

80TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S EDITION

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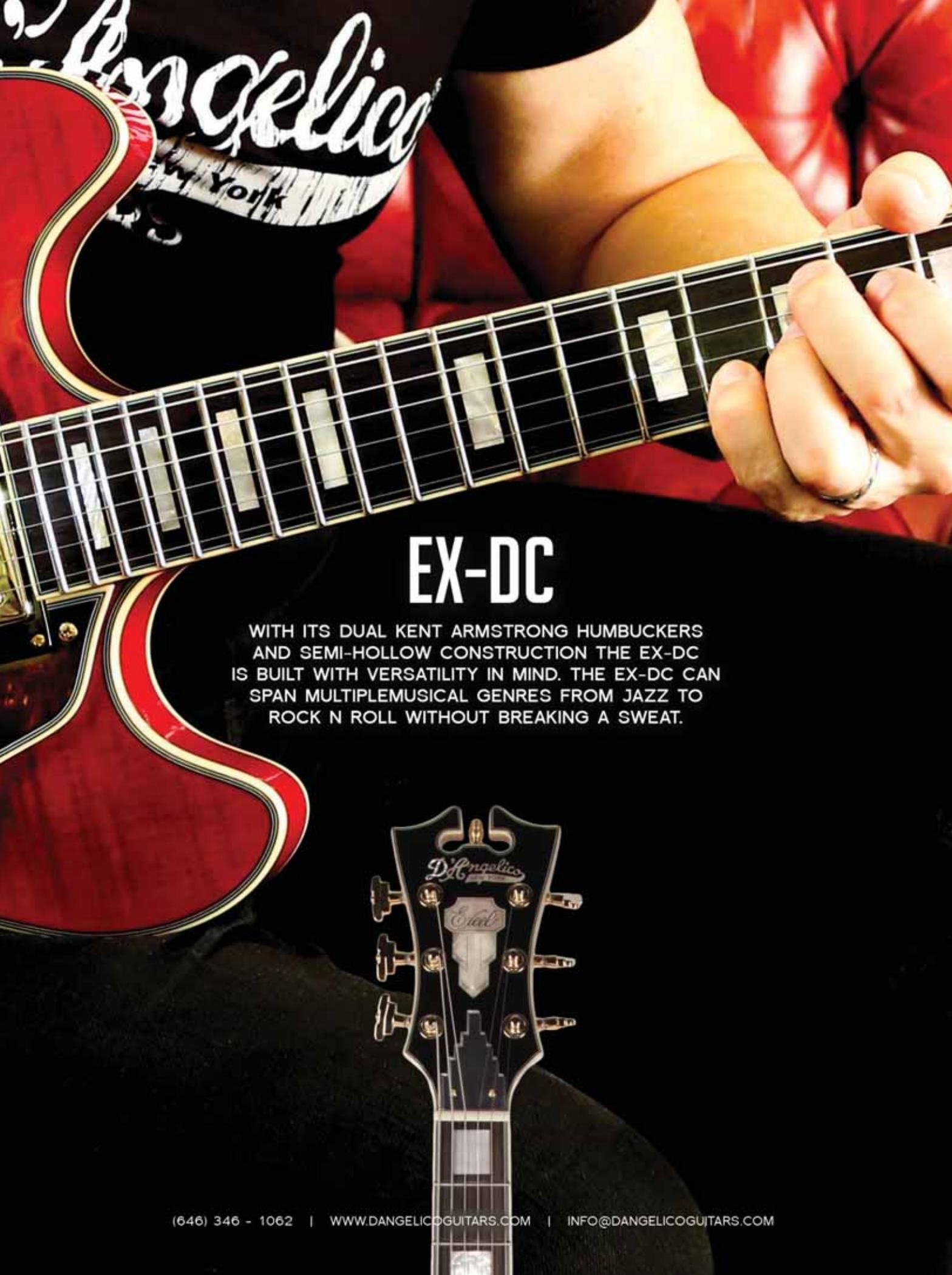
THE **80** COOLEST THINGS IN JAZZ TODAY

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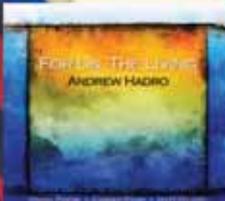


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DOWNBEAT

JULY 2014

VOLUME 81 / NUMBER 7

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DOWNBEAT (issn 0012-5768) Volume 81, Number 7 is published monthly by Maher Publications, 102 N. Haven, Elmhurst, IL 60126-2970. Copyright 2014 Maher Publications. All rights reserved. Trademark registered U.S. Patent Office. Great Britain registered trademark No. 719.407. Periodicals postage paid at Elmhurst, IL and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: \$34.95 for one year, \$59.95 for two years. Foreign subscriptions rates: \$56.95 for one year, \$103.95 for two years.

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POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: DownBeat, P.O. Box 11688, St. Paul, MN 55111-0688. **CABLE ADDRESS:** DownBeat (on sale June 17, 2014) Magazine Publishers Association.



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JULY 2014

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28 The 80 Coolest Things in Jazz Today

To celebrate DownBeat's 80th anniversary, we want to look at the present and future, not the past. So we proudly present "The 80 Coolest Things in Jazz Today." It's a glorious list of 80 people, places and things that illustrate why jazz is such a vibrant art form in 2014.



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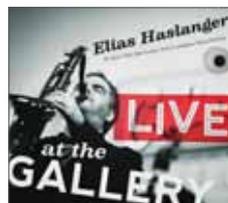
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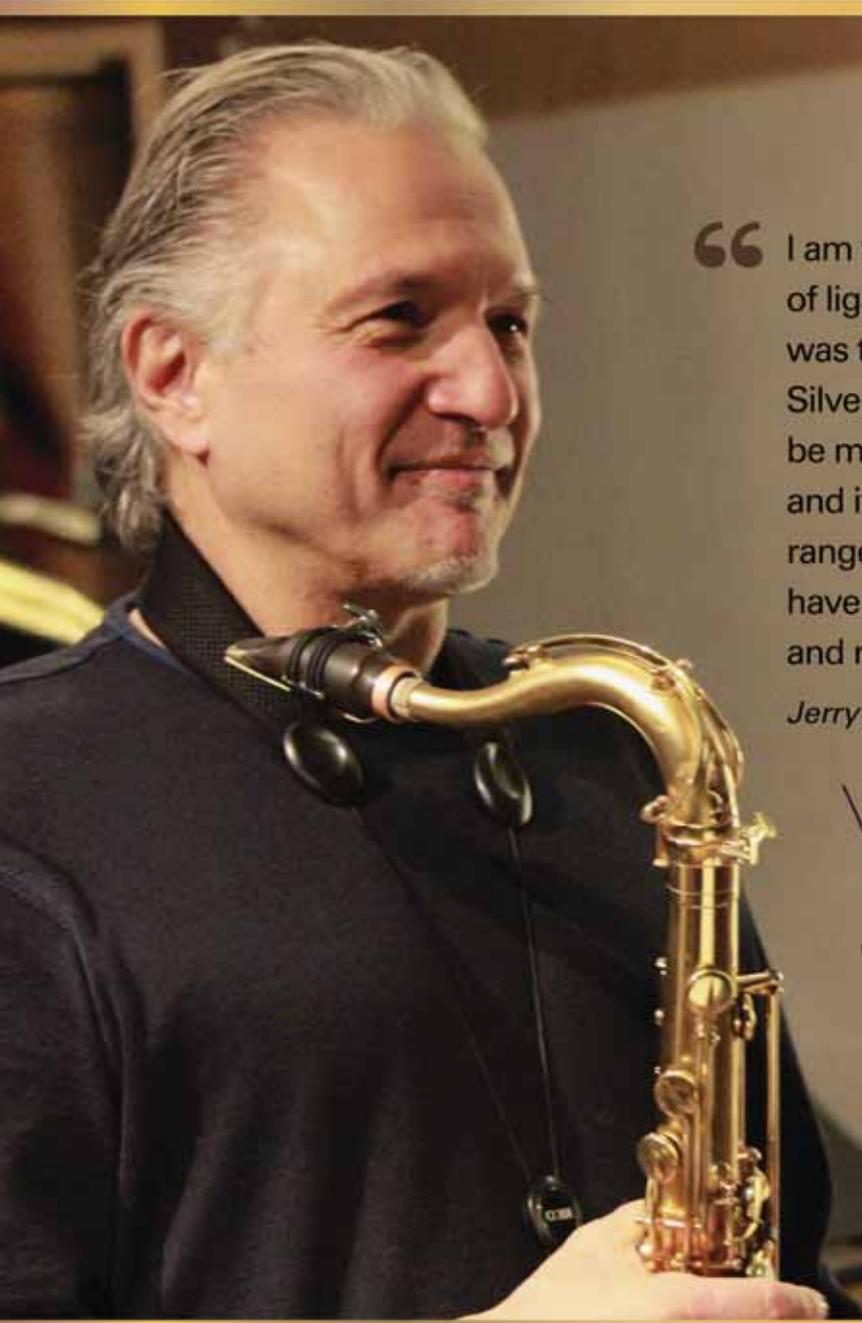
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Jerry Bergonzi

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First Take > BY BOBBY REED

The Robust State of Jazz Today

JAZZ IS THRIVING IN 2014. Nowadays, the world of jazz includes—first and foremost—a huge pool of incredibly gifted artists. Plus, there are wildly creative music labels, intelligent industry innovators, unique festivals, great record stores, engaging radio stations and smartly managed organizations. They all help this art form to evolve, as it continues to be an integral aspect of global culture. This month's cover story shines a spotlight on all that and more.

Several months ago, the DownBeat staff met to discuss the various ways we could celebrate the magazine's 80th anniversary. Longtime readers will recall that our July 2009 issue was a 75th anniversary edition that highlighted the magazine's remarkable past, compiling archival gems from various decades in our history. Five years later, we wanted to do something different. We didn't want to look back at the past. We want to focus on the present and the future.

Beginning on page 28, you'll find our detailed list of "The 80 Coolest Things in Jazz Today." Please keep in mind that although we numbered those 80 items, we did not rank them. So, for example, we don't think that Gerald Clayton (No. 18) is any more or less cool than Hiromi (No. 59) or Omar Sosa (No. 62). We hold them all in equally high esteem. Our intent was to share with our readers 80 amazing people, places and things that make jazz the greatest art form in the world.

As we were compiling ideas for the list (and enjoying the debates about which items should be included), we asked artists, journalists, industry leaders and our Facebook friends to tell us what they thought was the coolest thing in jazz. The input from all those parties was extremely helpful, often enlightening, and occasionally profane. It was difficult to narrow the list down to 80 items. After all, this office receives hundreds of jazz CDs every month. Selecting only a few dozen artists to include was a challenge.

We definitely wanted to tip our hat to exciting young artists like bassist-vocalist Esperanza Spalding and singer Cécile McLorin Salvant, but we also wanted to give a big thanks to the living masters of this art form—titans who have paved the way for generations of jazz artists. Therefore, we started the list with 10 veterans who are among the most important practitioners in this art form's history. We concluded the list with a look toward the future.

We hope that our "80 Coolest" list will serve as a shopping guide, a keepsake and a conversation-starter. Dig in. (Let us know what you think about the list by sending an email to editor@downbeat.com or posting a message on our Facebook page.)

We could not have reached this 80-year milestone without you, our devoted readers. Thanks for your support. DownBeat is thriving today because jazz is thriving today. And jazz is thriving because of its active, expanding, passionate fan base.

On page 31, Sonny Rollins offers a brilliant, philosophical, eloquent assessment of the jazz scene today. His conclusion is pithy: "You can't kill jazz. It will always exist." Who's going to disagree with Sonny Rollins? **DB**

Esperanza Spalding



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TONE



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Altruistic Educator

What a wonderful decision to induct José Díaz into the DownBeat Jazz Education Hall of Fame (Student Music Awards, June). His reputation as a world-class educator is well known in the profession of jazz education. Despite never having had the pleasure of his acquaintance, I would only hope my own goals in education remain as altruistic as his.

TOM SMITH
NINGBO, CHINA



José Díaz

Emotional Generator

A DownBeat critic strikes again. This time, it's a gentleman named Alain Drouot. With élan and great generosity, he gave 2½ stars to the splendid George Mraz/David Hazeltine Trio's new album *Your Story*.

That rating pushed me to buy the record immediately from the iTunes store, and I was right because that record is great. What leaves me incredulous is Drouot stating that the music "fails to generate emotions." To him, probably! This is pretentious and wrong. My emotions were plentiful and all genuine, I can assure Monsieur Drouot.

ADRIANO PATERI
MILAN, ITALY



Overabundance of Excellence?

Can you please ask your critics to be more selective when judging a record? I am an avid reader of album reviews, and in your June issue I counted 22 reviews of four stars or higher. At a certain point, the rating doesn't make any sense. I don't believe that in one month we could have 22 excellent recordings. I really don't.

What a pleasure it is (and so rare) to read a 1½-star review. It makes me so curious that I look all over for that CD!

ENZO CAPUA
SWINGMATISM@VERIZON.NET

Documenting Big Bands

I found the article on the Glenn Miller Archive acquiring the Tommy Dorsey collection quite fascinating (The Beat, June). I hope the American Music Research Center will add materials from recording artists who came near the end of the big band era and those whose contributions are part of the dance band era of the 1950s. In my opinion, the orchestras of Stan Kenton, Ralph Flanagan, Ray Anthony and Les & Larry Elgart and vocalists Peggy King, Harry Prime, Ronnie

Deauville, Stuart Foster, Ella Logan and June Christy should be added to round out a never-to-be-forgotten pastime. Thanks to DownBeat for a most interesting and important story.

HERB STARK
MOORESVILLE, N.C.

Hope for the Future

I have loved jazz for so many years. Back in the '50s my dad had albums that I still cherish. Lately, mainly because many of my favorite artists have passed away, I am turning to artists of today. Branford Marsalis and Joshua Redman are blowing my socks off. There is hope after all—even though the masters are passing.

LARRY GILLIAM
LGILLIAM01@GMAIL.COM

Correction

In the June issue, the review of *The Inquiring Mind* (Joyous Shout!) by Chico Hamilton misspelled the label's name.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

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



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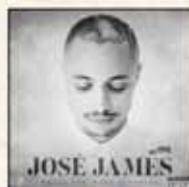
**AMBROSE
AKINMUSIRE**

Trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire returns with an expansive album that broadens the palette of his quintet with the addition of guitar, string quartet, and vocalists Becca Stevens, Theo Bleckmann, and Cold Specks.



**BRIAN BLADE
& THE FELLOWSHIP BAND**

Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band returns to Blue Note for a deeply expressive album co-produced by Blade and Jon Cowherd and recorded in Blade's hometown of Shreveport, Louisiana.



**JOSÉ
JAMES**

While You Were Sleeping is the follow-up to José James' widely acclaimed R&B and jazz-steeped No Beginning No End. The album signals a new creative direction for the versatile singer-songwriter and was produced by José and Brian Bender.



**HUTCHERSON,
SANBORN, DEFRANCESCO**

NEA Jazz Master Bobby Hutcherson returns to Blue Note Records, where the virtuoso vibraphonist started his career in the early '60s. Enjoy The View was produced by Blue Note president Don Was and recorded by an all-star collective of saxophonist David Sanborn and organist Joey DeFrancesco, featuring drummer Billy Hart.



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The

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Beat

Jazz in July Celebrates 20 Years

FOR 20 YEARS, DICK HYMAN SERVED AS ARTIS-tic director of Jazz in July at New York's 92nd Street Y, creating and sustaining the highly regarded jazz concert series. But when he handed the reins to fellow pianist Bill Charlap, Hyman told him to do it his own way. Today, entering his 10th season at the helm, Charlap continues to do just that.

Raised in Midtown Manhattan among the show-business elite, Charlap, like Hyman, is an urbane presence with encyclopedic knowledge and a dazzling keyboard touch. At the same time, he projects a singular ebullience as both expositor and entertainer. And, at age 47—40 years Hyman's junior—he brings a younger perspective to the programming.

"The world of people I play with are a different group of people," he said on a brilliant spring day between bites of a salad at a restaurant on Broadway.

Last July, for example, a tribute concert titled "The Mad Hatter: Music of Chick Corea" brought to the Y stage some of Charlap's outstanding contemporaries, including saxophonists Chris Potter and Steve Wilson, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Jeff Ballard. The personnel, if not the subject matter, would have been less likely under Hyman's directorship.

Not that the series has been ignoring jazz or performers of any vintage. This July, separate programs will feature singer Cécile McLorin Salvant, 24, and trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, 37—channeling Sarah Vaughan and Miles Davis, respectively—while 88-year-old guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli will be part of a seven-piece tribute to Fred Astaire. That assemblage, appropriately enough, will also include the woman Charlap calls his "dancing partner" (and wife), pianist Renee Rosnes.

Throughout the series' history, the programming has shed light on lesser-known sides of well-known subjects. Case in point: a concert last year on West Coast jazz that covered not only Gerry Mulligan—with whom Charlap cut his musical teeth as a sideman—but also the Central Avenue scene, heavily populated by African-American musicians.

As meticulously researched and executed as his shows are, Charlap eschews pedantry. The son of the late Broadway composer "Moose" Charlap and popular singer Sandy Stewart, he unashamedly entertains and unabash-

Bill Charlap (left) performing at a 2010 Jazz in July concert with Maucha Adnet, Reg Schwager, David Finck, Phil Woods, Duduka Da Fonseca and Erik Friedlander.



TERE LYNN PELLEGRINI

edly swings. While he talks as well as plays at all six concerts presented each year, he said, Jazz in July is not a lecture series.

"It's about telling people some more about some stuff that we love and that they probably love, too—whether they know it or not," he said.

As the series has evolved, it has discontinued some features—notably, its annual master class—but also explored new facets of old subjects. This season, it will revisit Hoagy Carmichael and reengage with Leonard Bernstein. Earlier concerts focusing on these artists were held in 2005 and '06, respectively.

The series will also return to a favorite format, the multi-piano evening, bringing together Hyman, Charlap and Christian Sands, the onetime protégé of Billy Taylor. The theme, "Three Generations of Piano Jazz," is a nod to Marian McPartland, on whose venerable radio show Charlap appeared as both guest and guest host.

McPartland, who died last August at 95, was, like Hyman, a constant in Charlap's life. Nearly 30 years ago, she and Hyman, together with pianist Roger Kellaway, shared the Y stage with a youthful Charlap—a night he still recalls with a measure of awe.

He explained: "I felt like that elephant in the Gary Larson comic who says, 'I don't know what I'm doing here. I'm a piccolo player.'" —Phillip Lutz

Riffs >

B.B. King



COURTESY MVD

B.B.'s Biopic: *The Life of Riley*, a documentary on the life of B.B. King, will be released on DVD, Blu-ray and digital platforms in the U.S. on June 17. King worked with director Jon Brewer for two years to create the film, which is narrated by Morgan Freeman. The candid biopic is highlighted by rare archive footage and beautifully shot scenes of the American Deep South. It features heartfelt contributions from musicians and stars, including Buddy Guy, Dr. John, Bill Cosby, George Benson, Bonnie Raitt and Jonny Lang. The film's original soundtrack, also available digitally, contains career-spanning songs as featured in the movie—from King's 1951 hit "3 O'Clock Blues" to his 2000 Grammy-winning duet "Riding With The King," plus two live songs never available on digital or CD format.

More info: bbking.com

Cosmic Reissues: To commemorate the centennial of one of jazz's most cosmic band leaders, the Sun Ra Music Archive has embarked on an extensive "Mastered for iTunes" reissue program. Released May 22, the series includes a significant amount of previously unreleased material, some stereo mixes of tracks previously available only in mono, and complete versions of tracks that had been edited for the original LPs. **More info:** apple.com/itunes

Hot for Bach: Jazz bassist Ron Carter is one of the participants on *Red Hot + Bach*, a new album that re-imagines the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. The project was produced by Red Hot, a not-for-profit organization that raises awareness and money for AIDS research while celebrating the music of geniuses as diverse as Antônio Carlos Jobim, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington and Fela Kuti. **More info:** redhot.org

In Memory: Trumpeter-flugelhornist Joe Wilder, an NEA Jazz Master, died May 9 in Manhattan. He was 92. In the '50s, Wilder recorded as a leader for Savoy and Columbia. As a sideman, he collaborated with pianist-band leader Count Basie, clarinetist Benny Goodman and vocalists Billie Holiday, Harry Belafonte and Tony Bennett. His most well-known recordings include 1956's *Softly With Feeling* (Savoy) and 1959's *Jazz From Peter Gunn* (Columbia).

Caught >



STEVE MUNDINGER/THELONIOUS MONK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ

Bassist Esperanza Spalding (left), trumpeter Roy Hargrove and vocalist Lalah Hathaway perform at the International Jazz Day concert in Osaka, Japan, on April 30.

All-Star Lineup Raises the Stakes at International Jazz Day Concert

THE THIRD ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL JAZZ day concert, held this year in the host city of Osaka, Japan, on April 30, offered a plethora of brilliant performances.

Spearheaded by the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Jazz Day is a celebration in which cities around the globe host jazz concerts and educational events. This year, 196 countries participated, with Somalia being a late entry. Reportedly, even the United States' McMurdo Station in Antarctica joined in the festivities.

Pianist John Beasley served as musical director for the grand concert in Osaka. The lineup boasted the same customary star power of internationally acclaimed musicians as the two years prior. But this year, the musicians veered away from the heavy emphasis on conventional jazz repertoire.

Held at historic Osaka Castle Park, the two-hour performance took on an auspicious tone from the beginning with Steve Turre playing the conch shells and Shuichi Hidano pounding a massive Taiko drum alongside two other traditional Japanese percussionists. The cross-cultural invocation alluded to a Santería religious ceremony in which musicians begin by playing a "Changó" to create pathways for sacred West African deities. Soon after, T.S. Monk kept the percussive spirits going by delivering a hard-hitting solo improvisation on the trap drums.

That mesmerizing one-two punch of an opener dovetailed into a vivacious reading of Horace Silver's "Saint Vitus Dance" with Dee Dee Bridgewater singing the intricate melody with the fluidity of a seasoned hard-bop saxophonist. Trumpeter Roy Hargrove and bassist Esperanza Spalding followed Bridgewater's incredible scatting with equally supple solos.

The musicians sprinkled in standards judiciously. Midway through the concert, the audience was treated to another well-known classic. Singer Roberta Gambarini led a sextet through an elegant reading of "Round Midnight," which was followed by a fine rendition of Miles Davis' 1963 chestnut "Seven Steps To Heaven," with Turre on trombone sharing the front line and trading solos with tenor saxophonist Lew Tabackin and trumpeter Terumasa Hino.

What raised the stakes for the International

Jazz Day was the performances by Monk Institute affiliate newcomers such as Lalah Hathaway and Gregory Porter. Both electrified by singing their own material instead of doling out listless covers. Riding the success of her recent Grammy win for her jazz-funk orchestral retooling of "Something" with the Brooklyn-based combo Snarky Puppy, Hathaway reprised the new arrangement of her hit with a large ensemble. As keyboardist Kris Bowers laid down hypnotic chords, Hathaway's soothing alto coaxed the gorgeous melody as the sexy ballad slowly crested into a medium-tempo funk workout with a mighty horn section responding to Spalding's undulating electric bass motif and Terri Lyne Carrington's propulsive drumming.

The soul-jazz vibe continued as Porter combined gospel and soul sounds with a gritty romp through "Liquid Spirit," the title track to his 2013 Blue Note album. Complementing his authoritative baritone with juke-joint party claps, the song gained a deeper sense of the blues than its recorded version, thanks to John Scofield's gutbucket guitar solo. After Porter invigorated the crowd, he intertwined lyrics from the famous Negro spiritual "Wade In The Water."

Later in the program, the soul-jazz quota gave way to jazz-funk with a fierce take on Herbie Hancock's "Hang Up Your Hang-Ups." The forceful reading featured Scofield handling the signature funky guitar riff famously recorded by Melvin "Wah Wah Watson" Ragin. The pianist—who is UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue—had already spellbound the audience with Wayne Shorter on soprano saxophone during a phenomenal version of Michiel Borstlap's "Memory Of Enchantment."

Although an all-hands-on-deck, closing performance of John Lennon's "Imagine" had the potential to be schmaltzy, it was another highlight thanks largely to Hathaway's impassioned vocal delivery at the beginning, combined with Hancock's plaintive piano chords and Sheila E's atmospheric percussion. The tune unfolded with a joyous South African rhythmic undercurrent as various singers swapped leads and Shorter unfurled a wondrous soprano saxophone solo midway through the song. As spirits soared high from both the musicians and concertgoers, this finale emitted not a hint of treacle but rather plenty of purposeful heart.

—John Murph

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Porter, Marsalis & Keb' Mo' Soar at Jazz Fest in New Orleans

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW ORLEANS Jazz & Heritage Festival, April 25, Gregory Porter stood behind the Jazz Tent, alone. The first notes of "Painted On Canvas" wafted back from the stage as Porter calmly spun one arm in circles to the slow beat of the music, his mouth set in a half-smile, his eyes cocked up at the blue sky.

The meditative warm-up ended within moments, but the serenity he evoked seemed to stay with him throughout his set, which spanned selections from his three albums—2010's *Water* and 2012's *Be Good* (both Motéma) and his Blue Note debut, 2013's *Liquid Spirit*. The performance also featured a strong fill-in from local pianist Jesse McBride.

Porter went on to engage the crowd with a groove-drenched "On My Way To Harlem." The lilting and poetic "No Love Dying" followed, Porter's warm baritone cushioning the ends of phrases through lyrics full of both ominous images and a refusal to accept the end of love. It's not one of Porter's overtly gospel-influenced songs, but the audience was soon backing him up, choir-style, on the refrain—a perfect segue into "Liquid Spirit," which brought the crowd to its feet.

"My mother was from Shreveport and she taught me how to make hot-water cornbread and how to sing in church," Porter said as an introduction to the song. Praising her for teaching him how to tap into spiritual energy, he added: "She taught me how to think about music." It wasn't long before the tent rang out with the sound of hundreds of handclaps and hollers, giving the nearby Gospel Tent a run for its money.

If Porter brought spiritual serenity to the Jazz Tent, the next day's closer, Branford Marsalis, brought muscle. Alternating between tenor and soprano sax, he led his quartet through a fiery collection of tunes that featured pianist Joey Calderazzo and drummer Justin Faulkner at their most visceral.

A thunderous version of Thelonious Monk's "Teo" followed a pair of originals by Calderazzo and bassist Eric Revis. Later, Marsalis opened his notoriously knotty "In the Crease" with hummingbird-like flutter breaths—a light touch belied the labyrinthine rhythms that lay ahead.

Things escalated quickly, with Calderazzo and Faulkner taking turns upping the power until Marsalis briefly cooled the tune off with a series of crescendoing lines. Soon, Calderazzo was on

his feet behind the piano's left side, siphoning new sounds out of his instrument as Faulkner forged his way through the odd meter with both brawn and grace. The performance earned the band its first standing ovation of the set.

Its final standing O came after Marsalis invited his brother Jason and father, Ellis, to join him onstage. A stately drumroll and powerful bass solo announced the group's closing number, "St. James Infirmary." Eschewing the campy factor that often plays into the New Orleans standard, Ellis delivered a sultry, blues-soaked piano solo that swung to its core. Branford, back on soprano, picked up the melody with dramatic doses of restraint and release, then wailed into an exuberant finish.

Earlier that day across the Fair Grounds, another venerated member of New Orleans' jazz elite made a surprise appearance with one of the festival's so-called "guest" touring acts.

"Michael's never played this song, but he can play anything," quipped singer-songwriter-guitarist Keb' Mo' while introducing clarinetist Dr. Michael White, who sat in on the traditional jazz-inspired "Old Me Better." "He can play way harder stuff than this," Keb' Mo' said. "We don't play hard stuff, just fun stuff."

The guitarist was half joking, but much of his set's beauty came from its stripped-down nature. On a weekend that also featured the grinding blues-rock of the North Mississippi Allstars and the driving Delta-meets-desert blues of Tuareg guitarist Bombino, Keb' Mo' presented a welcome reminder of the more comforting side of the blues.

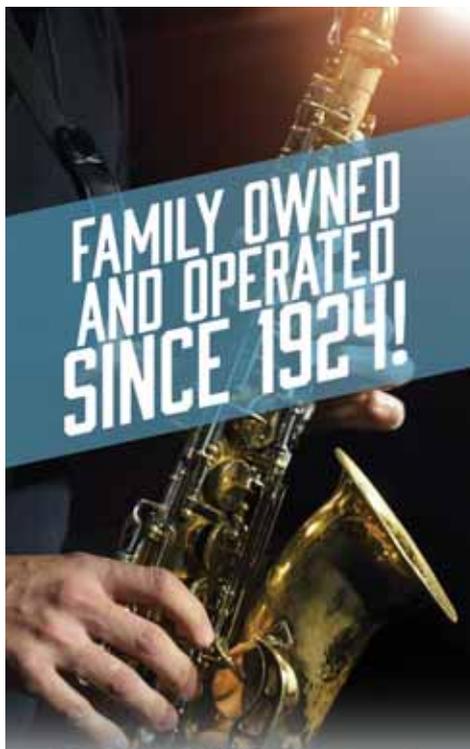
Joined by Tom Shinness on electric bass and cello, and Casey Wasner on drums, Keb' Mo' focused on material from his new album, *BLUESAmericana* (Kind Of Blue), which, as the name suggests, draws on a range of American roots traditions beyond blues—spiced by episodes of lyrical irony.

The playfully rendered dark side of tunes like the groove-filled opener, "The Worst Is Yet To Come," gave the set an edge, while Keb' Mo's addictively warm vocal range and his band's instrumental interplay kept the vibe upbeat.

Shinness lent a rootsiness to the performance, switching from bowed cello ("Government Cheese") to electric bass ("Life Is Beautiful") to slinging his cello like a guitar on the divorce-themed "The Itch."

Many hours after his festival performance on the Fais Do Do Stage, Keb' Mo' got a taste of the local roots-music scene when he sat in with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band at the hall's "Midnight Preserves" series. —Jennifer Odell

Branford Marsalis onstage at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival on April 26



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From Monastery, Back to Music

Swedish bassist and composer Torbjörn Zetterberg, 38, hadn't released a jazz album under his own name in seven years prior to his fantastic new sextet album, *Och Den Stora Frågan* (Mose-robite). The vitality of the music suggests he developed a real hunger during the interim. Flanked by some of his most trusted Swedish collaborators—reedists Jonas Kullhammar and Alberto Pinton and trombonist Mats Ålekint—along with new partners in Portuguese trumpeter Susana Santos Silva and Swedish drummer Jon Fält, he rips into the arrangements of his durable, hard-driving themes with palpable relish, providing a muscular backbone and fierce sense of propulsion. The record arrives within a spate of renewed musical activity from a guy who thought about leaving music in his past a few years ago.

Already a practicing Zen Buddhist, the Stockholm native left the city in 2010 and spent the next year in a monastery in Finnåker, two hours from the capital in the heart of the nation's farmland, without his bass. "Full-time training was kind of a dream to me, but career, family and relationships made it very hard, almost impossible," he said during a recent interview. "But in 2009 my life situation changed in several ways. My relationship suddenly ended, one of the bands I was working in most of the time took a break, and my latest project [Folke] was kind of a failure. I felt like it was now or never, and I went for it." After Folke—which is also the bassist's middle name—released the lo-fi pop album *Ordinary Extraordinary* on the Swedish label Brus & Knaster, Zetterberg struggled to find a balance between his spiritual practice and music.

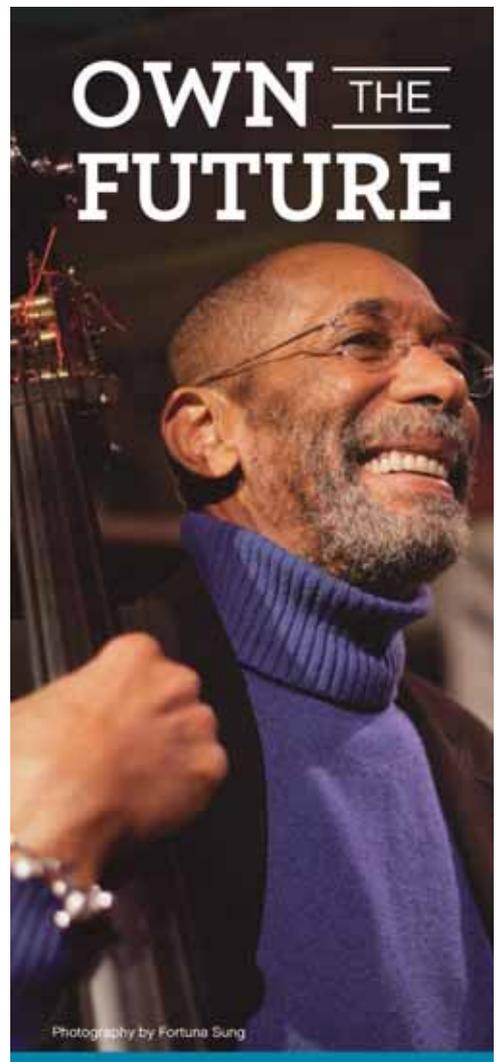
"I took about two years to find my way back to being a musician," he said. Zetterberg continued to spend extended periods at the monastery, away from music, family and friends. "I had all of these questions: 'Am I going to be a musician or a Buddhist monk?' As a musician I didn't know

what I wanted to do. 'Should I put the old band back together? Do I really want to go through the pain of being a bandleader again?'" Fans are thankful that he eventually resolved these questions, because he's playing at peak level now.

Before entering the monastery, Zetterberg had led two of Sweden's best bands: the Torbjörn Zetterberg Hot Five, a high-energy post-bop quintet that early on wore its influences on its collective sleeve; and a knockout octet characterized by rich contrapuntal arrangements, fiercely swinging grooves and fiery playing from some of Scandinavia's best talent (Kullhammar, Pinton and fellow Swedish reedist Per "Texas" Johansson; trombonists Ålekint and Norway's Øyvind Braekke; and percussionist Kjell Nordeson). In both of these settings, there was no missing the influence of Charles Mingus, both as a composer and bassist.

Perhaps the biggest difference in Zetterberg's music since his stay in the monastery is a greater sense of openness. "There is some new sense of freedom, which I believe comes from less judging and more acceptance." Zetterberg continues to anchor the long-running quartet led by Kullhammar—who also operates the Mose-robite imprint—and he recently turned up on a pair of smoldering trio dates with Kullhammar and the Norwegian drummer Espen Aalberg for Clean Feed.

But it's in his new sextet and in a duo project with Silva where one can really hear a sense of exploration. Last year's *Almost Tomorrow* (Clean Feed) was a bracing set of duets with the Portuguese trumpeter that balanced lyric dialogue with abstract smears, sibilant rumbles and pure, striated tones. The music on *Och Den Stora Frågan* is rooted in post-bop, but compared with the meticulously orchestrated octet recordings, there's a new sense of space and greater spontaneity. "I enjoy playing and listening in a way I don't think I ever did before," Zetterberg said. **DB**



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Kenny Wayne Shepherd Summons His Heroes

About the time of Stevie Ray Vaughan's fatal helicopter accident in 1990, a 13-year-old guitarist living in Shreveport, La., made his performing debut at the north Louisiana Red River Revel Arts Festival. The teenager, who'd been spurred to take up guitar several years earlier after attending a Vaughan concert produced by his father, caught the interest of a record company rep. In 1995, his first album, *Ledbetter Heights* (Giant), sold more than 500,000 copies.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd, 37, has remained a best-selling blues-rock recording artist ever since. Increasingly mindful of his blues heritage, Shepherd sought out venerated elders like B.B. King, Hubert Sumlin and Gatemouth Brown for feature spots on his 2007 CD/DVD, *10 Days Out: Blues From The Backroads* (Reprise). This year's *Goin' Home* (Concord) is yet another fond nod to his heroes. With his working band and guests including drummer Ringo Starr, the Rebirth Brass Band and guitarists Keb' Mo' and Warren Haynes, Shepherd reinvigorates classic material. In support of the new album, he is headlining shows throughout the United States this summer.

What about the blues speaks to you?

The blues is about life, real life. Honestly, the music that I'm attracted to comes from the people that play straight from their heart and their soul. They pour all of themselves into their music. Hubert Sumlin used to say to me, "If I'm up here and feelin' it, then the audience, they *gots* to feel it!" It's true. I've loved the blues since I was crawling.

The future health of the blues depends on you and others. You're aware of the responsibility?

I'm not trying to put pressure on myself or trying to put myself on some kind of pedestal, but I do know I've been given an opportunity. This music is responsible for me being who I am and having the career that I have. So I do feel it is my responsibility to do what I think is right, and I believe that it's right to give credit where credit is due. And that's to give credit to the artists that inspired me to play music, and also to show my love and appreciation for the genre and the artists before me.

How have your guitar sound and technique changed over the years?

I learned from my heroes that a lot of times less is actually more. I would listen to B.B. or Albert King and I would hear them play a guitar solo, and there are these moments when what they were playing just pierces right into my soul. I can feel it in the depths of my soul! Wow! I realize that when that's happening it's not like they're playing this flurry of really fast notes at lightning speed. It's usually like they're playing one note or one riff, playing the right note at the right time, putting their heart and soul into it, and that's what makes me feel that way. That's what I want my audience to feel when they listen to me, so I've focused on less-is-more.

What's the personal significance of *Goin' Home*?

I literally went home to do this record, in Shreveport. The album is a return to my musical roots, the music of my childhood. When I began searching for the material for the record, it brought back these vivid memories of my childhood sitting in the living room with my guitar learning how to play the instrument, and these artists and what they meant to me. I tried to choose songs that were not obvious choices, to make it more interesting for the listener so they're not hearing a bunch of songs they've heard other people do a million times. Also to encourage them to dig deeper into the artists' catalogs so they can find these great songs that sometimes get overlooked.



MARK SELIGER

The most mainstream song that we do is "Born Under A Bad Sign," and I almost didn't put it on the album. But Keb' Mo' did such a great job guest singing and playing guitar on it that I couldn't *not* put it on there. The songs are all favorites of mine. But I really like the Muddy Waters song "Still A Fool." As I get older I really dig the more positive message of the blues, though this one is kind of a dark song. Sonically, it sounds more like what I'm known for, a mixture between blues and rock. The B.B. King song ["You Done Lost Your Good Thing Now"] is one of the greatest slow blues songs ever.

Pastor Brady Blade Sr., your guest on *Goin' Home*, sounds like Willie Dixon when he sings on Dixon's "You Can't Judge A Book By Its Cover." Who is he?

Brady Blade Jr. [*Goin' Home* co-producer and acclaimed session drummer] owns the studio, and that's his father. His father and my father go way back to when Brady Jr. and I were little kids. His dad wandered into the studio to see what we were up to. We were cutting that song, and he walked up to the microphone while we were playing. He started singing it with Noah Hunt, my band's singer. It was great.

You recorded the old-fashioned way?

We did. Everything was done on 2-inch tape, and the band all played in one room together at the same time. There's not a bunch of overdubbing. There's no click tracks, no Auto-Tune, no fancy effects. We really wanted to do this the way that it was done back in the day, keeping the spirit and integrity of the early recordings intact but then put our own personalities in there as well—and I think we've accomplished that.

You want your music to sound uplifting, right?

Yeah, man. There's this misconception about the blues sometimes that it's for older people and there's a self-loathing or sad, depressing message. But the blues is a healing experience. Even the songs that have a dark message, it's the idea that it's therapeutic. The blues is a healing process. I want to bring light into people's lives and make them feel better. —Frank-John Hadley

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Bill Frisell (left), Joe Lovano, Joey Baron, Greg Osby, Scott Colley and Julian Lage onstage at Blue Note on April 18.

JACK VARTOQUIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

Bill Frisell & Friends Pay Tribute to Jim Hall at Blue Note

FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES AND SEVERAL OF his guitar disciples assembled at Blue Note in New York on April 18–20 to pay tribute to the late, great guitarist Jim Hall, who passed away on Dec. 10, 2013, at age 83. Known as much for the notes he left out of his creative comping and unique phrasing as the ones he left in, Hall changed the course of jazz guitar with his minimal, less-is-more aesthetic. His playing was subtle yet sophisticated, lyrical and always in the moment, with an indelible connection to the jazz guitar traditions of swing and the blues.

Hall may have come out of the Charlie Christian school, but it was his innovative ideas and constant search for fresh modes of expression that caused Pat Metheny to describe him as “the father of modern jazz guitar.”

The opening night of the three-night run featured guitarists from two generations who were profoundly influenced by Hall: 63-year-old Bill Frisell and 26-year-old Julian Lage. Frisell shared the stage with Hall on several occasions over the years and the two recorded together on 2008’s *Hemispheres*, a two-CD set released on ArtistShare and produced by label head, Brian Camelio, who acted as emcee for the evening. Lage, who was just 11 years old when he first met Hall, shared the stage with the elder guitarist just two years ago during a weeklong engagement at Blue Note.

Together with longtime Hall associates Scott Colley on bass and Joey Baron on drums, the two simpatico guitar players engaged in delicate, conversational interplay on “Days Of Wine And Roses” (a tune that Hall recorded with the Art Farmer Quartet on 1963’s aptly-titled *Interaction*). Frisell, playing a black Fender Stratocaster with a Bigsby vibrato bar, was the more subversive of the two guitarists, often instigating playful call-and-response and straying well outside the harmony in his exchanges with Lage. At the song’s contrapuntal peak, the two intertwining guitars sounded like a jazz version of “Layla” on the Henry Mancini classic.

Alto saxophonist Greg Osby—who featured Hall on his 2000 Blue Note recording *The Invisible Hand* and played frequently with the guitarist’s

group in recent years—joined the quartet for a lovely reading of “Body And Soul,” a favorite vehicle of Hall’s. Frisell’s comping on this standard was filled with gorgeous upper-register arpeggios, warm octaves and unpredictable fragments of the theme, while Osby’s patient phrasing was imbued with an abundance of soul.

“What an honor it is to be a member of Jim’s world and be a recipient of his wisdom and witty observations about the world,” Osby said to the audience, which included Hall’s wife of 50 years, Jane Hall. “His spirit lives amongst us forever.”

Their lovely 3/4 rendition of “All The Things You Are” recalled Hall’s delicate collaboration with pianist Bill Evans on “Skating In Central Park,” from their classic 1962 encounter, *Undercurrent*. Osby’s dancing solo on this standard was injected with a pungent, double-time feel. Lage’s brilliant, beautifully constructed solo on this favored Hall standard had the feel of an étude. Frisell stood by, beaming like a proud big brother as the younger guitarist utilized the full range of his axe in virtuosic fashion.

