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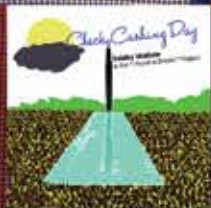
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FEBRUARY 2014

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Cover photo of Prism (and image above) shot by Daniel Sheehan in Seattle, 2013

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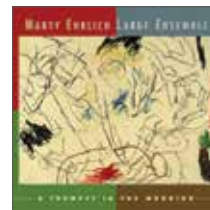
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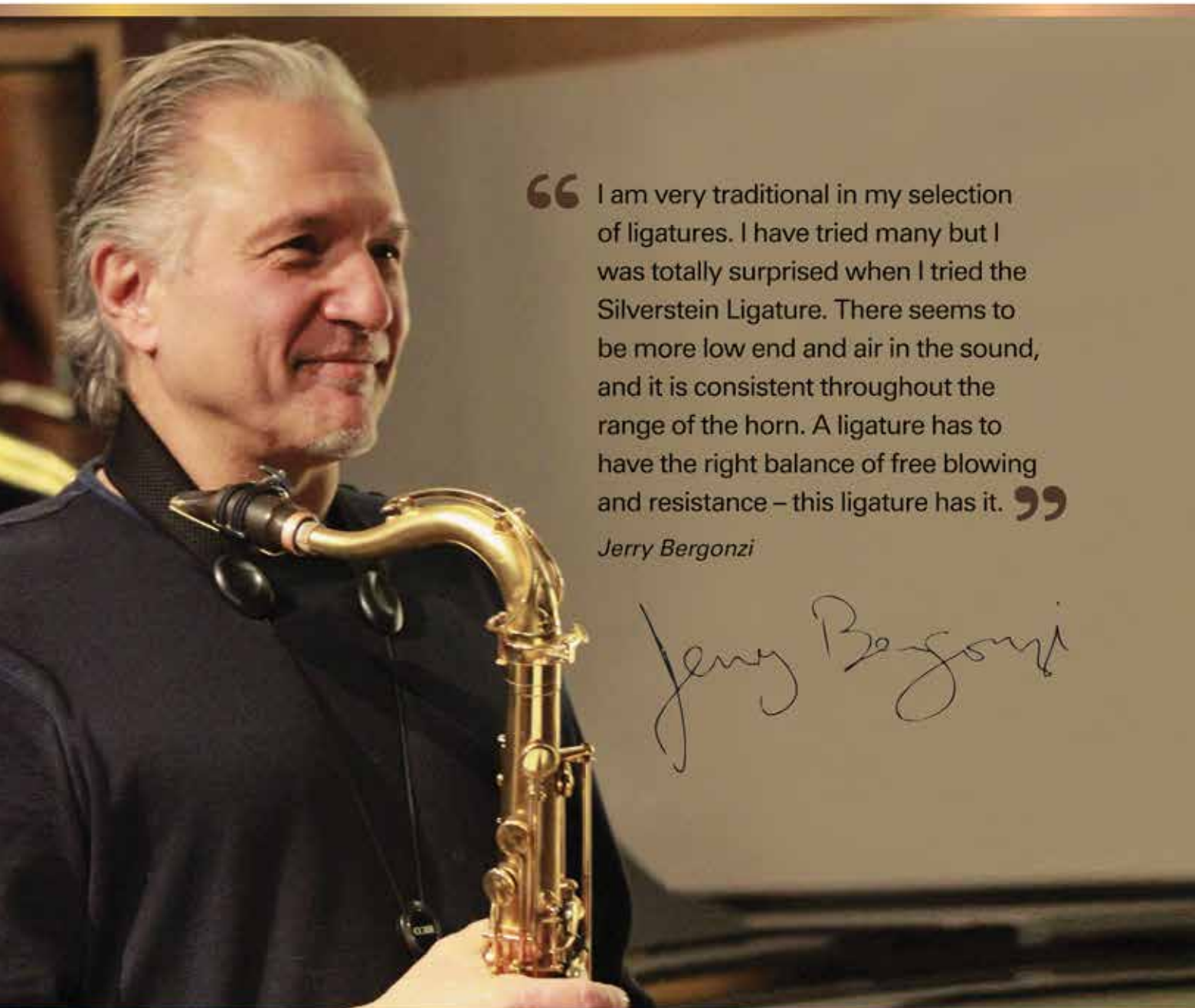
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## First Take > BY DAVIS INMAN



## Honoring Stan Tracey

**IN THIS MONTH'S FIRST TAKE, WE HONOR A GREAT JAZZ MUSICIAN.**

British pianist and composer Stan Tracey, whose long career included collaborations with saxophonist Sonny Rollins and drummer Charlie Watts, died on Dec. 6 from cancer. He was 86.

Tracey was born in London in 1926. He began his music career as a teenage accordion player in Britain's Entertainment National Service Association during World War II and later served in the Royal Air Force. He was a musician onboard cruise ships—which took him to New York, where he was influenced by American musicians like pianist Bud Powell—and was later a member of Ted Heath's Orchestra, one of Britain's most popular big bands.

From 1960–'67, Tracey was the house pianist at the London jazz club Ronnie Scott's, where he played with visiting American jazz musicians like Rollins and saxophonists Stan Getz and Ben Webster. Tracey appeared with Rollins on the original British film soundtrack to *Alfie* (1966).

Tracey became known as "the godfather of British jazz" for championing an original style that was not merely imitative of American jazz.

In 1965, he released *Under Milk Wood*, a jazz suite inspired by a Dylan Thomas radio drama, followed by *Alice In Jazz Land* (1966).

His style, he told *DownBeat* in 2007, "all comes down to touch."

"If you have the right touch, then you don't have to do all that much," Tracey said. "Duke Ellington could play two notes and you knew it was him. Ditto with Monk. Even if the phrase isn't recognizably Monk, you know it's him by his sound. You can't copy that. You have to find your own."

In the '70s, Tracey's career took a new direction as he began working with avant-garde musicians like British saxophonists Mike Osborne and John Surman. He founded his own label, Steam, which served as an outlet for recordings such as *Sonatinas*, a 1978 collaboration with Surman. Tracey's sense of humor was evident on his 1979 solo piano outing, *Hello Old Adversary*, which referred to the greeting he gave dysfunctional house pianos at clubs like Ronnie Scott's.

For a stint during the 1980s, Tracey joined a big band led by Watts, who's better known as the drummer for the Rolling Stones. The pianist toured with Watts' group and appears on its 1986 album, *Live At Fulham Town Hall*.

In 1993, Blue Note released Tracey's *Portraits Plus*, an album of songs dedicated to his influences (including Thelonious Monk and Gil Evans). It was nominated for a Mercury Prize.

Tracey was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1986. He was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2008.

Tracey's most recent album is *The Flying Pig*, inspired by his father's experience as a soldier in World War I. The album title comes from the nickname for a British mortar bomb.

Tracey is survived by his son, Clark Tracey, a jazz drummer.

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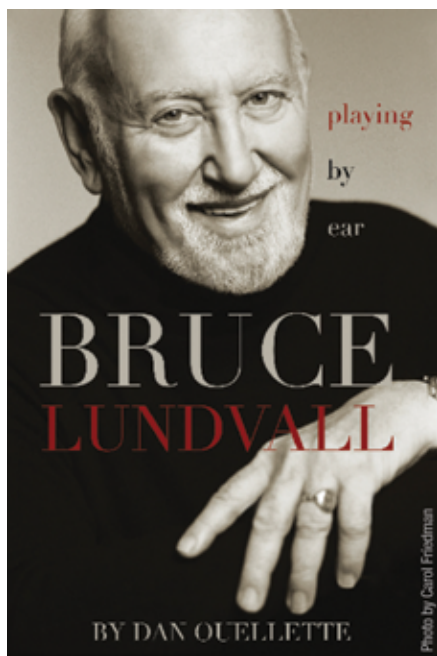
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## Dex Lives

Thanks for the holiday season gift. That is, seeing the smiling face of Dexter Gordon on the cover of the January 2014 edition of DownBeat. During the several decades I lived in Chicago, I was fortunate to see Dexter live many times. Almost always, it was under the aegis of Joe

Segal whenever he brought Dexter into his Jazz Showcase club. Hearing "Long Tall" in tandem with other great tenor players like Gene Ammons, James Moody and Sonny Stitt has left musical memories that thrill to this day.

Every pore of Dexter Gordon's body exuded the spirit of bebop. First and foremost was his great musicianship. But equally compelling was the rapport he established with his audience. Often at the conclusion of a tune, he would hold out his tenor saxophone in extended arms as if to present it as a gift to listeners. How wonderful to know that the gift still keeps on giving.

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## Only One

Thanks very much for the great review of my latest solo album, *ONE*, in the August issue. For the most part it was well informed, but I would like to straighten out one mistake for your readers. It was a great compliment that the reviewer assumed that I used overdubs to achieve some of the polyphonic textures on the disc. However, I assure you that all the tunes were performed by a singular performer without the use of additional tracks or looping devices. Hence the title, *ONE*.

JONATHAN KREISBERG  
NEW YORK CITY

## Vote Kilgore in 2014

It has taken me a couple of weeks to recover from perusing the annual DownBeat Readers Poll in your December issue. Diana Krall in first place for the category Female Vocalist? This must be an error. She should be in first place for Female Pianist. How about Rebecca Kilgore in first place for Female Vocalist? She can sing. I know: It's the readers' choice.

OLAF SYMAN  
BEAconsFIELD, QUEBEC  
CANADA

## Garnering Support

I'm a little behind in my reading of DownBeat, but that's because it is a page-by-page activity. Filmmaker Atticus Brady is to be commended for placing Erroll Garner into the proper limelight among jazz pianists with his film *Erroll Garner: No One Can Hear You Read* (The Beat, September). This independent documentary on Garner is a gem. Thank you, Mr. Brady.

VICTOR SNIECKUS  
KINGSTON, ONTARIO  
CANADA

## Here Comes the Sun

In the Jazz Venue Guide in your February 2013 issue, I was shocked to see that the jazz club in Paris called Sunset-Sunside was missing. Whenever I'm in Paris, I go there to enjoy a wonderful concert. I've seen Gerald Clayton with his trio and the great Kenny Werner there.

NORBERT WIELSCH  
MUNICH, GERMANY

**Editor's Note:** The Jazz Venue Guide (page 53) has an expanded International section this year, and we've included a listing for Sunset-Sunside.

## Correction

In the January issue, the review of *Worlds Put Together* (BYNK Records) by Matt Parker incorrectly listed the Ordering info. Parker's website is mattparkermusic.com.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

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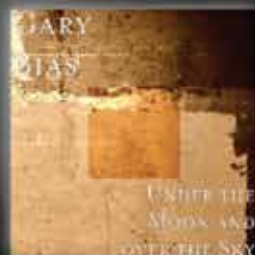
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# Beat

## Guitarist Jim Hall Dies at 83

### JIM HALL, AN NEA JAZZ MASTER

and one of the most important contributors to the evolution of jazz guitar since the mid-1950s, died in his sleep on Dec. 10 in his New York City home. The cause was heart failure. He was 83.

Hall was widely admired for his skilled yet subtle technique, textured tone, understated compositions, attention to dynamics and unfaltering grasp of advanced harmony. His prowess on the guitar put him in the company of Charlie Christian, Wes Montgomery and Django Reinhardt.

"Jim's impact on the evolution of this music is transcendent," said guitarist Pat Metheny, who was profoundly influenced by Hall and collaborated with him on the 1999 album *Jim Hall & Pat Metheny* (Telarc). "It goes way beyond 'the guitar' or 'jazz.' Jim invented a way to be. He found a space in the music that was all his own and sparked the imagination of his listeners and fellow musicians that is wholly unique. He was also one of the best human beings around—a fact instantly recognizable in his every phrase."

Bassist Christian McBride, who played on the 2001 album *Jim Hall & Basses*, a collection of guitar-bass duets, said, "Jim's playing reflected his personality—warm, gentle, sensitive, but extremely witty and

Jim Hall



clever. I was honored to work with him several times. He will be missed."

James Stanley Hall was born in Buffalo, N.Y., on Dec. 4, 1930. He was surrounded by music as an infant. Most of his immediate family lived in one large house, where he heard his grandfather play violin, his mother play piano and an uncle play guitar. The uncle interested Jim in guitar, and he began taking lessons when he was 10. He started working professionally when he was 13, which was against union rules.

After graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Music, Hall joined the Chico Hamilton Quintet in 1955 and became a member of the Jimmy Giuffre 3 in 1957. He continued to hone his craft playing with Ben Webster, Paul Desmond, Ella Fitzgerald and Lee Konitz, as well as touring with Jazz at the Philharmonic.

He joined Sonny Rollins' quartet from 1961-'62 and appeared on the saxophonist's landmark album *The Bridge* (RCA). Hall collaborated with Bill Evans on the 1962 United Artists album *Undercurrent* (reissued on Blue Note) and again on the 1966 Verve disc *Intermodulation*.

Starting in 1962, Hall co-led a quartet with Art Farmer, and he soon began leading his own trio with Tommy Flanagan and Ron Carter (and later Red Mitchell). He also performed as a session musician on numerous recordings and in the orchestra for Merv Griffin's hit TV show.

In addition to leading his own trio, Hall continued to collaborate with various musicians, including Bob Brookmeyer, Itzhak Perlman, Charlie Haden, Ornette Coleman, George Shearing, Bill Frisell, Michel Petrucciani and Joe Lovano. He remained active through 2013, performing at the Newport Jazz Festival on Aug. 4 and at Jazz at Lincoln Center on Nov. 22-23.

Between 1963 and 2002, Hall won the Guitar category of the DownBeat Critics Poll 15 times, once in a tie with Montgomery. He was voted top guitarist in the Readers Poll five times.

Hall recalled his time with Rollins' group in the July 1, 1965, issue of DownBeat: "It was a tremendously rewarding year with Sonny. I learned more from him, and was inspired more by him, than anyone in recent years. He is such a virtuoso that it scares you to be on the same bandstand. I felt I had to practice every day so that I wouldn't let Sonny down. I produced because I was scared of Sonny."

Well studied in classical composition, Hall produced many original pieces for jazz orchestral ensembles. His composition for jazz quartet and string quartet, "Quartet Plus Four," earned him the Jazzpar Prize in Denmark. In 2004, Towson University in Maryland commissioned a work for the First World Guitar Congress called "Peace Movement," a concerto for guitar and orchestra performed by Hall and the Baltimore Symphony.

Hall was also a respected educator who taught at New York's New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in the 1990s.

An ambitious instrumentalist, Hall continually sought to broaden the horizons of the guitar. "I would like to see it played more in a piano style, a more original and balanced combination of single-line and chord improvisation," he said in the 1965 DownBeat article. "Tal [Farlow] and Wes Montgomery have done quite a bit in this direc-

tion, but it should be taken farther."

One of the keys to Hall's success and longstanding popularity was an acute artistic sensitivity made manifest in his inclination to listen closely to his fellow musicians. "I think what I do best is listen," he said in the July 19, 1962, issue of DownBeat.

"Listening is a hard thing, and I think I do it well. If you can't do it well, if you can't hear the group as a whole, you can't do your job right. My job, as I see it, is to help make the parts fit the whole. ... I'm always most interested in the blending, no matter who I'm playing with. So my idea is to fill out, to add color to what's going on around me. Even when I don't make it individually, I feel I add something—a spark, a feeling that generates excitement."

Some of the more notable recordings from Hall's immense discography as a leader and sideman include *Trav'lin' Light* (Atlantic, 1958) with the Jimmy Giuffre 3; *Live* (Verve, 1975); *Live At Village West* (Concord, 1982) with Carter; *Something Special* (MusicMasters, 1993); and *Hemispheres* (ArtistShare, 2008) with Frisell.

Hall played on Greg Osby's 2000 album *The Invisible Hand* (Blue Note), and the saxophonist later interviewed the guitarist for a cover story in the July 2001 issue of DownBeat.

Osby asked Hall about the development of his

Hall onstage with saxophonist Sonny Rollins in the early 1960s



guitar style. He replied, "It probably goes back to saxophone. I was really knocked out by Paul Gonsalves for a long time. It's probably what's lodged in my head there over the years. I say this a lot, but I'd rather hear B.B. King play two or three notes than hear most guys play all night! Each note means something. Not that it's blues or classical, but it's just right. It must be what I hear and it must come from a combination of saxophone and piano, I guess. More than guitar."

New York-based, Prague-born guitarist Rudy Linka was inspired by Hall's recordings during his formative years and enjoyed a mentor-protégé relationship with the master early in his career.

"Jim Hall was the guy who got me to play jazz guitar when I was still in communist Czechoslovakia," said Linka. "He was the reason why I escaped the country at the age of 19—to come to America and hear him play. When I got the Jim Hall fellowship to attend Berklee in 1985, I went to New York to see him at the Village Vanguard, and he was so kind to me. He started to give me private lessons, even though he did not teach at the moment—and for free. We became friends ... I love him for his beautiful music—which is not just guitar playing but more like guitar 'singing'—and also for his amazing kindness. We have lost one of the giants of our time."

—Ed Enright

CAUGHT

# Barcelona Concert Salutes Bebo Valdés

On several occasions before his passing on March 22, virtuoso Cuban pianist Bebo Valdés had requested that, upon his death, a party be thrown where attendees should eat chocolate and drink rum rather than weep.

Those substances were distributed gratis in the lobby of Barcelona's BARTS Theater to the 1,450 attendees of an Oct. 29 memorial concert co-curated by Barcelona Voll-Damm International Jazz Festival Artistic Director Joan Anton Cararach and Bebo's son, maestro Chucho Valdés.

Titled "Rumba Para Bebo," the program spanned an expansive stylistic range: Cuban classical composers Ernesto Lecuona and Ignacio Cervantes, ritualistic music from Kongo and Yoruba religious practice, and various compositions by Bebo Valdés that addressed the blues, modern jazz, *descargas*, *boleros* and *son*.

The concert culminated a three-day celebration of Bebo's life. Spanish director Fernando Trueba, a key figure in the revival of Valdés' career after 1995, was on hand for screenings of his 2000 documentary *Calle 54*, which climaxes with a wrenchingly intimate Bebo-Chucho duet on Lecuona's "La Comparsa"; his 2010 animated film *Chico & Rita*, which vividly evokes '50s Havana and features Bebo's music on the soundtrack; and *Old Man Bebo*, a revealing 2008 biographical documentary directed by Carlos Carcas and produced by Trueba.

During the run-up, the festival—in conjunction with Barcelona's Conservatori del Liceu—presented master classes by Chucho Valdés, classical piano maestro Mauricio Vallina, pianist Omar Sosa and conguero Yaroldy Abreu—a member of Chucho's various groups since the late '90s, most recently the Afro-Cuban Messengers. The think-as-one synchronicity of Abreu and ACM bandmates Dreiser Durruthy Bombalé on batá drum, Rodney Barreto on drumset and Gastón Joya on bass was crucial to the continuity of the concert.

Chucho Valdés played throughout with a more spontaneous attitude than during his band's sold-out concert at the 2,000-seat Palau de la Música the following evening. Within two discursive solos on "Bebo's Blues"—played duo with Spanish bassist Javier Colina, Bebo's frequent partner during the aughts—Chucho refracted Wynton Kelly, Earl Hines and Cecil Taylor before shifting to a series of choruses in his own argot. He remained on stage for "Lágrimas Negras," spinning out elegant, vertiginous variations that complemented and counterstated his sister Mayra Valdés' impassioned delivery and the moves of an artful dance troupe drawn from two different Barcelona companies.

It was delightful to hear the nuanced pianism of Lazara Cachao, whose supportive *montunos* allowed the drums to shine on "Descarga del Bebo" and prodded Gastón Joya into uncorking an arco bass solo that channeled the spirit of Bebo's lifelong friend Israel "Cachao" López, her uncle. Her lyric, meditative passage illuminated Mayra Valdés' sensitive reading of "Serenata en Batanga," while on "Pan Con Timba" her informed comp cushioned a flugelhorn solo by Jerry González.



Jerry González at the Oct. 29 concert

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Honoring Bebo's classical roots and branches, Vallina inhabited Lecuona's "Tres Danzas Cubanas" and "Tres Danzas Afrocubanas," illuminating the message with micro-calibrated touch and fluid phrasing. Then he welcomed Paloma Manfugás to the left side of the bench for a four-hand tour through Cervantes' "Tres Danzas."

Somehow, it seemed perfectly natural to hear this music juxtaposed with Sosa's "Invocación-Malongo," a ritualistic "black mass" based on the Palo Monte tradition of Cuba's Kongo religion.

More functional spirit-raising transpired at the concert's conclusion, more than two hours after it had begun, when all members joined Chucho for a new tune, "Rumba Para Bebo," which, he said later, his father conveyed to him in a dream on their mutual birthday, Oct. 9. Everyone sang and danced; the celebration could have continued indefinitely had not Cararach and Valdés, concerned the stage floor might collapse, halted the proceedings.

—Ted Panken

A close-up portrait of Beata Pater. She has short, wavy blonde hair and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. Her hand is resting near her face.

## Beata Pater

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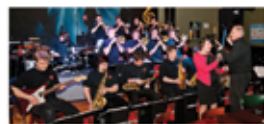
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## CAUGHT

# Berlin Jazz Fest Reveals German Big Band Wonderland



The woman behind the mask:  
Monika Roscher at the Berlin Jazz Festival

At the 39th annual Berlin Jazz Festival (Oct. 31–Nov. 3), some of Germany's finest big bands—most of whom are virtually unknown in the States—made an impressive showing. Economically unfeasible to tour and perhaps a tad too adventurous to garner large crowds abroad, a variety of German large ensembles performed each night, with three appearing on the main jazz stage, Haus Der Berliner Festspiele.

The first big-band eye-opener was dynamic reedman Michael Riessler and his 10-piece Big Circle. Inspired in part by Frank Zappa's orchestral work, Riessler charged into his unpredictable set with the twisted-and-turned "Le Flaneur Des Deux Rives," where he blew staccato bass clarinet and calliope-like alto clarinet lines with the support of a six-brass horn section. But the star of the number was Pierre Charial on barrel organ, whose solo spot moved freely from urgent telegraph speed to a sensitive childlike melody to zany cartoon-sounding passages.

Riessler took the bulk of the solos throughout the set, which featured movements from his long-form composition "Big Circle." He set the music into a driving exhilaration, slowed it to a march, built a jovial intensity with a cacophony of horn grooves, swooped into a New Orleans flair and closed with a high-intensity chase that stopped and then started again with comic release.

The best large-scale outing was turned in by the duo of pianist-composer Michael Wollny and harpsichordist Tamar Halperin leading the 13-horn hr-Bigband in a performance of invigorating music from the 2013 album *Wunderkammer XXL* (ACT). The two keyboard-

ists often frolicked in their exchanges, but Wollny was the jaunty star, delivering energetic, reflective, humorous runs with a pounce-and-pound dance spirit and low-note drama. Wollny's virtuosity never commanded the spotlight but instead pushed the music so that the horns could rise and fall, stream and dream. His compositions never became stale or predictable. The colors faded, then beamed; the structures came together and magically fell apart; quiet peace gave way to a playful ferocity; and introspection exploded into fervor.

A high point came on the final evening with black-masked guitarist Monika Roscher, who mysteriously offered her beauty-blemished, vocoder-affected songs, then unleashed her 18-piece band to navigate her complex but fully developed arrangements. Case in point: the opening tune, "Failure In Wonderland," where Heiko Giering delivered a pulverizing baritone sax solo to accent the sentiment of a collapsed love affair.

However, after the opener, Roscher abandoned the mask and donned an eager-to-please smile, demystifying her theatrical flair and giving her the appearance of a singer-songwriter in a folk club incidentally supported by a full orchestra. Still, her electronics-treated arrangements told compelling, jagged, sad and frightening stories—changing directions from soft and mild into rock tinged with funk while the horns turned up the heat and shifted the dynamics.

In her first major festival appearance, Roscher made an auspicious entry, fueled by her bare-bones lyrics, her effects-laden guitar riffs and her ability to imagine how an orchestra can bring full voice to her rapturous music. —Dan Ouellette



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# Marcus Roberts Elevates, Expands the Canon

Pianist Marcus Roberts keeps a full schedule: composing, recording, touring and teaching. On Nov. 12 he released three new albums on his own J-Master label. *From Rags To Rhythm* features his trio with Jason Marsalis on drums and Rodney Jordan on bass. Roberts worked hard to compose music that gave his bandmates control over the direction of the music, and *From Rags To Rhythm* is an impressive suite that stays unpredictable over 12 complex movements. A new studio album, *Together Again: In The Studio*, and a live disc, *Together Again: Live In Concert*, both feature Roberts' trio with Roland Guerin on bass and Wynton Marsalis guesting on trumpet.

Roberts spoke with DownBeat to discuss the creative process behind the music.

***From Rags To Rhythm* is built around a set of themes that drive the direction of the improvisation. How did that come about?**

When we started the trio, I talked about it with Jason and Roland Guerin, who was our bassist at the time and who was important in developing the sound. We were interested in exploring a new way to play as a trio. Number one, we started playing music that allowed each of us to influence the direction of the music. The agenda was for the bass, drums and piano to be completely equal.

We found we liked to play music where we could cue changes musically. For *From Rags To Rhythm*, we set it up so that each cue could be interchangeable across the whole suite and not tied to a particular movement. But before you can move on, someone has to play the cue. It keeps you on your toes, and it keeps things flexible. If Rodney is soloing, he's responsible for the next cue, and he can establish a new tempo or key. It gives us freedom, and the sound changes all the time. It makes a big difference over 12 movements, and we don't get locked into AABA. The group sounds bigger.

**Do you think it's easy for guys to get trapped in that AABA, head-solos-head format?**

Absolutely. I used to talk about it with Wynton when I played with him. One of the reasons he started writing interludes was because we were tired of stating the theme and then everyone solos. We wanted something new to do. It got portrayed this way, but we never said among ourselves, "We need to save the tradition of jazz." We wanted to play better, at the highest level, for a paying public.

**Changing the form helped you achieve that?**

In my group, forms have to match the agenda. On *From Rags To Rhythm*, "Spanish Tinge" has about 10 sections. It makes for richer improvisation. If you look at a Debussy etude, it'll have 10 or

12 markings in every single measure. It's a 2-minute piece, but he changes the tempo, the meter, the key measure by measure. He was saying, "You are not going to play my piece on autopilot."

**The cuing method of working through a piece forces musicians to listen to each other.**

Yeah. And we don't want to be predictable or repetitive. When you have musicians like Rodney and Jason in your group, you have to keep them interested and let them be creative.

**Does your approach to trio music affect the way you teach this music to your students at Florida State University?**

It does. I want them to experience the surprise that jazz can have. Ahmad Jamal says, "You don't create things—you discover things." When I'm working with young people, I put them in a position to discover Jelly Roll Morton or Count Basie, but it's not about who they were or the time period; it's about what was discovered by them. You have to find what you can take to make your playing more your own. It's not about what happened in 1936—when we play bebop, I might say, "Apply the psychology of what he was doing in 1936 to bebop." With young students, I find a system to unlock their personality as a player. But they need information. It can come from a lot of places, a record or their church, but it's about unlocking creativity so you can move people.

**Why did you decide to release three albums all at once?**

The time is right. We have a lot of other projects coming up. I wrote a piano concerto that debuted this year that I think brings jazz and classical together in a modern way. I put together a larger band with some of my students and some older musicians called the Modern Jazz Generation Band. We made several records in August, which I'll try to get out in 2014, and I have a solo piano album coming out in February.

**When the band plays this music, what are you feeling when another guy is playing on his own—for instance, when Jason Marsalis plays that textural drum intro to "Reservoir"?**

On "Reservoir," Jason gives us a taste of the huge reservoir of information he's accumulated. He's displaying mastery while using the themes of the piece—if he needs a little something from Brazilian music, he uses it, because he has it to use. When I listen, I'm thinking about how this fits with what's happened and what will happen.

**Jason's ability to incorporate a little Brazilian rhythm with everything else reminds me of the approach to learning to play you mentioned earlier.**

We don't play the history of jazz; we reference it. I'm interested in the elevation and expansion of the entire canon of jazz piano. We're always looking for a new experience.

What's most important to me is that jazz is relevant, and *From Rags To Rhythm* is a symbol of that relevance. Jazz is relevant because it brings people joy and allows them to celebrate their lives while they're dealing with whatever struggles they may have.

—Joe Tangari

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Front row, from right: President Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, Carlos Santana, Shirley MacLaine, Herbie Hancock, Martina Arroyo and Billy Joel

## Kennedy Center Honors Pays Tribute to Hancock

**SURPRISES WERE IN STORE ON DEC. 8 IN** Washington, D.C., at the 36th annual Kennedy Center Honors, which paid tribute to pianist Herbie Hancock, guitarist Carlos Santana, opera singer Martina Arroyo, pianist-singer Billy Joel and actress Shirley MacLaine.

When it came time for a top celebrity to discuss Hancock's career, conservative political commentator Bill O'Reilly walked onstage. "I know, I'm surprised, too," he quipped, before unraveling tongue-in-cheek anecdotes about Hancock's provocative music and calm demeanor.

That wasn't the only surprise. During a five-song summation of Hancock's huge repertoire, rapper Snoop Dogg guided an ensemble into a freestyle revisit of "Cantaloupe (Flip Fantasia)," Us3's acid-jazz staple, which sampled Hancock's mid-'60s bebop gem "Cantaloupe Island."

Among the other artists who performed in tribute to Hancock were pianist Chick Corea, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, drummer Jack DeJohnette, bassist Dave Holland, guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel and saxophonist Joshua Redman. —John Murphy



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**GUTSHOT MUSIC**

## Chico Hamilton Dies at 92

Chico Hamilton, a prolific drummer and bandleader who was also an important jazz educator, died on Nov. 26 in Manhattan. He was 92.

Hamilton's career spanned more than seven decades and included work with Lionel Hampton's big band in 1940, a stint as Lena Horne's touring drummer in the '40s and '50s, and a fruitful partnership with Gerry Mulligan in the saxophonist's early '50s quartet, which also included trumpeter Chet Baker.

Hamilton played an integral part in the "cool jazz" movement, and he enjoyed tremendous popularity as the leader of the Chico Hamilton Quintet.

His lengthy discography includes *The Three Faces Of Chico* (1959), *The Dealer* (1966), *Peregrinations* (1975), *Euphoria* (1988), *Trio!* (1992), *It's About Time!* (2008) and *Revelation* (2011).

Hamilton was a 2004 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Jazz Master and received the Kennedy Center Living Jazz Legend Award in 2007.

Hamilton's 1955 quintet had a unique sound that combined his drums, the bass of Carson Smith, the guitar of Jim Hall, the cello of Fred Katz and the flute of Buddy Collette. In 1962, Hamilton



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

formed another quintet with bassist Albert Stinson, guitarist Gabor Szabo, trombonist George Bohanon and tenor saxophonist Charles Lloyd.

"I've always considered the drums a melodic instrument, and as far as other drummers are concerned, I have tremendous respect for all drummers," Hamilton said in an article published in the April 20, 1978, issue of DownBeat. "I know what it takes to play drums. Anybody who is able to play them well and get something out of the instrument is doing a tremendous thing."

In 1987, Hamilton cofounded the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York, and he remained on the faculty there for two decades.

In 1989, he founded the group Euphoria, which would be the leader project he performed with for the rest of his career.

Over the decades, he performed with hundreds of artists, including Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Ron Carter and José James.

Hamilton appeared in the Hollywood films *You'll Never Get Rich* (1941) and *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), as well as the 1959 documentary *Jazz on a Summer's Day*.

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Players >

# RUSSELL GUNN

## *Thrill of the Chase*



When Russell Gunn came across a cassette of the Brecker Brothers' *Heavy Metal Bebop* album as a high school trumpet player, he hadn't considered ever mixing the two genres.

Growing up in St. Louis, Gunn was more focused on hip-hop—an interest that later led to jazz experiments blending the two sounds. But he carried the Brecker Brothers tunes in his mind, letting them age for more than 20 years while his career took him from St. Louis to New York City to Atlanta.

The sound Gunn heard on that cassette helped inform his latest project, *Elektrik Funeral* (Hot Shoe Worldwide). The disc comprises eight Black Sabbath songs spanning the group's first three records. Classics like "Wicked World" and "Electric Funeral" are on the disc, but they are far from strict representations of the originals.

"The music—obviously it's all Black Sabbath tunes, so that in itself would be, by definition, a tribute," Gunn said. "On the other hand, the direction that we take the music is so far away from traditionally just playing 'War Pigs' or something like that."

Gunn said he prepared for this album differently than he has in the past, making a conscious effort to let the music evolve during live shows

before thinking about entering the studio. The recording actually doesn't include some of his favorite tunes to play live—e.g., "Into The Void" and "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath"—because the studio energy simply wasn't the same as the concert environment.

The Black Sabbath project couldn't differ more from his previous *Hot Shoe* release, also recorded this year—a tribute to Kenny Dorham that finds Gunn and trumpeter Joe Gransden playing through 11 of their favorite compositions. The disjunctive albums, though, typify Gunn's work, as he said he isn't content to stay focused on one area of jazz. He has also begun branching out into long-form compositions. Recently, the National Black Arts Festival asked Gunn to write *Toussaint's Suite*, a work about the life of Haitian general Toussaint L'Ouverture.

"Maybe it's the thrill of the chase," Gunn said, mentioning that he has three or four more albums drifting around in his head. "I just don't think there's enough time to settle on one thing and ride it out."

Early on, the trumpeter seemed wholly dedicated to hip-hop, said Branford Marsalis, who hired Gunn for his first *Buckshot LeFonque* album. "He had great sound on the instrument," said Marsalis, who appears, briefly, on *Elektrik*

*Funeral*. "He was an r&b guy who had kind of gradually been converted to jazz. They are always my favorite players."

Marsalis said instrumentalists who arrive at jazz later in life typically haven't been through the educational rigors provided to traditional jazz players. Musicians who grew up figuring out songs off the radio have had to spend more time learning by ear.

"You could hear it in his sound," Marsalis said. "You could hear that he just had a natural way of playing."

Even back then, Marsalis saw that jazz seemed like a means to an end for Gunn, and that the music was one way to place r&b, hip-hop and eventually rock into an instrumental arena.

For Gunn, his instrumental interpretations, no matter the genre, are always evolving. After finishing *Elektrik Funeral*, he still found himself tinkering with some of the tunes. Partly because of the song's sheer omnipresence and the fact that there isn't much to play with melodically, "Iron Man" was the tune that proved the most stubborn adaptation. It's a challenge Gunn relishes.

"Whenever we rehearse, that's the only tune we change every time," he said. "What we recorded is cool; the way we do it now, I like it better."

—Jon Ross

## Players >

# ALAN CHAN

## Tonal Personality



NEVIN WONG

When the Alan Chan Jazz Orchestra is on the stand at the North Hollywood jazz club Upstairs at Vitello's, distinction is evident from the first downbeat. This isn't standard 4/4 swing in the mold of Count Basie. Compositions that unfold and morph, challenging structures, inventive voicings and ever-changing orchestral colors set this group apart. Chan has given Los Angeles a jazz big band with an utterly unique tonal personality.

Narrative is important to his work, but don't look for a decorative chirp to sing featured numbers. A muted trumpet and mallets on tom toms evoke ancient Beijing in the programmatic "Moving To A New Capital," and "Rancho Calveras" has a spoken text by poet Elaine Cohen.

"I like big-band jazz for the way that I can use all of the things I know to tell a story," the 34-year-old composer and bandleader said. "And the way that soloists have a conversation with the composition."

Chan didn't grow up thinking he would become a jazz composer. Born and raised in Hong Kong, he knew Chinese folk music and was steeped in classical music studies in piano and composition. "I liked Mahler for the way he could tell a story," he explained. Chan didn't discover jazz and big bands until he moved to the U.S. to study at the University of Miami in 1997. He graduated from Miami in 2001 as a music theory and composition major.

Beginning in 2004, Chan studied music composition at University of Southern California, where he graduated in 2008 with a doctoral degree. Shelly Berg, an endowed chair in the jazz studies department at that time, suggested that Chan study jazz composition for a year. Vince Mendoza helped to further sharpen his focus. "He taught me a lot about bringing out my own voice in a piece," said Chan.

A contingent of Chan's band gathered around a table at Typhoon restaurant in Santa Monica after a recent Vitello's gig.

"Alan doesn't dumb his writing down for anyone," trumpeter Michael Stever said.

Chan added, with a grin, "We have great readers and I torture them."

"You have to be reading when you have a rest, because you won't come back in at a standard point," drummer Jamey Tate pointed out.

"And when I play an ensemble part," trombonist Paul Young asserted, "I may be playing it with a trumpeter and saxophonist."

Veteran trumpeter Rick Baptist is the "old man" in the band, known for his studio work and time spent in orchestras led by Bob Florence and Bill Holman. His first night as a sub with the Alan Chan Jazz Orchestra, he knew he was involved in something special.

"I had no idea what the music was," Baptist mused, "but I was very inspired by Alan and his young guys; they're all amazing musicians. The writing was obviously from a legit point of view. But the colors he's able to get out of a big band—I hadn't heard anything like that in a long time."

"Every now and then," Baptist continued, "you'll see a note or a chord that's questionable. But you play it through a second time, and you always say, 'Oh—it really does go there.' I think Alan is bringing a set of sounds that haven't been heard before in an L.A. big band. It's very heady stuff."

The Alan Chan Jazz Orchestra has released an EP, *Rancho Calveras*, and is readying a full album for 2014. Chan also has global aspirations. "I'm exploring possibilities with some people in Hong Kong," he said, "to bring big-band jazz to China. I've accompanied student bands on a tour there, and it's been very encouraging. In some cities they have a real taste for big band jazz."

—Kirk Silsbee



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Players ›

# PEDRITO MARTINEZ

## 'Go to the Sky'



Growing up in Havana's gritty Cayo Hueso neighborhood, Pedrito Martinez's life was rich in the culture of the street but poor in opportunities to expand his horizons. His prodigious mastery of the batá drums, developed in impromptu jams and Santería religious ceremonies, was rewarded with dollar-a-month hotel gigs at which he was not even allowed to mingle with the guests.

So when the chance came to get out of Cuba, he jumped at it—joining Canadian saxophonist Jane Bunnett's band on a North American tour and staying on after the tour was over. He settled in Union City, a Cuban-expat enclave overlooking the Empire State Building high on the New Jersey Palisades, and today, after 15 years in the United States, he may be the hottest percussionist north of Havana.

"It's crazy," Martinez said, invoking a favorite word as he contemplated his life's trajectory while nibbling a sandwich at a Union City hangout.

As if by providence—and Martinez, a longtime Santería initiate, is a great believer in the providential—his career is peaking just as he has hit the milestone age of 40. An undisputed first-

call sideman for pop stars and jazz artists alike, he has some 100 album appearances to his credit. As a leader, he has released two albums in the last year alone.

The first, *Rumba De La Isla* (Sony Masterworks), offers a quasi-modernistic take on flamenco and rumba in a tribute to Camarón de la Isla, the late singer from Spain. The album, which brought together musicians from Europe and the Americas, was mulled for seven years before it was recorded, he said.

The second album, *The Pedro Martinez Group* (Motéma), documents his working quartet with Cuban pianist Ariacne Trujillo, Venezuelan bassist Alvaro Benavides and Peruvian percussionist Jhair Sala. Augmenting the group are coveted guest performers like trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, guitarist John Scofield and drummer Steve Gadd, who doubles as co-producer.

Compared with *Rumba*, Martinez said, his eponymous album is "more Afro-Cuban with a New York vibe." The tunes—culled from the playlist of the band's eight-year residency at Guantanamera, a midtown Manhattan nightclub—range from Martinez originals like

"Conciencia" and "Música" to covers like Robert Johnson's "Travelling Riverside Blues" and the Jackson 5 hit "I'll Be There."

Throughout the album, Gadd deployed his bass drum and hi-hat, marking time alongside the mechanized click track to "give it a feel," Martinez said. He also played traps on selected numbers, notable among them "La Luna," a driving account of a tune by timba pianist Tirso Duarte that has become a Martinez staple. All of which, Martinez said, added to the album's "cosmopolitan" appeal.

One of the few glitches in the recording session occurred on one of the more straightforward tunes, "I'll Be There." While the rhythm came off without a hitch, the vocal harmonies, arranged by Trujillo, a conservatory-trained pianist, proved a bit knottier than planned.

"She put in some crazy voicings," said Martinez, who, along with Trujillo, usually assumes lead-vocal duties. "Normally you go from the main voice to the third or the fifth. She was doing the second, the seventh."

No such issues arose with the originals. Calculated to put forth a positive message—"Música" is about the importance of music in Martinez' life, while "Conciencia" is about the dangers of substance abuse—the tracks were laid down with no undue strain. According to Gadd, the players demonstrated an intuitive grasp of all the elements needed to shape the final product.

"They know what each other is thinking," Gadd said. "What makes it special is how well they all work together. On a high technical level,

they just go in and out of these things by watching each other. It's incredible to see."

