could best approximate the sound that first inspired him to play music for a living.

Some critics have questioned his choice to record standard (yet eloquently performed) versions of traditional tunes rather than writing original material or taking the classics in a new direction. But in a way, the album represents Ruffins playing host to traditional New Orleans jazz itself.

"The idea was to try to go back," he says. "That's what I kept wanting to do in my heart. When I first started playing—going to Preservation Hall, going to Maison Bourbon, going to Famous Door—and watching all the elderly guys play, it touched me so hard. I think every human being has to do what really makes them feel good, and if I had my way, I would sit down at Preservation Hall or at the Palm Court Café and play that music every day. Because it's so comfortable and so satisfying."

A swinging rendition of "Chinatown" kicks off the disc, with clarinetist Tom Fischer playing trill-swathed lines around Ruffins' melody. The lively horn interplay continues when Lucien Barbarin's trombone comes in, purring through the low end of "Exactly Like You." On "Marie," pianist Steve Pistorius' dexterity and lightness balance out the trumpeter's big, round, personality-drenched blowing, while the vocal part showcases an appealingly soft rasp in Ruffins' voice.

Ruffins' trumpet chops are undeniable. But even when he laces tunes with inventive solos and hot, swinging melodies, he doesn't necessarily aspire to break new musical ground. Often the goal is simply to create his own version of the music that first moved him.

When he was a teenager, Ruffins discovered Louis Armstrong, shortly after starting the Rebirth Brass Band with Philip and Keith Frazier in 1983. While working with the band and performing in Jackson Square for tips alongside Shannon Powell, Anthony "Tuba Fats" Lacen and Dirty Dozen Brass Band founder Roger Lewis, Ruffins went deep into his Satchmo research, checking out every recording and video he could find. From there, he moved on to Cab Calloway, Count Basie, Miles Davis and Lionel Hampton.

The influence of Satchmo is apparent on *We Partyin'*. Asked how he has made the music of Armstrong and others his own, Ruffins is quick to admit that infusing it with his personality was key.

"I had no choice, because I'll never be able to play at the level that those guys play," Ruffins says. "There are very few people in the world who can actually do that. So I would take little risks and then go back to playing my old traditional New Orleans stuff that I kind of figured out on my own [by] listening to the great brass bands like the Dirty Dozen and Olympia and the Chosen Few."

Thirty years later, Ruffins is still soaking up inspiration from the city's best artists. His regular gigging band, the BBQ Swingers, features strong musicians with a collectively stunning range. But as is often the case when Ruffins heads into the studio, the album's lineup—which, in addition to Barbarin, Pistorius and Fischer, includes Shannon Powell (drums), Don Vappie (banjo), Richard Moten (bass) and singer Mykia Jovan—is an ensemble of players recruited specifically for their "traditional style" expertise.

Unlike many of his peers who had formal training at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts or whose artistry was passed down via family heritage, Ruffins came relatively late to his education in traditional New Orleans jazz.

Growing up in the Lower Ninth Ward, the young trumpeter listened to bands like r&b hitmakers the Commodores while helping his grandmother cook on Saturdays. "There was no brass bands just walkin' around," he says.

Ruffins' horizons widened when he left the neighborhood to attend Joseph S. Clark High School in the Sixth Ward, where he met the Fraziers. Once they graduated and Rebirth began to take off, Ruffins stitched himself into the fabric of Treme.

He has fond memories of those days: "Hanging out with 'Uncle' Lionel [Batiste], [Dirty Dozen Brass Band co-founder] Benny Jones, Tuba Fats and a whole lot of other great men. Every day, I'd be sitting at the bar with those guys, with 'Uncle' Lionel singin' tunes to me all the time, teaching me all kinds of stuff I had no idea existed in this world—let alone in New Orleans."

Before long, his informal lessons paid off. He found himself working for the Rebirth, Olympia, Dirty Dozen, Chosen Few and Treme brass bands simultaneously, playing as many as five gigs in a day and switching band T-shirts as he moved from set to set. "That was the time of my life: 19, 20 years old, with all those damn [brass band] T-shirts," he says, laughing. "I'd get mixed up sometimes."

In the meantime, Ruffins continued studying both live and recorded traditional jazz, practicing the riffs he heard and developing his own style, while marveling at "the spirituality those men brought onstage."

"The beautiful suits and ties, the lifestyle," he reminisces. "It just grew on me. I said, 'This is it. This is what I'm gonna do. I don't know how I'm gonna get there. But I'm gonna be dressed up, playing that old-school traditional jazz swing, all mixed together.'"

Although he was still co-leading the Rebirth, he felt tugged in a different direction.

"I said [to him], 'Go for it, bro,'" recalls Philip Frazier, who had already noticed that concert audiences were strongly responding to Ruffins' tone and charm. "Kermit plays with that growl; there's like a roll in it that people love. And people see that he just really loves life."

By 1992, Ruffins had ventured out on his own, recording three albums for the Justice label before finding his groove with Basin Street Records and the BBQ Swingers.

A few days after the MaCCNO meeting in June, Ruffins is clad in a crisp suit and bow tie onstage at the legendary venue Tipitina's for a CD release party. Seated around him and dressed equally to the nines, some of the city's best traditional jazz players, including Pistorius and clarinetist Evan Christopher, back up a vibrato-heavy "All Of Me," courtesy of singer Mykia Jovan.

Even in this album-focused setting, Ruffins plays curator, presenting a wide swath of his music community rather than simply showcasing the new release. The BBQ Swingers execute the eclectic mix of jazz, soul, hip-hop and r&b that their fans have come to expect.

"He's really good at playing in that traditional jazz idiom—when he wants to do it," says drummer Derrick Freeman, who has been with the BBQ Swingers for nearly two decades. "People ask us all the time, 'What are you gonna do in the next set?' I'm like, 'I seriously have no idea.' We might start the set with Tupac. We might start the set with Frank Sinatra."

Trombonist Corey Henry, an alumnus of the BBQ Swingers who now tours with Galactic and leads the Treme Funktet, compares Ruffins' role as a traditional jazz player to his role as a live music advocate, saying he "breathes new life" into both.

"IF I HAD MY WAY, I WOULD SIT DOWN AT PRESERVATION HALL AND PLAY THAT MUSIC EVERY DAY."

"After the hurricane, people left and had gone in so many different directions, we didn't know how to keep music afloat," says Henry. "[Ruffins' club] was one way everything got kick-started again in Treme with live music."

Like most things about Ruffins, the party vibe of his club comes from a place of honest sentiment. He says he's always wanted to own a venue where he could keep alive his family's tradition of gathering together for good times and great food.

"Since I was about 11 years old in the Lower Ninth Ward, me and my whole family, we would go out almost every Saturday—fishin', crabbin'—at 4 o'clock in the morning," he says, pausing in the Treme Speakeasy kitchen to drain a Bud Light.

"At 11 in the morning, we're comin' back to the house. … In the backyard, the grill is lit, the jukebox is going, my grandmother's over there, everybody's in their little station cleaning fish, gutting fish, cleaning crabs, then we'd boil 'em. Put some aside for gumbo. There's a cowan, which is a turtle. Hang it upside down with its head chopped off, blood drippin' out," he says, smiling, letting the image sink in.

"I was helping doing all that stuff, so you grow up seeing that, doing that and you continue doing what you're seeing all your life. I always say, 'Treat each day like it's a picnic,'" he says, quoting himself with a visible sense of satisfaction.

"I've been having that picnic state of mind since I can remember. I think that's what really gets me over. I think it comes across with music and my way of living."

Looking ahead, Ruffins plans to record an album with strings alongside members of the Louisiana Philharmonic, slated for a 2014 release. In the meantime, he has another club—the temporarily defunct Mother-in-Law Lounge—to open, and a dining room's worth of trout to fry. **DB**

Carl Allen, *Artistic Director*

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Photo: Hiroyuki Ito

Eddie Daniels & Roger Kellaway

'We Like Space'

EDDIE DANIELS IS DRIVING FOUR OF US FROM HIS HOME BASE IN SANTA FE, N.M., TO the small town of Abiquiu, where artist Doug Coffin is hosting a June "renovated house warming" party. As we pass the legendary site of the Santa Fe Opera, one of America's prime operatic entities, Daniels mentions that he was offered a role playing in the bar scene in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* for the company. On cue, Roger Kellaway—Daniels' longtime musical collaborator and duo partner—begins singing the tune from that scene, from his perch in the passenger's seat.

Later in the 50-mile drive, we sample a recording of an energized jazz-chamber version of Mussorgsky's *Pictures At An Exhibition*, Israeli pianist Yaron Gottfried's project that Daniels traveled to Israel this summer to perform.

Needless to say, Daniels and Kellaway are not your typical jazz vets. Both studied classical music early on and have incorporated elements of that genre into their work—Kellaway, notably, with his acclaimed '70s project the Cello Quartet. Both have also leaned into the winds of pop music: clarinetist/tenor saxophonist Daniels as a sideman to pop stars, and pianist Kellaway working with many non-jazz singers, including Bobby Darrin. In a memorable contribution to pop culture, Kellaway penned the closing theme of the TV series "All in the Family."

Coffin, the charismatic multimedia artist—painter, sculptor, designer, mystical handyman—supplied the abstract painting that became the cover of the duo's third album together, the recently released *Duke At The Roadhouse: Live In Santa Fe* (IPO). Coffin met Daniels in a Santa Fe coffeehouse and has become a friend and creative ally. He is, by Daniels' account, "part of the band." The artist is scheduled to actually paint alongside the duo (with cellist James Holland making cameos, as he does on the album) live onstage at the Detroit Jazz Festival over Labor Day weekend.

In Abiquiu, we arrive at the hilltop property where Coffin lives and works, with a stunning view of the sweeping, striated Plaza Blanca area, part of which is owned by movie star Shirley MacLaine. Mention of MacLaine triggers an anecdote from Kellaway, who met her at the late actor Jack Lemmon's memorial service.

As the house party heats up, the duo lays into a tuneful hourlong set in this living room-turned-jazz room, including the theme from the 1962 film *Days of Wine and Roses* (starring Lemmon) and "In A Sentimental Mood" from the new album. They also take an exploratory swing through "Body And Soul" featuring a cameo from tenor saxophonist Chris Collins, also the director of the Detroit Jazz Festival, who came along for the ride.

It is apparent from the duo's three concert albums and this impromptu hilltop set that Daniels and Kellaway are blessed with emphatic rapport. They have been wending in and out of each other's musical lives over many years, including their collaboration on Daniels' 1988 album *Memos From Paradise*, a jazz-band-plus-string-quartet project from the clarinetist's fruitful GRP era, which earned Kellaway a Grammy for his arrangements.

Another point of comparison with this pair of seventy-something musicians is that both are former New Yorkers who have long since fled the urban thrum and lived, for 20 years, in lovely American outposts: Daniels in Santa Fe and Kellaway in Ojai, Calif., a hideaway close to—yet far enough from—Los Angeles.

Daniels and his wife, plus their German Shepherd, live in a spacious, comfortable house on a five-acre site, perched high enough to afford a panoramic view of the area's arid beauty. As we settle into Daniels' home studio for an interview, Kellaway sits for a moment at the piano, playing some intriguing, yearning chords—Cage-ian chords, it turns out. Earlier, we had been discussing John Cage's *Four Walls*, a work performed by a blue-caped Ethan Iverson (the pianist in The Bad Plus) at the Ojai Music Festival only a week before and, apparently, still rumbling around in Kellaway's head.

By Josef Woodard

Eddie Daniels (left photo) at the VandoJam, held on Jan. 23 at Ralph Brennan's Jazz Kitchen in Anaheim, Calif. (Photo: Kurt Barclay). Roger Kellaway at Zankel Hall in New York City, December 2009 (Photo: Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos)


Kellaway (left) and Daniels explore the repertoire of Duke Ellington on their new disc

© PAUL SLAUGHTER

But for this conversation, the subject is mostly Duke Ellington, through the prism of the Daniels-Kellaway sensibility.

DownBeat: Is there something about being based in such remote places that nourishes and feeds your creative juices?

Roger Kellaway: For me, it's the space.

Eddie Daniels: I was going to say the same word.

RK: The space and the quietness.

ED: Also, it tends to make you go more inward, into yourself. Cities distract you. There's a lot of excitement, a lot of stuff going on, and they keep your adrenals pumping all the time. Here, you come down. You sit. You can be with yourself. You kind of have to go with yourself.

You look at the sky. You hear the coyotes. And our music is like that. We don't just dive into something, to attack something—unless Roger writes something that has an *attacca* at the very top. And if he does, he'll usually say, "Let's play around a little before we attack." So we almost always come to something from an airy space or place, where there's room to settle.

The music has a way of discovering itself while we're playing, because of that space-iness and an inner questioning of who we are, a kind of inner journey.

I can hear that. Plus, there is the lack of a rhythm section, which has an impact on the personality of your duo.

RK: People who play with bass and drums all the time could be capable of understanding what happens with us. But actually, my trio has been drumless for 10 years. When you don't have that—particularly in the way it takes up all the low to midrange sound —you have chamber music. It puts a much heavier burden on how you play and how you react.

ED: You also have to be comfortable with nothing going on.

RK: Yep. Being comfortable with nothing is wonderful.

ED: Our new album, *Duke At The Roadhouse*, was [recorded] live, so you really couldn't fix too many things. There's one spot where I came in and I stopped. I let the cello play. I remember, from the GRP days, if I were mixing that record, I would have called another session to fill in the spot where I stopped. But then I realized, "We don't have to over-perfect it, or over-fill each other." Whatever happens, it happens. I'm not trying to correct all of my faults.

If I can correct a couple of little things, fine. You have to do that. It's a record. You have a 1-hour-and-10-minute concert and that's the record, what do you do? So we had a one-hour rehearsal and we recorded that. You need to have a backup, because otherwise you have no album. You can't just put out a live concert, with all of its faults. For the continuity and the sake of the record, we did a miniscule amount of editing. But mostly nothing.

Tell me about the theme for this album, which includes eight songs from Ellington's repertoire, plus one original composition from each of you. Did the idea for this album just pop into your head, or was there conceptual background research involved?

ED: Since I live here, I get asked to do benefit concerts all the time. This guy calls me from [Santa Fe Center for] Therapeutic Riding and says, "How about doing a concert with the One O'Clock Lab Band from [University of] North Texas?" It's a hot band, so I said, "OK, I'll do it." [But] … that broke down and we didn't do it. … Then he said, "Well, the Jimmy Dorsey band could do it." I said, "There is no Jimmy Dorsey band. That's a pickup band where they get local guys and are going to play junk arrangements." I said, "Forget it."

[Then] I thought … Roger. We're just natural. Even if we haven't played for a year or two, we can go out onstage and make music. He loved the idea. It's two people, so we didn't have to deal with getting a whole band here.

RK: We talked about different concepts before we arrived at Ellington. At one point, we talked about doing Ellington and a whole bunch of composers. It evolved into just Ellington, which pleases me, to have a single concept.

ED: We didn't know it would be a recording. It was [just] going to be a concert. OK, it's Duke Ellington—which has been done to death—but we have our own way of playing. I thought, "What about adding the cello?" This is a duo, and that's more interesting at this point in our life.

RK: At first, you said, "What do you think about the idea of adding cello?" Of course, having done so much with cello in the past, I love that sound.

I said to the cellist [James Holland], "Don't worry. You don't have to improvise. It will all be written out, as long as you can play with a jazz feeling." I wanted to deliberately do that. I had a teacher in high school, Henry Lasker, who basically said, "Don't ever write jazz out." But I've been doing it all my life for classical players. You have to find the classical player who has some affinity with a jazz concept in order for the lines to work. The lines should not sound like they're written out. They should sound like improvisations, because that is the intent.

ED: Right. Not too perfect. Slightly rough around the edges, but beautiful. I thought James did that beautifully. When I sent him the record, he sent me an email saying, "There are a couple of places I'd like to do over …" [*laughs*].

RK: Well, we all feel that way.

When did you two first play together?

RK: [Promoter] Jack Kleinsinger put us together for a duo concert at NYU [in 1986]. We started playing as a duo at that time, though not very often.

Do you guys remember much about your first encounter together?

ED: That concert at NYU was quite spectacular. We had never played together before that, and [afterward] we said, "I think we have to do something." Jack had said, "Eddie, you've got to play with Roger." That was it. I had never met him. He was in New York and I came over to his house. He had a beautiful grand piano in his living room. It was in the Village. And it felt like, "Gee, I love this."

There is not much of a precedent of piano-clarinet duos in jazz, is there?

ED: Well, there are not a lot of clarinet players. That's part of it. Buddy DeFranco did something with Art Tatum. The Benny Goodman trio had no bass player—clarinet, piano and drums.

RK: There is an old record when a bass player didn't show up, with Nat Cole and Pres [Lester Young] and Buddy Rich.

That can make for some interesting sounds and elements of surprise, when somebody doesn't show up.

RK: Actually, when a bass player doesn't show up and you have a pianist who knows how to play the piano, it's freedom. When I played with Eddie Condon in the late '60s, I took Dave McKenna's place, and they only had bass on weekends. Without a bass, that was a good opportunity to develop your left hand.

Roger, you are a bit of a rarity in jazz because you love and are plugged into contemporary classical music. Why do you think more jazz musicians aren't generally interested in contemporary classical music? For instance, the late composer Conlon Nancarrow.

RK: I've never said this before, but I think it's like someone from a small town who never leaves that small town. When I was a teenager, all different kinds of music interested me. It wasn't until I was in my twenties that I realized the common denominator is sound. So even melody and harmony are constrictions of the possibility of the sound spectrum.

I give myself the palette to be open enough to include [Luciano] Berio into my jazz. When I do a leading-tone tenth to whatever the key is and let all this stuff superimpose over that, nobody writes about that.

My point is: Is it possible that people who are, say, in the jazz area, are so stuck

in the jazz area that they don't open up to a place like Nancarrow, or that Nancarrow never even comes into their lives?

Eddie, your body of work on GRP was really varied, and each album seemed to head in a different fresh direction.

ED: Yeah, and it was great having Dave [Grusin] and Larry [Rosen] let me do a lot of different kinds of things. I did about seven or eight albums for GRP. Of course, you can't get any of them, and I can't get the rights to any of them. It would be nice to just reissue them.

[Back] then, if you had only sold 20,000 records, that was a problem. Now, no jazz records sell anywhere near that amount. That was a failure back then. They were looking at 50,000 to 100,000. The problem today is how do you get people to actually listen to a record, to have a record and fall in love with a record. It's like there is so much food out in front of them that they can have for *nothing*. They have gluttonized themselves and listened to snippets of things. The attention span isn't long enough to have a record that they listen to a lot.

On this album, I wrote the liner notes based on an anecdote of an experience I had with Duke. To me, it was very valuable. A lot of people picked up on that. It gave a little more validity to the album, that I had had an experience with Duke Ellington, myself. It was just he and I, at a bar in the Village. I was invited to come down and sit in with him. It was fun for me to think back about that experience.

How old were you then?

ED: I was 25. Five years ago [*laughs*].

You mentioned that Ellington has been done to death, and he has been the subject of endless and varied tributes. But this project has a freshness to it. Was that the challenge you faced and set for yourselves?

RK: I don't think Eddie and I ever worry about whether something has been done to death or not. I don't care how many times a song has been done. We will do something different with a song. Guaranteed.

ED: And that's mostly because we don't know what's going to happen. That's the most precious part of playing with Roger. Because we have this airiness and we like space, we don't even know who's going to start the song. We don't always know what the tempo is going to be. We don't know how it's going to go.

That's if we're doing standards. We'll play "Wine And Roses" at the party. We have the key, but we have no idea what the feel is going to be. In a sense, that could be scary, but I think for both of us, that's a haven of not knowing.

RK: I think we've both arrived at that juncture, spiritually. There's something about the unknown that simply doesn't bother us.

ED: The unknown is the fullness of all the possibilities of the universe.

RK: Can I use frequent flyer miles? [*laughs*]

So you've become fearless, in a way?

ED: In a way. There is a trust there. I don't know if I could be fearless with just anyone. There's one spot on the last album, [2011's] *Live At The Library Of Congress* [IPO], where I decided to make another chorus. I heard you starting to comp and as soon as you realized that I kept going, there was a way that you just quickly dissolved.

RK: I can dissolve.

ED: Which was so great—to hear that moment happening.

RK: Oh, were you going solo and I thought you were finishing up?

ED: That's right. So it's almost a situation where, whatever happens, it's OK. It's hard to get that. I don't always get that all the time, in life and all situations, that whatever happens is what's supposed to happen and it's OK. Maybe you don't have to be great. Wouldn't that be great, if we didn't have to be great?

RK: [*pauses to reflect*] Yeah. I guess what happens is, as you mature, you set the bar higher for yourself. And then if you play with anyone who also sets the bar higher for themselves, you've got an interesting situation. You know something is going to happen. You know it's going to be musical.

The *what* remains to be experienced.

This partly has to do with that mysterious element of rapport, which you two obviously have.

ED: Yes. It's something a duo can do that a quartet can't necessarily do. The drums are doing this and he's got to do something, unless it's Paul Motian and Bill Evans, and there is this freedom of the trio, where the drummer is not doing the classic drum thing. He's a lyrical player. But there is so much air.

We don't know what's going to happen. That makes me nervous, until the first note. Once the first note happens, I realize, "Hey, we're cool." **DB**

Charnett Moffett

Playing the Ideas

ALL GOOD FATHERS HOPE THEIR WORDS OF WISDOM WILL INSPIRE their sons. Bassist/composer Charnett Moffett received such heart-to-heart nuggets from his own father, Charles Moffett, the drummer famous for his work with Ornette Coleman. Little did both realize that one particular short maxim of paternal advice would shape an entire musical life.

By Jeff Potter
Photo by Rebecca Meek

While the younger Moffett doggedly struggled on a half-sized bass, his father pulled the pint-size player aside and imparted his first lesson. "He said to me, 'If you can only play three notes, then find how many different ways you can make music with those three notes.'"

Today, at age 46, Moffett is one of the foremost bassists in jazz. In his three-decades-plus career, he has continued to explore those "three notes" and well beyond, plumbing endless possibilities of sound and expression from his acoustic, fretless electric and piccolo basses.

Whether swinging as a sideman, leading his own units, experimenting with multiple overdubbed bass tracks or performing solo, the artist has applied his talents and spectacular technique to one desired goal: "There's got to be a story; there's got to be a message."

In April, the Motéma label released his *The Bridge: Solo Bass Works*. Featuring 20 solo acoustic bass tracks, the daring endeavor has broken through as a surprise success. When tracing Moffett's life, it becomes clear that all roads have led to this solo statement. Three months later, the bassist delivered *Spirit Of Sound* (Motéma), showcasing an electric-leaning contrast that continues and expands his previous multitracked bass excursions into new fusion, straightahead and world music.

Always a sharp dresser, Moffett isn't deterred by a hot and humid day, sporting a navy suit jacket, vest and crisply ironed, bright-blue shirt. Savoring a slice of peach pie at an outdoor New York café, he ruminates on his late father's influence and lets out a chuckle. "Now I know about the other nine notes. But that's the beautiful thing about music: No matter what the style, culture or era may be, it's still the same 12 notes."

The MVP bassist speaks with a revved energy and is quick with a hearty laugh. Although he's armed with consummate chops, the topic of technique is routinely skirted. Instead, he revels in discussing the conceptual and spiritual aspects of his art. Asked, for instance, to cite the technical demands of playing diverse styles, he responds, "Whether I'm playing for someone in America, India, Japan or Africa, it doesn't matter. They're going to be a *person*. They need water and air to breathe. They've got eyes, ears, a brain and a heart."

Moffett experienced a musical and spiritual full circle when he joined Ornette Coleman's band. It was virtually a preordained destination: The moniker "Charnett" is a combination of his father's and Ornette's names. "Ornette once told me that the most important thing is to express the sound of your voice. He'd say, 'You're already *physically* playing the bass; play the *idea* that you want to play.'"

Punctuating his philosophical point, Moffett pauses, leans back, folds his big hands and beams an enlightened, mischievous smile with wide, bemused eyes. It's obvious that this seasoned musician has never lost his sense of wonder for the riddles of his life's art.

Born in New York City, Moffett grew up in an Oakland, Calif., household resounding with the sound of musician siblings and visiting jazz icons. Taking his father's lead, he started as a toddling 2-year-old drummer and then switched to trumpet at age 5. One of his father's friends discouraged it. Moffett recalls that moment using a gravelly voiced imitation: "'Don't play *trumpet!* Play drums like your father!' That was the first time I met Miles Davis," he laughs.

But the bass beckoned and the child embraced his ultimate calling. The reason was simple. "My father needed a bass in the family band," he explains. "But I fell in love with the sound of the bass as a youngster. One of the first bass players that I got attached to—on a performance level—was Verdine White of Earth, Wind & Fire. It looked like he was having so much *fun* onstage. Seeing that as a kid I said, 'Wow! I want to get one of those and go *joggin'!*'"

Moffett went pro as the official 7-year-old bassist of the Moffett Family Band. Propelled by Charles' swinging force, the group included siblings Codaryl on second drumset, Mondre on trumpet and Charles Jr. on sax. An additional ringer bassist, Patrick McCarthy—a principal in the Oakland Symphony Orchestra—also became Moffett's first formal teacher.

A frequent performing presence in the Bay Area, the family band cut an LP in 1974 and toured Japan and the Far East, making Moffett a show-biz vet before he had even turned 10.

Returning to New York, Moffett attended Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. While there, he also studied bass at Mannes College of Music (part of The New School) and won a scholarship to study under Homer Mensch at The Juilliard School. In 1983, he began playing with the young trumpet star Wynton Marsalis.

Saxophonist Branford Marsalis recruited Moffett for his 1984 Columbia Records leader debut, *Scenes In The City,* garnering attention for the budding bassist. Soon after, Moffett departed Juilliard for a full-time position he couldn't refuse: "I was drafted by Wynton Marsalis at 16 years old."

Wynton's quintet—including Branford, pianist Kenny Kirkland and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts—became one of his classic units, triumphing with the Grammy-winning 1985 album *Black Codes (From The Underground).* The breakthrough bassist had arrived, and his career velocity has never waned.

"Nobody played like him," Wynton recalls. "'The Net Man' played his own way with swing, energy and feeling. He already had an original genius and ability. We had a lot of fun, and it was more like a family. He's something, man; he's my little brother."

Following the Wynton whirlwind, Moffett played for two-and-a-half years in drummer Tony Williams' band alongside saxophonist Billy Pierce, trumpeter Wallace Roney and pianist Mulgrew Miller. Moffett can be heard becoming increasingly exploratory on the quintet's Blue Note discs *Civilization* (1987) and *Angel Street* (1988).

