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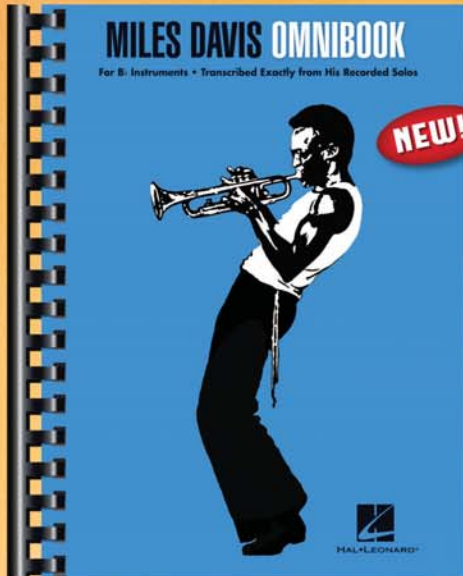
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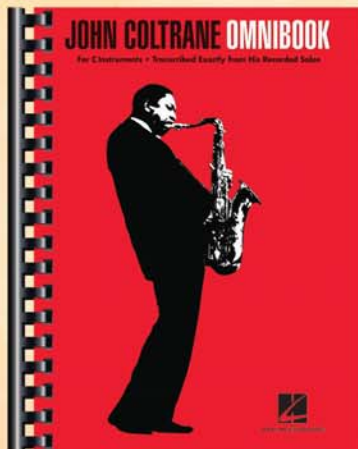
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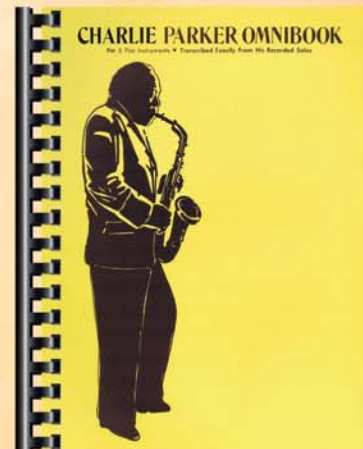
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**AUGUST 2015**

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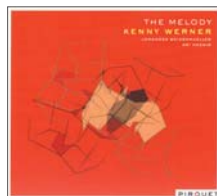
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First Take > BY BILL MILKOWSKI



True Revolutionary

ORNETTE COLEMAN WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARTISTS THAT the United States has ever produced. The avant-garde icon, who changed the course of jazz and made profound contributions to the music for six decades, died of cardiac arrest in Manhattan on June 11. He was 85.

More than almost any other jazz musician of his generation, he was revered for his philosophy and ideas as he was for his groundbreaking music.

"I have always wanted to do as many things as I could learn to do," he told associate editor Dan Morgenstern in the April 8, 1965, issue of *DownBeat*. "The reason why I am mostly concerned with music is because music has a tendency to let everybody see your own convictions; music tends to reveal more of the kind of person you are than any other medium of expression."

While his iconoclastic approach to alto saxophone was grating to many listeners in the 1950s, Coleman found kindred spirits in pianist Paul Bley, trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden and drummers Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins, with whom he began forging a new collective improv vernacular in Los Angeles (where he had moved in 1953 from his native Texas).

A triumverate of his now-classic albums—*Something Else!!!: The Music Of Ornette Coleman* (1958) along with *Tomorrow Is The Question!* and the prophetically titled *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* (both released in 1959)—ushered in the free-jazz movement and introduced Coleman's "harmolodic theory," whereby harmony, movement of sound and melody all share the same value.

After moving to New York City in November 1959, Coleman gained notoriety from a 10-week residency at the Five Spot with his quartet of Cherry, Haden and Higgins. For a second four-month residency at the Five Spot in 1960, Blackwell replaced Higgins on drums. Three important Coleman albums were released around this time, extending his influence in the music world—his double quartet project *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation* and two potent quartet recordings, *Change Of The Century* and *This Is Our Music*.

Coleman's boundless imaginative powers as a composer were illustrated on 1972's *Skies In America*, which was a single lengthy piece performed by the London Symphony Orchestra. Other noteworthy albums in his diverse oeuvre include 1986's *Song X*, a collaboration with guitarist Pat Metheny, and 1988's *Virgin Beauty*, which featured Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia on three tracks.

Throughout his lengthy, prolific career, no matter how far "out" Ornette took his music, that plaintive alto sax cry and deep blue Texas feel remained at the heart of his soaring improvisations.

Coleman, a 1969 inductee into the *DownBeat* Hall of Fame, was also honored with an NEA Jazz Masters fellowship in 1984, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007 and a Pulitzer Prize in music the same year, for *Sound Grammar*.

There are artists who amaze us with their musical talent, and there are artists who impress us with their tremendous intellect and acumen. There are those who move us with their humanity and sincerity. And then there's Ornette Coleman, who did all that and more—a titan who was a category unto himself. How many artists can say they transformed a genre?

Coleman passed away on the day this issue went to press. There is so much more to say about him. Our September issue will include an extensive tribute. **DB**





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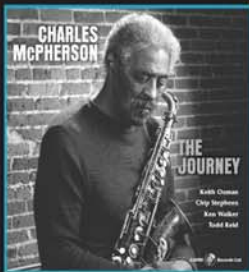
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## Chords & Discords

### Source of Inspiration

I enjoyed Ted Panken's excellent profile of Harold Mabern in your July issue. I was particularly struck by Mabern's observation that after many decades of work, he gets "a million dollars' worth of experience" from even modestly paying, low-profile gigs. That someone of his vast talent and experience still feels this way was very thought-provoking (and helpful) to this reader.

I can recall the thrill of hearing Mabern's work for the first time on Lee Morgan's *The Gigolo*, and later on his fine composition "Mr. Johnson" (also covered by Morgan) and on the pianist's excellent LP *Greasy Kid Stuff!*

Bravo to Mr. Mabern and DownBeat for an uplifting, inspiring read.

RICHARD FREEMAN  
RFREE@SONIC.NET



### Hooray for Harold

It's about time that the great Harold Mabern was recognized with a feature in DownBeat ("A Million Dollars' Worth of Experience," July). I had the privilege of working with him in master classes for several years at the Stanford Jazz Workshop. He was entertaining, humorous and great fun to work with—as well as being a great human being and teacher.

Known for his very powerful playing, he asked us to comment on a piece he had just played. After we all came up with sophisticated answers—all of which were wrong—he fed us the answer: "You just heard Harold Mabern play a slow, easy ballad; I can do *that*, too!" And well he could. Phineas Newborn Jr. is, I am sure, smiling down on his protégé.

DON CRESWELL  
SAN CARLOS, CALIFORNIA

### Dissing the Boxers

I want to comment on the reviews of Vincent Herring's *Night And Day* (The Hot Box, July). Despite the positive comments regarding the album, I think the reviewers still miss the key points on Herring's playing.

To constantly pigeonhole his playing as referencing Cannonball—you've got to be kidding! He references Stitt, Cannonball, Bird, Phil Woods, Coltrane and even Michael Brecker. In the days when Alan Broadbent wrote reviews, you could count on his insight as a world-class musician as well as a reviewer to bring light to a selective album review. Broadbent would have heard the inventiveness of Herring's nod to Coltrane and Brecker on "The Adventures Of Hyun Joo Lee," along with Mike LeDonne's "Tyner-ish" nod. Broadbent would have heard the reharmonization of "Night And Day" that offered up a modern twist.

Although the reviews by all four Hot Box critics were respectful, I think the emphasis on Cannonball and Cedar Walton every time this artist puts out an album is overstated. *That's* the best you can do—regurgitate his past history performing with Nat and Cedar? *That's it?*

Broadbent would have at least recognized

the minor pentatonic triad pairs and the minor-major scale patterns in Herring's work, as he takes the torch from Trane and Brecker and moves it up a notch.

The problem is simple: Vincent Herring plays alto saxophone, so all the comments will only reference the alto, not tenor. And it's easy to constantly reference Cannonball and Cedar. Plus, the album has a lot of lyrical quality, so it doesn't qualify as a progressive album because the reviewers don't view hard-bop as progressive; they're not programmed that way.

You people at DownBeat still don't get the fact that an album can have both a lyrical and harmonic quality at the same time. Trane did standards. Brecker recorded standards. They got the nod for being progressive. Brecker was finally recognized as Brecker, and not a Coltrane devotee.

Moving forward, I would like to see the bar raised for DownBeat reviewers to a more insightful musical understanding.

ROCKY GORDON  
MISATAJO@EMBARQMAIL.COM

### Give the Drummer Some

Please contact Ndugu Chanler and try to persuade him to write his autobiography. Until I saw your interview with him in the June issue of DownBeat, I am embarrassed to say that I had not heard of him. Thank you, Frank Alkyer, for that interview. It was too short, though!

STEVE ELLIS  
AUSTRALAND, AUSTRALIA

### Corrections

■ In the June issue, the review of *Time Within Itself* (Origin) by the Michael Waldrop Big Band misspelled the song title "Twisted Barb" and Waldrop's surname. Larry Panella plays saxophone and flute on the album. Waldrop is based in Washington state.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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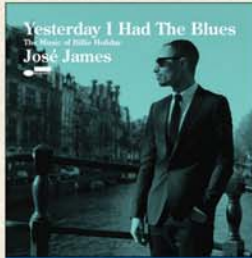
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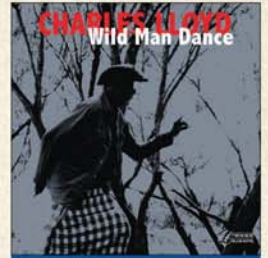
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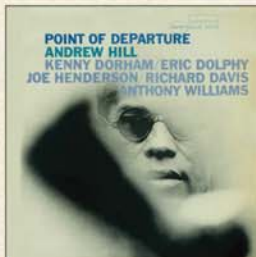


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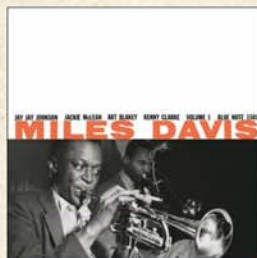
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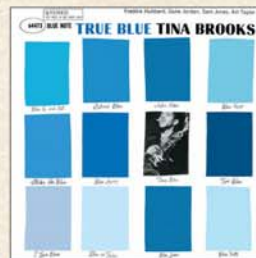
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CAPUCHIN SWING



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VOLUME 1



TINA BROOKS  
TRUE BLUE



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## Remembering Music Man Bruce Lundvall

**B**ruce Lundvall, whose 50-year career in the music business included a heralded stint as the president and CEO of Blue Note Records, died on May 19. He was 79.

Lundvall spent the last period of his life in a senior assisted-living center in New Jersey as he battled complications related to Parkinson's disease.

After serving in the U.S. Army, Lundvall took an entry-level marketing job at Columbia Records in 1960. Over the course of two decades, he rose through the ranks to become head of the North American division of the label. Along the way, he signed jazz artists Herbie Hancock, Stan Getz, Dexter Gordon and Wynton Marsalis, as well as country music icon Willie Nelson.

In 1982, Lundvall left Columbia to start the imprint Elektra/Musician, which released the debut album by vocalist Bobby McFerrin.

While establishing a track record as a smart yet generous business leader, Lundvall earned a sterling reputation as someone who genuinely loved music and enthusiastically championed artistic integrity.

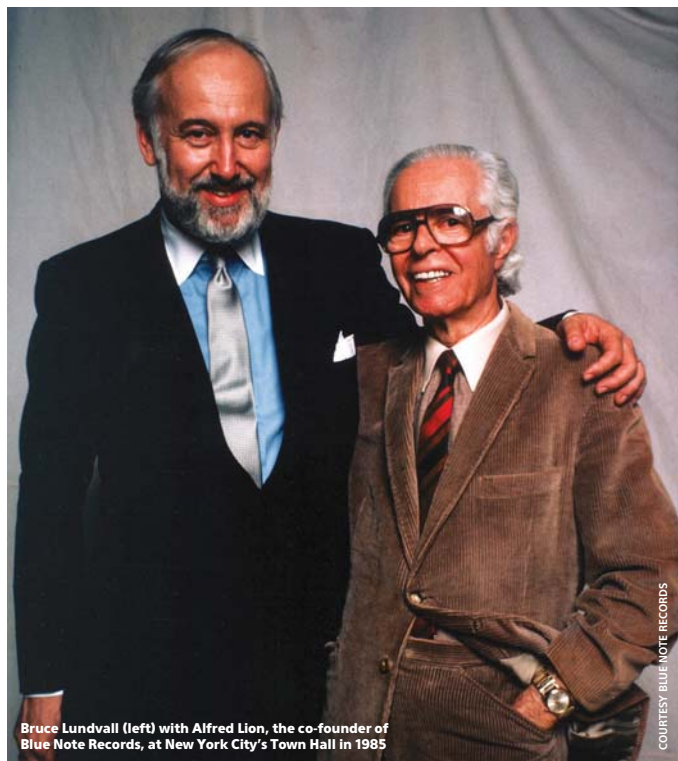
In 1984, EMI asked Lundvall to become the head of Blue Note. He was wildly successful, helping Blue Note to once again become one of the top-tier labels in jazz. Among the artists he signed was Norah Jones, whose debut for the label, *Come Away With Me*, sold over 11 million copies and earned the singer-pianist five Grammy Awards.

While at Blue Note, Lundvall worked with a diverse array of artists, including Kurt Elling, Joe Lovano, Greg Osby, Robert Glasper, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Terence Blanchard, Jacky Terrasson, Us3 and Al Green.

On May 19, Blue Note issued a statement that read, in part: "[Lundvall] received the offer of a lifetime in 1984 when EMI approached him about reviving Blue Note Records, which had been dormant for several years. He jumped at the chance, partnering with producer Michael Cuscuna to bring back the label's earlier stars like Jimmy Smith, McCoy Tyner, Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson and Jackie McLean, and signing new artists, including Dianne Reeves, Cassandra Wilson, Michel Petrucciani, John Scofield, Charlie Hunter and Medeski Martin & Wood."

Lundvall's accolades include the 2011 Grammy Trustees Award, the Jazz Foundation of America's Lifetime Achievement Award, the George and Ira Gershwin Award for Lifetime Musical Achievement (presented by UCLA) and a DownBeat Lifetime Achievement Award, presented in 1998.

In the September 1998 issue of DownBeat, Lundvall told journalist Don Heckman, "Whatever impact I've had can only be traced to one thing. And that's the fact that whenever I've heard someone who just absolutely astounded me because of their originality or their voice, I said we had to have that artist. I've always been right. That sounds egotistical, but it's not meant to be. When I've taken a chance to sign someone because of what I heard spontaneously—because of what I felt in my gut—that's when I made my best decisions."



Bruce Lundvall (left) with Alfred Lion, the co-founder of Blue Note Records, at New York City's Town Hall in 1985

Lundvall stepped down as president of Blue Note in 2010. Don Was became president in 2012.

Lundvall's authorized biography, *Bruce Lundvall: Playing By Ear*, was written with journalist Dan Ouellette and published through ArtistShare. One portion of the book is devoted to Lundvall signing pianist Jason Moran in 1998 after seeing him perform as a member of Greg Osby's group. Here's an excerpt:

"I went to see Greg's band at Sweet Basil," Bruce says. "Jason was very strong and I was impressed by how much originality there was to his playing. He was serious but also had an adventurous soul. It was a visceral thing that he had a voice of his own. I went back to see him another night and told him, 'You're going to be on Blue Note.'"

On May 21, Herbie Hancock posted a tribute on his Facebook page that read, in part: "Bruce Lundvall was one of the greatest music industry visionaries of the 20th century. He made the impossible possible with Blue Note Records. . . . He has left us in body but his legacy and extraordinary influence on the music industry will remain forever."

DB





**DB Poll Winners in Detroit:** The lineup of the Detroit Jazz Festival (Sept. 4–7) includes numerous artists who are winners in the DownBeat Critics Poll, including Gary Burton, who topped the Vibraphone category. In Detroit, Burton will collaborate with guitarist Pat Metheny, who will serve as the festival's Artist in Residence and perform in four different settings during the Labor Day weekend. Other Critics Poll winners in the fest's superb lineup are drummer Brian Blade, clarinetist Anat Cohen, alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa, tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, trombonist Steve Turre, trumpeter Dave Douglas (who topped the category Rising Star—Producer) and the Maria Schneider Orchestra (with Ryan Keberle, who won the category Rising Star—Trombone). **More info:** [detroitjazzfest.com](http://detroitjazzfest.com)

**Guitar Hero Honored:** Al Di Meola is being honored as the 22nd recipient of the Montreux Jazz Festival's Miles Davis Award this summer. Known as a pioneer of blending world music and jazz, the guitarist and composer has explored the influence of flamenco, tango, Middle Eastern, Brazilian and African music. Di Meola's new solo album, *Elysium* (released June 9), finds the 60-year-old blending the tones of his nylon-string Conde Hermanos acoustic prototype model and a '71 Les Paul electric. In addition to guitar, Di Meola plays cajon, bongos, snare, floor tom and cymbals on the album; he also utilizes a Roland VG88 synth guitar module. Joining Di Meola on *Elysium* are keyboardist and longtime collaborator Philippe Saisse, drummer Peter Kaszas and Moroccan percussionist and former Sting sideman Rhani Krija. **More info:** [aldimeola.com](http://aldimeola.com)

**Trombone Titans:** Grammy Award-winning trombonist/composer Doug Beavers honors past and present trombone greats of the jazz and Latin idioms on *Titanes del Trombón* (ArtistShare), released June 16. The fan-funded recording features an all-star cast of guest artists, including Oscar Hernández, Dafnis Prieto, Luisito Quintero, Edsel Gomez and Eddie Montalvo. Fellow trombonists include Conrad Herwig, Luis Bonilla, Reynaldo Jorge and Rey David Alejandro. Beavers will perform at the San Jose Jazz Summer Fest on Aug. 7. **More info:** [dougbeavers.com](http://dougbeavers.com)

# Memorable Moments Unfold in New Orleans

Caught &gt;

**SMILING BEFORE** A cramped crowd of more than 20,000 at the Gentilly stage at Jazz Fest in New Orleans on April 26, Tony Bennett introduced his *Cheek To Cheek* collaborator, Lady Gaga, as “the most popular singer in the world.” If the accolade was somewhat of an overstatement, it was at least in keeping with the over-the-top nature of the set that followed—and of the 2015 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in general.

Taking place over seven days from April 24 through May 1, the musical smorgasbord featured hundreds of performers and 460,000 attendees. Just as the most interesting things in New Orleans tend to happen off the beaten path, the smaller stages at Jazz Fest tended to host the more memorable moments. In a veritable sea of noteworthy performances, unorthodox pairings and surprise cultural mash-ups are the norm, which made Gaga and Bennett a fitting first weekend jazz highlight.

Interspersing most numbers with coy banter and costume changes, Lady G. showed off her versatile range on “Anything Goes,” “Cheek To Cheek” and “Bang Bang My Baby Shot Me Down.” She teased that “anything goes—even Tony and me” in a high-pitched squeal. Later, she sailed seamlessly from the duo album's lovestruck title track into a richly textured take on the Spanish-tinted “Bang Bang.”

By that point, she'd changed out of the blue-beaded caftan in which she'd opened the show. A silver sequined jumpsuit and four or five more looks followed, as did renditions of Charlie Chaplin's “Smile,” “Firefly” and “I Can't Give You Anything But Love.” On Bennett's solo endeavors, his voice often sounded thin—particularly to those unfortunate enough to be standing in certain sections where the audio seemed to have dropped out—but his charisma certainly hasn't dimmed with age.

Driving rain and thunderstorms may have played a factor in the disjointed sound across some stages that weekend. Luckily, the unorthodox or simply unexpected pairings across the Fairgrounds over both weekends were ultimately more electrifying than the weather.

On Saturday, April 25, Malian blues artist Vieux Farka Touré's dark torrents of propulsive guitar work anchored not only his own soaring voice but also that of vocalist Julia Easterlin. Alternating between raw, blues-soaked peals of lament and acrobatically clipped, end-of-a-line pops reminiscent of Björk, she heightened the intensity of the entire set.

That same afternoon, the New Orleans Klezmer All-Stars (aka “The Jewish Meters”) broke down boundaries between traditional Jewish music and New Orleans funk with a selec-

Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival on April 26



tion of new material in a memorable performance that was bolstered by a handful of special guests. The band upped the energy by using two simultaneous drummers—Stanton Moore and the preternaturally funky “Mean” Willie Green—on their classic “Dr. Lizard.” Matt Perrine on sousaphone and the Iguanas' Joe Cabral on bass also pitched in. Topping off the update was Glenn Hartman, who traded his accordion for an organ on the newer tunes.

The following weekend, another all-star group took over the grassy infield of the Jazz and Heritage stage. Fronted by a changing lineup of top New Orleans brass players, the horn-heavy Midnight Disturbers outfit grew in size over the course of its set.

Further highlights over the seven-day period included a sultry set from Cassandra Wilson, the muscle-bound emotion of Sturgill Simpson and a haunting, stripped-down performance by banjo virtuosos Béla Fleck and Abigail Washburn.

Singer Cécile McLorin Salvant sparked standing ovations in the Jazz Tent. During her version of “Guess Who I Saw Today,” Salvant's quick-changing vocal dynamics and artfully dramatic phrasing funneled every implication of the protagonist's spite, frustration and pain into just one line: “Were you caught in the rain?” she hissed.

Yet even those stellar performances rarely outshone the “only in New Orleans” moments, another of which arrived on the second Saturday, courtesy of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and the enormous, gut-rattling vocal performance delivered by newbie Ronell Johnson. By the end of the day-closing set, the tuba player had all but forsaken his instrument in favor of filling the Blues Tent with soulful power on tunes like “My Bucket's Got A Hole In It.”

The final day of the festival featured a main stage Meters reunion that brought together original members Art Neville, Leo Nocentelli, George Porter Jr. and Zigaboo Modeliste along with a small local horn section and support from Ivan and Cyril Neville. They breezed through the hits, giving Nocentelli a chance to stretch out on “Fire On The Bayou” and letting the crowd dig into Porter's famous “Cissy Strut” bass line. —Jennifer Odell



# Spalding Launches *Emily* Project

Caught >

“YOU GUYS ARE REALLY BOBBING ALONG LIKE YOU KNOW THE songs. We barely know the songs,” Esperanza Spalding declared with a chuckle a third of the way through her set at San Francisco’s The Independent nightclub on May 5. Hard to recognize in long braided hair and plastic framed glasses, the bassist/vocalist was in singer-songwriter mode as she presented her new project, *Emily’s D+Evolution*.

It was the triumphant conclusion to an extended stay that started with a four-night run at the SFJAZZ Center as one of the organization’s resident artistic directors. Five nights later, Spalding was headlining a sold-out show at a venue that has hosted the likes of John Legend, TV on the Radio and Sonic Youth.

Stylistic diversity has long been one of Spalding’s hallmarks, as demonstrated during her residency: She started by presenting music from her *Chamber Music Society* album with string trio, piano, drums and a second vocalist. The night of May 1 was devoted to the songs of 2012’s *Radio Music Society*, and then she and pianist Fred Hersch made their West Coast debut as a duo on May 2. A preview of *Emily’s D+Evolution* followed the next night.

Spalding performed as a vocalist for about half of her concert with Hersch. The other half was split between instrumental duets and numbers on which she sang and played double bass. The combination of standards such as “How Deep Is The Ocean” and “Like Someone In Love” with Hersch’s originals came across as if they were being presented in a considerably smaller cabaret.

The May 5 staging of *Emily’s D+Evolution*, a musical/theatrical presentation, was as much a happening as it was a show. Spalding, in costume as *Emily*, took the stage with vocalist/guitarist Nadia Washington, vocalist/keyboardist Corey King, guitarist Matt Stevens and drummer Justin Tyson. Over the course of a dozen songs (plus an encore), Spalding ushered the audience into a world inhabited by disparate characters such as recent graduates, a barroom pianist and an elevator operator.

In a press release, Spalding explained that *Emily* is her middle name, and that the *D+Evolution* project involves stories that are tied to her childhood. There was humor in both the presentation and some of the song titles, including “Farewell Dolly.”

“Ebony & Ivy” featured Spalding and Washington delivering rapid-fire spoken word prose with electronic vocal processing. For the artful “Noble Nobles,” Washington played acoustic guitar and King played bass keyboard as part of a dense soundscape. With its clap-along chorus and positive message, “Funk The Fear” showcased Spalding’s melodic and rhythmic instincts and overall pop sense. On “Tambien,” she switched from bass guitar to upright piano, popping a cigar into her mouth à la Fats Waller.

Singing the final notes of “Unconditional Love,” Spalding removed her spectacles in a Clark Kent-to-Superman moment prior to exiting the stage. Returning to introduce her band before performing an a cappella encore, she thanked the crowd for providing a charged atmosphere. —Yoshi Kato



Esperanza Spalding at The Independent in San Francisco on May 5

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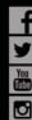
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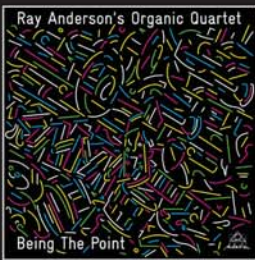
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## ROMERO

### 'Strings And Air'

Hernan Romero (guitar, bass, fender rhodes, cajon)  
Kestas Vaiginis (soprano saxophone)  
Carmen Estevez (vocals, cajon)



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Michal Kapczuk (bass)



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# SFJAZZ Honors Joni Mitchell with Lifetime Achievement Award

Caught >

The biggest disappointment at the SFJAZZ Lifetime Achievement Award gala concert on May 8 was that the honoree, Joni Mitchell, 71, could not attend due to health reasons. The composer and singer was hospitalized on March 31 after being found unresponsive in her Los Angeles home. But the black-tie benefit for the San Francisco organization's arts and education programs went on, with Mitchell's collaborators and admirers paying tribute to a brilliant artist who has explored folk, jazz, rock and other genres throughout her lengthy, diverse career.

Wayne Shorter (left) accepts the SFJAZZ Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of Joni Mitchell from the organization's executive artistic director, Randall Kline, in San Francisco on May 8.



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

The concert was curated by drummer Brian Blade and one of his Fellowship Band collaborators, keyboardist Jon Cowherd, both of whom have played with Mitchell. The SFJAZZ Collective ensemble and other musicians re-imagined Mitchell's compositions during a two-hour program that featured, among others, Judith Hill, Patti Austin, Joe Jackson and Kris Kristofferson. The set list included the honoree's simple, folk-leaning tunes as well as her complex, jazz-informed compositions.

The program opened with a straightahead take on "Court And Spark" by L.A. singer-songwriter Kelly Jones on an arrangement by Cowherd, followed by an inspired SFJAZZ Collective drive through Miguel Zenón's arrangement of "Both Sides Now" and Kurt Elling's sweet and soulful shouts with the Collective on "Edith And The Kingpin," arranged by pianist Edward Simon and highlighted by David Sánchez's blistering tenor sax solo.

Then Randall Kline, executive artistic director of SFJAZZ, addressed the audience: "We have a very open view about jazz," he said. "Joni is impossible to classify. At one point in Joni's career, she embraced jazz fully, working with Charles Mingus and Wayne Shorter, and, as you see, she's been an influence to so many jazz musicians."

Kline then introduced Shorter, a close friend of Mitchell's who received the same honor from SFJAZZ in 2008. Shorter accepted the award on her behalf, recalling how he met her at the Roxy in Los Angeles when she was a rising star. The saxophonist also offered a priceless anecdote: When Miles Davis heard that Mitchell painted, he said, "Let's paint together." Shorter added, "Joni is a vocalist and composer who wrote what she wished for."

Elling then returned to the stage with poetry and scatting on the full-bodied, drum-powered "The Jungle Line," with Blade adding to the exhilarating run. Jackson offered a clever Mitchell-meets-New-Orleans version of "Big Yellow Taxi." (Later he delivered a mediocre vocal take on "Twisted," the comic Annie Ross/Wardell Grey tune that closed Mitchell's 1974 album, *Court And Spark*). Hill got the proceedings grooving on "River"—backed by a band that included Blade, Cowherd and other Mitchell collaborators: saxophonist Tom Scott, guitarist Greg Leisz and trumpeter Mark Isham.

The show was filmed so that the honoree could see it later. Austin preceded her two songs by speaking directly to Mitchell via the camera: "My goddess, Joni, I love you desperately, madly, but could you write some simpler songs?" She then smoothly navigated her way through the gutsy, gripping "Don't Interrupt The Sorrow" (from 1975's *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*) and the earthy "Two Grey Rooms" (from 1991's *Night Ride Home*).

Vocalist Laurie Antonlioli joined with the SFJAZZ Collective and bassist Kanoa Mendenhall for a lovely interpretation of "This Flight Tonight," a composition the singer included on her 2014 tribute album, *Songs Of Shadow, Songs Of Light: The Music Of Joni Mitchell* (Origin).

The SFJAZZ Collective shined on trumpeter Avishai Cohen's slow and bluesy arrangement of "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" (the Charles Mingus instrumental that Mitchell penned lyrics to for her jazz-steeped *Mingus* album), and Elling returned for an energized charge through "Black Crow."

The most powerful performance of the show was Kris Kristofferson giving a shaded spoken-word rendering of "A Case Of You"—a poet covering a poet. The set ended with a free-spirited take on "Free Man In Paris" with the entire cast playing and singing, and the audience standing and singing along.

The denouement was SFJAZZ's now two-year tradition: wheeling out a wind-up Victrola player and spinning a crackly 78 of Billie Holiday singing "I'll Be Seeing You." It was a fitting end, conveying a heartfelt hope that Mitchell will regain her health so that she can paint—and perhaps sing—again.

—Dan Ouellette



Jean Derome conducts his ensemble at FIMAV.

©MARTIN MORISSETTE

## Victoriaville Fest Embraces Jazz, Rock & Avant-Garde

Many qualities weigh into the lofty reputation of the annual spring festival in Victoriaville, Quebec, known as FIMAV (Festival International Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville). Founded and run by the soft-spoken but determined Michel Levasseur, it's one of the premiere and venerable avant-garde festivals in the Americas.

The festival weaves its patchwork tapestry from strands in jazz, free improvisation, non-mainstream rock, world music hybrids, beatless electronica and experimentalism of all sorts for three-and-a-half densely packed days in Quebec's idyllic farmland region.

FIMAV's identity involves elements of what it isn't and doesn't pretend to be. Now in its 31st year, this expansive jazz festival is not a place one goes to hear musicians blowing over changes.

So it made perfect sense when guitarist Marc Ribot launched into a punk-ish version of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" with his power trio Ceramic Dog and opted out of the chord changes in the "B" section, letting the bass line rumble forth instead, despite the contours of the chord pattern. It was a gesture of sly reinvention in a trio (Ches Smith on drums, Shahzad Ismaily on bass and keyboards) that is restless and cosmopolitan.

After Ribot ended his set in the stunning hilltop Pavilion Arthabaska venue, he raced downtown to the largest festival venue, the Colisee, to join the expanded ranks of guitarist Nels Cline's Singers Unlimited project, one of the special occasions at this year's edition.

Cline—the Wilco member who, like Ribot, has excelled in a rock context while maintaining his more marginal, experimental persona—was obviously excited to have a chance to expand his core trio with four additional members. It was another momentous hour in the history of FIMAV.

After last year's 30th anniversary edition, this year's post-milestone was a touch cooler in terms of programming, but also louder, surveying the many variations of rock music to the left of conventional or commercial. But rock wasn't the only game in town, starting with the fine festival opener, Jason Kao Hwang's "Burning Bridge," a proverbial east-meets-west venture for eight musicians.

A recurring theme in keeping with past fests was the presence of two ambitious improvisation-oriented large ensembles led by dynamic conductors/conductionists working around small structured modules and cueing on the fly. Montrealer Jean Derome outdid himself with his texturally sweeping piece "Resistance." His 20-musician group (including three bass/drum components) was led via hand gestures. By contrast, New Yorker Hans Tammen directed his Third Eye Orchestra—in its first show outside of New York City—with a system of cue cards and stage-roaming action painting.

An intriguing theme this year had to do with the unusual—and unusually sensitive—pairing up of like instruments. We got an initial taste of this concept with the refreshingly soft and low-key festival debut set by the German clarinet duo wryly calling itself The International Nothing. Reedists Michael Thieke and Kai Fagaschinski ended their set with a minimal, melancholic piece reminiscent more of 20th-century composer Morton Feldman than anything in the jazz clarinet cosmos.

From another double-up angle, the rarely heard sound of two trumpets collaborating is at the center of the group Kaze. Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii and her husband, trumpeter Natsuki Tamura, teamed up with musicians from Lille, France—trumpeter Christian Pruvost and drummer Peter Orins—five years ago to form the bass-less quartet, which has honed a strong distinctive group sound over the course of three albums. At FIMAV, their set list slalomed from structured parts to free-spirited abandon. For the record, they did navigate a few chord changes on the way "out." —Josef Woodard

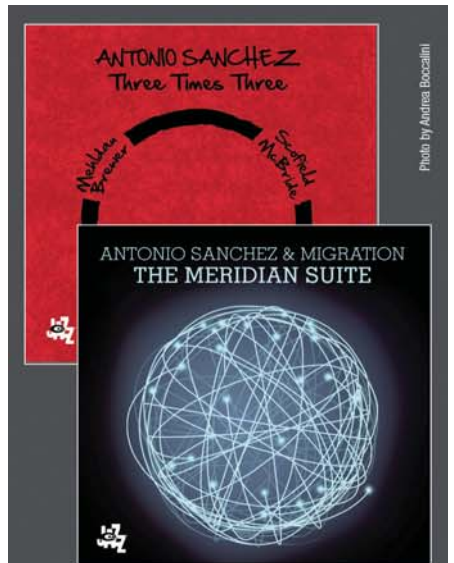


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# B.B. King

## THE UNDISPUTED KING

BY AARON COHEN • PHOTO BY PAUL NATKIN

**B**.B. King spent a summer weekend shortly before his 80th birthday doing the same thing he'd done for years: returning to the spot where his life in music began, and playing the blues. Over the course of a few days in Indianola, Mississippi, the hometown hero joined local officials in breaking ground on the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center (which would open in 2008). After delivering a few speeches, engaging in multiple interviews and performing at a local festival, King jammed at the juke joint Club Ebony until the early morning hours.

Acclaim surrounded King everywhere he went, and the bluesman remained determined to respond in kind right up until his death at age 89 on May 14 from a series of small strokes (likely triggered by his long-time struggle against diabetes). Through his timeless music, he brought the sound and spirit of Mississippi's farms, churches, street corners and small clubs to the entire world—reaching listeners across the globe and inspiring generations of jazz, blues and rock artists who emulated his style and technique.

Tributes and other words of praise came from such celebrities as Buddy Guy, who stated via Instagram, “B.B. King was the greatest guy I ever met. The tone he got out of that guitar, the way he shook his left wrist, the way he squeezed the strings ... man, he came out with that and it was all new to the whole guitar playin’ world.”

On Bonnie Raitt's Facebook page, the singer posted, “In my mind, B.B. has influenced more rock, r&b and blues musicians than nearly anyone else in history.”

President Barack Obama also praised King on the White House website, stating, “He gets stuck in your head, he gets you moving, he gets you doing the things you probably shouldn't do—but will always be glad you did. B.B. may be gone, but that thrill will be with us forever.”

His long list of accolades includes the Presidential Medal of Freedom, induction into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and membership in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

“King's style was the upmost of class,” said blues

singer/harmonica player Billy Branch, who sat in with King on various occasions. “In the broadest sense, he educated the world to the fact that it's OK to listen to the blues and the blues can be classy. It doesn't have to be down and out, or in the alley. It can be just as classy as the big bands of Count Basie and Duke Ellington.”

That approach reached far deeper than just stylistic connections. King always did embrace a world of music—especially jazz—but he also used all of it to inform a personal take on his own tradition. He developed a guitar vibrato that was recognizable after just a couple of notes and relentlessly performed around the world—only stopping when becoming ill during a concert at Chicago's House of Blues on Oct. 3, 2014. Along with this diligence, King also had the warm personality that made him welcome whether he was performing and speaking on network television or in a prison.

While King's affability and deep appreciation for all forms of music helped him stand out, he claimed that he just reflected the many dimensions of blues itself. King said as much to an assembly of Mississippi Valley State University students who packed an auditorium to see him during that 2005 visit.

“A lot of people who don't pay much attention think that all blues songs are the same,” King said. “Meaning that they're all slow, droopy-drawers tunes. But like with we as a people, there are many different colors and many different ways to do what we do.”

King's musical education didn't come easily. Growing up in the deeply segregated South, he worked in a cotton gin as a teenager, and his home lacked electricity until he was 16. Music provided more than spiritual relief, and King's initial performances included singing gospel in the sanctified church and on street corners. While he soon found out that singing secular songs paid more, religious tones resonated throughout his career.

“B.B.'s guitar playing sounded like a preacher preaching his sermon,” said blues singer/guitarist Jarekus Singleton. “He starts out low and then starts tuning up, and when he's repeating a line or two, every word is important. B.B. can use just four notes in a solo and make it sound like 10 million.”



B.B. King's sound and technique can be partially credited to his admiration for jazz guitarists.



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

As much as King drew from the culture surrounding him in Mississippi, he also had been an avid record collector. So much so that his early gigs in late 1940s Memphis included working as a DJ on the influential radio station WDIA (which was also where the former Riley B. King became known as “Blues Boy” King before he shorted the name to its initials). Those records opened up new worlds. Perhaps, too, King’s knowledge of what works in jazz improvisation enabled him to create a well-crafted all-instrumental album like *Easy Listening Blues* in 1962 that did not descend into directionless soloing.

“I like Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt,” King said in 2005. “And Lonnie Johnson was like Duke Ellington was with jazz. He seemed to fit in with everybody. Then there was this blues person out of Texas, Lemon Jefferson, but everybody called him “Blind” Lemon. Last, but not least, was T-Bone Walker. Those were my idols. They still are today. Each of them could play differently, but I could feel the same thing from each of them. It seemed like the notes, the way they placed them and how they controlled the guitar was like a sword going through me. It always gets me.”

That list was just the beginning, as King could also wax eloquently about country music and the

jump swing of Louis Jordan (music that he would delve into on his own recordings). Shortly before his 2005 visit to Mississippi he spoke at Berklee College of Music in Boston and related how pleased he was that genre specialization was not emphasized. “I thought that was a great thing,” King said. “I like students to be themselves, and that’s what they’re doing at a lot of music schools.”

Shortly after King’s time at WDIA, his own voice and guitar reached a wider audience on such early singles as “3 O’Clock Blues” (included on the compilation *The RPM Hits 1951–1957*; see sidebar on page 21). He used such techniques as sliding between notes, which he gradually enhanced with embellishments, and then developed a quick finger tremolo in his left hand.

“On earlier blues recordings you hear a lot of picking and chording,” Branch said. “B.B. was one of the pivotal people to usher in the style of squeezing. In terms of evoking the feeling and emotion from an instrument, that style facilitates that: Squeezing those strings and bending those notes is akin to what we do on the harmonica to get that emotional, powerful feeling.”

King developed this sound partially because of his admiration for jazz guitarists, but he also pointed to a more internal source.

