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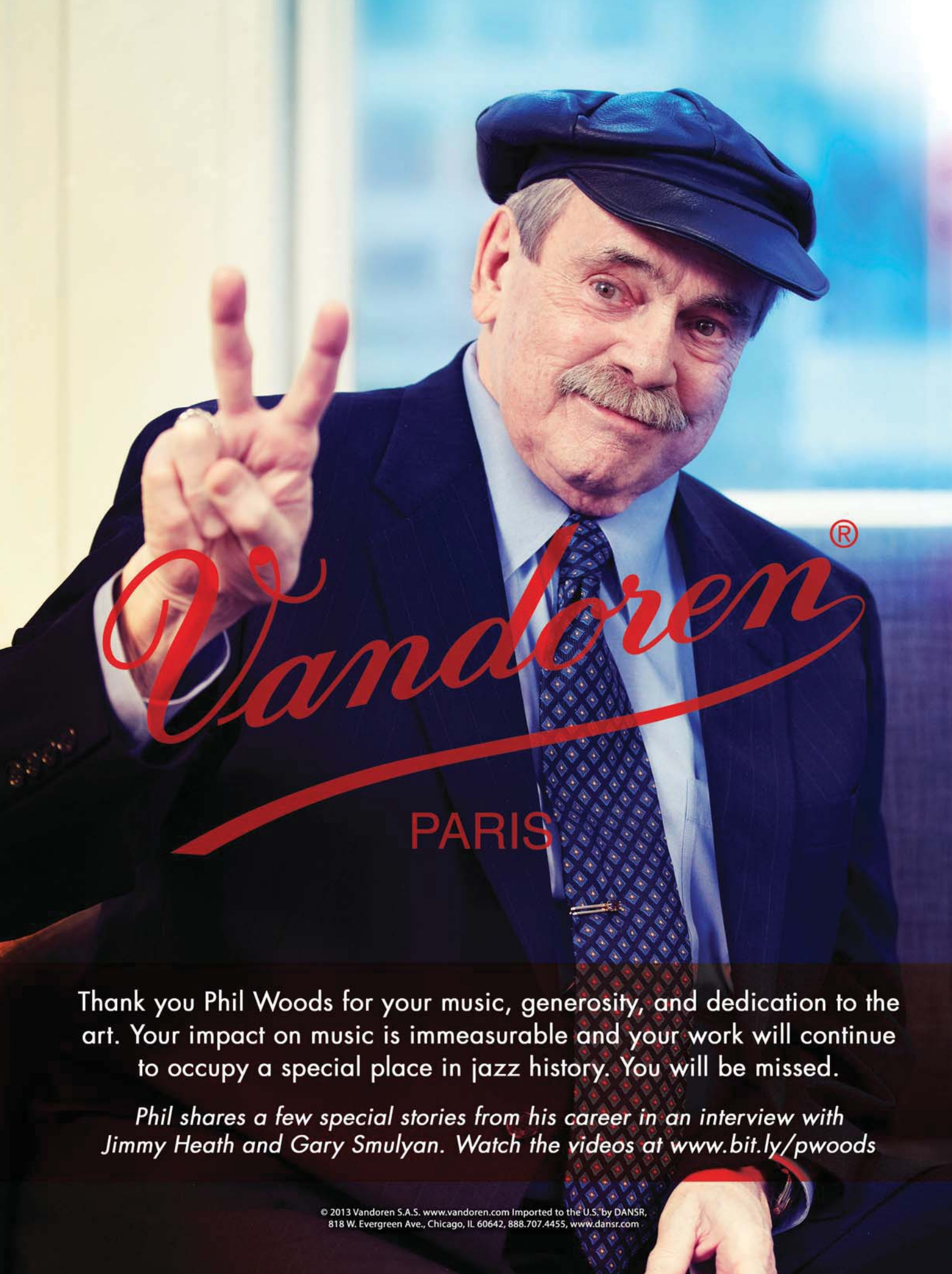


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DECEMBER 2015

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80th
READERS
POLL

BY MICHAEL BOURNE

The 18-time Grammy winner enters the DownBeat Hall of Fame and is named Male Vocalist of the Year in our 80th Annual Readers Poll.



The musicians on DownBeat Hall of Famer Tony Bennett's new album are Kenny Washington (left), Peter Washington, Bill Charlap and Renee Rosnes.

Cover photo of Tony Bennett shot by Jimmy & Dena Katz in New York City

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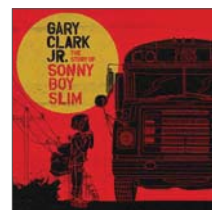
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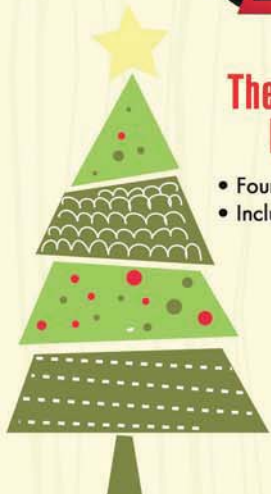
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Disc 3: Joe Castro's Jam Sessions: Just Joe – Two sessions from February 1956 provide a look at Castro's own playing with the illustrious lineup of trombonist Sonny Tuitt, saxophonists Zoot Sims and Lucky Thompson, bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Ron Jefferson. Recorded at Duke Farms in New Jersey.

Disc 4: Joe Castro: Feeling the Blues – The Quartet Sessions – Castro leads his tremendous working quartet of saxophonist Teddy Edwards, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Billy Higgins at Falcon Lair in January 1959.

Disc 5: Joe Castro Big Band – Reflection – Initially recorded for Castro's own Clover label but never released. The band performs pieces by Castro and friends Leroy Vinnegar and Teddy Edwards with aplomb and features some of the West Coast's most legendary musicians, including Al Porcino, Conte Candoli, Frank Rosolino, Bob Cooper and Stan Levey.

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Two Friends United Forever

FRANK SINATRA WAS TONY BENNETT'S BEST FRIEND. The two are forever linked. It is a beautiful bit of kismet that this issue, which welcomes Tony Bennett into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, also celebrates the centennial of Francis Albert Sinatra (born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on Dec. 12, 1915).



Frank Sinatra at the Chicago Theatre, March 19, 1988

Sinatra was elected into the Hall of Fame via the 1998 DownBeat Readers Poll. He had died earlier that year, on May 14, so he wasn't around to relish the honor. But that's not the case for the still youthful, 89-year-old Bennett. He enters the Hall of Fame during a year in which he has wowed audiences on tour and released a brilliant album with Bill Charlap, *The Silver Lining*, which is the subject of a 5-star review on page 66.

Bennett also topped the Male Vocalist category in this year's Readers Poll, a validation that he remains an active, thoughtful musician with plenty to say.

The numerous connections between Sinatra and Bennett are well-known to fans. Both singers mined musical gold from the Great American Songbook. Both remained elite performers for several decades. Both enjoyed late-career commercial success with duet albums recorded with younger, high-profile collaborators. Not coincidentally, the two singers deeply admired each another.

In a cover story for the April 23, 1965, issue of Life magazine, Sinatra said, "For my money Tony Bennett is the best singer in the business. ... [He] gets across what the composer had in mind, and probably a little more."

Bennett has continuously shown his respect to Sinatra, who aided him early in his career (as he tells journalist Michael Bourne in our fascinating cover story). In 1992, Bennett released the Sinatra tribute album *Perfectly Frank*. In the years since Sinatra passed, Bennett has done much to keep the flame burning. His most important tribute was founding the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, a public high school in Queens.

Sinatra and Bennett are also intertwined because they recorded some of the same tunes. Sinatra cut a classic, swingin' version of the Jerome Kern/Dorothy Fields song "The Way You Look Tonight" on Jan. 27, 1964, working with arranger Nelson Riddle. If you want to hear an example of how Bennett's artistry has deepened but remained fully intact, check out the version of "The Way You Look Tonight" that appears on *The Silver Lining*. Accompanied only by Charlap, Bennett offers a slow, nuanced, intimate rendition for the ages. When he gets to the line about "that laugh that wrinkles your nose," he inserts a subtle chuckle in his delivery. Classic. Bennett has given us another jewel to add to the huge pile of treasures he has given us for more than 60 years.

Bennett perpetually returns to the Great American Songbook because he believes those are the best songs ever composed. In the interview with Bourne, Bennett explains how his mother's work ethic has influenced his choice of material: "I decided I would never do an unintelligent song just to get a hit record. I would always do quality. That's what my mother taught me."

As Bennett enters the DownBeat Hall of Fame, his mother is smiling down from above, beaming with pride. She's happy. She's probably sharing a joke or two with Sinatra.



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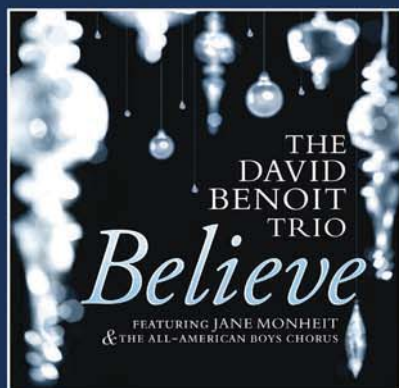
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Bravo for John Ephland's heartfelt, bursting-with-Bobness piece on the late Bob Belden ("A Jazz Raconteur's Parting Words," October). "I wanna know what it really feels like when you get possessed with this music," says this beautiful man, who should have lived and created until he was 108. After the first paragraph, I stopped to put on Mr. Belden's extravagantly creative album *Black Dahlia* (Blue Note, 2001).

Do yourselves a favor: Get a copy of this or any (or all!) of Mr. Belden's albums today. Enrich your lives the way this good man enriched our music for so many years.

MICK CARLON
CENTERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS



Bob Belden

Swaying Schneider

I enjoyed the recent article on Maria Schneider very much ("Natural Wonder," August). She gets high ratings every year in the DownBeat polls for the categories Composer and Arranger. I would like to add another aspect of her "natural wonders": The way she communicates with the members of her orchestra is fantastic.

A few years ago, I had the privilege of sitting up close during her concert at the North Sea Jazz Festival, and her body language was wonderful to observe. She loves the band, and she shows it in a very emotional way.

This is also visible in a 2004 performance of "Three Romances: Choro Dançado" (from her album *Concert In The Garden*) that has been posted on YouTube.

WIM VAN DOKKUM
W.DOKKUM@PLANET.NL

Praising Beach

The article in your June issue about Doug Beach's achievements at Elmhurst College made me very happy (DownBeat Jazz Education Achievement Award: "Focused on Repertoire, Committed to Outreach"). For nearly 40 years, Beach's accomplishments have been the result of brains, enthusiasm and hard work. His achievements as the director of Elmhurst's Jazz Studies program endure while I witness other so-called "educators" continuing to tear down. Very few institutions can measure up to Elmhurst's quality.

KEITH CHARLES EDWARDS
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK



Less Free-Jazz, Please

I've been a DownBeat subscriber since the 1970s. I have to say that I notice a distinct bias with your reviewers toward free-jazz. If a review gets 4½ or 5 stars it's almost certain to be some kind of free-jazz release. Wind instruments that squeak, squawk, shriek and bark or piano playing that sounds like the removalists have dropped the instrument down a long flight of stairs is not my idea of music.

I'm not a musician so I don't know if this stuff is hard to play, but it's certainly hard to listen to. I wonder why this stuff is so admired by your reviewers. Is it because they are so jaded from listening to so much music, or is it some kind of snobbery? I have really tried over the years to find the attraction but have failed. For me it seems to be dissonance and chaos masquerading as music.

TONY MEYER-GLEAVES
QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Corrections

- In the November issue, the review of author Sanford Josephson's *Jeru's Journey* (Hal Leonard) contained errors. Thor Raxlen directed the documentary *Listen: Gerry Mulligan*. Miles Davis and Quincy Jones performed Gil Evans' arrangements at the 1991 Montreux Jazz Festival.
- In the November issue, an item in the School Notes column did not list the correct website for The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York City: newschool.edu/jazz.

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

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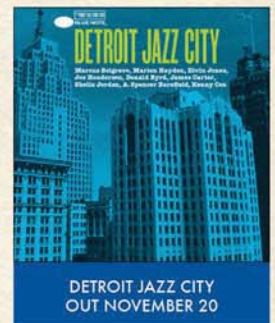
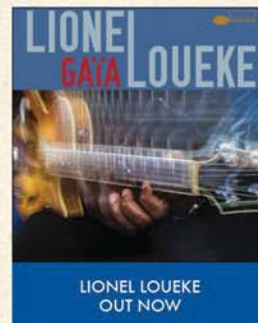
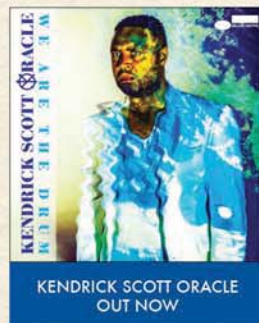
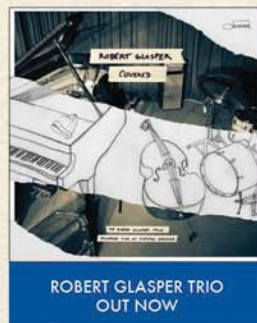
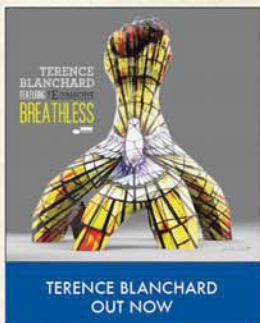
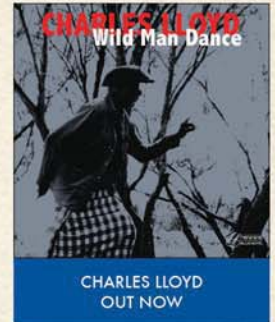
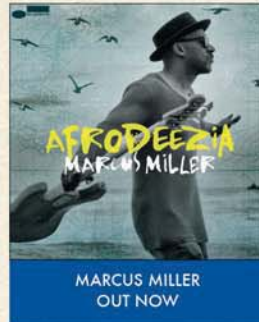
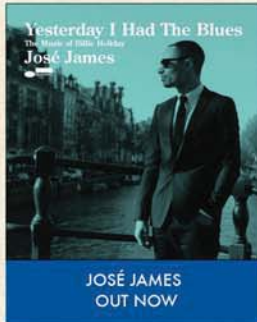
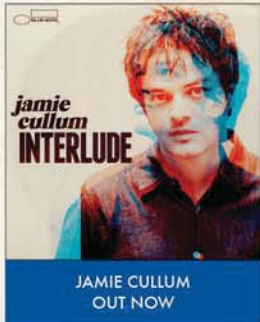


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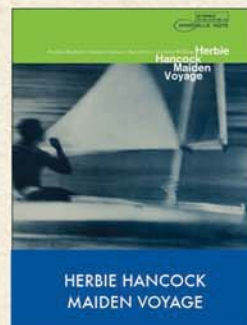
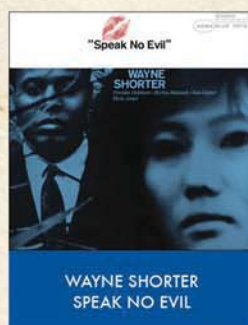
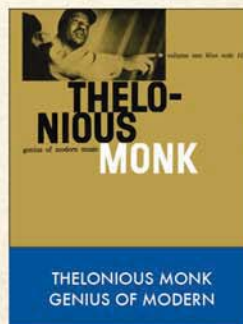
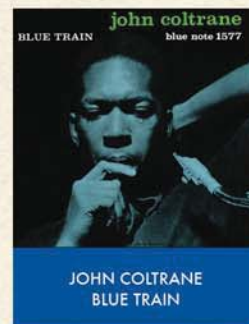
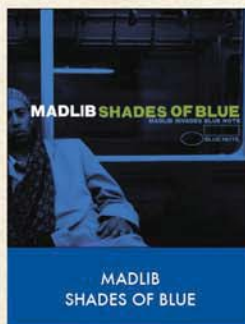




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Beat

Phil Woods (1931–2015)



Remembering Phil Woods

Phil Woods, the eminent alto saxophonist-composer, died on Sept. 28 in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, of complications from emphysema. He was 83.

Among Woods' many accolades were four Grammy Awards and being honored as an NEA Jazz Master in 2007. He appeared on the cover of *DownBeat* six times during his lengthy career, most recently for the February 2012 issue.

Philip Wells Woods was born on Nov. 2, 1931, in what he described in his unpublished mem-

oir, *My Life In E-Flat*, as a lower-middle-class neighborhood in Springfield, Massachusetts. An uncle bequeathed him a saxophone, and Woods began taking lessons at 12, with a local teacher named Harvey LaRose, who, Woods said in 2004, "gave me jazz improv lessons that I've never seen equaled ... and turned me into a walking *Real Book*." Within several years he was playing locally, with such teenage associates—and future jazz luminaries—as vibraphonist Teddy Charles, drummer Joe Morello, guitarist Sal Salvador and

pianist Hal Serrra.

During the summer of 1947, before Woods' senior year of high school, he and Serra started making "field trips" to New York for lessons with Lennie Tristano. After graduating high school, he spent a year in Springfield assimilating Tristano's pedagogy, while holding a five-nights-a-week gig at a local Elks club, then joined Salvador and Serra in their New York apartment midway through 1949. After a summer of courses at Manhattan School of Music, he matriculated at Juilliard as

a clarinet major. In a 2007 conversation, Woods described the milieu he had entered: "I'm the first generation that not only learned at the feet of the masters, but also at the conservatory. The war was over, and the arts were exploding in Manhattan, changing the world. Ussachevsky was doing the first *musique concrete* and the taped experiments, and John Cage was talking, and Dylan Thomas was writing, and Allan Ginsberg was howling, and Pollock was drippin' and boppin', and Leonard Bernstein and *film noir*. ... It was like a great sigh of peace. We're not killing each other; now let's create. Jazz had a lot to do with that."

While immersing himself in the European canon, Woods jammed extensively, paying the rent with club dates and dance band gigs (most notably with Charlie Barnet). In 1954, he took a steady gig at a strip joint on Sheridan Square with drummer Nick Stabulas and bassist Teddy Kotick, who joined him for his debut leader recording on Prestige that October, and on three of the five subsequent sessions he made for the label through July 1957.

Toward the end of 1954, Woods began playing regularly at Birdland in a Monday night band led by drummer Jim Chapin and a big band led by Neal Hefti. In 1956, Birdland proprietor Morris Levy hired Woods for a 10-week "Birdland All-Stars" tour as an opening act (with Al Cohn, Kenny Dorham and Conte Candoli) for a lineup that included the Count Basie Orchestra, Sarah Vaughan, Lester Young and Bud Powell. Quincy Jones heard him, and retained his services as lead alto saxophonist for the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band on Gillespie's first international State Department tour. Woods left Gillespie in the spring of 1957, started a popular two-alto combo with Gene Quill, and began a romance with Chan Parker, Charlie Parker's widow. They married and settled in New Hope, Pennsylvania.

Over the next decade, Woods became New York's first-call studio alto saxophonist, a function he fulfilled on perhaps a thousand dates, while also uncorking memorable solos on recordings by the likes of Jones, Oliver Nelson, Gary McFarland, Gil Evans, John Lewis, Benny Carter, George Russell, Clark Terry, Thelonious Monk and Benny Goodman, with whom he toured Russia in 1962.

"I was a fine musician," Woods said in 2007. "I was the first-generation jazzier that actually went through the conservatory. The music became more complicated, and it required a better level of musicianship from the section players. Writers like Gil and Quincy, John Carisi, Billy Byers, Al Cohn, Elliot Lawrence, Manny Albam and Bill Potts had to get younger players, because the older guys were not doing justice to the new bebop time-feel. I was well-equipped to handle all that."

Busy as he was, Woods grew weary of jingle dates and New York's tamped-down hardcore jazz scene, and was discouraged by the demise of Ramblerny Camp For the Performing Arts, where, between 1964 and 1967, he taught students like Michael Brecker, Steve Grossman and Richie Cole. He, Chan and their four children transplanted to Europe in May 1968, and settled in France, during the student revolution. There, Woods formed the European Rhythm Machine, a dynamic quartet with either George Gruntz or



European Rhythm Machine: Daniel Humair (left), George Gruntz, Woods and Henri Texier

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES



Woods' commitment to jazz education and mentorship is illustrated by this jazz camp photo from DownBeat's Sept. 21, 1967, issue.

JAMES HOLT/DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

Gordon Beck on piano, Henri Texier on bass and Daniel Humair on drums. With ERM, Woods received his first invitation to play the Newport Jazz Festival as a leader in 1969. "We were a hot band," Woods remarked. "I sounded like I was let out of jail. The Europeans were much more aware of development in music than American musicians at that point. You were expected to be an artist and to experiment."

ERM worked frequently in Europe until 1972, when Woods brought his family back to the U.S. They settled in Los Angeles, where Woods estimated that he earned \$3,000 during their ten-month residence. Chan moved the family back to France in 1973, and their marriage disintegrated. Not long thereafter, Woods met Jill Goodwin, who would be his companion and wife for the remainder of his life. In October 1973, they decided to drive east together and make a fresh start. A few months later, he made the album *Musique Du Bois*

with pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Alan Dawson.

"I brought in demanding material, there was no rehearsal time to refine it, and the results, although damned good, were disappointing from my perspective," Woods wrote in *My Life In E-Flat*. "I was hearing more. It wasn't so much the creative improvising side of it, but locking up with what the rhythm section is doing. Since high school I was involved with development, using thematic material in other shapes as the coda, or a departure for a shout chorus, or using a motif as background material to impart an organic wholeness to the tune. The intention is not just to use it as frosting, or, as the French so nicely put it, the *remplissage*, which is the pretty stuff on top, while neglecting the meat and potatoes. This way the meat and the potatoes and the frosting all make organic sense. ... I missed the interplay of a working band that could develop new arrangements



and contribute some original compositions, a well-rehearsed unit that could get the music off the paper and into the air—a real ensemble sound instead of passing out chord symbols.”

After that session, Woods approached his prospective brother-in-law, drummer Bill Goodwin Jr., about forming precisely such a band, and the Phil Woods Quartet—with bassist Steve Gilmore and pianist Mike Melillo—was born. In 1976, augmented by guitarist Harry Leahey, they recorded the in-club double album *Live At The Showboat*, which Time magazine designated as one of the year’s five best recordings, encompassing all genres, and earned the first of Woods’ three Grammy Awards for Instrumental Jazz Performance. In 1977, Woods recorded perhaps his most famous solo on Billy Joel’s “Just The Way You Are.”

The Phil Woods Quartet ascended, as Goodwin put it, “to the top echelon of jazz attractions.” The group’s palette broadened after pianist Hal Galper replaced Melillo in 1980; the addition of trumpeter Tom Harrell in 1983 further expanded its possibilities. Harrell remained until 1990, replaced by trombonist Hal Crook, who was followed in early 1992 by trumpeter Brian Lynch, who played alongside Woods until the group’s final performance on the Jazz Cruise in January 2015. After Galper, the piano chair was filled, respectively, by Jim McNeely, Bill Charlap and Bill Mays.

“I don’t hire instruments, I hire *people*,” Woods said in 2007. “I need a cat to be able to make an arrangement right on the spot by just saying, ‘OK, on the bridge I’m coming off the plus-V, you come off the plus-V, we’ll get on chromatic for eight bars’—*bap*, and there you are. My band sight-reads on concerts better than most bands sound when they rehearse for a week. We do a lot of neglected works of the American Songbook and try to put a little switcheroo on them. These guys don’t need to look at a *Real Book*. They know every song I know.”

During his last quarter-century, Woods expanded his involvement in jazz education, both as a clinician and personal mentor to such bright lights as Ken Peplowski, Vincent Herring and Jon Gordon. Gordon recalled a lesson the day after the death of saxophonist Budd Johnson, Woods’ close friend since both played in Quincy Jones’ *Free And Easy!* tentet during its ill-fated European sojourn in 1959 and 1960.

“He gave me a hard look,” Gordon said. “He told me, ‘You’d better know why you’re playing this music. I know too many people who have lived and died for it. If you’re not trying to change the world, I’m not interested.’ I knew just what he meant. You’d better be committed.”

“Phil had a gruff, tough exterior, but I always felt loved and cared for and supported. At that lesson, when he was just in utter mourning, he was saying: ‘Play me the opening of *Rite Of Spring* at the piano.’ ‘Here’s the score. I’m going to drop the record needle. You show me where we are.’ ‘Play me Bird’s solo break on ‘Night In Tunisia,’ which I didn’t exactly know. ‘Write a rondo for me.’ He threw stuff at me all day. At the end, he said, ‘I’m going to take you in. You never have to pay me again. But don’t get cocky. Don’t let me down.’”

Trumpeter and educator Bob Lark, the director of jazz studies at DePaul University, to which Woods donated his library during the aughts, recalls him as “exceedingly kind” to students on his frequent visits to the school. “He was hungry to share,” Lark recalls. “He regularly gave workshops on improvisation and combo playing, and he’d coach. He’d regularly sit at the piano and talk about how to improvise over a particular series of chord changes. He rode the bus with us to concerts on multiple occasions over the last 15 years. He’d hold court, telling stories about Quincy and Dizzy, and commenting on students’ arrangements of his tunes.”

Woods also freelanced extensively, performing his compositions and arrangements with an international array of jazz orchestras, and engaging in memorable collaborations with, among others, Gillespie and alto saxophonist-composer Benny Carter, his early role model. Indeed, it’s not a stretch to compare Woods to Carter as the embodiment of a complete, soup-to-nuts musician.

“The most important thing I learned from Phil was seeing how high the bar was,” Herring said. “His musicianship was incredible, which is an appropriate word to describe him. He wasn’t a good player. He was a great player.”

“He made the most out of his talent in all conceivable aspects of it,” Lynch said. “No chinks in the armor. Everything was covered. Little peccadillos and grumpiness aside, everything about him was above reproach—the playing, the writing, the presentation, the way business was done. He was inquisitive, with broad tastes. He was an American epic.”

Emphysema caught up to Woods in 2001. But, fortified by a portable oxygen tank that he called his “amplifier,” he continued to perform at a high technical and artistic standard for the final 15 years of his life.

As news of Woods’ death spread quickly across the Internet on Sept. 28, heartfelt appreciations and encomia appeared on Twitter and

Facebook.

“There was a very specific reason Phil played on nearly every album I’ve made since 1956,” Quincy Jones wrote. He elaborated: “Phil not only was one of the best jazz alto sax players there was; he was a truly beautiful person. He epitomized what Nadia Boulanger meant about ‘your music never being more or less than you are as a human being.’”

Other encomia touched on different dimensions of the maestro’s novelistically complex, operatically extravagant personality. John Clayton, who cited Jones’ 1956 *Quintessence* album as an early inspiration, wrote that “Woods’ alto sax always felt as if he could both connect with the rhythm section or soar above it—still remaining connected.”

Dave Liebman, a fellow inhabitant of the Poconos, described Woods as “the epitome of a jazz warrior.” He noted that Woods cast “the mold for lead alto in a big band setting with his sound and phrasing”; that “he, along with Cannonball [Adderley] and a few others, took [Charlie Parker] to a logical extension, paving the way for [John Coltrane] to go further; and that ‘his sense of humor and prose-writing abilities were special, always with great insight, [containing] a healthy dose of sarcasm pertaining to the state of the



world and life in general, peppered with keen insights into the people he dealt with.”

Woods faced his transition with Socratic grace and characteristic flair. He had announced his own retirement from the stage of Pittsburgh’s Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild 24 days before his death, after concluding a *Charlie Parker With Strings* concert with a well-wrought improvisation on Gerry Mulligan’s “Rocker” that included a quote from “Let’s Fall In Love.”

Not long thereafter, he contracted pneumonia and was hospitalized. In past instances, he had rallied; this time, he did not. Faced with the prospect of protracted confinement, Woods opted for a dignified exit on his own terms. He declined further treatment, decoupled himself from the ventilator and was put on palliative care. He reached out to close friends and musical partners, and spent his final day receiving their phone calls, reminiscing, bestowing love and even making sardonic jokes.

Survivors include his wife, Jill Goodwin; a son, Garth Woods; and three stepdaughters, the singer Kim Parker and Allisen and Tracy Trotter.

—Ted Panken

Schneider, Ulmer Dazzle in Detroit

THESE DAYS, DOWNTOWN DETROIT BUZZES WITH A CONTAGIOUS sense of regional pride. You can see it in the ubiquitous “Detroit” branding of signage, storefronts and clothing. And you could feel it each time a crowd of thousands roared in approval upon hearing artists praise the city from the stage at the 36th annual Detroit Jazz Festival over Labor Day weekend.

Held from Sept. 4–7 on stages clustered near Detroit’s Renaissance Center, the free event—which artist-in-residence Pat Metheny dubbed “the hippest jazz festival in the world” during one of his four performances there—drew an estimated 275,000 fans despite the heat index climbing into triple digits.

Though not a native Detroiter, James “Blood” Ulmer called the city home for five years while teaching guitar at the Detroit Metro Art Complex. He returned on Sept. 5 to perform with his Black Rock Experience, reflecting the Motor City’s gritty, funky and soulful music roots.

Joined on the Carhartt Amphitheater Stage by vocalist Queen Esther, Ulmer delivered a catalog-spanning set of knotty jazz guitar melded with Delta blues. A highlight was their mellow version of “Backwater Blues,” which Ulmer recorded for his 2007 album *Bad Blood In The City: The Piety Street Sessions*. His vocals were thick and dark, while Queen Esther’s soared, lifting the song out of blues territory and into the gospel realm.

Later that evening on the same stage, the Maria Schneider Orchestra conjured a different mood in a performance bolstered by stellar accordion solos by Gary Versace. While deeper cuts from her catalog found their way into the set, most of the performance centered around material from Schneider’s 2015 album *The Thompson Fields* (ArtistShare), a work rooted firmly in sense of place.

“The Monarch And The Milkweed,” Schneider explained, was “inspired by the beauty of the prairies” in her native Minnesota. It played out in trium-



Bandleader Maria Schneider conducts her namesake orchestra at the Detroit Jazz Festival on Sept. 5.

LENI KATZ/DETROIT JAZZ FESTIVAL

phant form as a sweeping reflection of the landscape. The follow-up, “Home,” delved further into a pastoral vibe. “Gumba Blue” provided a welcome showcase for Clarence Penn’s adroit drum work, and featured a gloriously off-kilter accordion solo from Versace.

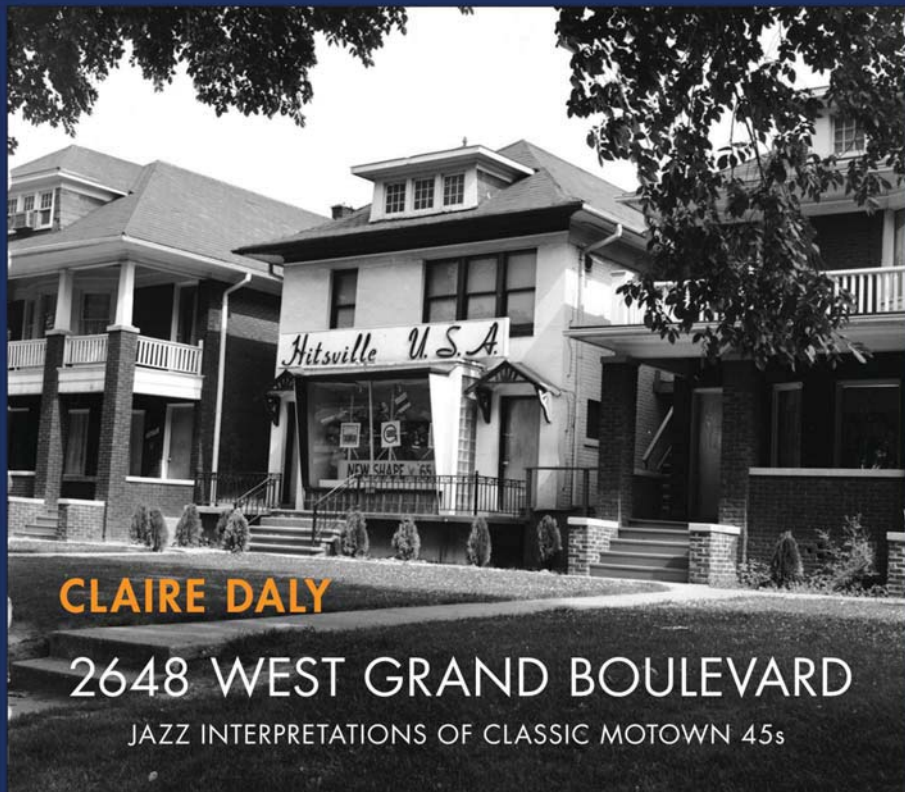
The name “The Thompson Fields,” Schneider explained, derived from the farms near her childhood home in Minnesota. She said she’d returned recently and recalled climbing a silo and looking out at the fields.

“It was a windy day, and the wind was making these ripples like water across the bean fields and it was just this open ... space and we were becoming very nostalgic about our families, [and] the sense of community,” Schneider said.

“In this piece,” she added, “I want you to just imagine this open space that looks like nothing’s there but there is this deep sense of community and beautiful people and incredible environment.”

The sentiment—and the music that followed—seemed especially resonant in Detroit, a once battered city whose own deep sense of community is helping it thrive again.

—Jennifer Odell



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Improvisational Savvy Reigns at Guelph Jazz Festival

Caught ›

GUELPH IS A SMALL CITY ABOUT AN HOUR WEST OF TORONTO which gets much of its cultural energy from the University of Guelph, never more so than in mid-September, when the Guelph Jazz Festival occurs. The event is annually presented in conjunction with an academic symposium focusing on improvised music. Both events were originally spearheaded by Ajay Heble, but for the 2015 edition the music was programmed by Rainbow Robert, a key curatorial figure of the superb Vancouver Jazz Festival.

It's not just any festival that would dare to present the free improv quartet Rocket Science as a headlining act. Formed by the fearless, technically-dazzling trumpeter Peter Evans with legendary British saxophonist Evan Parker, the version of the band at Guelph surrounded those horn players with two electronic musicians—Ikue Mori, who doled lapidary gurgles and glugs from her laptop, and Sam Pluta, a master manipulator of real-time signals who used spontaneous horn sounds as dynamic raw material.

A night earlier, New York saxophonist Darius Jones clung closer to tradition in front of a rapt audience. Leading a sharp quartet with pianist Matt Mitchell, bassist Sean Conly and drummer Nasheet Waits, the band masterfully balanced scalding free-jazz and deep-seated soul. Smith also turned up the next evening, serving as a guest vibraphonist for the woolly trio Bly de Blyant, with Icelandic guitarist Hilmar Jensson, Norwegian drummer Øyvind Skarbø and Brooklyn bassist Shahzad Ismaili moving between simple, catchy rock-like tunes and bursts of rude, free improvisation.

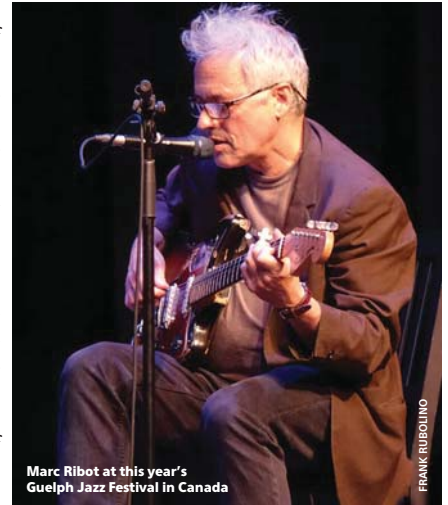
Rudeness is a calling card for Marc Ribot's Ceramic Dog, his trio with Smith and Ismaili. The band's set was loose and crude, Smith playing like a man possessed, knocking over a crash cymbal and pounding his kit like a punk rocker. Ribot seemed to revel in the chaos, kicking off tunes like an arsonist tossing lit matches on gas-soaked rags.

Thumbscrew, the wonderfully knotty trio of guitarist Mary Halvorson,

bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara, performed a late-night set at the intimate Heritage Hall that featured work developed during the group's recent residency in Pittsburgh. Each piece was rigorously charted, making the improvisation within each performance carry extra weight.