The group's simpático approach was evident before a packed room on a weeknight in November at Guantanamera. The players assembled unannounced—Martinez at center stage, his bandmates arrayed around him—and, in several short bursts, brought the raucous house to its knees, radically displacing rhythms, replacing harmonies and generally pushing every button, even as the pulsating center held. The result was in equal measure high art and dance party.

"He gives everything he's got," Gadd said of Martinez, "and he's got a lot."

For Martinez, having the goods is one thing; communicating them is another. "Every time I go to play," he said, "I tell the cats, 'I don't care if you make mistakes. I want you guys to pull out the best from me.'"

"When I start jumping and 'cajoning,'" he added, shrugging his shoulders and tapping air-drums as he spoke, "they know right away that I'm asking for something that is not just playing great. I'm asking them to get out of the place, to go to the sky. And I feel it. I'm already crazy." —Phillip Lutz

## Players >

# GENE BARGE

'I Just Want To Play'

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The title of Gene Barge's song "Give Me My Flowers Now"—which is included on his new album, *Olio* (Wildroot Records)—is a request to receive due recognition while still having an earthly presence. During a conversation near his home in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, the saxophonist does not have to say if the tune's title applies to himself.

Barge's brawny tone powered a string of blues and r&b hits starting in the 1950s, when he collaborated with Gary "U.S." Bonds, Koko Taylor, Little Milton and a host of others.

But he also had a deft touch as an arranger and producer at Chess and Stax, where he worked behind the scenes on several of those labels' soul and gospel records. He also worked on numerous ad jingles in the 1970s and the occasional film acting job. But Barge's playing is where he always returns—even if that means going back to the basics.

"I like my funky style," Barge said. "King Curtis and I came up with this style. That's what I do. But at the same time, a lot of my friends are jazz players, so to compete with those guys I had to get my technique up to where I could play jazz. That's why I'm going back to the ABCs."

When Barge devised that attack, he was living in Norfolk, Va., and cutting such records as "A Night With Daddy 'G'" in 1960

as part of the Church Street Five. That nickname stuck, especially when Bonds name-checked him on his hugely popular vocal version of that song, "Quarter To Three." In 1964 Barge left his day job as a high school teacher to move to Chicago, where he became a producer and arranger at Chess. One of his former colleagues at the label, Buddy Guy, guests on *Olio*.

After Chess folded, Barge produced gospel records for Stax, as well as early demos for singer Natalie Cole. He picked up the saxophone again to play a few dates with the Rolling Stones in 1982, but realized that his technique needed improvement. Throughout the '80s, Barge performed with the Chicago blues stalwarts Big Twist & The Mellow Fellows.

Nowadays he shifts from working with the Chicago Rhythm & Blues Kings to performances with veteran producer/arranger Thomas "Tom Tom" Washington's big band. Other independent gigs come up every so often, and a levelheaded approach to the next few years does not inhibit his steadfast determination.

"I'm 87 years old, so let's not kid ourselves," Barge said. "But I'm doing more than a lot of guys much younger than me in terms of playing. I'm still out there on the firing line doing what I can do. In my latter days, I just want to play."

—Aaron Cohen

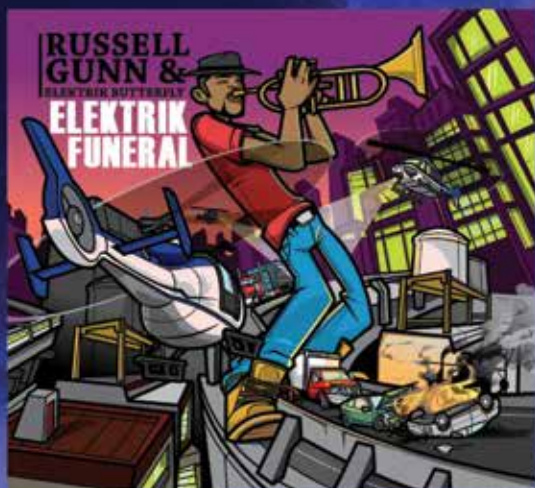


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## Russell Gunn & Elektrik Butterfly New Directions in Jazz, Rock and Hip Hop

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Harland**



**Dave  
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**Kevin  
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**Craig  
Taborn**



# PRISM

## Fantastic Four

By Aaron Cohen  
Photography by Daniel Sheehan

Last summer, Dave Holland took his granddaughter Sarah to the Montreal Jazz Festival. He wasn't performing, but just wanted to make the five-hour drive from his home in New York's Hudson Valley so the two of them could enjoy the music. While his stature undoubtedly loomed large for every other musician attending the event, to her, Holland is simply "Grampy." And that's just how he wants it.



Holland cast himself in the background frequently during a relaxed conversation a few hours before his Prism quartet took the stage at SPACE in Evanston, Ill., last October. His bright eyes widened a bit when he mentioned hanging out with his rural neighbors. Their discussions tend to be about their corn crops—if they know about his years spent working with Miles Davis (or, for that matter, his afternoon spent jamming with Jimi Hendrix), they don't bring it up. None of Holland's gracious demeanor comes across as false modesty. It's the sort of humility that is reflected in his current band's name and the way it operates.

"To be honest, I've had the Dave Holland Quartet, Quintet, Octet, Big Band," Holland said with a chuckle and an accent that conveys the cadences of England's West Midlands. "I thought, 'Enough *Dave Holland* this or that. Let me just put a name on this band, and that's the band.' I wasn't thinking about ownership or anything like that. All the bands reflect a collaborative [approach] and try to reflect that in the way the music is presented. I think of myself as a bass player in the band when we come to the music. I don't think of it as a showcase for me as a bass player. That's the premise of the whole thing."

Prism released its self-titled debut in September on Holland's own label, Dare2. Everyone in the group has committed to being part of this quartet even while they're receiving accolades as leaders. Guitarist Kevin Eubanks came on board after his long-running job as the leader of "The Tonight Show" band and a couple years after releasing his own *Zen Food* (Mack Avenue). Craig Taborn's challenging trio and solo discs on ECM have made him a crucial force on electric and acoustic piano. Alongside drummer Eric Harland's work as a valued sideman, he has also assembled his own package of eclectic samples, *Looped* (Loop Loft), for omnivorous DJs.

"Musicians follow music," Eubanks said. "When I was playing with Sam Rivers, I felt like I was part of a band—not like I was a side guy for Sam Rivers. We're all in it together. If someone was to say, 'Kevin, you're putting a band together, so who do you want to be in it?' 'Well, Dave, Eric and Craig. Oh, that's Prism? I don't have to put that band together—I'm in it.'"

For Taborn, being a part of Prism means working within a jazz lineage that has long shaped his own playing.

"Dave's history is really deep and broad in terms of a lot of pivotal points in music in the last 45 years," Taborn said. "He's right there at many [of those] points. Of course, Miles Davis. But a lot of guys didn't listen to Anthony Braxton the way I did. I was way into that stuff. You could also take early ECMs that I was totally into, like [Holland's 1971] duo albums with Barre Phillips and Derek Bailey. That was my stuff going back to when I was 14. All the quintet stuff with Steve Coleman and his work with Kenny Wheeler were the things that were happening when I was in high school. That was the stuff I was wearing out. There are ways to approach the music, and then there's the Dave Holland way. He stands in terms of playing in a freer context, a groove context that's electric."

Holland's generous spirit is intertwined with the quiet strength he exudes onstage. His anchor-



Prism performs at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley in Seattle on Oct. 8.

ing lines at SPACE became especially formidable when he synchronized with Taborn's left hand. No question, this matches the diligence involved in coordinating the band—and his label—as well as in his life outside of music. After all, driving up with his granddaughter to Montreal, or farming in upstate New York, has as much to do with rigor as it does magnanimity.

"Dave is always searching, being a balance between the rock that holds everything together and introducing new ideas," Harland said. "Dave has so much language from so many different bands that he's been in. He holds it down and is always searching for the different harmonic progressions of where Kevin or Craig are going. I try to be as outside of my mind as possible, and as natural and pure for every note."

That searching quality has been part of Holland's musical journeys for nearly 50 years. He worked with Davis from 1968 to 1970, which included some landmark albums—*In A Silent Way*, *Bitches Brew*—and the recently released *Live In Europe* 1969 quintet dates (Sony/Legacy).

As Taborn mentioned, Holland then steered

such innovative 1970s albums as *Conference Of The Birds* (ECM) with Rivers and Braxton. He joined with guitarist John Abercrombie and drummer Jack DeJohnette for the fusion trio Gateway. Holland also shone on lesser-known gigs, such as working on bop traditionalist Nick Brignola's *Baritone Madness* (Bee Hive) in 1977.

About three years ago, Holland collaborated with flamenco guitarist Pepe Habichuela on *Hands* (Dare2), but insisted they play the traditional Spanish idiom rather than create a trans-Atlantic hybrid that would put the bassist more up-front.

Prism follows a similar egalitarian principle. The quartet's origins go back further than its first rehearsal in June 2012 and subsequent premiere that summer at the TD Ottawa International Jazz Festival. Holland has worked with Eubanks—and his brother, the trombonist Robin, as well as his trumpet-playing brother Duane—since the 1980s. They both collaborated with the influential saxophonist Rivers at different times. Holland and Taborn were both on James Carter's album *The Real Quietstorm* (Atlantic) in 1995, and the pianist

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has also collaborated with Chris Potter, who had notably served with the bassist. Harland played on Holland's 2008 sextet disc, *Pass It On* (ECM).

"Eric is in the top class on his instrument, but the element I love about him is his sense of moment in the music," Holland said. "He seems to instinctively know when music needs to go up or down a notch. When the dramatic element needs to be changed, he shapes the music so beautifully and frames it. If you have a drummer who bashes through everything, it doesn't give you a chance to breathe or have ebb and flow in the music. Eric's so sensitive to that ebb and flow. He has really big ears, so aware of everything that's going on. The way he connects it up, somehow the music all funnels through his playing."

Around the time that Prism came together, Holland marked the 30th anniversary of the formation of his first quartet. Although he did not mark this milestone in any obvious manner, he points to Betty Carter's advice as being a key factor in helping him step out of the sideman role.

Looking back, Holland said he's more relaxed and comfortable about his role as a leader nowadays and is clearer at expressing what he wants to play, even as that constantly changes. One immediate individual characteristic of Prism is the absence of horns. Still, certain ongoing beliefs apply no matter what the date, or format.

"Obviously, when I'm writing for the quintet or larger ensembles I tend to write more contrapuntally, because you have several instruments and different backgrounds," Holland explained. "I wouldn't say it's more open, but it's just a different context to work in. The guitar and bass have a very 'family relationship' in the sound. The bass is an octave below the guitar. There's always been a wonderful match between the two instruments, and I always felt a strong connection with Kevin

from when we first started playing together. So this band was an opportunity for us to get together and work on more music. Each situation is different. It's not just the instrumentation; it's the people who are in it and creating a setting where they can explore their creativity. That's my goal: to create a situation that's creatively satisfying, interesting and fulfilling for everyone."

Reaching that goal meant inviting everyone in Prism to bring in their own compositions. Eubanks wrote three tracks on the album and everyone else contributed two (although Holland indicated that he has three tunes on a limited-edition LP version). The results show off the resourcefulness of the quartet. Some pieces, like Eubanks' "The Watcher," have a low-key rock drive. Harland's "Choir" draws on the way harmonic progressions modulate in classic gospel. And Taborn's multidirectional approach on piano and Fender Rhodes becomes a key element of his "The True Meaning Of Determination" and "Spirals."

"I don't know how Craig does that," Holland said with a laugh. "I told him, 'You certainly didn't write easy music for yourself to play!' The range of Craig's understanding of music is pretty stunning—from pop culture to high classical and everything in between. He's a fascinating person to talk to and brings a great sense of spontaneity to his music."

For Taborn, writing comes down to thinking orchestrally while playing in a quartet. "It's the way I put a lot of things together," Taborn said. "The written sections invite improvisation. With 'Spirals,' I wanted to open up a certain textural space: to suggest a lot of different things. I was mining a tiny bit of material to see how much I could do with it. I like multiple kinds of rhythmic things. On their own, they're not so complicated, but when you fit them together, it sounds a lit-

tle mysterious. A lot of that writing extends from my trio writing, where I'm writing things that are playable in real time. There's a certain orchestration you can get out of a four-piece. How far can we suggest a larger ensemble? [I want] to create the illusion of a larger ensemble, even if it's guitar, piano, bass and drums. A lot of that gets into the rhythmic complexity because I'm hearing another part. And then I divide the duties with everybody."

That sense of mutual appreciation within Prism gave Harland the incentive to compose "Breathe," which avoids fixed time signatures.

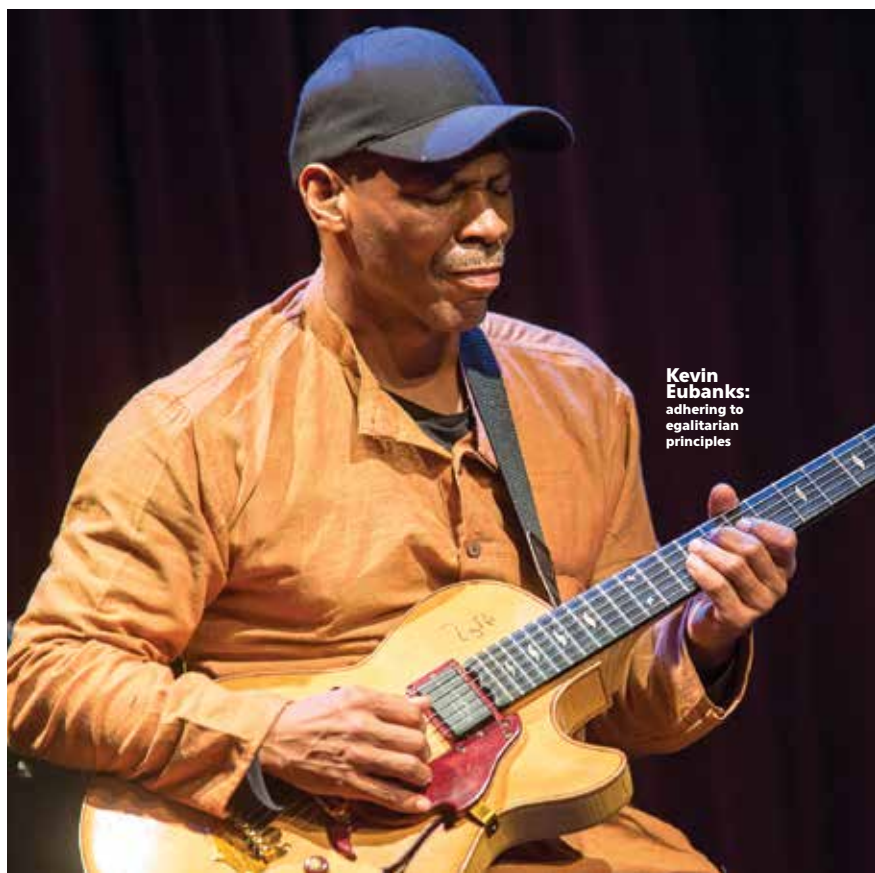
"Since this is a very rhythm-section band with the guitar and piano, you can take advantage of harmonic movements," Harland said. "I wrote 'Breathe' to be very free. I thought of writing it in time, but then I thought it should capture the actual breath. In a way, it's out of time—that natural state of feeding the body with air, like you're taking in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide. There's something very meditative about it, so how can I capture this within a song? When you have great players, it allows everything to be natural in its own way."

While Eubanks' driving "The Watcher" and "Evolution" reflect his background in rock and r&b, he took an entirely different direction on "The Color Of Iris."

"I wanted something gentle and kind of romantic, with just a hint of classic romanticism to it," Eubanks said. "I wrote that one on piano. I like the romantic period in music: Debussy, and even parts of Beethoven and even Chopin; those are such poignant melodies. I wanted something with a pleasant melody, but getting into the romantic thing. That's how it started, and everyone puts in their own experiences. I like the underlying mystery to it, with the bass starting off and not know-



**Dave Holland:**  
generous spirit  
and quiet  
strength



**Kevin Eubanks:**  
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ing where it's going to go. When you meet someone [new] or [go on an] adventure, it's like that. It's unknown. It's mysterious, but you want to peek around the door and see what it is."

Loss and hope both shape Holland's contributions. "The Empty Chair" is dedicated to his late wife, Clare, who passed away on Sept. 7, 2011. He still keeps a place at the dinner table for her. His former colleague, pianist Mulgrew Miller, died last year; he also had a role in framing the piece. In contrast, with the song "A New Day," Holland focuses on moving forward.

"Empty Chair" is a form of blues, but not a strict blues," Holland said. "Before we got the band together last year, I was thinking of the sound of the group and guitar, and was listening to a lot of Jimi Hendrix's music, which Kevin also loves. I thought I'd want to write a guitar piece for Kevin and a blues would be great for the band to have. A few years ago, I had my sextet with Mulgrew, and during a soundcheck at the Blue Note, he started playing this gospel piece that was in that slow three. That feel stuck in my mind. Somehow it came to the surface, but I only realized that after I had written the piece.

"On 'A New Day' I'm thinking about the sound of the band, and the guitar being the lead instrument," Holland continued. "I wanted an anthem kind of feel to that piece. I also thought of it being a new day and what that means. A new phase in my life, really—that's what I wanted to express. Clare loved that sense of positivity in the music. She told me she really wanted that to continue."

Holland has encouraged more spontaneous composition in Prism. "The written music is starting to merge with the improvisation in a very organic way," he said. The group's method of devising pieces just before reaching the stage is not

necessarily a new concept: A couple of his heroes pursued that path—like Charles Mingus did with his workshops. Davis usually worked in that mode when Holland was a part of his group, and so did Duke Ellington, a bandleader they all revered.

"We work the music out on the gigs," Holland said. "At soundcheck you can get an idea of what the piece is like. Maybe two soundchecks. You'll run through the piece a couple times and say, 'Hey, let's put it in tonight and see what happens.' I like doing that, rolling the dice and seeing where we're going to go with it and put it in the set. That's part of the tradition. Duke Ellington would put on the music stands something he wrote that afternoon."

The group is also adjusting its sound in ways that go beyond the repertoire, such as the changes Harland has made to his kit.

"My setup now is different than when I started with Prism," Harland said. "At first I had my normal 18-inch bass drum and two snares. I just had something I felt comfortable with to see what direction to go. Then ideas started to come, so I started to use a 20-inch bass drum to challenge myself creatively. I also added a couple warm cymbals because I feel like it gives me room to capture the sensitivity of the band."

Prism is planning its follow-up disc and will tour throughout 2014. (Holland is also looking forward to a spring tour with Kenny Barron that will take the duo throughout Europe. "He's so elegant and graceful, it's such a joy to play with him," Holland said of the pianist.) One reason why the members of Prism are so committed to the group is they know that, as Eubanks said, "There hasn't been the era of bands for a long time. Not like when you got your guys and girls from the neighborhood and it was your band against the world. Especially in jazz, where as soon as you make a record, you're a bandleader.

"This band could branch into other genres and other types of circuits than just the traditional jazz circuit," Eubanks continued. "We have so much energy and so many naturally eclectic interests. The energy is there, and we could wind up on other stages. That could open up the gate to other things and bring more people into jazz, or progressive music."

For the past few years, Holland has been in a place to reflect on his own teenage band experiences. Coming from Wolverhampton, England, his rock group played the early '60s pop and dance-club circuit and on TV in the British West Midlands. (Yes, they did cross paths with The Beatles). He now spends part of each year back in the region as an instructor at Birmingham University and works with Birmingham Jazz, Tony Dudley-Evans' promotional and educational organization. Even though he does not consider the age differences between himself and the other members of Prism to be a big deal, Holland said he's amazed that he can reach a younger generation across the Atlantic.

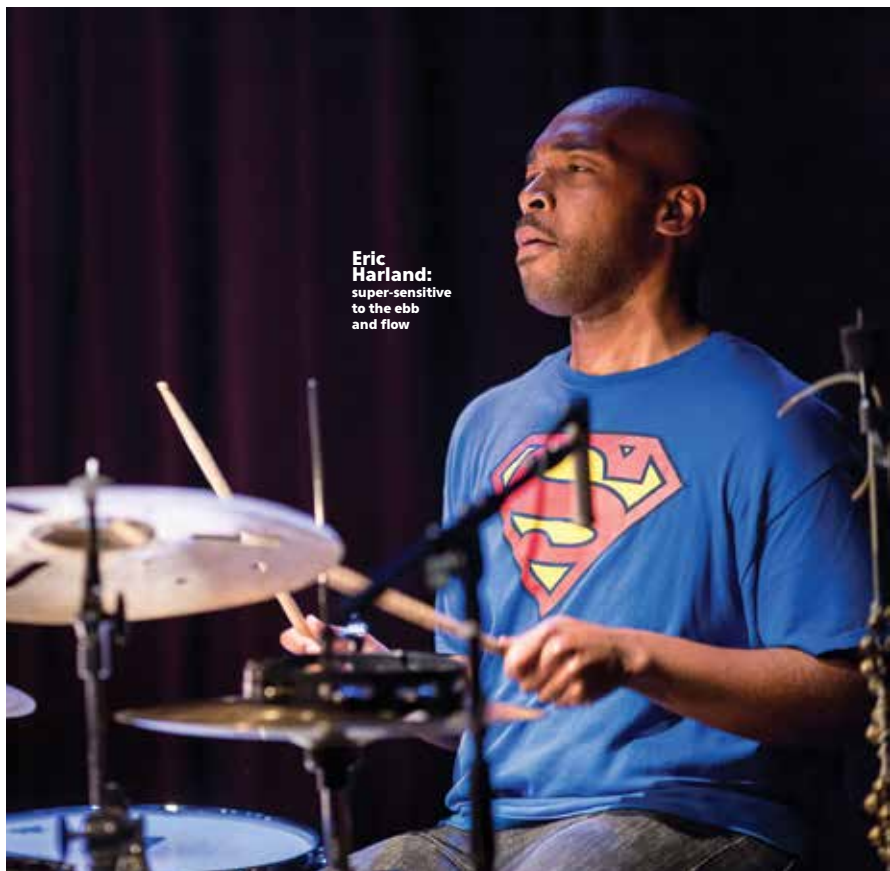
"It's kind of a full circle to be back in the Midlands, teaching," Holland said. "Having been through all the experiences that I've been through, and to share that with these musicians, is very fulfilling. There's not the tradition of jazz in the schools like there is in America, so that's something we're trying to develop in England. It's that moment in your life when you're absolutely wide open and receptive and you've got this beautifully pure passion for the music.

"It's untainted by any of the considerations of commercialism; you find yourself taken and emotionally affected by this music and want to play it. That's what these young people have happen to them. To work them at that young stage is such a beautiful experience."

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**Omar Sosa**



# Ancestral Reflections

BY TED PANKEN

Rituals—both musical and oenophilic—were on Omar Sosa's mind at Monvinic, the Barcelona "wine palace" where he would sit for a nine-track, nine-vintage DownBeat Blindfold/Winefold Test during the 45th Voll-Damm Festival Internacional de Jazz de Barcelona in late October. Sipping a preliminary glass of red, Sosa discussed his contribution to "Rumba Para Bebo," the previous evening's raucous celebration of the late Cuban maestro Bebo Valdés. The 48-year-old pianist-composer offered "Invocación-Malongo," an intense 14-minute liturgical "black mass" from the spirit-raising Palo Monte tradition of Cuba's Kongo religion, interpolating pianistic responses to a coro of Barcelona-based Cubans led by Kongo-Yoruba priest Lázaro Montalvo and batá rhythms from three cajon drummers.



"I am not the type of person who likes to play covers," said Sosa, a Santería practitioner since the late '90s. The Camagüey native and self-described "empirical piano player" majored in percussion at Havana's Escuela Nacional de Música and Instituto Superior de Arte in the '80s, emerging a gainfully employed—thoroughly secular—keyboard professional. He immersed himself in folkloric roots after leaving the island in 1993—first to Ecuador, then Oakland, Calif., then Barcelona, his primary residence for the last decade.

"Someone can play Bebo's music amazing, but I am not that kind of guy," Sosa continued. "I don't play like him or Chucho Valdés, but I have the same spiritual philosophy inside. So I can say 'thank you' to Bebo the way we thank our ancestors. Bebo is one of my ancestors. Why? Number one, he's Cuban, and he was inside of the religion. So I wanted to do a ceremony as we do it in our religion.

"A lot of people in Cuba practice Palo Monte, but it's not light music. It's repetitive drum music, extremely polyrhythmic—trance music. For Western people, it's complex." Sosa sang a rhythmic pattern. "This 6/8 clave is completely different than the rumba clave. The meaning of every word goes directly to the ancestors you want to give something to. I've fought a long time to present this tradition in public."

Sosa held nine rehearsals to facilitate an idiomatic performance from his non-professional ensemble members. "I don't rehearse my band for records, but these are persons of our religious community, so they learn everything as if it is like

a ceremony," he said. "I told them, 'The only thing we need is to be honest and do what we do. Don't figure out a way to be jazz musicians. If you try to think about it, the meaning will go away.' It's not about perfect pitch. It's not going to have a form—or, the form is a ritual form. You start with some prayer, and some people in the crowd respond, which means they know what they are supposed to do."

As an illustration, Sosa recalled a recent party honoring Lázaro Montalvo's ancestors. "I grabbed the bell while he's singing," he said. "At some moment I said, 'I have a little pain in my hand.'" He laughed. "I was playing the bell for almost two hours! When you go in a trance, the dimension of your body hides. It's like what happens with Gnawa music, or the sanctified church in the United States. If you don't go into a trance after one hour, it's because you need to do some homework inside of you."

Sosa's qualifications to speak on the subject emanate from extensive fieldwork in various tributaries of the African diaspora during his two decades outside of Cuba. The results are documented on 25 solo, duo and ensemble recordings (all but one on Sosa's imprint, Otá) issued since 1996.

In a few days, Sosa would embark on a two-week, cross-country U.S. tour behind his 2013 album, *Eggun: The Afri-Lectric Experience*, which received a Grammy nomination in the Best Latin Jazz Album category.

Omar Sosa: "I try to heal myself with the piano."



Springboarding from a 2009 commission from the Barcelona festival to create an original work based on *Kind Of Blue*, Sosa spent a year writing *Eggun*. He weaves a detailed, complex sonic tapestry, developing motifs for his sextet—Peter Apfelbaum and Leandro Hill, saxophones; Joo Kraus, trumpet; Childo Tomas, electric bass; Marque Gilmore, drumset and electronics—with guitarists Lionel Loueke and Marvin Sewell and, on separate tracks, percussionists Pedrito Martinez, Gustavo Ovalles and John Santos.

This spring, Sosa will return to the States for a tour that includes a four-night residency with his Quarteto AfroCubano at New York's Blue Note.

Sosa has also performed with the Sardinian trumpeter Paolo Fresu. Their simpatico relationship is palpable on *Alma*, a contemplative 2012 duo conversation in which the participants—

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joined on some tracks by Jaques Morelenbaum's overdubbed cello—improvise at length on brief melodic structures, liberally incorporating real-time electronics to summon the energy of voices from otherworldly dimensions.

Sosa said his intention on both albums was to illuminate cross-cultural connections. "When I was initiated, my godfather told me, 'Omar, you have one mission now: to keep the tradition at the center of your life, and put it any way you want to feel it,'" he said. "Now I've studied a lot of traditions—to talk, you need to know at least a little bit about what you're talking about. Everything I do has a function. I don't do it for a joke."

A pivotal moment occurred around 1990, when Sosa, then employed as musical director for vocalist Xiomara Laugart, after several years with *nueva trova* singer Vicente Feliú, approached pianist Rubén González, of Buena Vista Social Club fame, who was then musical director for cha-cha founder Enrique Jorrín.

"I asked Rubén, 'Master, can you give me one class?' He told me, 'The best class I can give you is to watch, and then play whatever you feel inside you with all your heart.' It was like in Africa. You watch someone playing for maybe a year, and at one moment the master gives you the instrument and says, 'OK, you are ready—play.'"

Until the mid-'90s, Sosa—conscious that his pianistic skills suffered in comparison to Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, his primary influences—was unable to apply González' message to his own musical production. Then he accepted an engagement with Cuban alto saxophonist Luis

Depestre in Palma de Mallorca that involved daily rehearsals of complex music.

"I started to feel more confident, and one day I recorded solo for a half-hour at the rehearsal space," Sosa recalled. "My ex-wife listened and said it sounded honest. 'Honest' is the word I focused on. The religion has helped me have more self-confidence, too. I can't emulate any top piano player, but I can play something based on my information and try to translate it into my own voice. I try to use my limitations inside the technical world of piano as a flag to move ahead."

Sosa is readying his fifth solo piano release, *Senses*, on which he evokes a stark, somber sound-

scape reflective of the snowed-in environs of Troy, N.Y. There, fueled by a bottle of wine, he executed the recording in two three-hour sessions last January.

"I translated my emotion in that moment," he said. "When I have problems, I try to heal myself with the piano, and when I'm home I need to take an hour playing, not only to practice, but to have a conversation with the instrument, communicate with myself and translate what comes to mind. My solo piano records are extensions of my practicing at home. They portray a moment in my life. When I do it, it covers me with a peaceful energy. It's therapy."

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## Winefold Blindfold Test

BY TED PANKEN

# Omar Sosa

### FOR THE FOURTH ANNUAL BLINDFOLD/WINEFOLD

Test at the Barcelona wine club Monvínic, pianist Omar Sosa listened to tracks that had been paired thematically with wines selected by sommelier César Cánovas. The live session was part of the 2013 Voll-Damm Barcelona International Jazz Festival. In the text below, Sosa comments on the music, and Cánovas describes the rationale for each wine selection.

#### Gonzalo Rubalcaba

"Oshun" (XXI Century, 5 Passion, 2012) Rubalcaba, piano, Yamaha CFX; Pedrito Martinez, percussion, voice; Matt Brewer, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.

**Wine:** Steyer Podravje Diseci Traminer Polsladko 2011 (Gewürztraminer, Slovenia): "The sound of the Cuban rumba is used to dedicate this track to Oshun. Oshun is the Orisha of the fresh water, the female sexuality, the love, the sensuality, the fertility. The sweet, sumptuous and sensual taste of the Gewürztraminer grape represents this idea very well. With its intense floral perfume of roses and tropical fruit, the Gewürztraminer of Danilo Steyer is a good example of a seductive wine that surrounds you with flavors and caresses your palate."

Is that the new one by Gonzalo? Pedrito Martinez is singing. Gonzalo is a genius. At school, he already had a *projecto* that I followed to every concert. At one concert he played for the first time a ballad I love, with the name of his son, "Joao." I cried like a baby for 20 minutes, because I drank too much that day; the music and the alcohol triggered something in me. Gonzalo has the cleanest sound you can imagine. One note, it's like a crystal. His touch is unique. He's one of the faster piano players in the world. His sense of rhythm is perfect. He studied at Amadeo Roldán, which is the music school that's only for people who live in Havana.

#### Fabian Almazan

"Comet" (from *Magnetic*, by Terence Blanchard, Blue Note, 2013) Almazan, piano, electronics.

**Wine:** Castell d'Encús Costers del Segre Ekam 2012 8 Riesling (Catalonia): "Some mysterious sounds are followed by the melodic piano of Fabian Almazan. That's the sensation that we can find in some wines made with the Riesling grape. The tart acidity of the Riesling is always a cold impression that freezes your palate and your soul, but immediately the fragrance

of its complex aromas makes you feel good. Citrus, honey and peach perfumes, a wine that is at the edge where the acidity and the sweetness find their balance."

It's really New York—a personal vision of every day in New York. Is it Aruán Ortiz? No? It has a Bartók side. It's not music I'm going to listen to every day. It's beautiful, I like it, but it's too intellectual. Is it Vijay? It was wild! [after] I went to hear Fabian a few times. He has a strong classical influence. It's well done. This music reminds me of when you arrive at JFK Airport; you see a mix of everything there. In my humble opinion, you need to digest New York in your own way to arrive at your own sound. What I miss here, I need to say, is the groove.

#### Danilo Pérez

"Galactic Panama" (Providencia, Mack Avenue, 2010) Pérez, piano, percussion; Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; Ben Street, bass; Adam Cruz, drums; Ernesto Diaz, conga; Jamey Haddad, percussion.

**Wine:** Colet-Navazos Penedès Extra-Brut (Xarel·lo, Catalonia): "On this track the Latin piano of Danilo Pérez meets the Indian-influenced sound of Rudresh Mahanthappa, a conversation between two musicians and two cultures connected by jazz. Eduardo Ojeda and Jesús Barquín (Navazos team) founded Sergi Colet, a Catalan producer of sparkling wine, to explore the connections between the Catalan sparkling wine and Sherry wine. The result is this sparkling with a little part of Sherry added. The aromas produced by the yeast during the aging process connect these wines. We find fine refreshing bubbles, and the intense aromas of toasted bread, nuts and honey, due to the yeast and the time."

Is Miguel Zenón on sax? I like this group. I love the piece. Who is it? [after] *Galactic Panama*! I like this groove! Danilo has the Caribbean

touch in a unique way, but he's got a really New York thing, too, with this pointillist harmony. [sings percussive phrase] This is a New York sound, but it comes from Berklee, too. A lot of the cats there go with that kind of thing. Danilo is one of the masters of this. For a long time, I heard Danilo more light and melodic and groovy, but not so avant-garde as this. It's the first time I've heard the record. I love the melody, which is something traditional. He breaks everything down in a way where you say, "Wow!" This is what jazz is—your own thing.

#### Elio Villafranca/Arturo Stabile

"Ararà" (Dos Y Mas, Motéma, 2012) Villafranca, piano; Stabile, percussion, composer.

**Wine:** Henriques & Henriques Madeira Verdelho 15 anos (Portugal): "A warm, mild and velvet piano sound with the rhythm of Cuban Ararà percussion—together it becomes deep and spiritual. The historical wine region of Madeira gives us centuries of tradition and experience. The combination of sugar and alcohol makes the Madeira a silky and warm wine. Its acidity adds freshness and rhythm, and the ancestral aromas, deep and complex, drive us to a heaven where the sensory feeling becomes spiritual."

This is a Cuban piano player. For the sound, for the concept of the mix, it's between Elio Villafranca or Harold López-Nussa. Harold records in

Paris, and Harold is more sublime—he uses more drama. No, it's not Harold, because Harold doesn't use too much world sound. I'd go for Elio. All of the Cuban piano players have something from some of our heroes. Elio has something from Chucho. Appoggiatura. When the piano player has 100 percent classical training, the approach, the touch is different. What I hear is how a guy who hasn't received that whole classical training can approach and play his own music. I know for sure this is Elio's music.

#### Yosvany Terry

"Contrapuntístico" (Today's Opinion, Criss-Cross, 2012) Terry, alto saxophone; Osmany Paredes, piano; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet; Yúnior Terry, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums; Pedro Martínez, percussion.

**Wine:** Ervideira Alentejo Conde d'Ervideira Private Selection 2008 (Trincadeira, Alicante Bouschet, Aragonez, Portugal): "The energetic, intense way that Osmany Paredes plays the piano reminds us of a full-bodied wine, intensely ripe but balanced and with a fragrant nose. Ervideira is a historical winery located in the Portuguese Alentejo, a typical expression of the sun from the south—the strength and the balance of the best grapes."

It's another New York sound, close to Miguel ... Is this Yosvany Terry? Osmany Paredes? I know the team. Yosvany was 13 or 14 when we did a concert in the National Theater for





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four nights with Xiomara Laugart. Packed each night. He already had this sound. Osmany is from Santa Clara in Las Villas Province. When Rubén González left Orquesta Enrique Jorrin (the person who invented the cha-cha-cha), my best friend, Reynaldo Perez-Cruz, called him to play piano. I am personally waiting for Osmany to write to his deep traditional Cuban cha-cha-cha concept, which he learned from playing with the masters.

## Roberto Fonseca

"El Soñador Está Cansado" (Yo, Jazz Village, 2012) Fonseca, piano; Felipe Cabrerá, bass; Etienne Mbappe, electric bass; Ramsés Rodríguez, drums; Joel Hierrezuelo, Cuban percussion; Baba Sissoko, talking drum.

**Wine:** López de Heredia Rioja Viña Tondonia Blanco Reserva 1998 (Viura, Malvasia, Spain): "Beautiful melancholic melody like a bolero 'filin' that sounds very close and quiet. The white wine of López de Heredia is aged at length in old barrels; it needs time to be made and to be tasted. The wine has lost the strong, fruity aromas of youth, and has become calmer and wiser, denser and longer."

This is a Latin guy, too. He's Cuban. He has a touch like Aruán. No? He has some Lecuona vibe. Alfredo Rodríguez? No? [after] Can I listen more? Yeah, now I hear this is Roberto. He's a charismatic musician and piano player. I like the music. I

like the concept. It's complex for me to talk about Roberto. One reason is that some of his music reminds me of my music—sometimes. But we all come from the same root, the same tradition. Actually, he is a religion person, too, and he uses the batá and all this stuff. This is Yo? [Yes] The only thing I don't like is the title. It's not YOU. It's our, US, all of us. You don't do nothing without the rest, even if you're the King. Even if you play solo, it's not you, because something comes through you."

## Alfredo Rodríguez

"Crossing The Border" (Sounds Of Space, Mack Avenue, 2012) Rodríguez, piano.

**Wine:** Bodegas Marañones Vinos de Madrid Trentamil Maradevies 2012 (Garnacha, Spain): "Here this young Cuban musician plays with a fast rhythm that shows his virtuosity and talent. Fernando Garcia is the person in charge of the wines in Bodegas Marañones. He makes a young, intense wine, a true expression of the soils and climate of Sierra de Gredos—he's a young person who uses his talent and very quickly came to be regarded among the best producers of his region."

It's the sound of Michel Camilo. Alfredo Rodríguez? That's a young guy who needs to find his voice. This is a little bit of Michel Camilo, a little Bela Bartók, a little Stravinsky, a little Tchaikovsky. This is what he is. A little bit of a lot of things. How old is Alfredo? [28.] So he has a long jour-

ney. You hear the influence of Michel Camilo, and after that it comes to a crazy *tumbao*, the virtuosity in the beginning. He has the classical training, you see. You know what happened with jazz, man? One of the main sins became, How are you going to impress people when you play? You can impress people with silence or with notes—or with passion. The first notes by Gonzalo—four notes. Monk. Don Pullen. Andrew Hill. Chucho. They take the time. When you have a strong limitation, you need to develop your own language. You won't be able to go to a certain room, or you're going to have trouble. But when you have really good classical information, you can play whatever.

The music needs to touch you. It's important for me to listen to music, not to say, "This guy played really good." I don't want to judge the guy, but this is what I feel. I like it, but I don't want to listen to this music in my house because it's not going to give me peace.

## Eddie Palmieri

"In Walked Bud" (Listen Here!, Concord Picante, 2005) Palmieri, piano; Brian Lynch, trumpet; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Conrad Herwig, Doug Beavers, trombone; John Benítez, bass; Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, drums; Giovanni Hidalgo, congas; Paoli Mejías, udu drum, bongos.

**Wine:** Benoit Lahaye Champagne Rosé de Macération (Pinot Noir, France): "We can consider the Latin salsa like a big party with rhythm and sounds that invites your body to move and fills your soul with happiness. Eddie Palmieri is a major figure of the salsa; of course his music is not just simply dance music. The bubbles of Champagne are considered an indispensable element of all the parties, but in the hands of the talented producer Benoit Lahaye, this wine goes further in terms of intensity and complexity, like the music of the master Eddie Palmieri."

It reminds me of Palmieri back in the day. It's an American band. Puerto Rican vibe, like a Latino vibe. Ah, it's Palmieri! I miss the grunting. It's a standard. I love Eddie so much! He's my hero. When he played, he reminded me of Arsenio Rodríguez on the *tres*. What Arsenio did was translate the pattern of the rumba, or the pattern of the traditional thing, to the *tres*. This is why he comes up with this [sings the pattern]. This is the *quinto*. The instrument that improvises in the rumba is the *quinto*. Arsenio writes to this, and he passed this along. When I play Latin, sometimes I come with some patterns, like blues or a little bit contemporary. But in the end, I think as a percussion player. Palmieri dances

inside. His music is grooving.

This sound is New York. Latin jazz is this sound. It comes from Machito, Mario Bauza, Tito Puente, Mongo, Chano Pozo. They developed in their inner way. It's important to say that the sound of Puerto Rico is different than the sound of Cuba. Some people say that salsa is a Cuban music. I say no. Salsa is salsa, and Cuban music is Cuban music. Salsa was developed in New York with the Cuban people who arrived in New York, and together they created this kind of music. The way of dancing is different, which is the foundation of all this music. You can dance inside. But you need to move. Eddie played for dancers in New York.

## Frank Emilio

"Reflejos Ancestrales (Ancestral Reflections)" (Reflejos Ancestrales, Blue Note, 1999) Emilio, piano; Tata Güines, Changuito, Enrique Lazaga Varona, percussion.

**Wine:** Pardas Penedés Collita Roja 2011 (Sumoll, Catalonia): "Ancestral reflections of the traditional Cuban music. Here, Frank Emilio Flynn prefaces the ancestral percussion with a piano solo, and they all join together at the end. Jordi Arnan and Ramon Parera wanted to make a wine with the grape Sumoll—the wine that their fathers used to drink when they were kids. The Sumoll is light in color, refreshing, with a harsh texture like the sound of a drum. This Pardas Sumoll is the performance that Jordi and Ramon have made of the ancestral Sumoll that their fathers drank."