“I never tried to advance on [the technique],”

King said. “I try to advance on progressions and stuff like that, but I never try to advance on the vibrato. It’s like breathing. It comes natural. I do it whether I want to or not.”

Although King emerged a few years before the rock ‘n’ roll era, it took about 15 years for a pop audience to realize his influence and begin flocking to his concerts. The success of his 1964 album, *Live At The Regal*, indicated that he was esteemed in black communities at the time. But America’s racial segregation—especially in the late 1950s and early ‘60s—didn’t help matters, nor did the myopic playlists of mainstream radio stations and promotion departments of major record labels.

King often stood apart from many of his contemporaries: He made a solid attempt at smoother pop crooning (on the 1963 album *Mr. Blues*), but only briefly pursued that direction, his voice never fully letting go of the rough twang that made it so distinctive. King also wasn’t part of that era’s acoustic folk-blues revival.

By the mid-1960s, King started to achieve the universal acclaim that he deserved. A litany of rock guitarists, from Mike Bloomfield in Chicago to Jeff Beck in England, claimed him as their hero. Sociologist Charles Keil described King’s cultural importance in the 1966 book *Urban Blues*. At the same time, King was never one to sit back and wait for accolades to come his way. For years, his diligence included performing around 300 concerts annually. But he still strove to go further. That came across in his interview with James R. Bourne for the article “The Anatomy of B.B. King” in the July 27, 1967, issue of *DownBeat*.

“I’ve been trying my best to live so the people in my circle, the people that I meet, will accept me the same way that they do Mahalia Jackson or that they would Frank Sinatra,” King said. “You know, for being what he is and what he does. Do you follow me? Yeah, I think that Frank is one of the greatest singers in the world, at least in the pop field; and I think that Mahalia Jackson is one of the greatest spiritual singers, so I want to be one of the great blues singers. And I want, most of all, for the people, not only Negroes but people, to know me as such and to think the same way I just mentioned.”

The 1969 mega-smash “The Thrill Is Gone” helped King become the kind of international star he mentioned in that *DownBeat* interview two years earlier. Producer Bill Szymczyk felt that adding strings would make the song by Roy Hawkins and Rick Darnell a pop hit, and King went along with the idea. More than 45 years later, this record’s appeal remains vivid, especially when his guitar cracks through those lush background arrangements.

The following year, King recorded *Indianola Mississippi Seeds* with Szymczyk and some rock guests, including Carole King on piano and Joe Walsh on rhythm guitar. This album, which mostly included King’s compositions (aside from Leon Russell’s “Hummingbird”), has the kind of upbeat, easygoing feel that matched his conversational personality. About 30 years later, King said it was also the only one of his albums where he did not find any mistakes afterward.

Despite the sophistication inherent in King’s music, he often dealt with the ill-informed pre-

conception that his blues lacked refinement. For a period in the latter 1960s, some younger African Americans also felt that his music was a throwback to an era better forgotten, which singer/guitarist Chris Thomas King mentioned on his own website the day after King died.

One of King's recurring statements about all that was, "If you're black and you're playing the blues, it's like being black twice." Actually, African American concertgoers and record buyers never completely abandoned King. He had hits on the r&b charts during the 1960s, including "Don't Answer The Door" in 1966 and "The Jungle" in 1967. But the kind of dismissive attitudes that Chris Thomas King described continued to bother him decades later.

"A lot of people seem to be ashamed of playing the blues as blues," King said in 2005. "For example, a guy would be playing a simple song and then at the end of it he'd put in, say, a flat five or something like that when he should just end a song with a dominant seventh or something to keep the same sound. But then they end a song with a pregnant ninth, or something that takes away from everything you've heard. Just like if you're going to play something jazzy, keep it jazzy. But if you're going to play something bluesy—or, as we used to say, 'down-homish'—end it the same way."

None of this prevented King from being one of the few blues musicians to consistently engage younger black audiences during the 1970s, and he did not ignore the changes that were happen-

ing in r&b at that time. Stevie Wonder wrote the title track and played his singular piano parts on King's 1973 album, *To Know You Is To Love You*. On *Friends* from 1974, King embraced proto-disco arrangements while keeping his own integrity, especially on the sleek instrumental track "Philadelphia." King was also a "Soul Train" guest when the TV show was just getting off the ground in 1971 and performed on the show well into the decade. That program's famous youthful dancers took the time to listen to him speak.



King with Buddy Guy at the 2008 Chicago Blues Festival

© LINDA VIRT DOGIAN/FROMPHOTOS

They were not the only ones, as King spent the remainder of his life as an ambassador for his art on various public forums, including TV talk shows. His skills in this setting equaled his musical finesse, according to Singleton.

"He was the first blues musician who could sit down on the couch on TV and hold a conversation with good grammar skills," Singleton said. "That was a big lesson for me. You could also see how

much he loved people. He'd be late for his shows because he was so busy talking to people at his previous shows. And he had such humility. So if the king is that humble, who am I not to be? That set a good example that would carry over into any profession."

While the nation has fallen far short of the kind of harmony King desired, his concerts showed how mutual accord could be possible at least within the community that formed around him. Throughout the latter part of his career, his audiences at festivals and theaters across the United States included a wide variety of fans. So King's passing is a loss not just for the blues, but for society itself in ways that may not be immediately grasped. Yet today it's also clear that his life's work continues to be passed along to numerous generations. This includes some young blues players who emerged in recent years from the South, such as Singleton and Selwyn Birchwood. His legacy means the world to them.

"He always had such a presence about him," Birchwood said. "He was so personable, you never felt there were barriers between him and the crowd. He was talking right to you, singing with an intensity you could feel and relate to. Look at his music over the years, especially in the 1950s and '60s—he was just the man. B.B. played and sang with so much power and so much emotion. It means a lot to be called the King of the Blues, and nobody tried to dispute it." DB

## King's Dozen

**B.B.** King's recorded output includes more than 350 commercially available recordings. Here are 12 essential albums, compilations and videos.

**The RPM Hits 1951–1957 (Ace).** This priceless array of early tracks, including the superbly bleak "3 O'Clock Blues," finds King coming of age as a Roy Brown-inspired singer and T-Bone Walker-influenced guitarist.

**Eight Classic Albums (Real Gone).** This CD box set presents LPs originally released on Crown in the late 1950s and early '60s. The most sublime are *My Kind Of Blues* and *Singin' The Blues*.

**Spotlight On Lucille (Virgin).** Recorded in the early 1960s, a dozen instrumental tracks display King's virtuosic string-bending in service of a style combining country blues with his take on the artistry of Lonnie Johnson and Charlie Christian.

**Live At The Regal (MCA).** Playing a Chicago theater in 1964, King comple-

ments his voice with guitar in a way that only a supreme bluesman could. The crowd went crazy. This is often cited as one of the greatest blues albums of all time.

**Blues Is King (Traffic).** Concert stages were King's natural habitat, and this underappreciated recording of a 1966 club gig is almost as astounding as *Live At The Regal*.

**Completely Well (MCA).** This 1969 release gets noticed for including his signature song, "The Thrill Is Gone," and another one of his most famous tracks, "Hummingbird." Often overlooked is just how *hard* bassist Jerry Jemmott and other hired guns pushed the legendary guitarist.

**Indianola Mississippi Seeds (MCA).** By 1970, King was embraced by the pop world. This session with Carole King and Leon Russell runs deep with warm feeling.

**Live In Cook County Jail (MCA).** This 1971 album, a classic that became one of his most popular releases, found him in inspired form during a high-security concert. It's his third-best live album.

**Together For The First Time ... Live**

**(Geffen).** This 1974 meeting of giants King and Bobby "Blue" Bland didn't turn out to be as monumental as it could have, but the pair did show flashes of a special chemistry.

**Riding With The King (Reprise).** Released in 2000, this is one of the rare albums in recent decades that saw King rising far above merely a senior-statesman affability. Follower Eric Clapton matches well with the master. The album opens with the title track (a John Hiatt composition), and it closes with a rendition of the Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer standard "Come Rain Or Come Shine."

**The Ultimate Collection (MCA).** Of the many compilations available, this single-CD release is the best introduction to the man. It covers his recording career from the 1950s up to 2000.

**B.B. King: The Life Of Riley (MVD Visual).** Director Jon Brewer's two-hour documentary nearly implodes with all its hero worship, but it does tell the bluesman's life story well. The film is available on DVD and Blu-ray, and the soundtrack was released on CD. —Frank-John Hadley



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# JAZZ ARTIST | JAZZ GROUP

# VIJAY IYER

# CHANNELING

# EMOTIONS

BY PHILLIP LUTZ • PHOTO BY JIMMY & DENA KATZ

**V**ijay Iyer had barely digested his double victory in the 2015 DownBeat Critics Poll—for Jazz Artist and, with his compatriots in the Vijay Iyer Trio, for Jazz Group—when it was back to the grindstone, preparing for concerts with the Brentano String Quartet, sound installations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and sundry other special projects, not to mention lectures at Harvard and the usual complement of jazz dates.

Few pianists can claim Iyer's drive and intellect, fewer still the kind of notice he has received for his marshalling of those gifts. But in his view, other aspects of his musical life are often obscured, not least its very humanity—a situation that he meant to address when, on a brilliant day in May, he settled into a bench in the kitchen of his Harlem home, a neat triplex with few distractions save for the chirping of birds outside his screen door.

The chirping, as it turned out, proved a fitting backdrop to the conversation. Birds have formed a kind of leitmotif in Iyer's work of late, what with "Geese," "Wrens" and, most saliently, "Starlings" among the titles populating "Open City," a large-ensemble work that, in reduced form, provided the raw material for the avian-themed portion of *Break Stuff*, his third trio album.

*Break Stuff*, released by ECM in February, represents something of a breakthrough, and "Starlings" is integral to it. The tune, which opens the album, evokes the spatial awareness of the famously swooping, swarming birds, luxuriating in the intervals between Iyer's idiosyncratically placed notes as it eases the listener into the album's more restless territory.

Easing into the proceedings is a marked departure

for Iyer, who likened his earlier albums' opening gambits to both the hyperkinetic *Saturday Night Live* routine featuring absurdly brief skits, "Short Attention Span Theater," and the quick-cut technique of hard-boiled filmmakers like Martin Scorsese.

"I'd try to punch up an album," he said, "to make each cut just 'hit it and leave.' I'd start with a whole succession of those, so by the time listeners are 15 or 20 minutes into it, they won't even realize something has happened."

Breaking that pattern may have qualified as a risk, but it was, in retrospect, one worth taking. Based on a suggestion by ECM founder and producer Manfred Eicher to push the more-animated "Chorale," once slated to open the album, down a spot in the track order, the decision set a tone for the project, which received five stars in the March issue of DownBeat.

"One thing we gained from working with ECM," Iyer said, "is the ability to play quiet and be heard. There's all this subtlety at this barely audible kind of level that's now being featured, so all these details about touch, texture and resonance—that tactile quality, the really intimate aspect of the music—is very present, not engulfed in tape hiss and not dwarfed by the loud parts. It's nice to find all this detail and find ways to express inside that quiet space."

For Iyer, quiet space, wherever he finds it, is a valued commodity these days. The Critics Poll honors follow a 2013 MacArthur Foundation fellowship and five wins in the 2012 DownBeat Critics Poll, among other awards. As the honors pile up, the stream of offers from educational and cultural institutions has become a veritable flood.



The Vijay Iyer Trio—bassist Stephan Crump (left), Iyer and drummer Marcus Gilmore—topped the Jazz Group category in the DownBeat Critics Poll.

© JUAN HITTERS/ECM RECORDS



In addition to the professorship at Harvard (where he is teaching critical improvisation studies) and his post at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (where as artist-in-residence he will, in March 2016, take up activities ranging from solo piano to multidisciplinary collaborations), he has accepted appointments as project director at the Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music for the month of August, and as music director of the Ojai Music Festival, a post that begins in 2017. And that's just for starters.

The appointments have a downside. Every institution has its set of agendas, and every commitment means less time for making music unconstrained by those agendas. It also means less time for personal indulgence, which even Iyer needs occasionally to pursue, despite his image in some quarters as a strictly cerebral kind of guy.

For Iyer, 43, the issue of image is entangled with some misconceptions of him as a person and artist. It is an issue that surfaces from time to time, as it did last year with the death of poet Amiri Baraka, a onetime Iyer collaborator who reviewed the pianist's debut CD from 1995, *Memorophilia* (Asian Improv Records), a deeply felt effort on which a heady cast of characters—including a mentor, saxophonist Steve Coleman—agreed to appear. Most of the critics' reviews missed the point, Iyer said. But Baraka, he belatedly discovered, was a notable exception.

When Baraka died, he said, "I found that he had reviewed my first album. It was published in the book *Digging*. I realized he was one of the only critics ever to talk about my feelings, the fact

that I had put my emotions into this, that it's not just ideas, that it's not just my strategy, my cerebral something-or-other. That this was an emotional outpouring. That I'm a human being. And that the music is somehow an expression of my personhood."

Iyer has occasionally hinted at his feelings about the reflexive stereotyping of musicians with roots in the subcontinent, especially those who, like he, hold science degrees and apply mathematical formulas to their music's rhythmic structures. But the full-throated lament offered in the kitchen on that May day—made all the more

from the start about Vijay is the seriousness, the enormous intellect," he said, sitting in the music room of his Brooklyn apartment. "Yes, there is often mathematical underpinning to the music, and that was apparent from the start. But the thing that really makes it work for me and others, as they have become exposed to his artistry, is that it's really about the breadth of his humanity and his character and his empathy, his human sensitivity. That's what makes the music run deep."

Certainly, *Break Stuff* is as deep as any collection he has produced. If anything, its contrasts lend it added layers of meaning. The formidably restrained "Starlings," for example, is counterbalanced by a no-holds-barred "Hood," a nod to Detroit tech pioneer Robert Hood on which the trio pushes all the buttons that fans of Iyer's approach—"getting deeper and deeper into the groove and growing from inside of that," as he put it—have come to expect.

Marcus Gilmore, the trio's drummer, stressed the contrasting emphases in his approaches to the tunes. Sitting in his Harlem apartment, he noted that, on "Hood," "I was always thinking about the definition of

powerful by the validating presence of his visiting mother, Sita Raghunathan, seated in the adjoining living room—seemed remarkable for the specificity with which it addressed the soft bigotry of high expectations.

And it was backed up by bassist and bandmate Stephan Crump, who, having stood next to Iyer's piano for the past 16 years, probably has as deep a perspective on his musical life as anyone.

"The thing that everybody has emphasized

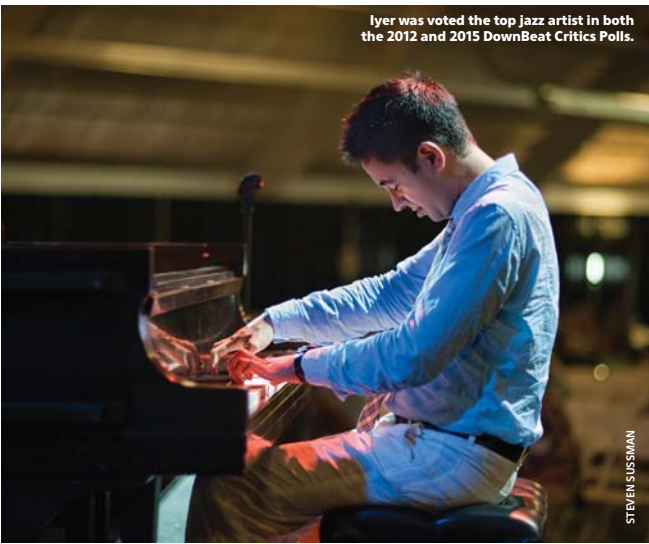
of the rhythms; I wanted to hear the stick, the way it strikes the head, to hear the rhythm more than the actual tone. On 'Starlings,' I wanted a stronger tone than rhythm." Each tune gains in effect by sharing real estate on the CD.

Each tune also gains by virtue of the trio format. Like "Starlings," which was originally scored for a larger ensemble (20 pieces), "Hood" was first developed for a larger group (a sextet). And like "Starlings," "Hood" seems liberated by its reduc-

**'WHEN I SEE VIRTUOSIC DISPLAYS, IT FEELS KIND OF IMPERVIOUS. THAT'S NOT WHAT I VALUE FROM MUSICAL PERFORMANCE. I'VE COME TO VALUE CONNECTION, WHICH OFTEN COMES MORE FROM VULNERABILITY.'**



Iyer was voted the top jazz artist in both the 2012 and 2015 DownBeat Critics Polls.



tion to a threesome. With the reduction, Crump said that the tune's "elasticities and tensions" are laid bare, and it becomes a vehicle for revealing Iyer's humanity in the most literal sense, down to the "stretching of the tendons."

In live performance, Iyer said, "It becomes the heart of the set. Not because people go wild but because it really focuses the energy like nothing else does. There's something so elemental about it. It's like we're kind of hammering on things. It goes on and on, but it expands these very relatable elements into something no one foresees. You lead

listeners somewhere.

"As an educator, that's what I like to tell my students: 'Personally I don't know what's going to happen, but we're going to be in it together and I respect you as a person.' And that, to me, is key because some of these young musicians haven't really been addressed as human beings before. I know that feeling."

Of all Iyer's projects, he explained, the trio has emerged as the most reliable means of efficiently achieving both commercial and artistic ends. "It's the format that's most in demand," he said. "It's also the most tourable. But beyond that practical kind of stuff, it's very real for me, it's very nourishing and it's a way I get to be fully myself, especially because it's so collaborative and communal. And because the music

has these very real-time ritual kind of qualities, it's rewarding."

The trio's utility was already evident at its debut in January 2005 at Merkin Hall in New York. With alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa uncharacteristically absent, Iyer went with a combo that included Crump and Gilmore. The trio constituted half the bill. (The other half, coincidentally enough, included the premiere of Iyer's 10-movement suite for strings, piano and electronics, "Mutations," which would, nine years

later, become the title work on Iyer's first CD as a leader for ECM.) It clicked.

"It was immediately apparent to me that all of a sudden there was the unveiling of this organism that had been existing within the quartet but it was tethered, bound," Crump said. "It was exciting to feel this thing that could be much more amoeba-like and shapeshifting, more dimensional and, especially for me as a bass player, much more expansive as far as the roles I could take on in the ensemble."

With only three voices roaming the sonic terrain, Gilmore explained, the space for each expanded accordingly. "I don't know if there was more freedom," he said, "but having the space gave you room to experiment in different kinds of ways, to breathe in different kinds of ways."

By the time the musicians hit the studio for 2009's *Historicity* (ACT), the breathing was involuntary. "I remember feeling this sense of ease with the process," Crump said. "Part of the special vibe with this trio is that we've been through all kinds of stuff together. We'll be joking around, whether it's high-minded stuff or stupid stuff, and we'll walk right onto the stage, taking that conversation—that sort of multidimensional interaction—right into the music."

With 2012's *Accelerando* (Pi Recordings), the second trio album, the group felt loose enough to leaven the mix with what Crump, for lack of a better term, tagged a "swing" tune—Herbie Nichols' "Wildflower." On *Break Stuff*, the group has upped the ante with Thelonious Monk's "Work," rendered

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- 5<sup>TH</sup> AS  
- 3<sup>RD</sup> TS  
- 2<sup>ND</sup> BS



largely straight, with a slight structural chaser in the stretching of the form between sections.

"We often play one or both in a night," Crump said. "I think it's good pushing that expectation for someone who might be coming to a jazz concert. It's fun for us to interact in that mode because it's usually other grooves or feels."

On some nights, of course, expectations are upended by circumstance. Such a night occurred during July 2013, when a Florida jury found George Zimmerman not guilty of the murder of Trayvon Martin. Iyer and Crump, touring with drummer Tyshawn Sorey, were scheduled to play at A-Trane, the famed club in Berlin. And play they did.

"We were in shock," Iyer said, "so we just opened ourselves to it. We just let it all pass through us. Those were some of the most unforgettable, intense nights of music-making, some of the deepest nights of my life. A moment like that is not about you. It's about allowing yourself to be a conduit for forces in motion around you, to see if you can channel them, shape them, let them move you."

Iyer is more than merely influenced by the news around him; he allows it to shape his work. He incorporated an element of social protest into his Dec. 18, 2014, concert at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. With police brutality against minorities—and the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner—lingering in the public's mind, Iyer opened the show with a darkened stage and 20 to 30 people who performed a "die in," simulating their deaths. Projected on the screen above the stage was the phrase "Black Lives Matter."

Iyer tapped into similarly powerful, if more benign, forces with his score for the 2014 film *Radhe Radhe: Rites of Holi*, director Prashant Bhargava's take on the Hindu spring festival of Holi. Drawing inspiration from Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring*, Iyer's score, an extravagant swirl of Eastern and Western influences, reflects the spirit—and, to an extent, the letter—of Bhargava's footage capturing the ecstatic explosion of color and sound that is the eight-day religious festival in northern India.

"I tried to understand how the music was impelling people to behave the way you're seeing them behave," he said. "The music almost provides direct access to some of the higher, mysterious forces."

It is emblematic of Iyer's humanity that he does not simply move on from such episodes. In May, Bhargava died suddenly at the age of 42. Iyer, who had opened his home to Bhargava when the filmmaker was in New York, flew immediately to Chicago for a memorial service (which took place just weeks after Iyer's *DownBeat* interview in Harlem).

And when the opportunity arose to make a musical statement about the Zimmerman case, he wrote and performed "Suite For Trayvon (And Thousands More): Fallacies" for the 2014 album *Wiring* (Intakt Records) by Trio 3: saxophonist Oliver Lake, bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Andrew Cyrille. The contribution, he said, was "a big landmark for me personally."

Iyer's music is always about more than the notes on the page. Case in point: the 2013 album *Holding It Down: The Veterans' Dreams Project* (Pi Recordings), a long-form collaboration with



Iyer's 2014 album *Mutations* was his first leader project for ECM.

JIMMY & DEBRA KATZ

hip-hop poet Mike Ladd involving minority veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Years in the making—he and Ladd started playing together around the turn of the millennium—the project has yielded "In What Language?," "Still Life With Commentator" and the current installment, 18 songs that address the post-9/11 world from the viewpoint of people of color through acoustic and electronic grooves.

To Iyer, the aesthetics of incorporating electronics into jazz are tied to the very notion of community.

"The jazz community is a lot of different things," he said. "Maybe there's no unity or center to it. But whatever it is, I think we do care about *liveness*. You definitely cannot have whatever this music is without that.

"It's what I value—I want to be invited in. When I see virtuosic displays—'Check out what I can do'—it feels kind of impervious. It doesn't even matter if I'm there or not. That's not what I value from musical performance. I've come to value connection, which often comes more from vulnerability."

To illustrate his point, he cited "Vuln, Part 2," a plaintive piece for piano and laptop on *Mutations* that he said often gets lost amid the discussion about the impressive sweep of the suite. The title is a coinage, he said, a "verb version of 'vulnerable.' It's what it means to reveal yourself, to put yourself out there. That's what we do."

Performing the piece live, Iyer cuts a stark figure as he plays the acoustic instrument while mixing and triggering loops using the sequencing program Ableton Live. Unlike in straight acoustic performance, where the relationship between gestures made and sounds produced is evident, the mapping between gesture and sound is less clear in the realm of electronics performance.

"That connection is not so obvious," he said. But "if you don't take those kinds of risks, it's like you're not present."

The suite, for its part, presents other kinds of challenges, among them integrating groups of musicians schooled in different traditions. "Part of the impetus," he said, "was, 'How do I work

with classical musicians and still be myself and let them still be themselves? How can I create opportunities for the music to evolve in real time?'"

About 85 percent of the music for *Mutations*, he said, was notated. "The rest of it contains directives, tasks, parameters that are very constrained in a way," he said, "so as not to dumbfound them with a universe of choices but rather to give them a set of possibilities that are very definite, and then find ways to work with those and create in relation to each other."

In the movements where he's improvising on piano and interacting with the laptop—"Canon," "Automata" and "Kernel"—the other musicians (Michi Wiancko and Miranda Cuckson on violin, Kyle Armbrust on viola and Kivie Cahn-Lipman on cello) have to yield to him or work with him in the same space. Iyer expressed his satisfaction with the way the musicians inhabited it.

"We really lived it," he said.

Yet another challenge—one for the future—is presenting the trio with chamber orchestras. "The trio is so fluid and interactive and organic," he said. "We'd have to find a way to sustain that kind of approach even when you're dealing with a bunch of musicians who are dealing with notation."

In the end, he said, the approach might be similar to the one he has successfully been "test-driving" as a soloist with the Brentano quartet—cycling a groove and using cues to move in and out of discrete sections. "But doing it with 30 people instead of four is a different story."

"I'm exploring how we can bring together the languages," he explained. "It's not so much the styles. We're supposed to be ourselves. It's supposed to speak through you. It's about, 'Can we find fundamental ways of working together? How do you organize that sonically and behaviorally? What's the chain of command, who's got the ball?'"

"My basic interest as the kind of musician I am, whatever that may be, is, 'How can I function in the ensemble in a way that isn't a lie?'"

DB





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# 63rd ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

## JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

**Rudresh Mahanthappa, *Bird Calls* (ACT) 68**

On this vigorous tribute to Charlie Parker, alto saxophonist Mahanthappa mined choice nuggets of the master's genius to inspire eight electrifying compositions of his own.



1



**Steve Lehman Octet, *Mis En Abime* (PI) 57**

The electro-acoustic framework of this jewel is as rich as jazz gets, with an emotional edge that transcends the spectral harmony in which it's based.

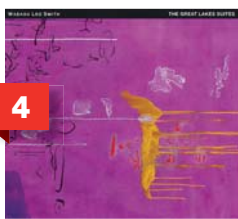
With a delicious sense of multiplicity, Lehman sends his alto sailing over chimey, microtonal vibraphone and an indeterminate sense of time.



**Jason Moran, *All Rise: A Joyful Elegy For Fats Waller* (BLUE NOTE) 55**

This jazz-infused album, co-produced by singer/bassist Meshell Ndegeocello, contains intoxicating deconstructions of Fats Waller tunes that fuse hip-hop, funk, house, r&b, soul, rock and Afrobeat—translating the jazz tradition into contemporary expression as a dance party.

Wadada Leo Smith's quartet members share a mutual sense of how collective improvisation illuminates his distinctive compositional ideas.



**Wadada Leo Smith, *The Great Lakes Suites* (TUM) 47**

On this two-CD set of multi-part suites, the trumpeter pays tribute to the North American Great Lakes. Smith's quartet members share a mutual sense of how collective improvisation illuminates his distinctive compositional ideas.

This three-CD live set documents two years of touring by the pianist's elite trio with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade. Critics have praised this group for the inventiveness of its arrangements, the imagination and virtuosity of each member and the intangible but ever-important factor of group chemistry.



**Chick Corea Trio, *Trilogy* (STRETCH/CONCORD) 45**

This three-CD live set documents two years of touring by the pianist's elite trio with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade. Critics have praised this group for the inventiveness of its arrangements, the imagination and virtuosity of each member and the intangible but ever-important factor of group chemistry.

Consisting of drummer Blade, pianist Jon Cowherd, bassist Chris Thomas and reedists Myron Walden and Melvin Butler, The Fellowship Band may not be prolific, but it's a profoundly important group on today's scene.



**Kenny Barron/Dave Holland, *The Art Of Conversation* (IMPULSE!) 42**

This aptly named set features two masters at play, swinging solidly and waxing romantic in the tradition as they seek out timbral and textural nuance. It's a pleasure to eavesdrop on this sophisticated chat between two musicians with such luxurious sounds, consummate technique and open ears.

Critical to this album's success is the fact that the Vijay Iyer Trio is a working band. Positioning, flow, calibration, order—each is keenly considered here, and each helps make this the trio's most compelling date so far.



**Vijay Iyer Trio, *Break Stuff* (ECM) 41**

Critical to this album's success is the fact that the Vijay Iyer Trio is a working band. Positioning, flow, calibration, order—each is keenly considered here, and each helps make this the trio's most compelling date so far.

Marking the centennial of Billie Holiday's birth, James avoids the usual pitfalls through effective gender reversal and the skillful blending of his husky voice with a superb rhythm section. He succeeds beyond creating great music and truly captures the essence of Lady Day's spirit.



**José James, *Yesterday I Had The Blues: The Music Of Billie Holiday* (BLUE NOTE) 41**

Marking the centennial of Billie Holiday's birth, James avoids the usual pitfalls through effective gender reversal and the skillful blending of his husky voice with a superb rhythm section. He succeeds beyond creating great music and truly captures the essence of Lady Day's spirit.

The band's fourth album is a lushly atmospheric set that braids haunting Americana moods with group improv.



**Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band, *Landmarks* (BLUE NOTE) 40**

The band's fourth album is a lushly atmospheric set that braids haunting Americana moods with group improv.

Consisting of drummer Blade, pianist Jon Cowherd, bassist Chris Thomas and reedists Myron Walden and Melvin Butler, The Fellowship Band may not be prolific, but it's a profoundly important group on today's scene.



**Fred Hersch Trio, *Floating* (PALMETTO) 40**

The pianist and composer complements his essentially lyrical art with rhythmic mates from jazz's edgier realm: drummer Eric McPherson and bassist John Hébert. On their third album together, this trio once again proves an ideal vehicle for Hersch, balancing subtle loveliness with forward-minded energy.

Positioning, flow, calibration, order—each is keenly considered here, and each helps make this the trio's most compelling date so far.

**11 Billy Childs, *Map To The Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro* (SONY MASTERWORKS) ..... 33**

**12 Chris Potter Underground Orchestra, *Imaginary Cities* (ECM) ..... 33**

**13 Mark Turner, *Lathe Of Heaven* (ECM) ..... 31**

**14 The Cookers, *Time And Time Again* (MOTÉMA) ..... 30**

**15 Anat Cohen, *Luminosa* (ANZIC) .... 29**

**16 The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, *Over Time/The Music Of Bob Brookmeyer* (PLANET ARTS) ..... 29**

**17 Keith Jarrett/Charlie Haden, *Last Dance* (ECM) ..... 28**

**18 Sonny Rollins, *Road Shows, Volume 3* (DOXY/OKEH) ..... 28**

**19 Henry Butler, Steven Bernstein and the Hot 9, *Viper's Drag* (IMPULSE!) ..... 26**

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For more of the year's top jazz albums, see page 54.





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## HALL OF FAME LEE KONITZ

# MELODIC INVENTION

BY TED PANKEN • PHOTO BY JIMMY KATZ

**O**n the afternoon of May 4, when Lee Konitz was informed of his induction into the DownBeat Hall Of Fame, he was not at his Manhattan apartment, or his house in rural Poland or the apartment he keeps in Cologne, Germany.

Instead, the 87-year-old alto and soprano saxophonist was in a London hotel room, preparing to play a few hours hence at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in a quintet with trumpeter Dave Douglas, guitarist Jakob Bro, bassist Linda Oh and drummer Jordi Rossy. The band would play Douglas' arrangements of tunes by Konitz and pianist Lennie Tristano, interpreting, among others, "Subconscious Lee" (a contrafact of "All The Things You Are") and "Kary's Trance" according to *tabula rasa* improvising principles similar to those Konitz and Tristano followed when they collaborated frequently between 1949 and 1952, at periodic intervals between 1955 and 1959, and a final time in 1964.

On the next day, Konitz and Bro, who had played three gigs in three days with Douglas, would depart for an eight-day, six-concert tour with guitarist Bill Frisell and bassist Thomas Morgan in Iceland, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Norway and Greenland, during which they would apply similar aesthetics to navigating Bro's beyond-category 21st century songs, as they did on the Loveland albums *Balladeering* (2008), *Time* (2011) and *December Songs* (2013).

Konitz first visited Scandinavia in November 1951, as documented on spirited location broadcasts with local musicians that include "Sax Of A Kind," "Sound-Lee" and "All The Things You Are." Seven months before, he

had played those and the 11 other tracks that constitute last year's release *Lennie Tristano: Chicago, April 1951* (Uptown) alongside tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh in Tristano's sextet at the city's Blue Note Jazz Club.

Proprietor Frank Holzfeind, who taped the proceedings, only booked top-shelf national acts, a category to which Chicago natives Tristano and Konitz had ascended after several critically acclaimed recordings during the two previous years—Tristano's for Prestige and Capitol and Konitz's for New Jazz. Before a friendly, not-too-loud audience, the sextet executes vertiginous unisons, stretching out solistically and contrapuntally on the aforementioned, along with Konitz's "Palo Alto" and "Tautology," Marsh's "Background Music" and Tristano's "No Figs."

They also tackled the standards "I'll Remember April" and "Pennies From Heaven," which would spawn now-canonic variants like Tristano's "April" and "Lennie's Pennies," and Konitz's "Hi-Beck," which he had recorded a month before with a sextet that included Miles Davis, who had brought Konitz's *sui generis* alto voice to the *Birth Of The Cool* sessions for Capitol in 1949 and 1950.

That Konitz continues to seek and find new pathways through this core repertoire is evident from Douglas' reports of the British engagements and a new CD titled *Jeff Denson Trio + Lee Konitz* (Ridgeway), on which, accompanied by partners the age of his grandchildren, Konitz uncorks stunning alto saxophone solos on "Background Music" and Tristano's "317 East 32nd Street."









Lee Konitz worked with Lennie Tristano, Stan Kenton, Miles Davis and Jim Hall. The saxophonist now joins his former collaborators in the DownBeat Hall of Fame.



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

A few days after returning from England, Douglas recalled his surprise at Konitz's "radical approach to form" during rehearsals for the group's March debut at Manhattan's Jazz Standard. "The language itself adheres to the rules of Charlie Parker and Lennie Tristano—and Lee Konitz," Douglas said. "But everything starts as an improvisation, and the themes emerge from an unpredictable group improvisation. Everybody comes and goes. The song gets played in pieces. The full group is constantly involved in the elaboration of the form and the unfolding of the piece.

"Lee gave very specific directions. He said: 'When one person plays a line and the other person enters, they should start on the note that the other person ended on, and use a bit of the phraseology that the person was in—this is the way I used to play with Warne Marsh.' An intense ear-training thing. I think there's a parallel between Lee's ideas about how form and musical structure operate and the way Wayne Shorter works with his quartet."

Unlike Shorter, Konitz does not use metaphorical koans to describe the process that he follows as assiduously today as he did in 1949. The son of Jewish immigrants who ran a laundry and

cleaning establishment in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood during the Great Depression, he explains his own no-safety-net improvisational intentions with pragmatic, nuts-and-bolts terminology.

"When I play, I'm not thinking of expressing sadness, or some picture-idea, or some way to make an emotional effect," he told collaborator Andy Hamilton in his authoritative autobiography, *Lee Konitz: Conversations On The Improviser's Art*. "I'm thinking of playing a melodic succession of notes, with as accurate a time-feeling as possible. I don't *feel* very poetic. I hear of people seeing colors, or images, or some spiritual motivation. I'm just playing the music clear, warm and positive—that's really my motivation."

Konitz's 2015 explanation to DownBeat was even more to the point. "I start from the first note, and trust something will happen if I give it a chance," he said. "It has to do with taking the time to let whatever note I'm playing resolve in some way, so I'm not just playing finger technique, one note after another non-stop, take a quick breath when you get out of breath. This is literally note by note."

A key component of Tristano's pedagogy was for students to sing the solos of Lester Young and Charlie Parker—to internalize them so deeply that they could then create their own composed variations and improvise upon them. That this remains fundamental to Konitz's aesthetics is illustrated in a two-and-a-half-minute vignette in the documentary *All The Things You Are*, where Konitz and pianist Dan Tepfer, en route to a duo concert in France in November 2010, scat Lester Young's heroic declamations on "Lady Be Good" and "Shoe Shine Boy." In recent months, Konitz said, he has begun to bring this heretofore private activity into performance.

"I enjoy making the singing feeling dictate the playing feeling, not the finger technique, which I tried to develop for many years, like most people," Konitz said. "I'm a shy person to some extent, and I never had confidence to just yodel, as I refer to my scat singing. One day with Dan, I played a phrase and needed to clear my throat, so I finished the phrase, *bi-doin-deedin-doden*, or whatever, and then a few bars later Dan did something like that, so I said, 'Oh, good—I'm in now; I can do this.' I don't get up to the microphone. I don't gesticulate. I just sit in a chair, and whenever I feel like it, at the beginning of a solo or in the middle or whenever, I warble a few syllables. I've been warbling ever since, and feel great about the whole process."

As a teenager in Chicago, Konitz—then an acolyte of Swing Era avatar altoists Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter—played lead alto and sang the blues at the South Side's Pershing Ballroom in an orchestra led by Harold Fox, the tailor for Jimmie Lunceford and Earl "Fatha" Hines. Seventy years later, he scatted with Douglas in England and with Bro in Scandinavia. Just three months earlier, he scatted several complete solos on the sessions that generated the new recording with bassist Denson, following three albums on Enja with the collective trio Minsarah: *Standards Live—At The Village Vanguard* (2014), *Lee Konitz New Quartet: Live At The Village Vanguard* (2009) and *Deep Lee* (2007). Denson recalled that when he and his Minsarah partners, pianist Florian Weber and drummer Ziv Ravitz, first visited Konitz in Cologne, he immediately suggested they sing together.

"After several minutes, Lee said, 'Sounds like a band,'" Denson recalled. "For years traveling on the bus, we'd sing and trade and improvise, but never on stage until last October, when we were touring California. We went to extended phrases, then to collective improvising. We decided to record it, so I booked a show at Yoshi's in February, and went into the studio.

"His vocal solos are beautiful. Lee told me that over the years he's worked to edit his playing to pure melody. If you listen to the young Lee, it's virtuosic, total genius solos. Now it's still genius but a very different mode—all about finding these beautiful melodies. That sense of melody continues to capture me. So does Lee's risk-taking, his desire not to plan some 'hip' line that he knows will work, but to take something from his surroundings so that the music is pure and truly improvised in the moment."

On June 9, 2011, during soundcheck for a concert with Tepfer's trio and guitarist Kurt



Warne Marsh (left) and Konitz share the bandstand.



Rosenwinkel in Melbourne, Australia, Konitz suffered a subdural hematoma and was hospitalized for several weeks. “He made an unbelievably miraculous recovery, and when we started playing again something had changed,” said Tepfer, whose recorded encounters with Konitz include *Duos With Lee* (Sunnyside) and *First Meeting: Live In London, Volume 1* (Whirlwind), a four-way meeting in 2010 with bassist Michael Janisch and drummer Jeff Williams. “When I first played with him, Lee was open to pretty out-there experimentation. I realized he was no longer interested in anything that resembled noise. He was very interested in harmony and playing together harmoniously. That’s a real shift in his priorities, and it took me a while to get used to it. But we’ve done a lot of touring in the last six months, and the playing together feels powerful. We’re playing standards and some of Lee’s lines, which are based on standard chord changes. Lee is entirely comfortable with any harmonic substitution or orchestration idea as long as it’s clear and musical and heartfelt. There is tremendous freedom in that restricting of parameters.”

On the phone from Aarhus, Denmark, after the second concert of his tour, Bro, 37, described the effect of Konitz’s instrumental voice. “I’ve listened to all his different eras, and it seems the things he’s describing with his sound are

becoming stronger and stronger,” he said. “When he plays a line, a phrase, it sounds clearer than ever. It has a lot of weight. I don’t know any young players that have it. Lee moves me so much. He plays one note, and I’m like, ‘How the hell did he do that?’ The sounds become more than music, in a way.”