Moffett next worked with guitarist Stanley Jordan, a gig that became a 20-year intermittent relationship. Other long-term associations have included a 25-year membership in the Manhattan Jazz Quintet beginning in 1984, a six-and-a-half-year term with McCoy Tyner starting in 2000 and gigs with Coleman spanning from 1990 to 2007.

The bassist's discography exceeds 200 recordings, and as a freelancer he's performed with a stellar roster that includes Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, David Sanborn, Herbie Hancock, Joshua Redman, Pharoah Sanders, Harry Connick Jr. and Nicholas Payton.

As a leader, Moffett has recorded 13 discs, kicking off in 1987 with *Net Man* (Blue Note). With his 2009 release *The Art Of Improvisation*—his 10th disc and first for Motéma—Moffett staked a new landmark. Fully exploring various combinations of multi-bass overdubbing, the conceptualist mined every sonority the instrument could offer. An increased world music element also emerged. The expansive disc's finale featured his signature Jimi Hendrix homage, "The Star Spangled Banner." Employing wah-wah on bowed upright, Moffett transformed his acoustic instrument, echoing the dive-bombing feedback notes of the iconic Woodstock moment.

The 2010 album *Treasure* (Motéma) reflected his fascination with Indian music. The disc showcases him blowing melodies and stream-of-consciousness cascades over layers of traditional jazz instruments supplemented with sitar, harmonium and tabla.

Then came a leap of faith with *The Bridge.* Moffett stepped forward, metaphorically naked—one man, one bass. "I've waited a lifetime to do a solo bass album," he says. "At my childhood house, musicians always dropped by—whether it was George Benson or Steve Turre or Bobby Hutcherson. My father would call, 'Come on in here and give a solo concert!' I'd totally improvise on the spot, giving them a 10-minute preview or a 20-minute solo."

Along with eight originals, *The Bridge* taps a

range of material spanning from Duke Ellington to Charles Mingus to Sting. A surprising merging of the old and new pairs "Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho" with Adele's "Rolling In The Deep." Several tracks were chosen to reference mileposts in Moffett's career, including "Walk Spirit, Talk Spirit" from his stint with Tyner, Williams' "The Slump" and Marsalis' "Black Codes (From The Underground)."

Moments of dazzling technique are many, including "Kalengo," highlighting Moffett's variations on bow-tapping technique, which produces a shimmering soundscape of percussion, harmonics and overtones. *The Bridge* impressively succeeds as a musical whole in a high-wire format rarely attempted. The artist's intention is playfully implied in the title itself: "I wanted to say that solo bass *works,"* he emphasizes.

The chaser CD, *Spirit Of Sound,* finds Moffett again performing with family, featuring son Max on drums and tabla, wife Angela providing tamboura and spoken-word poetry and daughter Amareia on vocals. Guests include keyboardist Marc Cary, reedist Oran Etkin, percussionist Babatunde Lea and vocalists Jana Herzen and Tessa Souter. "I wanted to incorporate the vocals with the bass acting more like a vocalese," he says. "That's what all the doubling's about. It's a continuation of *Treasure*, using the same four core band members with even more freedom."

Another ongoing endeavor is Moffett's work with Will Calhoun. The drummer's *Life In This World* (Motéma) features a core trio of Calhoun, Cary and Moffett laying down seamless yet open grooves, straddling straightahead, funk and world-music sounds with a strong accent on West African rhythms. "While playing with Charnett, nothing is unacceptable," says Calhoun. "His taste in music is vastly wide and his mind is open. For any drummer/rhythmatist, this type of musician is a dream to collaborate with. Charnett has the past, present and future of his instrument at his fingertips."

Herzen (the singer/guitarist who founded Motéma) collaborated with Moffett on her duo CD *Passion Of A Lonely Heart*. Originally intending to use a band, Herzen discovered a rewarding alternative with the bassist alone. "Charnett's amazing facility allows him to sonically serve as a percussionist, bassist and lead soloist, which is pretty remarkable," she says.

"When you're working with singers, there's another kind of concentration," Moffett points out. "It's a different focal point because you're dealing with the vibrations of the vocal cords. Vocalists may sing notes slightly sharp or flat. With the bass being a fretless instrument, that variation will determine my consideration of whether I should move up a little bit so I will be a little sharp to match the tonality of the vocal pitch or if I should I move down a little bit. When working with vocalists, you have to be in tune to that thing that makes it special, the magic that matches it.

"Music is a spirit. It's also a science. It's created in the flesh but the feeling that you enjoy from it comes from the *spiritual* contribution of the artist."

Assuming a serious tone, Moffett continues, "Jazz is a great music. It stimulates the thought process. It makes people love. Think about how far we've progressed in technology. Think about how far we've progressed in medicine. Well, we can still continue to progress in music. If we can play a sound that can heal someone with brain cancer, then why not do it?" Asked if he sees music as literally curative, Moffett responds, "Absolutely. Music is definitely healing."

Reflecting on his career longevity, Moffett cites his deep love for music but also the benefits of an innate restlessness. "I've always admired musicians like Miles and Ornette, who were constantly striving to move on. … It's hard for me to play something I don't like. I need to play something that agrees with me spiritually and intellectually. That might not always be the best financially, but what do you do? You may have a great gig financially but you're not feeling it."

Would he unquestionably decline a commercial gig? "I plead the Fifth Amendment on that one," he laughs. "But seriously, some musicians are just better conditioned to do that and there's nothing wrong with that. Nothing's wrong with playing a jingle."

Fans often question Moffett about his bass that resembles a traditional upright on a Slim-Fast diet. The frequent flyer bassist initially purchased his reduced-scale Kolstein Busetto Travel Bass as a matter of portable practicality. "But then it worked out, physically *and* spiritually," he says. It's now his bass of choice. "It's full circle; it's roughly the same size as the one I started with." On the electric side, Moffett favors Moon fretless and piccolo basses.

But Moffett's not keen on gabbing about gear, just as he doesn't get mired in technique-talk.

"You've got to remember: The *instrument* doesn't know what note you're playing. If you hit middle C, the piano doesn't know what key you're in. The only thing that tells you what key you're in is your own head." Moffett takes a pause. "Which means, you can use your instrument any way you want to use it." **DB**

BRIAN LANDRUS

SEIZING THE RAW MATERIAL

By Phillip Lutz
Photo by Vince Segalla

For nearly 20 years, Brian Landrus wrote all his music seated at the piano with Sammy, his black cat, nestled in his lap. So it was only natural that when Landrus and a mortally ill Sammy got together for what would be their final writing session, on March 21 of last year, the session would yield a tune dedicated to this feline muse.

"I was singing and he was looking at me," Landrus recalled in his Brooklyn home, his normally booming voice reduced to a whisper as he gazed at the piano where the writing sessions took place. "At the end of the song I wrote it like I wanted it to keep going. It just fades out like his life did."

At first glance, Landrus might seem like an imposing presence—he stands 6 feet, 7 inches tall. But according to Esperanza Spalding (one of his current employers), the saxophonist is actually "a warm and open spirit." That is reflected in his approach to the low woodwinds, and his melodic playing has attracted the widespread attention of fellow musicians as well as critics. Landrus landed in the top three slots in the Rising Star–Baritone Saxophone category of the DownBeat Critics Poll for both 2013 and 2012.

"I don't have the desire to play squeaks and squawks," he said. "That's not where my heart is at. That's not what I hear. I want to be the guy who, when they hear bass saxophone, they say, 'Isn't that beautiful?'"

Landrus' penchant for beauty is matched by a cat-like capacity for seizing the raw material of life and shaping it to maximum advantage—even material as painful as the loss of a beloved writing partner. "Sammy," the requiem created on that March day, has surfaced as the second track—and one of the most powerful—on Landrus' new album, *Mirage* (BlueLand).

Such resourcefulness is, of course, an asset for anyone—let alone an independent musician trying to produce an album—and *Mirage* is brimming with evidence of it. Nearly every one of the dozen pieces on the album connects Landrus' life directly to his art, first and foremost the title tune, a seductive work written amid tears at the end of what proved to be an illusory love affair.

"When things went down," Landrus said, "it wasn't there. It's the mirage we live in."

Landrus is hardly unique in drawing on personal experience. But Ryan Truesdell, the conductor on and co-producer of *Mirage*, noted that in the decade since he and Landrus attended the New England Conservatory together, the saxophonist has consistently mined the life-art connection to profound effect.

"He uses the music as a vehicle for something deeper," Truesdell said.

Music has paved the way for Landrus' personal development since his days growing up in free-wheeling Reno, Nev., where he transformed himself from a boombox-toting street brawler to a sax-wielding habitué of the local clubs and casinos. Landrus, 34, said the transformation started at age 12 after he heard a Charlie Parker record, picked up an alto sax and saw a life in music stretching out before him.

"I started playing," he said, "and everything changed."

By the age of 14, he was networking with local musicians. By 16, he was subbing for his teacher, Rico Mordenti, in backup bands for r&b groups like the Coasters and the Drifters when they played in town. Soon he became the first-call tenor for those bands, performing with them as far west as Sacramento, Calif.—all while under the watchful eye of a bouncer assigned to keep him from straying into areas off-limits to minors.

Through it all, he had only flirted with the baritone sax. Then, at age 18, he landed a full-time casino show that both required him to play the baritone and afforded him the means to buy one. Titled *Work That Skirt*, the show—a jumble of quick costume changes and platforms rising precariously above the Reno Hilton stage—was, he said, "as bad as it sounds." But it provided collateral for a $6,000 bank loan with which he bought a Keilwerth SX 90 baritone.

The purchase set him on another professional track: instrument dealer. Although the Keilwerth was reliable, Landrus said, he placed it on eBay

after three years of service when he saw the opportunity to upgrade to a 1953 Selmer Super Action. Using the marketing know-how he acquired watching his father run a jewelry store, he found that he could flip instruments for an occasional profit—no minor skill for a musical free agent—and build an impressive private collection along the way.

Standing in his Brooklyn living room, Landrus was surrounded by that collection: 14 axes arrayed in stands on the floor. Among them—all manner of saxes, clarinets and flutes, heavily weighted toward the musical low end—was the '53 Selmer, one of four baritones he has retained among the hundreds of horns he has bought and sold over the years. The collection provides him with a financial cushion.

"It's the only thing I have that's valuable," he said. But, he was quick to point out, its value was far more musical than monetary. While newer instruments might be mechanically superior, he said, vintage ones often have a richer sound, like the 1964 Selmer Series 9 bass clarinet or the 1948 Selmer Super Action baritone once used by a member of the Dorsey Brothers Band. Instruments like these help him play what he hears.

"Number one," he said, "it's about my voice."

Landrus has been honing his voice of late before audiences large and small, moving between world tours with Spalding's Radio Music Society ensemble and club dates with his quintet, Kaleidoscope. That band—Nir Felder on guitar, Frank Carlberg on piano, Lonnie Plaxico on bass and Rudy Royston on drums—appeared in full on *Mirage* with a string quartet that included violinist Mark Feldman.

When Landrus is not performing publicly, he can often be found leading student ensembles at the 92nd Street Y or laying down horn parts at home in a small studio carved out of his living room, where he dispatches them digitally to producers who integrate them into their musical settings. All of which helps pay the bills: *Mirage* cost $30,000 to produce, he said, and he is already thinking about his next album.

Meanwhile, the dedicated craftsman practices his baritone and bass saxes, bass clarinet and alto flute three hours a day. When asked to blow a few random bars on his biggest horns, he reveals range, humor and a highly developed melodic sense—traits that, at the conservatory, helped him win both the coveted Gunther Schuller Medal and the enduring esteem of teachers like saxophonist George Garzone.

"He was pretty much open to anything I had to say," Garzone recalled.

Ironically, Landrus' openness to ideas—and willingness to pursue them—might have delayed the discovery of his musical niche back in the day. But as he moved about his Brooklyn living room, a big man amid big horns, it was clear that he had found that niche. The big horns' comparatively lower profiles, he said, had unlocked opportunities for him to create a wider berth in the marketplace—and to forge an identity more closely aligned with who he is.

"When I'm playing tenor," he said, "there's this legacy that goes so far back. I love it, but that's not what I hear anymore." **DB**

DAVE REMPIS

NO PERMISSION NEEDED

By Alain Drouot / Photo by Peter Gannushkin

In December 2012, all arrangements had been made to celebrate the release of the debut album by Wheelhouse, the Chicago trio featuring saxophonist Dave Rempis alongside bass player Nate McBride and vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz. "It was supposed to be released by a Polish label, but it never came out," says Rempis. The deplorable experience finally convinced him of the necessity to launch his own label, Aerophonic Records.

Rempis, 38, is part of a second wave of adventurous musicians following in the footsteps of reedist Ken Vandermark, who was integral to a sea change in the Chicago jazz scene in the 1990s. At age 22, Rempis had replaced Mars Williams in The Vandermark 5 and soon impressed listeners with his boundless imagination and deft improvisational skills. Since then, he has been active in numerous other ensembles, including his own leader projects. Moreover, Rempis, who makes most of his living as an organizer for the Pitchfork Music Festival, is no stranger to the DIY culture. He has curated the Improvised Music Series hosted by Chicago's Elastic Arts Foundation for more than 10 years.

On June 11, Aerophonic released its first two albums. *Phalanx* is a live double-CD set by The Rempis Percussion Quartet, an outfit that shows the saxophonist at his most unfettered. Meanwhile, *Boss Of The Plains*, a studio album by Wheelhouse, displays a more introspective facet of Rempis' artistry. Both bands were founded in the mid-aughts; the quartet has released six albums, but Wheelhouse has only released one disc thus far. That accounts for some of the saxophonist's frustration—a sentiment echoed by Tim Daisy, who is one of the quartet's two drummers and Rempis' most frequent collaborator. "It seems that instead of just saying no, some labels string you along for months and months, leading you on, with the end result being zero," he says.

The speed with which Rempis put his label together is evidence of a strong work ethic. "In January, I started talking with everybody I knew: musicians who have their own label, label owners, writers and record store employees," he recalls. "I also started to work with a graphic designer [Jonathan Crawford]." The label's website has a clean, elegant look with interesting design elements. As for the label name, Rempis elaborates on its origin: "I studied musicology and I always loved the word *aerophone*. An aerophone is any instrument created by blowing air through it. The 'phonic' part is a reference to the word *stereophonic*, used in the 1950s."

Artistic control is often cited as a reason to go the indie route, but Rempis has no gripes about the artist-friendly labels he has worked with over the years (Okka Disk, 482 Music and NotTwo Records). His main concern is the business side. "It involves a lot of work, but the intent is to never again ask anybody's permission or rely on their schedule to put music out," he says. Rempis had 1,000 copies of each CD manufactured, and he hopes that by the fall he will have done better than merely break even. The label also offers digital downloads. To that end, he entered a partnership with Subradar, an artist-run outlet based in Norway. "We might keep it in-house in the future," he says. "But the main goal was not to have to deal with iTunes or Bandcamp, where the artists do not make any money."

Because running a label is so labor-intensive, Rempis has decided not to release other artists' music—at least for the time being. Forthcoming Aerophonic releases include a trio project with bass player Joshua Abrams and drummer Avreeayl Ra, as well as a duo album with Daisy. Next year, Rempis plans to issue on vinyl a duet with Norwegian electronics master Lasse Marhaug.

Asked about the future of the compact disc, Rempis is ambivalent. "There are still a lot of collectors out there who want to have a physical object. But by the time a disc comes out, a band has moved on," he says. "Ten years from now, I can see musicians streaming concerts in real time and charging a minimal amount for people to watch. The concept is not that different from Duke Ellington being broadcast from the Cotton Club back in the day." **DB**

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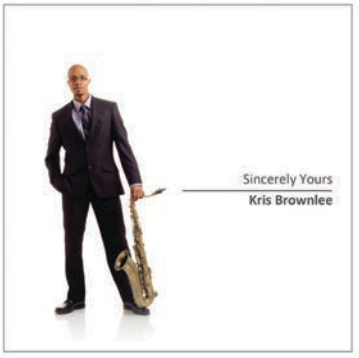

Kris Brownlee
Sincerely Yours

Sincerely Yours is saxophonist Kris Brownlee's third album. In this break-out project, Kris often plays multiple instruments on each track, as he collaborates with legendary guitarist Freddie Fox and Grammy Award-winning producer Michael Broening.

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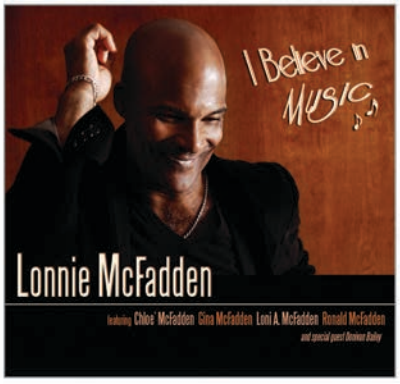

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BLUE BAMBOO MUSIC

UNIFIED IN HOUSTON

By Michael Point / Photo by Pin Lim

Chris Cortez

Guitarist-vocalist Chris Cortez is a master at multitasking. He's a steadily gigging musician, playing Cezanne and Sambuca, the top jazz venues in Houston, with occasional dates back at the classy Snug Harbor in his previous New Orleans base. He operates a full-service audio-video studio; organizes musical backing for casino shows, cruise ships, hotels and theatrical productions; and from time to time undertakes the role of concert promoter.

The centerpiece of his activities, however, is Blue Bamboo Music. The Houston-based label currently has 17 recordings to its credit and is poised to add to that in the months ahead. "It's been a lot of hard work, but being involved in music from the record company side—instead of just as an artist—has been both very educational and highly enjoyable," Cortez said.

Cortez relocated his base of operations from the New Orleans area to Houston in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The displacement served as an impetus to expand his musical involvement. "I was forced to start over, so I took a good look at what I really wanted to do with my time and my career," he recalled. The growth of Blue Bamboo became the result.

The history of Blue Bamboo began much earlier than the relocation to Houston. Cortez and saxophonist-composer Mark Piszczek created a flourishing jazz fusion mini-empire in Orlando, Fla., where Cortez grew up, in the early '80s. Founded in 1986, the label was named for a tune written by Piszczek. In subsequent years Cortez used the label as an outlet for his own recordings, producing a series of regional releases. The move to Texas didn't so much change his concept of the label as it allowed him to finally realize it. "I never lost sight of my original vision of a record company," he said. "I always knew what I wanted it to be if and when I got the chance to do it."

In 2008 he kicked the label's activity up a notch as he released albums by a trio of Houston stalwarts: saxophonist Woody Witt, guitarist Mike Wheeler and pianist Joe LoCasio. And he did it exactly as he had planned to a couple of decades earlier. "I probably could have put out a few albums a few years before I did, but I couldn't have done it in the way I wanted to," he explained. "It's important to know your craft, and I was still learning that and I also needed to accumulate the tools to do it right. But mostly I didn't have the proper situation to be able to offer the artists the freedom they deserved."

The concept of artistic freedom in a recording situation is a very real one to Cortez. From the beginning, Blue Bamboo was intended to be an artist-oriented label. Its business model reflects that attitude, with artist-friendly session pay and royalty rates, as well as the retention of publishing rights and non-exclusivity contracts. In the studio, Cortez seeks to create an environment that "sets the musician free." Vocalist Tianna Hall, who recorded *Never Let Me Go* for the label, is a fervent fan of the approach. "Having a fellow musician in charge of everything is a liberating situation," she said.

Hall first met Cortez through the NOAH organization she and pianist Paul English had established to help the flood of New Orleans musicians settling in Houston after Katrina. Now she says it is Cortez who is providing the assistance by helping to coalesce the previously isolated elements of the Houston jazz scene. "Chris and the label have definitely brought the local jazz community together," she said. "There are a lot of great musicians here, but they never really had an opportunity to work together until the record company made it possible."

Last year Cortez further expanded his musical activities by producing a series of live gigs for touring guitarists. He presented performances by Pat Martino, Charlie Hunter and Mike Stern in Houston, Austin and Denton, home of the University of North Texas. As usual, organizing the live dates was a multi-purpose operation. Cortez admits the contacts and experience have opened doors for him as a performing artist—he's especially proud of getting to play Yoshi's as a result—but the endeavor also opened up his playing. "Getting to spend some quality time with Pat Martino changed my thinking on several levels," he said.

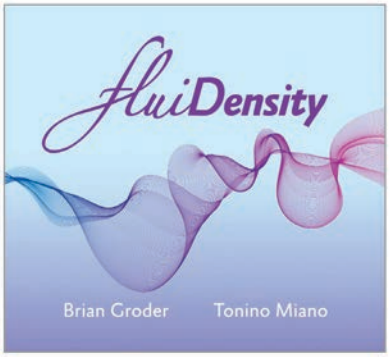
Cortez's forays into presenting live music were more by default than design, as the record label remains his primary occupation: "Everything I do is intended to help fund and advance the label. I enjoy the other activities, but they're really just a means to an end."

Although the core of the Blue Bamboo catalog is currently drawn from the Houston scene with Witt, Wheeler, Hall and LoCasio represented along with bassist Glen Ackerman and Cortez's own recordings, it also includes albums by Piszczek, New York trumpeter Carol Morgan and veteran bassist Harvie S.

The newly released Morgan session *Retro Active*, featuring Stern, Cortez and bassist Lincoln Goines, is the latest addition to the expanding Blue Bamboo catalog. Next up is a Christmas album with Hall and Cortez in front of a Houston all-star band featuring trumpeter Dennis Dotson. A Witt-LoCasio album of Billy Strayhorn duets will kick off the 2014 schedule.

The label's founder and president is represented in its 2013 releases via Cortez's eclectic *Aunt Nasty*, which received substantial attention on Sirius/XM radio and YouTube. It was the first recording as a leader for Cortez in five years, quite a break for a musician who once used the label as a personal outlet.

"I've been sort of busy," Cortez proudly explained in a classic understatement. **DB**



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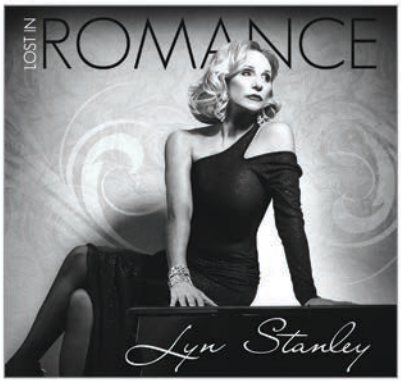

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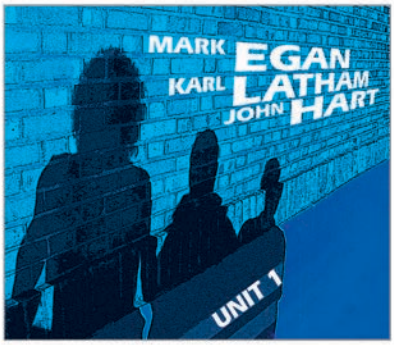

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Reviews

Frank Wess
Magic 101

IPO 1023

★★★★

Three generations share this warm and deeply centered disc, with all generational seams smoothly sealed by common values, collective sensibility, and, no doubt, mutual admiration. Frank Wess, who began recording with Billy Eckstine's band in 1944, has been a prominent tenor and sometimes-alto voice since he emerged as half of Count Basie's Two Franks (with Frank Foster) tenor team in the 1950s. But it was his pioneering work on flute with Basie that drew even more attention and has kept his name high the polls ever since.

No flute on this 2011 session, though. Just a straight tenor quartet where the tempos never move past the medium sway of "Say It Isn't So." With nothing to prove, no fireworks to ignite, and no guest artists to entertain or second horns to accommodate, Wess is fully on his own, never more than in the a cappella solitude of "All Too Soon." So he dims the lights and gathers the music around a handful of mostly familiar ballads and one blues. The mood is gentle, the sound intimate and amorous. It's the kind of performance that transcends typecasting and characterizes IPO's output.

Wess comes out of a competitive era for tenor saxophonists. Among his contemporaries, he ranks just below the top tier of the modern hierarchy of Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, Benny Golson, Dexter Gordon and, of course, John Coltrane. Maybe this was because Wess remained rooted in the communal comradeship of the big band. Today though we hear him more clearly because, along with Jimmy Heath, he has survived the attrition of that generation. Wess comes to us here in full flower, skills and sound intact.

One generation down, Kenny Barron provides Wess with wise accompaniment and ballast, particularly on their duet "Come Rain Or Come Shine." Discretion rules, even when he quietly upstages "Pretty Lady." Barron's solo prowls Wess' Billy Staryhorn-inspired original, letting his left hand hang gently over the right like a willow swaying in a soft tick-tock. This is a partnership of rare elegance. *—John McDonough*

Magic 101: Say It Isn't So; The Very Thought Of You; Pretty Lady; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Easy Living; Blue Monk; All Too Soon. (53:09)
Personnel: Frank Wess, tenor saxophone; Kenny Barron, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Winard Harper, drums.
Ordering info: iporecordings.com

Bill Frisell
Big Sur
OKEH 37304
★★★★

Like Jack Kerouac in his fire tower, last year Bill Frisell headed off alone to the mountain retreat of the Glen Deven Ranch to see what he could see. The offer of 10 solitary days in that majestic locale came from a Monterey Jazz Festival commission for new work that was to celebrate Big Sur's breathtaking blend of earth and ocean. Sometimes the muse is sparked by isolation, and the 19 pieces resulting from his stay are some of his most fetching music ever, by turns forlorn, giddy, stately, spiritual and frolicsome.

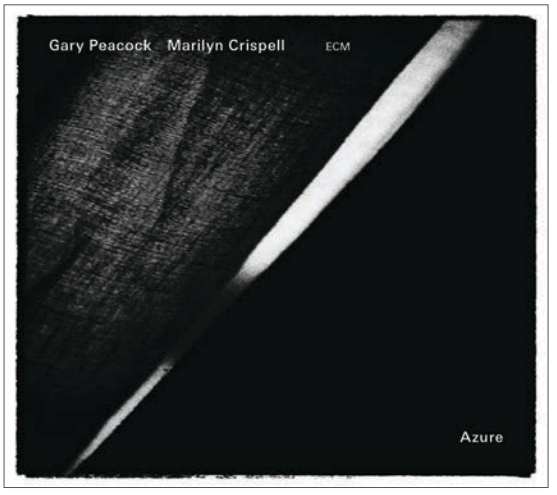
Frisell's band combines his 858 Quartet and Beautiful Dreamers trio—four string players and a drummer. Together they stress their skills at establishing moods in a matter of moments. Plucking and bowing a circular pattern on "Hawks," violinist Jenny Scheinman, cellist Hank Roberts and violist Eyvind Kang conjure the swooping and darting of a sky dance. Frisell adds shimmer, Rudy Royston's traps provide punch.