Saxophonist Joe Lovano joined the core quartet for the urgent Hall composition “Slam,” which they had recorded together on 2000’s collaborative *Grand Slam* (Telarc), with bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash. Frisell dropped in a quote from Charlie Christian’s “Seven Come Eleven” (another Hall favorite) in the middle of his solo while Lovano dug in and wailed on this blues form in typically robust fashion, guided by the spirit of discovery. They followed with Hall’s joyful, danceable “Calypso,” his answer to Sonny Rollins’ “St. Thomas.”

Osby joined that quintet to close out the set in rollicking fashion with a romp through Milt Jackson’s “Bags’ Groove,” which bassist Colley fueled with his walking lines and Frisell treated as a Texas roadhouse shuffle in his stinging solo.

Among the other friends and colleagues who came by during the following two nights to pay their respects to Hall were guitarists Russell Malone, Adam Rogers, John Ponder and Satoshi Inoue, saxophonist Chris Potter, bassist Steve LaSpina, pianists Bill Charlap, Larry Goldings and Gil Goldstein and drummer Bill Stewart.

—Bill Milkowski

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PAT SENATORE

A Blessed Life

BOB BARRY / JAZZOGRAPHY

Few jazz musicians have had the kind of career that bassist Pat Senatore has enjoyed. He's worked with numerous jazz greats, been a member of one of the world's best-selling bands and operated his own club. He oversees the music at a fashionable Los Angeles jazz venue and leads his own estimable trio.

Ascensione (Fresh Sound), the new album from the Pat Senatore Trio, displays a unique chemistry that can be heard at Vibrato, Herb Alpert's chic restaurant, where Senatore is the music director. In the studio and on the bandstand, Senatore's strong yet pliant playing is complemented by the poetic young pianist Josh Nelson and the melodic drummer Mark Ferber. The disc features probing renditions of "Con Alma" and "All The Things You Are."

"I call Pat my jazz grandpa," said Nelson. "He's the compass, the standard-bearer, and we dance around him. There aren't many people his age who play with the joy he brings to the music."

A Newark, N.J., native, the 78-year-old Senatore went to school with Wayne Shorter. He saw big bands at the Adams Theatre and knew that

he wanted to play music. At Sugar Hill, a predominantly black club, Senatore was allowed to sit in. In New York he saw Charlie Parker at Birdland and the Bill Evans Trio at the Village Vanguard.

Senatore drily recalled his feelings upon hearing Scott LaFaro play with Evans: "I wanted to sell my bass." But when Stan Kenton beckoned, Senatore didn't have to audition. "We already know about you," he was told.

In 1960 he moved to Los Angeles. While waiting out his union transfer, Senatore worked at the famous record store Wallichs Music City in Hollywood and eventually became the night manager there. "I had run a record store in Newark, so it was easy," he said. Trumpeter Alpert came into Wallichs and they talked about ambitions.

Alpert later called Senatore when he assembled his band, Tijuana Brass. The group became one of the biggest pop successes of the 1960s, placing 13 songs on the Billboard Top 40 between 1962 and 1967, including "Taste Of Honey" and "Tijuana Taxi."

"There was a lot of protest," Senatore recalled, "in the music of the '60s. But Herb made happy

records that people liked a lot." The group was stocked with fine players, including guitarist John Pisano and drummer Nick Ceroli. "We were all jazz musicians, and we tried to play that music like we'd play jazz," Senatore said.

"I tried to get really good people," Alpert explained. "And they happened to be great jazz musicians."

From 1977 to 1983, the bassist and his wife, Barbara, presided over the fondly recalled Pasquale's, a Malibu jazz club. It was a real listening venue, where Senatore headed the house trio with pianist George Cables and drummer John Guerin.

The 150-seat room hosted Joe Pass, Ernie Watts, Warne Marsh & Pete Christlieb, Anita O'Day, Clare Fischer's Salsa Picante band and many others. Pasquale's showcased Art Pepper's last triumphant period, and it was a favored SoCal venue for Michel Petrucciani. A Jon Hendricks appearance brought in Bobby McFerrin and Al Jarreau for a memorable after-hours session, and the Manhattan Transfer did an unannounced tune-up gig there. It was also Joe Farrell's home base (he did turn-away business with a quixotic Monday night big band) during the last phase of his life.

Jazz in beach cities was nothing new, but a club right on the sand was extraordinary. "One Sunday afternoon," Barbara warmly recounted, "the tide was pulling in shells and tiny stones that lapped against the pilings under the room." Bobby Hutcherson's vibes incorporated those sonic textures into his improvisations and held the crowd in silent awe. "It was really magical," she added.

Bandstand magic couldn't protect Pasquale's from Mother Nature. Periodic heavy rainstorms and mudslides closed Pacific Coast Highway, the club's only access route. The Senatores had to reluctantly cut their losses. Still, Pasquale's lives in memory and the music.

"I love to hear Pat's stories," Nelson related, "about the legends who played there: George Cables, Wayne Shorter and all the others." As tribute to that little epoch (which Nelson missed), he contributed charts on two Petrucciani tunes to the trio's book: "Sahara" and "The Prayer."

Nelson feels there is a precedent in the exchange and energy of the trio: "It's like the symbiotic energy that Eddie Gomez had with Bill Evans," he said. "The solos are extensions of the melodies, and focus on the tune. And Mark Ferber is one of the most melodic drummers I know of—he makes something complicated sound simple and easy."

"What's so beautiful about Pat," Alpert said, "is that he wants the music to be the best it can be. He's continually studying, working on the bass and playing the piano. It's a never-ending process with him."

"I've had a blessed life," Senatore said. "I've done everything I wanted to do." —Kirk Silsbee



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MATT SLOCUM

Transparency to the Source

MICHAEL OLETTA

Some musicians capture our attention with direct references to past masters; others integrate their web of influences within a more personalized interpretation. The latter approach, within an even greater historical reference, can be heard on drummer-composer Matt Slocum's latest album, *Black Elk's Dream* (Chandra).

Performing at New York's Kitano with his quartet of pianist Adam Birnbaum, saxophonist Jon Irabagon and bassist Massimo Biolcati in April, Slocum served the music with a focus on dynamic micro-detail, which in turn allowed his musicians to play and say even more. It's a cerebral concept, one that comes to fruition on *Black Elk's Dream*.

"Joe Locke was talking about this book, *Black Elk Speaks*, by John G. Neihardt," Slocum recalled, explaining the album's title. "I read it and it amazed me."

Neihardt's 1932 book documented the author's conversations with Black Elk, an Oglala Lakota tribe medicine man who, as a teenager, fought at the Battle of the Little Bighorn (1876) and the Wounded Knee Massacre (1890), the latter a slaughter of 150 Lakota men, women and children by the U.S. military. By turns meditative and melancholic, Slocum's *Black Elk's Dream* works like a soundtrack to Neihardt's book.

"Black Elk was very direct even though he didn't speak English," Slocum said. "He was at Wounded Knee when the tribe returned and fought. He made the decision to surrender. He was so disappointed because he had a great vision to bring his people to peace. It was inspiring. After two albums, I realized I need something to write about, in the same way some musicians say it's easier to have a framework for improvisation rather than, 'Let's just show up and go totally free.'"

Though Slocum didn't write the album's material as a suite, its songs flow together organically, and they feel interconnected.

"That wasn't intentional," he said. "I didn't start out trying to make a record about the book. I wrote the title track first, basing it around Black Elk's vision. Then I tried out other ideas and moods based on that. As a whole, the album reflects the book, but certain tunes are less literal.

The title track and 'Yerazel' reflect specific periods in Black Elk's life; the interludes relate to how the book unfolds in later chapters.

"In some ways I feel weird," Slocum added. "I used Black Elk's story to help me write music."

The album's cast—bassist Biolcati, pianist Gerald Clayton and saxophonists Dayna Stephens and Walter Smith III—create swirling, nocturnal imagery. Like Wayne Shorter's classic Blue Note recordings, *Black Elk's Dream* seems to ask questions, leaving the answers open to individual interpretation. The beautiful "Ghost Dance" percolates over Slocum's gently sizzling cymbal and drum work; Stephens and Clayton swing "Yerazel" to Slocum's pulsing brushes; the title track combines Afro-Cuban rhythms and a soaring, Americana-infused melody and improvisations. "Days Of Peace" brings a stately swing as familiar as the Strayhorn classics Slocum admires. Throughout, Slocum uses his cymbals for punctuation and color as equally as his drums. A former student of Peter Erskine, Slocum follows a similar economy of motion, coupled to a finesse-filled approach. He gravitates to similarly artful drummers.

"Max Roach was my first influence," Slocum noted. "As a kid I had three jazz CDs: *Study In Brown*, *Rich Versus Roach* and *Cookin' With The Miles Davis Quintet*. Max's solos, composing and phrasing made a big impact on me. Roy Haynes became a serious influence later, starting with Monk's album *Thelonious In Action*, Chick Corea's *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* and Roy's own *We Three*. I liked Roy's feel, and the sound of his snare drum, and, of course, his flat ride. I liked the flat ride's transparency within the recording."

After copious sideman work around New York City and his previous albums, *Portraits* (2010) and *After The Storm* (2011), Slocum follows the ideal expressed so well on *Black Elk's Dream*: transparency to the source.

"I try to keep my drumming transparent even when the music is dense," Slocum explained. "If something crazy is needed, I go there, too. I want to play something that makes the other musicians sound great, and complements what they're doing without my ego being involved." —Ken Micallef

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ROY NATHANSON *Essence of the Song*

The multitalented Roy Nathanson has had a wildly diverse career. The saxophonist studied with Jimmy Heath early on, was an integral part of the "Downtown" scene of New York in the 1980s with the Lounge Lizards, and has done some acting. He also created a program for high school students in 2007 called Subway Moon, named after his first book of poetry and the second album of his current and ongoing band Sotto Voce, which formed in 2004. In the intervening years, he's been a driver in the much-acclaimed Jazz Passengers, featuring guest artists like Elvis Costello, Mavis Staples and Debbie Harry.

Sotto Voce's latest album, *Complicated Day* (Enja/Yellowbird), offers a mix of music and words, and a showcase for seven other talents, chief among them regular collaborator Curtis Fowlkes, who plays trombone and sings on the disc. In addition to providing the lead vocals, Nathanson shows his mastery of soprano, alto and baritone saxophones.

In the press materials for *Complicated Day*, the New York-based Nathanson described the disc as "this 62-year-old jazz sax player's first singer-songwriter album." When asked about the quote, Nathanson added: "The music is at the service of the words. In the [Jazz] Passengers' song constructions or on my previous two Sotto Voce CDs, the poems and texts generally had their place, and then I found specific spots where the music took center stage. On *Complicated Day* I worked harder to integrate the singing into the musical meaning of the song. I tried to make songs in a traditional way—hopefully you can hear them and sing them back with the sense that in doing so you capture the essence of each song."

The result is a dandy mash-up of grooves, solos and harmony. Nathanson's original songs are augmented by three covers: Johnny Nash's 1972 pop hit "I Can See Clearly Now," the Frank Loesser standard "Slow Boat To China" and Isaac Hayes' classic "Do Your Thing."

Nathanson referred to guitarist Jerome Harris as a "wonderful singer," noting that all his collaborators' vocals help the band achieve a balance between singing and instrumental prowess. "Jerome's guitar makes the palette of the songs more related to pop music of the last 50 years, most of the songs having clear verse-chorus formats," Nathanson explained.

Bassist Tim Kiah and beatboxer Napoleon Maddox also contribute vocals, as do violinist Sam Bardfeld, acclaimed poet Gerald Stern and trumpeter Gabriel Nathanson, who is the leader's son. Nathanson explained that his longtime friend and producer-engineer Hugo Dwyer spent many hours "crafting the recordings, dropping verses and doubling vocals in ways that are far more like a pop production than a jazz recording."

The album's title has an intriguing backstory. "Several years ago," Nathanson recalled, "my friend Marty Ehrlich observed how the appropriate way to deal with getting older is to let things get more complicated rather than simplify. This concept permeates the music as well. In trying to make sense of the last few years—where I've had to face some difficult personal issues amid the attendant difficulties of aging and working two jobs—I tried to frame the stories of these songs in a kind of alchemy where word, sound and instrumental-ensemble improvising form meaning together. [I tried] to create detailed songs that are complicated without appearing so and that convey a multilayered emotional life experience."

Fowlkes is very familiar with the leader's theatrically minded methods. "Roy usually has a composition pretty flushed out by the time he brings it in," Fowlkes said. "*Complicated Day* is quite a unique experience for me, since this project is song-centric. More like underscoring, which allows for Roy's text emphasis." Commenting on his place in Nathanson's work, Fowlkes said, "I've been more of a sounding board. I'm honored to work with Roy, whose bravery and creative imagination are always inspiring." —John Epland



Players ›

ROSS HAMMOND

Personal Resonance

GEORGE THOMPSON

Visual artist Kara Walker has long used her work to confront some of America's most uncomfortable realities. She's best known for her series of tableaux using black paper silhouettes to depict scenes of slavery and racism. Her "Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War," for instance, takes romanticized images of the Civil War from 19th-century Harper's magazines and contrasts them with her own silhouettes adding scenes of violence and sexuality.

When Sacramento's Crocker Art Museum asked Ross Hammond to perform at the opening of its exhibition of Walker's art in October 2013, the guitarist wanted to create something specific to the occasion. "I'm not in any way an expert on Kara's work," Hammond said. "But just looking at it, it's very deep and emotionally charged, so I wanted to create music that reflected that."

Hammond spent the summer of 2013 composing his *Humanity Suite*, the live performance of which constitutes his latest album, which he's releasing on vinyl and as a digital download. The piece was written for a sextet featuring multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia, saxophonist Catherine Sikora, trombonist Clifford Childers and his regular rhythm section of bassist Kerry Kashiwagi and drummer Dax Compise.

Despite the fact that he's a white male composer adapting the work of an African-American female artist that deals specifically and bluntly with issues of race and gender, Hammond found ideas and emotions in Walker's work that resonated with him personally. "Kara's work has something that everyone can relate to," he said. "You don't have to live in the time of slavery to understand a silhouette of a mother and her dying child, or the silhouette of someone trying to flee. Those are feelings common to anyone alive. I wanted to tap into that common thread of human nature."

Hammond thought of the composition as a soundtrack to Walker's work in general, rather than drawing inspiration from particular works. His music constructs a loose framework, with

thematic material giving way to passages of free improvisation or intertwining horn lines weaving around taut rhythms. The second movement begins with Golia's bass clarinet spiraling around Hammond's airy guitar musings, their untethered improvisation soon focusing into a funky groove over which the horns moan a slow dirge.

The feel of the piece stems from Hammond's "healthy respect for the blues," according to Golia, a frequent collaborator. "I know that sounds corny, but if you listen to a lot of newer players nowadays, they're not so blues-oriented. It's a lot of licks and riffs and a focus on technical ability. Ross is a little more concerned with feeling and getting a sound in the context of who he's playing with."

The blues was Hammond's earliest interest when he picked up the guitar in junior high school. Originally a devotee of artists like Freddie King and Curtis Mayfield, Hammond was introduced to such jazz greats as Grant Green and Kenny Burrell by one of his college teachers. He fell into the Bay Area jazz scene of the early '90s, which boasted eclectic groups like the Broun Fellinis and T.J. Kirk, while digging into classic Blue Note soul-jazz and '70s Impulse albums, finding a familiar common thread throughout.

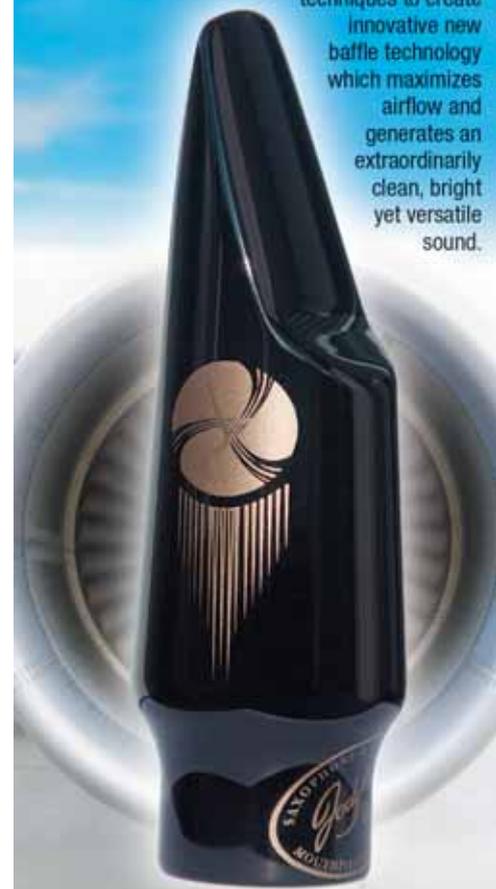
"The old Pharoah Sanders and Coltrane records, even though they weren't playing blues per se, the expression and the tonality and all of that is definitely in there," he said. "You can hear those roots, and that's always resonated with me."

While Hammond plays most often in his hometown of Sacramento, he regularly heads east or to larger West Coast cities, where he's played with the likes of Oliver Lake, Scott Amendola and Mike Pride. In 2008 he and a friend co-founded the In The Flow Festival, scheduled for its seventh incarnation in May. "We started it because there really weren't any gigs," he explained. "For this kind of music to survive and to thrive, all the artists need to get on the horse and make it happen ourselves. You can't wait for the Village Vanguard to call."
—Shaun Brady

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THE 80 COOLEST THINGS IN JAZZ TODAY



To celebrate DownBeat's 80th anniversary, we want to look at the present and future, not the past. So we proudly present "The 80 Coolest Things in Jazz Today." It's a glorious list of 80 people, places and things that illustrate why jazz is such a vibrant art form in 2014. Note that the items on this list are numbered, but not ranked. We hope this list generates conversations (and passionate debates) about the state of jazz today. We begin our list by paying respect to 10 living masters.

THE LIVING MASTERS



1. TONY BENNETT

At 87, Tony Bennett is as cool as he's ever been—maybe even cooler. Since the mid-'90s (the benchmark being an *MTV Unplugged* appearance and subsequent album), Bennett has been surging, artistically and commercially, reaching out to a young audience without compromising. Recording duet albums with the likes of Stevie Wonder, Sting, Elvis Costello and John Legend, he's invited the younger artists to meet him on his own turf. While also touring constantly, he's rededicated himself as a jazz singer and become the foremost standard-bearer for the Great American Songbook.

It wasn't always thus. The post-rock years were not always kind to the Vegas headliner, before son Danny Bennett came along as manager with the attitude of "Let Tony be Tony," confident that a new audience was eager to hear one of the masters.

During a May interview, it was clear that Bennett views his artistic trajectory as unaltered, remembering the lessons he learned as a World War II veteran studying on the G.I. Bill at the American Theatre Wing in New York: "Never compromise, only stay with quality. I've spent the rest of my life, from that day until now, never singing a bad song—only something that has intelligent lyrics and intelligent music."

Talking to *DownBeat* from his home on Central Park South in New York, Bennett remembered taking lessons from his teacher, Mimi Spear. "She said, 'Don't imitate another singer, because you'll be one of the chorus. Listen to musicians, and find out how they're phrasing their songs.'"

So he studied the phrasing of pianist Art Tatum and his ability to vary tempos within a song as a way to tell a story. For sound, he listened to Stan Getz, who delivered "a nice, wide, human, warm, meaningful sound."

Today, Bennett is unstinting in his praise for younger singers like the late Amy Winehouse ("a true jazz singer") and Lady Gaga, with whom he's recorded a full album to be released in the fall ("I think she's going to surprise everybody").

And he remains unwavering in his dedication to the Great American Songbook. "Those songs will never die. In fact, 35 years from now, they will no longer be called light entertainment. They're going to be called America's classical music."

Bennett's whole game, he said, "is to try to do definitive versions of great standards. And I'm not really interested in doing anything except making the public feel the song that I'm singing." —Jon Garelick

2. ORNETTE COLEMAN

As the architect and progenitor of "free-jazz," Ornette Coleman shifted the cultural universe. There is no way to minimize this achievement, or back off from it. The rise of jazz, and, specifically, collective improvisation, presaged a number of seismic changes in the 1960s along the lines of individual expression, human rights and true democracy. Leading the way, alto sax in hand, was Coleman—lots of notes, many off-kilter and discordant, and a personal system, harmolodics, that gamely explained his new musical language. His cagey intentions and creations present audiences with the ultimate compliment: Experience the music and react to it as you wish. The bleat of



his horn is unforgettable, and his songwriting underrated. For decades, whenever he has walked onto any stage, as he did at Sonny Rollins's 80th birthday concert celebration in 2010, a large sense of unpredictable and dangerous fun has accompanied him. —Thomas Staudter

3. HERBIE HANCOCK



Jazz fans don't have to be sold on Herbie Hancock's historic and innovative role as pianist, side-

man, composer and bandleader. They know about his years as an independent musical thinker who was not afraid to try new things. His recorded ventures that embraced pop music and tried to find common ground with jazz showed him to be a risk-taker.

If Hancock had done nothing but confine his musical life to any one of those activities, he would be a historic figure. Fortunately for jazz, and the world, making music was never enough for him. He's been one of the music's most articulate spokesmen, and he's used his celebrity to evangelize for the music and its potential for good in the world. He was the right person to co-chair (with Irina Bokova) UNESCO's International Jazz Day efforts, begun in 2011. In his many roles—peerless musician, chairman of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue—Hancock brings jazz to the world and the world to jazz. —Kirk Silsbee

4. ROY HAYNES

It is remarkable that powerhouse drummer and bandleader Roy Haynes, 89, has maintained his instrumental mastery at such an advanced age. While there are other octogenarians in the music business still performing near the top of their game, the physical requirements of patrolling drums and cymbals for a solid hour is no small feat. Watch Haynes and notice how *hard* he plays: The buzz of his rolls, the crack of his snare, his relentless swing and imaginative stick work on the cymbals push away any notions of failing abilities. One of the few remaining figures from the bebop revolution, Haynes' bandstand associations from the late 1940s and early '50s include legendary artists like Lester



Young, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker—they all wanted Haynes on drums, as did Chick Corea for *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*. Today, Haynes continues to shepherd new talent in his Fountain of Youth band with the same snazzy, cocksure style he did when your parents were young. —Thomas Staudter

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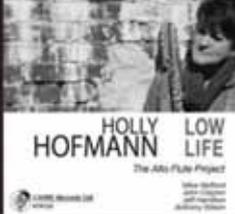


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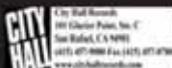
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5. DAVE HOLLAND

Few artists have the breadth and depth to their musical oeuvre that bassist Dave Holland has. With a career that spans half a century, the soft-spoken Brit has been on the ground floor of many modern jazz movements and been a prime catalyst in the advancement of the art form. From groundbreaking solo bass and cello recordings to his seminal work with Miles Davis, Holland developed a playing style that not

only bridged the gap between jazz and rock, but seamlessly created an approach fusing harmonic complexity with an overt melodic sensibility. He continues to win fans and critics over with his latest ensemble project *Prism* (Dare2). Diversity has long been Holland's calling card, and his current release reflects an exciting mix of post-fusion, minimalism and modally based improvisation. —Eric Harabadian

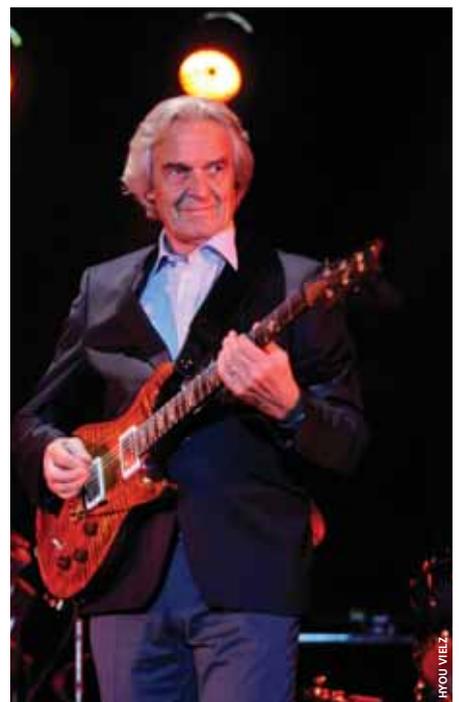
6. KEITH JARRETT

For his 8th birthday, Keith Jarrett received an Everett piano, although he'd also wanted walkie-talkies and an elephant. On many nights young Jarrett slept under the instrument. Fussy, disciplined prodigies don't ever really "grow up"; they evolve. For Jarrett, that means a continuum from his extraordinary side work with the Charles Lloyd Quartet and Miles Davis' groundbreaking fusion groups during the late 1960s through his joining Dewey

Redman, Charlie Haden and Paul Motian in a visionary quartet and then three decades of sublimity in the Standards Trio alongside Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock. After *Facing You* and *The Köln Concert*, his solo masterpieces, the cult of the inward rhapsodist and dazzling improviser grew large. Following his gradual triumph over Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in the new millennium, Jarrett's art brims with joy and healing. —Thomas Staudter

7. JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

While he might not have been the first to combine rock and jazz into a new, scintillating vocabulary, John McLaughlin's indelible stamp is all over such fusion landmarks as Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way*, *A Tribute To Jack Johnson*, *Bitches Brew* and *Live-Evil* as well as Tony Williams Lifetime's *Emergency!* and *Turn It Over*. Those albums, plus his mind-blowing work on *The Inner Mounting Flame* and *Birds Of Fire* by the trailblazing Indo-fusion juggernaut the Mahavishnu Orchestra, have earned him a spot on any list of the greatest jazz guitarists of all time. His



discography includes many more six-string triumphs, from his '80s acoustic Guitar Trio with Paco de Lucia and Al Di Meola and his East-meets-West ensemble Shakti to his organ trio encounters with Elvin

Jones and Joey DeFrancesco, his symphonic *Poets And Thieves* and his current 4th Dimension Band. At age 72, the British-born guitar hero continues to wield his axe like a true avatar. —Bill Milkowski

8. SONNY ROLLINS



MICHAEL JACKSON

DownBeat recently asked Sonny Rollins what he thinks is the coolest thing in jazz today. His response was just as eloquent as one of his tenor sax solos: “I like the fact that jazz is not primarily, as it used to be, dance music. It’s great as dance music. But today it can almost be like art music, and still be jazz. In fact, I was thinking of my friend Wayne Shorter. I heard his current band on his new record [*Without A Net*]. As far as I remember, there’s nothing straightahead, no ‘swinging.’ That kind of stuff is not on there. Yet, it is jazz. I would call it ‘jazz conquers art music.’ Not just Wayne, but that’s what’s going on all over. It’s a lot of broken rhythms. It doesn’t have to be straightahead playing all the way through.

This is much more creative for the musicians. It gives them a chance to really express themselves without having to do whatever you can do within the strictures of time. Having said that, there will be nobody like Elvin Jones. When you’re playing with somebody like Elvin Jones, it’s a pleasure to play in time! But these days, I see a lot of more group improvisation, and this type of thing going on—which is great.

“Wayne’s last record really shows that jazz is supreme. Even when his group, who are all jazz musicians, is playing that type of music—which, for lack of a better name, I would call ‘art music’—they make it jazz. It’s just a different form of jazz. I think jazz has gotten to the point where it can include everything and still be distinctively jazz. That’s a great development. Again, that doesn’t mean that Elvin Jones isn’t Elvin Jones or that Art Blakey isn’t Art Blakey. But let’s say it’s ‘both/and’ now. You can have that great feeling, and the great straightahead players always will be great, of course. But now, someone like Brian Blade, the fellow with Wayne’s group, is playing a lot of stuff that isn’t straightahead, but it’s great.

“Jazz has always been under-funded, under-appreciated, under-advertised. It’s always hard. But the music is so great that it will always be there. It’s like a spirit. You can’t kill jazz. It will always exist.”
—Ted Panken

9. WAYNE SHORTER

The title of Wayne Shorter’s latest quartet album, *Without A Net*, echoes general agreement that the saxophonist and composer has long taken risks and chosen to work with fellow daredevils. A substantial apprenticeship as a sideman with Lee Morgan, Art Blakey and Miles Davis, among others, allowed Shorter to develop his own musical vocabulary and spiritual values outside of John Coltrane’s inescapable shadow. In this demanding context, he learned how to express his individuality with both pen and horn. Whether it’s tunes or solos, you always know when it’s Wayne. He writes unique, original melodies within the same framework that everyone else has been playing in—no easy task. With Weather Report, Shorter crossed over to mass popularity without sacrificing his jazz cred, then actually increased his hipness quotient following guest spots with Steely Dan, Santana, Joni Mitchell, Salif Keita and others. Only the rarest of adventure seekers will re-group at 70 and step back on the high wire, as Shorter has, again and again, for late-career affirmations as an exploring, one-of-a-kind artist.

—Thomas Staudter



JOS L. KNAEPEN

10. PHIL WOODS

From his formative years in Springfield, Mass., until the present day, Phil Woods, 82, has embraced the ethos of the soup-tomats musician. Juilliard-trained and bandstand-tested, he mastered the lead alto saxophone function (he was a first-caller in New York’s thriving studio scene from 1957 until 1967) while developing into a virtuoso improviser with a tonal personality as personal and fully realized as any on the post-Parker alto timeline. Remarkably, despite the emphysema that has afflicted his golden years, Woods projects—as his contemporary Lee Konitz once assessed—his trademark “pizzazz” with skill and accuracy. Even without a microphone, he still fills halls with a rich-as-a-Stradivarius sound. Woods remains, per his self-description, a committed “soldier for jazz,” passing on lessons learned with Dizzy Gillespie, Quincy Jones and Thelonious Monk to successive generations with maximum passion and minimum B.S. Consider his guest spot on *Time Management*, a new release by bassist Kris Berg’s Dallas-based big band, on which Woods addresses Berg’s harmonically suave ballad, “Lifelong Friends,” with ascendent, operatic declamation that can stand with anything in his distinguished canon. “That cat can play!” Miles Davis once remarked of Woods to journalist Ira Gitler, and it still holds true.

—Ted Panken

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Bassist, singer, composer, Grammy winner and inspiration to young women around the world who are now learning to play the upright bass.

16. JASON ADASIEWICZ

Vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz has yet to pull a rabbit out of a hat, but his sleight of hand beats any magician's. During a show at Chicago's Green Mill with his trio, Sun Rooms, Adasiewicz's rapid, four-mallet technique fueled multilayered runs, which he built up from his almost hidden manic footwork: Dancing on the vibrato pedal made the percussive instrument even louder. But more than merely embracing volume, this former drummer's inventive harmonies and challenging rhythms have made his sound a key part of his hometown's constantly burgeoning jazz community.

Adasiewicz adheres to an imperative at the heart of the oldest jazz traditions. "Every song I've written is swinging in four," Adasiewicz said. "There are no odd meters, no straight-eighth groove. I'm always hearing swing and just trying to figure out how to manipulate it and keep it driving."

—Aaron Cohen

17. AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE

Ambrose Akinmusire, that gymnastic sophisticate of a trumpeter, insists that his instrumental mastery is only one part of a grander, more complex story. As heard on his two ambitious Blue Note albums, and in live interactions with his nimble band, the Oakland-bred Akinmusire bedazzles and searches as a player of virtuosic and poetic might, while exploring new personal notions of pluralism in his music, composition and style-stitchery.

His latest album opus bears the poetically elusive yet fitting title *The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier To Paint*, which could function as a mission statement for this spiritually seeking, jazz-rooted and open-minded artist. With recent victories in DownBeat Critics Polls (Trumpet in 2012; Rising Star-Jazz Artist and Rising Star-Trumpet in 2011), he's someone to keep an eye on as his story progresses.

—Josef Woodard



AUTUMN DEWILDE

18. GERALD CLAYTON

We're long past the point of having to make an issue of pianist Gerald Clayton's pedigree. Yes, the celebrated bassist and composer John Clayton is his father and the reedist Jeff is his uncle, but Clayton the Younger has been making his own musical bones for over a decade now. Even as a student in the USC jazz program, he was already showing the maturity to be a bandleader.

Though Clayton is well versed in the history of jazz piano, he's smart enough to not have to show it all the time. He not only has discerning taste, Clayton has a beautiful touch—it can be as soft as a sigh in a monastery or as forceful as a gut-punch. With virtuosi, the tendency is often to fill every measure with as many notes as possible. Clayton knows the value of negative space around his passages.

He's a lyrical player who looks for the pretty notes and doesn't indulge in dissonance for shock value. Clayton probes the keyboard, as though searching for something he hasn't yet found; his



DEVIN BEHAVEN

original material underscores that quest. Clayton takes the audience on a journey that's as new to him as it is to them.

—Kirk Silsbee

19. AMIR ELSAFFAR

Trumpeter Amir ElSaffar was a Beatlemania, gained classical chops and credibility playing blues, bebop, salsa and post-Coltrane improvisation, and then dove into his ancestral past. He's traveled extensively studying Middle Eastern modal traditions, Arabic language and culture, the santoor hammered dulcimer and singing in strictly proscribed makam style. Since 2006, he's worked to integrate elements of all the music he knows, and has arrived at something new. ElSaffar believes his music can and should be for everybody: "There's an audience of listeners ready to expand beyond conventional forms," he says. "It's not about being overly rigorous or intellectually complex. It's about emotion. The idea is to appeal to people on the broadest, most basic level."

—Howard Mandel



20. MARY HALVORSON

Not since the trumpeter Dave Douglas became ubiquitous in the mid-'90s has a jazz musician dominated conversation like guitarist Mary Halvorson. Shortly after moving to New York from Boston, word spread about the young woman with the large Guild hollowbody whose vocabulary included aggressively arpeggiated lines, oddly smeared chords and sudden pitch bends. Being in Anthony Braxton's Diamond Curtain Wall Trio didn't hurt.

Her own trio's debut recording, 2008's *Dragon's Head* (Firehouse 12), was hotly anticipated by outside-leaning guitar fans—just as her hero Jimi Hendrix's *Are You Experienced* was in 1967. Since then, her sound has continued to evolve, and she is beginning to perform solo concerts, covering material by composers as diverse as Ornette Coleman and Oliver Nelson. Her current compositional focus is on pedal



PETER GANNUSKIN

try to challenge myself and expand what I do," she wrote in an email from the road in Western Europe. "There is always something to improve upon and something new to learn."
—James Hale



BART BABINSKI

21. VIJAY IYER

There are only two times per week when it is guaranteed that pianist Vijay Iyer doesn't have a gig or a recording session—when he is commuting to and from his home in New York and his new teaching position at Harvard University. Iyer has been on a hot streak. He won a 2013 MacArthur Fellowship, and he topped five categories of the 2012 DownBeat Critics Poll. In a recent span of six months, he released *Holding It Down: The Veterans' Dreams Project* (Pi), which is an ambitious collaboration with Mike Ladd, and the leader project *Mutations* (ECM), centered around a 10-part suite. He's working on a trio album and a film score to be released by the end of the year. "It's a life in progress," Iyer said while hurtling southbound through New England. "There's definitely a lot of great things going on." That's a light way of putting it.
—Sean J. O'Connell



STEVEN SUSSMAN

22. JULIAN LAGE

One of the outstanding young guitarists on the scene today, 26-year-old Julian Lage has distinguished himself as an impeccable accompanist and inspired soloist with The New Gary Burton Quartet, in the company of six-string elders Jim Hall and Bill Frisell, and in intimate duet settings with guitarist Nels Cline and pianist Fred Hersch. In each situation, Lage's playing is marked by an unerring rhythmic sense, uncanny precision and a pure, unaffected tone on either his Manzer Blue Note archtop or his 1932 Gibson L-5.

"I've always had a kind of allegiance to this pure sound," he said. "To play an acoustic guitar, for me, is the most honest way of playing guitar because you can't hide behind anything. If you don't have that kind of clarity of intention, you get a little sloppy, you miss notes ... it's not pretty. So if I play a note, I like to hear just the note in its entirety with no effects." That quality is evident on Lage's two releases as a leader, 2009's Grammy-nominated *Sounding Point* (Emarcy) and 2011's *Gladwell* (Emarcy), both of which showcase his compositional prowess while revealing a fondness for Americana.
—Bill Milkowski

23. CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

Cécile McLorin Salvant, who turns 25 in August, reminds jazz lovers of the great vocalists of yore even as she puts forth an insouciant individuality. Born in Miami to a Haitian father and French mother, the polyglot charmer won the 2010 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition and can count Wynton Marsalis among her fans.

Her technique is crystalline, her phrasing sensual, her repertoire deep. Moreover, she's at ease with breaking the rules. On her swinging, self-released debut and 2013's more textured *WomanChild* (Mack Avenue), the vocalist echoes prewar stars Bessie Smith, Valaida Snow and Ethel Waters and ventures into songs by Erik Satie, John Lennon and tunes of her own devising. Making the old sound new and the offbeat feel inevitable, she's a jazz songbird for the 21st century.
—Bradley Bambarger



JOHN ABBOTT

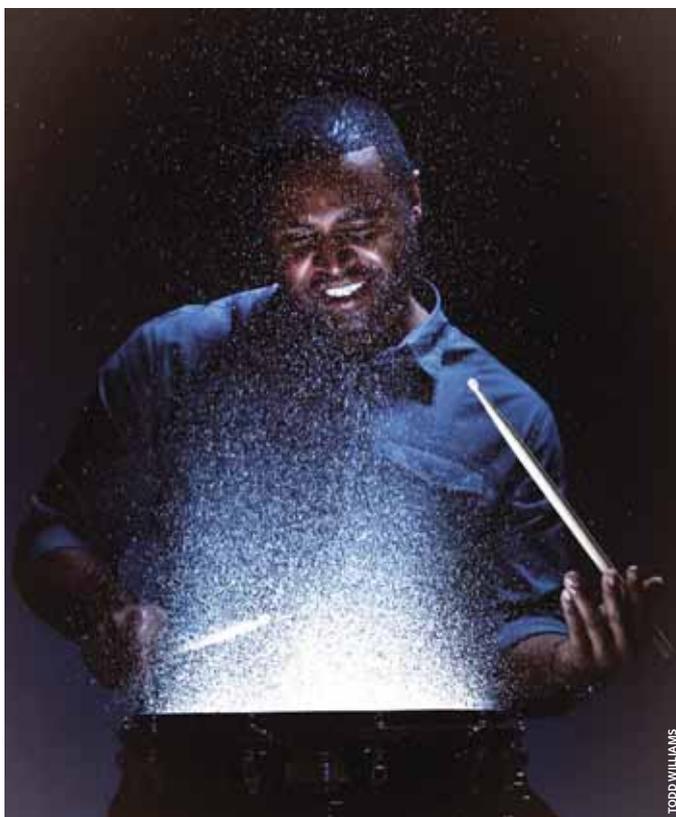
24. GREGORY PORTER

Gregory Porter has been acclaimed as “The Next Great Male Jazz Singer,” and he topped two categories in the 2013 DownBeat Critics Poll: Rising Star–Jazz Artist and Rising Star–Male Vocalist. What is that thing he’s got? Flutist Hubert Laws, who helped discover him, acknowledges the power of the singer’s charisma. Porter is a one-man movement to bring down-home soul back to jazz. Perhaps the best baritone pop or jazz singer of his generation, he also composes great, idiosyncratic songs perfectly suited to his voice. He is the embodiment of a vibe that people had almost forgotten: the romantic, jazz/gospel/r&b balladeer epitomized by Billy Eckstine in the ’40s, Nat “King” Cole in the ’50s, Sam Cooke in the ’60s and Donny Hathaway in the ’70s. Porter has clearly been influenced by all of them but, to his great credit, sounds like none of them—he’s his own man. That could hold him in good stead for the long career he hopes to have. He’s off to an excellent start.

—Allen Morrison



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TODD WILLIAMS

25. KENDRICK SCOTT

Drummer Kendrick Scott’s third and most recent album, *Conviction* (Concord Jazz), points to why he is among the next generation of important jazz artists. His quintet Oracle has become the perfect vehicle for his original, contemporary mix of bop, funk and soulful swing. A sideman with singer Kurt Elling and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, among others, Scott’s trajectory took off in 2003. “For me,” Scott said, “being in Terence Blanchard’s band continues to be a great learning experience. To learn lessons from Art Blakey through Terence has linked me to Blakey’s philosophy of building sidemen into strong leaders. And with Terence’s encouragement, I took on the task of becoming a bandleader [in 2005].”

Scott’s style behind the drums is a rarefied blend of forceful yet supportive playing, resulting in music that can be tender or fierce. “Music, for me, is very cathartic,” he said. “It allows me to fully express my life’s fears, hopes and journeys into the unknown.”

—John Ephland

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EMMA ISLER

32. BROOKLYN

It's very hard to find a musician under 40 who calls Manhattan home—it's simply too expensive. And while popular Manhattan clubs such as The Village Vanguard, Blue Note and The Jazz Standard present both local and international musicians, Brooklyn is the go-to place for experimentation, for breaking fresh ground. The borough's diverse array of clubs is fostering a constantly evolving and rich music culture. Passing the hat at Brooklyn gigs—often in a DIY environment—is increasingly the norm for the creative artist.

"By virtue of Brooklyn's large and diverse jazz population, there are numerous extraordinarily vibrant creative scenes here," said Ohad Talmor, director of the venue SEEDS. "All these musicians come from many different backgrounds, cultures or musical interests and merge together, resulting in this multifaceted musical phenomenon which is unique to Brooklyn."

The result is the richest strain of jazz being created in New York City, heard from artists as diverse as Matt Garrison, Dave Douglas, Antonio Sanchez, Chris Speed, Curtis Fowlkes, Jim Black, Darcy James Argue, Ravi Coltrane, Dan Tepfer, Gilad Hekselman, Jerome Sabbagh, Aaron Parks, Rob Garcia (a member of the Brooklyn Jazz Underground) and Nir Felder—Brooklyn residents all.

Matt Garrison's ShapeShifter Labs is another hotbed of creativity, a larger space that also offers Internet concerts and a record label. Other clubs large and small that cultivate a Brooklyn state of mind: I-Beam Brooklyn, Barbès, Sistas' Place,

Sycamore, Roulette, The Tea Lounge, Douglass Street Music Collective, Sunny's Bar, Glasslands, Silent Barn, Cameo Gallery, Korzo, BAMcfe and The Branded Saloon.