Douglas recalled a moment in England when Konitz played “*Lover Man*,” which he famously recorded with Stan Kenton in 1954. “It was a completely new conception, of course with a kinship to that great recording,” Douglas said. “But what struck me most is how much his melodic invention is wrapped up in his warm, malleable tone that at times seems unhinged from notions of intonation or any sort of school sense of what music is supposed to be. It has a liquid quality, like the notes are dripping off the staff. Everyone was stunned that he pulled this out in the middle of the set.”

What these young musical partners describe—and, indeed, Konitz’s masterful 1954 invention on “*Lover Man*”—is the antithesis of “cool jazz.” That’s a term that critics attached to Konitz for the absence of what he calls “schmaltz” and “emoting on the sleeve” in his improvisations with Tristano, the *Birth Of The Cool* sessions, Gerry Mulligan’s combos, and during his two years with Kenton, when he emerged as the

only alto saxophonist of his generation to develop a tonal personality that fully addressed the innovations of Charlie Parker without mimicking his style.

“To me, Lee combines Lennie’s rigorous, almost intellectual manufacturing of the line, with a huge heart and a desire to communicate,” Tepfer said. “I clearly remember that what first struck me when I met him is that there was never any misunderstanding. If Lee doesn’t understand you, he’ll always ask you to repeat it. He often says, if you say something on the money, ‘You ain’t just beatin’ your gums up and down.’ What he stands for in music is very much that. I think there’s nothing worse to Lee than people saying things just to say things, or playing things just to play some notes. There always has to be meaning, and intent to communicate that meaning to other people. What I described about his current passion for playing harmonious music, playing together with no semblance of noise or discordance, I think comes from an even more intense desire to communicate as he’s getting older.

“There has to be a question of what improvisation is and why we would do it, and whether it’s a meaningful thing or not. I think of all the people in the world, Lee stands as a beacon of truth in improvisation. There aren’t many like him, where you listen and come away with, ‘OK, that’s why we do this.’”

Konitz allowed that playing with Tepfer, or with Brad Mehldau (most recently his partner with Charlie Haden and Paul Motian on the 2011 ECM date *Live At Birdland*) or with Frisell (their June 2011 encounter at Manhattan’s Blue Note with Gary Peacock and Joey Baron constitutes *Enfants Terrible*, on Half Note), “or whomever I’m playing with who’s really listening and pushing a little bit in some positive way,” makes him “less inhibited to open up.”

He was asked about overcoming that shyness when he came to New York in 1948, at 21, and plunged into direct engagement with the movers and shakers of modern jazz vocabulary. “Lennie’s encouragement had a lot to do with the playing ability that I became more confident in,” Konitz said. “I was always so self-critical; it was sometimes pretty difficult. But I was sometimes able to play. Marijuana had something to do with it, I confess. But at a certain point, I stopped it completely. I appreciated that, because whatever I played, it was more meaningful to me, and I felt totally responsible for it.”

Sixty-seven years after arriving in New York, Konitz is finally a member of the DownBeat Hall of Fame. “It’s the ‘ain’t over until it’s over’ syndrome, and I deeply appreciate it,” he said. “I appreciate being around to say thank you. It’s romantic and poetic, and I’m accepting it on that level, and for being honored for trying to play through the years.”

Konitz keeps moving. He’s focused on his itinerary immediately after he turns 88 on Oct. 13. “I’ve got a lineup of tours coming up, all over the U.S. the last part of October; all over Europe, day by day, in November,” he said. “I’m pleased that I can do it.”

DB



# VETERANS COMMITTEE HALL OF FAME MUDDY WATERS 'PUT A LITTLE DRIVE TO IT'

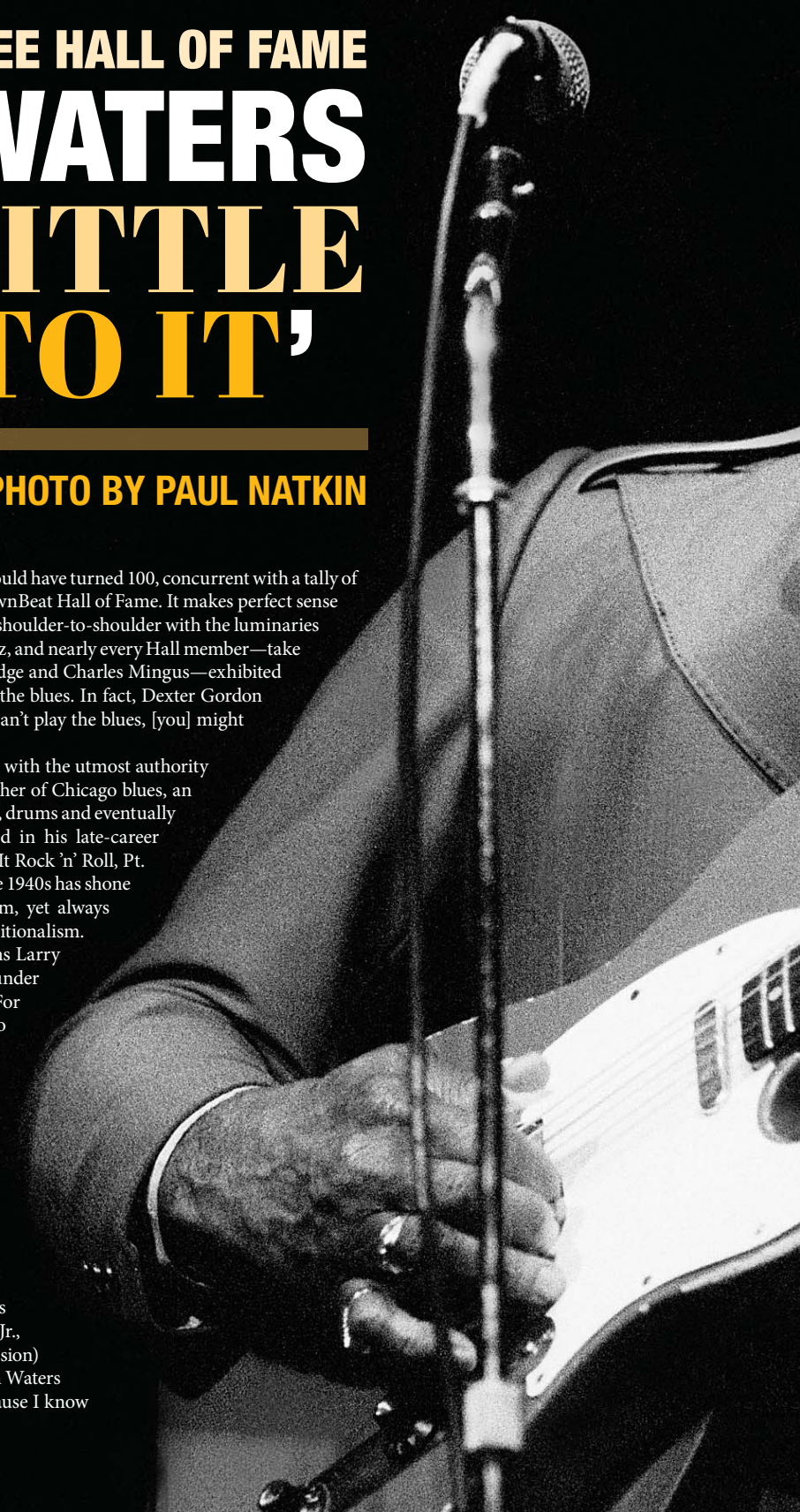
BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY • PHOTO BY PAUL NATKIN

In April, McKinley Morganfield (aka Muddy Waters) would have turned 100, concurrent with a tally of Veterans Committee votes inducting him into the DownBeat Hall of Fame. It makes perfect sense that this blues master, who died in 1983, should stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the luminaries of jazz history. After all, blues is the bone marrow of jazz, and nearly every Hall member—take your pick from, for starters, Charlie Parker, Roy Eldridge and Charles Mingus—exhibited remarkably expressive powers using the vivid language of the blues. In fact, Dexter Gordon once quipped about the mettle of a jazz musician, “If you can’t play the blues, [you] might as well forget it.”

An excellent storyteller, Waters sang and played guitar with the utmost authority for about all of his blues lifetime. Famously, he was the father of Chicago blues, an amplified version of Delta blues guitar plus bass, harmonica, drums and eventually piano. The man also sired a blues offshoot he celebrated in his late-career signature song, “The Blues Had A Baby And They Named It Rock ‘n’ Roll, Pt. 2.” The Chicago blues fire that Waters ignited back in the late 1940s has shone ever since, sometimes fiercely, other times hardly a gleam, yet always fueled by a combination of supple spontaneity and taut traditionalism.

Graying graduates of Waters’ band, along with his sons Larry “Mud” Morganfield and Big Bill Morganfield, and others under the spell, are working overtime to keep his legacy intact. For the centennial, John Scofield and Taj Mahal got the mojo working at New York’s Lincoln Center, while the 2015 Chicago Blues Festival scheduled a special rollin’ and tumblin’ set featuring singer Mud and former Waters warriors John Primer, Bob Margolin, Paul Oscher and Jerry Portnoy (the first two guitarists, the latter harmonica players). At the Blues Foundation gala in Memphis, Chicagoan Mud Morganfield and harmonica specialist Kim Wilson took home the Best Traditional Album award for their 2014 release *For Pops: A Tribute To Muddy Waters* (Severn).

The deluxe new album *Muddy Waters 100* (Raisin’ Music) features an all-star lineup of Primer, Margolin, James Cotton, Billy Branch, Keb’ Mo’, Derek Trucks, Guy Clark Jr., Shemekia Copeland and Johnny Winter (on his last session) honoring the blues legend’s legacy. Primer, who played with Waters from 1980 to ’83, said, “I was excited to sing his songs because I know all his stuff.”











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Waters’ story is the stuff of legend, from the rags of hardscrabble Mississippi Delta life to the non-monetary riches of worldwide veneration. Nicknamed “Muddy” for his childhood play in local streams, he grew up on Stovall Plantation. From an early age, he earned 50 cents a day chopping cotton and doing other farm work. Waters played blues 78s on his phonograph and spent several years practicing the harmonica. He saw bottleneck guitarist Son House perform in a Clarksdale juke joint, inspiring him to take up guitar. He hung out with other later-to-be-famous musicians like Rice Miller (Sonny Boy Williamson II), Big Joe Williams and Robert Lockwood Jr. An increasingly confident musician, he played at clubs, fish fries and other social gatherings of blacks and sometimes whites. In 1941, Library of Congress field representatives Alan Lomax and John Work taped him singing and picking guitar on a batch of country blues songs. Lomax returned the next year to record him again. (Check out *The Complete Plantation Recordings*.)

Chicago beckoned in 1943. “I thought I could make more money [in a big city],” he told DownBeat’s Pete Welding more than 30 years later. “Then I would have more opportunities to get into the big record field.” He drove a truck days and spent his nights entertaining at house parties and taverns on the South and West Sides. Big Bill Broonzy, the reigning Chicago blues king, graciously offered him guidance. After a session for Columbia Records didn’t lead anywhere, Waters’ career took an upward turn in 1947 with an invitation from Polish immigrant Leonard Chess to record for the Aristocrat label (soon to be renamed Chess). By this time, Waters was fronting an amplified band—members included Little Walter Jacobs on harmonica and Jimmy Rogers on guitar. But rather than record the group, Chess, looking for a country blues hit and out of touch with the new development in local blues, paired Waters with a pianist. The sides flopped with record-buyers, but nonetheless Chess gave Waters another chance to make a record.

The ensuing 1948 single “I Can’t Be Satisfied”/“I Feel Like Goin’ Home” was a smash hit. Waters’ singing was rich and his electric guitar playing offered frissons of fresh urgency. His only accompaniment was the thump of Big Crawford’s upright bass. Modern blues began right here, with Waters stunningly launching a new voice of his own emotional and musical life. The new ruler in Windy City blues and his men thrived in clubs, both as a group and as roving hellions out to blithely scare competitors.

Beyond a set of chords and a structure, the blues is a worldview espousing emotional honesty about the heartache or happiness of everyday, rough-and-tumble urban life. Waters’ postwar band captured its every pulse. The bandleader recalled for Welding: “[My band] would set down and we kept that Mississippi sound. We didn’t do it exactly like the older fellows with no beat to it. We put the beat to it, put a little drive to it.” His first song to scale the national r&b chart, “Louisiana Blues,” didn’t have his full group, but Waters was still rolling in clover as a breathtakingly good singer and a guitarist, now with the magnificent harmonica player Little Walter Jacobs in his company.

The addition in 1951 of jazz drummer Elgin Edmonds and pianist Otis Spann made Waters’ band all the more Herculean—and a couple years later they had the good fortune to have songwriter-bassist Willie Dixon bulking up their repertoire with one rough diamond after another, including “Baby Please Don’t Go” and “I’m Ready.” Although Waters had no real r&b chart action after 1956, his deeply felt blues with lyrics on carnal love, romantic longings, fun or taking-the-bitter-with-the-sweet connected with fans.

Late in the 1950s, Walter, Rogers and Spann all left the fold for solo careers. Not missing a beat, Waters kept going and filled his finishing school with talent like Pat Hare and Hubert Sumlin on guitars and James Cotton, Big Walter Horton and Junior Wells on harps. Waters first traveled to England in 1958, shaking up the Brits with his electric guitar playing (they’d expected an acoustic folk blues performance). Back home, Waters, Cotton, returnee Spann and associates were well received at the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival.

Waters’ reputation in the late 1960s soared when the Rolling Stones spoke glowingly of him wherever they went. However, a car accident knocked Waters out of action for a good while. He rebounded with the rousing 1977 album *Hard Again* (Blue Sky), supported by Cotton, guitarist-producer Johnny Winter, guitarist Margolin, pianist Pinetop Perkins and others. World tours followed. The blues man kept it going till stopped by a fatal heart attack at age 68. (There has long been a debate about Waters’ actual date of birth; some sources indicated he was 70.)

In a 1969 DownBeat interview with Waters and Paul Butterfield, Waters didn’t say any more than he had to when measuring his own considerable worth. “It comes down to I play my way, my style,” he said. “That’s it.” **DB**





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# HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR

## John Coltrane, *Offering: Live At Temple University* (IMPULSE!/RESONANCE) 194

Documenting a transformative 1966 concert by John Coltrane—in which local musicians were brought on stage to jam with the band—this joint venture between the Impulse! and Resonance labels captures the saxophone giant at his freest and most transcendent.



1



## Charlie Haden/ Jim Hall, *Charlie Haden—Jim Hall* (IMPULSE!) 111

This recording, from a historic meeting at the Montreal Jazz Festival on July 2, 1990, offers one of the most memorable and significant musical encounters between bassist Charlie Haden and guitarist Jim Hall.

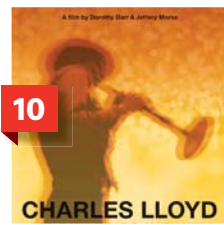
2



## Jimmy Guiffre 3&4, *New York Concerts* (ELEMENTAL) 65

Consisting of a pair of previously uncirculated live recordings from 1965, this compilation features the saxophonist performing his signature blend of ahead-of-their-time compositions and free extemporizations.

6



## Charles Lloyd, *Arrows Into Infinity* (ECM) 47

Created by Lloyd's wife, the painter/filmmaker Dorothy Darr, and filmmaker Jeffery Morse, this film sheds light on why the saxophonist remains one of the most respected artists in improvised music, and the path he took to get there.

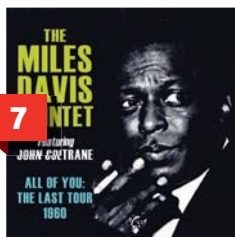
10



## Keith Jarrett/ Charlie Haden/ Paul Motian, *Hamburg '72* (ECM) 100

Recorded during a one-night performance in Germany in 1972, this landmark album reveals all the magic and majesty at play between three remarkable musicians.

3



## Miles Davis, *All Of You: The Last Tour, 1960* (ACROBAT) 49

Culled from radio broadcasts and private bootlegs, this four-CD box of remasters features material from John Coltrane's last European tour with Miles Davis.

7



## Various Artists, *The Complete Modern Dial Jazz Sessions* (MOSAIC) 49

Dial Records producer Ross Russell, a former Merchant Marine radio operator, put together all but one of the 22 sessions—some of the earliest to feature Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie—that make up this nine-CD set.

8



## Charles Lloyd, *Manhattan Stories* (RESONANCE) 95

This two-disc set collects two previously unreleased concerts at long-defunct New York City venues by a jazz legend who continues to push musical boundaries.

4



## Wayne Shorter, *Speak No Evil* (BLUE NOTE) 76

A testament to the saxophonist's compositional brilliance, this moody, atmospheric album, which turned 50 in 2014, is a crown jewel in the Blue Note discography.

5



## Louis Armstrong & The All Stars, *Complete At Newport 1956 & 1958* (MOSAIC) 47

Louis Armstrong was a fixture at the Newport Jazz Festival throughout the 1950s. This nine-CD compilation offers two of his complete sets, from 1956 and 1958, released in their entirety for the first time.

9

## 11 Bob Dylan, *The Basement Tapes Complete: The Bootleg Series Vol. 11* (COLUMBIA/LEGACY) .....46

## 12 Red Garland Trio, *Swingin' On The Korner: Live From Keystone Korner* (ELEMENTAL) .....45

## 13 Allman Brothers Band, *1971 Fillmore East Recordings* (MERCURE) .....44

## 14 Thelonious Monk, *The Complete 1966 Geneva Concert* (SONAR) .....29

## 15 Albert Ayler, *Lörrach/Paris 1966* (HATOLOGY) .....28

## 16 John Coltrane, *So Many Things: The European Tour 1961* (ACROBAT) .....28

## 17 Art Pepper, *Neon Art Volume 2* (OMINVORE) .....27

## 18 Sun Ra, *In The Orbit Of Ra* (STRUT) .....26

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## 20 Oscar Peterson, *Exclusively For My Friends, Vol. 4* (EDEL/KULTUR) ...21

For more of the year's top historical albums, see page 55.





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# FOR THE LOVE OF BIRD

BY ALLEN MORRISON • PHOTO BY STEVEN SUSSMAN

Perhaps not every toddler digs Charlie Parker, but Talin Mahanthappa, a 2-year-old with dark eyes and an impish grin, shows a definite preference for Bird. As they were driving recently near their home in suburban Montclair, New Jersey, Talin's father, alto saxophonist/composer Rudresh Mahanthappa, switched the car radio to jazz historian Phil Schaap's "Bird Flight" program on WKCR. At the first strains of Bird, a little voice from the back seat piped, "Saxophone! Toot-toot!" The toddler bopped and smiled the rest of the way to daycare.

His son is generally aware of Dad's job. "If he sees me leaving for work," Mahanthappa said recently over a lunch of pastrami and corned beef, "Talin will say, 'Daddy working? Saxophone? Toot-toot?'"

Someday the child will learn of the deep bond between his father and Parker (1920-'55). Mahanthappa's *Bird Calls* project debuted at the 2014 Newport Jazz Festival, thanks to festival impresario and Mahanthappa fan George Wein. The suite, which is inspired by Parker, uses fragments of Bird's music but sounds nothing like bebop. It was released as a studio album by ACT in February. The leader surrounded himself with a superb quintet: pianist Matt Mitchell, bassist Francois Moutin, drummer Rudy Royston and 20-year-old trumpet prodigy Adam O'Farrill.

As a concert event and as an album, *Bird Calls* has garnered rave reviews, culminating in

its honor as Jazz Album of the Year, one of three victories Mahanthappa had in the DownBeat Critics Poll. He also won the Alto Saxophone category (for the fourth time in the past five years) and Rising Star-Composer.

There's not much doubt that this kind of homage to Parker gets the attention of critics. But once that attention is earned, there are an almost unlimited number of ways to screw it up. One could try to imitate Bird, rehash Bird's greatest hits in a "more modern" style (which might invite unfavorable comparison to the real thing) or try imagining how Bird would have played some of the great tunes he didn't get to in his tragically shortened life. Instead, Mahanthappa decided to use Bird as an inspiration for an album of music that sounds like himself—and nobody else.

Pretty much everything you need to know about *Bird Calls* is present in its second track, entitled "On The DL": humor in the wild expropriation of a scrap of Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee"; the supreme self-assurance of the leader's tone; rhythms inspired by Parker solos; and passages of grandeur and mystery, with occasional use of Indian scales and generous amounts of inspired soloing, especially by Mahanthappa and O'Farrill, who plays postmodern Dizzy Gillespie to the leader's postmodern Bird.

Mahanthappa is bemused by, and grateful for, the critical success of *Bird Calls*. He pondered whether the music has been so well received because of its relative accessibility. "It's a little eas-

ier to grasp," he conceded. "The rhythmic content is a little more straightforward than, say, the music from *Samdhi* or *Gamak* [two previous albums]. Perhaps the 'story' about *Bird Calls* allows people to find it more accessible. Because it's tied to Charlie Parker, their ears are positioned in a way to hear it—they made *themselves* more accessible." He wondered aloud whether, if some of his previous work had had a story behind it, people would have found it easier to appreciate. "If I wrote a bunch of crazy music and said it was based on James P. Johnson, would people have found it more accessible?" he laughed.

Accessible though it may be, it is by no means easy to play. "Technically, maybe it's a little easier for [musicians] to play, but it's harder to make great music out of it. As a soloist, *Bird Calls* leaves you a bit naked—you have to guide the band and make something out of these structures. You have to own that music very quickly."

He admits to being a little puzzled by people who have told him that *Bird Calls* is his best album yet or his most brilliant work. "That's fine if they think that. ... When someone says that, I'm thankful, but part of me is like, 'But wait, did you hear that *other* album? That stuff is really good, too!' Of course, I never really say that."

Audience response has been extremely enthusiastic. "There is something about this quintet, that trumpet/alto sax front line, and the band's dynamic—it has a special sort of charisma." That magnetism was on display at the Newport premiere. "I was a little nervous," he recalled. "I was



Rudresh Mahanthappa at New York City's 2013 Winter Jazzfest



still dealing with issues like, 'Is this the best tempo for this tune?' I was a bit distracted by the technicalities of bandleading, so much so that you almost forget that you're supposed to take a solo right now. But meanwhile, these four other guys were playing their butts off, so it didn't matter. Everyone was on fire."

Even though Parker is universally revered, some might consider Mahanthappa's music to be more "modern." He is not among them. "The ini-

tial point of the album was just to express some love for Charlie Parker. But I also wanted to show that Charlie Parker is still modern. Writing this music was a way of showcasing how we can take these little bits of things that he played and place them in what we consider cutting-edge 2015 musical scenarios, and the end result is that nothing is dated about it.

"Look, bebop was totally modern when it was happening. At some point we had to forget about

what was happening stylistically and look at the bare bones of the music itself. And that's what I did. I didn't worry about whether it was bebop. I was more concerned with, 'Here's this guy playing all this amazing stuff, and it's as forward-thinking now as it was back then. It's the context that makes it sound a bit dated now.' It's certainly not *what* he was playing, which was totally modern."

On the heels of his greatest critical success to date, Mahanthappa is not yet certain about his next project. In the past, he has changed bands often to suit the needs of his current compositions. "But there's something [special] about the *Bird Calls* band," he said. "I'd like to keep it going. They're fabulous. It would be kinda nice to make two albums in a row with the same band." The band is booked to play the Detroit and Monterey Jazz Festivals, as well as New York's Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in August.

Mahanthappa also has a few other things in mind. Last December, he and Arturo O'Farrill (Adam's father) went to Cuba to record *Afro-Latin Jazz Suite*, which O'Farrill wrote expressly for Mahanthappa; they will perform it at this summer's Newport Jazz Festival, and Mahanthappa expects the record to be released later this year (on Motéma). "I also have a crazy inter-disciplinary idea to do something with a chamber group, live video projection and a comedian," he said. "The way comedians think about timing, arc and flow is very much like how a jazz musician thinks."

Mahanthappa also has been appearing with the Ragamala Dance Company, a Minneapolis-based, Indian-influenced modern dance troupe, performing music he wrote for them with a band featuring frequent collaborator Rez Abbasi on electric guitar, as well as traditional South Indian flute, violin and percussion. He may record that music with the ensemble, or possibly arrange it for his Indo-Pak Coalition trio (with Abbasi and percussionist Dan Weiss) as a follow-up to their 2008 album, *Apti* (Innova).

Compared to some of Mahanthappa's previous work, *Bird Calls* seems less explicitly shaped by Indian music, yet the subcontinent continues to exert a profound influence on his saxophone style. "At this point, [the Indian influence] is so woven into the fiber of my musical personality, both as a composer and an improviser, that it's something I don't think about. It just comes out.

Ten years ago it was more deliberate and studied. Now it's like brushing my teeth—whether I'm writing for *Bird Calls*, or Indo-Pak or my saxophone quartet, it's all just *there*, and that's just the best thing. It's like learning a new language. Like when you're *trying* to speak French, but you get to a point where you just *speak* French, and you think in French, and you dream in French and you say, 'Oh, yeah! I'm fluent now.'" **DB**



COMPOSER • ARRANGER

MARIA SCHNEIDER

NATURAL  
WONDERER

BY THOMAS STAUDTER • PHOTO BY BRIENE LERMITTE

In the small Manhattan apartment Maria Schneider has lived in for the past 22 years, it takes no more than a few steps to get from the front door to the combo living/music room, by which time you have already passed through a kitchen and dining area. The imminent arrival on a warm spring afternoon of boxes containing 2,000 CDs of the bandleader-composer's new album with her jazz orchestra, *The Thompson Fields*—the first freshly printed copies, in fact—has Schneider and an assistant both excited and busy with logistics. There isn't much available room in the already spatially challenged confines.

With the puzzle of where to find more space still unsolved, Schneider takes a short break to talk about her career and *The Thompson Fields* and express her thanks regarding the news that she is a repeat winner in Composer and Arranger categories of the 2015 DownBeat Critics Poll.

"I feel very lucky because there are so many great musicians out there who don't get their due, and I have," she says while sitting in the living room's one chair. "But at this point, what is keeping me awake at night aren't career things: It's whether the music I'm writing is satisfying or not. I'm pretty much focused on that. Everything else is the frosting on the cake. I think most musicians feel this way. You cannot guarantee that everybody or

anybody is going to like your music. It's nice if they do. But people have different motivations, though, when they write or perform: Some do it to be on a cutting edge, or to push the envelope intellectually. For me, it's about communicating some experience and taking people somewhere. So, if people didn't like my music, it would be an indication that I'm doing something wrong."

Three Grammy awards—one for *Concert In The Garden*, one for the song "Cerulean Skies" from *Sky Blue* and a "Best Contemporary Classical Composition" honor for the title track to *Winter Morning Walks*, her 2013 collaboration with soprano Dawn Upshaw—are evidence that Schneider is more than simply on the right track. She's widely regarded as one of the nation's foremost musical artists. Behind the dedication, talent and effort—which has carried her from her hometown of Windom, Minnesota, to Gotham and concert halls around the world—there is a certain competitive drive. She brings a stealthy toughness to her job.

"You can't be a musician and not have a sense of ego; and as a result, you feel your value is based in your art," Schneider, 54, admits. "And that's a tough thing. If you have a bad day of writing or go through a slump, everything looks dark in your life. That's something every-

body tries to get past as they mature—to realize that art is art, but life, in itself, is beautiful. A bad day or a bad solo should not make your life bleak.

"For me, the intense competition is proving to people that there is a way to deal with this business and to do it basically independently: to own my own work, to not have to be beholden to a publishing company or a big record label. It's not a matter of wanting to sell more records or having more recognition than someone else. One of the things I like about the music business is that although everyone is trying to get a piece of the pie and make a living, there is a lot of support for each other. We're inspired by one another. And if what someone does shakes you up a little bit, that's healthy; it keeps everybody questioning themselves."

Schneider, of course, was one of the first musical artists to embrace the novel Internet-based crowdfunding operation ArtistShare, founded by Brian Camelio in 2001. (Her *Concert In The Garden* CD, ArtistShare's initial album release in 2004, was the first album not sold in retail record stores to win a Grammy.) The bandleader now has eight recordings out on the fan-funded label, including *The Thompson Fields* and re-released packages of her first three studio albums.









BRIEN LEHRMITE

“The key thing about ArtistShare is that we’re sharing more than just music—we’re sharing a more intimate look at the creative experience,” Schneider continues. Indeed, *The Thompson Fields* project began in 2009 with the fan-commissioned writing of the title track, and moved forward with three other commissions, totaling half of the album’s eight tracks. A variety of bonuses were provided to funding participants, including access to videotaped rehearsals of Schneider’s 18-piece orchestra, invitations to mixing sessions and extra downloadable tracks (such as a September 2014 recording of harmonica legend Toots Thielemans with Schneider’s band performing her arrangement of Ivan Lins’ “Lembra de Mim”). The relationship with her fans is mutually beneficial. Schneider maintains her own database, so she knows who is buying her music, and how to contact them about future projects.

The cost and effort of guiding and recording her jazz orchestra, even on works supported financially through commissions or crowdfunding, have long been a daunting experience for Schneider. She candidly wonders aloud whether she will be able to make another album-length studio recording. Despite the hurdles, it is easy to view *The Thompson Fields* as a personal valediction, with an emphasis on home and community, both micro (a jazz orchestra with many long-serving members) and macro (the Midwest and its strong values), along with an argument for sus-

taining the necessary balance between nature and humankind.

Throughout the sumptuous 56-page hardback booklet that is part of the CD packaging, there are numerous photos taken around the Minnesota farm near where Schneider grew up. The images include barns, caterpillars, butterflies, bean fields, prairie flowers and sunsets. Interspersed are reproductions of John James Audubon’s famed illustrations of birds—all favorites of Schneider’s, an ardent bird watcher and now a board member of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

In the copious liner notes, Schneider describes the nostalgic sense of passing that pervades the CD. The title track and “Home,” which is dedicated to jazz impresario George Wein and was composed after her father’s death, are the album’s Copland-esque centerpieces, standing as honor guards of cherished memories.

“Was I consciously setting out to write a whole album thematically about home? No. I was writing music and these themes—they are this place, and this time. Every one of my records has been basically a compilation of music I’d written around the time of the record. But if your music is deeply attached to your life, your inner motivation, and it’s not about ‘I’m going write something now that’s motivated by Moroccan music’—if it’s much more personal than that, then it can’t help but be a record of a period—whatever that

represents, whether it’s political, emotional, personal or environmental. This moment in my life is one of deep concern for natural habitats . . . This world I grew up in—it still exists, but not in many places anymore.

“But this album is the work of a musical collective—a community of very special musicians with highly unique voices that has developed a high level of synergy.”

Among her talented collaborators are reedists Donny McCaslin, Scott Robinson and Steve Wilson, as well as pianist Frank Kimbrough.

“If you listen to the comping, the solos, and how the musicians organically create magic inside of the ensemble, and how the ensemble plays and blends and cares for each other—it’s such a communal thing. It has matured to a level I never dreamed. Any manner of musical maturity that I have found on my part can be largely attributed to these musicians and the many ways they have influenced me over the years.

“I’m making more space in my life now for issues that matter to me. It started around the time of *Sky Blue* when I got back into birding again, which re-ignited a passion that inspired me to write music. Honestly, I am as passionate about birds as I am about music. I don’t focus all my energy on birds, because creating and performing music requires so much, and I love it so much. But in my next life, I might be an ornithologist—if there are any birds left to enjoy.”


DB

JOHN COLTRANE  
Historical Album



# BMI


salutes  
our 2015  
DownBeat  
Critics Poll  
Winners



LEE KONITZ  
Hall of Fame



RUDRESH MAHANTHAPPA  
Jazz Album  
Alto Saxophone  
Rising Star Composer



MUDDY WATERS  
Veterans Committee  
Hall of Fame



GARY CLARK JR.  
Blues Artist  
Blues Album

DARCY JAMES ARGUE  
Big Band

STEVE TURRE  
Trombone

WAYNE SHORTER  
Soprano Saxophone

JOE LOVANO  
Tenor Saxophone

GARY SMULYAN  
Baritone Saxophone

KENNY BARRON  
Piano

JOEY DEFRANCESCO  
Organ

BILL FRISELL  
Guitar

CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE  
Bass

STANLEY CLARKE  
Electric Bass

BRIAN BLADE  
Drums

CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT  
Female Vocalist

BUDDY GUY  
Blues Artist

KIRK KNUFFKE  
Rising Star Trumpet

RYAN KEBERLE  
Rising Star Trombone

MELISSA ALDANA  
Rising Star Tenor Sax

CHRIS CHEEK  
Rising Star Baritone Sax

CHRIS SPEED  
Rising Star Clarinet

TARUS MATEEN  
Rising Star Electric Bass

TYSHAWN SOREY  
Rising Star Drums

ARTURO O'FARRILL  
Rising Star Arranger

DAVE DOUGLAS  
Rising Star Producer

# WRITE ON.




**63<sup>rd</sup>**  
ANNUAL  
CRITICS POLL

**The RISING STAR—JAZZ GROUP**  
**COOKERS**  
**‘USEFUL**  
**EXUBERANCE’**

BY TED PANKEN • PHOTO BY VINCENT SOYEZ

The Cookers (from left): Donald Harrison, Billy Hart (crouching), Billy Harper, Eddie Henderson, Cecil McBee, George Cables and the band's leader, David Weiss (seated).





In 2013, not long after the release of The Cookers' third album, *Believe* (Motéma), the meme "70 is the new 30" appeared frequently in reportage on scientific studies of increased life expectancy in first-world nations. That notion is relevant to the septet's victory in the 2015 DownBeat Critics Poll as Rising Star–Jazz Group—a category typically won by accomplished early-to-mid-career practitioners, not top-of-the-food-chain septugenarians like tenor saxophonist Billy Harper, trumpeter Eddie Henderson, pianist George Cables, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Billy Hart, or their colleagues Donald Harrison, the 54-year-old alto saxophonist who replaced original Cooker Craig Handy (now 52), and 50-year-old trumpeter-arranger David Weiss, who serves as the band's leader.

The Cookers, who have averaged 40 to 50 gigs a year since 2010—the year of their debut recording, *Warriors* (JLP)—are pleased to accept the award. "A band like this has 50 strikes against it," said Weiss, arranger of the signature four-horn charts of originals by Harper, Cables, McBee and Hart that infuse the aforementioned albums, *Cast The First Stone* (Plus Loin) and The Cookers' latest, *Time And Time Again* (Motéma), which iTunes hailed as the top jazz album of 2014.

"We have a fan base; people come to our gigs," Weiss continued. "The critics haven't been looking for a bunch of older guys. Still, they heard the band, and the music won out. Each member is a great composer and instrumentalist. They approach the music fresh every day, and play with emotion and power and excitement every night. They play like a unit. We don't have the newest, hottest thing that everybody wants to write about. This is the antithesis of that. This is: 'We play music, and we do it very well.'"

Like the band's three previous albums, *Time And Time Again* evokes the think-on-your-feet, inflamed-soul zeitgeist that defined the late '60s and early '70s milieu in which the elder members developed their aesthetics. They play with the hard-won discipline of improvisers who served consequential sideman apprenticeships, devoid of the self-indulgence often attendant to all-star bands.

Consider Harper's explosive "Sir Galahad," which debuted on the tenorist's 1973 debut *Capra Black*, relentlessly propelled by a rhythm section that included Cables and Elvin Jones. Forty-one years later, Hart complements the torrential, galloping quality of the flow ("Sir Galahad" was a Great Dane who liked to run) with a blend of strength and finesse worthy of a champion jockey.

On Hart's own "Reneda" (which debuted on his 1987 album *Rah*, with Henderson, Bill Frisell, Kenny Kirkland and Dave Liebman), the drummer underpins crisp, cogent solos by Henderson, Harrison and Cables with disjunctive funk-with-a-limp beats that land in exactly the right places. Hart teeters on the edge of the beat throughout McBee's fluid, ambiguous blues "Slippin' And Slidin'" (which appears on his 1997 album *Unspoken*), complementing another force-of-nature Harper declamation, slick bob-and-weave melodies by Henderson and several master-class choruses from the composer.

Weiss evokes the flavor of Herbie Hancock's *Speak Like A Child* and *The Prisoner* in transforming Cables' church-tinged "Farewell, Mulgrew" (composed two years ago in response to the death of Mulgrew Miller and recorded trio on 2014's *Icons and Influences*) into a virtuoso concerto on which Cables improvises off the voicings in dialog with McBee and Hart.

"Jabali got me one of my first gigs on the road, with Buddy Montgomery," Cables said, using Hart's nickname as he offered an example of the long acquaintances that underpin the collective simpatico. "He was on my very first record with Paul Jeffrey (*The Electrifying Sound*, 1968). When I joined Art Blakey, Billy Harper was in the band. Eddie wasn't with Art when I was, but he was tight with Woody Shaw when Woody and I were working with Joe Henderson, and he worked with Herbie Hancock when I was with Freddie Hubbard. Our paths always crossed. Our shared experiences and a lot of our strong development—overlapping concepts, you could say, from John Coltrane, Freddie, Lee Morgan and Woody—come from a period that is under-represented. This music is not all *ting-a-ding, ding-a-ding*. Some elements are present from fusion, but it's definitely not fusion."

"Our collective history allows for extra freedom, but we know

exactly where we are," Harper remarked. "I might deliberately play something a little louder than usual, and they know why—historically why. They understand what I'm creating and *how* I'm accenting it. Billy Hart might come out with a statement that sounds something like Max Roach, and then goes back to his thing. We're like a bridge, a continuum of the music that can go back and forward. Everybody clearly understands the drive and the cooking."

To elaborate, Harper referenced his own c.v., which includes consequential tenures with Roach, Blakey and Jones, as well as long hauls with Gil Evans and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra. "I hear good younger groups that don't understand something about cooking," he noted, attributing this deficiency among generation-Xers and millennials to lack of firsthand exposure to the aforementioned drummers. "When you played with Max or Art or Elvin, you couldn't just stand there. You've got to get going, or that fire will burn you."

"This band sounds 40 years younger than they are," Hart said. "Harper is the key. He writes big, and we play more of his material than anyone else's. He's an overachiever. He still practices more than most people. He still jogs. When he hits the bandstand, there's a pull. He wants me, as the drummer, to play as much as I can play. Often he solos first, and then the whole band is on fire. People look and say, 'What are these old cats doing playing this hard?'"

"It has to do with your thinking," Harper responded to a query on how these veterans overcome the tamping-down of inner flames that tends to accompany the aging process. "The music got into me when I was crawling, and it's grown and grown and grown. We're all energized when we start playing, so nobody tones down. Everyone feels completely, 'OK, it's time to cook.'"

"We still have some useful exuberance," Cables agreed. "We're all strong personalities, and if we were to do our own bands, each one would sound different than this."

Weiss said he finds it difficult to trace "how I wound up with these guys being the closest people I can identify with—philosophically, musically, life outlook, everything." A self-described "rock 'n' roll kid" from the Jackson Heights district of Queens, he studied piano from age 10 and trumpet from 13. Progressive rock bands King Crimson, Magma and Henry Cow provided a window into outcat-jazz.