Halvorson and Fujiwara also contributed to a rain-hampered set on Guelph's Market Square with Living by Lanterns, a large group originally inspired by lost fragments of music recorded by Sun Ra. Fujiwara and fellow drummer Mike Reed formed airy polyrhythmic constellations of sound embroidered by the sweet-toned cello of Tomeka Reid, the woody bass of Joshua Abrams and the clanging vibraphone of Jason Adasiewicz (whose trio Sun Room also played a strong set). Saxophonists Greg Ward and Ingrid Laubrock and trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum all possess radically different musical personalities, making each tune from the nonet feel like a fresh exploration, packed with unexpected twists and turns—which also happens to be a nice description for the aesthetic of this wonderful festival.

—Peter Margasak



Marc Ribot at this year's Guelph Jazz Festival in Canada

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Trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire (center) leads a band that includes vocalist Theo Bleckmann and cellist Okkyung Lee in the premiere of his piece *The Forgotten Places* on Sept. 19 at the Monterey Jazz Festival in California.

Caught >

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Akinmusire Shines with Monterey Fest Commission

THE 58TH EDITION OF THE ESTEEMED Monterey Jazz Festival, which ran Sept. 18–20 offered a pleasing mix of the straightahead (exemplified by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and its offshoots), the adventurous (trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire explored solitude and memory on his triumphant long-form commissioned piece, *The Forgotten Places*) and a range of acts that the West Coast fans hadn't been fully exposed to (from the New York-based vocal trio Duchess to Berlin-based guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, who hadn't previously played the fest as a leader).

Chick Corea was a Jimmy Lyons Arena weekend star, brilliantly and amiably improvising first with his *Trilogy* trio of Christian McBride and Brian Blade on Friday night and then with his *Enchantment* and *Two* banjo partner Béla Fleck on Sunday evening.

Friday night on the club scene Rosenwinkel led his band in a rousing set that proved to be a revelation to many in the crowd, and in a trumpeter doubleheader ascending star Theo Croker unleashed his DVRKFUNK band for a frolicking good time and Terence Blanchard showed off his new E-Collective to Monterey for the first time. (Unfortunately the shows took place at the same time in two different venues, so fans had to jump from one show to the other to catch the mini-trumpet summit.)

Saturday featured the young master Akinmusire, both on the main stage—where he led a chamber nonet through the commissioned piece—and with his quartet in the evening at Night Club. From the tranquil, mysterious beginning of *The Forgotten Places* to its surprisingly rhythmic conclusion, the band took the crowd on a journey that was part reflection, part awakening. While the individual sections of the composition lacked the powerful, dramatic surges that often flow through a new commissioned work, Akinmusire sustained an energy throughout the piece that kept the audience mesmerized.

Elsewhere on Saturday, vocalist Lizz Wright dazzled at Dizzy's Den—in one of the best perfor-

mances this reviewer has seen her deliver over the years. The crowd agreed, giving her a full-house standing O.

But the best day of the festival was Sunday, especially in the afternoon when Snarky Puppy opened for the Pete Escovedo Latin Jazz Orchestra in the Jimmy Lyons Arena.

It was a slightly risky move booking Snarky Puppy onto the main stage, but the band won the crowd over with its playful, rip-snorting excursion of jazz meets rock meets New Orleans r&b meets funk music. They served up a maelstrom of a good time with their three-trumpet rhythm section and two killer beat blasters: drummer Jason "JT" Thomas and percussionist Nate Werth, who blew into a conga/drum tempest at the end of the show, in anticipation, one thinks, of the next rhythm-crazy band to come.

Pete Escovedo is a living legend of Latin jazz who not only leads his orchestra of top-notch players (including smooth/funky guitarist Ray Obiedo) but also enlists his own children to join on drums and percussion: daughter Sheila E. and sons Juan and Peter Michael. The youngest daughter, Zina, contributes vocals and dance moves. Pete, who fires up the timbales, was celebrating his 80th birthday in what was his first time as a leader playing in the Arena. He joked, "It's so great to be an overnight success." Commenting on reaching the milestone birthday, Pete quipped, "It's just a state of mind. I love Obamacare. I get all my medicine free. But if Trump becomes president, I'll have to go to Mexico."

The Escovedo set was a spitfire launch into Latin jazz that had scads of real improvisation, a charge of funk and a hint of smooth jazz. The accelerated drive garnered standing ovations, the biggest coming when Sheila E. and her two brothers (with dad in the wings) delivered an exhilarating excursion on congas, timbales and drums. The program came back to earth for the rumba, salsa, cha-cha-cha finale, "What'cha Gonna Do," a tune that Pete and his brother Coke recorded for their Latin rock band Azteca in the '70s.

—Dan Ouellette

Hargrove, Gambarini Add Heat to Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival

Caught >

ARUBA, THE 20-MILE-LONG SLIVER OF A CARIBBEAN ISLAND JUST north of Venezuela, is, in late September, a scintillating mixture of sights, smells and most of all, *sounds*—a sonic stew whose Dutch culture long ago mixed it up with the spicy indigenous music. So it is no surprise that the ninth edition of the Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival was something of a potpourri. Held on Sept. 25–26, it featured performers from around the world, offering up a range of styles to suit locals and tourists alike.

Yet for all their differences, the festival's performers largely bought into the idea that they were part of a collective. That concept was defined by trumpeter Roy Hargrove on a foray to the microphone on opening night: "One nation under groove."

Hargrove was in an electric state of mind. Though he works more often these days with his acoustic quintet, the festival's organizers asked him to bring his RH Factor, a high-voltage affair featuring, among others, three keyboardists and Todd Parsnow's electric guitar. Through it all, Hargrove's voice came through as clearly as it always has with his quintet.

Members of the Hargrove quintet surfaced in vocalist Roberta Gambarini's set. Robinson, who plays with the quintet as well as RH Factor, appeared with the singer. So, too, did pianist Sullivan Fortner, bassist Ameen Saleem and drummer Quincy Phillips, all of whom play in the Hargrove quintet. In addition, Parsnow, from RH Factor, sat in with Gambarini's combo on a hard-swinging blues.

Gambarini concentrated on standards, all of them transparent vehicles for revealing her gift for communicating. From her opening rubato on "In Your Own Sweet Way," she demonstrated an ability to gracefully transform a song into an intimate conversation.

Did any clouds rain on her parade on "Sunny Side Of The Street?" She

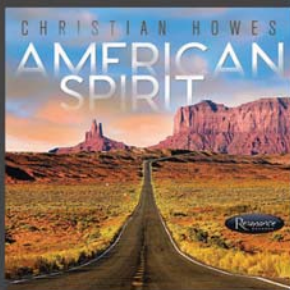
Trumpeter Roy Hargrove (center) leads RH Factor at the Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival in Aruba on Sept. 25.



left the question hanging, her upbeat reading tempered by just a hint of melancholy. And when she asked for "one more chance" on "Body And Soul," who could resist her plea? Few, it seems safe to say, as Gambarini's exquisite glissando slipped into a lower-register fade out.

If the authenticity flagged at any point, it might have been on material from "Porgy And Bess," whose lyrical dialect—"Porgy, I's your woman now"—demands an improbable suspension of disbelief in 2015.

Any missteps, however, were more than outweighed by the easygoing truths she conveyed in the '60s-era samba "Estate." This was the sole song in the set from Gambarini's native Italy—its title is Italian for "summer"—and, in her hands, it became a very warm embrace indeed. —Phillip Lutiz



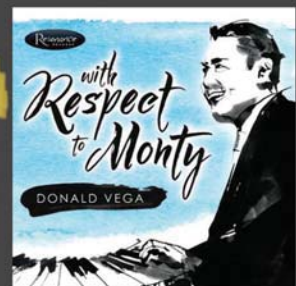
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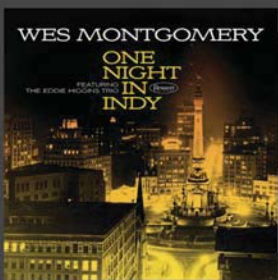
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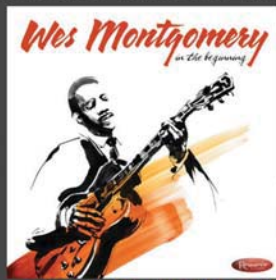


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McLaughlin Continues the Quest

ONE LISTEN TO JOHN

McLaughlin's new CD, *Black Light* (Abstract Logix), instantly reveals that the guitar hero is very much on top of his game at age 73. The disc was recorded with his powerhouse 4th Dimension Band: Etienne M'Bappe (electric bass), Ranjit Barot (drums and vocals) and Gary Husband (keyboards and drums).

McLaughlin's fabled machine gun picking is still intact along with his dazzling precision on single note lines and passionate intensity on improvisations. The album's tributes to his fallen comrades—U. Srinivas, the Indian electric mandolin virtuoso who played alongside McLaughlin for 14 years in Remember Shakti; his close friend and flamenco guitar master Paco de Lucia; and his Indian music mentor Ravi Shankar—make *Black Light* McLaughlin's most potent and personal recording in years.

It has been 46 years since McLaughlin played a pivotal role in the birth of fusion music with his savage six-string work on Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew* and also Tony Williams Lifetime's *Emergency!*, and 44 years since he blew minds with The Mahavishnu Orchestra's debut, *The Inner Mounting Flame*. And yet, the fire still burns within this six-string avatar.

On *Black Light*, your playing on compositions like "Here Come The Jis" and "Panditji" is so forceful and full of energy.

I'm feeling very good. I just hope my hands hold out. Because my mom had arthritis, and I feel twinges of it. You know, it's that time. I'm talking to a couple of friends who are doctors about making a pre-emptive strike, as it were. Before it hits me, I want to hit it. There's a very dear friend at the Sinai Hospital in Toronto who is a real expert and he's got some plans for me. So, at the moment, everything's fine. I don't have arthritis anywhere else in my body; I only have it in the wrist. But even if I have to quit tomorrow ... what a fantastic life I've had, man! How lucky I am, really lucky, to have so many meetings with so many great musicians over the years.

You have a very warm yet ferocious distortion sound on this album.

We gotta thank Jimi [Hendrix] and Eric [Clapton] for some of that ... and Leslie West too, to a degree. You remember Leslie West from



John McLaughlin

Mountain? Great guitar player.

But the idea of distortion tone has been around for a long time. If you listen to "A Love Supreme," you hear that Trane ... is not going for the clean sound—he's looking for the overtones. He's got like a natural distortion pedal in his embouchure, hasn't he? The great thing I love about distortion is that it widens the sound. I know a lot of jazz purists don't like it, but I love it. To hear the harmonics and the note and the broader, warmer note—that's the sound I'm looking for.

Tell me about the song "Panditji."

That's for Ravi Shankar, who passed in 2012. In the mid-'70s, I was accepted as a kind of extra-curricular student by Ravi Shankar, who of course was Pandit. It's a title given by the president of India, like 'Sir' in England. It's a very high award. But even so, nobody called him Pandit. Everybody called him Panditji. And I have such a debt to him. He helped me so much in those mid-'70s years because he taught me Indian rhythmic theory.

He was there at this big concert we did in India a few years ago. Zakir Hussain and I organized this group of about 20 musicians that toured India. In Delhi we walked on stage to start the show and there's Panditji sitting in the audience right in front row center! It's like if you're a jazz musician and Miles is sitting right in front row checking you out, you know? Some of the musicians were so nervous they were saying, "Well, maybe he'll leave at the break" [laughs]. And of course, he didn't.

At the end of the third encore, he walks up on stage and gives a beautiful discourse about East-West and one after the other gave blessings to us

on stage. What a man! Unbelievable! Beautiful.

I really dug the blending of new technology and beats and the traditional Carnatic konokol singing on "360 Flip."

I've been interested in the drum 'n' bass thing and jungle that comes out of the electronic dance music scene. The new one is trap. My son Luke, who just turned 18, has cued me into a few nice things from that whole scene. So this was just like a weird kind of counterpoint thing going on with the chords and the bass and the melody, and it's all kind of twisted.

But what I like really in this song is the psychedelic bit in the middle [laughs]. I'm showing my age here, still a hippie at heart. But that period, the '60s, was a beautiful period for me, a pivotal period for me. I had some wonderful trips in those days but I came out of it knowing that it was time to alter my state of consciousness naturally, through meditation and music. That's what I'm looking for now.

And it's a lot of work trying to find these new sounds and create this kind of portal where my mind can go inside. I want to find a gate through music that my mind can go into.

But you know what "360 Flip" is? It's a move on a skateboard. It's also very relative to a kind of experience I had in meditation, where all of a sudden you're seeing the same things, from one second to another, but it's not the same—it's all different. It's where you suddenly do a complete 360 spin in your mind and everything suddenly looks different to you. It's like the difference between looking and really 'seeing', if you get what I mean.

—Bill Milkowski



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Clockwise starting from the top left: Mark Colenburg, Kendrick Scott, Ulysses Owens Jr., and Otis Brown III.

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Liberty Ellman understands the importance of documentation. He has played acoustic guitar with reedist Henry Threadgill's Zooid sextet on six albums since 2001, most recently *In For A Penny, In For A Pound* (Pi). More recently, saxophonist Joe Lovano deployed Ellman's electric guitar for a soon-to-be-released quintet album on Blue Note, while pianist Myra Melford wove his acoustic sound into the flow of her 2015 release *Snowy Egret* (Enja-Yellowbird). Before an October tour with Melford, Ellman would return to the studio to mix Lovano's recording, adding to a discography that includes post-production for projects by Threadgill, Steve Coleman, Vijay Iyer and Mike Ladd, Gregory Porter, Wadada Leo Smith, Tyshawn Sorey and Steve Lehman.

By his 35th birthday, Ellman, now 44, had documented 19 originals on two critically acclaimed dates for Pi, *Tactiles* (2003) and *Ophiucus Butterfly* (2006), each with a structure containing, as he puts it, "a beginning, a middle and an end rather than head-solo-head." He illuminated the stories with melodic statements on electric guitar—sometimes searing, sometimes reflective; sometimes percussive, sometimes legato—within a polyphonic, rhythmically percolating environment, articulated with a warm, burnished tone. Infused with a freewheeling attitude, Ellman's style amalgamates deeply studied funk, blues and hardcore jazz flavors into his own informed argot.

"I know it's a good idea to regularly release albums and update what you're doing," Ellman said in mid-September at his studio in the Brooklyn apartment where he lives with his wife and two small children. He was explaining the nine-year gap between *Ophiucus Butterfly* and his new release, *Radiate* (Pi), comprising eight bespoke compositions for a sextet that includes Lehman on alto saxophone, Jonathan Finlayson on trumpet, Jose Davila on tuba, Stephan Crump on bass and Damion Reid on drums.

"After *Ophiucus Butterfly* I was working with a lot of people, and once the kids were born I didn't focus on my own things," Ellman explained. "I was writing nuggets of ideas, but didn't have anything important to say, so I figured I'd wait until I was ready." He started off slowly during 2013, then kicked into gear after a grant from the Shifting Foundation enabled a self-imposed retreat in a Woodstock cabin containing a grand piano, a wood-burning stove, a kitchen and a bathroom. "When I came home, the creative juices were flowing," he said, "and I was able to get it done."

Various observers discern Threadgill's influence

in Ellman's writing. Lehman's tart alto tonality is a sonic link, as is Zooid member Davila's funky interlock with the rhythm section. So is the polyphonic orientation. But in Ellman's view, the connections are more methodological than linguistic.

"I think a lot of people who work in jazz would benefit from expanding their forms and letting go," he said. "Henry's incredible creativity in that regard is inspiring. But he has his own harmonic system, which I'm not trying to use at all. Everything I write is coming from a place of my ear, not from a formula."

Ellman won't dally with his next document. He's considering an open-form improvisational encounter (a process represented on *Radiate* by "Moment Twice") and a project that piggybacks from the electro-acoustic ambiance of "Enigmatic

Runner" (the final track on *Radiate*). But he also wants his sextet "to have a life."

"I enjoy writing for the format," he continued. "Part of keeping that going is to stay fresh and energized, to keep writing, and it's helpful to book a studio date and work towards it. I get pulled in so many directions, it's easy for me to spend time on something else."

"I spend many hours absorbing other people's music, and I learn something from everyone. They're all very creative, with something specific to offer. The people who drive them have found something personal that translates into their music, that makes you say, 'I've got to have this record.' We're all trying to find that thing for ourselves."

—Ted Panken



Players >

LIBERTY ELLMAN

Creative Juice

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Players >

ROBIN EUBANKS

Ambition Realized

In 2008, trombonist Robin Eubanks received a message from Dr. Arthur White, then the director of jazz studies at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

"He said he wanted to do a recording, and he was going to write big band arrangements of my compositions," Eubanks recalled. "And then when I went to check it out, he'd written his ass off." The NSU Jazz Ensemble's album *Global Citizen: The Music Of Robin Eubanks* came out that same year. Eubanks played trombone and electric trombone on the disc, which featured White's arrangements of seven tracks and Bradley Spears' arrangement of "The Yearning."

Eubanks had long aspired to do a big band recording, even listing it as an active project on his website well before it existed. But White had beaten him to the punch. "That made me step back and say, 'I need to do it,'" Eubanks explained.

It took him seven more years, but Eubanks has realized his ambition with the release of his 10th album, *More Than Meets The Ear* (ArtistShare), on which nine of his compositions are performed by the 19-piece Mass Line Big Band. More than any other album in his nearly 40-year career, it showcases Eubanks as a composer. Two of the pieces on the new album are from previous Eubanks recordings, and seven were written for either the SFJAZZ Collective or Dave Holland's quintet/big band (Eubanks is a veteran of both).

"I was just trying to balance different styles of material," he said of his selections for the project. "But for some of them I had some kind of arrangements already done. The stuff for SFJAZZ already had four horns, so I was thinking in more of a big band mindset when I was arranging and writing it for four horns plus the vibes and all that stuff."

"And now with the big band arrangements, I've gone back and listened to some of the original recordings ... and they sound so empty to me

now," he added with a laugh. "Because all these other parts aren't there. Those are the skeletal, scaled-down, Reader's Digest versions."

Even with their fuller treatments, however, Eubanks' compositions retain his trademark sound, particularly his love of tricky polyrhythms. "I think Robin's strongest thing is the way he's able to put the rhythm together, make it sound effortless even though there's all these layers," said alto saxophonist Antonio Hart, a Mass Line member who is also one of Eubanks' best friends. "From a musician's standpoint, it's very technical, but from the listener's standpoint it's very accessible, because the groove is still there."

More Than Meets The Ear is the product of a research sabbatical from Oberlin College Conservatory, where Eubanks teaches jazz trombone. Unlike a traditional sabbatical, research status includes a year's leave with full pay (plus a stipend), but requires a research proposal for approval and a full report at the conclusion. Eubanks proposed that his big band project make use of Oberlin alumni.

"Each section has one Oberlin graduate in it," Eubanks said. "I know all of them. Most of them have graduated recently and I knew they would do a really good job. And it gives them a nice little introduction to some of the players in New York." Among the New York players are Eubanks' brother Duane and the late Lew Soloff (in one of his final sessions) on trumpet, Nate Smith on drums and Hart on alto.

"Because I got this time from Oberlin, I painted myself into a corner," Eubanks said. "I said, 'Well, let me propose something I've always wanted to do, that I've never done.' And they said, 'OK,' so now I had to do it. That was one of those things I was glad I could realize and make happen."

—Michael J. West

Trio East

Clay Jenkins/Jeff Cambell/Rich Thompson



After two decades, the members of *Trio East* communicate as if by telepathy. Joined by frequent collaborators Harold Danko and Larry Koonse, they explore recent repertoire in two contexts, live and studio. Together, the two recordings offer a masterclass in jazz improvisation.

Akira Tana



Otonowa ("Sound Circle") explores both contemporary and traditional folk melodies of Japan in search of new jazz standards. Inspired by relief efforts for the earthquake and tsunami of 2011, Tana and friends interpret the songs of their ancestry with a Western jazz sensibility.



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In a email exchange with San Francisco East Bay drummer Scott Amendola, it was noted that most of his latest albums—including his new ambitious orchestral project *Fade To Orange*—featured guitarists. His reply: “Oh, yeah, man, I love the guitar!”

As for him being one of the few musicians from the burgeoning San Francisco jazz scene in the '90s who did not make the exodus to New York, the New Jersey native wrote: “I love living in the Bay. But it’s gotten a lot harder to be a working musician here.”

Even so, Amendola, a rhythm virtuoso who digs a deep groove as well as lean swing, has been prolific on the recording front in the past few years—working with two six-stringers (the East Bay’s Henry Kaiser, who enlisted him to fly free improvisationally on *Leaps*), and with the Nels Cline Singers (Cline is featured on *Fade To Orange*) and one seven-stringer (Charlie Hunter).

Following a girlfriend to San Francisco after he graduated from Boston’s Berklee College of Music in 1992, Amendola met Hunter the following year. “In my head I was wanting to meet an interesting guitarist who was unique—and that was certainly Charlie,” Amendola said.

The guitar affinity began early with Amendola, thanks to his grandfather, Bronx-born guitarist Tony Gottuso, who played in the band for *The Tonight Show* during the program’s initial stint in New York City. Gottuso encouraged his grandson to play guitar with him. “That’s when I learned about feel and time,” Amendola recalled.

Today, Amendola, who lives in Berkeley with his wife and two children, stays busy (Cline says he has a “probing, restless creative mind”), evidenced in his milestone project *Fade To Orange*. The album originated in 2009 when he was one of four composers commissioned by the Oakland/East Bay Symphony’s “New Visions/New Vistas” project. “It was a ton of work,” Amendola said. “It turned out to be 40 pages of orchestration for an entire symphony—strings and horns—that I

wrote by hand. My original idea was to have the orchestra improvise, but then I thought, ‘I may never write for an orchestra again,’ so I wrote it all out. This represents me as a composer.”

With a concept steeped in symphony-meets-electric-rock-band sensibility, Amendola enlisted Cline and bassist Trevor Dunn, who also plays with the Nels Cline Singers. Amendola debuted the work in April 2011 at Oakland’s Paramount Theater. The concert was recorded but with poor sound quality. So the drummer shelved the project until he could do *Fade To Orange* proper justice in the studio—not as a 90-piece full orchestra endeavor but with a 21-member ensemble. A crowd-funding campaign helped him complete the project four years later.

The 17-minute studio recording features the Magik*Magik Orchestra, Yuka Honda (of Cibo Matto) and various wind-playing friends from the Bay Area, including clarinetist Ben Goldberg, trombonist Jeff Cressman and ROVA flutist Steve Adams.

“In the studio we got to rethink how to document Scott’s piece,” Cline said. “We overdubbed so that I could control my sound choices to make it work. I was free to use my instincts.”

Because this recording was not enough to fill an entire album, Amendola toyed with the idea of writing additional music for the string trio. But then he decided to give the music to remixers who could deliver their own interpretations. This included Honda—whose remix is impressionistic and grooved—as well John Dieterich from Deerhoof with Drake Hardin from Teetotum. Also contributing remixes are Mocean Worker (aka Adam Dorn) and Beautiful Bells (aka Justin Peake) who favored quiet electronics and a looped beat.

“[The title track,] ‘Fade To Orange,’ is the centerpiece of the album,” Amendola said. “The entire record is about the composition. I’m pleased with that—and the entire project. It’s my Pink Floyd’s *The Wall*.”

—Dan Ouellette



Players >

MICHAEL BISIO

Rewarding Relationship

MAREK LAZARSKI

Sometimes it takes a while to find your musical soul mate.

For bassist Michael Bisio, it didn't happen until he was 55, when he started playing with pianist Matthew Shipp.

"In 2009, Matt had a trio gig in Sardinia [Italy], but there was no bass player," Bisio said from his home in Troy, New York. "He called me for that gig and after that, he said, 'This is the band.' I've been in heaven ever since."

Born and raised in Troy, Bisio started playing music at age 17, when his brother needed an electric bass player for a Jimi Hendrix-inspired group. Once Bisio discovered an acoustic bass in his school band room, he was hooked. He moved to Seattle in 1975 to study with James Harnett, principal bassist with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, and graduated from the University of Washington with a music degree in 1979.

Bisio forged a robust classical career—you can hear it in his rich, warm sound, deft finger facility and agile arco technique—but jazz beckoned.

In the early '80s, Bisio walked away from the symphony hall, and later that decade he recorded the dazzling inside-outside quartet album *In Seattle*. Collaborations with reed master Joe McPhee followed, and in 2005 Bisio moved to New York. Serendipitously, he wound up living down the street from Shipp, whom he had first met in Seattle in 1997, when the pianist came out for the Earshot Jazz Festival.

"When I first met him, it was obvious we were going to hit it off one day," said Shipp, whose trio is slated for stints in New York at The Stone and Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in 2016. "We're just on the same wavelength. We said, 'One day, we'll play together.' It took a decade."

Part of what attracted Shipp to Bisio, he said, was a shared interest in the works of John Coltrane and Bill Evans. "That trajectory—and I hate to put

it this way, but black and white—is really important to me," Shipp said.

You can hear the conversational relationship between these two musicians popping up all over the eight albums they've shared: five with Shipp's trio, two duos and a chamber trio effort with Mat Maneri on viola. It's an impressive body of work, the more recent installments of which may surprise listeners who think of Shipp as intimidatingly abstract. For example, the title cut of the trio's latest album, *The Conduct Of Jazz* (Thirsty Ear), digs into swing time, with a Monk-like riff.

"A real big factor in this album is that it's the first one with Newman [Taylor Baker]," Bisio said of the former Henry Threadgill drummer, who recently succeeded Whit Dickey. "Whit comes out of the Milford Graves school, and Newman comes out of Ahmad Jamal and McCoy Tyner."

Not that Shipp hasn't always mixed blues and the abstract truth (to borrow a phrase from Oliver Nelson), but his stream-of-consciousness excursions sometimes make traditional elements feel like a rumbling undercurrent. Bisio gets that distinction.

"I think at some point I got too free for even the people who were free," admitted Bisio, who can look like he's in a trance when he plays: shaking his head, hair flying, bowing all four strings at the same time, scraping, grinding or snapping them against the fingerboard.

Bisio dips even more deeply into tradition with the charming eponymous new album on Relative Pitch Records by his other group, Accortet, which features accordion player Art Bailey.

"I always want to tell a story," he said. "One of the things I love to hear is when somebody who is dragged to the concert by a friend comes up and says, 'I didn't know I liked this music until I heard you guys.' There's nothing that could be more meaningful."

—Paul de Barros

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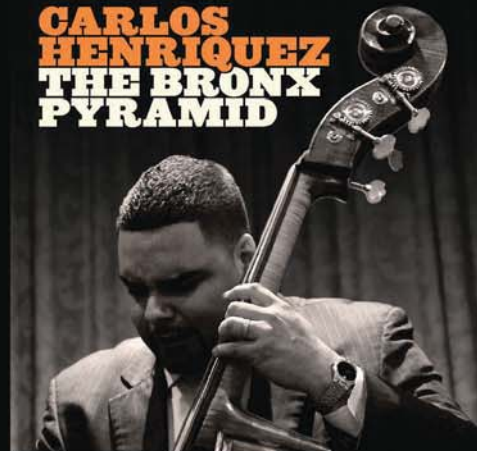
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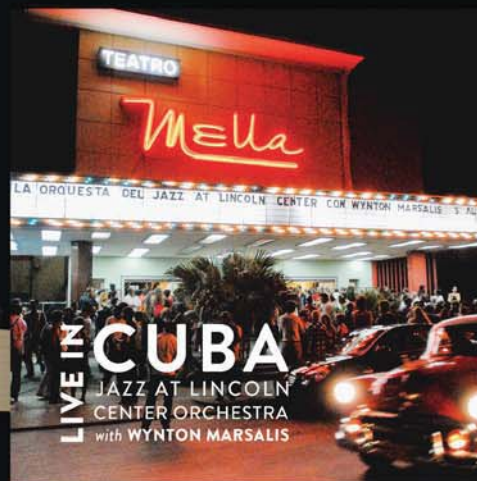
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Tony Bennett at the Palladium at the Center for the Performing Arts in Carmel, Indiana, Nov. 21, 2014

TONY BENNETT

HALL OF FAME | MALE VOCALIST



'PLAY FOR THE MOMENT'

BY MICHAEL BOURNE | PHOTO BY MARK SHELDON

I've never worked a day in my life," Tony Bennett writes in the coda of his philosophical memoir, *Life Is A Gift*. "I have a passion to sing and paint, and I get to do both every day."

He's been artistic since he was a child in Astoria, Queens. He signs his paintings with the name he was born with, Benedetto, and several of his paintings hang in the collections of Washington, D.C.'s National Gallery. That he's been exhibited and honored as a painter thrills him, but countless millions around the world know him better and love him best as one of the greatest singers of the American Popular Songbook. And after working as a singer going on 70 years, after recording more than 70 albums, most of which are on the 73 CDs in the massive box set *The Complete Collection* (Columbia/RPM/Legacy), Bennett is now joining his idols—Nat, Ella, Billie and Frank—in the DownBeat Hall of Fame. The readers also voted him the year's top Male Jazz Vocalist, further proof that at age 89 Bennett is nonetheless passionately singing. "I could've retired 20 years ago," said the truly living legend. "I'm still working because I love doing it, and I really feel that I can keep getting better as I get older."

When he was younger, he was inspired by his Italian-American family. "My relatives would come over on Sunday, and my brother and sister

and I would entertain them," Bennett recalled. "They said that they liked the way I sang and they liked the way I painted flowers. That really created the passion in my life of just doing that and nothing else. I can't think of a more comfortable life for me. I'm always in a state of creating."

Bennett's grandparents emigrated from Calabria, Italy. His father, Giovanni, died when Anthony Dominick Benedetto was 10. "When I knew him, he was very ill," Bennett said, "but his legend was that in Italy everybody loved him. He would sing on the top of a mountain, and the whole valley would hear him." When connecting with his family's roots on a trip with his sons, Daegal and Danny, Bennett climbed that very mountain and sang to that very valley. Channeling his father? "That's a very good description," Bennett responded. "He's always influenced me."

His mother, Anna, also inspired young Anthony. "My mother had to raise three children. She had to work every day, making dresses, and she would only accept top-quality dresses. She'd work all day long, and every once in a while she'd throw a dress over her shoulder and say, 'I won't work on a bad dress.' That was a good lesson for me. That stayed with me when it came to my recordings. I decided I would never do an unintelligent song just to get a hit record. I would always do quality. That's what my mother taught me."



Bennett has been a touring and recording artist for more than 60 years.

MARIO DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

Bennett studied painting as a kid in New York. He started singing in the U.S. Army. "I couldn't stand it," Bennett said about World War II. "I was a soldier in the infantry and they trained us to kill everybody. I wouldn't kill anybody, and I'm happy I never did. I'd have been cursed my whole life if I knew I'd killed somebody." While waiting to come home from the war, his passion to sing for a living came when stationed in Mannheim, Germany. "I would sing with a huge orchestra, and every Saturday we put on a radio show that [was broadcast] all over Europe. It was so much fun. I said, 'When I come out of the Army I'm going into show business.' When I came home I made a wonderful decision: Under the GI Bill of Rights, I joined the American Theatre Wing. What a school that was! It was all about the creative process. They taught us every element of how to become a good performer. How to memorize. How to improvise. They gave me great training."

Bennett learned how to properly sing from a voice teacher, Mimi Speer. She taught him *bel canto*.

"It means 'beautiful singing.' That's how opera singers trained. It's based on how to sing each vowel sound. By having that, I warm up 10 or 15 minutes. Not with volume. Very intimately. I use that same intonation, and I use those scales. My voice always has been in control. It's the most correct way to sing. It's a wonderful technique to learn, to keep your voice in shape all the time."

He learned even more from the jazz clubs on 52nd Street—Swing Street—that were close to his teacher's studio. "One great artist after another was on that great jazz street," Bennett said. "Art Tatum on the piano. Dizzy Gillespie. Miles Davis. I used to go and stay in those jazz clubs, stay until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning when they would close, and I tried even to stay later. When the public had left, the guys would still have jam sessions, sometimes until 12 o'clock in the afternoon. I tried to sing every once in a while. I'd get up and be able to sing. They were wonderful days."

When his singing career was first happening, he knew that he wanted to sing jazz like the greats of those days and nights on 52nd Street. He wanted

a cool sound in his tenor voice like Stan Getz playing the tenor saxophone. He wanted to phrase a song every which way, like Art Tatum playing the piano. "I'll never forget a little club in Cleveland called Moe's Main Street," Bennett said. "I was supposed to go in there the next night, and I found out that Art Tatum was playing there. I walked in and he was playing a beautiful ballad, and the whole audience was silent, watching him. Something unforgettable to me, the audience had tears in their eyes. They were all crying from how beautifully Art Tatum played that piano."

Bennett's promoters and producers early on didn't appreciate his desire to sing like (and with) jazz musicians. They "didn't know what I was talking about," he said. "Singers were supposed to just stand there and sing, but I was imitating Art Tatum and Stan Getz. They were my influences."

Mitch Miller produced the earliest hits, Bennett's pop singles on Columbia. "Boulevard Of Broken Dreams." "Because Of You." "Cold, Cold Heart," a country song composed by Hank Williams. "Blue Velvet," very popular with teens of the '50s. And though it was #1 on the charts, Bennett initially didn't want to sing "Rags To Riches." Not that his hits were not good songs—he even enjoyed (eventually) "Rags To Riches"—but Bennett often quarreled with Miller about recording what the singer felt weren't "quality" songs. (One that made him sick, "In The Middle Of An Island," is not included in *The Complete Collection*.) Once Bennett had become a million-selling singer, Miller agreed to let the vocalist alternate pop songs with jazzier songs and musicians. First came his first LP, *Cloud 7*, in 1955, with guitarist Chuck Wayne. Then came his first full-tilt jazz LP, *The Beat Of My Heart*, in 1957, with a who's who of jazz drummers: Jo Jones; Art Blakey; Chico Hamilton; his usual drummer, Billy Exiner; and his good friend ever since, the Cuban *conguero* Candido. "Annie Ross gathered up all those people for me to sing with," Bennett said. "That was a great time in my life."

Miller finally acknowledged that Bennett was right to believe in himself as a jazz singer. "Toward the end of his life, in his nineties," Bennett remembered with retroactive happiness, "he ran into my son Danny and said, 'Boy, did I make a mistake with your dad. He kept trying to sing jazz, and I would tell him to stop singing that way. Now he's one of the big jazz singers in the world.'"

Two of Bennett's best popular records in the '50s came from Broadway shows: "Stranger In Paradise" from *Kismet* and "Just In Time" from *Bells Are Ringing*. Bennett's records on the radio enabled both musicals to open with hit songs. Although Bennett studied acting with the American Theatre Wing, performing in the theatre was not in his heart. "It was tough to get started," he said. "We had auditions all up and down Broadway. Many years later, when I finally met Sinatra, he said to me, 'Do me a favor. Don't do anything on Broadway.' He said, 'Just sing in nightclubs.' He was against the theater attitude. They would force me to sing like legit actors sing. He knew I was a jazz singer."

Bennett eventually acted, but only in a film, *The Oscar*, in 1966. Quite histrionically, he played the agent of a poisonous movie star played by Stephen Boyd. He didn't sing on screen, but on the

Count Basie (left) with one of his great admirers, Bennett



soundtrack recording he sang "Maybe September," the song that opens the album Bennett often calls his all-time favorite, *The Movie Song Album*. He was also convinced, by one of the greatest actors, to stay away from acting in movies. Spencer Tracy bought one of Bennett's paintings, and when the singer asked what to do about having an acting career, Tracy said that a movie actor's life is nothing but tedium—mostly getting up very early and waiting alone all day to speak four lines on camera. "He said, 'It's the most boring life in the world.' He said, 'I've watched you perform, and you go over so well with an audience.' He said, 'Just work live. Go everywhere in the world and perform live.' And his advice was correct. I just love meeting everybody and being able to talk to everybody. It's never boring to me. It's always an

interesting day, being a live performer."