"I-Beam is where you can try anything and put it out into the world," proprietor Bryan Drye said. "The musicians rent the space and keep 100 percent of the door profits. Additionally we have a strong membership that helps pay the bills and who have access to the space as presenters and for rehearsal time. We hope for I-Beam to become a non-profit and present artists in a residency format."

A bar and performance space in Brooklyn's South Slope, Barbès is another venue with a consistently bold schedule.

"We wanted Barbès to be a music incubator," said club founder Olivier Conan. "We were hoping to attract musicians interested in exploring and defining their own style. Brooklyn has been a safe haven in many ways, although this is changing very fast and I don't know what will happen in the next five years. Once Bushwick and East New York [also in Brooklyn] are thoroughly gentrified, it will be time to look for new pastures."

But even as Brooklyn currently provides a setting for wide experimentation and a furnace for melding new ideas, it's not yet created a singular style based on that experimentation. As musicians tour the world, promote gigs on the Internet and play for small audiences (that typically include other musicians), perhaps a sense of place—a scene—is as much a state of mind as a physical location.

Brooklyn native and tenor saxophonist John Ellis poses important questions that address the concept of "scene" as well as broader notions of historical values, economic considerations and the future of jazz itself.

"The whole notion of geographical identity influencing music is breaking down in NYC," Ellis explained. "Also, how has digital connectivity reshaped the notion of regional identity? A 'Kansas City sound,' a 'Chicago style': These were fundamentally different microcosms than what we have today. If style, vocabulary and aesthetics aren't related to regional identity, how do we determine authenticity? What happens when the only way musicians get training is in school, and there is virtually no connection to a continuum that includes older, discerning audiences? How has social media changed the mentality of musicians, and do they make different musical choices because they're [expected to practice] sound-byte self-promotion? Can there be such a thing as a 'scene' when there is no capacity to make money playing live and no engaged local audience?"

New York City is a microcosm of these questions, lived out in the streets every day, year after year. Perhaps in 100 years time, jazz will be the most popular music on the planet, its history cloud-based, its musicians citizens of the universe.

—Ken Micallef

Thank you to the following Brooklyn-based musicians who helped with this article: Ava Mendoza, James Carney, Oscar Noriega, Magos Herrera, Pete Robbins and Nick Sanders.

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Gary Lindsay, faculty mentor

Jazz Arrangement

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Kelly Garner, "East of the Sun"
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33. MANFRED EICHER & ECM

When reached at his office in Munich, ECM Founder and President Manfred Eicher is reminded of the theme of this month's special issue. "Yes, whatever 'cool' is," he replied, philosophically.

In terms of his 45-year-old label, "cool" is having a catalog of nearly 1,400 releases in which every album is identifiable by its distinct cover and even spine. Listeners can also hear a few measures of any given ECM track and peg it as one of Eicher's projects.

Serving in both A&R and production capacities, Eicher has been a champion of improvisational, free and, since 1984, classical music. He continues to introduce audiences to new talent, notably European artists to North American ears.

"Often it has to do with the sessions. I meet people in the studio who are members of bands or a guest on some recording we were doing," Eicher revealed. "I get to know them and their music and invite them back to make their own album."

"For me, it's important to find new and creative musicians who offer some kind of personal statement," he added. "We started with young musicians, like Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, who were not very known in their early years."

Historically, ECM has boasted an impressive roster of guitarists. It released first (and many subsequent) efforts by Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell, John Abercrombie and Ralph Towner.

Pianists are enjoying a renaissance of late. Craig Taborn, Giovanni Guidi, Aaron Parks and Vijay Iyer have all made their ECM debuts as bandleaders since last April.

Colin Vallon is part of the next generation of ECM pianists. The Lausanne, Switzerland, native's first album on the label, *Ruga*, came out in 2011.

"Manfred contacted our former drummer [Samuel Rohrer], who recorded for ECM already with a Swiss singer, Susanne Abbuehl," Vallon said. "He read about a concert we did in Switzerland. It came from out of the blue, which was a nice surprise."

"I was obviously listening to a lot of music from this label already," he continued. "For me, it has this purist quality. The aesthetic was something I liked about it—minimalist and poetic images with very reduced text."

ECM's lineage of pianists was an influence on Vallon, whose trios strike a balance between delicate playing and assertive declarations. In his late teens, he bought a CD of a solo Jarrett concert in Tokyo. He then worked backwards to Jarrett's quartet recordings with Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden and Paul Motian as well as works by Bobo Stenson and Christian Wallumrød and also early Dave Holland and Kenny Wheeler sides.

"ECM has a really strong identity, and I can relate to that in the music I do," he said.

—Yoshi Kato

THE GREAT JAZZ FESTIVALS

34. MOERS FESTIVAL,
MOERS, GERMANY

35. MONTREAL JAZZ
FESTIVAL, CANADA

36. MONTEREY JAZZ
FESTIVAL, CALIFORNIA

37. NEWPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL,
RHODE ISLAND

38. NEW YORK WINTER
JAZZFEST, NEW YORK CITY

39. UMBRIA JAZZ FEST, ITALY

40. FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
DE MUSIQUE ACTUELLE
DE VICTORAVILLE, CANADA



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Bob Mintzer

Soprano Sax
Model **ESS642-GL**

Charlie Gabriel (second from right) and his bandmates in the Preservation Hall Jazz Band play in New Orleans' Preservation Hall.



41. NEW ORLEANS

In the courtyard at Preservation Hall before the first set one recent spring evening, Preservation Hall Jazz Band clarinetist Charlie Gabriel shared a basic yet essential insight.

“I tell everyone around the world,” he said, “You have to go to New Orleans one time in life before you close your eyes to be a *part* of this environment, to really understand this music.”

Like Christians who take communion, New Orleanians celebrate their common devotion to the city’s music culture not by merely listening to it, but by participating in it. On Sunday afternoons, brass bands like the TBC, Hot 8, Stooges and Rebirth take over entire city streets along with the social aid and pleasure clubs and second-line dancers, all of whom sing and shout along with the band on numbers like “Let’s Go Get ’Em” and “Casanova.” On Sunday evenings, Mardi Gras Indians gather in bar rooms around town to practice their chants, moves and thunderous sheets of percussion as onlookers clap along to the beats.

While artists such as Branford Marsalis, Deacon John, Aaron Neville and Trombone Shorty perform at the massive New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the neighborhood streets around the fest fill with young violinists, Maracatu drumming groups and a slew of brass bands, all of

whom play their own version of a soundtrack to the jasmine-scented spring sunsets. Meanwhile, volunteer radio station WWOZ broadcasts live every day from the fest, bringing the marathon music event’s pastiche of jazz, blues, zydeco, rock and pop to those who can’t attend. (Fans around the globe listen to the fest via the WWOZ website.)

Once evening falls on the Crescent City, more music brings more opportunities for listeners to become part of the environment. At donation-only events like Jeff Albert’s Open Ears Music Series, improvising players innovate new sonic concepts on the fly, giving listeners direct and immediate access to their creative process. At Preservation Hall, visitors lean on chipped walls—communing with the spirits of George Lewis’ clarinet, Sweet Emma Barrett’s piano-timed jingle bells and Allan Jaffe’s tuba—while the band onstage, now led by Mark Braud, shares floor space with its audience, eschewing formality in favor of a direct connection with listeners.

The participatory nature of music in New Orleans dates back to the 18th century, when slaves gathered in Congo Square to play drums and other instruments on Sundays. It evolved through jazz funerals that offered mourners a way to channel their grief through a communal celebration of

sound. When the music scene encountered obstacles like the devastation following Hurricane Katrina, the drive to participate in musical culture helped spark social and financial programs designed to ensure the culture’s longevity.

The future looks bright for the next generation of New Orleans music, too. Young players raised on a steady diet of second lines, Mardi Gras parade marching bands, gospel choirs and the music of James Black, James Booker, Professor Longhair, the Neville’s and the Marsalises are now finding their voices through music education resources like Bennie Pete’s Roots of Music program, the Louis Armstrong Summer Jazz Camp, the esteemed jazz program at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) and the Trombone Shorty Music Academy and foundation.

To experience music in New Orleans is to be part of a larger network of connected support that encapsulates all of these elements and more. The common denominator remains the communal belief that live music reigns supreme—and that sustaining it is an all-in proposal.

Or, as Gabriel put it, “New Orleans music will never die as long as we got people that can tap their feet.”
—Jennifer Odell



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RECORD STORES

42. JAZZ RECORD MART, CHICAGO

43. PRINCETON RECORD EXCHANGE, PRINCETON, N.J.

44. AMOEBA, HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, the record store went from a cultural common for all to an eccentric niche. Today it's populated by obsessive collectors out to score an original yellow-label Prestige and nostalgia seekers looking to buy back some mislaid artifact of their adolescence. Today's record store is no longer a slick retail machine, but a kind of museum where the most interesting exhibits are secondhand, sometimes historic, and always for sale. It is among the last frontiers of the unexpected discovery you can actually put in a bag to take home with you. It sounds absurd, but once or twice, when the price was right, I've actually bought an LP I already own just for the pleasure of briefly recapturing being 14 again.

Anyone who hit that age before the 1980s probably remembers the afternoons spent trying to decide which LP to spend that \$4 on. Lust was captive to cash on hand, so a lot of listening energy got concentrated on a few things. It's a frustration that few need endure today. With the Internet and easy file sharing, music for many is now as free as the unseen zeroes and ones they shovel into their hard drives every day. The ritual is gone. The first generation for whom music exists in no manufactured physicality is well upon us.

It's not *all* gone, though. There are still real record stores, such as the Jazz Record Mart in Chicago, the Princeton Record Exchange in New Jersey, and the Grand Central Station of them all, Amoeba Music in Hollywood, where jazz is just one section among many, but still so big it's an

adventure to any explorer. There may be little in terms of content in these places that you probably couldn't grab in the vast bazaar of the cyber world. But the niche of folks you find in one of these stores is after more than mere content. For them the value is in the artifact as well as the art. They want to hold it before they hear it.

The Jazz Record Mart even caters to that ultraniche of collectors, the 78 rpm buyer. The dusty shelves and flaking paper sleeves near the back of the store house the parchment scrolls of jazz history. Here you may find some of the great first editions of the jazz canon. Ellington Victors and Brunswicks of the '20s and '30s, Billie, Basie and Goodman Columbias with Lester Young and Charlie Christian; or maybe a Parker Dial or Savoy or a Miles Capitol. Twelve-inch Commodores and Blue Notes, too. Some of it you'll hear when you walk in. There's always jazz in the air at the Jazz Record Mart. Amoeba has a more modest 78 selection. A Swedish pressing of Bird's "Little Willie Leaps" was recently showcased under glass for \$75. Most are around \$2.

But the main inventory of each of these stores is the CD, DVD and LP. There's new stock too, but it's the used, orphaned and out-of-print oddities that bring in the more interesting customers and give each store its special tang. The Princeton Record Exchange boasts stock of 140,000 items. It casts a fairly wide net beyond jazz, but claims to have a special eye out for the right Blue Note or Prestige pieces when they buy up a collection.

Hollywood being Hollywood, Amoeba claims an inventory of "more than half a million." But who's counting? To walk the concrete floors of its flagship shop on Sunset Blvd. is to enter a music warehouse the size of an airplane hangar. (Amoeba also has stores in San Francisco and Berkley, Calif.) You won't hear any jazz at first. But in the rear of the store, where the piercings and tattoos are less evident, you'll find separate quarters for a major cache of jazz CDs, LPs and 78s.

Bargains? Sure. But each customer seeks his own personal white whale and brings his own private treasure map to the hunt. All value lies in the imagination of the buyer. For some it might be a special Reid Miles or David Stone Martin Blue Note of Clef cover; a red vinyl Brubeck on Fantasy; or a first pressing of some frequently reissued classic. For that you must know the subtle tells that betray authenticity. If you spot a Columbia *Miles Ahead* cover depicting a woman and a boy aboard a sailboat, congratulations: You've hit on a first edition because Davis ordered it changed after the first pressing.

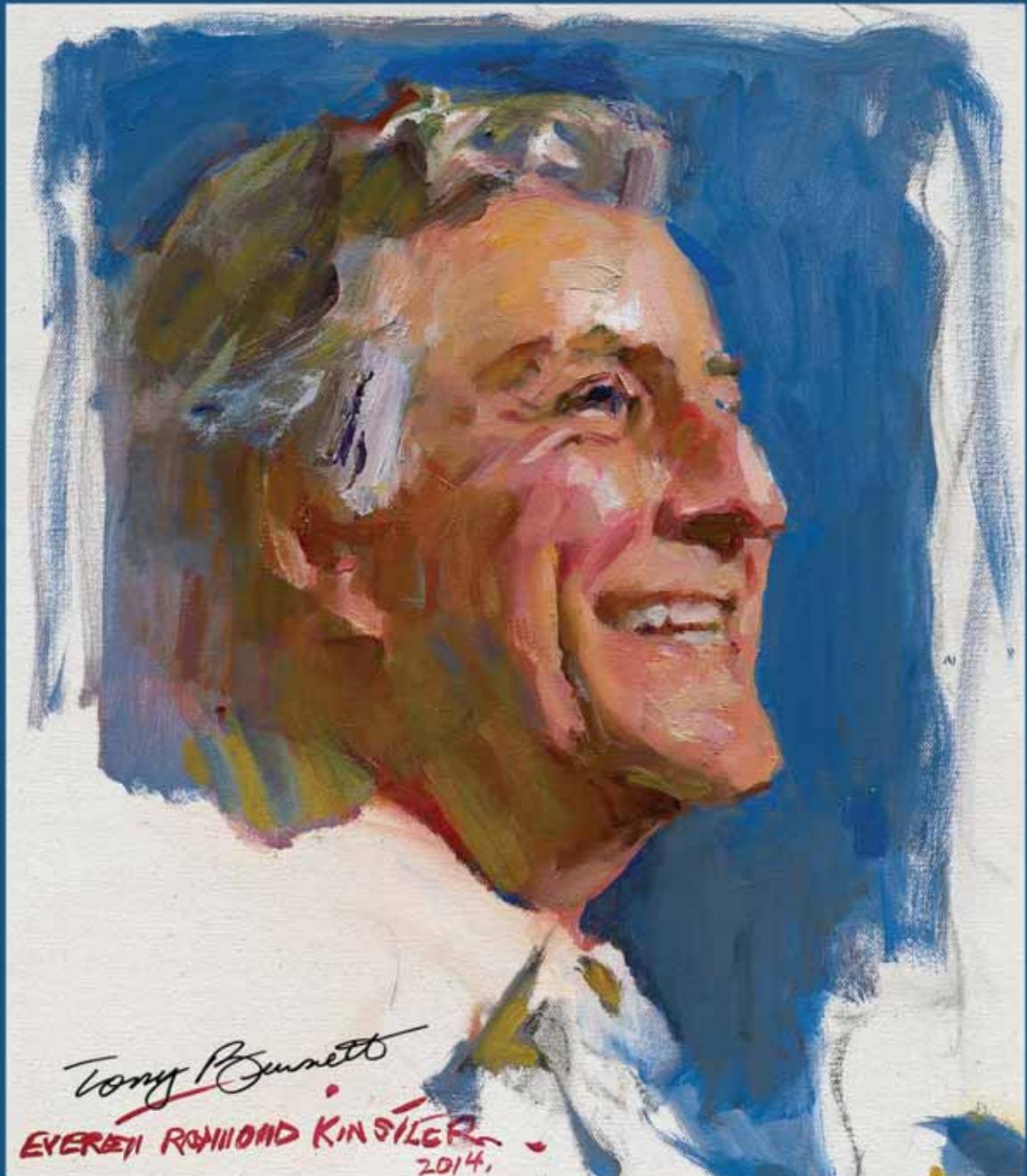
With old turntables scarcer than some records nowadays, though, these iconic 78s and LPs may never again see a needle or stylus. Many will retire to the more passive pastures of *objects d'art*. They will spend the rest of their days on someone's wall, safely inside a 12" x 12" picture frame—something most record stores also sell today, by the way.

—John McDonough



JOHN McDONOUGH

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THE ARTIST AS DIY ENTREPRENEUR

Resourceful jazz musicians have a history of creating their own productions, rather than merely complaining about working on the industry's margins. Charles Mingus, Max Roach and Clifford Jordan started their own labels. Experimental jazz thrived in 1970s New York when Sam Rivers and his colleagues launched the loft scene. Artists' entrepreneurial and collective spirits endure, even while the music and business models continue to evolve.



MICHAEL JACKSON

45. MIKE REED

A dynamic Chicago-based drummer, Mike Reed has woven a sense of personal, and community, investment into his musical vision. His band People, Places And Things has interpreted works from his city's under-recognized composers. He has organized performing opportunities that range from a Sunday night jazz series at the Hungry Brain to the expansive Pitchfork Music Festival in July—and he helps program the Chicago Jazz Festival. Reed also took on a full-time job in owning Constellation, which opened in April 2013 and has hosted such international artists as trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, composer Charlemagne Palestine and the ICP Orchestra. The 75- and 150-seat performance venue also hosts Chicagoans ranging from upcoming trumpeter Marquis Hill to veteran guitarist George Freeman.

"It's not the big challenges; it's all small challenges that add up," Reed said backstage at Constellation. "Like, 'Who's going to vacuum the dressing room?' It's very difficult for me to focus on those small things. I tend to see a larger canvas, like a muralist. But we made a big impact really fast. We've had some legendary people walk through these doors. Some place opens and has a lot of money backing it, but [Constellation] is all based on relationships—a personal email sent, or a personal phone call. It goes back to when I started: My only currency was my relationships with people and their feeling that they could rely on me."

—Aaron Cohen



STEVEN SUSSMAN

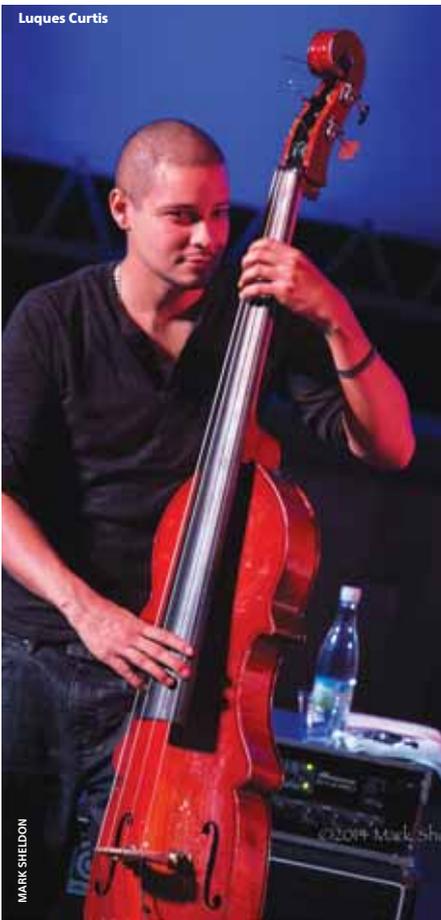
46. SPIKE WILNER

The New York-based pianist Spike Wilner is a partner in the 60-seat Smalls club in Greenwich Village. The room has become one of the rare places in the neighborhood where audiences can pay a low cover and spend the entire night watching an array of top artists from different generations. Wilner started documenting the performances and issued trumpeter Ryan Kisor's disc in January 2010 as the inaugural "Live At Smalls" release. This series of recordings feature musicians ranging from trumpeter Alex Sipiagin and veteran pianist Harold Mabern to unsung bassist Tyler Mitchell.

"The philosophy of the club and SmallsLive is to present the broadest range of talent available," Wilner explained. "Duke Ellington said, 'There's two kinds of music: good and bad,' and we feel the same way. So we present the cutting edge, traditional, masters and modernists." The SmallsLive website includes live video and an audio archive. Wilner offers the musicians a 50-50 split, and ownership of their masters.

"We're giving artists power to own," Wilner said. "The industry is scrambling now, but I'm very realistically running a club. It's a limited economic model, but every night is a master group. We're up against a stubborn, backward environment, but my goal is to make a record a week."

—Aaron Cohen



Luques Curtis

MARK SHELDON



Zaccai Curtis

MARK SHELDON

47. THE CURTIS BROTHERS LUQUES CURTIS ZACCAI CURTIS

Pianist Zaccai Curtis and his brother, bassist Luques Curtis, had a vision for their label, Truth Revolution, which started when they moved to New York from their native Hartford, Conn., in 2005. Zaccai said that such artists as Danilo Pérez and the late Hilton Ruiz convinced them to form their own company, and own their own publishing. The Curtis Brothers present a mix of older

and younger artists on Truth Revolution. Their roster comprises an array of nationalities, from Argentina-born singer Natalie Fernandez to veteran jazz and salsa trumpeter Ray Vega.

“We don’t produce CDs; we help you produce your own CD,” Zaccai said. “We provide information. We get together, talk about it and we do it that way.”

—Aaron Cohen

Jacob Young
Forever Young

Jacob Young guitars
Trygve Seim tenor and soprano saxophones
Marcin Wasilewski piano
Slawomir Kurkiewicz double bass
Michal Miskiewicz drums

Jacob Young
Trygve Seim
Marcin Wasilewski
Slawomir Kurkiewicz
Michal Miskiewicz

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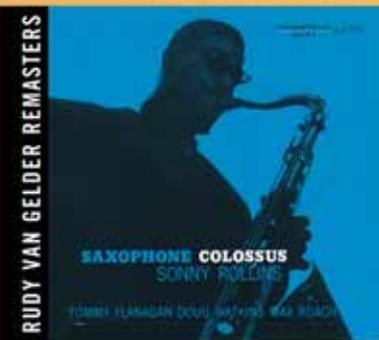
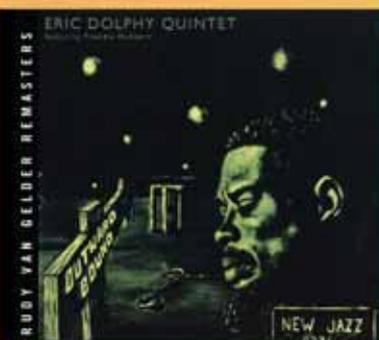
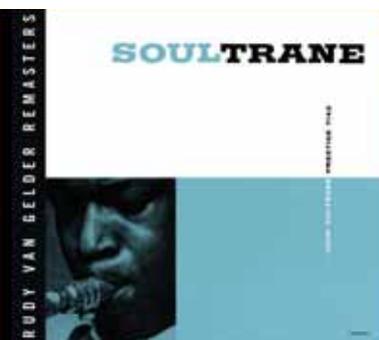
48. DAVE DOUGLAS

Trumpeter Dave Douglas started the label Greenleaf Music after he had topped critics' polls and had been through the experience of recording for a major label. Greenleaf has a different mission than just releasing CDs and downloads. Through its website, listeners can purchase sheet music and listen to podcasts featuring conversations with artists (including saxophonists Henry Threadgill and John Zorn). The results have generated exciting, critically acclaimed projects from Douglas and drummer Rudy Royston, as well as bassists Matt Ulery and Linda Oh. Douglas prefers calling Greenleaf a "music company" rather than "record label."

"As I develop different projects and extend my own vocabulary as a musician, that creates challenges for the company," Douglas said. "But the whole idea is to have a holistic music company that supports a challenging and engaging musical aesthetic. The people who follow us are engaged in an understanding of the meaning of what we do, and that includes our ability to be quick on our feet and adapt to new sounds and new realities." —Aaron Cohen



STEVEN SUSSMAN



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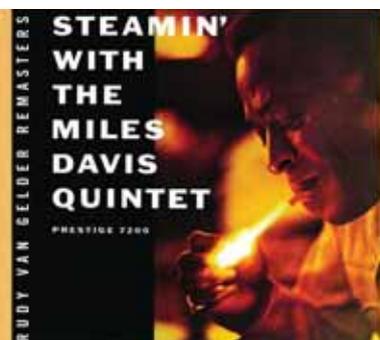
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49. JOHN ZORN

Composer and multi-instrumentalist John Zorn has been a catalyst for a range of experimental music, especially in New York, since the mid-1990s. His Tzadik label emphasizes new compositions, and the company's vast catalog boasts vital discs from a diverse array of experimental musicians, including violinist Jenny Scheinman, multi-instrumentalist Eyvind Kang and percussionist Susie Ibarra. He also owns the East Village non-profit performance space The Stone. It's a small, sparse room and admission is a straight \$15 (discount for students), with all the proceeds going to the performers. Risk-taking is the order of the night, such as the "First Meetings," which present musicians who have never worked together before. On a chilly night last November, reedist Marty Ehrlich performed with drummer Tyshawn Sorey. Had it not been billed as such, there was no reason to guess that this was an initial encounter: Each musician anticipated the other's oblique moves. Such spontaneous conversations have always been a fundamental element of jazz.

—Aaron Cohen



5 REASONS TO LOVE JAZZ RADIO

50. KUVO, DENVER

51. KKJZ, KJAZZ, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

52. WWOZ, NEW ORLEANS

53. WBGO, NEWARK, N.J.

54. REAL JAZZ, SIRIUS XM RADIO

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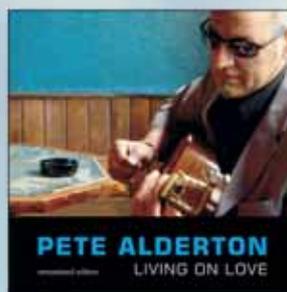
Helge Lien: piano **Frode Berg**: bass
Per Oddvar Johansen: drums



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From left: Steve Hashimoto, Eric Schneider and other players at Chicago's Green Mill



55. THE JAM SESSION

Jazz is a music of the moment, an art form of the unpredictable. So when drummer Richie Morales was asked recently to recall what was most vivid about the scene in late-'70s Harlem—a time before the real-estate speculators moved in and some of the adventure moved out—he did not dwell on rehearsed sets, hip as they might have been. He concentrated on jams.

And he focused not on famous clubs but on a spot at 147th Street and Broadway known as the Gallery. There, Morales, just a kid from the Bronx, mixed it up with a cast that, on any given night, might have included leading Latin lights like pianist Edy Martinez, bassist Guillermo Edgehill and a bevy of name percussionists, including Steve Berrios, Frank Malabe, Francisco “Kako” Bastar and Frank Rodriguez. Ray Baretto, who would later hire Morales, may even have wandered in.

“It was a pretty rough neighborhood at the time, and there was very little money involved,” Morales said. “But what I learned was priceless.”

What he learned formed the basis of an impressive career that has found him playing with everyone from George Russell to the Brecker Brothers to Mike Stern. And while Morales, like many city-bred musicians, has long since decamped to suburbia, his predilection for the jam remains undiminished. One favored spot: the Turning Point, a modest room in pastoral Piermont, N.Y., not far from where he lives.

Piermont is no stone's throw from Harlem, nor is it filled with Harlem's dangerous delights. The Turning Point jams usually end before the Gallery jams would have begun. And the material played rarely strays beyond the precincts of Monk or a Coltrane-inspired original, while the Gallery jammers were literally helping draw the template by which the drum set would be fully integrated into Latin jazz.

But like the Gallery, the Turning Point is the real deal musically. Recent Monday night jams there have found Morales trading places with drummer Eliot Zigmund, who cut his teeth with pianists Bill Evans and Michel Petrucciani; cooking in the rotating house band with bassist Harvie S, known for his associations with both Baretto and pianist Kenny Barron; and entertaining young aspirants, some his students from Purchase College.

The Turning Point recalls the Gallery in another way: No one walks away with much money. Truth be told, jazz for better or worse has historically been less about the money than the music, and that has often been best nurtured in unrehearsed settings, whether at the High Hat Club in prewar Kansas City, where a teenage Charlie Parker legendarily hit the woodshed after being “gonged”; in the cafes of postwar Paris' Saint Germain des Pres, where pianist Bernard Peiffer modernized Django Reinhardt's gypsy jazz; or, in more recent times, in Chicago's South Side haunts, where saxophonists vied to match their sound against Von Freeman's.

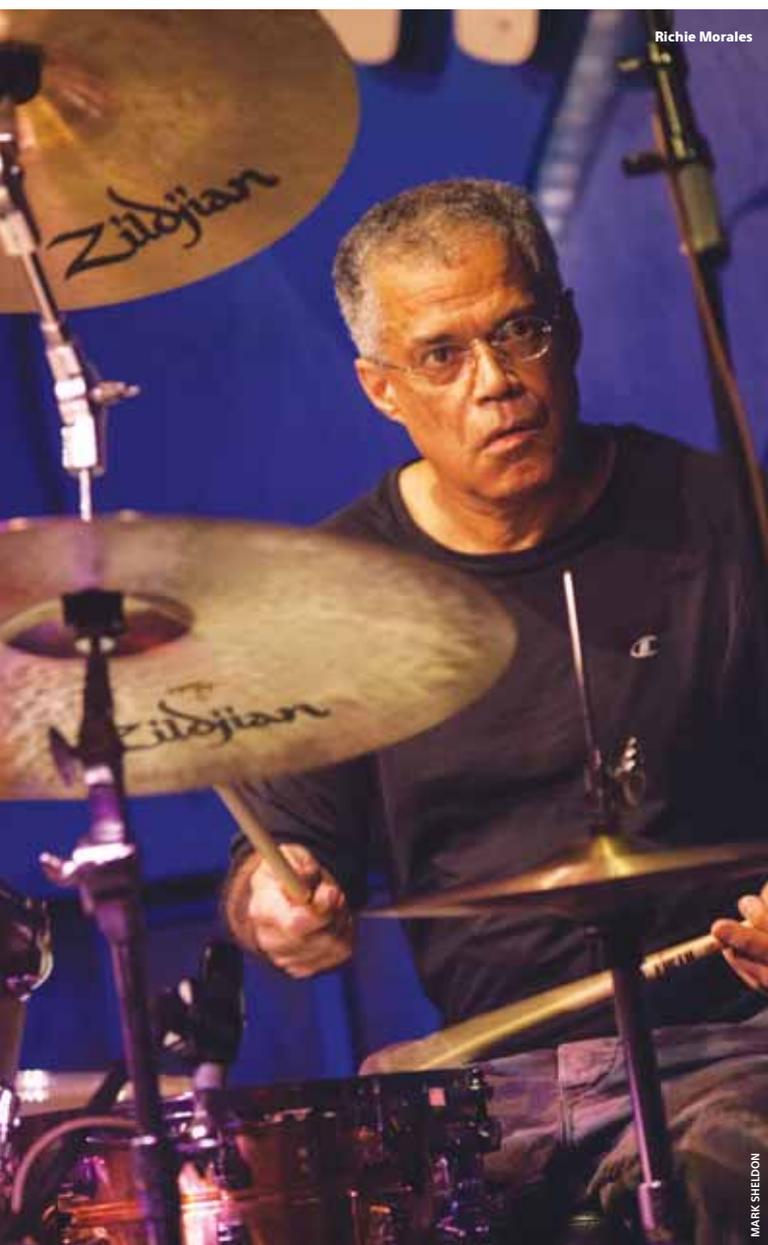
All that Windy City drama came rushing back recently to Steve Hashimoto, the longtime house bassist in the late-night Friday jam at the Green Mill, a ven-

erable Uptown club. Unsurprisingly, Hashimoto said the prospect of a little late-night fun, more than monetary compensation, was what convinced him to help inaugurate the jam in the late '80s. Over the years, the fun has been tempered by some artful challenges, not least those delivered by the formidable avant-gardists from the AACM, who have occasionally shared the stage with jam-leader Eric Schneider, a saxophonist partial to standards.

"They generally don't go the full Art Ensemble of Chicago route," Hashimoto said. "But they will go pretty post-Coltrane."

Known for its aesthetic cross-breeding, the Green Mill scene is an ecumenical one and a rite of passage that attracts its share of young players—sometimes to powerful effect. Hashimoto recounted a night when saxophonist Hank Crawford was nearly moved to tears as guitarist Pat Martino sought to usher a student onstage, conjuring a scene that evoked the apprentice-master relationships of old. Recreating the opportunities such relationships fostered may be the most powerful argument for jams.

At a time when the number of graduates is growing but six-night engagements and three-set nights are on the wane, it is no surprise that so many young players are seeking a few stolen moments with seasoned practitioners, even at out-of-the-way spots like the Turning Point. Nor is it a turn to be denied. Among those players might be a comer who helps advance the music, much as Morales did 30 years ago. —Phillip Lutz



Richie Morales

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56. HAN BENNINK

Several dictionary definitions of “play” apply to the way Han Bennink plays music. When Bennink wields sticks of various sizes to strike a drumkit, or his various body parts, or rounds of cheese on drumheads, or the floor or chair upon which he is sitting, or whatever surface (a garbage can, a cardboard box) comes into his view, he is, of course, “performing on or as if on the stage,” but also “exercising or employing himself in diversion, amusement, or recreation,” “taking part or engaging in a game,” and, sometimes, engaging in what appears to be “undirected, spontaneous or random activity” or “doing something that is not to be taken seriously.” In truth, “serious fun” is a more apropos term for the absurdities that Bennink incorporates when “instant composing” in both solo and ensemble contexts, to which he contributes meticulous technique, flawless time feel, conceptual clarity and a penchant for contextualizing diverse sounds and organizing them within the flow.

Bennink developed his musical language during the '60s, when he propelled numerous Netherlands gigs by American exiles like Johnny Griffin, Dexter Gordon, Don Byas, Ben Webster, Eric Dolphy and J.R. Monterose. By the end of the decade, he had developed ways to integrate swing-to-bop roots with sonic and gestural strategies drawn from John Cage, Fluxus, “New Thing” jazz and African rhythms in encounters with fellow Euro freedom principle avatars—pianist Misha Mengelberg and the music-as-theater Dutch Instant Composers Pool; tenorist Peter Brötzmann’s rage-against-the-machine trio with pianist Fred Van Hove; and guitarist Derek Bailey in various *tabula rasa* configurations. At 72, he’s a *sui generis* figure, his language codified, his creative energies undimmed, still endeavoring, as he told an interviewer last year, “to keep a childish thing inside me.”

—Ted Panken

57. JAKOB BRO

Jakob Bro’s 2013 release, *December Song*, concludes a trilogy of recordings on which alto saxophonist Lee Konitz and guitarist Bill Frisell interpret Bro’s original songs. Here, as on *Time* (2011) and *Balladeering* (2008), Konitz solos with luminous charisma, while Frisell egolessly fleshes out Bro’s spare, mysterious structures, contributing to a two-guitar sound that he describes as an “ocean of strings.” Pianist Craig Taborn and bassist Thomas Morgan carve out their own respective spaces on *December Song*, which, like *Time*, is drummerless. That’s because Bro launched this project hearing the sound of his



STEVEN SUSSMAN

2003–’06 employer, the late Paul Motian, who played on *Balladeering* (and its immediate predecessors, *Pearl River* and *The Stars Are All New Songs*) but is present only in spirit on the final pair of the Konitz trilogy. In *Weightless*, a documentary on the making of *Balladeering*, Konitz marveled at the

36-year-old Danish guitarist’s ability “to pull off something so simple.” He tried to categorize, but found it impossible to do so. “It’s not folk music,” he said. “It’s not jazz. It’s not pop music. It’s not funk. Jakob has no words for it.”

—Ted Panken

58. PETER BRÖTZMANN

“The saxophone is just a pipe with some holes, and the air inside it has to vibrate for the pipe to make the sound,” Peter Brötzmann said in 2004. “What I like is when that feeling really is getting out of the horn.” Now 73, Brötzmann, a founding father of European free improvisation a half-century ago, continues to blow with undiminished force. His sound—evocative of the bellows deployed in the metallurgical factories of Wuppertal, the Westphalian city he has called home since moving there in 1958 to attend art school—is as startling today as it was in the late '60s and early '70s, when such records as *Machine Gun* and *Balls* expressed the primal emotions that animated politically radicalized Germans of his generation furious at their fathers for complicity in and refusal to discuss the depredations of World War II. “As a young man, you have to fight against that,” Brötzmann said.



MICHAEL JACKSON

“That’s why our early music was much more violent than in other European countries.” Himself inspired by such tenor avatars as Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Rollins and Albert Ayler (whom he heard in Heidelberg in 1961) and by the anything-goes example of Fluxus artist-musician Nam-June Paik (a Wuppertal resident at the cusp of the '60s), Brötzmann “worked hard” at finding techniques with which to calibrate a raw, over-tone-saturated tonal analog to his “wish for freedom and justice.” He is not inclined to tamp the fires. “There’s no reason to cool down and play nice music for the people,” he stated last year. “I see what’s happening around the world, and I can’t sit back and say everything is fine. There’s still a lot of rage in me. Of course, we had to learn that we won’t change the world. But whenever I go, it’s been my experience that I can open minds, make people see things from another point of view. That keeps me going, in a way.”

—Ted Panken



STEVEN SUSSMAN

59. HIROMI

“Playing standards is like trying to cook the world’s best tiramisu or my own cheesecake,” says pianist Hiromi Uehara, known professionally by her forename. “But playing my original compositions is like trying to cook something that never existed in the world—like trying to find my own recipe.” Hiromi has offered 90 or so bespoke “recipes” on a string of 10 leader CDs that launched in 2003 with *Another Mind*, which sold 100,000 units in Japan, where she was born in 1979. Now an international star, she continues to refine her craft, as is palpably clear on this year’s *Alive* (Telarc), featuring her working trio with bassist Anthony Jackson and drummer Simon Phillips. The new album is “jazzier” than

some of her earlier work. As always, the nine pieces are inexorably melodic and episodic; each evokes a place, a feeling, an environment. She sculpts her lines with heady counterpoint, modernist dissonance, impressionist harmonies, bebop and the blues, and interprets them with virtuoso dexterity, independence, articulation and touch, incorporating the piano’s full registral and dynamic range to convey the emotions in play. She addresses the trio like a miniature orchestra in which the instruments switch roles at different points. “I always see visuals when I compose, and I like to have a story and plot,” Hiromi says. “Music comes from experiences. I try to write every single day.”

—Ted Panken

60. INSTANT COMPOSERS POOL

Pianist-composer Misha Mengelberg, 82, who co-founded the ICP (Instant Composers Pool) Orchestra midway through the '70s with drummer Han Bennink, suffers from the ravages of progressive dementia, and, more often than not, has been unable to participate in ICPO activities in recent years. While beatmaster Bennink might be described as ICPO's heart and soul, Mengelberg has famously functioned as its brain. The pianoless edition misses his conceptual mischief and ingenious subversions; his penchant for inventing games to maneuver the individualistic and sometimes contrarian tonal personalities of ICPO's personnel; his distinctive harmonic sensibility; his mastery of the lexicons of Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Herbie Nichols, free-jazz, the Euro-canon from Bach to Stockhausen, and various Dutch vernacular streams.

Mengelberg began to conceptualize and apply instant composition techniques to real-time performance-sculpting midway through the '60s, when he, Bennink and saxophonist-composer Willem Breuker organized ICP's first iteration. Breuker would leave to follow his own more curated path, but Mengelberg—as documented on two



dozen recordings on ICP's namesake label since 1979—continued to refine his ideas until his illness. Minus Mengelberg, ICPO's members (saxophonists-clarinets Ab Baars, Tobias Delius and Michael Moore, trombonist Wolter Wierbos, trumpeter Thomas Heberer, violinist-violist Mary Oliver, cellist Tristan Honsinger, bassist Ernst

Glerum and drummer Bennink), who now contribute the lion's share of ICPO's repertoire, continue to refract his aesthetics in their own argot. If these modern masters can coalesce around a common animating principle, ICPO will be well-positioned to entertain and provoke its international fan base indefinitely into the future.—Ted Panken

61. ENRICO RAVA

“It’s important for me to be able to change the music every night,” Enrico Rava said in 2011, when he was 72. “Playing has to be a pleasure. If I get bored, I stop.” This sentiment is apropos to the Turin-born trumpeter’s determination to frame his voice in as many contexts as possible. Rava’s originals encompass lyrical arias, noirish ballads, tangos, tarantellas, free-bop and the blues, propelled by grooves drawn from the lexicons of Brazil, New Orleans, North Africa and swing. He is as diverse in his associations as his references, recruiting the best and brightest of Italy’s Generation X’ers and Millennials into his quintet, drawing improvisational inspiration from their fresh approaches. One member was piano virtuoso Stefano Bollani, whose simpatico with Rava was documented on several serious-fun duo dates, and a transcendent trio with Paul Motian. Most recently, Rava took another left turn with *On The Dance Floor* (ECM), a Michael Jackson project featuring kinetic arrangements that sound like Nino Rota meets the Dirty Dozen and Lester Bowie’s Brass Fantasy. “I’ve listened to a lot of music in my life, not just jazz,” Rava said. “Somehow I metabolize these things, and eventually—deliberately, very slowly—it comes out some day.”

—Ted Panken



62. OMAR SOSA

Omar Sosa’s *Real Life* (Otá), by his New Afro-Cuban Quartet, is the 48-year-old pianist’s 26th recording since 1996. As on the previous 25 (most recently *Eggun: The Afri-Lectric Experience*, an extended rumba for Miles Davis comprising Sosa’s refractions of *Kind Of Blue*), Sosa—a product of Havana’s Escuela Nacional de Música and Instituto Superior de Arte, where he majored in percussion and received thorough training in the European canon—constructs an artistically and spiritually cohesive ancient-to-future narrative, organizing traditional musics of various Afro-diasporic tributaries with harmonic and orchestral ingenuity, and deploying real-time electronics to illuminate the spiritual connections that his raw materials evoke in the functional contexts that gestated them. A native of Camagüey who served as musical director for vocalists Vicente Feliú and Xiomara Laugart during the late '80s, Sosa began these investigations—and his solo career—after leaving Cuba in 1993. Not a florid virtuoso in the manner of Cuban pianistic idols Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, the Barcelona resident follows Davis’ example in using space and proportion to say his piece. “When you have a strong limitation, you need to develop your own language,” Sosa says. “You can impress people with a lot of notes, or with silence—or with passion.”

—Ted Panken



THE GREAT JAZZ INSTITUTIONS

The Harlem Renaissance Orchestra performs at Jazz At Lincoln Center on Dec. 31, 2012



63. JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

When friends and family from back home in Southern California come to visit Ted Nash in New York, the saxophonist usually takes them to see his workplace: Jazz at Lincoln Center. If the band Nash belongs to—the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra—is playing, his visitors can hear them in the 1,230-seat Rose Theater, a room that JALC Executive Director Greg Scholl calls “the quietest space in New York” because it was built as a box suspended in a box, so it’s isolated from all the noise inside the Time Warner Center as well as outside it.