By the cusp of the '80s, Weiss was attending concerts by experimentalists like Anthony Braxton, and contacting the likes of Butch Morris and Ted Daniel ("he had all of Lee Morgan's records") for trumpet lessons. After a middling semester at Cal Arts as a photography major, he returned east in the summer of 1982, and enrolled at Karl Berger's Creative Music Studio in Woodstock. "I met a trumpeter there who played like Don Cherry who was way more advanced than me, who told me he'd gone to North Texas State," Weiss said. "I jumped on it. He didn't tell me, 'There was nobody else like me there.'"

As a student at North Texas State University in Denton, Weiss, realizing his deficiencies, hunkered down in the woodshed. He diligently applied lessons he learned in New York City on semester breaks from trumpet gurus John McNeil and Carmine Caruso. He and Handy, a fellow underclassman, transcribed and internalized the Blue Note canon, skills that Weiss utilized after returning to New York following his graduation in 1986. His early employers included Hubbard and Bob Belden. In 1996, Weiss organized the collective New Jazz Composers Octet, which featured originals by up-and-comers like Handy, Jimmy Greene, Myron Walden, Steve Davis and Xavier Davis. During the aughts, NJCO became lip-weakened Hubbard's backup unit on tours and two recordings.

"I think my work with Freddie made them less skeptical about me when we started," Weiss said of his Cookers colleagues. "These guys have been in some of the most important bands ever, so they saw the collaborative nature of this. They're professionals in every sense of the word; they always want to play their best. They're always trying to find ways to make the band better, more interesting."

"I'll take the [DownBeat] 'Rising Star' thing to mean we're still growing, still rising. Call us 'rising'; call us whatever you want. At least people are hearing the band now, and what we do is starting to be undeniable. It's a different path than most people take to get this kind of recognition."

DB



**RISING STAR—JAZZ ARTIST**  
**RISING STAR—ALTO SAXOPHONE**

**STEVE LEHMAN**  
**‘AS PERSONAL**  
**AS POSSIBLE’**

BY BILL MILKOWSKI • PHOTO BY STEVEN SUSSMAN

**A**fter a decade on the scene, Steve Lehman has finally won a DownBeat Critics Poll award. In fact, the New York native was doubly honored, topping the categories Rising Star—Jazz Artist and Rising Star—Alto Saxophone in this year’s poll.

The 36-year-old has actually been a talent deserving of wider recognition since his auspicious Pi Recordings debut, 2005’s *Demian As Posthuman*. That experimental outing, which showcased his bracing alto sound and formidable Bird-like facility melded with some electronic environments, had him surrounded by such kindred spirits as keyboardist Vijay Iyer, drummers Eric McPherson and Tyshawn Sorey and electric bassist Meshell Ndegeocello.

Since that provocative manifesto, Lehman has distinguished himself as a composer-bandleader-improviser on a series of potent recordings on the Pi label, including 2007’s quintet project *On Meaning* and 2009’s critically acclaimed octet recording, *Travail, Transformation And Flow*, which dramatically elevated his profile in the jazz community. “That was a turning point where everything sort of started to open up in terms of visibility, the opportunity to tour and just being able to play more,” Lehman said.

The year 2010 saw the release of *Dual Identity* (Clean Feed), which paired him on the front line with fellow new-breed alto saxophonist-composer Rudresh Mahanthappa alongside guitarist Liberty Ellman, bassist Matt Brewer and drummer Damion Reid. That stellar rhythm tandem of Brewer and Reid joined Lehman on his provocative trio recording on Pi from 2012, *Dialect Fluorescent*, which had the three intrepid souls exploring with a no-holds-barred aesthetic in a highly interactive setting on Lehman originals like “Allocentric” and “Foster Brothers” while putting their own unique stamp on radically re-imag-

ined renditions of John Coltrane’s “Moment’s Notice,” Duke Pearson’s “Jeannine” and Jackie McLean’s “Mr. E” (while studying at Wesleyan University in the early 2000s, Lehman audited classes at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, where he studied with McLean, whom he regards as one of his most important mentors.

Regarding that powerhouse trio outing, Reid said, “Steve wanted to feature himself as a saxophonist because a lot of the stuff that he was doing for his octet seemed to feature him as a composer rather than a lead instrumentalist. The trio format gave him freedom, and the interplay with the drums and the bass was always invigorating. I think he really enjoyed that type of energy, where no one feels like they have to do anything to cater to some sort of perspective or ego.”

Lehman has forged his own unique vocabulary while still honoring the past masters. “Steve’s not trying to abandon the fact that he’s participating in an art form that started long before him,” Reid said. “As far as being truly ‘avant-garde,’ which means ‘progressive’ ... of course you want to be that. But you also gotta understand there’s a way to do that while honoring people who composed great music before you were doing what you’re doing. And I’m glad Steve did it because it shows in one album how you can take compositions and play them and interpret them differently and still get to different things and not abandon the past. You can do it all and still stay progressive.”

Lehman followed that trio project with a return to a larger format on 2014’s *Mise En Abime*. Longstanding members of his working ensemble—tubaist Jose Davila, tenor saxophonist Mark Shim, vibraphonist Chris Dingman, bassist Drew Gress, drummer Tyshawn Sorey and trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson—were on board again for that second octet recording, which has them

re-imagining Bud Powell’s moody and harmonically advanced “Glass Enclosure” and “Parisian Thoroughfare” while also repurposing a solo piano intro that Powell played on “Autumn Leaves” from 1953’s *The Amazing Bud Powell, Vol. 2* on Blue Note. “I’m trying to align myself with that Bud Powell legacy, because Jackie is probably my most important mentor and Bud was one of his very important mentors. So I feel like this is a real continuum.”

Lehman confides that a major role model for his own adventurous work with octet is alto saxophonist-composer Henry Threadgill. “He’s Number 1 for me,” said the new father and current resident of Hoboken, New Jersey. “To me, that’s the beginning of music that has the potential to have a great deal of abstraction harmonically and rhythmically but also be unmistakably groove-oriented and propulsive and connected to urban dance rhythms. That really starts with Henry. It totally spun my head around when I first heard his music.”

Lehman holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in composition from Wesleyan University, where he studied with Anthony Braxton. He received his doctorate (2012) in music composition from Columbia University, where he studied with avant-garde trombonist and computer music pioneer George Lewis as well as Tristan Murail, the French composer and former student of Olivier Messiaen who is associated with the “spectral” technique of composition. A recipient of a 2014 Doris Duke grant and a 2015 Guggenheim Fellowship, Lehman is clearly on a roll after winning these twin Rising Star awards. “It’s been a cool past couple of years, for sure,” Lehman said.

“I’m very happy for him, and I’m very glad to be a part of his endeavors as a composer and a player,” Finlayson said of his longtime friend and colleague. “Steve’s a man who is very dedicated to music. And forwarding his own vocabulary is one of the things that intrigued me most when I began playing with him—even back then he had a very, very distinct sound on his instrument. You can hear influences, of course, but you could tell that there was this voice emerging. We’ve grown together musically and played in numerous settings together over the years. So our collaborations extend beyond the octet. And I look forward to more for as long as I can put air through this horn.”

Speaking for himself and the rest of his kindred colleagues, which would include Iyer, Mahanthappa, Sorey and Finlayson, Lehman said, “We’re all trying to do something as personal as possible but have it be really rooted in research and study of the people that we admire. That’s important for me. And that’s a kind of thread of continuity that I see with all the people that I really enjoy collaborating with—that really strong tie to the past while trying to do something really personal and contemporary.”





Steve Lehman at the 2014 Newport Jazz Festival



■ RISING STAR—BASS

# BEN WILLIAMS

# TRADITION & PROGRESS

BY KEN MICALLEF • PHOTO BY STEVEN SUSSMAN



Ben Williams at Smalls Jazz Club in New York City in 2012

**B**assist Ben Williams' second album, *Coming Of Age*, documents the 30-year-old's evolution as a composer, but whether the music found therein can be categorized as purely jazz is debatable.

Like a handful of his fellow jazz musicians, including Robert Glasper and Kris Bowers, and those typically defined as hip-hop artists—Flying Lotus, Thundercat and Kendrick Lamar—Williams has covered vast stylistic ground as a player and writer.

"Jazz" encompasses a lot of different elements, and it's becoming harder and harder to identify what it is," Williams said. "It sounds like one thing that has elements that you identify with jazz, but it has other elements that you don't identify with jazz. What Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola calls jazz is different from what you might hear at the North Sea Jazz Festival. And in the production, there are more sounds you might associate with hip-hop or progressive r&b. The line is getting totally smudged, and I think that's great."

Williams and his group Sound Effect—with saxophonist Marcus Strickland, guitarist Matthew Stevens, pianist Christian Sands, keyboardist Masayuki "Big Yuki" Hirano, drummer John Davis and percussionist Etienne Charles—play jazz through the lens of their own experiences, not those of 50 years ago.

"There's definitely a movement going on now," Williams said. "The musicians of my gen-

eration are not concerned about what jazz is supposed to be. There's no doubt that everyone on my record came up playing and loving the tradition. Actually, what we are doing is *about* the tradition; we're interpreting the music the way we hear it, according to what's going on around us and how we are interacting with the world. That's what the real tradition is. Tradition is not something that happened in the past; it continues to happen as the music progresses."

*Coming Of Age* opens with the powerful "Black Villain Music," its curling soprano sax melody and skipping rhythms recalling early Weather Report.

"That image of the black superhero is so radical," Williams explained. "A black character saving the world? We never see that. So for me this is an empowering title. I wanted something dark and sinister. Usually, in a superhero movie, each character has his own theme song—this is mine."

"Half-Steppin'" picks up a similar musical thread, with Williams' electric bass (he plays electric on four tunes) driving a composition that recalls John Scofield's *Still Warm*, Miles Davis' *Decoy* and Frank Zappa-era George Duke.

"The melody is almost bebopish in its chromaticism," Williams said. "But the overall vibe is sort of African, and with an almost Marvin Gaye feeling to balance it all."

Though it's not readily apparent, Jaco Pastorius is also a huge influence on Williams' bass playing, as Pat Metheny (Williams' employer

since 2011) noted in a recent *DownBeat* interview.

"Jaco's sense of lyricism was just so strong," Williams said. "The way he played over harmonies was very unique. Even though he was an electric player, he inspired the way I play acoustic bass. I've really studied Jaco's concept so I could play it my own way. I worked on understanding his sense of melodicism. Jaco is a very, very influential musician on me."

*Coming Of Age*'s lone solo selection, an upright bass version of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," might seem like an odd choice for a musician reared on Ray Brown and Jaco Pastorius.

"I didn't intend to record it; it was a practice exercise," Williams said. "The band thought I should record it. I put it in a key with lots of open strings, and the chord progression was perfect. I could play the melody without interruption and the bass line as double-stops. And it's not easy to play."

Music that flows with sinister melodies and streamlined arrangements, that is both intricate and daringly simple, performed by a young group of musicians raised on jazz tradition yet incorporating contemporary pop and r&b, *Coming Of Age* is Williams' treatise on the state of jazz in 2015.

"A lot of jazz today has developed this allergy to simplicity," Williams noted. "If it's simple, that means it's not hip' is a theme. But sometimes the simplest thing you can do is the hippest thing you can do. It's about being honest. Let the music tell you what it needs and follow that." **DB**





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63<sup>rd</sup>  
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CRITICS POLL

## RISING STAR—DRUMS

# TYSHAWN SOREY

# MEDITATIVE

# & VISCERAL

BY DAN OUELLETTE • PHOTO BY MARK SHELDON

**T**he remarkable thing about Tyshawn Sorey's drumming is that instead of automatically digging deeper into any particular groove, he steps outside the typical pathways to embrace a broader view compositionally. "I wanted to express myself in my own terms," Sorey said. "I set out to find ways of connecting the different avenues—gathering all kinds of material and making a powerful statement greater than the sum of its parts. I want to make the music visceral and personal."

The 35-year-old leader and acclaimed sideman has collaborated with the likes of Vijay Iyer, Steve Coleman and Roscoe Mitchell. Growing up in Newark, New Jersey, he listened to all stripes of musical expression. First he became a jazz purist, tuning in the city's famed radio station WBGO. Then he started listening to Columbia University's WKCR. Soon he was stretching his appreciation to include everything from bluegrass and country to rock and metal.

"I just loved music," Sorey said. "I always had an open ear. If I liked it, I embraced it for what it was. I got exposed to new music early on by accident. I must have been 8 or 9, and on the radio I started hearing this type of music that I was unfamiliar with. I didn't realize until my mid-teens that I had been listening to 20th century music by challenging composers like Schoenberg, Stockhausen and Morton Feldman. I thought it was cool and meditative, which is the primary tenet of my drumming and composing today."

Sorey attended William Paterson University in New Jersey as a classical trombonist eager to study composition. At the same time, he started playing in jazz combos. "Wayne Shorter was my biggest influence," he recalled. "As a composer, he was highly important in my development. And then Steve Coleman. He's a mastermind. His music helped me find myself compositionally."

To follow that line of thinking, Sorey studied drumming at Connecticut's Wesleyan University. "I wanted to master in composition and study ethnomusicology," he said. "I wanted to expand my network, too, and take my composing to the next level. Anthony Braxton was important. He told me, 'It's a

good thing you decided to come here. You can write in whatever context you want. You can find many ways to discuss your own work, or others may define it for you.'"

In 2011, Sorey began doctoral studies in composition at Columbia University, with George Lewis being an integral teacher who introduced to him "the idea of behavior where you don't have to behave the same way as in a normal music group." Case in point: the piano trio that Sorey has been using as his touchstone these days. Last year's *Alloy* (Pi Recordings), with pianist Cory Smythe and bassist Chris Tordini, stands as a spare, mysterious gem that goes against the grain of a standard jazz piano trio.

"*Alloy* challenges the piano trio medium and brings together an interconnected playing with Cory coming from new music and classical and Chris having classical chops but also working with singer-songwriters—and I'm into new music, jazz and funk," Sorey explained. "As a drummer and composer, I've become clearer than ever in my understanding of what I want to do. I can use silence—not play the drums at all during a piece. And as a trio we don't have to play together all the time. It's not a new concept, but it's looking at a bigger view where you can go outside of what's expected."

Smythe, who called Sorey's work "something truly rare and awe-inspiring," said that *Alloy* has "a sort of epochal unfolding [that] ends up allowing for some pretty disparate sorts of musical ideas to become organically fused." Regarding the sonic excursion through the reflective, searching "Movement," he said, "It's something like a Brahms intermezzo existing in the timeless space of a piece by Feldman." He described the dreamy, lyrical "A Love Song" as "something like a piece by Feldman coalescing after half an hour into a kind of strange and beautiful jazz ballad."

Tordini noted that the music on *Alloy* leaves room for all kinds of creative possibilities. "Because of the meditative nature of the music, it requires all the players to be in the moment at all times in a subtler and more nuanced way ... to be outside the comfort zone," he said. "Tyshawn wants the music to evolve, which makes new things happen all the time."

Sorey said that he "problematizes" his drumming among a bundle of contradictions. "I have no problem being in a situation where I'm keeping time," he said. "But I'm [also] trying to find my own way to navigate through the form—to do it my way for it to make cohesive sense. I see myself as embracing both qualities—holding a groove but also being creative with it."

DB





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Ingrid Jensen – Bach  
Bria Skonberg – Bach

*C.G. Conn*



## Trombone

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Ryan Keberle – Bach  
Natalie Cressman – King  
Tom Garling – King  
Scott Whitfield – Bach



## Saxophone

Tia Fuller – Yanagisawa  
Russ Nolan – Selmer Paris  
Greg Abate – Selmer Paris  
Tim Green – Yanagisawa  
Brian Landrus – Selmer Paris



## Clarinet

David Krakauer – Selmer Paris



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# 63rd ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

## COMPLETE RESULTS

We are proud to present the results of the 63rd Annual DownBeat International Critics Poll, which includes Jazz Album of the year (page 28) and Historical Album of the year (page 38). Results for Established Talent are on pages 54–63, and the Rising Star categories are on pages 64–69.



Darcy James Argue

BEN ANAMAN

### Hall Of Fame

- Lee Konitz**.....72
- Marian McPartland..... 70
- Jack DeJohnette..... 63
- Don Cherry ..... 62
- Randy Weston ..... 54
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#### VETERANS COMMITTEE

### Hall Of Fame

#### Muddy Waters ..... 71%

Note: Artists must receive at least 66% of the Veterans Committee votes to gain entry.

Other artists receiving more than 50% of the vote:

- Eubie Blake.....58%
- Herbie Nichols..... 52%
- T-Bone Walker..... 52%

### Jazz Artist

- Vijay Iyer** .....112
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- Christian McBride..... 69
- Ambrose Akinmusire..... 64
- Kenny Barron .....53
- Rudresh Mahanthappa.....53
- Wadada Leo Smith.....53

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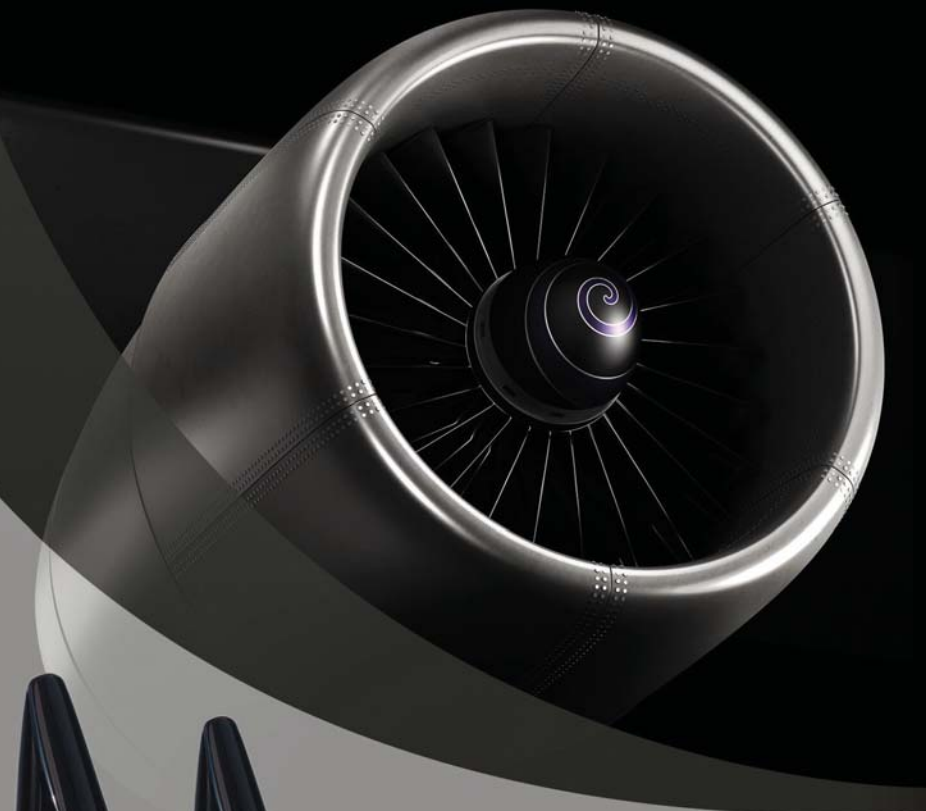
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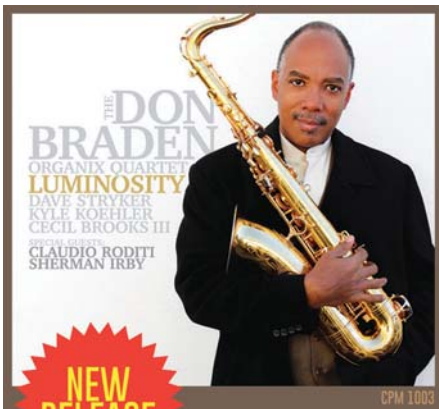
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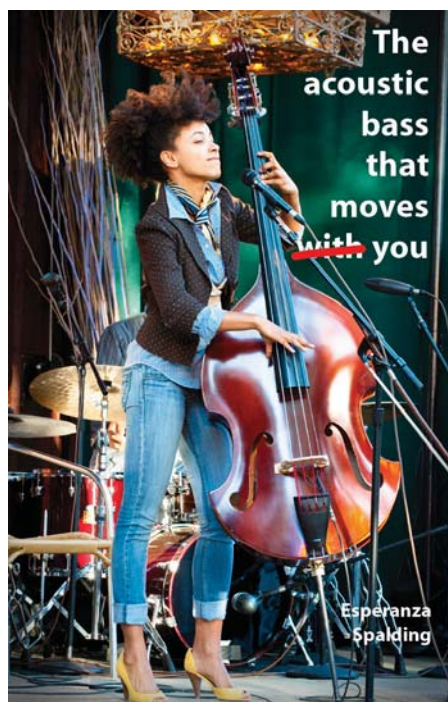
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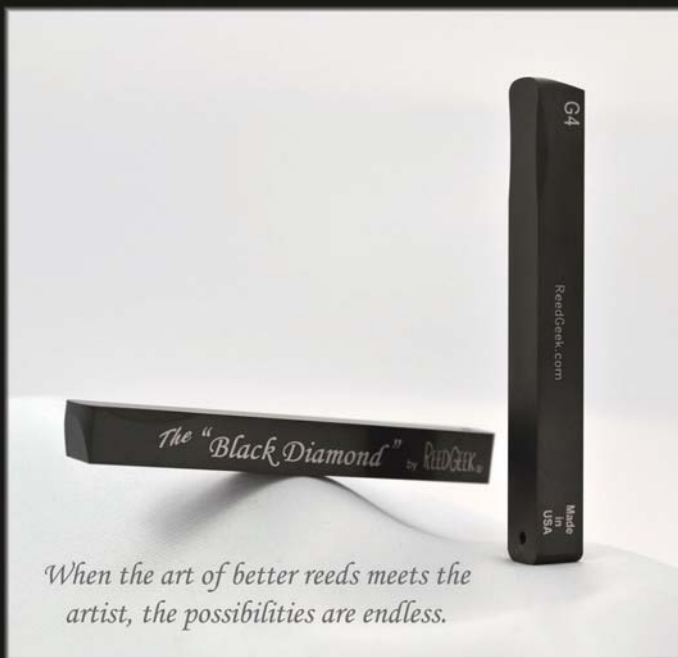


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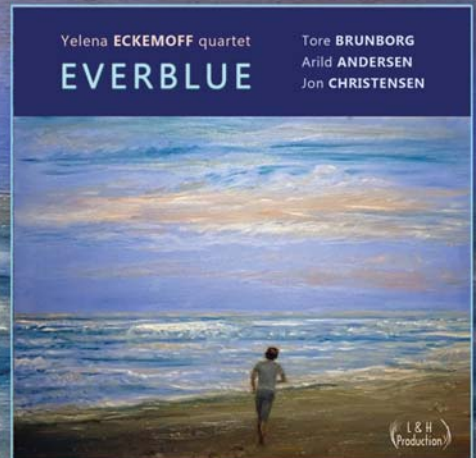
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# 63rd ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

## THE CRITICS

Below are the 141 critics who voted in the 63rd Annual International Critics Poll and some of the publications to which they have contributed. In the poll, critics distributed up to 10 points among up to three choices (but no more than 5 points per choice) in each of two groups of categories: Established Talent and Rising Stars. (Note: The asterisk [\*] denotes a Veterans Committee voter.)

**David Adler:** Stereophile, JazzTimes, The New York City Jazz Record

**Don Albert:** Artslink

\* **Frank Alkyer:** DownBeat

**Larry Appelbaum:** JazzTimes, Let's Cool One, WFPW-FM

**Bridget Arnwine:** axs.com, examiner.com, bridgetsjazz-planet.wordpress.com

**Glenn Astarita:** All About Jazz

**Mark R. Bacon:** Baltimore City Paper, National Geographic Society

**Bradley Bamberger:** DownBeat, Listen

**Chris Barton:** Los Angeles Times

**Peter Bastian:** Jazzthetik

**Angelika Beener:** Alternate Takes, jazz.org

**Bill Beuttler:** DownBeat, Esquire, JazzTimes, The Boston Globe

**Nicholas Bewsey:** ICON Magazine, WRTI.org

**Eric Bishop:** DownBeat

**Edward Blanco:** All About Jazz

**Ross Boissoneau:** Jazziz, Progression

\* **Fred Bouchard:** DownBeat, The New York City Jazz Record, Berklee Online, The Boston Musical Intelligencer

\* **Michael Bourne:** DownBeat, WBGQ.org

\* **Herb Boyd:** DownBeat, New York Amsterdam News, The Network Journal

**Jon Bream:** Minneapolis Star Tribune

**Gigi Brooks:** JazzTimes

**Stuart Broomer:** The New York City Jazz Record, Point of Departure, WholeNote, Musicworks

**Andrea Canter:** jazzpolice.com, Jazzink

**Nate Chinen:** The New York Times, JazzTimes

\* **Aaron Cohen:** DownBeat

**Sharonne Cohen:** DownBeat, JazzTimes

**Thomas Conrad:** Stereophile, The New York City Jazz Record, JazzTimes

\* **John Corbett:** DownBeat

**Owen Cordle:** JazzTimes, The News & Observer

**J.D. Considine:** The Globe and Mail

**Michael Cote:** Blues Music Monthly, New Hampshire Union Leader

\* **Paul de Barros:** DownBeat, The Seattle Times

**Coen de Jonge:** JazzBulletin NJA, Jazzism

**Anthony Dean-Harris:** DownBeat, nextbop.com, KRTU-FM

**R.J. DeLuke:** All About Jazz, Times Union, rjonjazz.blogspot.com

**Matthew Dicker:** JazzTimes, The Washington Times

**John Diliberto:** Echoes

**Bob Doerschuk:** DownBeat, Drum!, Keyboard, Strings, Acoustic Guitar, Rolling Stone Country, Country Weekly

**Laurence Donohue-Greene:** The New York City Jazz Record

**Alain Drouot:** DownBeat, WNUR-FM, JazzColours

**Ken Dryden:** The New York City Jazz Record, Hot House

**José Duarte:** RTP Radio, jazzportugal.ua.pt

**Shannon J. Effinger:** DownBeat, Ebony, NPR, JazzTimes, Caribbean Beat

\* **Ed Enright:** DownBeat

\* **John Ephland:** DownBeat, Drum!, All About Jazz, Relix

**Steve Feeney:** Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram

**Dr. David Franklin:** Winthrop University, Cadence

**Philip Freeman:** Jazziz, The Wire, Burning Ambulance

**Dustin Garlitz:** jazztalent.com

**Richard Gehr:** Village Voice, Rolling Stone, Relix, Spin, Wondering Sound

\* **Ted Gioia:** The Daily Beast, *The History of Jazz* (Oxford University Press)

**Kurt Gottschalk:** DownBeat, The New York City Jazz Record, WFMU-FM, The Wire, Time Out New York, Musicworks, The Brooklyn Rail

**Stephen Graham:** marlbank.net

**Steve Greenlee:** JazzTimes, Portland Press Herald

**George Grella:** Jazziz, The Brooklyn Rail, NewMusicBox, The Big City

\* **Frank-John Hadley:** DownBeat, XS Music Group

**Carl L. Hager:** Jazz (Jazzes Jazzing), All About Jazz

\* **James Hale:** DownBeat

**Robert Ham:** Paste, The Oregonian, Portland Mercury, Wondering Sound

**George Harris:** Jazz Weekly

**Neil Haverstick:** DownBeat, Microstick

**Don Heckman:** The International Review of Music

**Dave Helland:** grammy.com

**Andrey Henkin:** The New York City Jazz Record

**Lee Hildebrand:** Living Blues, San Francisco Chronicle, The Oakland Post

**Geoffrey Himes:** DownBeat, JazzTimes, The Washington Post, Baltimore City Paper

**Rob Hoff:** WQLN, JazzErie

**Eugene Holley, Jr.:** DownBeat, Publishers Weekly, Wax Poetic, A Blog Supreme

**C. Andrew Hovan:** DownBeat, All About Jazz

**Tom Hull:** tomhull.com

**Peter Hum:** The Ottawa Citizen

**Tom Inect:** Lincoln Journal Star, NET Radio

**Eric Jackson:** WGBH-FM

**Michael Jackson:** DownBeat, Chicago Sun-Times, Jazzwise

**Robin James:** Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder

\* **Willard Jenkins:** DownBeat, Independent Ear, JazzTimes, Open Sky Jazz

**David Brent Johnson:** WFUJ, NPR

**Jeff Johnson:** DownBeat, Chicago Sun-Times

**Richard Kamins:** steptempest.blogspot.com

**Fred Kaplan:** Stereophile, Slate

**Bob Karlovits:** Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

**Yoshi Kato:** DownBeat, San Francisco Chronicle, The Christian Science Monitor

**Larry Kelp:** KPFA-FM

**Elzy Kolb:** Hot House

\* **Kiyoshi Koyama:** NHK-FM (Japan)

**Jeff Krow:** Audiophile Audition

**Will Layman:** popmatters.com

**Angelo Leonardi:** All About Jazz Italia

**Bruce Lindsay:** All About Jazz, Jazz Journal

**John Litweiler:** Point Of Departure, Encyclopaedia Britannica, WHPK-FM

**Christopher Loudon:** JazzTimes

**Phillip Lutz:** DownBeat, The New York Times

\* **Jim Macnie:** DownBeat, VEVO

\* **Howard Mandel:** DownBeat, NPR, artsjournal.com

\* **John McDonough:** DownBeat, NPR

**Peter McElhinney:** Style Weekly

**Bill Meyer:** DownBeat, The Wire, Chicago Reader, chicagomusic.org, Dusted, Magnet

\* **Ken Micallef:** DownBeat, Electronic Musician, Modern Drummer, Bass Player, The New York City Jazz Record

\* **Bill Milkowski:** DownBeat

**Virgil Mihaiu:** DownBeat, Steaua/Jazz Context, Jazz Compass

**Ralph A. Miriello:** Huffington Post, Notes on Jazz blog, Hot House, popmatters.com

\* **Dan Morgenstern:** Jersey Jazz, Journal of Jazz Studies

**Allen Morrison:** DownBeat, JazzTimes, Jazziz

**John Murph:** DownBeat, NPR, JazzTimes, Jazzwise, AARP, The Root

**Russ Musto:** The New York City Jazz Record

**Michael G. Nastos:** Hot House, WDEE-TV.com

**Ron Netsky:** City Newspaper (Rochester, NY)

**Jon Newey:** Jazzwise

**Sean J. O'Connell:** DownBeat, KCET's Artbound, KPCC, LA Weekly

\* **Jennifer Odell:** DownBeat, Offbeat, Gambit, MSN.com

\* **Dan Ouellette:** DownBeat, ZEALnyc

\* **Ted Panken:** DownBeat, Jazziz

**Thierry Peremarti:** Jazz News magazine (France)

**Terry Perkins:** DownBeat, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

**j. poet:** DownBeat, San Francisco Chronicle, Magnet, SOMA

**Jeff Potter:** DownBeat, Modern Drummer

**Norman Provizer:** DownBeat, KUVO/KVJS-FM

\* **Bobby Reed:** DownBeat

\* **Howard Reich:** The Chicago Tribune

**Tom Reney:** New England Public Radio

**Guy Reynard:** JazzHot

**Derk Richardson:** Acoustic Guitar, The Absolute Sound, AFAR Media, KPFA-FM

**Alex Rodriguez:** NPR, Ethnomusicology Review

\* **Gene Santoro:** DownBeat

**Phil Schaap:** DownBeat, WKCR-FM, philschaappjazz.com

**Areif Sless-Kitain:** DownBeat

\* **Thomas Staudter:** DownBeat, Croton Gazette, Hudson Valley

**W. Royal Stokes:** JJA News, wroyalstokes.com

**Otakar Svoboda:** Czech Radio, Czech TV

**Larry Reni Thomas:** jazzcorner.com, jazztimes.com, ejazz.com, All About Jazz

**Eliot Tiegel:** Entertainment Tonight

**Mark F. Turner:** All About Jazz

**Chris Walker:** DownBeat, LA Jazz Scene, California Tour & Travel, JazzTimes

**Ken Weiss:** Jazz Inside, Cadence

**Michael J. West:** DownBeat, JazzTimes, The Washington Post, Washington City Paper

\* **Kevin Whitehead:** DownBeat

\* **Josef Woodard:** DownBeat, Santa Barbara News-Press, Los Angeles Times

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# REVIEWS >



## JD Allen *Graffiti*

SAVANT 2147  
★★★★½

For more than 15 years, tenor saxophonist JD Allen has been an unassuming force on the New York jazz scene. His wonderful Savant release from last year, *Bloom*, particularly caught the ear of this reviewer, prompting a return to the stacks to revisit Allen's repertoire, which consists of a raft of great CDs. Add to that discography *Graffiti*, a tough trio outing that smokes from start to finish.

Nine original pieces ranging from straightforward tunes to compositions with more complex organizational conceits, it shows the breadth of Allen's scope with great panache. In the liner notes, he says of the song "Indigo (Blue Like)," "Sometimes I feel that the most avant garde thing that a jazz musician could do today is try to straight up and down swing."

With bassist Gregg August and drummer Rudy Royston, Allen is fearless in exploring that idea on several tracks, swingfully enjoying the intimacy of the trio setting on a slow, anthemic dedication, "G-dspeed, B. Morris," written for the

late cornetist-composer Butch Morris, and the Sonny Rollins-esque "Jawn Henry" and its companion piece, "Disambiguation" (same form, no theme). Sly rhythm modulations undergird the title track, and Allen opens up the time on "Third Eye," his muscular melodicism an absolute treat, deep and searching without any stridency.

—John Corbett

**Graffiti:** Naked; Jawn Henry; Third Eye; Graffiti; G-dspeed, B. Morris; Little Mack; Sonny Boy; Indigo (Blue Like); Disambiguation. (45:56)

**Personnel:** JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Gregg August, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

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





**Aaron Diehl**  
*Space Time Continuum*

MACK AVENUE 1094  
★★★★★

A terrific pianist and conceptual striver whose notion of conflating adjacent styles and historic jazz eras has guided a big chunk of his recorded work, Aaron Diehl makes a very compelling case for derring-do on this album. Because his instrumental authority is so striking, he pulls off almost any gambit he thinks up—and he's got a deep imagination. So as he positions octogenarian masters Benny Golson and Joe Temperley with a much younger team and sets a bouncy bolero duet next to an elaborate blues, while also providing an art song-cum-poetry piece for vocalist Charenee

Wade to mold to her liking, a vision is solidified.

This era-hopping and genre-splicing fulfills on the promise of the record's title, but it's more fun to enjoy the music's natural charm than it is to absorb its thesis. Last time out, on *The Bespoke Man's Narrative*, Diehl made some of his points by aligning the MJQ, Ellington's "Single Petal Of A Rose" and Ravel. Here it's mostly originals that contain expansive elements of the rich jazz history the pianist adores. "Flux Capacitor" invites saxophonist Stephen Riley to use his breathy '40s sound to fly through a modern landscape.

The core trio of Diehl, bassist David Wong and drummer Quincy Davis is pliable enough to make their steady shifts utterly natural. On "Santa Maria," the threesome chops up the tune from measure to measure, keeping the action percolating with a disarming ease. And when bari master Temperley builds his greenery up the lattices of "The Steadfast Titan," the group's solemn swing snuggles into an apropos posture. Same goes for the down-home fluency of the mighty Golson on "Organic Consequence." In the large, the finesse that marks Team Diehl is plenty appealing—something that should be valued regardless of the era you're working in.

—Jim Macnie

**Space Time Continuum:** Uranus; The Steadfast Titan; Flux Capacitor; Organic Consequences; Kat's Dance; Santa Maria; Broadway Boogie Woogie; Space, Time, Continuum. (56:17)

**Personnel:** Aaron Diehl, piano; David Wong, bass; Quincy Davis, drums; Joe Temperley, baritone saxophone (2); Benny Golson, tenor saxophone (4, 8); Stephen Riley, tenor saxophone (3, 5); Bruce Harris, trumpet (4, 8); Charenee Wade, vocals (8).

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

**Kurt Elling**  
*Passion World*

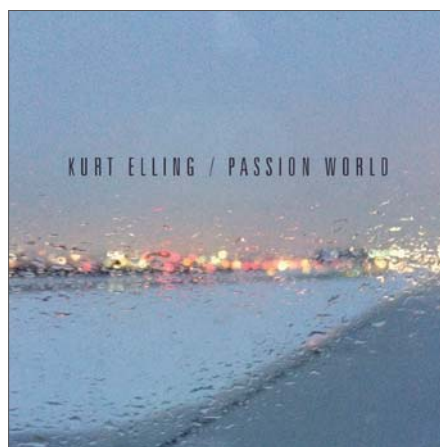
CONCORD 36841  
★★★★½

Globe-trotting romance was stylish and sexy in the '50s when Frank Sinatra hit the friendly skies with *Come Fly With Me*. Kurt Elling works in that tradition here, though both the times and the flight plan have changed. He's gathered up international material from Björk to Brahms and fashioned a suite of art songs intended to explore the nuances of romance in a broader cultural context.

Elling casts a soft precision over the better material, mostly avoiding dramatic flourishes of dynamics and the sort of jazzy vocal high-stepping we know he can manage. He gives "Loch Tay Boat Song" the purity of a traditional folk singer. Guest trumpeter Arturo Sandoval is equally understated on his cameo, "Bonita Cuba."

Since "La Vie En Rose" is the most familiar of the tunes, Elling not only sings it in French, but interpolates an English lyric of his own to a vocalese-style music line drawn from a Wynton Marsalis performance. That song, together with "Si Te Contara" and a featherweight samba duet with Sara Gazarek, gives Elling a certain breadth of virtuoso opportunity. The one bridge-too-far is "Where The Streets Have No Name." The cryptic lyric is gilded with a poetic artifice that puts it beyond the particulars of meaning.

It wouldn't be accurate to call this a "romantic" album. Elling is just a few too many steps



ahead of us to offer us the familiar comforts Sinatra might give. Romance is sentiment, something Elling is a bit uneasy with. A crooner with a Beat poet attitude, he flirts with romance as he undermines it with a subtle but eclectic audacity.

—John McDonough

**Passion World:** The Verse; After The Door; Loch Tay Boat Song; La Vie En Rose; Bonita Cuba; Where The Streets Have No Name; The Tangled Road; Você Jê Foi A Bahia?; Nicht Wandle, Mein Licht (Liebeslieder Walzer Op. 52, No. 17); Who Is It (Carry My Joy On The Left, Carry My Pain On The Right); Where Love Is. (65:00)

**Personnel:** Kurt Elling, vocals; Arturo Sandoval (6), Titi Brönner (8), trumpet; Ruairidh Pattison (3), Martin Kershaw (3), Bill Fleming (3), clarinets; Tommy Smith (3), Carolina Strassmeyer (5), saxophones; John McLean, guitar; Gary Versace, Frank Chastenier (10), Steve Hamilton (3), Dave Siegel (3), Alan Pasqua, keyboards; Clark Sommers, John Belzaguy (6), Calum Gourlay (3), bass; Kendrick Scott, Alyn Cosker (3), Johnny Friday (6), drums; Sara Gazarek (7, 9, 11), Francisco Torres (4), voice.