It's perfect Frisell logic to hang ten in the middle of a pastoral outing. "The Big One" finds him with his binoculars out, checking the surfers across the Coast Highway. A bastardization of "Wipe Out" and the Beach Boys' "Don't Back Down," it injects pop energy into the folksy song cycle. That's the way it should be. From exotic fauna to unique animal life to the mysteries of the Pacific, the coastal wilderness is an exalted area with myriad personality traits. Whether it's the sunset sentiment of "We All Love Neil Young" or the echoes of Nino Rota in the title cut, each makes its mark. Frisell has done for Big Sur what Duke Ellington did for Harlem—celebrated its pluralism and revealed the poetry of its essence.

—Jim Macnie

Big Sur: The Music Of Glen Deven Ranch; Sing Together Like A Family; A Good Spot; Going To California; The Big One; Somewhere; Gather Good Things; Cry Alone; The Animals; Highway 1; A Beautiful View; Hawks; We All Love Neil Young; Big Sur; On The Lookout; Shacked Up; Walking Stick (For Jim Cox); Song For Lana Weeks; Far Away. (65:07)
Personnel: Bill Frisell, guitar; Jenny Scheinman, violin; Eyvind Kang, viola; Hank Roberts, cello; Rudy Royston, drums.
Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

Gary Peacock/ Marilyn Crispell
Azure
ECM 2292
★★★★



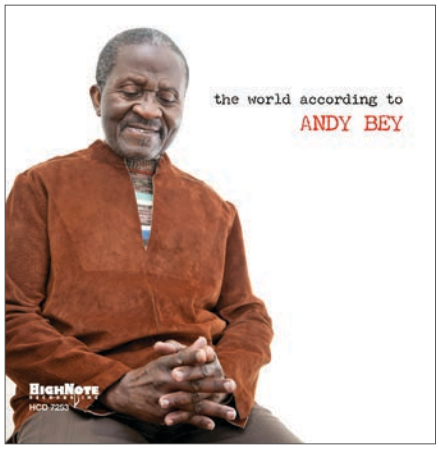
For long stretches on this set of deeply engaging duets, one hears the same Gary Peacock who made the most radical and important free bass music, on Albert Ayler's *Spiritual Unity*. Here, in a new studio recording with pianist Marilyn Crispell, a sensitive sparring partner, the same ineffible mix of guts and acumen are evident. He is not, perhaps, quite as hyperactive as he was in 1964, reputedly fueled on copious amounts of coffee, but on *Azure*, he proves to be equally alert and penetrating, paradoxically somehow both direct and oblique.

Crispell has grown more lyrical over the last 15 years, opening up to a romantic side that she'd suppressed in her earlier work, including her crucial participation in saxophonist/composer Anthony Braxton's quartet during the 1980s. On "Goodbye," for instance, the harmonies set a sentimental, contemplative mood, wistful without being slight; Cripsell joins after an extended bass solo on "The Lea," introducing the deliberative theme. There's always a duende sonority lurking in her impressionistic work, radiance and darkness locking horns, and it rises to the surface in the churning of the gorgeous title track.

There are angular and more dissonant moments, too, thoughout the disc, as on "Patterns," and Peacock is an ideal partner on these dialogues, working contrapuntally, canonically. He walks a little on "Blue," refrains from swinging otherwise, but the bassist and pianist play in tandem on his composition "Lullaby," her chord choices subtle and emotionally rich.

—John Corbett

Azure: Patterns; Goodbye; Leapfrog; Bass Solo; Waltz After David M; Lullaby; The Lea; Blue; Piano Solo; Puppets; Azure. (59:10)
Personnel: Gary Peacock, bass; Marilyn Crispell, piano.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Andy Bey
The World According To Andy Bey
HIGHNOTE 7253
★★★★

Andy Bey, like Shirley Horn, is fond of very slow tempos but, like his counterpart, can hypnotize listeners at any speed. On this album, the 73-year-old singer plumbs the mysteries of life and love in his foggy baritone, delivering a message that feels both sad and celebratory. Though a couple of tracks are a bit talky, overall, the world according to Andy Bey is a sumptuous, warm redoubt: full of savvy and worldly wisdom.

A spectacular interpreter of Gershwin, Bey starts "But Not For Me" with the verse, plunging to a resounding bass note on "It's the final curtain" then shouting the opening line of the chorus, "They're writing songs for me!" Though he's at ballad tempo, he somehow swings, as if there were a drummer inside his head, drenching the song with Ray Charles-like soul. On "Love Is Here To Stay," Bey punches repeated phrases followed by pauses, invoking a big band, then falls off like a trumpet section on the phrase, "Oh, my dear."

The singer is not too shabby with Rodgers and Hart's "It Never Entered My Mind," either, imbuing the song with an ever so slightly spiritual piano drone as he draws the listener into the tune's distilled ennui. He gives Harold Arlen's "The Morning After" a lived-in warmth.

Bey's philosophical originals, "The Demons Are After You" and "Being Part Of What's Happening Now," feel less like songs than recitatives from a larger work, the sort of thing Horace Silver essayed years ago. The messages are solid, but a bit over-earnest. The album ends with "Dissertation On The State Of Bliss," an Arlen-Ira Gershwin collaboration. Its closing line sounds bleak until you realize Bey has mischievously tweaked the phrase with a note of triumph, as if to say our mistakes in love—and life—may be where the pain comes from, but also the source of all the joy.

—Paul de Barros

The World According To Andy Bey: It Never Entered My Mind; But Not For Me; Dedicated To Miles; The Demons Are After You; Love Is Here To Stay; There's So Many Ways To Approach the Blues; The Joint Is Jumpin'; Being Part Of What's Happening Now; The Morning After; 'S Wonderful; Dissertation On The State Of Bliss. (50:32)
Personnel: Andy Bey, piano, vocals.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

The Hot Box

CRITICS	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Frank Wess *Magic 101*	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★★★
Bill Frisell *Big Sur*	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Andy Bey *The World According To Andy Bey*	★★★½	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★
Gary Peacock/Marilyn Crispell *Azure*	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

CRITICS' COMMENTS

Frank Wess, *Magic 101*

Good. Old. Jazz. Equal emphasis, each word. Nothing new or different, conventional at its core, but imbued with feeling and intelligence. Buttery balladry, gentle touch, focused narration. As much a treat to hear Kenny Barron, whose playing is super-perceptive. *—John Corbett*

It's important to document elders like Wess. The saxophonist's hard-nosed tenor sound is becoming something you see in the rear-view mirror. Perhaps that's why it seems so seductive and sentimental. The solo Ellington piece explains it all. *—Jim Macnie*

Who knew there would ever be an album that could stand in for Ben Webster's *Soulville*? But here it is: svelte, warm, spirited, witty, passionate, swinging, easygoing, tender, elegant—the epitome of the tenor saxophone as the spirit of romance. Love the duets with Kenny Barron. *—Paul de Barros*

Bill Frisell, *Big Sur*

These 19 through-composed miniatures offer little jazz, but enough 19th century rural Americana to support a season of PBS *American Experience* documentaries. The two violins have a grieving Great Plains melancholy, suggesting more Walker Evans than Ansel Adams. Whatever the images, yet another of the composer's many interesting faces. *—John McDonough*

Lovely to get lost in the 858 string quartet center of this fivesome; Scheinman and Kang complement each other extremely well, it's a real pleasure to hear Roberts back in the saddle, and Royston is ideal: terse, economical, soulful. The setting seems to have inspired Frisell. This suite is one of the richest offerings in a string of good ones. *—John Corbett*

When I heard the premiere of this pastoral suite at the 2012 Monterey Jazz Festival, it felt almost too pretty, as if the brilliant Seattle guitarist had missed the scary elements of its craggy California coastal namesake. But the foggy dread is there, after all, and so is a unified coherence, as the haunting strings gather around a recurring descending figure. Much to mine here. *—Paul de Barros*

Andy Bey, *The World According To Andy Bey*

This cabaret-size set of Bey accompanying himself delivers many intimate, playful and sophisticated turns on great lyrics, familiar and otherwise. Hear his seductive baritone descend over the word *curtain* like moist fog on "But Not For Me." But his own lyrics sadly pale in their presence. *—John McDonough*

A dilly of a record; spare is the stuff. Fascinating to hear how Bey accompanies himself, sometimes like a totally different person, responding, supporting, sparring with the vocals. On the opener, it's like he's waiting for himself, the vocals are so unhurried. *—John Corbett*

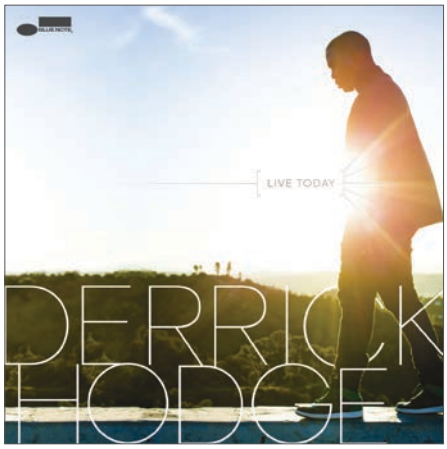
His voice, meaning its textures and depth, is like a world unto itself—that hasn't changed. But here he's taking lots of chances with the shape of his lines as well, and the results have moments of abstraction. Fetching stuff. *—Jim Macnie*

Gary Peacock/Marilyn Crispell, *Azure*

There's a flinty, abrupt and brainy charm here. Scraps of scales and random ideas that find shape and form as they spontaneously interact. But more reflective moments simmer with the kind of generic beauty that seems to constantly pause to appreciate itself, thus adding a third voice to the duo—space. *—John McDonough*

The more Crispell refines her sometimes scrambling approach, the more I appreciate her poetic powers. This record is a jewel, and it's because melody was so deeply considered by both participants. Up there with the Charlie Haden/Hampton Hawes session *As Long As There's Music*. *—Jim Macnie*

Now here's a pairing that should have happened years ago. The bassist and pianist both share a probing surface anxiety, an incisive awareness of deep structure and a disarming sense of wonder. Peacock stretches out in a way we seldom get to hear anymore, and Crispell is crystalline, smart and dense. "Blue" swings mightily, "Azure" is transcendent. *—Paul de Barros*



Derrick Hodge
Live Today

BLUE NOTE 82892

★★★½

Bassist Derrick Hodge—whose background includes gigs with Terence Blanchard, the Robert Glasper Experiment and rapper Common—here straddles the jazz/hip-hop divide with a 14-song collection. For the most part that means slow jams, and a mood that is decidedly chill. From track to track he also deploys all manner of basses, percussion, synths, turntables, and keyboards, plus a string quartet. Impressively, this makes for a lot of textural variety but very little clutter. No matter how busy, the textures remain essentially transparent. The problem is, all these chill beats have nowhere to go. Despite Hodge's virtuoso bass lines, there's little in the way of solo voices, instrumental or otherwise. Common shows up for the title track of affirmation and self-determination. More impressive is Alan Hampton's turn on Hodge's soul-folk ballad "Holding Onto You." Hampton's warm, grainy voice, complemented by strings, is perfect for the romantic longing in this soul-folk ballad. And Aaron Parks has a nice acoustic-piano solo turn. But much of the album feels like all background and no foreground. Sometimes that's enough. Chris Dave and Mark Colenburg will have you scratching your head about the new generation of drummers who can play hip-hop beats with phenomenal elasticity, slowing down, speeding up, but always somehow coming out on the downbeat. But mostly the beats percolate, the horns bark call-and-response, and a pretty eight-bar melody like "Message Of Hope" just repeats with no development. *—Jon Garelick*

Live Today: The Real; Table Jawn; Message Of Hope; Boro March; Live Today; Dances With Ancestors; Anthem In 7; Still The One; Holding Onto You; Solitude; Rubberband; Gritty Folk; Doxology (I Remember); Night Visions (bonus track). (57:00)
Personnel: Derrick Hodge, acoustic and electric bass, keyboards, synthesizers, percussion, vocals (8); Chris Dave and Mark Colenburg, drums and percussion; Common, vocals (5); Alan Hampton, vocals and acoustic guitar (9); Aaron Parks, acoustic piano (10); Robert Glasper, acoustic piano, choir pad, and Fender Rhodes (5), percussion (2); American String Quartet (9,10); Travis Sayles, synths (1), keyboards (3) and Hammond B3 Organ (3, 6, 7, 13); Casey Benjamin, Vocoder (8); Keyon Harrrold, trumpet (1, 4, 5, 12); Jahi Sundance, turntables (1); Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone (1), soprano sax (6); Corey King, trombone (1).
Ordering info: bluenote.com

Geoffrey Keezer
Heart Of The Piano

MOTÉMA 125

★★★★

Pianist Geoffrey Keezer became a Jazz Messenger at 18, appearing on the 1990 Art Blakey albums *One For All* and *Chippin' In*. Stints with Ray Brown and Benny Golson followed. But on *Heart Of The Piano*, his second solo piano disc and first in over a decade, there are only three true jazz tunes present. Maybe that's because in the hands of a capable player, anything can sound like a standard, so there's no need to stress over repertoire. In any event, this recording is a gorgeous, thoughtful statement filled with the sounds of jazz. Many of its songs, though, hail from a different world.

One of those worlds is Planet Rock. The LP begins with Rush's "Limelight," which benefits from Keezer's chatty, nimble bass hand. Running the gamut from cool and composed to bluesy and cathartic, "Limelight" takes the listener on an emotional rollercoaster ride. Peter Gabriel's "Come Talk To Me" begins with a cascading waterfall riff and, near the end, attaches itself to a lower, more persistent version of that ostinato.

Heart visits the sphere of female singer-writers, too. The Alanis Morissette song "Still" is an often-Middle-Eastern-sounding meditation that spends a lot of its time on top of a supportive pedal. KT Tunstall's "Suddenly I See" opens with a jolt of dissonance then grows focused, concerned and whimsical.

Free improvisation beats within the heart of *Heart*, too. "Chirizakura" churns and flees and pirouettes and includes a beautiful, classical-music-like buildup. "Grunion Run" is foreboding and surprising. Donald Brown's "New York" is, like the city it's named after, hectic and imposing. Keezer exhibits tremendous independence at one point, then a few moments later unites his hands for a dazzling run. *—Brad Farberman*

Heart Of The Piano: Limelight; My Love Is Like A Red Red Rose; Come Talk To Me; New York; Still; Suddenly I See; Chirizakura; Lullaby For A Ladybug; Grunion Run; Take Time For Love. (50:05)
Personnel: Geoffrey Keezer, piano.
Ordering info: motema.com


Jitterbug Vipers: Francie Meaux Jeaux (left), Sarah Sharp, Masumi Jones and Slim Richey

KEITH GOODE

Lone Star State Swing

Texas, with a litany of jazz giants running from Charlie Christian to Ornette Coleman to Jason Moran, has always been an exceptionally fertile musical breeding site. And with the state's vital and vibrant live scene many artists are staying at home while producing noteworthy recordings as stylistically expansive as the size of Texas itself.

Temple Underground: *Live At Strange Brew* (Self Release; 37:49 ★★★★½) Brannen Temple is at the epicenter of the active Austin scene as a drummer, composer, bandleader and organizer. He's behind the drum kit for a wide assortment of quality acts in all genres but his most adventurous and accomplished group is Temple Underground. The band's power and glory is evident and well-represented on this fiery but focused live recording of three extended Temple originals and a sublimely superlative expansion of Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." Australian émigré Sam Lipman, on tenor sax, and the city's first-call pianist Rich Harney supply solos at an elevated level while Temple and demonstrative bassist Dwayne "D-Madness" Jackson work as equals to produce an exciting, unified ensemble sound.

Ordering info: brannentemple.net

Chris Cortez: *Aunt Nasty* (Blue Bamboo 0020; 47:47 ★★★) Houston guitarist-vocalist Chris Cortez offers something for everyone on his sixth album as a leader, deftly weaving together everything from Duke Ellington to Walt Disney, with a little Jimi Hendrix thrown in. Backed by an aggregation of Houston all-stars, anchored by bassist Glenn Ackerman and drummer Guillermo Reza, Cortez offers a full-spectrum jazz experience, utilizing local sax great Woody Witt and New York trumpeter Carol Morgan to especially excellent advantage. He makes it all work but the biggest successes are the smallest pieces, a trio of reharmonized Disney delights.

Ordering info: bluebamboomusic.com

Shelley Carrol & Friends: *I Heard That* (South Memphis Music 0052; 58:38 ★★★) Dallas tenor saxophonist Shelley Carrol has been a fixture in the touring Duke Ellington Orchestra for years but the urban soul-drenched Texas tenor sound of his latest album owes more to home state heroes like The Crusaders, who are represented via tunes by Joe Sample and Wilton Felder. Carrol plays with funk and finesse throughout, switching to flute for one tune and accompanying Ardina Lockhart on a trio of vocal numbers. A bonus is the participation of the late saxophonist Marchel Ivery, one of the major influences of the modern Dallas scene.

Ordering info: nichelsonentertainment.com

Jitterbug Vipers: *Phoebe's Dream* (Flying High Records; 39:10 ★★★½) No musical act embodies the "Keep Austin Weird" civic mantra with more style and class than the "swingadelic" quartet Jitterbug Vipers. The band's witty updating of classic 1930s reefer jive music, featuring septuagenarian guitar genius Slim Richey front and center, is sly, sophisticated and more than a little habit-forming. The inherent humor of the material disguises serious musicianship from not only Richey—who sparkles on the disc's denouement, the closing "Django's Birthday"—but also from bassist Francie Meaux Jeaux and drummer Masumi Jones. Vocalist Sarah Sharp, who also serves as the primary songwriter, sweetly sails through a selection of originals in the tradition with seductive nonchalance but also digs down deep for an exquisite rendition of "Billie's Blues."

Ordering info: jitterbugvipers.com

Bruce Saunders 5: *Drift* (Strange Planet Records; 64:57 ★★★★) Austin-based Bruce Saunders has been making marvelous music for years that has unfortunately often flown under the mainstream radar. His sixth album as a leader features uniformly masterful playing that is musically enlightened and eminently accessible as it deftly navigates through eight compositionally advanced originals. The material is probably a challenge to play, although Saunders and saxist Adam Kolker, pianist Gary Versace and the rhythm section of bassist John Herbert and drummer Mark Ferber perform it in note-perfect fashion. The title track is a masterpiece of understated brilliance but the highlight may be the closing "Serene," an evocative progeny of Joe Henderson's "Serenity."

Ordering info: brucesaunders.com

David Dove/Jawwaad Taylor: *These Are Eyes, See?* (El Cangrejito 04; 65:23 ★★★) Houston trombonist David Dove specializes in aggressive improvisational music that often intersects with jazz only through its exploratory intent. His latest recorded effort presents a couple of intriguing pieces probably better described as audio performance art than tunes. Dove's trombone, amplified, embellished and treated, is juxtaposed with electronics from Jawwaad Taylor in slowly developing soundscapes spiked with words. **DB**

Ordering info: elcangrejito.org

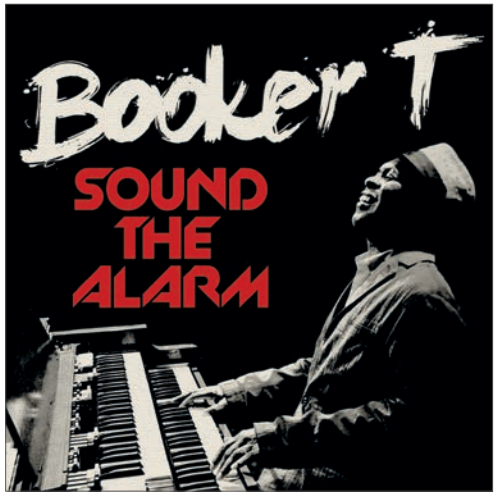
Gilad Hekselman
This Just In
JAZZ VILLAGE 570013
★★★★

What's a modern jazz guitar slinger to do, in the thick of the 21st century? With a wealth of historical precedents, vocabularies, attitudes and masters to draw from, the challenge of finding one's way and voice can get daunting. Gilad Hekselman manages the feat, hinting at influences in the past and present while asserting his own voice, combining technical fluidity with a probing spirit, never smug or besmirched by the "look ma, no hands" hubris.

He delivers a stirring progress report with *This Just In*, a bold yet free-feeling album with his excellent and ensemble-sensitive trio—bassist Joe Martin and the ever-impressive drummer Marcus Gilmore—with a few ripe cameos by tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. On "Above," a floaty but solid fast jazz waltz, there are parallels to the John Abercrombie Gateway Trio, as well as Kurt Rosenwinkel's cerebral muscularity. On the title track, the mostly clean-toned Hekselman kicks in the distortion and flies into some Allan Holdsworth-ish hammer-on run-on sentences, and yet keeps a sense of self through it all. An implied sense of grace in his music-making, even on the fiery bits, comes to the fore with his warm balladic touch on the waltz "March Of The Sad Ones," lightly sprinkled with electronic fairydust.

When Hekselman veers outside of his original songbook, he does so with taste and subtle surprises, giving some due interpretive airtime to the late, great Don Grolnick's "Nothing Personal," or injecting rambling looseness and reharmonized schemes on the theme of the Alan Parsons Project tune "Dreamer." It all comes to a gentle, acoustic guitar and drums-with-brushes-based close with the bittersweet yet calmly energized tune coyly named "This Just Out." *—Josef Woodard*

This Just In: Above; Newsflash #1; This Just In; Newsflash #2; The Ghost Of The North; Newsflash #3; March Of The Sad Ones; Newsflash #4; Nothing Personal; Eye In The Sky; Newsflash #5; Dreamers; This Just Out. (50:46).
Personnel: Gilad Hekselman, guitar, synthesizers, glockenspiel; Joe Martin, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone (3, 9, 13).
Ordering info: jazzvillagemusic.com



Booker T
Sound The Alarm
STAX 34121
★★★½

If Yoko Ono can dominate today's dance music then it's certainly possible that one of the grand old men of Memphis soul, Booker T. Jones (going by his first name and middle initial), can make a splash even bigger than those he made for his pop-soul albums, *Potato Hole* and *The Road From Memphis*.

Back on the reconstituted Stax label, Booker teams up with Bobby Ross and IZ Avila as producers, songwriters and musicians on a likable album having various guest vocal turns. Grounded in Stax, Motown or Philadelphia International black pop, all the singers except the over-sugared Estelle succeed in rendering lyrics about romance believable, avoiding the void of vapidity. Booker, too, is a likable singer, joining Kori Withers on "Watch You Sleeping."

Booker's organ is still an 18-carat diamond necklace, decades after "Green Onions" and "Soul Limbo." The man's inbred soulfulness, the deceptive nonchalance of his dual-keyboard work an eternal virtue, wins out over the cluttered-with-horns arrangement of "Fun." His hide-and-seek playing on "66 Impala" may be safe but it's the perfect correlative to the percussion of Sheila E. and Poncho Sanchez. Never mind a Grammy, the smoothly gritty "Austin City Blues" should be a strong contender for "best song" at the Blues Music Awards gala in, fittingly enough, Memphis. *—Frank-John Hadley*

Sound The Alarm: Sound The Alarm; All Over The Place; Fun; Broken Heart; Feel Good; Gently; Austin City Blues Idea; Can't Wait; 66 Impala; Watch You Sleeping; Your Love Is No Love; Father Son Blues. (47:34).
Personnel: Booker T. Jones, organ, electric and acoustic piano, bass, vocals (10); Mayer Hawthorne (1), Luke James (2), Jay James (4), Anthony Hamilton (6), Estelle (8), Kori Withers, (10),Ty Taylor (11), vocals; Raphael Saadiq (3-5), Gary Clark Jr. (7), Nalle Colt (11), Ted Jones (12), guitars; Nate Watts (10), Rick Barrio Dill (11), bass; Richard Danielson (11), Gordon Campbell (12), drums; Shiela E., timbales, bongos, cowbells (9); Poncho Sanchez, congas, guiro (9); Avila-Issiah "IZ" Avila, basses, drums, percussion, scratches, guitar, vocal FX, horns; Bobby Ross Avila, bass, guitar, pianos, synthesizer, background vocals; Jaymes Felix, Sam Salter, Ben Franklin, Carla Carter, Hugo Johnson, Adan Castillo, Jay James, Devin Vasquez, Elizabeth A. Langham, background vocals; Rashawn Ross, Kevin Williams, Wesley Smith, Leon H. Silva Jr., horns.
Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Sugar, Soul and Microtones


Roberta Donnay

EDDY BEE IMAGES

Dayna Kurtz: *Secret Canon Vol. 2* (Kismet/MC 0072;. 48:41 ★★★½) Dayna Kurtz, hardly the shy and retiring type, cuts across stylistic lines with integrity and intensity on an album that holds appeal to listeners open to classy blues and sophisticated soul music and the bluesy side of the jazz vocal tradition. The singer, a Brooklynite now living in New Orleans, projects emotional involvement with the words to fine, little-celebrated gems identified with undervalued eclectics like Johnny Adams ("Reconsider Me"), Mable John ("Same Time, Same Place") and Helen Humes ("All I Ask Is Your Love"). Hired guns in New York and New Orleans serve Kurtz and the songs adequately without distinction.

Ordering info: mc-records.com

Koby Israelite: *Blues From Elsewhere* (Asphalt Tango 3513; 54:35 ★★★½) This Israel-born Londoner, a one-man studio band with four Tzadik albums in his discography, takes creativity to giddy peaks here. Playing accordion, guitar and at least 10 more instruments, he triggers a solar storm of indescribable, mutant new-blues made of klezmer, Bedouin rai, Slavic folk, Americana music, Celtic music and loud Led Zeppelin guitar stomp. Imagine what "Crayfish Hora" and "Bulgarian Boogie" sound like. Guest vocalist Mor Karbasi adds exotic rapture to "Lemi Evke," while a rock-inclined nymph named Annique on two other wild songs looks better than she sings.

Ordering info: asphalt-tango.de

Gitlo Lee: *Comin' Out The Hole* (GitloBlues 03; 45:50 ★★★) Singer and guitarist Gitlo Lee, raised on the Southern "chitlin' circuit," finally gets his day in the sun with this feature soul-blues release. Backed by three dependable musicians from Louisiana, the youthful senior citizen has fun recounting the tale of a drunken encounter with a Georgian swamp creature and sizing up an XL woman. The program shines brightest, though, when Lee, sporting an appealingly crimped voice, brings serious intent to his love lament "Ease Out" and, on the flip side emotionally, his love affirmation "Angel."