Frank Sinatra taught Bennett another valuable lesson when the two first met in the mid-'50s. Because of his great success selling records, Bennett in 1956 was offered a TV variety show, a summer replacement for Perry Como on NBC—"but without any guest stars, and just a blank stage," he said. "I was in a panic. I didn't know what to do. Sinatra was at the Paramount Theatre. I had great respect for him, so I decided to take a chance and get some advice from him. I mentioned my name backstage. I said, 'I'd like to talk to Mr. Sinatra'—and they sent me up to him. I couldn't believe it. He was so friendly to me. He said, 'Come on. I know who you are. What do you want to talk about?' I said I was completely nervous about [the TV show]. He said, 'Don't worry about that. The audience, when they see you're nervous, they're going to support you.' What he taught me in that moment is that the audience are your friends. He gave me such confidence. He said, 'All of us are nervous.' He said, 'I'm going on stage in about 25 minutes, and I'm nervous, wondering how the show will go.' He said, 'That never goes away. It's not nerves. It's just caring that everything works. And making sure that you do a good show.' And from that day, we became great, great friends."

Sinatra catapulted Bennett's very happening career even higher when, in a 1965 issue of *Life* magazine, he said, "For my money, Tony Bennett

is the best singer in the business. He excites me when I watch him. He moves me. He's the singer who gets across what the composer has in mind, and probably a little more."

"He changed my career," Bennett remembered with reverence, "because every one of his fans, and he had armies that adored him, all wanted to check out what Sinatra was talking about." And if that were not tribute enough, in 1986 Sinatra famously signed a photo, "For Tony—The best g.d. pop singer I've ever heard! I love ya!"

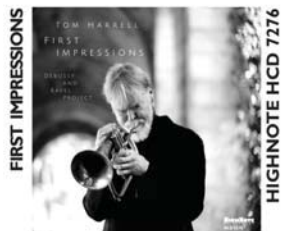
In his personal pantheon of jazz and song, Bennett always names Sinatra first. And also Fred Astaire. "I call the American Popular Songbook 'The Fred Astaire Songbook,'" he said. "They wrote the songs for him." He likewise loved (and learned from) three titans of jazz and song.

"Nat Cole was a master," he said. "A swinging, great piano player. And he sang intimately. Everything he did, whether it was a ballad or a rhythm song, it had just the right beat to it." Bennett felt so strongly that Cole's recording of "Stardust" is definitive, he didn't want his own recording of the song released. It's now included as one of the "rarities, outtakes and other delights" in *The Complete Collection*.

"I loved the kind of person Nat was," he said. "He was always quality. He was a great gentleman and a wonderful artist."

Bennett is angry that Billie Holiday is remembered more for being a junkie than for being a

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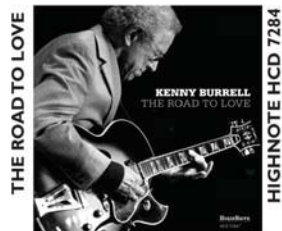
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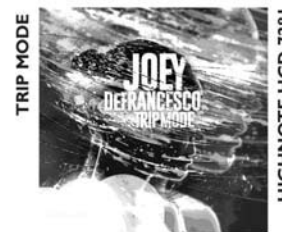
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Crafting The Silver Lining

Tony Bennett's new album, *The Silver Lining: The Songs Of Jerome Kern* (RPM/Columbia), features one of his favorite collaborators: pianist Bill Charlap. The two are good friends and have recorded on each other's albums. Bennett sang "I Get Along Without You Very Well" on Charlap's tribute to Hoagy Carmichael, *Stardust*. Charlap accompanied Bennett singing his signature tune, "I Left My Heart In San Francisco" on *Duets: An American Classic*—Bennett's only duet on the album not with a singer.

The Silver Lining gathers 14 of the songs Kern composed for Broadway and Hollywood musicals, songs that have been recorded by jazz artists countless times. "The Way You Look Tonight," an Oscar-winner first sung by Fred Astaire to Ginger Rogers in the movie *Swing Time*. "Dearly Beloved." "Yesterdays." And especially the song of Kern's that became the most often recorded in jazz, "All The Things You Are," which came from a Broadway flop, *Very Warm For May*.

Kern is the transitional composer of the American musical theatre. His first shows, early in the 20th century, were often operettas, or revues that mostly shuffled songs and dances into silly comedies. And then, together with lyricist and librettist Oscar Hammerstein, *Show Boat* in 1927 theatrically and musically revolutionized Broadway.

All the songs, including "Make Believe" on *The Silver Lining*, were dramatically integrated into a serious play. *Show Boat* nowadays is the only Kern musical that's still revived from time to time, but even from Kern's most forgettable musicals came some of the most unforgettable songs of the American Popular Songbook. Deeply melodic songs that inspired the generation of songwriters who came after Kern.

"[Kern] had one foot in Europe and one foot in America," Charlap said. "Think about the bridge to 'All The Things You Are.' There's a complexity and ability to be so rich within that harmony that's related to the Romantic period of classical music—Brahms and Schubert and Chopin—but Kern's songs are really the first American songs. Kern is the angel at the top of the tree of American popular songwriters. He's the writer that all the other writers—Gershwin, Berlin, Rodgers, Porter, Arlen—all looked up to as the paradigm of what's possible within great popular songwriting. He really is the first and maybe the greatest melodist of them all. Every one of these songs is profoundly beautiful."

Each of the songs on the album was arranged uniquely. "Some are just piano and voice," Charlap said. "Some are with two pianos, with me and my wife, Renee Rosnes. [Those songs] have an orchestral quality. Some songs are with my trio, with Kenny Washington at the drums and Peter Washington at the bass. Each combination



was chosen for the song."

Bennett sings "The Last Time I Saw Paris" with Charlap and Rosnes playing four-hands. "It's a very poignant song about Paris and the beauty that is all things Parisian," said Charlap. "French music is very influential on jazz, especially the great Impressionist composers. Debussy. Ravel. [With] two pianos we were able to exploit some of those Impressionist ideas that perhaps couldn't be done with one piano or the rhythm section."

"All The Things You Are" opens the album. "Fantastic things happened that were extemporaneous when we performed that song," Charlap said. "First of all, Tony sang the verse—which is written in a different key than the chorus of the song. We did it as written, and it's very powerful when the key center shifts for [the chorus]. It's also very intense in the way Tony approached the lyric. And the harmony of that song is so attractive and so rich that it's always attracted the greatest jazz musicians. It's a perfect canvas to improvise on."

Charlap marveled at what he called "magical moments" recording with Bennett, especially several of Bennett's improvisational twists and turns, like on the Charlap-and-Bennett duet of "All The Things You Are." "After he sang the first chorus of the song and I played an improvised statement of the song within the same feeling, when we got to the bridge, Tony looked at me and made a motion to keep going," Charlap said. "He came in brilliantly at the end of that statement with the bridge of the song, the middle section, and then [sang] to the last eight bars. In doing that, because of the way the song is built, we ended up in a different key entirely. It was one of those brilliant instinctual moves that Tony makes throughout the entire album."

With all of them together in the studio, the recording was all the more intimate. And the moments kept happening. "On this album, many things happened only once. In fact, everything you hear happened only once," Charlap said. "There were not a lot of takes on these pieces, and when we did other takes they were different. Bennett certainly sang them differently. I remember on 'Long Ago And Far Away,' with me and Renee, [Tony sang], 'Just one look and then I knew ... that all I longed for'—the note that coincides with the word 'for,' Tony reaches up for a note and just nails it. It's so gorgeous and pure and technically astonishing. Renee and I looked at each other, and our eyes widened, and we said, 'Wow!' It only happened that once. And there are many magical moments that happened like that. That's one of the joys of playing with Tony Bennett."

"I think that every moment should be important," Bennett said. "It's like having a conversation. You're saying something that communicates. With each phrase it's the moment that counts."

The Silver Lining comes 60 years since Bennett's first LP, and he's rarely enjoyed so many moments singing on an album.

"What I love about this album I made with Bill and his wonderful group is it's the first album I've ever made where all the songs are A sides," Bennett said. "Any other album I've made, there's one or two strong sides, and you say, 'Wow, that'll make the album sell when people hear those two sides.' Then there'll be 10 or 12 other performances. But this album, the way they played, the way it all felt, I don't remember making an album where every side is an A side."

—Michael Bourne

classic singer. “Those early records she made are timeless,” he said. “When she was young, nobody ever sang that good. Nobody!” Holiday recorded early for Columbia and returned to Columbia for her last great album, *Lady In Satin*, in 1958. Bennett recorded most of his decades of albums for Columbia, and he wished that he could’ve recorded with her. “I was hanging out with a bunch of characters, and she came to Basin Street East,” he said. “Duke Ellington was playing, and she came over to my table and said, ‘Tony, let’s go up to Harlem and sing.’ I went to get up, and the guys I was with said, ‘Don’t do it. It’s not safe up there.’ They were so ignorant. One of the most regretful things in my life is that I didn’t take her up on it, going up there and jamming with her in Harlem.” Bennett finally got to sing with Holiday ... electronically ... on “God Bless The Child” from his album *Bennett On Holiday*. “I loved it,” he laughed, remembering her voice in the headphones. “I loved the way she sang. She was an intelligent selector of songs. And [her songs] are never dated. They’ll never sound old-fashioned.”

Though he calls Ella Fitzgerald “the greatest singing teacher, who taught everybody how to sing the right way,” Bennett speaks much more mournfully about the racism she (and Holiday and Cole) faced in the ’50s and ’60s. “Ella was my neighbor when I lived in Los Angeles,” he said. “I used to go to her house. When we started talking politically, she’d only say three words. Over and over she’d say, ‘We’re all here.’ That was her reaction to the ignorance of people treating African-Americans below them. To this day I wish I could compose well enough to write a song called ‘We’re All Here.’”

Always wanting to learn more as an artist, in his 80s Tony studied sculpting, and his first work was a very lifelike head of his friend Harry Belafonte. They’ve been brothers since Bennett, Belafonte and other celebrities defied all the dangers 50 years ago and joined the civil rights march in Selma, Alabama, with Martin Luther King Jr. At one of the stops during the march, Bennett sang impromptu, a mini-concert that he re-created in the 1978 TV mini-series *King*. “Billy Eckstine and I had to leave in the middle of that walk,” he said. “We had engagements. A woman drove us to the airport, and on the way back she got killed. She was a woman from Detroit who had four or five children. It’s a tragedy that happened there, on that walk. The ignorance of it.”

One way Bennett thought that he could address racism was to record “Georgia Rose,” a song from the ’20s that Carmen McRae brought to him, a song about a woman lamenting her dark skin. “Don’t be blue ‘cause you’re black” is one of the lyrics. “Columbia didn’t want to release the song,” Bennett said. “They thought it would be controversial. I think life is a magnificent gift. We should all enjoy the fact that we’re living on an unbelievable planet that’s loaded with education and love and beauty.”

Bennett’s longtime pianist, Ralph Sharon, discovered the song that became the singer’s signature, “I Left My Heart In San Francisco,” in 1962. His recording earned him two Grammy Awards (including Record of the Year), and the tune has now become synonymous with Bennett.

A couple of other big hits followed in 1964: “I

Wanna Be Around” and the song that became the title of his autobiography, “The Good Life.” That same year, Bennett also happened into one of his most joyous recordings—with the saxophonist he always wanted to sound like.

“There was a studio called the 30th Street Studio,” Bennett said. “It was huge and wonderful, as good as Carnegie Hall. One Saturday afternoon, I heard Stan Getz was making records there. I went to the studio, and I was listening to his wonderful group [with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Elvin Jones]. He signaled to me. ‘Come on. Come in. Record some songs with me.’ It was that spontaneous. It was real jazz.”

“Out Of This World” and three other songs

were long-unreleased but finally showed up on a collection titled simply *Jazz*. Another album finally rediscovered and released a couple of years ago was a long-mislabeled reel-to-reel recording of Bennett and Dave Brubeck performing at the White House in 1962. During the ’60s, Bennett also got to sing in the with his favorite bandleaders: Count Basie and Duke Ellington.

The turn of the ’70s was not so happy a time for Bennett, personally or musically. He didn’t like recording pop songs of the Beatles et al., and he split from Columbia. He started his own label, Improv, and recorded one of his best albums, *Life Is Beautiful*. Improv ended, but in 1975 Tony recorded a masterpiece, an album of duets with

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Bill Evans on Fantasy. "He'd say to me, 'What tune would you like?' I'd mention a tune. He'd say, 'Let me work on that,' and he'd start playing. He'd take three quarters of an hour on the songs, improvising to make them work properly, and what he was going into was so phenomenal, so entertaining, so inventive. I said to the engineer, 'Keep recording! You've got to record that!' And he said, 'If we did that, we'd run out of tape.' That was some of the best music I've ever heard, and nobody ever heard it—but I did." Two albums of duets were released as LPs, including an exquisite "Some Other Time" with Evans playing his "Peace Piece" as a prelude. And just last year, *The Complete Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Recordings* was released on CD and vinyl.

Some time after the sessions, "Bill called me up when I was working a one-nighter somewhere," Bennett said. "He said, 'Tony, just think truth and beauty.' I've never forgotten that, and to this day if it isn't true and it isn't beautiful, I don't do it."

When his life was not so beautiful, when he was spiraling down, beset with serious tax problems, Bennett called his sons for help.

Danny became his father's business manager and turned his life around. Bennett returned from Las Vegas to New York and returned to Columbia in 1986 with an album aptly titled *The Art Of Excellence*. Bennett was back on the charts and, with Danny's smartly calculated TV appearances and media presence, was soon a top-selling artist

again. Bennett's tribute album to Sinatra, *Perfectly Frank* (1992), won a Grammy for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Performance. So, too, did his tribute to Fred Astaire, *Steppin' Out* (1993). And his live performance on *MTV Unplugged*, including guest duets with k.d. lang and Elvis Costello, won the Grammy for 1994 Album of the Year. Bennett has now won 18 Grammy Awards, including a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2001. For the last 20-plus years, his albums, all made with his complete creative control, have been selling like ... Tony Bennett records.

In recent years, Bennett's three albums of duets have been particularly strong sellers worldwide—*Duets: An American Classic*, *Duets II* and, with Latin pop stars, *Viva Duets*. His duet with Amy Winehouse, "Body And Soul" on the album *Duets II*, was heartbreaking. Although some feared that Hell had finally frozen over when Bennett sang "The Lady Is A Tramp" with the teal-tressed Lady Gaga (on *Duets II*), he helped her achieve a lifelong goal to sing jazz, and she's given him a second wind. Bennett and Lady Gaga's duo album *Cheek To Cheek* leapt to the No. 1 spot on charts around the world. When they sang sold-out concerts at Radio City Music Hall and at last summer's international jazz festivals, Bennett's chops sounded stronger than ever.

Lady Gaga, singing with Bennett, is also introducing jazz and classic songs to a new generation, and Bennett is especially proud that he's enjoying so much success singing the "quality" songs he loves. "No country has given the world such great music," he said. "Cole Porter. Irving Berlin. George Gershwin. Jerome Kern. Those songs will never die." He's also almost defiantly reasserting that he's the same singer that he was when he first sang in the Army. "I'm a jazz singer," he said. "I love improvising. I never sing the same twice. If it's a good song, every time you sing it, you sing it for the moment. I love jazz artists. They're so honest. They play for the moment, and the music never becomes old-fashioned. True jazz artists, like Dizzy Gillespie, you listen to the music and it never sounds dated. It sounds like a brand-new record."

Bennett's brand-new record, *The Silver Lining*, with pianist Bill Charlap, is all songs of Jerome Kern. And he's thinking about making another album of standards with Lady Gaga. He's also delighted that Exploring The Arts, the organization he founded with his wife, Susan Benedetto, is continuing to expand opportunities for kids across the country to learn about the arts. "My wife is fantastic," he beamed. "We started the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in my hometown, Astoria. We now have 26 schools throughout the United States, and the whole dream and reality is that the United States will have more creative artists than any country in the world."

Bennett plays on. And paints on. And sings on. "I can't believe that I'm 89," he said. "I stay in shape. I take good care of myself. I got rid of all bad habits. When I was younger, I was pretty wild, doing a lot of foolish stuff. I stopped all of that and I got back to how to sing properly."

And for Tony Bennett, singing properly is good for his health. And his heart. "Oh, yes," he said, "and the audience loves when you give them a full shot." **DB**

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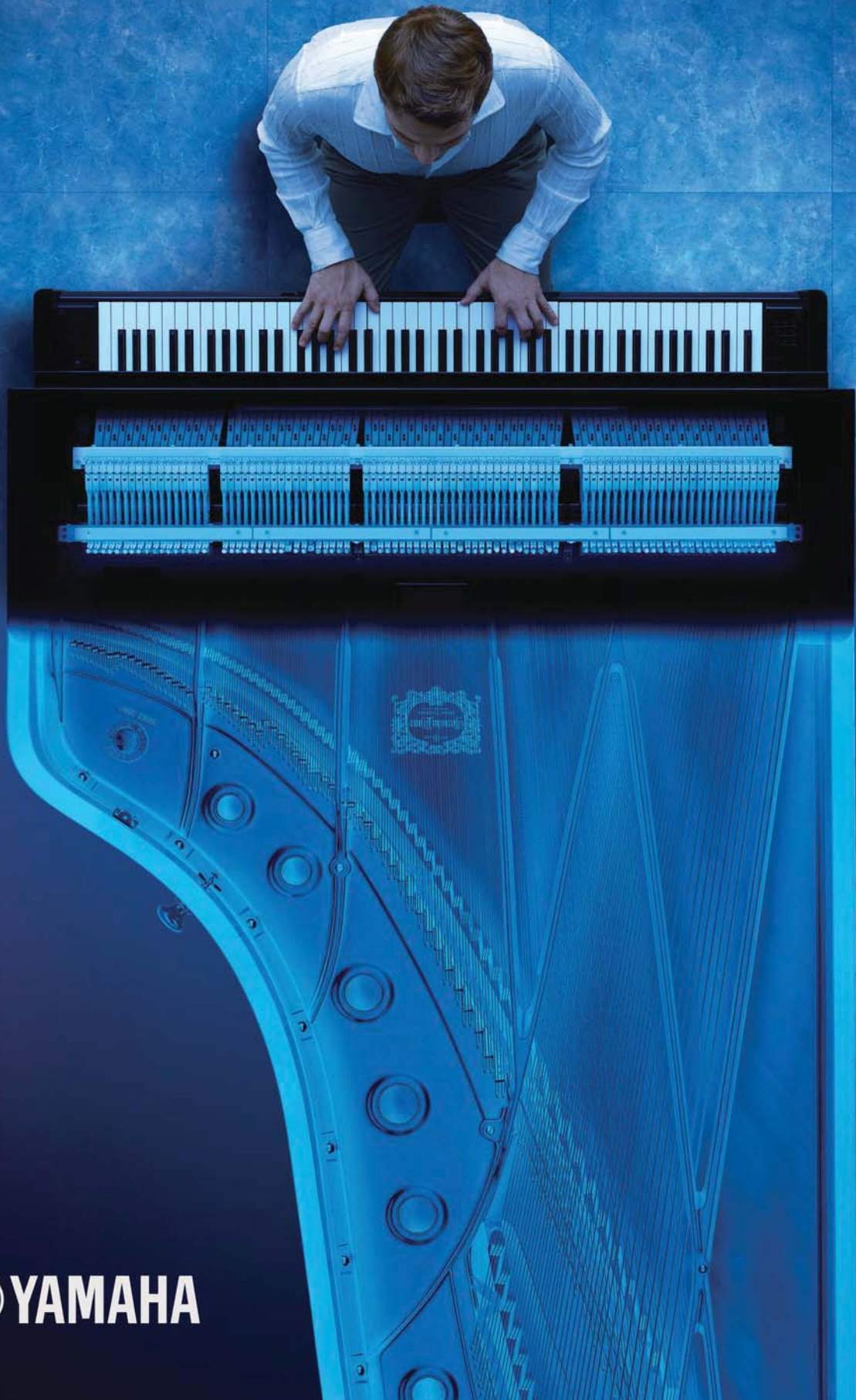
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Chick Corea was voted Jazz Artist of the Year in the 2014 and 2015 DownBeat Readers Polls.

CHICK COREA

**JAZZ ARTIST OF THE YEAR
JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR**



‘COME ON AN ADVENTURE’

BY DAN OUELLETTE | PHOTO BY STEVEN SUSSMAN

The word *retire* is not in Chick Corea’s vocabulary. “Jazz is a good profession to be in because it just keeps going,” says the 74-year-old maestro of jazz varietals from straightforward to fusion to astonishing free encounters. “For most professions, it’s 65, but I look at my heroes like Roy Haynes. They keep going.” Corea looks forward to the year ahead, which he hopes will afford him the opportunity to play with some of the artists on his “wish list” of potential collaborators. “I turn 75, and concert promoters love those kinds of numbers,” he says. “So that will give me the opportunity to celebrate it with a bunch of those people. ... It’s a long list.”

This has been a stellar year for the pianist. He went on a vibrant and sublime duo concert tour with Herbie Hancock. He won two Grammys for his spirited three-CD live recording *Trilogy* (Concord) with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade. Corea continued his ongoing collaboration with banjoist Béla Fleck and saw the release of their live double-album *Two* (Concord). And he played a duet performance with Gonzalo Rubalcaba in a four-concert residency at SFJAZZ that also featured the Fleck duo, the trio and a solo spot. Corea is not only prolific; he’s also playing at the top of his game.

No wonder Corea was deservedly crowned with the Jazz Artist of the Year award in the DownBeat Readers Poll, an honor he also won last year. Additionally, DownBeat readers voted *Trilogy* the year’s top Jazz Album.

The NEA Jazz Master is pleased with the recognition that his artistry is receiving. “Why would the readers vote for me?” Corea rhetorically asks. “Hmmm. The only thing I can think of is that I continue, more than anything, to just play. I like to travel, and I get to perform for a different

audience every night in new cities. People like diversity. They continue to come out and are truly interested in what I’m doing. I’m proud of that. As the decades go on, younger audiences are coming. For me, playing live in concert is the truest kind of communication. There are no interpreters. There we are.”

What’s also remarkable about seeing Corea perform live is how friendly he is to his audiences. He’s not elusive, arrogant or standoffish. His confidence in his artistic vision overrides what oftentimes become a gap between the onstage musician and seated listener. “It’s a pleasure for me,” Corea says. “I like communication. That’s my way of giving—my version of the Golden Rule. I want the audience to be able to receive new ideas, not just ideas that are familiar. For me, it’s like saying, ‘Come on an adventure. Feel comfortable and relaxed and not feel threatened. In some of our improvisations, *we* don’t even know where we’re going. But that’s the adventure.’”

Case in point: the piano summit with Hancock at Carnegie Hall in April. Just walking on the stage together, the two garnered a standing ovation. Neither of them had touched their pianos yet, but it was a jazz fan’s dream to see them together after each had done so much to contribute to jazz history—from performing in Miles Davis’ bands, to ushering in the fusion age with their electrified ensembles (Hancock’s funk-fueled Headhunters, Corea’s plugged-in Return to Forever), to surging ahead in their vibrant solo careers as Grammy Award-winning leaders.

The Carnegie concert took place a few days shy of Hancock’s 75th birthday and two months prior to Corea’s 74th. But age, as Corea expressed, is not a factor when it comes to artists who are not only banking on the past but are also creatively—and often innovatively—diving into the future with an ebullient vision.

Fleck's Banjo-Piano Dialogues

Banjo with piano seems like an odd combination, but virtuoso picker Béla Fleck, who topped the Miscellaneous Instrument category in the Readers Poll, has made himself quite at home collaborating with jazz pianists, including Marcus Roberts, with whom he recorded the 2012 album *Across The Imaginary Divide* (Rounder). Of their "wonderful interaction" jamming together at the 2010 Savannah Music Festival in Georgia, Fleck says, "It happened immediately. It wasn't, 'OK, you play solo and then I'll play solo.' We played lines together, which you don't get much of a chance to do in jazz. But since I come from bluegrass, that's what I always want to do."

Fleck can't remember exactly what they played ("I think it was a blues in G or something"), but he says, "It was the energy of the interaction and the feeling and intelligence of it that was exciting. Unfortunately, we always get caught up in labels. Honestly, I feel that jazz musicians have been destroyed by this. You put yourself in a corner. Duke Ellington was famous for saying, 'No boxes.' The categories limit the understanding of what other people are doing. Hopefully this kind of [recording] project will illustrate to people that it's more important to focus on the music, the rhythms, the harmonies, and let all that speak for itself."

He notes that his sessions with Roberts were like a gift. "Marcus and I had a blast," Fleck says. "His harmonic concept is unique. He hears music that no one else can hear."

Fleck's first connection to jazz piano predated his Roberts date. In 2007, Fleck was approached by Chick Corea to explore their disparate worlds on the studio album *The Enchantment* (Concord). Eight years later arrives the two-CD live recording of their growth as a duo, *Two* (Concord), which Fleck painstakingly produced. "I felt like an archeologist digging through all the material from all the shows we had performed," Fleck says with a laugh.

Actually, he was more like a long-distance runner, as he spent time in Oregon running on a beach while listening to the various takes and taking notes on his iPhone. "I could tell what was



Béla Fleck (left) and Corea collaborated on the live album *Two*.

good because I started running faster when I listened to a magical show."

Playing with Corea has been a totally different learning experience than with Roberts. "Chick is very responsive and doesn't recognize rules and boundaries," Fleck says. "If I'm being adventurous, he goes with it. Chick feels that rules are a pain in the ass. He just wants to make music. We become like two kids in a sandbox."

A native New Yorker who's now based in Nashville, Fleck vividly recalls how hearing Corea and Return to Forever resulted in a jazz epiphany for him. It was 1975 and RTF was playing the Beacon Theater, close to Fleck's home on Riverside Drive and West 76th Street.

"They were playing music from the *Light As A Feather* album, and Chick was playing a Fender Rhodes on his song 'Spain,'" recalls Fleck, who was a fledgling banjoist at the time. "And all of a sudden I thought, 'That's the kind of jazz I can play on the banjo.' I could hear all the notes being played on the banjo. So that night, I went home and I figured out all the modes and scales. It was a transcendent experience of jazz. It came at a ripe moment for my mind to be exploded. And here I am this many years later, playing with the pianist responsible for that." —Dan Ouellette

With two grand pianos on stage facing each other, they made their concert a regal recital. But first, they engaged the audience by excitedly reflecting on being in New York, where their careers started.

Then Corea said, "I'll bet the audience doesn't know what we're going to play."

Hancock added, "But they know that we don't know what we're going to do." He paused and said, "You thought we were joking?"

After which they manned their 88s and, like kids on a playground, began to riff off each other in a torrent of improvised passages—no charts in sight at the moment (some found their way to the pianos later). They looked at each other; they

listened to each other. They played daintily and mysteriously, then pounced and scurried and rushed. Hancock would stop and Corea would fly, and vice versa. But the best moments came when they countered, at times doing call-and-response runs, eyes locked on each other, smiling and marveling. It was journey music with conversations along the way—sometimes getting lost and then finding their ways, with the only question being where—and how—the trip would conclude. Nonetheless, they landed safely.

"I've had a timeless friendship musically with Herbie since we first met in the '60s," Corea says. "Years may go by, but we're always in touch and aware of each other. Herbie was in New York several

years before me, so he was always an inspiration. We both love this kind of adventure to freely improvise. In recent years, every time we had seen each other, we were both busy with personal projects. So when it came to this, it has been a personal success."

As for his other piano duet outing, Corea says that he had only played with Rubalcaba on a few occasions, including a short European tour and his *Rendezvous In New York* two-CD set of live performances at the Blue Note in New York in celebration of his 60th birthday in 2003. (On the recording, the pair delivered a 13-minute take of "Concierto De Aranjuez/Spain.") "Gonzalo has become my buddy," Corea says. "I always learn new musical tricks from him. He's one of the young sources of inspiration. He's become another partner, and we make something special."

More partnerships were in the air. At this year's Monterey Jazz Festival, Corea was honored as the marquee guest at the 2015 Jazz Legends Gala benefit and was deemed the showcase artist with two high-profile shows at the Jimmy Lyons Stage on opening and closing nights—the trio and Fleck duo, respectively.

On opening night, Sept. 18, Corea, McBride and Blade played with mutual fascination through an hour-long set in front of a packed crowd. They opened with a tune that Corea introduced as the first standard piece he ever recorded: Kurt Weill's "This Is New" from the pianist's debut, *Tones For Joan's Bones*, recorded in November 1966 and released on Atlantic Records in 1968. McBride played the depths while Blade buoyed with spirited beats, making his characteristic facial expressions of ecstasy. At one juncture, McBride soloed with Corea first listening intensely then responding with a fiery rush across the keys.

What was remarkable about the show was how Corea related to his collaborators. Instead of gluing his eyes to the keyboard during the songs, he actively made eye contact with his bandmates, observing the musical motion so as to reply to the conversations—sometimes adding grace notes, other times sparking the tune to another improvisational sector.

Corea led off the Bill Evans-associated tune "Alice In Wonderland" with a quiet solo reflection and was soon joined by his unit—Blade on brushes and McBride playing gentle bass melodies. It was a sublime highlight of the evening and was followed by an animated sprint through one of Thelonious Monk's lesser-known tunes, "Work" (Monk recorded it once on the 1954 Prestige recording *Thelonious Monk And Sonny Rollins*). Here the trio of virtuosos weaved among each other in an energetic improvisational excursion.

Corea has performed in a trio setting many times in his career, but he says that this threesome is special: "It's another universe. When we get together, what happens is indefinable. I never try to search for reasons why. We have similar tastes and it's a joy to play with Brian and Christian. Brian isn't even a percussionist. He's a world. He cannot be defined. You can't call him a drummer. He's way more than that. Christian is as open-minded as Brian. What he does is unique. We do it all—give the music a fresh perspective and make it beautiful. I love to be in that space."

Just as the trio members radiated at Monterey, so do they in uncanny brilliance on the acoustic-jazz *Trilogy*, an expansive, 17-song, three-and-a-half-hour live recording that captures the best moments of their tours between 2010 and 2012. Corea records most—if not all—of his concerts, which supplies him with a vast reservoir of creative material to document on recordings. To put together such an enormous project was a labor of love for his fans, Corea says. He listens to all the music he's performed live, oftentimes that evening or the next day while on the road. His partner in this endeavor is his engineer/mixer Bernie Kirsh. "I've known Bernie since 1975 and he's one of my best friends," Corea says. "So after shows, we'd confer about what was played. He's also great at taking personal notes. I'd go back to the shows and think, Wow, they were so great. So it was like, should I pick this apple or that apple? There were dozens of takes and we'd get it down to the best two, then listen again or flip a coin." He emphasizes again that it really wasn't that much heavy lifting.

While Corea was at the helm of listening to all the trio dates, he switched gears when it came to the piano-banjo live project *Two*, recorded with Fleck—who topped the Miscellaneous Instrument category in this year's Readers Poll. The pair first found common ground in 2007 with their hit studio album *The Enchantment* (Concord), which they toured worldwide periodically over the next seven years in the midst of other marquee projects each artist pursued.

Again, almost all the duo shows were recorded.

In the album's planning stages, Corea asked Fleck if he'd be interested in producing the live project. "Béla is a meticulous producer," Corea says. "I trust his judgment. He listened to everything and made great calls about what to use—the special takes. I had a good recall of the shows, but Béla gave it that extra certainty."

Thrilled at the prospect, Fleck was not only psyched to listen to the best takes but also to study how the two had linked up during the performances. "I wanted to study the shows, too, to learn about the duo," Fleck says. "I wanted to learn about the ways that Chick plays with me, so I could develop a different understanding of my own role in the duo and understand what worked better to live up to the challenge of playing banjo with a pianist like Chick. Sometimes he does a rippling like a banjo reach, and other times he'll play a short burst—octaves and three notes—up and down but always leaving space for me to play rhythms. From studying this, I'm hoping it'll rub off."

During the show that Corea and Fleck delivered at the Arena on the final night at Monterey, it seemed as if they had known each other their entire lives. Both playing with high velocity, they leaped into Corea's "Children's Song: No. 6" with a conversational attack, teeming with surprises in each interlude as Fleck sat and Corea danced on the keys. While both got lost in the improvisation realm, they returned together and closed with a burst of applause. Corea flashed a thumbs-up to the crowd. Then they slowed the pace with Fleck's

love song "Waltz For Abby," written for his wife (fellow banjo virtuoso Abigail Washburn), then played happily on another Fleck tune, the joyful "Juno," which he wrote for his newborn son while stuck in Dallas on his way home to Nashville.

More improvisational communication took place in a range of music, from an intriguing take on a classical piece by Italian composer Domenico Scarlatti to the folk-infused tune "Mountain" from *The Enchantment*, where Fleck flashed his bluegrass chops.

At the close, Corea held two thumbs up and the crowd responded with a five-minute standing ovation.

As befitting his embrace of manifold styles of music, Corea these days is listening to a lot of contrasting idioms. "Recently I've been delving into electronics," he says. "But then it's Run-DM.C., D'Angelo and Alicia Keys. I've been going back into classical, such as Bartók's Sonata For Two Pianos And Percussion." He pauses and then excitedly adds, "There's this amazing young Chinese pianist, Yuja Wang, who plays Bartók. You can see her on YouTube with an Italian orchestra [Orchestra of the Academy of Santa Cecilia, Rome]. Just amazing."

On the jazz front, Corea recently has been immersing himself in the box set *The Complete Columbia Recordings Of Miles Davis And John Coltrane*. "This still sounds so fresh," he says. "Miles and Trane together changed my life in 1959. I hear 'Billy Boy' and it's, Wow! This music brings tears to my eyes."

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80th READERS POLL

JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR

1. Chick Corea Trio, *Trilogy* (Stretch Concord) 480

This triple-CD set features live recordings from performances around the world by Corea's superbly talented trio, which includes Christian McBride on bass and Brian Blade on drums. The fare ranges from reworkings of classic Corea compositions to previously unrecorded originals and reimagined jazz standards.



2. Tony Bennet & Lady Gaga, *Cheek To Cheek* (Streamline Interscope/Columbia) 437

Pop powerhouse Lady Gaga and the iconic Tony Bennett team up once again for an unconventional reading of 11 standards (15 on the deluxe edition). A handful of jazz all-stars contribute solos, including saxophonist Joe Lovano and pianist Tom Rainer.



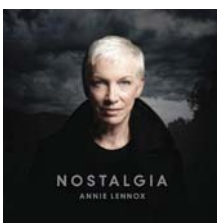
3. Chris Potter Underground Orchestra, *Imaginary Cities* (ECM) 373

Imaginary Cities finds saxophonist Chris Potter thinking big and conceptually, conjuring utopian population centers. A big component of this album's success was his decision to add two bassists to his expanded lineup—Scott Colley on acoustic and Fima Ephron on electric. Together, they generate the momentum that gives this album its graceful motion.



4. Annie Lennox, *Nostalgia* (Blue Note) 352

The seventh solo album from singer-songwriter Annie Lennox, *Nostalgia* offers smart and eloquent takes on American classics by Hoagy Carmichael, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Billie Holiday and even Screamin' Jay Hawkins. The artful singer makes these compositions her own, stripping them to their emotional core and imbuing them with a heartfelt passion.



5. Kamasi Washington, *The Epic* (Brainfeeder) 320

At age 34, Los Angeles-raised tenor saxophonist Kamasi Washington should be considered more of a veteran than a rookie, but he didn't put out his debut album as a leader until this year. His brilliant and staggering *The Epic* is 172 minutes long, with tracks spread across three CDs. It features a 32-piece orchestra, a choir of 20 voices and a 10-piece band called The West Coast Get Down.



6. Keith Jarrett/Charlie Haden, *Last Dance* (ECM) 300

These informal duo sessions were recorded seven years ago, and their release serves as a sequel to the 2010 duet release *Jasmine*. The album is poignant and romantic, with most of the music drifting along in no particular rush. Lengthy ballads like "Everything Happens To Me" and "Every Time We Say Goodbye" are treated to passionate and achingly deliberate explorations.



7. Diana Krall, *Wallflower* (Verve) 293

On *Wallflower*, five-time Grammy-winning pianist and vocalist Diana Krall partners with producer David Foster to record a collection of songs from the '60s to the present day, including pop classics like "California Dreaming" by the Mamas and the Papas and "Desperado" by The Eagles. The album also features a brand new composition by Paul McCartney. The gifted singer treats them all in her bold and beautiful way.



8. Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, *Over Time: Music Of Bob Brookmeyer* (Planet Arts) 285

OverTime: Music of Bob Brookmeyer is The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra's celebration of the music of trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, the group's longtime friend and contributor. The album consists of four magnificent new arrangements written to highlight the band's soloists, three previously unheard statements Brookmeyer wrote for Mel Lewis' Orchestra in the early 1980s and a Grammy Award-winning arrangement of "Skylark" featuring Dick Oatts.



9. Bill Frisell, *Guitar In The Space Age!* (Okeeh) 269

On *Guitar In The Space Age!*, Frisell revisits some of the music that made him want to become a guitar player—tunes from the late 1950s and early '60s. There are nods to the early legends of rock guitar with Link Wray's "Rumble" and Duane Eddy's "Rebel Rouser," and tributes to the surf scene with The Beach Boys' "Surfer Girl" and The Astronauts' minor hit "Baja."



10. Kenny Barron/Dave Holland, *The Art Of Conversation* (Impulse!) 253

This aptly named set features two masters at play, swinging solidly and waxing romantic in the jazz tradition. The album eavesdrops on a sophisticated chat between two veterans with luxurious sounds, consummate technique and open ears. Full of humor, playfulness, serenity and wit, the album sows a seed of anticipation for hearing this conversation live.



- | | |
|---|-----|
| 11. Chris McNulty, <i>Eternal</i> (PALMETTO) | 248 |
| 12. Cassandra Wilson, <i>Coming Forth By Day</i> (SONY LEGACY) | 232 |
| 13. Jack DeJohnette, <i>Made In Chicago</i> (ECM) | 221 |
| 14. Rudresh Mahanthappa, <i>Bird Calls</i> (ACT) | 216 |
| 15. Dave Stryker, <i>Messin' With Mr. T</i> (STRIKEZONE) | 208 |
| 16. Billy Childs, <i>Map To The Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro</i> (SONY MASTERWORKS) | 200 |
| 17. Harold Mabern, <i>Afro Blue</i> (SMOKE SESSIONS) | 200 |
| 18. Anat Cohen, <i>Luminosa</i> (ANZIC) | 197 |
| 19. Vijay Iyer Trio, <i>Break Stuff</i> (ECM) | 197 |
| 20. Dr. John, <i>Ske-Dat-De-Dat: The Spirit Of Satch</i> (CONCORD) | 189 |
| 21. Charles Lloyd, <i>Wild Man Dance</i> (BLUE NOTE) | 189 |
| 22. The Bad Plus & Joshua Redman, <i>The Bad Plus Joshua Redman</i> (NONESUCH) | 181 |
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| 25. Conrad Herwig, <i>The Latin Side Of Joe Henderson</i> (HALF NOTE) | 168 |
| 26. Marcus Miller, <i>Afrodeezia</i> (BLUE NOTE) | 168 |
| 27. Antonio Sanchez, <i>Three Times Three</i> (CAM JAZZ) | 168 |
| 28. Branford Marsalis, <i>In My Solitude: Live At Grace Cathedral</i> (MARSALIS MUSIC/OKEH) | 165 |
| 29. Eliane Elias, <i>Made In Brazil</i> (CONCORD) | 160 |
| 30. Ryan Truesdell's Gil Evans Project, <i>Lines Of Color: Live At Jazz Standard</i> (BLUE NOTE/ARTIST SHARE) | 160 |

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80th READERS POLL

HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR

1. Wayne Shorter, *Speak No Evil* (Blue Note) 1,677

Recorded on Christmas Eve in 1964, *Speak No Evil* found saxophonist Wayne Shorter in the elite company of drummer Elvin Jones, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. The pointed, exploratory album that emerged from this collaboration became a gem in the Blue Note discography. Its 2014 reissue brings Shorter's vision back to prominence with startling clarity.



2. The Allman Brothers, *1971 Fillmore East Recordings* (Mercury) 821

The Allman Brother's classic 1971 album *At Fillmore East* is expanded into a six-CD set, featuring 15 previously unreleased performances. Included in this compilation is a June 27 concert by the southern rock supergroup that took place on the Fillmore East's last night of operation. With liner notes by Allman guru John Lynskey, this is an essential item for any fan of roots music, blues and rock 'n' roll.



3. John Coltrane, *Offering: Live At Temple University* (Impulse!/Resonance) 784

Recorded in 1966 at Temple University, this welcomed addition to Coltrane's catalogue represents the first legitimate release of a performance that has long been bootlegged in low-fidelity or truncated form. The recording finds the saxophone giant at his freest and most transcendent, and includes rare audio footage of Coltrane's singing voice.



4. Tony Bennett/Bill Evans, *The Complete Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Recordings* (Fantasy) 755

Bennett and Evans' finest material is presented on four audiophile LPs, with numerous alternate takes and Will Friedwald's perceptive liner notes. Bennett dynamically personalizes Evans' brilliant compositions, making the duo's control of musical space and intuitive rhythmic sense sound as remarkable today as it must have 30 years ago.



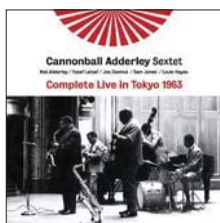
5. Wes Montgomery, *In The Beginning* (Resonance) 734

A phenomenal collection of unreleased material recorded between 1949 and 1958, *In The Beginning* captures the start of guitarist Wes Montgomery's career as it has never been captured before: with all of its creative energy and raw passion intact. The two-CD set compiles some of the earliest recordings ever made of Montgomery and his musical brothers.



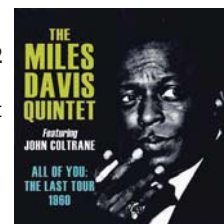
6. Cannonball Adderley Sextet, *Complete Live In Tokyo* (Solar) 726

This release comprises all of the tracks ever issued from the 1963 Japanese tour by the Cannonball Adderley Sextet. Featuring Nat Adderley, Yusef Lateef, Joe Zawinul, Sam Jones and Louis Hayes, the album includes rare concert performances that appear on CD for the first time.



7. Miles Davis Quintet featuring John Coltrane, *All Of You: The Last Tour, 1960* (Acrobat) 672

A collection of previously unreleased radio broadcasts and hi-fidelity bootlegs, this four-CD set of remasters features material from Miles Davis' final European tour with John Coltrane, marking the close of the duo's five-year association. The quintet consistently reinvents their own repertoire, stunning audiences in the process.



8. Charlie Haden/Jim Hall, *Charlie Haden-Jim Hall*, (Impulse!) 613

This historic meeting of bassist Charlie Haden and guitarist Jim Hall took place at the Montreal Jazz Festival on July 2, 1990. It wasn't their first or last time playing together, but this was without a doubt their most significant and memorable musical encounter—just the two of them onstage with their instruments for more than an hour.



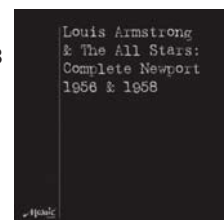
9. Keith Jarrett/Charlie Haden/Paul Motian, *Hamburg '72* (ECM) 576

This trio goes where the spirit leads, and the spirit is generous, indeed. From Jarrett's wizard-like perambulations and Motian's spirited and riveting cymbal and drum work to Haden's sonic and emotional depth, *Hamburg '72* is a luminous recording that reveals all the magic and majesty at play between these remarkable musicians.



10. Louis Armstrong & The All Stars, *Complete Newport 1956 & 1958* (Mosaic) 568

Louis Armstrong was a Newport Jazz Festival regular throughout the 1950s. This historic nine-CD box set features two of his complete performances—from 1956 and 1958—released in their entirety for the first time. Armstrong, just shy of his 60th birthday here, is electrifying as ever.



11. Oscar Peterson, *Exclusively For My Friends* (BOX SET) (MPs) 520

12. Thelonious Monk, *The Complete 1966 Geneva Concert* (SONAR) 493

13. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, *CSNY 1974* (RHINO) 480

14. John Coltrane, *So Many Things: The European Tour 1961* (ACROBAT) 469

15. Bob Dylan, *The Basement Tapes Complete: The Bootleg Series Vol. 11* (COLUMBIA/LEGACY) 453

16. The Brecker Brothers, *The Bottom Line Archive* (BFD) 445

17. Soft Machine, *Switzerland 1974* (CUNEIFORM) 421

18. Duke Ellington, *The Treasury Shows Volume 18* (STORYVILLE) 405

19. Horace Silver Quintet, *June 1977* (PROMISING MUSIC/HGBS) 373

20. Henry Mancini, *The Classic Soundtrack Collection* (SONY MUSIC) 277



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THINKING PERSON'S FEEL-GOOD MUSIC

BY JOSEF WOODARD | PHOTO BY PHILIPPE LEVY-STAB

On a sweltering afternoon at this year's Monterey Jazz Festival, the ceremonial crimson curtain parted and the solar spotlight was cast on the phenomenon known as Snarky Puppy. The Texas-born, Brooklyn-based collective, a model success story of DIY gumption and drive, wasted no time in doing what it does best and winning over the crowd. In this sun-bleached, main-stage setting, Snarky Puppy reinforced its reputation as a uniquely exciting live act.

Funk, jazz, post-fusion designs, touches of New Orleans tunes and other influences were woven into the fabric concocted by this sprawling band, led by electric bassist Michael League. Call it "thinking person's feel-good music." The crowd at Monterey was treated to a nine-piece incarnation of this fluctuating group (which has an on-call roster of about 40 musicians).

"I don't consider us to be modern jazz," said League, who founded the band in 2004. "I feel like the aesthetic of modern jazz is not really song-based, and we're basically like a pop band that improvises a lot, without vocals. That's how I think about us."

Snarky Puppy's career trajectory has continued to make its way dramatically upward since the band won a Grammy (in the category Best R&B Performance) for the track "Something," featuring singer Lalah Hathaway, from the 2013 album *Family Dinner, Vol. 1* (groundUP/Ropeadope). The band scored an instrumental neo-fusion hit with last year's *We Like It Here* (groundUP/Ropeadope), and then made a contextual left turn with this year's ambitious *Sylva* (Impulse!),

a League-penned suite with the Dutch Metropole Orkest working in conjunction with the Snarky Puppy ensemble.

This is a band as unstoppable as it is hard to describe, and that's the way League & Co. like it.

Capping off a high-flying summer, the band's Monterey gig was a coup after having previously played on much smaller stages at the historic festival. That newfound prominence is part of a larger, concentric pattern of success, evidenced by the nature of this summer's tour schedule, which included appearances at such marquee events as the Montreal Jazz Festival, North Sea Jazz Festival, Jazz à Vienne, the Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl and the prestigious Olympia in Paris with the Metropole Orkest.

But while Snarky Puppy has enjoyed a rapid rise to glory and an expanding, grassroots-fueled fan base, there are naysayers on the fringes, including critics who question the group's jazz credibility. League says he has become used to the mixed responses of the band's devoted following and skeptics. DownBeat readers certainly view Snarky Puppy as an elite jazz entity, as evidenced by this year's victory in the Jazz Group category of the Readers Poll.

Sylva, written in two-and-a-half months, allowed League to take on one more contextual challenge: his first actual orchestral piece, apart from freelance arranging work for strings and horns. He had some in-the-trenches help from Metropole conductor Jules Buckley, League notes, in terms of "crossing my t's and dotting my i's."

While conceptualizing the music that became *Sylva*, he pulled out one existing piece from his vast library of compositions. That song, titled "Gretel," was written for a project that never came to fruition—"orchestra and drums, nothing else," he says, "an indie rock, Radiohead kind of thing."

"I used that as my template," League

explained, "my soundscape, with lots of soaring high stuff and lots of really deep beefy sounds. I wanted the orchestral sound to be really dark and really raw and dirty—not a golden orchestral sound. So we basically cut out the midrange of the orchestra. And then my band lived in the middle, with me playing on the low end."

"That was kind of the concept, putting the orchestra in a different context and not sounding beautiful, but sounding ugly, especially on 'The Curtain' and on 'Gretel.'"

And yet much of *Sylva* is beautiful and fleetingly melodic in a distinct, League-ish way, with an idiosyncratic, atmospheric use of the orchestral palette, and Snarky Puppy's slinky, funky maneuvers in the live mesh. He envisioned the score's six parts as tone poems about the forest, a place of innocence and foreboding, myth and mist.

Snarky Puppy's next release will be completely different from *Sylva*. The band is working on *Vol. 2* of the *Family Dinner* project, this time recorded in New Orleans and with a guest list that includes David Crosby, Becca Stevens, Malian legend Salif Keita and Peruvian heroine Susana Baca.

League is keenly aware that his band has zoomed upward in a short period of time, and he clings to both a humble perspective about that radical shift and grand ambitions for the future. "We played in Flagstaff [Arizona] two or three years ago for about 15 people," he recalled. "And then we found out that they were all there for the karaoke that was happening [at the venue]. We opened for karaoke in Flagstaff. From time to time, we still play gigs that aren't well-attended, but nine out of 10 sell out now, which is an amazing feeling."

Maintaining a musical unpredictability is central to the band's ethos: "With Snarky Puppy, [our fans] don't really know what's going to happen, but they know it's going to be something creative and interesting."



Snarky Puppy was voted Jazz Group of the Year.
Michael League (seated, front) leads the band.

HUBERT LAWS

FLUTE



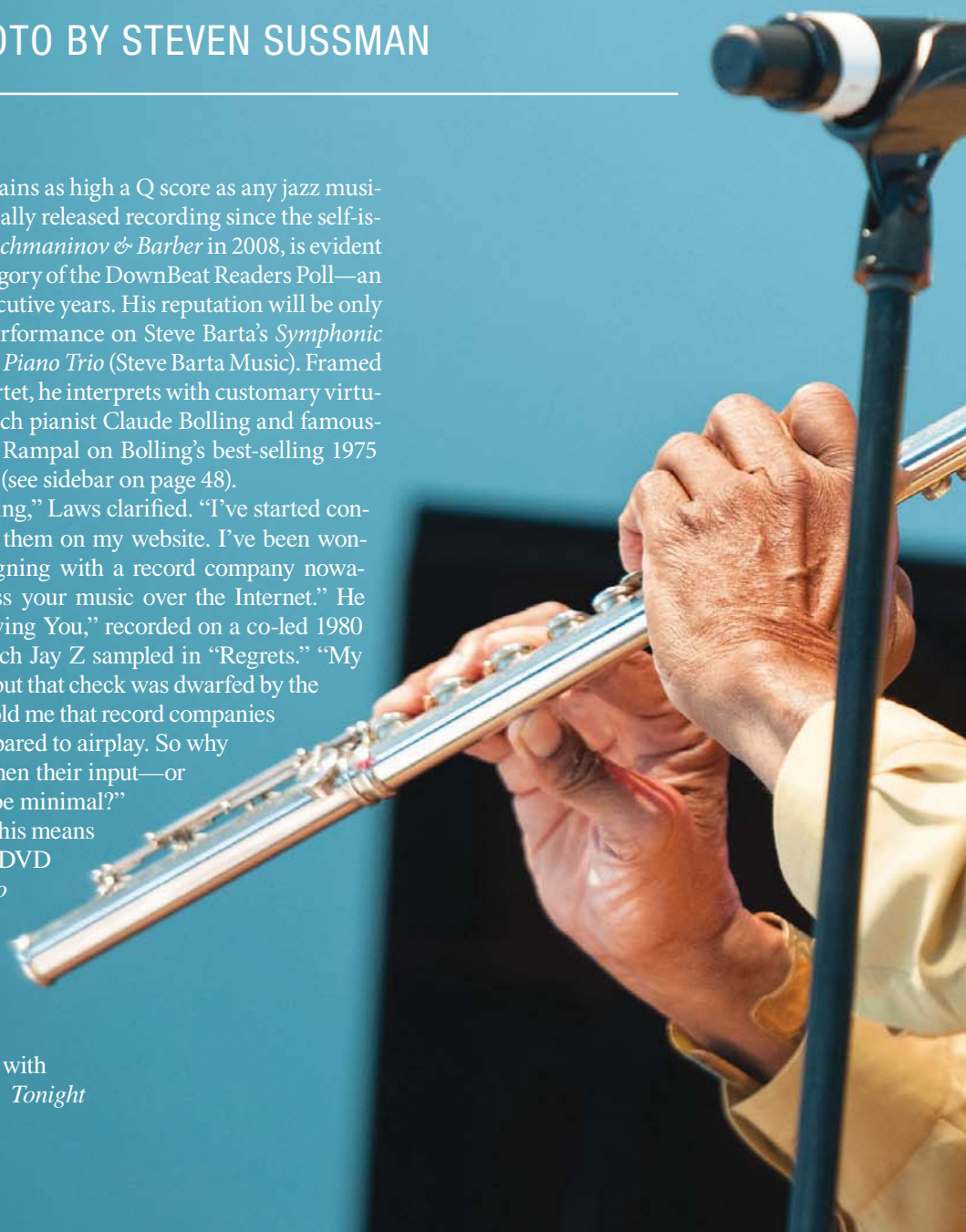
BENEFICIARY OF CIRCUMSTANCES

BY TED PANKEN ■ PHOTO BY STEVEN SUSSMAN

That Hubert Laws, now 76, retains as high a Q score as any jazz musician, even with no commercially released recording since the self-issued *Flute Adaptations Of Rachmaninov & Barber* in 2008, is evident from his win in the Flute category of the DownBeat Readers Poll—an honor he has received for seven consecutive years. His reputation will be only enhanced, if that's possible, by his performance on Steve Barta's *Symphonic Arrangement: Suite For Flute And Jazz Piano Trio* (Steve Barta Music). Framed by a 31-piece orchestra and string quartet, he interprets with customary virtuosity the flute part composed by French pianist Claude Bolling and famously executed by the iconic Jean-Pierre Rampal on Bolling's best-selling 1975 album *Suite For Flute And Jazz Piano* (see sidebar on page 48).

"I'm just a sideman on that recording," Laws clarified. "I've started controlling my own masters and issuing them on my website. I've been wondering about the wisdom of even signing with a record company nowadays, when people can readily access your music over the Internet." He mentioned his song "It's So Easy Loving You," recorded on a co-led 1980 Atlantic album with Earl Klugh, which Jay Z sampled in "Regrets." "My first check came from Sony Records, but that check was dwarfed by the revenues from BMI," he said. "That told me that record companies may be pretty insignificant now, compared to airplay. So why have someone take part of the pie, when their input—or the revenues from that source—will be minimal?"

In keeping with his goal to control his means of production, Laws is selling the DVD *Hubert Laws Live: 30-Year Video Retrospective*. It includes footage from an appearance on the public television broadcast *DownBeat—The 1975 Readers Poll Awards*, and a warp-speed performance of the "Fugace" section of Bolling's suite with the composer on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* during the late '70s.





Hubert Laws at the 2012 Litchfield Jazz Festival in Connecticut

DownBeat: Tell us about your history with Bolling's *Suite For Flute And Jazz Piano*.

Hubert Laws: I did some concerts with Bolling shortly after the suite was released. He's a great admirer of Duke Ellington, and that influenced the feeling he tried to project. I still try to figure out why it became such a big hit. Perhaps it's because Jean-Pierre Rampal had so much classical notoriety that he may have drawn the classical audience, for whom jazz is somewhat of a novelty. The title puzzles me, though, because "jazz," as I have known it, immediately connotes spontaneity, more of a personal expression than reflecting the notes and sentiments of a composer. You take the melody and do your impression based on the chord changes and rhythms.

Bolling's piece, which is 95 percent written, doesn't allow for spontaneity. There's a rhythm section, with rhythms and recognizable innuendos of jazz, but mostly it's only in name. I tried to take as many liberties as I could with the melody to reflect the feeling of jazz. Steve Barta skillfully arranged the strings and accompaniment to complement the original concept, which made it very interesting. I was gratified to be asked to re-record it, though it didn't allow the kind of freedom I'm accustomed to when improvising. He wanted me to take some greater liberties, which I did where I could, on the slow movements, but there's very little you can do on the faster movements.

How do you divide your time between performing and writing new projects?

I'm still learning and endeavoring to maintain and improve my skills. I keep my flute close by. It's in my office on a stand. When I'm on the computer or watching a tennis match, I'll play long tones or whatever else I need to do to maintain my embouchure and other skills. I improvise much more than I used to. When I was at Juilliard, I believed that playing classical music was the zenith. I'd work on concerti and sonatas, difficult

things to play that composers demand of you, and took for granted my innate ability to improvise, a skill that has sustained me over the years. But here, later in life, I'm giving it a lot of attention, and I feel so good about it. It seems to enhance my cognitive skills. I'm able to think more clearly.

You began playing in talent shows when you were in junior high school, and professionally during high school as a saxophonist around Houston with Stix Hooper, Wilton Felder, Joe Sample and Wayne Henderson.

I started out playing mellophone, which is like a French horn with piston valves like a trumpet. Then I went to alto saxophone, then clarinet. I was introduced to the flute in my high school band, when we were playing Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. I was really drawn to it, and I began to pay less attention to the other wind instruments I played. ...

I did play tenor saxophone on Quincy Jones' *Walkin' In Space* and with Harold Mabern [on *Greasy Kid Stuff*]. I also played tenor during my four years with Mongo Santamaria. Mongo was a great experience for me. Although it wasn't the greatest environment for my flute playing, it was a means of learning how Latin music works, and I've been involved with it ever since. Around 2001 I did a CD of all Latin music called *Baila Cinderella*.

You reached a crossroads around 1960, when you had to choose between remaining with your friends in the Jazz Crusaders, with whom you moved from Houston to Los Angeles, or accepting a scholarship to Juilliard. Was that a difficult decision?

I didn't think twice about it. My aspiration was to live a quiet life playing in a symphony orchestra. That's what I ended up doing—I played five years with the New York Philharmonic and then five with the New York Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Then

I had this epiphany that what I was doing naturally—improvised music—is what my calling was all about. It's an ongoing process of personal expression, which is what I like about it. There's so much more to be done. To repeat the same repertoire, over and over, every year, like some of my peers from Juilliard do—how do you think it makes you feel?

You became one of the first pan-stylistic jazz musicians.

I was a beneficiary of circumstances. Things happened spontaneously, from being in the right place at the right time. In New York, I recorded a lot of jingles and television commercials, then Broadway shows, and then the Philharmonic.

It wasn't really planned. No one was saying, "OK, you should go do this or do that." I got calls to do it. But I always practiced very hard, because I wanted to develop my skill, and when the time came for me to perform, I wanted to be prepared. That's why I practice so much, even to this day.

In November, I'm scheduled to play a concert of that Bolling suite in New York. It's a demanding piece. I have to play the notes that were written for me, so I'll devote some time to keeping it under my fingers so I can play within a certain level of performance.

Are there any projects you'd like to do that you have not yet realized?

Right now, I have no specific goal. Most of my life, I've come upon something or heard something, and then tried to make it a part of my musical experience.

I was in South Africa, and we saw some people dancing to music that sounded like a different rhythm than I knew. I recorded the rhythm on my cell phone. I can use that rhythm in something.

That's an improviser's attitude, to take what comes your way and incorporate it.

That's it. I'm a beneficiary of circumstances. **DB**



Barta Reinterprets a Crossover Classic

In 1975, Steve Barta, then an undergraduate psychology major at Mankato State University, 30 miles down the road from his hometown of New Prague, Minnesota, heard a new album by pianist Claude Bolling. Titled *Suite For Flute And Jazz Piano*, it documented a seven-part opus featuring the sublime instrumental voice of Jean-Pierre Rampal. Like millions of other listeners who kept that album high on the Billboard charts for many years, Barta "fell in love."

"I thought the writing was genius," Barta recalled over the phone from his home in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he serves

on the faculty of Colorado College. Although he wasn't writing or arranging music at the time, he felt certain that "at some point in my life this piece would cross my path again," though he couldn't foresee exactly how. Forty years later, on *Symphonic Arrangement: Suite For Flute And Jazz Piano Trio* (Steve Barta Music), he brings to bear a 31-piece orchestra, a string quartet, a jazz-oriented bassist and drummer, the distinguished classical pianist Jeffrey Biegel and the singular voice of flutist Hubert Laws.

"Bolling brought together the jazz and classical genres in a way nobody else had," Barta opined. "Parts of it were fugal; parts of it would swing. The pieces made so much sense structurally, and they were extremely melodic. The first time I heard them, I felt sure they would [stand] the test of time."

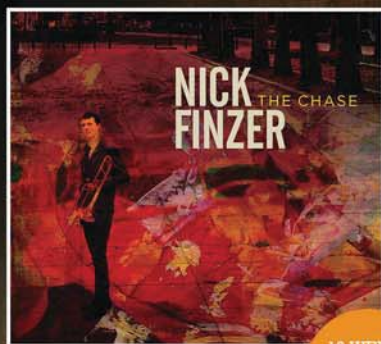
This being said, Barta had reservations. "It was highly structured and perfectly executed, almost to its detriment," he said. "I felt the rhythm tracks needing loosening, a jazzy, American-style interpretation. And I felt the flute player should be someone who can carry

the influence of a fine classical player while truly walking the jazz world."

Over the ensuing decades, Barta, who is self-taught, became a professional pianist and arranger, building a c.v. that included work with Herbie Mann and Dori Caymmi. "The piece stayed on my mind, but I put it away," he said. Then, several years ago, Biegel came to town for a concert and had dinner at Barta's house. "I asked Jeffrey how he felt about the Bolling piece," Barta said. "He told me he'd always wanted to hear an orchestral arrangement."

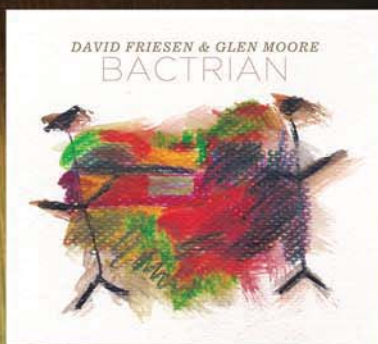
With Bolling's blessing, Barta decided to arrange and orchestrate the suite for expanded instrumentation. He recruited conductor Peter Rotter, who contracted performers from the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He reached out to Laws and to drummer Mike Shapiro, who recommended bassist Mike Valerio.

"I wanted to do it first-rate," Barta said. "I just gave them the score, and that's what came out. I didn't micro-manage anything Hubert played. That's what he does. And he does it so well, he certainly doesn't need my input." —Ted Panken



Nick Finzer
The Chase

10 WEEKS
JAZZWEEK
TOP 25

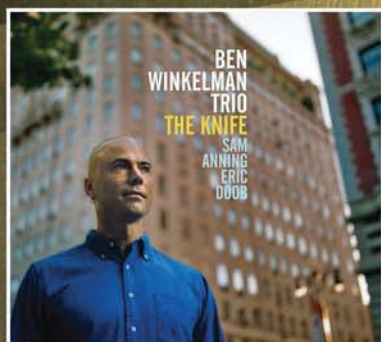


**David Friesen &
Glen Moore** Bactrian



**Electric Squeezebox
Orchestra** Cheap Rent

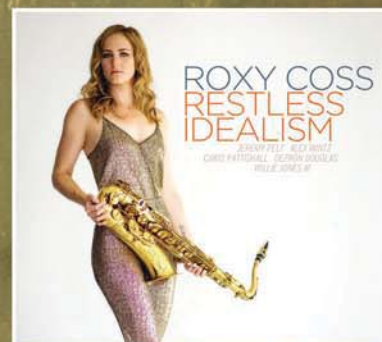
NEW MUSIC from **ORIGIN RECORDS**



Ben Winkelman Trio
Sam Anning / Eric Doob
The Knife



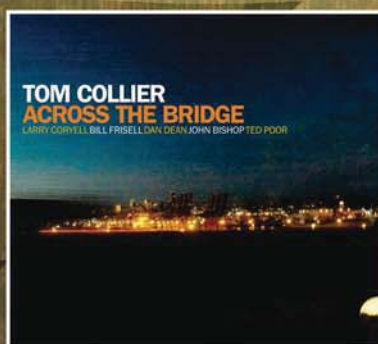
**Jeff Jenkins
Organization**
The Arrival



Roxy Coss
featuring Jeremy Pelt / Dezron Douglas
Restless Idealism



**Laurie Antonioli &
Richie Beirach**
Varuna



Tom Collier
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Caption

Frank Sinatra

[THE GREATEST SINGER EVER]

BY JOHN MCDONOUGH

IT'S BEEN JUST OVER 20 YEARS NOW since February 25, 1995. Not that long ago.

The scene is the Marriott Hotel in Palm Desert, California. It's the Frank Sinatra Celebrity Golf Gala and Sinatra, 79, is there. It will be his first appearance anywhere since the sell-out concerts in Fukuoka, Japan, two months before. But this is not an arena event. It's a saloon gig, intimate, adult and a little boozy. The audience is an invited one—several hundred blue-chip, black-tie insiders, all reveling in the exclusivity of the moment. And maybe a few with their fingers quietly crossed, too. Sinatra has been having some bumpy performances lately.

He is introduced by comic Tom Dreesen, whose words are warm but hyperbolic. Sinatra lives outside the reach of hyperbole now. A simple “Ladies and gentlemen, Frank Sinatra” would have done it. He walks on stage, grabs a mic and bites into “I’ve Got The World On A String.” His presence fills the room with a startling power. Any performance worries are brushed aside. It will be a short 23-minute set. Just six songs, including “You Make Me Feel So Young,” “Fly Me To The Moon,” “Where Or When” and “My Kind Of Town.” Each crackles with grit, punch, bravado, attitude, sweep and swagger—a high concentrate of the old Sinatra many had thought was slipping away. And he runs them all down with no TelePrompTer. It ends with an ironic encore—“The Best Is Yet To Come.”

But the irony is invisible as the band plays him

off. In time we will know. There is no more to come. It's all over.

On this night Sinatra will close his 60-year career as a performer. There will be no announcement, no fanfare, no farewell concert. Just no more songs. Like his music, his career timing has always had a certain intuitive pulse. He got in at just the right time in the late '30s. Now he will leave the same way. He is too careful a custodian of his own legend to let it falter and stumble in public. Better to leave the fans with a final glimpse of it at the height of his powers. Who knows how many opportunities remain at this point? Even Sinatra cannot be sure. But this night is such a chance. And he chooses to take it. He will never sing before an audience again. He celebrates his 80th birthday as a spectator in a TV special. Less than three years later he will be dead.

Today Frank Sinatra may seem remote to young people weaned in the splintered sensibilities of contemporary music—as foreign as those sensibilities may have seemed to him in the 1970s and '80s, when he tried to penetrate their qualities and found them small. It wasn't surprising. Popular music hasn't been a universal language for 50 years. Diversity—both between and within generations—has long since consumed any universality it once had. Its languages are a catalogue of tribal encryptions, intimate to some, incomprehensible to outsiders. This is why few people past 30 now have the slightest idea what the most popular songs are.

Each generation finds its own particular musical Golden Age during its brief trip through adolescence. It moves on, but never forgets. For a few years its music is internalized, then encapsulated. It bonds emotionally to the experiences of those years in a way that it never will again once career, family and responsibility displace the pleasures of innocence. "Quality" is beside the point. "Good taste" is irrelevant. Popular music is rarely an artistic meritocracy. It finds its standards emotionally, not intellectually. All that's important is that it acquires meaning as it attaches to the formative experiences of its audience—parties, school, cars, summer nights and springtime romances. Canons of value are found later to justify and elevate it. Every generation goes to its grave believing that the music of its own Golden Age was simply the "greatest" ever.

But the Sinatra generations were a privileged lot. He probably *was* the greatest singer ever. History has peered through the fog of sentiment and pretty much confirmed that. He remained a force longer than any performer of his era. His presence penetrated a succession of demographics. As the concerts went on, they became points of convergence—moments when one generation might explain something about itself to its children, grandchildren and maybe great-grandchildren. Perhaps the older members of the audience could pass along some sense of their life to their kids if they could make the youngsters understand why this man was so important—and more important, why he was so completely captivating.

This is because such celebrity—fame that exists as an expanding universe of stardom decade after decade—must feed on more than music alone. Sinatra's songbook began to converge when he was still a band singer, but the essential content and feeling would remain remarkably consistent. What was constantly surprising and unexpected was Sinatra himself. He was a bundle of contradictions—outspoken, private, volatile, generous, vindictive, classy, street-wise, open, mysterious. His network of cronies extended high and low, from Princess Grace to Sam Giancana, presumably reflecting the many corners of his lives. He was a ladies' man and a man's man. He was too public to hide behind an image, but too private not to have secrets. That's why the press (and the public it spoke to) couldn't take its eyes off of him. What it couldn't report, it would fabricate or exaggerate. Behind the singer, the public began to see a charismatic confluence of human strength and weakness that informed his songs and gave them authenticity. The craft and talent existed with a larger organic persona. It was fascinating because an effective persona must communicate something heroic in an epic way. And that's why Sinatra came to matter so much.

As his music matured over the years, so did these personas. They moved alongside his music on a parallel track, producing a procession of evolving Sinatras, each mirroring and personifying the values of its time and the aspirations of its audience. At a certain point, the music and the man began to exist in a curious symbiosis. Each fortified the other as the public began to sense that the songs expressed something deeply personal about himself. This is a mirage, of course, an illu-

sion that young performers today spend millions trying to create. It didn't used to be so essential.

For Ella Fitzgerald and Tony Bennett, their charisma was and is wholly in their music—not in their personal lives. Miles Davis and Mick Jagger, however, always seem to represent *more* than their music. They had personas; they represented revolt. Maybe they learned it from Sinatra. This thought occurred to me earlier this year when I was writing a similar piece for this magazine on Billie Holiday—also born in 1915. She also understood the value of a persona, especially the use of revolt as vessel of tragedy. She exploited it and linked it specifically to her music. She died at 44, though, and never lived to see the extraordinary legend

In the Sherman House Hotel that fall, he sang romantic songs, though he didn't look the part quite yet. It didn't matter. With only radio and records on the media menu, sex appeal still resided in the voice of the singer and the imagination of the listener. "This young Frank Sinatra handles the ballads," James told *DownBeat*. "We think he is doing a fine job." It may have been the first time his name appeared in the national media. For eight weeks anyone in Chicago willing to spend 75 cents could go to the Sherman House and be there as the gods of destiny began to gather around this skinny 24-year-old.

James wasn't the only one who thought Sinatra was pretty good. Tommy Dorsey was



that would fill the vacuum of her absence.

Not so with Sinatra. He went for the full ride, fulfilled every potential, lived long enough to collect every honor a thankful world could invent for him. He took us through a lifetime of changing personas—the boy singer, the American idol, the cast-off has-been, the hip Chairman, the worldly elder statesman. It was tacky, troubled and triumphant. Through it all, there was a sense of adventure and fun in being Sinatra. Whereas death was a career move for Billie Holiday, for Sinatra it was just a passage into another persona—the fabled legend-Sinatra. Maybe it will finally fix him in some mythic amber. But don't be too sure. A century after his birth and 17 years after his death, he's still fascinating, still captivating and, in a sense, still evolving.

DownBeat first met the Boy Singer Sinatra in 1939. Chicago was the crossroads of the nation's railroads then and the biggest music venue in America outside of New York City. All the bands played there—on their way up and their way down. In September Harry James was on his way up. Sinatra had been with him only 10 weeks.

The Dorsey orchestra moved into the prestigious Palmer House two blocks from the Sherman House just as Dorsey was looking to replace singer Jack Leonard. In the Wrigley Building one day, a CBS music executive asked Dorsey if he'd ever seen Sinatra. "He's nothing to look at but he's got a sound," he told him. "My back was to the bandstand, but when the kid started taking a chorus, I had to turn around." Dorsey told his road manager, Bob Burns, to have Sinatra meet him the next afternoon in his suite. Dorsey welcomed him, got down to business quickly and offered him \$125 a week.

Sinatra started to build a lasting songbook with Dorsey: "I'll Be Seeing You," "East Of The Sun," "Street Of Dreams," "Without A Song," "Violets For Your Furs," "The Song Is You," "Stardust" and "I'll Never Smile Again." Dorsey knew from the start what a sensation he had in Sinatra. After two-and-a-half years, Sinatra knew it, too. By September 1942 he was on his own, about to be thrust into an unmapped frontier of fame, the existence of which no one had yet imagined—a place where millions of shrieking young

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girls awaited him. Sinatra was about to become the first American idol.