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



**Bob Mintzer Big Band**  
*Get Up!*

MANCHESTER CRAFTSMEN'S GUILD 1040  
★★★★½

For this crisply executed live album, tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer crafted big band treatments of a host of smartly chosen '60s r&b tunes and a few originals. The band's punching brass figures, optimistic outlook and double-clutching beats are in the spirit of Blood, Sweat & Tears—though often more sophisticated—and the toe-tapping music reinforces the title's dance imperative. Though the album builds from the concept of soul nostalgia, the covers of Sam & Dave, the Isley Brothers and Sly Stone come as off as a tad polite, while the more jazz-leaning offerings make for more engaging listening.

In that department place Mintzer's funky, medium-tempo "Truth Spoken Here," with saxes and trombones spitting quick, sometimes dissonant lines back and forth and Mintzer and trumpeter Scott Wendholt offering lively solos. Even more infectious is the sax man's slow, mysterious "Civil War," with its tight beat and flowing lyricism. Mintzer's considerable arranging gifts also shine on the opening of "Elegant People," where he highlights bass trombone and flute textures.

That's not to say that the more beat-oriented tunes don't work. The slow, bluesy backbeat of the Isley Brothers' "It's Your Thing" hits a delicious groove. But instrumental versions of expressive vocals need an extra sparkle (think Ray Charles); a little more grease would have fueled the flames. Stone's "Sing A Simple Song" features some tricky rhythms and brisk sax-brass chats, but could use a knockout punch.

The album ends, appropriately, with a blues—and a clever one at that. Built around a three-note staccato figure and antic trombones, it recaps the feel-good fun established by the opening title track. And good fun it is, all the more impressive for how accurately and precisely it is rendered in front of a live audience.

—Paul de Barros

**Get Up!:** Get Up!; Land Of Oak; It's Your Thing; I Thank You; Sing A Simple Song; Truth Spoken Here; Elegant People; Civil War; Yeah Yeah Yeah. (60:55)

**Personnel:** Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone, flute; Robert Shepard, Lawrence Feldman, alto saxophone, flute; Bob Malach, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Roger Rosenberg, baritone saxophone, clarinet; Tony Kadleck, Frank Greene, John Daversa, Scott Wendholt, trumpets; Keith O'Quinn, Michael Davis, Andy Hunter, trombones; David Taylor, bass trombone; Ray Obiedo, guitar; Russell Ferrante, piano; Will Lee, bass; William Kennedy, drums.

**Ordering info:** [mcjazz.org](http://mcjazz.org)

# The Hot Box

Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>JD Allen</b> <i>Graffiti</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
<b>Aaron Diehl</b> <i>Space Time Continuum</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
<b>Kurt Elling</b> <i>Passion World</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½
<b>Bob Mintzer Big Band</b> <i>Get Up!</i>	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★½

## Critics' Comments

### JD Allen, *Graffiti*

A big, warm tenor sound with a propulsive attack that can lay down real drive. Don't let the messy tenor-drum noodling rattle your patience early on. It gets past the bumpy air and hits cruising altitude by the title track. Bassist August enforces a steady groove. Allen says that "swinging" is the new avant-garde and has the audacity to pursue what he preaches. —John McDonough

As limber as ever—I think the break did him good. Allen seems a bit more loquacious these days, and the rhythm section reacts to his expounding with the kind of feisty invention that gives an extra charge to these pieces. —Jim Macnie

The telegraphic message and appropriately titled first track, "Naked," set the tone for an album by a tenor saxophonist whose mix of strength and languor needs little adornment. Among the highlights: the spiritual vibe emanating from "Third Eye," the sweetly lyrical farewell to the late Butch Morris and the way "Sonny Boy" reaches back to the oral drone of pre-sheet-music blues. —Paul de Barros

### Aaron Diehl, *Space Time Continuum*

A trio with benefits that include Golson and Temperley is pretty special. But Diehl is a pluralistic pianist himself, and much of his best playing here is trio-size. Temperley channels Ellington with majesty, while Golson anchors the two most ambitious pieces. —John McDonough

A clearer demonstration that traditionalism and innovation are not mutually exclusive. Beautiful, involved compositions played with style and energy, and a series of unexpected and lovely cameos. Golson is a treat on "Organic Consequence," a major centerpiece at an otherwise delicious table. —John Corbett

Aaron Diehl clearly has Bud Powell, John Lewis, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Billy Strayhorn and Horace Silver under his fingers. And his touch, tone, technique and phrasing are impeccable. But where is he in this "space time continuum" of jazz history? These tracks feel like black-and-white movie classics, not urgent missives from the messy present. —Paul de Barros

### Kurt Elling, *Passion World*

I was waiting for the wrong move that never came. The Björk cover was a near miss, the least casual and natural seeming, but it doesn't spoil what turns out to be a beautiful record, by far Elling's best. Even the U2 cover is lovely. A totally consolidated program, wonderful platform for his rich voice. —John Corbett

I'm always looking for a bit more informality from Elling, but I'm always taken with the way his attack can fortify a lyric, or an arrangement for that matter. His amble through the traditional Scottish tune "Loch Tay Boat Song" is most satisfying on this emotional travelogue. —Jim Macnie

Elling feels compelled to create epic projects, and this is one of the better ones—an around-the-world spirit quest in several languages (elegant Portuguese, stiff Spanish, precise German, flowing French), but the strongest track is in English, a heart-on-sleeve cover of U2's "Where The Streets Have No Name." Elling is a terrific singer and a smart, literate guy (he ends on a tune with lyrics by James Joyce), but sometimes you'd just like to hear him sing a few songs. —Paul de Barros

### Bob Mintzer, *Get Up!*

Mintzer, the old pro of the big band, offers a punchy, vamping, staccato lineup that hammers at a funky, crowd-galvanizing groove. Clever writing by Mintzer adds layers of interest to an elemental genre, but the tyranny of the backbeat can also drag thrust. The music rolls, but on square wheels. —John McDonough

Tight as Tupperware, brassy and punchy, heavy charts mashing together the slick and the funky in a way that sometimes finds each canceling the other out. Outlandish musicianship, but the r&b badassness seems more borrowed than felt, more of a soundtrack to the '70s than the decade itself. —John Corbett

Unfunky funk is some of the most frustrating music around. Mintzer's crew tries to catch fire at every turn, but the charts are florid and the bottom a little too stiff to get a compelling groove on. The playing coalesces, but not enough to carry the day. —Jim Macnie

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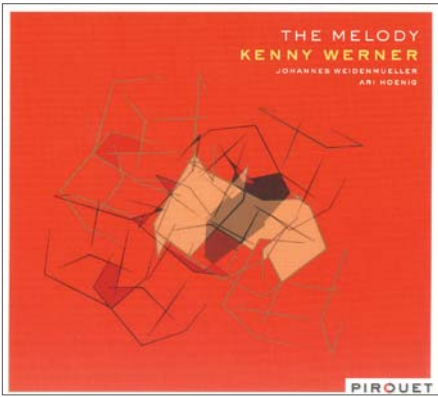


**Melissa Stylianou**



ANZIC RECORDS  
ANZICRECORDS.COM





## Kenny Werner *The Melody*

PIRQUET 3083

★★★★★

Pianist Kenny Werner has always struck me as a sophisticated soul, his compositions and performances consistently swinging, but also jewel-like and urbane. His latest album, *The Melody*, cements that image of a cosmopolitan musician in the lineage of Oscar Peterson and Bill Evans.

I could spend an evening listening to Werner, Fred Hersch and the aforementioned masters and never want for more. From the delicate show tune classic “Try To Remember,” to the closing original

composition, “Beauty Secrets,” Werner proves to be a sensitive stylist on a perpetually upward path.

Not that he doesn’t take chances; if anything, he delights in them. His choice of drummer Ari Hoenic and acoustic bassist Johannes Weidenmueller finds the veteran musician drawing on a young blood/young gun rhythm section that pushes and prods, sends directions left and detours right. Hoenic, one of the wittiest drummers on the block, is perfectly paired with the deeply resonant and empathetic Weidenmueller.

The zigzagging “26-2” is a highlight, the trio playing jagged unison lines, exploring every cranny and crevice in a lovely lesson of swinging as if a windblown leaf. “Voncify The Emulyans” recalls Bill Evans’ classic trio with Paul Motian, its slow-mo pulse as heated as the Gobi desert.

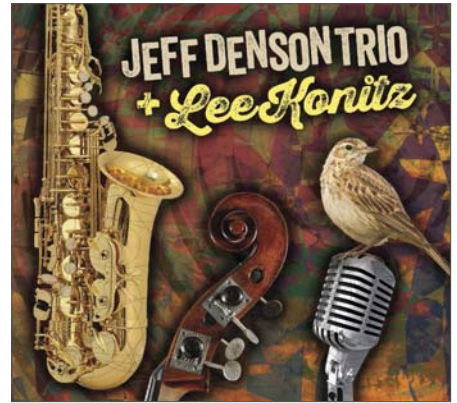
The trio totally upends “In Your Own Sweet Way,” injecting mischievous rhythmic disturbances and comedic one-liners. “Beauty Secrets” closes the set like a midnight exploration, hushed tones leading to the most muscular, powerful and dynamic performance of this very satisfying album.

—Ken Micallef

**Personnel:** Kenny Werner, piano; Johannes Weidenmueller, bass; Ari Hoenic, drums.

**The Melody:** Try To Remember; Who?; Balloons; 26-2; Voncify The Emulyans; In Your Own Sweet Way; Beauty Secrets. (56:48)

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



## Jeff Denson Trio featuring Lee Konitz *Jeff Denson Trio + Lee Konitz*

RIDGEWAY 001

★★★

Bassist Jeff Denson has collaborated with alto saxophonist Lee Konitz for nearly a decade, cajoling the reedist into some of his best playing of the current century on a series of recordings made with the Brooklyn trio Minsarah (where the bassist was joined by drummer Ziv Ravitz and pianist Florian Weber). These days, Denson is based in California, and his current trio features a pair of Bay Area musicians: pianist Dan Zelman and drummer Jon Arkin.

Although the repertoire on this new studio effort plays up Konitz’s crucial ties to Lennie Tristano—including several obscurities from the pianist and a reading of “Background Music” by fellow traveler Warne Marsh—what ultimately distinguishes this effort from the reedist’s voluminous discography of one-off collaborations is the use of voice. Denson carries on a recent practice of singing along with his own playing, bringing a polished pop sensibility to his jacked-up version of “Blue Skies,” but what sets this recording apart is that it documents Konitz’s scat singing, something he’s done in performance in recent years, but never on disc to this extent.

On a spontaneous ditty called “Duet,” Denson and Konitz open up with a delightful bebop slalom, intertwining lines with preternatural grace and rhythmic sophistication, but toward the end they engage in a chorus of wordless vocals, improvising with the same kind of harmonic acuity they demonstrate with their primary instruments. On Tristano’s “East Thirty-Second,” the trio plays the theme for a couple of minutes before Konitz joins in, not on alto, but with his wobbly voice, shaping the same sort of peerless phrasing he masterfully produces with his horn. Ultimately, the curious distinction of this recording doesn’t do much to enhance an already brilliant reputation—one better cemented by the alto playing.

—Peter Margasak

**Jeff Denson Trio + Lee Konitz:** Baby; Duet; Blue Skies; East Thirty-Second; Subconscious-Lee; Body And Soul; Background Music; Kary’s Trance; Skylark; 317 East 32nd Street; Subconscious-Lee (Solo). (54:49)

**Personnel:** Jeff Denson, double bass, voice; Lee Konitz, alto saxophone, voice; Dan Zelman, piano; Jon Arkin, drums.

**Ordering info:** [ridgewayrecords.net](http://ridgewayrecords.net)

## Steve Davis *Say When*

SMOKE SESSIONS 1505

★★★★½

This deeply felt set is steeped in a history that’s reflected in both the repertoire and the players in the studio. As detailed in the liner notes, *Say When* is Davis’ tribute to the late trombone giant J.J. Johnson that’s been 20 years in the making.

It features six Johnson originals plus a few standards, a Crescent City classic, one John Coltrane piece that Johnson recorded and a dedication tune by Harold Mabern, who also plays piano on the album. It’s a nice overview of Johnson’s songbook, illuminating both his instrumental innovations and his vast influence.

As a whole, the musicians assembled for this crisp session are a respected but perhaps underappreciated group. The interconnectivity heard here only strengthens their cases for wider recognition.

Davis met trumpeter Eddie Henderson while a teenage undergraduate at the University of Hartford. Their longtime rapport can be heard on the heads of the opening cut, “Pinnacles,” and “Kenya.” Tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander has known Davis for two decades and is a muscular sounding standout on Coltrane’s “Village Blues.”

Mabern gigged and recorded with Johnson in the mid-’60s, and his spirited “Mr. Johnson” is the setting for a particularly combustible Davis solo. A bandmate of Davis’ in Jackie McLean’s sextet, bassist Nat Reeves is nimble yet authoritative throughout. Davis and drummer Joe Farnsworth’s history also stretches back through the years, and the drummer gets a nice showcase



on “What Is This Thing Called Love?”

Interestingly, Davis approaches *Say When*’s two ballads, “Lament” and “There Will Never Be Another You,” in quartet settings, giving his warm legato tones some time in the spotlight.

A modern version of “When The Saints Go Marching In,” inspired by a Johnson arrangement, ends *Say When* with comfortable aplomb. Farnsworth is given one final solo in which to channel the spirit of a second line before the horns wistfully fade out.

—Yoshi Kato

**Say When:** Pinnacles; What Is This Thing Called Love?; Shortcake; Mr. Johnson; Lament; Say When; Kenya; Shutterbug; Village Blues; There Will Never Be Another You; When The Saints Marching In. (68:04)

**Personnel:** Steve Davis, trombone; Eddie Henderson, trumpet (1–4, 6–9, 11); Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone (1–4, 6–9, 11); Harold Mabern, piano; Nat Reeves, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

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



## David Torn *Only Sky*

ECM 2433

★★★★½

Point of entry is not an issue with the open-ended, all-embracing *Only Sky*, David Torn's first ECM release since 2007. It sweeps you up, pulls you in, assaults you and provokes you. It engages you even at its most fearful.

*Only Sky* lifts you up so high you may never want to touch down; you just want to stay along for the ride as the album dwindles to nothing and swells back to crescendo, its style devolving from Western to Eastern, raga to rock.

Its nine tracks span the Americana of "Spoke With Folks," the widescreen title track and the shrieking sci-fi of "Was A Cave, There ..." a long, orchestral journey that conjures a string section gone lunatic. The opening of "A Goddamned Specific Unbalance" combines classical harmonies, Eastern melodies and the blues. It ultimately turns into the last, run through a white noise wringer. The unexpected is the norm here, and this music will never be background.

Elasticity is a watchword for guitar shaman Torn. Each tune has its own character, but there are commonalities: fearlessness, disdain for the linear and the interplay of electronic and acoustic (this is an album of doctored guitar indeed). At times, it evokes Pink Floyd—Torn's sensibility is kin to that of Floyd guitarist David Gilmour—and his sonics are routinely psychedelic.

One reason the sound of *Only Sky* is so unusual is that when Torn and engineer Daniel Goodwin recorded it at the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, they amplified the guitar and looping devices separately. That's the sort of touch that gives this album its unique depth and texture; the last is far more important to it than melody.

While it's defiantly a solo album—Torn, who occasionally goes by the nickname "splattercell," shreds as hard and deep as any rock guitar hero—*Only Sky* isn't narcissistic. Self-absorbed, perhaps, in the sense that the obsessive dreamer Torn delivered impossibly complex tracks to edit into his latest journey. But more important, it's absorbing.

—Carlo Wolff

**Only Sky:** At Least There Was Nothing; Spoke With Folks; Ok, Shorty; Was A Cave, There ...; Reaching Barely, Sparely Fraught; I Could Almost See The Room; Only Sky; So Much What; A Goddamned Specific Unbalance. (74:38)

**Personnel:** David Torn, guitar, electric oud.

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

## Low-end Theory

Whether it's a bass fiddle, a bass guitar or a pair of double basses employed by an adventurous drummer-bandleader, this batch of new releases spotlights the low end in differing, intriguing and geographically broad ways.

**Lorin Cohen, *Home* (Origin Records 82693; 50:56 ★★★★★)** Double bassist Cohen plays regularly with pianist Monty Alexander and vibraphonists Joe Locke and Stefon Harris, and those gigs are reflected on *Home*, the bassist's debut album. By bringing aboard steel pan player and U.S. Virgin Islands native Victor Provost, Cohen, a Chicago native, revisits the reggae and Caribbean sounds he heard as a child while vacationing in South Florida with his family.

Cohen presents his deep, mahogany tone early into the opening cut, "Crossings," which features some seemingly telepathic locked-in exchanges between him and Locke. "Always In My Heart" begins with native Parisian Yvonnick Prene's plaintive harmonica, as accompanied by pianist Ryan Cohen, before Provost's flowing steel pan lines are introduced.

The mix-and-match instrumentation, with percussionist Samuel Torres adding to the rhythm section, makes for a varied listening experience—"The Sweetest Soul (For My Father)" even features Cohen's keyboard playing and programming. The melodically uplifting "A Brighter Day" concludes this all-originals program that allows for the session leader to highlight his players, including kinetic drummer Donald Edwards.

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

**Jens Fossum, *Bass Detector* (Ozella Music 57 CD; 44:31 ★★★★★)** *Bass Detector* is another album that consists solely of originals and is also joyous in nature. Hailing from Norway, Fossum plays enough *other* instruments to impress fellow bassist Marcus Miller. On *Bass Detector*, his instrumental repertoire includes electric bass, double bass, piccolo bass and piccolino mini-bass, as well as Roland MIDI bass. He also plays everything from Chinese instruments pipa and erhu to keyboard, drums and percussion.

*Bass Detector* is no one-man-band affair, though Fossum certainly covers a lot of ground instrumentally. His brother, Håvard Fossum, plays alto, tenor, baritone, clarinet or flute on all tracks, and other keyboardists, drummers and horn players contribute throughout.

"Walter Freeman's Pick Of Choice" is a high-energy electric jazz voyage with an impressively frenetic bass line and cool synthesizer solo. "Zanzibar" could be a second cousin of Sonny Rollins' "St. Thomas," while "The Days Of Wine, Guns and Roses" means business with its dual-drummer-driven shuffling beat and three-horn attack. The retro "Route 69" showcases Fossum's bass playing in a mischievous, straightahead setting.

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

**Billy Mintz, *The 2 Bass Band ... Live* (Thir-**



Lorin Cohen

ORTAL MIZRAHI

**teenth Note 008; 63:37 ★★★★★½)** Drummer Billy Mintz has been leading different incarnations of his unusual 2 Bass Band for nearly 25 years. He launched the concept in Los Angeles before returning to New York in 2001 and assembling a new group of players for his atypical large ensemble.

Without chordal instruments, this incarnation of the tentet features two trumpeters, two trombonists, tenor, alto and baritone saxophonists (who all double on soprano), Mintz on drums and percussion, and the titular pair of double bassists Masa Kamaguchi and Cameron Brown. This live effort, captured at Ibeam in Brooklyn in one night, is the group's first recording.

Clocking in at nearly 11 minutes, "Ghost Sanctuary" is one of the centerpieces of the concert. A hypnotic bass line and Mintz's tom work set the scene for serene horns. It's at once tense and calming. The charming "Flight" features a dual walking bass line and spot-on arrangements. Mintz shifts to percussion on "Darkland" before transitioning to the drum kit (and closing number "Relent") via a gently exploding solo.

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

**Filip Augustson, *Viva Black* (Found You Recordings 030; 51:41 ★★★★★½)** Though this is double bassist Augustson's recording, *Viva Black* is a trio date that features violinist Eva Lindal and drummer Christopher Cantillo. Active on the Swedish jazz scene, Augustson first played with Lindal on a Stockholm bandstand in 2012. They enjoyed improvising together, and Augustson was inspired to assemble a lean, chordless trio with Cantillo, with whom he had played before.

Augustson composed six of the pieces; the other four were group improvisations. In press materials, he says that Tomasz Stanko was his inspiration when writing the opening track, "Desperadon!" With Lindal's yearning legato playing and Cantillo's explorative drumming, it evokes the trumpeter's mysterious tone.

"The Butterfly Left The Flower (For Kenny Wheeler)" finds Lindal exploiting her instrument's lesser-explored hues with pizzicato fervor. The abstract composition contrasts directly to the more traditional "Stuff By Stuff" that immediately follows.

Closing out *Viva Black*, "Triss I Trä" spotlights each of the three instrumentalists individually before bringing the trio together in a collective sonic investigation that encapsulates the open-minded nature of the three musical comrades.

DB

**Ordering info:** [foundyourecordings.net](http://foundyourecordings.net)



## Art Pepper *Neon Art Volume One*

OMNIVORE 26

★★★★★

This is the initial third of a trilogy that was released on colored vinyl in 2012 by the Omnivore label; and this is the material's first appearance on CD. The three volumes were recorded at Parnell's club in Seattle in January 1981, a period when Pepper was cutting fairly often. So this recording falls between the Freddie Hubbard nonet date for Eastworld in September 1980 and the Shelly Manne sextet album on Atlas in May 1981.

After long periods of incarceration, Pepper, who had reentered the music sphere 10 years earlier, began recording prolifically. He had conquered New York's Village Vanguard and had recorded masterfully with strings for Galaxy. This edition of his working band has the Bulgarian composer Milcho Leviev on piano, David Williams on bass and Carl Burnett on drums. Serious Pepper fans may be surprised by the dissonant flourishes, unrestrained joy and hard-grooving vibe the band gets into on these two extended jams.

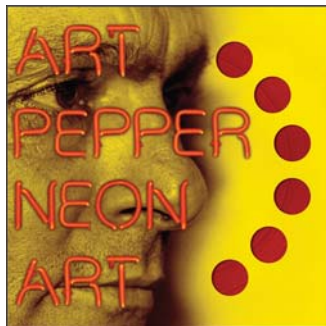
Pepper loved playing the blues, and these two tracks show him in a care-free mood. His alto is swaggering with confidence and rough-hewn in tone. Altissimo octave leaps and out-of-the-chord accents are tossed off with abandon. Leviev engages in some free-association on "Blues For Blanche" before playing hammered, kaleidoscopic piano variations. Burnett, who has recently made his own musical reentry, reminds how he bashed with fluid and uninhibited acuity.

—Kirk Silsbee

**Neon Art Volume One:** Red Car; Blues For Blanche. (34:09)

**Personnel:** Art Pepper, alto saxophone; Milcho Leviev, piano; David Williams, bass; Carl Burnett, drums.

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



## Charles Evans *On Beauty*

MORE IS MORE 152

★★★★½

New York-based baritone saxophonist Charles Evans exhibits an attraction to unusual sonorities. A specialist in chromatic improvisation, he has recorded a solo album of overdubbed baritone saxophone (2009's *The King Of All Instruments*) as well as several albums of innovative chamber jazz. This is his second album to employ the unusual lineup of bari, soprano, piano and bass.

Having studied composition at Queens College in New York, Evans, a gifted composer with an ear for subtlety, understands how to manipulate sound to striking effect. In his latest release he uses the space left open by the absence of a drum kit to render thick harmonies in sharp relief, and often relies on the wide reach of pianist Ron Stabinsky to bridge the gap between guest saxophonist Dave Liebman's adroit probes and his own tightly knotted figures.

Beauty, in Evans's eye, can be a stern thing; it is easy to admire this music's bold architecture and fluid movement, but harder to warm up to its forbidding intricacies.

—Bill Meyer

**On Beauty:** Introduction; Movement I; Interlude I; Movement II; Movement III; Movement IV; Movement V; Interlude II; Ending Beauty. (47:47)

**Personnel:** Charles Evans, baritone saxophone; David Liebman, soprano saxophone; Ron Stabinsky, piano; Tony Marino, bass.

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



## Gunnar Halle *Istanbul Sky*

OZELLA 056

★★½

In a note to *Istanbul Sky*, his solo debut, Norwegian trumpeter Gunnar Halle speaks of an epiphany he had walking the streets of the titular Turkish city, realizing that he had to step out from playing in the bands of others to find his own voice.

Yet his execution of that aim is far less personal than it could have been, with the album's sound indebted to Portishead and Sigur Rós on the vocal tracks, and its instrumentals indebted to late-era Miles Davis and Jon Hassell. As for literally finding his own voice, Halle's childlike falsetto on the title song is bound to set some teeth to grinding.

That isn't to say that Halle's sense of atmosphere and his feathery trumpet tone don't have their allure. There's an evocative film-score vibe to the tolling beat, digital textures and arching horn lines of "Electrify," though it's impossible to hear any influence of John Tchicai, a free-jazz contributor to Coltrane's *Ascension*, in the nursery-rhyme simplicity of "Tchicai Silence."

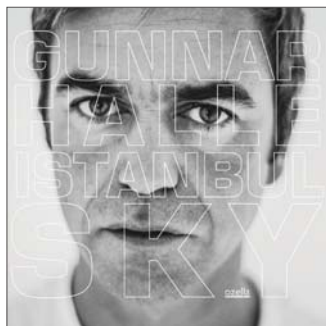
Guitarist Eivind Aarset adds some edge to three tracks, including "This Last One Is For You" (with vocals by Maria Laurette Friis), which is slavishly modeled on the mid-'90s trip-hop of Portishead. Ultimately, the album's mix of derivative electro-pop and ambient instrumentals sounds like something designed for the lobby of a Scandinavian hotel.

—Bradley Bamberger

**Istanbul Sky:** Istanbul Sky; Port; Electrify; Tchicai Silence; This Last One Is For You; Lørdag; Snøting; Weightless; Tropehjem; Why Has the World Turned Upside Down. (43:34)

**Personnel:** Gunnar Halle, trumpet, vocals, keyboards, electronics; Thommy Andersson, bass; Knut Finsrud, drums; Eivind Aarset, guitar (3, 5, 6); Joakim Frøystein, guitar (1, 9); Maria Laurette Friis, vocals (5); Wette Holte, drums (8); Jon Meinild, vibraphone (5); Berke Can Ozcan, handclaps, percussion (1); Einar Halle, cello (1, 4, 10).

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



## Jerry Bergonzi *Rigamaroll*

SAVANT 2149

★★★★½

Tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi and crew are Boston's modern jazz masters. Over the past three decades, in various combinations not always led by Bergonzi, they've recorded a bounty of refined if romantically gruff improvised music. *Rigamaroll* is more such moody, bluesy, abstract melodicism, washing over and through firmly stated though rhythmically flexible song forms.

The acoustic solidity of mid-'60s Blue Note albums is this project's model; that it lacks tunes as memorable as those by Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Sam Rivers, Lee Morgan and Bobby Hutcherson is a serious flaw. Still, Bergonzi has a personal sound and an original phraseology, especially flowing and compelling in the low register; trumpeter Phil Grenadier complements him with a weighty tone. They blend well, and get especially inspired going up against each other. Why does "Awake" fade out while they're still blowing?

Pianist Bruce Barth is a perfectly tasteful accompanist, and floating off on his own he dazzles. The rhythm team, completed by bassist Dave Santoro and drummer Andrea Michelutti, swells and ebbs in close accord with the horns. The whole band seems to take its virtuosic inner coherence, represented by its expert negotiation of the jagged steps of "A Hankering." One may long for some breakaway excitement—less simmer, more fire—but *Rigamaroll* is subtle and Bergonzi's team is proud of that.

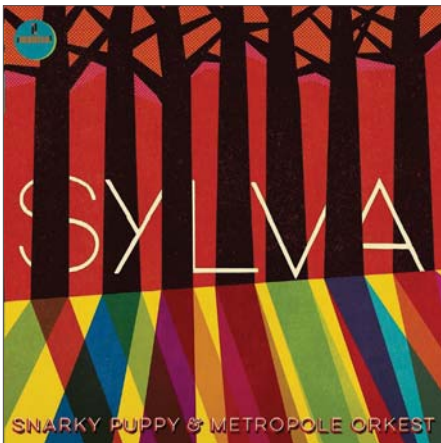
—Howard Mandel

**Rigamaroll:** Awake; An Internal Affair; Rise Up; A Hankering; Tidlig; Rigamaroll; Do It To Do It; Lunar Aspects. (60:03)

**Personnel:** Jerry Bergonzi, tenor saxophone; Phil Grenadier, trumpet; Bruce Barth, piano; Dave Santoro, bass; Andrea Michelutti, drums.

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





## Snarky Puppy & Metropole Orkest *Sylva*

IMPULSE 0023119

★★★

The fluctuating membership of New York City's Snarky Puppy has been sourced from America's jazz education tradition, particularly the high-grade program at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas, where the band got started in 2004. The group's voluminous discography nonchalantly erases the borders between jazz, funk, international traditions, film music and more.

*Sylva* ranks as Snarky Puppy's most ambitious project yet, a collaboration with the similarly flexible Metropole Orkest, a Dutch jazz orchestra. The six pieces were written by bassist and lead-

er Michael League, and rather than tacking on orchestral arrangements to music composed for his own band, he wrote the material with the final instrumentation in mind: This isn't an exercise in lily-gilding.

Just as impressive, *Sylva* was recorded live (the package included a DVD of the performance), with both peerless playing and audio quality. All that leaves is the actual music. As impressive as Snarky Puppy may be, their work reflects the downside of university jazz programs—an almost clinical perfection void of purpose. League composed the music to convey a wide range of landscapes and sensations, and while the pieces unfold with seamless grace, it all sounds rather tame.

The involvement of Metropole Orkest doesn't blunt Snarky Puppy's edge, because there isn't much of one to begin with. The melodies are cinematic and lush, but they feel more like a manifestation of craft than an expression of emotion. "Flight" taps into the late-'70s sound of George Clinton's Parliament, and later the group concludes the second-line groove of "Atchafalaya" with some Philip Glass-style minimalism. But polish and politesse smother what is otherwise a meticulous piece of work rippling with ideas.

—Peter Margasak

**Sylva:** Sintra; Flight; Atchafalaya; The Curtain; Gretel; The Clearing. (54:31)

**Personnel:** Michael League, electric bass; Moog keybass; Bob Lanzetti, Mark Lettieri, Chris McQueen, electric guitars; Bill Laurance, piano; Wurlitzer, Moog; Cory Henry, organ, clavinet; Moog; Justin Stanton, Fender Rhodes; Moog, clavinet, piano, trumpet; Jay Jennings, Mike "Maz" Maher, trumpets, flugelhorn; Chris Bullock, tenor saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Nate Werth, percussion; Robert "Sput" Searight, drums; Metropole Orkest, Jules Buckley, conductor.

**Ordering info:** [impulse-label.com](http://impulse-label.com)

## Matthew Stevens *Woodwork*

WHIRLWIND 4677

★★★★½

One of the new breed of post-Adam Rogers guitarists possessing a truckload of chops tempered with exquisite taste and a composer's vision, Toronto native and New York City resident Matthew Stevens makes his startling debut as a leader with *Woodwork*. A member of the forward-thinking NEXT Collective and longtime member of trumpeter Christian Scott's group, Stevens has fashioned a fresh group sound here with the contributions of stellar sidemen Gerald Clayton on piano, Vicente Archer on bass, Eric Doob on drums and Paulo Stagnaro on percussion.

Stevens' intricate interactions with fellow NEXT Collective member Clayton, particularly on the driving "Star L.A." and the shimmering "Sequel," recall the classic hookup between guitarist Pat Metheny and pianist Lyle Mays. Clayton stretches on impressive piano solos on the thoughtful, anthemic title track and on the brooding, atmospheric "Blasted," then he mans a mesmerizing Fender Rhodes on a smart cover of David Bowie's "Sunday." "Gently" is a delicate through-composed piano-guitar duet, while "Brothers" is a moody-folksy number played by Stevens on a vintage steel-string acoustic. And "Grown Ups" is a luminous number with a singable melody played with uncanny lyricism by the



guitarist.

The brief, rocking "Gut Check" blends Doob's stutter-step backbeat and Stevens' percussive picking. The drummer is turned loose on the aggressive throwdown "Uptown Dance Party," fueled by Doob's propulsive backbeats and featuring the guitarist's nasty grunge tones. Percussionist Stagnaro, a kind of secret weapon in this exceptional outing, provides some exhilarating conga work on the two "Ashes" pieces and also on the churning "Sequel."

—Bill Milkowski

**Woodwork:** Ashes (One); Star L.A.; Woodwork; Sequel; Blast; Sunday; Gut Check; Brothers; Ashes (Two); Uptown Dance Party; Grown Ups; Gently. (56:57)

**Personnel:** Matthew Stevens, guitar; Gerald Clayton, piano; Vicente Archer, bass; Eric Doob, drums; Paulo Stagnaro, percussion.

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

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**John Tropea**  
**Gotcha Rhythm Right Here**

STP RECORDS 1011

★★★★½

The accessibility and authority of *Gotcha Rhythm Right Here*, guitarist John Tropea's 11th leader project, make it a particular delight. Sparked by musicians who, like him, are among the best in the jazz business, Tropea drives 13 urbane tracks, most written with co-producer, co-arranger and keyboard wizard Chris Palmaro.

Tropea's versatility as a player and composer spans the romantic, widescreen "Always In My Heart," the goofy pop sketch "Bikini Beach" and the two very different versions of the title tune. The launch version is modern and pointillist, its two-plus minutes the album's leanest and most

abstract. The sequel toward the end conjures "Shaft" on stimulants.

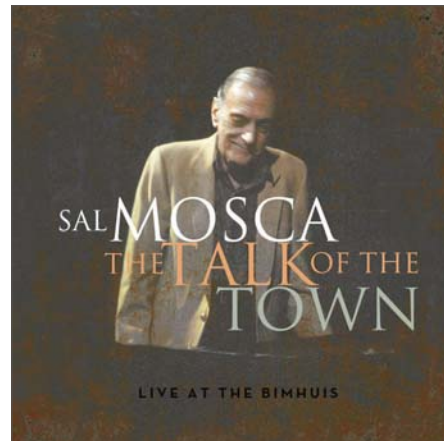
Tropea and Palmaro can also plunk you right inside the carnival. "Boulevard Strut," featuring the cheerleader vocals of Rallybop, Keith Karlock's haughty drums and Tommy McDonnell's Latin percussion, puts you in the middle of a party. No matter the configuration of musicians, the album is of a piece. It's also produced with startling transparency and presence. If you like your funk rich, you'll particularly like these cuts. If you like music with character and personality, *Gotcha Rhythm Right Here* is a keeper through and through.

—Carlo Wolff

**Gotcha Rhythm Right Here:** Gotcha Rhythm Right Here, Part 1; Black Eyed G's; Soul Surrin'; 7th Avenue South; Chili Wa Man; Always in My Heart; Side By Two; Bikini Beach; Les Is Moe'; NYC Direct 2014; Hip To The Hips; Gotcha Rhythm Right Here, Part 2; Boulevard Strut. (73:31)

**Personnel:** Cliff Almond, drums (9, 10); Randy Brecker, trumpet (8, 10); Clint de Ganon, drums (6); Glenn Drews, trumpet (3, 4, 7, 10, 12); Larry Farrell, trombone (2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13); Lee Finkelstein, drums (7); Duke Gadd, percussion (11); Steve Gadd, drums (11); Bill Harris, alto saxophone (5), tenor saxophone (8, 10, 12), baritone saxophone (13); Don Harris, trumpet (5, 12, 13); Neil Jason, bass; Keith Karlock, drums (13); Zev Katz, bass (9); Will Lee, bass (6, 13); Bob Malach, tenor saxophone (5); Dave Mann, tenor saxophone (2, 4, 7); Lou Marini, alto saxophone (2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12), tenor saxophone (11, 13), flute (6, 9); Tommy McDonnell, percussion (13); Bob Millikan, trumpet (3); Chris Palmaro, Hammond B3, piano, bass, drums, percussion, strings; Shawn Pelton, drums (3, 5); Leon Pendarvis, piano; Rallybop, vocals (13); Dave Riekenberg, baritone saxophone (4); Scott Robinson, bass saxophone (3); Roger Rosenberg, baritone saxophone (2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 12), bass saxophone (11); Hanan Rubinstein, guitar (7); Lew Soloff, trumpet (4, 9); Roger Squitro, percussion (4, 8); John Tropea, guitars; Eric Udel, bass (7); James O. "D Train" Williams, vocals (13).

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



**Sal Mosca**  
**The Talk Of The Town**

SUNNYSIDE 1317

★★★★

Listening to *The Talk Of The Town*, one might imagine the piano medley form had been created for Sal Mosca.

The second release of Mosca's material since his passing, this album features material recorded live at Amsterdam's Bimhuis during his tour of the Netherlands in November 1992.

We can get a glimpse of Mosca's muse from the very first tune, one of a string of stand-alone visits before the medleys kick in. "Ghost Of A Chance," played true to form as a lilting, ruminative yet slightly whimsical lament, offers a mood of wistful, gentle resignation. Having been inspired by other pianists such as Art Tatum, Erroll Garner, Nat "King" Cole, Teddy Wilson and friend and teacher Lennie Tristano, Mosca's fugue-like way of improvising gives a sense of history and a taste of keyboard wisdom.

*The Talk Of The Town* is sprinkled with more upbeat fare as well, showing off Mosca's affinities with early jazz piano. He strides here and there with "Sweet Georgia Brown," unpacks "I Got Rhythm" and explores the hidden contours of "Topsy." He takes a more danceable approach to "Love Me Or Leave Me," "Scrapple From The Apple" and "Donna Lee." Another ruminative take, this time via "Gone With The Wind," sets the stage for the first medley, showcasing the melodic (and seemingly inevitable) links between "I Can't Get Started" and "Over The Rainbow."

The medleys offer repeated opportunities to get lost as Mosca, who died in July 2007 at age 80, winds his way without interruption through various delectable assortments. This nearly two-hour concert serves as a great introduction to newcomers and a welcome revisit for fans already converted.

—John Ephland

**The Talk Of The Town:** Disc One: Ghost Of A Chance; Love Me Or Leave Me; Sweet Georgia Brown; Stella's Blues; Donna Lee; Gone With The Wind; Topsy; I Got Rhythm; Medley 1: Over The Rainbow, I Can't Get Started; Scrapple From The Apple; Cherokee. (58:34) Disc Two: Medley 2: Stardust, Dancing In The Dark, Too Marvelous For Words, I Cover The Waterfront, It's The Talk Of The Town, Somebody Loves Me, I Never Knew, Lullaby In Rhythm; Medley 3: Sweet And Lovely, The Man I Love, Groovin' High; I'll Remember April/Limehouse Blues; Medley 4: All The Things You Are, A Night In Tunisia; Medley 5: Yesterdays, Sunnyside Of The Street; Tea For Two; Love For Sale. (60:06)

**Personnel:** Sal Mosca, piano.

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

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## Speaking Their Mind

**Nancy Wright, *Putting Down Roots* (Direct Hit 107; 53:18 ★★★½)** Nancy Wright, a San Francisco-based saxophonist with extensive studio and road credits, displays a confident versatility on the original material she's brought together for her second feature album. Her tenor is, by turns, slathered with Noble "Thin Man" Watts Southern-fried grease, robust with King Curtis soulfulness and buffed to a gleam with pungent Junior Walker funk. Beyond sharing affinities with past greats, Wright carries her own ideas about flutter-tonguing technique and deployment of the entire range of her horn. She's also a talented songwriter—her instrumentals

range in stylistic breadth from John Lee Hooker boogie to New Orleans r&b to James Brown funk—and a good singer who's on target about steamy relationships.