Ordering info: gitloblues.com

Willie McBlind: *Live Long Day* (Free Note 1201; 49:57 ★★★½) Manhattan's microtonal band—highlighted by singer-guitarist Jon Catler's fealty to Harmonic Series tuning (he's a master at fusing pitch and rhythm) and by Babe Borden's acrobatic, venturous singing—offers a repertory of nine originals that reflect on the freedom of train travel. They also reinvent "Love In Vain," from the canon of freight car rider Robert Johnson. Powerful rock and blues, plus Jefferson Airplane-like psychedelia, meld with an intelligent, complex musical sensibility. Sidestepping expectations, McBlind travels its own way. The last nine minutes of the album are a guitar drone (aka Harmonic Ghost Train Cloud) that avant-gardist La Monte Young would give his blessing.

Ordering info: microtones.com

Roberta Donnay: *A Little Sugar* (Motéma 104; 50:54 ★★★½) Roberta Donnay, whose interpretive license is valid for both jazz and blues, knows exactly how far she can go drawing inspiration from time-honored singers like Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters and Ida Cox without sacrificing a sense of self. Fronting her swinging Prohibition Mob Band (three horns plus a rhythm section), the Bay Area chanteuse resuscitates a dozen chestnuts, among them "You Go To My Head" (recall Billie Holiday's version) and "Sugar Blues" (well treated by Ella Fitzgerald). Donnay's touch is firm and playfully coy, her tonal control secure and her combination of silkiness and sensuality effective in a meticulous, measured manner.

Ordering info: motema.com

Quinn Sullivan: *Getting There* (SuperStar 1107131001; 49:53 ★★½) Endorsed by Buddy Guy as the future hope of the blues, the 14-year-old's breakout album showcases his blowtorch guitar distillations of Guy, Eric Clapton and the other popular guitarslingers he has studied hard. (If he were fixated on, say, Son Seals or Otis Rush, he'd stand less a chance of becoming a darling of mainstream America.) Deft execution runs ahead of artistic expression and mature feeling in pop-blues songs written by first-rate producer-drummer Tom Hambridge. Sullivan's unripe singing is as sweet as a gummy bear dipped in honey but he does have an engaging, angelic presence on the teen ballad "I Know, I Know." **DB**

Ordering info: quinnsullivanmusic.com

Bob James & David Sanborn
Quartette Humaine
OKEH 48471
★★★

Those expecting a rehash of Bob James and David Sanborn's 1986 *Double Vision* may be surprised at the duo's second album, as it's an all-acoustic quartet. Although *Quartette Humaine* fits in the "jazz" column, as opposed to occupying the smooth jazz/pop crossover territory of their first album, it's not fully straightahead; there are few swinging numbers, no bebop burners, and there's a healthy dose of straight-eighth grooves. Recorded a week after Dave Brubeck's death, the duo took their inspiration from the Brubeck Quartet's communicative power. Most of *Quartette Humaine*'s more interactive moments come via James' arrangements as opposed to more telepathic communication demonstrated by Brubeck and Paul Desmond. Some of the most compelling moments come on James' "Follow Me," a tricky composition with sections in 15/16 and 6/8 that features a rapid stair-step line doubled by piano and bassist James Genus. The tune moves to 4/4 for Sanborn's fiery and impassion solo. Sanborn's reading of "My Old Flame," the disc's sole standard, is somewhat stiff, although he digs in on his solo. The album's final cut, James' "Deep In The Weeds," is catchy as hell, and Steve Gadd's backbeat snare groove is begging to be flipped by a hip-hop producer. *—Chris Robinson*

Quartette Humaine: You Better Not Go To College; Geste Humain; Sofia; Follow Me; My Old Flame; Another Time, Another Place; Montezuma; Genevieve; Deep In The Woods. (55:32)
Personnel: Bob James, piano; David Sanborn, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone (9), sopranino saxophone (9); James Genus, bass; Steve Gadd, drums; Javier Diaz, percussion (9).
Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

Julia Hülsmann Quartet
In Full View
ECM 2306
★★★★

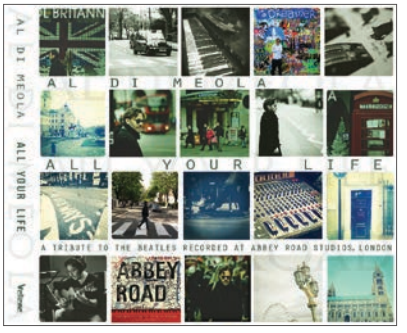
It does not diminish Julia Hülsmann to state that trumpeter Tom Arthurs steals the spotlight on the German pianist's third ECM recording. The 33-year-old British musician, who has studied with Dave Douglas, among others, impressed Hülsmann so much when she encountered him that she immediately expanded her trio to include his contributions. On pieces like "Quicksilver" and a reinterpretation of singer Leslie Feist's "The Water," it's easy to see why Hülsmann was so taken with him. Arthurs displays a romantic lyricism that is reminiscent of Kenny Wheeler, without the elder trumpeter's signature balletic intervals or artfully cracked notes. His tone glows warmly throughout *In Full View*, and his melodic voice is that of a storyteller.

The leader's "Dunkel," taken at an achingly slow tempo, provides Arthurs an open canvas on which to build a rich, cinematic solo that contrasts long tones against fluttery asides. On "Spiel," another Hülsmann composition, the minimalism is even more pronounced: just a two-note piano vamp, over which the trumpeter constructs a texturally varied line, with flowing momentum provided by Heinrich Köbberling's supple brushwork.

Overall, Hülsmann is a most democratic leader, featuring six compositions by her bandmates and just four of her own. The common thread between them is a sense of space. Aside from the head of Marc Muellbauer's "Dedication," nothing is hurried, and the hanging notes of Muellbauer's bass and Hülsmann's piano are accentuated by the depth and clarity of veteran ECM engineer Jan Erik Kongshaug's approach to recording. Just as on classic Wheeler recordings like *Gnu High*, which *In Full View* resembles in numerous ways, the sound engineer is truly the fifth band member. *—James Hale*

In Full View: Quicksilver; Dunkel; Gleim; Forever Old; Spiel; Richtung Osten; The Water; Forgotten Poetry; Dedication; Snow, Melting; Meander; In Full View; Nana. (69:49)
Personnel: Julia Hülsmann, piano; Tom Arthurs, trumpet, flugelhorn; Marc Muellbauer, bass; Heinrich Köbberling, drums.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Al Di Meola
All Your Life
VALIANA MUSIC AND MEDIA
★★★★½



Al Di Meola has proven himself not only a profound technical wizard, but a mature interpreter of disparate music—from Astor Piazolla to flamenco. But The Beatles? If the job of an interpreter is to make you hear familiar standards anew, Di Meola not only succeeds on *All Your Life*, he sets a standard all Beatle-peopled instrumentalists should aspire to. He could have taken the easy way out; instead he challenges himself and the listener. Reharmonizing some songs ("Blackbird"), playing others straight ("Eleanor Rigby"), Di Meola brings the insight of a fan-turned-guitar master to the beloved Lennon/McCartney catalog. Performing complex arrangements with a handful of guitars and percussion, the results are revelatory. Di Meola maintains the majestic melody of "And I Love Her" while picking an exquisite solo and upends the original Mellotron-mad 3/4 section of "Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite" into a Middle Eastern magic carpet ride.

—Ken Micallef

All Your Life: In My Life; And I Love Her; Because; I Will; Eleanor Rigby; Penny Lane; Blackbird; I Am The Walrus; Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite; With A Little Help From My Friends; If I Fell; She's Leaving Home. (54:12)
Personnel: Al Di Meola, guitars, percussion; Hernan Romero, hand claps.
Ordering info: aldimeola.com

Satoko Fujii ma-do
Time Stands Still
NOT TWO RECORDS 897
★★★★

Satoko Fujii New Trio
Spring Storm
LIBRA RECORDS 203-034
★★★

These two bands led by Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii are about personalities and not instrumentation. There is little sense, for instance, in seeing her New Trio as a substitute for or an offshoot of the powerful trio she had with Mark Dresser and Jim Black.

Time Stands Still will be ma-do's final opus because of the untimely loss of bass player Norikatsu Koreyasu, who suffered a fatal heart attack at 56. Almost prescient, Fujii's forlorn lines intertwined with Koreyasu's profound arco work in the final minutes now resonate as a poignant farewell. Based on the quality of the material and of the delivery, the album can be viewed as the group's crowning achievement, for it shows some tremendous growth since their debut six years ago. The compositions take full advantage of the unique chemistry the quartet—trumpeter/husband Natsuki Tamura and drummer Akira Horikoshi round out the group—has developed over the years. Beautiful and exuberant songs are pitted against probing and impressionistic improvisations whereas frequent tempo and theme changes threaten to bring the band's search for an elusive balance to an end. There are displays of individual mastery as well. The introduction to "North Wind And The Sun" shows how Fujii and Tamura have become experts at combining extended techniques and more conventional playing. Another remarkable trait is how Tamura seems unfazed by the maelstrom often surrounding him.

While ma-do was put together with musicians Fujii already knew, her New Trio truly captures the beginning of a collaboration with expatriate bassist Todd Nicholson and drummer Takashi Itani. *Spring Storm* might be her most autobiographical album to date. Her alternately menacing and hopeful playing seems to encapsulate her recent state of mind, having lost a close and dear collaborator. Moreover, Koreyasu's shadow hovers over this new work, which is often shrouded in darkness. In the same vein as *Time Stands Still*, Fujii continues to explore the connections between composition and improvisation with enthralling melodies that make room for rounds of wild abandon. Her strong personality and muscular approach also means that the band can pack a punch. Fujii's broad attack can generate an impressive ascending effect that contributes unquestionably to the group's huge sound. Sometimes accused of being too loquacious, the pianist has also learned over the years how to let the parts come together naturally rather than forcing the issue. As for her band mates, Nicholson appears to be a more original player. His solos are penetrating whereas Itani's only shot at the exercise is dispensable and his overall performance a tad too one-dimensional.

—Alain Drouot

Time Stands Still: Fortitude; North Wind And The Sun; Time Flies; Rolling Around; Set The Clock Back; Broken Time; Time Stands Still.(52:25)
Personnel: Satoko Fujii, piano; Natsuki Tamura, trumpet; Norikatsu Koreyasu, bass; Akira Horikoshi, drums.
Ordering info: nottwo.com

Spring Storm: Spring Storm; Convection; Fuki; Whirlwind; Maebure; Tremble. (52:21)
Personnel: Satoko Fujii, piano; Todd Nicholson, bass; Takashi Itani, drums.
Ordering info: satokofujii.com

Liberation Prophecy
Invisible House

CALVIN CYCLE COLLECTIVE 1001

★★★ ½

Louisville-based collective Liberation Prophecy amalgamates so many different genres that it's nearly impossible to single one out as its home base. Are they an indie rock group with jazz leanings? A jazz ensemble exploring song forms? A folk band with an unusually broad concept of tradition? The short answer to all of these questions would be yes, but on their second album, *Invisible House*, they craft a far more cohesive and alluring sound than those schizophrenic-seeming descriptions might suggest.

Liberation Prophecy may be best known as the band that Norah Jones left en route to stardom, and singer Carly Johnson brings a touch of Jones' dusky soulfulness to "You" and "Fortress," which gradually transforms from a bluesy swagger to a country saunter. The album, which arrives seven years after their debut, *Last Exit Angel*, is strongest when it strikes an even balance between her sultry lilt and the more intricate work of the instrumentalists. Nonetheless, saxophonist/bandleader Jacob Duncan, who wrote or co-wrote all 10 songs, places the spotlight firmly on Johnson's voice for the majority of them. But the band is also capable of the stark free improvisation of "Nova Vite," which eventually congeals into a valedictory fanfare, or the airy rubato horn swells of "Consolations," which features pianist Rachel Grimes of the indie chamber group Rachel's. Will Oldham, a.k.a. Bonnie "Prince" Billy, co-wrote the lyrical folk tune "Let's Not Pretend."

The best encapsulation of their sound might be an expanded definition of "Americana" that swells beyond traditional country and folk musics to incorporate rock and jazz into its borders.

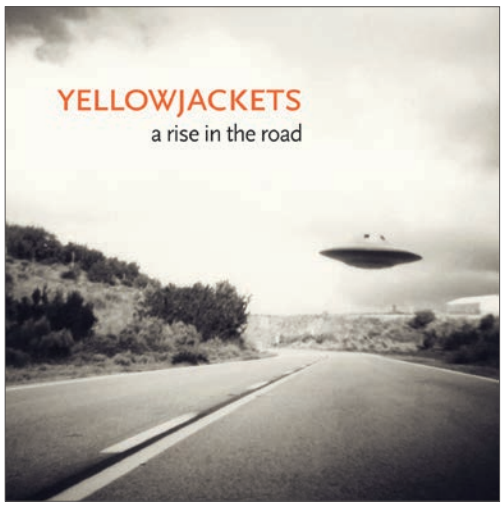
—Shaun Brady

Invisible House: You; Fortress; Wish I May; Let's Not Pretend; Invisible House; The Lazy Mist; Tip Toe; Death From Above; Consolations; Nova Vite. (43:49)
Personnel: Jacob Duncan, alto saxophone, clarinets, flute, Rhodes, vocals; Carly Johnson, vocals; Michael Hyman, drums; Craig Wagner, guitars; Chris Fitzgerald, double bass; Steve Good, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet; Chris Fortner, trombone; Kris Eans, trumpet; Rachel Grimes, piano (9).
Ordering info: liberationprophecy.com

Yellowjackets
A Rise In The Road

MACK AVENUE 1073

★★★



The big news here is that Felix Pastorius, son of Jaco Pastorius, has joined the Yellowjackets for their 22nd recording. A playful closing number, "I Knew His Father," nods to the legacy and welcomes the newcomer. The Yellowjackets' strength always has been a lizard-like ability to lose an appendage (losing bassist Jimmy Haslip qualifies as an amputation) and then grow a new one that allows them to make tracks pretty much exactly like before.

The younger Pastorius' assimilation into this veteran quartet's easygoing oeuvre is so seamless it's a bit frustrating. At 28, only four years younger than the band itself, Pastorius stands out in the group's new publicity photos yet not often on these tracks. He holds his own—starting with "Civil War," a peaceful composition that includes Bob Mintzer breaking off for an airy tenor reverie while Pastorius knuckles down underneath for more serious rhythmic contemplation. Pastorius travels much of this *Road* in step with Russell Ferrante's piano, sticking close in rhythm and melody throughout each whiff of Charlie Parker's "Confirmation" that swings through "When The Lady Dances" and the giddy parody of Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island" that is the breezy, tropical "Can't We Elope." The two huddle together within their time signature during much of "An Informed Decision." Ferrante's "Longing" is the other highlight here—a soft winter storm of a song in which Pastorius duets with Mintzer before lengthening his stride, wandering in and out of the occasional fugue, while William Kennedy's skittering cymbal unnerves the song's otherwise placid soundscape.

—Thomas Conner

A Rise In The Road: When The Lady Dances; Civil War; Can't We Elope; An Informed Decision; Longing; Thank You; Madrugada; An Amber Shade Of Blue; (You'll Know) When It's Time; I Knew His Father. (57:47)
Personnel: Russell Ferrante, piano, keyboards; Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone; William Kennedy, drums, keyboards; Felix Pastorius, bass; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet (3, 4, 8).
Ordering info: mackavenue.com

Rockers Onscreen


Los Lobos: Conrad Lozano (left), David Hidalgo, Cesar Rosas, Louie Perez and Steve Berlin

COURTESY SHOUT FACTORY

Patti Smith brings a fresh, WTF quality to ***Live At Montreux 2005*** **(Eagle Rock 392589; ★★★★)**. Her jazz spirit is reflected in the verbal nods she gives to Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Miles Davis, among others. Who else has ever spit on stage at that storied festival, and not just once? But, apart from the spectacle of Smith rattling the fences, what matters is her music, her singing, her clarinet playing and the way she lays out and lets her band speak for itself (a group that includes original members Lenny Kaye and Jay Dee Daughterty, Tony Shanahan and Tom Verlaine of Television). Smith stays true to her punk/New Wave core in this set, a first-ever live concert DVD that includes cuts from the first LP to the then-current *Trampin'*.

Ordering info: eaglerockent.com

Peter Gabriel's ***Secret World Live*** **(Eagle Rock 305239; ★★★★½)** finds his band touring in support of the album *Us*. With 16 songs, this 1993 concert from two nights in Modena, Italy, showcases Gabriel's enlarged cast of players, his unique, usually riveting flair for composition, arrangement, not to mention choreography. *Secret World Live*—with bonus features not seen in the original film—includes expert camerawork covering two stages, interviews, the crack band of drummer Manu Katche and bassist Tony Levin, among others. ***So*** **(Eagle Rock 305249; ★★★★)**, on the other hand, suggests a prior knowledge of the album of the same name, given how much talking and detail goes into analyzing it. Including present-day comments from, among others, Gabriel, co-producer Daniel Lanois, Laurie Anderson, drummer Katche, bassist Levin and critic David Fricke, *So* is an in-depth story of an artist of vast talent, aware of changing demographics and market potential. "Sledgehammer," "Big Time," "In Your Eyes" and the duet with Kate Bush, "Don't Give Up," are analyzed as art works.

Ordering info: eaglerockent.com

If you are a fan of Los Lobos, ***Kiko Live*** **(Shout! Factory 826663-12700; ★★★★★)** is as good as it gets when it comes to documenting their concerts. Playing their critically acclaimed 1992 *Kiko* album from start to finish at a 2006 House of Blues show in San Diego, this DVD includes hot renditions of all 16 songs along with a few added performances. The DVD features interviews with band members about the making of the album. In conversation, they all express themselves well, but, clearly, it's the performances that demonstrate how versatile this group remains—band members switching to different instruments throughout, moving in and out of solid rock 'n' roll, leaning into country and blues, seesawing with their Mexican roots.

Ordering info: shoutfactory.com

Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* may not have been *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, its immediate predecessor, but it was close. Close enough to document in this DVD, ***The Story Of Wish You Were Here*** **(Eagle Rock 305189; ★★★★)**. For fans, it offers a bit of history on through to the making of the album. This authorized story includes interviews with band members David Gilmour, Nick Mason and Roger Waters, an "archive" interview with the late Richard Wright, along with the presence of original member Syd Barrett through comments, photos and an unexpected filmed visit by Barrett during the recording of the 1975 album. Originally shown on TV, this DVD adds 25 more minutes of footage as the program moves in and out of the music with chats on the Barrett-inspired "Shine On You Crazy Diamond," along with Gilmour and Waters playing selections from the album.

Ordering info: eaglerockent.com

Brian Wilson's ***Songwriter 1969–1982*** **(Sexy Intellectual 574; ★★★★)** is a credible followup to *Songwriter 1962–1969*. Wilson's influence had already been leaving its mark on a band increasingly dependent on his creativity. What this second part does is show how Wilson's genius—which would include collaborations with lyricists such as Van Dyke Parks and Jack Rieley—was continuously put to the test, his needed songs becoming like a factory for brothers Carl and Dennis Wilson, Al Jardine and cousin Mike Love. The most fascinating music in the band's history, created between the years 1969 and 1973—including the complex albums *Friends*, *Sunflower*, *Surf's Up*, *Holland* and *Carl And The Passions So Tough*—also showcased the writing strengths of the other band members. As Brian Wilson's mental and physical health continued to decline, the remainder of the DVD is a sad recap of a band turning into an oldies act. The tributes to Wilson in later years are given only cursory attention due to its cutoff date of 1982. Revealing input comes via session player Hal Blaine, manager Fred Vail, as well as friends Mark Volman and Danny Hutton. **DB**

Ordering info: chromedreams.co.uk

George Benson
Inspiration (A Tribute To Nat King Cole)

CONCORD 34268

★★★★

After several years of developing his tribute to Nat King Cole, George Benson took the project into the studio to record 12 tunes from Cole's repertoire. Inspiration begins with a recording of Benson at age 8 singing "Mona Lisa" before going into a swinging big band take of "Just One Of Those Things." Benson often sounds eerily similar to Cole, and his delivery has a slight touch of Sammy Davis Jr. He is backed by a tight big band on "Walkin' My Baby Back Home" and "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter." The delicious string writing on "Nature Boy" makes a beautiful tune even more gorgeous. "Route 66" and "Straighten Up And Fly Right" are for guitar plus rhythm section, with the latter including backing vocals. Benson takes a few tasteful and swinging guitar solo choruses, and he plays along with his scat solos. Guest performances make this more than a straight imitation of Cole's recordings. Wynton Marsalis lends his romantic trumpet playing to "Unforgettable," which is given a light bossa treatment that's augmented with lush string writing. —*Chris Robinson*

Inspiration (A Tribute to Nat King Cole): Mona Lisa–Little Georgie Benson; Just One Of Those Things; Unforgettable; Walkin' My Baby Back Home; When I Fall In Love; Route 66; Nature Boy; Ballerina; Smile; Straighten Up And Fly Right; Too Young; I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter; Mona Lisa. (40:49)
Personnel: George Benson, vocals, guitar; Wynton Marsalis, trumpet (3); Idina Menzel, vocals (5) ; Till Brönner, trumpet (9); Judith Hill, vocals (11); Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra.
Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Etienne Charles
Creole Soul

CULTURE SHOCK 004

★★★★

Creole Soul picks up where last year's delightful *Kaiso* left off with Etienne Charles placing his lyrical trumpet improvisation inside ebullient grooves, often propelled by Caribbean rhythms. Pianist Kris Bowers brings an understated electric quality to the fore by playing Fender Rhodes as on the dazzling opening title track, on which Alex Wintz also contributes some electric sensibilities with his brief guitar solo. But while on the previous outing he showcased his engaging vocals on a couple of humorous tunes, notably "My Landlady," this time he seems more focused on solidifying an identifiable group sound. While the sleek melodies on *Creole Soul* don't leap out as much as ones on *Kaiso*, Charles' trumpet playing retains its sublime elegance, especially in the way he unravels his improvisations in a soothing, almost blustery manner, even on the more quicksilver tunes. On Thelonious Monk's "Green Chimneys," he burnishes the rough edges from the signature riff-like melody while also underscoring it with a simmering yet percolating Caribbean groove. *Creole Soul* delivers fine originals, too, such as the tender "Memories" and the funky "Midnight." —*John Murph*

Creole Soul: Creole Soul (Intro); Creole Soul; The Folks; You Don't Love Me (No, No, No); Roots; Memories; Green Chimneys; Turn Your Lights Down Low; Midnight; Close Your Eyes; Doin' The Thing. (56:18)
Personnel: Etienne Charles, trumpet, flugelhorn, percussion; Brian Hogans, alto saxophone; Obed Calvaire, drums, Jacques Schwarz-Bart, tenor saxophone; Kris Bowers, piano; Ben Williams, bass; Erol Josue, vocals (1, 2); Daniel Sadownick, percussion and vocals (5); D'Achee, percussion (2, 3, 7, 11), vocals (5); Alex Wintz, guitar (2, 5, 6)
Ordering info: etiennecharles.com

No BS Brass!
Fight Song: A Tribute To Charles Mingus

NO BS BRASS 711574757329

★★★

At first glance, No BS! Brass appears to be indie rock's version of a jazz big band. The Richmond, Va., collective has played with hipster icons Feist, Sharon Van Etten, and Bon Iver. It has garnered praise from pop culture taste-making media that may not be exactly known for keeping tabs on contemporaries like Anat Cohen. And its spunky name contains a smidge of trendy irony.

Yet on *Fight Song: A Tribute To Charles Mingus*, the 11-piece group proves adept at both reinterpreting eight Mingus compositions and revealing bursts of illuminating creativity. Purists are advised to avoid the record, and no, none of the playing qualifies as serious jazz. But that really isn't the band's aim. Getting people to shake their hips—and stoking good-times enthusiasm by fusing rock, hip-hop, and soul into songs of digestible lengths that even attention-challenged listeners can appreciate—assume priority. Hence, there's "Jelly Roll," refashioned in 7/8 time and seeded by the kind of fat, funky groove first been planted on a Deep South rap album. Equally spirited, "Haitian Fight Song" comes across as a pop-art punch-out between the trombone and baritone sax, each residing in a separate channel. Blammo!

Other experiments also elicit smiles ("Invisible Lady" parades about before ultimately turning into boogie wonderland) but not all the daredevil rearrangements click. Underdeveloped lines, out-of-place solos, and uncharacteristic themes fail to take root and lose sight of the original compositions. Nowhere are the offenses more egregious than on "Nostalgia In Times Square," anchored by a distracting spoken-word poem that cries out for a "mute" option. *—Bob Gendron*

Fight Song: A Tribute To Charles Mingus: Jelly Roll, Better Git Hit In Your Soul, Girl Of My Dreams, Invisible Lady, Haitian Fight Song, Moanin', Goodbye Porkpie Hat, Nostalgia In Times Square. (31:38)
Personnel: Stefan Demetriadis, contra; Lance Koehler, drums; Dillard Watt, bass trombone; Reggie Pace, trombone; Bryan Hooten, trombone; David Hood, alto and baritone saxophone; Marcus Tenney, trumpet and tenor saxophone; Taylor Barnett, trumpet; Rob Quallich, trumpet.
Ordering info: nobsbrass.com

Laila Biali
Live In Concert

LBO 6125

★★★★

Canadian Laila Biali turns in a well-realized debut. Her best assets are an ability to sing flexible time, phrase cannily and to stretch her somewhat breathless alto voice across bar lines.

Biali's piano playing and ability to conceptualize puts her in the category of Patricia Barber and Dena DeRose. The piano on her own "Human Condition" is a tour de force that either of those two would envy. Daring arrangements and passionate vocals that usually sidestep the overwrought are part of her art. Her band helps Biali recast well-known fare that mixes the contemporary with the standard. Saxophonist Phil Dwyer plays airy soprano on the lightly melodic "A La Poursuite Des Marées" and liquid tenor on a spaced-out version of Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock." Biali's upper-register notes soar fuller than her middle tones, but her dynamic charts and the way she integrates her voice and piano are her most impressive achievement. *—Kirk Silsbee*

Live In Concert: Woodstock; Secret Heart; A La Poursuite Des Marées; Show Me The Place; Stolen Land; Night & Day; The Best Is Yet To Come; Human Condition; Let Go; Nature Boy; Still The One; I'll Never Smile Again; One Note Samba. (65:49)
Personnel: Laila Biali, vocals, piano; Phil Dwyer, soprano and tenor saxophones; George Koller, bass, sitar; Larnell Lewis, drums; Ben Wittman, percussion.
Ordering info: lailabiali.com

Buika
La Noche Más Larga
WARNER MUSIC LATINA 535726
★★★½

When flamenco is referenced by musicians, it often appears as a stereotype—a bit of chattering castanet or modal acoustic guitar to add a dash of flavor. For Concha Buika, flamenco is not a flavor. It's essential to who she is as a performer. Born in Mallorca to parents from Equatorial Guinea, she was steeped in Gitano culture as a child and learned to sing in a traditional flamenco style, a demanding discipline that requires both power and dexterity.