This was the Sinatra that DownBeat saw in May 1946 headlining the Chicago Theater. Now a national sensation, he had morphed into a rolling dynamo of sexual magnetism, able to ignite young passions with a whispered rubato or the intimate swerve of note from sharp to flat. He was called “The Voice.” Fans began lining up four abreast at dawn on Friday, May 17. And “something new has been added to the stage show,” the local press noted. “A brace of burly policeman arranged ... in plain sight at both sides of the stage.” In the new frontier of fame that Sinatra had penetrated, “security” would become a permanent fixture. “That’s something I’ve never seen before,” one reporter wrote. He probably had never seen young girls being carried prostrate out of a performance, either, overcome by the sight of a singer. The pandemonium was apparent nationwide. The irony was that Sinatra was doing nothing to invite such mayhem. He sang soft love songs (“I’ve Got A Crush On You,” “Someone To Watch Over Me,” “You Go To My Head”) and serious concert pieces (“Soliloquy” from *Carousel*). He seemed as baffled by it all as the cultural anthropologists who scrambled for reasons.

How long could such passions last? By 1952 the answer was clear: Sinatra was over. A series of personal and career blows hit him in quick succession: MGM dropped him, Columbia Records dropped him, MCA dropped him, his first wife had dropped him and his second was about to separate from him. Local columnists covered him that summer as if he were a nostalgia act. “It’s difficult to realize it was nine years ago that Frank Sinatra swept across the American scene,” the Chicago Tribune said. “Time has marched on, and Sinatra looks strangely dated. Ask a youngster of 16 today what she thinks of Sinatra and she’ll look at you as if you were dredging up something from the horse and buggy age.”

Sinatra’s post-war persona had probably been less influenced by his music than his boyish movie

roles at MGM: *Anchors Aweigh* (1945), *The Kissing Bandit* (1948) and *On the Town* (1949). Now in his 30s, divorced and remarried to Ava Gardner, such innocence clashed with the reality of the real Sinatra. A persona need not be authentic. But it must be believable.

It was the bottom of his famous slump. He did not wear defeat well, but Sinatra would never be an object of press-induced self-pity. The pain was as private as he could keep it. For Sinatra, in fact, the public and private wounds of his fall became oddly empowering. They gave the still-boyish Sinatra a sobering slap of adulthood followed by a series of lucky opportunities, including a defining film role, *From Here to Eternity* (1953), that would practically erase *The Kissing Bandit* from the public memory. Sinatra entered the slump as an aging adolescent idol. He came out of it around 1954 a grown man in his 40th year who could sing a love song with an emotional authority that seemed not just credible but autobiographical. Most singers can be located somewhere on a spectrum between musician and actor. Sinatra found the perfect spot between the two. It set him up for his most stunning recording achievements and decades of success in film, television, clubs and concerts. By the time he came back to The Windy City in November 1962, he was the coolest man in the world.

That’s when I got my first up-close glimpse of Sinatra. It was at the Villa Venice, a faded but patched-up roadhouse 10 miles north of Chicago. And it was not just Sinatra now, but the Rat Pack with pals-in-residence Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. Sinatra was now at the pinnacle of his powers and stature. *The Manchurian Candidate* was in theaters and his latest LP, *All Alone*, had just come out. When he walked on stage he radiated certainty and control. This was “The Chairman of the Board” himself in full thrust—the latest, most rakish and enduring of Sinatra’s personas and leader of the wildest, most beguiling pack of rogues on earth. The trio did a dozen shows that incendiary week. Then, poof! It was all gone, and the Villa Venice went dark. Behind the sparkle, some folks wondered: What could bring the three most sensational entertainers in America from Las Vegas to play a week on the edge of an unincorporated forest preserve?

The answer went to the essence of the dilemmas that made the Sinatra persona dangerous, exciting and endlessly attractive—the glamour of its channels into President Kennedy’s Camelot and the darker connections it could access into the secret corners of the underworld. What few knew then was the Villa Venice had a silent owner, Chicago mobster Sam Giancana. Years later it came out. Two years before, Joe Kennedy was quietly helping plan his son Jack’s primary election strategy for the 1960 Democratic nomination. The Protestant labor vote in West Virginia was crucial to smothering the Catholic issue, and Giancana had deep connections in the state’s labor network. No Kennedy could approach such a man directly, but family friend Sinatra could be an interlocutor. Sinatra made the contact as a favor to Kennedy, Giancana put his influence to work as a favor to Sinatra, and

John F. Kennedy was elected. By the rules of such transactions, it was Sinatra who owed Giancana. Kennedy was insulated. The Villa Venice was one favor in return for another. It made history in more ways than one.

There would be other Sinatras, some tentative as he searched out new song material in a time when the great craftsmen had been replaced by singer-songwriters. Old 1970s pictures of him in polyester Nehru jackets and love beads are a clue that the times were shaking Sinatra’s confidence in his core art. He was conscious—perhaps desperately so—of his persona and the need to keep it contemporary. If his experiments seem cringe-worthy today, they were at least temporary.

As rock changed the economic calculations of the touring music business, Sinatra became less a saloon singer and more an arena attraction, where one performance could equal 20 Villa Venice shows. After his famous “retirement” concert in 1971, the risk that he might disappear made him stronger than ever. As his movie career wound down, his touring calendar ramped up and the venues got even bigger. A new generation of critics held him up to the younger Sinatras they knew from records. They probed his performances for telltale cracks in the mortar—a wayward pitch, a tiny frog. It was all now irrelevant, anyway. People could see the Sinatra they wanted to see. The arc of the Sinatra character was beyond the reach of any critic’s second-guessing. His persona was now at cruising speed in the calm stratosphere of its own legend. This was the Sinatra we would continue to see for the next 20 years. We didn’t want him to change.

It is still hard to hear Sinatra sing without feeling one of the Sinatra personas peering over his shoulder at us. But in the end, they are not his real legacy. The further our sense of the man slips from nostalgia into the emotional neutrality of history, the more future listeners will hear only the music and may appreciate how good it really was. If a true classic is timeless, then time is on Sinatra’s side.

DB

Centennial Gifts

Numerous products will celebrate the centennial of the birth of Francis Albert Sinatra, who was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on Dec. 12, 1915. Here are three of them:

Ultimate Sinatra: This four-CD box set from Capitol/Ume compiles 101 tracks that the singer recorded for Columbia, Capitol and Reprise. (See our feature on this set on page 89.)

Frank Sinatra: A Voice On Air (1935–1955): Hardcore fans will seek out Legacy Recordings’ four-CD set, which compiles rare radio performance and rehearsals, including 91 that are previously unreleased.

Sinatra 100: Published by Thames & Hudson and written by Sinatra expert Charles Pignone, this 288-page book includes more than 400 photographs. The tome features forewords by Steve Wynn and Tony Bennett as well as afterwords by Nancy Sinatra, Tina Sinatra and Frank Sinatra Jr.

DB





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COMPLETE RESULTS

This year's poll had 28,496 voters. See page 40 for Jazz Album results, and see page 42 for Historical Album results.

80th

READERS

POLL

HALL OF FAME

TONY BENNETT 1,237

Wynton Marsalis.....	797
John McLaughlin	765
Bob Brookmeyer	717
Hank Mobley	672
Les Paul	605
Phil Woods	600
Jack DeJohnette	568
Marian McPartland	560
Tito Puente	533
George Benson	525
Grant Green	469
Benny Golson	453
Carmen McRae	445
George Duke	432
James Moody	424
Toots Thielemans	413
Shirley Horn	384
Mel Tormé	376
Kenny Burrell	360
Charles Lloyd	341
Steve Gadd	325
Kenny Barron	304
Jimmy Heath	296
Dr. John	277
Mark Murphy	277

JAZZ ARTIST

CHICK COREA 848

Wayne Shorter	752
Chris Potter	637
Diana Krall	616
Wynton Marsalis	613
Pat Metheny	568
Tony Bennett	565
Maria Schneider	560
Christian McBride	525
Roy Haynes	424
Charles Lloyd	413
John McLaughlin	408
Wycliffe Gordon	405
Vijay Iyer	397
Esperanza Spalding	397
Keith Jarrett	368
John Scofield	360
Gregory Porter	357
Kenny Barron	349

Kurt Elling	341
Tom Harrell	341

JAZZ GROUP

SNARKY PUPPY 1,237

Pat Metheny Unity Group	992
Wynton Marsalis Quintet	677
Chick Corea Trio	624
Keith Jarrett Standards Trio	608
Wayne Shorter Quartet	608
Charles Lloyd Quartet	477
Yellowjackets	477
Chris Potter Underground Orchestra	464
The Bad Plus	445
Ahmad Jamal Trio	424
Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue	397
Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band	384
Christian McBride & Inside Straight	376
Preservation Hall Jazz Band	360
Esperanza Spalding's Radio Music Society	360
The Cookers	352
Vijay Iyer Trio	336
Tom Harrell Quintet	333
Roy Hargrove Quintet	328

BIG BAND

JAZZ AT LINCOLN

CENTER ORCHESTRA 1,853

Maria Schneider Orchestra	1,845
Count Basie Orchestra	1,416
Gordon Goodwin Big Phat Band	944
Mingus Big Band	720
Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra	669
Christian McBride Big Band	653
Vanguard Jazz Orchestra	608
Bob Mintzer Big Band	605
Dave Holland Big Band	549
Darcy James Argue's Secret Society	512
Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band	512

Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra	493
SFJAZZ Collective	485
WDR Big Band	485
Sun Ra Arkestra	437
Carla Bley Big Band	429
Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band	408
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Annie Lennox, <i>Nostalgia</i> (Blue Note)	352
Kamasi Washington, <i>The Epic</i> (Brainfeeder)	320
Keith Jarrett/Charlie Haden, <i>Last Dance</i> (ECM)	300
Diana Krall, <i>Wallflower</i> (Verve)	293
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Bill Frisell, <i>Guitar In The Space Age!</i> (Okeh)	269
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Chris McNulty, <i>Eternal</i> (Palmetto)	248
Cassandra Wilson, <i>Coming Forth By Day</i> (Sony Legacy)	232
Jack DeJohnette, <i>Made In Chicago</i> (ECM)	221
Rudresh Mahanthappa, <i>Bird Calls</i> (ACT)	216
Dave Stryker, <i>Messin' With Mr. T</i> (Strikezone)	208
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Harold Mabern, <i>Afro Blue</i> (Smoke Sessions)	200
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Vijay Iyer Trio, <i>Break Stuff</i> (ECM)	197
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Charles Lloyd, <i>Wild Man Dance</i> (Blue Note)	189
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Cannonball Adderley Sextet, <i>Complete Live In Tokyo</i> (Solar)	726
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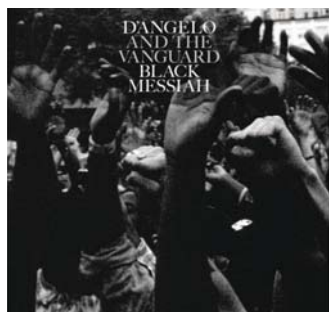
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A high-contrast black and white image. On the left, a person is shown in silhouette, holding a long, thin vertical pole. The pole extends from the bottom of the frame towards the top, where it is illuminated by a very bright, circular light source, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the top of the pole. The person's head is turned slightly to the right, looking towards the light. The background is dark, making the light source and the silhouette stand out.

CHILLPILL LIVEBAND II NOTHINGLEFT

ANDREJ ŠEBAN MARK MONDESIR GARY HUSBAND

MICHAEL MONDESIR ŠTEFAN BUGALA MICHAL BUGALA JURAJ GRIGLÁK

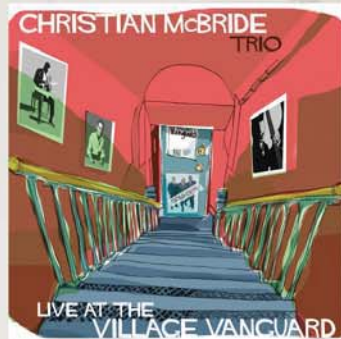
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Christian McBride Trio
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Masterpiece ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

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REVIEWS >

Karrin Allyson



INGRID HERTFELDER

Karrin Allyson *Many A New Day*

MOTÉMA 183

★★★★

Norman Granz, who guided Ella Fitzgerald through those legendary songbook albums, once explained to me why they did Rodgers and Hart but never Rodgers and Hammerstein. The collaborations with Hammerstein, he said, were more theater than song and had a sugary center that resisted Fitzgerald's urbanity. There was some truth in the distinction. But Karrin Allyson's new Rodgers and Hammerstein collection willingly embraces both the theater and the sugar, while spicing it up smartly with dapper vocal arrangements and Kenny Barron's bracing accompaniments.

She certainly demonstrates that the songbook is still the singer's best and most loyal friend when formatting an album. She favors three legendary shows here—*Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific* and *The King and I*—none of which generated much heavy traffic from the jazz world. Yet she leans toward some of these musicals' lesser-known songs, which strike a nice balance between fresh and familiar but leave space for tangy touches of hipness.

Everybody who knows "Oh What A Beautiful Mornin'"—and that's everybody—will savor the softly banking curves she puts on that "elephant's eye" in the verse before she and Barron steer it into a progressively more funky feel. But with only Patitucci on bass and no lurching backbeats cracking the air, it's all nicely subtle. Allyson and Barron take the childlike tick-tock of "Happy Talk" and add a long bopish introduction, turning that kid song into a fairly stylish adult. And she eases the preachiness of "You've Got To Be Carefully Taught" with an after-hours sensuality, as if confiding her anger to a friendly bartender. Allyson opens up the most natural swinger of the group, "Surrey With The Fringe On Top," with a full scat interlude and a final chorus in ascending half-step keys.

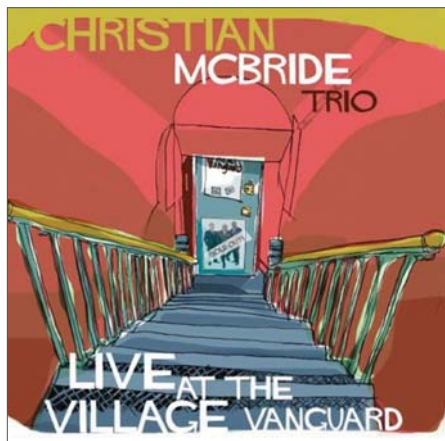
What may surprise some is how many songs from these famous shows they may not know. Not every R&H tune became an anthem of the American theater. All are ballads of different kinds (the most charming being "I Can't Say No"), which Allyson treats in a fairly straight and intimate cabaret style. She has created a very good collection that should find a large audience of eager Rodgers and Hammerstein admirers. But Granz was not entirely wrong. I hope she gets around to Rodgers and Hart one day soon.

—John McDonough

Many A New Day: Oh What A Beautiful Mornin'; Many A New Day; Happy Talk; I Can't Say No; I Have Dreamed; Out Of My Dreams; Bali Ha'i; When I Think Of Tom; Hello Young Lovers; We Kiss In A Shadow; You've Got To Be Carefully Taught; Something Wonderful; Surrey With The Fringe On Top; Something Good; Edelweiss. (54:36)

Personnel: Karrin Allyson, vocals, piano; Kenny Barron, piano; John Patitucci, bass.

Ordering info: motema.com



Christian McBride Trio *Live At The Village Vanguard*

MAC K AVENUE 1099

★★★★½

Christian McBride has been quoted as saying that “there’s nothing more modern than a standard with the push.” That’s a matter of opinion, but it’s surely been a winning recipe for the virtuosos bassist.

Though powered by catholic interests, he has heartily evangelized the creative rigor of straight-ahead jazz, a sound that’s been slowly on the run for the last decade or so. Thanks to the playful commitment of his piano trio, it’s impressively revitalized on this portrait of a three-night Vanguard stretch.

Gilad Hekselman *Homes*

JAZZ VILLAGE 570058

★★★★½

Homes is the fifth outing from the Israeli-born, New York-based guitarist Gilad Hekselman, and it’s a nice one, covering various bases with panache and grace. Hekselman has been on the scene for a decade, working with top colleagues, including this working trio. There’s nothing outstandingly original here, but the approaches—which range from boppish to light classical to mainstream fusion-diaspora—are handled with a personal touch by a deft, remarkably fluid guitarist.

References to Pat Metheny, which Hekselman’s music has drawn in the past, are not unwarranted; writing songish tunes, he has a similar sneaky line, an unexpectedness in his timing and closely related tone. But he’s not a copycat by any means, even when playing Metheny’s “Last Train Home” as a duet with the crisp drums of Jeff Ballard; Hekselman makes the tune his own, as if to challenge the comparison.

The best tracks, for me, are the less dreamy ones, like Bud Powell’s “Parisian Thoroughfare,” which is given a brisk workout that makes me wish to hear a whole record of Hekselman playing bop. “Keedee,” which incorporates both special guest Ballard and the trio’s regular drummer, Marcus Gilmore, is another outstanding track, the guitarist flying through the optimistic theme, the two drummers keeping it spare and hinting at the African inspiration. Joe Martin nails it on

Ceaselessly pushing an overt style of swing, Team McBride gives its cover material the kind of hyped attack and collective flair that provides audiences with lots of pleasure points. There’s no head-scratching here, no pregnant pause before the crowd discerns direction. The trio’s goals are straight up: connect as one, fill the designs with inventive action and tickle the patrons with some splash ‘n’ flash. Whether it’s the Wes Montgomery nugget that’s used as the album kick-off (“Fried Pies”), or the Rose Royce outro tune (“Car Wash”), they make obviousness a key element of their art.

Precision and dynamics are paramount. Like the arrangements on the band’s 2013 debut, most everything is sketched to accommodate cues for punctuation and change-ups—you can hear them coming to some degree. But that foreshadowing doesn’t mar the interplay because each of the players crushes his role.

J.J. Johnson’s “Interlude” finds pianist Christian Sands dropping a two-fisted tsunami that gets loads of house reaction. Drummer Ulysses Owens Jr. lifts his mates on a galloping “Cherokee,” and McBride dazzles with that impeccable intonation and constant oomph. Even the Billie Holiday ballad—“Good Morning Heartache”—has a subtle fierceness. Turns out splash ‘n’ flash, when used judiciously and applied to various approaches, can still carry the day.

—Jim Macnie

Live At The Village Vanguard: Fried Pies; Band Introduction; Interlude; Sand Dune; The Lady In My Life; Cherokee; Good Morning Heartache; Down By The Riverside; Car Wash. (68:28)

Personnel: Christian McBride, bass; Christian Sands, piano; Ulysses Owens Jr. drums.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



bass, as he does throughout.

Homes’ slower tracks are also worthy. Gilmore’s hesitating hiccup and gargantuan snare on “Eyes To See” charge the power-ballad with extra power, a moody ambience infusing the cut like smoke slipping into a spotlight.

Nods at Brazil are de rigueur these days, but Hekselman makes good on Baden Powell’s “Samba Em Prelúdio,” his caressing lines never simpering, but staying firm and decisive.

—John Corbett

Homes: Homes; Verona; Keedee; Home E-minor; Space; Cosmic Patience; Eyes To See; Parisian Thoroughfare; Samba Em Prelúdio; Last Train Home; Dove Song; Place Like No Home. (58:58)

Personnel: Gilad Hekselman, guitar; Joe Martin, bass; Marcus Gilmore, Jeff Ballard (3, 10), drums.

Ordering info: jazzvillagemusic.com



Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah *Stretch Music*

ROPEADOPE/STRETCH MUSIC 001

★★★★

In this follow-up to his eponymous 2012 album on Concord, trumpeter Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah plays what he calls “stretch music”—a fusion of jazz and rock, hip-hop, blues, traditional music and whatever else he fancies from the African diaspora. This album feels more focused, concentrated and electronically manipulated than his sprawling previous album. It also sounds a lot like Miles Davis in his *Bitches Brew* period—not a bad thing, but a development that somewhat deflates the trumpeter’s youthful pronouncements about innovation. Scott also recalls Rahsaan Roland Kirk in his adoption of a non-European name—Atunde and Adjuah are towns in Ghana—theatrical regalia, and eccentric instruments (sirennet, reverse flugelhorn).

If all this feels like a distraction, Scott’s huge, burnished tone and authoritative command of his horn certainly will not. His Latin bravado on “Twin,” Miles-like muted moodiness on “Perspectives” and pyrotechnic high notes on the rocked-up “West Of The West” are impressive. Whatever name he goes by, this guy can play, and he’s created an attractive collection of settings in which to showcase his horn. This makes it all the more disappointing that he’s also using some kind of chorus or echoing device on several tracks to double- and triple-up his sound, imbuing the music with a false orchestral grandeur. Overall, for music that wants desperately to sound new and effusive, this album feels tense and half-digested.

It does, however, showcase a marvelous flute player, Elena Pinderhughes, who soars with inspirational abandon on the airy, African-influenced “Liberation Over Gangsterism.” Guitarist Matthew Stevens also contributes tastily fuzzed-up rock guitar solos, and vibist Warren Wolf brings warmth to the icy “Of A New Cool.”

—Paul de Barros

Stretch Music: Sunrise In Beijing; Twin; Perspectives; West Of The West; Liberation Over Gangsterism; The Corner; Of A New Cool; Runnin’ 7s (For Big Chief Donald Harrison Sr.); Tantric; The Last Chieftain; The Horizon. (51:00)

Personnel: Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, trumpet, sirennet, reverse flugelhorn; Elena Pinderhughes, flute; Braxton Cook, alto saxophone; Corey King, trombone; Cliff Hines, Matthew Stevens (4, 5, 7, 10), guitar; Lawrence Fields, piano; Fender Rhodes; Warren Wolf, vibes (3, 7); Kris Funn, bass; Corey Fonville, drums (1–5, 7–10); Joe Dyson, pan African drums (1, 2, 5–11).

Ordering info: ropeadope.com

The Hot Box

Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Karrin Allyson <i>Many A New Day</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Christian McBride Trio <i>Live At The Village Vanguard</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★½
Gilad Hekselman <i>Homes</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah <i>Stretch Music</i>	★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★

Critics' Comments

Karrin Allyson, *Many A New Day*

To find a way to reinvent these songs and still stay true to what they're about—that's a feat. And everything about Allyson's approach is appealing; she's without the insipid little-girl affectations that afflict some song-stresses, and her voice is rich without lading on the emotionality. And she's got Barron and Patitucci—that's a plenty!
—John Corbett

Intimacy has long been Allyson's forte, and this piano/bass amble through the R&H musical nexus is fortified by the deep lyricism of Barron and Patitucci—understated marvels abound. The singer sells the sentiments nicely.
—Jim Macnie

Karrin Allyson's immaculate voice and consummate good taste are usually an inspiration, but on this album of reimagined classics it's sometimes difficult to separate the songs from their hoary Broadway roots. While Barron and Patitucci do some terrific reharmonizing on "I Cain't Say No" and "Edelweiss," elsewhere they sound more jumpy than swinging, never quite settling into a groove.
—Paul de Barros

Christian McBride, *Live At The Village Vanguard*

A strong trio set with a hard-swinging whiplash, especially in the contrasting tempo interludes that drive "Cherokee." The flying fingers of McBride and Sands are well matched. "Heartache" lingers a bit amidst the overall sparkle of the playing.
—John McDonough

An accurate account of a strong Vanguard hit for the bassist's trio, with trolling bop, church music, soul jazz, soul and funk. High musicianship, sometimes with the ambition bar set a bit low (see "The Lady In My Life"), but with such an insane rhythmic feel (see "Cherokee") that such complaints are easy to overlook.
—John Corbett

This album feels nostalgic for a time when jazz piano trios led by the likes of Oscar Peterson, Vince Guaraldi and Ramsey Lewis made sparkling, on-the-spot live albums that actually sold records. The trio moves seamlessly from the down-home groove of "Down By The Riverside" to J.J. Johnson's wonderful "Interlude" to the funk-up disco clap of Rose Royce's "Car Wash."
—Paul de Barros

Gilad Hekselman, *Homes*

A warm, pretty, accomplished and pleasantly serene guitar trio. Music is soft and inconspicuous; rewards are welcoming but subtle. Only on the boppish "Parisian Thoroughfare" does Hekselman reach out with the kind of affirmative energy and focus that would snap a jazz crowd to attention. Otherwise, peace!
—John McDonough

The more I play it, the more I want to play it. Hekselman's insight into how variety can be distributed gives a cinematic flow to the 12-track program. The Powell to Powell transition is heavenly.
—Jim Macnie

After the yearning cut "Home E-Minor," it was no surprise to hear this quietly restrained young guitarist doing Baden Powell's "Samba Em Prelúdio." Brazilian lyricism and the glowing tone of Pat Metheny and Jim Hall flow through this lovely album. The interplay with bassist Joe Martin on "Keedee" is brilliant.
—Paul de Barros

Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, *Stretch Music*

Suggestions of Miles in his declining years. Scott plays with a clear, cutting intonation, but snaps off his music in short spirts, rips and whoops, rarely sustaining an idea long enough to take it places. An artificial echo gives the music space but also a chill. "Of New Cool" brings a glimpse of shape to the otherwise woozy atmospheric.
—John McDonough

In attitude, Scott's Afro-synthetic aesthetic calls to mind Jon Hassell more than Miles Davis, which is fine given all of today's warmed-over Miles projects. Layering flute and trumpet over a nervous veldt of live and electronic percussion, he achieves a convincing cyborg jazz fusion.
—John Corbett

It isn't easy to balance and personalize all those influences, but from Thom Yorke's whispers to J Dilla's clatter, Scott's got an engaging approach to mixology. This might be his most potent work yet.
—Jim Macnie



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Tony Bennett & Bill Charlap *The Silver Lining: The Songs Of Jerome Kern*

RPM/COLUMBIA RECORDS 88875-14574

★★★★★

In June 1975, Tony Bennett and Bill Evans, both in middle age and at the height of their powers, sat down in Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California, to record an album of American standards, mostly ballads. The result was a simple masterpiece and a career landmark for both performers.

Forty years after that first collection, we have another set of ineffably beautiful piano/vocal duets of classic tunes. Improbably, the singer is *still* Bennett, and the pianist is *still* named Bill. Replacing the late Evans, however, is Bill Charlap,

a master interpreter of the American Popular Songbook who never lets his poise stand in the way of swing. The resulting album is sublime.

As in the Bennett/Evans album, the pianist is a full collaborator, not just an accompanist. A major difference, however—and arguably for the better—is that Charlap’s fabulous playing is supported on 11 of the 14 tunes by the judicious addition of three exceptional musicians: pianist Renee Rosnes (Charlap’s wife), who joins him on four tunes; and his sidemen of 20 years, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington.

Bennett’s voice is profound. The goosebumps begin with the opener, “All The Things You Are,” one of the album’s three pure piano/vocal duets. Bennett remains in full control of his instrument. His high notes, when he reaches for them, as in the thrilling climax of “Long Ago And Far Away,” seem to come from some previously untapped spring of pure melody. This is now the version of the song to beat.

Like all great albums, *The Silver Lining* can be savored in multiple ways: for the late musings of a master singer; for Charlap’s thrilling solos; for the telepathic partnership between Charlap and his bandmates; or as a welcome refresher course in the Jerome Kern songbook. —Allen Morrison

The Silver Lining: The Songs Of Jerome Kern: All The Things You Are; Pick Yourself Up; The Last Time I Saw Paris; I Won’t Dance; Long Ago And Far Away; Dearly Beloved; The Song Is You; They Didn’t Believe Me; I’m Old Fashioned; The Way You Look Tonight; Yesterdays; Make Believe; Nobody Else But Me; Look For The Silver Lining. (46:53)

Personnel: Tony Bennett, vocals; Bill Charlap, Renee Rosnes (5, 6, 10, 12), piano; Peter Washington, bass (2–4, 8, 9, 13, 14); Kenny Washington, drums (2–4, 8, 9, 13, 14).

Ordering info: columbiarecords.com

John Hébert *Rambling Confessions*

SUNNYSIDE 1413

★★★★½

A ubiquitous figure on the New York jazz scene for the past two decades, New Orleans-born bassist John Hébert has straddled the inside-outside-Third Stream aesthetics in his work with pianists Andrew Hill, Fred Hersch and Paul Bley. In all of his numerous settings, Hébert exhibits Zen-like patience, incredible ears and strong convictions as an improviser, often surrounding his huge, resonant upright tone with lots of space. He demonstrates some of those same qualities on his Sunnyside debut while also presenting several original compositions that showcase the stunning vocals of Jen Shyu.

Intuitive interaction is the guiding principle of this adventurous outing. Whether it’s spacious, rubato meditations like Chan Marshall’s “Fool” or Hébert’s “When You Love” (the latter featuring Shyu’s ethereal wordless vocals wafting gracefully in the air), or more rhythmically charged fare like the lightly swinging “Upbeat Down” or the grooving “70s’ And 80’s Remix” (which has Shyu running tight unisons with pianist Andy Milne on some challenging, dissonant lines), these pieces are all characterized by an abundance of trust and daring. Even their two well-known covers—Kurt Weill’s “September Song” and Burt Bacharach’s “Alfie”—have been radically re-imagined by these intrepid risk-takers.

Milne is a marvel throughout with his delicate



touch and empathetic accompaniment, while drummer Billy Drummond brings a world of textures, colors and dynamics to the table with sticks, brushes and mallets. Hébert, the backbone from track to track, provides some brilliant counterpoint to Shyu’s amazing wordless vocals on “Rodger’s Lodge” and also offers a resounding, woody-toned solo on that standout number. But this daring project is not about solos. It’s more about kindred spirits communing, and casting a spell in the process.

—Bill Milkowski

Rambling Confessions: September Song; Fool; When You Love; Upbeat Down; Alfie; Rodger’s Lodge; Media Luna; 70’s And 80’s Remix. (50:59)

Personnel: John Hébert, bass; Jen Shyu, vocals; Andy Milne, piano; Billy Drummond, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com



Tom Harrell *First Impressions*

HIGHNOTE 7276

★★★★★

It would be easy to categorize trumpeter Tom Harrell’s *First Impressions* as a classical/jazz fusion in the tradition of Third Stream, but that would be unnecessarily limiting. Yes, six out of the eight tracks are credited either to Claude Debussy or Maurice Ravel, and the album features a string section. But it’s probably more useful to think of the disc simply as a triumph of jazz composition, and leave it at that. Augmenting his working quintet with flute, guitar, violin and cello, Harrell here is doing the kind of detailed and challenging ensemble writing that one also hears these days from the likes Jamie Baum and Bill Frisell, or John Hollenbeck for his Large Ensemble.

It’s not surprising that the centerpiece of *First Impressions* is Harrell’s own nearly 12-minute “Perspectives,” a multi-section work that deploys varied Brazilian rhythms and disparate melodic episodes, including an atonal piano solo passage. The final tenor solo by Wayne Escoffery is set against a fast walk in the rhythm section and slow-moving chords from the winds and strings. Harrell’s flugelhorn solo is light and free, mixing short and long phrases, a lyric bird on the wing.

The counterpart to “Perspectives” is Harrell’s arrangement of Debussy’s “Passepié,” which includes a bossa nova section for guitarist Rale Micic and a double cadenza for Escoffery on tenor and Meg Okura on violin, each with its own distinct character. Harrell’s handling of textures and structure is a balm throughout the album. Each one of these pieces, no matter how varied the contents, moves with inexorable rightness from section to section, always with something new to catch the ear. Despite the broad palette and far-reaching rhythmic variety, Harrell has a jazzman’s understanding of grooves—the habanera of Ravel’s “Voices” is de rigueur, with the added punch of the stop-time section that drives Harrell’s solo. This is a jazz record. An uncommonly good one.

—Jon Garelick

First Impressions: Sainte; Voices; Perspectives; Beau Soir; Reverie; Passepié; Sarabande; Musique Du Café. (63:27)

Personnel: Tom Harrell, trumpet (4, 5, 7), flugelhorn (1, 2, 3, 6, 8); Wayne Escoffery, soprano (1, 2, 3, 6, 8) and tenor saxophone; Charles Pillow, flute (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8), bass flute (4); Danny Grissett, piano; Rale Micic, guitar (3, 4, 6, 7, 8); Meg Okura, violin; Ruben Kodheli, cello; Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Banda De Los Muertos *Banda De Los Muertos*

BARBES 0040

★★★★½

Jacob Garchik *Ye Olde*

YESTEREVE RECORDS 05

★★★

Two outrageously divergent releases—one filtering prog rock with medieval tales of majesty and architecture, the other a below-the-border shindig that will have feet hopping and kegs popping—each emanated from the mind of trombonist/sousaphonist Jacob Garchik and (for the latter release) clarinet master Oscar Noriega.

After the gospel trombone blowout of his previous record, *The Heavens*, Garchik returned to his Brooklyn base and wondered, “What if I composed a suite of surreal adventures set amidst a landscape of ruined castles and apartment buildings and asked the city’s most badass guitar players to joust over the detritus?” Garchik, a former sideman to Henry Threadgill, Lee Konitz and John Hollenbeck, and an arranger for the Kronos Quartet, is light-years from the Robert Fripp-derived prog-rock of *Ye Olde*. To enjoy this album’s guitar-centric splendor one must absorb *Ye Olde*’s liner notes, which clarify the album’s plot as “featuring a cast of misfits, cryptic architectural stonework, and an illuminating ray of light in a map room set in a magical medieval [Brooklyn].”

From Vinnie Sperrazza’s pummeling drum work on opener “Ye Olde Of Flatbush” to Garchik’s spastic noise-quakes in “The Sinister Scheme Of Mortise Mansard” to the King Crimson-inspired guitar eloquence of “The Lady Of Duck Island,” *Ye Olde* is a tour of Brooklyn prog rock by bus, ferry and robo-horse. The band grooves ambitiously while guitars battle in the dreamscape of “And Meanwhile”; Brandon Seabrook serves up bloody distortion in “The Elders Of Ocean Pathway”; and Mary Halvorson steps lightly through the wreck of “The Battle Of Brownstone Bulge.”

Where *Ye Olde* is intrinsically New York City music, *Banda De Los Muertos* is world music from Mexico. The riotous Banda of Garchik’s gringos brings the festive dance fodder stateside.

Co-led and co-arranged by Noriega, who grew up in Tucson performing rancheros, bole-ros and cumbias with his brothers, *Banda De Los Muertos* successfully translates the Banda music pioneered by the Mexican ensemble Banda

Sinaloense el Recodo de Don Cruz Lizárraga in the 1940s. Joined by such New York City ringers as clarinetist Chris Speed, trumpeter Ben Holmes, trombonist Curtis Hasselbring and drummer Jim Black, Garchik and Noriega beautifully recreate Banda. Along the way, they enlist the help of Mireya Ramos, singer and bandleader of New York’s all-female Mariachi Flor de Toloache.

There is not a whiff of jazz on *Banda De Los Muertos*’ debut. Rather this is Banda transformed with disciplined technique and infectious down-home feeling, an emotional music where feet hit the floor, delirious melodies grip the soul and the cares of this life quickly fade.

—Ken Micallef

Ye Olde: Ye Olde Of Flatbush; The Sinister Scheme Of Mortise Mansard; A Clue Wrought In Stone; The Lady Of Duck Island; And Meanwhile; The Elders Of Ocean Pathway; Stained Glass Transoms Illuminate A Hidden Crypt; The Opossum King Of Greenwood Forest; Crenulated Corbels; Post-Modern Revival; While Meanwhile; The Battle Of Brownstone Bulge; Refuge In The Ruins Of Castle Martense; The Throne Room Of Queen Anne. (60:21)

Personnel: Jacob Garchik, trombone, alto horn, tenor horn; Mary Halvorson, Brandon Seabrook, Jonathan Goldberger, guitars; Vinnie Sperrazza, drums.

Ordering info: jacobgarchik.com

Banda De Los Muertos: Cumbia De Jacobo; El Sinaloense/El Jalisciense; La Puerta Negra; El Toro Viejo; Tragos Amargos; Culiacán; Las Nubes; El Paso; Te Quiero Tanto; Ay Mexicanita; Tu Recuerdo Y Yo; Arriba Mi Sinaloa. (55:10)

Personnel: Oscar Noriega, Chris Speed, clarinet; Jacob Garchik, sousaphone; Ben Holmes, Justin Mullens, trumpet; Curtis Hasselbring, Brian Drye, trombone; Rachel Drehmann, alto horn; Jim Black, drums; Mireya Ramos, vocals (3, 9).