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

**The Cash Box Kings, *Holding Court* (Blind Pig 5165; 47:35 ★★★)** These Chicagoan caretakers of local 1940s and 1950s blues venture into swinging jump-blues and Louisiana roots music with the same eager professionalism they give to retro originals and historic songs like Chess master guitarist Jimmy Rogers' "Out On The Road" and Delta pianist Willie Love's "Everybody's Fishin'." However, there's nothing special about the vocals and instrumental work, no new lease on life for the material.

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

**J.B. Hutto & His Hawks, *Hawk Squat* (Delmark 617; 61:34 ★★★)** The latest reissue of this well-regarded (if overrated) 1968 album demonstrates the effectiveness of J.B. Hutto's terrifying slide guitar and his back-to-the-wall vocals in a recording studio. The Hawks stomp like a Saturday night in a South Side tavern, but the contributions by Sunnyland Slim on keyboards and Maurice McIntyre on saxophone are dispensable. Note: When this album was made, Hutto had just recently back returned to action after several years away from music; for his crowning studio achievement, go to 1983's *Rock With Me Tonight*.

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

**The Laura Holland Band, *Dare I Believe* (Tooting Records; 41:02 ★★★)** British vocalist Laura Holland is surely genuine about her devotion to soul-blues, confidently leading a six-piece band that hews to the conventions set decades ago in Soulsville USA. Yet she doesn't achieve a sharp edge of feeling upon delivering the words of her rather unremarkable tunes. "The One And Only Jimmy Reed," imagining a blues afterlife, rates as the most appealing track, with harmonica squalls



Joe Nosek (left) and Oscar Wilson of the Cash Box Kings

CHRIS MONAGHAN

coming from British blues veteran John O'Leary.

**Ordering info:** [laurahollandband.co.uk](http://laurahollandband.co.uk)

**Jackie Payne, *I Saw The Blues* (Blue Dot 107; 59:39 ★★★½)** Once a member of Johnny Otis' storied band, Payne belongs to an ever-diminishing circle of esteemed elders who sing from the gut. Recorded last year before Payne had a stroke, this session testifies to his special gift for expressive honesty, even though the sexual braggadocio of "Six Million Dollar Man" and "I Get Off On It" exhaust their aura of entertainment after a couple of listens. Payne is fortunate to have the support of several leading Bay Area roots musicians, among them guitarists Kid Andersen and Anthony Paule.

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

**Harvey Mandel, *Snake Box* (Purple Pyramid 2100; 45:37/41:46/37:30/38:23/30:07/70:24 ★★★★★)** A guitar visionary, Harvey Mandel recorded a string of largely instrumental solo albums in the freewheeling late 1960s and early 1970s. Six of them are boxed up here. Best known for stints with Canned Heat and the Rolling Stones, the Chicago-raised guitarist who resettled in San Francisco plays with deadly poise and an appetite for exploration matched by a passion for the blues. Looking at blues-rock through the prism of trippy flower power, Mandel reinvigorates the spiritual "Wade In The Water" and joins harmonica conductor Charlie Musselwhite aboard the hurtling blues-train romp, "The Lark"—two highlights of the altogether compelling album *Cristo Redentor*. Mandel's jazz lyricism and horn and string arrangements by West Coast jazzman Shorty Rogers are among the lucky surprises of *Righteous*, an album fraught with sensible guitar lines that burn hot. The cross-pollination of guitar and uncredited Duane Hitchings' organ is just as impressive as what Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper were doing around the same time.

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

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## Ramón Valle *Take Off*

IN + OUT 77121  
★★★

The first sound on Cuban pianist Ramón Valle's new disc is a bit of pointillistic misdirection. The solo piano introduction to "All The Things You Are" is a spindly, percussive piece of quasi-stride piano, showcasing the dexterous Valle's whimsical arrangement aesthetic. Here, Valle is Monk-like in his forceful attack, and his introduction carries a hot kinetic energy through the tune.

Valle and his backing band—bassist Omar Rodriguez Calvo and drummer Ernesto Simpson, who do their jobs capably but harmlessly—reach the potential of "All The Things You Are" a few times throughout the disc, but the rest of Valle's arrangements play up florid classicism and easy

emotion. His approach works as introductions to medium-tempo tunes, but on ballads, he gets bogged down in his own introspection. On the whole, these can be overlooked because Valle is an exceptional talent, but his sentimental reading of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" quickly veers into overly cloying territory instead of heartfelt poignancy.

Valle's band gives each tune movement, a grooving pulse that helps keep melodies bouncing along, but in the majority of songs, Valle's sharp, spiky playing is rounded off. Though the promise of "All The Things You Are" returns throughout the disc, the overarching theme of the disc centers on presenting pleasing music. The hit-and-miss tunes don't provide a clear picture of who he is as a pianist. Valle is best when his playing sounds a bit manic, dancing on the edge of catastrophe, but he only occasionally pushes the music to its full capabilities.

*Take Off* is attached to a video performance of the disc's tunes recorded live for a studio audience; Valle introduces each piece in a pre-recorded documentary, talking about his arranging style and motivations. It's all very instructive and provides a fuller picture of the man behind the music, which is both effortlessly thrilling and a tad underwhelming.

—Jon Ross

**Take Off:** All The Things You Are; Steps In The Night; Es Una Historia; Trance Dance In Blue; Hallelujah; Principe Enano; Y Si Volviera, Levitando; Cinco Hermanas; What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life; Kimbara Pa'Nico. (46:37)

**Personnel:** Ramón Valle, piano; Omar Rodriguez Calvo, bass; Ernesto Simpson, drums.

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



## Dave Douglas *High Risk*

GREENLEAF MUSIC 1042  
★★

One can always rely on Dave Douglas to take his career in unpredictable directions. While the trumpeter has been involved in many rewarding projects during the past couple of decades, he has never rested on his laurels nor stayed with a specific group concept for very long, no matter how successful it might be. He is consistently restless and always eager to try something different.

High Risk is Douglas' newest group, and also the name of his latest album. His trumpet is teamed with DJ-producer-beatmaker Shigeto (with whom Douglas had not played prior to meeting in the studio), bassist Jonathan Maron and drummer Mark Guiliana. Each of Douglas' sidemen are also heard on electric versions of their instruments, with Shigeto in the lead. All of the music on *High Risk* was recorded during a single session.

Douglas' trumpet chops are in top form throughout this album as he displays his usual desire to stretch himself. *High Risk* begins with "Molten Sunset," which at first sets an atmospheric mood reminiscent of Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way*, punctuated by some hammering percussion. Unfortunately, the subsequent tracks offer no other reasons to acquire this CD.

At best, *High Risk* contains mood music that could work well as a soundtrack, serving as a background for something more interesting. At its worst, it sounds as if Douglas has added his trumpet after the fact, playing over some rather dull electronics and trying to make music out of nothing. While he does his best to react to what his sidemen are playing, the opposite never seems to be true. One waits in vain for some interesting interplay to occur. Outside of an occasional trumpet blast, nothing much happens.

It is not an understatement to say that there are many Douglas recordings that are of much greater interest than this one.

—Scott Yanow

**High Risk:** Molten Sunset; Household Item; Etiquette; First Things First; High Risk; Tied Together; Cardinals. (41:01)

**Personnel:** Dave Douglas, trumpet; Jonathan Maron, bass, electric bass; Mark Guiliana, drums, electric drums; Shigeto, electronics.

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

## Joanna Pascale *Wildflower*

STILLETO 45615  
★★★

There's plenty of beauty in Joanna Pascale's pliant voice, and impressive skill in her ability to scale leaping registers and tricky rhythms. But what's most impressive on *Wildflower* is how she marshals those skills by holding back. When she opens *Wildflower* with the title words of Valerie Parks Brown's "Forget Me," she might be channeling Carmen McRae—her lower register delivered in a near-speaking voice over lightly swinging shuffle: "He's always saying forget me/as his kisses upset me/he whispers: you must forget me." In her assured delivery, you can feel the tension between control and surrender. She makes Buddy DeSylva and George Gershwin's "Do It Again" (one of several ballads-with-brushes here) a tragicomedy of erotic desperation, at once a plea and seduction.

The album is a mix of pop from all eras, from Johnny Mercer ("I Remember You") to Stevie Wonder ("Overjoyed") to J.J. Johnson's "Lament," with new lyrics by Pascale associate Tony Haywood. Pascale makes them all of a piece. Though singing jazz, she's careful not to let over-swinging become another way of oversinging, so Gerry Goffin and Carole King's "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" is reimagined without distortion. She's also surrounded herself with superb talent, including pianist Orrin Evans (who produced the disc) and guest spots by the likes of



pianist Cyrus Chestnut and bassist Christian McBride. The standout soloist might be harmonica ace Grégoire Maret, who joins Pascale for her typically understated reading of "I Wanna Be Loved"—his prolix solo says everything the words can't. For the rest, you never doubt that this singer, whatever the romantic distillate, is in complete control.

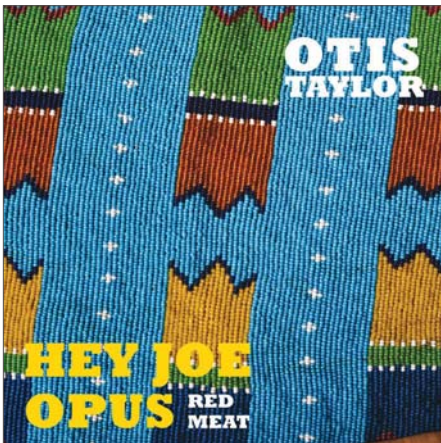
—Jon Garelick

**Wildflower:** Forget Me; Lament; Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow; Stay With Me; Do It Again; Wildflower; Overjoyed; I Wanna Be Loved; Drown in My Own Tears; I Remember You; I'm Confessin' (That I Love You). (62:00)

**Personnel:** Joanna Pascale, vocals; Orrin Evans, piano, background vocals (9); Cyrus Chestnut, piano (5), Hammond B-3 organ (9); Vicente Archer, bass; Christian McBride, bass (1, 5, 6); Luques Curtis, bass (2), background vocals (9); Obed Calvaire, drums; Donald Edwards, drums (1, 2, 6); Grégoire Maret, harmonica (3, 7, 9); Bilal, vocals (6); Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar (6); Ted Motzer, guitar (6); Tony Haywood, Michael Bond, background vocals (9).

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





**Otis Taylor**  
*Hey Joe Opus/Red Meat*

TRANCE BLUES 1915  
★★★★½

Otis Taylor, with an outlier's sense of blues-rock power, inhabits his own musical universe. What he calls "trance blues" has been his signature for 14 albums now. He became active in blues in the '60s, then became an antiques dealer before returning to music nationally in the mid-1990s. Here, he goes looking for inspiration in the darkness and chiaroscuro of original songs and a cover. He always finds it.

"Hey Joe," a tune about infidelity and murder identified with Jimi Hendrix, has been lodged in his cerebral cortex for many years, and here two idiosyncratic adaptations serve as the fulcrum of

**Paquito D'Rivera & Quinteto Cimarrón**  
*Aires Tropicales*

SUNNYSIDE 4556  
★★★★½

The famed clarinetist/saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera joins forces with a string quintet consisting of Cuban expatriates based in Spain to revisit and pay tribute to the musical heritage of their home country. They focus on several 20th-century and contemporary composers, including Eduardo Cana Flores (he also wrote most of the arrangements), who have had an interest in mixing classical forms with Cuba's various musical traditions.

The prevailing atmosphere is playful—and on occasion veers toward lightheartedness, but without sentimentality or mawkishness. There are some moody pieces, including one of the program's highlights, Orestes Urfé's "Martica," which features a most stirring melody. Rather than blending classical and highly rhythmic Cuban forms, the compositions tend to juxtapose them—Cana's jaunty "La Rity" is a good example. All along, the performances are tasteful and display at times a retro charm or a striking staccato backdrop.

Compared to the works of the composers featured on *Aires Tropicales*, D'Rivera's own five-part suite that gives the recording its title holds itself well. Originally written for a wind quintet, D'Rivera's luthier Luis Rossi penned new arrangements. The work includes "Alborada Y Son," which is arguably the most intricate piece on the

a 10-song suite best experienced in one uninterrupted listen. The tension and menace in "Hey Joe" fascinates him. So does, throughout the album, deconstructing conventional assumptions about race, gender, love, marriage and human nature. Taylor the provocateur ponders cause and effect, choices and consequences, and challenges us to reflect on our own insecurities and prejudices.

The guitars of Taylor, Taylor Scott and special guest Warren Haynes take the instrumental "Sunday Morning (A)" to a fantastic place beyond time and space, where psychedelic-era Pink Floyd and Steve Hillage-era Gong hang out with Neil Young's Crazy Horse, with none other than Miles Davis stopping by. Taylor sings the low-down blues "The Heart Is A Muscle (Used For The Blues)" to a pumping beat. On no-vocals-required "They Wore Blue," his phased, toiling guitar speaks volumes, and Ron Miles' cornet carries a somber quality, as if playing "Taps."

Certainly not a glutton for dread, Taylor often props up his voice with compassion and faith in mankind, as on a Skip James-esque song concerning a transgender person, "Peggy Lee."

—Frank-John Hadley

**Hey Joe Opus/Red Meat:** Hey Joe (A); Sunday Morning (A); The Heart Is A Muscle (Used For The Blues); Red Meat; Peggy Lee; They Wore Blue; Hey Joe (B); Sunday Morning (B); Cold At Midnight; Sunday Morning (C). (48:14)

**Personnel:** Otis Taylor, vocals, guitar; Anne Harris, violin; Todd Edmunds, bass; Larry Thompson, drums; Taylor Scott, (1, 2, 7, 10); Bill Nershi, guitar (5); Daniel Sproul, guitar (7, 9); Warren Haynes, guitar (1, 2, 3); Ron Miles, cornet (1, 6, 8, 10); David Moore, banjo (5, 7, 8), piano (5); Langhorne Slim, backup vocals (1, 5), lead vocal, acoustic guitar (7); Steve Vidaic, organ (7, 8, 10); Gus Skinas, Moog synthesizer (7, 9, 10).

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



album with its pace shifts and countermelodies.

The meeting of D'Rivera and Quinteto Cimarrón was purely coincidental, but it was also fortunate. Together, they bring to our attention some relatively unknown composers and help expand our understanding and appreciation for Cuban music, which has a much broader palette to offer than what is usually expected.

—Alain Drouot

**Aires Tropicales:** Alborada Y Son; Wapango; Habanera; Afro; Contradanza; Martica; Tamborichelo III; La Cubana; Longina; Notas De La Habana; Introducción Y Guajira; Al Fin Te Vi; Zumolandia; A La 1830; Isora Club; La Rity; Doña Vainilla; La Comparsa. (64:13)

**Personnel:** Paquito D'Rivera, clarinet, saxophone; Eduardo Coma, Lázaro W. González Peña, violins; Raymond Arteaga, viola; Luis Caballero, cello; Oscar Rodríguez, Bass.

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

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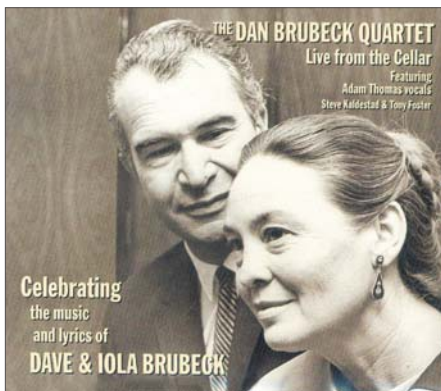
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## The Dan Brubeck Quartet Celebrating The Music And Lyrics Of Dave & Iola Brubeck

BLUE FOREST 15001

★★★★★

There are some great love stories in the music business, but none greater—or longer lasting—than Dave and Iola Brubeck. Many people who saw Dave Brubeck play over the years encountered Iola. She was usually in the audience, watching and listening as if it was the first rather than the one-thousandth time she'd seen her husband perform. Her role behind the scenes during the 70 years of their marriage is relatively well known (it was Iola who suggested the Brubeck quartet look for bookings on college campuses in the 1950s). Lesser known is her role as a lyricist for many of the pianist's most famous songs.

Their drummer son, Dan, set out to showcase

## Ben Sidran Blue Camus (Jazz + Philosophy)

NARDIS

★★★★★

Ben Sidran's career is full of twists and turns, many of them dictated by the inability of listeners to deal with his scrambling of genres—rock, jazz, funk, blues and, in the past few years, rap—in into something of his own.

*Blue Camus (Jazz + Philosophy)* is evenly divided between funky, playful instrumentals that showcase the interplay between Sidran's electric piano and Ricky Peterson's organ and songs that cast a jaundiced eye on the foibles of the modern world. "A Is For Alligator" features reggae/funk drumming from Sidran's son Leo and Peterson's organ playing lines that suggest a parade of circus animals. Ben delivers a vocal that splits the difference between rap and vocalese with a cornucopia of internal rhymes that take us from the bliss of Eden to the violent reality of evolution.

Federico García Lorca's poetry collection *Poet in New York* is the basis for the spoken-word riffs Ben throws down on "The King Of Harlem." Leo plays a vaguely Latin backbeat while his dad intones the virtues of The Big Apple, worms and all. Billy Peterson's bass and Ben's piano play reggae-like figures on "Wake Me When It's Over," a cynical look at the American political landscape sung by the elder Sidran with a weary irony that brings Mose Allison to mind.

On the instrumental side, "There Used To Be

his father's music with his Vancouver-based quartet, and discovered that his bassist, Adam Thomas, had an ideal voice to communicate Iola's wistful lyrics. It's a light tenor voice with lots of character, and Thomas controls it well, particularly on the tongue-twisting "It's A Raggy Waltz." The only piece that stretches him uncomfortably is "The Desert And The Parched Land," written originally for a liturgical soprano and reinterpreted here as a heartfelt ballad.

Time is always highlighted when Brubeck's music is the focus, but it's never in question with a family member handling the rhythm chores. Dan steps up to demonstrate his chops—learned directly from Joe Morello—on the long, closing rendition of "Take Five," but throughout this live set he's clearly in control of his band.

Although so many of the songs in Dave Brubeck's book have become standards, hearing the lyrics is often like hearing the compositions anew, and a few—including "Since Love Had Its Way" and "Summer Song," both of which were recorded by Louis Armstrong on *The Real Ambassadors*—are rarely heard. This is a labor of love on many levels, and it shows.

—James Hale

### Celebrating The Music And Lyrics Of Dave & Iola Brubeck

**Disc One:** In Your Own Sweet Way; Since Love Had Its Way; Summer Song; It's A Raggy Waltz; Autumn In Our Town; Lord, Lord; Ode To A Cowboy; Blue Rondo A La Turk. (41:44) **Disc Two:** Strange Meadowlark; The Desert And The Parched Land; For Iola; The Duke; Weep No More; Take Five. (44:59)

**Personnel:** Steve Kaldestad, saxophone; Tony Foster, piano; Adam Thomas, vocals, bass; Dan Brubeck, drums.

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



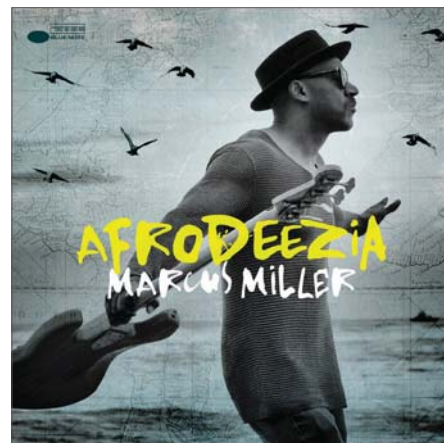
Bees," an ecological protest song, moves along by Leo's multilayered percussion and Billy Peterson's mellow bass. "Rocky's Romance," which features a syncopated second-line pulse, supports a piano excursion from Ben that moves around before and after the beat. The ensemble shines on "Dee's Dilemma," a free-form reinvention of the Jackie McLean favorite.

—j. poet

**Blue Camus (Jazz + Philosophy):** Soso's Dream; Blue Camus; "A" Is For Alligator; The King Of Harlem; Rocky's Romance; Wake Me When It's Over; There Used To Be Bees; Dee's Dilemma. (49:08)

**Personnel:** Ben Sidran, piano, Wuritzer piano, vocals; Leo Sidran, drums; Billy Peterson, bass; Ricky Peterson, organ; Bob Rockwell, saxophone; Trixie Waterbed, background vocals.

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



## Marcus Miller Afrodeezia

BLUE NOTE 002277802

★★★★★

Recently named a spokesperson for UNESCO's "Slave Route Project," bassist Marcus Miller means to bring attention to "the story of slavery" by referencing music of African and the Caribbean, southern rural blues, urban r&b and jazz on *Afrodeezia*, his first Blue Note release. This eclectic approach has its power, but also its pitfalls. Miller's polished, radio-ready tracks go down smoothly—maybe too smoothly—each featuring such a wealth of colorful elements as to blur the distinctions.

On "Hylife," the opener, Miller stirs together a Ghanaian beat, Malian kora, call-and-response vocals, modulating horn riffs, soulful horn solos, synth string backgrounds and an ever-throbbing bass. The mellow "B's River" is roughened by Miller's gimbri lick, then sweetened by Etienne Charles' trumpet chorus. Miller's core ensemble is excellent—kudos especially to intense alto saxophonist Alex Han—and name-brand guests deliver their goods. An ace African percussion troupe, fresh horn charts, hot guitar parts, synth beds, kora, kalimba and steel drums provide further sonic treats.

The finale, "I Can't Breathe" with rapper Chuck D., is both catchy and relevant, and like the rest of *Afrodeezia*, it turns things upside-down. A sheen of highly professional production covers all the exotic material and high energy, but *Afrodeezia* really shows how to control from below.

—Howard Mandel

**Afrodeezia:** Hylife; B's River; Preacher's Kid; We Were There; Papa Was A Rolling Stone; I Still Believe I Hear, Son Of MacBeth; Prism (Interlude); Xtraordinary; Water Dancer; I Can't Breathe. (65:04)

**Personnel:** Marcus Miller, bass guitar, upright bass, fretless bass guitar, piano, bass clarinet, kalimba, vocals, gimbri, Fender Rhodes, synths; Louis Cato, drums, vocals; Lee Hogans, trumpet; Brett Williams, piano, Fender Rhodes; Alex Han, alto saxophone; Adam Agati, guitar; Alune Wade, lead vocals (3); Adama Bilorou Dembele, background vocals, percussion (2); Guimba Kouyaté, acoustic guitar, background vocals (2); Cherif Soumano, kora, background vocals (2); Etienne Charles, trumpet; Cory Henry, organ; Julia Sarr, Alune Wade, Alvin Chea, choir (4); Lalah Hathaway, vocals (4); Robert Gasper, Fehnder Rhodes (4); Marco Lobo, percussion (4); Aline Cabral, Andrea Dutra, Christiane Correa Tristao, background vocals (4); Keb' Mo', guitar (5); Wah Wah Watson, wah-wah guitar (5); Patches Stewart, trumpet (5); Cliff Barnes, organ, piano (5); Munyungo Jackson, African percussion (5); Lamumba Henry, percussion, djembe (6); Ben Hong, cello (6); Robert Greenidge, steel pans (7); Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet (10); Michael Doucet, violin (10); Roddie Romero, accordion (10); Mocean Worker, guitar, bass guitar, drum programming, Fender Rhodes (11); Chuck D., vocals (11).

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





**Keith Jarrett**  
**Barber/Bartók/Jarrett**

ECM NEW SERIES 2445 B0022987

★★★★★

**Keith Jarrett**  
**Creation**

ECM 2450 B0023013

★★★★½

The existence of these two albums should not surprise anyone. After all, decades have passed since Keith Jarrett forged, fashioned and fitted a crown for himself as the ultimate improvising pianist to have emerged from the jazz tradition.

The distinction is that Jarrett, by the estimation of many, had ascended above the tradition of stretching out on standards, or original tunes

or even any kind of road map whatsoever. His mentors and colleagues helped him get started, but eventually he bored through their rules and forms and strove toward the spark that burned somewhere within all that—the reason for improvising or, better put, its genius.

He began walking out onto stages in concert halls alone, lost in non-thought, clearing his head of melodies and licks, leaving only silence from which he could approach that spark without distraction or preconception. Beginning with *The Köln Concert* (ECM, 1975), these epic events shifted the focus from result to process. What Jarrett could conjure at the keyboard, often with agonizing contortions and shrieks, became almost less important than his reach toward—and connecting with—that light. He considered audiences privileged to bear witness.

Around the same time, Jarrett started delving into classical repertoire. He performed works from the Baroque to the modern era. Classical reviewers—the ones who follow along with a score in their laps at recitals—scoffed at first and then started to come around, eventually accepting Jarrett as sui generis, a pilgrim from the jazz lowlands who became a transcendent artist in their world.

Now we have two new Jarrett releases, issued on May 8 to commemorate his 70th birthday. One features two concerto performances and an improvised encore. The somewhat presumptuously titled *Barber/Bartók/Jarrett* confirms once again that Jarrett is a formidably gifted player

whose mission is to tackle and triumph over varied and difficult repertoire.

The other, *Creation*, draws from his more recent solo efforts. One difference in this presentation is that Jarrett takes selections from his improvised solo concerts in Japan, Canada and Europe in April–July 2014 and sequences them non-chronologically. This is an inspired idea: Listening to *Köln* at home always led to the sense that something was missing, which may have been apparent to audiences that could watch Jarrett touch the stars. Perhaps as a result of the miniature-scaled solo jazz recordings he has put forth, he allows us here to take better note of his profound simplicity, his gift for brushing the clutter aside and conjuring complete works—or sketches of what could become written pieces—in real time.

And so Jarrett brings us once more up to that naked flame. The road there is much more familiar than it once was, but this time it's getting there that makes this feel complete. —*Bob Doerschuk*

**Barber/Bartók/Jarrett:** Samuel Barber Piano Concerto, Op. 38; Bela Bartók, Piano Concerto No. 3; Keith Jarrett, Tokyo Encore. (50:09)

**Personnel:** Keith Jarrett, piano; Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Saarbrücken, Dennis Russell Davies; New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, Kazuyoshi Akiyama.

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

**Creation:** Part I, Toronto–Roy Thomson Hall; Part II, Tokyo–Kioi Hall; Part III, Paris–Salle Pleyel; Part IV, Rome–Auditorium Parco Della Musica; Part V, Tokyo–Kioi Hall; Part VI, Tokyo–Orchard Hall; Part VII, Rome–Auditorium Parco Della Musica; Part VIII, Rome–Auditorium Parco Della Musica; Part IX, Tokyo–Orchard Hall.

**Personnel:** Keith Jarrett, piano.  
**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

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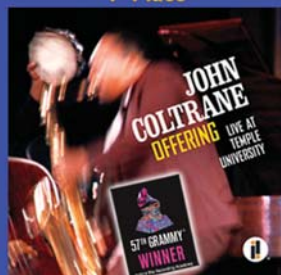


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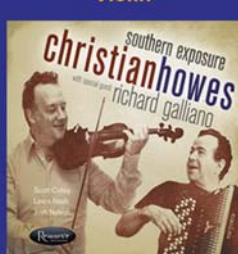
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Producer and Resonance EVP/GM **Zev Feldman** has attracted lots of attention in the press this year for his historical releases of such icons as John Coltrane, Charles Lloyd & Wes Montgomery.



# Kindling the Flame

For Eastern European Jews, klezmer music was the populist song of the little man, the instrumental backdrop to life's joys and tragedies. Largely improvised, it was akin to a type of Jewish dixieland. Though frequently mournful, it was essentially dance-based with exuberant rhythm. Klezmer played hide-and-seek throughout jazz's early years, appearing in Max Fleischer cartoon soundtracks, in Ziggy Elman's 1938 trumpet solo on "And The Angels Sing" and in Leo Watson's rendition of "Utt Da Zay (The Tailor's Song)" in 1939. Woe to the interviewer, though, who tried to suggest to Artie Shaw that *klezmerim* (klezmer musicians) should be taken seriously.

When the beginnings of what turned into the klezmer revival first stirred in the late 1970s, it brought out preservationists, the ecstatic and the curious. Bands like The Klezmerim served up lots of razzle-dazzle onstage while scholars set about trying to take the historic measure of a music that was often forgotten or poorly chronicled. Israeli Symphony clarinetist Giora Feidman displayed a klezmer flipside, and cutting-edge clarinetist Don Byron raised eyebrows by giving serious tribute to the legacy of musical clown Mickey Katz. Klezmer was no longer confined to weddings and bar mitzvahs.

The ripples in the klezmer pond are still emanating, and a current group of recordings shows some of the surprising directions the music is taking. Europe has embraced klezmer, so it's no surprise that clarinetist Annette Maye and guitarist Martin Schulte's Duo Doyna album, *Sammy's Frejlach* (Konnex 5311; 45:21 ★★½), is on a Berlin-based label. Their 2013 duo recital at Germany's Multiphonics Festival telescopes ensemble music down to two voices.

This is klezmer for the concert hall: cleanly executed and with program notes. Schulte's nylon-string pickings are always conscious of pulse and harmonies that suggest a long-ago tradition. Maye plays with learned precision and occasionally a marvelous expressiveness—like the ornate tag to "Las Estrellas De Los Cielos" and her marvelously undulating lines on Feidman's "Ballad For A Klezmer." From the Orientalism of "Araber Tanz" (with its allusions to the Afro-Cuban habanera) to the Argentine tang of "Clarinetango," these two touch a lot of diverse sources.

Ordering info: [doyna.de](http://doyna.de)

So does Australian-born, Berlin-based composer-violinist Daniel Weltlinger. His *Ko-blenz* (Toca 12121; 43:20 ★★★★★) makes a thoughtful case for Django Reinhardt's gypsy jazz as a kissing cousin to klezmer. Weltlinger goes deep into the guitarist's Sinti and Roma roots while touching on his own family history. Using a mid-sized band that includes guitarists Ian and Nigel Date and pianist Daniel Pliner, Weltlinger has written 11 pieces that trace Reinhardt's trajectory. The songs are an irresistible grouping: gypsy



Martin Schulte (left) and Annette Maye of Duo Doyna

and flamenco ("Musique Metisse"), New Orleans/Caribbean ("Louis"), a fittingly elegant nod to Reinhardt's great collaborator Stephane Grappeli ("Stephane"), the French dance halls where Django played ("Bal Musette") and a Romani rave-up ("Bale Boldo"). These may be highly trained players, but this is not the music of the conservatory. The inclusion of guitarist Lulo Reinhardt, Django's great nephew, is a nice bit of heritage.

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

Guitarist-composer Yoshie Fruchter's *Schizophrenia: Cantorial Recordings Reimagined* (BlueThread; 53:32 ★★★★★) takes a post-modernist approach to Jewish sacred music. The grandson of a cantor, Fruchter channels rock bands like Radiohead to remake 20th century recordings by great cantors like Yossele Rosenblatt and Gershon Sirota. With a quintet that includes bassist Shanir Blumenkranz, drummer Yonadav Halevy, percussionist Rich Stein and keyboardist Brian Marsella, Fruchter makes much of the minor chords and old melodies ("B'Rosh Hashonoh," "Shir Hashirim" and "Brich Shmeh" among them). Traditionalists might recoil from the electronically enhanced guitar and crushing power chords, but Fruchter stays close to the changes and makes smart rhythmic adjustments. His use of his grandfather's home recordings is an additional source of harmonic variety, and Fruchter plays off of them beautifully. This set should appeal equally to open-minded jazzers, fans of Yiddishkeit and downtown habitués.

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

Flute soloist and bandleader Mark Weinstein takes a decidedly Latin jazz approach to traditional Hasidic melodies and consonant originals for *In Jerusalem* (ZOHO 201506; 44:55 ★★★★★). Guitarist Steve Peskoff assembled the Israeli rhythm section that is heard here. Time signatures like 7/8 seem quite unforced under the singing quality of Weinstein's lyrical playing. His prolific flute improvis, Peskoff's harmonically acute guitar chords (not unlike Jim Hall's), Gilad Abro's economic bass and Gilad Dobrecky's percussive tang bring to mind Brazilian jazz. It's an apparently effortless mixture melding the difficult combination of spiritual aspiration with the romantic. **DB**

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



## Luis Perdomo & Controlling Ear Unit *Twenty-Two*

HOT TONE MUSIC 107

★★★★★

Urgency and poetry blend fiercely on *Twenty-Two*, pianist Luis Perdomo's autobiographical take on Caracas, Venezuela, where he spent his first 22 years, and New York, where he came of age as a jazz master.

Controlling Ear Unit is Perdomo, bassist Mimi Jones and drummer Rudy Royston. The emphasis is on unit because the group's churn is what sticks, even more than the individual prowess. The production, by Perdomo and Jones, yields a crystalline soundscape that preserves each unique voice.

The music is multilayered whatever the mode, be it the pulsating, confident "Old City," the minimalist electric piano funk of "A Different Kind Of Reality," the contrapuntally daring "Brand New Grays" or "Aaychdee," a showcase for Jones' wordless keening. While Perdomo is a gifted melodist—"Love Tone Poem" and "Weilheim" are lovely, even courtly, and "Old City," launched by a lean, mean Jones, is inventively chromatic—it's his improvisations that pull in the listener.

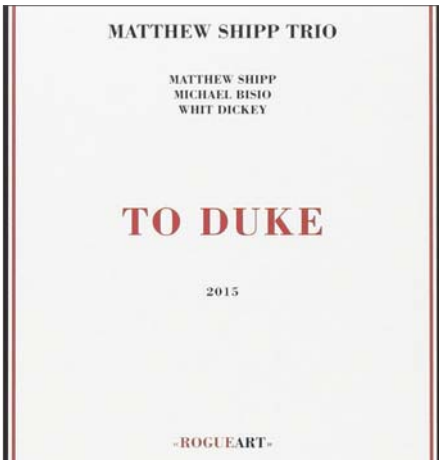
Most tunes start stealthily and lucidly, but before long, Controlling Ear Unit whips up the song far beyond what the listener might expect. Take "Looking Through You," a kind of blues Royston turns frothy and menacing through quicksilver textural shifts; Jones, a bassist of unusual expressiveness and deliciously round tone, brings it back to earth as Perdomo lays back, only to usher out the tune in gliding fashion as Royston thrashes and Jones drives.

Perdomo can play ridiculously complex lines, as in "Old City" and the thrilling "Brand New Grays." He also can play tenderly: His introduction to the Bee Gees' ballad caresses as it builds, and "Love Tone Poem" starts softly; then, as Royston's cymbals crash it forward, it becomes something more roiled, communal and poetic. It's an original strategy and it pays off. —Carlo Wolff

**Twenty-Two:** Love Tone Poem; Old City; Weilheim; A Different Kind of Reality; Two Sides Of A Goodbye; Light Slips In; Looking Through You; How Deep Is Your Love; Aaychdee; Cota Mil; Brand New Grays; Days Gone Days Ahead. (68:38)

**Personnel:** Luis Perdomo, piano, electric piano (4, 6, 7, 10, 12); Mimi Jones, bass, vocals (9); Rudy Royston, drums.

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



**Matthew Shipp Trio**  
*To Duke*

ROGUE ART 060  
★★★★

**Matthew Shipp Chamber Ensemble**  
*The Gospel According To Matthew & Michael*

RELATIVE PITCH 1035  
★★½

Indefatigably prolific and questing, pianist Matthew Shipp released three albums last year and will appear on several more this year. With his avant-minded working trio, Shipp offers what

to some may be a surprise: *To Duke*, a collection of Ellington interpretations and tributes. This isn't your grandfather's Ellington, of course. While the pianist limns the melody of "In A Sentimental Mood," his kindred-spirit rhythm section—bassist Michael Bisio and drummer Whit Dickey—can sound as if it were playing a different song altogether, purposefully. The disorienting undertow was wonderfully stimulating.

But those following Shipp know that he has been personalizing Ellington standards for years. Like the trio's live version on 2011's *The Art Of The Improviser*, the new "Take The 'A' Train" is a trip to the Harlem of some surreal dream. Shipp's solo rendition of "Prelude To A Kiss," a tune he recorded with a quartet on 2000's *Pastoral Composure*, is very beautiful and relatively straightforward; yet the pianist refashions "Solitude" with outbursts of his own chordal drama.

"Satin Doll" and a deeply moody "Mood Indigo" bend the ear via visceral—even sensualist—music-making, with a love of Ellington's melodies shining through (even if there's not a care in the world regarding the original rhythmic ideals). Shipp's instrument has been captured well on *To Duke*—whether he's playing glittering lines in the Ellingtonia or the prepared-piano phrases of his original "Tone Poem For Duke"—so it's too bad the hardworking rhythm section sounds so woolly and boomy.

Along with *To Duke* and two duo ventures just out—a roughhewn beauty of a disc with multi-instrumentalist Mat Walerian and an epic double album with saxist Ivo Perelman—Shipp

has another leader release featuring a new incarnation of an earlier band. His String Trio with violist Mat Maneri and bassist William Parker put out two albums a decade-and-a-half ago. For *The Gospel According To Matthew & Michael*, Bisio takes the place of Parker.

The 15 "chapters" of Shipp's archly titled yet intense, interior suite don't offer much of a journey in terms of color—this hour of music ranges from austere ruminative to evocative of angst in the manner of postwar high modernism.

The recording focuses Bisio's bass much better than on *To Duke*, so his sternum-rattling rumble and impulsive Mingus quotes have the right effect, as do Shipp's dark block chords. The flashes of dynamic hue come from Maneri, a peerless improviser on viola, whose instrument bursts like lightning against charcoal skies.

—Bradley Bamberger

**To Duke:** Prelude To Duke; In A Sentimental Mood; Satin Doll; I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good; Take The "A" Train; Mood Indigo; Dickey Duke; Tone Poem For Duke; Prelude To A Kiss; Sparks; Solitude. (56:28)

**Personnel:** Matthew Shipp, piano; Michael Bisio, bass; Whit Dickey, drums.

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

**The Gospel According To Matthew & Michael:** Chapters 1; Chapter 2; Chapter 3; Chapter 4; Chapter 5; Chapter 6; Chapter 7; Chapter 8; Chapter 9; Chapter 10; Chapter 11; Chapter 12; Chapter 13; Chapter 14; Chapter 15. (60:41)

**Personnel:** Matthew Shipp, piano; Michael Bisio, bass; Mat Maneri, viola.

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

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## Nautical Miles

In his 1989 autobiography, Miles Davis semi-seriously noted that he “had changed music five or six times.”

Even for someone with an ego as large as Davis’, that would seem to be an inflated boast, but the proof is condensed into five hours on **Miles Davis At Newport 1955–1975: The Bootleg Series Vol. 4** (Columbia/Legacy 88875081952; 64:51/72:55/78:26/79:47 ★★★★★), which captures the trumpeter playing in four venues with seven different groups in the employ of the impresario George Wein.

Beginning and ending with two dark periods of exile—the first due to the bad reputation he had gained during his heroin addiction in the early ’50s and the second from a welter of health problems in the second half of the ’70s—these performances trace his movement from ripe romanticism in 1955 to electric jungle music 20 years later.

Two decades is not a lot of time in the life of any artist. Even the most ambitious and innovative might have a couple of peaks, perhaps make one radical change in direction if they are young or creatively agile enough. But Davis went from crest to crest—showcasing the best young musicians of the time (John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, to name just a handful) and finding new ways to connect with increasingly younger listeners.