Her use of that style in a jazz context is a unique signature, and her seventh album highlights the contrast between her slightly rough-edged bellow and her band's dark-hued, muted backing. Buika sounds like a hammer crashing into the smooth backing vocals. It's an effective way to drive home the emotion in the music.

Given how much the spotlight is on the singer, it's odd how much the backing tracks dictate the quality of the songs. "Siboney" and "La Nave De Olvido" are meant to be sleek and propulsive, but their grooves don't quite cohere, with far too much going on at once. The missed potential is audible on "Como Era," which deftly manages a thrilling shift from wispy ballad to heavy rhythm led by insistent piano and wild drumming.

The slower numbers give Buika plenty of room to breathe, and are the album's true heart. On the powerful title track, she winds around rolling piano, in complete control, and it's something to hear. There's not another vocalist doing quite the same thing. *—Joe Tangari*

La Noche Más Larga: Sueño Con Ella; Siboney; Ne Me Quitte Pas; Yo Vengo a Ofrecer Mi Corazon; La Nave Del Olvido; La Noche Más Larga; Don't Explain; No Lo Sé; Santa Lucia; Los Solos; Como Era; Throw It Away. (56:40)
Personnel: Concha Buika, vocals; Iván "Melón" Lewis, piano, keyboards, percussion; Ramón Porrina, percussion, background vocals; John Benítez, bass; Alain Pérez, electric bass; Juan José Suárez, flamenco guitar; Carlos de Motril, flamenco guitar; Pedrito Martínez, percussion and background vocals; Israel Suárez, percussion; Dafnis Prieto, drums; Carlos Sarduy, trumpet; Genara Cortés, background vocals; Alicia Morales, background vocals; Saray Muñoz, background vocals; Pat Metheny, guitar (8).
Ordering info: wmg.com

Joel Harrison 19
Infinite Possibility
SUNNYSIDE 1366
★★★★½

The trajectory of guitarist Joel Harrison's career has been one of folding more influences into what has become an expansive yet cohesive voice. Firmly rooted in jazz, Harrison draws on classical and global approaches as well as blues, rock, and country. But despite that sweepingly inclusive vision he has until now avoided writing for big band.

The 19-piece ensemble on *Infinite Possibility* includes French and English horns and vibraphone, unusual additions to the typical jazz orchestra that afford Harrison a vivid palette. The full force of that band is revealed on "As We Gather All Around Her," which swells powerfully towards the ecstatic rather than the bombastic. Based on an Appalachian hymn, the piece becomes an impressionistic gospel song encompassing the transcendent and the intimate. "Dockery Farm" is named for the Mississippi plantation where future blues legends picked cotton, which Harrison depicts via a combination of Duke Ellington and the Delta, combining guitar and brass to conjure a throaty blues holler before launching into a scything slide solo. The album's most urgent piece, "The Overwhelming Infinity Of Possibility," begins with a bristling polyphonic fanfare inspired by composers like Messiaen and Ligeti, then evolves almost imperceptibly into an electric haze straight out of *Bitches Brew*. "Highway" evokes the open road in its optimism, while "Blue Lake Morning" traces an evolving landscape, from the placid opening through the brooding clouds of Ned Rothenberg's bass clarinet to the burst of sunlight that couches a bracing tenor solo by Donny McCaslin. *—Shaun Brady*

Infinite Possibility: As We Gather All Around Her; Dockery Farms; Remember; The Overwhelming Infinity Of Possibility; Highway; Blue Lake Morning. (52:50)
Personnel: Michel Gentile, flutes; Ned Rothenberg, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet, flute; Ben Kono, alto and soprano saxophones, oboe, English horn, flute; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone (1, 6), flute (6); Ben Wendel, tenor saxophone (2, 3, 4, 5); Rob Scheps, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Andy Laster, baritone saxophone; Seneca Black, trumpet; Taylor Haskins, trumpet; Dave Smith, trumpet; Justin Mullens, trumpet; Alan Ferber, trombone; Jacob Garchik, trombone; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Ben Stapp, tuba (1, 2, 4, 5, 6); Joseph Daley, tuba, euphonim (2, 3); Joel Harrison, electric guitar; Daniel Kelly, piano, keyboard; Kermit Driscoll, electric and acoustic bass; James Shipp, vibes, marimba, hand percussion; Rob Garcia, drums; Everett Bradley, voice (1); Laila Biali, voice (3).
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com.

Dave Stryker
Blue To The Bone IV
STEEPLECHASE 31755
★★★

The "Blue To The Bone" series has been driving Dave Stryker's mix of 12-bar blues-inspired post-bop and beyond since the mid-'90s. For his fourth such outing, Stryker calls on longtime collaborator Steve Slagle. But baritone legend Gary Smulyan and rising star drummer McClenty Hunter bring the most promise to the group's dynamic: Smulyan for his deep sense of soul and Hunter for his range and ability to hold down the band's center.

As on previous albums, Stryker casts his net wide when it comes to influences and styles. Here, he complements four originals with material from the Isley Brothers, Robert Johnson, Nat Adderley, and James Brown. Stryker seems to be at his best when he slows down and leans into his material, a fact that quickly sets his takes on the bluesier and more soulful selections as quick favorites here. "Come On In My Kitchen" is rendered with feeling and restraint, Stryker's graceful interpretations of the changes echoing through the horn swells and light touches of color added by organist Jared Gold. Styker's "Blues Strut" puts blues-based bop through a soul-jazz filter to great effect. His take on "Soul Power" features a playful toying with the tension between the main horn line, Stryker's laidback solos and Smulyan's zipped-up baritone on the bottom.

At faster tempos, that tension sometimes elevates beyond what's appealing, throwing solos from Gold into moments of high-register needling or super-clipped notes amid slanted time structures that end up feeling overwrought. Generally, though, those moments are explorations that point to an ensemble unafraid of testing its limits. *—Jennifer Odell*

Blue To The Bone IV: Blues Strut; Workin'; For The Love Of You; Come On In My Kitchen; Big Foot; Blues For Brother Jack; Shades Ahead; Fun; Soul Power. (61:46)
Personnel: Dave Stryker, guitar; Freddie Hendrix, trumpet; Vincent Gardner, trombone; Steve Slagle, alto sax; Gary Smulyan, bartone sax; Jared Gold, organ; McClenty Hunter, drums.
Ordering info: steeplechase.dk


ICP Orchestra

PIETER BOERSMA

Massive Collection Of Whimsical Dutch Masters

The 45-year, 52-CD and two-DVD retrospective ***Instant Composers Pool*** **(ICP 1275-1; ★★★★★)** is huge in more ways than one. The label that Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg and drummer Han Bennink founded (with saxophonist Willem Breuker) in 1967 never did reissues. This handsomely mounted box—save the flimsy liner that leaves all the slipcases in a heap, and some production gaffes—marks the first digital release of half its contents originally on LP, flexidisc, cassette or VHS. It begins with a bang—newly issued small groups including all three founders, forecasting so much to come: whimsy as a way to make and confound music.

The overture and intro is a lavish book of Pieter Boersma's telling-detail photographs of ICP activities through the years (including their weird early theatricals: Bennink as caged Tarzan). Boersma's images often correspond to the sounds herein: the young Breuker's diverse delightful theater scores and street-organ music; Bennink and Mengelberg's improvised dust-ups with Derek Bailey and John Tchicai; Mengelberg with power tools converting a wooden chair into a camel (plans included!) as the orchestra riffs at a dromedary tempo; bassist Maarten Altena, his broken arm and bass neck each sporting a plaster cast; Steve Lacy recording *Lumps* with Altena and Bennink; messy '70s big groups. And then one by one the members of the modern ICP Orchestra start appearing. The first two set the tone: trombonist Wolter Wierbos, inspired spontaneous improviser whose inventions can be hilarious (but who never milks a shtick); reedist Michael Moore, open-eared jazz cat who marvels at all the harmonic, rhythmic and conceptual possibilities.

Mengelberg is a trained composer, but his classical pieces have mostly appeared on other labels (though on the other newly issued disc here, the ASKO chamber ensemble joins ICP to embroider a few of his themes). In the '70s after Breuker broke off to form his celebrated Kollektief, Bennink and Mengelberg mostly documented their improvised duo. The sense of play is obvious: One album title translates as "A Ping Pong Game." Swinging lighthearted moments (and standards) stud their cat-mouse/tortoise-hare antics. For variety they get casually multi-instrumental, as when deploying violins as anti-classical rayguns. But they were sometimes execrably recorded, with execrable pianos.

The biggish '70s groups on *Tetterettet* and *Soncino* often have that caged-Tarzan quality; sustained bluster didn't really suit Mengelberg's lyrical, natural-tunesmith melodies. But in the '80s, everything clicked: young, versatile, ravenously curious disciples arrived, like reedist Ab Baars and bassist Ernst Glerum. Mengelberg schooled them in conducted improvising, arcane game strategies for distorting, hijacking or salvaging a piece, the joys of obstinacy—and the logics of jazz harmony and rhythm, via Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols projects. The band emerged in full flower in 1991 with *Bospaadje Konijnehol I & II*: rich Ellington-style jazz one minute, lacy chamber music the next: elegant wheels turning, and Bennink and Mengelberg jamming sticks into spokes as needed.

Since then, Mengelberg's grand clockwork learned to run itself, with Bennink minding the clock, making sure even inspired episodes don't run overlong. The occasional new voice got absorbed into ICP's hive: trumpeter Thomas Heberer, tenor Tobias Delius, violist Mary Oliver. A returning '70s refugee, cellist Tristan Honsinger, brought improvised theatrics back. A series of CDs documented dozens of fetching Mengelberg compositions that have sustained the modern orchestra for three decades.

The ICP label also sponsors side projects: Altena, Bennink, Honsinger, Mengelberg, Oliver and Wierbos solo or in various duos, Delius's quartet with Tristan and Bennink. Many guests drift through: Peter Brotzmann, George Lewis, Evan Parker, Dudu Pukwana, Enrico Rava, Paul Rutherford and Gianluigi Trovesi. ICP 015 had a live "Epistrophy" with Eric Dolphy on one side, and Mengelberg's duet with a heckling parrot on the other.

Alas, there are problems. Transfers were careless: Breuker's *The Message* pops/skips at around 4:00, the first part of Bennink and Mengelberg's *Coincidents* is missing (while the second appears twice), and *Midwoud 77* is absent entirely. Still, musical wonders abound, despite such screw-ups. **DB**

Ordering info: challengerecords.com

Ivan Lins & SWR Big Band
Cornucopia
SUNNYSIDE 1354
★★½

This project is a combination of a lot of phone calls. Brazilian vocalist/composer Ivan Lins is joined by the German SWR big band and, briefly, a South African choir. The 13 dense tracks were recorded in five different recording studios on four continents. Those passport stamps are clearly reflected within the first 30 seconds of the album when Themba Mkhize's choir kickstarts the proceedings before a wailing saxophone joins the fray of spiraling keyboards and a sputtering horn section. Eventually Lins joins with his sleek tones and pop sensibility. This doesn't feel so much like a big band album as a Brazilian pop record with a lot of instruments. SWR moves primarily as a unit, offering bright brass throughout but with not enough emphasis on solo opportunities. Squiggly laughter and other sound effects dot the landscape, adding a playful vibe. "Todo Mundo" has an enthusiastic bounce complete with Carnival percussion while "Roda Baiana" has a stop-start hi-hat that is refreshingly disjointed and pleasantly upbeat. But a sort of sameness pervades large parts of the recording, a formula that gets a little predictable as the album moves along as though every musician should be on every track. SWR is an immaculate big band that moves seamlessly through their arrangements and Lins is a sensitive vocalist, but it reaches an oversaturation point early on and never lets up. *—Sean J. O'Connell*

Cornucopia: Araketut; Awa Yio; Atlantida; Todo Mundo; Oi Lua; Carrossel Do Bate-Coxa; Samba De Vison; Missing Miles; Trem Bom; Estrela Guia; Pontos Cardeais; Roda Baiana; Guantanamineira. (60:10)
Personnel: Ivan Lins, vocals, keyboards; Klaus Graf, soprano, alto saxophone, clarinet, flute; Steffen Weber, alto saxophone, flute, alto flute; Mathias Erlewein, alto sax, flute; Axel Kuhn, tenor saxophone, flute, alto flute, piccolo; Andi Maile, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute, alto flute; Pierre Paquette, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet; Martijn Delaat, Felice Civittareale, Karl Farrent, Rudi Reindl, trumpet, flugelhorn; Marc Godfroid, Ernst Hutter, Ian Cumming, trombone; Georg Maus, bass trombone; Klaus-Peter Schopfer, electric guitar; Decebal Badila, bass; Guido Joris, drums, percussion; Paula Morelenbaum, vocals; Joo Kraus, trumpet, electronics; Themba Mkhize, South African Choir, vocals; Ralf Schmid, piano, keyboards, celesta, harmonium, programming; Portinho, drums; Nilson Matta, bass; Wolfgang Haffner, drums; Edmundo Carnheiro, Roland Peil, Jorge Brasil, percussion.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Mark Gross
Blackside
JAZZ LEGACY PRODUCTIONS 1201019
★★★

Mark Gross' discography is small—his debut, *Riddle Of The Sphinx*, dropped 13 years ago, and this is only his third disc. He concentrates more on group empathy within the solid post-bop framework rather than gunning for new-fangled concepts. And while Gross is an outstanding alto saxophonist, he still deserves greater recognition.

Blackside might reap some of that overdue attention. Gross doesn't exactly try to push stylistic envelopes in any conspicuous manner. Nevertheless, he does exhibit great taste in choosing material. He embeds a subtle Brecker Brothers tribute by covering four compositions penned by the siblings. The disc's title is a discreet play on the Brecker Brothers' early '90s gem "On The Backside." Gross burnishes the hi-tech production of two decades prior, yet retains the funkiness while also showcasing his piquant tone and soulful swagger on alto during some lively exchanges with trumpeter Freddie Hendrix. More rewarding is Gross' rendition of Randy Brecker's "Bangalore." He serves the tune well, again without trying too desperately to give it a stylistic overhaul. Instead Gross and Hendrix dive into the meaty arrangement with verve, articulating the ebullient melody atop of the quick rubato feel. The best showcase of Gross' lyricism and interpretative skills, however, is his glowing reading of Stevie Wonder's "Knocks Me Off My Feet," which he enlivens with a soulful pithiness atop Cyrus Chestnut's graceful piano accompaniment. *—John Murph*

Blackside: On The Backside; Evocations; Choro Bandido; Volare; Bangalore; Sabe Voce; Cherry Picker; Name Games; Straphangin'; Meadows; Knocks Me Off My Feet. (63:24).
Personnel: Mark Gross, alto and soprano saxophones; Freddie Hendrix, trumpet and flugelhorn; Cyrus Chestnut, piano and organ; Yotam, guitars; Dezron Douglas, bass; Greg Hutchinson, drums; Vanderlei Pereira, percussion; Rosena Hill, vocals (1); Greg Gisbert, trumpet (1); Stanton Caldwell, trumpet (1); Randall Haywood, trumpet (1); James Gibbs III, trumpet (1); Jason Jackson, trombone (1); Michael Dease, trombone (1); Curtis Henderson, trombone (1); Robert Edwards, bass trombone (1).
Ordering info: jazzlegacyproductions.com

Vadim Neselovskyi
Music For September
SUNNYSIDE 1342
★★★★

On *Music For September*, the intense first solo piano record from Vadim Neselovskyi, "Body And Soul" begins with just the melody. No chords. Issued at a snail's pace, the ghostly notes announce themselves and then float away into the ether. Then, at 47 seconds in, the harmonies show up. At first, they're thin and shy. Then rich and warm. Moments of dissonance and uncertainty materialize. During a pass through the bridge, the pianist's fingers fly, sending clear, sparkling pitches in different directions. Long, winding lines stumble and weave. Big, deep, all-knowing chords close things out. The take here on "Body And Soul" is gripping, unique, and classically influenced, and a reminder that standards are only as worn-out as we allow them to be. But on *September*, Neselovskyi approaches classical works and his own originals in this fashion, too.

Save for the short, pensively rolling "Epilogue," Neselovskyi's compositions are more like journeys than "tunes." "Spring Song," which leads off the album, starts with bright, sunny sprinkles of sound before jumping into the spunky, playful riff that pops up periodically in the piece. Following the initial emergence of that figure, though, there's a determined, serious line, urgent chording, mutated versions of the motif, and a peaceful, contemplative passage. "San Felio" arrives with uplifting ideas then travels to a choppy, staggering rhythm, a serene but mysterious area, and calming, compassionate chords. Like "Body And Soul," "All The Things You Are" is also reworked. It's dark, insistent, tragic and closely related to classical music. It never goes where you think it's going to go. But the arrangement never feels forced. It never feels like Neselovskyi is mashing genres together just to be slick or clever.

The big surprise is Neselovskyi's arrangement of Tchaikovsky's "Andantino In Modo De Canzona." For that work, the pianist wrote Russian lyrics and sings them as if he were at a bossa nova session. *—Brad Farberman*

Music For September: Spring Song; Mazurka Op.67 No.4; All The Things You Are; Sinfonia No. 11 In G Minor BWV 797; Birdlike; Body And Soul; San Felio; My Romance; Andantino In Modo De Canzona; Epilogue. (51:43)
Personnel: Vadim Neselovskyi, piano, vocals (9).
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Pablo Ziegler & Metropole Orkest
Amsterdam Meets New Tango

ZOHO 201307

★★★★½

Tango originated in Buenos Aires as a dance that syncretized African ceremonial dancing and European ballroom dancing. Here, Pablo Ziegler and company re-syncretize the music with another Afro-European form, jazz, with often striking results.

Ziegler played in Astor Piazzolla's last quartet, so he knows about innovation and tango. The music is sumptuously orchestrated, sometimes sounding a bit like a big band, at others a more conventional orchestra backing a quartet, and Ziegler's compositions running from easy-bounding, cheerful fare to aggressively thrusting, staccato assaults. This second approach is often the best. "Buenos Aires Report"'s stabbing piano captures the frenzy of this city, "Desperate Dance" suggests a sinister procession in its fractured rhythms, and "Que Lo Pario" lurches toward thrilling overload as the orchestra and Walter Castro's bandoneon duel. Along the way, there are moments of stirring beauty, such as when the orchestra pulls back to reveal Ziegler, alone and in full melodic flower, in the middle of "Places." One needn't be a tango aficionado to appreciate what Ziegler does here. *—Joe Tangari*

Amsterdam Meets New Tango: Buenos Aires Report; Milonga Para Hermeto; Blues Porteño; Desperate Dance; Murga del Amanecer; Places; Pajaro Angel; Buenos Aires Dark; Que Lo Pario. (55:17)
Personnel: Pablo Ziegler, piano; Quique Sinesi, guitar; Walter Castro, bandoneon; Quintino Cinalli, percussion, cajón; Metropole Orkest, conducted by Jules Buckley.
Ordering info: zohomusic.com

Caswell Sisters Featuring Fred Hersch
Alive In The Singing Air

TURTLE RIDGE 001

★★★½

Two sisters, Rachel and Sara Caswell, in a vocal/violin duo is an unlikely combination. Add the endorsement of pianist Fred Hersch, though, and the attention quotient rises significantly. This is chamber jazz, with a strong undercurrent of classical music; when they swing, they do so lightly. Rachel has a sparkling alto, and she sings in two modes. When she addresses lyrics, her callow purity makes every tune sound like a maiden's prayer. When she scats, it's musical, but quickly gives off an automatic pilot cachet; a little goes a long way and Rachel quickly uses up her tickets. The intonation is true and she often phrases on the beat, like a one-woman Swingle Singer; and though she scats Sara's "Stroll" blues, the absence of worldliness is telling. Someone should have told Rachel to take "Bye Bye Blackbird" a step lower. Sara has good legitimate violin technique and does some improvising. She turns in her swingingest flight on a bright version of Kenny Dorham's "Asiatic Raes."

Hersch gives an accompaniment tutorial throughout: providing sterling introductions and endings, signaling rhythmic shifts, opening harmonic doors, underlining soloists when they need bolstering, and getting out of the way when the women are hitting on all cylinders. *—Kirk Silsbee*

Alive In The Singing Air: Song Of Life; I Get Along Without You Very Well; Stroll; Poinciana; Lucky To Be Me; I Sing For You; Bye Bye Blackbird; A Wish; Sweet Adelphi; Sweet Lorraine; Asiatic Raes. (61:07)
Personnel: Rachel Caswell, vocals; Sara Caswell, violin; Fred Hersch, piano; Jeremy Allen, bass; Bryson Kern, drums.
Ordering info: caswellsisters.com

Eri Yamamoto Trio
Firefly

AUM FIDELITY 079

★★★★

The latest from Eri Yamamoto is an eight-song collection of original compositions recorded live at New York's Klavierhaus. Joined by her longtime rhythm section of bassist David Ambrosio and drummer Ikuo Takeuchi, *Firefly* reaffirms Yamamoto's standing as a contemporary pianist of the highest order. While the classically trained Yamamoto has a deft sense of harmony and note selection, not to mention sheer chops, her virtuosity never gets in the way of playing it straight from the heart.

The opening cut, "Memory Dance," sets the mood. A gentle melody is introduced that is at turns somber, then jubilant. Ambrosio and Takeuchi gradually join in on the riff, tentatively at first, but by mid-song the band elevates this musical tribute to a mindful call-and-response, only to eventually return to the opening refrain. Like Matthew Shipp, part of the joy of listening to Yamamoto's playing is in the anticipation of wondering where she and her band will carry us. Both the title track and "Echo" start with minimal pentatonic-style motifs that evolve in unexpected ways; the former is based on the Japanese folk song "Hotaru," while the latter transforms into a strolling ballad. "Around On The Way" comes out swinging with a tip of the hat to Thelonious Monk. On the same tune, Yamamoto displays her generosity by highlighting her sidemen; Ambrosio peels off a choice solo early on while Takeuchi supports the whole affair with his inventive style that includes tasteful cymbal runs and rim shots. Yamamoto's style and approach seem to lean towards minimalism, but there is a beautiful logic in the restraint she and her band reveal on "Firefly." The dynamics in these performances seem inspired by softness and emotional vulnerability, pushing forward harmonic ideas rather than resorting to aggression. —*Daniel A. Brown*

Firefly: Memory Dance; A Few Words; Around The Way; Firefly; Heart; Echo; Playground; Real Story. (59:67)
Personnel: Eri Yamamoto, piano; David Ambrosio, bass; Ikuo Takeuchi; drums.
Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

Javon Jackson And We Four
Celebrating John Coltrane

SOLID JACKSON RECORDS 1001

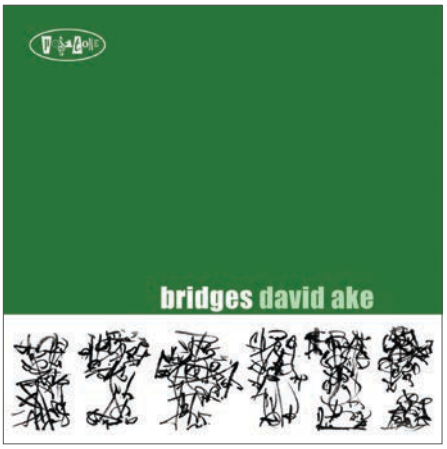
★★★

With a deeper, ruddier tenor saxophone sound and a predilection toward ballads, Javon Jackson provides a suitable tribute to the most active, and beloved, period of John Coltrane's career. Jackson, accompanied by pianist Eric Reed, bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Jimmy Cobb, faithfully interprets the introspective Coltrane, beginning with his time in Miles Davis' band. The rare uptempo track, "If I Were A Bell," represents the earliest Coltrane work, and on his version, Jackson hands over the articulated melody and the first solo to Reed, bringing in his saxophone later for a deliberate, disjunct solo. Jackson plays here in bursts and starts, careful in his phrasing, but occasionally letting out an eruption of 16th notes.

Jackson also pays tribute to Coltrane's time with Davis by including a straightforward "Freddie Freeloader" and the delicate "Someday My Prince Will Come." Coltrane's work as a leader is given equal reverence, with "Naima" and "My One And Only Love" sticking out as highlights on the album. On the former, Jackson is able to convey the emotion in Coltrane's original without pandering or moving into maudlin territory. "Love" is syrupy slow, a wonderful selection for a tender handling of Coltrane tunes.

The saxophonist doesn't try to go note-for-note with the master in this well-balanced tribute album, happy to simply present his own versions of these classic tunes. Aided by his excellent accompanists, Jackson creates good copies of Coltrane's music; these are suitable cover songs, but the saxophonist seems to not really add anything new to the conversation. However well-played they are, the tunes are faithfully rendered tributes, but sometimes that's enough. —*Jon Ross*

Celebrating John Coltrane: Someday My Prince Will Come; Like Sonny; You Don't Know What Love Is; Freddie Freeloader; My One And Only Love; If I Were A Bell; Naima; My Shining Hour. (49:18)
Personnel: Javon Jackson, tenor saxophone; Eric Reed, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.
Ordering info: Javonjackson.com



David Ake
Bridges
POSI-TONE 8108
★★★★½

Pianist David Ake's thoughtfully calibrated sequencing allows him to cover a lot of ground in these original compositions, from formal exactitude to exuberant free blowing.

He begins with the title track's strict formalism: unison piano and horns toggling between two sets of dissonant intervals with slight variations. "Sonomads" loosens up a bit, laying down a repeated two-chord piano vamp, but allowing for a variety of solo statements and becoming more rhythmically emphatic as it unfolds. "Waterfront" is a solo-piano ballad with broadly colored chord voicings and a touch of stride. Everyone gets to cut loose over the cycling, halting rhythm of the piano chords on "Story Table," and "We Do?" hurtles headlong into Ornette Coleman-land: a bright, folky unison-horn theme, with the kind of interplay between tenor Ravi Coltrane and alto Peter Epstein that recalls the Coleman-Dewey Redman matchups of yore.

There's a brief refocusing of attention with the atmospheric "Boats (exit)," all nocturnal cries and whispers with a sparely stated piano melody, and then the swaggering, medium-tempo groove "Year In Review," Ake pounding hard, dissonant chords behind the soloists before another four-way free-for-all and a consoling gospel chord coda. "Open/Balance" moves from rubato impressionism and bowed bass to a grand majestic unison melody. The walking bass at the core of "Dodge" gradually accelerates into a run before breaking into a reverie of muted trumpet vocalisms and free rhythms. Ake's piano, meanwhile provides guidance as well as fire. The elegant little trumpet/piano finale "Light Bright" brings us full circle. It might have helped that Ake, Coltrane, trumpeter Ralph Alessi and bassist Scott Colley are old CalArts classmates. But also credit the leader for knowing what he likes.