Ordering info: barbesrecords.com

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ECM

New Sounds from NOLA

A new crop of jazz musicians is on the rise in New Orleans, all of whom possess a distinctly "Crescent City" skill set. They are talented, first and foremost, and can play a variety of music. But most importantly, these musicians don't draw a line between jazz's intellectual aspect and its ability to entertain. They play from the head and the heart, which makes for music that is both deeply intelligent and endlessly amusing.

Sasha Masakowski is known for singing and arranging everything from experimental art-rock to Brazilian samba jazz. On her *Old Green River* (Sasha Masakowski Music; 61:00 ★★½), she and her band, the Side-walk Strutters, take on a swinging set of uppers. This recording was made in two days after Mardi Gras in February 2015, and has the happily hungover feel to match, especially in the leisurely pace of "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "Until The Real Thing Comes Along." Masakowski takes obscure and well-known tunes and glides over the melodies with a polished tone. The band lays back just enough to stay out of her way, but steps up when needed, such as during the opening cadenza of "Russian Lullaby" and sinister bass and wa-wa mute trombone of "Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho."

Ordering info: sashamasakowski.com

Organist **Charlie Dennard's** new release, *5 O'Clock Charlie* (Self Release; 58:09 ★★½), proves that his years touring with the circus of Cirque du Soleil have not hindered his ability to lay down a groove. This organ trio record combines effortless rhythms with solos that have smooth contours and self-perpetuating motion. The biggest surprise is guitarist Todd Duke, who is known for his traditional New Orleans chops but here comes up with a hard sound and clear, sharp attack. He cuts a deep hole in the pocket that Dennard and drummers Geoff Clapp and Doug Belote have stitched together. The band digs in and gives what could be an ordinary jam session an edge. These are the kind of grooves you don't hear to often on organ trio records.

Ordering info: charliedennard.com

Pianist **Tom McDermott** is one of New Orleans' most varied and creative pianists. His sets on the edge of the Faubourg Marigny with vocalist/saxophonist/accordionist **Aurora Nealand** have thrilled people for years, and their album *City Of Timbres* (OPM Music; 48:00 ★★★★★) exhibits their sensuous musical connection. "Moanin' Low" and "Make Me A Pallet On The Floor" have a flirtatious and seductive vibe that continues with a French take on "La Nouvelle Orleans" and the moody McDermott original "Opulence." Both McDermott and Nealand bring the classical strains



and Caribbean syncopations of New Orleans to their music, and those elements contrast in a fine but no less sensuous fashion on this great album.

Ordering info: mcdermottmusic.com

Brad Walker, saxophonist for funk-rockers Johnny Sketch and the Dirty Notes, brings a soulful/avant-garde approach to his latest disc, *Quintet* (Self Release; 68:13 ★★★★★). The music pairs reedy, soaring lines against some rougher and more naturalistic textures, with subtle electric processing. There is a pop element here that mixes well with solid jazz base. Walker's songs are not simple sketches that lead to jams or overly virtuoso flights of fancy; they tell stories, and his band is more than adept at telling them, especially Brian Seeger on guitar and James Singleton on bass.

Ordering info: bradwalker.me

Trombonist Mark McGrain is the leader of the modern-jazz-with-a-tinge-of-funk band **Plunge**, whose latest album, *IN For The OUT (Immersion 15-01; 69:29 ★★★★★)*, sustains a groove from beginning to end. McGrain's trick is to feature two low-register players—Kirk Joseph on sousaphone and Singleton (again) on bass—to keep the music moving. Listen to the unison lines on "Schoolie's Day" and the group solos on "As Angels Roar" to get a feel. McGrain's playing, when coupled with the late reedman Tim Green and tenor player Tom Fitzpatrick, can venture outside the changes, but never distastefully so. His solos are poignant and well thought out, and the band is well suited at both abstract compositions and the earthier, funkier ones. **DB**

Ordering info: immersionrecords.com



London, Meader, Pramuk & Ross *The Royal Bopsters Project*

MOTÉMA 182

★★★★½

Does the world really need another jazz vocal quartet? After listening to this effervescent album, in which some of the hippest vocalists in jazz history join a younger generation of scat-singers to reimagine the tight harmonies and witty vocalese wordplay epitomized by Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, the answer is a resounding "Hell, yes!"

The Royal Bopsters Project was born out of veteran jazz vocalist Amy London's love and admiration for hipster-singer Mark Murphy. In 2010, she found Murphy, then 78, living in the Actors Fund Home in Englewood, New Jersey. After gently coaxing him into accompanying her to New York jazz clubs, she persuaded him to appear with her in a 2011 vocal concert at The New School, where London teaches, with a 10-voice student choir. She recruited ace vocal arranger and tenor Darmon Meader (of New York Voices fame), alto Holli Ross and a prodigious newcomer named Dylan Pramuk, and a new quartet was born.

What makes the album really extraordinary is the participation of four other masters of jazz singing and vocalese: Jon Hendricks (age 94), Annie Ross (85), Sheila Jordan (86) and Bob Dorough (91)—all of whom turn in spirited, agile performances.

Among the album's manifold pleasures are Murphy's audacious, pull-out-all-the-stops performances, including a bravura spoken-word selection from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. The reading perfectly complements London's newly minted vocalese lyric to Charlie Parker's "Chasin' The Bird." Hendricks sounds remarkably spry and musically witty as he trades "fours" with the nimble Pramuk on "Music In The Air (Wildwood)." Annie Ross and Jordan add poignancy and theatrical flair to their songs, "Music Is Forever" and "Peace," respectively. And Dorough navigates the dizzying, chromatic harmonies of "Nothing Like You Has Ever Been Seen Before" with the adroitness and sweet tones of a much younger man.

—Allen Morrison

The Royal Bopsters Project: Music In The Air (Wildwood); On The Red Clay (Red Clay); Peace; Basheer, The Snake And The Mirror; Senior Blues; Invitation; Bird Chasin' (Chasin' The Bird); Music Is Forever; Bebop Lives (Boplicity); Just Step Right Up; Nothing Like You Has Ever Been Seen Before; Let's Fly. (62:15)

Personnel: Amy London, Darmon Meader, Dylan Pramuk, Holli Ross, vocals; Jon Hendricks (1), Mark Murphy (2, 5, 7, 9), Sheila Jordan (3), Annie Ross (8), Bob Dorough (11), guest vocals; Steve Schmidt, piano; Sean Smith, Cameron Brown (3) bass; Steve Williams, drums; Steven Kroon, percussion; Roni Ben-Hur, guitar (12).

Ordering info: motema.com

Matthew Shipp Trio *The Conduct Of Jazz*

THIRSTY EAR 572011

★★★★½

Is there any voice in jazz more challenging, confounding and representative of the idiom's creative possibilities than Matthew Shipp? Though maddening to some and liberating to others, there's no denying that Shipp's charging improvisations are meaningful.

Following his recent ESP-Disk duo release, *The Uppercut: Live At Okuden* (with reedist Mat Walerian), *The Conduct Of Jazz* condenses Shipp's enthralling live trio performances to their essence. It's nonetheless a dense kernel of creativity that satisfies on multiple levels. Joined by drummer Newman Taylor Baker and bassist Michael Bisio, Shipp mines so many inspired melodic and rhythmic collisions that it's worth focusing on the individual moments that make up the pianist's larger compositional landscape: the Monkish delights of the title track, the nightmarish spirals of "Ball And Space," the expansive trio skirmishes of "Primary Form"—together they form a gateway to higher improvisation that is practically without parallel.

Critics more broadminded than I say it is no longer necessary for jazz newbies to appreciate the canon of Armstrong and Ellington before they can enjoy free-jazz, once the interest of a select few. And fans in their 20s and 30s are often as enamored of Flying Lotus and Kendrick Lamar as with Albert Ayler and Karl Berger. Matthew Shipp is the connection between that past, present and future for jazz heads of all jazz ages.

—Ken Micallef

The Conduct Of Jazz: Instinctive Touch, The Conduct Of Jazz, Ball And Space, Primary Form, Blue Abyss, Stream of Life, The Bridge Across. (54:32)

Personnel: Matthew Shipp, piano; Newman Taylor Baker, drums; Michael Bisio, bass.

Ordering info: thirstyear.com



Essiet Okun Essiet *Shona*

SPACE TIME 1439

★★★★

Some albums are worthy of respect based on how they are planned and plotted; some are a joy to listen to because of the effort that went into their production. This outing, by bassist Essiet Okun Essiet, is a little of both. His personnel includes a mixture of players from different musical cultures, just as his tunes reflect different global styles.

Essiet is ethnically Nigerian and American by birth. As a composer, he is all over the map—literally. "Xangongo," named for an Angolan province, is in 9/4 and features the young French jazz star Baptiste Herbin on soprano saxophone. It has a hot, straight-eight swing section, where Jeff "Tain" Watts' drums carry the ensemble. Lionel Loueke's guitar scratches and Manuel Valera's ring modulator percolates on "Brother Nelson," and Loueke's sprightly vocal on "Courez, Courez Gazelle!" is a delight.

Not everyone could play this music as effectively as the musicians assembled here. Valera is admirably protean in his chameleonic contributions. And Essiet proves a fine bassist, popping, stroking and caressing in a way that shores up the bottom but comments on the front-line action.

—Kirk Silsbee



Shona: Shona; Brother Nelson; Xangongo; Ekpokut; Courez, Courez Gazelle!; Itiat; Enuen; Splash; IBM; Black Nile; Enuen. (68:04)

Personnel: Essiet Okun Essiet, electric bass, contrabass, vocals (7); Baptiste Herbin, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone (3, 8); Rob Scheps, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophones (2, 4, 7, 9); Manuel Valera, piano, keyboards; Lionel Loueke, electric guitar (2, 4, 5); JB Butler, guitar (11); Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums; Moise Marie, vocals, percussion (5).

Ordering info: spacetimerecords.com

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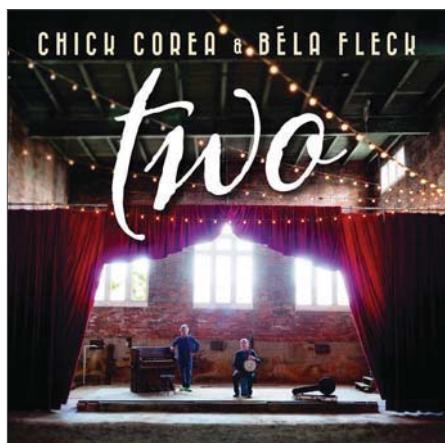
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Chick Corea & Béla Fleck *Two*

CONCORD JAZZ 37992

★★★★★

Why has the duo format always fascinated Chick Corea? Two reasons come to mind. First, it is an ideal setting for his temperament, which combines extraordinary technique, playfulness, improvisational facility and a commitment to communication through music. And second, he has always been able to find artists with similar attributes, from Herbie Hancock and Gary Burton through Bobby McFerrin and now Béla Fleck.

One other trait characterizes these pairings: a disinclination to tap too deeply into the blues specifically or darker wells of emotion in general. As

a result, Corea's duos tend to operate on the surface rather than with any significant depth, often pleasing the crowd to the extent that entertaining patter between performances is not at all inconsistent with the evening's vibe.

This point is confirmed on *Two*. Recorded live, this double-CD is like a Fourth of July sparkler that dims at times but never loses its brilliance. Dialogue is the key here, as in the first moments of the track "Señorita." Corea trills, so does Fleck. Corea plays a quizzical dissonance, and Fleck echoes it. Corea does a triplet ascending and descending figure, which Fleck answers. These moments demand patience, but in context they ramp up the subsequent action.

Sometimes the results don't rise to the heights achieved on the best tracks. "The Enchantment" feels unfocused, though mainly because it follows an explosive performance of "Brazil." The pattern on the latter is familiar: an exploratory intro from which fragments of the theme begin to take shape. Fleck alternates between modal and standard scales in his solo then joins with Corea in some prickly, high-range invention that cues rapturous cheering and applause. That's pretty much how *Two* operates. It's a classic Corea tour de force, a whirlwind of virtuosity and fun. It's more dessert than entrée. But sometimes dessert is all you need.

—Bob Doerschuk

Two: CC's Intro; Señorita; Menagerie; BF On The Waltze; Waltz For Abby; CC And BF On Joban; Joban Dna Nopia; The Climb; Mountain; Brazil; The Enchantment; BF On Bugle Call Rag; Bugle Call Rag; CC And BF On Dutilleux; Prelude En Berceuse; Children's Song No. 6; Spectacle; Sunset Road; Armando's Rhumba. (141:52)

Personnel: Chick Corea, piano; Béla Fleck, banjo.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Danilo Pérez/John Patitucci/Brian Blade *Children Of The Light*

MACK AVENUE 1104

★★★★★

Pianist Danilo Pérez, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Brian Blade have spent nearly 15 years in mind-meld with saxophonist Wayne Shorter, simultaneously earning accolades as leaders in their own rights. *Children Of The Light* is, surprisingly, their first album as a trio. They are presented as an equilateral triangle performing original compositions with elegant confidence.

Despite the threesome's united front and best intentions, Pérez dominates as lead voice and composer of seven of 11 songs (Patitucci penned three, Blade one). The pianist is a fluid player with a sparkling touch and a strong sense of dynamics. Lyrical and romantic, he dares to meander and get knotty, too, though he sometimes ends an episode when it's reached a point of potentially interesting development.

Patitucci is firm and resonant throughout, yet understated. Blade is the group's firecracker, prodding with press rolls, cymbal splashes and attention-getting bombs. He seems set back in the mix—where's his bass drum? where's his snare?—perhaps because he could so easily overwhelm.

The tunes establish moods that the musicians explore from diverse angles. They pulse more than they groove or swing. The title track is warmly upbeat, whereas "Sunburn And Mosquito" evokes an annoyance and Patitucci's "Moonlight On



Congo Square" is predictably subdued. "Lumen" is a fusion-esque standout, and Blade's "Within Everything" is simply somber.

Though Pérez, Patitucci and Blade sound like no one but themselves, *Children Of The Light* comes off as neither what they'd play together with Shorter nor quite what any one of them would do on their own. They've succeeded at forging a unique unit, one sure to please their fans.

—Howard Mandel

Children Of The Light: Children Of The Light; Sunburn And Mosquito; Moonlight On Congo Square; Lumen; Within Everything; Milky Way; Light Echo/Dolores; Ballad For A Noble Man; Looking For Light; Luz Del Alma; African Wave. (55:56)

Personnel: Danilo Pérez, piano, keyboards, Panamanian drum (pujador); John Patitucci, bass; Brian Blade, drums, chekeré.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Romero Lubambo *Setembro: A Brazilian Under The Jazz Influence*

SUNNYSIDE 1427

★★★★★

Brazilian guitarist Romero Lubambo's *Setembro* is not background music, though it is easy on the ear. Lubambo's style, channeled through a variety of guitars, is knowing and romantic. This largely acoustic solo album exhibits a prodigious technique that Lubambo deploys for drama, not show.

In this homage to his jazz, classical and Brazilian passions, Lubambo plays his emotions close to the vest, leaving you wanting more. That's especially true in the more familiar North American material he recasts, as well as his painterly originals and tunes by such Brazilian masters as Ivan Lins and Jobim.

"Influência Do Jazz," Carlos Lyra's ambitious and theme-setting track, launches the album with a combination of classical discipline, pyrotechnics and unexpected melodic twists. It's the album's low, magnetic spark, a lean take on the ballad, which Lyra co-wrote with Lins.

Conceptual originality rules even in the covers. Take how Lubambo treats "All The Things You Are," perhaps his most radical recasting of the Great American Songbook on this disc.

He breaks down the Kern-Hammerstein classic to its most rhythmic components, slicing and dicing it deftly and dramatically. He thankfully avoids sentimentality on "Days Of Wine And Roses," a rueful, confident "Darn That Dream" and a rendition of "Love Letters" that is as courtly as a minuet.

The sweetest cuts include Lubambo's "Nira" and "Lukinha." The first conjures a beautiful woman coming into view as she slowly descends a staircase, an elegant opening to the insistent, proudly virtuosic "Lukinha."

The album closes with "Preciso Aprender A Ser Só," a minimalist, oddly rustic ballad by Marcos and Paulo Valle. It caps a winning tour of Lubambo's musical touchstones. —Carlo Wolff

Setembro: A Brazilian Under The Jazz Influence: Influência Do Jazz (Under The Jazz Influence); Darn That Dream; Meditação; Joana Francisca; Muriqui; Setembro; All The Things You Are; Nira; Lukinha; Love Letters; Days Of Wine And Roses; Preciso Aprender A Ser Só. (53:49)

Personnel: Romero Lubambo, acoustic guitar, electric guitar.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com

Mack Avenue Superband Live From The Detroit Jazz Festival

MACK AVENUE 1096

★★★★★

Oliver Ragsdale Jr., president of Detroit's Carr Center, introduces this septet (drawn from Mack Avenue's choice roster under the direction of bassist Rodney Whitaker) the old-fashioned way: at the top of his lungs. The committed vibe of this fest in 2014 makes you wish you could go back in time and visit.

Don't be put off if you dislike live dates. Engineers Timothy Powell and Todd Whitelock took care of business. The group steams straight into "Riot," with vibraphonist Warren Wolf, guitarist Evan Perri and pianist Aaron Diehl taking rides before a fine solo from the hard-grooving Whitaker and a choppy vamp by drummer Carl Allen. Wolf's "The Struggle" includes smooth licks suggesting resignation to the titular effort, and saxophonist Kirk Whalum's "Bipolar Blues Blues" warms hearts. Whitaker's tensile auguring of "A Mother's Cry" is massively authoritative. Diehl shines with a layered, classically infused intro to his own "Santa Maria," and Hot Club of Detroit's Perri shifts the mood yet again with an intense, metrically ram-bunctious gypsy jazz number.

A super festival, a super label and indeed, a Superband.

—Michael Jackson

Live From The Detroit Jazz Festival: Introduction; Riot; The Struggle; A Mother's Cry; Santa Maria; For Stephane; Introduction To Bipolar Blues Blues; Bipolar Blues Blues. (57:57)

Personnel: Rodney Whitaker, bass; Kirk Whalum, tenor saxophone, flute (4); Tia Fuller, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Carl Allen, drums; Warren Wolf, vibraphone; Aaron Diehl, piano; Evan Perri, guitar.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Charlie Haden & Gonzalo Rubalcaba Tokyo Adagio

IMPULSE 23543

★★★★½

Jazz history is filled with atmospheric live recordings—from Miles Davis at the Blackhawk to Duke Ellington at Newport—where the presence of an audience adds to the listening experience. On *Tokyo Adagio*, the effect is the opposite; the clank of plates

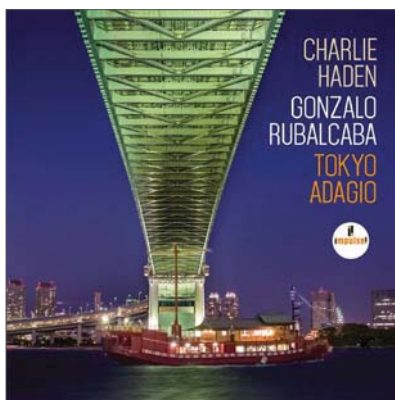
and the clatter of cutlery is a constant distraction from the intimate music being made by pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba and the late bassist Charlie Haden.

A disruptive audience is one issue, but the problem on this 2005 live set is compounded by an abysmal recording setup, which lends a metallic edge to the piano and muffles Haden's bass. This is a shame, because these sonic shortcomings mask a soulful connection between two artists who always sounded like they were born to play with each other. The link, which Haden initiated in Cuba in 1986, is cemented in the way the pair could suspend time and space together. Rubalcaba turns rhapsodic on his own "Transparence," but Haden never rushes, pulling spectral colors from his instrument. The bassist's note choices match Rubalcaba so closely that his presence is felt more than heard, yet his first notes on "En La Orilla Del Mundo" are so powerful that it's almost like encountering him again for the first time. —James Hale

Tokyo Adagio: En La Orilla Del Mundo (The Edge Of The World); My Love And I; When Will The Blues Leave; Sandino; Solamente Una Vez (You Belong To My Heart); Transcendence. (51:49)

Personnel: Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano; Charlie Haden, bass.

Ordering info: universalmusicclassics.com



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Done Somebody Right

Dalannah & Owen, *Been Around A While* (Quest 009; 41:43 ★★★★★)

Vancouver's Dalannah Gail Bowen, musically joined at the hip to bassist Owen Veber since mid-2014, is a force to be reckoned with. An expressive vocalist, her voice sweeps or lingers over phrases with a dark richness edged with a husky emotional frankness. She renders "Gone" with defiant finality and makes

Dalannah Gail Bowen (left) with Owen Veber



"Queen Bee" into a declaration of independence from a suitor no longer worthy of her lusty "buzz." Confident and unstoppable, she gives fresh insight into canonical material—Robert Johnson's "Come On In My Kitchen" and Son House's "Walkin' Blues"—as well as tunes identified with Marvin Gaye, Billy Eckstine and Louis Jordan. With funk in his musical background, Veber gainfully employs his electric bass as both a conversationalist and commentator.

Ordering info: dalannahandowen.com

Charlie Musselwhite, *I Ain't Lyin'* (Henrietta; 56:18 ★★½) Charlie Musselwhite's trademark easy-does-it vocals and harp elocutions stand him in good stead on this part-concert/part-studio album. He takes to decent original tunes, revises Elmore James' "Done Somebody Wrong" and rekindles his jazzy signature song "Cristo Redentor." The man communicates warmth without effort. Underrated guitarist Matt Stubbs and the rest of the band come up trumps song after song.

Ordering info: charliemusselwhite.com

Modou Touré & Ramon Goose, *The West African Blues Project* (ARC 2591; 47:47 ★★★★★) Freedom and affirmation of life are concepts of concern for Senegalese singer-percussionist Modou Touré and British guitarist Ramon Goose, whose new album is one of the most spellbinding of all blues and world music mergers. Controlled urgency informs Touré's sweetly sung poetizing in the French, Wolof and Mandinka languages, and he mixes well with Goose's expressive expositions of Delta and boogie blues. Supported by musicians from two continents, they grant a sanguine dreaminess to "Dune Blues" and create a vibrant message of anti-slavery on "Kayre." Humanity also shines throughout nine more songs.

Ordering info: arcmusic.co.uk

Bey Paule Band, *Not Goin' Away* (Blue Dot 108; 50:45 ★★★★★) Frank Bey belongs to a fast-fading breed: the authentic soul-blues singer. As on two previous band albums with guitarist Anthony Paule, the San Franciscan presides over an unusually rich voice that evidences personal involvement with the drama in the songs he wrote for this disc, especially the autobiographical "Black Bottom." Paule is one of the most thoughtful and disciplined guitarists in the country, never playing

fast and loose with technique, never faking emotion. Let's hope the album title is a promise.

Ordering info: beypaule.com

The Ragpicker String Band, *The Ragpicker String Band* (Yellow Dog 2242; 57:26 ★★★★★)

Three roots-music virtuosos—Rich Del Grosso on mandolins and dobro, Mary Flower on fingerpicked and lap slide guitar, Martin Grosswendt on fingerpicked and bottleneck slide guitar, fiddle and mandolin—show a friendly coffee-house presence in reconditioning rural blues and string music from the 1920s and '30s. Playing their own material and the jazz classic "Blue Monk," the trio crafts its acoustic sounds with purpose and compassion. They find the correct balance among dramatic interpretation and spontaneous or calculated technical display. Highlight: Flower's voice and guitar on the old folk-blues "Trimmed And Burning."

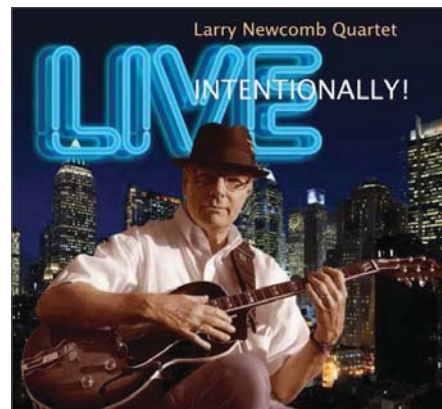
Ordering info: yellowdogrecords.com

Guy Davis, *Kokomo Kidd* (M.C. Records 0078; 61:56 ★★★★★) Storyteller Guy Davis has a stellar discography that is unrivaled in the post-1990 blues world. On his latest winner, his voice, low-down and cured in smoke, is as penetrating as ever. His songwriting also reflects his quietly powerful musical personality. The title track is the tale of a black raconteur with ties to the elites in early 20th-century Washington, D.C., and "Wish I Hadn't Stayed Away So Long" throbs with heart-rending regret over having been elsewhere when a loved one died. He wryly solves the riddle of "Have You Ever Loved Two Women," whooping like a modern-day Sonny Terry. Also, Davis channels his strength of feeling in service of six more original songs and four covers.

Ordering info: mc-records.com

Ironing Board Sam, *Super Spirit* (Big Legal Mess 19; 35:21 ★★★★★) Sammie Moore, peddling an eccentric mix of blues, soul, hip-hop and the inexplicable, has been receiving wide notice after decades of obscurity. This album of little-known r&b oldies and recent garage-rock tunes finds Moore's creaking vocals and keyboard tinkering set in a force field of energy generated by guitarist Jimbo Mathus and other supporters. Metaphysicians may fathom his cosmic monologue "Super Spirit."

Ordering info: biglegalmessrecords.com



Larry Newcomb Quartet *Live Intentionally!*

ESSENTIAL MESSENGER 12015

★★★★★

This disc from New York guitarist and educator Larry Newcomb is a typical post-bop straight-ahead format—a quartet date with plenty of solo turns for everybody (except maybe drummer Jimmy Madison, who makes his authoritative presence felt in other ways). So there's a comfortable familiarity here. But what returns pleasure on multiple listens is the way everyone involved makes the familiar sound brand-new.

That's especially true of the leader, with his fluid attack and varied phrasing. Listen to the bluesy bends on his slow phrasing of "Stardust." For that matter, on the same tune, pianist Eric Olsen's voice-leading would make Hank Jones smile. The Kern-Hammerstein chestnut "All The Things You Are" opens with a guitar-piano duo full of contrapuntal lines before settling into an easy waltz groove.

On "Instant Water" (one of three originals on the nine-track set), paraphrase is raised to a high art, as both piano and guitar, and then bass (Dmitri Kolesnik), seem to reveal another level of depth to the piece on every chorus of their solos, always keeping the beautifully crafted melody within easy earshot.

Another original, the medium-uptempo "Thanks Jack!," sports a sprightly extended guitar-piano unison line, as well as a sturdy AABA structure that should make it a favorite in Newcomb's book. Here Madison is at his best, punctuating the end of a phrase with a single soft-ringing cymbal hit, or playing the rhythm of the melody along with the soloist for a few bars.

The album title, by the way, refers not to a club date, but to Newcomb's intention to record live in the studio, without the "safety net" of overdubs, for maximum creative spontaneity in real time. He's succeeded.

—Jon Garelick

Live Intentionally! Be My Love; All The Things You Are; Thanks Jack!; Sure Thing; Instant Water; Olhos De Gato; Au Privave; Stardust; Have You Met Miss Jones? (43:45)

Personnel: Larry Newcomb, guitar; Eric Olsen, piano; Dmitri Kolesnik, bass; Jimmy Madison, drums.

Ordering info: larrynewcomb.com

Lorraine Feather *Flirting With Disaster*

JAZZED MEDIA 1072

★★★★★

Lorraine Feather, jazz's savviest self-chronicler—daughter of jazz doyen Leonard Feather and goddaughter of Billie Holiday—usually strikes us as being comfy in her skin, but the songs on *Flirting With Disaster* quiver with vulnerability. The ravages of lost love threaten to overwhelm her on this rare album of all love songs.

Gone are her trademark witty lyrics of lighthearted Lautrec cameos, weather reports, lost keys, breathless ballerinas and sly digs at encroaching media. Misaligned love weighs her spirits on “Disastrous Consequences” and “The Last Wave.” Confusion engenders complexity as “Be My Muse” changes course several times. And brave despair is the predominant emotion on the upbeat samba “Wait For It.” Feather’s usual suspects—pianists Russell Ferrante, Shelly Berg and Dave Grusin and guitarist Eddie Arkin—collaborate closely with her on the sure, genial melodies. Arkin’s guitar fleshes out a blues-tinged “Big-Time,” and Ferrante plays tea and sympathy on “Later,” combining pointillist strokes into a masterpiece. Prominent among simpatico band-buds, violinist Charlie Bisharat wails on the wistful “Off-Center.” Feather’s lyrics tell us this album is a “wild ride from bliss to despair.” We should be grateful to have been invited along.

—Fred Bouchard

Flirting With Disaster: *Flirting With Disaster*; *Feels Like Snow*; *I’d Be Down With That*; *Off-Center*; *Be My Muse*; *Later*; *The Last Wave*; *Disastrous Consequences*; *Big-Time*; *Wait For It*; *The Staircase*. (59:40)
Personnel: Lorraine Feather, vocals; Russell Ferrante, piano (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8); Shelly Berg, piano (5, 11); Dave Grusin, piano (9, 10); Michael Valerio, bass (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10); Michael Shapiro, drums, percussion (1, 2, 6, 9, 10); Gregg Field, drums (4, 5); Carlos Del Rosario, percussion (10); Grant Geissman, guitar (1, 9, 10); Eddie Arkin, guitar (4, 6); Charlie Bisharat, violin (1, 4, 5, 8, 11).

Ordering info: jazzmedia.com



Mose Allison *American Legend: Live In California*

IBIS RECORDINGS 1754

★★★★★

Pianist Mose Allison was 78 when this album was recorded over three nights in 2006, but even as he applies his acerbic wit to the subject of aging on “Certified Senior Citizen,” you’d be forgiven for thinking he was quite a bit younger. As he leads his trio through some of his best songs and a handful of covers, he still loves to upend expectations, never quite sticking the melody where the average songwriter would assume it should go. Allison has never had a spectacular voice, but he does spectacular things with it, anyway, be it a simple and hilarious musical joke like the very loooooong pauses on “One Of These Days” or a tour-de-force reinvention of Big Joe Williams’ “Baby Please Don’t Go.”

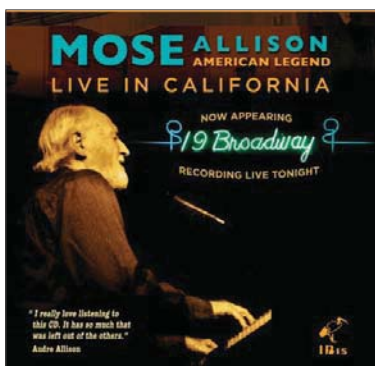
Allison is also a well-regarded pianist, and the most puzzling decision here is to place the only instrumental at the very end as a “bonus track.” This is the performance that would have opened the show, and it is thrilling to hear these three musicians tearing into it together. Banishing it to the end makes no sense. That aside, we should be glad it’s included, as Allison is one certified senior citizen who still has a lot to say, with both voice and hands.

—Joe Tangari

American Legend: *I Don’t Want Much*; *City Home*; *Everybody’s Cryin’ Mercy*; *Certified Senior Citizen*; *Your Mind Is On Vacation*; *One Of These Days*; *You Are My Sunshine*; *Ever Since The World Ended*; *Do Nothin’ Till You Hear From Me*; *Middle Class White Boy*; *Lucky So & So*; *Stranger In My Hometown*; *Numbers On Paper*; *You Call It Juggin’*; *My Backyard*; *You Can Count On Me*; *Tumblin’ Tumbleweed*; *Baby Please Don’t Go*; *No Name*. (54:36)

Personnel: Mose Allison, piano, vocals; Bill Douglass, bass; Pete Magadini, drums.

Ordering info: cityhallrecords.com



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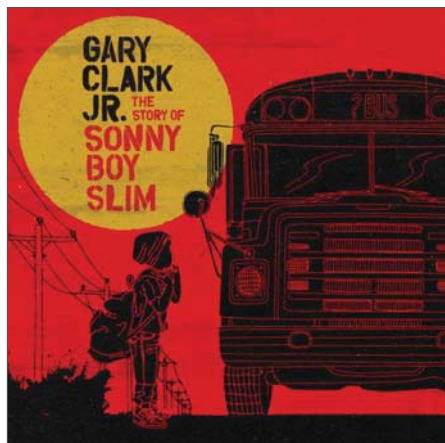
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Gary Clark Jr. *The Story Of Sonny Boy Slim*

WARNER BROS. 550131

★★★★

You'll get no argument from Gary Clark Jr. if you describe him as a musical schizophrenic. His second major-label studio release, *The Story Of Sonny Boy Slim*, bolsters his reputation as a man of multiple musical personalities. Clark has chosen to stray far from the blues-rock superhero role he created with his breakthrough song, "Bright Lights," and this choice has caused instant consternation among those who eagerly hailed the 31-year-old guitar slinger as the second coming of Jimi Hendrix, or at least fellow Austin, Texas, axman Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Emiliano Sampaio Mega Mereneu Project *Tourists*

SESSION WORK 75/14

★★★★½

Emiliano Sampaio is a guitarist and trombonist who is becoming more notable as an arranger-composer. A native of São Paulo, Brazil, he formed Meretrio, a trio with bassist Gustavo Boni and drummer Luis André, in 2003. After recording several CDs with that group, he moved to Graz, Austria, in 2012 and expanded his trio to a nonet called the Mereneu Project. Sampaio, who won a DownBeat Student Music Award in 2014 for Best Small Jazz Combo, is heard on *Tourists* with his Mega Mereneu Project, which utilizes a full big band.

Sampaio's eight compositions on *Tourists* are about travel. Many of the pieces date from 2012, when he toured Europe with his trio, writing down musical ideas at each stop.

The music consistently defies one's expectations. Although his big band is excellent, there are relatively few extended solos heard throughout these performances. The emphasis is on the arranged ensembles.

While one might expect "Jazz Mayday—São Paulo" to be a bossa nova or a samba, it is actually soul music that uses unusual rhythmic accents, much closer to James Brown than to Jobim. "Groznanj" is a gloomy ballad that retains its melancholy mood through the solos of flugelhornist Gerhard Ornig and pianist Michael Lagger. In

Clark breaks out into a surprisingly rich falsetto à la Curtis Mayfield on much of the album as he explores various shades of soul: classic Impressions-style ("Our Love"), Philly-style ("Hold On"), Sly Stone-esque funk ("Star"), singer-songwriter ("Wings," "Can't Sleep"), gospel ("Church") and blues ("Down To Ride"). But it would be inaccurate to pigeonhole *The Story Of Sonny Boy Slim* as a soul album. There's just too much else going on here.

The opening track, "The Healing," begins with a field recording of an Austin local singing the gospel tune "Hard Fighting Soldier." Clark's lyrics, punctuated by backing vocals from sisters Shawn and Savannah, declare, "The music is our healing." But the tone is brooding and desperate, not blindly uplifting. Clark then puts the fuzz tone and wah-wah pedal to the metal for "Grinder," a strange format for a tribute to his son, as he declares, "My baby's crying."

Clark challenges the listener to follow his jarring mood swings and thematic shifts throughout this Austin-recorded, self-produced CD. In the hands of a lesser artist, such demands would seem precious or just tedious. But the Grammy-winning face of the new blues (two straight Blues Music Awards for contemporary male artist of the year) has earned a certain degree of latitude, and he uses it wisely on this album. —Jeff Johnson

The Story Of Sonny Boy Slim: The Healing; Grinder; Star; Our Love; Church; Hold On; Cold Blooded; Wings; BYOB; Can't Sleep; Stay; Shake; Down To Ride. (53:08)

Personnel: Gary Clark Jr., guitar, vocals; Johnny Bradley, bass; King Zapata, guitar; Johnny Radelat, drums; Shawn Clar, Savannah Clark, vocals (1).