It's nice. This is Cuba, for sure—no one is going to do a solo *guiro* unless they're from Cuba. Actually, it could be something from 1950, 1960. It's a little bit of *amigos*. No one does this today. Tata Güines. Tata's sound is unique. Changuito. They created some language. After them, everybody can play this, but they created the sound. This is what we played last night, the Palo Monte. One question: Is the record is old? End of the '90s. OK, Frank Emilio. In the beginning, I said, "Whoa, this is not from now." But the sound is a bit like the sound we have today. The melodies. It reminds me of Randy Weston. Abdullah Ibrahim. A moment of Ahmad Jamal. They try to tell the story. This is music that dances; a dance like a bird. And it's simple. The complexity is the space between the notes. If you listen to Bola de Nieve [Ignacio Villa], when he played solo, he would play that way. Now, sometimes everything is 7/4. But at that time, everything was ... [gestures like a bird]. Frank Emilio was a nice ending. "Ancestral Reflections." There we go.

DB



**SNARKY PUPPY**

# WORLDS COLLIDING

BY KEN MICALLEF

**S** **NARKY PUPPY** experienced a revelation in early 2010. The band arrived in England and showed up at the London club Cargo for the start of its first international tour. The gig was booked only a few weeks prior, and the musicians figured a half-empty hall was in their immediate future.

"We had no way of knowing what the reception would be, but we got there and were told we'd sold out the club," recalls Bill Laurance, organist and Fender Rhodes player for the combustible ensemble, which stages from 17–27 instrumentalists and vocalists at any given time. "We could feel the electricity of the crowd, this sense of anticipation. It was like this dam of water had built up. We didn't know it, but they'd been waiting for us. We couldn't afford to promote the show, but the word had spread via the Internet and social media. They applauded for ages before we played a note. It was a momentous arrival. It really lifted us."

IN THE LAMP LIGHT: Snarky Puppy







After “slogging away in the U.S. for years” (in Laurance’s words) only to receive such an overwhelming reception in Europe, Snarky Puppy was, in British slang, gobsmacked. Similar receptions followed the band throughout Europe. Nowadays, when Snarky Puppy tours (typically 200 dates a year), band members are still impressed when audiences from Budapest to Barcelona sing along to tunes like “Thing Of Gold” or “Binky” (from 2012’s *GroundUP*), “Whitecap” or “The Little People” (from 2010’s *Tell Your Friends*, both on *GroundUP Music/Ropeadope*).

“In Budapest, everyone in the audience sings along with our melodies,” explains Michael League, Snarky Puppy’s bassist, principal composer and de facto leader. “Cultures like those in Budapest are accustomed to instrumental music. And also, their traditional music is a little more melodically complex than traditional American music. The audiences we play to have more of an influence on the band than people might expect.”

Each Snarky Puppy album—from 2005’s *Live At Uncommon Ground* to the recent *Amkeni* (with Burundian refugee Bukuru Celestin)—was recorded in front of an audience and produced by League. This is no easy band to tour: a full rhythm and percussion section, with two (sometimes three) guitarists, three keyboard players, trumpet, flugelhorn, flute, bass clarinet, tenor sax and three backing vocalists. But live is where Snarky Puppy lives. Eight albums in and counting, Snarky Puppy’s latest offering, *Family Dinner Volume One*, was recorded live (and filmed for the group’s now ubiquitous DVDs) at Shaftman Performance Hall in the Jefferson Center in Roanoke, Va., where the group has performed and given workshops to aid the center’s music outreach programs.

“Like everyone in the band, I am a product of music education,” League says. “We all studied music in high school, or privately, or in college. We’ve given clinics at colleges, high schools, elementary schools and non-profits since our first tour. I’m from Virginia, so when I heard about the Jefferson Center, I got in touch with Dylan Locke, the artistic director. We did a clinic there around 2008, and Dylan and I immediately became good friends. Everyone at the Jefferson Center has really seen the potential of developing a relationship with the band. We recorded *Family Dinner* and the record with Bukuru there. He’s also a student.”

When Snarky Puppy shifts gears between massively funky r&b to jazz-jumps fueled by equal helpings of gospel, Tower of Power, Weather Report, Lalo Schiffrin and what sounds like Frank Zappa’s *Roxy & Elsewhere* period—as well as Brazilian, African and pop sounds—one also hears definite strains of traditional big-band brass charts, and it’s no wonder. Many of Snarky Puppy’s revolving roster of some 75 musicians attended University of North Texas in Denton. This band came to play, but also to have fun.

Snarky Puppy delivers righteous good groove music—so good that drummer Robert “Sput” Searight (a regular with Kirk Franklin, Snoop Dogg and Timbaland) sometimes ejects off his throne in joy. So good that audiences around the world sing along like they’re recalling familiar church hymns. In fact, Snarky Puppy’s music is so melody-rich that Pat Metheny praised them on Toronto’s Jazz FM 91.1. When asked what album he was into at

Michael League (left) and Bill Laurance



the moment, Metheny responded, “I like this band called Snarky Puppy.”

“I can hear they are coming from my thing, but they also have many other sounds and influences,” Metheny continued. “They have an orchestral sense of the small-group thing. But more than that, their latest record has some really, really good melodies on it. And that’s the thing I am always looking for, [a melody] that you actually remember the first time you hear it. Those guys did that for me. That’s fantastic. I really admire them.”

Jazz, funk, r&b and gospel find a happy home in Snarky Puppy’s deep-dish grooves and barely containable group hugs. But as League has said in many interviews, he’s also a fan of Björk, Radiohead and, for textures, Metheny. Snarky Puppy’s evocative melodies, deep-pocket grooves and serious improvisations create a contagious move of the spirit that is no fluke. Snarky Puppy calls Brooklyn, N.Y., home, but its soul is in Dixie.

“From 2004 when I started the band to 2008,” League recalls, “the band was all college jazz kids playing out. But then I found myself playing bass in the really rich gospel and r&b scene in Dallas. I got in and dragged the other guys with me. There was a cool collision of worlds, these white jazz-educated kids and this black-church r&b gospel world. It was the perfect combination of ingredients and personalities.” That’s how Searight, Shaun Martin (keyboards), Bernard Wright (keyboards) and Bobby Sparks (keyboards) became part of the Snarky Puppy posse. “They influenced the group sound largely, and not just them, but the scene they came from,” League says. “That was the most pivotal moment in the musical life of the band.”

And there’s much musical life in Snarky Puppy. On the collaboration with Celestin, the ensemble contours its explosive funk to an intimate African weave, while *Family Dinner Volume One* offers what may be a new band tradition. Calling on some of its members’ favorite vocalists—from Lalah Hathaway, Lucy Woodward and Shayna Steele to Magda Giannikou and N’Dambi—the band gives the singers’ compositions the Snarky Puppy treatment. Hold on to your seats, check your air passag-

es and get ready for a wild ride. Where a song begins is no indication of where it may end. “Gone Under” with Shayna Steele goes from strength to strength, expressing all the majesty of a Holy Ghost-filled revival on a Sunday evening. “Too Hot To Last” recalls the theme song to the TV series “Breaking Bad,” with Woodward’s sexy growl paving the groove for Searight’s massive swamp thump, the song slowly building then exploding with tangible tension. *Family Dinner Volume One*’s outright smash hit is Hathaway’s version of the Linda Russell/David Foster song “Something.”

The red-hot track even got a Grammy nomination in the category Best R&B Performance. (The Grammy awards will be handed out on Jan. 26.)

“Something,” a smoky, ethereal r&b ballad as portrayed by Hathaway’s husky delivery, gets its soul bonafides from a band whose collective CV includes Kirk Franklin, Erykah Badu, Marcus Miller, Justin Timberlake, Ari Hoenig, Morcheeba and Roy Hargrove. Snarky Puppy knows how to work a song. Somewhere around the 6-minute mark, the band kicks it into high gear, and something like the sound of a steam train—or Rahsaan Roland Kirk playing three horns simultaneously—bellows over the vamp. It’s Hathaway making dramatic use of her ability to project multiphonics with her throat.

“It’s hard to describe the process,” Hathaway says. “It’s just something that I hear and go for. There’s some smoke-and-mirrors that I don’t understand; I just move into it. It wasn’t until that moment with Snarky that I realized I could sing it over the changes. Sometimes it’s two notes, other times it’s three or four notes. Sometimes it’s a major triad, other times a minor triad. I am just learning now how to control it. I can see myself working it out on the DVD in that moment. We were figuring it out as we did it.”

Perhaps Hathaway is keying into her gene pool—she’s Donny Hathaway’s daughter, after all—but her performance inspired members of Snarky Puppy to give it all they’ve got. Going for broke is a Snarky Puppy trademark, but some might hear the more standard attitude and two-and-four fortified

Photography by Fortuna Sung

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accompaniment of *Family Dinner Volume One* as a bid for mainstream success. Though the band performs with all the intensity and dynamic potency for which it's known, there's not a Moog solo, drum solo, deranged guitar improvisation or P-Funk bass boogie in sight on the album.

"Ha!" laughs League. "I wouldn't say any of these songs are any poppier than 'Thing Of Gold' [the opening track from *GroundUP*]. Maybe these are more accessible songs because they have vocals. It's definitely not an attempt to go mainstream. We've played with singers as a band for six years. The release was strategic in its timing because the record preceding *Family Dinner* was our collaboration with Bukuru Celestin. He grew up in Tanzania in the Congo.

"Bukuru's album is titled *Amkeni*, which means

'wake up' in Swahili," League continues. "I produced and arranged it, and Snarky Puppy played on it. It's like *Graceland* but flipped. We're not African, but we're serving the tunes. Then a month after *Family Dinner One*, we recorded a new Snarky Puppy album in the Netherlands [at Kytopia in Utrecht, Holland]. It comes out in February. So we did an African album, then an album with eight different singers, then a regular Snarky Puppy album with no vocalists or guests. That's three releases within seven months; it shows our versatility within a very short amount of time."

That *Family Dinner Volume One* is a stone soul hit shouldn't come as a surprise. As a band that not only taps fresh sources for sustenance but integrates them with memorable melodic ideas and potent musicianship, perhaps it's Snarky Puppy's time to truly go global.

"Besides showcasing these amazing artists and their songs, we also wanted to put the band in a different context," League adds. "It's a challenge for us to support a singer and their compositions in a variety of styles from hip-hop to Americana to Brazilian pop. Hopefully it conveys the message that this is a band focused on *songs*, not some wanky fusion band. But the approach we took to this music is identical to the approach we take with our own music. I think of us not as an improvisational ensemble, even though we improvise constantly. Our central core is about songs, about composition. My songs just happen to be instrumental and have a lot of room for improvisation. But from the singers to our music, the approach is identical: We're serving the compositions."

The band's goal is simply to be a vessel for the music. "We're not trying to wow anybody or be the hippest band around," League says. "Maybe that is a stumbling block for a lot of modern jazz artists. It seems like fun is not the priority. The priority is hipness."

Another key to Snarky Puppy's growing success is its constant road-dog pursuits. This band tours as if there's a steady circuit of cross-country gigs where jazz is welcome, the groove reigns supreme and improvisation finds a welcome handshake. But that world hasn't existed since the 1960s. Somehow Snarky Puppy has found its way through the wilderness.

"If you look at the jazz tradition," League says, "all the bands that I love—Mingus, Ellington, Armstrong, Miles, Coltrane—they all toured their asses off. And that is the most important thing: Having a concept is vital, but of equal importance is spending night after night playing together."

The title *Family Dinner* alludes to the musicians, singers and audience in attendance during Snarky Puppy's Jefferson Center session. But it's also who Snarky Puppy is—family through thick and thin.

"The truth about jazz is when you go back to its roots, it's the sense of struggle that made it," Laurance says. "The more jazz is institutionalized and put into academies and gets further away from what it is that actually started it and made it so powerful, I think jazz loses its way. That's why there's a hole in the market and we're doing well. People are crying out for instrumental music that has that sense of truth and that moves people."

DB

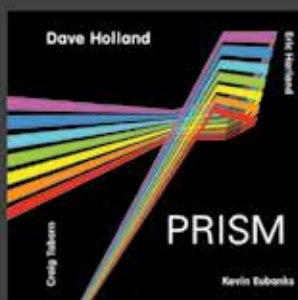


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# Getting Deep & BREAKING RULES

**AS** THE SUDAN SOCIAL AID AND PLEASURE CLUB'S 30TH ANNUAL PARADE IN New Orleans turned off Rampart Street onto Ursulines Avenue, a pair of tall buildings suddenly amplified the sound of bass and snare drums. As if on cue, the TBC Brass Band kicked up the tempo, reacting to their environment. Then, with just four notes from the sousaphone, a throng of musicians, suit and fedora-clad club members and second-liners rolled straight into "Let's Go Get 'Em." They gamboled over porches and dropped low under hanging branches, propelled by the acoustics of the block as well as the relentless motion of their feet. Once the trombones, trumpets and saxophone joined in, a battery of voices began chanting the title's refrain. These moments—when players, dancers and even the landscape of a neighborhood unite to serve the music—wield some serious power. That fact's not lost on the phalanx of cameras, out-of-towners and post-Katrina transplants who have swarmed around second lines in the last few years.

The events surrounding Hurricane Katrina and the city's subsequent rebuilding have sparked a renewed surge of outside interest in New Orleans culture. Social media—and eventually mainstream pop culture—fed that interest, as did an explosion of international festival tours for brass bands like the Hot 8 and the Soul Rebels. And it wasn't just traditional New Orleans music that started traveling. The democratic, real-time aspects of websites like YouTube made the city's edgier sounds and scenes accessible to a wider audience, while multiple hit records from acts like Preservation Hall Jazz Band and Trombone Shorty proved the sales potential of combining new ideas with traditional concepts.

The result of all of these factors is shaping up to be an important step in the evolution of New Orleans-style brass-band music—one in which artists in other cities and countries are able to experience more of the culture than ever before. They're finding inspiration in things that run deeper than improvisational styles, repertoire and instrumentation, too. These artists repeatedly credit factors like the music's capacity to express community power or the all-inclusive participa-

tory spirit of a second line. And many of them are aware of the continuum in which a series of bands—the Olympia in the '60s, the Dirty Dozen in the '70s, Rebirth in the '80s, the Soul Rebels in the '90s—have kept the music popular by constantly updating it without losing sight of its roots.

History has already proven that both traditional and innovative ideas can thrive in the brass-band music style born in New Orleans. Now, that phenomenon is going global.

The "activist street band" festival called Honk!—which started in Somerville, Mass., in 2006—has since expanded to the West Coast, with a Midwestern version planned for 2014. The flagship event draws bands inspired by the New Orleans, klezmer, Balkan and Romany styles of brass. Several of these bands are less than 10 years old, and in the spirit of the non-profit festival at which they play, many come to advocate their positions on various social causes or educate festivalgoers about environmental or political issues.

Kevin Leppmann, a Honk! organizer, leads a New Orleans-style ensemble of his own, the Second Line Social Aid & Pleasure Society Brass Band, which is a sprawling, 12- to

A new wave of brass bands takes New Orleans traditions into new territories—both sonically and geographically

BY JENNIFER ODELL



20-piece group that often performs at the event.

The group borrows widely from New Orleans brass-band culture, both old and new. A set might include a gospel-tinged medley of hymns and dirges ("I'll Fly Away," "A Closer Walk With Thee"), a Trombone Shorty hit ("Hurricane Season") and a Rebirth cover ("You Move Ya Lose"). Just as is the case among brass bands in New Orleans, a tune that's received well within the Honk! community quickly spreads. "Our band has helped popularize Rebirth tunes for bands that

usually play Balkan," Leppmann says.

Honk!, as Leppmann explains, is more than just a music festival. "Many of the bands that come, their mission is to get people activated in the street. And sometimes a popular rock song, if they can make that their own, will work. So, for example, we just started doing [Eurythmics'] 'Sweet Dreams.' After the Soul Rebels did that, there were three bands that covered that tune because they were shown that you could make it work with a brass band. ... They're looking for any music they think will energize their audi-





ence ... and bring arts back into the street but in a way in which everyone is involved."

Honk! artists like Leppmann aren't alone in their desire to use brass-band music to forge a connection to a larger community.

In New York, the classically trained tubaist Chanell Crichlow formed the hip-hop-meets-brass ensemble Pitchblak Brass Band in 2010 as a way of plugging into what she felt was a neglected element of her cultural heritage.

"We'd all heard New Orleans

brass bands ... it comes from that culture," Crichlow says, referring to the Manhattan School of Music alumni in her band. "But I did classical music and I thought, 'I'm a black person and I need to get reconnected with my roots.' And I wanted to connect to black music through hip-hop because it stems from blues and jazz."

So she gathered a handful of artists who were willing to take some risks: Pitchblak percussionist and emcee Chris Johnson also works as a classical bass player; guitarist Ben Brody plays classical French horn; and

about half the group wrote the original music that appears on their debut album, *You See Us*.

"Everyone is pushing themselves to do things they didn't do in conservatory," says Crichlow.

"This music is from the heart and is less about accuracy. It's about interacting with people in a person-to-person way. There's no boundary between you and the audience. It's about that immediate connection to a person two steps away from you."

Despite that conceptual similarity to New Orleans brass bands,

Pitchblak's execution is all its own. Unison lines and the kind of gloss found on hip-hop studio recordings dominate Pitchblak's sound, even when they play live. And though their rap vocals are sometimes removed for the purpose of parading during a show, the rhymes have more in common with spoken word than with the more chant-oriented lyrics that turn up in many New Orleans brass bands' music.

In fact, when it comes to her influences for Pitchblak, Crichlow first cites the Madison, Wis.-based Youngblood



Brass Band and its tuba player, Nat McIntosh.

Formed in 1995 (initially under a different name), Youngblood takes after the Dirty Dozen and Soul Rebels' stage-centric instrumentation. And like those New Orleans groups, the band has historically drawn from hip-hop, jazz and rock, although punk also plays a large role in its music.

Youngblood's snare drummer, David Henzie-Skogen, recalls that the first brass band he ever heard was Rebirth on Maceo Parker's 1993 album, *Southern Exposure*, when he was 13. Already fascinated with West African drumming, he got hooked on brass fast.

"It was so much heavier than the rest of the horn-based music I was hip to at the time," he recalls. "You could hear the history in it; you could hear that it was about more than music, that it celebrated an entire culture."

Along with McIntosh and a few others, Henzie-Skogen joined Mama Digdown's Brass Band and traveled to New Orleans and befriended members of the Hot 8.

"Our first trips to New Orleans were completely essential to developing some kind of appreciation for the stuff that exists beyond notes and rhythms," he says. "If we had anything to contribute to the conversation, it would be by bringing something else to the table. The goal was to be inspired by New Orleans, but not get too caught up in trying to play copycat. That being said ... you have to get pretty deep inside the music before you can start to break rules."

The more conservative Jack Brass Band, based in Minneapolis, is another Midwestern ensemble that forged direct ties with musicians in New Orleans in the '90s. Like Youngblood, Jack Brass Band mem-

bers visit New Orleans regularly and take what they learn there seriously.

At first, Jack Brass founder Mike Oleander was less moved by the slow tempos of traditional jazz-funeral staples than by the Dirty Dozen and Rebirth recordings that had first inspired him to form the band in 1990. After visiting the city repeatedly, though, musicians he interacted with there taught him something important. He says, "In order to play the contemporary songs, you have to be able to play the traditionals, because it's about the way the instruments interact with each other."

These days, when Oleander gets a new player in the band who doesn't know the music's history or understand the rhythmic feel of a split bass and snare drum, he frequently turns to YouTube. There, the gamut of New Orleans street music, from jazz funerals to second lines to Mardi Gras Indian performances, provides a vicarious experience of the culture.

Many other artists today are using what they find on YouTube as a point of departure for entirely new concepts. Inspired by the West African-rooted drum rhythms of Mardi Gras Indians and, to a lesser extent, New Orleans brass bands, British reedist Tom Challenger has reworked classics like "Indian Red" and "Shallow Water," along with some of his own melodies, for *Spy Boy* (Babel), an album by his brass octet, Brass Mask. Henry Threadgill's "Just The Facts And Pass The Bucket" held equal weight to the Indians' music as Challenger worked to, in his words, "create a thicker harmonic backdrop to some of the melodies."



Jack Brass Band

Even in New Orleans, it's not uncommon for brass-band or Indian culture to simply provide a springboard for innovation. The Brass-A-Holics, for example, merge a brass-band style with go-go, the genre born in Washington, D.C. Setlists can range from a Journey cover to a go-go-infused original to a Chuck Brown-style "Hoochie Coochie Man," and the band's inclusion of electric keyboards, a drumkit and a percussion setup with congas and bongos pushes the music pretty far outside of New Orleans brass-band territory.

"We're not really trying to emulate the brass-band sound," explains saxophonist Robin Clabby. "What's more important from the brass-band tradition is the way we play together. It's a polyphonic thing: We're really listening to each other all the time."

The band's leader, trombonist Winston Turner, is an alumnus of both the Pinstripes, a more traditional brass band, and the pop-minded Soul Rebels. "It's a matter of wanting to go in new musical directions, particularly if you grew up playing inside the tradition," says Clabby. "At some point you either incorporate that or you don't feel fulfilled musically."

Like so many other bands in New Orleans today, the Brass-A-Holics' exploration of other genres within the brass-band tradition is a musical descendant of what Benny Jones and the Dirty Dozen did in the late '70s, when a lull in brass-band gigs opened the door to previously unseen experimentation. Now that such experimentation has become part of the tradition, it's hard to imagine a dearth of gigs for brass outfits.

On the same November Sunday as the Sudan's second line, brass lovers in nearby Congo Square knocked out skip-stepping, high-to-low dance moves like those being employed in the parade. They were dancing before a stage in this case, but the instruments—a tuba, two trumpets, drums and handheld percussion, among others—were brass band-based. The music, however, was not.

As the horns improvised over parade rhythms, bandleader Earl Scioneaux III built what he calls "electronic beds" of music, thick with real-time-manipulated samples of phrases the acoustic instruments in the band had just played.

Scioneaux, a.k.a. The Madd Wikkid, was leading the latest incarnation of his Brassft Punk project, in which a New Orleans-style brass band plays arrangements of Daft Punk, the French electronic-music duo that had a worldwide pop hit in 2013 with "Get Lucky."

"I like the idea of taking electronic music that was never intended to be played with real instruments and bring it down and do it with [brass]," says Scioneaux, a producer whose recent engineering credits range from Preservation Hall Jazz Band to the electronic act Pretty Lights.

After enlisting the Soul Rebels to help test out the music, Scioneaux set up a Kickstarter fund in hopes of raising \$10,000 to pay the musicians and cover the studio expenses. Before the deadline had even arrived, he'd raised more than double the goal.

"People all over the U.S. ended up ordering it, and there were a ton of international orders," he says. "I had orders going all over Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore. It was kind of amazing when I started looking at the addresses and I realized how far this had reached."

Indeed, globalization has never sounded so local.

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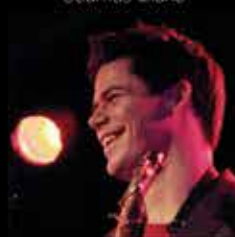
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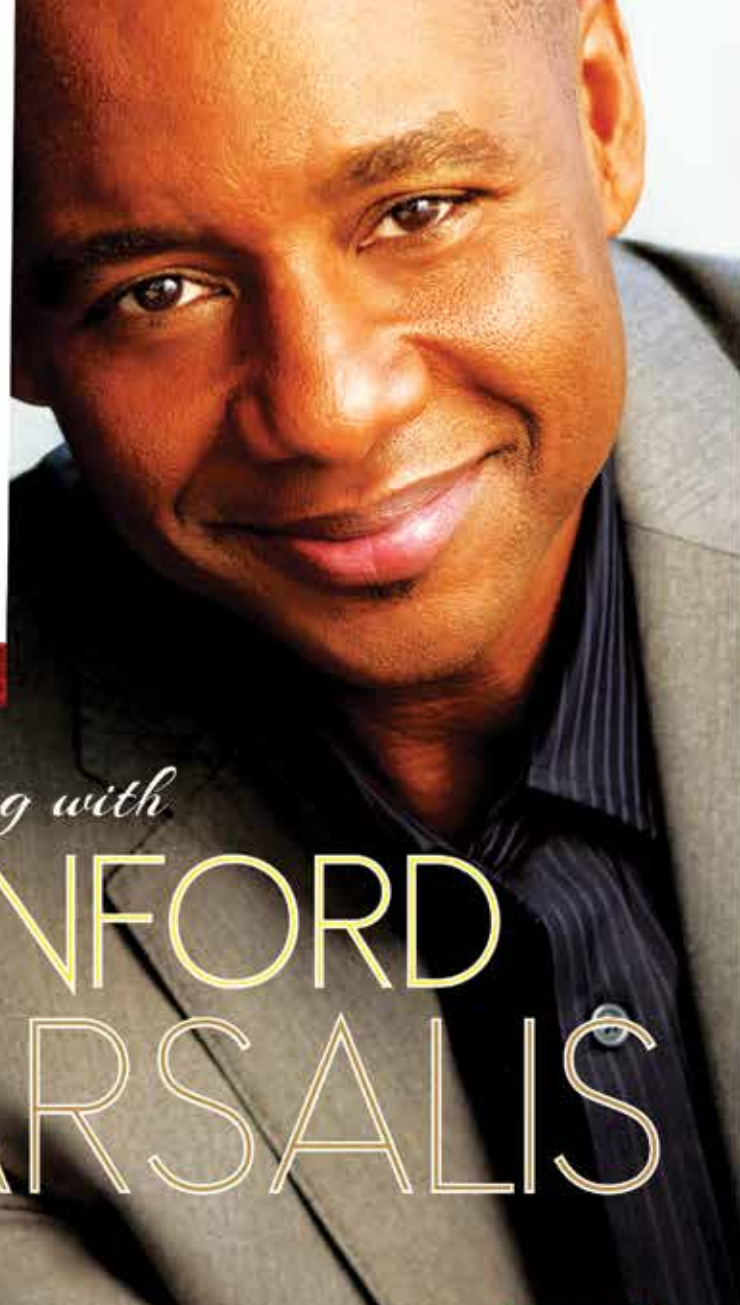






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e're proud to present our annual Jazz Venue Guide—a musical map for jazz lovers. On the following pages, the listings are divided by geographic region, and a star beside a venue name indicates that there is an advertisement for that establishment within this guide. Also, woven among the listings are sidebar interviews with five great jazz artists, who tell us what their favorite clubs are, and why. This detailed guide will help you plan your journeys, whether it's a cab ride to a local gig or an excursion to the other side of the world. Dig in.



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## MASSACHUSETTS

## The Acton Jazz Café

103 NAGOG PARK  
ACTON, MA  
(978) 263-6161  
actonjazzcafe.com

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## Chianti Tuscan Restaurant &amp; Jazz Lounge

285 CABOT ST.  
BEVERLY, MA  
(978) 921-2233  
chiantibeverly.com

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1353 CAMBRIDGE ST.  
CAMBRIDGE, MA  
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lilypadinman.com

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regattabarjazz.com

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## Wally's Café

427 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.  
BOSTON, MA  
(617) 424-1408  
wallyscafe.com

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## NEW YORK

## 55 Bar

55 CHRISTOPHER ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 929-9883

This basement room, rem-

iniscent of the Prohibition era, is somewhat of a laboratory for jazz, funk and blues artists in Greenwich Village.

## Birdland

315 W. 44TH ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 581-3080  
birdlandjazz.com

Named after Charlie Parker, this historic club, now in its third incarnation, boasts performances from top jazz artists and has its own big band.

## Blue Note

131 W. THIRD ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 475-8592  
bluenote.net

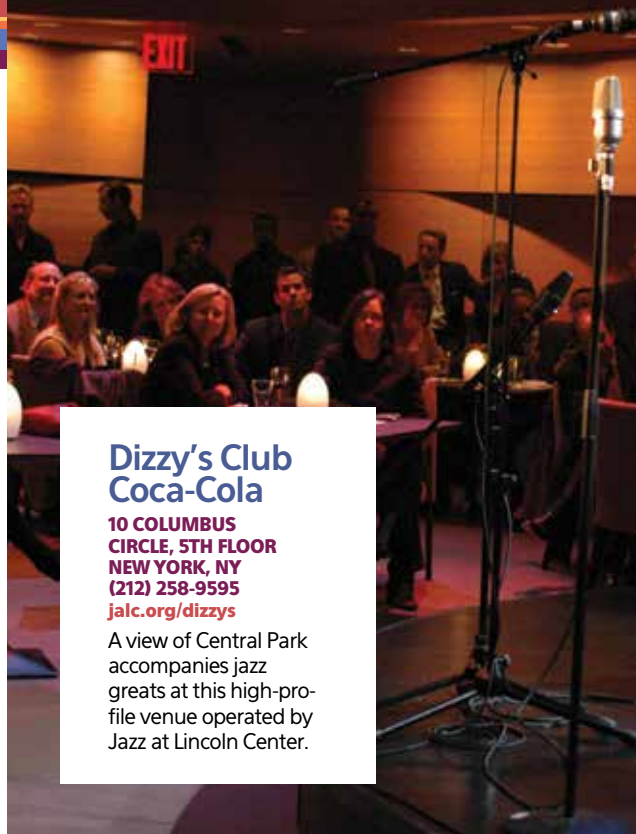
The Blue Note continues to present legends such as Phil Woods but doesn't exclude up-and-comers.

## Cornelia Street Café

29 CORNELIA ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(219) 989-9319  
corneliastreetcafe.com

This charming Greenwich Village café presents hip performances and outdoor dining. In 2013, it hosted Mostly Other People Do The Killing and Hiromi.

Wynton Marsalis performs at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola.



## Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola

10 COLUMBUS  
CIRCLE, 5TH FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 258-9595  
jalc.org/dizzys

A view of Central Park accompanies jazz greats at this high-profile venue operated by Jazz at Lincoln Center.

## Fat Cat

75 CHRISTOPHER ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 675-6056  
fatcatmusic.org

This cavernous pool hall hosts stride piano, late-night jam sessions, a big band and visits from saxophonist George Braith.

## Iridium

1650 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 582-2121  
theirdium.com

The late Les Paul's longtime Monday-night spot, the Iridium books eclectically—in 2013 it welcomed Grace Kelly and Ginger Baker.

## ★ Scullers Jazz Club

400 SOLDIERS  
FIELD RD.  
BOSTON, MA  
(617) 562-4111  
scullersjazz.com

A Boston landmark, this 200-seat room in the Doubletree Suites is celebrating its 25th anniversary of hosting internationally known jazz, blues and soul acts such as Fred Hersch and Arturo Sandoval.



Poncho Sanchez performs at Scullers Jazz Club.



FRANK STEWART

# GREAT JAZZ ROOMS

## Rez Abbasi



### The Jazz Standard in

New York has a real good combination of elegance, space and warmth. When you have all three of those, you really capture something. The stage has enough depth that the band can set up in a variety of ways; you don't have to set up in a line. If the stage

doesn't have any depth, there's not as much a sense of a band because of the sightlines. Imagine if you're playing where everybody is in a straight line; not only can't you see them but you're also not hearing the direct output of their instruments. Some clubs have stages that force you into that straight line. I think most musicians would agree that it makes it hard to cue or feel like a band. It's like in a studio, where you're separated from one another. The whole purpose is to play with the band. The staff is very friendly and all that stuff counts. The Jazz Standard offers that room.



I really like the arena-style seating of the **Bimhuis** in Amsterdam, the feeling of the audience being 180 degrees around me. It feels more intimate. You never feel claustrophobic, because of the architecture that includes a big window that looks out on the street. It's an all-inclusive feeling; we're playing for the patrons there, but we're also part of this wider world. It's the best of both situations; you're there inside with the audience but you're also part of the outside city. It's very different from a lot of clubs that are in basements. There is a bar, but it's just outside the room."

**The guitarist's latest album is 2012's *Continuous Beat* on Enja. He plans to release a new one in 2014 with the Rez Abbasi Acoustic Quartet.**

—Geoffrey Himes

## Jazz Gallery

**1160 BROADWAY, 5TH FLOOR  
NEW YORK, NY  
(646) 494-3625  
[jazzgallery.org](http://jazzgallery.org)**

This nonprofit hub of creativity allows new jazzers to hone their chops and has served as a launching pad for now-renowned names like Jason Moran.

## Jazz Standard

**116 E. 27TH ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 576-2232  
[jazzstandard.com](http://jazzstandard.com)**

The Standard is home to many things: great sound, the Mingus Big Band and the best meal you'll have at a New York jazz club.

## Le Poisson Rouge

**158 BLEECKER ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 505-3474  
[lepoissonrouge.com](http://lepoissonrouge.com)**

"Serving art and alcohol" is the tagline of this edgy club that books left-of-center artists like Ólöf Arnalds; but Bill Frisell's Big Sur Quintet performed in 2013 as well. The club is in the same building that once housed the Village Gate.



## MCG Jazz


1815 METROPOLITAN ST.  
PITTSBURGH, PA  
(412) 323-4000  
[mcgjazz.org](http://mcgjazz.org)

MCG Jazz presents artists who bolster its educational mission. Last year, the 350-seat venue welcomed Ahmad Jamal, The New Gary Burton Quartet and The Bad Plus.







Paul Winter (second from left) performs at MCG Jazz.

BRANDON MCCHESEY



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510-238-9200

[yoshis.com](http://yoshis.com)



"...I am looking forward visiting my Viennese home again in the future."  
(Brantford Marsalis)



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[Facebook.com/Bethesda.Blues.Jazz](https://www.facebook.com/Bethesda.Blues.Jazz)  
 Follow us on Twitter: @BethesdaBlues

## ShapeShifter Lab

18 WHITWELL PLACE  
NEW YORK, NY  
(646) 820-9452  
shapeshifterlab.com

This versatile, interdisciplinary performance and art space owned by bassist Matthew Garrison books top-notch, innovative acts.

## Smalls

183 W. 10TH ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 252-5091  
smallsjazzclub.com

Smalls keeps faithful jazz fans coming back with an unwavering devotion to providing a place for new and seasoned artists to perform. The 60-seat basement club also has a video archive of every show played and live-streams its performances.

## Smoke

2751 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 864-6662  
smokejazz.com

Smoke Jazz & Supper Club-Lounge has space for just over 50 in its plush velvet, vintage-styled room that offers jazz and dinner seven nights a week. Smoke counts organist Mike LeDonne and guitarist Peter Bernstein among its regulars.

## The Stone

AVENUE C AT 2ND ST.  
NEW YORK, NY  
thestonenc.com

John Zorn's experimental-music temple conjures up magic six nights a week.

## The Village Vanguard

178 7TH AVE. S.  
NEW YORK, NY  
(212) 255-4037  
villagevanguard.com

Established clubs all around the world compare

themselves to this classic basement venue with a famed history and a tradition of bringing the world's best to its stage.

## PENNSYLVANIA

### Chris' Jazz Café

1421 SANSOM ST.  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
(215) 568-3131  
chrisjazzcafe.com

This full-time jazz club presents local and national artists six nights a week, with late-night jams on Tuesdays and weekends.

### Deer Head Inn

5 MAIN ST.  
DELAWARE WATER GAP, PA  
(570) 424-2000  
deerheadinn.com

This site of the well-known live recording by Keith Jarrett's trio is located two hours from Philly. It's home base for a coterie of nearby residents such as saxophonist Phil Woods.

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

### ★ Bethesda Blues & Jazz Supper Club

7719 WISCONSIN AVE.  
BETHESDA, MD  
(240) 330-4500  
bethesdabluesjazz.com

Founded in 1938, this historic club seats up to 500 and hosts national artists like Omar Sosa, René Marie and Freddy Cole.

### Blues Alley

1073 WISCONSIN AVE. N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
(202) 337-4141  
bluesalley.com

Home of the Big Band Jam festival, this jazz and supper club is located in the heart of Georgetown in an 18th century house.

### Bohemian Caverns

2001 11TH STREET N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
(202) 299-0800  
bohemiancaverns.com

Founded in 1926, this spot

not only attracts major headliners, it provides a platform for D.C.'s thriving jazz scene. Monday nights are reserved for the Bohemian Caverns Jazz Orchestra.

### Columbia Station

2325 18TH STREET N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
(202) 462-6040  
columbiastationdc.com

This homey venue delivers nightly jazz alongside all-American cuisine without the flash—or a cover charge.

### Twins Jazz Lounge

1344 U STREET N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
(202) 234-0072  
twinsjazz.com

The U-Street club often promotes the city's riskiest lineups, including artists visiting from Scandinavia and Brazil.



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Regina Carter, *Southern Comfort* APRIL 22

An Evening with Branford Marsalis MAY 7

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**www.americanjazzmuseum.com**



## SOUTH

### FLORIDA

#### Bradfordville Blues Club

7152 MOSES LANE  
TALLAHASSEE, FL  
(850) 906-0766  
bradfordvillebluesclub.com

This one-room juke joint hosted Eddie Shaw and Johnny Rawls last December.

#### Heidi's Jazz Club

7 NORTH ORLANDO AVE.  
COCOA BEACH, FL  
(321) 783-4559  
heidisjazzclub.com

Heidi's has certainly carved out a niche for itself in the Sunshine State, serving up jazz five nights a week as well as top-notch German cuisine.

### GEORGIA

#### Churchill Grounds

660 PEACHTREE ST.  
ATLANTA, GA  
(404) 876-3030  
churchillgrounds.com

Churchill Grounds is the most recognizable name in Atlanta. Thursday nights are reserved for the Harper Family Jam Session, a decade-long tradition, while weekends feature acts like Russell Gunn.

#### Twain's Billiards and Tap

211 EAST TRINITY PLACE  
DECATUR, GA  
(404) 373-0063  
twains.net

Revitalize a Tuesday night with Twain's weekly jam sessions led

by the Joe Gransden Quartet, freshly brewed draught beer and 11 pool tables.

### LOUISIANA

#### d.b.a.

618 FRENCHMEN ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 942-3731  
dbaneworleans.com

d.b.a. is one of the more eclectic bars in the area, stirring up a dynamic stew of local brass bands, NOLA-style jazz and blues. The enormous

beer and whiskey selection is just as diverse.

#### Fritzel's European Jazz Pub

733 BOURBON ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 586-4800  
fritzelsjazz.net

Housed in a historic 1831 building, Fritzel's has been serving up traditional musical fare since it was founded in 1969.

#### The Maple Leaf Bar

8316 OAK ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 866-9359  
mapleleafbar.com

A pressed-tin ceiling, verdant backyard patio and consistently memorable shows such as the Rebirth Brass Band's Tuesday-night stands make this historic Uptown spot a top-notch choice.

#### Palm Court Jazz Cafe

1204 DECATUR ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 525-0200  
palmcourtjazzcafe.com

A mecca for jazz in the French Quarter, this club's decor and local acts are a nod to traditional New Orleans jazz.

#### Preservation Hall

726 ST. PETER ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 522-2841  
preservationhall.com

Three blocks from the Mississippi river, this small, barless room built in 1750 has been preserving and sustaining

traditional jazz since 1961 with three shows a night from veteran performers.

#### Spotted Cat

623 FRENCHMEN ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 943-3887  
spottedcatmusicclub.com

This cozy hideaway presents local jazz and blues acts such as The New Orleans Cotton Mouth Kings and Meschiya Lake with no cover.

#### ★ Snug Harbor

626 FRENCHMEN ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 949-0696  
snugjazz.com

With a contemporary vibe, this bar and restaurant with a separate, two-level music room offers prime views of artists such as Ellis Marsalis and Wycliffe Gordon.

#### Three Muses

536 FRENCHMEN ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 252-4801  
threemusesnola.com

Featuring multiple live acts each night, no cover charge and delicious small plates, Three Muses is a prime destination for hungry music lovers.

#### Tipitina's

501 NAPOLEON AVE.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 895-8477  
tipitinas.com

This historic Uptown music mecca presents brass bands, jazz, funk and rock acts, while its affiliate foundation helps fund local music education.

#### ★ Scat Jazz Lounge

111 W. 4TH ST.  
FORT WORTH, TX  
(817) 870-9100  
scatjazzlounge.com

This subterranean jazz bar is a stylish hideaway that provides fans with a music-focus refuge in Fort Worth's central Sundance Square.



#### The Maison

508 FRENCHMEN ST.  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
(504) 371-5543  
maisonfrenchmen.com

With three stages running diverse acts every night, this lively spot is a must-visit on New Orleans' famous Frenchmen Street.

# GREAT JAZZ ROOMS

## MISSISSIPPI

### 119 Underground

119 SOUTH PRESIDENT ST.  
JACKSON, MS  
(601) 352-2322  
[underground119.com](http://underground119.com)

This hidden gem in downtown Jackson serves up a medley of both Southern music and food just about every night. Catch blues guitarist and vocalist Jesse Robinson for one of his regular performances or check out new, local talent that spans blues, funk and jazz.