—Jon Garelick

Bridges: Bridges; Sonomads; Waterfront; Story Table; We Do?; Boats (exit); Year in Review; Open/Balance; Dodge; Grand Colonial; Light Bright (56:26).
Personnel: David Ake, piano; Ralph Alessi, trumpet; Scott Colley, bass; Ravi Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Peter Epstein, alto saxophone; Mark Ferber, drums.
Ordering info: posi-tone.com

Eric Revis Trio
City Of Asylum
CLEAN FEED 277
★★★½

When Eric Revis chose Ken Vandermark, Nasheet Waits and Jason Moran to be the band on his Clean Feed debut, *Parallax*, they had already tested the combustible potential of their New York-Chicago combination during a weekend stand at Chicago's Green Mill; he simply struck while the iron was hot. The accompaniment on *City Of Asylum*, his second record for the label, is much less obvious. Kris Davis is a Canadian-born pianist in her 30s whose work consistently pushes contemporary boundaries. The recent work I've heard from drummer Andrew Cyrille is much gentler than the free-jazz he once played with Cecil Taylor and Milford Graves.

But they share a common quality—restraint—that makes them apt accomplices in the matter at hand. Although Revis' name is on the sleeve, this is an egalitarian ensemble. No one hogs the spotlight, and everyone shapes his or her contributions so that the music persistently evolves but never gets out of balance. Davis combines fleetness with a spare attack, so that her lines suggest directions without once overwhelming her partners. On "For Bill Traylor," Cyrille matches her approach, playing quick and lightly stated forays while expertly shadowing her shifts in tempo. But they aren't shy to propose contrary strategies, even when the orders they contradict come from the boss. Revis' pungent bowing throughout "Sot Avast" invites a plunge into the same sort of funk that Abdul Wadud played with Julius Hemphill, but they leave him alone in the pocket, preferring to construct an airy scaffolding around it. The play of complementary and opposing vectors is fascinating, but the purposeful lack of foregrounding make this a music that you seek and find rather than one that reaches out to collar you.

—Bill Meyer

City Of Asylum: Vadim; Egon; Gallop's Gallop; Sot Avast; For Bill Traylor; Prayer; St. Cyr; Harry Partch Laments The Dying If The Moon ... And Then Laughs; Question; City Of Asylum. (59:11)
Personnel: Kris Davis, piano; Eric Revis, double bass; Andrew Cyrille, drums.
Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

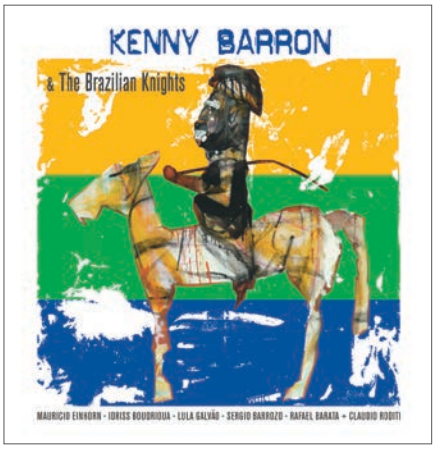
Jutta Hipp
Lost Tapes: The German Recordings 1952–1955
JAZZ HAUS 101 723
★★★★

Pianist Jutta Hipp arrived in New York from Germany 10 years after the end of World War II, and she had a fine entree into the jazz scene. She had a contract with Blue Note, was a regular at the city's prominent venues and received adulation from musicians and critics. Three years later, she gave it all up.

So any new discovery helps fill in the gaps of this fascinating and mysterious musician's narrative. *Lost Tapes*, which combines Hipp's live and studio recordings from the early to mid-'50s, shows how advanced her ideas were before her arrival in the United States—and how different she sounded once she started recording on these shores. On such Blue Note albums as *Jutta Hipp With Zoot Sims* (from 1957), she performed in the style of her associate Horace Silver, with a band responding through hard-bop's lively aggression. But on *Lost Tapes,* Hipp—who had studied classical piano in Leipzig—is taking a more abstract approach to standards, more akin to what Lennie Tristano was teaching at the time. That comes across clearly in her somber version of "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and deliberate pacing of "What's New?" Hipp also worked with first-rate German musicians before she left the country, evidenced by saxophonist Hans Koller's channeling Lester Young on "These Foolish Things" and Attila Zoller's Gypsy swing on "Daily Double."

Fans and scholars have provided different reasons why Hipp left music in 1958 and died virtually alone at 78 a decade ago. Whatever the cause, she deserved a far better fate. *—Aaron Cohen*

Lost Tapes: Blues After Hours; Erroll's Bounce; Gone With The Wind; You Go To My Head; Out Of Nowhere; Stompin' At The Savoy; What Is This Thing Called Love?; What's New; These Foolish Things; Lonesome Road; Sound-Koller; Come Back To Sorrento; Moonlight In Vermont; Daily Double; Indian Summer; Everything Happens To Me; Serpentinen. (64:33)
Personnel: Jutta Hipp, piano; Franz Roeder, bass (1-13); Karl Sanner, drums (1-10, 14-17); Albert Mangelsdorff, trombone (8-13); Hans Koller, tenor saxophone (3-13); Rudi Sehring, drums (11-13); Joki Freund, tenor saxophone (14,17); Attila Zoller, guitar (14, 17); Harry Schell, bass (14-17).
Ordering info: jazzhaus-label.com



Kenny Barron
Kenny Barron & The Brazilian Knights
SUNNYSIDE 3093
★★★★

For stretches of *Kenny Barron & The Brazilian Knights*, which pairs the venerable American pianist with an expert crew of Brazilian players, it's easy to lose sight of the album's marquee name. Which is to say, he fits right in. While the heads head in and out, and while the other players—particularly bassist Sergio Barrozo, drummer Rafael Barata, harmonica player Mauricio Einhorn, alto saxophonist Idriss Boudrioua and guitarist Lula Galvao—are soloing, Barron sinks humbly into the tapestry of the band, standing out only as an egoless ensemble player. But there's a stunning moment in every tune when the spotlight falls on Barron and, usually spurred on by supportive bass and drums, the pianist makes a wise, graceful statement. On Baden Powell's "So Por Amor," he sparscurries, rejoices, and makes it sound easy, too.

Conceived by producer Jacques Muyal and recorded over two days in Rio De Janeiro last year, *Knights* deviates from its own norm—the instrumentation of sax, piano, guitar, bass, and drums—in interesting ways. On the four tracks he wrote, harmonica man Einhorn takes the melody, conjuring up assuredness, tenderness, frustration and coy sexiness. Jobim's "Triste" is arranged for just Barron's keys and Galvao's six-string. On that track, the partners swap nimble, exultant piano runs for warm, fluid guitar wiggling. And the aforementioned "So Por Amor" is graced by Claudio Roditi. He handles the head with care, then improvises with taste, agility, and patience. Plus, thanks to overdubbing, Roditi's muted trumpet comments on his flugelhorn. And then there's Barron's brief, time-stopping solo-piano intro to Johnny Alf's "Ilusao A Toa." It's sad, deep, classy, and perfect. Any ballad would be lucky to have it. And any country would be lucky to have Barron.

—Brad Farberman

Kenny Barron & The Brazilian Knights: Rapaz De Bem; Ja Era; Ilusao A Toa; So Por Amor; Curta Metragem; Nos; Triste; Sonia Braga; Tristeza De Nos Dois; Chorinho Carioca; Sao Conrado. (73:31)
Personnel: Kenny Barron, piano; Mauricio Einhorn, harmonica; Idriss Boudrioua, alto saxophone; Lula Galvao, acoustic guitar; Sergio Barrozo, bass; Rafael Barata, drums; Claudio Roditi, flugelhorn, muted trumpet.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Preservation Hall Jazz Band
That's It!

SONY/LEGACY 371521

★★★★★

In describing the impetus to make the first album of all-original material in the 52-year history of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Creative Director Ben Jaffe has pointed out that "this is a living, breathing tradition." And the idea is poignant.

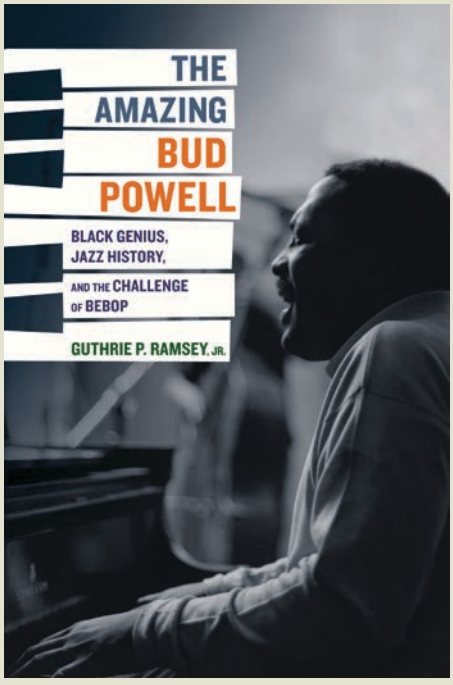
Taken as a whole, the album reflects key elements of the music's history: dance and parade rhythms, church themes, humor, theatricality and a strong sense of place. But the brilliance of *That's It!* lies in the varied innovations that marry past to present. The result is progressive, yet fits seamlessly into the canon of traditional New Orleans jazz.

Meticulously produced at the hall by Jaffe and My Morning Jacket's Jim James, every track captures sonic subtleties usually only afforded to those lucky enough to snag a front-and-center seat. This is especially important with regard to Charlie Gabriel, whose voice at 82 reverberates with the soulfulness that inspired artists like George Lewis and Lionel Hampton to hire him as a teenager, along with everything he's experienced since. On Gabriel's sly and bouncy "I Think I Love You," that history influences a brilliant artist whose warm phrasing and low-end vibrato is crystalline; you can actually hear his smile. Gabriel's bright and brassy "Come With Me" is equally memorable. Within its twinkling clarinet solos and gentle lyricism lies a new addition to the city's historic catalog of songs sung from the perspective of a New Orleanian who aches to share the experience of his city with an outsider.

Other highlights include the title track, a gangster-ready romp that pairs a double-tuba shuffle rhythm with searing crescendos of brawny horn lines. The rebirth and resiliency-themed "Dear Lord (Give Me Strength)" features Ronell Johnson at his best, interpreting the church-based music that feeds the city's parades through caramelly vocals steeped in gospel. *—Jennifer Odell*

That's It!: That's It!; Dear Lord (Give Me Strength); Come With Me; Sugar Plum; Rattlin' Bones; I Think I Love You; August Nights; Halfway Right, Halfway Wrong; Yellow Moon; The Darker It Gets; Emalena's Lullaby. (37:39)
Personnel: Mark Braud, trumpet, vocals; Charlie Gabriel, clarinet, vocals; Freddie Lonzo, trombone, vocals; Rickie Monie, piano; Clint Maedgen, tenor saxophone, vocals; Ben Jaffe, tuba; Ronell Johnson, tuba; Joseph Lastie Jr., drums.
Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Unlocking the Mysteries of Bud Powell's Musical Genius



Born in Harlem in 1924, Earl "Bud" Powell was a piano prodigy who turned from classical to jazz as a preteen, became Thelonious Monk's most treasured protégé in 1942 and the following year was helping to redefine modern jazz at Minton's. Yet Powell has been the least studied and most opaque of the bop pioneers, which makes Guthrie P. Ramsey's ***The Amazing Bud Powell: Black Genius, Jazz History, And The Challenge of Bebop*** **(University Of California Press)** and Peter Pullman's self-published ***Wail: The Life Of Bud Powell*** especially welcome.

Ramsey, a music professor at the University of Pennsylvania, takes a Black Studies/New Jazz Studies approach, amplifying on his 1994 Ph.D. thesis about Powell. Ramsey offers not a biography but a theoretical rethinking of Powell's life and work through a sociopolitical lens that takes in race, class, gender, the music industry, criticism and black culture, explicitly rejecting the "old musicology" notion that music exists in a timeless, universal place unattached to historical circumstance. In one of his most convincing chapters, he unpacks the received notion that bop was an anti-commercial "art music" that turned its back on vernacular black culture, pointing out that beboppers worked in a commercial milieu and never severed ties with blues and popular song form. Ramsey then brilliantly ties this nuanced view of bop's innovations to the whole notion of "genius" that attached to Powell, suggesting that the word was code for the (then-forbidden) assertion of black manhood.

Makes sense. Though sometimes Ramsey lets theory cloud the facts. To wit: though the notion of Powell's genius may have conveniently turned on falsely believing he waged an epic struggle against a stereotypically emasculating woman—namely, his caretaker in Europe, Altevia "Buttercup" Edwards—unfortunately, it wasn't false: Buttercup, at least to judge from the evidence Pullman has unearthed, did exploit (and drug) Powell.

In his penultimate chapter, Ramsey offers detailed parsings of various Powell solos, with the goal of showing that the importance of Powell's music isn't, as we have read for years, how "advanced" his ideas were in relation to previous styles, but how they are "sonic symbols" representing ideals of race advancement against social oppression. But Ramsey doesn't offer analyses that break much new ground. With its 16 musical examples and dense theoretical vocabulary, Ramsey's book will not appeal to casual readers. But it is an important, thoughtful work for those wishing to probe beyond clichés.

Pullman, in his exhaustive biography, goes a long way toward exposing some of the most notorious of those clichés—particularly the 1945 beating so often used to "explain" the pianist's "madness" and the 1951 drug bust in which Monk was said to have taken the rap for Powell. Like an archaeologist cataloging shards, Pullman cobbles together a heartbreaking composite of a man who left few traces behind. A picture emerges of a pathologically introverted, angry, driven adolescent and sometimes eerily out of touch man who was obsessive about music but had no friends and was apparently unable to sustain any kind of normal personal relationship—despite fathering a child with his girlfriend, entering into a marriage of convenience and living for several sedated years with Edwards and for a few more under the wing of French graphic artist Francis Paudras.

Because he spent so many years in mental institutions (where he endured shock treatments), Powell missed crucial moments that might have elevated his reputation. Was Powell crazy? Or the victim of a malevolent, racist psychiatric establishment? Pullman won't offer a direct answer, but his evidence suggests that Powell suffered from what today would be diagnosed as autism: obsessive, drawn to repetition, unalert to social cues and profoundly childish. These symptoms were apparent long before he was struck with a police baton.

But *Wail* is far more than a myth-buster. Reading its vivid, detailed account of 52nd Street is like watching a movie. Though Pullman is not strong on musical detail, his accounts of the sessions are readable and sensible. While his obsession with other detail—not to mention an annoying fussiness about racial terminology and the use of the word "the" in front of proper nouns—cry out for an editor, his punctiliousness insures that *Wail* will serve as the standard reference for some time. **DB**

Ordering info: ucpress.edu; wailthelifeofbudpowell.com

Trilok Gurtu
Spellbound
SUNNYSIDE 1355
★★★

India-born percussionist Trilok Gurtu's career is tough to pin down. Trained to play tabla as a child in Mumbai, he also picked up the Western drum kit, and spent parts of the 1970s and 1980s kicking around Europe's progressive rock and fusion scenes and worked with the likes of John McLaughlin, Joe Zawinul and Jan Garbarek. Since then, he's played on a huge range of fusion projects and experimented with electronic music, and his new disc, *Spellbound*, seems to reflect on all of those previous experiences.

Don Cherry is very much on Gurtu's mind here. He bookends the album with brief snippets of a show he played with Cherry, includes versions of "Brown Rice" and "Universal Mother," and dedicates two originals to the late multi-instrumentalist, but this shapes the full album only inasmuch as Gurtu seems to share Cherry's pan-cultural appetites. Ibrahim Maalouf's haunting solo trumpet introduction to "Universal Mother" is among the album's finest moments.

When the full band engages, *Spellbound* is a rhythmically varied, winding ride that matches its most bracing content, such as a funky take on Dizzy Gillespie's "Manteca," with more frustrating tracks, such as a leaden version of "All Blues" that tries to shake things up with jarring stop-start passages but remains lugubrious.

Gurtu takes to the tablas on half the songs, but even when he does, the rhythm work here feels oddly conventional for all its variety. This is not a trivial thing: The album's principal weakness is that, even as it constantly shifts shape, it offers few peaks of intensity and winds up feeling a bit flat for it. —*Joe Tangari*

Spellbound: Improvisation Live: Don Cherry & Trilok Gurtu; Manteca; Jack Johnson/Black Satin; Cuckoo; Berchidda; Like Popcorn; Haunting; Universal Mother; Spellbound; All Blues; Cosmic Roundabout/Brown Rice; Thank You By Don Cherry. (57:37)

Personnel: Trilok Gurtu, drums, percussion, vocals, keyboards, tambura, tabla; Hasan Gözetlik, trumpet; Tulug Tirpan, keyboards; Jonathan Cuniado, bass; Nitin Shankar, percussion; Carlo Cantini, keyboards; Nils Petter Movaer, trumpet; Paolo Fresu, trumpet, effects; Matthias Schriefl, tumpet; Matthias Höfs, trumpet, doublebell trumpet; Helene Traub, English horn; Jakob Janeschitz-Kreigel, cello; Ibrahim Maalouf, trumpet; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Mary Stallings
But Beautiful

HIGHNOTE 7250

★★★½

For every fresh-voiced ingénue who finds fame in her twenties and is assured she can ride it for decades like Diana Krall or Cassandra Wilson, there's a Mary Stallings who knows that it doesn't always work out that way. At 74, the San Francisco singer still possesses the confident phrasing and rich tone that made her a favorite of bandleaders like Earl Hines and Dizzy Gillespie in the 1960s, but outside the Bay Area she hasn't attained the kind of late-career name recognition enjoyed by Bettye LaVette or Mavis Staples.

But Beautiful—a ballad-filled program that sparkles under the curation of pianist Eric Reed—can't turn back the years on Stallings' once-promising career, but it demonstrates that the decades have burnished her voice and given her the gravitas that only comes with age.

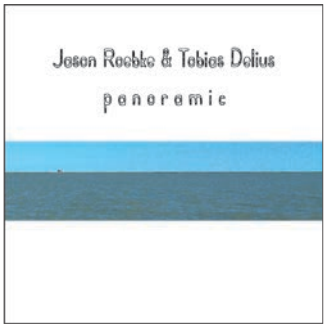
When she sings "Autumn in New York is often mingled with pain," with soulful phrasing that echoes Dinah Washington, it's in a voice that carries authority. Reed—who has championed Stallings for years—never crowds her, yet finds chord voicings that add depth to these well-trod standards. On "Just A Gigolo" when the other musicians lay out, the dialogue between Reed and Stallings offers a superb example of two musicians listening and responding, and finding a way to make an old song sound new. *—James Hale*

But Beautiful: Dedicated To You; Just A Gigolo; Some Other Spring; But Beautiful; The Lamp Is Low; Time On My Hands; Autumn In New York; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; You Don't Know What Love Is; I Thought About You. (46:53)
Personnel: Mary Stallings, vocals; Danny Janklow, alto saxophone (1, 4, 7); Brian Clancy, tenor saxophone (1, 3, 8); Eric Reed, piano; Mike Gurrola, bass (1, 4-10); Wes Anderson, drums (1, 4-10).
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Jason Roebke & Tobias Delius
Panoramic

NOTTWO 881

★★★★



Amsterdam and Chicago have forged a relationship as sister cities, at least as far as forward-leaning jazz is concerned. The latest product of that collaboration is this rich duo recording featuring bassist Jason Roebke and saxophonist Tobias Delius.

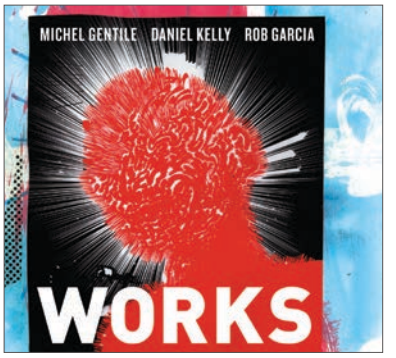
Roebke is a key member of the Windy City's fertile scene, a member of Jason Adasiewicz's Rolldown, Jason Stein's Locksmith Isidore and Mike Reed's People, Places and Things; Delius is a member of the ICP Orchestra. On *Panoramic*, the duo cite the influence of Duke Ellington's Blanton-Webster Band, and while the connection might not be apparent these eight tracks maintain a classic musicality even at its most adventurous. The pair explores a wide swath of territory, from the angular blues of "Cuttlefish," where Delius' lines snake around a bass line that's less walking than meandering, to the scurrying, furtive "G-Bug." Their approach ranges from finessed to ferocious, as when the initially melancholy "Which Goose" builds to a strained tension, with Delius' screeching clarinet and Roebke pounding his strings with heavy metal force. The soulful elasticity of "On The Moon" stands in contrast to the sparse, dusky moan of "Convolvulaceae" or the gritty drones of "No Night." The session was recorded with remarkable clarity, placing the listener in a privileged position to catch the tactile sensation of fingers sliding on strings, sax keys clacking, and vocal outbursts. *—Shaun Brady*

Panoramic: Cuttlefish; On The Moon; Which Goose; G-Bug; Convolvulaceae; Panther; No Night; Punkin. (59:42)
Personnel: Jason Roebke, double bass; Tobias Delius, tenor saxophone, clarinet.
Ordering info: nottwo.com

Michel Gentile/ Daniel Kelly/ Rob Garcia
Works

CONNECTION WORKS RECORDS 102

★★★★



Works, consisting of flautist Michel Gentile, pianist Daniel Kelly, and drummer Rob Garcia, is the group affiliated with the non-profit Brooklyn-based jazz organization Connection Works. On their disc, the compositions and arrangements are meaty, contain several clever wrinkles, and are often quite complex—"Will" being especially so. The piece begins with highly syncopated, punchy flute and piano accents before settling into a second theme on which Gentile doubles Kelly's right hand while his left hand plays a hemiola line. The effect creates a tension-laden push-and-pull with thick textures, making the ensemble sound bigger than it is. "Voir Dire" features a steady-running, zig-zag line that provides an unexpected setup for the out-of-time, avant-garde-leaning solo section. Gentile's solo on "Will," on which he's accompanied by Garcia, is intense—he almost blows the house down. Gentile works serious extended technique on "Flute Soliloquy," a short solo track on which he creates slow polyphonic textures. Garcia's busy snare and cymbals drive "Hundertwasser," provide accents and colors on "Spring Comes 'Round," while his minimal brushwork helps give the ballad "Chorale" an ECM-like feel. Kelly's ability to play independent lines in each hand is impressive, and he varies his touch, from percussive on "Voir Dire" to delicate on "C'est Bien Ça." *—Chris Robinson*

Works: Island; Hundertwasser; C'est Bien Ça; Flute Soliloquy; Will; Chorale; Voir Dire; Spring Comes 'Round; Drum Soliloquy; Emanglons; Piano Soliloquy; Commodius Vicus. (50:53)
Personnel: Michel Gentile, flute; Daniel Kelly, piano; Rob Garcia, drums.
Ordering info: connectionworks.org

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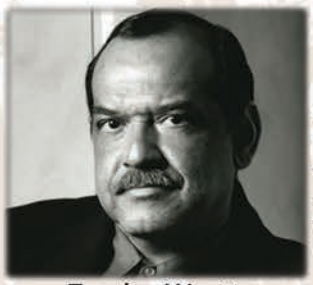

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INSIDE

Maximizing Piano Technique Using the Matthay Exercises


John Colianni
OLIVIA ROSENKRANTZ

THE MATTHAY (PRONOUNCED "MAT-TAY") method for pianists is a little-known technique system, but it has proven its merit among the select group of pianists who have adopted it. The Matthay exercises promote speed and quickness, accuracy, touch sensitivity, strength, dynamic range and endurance at the keyboard. These routines are the foundation of my own technique: As a student, Matthay significantly advanced my keyboard skills, rapidly and lastingly, but without the requirement of long hours of practice.

These exercises, and their governing musical philosophies, were developed by the regarded British pianist and teacher Tobias Matthay (1858–1945). The Matthay method was considered unorthodox at the time of its introduction in 1900, but it quickly yielded results for its early students, among whom were some well-known classical pianists. And, although there are many pianists who still use this method, it has remained relatively obscure.

My own teacher back in suburban Maryland, where I grew up, was a fine pianist named Les Karr, who attested to the ongoing contribution the Matthay studies made to his own piano technique, which was considerable. At Juilliard, around 1950, Karr attended master classes taught by Teddy Wilson, whose artist-in-residence status at a renowned conservatory was a rare honor for a jazz pianist at that time. As it happened, Wilson himself was a student of Professor McLanahan, a well-known classical piano teacher, and McLanahan was also Karr's classical teacher. Wilson followed through with the Matthay exercises over the years, which he once acknowledged in a radio interview. Many years later, I shared the stage with Wilson a few times when I was in Lionel Hampton's Orchestra, and once, at Howard University in Washington, D.C., I watched him warm up with some Matthay routines at the sound check. I let him know that I had learned Matthay as Karr's student. Wilson remembered Karr well from their Juilliard days. It was a privilege for me to be part of this advanced community of pianists who studied Matthay. But Matthay has yet to "go mainstream." Along with Wilson, Oscar Peterson (who is said to have embraced elements of Matthay in his practicing), Marian McPartland (who has referenced Matthay on her radio series "Piano Jazz") and Dick Hyman are on the short list of jazz pianists who have acknowledged this school of technique.

I was 14 when I started lessons with Karr, and I was attending a prep school that held long hours. I was also involved in sports. These circumstances kept my practice time brief, especially when compared to the long hours put in by those preparing for a classical career. But I had an agenda: I wanted to become proficient in the piano styles made famous by Wilson, Peterson, George Shearing and Duke Ellington, among other heroes, with a view toward eventu-

Matthay Exercise

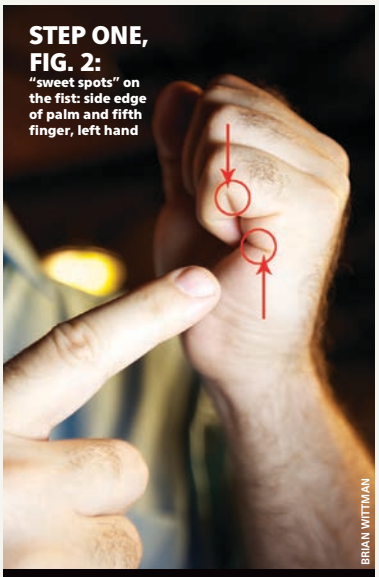
HERE IS THE FIRST EXERCISE OF "THE 9 STEPS," Matthay's core grouping of exercises:

STEP ONE) ***Fists, thumb side up, on D♭ and B♭.*** This first exercise of the 9 Steps will introduce you to the most basic aspects of Matthay's relationship to the physical aspect of piano playing. As you practice and master Step 1, you'll get a preliminary sense of the ways that the Matthay routines manifest a balanced, relaxed and supple feeling throughout the fingers, hands and wrists.