Ordering info: garyclarkjr.com



contrast, "Käesekrainer Blues—Graz" is a whimsical blues with short statements from altoist Heinrich Von Kalnein and drummer André. "Brno" is a somber ballad that has a thoughtful solo from Sampaio, while "Paris" is not unexpectedly a bit romantic. Throughout, Sampaio shows a great deal of skill as the arranger-composer for his concert jazz orchestra. —Scott Yanow

Tourists: Jazz Mayday—São Paulo; Groznanj; Käesekrainer Blues—Graz; Brno; Paris; Bad Radkersburg (Inspired By My Favorite Things); Lodz; Vienna. (59:56)

Personnel: Emiliano Sampaio, guitar; Heinrich von Kalnein, Patrick Dunst, Jan Kopcak, Tobias Pustelnik, Thomas Fröschl, woodwinds; Mario Stuhlhofer, Dominic Pessi, Gerhard Ornig, Marko Solman, Werner Hansmann, trumpets; Adam Ladanyi, Karel Eriksson, Carlo Grandi, Johannes Oppel, trombones; Michael Lagger, piano, organ; Maximilian Ranzinger, bass; Luis André, drums;

Ordering info: emilianosampaio.com



Sun Ra Arkestra *Live At Babylon*

IN + OUT 77122-9

★★★★

Celestial mayhem, gleeful abandon, vestigial swing and a joyously loose big band come together beautifully in this live recording by the Sun Ra Arkestra, post-Sun Ra. The visionary and impossible-to-categorize jazz legend, who claimed to have come from Saturn (who are we to argue?), died in 1993, but he would most likely approve of the project, which was recorded on the road in 2014 for what would have been Sun Ra's centennial year.

Anyone who caught the band on tour in Europe during that run can attest to the high spirits and effective channeling of the bygone leader's quixotic persona—even though the Arkestra will never be the same without the master. This particular night, May 21, 2014, at the Babylon in Istanbul seems notably informed by the delicate balance of the Sun Ra aesthetic—with jazz tradition in the bones and in the echoes.

In this band, directed by veteran Sun Ra alum and delightfully mad saxophonist Marshall Allen, a quality of focused looseness is amply evident on the opening tracks, "Astro Black" and "Ra #2," which teem with post-swing energy and free-range soloing. "Saturn" and "Dancing Shadows" bustle with a similar inside-meets-outer-limits character, while balladic airs come in the form of "Star Dust" (with Tara Middleton singing in a raw, beauteous manner).

As a historical cross-reference, two of the tunes in the set—"Discipline 27B" and the anthemic "Satellites Are Spinning" (with the hypnotic mantra "We sing this song to a great tomorrow/ We sing this song to abolish sorrow")—were also played by the Sun Ra-blessed band at a large outdoor show in Istanbul in 1990.

Although the idiosyncratic and inimitable maverick leader is conspicuously missing in action, *Live At Babylon* makes for a necessary addition to any Sun Ra collection, and even a fine place to start for the uninitiated—who may well find themselves on the path to Sun Ra fandom.

—Josef Woodard

Live At Babylon: Astro Black; Ra #2; Saturn; Discipline 27B; Care Free #2; Dancing Shadows; Satellites Are Spinning; Some Times I'm Happy; Unmask The Batman; Borna. (104:58)

Personnel: Marshall Allen, director, alto saxophone, EWI, vocal; Tara Middleton, vocal, violin; Cecil Brooks, trumpet; Vincent Chancery, French horn; Dave Davis, tuba; Noel Scott, alto saxophone, vocal; James Stuart, tenor saxophone; Danny Ray Thompson, baritone saxophone; Farid Barron, piano; Dave Hotep, guitar; Tyler Mitchell, bass; Stanley Morgan, congas, percussion; Elson Nascimento, surdo, percussion; Wayne Anthony Smith Jr., drums.

Ordering info: inandout-records.com

Joe Magnarelli

Three On Two

POSI-TONE 8142

★★★

Joe Magnarelli's latest, *Three On Two*, is a study of the past. The trumpeter presents straightforward readings of chestnuts by John Coltrane, Cedar Walton and Claude Debussy.

A no-frills interpretation of Coltrane's "26-2" is given more dynamism with a three-horn melody line and a faster tempo; here, alto saxophonist Mike DiRubbo takes the lead, his bright, scrappy sound a beautiful contrast to Magnarelli's caramel, fanned-out tone.

As for Debussy, Magnarelli takes a slowly unfurling solo piano piece and turns it into a bouncy, arpeggio-fueled tune. Using Debussy's melody, he gives trombonist Steve Davis and DiRubbo both a chance at the melody, creating a dialogue between the instruments as organist Brian Charette lays down a smooth walking bass line under his chordal punches.

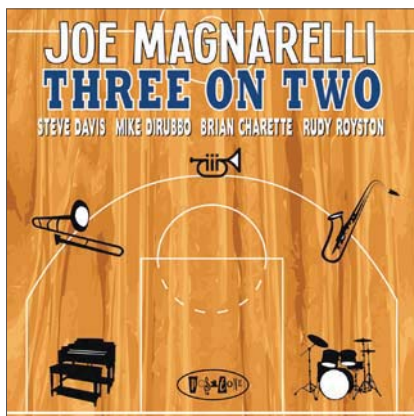
Magnarelli's originals all lie within the medium-tempo to "burning" range, and he seems most comfortable when playing at semi-breakneck speeds. "Paris" and "Outlet Pass" are the best examples of Magnarelli's punchy, dynamic playing.

—Jon Ross

Three On Two: Three On Two; Easy; The Step Up; NYC-J-Funk; 26-2; Clockwise; Paris; Central Park West; Outlet Pass; My Reverie. (55:41)

Personnel: Joe Magnarelli, trumpet, flugelhorn; Steve Davis, trombone; Mike DiRubbo, alto saxophone; Brian Charette, organ; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Michael Gallant Trio

Live Plus One

GALLANT MUSIC 004

★★★½

Part-time music journalist Michael Gallant combines considerable piano facility with his love of grunge tones (courtesy of his Nord electric keyboard) on his sophomore outing recorded live at Levine Music in Washington, D.C.

Gallant and his working trio of bassist Dmitry Ishenko and drummer Rob Mitzner hit an earthy groove early on with "Greens," a tune that falls somewhere between Medeski, Martin & Wood and the current Ahmad Jamal group. "Follow Me" is a propulsive two-bass jam, reminiscent of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground," and features Gallant's Washington mentor Pepe Gonzalez joining the trio on upright bass.

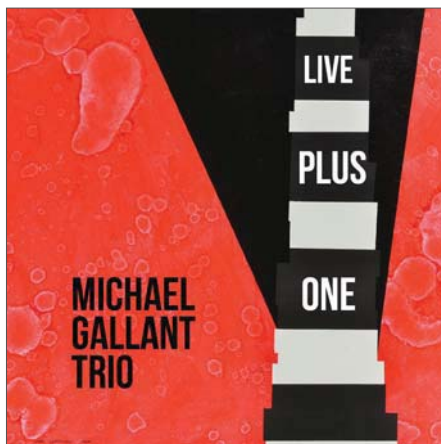
"City Never Seen" is a kind of second-line groover alternately colored by Gallant's Nord organ and Steinway piano. "Borrowed" is a medium-tempo number underscored by Rodriguez's upright and Mitzner's swinging brushwork. And "Sandra And Michel," dedicated to pianist Michel Camilo and his wife, has a churning Latin feel fueled by Mitzner's percussive touch on the rims of his kit. The collection closes with the pianist's cascading solo showcase on "Love You Better."

—Bill Milkowski

Live Plus One: Returned; Green; Interlude I; Follow Me; City Never Seen; Interlude II; Completely; Borrowed; Sandra And Michel; The Real Maria; Love You Better. (65:18)

Personnel: Michael Gallant, piano, electric keyboard, melodica; Dmitry Ishenko, electric bass; Rob Mitzner, drums; Pepe Gonzalez, acoustic bass (3-5, 8-10)

Ordering info: gallantmusic.com



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Old Friends

Simon & Garfunkel, *The Complete Columbia Albums Collection* (Columbia Legacy 88875049671S1; ★★★★★½)

contains the duo's original five studio albums physically reproduced as they were, remastered for 180-gram vinyl from the original analog tapes, along with color and black-and-white photos and liner notes.

Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel's 1964 debut, *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.*, starts with lively gospel numbers with traditional arrangements. The rest of the album is a balance between mostly Simon numbers with a few more covers, including one of the Bob Dylan waltz ditty "The Times They Are A-Changin'." Featuring the original "The Sound Of Silence," this album smells like the coffee shop of the titular scene it helped define, a typical freshman outing that was a commercial failure but hinted at what was to come. Simon's lullaby "Bleeker Street" is the album's first original, and his acoustic guitar undergirds the duo's intertwining voices like a third voice. Simon's spirited "Sparrow" points to the wordplay and deviation from the norm that would become the pair's hallmark.

By the time *Sounds Of Silence* was released in '66, the duo, which had split up, were back together, reprising the now-popular title track with rock overdubs. A tad more flamboyant, they sing "I Am A Rock" and "We've Got A Groovy Thing Goin'" opposite more ethereal fare like "April Come She Will" and "Kathy's Song," the latter two highlighting Garfunkel's pristine yet forceful vocals and Simon's distinctive guitar playing. Gradually, the production work of Bob Johnston helped steer the duo toward more instrumentation, even as Simon the bard was still writing as a folk musician, e.g., "Leaves That Are Green," "Richard Cory." Standout track: the snarly rocker "Blessed," which features a lurching backbeat, slithering organ and plangent electric guitar.

With *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme*, the duo's complexity reaches a zenith, with all 12 tracks either arranged or written by Simon. Also released in 1966, this album features playful poetics on "Cloudy" and a dreamy sense of otherness on the title track. The rock sound continues with "Homeward Bound" and "The Big Bright Green Pleasure Machine," both of which perfectly blend the then and now. The acid-rock of "A Simple Desultory Philippic" plays as a Dylan parody. The unease of growing up in the second half of the 1960s is on full display with "7 O'Clock News/Silent Night." Even so, with the title track, "The Dangling Conversation" and "For Emily, Whenever I May Find Her," this was some of the most lyrical, poignant music of the time. The duo tastefully incorporates yet more instrumentation, including strings. "Flowers Never Bend With The Rainfall" is a playful update on the Everly Brothers, ending on a disarming minor chord.

As they begin to produce their own music with Roy Halee, *Bookends* (1968) provides their strongest statement overall. The short, quiet guitar



instrumental "Bookends Theme" sets the stage for "Save The Life Of My Child," which combines familiar but disturbing references: a snippet of "Sound Of Silence," a spirited vocal chorus and an insistent beat. Other standouts include the mournful and melancholy "Old Friends," which contains the revelatory lyrics "Preserve your memories/ They're all that's left you." And, of course, there's "Mrs. Robinson."

Preceding their best-selling 1972 *Greatest Hits* collection by two years, *Bridge Over Troubled Water* presages Simon's emerging multicultural influences with "El Condor Pasa." More instrumental flamboyance comes with the big-band bombast of "Keep The Customer Satisfied." Miles from their folkie days, Simon's writing continues the dance between exploration and roots.

Their cover of "Bye Bye Love" slides up next to cousin "Baby Driver" and the searching "The Boxer," both with heavy production. Simon's writing continues to amaze with the sweetly whimsical "The Only Living Boy In New York" and the playfully funky "Why Don't You Write Me" a paean to love lost, honestly.

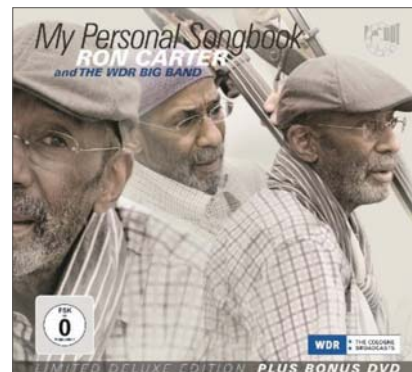
The long-out-of-print *The Concert In Central Park* (Legacy 88875078782; 86:49 ★★★★★), billed as the duo's "historic 1981 reunion," was originally recorded for Warner Bros. It is now available as a CD/DVD and as a double 12-inch 180-gram vinyl release (Legacy 88875049741). A free concert with roughly a half-million people in attendance, the program was a spirited mix of covers and songs from each artist's repertoire.

The duo was supported by an 11-piece group, including bassist Anthony Jackson, keyboardist Richard Tee and drummer Steve Gadd. The first-time-ever DVD release contains two bonus tracks. It's fun to watch Paul and Art interact with each other as well as with members of the band, which also included horns to take advantage of the extended musical palette the pair had incorporated over time. The camera work is steady, not jumpy.

Highlights include typically lively versions of "Late In The Evening" (two versions), "The Boxer" and "Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard." Intimate moments reached in this massive, outdoor setting include Garfunkel crooning "April Come She Will" and the duo singing sweet harmony with "Old Friends."

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

DB



Ron Carter and the WDR Big Band *My Personal Songbook*

IN + OUT
★★★★½

Even without the addition of a top-tier guest artist, the WDR Big Band is a highly calibrated swing machine. But with veteran bassist Ron Carter at the helm, everything there is to like about this venerable large ensemble—its keen sense of melody, its airtight cohesion—is ratcheted up to a higher degree. *My Personal Songbook*, the first recording of Carter's original compositions performed with an extended jazz orchestra, finds Carter in a role he was born to play: bandleader.

The 10 compositions on this handsome CD/DVD package are imbued with Carter's personality. The bassist, a veteran of Miles Davis' second quintet, favors lean, graceful melodies with a sturdy blues foundation. Fortunately, this is where the WDR Big Band excels. Arranger Richard DeRosa extracts vivid colors and textures from Carter's compositions, using the saxophone, trumpet and trombone sections to announce the lead melody in alternating voices on "Receipt, Please" and creating eerie, spectral soundscapes through a repeated piano motif on "Wait For The Beep."

Carter, a relaxed player by nature, solos with a malleable sense of time—flexing, stretching and widening the beat to allow space for his melodic ideas to sink in. His solo on the somber "Doom Waltz" is replete with free-floating trills in the upper register, plangent double-stops and neck-spanning swoops that underscore the song's ominous feel. A number of the players in the WDR Big Band adapt to Carter's intelligent and emotional style, with trombonist Shannon Barnett taking a warbling solo on "Blues For D.P." that muscles through the chord changes and pianist Frank Chastenier pecking brief, soulful motifs on the uptempo swinger "Eight."

Carter's bass playing has been heard on more than 2,500 recordings, lending reliable support to artists as diverse as Cannonball Adderley and A Tribe Called Quest. But his big band recordings have been few and far between. Let's hope this album signals a shift in his desire to work on a larger scope.

—Brian Zimmerman

My Personal Songbook: Eight; Receipt, Please; Ah, Rio; Doom Mood; Blues For D.P.; Wait For The Beep; Little Waltz; For Toddlers Only; Sheila's Song; Cut And Paste. (79:21)

Personnel: Ron Carter, bass; Rich DeRosa, arranger; Johan Hörlen, Malte Dürrschnabel, alto saxophone; Oliver Peters, Frank Jakobi, Paul Heller, tenor saxophone; Jens Neufang, baritone saxophone; Wim Both, Rob Bruynen, Andy Haderer, Ruud Breuls, John Marshall, trumpet; Ludwig Nuijs, Shannon Barnett, Andy Hunter, trombone; Mattis Cederberg, bass trombone; Paul Shighihara, guitar; Frank Chastenier, piano; Hans Dekker, drums.

Ordering info: inandout-records.com

New West Guitar Group Send One Your Love

SUMMIT RECORDS 659

★★★★½

This savvy guitar trio consisting of two native New Yorkers (Perry Smith and Jeff Stein) and one Angelino (John Storie) has, over the past decade, established a rare chemistry. Overall, their inviting sound is a more understated chamber-jazz aesthetic than the fiery flamenco fusillades of the international Guitar Trio (John McLaughlin, Paco de Lucía and Al Di Meola) or the blues-drenched swinging of Great Guitars (Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis and Charlie Byrd). On their sixth outing, the New West Guitar Group (originally a quartet formed in 2003 at USC's Thornton School of Music) seeks to expand its audience beyond the inner circle of fretboard fanatics by adding guest vocalists on every track.

The opening title track is a Stevie Wonder tune with a rhythmically tricky arrangement by Stein that features the breathy, intimate vocals of Gretchen Parlato. Peter Eldridge, of New York Voices, delivers a compelling rendition of Joni Mitchell's "Black Crow" (from *Hejira*) against a phalanx of aggressively strummed acoustic guitars. Smith's relaxed arrangement of Jule Styne's "I Fall In Love Too Easily," enhanced by Sara Gazarek's alluring vocals, is full of deftly plucked harmony lines. A pleasant melding of stringing and singing.

—Bill Milkowski

Send One Your Love: Send On Your Love; Detour Ahead; Black Crow; I Fall In Love Too Easily; You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To; Like Someone In Love; Waltz No.1; My Ship; When She Loved Me; Secret O' Life. (51:33)

Personnel: Perry Smith, guitar; John Storie, guitar; Jeff Stein, guitar; Gretchen Parlato, vocals (1, 6); Becca Stevens, vocals (2, 7); Peter Eldridge (vocals 3, 8); Sara Gazarek, vocals (4, 10); Tierney Sutton, vocals (5, 9).

Ordering info: summitrecords.com



Mitchel Forman Trio Puzzle

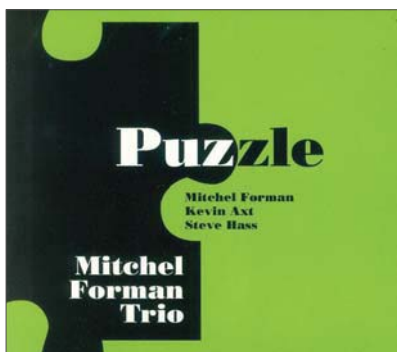
BFM JAZZ 302062431

★★★★

In perhaps the greatest thumbing of the nose to the New York-centric "gourmet" jazz demographic, keyboardist Mitchel Forman recorded some of *Puzzle* in a bagel shop in a Los Angeles suburb. That's possibly the most intricate riddle in this new and airy trio disc.

When Forman writes in his liner notes that "anything any of us played would be treated as holy," that seems like less of a riddle and more of a mirage. Forman punches holes through "What Is This Thing Called Love?" at a breakneck pace, aided by muscular outbursts from drummer Steve Hass. The leader starts multitasking on the self-penned "Passing Smile," playing a melodica in tandem with his piano. It's a little fun and a *lot* kitschy when he takes a solo on the handheld keyboard, leaving the listener to guess which hand is playing what. Mingus' "Nostalgia In Times Square" gets a start-stop shuffle that pushes the feel into a smiley realm that Mingus probably never foresaw. It is a natural spotlight for bassist Kevin Axt, who nimbly swerves around the changes. The ridiculously fast "Bounce" allows Forman to show off his burning right hand, and "Time After Time," a jazz standard since the moment it fell out of Cyndi Lauper's tangled pink locks more than 30 years ago, is jumped by a frantic push.

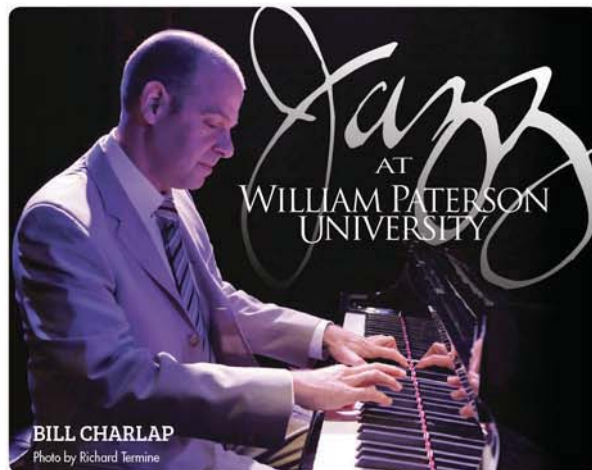
—Sean J. O'Connell



Puzzle: Death And The Flower/What Is This Thing Called Love?; Alfie; Passing Smile; Puzzle; Nostalgia In Times Square; Ten Cent Wings; Bounce; Time After Time; My Old Room; Cartoons; Nimbus; Old Faces In Windows. (67:56)

Personnel: Mitchel Forman, piano, organ, synth, melodica; Kevin Axt, bass; Steve Hass, drums.

Ordering info: bfmjazz.com



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Guitar Contemporaries

Carlos Santana & John McLaughlin, *Invitation To Illumination: Live At Montreux 2011* (Eagle Rock 203892; 67:54/67:06 ★★★★★) shows

how two guitar heroes' respective styles have evolved over the decades: one, a rocker who changes colors; the other, a perennial blender. Apart from a return to music from their 1973 album *Love Devotion Surrender*, including John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" and "Naima" (the latter performed as before, as an acoustic duet, followed by an acoustic medley of Cyril Scott's "Lotus Land Op. 47, No. 1" with the soul classic "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood") as well as their "Let Us Go Into The House Of The Lord" (which remains a tad gushy and overwrought), the two provide inventive surprises with their unconventional medley of, among nine tunes, Coltrane's "Peace On Earth," Bob Dylan's "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and Jimmy Page and Robert Plant's "Stairway To Heaven."

It's a strange melding of the reverent with the unexpected, and the music is a reflection of an extended band that has clearly spent some time rehearsing. That extended, rotating band includes Cindy Blackman Santana and Dennis Chambers on drums, Tommy Anthony on guitars and vocals, bassists Tienne M'Bappe and Benny Rietveld and percussionist Paul Rekow.

McLaughlin quotes Davis' "Pfrancing" on John Lee Hooker's jump-blues closer "Shake It Up And Go" (fest head Claude Nobs getting into the act on harmonica) as part of his rapid-fire delivery. Elsewhere, keyboardist David K. Mathews slips in a nod to Stevie Wonder's "Too High," reinforcing a vibe that's more playful than intense. The chatty Santana can be heard addressing the house early on: "How do you feel so far? Do you feel pretty good?" Talking about his playing with his buddy McLaughlin, he adds, "We resonate with spiritual principals and we resonate with having fun," but reminding everyone that, "This isn't show business or entertainment."

Highpoints of this two-CD set are medleys of Miles Davis and Teo Macero's "Right Off" with a guitar interlude and Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," Davis' "Black Satin" with Michael Jackson's "Smooth Criminal" and "Land Of A Thousand Dances" and Tony Williams' Lifetime-era "Vuelta Abajo" and "Vashkar." Williams' insistent rockers aren't your typical open-air-festival-type fare. Both are more rigorous and intricate in conception and bereft of obvious crowd-pleasing markers. Still, they burn it up. Blackman Santana's drumming is a driving (despite being under-recorded) force. The only thing missing: a cover of McLaughlin's driving "Marbles," originally played at a festival by Santana and Buddy Miles back in '72.

Ordering info: eagle-rock.com

Back in 1972 is where **Larry Coryell: Au-**



Larry Coryell

rora Coryellis (Purple Pyramid CLP 2271; 42:45/68:20/51:35 ★★★★★½) begins. Having recorded with McLaughlin on the electric/acoustic jazz album *Spaces* in 1970, Coryell was now a bandleader, and this 1972 gig at Boston's Jazz Workshop is a strong example of Coryell's ability to lead.

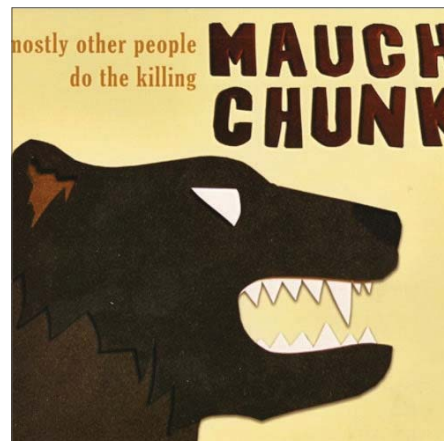
The blistering fusion feel of drummer Harry Wilkinson's funky hoedown "Offering" continues through three more tracks, which also feature the stellar accompaniment of sax player Steve Marcus, keyboardist Mike Mandel and bassist John Miller. Throughout we hear a band with ample solo room for all, each player an integral part of the whole sound. Coryell's guitar playing is forceful and inventive, with a characteristic mix of taut, chunky power chords and acid-drenched single lines. It can also be lyrical when called for, as on Coryell's intro to the alternating ruminator/uptempo rocker "Scotland Part One."

Clark University's Little Center in Worcester, Mass., was the site of Coryell's solo-acoustic set of 12 originals and covers in 1976. Approaching a creative acoustic phase with a number of guitar collaborators, Coryell offers a good sampling of his then-acoustic sound with material he recorded or would record elsewhere in duet, including Chick Corea's "Spain," Rene Thomas' "Rene's Theme" (with McLaughlin on *Spaces*) along with his own "Julie La Belee," "The Restful Mind" and "Improvisations On Sarabande" (all recorded earlier on his 1975 *The Restful Mind* album with Oregon). The songs are obviously pared down, Coryell doing double, and in some cases triple, duty. His lightning-quick dexterity and ease with filling in the gaps are apparent with his energetic take on Wayne Shorter's "Juju."

Performing at the San Jose Jazz Festival in 2002, Coryell's trio with bassist Jeff Chambers and drummer Paul Wertico is interesting if only because we get to hear Coryell playing jazz standards (e.g., Monk's "Trinkle Tinkle," Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood," guitar hero Wes Montgomery's "Bumpin' On Sunset"). And there's more straight-ahead fare with his two-part "Spaces Revisited." The playing is good if uneventful, and Coryell's sound sometimes lacks his distinctive touch. The music, played in this large outdoor venue, begs for the intimacy of a club.

Ordering info: cleopatrarerecords.com

DB



Mostly Other People Do the Killing *Mauch Chunk*

HOT CUP 103

★★★★★

At first blush, the music of Mostly Other People Do the Killing might seem to be a savage parody of jazz. But though the quartet's collective tongue is seldom far from its musical cheek, these are uber-talented musicians who have fun with jazz tradition (liners notes are by one "Leonardo Featherweight") and the music itself.

Of course, that doesn't preclude a lot of fine, if raucous, playing on this collection. It's intense, loose, unpredictable music with morphing structures and freewheeling soloists who can turn on a dime.

Alto saxophonist Jon Irabagon is the lead ensemble voice; he's a player with a seemingly inexhaustible vocabulary. A solo can be behind, on and in front of the beat at different junctures. He's a blowtorch player with a caustic tone, ripping out long lines that charge ahead, whipsaw back-and-forth and occasionally turn and mock themselves. Then, he can turn buttery, as on the slow, sliding "Niagra."

MOPDTK is remarkable for how it seems to deconstruct its own material in mid-song. The tribute to Sonny Clark, "Herminie," has pianist Ron Stabinsky playing vaguely post-bop piano—until Kevin Shea's drums and Irabagon's saxophone overwhelm him from their own respective angles.

Nothing stays in the same place for long: Shea can do lots of crazy things to the beat as the alto strong-arms a piece of "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" into a Henry Threadgill-inspired tune.

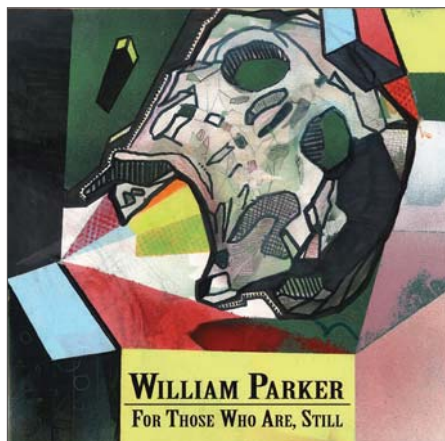
Sure, this outfit plays hard and has a lot of fun. But close listening reveals many surprising musical delights.

—Kirk Silsbee

Mauch Chunk: Mauch Chunk Is Jim Thorpe; West Bolivar; Obelisk; Niagra; Herminie; Townville; Mehoopany. (46:25)

Personnel: Jon Irabagon, alto saxophone; Ron Stabinsky, piano; Moppa Elliott, bass; Kevin Shea, drums.

Ordering info: hotcuprecords.com



William Parker *For Those Who Are, Still*

AUM FIDELITY 092/93/94

★★★★½

Bassist/composer William Parker once shared in an interview the experience of being in a combo that played so intensely, it levitated off the bandstand. That degree of transcendence has become his objective every time he plays. If the impossible is what you aim for on a regular basis, what do you do when you want to aim higher?

Parker's answer is contained within the three individually titled CDs that constitute *For Those Who Are, Still*. For sheer size, it is actually a step down from his previous boxed set, the eight-

disc *Wood Flute Songs*. But where that collection tracked the permutations of one ensemble across years of live performance, this one contains four discreet pieces, each epic in scale, on which Parker stretches himself beyond his usual long reach. On each, Parker has written for the human voice. This by itself is nothing new; one of his most celebrated and accessible endeavors is the Curtis Mayfield Project, which reimagines Mayfield's compositions as loose-limbed jazz tunes.

But these stray much further from jazz, drawing from the classical traditions of Europe and India amongst other influences. Some of *For Those Who Are, Still* is deeply satisfying, but some of it feels frustratingly piecemeal. *Red Giraffe With Dreadlocks* emulates certain of Don Cherry's efforts by combining outward-bound jazz, African and Asian elements. One singer, Sangeeta Bandyopadhyay, intones elaborate, multilingual elaborations on Indian melodies, while Senegalese griot Mola Sylla calls out short phrases like he is casting spells. But what holds the piece together is the swing and flow generated by Parker and a core of musicians who have worked with him for many years.

Vocalist Leena Conquest is showcased on *Fannie Lou Hamer* and *Vermeer*, a pair of chamber pieces recorded a decade apart that share another CD. The earlier piece uses drums that speak in several tongues and seething strings to frame scenarios from a half-spoken, half-sung narrative of slavery-era survival. Despite lasting

nearly half an hour, the piece proceeds in brisk and absorbing fashion. *Vermeer*, the later piece, is much starker, rather like Steve Lacy and Irene Aebi's settings for poems. Perhaps due to the absence of percussion, the music is sometimes too skeletal and deliberate.

Ceremonies For Those Who Are Still can hardly be characterized as skeletal. A trio that includes Parker, drummer Mike Reed and Charles Gayle on saxophones and piano mixes it up with a full orchestra and chorus, but they don't combine particularly well. The orchestral passages sound bulked-up and awkward, striving to express a grandness that they do not earn, especially when heard next to the trio's fleet changes and organic balance.

—Bill Meyer

For Those Who Are, Still: Disc One: For Fannie Lou Hamer; Vermeer; Awash In The Midst Of An Angel's Tears; Essence; Flower Song (Take 2); Just Feel; Feet As Roses; Gongs For Dear Dreams; Sweet Breeze; Flower Song (Take 1). (68:50) Disc Two: Villages; Greetings And Prayer; Souls Have Fallen Like Rain; The Giraffe Dances; Tour Of The Flying Poem; Children Drawing Water From The Well; Where Do You Send The Poem. (73:52) Disc Three: A Magical Figure Dances Barefoot In The Mud; Light Shimmering Across A Field of Ice; Trees With Wings; Rise Up In Sound; Humble Serious; Tea Leaves Of Triple Sadness; Ritual; Winter; My Cup; Encore; Escapade For Sonny (Dedicated to Sonny Rollins). (73:20)

Personnel: William Parker, bass, hocchiku, doson nogoni, bamboo flutes; Daryl Foster, soprano and tenor saxophone; Eri Yamamoto, piano; Leena Conquest, voice; Todd Reynolds, violin; Shiau-Shu Yu, cello; JD Parran, woodwinds; Sam Furnace, woodwinds; Ravie Best, trumpet; Kathleen Supove, piano; Masahiko Kono, trombone; Nicki Parror, bass; JT Lewis, drums; Jim Pugliese, percussion; Sangeeta, Bandyopadhyay, voice, electronic shruti box; Mola Sylla, voice, m'bira, ngoni; Bill Cole, double reeds; Rob Brown, alto saxophone; Klaas Hekman, bass saxophone, flute; Cooper-Moore, piano; Hamid Drake, drums; Charles Gayle, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, piano; Mike Reed, drums; NFM Symphony Orchestra.

Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

Michael Musillami Trio *Zephyr*

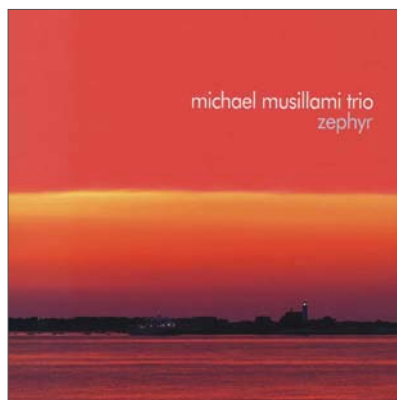
PLAYSCAPE 040115

★★★★

Veteran guitarist Michael Musillami brings a sleek approach to his latest trio outing with longtime cohorts Joe Fonda on bass and George Schuller on drums. *Zephyr* was cut on the heels of a short tour in March of 2015, and there is a palpable spark to the playing. Musillami plays with a clean, resonant tone with phrases that alternate between buoyant and cutting, qualities given sympathetic energy and bounce by the nimble, fast-paced rhythm section. The guitarist penned all of the pieces here, many of which draw inspiration from childhood experiences.

"Pacific School" isn't about a California style of jazz, but rather looks back on the Sacramento elementary school Musillami attended as a kid. The tune elegantly plays with tempo and density, setting a standard for the entire collection. "Francesca's Flowers," a wide-open ballad marked by lovely harmonies from the guitarist, was written for his daughter. "Zephyr Cove" is a medium-tempo gem about a park off Lake Tahoe where Musillami spent childhood vacations. Its accelerating and decelerating slaloms, funky grooves and expansive ruminations suggest a feel somewhere between Arabic music and surf guitar. Although these musicians sometimes push toward experimentation in their work together, here they seem content to revel in their fine rapport. This proves to be a wise idea.

—Peter Margasak



Zephyr: Loops; Pacific School; Francesca's Flowers; Zephyr Cove (Bass Introduction); Zephyr's Cove; Environmental Studies; Remembering Dawn. (51:58)

Personnel: Michael Musillami, guitar; Joe Fonda, bass; George Schuller, drums.

Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com

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The Sun Also Rises

Peter Guralnick works hard to justify the hyperbolic title of *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll* (Little, Brown and Co.) and much of the story is fascinating. It is a remarkably reported biography of Phillips and his iconic company, Sun Records, as well as his tangled family life and his career after Sun. It is also just a tad too long.

Like *Dream Boogie*, the Sam Cooke biography Guralnick published 10 years ago, this swamps the reader with detail. And the way Guralnick weaves his relationship with Phillips into the book (they knew each other for 25 years, in effect making Guralnick and his wife Alexandra part of the sprawling Phillips family), while good material for NPR interviews and book tours, seems more self-indulgent than informative.

Phillips, not as well known as either Cooke or Elvis Presley (the latter was subject of Guralnick's first major biography, the magnificent, two-volume *Careless Love* and *Last Train to Memphis*), was the Florence, Alabama, man who founded Sun in Memphis. While jazz was in the midst of its bebop revolution, popular music, when Phillips first articulated his determinedly democratic vision of it, was far less adventurous. What he did by founding Sun was nothing less than shift the culture from black and white to color.

Phillips effectively discovered the founding white fathers of rock 'n' roll: Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison and Charlie Rich. He also was the first to record the talented Ike Turner. By communicating his approach to all of them and by being open to their idiosyncrasies, he gave them a voice.

While none of these artists stayed with him, each honed his individual style under Phillips' astute tutelage, and the way he set up his studio to build echo into their voices presaged the kind—if not the degree—of manipulation available to today's producers.

Phillips was indeed a pioneer in recording, in radio stations (he founded Memphis' WHER, the first all-female station) and in desegregation.

While best known for his major white artists, he also was the first to record "Rocket 88," a 1951 burner that was the vinyl debut of Turner and what many consider the first rock 'n' roll record. He was also behind the debut of Howlin' Wolf, a Delta force who would go on to far greater fame with Chess, a Chicago label with which Phillips had profound differences.

Besides accounts of the entries of Presley,

Cash, Lewis, Orbison and Rich into the Sun fold—Guralnick rightly refuses to settle whether Phillips or his earliest partner (and a key inamorata) Marion Keisker "discovered" Presley—there are stories of Phillips' adulation of Howlin' Wolf, his easy relationship with the difficult Turner, efforts he made to interact with other independents of the time like the Bihari brothers, Duke Records' Don Robey, and Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler of the Atlantic label. Fans of the record business will enjoy yet another spin on these early days.