### Ground Zero Blues Club

252 DELTA AVE.  
CLARKSDALE, MS  
(662) 621-9009  
[groundzerobluesclub.com](http://groundzerobluesclub.com)

Actor and Mississippi native Morgan Freeman is part owner of this club, which neighbors the Delta Blues Museum. The club offers authentic Delta blues from locals Wednesdays through Saturdays.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

### ★ The Jazz Corner

1000 WILLIAM HILTON PKWY.  
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC  
(843) 842-8620  
[thejazzcorner.com](http://thejazzcorner.com)

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

## TENNESSE

### F. Scott's Restaurant and Jazz Bar

2210 CRESTMOOR RD.  
NASHVILLE, TN  
(615) 269-5861  
[fscotts.com](http://fscotts.com)

This lounge is paired with an upscale restaurant and offers jazz six nights a week with no cover.

### The Jazz Cave

1319 ADAMS ST.  
NASHVILLE, TN  
(615) 242-5299  
[nashvillejazz.org](http://nashvillejazz.org)

The Cave, which holds about 90, is the listening room of the Nashville Jazz Workshop, an educational, community-oriented space for performances by artists such as Roland Barber and the Bruce Dudley Quartet.

## Cyrus Chestnut

“The Village Vanguard is a special place for me. A lot of history and spirit looms in those red curtains and on that stage. Every time I've sat down at the piano there, it's a special time. I remember the first time I played at the Vanguard. There was a picture of Monk and a picture of Dizzy hanging above the piano, and as I started playing, those pictures started talking to me. It was like they were saying, 'OK, you're here now. You're welcome here.' After I left Betty Carter's band and I was working with Roy Hargrove while I was waiting for my first American album, *Revelation*, to come out, those same pictures started talking to me again. They said, 'This isn't it; it's time for you to headline.'”

“Dizzy's at Lincoln Center has a different audience. If you headline at Dizzy's, you know you've made it. Different people come to different places. The patrons who go to Lincoln Center support Dizzy's, while the downtown people support the Vanguard. Both Dizzy's and the Vanguard are tourist destinations, so you get a lot of out-of-towners, so you get people from all over the world, and I like that.”

**The pianist's latest album is 2013's *Soul Brother Cool* (WJ3). He recently recorded a live album at Smoke that will come out in 2014.**

—Geoffrey Himes



## TEXAS

### Cezanne

4100 MONTROSE BLVD.  
HOUSTON, TX  
(832) 592-7464  
[cezannejazz.com](http://cezannejazz.com)

With an art-filled upstairs and listening room, Cezanne is sublime for experiencing Houston's best music.

### Elephant Room

315 CONGRESS AVE.  
AUSTIN, TX  
(512) 473-2279  
[elephantroom.com](http://elephantroom.com)

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





The John Pizzarelli Quartet performs on the Nighttown stage.

BRUCE HENNES

## OHIO

## Nighttown

12387 CEDAR RD.  
CLEVELAND, OH  
(216) 795-0550  
[nighttowncleveland.com](http://nighttowncleveland.com)

Founded in 1965, this colorful joint combines its white-tablecloth restaurant with performances from artists like Kurt Elling and Ann Hampton Callaway on a small stage in a packed room.

## MIDWEST

## ILLINOIS

## Andy's Jazz Club

11 E. HUBBARD ST.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(312) 642-6805  
[andysjazzclub.com](http://andysjazzclub.com)

This energetic bar in Chicago's swanky Gold Coast area draws after-work jazz lovers with performances by artists like Dana Hall and Bobby Broom.

## B.L.U.E.S.

2519 N. HALSTED ST.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(773) 528-1012  
[chicagobluesbar.com](http://chicagobluesbar.com)

The name says it all. As one of the Windy City's finest blues establishments, this Lincoln Park spot has been serving up live blues since 1979.

## Buddy Guy's Legends

700 S. WABASH AVE.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(312) 427-1190  
[buddyguy.com](http://buddyguy.com)

Renowned guitarist Buddy Guy's venue is home base for Chicago's dynamic blues scene. Enjoy seven nights of live blues surrounded by decor that includes a few of Guy's Grammys and a collection of memorabilia autographed by B.B. King, Carlos Santana and Eric Clapton.

## Constellation

3111 N. WESTERN AVE.  
CHICAGO, IL  
[constellation-chicago.com](http://constellation-chicago.com)

Founded in 2013 by drummer and composer Mike Reed, this modern, progressive venue focuses on forward-thinking jazz

and contemporary classical music. Recent performers have included Michael Formanek, the Spektral Quartet and The Marquis Hill Trio.

## Elastic

2830 N. MILWAUKEE AVE.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(773) 772-3616  
[elasticrevolution.com](http://elasticrevolution.com)

This multidisciplinary space features a Thursday night improvisational music series. Last year, Jason Roebke, Steve Marquette and Aram Shelton all paid a visit.

## The Green Mill

4802 N. BROADWAY ST.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(773) 878-5552  
[greenmilljazz.com](http://greenmilljazz.com)

Patricia Barber is a regular performer at Chicago's oldest continually running jazz club, once

a hangout for Prohibition-era bootleggers.

## Hungry Brain

2319 W. BELMONT AVE.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(773) 709-1401  
[umbrellamusic.org](http://umbrellamusic.org)

Part of the forward-looking Umbrella Music collective, this avant-garde space is known among local and visiting improvisers for its Sunday Transmission Series.

## Jazz Showcase

806 S. PLYMOUTH CT.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(312) 360-0234  
[jazzshowcase.com](http://jazzshowcase.com)

One of the best locales for jazz in Chicago saw performances from Ravi Coltrane, Miguel Zenón and Charles McPherson last year.

## Katerina's

1920 W. IRVING PARK RD.  
CHICAGO, IL  
(773) 709-1401  
[katerinas.com](http://katerinas.com)

From bebop to gypsy jazz, this venue boasts an eclectic program and fine dining.

## Kingston Mines

2548 N. HALSTED  
CHICAGO, IL  
(773) 477-4647  
[kingstonmines.com](http://kingstonmines.com)

Chicago's legendary blues bar with a '60s vibe is the spot to go for spirited blues and ribs every day until 4 a.m. (5 a.m. on Saturdays).

## SPACE

1245 CHICAGO AVE.  
EVANSTON, IL  
(847) 492-8860  
[evanston.space.com](http://evanston.space.com)

With no seat further than 40 feet from the stage,

# GREAT JAZZ ROOMS

listeners can expect an up-close experience watching artists such as Allen Toussaint, Chick Corea, Kat Edmonson and Shemekia Copeland.

## INDIANA

### Chatterbox Jazz Club

435 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN  
(317) 636-0584  
chatterboxjazz.com

This spot in the "cross-roads of America" has featured jazz performances every night for three decades.

### ★ The Jazz Kitchen

5377 N. COLLEGE AVE.  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN  
(317) 253-4900  
thejazzkitchen.com

With a Latino/New Orleans fusion-type menu, the Jazz Kitchen features regional and national jazz entertainment and Latin dance nights.

## MICHIGAN

### Baker's Keyboard Lounge

20510 LIVERNOIS AVE.  
DETROIT, MI  
(313) 345-6300  
theofficialbakers  
keyboardlounge.com

Long the hub of Detroit's jazz scene, Baker's features top local artists such as Allan Barnes and Deon Yates.

### Cliff Bell's

2030 PARK AVE.  
DETROIT, MI  
(313) 961-2543  
cliffbells.com

This landmark club in the heart of Motor City's entertainment district has retained its lavish art deco atmosphere

since 1935. Programming is mostly local, but artists from out of town travel through as well.

### Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe

97 KERCHEVAL AVE.  
GROSS POINTE, MI  
(313) 882-5299  
dirtydogjazz.com

Artists like Freddy Cole and Sean Dobbins often perform in this club, which has tantalizing small plates.

### Kerrytown Concert House

415 NORTH FOURTH AVE.  
ANN ARBOR, MI  
(734) 769-2999  
kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Home to Edgefest, this 110-seat venue presents jazz artists such as Omar Sosa and Dave Douglas, but its programming also includes classical and cabaret music.

## MISSOURI

### ★ The Blue Room

1616 E. 18TH ST.  
KANSAS CITY, MO  
(816) 474-2929  
americanjazzmuseum.org

Located next to the American Jazz Museum in the historic 18th & Vine district, this '30s-inspired room offers jazz four nights a week.

## WISCONSIN

### Jazz Estate

2423 N. MURRAY AVE.  
MILWAUKEE, WI  
(414) 964-9923  
jazzestate.com

This vintage '50s hipster scene brings five nights of jazz a week to Milwaukee jazz lovers.

## Terri Lyne Carrington

“ I really like venues where they have a good sound system and have done their work to get people into the club. The drums are the loudest acoustic instrument on the stage, and clubs don't always spend the money for a good monitor system, so I'm often struggling to hear. I need to hear the bass and the piano at least. I recently played the **Hamilton** in D.C. and was impressed by the sound system there. The sound is good because they took the time to make it sound better. They also videotape there, so they've taken the time to install cameras and create a sound that you can record. Rock clubs tend to have better sound systems, because they're dealing with louder music. I like playing jazz in rock clubs.



ANNETTE BROWN

“ When you talk about clubs abroad, the **Blue Note in Tokyo** has really good sound. It's almost too good; it's so pristine it sounds a bit sterile. As a drummer, it's nice when the sound bounces a little bit but not too much. But I appreciate that the Japanese clubs are more attentive to sound and design clubs with that in mind. They have a good work ethic and choose a club with the sound in mind. They don't choose just any old room and put a jazz club in there, as they do sometimes in the States.

“ Like a lot of people, I like to play the **Vanguard** in New York because of its historical value. I also like that it's been run by a woman for all these years. Lorraine Gordon's a real jazz lover; she's written books and knows her stuff, so I want to give her props.” (Visit **Hamilton** at thehamiltondc.com; **Blue Note Tokyo**, bluenote.co.jp.)

**The drummer's latest album is 2013's *Money Jungle: Provocative In Blue* (Concord). She is currently working on a sequel to 2011's *The Mosaic Project* (Concord).**

—Geoffrey Himes



## Dimitriou's Jazz Alley

2033 SIXTH AVE.  
SEATTLE, WA  
(206) 441-9729  
jazzalley.com

For more than three decades, Dimitriou's has been one of Seattle's premier jazz clubs, presenting artists like Roy Hargrove, Louis Hayes and Rachelle Ferrell with great sight lines and incredible sound.

The Nnenna Freelon Band performs at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley.

BRUCE C. MOORE

## WEST

### ARIZONA

## The Nash

110 E ROOSEVELT ST.  
PHOENIX, AZ  
(602) 795-0464  
thenash.org

The Nash's straight-to-the-point motto "jazz happens here" describes nearly every night at this nonprofit performance and education center in the Roosevelt Row arts district. The Nash celebrated its first anniversary with a performance by Phoenix native Lewis Nash, whom the club is named after.

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

## Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society

311 MIRADA RD.  
HALF MOON BAY, CA  
(650) 726-4143  
bachddsoc.org

Complete with ocean views, this nonprofit has

been a seaside home for jazz since 1964.

## ★ Kuumbwa Jazz Center

320-2 CEDAR ST.  
SANTA CRUZ, CA  
(831) 427-2277  
kuumbwajazz.org

Swahili for "an act of spontaneous creativity," Kuumbwa recently hosted Yellowjackets and the Christian McBride Trio.

## Savanna Jazz

2937 MISSION ST.  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
(415) 285-3369  
savannajazz.com

This educator-run bar, restaurant and jazz club features jazz, Brazilian and Latin-jazz music five nights a week.

## ★ Yoshi's Oakland Jazz Club

510 EMBARCADERO WEST  
OAKLAND, CA

(510) 238-9200  
yoshis.com/oakland

The most venerable jazz club east of the Bay Bridge, Yoshi's Oakland has been serving up world-class jazz and traditional Japanese fare for 40 years. Lavay Smith, Gregory Porter and Louis Hayes all performed last year.

## ★ Yoshi's San Francisco Jazz Club

1330 FILLMORE ST.  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
(415) 655-5600  
yoshis.com/sanfrancisco

Designed by award-winning architect Mori Moto, this state-of-the-art venue is San Francisco's jazz jewel.

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## The Baked Potato

3787 CAHUENGA BLVD.

STUDIO CITY, CA  
(818) 980-1615  
thebakedpotato.com

Founded in 1970 by keyboardist Don Randi, the Baked Potato is a funky and homegrown landmark perfect for jazz heads and fans of enormous, stuffed baked potatoes.

## Blue Whale

123 ASTRONAUT E. S.  
ONIZUKA STREET #301  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
(213) 620-0908  
bluewhalemusic.com

This jazz and art spot in L.A.'s Little Tokyo is a hidden jewel that artists like Grace Kelly and Laurence Hobgood have visited recently.

## Catalina Bar & Grill

6725 W. SUNSET BLVD. #100  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
(323) 466-2210  
catalinajazzclub.com

A stopover for touring legends and locals, Catalina

Bar & Grill is the longstanding oasis on Sunset Boulevard, tucked into an unassuming building.

## ★ Lobero Theatre

33. E CANON PERDIDO ST.  
SANTA BARBARA, CA  
(805) 963-0761  
lobero.com

The oldest continually operating theater in the state, this recently renovated jazz room will host the Newport Jazz Festival: Now 60 featuring Anat Cohen, Randy Brecker, Karrin Allyson and others in March.

## Steamers Jazz Club and Cafe

138 W. COMMONWEALTH AVE.  
FULLERTON, CA  
(714) 871-8800  
steamersjazz.com

Steamers is a well-established haven for SoCal's finest players and features big bands every Monday.

# GREAT JAZZ ROOMS

## Upstairs at Vitello's

4349 TUJUNGA AVENUE  
STUDIO CITY, CA  
(818) 769-0905  
vitellosjazz.com

Once the hangout of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, this Italian restaurant doubles as a trendy jazz club that has recently hosted artists such as Sasha's Bloc and the Nick Mancini Quartet.

## Vibrato Grill Jazz

2930 N. BEVERLY GLEN CIRCLE  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
(310) 474-9400  
vibratogrilljazz.com

Eight-time Grammy winner Herb Alpert owns this welcoming restaurant and club that features jazz acts such as the Bob Sheppard Trio and Bill Cunliffe.

## COLORADO

## Dazzle

930 LINCOLN ST.  
DENVER, CO  
(303) 839-5100  
dazzlejazz.com

The walls of Dazzle Jazz Showroom are acoustically treated to ensure an optimal listening experience for acts like Kneebody and Sean Jones.

## NEW MEXICO

## Outpost

210 YALE BLVD. SE  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
(505) 268-0044  
outpostspace.org

This nonprofit space presents more than 100 shows a year from artists like Charles Lloyd with Bill Frisell and Peter Brötzmann.

## OREGON

## Jimmy Mak's

221 NW 10TH AVE.  
PORTLAND, OR  
(503) 295-6542  
jimmymaks.com

Portland's signature club in the artsy Pearl District is a handsomely decorated room hosting local acts and national talent such as Lucian Ban and Mat Maneri.

## WASHINGTON

## Boxley's

101 NORTH BEND WAY  
NORTH BEND, WA  
(425) 292-9307  
boxleysplace.com

Boxley's lively jazz room books artists by Seattle's Pony Boy label including Danny Kolke and Bernie Jacobs.

## Egan's Ballard Jam House

1707 NW MARKET ST.  
SEATTLE, WA  
(206) 789-1621  
ballardjamhouse.com

This small black box isn't short on spirit, welcoming both national touring musicians and student groups.

## Tula's

2214 SECOND AVE.  
SEATTLE, WA  
(206) 443-4221  
tulas.com

A home of the Earshot Jazz Festival, Tula's is a homey spot for locals to hang out and enjoy jazz and American and Mediterranean cuisine.

## Roberta Gambarini

“Every club has a different feel. The

**Kuumbwa Jazz Center** in Santa Cruz, for example, is a nonprofit run by a team of volunteers who are happy to share the music. There's a lot of passion in the way they run the club, because it's important for the community. You can tell that they're glad that you're there. Scullers in

Boston has a similar feel. Freddie Taylor, the promoter, and all the staff are very friendly, and that makes a difference. You feel welcome, and when you feel at ease you can perform at your best.

“**The Blue Note in New York** draws a crowd from all over the world, and that makes for a different energy in the room.

Often you have people in the audience who have never heard this kind of music before; you can tell by their reactions. When you play for people who are discovering this music for this first time and the music communicates independently of someone knowing the technical details or the history, that validates something I believe: that this music can be felt and understood across the borders.

“In São Paulo, **Bourbon Street** is wonderful because of the audience's musicality. Things happen in Brazil that don't happen anywhere else in the world. People are used to participating in the performance, especially if you do something from their culture, such as Jobim. Not only will they sing along, but they'll always be in tune, even if the song is complicated. Or they might pick up a box of matches and keep rhythm with you, always in time.”

**The singer's latest album is 2013's Japan-only release, *The Shadow Of Your Smile: Homage To Japan* (Boundee). She is working on an album of South American songs.**

—Geoffrey Himes



JACK VARTOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS



## INTERNATIONAL

Ayub Ogada performs at Harlem Jazz Club.

## ARGENTINA

## Notorious

AV. CALLAO 966  
(C1023AAP)  
BUENOS AIRES  
54 11 4814 6888  
notorious.com.ar

Peruse albums in this venue's attached shop, stroll through its music-filled garden or simply kick back to listen to Brazilian and international acts.

## Thelonious Club

JERÓNIMO SALGUERO  
1884, 12TH FLOOR  
BUENOS AIRES  
54 11 4829 1562  
thelonious.com.ar

This Palermo club is busiest on weekends, but South American free-jazz fills the spot the rest of the week.

## AUSTRALIA

## Bennetts Lane

25 BENNETTS LANE  
MELBOURNE, VIC 3000  
61 3 9663 2856  
bennettslane.com

Bennetts Lane features two rooms: the original Jazz Club for more intimate crowds and the Jazz Lab for the larger, weekend shows. Expect a mix of top-notch Aussie talent.

## The Sound Lounge

CITY ROAD AND  
CLEVELAND ST.  
CHIPPENDALE NSW 2008  
61 2 9351 7940  
sima.org.au

The Sydney Improvised Music Association presents contemporary jazz and improvised music from Australian and international musicians at the Sound Lounge on Friday and Saturday nights.

## AUSTRIA

## Blue Tomato

WURMSERG 21  
A-1150 VIENNA  
43 1 985 5960  
bluetomato.cc

Those in search of experimental jazz should check out this intimate space, which attracts a global array of avant-gardists.

## Jazzit

ELISABETHSTRASSE 11  
5020 SALZBURG  
06 62 883264  
jazzit.at

Salzburg's alternative spot for everything from avant-garde to improvised electronic music also boasts its own label.

## Jazzland

FRANZ JOSEFS-KAI 29  
1010 VIENNA  
43 1 533 2575  
jazzland.at

This club is situated in a 500-year-old cellar and presents a wealth of local acts and the occasional American artist, such as Kevin Mahogany.

## ★ Porgy &amp; Bess

RIEMERGASSE 11  
A-1010 VIENNA  
43 1 512 88 11  
porgy.at

Porgy & Bess is a multilevel club for contemporary jazz complete with a CD shop and fine dining. The Dr. Lonnie Smith Trio, the Ron Carter Trio and the Jack DeJohnette Group all performed in 2013.

## Stockwerk Jazz

JAKOMINIPLATZ 18  
GRAZ  
43 676 31 59 551  
stockwerkjazz.mur.at

This bold club hosts international acts and jazz players from the surrounding region in a comfortable setting.

## SPAIN

## Harlem Jazz Club

CARRER DE COMTESSA  
DE SOBRADIEL 8  
08002 BARCELONA  
93 310 07 55  
harlemjazzclub.es

This venue's musical offerings are vast, diverse and attract the global crowd of the winding Barri Gòtic neighborhood.

## BRAZIL

## Bourbon Street Music Club

RUA DOS CHANÉS,  
127 – MOEMA  
SÃO PAULO  
11 5095 6100  
bourbonstreet.com.br

Brazil may be known for samba, but this club is where locals go to catch up on jazz and blues from artists like Edsel Gomez and Adriano Grineberg.

## The Maze

RUA TAVARES BASTOS 414  
CASA 666  
RIO DE JANEIRO  
55 21 2558 5547  
jazzrio.com

Venture into the Catete neighborhood of Rio and you'll find this gem, which houses live acts and breathtaking views.

## Miranda

1424 AVENIDA BORGES  
DE MEDEIROS  
LAGOA  
RIO DE JANEIRO  
55 21 2239 0305  
mirandabrasil.com.br

This promising club and

upscale restaurant in the heart of Rio draws Brazilian talent as well as international acts.

## CANADA

## L'Astral

305 STE. CATHERINE ST. W.  
MONTREAL, QB  
(514) 288-8882  
sallelastral.com

Owned and operated by the Montreal International Jazz Festival, this 320-seat venue features state-of-the-art sound and performances from both up-and-comers and well-established artists.

## Largo Resto-Club

643 ST. JOSEPH ST.  
EAST QUEBEC CITY, QB  
(418) 529-3111  
largorestoclub.com

Located in a bohemian neighborhood outside the tourist mecca, Largo doubles as a first-class Italian bistro and intimate jazz venue.

## AUSTRALIA

## 505

280 CLEVELAND ST.  
SURRY HILLS, NSW, 2016  
SYDNEY  
61 422 583 190  
venue505.com

This artist-run club seats 160 and presents jazz six nights a week. Australian and European musicians, like Sarah McKenzie and the Peter O'Mara European Quartet, make up most of the programming.

Live music is presented at 505.

MATTHEW VENABLES



## The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar

194 QUEEN ST. W.  
TORONTO, ON  
(416) 598-2475  
therex.ca

"Where jazz lives" is the motto of this student haven in Toronto's entertainment district that offers live jazz every night from artists such as Snarky Puppy and the Dave Douglas Quintet.

## Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill

1254 MACKAY ST.  
MONTREAL, QB  
(514) 931-6808  
upstairsjazz.com

An extremely well-managed basement room, Joel Gibero-vitch's club has developed a strong reputation as a great listening venue, hosting artists like the Eric Saint-Laurent Trio.

## Yardbird Suite

11 TOMMY BANKS WAY  
EDMONTON, AB  
(780) 432-0428  
yardbirdsuite.com

Running since 1957, one of the highlights of this Edmonton

Jazz Society-run spot is the impressive Tuesday-night jams.

### CHINA

## Fringe Dairy

FRINGE CLUB, 2 LOWER  
ALBERT ROAD, CENTRAL  
HONG KONG  
852 2521 7251  
hkfringeclub.com

Included in the Fringe Club network of art, music and theater spaces is Fringe Dairy, the premier spot for jazz in Hong Kong. Built in an early 20th century dairy shop, this intimate club has been hosting a hodgepodge of jazz acts and styles for 30 years.

### COSTA RICA

## Jazz Café

2, SAN PEDRO  
NEXT TO BANCO POPULAR  
AT SAN PEDRO OF  
MONTES DE OCA  
2253 8933  
jazzcafecostarica.com

Located right outside capital city San Jose, this club attracts locals, tourists and expats who come to spend a night listening to a mix of Latin or American jazz, blues, salsa and rock. Although a blend of genres is the norm, the dark and lively venue is decorated with busts of jazz legends.

### CZECH REPUBLIC

## AghaRTA Jazz Centrum

ZELEZNA 16  
PRAGUE 1  
222 211 275  
agharta.cz

Named after a Miles Davis album, this Old Town club is housed in the basement of a 14th-century building and includes an extensive CD and merchandise shop. AghaRTA has hosted Chick Corea, Diana Krall and Pat Metheny and a bevy of renowned Czech artists.

## The Jazz Dock

JANÁČKOVO NÁBREŽÍ 2  
150 00 PRAGUE 5  
42 7 7405 8838  
jazzdock.cz

Part indoor, part outdoor, this modern club on the water presents an array of acts from around the globe including Tony Malaby and Rene Trossman.

## Lucerna Music Bar

VODI KOVA 36  
PRAGUE 1  
224-217-108  
musicbar.cz

This modern, energetic club hosts a wide variety of acts and genres from around the world, from the Joshua Redman Quartet to The Roots.

### DENMARK

## Copenhagen Jazzhouse

NIELS HEMMINGSENS GADE 10  
1153 COPENHAGEN  
45 7015 6565  
jazzhouse.dk

A must-visit for fans in the region, this newly renovated historic club packs its programming with European talent.

## Jazzhus Montmartre

ST. REGNEGADE 19A  
1110 COPENHAGEN  
45 3172 3494  
jazzhusmontmartre.dk

Once the European performing home for jazz greats such as Dexter Gordon and Ben Webster, the Jazzhus Montmartre reopened in 2010 and continues its tradition of hosting fine acts such as Charenee Wade and Kris Bowers.

### FINLAND

## Arrhythmia Club

SÄÄSTÖPANKINRANTA 6  
HELSINKI  
358 20 7424240  
juttutupa.com

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

One of the **TOP**  
"GREAT JAZZ ROOMS"  
in the **WORLD!**

—DownBeat Magazine, February 2014



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thejazzcorner.com  
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Hilton Head Island, SC 29928

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# GREAT JAZZ ROOMS

## Mark Turner

“ I like the **Copenhagen Jazz House**, especially now that they’ve changed it. The stage used to be much higher, but now it’s lower. You want the stage to be high enough that the people in the back can see you but not so high that you’re removed from the audience. I love the city, and the audience that comes when I’m there are music lovers, and they put that vibe into the room. The Bimhuis in Amsterdam is different, because the stage is low and the audience is high, more like a theater. You’re on the ground, and I like being on the ground, being grounded. It might be my favorite place to play in the whole world.



“ I like the **Vanguard** in New York because it’s old; the masters played there and their vibrations are still in the air. Those vibrations from the past are important in any walk in life, but in the arts they’re especially important. The arts use the senses to give you a connection to the otherworldly, so it’s good to have those sensual cues. Music gives you that connection to the non-physical in a less abstract way than religion. You’re able to communicate something that you’re a part of, something that’s bigger than you but it comes through you.

You get power from your ancestors. I think places gather vibrations from others who did the same thing in the same place. If you’ve seen people play there, the masters or your heroes on that stage, and then you’re on that stage, it’s very powerful. It has a lot to do with oral tradition, the way knowledge is passed down. The masters say, ‘You’ve seen me do this; now you do it.’ And a physical place is a big part of that; we’re physical beings and we respond to sights, smells, sounds and touch. The people who work at the Vanguard are either musicians or music lovers and that expresses itself in the way they approach their work and their intention.”

**The saxophonist released *Year Of The Snake* (ECM), with the trio *Fly*, and *All Our Reasons* (ECM), with Billy Hart, in 2012. He will release a leader project in 2014 on ECM.**

—Geoffrey Himes

## Storyville

MUSEOKATU 8  
HELSINKI  
358 50 363 2664  
[storyville.fi](http://storyville.fi)

The upstairs Tin Roof piano bar is lively, but the New Orleans-styled basement is the main room where Finnish artists (like Gregg Stafford and His Helsinki Jazz Hounds) and visiting American musicians perform four nights a week.

### FRANCE

## Duc Des Lombards

42 RUE DES LOMBARDS  
PARIS  
33 1 4233 2288  
[ducdeslombards.fr](http://ducdeslombards.fr)

The programming of this cabaret-style space, which has recently included JD Allen and Christian McBride, is equally as memorable as its paraphernalia and albums from jazz greats.

## Le Caveau de la Huchette

5 RUE DE LA HUCHETTE  
PARIS  
33 1 4326 6505  
[caveaudelahuchette.fr](http://caveaudelahuchette.fr)

Dancing is permitted in this storied jazz hole, which was a dungeon during the 1700s.

## New Morning

7-9 RUE DES PETITES  
ÉCURIES, PARIS  
33 1 45 23 51 41  
[newmorning.com](http://newmorning.com)

This Parisian mainstay is more of a concert hall than a club, with a capacity of 500 and programming that blends jazz, blues and world music. Both Sheila E. and John Scofield’s Überjam band performed last year.

## Sunset-Sunside

60, RUE DES LOMBARDS  
PARIS  
33 0 1 40 26 46 60  
[sunset-sunside.com](http://sunset-sunside.com)

The Miguel Zenón Quartet and Susie Arioli are just two of the artists who’ve recently performed at this renowned Parisian club with two separate rooms.

### GERMANY

## A-Trane

PESTALOZZISTRASSE 105  
10625 BERLIN  
49 30 3132550  
[a-trane.de](http://a-trane.de)

This intimate club is a home to Jazzfest Berlin and hosts international artists such as Magnus Lindgren and Cindy Blackman Santana.

## GREECE

### Half Note Jazz Club

TRIVONIANOU 17  
ATHENS 116 36  
30 21 0921 3310  
halfnote.gr/eng

Both Dexter Gordon and Steve Lacy played in Athens' best-known jazz spot. Known for its cozy atmosphere, over 250 performances a year from local artists and international names like Nicholas Payton entertain laid-back crowds.

Carmen Lundy performs at Half Note Jazz Club in Athens.



## Stadtgarten

VENLOER STRASSE 40  
50672 KÖLN  
49 0221 952994 0  
stadtgarten.de

Jazz remains the focus of the otherwise-varied programming at this club, which hosts more than 400 events a year and is set in a lush garden compound.

## ★ Unterfahrt

EINSTEINSTRASSE 42  
81675 MÜNCHEN  
49 0 89 448 27 94  
unterfahrt.de

Munich's primary jazz club, hunkered in underground quarters, covers a gamut of jazz styles and has recently hosted Roberto Santamaría and the John Abercrombie Quartet.

## GREAT BRITAIN

### Aufsturz

ORANIENBURGER STRASSE 67  
10117 BERLIN  
49 30 2804 7407  
aufsturz.de

Avant-garde jazz is prominent at this Berlin hang, as is an extensive menu of top-notch German beers.

### B-Flat

ROSENTHALER STE. 13  
10119 BERLIN-MITTE  
49 30 2833 123  
b-flat-berlin.de

Folks in the know head to B-Flat for its modern local players, who perform in front of the venue's floor-to-ceiling glass facade.

### Quasimodo

KANTSTRASSE 12A  
10623 BERLIN  
49 30 318 045 60  
quasimodo.de

This basement space fits up to 350 patrons and is a home to Jazzfest Berlin. Its programming doesn't neglect funk, soul and blues.

### The 606 Club

90 LOTS ROAD  
LONDON SW10 0QD  
44 0 20 7352 5953  
606club.co.uk

To support the thriving local music scene, this treasured Chelsea spot has a policy of only booking British-based musicians, seven nights a week.





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~Chris Botti



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I've ever known"*  
~Marian McPartland



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~Joe Sample



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best Audiences  
in the country"*  
~Arturo Sandoval


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 www.scullersjazz.com





The Paco de María Big Band performs at Zinco Jazz Club.

## MEXICO

## Zinco Jazz Club

MOTOLINÍA 20, CENTRO  
MEXICO CITY  
01 55 5512 3369  
zincojazz.com

If you're searching for cutting-edge acts and a happening crowd, look no further than this trendy club located in the basement vault of Mexico City's Historic Center.

## Cafe OTO

18-22 ASHWIN ST.  
DALSTON, LONDON  
cafeoto.co.uk

Cafe Oto hosts cool, out-of-the-mainstream local talent as well as U.S. notables such as Wadada Leo Smith. Also great for exotic tea and whiskey.

## Jazz Cafe

5 PARKWAY,  
CAMDEN TOWN  
LONDON, NW1 7PG  
0207 485 6834  
mamacolive.com/  
thejazzcafe

This trendy club caters to blues, soul, acid-jazz and world music.

Pizza Express  
Jazz Club

10 DEAN ST., LONDON W1  
44 20 7437 9595  
pizzaexpresslive.com

This SoHo mainstay is a must-see for fans of the mainstream, not to mention lovers of Italian food and artists on the international club circuit.

Ronnie Scott's  
Jazz Club

47 FRITH ST.  
LONDON  
0 20 7439 0747  
ronniescotts.co.uk

This newly remodeled club has featured the most popular names in modern jazz and jazz-fusion since 1959. The Late Late Show samples some of the best of British jazz in an after-hours area open until 3 a.m.

## The Vortex

11 GILLET SQUARE  
LONDON N16 8AZ  
VORTEXJAZZ.CO.UK  
020 7254 4097  
vortexjazz.co.uk

This nonprofit, volunteer-run venue, located in the Dalston Culture House, books progressively—honoring in on jazz, improvised and experimental music.

## HUNGARY

Budapest  
Jazz Club

HOLLAN ERNO UTCA 7 1136  
BUDAPEST  
06 30 3429 303  
bjc.hu

This Budapest club presents a diverse mixture of Hungarian and international artists. With its palace-like interior, this classy venue is known for its high-quality sound, HD video system and Steinway B piano.

## ISRAEL

## Shablul Jazz

AIRPORT HANGAR 13  
TEL AVIV  
3 546 1891  
shabluljazz.com

Expect a mix of local and jazz, blues and rock acts at this cozy bar situated on the Mediterranean Sea.

## ITALY

## Alexanderplatz

VIA OSTIA, 9  
ROME 00192  
06 39721867  
alexanderplatz.it

One of the famed older and underground jazz clubs, this spot for jazz lovers in Rome has walls covered in autographs of the many musicians who have visited.

Cantina  
Bentivoglio

VIA MASCARELLA 4/B  
BOLOGNA 40126  
39 051 265416  
cantinabentivoglio.it

At Cantina Bentivoglio, excellent food, wine and jazz are served in the atmosphere of a medieval palace cellar. The Tom Harrell Trio recently played the Bologna Jazz Festival here.

La Salumeria  
Della Musica

VIA PASINETTI 4  
MILAN  
02 5680 7350  
lasalumeriadella  
musica.com

Why *not* pair high-quality salami, prosciutto and mortadella with top-notch jazz? That's the question this charcuterie extraordinaire poses, hosting Italian artists, the occasional international name and decadent cuisine.

## JAPAN

## Alfie Jazz House

6-2-35 ROPPONGI  
TOKYO  
81 3 3479 2037  
homepage1.nifty.  
com/live/alfie

The late, great drummer TOKO (Terumasa Hino's brother) opened this intimate spot in 1980. His widow kept its jazz spirit.

## Body And Soul

6-1-3-9 MINAMIAOYAMA  
TOKYO  
81 3 5466 3348  
bodyandsoul.co.jp

After 30 years, Body And Soul remains a go-to locale for music enthusiasts seeking a refined jazz program.

## Jz Brat

26-1 SAKURAGAOKACH  
SHIBUYA-KU  
TOKYO  
03 5728 0168  
jzbrat.com

The self-proclaimed "sound of Tokyo" is located on the second floor of the Cerulean Tower in Tokyo's bustling Shibuya district. This modern club has a fine dining and drink menu and features nightly, mostly Japanese, acts.

## Shinjuku Pit Inn

2-12-4 SHINJUKU  
TOKYO  
81 3 3354 2024  
pit-inn.com

Shinjuku Pit Inn is Japan's answer to the Village Vanguard in New York. An English website has all the details about the first-rate Japanese performers.

## THE NETHERLANDS

## Bimhuis

PIET HEINKADE 3  
1019 BR AMSTERDAM  
31 20 7882188  
bimhuis.com

Amsterdam's celebrated Bimhuis is a center for jazz and a progressive-minded music with a beautiful architectural grace. Last year,

Dafnis Prieto performed.

## Jazz Cafe Altó

**KORTE LEIDSEDEWARSTRAAT  
115, AMSTERDAM  
31 20 626 3249  
jazz-cafe-alto.nl**

Don't let the cozy ambience of this Amsterdam club fool you. This 50-plus-year-old venue boasts a vast musical history and clientele, including Chet Baker, and its seven-days-a-week jazz offerings are a treasure.

### NORWAY

## Nasjonal Jazz Scene

**KARL JOHANS GATE 35  
OSLO  
47 23 89 69 23  
nasjonaljazzscene.no/en**

Norway's most interestingly programmed jazz venue offers a consistently colorful mix of touring artists and avant-garde sounds. ACS and the Carla Bley Trio performed last year.

### PORTUGAL

## Hot Clube de Portugal

**PRACA DE ALEGRIA 48  
LISBON  
351 13 467 369  
hcp.pt**

The starting place for jazz in Portugal, this club runs a respected jazz school and is home base for local talent.

### RUSSIA

## Igor Butman Jazz Club at Chistye Prudy

**ULANSKY LANE, 16  
MOSCOW  
7 495 632 92 64  
butmanclub.ru/cp/en**

Located in the Ulanskaya hotel, this club accommodates founder Igor Butman's outstanding jazz orchestra, Russian musicians and touring artists from around the world.

## Igor Butman Jazz Club at Sokol

**LISA TCHAIKINA ST. 1  
(IN THE 5 OCEAN HOTEL)  
MOSCOW  
7 499 151 01 97  
butmanclub.ru/sokol/en**

Launched in 2011, this is more cozy than the Chistye

Prudy location and showcases singers and small acoustic groups, including those led by drummer Oleg Butman.

## JFC Jazz Club

**TAPESTRY, 33  
ST. PETERSBURG  
7 812 272 9850  
jfc-club.spb.ru**

This simple club has a very open-minded booking policy, but high-quality jazz is its standard.

### SCOTLAND

## The Jazz Bar

**1A CHAMBERS STREET  
EDINBURGH EH1 1HR  
44 0 131 220 4298  
thejazzbar.co.uk**

Patrons of all ages fill this small, candlelit club that showcases Edinburgh's jazz, funk and soul talent seven days a week, often until 3 a.m.

### SOUTH AFRICA

## The Mahogany Room

**79 BUITENKANT ST.  
CAPE TOWN  
27 76 679 2697  
themahoganyroom.com**

The owners of this jazz club took notes from seminal venues such as Smalls, the Village Vanguard and Ronnie Scott's, but the vibe here is innately South African and the program is always a creative concoction of genres.

### SPAIN

## Café Central

**PLAZA DEL ANGEL 10  
MADRID  
34 91 3694 143  
cafecentralmadrid.com**

This informal art deco cafe near the Plaza del Angel offers extended engagements for journeying European and American musicians.

### SWEDEN

## Fasching

**KUNGSGATAN 63  
111 22 STOCKHOLM  
46 8 20 00 66  
fasching.se**

One of the homes to the Stockholm Jazz Festival, this club has been impressing music lovers since 1977. Both local artists and international

talents, such as Magnus Lindgren and Roy Ayers, are abundant.

## Glenn Miller Café

**BRUNNSGATAN 21A  
111 38 STOCKHOLM  
48 8 100 322  
glennmillercafe.com**

This cozy restaurant and bar is one of the best locales to hear up-and-coming post-bop and free-jazz in Scandinavia.

### SWITZERLAND

## Marian's Jazz Room

**ENGESTRASSE 54  
CH-3012 BERN  
41 31 3096 111  
mariansjazzroom.ch**

Nestled downstairs in the Innere Enge Hotel, this venue's stage is a home for both emerging artists and well-known names such as Jeff Hamilton and Lenny White.

### TURKEY

## Istanbul Jazz Center

**ÇIRA AN CADDESİ SALHANE  
SK. NO. 10 34349  
ISTANBUL  
90 212 327 5050  
istanbuljazz.com**

Featuring a Yamaha C7 piano, "JC's" offers jazz and fine dining with performances typically scheduled on weekends. The room also hosts jazz history seminars on Saturday afternoons.

### THAILAND

## Saxophone Pub

**3/8 PHAYATHAI ROAD  
VICTORY MONUMENT  
BANGKOK  
66-022465472  
saxophonepub.com**

Just steps away from the historic Victory Monument, this cool venue in the heart of Bangkok is the stomping grounds for local jazz and blues musicians. Saxophone Pub is open every night and serves up authentic Thai dishes as well.



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Matt Wilson (left) leads his quartet with Jeff Lederer, Kirk Knuffke and Chris Lightcap. The group collaborated with John Medeski on *Gathering Call*.



## Matt Wilson Quartet + John Medeski *Gathering Call*

PALMETTO 2169

★★★★

Jazz musicians tend to overvalue complexity. So it's refreshing when a nonpareil drummer like Matt Wilson drops an album where unpretentious swing on Duke Ellington tunes, blunt cries and world-folk ballads recalling Ornette Coleman or Don Cherry and stark Americana deliver an emotional punch more joyous and honest than many an album with more obvious structural intrigue.

To make music this marvelous you need great players, and cornetist Kirk Knuffke fills that bill, not to mention guest pianist John

Medeski, who lately has been stretching beyond his famous indie jazz trio, Medeski Martin & Wood, in welcome and wonderful ways.

The fun gets under way with Ellington's carefree "Main Stem," with tenor saxophonist Jeff Lederer conjuring the blowsy swagger of Paul Gonsalves. Ellington small-group elegance continues—with a sound pleasantly reminiscent of Wynton Marsalis' *The Marcia Suite*—with Ellington's seldom-played riff "You Dirty Dog," which features one of several shapely Knuffke outings.

"Some Assembly Required" moves into splashier, more contemporary territory, touching on the happily hurried urgency of Mostly Other People Do the Killing; the uptempo "How Ya Going?" nods to

Coleman, with its gently cacophonous group improv. And who but Matt Wilson would think of doing a 5/4 boogaloo ("Get Over, Get Off And Get On")? The quintet returns to that funky feeling on Charlie Rouse's "Pumpkin's Delight," with Medeski offering a Horace Silver-esque solo and Wilson, as always, telling a crisp story with his traps.