Place your fists hovering on the keyboard, lightly but firmly clenched. The proximal (lower) phalanges of the fingers should be facing parallel to the fall board (see Fig. 1). Now, place your hands on the notes, as follows: Rest the right fist on D♭ and B♭, an octave above middle C. Contact with both notes will be made from the skin and flesh at the creases of the fifth finger in both hands. The wrist and forearm should be aligned at an approximate 45-degree angle. For the right hand, contact with D♭ is made at the palmar digital crease. Contact with B♭ below is made at the distal interphalangeal crease (Fig. 2). Place the left hand on B♭ and D♭ an octave below, with the aforesaid areas of the fifth finger making contact, in an opposing, mirror image with B♭ and D♭ (Figs. 1, 2).

The arms are now opposing one another at a 45-degree angle. Your weight is mostly suspended from your hands, wrists and forearms, and the burden is on your upper arms and shoulders. From the elbows to the ends of the fists, there should be an absolute straight line; furthermore, the fists should extend straight out from the wrists, and there should be no slumping or arching whatsoever. In other words, the wrists should stay even with the forearms and hands. With the weight mostly suspended from the hands, forearms and wrists, the elbows should now be suspended outward about 6 inches from the torso. Hold this position and get used to the feeling of the fists resting from the points of the fifth fingers on the keys (ascending, B♭ and D♭ in the left hand, B♭ and D♭ an octave above in the right hand).


STEP ONE, FIG. 1: starting position
BRIAN WITTMAN


STEP ONE, FIG. 2: "sweet spots" on the fist: side edge of palm and fifth finger, left hand
BRIAN WITTMAN

Once this feels somewhat familiar, adjust your fists slightly so that the most touch-sensitive areas of skin are resting and touching lightly on the keys. Think of these parts of your hands and fingers as the "sweet spots." Sweet spots on the fingertips are the most important, but for these fist-played exercises, the sweet spots as shown and described in the joint creases are equally important.

ally forging a sound and style of my own. So Karr made the most of the situation by focusing on concise assignments that he felt would best develop my skills in the shortest time. Early on, he introduced the Matthay exercises, which he explained and demonstrated for me in his highly understandable way. In addition to the Matthay studies, he would give me a few scales and other exercises to work on, and some simple classical pieces. All of these assignments were designed to be practiced interactively with elements of the Matthay applications. This was consistent with the way students of the Matthay technique are taught to incorporate Matthay into all phases of their playing. In addition to technique-building, the lessons also focused on jazz and pop interpretation and improvisation, as well as aspects of theory.

My lessons with Karr ended when my family moved to New Jersey during my senior year of high school. Around this time I discovered the benefits of sticking closely to the Matthay method, and not just during practice time, but when I was out jamming or playing a gig. I wouldn't become fatigued or tense or bogged down in any physical way, even after long, hard hours of playing—as long as I stayed true to my Matthay training and mindset. This was confirmed the hard way in the early '80s, when I was booked to play at a Newport Jazz Festival event. This was a heavy gig for me, and I was on stage with name players. For my first number, I tore into a fast piece, but in the heat of the moment I abandoned my Matthay training. For one thing, I wasn't sitting at the piano with the right posture according to the method, nor was the distribution of weight in my arms and upper body managed in the proper Matthay manner. The physical alignments that are so important in Matthay weren't in place. I played hard and fast, and after my first solo chorus on the tune "Lover," my right forearm and wrist were so tightened up, I could barely play at all! Since then I've made it my business to use my Matthay training, both in practicing and in live situations, and hence have experienced few problems like those I had during that gig. To this day, I run the Matthay routines regularly, and it has been consistently helpful—it keeps my energy and facility at a high level and wards off fatigue, stiffness and tightness in the fingers, hands, wrists and arms.

Not long after my lessons with Karr were over, I got the piano chair in Lionel Hampton's Orchestra, staying in his band for three exciting years. Following that, I had the thrill of working long, steady residencies with both Mel Tormé and Les Paul, and of course I also perform with my own bands and as a solo pianist, too. Matthay training has facilitated the technique necessary to handle all of those situations.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF MATTHAY

The Matthay routines emphasize the importance of posture and positioning at the piano. Specialized physical movement, relative to bodily position, is central to all applications of Matthay. In fact, the Matthay method involves the player's conscious, ongoing involvement of many parts of his or her body. From the upper back and shoulders, power and force are channeled outward as a targeted flow of energy, moving down through the upper arms, forearms, wrists, hands and fingers, all the way to the fingertips on the keys. This philosophy of weight management and balance will allow the hands and fingers to maintain a state that's light and supple, but suitably firm, enabling advanced agility, dexterity and strength.

There is an array of Matthay applications:

- the 9 Steps, which are the method's core exercises, embodying Matthay's most basic ideas and principles of physical movement at the piano;
- the school of Quiet Hands, which promotes a policy that restricts extraneous movement in the wrists, hands and fingers during keyboard executions;
- the Hand Touch method, which heightens the player's sense of touch and attack;
- the Interval Training regimen, for managing spans and awkward jumps between notes and registers.

The use of Rotation, a technique-building keyboard application characterized by slow and exaggerated motion, is the Matthay method's most widely employed exercise device, and an important part of most of these routines.

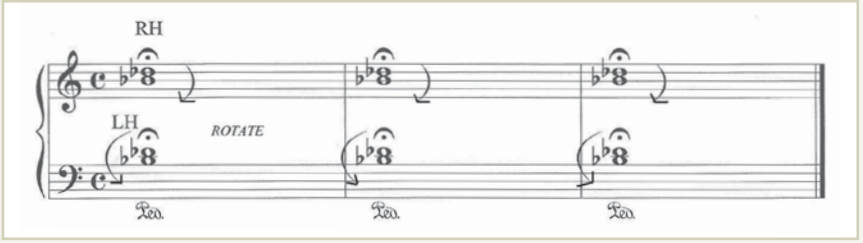
The Matthay system promotes:

- dexterity and speed;
- clarity and crispness—clean playing;
- heightened touch-sensitivity, enabling greater expression;
- accuracy in execution;
- endurance;
- alleviation of unnecessary physical stress and muscle tightening of the fingers, hands, wrists, arms;
- increased hand/wrist/arm strength.

I've outlined the first exercise of Matthay's 9 Steps below, complete with some diagrams to help you get started. Check it out, and start reaping the benefits. **DB**

John Colianni was a cash prize-winner in the Thelonious Monk Piano Competition, has recorded as a leader for Concord Jazz (and other labels) and is featured on the soundtrack of the film *Revolutionary Road*. This Master Class contains condensed content from *The John Colianni Piano Method, Volumes I* and *II*, available from johncolianni.com.

THE EXERCISE:
From your held position, let the elbows fall to your sides, and the turn of the fists and wrists will make the notes sound.



STEP ONE, FIG. 3:
arms suspended from elbow

STEP ONE, FIG. 4:
elbow dropped to side

While allowing your elbows to drop to the sides of the torso, still keep your arms, wrists and fists firm and aligned, but not too rigid. The easy turning motion of your fists that will occur when your elbows fall, along with the dropping of the weight in your arms, will depress and sound the keys and produce B♭-and-D♭ chords in each hand. Let the chords ring, as the elbows flop slightly and gently and then become still against your torso. Relax for three seconds. Your arms and wrists will now be, more or less, at a 90-degree angle from the keyboard. Slowly bring your elbows back to the starting position, and repeat the exercise three more times. Take your time and always let your elbows rest at your sides for a moment as you let the notes ring.

With this exercise, the process of loosening up begins. You should feel a release of tension in your arms, wrists, hands and shoulders. You'll also get a preliminary feeling for how your weight will be distributed throughout these routines, if you continue with this method. Without a doubt, there will be some awkwardness, and the notes won't go down smoothly at first. But stay with it, and make your movements count. Keep everything firm yet relaxed, allowing the drop of your elbows to do most of the work in making the notes sound. Feel your fists truly going down to the bottom of the notes. The volume should be in the mezzo forte range.

You'll get the most out of this exercise (and all other Matthay routines) when you're able to get an even sound and attack. The more musical the exercises sound, the better you're doing them. *—John Colianni*

Developing Chord Fluency for Advancing Piano Students

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 12 YEARS OLD, MY PAR-ents took me to a restaurant that featured a live jazz trio. I was amazed to see the pianist playing without written music. I approached the bandstand and asked him how he did it. Without missing a beat, he simply said, "Learn your chords, kid."

He was right, of course. All improvising musicians benefit by understanding harmony, but it is fundamental for pianists. That's why I spend a good portion of every lesson helping my students develop what I call "chord fluency": the ability to instantly play any chord in a logical position that easily connects to the chords around it (voice leading).

PART 1: DIATONIC SEVENTH CHORDS

When students ask, "How many chords are there?" I tell them there are hundreds, maybe thousands if you include extended, altered, clusters and quartal chords. But all of those hip harmonies are only useful after one has first mastered stacked-third seventh chords. Use these steps and drills to increase your own fluency with seventh chord basics.

I. CONSTRUCT AND LABEL

You can read how chords are constructed in any music theory resource book, but the information will stick better if you build and play them yourself.

1) First, notate all of the diatonic seventh chords in a key by stacking thirds on each note of a major scale.

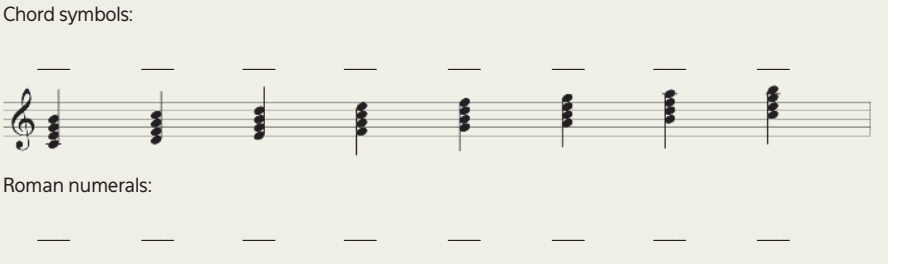
2) Next, write the associated chord symbols above the staff (referencing the Pop/Jazz Chord Symbol Review below as needed).

3) More generic than specific chord symbols, Roman numerals underscore harmonic relationships, making it easier to transpose and analyze what's "under the hood" in a tune. Write them below the staff, using capitals for major and lower case for the rest. For example, in C major, you would construct and label the chords in **Example 1**. Now, let it sink in that what is true for one key remains true for all keys.

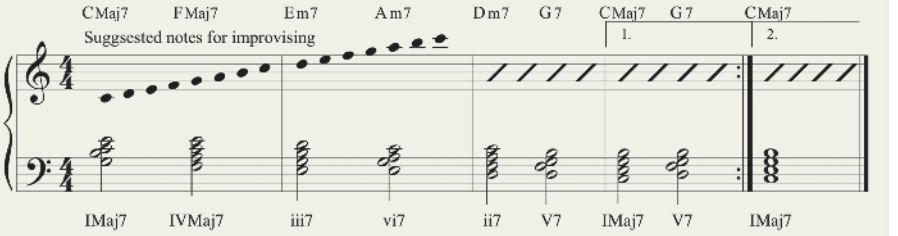
Pop/Jazz Chord Symbol Review

Chord Name	Explanation
C	Major by default.
C–, Cm, Cmi, Cmin	"Minor" modifies the triad (never the 7th).
CM7, CMa7, CMaj7, C△	"Major" modifies the 7th (never the triad).
C7	Triad is major by default, 7th is dominant.
C–7, Cm7, Cmi7, Cmin7	Triad is minor, 7th is dominant (not Maj7).
Cm7(♭5), Cø7	Triad is minor, 7th is dominant, 5th is lowered.
Cdim7, C°7	Triad is diminished and so is 7th.

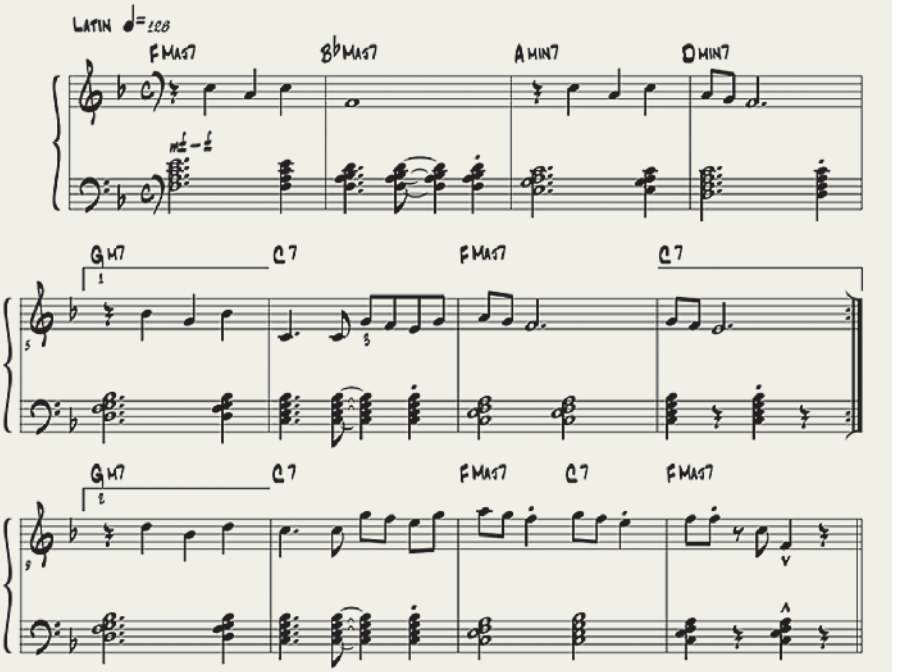
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3

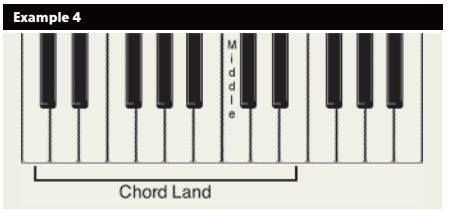


"Farmer's Market," from *That's Jazz, Book 1, Digging Deeper* by Bradley Sowash.

II. SCALING THE CHORDS

I've found this to be an ideal progression for practicing diatonic seventh chords because it accustoms the ear (and fingers) to the sound so often found in jazz standards of chords moving by fourths.

Example 4



1) Practice the progression in **Example 2**


Bradley Sowash

using your left hand. Use only root position and second inversions as shown.

2) When the left hand feels secure, add an improvised right-hand part reordering notes from the C major scale—a process I call "scaling the chords."

III. TRANSPOSING POWER

The next step is to transpose this progression to all major keys. **Example 3** is an excerpt from a tune from my *That's Jazz* piano method that makes use of this progression in the key of F major. If you were my student, I'd ask you to play it first as written and then loosen up the left hand while improvising a new right-hand part.

From here, transpose this progression to the remaining keys, adding a sharp or flat to the key signature as your move around the circle of fifths. As you do so, keep in mind that:

- For pianists, root-position and second-inversion seventh chords are all that are necessary to navigate most chord progressions. (Notice that these are the only positions in "Farmer's Market.") Focusing solely on these in your practice cuts the number of muscle-memory hand positions you will be learning in half.
- It's best to keep the left hand chord range in the area I call "chord land": from about C below middle C to E above middle C.
- **Example 4** shows where closed block chords sound best on the piano. Note that some keys may require resetting the hand along the way to stay in this range.

PART 2: SEVENTH CHORD DRILLS

Another way to develop unerring chord fluency is to practice sequential progressions that move logically from key to key.

I. CHORD CRAWLS

Pick a single chord quality and run it up or down chromatically. See **Example 5**.

II. STEP DOWN PROGRESSIONS

In **Example 6**, the four most common seventh chord qualities move through all keys by half steps.

III. CYCLE PROGRESSIONS

Example 7 moves by fourths, alternating root position and second inversions.

IV. MINI PROGRESSIONS

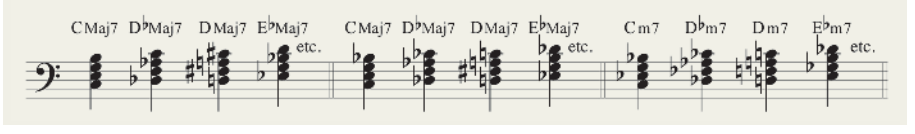
The ii–V–I sequence of chords is the most often-found mini-progression or "chord cell" found in standards. The exercise in **Example 8** isolates the progression and moves through six keys. To practice the other six keys, start on E♭m7–A♭7–D♭Maj7.

CONCLUSION

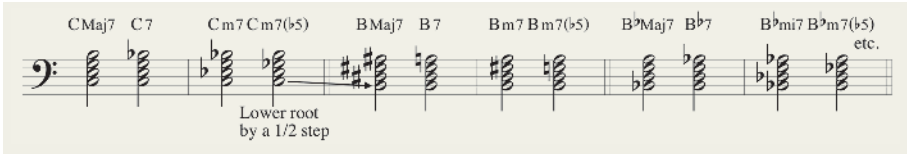
Chord fluency enables you to understand how progressions work, sight-read lead sheets, transpose, integrate arpeggios into your solos and more easily memorize tunes. If you want to play more creatively in a greater number of styles, get your butt on the piano bench and learn your chords, kid. **DB**

Bradley Sowash is a pianist, composer, author and educator specializing in improvisation for beginners and "recovering classical musicians." His publications include *That's Jazz* (Neil A. Kjos Music Co.) and jazz hymn arrangements from Augsburg Fortress Press. Visit him online at bradleysowash.com.

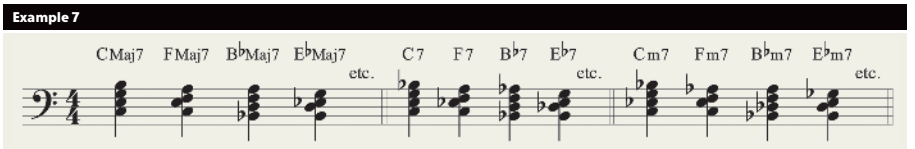
Example 5



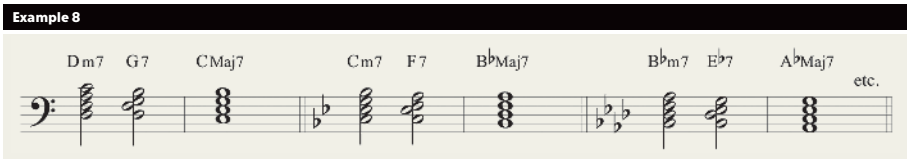
Example 6



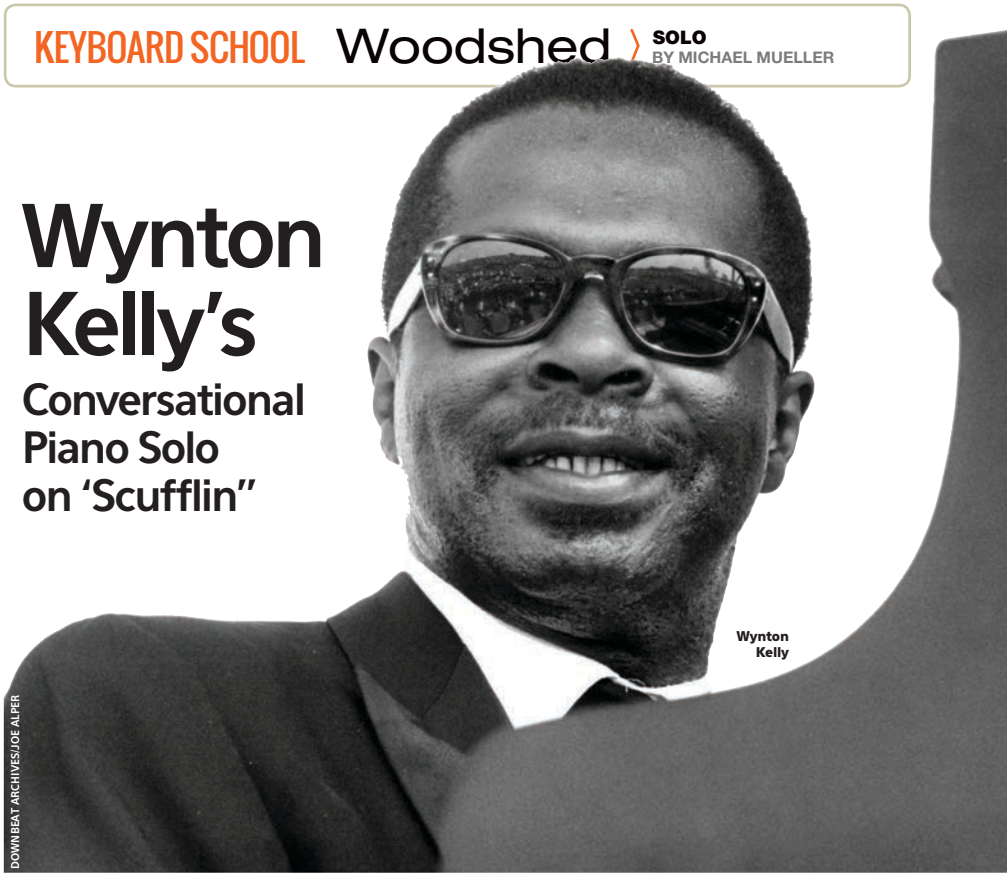
Example 7



Example 8



Wynton Kelly's Conversational Piano Solo on 'Scufflin"


Wynton Kelly

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES/JOE ALPER

WHILE WYNTON KELLY DID NOT HAVE ANY formal musical training, he learned his craft on the bandstand by playing r&b in nightclubs as a teenager. The music had to be accessible, entertaining and easy to dance to. When Kelly became a full-time jazz pianist later, he was able to transfer these same qualities to his improvisations.

His original composition "Scufflin'," from the 1967 album *Full View* (Milestone), is a 12-bar blues in B♭ major, with most of the melody being based on the G minor pentatonic scale. The double-time feel in the first eight bars creates a restless mood, hence the title. This tension is subsequently released in the last four bars with a relaxed and easy-flowing eighth-note swing feel.

Keith Jarrett once said that "if you graph a good melody, it probably looks good as a graph." Similarly, if one writes out a good solo, the transcription will look visually appealing. When looking at Kelly's solo on the page, one can see how organically his lines rise and fall, similar to waves or mountain ranges.

Kelly starts his solo by sequencing a simple four-note motif (mm. 15–19) that is derived from the B♭ minor pentatonic scale. In a stark contrast, he then plays a long and complex bebop line in a double-time feel (mm. 21–24). This balancing of simple against complex ideas creates a lot of variety and interest for the listener.

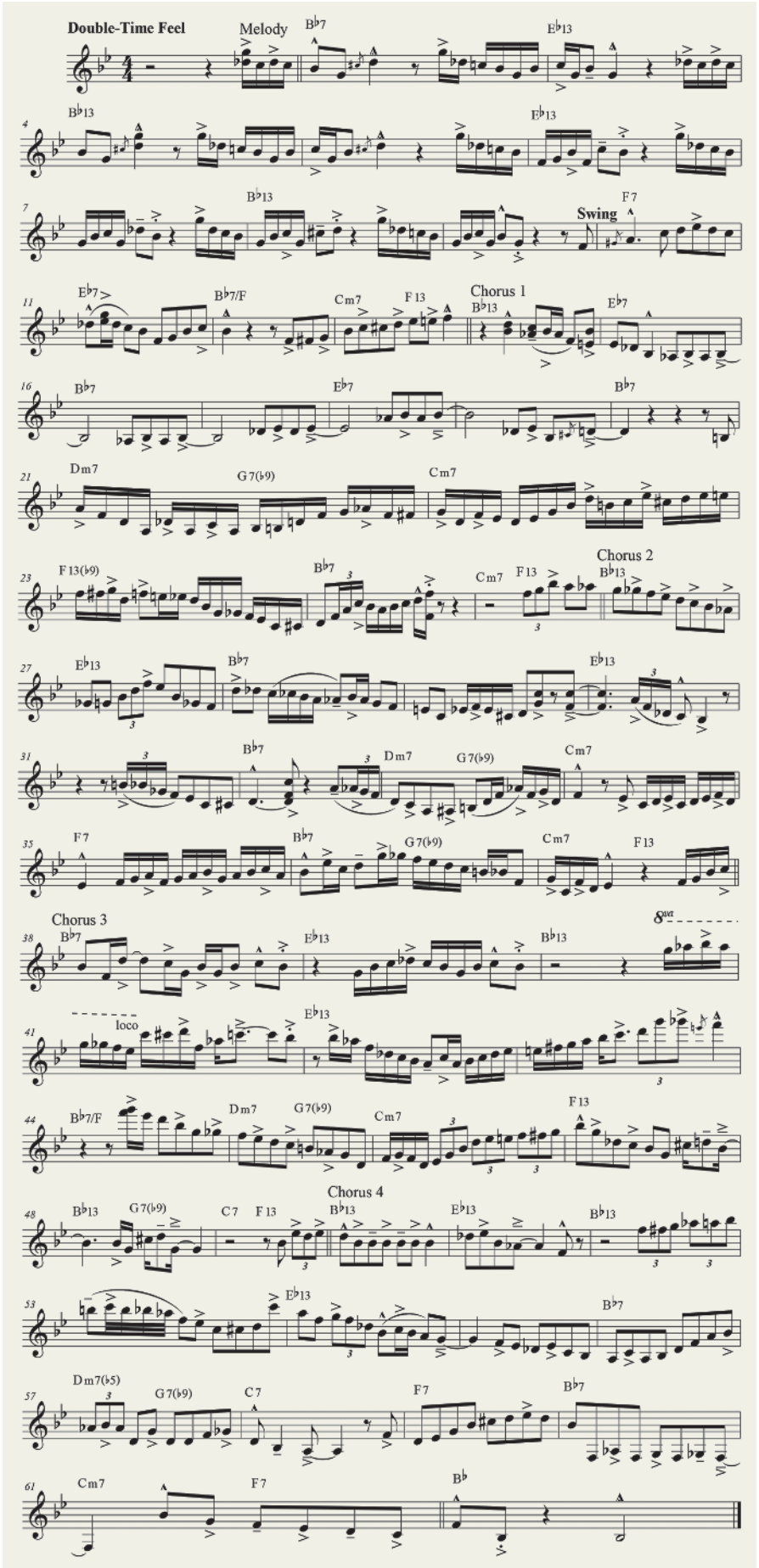
In the second chorus, the first line is long (mm. 25–29) and contains several chromatic passing tones (mm. 26 and 28, second eighth-note). A short idea is introduced in bar 30, expanded in bars 31–32 and further expanded in bars 32–34. The dense harmonic progression in the last four bars prompts Kelly to return to the double-time feel (mm. 34–37). The various lengths of his phrases and rests give the solo a speech-like quality, very conversational and lyrical.