Or, if the orchestra isn’t performing, Nash might take his visitors to a concert in the 480-seat Appel Room (formerly the Allen Room). Sitting in the stadium seating, Nash’s friends can look over and behind the heads of the musicians on stage to the 50- by 90-foot window that resembles a giant windshield driving the audience across Columbus Circle and into the southeast corner of Central Park. “The sound in there is the best of any room I’ve ever been in,” Nash says. “You don’t need much amplification to hear everyone on stage.”

If both those rooms are quiet on a particular night, the 140-seat Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola hosts two or three sets every night, and it too boasts a big window where the moon rises during the first set on certain nights of every month. There are always interesting exhibits in the atrium and corridors between the venues.

“Right now, for example, we have a Dave Brubeck exhibit with artifacts such as his glasses and sheet music, and we host the Nesuhi Etergun Jazz Hall of Fame,” says Scholl. “Next year we’ll begin a new construction project to transform those spaces to create more display space and an actual Hall of Fame with more meat to it. When that’s done, you won’t be able to visit any of our spaces and not interact with jazz.”

It’s harder for Nash to give his visitors a sense of JALC’s other activities: the jazz education, jazz archives and jazz advocacy that take up the majority of the organization’s time and budget. But it’s this combination of activities, he argues, that makes the center so unique. There are other great jazz venues in New York—and great college jazz

departments and jazz libraries, too—but having them all under one roof where one reinforces the other makes a big difference.

“The highlight of each year for me,” Nash says, “is Essentially Ellington, when 15 high school jazz bands come to Jazz at Lincoln Center. We’ve created this huge archive of Ellington scores that we can give to these students. Each member of the orchestra becomes a mentor for one of the bands and helps them get ready for the competition. At the first rehearsal, when we tell them, ‘You have to deal with the dynamics here, and you have to play with a lot of joy in that section there,’ you can see their eyes and ears just open up as they start to ‘get it.’ It reminds me of myself as a teenager when I first got excited about jazz.”

“That’s the best weekend,” Scholl agrees. “To have the building overrun by hundreds of high school kids, all talking about jazz, to hear Wynton Marsalis and Ron Carter arguing about who should get the best soloist award, as if it were a Grammy. It makes me feel optimistic about the future of this music.” —*Geoffrey Himes*

64. THE MONK INSTITUTE

The Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition is recognized as being one of the most prestigious events of its kind, helping to launch the careers of Joshua Redman, Ambrose Akinmusire, Aaron Parks, Tierney Sutton, Marcus Roberts, Gretchen Parlato and many more. As a participant in 2008, I witnessed the incredible amount of work that goes on behind the competition firsthand, but there is a lot more to the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz than just this annual gala. Its primary mission is *education*. The institute, based in Washington, D.C., continually reaches out to students and fans through its various programs in venues and classrooms around the globe.

At the collegiate level, the institute offers a fully funded master's degree through UCLA for several handpicked students. Graduate and in-demand pianist Helen Sung learned an immense amount during her tenure there. "I can't think of another program where you would get such personalized attention, focused experiences and access to the best teachers," she said. Her class did a worldwide State Department-sponsored tour with Wayne Shorter, and because of connections she made there, she has performed with Clark Terry, T.S. Monk and Ron Carter.

The institute also sponsors 11 performing arts high school jazz programs around the country, sending prominent artists to lead master classes and guide constantly evolving jazz pedagogy. Its innovative Peer-to-Peer program focuses on



Monk Institute Chairman Herbie Hancock looks on as Kris Bowers, winner of the 2011 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition, plays at a concert celebrating the institute's 25th anniversary at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

STEVE MUNDINGER/THELONIOUS MONK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ

gifted high school musicians, pairing them with such artists as Antonio Hart and Bobby Watson to present *informances* and "360 degree" teaching and learning. "Combos comprising some of the most advanced, artistic and creative teenage musicians in the country go on national tours with acclaimed jazz artists, learning from them while they, in turn, teach their peers in high schools across the nation," said Dr. J.B. Dyas, the institute's vice president for education and curriculum development.

To extend its outreach, the institute has created the online resource jazzinamerica.org. Here, a highly organized, animated and educational look

at both the history of jazz and how it can be connected to economic, social and political contexts in America can be found. The institute is also the leading coordinator for International Jazz Day. Through its relationship with UNESCO, for which Herbie Hancock—the institute's chairman—serves as International Goodwill Ambassador, nearly a billion people in 196 countries worldwide are reached through educational programs, live performances and media coverage.

This year's Thelonious Monk Competition focuses on the trumpet and will take place on Nov. 8–9 in Los Angeles. Applications are due Sept. 5 and are available at monkinstitute.org. —Jon Irabagon

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The SFJAZZ Collective performs in the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco: Warren Wolf (left), Edward Simon, Robin Eubanks, Avishai Cohen, David Sánchez, Matt Penman, Miguel Zenón and Obed Calvaire

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65. SFJAZZ

When reflecting on what makes SFJAZZ cool, it's natural to default to its 18-month-old SFJAZZ Center.

The three-story building's attributes read like impressive stats on the back of a trading card: The \$64 million dollar project is famously the first free-standing building dedicated to jazz, with a 700-seat main auditorium, a 100-person capacity concert/multi-use space, administrative offices and a restaurant-bar.

But, just as baseball teams have discovered, a glistening new ballpark—or, in this case, music venue—is ultimately only as successful as the talent it presents.

SFJAZZ continues to be cool in this regard, too. Its home team, the all-star SFJAZZ Collective octet, is going into its 11th year. The organization's first set of resident artistic directors (Miguel Zenón, Bill Frisell, Regina Carter, John Santos and Jason Moran) just completed their two-year term, performing bi-annual four-night residencies. And the regular programming continues to be impressive and adventurous after 31 years.

"The hall is the facilitator," says Randall Kline, SFJAZZ founder and executive artistic director. "It allows everything to happen."

It has also provided a permanent home base for the SFJAZZ High School All-Stars, which in late March won its second consecutive Conglomerate Big Band Award at the 2014 Next Generation Festival in Monterey, Calif.

To date, perhaps the most discussed event at the new center is Moran and his Bandwagon group (plus guitarist-skater Jeff Parker) backing live skateboarding last May. Seats were removed and a custom half-pipe was assembled on the dance floor for 10 skateboarders to showcase their considerable skills. The event was so successful that Moran and SFJAZZ rebooked it, sans Parker, for two nights this June.

Moran's other residency dates have included piano-vocal duo shows with Cassandra Wilson (only the second time they'd performed together in that format) and his wife, opera singer Alicia Hall-Moran; as a member of trumpeter Ralph Alessi's quartet; and solo on a double bill with pianist Randy Weston and saxophonist Billy Harper.

"It's an evolution of what we've done," Kline concludes. Presenting music year-round instead of seasonally, "Now, every four nights is like a mini-festival."

—Yoshi Kato



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THE GENRE BENDERS



66. THE BAD PLUS

The Bad Plus has long been recognized for successfully integrating its brainy jazz compositions with more accessible rock grooves. Now the New York-based trio has broken new ground with its daring interpretation of composer Igor Stravinsky's score for *The Rite Of Spring* (Sony Masterworks). —Davis Inman



67. PEDRITO MARTINEZ

Percussionist-vocalist Pedrito Martinez is taking Afro-Cuban music to new heights, mixing jazz, funk, rumba, gospel, flamenco and other styles into an undeniably infectious sonic brew. His quartet's new album, *The Pedrito Martinez Group* (Motéma), features guest spots from a couple of players you might have heard of: Wynton Marsalis and John Scofield. —Davis Inman



68. MEHLIANA

Throughout his career, pianist-keyboardist Brad Mehldau has pulled from the rock and pop songbooks of such diverse artists as The Beatles, Radiohead, Nick Drake, Paul Simon, Oasis and Soundgarden. His new Mehliana project with drummer Mark Guiliana—documented on *Taming The Dragon* (Nonesuch)—is a head-on collision with woozy electronica, spoken-word segments, dreamscapes and ambient music. —Davis Inman



69. TROMBONE SHORTY

Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews has quickly risen to the top of the New Orleans brass-band hierarchy, bringing his soulful, funky chops to mainstream audiences around the world. A major draw on the festival circuit, the trombonist-trumpeter-vocalist's new album, *Say That To Say This* (Verve), was co-produced by r&b star Raphael Saadiq and pushes even further into jazz-meets-arena-rock territory. —Davis Inman

71. MEGHAN STABILE

If you've kept up with the New York jazz scene during the past few years, you've noticed the work of concert producer Meghan Stabile and her Revive Music Group. Though known for combining jazz with hip-hop, Revive is in search of just one thing from its artists, according to Stabile: "Really great music."

Stabile has put together shows for Roy Ayers, Pete Rock, Mos Def and the Robert Glasper Experiment, as well as Iqmar Thomas' Revive Big Band—a group that embodies the merging of genres.

"Our focus is to just be that place where people can go to... see the most ridiculous live concert," says Stabile. "They know they're going to be exposed to music they've never seen before. Or artists that they never knew existed."

In the future, Stabile intends to expand beyond the Big Apple.

"New York is our home, and New York will always be present [in Revive], but I know that part of what this is [involves] giving it to the world," says Stabile. "So that's gonna be the next step."

With her finger on the pulse of jazz and hip-hop, as well as her role as an executive producer for Blue Note Records, Stabile is an industry star on the rise. —Brad Farberman

70. SNARKY PUPPY

The members of Snarky Puppy originally came together as college students in Denton, Tex., but now the Brooklyn-based group wows audiences all over Europe and recently won a Grammy in the category of Best R&B Performance for the song "Something" featuring vocalist Lalah Hathaway. Expect to sweat at a Snarky Puppy show because you won't be sitting still for long. —Davis Inman





MICHAEL JACKSON

72. BLUE NOTE RECORDS

Except for a five-year hiccup in the late 1970s into the early '80s, Blue Note Records, celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, has consistently been the most prominent label in the jazz world. In its heyday of the 1950s and early '60s, jazz aficionados would buy a Blue Note album (distinctive in its trademark cover art) because of a trust factor: They knew the music would be top-drawer and no doubt adventurous even if they didn't know who the artist was.

That was the fulfillment of the goal set by label founder Alfred Lion, who in 1939 launched Blue Note with a pair of boogie-woogie pianists, Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis. It was an unlikely challenge for an upstart indie given that swing was the music of the day. But undeterred, Lion sketched out his mission in a brochure, emphasizing "uncompromising expressions" of "any particular style of playing that represents an authentic way of musical feeling." He sought to steer the label to "possess its own tradition, artistic standards and audience that keeps it alive."

Hearing the beat of bebop eclipsing the big band swing era, Lion offered Thelonious Monk his first home and assembled a group of session musicians that would soon spawn the Jazz Messengers, originally founded by Art Blakey and Horace Silver. Soon there was a flood of titanic talent including Dexter Gordon, Wayne Shorter, Joe Henderson, Herbie Hancock, Bobby Hutcherson and Freddie Hubbard, among many others.

Blue Note even became the home of hit songs that crossed over onto the pop charts, including Hancock's highly grooved hard-bop-meets-r&b "Watermelon Man" in 1962, Lee Morgan's 1963 boogaloo beauty "The Sidewinder," Silver's sub-

lime gem "Song For My Father" in 1964 and Lou Donaldson's funky "Alligator Bogaloo" in 1967.

Because of financial constraints and Lion's failing health, Blue Note began its decline at the time when soul, funk and fusion infiltrated the label's sound in the '60s and '70s. After a series of deals where the imprint was sold and shifted to different parent labels, it magically revitalized via EMI in 1984 under the supervision of Bruce Lundvall. He revisited the original Lion vision and spirit "to document all the important stylistic movements within the music as conceived and performed by the foremost jazz artists of the time."

That Lundvall did, signing on veterans as well as introducing important new talent ("originals," as his mentor John Hammond had taught him), including today's label mainstays such as Joe Lovano, Jason Moran, Robert Glasper, Ambrose Akinmusire and Norah Jones.

With Lundvall serving as chairman emeritus and Don Was taking over the helm as president, what's in store for Blue Note? "The future is in line with the past," Was says. "It started with Alfred Lion pushing the threshold of the music, with every innovative step. Blue Note changed the face of jazz through 30 years. Artists who may have seemed to be radical signings at the time, from Monk to Cecil Taylor, are now seen as the normal path of jazz."

Was has championed the legacy—bringing back to the fold onetime Blue Note heroes (including Wayne Shorter, Bobby Hutcherson and Kenny Burrell), expanding the beyond-jazz camp with artists such as singer-songwriter Rosanne Cash and indie rock-soul band Vintage Trouble, and

nurturing such jazz-infused hybrid-genre stars as Glasper and vocalist-songwriter José James. "You honor the future by breaking down barriers and taking risks," Was says. "The Blue Note way is to be endemic to the core of jazz changing. You don't play the same thing every night. You improvise every night. You keep pushing forward. Look at Wayne and his quartet, they're pushing the threshold every night. Wayne would rather drink poison than re-do himself from the past."

Glasper, who has the potential to be "the next link in the chain," according to Was, believes that Blue Note is the perfect fit for him. "It's a privilege and honor to be here, being part of a major lineage of great music, great thinkers and visionaries," Glasper says. "At first it was a little scary, but Bruce made it easy. I went to his office to let him know my thoughts. He told me to stop. He said, 'You're the artist, you do what you need to do. My job is to sell it.' That let me be free, which probably wouldn't have happened at another label."

"I agree with Robert," says James, a Was signing whose second album for Blue Note is the electric guitar-charged *While You Were Sleeping*. "We were given a lot of freedom. The artist comes first, and Don understands that because he's an artist himself. He understands. So I've been able to incorporate lots of different genres and expand myself as a composer, a bandleader."

As for the leadership changeover, Glasper, who won a Grammy for best r&b album for his genre-defying 2012 *Black Radio* album, says that Was is perfect for the label. "Don wants Blue Note to compete now," he says. "Blue Note always wins when it comes to jazz. Now, we have the chance to go down some other lanes, too." —Dan Ouellette

ART BEYOND ADVERSITY



73. FRED HERSCH

Some nominal courage is necessary to embark on a career path as an artist, where self-confidence and resolve may be tested for an undetermined number of years. Another kind of courage altogether is required to face public scorn and fear of death, however, especially knowing that real pain very well may accompany any personal triumphs. No one in the jazz world knows this better than Fred Hersch, pianist and composer extraordinaire, HIV/AIDS survivor, and unstoppable professional.

A flurry of new recordings (10 titles since 2009), a multimedia stage production and tour dates around the world confirm Hersch's recent assertion that, despite all he's been through, he's now at the height of his powers. After regaining his strength from a two-month long coma in 2008, "Something loosened up and released inside of me, so now I always feel great about playing," Hersch said. "I'm less fussy, too, more willing to let it rip." The mind-bending intricacy of exquisitely entwined improvisations and stellar renderings on duo recordings with trumpeter Ralph Alessi, clarinetist Nico Gori and guitarist Julian Lage, a double trio project with Benoît Delbecq, plus "Floating," a new studio offering with trio-mates John Hébert and Eric McPherson, proves that this creative artist has finessed an easy 88 answers for adversity.

"When my first CD was released 30 years ago, I had just received my HIV diagnosis and felt that a cloud was hanging over me," said Hersch. "I felt every recording I made had to be great because it could be the last. In time, I just began to trust myself. When I came out as a musician with HIV/AIDS, I saw that a moment had been handed to me. Those were really dark days in the HIV community, before a cocktail of drugs was discovered that could save lives. But I decided, as an artist, to let people know who I am, and not compartmentalize my life."

Through recordings and performances, Hersch became a key fundraiser for HIV/AIDS awareness projects, and the go-to guy for other musicians needing help with HIV/AIDS and gender identity issues. "Musicians who stay in the closet pay a steep price," Hersch said. "They suffer personally, and their music suffers, too. My situation has shown me the power of music to move people, and I don't ever want to lose sight of that fact. Since nearly dying in 2008, music has become even more important to me. Everything I play now is really felt."

Another stage production is in the works, Hersch explained. He was between gigs on a tour of the U.S. Northwest and getting ready for a summer full of concerts. Although he takes 34 pills every day, he said, "I won't let my illness control my life."
—Thomas Staudter

74. JAZZ FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Wendy Oxenhorn rarely refers to the Jazz Foundation of America as an organization, preferring to call it a family. "Whatever the need is, we don't treat it bureaucratically," she says. "We treat it as if this was our grandfather or our brother. We've really become family to the people who have made the way for everybody in America's music."

Since its founding in 1992, the JFA has provided assistance to countless jazz and blues musicians in times of medical and financial crisis. The group offers pro bono medical care to uninsured musicians through a network of physicians, specialists and dentists who donate their services at minimal or no cost and through a partnership with Englewood Hospital and Medical Center's Dizzy Gillespie Memorial Fund. They also provide housing and emergency assistance for artists facing eviction or in need of living expenses.

The JFA now handles over 6,000 cases a day with a budget approaching 3 million dollars. They raise funds in part through their annual gala benefit, "A Great Night in Harlem," at the Apollo Theater.

One of the JFA's most recent success stories has been Clark Terry. For the past seven years, the organization has provided financial assistance and a home health aide, which has allowed the trumpet great to remain at home with his wife, Gwen, during a lengthy illness.

"Had the Jazz Foundation not stepped in, I don't know what the fate of people like Elvin Jones, Abbey Lincoln, Odetta and Freddie Hubbard would have been," says Oxenhorn, JFA vice-chairman and executive producer. "It's a beautiful history when we're able to turn around the end of someone's life so that it doesn't end tragically."
—Shaun Brady

75. BOB BELDEN

Bob Belden has seen the ups and downs of a jazz life in New York City. The saxophonist, composer, arranger and producer has won polls, Grammy Awards and accolades by the bushel, but also suffered the vagaries of debilitating illness and financial strife that so often come with that life, or just life in general.

None of it stops Belden, 57, from dreaming bigger than most humans do, and in the face of daunting odds, somehow pulling off these dreams. He's moved beyond simply recording music, now immersing his work with film, theater and art.

"I have no real interest in making CDs anymore," Belden said. "I want to make live IMAX movies; take the presentation of jazz out of the 19th century."

In 2012, Belden took his band, Animation, to London to test an idea. He created a live IMAX-style music and visual presentation whereby the album *Transparent Heart* became "an electronica science fiction film noir suite." He sees it as the next logical step in jazz: "As a band, we improvise these visual and aural projections the same way traditional jazz musicians would play chord changes."

He wants to create a noir murder mystery set at the historic jazz club The Royal Roost when Miles Davis' *Birth Of The Cool* band was playing. He calls the project a "complete electronica noir hallucination," wherein original music, archival samples, spoken word, vocalization and visuals are recorded in surround sound.

And proving that jazz has no boundaries, Belden's latest work-in-progress is to go to Iran with Animation to create a multi-media collaborative project with Iranian musicians, filmmakers and visual artists.

And to that, we say, keep dreaming, Mr. Belden. We need you.
—Frank Alkyer

FREEDOM

We pay tribute to the experimenters, the agitators, the avant-garde artists who embody the freedom of jazz.



76. TONY MALABY

Ask Tony Malaby about freedom and you'll get a long, thoughtful response that grapples with its social and technical dimensions, followed by the admission, "Freedom is so paradoxical." One aspect of that paradox is that he is a formidably accomplished soprano and tenor saxophonist with enviable tone and an endless font of compelling ideas, yet he steers his music away from perfection. Another is that he favors the company of highly accomplished musicians like John Hollenbeck, William Parker and Ben Monder, but asks them to embrace an "aesthetic of not knowing." Malaby uses a variety of settings—the tightly arranged charts of his Novela nonet, the unusual tonal combinations of his TubaCello Band, the limitless, aquatic flow of his trio Tamarindo—to open up spaces in which he and his bandmates evoke elemental feelings. In each, he displays a preference to bring what the performance requires. This humility means that his considerable gifts as a melodist tend to sneak up on you. And by drawing on the iconography of Mexican-American culture and seeking out opportunities to play with creative musicians in Central and South America, he is redefining jazz's Spanish tinge as something lived rather than learned. —Bill Meyer

77. MATTHEW SHIPP

Pianist Matthew Shipp makes things happen. As a member of the storied David S. Ware Quartet, he provided the harmonic platform and endless fund of thunderous energy that fueled the late saxophonist's heroic improvisations. As the curator of Thirsty Ear Records' Blue Series, he has fostered collaborations across



genres that reconciled the rigor of jazz improvisation with the sonic possibilities of contemporary electronic music. That willingness to cross boundaries may be evidence of a free spirit, but Shipp doesn't even like the word *freedom*, or at least the associations that it pulls in some quarters. "I'm trying to make music that has coherence and life and ideas to it," he said. While Shipp has put considerable energy into helping other musicians realize their projects, the most elegant expressions of his aesthetic come in his two preferred settings these days: as a solo pianist and as the leader of a trio with drummer Whit Dickey and bassist Michael Bisio. In each, Shipp wields stark melody and dense, forceful rhythm as channels for abstract, spiritual energy: "I just wake up and do my best to express a divine impulse in me that makes me want to play the way that I do. Once you tap into that divine influence, it takes you to the core." —Bill Meyer



78. WADADA LEO SMITH

For trumpeter and composer Wadada Leo Smith, personal fortune is a means to a greater end. The fact that his four-disc suite *Ten Freedom Summers* (Cuneiform) was a finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize is not so important as the attention that such accolades draw to what it portrays: the civil rights movement's progress over time and the changes that it engendered in the nation's collective mind and soul. Smith uses his magisterial instrumental voice, his inspirational leadership and his command of classical, jazz and blues forms to remind us of what has gone down and what's still happening. His 2013 album *Occupy The World* (TUM) is a collaboration with a Finnish jazz and folk orchestra that celebrates the recent strivings for social and economic justice manifested by the Occupy movement. But Smith doesn't just operate on an epic level. The performances by his new collaborative trio with multi-instrumentalist Douglas Ewart and drummer Mike Reed show that Smith is, at age 72, still nurturing old relationships, fostering new ones and playing at a very high level. —Bill Meyer



MICHELLE SMITH-LEWIS

79. YOUTH & DIVERSITY

DownBeat asked trumpeter Dave Douglas to comment on the state of jazz in 2014: “The coolest thing happening in jazz today is that people are playing it well at younger and younger ages. It’s really amazing to hear what musicians at the university and even high school level are coming up with. People often say, ‘Yeah, they are well trained but there won’t be any jobs for them.’ I disagree. The field is broadening as a result of all this activity, and there are more kinds of jobs available around jazz. There are also more kinds of people from more parts of the globe playing it. And these educated young musicians are not sounding like clones or simply regurgitating information. There is always a dif-

ficult search for one’s own thing in music, and I sense the keen blade of inquisition all around the discussion of learning to play jazz these days. That’s cool.”

80. KIDS NAMED MILES

Just as it has for decades, jazz continues to influence culture around the world. It’s remarkable how many kids nowadays are named after—or at least share the names of—great jazz musicians, such as Miles, Wynton, Ornette, Ella, Louis, Thad, Duke, Dexter, Billie, Elvin, Abbey, Horace and Django. **DB**



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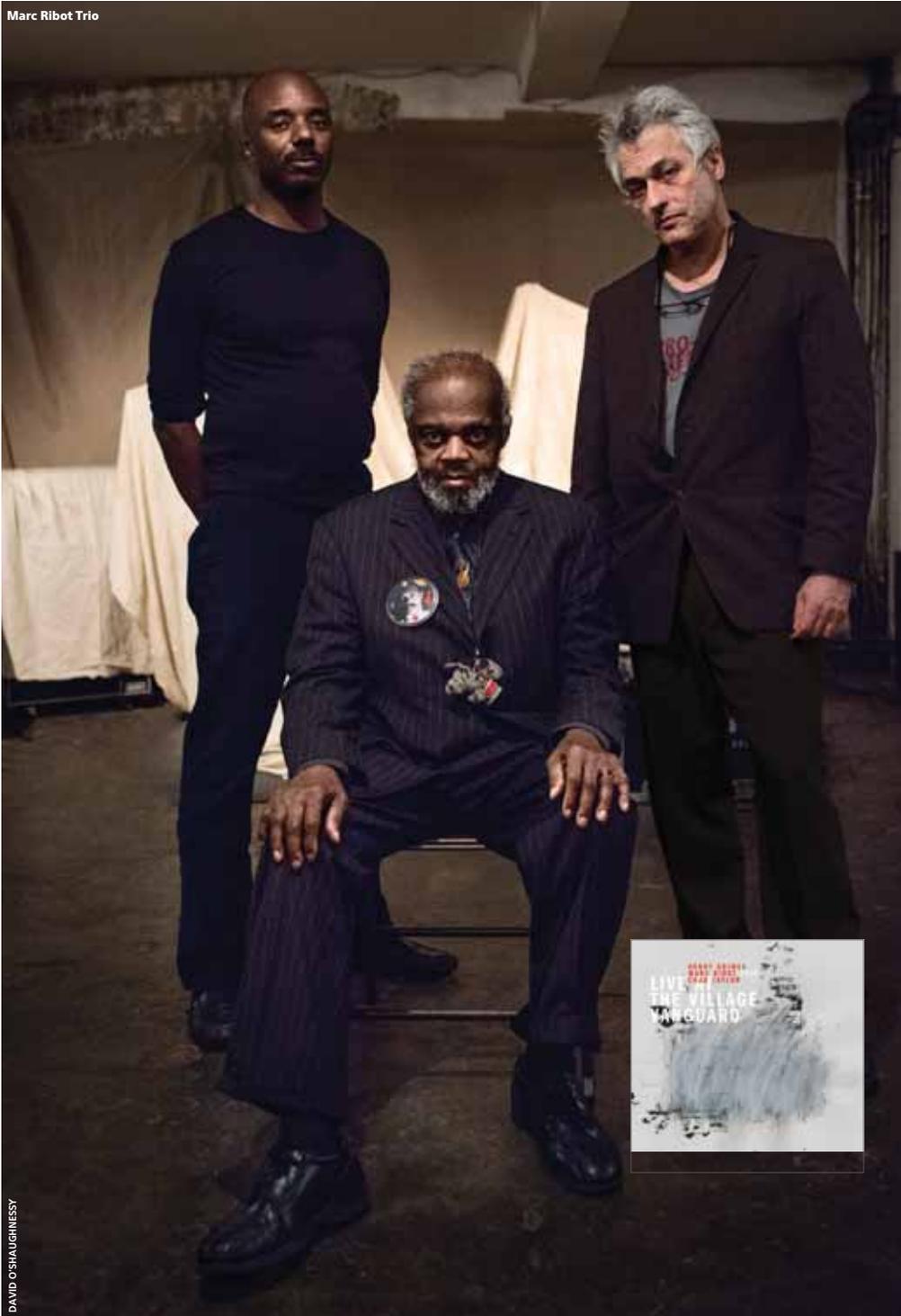
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DAVID O'SHAUGHNESSY

Marc Ribot Trio *Live At The Village Vanguard*

PI 53

★★★★★

In the 1960s, the appellation “Live At The Village Vanguard” often put the emphasis on the “vanguard.” Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane and Albert Ayler all made groundbreaking concert recordings at the club. Guitarist Marc Ribot returns to the original scene in spirit and in songbook, playing feverishly and paying homage to thematic material by Trane and Ayler.

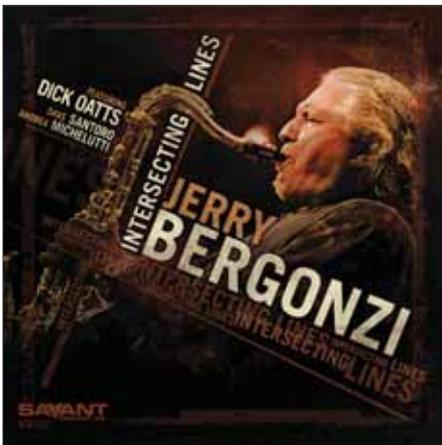
Part of the hook here is the fact that bassist Henry Grimes, now a decade back on the creative music scene after a three-decade absence, performed and recorded at the Vanguard with Ayler in the mid-'60s. He sounds the best I've heard him since the return, whether pumping along on a countrified version of Ayler's “The Wizard” or daubing and smearing arco on Coltrane's “Dearly Beloved.” Ribot is absolutely concentrated and sounds brilliant, at times evoking prime-era James Blood Ulmer, with heavy open strings reverberating against a modal line. As counterpoint, he's featured on two ballads, a lovely, dark version of “Old Man River” on which Grimes shows some of his experience with changes, and a spidery take on “I'm Confessin' (That I Love You).”

“Bells” builds to a tumultuous climax, flurries of distortion-saturated guitar giving way to the theme, stated as a tender, fragile little nursery rhyme, then into the classic Ayler march. Behind it all, Chad Taylor works at the service of the music, his drumming the perfect conduit for the natural flow of guitar and bass. It's a sense of vanguardism steeped in history, nothing radical in itself, but building fruitfully on a venerable New York legacy, adding another chapter. —John Corbett

Live At The Village Vanguard: Dearly Beloved; The Wizard; Old Man River; Bells; I'm Confessin' (That I Love You); Sun Ship. (64:21)

Personnel: Marc Ribot, guitar; Henry Grimes, bass, violin; Chad Taylor, drums.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



Jerry Bergonzi *Intersecting Lines*

SAVANT 2137
★★★★

Jazz is rich with terrific reed-on-reed partnerships. The best of them—Ammons and Stitt, Cohn and Sims, Davern and Wilber, Wardell Gray and Dexter Gordon—were power combos that could burn with the fury of a twister. Jerry Bergonzi and his alto partner Dick Oatts are in that broad tradition here. But in their first collaboration since *Saxology* a decade ago on SteepleChase, they prefer instead to warm the land with a light and feathery spring breeze that is both sweet and smart. Their dozen originals often swing obliquely rather than head-on, more like the

Abdullah Ibrahim *Mukashi: Once Upon A Time*

SUNNYSIDE 1356
★★★★

It's revealing that Abdullah Ibrahim's first solo album for ECM has been reissued around the same time the pianist has dropped his latest ensemble affair. *African Piano* is almost 45 years old, but it contains the same stylistic rudiments as *Mukashi*: poise, insistence, lyricism.

The master will be 80 in October, and his art is in refinement mode these days. The music made by *Mukashi*'s four instrumentalists—Ibrahim, two cellists and a reed player—has a sense of tranquility. That, too, is a longtime stylistic element, but here it resounds so deeply that it almost seems to be Ibrahim's lone mission statement.

An atmosphere of chamber music marks the program, and it's seductive to say the least. Like the way pianist-composer John Lewis perpetually pared down his work as he got older, Ibrahim makes sure that generating grace is on top of his to-do list. So "Serenity," heard previously on 1988's *Mindif*, becomes a misty poem of rounded tones that seems to rise up from nowhere, create an aura (it's inspired by the light of daybreak) and drift away. The flute quivers, the piano tickles a few plaintive licks, and the strings are gently plucked. Buoyancy is crucial to the design, and the group never sounds wan during these fragile maneuvers. Likewise, "Matzikama" has its own inner glide that depends on the players' abil-

here-and-there rhythm of a leaf on the wind rather than a straight arrow slicing through it.

Bergonzi—who began his recording career in 1973 with Dave Brubeck (in the shadow of Paul Desmond)—plays with a downy coolness that has a frothy texture. Oatts picks up the narrative with an even wisper purr. Together they offer an ensemble sound that often seems to sigh in a placid and comforting murmur.

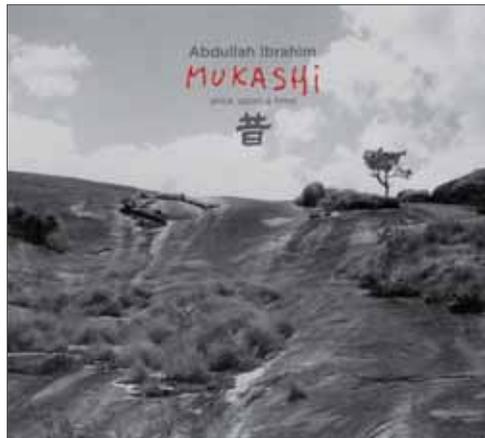
On the title track, Bergonzi's tenor drifts with a calming but open rhythmic liberty, never dense or aggressive. Oatts' soft pastels suggest Desmond and Lee Konitz. The liner notes emphasize both players' commitment to bebop, which is evident in the frequent Parker-esque flares that pepper the solos. More to the point, "Dream Step" and "Marshland" are among the most precipitate and direct plunges into the realm: fast, 4/4 pieces that swing straight-up in the old-fashioned manner, the way bop sounded before we had any need for phrases like *post-bop*.

One of the more interesting moments in this consistently interesting recital is "Mo-ment," where Bergonzi and Oatts slowly coil around each other like serpentine columns of smoke that meet, mingle and then drift apart. The themes here are consistently fresh, subverting logic now and then with a Monk-ish defiance. The music's overall cool tone is never less than winning. —John McDonough

Intersecting Lines: Intersecting Lines; Dream Step; Creature Feature; Tanzania; Marshland; Mo-Ment; Dig Oatts; Someplace Out/A Grammy Winner; Itchy; Saddle Back; Arbonius Unt; Horton's Lament. (68:35)

Personnel: Jerry Bergonzi, tenor saxophone; Dick Oatts, alto saxophone; Dave Santoro, bass; Andrea Michelutti, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



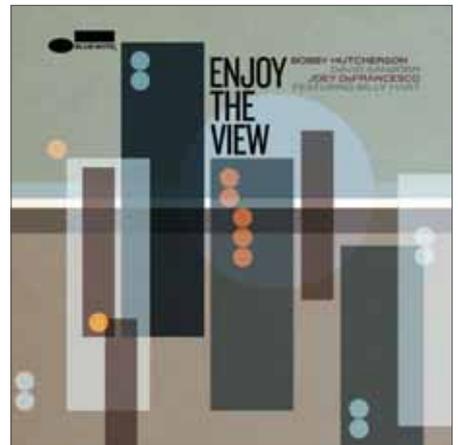
ities to coalesce. Though near-static, it seems to float in midair.

Every nuance is weighted on this album, and the fact that Ibrahim can make Vaughn Monroe's "The Stars Will Remember" and "Cara Mia"—a No. 1 hit for vocalist David Whitfield in 1954—at home in a hushed suite of folksy originals makes his scope seem even more catholic. As the last enticing notes of "The Balance" close the album, all that remains is the maestro's impeccable vision. —Jim Macnie

Mukashi: Once Upon A Time: Mukashi; Dream Time; The Stars Will Remember; Serenity; Mississippi; Peace; Matzikama; Cara Mia; Root; Trace Elements/For Monk; Krotoa; Crystal Clear; Devotion; Endurance; In The Evening; Essence; The Balance. (56:54)

Personnel: Abdullah Ibrahim, piano, flute, vocals; Cleave Guyton, saxophone, flute, clarinet; Eugen Bazijan, Scott Roller, cello.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Bobby Hutcherson/David Sanborn/Joey DeFrancesco featuring Billy Hart *Enjoy The View*

BLUE NOTE 060253765448
★★★

This relaxed, feel-good, all-star session marking the return of jazz's greatest vibraphonist to Blue Note Records occasionally rises to a genuine state of spontaneous combustion, but most of the time it doesn't make much of an impression—like very high-level mood music.

Despite Hutcherson's prominence, the stars of the show are keening alto saxophonist David Sanborn, who reaches beyond his r&b licks (not that there's anything wrong with those) to some edgy jazz improv, and Joey DeFrancesco, who not only thumps through bass lines while churning out oceans of organ, but also contributes an estimable trumpet solo.

Though Sanborn had never played with Hutcherson or drummer Billy Hart, the foursome seems to have immediately established a level of trust that allowed them to move very freely in a fluid, conversational, late-'60s Miles mode. A standout in that department is Hutcherson's "Hey Harold," where he spins a nicely arced solo then trades figures with a squirrely Sanborn and romping DeFrancesco, who takes the tune out with Harmon-muted horn. Sanborn gets down and scratches in the dirt on DeFrancesco's Monk-ish blues "Don Is" (a pun on producer Don Was), and the sax man's hovering, fluttery waltz "Little Flower" offers just the kind of transcendent, impressionistic carpet Hutcherson flies best on.

Elsewhere, there's not much to sink your teeth into. Sanborn's swinging opener, "Delia," is pleasantly soulful, but Hutcherson feels barely there; ditto on his own tunes "Montara" and "Teddy." Health problems have slowed Hutcherson down, so it's hard to begrudge him time to "enjoy the view." He's earned it. But he's also turned in far more animated performances than this one, even over the last couple of years. Let's hope there will be more. —Paul de Barros

Enjoy The View: Delia; Don Is; Hey Harold; Little Flower; Montara; Teddy; You. (43:25)

Personnel: Bobby Hutcherson, vibraphone; David Sanborn, alto saxophone; Joey DeFrancesco, organ, trumpet (3); Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

The Hot Box

Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Marc Ribot Trio <i>Live At The Village Vanguard</i>	★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
Jerry Bergonzi <i>Intersecting Lines</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Abdullah Ibrahim <i>Mukashi: Once Upon A Time</i>	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★
Bobby Hutcherson <i>Enjoy The View</i>	★★★½	★★★½	★★½	★★★

Critics' Comments

Marc Ribot Trio, *Live At The Village Vanguard*

Ribot, erstwhile Albert Ayler bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Chad Taylor cut straight to the sweet and troubled heart of Ayler, whose outsider mix of childlike innocence and fearless iconoclasm comes through loud and clear on "Bells" and "The Wizard." Slipping "I'm Confessin'" into the mix was a stroke of genius on this spiritually riveting live recording. —Paul de Barros

Beyond two well-mapped standards, Ribot takes a bad trip chasing the Trane down into that long tunnel that consumed his last years. The smaller the pickings, the more strident the music gets. Coltrane's sketchy "Dearly Beloved" rips off of "Lazy Afternoon," so why not do that? Ribot is a player of many voices. The loudest may be the least of them. —John McDonough

The trio has little trouble conjuring the gnarled ecstasy of the Trane & Ayler nexus—there's a spiritual sense of teamwork coursing through the music. Even "I'm Confessin'" comes off sounding like a hymn. —Jim Macnie

Jerry Bergonzi, *Intersecting Lines*

Tristano-esque interplay, emphasis on softer tumbling lines, the Marsh-Konitz tendency to extrapolate, working on different horns within the same range, all played with precision and great personality. Relaxed rhythm section pushes it into the winner's circle. —John Corbett

The action never stops, and there's a fair share of thrills when Dick Oatts and Gonz wrap themselves around each other. Call it a communion of agility and ideas, and pray that it earns some well-deserved notice for both horn players. —Jim Macnie

Pure ear candy, with Bergonzi's tough, gruff tenor and Dick Oatts' once-over-lightly alto weaving, braiding, dancing and sparring in dry, pianoless air space, exulting simultaneously in both freedom and form. Smart and lovely. —Paul de Barros

Ibrahim Abdullah, *Mukashi: Once Upon A Time*

If more of this quietly beautiful album sounded like "In The Evening," where Ibrahim actually put the cellos and clarinet at the session to good use, it would be more engaging. But the South African pianist too often falls back on a signature ceremoniousness that, with the exception of "Crystal Clear," imparts a tad more gravity to simple statements than is warranted. —Paul de Barros

Much passive, reclusive beauty here. Ibrahim plays a phrase, lets it linger, and you lean in saying, "Yes ... go on." The cello-woodwind wrap consoles with an inner sobriety. "Mississippi" offers a gust of emotional catharsis as Guyton wails like the proverbial downhearted frail. Then it all shuts down again. But patience offers some rewards. —John McDonough

A brilliant elder statesman, perhaps entering the soporific phase, equipped with a two-cello chamber trio. Flashes of folksy insight; his lovely voicings, very subdued and inward. —John Corbett

Hutcherson/Sanborn/DeFrancesco/Hart, *Enjoy The View*

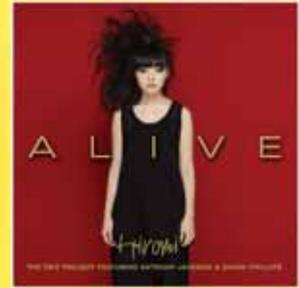
This agreeably vivacious and unassuming all-star date sends off a nice sparkle without being singularly memorable. The plate of originals is bland, but DeFrancesco and Sanborn create a nice fizz while Hutch simmers in a soft iridescence. At only 43 minutes, it doesn't wear out its welcome. —John McDonough

Am I alone in thinking it especially weird that a quartet CD on which one musician is such a presence is credited to the other three? A contractual snare, perhaps? What a lonely life the drummer has! Anyway, one of the best Sanborn outings I've heard, warm combination with vibes and organ, DeFrancesco holding back, making plenty of space for Hutcherson. "Don Is": badass dedication to the producer, calling him into present tense. —John Corbett

Impressive licks arrive intermittently, but in large part this one needs more of a *raison d'être* than simply blowing over some grooves. There's something ho-hum about this session—a few of these takes could use some extra oomph. —Jim Macnie

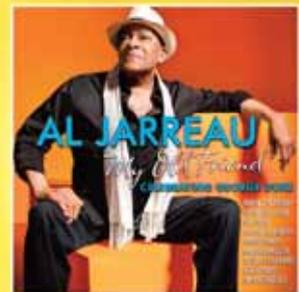
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PRESENTS....



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Lee Konitz/Dan Tepfer/Michael Janisch/Jeff Williams
First Meeting: Live In London, Volume 1

WHIRLWIND 4638

★★★★



It's impossible to write about saxophonist Lee Konitz without treading a fine line of appearing ageist. How to appreciate the music he makes today without reflecting on his 60-plus years of creativity and noting the allowances and alterations he has had to make to stay vital in his 80s? And vital he most certainly remains. His mind is as inventive as ever, and if he has lost some instrumental power to time, just listen to what is still intact. This 2010 live recording, instigated by bassist Michael Janisch, was cut when Konitz was 82. As is his wont in recent years, Konitz refused to designate a set list or even call tunes on the fly. He loves to keep his bandmates on edge, and keep his own senses sharp. A glance at what compositions were played tells you nothing; being in the moment is everything. Among the most enticing moments here are the engaging interplay between pianist Dan Tepfer and Konitz on "Billie's Bounce" and a hard-grooving Janisch solo on "All The Things You Are." Above all, this is a live recording that captures the essence of improvisational musical dialogue—dull spots and all. The mind may wander a bit during the front half of "Alone Together," where Konitz sits out, but it snaps into focus at things like Tepfer's wry, unaccompanied introduction to "Stella By Starlight," which prompts Konitz to exclaim, "Wise guy!" Half the fun is guessing the response to various musical gambits and where the conversation will lead next.