In the ballad department, the shimmering "Dancing Waters" highlights a warm bass solo by Chris Lightcap; "Hope (For The Cause)" and "Juanita" trade in Americana naiveté; Beyoncé's hit "If I Were A Boy" arrives as a stately, then anthemic, declaration with a tanga backbeat. Lederer's clarinet adds yet more mystery to the chimey, music-box nostalgia of Butch Warren's puzzling-

ly titled "Barack Obama." A couple of the tracks—the brief burst of energy that is the title track and the staccato "Dreamscape"—feel underdeveloped.

On the other hand, one of the charms here is that the musicians get in, say what they have to say and get out, displaying another virtue—brevity—that, like simplicity, is also in short supply these days. Bravo to Wilson for a joyous album with a light, masterful touch.

—Paul de Barros

**Gathering Call:** Main Stem; Some Assembly Required; Dancing Waters; Get Over, Get Off And Get On; Barack Obama; Gathering Call; You Dirty Dog; Hope (For The Cause); Dreamscape; How Ya Going?; If I Were A Boy; Pumpkin's Delight; Juanita. (54:38)

**Personnel:** Matt Wilson, drums; Jeff Lederer, tenor, soprano saxophones, clarinet; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Chris Lightcap, bass; John Medeski, piano.

**Ordering info:** [palmetto-records.com](http://palmetto-records.com)





### Dave Bennett *Don't Be That Way*

MACK AVENUE 1071

★★★★

Few players in jazz history have held the grip of monopoly over an instrument to the degree that Benny Goodman has over the clarinet, even nearly 30 years after his death. The swing era may be ancient history, but no one, even today, can reach the highest levels of performance on that whistle without confronting the inevitable comparisons. Most defer rather than fight it. Anat Cohen, Eddie Daniels, Victor Goines,

Bob Wilber, Buddy DeFranco, Eric Schneider, and even Larry Combs, former principal with the Chicago Symphony, all do their occasional Goodman commemoratives.

But Dave Bennett, 29, is the only one who seems to have made it a full-time gig. Maybe it helps that among this elite cadre of clarinetists, he's the only one who not only sounds like Goodman but *looks* strikingly like him as well.

Bennett, who claims to be self-taught, has a remarkably correct sound, a poised precision, and no audible unorthodoxies that often pepper an autodidact's outcomes. He fills the Goodman matrix with a bravura confidence, authority and empathy. While he brings it all to life with a fresh and airy sparkle, though, only occasionally does he permit himself to be more than an actor—like Hershey Felder doing George Gershwin.

Some tunes, like “Don't Be That Way,” are played with such a middlebrow moderation, it hardly seems to challenge his higher skills. It's pleasant cocktail jazz. Bennett can certainly hold the stage with the other neo-Bennys. But maybe it's time we met him on his own terms.

—John McDonough

**Don't Be That Way:** Slipped Disc; Begin The Beguine; Don't Be That Way; Running Wild; St. James Infirmary; Yesterday; Sing, Sing, Sing; Woodchopper's Ball; My Inspiration; Goodbye; A Funeral In New Orleans; When The Saints Go Marching In. (66:39)

**Personnel:** Dave Bennett, clarinet, vocals (5); Reg Schwager, guitar; Ted Weed, piano; Paul Keller, bass; Pete Siers, drums; Shelly Berger, arranger.

**Ordering info:** [mackavenue.com](http://mackavenue.com)

### Randy Weston/Billy Harper *The Roots Of The Blues*

SUNNYSIDE 3097

★★★★½

There are fewer and fewer original elders around now. And hardly any are making records this good. Pianist Randy Weston exudes authority from the first time he hits the keys on “Carnival,” his huge reach and brilliant timing unimpeded by age—*criminy*, how did he get to be 87?—and his inventiveness is seasoned with experience. The relative youngster, saxophonist Billy Harper, clocks in at 70 years old, and he's lithe and more sure-footed, with oodles to say and all the means to express them.

Intimacy and warmth are hallmarks of *The Roots Of The Blues*, but so too is a sense of being unvarnished and vulnerable. Listening to the big tenor bust out his tough Texan tone on “Berkshire Blues,” with the pianist stabbing hard at block chords behind him, there's no cover—it's all exposed and raw. And in the wrong hands, it could be disaster, but Weston is so elegant and smart, his harmonic choices and phrasing so totally on the mark, that a look behind the curtain reveals only strength. Here, they each take an unaccompanied solo. For the saxophonist, it's even starker exposure, but again, nothing but pleasure. Makes me want to hear him more frequently in unconventional settings. Weston conjures Thelonious Monk, but he's so steeped in his own African adventures that his music contains



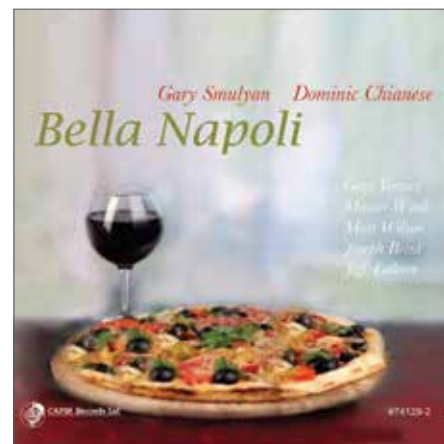
many other cultural threads. Harper is at home on “Timbuktu,” opening up into the piano's oceanic sonorities, or locking in with Weston on the theme to “The Healers,” one of the pianist's signature compositions. So, too, can the duo burrow back into “Body And Soul” or “Take The ‘A’ Train” with insouciance, effortlessly finding something new to dig out of such chestnuts.

—John Corbett

**The Roots Of The Blues:** Carnival; Blues To Senegal; Berkshire Blues; Body And Soul; Congolese Children Song; If One Could Only See; Blues To Africa; How High The Moon; Cleanhead Blues; Timbuktu; Roots Of The Nile; Take The “A” Train; The Healers; African Lady. (54:41)

**Personnel:** Randy Weston, piano; Billy Harper, tenor saxophone.

**Ordering info:** [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)



### Gary Smulyan/ Dominic Chianese *Bella Napoli*

CAPRI 74129

★★★★

Subjects for jazz tribute albums have exploded during the last two decades. Almost everything that inventive improvisers get their hands on—from Joni Mitchell weepies to Sly Stone anthems—seems to become a viable vehicle for group excursions. So don't bother to raise an eyebrow at this quizzical collaboration between New York's most astute and agile bari player and the octogenarian actor best known as Uncle Junior on “The Sopranos.” As they roam around the Canzone Napoletana songbook, their insightful dedication to variety and their animated playing make this nod to Italian culture one of the more engaging “tribute” discs to come along in a while.

Music director Jeff Lederer can take a bow right at the top. His inspired design sense gives the program an enviable flow. Interspersing tracks featuring Chianese's heartfelt tenor with instrumental romps led by Smulyan's forthright horn, the action is focused and fluid.

The band is culled from the circle of players that surround Matt Wilson, and a few of the pieces are infused with the drummer's trademark whimsy. Their spin on “Tre Veglia e Sonno” starts tight and then lets a bit of deconstruction in the door—the looser it gets, the jazzier it feels. “O Saracino” doesn't have that kind of wobble, but its élan comes across just as plainly, and with bassist Martin Wind driving the action, the band gives both Smulyan and Gary Versace (on accordion) plenty of *oomph* for inspired solos. Chianese fits in nicely because his approach tilts toward the folksy side. “O Sole Mio” is taken seriously, but nonchalance guides the vocal. As Smulyan's basso lines weave in and out of Chianese's plaint, the performance becomes more irresistible. There's bravura to their bromance on this unique album, but its invitation is warm from start to finish.

—Jim Macnie

**Bella Napoli:** Funiculi Funicula; Anema e Core; Fenstra Che Lucive; Marechiarie; Peque; O Sole Mio; O Saracino; A Vucchella; Dicitencello Vuiei; Tre Veglia e Sonno; Santa Lucia Lontana.

**Personnel:** Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone; Dominic Chianese, vocals; Gary Versace, piano, accordion; Martin Wind, bass; Matt Wilson, drums; Joseph Brent, violin, mandolin; Jeff Lederer, arrangements, music direction.

**Ordering info:** [caprirecords.com](http://caprirecords.com)

# The Hot Box

Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>Matt Wilson Quartet</b> <i>Gathering Call</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
<b>Dave Bennett</b> <i>Don't Be That Way</i>	★★★	★★½	★★★	★★
<b>Weston/Harper</b> <i>The Roots Of The Blues</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★
<b>Smulyan/Chianese</b> <i>Bella Napoli</i>	★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★

## Critics' Comments

### Matt Wilson Quartet + John Medeski, *Gathering Call*

Starts with a couple of big, gutsy bangs—a great “Main Stem”—then periodically atomizes into little pools of impressionistic daydreams. But when the cylinders are firing, attention refocuses and galvanizes at a high level. Medeski’s lovely “Juanita” is a beautiful closer.  
—John McDonough

Swings like heck, brings heavy musicality with a light touch. There is integral artistic logic to the Medeski invite, not just marquee power. Cool program, unexpected punches like the funky Rouse tune. Creative music for the head-bobbing set. Go team!  
—John Corbett

Ridiculously swinging affair that posits glee as one of improvisation’s cornerstone elements. From the opening Ellington romp to the Beyoncé nod near the end, the foursome and their friend tackle these pieces like it was their last chance to make a mark in life. Music with spirit, indeed.  
—Jim Macnie

### Dave Bennett, *Don't Be That Way*

Big buttery sound, impressive chops—but almost too prodigious. Despite a range of modernizing moves in Shelly Berger’s arrangements, this is so straight it’s squeaky clean—pretty, accomplished, inventive, but lacking some fundamental schmutz, which makes his blues hard to believe.  
—John Corbett

Nice stuff, and the group is wonderfully coordinated. But there’s something too clinical about the record and the performances. Everything is so polished that it makes things seem slightly unreal, like a pop album with jazz performances.  
—Jim Macnie

Bennett is a hell of a clarinet player, but this bland, earnest album feels more like a textbook on Benny, Artie and Woody than a joyful gambol through their swing domain. Does the world really need a reimagining of “Sing, Sing, Sing” at Carnegie Hall? Probably not.  
—Paul de Barros

### Randy Weston/Billy Harper, *The Roots Of The Blues*

I’m always dazzled by the pianist’s touch—so declarative and meaty. Harper rides his mate’s rhythms with fierce aplomb on this duet disc, and along the way both participants remind me how simple structures can provide intricate extrapolations. Right up there with the Archie Shepp/Horace Parlan albums.  
—Jim Macnie

The main attraction here is the casual, offhand intimacy of two old friends making music together—Weston ceremonial, orchestral and percussive; Harper gruff, blunt and pleasantly ragged around the edges. Apart from “Congolese Children Song” and “The Healers,” though, there’s not as much magic as one would have hoped for.  
—Paul de Barros

Lots of the Weston songbook in this unusual duo, without the usual Afrocentric trimmings. Harper seems relatively soft and warm, digressing briefly to the tenor’s outer frontiers, while Weston is generically percussive and pensive. But together they are mutually reactive, like a couple of oblique raconteurs with a taste for irregular verbs.  
—John McDonough

### Gary Smulyan/Dominic Chianese, *Bella Napoli*

File this one under Noble Failures. Though it may indeed be possible to fuse choppy bebop baritone saxophone with lyrical Neapolitan song, here the styles sound as far apart as a bullfrog wooing nightingales. The group achieves a kind of wedding-band unity on “O Saracino,” though, and when Smulyan plays tenderly, as on “Dicitencello Vuie!,” the courtship approaches plausibility.  
—Paul de Barros

*Bella Napoli* is an awkward pasta pulled between the Village Vanguard to the north and Little Italy to the south. But the sauce is wrong. Smulyan masters these Neapolitan tunes with relish. And Chianese sings them with old-world feeling. But the two flavors push each other away like alien ethnic worlds. Suggest a tutorial on Louis Prima.  
—John McDonough

Who knew that Uncle Junior had pipes? Super-weird and wonderful in a way similar to Lol Coxhill’s singing projects. Gotta love the audacity of making a disc of Neapolitan à la jazz. Chianese charms his songs all the way to the bank, and sly Smulyan provides much more than mere support. Check them out tandem on “Marechiaré.” Magic.  
—John Corbett



**KATE MCGARRY & KEITH GANZ**  
**GENEVIEVE & FERDINAND**  
SSC 1374 / IN STORES 2/4  
[iTunes.com/KateMcGarry](http://iTunes.com/KateMcGarry)

The singular vocalist and song stylist Kate McGarry has carved a niche in the jazz world with her unique talents and interpretive skills. Along with her guitar-slinging husband Keith Ganz, McGarry has put together a program of stripped-down, heartfelt renditions of American standards, new and old, on the new live recording, *Genevieve & Ferdinand*. The recording provides a wonderful view of both musicians’ tremendous talents and their extensive musical range.



**ROMERO LUBAMBO**  
**SÔ-BRAZILIAN ESSENCE**  
SSC 1381 / IN STORES 2/4  
[iTunes.com/RomeroLubambo](http://iTunes.com/RomeroLubambo)

Brazilian guitarist Romero Lubambo has established himself as one of the finest interpreters of Brazilian jazz repertory. He has had a long career performing alongside the leading voices in jazz, including Dianne Reeves, Diana Krall, and Luciana Souza, as well as leading the highly regarded Brazilian jazz trio, Trio Da Paz. His new solo guitar recording, *Sô - Brazilian Essence*, presents an essential and enchanting view of Lubambo’s tremendous gifts as performer, composer, and interpreter of Brazilian jazz.





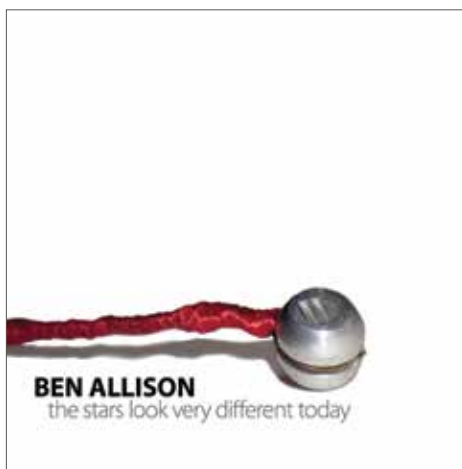
## Ben Allison *The Stars Look Very Different Today*

SONIC CAMERA 1301

★★★★

Bassist-composer Ben Allison's 11th album, *The Stars Look Very Different Today* (named after a line from David Bowie's "Space Oddity"), doesn't need the extra narrative juice about science, technology and film that its title implies. It's all Ben Allison, all over the place—from soup to nuts—including the production and mixing. Here, he has a two-guitar band, featuring Steve Cardenas and Brandon Seabrook (doubling on banjo), to help flesh out his songs. Allison Miller's drums sound so personal, so warm, *un-icy* to boot. The guitars serve up the only real jumping-off points toward something "Star Trek"-y here and there, while the tech-loving leader holds fast to his acoustic bass, anchoring it all in the most unobtrusive way possible.

And, appropriately for a CD that evokes a daytime reference to the stars, this is not a mind-blowing affair but a modest one. It's full of subtle surprises and features some great group interplay. Seabrook's slightly surreal guitar atmospherics open "Dr. Zauis." The song's ballad-like beginnings are pushed along by Cardena's gentle picking, Allison's deft, prodding pulse and Miller's quiet rumbles. Seabrook's plucky banjo directs "The Ballad Of Joe Buck." The strolling ditty is the CD's most memorable melody.



"Neutron Star"—with its slightly funky, rolling beat and simple guitar progression and melody—has TV-theme-music potential. Favorite drum moment: Miller's fierce blows through "Swiss Cheese D." "Improvvisus," an almost ambient free-fall with Seabrook and Allison, ends everything, this time with yet another, different meteoric burst. Imagine a drive-in movie at the heart of the Milky Way.

—John Ephland

**The Stars Look Very Different Today:** D.A.V.E.; Dr. Zauis; The Ballad Of Joe Buck; Neutron Star; No Other Side; Kick It, Man; Swiss Cheese D; Improvisus. (42:40)

**Personnel:** Ben Allison, bass; Steve Cardenas, guitar; Brandon Seabrook, guitar, banjo; Allison Miller, drums.

**Ordering info:** [benallison.com](http://benallison.com)



## 3 Cohens *Tightrope*

ANZIC 0043

★★★★

Small group dynamics are odd enough; who can fathom what it might be like to push internal family issues to the back burner and let the music flow when your front line includes two of your siblings? Whatever sibling rivalry that ever existed between Avishai, Yuval and Anat Cohen, there's no indication of it on *Tightrope*—their fourth recording together. Products of the same performing-arts schools in Tel Aviv and Boston's Berklee College of Music, the Cohen siblings achieve a remarkable level of harmony on this mix of standards, new compositions and freely improvised miniatures.

On 13 of the 18 pieces, the trio plays unaccompanied, including five short "conversations" (the longest is just over two minutes). In some ways, these brief exchanges are the highlights of the recording, due to their inherent spontaneity and unpredictability. They include rapid-fire dialogue or chases, and sometimes—as on "Conversation #2"—shift unexpectedly into a radically different mood. "Conversation #3" resembles birdsong being passed between branches, with the theme from "Peter And The Wolf" slipping in occasionally. "Conversation #4" is dominated by Anat's long tones, and "Conversation #5" might be subtitled "variations on a theme." Throughout, the sense of playfulness is evident.

That playful nature is never completely absent, but some of the arrangements have a certain sterility that comes with having parts that are almost too clever, too rehearsed. Gerry Mulligan's "Festive Minor" falls into that trap for a time, although Avishai rescues it at the three-minute mark with a sudden flourish that enlivens everyone. "Ai Li Lu Li Lu," a Yiddish lullaby that is a sentimental favorite from Israel, also lacks the energy and surprise that make their arrangements of "Indiana" and Art Farmer's "Bluepoint" sound fresh.

—James Hale

**Tightrope:** Blueport; Conversation #1; Song Without Words #4; Duet; Conversation #2; Black; Just Squeeze Me; Hot House; There's No You; Estate; Conversation #3; Indiana; I Mean You; It Might As Well; Festive Minor; Conversation #4; Conversation #5; Ai Li Lu Li Lu; Mantra. (57:34)

**Personnel:** Avishai Cohen, trumpet; Yuval Cohen, soprano saxophone; Anat Cohen, tenor saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Fred Hersch, piano (3, 9, 12); Christian McBride, bass (6); Johnathan Blake, drums (5).

**Ordering info:** [anzicrecords.com](http://anzicrecords.com)



## John Abercrombie Quartet *39 Steps*

ECM 2334

★★★★½

At its core, *39 Steps* can be seen as an album based on aural interpretations of Alfred Hitchcock films, from which four songs here take their name. Just look to "Spellbound." Mystery abounds, as its pensive start evokes a foggy night before giving way to instrumental cat-and-mouse shadowplay and gentle swing. Similarly enthralling, the laidback "Vertigo"

acknowledges slight pauses and the possibilities such open spaces engender. Not to be outshined, the beautiful title track disarms with fragile tension and welcoming intimacy. Initial percussion mimics the delayed drip of a leaky water pipe before a more concrete structure develops and melodic devices flourish.

Inspirational threads aside, John Abercrombie's latest creation could lack any cinematic reference and lose nothing in translation. Pairing with longtime collaborators drummer Joey Baron, bassist Drew Gress and pianist Marc Copland—this is the first time in three decades Abercrombie has included a pianist on an ECM recording—the leader delivers a memorable lesson in moody mise-en-scene and understated balladry. The guitarist's interests in experimental realms are set aside to make more room for elegant textures. A playfully angular take on "Melancholy Baby" registers as the lone act of high-wire acrobatics. Together, the group achieves acoustic-electric symmetry of the highest order. The compositions react like a burning magnesium strip that gives off terrific color and slow-burn rewards.

—Bob Gendron

**39 Steps:** Vertigo; LST; Bacharach; Greenstreet; As It Stands; Spellbound; Another Ralph's; Shadow Of A Doubt; 39 Steps; Melancholy Baby. (59:36)

**Personnel:** John Abercrombie, guitar; Marc Copland, piano; Drew Gress, double bass; Joey Baron, drums.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

## Gretchen Parlato *Live In NYC*

OBLIQSOUND 114

★★★★½

Often praised for her subtlety, Gretchen Parlato is a singer-arranger of consummate control and slow-burning intensity. The L.A. native lives at the crossroads of sensuous and spiritual, singing from deep within hypnotic grooves with enormous rhythmic sophistication. Her approach, inspired in part by early exposure to João Gilberto, might be summed up as “sing softly and carry a killer rhythm section.”

She is equally comfortable with jazz standards, Brazilian tunes, her own compelling songs and r&b-based material from the '80s and '90s (“Holding Back The Years,” “Weak”), which she utterly transforms with complex harmonic ideas, shifting rhythms and offbeat accents. In recent years, she has become a critical darling and a favorite of such jazz artists as Esperanza Spalding, Terri Lyne Carrington and Kenny Barron, among dozens of others with whom she has recorded. In concert, Parlato seems almost to go into a trance when she sings, which is part of what makes this new live set so compelling. The album and 30-minute DVD, recorded over two nights at New York's intimate Rockwood Music Hall, is a summing-up of her career to date, showcasing the staples of her repertoire; the grooves have only deepened over the years, as arranged by Parlato (sometimes with Robert Glasper) and performed



by two exceptional trios, both featuring the prodigious Taylor Eigsti on piano and keyboard.

Parlato shines with her solo—a wordless, modal exploration—on Wayne Shorter's “Juju,” a tune to which she wrote lyrics when she was a student of Terence Blanchard at the Monk Institute. “His footprints will lead us to find/ Our own voices in our own time,” she sings. This beautiful album is further proof that she has found hers. —Allen Morrison

**Live In NYC:** Disc 1 (CD): Butterfly; All That I Can Say; Aló Aló; Within Me; Holding Back the Years; Juju; Weak; On The Other Side; Better Than. (61:13) Disc 2 (DVD): Weak; Butterfly; Aló Aló; Better Than.

**Personnel:** Gretchen Parlato, vocals, percussion; Taylor Eigsti, piano, keyboard; Alan Hampton, bass, vocals; Mark Guiliana, drums; Burniss Earl Travis II, bass, vocals; Kendrick Scott, drums.

**Ordering info:** [obliqsound.com](http://obliqsound.com)

## Joe Fiedler's Big Sackbut *Sackbut Stomp*

MULTIPHONICS MUSIC 001

★★★

Joe Fiedler's Big Sackbut brass quartet (augmented here on several cuts with slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein) seems to be having a blast throughout this disc, the second recording of the ensemble. The band obviously takes its music seriously, but there is nary a pedantic or overbearing note here. Instead, there are many moments of whimsy and delight. Fiedler also works as a music director for “Sesame Street,” so he knows how to make music fun. Any band that spends more than seven minutes blowing on a version of Roger Miller's “King Of The Road” is having a good time. There is a zany attitude here. On tunes like “The Attic” and “Feet And Breathe,” Fiedler's group sounds like the World Saxophone Quartet-meets-Raymond Scott. At certain points, they veer to the abstract side. In a band of five brass instruments, that is to be expected, and such abstraction is a nice contrast to the more standard riffing.

Each of the players—Fiedler, Ryan Keberle and Luis Bonilla on trombones, Marcus Rojas on tuba and Bernstein—are expressive on their instruments, mimicking the human voice and using the entire tonal range and timbres, though sometimes it feels a little over the top. The drums are barely missed as the band has a great sense of tension-and-release, which gives the music a push



and a pull on Fiedler's original “The Schlep.” There are pretty melodies and beautifully tight ensemble playing on the Fiedler original “Pittsburgh Morning” and the Gil Fuller/Chano Pozo Afro-Cuban standard “Tin Tin Deo.”

Fiedler's Big Sackbut has produced an album with great range and a sound that is simply fun to listen to—yet still serious about the music.

—David Kunian

**Sackbut Stomp:** Sackbut Stomp; King Of The Road; Eight Page Bible; Tin Tin Deo; Pittsburgh Morning; Feet And Breathe; The Schlep; The Attic; Solo For Quartet. (55:48)

**Personnel:** Joe Fiedler, Ryan Keberle, Luis Bonilla, trombone; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Steven Bernstein, slide trumpet (2, 4, 8).

**Ordering info:** [joefiedler.com](http://joefiedler.com)



## EDWARD SIMON *VENEZUELEAN SUITE*

SSC 1382 / IN STORES 1/21

[iTunes.com/EdwardSimon](http://iTunes.com/EdwardSimon)

The music of Venezuela has yet to gain the wider renown of many other beloved musical traditions in Latin America, but renowned jazz pianist-composer Edward Simon aims to change that.

Simon leads *Ensemble Venezuela*, which features such jazz stars as saxophonist Mark Turner alongside virtuosos of the Venezuelan folk tradition. Drummer Adam Cruz is one of Simon's longstanding musical associates, and he joins bassist Roberto Koch, flutist Marco Granados, cuatro player Jorge Glem and maracas ace Leonardo Granados, plus guests Emar Castañeda on harp, Luis Quintero on percussion and John Ellis on bass clarinet.



## LIVING LOVERS

BRANDON ROSS & STOMU TAKEISHI

REVEALING ESSENCE

SSC 1351 / IN STORES 1/21

[iTunes.com/BrandonRoss](http://iTunes.com/BrandonRoss)

The inspiring collaborative duo For Living Lovers features guitarist Brandon Ross and bassist Stomu Takeishi in moving musical dialogue. The duo has worked together for some time and in many settings. Their language has become unique to them, though there are elements of jazz, classical, and folk music. *Revealing Essence*, the duo's first recording, is a marvelous view into their sound world, one built with a focus on space as much as sound.





# Free-Jazz and Soul Grooves

Hallelujah for beautifully produced objects d'art in the virtual age—particularly when they're devoted to living artists and not just bygone icons. The eight-CD box set **Wood Flute Songs: Anthology/Live, 2006–2012** (AUM Fidelity 080–87 ★★★★★) encapsulates the protean spirit of William Parker—bassist, composer-poet and leader of multiple bands on the New York scene. Totalling some nine hours of multitrack concert recordings, the set attests to the 61-year-old Parker's ability to invoke both “the history and the mystery,” as he describes the living art of jazz. The Bronx native played extensively in groups led by Cecil Taylor and David S. Ware, but he has grown increasingly prolific as a leader over the past decade-and-a-half. A majority of Parker's compositions in this box are making their debut on record, with some rivaling his previous best. His music breathes the air of Ornette Coleman and Curtis Mayfield, Beat-era Marrakech and the Caribbean; it's free-jazz and medina wails, soul grooves and psychedelic lyricism.

This set has at its core the William Parker Quartet, founded in 2000 and featuring alto saxophonist Rob Brown, trumpeter Lewis Barnes and drummer Hamid Drake. *Wood Flute Songs* includes two double-disc live documents of the band—one recorded at Yoshi's in Oakland in 2006, the other the next year in Houston at DiverseWorks. Both shows brim with ensemble invention, the instruments entwining as second nature. One of today's most underrated altoists, Brown is the group's prime mover of emotional energy, particularly at full cry. Barnes' horn glints with silvery incisiveness, while Drake is a drummer of heavy-hitting physicality, all roiling polyrhythms and African accents. If not as lithe as some, Parker's bass playing throbs with sinewy phrasing and old-wood tone, driving the band through the strength of his imagination.

Highlights from the quartet's Oakland concert include a fantastical 43-minute sequence of “Alphaville/Daughter's Joy/Golden Bell.” From the Houston gig, there's a great version of the tune-rich swinger “O'Neal's Porch,” plus “Red Desert”—where Parker makes like a tripping muezzin as he plays a *gralla*, an archaic double-reed instrument that here evokes *Naked Lunch* as much as *The Sheltering Sky*.

Augmented by shamanistic pianist Cooper-Moore, the Parker quartet morphs into the latest incarnation of his quintet, In Order To Survive. The band's powerhouse show at the 2012 Vision Festival in New York was captured for this box. Parker calls Cooper-Moore as a player “full of the blues and African funk,” and that description



William Parker

PETER GANNUSHKIN

suits the band as a whole, with an admixture of noir lament on “Theme For Rondo Hattan.” Another Parker band expanded from the core quartet is Raining On The Moon, which adds pianist Eri Yamamoto and deep-soul vocalist Leena Conquest. This set's 2012 live recording of all-new material from Montreal starts with “3+3 = Jackie McLean,” a sublime folk-jazz homage not only to the titular alto hero but to Sidney Bechet, Willie “The Lion” Smith, Zora Neale Hurston and the legacy of Harlem. When Conquest delivers such lines as “bring him his horn, let him blow strong” in her proud, clear, golden-hued voice, she taps a bottomless well of feeling. “For Abbey Lincoln” and the nostalgic “Sweet Breeze” are further stunners, with Parker's melodies fit to charm snakes.

In addition to the limited-edition box, this set's concerts are available as individual downloads. Hardcore avant-improv fans will be drawn to the album showcasing a one-off septet with Parker's quartet joined by violinist Billy Bang, cornetist Bobby Bradford and alto-sax vet James Spaulding, taped at the Vision Festival in 2009. Bang brought his “Alabama magic,” as Parker puts it, to an untamed take on “Wood Flute Song,” the bassist's singing, dancing tribute to Don Cherry. The box's remaining disc documents a 2011 concert at Switzerland's AMR Festival where the quartet became the Creation Ensemble when enlarged by four saxophones, second trumpet, bass clarinet, additional double-bass and voice. The arrangements are exciting, even if vocalist Ernie Odum's rough expressivity won't be for everyone. That show's heart is “Psalm For Billy Bang,” written for the mortally ill fiddler, who passed just five days after the concert.

DB

Ordering info: [aumfidelity.com](http://aumfidelity.com)



## 10<sup>32</sup>K *That Which Is Planted: Live In Buffalo And Rochester*

PASSIN' THRU 41231

★★★★½

In Ecclesiastes, it is written that there is a time to plant, and a time to pick that which is planted. Ku-umba Frank Lacy planted his free-jazz seeds in the '80s and '90s, when he worked with Henry Threadgill and Lester Bowie; more recently, he's split his time between acts like D'Angelo and the Mingus Big Band. But when bassist and long-time Lacy fan Kevin Ray sought to play with him, that older material is what he wanted to play. Lacy had to get reacquainted with territory he had not inhabited in quite some time. Nonetheless, there were still some crops available to be pulled from the ground, and with the help of an essential third pair of hands—drummer Andrew Drury—10<sup>32</sup>K has obtained a thoroughly respectable yield.

The group has not, however, lived up to the promise of its name, which refers to the Planck temperature. This is the highest temperature at which known physics work; get any higher, and the understood properties of particles and energy seem not to hold. While this group generates appreciable warmth, its jazz is never *that* hot. Instead, the trio plays from a book that closed during the first Reagan administration. The newest tunes here, Joe Ford's “Give It Some Thought” and Steve McCall's “BK,” date from the early '80s, while tunes from Albert Ayler, Charles Mingus and Henry Threadgill go back even further.

The performances are full of energy and appreciation. Lacy's horn playing is brash and soulful, and Ray's upright bass sound is satisfyingly big, while his phrasing is yielding where it needs to be. But this feels like the work of musicians playing what they know. It falls to percussionist Drury to shake things up, but even though he does what is required by throwing in arrhythmic pure-sound explorations and rock-derived grooves, it's not enough to make this music sound like a fresh harvest.

—Bill Meyer

**That Which Is Planted:** Ghosts; Give It Some Thought; Ecclesiastics Intro; Ecclesiastics; BK; Midnight Sun.

**Personnel:** Ku-umba Frank Lacy, trombone, flumpet, vocals, percussion; Kevin Ray, bass; Andrew Drury, drums, percussion. (65:59)

Ordering info: [passinthru.org](http://passinthru.org)





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# Blues

BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY



James Booker

HENRY FLORENTIN

## Maharajahs and Minions

**James Booker: *Classified—Remixed And Expanded* (Rounder 11661; 73:03 ★★★★★½)**

Starting in the late 19th century with jazz professor James Brown Humphrey, New Orleans has spawned a fair number of musical geniuses. Maybe the most enigmatic of them all is pianist James Booker, who was dogged by drug addiction and mental health issues in his rather short lifetime. He's been in the news of late thanks to Lily Keber's bio-documentary *Bayou Maharajah*, so it's no surprise that Rounder retrieved his 1983 album *Classified* from the lost swampland, adding nine formerly unused tracks to the original program of mostly cover songs pinched from the likes of Fats Domino, Professor Longhair and Doc Pomus. Booker, recording soon after checking out of a hospital, gave producer Scott Billington a difficult time in the studio but out of the chaos emerges fantastic music. The fey pianoman's expressive excursions into pop, jazz, blues, classical, stride, boogie and r&b—along with surprising interchanges among these idioms—have the power to linger in the memory long after the music quits.

**Ordering info:** [rounder.com](http://rounder.com)

**Roosevelt Sykes: *The Original Honey-dripper* (Blind Pig 5155; 41:31 ★★★★★)** Patrons of the Blind Pig Café in Ann Arbor, Mich., were fortunate to have the opportunity to hear New Orleans-based pianist Sykes in early 1977. Even though the pianist, then 73, lacks the vibrancy of years past and his technique springs more from his memory than his heart, Sykes' trebly blues phrasings match up with the rolling bass figures of boogie-woogie for pleasing result on standard fare such as "St. James Infirmary" and on his own saloon songs, dating as far back as the 1930s. The big gent with the cigar shows he can still sing, too.

**Ordering info:** [blindpigrecords.com](http://blindpigrecords.com)

**Cyril Neville: *Magic Honey* (Ruf 1192; 54:12 ★★★★★½)** On his latest album, Cyril supplies all the soulful sincerity you'd expect from a member of the venerated Neville family. Four different guitarists, however, do him no favor by undercutting his natural-born Uptown 13th Ward

vibe with wretched bluster. Of a dozen tunes, just Dr. John's "Swamp Funk" and two others prove exempt from those deadly hot-strings. Neville's heartening social consciousness, embedded in a few lyrics, is a plus.

**Ordering info:** [rufrecords.de](http://rufrecords.de)

**Macy Blackman & The Mighty Fines: *I Didn't Want To Do It* (MamaRu 102; 48:36 ★★★★★)**

Pianist Blackman's mission in life appears to be granting immediacy to 1950s New Orleans r&b songs and soul-blues items of similar vintage. This well-traveled San Franciscan isn't much of a singer, short on sonority for starters, so it's good that Nancy Wright, the tenor sax player in his swinging band, takes over on vocals for five selections.

**Ordering info:** [macyblackman.com](http://macyblackman.com)

**Danny Fitzgerald And The Lost Wandering Blues And Jazz Band (Li'l Shack 01; 65:37 ★★★★★)**

You don't have to know anything about 79-year-old Fitzgerald—a bandleader since 1979, a former Civil Rights advocate, a world adventurer, lots more—to be won over by the charm he brings to his creaky, honest-as-the-day-is-long singing of antique songs he loves, including ones associated with Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. Never stiffly referencing early 20th century American music, Fitzgerald's friends on trumpet, woodwinds, guitars and washtub provide lots of gusto. Between the song tracks, Fitzgerald speaks with characteristic warmth about his life experiences. (Note: Joan Osborne and Madeleine Peyroux used to be Lost Wanderers.)

**Ordering info:** [lostwandering.com](http://lostwandering.com)

**Hugh Laurie: *Live On The Queen Mary* (DVD) (Eagle Vision 306609; 106:00 ★★★★★)**

Singer Laurie plays the first part of this expertly filmed show for quiet laughs, but then, playing guitar or his primary instrument, piano, he shifts into serious business, reanimating songs by, among other historical figures, Champion Jack Dupree, Muddy Waters and Professor Longhair (his idol, once feted on this very ship). The excellent combo includes Canadian guitarist Kevin Breit and Sunday morning shouter Jean McClain.

DB

**Ordering info:** [eaglerockent.com](http://eaglerockent.com)



## Kirk Knuffke Quartet *Chorale*

STEEPLECHASE 31769

★★★★★

The late Ruby Braff, a slyly insinuating cornetist, said that hearing a jazz combo should be like eavesdropping on a conversation among friends. Kirk Knuffke, another sly and engaging cornetist, lists on his website more than 20 bands with whom he plays cornet, so we hope he's alert and receptive in group discussions. *That* he is. Though Knuffke's personality in the present company seems a tad reserved and confidential compared to his more extroverted units with drummer Matt Wilson and reedist Jeff Lederer. But here he's still wry and daring, and engages his mates with confident enthusiasm.

Knuffke's wise to cede drummer Billy Hart extra licks, and the veteran constantly surprises with all manner of kit-consciousness; he's a restless presence throughout. When weather-talk warms them up on the cloudy "Wingy," simmering hi-hats and dry snare-rolls set Miles Davis-like balladry into cautious play, then shrouds of hi-hat wreath the soft-spoken "Made." Russ Lossing's quick piano glissandi enrich the group's poetic textures, as bassist Michael Formanek's blunt walking keeps each player grounded.

"Kettle"—which nods to the compositional influence of Steve Lacy—galumphs good-naturedly on snappy triplets that simmer under horn and piano. After his first say on the finger-popping "Standing," Hart hooks up with Formanek on expansive porch-swings. The staunch 4/4 beat of "Match"—where the rolling toms are more playful than ominous—gives way to chattering rims like hoofbeats. On "Madly," Hart's toms roll over his mates' snail-pace melodizing. The title tune gently unfolds with *Cinema Paradiso*-like nostalgia, and "School" lightly rocks as a no-hurry groover until four-bar breaks stutter like exclamation points. "Good Good" closes in high gear with rising, emphatic tags. Put these lean, jolly conversations on shuffle and repeat.

—Fred Bouchard

**Chorale:** Wingy; Made; Kettle; Standing; Madly; Match; Chorale; School; Good Good. (64:04)

**Personnel:** Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Russ Lossing, piano; Michael Formanek, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

**Ordering info:** [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)

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**Matt Kern, DownBeat review, Feb 2014**

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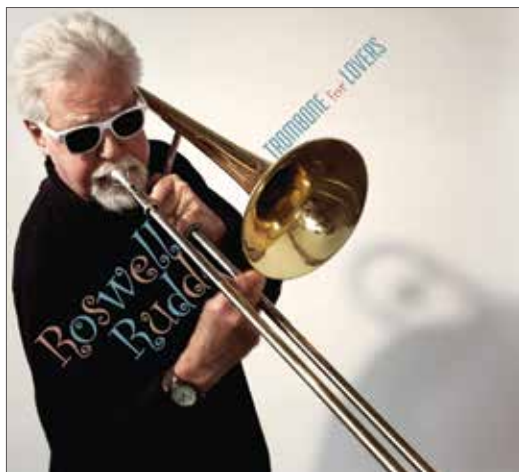
## Roswell Rudd *Trombone For Lovers*

SUNNYSIDE 1369

★★★★

When you've got a four-part suite arranged around the labor anthem "Joe Hill" (with chorus!), calling an album *Trombone For Lovers* might seem a stretch. Nor are "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" or "Green Onions" exactly sweet ballads. But you don't go to avant-gardist Roswell Rudd for conventional choices. Rudd's instrumentation and personnel are as varied as his program—John Medeski's B-3 organ helps give the cowboy tune "Ghost Riders In The Sky" a boogaloo bump and brings the r&b to the aforementioned Booker T. & The M.G.'s classic. Slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein is an appropriately witty foil for Rudd on several numbers. Veteran cajun violin star Michael Doucet and guitarist Rolf Sturm conjure a bit of gypsy swing ("Autumn Leaves") and classic American folk ("Tennessee Waltz"). Vocalists help out on a few tracks: Bob Dorrough (Lennon and McCartney's "Here, There And Everywhere"), Fay Victor (a growling "Trouble In Mind") and Heather Masse (Rudd and Verna Gillis' "Funky Little Sweet Thing"). The NYC Labor Chorus and rapper Reggie Bennett give historical and topical reference to "Joe Hill."

But the *real* standout vocal performance here comes from Rudd's trombone—his peerless



phrasing, his use of a variety of mutes to articulate syllables with fully rounded vowels, his alteration of those mutes with open horn from chorus to chorus. He and Bernstein make "Baby, It's Cold Outside" a truly conversational duet. Embracing a broad range of styles, Rudd makes everything his own—and continues to amaze. —Jon Garelick

**Trombone For Lovers:** Ghost Riders In The Sky; Here, There And Everywhere; Baby, It's Cold Outside; Trouble In Mind; Struttin' With Some Barbecue; Sleepwalk; Autumn Leaves; Green Onions; Tennessee Waltz; Come Sunday; Unchained Melody; September Song; Funky Little Sweet Thing; Joe Hill (Suite). (60:37)

**Personnel:** Roswell Rudd, trombone; John Medeski, Hammond B-3 organ; Richard Hammond, contrabass, electric bass; Aaron Comess, drums; Steven Bernstein, slide trumpet (1, 2, 3, 5, 8); Bob Dorrough (2); Fay Victor (4); Heather Masse (13), vocals; Michael Doucet, violin (7, 9, 12); Rolf Sturm (7, 9, 12); Matthew Finck (13); Gary Lucas (8), guitar; Ira Coleman, bass (13); T'Xiques, drums (13); Dennis Nelson, piano (14, 15, 17); NYC Labor Chorus (14, 15, 17); Reggie Bennett, vocals (16).