Reconnecting with any listener was on his mind in 1955. Just prior to the second edition of his nascent festival in Rhode Island, Wein encountered Davis, who told him it could not be considered a festival without him. Sensing he was ready to return from obscurity, Wein added him at the last minute to an all-star band made up of pianist Thelonious Monk, saxophonists Zoot Sims and Gerry Mulligan, bassist Percy Heath and drummer Connie Kay.

On their first number, Monk’s “Hackensack,” Davis catches the ear with his obvious sense of drama. He takes his time, leaving air between his phrases. Despite a false start on the song’s tag, it is clear he means business. And, then—the equivalent of the shot heard around the world—Monk calls “Round Midnight,” and Davis seals his future with the captivating intimacy of his narrative, the whispery, direct tone, the bell of his horn pressed to the microphone. If it wasn’t already clear from his *Birth Of The Cool* sessions, it was suddenly evident that bop was finished and a new romantic era had begun. A leisurely stroll through “Now’s The Time,” dedicated to Charlie Parker, dead just over four months, is an anticlimax, although Davis’ sprightly opening is a jolt of energy after meandering solos by Monk and Heath.

During the intervening three years before Davis’ next Newport appearance, everything changed. He now led an extraordinary sextet, with two exciting saxophonists—Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley—and a rhythm section that could play with velvet-cloaked precision. He was



days away from recording his highly influential version of *Porgy And Bess* and was becoming a fashion and attitudinal style-setter. What could go wrong? For reasons we will never know, the band came across somewhat uneven. Davis solos aggressively, as does Coltrane—particularly on “Two Bass Hit”—but bassist Paul Chambers sounds listless, drummer Jimmy Cobb is too loud and pianist Bill Evans all but disappears.

Two performances, from 1966 and ’67, capture Davis’ second great quartet—with saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams—in superb form, and these blissful, previously unreleased 73 minutes are box-set gold, with Davis sounding fit and strong.

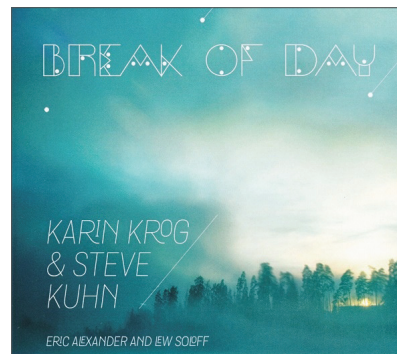
Disc 3 brings 24 minutes of more prime Davis, this time from 1969, with pianist Chick Corea, bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette joining Shorter for three pieces previously released in 2011. Just a month away from beginning work on *Bitches Brew*, the band sounds exceptionally powerful and brimming with ideas.

To remain in chronological order, listeners jump to Disc 4 for a typically intense and funky set by Davis’ 1971 band, featuring Keith Jarrett on piano, Gary Bartz on saxophone, Michael Henderson on bass, Ndugu Chancler on drums and Don Alias and James Mtume Forman on percussion. This ’71 tour of Europe was heavily recorded, so this performance from late October in Dietikon, Switzerland, yields few surprises, but it is bracing for the sharp dialogue between Jarrett’s electric piano and Davis’ electrified trumpet.

By late 1973, Davis’ health was beginning to fail, and he was retreating further and further behind a dense wall of electronics, his trumpet heard only as a slashing percussive device and silent for long periods. Five pieces from Berlin add little to what has already been released of this band, although Pete Cosey is typically enticing for his *outré* electric guitar explorations.

The final piece, from one of Davis’ last appearances before disappearing from music for five years, comes from his family’s collection and is more a curiosity than anything—the trumpeter barely audible. **DB**

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



## Karin Krog & Steve Kuhn *Break Of Day*

MEANTIME 22

★★★★★

When Norwegian vocalist Karin Krog first heard pianist Steve Kuhn—on Pete La Roca’s 1965 Blue Note album *Basra*—it was love at first listen. Like most fans of Kuhn’s music, she adored his delicate touch and elegant phrasing, especially on the tune “Lazy Afternoon.” At the time, she never expected she would one day be singing alongside him. But after a chance encounter in Sweden in the late ’60s, the two formed a strong musical bond. Their powerful 2006 album, *Together Again*, was a testament to this enduring friendship (it even included a heartfelt rendition of “Lazy Afternoon”), and *Break Of Day*, the duo’s latest release, picks up where they left off: in the middle of a fun, empowering partnership.

Owner of a warm, silky voice, Krog finds nuance within the simplest melodies, adding depth and complexity to songs that have long become familiar. On trumpeter Kenny Dorham’s “Scandia Skies,” she creates a delightful sense of motion, layering soft, sweeping vocal passages over Kuhn’s roiling left-hand bass line and saxophonist Eric Alexander’s meandering tenor flights. On “Thank You For Everything,” a Duke Ellington dedication based on Billy Strayhorn’s “Lotus Blossom,” she relaxes the melody to a sleepy crawl while Kuhn spreads rich, dense chords beneath her. “Little Butterfully (Pannonica),” a Thelonious Monk composition, is a standout for the vocalist, who caresses the song’s lyrics with elongated phrases and cascading runs.

The album is also notable for the appearance of trumpeter Lew Soloff, who passed away of a sudden heart attack in March. Though he performs on only three of the album’s 14 tracks, his contribution—like his musical legacy—is unforgettable. Using a Harmon mute on “Break Of Day In Molde,” he paints sparse, graceful brushstrokes across the song’s pristine canvas, filling in Krog’s gentle lyrics with whispery phrases of his own. He doesn’t say much, but he doesn’t have to. His quiet, minimalist approach lingers across each track.

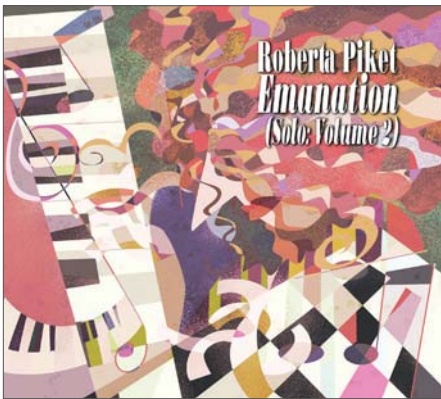
Kudos to Krog for breathing new life into this wonderful material, and for helping to preserve the life of a trumpeter whose flame was extinguished far too soon.

—Brian Zimmerman

**Break Of Day:** I’m Old Fashioned; Break Of Day In Molde; The Folks Who Live On The Hill; Scandia Skies; How Do You Keep The Music Playing; The Way You Look Tonight; Love Came On Stealthy Fingers; Thank You For Everything; You Do Something To Me; Little Butterfly (Pannonica); Did I Remember; Trane; Time’s Getting Tougher Than Tough; Every Time We Say Goodbye. (56:00)

**Personnel:** Karin Krog, vocals; Steve Kuhn, piano; Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone (4, 10, 12); Lew Soloff, trumpet (2, 9, 13).

Ordering info: [karinkrog.no](http://karinkrog.no)



**Roberta Piket**  
*Emanation (Solo: Volume 2)*

THIRTEENTH NOTE RECORDS 007  
★★★★½

On *Emanation (Solo: Volume 2)*, Roberta Piket makes it clear that she knows who she is and what she has to offer. As a musician she is gifted with empathy, intellect and insight. When playing someone else's composition, she seeks an unusual and especially rewarding path into it. She is uninterested in razzle-dazzle display; instead, she draws carefully from her technical well, casting light into the music from fresh perspectives.

That attraction manifests on each of these tracks. They're arranged in an alternative pattern: medium tempo, followed by ballad, back to medium tempo and so on. There's no steady pulse, stride or walking bass. Instead, she estab-

**Twin Danger**  
*Twin Danger*

DECCA 6025471 1957  
★★★★★

*Twin Danger* is a most appropriate name for this band and this record. There is a stylized danger in the music here, one that mixes jazz, r&b, film noir and late-night romance. All the songs have a sense of atmosphere and place. The rainy-night saxophone, the muted trumpet and the low horn arrangements make for a setting that can take listeners deep into their imagination.

Vocalist Vanessa Bley, renowned pianist Paul Bley's daughter, has a femme fatale quality that is breathy and slightly unsettling, as if her voice isn't revealing everything she knows. There is also a little Rickie Lee Jones and English r&b in her delivery. This should not come as a surprise, since her co-leader is saxophonist and guitarist Stuart Matthewman, the co-founder of the group Sade. He provides the sexy and melancholic lines that act as a second voice to Bley's singing. Larry Grenadier's bass and the drums of Jamie Alegre and Joe Bonadio act as both support and individual voices with a great sense of space.

A languid ambivalence is exhibited on "Pointless Satisfaction" and "I Love (Loving You)," adding to the mystery of the record. "When It Counts" updates Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments" with added complexity. But it's not all slow tempos and early morning vibes. Late in the record, they take the Queens of the Stone Age hard rock classic "No One Knows" and make it a

lishes momentum through a rhythmic motif, as in the early sections of "Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise" and "Con Alma."

She also keeps things moving through more intricate alterations between her hands. Piket begins "All The Things You Are" freely, alluding to the written tune but also lancing it with fleet lines. Even after a tempo begins to take shape, Piket sticks with this approach all the way to the final verse, trimming everything down briefly to one crisp line per hand. "Haunted Heart" drifts on a cloud of regularly articulated chords, rendered so delicately that one hardly notices their steadiness until the ritard leading to a gently dramatic closing. "Emanation" floats on a somewhat more dissonant and abstract stream, with some unusual emphases in the low bass.

Much more can be said about the intricacy of Piket's complex funk allusions on Herbie Hancock's "Actual Proof," or her elastic and inventive treatment of the written left-hand part in her "Fantasy On A Theme By Chopin (Prelude Opus 28, No. 2)," over which she crafts gently dissonant passages in the fashion of Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies*. For now, it's enough to remark on how rare it is to find a pianist whose self-imposed limitations on dynamics and exhibitionism only empower her eloquence.

—Bob Doerschuk

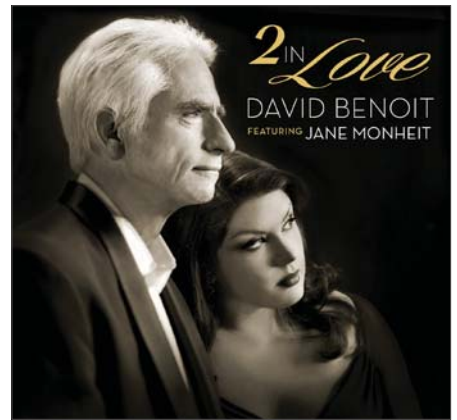
**Emanation (Solo: Volume 2):** Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise; Haunted Heart; Con Alma; Saying Goodbye; Ba Lue Bolivar Ba Lues; Emanation; All The Things You Are; Ambiance; Actual Proof; Fantasy On A Theme By Chopin. (50:09)  
**Personnel:** Roberta Piket, piano.  
**Ordering info:** [thirteenthnoterecords.com](http://thirteenthnoterecords.com)



dynamic, swinging number that keeps the dread of the original. However, they could use one or two more upbeat numbers to balance the disc. *Twin Danger* is a record with a wide appeal in its intimacy and sultry, whiskey-served-neat mix of jazz and r&b. Bley and Matthewman and company are not making a new sound, but they are delivering and updating an old one with style and depth.

—David Kunian

**Twin Danger:** Pointless Satisfaction; Coldest Kind Of Heart; I Love (Loving You); Just Because; Save It; When It Counts; Sailor; In Many Ways; Past Yet Untold; You're Everything; No One Knows; Take It From My Eyes. (50:15)  
**Personnel:** Vanessa Bley, vocals, guitar, and piano; Stuart Matthewman, tenor saxophone, guitar, Fender Rhodes; Michael Leonhart, trumpet, mellophone; Larry Grenadier, bass (1-6, 8-12); Joe Bonadio, drums (1, 2, 4-12); Jaime Alegre, drums (3, 11); Gil Goldstein, piano (6, 9); Zev Katz, bass (7).  
**Ordering info:** [twindanger.com](http://twindanger.com)



**David Benoit featuring Jane Monheit**  
*2 In Love*

CONCORD 37135  
★★★★½

Jane Monheit has proven herself to be one of the most capable jazz vocalists of her generation. At her best, she is an emotive, delicate, pure-voiced skylark of a singer with considerable jazz instincts. *2 In Love*, on which she plays "featured vocalist" to smooth jazz pianist David Benoit, is not Monheit at her best. In this partnership, Monheit does a lot more for Benoit than Benoit does for Monheit.

The problem is the material, almost all of which was written by Benoit, with three lyricists. This is a pop album—and that's fine—but Monheit deserves better pop songs to sing than most of these unsurprising smooth jazz excursions. The opener, "Barcelona Nights," is an energetic, soft jazz-rock with a flamenco-style middle section; it's all in the service of a lyric lamenting a romantic idyll in the title city that is, alas, now just a memory. Monheit shows she is game—in fact she sings her butt off—but she can't elevate the lyric above the level of a Harlequin romance.

"Too In Love" is vintage-sounding smooth jazz; it gives the singer a rare chance to scat (all too briefly) and includes Benoit's most persuasive, in-the-groove playing. Two of the tracks are typical Benoit instrumentals, competent but too middle-of-the-road for their own good, including a closing solo piano medley of "Love Theme From Candide" and "Send In The Clowns"—two worthy tunes that seem to have gone through the de-flavorizer.

The last duet on the album is a saving grace. "Something's Gotta Give," a ballad in 5/4 written by Benoit and lyricist Mark Winkler for a play they co-wrote about the life of Marilyn Monroe, has a haunting lyric about a soul in distress and a haunting melody to match, and Monheit and Benoit make the most of it. It just goes to show that a great song rises above genre. If only the rest of the album had done the same. —Allen Morrison

**2 In Love:** Barcelona Nights; This Dance; Too In Love; Dragonfly; Love Will Light The Way; Love In Hyde Park; The Songs We Sang; Fly Away; Something's Gotta Give; Love Theme From Candide/Send In The Clowns. (41:07)  
**Personnel:** David Benoit, piano, synthesizer; Jane Monheit, vocals; Pat Kelly, acoustic guitar, electric guitar; David Hughes, John Clayton, bass; Jamey Tate, Clayton Carreron, drums; Lauren Kosty, percussion; Michelle Suh, violin; Cathy Biagini, cello; Tim Weisberg, flutes.  
**Ordering info:** [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)





## Chuck Israels Jazz Orchestra *Joyful Noise: The Music of Horace Silver*

SOULPATCH MUSIC 002

★★★★½

It might be hard nowadays to understand the pied piper role that pianist Horace Silver and his streamlined, gospel-inflected take on bebop played for young jazz musicians in the mid-'50s. In his lovely, memoiristic liner notes for *Joyful Noise: The Music Of Horace Silver*, 78-year-old bassist-arranger Chuck Israels—veteran of the second Bill Evans Trio, as well as sessions from George Russell to Rosemary Clooney—recounts Silver's impact, referencing not only the "unrelenting buoyancy" of the music but also the lingua franca that moved and motivated Israels and his peers.

## Hilary Kole *A Self-Portrait*

MIRANDA MUSIC 1017

★★★★½

New York singer Hilary Kole emerges from a fall-out with a former manager and ex-lover with a lovely album about empowerment. It's an engaging work by a cabaret singer of pure passion, filtered through impeccable technique. One can understand the words here, not just the emotions, and the arrangements are transparent and powerful.

Backed by pianists Tedd Firth and John DiMartino, bassist Paul Gill, guitarist John Hart, drummer Aaron Kimmel and, on a few tracks, cellist Agnes Nagy, Kole puts her stamp on Great American Songbook tunes and more contemporary classics-to-be. The album is personal, accomplished and versatile. Whether she's vamping on Cole Porter's "It's All Right With Me," pouring herself into George and Ira Gershwin's "The Man I Love" or quickening John Wallowitch's seductive "Come A Little Closer," Kole makes the tune her own.

Kole also is in command of more modern songs. Her take on "And I Love Her," John Lennon and Paul McCartney's guileless ballad (here called "And I Love Him"), nicely complements the Gershwin. Paul Simon's "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" and Elvis Costello and Bert Bacharach's "God Give Me Strength" seem to liberate her. The Beatles tune is a beauty. As Firth beds Kole's voice in discreet chording and guitarist Hart extends her supple phrasing, she turns the

A longtime educator in the Northwest, Israels has been more active as a performer-arranger of late. *Joyful Noise* follows his 2013 release, *Second Wind: A Tribute To The Music Of Bill Evans*, with both albums featuring mostly the same octet of young local players (though without the first disc's weak vocals).

Israels' thoughtfully detailed expansions of Silver's originals have added texture without sacrificing the clarity that the bassist defines as a key aspect of the music. Recorded in a studio, the band's execution manages to be both tight and loose, in ensemble and solos; that said, it all might have had more swinging ebullience if captured live in a club.

A highlight is the finger-snapping take on "Creepin' In," with a slinky muted trumpet solo by Charlie Porter and groovy piano interjections by Dan Gaynor.

Then there is the leader's ruminative bass intro for "Peace" and the zing of multiple saxophones on "Opus De Funk," one of the first Silver songs Israels remembers poring over in a Harvard Square listening booth a half-century ago.

—Bradley Bambarger

**Joyful Noise: The Music Of Horace Silver:** Sister Sadie; Moonrays; Creepin' In; Doodlin'; Cool Eyes; Opus De Funk; Strollin'; Cookin'; At The Continental; Peace; Home Cookin'; Room 608. (69:40)

**Personnel:** Chuck Israels, bass; Charlie Porter, trumpet; John Moak, trombone; Robert Crowell, baritone saxophone; David Evans, tenor saxophone, clarinet; John Nastos, alto saxophone, flute; Dan Gaynor, piano; Christopher Brown, drums.

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



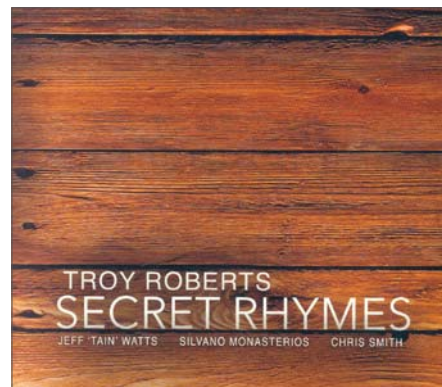
classic "Help!" into something more akin to art song, using melisma to underline the plea behind the song's assertion. In "God Give Me Strength," Kole plumbs the depths of a relationship gone rotten, coming as close to wailing as she can. When she says, "I want him to hurt," you want him to hurt, too. The track may be the strongest one on the album. It's certainly the most heartfelt, though Kole's takes on Joni Mitchell's "River" and Stevie Nicks' "Landslide," the last ushered in by Nagy's bass, come close.

—Carlo Wolff

**A Self-Portrait:** While We're Young; 50 Ways To Leave Your Lover; When The World Was Young; God Give Me Strength; And I Love Him; It's All Right With Me; River; I Remember You; Lemon Twist; Come A Little Closer; Landslide; You Must Believe in Spring; The Man I Love; Some Other Time. (64:00)

**Personnel:** John DiMartino (2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11–14), Tedd Firth (1, 3, 6, 9, 10), piano; Paul Gill, bass; John Hart, guitar; Aaron Kimmel, drums; Agnes Nagy, cello.

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



## Troy Roberts *Secret Rhymes*

INNER CIRCLE 051

★★★★

*Secret Rhymes* has bounce to it, a product of the keen, vivacious musicians who lend their talents to it. Drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts is crisp and stylist. Chris Smith's bass is full. Silvano Monasterios' piano seems to shimmer in staccatos. But it's Australia-born, New York-based saxophonist Troy Roberts who excels here as a leader, with an awesomely arranged album with just a touch more arch than one can legally call straightahead.

Roberts, a University of Miami graduate and a semi-finalist in the 2008 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition, is a boisterous and effusive player, conversant but not busy. It's a pleasure to hear his tenor saxophone not only because he plays so well in the instrument's range, but also because he does so much within that range.

To that regard, it's hard to say which attribute is more marvelous—the playing or the arranging. His creative flashes are everywhere: in his take on "Stella By Starlight" in 9/4, in his novel jazz rendering of Prokofiev's "Piano Concerto No. 2," in his genre-morphing interpretation of Freddie Hubbard's "Up Jumped Spring" and in the five original compositions that never grasp outside their reach. All of them indicate that Roberts has complete ownership of this music.

It's this sense of control that makes the album work so well. And while it may seem strange to praise an album for its ability to stay so firmly on course, there's craftsmanship in how these songs and this band seem to hug the curves. Roberts stays in his lane so well because he's the one who laid the road in the first place. For his sixth album as a leader, this would seem only natural, but it doesn't make *Secret Rhymes* any less impressive or give it any less verve.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

**Secret Rhymes:** Stella By Starlight; Piano Concerto No. 2; Trick Or Treat; Up Jumped Spring; The Little Things; Eyes Pie; Trip; Secret Rhymes. (60:04)

**Personnel:** Troy Roberts, tenor saxophone; Silvano Monasterios, piano; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums; Chris Smith, bass.

**Ordering info:** [innercirclemusic.net](http://innercirclemusic.net)



**Kris Davis Infrasound  
Save Your Breath**

CLEAN FEED 322  
★★★★½

The immediate and ongoing appeal of *Save Your Breath*, Kris Davis' first album since last year's trio date *Waiting For You To Grow*, comes from the mashup of different musical elements at play. Davis' piano is the driving force for all six of her compositions, which are a force unto themselves.

Whether it's the new-music classical vibe interfacing with the down-home sense of abandon or the sound of the instruments themselves and the novel assortment Davis has brought on

board, *Save Your Breath* seems to have something for everyone.

The most prominent aspect here, apart from the compositions themselves, is the collection of four clarinetists, ranging from B-flat clarinet through bass and contrabass clarinet. Despite the fact that they make up half of this octet, however, there's a nifty interplay between the clarinets and the rhythm section quartet of piano, organ, drums and guitar that distracts one from thinking it's all clarinets all the time.

For example, on "Whirly Swirly," just when you think you know what's coming next, out of the clarinet midst comes a rocking, offbeat guitar solo from Nate Radley, with Jim Black's ferocious, floating backbeat following prominently behind. The same song also features a clarinet chorus sometime after, a chorus that eventually splinters amidst the plodding march-turn-dissembled-groove that occurs behind them all. It's an ensemble sound, not a gimmick that features one particular instrument, an organic mindset behind this controlled yet alternately outlandish outpouring.

Along with organist Gary Versace, who contributes some otherworldly, eerie sounds along the way, that chorus of clarinets includes Ben Goldberg, Oscar Noriega, Joachim Badenhorst and Andrew Bishop speaking as one, except when they aren't. And there's Davis herself, who arises with a free-ranging, aggressive solo in the wake of another clarinet chorus of sorts on "The Ghosts Of Your Previous Fuckup."

The interaction that follows (complete with Davis' insistent, banging chordal attacks and more freestyle, splayed note-taking) between her and the clarinets is a kind of merging of band and boss. The music does tend to stray a bit, and become somewhat repetitive as "Fuckup" draws to a close, the off-kilter nature of the tune, its atonal and clunky beats a bit overplayed.

The highpoint of it all comes with the finale, the title track, which places the music once again in another space, this time one more ambient in nature, the relative calm hinted at throughout the CD now on full display.

The mesmerizing "Save Your Breath," the most contrasting piece here, can evoke the experience intimated by the CD's cover photo, where one might be alone in the depths of the sea, or maybe out there among the stars, with everything suspended, nothing tethered.

With bo beat and a pared-down sound as if recorded in a gravity-less environment (Black's selective, tasty punctuations the exception), it is the most mysterious music proffered and perhaps the best sample of what the band's name, *Infrasound*, points to.

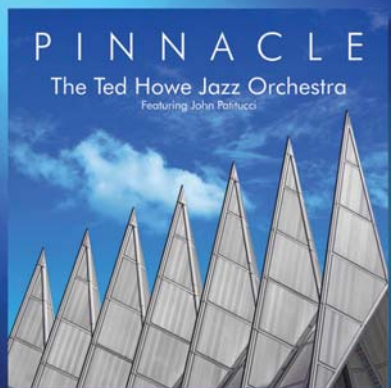
—John Ephland

**Save Your Breath:** Union Forever; Jumping Over Your Shadow; Always Leave Them (Wanting More); Whirly Swirly; The Ghost Of Your Previous Fuckup; Save Your Breath. (65:52)

**Personnel:** Ben Goldberg, bass clarinet, contra alto clarinet, clarinet; Oscar Noriega, Joachim Badenhorst, bass clarinet, clarinet; Andrew Bishop, contrabass clarinet, clarinet; Nate Radley, guitar; Gary Versace, organ; Jim Black, drums; Kris Davis, piano.

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

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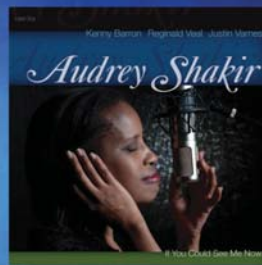
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## Sacred Ground

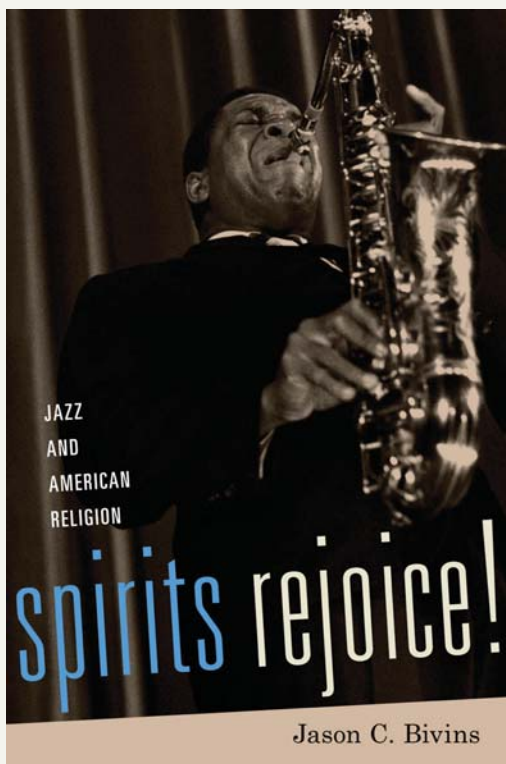
Interviewing reedist Ned Rothenberg about the confluence of jazz and religion (or at least jazz and spirituality), Jason C. Bivins got a cautionary reply: "I wish you luck, but you're trying to grab smoke here. I guess what you can do is put the smoke in a container so you can look at it." This resonates throughout Bivins' *Spirits Rejoice! Jazz and American Religion* (Oxford University Press). The author, a professor of religious studies at North Carolina State University who also plays jazz guitar, conveys rigorous thought and research via his text (being as quick to quote Walter Benjamin as he is Ralph Ellison). Bivins also repeatedly reminds the reader that he is exploring connections rather than making great claims.

Bivins' book should perhaps have as its subtitle "Jazz and American Religiosity," as many of the spiritual practices covered stem from Eastern religions and disciplines—even if the African-American church is central. He admits that "the definition of 'religion' is as elusive as [that of] 'jazz.'" A positive attribute of *Spirits Rejoice!* is that Bivins lets taste as well as conscience be his guide. He doesn't just address the traditional canon, with the sound and signifying of Duke Ellington's Sacred Concerts, Mary Lou Williams' Jazz Mass and the Saturday-night blues/Sunday-morning gospel dichotomy in myriad hard-bop and soul-jazz LPs. Rather, he interviews a swath of contemporary artists, from veterans of the New Thing to many 21st-century seekers.

Perhaps he senses that these improvisers—questing in the face of cultural marginalization—must be possessed by some faith. Making key appearances are trumpeters Wadada Leo Smith and Roy Campbell Jr., drummers Milford Graves and Hamid Drake, bassist William Parker, pianists Marilyn Crispell and Matthew Shipp and saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, among many others.

Religion was a key aspect of the 1960s avant-garde as it related to rising African-American self-possession, multicultural identity and the Civil Rights Movement. There seemed to be spiritual solutions to the challenges of life as a minority in America when secular guarantees were few. John Coltrane was the patron saint of the era's aim toward artistic and spiritual self-actualization. Coltrane's grandfathers were both African Methodist Episcopal Zion ministers, although he would investigate all manner of inner-minded practices in search of mystical-musical enlightenment—even LSD.

Bivins covers a world of otherworldly disciplines: the Islam to which so many such Africa-conscious boppers turned, such as Yusef Lateef (formerly William Huddleston); the Afro-centric sci-fi cosmology of Sun Ra; Afro-Cuban mysticism and



ritual (though the author misses pianist David Virelles' absorbing ventures in this vein); the Buddhism of Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter; the Zen meditation of Gary Peacock and Myra Melford; the Taoism of Steve Lacy; the numerological Stockhausen-meets-Kabbalah systems of Anthony Braxton; and the "radical Jewish culture" of John Zorn. Most interesting are the "communitarian" movements, from the pragmatic (Horace Tapscott's Underground Musicians and Artists Association) to the mystical (Alice Coltrane's ashram) to the idolatrous (the Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church).

If there's an angel in this story—Coltrane—there are darker elements, too. Saxophonist Charles Gayle's fire-and-brimstone jeremiads about the "sins" of homosexuality and abortion are notorious among the liberally minded who attended his '90s concerts. Bivins also touches on Scientology, highlighting Chick Corea's espousal beyond the searching '70s to this day.

Bivins points out that the spiritual aspect of jazz can boil down to cultural ritual (Art Ensemble of Chicago, pianist Cecil Taylor) and sheer ecstatic release (saxophonist David S. Ware, pianist Keith Jarrett). Jarrett says that there is a "surrender" involved with high-level improvisation that could be akin to submitting to a faith. Bivins quotes Abbey Lincoln on learning from Thelonious Monk and Max Roach about allowing oneself the freedom as an improviser to make mistakes, to have faith in the value of the quest. "You take a chance and you reach for something. If you don't make it, you reached for it, anyway. They call it 'jazz.'" Bivins adds, "They call it 'religion,' too." **DB**

Ordering info: [global.oup.com](http://global.oup.com)



## David Berkman *Old Friends And New Friends*

PALMETTO 2177

★★★★½

Pianist David Berkman's latest recording has that timeless sound of music that could be from the 1960s or 2015. *Old Friends And New Friends* is an appropriate title, as it puts Berkman back with Palmetto Records and his old friends: label owner/recording engineer Matt Balitsaris, drummer Brian Blade and reedmen Adam Kolker and Billy Drewes. New friends include members of his current ensemble: saxophonist Dayna Stephens and bassist Linda Oh.

The music keeps to the upbeat and contemplative. There are no loud burners or blatant displays of technique. Rather, the compositions keep a listener tuning in with the way the music moves from passage to passage. It's logical yet surprising, but never particularly jolting.

All the musicians sound comfortable and confident in their playing, and on songs such as "Past Progressive," they really push and weave lines around each other.

Such conversation is good here, but sometimes the three saxophones overwhelm the music and don't add enough contrast. Blade plays rhythms and colors with his pristine touch. He is deeply listening to his bandmates, not just keeping rhythms.

Oh fits in all the spaces between Blade and Berkman with a deep, beautiful sound and several in-the-pocket solos that are a highlight of the record.

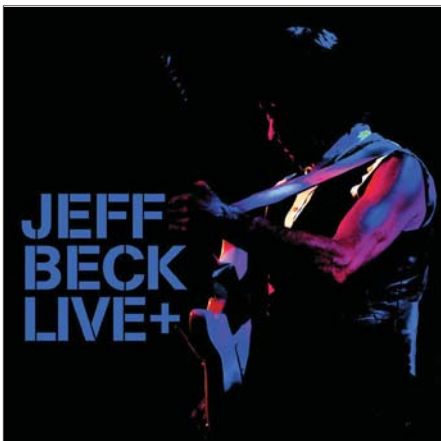
Berkman's piano has a bright tone, and he keeps the band together and tight with his coherent and logical solo work. Especially sweet and pretty is the last track, "Psalm," which features Kolker's clarinet and Drewes' soprano saxophone coming in and out of the high register. Berkman isn't pushing the edge of jazz; he's simply making great music with great playing.

—David Kunian

**Old Friends And New Friends:** Tribute; No Blues No Really No Blues; Past Progressive; Deep High Wide Sky; Strange Attractions Then Birds; No Blues No Really No Blues (Piano Trio Version); West 180th Street; Up Jumped Ming; Psalm. (50:22)

**Personnel:** David Berkman, piano; Dayna Stephens, tenor saxophone (except 5, 6, 7, 9); Billy Drewes, alto saxophone (2, 3), soprano saxophone (5); Adam Kolker, soprano saxophone (1, 2, 5), clarinet (9), bass clarinet; Linda Oh, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

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



## Jeff Beck *Live+*

ATCO R2 549269

★★

Jeff Beck earned his place in the rock pantheon over 40 years ago, and he's kept his legacy healthy since then, touring frequently and entering the studio occasionally; he won a pair of Grammys in 2011 for his last such studio effort. Time marches on nevertheless, and *Live+* is a taxing reminder that Beck's platinum-selling 1975 album *Blow By Blow* was a long a time ago.

Compiled from material recorded during his tour with ZZ Top in 2014, the disc finds Beck digging into his back catalog, including some of his signature covers. The band is solid, but too often,

## Tom Tallitsch *All Together Now*

POSI-TONE 8137

★★★★½

Cleveland-bred tenorist Tom Tallitsch is clearly an inclusive dude, if his résumé as a teacher in Princeton, New Jersey, and beyond is anything to go by. Among other activities, he founded the Central New Jersey Homeschool Bands, has taught piano to children with disabilities and worked with dancers and choreographers. So the community-conscious title of his latest album, *All Together Now*, seems a natural fit for Tallitsch's tightknit yet soulful recording.

Save for Frank Zappa and George Duke's "Uncle Remus" and The Band's "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down"—a Civil War eulogy fueled by Brian Charette's churchy organ and overdubbed piano—the remaining 11 titles were composed by the leader. The anthemic "Big Sky" is not for the town in Montana but for dance company Big Sky Project, founded by Tallitsch's wife; Peter Brendler's urgent bass line suggests the scurrying of disposed fugitives in "Border Crossing," as does Charette's nimble solo; Tallitsch's blunt-nosed, garulous tenor doesn't sound unduly curmudgeonly on that eponymous track, nor does Michael Dease's useful trombone or the alto of Mike DiRubbo. But several cuts here carry the vibe of battle-scarred triumph against adversity.

Layered meter and rhythmic buoyancy are inherent in Tallitsch's conceptions, and drum-

the performances feel more like demonstration than inspiration. Case in point is the awful cover of Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come," on which vocalist Jimmy Hall lays overcooked waste on one of the finest Civil Rights anthems, changing lyrics and draining the song of its meaning and soul.

Hall is more at home on spirited, bruising versions of "Rollin' And Tumblin'" and "Going Down," which are both highlights. Beck's shredding on "Loaded" and "Hammerhead" is fun, but he's at his best when he throttles back for more sensitive, melodic playing, such as on "A Day In The Life," where his lead is beautifully nuanced.

The "+" in the album title refers to two new studio tracks tacked on at the end. While they are completely incongruous here, they do offer a glimmer of hope that Beck's next studio album will explore new ground for him. "My Tiled White Floor" is essentially amped-up trip-hop, and it's possible he could take that sound in interesting directions.

For its part, *Live+* settles mostly for generic hard rock and is strictly non-essential Beck.

—Joe Tangari

**Live+:** Loaded; Morning Dew; You Know You Know; Why Give It Away; A Change Is Gonna Come; A Day In The Life; Superstition; Hammerhead; Little Wing; Big Block; Where Were You; Danny Boy; Rollin' And Tumblin'; Going Down; Tribal; My Tiled White Floor. (71:33)

**Personnel:** Jeff Beck, guitar; Jimmy Hall, vocals; Rhonda Smith, bass, vocals; Jonathan Joseph, drums; Nicolas Meier, guitars; Veronica Bellino, drums (15, 16), percussion, vocals, keyboards (16); Ruth Lorenzo, vocals (15).

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

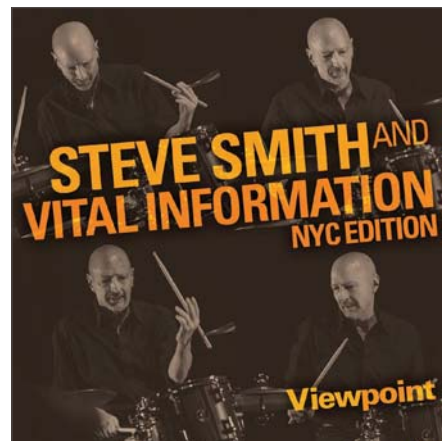


mer Mark Ferber's crisp time gives the proceedings a hearty thrust, even during the laid-back "Greasy Over Easy," where Dease's excellent, brisk solo might have benefited from cup mute action to boost the lard. There is a pervading 6/8 feel to the mellow closer "Arches" and elsewhere, tethering the breezy synch of this simpatico sextet and pulling the listener with it. —Michael Jackson

**All Together Now:** Passages; The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down; Slippery Rock; Big Sky; Border Crossing; Curmudgeon; Uncle Remus; Medicine Man; Greasy Over Easy; Dunes; Arches. (50:27)

**Personnel:** Tom Tallitsch, tenor saxophone; Mike DiRubbo, alto saxophone; Michael Dease, trombone; Brian Charette, piano, organ; Peter Brendler, bass; Mark Ferber, drums.

**Ordering info:** [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com)



## Steve Smith and Vital Information NYC Edition *Viewpoint*

BFM JAZZ

★★★★★

Prolific drummer Steve Smith came to fame after replacing Aynsley Dunbar in the San Francisco fusion/prog rock group Journey in the late '70s. Inspired by the ferocious technique of Buddy Rich, he's been somewhat sidelined by the jazz mainstream, yet he's collaborated with many Rich alumni, including saxophonist Steve Marcus, pianist Lee Musiker and saxophonists Andy Fusco and Walt Weiskopf. The latter two feature on this album's standout Rich tracks, "Time Check" and "Willowcrest." Superbly tight horn-guitar work goaded by Smith and lubricated by the Rhodes of Mark Soskin and the pendulum of Baron Browne's bass precedes one of three kit solos on "Viewpoint One," which recalls Ginger Baker's African-inspired double-flam energy of yore.

Though you can't witness it on record, it's easy to imagine Smith cross-sticking and performing as bombastically in the studio as he does onstage. For the live set of this material, he brings snare center stage to play "The Brush Off," written by Valentine to feature Smith's brush artistry. On the CD, Fusco takes it out with scribbly alto reminiscent of Art Pepper; though he has the control of a lead alto man, his impassioned playing has the agreeable whiff of possible chaos. "Willowcrest" grooves like a well-oiled bass drum pedal. "Oleo" is Soskin's nod to his tenure with Sonny Rollins. Herbie Hancock's "Chan's Song" provides ballad oasis—Fusco's piping alto in lovely accord with Valentine's warm tone.

The energized collection closes with tributes to legendary clubs, the Blackhawk (San Francisco) and The Bottom Line (New York City). The first has a "Sidewinder" groove allowing space for Browne to slap; Soskin stretches on "Bottom Line" before a bluesy stomp segues to fleet swing, more deft brush work and a surprise ensemble ending.