—James Hale

First Meeting: Live In London, Volume 1: Billie's Bounce; All The Things You Are; Stella By Starlight; Giant Steps; Body And Soul; Alone Together; Subconscious Lee; Outro. (68:10)

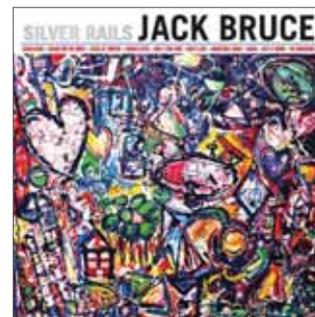
Personnel: Lee Konitz, soprano saxophone (2, 5, 6), alto saxophone (1, 3, 7, 8); Dan Tepfer, piano; Michael Janisch, bass; Jeff Williams, drums.

Ordering info: whirlwindrecordings.com

Jack Bruce
Silver Rails

ESOTERIC ANTENNA 6278

★★★★



Rock has seldom known a recording artist as intent on following an adventurous solo career path as Cream singer-bassist Jack Bruce. Down his years involved with jazz, blues, r&b and rock, he's been on equal artistic footing with a host of ace associates, including guitarists John McLaughlin, Albert Collins and Frank Zappa; drummer Tony Williams; pianist Carla Bley; keyboardist Bernie Worrell; and, most recently, his fellow members in Spectrum Road—Vernon Reid, Cindy Blackman Santana and John Medeski. Bruce is still going strong at 71. On *Silver Rails*, his first album in a decade, his enthusiasm for intelligent, off-kilter rock is as genuine as ever. The album exudes powerful presence and personality, not unlike his long-ago rock gems *Songs For A Tailor* and *Harmony Row*. Despite some fraying, his supple, one-of-a-kind voice has aged well, with its high-noted sweetness in balance with a bluesy middle range. All 10 songs here, each impressive, are originals, with longtime lyricist Pete Brown contributing his cleverly ambiguous boho-poetry to seven. The material runs the gamut from distorted-bass grunge ("Drone") to catchy, welcoming rock ("Fields Of Forever"). The electric blues "Rusty Lady" (Margaret Thatcher) evokes the best of Cream. "Industrial Child," with only voice, piano and acoustic guitar, is gentle, wistful, beautiful.

—Frank-John Hadley

Silver Rails: Candlelight; Reach For The Night; Fields Of Forever; Hidden Cities; Don't Look Now; Rusty Lady; Industrial Child; Drone; Keep It Down; No Surrender. (47:36)

Personnel: Jack Bruce, vocals, bass guitar, piano, Mellotron; John Medeski, Hammond organ (1, 4, 5, 9), Mellotron (5); Phil Manzanera (1), Bernie Marsden (9, 10); Tony Remy (1–3, 5, 7), Uli Jon Roth (4), Robin Trower (6), Malcolm Bruce (2, 5, 6), Pearse MacIntyre (3), guitars; Derek Nash, tenor saxophone (1–3); Russell Bennett, trumpet (1, 3); Winston Rollins, trombone (1, 3); Frank Tontoh (1–3, 5, 6, 9), Cindy Blackman Santana (4, 10), drums; Milos Pál, djembe (1), drums (8); Rob Cass, percussion (1, 3, 6), backing vocals (10); Aruba Red, Kyla Bruce, Chantelle Nandi, Julie Iwheta, backing vocals (4).

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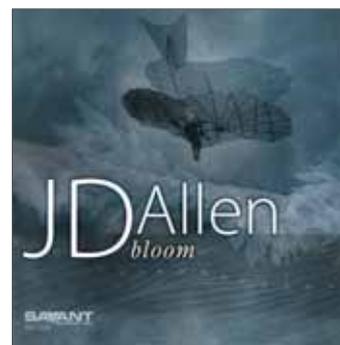
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JD Allen
Bloom

SAVANT 2139

★★★★½



JD Allen's run at Savant Records—which started with *The Matador And The Bull* in 2012—has encompassed a shifting roster of musicians. After moving away from his longtime rhythm section of Gregg August on bass and Rudy Royston on drums, Allen has tinkered with his lineups. On *Bloom*, he's expanded to a quartet (2013's *Grace* also included a quartet), giving the piano chair to Orrin Evans. Evans—a pianist with a soft touch who provides a rich chordal bed for Allen's extended improvisations—collaborated on the tenor saxophonist's 2002 album, *Pharoah's Children* (Criss Cross Jazz). Drummer Jonathan Barber is a holdover from *Grace*, and Alexander Claffey, on bass, represents the newcomer of the group. Though the assembly of previous musical partners might seem to invite nostalgia, *Bloom* expands Allen's musical concepts, nurturing melodic lines organically, and continues to step outside traditional jazz boundaries. The focus here is Allen's clean, pure saxophone tone and expansive improvisational abilities. In the liner notes, Allen writes that Olivier Messiaen's harmonic language drove the ideas behind *Bloom*, and on every track, the saxophonist delves deep into non-functional harmony, steering clear of obvious harmonic resolution. The end result is an album full of rewarding, complex music—Allen's unaccompanied version of "Stardust" is a standout—that provides another wrinkle to Allen's jazz outlook.

—Jon Ross

Bloom: Jack's Glass; Bloom; The Secret Lives Of Guest Workers; The Dreamer; A Throng Of Millions Can Be One; If You Could See Me Now; Stardust; The Rule Of Thirds; Pater Noster; Car—Car (The Blues). (40:12)

Personnel: JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Orrin Evans, piano; Alexander Claffey, bass; Jonathan Barber, drums.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Brian Charette
The Question That Drives Us

STEEPLECHASE 31784
 ★★★★★

Brian Charette
Square One

POSI-TONE 8120
 ★★★★★½



Charette's compositions tend to have multiple interlocking pieces, that flexibility becomes all the more crucial.

On the opening "Blazinec," Kriss' upper-register lines break through the group's fast tempo charge before the focus shifts to John Ellis' bass clarinet. The latter

also shows off a cool strut on "5th Base." But sometimes the shift in tone comes quickly, and the intertwined saxophones of Mike DiRubbo and Joel Frahm finesse these moves.

While "Denge Merenge" begins with a motif based on the Dominican dance, it suddenly takes a more ominous tone and then jumps back to the original theme. Their strong horn lines make all the parts cohere. In some passages, like on "Svichkova," Frahm's tone also recalls David "Fathead" Newman's approach to blues playing within a large-band framework.

Charette uses his own solos here primarily to complement the larger group. His lines serve as additional harmony underneath the reeds and drummer Jochen Rueckert on the title track, which has a Beatles-influenced melody. But he also takes the lead for a three-way exchange with Rueckert and Kriss over a solid funk beat on "Answer Me."

Fronting a trio, Charette carves out more solo

space for himself on *Square One*. His group takes a couple nods to The Meters, especially with a lively interpretation of their song "Ease Back." Charette's own "Aaight!" conveys a similar vibe with the New Orleans' funk-r&b masters, especially through his sharp staccato introduction. He also has a lyrical feel for making notes linger, as on the ballad "Three For Martina."

Guitarist Yotam Silberstein sounds equally inspired on "A Fantasy." Producer Marc Free adds a bit of his synthesizer lines on a couple tracks, but even with an accomplished keyboardist already leading the group, his added textures are not too much of an intrusion. Drummer Mark Ferber is also adept at navigating the changing time signatures. Charette has commented that the 4/4, 3/4, 4/4 and 6/4 shifts on "Time Changes" "freaks out a lot of the young uptight jazz people." Of course, he doesn't say who those timid players may be, but these discs show he shouldn't ever worry about finding simpatico partners.

—Aaron Cohen

The Question That Drives Us: Blazinec; The Question That Drives Us; Medium Up; Answer Me; Labor Day; Svichkova; 5th Base; #9; Denge Merenge; I Came So Far To See You; Moose The Mooche. (62:36)

Personnel: Brian Charette, Hammond B-3; Itai Kriss, flute; Mike DiRubbo, alto saxophone; Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone; John Ellis, bass clarinet; Jochen Rueckert, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

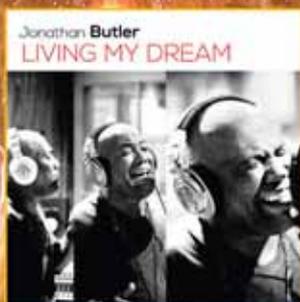
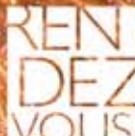
Square One: Aaight!; If; Three For Martina; People On Trains; True Love; Ease Back; Time Changes; A Fantasy; Ye! Fei; Things You Don't Mean; Ten Bars For Eddie Harris. (46:08)

Personnel: Brian Charette, organ; Yotam Silberstein, guitar; Mark Ferber, drums; Marc Free, keyboards (8, 10).

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

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Armen Donelian
Sayat-Nova: Songs Of My Ancestors

SUNNYSIDE 4018
 ★★☆☆½

While the 18th-century Armenian troubadour Sayat-Nova may not be a household name in the Western world, he has long been recognized as one of the greatest poets and troubadours to emerge from the Caucasus region. On the two discs that make up *Sayat-Nova: Songs Of My Ancestors*, the Armenian-American

pianist Armen Donelian has prepared a deeply felt—and often strikingly beautiful—tribute to this distant master.

Most of Sayat-Nova's songs survive only as simple melodies, offering considerable scope to the modern arranger. Donelian—who, in addition to having a long career in jazz, was educated in harmony and counterpoint—has broken his arrangements into two distinct groups: The first disc features solo piano versions of nine of Sayat-Nova's compositions, while the second offers four more Sayat-Nova songs (plus one from Armenian folk musician Khachatur Avetisyan) performed as a trio with bass and drums.

The solo piano arrangements are, by far, the more extraordinary. Although Donelian is respectful of the original melodies, he also appears largely unbound by the constraints of any particular musical approach, using the spare frame of Sayat-Nova's compositions more as a compass than a map. His expansive improvisations occupy a beautifully elusive place somewhere between the taciturn introspection of Erik Satie's *Gnossiennes*, the modal lamentations of John Zorn's Masada songbook and the genial invention of Art Tatum's solo recordings. There are countless exquisite moments to be found within these nine extended meditations.

Next to such a carefully wrought offering, the trio disc cannot help but sound somewhat conventional. Although bassist David Clark and drummer George Schuller provide an agile and tightly focused rhythm section—and Donelian's improvisatory flights are constantly informed by a graceful melodic sensibility—the piano trio format has a tendency to downplay the unconventional exoticism that makes the first disc so compelling. The trio performances are never less than satisfying, and there are numerous passages where the combo really cooks, but there is little on the second disc to match the revelatory quality of Donelian's solo explorations.

In the course of his life, Sayat-Nova composed hundreds of songs, and their singular melodic language—at once disarmingly foreign and strangely familiar—seems to have offered Donelian a considerable well of inspiration. On the strength of the first disc alone, one can only hope that the songs on *Sayat-Nova: Songs Of My Ancestors* represent the beginning of a continuing partnership between the 18th-century master and his 21st-century disciple.

—Jesse Simon

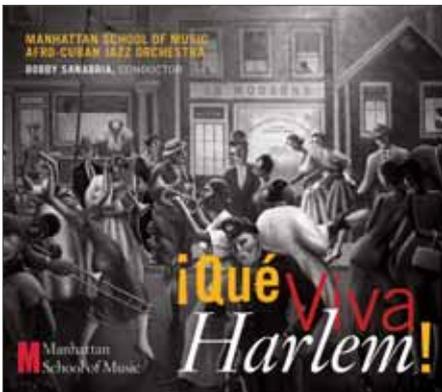
Sayat-Nova: Songs of My Ancestors: Disc 1: Where Do You Come From, Wandering Nightingale (Oosdi Goukas Gharib Blbool); I Have Traveled The Whole World Over (Tamam Ashkhar Bdood Eka); Without You, What Will I Do? (Arantz Kez Eench Goneem); Surely, You Don't Say That You Also Cry? (Ches Asoum Te Latz-es Eli); I'll Never Know Your True Worth (Hees Koo Gheemethn Cheem Geeteel); I Call Lalanin (Hees Ganchoom Eem Lalaneen); Praised Among All Instruments (Amen Sazi Mechn Govats (Kamanche)); With The Nightingale You Also Cry (Blbooli Hit Latz-es Eli); Were I Offered Your Weight In Pearls (Tekouz Koo Kashn Markrit Tan). (55:00) Disc 2: King Of Cathay (Shahkhatyee); Your Headdress Is Silver And Silk (Tasdamazt Sim Oo Sharbab); My Sweet Harp (Eem Anoush Davigh); You Are Golden And Exotic Brocade (Tipa Oo Yenkitoonial); As Long As I Draw Breath (Kani Vor Jan Eem). (43:36)
Personnel: Armen Donelian, piano; David Clark, bass (Disc 2); George Schuller, drums (Disc 2).
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

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IMAGE © 2014 LAUREN DEUTSCH



**Manhattan School Of Music
Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra
with Bobby Sanabria
*Qué Viva Harlem!***

JAZZHEADS 120
★★★★½

A typical college big band CD features well-played ensemble passages, erratic solos from its young players and a mixture of post-bop originals and versions of standards that rarely measure up to the original versions.

However, this CD by the Manhattan School of Music (MSM) Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra is on a different level altogether. MSM, which was founded in 1917 as a small community music school on Manhattan's Upper East Side, now enrolls 900 students from over 40 countries and is home to a wide variety of ensembles, from the MSM Symphony Orchestra to the MSM Chamber Jazz Ensemble.

Under the direction of percussionist and drummer Bobby Sanabria, the 19-piece MSM Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra (which includes three percussionists) sounds very much like an authentic Latin jazz orchestra (perhaps Machito's) from the mid-1950s. The musicianship is very professional, on the same level as well-known big bands. The soloists sound mature and lively, while the ensemble passages are filled with a joyous team spirit. And then there is the inspired repertoire.

Rather than play the usual Afro-Cuban hits (such as "Manteca" and "A Night In Tunisia"), one gets to hear René Hernández's exciting "Feeding The Chickens," Gene Marlow's "Let There Be Swing," which is taken as a Latin retro-swing romp, and Juan Tizol's obscure but worthy "Moon Over Cuba." The latter is the first of four pieces from the universe of Duke Ellington, preceding Duke's lesser-known blues "Oclupaca," a Latinized version of Billy Strayhorn's mid-1940s arrangement of the dixieland standard "Royal Garden Blues" and Strayhorn's "Blood Count." If Ellington had been born 20 years later in East Harlem rather than Washington D.C., his music might have sounded like this.

Among the solo highlights are Josh Holcomb's powerful trombone on "Feeding The Chickens" and baritone saxophonist Leo Pellegrino's use of extreme high notes

as punctuation during his passionate solo on "Let There Be Swing." Tenor saxophonist Graeme Norris sounds a bit like Al Sears on "Oclupaca."

The CD concludes with a nearly 19-minute version of the title track, a multi-sectioned work by Kyle Athayde that covers several moods and gives two trumpeters, all five saxophonists and the percussion-driven ensemble plenty of opportunities to explode musically.

Qué Viva Harlem! is a triumph. How can

this be a college band?

—Scott Yanow

Qué Viva Harlem! Mamba Inferno; Feeding The Chickens; Let There Be Swing; Moon Over Cuba; Oclupaca; Royal Garden Blues; Blood Count; Qué Viva Harlem! (63:25)

Personnel: Bobby Sanabria, timbales, clave, shekere, vocals; Josh Gawel, Ryan DeWeese, Benny Benack, Kyla Moscovich, trumpets; St. Clair Simmons, Josh Holcomb, Jesus Viramontes, trombones; Santiago Latorre, bass trombone; Patrick Bartley, alto, soprano saxophones, flute, clarinet; Kevin Bene, alto saxophone, clarinet, flute; Xavier Del Castillo, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Graeme Norris, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Leo Pellegrino, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Saiyid Sharik Hasan, piano; Max Calkin, bass; Arthur Vint, drums; Takao Heisho, congas; Matthew Gonzalez, Oreste Abrantes, percussion, bongó/cencerro, baríl de bomba.

Ordering info: jazzheads.com

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Hammond Eggs

Phronesis, *Life To Everything* (Edition 1050; 63:21 ★★★★★)

For the fiercely restless trio Phronesis, live recording is an ideal choice. This fifth disc from the London-based force captures the coiled-spring energy that's made them a European festival favorite. The opener, "Urban Control," is characteristic. Danish upright bassist and leader Jasper Høiby opens with a pointed, rhythmically complex line that becomes the tune's DNA. Swedish drummer Anton Eger adds busy layers on his thick-timbred kit like Elvin Jones, all the while outlining the tune's twists and turns. British pianist Ivo Neame serves as the song's glue, providing adventurous harmonies while darting between the spiny rhythms and brandishing sudden blooms of lyricism. Once in, there's no coming up for air.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com

Hammond Eggs, *Back In The Pan* (In+Out Records 77018; 64:24 ★★★★★)

From Germany comes a grooving trio molded in the classic Hammond B-3/guitar/drums format. While the band's previous disc honored the deep, bluesy swinging mode of its heritage, this latest outing expands the groove palette, mixing an extra dose of funk with Latin touches, all slyly mixed within a framework of daunting odd meters. Avoiding fusion bookishness, the trio keeps the good grit intact. Organist Jermaine Landsberger wields serious chops and encapsulates his instrument's history. Christoph Huber's cracking drumming keeps the energy to the edge and smoothly oils the odd meters while guitarist Paulo Morello is a seamless keyboard complement who percolates every solo. Star guests include trumpeter Randy Brecker, saxophonist Bob Mintzer and Hungarian tenor notable Tony Lakatos, who all throw heated solos on the skillet. Sizzak!

Ordering info: inandout-records.com

Gjertrud Lunde, *Hjemklang* (Ozella 054; 62:03 ★★★★★)

Based in Cologne, Germany, vocalist Gjertrud Lunde offers an atmospheric mix of jazz, pop and world sounds infused with intermittent funky grooves. Backed by a fine bass-less quartet, including husband Florian Zenker on guitar and baritone guitar, pianist Wolfert Brederode, drummer-percussionist Bodek Janke and guest trumpeter Arve Henriksen, Lunde explores ethereal multilingual excursions. The material sometimes flounders into New Age soundtrack-y waters. But Lunde knows how to let a good melody speak for itself, and her lovely, focused voice is frequently entrancing.

Ordering info: ozellamusic.com

Andreas Schickentanz, *Chimera* (Jazz Haus Musik 214; 64:01 ★★★★★) A busy trombonist-composer based in Belgium, Andreas Schickentanz is a swinging, thoughtful and dexterous



soloist. He also knows the elemental value of a great sounding long tone. The bandleader has a warm, expressive sound from the bottom to the top of his instrument. And he has carefully chosen bandmates whom are equally dedicated to the beauty of sonic blend. This is especially evident in his brotherly blend with tenor saxophonist Matthias Erlewein. The naked improvisations here sometimes incorporate electronic effects and snippets of field recordings. Even within that seemingly aberrant input, the trombonist finds the connecting color thread.

Ordering info: jazzhausmusik.de

Orange Trane Acoustic Trio, *Fugu* (Soliton 347; 50:00 ★★★★★)

A gathering of three bright lights of the Polish jazz scene, Orange Trane delivers a warm, confident sound with an astonishing knack for ensemble breathing. Bassist Piotr Lemanczyk and drummer Tomasz Losowski reformed the Gdansk-based group in 2011, recruiting superb vibraphone-marimba player Dominik Bukowski for a more open and interactive sound. In their second trio recording, Lemanczyk—who is also chief composer—lays down a fat, supportive acoustic bottom and grooves nimbly when called. The lyrical and economic Bukowski plays finely chiseled mallet solos—especially when sparsely suggesting harmonies, leaving eloquent space for his bandmates.

Ordering info: orangetrane.pl

Stein Urheim, *Stein Urheim* (Hubro 2529; 40:15 ★★★★★)

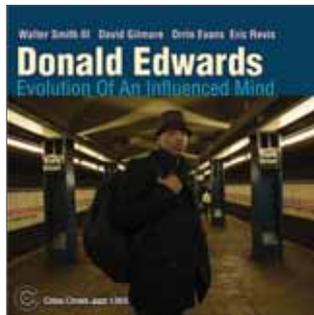
All too often, drone-ish solo projects get mired in cosmic soupiness, but Norwegian guitarist Urheim wisely avoids that. His multitracked stringed instruments speak with strong immediate personality, and he doesn't dawdle. He's also brimming with sonic and thematic ideas. His acoustic guitar picking is central, aided by a vast supplemental collection of exotic instruments, both fretted and unfretted. Spanning the contemplative to the humorous, it's an ear-resuscitating treat.

Ordering info: hubromusic.com

DB

Donald Edwards
Evolution Of An Influenced Mind

CRISS CROSS JAZZ 1365
 ★★★★★



On his third album as a leader, Donald Edwards—best known as the drummer with various Mingus Dynasty configurations—has the players *and* the tunes. These 11 originals (including one by pianist Orrin Evans) are all keepers, and the album continues to surprise as it unfolds. The Opelousas, La.-born drummer has been schooled by playing church music and reggae, by working the fertile '90s New Orleans jazz scene with the likes of his teacher clarinetist-composer Alvin Batiste (1932–2007) and by his long tenure in New York. His versatility and musical curiosity inform every track. A short prelude piece, “American Drum Call To Mama,” opens with a field recording of a church congregation’s wordless vocal—a portentous spiritual—over which Edwards improvises freely, layering polyrhythms. It’s unlike anything else on the album, and it clears the decks and establishes context. The quintet numbers that follow are marked by attractive tunes, great playing and a refreshing flow of alternating rhythmic patterns. Edwards’ band includes stellar soloists: Evans, guitarist David Gilmore and tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III. Edwards and bassist Eric Revis guide them through fast-burning chord changes (“The Essential Passion”), free improv (Evans’ “When”) and a lovely, open-ended ballad (“The Dream”). The relaxed interplay between Gilmore and Smith shows how well this band takes to everything Edwards writes. The drummer has evolved into a composer and leader to reckon with.

—Jon Garelick

Evolution Of An Influenced Mind: American Drum Call To Mama; History Of The Future; Niece; The Dream; The Essential Passion; Dock’s House; Nightmare Of Fun; When; Culmination For Now; Not Really Gumbo; Truth Or Consequence. (63:55)

Personnel: Donald Edwards, drums; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone; David Gilmore, guitar; Orrin Evans, piano; Eric Revis, bass.

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com

John McLaughlin & The 4th Dimension
The Boston Record

ABSTRACT LOGIX 042
 ★★★★★½



Ho hum, another stunner from John McLaughlin. Now 72, the pioneering guitarist should have nothing left to prove. His legacy—innovator on Miles Davis’ groundbreaking fusion records, figurehead behind Mahavishnu Orchestra, genre-busting bandleader, tireless collaborator—could fill several Hall of Fame plaques. And yet here he is on *The Boston Record*, an electric set captured live in June 2013, launching acrobatic notes, unfurling hummingbird-wing-fast flurries, and balancing high-wire solos on a familiar instrument he makes capable of yielding vocabularies that sound new to even veteran ears. While stylistic adventurousness and sonic restlessness go hand-in-hand with McLaughlin’s career, the instrumentalists comprising 4th Dimension bring out these traits more consistently, dynamically and authoritatively than any group he’s fronted in recent memory. Rather than stick out, McLaughlin blends in with his cohorts, the quartet performing as a true collective—not a vehicle for one individual’s virtuoso stunts. Goosed by bassist Etienne M’Bappe, whose subtle low-register rumble juxtaposes McLaughlin’s laser-sharp fluidness, the foursome demonstrates uncanny pacing and attack. Any change, tempo or pattern appears entirely possible. The multicultural crew loves playing together, and it shows via vibrant edginess and kinetic aggression.

—Bob Gendron

The Boston Record: Raju; Little Miss Valley; Abbaji; Echos From Then; Señor C.S.; Call & Answer; Maharina; Hijacked; You Know You Know. (63:00)

Personnel: Etienne M’Bappe, bass; Ranjit Barot, drums, voice; Gary Husband, drums, keyboards; John McLaughlin, guitar.

Ordering info: abstractlogix.com

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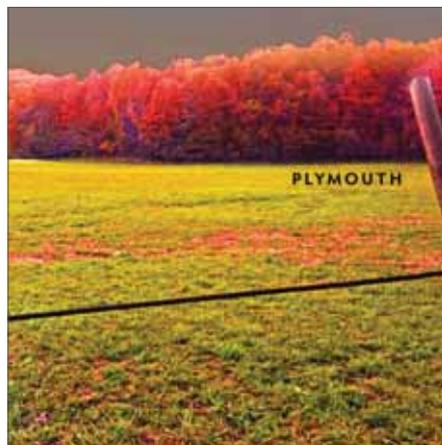


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Plymouth Plymouth

RARENOISE 040

★★★

Plymouth is the latest partnership between keyboardist Jamie Saft and guitarist Joe Morris, a follow-up to last year's *Black Aces* cut under the moniker Slobber Pup. For the new outing the lineup has expanded to include drummer Gerald Cleaver, electric bassist Chris Lightcap and guitarist Mary Halvorson, but the jam quotient is undiminished. The five musicians improvised these three extended works in the studio with no premeditation.

On the opening track, "Manomet," Saft sets the tone with huge, dirty swells of Hammond B-3—more Jon Lord (Deep Purple) than Jimmy Smith—and churning Leslie speaker distortion; he's a steady presence—all dense, droning long tones. That gives the others loads of leeway, but not a lot of room. Cleaver provides surges of sound, from delicate cymbal patter to hydroplaning clatter, Lightcap pivots around between pulsing lines and fuzzed-out, bulbous tones, and Morris and Halvorson engage in constant dialogue. There are moments of exciting interplay, but ultimately the track is the album's weakest entry, plodding where it should be driving.

Things are more dynamic when Saft moves to piano on "Plimouth," his lines fed into an Echoplex effect unit to give his sound a murky, haunting quality. When he eventually moves to organ, the piece has built up its own dazzling, head-banging momentum with a dynamic braiding of post-psychedelic lines that suggests the Grateful Dead colliding with an organ combo. Morris and Halvorson are terrific, intertwining lines but never tripping one another up, with a combination of sinister art-rock and free improvisation.

The 30-minute "Standish" is a veritable smorgasbord of moods and grooves. The most satisfying sounds emerge when the ensemble is coolly hovering, allowing the guitarists to indulge in pointillistic splatter and viscous smudges of sound. The band clearly has a rapport, but the unedited results do meander at times. Here's hoping they reconvene again, but with some kind of plan. —Peter Margasak

Plymouth: Manomet; Plimouth; Standish. (61:58)

Personnel: Jamie Saft, organs, Echoplex piano, Fender Rhodes; Joe Morris, electric guitar; Chris Lightcap, electric bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums; Mary Halvorson, electric guitar.

Ordering info: rarenoiserecords.com



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"The Times of Dave Brubeck" traveling exhibit is now available to potential host sites. It explores the legendary musician's jazz and classical music, his contributions to civil rights, and his participation in using jazz as a diplomatic tool in the 1950s and 1980s. There is a continuous loop of Brubeck's most famous tunes and an opportunity to hear Dave explain his own music.

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Jacob Young
Forever Young

ECM 2366

★★★★

There is a layered delicacy to Norwegian guitarist Jacob Young's recording with longtime reed partner Trygve Seim and the Marcin Wasilewski Trio that makes the perfect complement to the studio approach that is the signature of Oslo engineer Jan Erik Kongshaug. While it may be true that the "ECM sound" is a myth—as label boss Manfred Eicher contends—*Forever Young* makes a strong case to the contrary.

Seim's dominant role is Exhibit A. Whether moving in breathy unison with Young's dark, organic acoustic tone on the ethereal "Therese's Gate" or expanding upward with plangent urgency on "Sofia's Dance," Seim has a presence and mood-setting ability that alludes to fellow Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek. Seim lacks his countryman's diamond-hard edge, but his voice steers the ship on *Forever Young*, with the leader content to take a supporting role.

Young becomes more prevalent when he switches to electric guitar, establishing a loping rhythm on "Bounce" and spinning a spectral web on the gentle "Comeback Girl." As a composer, he keeps his heart on display, balancing buoyant melodic lines with a slight touch of melancholy that suits the Polish rhythm section perfectly. Young's compositions have a familiar feel, but there is also a slow, deliberate approach to storytelling here that is distinctly European. As a continuation of the ECM lineage that encompasses recordings by Terje Rypdal, Ralph Towner and John Abercrombie, *Forever Young* feels right at home.

—James Hale

Forever Young: I Lost My Heart To You; Therese's Gate; Bounce; We Were Dancing; Sofia's Dance; Comeback Girl; 1970; Beauty; Time Changes; My Brother. (73:54)

Personnel: Jacob Young, guitars; Trygve Seim, tenor, soprano saxophones; Marcin Wasilewski, piano; Sławomir Kurkiewicz, bass; Michał Miskiewicz, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



José James
While You Were Sleeping

BLUE NOTE 060253779458

★★★★

Anyone concerned about singer-songwriter José James abandoning his loverboy cred can rest easy. His newest album opens with a desire to "taste you" and—not counting an elegant cover of Al Green's "Simply Beautiful"—closes with the phrase, "All I need is one more night alone with you." In between those carnal desires, however, James tries on a few different hats with varying degrees of success.

Guitarist Brad Allen Williams opens "Angel" with an unexpected nod to Randy Rhoads, supplying a sturdy rock riff to what would otherwise be a simmering r&b ballad. The guitar sound makes for an unexpected opening statement, and returns again in even stranger territory on "Anywhere U Go," an unabashed post-grunge rock 'n' roll song that could have been in heavy rotation on an early '00s alt-rock radio station. Anyone purchasing the album on the weight of that track would be in for a surprise, and James seems only to be sticking a toe into the mosh pit.

Well-deserved Blue Note muse Becca Stevens—she also penned a track for trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire's 2014 release—performs a vocal duet with James on her own "Dragon," blending a hushed groove and ethereal production into a pulsating vibe. Labelmate Takuya Kuroda delivers a wonderfully melodic trumpet solo on "Simply Beautiful." James is a welcome, youthful bridge from the jazz world to the r&b scene, but this album is a little too schizophrenic.

—Sean J. O'Connell

While You Were Sleeping: Angel; U R The 1; While You Were Sleeping; Anywhere U Go; Bodhisattva; 4 Noble Truths; Dragon; Salaam; Without U; Every Little Thing; xx; Simply Beautiful. (51:37)

Personnel: José James, vocals; Kris Bowers, Fender Rhodes, organ, synths; Brad Allen Williams, guitar; Solomon Dorsey, bass, vocals; Richard Spaven, drums; Becca Stevens, vocals; Nate Gowtham, vocals; Monica Davis, violin; Amber Docters Van Leuwens, cello; Takuya Kuroda, trumpet, flugelhorn; Corey King, trombone.

Ordering info: bluenote.com



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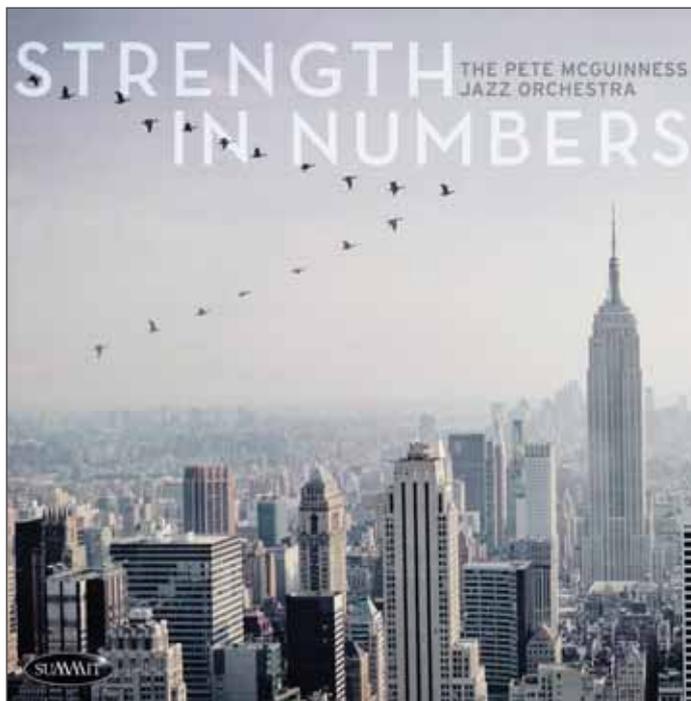
The Pete McGuinness Jazz Orchestra
Strength In Numbers

SUMMIT 627
★★★★½

On its 2007 Summit debut, *First Flight*, the Pete McGuinness Jazz Orchestra showed a portentous range of orchestral vocabulary and instrumental facility. That promise has developed and deepened on this release. The band continues to display ensemble and solo maturity on superb arrangements, and it's significant that most of the participants are back for this outing.

Equally impressive is how trombonist-composer McGuinness uses compositional variety to tell a story. The pieces seldom end up where they begin and if they do, the listener has been on an aural journey nonetheless. "The Send-Off," a nod to Bob Brookmeyer, shows brass and reed sections expertly working off each other, with a surprise tenor-and-drum exchange (Tom Christensen and Scott Neumann) à la John Coltrane and Elvin Jones. Surprise is as much a tool as anything else for McGuinness.

In other hands, Stephen Foster's antebellum "Beautiful Dreamer" might be a forum for social commentary or overt sentimentality.



ty. McGuinness skirts both, making it a metric and dynamic playground for Dave Pietro's nimble soprano sax and a piano fantasia by Mike Holober.

McGuinness sings a couple of numbers ("What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life?" and "You Don't Know What Love Is"), reminiscent of Chet

Baker's features. Sincerity, good phrasing and dead-on intonation offset what he lacks in vocal timbre, and though instrumentalist vocals are often something to be indulged sparingly, he doesn't wear out his welcome.

The vigorous "Nasty Blues," with its two-trombone workout (Mark Patterson and Matt Haviland) would have made Basie smile with approval, while "Spellbound" (composed by McGuinness, not Bernard Herrmann) couples Latin rhythm with harmonic ambrosia. Without recreating an era or bowing to earlier models, the Pete McGuinness Jazz Orchestra deftly utilizes what came before to show what is possible in the present. —Kirk Silsbee

Strength In Numbers: The Send-Off; What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life?; Trixie's Little Girl; The Swagger; Beautiful Dreamer; Spellbound; You Don't Know What Love Is; Nasty Blues; Bittersweet; You Don't Know What Love Is. (76:19)

Personnel: Pete McGuinness, trombone, vocals (2, 7, 10), arranger; Jon Owens, Tony Kadlec, Bill Mobley, Chris Rogers, trumpets; Bruce Eidem, Mark Patterson, Matt Haviland, trombones; Jeff Nelson, bass trombone; Dave Pietro, flute, soprano, alto saxophones; Marc Phaneuf, flute, alto saxophone; Tom Christensen, flute, tenor saxophone; Jason Rigby, clarinet, soprano, tenor saxophones; Dave Reikenberg, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone; Mike Holober, piano; Andy Eulau bass; Scott Neumann, drums.

Ordering info: summitrecords.com

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Rachel Eckroth *Let Go*

VIRGO SUN 12014

★★★★

With *Let Go*, Rachel Eckroth has reinvented herself from a jazz pianist to a singer-songwriter with a collection of 10 songs that fully embrace the expressiveness and vulnerability of her voice. Her jazz background peeks through in the agile way she coaxes a melody, but on this CD the main focus is on revealing emotion. The recording follows a sabbatical during which Eckroth left New York City to return home to Phoenix, initiating a period of regrouping and self-examination that led to her first stabs at writing lyrics. After returning to Brooklyn in 2013, she teamed with keyboardist and producer Jesse Fischer to craft *Let Go*. The results frame Eckroth's songs in a variety of settings, which at times could stand to retain a bit more spontaneity from her more jazz-oriented side. But they wisely keep her voice as the core of the sound, whether it's surrounded by the Stevie Wonder-flavored Fender Rhodes funk of "Future" or the desert twang of "Bitter My Heart." These songs are built around the supple intimacy of that voice, and falter a touch when confronted with excessive production, as on the melodramatic strings that climax the album's opener, "Gold." She's better served by the less showy challenges of the shifting rhythmic contours of "A Million Dreams," the torch song airiness of the title track or the mysterious electronic textures of "Words Don't Mean." The stylistic leaps occasionally feel like eclecticism for eclecticism's sake, but showcase a promising adaptability.

—Shaun Brady

Let Go: Gold; Future; Sunrise; Words Don't Mean; Let Go; A Million Dreams; Muse; Dark And Dreamy; More Beautiful Than That; Bitter My Heart. (50:42)

Personnel: Rachel Eckroth, piano, keyboards, Fender Rhodes, Wuritzer, synthesizers, harmonium, bells, finger cymbals; Jesse Fischer, synthesizers, Moog, organ, bass, drums; Chris Parrillo, guitar, ukulele; Myles David Lancette, background vocals, dobro, bells.

Ordering info: racheleckroth.com



Elias Haslanger *Live At The Gallery*

CHERRYWOOD RECORDS

★★★★½

Thought you were done with soul-jazz organ combos? Not yet, you ain't—not by a long shot. I was close to overlooking this CD: "Elias Haslanger," with all those vowels, didn't sound like a jazzman, and the song list for this live set at Austin's Continental Club Gallery looked hackneyed, with reruns of the well-chewed "Watermelon Man" and "Song For My Father." But giving it the benefit of the doubt, I was rewarded with one of the most enjoyable, raucously swinging, unpretentious yet adventurously soulful albums I've heard in a month of Sundays. The weekly gig at which these cuts were recorded actually takes place Monday nights and is dubbed "Church on Monday" thanks to the preachy organ of Dr. James Polk (who directed Ray Charles' band for a decade; check his swirling investigations on "Watermelon Man"). Credit to engineers Eddy Hobizal and Evan Kaspar for beautifully capturing the sound of Jake Langley's warm, gorgeously tasteful guitar, and the unfussy rhythm section of drummer Scott Laningham and bassist Daniel Durham. The band provides an excellent pocket and launchpad, but it is Haslanger's fabulously virile sound and starter-gun chutzpah that leap out (listen to his voluble break on "Adam's Apple"). The saxophonist credits Coltrane and Stevie Ray Vaughan as influences but it's the pecky punctuation of Sonny Rollins that hops to the fore on his ripping "One For Daddy O" solo and the trilly, sardonic "I Thought About You." Not as obtuse as Rollins but similarly playful, Haslanger's freewheeling licks roar with virtuosity and infectious joie de vivre.

—Michael Jackson

Live At The Gallery: One For Daddy O; Watermelon Man; I Thought About You; Goin' Down; Song For My Father; Misty; Adam's Apple; In A Sentimental Mood. (69:33)

Personnel: Elias Haslanger, tenor saxophone; Dr. James Polk, B-3 organ; Jake Langley, guitar; Scott Laningham, drums; Daniel Durham, bass.

Ordering info: elijazz.com



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Cathy Lemons, *Black Crow* (VizzTone CL 01; 51:19 ★★★)

In Dallas, Cathy Lemons used to run with guitarists Stevie Ray Vaughan and Anson Funderburgh before moving to the Bay Area in the mid-1980s. She's lived a hard life, and the singing on her first solo album in many years lends credence to the typically suspect supposition that misfortune is a prerequisite for creating superior blues. Backed by guitarist Stevie Gurr and other above-average musicians feasting on slow tempos, Lemons both salves the scars of the past and celebrates new feelings of freedom on her compositions "I'm Going To Try" and "You're In My Town." Thankfully forgoing sensory overload, she boogies, shuffles and personalizes Earl King r&b, James Brown funk and Kieran Kane roots music with unfeigned ardor.

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Ray Bonneville, *Easy Gone* (Red House 269; 37:20 ★★★)

There's a down-home mix of tenacity and ironic playfulness on the 10 original songs on Ray Bonneville's eighth album. Never guilty of pretension or soft sentimentality, he admires the spirit of resilience possessed by those underclass and often forgotten folks. Rumbling grooves and loping riffs—Bonneville's no-frills guitar and harmonica sit well with Gurf Morlix's bass and Geoff Arsenault's drums—seem to emanate from a bewitching haunt midway between Louisiana swampland and J.J. Cale's Tulsa. Take a visit.

Ordering info: redhouserecords.com

Daunielle, *Daunielle* (Catfood 019; 41:17 ★★★)

Most recently known for her backup singing with the Huey Lewis band, Daunielle's solo album connects depth with impassioned soul-blues expression. Living in Memphis but supported here by the Texas-based band The Rays, she dares to address Etta James's "Damn Your Eyes" and Jackie Wilson's "Higher And Higher," yet makes them her own. Also striking is her devotion to the subtleties in lyrics of top-grade songs written by bassist Bob Trenchard and a few associates at the label. Daunielle emotes the ballad "Goodbye Kiss" with a lump in her throat and somehow succeeds in steering horn-fueled, thunderous "Runaway Train" down a sublime track.

Ordering info: catfoodrecords.com

Dave & Phil Alvin, *Common Ground* (Yep Roc 2384; 43:07 ★★★½)

In the recording studio for their first collaboration in nearly 30 years, the brothers apply their Blasters rockabilly/blues/country aesthetic to a dozen Big Bill Broonzy tunes they've treasured since childhood, including the well-traveled "Key To The Highway." Phil's unusual voice, the Alvins' guitars and two rhythm sections all meet the high standard set by such ageless material. (But the less said about Dave's

vocals the better.)

Ordering info: yeproc.com

Various Artists, *A Celebration Of Blues And Soul* (Shout! Factory DVD 826663; 120:00 ★★★)

A nasty pit bull as a Republican party strategist, the late Lee Atwater sure loved blues, soul and r&b performers. His dream-come-true 1989 Presidential Inaugural Concert (for George H. W. Bush) is at long last available for viewing. It's a triumph, all performers giving their best to entertain the dressed-up crowd with their signature songs. The Memphis/Stax soul section of the program stars William Bell, Carla Thomas and Sam Moore while the Chicago/Chess blues camp is represented by Bo Diddley (onstage too long), Koko Taylor (not long enough) and Willie Dixon (ditto). Texans Albert Collins, Delbert McCClinton, Jimmie and Stevie Ray Vaughan work up beatific sweats; the latter's multi-string bends are like mini-nuclear explosions. No mere opening act: Chuck Jackson, an uptown r&b singer capable of bursts of inspiration.