**Ordering info:** [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

trumpeter and longtime musical companion Marvin Stamm and cellist Alisa Horn—first heard on 2007's *Fantasy*.

The evocative "Main Title" conveys a bucolic splendor, especially with its initial sparse melody, which evolves into tumbleweed figures and the dark hues concocted by Horn's lovely counterpoints and Stamm's fugue-like tone. Mays heightens the beauty and suspense on the following "Love Theme Bittersweet," a treat that allows listeners a greater opportunity to enjoy his pensive, extremely lucid passages. The capricious "Chase" finds Mays exploring the darker realms of the piano as well as discreet dissonances, but it stays tuneful, while "End Credits" returns with a sanguine melody and lithe rhythms.

Likewise, Mays' investigations of classic Evans and Monk material are expertly executed and again display his accord with his ensemble—but given the strength of his own compositions, one wishes that he would have stretched out the "Life's A Movie" suite to occupy the entire disc. —John Murph

**Life's A Movie:** Homage To Bill Evans: My Bells, Interplay, Turn Out The Stars, Waltz For Debby; Life's A Movie: 4 Cues In Search Of A Film: Main Title, Love Theme Bittersweet, Chase, End Credits; Concierto de Aranjuez: Spain; Monk Tribute: Trinkle Trinkle, Pannonica, Straight; No Chaser. (55:35)

**Personnel:** Bill Mays, piano; Marvin Stamm, trumpet, flugelhorn; Alisa Horn, cello.

**Ordering info:** [chiaroscurojazz.com](http://chiaroscurojazz.com)



## Bill Mays Inventions Trio *Life's A Movie*

CHIAROSCURO 400

★★★★½

This disc's most poignant moments are nestled between a moving tribute to Bill Evans and a riveting shout-out to Thelonious Monk. The section "Life's A Movie: 4 Cues In Search Of A Film" serves as the central theme and optimizes pianist Bill Mays' impeccable approach to melody, improvisation and composition. It also illustrates his rapport with his trio-mates—



## Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra *Habitat*

JUSTIN TIME 8583

★★★★★

Christine Jensen—Montreal-based composer, arranger, conductor and saxophonist—has created something special with *Habitat*, her second large-ensemble album. The follow-up to 2010's questing *Treelines* (which won a Juno Award, Canada's Grammy, for contemporary jazz album of the year), *Habitat* is orchestral jazz on par with the textural-lyrical magic of Kenny Wheeler and Maria Schneider—though with an earthy dynamism more akin to Wayne Shorter and a sense of bittersweet melody all Jensen's own. This album feels of the moment yet timeless; big-band clichés are avoided, but beauty is paramount. There's a subtle cry to Jensen's music that gives *Habitat* emotive resonance.

Born in 1970 in British Columbia, Jensen is younger sister to New York-residing trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, who adds liquid tones to the excellent *Habitat* ensemble. (The sisters also play together in Nordic Connection, a kindred-spirit band with Swedish pianist Maggi Olin.) Tenor sax soloist Chet Doxas imbues "Nishiyuu"—a piece inspired by an epic protest walk by Cree natives in Ottawa—with cries and whispers. Cascading brass choirs beguile the ear in "Tumbledown," as do Richard Irwin's dramatic drumming and the pensive wail of tenor saxophonist Joel Miller. The composer's soprano sax flies like a ribbon in the breeze during closer "Sweet Adelphi."

*Habitat* feels utterly of a piece, with the improvisations woven from threads of the compositions, the melodies and countermelodies flowing holistically. The recorded sound conveys Jensen's artful blend of 20-some instruments with warmth and immediacy. The cumulative impact is more than impressive; it's moving. —Bradley Bambarger

**Habitat:** Treelines; Tumbledown; Blue Yonder; Nishiyuu; Intersection; Sweet Adelphi. (67:00)

**Personnel:** Christine Jensen, composer, arranger, conductor, soprano saxophone; Donny Kennedy, lead alto, soprano saxophones, flute; Erik Hove, alto saxophone, flute; Joel Miller, Chet Doxas, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Samuel Blais, baritone saxophone, clarinet; David Grott, lead trombone; Jean-Nicolas Trotter, Muhammed Abdul Al-Khabyr, trombone; Bob Ellis (1, 3, 4, 5), Jean-Sébastien Vachon (2, 6), bass trombone; Dave Martin, tuba, euphonium (1, 2, 3, 4); Joceyln Couture, lead trumpet; Bill Mahar, Dave Mossing, Aron Doyle, Ingrid Jensen (1, 3, 5, 6), trumpet; John Roney, piano; Ken Bibace, electric guitar; Fraser Hollins, bass; Richard Irwin, drums; Dave Gossage, native flute (4).

**Ordering info:** [justin-time.com](http://justin-time.com)

## Sasi Shalom *Moments Of Eternity*

SELF-RELEASE

★★★★

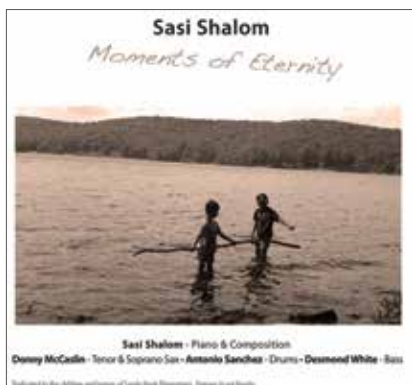
Israeli-born pianist Sasi Shalom has employed saxophonist Donny McCaslin, bassist Desmond White and drummer Antonio Sanchez on this disc dedicated to “the children and heroes of Sandy Hook Elementary.” But the propulsive collection of original tunes is not a maudlin meditation on loss and violence. The disc hovers in a muscular medium tempo, dishing out strong solos in an optimistic but respectful tone. “Raging Bull” is an appropriately pugilistic jaunt, pushed by Sanchez’s clanging setup. Shalom and McCaslin spit the rapid-fire melody together. Shalom is not outshined by his better-known bandmates. He is lifted by their efforts, which present his tender compositions in the best possible light. His spry solos and intimate accompaniment are the soul of this recording.

—Sean J. O’Connell

**Moments Of Eternity:** Shari; Raging Bull; Aba (My Father); Moments Of Eternity; My Sons My Soul; Up And Down; Watch Your Back. (61:14)

**Personnel:** Sasi Shalom, piano; Donny McCaslin, tenor, soprano saxophones; Desmond White, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums.

**Ordering info:** [sasishalom.bandcamp.com](http://sasishalom.bandcamp.com)



## Dana Lyn *Aqualude*

ROPEADOPE 205

★★★★

Inspired by fantasies of aquatic life, violinist Dana Lyn’s *Aqualude* is a whimsically impressionistic suite of chamber-jazz that evokes a joyful underwater fantasia. At times the playfulness overwhelms, resulting in a cloying, over-exact caricature straight out of a Disney cartoon, but at its best *Aqualude* gracefully captures the fluid weightlessness of swimming, the freedom and blissful solitude of a plunge into the ocean.

Lyn has a diverse background, having worked in Irish folk bands, composed for classical ensembles, collaborated with rock groups and performed on a variety of theater stages. Much of that experience comes to bear on *Aqualude*, particularly the theatrical work; there’s a distinct narrative feel to the music, painting vivid pictures through Jonathan Goldberger’s shimmering guitar on “Yeti Crab Theme Song” or the impressions of animal calls that close that album on a strange, immersive note.

More directly, the three titular interludes utilize the “Angel” door, a sound sculpture-instrument made from a discarded door created for actor Ethan Hawke’s production of the play *Clive*. These pieces are sparse and lovely, suggesting a music box submerged and warped by the water.

Lyn does occasionally break from the overtly programmatic, however. Opener “Carping,” while punning on the name of an invasive fish series, is a jaunty prog-pop ditty, and “Mother Octopus” becomes the album’s standout track by virtue of its stark solemnity and Lyn’s most expressive bowing. “Yeti Crab Theme Song” is marked by the elegant weave of the strings with Mike McGinnis’ clarinet, while “Pyramid” draws upon Lyn’s Irish fiddling experience in moments that dance with gleeful abandon.

—Shaun Brady

**Aqualude:** Carping; Mother Octopus; Aqualude I; Queueque; Yeti Crab Theme Song; Aqualude II; Pyramid; The Snow Is General; Aqualude III; Yeti Sleeps. (45:41)

**Personnel:** Dana Lyn, violin; Angel door (3, 6, 9); Jonathan Goldberger, guitar; Clara Kennedy, cello; Mike McGinnis, clarinet, bass clarinet; Vinnie Sperrazza, drums.

**Ordering info:** [ropeadope.com](http://ropeadope.com)



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# Beyond / BY JON GARELICK

## Personal Narratives

**Anoushka Shankar: *Traces Of You* (Deutsche Grammophon B0018984; 56:09 ★★★★★)**

Sitar virtuoso Anoushka Shankar's latest CD is in part an elegy for her father, the legendary Ravi, and it includes three vocal performances by her half-sister, Norah Jones. The folksy, diatonic opening track, "The Sun Won't Set" (the title plays on the meaning of Ravi's name: "sun"), is affecting, with Jones intoning the lyrics in her pure soprano and Shankar's slithering lines providing color. And "Flight," with its Western strings, suggests a melding of Indian classical with Renaissance music. Still, I wished for the ornamentation and rhapsodic, improvisatory flights that are the sitar's hallmark—as well as the unusual rhythms, forms and scales of ragas. But the album grew on me as it became more "Indian" and Shankar's playing took off. By the eighth track, "In Syoti's Name," with its repeated riffs and rolling percussion, she's flying. "Chasing Shadows," with its rapid call-and-response figures, is delirious, ecstatic. The closing ballad, "Unsaid," with Jones' voice and piano in the forefront, completes an ultimately satisfying emotional narrative arc.

**Ordering info:** [deutsche Grammophon.com](http://deutsche Grammophon.com)

**Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings: *Give The People What They Want* (Daptone 032 35:01 ★★★★★)**

"What the people want" apparently is more original tunes that mine vintage r&b, soul and funk. They want songs of love-gone-wrong and also some social justice ("People Don't Get What They Deserve"). The sounds range from the Spector-ish orchestral chimes in "Retreat!" to the roadhouse baritone sax of "Stranger To My Happiness." The familiar riffs and progressions here will tickle your memory for possible antecedents. But what matters is how Jones and the Dap-Kings fill in those familiar contours. Jones' voice is ardent, if not beautiful, committed to every syllable. The sonic details are astutely deployed—that honking bari, the reverby guitar-twang groove on "You'll Be Lonely" or the backing vocals by the Dapettes, who can conjure the testifying grit of the Raelettes or the girl-group swoon of the Shangri-Las. It's hard not to sing along and dance.

**Ordering info:** [daptone records.com](http://daptone records.com)

**Rosanne Cash: *The River & The Thread* (Blue Note 430122; 38:08 ★★★★★½)** For these 11 original songs, Cash and co-writer, guitarist, producer and husband John Leventhal made a conscious effort to explore her roots in the South. The songs return to Memphis, her hometown, at least a couple of times, creating several vivid characters along the way, including an ancestor who fought (for the Union) in the Civil War. As she sings, Cash's personal story melds with those of her characters, sometimes



Anoushka Shankar

outlined with stark imagery ("the mud and tears melt the cotton bolls"). Cash's pure, unsentimental vocal delivery is matched by songcraft and by Leventhal's beautifully detailed production and arrangements. Every song has its particular groove, its particular guitar tone or shuffle; strings and backing choruses are deployed without clouding the transparency of the arrangements. And when called for, the album rocks out. The vague term "Americana" takes on specific historical and emotional weight here.

**Ordering info:** [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)

**Lanterns On The Lake: *Until The Colours Run* (Bella Union 410; 42:20 ★★★★★)**

The moody, cinematic, often lovely folktronica of Newcastle band Lanterns On The Lake has been compared to everyone from Mazzy Star and slowcore heroes Low to Sigur Rós. So instead of Cash and Leventhal's detailed approach to production, think big orchestral washes of sound. Guitars, piano, violin, cymbal smashes and dabs of electronics all create an impressionistic haze of sound suited to the title of this new album. What's important is not isolated details but the overall dramatic shapes. Slow, long-line melodies float over fast, turbulent rhythms, then break for a spare piano-and-vocal verse. All of this is bathed in heavy reverb, so that it's often difficult to make out the lyrics—delivered by Hazel Wilde's ethereal vocals—in the murk. That's true even for the piano-and-vocal-only "Green And Gold." Elsewhere, electronics simulate the percussive ambience of vinyl's softly clicking scratches or rain-like surface noise.

DB

**Ordering info:** [bellaunion.com](http://bellaunion.com)



## Ralph Towner/Wolfgang Muthspiel/Slava Grigoryan *Travel Guide*

ECM 2310

★★★★★

Three guitarists from three different continents with three very different disciplines unite for this breathtakingly beautiful trio outing, which is Towner's 24th for the ECM label since 1972 and both Muthspiel's and Grigoryan's first on ECM. American Towner (now residing in Italy) brings his personalized fingerstyle approach to the table, while Austrian Muthspiel adds his deft touch on electric guitar and Kazakhstan-born Grigoryan (who was raised in Melbourne) provides a classical sensibility on pieces like Muthspiel's delicate and lyrical "The Henrysons" and Towner's sparse and dramatic "Museum Of Light."

While it is natural to compare this project with other successful guitar trios—like the famed union of John McLaughlin, Al Di Meola and Paco de Lucía during the early '80s and the *Three Guitars* collaboration of Larry Coryell, John Abercrombie and Badi Assad in 2003—those were both strictly acoustic outings. It is Muthspiel's warm, bell-like tones and flowing lines on electric guitar, along with his introduction of another texture into the proceedings in the form of wordless vocals on his beguiling "Amarone Trio," that set this particular trio apart. Muthspiel also splits half of the 10 compositions here with Towner, providing a Metheny-esque harmonic quality on "Windsong" then instigating some daring exploration on his open-ended "Die Blaue Stunde."

Sparks fly on Muthspiel's kinetic "Nico und Mithra." He and Grigoryan engage in some bristling unison lines on the challenging head before breaking off individually for some stunning solos. The two also combine for some tight, cascading harmony lines on Towner's invigorating title track, which is one of the high-water marks of this brilliant six-string summit meeting.

—Bill Milkowski

**Travel Guide:** The Henrysons; Father Time; Windson; Duende; Amarone Trio; Travel Guide; Die blaue Stunde; Nico und Mithra; Tarry; Museum Of Light. (50:32)

**Personnel:** Ralph Towner, classical and 12-string guitars; Wolfgang Muthspiel, electric guitar; Slava Grigoryan, classical and baritone guitars.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

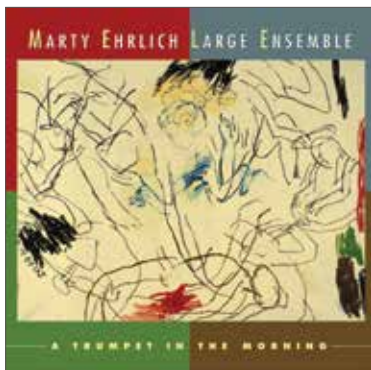
## Marty Ehrlich Large Ensemble *A Trumpet In The Morning*

NEW WORLD 80752

★★★★½

*A Trumpet In The Morning*, named for a poem by the late Arthur Brown, consists of six sections. The CD begins and ends with relatively shorter pieces, "Prelude: Agbekor Translations" and "Postlude: Agbekor Translations." In between are the four meatier works, including the title piece and "Blues For Peace," "Rundowns And Turnbacks" and "M Variations." The title piece brings us Brown's poem and is a concerto for composer Marty Ehrlich's longtime collaborator J.D. Parran, who narrates with panache and plays some spirited soprano as well as bass saxophone. Brown's poetry instigates a stunning variety of musical excursions.

From this more eloquent (if slightly raucous) section, the music then swerves into an out-and-out blues, "Blues For Peace," incorporating elements of funk, both long-form in structure and allowing for rhythmic excursions into 9/8. This blues becomes a kind of taffy for Ehrlich as he stretches the music and musicians, creating both an inbuilt architecture as well as an elasticity unique to the blues form itself. Pianist Uri Caine comes front and center with



"M Variations," a piece that also includes deft solo work from bassist Drew Gress, reedist Adam Kolker and trumpeter Ron Horton. Essentially a piano concerto, once again we hear Ehrlich's masterful touch interweaving melody, around and through the various orchestral sections. Gress' bass work serves as the glue, particularly towards the end.

—John Ephland

**Trumpet In The Morning:** Prelude: Agbekor Translations; A Trumpet In The Morning; Blues For Peace; Rundowns And Turnbacks: I. The Ship On The Corner, II. Rundowns, III. This Graceful Waltz, IV. "Didn't Know The Levees Would Break" Blues, V. Quaker Work Song, VI. Sugar For Sugar, VII. Turnbacks; M Variations (Melody For Madeleine); Postlude: Agbekor Translations. (75:24)

**Personnel:** Marty Ehrlich, conductor, clarinet, bass clarinet (4); J.D. Parran, vocals, soprano, bass saxophones (1, 2, 6); Andy Laster, alto saxophone (1–6); Robert DeBellis, alto, soprano saxophones, clarinet (1–6); Jason Robinson, tenor saxophone (1–3, 5, 6); Adam Kolker, tenor saxophone, clarinet (3–5); Howard Johnson, baritone saxophone (1, 2, 6); Lisa Parrott, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet (3–5); E.J. Allen (1–6), Ron Horton (1–6), James Zollar (1–6), Miki Hirose (5), trumpet; John Clark, French horn (3–5); Ray Anderson (1–6), Michael Dessen (1–6), Curtis Fowlkes (3–5), trombone; Joseph Daly, tuba (1, 2, 6); James Weidman (1, 2, 4, 6), Uri Caine (3–5), piano; Warren Smith, vibraphone, percussion (1, 2, 5); Jerome Harris, guitar (4, 5); Brad Jones (1, 2, 4, 6), Drew Gress (3–5), bass; Eric McPherson (1, 2, 4, 6), Matt Wilson (3–5), drums.

Ordering info: [newworldrecords.org](http://newworldrecords.org)

## Evan Parker & Joe McPhee *What / If / They Both Could Fly*

RUNE GRAMMOFON 2149

★★★★½

Nothing about this 2012 performance, recorded at the Kongsberg Jazz Festival in Norway when saxophonist Evan Parker was 68 and saxophonist-trumpeter Joe McPhee was 73, sounds like the work of musicians who are anywhere short of the top of their game. Parker's tone is at once gorgeously rounded and a bit brusque, his command of circular breathing a stern reproach to many players half his age. McPhee sounds utterly confident on the notoriously slippery straight horn, shifting from carefully calibrated coarseness to pure long tones as the music requires. His quick, breathy flutters and rough longer phrases on the pocket trumpet strike just the right contrast with Parker's smoother sounds. And throughout this completely improvised performance, they sound quite in tune with each other, whether adding to one another's ideas or holding back to give the other space.

—Bill Meyer



**What / If / They Both Could Fly:** What; If; They Both Could Fly. (39:13)

**Personnel:** Evan Parker, tenor saxophone; Joe McPhee, pocket trumpet, soprano saxophone.

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# Historical / BY JAMES HALE

## Chasing an Illusive New Form

By their late thirties, most artists have found their voice and settled into a signature style. John Coltrane was anything but typical; at 37, he was in transition, chasing an illusive new form of expression, and moving fast.

**Afro Blue Impressions (Pablo 34605; 62:41/62:53 ★★★★★)**, recorded at two European concerts 10 days apart in 1963, finds Coltrane straddling two worlds. Like his former boss Miles Davis, the saxophonist's quartet was still playing material from the late 1950s, while reshaping it with radical new concepts of time and harmony.

On the version of "Cousin Mary" recorded Nov. 2 in Berlin, Coltrane's tenor sounds raw as he races through multiple choruses. Later in the show, he dismisses his bandmates to improvise a long, cascading soliloquy to close "I Want To Talk About You." On an earlier version, recorded in Stockholm, the band's transformation is even more evident. While Coltrane sounds ready to burst out of the song's structure, bassist Jimmy Garrison and pianist McCoy Tyner hold back. When Coltrane takes off unaccompanied after five minutes, he literally sounds like he is running loose—arpeggiating phrases aggressively, turning over new ideas and examining them as they emerge. The solo, one of the set's highlights, provides an impressive view of the artist's imagination at work.

Two divergent performances of "My Favorite Things" also illustrate how the quartet refused to settle for stasis. At 14 minutes, the Stockholm performance is one of the shorter versions the band played on the tour, which was extensively recorded by Norman Granz, and Coltrane introduces his main improvisation with a long, whistling slide before shifting into some repeated, incantatory phrases and ending with a ululating vibrato. Ten days later in Berlin, the song is stretched to more than 21 minutes, as Coltrane subtly shifts the dynamics of the piece through his phrasing, volume and tonality. As in numerous instances in these performances, he appears to be listening carefully to his own playing, and pushing to find expression beyond what he had already played.

Where Coltrane was headed became increasingly clear over the following 22 months. By the time his quartet arrived at RCA Victor's New York studios on Aug. 26, 1965, to record *Sun Ship*, the band had reached its apotheosis with *A Love Supreme*, and Coltrane was preparing to move on. By the end of the year, Tyner would be gone, with Jones close behind. Given the changes Coltrane was making, it's no surprise that the recordings were shelved until 1971, four years after his death.

Ordering info: [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)



Coltrane's widow, pianist Alice Coltrane, and producer Ed Michel prepared that initial release, which bears only passing resemblance to ***Sun Ship: The Complete Session (Impulse! B0018075; 59:40/46:49 ★★★★★)***. Only "Amen" appears in its original form, with one slightly shorter complete variation. Elsewhere are complete takes of the album's other four songs, alternate takes—both complete and incomplete—and inserts recorded to replace partial sections. These are the raw materials the editors inherited, and they show a relatively efficient day's work.

The evolution of "Attaining" is most telling, both of Coltrane's original vision and how the final release was created. The band's first take finds Garrison and Jones falling into a walking pattern behind Tyner's cascading piano. After a brief, partial take, which is interrupted by Coltrane saying, "There's something I forgot to tell you," there is a complete version that is much tighter and more focused. Instead of walking, Garrison maintains tension behind Tyner, and the pianist climaxes his solo with some hard-slammings chords. But Coltrane was dissatisfied with where things went from there, and a much more dramatic four-minute insert provided the final conclusion.

Of the other unreleased material, the first takes of "Dearly Beloved" show Coltrane moving toward the microtonality that would dominate much of his later playing, as well as a harsh, almost brutal attack, and illustrate how Jones could sense his leader's cues. After the crushing flams the drummer played on the released take of "Sun Ship," he took the song out with a jaw-dropping coda that was excised. By the closing grace notes of "Amen," Coltrane was miles away from where he was just two years earlier, but with his destination still eluding him.

Ordering info: [hip-oselect.com](http://hip-oselect.com)



## The Modern Jazz Quartet Germany 1956-1958: Lost Tapes

JAZZHAUS 731

★★★★½

It's rare that one finds fresh performances of a group that played continually together for 40 years without also finding the goods a trifle moldy with the echoes of repetition. It may be a point of honor of one of jazz's most honorable and honored ensembles that it constantly refurbished its repertoire and dumbed for no one.

The Modern Jazz Quartet began in the rhythm section of the 1946 Dizzy Gillespie band, was officially born in 1952 and made its final records 41 years later with only one change in personnel. This wonderful CD catches the brittle persona of the MJQ in prime early form during several mid-'50s visits to Europe, both live and in-studio and all superbly recorded.

The MJQ's principal architect and theoretician was John Lewis, a pianist of the bebop generation who favored minimalism in much the same way Count Basie did in the swing years. Even on a bright and driving tempo like "I'll Remember April" with vibraphonist Milt Jackson flying high in elegant overdrive, Lewis plays the anti-virtuoso who refuses to be rushed. He tiptoes in like a furtive cat burglar and, in his own way, steals the show.

About half the pieces are Lewis' own. On "Django," probably the MJQ's greatest hit, a fine German studio orchestra adds new dimensions to a familiar piece. And "Midsommer," available in a few MJQ versions, is transformed here in a swaying, impressionistic orchestration arranged by Gunther Schuller.

In 1957, Schuller coined the term "Third Stream," a hookup between jazz and neo-classical formalism. Lewis saw that the contrapuntalism of the Bach fugue was well within the six-degrees-of-separation perimeter that also included New Orleans polyphony and the Benny Goodman sextet. It was just a matter of creating a reconciling concept and expanding it to embrace everything from the blues to a Christmas carol like the crystalline "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." The result was a modernity for the ages.

—John McDonough

**Germany 1956-1958: Lost Tapes:** Ralph's New Blues; God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen; Willow Weep For Me; I'll Remember April; Midsommer; Bluesology; Django; Sun Dance; Cortège; You Go To My Head; I Can't Get Started; Tenderly; J.B. Blues. (68:17)

**Personnel:** John Lewis, piano; Milt Jackson, vibraphone; Percy Heath, bass; Connie Kay, drums; Harald Banter Ensemble (5); Orchester Kurt Edelhagen (6, 7).

Ordering info: [arthaus-musik.com](http://arthaus-musik.com)

## Jakob Bro *December Song*

LOVELAND 017

★★★★½

Danish guitarist Jakob Bro is a special interpreter, his improvisational folk songs at times spectral, other times jewel-like, and always captivating. *December Song* is the final note in a chapter of albums that include *Balladeering* (2009), which included the late Paul Motian, and *Time* (2011). Bro worked in Motian's various groups and his compositions bear, in no small way, the Motian brand—that undeniable sense of ever-mutable time and space, and a penchant toward beautiful, translucent melodies that inform tactile, playful rhythms. As Motian's best music floated as beautifully as it swung and stung, Bro's *December Song*—at turns delicate, yearning, meditative—recalls Motian's touch without including the master drummer, who passed before the album's recording sessions began.

Accompanied by Bill Frisell, Thomas Morgan, Lee Konitz and Craig Taborn, *December Song* works as an elegy and a dedication to Motian. Frisell and Bro interweave glistening guitars; sometimes their mutually compatible styles are reversed into a ghostly echo. Konitz's soft, sweet notes add a tender, reflective voice while bassist Morgan holds back throughout, creating a deep anchor with exact placement and designated sparseness. One thinks of five musicians performing on a cloud, holding their notes long and carefully, lest the cloud dissolve and they collectively fall to earth.

—Ken Micallef

**December Song:** Laxness; Giant; Zygaena; Tree House; Lys; Kong Oscar; Risskov; Vinterhymne. (46:22)  
**Personnel:** Jakob Bro, Bill Frisell, guitars; Lee Konitz, alto saxophone; Craig Taborn, piano; Thomas Morgan, double bass.

**Ordering info:** [jakobbro.com](http://jakobbro.com)



## Marcus Roberts Trio *From Rags To Rhythm*

J-MASTER 004

★★★★

Whether solo, with a small band or larger ensemble, Marcus Roberts embraces the entire world of pre-fusion jazz on the piano. On this CD—one of three simultaneous releases on his own J-Master label—he teams up with trio members Rodney Jordan on bass and Jason Marsalis on drums for a fine album of original compositions. As Roberts explains in the liner notes, this is a 12-part suite based on themes that reappear throughout the record in various ways on all three instruments. Bass and drums are not just a backing band here, but act as equal partners to Roberts' piano.

Many bands pay lip service to this idea, but this trio follows through. Jordan's bass is beautifully recorded and often comes to the forefront, playing contrasting melodies and counterpoint. The meditative start of "A New Orleans Parade" leads to striking chords and Roberts' virtuosic piano runs. The title track builds to a *Rhapsody In Blue*-type coloring, then into an elegant groove. Roberts varies his touch and feel from the mysterious sound of "The Reservoir" to the bebop lines of "Gotta Play Your Own Song." You can hear traces of the great pianists, bassists and drummers of jazz—but together and individually, each player here has a sound all his own.



**From Rags To Rhythm:** On A Special Occasion; There's A Dance Tonight; The Spanish Tinge; Playing Around; A New Orleans Parade; From Rags To Rhythm; On The Edge Of The Unknown; The Reservoir; Gotta Play Your Own Song; The Duo; Under The Cover Of Darkness; Searching For The Blues. (65:29)

**Personnel:** Marcus Roberts, piano; Rodney Jordan, bass; Jason Marsalis, drums.

**Ordering info:** [marcusroberts.com](http://marcusroberts.com)

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No One Can Forgive Me But My Baby (Tom Waits)  
Heartache Blues  
Going Away Baby (James Lane)  
Further On Up The Road (Joe Medwick)  
Looking for Trouble (Eddie Taylor)  
Tell Me Mama (Walter Jacobs)  
Last Night (Walter Jacobs)  
That Nasty Swing (Cliff Carlisle)  
Drop Down Mama (Sleepy John Estes)  
Hard Times (Skip James)  
Jockey Full of Bourbon (Tom Waits)  
Tell Me (Chester Burnett)  
Junco Partner (Trad. Blues Song)  
The Sky Is Crying (Elmore James)  
No Money Down (Chuck Berry)



## Magnus Lindgren *Souls*

GAZELL 1117

★★½

Swedish multireedist and composer Magnus Lindgren's *Souls* showcases a slew of top-notch singers. That there may be a real band playing here seems almost incidental. The title track, featuring Gregory Porter, shows Lindgren's ease with Brazilian flair. He provides a playground of funk for Porter on "Small Stuff," alongside a dash of soulful flute. "Change All The Time," featuring Anna Christoffersson, is radio-friendly pop—nice but forgettable. So is Lindgren's "Rainy Day," where Christoffersson is joined by Mark Reilly on vocals in what is, essentially, well-played makeout music. "She Walks This Earth," featuring Ivan Lins, is the album's highlight. The tune's lovely, infectious melody, with Lins' inimitable voice and Lindgren's winning flute work, is hard to resist. It makes you wish these two would build on their obvious musical affinities beyond just one song. —John Ephland



**Souls:** Souls; Change All The Time; Creepin'; Rainy Day; Dreaming In New York; Barcelona; Small Stuff; Broken Heart; On A Sunday; She Walks This Earth; Wrapped Around Your Finger. (44:51)

**Personnel:** Magnus Lindgren, tenor saxophone, flute, alto flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, Fender Rhodes, Wurliizer, vocals; Leonardo Amuedo, guitar; Ira Coleman, bass; Rhani Krija, percussion; Marie Fredriksson (9), Mark Reilly (4), Ivan Lins (10), Gregory Porter (1, 2, 8), Rigmor Gustafsson (5), Anna Christoffersson (1, 2, 4, 7, 8).

Ordering info: [edel.com](http://edel.com)

## Rent Romus' Life's Blood *Truth Teller*

EDGE TONE 4135

★★½

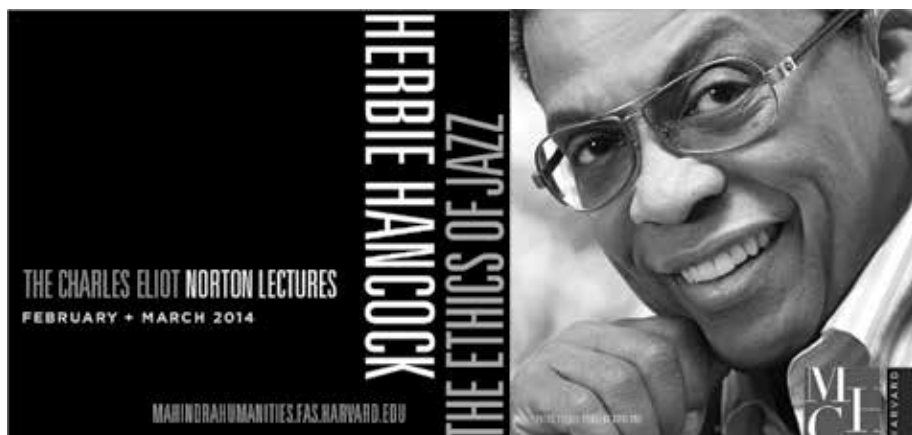
Californian saxophonist Rent Romus wears his influences on his sleeve—his obvious antecedent is Arthur Blythe. Here, Blythe's buzzy bumblebee vibrato and unforced, diatonic style is overt on Romus' cover of "Faceless Woman." But although Romus melodically hovers and takes his time, he has an aggressive, splintery side. Acoustic bassists Kim Cass and Markus Hunt intertwine on the loftily titled opener, "Infinitism," and, though their simpatico playing is nice, there's too much boom in the mix. "Truth Teller" begins bombastically with Timothy Orr's percussion. Romus waits several minutes before launching in emphatically, in Albert Ayler mode. The CD loses stars for low-budget packaging, mix issues and a lack of programmatic focus—but Romus has a bold sound, unmistakable sincerity and conviction. —Michael Jackson



**Truth Teller:** Infinitism; Truth Teller; Snow Ghost; Luggage Store Breakdown; Q Cee; Universal Message; Faceless Woman; Sydāmeštāni Rakastan. (65:11)

**Personnel:** Rent Romus, alto, soprano saxophones; Kim Cass (1, 3–5, 8), Markus Hunt (1, 2, 6, 7), bass; Timothy Orr, drums, percussion; Thollem Electric, Fender Rhodes (6).

Ordering info: [edgetonerecords.com](http://edgetonerecords.com)



## Spyro Gyra *The Rhinebeck Sessions*

CROSSEYED BEAR 1045

★★★★½

It's hard to believe that Spyro Gyra is approaching its 40th anniversary next year and that this is its 30th album. Through the numerous personnel changes over the years, only saxophonist Jay Beckenstein survives from the band's initial 1974 release. And while all the other names have remained fixed since 2007's *Good To Go*, Lee Pearson now fills the drum chair. The stability and marketplace longevity, though quite admirable, has bred homogeneity; it's doubtful that the band's fans expect this group to break much new ground.

As much as any band, the smooth-jazz phenomenon rests on Spyro Gyra's canon. But rhythm has always been the band's hole card. On the soporific "Wishful Thinking," the beat just kind of bumps along as Beckenstein winds through the theme and Tom Schuman's piano noodles. Scott Ambush's electric bass vigorously animates the popping "Not Unlike That"—percolating and playing stick-and-move. Pearson leaves few percussive doors unopened throughout the whole album. He's uniformly engaged with keening grooves and rhythmic commentary; his duo exchange with the riffing tenor that opens "I Know What You Mingus" is thrilling in its vitality. He's a good source of creative sabotage to this music.

Beckenstein's conversational tenor sax is relentlessly linear, though rhythmically acute. An octave leap or a better sense of catch-and-release would add some much-needed drama to tunes like "Off The Cuff." But turn him loose on the percussively layered "Sorbet" and he takes charge masterfully. One might wish for more intricate structures, more abandon in the solos and a greater sense of dynamic sweep, but that would be asking the band to be something it's not. As it is, Spyro Gyra maintains its posture of pleasant and occasionally surprising instrumental standing. —Kirk Silsbee

**The Rhinebeck Sessions:** Serious Delivery; Wishful Thinking; Not Unlike That; Sorbet; I Know What You Mingus; Off The Cuff Clubhouse Jam; Odds Get Even; Who Knew! (57:34)

**Personnel:** Jay Beckenstein, saxophones; Tom Schuman, keyboard; Julio Fernandez, guitar; Scott Ambush, bass; Lee Pearson, drums.

Ordering info: [spyrogyra.com](http://spyrogyra.com)

## Dana Reason *Angle Of Vision*

482 MUSIC 1085

★★★★

Canadian pianist Dana Reason releases albums as a leader only occasionally; it's been three years since her last one, but the silence has been productive. She has a lot to say on *Angle Of Vision*, and in bassist Glen Moore and drummer Peter Valsamis, she's chosen collaborators who are able to answer with exactly the right phrases to bring out the best in her playing.

She's also brought some of the silence of the last three years with her to the studio. Reason's original compositions, which constitute most of the album, are largely delicate and contemplative. "Unmarked" and the title track are well-calibrated indoor listening for cold, snowy days, while "Moments With Clara," her rewrite of Clara Schumann's "Drie Romanzen Opus 21," is crystalline and seems to mourn the 19th-century composer-pianist's relative obscurity.

Reason has other gears. "Paris Tango" is a playfully rhythmic piece that delivers on its title by skillfully blending the beat of tango with the airy feel of musette, quoting Astor Piazzolla in its fluttering melody. "Play Ball" bounces through its verses, flits lightly through dizzying



double stops and rippling cadenzas, and generally shows Reason to be fleet-fingered and naturally melodic. As piano trio records go, *Angle Of Vision* is comfortably traditional (it would sit well on a shelf between Bill Evans and Vince Guaraldi), but Reason's voice as a composer and instrumentalist is firmly her own, and well worth listening to.

—Joe Tangari

**Angle Of Vision:** Rendezvous; Unmarked; Paris Tango; On My Way; Moments With Clara; Night Club Skin; Angle Of Vision; God Bless The Child; Play Ball; September; Transition; Someday. (55:20)

**Personnel:** Dana Reason, piano; Glen Moore, bass; Peter Valsamis, drums.

**Ordering info:** [482music.com](http://482music.com)

## BuJazzO 25 *Jazz Thing: Next Generation Vol. 49*

DOUBLE MOON 71124

★★½

Following France's example, Germany decided in the mid-1980s to create a national jazz orchestra, which gave birth to BuJazzO, which is short for Bundesjazzorchester. The music director chair is now shared by Niels Klein and Jiggs Whigham, whose divergent visions underline the orchestra's dichotomic mission as a repertoire band and as a vehicle for works by contemporary composers.

The first disc, subtitled "Next Generation," has Klein in the director's chair. With the exception of a vocal rendition of Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing," which gets an incongruous Disney-like treatment, the pieces are by young German musicians and composers. The musicians sound more comfortable and convincing tackling this type of material, which they most likely have a deeper connection with and feel more empathy for.

The other disc is labeled "At The Jazzband Ball" and is devoted to classics by some of Whigham's favorite composers and arrangers. The piece that really stands out is Gershwin's "What You Want Wid Bess," featuring tenor saxophonist Lennart Allkemper, who does not miss the opportunity to shine and delivers the most imaginative and heart-



felt solo of the whole twofer.

—Alain Drouot

**Jazz Thing: Next Generation Vol. 49:** Disc 1: Persistence Of Memory; Giese; A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing; Young And Unfashioned; Throb; Daily Race; Amesein In Stockholm. (46:50) Disc 2: Woodrow; My Old Flame; What You Want Wid Bess; Daydream; Shine; This Time The Dream Is On Me; Skylark; Suite Georgia Brown; My Romance; Sax No End. (52:38)

**Personnel:** Jan Kaiser, Malk Krah, Felix Meyer, Christin Mehler, Johannes Schneider, Max Seibert, trumpet; Benjamin Gerny, Jacob Grimm, Robert Hedemann, Adrian Prost, Moritz Wesp, trombone; Jan Braun, horn; Pascal Bartoszak, Theresia Philipp, Anna-Lena Schnabel, alto saxophone; Lennart Allkemper, Marc Doffey, Nils Wrasse, tenor saxophone; Philipp Schoof, baritone saxophone; Johannes von Ballestrem, piano; Alex Eckert, Rafael Krohn, guitar; David Helm, Christian Müller, bass; Dominik Mahnig, Silvan Strauss, drums; Miriam Ast, Marie Daniels, Tamara Lukasheva, Zola Mennenöh, Lydia Schiller, Elina Viluma, Frederic Betz, Daniel Cacia, Sebastian Hengst, Nicolas Ries, vocals; Niels Klein, Jiggs Whigham, conductor.

**Ordering info:** [challengerecords.com](http://challengerecords.com)



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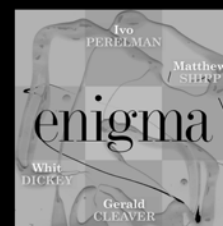
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## Project THEM

MILES HIGH 8622

★★½

On "Minor Turns," a tune from Project THEM's self-titled debut, things get really interesting. The head includes an engagingly paranoid funk section, then solos commence over the chords from "Giant Steps." The groove is funky, and John Coltrane's famous progression is offered up on organ. On top, Project THEM's co-leaders—vibraphonist Mark Sherman and tenor saxophonist Bob Franceschini—issue solid, if dry, solos. Below, drummer Adam Nussbaum maintains a thick, propulsive beat, ensuring that momentum is never lost. "Angular Blues," by Sherman, achieves a similar feeling. A swinging blues framed by a tricky, frisky head, "Angular" inspires a little extra fire from the soloists by being short and compositionally engrossing. Unfortunately, the rest of the disc is not on the level of "Minor Turns" and "Angular Blues." The music is well-played and enjoyable, but it lacks personality and danger.