—Michael Jackson

**Viewpoint:** Bernsha Swing; Time Check; The Brush Off; Willowcrest; Viewpoint One; Take Five; Viewpoint Two; Chan's Song (Never Said); Oleo; A Final Viewpoint; The Blackhawk; The Bottom Line. (58:16)

**Personnel:** Steve Smith, drums; Baron Browne, bass; Mark Soskin, piano, Fender Rhodes; Andy Fusco, alto saxophone; Vinny Valentine, guitar, Walt Weiskopf, tenor saxophone (2, 4).

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





Kenny Werner

# Joy Therapy

## Zen and the Art of Jazz: Part 3

**“JOY THERAPY” IS A TERM I MADE UP IN A HUMOROUS MOMENT.** Ten minutes later, it was the title of my third article in the series “Zen and the Art of Jazz.” Joy Therapy is learning to identify and focus on moments of connectedness, moments when the music is just “happening.” It often seems like that experience visits us randomly and then flies away when we try to count on it. We can learn to welcome those moments, those flashes of joy that come when we’re aligned with ourselves and the instrument.

It takes practice to stay in a “space” where one can inhale and exhale in the moment with contentment. We want to become familiar with that state until we believe that we can live there. By fully manifesting our own greatness, we give our audiences a heightened awareness of their greatness.

First we have to find the space within ourselves. We find a path, meditation class, teacher or guru, whatever works to help us regularly make the connection. Maybe it’s running or doing tai chi. We have to find the connection

somehow. Then we want to be able to touch our instrument before losing that space. For some, touching their instrument is like submerging their hands in a tub of warm water after they’ve been frozen from the snow. For others, it’s like touching a hot stove.

Our relationships to objects are as they have been programmed to be. They can be reprogrammed, however. I tell musicians, *go into the space, touch the instrument, go into the space, touch the instrument, etc.* One day, you’ll touch the instrument and *go into the space*. Imagine your freest state of mind and body being triggered by the touch of your instrument.

The second checkpoint is the sound you make. As we’ve established in this series of articles (see January 2015 and March 2015 issues), pressuring oneself to play better doesn’t work for the majority of musicians. Self-loathing can motivate but usually doesn’t.

The joy is usurped by worrying about or trying to manage the sound you

make. Trying to make a joyful sound doesn't sound joyful. Controlling your body to induce "the right kind of sound" is unsatisfying and rather insincere.

It's the other way around. Be steeped in joy and share it with your instrument. In order to not get tripped up by trying to control the sound, one must indulge in a bit of brainwashing. Brainwashing has gotten such a bad reputation. Doesn't our brain often need a good washing? What do we brainwash it with? The firm belief that *every sound we make is the most beautiful sound we've ever heard*. No exceptions! As I stated in a previous article, this is the musician's version of enlightenment. If you apply only that belief and "pretend" that every sound you make satisfies that criteria, that is Joy Therapy. In music and life you often have to practice a joyful reaction and the feelings may follow. That is known as "acting as if." For example, forgiving someone who you really can't forgive, you might say over and over again, "I forgive this person." You act as if. You may also apply it to forgiving yourself.

Our baggage comes in many forms. Practicing this path, one may have flashes where one actually does feel forgiveness towards oneself or another. Even if the feeling is fleeting, it informs us of how much more satisfying our lives could be if we were programmed more towards habitual forgiveness and generosity of spirit than habitual blame and resentment. These things can be programmed into your gut. It's tricky and it may take a long time, but a new program is established in one's heart and mind by the same process we learned to play an instrument: repetition.

Repetition of the same thought pattern may begin to alter the previous, more familiar thought patterns. But one must hang in there until the brainwashing is complete. You may have many jealousies, feelings of low self-esteem, resentment toward God because he didn't give you that "special talent," or you're simply angry because you haven't gotten the gigs you feel you deserve. The easy choice is to live with the toxicity of that type of thinking and feel the emotions thereof. Those attitudes even lodge themselves in the body. Perhaps they're even the source of diseases. But you can aim towards the perfect principle, of forgiveness, of generosity, loving sound, loving the sound you make and feeling joy from others' good fortune rather than, "Why him and not me?"

Like mastering any instrument, mastering oneself can lead to a joy that is sustainable. That leads to becoming a performer who does more than groove: Although he certainly does that, he is a beacon, a light source, a channeler of light and sound. At such a concert, the audience gets treated to an inner experience that could not be matched by the most up-to-date CGI. It is the fireworks and light show of the Inner Self. Conversely, boredom or lack of light—with which even great players sometimes perform—may be a major factor in the lack of interest in your music.

Joy Therapy then means training the mind to stay out of the way so the flow of joy (music) can

be uninterrupted. The way to train the mind to do this is by taking your hands off the instrument or putting it down, whatever the case may be, when the mind interferes. This is obviously only possible during practice and not in performance. Stopping what you're caught up in and going back to the source time and time again, one sculpts a new person within the fuzzy shell of the old.

Go back to the well of wisdom day after day, regardless of whether your ego is shouting or purring. Take a break from it and imagine your greatness for a few moments. It is the conscious mind that interferes with this expanded awareness. In music practice, we can work on this by literally taking our hands off of the instrument until the mind quiets down. This is training your mind the way you would train a dog to sit. Then, in the stillness, we contemplate the source of all joy and continue to forge new pathways for the mind and body. At that point we reconnect with our instrument.

Joy Therapy aims at clearing the wreckage and

## Like mastering any instrument, mastering oneself can lead to a joy that is sustainable.

seeing, even for a moment, the sunlight of your spirit, the simplicity of the moment, the great value that one has simply by the attainment of a human birth. It is necessary for those epiphanies to occur to know what one is aiming for. Those moments can be highlighted, contemplated and expanded until, perhaps, with enough work, one can live in the space and joy of the moment.

Imagine making all your choices musically in the joy of the moment. What would your music sound like? When an audience is treated to that phenomenon, no matter how modest the circumstances are of the gig, they never forget that show. You have given them food for their heart's desire, supplied the answer to their yearnings. Then it can be said you have truly contributed to humanity and are not trapped in the myopic world of "art." Imagine every person who ever hears you yearning to hear you again and again. Sounds like a business plan to me!

Joy is always radiating inside us. It is the truth of who we are. The problems, anxieties, jealousies, resentments and obsessing about things going our way and feeling desolate if they don't—these are all superimpositions, transitory items. Those episodes are the illusions. Joy is the truth.

The best analogy is the sun and clouds. The sun is always shining with the same brilliant light, radiating the same amount of heat and energy. It is the unchanging reality of our solar system, and thank God it is or we wouldn't exist. But every day the sky presents a different play for us, a different symphony of dark and light. Sometimes there are clouds and the sky is gray and it looks as if the sun

is not as strong or as bright. Some days the clouds are so thick that even though it's the middle of the afternoon, it's dark enough to be evening. If we didn't know anything about the science of our environment we might think, as primitive people probably did thousands of years ago, that the sun has gone away, or that it doesn't burn as brightly on such a day. But we know that it does. We are absolutely sure that, even on the darkest day, the sun is as bright, hot and powerful as ever. The sun is the never-changing reality. The clouds are transitional events, just as our problems tend to be.

Humans are always aware of this simple fact in their outer environment but often can't identify the same reality in their inner environment. On a day that our spirit is dark with fear or anger, most of us doubt that the sunlight of our spirit burns as brightly and unwavering as on our best day. That's why we could use a little . . . Joy Therapy.

For a musician, the analogous idea is that many of us think of ourselves as weak or not as worthy of the self-expression that others in music history have enjoyed. We are tempted to think, "Sure, Miles Davis, but not me; Thelonious Monk, of course, but I'm no Thelonious Monk," etc. We all have the same incredibly bright, incredibly powerful, incredibly creative force burning within us. We just need to have a regular practice, even for a few minutes a day, of seeing through the mist of our despair and focusing on the burning light of our essence. Just for a few minutes, we ignore the mundane person we think we are and become one with the genius that undoubtedly lives within us.

Acting as if, we "accentuate the positive" or as it used to be called "counting your blessings." It could mean making gratitude lists when you don't feel gratitude. I make one most mornings although I don't actually feel that grateful. But it has the potential of changing old patterns. In the movie *Miracle on 34th Street*, Maureen O'Hara says to Natalie Wood (as John Payne had said to her), "Faith is believing when common sense tells you not to." Common sense tells us we are our problems. Faith tells us we are nothing but joy.

We must isolate the joy gene from the despair gene, reprogramming the cells until every cell in our body radiates joy. That state of mind emits a certain vibration, just as conflict and anxiety do. The latter vibration is a low frequency. Infusing ourselves with the light creates a much higher frequency. Light and sound, sound and light! We play with the idea until we emerge as the manifestation of joy. Now tell me that isn't relevant to the issue of musicians and performance!

DB

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Kenny Werner is a world-class pianist, composer, educator and author whose prolific output continues to impact audiences and musicians around the world. His groundbreaking 1996 publication *Effortless Mastery: Liberating the Master Musician Within* is a guide to distill the emotional, spiritual and psychological aspects of an artist's life. Werner was recently named Artistic Director of The Effortless Mastery Institute at Berklee College of Music. His latest trio CD, *The Melody* (Pirouet), features Ari Hoenig on drums and Johannes Weidenmueller on bass. Visit Werner online at [kennywerner.com](http://kennywerner.com).





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## Ron Miles' Cornet Solo on 'Angelina' from *Circuit Rider*

**FOR HIS TWO MOST RECENT RECORDINGS** as a leader, cornetist Ron Miles has incorporated a trio consisting of himself, guitarist Bill Frisell and drummer Brian Blade. Working without a bass player has its challenges. If the objective is to make the form and harmonies clear to the listener, then there is more responsibility put on the soloist than in a typical quartet situation. For his solo on "Angelina," an original composition from the 2014 album *Circuit Rider* (Enja/Yellowbird), we find Miles using a variety of techniques involving arpeggios and scales to help create this clarity.

The simplest element he uses are triads. In bar 11, we hear a straight G<sub>7</sub> triad ascending almost through two octaves. He does this on a G<sub>7</sub>maj<sub>9</sub> chord, and playing a root-position triad against the same chord is a very stable sound that makes the harmony clear. Miles does this again in bar 16, playing a C diminished triad on the Cm<sub>7</sub><sub>♭5</sub>. To create a bit of variety, Miles doesn't always play the notes in order. For example, in measure 35, he starts on the high root of the Cm<sub>7</sub> and then descends to the low root. In this case, rather than allowing it to sound final, he comes back up and defines it as Cm<sub>7</sub> with a flat seventh at the end of the bar.

Measure 23 is another example of descending through a root-position triad on the same harmony, and in measure 43 he starts on the high fifth, drops to the tonic and then plays the third.

Measure 32 is also hip, where there is an A<sub>7</sub> arpeggio, but Miles approaches the third from a half step down, resolving the minor third into the major third, a move common in older blues styles.

There are multiple examples of inversions as well. In bar 51, there is the G major triad played in second inversion, but starting on the third. A particularly clever example is in bar 34. Here Miles plays a second-inversion E triad, but without the root. Since the E appears in the guitar part, Miles doesn't have to play every note for the E chord to be heard by the listener.

There are also seventh chord arpeggios, which add a bit more color than the straight triads. In measure 9, we have a B<sub>7</sub>m<sub>7</sub> arpeggio. In bar 42, there's an Fm<sub>7</sub> where Miles only plays the root, seventh and fifth, leaving the third out; as pointed out earlier, it is not necessary for the cornet to play every note in the chord.

Miles has an inventive way of using seventh chords and triads. Since chords are built in thirds, the 3-5-7 of a seventh chord actually forms another chord. So, triads can be played off of the third of a chord, producing a seventh chord but simultaneously sounding like a triad. We hear Miles use this technique in measures 7, 12 (with the seventh appearing on the downbeat of the next bar), 19, 27 and 39. Measure 27 is especially slick, as he starts with a natural, creating a Bm<sub>7</sub> arpeggio on the Gmaj<sub>7</sub>. In this case, the R-3-5-7 of the B minor is the 3-5-7-9 of the G.

# Saga



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## The stunning debut album by Brazilian jazz guitarist **Rodrigo Lima**

"...[An] ambitious debut album... *Saga* is a good introduction to a serious talent. [Producer] Arnaldo DeSouto has assembled an impressive group of musicians to help realize Lima's cinematic visions, including legends like Hermeto Pascoal and Hubert Laws, trombone virtuoso Raul de Souza, ace vibraphonist Mike Manieri, arranger Don Sebesky, singer Ithamara Koorax and Anat Cohen on both clarinet and tenor sax. Lima employs a diverse palette of Brazilian traditional and jazz styles. It's also exciting to hear new work by Pascoal, the grand old man from Brazilian jazz... The dreamy "Flying Waltz" with a gorgeous string arrangement by Sebesky, becomes a canvas for Hubert Laws' breathtaking legato runs."

Allen Morrison, *DownBeat*

"*Saga* is an astonishing first release by Lima showcasing his extraordinary musicianship and sweeping passion... Captured on *Saga* is Brazil's rich tradition of lyrical, playful melodies matured with a shaker of intricate and seductive rhythms... the album is a tribute, of sorts, to CTT's sultry Brazilian jazz recordings of the 1970s, but with contemporary twists. Even the cover is by photographer Pete Turner... I can't wait to tell Creed Taylor."

Marc Myers, *JazzWax*

"...features a killer studio band... elegant, sophisticated arrangements that extend the reach of jazz itself. Lima's innovative playing is rivaled only by his wide-angle compositional and arranging skills... Its highlight is "Brahms," a 20-minute jam based on the composer's third symphony. Lima's playing is jaw-dropping in phrasing, fluidity, and eloquence; he breezes through postbop, flamenco, and classical, making it a contemporary jazz classic. Lima's taste and maestro-like abilities, combined with DeSouto's veteran experience, puts *Saga* in a class by itself. This is an expansive yet utterly welcoming offering that sounds more adventurous with repeated listening. It is holistic in conception and visionary in articulation."

Thom Jurek, *All Music Guide*

"... Nothing he does is forced or exaggerated, or overly mannered – all seem effortlessly and intuitively right. The string sound is lucid and the often chamber sound of the ensemble add warmth to the music."

"The always-sensitive guitarist brings his velvety sound to the small and larger ensembles that accompany him... Mr. Lima is warmly spontaneous unleashing ardent melodies without fuss and he brings a huge range of colour overall."

Raul da Gama, *Latin Jazz Network*

0:50 B $\flat$ m7 Cm $^6$  G $\flat$  B $\flat$ m $^9$  C $\flat$ maj7 E $\flat$ m7 D $\flat$

9 B $\flat$ m7 Fm7 G $\flat$ maj $^9$  Fm7 G $\flat$ maj $^9$  Amaj7+ A7+( $\flat$ 9)

16 Cm7( $\flat$ 5) F7 B $\flat$ m7 E $\flat$ m7 Gmaj7 Dmaj7 D $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ m $^9$

23 G $\flat$  A $\flat$ 9 E E $\flat$ m7 Gmaj7 Dmaj7 D $\flat$ 7

30 A $\flat$ m $^9$  G $\flat$  A $\flat$ 9 E B $\flat$ m7 Cm $^6$  G $\flat$

37 D $\flat$ maj $^9$  C $\flat$ maj7 E $\flat$ m7 D $\flat$  B $\flat$ m7 Fm7 G $\flat$ maj $^9$

44 Fm7 G $\flat$ maj $^9$  Amaj7+ A7+( $\flat$ 9) Cm7( $\flat$ 5) F7 B $\flat$ m7 E $\flat$ m7

51 Gmaj7 Dmaj7 D $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ m $^9$  G $\flat$  A $\flat$ 9 E

58 E $\flat$ m7 Gmaj7 Dmaj7 D $\flat$ 7

62 A $\flat$ m $^9$  G $\flat$  A $\flat$ 9 E B $\flat$ m7

But it's not just arpeggios Miles uses to bring out the sound of the harmonies. Adding a couple of notes to a triad produces pentatonic scales, which are a great way to fill out the sound of an arpeggio and make it a bit more melodic, while still retaining the underlying chord sound. By adding the flat seventh and the fourth to a minor triad, we get the minor pentatonic scale, which is heard on the B $\flat$ m7 chord in bar 17. However, on the Dmaj7 appearing in bars 28 and 60, Miles also plays this sound, in both cases descending through an F# minor pentatonic, with both the seventh and fourth added to the F# minor triad. This is very inventive, as the notes of F# minor pentatonic (F#, A, B, C#, E) are the third, fifth, sixth, seventh and ninth of D major. By choosing this scale on the Dmaj7, he is giving us more of the color tones for this chord.

There are also modes and scale fragments. In fact, Miles kicks off this solo with one, playing a B $\flat$  aeolian from the fifth to the root. This makes a nice resolution to the B $\flat$ m7. Measures 36–37 present this idea backwards, going down from the

fifth of D $\flat$  ionian to the root (D $\flat$  being the relative major of B $\flat$ m, this is actually the same scale). We also hear a descending C locrian in bar 48, also going from fifth (in this case, flat fifth) to root. In all these examples, the modes used are ones that fit the chord sound.

The previous bar (47) gives us a bit more spice, with Miles playing what at first appears to be a descending B $\flat$  major scale over an A7+( $\flat$ 9). Notice how this provides the flat ninth, root, flat seventh and raised fifth while still retaining the quality of a simple scale. After this, Miles drops down to the third of A (C#), which, if thought of as D $\flat$ , makes this a B $\flat$  melodic minor. Playing a melodic minor a half step up is a great way to bring out the color of an altered dominant.

I've restricted this analysis to lines occurring within measures, but if you expand beyond bar lines, you may find other instances of the above elements, used in other ways. **DB**

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



## Best Brass e-Brass IV Trumpet

### *Electronically Enhanced Practice Mute*

The e-Brass IV Trumpet is a new practice mute (or whisper mute) from Japan-based Best Brass Corp. It maintains the functionality of a quiet, resistive practice mute while actually having built-in circuitry to amplify a trumpet and output its natural sound to headphones or an audio system. The e-Brass IV is the latest incarnation in the company's sound transformer mute series.

Best Brass has billed the e-Brass IV as “the world’s smallest and lightest e-mute.” Its small footprint does make it just a shade larger than a pixie mute, and even with two AA batteries, it weighs less than a metal straight mute. There are 3 inches of firm, tackified rubber surrounding the shaft that creates a nice, tight seal, even without the customary exhale into the bell.

When inserted, the mute extrudes about 1 inch from the edge of the bell. This is the housing for all of the controls. Aside from a small on/off switch, there are three jacks available. One is a standard headphone jack, and one is a line out to connect to an external speaker. There is also a line-in jack if you want to play along with your favorite “music minus one” recording from your smartphone or tablet. The volume and echo dials are also situated here. When inserted at a convenient angle, the player can easily adjust both dials with one hand while playing the horn with the other.

My first experience with the e-Brass IV was without the headphones, and subsequently I compared it to my Denis Wick practice mute. The e-mute was a bit more restrictive and did not resonate as much due to its plastic body. I did notice it was moderately softer than the metal practice mute. I quickly plugged in a decent pair of headphones, turned it on and played a few phrases. I advise you set the volume before you play, as the numbers on the dial are tiny and difficult to read.

The sound production was remarkable. As my ears registered the full sound of the horn, my chops tended to ignore the resistance, and playing felt quite natural. I listened intently as I moved the echo effect dial. At zero, the sound was natural but dry. Any air in my tone or imprecision with my attacks seemed disproportionately amplified. Increasing the echo to the maximum created an electronically induced atmosphere suitable for playing along with



'70s avant-garde rock recordings. I finally optimized the reverb to the point where it felt similar to playing in a small room with no carpeting or other sound-dampening materials. After playing a while, my chops noticed that not all registers behaved equally when playing at different intensity levels. F on top of the staff was flat when played soft, and F within the staff had to be lipped down to be in tune.

The compact e-Brass IV plays well and travels. It's very satisfying to hear a full brass sound when your decibel level is restricted—such as when family members may be working or sleeping—and it leads to more productive practice sessions. I would definitely recommend this new e-mute to the working trumpet professional.

—Dave Ruth

Ordering info: [bestbrass.jp](http://bestbrass.jp)

## Yamaha Custom CSVR Clarinet

### *Responsive, Flexible & Reliable*

Playing clarinet as a main instrument requires some flexibility on the part of the player as well as the instrument. Whether clarinet is your main axe, or you're a doubler who's frequently called upon to play demanding clarinet parts, it's always good to have choices, and clarinetists now have a wonderful new choice in Yamaha's Custom CSVR.

The Custom CSVR is available in B-flat and A versions. I play-tested a number of the B-flat models using different mouthpieces and reed setups to see how they would hold up in various real-world playing situations.

The Custom CSVR has a number of new features that help it consistently deliver the type of rich, warm, dark tones that professional players

and advancing students demand. These include improved keywork, a reconfigured bell and barrel, thicker silver key plating and leather pads throughout. An adjustable thumb rest allows for a customized setting for each individual player.

The Custom CSVR played well right out of the box with no adjustments. What first struck



me was the instrument's outstanding response and the projection. If you want the flexibility to use mouthpieces with larger tip openings and create a brighter sound, the Custom CSVR can accommodate. I tried a number of setups, including traditional classical mouthpieces for a darker, more resistant feel, as well as a large tip opening (0.115) for a jazz gig. The intonation, tone quality and response were ideal for both scenarios. With the larger mouthpiece in place, it was very free-blowing. I also tried the Yamaha 4C, 5C and Custom 5C (supplied) mouthpieces, all of which would be great either for students or more advanced players.

For consistency's sake, I used the supplied barrel. However, trying different barrels with the Custom CSVR would be interesting—something you might want to explore yourself.

The chalumeau register was totally responsive and full. In particular, the throat tones were clear, round and flute-like (which I prefer), without too much of an "airy" quality. A few specific fingerings on the clarinet I like to use as a test are the middle-register B-flat and the long high F. The trill-key B-flat was nice and clear, and in tune, and register-key B-flat was fine. The long high F was stable and felt solid at the attack.

I tried the Custom CSVR on a big band gig (as a double), in a small chamber accompanying a choir in a marble-floored church, and in the practice room. It was a pleasure to play and performed well in all settings. The feel of the keywork is very friendly and familiar—without any adjustment or special setup (as folks sometime feel is necessary). The action was solid, and the key heights, intonation and sensitivity/response were all consistent on the three models I tried.

One note to potential buyers: Some clarinet players and repair technicians like to have cork pads on the side trill keys and upper-joint pads. This may be something that a player might explore or at least be aware of as a possible modification, since I noticed the side E-flat key picking up, retaining some moisture and making some pad noise.

All in all, I was impressed with the Yamaha CRSV Custom. It is a very sharp-looking clarinet that plays and feels great. It's obvious that Yamaha took care and paid attention to the details in the design and production of this instrument—right down to the secure case closures, the high-quality case lining and the silver-plated mouthpiece cover and ligature that come included. All add to the luxuriousness and a feeling of security for the instrument. Clarinetists want their instruments to remain in top mechanical shape, hold their regulation and stay well protected. With a suggested retail price of \$4,200 for the B-flat model, it's good to know that your investment is secure.

If you're looking for a new clarinet, add it to your short list of possible contenders. —John Ruf

Ordering info: [usa.yamaha.com](http://usa.yamaha.com)



## DigiTech TRIO Virtual Band Creator

Players have been using DigiTech guitar effects for more than 30 years. The company's newest innovative pedal, the TRIO Band Creator, gives you a virtual backing band of bass and drums that quite literally follows your chord-progression input note for note with a few touches of the footswitch and knobs.

The TRIO is a smart "band in a box" that digitally learns any chord progressions and rhythmic feels that you "teach" it with a click of the footswitch. It generates appropriate bass and drum parts so you can perform, rehearse and improvise with its backing rhythm section or flesh out song sketches for composition and songwriting.

The TRIO provides seven music genres to choose from: blues, pop, alternative rock, rock, country, r&b and jazz. It's less of a stomp pedal and more of an integrated mini music workstation that sequences itself to your chord progression input to provide all the bass and drum backing you could want. The onboard bass and drum sounds are similar to digital tones you would get out of a competent keyboard or MIDI workstation.

Within each of the seven genres, you can select up to 12 different styles of backing to alter the feel. DigiTech left no stone unturned in providing complete song accompaniment with the TRIO—not only with the included comprehensive music genres, but also with its capability to recall up to three different song parts (e.g., verse structure, chorus, bridge, turnaround, etc.) that you can recall and interchange on the fly.

Independent bass and drum level knobs allow you to adjust the mix volume of the bass and drum parts, and a tempo knob provides the ability to change the rhythm backing from slow to fast. While all tempos and styles are based in standard 4/4 time, the TRIO does allow you to change to 3/4 and/or double- and half-time variants.

An effects button gives you the option of applying effects to your guitar that match the selected genre. The pre-programmed effects offer a bit of chorus, reverb and/or overdrive to simulate typical guitar tones employed for power pop, jazz combo, country shuffle, driving rock edge or overdriven blues tones. The TRIO includes dedicated quarter-inch amplifier and mixer outputs, and it also includes a separate headphone output with volume control.

The learning curve for using the TRIO pedal is as simple as plugging in, dialing in a genre and one of the 12 song styles for that genre, and then teaching your chord progression to your "band mates." Then, it's just a matter of pressing the stomp button to alternate between "learn" and "play" modes. An indicator light goes red and blinks rapidly to show you that the pedal is ready to record your input—that's your opportunity to teach the bass and drums backing by playing a chord progression in the time and feel you want. Click the stomp button again, and the bass and



drums join in immediately in the genre and style you've chosen.

One great feature of the TRIO is that it does not discriminate against your chord changes from genre to genre. If you put in a three-chord, 12-bar blues progression but decide you want to hear it in an r&b, pop, country or jazz style, you can simply switch the genre on the fly. The pedal adjusts in real time to change the way it plays the rhythm.

The TRIO provides songwriters with a very simple and easy way to hear different rhythm backings to flesh out song structure or chord progression ideas. For solo gigs, setting up the TRIO at your feet gives you bass and drums that won't ever miss a beat. An optional DigiTech FS3X footswitch (sold separately) provides hands-free control of genres and styles.

The TRIO is a great rehearsal tool for guitarists at all levels. Instead of playing along to pre-recorded songs or taking the time to set up a rhythm backing on a DAW or pedal looper, you simply "teach" the TRIO the chord progression, dial in the genre, tempo and style you want, add some effect to your guitar, and you are off and running to better chops. You can also use it to practice basic comping techniques and work out chord voicings.

Finally, the days of slowing down recordings, looping or laying down rhythm tracks for woodshedding purposes are over. With the TRIO, you have your own virtual bass and drum players ready and willing to give you whatever you want so you can wail to your heart's desire.

—John LaMantia

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



## 1. Hybrid Reed

Japanese manufacturer Forestone has introduced the Hinoki, an unfiled hybrid reed geared toward players who desire a warmer, more earthy tone. All Forestone reeds are precision injection-molded from non-toxic polypropylene resin combined with real cane bamboo. Hinoki reeds are currently available for alto and tenor saxophone and clarinet. **More info:** [forestone-japan.com](http://forestone-japan.com)

## 2. Stroke of Power

Inspired by drummer Steve Smith, Remo's Powerstroke 3 Black Dot bass drumhead features a thin underlay ring at the outer edge to subtly dampen unwanted overtones. The added 5-mil bottom Black Dot provides deeper low tones, focused attack and increased durability. The clear and coated drumheads are available in 18-, 20-, 22-, 24- and 26-inch sizes. **More info:** [remo.com](http://remo.com)

## 3. Pro Studio Headphones

AKG's K553 Pro closed-back studio headphones combine the noise-isolating qualities of closed-back headphones and the spacious, multi-dimensional sound of an open-back design. They feature 50mm drivers for accurate bass response, plus extra-large soft ear pads and a lightweight over-ear design. **More info:** [akg.com](http://akg.com)

## 4. Bassbone Updated

Radial Engineering has introduced the Bassbone V2, a second-generation Bassbone that features a dedicated effects loop, a combination power booster/mute footswitch and piezo-optimized input for upright bass. The two-channel bass control center has a main output used to feed the stage amp, while a built-in Radial DI box connects to the PA system or recording workstation. **More info:** [radialeng.com](http://radialeng.com)


## 5. Inspiration Strikes

Wood Violins has debuted the SVX series, the latest update to the company's Stingray line of electric violins. The SVX4 and SVX5 feature lightweight bodies combined with a Wood Tru-Tone pickup for enhanced dynamics, warmth and clarity. **More info:** [woodviolins.com](http://woodviolins.com)

## 6. Phone Protection

Anvil Cases has created a protective case for the iPhone that has the rugged, durable look of a classic touring road case. Featuring a rigid CNC aluminum frame and polycarbonate back, the Heritage Case is available in silver or black versions. **More info:** [anvillifestyle.com](http://anvillifestyle.com)





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Ron Miles, director of jazz studies at Metropolitan State University of Denver, conducts the school's jazz orchestra at a 2014 concert on campus.

## MSU Denver Embraces Expansive Approach

**HAVING TAUGHT AT METROPOLITAN** State University of Denver since 1998, trumpeter and cornetist Ron Miles established his dream program last year: a bachelor of music degree with a performance concentration in jazz and American improvised music.

"It's been a long process, but even our classical faculty came to realize this had to happen," said Miles, who is the director of the university's jazz studies department. "We wanted to have the most effective education for the modern improvising musician. So we've included not only the standard collegiate jazz curriculum and repertoire, but also American folk repertoire and traditions of improvising in American folk music."

Earning the degree involves courses in performance, music history and music theory, plus participation in numerous ensembles and recitals. Among the recommended courses for graduating in eight semesters are jazz composition and arranging, basic conducting, traditional American improvised styles and musics of the world.

To date, 35 students have enrolled. Miles intends to keep registration limited to that size: "We want to be sure we maintain the appropriate skill level of people coming into and graduating from the program. We're looking for students who have a certain level of musical accomplishment."

In addition to his esteemed career in jazz education, Miles is very active as a recording and touring artist. On his latest album, *Circuit Rider* (Enja/Yellowbird), he plays cornet in a trio with guitarist Bill Frisell and drummer Brian Blade.

Miles is directly engaged in the teaching efforts at MSU Denver, which was founded in 1965. He offers lessons to everyone regardless of his or her main instrument, and expects clarinet-

ist Don Byron—who begins work as a full-time faculty member in August—will do the same.

Students in the program not only study an array of musical genres, they also perform them.

"Our combos are not style-specific," Miles said. "They tackle everything from Pop Staples' tunes to D'Angelo—in addition to Jelly Roll Morton. Nothing is cut off. We want our students to feel they're part of a great tradition, which all this music belongs to."

This broad approach also incorporates a solid foundation in jazz fundamentals, including an emphasis on current artists.

"It's common practice to teach Basie-style big band music and mainstream jazz of the 1950s, but we extend the curriculum into the '60s, the AACM, the 1970s and so on," Miles explained. "Every concert features something by Mary Lou Williams and music by living composers. Maria Schneider, Wayne Horvitz, Marshall Allen from the Sun Ra Arkestra and Wynton Marsalis have all visited [the campus]."

Ashlee Varner—a singer, pianist and composer who teaches courses in jazz voice and jazz chamber music—feels that graduates of the program are equipped to succeed in the real world.

"Jazz, r&b and bluesgrass that I grew up hearing but never performed—that's the emphasis here," Varner said. "But while we want students to learn all that, Ron emphasizes that they should be creative, using their musicianship to make something of their own. We're not creating cookie-cutter musicians; the aim is to develop versatile and successful artists. I love the mix of being able to get the jazz core but also the other stuff you may get hired to play after you leave school."

—Howard Mandel



Dianne Reeves sings at The Juilliard School on May 22.

**Juilliard Degree:** Singer Dianne Reeves received an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Juilliard at the school's 110th commencement ceremony on May 22. Reeves surprised the audience at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall by joining a student jazz combo in performing a heartfelt rendition of Hoagy Carmichael's "Skylark."

[juilliard.edu](http://juilliard.edu)

**'Duking' It Out:** American Music Program (Portland, Oregon) was named the first-place winner in the 20th Anniversary Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival, which took place at New York's Frederick P. Rose Hall on May 9. The second-place winner was Tucson Jazz Institute (Tucson, Arizona), and third-place honors went to Lexington High School (Lexington, Massachusetts). Dillard Center for the Arts (Fort Lauderdale, Florida) received an Honorable Mention. Participating high school jazz bands were immersed in three days of mentoring, jam sessions and workshops. The event culminated in a performance of Duke Ellington's music by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, whose members served as mentors for the finalist bands.

[wyntonmarsalis.org](http://wyntonmarsalis.org)

**Afro-Cuban Evolution:** Drummer Ignacio Berroa has made his live presentation "Afro-Cuban Jazz and Beyond" available to colleges, universities and cultural centers. The audio-visual teaching program shows the evolution of Afro-Cuban music and its fusion with jazz. Berroa, whose father and grandfather played an integral part in the development of Cuban music, presents a historical view of the circumstances involved in the development of Afro-Cuban music, beginning with the arrival of African slaves in Cuba, the Caribbean, the United States and Brazil. The presentation culminates by engaging students in performance and showing them how to incorporate Afro-Cuban rhythms into jazz.

[codesdrummusic@gmail.com](mailto:codesdrummusic@gmail.com)

**Jerry Kozić Scholarship:** Pennsylvania Jazz Collective has announced the Jerry Kozić Memorial Scholarship fund. Pianist/vocalist Kozić, who died in the Ross Township shooting of Aug. 5, 2013, was a multifaceted performer and music industry professional. The scholarship fund will be used to help student jazz musicians attend regional summer youth jazz camps and to offer assistance for local jazz students to take lessons with distinguished Pennsylvania jazz artists.

[pajazzcollective.org](http://pajazzcollective.org)



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## Jaleel Shaw

Alto and soprano saxophonist Jaleel Shaw's c.v. includes a nine-year run with drum grandmaster Roy Haynes as well as studio and road work with trumpeter Tom Harrell. The most recent of Shaw's three leader albums is *The Soundtrack Of Things To Come* (Changu). The Philadelphia native topped the category Rising Star—Alto Saxophone in the 2014 DownBeat Critics Poll.

### Steve Coleman and the Council of Balance

"Tempest" (*Synovial Joints*, Pi Recordings, 2015) Coleman, alto saxophone; Kristin Lee, violin; Chris Otto, viola; Jay Campbell, cello; Tim Albright, trombone; Jonathan Finlayson, Jeff Missal, trumpets; Barry Crawford, flute; Rane Moore, clarinet; David Bryant, piano; Marcus Gilmore, drums; Alex Lipowski, Mauricio Herrera, percussion; Greg Chudzik, bass.

Steve Coleman. I've never heard Steve with strings before. The strings made me think of Greg Osby's album *Symbols Of Light*, but I recognized Steve when he started playing. I'm used to Steve doing more uptempo songs, things with grooving beats with some odd-metered thing where he breaks up his phrases. So it blows me away to hear him flow over this basically rubato, free piece. It shows me how beautiful his sound is; that dark, clear sound is what drew me to him initially. It reminds me a lot of Charlie Parker.

### Jim Snidero

"Las Vegas Tango" (*Main Street*, Savant, 2015) Snidero, alto saxophone; Fabian Almazan, piano; Linda Oh, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

The way the melody was played reminded me of Bobby Watson; it sounded like something Bobby would write. After that abstract piano intro, I was surprised it went into a minor blues. The band sounded very mature, like an older group, not young kids playing a minor blues—maybe people in their mid-to-late fifties.

### Tineke Postma/Greg Osby

"Body And Soul" (*Sonic Halo*, Challenge, 2014) Osby, alto saxophone; Postma, alto and soprano saxophones; Matt Mitchell, piano; Linda Oh, bass; Dan Weiss, drums.

Greg Osby. "Body And Soul." It has to be a new recording, because the sound is darker than I know Greg's to be, with less vibrato. I like it. Is this Tineke and Greg? [after] I was hoping to hear more interweaving between them; it sounded free with Greg floating over it, and she was providing ditones, dealing with roots and chord tones.

### Gary Bartz

"Holiday For Strings" (*Shadows*, Timeless, 1991) Bartz, alto saxophone; Benny Green, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Victor Lewis, drums.

It sounded like a Broadway song with Coltrane changes thrown in. I'm linking it with someone who was around during the mid-to-late '60s into the '70s who was dealing with bebop and hearing what Trane was doing. That growl is not the sound a lot of bebop saxophonists go for, though. The rhythm section was amazing. I was going to say Mulgrew Miller, but he didn't go into Mulgrewisms. The drummer was very clean. At first, I thought Lewis Nash, but the tuning is different. [after] My mom had [recordings by Bartz's group] Ntu Troop when I was a kid, so I know those things and Gary's playing with McCoy more than him playing bebop. But I should have known from the Coltrane changes and that growl.

### Andrew Cyrille/Anthony Braxton

"Water, Water, Water" (*Duo Palindrome, Vol. 2*, Intakt, 2004) Cyrille, drums; Braxton, soprano saxophone.

It's very Afrocentric. Roscoe Mitchell? It's someone out of Chicago. I say Chicago because I know it's not someone from Philly, where I grew up in an Afrocentric environment, hearing cats like Byard Lancaster, Marshall Allen, Rufus Harley. Chicago was the other scene that I felt approached this kind of playing. Joseph Jarman? I love it—the earthy African vibe, the nasal Middle Eastern sound, with quarter-tones in between the notes. [after] I'd always associated Braxton with extremely cerebral music.



### Miguel Zenón

"Perfume de Gardenias" (*Alma Adentro: The Puerto Rican Songbook*, Marsalis Music, 2011) Zenón, alto saxophone; Luis Perdomo, piano; Hans Glawischnig, bass; Henry Cole, drums; woodwinds and brass ensemble; Guillermo Klein, conductor and arranger.

Miguel Zenón. We go back to Berklee. Playing with Miguel is like recognizing the voice of your brother or your friend. That opening excerpt sounds composed, almost like a classical etude. Is this Miguel's recording? It doesn't sound like one of his compositions, and doesn't have much of a Latin flavor. Miguel has a strong vibrato. When I hear that, I can identify him easily. His ideas and technique are very clean. What he's done with odd meters and layering is amazing. You hear the Bird influence and a little of Steve Coleman's thing, but at the end, it's definitely Miguel Zenón.

### Roy Haynes

"I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" (*Cymbalism*, New Jazz/Original Jazz Classics, rec'd 1963/reissued 2002) Haynes, drums; Frank Strozier, alto saxophone; Ronnie Matthews, piano; Larry Ridley, bass.

That's Roy. *Cymbalism*. Roy sometimes talks about Trane and Bird, how he could play anything behind them and they would play anything on top of what he was doing. He's a little looser now than he was on this, where he's playing the hi-hat on 2 and 4—not that this feel isn't loose, too. When I first started playing with Roy, he'd drop bombs on places that weren't 1, but I'd think it was and so would the rhythm section. Roy told us: "Don't follow me; I'm not your metronome; I'm not here to give the time; I'm here to accent. You've got to be able to stand on your own." He interacts best with phrases. It's great to hear Frank Strozier play with Roy here, because Frank has that strong sense of time, too. I know Frank from the Booker Little records and from his [1960] album *Cool, Calm And Collected*. I always dug him. **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 track using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.





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