Ordering info: shoutfactory.com

Various Artists, *The Rough Guide To African Blues* (World Music Network 1316; 68:14 ★★★½)

The late trance-hypnotists John Lee Hooker and Skip James as well as modernists like Otis Taylor and Markus James convey threads of musical and emotional linkage to many of the 14 African performers contributing a track apiece to this anthology. The truly missed Ali Farka Touré brings his great powers of voice and guitar to bear on "Yer Mali Gakoyoyo." Other West Africans Samba Touré and Nuru Kane (with Frenchman Thierry Fournel playing a bluesy oud) give examples of their alluring music, as do the first-rate Saharan bands Tamikrest and Bombino. Lala Njava sings "Blues Song" with the resignation of a Madagascan Edith Piaf, and Senegalese singer Modou Touré joins guitarist Ramon Goose for the boogie "Lalumbe." The last third of the album, however, featuring musicians from Zambia, Mozambique and Ethiopia, settles into a somnolent mellowness. Bonus disc: Tuareg singer-guitarist Alhousseini Anivolla's 3-star album *Anewel/The Walking Man*.

Ordering info: worldmusic.net

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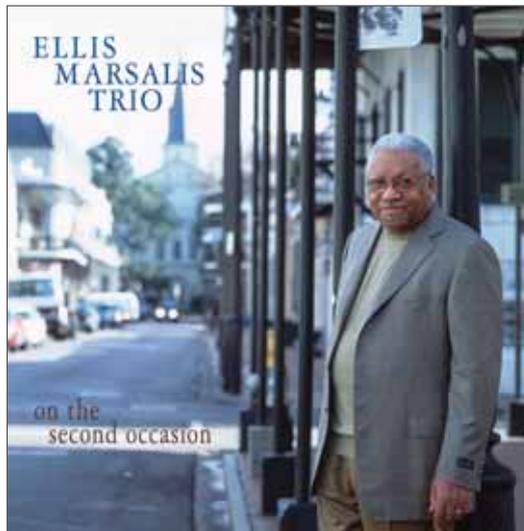
ELM 19791

★★★★½

In jazz, it is not unusual for excellent sessions to sit in the vaults for many years before finally being released. The possible reasons are many and usually have little to do with the music. Such is the case with pianist Ellis Marsalis' *On The Second Occasion*.

In 1998 he recorded his first album in quite a few years, *On The First Occasion*, a ballad-oriented date. In 2003 he returned for its sequel, concentrating on medium and uptempo performances. But for reasons not explained in the CD's brief liner notes, the music is just being released for the first time now.

It might be 11 years old, but these trio performances were worth waiting for. Marsalis, bassist Bill Huntington and drummer Jason Marsalis perform well-rehearsed arrangements that manage to also sound spontaneous. While the music is in the tradition of the Oscar Peterson, Ahmad Jamal and Ray Brown trios with clever and witty melody statements that contain plenty of little surprises, the music is timeless rather than derivative. In fact, this is one of Ellis Marsalis' finest recording projects.



There are many highlights sprinkled throughout the performances here. "Yesterdays" is given a mysterious piano introduction before it becomes a swinger. "Delilah" has Jason playing picturesque rhythms that make one think of a desert cavern. "The Breeze And I" (which is heard twice in similar versions) has a three-note bass pattern during the main part of the chorus that alternates with a swinging bridge.

"Surrey With The Fringe On Top" (the one tune that features Roland Guerin on bass) finds the pianist hinting at McCoy Tyner before the performance becomes quite joyful. "Things You Never Were" is a barely disguised "All The Things You Are" that really cooks, although the piano solo could have been much longer. "Canadian Sunset" has near-telepathic interplay between the sidemen that is worthy of Jamal, while "Get Me To The Church On Time" frequently uses a 1940s mop-mop rhythm.

An oddity is that there are three "hidden" tracks that are placed between some of the songs. These are just brief excerpts of the trio playing unidentified songs, a little bonus for the listener.

Huntington and Jason have fine solos along the way and prove to be sensitive and very alert accompanists. But the main reason to acquire this set is to hear Ellis playing in peak form, clearly enjoying himself.

—Scott Yanow

On The Second Occasion: Yesterdays; Deliah; The Breeze And I; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; Surrey With The Fringe On Top; Things You Never Were; Canadian Sunset; The Breeze And I (Reprise); Will You Still Be Mine; On Broadway; Get Me To The Church On Time. (60:47)

Personnel: Ellis Marsalis, piano; Bill Huntington, bass; Jason Marsalis, drums; Roland Guerin, bass (5).

Ordering info: ellismarsalis.com

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 Downbeat magazine

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Monty Alexander
Harlem-Kingston Express
Vol. 2: The River Rolls On

MOTÉMA 138
 ★★½

Jamaica-born pianist Monty Alexander has been paying tribute to his homeland for a number of years, and this is one more continuation in the series of his jazz interpretations of reggae, calypso, rocksteady and other Caribbean idioms. His style and technique have remained consistent, but this disc contains a few turns, some of which sound better than others.

Alexander's bridge between the United States and Jamaica works best when he simply lets loose, like on the lighthearted "Skamento." He also brings blues phrasing to Jimmy Cliff's "The Harder They Come." His strong block chords dialog with the offbeat rhythm of "Sleaky," a piece he co-wrote with Curtis Mayfield's former arranger, Johnny Pate. "Concierto De Aranjuez" balances high-register triplets with dark rumbles from the lower end. High-profile guests show up for "Love Notes," including George Benson, who adds a succinct, yet stinging, guitar solo.

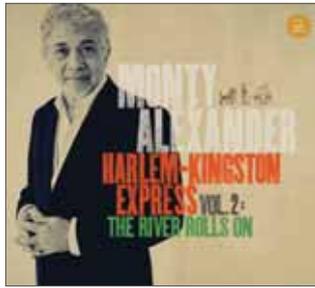
Throughout much of the disc, the spirited vibe is buried among overbearing synthesizer lines, especially on "The River Rolls On" and Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." The rough edges made classic reggae and rocksteady sound so warm, and on this disc the electronic keyboard buffs them out. While Alexander does not claim his voice as his primary instrument, his limited range still sounds endearing in the quiet doses he provides.

By the end of *Harlem-Kingston Express*, Alexander sounds re-energized on three live tracks. In a setting where he's relaxed enough to take some chances and play with a sense of humor, he avoids the studio tricks that diminish the disc's vitality. Alexander's liner notes include his warm memories of some great producers of early '60s Jamaican music—Duke Reid and Clement "Sir Coxson" Dodd—as well as Pate. No doubt, he learned a lot from working with them as a teenager. But Alexander would have been better off applying their lean aesthetics to his current recordings. —Aaron Cohen

Harlem-Kingston Express Vol. 2: The River Rolls On; Hurricane Come And Gone/Moonlight City; People Make The World Go Round; Concierto De Aranjuez; Sleaky; Trust; The Harder They Come; The River Rolls On; What's Going On (Wa'A Gwan); Love Notes; Skamento; Linstead Market; Redemption Song; Regulator (Reggae-Later). (65:44)

Personnel: Monty Alexander, piano, melodica, vocals; Hassan Shakur, acoustic bass; Obed Calvaire, Karl Wright, Frits Landesbergen, drums; Joshua Thomas, electric bass; Yotam Silberstein, Andy Bassford, guitars; Earl Appleton, keyboards; Courtney Pantony, bass, percussion; Caterina Zapponi (7), Wendel Ferraro (12), vocals; George Benson, guitar (9); Ramsey Lewis, piano (9); Joe Sample, keyboard (9).

Ordering info: motema.com



Wolfgang Muthspiel
Driftwood

ECM 0020543
 ★★

Driftwood is 49-year-old Austrian guitarist Wolfgang Muthspiel's debut for ECM and an opportunity to present a new trio that includes bass player Larry Grenadier and drummer Brian Blade—although he has been playing with both of them separately since the 1990s. The idea of recording for the famed German label influenced his writing as he prepared for the session. Moreover, his connections to the imprint's aesthetics are multiple: guitarist Mick Goodrick was his teacher when he studied at the New England Conservatory; guitarist Ralph Towner has been collaborating with him in a recent project; and this album has some hints of Gateway, the celebrated trio that featured guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette.

With this trio, Muthspiel is fully in charge from a compositional standpoint. With a couple of exceptions, his pieces sound open-ended and do not follow a predictable pattern or structure. In fact, the fully improvised title track does not seem less composed than, say, "Joseph," his somber tribute to fellow countryman Joseph Zawinul of Weather Report fame, or his duo with Blade, "Lichtzelle," an homage to French 20th-century composer Olivier Messiaen, whose searching and explorative musings could have been uttered on the spur of the moment.

Despite the guitarist's taste for adventure and the unknown, his music remains remarkably accessible. One of the reasons is that his ramblings are always centered on a melodic line that tends to be pretty or sweet. It can also be troubling though, especially when the approach produces original results and leaves you wondering what might have happened had Muthspiel decided to push the envelope.

In any case, the modus operandi here seems to suit Grenadier and Blade who provide an ideal backdrop. The bassist serves as the trio's pillar without being obtrusive (he also delivers some stunning arco work) while the drummer demonstrates a great ear and his usual attention to detail, which shines through scintillating cymbals, scurrying brushes, light mallets and surgically-precise sticks. —Alain Drouot

Driftwood: Joseph; Uptown; Cambiata; Highline; Driftwood; Lichtzelle; Madame Vonn; Bossa for Michael Brecker. (43:00)

Personnel: Wolfgang Muthspiel, electric, acoustic guitar; Larry Grenadier, double bass; Brian Blade, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



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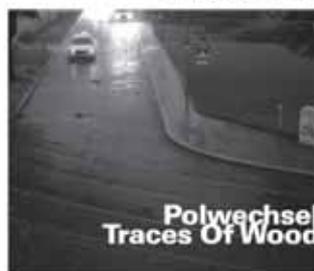
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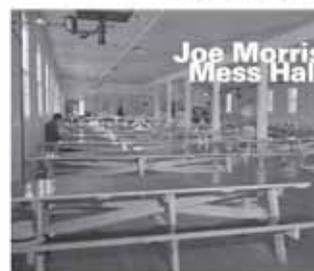
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* New releases

David White Jazz Orchestra *The Chase*

MISTER SHEPHERD RECORDS 10615

★★★★

The Chase, the 17-piece David White Jazz Orchestra's follow-up to 2011's *Flashpoint*, explodes out of the starting block. On the first tune, "Mister Shepherd's Misadventures," the sizzling, articulated melody—which is played at a blistering pace by the saxophone section, backed by trumpet accents—sets a relentless pace for the rest of the album.

The hard-driving, madcap pace moves below the surface for the gospel-tinged "And The People Could Fly"—propulsive drums and a percussive piano ostinato needle on a reflective melody. While this soaring passage is passed around the ensemble, the rest of the group blends together perfectly, providing a delicate background.

White, on trombone, weaves compositions that use his band in equal measure. As a trombonist, he seems to have no great bias toward brass, and in fact, some of the best writing on the album is given to the woodwinds, who serve as the base layer for saucy, uptempo numbers like "Persistence" and "The Shakedown." White's ability to write pieces with many moving parts makes the majority of *The Chase's* tunes exciting and enjoyable. —Jon Ross

The Chase: Mister Shepherd's Misadventures, And the People Could Fly, The Sweetest Bite of Cherry, Persistence, The Shakedown, Blues for Sally Draper. (34:02)

Personnel: David White, music director, trombone; Andrew Gould, Omar Daniels, alto saxophone; Sam Taylor, Sam Dillon, tenor saxophone; Tim Stocker, baritone saxophone; Miki Hirose, Colin Brigstocke, Alicia Rau, Pablo Masis, trumpet; Rick Parker, Dan Reitz, Alaina Alster, trombone; Robert Stattel, bass trombone; Nick Consol, piano; Phil Rowan, bass; Ryan Cavan, drums.

Ordering info: davidwhitejazz.com



Michael Feinberg's Humblebrag *Live At 800 East*

BEHIP RECORDS

★★

Bassist Michael Feinberg is gaining a name on the New York scene these days, but he recorded his fourth album as a leader live in a studio in his hometown of Atlanta, convening a crew of youthful kindred spirits he calls Humblebrag. The bassist attests to influences from fusion-era Miles Davis and the vintage hip-hop of Busta Rhymes to such disparate contemporary figures as bassist Ben Allison and keyboardist Robert Glasper. Diverse touchstones and the live-in-the-studio setting might offer grooving promise, yet *Live At 800 East* captures a group of young pros playing well together but breaking no molds, or even making much of an impression.

Feinberg's 2012 release, *The Elvin Jones Project* (Sunnyside), was a much more potent affair, perhaps inevitably given its titular inspiration and the all-star band in tow (including Feinberg mentor saxophonist George Garzone alongside drummer Billy Hart, trumpeter Tim Hagans and pianist Leo Genovese). *Live At 800 East*—which features Billy Buss on trumpet, Godwin Louis on alto sax, Julian Shore on piano and Terreon Gully on drums—feels humdrum. The ballad "Untitled 2" lopes along without much more than a wan rumor of a tune. It's no better when Feinberg straps on his electric bass for a softcore fusion sound on "Puncher's Chance" and "Humblebrag." Gully—whose associations include Christian McBride's electric band—drives the Ice-T-referencing "Tutuola" with his crackling fills. Buss' squealing, smearing horn is another animator, helping to disguise Feinberg's prosaic writing. The more involved and atmospheric "But The Sound" is the album's 12-minute highlight, with its intersecting horn lines as a constant hook. The head of "Duckface" harks back to soul-jazz in a pleasant way, though it's only with a funky alto solo by Louis that the track rises above the mildly diverting.

—Bradley Bamberger

Live At 800 East: Tutuola; Puncher's Chance; But The Sound; Duckface; Untitled 2; Humblebrag. (49:09)

Personnel: Michael Feinberg, acoustic, electric bass; Billy Buss, trumpet; Godwin Louis, alto saxophone; Julian Shore, piano; Terreon Gully, drums; Jacob Deaton, electric guitar (5).

Ordering info: humblebrag-band.com

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El Portal *Slow Grind*

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★★★★½

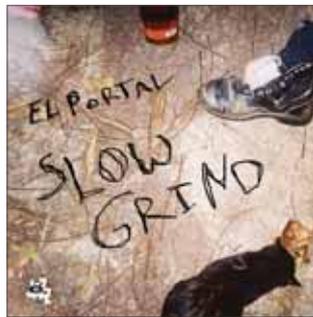
The Miami-based quintet El Portal never gets too riled up. On its sophomore album, there are no uproarious ascensions, nor does the group soften its sound for any stretch long enough to be considered true balladeers. It shifts about with hazy tones that aren't quite psychedelic. The songs here are a pleasure to listen to but aren't particularly memorable enough to sing along with. The somber title track, off-kilter "Diagonalization" and the needling "Grid 3" and "Grid 1" have a tinge of rock, but not overbearingly so. El Portal sounds like a true collective. Tenor saxophonist Nolan Lem is out front on many of these songs, though he's not the leader. His tones mesh well with Paul Bedal's Fender Rhodes and Rainer Davies' electric guitar, making for the shifting, fuzzy sound that tonally explains the album title. The disc never quite rises in energy level over a low rumble, but weirdness is by no means out of the picture. A floating, psychedelic vibe fuels the metallic opening of "Kernal," perhaps the most ambitious section of the album. The ballads "Schwayze" and "Overly Romanticized" are well-served by Dion Keith Kerr IV's soft play on drums. There's care in the construction of these songs. The way the disparate sounds come together to make an interesting tableau recalls the work of saxophonist Sam Sadigursky—though Sadigursky does this sort of thing better. El Portal has obvious talent, but not quite staying power. *Slow Grind* piques interest, but isn't earth-shattering or head-turning.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Slow Grind: An Arm's Length; Slow Grind; Grid 3; Diagonalization; Loose Time; Terranium; Kernal; Schwayze; Grid 1; Overly Romanticized. (46:08)

Personnel: Nolan Lem, tenor saxophone; Rainer Davies, electric guitar, bass VI; Paul Bedal, Fender Rhodes; Joe Rehmer, bass; Dion Keith Kerr IV, drums.

Ordering info: camjazz.com



Javon Jackson *Expression*

SMOKE SESSIONS 1404

★★★★

Released on the new label founded by New York City jazz institution Smoke Jazz Club, Javon Jackson's 14th album is more of the straightforward fare we've come to expect from this perennial tenor saxophonist. Too old for Young Turk status but hardly a veteran, Jackson combines original material, worthy hard-bop and three pop standards from this July 2013 Smoke date. Unfortunately, Jackson sounds oddly uncommitted throughout, the music often lifted by the performances of pianist Orrin Evans and drummer McClenty Hunter. *Expression* begins smartly, Wayne Shorter's "One By One" delivered with forward-motion energy, Jackson's solo slightly raunchy, with funky bar-walking intent. Jackson's tone has always been one of his biggest assets, a warm, full-throated, sometimes burly expression that, when combined with his easy gait, can make his notes float in midair. But too often on *Expression* Jackson sounds uninvolved and his mind seems elsewhere; the torpid pop fluff of "Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing" and "Where Is The Love" amplify the stasis. Jackson kicks it up a notch on his original material, but even here Evans sounds more inspired. Jackson catches fire on "T.J." before Evans takes it for a cosmopolitan spin. The tenor saxophonist delivers a great solo on "Mr. Taylor," then closes with Trane-ish mover "88 Strong," with ideas flowing out of his horn like a waterfall. Perhaps the inclusion of hackneyed pop material was a commercial decision, but why such a fine tenor player was captured sounding so out of sorts is a mystery.

—Ken Micallef

Expression: One By One; Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing; T.J.; When I Fall In Love; Think On Me; Mr. Taylor; Where Is The Love; Lelia; Richard's R.A.P.; 88 Strong. (69:07)

Personnel: Javon Jackson, tenor saxophone; Orrin Evans, piano; Corcoran Holt, bass; McClenty Hunter, drums.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com



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Johnny O'Neal
Live At Smalls

SMALLSLIVE 0041

★★★★

He once opened for his idol, Oscar Peterson, at Carnegie Hall. On Peterson's recommendation, he portrayed Art Tatum in the movie *Ray*, mimicking the master on piano. No less a figure than the late Mulgrew Miller said he is "probably the most naturally talented pianist I know" with "a million-dollar touch." Yet Johnny O'Neal may be one of the best mainstream piano players you've never heard of.

After two decades of obscurity and bad health, O'Neal is back in New York enjoying a career renaissance at age 57, re-building his fan base and playing every Sunday night to packed houses at Smalls in Greenwich Village. This sparkling set, recorded at the venerable basement club, is his first album in 12 years.

O'Neal's playing is looser and rawer than in his earlier albums, and the occasional fumble is not uncommon. Never mind: he has a cast-iron sense of swing that many more modern players can learn from. His pianism predates the re-interpretations of the neo-traditionalists; when O'Neal plays it, it's the real deal. When he throws in a vocal, as he often does on this disc, his hoarse



yet suave voice conveys the bumps and bruises he has accumulated along the way, but can he ever swing a lyric, and scat old-school, too.

A somewhat ragged piano introduction on the opener, "The More I See You," announces that this set will be all about feel, not finesse. Even if his reach occasionally exceeds his grasp, he retains the capacity to surprise with his daring imagination and the occasional knockout two-handed run or odd arpeggio.

In uptempo, straightahead tunes like Walter

Davis Jr.'s "Uranus," the excellent Paul Sikivie on bass and Charles Goold on drums provide the necessary ballast to O'Neal's galloping, almost reckless flights of fancy. Tender ballads like "I'll Be Tired of You" and "Goodbye" showcase his feathery touch and accessible emotions. A remarkable unaccompanied piano solo in "Blues For Sale" begins in a bluesy hush and ends at full throttle, taking in stride and gospel along the way. At one point, O'Neal momentarily stumbles, apologizes, then eventually finds his way home, to general applause.

Smalls impresario Spike Wilner, an excellent player himself, sits in on piano as O'Neal delivers a joyous, scating vocal on "Tea For Two." As producer, Wilner provides an invaluable service by documenting the raw O'Neal in performance with no air-brushing; it's the aural equivalent of cinema vérité. The recording delivers a visceral sense of O'Neal's late Sunday set before a rapt audience. It's also an effective antidote to some of today's canned, over-thought, over-rehearsed jazz.

—Allen Morrison

Live At Smalls: The More I See You; I'm Born Again; Blues For Sale; I'll Be Tired Of You; Uranus; Goodbye; Where Is The Love/Overjoyed; Tea For Two; Sudan Blue; Let The Good Times Roll. (64:37)

Personnel: Johnny O'Neal, piano, vocals; Paul Sikivie, bass; Charles Goold, drums; Spike Wilner, piano (6).

Ordering info: smallslive.com

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Global Grooves

Seun Kuti + Egypt 80, *A Long Way To The Beginning* (Knitting Factory 1132; 45:57 ★★★★★)

It doesn't take long to establish the intensity of this album: the fist on the cover; the "Fela Lives" tattoo on the back; the fact that Miles Davis' favorite 12-letter word shows up within the first 30 seconds of the disc. Seun Kuti, son of Fela, spits venom over strafing horns on "Higher Consciousness" and builds a driving, scratchy groove on his alto saxophone for the frenetic "Kalakuta Boy." The instrumental support is dense with upwards of 15 musicians contributing to the funky pile of spidery lines and buckshot blasts. Keyboardist and co-producer Robert Gasper contributes to every track on the album, while rapper M-1 from Dead Prez makes a brief but suitably fuming guest appearance on "I.M.F." Kuti carries on the family tradition while adopting a few noble ideas of his own, making for an engaging album on numerous fronts.

Ordering info: knittingfactoryrecords.com

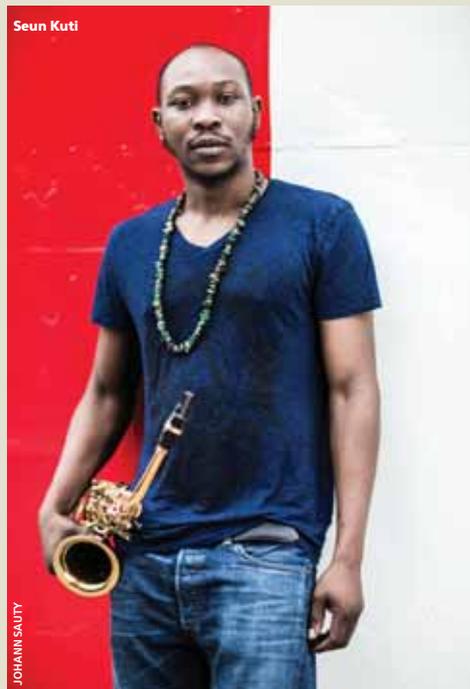
Ernest Ranglin & Avila, *Bless Up* (Avila Street 004; 73:08 ★★★★★)

Guitarist Ernest Ranglin could fill a radio station's entire playlist solely with the records he has contributed to since becoming a key session musician for the Jamaican music scene in the 1950s. Now in his early eighties, Ranglin's rich history as a bridge between the worlds of reggae and jazz is well established. He is a master of laid-back cool, employing a sprightly touch to help roll out his economically prodding phrases. On this recording, he serves as frontman for the six-piece, San Francisco-based band Avila, which is steady but rarely shining. Tracks like "Sivan" channel light touches of Les Paul, while the self-titled track is a bit of a hokey turn around the roller rink. The album is nearly instrumental but for a brief snippet of studio goofiness that leads to "Ska Renzo." Of the 16 tracks on this album, only a handful move at a tempo any faster than a stroll. "Ska Renzo" has a welcome bounce that gives Ranglin a little room to unravel his skitish riffs over gurgling horn harmonies and a reverb-heavy melodica. But in the end, this album brings similar results as an afternoon sipping sweet cocktails by the beach: warm, happy and a little sleepy.

Ordering info: avilastreetrecords.com

Lee Fields & The Expressions, *Emma Jean* (Truth & Soul; 44:10 ★★★★★½)

There is a generation of soul men who witnessed and worshipped James Brown in his prime when they were only in middle school. Those determined disciples are now in their sixties and some of them are still singing their hearts out for the title of The Hardest Working Man in Soul Business. Lee Fields, 63, is one of those lifers, and his plaintive wail is scorched by decades of living. Faithful



Seun Kuti

JOHANN SAUTY

production values and an airtight band help to elevate Fields' righteous sound. The band does not stick to simple rehashing of vintage soul but offers unique touches like a gentle slide guitar on "Magnolia" that takes the tune to a different, dustier locale, while tubular bells on the chorus of "Paralyzed" further broaden the orchestral reach of Fields' band, The Expressions. An unexpected take on Leon Russell's "Out In The Woods" is heightened by a handful of no-nonsense backup singers and a bristling guitar building in the background. There is an almost spooky sadness to Fields' delivery throughout this album, but he fights off the misery for a performance that is riddled with gritty honesty. It's an engaging listen from beginning to end.

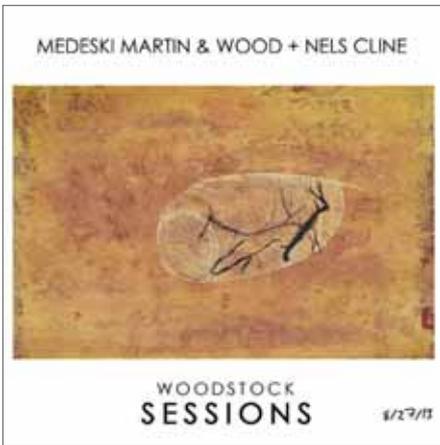
Ordering info: truthandsoulrecords.com

Ikebe Shakedown, *Stone By Stone* (Ubiquity Records 333; 38:15 ★★★★★½)

This Brooklyn-based, seven-piece band sounds like they could be an Afrobeat unit from the 1970s. Album opener "The Offering" and "The Beast" give it up to the gods of funky togetherness, slathering the horns in vintage Daptone gels and a gnarly baritone saxophone solo. Like its borough neighbor Antibalas, the band delivers a well-informed homage to the sounds of sweat-drenched Afro-pop, but the band's reach quickly expands and dilutes beyond the shores of Western Africa into warbly surf guitars and Ethio-jazz. The 10 tracks dip into a sandy swagger on "Rio Grande" with a humming vibraphone solo, while album closer, "The Dram," could make animatronic raisins testify. This is instrumental party music indebted to a shrinking globe and expanding ears, the soundtrack to a fun night out that doesn't result in paying the babysitter any overtime.

DB

Ordering info: ubiquityrecords.com



Medeski Martin & Wood + Nels Cline
Woodstock Sessions, Vol. 2
 WOODSTOCK SESSIONS
 ★★★★★

In conversation, the most compelling ideas often emerge from debate, yielding payoffs only after a process of deliberation that's not necessarily comfortable or easy. Taken as one long and highly organic musical conversation, keyboardist John Medeski, drummer Billy Martin, bassist Chris Wood and guitarist Nels Cline's *Woodstock Sessions, Vol. 2* follows a similar trajectory.

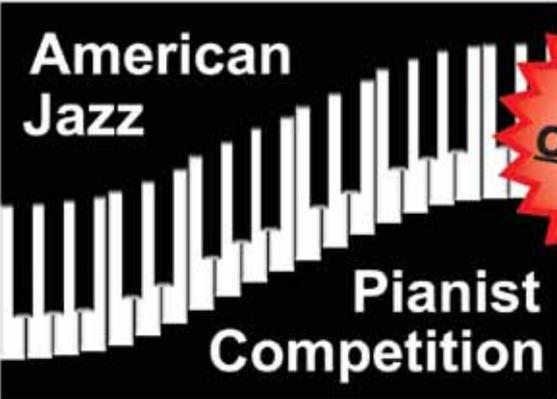
Recorded at Applehead Studios in Woodstock, N.Y., last summer before a small audience, then edited into nine distinct tracks, this uber-creative improvisational experiment is festooned with innovative grooves, heady rock licks and compelling sonic narratives. But those elements aren't quick to reveal themselves.

Nascent motifs unspool slowly here. Four instruments seem to share one skittering voice in the opener, "Doors Of Deception," creating a sinister dissonance that returns in the next two tracks, only to see Cline jump in with vamps as mileposts that guide the listener into a delectably wonky groove ("Bonjour Beze") or a bass line-buoyed muted rock breakdown ("Mezcal").

Springy, off-kilter chimes and woozy chords from Medeski's arsenal of keys conjure a haunted clock shop on the second track. Those sounds make a morphed reappearance alongside Wood's mournful bowing on "Looters." They get one more nod in the form of the metallic bells and lonely keys that herald the epic "Los Blank," which, over a trio of sections, reconstitutes its beat alongside Cline's psychedelic rave-ups. Later, the heavy doses of shimmering guitar tremolo and increasingly melodic drum work on "Jade" provide a foundation for the warmth and softness emanating from the seemingly Miles Davis-influenced "Cinders." Whether rooted in melodic mutiny, out-there space jams or accessible grooves and beats, this is improvisation processed through the waves of a funhouse mirror—and the result is a decidedly dark kind of fun. —Jennifer Odell

Woodstock Sessions, Vol. 2: Doors Of Deception; Bonjour Beze; Mezcal; Los Blank; Jade; Looters; Conebranch; Arm & Leg; Cinders. (65:00)
Personnel: John Medeski, keyboards; Billy Martin, drums, percussion; Chris Wood, bass; Nels Cline, guitar.
Ordering info: mmw.net

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The Westerlies *Wish The Children Would Come On Home: The Music Of Wayne Horvitz*

SONGLINES 1606
★★★

There's only a muted sense of outright blues in The Westerlies' offbeat, respectful reworking of music by transplanted Seattle composer Wayne Horvitz. From it, they draw links to folk, shape-note music and European brass traditions.

The brass quartet plays this suite-like set with a fair share of bent notes and orotund solemnity. They dig into brass history with a nod to the quiet authority of Gabrieli's Canzoni

Lisa Hilton *Kaleidoscope*

RUBY SLIPPER PRODUCTIONS 1017
★★★

This is Lisa Hilton's 16th release as a leader. Since 1997's *Seduction*, the California pianist-composer has worked with impressive, challenging sidemen, including bassist Christian McBride, saxophonist Steve Wilson, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and drummers Nasheet Waits and Lewis Nash. On *Kaleidoscope* she worked with previous collaborators Larry Grenadier (bass) and JD Allen (tenor saxophone) as well as drummer Marcus Gilmore. And, though there are a couple of covers (Adele's "One And Only," Victor Young and Edward Heyman's "When I Fall In Love"), the other nine tracks here all continue her trend of presenting her own writing.

Hilton has a beautiful touch and an appealing taste for the blues, and she's at her best supporting and drawing inspiration from Allen (here on three tracks). Her medium-tempo opener "Simmer" is inspired by Horace Silver and Herbie Hancock, and Hilton's not only superb at laying down the vamp but also at spinning attractive variations on the theme in tandem with the saxophonist.

Equally appealing is the similarly easygoing, Latin-tinged "Labyrinth," with Hilton's insistent repeated figures working a nice contrast to Allen's slow line. Hilton leans toward what you could call movie-music blues, as in the insinuating melody of the trio number "Whispered Confessions," with its ascending extended lines, or the cascading arpeg-

gios of pieces like "Kaleidoscope" and "Stepping Into Paradise." On the latter, she risks stepping from movie-music into New Age blandness.

Aside from the sheer beauty of her playing—the rhythmic acuity, those silky extended lines—Hilton has another side that's worth exploring further: On "Midnight Mania," she and Allen dig into the vamp, take it out, and stir some of the mud up from the bottom of her clear-flowing stream.

But these laid-back youngsters do not bestir themselves readily. When they finally go up-tempo near halfway through this debut session, it's not that they break a sweat so much as bedew themselves with a deep fog off Puget Sound. Everywhere the ensemble work eclipses the sparse solos: a shy trombone bit peters out early on "You Were Just Here." Bouncing cruisers like "Home" and "Barber Shop" cry out for trumpet breaks, to slight avail.

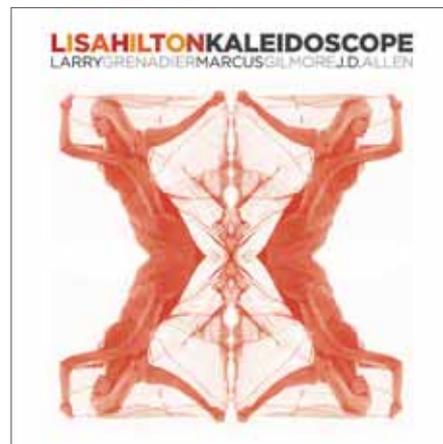
Horvitz himself comes aboard at evenly spaced "Interludes" and the titular finale, gently spicing the voyage with electronica: will-o'-the-wisp flashes of Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*, halyard creaks like Strauss' *Don Quixote* tilting at windmills, and the drone of Puget Sound foghorns. At sea, The Westerlies kick back like old salts, but their amiable vessel is searching for port.

—Fred Bouchard

Wish The Children Would Come On Home: The Music Of Wayne Horvitz: Please Keep That Train Away From My Door; 9/8; Sweeter Than The Day; Interlude 1; Triads; The Band With Muddy; You Were Just Here; Interlude 2; The Circus Prospered; Home; Waltz From Woman Of Tokyo; Interlude 3; Love, Love, Love; Barber Shop; The Store, The Campfire; Wish The Children Would Come On Home. (47:18)

Personnel: Riley Mulherkar, Zubin Hensler, trumpet; Andy Clausen, Willem De Koch, trombone; Wayne Horvitz, keyboard, electronics (4, 8, 12, 16).

Ordering info: songlines.com



Personnel: Lisa Hilton, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums; JD Allen, tenor saxophone (1, 3, 7).

Ordering info: lisahiltonmusic.com

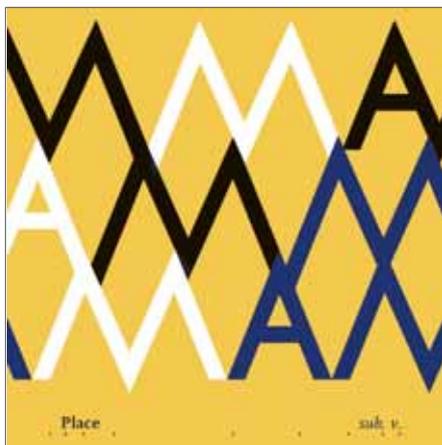
AMM
Place Sub. V.

MATCHLESS 91
★★★★½

Time is an essential aspect of any musical performance. The character of a groove shifts when you push against or play behind the beat; suspense is built or squandered through duration. What is swing, but the way we experience divisions in time? In free improvisation, the knowledge that players are conceiving the music at the same time that they perform it charges the music with certain meanings. First-thought creativity, responsiveness and the way these qualities reveal a player or an ensemble's sensitivity, fortitude and clarity of thought all come to the fore.

But when a group has been around since 1965—as have British pianist John Tilbury and percussionist Eddie Prévost of AMM—another temporal matter comes into play: the weight of individual and shared history. Everything that each player has played within and without the group potentially influences what they play and how the listener hears them.

AMM has remained true to an aesthetic that values working out just what the music will be in real time by playing it, and also a profound respect for the qualities of individual sounds. The ensemble has often evinced a sort of parallel play in which the material that players develop coexists rather than directly interacts. AMM's lineup and sound have changed dramatically, most recently when guitarist Keith Rowe departed the group in



2004, but it's still possible to know that it's AMM you are hearing within seconds due to certain signature elements—Prévost's preternatural cymbal bowing, Tilbury's Morton Feldman-like flourishes and the liberal use of silence. All of these elements are present on *Place Sub. V.*, but the way the duo employs them never feels rote. Each drumskin moan or gamelan-like piano note feels necessary and resoundingly right. AMM doesn't try to evade its history here. Rather, one's awareness of how the players have played their music before enhances the appreciation of the further refinement they bring to it right now. —Bill Meyer

Place Sub. V.: Lublin. (61:01)
Personnel: Eddie Prévost, percussion; John Tilbury, piano.
Ordering info: matchlessrecordings.com

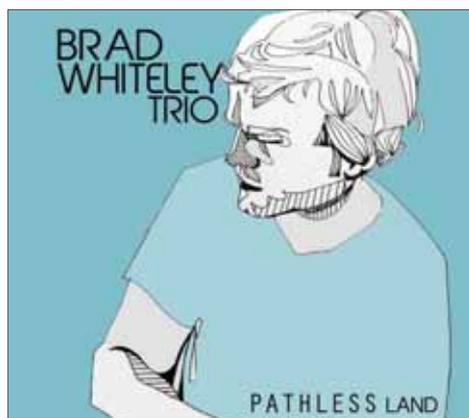
except for a vocalist (Erika Lloyd) on one track, there are no "special guests" here. In other words, there's no one to distract the listener from what's really happening.

Each set of music is created by a steady band. There aren't people jumping in and out on this record. Each soul-jazz track is cut by the same group, and each piano-trio track is cut by the same group—and the same drummer plays in both ensembles. So there's continuity and trust here—no flighty stylistic jumps to disorient the listener. In a music world where everyone does everything pretty well, what if you did just a couple of things but you were *great* at them?

Whiteley does slightly alter the soul-jazz lineup on "Bass Instincts." On that track, Whiteley and drummer Kenneth Salters disinvite guitarist Andrew Lim, diving into a soulful drum and organ duet. Here, more than anywhere else on the album, you can hear Whiteley do his thing. Over Salters' supportive beat and his own deep bass lines, Whiteley gets warm, funky, playful and enthusiastic. Much like the way he planned out *Pathless Land*, "Bass Instincts" gives you everything you need, and not a drop more. Because no one needs that extra drop. It's a waste.

—Brad Farberman

Pathless Land: Winsome Excursion; Erika's Song; Bass Instincts; Suite: Contemplation; Come Rain Or Come Shine; No Regrets; Nostalgistic; Suite: Resolve; Pathless Land; Brooklyn Hustle. (51:23)
Personnel: Brad Whiteley, piano, organ; Andrew Lim, guitar; Daniel Foose, bass; Kenneth Salters, drums; Erika Lloyd, vocals.
Ordering info: destinyrecordsmusic.com



Brad Whiteley Trio
Pathless Land

DESTINY RECORDS 0002
★★★★

With his first album, *Pathless Land*, New York pianist-organist Brad Whiteley offers more than a smart record. He shows us how it's done.

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**Jeff Denson
& Claudio Puntin**
Two

PFMENTUM 075
★★★★

**Jeff Denson
& Joshua White**
I'll Fly Away

PFMENTUM 081
★★★★

Double bassist Jeff Denson capitalizes on his

considerable gifts as an improviser, interpreter and sonic trailblazer in these two surprising recordings. At once playful and welcomingly bizarre, *Two* and *I'll Fly Away* offer unique interpretations of experimental and traditional music, respectively, each as insightful as they are joyous.

Denson—who was born and raised in Washington, D.C., attended Berklee College of Music and earned his master's in jazz studies at Florida State University—is known for his work with the trio Minsarah with pianist Florian Weber and drummer Ziv Ravitz.

The bassist with Lee Konitz's New Quartet, Denson has also worked with saxophonist Joe Lovano, pianist Anthony Davis and guitarist Lionel Loueke, among others, and he's a professor at the California Jazz Conservatory. Even given Denson's copious cred, these recordings are a revelation and inhabit a rare, cliché-free zone.

Two, with the clarinet and "analog preparations" of Claudio Puntin, is an improvised set of 12 songs recorded in 2008. The duo creates all manner of moods from nightmarish ("Frozen Oscillations") and placidly swinging ("You Don't Say") to free ("Plan B"), never losing the plot even at its most absurd. Denson and Puntin's performance is so melodic and in sync that you're instantly sucked into their weird-world improvisations.

As the title suggests, Denson and pianist Joshua White explore American spirituals and traditional songs on *I'll Fly Away*, generally playing it straight then going berserk on such familiar fare as "Amazing Grace" and "Just As I Am." The second of three versions of the title track begins at a slow gait, White soon altering the spiritual via stinging multi-note clusters, crippled swing illusions and Monk-filled assertions. It's as if Mr. Rogers changed out of his sweater into a Zoot suit of many colors.

The pair plays "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" with clearheaded reverence, then swings "When The Saints Go Marching In" into almost unrecognizable terrain. "Just As I Am" is a rolling collision of bass and piano notes crashing and splayed, like Cecil Taylor interpreting "America The Beautiful."

Among the other songs Denson and White explore here are "Lord, I Want To Be A Christian," "Down At The Cross," Artie Glenn's "Crying In The Chapel" and the gospel song "In The Garden."

That these songs retain their beauty under fire proves their resilience and the musicians' great invention and skill.

—Ken Micallef

Two: Harbor Of Fog; Plan B; Black Lilies; Variation On A Point Of View; Nobody Bothers Me Either; A Sunday Afternoon And Still Surprising; Frozen Oscillations; Un Sueño Distante; First Take—Scanning Souls; You Don't Say; Ghosts In The Walls; Desperate. (57:04)

Personnel: Jeff Denson, double bass, voice; Claudio Puntin, clarinet, bass clarinet, analog preparations, tarcas.

Ordering info: pfmentum.com

I'll Fly Away: I'll Fly Away (Version One); Lord, I Want To Be A Christian; Down At The Cross; Amazing Grace; I'll Fly Away (Version Two); What A Friend We Have In Jesus; When The Saints Go Marching In; Just As I Am; Crying In The Chapel; In The Garden; I'll Fly Away (Version Three). (50:10)

Personnel: Jeff Denson, double bass; Joshua White, piano.

Ordering info: pfmentum.com

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Dave Rempis/Darren Johnston/Larry Ochs
Spectral

AEROPHONIC 006
 ★★★★★

Forget any notions of received languages that you might imagine when you hear that this trio practices total improvisation. Likewise, forget whatever you might think it means for the combo to include a Chicago saxophonist, or that the others are from the West Coast, or that one member is also part of the ROVA Saxophone Quartet.

A web of associations already linked saxophonists Dave Rempis and Larry Ochs and trumpeter Darren Johnston before they first shared a stage in 2011, so there was a certain amount of foreknowledge of shared affinities. But what they discovered is a chemistry that is founded upon a collective sense of balance, and also a capacity to imagine and enact a coherent piece of music from a spontaneous beginning.