—Brad Farberman

**Project THEM:** Submissive Dominants; Sleight Of Hand; We 3; Solitude; The South Song; Minor Turns; Close Enough For Love; A Short Swing; Ma Bo's Waltz; Angular Blues. (56:41)

**Personnel:** Bob Franceschini, tenor saxophone, flute; Mark Sherman, vibraphone; Mitchel Forman, piano, B-3 (1, 2, 4, 6, 10); Martin Gjakonovski, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums; Paolo di Sabatino, piano (3, 5, 7, 8, 9).

**Ordering info:** [mileshighrecords.com](http://mileshighrecords.com)



## Bill O'Connell + The Latin Jazz All-Stars

SAVANT 2129

★★★★½

Among the countless stylistic hybrids in music, Latin jazz occupies a unique place. It owes its endless variety of alligiances to the specific linguistics of the two powerful styles. Pianist-arranger-composer Bill O'Connell works multiple angles toward an artistically satisfying middle zone on *Zócalo*, with his band rightly dubbed the Latin Jazz All-Stars.

O'Connell has long been an experienced hand in Latin jazz quarters, working with Mongo Santamaría, The Fort Apache Band and other Latinized outfits, but other types of jazz are also in his wheelhouse. What he assembles on this fine new album is an artistically cohesive index of expressive possibilities among the different worlds he traffics in. At the center, O'Connell is a clear and present musical force, at the pen or piano, not to mention in the role of conceptual overseer. He has potent and flexible horn soloists in bold saxophonist Steve Slagle and especially trombonist Conrad Herwig, who turns many a solo on the record into a logical, well-sculpted statement, negotiating the shifting rhythmic pulses of swing and Latin rhythms, and back.

O'Connell's songbook here ranges from imaginatively Latin-flavored rethinking of standards—Victor Feldman's "Joshua," a bolero-esque ballad take on "For All We Know" and an Afro-Cuban-syncoated "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top"—to strong original tunes. In the composer role, he finds fresh ways to revitalize and change up expectations. On *Zócalo*, restless harmonic and rhythmic shifts meet restless idiomatic moves, but in the most natural, vibrant and musically truthful way.

—Josef Woodard

**Zócalo:** Big Sur; Joshua; Zócalo; For All We Know; Nothing But the Truth; 21st Century Blues; The Surrey With The Fringe On Top; Erik's Song; One Note Mambo. (59:49)

**Personnel:** Bill O'Connell, piano; Steve Slagle, alto, soprano saxophones; Conrad Herwig, trombone; Richie Flores, percussion; Luques Curtis, bass; Adam Cruz, drums.

**Ordering info:** [jazzdepot.com](http://jazzdepot.com)



## The Fringe

SUNDANCE 13072

★★★★½

As a musician and professor at Berklee College of Music, saxophonist George Garzone undoubtedly has influenced legions of players for a couple generations. The same could be said for his trio, The Fringe, with drummer Bob Gullotti and bassist John Lockwood. Its weekly residencies in Cambridge, Mass., have been a crucial hub for the Boston area's jazz players, and not just the musicians working on the outer edge of improvisation: Esperanza Spalding has always been a big fan of the group.

So The Fringe had a lot to celebrate for its 40th anniversary concert, which was held and recorded at the Boston Conservatory in May 2012. The resulting disc serves as a solid introduction to the group, as well as a strong statement that Garzone, Gullotti and Lockwood are not inclined to let any recent milestone weigh them down. All of the compositions are credited to the group and the pieces represent a variety of different frameworks for their freewheeling dialogues, rather than, say, tunes as such.

Garzone especially doesn't sound burdened by The Fringe's longevity, as he burns through fast-paced 16th notes, making his most outwardly assertive statements on the short opener, "Take Off," and the concluding "40 Years & Counting." He's also compelling during low-key passages where the emphasis is on the sound of breath itself, like on "Looking Back." Gullotti and Lockwood are just as formidable, and not just for the way their frantic energy and sense of melodic structure set up the saxophonist's lead on such tracks as "This Is It." Repetition is another of Garzone's frequent techniques, and it works well alongside Lockwood and Gullotti's shifting phrases on "Let's Discuss This." Sometimes that melodic insistence can sound routine, like on the short "Watch Out People." Even with such moments, this disc shows The Fringe's 50th anniversary will be cause for an even louder celebration.

—Aaron Cohen

**40 Years On The Fringe:** Take Off; Let's Discuss This; Funky Stroll; I Loved You Yesterday; Don't Look Now – But!!!; This Is It; Looking Back; Rumble Tumble; Watch Out People; Little Feet; 40 Years & Counting. (62:10)

**Personnel:** George Garzone, tenor, soprano saxophones; Bob Gullotti, drums; John Lockwood, bass.

**Ordering info:** [sundance.dk](http://sundance.dk)



## Melaza

CHULO

★★★★½

Salsa had its heyday in the 1960s and '70s, but in the hands of a capable band, the genre still has plenty of life in it. New York-based 12-piece Melaza is just such a band. One of the album's finest songs is "Estas a Tiempo," which begins with a slow, dark and smoky groove and eventually builds into something more propulsive. Vocalist Renzo Padilla has the right kind of voice to navigate these extremes; his Spanish-language singing can engage in rapid-fire call-and-response with his bandmates, but it has just enough of the weathered power needed to carry a good bolero-style verse. The band is solid, with tight horn arrangements and a few strong solos, particularly from the trombonists, and well-arranged percussion that locks in with Maximo Rodriguez's foundational bass lines. One would be hard-pressed to pinpoint anything new that the band brings to the music, though. *Melaza* is as down-the-middle as churning salsa gets.

—Joe Tangari

**Melaza:** Mal Amigo; Estas a Tiempo; El Fregabook; En El Pasado; Quedara; De Nueva York; Abusador; Inesperado Adios; Suegros; El Niche. (36:25)

**Personnel:** Renzo Padilla, lead vocals, coro; Jonathan Powell, Dennis Hernandez, trumpet; Eddie Venegas, trombone, coro; Jose "Biribo" Cruz, trombone; Maximo Rodriguez, bass; Roberto Quintero, congas, maracas; Daniel Antonetti, bongo, guiro, shekere; Carlos Padron, timbales; Mike Eckroth, piano; Jacob Plasse, tres guitar; Eddie Rosado, coro.

**Ordering info:** [chulorecords.com](http://chulorecords.com)



# Redefining Composition

Seems only yesterday I was reviewing Harvey Cohen's 700-page *Duke Ellington's America* in these columns. And here we are again with **Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington (Gotham Books/The Penguin Group)**, Terry Teachout's 500-page trek over the same ground. His 2009 Louis Armstrong bio used the trumpeter's unpublished letters to sprinkle some fresh texture over a familiar story. But Ellington left no such stash. So here he settles for "an act of synthesis," meaning a book based on the published work of others.

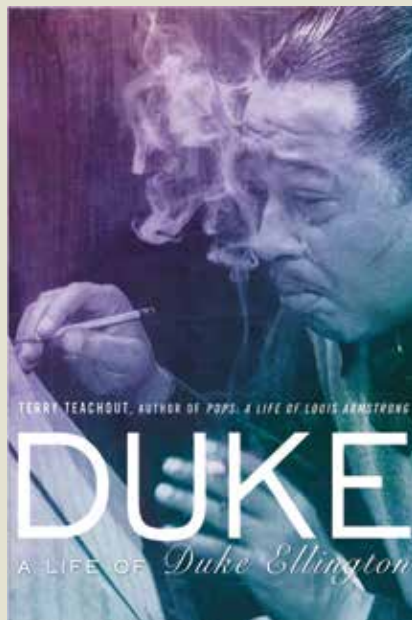
There is much to synthesize, however, and many "others" to consult. And Teachout has done a crackerjack job. I can think of about 16 books dealing wholly with Ellington or his music. Some were more prescient than others. James Lincoln Collier's 1987 biography was first thought flawed because it sneered at Ellington's grasp of long-form structure. Collier can take comfort from Teachout, who thoroughly agrees.

Unlike Cohen, who focused on Ellington's business infrastructure and rarely talked about musicians, Teachout writes extensively about the man as musical architect and composer, a fact that makes the two books nicely complementary. Ellington had the gift of texture and atmosphere, he writes, but rarely melody. "Over time he found a near-infinite number of ways to conceal this deficit," he says. One of them was a kind of "musical kleptomania" whereby Ellington plucked many of his most famous tunes—the ones in the "dreaded medley"—from his band members' doodles, often leaving their creators unrecognized and unrewarded.

Sometimes, though, they were plagiarizers. Consider "Creole Love Call," which Ellington and Bubber Miley developed from an idea given them by clarinetist Rudy Jackson. But alas, writes Teachout, "Jackson neglected to inform his collaborators that he had stolen the song from his old boss"—King Oliver, who had recorded the piece in 1923 as "Camp Meeting Blues."

Yet, Ellington's ear was quicker than anyone's in snatching up others' cast-offs. Thus, without Otto Hardwick, there would be no "In A Sentimental Mood"; without Hardwick and Lawrence Brown, no "Sophisticated Lady"; without Cootie Williams, no "Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me"; and without Johnny Hodges, no "Don't Get Around Much Anymore"—none of whom would receive composer credit. Plagiarism? In a way, Teachout concedes. But he accepts it as Ellington's method of "band-based" composition and ends by quoting classical music critic Alex Ross: "Ellington carved out his own brand of eminence, redefining composition as a collective art."

There are two great Faustian bargains at the heart of Teachout's story. The first was between Ellington and his manager Irving Mills, who created his unique "jazzman-as-artist" image, protected him from predators and made him a star. But the price was something "close to indentured



servitude." Mills became owner of the Ellington band, "co-writer" of most of his songs and receiver of "most of his income." Yet, there is no clear villain or victim in Teachout's telling. There were profits enough for all and sufficient stardom banked to fix Ellington for life.

The second Faustian partnership starts as the first ends. Ellington's long relationship with Billy Strayhorn begins in 1939, and in many ways seems remarkably similar, though reversed. This time Ellington was the power-patron to Strayhorn's eternal protégé. The interesting thing is that each man seemed to accept his bargain.

Teachout finds complexity and tension in this partnership, more than the chummy, alter-ego image that many years would suggest. Drawing on the work of David Hajdu, Strayhorn's biographer, and Walter van de Leur, who was able to study the handwriting on the original manuscripts, we get a fairly nuanced portrait of their work together, and especially who wrote what.

One thing Teachout finds a bit of a charade is Ellington's fondness for casting his inspirations in narrative terms, as if a piece must "mean" something to have value. None of this artifice can "be taken at face value," he writes. "Many of his best known titles, like 'Harlem Air Shaft,' were later shown to be concocted after the fact ... to tickle the fancies of musically uneducated listeners." Harmless perhaps. But when he unveiled *Black, Brown And Beige* at Carnegie Hall in 1943, it was a needless distraction to puzzled critics who tried to reconcile the specifics of the music with the vagueness of the "story" it was presumed to be telling. Along the way we glimpse more of Ellington's quirks—like his penchant for superstition (never give socks as a gift because the person will walk out of your life). In the end, Teachout gives us a smart and literate book that can sit alongside Cohen's without too much redundancy.

DB

Ordering info: [penguin.com](http://penguin.com)

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### Kenny Barron/Gerry Gibbs/ Ron Carter *Gerry Gibbs Thrasher Dream Trio*

WHALING CITY SOUND 065

★★★

Drummer and composer Gerry Gibbs is the son of vibraphone kingpin Terry Gibbs. The younger percussionist has already amassed a total of seven albums, three on the prolific Whaling City Sound label.

For his latest release, Gibbs took on a challenge not for the faint of heart. Hiring bassist Ron Carter and pianist Kenny Barron for his Thrasher Dream Trio, Gibbs swings and solos with the two

masters like he's voting for his own Jazz Hall of Fame induction. Gibbs whips up an incessant storm, from his flag-waving "When I Dream" to the Tony Williams/V.S.O.P torture test "The Eye Of The Hurricane."

But it's not only Gibbs' drumming that wows ("Mr. Clean" is a highlight). The sheer organizational skills required to expertly arrange 15 songs of such diversity—and present them to two of the most important jazz musicians of the past 75 years—is also impressive. (Carter and Barron contribute a song apiece). Gibbs' energy occasionally boils over as on a nail-biting "Epistrophy," its nervous tempo making Carter and Barron sound as if they're swinging in the back seat of a VW Beetle.

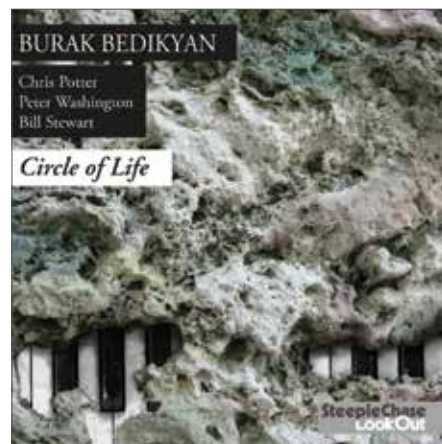
But Gibbs' flavorful brushwork fires "Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing" and "Here Comes Ron." And the trio gels beautifully on Gibbs' "The Thrasher" and Coltrane's "Impressions," Barron and Carter dancing rhythms and regulating melodic currents with magical grace. A major plus is the sound of the recording. The album documents two important masters and an energetic upstart with a rich, clear production aesthetic.

—Ken Micallef

**Gerry Gibbs Thrasher Dream Trio:** Epistrophy; Promises, Promises; When I Dream; The Shadow of Your Smile; The Woman On The TV Screen; The Eye Of The Hurricane; Tell Me A Bedtime Story; A Feeling; Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing; Sunshower; Hear Comes Ron; Impressions; The Thrasher; Mr. Clean; The Theme. (74:55)

**Personnel:** Kenny Barron, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Gerry Gibbs, drums.

**Ordering info:** [whalingcitysound.com](http://whalingcitysound.com)



### Burak Bedikyan *Circle Of Life*

STEEPLECHASE 33109

★★★

Pianist Burak Bedikyan, a Turk of Armenian ancestry living in Istanbul, makes a strong case for his post-bop bona fides on *Circle Of Life*, a quartet outing in the company of three of New York's strongest personalities: saxophonist Chris Potter, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Bill Stewart. There's not much in these 12 pieces that overtly connects Bedikyan to his native musical traditions, but there are a number of pieces that reflect his early interest in contemporary classical music. His two-part "Prayer For Forgiveness" is wide open harmonically and structurally. The pianist's prismatic chords, brooding tone, swift tempo-shifts and sharp dynamic range provide a rich foundation for Chris Potter's improvisation on tenor, with Stewart providing apt, skittery support—the bassist sits this one out.

Prior to studying with fellow Turk pianist Aydin Esen beginning in 1996, Bedikyan's interest in music was deep, but unfocused. Those lessons proved to be a turning point, and from the opening track there's no doubt that the pianist has absorbed lessons from the masters. There's nothing tentative about "First Steps," an original steeped in the splintered rhythms and the indelible melodic complexity of Thelonious Monk (with a particularly great Potter solo marked by humorously braying honks à la Sonny Rollins). Bedikyan does have a slight predilection for mawkishness, whether clinging tightly to the syrupy melody of The Beatles' ballad "Here, There And Everywhere" or the touch of Brazilian-tinged treacle in his "Do You Still Have Hope?"

But the excellent band brings enough force and concision to counter those occasional flourishes. Whether Bedikyan manages to break out with a fully distinctive sound in the future is open to debate, but this effort leaves no doubt that he's got the chops, taste and range to do so—here's hoping he lets more of his imagination run wild.

—Peter Margasak

**Circle Of Life:** First Steps; Here, There And Everywhere; Do You Still Have Hope?; For Old Times Sake; Prayer For Forgiveness Part 1: Delusion; Prayer For Forgiveness Part 2: Serenity; Joy Of Giving; TF (For Tommy Flanagan); Intro: Melancholia; Circle Of Life; 19.01.2007 (In The Memory Of Hrant Dink). (64:34)

**Personnel:** Burak Bedikyan, piano; Chris Potter, saxophone; Peter Washington, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.

**Ordering info:** [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)

### Shauli Einav *Generations*

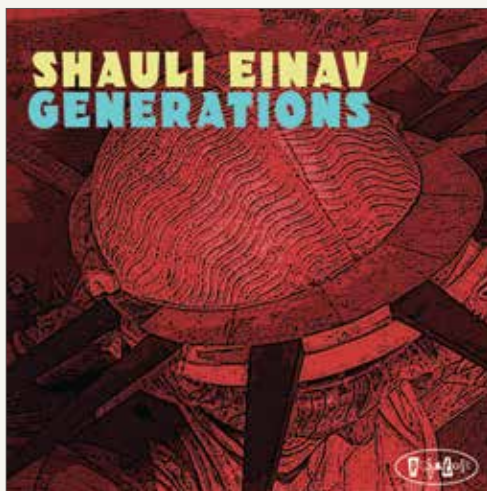
POSI-TONE 8113

★★★½

The title of Israeli-born saxophonist Shauli Einav's latest CD, *Generations*, reflects the fact that the 31-year-old saxophonist and his contemporaries and countrymen bassist Or Bareket and guest flutist Itai Kriss are joined by a pair of veterans, pianist Don Friedman and drummer Eliot Zigmund. While the nearly half a century spanned by the participants' ages justifies the title's plural, the music is resolutely focused on one generation—that represented by the bop-era elders.

Einav possesses a strong tenor voice that belies his age. Here, it's limber and muscular on the many acrobatic bop workouts, sweetly warm and breathy on the ballads. It's a decidedly throwback sound, but Einav has obviously dug deeply into this tradition, emerging with a bold approach indebted to more than his most obvious predecessors.

Einav's previous releases have focused on his own compositions, but *Generations* is dominated by older tunes; with the exception of John Coltrane's "Crescent," here rendered as a hushed, brooding ballad, most of the pieces are lesser-reprised tunes by the likes of



Harold Land and Don Byas. Land's bustling, upbeat "As You Like It" provides a leaping-off point for brisk, round-robin interplay between Einav, Kriss and Zigmund, a particular highlight. Kriss returns for Einav's own "Renewal," another celebratory excursion featuring the leader's sinuous soprano that culls bristling work from the entire band.

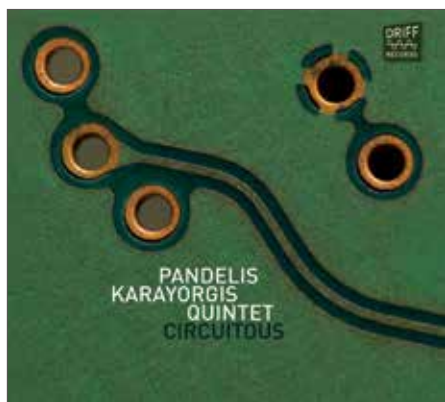
—Shaun Brady

**Generations:** Thermo Blues; The More I See You; As You Like It; Crescent; Compulsion; Land Of Nod; Waltz For Zweetie; Almost Everything; Renewal; Gloria. (50:33)

**Personnel:** Shauli Einav, tenor, soprano saxophones; Itai Kriss, flute; Don Friedman, piano; Or Bareket, bass; Eliot Zigmund, drums.

**Ordering info:** [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com)





## Pandelis Karayorgis Quintet *Circuitous*

DRIFF RECORDS 1304

★★★★★

## Gregorio/Swell/Karayorgis *Window And Doorway*

DRIFF RECORDS 1301

★★★★★

Two albums featuring the formidable and subtle playing and conceptual brainwork of Greek-born, Boston-based pianist Pandelis Karayorgis illustrate the renewable power and adaptability of personal stylistic imprints in the contemporary, post-free-jazz universe. In this music, impulse meets, undermines and converses with structure—often in compact, fragmented forms, or suggested modalities and moods. An engaging and empathetic trio set from 2011, *Window And Doorway* divides itself into 11 mostly compacted tracks in which three-way collective exploration glows and scampers, while the quintet album *Circuitous* ups the ante of textures and structural schemes.

By contextual standards, the trio date—in collaboration with sentient musical beings Steve Swell, trombone, and clarinetist Guillermo Gregorio—reflexively conjures up the idea of a “chamber-esque” setting. Conversely, the Chicago-based quintet, featuring reedists Dave Rempis and Keefe Jackson, along with the piano-bass-drums rhythm section of Karayorgis, Nate McBride and Frank Rosaly, steers perceptions toward comparisons to classic jazz quintet paradigm, different in form and function though it may be.

Both groupings are linked to an essential musical philosophy espoused by the pianist, ambling on the boundaries between the preconceived and the spontaneous. These recordings exemplify an aesthetic at once solid in its concept and open to evolution and expansion.

—Josef Woodard

***Circuitous*:** Undertow; Nudge; Swarm; Circuitous; Vortex; Even-fall; Blue Line; Here In July; Souvenir. (61:10)

**Personnel:** Dave Rempis, tenor, alto, baritone saxophones; Keefe Jackson, tenor saxophone, bass and contrabass clarinets; Pandelis Karayorgis, piano; Nate McBride, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums.

**Ordering info:** [driffrecords.com](http://driffrecords.com)

***Window And Doorway*:** Texture 5; Hazy Recall; Window And Doorway; Lifgatomy; Coplanar 1+2; Curves And Angles; Planimetria; In the Cracks Of Four; Thinly Veiled; Summer; Nu Blu. (52:00)

**Personnel:** Guillermo Gregorio, clarinet; Steve Swell, trombone; Pandelis Karayorgis, piano.

**Ordering info:** [driffrecords.com](http://driffrecords.com)

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Mintz Quartet**

THIRTEENTH NOTE 005

★★★★½

You can tell a lot about musicians from the way they solo. But you can tell even more from the way they solo unaccompanied. At one point during "Dit," a tune from drummer Billy Mintz's new quartet project, he is left alone with his instrument. In the absence of tenor saxophonist John Gross, pianist-organist Roberta Piket and bassist Putter Smith, his improvising is powerful but restrained. He doesn't play a lot, but what he does play has intent and focus. *Mintz Quartet* is Mintz's first album as a leader, and all the tunes are composed by him. Some of the best moments here feature Piket on organ. "Cannonball," for instance, is a gloomy soul-jazz piece also marked by funky, swinging drums, thick, round tenor saxophone and Piket's deep, minimal bass lines (Smith sits this one out). On the Latin piece "Destiny," Piket's unpolished but honest vocals sit alongside Gross' breathy tenor, Smith's supportive low end and Mintz's subtle drumming. "Where is my soul? It's gone away," sings Piket. "Beautiful You" is brought to life by just piano and tenor saxophone, save for a drop of bass and cymbal work at the very end. As on the rest of the album, there's no ego here. The compositions and the collective musicianship are the stars.

—Brad Farberman

**Mintz Quartet:** Beautiful You; Flight; Dit; Destiny; Haunted; Shmear; Cannonball; Beautiful; Ugly Beautiful; Relent; Retribution; After Retribution. (66:50)

**Personnel:** John Gross, tenor saxophone; Roberta Piket, piano, organ, vocals (4); Putter Smith, bass; Billy Mintz, drums, tambourine (7), maracas (4).

**Ordering info:** [thirteenthnoterecords.com](http://thirteenthnoterecords.com)


**Scott Jeppesen  
El Guapo**

CREATIVE BOTTLE MUSIC

★★★★½

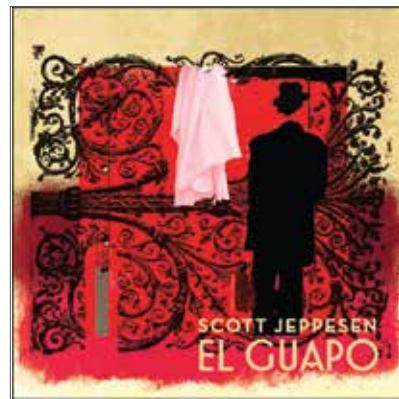
The debut album from Los Angeles-based saxophonist Scott Jeppesen stays grounded thanks to its leader's earnest playing and creative writing. Occasionally though, the music drifts into a synthetic smoothness that is not always welcome. Jeppesen's version of Richie Beirach's "Elm" is eerily similar to the original 1979 recording. The two tracks can be played simultaneously and line up almost perfectly. Nonetheless, on this recreation Jeppesen gently flutters over guitarist Larry Koonse's nimble support with dreamy results. Co-producer and trumpeter-flugelhornist John Daversa steps out with his horn on two tracks including Jeppesen's "Great Odin's Raven." Daversa trails Jeppesen a few steps on the prodding melody before they each make driving statements of their own, followed by pianist Josh Nelson. The album consists mostly of Jeppesen's compositions. "I Tend To Agree" pits Nelson's keyboards against drummer Dan Schnelle's bumping solo. Jeppesen switches to soprano saxophone for "No Drama," a seductive platform for bassist Dave Robaire's swaying solo. Jeppesen closes with a confident display of chops. With just Robaire and Schnelle, the saxophonist pays homage to Sonny Rollins' muscular style, honking through Cole Porter's "Don't Fence Me In" with a swinging playfulness.

—Sean J. O'Connell

**El Guapo:** El Guapo; Elm; Great Odin's Raven; I Tend To Agree; Maybe Later; No Drama; Overlapping Conversations; Hidden; Prayer For Sandy Hook; Don't Fence Me In. (61:04)

**Personnel:** Scott Jeppesen, saxophone, bass clarinet; John Daversa, trumpet, flugelhorn; Larry Koonse, guitar; Josh Nelson, piano, keyboard; Dave Robaire, bass; Dan Schnelle, drums.

**Ordering info:** [scottjeppesen.com](http://scottjeppesen.com)




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**Ivo Perelman/Matthew Shipp/Whit Dickey/Gerald Cleaver**  
*Enigma*

LEO RECORDS 683

★★★★

**Ivo Perelman/Matthew Shipp/Mat Maneri**  
*A Violent Dose Of Anything*

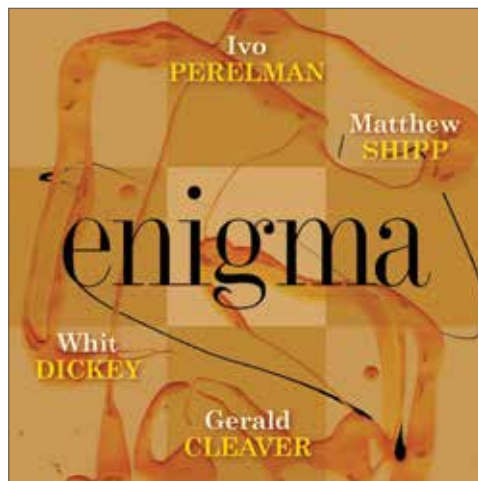
LEO RECORDS 681

★★★★

**Ivo Perelman/Joe Morris/Balázs Pándi**  
*One*

RARENOISE 034

★★★★½



Brazilian saxophonist Ivo Perelman has been releasing records at a brisk rate for some time now, but lately his productivity has gone off the hook. The three CDs under consideration here were all recorded during the same month in the same Brooklyn studio. All three discs are totally improvised. But despite shared circumstances and an almost familial connectedness between the personnel, they are very different albums.

*Enigma* is a logical culmination of Perelman's productive association with pianist Matthew Shipp. In Shipp, Perelman has found someone who can be both his McCoy Tyner and his Elvin Jones. The pianist's playing is a three-dimensional field of

energy vectors, applying rhythmic force via crashing bass clusters and harmonic elaboration with quick right-hand runs. But on *Enigma*, there are two other sources of sonic force. Both are drummers: Whit Dickey is an old mate of Shipp's from the David S. Ware Quartet, and Gerald Cleaver has worked with Shipp and Perelman before. Each man picks a zone and sticks to it, resulting in music that is full of tense, opposing forces that provide Perelman with plenty of propulsion, impelling him to peel off fleet, darting figures in a fat tone.

*A Violent Dose Of Anything* is part of the soundtrack to a film by Brazilian director Gustavo Galvão. The disc swaps two drummers for one

microtonal violist, Mat Maneri. While the music is still completely improvised, the musicians comport themselves with a mindfulness of the music's ultimate purpose. Here, they pursue a pithiness that makes the lyrical passages especially sweet and the stormy ones as bracing as a late-afternoon tropical squall.

On *One*, Perelman is joined by bassist Joe Morris and drummer Balázs Pándi, who usually works in the realms of doom metal and noise. Pándi proves to be a worthy accompanist, beating short, insistent tattoos that explode from the center of his cymbal attack. Morris, making his recorded debut on electric bass, doesn't sound like a rookie; his tone is solid, and his articulation at high speeds is impressively clear. Perelman's response to the brute energy is to match it, and then top it by either barking out short, braying phrases or unspooling long streams of altissimo. *One* lacks the expressive range of the other records, but it's undeniably effective. —Bill Meyer

**Enigma:** *Enigma*; *Irresistible Incarnation*; *Annunciation*; *Supernatural Life*; *Return To Nature*; *Ritual*; *Gentle As A Fawn*; *A Bourgeois Ideal*. (52:44)

**Personnel:** Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Matthew Shipp, piano; Whit Dickey, Gerald Cleaver, drums.

**Ordering info:** [leorecords.com](http://leorecords.com)

**A Violent Dose Of Anything:** *Brasilia*; *Pedro*; *Virginia*; *Lucas*; *Jesús*, *el Vasco*; *Cristalina*; *Bia*; *São João del Rei*. (44:15)

**Personnel:** Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Matthew Shipp, piano; Mat Maneri, viola.

**Ordering info:** [leorecords.com](http://leorecords.com)

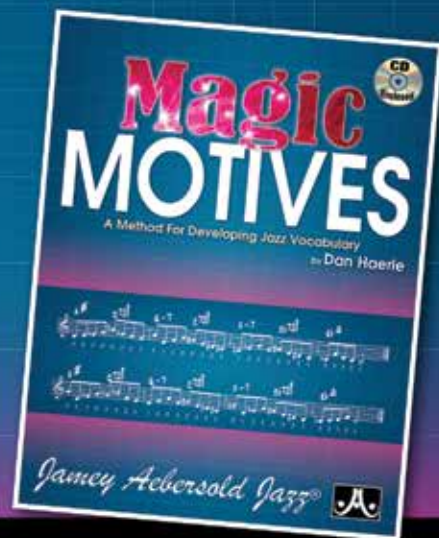
**One:** *Freedom*; *What Love Can Lead To*; *One*; *Universal Truth*; *Stigma*. (52:30)

**Personnel:** Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Joe Morris, electric bass; Balázs Pándi, drums.

**Ordering info:** [rarenoiserecords.com](http://rarenoiserecords.com)

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# RECORDING SCHOOL

DOWNBEAT'S GUIDE TO LEARNING JAZZ

Student Michael Hilgendorf (left) works in the studio with Assistant Director of Recording Services Edward Stalzer at University of Miami's Frost School of Music. (Photo: Versatile Light Studio)

## In the Studio

WITH PRODUCERS JOE FERLA & ODED LEV-ARI

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# WORKING THE ROOM

## In the Studio with Producer JOE FERLA

BY KEN MICALLEF

**P**aul Motian's *Monk In Motian*. John Scofield's *Loud Jazz*. Esperanza Spalding's *Radio Music Society*. Pat Metheny's *Day Trip*. What do these albums have in common? The engineering and/or production touch of recording studio master Joe Ferla.

Ferla's discography of more than 600 albums is an incredible journey through American jazz, r&b, pop and rock, his minimalist recording approach producing the natural, pure sound that became his trademark. Over his 40-year career, the five-time Grammy winner—who is now officially retired—recorded albums of great sonic breadth and musical diversity. Whether manning the console (usually at Power Station, now called Avatar) for Keith Richards, Betty Carter, Marianne Faithfull, Cassandra Wilson, Joe Lovano, Bill Frisell or Dave Douglas, Ferla's spartan approach and welcoming personality made him the go-to studio whiz for New York City sessions.

A month after curating a retrospective of his storied career at the recent Audio Engineering Society convention, where he discussed some of his pivotal albums, Ferla shared some of his unique recording wisdom with *DownBeat*.

### Realistic Sound

"Use Pro Tools as a tape recorder and concentrate on the basics of recording: mic choice and placement, a well-balanced mix (including volume, panning and reverb) and, most importantly, capturing a sound that actually resembles the sound the instrument makes when you stand in front of it. If you need to manipulate the sound and change it later, you have that option, but you should try to capture a realistic sound. People get carried away with what Pro Tools can do. New engineers are hung up on doing too much. Know what your taste is as far as where you like to sit at a concert; that will define your outlook.

"Sometimes people come to my sessions and say, 'There are no equalizers in the board. What are you doing?' I am just capturing the sound of the instrument

by moving the microphone around or changing the mic out. I don't do anything but put a mic through a preamp and into a medium that will capture it. And it usually sounds awesome."

### Work the Room

**"Being a successful engineer is 50 percent recording technique, 50 percent psychology."**

You have to know how to establish a connection with each musician up front. Say the musicians are warming up. Go over to each cat while you're adjusting the mics, and introduce yourself. Comment on their gear and comment on their sound. Engage them in a conversation so that you've established a relationship. When you need them to do something like play louder or softer, you want people to cooperate with you."

### Listen First

"Go out in the live room and listen *before* you adjust anything in the control room. If you only have a couple instruments, find the sweet spot in the room for those two mics. If you have one mic, find the spot where that one mic sounds good. Then go into the control room and see if it sounds like it did when you were in the live room. You have to do a lot of walking between the live room and the control room. Don't be lazy."

### Corrective Tools

"Plug-ins, compressors, limiters and equalizers are just corrective tools. If you can get away without using them, that is awesome. If you need them, you use them. I am not a big fan of plug-ins. I am an old analog dog. Hardware pieces with knobs sound better than plug-ins."

### Microphone Choices

"You have dynamic, condenser and ribbon mics. They all react differently and have different pick-up patterns. A condenser mic like a Neumann or Telefunken picks up not only what you put in front of it, but also other elements in the room. If you have a lot of instruments in the room, you need more isolation, so you might choose a dynamic mic."

### Miking Drums

"On a drum set, I use condenser mics on the cymbals, and dynamic mics on the toms and bass drum; that prevents bleed or leakage from the tom mics. I place the mics 3 inches away from each drum. I also set up two room mics, 10 feet up and 6 feet away from the kit; and two cymbal mics, 18 inches away from each cymbal; then a ribbon mic overhead for a mono pickup of the overall drum sound—that glues all the mics together."

### Humans vs. Robots

"When I recorded Pat Metheny's *Orchestration* [a one-man-band contraption comprising multiple mechanical instruments that the guitarist used to record an album of the same name], I used 40 close mics. Since it was all machines, there was no human element to balance the sound in the room. We had to put the dynamics in the mix that musicians would play normally. A ride cymbal being hit and manipulated by a solenoid only has so much dynamic range, and it's hitting the cymbal in the same place every time. I used an automated pan pot on the mixer to move the ride cymbal track left and right just a little bit in the mix. It had more variation like you would have with a real drummer."

### Keys to Success

"I create a vibe in the studio. You are coming into my home—my room. It's going to be a very relaxed, calm vibe, and we're going to have fun. The vibe is captured in the recording. I have a signature sound that many people can pick out. I tell young engineers to get their own sound. Don't copy. Be original so that there will be some longevity in your career. Even in my jazz recordings, the drums are clear and loud and big, because I started in r&b and pop. I make the rhythm section as loud as I can without stepping on the lead instrument. You will always tap your feet listening to one of my mixes. It's got rhythmic pace. That is the Joe Ferla sound."

DB



# LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE

## In the Studio with Producer ODED LEV-ARI

BY MICHAEL GALLANT

**PLAYING** a killer solo on a midnight club date is one thing—but capturing that same ephemeral fire in a studio setting can be another challenge entirely. Without the right preparation, even the most inspired and talented of players can find their music falling flat when their horns end up in front of a mic and the red “recording” light goes on for the first time. So what can be done to help those new to the studio capture the transcendent, awesome-sounding take that their music deserves?

Putting such lightning in a bottle is what producers like Oded Lev-Ari specialize in. A co-owner of Anzic Records in New York City and an accomplished pianist, composer and arranger, Lev-Ari has produced recordings for such artists as Anat Cohen, Marty Ehrlich and Amy Cervini. Here are his thoughts on conjuring and crystallizing jazz magic in the studio.

**DownBeat:** In your experience, what's the most important thing that musicians should keep in mind when it's time to record?

**Oded Lev-Ari:** When you go into the studio, remember that you're trying to capture what's actually coming out of the instruments. Sometimes, there can be the temptation to make the recorded product sound different from what the instruments and music actually sound like in the room. That's the wrong way to go about it. To end up with a great-sounding product, you have to start with great-sounding music. There's a lot that can be done to that end before you ever set foot inside the studio.

**Can you describe one example?**

**OL-A:** When you're recording, you can become aware of things that you don't necessarily hear every day when

you're playing live. So the studio is a very different experience than being onstage. It's a much more detailed view, like looking at the band under a microscope, and it can be pretty jarring if you don't know what to expect. Mentally preparing yourself for that close examination of what things *actually* sound like, and not being thrown off by it—even if you hear things you don't necessarily like—is important.

**That microscopic examination can be a useful thing too, right?**

**OL-A:** Absolutely. The scrutiny that you get in the studio allows you to consider what you're recording at a different level.

**What do you recommend as pre-studio homework?**

**OL-A:** You should strive to do whatever you can before going into the studio so that you can be focused on the music once you actually get there. For a trio that plays a 10-bar head and improvises for 5 minutes, that calls for very different preparation than for a big-band date with complex arrangements. The point is to do whatever you can ahead of time to make sure that you're comfortable. A lot of times when people go into the studio, they get too distracted by technical details, and that can be a mistake.

**Like what?**

**OL-A:** People can spend hours figuring out what microphones to use, talking about what kind of console the studio has and looking for the ideal mic placement for a session. Those are all important things, but **the hardest thing to capture in the studio is the emotional impact of the music, and fixating on tweaky details can get in the way.** I like to remember that great-sounding recordings were made in the 1960s with very few microphones, everybody recording in the same room, and limited sonic isolation between musicians. Those are albums that we *still* refer to as great recordings. So highly technical aspects are not the most important things for artists to focus on.

**Do you prefer to have musicians record in the same room, or do you want them sonically isolated in different spaces in the studio?**

**OL-A:** It depends on what material

you're recording, but my knee-jerk reaction to producing jazz ensembles would be to have everybody in the same room. Great-sounding recordings happen because there's great interaction between musicians, everyone's comfortable and everyone can ignore the mics and just make music.

Physically, there are also important things that happen when instruments are in the same room. I remember producing one jazz album where I recorded three cellos and a bass. For one section, I had the bass playing with a bow, and during rehearsals that playing caused sympathetic resonance in the strings of the cello. Even though the cellist wasn't playing at the time, we still heard the overtones and richness that came from the instrument. That sort of thing can't happen unless

BILL WEST/MORELAND



the instruments are in the same room and physically close to each other.

### **When is it helpful to have the instruments acoustically isolated?**

**OL-A:** If something goes wrong, you have the option of fixing it without having to do the whole take again. You can replay a solo or part of a solo, for example. You can also drastically change or correct the sound of an instrument—though in a purist way of thinking, if you need to change the sound of an instrument that much, either you picked the wrong instrument or player, or you're trying to twist the recording into representing something that didn't happen in the room to begin with. That goes back to my first point: Make sure that everything sounds like you want it in the room to begin with.

### **What's your ideal recording room?**

**OL-A:** This might be an annoying answer, but it's whatever room the musicians feel comfortable in, physically and emotionally. Some musicians care if there are windows or no windows, high ceilings or low ceilings; all of that is important to pay attention to. If a room doesn't have the outboard equipment or console that everybody is talking about, but it feels physically good to you, then go for that rather than trying to tweak the technical aspects.

### **What about the acoustic qualities of a room?**

**OL-A:** A tracking room at a recording studio is a lot like the sound box for an instrument like the guitar, violin or piano. The room basically func-

tions as another instrument, and you don't want the room to have an opinion about which frequencies are louder than others [*laughs*]. If you walk into a tracking room and your voice sounds like your voice should sound, and the piano or bass sound like a great, rich piano or bass, then you're on the right track.

### **How should musicians make themselves comfortable in the studio?**

**OL-A:** I encourage some musicians I'm working with to bring things like pictures, little objects or even candles, if it's not against the fire code. With singers in particular, I'm looking for the emotional content or meaning in the performance, and it can be hard to get a singer to open up sometimes if he

or she is stuck in a small vocal booth with a big mic in front of him or her. Plus, having every single lip sound and breath amplified in the headphones can be disconcerting, so whatever can get the musician in the right, comfortable place emotionally is helpful.

The pictures and objects—bringing them in helps make the recording process feel like something really special. In religious practices, there's a lot of symbolism and ceremony that brings meaning to what you do and takes you to a different place spiritually. Anything you can do to bring that same process into the recording studio can help you create the sounds in the room that you want to capture.

But some people just want to get in front of the mic and play, and that's OK, too.

### **When should artists spring for a well-known, professional studio, as opposed to a more DIY approach?**

**OL-A:** If you're developing material in the studio, it can take too much time and cost too much money to do that in a commercial place. But if you know what you want to lay down and have done your preparation so you can knock out the recording in a day or two, I would absolutely recommend going to a professional facility. At this point, there are some great-sounding rooms available to musicians of all sorts. There aren't a lot of them left and they're not cheap, but you can rent them at reasonable rates and you're getting a great amount of bang for your buck—great mics and equipment, a carefully built room and hopefully a house engineer with an experienced set of ears who knows the room and where to place instruments.