After Kelly starts the third chorus by quoting the melody (mm. 38–39), he continues by playing in the higher register of the piano (mm. 40–41 and mm. 43–44). Together with the prevalent double-time feel (mm. 38–44), this creates the effect of a raised voice and an accelerated rate of speech, thereby providing a distinct climax. In measure 44, Kelly starts his line by simultaneously playing two notes (F and G). This major second is no mistake on his part (a finger striking two white keys instead of one) but is meant to put a strong accent on the beginning of this phrase.

At the start of the last chorus (m. 50), Kelly plays a drum-like figure using only two pitches (D and B♭). By concentrating on rhythm while simplifying the melody, he brings the solo to a natural close. And while he used a lot of chromaticism in the previous chorus (mm. 41 and 46), he now concentrates on diatonic- and pentatonic-based ideas, which further winds things down and resembles the beginning of his solo.

Kelly's pianistic style comprises the essential elements of jazz: swinging hard, improvising singable melodies, balancing blues- and bebop-based vocabulary, sensitive accompanying, rhythmic diversity and original arrangements. Therefore, his approach can serve as a solid musical basis for any aspiring jazz pianist. **DB**

Dr. Michael Mueller is a jazz pianist from Vienna, Austria. His collection of 25 Wynton Kelly solo transcriptions can be ordered from Jamey Aebersold Jazz (jazzbooks.com).



M-Audio Axiom Air 61

USB/MIDI Control

M-Audio's Axiom Air 61 is a new entry to the USB/MIDI controller market—one that is expanding as virtual instruments and sample libraries become more commonplace in live performance settings. While no single controller can instantly transform to accommodate the plethora of DAW and software instrument options out there, the Axiom series has done a pretty solid job of this historically. With the AIR series, M-Audio takes the next step.

I own the Axiom Pro 61, the direct predecessor to the AIR, so I was able to compare the key beds. Although M-Audio insists the AIR has the same action as the Pro, I think the AIR had a smoother, more even feel. Overall the keys feel great: not too soft, not too rigid and solid aftertouch response. It's a different feel than any of the other controllers on the market, though, so you should try and get your hands on one before making a buying decision. M-Audio also went with the traditional wheel controllers for pitch and modulation, which feel fluid, silky and solid. The same goes for the sliders, which are lower profile and longer throw than the Axiom Pro version—a definite improvement. M-Audio also increased the drum pad count from eight to 12.

The transport controls and LCD screen now have their own raised control-center area, which houses some cursor controls and other useful buttons for accessing HyperControl, Tempo, Edit, Banks, etc. Each set of controls (knobs, sliders and pads) now can access three separate banks of MIDI controls individually at the press of a single button, and each is represented by a different color.

M-Audio uses a system called HyperControl to automatically map to various DAW and virtual instrument controls. These maps are either present in the VI/DAW software or are downloadable from M-Audio and give you instant access to the most commonly used parameters in the knob, slider and pad sets. For software that lacks a pre-built template, you can map out standard MIDI messages to the controls and save them as patches internally or to your computer.

Included with the AIR is a software composition tool called Ignite, a sketchpad for getting your musical ideas down quickly in an enclosed environment. Ignite includes preset instruments that sound good, a clip-based recorder (MIDI and audio) and some FX and editing tools. Included is a copy of Pro Tools Express with the dongle, so out of the box you've got some powerful tools to work with.

If you are looking for a powerful, intuitive and good-feeling synth-action keyboard controller to run your computer, the Axiom Air 61 is one of the best. This field is getting crowded, and it is good to see that M-Audio continues to improve an already successful line. *—Chris Neville*

m-audio.com

Kawai ES7 Digital Piano

Real-Feel Ivories

Kawai's ES7 digital piano, now available in Ivory White in addition to the original Elegant Black Gloss finish, has gained popularity among players who have been impressed with its excellent piano sounds, realistic feel, triple-sensor key detection and onboard USB digital audio.

The 256-note polyphonic ES7 has a relatively new kind of weighted-key action called Responsive Hammer 2. Graded from left to right, the RH2 action mirrors the heavier bass hammers and lighter treble hammers of a real grand piano.

The tones of the ES7 are complex and true-sounding. Kawai uses Progressive Harmonic Imaging technology to record and reproduce all 88 keys of its best concert grand acoustic pianos at several different dynamic levels. Several different piano types are preset into the ES7's sound banks, including concert grands, studio grands, mellow grands and modern/rock pianos. The imaging process also does a great job of taking string resonance into account, adding further dimension and depth to the playing experience. And the triple-sensor key detection allows you to use proper piano technique while triggering repeated notes.

"The ES has many major upgrades to features and sounds compared to its predecessors," said Tom Love, Senior Director of Online Marketing and Electronics for Kawai America and Kawai Canada. "A new processor, or tone generator (TG), is behind many of these improvements. A lot of memory is dedicated to this TG, and the ES7 is the first Kawai instrument to utilize it."

One of the coolest parts of the ES7 is the instrument's built-in Virtual Technician, which gives you the tools to shape various piano characteristics, including touch sensitivity, voicing, damper resonance levels, string resonance levels, and subtle hammer and key-release noises.

The ES7 also has a strong selection of electric pianos and organs, plus amp simulations to go with them. Mallet instruments, basses, strings and choirs add even more variety. Other highlights include MP3 and WAV recording capabilities and a built-in sound system. *—Ed Enright*

kawaius.com

Casio XW-P1

Groove-Producing Synth

With the introduction of the XW-P1, Casio continues to shed its long-time brand image as being a K-Mart-quality instrument manufacturer. The company's recently released Privia line of piano-oriented keyboards focused on price point while significantly improving the ratio of sound quality to portability. Furthering this trend is the new XW-P1, an exceptionally powerful hands-on synth that, for the most part, far surpasses its entry-level price point.

The XW-P1 is aimed at keyboardists who are interested in electronic textures with an emphasis on DJ-styled groove production and real-time manipulation. The XW-P1 is labeled as a "Performance Synthesizer," highlighting the vast array of controllers and parameters available for the player to use as inspiration strikes. It's not designed for someone who's looking for a piano-oriented axe to take on gigs.

The XW-P1 is only available in 61 unweighted keys, so it probably won't be the first choice for a solo piano gig, anyway. It is equipped with 400 serviceable PCM-based sounds in all the standard categories (piano, electromechanical, orchestral, drum, GM, etc.) that could get you through a stylistically diverse gig with a cover band or serve as a versatile sound source for MIDI playback. But its main emphasis resides in its robust electronic-oriented sounds, accessible with the monophonic "Solo Synth" engine and the pad-oriented "Hex Layer" engine. Each of these engines features up to six layers of independent sounds, each with its own real-time continuously variable level control and four patch-common assignable controllers.

Another dedicated sound engine is a Hammond-style "clone-wheel" synth. It has some of the expected controls, including nine drawbars, percussion control and rotary emulation with speed control. However, it lacks chorus/vibrato, key click and many other tweakable controls common to clone-wheel synths. Nor does it have an expression pedal/CV jack.

What the XW-P1 lacks in these areas, it makes up for with the unique capabilities of its arpeggiator, phrase sequencer and 16-step sequencer. While not a loop-station-style device per se, the phrase sequencer offers the ability to capture ideas performed on the keyboard in real time, to loop and retrigger them, and to use the keys to transpose them harmonically. Phrases can have an unaltered rhythmic feel or can be quantized to the master beat clock.

The step sequencer offers similar real-time operation and transposition. And while 16 steps might seem limiting, each of its nine tracks allows for a unique number of steps and a unique metric subdivision. Though clock-locked, the phrase and step sequencer can run independently and simultaneously. The keyboard can also be played live independently from the running sequencer(s).

Other important features abound. An external audio input (mic, stereo 1/8-inch and line level) can be incorporated into patches and routed through effects processing. The right end houses a rubberized iPad-sized resting pad. MIDI can be sent simultaneously over a USB interface and the standard MIDI jacks. The instrument weighs less than 12 pounds and can be run using six D batteries.

The XW-P1 offers great interactive creative potential at an entry-level price point of $699.99. *—Vijay Tellis-Nayak*

casio.com

Reed Geek

Table-Flattening Tool

The Reed Geek is an innovative tool for enhancing reeds and flattening reed tables. It's not a reed knife, but a compact, multi-edged steel machine tool that can be used to safely sculpt your reeds into shape. Considering the high costs of reeds today—not to mention imperfections and variations from reed to reed—it's great to have a quick and easy tool that helps you get more usable, longer-lasting reeds from every box you buy.

I tried the Reed Geek on a nice, responsive alto saxophone reed I had been using for a while, in an effort to prolong its life. I was able to do some subtle work on the table to help keep it flat and a little work near the tip to expose some fresh cane. It worked great and allowed me to use my reed for a few more gigs. Success!

I also used the Reed Geek on a not-so-good clarinet reed with positive results. Being smaller, the clarinet reed required a bit more control. The Reed Geek helped me balance out the tip and take a little off the heart, which made the reed much more comfortable to play and saved me from having to start a new one. When you're working on larger reeds (e.g., tenor sax, baritone sax, bass clarinet, bassoon), the Reed Geek provides even more control. And if you're a teacher, the Reed Geek would be a safe and worry-free way to introduce your students to the joys of working on reeds.

The Reed Geek is a definite winner for all levels of reed players. It's safe, easy to control and a great way to sound better and save money. And it never requires sharpening. The Reed Geek comes in a cloth bag with a protective plastic holder that will fit in the tightest of instrument cases. *—John Ruf*

reedgeek.com

Double Memory

The Nord Electro 4 SW73 has twice the memory capacity of its predecessor and fits more sounds from the Nord piano and sample libraries. The organ section has been upgraded to the latest tone wheel engine to include a vintage 122 rotary speaker simulation. The Nord Electro 4 features the B3 tone wheel organ engine from the flagship Nord C2D. **americanmusicandsound.com**

On the Bayou

Hohner's Cajun IV one-row diatonic accordion is a mid-priced model designed for beginning and advanced players. The Cajun IV salutes traditional design with an individual register stop for each set of treble reeds. It features a tactile fingerboard, wooden casing and 10 bass/chord buttons. The accordion produces a sound that is reminiscent of Southern Bayou dance halls. **playhohner.com**

Key Support

On-Stage Stands' new KS9102 Quantum Core is a column-style keyboard stand. Each of the stand's two tiers is independently height-adjustable and capable of supporting up to 125 pounds. Tilt can be tweaked to provide just the right playing angle. **onstagestands.com**

Stage Piano/Workstation

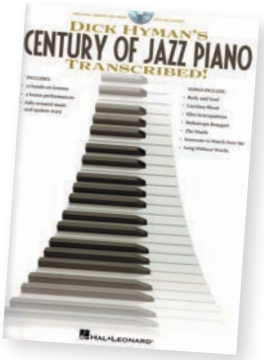
Kurzweil's SP5-8 offers the high-end sound palette of a professional workstation combined with the easy workflow and graded hammer-weighted action of a stage piano. The SP5-8 includes an assortment of piano presets (concert grands, compressed and EQ'd studio pianos, barrelhouse and tack uprights) and several vintage instrument emulations. **americanmusicandsound.com**

Small Leslie

Hammond Organ USA has created a small, ultra-portable Leslie dual-rotor speaker for general applications. The Leslie Studio 12 has a tube pre-amp that drives a 100-watt solid-state power amp and a true Leslie horn. Its input options let virtually any instrument connect, and a standard footswitch handles control of fast and slow speeds. **hammondorganco.com**

Jazz Piano Century

Hal Leonard has released *Dick Hyman's Century of Jazz Piano—Transcribed!* The 160-page book/DVD presents exact notations of the performances and commentary Hyman recorded on the Arbors Records box set *Dick Hyman's Century Of Jazz Piano*. **halleonard.com**

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Rhythm Changes Conference Urges Rethinking of Jazz Cultures

THERE ARE MANY COMMON conceptions of jazz: It is uniquely American. It expresses African American culture. It's democratic. It's high art that transcends social boundaries.

This year's Rhythm Changes jazz studies conference, as historian and conference organizer Tony Whyton explained, aimed at encouraging its participants to "rethink the ways we think about jazz, to continue to move away from common stereotypes about jazz and to focus on the importance of community." For Whyton, the conference's theme of "Rethinking Jazz Cultures" is particularly salient given that jazz has always been shared by a diverse group of people and enjoyed a diverse set of practices. Hosted by the University of Salford in Salford, England, from April 11–14, this year's event attracted dozens of the world's leading jazz scholars and teachers.

Journalist Val Wilmer speaks at this year's Rhythm Changes conference.

Historian and pianist David Ake's provocative keynote address opened the conference. Ake, who teaches at the University of Nevada–Reno, examined the state of jazz studies in the post neo-traditional era and argued that although Wynton Marsalis is still very active, "His long and somewhat despotic reign is over." Ake asked: "Are we going to miss Wynton? Do we miss him already?" While many jazz scholars have found fault with Marsalis, Ake argued that Marsalis' critics benefited from him and concluded that it's important to consider Marsalis' importance.

More than two dozen papers followed Ake's address. One panel focused on the blurry line between jazz and pop in the 1970s and the difficulty of defining jazz at that time. In another session, Danish guitarist Haftor Medbøe explored the relationship between language and musical practices. Medbøe discussed some of the difficulties non-American musicians have finding their own voice and contributing to the music, observing that for some non-Americans, "Playing in a more 'American' style was like putting on an accent." Alyn Shipton and Alexander Kan from the BBC, along with Sebastian Scotney of LondonJazz and Ian Patterson of All About Jazz, discussed the state of jazz coverage in the media, especially in the U.K.

E. Taylor Atkins, who teaches at Northern Illinois University and who has written extensively on jazz in Japan, opened the second day with another keynote address. Atkins discussed the inherent difficulties of studying jazz in a transnational context, urging those active in jazz studies to resist the idea that differences in jazz throughout the world are solely based on culture or nationality. Jazz scholars, Atkins argued, must simultaneously acknowledge and downplay the importance of time, location and nation.

Other second-day sessions focused on representations of jazz in poetry and fiction, the British revival of New Orleans traditional jazz and efforts by British musicians to create a uniquely British approach, ways in which European jazz musicians are succeeding in tough economic times, the history of jazz in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and the work of Wayne Shorter, Billie Holiday and Lenny Tristano.

The final event of the conference was a discussion with journalist Val Wilmer moderated by Dave Laing. Wilmer—who was DownBeat's Great Britian correspondent in the late 1960s/early '70s and is best known for her photography and writing on free-jazz—said she prefers to document jazz and blues musicians as people with lives outside music. Wilmer explained her distaste for jazz photography that only showed musicians with horns in their mouths, relaying a complaint Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis once expressed to her: that too often photographers "forget that musicians have lives, that we have wives."

Wilmer's session provided a fitting conclusion to the Rhythm Changes conference, given that her approach to writing and photography emphasizes rethinking the ways in which jazz is documented.

—Chris Robinson

School Notes ⟩

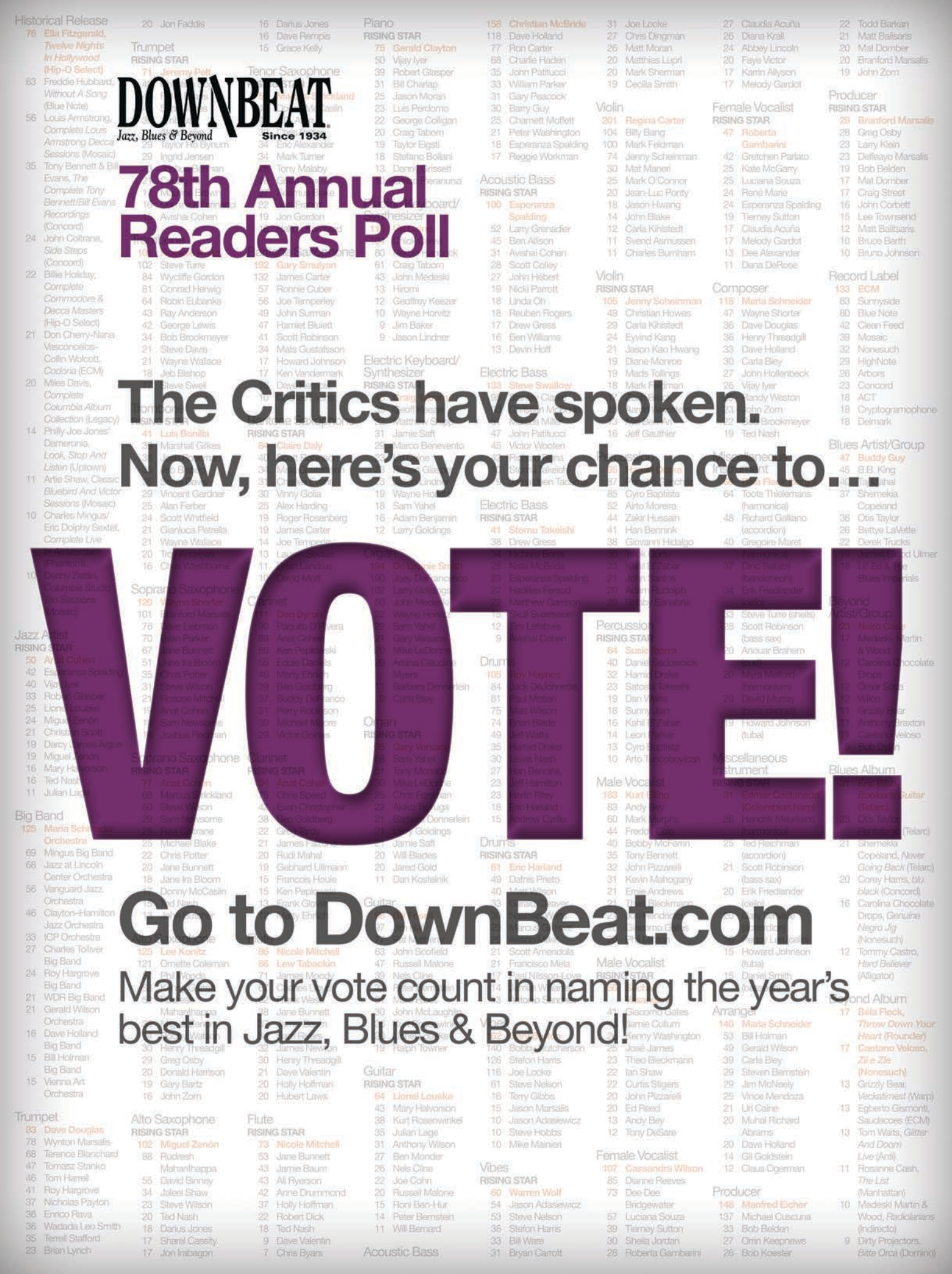

Nathan Davis

Institution Builder: Saxophonist and educator Nathan Davis has retired after serving for 43 years as director of jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Davis, an accomplished jazz artist who founded Pitt's jazz studies program in 1969, will be honored with the BNY Mellon Jazz 2013 Living Legacy Award in a ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on Oct. 5. The award is a program of the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. **pitt.edu**

Trad Jazz Grant: The Jazz Education Network (JEN) has been awarded a $40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support final production and distribution of the Traditional Jazz Curriculum Kit, which provides music teachers with tools to teach young people how to perform the early New Orleans styles of jazz and their outgrowths. The kit contains lesson plans; music arrangements, transcriptions and lead sheets; a sampler CD; an instructional double-DVD; a resources guide; a jazz style guide; and a poster. A requirement of the grant is that it must be matched from other funding sources. JEN is currently seeking support from individuals and foundations. **jazzednet.org**

NEC Freebies: New England Conservatory's Jazz Studies and Contemporary Improvisation Departments have announced more than 100 free concerts for the 2013–2014 season (Sept. 3, 2013–May 30, 2014). Highlights include residencies by John Zorn, Luciana Souza, Fred Hersch and Dave Holland; a Sun Ra Centennial Concert; Jazz and the Struggle for Freedom and Equality; A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall featuring CI Students; Ran Blake's annual Film Noir Concert; faculty recitals; and 75 one-hour concerts by exceptional student ensembles. **necmusic.edu/jazz**

3 Keys for Romeo: Casio America has donated three keyboards—a Privia PX-330, Privia PX-350 and XW-P1 synthesizer—to New Jersey City University in memory of Dominique Romeo, the father of Rob Romeo, an assistant professor of music who graduated from the college in 1985. **casiomusicgear.com**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David Sanborn


HOLLIS KING

David Sanborn achieved fame as a mega-star of instrumental pop, as a singular alto saxophone voice on hundreds of sessions and as host of the TV show "Night Music." Frequently sought out as a collaborator, Sanborn released *Quartette Humaine* (OKeh)—a quartet album with pianist Bob James— in May, and he has a forthcoming Blue Note disc with organist Joey DeFrancesco, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson and drummer Billy Hart.

NEXT Collective

"Twice" (*Cover Art*, Concord, 2013) Logan Richardson, alto saxophone; Walter Smith, tenor saxophone; Matthew Stevens, guitar; Gerald Clayton, piano; Ben Williams, bass; Jamire Williams, drums.

I like how the tune unfolded into this beautiful, almost folk-like melody; how it went effortlessly from odd meter into more straight meter; and how the alto solo proceeded in an unhurried, unforced, natural way, like singing, integrating into the rhythm section but still taking it someplace else. Nobody was showing off. It's so hard to play over odd meters, so it's noticeable when someone does it in a flowing way without being a slave to the meter. 4 stars.

Miguel Zenón & The Rhythm Collective

"Jos Nigeria" (*Oye!!! Live In Puerto Rico*, Miel Music, 2013) Zenón, alto saxophone; Aldemar Valentin, electric bass; Tony Escapa, drums; Reynaldo De Jesús, percussion.

I like how the time turned around so naturally on the bridge. The saxophone player has a great time feel and beautiful sound and intonation. I'd guess it's an older player, not *old* like my age, but with some maturity and a lot of playing under his belt—someone with a lot of confidence. The solo felt so self-assured, especially for playing mostly an eighth-note feel. 5 stars.

Tarbaby

"Unity" (*The End Of Fear*, Posi-Tone, 2010) Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Nicholas Payton, trumpet; Orrin Evans, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.

The angularity doesn't pull me in right away, but once I got into it, I dug it. Everybody moved very easily between playing more inside and more out; I always like it when guys can blur that line. But it did have a relentless feel that sometimes felt a little overbearing. I love the saxophone player's great sound, the way he used honks and high-register stuff, how he used accents and rhythmic placements. 4 stars for the tune, 5 for the playing.

Greg Osby

"Whirlwind Soldier" (*St. Louis Shoes*, Blue Note, 2003) Osby, alto saxophone; Harold O'Neal, piano; Robert Hurst, bass; Rodney Green, drums.

I liked how the alto stayed in the mid-low range of the horn while playing the melody. So beautiful. Again, the self-assurance of a mature player. Well-recorded, too—you can hear the full range of all the instruments. I like the drama of the tune, touching and emotional. Kenny Garrett would be my guess. 5 stars.

Kenny Garrett

"Du-Wo-Mo" (*Seeds From The Underground*, Mack Avenue, 2012) Garrett, alto saxophone; Benito Gonzalez, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Ronald Bruner, drums.

That really sounds like Kenny! The *sound*. There wasn't a single uninteresting moment. He played a long solo, and it was consistently engaging from beginning to end. Nothing wasted. Kenny phrases so uniquely. I love his tone, and the way he spits notes out, the way Cannonball did it, and the Woody Shaw harmonic concept he's taken and evolved into his own language. He's the most interesting alto player around, my favorite, bar none. Off-the-charts good. 5+ stars.

Tim Berne

"Scanners" (*Snakeoil*, ECM, 2012) Berne, alto saxophone; Oscar Noriega, clarinet; Matt Mitchell, piano; Ches Smith, percussion.

Initially the recording felt distant, like everything was far away and [with] not much presence, like it was recorded in a big hall with a couple of mics. The dynamics seemed a little flat. As I acclimated to the sound, I ended up loving it. The structure is intricate, and it felt assured from beginning to end. The clarinet player was *killin'* me. Unbelievable control. 5 stars.

Steve Coleman and Five Elements

"Hormone Trig" (*Functional Arrhythmias*, Pi, 2013) Coleman, alto saxophone; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Anthony Tidd, bass; Sean Rickman, drums.

Steve Coleman. Steve is great—so much flexibility, great sound, control over time signatures, and swings his ass off. He can imbue the most potentially uninviting circumstances with an emotional content and a spirit of originality that amazes me. He's one of the true originals to come along in the last 20–30 years. He's in a class by himself. 5+ stars.

Clayton Brothers

"Souvenir" (*The Gathering*, ArtistShare, 2012) Jeff Clayton, alto saxophone; John Clayton, bass; Gerald Clayton, piano; Obed Calvaire, drums.

Very Strayhornesque piece. The warmth, the Johnny Hodges bending of the notes made it sound a bit like Wess Anderson. The alto player took his time, and I understand he wanted to state the tune straightforwardly—ain't nothin' wrong with that. Still, it would have been nice to hear him stretch a bit. 4 stars.

John Zorn

"Hath-Arob" (*Electric Masada At The Mountain Of Madness*, Tzadik, 2005) Zorn, alto saxophone; Marc Ribot, guitar; Jamie Saft, keyboards; Ikue Mori, electronics; Trevor Dunn, electric bass; Joey Baron, Kenny Wolleson, drums; Cyro Baptista, percussion.

That has to be John Zorn. Nobody plays with that kind of insanity and humor. The composition was great: the way all the elements grew out of each other, came out and went back in, unfolding so naturally. There's so much texture. An amazing piece of music. John always makes me laugh and smile. So much energy. His approach to the saxophone reminds me of Marshall Allen, but he's unique, and you have to judge him on his own terms. 5 stars.

Tim Green

"Pinocchio" (*Songs From This Season*, True Melody, 2012) Green, alto saxophone; Kris Funn, bass; Rodney Green, drums.

Almost sounds like a soprano. A very pure saxophone sound on that Wayne Shorter tune—flawless articulation, flexibility and facility, especially up in the upper register. I don't respond as well to that kind of sound as one that's more resonant and full, but I appreciate it. For the playing, 5 stars; overall, 4 stars. **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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