Throughout this CD you can hear the players quickly shifting responsibility, so that there is always someone setting up a harmonic or tonal foundation for the others' explorations. But they do not fall into the trap that snares some all-horns ensembles in which someone is



always playing like a rhythm section; the player making structural suggestions does so using the natural language of his instrument. Natural, however, does not mean limited. They wield the full range—from lush long tones to abrasive cries to percussive pops—to create music that imparts both the thrill of instant creation and the satisfaction of elegant construction.

—Bill Meyer

Spectral: Traction; Integrated Integrals; Wrinkle Wrinkle; How It Started; Snaggletooth Tussle; Cheek And Bones; The Drop. (55:30)

Personnel: Dave Rempis, alto saxophone; Darren Johnston, trumpet; Larry Ochs, tenor, soprano saxophones.

Ordering info: aerophonicrocords.com



Tom Chang
Tongue & Groove

RAW TOAST RECORDS
 ★★★★★

About three minutes into “Bar Codes,” a slow, swaggering song from guitarist Tom Chang’s first album, *Tongue & Groove*, the leader starts a solo with one dirty, twisted note. Then he gets bluesy with a lot of space. His tones are piercing. After a solo each from saxophonists Greg Ward and Jason Rigby, Chang jumps into the spotlight again. He makes a strong entrance then goes down-home, sending some notes sky-high. Now, really, no one should solo twice on the same tune. Not even the leader. It’s redundant, and perhaps a bit egotistical; how many insightful things can one player say

on the same topic? But Chang earns that second turn. His first improvisation was gripping, so if he’s got more to say, let him do it. And maybe that’s a metaphor for the whole album. Track after track, Chang and his band—Ward on alto, Rigby on tenor, Chris Lightcap on bass and Gerald Cleaver on drums—earn the opportunity to play for you. There are no duds on *Tongue & Groove*, just unslick, dark-hued, contemporary jazz tunes performed by top players.

The band is especially memorable when dishing out short tracks. “Spinal Tap / Goes To 11,” which opens and closes the album, settles in somewhere between Black Sabbath and grunge-rock. What separates these tracks from other rock-leaning cuts made by jazz musicians today? It’s not ironic, or cool—they’re just actually working with some sinister rock riffing. It feels authentic. And when the brief funk tune “Scatterbrain” emerges about halfway through the album, there’s chicken-scratch guitar and a simple yet heavy beat that screams The Meters. But later, things get eerie, as if someone was mixing funk with a New York jazz edge. That someone was Chang.

—Brad Farberman

Tongue & Groove: Spinal Tap/Goes To 11; Djangolongo; Variations For Piano Op. 27; Sleepwalker; Tongue & Groove; Scatterbrain; Bar Codes; The Logos; Entangoed Heart; Spinal Tap Tk. 2. (49:33)

Personnel: Tom Chang, guitar; Greg Ward, alto sax; Jason Rigby, tenor sax; Chris Lightcap, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums; Akshay Anantapadmanabhan, kanjira, mridangam; Subash Chandran, konnakol.

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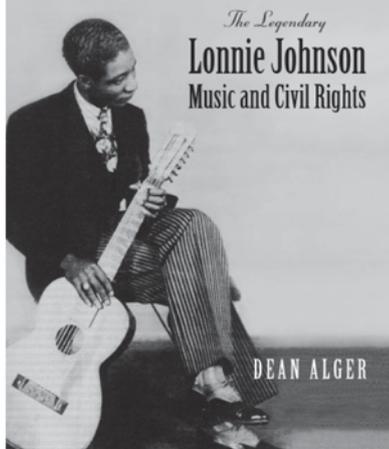
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Historical / BY DAVID KUNIAN

**High-Flying
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Three recent albums help fill in historical and musical gaps from the '50s to the early '70s.

The nimble and high-flying joy of bebop is beautifully evident on the three-disc **Birdland 1953 (ESP-Disk 4073; 51:17/62:52/54:47 ★★★★★)**, an invaluable document from one of pianist Bud Powell's best periods. His single-note solos go in unanticipated directions and stop and start in unexpected places. The cuts here show his brilliance both in playing and composition, before his slow decline and death in 1966 at age 41.

These tunes come from recordings made at New York's Birdland club from February to September 1953. They have been released before, but in this new version the piano is clear and up front. Powell's famous technique is fully on display on the many different versions of "Dance Of The Infidels" and "Embraceable You." Also exciting about these three CDs are the live versions of Powell's originals such as "Un Poco Loco" and "Oblivion." On "Parisian Thoroughfare," the pianist embellishes the lush melody, while "Glass Enclosure" is given a powerful, dramatic rendition.

Powell's fellow musicians here include Roy Haynes and Art Taylor on drums; Charles Mingus, Curley Russell and George Duvivier on bass; and guest spots from saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. Both Haynes and Taylor add driving rhythms and Latin accents while playing their entire kits. Parker and Gillespie play on separate tracks and sound relaxed and buoyant while revving up versions of "Woody 'N' You," "Salt Peanuts" and "Moose The Mooche."

Ordering info: espdisk.com

Jimmy Giuffre's **New York Concerts (Elemental Music 5990425; 36:27/50:22 ★★★★★)** is a previously unreleased two-disc set recorded at Judson Hall and Columbia University's Wollman Auditorium in 1965, featuring the leader's trio and quartet from the time period. The tapes were made by George Klabin, the same engineer who recorded Bill Evans' *Live At Art D'Lugoff's Top Of The Gate* (Resonance). These live tracks are especially significant since they come from a decade in which Giuffre did little recording.

Giuffre (1921–2008) plays both clarinet and tenor, and gets a wide range of notes and sounds from both instruments. Twenty-first century ears have adjusted to avant-garde playing, but his approach was radical in 1965, and it is easy to hear the excitement of the players exploring new musical ideas. At times he jumps around with unconventional intervals, and sometimes he pushes the sound of his instruments to their extremes, but never for too long. There is a lot of space in the tunes, and the players focus on melody and texture while listening to each other carefully.

On the Judson Hall disc, bassist Richard Davis gets a strong and heavy tone from his bass,

Jimmy Giuffre



DELIA SELIGO/FRED SELIGO ARCHIVES/CTS/IMAGES

which matches well with Joe Chambers' emphasis on snare drum. Ornette Coleman's music is a reference point here, not only in the group's version of his song "Crossroads," but also in the way that the band starts and stops. Some of Giuffre's phrasing even has an Ornette-type rhythm, but Giuffre was working on similar concepts around the same time. Even with the addition of piano for the Wollman Auditorium concert, there is still an Ornette vibe—though Giuffre's music is less dense.

The best thing about this recording is the surprise that the players convey. On "Syncopate" on the second disc, there is a beautiful moment where everyone comes together in a shimmering crescendo before continuing to weave their lines in and out of each other. The abstraction of "Drive" gives way to a honking rhythm-and-blues riff with Chambers' shuffle. Giuffre pushes the beat into a propelling, powerful rhythm before hanging back with short-note phrases. And on the standout track "Cry, Want," Don Friedman's flowing piano ventures further out, giving the song a medieval hue.

Ordering info: ingrooves.com

The setting is relaxed and casual on pianist Oscar Peterson (1925–2007) and saxophonist Ben Webster's **During This Time (NDR/Art Of Groove/MIG 80212; 73:45/67:28 ★★★★★)**, a live CD/DVD set recorded for the NDR Jazz Workshop in Hannover, Germany, in December 1972, less than a year before Webster died.

Both men play and swing like it is second nature to them. Webster's wide, reedy tone is in full effect, and Peterson's playing always serves the songs. They do standards such as "I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good" and "Cotton Tail," which Webster was associated with, and although there are better versions, these versions are excellent.

Both players focus on telling stories in their solos rather than merely collecting notes, and they elevate versions of "Perdido" and "Come Sunday." All the tunes here have the authority that excellent jazzmen bring to their playing.

Webster and Peterson didn't really have periods where they were not playing or recording, but their pairing in this live setting is a rare one. **DB**

Ordering info: amazon.com



Bayeté (Todd Cochran)
Worlds Around The Sun

OMNIVORE RECORDINGS 79
★★★★½

The long-awaited reissue of the 1972 debut from keyboardist-composer Bayeté aka Todd Cochran, *Worlds Around The Sun*, conveys that era's scintillating entwine of patchouli and politics, yet also remains enjoyably compelling to today's listener.

Before Cochran went on to a laudable career as a sideman for jazz and popular music greats alike—and later scoring films and theatrical works—the San Francisco native and Herbie Hancock protégé was impressing jazz notables with virtuosity and vision way beyond his young years. Just 20 in 1971, he wrote and arranged five tracks for Bobby Hutcherson's *Head On* and a follow-up recording session with the vibraphonist, bassist James Leary and drummer Michael Carvin (aka Thabo Vincar), all of whom appear on Cochran's precocious voyage out, originally released on Prestige Records.

Asserting support for Black Power on "Free Angela (Thoughts ... And All I've Got To Say)," which was later covered by Santana, and the more insinuating "I'm On It," Bayeté skillfully mixes chants with marching funk rhythms and punctuating horns. At the forefront, though, of a solid ensemble is Bayeté's impressive keyboard playing. He alternates between acoustic piano and electric Rhodes, or switches in mid-song, as he does on the jazz-fusion workout "Bayeté (Between Man And God)."

The Hancock influence is readily abundant on two ballads, in which the keyboard girds horn charts carrying the harmonization. The two bonus tracks from the original session clearly emphasize Bayeté's affinity for hard swing and his ability to create inventive variations on post-bop structures; it's easy to understand why they were dropped from final consideration as jazz features without an obviously expressive vibe.

—Thomas Staudter

Worlds Around The Sun: It Ain't; Free Angela (Thoughts ... And All I've Got To Say); Njeri (Belonging To A Warrior); I'm On It; Bayeté (Between Man And God); Eurus (The Southeast Wind); Phoebe; Shine The Knock. (56:52)

Personnel: Bayeté, piano, Fender Rhodes, Clavinet, vocals; James Leary III, bass, vocals; Thabo Vincar, drums; Hadley Caliman, flute, tenor saxophone; Bobby Hutcherson, vibraphone, marimba; Wayne Wallace, trombone; Mganda (Dave Johnson), soprano saxophone, vocals; Mulobo (Fred Berry), Oscar Brashear, trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals.

Ordering info: omnivorerecordings.com

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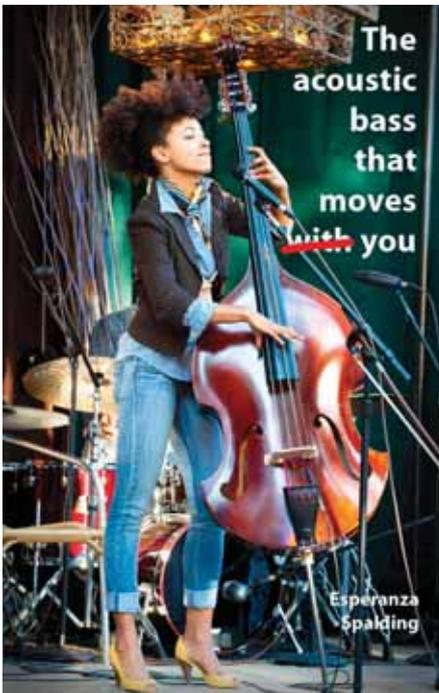
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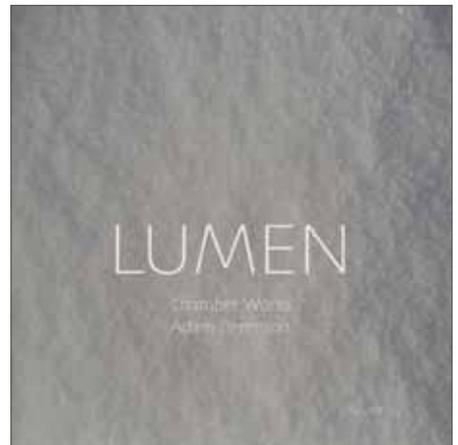
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Adam Berenson
Lumen: Chamber Works

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Both a jazz pianist and a classical composer, Adam Berenson's work often treats those two worlds like the Large Hadron Collider treats subatomic particles, smashing them together and marveling at the only somewhat predictable results. *Lumen* provides an ideal starting point for exploring the prolific composer's catalogue, compiling material from nearly two decades of recordings onto two discs. The material is presented without regard to chronology, style or theme, so it can often feel like rooting through Berenson's mental attic, unearthing one treasure after another with jarring shifts in tone.

The dense electronic soundscapes of Berenson's "Jnana" series give way to the rigorous, Keith Jarrett-esque solo piano of "Rainer Maria Rilke," which is followed by the abstract swing of the trio tune "Ricerca (For Sven Nykvist)" and the stride-influenced solo piece "... Was Near The Black Plague ..." which segues into the percussive prepared-piano minimalism of "A Little Boy Opened A Window 3." Both discs proceed through such willfully eclectic territory before ending on a string quartet.

Disc one concludes with the premiere of "String Quartet #3," recorded live in Philadelphia last summer by the renowned JACK Quartet. The 15-minute piece deals in focused, miniscule gestures, finely detailed textures and shocking dynamic contrasts. "String Quartet #1," recorded in 1997 in Boston, ventures a bit further into the realm of melody while still playing with strident contrasts and tense silences. Like the discs overall, these two pieces reveal a composer of post-modern vision and staggeringly wide-ranging interests.

—Shaun Brady

Lumen: Disc 1: Transpersonal; Jnana 10; Late 20th Century Stomp; Emotional Idiot; Prose Surrealism; Very Soon Mankind Will No Longer Be A Useless Passion (Broadway Melody Of 1996); Jnana 13; Rainer Maria Rilke; Ricercar (For Sven Nykvist); ... Was Near The Black Plague ... ; A Little Boy Opened A Window 3; ... Searching ... Everywhere ... ; Dithyramb; Jnana 8; Treaty Of Dancing Rabbit Creek; String Quartet #3. (76:30) Disc 2: "I"; Respectable People; Stars 1; The Adytum; Ticked To Death; Jnana 18; Ingrid Thulin; Through This Stillness; Yasujiro Ozu; Spooky Action At A Distance; String Quartet #1. (79:02)

Personnel: Adam Berenson, piano, prepared piano, synthesizer, percussion, live electronics; The JACK Quartet, strings; Bob Moses, drums, percussion; Scott Barnum, bass, electronics; Bill Marconi, percussion, electronics; Eric Hofbauer, guitar; Yukako Funahashi, Annette Chan, violin; Ilana Schroeder, viola; Sigurgeir Agnarsson, cello.

Ordering info: adamberenson.com

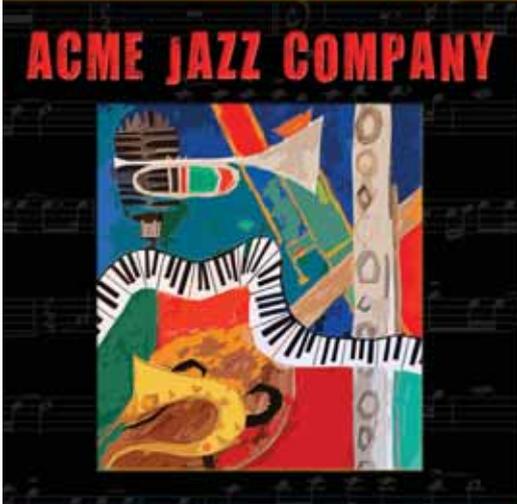
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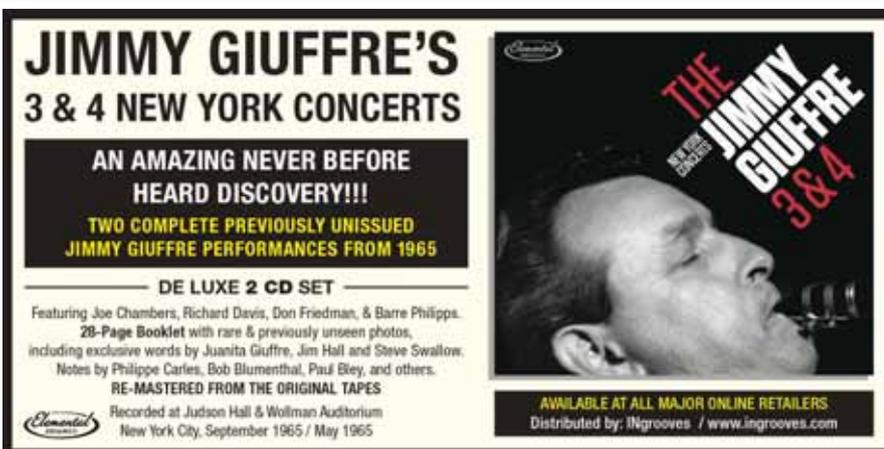
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Helge Lien Trio
Badgers And Other Beings
 OZELLA 055
 ★★★★★

Krom's name comes from its putative leader, pianist Adam Kromelow. The music is seamless, and the overall effect is one of a composed trio performance. Airtight, and still somewhat fluid, the sensibilities use the rock vending machine as opposed to a more Keith Jarrett Standards Trio-style quietude. The Helge Lien Trio's *Badgers And Other Beings* also borrows from a rock vibe, with a Northern European sensibility. The approaches these relatively young musicians take are interesting in part because of the overlaps: two piano trios, similar sights, contrasting narratives.

Krom's self-titled second release—following 2012's *Youngblood* (Zoho), which was released under the name Adam Kromelow Trio—draws principally from the pianist's energetic, propulsive chordal attack. (Think Jerry Lee Lewis minus the flying hair and rancid vocals.) The New York-based group—with bassist Raviv Markovitz and drummer Jason Burger—is a forceful trio, but it also has an affinity for nuance. "The Experiment" is a good example of the players' quirky sensibilities and knack for interactive dialog.

The trio doesn't shy away from more gentle touches, floating through the almost ballad-like "The Better Story," with scant improvisation but a healthy dose of conversational playing. The album, full of virtuosic twists and turns, ends up being more of a romp, more a dizzying, marching kind of pop than either jazz or rock, which is a rare virtue these days.

Norway's Helge Lien Trio is a mirror back to America of what the jazz-piano trio has sounded like over the decades, full of rumination, romance but also some bite. The trio's third release for Ozella suggests an underlying narrative that's less "Stardust" and more roving star. "Mor" opens the set with something akin to what one might have heard from Keith Jarrett in the late 1970s—minus horns—with a dash of Esbjörn Svensson. Both "Joe" and the dream-like "Hvalen" avoid a swing feel for more of a dance-

able, free-flow rhythm, a mattress that the music tosses and turns on, full of chords and flowing gestures—restless without being pointless.

Veterans all, composer-pianist Helge Lien, bassist Frode Berg and drummer Per Oddvar Johansen are clearly of one mind. There's a patience to these tunes that coincides with an underlying, undefinable unease, the combination a subtle fascination. "Hoggormen" sports a deft left-hand chordal movement from Lien that keeps you listening for what's coming next in this soft tumbler of a rocking funk tune that threatens to but never boils over. Solo spots throughout

this CD—the poetic "Badger's Lullaby" is a perfect example—keep us listening to everyone, again the accent being on a trio and not just one voice, the piano at its center.

—John Ephland

Krom: Savior Complex; The Experiment; The Better Story; Fly; See With Your Eyes; Hard Hearts; Trust Your Instincts; Sven's New Identity; Monster Bite. (39:49)
Personnel: Adam Kromelow, piano; Raviv Markovitz, bass; Jason Burger, drums, percussion.
Ordering info: kromtrio.com

Badgers And Other Beings: Mor; Joe; Hoggormen; Hvalen; Folkmost; Early Bird; Knut; Calypso In Five; The New Black; Badger's Lullaby. (53:41)
Personnel: Helge Lien, piano; Frode Berg, bass; Per Oddvar Johansen, drums.
Ordering info: ozellamusic.com

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R&B's Tortured Soul

American pop music from the no-man's-land between "the day the music died" (Buddy Holly's fatal 1959 plane crash) and the arrival of the Beatles in 1964 has been unfairly maligned for decades as the province of manufactured teen idols that spewed out pimply pop. As the party line goes: Real rock 'n' roll died when Little Richard joined the ministry, Chuck Berry went to prison on Mann Act charges and Jerry Lee Lewis shocked the world by marrying his 14-year-old cousin.

But a potent pre-Motown strain of early '60s black soul ballads and uptempo shout-fests belies that narrative. Some of the most impassioned laments and jubilant musical preaching on record had songwriter Bert Berns' name below their song titles.

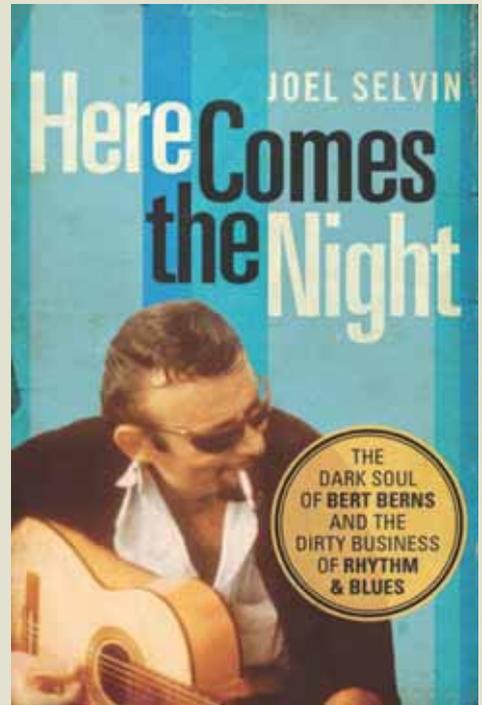
Soul devotees know his name well from records like "A Little Bit Of Soap" by The Jarmels, Solomon Burke's "Cry To Me" and "Everybody Needs Somebody To Love," "Twist And Shout" by the Isley Brothers, "Cry Baby" by Garnet Mimms, The Drifters' "I Don't Want To Go On Without You," "That's When It Hurts" by Ben E. King, "Are You Lonely For Me Baby" by Freddie Scott and "Piece Of My Heart"—originated by Erma Franklin and then covered to far greater success by Janis Joplin. Aside from the songs, though, Berns (1929–'67) has remained a shadowy legend, presumed knowable only through his music.

Berns may not have been the best or the most celebrated soul auteur, but he helped to make rhythm and blues an art form. His best efforts speak of lonely rooms, fickle lovers, dark nights, lost lovers, unrequited love, unbearable emotional pain and tears—lots of them.

San Francisco Chronicle critic and author Joel Selvin put over 20 years of research and interviews into *Here Comes the Night: The Dark Soul of Bert Berns and the Dirty Business of Rhythm & Blues (Counterpoint)*, a compelling biography of a man who wrote and produced records in a fever. It's also an unvarnished account of the often-sordid world of East Coast music publishers, tunesmiths, record hustlers, label executives, gamblers, studio engineers, rack-jobbers, disc jockeys and leg breakers.

Selvin paints Berns as a mambo-obsessed young man who wrote songs on his guitar. Many nights dancing to the great Latin bands at the Palladium manifested as the "La Bamba" structure on "Hang On Sloopy" by The Vibrations and the Latin horns on "Twist And Shout."

A childhood bout with rheumatic fever left Berns with a bad heart, and he lived his adult years with a time bomb ticking in his chest. Selvin opines that the continual anxiety of a man who wasn't expected to live past 21 may have pushed him to "cut corners" with some of the more nefarious characters in the East Coast record *shetl*. It was a milieu where a record label could change hands on a gambling debt, where office safes



had paper bags stuffed with hundred dollar bills and handguns, and a record bootlegger could be beaten within an inch of his life.

Unlike many pre-Beatle writers, Berns' tunes found favor with American garage rockers and British Invaders. "Hang On Sloopy" and "I Want Candy" hit big for The McCoys and The Strangeloves, respectively. Across the pond, Them, The Animals and Lulu identified with his soulful laments.

Like Leiber & Stoller, Phil Spector and other great producers of '60s pop, Berns wouldn't transition comfortably to the new art form of rock. Huge budgets, interminable recordings schedules, artist-generated material and general self-indulgence were anathema to Berns, whose stock-in-trade was hook-laden songs with emotional tang.

Berns rode his last successes—the production of Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl" and hit singles with a young Neil Diamond—as time ran out. L.A. record producer Kim Fowley saw him near the end of his life as Berns shepherded Morrison on his first solo tour.

"He looked haunted—like a cross between Robert Mitchum in *Out of the Past* and Gene Vincent," Fowley recalled. One morning Berns simply didn't get out of bed.

For all of the interviews Selvin obviously conducted, there are precious few direct quotes in the book. The inference is that principals only spoke on condition of anonymity. No matter, Selvin has written a tortured-soul story worthy of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award.

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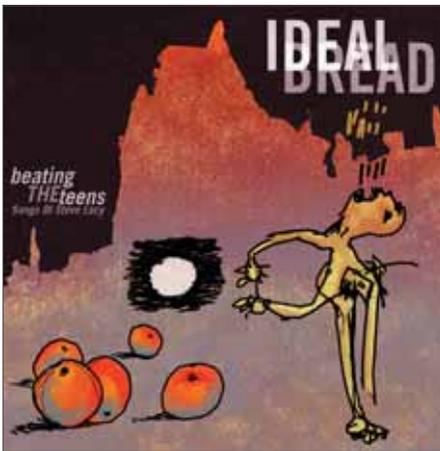


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Ideal Bread
Beating The Teens: Songs Of Steve Lacy

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★★★★★

New York's Ideal Bread was formed as a Steve Lacy repertory band—a nimble quartet picking up on the decision by the celebrated soprano saxophonist himself more than five decades ago to start one of jazz's first rep projects when he put together School Days with trombonist Roswell Rudd to play the music of Thelonious Monk.

But on the way to its third album a funny thing happened to Ideal Bread: It had developed an identity all of its own, a working band dedicated to the music of someone else. Although leader and baritone saxophonist Josh Sinton had already been making bold choices in how he arranged the material for the group, he pushed things much further on *Beating The Teens*—a complete set of interpretations to all of the tunes featured on the three-CD set *Scratching The Seventies/Dreams*, which collected music Lacy

and his bands cut for the French label Saravah between 1971-'77. It's a sprawling, diverse affair that spreads 30 pieces over two discs.

Sinton applied far-flung models to Lacy's tunes—or rather, vice versa. Ideal Bread's version of "Wish" turns the art-song—which had florid vocals from the composer's wife Irene Aebi—is transformed into a thudding hard-rock dirge seemingly inspired by The Stooges, with drummer Tomas Fujiwara dropping a heavy backbeat, the group's new bassist Adam Hopkins drilling a tightly coiled, looping bass line, and Sinton blowing rude ostinatos, giving cornetist Kirk Knuffke a meaty platform to improvise over.

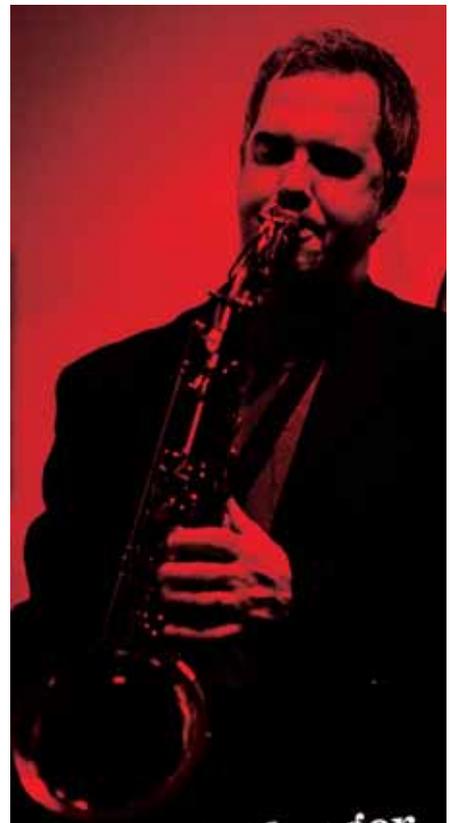
"Spell" brings out a slow, bluesy dimension, with Hopkins holding it down with an ascending line that crawls and Fujiwara spreading beats with uncontained energy, but not disrupting the flow. Not everything here tries to radically recast the original material: "Cryptosphere (S)" is one of two adaptations of a decidedly abstract original that featured spit-flecked squeals and cries to the distant accompaniment of some unidentified bebop ballad (that entire 1971 album, *Lapis*, featured Lacy playing against various ambient sounds). Knuffke's background lines simulate that faraway record, while Sinton and Hopkins do their best to simulate the horrific squeals and thwacks. Still, there's as much chutzpah in "covering" such an abstraction as there is in reinventing a tune. By putting the focus on the durability and malleability of Lacy's compositions, the quartet manages both to assert its own personality as well as saluting that of its inspiration.

—Peter Margasak

Beating The Teens: Songs Of Steve Lacy: Disc 1: Three Pieces from Tao-I; Obituary; The Precipitation Suite (I Feel A Draft/ Cloudy/Rain); Wish; Lesson; The Wire; Paris Rip-Off; Cryptosphere (S); Scraps; The Highway; The Wane; Dreams; Somebody Special; Name; Three Pieces From Tao-II. (60:20) Disc 2: Three Pieces From Tao-III; The Owl; Spell; Crops; Pearl Street; Ladies; Blinks; Cryptosphere; Lapis; The Uh Uh Uh; Torments; The Oil; Notre Vie; Roba; Three Pieces From Tao-IV. (61:53)

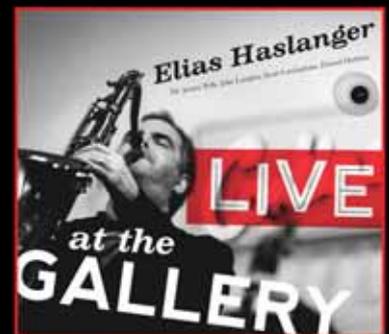
Personnel: Josh Sinton, baritone saxophone; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Tomas Fujiwara, drums; Adam Hopkins, bass.

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CREATIVE NEW GUITAR CONCEPTS FOR THE MODERN AGE

By Keith Baumann

GUITAR SCHOOL

Most of us don't think twice when we plug our beloved Strats or Teles into a digital tuner, run them through a DSP effects processor, or even connect directly to a laptop or tablet computer. But there is irony inherent in this scenario—kind of like a driver in a Model T Ford talking on an iPhone. The fact is that despite major advances in technology, the basic design of the acoustic and electric guitar has been surprisingly stagnant throughout the decades.

Over the past 70 years, guitar culture and instrument design have remained highly resistant to change, with players and manufacturers slow to adopt new concepts. Although computer technology has greatly impacted the way we make instruments and generated an explosion of digital outboard gear, players tend to stay stubbornly loyal to the classic guitar designs, choosing instruments that pay tribute to the legendary axes first introduced to us by industry giants like Martin, Gibson and Fender. Among such a conservative marketplace, innovation is an extremely risky proposition. One has to dig deep to uncover those with the true grit to push tradition and blaze entirely new trails into the guitar universe.

In seeking out trends in guitar innovation, we stayed focused mainly on the instrument itself, targeting concepts and technologies that occur within the guitar and not through outboard gear or external software. Each represents a notable departure from standard methodologies. Our research revealed several key categories where there is a significant amount of development as well as a noticeable interest from musicians. These include innovative bracing patterns, new body design concepts, unconventional construction materials, fan fret models (variable scale length), amplification/pickup technology and on-board DSP/MIDI capabilities.

Bracing

Simply put, bracing a guitar's top is a necessary evil on wooden instruments with hollow body chambers such as acoustic flattops and archtops. The braces' main function is to strengthen the soundboard so that it does not distort when placed under pressure by the strings. In order to vibrate freely and produce rich tone, a guitar's top needs to be thin enough to react efficiently to the playing, yet stiff enough to resist any warping. The compromise is a pattern of thin wooden struts glued to the underside of the top.

Most acoustic flattops utilize a variation of X-bracing, which places the struts in an "X" pattern across the soundboard (a technique that has been around since the 1840s). Archtop instruments generally use either a parallel bracing system consisting of two tone bars placed on the bass

and treble side of the top, or an X-brace pattern similar to flattops.

Bracing is an absolutely critical factor in shaping a guitar's tone, and the battle of stability-versus-tone has been raging for years. Techniques such as scalloping or shaving braces and tapping tops to maximize responsiveness are common practices. But despite all these subtle variations, most luthiers still rely on traditional bracing methodologies. There are, however, a select few who have strayed far from the pack and are attempting to test the laws of physics.

Mike Shellhammer was driven to find a better way to brace an acoustic guitar without causing significant dampening to the top's vibrations. After 15 years of development, he created the Suspended Bracing System (SBS), which utilizes two aluminum bars that are suspended from the soundboard, anchored only at their ends. This allows the entire top to vibrate freely while still providing the necessary stability. Shellhammer also felt that the traditional placement of the soundhole in an acoustic guitar was not optimal since it weakened the overall structure, requiring the need for stiffer bracing. His design relocated the opening off to the side, closer to the player's ear, which he felt had structural advantages and greatly enhanced the overall playing experience.

This radical new concept became the cornerstone of the Boulder Creek Guitar Company, which has been manufacturing a successful line of SBS-equipped guitars for six years. According to Jeff Strametz, CEO of Boulder Creek Guitars, "It was very difficult to sell the concept to guitar manufacturers since it was something so foreign and completely different." Strametz describes his guitars as exceptionally well-balanced, producing a tone reminiscent of instruments that sell for a significantly higher price tag.

Luthier Lukas Brunner is another innovator who felt dissatisfied with the traditional X-brace design. Brunner noticed how gluing on braces actually divides a top into several different sections that each vibrate unevenly. His solution was to create the "Flying Top" bracing system. Traditional braces are replaced by an extra layer of spruce that is glued onto the center of the top to create additional strength. Brunner then adds a set of wood braces that are supported on the sides, contacting the top in only one spot. These floating braces, along with his use of a tapered top design, leave the soundboard free to vibrate and result in increased balance, clarity and volume.

Materials

When it comes to materials, tonewoods such as spruce, maple, mahogany, walnut and rosewood have all become widely accepted industry standards due to their ability to produce warm, complex tones. Although there are numerous additional hardwood species now being utilized, the industry remains focused primarily on wood as its primary choice for construction. The tonal advantages of wooden construction are obvious—just ask anyone who has ever picked on a vintage



Martin guitar or strummed a Lloyd Loar L-5. So, why look for alternative materials? To begin with, environmental concerns such as unsustainable harvesting have made some of these woods more difficult, or at least significantly more expensive, to acquire. Furthermore, laws like the Lacey Act have actually made some species illegal to import. Availability issues aside, wood, among its many benefits, also has some distinct disadvantages. As good a sound transmitter as it is, wood is actually quite inconsistent, with variations in structure and density throughout any given slab. In fact, some will tell you that the most consistent thing about any wood is its inconsistency. To top it off, wood is highly susceptible to climate changes such



Godin Montreal Premier with TriplePlay

as temperature and humidity.

With these drawbacks in mind, there were those who felt there must be a suitable alternative to wood as a tone producer. The answer was carbon fiber (CF), a composite material capable of an extremely high strength-to-weight ratio that can be molded into virtually any shape. Carbon fiber was already being used in racing cars and sailing boat hulls before its unique resonance properties were discovered by musicians such as Martin Lewis, who immediately recognized its potential and began constructing stringed instruments with it. Lewis is now among numerous builders working with carbon fiber, but his company is the only one that currently offers an acoustic archtop guitar model.

Unlike traditional instrument building in which a guitar is assembled from individual pieces, carbon fiber guitars are created from a mold, with the back, sides, neck and headstock formed as one solid piece. The top and fingerboard are then added to complete the instrument. Lewis chooses to form his necks separately, and then attaches them to the body in a more traditional fashion. The incredible tensile strength of the material completely eliminates the need for top bracing or truss rods, although some manufacturers have chosen to include them. Martin Lewis Stringed Instruments has built 23 archtops in 17- and 14-inch designs. Lewis takes great care with every guitar he makes and actually tap-tunes each top. "I tap-tune CF differently than I would wood," he says. "CF has its own sound—not as complex as wood, which has variations in the material throughout.

CF is so even that you get consistent volume and tone up and down the neck."

RainSong Guitars also believes strongly in carbon fiber and was the first company to offer a full line of CF guitars. President and CEO Ashvin Coomar says he feels that the consistency and repeatability of his guitars are reasons why artists like

Leo Kottke play carbon fiber instruments. In addition,

CF guitars are impervious to climate conditions. "As soon as you incorporate wood, you add a



Andy Reiss plays a Martin Lewis carbon fiber archtop

weak link that is susceptible to climate and stress," Coomar says. RainSong also notes that not all CF guitars are the same, as there are several different weaves and manufacturing methods that can shape the sound in various ways. "We do not try and replicate the tone of wood, but bring out the unique sound of the material," Coomar says of his carbon fiber guitars. RainSong and Lewis are not alone in the carbon fiber revolution: Companies such as Blackbird Guitars, Composite Acoustics

and Emerald Guitars all produce CF instruments.

Fanned Frets (Variable Scale Length)

Any musician who has broken a string, or struggled to get their instrument to play perfectly in tune up and down the fretboard, has been the victim of a little-known fact about guitars: The standard fixed scale layout used on nearly every guitar is inherently flawed. It's a compro-



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Wilcox Atlantis ElectroAcoustic with Lightwave Systems Optical Pickups

mise at best. Guitars with a single scale length use only string gauge to control pitch and tension. This leads to intonation problems and varied amounts of tension across each string, which has a direct impact on playability and tone. The solution is fairly obvious and has actually been in use for hundreds of years on pianos and harps, which use a variable-length scale layout where the lower-pitched strings get progressively lon-

ger than the high-pitched ones. If you apply this theory to a guitar or bass, you get what is known as a “fanned fret” instrument, which replaces the common straight frets on the neck with ones that are aligned in a non-parallel pattern and actually fan out to create a longer scale length for the lower strings.

Ralph Novak of Novax Guitars is regarded as the pioneer of fanned fret instruments. He held

the first patent in 1989. “I came to this through my repair work, where I learned how all tone begins with the string, so controlling the harmonic structure of each string individually makes perfect sense,” Novak says. Adding individual scale length to the equation of string gauge and pitch opens up an entirely new world of possibilities that include perfect intonation, improved balance with a richer bass response, and optimal string tension. Novak adds, “Many builders are looking to simply recapture the past, but these instruments are a completely different paradigm.”

Jeff Traugott of Jeff Traugott Guitars is another practitioner of the fanned fret school who first embraced the concept when a client requested that he build an eight-string guitar. Fanned fret technology is especially well-suited for seven- or eight-string guitars, which encompass a much broader tonal range than traditional six-string designs. Crediting Novak as a major influence, Traugott focuses mainly on acoustic instruments—he was among the first to build a fanned fret acoustic.

“Fanned frets are all about maximizing scale length to the pitch,” Traugott says. “It changes the quality of the sound and creates an entirely different instrument.” Both builders agree that there has been a lot of resistance to fanned fret guitars in the market. They look radically different than a standard guitar, which makes it seem like they would be difficult to adapt to. This is apparently not true at all: Most players who have tried fanned fret guitars find the transition to be quite easy, with minimal adjustments and huge benefits. Fanned fret technology has grown slowly but steadily in the market since Novak’s patent reverted to the public domain in 2006. There are numerous luthiers and



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even some major manufacturers such as Lowden and Eastman who are climbing aboard the fanned fret bandwagon.

Amplification

Although most musicians cite Charlie Christian as a major innovator in creating the demand for amplified electric guitars, it was actually George Beauchamp, working with Adolph Rickenbacker, who introduced the first commercially produced electromagnetic pickups on their Frypan model lap steels in 1931. The use of pickups has literally exploded since then, and although there have been a few advances in overall design—such as Gibson’s humbucking pickups and Fender’s single-coil models—the basic technology of a metal or ceramic core wrapped in several thousand turns of fine copper wire has remained virtually unchanged since the mid-1950s.

One of the biggest advances in electric guitar pick-

up technology in the last 60 years comes from a company known best for its acoustic amplification products. Originating from a desire to utilize new technology to overcome the limitations of the old, Fishman’s new Fluence pickup replaces the traditional wound coil with a multilayer printed circuit board. According to Fishman CEO Larry Fishman, eliminating the wire-wrapping process addresses the problem of quality variations and noise that are unavoidable with the older technology. The result is a pickup that is predictable, repeatable, stable and extremely quiet. Fishman also notes that Fluence pickups are specifically designed to produce the classic sounds that we all know and love. “Fluence has all the benefits with none of the baggage,” he says. “Technology brings things to the table, so why not take advantage of it?”

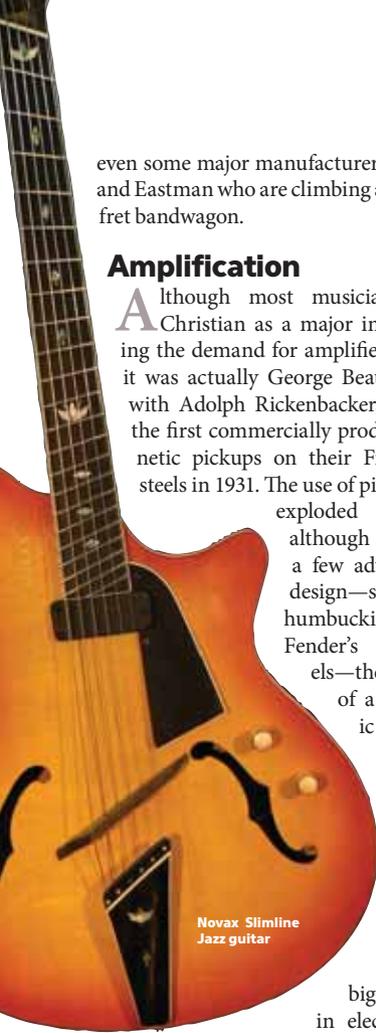
Taking a more radical approach, Lightwave Systems Optical Pickups redefine the entire paradigm of a pickup by using infrared light to detect string vibration instead of an electromagnetic field. According to Chris Wilcox, president of Lightwave Systems/Wilcox Guitars, the pickup actually sees a string’s vibration but does not interfere with it in any way. The result is a neutral, accurate and clear tone, with improved sustain and no inherent noise. Ron Hoag actually began to develop this technology in 1968, but Wilcox Guitars is the first company to offer a line of instruments that feature optical pickups. “As a luthier, I was always looking for tone and sustain,” Wilcox says. “I found that there were many inher-



ent flaws in traditional magnetic pickups, which actually dampen sustain.”