Many problems are resolved before they even become problems when you go to a good facility, so if you can afford to rent one, it makes a lot of sense. And think about all of the sound that these rooms have experienced! The history of a great, old recording space can help create the ceremonial atmosphere that brings things to a different place.

### **What other advice do you have for musicians in the studio?**

**OL-A:** I've heard that a very famous pianist and very famous producer once tracked an entire Grammy-winning album with one of the piano mics accidentally set up backwards. That [anecdote] puts technical questions about things like mic placement in perspective. Again, if you have a great-sounding piano and a great player, that's what's most important. It's all about the performance, the musician and the music.

**DB**



# Recording Outside the Studio

## How to Capture Live Performances

### RECORDING LIVE MUSIC IS A CHALLENGE

for even the most seasoned engineer. Unlike the studio, there's no turning back during a concert. There's no stopping for a wrong note, and no one is waiting for that temperamental DAW to reboot. Isolating the microphones on individual instruments is often difficult, if not impossible, on the stage, and everyone must play at once, live—no kidding! Here are a few observations and pointers regarding live recording, with some additional thoughts on how things might differ in the studio.

In order to make any kind of recording, the “chain” of items involved in capturing the performance must be planned. In my opinion, this is the most important step in the recording process and the step where the most mistakes can be made. Microphones, wire, preamps, consoles, DAWs, signal processing, plug-ins, monitor speakers—all of these are important components in the chain. While much can be said about specific brands and models, here are some principles that should help guide the process.

First things first: The earliest items in the chain have the most impact on the end results. If, for example, the venue has a lot of ambient noise or perhaps a crazy amount of reverb or reflections, everything we do afterwards is an effort to overcome these shortcomings while somehow also producing a good result. Similarly, if the piano is out of tune or if one of the instruments is producing unwanted noises, then no matter how well we capture it, we're going to be trying to deal with these problems. Continuing the thought, if the space is nice and the instruments are sounding well, but the microphone used to capture the performance is either badly chosen, not working properly or not placed well, then our efforts later in the chain are going to be focused on overcoming these problems rather than on enhancing sounds that are already good. Whether or not we're using the most expensive audiophile wire is not nearly as important as the microphone that is plugged into it—as long as the wire isn't filtering the sound, presenting a crackle or creating some other problem of its own. The same can be said of preamps, consoles, etc.

How do we know that what we have is “good”? I like to use the EQ test. If I position a mic on an instrument and turn it up in the control room mon-

itors, do I immediately want to adjust an equalizer (EQ) or make some other change to the sound? If so, then it's probably not the right mic or it's not in the right position. Different preamps can sometimes dramatically change the sound characteristics of microphones, so everything earlier in the chain should be examined and optimized before twisting an EQ knob. Once things sound well, then EQ can be used (or not!) to improve or enhance rather than to fix. If you're not using external preamps and are finding that all of your inputs just aren't sounding the way that you hope, it may be that the preamps in your console are introducing a problem. Similarly, if a mic just doesn't seem to sound good on any instrument without using some sort of processing, no matter the positioning, it might be time to consider an upgrade.

Much can be said regarding mics. In fact, entire books are written on the subject and the discussions can often be very technical. Following is a very brief rundown of things to know and consider.

First, every mic has a directionality pattern. It

will vary between omnidirectional, wide cardioid, cardioid, hypercardioid and figure-of-eight, with steps in between and a few specialty types that are outside of this discussion. Omnidirectional mics will tend to pick up everything near them, no matter in what direction, while hypercardioid mics will tend to hear only what they are pointed at.

There are two primary kinds of mics to think about, in terms of how they operate: dynamic and condenser. Dynamic mics are self-powered, are less sensitive to further-away sounds and tend to not hear high frequencies as well as condensers. Condenser mics require power (phantom power through the mic cable, an external power supply, or even batteries), are sensitive enough to hear sounds from distances and can usually pick up high frequencies very clearly. They also tend to be more delicate and expensive than dynamics.

Directional mics can produce different sound qualities depending upon how they are positioned. If a dynamic, hypercardioid mic is positioned a few inches in front of the speaker cone of a guitar



Paul Griffith





amp, it will sound a certain way. If it is moved closer, then not only will it be louder (because it is closer), but some low frequency boost will be added. This is called “proximity effect.” If turned somewhat to the side, the resulting output will not only be softer (because it is turned away from the amp), but high frequencies will be lowered. This is known as “off-axis coloration.” Wait, aren’t these the kind of controls we see on equalizers? Yes, we can adjust treble and bass by merely moving microphones! Can’t remember which movement results in which result? Never mind—just move it around and find out.

In studio recording, it’s easy to bring in baffles or position instruments in such a way that the sound of one instrument doesn’t bleed into the mic being used on another. Isolation booths are the ultimate expression of this possibility, with windows and headphones being essential to the process. Isolation between instruments is often critically important, especially when you need to go back and re-record certain instruments in certain places (“punching in”). On stage, however, isolation isn’t usually possi-

ble. This is especially true with jazz, where musicians positioned in close proximity is the rule and where seeing and hearing one another is essential. So one rule of live recording that can be very helpful: Bleed is not the first priority; good overall sound is the end goal. If you just can’t isolate the acoustic bass from the drums—let it go! Get a great bass sound through your mic choice and positioning, and make sure that the drum sound from its dedicated mics is not hurt by the bleed into the bass mic. If it is, try turning the bass mic so that it aims away from the drums, or try moving the bass a foot or two. You might also try using both a mic and a DI (direct input) on bass, combining the two for a good sound.

We can reduce bleed by using more directional microphones, and they can help our sound reinforcement colleagues to reduce feedback problems. If directional mics are used, and if they’re pointed away from the monitor speakers, then there are fewer problems of this sort. In the recording studio, isolating instruments allows a wider choice of mic pickup patterns, providing more options than on the stage.

One general concept has served me well over the years: Fewer mics equal better sound. If I place five microphones around a piano to try to capture its sound, then the timing differences between them as I turn them all up are going to be heard as “EQ.” I’ll get various frequencies being accentuated while others are cut, resulting in an overall sound that needs to be corrected. This is known as “comb filtering.” If it’s a stereo recording, I’ll have a more satisfying end result if I can capture the piano with only two mics, panning them left-right in the stereo image, not using any equalization at all. Often, moving one or both of these mics even an inch or two makes an incredible difference in the resulting sound, so be patient and don’t be tempted to go the easy route of EQ and plug-ins to fix the piano sound. The same can be said of drums. While we are used to seeing a mic on each individual instrument within the drum kit, the overall result can be quite unsatisfactory. If I want for the drums to sound real, then fewer mics can help with this. Try a pair of overheads, positioned so that equal parts cymbals and drums can be heard, with spot mics on the snare and bass drums so that they can be brought up into balance with the other instruments.

Brass instruments tend to be more straightforward to record, since almost all of their sound comes directly out of the bell. Still, distances and directionality of mics can make important differences in their sound. Woodwind instruments, however, tend to have sounds coming out in multiple directions. Flute is a good example, with a notable portion of the sound being the wind produced by the player. Moving the mic up and down the flute can balance that wind sound to the sound of the instrument, and moving the mic a couple of inches closer to or farther from the instrument can help balance the different notes to each other. Similarly, saxophones tend to have different notes speaking from different places along the body of the instrument. Some notes come out of the bell, but others are heard more through the keys. Try positioning a saxophone mic in such a way that the bell sound can be heard directly, but off to the side of the bell enough that the other sounds can also be heard. Take time to adjust mics for better sound. There is just no substitute for getting it right in the first place. Equalization and other processing can then be used to improve and augment the original sound—not in a futile effort to repair it.

Recording is an art and passion that is greatly improved through practice and experience—just like performing. Hopefully, this brief primer will help you to better understand the process.

The energy of a live performance is often difficult to capture in the studio, especially when there’s an enthusiastic audience in the house. While there are challenges to making high-quality live recordings, the results can still be sonically excellent. If you use your experience to get everything well prepared, you can then expend your energy and creativity in fine-tuning and capturing an excellent recording. **DB**

---

Paul Griffith, a member of the Audio Engineering Society since 1986, is a lecturer in music engineering and the director of recording services for the University of Miami, Frost School of Music. He has worked in a variety of positions in the recording industry, including staff recording engineer with DEO recordings in Wisla, Poland; product specialist for Micro Technology Unlimited in Raleigh, N.C.; mastering engineer with P&A Audio in Gdansk, Poland; and lecturer/research assistant for the Technical University of Gdansk.



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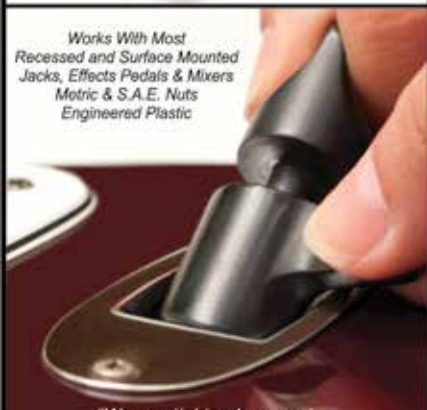
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**SOLO**  
BY JIMI DURSO

# James Carter's Tenor Sax Solo on 'Sussa Nita'



## **JAMES CARTER'S 2008 CD PRESENT**

*Tense* includes his original bossa nova "Sussa Nita," the melody of which was sung to him in a dream by Billie Holiday, the saxophonist says. For this album, producer Michael Cuscuna recorded all of the musicians (except bassist James Genus) in the same room to create a more relaxed feel. Carter was recorded with two microphones, one pointed directly at his horn and one at a 70-degree angle to capture different overtones. Carter says he was happier with his sound on this CD than on previous albums.

"Sussa Nita" is in E minor, and Carter starts his solo one bar before the top, overlapping with the end of Rodney Jones' guitar solo. Most of his first lick is E minor pentatonic (and mostly ascending fourths), which is curious since he plays it over an Fmaj7 chord. None of the notes conflicts with the F major tonality, however. In fact, Carter's emphasis on the E, G and D bring out the upper structures of F major (the seventh, ninth and 13th), and the B makes it sound like Fmaj7#11. He is basically playing a sound that not only works on this chord but also relates it to the key of the song.

Carter does this a few more times in this improvisation. In measure 13, we again hear E minor pentatonic over Fmaj7, but without the E it sounds more like G major pentatonic, which, just like the first bar, doesn't conflict with the harmony, although it relates it to the tonal center of the piece. Measure 10 hints at it, where Carter plays E and G back and forth on the F#m7(b5), but he goes full-out minor pentatonic (again without the root) on the C#7(#9) in measure 14. In the following measure, he puts a twist on it by playing a G major arpeggio. G is the relative major of E minor, so he's still relating to the song's key, but by playing it on the C9 chord, he's emphasizing the fifth, major seventh and ninth of the chord.

When Carter uses chromatics, he often uses tones that are ambiguous in a minor key. For example, in measures 2 and 4 he emphasizes F# on the Em9 (which is the second) but makes a point of playing F natural in the middle measure on the C9 chord, which would be part of E phrygian. And he plays the sixth of Em9 (C#) in bar 18 (creating a dorian flavor) after having played C

natural (producing an aeolian sound) in the previous bar.

Another interesting example is the use of D#. As the third of the V chord, it fits on measures 11 and 31, but when Carter continues playing it in bar 12 on the tonic, it creates more of a harmonic- or melodic-minor vibe. In measure 31, he juxtaposes it against the D natural that had appeared in the previous bar, once again creating the sound that the mode has been altered while still remaining E minor. Also worth noting is how Carter leans on the C# in bar 29 and on the low E in bar 32, creating a chromatic line leading from the sixth up to the root.

After resolving to the root, Carter again plays E minor pentatonic in this and the following measure (though he does sneak in an F#), but once again it's on an Fmaj7. This harkens back to how he started his solo, bringing us full circle. **DB**

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. Visit him online at [jimidurso.com](http://jimidurso.com).

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# Samson Resolv Studio Monitors

## Big Bang for Your Buck

Samson has been a player in the studio reference monitor arena since the home recording market blossomed a decade ago. The company recently redesigned its Resolv line of studio reference monitors, and I had the opportunity to put the Resolv SE5 and SE6 models through their paces.

The Resolv SE6 delivers 100 watts of output, with 75 watts used on the 6.5-inch low-frequency driver and 25 watts on the 1.25-inch tweeter for a frequency range of 40Hz–30kHz. The Resolv SE5 has a 5-inch woofer and 1.25-inch tweeter to pump 70 total watts of power for a 50Hz–27kHz frequency response.

I pulled up some mixes in different musical styles to hear these monitors roar. The sound is big—volume is definitely their strong suit. The Resolv SE6 handled the huskier levels better than the SE5, not surprising considering the difference in woofer size.

The silk domes of the tweeters on the SE6 and SE5 kept high guitar tones and cymbal splashes from becoming abrasive. The mids produced a noticeable but acceptable level of coloration on instruments like saxophone and piano. The low frequencies from the woofers felt a bit forced at times, but you can purchase a separate subwoofer for use with the Resolv series that will flatten out the low frequencies for professional applications.

While it would be unrealistic to expect these monitors to stack up to high-end models that are four times the price, the SE5 and SE6 are a good value for musicians looking for competitive reference monitoring for home and project-studio applications. —John LaMantia

Ordering info: [samsontech.com](http://samsontech.com)



# Steinberg UR22 USB Audio Interface

## Rugged, Reliable Recording on the Go

The acquisition of Steinberg by Yamaha in 2005 created a perfect partnership by merging a world-class hardware developer with an innovative audio software company. Taking advantage of their combined talents, Steinberg has released the UR22, a compact, high-resolution, two-channel USB 2 audio interface featuring 24-bit/192kHz recording capability and a pair of sweet mic preamps.

The UR22 appears very plain with its basic no-frills box design. However, closer inspection reveals the ruggedness of the unit, which is housed in a durable metal casing. The UR22 is powered directly through the host's USB port.

Two vital components lie at the heart of any digital audio interface: the mic preamps and digital converters. They are critical links in the audio chain. The UR22 meets this challenge by providing conversion at resolutions up to 24-bit at 192kHz. The preamps are one of the UR22's strongest features, with two D-PRE Class-A units onboard.

Getting started with the UR22 is painless. Just connect via any USB 2.0

port after installing the Yamaha Steinberg USB control panel on either Windows or Mac. The interface is compatible with all major audio production software and comes bundled with Steinberg's Cubase AI7 DAW package.

The UR22's front panel houses the two microphone inputs, which use combo XLR/1/4-inch input sockets for accepting either mic or line inputs. Input 2 offers a switch for selecting high or low impedance, allowing for direct input of an instrument such as electric guitar or bass. Phantom power (48 volts) is available, and each channel has its own input gain control and LED peak indicator. For latency-free hardware monitoring of the inputs, there is a headphone jack with level control, and the UR22 even provides a mix knob for combining the input the audio signal with audio from your DAW host. The unit's rear panel features line outputs for monitor speakers, a phantom power switch and the USB port. Steinberg also adds MIDI interface capabilities with MIDI in and out ports.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: [steinberg.net](http://steinberg.net)





## Waves Abbey Road J37 Tape Saturation Plug-in

### *Modeling '60s Warmth*

When it comes to iconic recording studios, few would argue that London's Abbey Road tops the list. Hoping to bring some Abbey Road magic into the digital world, Waves has introduced the Abbey Road J37 tape saturation plug-in, a precise modeling of the Studer J37 four-track tape machines that were at the heart of the studio starting in 1965. Housing 52 vacuum tubes, the J37s were coveted for their ability to produce a natural compression, add just the right amount of distortion and generate warmth to a mix.

Creating the plug-in required precise digital modeling of the original J37 units. According to Waves, the most common application for the J37 plug-in is to add character to a dull track and naturally compress and smooth out audio without the need for a compressor. The interface is very intuitive and features a graphical representation of the actual Studer machine.

The J37 plug-in offers numerous user-configurable parameters that are capable of producing a nearly limitless array of possibilities. This can be overwhelming at first; Waves recommends auditioning the factory presets as a first step. Set up to appear as an actual tape machine, settings are manipulated by activating buttons and adjusting rotary knobs. The tape selector allows you to choose which formula tape to run, with EMI 888, 811 or 815 as your choices. The next option is tape speed, which provides 7.5 or 15 inches per second, each with its own tonal character. Input and output controls dial in exactly how much harmonic distortion and tape saturation you desire. A bias selector controls the level of ultrasonic bias with options for normal, +3 and +5. A set of VU meters for headroom calibration and input/output levels round out the interface.

The Waves J37 plug-in will greatly expand the range of possibilities in your digital tracks. Its generous selection of features provides an endless set of options, and at \$249 for the Native or SoundGrid formats, it is well worth a serious listen.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: [waves.com](http://waves.com)

## Audix SCX25A Studio Condenser

### *Natural Sound, Lean Design*

The Audix SCX25A studio condenser mic features an innovative suspension system that completely isolates the capsule from the mic body and electronics.

The first thing you notice about this mic is that it looks exactly like a lollipop. After using the mic for a short period of time, I came to realize that it is a completely lean design—meaning that I had trouble thinking of another large-diaphragm microphone with a smaller overall footprint. Its stealth design turned out to be a real asset when trying to place the mic into tight spaces, such as the bottom of a snare drum head or inside a piano.

The frequency response of the SCX25A goes from 20Hz to 20kHz, with little in the way of peaks or valleys until you get to about 5kHz, where it starts to bump up a bit. The polar pattern is a fixed cardioid pattern, and the maximum spl is 135db. After getting a feel for the mic's specs, I noted that it had a lot in common with my first-call, go-to mic: the Neumann TLM103. While it's probably not fair to compare mics in two completely different price ranges (the TLM103 is about double the price of the SCX25A), something told me that the SCX25A would be able to compete.

I was given a matched set of mics that were housed in a nice wooden box and came with a set of mic clips (Audix calls it the SCX25A-PS package). Since I had the pair, I thought I would start out with a stereo application. I had a drum tracking session on the books, so I set up the mics in an ORTF pattern to use as overheads. The result was a transparent sound that had a bit of crispness to it. I felt these mics were going to be good for various acoustic applications.

Smaller diaphragm mics tend to provide a better focus on transients than large diaphragm mics, but I found the SCX25A to provide an amazing amount of detail when recording acoustic guitar.

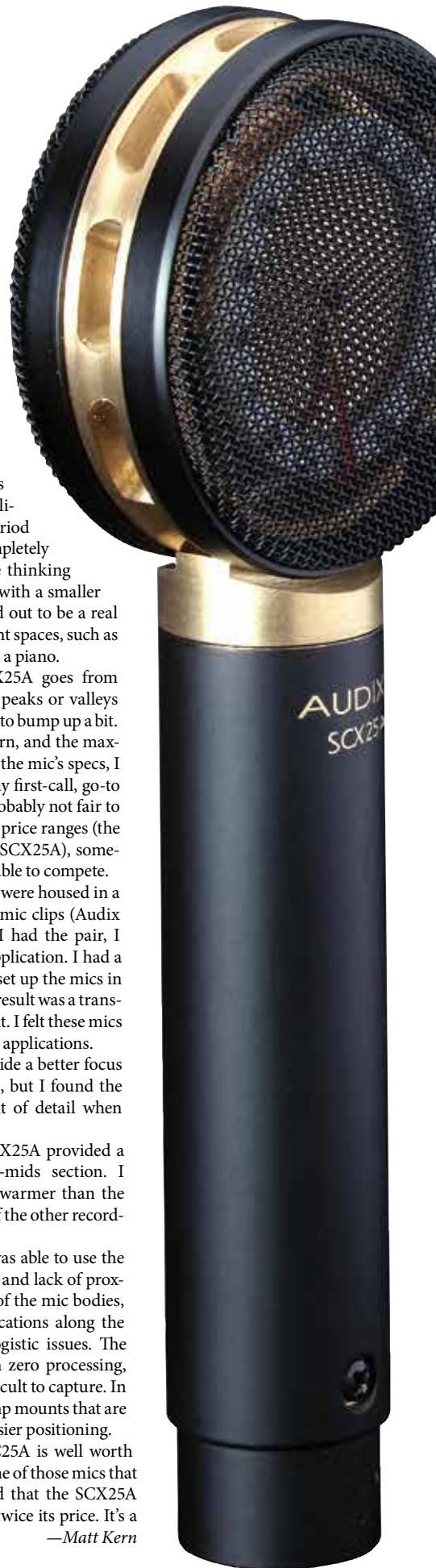
When recording male vocals, the SCX25A provided a nice roundness, especially in the low-mids section. I was surprised that the mic was a touch warmer than the TLM103 since it seemed crisper in some of the other recording applications.

The SCX25A really excelled when I was able to use the pair to record a grand piano. The realism and lack of proximity effect, along with the small profile of the mic bodies, meant I could place them in optimal locations along the soundboard without adverse sonic or logistic issues. The final sound was amazingly natural; with zero processing, the mics evoked a fullness that can be difficult to capture. In addition, Audix offers optional piano clamp mounts that are made to attach directly to the piano for easier positioning.

Considering its price range, the SCX25A is well worth checking out and has the potential to be one of those mics that is instantly recognized by name. I found that the SCX25A held its own when competing with mics twice its price. It's a classic in the making.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: [audixusa.com](http://audixusa.com)





# Griffin StudioConnect with Lightning

## iPad Recording Tool

As the iPad and iPhone continue to gain momentum in changing the way we play and record music, Griffin Technology has increased its selection of audio accessories for Apple platform iOS and Mac OSX enthusiasts. I got my hands on Griffin's StudioConnect with Lightning to see how quickly and easily I could start recording with Apple technology on the go.

StudioConnect is an all-in-one audio interface that's compatible with the iPad (original to current fourth-generation) as well as the iPad mini. It's a one-piece, compact device that provides plug-and-play convenience for guitar input, stereo audio and MIDI in/out. A Lightning dock charges your iPad while recording.

The StudioConnect interface features a mono 1/4-inch jack to plug in an instrument and a stereo 1/8-inch connector for audio input coming from a device such as a mixer. Standard five-pin MIDI in and out ports accept a sequencer, patch bay or other MIDI gear, which lets your iPad and MIDI apps function as a



# Ableton Live 9

## More Flexible Ways To Create

Ableton has released a major update to its Live DAW software after a long wait, and the results are good. At first glance, it might seem that there is not much difference, but there have been a lot of major alterations as well as significant refinements and improvements with the new Live 9.

As with Live 8, you can buy three separate versions. Intro is a stripped-down budget version that is two-channel only. The Standard and Suite versions both include the full application, with Suite containing a much larger library of sounds, instruments and effects. At last, Live now ships with both 32- and 64-bit versions. Suite also includes MAX for Live, an integral element that opens up a world of possibilities for those of us who are more programming-oriented.

One of the biggest changes in Live 9 is the way automation works and is handled. Live has always been strong in the automation category, but only in Arrangement View. In version 9, automation info lives with the clips, so you can take a partially completed arrangement back into Session View to tweak it, or into a live performance maintaining your automation. This is an incredibly powerful thing that solidifies the relationship between these two views and offers the Live artist a much more flexible way to create—which has always been Ableton's strong suit. The control bar has some new buttons to help control these automation behaviors and allow for toggling individual tracks between the views, too.

Live's Browser window has also received a major facelift, and, I gotta say, it's a big improvement. Gone are the small view buttons on the left. Instead, we have a column contain-



MIDI controller. The audio out section includes stereo line-level RCA jacks, and the unit's 1/8-inch stereo headphone jack with volume knob gives you control over monitoring levels.

"Griffin engineered the StudioConnect to maximize the user experience when creating music with the iPad," said Andrew Biddle, Griffin Technology audio category manager.

"From the ergonomic angle at which the iPad lays, to the case compatibility which lets you easily dock and undock your device, we know how musicians use their iPads."

Retailing at \$149.99, StudioConnect with Lightning is the most versatile interface I've seen for full-blown Apple iPad recording. For the musician looking for quick recording with their Apple computers and mobile devices, it offers a cost-effective, practical solution.

—John LaMantia

Ordering info: [griffintechology.com](http://griffintechology.com)

ing Categories and Places, which cover all the instruments, effects, locations and sounds at your disposal in a much more intuitive and clear way. There is a second area on the right that presents the tree of whatever you have selected on the left, and in general it is a much more familiar way to find what you are looking for. There is also a lot of flexibility here for those who use a lot of sound categorization—it's a snap to dial up exactly the tone you need. You can also add a second column to the right pane to make the tree view more useful.

Live's Library section has also received some attention. It is now divided into a few different libraries, separating user, factory and third-party material into distinct libraries of their own. This should make it easier to differentiate your own stuff from the factory content and keep your third-party libraries straight, too.

The Library also includes a ton of new content, and there have been some significant upgrades to the Live Core Audio effects, too. There's a new compressor and new ways to convert audio to MIDI that go far beyond Live's previous capabilities. Overall, this upgrade has enhanced or added to every area of the program, and I highly recommend it to current Live users. If you're new to Live and are thinking of jumping in, there's never been a better time.

—Chris Neville

Ordering info: [ableton.com](http://ableton.com)

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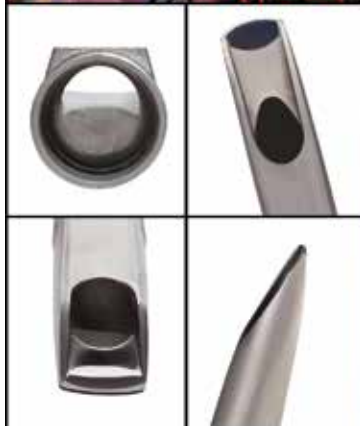
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More info: [akg.com](http://akg.com)

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Sennheiser's HD 800 is a dynamic, audiophile-quality headphone with an open, circumaural design.

Featuring an extremely large driver for improved low-frequency response, the HD 800 includes technology that allows it to overcome any resonances created by such large drivers in the highs. Tilted drivers allow sound to be directed toward the ear at a 45-degree angle, resulting in a truer listening experience. **More info:**

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### Now Ear This

Westone has introduced UM Pro Series in-ear monitors.

The UM Pro 10 (pictured) has a single balanced armature and is suitable for all musicians. The UM Pro 20 features a dual-driver balanced armature design and is ideal for drummers, vocalists and bassists. The UM Pro 30 has a three-way crossover and is a reliable reference for onstage monitoring and recording. **More info:** [westoneaudio.com](http://westoneaudio.com)

### Optimized Playback

Mackie's MRmk3 Powered Studio Monitors are acoustically optimized to enhance the mixing, monitoring and multimedia experience. Optimizing features include an enhanced waveguide system and custom-tuned rear porting. The line includes the 8-inch MR8mk3, 6.5-inch MR6mk3 and 5.25-inch MR5mk3 studio monitors, and the MR10Smk3 studio subwoofer. **More info:** [mackie.com](http://mackie.com)

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# New Director Emphasizes Jazz at MTSU

**FOR SOME PEOPLE, LIFE CAN BE A WIND-**ing road; for others, it can seem like they have followed a straight line and destiny held the pen.

Music educator Dr. Michael Parkinson falls into the latter category.

A 63-year-old native of Cleveland, Tenn., he returned last July to take the post of director of the School of Music at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) in Murfreesboro, just 130 miles away from home.

"I honestly thought I would finish my career at Ohio University," he said, referring to the institution where he had filled the same role for five years. "I had returned to full-time teaching, and I figured that was it."

Then, a friend called and told him about the opening at MTSU.

"He told me I needed to apply, and he kept calling," Parkinson said. "Finally, he told me that he had nominated me for the job, and now, by the grace of God, here I sit."

Returning to Tennessee at the tail end of a career that has taken him to Furman University in South Carolina, Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Webster University in St. Louis, Parkinson was reminded of how he started on his journey.

"I had jazz fever in high school," he said. "My brother was 10 years older than me and played the trumpet. He played in church, but he could improvise, as well. He brought home records by Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie, and I can't underscore enough how important that was."

By his teens, Parkinson was playing trumpet, too, and riding a Trailways bus the 35 miles to Chattanooga on weekends to hang out at Bailey Music on Cherry Street.

"There wasn't the proliferation of information about music that there is now," he said. "You had to seek it out. It seems so easy now that people have lost the knowledge of how long it takes to learn to play jazz. It's part of a lifelong quest."

Given that belief, it's no surprise that Parkinson followed his quest into music education rather than full-time performing, despite winning a DownBeat scholarship to attend a summer session at the Berklee College of Music and attaining a master's degree in trumpet performance from Kent State University.

His passion for teaching was evident as he talked about his plans for the music department at MTSU. Those plans include expanding the reach of the school by introducing 20 scholarships for students applying from outside Tennessee, developing a degree program in commercial music



Dr. Michael Parkinson

J. INTINTO/MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

recording and introducing a doctoral program in jazz pedagogy. Parkinson is committed to increasing the jazz emphasis in a program that already offers bachelor's and master's degrees in jazz studies and maintains six jazz combos and a vocal jazz ensemble. He also anticipates adding significant jazz content to the MTSU Center for Popular Music, one of the most extensive research facilities on American music in the South.

"We're in a really unique position here because of how close we are to Nashville," he said. "It truly is Music City; it's a lot more than just country music. Our students get a lot of exposure by seeing music there and by performing themselves. And our proximity ensures that we have a very diverse faculty, a number of whom have very active performing and recording careers there."

One of those is keyboardist Pat Coil—a veteran of the road with singers Vince Gill, Michael McDonald, Amy Grant and others—who has taught jazz piano at MTSU for six years.

"To be successful in music today, you have to be diverse stylistically," Coil said. "As a teacher, I look at what jazz theory and improvisation can bring to musicians, to try to enhance the full musician, whatever kind of music they play. I've heard great things about Michael. It's pretty exciting for us to get someone who's a jazz guy as the head of the music department, and I'm hoping it means we're going to get more attention."

"I have every intention of making jazz one of our flagship programs," said Parkinson, "and I'm getting great support from MTSU's administration."

—James Hale



Jimmy Amadie

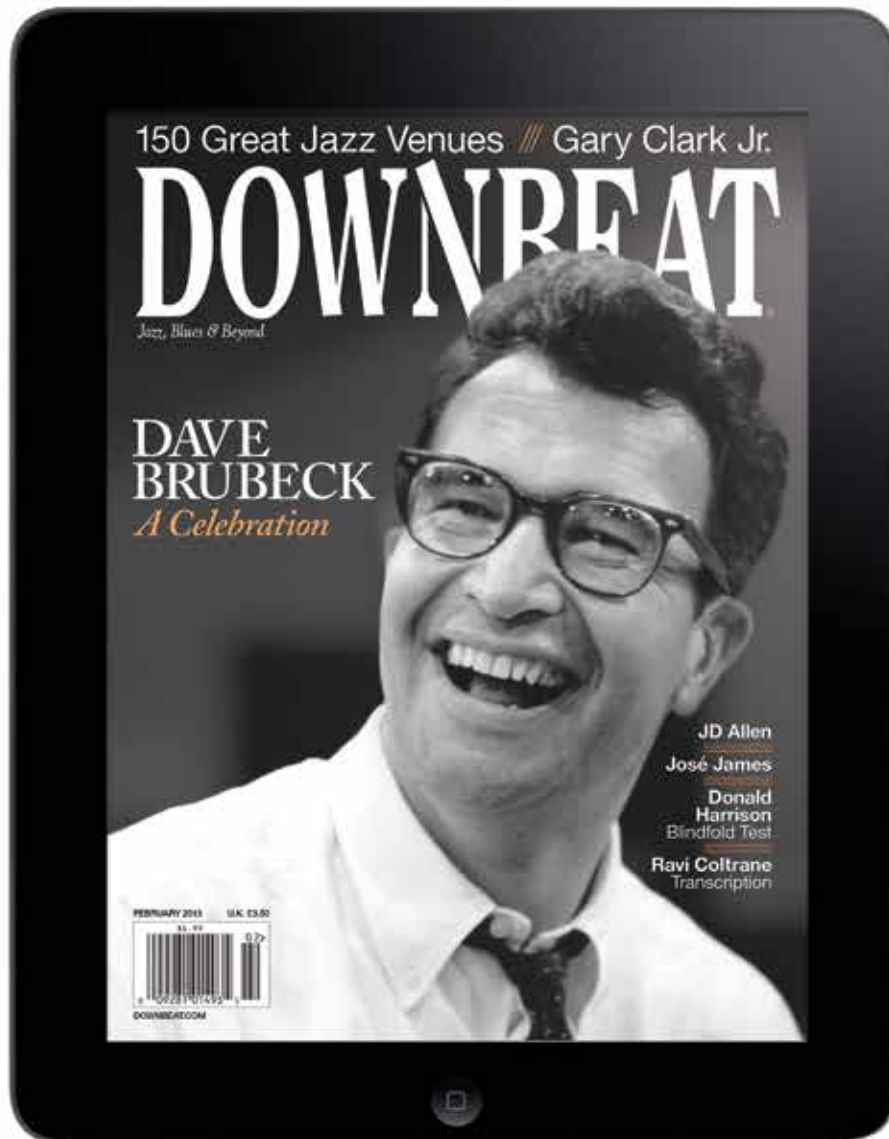
JOHN MILLER

**Final Bar:** Jimmy Amadie, the Philadelphia pianist and educator known for his contributions in improvisational theory, passed away on Dec. 10 at age 76. After a tendonitis condition ended his performing career more than 40 years ago, Amadie went on to become one of the country's leading jazz educators, writing two influential books: *Harmonic Foundation for Jazz and Popular Music* and *Jazz Improv: How To Play It and Teach It*. He led master classes at Berklee College of Music and Villanova University, and taught students (including guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel) in his home. Amadie's last recording, 2013's *Live At The Philadelphia Museum Of Art*, documents his Oct. 14, 2011, comeback concert with bassist Tony Marino and drummer Bill Goodwin.

**College Documents:** Drummer Jeff Hamilton collaborated with the DePaul University Jazz Ensemble on *Salutes Woody Herman*, a recording of 11 Herman tunes that celebrates the legendary big-band leader's 100th anniversary. Other new collegiate jazz CDs include *Kind Of Two*, by the University of North Texas Two O'Clock Lab Band; *Lab 2013*, by the University of North Texas One O'Clock Lab Band; *Hang Time* (Capri), featuring two ensembles at Colorado Conservatory for the Jazz Arts; *Nostalgia In Corcovado*, a trilogy of Bill Cunliffe compositions recorded by the Temple University Symphony Orchestra with Dick Oatts on soprano sax; and *Independent Study*, with the Northern Kentucky University Jazz Faculty.

**Hamp's Legacy:** The University of Idaho Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival will celebrate its 47th year Feb. 19–22. The festival will include concerts featuring some of the biggest names in jazz, free student performances, and free and low-cost workshops and clinics. Tickets are available for all evening concerts, with prices ranging from \$25–\$50 per night (student discounts are available). Headlining festival performers will include Benny Golson, Ken Peplowski, Grace Kelly, Terell Stafford, Sheila Jordan, Geoffrey Keezer, René Marie, Yellowjackets, Jason Marsalis and Eddie Palmieri, among others. [uidaho.edu/ticketoffice](http://uidaho.edu/ticketoffice)

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## Adam Rudolph

**A** force in bridging folkloric traditions within modern improvisational contexts since the late '70s, Adam Rudolph, 58, has most recently showcased his percussion and compositional skills on *Sonic Mandala* (Meta) by his 33-piece Go: Organic Orchestra. This is his first DownBeat Blindfold Test.

### Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra/Odadaa!

"War-Discord" (*Congo Square: Love, Libation, Liberation*, Jazz at Lincoln Center, 2007) James Zollar, Ryan Kisor, Sean Jones, trumpet; Ted Nash, alto saxophone; Walter Blanding, tenor saxophone; Vincent Gardner, Delfeayo Marsalis, trombone; Ali Jackson, drumset; Okoe Nunoo, master drum; Ani Apang, Yacub Addy, drum.

Is this Yacub Addy's project with Wynton Marsalis? I lived in Ghana in 1977, and subsequently worked with the Ledzepko family, and had a chance to dive into that tradition. This section—the saxophonist dialoguing with the lead drummer—is interesting. Everybody's playing from the center of where they are, then dialoguing in a high, beautiful way. The Ghanaian hand drummers play their language, the trap drummer plays his language. Rather than switch from section to section—the swing part, then the African part—it would be interesting to hear the meeting ground, to combine the rhythmic elements as Randy Weston and Melba Liston did on that incredible recording, *Bantu*. But hearing the contrast is also beautiful. 5 stars.

### Trilok Gurtu

"Jack Johnson/Black Satin" (*Spellbound*, Sunnyside, 2013) Gurtu, drums, percussion, tambura, tabla; Nils Petter Molvaer, trumpet; Tulug Tirpan, keyboards; Jonathan Cuniado, bass; Carlo Cantini, additional keyboards.

Trilok Gurtu's record, with Nils Petter Molvaer playing trumpet. Trilok opened the door for many percussionists who want to play a drumset-oriented percussion setup. It's a Miles piece from the *Big Fun* period—I don't remember the title—and they're bringing something fresh to it. Now they're playing the last piece from *On The Corner*—"Black Satin." This spoils it for me. Why use that head, that short melody, but not address the rhythmic concept or orchestration? To me, the way to do a tribute is to project your own voice, your own compositions, into the here-and-now. For Trilok and Nils, and the production, 5 stars.

### AACM Great Black Music Ensemble

"Fractals" (*At Umbria Jazz*, 2009, MJCD, 2009) George Lewis, Isiah Jackson, trombone; Edward House, tenor saxophone solo; Edwin Daugherty, Edward House, saxophones; Douglas Ewart, Nicole Mitchell, flute; Dee Alexander, Saalik Ziyad, Taalib-Din Ziyad, vocals; Ann Ward, piano; Leon Allen, Ben Lamar Gay, Jerome Crosswell, trumpet; Renée Baker, violin; Tomeka Reid, cello; Leonard Jones, Dawi Williams, bass; Art Turk Burton, percussion; Dushun Mosley, drums.

It reminded me of Hermeto [Pascoal], though it's not him. Interesting texture and orchestration with the electronics. The saxophonist has obviously listened to late Coltrane; the solo sounds almost like a sample, not an integrated element in the music—nobody responds to him nor he to them. Improvisational music and compositional ideas can be projected and expressed through all kinds of instrumentation. This combination of voices and what sounds like heavy processing is very interesting. Everything's sort of processed, but I hear strings in there. That's beautiful—to go as far into a concept as you can and see what you can discover. [after] It's live? That changes my thoughts. Big credit to George Lewis—it has the sound of now. 5 stars.

### Rudresh Mahanthappa

"Wrathful Wisdom" (*Gamak*, ACT, 2013) Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; David Ficuzynski, electric guitar; François Moutin, bass; Dan Weiss, drums.

Is the guitarist Dave Ficuzynski? I know he uses a lot of alternative tunings. This is not my favorite kind of saxophone playing. It's Rudresh. He clearly can play. Is the drummer Dan Weiss? From his studies with Samir Chatterjee,



HIROSHI TAKAOVA

Dan has real command of that additive concept of rhythm. I like that they're dealing with elements from expanded research in ways that aren't obvious, that say this is an Indian-type piece. It's interesting how they seamlessly move improvisationally through the forms and rhythmic elements. Now we're hearing a South Indian form called a reduction, a *mora*, where you make the same phrase smaller and smaller, which they probably learned from my friend Srinivasan, who played with Rudresh for a while. But Monk—the expanded whole tone concept—has also influenced this music. 5 stars.

### Indigo Trio

"Anaya With The Moon" (*Anaya*, RogueArt, 2008) Hamid Drake, drums; Nicole Mitchell, flute; Harrison Bankhead, bass.

That's Nicole Mitchell, Harrison Bankhead and Hamid Drake. Hearing Hamid play is like hearing him speak; he's able to project his inner voice through the instrument. I can hear everyone's voices projected clearly. The Dogon people in Mali have a concept called *mi*, which means one's inner spirit projected through the voice of the instrument. I think that's what we're all reaching for. To put it another way, as Monk said, "Play yourself." Hamid and I met when we were 14 years old; we'd play hand drums together. He'd bring some quality of a hand-drums approach to the drumset, whereas I was trying to project drumset concepts—especially from Elvin Jones, Ed Blackwell and Tony Williams—on the hand drums. 5 stars.

### Milford Graves

"Know Your Place" (*Grand Unification*, Tzadik, 1998) Graves, drums.

That's Milford Graves on a solo record for Tzadik. I heard him immediately in terms of that Dogon concept of *mi*, a complete sense of who he is—his mysticism, his humanity. He's taken the time and effort to study a lot of drum traditions, and always had the courage to project his own vision and voice. In that way, he's been inspirational for me. Milford hears a multiplicity of layers, things moving simultaneously in more than one kind of motion.

You could think of rhythm as three elements—mathematics, dance and language. Milford has tried to ingest and express a lot of those linguistic elements. I also like that he's orchestrated his drumming. He's reinvented the drumset and made it its own thing; he's channeled the spirit of Kongo and Baka aspects of drumming into a contemporary format. I'll paraphrase Carl Jung: "To express the ancient in a new time is creativity." A zillion 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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