Design

When it comes to true innovation in guitar design, there are a surprising number of talented builders who are breaking the mold and defying



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tradition. Few would deny that Ken Parker is at the top of that list. Parker forever altered our perception of the solidbody electric when he introduced the Parker Fly guitar in 1992, but in recent years he has focused his attention on the acoustic archtop. Parker's love affair with the archtop began in 1973 when he first heard his guitar teacher's Gibson L12. "After playing a variety of other archtops, I felt most of them did not sound as good," Parker said. "They were heavy and bulky and not practical when amplified." Parker believes that an archtop must be light and flexible in order to be responsive and produce a full bass response. Parker also points out that since guitarists are not using a bow, their instruments should not be designed like a cello. His guitar designs feature several key innovations. He uses a unique system for attaching his necks to the body with a mounting post that suspends the fingerboard over the top, freeing the top to vibrate more and eliminating the need for a heel. The post is also adjustable so that the guitar's action can be easily altered without requiring the need for an adjustable bridge, allowing Parker to design a lightweight custom hollow bridge and maximizing sound transfer to the top. Another variance from the norm is Parker's sound port design, placed at the upper bout nearest to the player's chin. "If you want a guitar to feed back, just put the f-holes in the traditional spot," he quips.

Another interesting trend in guitar design makes full use of CAD/CAM capabilities and CNC-driven machinery to design and build guitars. Although computer-controlled machines are common practice in modern guitar manufacturing, most builders use the technology to automate repetitive tasks and do not take advantage of its creative potential. Jeff Kosmoski of Kozm Guitars takes digital technology to a whole new level by building ergonomic three-dimensional guitars designed and fabricated with the aid of computers and a computer-controlled router.

Kosmoski feels that most guitars remain rooted in 1950s two-dimensional technology and do not take advantage of today's modern tools. With a background in mechanical engineering and product design, Kosmoski creates a highly unique acoustic guitar that is carved from two pieces of hollowed-out tonewood. The front and back are then assembled to form the body without the need for separate side panels, allowing for the creation of soft curves along the instrument's edges. "My guitars look different and sound different, but they do sound like wooden acoustic instruments," Kosmoski says.

MIDI/DSP

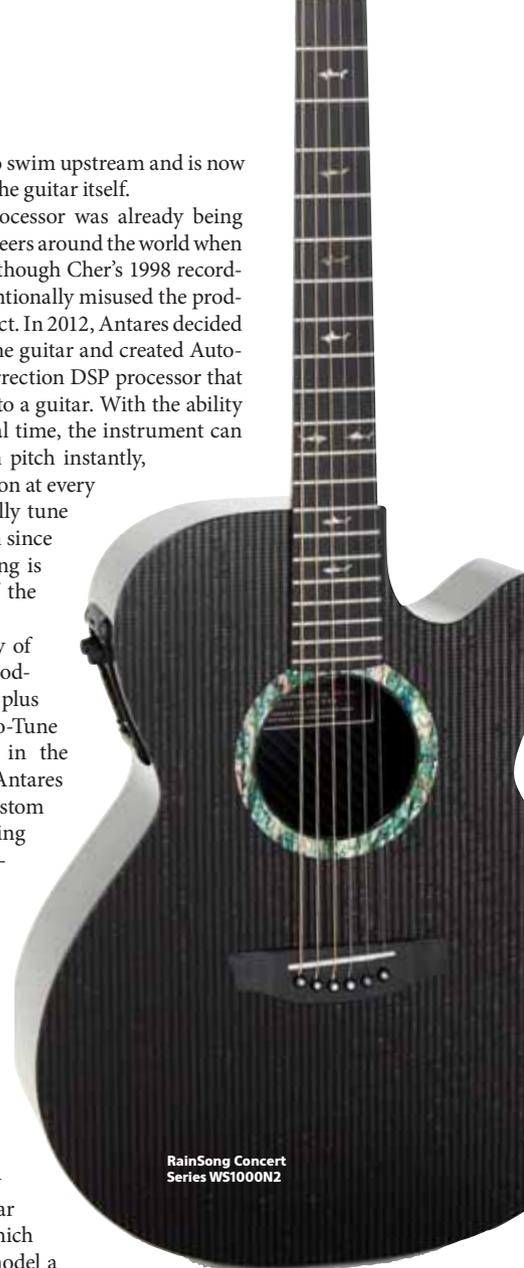
Digital signal processing (DSP) technology has become widely accepted throughout the music industry and can be found in many guitar pedals and amplifiers. Commonly used for effects processing and amp modeling, DSP has mainly stayed within the domain of outboard gear. Recently,

the technology has begun to swim upstream and is now being integrated right into the guitar itself.

Antares' Auto-Tune processor was already being used on recordings by engineers around the world when it came into the public eye through Cher's 1998 recording of "Believe," which intentionally misused the product to generate a vocal artifact. In 2012, Antares decided to apply its technology to the guitar and created Auto-Tune for Guitar, a pitch-correction DSP processor that can be mounted directly into a guitar. With the ability to process every note in real time, the instrument can correct any inaccuracies in pitch instantly, resulting in perfect intonation at every fret. It can also automatically tune itself at the push of a button since the actual pitch of the string is completely independent of the processed note it outputs.

Antares offers a variety of altered tunings, pickup modeling and guitar modeling, plus instant transposition. Auto-Tune for Guitar first appeared in the Peavey AT-200 guitar, but Antares also offers a Luthier Custom Installation Kit for installing the system into any instrument. Antares Product Managers Henry Bridger and Marco Alpert agree that this technology is in its infancy and will expand down the road.

Line 6 is a well-known name in the world of DSP processing and an industry leader in the field of amp modeling. In 2003, the company introduced the Variax guitar featuring on-board DSP, which allows the instrument to model a



variety of electric guitars and even other acoustic instruments like a sitar or banjo. The Variax is also capable of pitch-shifting alternate tunings with user customization accessible via connection to a computer.

Roland is another name that needs no introduction in the world of guitar innovation. The company released its first guitar synth in 1977 and has been a major player in the technology market ever since. Roland is well known for its COSM modeling technology, which first appeared in its VG-8 guitar system. Recently Roland teamed up with Fender to produce the Roland G5 VG Stratocaster featuring on-board COSM. The G5 is capable of modeling a variety of acoustic and electric tones as well as providing alternate tunings.

MIDI guitar controllers have been around for more than 25 years, but the technology has been somewhat quirky at best. Use of external MIDI pickups or even synth-equipped guitars offered only a hex-signal output that required a special cable and outboard translation into MIDI. Solutions were expensive and plagued with latency issues, and frequently carried an extremely steep learning curve. Sensing players' frustration and determined to offer a better solution, Fishman

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developed the TriplePlay wireless MIDI controller. “We wanted to simplify the equation,” says Larry Fishman. “In creating TriplePlay, Fishman took advantage of emerging DSP technology to create a self-contained unit that required no cables or breakout boxes with all processing done directly on the guitar.” TriplePlay easily mounts onto any solidbody electric or archtop guitar in minutes and connects to your computer or tablet through a wireless USB dongle. It provides guitarists with extremely low latency and accurate MIDI tracking at an affordable price point.

Initially released as a standalone product, TriplePlay technology is now being offered in Fender’s Stratocaster HSS guitars as well as Godin’s Session Custom and Montreal Premiere guitars. “We have always built guitars that are technologically advanced, and our seamless integration of TriplePlay has been extremely well received because the instruments look and feel just like standard guitars,” says Mario Biferali, sales and marketing manager at Godin.

It’s encouraging to discover that innovation is alive and well in an industry that’s deeply rooted in tradition and extremely cautious about change. It’s also apparent that a significant portion of new innovations will arise from independent visionaries who are willing to take a chance. If you wonder, “Why reinvent the wheel when the wheel was pretty well designed to begin with?,” consider that the road we are traveling on is changing all the time. **DB**

Creating Chord Melodies on Guitar

OF ALL THE TOPICS THAT I GET ASKED ABOUT

when teaching, the concept of chord melody probably comes up the most. Since creating chord melodies is a combination of several techniques and concepts, I feel that studying many types of voicings is an important place to start. This includes common drop 2 and drop 3 voicings using as many different string groupings as possible, up and down the neck, covering the full range of the instrument.

Additionally, understanding different types of melodic motion and their effects is important to gaining a natural and instinctual way to create chord melodies. Sometimes knowing where to start can be the trickiest part and the options can seem overwhelming at first.

Be sure to do plenty of listening—especially to the masters of chord melody. Players like George Van Eps, Bucky Pizzarelli, Herb Ellis, Joe Pass, Barney Kessel, Johnny Smith, Lenny Breau, Howard Morgan, Kenny Burrell, Barry Galbraith and many more can teach us so much simply by doing a little listening and transcribing.

A good place to start is with some drop 2 voicings. Example 1 shows different inversions of a Gmaj7 chord using drop 2 voicings. Notice how they extend to use as much of the full range of the instrument as possible—in most cases up to the 15th fret. Feel free to extend them even higher if your instrument can accommodate it.

Think of the top note of each chord voicing as being the melody note creating an arpeggio of the chord as it moves. Note that the G6/9 voicing has been included as a possible alternative to the Gmaj7 when in third inversion. This avoids the more dissonant interval of a minor ninth (F#–G) in the outer voices as well as adds another voicing option. You should also be comfortable playing these voicings on as many different string groupings as possible. In Example 1a, we see drop 3 voicings for the same Gmaj7 chord. Here we also have an Em7 chord, a very common substitute for the third inversion voicing. This also helps to avoid the minor ninth interval (no longer in the outer voices) if desired.

As a side note: In all of these examples, moveable chord shapes are used for ease of transposition. I urge you, however, to explore the option of using open strings when allowed by the key you are in, which often create a very beautiful sound unique to the guitar.

Examples 2 and 2a show drop 2 and drop 3 voicings respectively for an Em7(b5) chord, while Examples 3 and 3a show the same type of voicings for an Am7 chord.

Example 4 shows various drop 2 voicings for a D7alt chord. Sometimes the b9 is used, while other times the #9, b5, #5 or a combination of several. Note that in many cases the root is omitted and that for all the D7(b9) voicings, the upper-structure diminished seventh chord is used. Again, for Examples 1–4, be sure to play these voicings on as many different string groups as possible.

In Examples 5 and 6, we move away from arpeggios and harmonize some scales. While suggested fingerings have been given for each scale, feel free to experiment with different ones. In Example 5 we get a bit more complex. Here we have the G major bebop scale as our melody, which is then harmonized up the octave in Example 5a with drop 2 voicings. This example utilizes chromatic passing chords for the notes that are not part of a Gmaj7 chord. Notice how the non-chord tones are harmonized with D7(b9) voicings but use the upper-structure diminished seventh chords like we saw in Example 4 as well as the Em7 substitute that we saw in Example 1a.

Examples 6 and 6a take the G lydian scale and harmonize it up the octave



Eric Divito

Example 1

Example 1a

Example 2

Example 2a

with some type of G major voicing. The idea here is to play each note of the scale with a drop 2 or drop 3 voicing for Gmaj7 (or G6/9 as discussed earlier). Note that instead of starting on the root, this example begins on the third of the scale (B), extending the range further down on the instrument.

Now that you have some practice creating different types of voicings and creating chord melody with arpeggios and scales, let's apply them in a more musical way. In Examples 7–13, we see some simple melodies that move in different ways. Each melody is then harmonized with a I–vi–ii–V7–I progression in the key of G major (with certain alterations) using various drop 2 and drop 3 voicings. At times there are substitute harmonies used to add interest

Example 3 **Example 3a**

Example 7 **Example 7a**

Example 4

Example 8 **Example 8a**

Example 5

Example 9 **Example 9a**

Example 5a

Example 10 **Example 10a**

Example 6

Example 11 **Example 11a**

Example 6a

Example 12 **Example 12a**

Example 13 **Example 13a**

and to help make the melodic line work over the progression.

These are just some examples of chord options for the given melody notes. Try to come up with your own new harmonizations—or, even better, write your own original melodies and harmonize them. As you do this your chord melody style and technique will begin to develop more.

Continue to work on expanding your knowledge of voicings for all different chord types throughout the entire range of the instrument and with all different types of melodic motion. Use different scales, arpeggios, more progressions, and of course actual melodies to guide your choices. Soon you

will be instinctually making quicker and more musical choices in your chord melody playing.

DB

New York guitarist Eric DiVito performs in various settings, most often leading his own trios at The Iridium, Smalls, The 55 Bar, Kitano, The Garage, Miles' Cafe, Tomi Jazz, Puppets Jazz Bar, Tutuma Social Club, The Cutting Room, Port Jazz and Sullivan Hall. He has been teaching music in the New York City public school system since 2006. In 2011, DiVito signed with the Canadian record label Pioneer Jazz Collective and released his debut as a leader, *Breaking The Ice* (2012), as well as a follow-up recording, *The Second Time Around* (2013). Visit him online at ericdivito.com.

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An even younger
Derek Trucks, in 1993

JACK VARGAS/ALAMY/CONTRAST PHOTOS

Derek Trucks' Guitar Solo on 'Deltaraga'

GUITARIST DEREK TRUCKS HAS A SLIDE style deeply rooted in the blues. Since childhood, he has demonstrated a genius for nuanced, bluesy lyricism and an ability to summon a variety of stylistic flavors.

For Trucks, youth was never a hindrance. Born in 1979 in Jacksonville, Fla., he was onstage at age 9 and touring as a headliner by 11. When his fingers were too small to hold down the strings of his guitar, he took up the slide, which soon became a primary element in his approach. At 15, he had formed the core of his longtime road band. Before reaching 20, he had already jammed with

many of his heroes, including Bob Dylan, John Lee Hooker and Buddy Guy.

Trucks spent his teen years touring and developing his group, The Derek Trucks Band. He averaged over 200 shows a year, completing most of his high school studies with on-the-road schooling. By his late teens, he had gained a reputation for performing electrifying live shows that featured extended solos and summoned an intoxicating collision of musical influences, from electric blues to modern jazz and Indian ragas. Trucks has never been one to limit his musical focus—he's an avid jazz fan and lover of Indian classical music—and

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he's always been one to follow his muse.

On his second solo album, 1998's *Out Of The Madness* (Sony), Trucks juxtaposes the two genres on the final track, appropriately entitled "Deltaraga." The piece is for solo guitar, with the young Trucks (then age 19) keeping a steady eighth-note groove on a low D to support the melodic material. This device has a long history in delta blues, but improvising over a drone is also common to Indian music, and Trucks cleverly exploits this connection.

The melody is all bluesy minor pentatonic, but the improvisation is where Trucks brings in a more Eastern sound. He does this in part by switching from the minor pentatonic sound to the lydian scale. The major 3rd and 7th already take us away from the blues, but when Trucks adds in the sharp 4th, in this context it creates a much less bluesy, more Eastern sound.

But Trucks doesn't take us there all at once. He starts out with the major 7th in the second bar, which is already a big deviation from the typical flat-7th blues sound. And having that major 7th on top of the root with nothing in between to support it certainly doesn't sound Euro-centric. The major third is introduced in bar 5, but Trucks waits another measure before bringing in the note that defines the lydian sound.

When Trucks brings in the 3rd and sharp 4th, you'll notice he repeats these notes, as well as the 5th that follows in measure 7. There are multiple examples of Trucks using this technique of arriving at a pitch and then repeating it multiple times, and it's something that can be heard in the work

of Indian sarod player Ali Akbar Khan. Trucks is likely referencing this sound to make more of a connection to the East.

His choices of which notes to emphasize with this repetition are worth taking a look at. In the first measure he leans on the root, but then the major 7th, a tone carrying much more tension, in the second measure. Then in bar 5 he stresses the 3rd, releasing some of that tension.

Trucks follows this pattern of less to more to less tension in other places: highlighting the stable sound of the 5th in bar 13, then the more tense major 7th in the following measure, and releasing it with the root in bar 15. Bars 22 through 24 are another example where the 5th leads to the 7th and resolves to the root.

The melody of this tune is clearly in 4/4 (like we'd expect from the blues), but since Trucks' thumb on a constant D is the only rhythm section, he can be (and is) loose with his downbeats. In this transcription, I put in some non-4/4 measures based on what sounded like downbeats to me, but that is open to debate. In fact, it might have been more accurate to present the entire transcription in "1" (or without a time signature), but that would have been much more difficult to read. This loose rhythmic feel is something we sometimes hear in the "alap" in Indian music: the rhythmically free introductory section to most Hindustani pieces. So, it's another manner in which Trucks is bringing together the East and West. **DB**

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

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Nik Huber Rietbergen Semi-Hollow

New Generation of Tradition

The Huber family boasts a proud history of fine woodworking that dates back more than 100 years. Sharing in his family's heritage, Nik Huber has applied his love for the tradition toward the art of guitar making. His latest creation, the Rietbergen, is a semi-hollow beauty that pays tribute to his skill as a fine craftsman and his talent as a master guitar builder.

Huber began building handcrafted instruments in 1996 in a small factory just outside of Frankfurt, Germany. He had previously worked as a PRS authorized repairman, and his flagship offering, the Dolphin, featured a solidbody design. As Huber's company expanded, he gradually added models to his product offerings, including the Les Paul-inspired Orca and the Telecaster-style Twangmeister. In 1999, the company moved to a larger factory in Rodgau, Germany, and expanded to employ five craftsmen who now produce about 120 guitars per year. Although the Huber lineup featured 10 different models, they were all based on solidbody designs until the release of the Rietbergen, the company's first semi-hollow production instrument.

With a full line of solidbody electrics under its belt, a semi-hollow was the logical next step for Huber. The Rietbergen utilizes the Dolphin model for its basic specs, sharing the same single-cutaway body shape and dimensions. Taking cues from the classic Gibson 335, the guitar features a solid-wood internal centerblock, dual pickup configuration and f-holes. However, the Rietbergen is a true handcrafted instrument constructed entirely from solid carved woods. The guitar is visually stunning, with a radically flamed solid redwood top and gold hardware featuring rosewood pickup rings and control knobs. The Rietbergen's body cavity is carved from a solid piece of mahogany, and the neck is crafted from a solid chunk of flame maple. The fingerboard is rosewood that's tastefully devoid of any inlays, showing only dot markers on the side of the neck. The instrument is stained and finished in a high-gloss lacquer that Huber calls Tigereye Burst.

Huber added several features to enhance the guitar's playability. The headstock is set at a slightly reduced angle to the fingerboard to produce a better balance and offer less string tension. The neck joint utilizes a slick cutout design in the heel to offer increased access to the upper frets, and the medium jumbo alloy fretwire makes noting the guitar a breeze. The Rietbergen has a slightly wider nut width and 25 1/2-inch scale length with a neck profile that is rather thick compared to most guitars.

After spending some quality time playing the Rietbergen, I fell in love with the sound of this guitar. With its ability to go from smooth, rich, resonant tones



to crystal-clear twang and everything in between, the Rietbergen is highly versatile. The pickups are extremely clear-sounding, highly responsive 1959 humbuckers manufactured in Germany by Harry Häussel. I particularly liked the clarity and sustain of each note on the guitar. The Rietbergen excels at playing absolutely clean tones, but it can really strut its stuff when thrown into overdrive, with in-your-face presence and "sustain for days." And when you pull on the tone knob to activate the coil tap switch, you can enjoy a whole new set of single-coil sounds.

The Rietbergen Redwood Semi-Hollow is a true handmade instrument in every sense of the word. At a retail price of \$9,037, it may not be for everyone, but for those discerning musicians seeking an exceptionally fine and highly versatile guitar, this may be for you.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: nikhuber-guitars.com

NS Design CR4 Radius Bass Guitar

Ergonomics & Aesthetics Combined

I remember the 1980s. I was an early adopter of the Steinberger, the original headless bass guitar from Ned Steinberger. I loved that bass, with its unique playability and tone and radical looks. Over time, as many bassists are wont to do, I eventually moved on to various boutique instruments before cycling back to the tried-and-true “J” and “P” bass styles.

Bassists’ personal tastes are always evolving, and luckily companies like NS Design are right there to evolve with them. Enter the newest creation from NS, the Radius bass guitar. That’s right—bass guitar, not another in the long line of industry-standard electric upright basses, cellos, violas and violins that NS Design has become known for.

The test bass was the Czech Republic-built CR4 (five-string version is the CR5). The first thing I noticed was the smaller form-fitting gig bag, and how lightweight the whole package was. The Radius’ Diradial body is a stunner. The top of the body has a tighter radius than the back, with the top (towards the B- and E-string side) being thinner than the bottom. This results in a slightly tilted-up fingerboard and optimal playing angle. The interior curve stabilizes the bass on your torso and is very comfortable. The test bass featured a charcoal satin finish over a flame maple top (amber and natural finishes are also available). Steinberger’s newest design was meant to combine ergonomics and aesthetics, and also to be cohesive with the other NS Design instruments. It’s right on the money.

Some other musicians asked if the Radius was synthetic. Nope! Steinberger chose maple as the tonewood due to its brilliance and clarity. So, how does the Radius come in at only 8.4 pounds? The interior of the body has a honeycomb-like construction, with a series of holes removed. This increases the stiffness-to-weight ratio, making the bass significantly lighter while not compro-

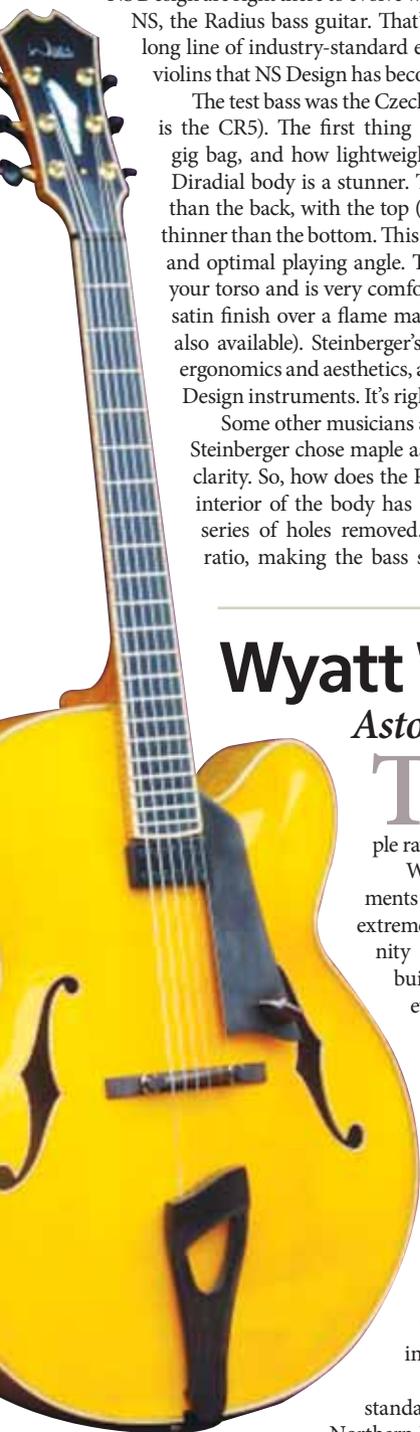
mising tone. The NS Fusion neck is a 34-inch scale, 24-fret, one-piece bolt-on maple neck embedded with a carbon fiber core and truss rod. This innovative neck gives the player enhanced sustain and definition (zero dead spots) while retaining the feel of wood.

The Radius’ NS Patented Tuning System is a self-clamping precision tuning machine built into the body. Any type of single-balled full-scale bass string will work, and no tools are needed except to trim the excess string that comes out of the back of the body. The NS/EMG Integral Pickup System is a combination of EMG magnetic and NS Polar piezo pickups powered by an 18-volt pre-amp. This powerful combination gives the player a dizzying array of tonal possibilities at his fingertips. The controls consist of four knobs (master volume, magnetic/piezo blend, treble cut/boost and bass cut/boost) and two switches (three-position magnetic pickup selector, three-position piezo EQ switch). Fingerstyle or with a pick, the Radius can tonally step up to any musical plate.

In practice, the Radius was a winner, garnering positive comments on its sound in every performance situation. In a large club with a challenging sound system, I asked the engineer how the bass sounded in the house. His response: “It sounded great—it was the only thing in the mix I didn’t have to touch.” Hey, bassists, aren’t those the words we’re all dying to hear? At around \$2,700 street, the CR4 Radius isn’t inexpensive, but if you’re a player who is looking to evolve his playing with something new, full of tonal possibilities, with superb playability, comfort and flawless engineering, you owe it to yourself to check it out.

—Jon Paul

Ordering info: thinkns.com



Wyatt Wilkie Strathcona Archtop

Astounding Acoustic Responsiveness

The Strathcona model archtop guitar from Wyatt Wilkie is a testament to the luthier’s ability to transform simple raw materials into an object of true beauty.

Wilkie—who has been building instruments for 14 years and considers himself extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to apprentice with legendary archtop builder Bob Benedetto—crafts each and every guitar entirely by hand. The journey begins with a 1-inch slab of tonewood that is carved using only manual wood planes. “Carving is the most important factor in voicing a guitar,” according to Wilkie, and as a one-man operation he can constantly react and adapt as the instrument progresses. This is something that is not possible with a manufactured instrument. Wilkie strives for maximizing acoustic tone in all his guitars. “The mystery of acoustic tone is so alluring to me,” he says.

The Strathcona is one of Wilkie’s two standard archtop guitar models alongside the Northern Flyer. It features a full-sized body with a 17-inch lower bout and 3-inch depth. The single cutaway design is constructed using the standard maple-and-spruce com-

bination with a maple neck and 25-inch scale ebony fingerboard. The maple back and sides are highly figured with a stunning quilted pattern. The guitar is X-braced and has maple binding throughout, which is attractively offset by ebony striping.

The Strathcona’s adjustable floating bridge is made of solid ebony and is hand-carved by Wilkie. Although previous Strathcona models utilize an ebony tailpiece, this particular guitar is the first to feature Wilkie’s new solid brass tailpiece design. “I always liked the D’Angelico look and felt the increased mass would help the tone,” he says. One unique feature here is that Wilkie uses a Sacconi Tailpiece Adjuster to attach the tailpiece instead of the more common hinge design, which keeps the guitar lighter. For amplification, the Strathcona has a single floating Kent Armstrong pickup mounted to the pick-guard. The guitar is finished with a Shellac French polish but is also available with Nitrocellulose lacquer.

Playing the Strathcona was an absolute pleasure. The instrument exhibited a wonderfully comfortable feel as well as an astounding acoustic responsiveness. I enjoyed the acoustic tone so much that I actually found myself playing the guitar unplugged the majority of the time. The Strathcona has a deep, resonant, powerful voice with an amazing amount of punch and volume. Wilkie uses a slightly wider upper bout in his design, which he feels generates a better bass response. When amplified, the Strathcona shines with a fat, rich tone that would satisfy even the most critical jazz player.

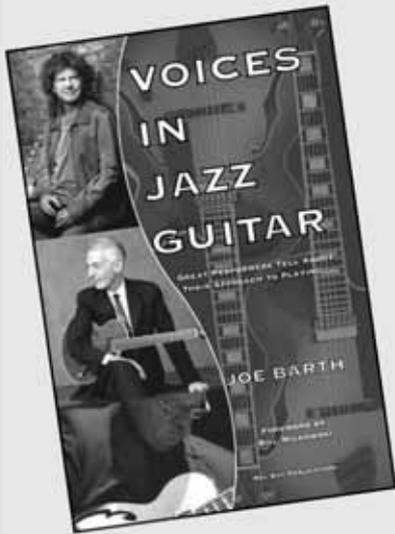
Simply stated, Wilkie builds a great guitar, and the attention to detail and mastery of his craft are more than apparent in the Strathcona. Considering the substantial amount of expertise and hand labor that goes into each and every instrument he builds, the Strathcona is well worth its \$8,000 price tag.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: wilkiestrungedstruments.com

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Luxurious Levy's

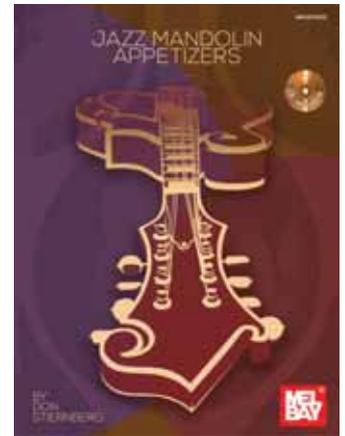
Levy's Leathers has released the MSS17, a new luxury guitar strap. The MSS17 features garment leather and a soft foam core body with caramel-colored leather piping. This addition to Levy's Signature series collection comes in burgundy, black, blue, brown, tan, red, dark brown and white. **More info:** levysleathers.com



Breakthrough Amp

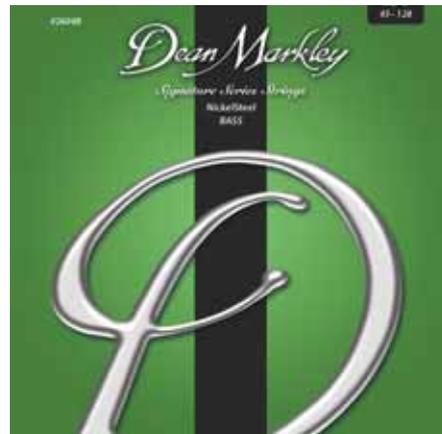
Line 6 has introduced AmpliFi, which combines a high-performance guitar amp with a streaming Bluetooth speaker system and a breakthrough

iOS app. Its five-speaker design delivers detailed guitar tones, from crystal-clear highs to deep and smooth low end. AmpliFi enables guitarists to jam along with songs in their music library, play back tracks during band rehearsal, or crank up the volume at parties. It is available in a powerful 150-watt model or portable 75-watt version. **More info:** line6.com



Taste of Jazz Mandolin

Mandolinists who want to expand their improvisational vocabulary and spice up their rhythm accompaniments will benefit from Mel Bay's *Jazz Mandolin Appetizers*. The book/CD package, prepared by Don Stiernberg, includes a batch of études that address the challenges every improvising mandolinist faces. **More info:** melbay.com



Tone Transfer

Dean Markley's Signature series strings for bass guitar use a nickel-plated steel slowly wound over a hex core with a unique core-to-wrap ratio that facilitates note-bending. The wrap wire is able to provide 100-percent contact with the core, ensuring maximum transfer of tone and sustain. The series is available in an assortment of gauge sets for four- and five-string players. **More info:** deanmarkley.com



Old-Timey Ukes

Moku Vintage series MV-20T tenor ukuleles are styled after vintage instruments of the 1930s. They have an old-time sound and play just like grandpa's old uke. The 18-fret models are handmade and are constructed of solid sapele mahogany with an ebony nut, saddle and bridge pins. They also feature a three-point headstock with hand-inlaid abalone rosette and headstock logo. **More info:** mokuukes.com



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CalArts Jazz Program Celebrates 30 Years

VALENCIA, CALIF., IS KNOWN FOR TWO things. Six Flags Magic Mountain's roller coasters and waterpark draw people from all over Southern California. Creative arts students come to California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) from all over the world.

For the past 30 years, CalArts has had a one-of-a-kind jazz program. Known for its free, learn-at-your-own-pace atmosphere, the school was a pioneer in electronic music and world percussion. The late composer Morton Subotnick and drummer John Bergamo oversaw those respective aspects of the CalArts music school.

A striking feature of the jazz program is the yearly recording sessions that students participate in at Capitol Records Studios in Hollywood. To observe the 25th anniversary of the limited-edition CDs, the school recently staged a reunion concert with alumni from the first recording: trumpeter Ralph Alessi, saxophonists Peter Epstein and Ravi Coltrane, pianist James Carney, bassist Darek "Oles" Oleszkiewicz and drummer Mark Ferber.

The recording project was the brainchild of former Elektra/Asylum, Warner Bros. and Capitol CEO Joe Smith, who first saw the campus in the 1970s. "I went to Yale and participated in the music department, but I'd never seen anything like CalArts," Smith says. "Mel Powell and Charlie Haden were there, and it just felt like the music business. I had no expectations about the recordings other than I wanted young people to experience recording in the most professional circumstances."

Ron McMaster is only the third Capitol engineer to master the CalArts sessions. "They've been excellent from the beginning," he declares. "I never know what I'm going to hear, and it's always exciting." He has high praise for Smith, who is a trustee emeritus. "His genius is in setting up a program that will live long after we're all gone."

Saxophonist Paul Novros has been part of the CalArts jazz faculty since day one. "It was Dave Roitstein, Charlie Haden and myself," he says. "Charlie needed a saxophonist for his Liberation Music Orchestra, and I played it as a freebie. I had taught privately for years, but I was in the right place at the right time." While bassist Haden initiated the program, Novros can't overemphasize Roitstein's hand, noting that he got it off the ground, set it up and directs it.

"When Charlie Haden suggested a jazz program," Roitstein recalls, "Mel Powell was determined that it not be a cookie-cutter operation. Nick England, the school of music dean, wanted it very small, responsive and circular. Nick chose Charlie but knew he couldn't do it alone; I've been here since the second semester.

"Charlie brought in the lead sheets for Pat

Metheny's 'Song X' and eventually Ornette Coleman," Roitstein continues. "Pat became a resident artist and we had Dewey Redman, Don Cherry and Billy Higgins here in the '80s. It was an amazing time."

In addition to directing combos at Cal State Northridge, pianist-composer Gary Fukushima teaches jazz piano, history and improvisation. Fukushima received his master's in jazz keyboard at CalArts in 2005 and was struck by how caring the faculty was. "I walked into David Roitstein's office once and we sat there for two hours," he recalls. "It didn't even feel like a school; it felt more like a family."

Roitstein confirms: "We've always been interested in developing people as composers and improvisers."

Fukushima, like all of the jazz students, completed required courses in African drumming.

CalArts alumni Mark Ferber (left), Peter Epstein, Ravi Coltrane and Ralph Alessi onstage at the Wild Beast Music Pavilion on April 19.



"It opened my eyes to different rhythms," he says. "I took an elective in Balinese gamelan, and I've incorporated some of those concepts into my own writing."

"Our first goal," Roitstein points out, "has always been that the individual is tremendously important."

Percussionist Vineet Vyas is 44 and came to the MFA percussion program after earning a chemistry degree. "I'm amazed," he notes, "how serious Indian classical music is treated here. The beauty of CalArts is the openness—you can pursue anything you want to. And there's an amazing thirst for musical knowledge among your peers."

Novros sees a difference in the kind of student that CalArts attracts. "We probably appeal more to a master's program candidate," he says. "Someone who wants to learn outré music, above and beyond the standard stuff. We've never had a big band here.

"Here we have quite the opposite. These people are among the most beautiful on the planet—both students and faculty. The people who come to us are usually happy to give help to other people whenever they can. I'm always amazed at how lovely everyone is. I feel blessed to be here."

—Kirk Silsbee

Dan Gailey directs KU Jazz Ensemble II at the Lied Center on May 4.



Sights & Sounds: On May 4, the University of Kansas Jazz Ensembles II and III, led by directors Dan Gailey and Albert Miller, respectively, presented a concert program that included works by Fred Sturm, James Miley, George Stone, Tom Kubis, Charles Mingus and John LaBarbera at the Lied Center of Kansas. Following the ensembles' performances, the KU University Band offered a program titled "Sights and Sounds" that combined music with visual arts, created in collaboration with a KU Art Principles and Practice class led by professor Ruth Bowman. ku.edu

Archive Preservation: The Grammy Foundation awarded a grant to the nonprofit Creative Music Foundation to help it restore, preserve and digitize the CMS Archive, more than 400 recordings of concerts conducted at the Creative Music Studio during the 1970s and '80s. The \$11,600 grant will help CMF digitize the remainder of the CMS Archive, which is being housed at Columbia University's Library in New York City. The digitized, remastered recordings will be available for scholars or others who want to enjoy and learn from them. A CMS Oral History Project is also being conducted in association with Columbia University and its radio station, WKCR-FM. columbia.edu

IU Appoints Barker: The Indiana University Jacobs School of Music has appointed Alain Barker as director of entrepreneurship and career development, and lecturer, effective July 1. Barker has been serving as the interim director of entrepreneurship and career development since September 2013. His responsibilities include the supervision of Project Jumpstart, a student-centered, student-driven entrepreneurial leadership program. music.indiana.edu

Ethnomusicology Classes: The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music's Ethnomusicology department is offering three courses during Session C (Aug. 4–Sept. 12) this summer: Jazz in American Culture (Charley Harrison, instructor); Music of India (Abhiman Kaushal, instructor); and Music of India: Sitar (Rahul Neuman, instructor). All classes are open to the public. ethnomusic.ucla.edu

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Blindfold Test > BY TED PANKEN

Paquito D'Rivera

On recent albums like *Song For Maura* and *Tango Jazz: Live At Lincoln Center* (both on Sunnyside/Paquito), master clarinetist and alto saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera, 65, has burnished his stature as the most accomplished practitioner of the Pan-American aesthetic promulgated by Dizzy Gillespie, his employer for most of the decade after D'Rivera defected from Cuba to the United States in 1981. This was D'Rivera's fifth Blindfold Test.

Charles McPherson

"Blue 'N' Boogie" (*Manhattan Nocturne, Arabesque*, 1998) McPherson, alto saxophone; Mulgrew Miller, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Victor Lewis, drums.

Fantastic. The pianist has listened a lot to Bud Powell. The alto player had so many ideas, like an open faucet, coming from Cannonball Adderley but with his own thing. All those double notes, tricks that you don't do with the alto. Fantastic drummer; very supportive bass player. 5 stars.

Edward Simon

"Caracas" (*Venezuelan Suite*, Sunnyside, 2014) Simon, piano; John Ellis, bass clarinet; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Marco Granados, flute; Roberto Koch, bass; Adam Cruz, drums; Jorge Glem, cuatro; Luis Quintero, percussion; Leonardo Granados, maracas.

That's a Venezuelan *merengue*, which has nothing to do with Dominican *merengue*. It's in 5/4—and they dance to it! You don't often hear that beautiful sound in jazz pianists. It must be Ed Simon. Chucho Valdés once said, "He is the best of all of us." The composition is spectacular: a perfect combination of folkloric with jazz elements and jazz players with folk players, using the best of everyone. In my opinion, the bass clarinet soloed beautifully, but didn't have to play that long. Since Ed didn't play a piano solo, 4 stars, not 5. The composition is 10.

Ken Peplowski

"I'll String Along With You" (*Maybe September*, Capri, 2013) Peplowski, clarinet; Ted Rosenthal, piano; Martin Wind, bass; Matt Wilson, drums.

The pianist reminds me of Hank Jones, and the clarinet—apart from those high notes, which are played beautifully—reminds me of Jimmy Giuffrè. You can understand everything. The improvisation in the middle is nothing extraordinary, but very pleasant. Could be Ken Peplowski. It is? Sometimes, when I play with Ken, he's more aggressive. I love the way Ken combines tradition with bebop playing and a modern approach. 3½ stars.

David Krakauer

"Vua!" (*Prufilas: Book Of Angels Volume 18*, Tzadik, 2012) Krakauer, clarinet; Sheryl Bailey, guitar; Jerome Harris, electric bass; Michael Sarin, drums.

A very original way of playing clarinet! I can only think of one guy, Giora Feidman. Or Ivo Papasov. No? Very original playing. Great sense of humor. Sounds like klezmer music mixed with straightahead jazz. Really attractive, though not my cup of tea. 3½ stars. [after] He's a very fine classical player, too.

Eddie Daniels

"Repetition" (*To Bird With Love*, GRP, 1987) Daniels, clarinet; Roger Kellaway, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Al Foster, drums.

Eddie Daniels. John Patitucci on bass. Maybe Chick on piano. No? Oh, Roger Kellaway. Eddie and Roger use a lot of dynamics to play jazz, like playing a chamber piece. Eddie inspired me to play the clarinet again. Dizzy and Mario Bauzá suggested it to me, but I didn't trust clarinet, because people didn't like the instrument anymore. Soprano sax had taken over. Then I heard Eddie's LP *Breakthrough*, arranged by Jorge Calandrelli, where he plays only clarinet—not tenor or flute, which he also plays beautifully—and realized the clarinet had life. Eddie is a unique player. That instrument flies in his hands. He has a disgusting combination of natural talent and perseverance, which is lethal. 5 stars.

Anat Cohen

"La Comparsa" (*Noir*, Anzic, 2007) Anat Cohen, clarinet; Ted Nash, Billy Drewes, Scott



R. ANDREW LEPLLEY

Robinson, saxophones; Frank Greene, Avishai Cohen, Tanya Darby, trumpets; Yonatan Voltzok, Deborah Weisz, trombones; Erik Friedlander, Greg Heffernan, Robert Burkhardt, cellos; Guilherme Monteiro, guitar; Barak Mori, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums.

"La Comparsa" by Ernesto Lecuona. That is Anat Cohen. She is always looking south. I know this CD. There are some better cuts on it. The arrangement is traditional, close to the original harmonies. Maybe that's the idea. Anat soloed superbly. 4 stars.

Michel Portal/Richard Galliano

"Taraf" (*Concerts*, Dreyfus, 2004) Portal, clarinet; Galliano, accordion.

It sounds like a traditional Bulgarian piece. Probably Ivo Papasov. It's not? He's the only clarinet player I know who plays that style. I think you have to be born or raised in or go very often to that area to understand and play that music with such ease. 4½ stars. Maybe a Bulgarian would say, "That's a piece of shit; anyone here can play it." I doubt it! [after] Michel Portal!? Richard Galliano. I contradict myself. I always say you don't have to be Austrian to play Mozart. That is living proof.

Román Filiú

"La Montaña" (*Musae*, Dafnison, 2012) Filiú, alto saxophone; David Virelles, piano; Reinier Elizarde, bass; Dafnis Prieto, drums.

Interesting music, but 3 stars for the total absence of dynamics. Playing only *forte* or *fortissimo* doesn't make me happy. The composition is good, and the alto solo is extraordinary in the lines, intonation and so on. But I get bored, because it's always the same volume. It sounds like Miguel Zenón? No? That type of sound. The drummer, who is very good, plays in the style of El Negro. 3 stars.

Dave McKenna/Buddy DeFranco

"Anthropology" (*You Must Believe In Swing*, Concord, 1997) McKenna, piano; DeFranco, clarinet.

Sounds like Buddy DeFranco. Everybody who plays modern clarinet owes something to him. He's the first one who had that idea. Who is the pianist? [after] I know Dave McKenna very well, but I am not familiar with his style. I'll bet he [has] played organ, because of the bass lines he plays in the left hand while soloing. I thought it was a live recording because it sounds so spontaneous. 5 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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