Charismatic yet all-too-human, Phillips was open to mistakes; he thrived on them because he was against perfection, be it on shellac or in his own life. "I love perfect imperfection, I really do, and that's not just some cute saying, that's a fact," he said of cutting a track with bluesman Walter Horton. "Perfect? That's the devil. Who in this world would want to be perfect? They should

strike the damn thing out of the language of the human race."

As a kid, Phillips stirred to African-American field hands he heard singing gospel in his hometown. It was there, Guralnick suggests, that he got the idea of starting a company to record talented musicians whose class or color kept them from such an opportunity.

While the recording studios started by Phillips and his associates—including Holiday Inn founder Kemmons Wilson, who advised Phillips to "sell" Presley to Col. Tom Parker and RCA Records—occupy a good deal of the book, as do the radio stations he launched in Tennessee, Alabama and Florida, Guralnick also lets us into his private life. It's more soap opera than rock 'n' roll.

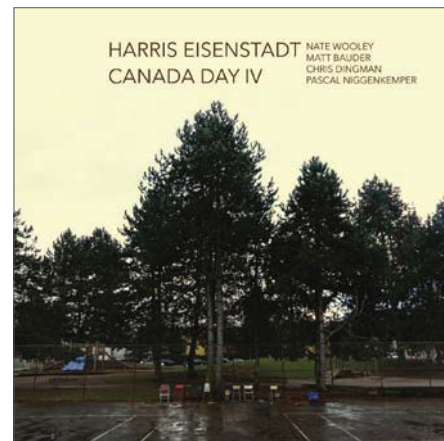
When Phillips died in 2003, he'd been married to Becky Burns for 60 years. She'd stood by him through electroshock treatments and financial vagaries, weathered family disputes and had given birth to the talented and troubled Knox and Jerry Phillips, who followed in their father's footsteps in their own way.

Becky also stood by, more than accommodating, as Phillips carried on many affairs; one of the most touching documents in this book is a letter attesting, in Guralnick's memorable phrase, to the "terrible ferocity of her love." The missive Becky sent her "dream boy" is a joy to read.

Despite its flaws, Guralnick's biography of Sam Phillips is a key work of Americana, getting inside the head and heart of a very influential figure and the scenes he spawned.

Ordering info: peterguralnick.com

DB



Harris Eisenstadt *Canada Day IV*

SONGLINES 1614

★★★★½

In his liner notes to *Canada Day IV*, bandleader Harris Eisenstadt talks about being "pleased with the air that we have let into the music." There is indeed a spacious atmosphere to this fourth album from his quintet (which follows an expanded outlier, *Canada Day Octet*); the ever-tuneful music seems to breathe, its blend of composition and improvisation feeling organic, even inevitable.

Eisenstadt is a prolific composer, having also yielded two recent albums each with his chamber-jazz quartet Golden State and with the September Trio (alongside Ellery Eskelin and Angelica Sanchez). But *Canada Day*—which includes trumpeter Nate Wooley, tenor saxist Matt Bauder, vibraphonist Chris Dingman and new bassist Pascal Niggenkemper—has been the drummer's prime vehicle on the road and in the studio.

The Toronto-bred New Yorker takes full advantage of the instrumental tones and improvisational tempers of his players, whether it's the smoky exhalations of Bauder or the keening vocalisms of Wooley.

"After Several Snowstorms" makes for a striking opener to this beautifully recorded album, with its deep bass line and silvery lace of vibes, the sequence of solos enveloping. "Sometimes It's Hard To Get Dressed In The Morning" is driven by another strong bass line for Niggenkemper, with Dingman's vibes adding more shimmering halos of resonance.

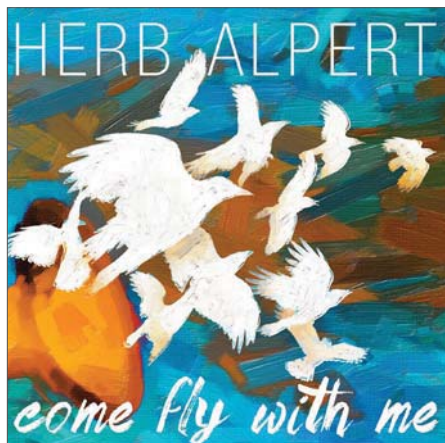
The volatile "Life's Hurtling Passage Onward" ends with an extended otherworldly duet for Wooley and Dingman. A composer-drummer rather than a drummer-composer, Eisenstadt rarely spotlights his own instrument, opting to heighten dynamics and emphasize the whole.

—Bradley Bamberger

Canada Day IV: After Several Snowstorms; Sometimes It's Hard To Get Dressed In The Morning; Let's Say It Comes In Waves; Life's Hurtling Passage Onward; What Can Be Set To The Side; What's Equal To What; Meli Melo. (50:53)

Personnel: Harris Eisenstadt, drums; Nate Wooley, trumpet; Matt Bauder, tenor saxophone; Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Pascal Niggenkemper, double-bass.

Ordering info: songlines.com



Herb Alpert *Come Fly With Me*

HERB ALPERT PRESENTS 001

★★½

Herb Alpert continues to deliver the sunny sound he inaugurated in 1962, when his work with the Tijuana Brass propelled him to fame and fortune. Here, he leavens reimaginings of chestnuts spanning "Take The 'A' Train" and "Danny Boy" with semi-catchy originals. It's a winning formula from which Alpert rarely strays. But it's a formula; he is not known for taking chances.

His tone remains bright, his phrasing lean. Those can be admirable qualities, but if they're virtually the only ones, as they are here, they make for an album that lacks dimension and variety. Passion takes a back seat to precision—this album is produced to within an inch of its life—and only a few cuts suggest a greater range.

"Night Ride," which Alpert says was inspired by Tito Puente, approaches excitability through Alpert's multitracked trumpet, Scott Mayo's pushy sax and co-writer Michael Shapiro's drums and percussion. "Love Affair" huffs and puffs and eventually dramatizes, setting Alpert's piercing trumpet against plush strings in a widescreen arrangement by Eduardo Del Barrio, a keyboardist and one of the recording's six engineers.

Otherwise, this is jazz as trinket souvenir, with a frequent island touch. It also feels like the last breath of summer, with its reggae overlay (which works on Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies" and the catchy original "Cheeky") and its overall jauntness. It is always pretty, even on duds like the lackluster takes on Duke Ellington's "'A' Train" and George Harrison's "Something."

This is expertly played; the musicians include the cream of smooth jazz, and there's not a note out of place. *Come Fly With Me* is ideal for cruise ships, its music going down like happy hour bubbly.

—Carlo Wolff

Come Fly With Me: Come Fly With Me; Blue Skies; Got A Lot Of Livin' To Do; Take The "A" Train; Love Affair; Windy City; Sweet And Lovely; Walkin' Tall; Night Ride; Something; On The Sunny Side Of The Street; Danny Boy. (40:52)

Personnel: Herb Alpert, trumpet; Marcel Camargo, guitars and cavaquinho; Bill Cantos, keyboards; Eduardo del Barrio, strings, keyboards, programming; Robert Greenidge, steel drum; Hussain Jiffy, bass, guitar; Jeff Lorber, keyboards, guitar, programming; Scott Mayo, saxophones, flute and vocals; Judd Miller, EVI; Dorrel Salmon, Hammond B-3; Jamieson Trotter, keyboards.

Ordering info: herbalpert.com

MARIO PAVONE *BLUE DIALECT*

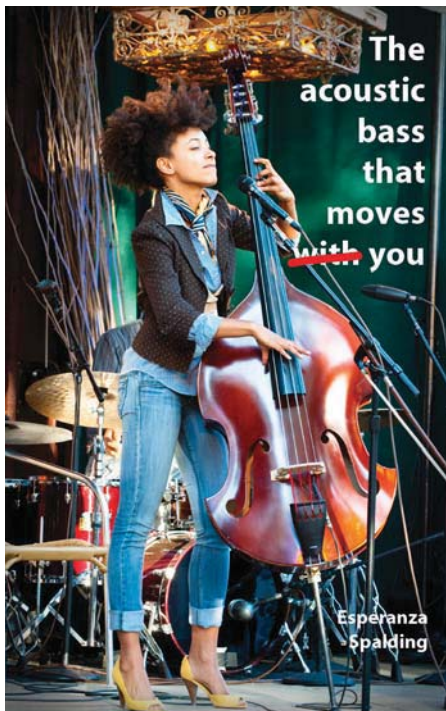
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galen weston *plugged in*

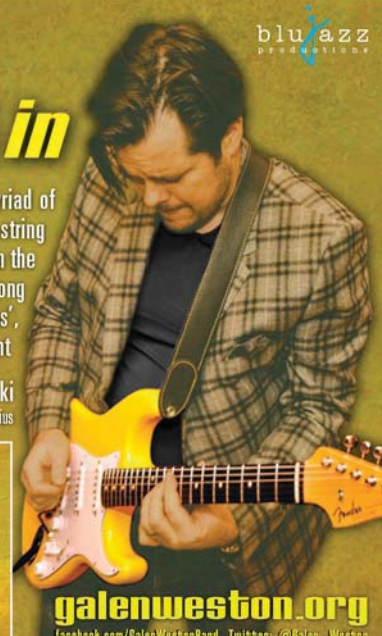
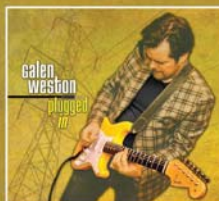
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Bill Milkowski

Contributor to *Down Beat*, *Jazziz* and author of *JACO: The Extraordinary and Tragic Life of Jaco Pastorius*

Plugged In, the ambitious debut album by Toronto Jazz guitarist Galen Weston, features 10 originals by Weston along with bold arrangements of Keith Jarrett's 'Country' and Jimmy Van Huesen's 'Like Someone in Love'. It is inspired by essential guitarists such as George Benson, Pat Metheny, Mike Stern, Eric Johnson and Mark Knopfler.



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Bob James/Nathan East *The New Cool*

YAMAHA ENTERTAINMENT GROUP 23280

★★★★★

As one half of Fourplay, pianist Bob James and bassist Nathan East are known for making palatable, catchy jazz. Here, the music is less easy to categorize, interspersing duo tunes such as the slightly Monkish “Oliver’s Bag” and the bluesy, minimalist title track with orchestrated, darker originals including “Waltz For Judy” and the beautifully grainy “All Will Be Revealed.”

There’s no showboating here, no need to impress. Produced by Yamaha Entertainment Group President Chris Gero, *The New Cool* is comfortable and confident, with James and East in total empathy, as one might expect from play-

ing together for 25 years.

There is drama, too, in the masterfully swinging “Canto Y La Danza” and the final track, “Turbulence”; here, percussionist Rafael Padilla and drummer Scott Williamson add appropriate body and power. But above all, in the duet tracks there is modesty, and virtuosity takes a back seat to expressiveness throughout. There’s swing, too, as James and East compete in amiable propulsion in “Midnight Magic/Love Me As Though There Were No Tomorrow.”

Two key points of interest and originality: Use of the Nashville Recording Orchestra and positioning a lush version of Willie Nelson’s already lush “Crazy” close to the center of the disc. The orchestrations span the angular, dissonant strings on “All Will Be Revealed”—which early on convinces the listener this album is special—and the pastoral cast of the winds on “Ghost Of A Chance.”

“Crazy” seems especially plush thanks to Nashville mainstay Vince Gill. His plummy vocal is a perfect fit for James’ artful piano and an arrangement. One could argue that the world doesn’t need another version of this chestnut, but this one works.

—Carlo Wolff

The New Cool: The New Cool; Oliver’s Bag; All Will Be Revealed; Midnight Magic/Love Me As Though There Were No Tomorrow; Crazy; How Deep Is The Ocean; Canto Y La Danza; Waltz For Judy; Seattle Sunrise; Ghost Of A Chance; Turbulence. (53:00)

Personnel: Nathan East, bass; Bob James, piano; Nashville Recording Orchestra; Rafael Padilla, percussion; Scott Williamson, drums.

Ordering info: yamahaentertainmentgroup.com

John Pizzarelli *Midnight McCartney*

CONCORD 37634

★★★

When Paul McCartney recorded his surprising set of standards, *Kisses On The Bottom*, in 2012, John Pizzarelli served as the session’s guitarist. McCartney later sent a note to Pizzarelli, proposing that he document some of his lesser-known songs in what he called “a mellow jazz style,” even suggesting that *Midnight McCartney* would be a suitable title.

Pizzarelli, who back in 1996 recorded a full CD of Beatles songs, liked the idea. With his wife, the vocalist Jessica Molaskey, and keyboardist Larry Goldings, he came up with 13 songs from McCartney’s solo career (none are Beatles tunes) that he felt would work well for the project. The result is a mix of bossa novas, ballads and medium-tempo swing pieces that succeeds most at being mellow.

Pizzarelli’s voice is heard at its warmest throughout, making the case for him as a rewarding pop singer. He scats a little but most of the time sticks close to the melody and the lyrics. Everything is tastefully played and singer Michael McDonald’s guest spot on “Coming Up” works well.

On the minus side, the music is jazzy rather than jazz-oriented, with all of the solos being brief. There are no real chances being taken with the music. Most of the songs, although consistently likable, are not memorable in this setting (the



ballad “Warm And Beautiful” comes the closest).

The music on *Midnight McCartney* is nicely played but a sense of adventure is missing.

—Scott Yanow

Midnight McCartney: Silly Love Songs; My Love; Heart Of The Country; Coming Up; No More Lonely Nights; Warm And Beautiful; Hi, Hi, Hi; Junk; My Valentine; Let’ Em In; Some People Never Know; Maybe I’m Amazed; Wonderful Christmastime. (49:48)

Personnel: John Pizzarelli, vocals, guitar; Larry Goldings (2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11), Helio Alves (1, 5, 9, 13), Konrad Paszkudzki (4, 8), piano; Bucky Pizzarelli (2, 6, 8), guitar; Martin Pizzarelli, bass (except 12); Kevin Kanner (2–4, 6–8, 11), drums; Duduka DaFonseca (1, 5, 9, 13), drums percussion; Harry Allen, tenor saxophone (8); Tony Kadleck, trumpet (4, 10); John Mosca, trombone (4, 10); Andy Fusco, alto saxophone (4, 10); Katherine Fink, Pamela Sklar, alto flute (2, 6, 8); Paul Woodiel, Robin Zeh, violin (2, 6, 8); Chris Cardona, viola (2, 6, 8); Mairi Dorman-Phaneuf, cello (2, 6, 8); Jessica Molaskey, vocals (12); Michael McDonald, vocals (4).

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com



Tiffany Austin *Nothing But Soul*

CON ALMA MUSIC 001

★★★★★

Vocalist Tiffany Austin has had a rapidly increased presence on the Bay Area live music scene, leading her own quartet and quintet and performing with others in piano trio and big band settings. The University of California–Berkeley School of Law alumna has participated in or given tribute concerts in honor of Bessie Smith, Nina Simone and Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald.

Her much-anticipated debut recording draws off another of her thematic programs, with more than half of the selections coming from the Hoagy Carmichael songbook. Austin navigates those standards, including an urgent version of “Baltimore Oriole” and a rhythmically hypnotic reading of “Georgia,” with an ease cultivated through several years of gigging and session work.

Austin has found an ideal collaborator in tenor saxophonist and vocalist Howard Wiley, who produced the album and opens it with some lusty blowing on a fancifully executed “Stardust.” The two split arranging duties evenly and co-wrote the track “Tête-À-Tête”—a wordless a cappella number in which the pair trades off lead and supporting vocal roles over the chord changes to Charlie Parker’s “Confirmation.”

Both Austin and Wiley are poly-stylists who sound as comfortable with big band swing as they do with new jack swing. They demonstrate their flexibility by transforming the Johnny Cash anthem “I Walk The Line” (which Carmichael also recorded) into a rowdy shuffle that showcases pianist Glen Pearson’s blues sensibility.

Pearson provides Austin’s sole accompaniment on an appropriately wistful “I Get Along With You Very Well,” and it’s just Austin and double bassist Ron Belcher on a brief but inspired run through “Sing Me A Swing Song (And Let Me Dance).” In both settings, Austin’s vocal strengths are showcased—clarity of tone and delivery on the former and outright presence on the latter.

—Yoshi Kato

Nothing But Soul: Stardust; Baltimore Oriole; I Get Along With You Very Well; I May Be Wrong (But I Think You’re Wonderful); Skylark; I Walk The Line; Georgia; Sing Me A Swing Song (And Let Me Dance); Tête-À-Tête (bonus track). (39:00)

Personnel: Tiffany Austin, vocals; Howard Wiley, tenor saxophone, vocals (1, 5, 7); Glen Pearson, piano; Ron Belcher, bass; Sly Randolph, drums.

Ordering info: tiffanyaustin.com

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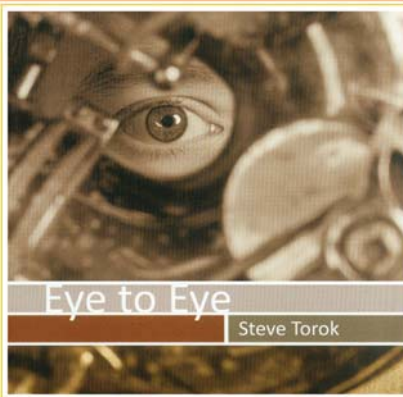
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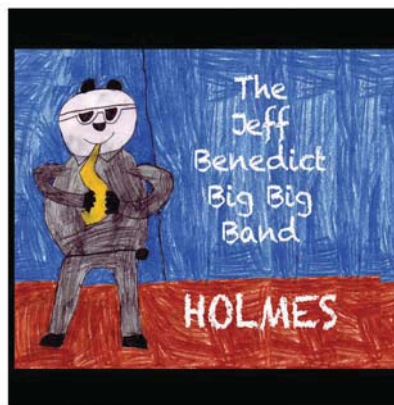
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By Frank-John Hadley

Christmas music is balm for the soul. Remedies of good cheer are prescribed every autumn by recording artists who redecorate old home-and-hearth carols and Yuletide favorites. Some even compose their own songs. This year's batch of holiday albums features a bevy of talented musicians with soothing powers.

The holiday season is the time to raise a cup of spiked eggnog and salute today's big bands. Leading the charge is the **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra** led by trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. The

Yuletide album in the Basie organization's 80-year run. The core Basie virtues remain intact: meticulous musicianship, tight comradeship, buoyant swing. The riffs aren't as steamy and bluesy as they were when Basie (or his enlightened surrogate Grover Mitchell) was in charge, but no worries. Arrangements by several experts, including Sammy Nestico (savor his chart for "Good 'Swing' Wenceslas"), are a strong suit and take the onus off "Silent Night" and similarly obvious songs. Barnhart and other soloists shine. Pleasing to the ear, too, are vocals by Carmen Bradford (an alumna), good ol' Johnny Mathis and jazz-influenced Ledisi. New Orleans legend Ellis Marsalis gets to mimic Basie's piano style.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band piles its 18 or more members into one big sleigh for the fun ride of the group's second holiday outing, **A Big Phat Christmas—Wrap This! (Music of Content; 49:10 ★★½)**. Swinging in the spirit of Basie is the defining motivator for arranger-pianist Goodwin and his Los Angeles-based revelers. They grant "Let It Snow" and other favorites new leases on life, and

and Dean Martin without imitating them or adopting a Rat Pack smugness. Skipping the usual holly-and-ivy crowd-pleasers, he merrily investigates sturdy, oft-forgotten tunes waxed long ago by the likes of Martin, Julie London and Brook Benton. Fortunate to have such a crisp, swinging band and to have pianist Park supplying sumptuous charts, Lorenson has a fine time with a recent Yuletide song by John Pizzarelli, "Santa Claus Is Near."

Ordering info: russlorenson.com

David Benoit made Christmas albums back in the 1980s and '90s, but his new trio CD, **Believe (Concord 37154; 36:59 ★★½)**, is not a tossed-off exercise in rewrapping old presents. Collaborating with talented singer Jane Monheit, the pianist forgoes the lite-jazz he's known for and instead performs full-caloric acoustic jazz. His spry, intelligent playing prompts Monheit to follow him in reconditioning standards. They excel with a winning rendition of "My Favorite Things," mixing gaiety and a touch of the gorgeous to retain the song's tunefulness and identity. The pianist reveres Vince Guaraldi's soundtrack to *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, and he relishes, without sentimentality, the several melodies that make up his "Guaraldi Medley."

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

A quarter-century since last trimming the tree in a recording studio, smooth-jazz operator **Kim Pensyl** sends personalized season's greetings by way of his **Early Snowfall (Summit 669; 48:54 ★★½)**. Despite a set of standards more worn down than an old toboggan stored in grandpa's garage, the pianist considerably staves off boredom for the listener by offering updates of musical and emotional substance. Along with Rick VanMatre's flute and Rusty Burge's vibraphone, Pensyl's piano conjures honest-to-goodness Kris Kringle-certified jazz, not its sanitized simulacrum. He composed the album's title track, which has an air of enchantment.

Ordering info: summitrecords.com

A glorious gift of new music comes from **Ann Hampton Callaway**, a Tony-nominated Broadway and cabaret singer-songwriter with a genuine feel for jazz. Using impeccable phrasing, she infuses the music of **The Hope of Christmas (Manchester Craftsmen's Guild 1042; 52:22 ★★★★★)** with a refined jollity. The songs aren't the usual Jack Frost lot. With the exception of one track, none of these songs have been available before. Callaway and New York cognoscenti like Michael Feinstein and Wesley Whatley did the songwriting—and the results are mainly exceptional. William Schermerhorn, a songwriter of wit and wise deliberation, penned the lyrics here, intelligently exploring the complex emotions in play during the holiday season. Arrangements by the Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra's Mike Tomaro are characterized by a warm, small-band sound and structural clarity. The talented musicians present—including Hubert Laws, Gerald Albright, Claudio Roditi, the Ted Rosenthal Trio and vocal quartet New York Voices—are pledged to decorum, leaving it to Callaway to supply the poignancy.

Ordering info: mcg jazz.org

World-class trumpeter **Etienne Charles** shuns the routine and takes the measure of diverse musical celebrations on his **Creole Christmas (Culture Shock Music 005; 67:27 ★★★★★)**. Originally from Trinidad, he calls on prominent calypso singers Relator and David Rudder to spice up three tunes. The program includes two strong renditions of Lionel Belasco waltzes; "Roses Of Caracas Waltz" utilizes the wild talent of Macedonian clarinetist Ismail Lumanovski. Steel pans master Andy Narell is among



Cécile McLorin Salvant with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

group's **Big Band Holidays (Blue Engine 003; 59:15 ★★★★★)** compiles 11 performances that were first heard at JLCO's festive holiday concerts in recent years. This swinging assemblage of 16 excellent musicians treats familiar and unexpected songs with a joy and a heartfelt intent that never flags. This disc sparkles, thanks to Victor Goines' arrangements, the palette of colors on display and the top-flight improvisations. Among those exercising their imaginations: saxophonist Ted Nash and trumpeter Marcus Printup. Yet it's a guest, Cécile McLorin Salvant, who makes the most persuasive case for the empathy and intimacy of the Christmas spirit. A singer of uncommon artistry, she radiates authority when interpreting the Billie Holiday-associated, set-in-winter "It's Easy To Blame The Weather" and three more tunes. Vocalists René Marie and Gregory Porter are fine on a few songs, but it's Salvant who dispenses musical alchemy.

Ordering info: jazz.org/blueengine

Thirty-one years since Count Basie left for eternal rest, trumpeter Scotty Barnhart puts the present-day ghost band, **The Count Basie Orchestra**, through its paces on **A Very Swingin' Basie Christmas (Concord 38450; 44:50 ★★½)**, the first

the bandleader, looking good in a Santa suit, gets an extra slice of mince pie for his surprising revival of John Williams' "Somewhere In My Memory" from the 1990 comedy *Home Alone*.

Ordering info: bigphatband.com

Also capable of swinging from the rafters of Santa's wintry abode is the **Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra**. On **Joyful Jazz (Manchester Craftsmen's Guild 1039; 69:51 ★★★★★)**, these celebrants plumb standards and reveal fresh perspectives. Credit goes to several skilled soloists (including trumpeter Sean Jones and soprano saxophonist Mike Tomaro) and to a delightful combination of reeds and brass. Tomaro's song "Merry Christmas, John Coltrane" is a life-affirming treat. Classy singer Freddy Cole's presence on three obscure and delightful tunes is a blessing of the season.

Ordering info: mcg jazz.org

Crooner **Russ Lorenson**, joined by the Kelly Park Big Band, delivers good cheer on his album **In The Holiday Spirit (LML Music 285; 42:56 ★★★★★)**. The San Franciscan possesses a warm, rhythmically confident voice that holds volumes of Noel exhilaration. A showman of taste and discretion, Lorenson admires Bobby Darin, Frank Sinatra

David Benoit (left) with Jane Monheit



the talented artists visiting Charles for the holidays. Mykal Kilgore, a singer with Broadway experience, goes to passionate extremes in the gospel number "Go Tell It On The Mountain." Don't think Charles gets lost in the crowd. He and equally bold jazz musicians like saxophonists Jacques Schwarz-Bart and Brian Hogans invest songs with their crackling inventiveness and harmonic ingenuity. With only guitarist Randy Napoleon accompanying him on "I'll Be Home For Christmas," Charles conveys complete, stunning emotional involvement.

Ordering info: etiennecharles.com

Far more conventional, the **Fred Hughes Trio** contributes to the special time of the year with *I'll Be Home For Christmas* (ShoreThing Records 1215; 45:36 ★★½). This well-regarded Washington, D.C.-based pianist and his bandmates demonstrate that with the right melody, harmony and rhythm sensibilities even the most comatose of standards can breathe again.

Ordering info: fredhughes.com

Mr. Claus knows exactly which album to turn to when he's in need of a roots-music fix: *A Blues Christmas* (Alligator 9203, vinyl and download; 40:21 ★★). This collection finds 14 roster acts—their tracks lifted from two old Alligator holiday CDs—sending messages of sensual revelry. Blues powerhouse Shemekia Copeland wraps her tonsils around the terrifically clever "Stay A Little Later, Santa," and the late Koko Taylor sings "Merry, Merry Christmas" with typical zest. Everyone from Elvin Bishop to Marcia Ball to the Holmes Brothers drinks heartily from the 'Gator wassailing bowl.

Ordering info: alligator.com

As the band's fans are well aware, the lead vocalist of **Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings** has full-throated energy to spare. The group's new album, *It's A Holiday Soul Party* (Daptone 037; 34:08 ★★½), commands attention for how much it sounds like lusty soul of the 1960s and early '70s during Christmastime. This version of "White Christmas" sounds like a track by the Ike & Tina Turner Revue that was stashed away in a record company vault. Beyond hearty partying, Jones' most convincing singing is done on "Please Come Home For Christmas." She's to be applauded for her inclusive attitude, too, as she expends high emotion on the

Hanukkah salute "Eight Days."

Ordering info: daptonerecords.com

Santa would be remiss if he didn't place some gifts of rowdy holiday music under the tree. **The Brian Setzer Orchestra's** *Rockin' Rudolph* (Surfdog; 34:02 ★★½) finds the ex-Stray Cats rockabilly singer-guitarist focusing tons of mirth on the usual picks, plus a couple originals and the cartoon Flintstones' goofball "Yabba Dabba Yuletide." Setzer showcases his guitar prowess on "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," while "Carol Of The Bells" makes a favorable impression with its matrix of classical, rock and blues. Big band jazz takes over in swinging style on "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

Ordering info: surfdog.com

Starting in the mid-1980s, a holiday album credited to **The dB's & Friends** has been recycled every 10 years or so with new tracks alongside holdovers. *Christmas Time Again* (Omnivore 152; 69:22 ★★½) features wholly enjoyable old songs by the jangle-rock dB's and a version of "The Christmas Song" by indie-rock icon Alex Chilton. But that can't be said about new, undercooked turkeys basted by pop singer-songwriters such as Lydia Kavanagh.

Ordering info: omnivorerecordings.com

Bluegrass queen **Rhonda Vincent's** *Christmas Time* (Upper Management Music; 37:00 ★★½) stands out from the country crowd thanks to her smooth-textured tenor voice and bright fiddling. Sure, there's some commercial drivel here, but Vincent's highly melodic songs "Dreams Of Christmas" and "Christmas Time At Home" are nice—*real* nice. Willie Nelson and Charlie Daniels are among the guests who drop in to celebrate the season. **DB**

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Mack Avenue Records celebrates the season with its brightest stars in a collection of familiar and maybe not-so-familiar holiday tunes. While "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," "Little Drummer Boy" and Vince Guaraldi's Charlie Brown classic "Christmas Time Is Here" stand tall on the holly bedecked mantle, "Santa Claus, Go Straight To The Ghetto" makes a welcome addition to the Yule time repertoire.

mackavenue.com

Monk at his Peak

We don't have Bach playing Bach, but we have Monk playing Monk, and *Thelonious Monk: The Complete Riverside Recordings* (Riverside/Concord) is as historically significant and musically enriching a treasure as anyone could want. These 15 CDs contain 153 studio sessions—everything that producer Orrin Keepnews could find from the more than two dozen sessions he'd run for his label's brilliantly iconoclastic, tradition-rooted pianist-composer from July 1955 to April 1961, the era of Monk's greatest ambition and artistic maturity.

Several classic albums—including *Plays Duke Ellington*, *Brilliant Corners*, *Monk's Music* and *At Town Hall*—are here in their entirety, plus offhand studio talk, revealing outtakes and previously unissued pieces that were deemed failures, including three from a scrubbed date with drummer Shelly Manne. However, everything is sequenced chronologically, and there is no identification of songs by the albums on which they appeared. Nor do we get the original, often witty cover art. But the music—it's tender, flinty, wry, hummable, joyous, infectious, danceable, reflective, fundamental, quizzical, vital and often offhandedly virtuosic. Monk's impact can be taken today as that of a genius everyman, distinct and inimitable.

Hear the pianist in the moment, pausing strategically between or even during his stark

phrases, casting standards such as "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)" as if hewing it from a tree trunk. Hear him meld stride and ragtime figures with seemingly far-fetched harmonic extrapolations that prove wrong is right, hilariously on "Tea For Two." Hear him balance his rumbling left hand against his insistently percussive upper-register right, then comp airily for Gerry Mulligan's baritone sax on "Rhythm-a-ning." Hear sudden tangents and tossed-off exclamations as on "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart," celestially chromatic arpeggios and glisses on "Pannonica," "Nuttty" and "I Mean You," note-bending dissonances and odd but inevitable tunes like "Off Minor," "Trinkle, Tinkle" and "Straight No Chaser." The music's pleasures seem inexhaustible.

Keepnews brought Monk to his nascent Riverside label when the pianist's career had been dragged down by his previous label's disinterest and his lack of a cabaret card, restricting New York City gigs. The producer introduced the "high priest of bop" to new listeners (who might otherwise have been scared off by his reputation for being difficult) with Ellingtonia, but he remained supremely attentive to Monk's potential as well as his moods.

When *Thelonious Monk: The Complete*



Riverside Recordings was first released in 1986, Keepnews won the Best Album Notes Grammy, and the whole package, including a glossy booklet with black-and-white photography, was honored as Best Historical Album.

The new CD box set contains the original liner notes and photography in a small booklet, making this a truly compact package. The booklet measures 5 by 5½ inches, and each of the 15 CDs is housed in a cardboard slip-cover instead of a plastic jewel case. So the new set is less than a quarter of the size of the old LP edition. For those running out of shelf space, this is a significant improvement.

—Howard Mandel

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

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Sinatra Box: 100 Years, 101 Swingin' Songs

What makes Frank Sinatra so great? Critics and fans have been trying to explain that to the uninitiated for decades.

Here's how Don Costa (the producer of 1962's *Sinatra & Strings*) put it: "His reading lyrically is far better than anyone I have ever heard—it's almost flawless. Also, he has this rare ability to phrase musically without destroying the meaning of the lyric, but at the same time maintaining the flow of the melody. To create this balance is very difficult because the words are not always meant to be read in the same meter as the melody is written in. However, Frank can place the emphasis exactly the right way so that there is that balance, and with him it always works."

That's a fine description of Sinatra's skills, and it's one of the best quotes contained in the booklet that comes with *Ultimate Sinatra*, a deluxe four-CD box set spanning his entire career.

One hundred years after his birth (and 17 years after his death), The Chairman of the Board remains deeply ingrained in American culture. But not everyone's music library contains a decent Sinatra collection. *Ultimate Sinatra* is a remedy.

This isn't a comprehensive box set for hardcore fans looking for a bunch of rarities. The 80-page booklet is heavy on photos but light on details. It specifies the recording dates and arrangers, but not the names of the albums on which the tracks originally appeared. These are quibbles. The music contained here is timeless and plentiful.

The appeal of this set is its breadth: It chronicles five phases of Sinatra's career: the big band years (1939-'42); the Columbia Records years (1943-'52); his first stint with Capitol Records (1953-'62); the era when he recorded for the label he founded, Reprise (1960-'88); and his fabled late-career return to Capitol (1993-'94).

Ultimate Sinatra is a good introduction for rock fans who don't know much about Ol' Blue Eyes but keep hearing their grandparents talk about him. It's a primer for kids who want to know about that dude who sings "You Make Me Feel So Young" on the soundtrack to the Christmas movie *Elf*. It's also a nice package for fans who don't yearn to dig deep but who want something more extensive than Capitol's 20-track CD *Classic Sinatra: His Great Performances* (1953-'60).

It's appropriate that this set includes 101 songs



because it could function as the text for a college course titled Sinatra 101. Listen up, students.

This set is one-stop shopping for those in need of a sleek set housing all these gems: "Night And Day," "Someone To Watch Over Me," "Come Fly With Me," "Luck Be A Lady," "My Kind Of Town," "Fly Me To The Moon," "It Was A Very Good Year," "Strangers In The Night," "Summer Wind," "New York, New York" and "My Way."

Buy this set for an uninitiated but curious music lover and you run the risk of creating yet another Frankoholic. You've been warned.

—Bobby Reed

Ordering info: sinatra.com

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Honoring A Class ACT

Sigfried "Siggi" Loch began his career in the music industry behind the wheel of a VW Beetle. It was the early 1960s, and Loch, a specialist foreign sales rep for EMI Electrola, was on the road peddling newly imported albums to record stores across Germany. His "mobile" beginnings were a sign of things to come. Within six years, Loch, at 26, would become the youngest manager at the Hamburg-based Phillips label. But his ascent wouldn't end there. In 1972, he became the head of Warner-Elektra-Atlantic in London. Then, in 1992, he launched his own record label, ACT.

Today, ACT is considered one of the finest curators of progressive jazz and creative music, and Loch, the Polish-born record producer behind the venture, is largely responsible for its success. In 2015 Loch celebrated his 75th birthday, adding yet another milestone to a life already full of them. To commemorate the occasion, the Munich-based label has released *The ACT MAN: A Life In The Spirit Of Jazz—75 Siggi Loch*, a five-CD box set that provides a vivid cross-section of Loch's prolific career as a producer.

Each disc in this substantial box set is dedicated to a different genre of popular music, a testament to Loch's broad influence. Everything from Dixieland jazz to '60s rock 'n' roll is represented, but connecting the pieces is Loch's pristine touch as a record producer and his fierce commitment to

preserving the artist's vision.

The first disc, *The Beginning*, showcases Loch's lifelong love affair with traditional jazz, and features recordings that span from the early 1940s to the mid-'90s. The disc begins with clarinetist Sidney Bechet's winning rendition of "Indian Summer" (though he didn't personally produce this track, Loch claims it was Bechet who inspired his passion for music) and includes a startling live take of Dave Brubeck and Gerry Mulligan's "Unfinished Woman."

As is the case for most lovers of jazz, Loch also kindled a deep appreciation for the blues throughout his life, and disc two, *Blues & Rock*, shines a light on the blues icons that graced Loch's studio throughout the years. Present on this disc are the American greats John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy and Willie Dixon—all captured in peak form. But a real treat is the German jazz saxophonist Olaf Kübler, who, with Loch's guidance, filters the spirit of the blues through a distinctly European prism.

The third CD, *Crossing Borders*, collects tracks from the genre-bending world musicians that Loch fostered in his day, including Danilo Rea, Al Di Meola and the supergroup Jazzpaña. Covering more recent ground, disc four, *Visions Of Jazz*,

focuses exclusively on ACT artists, and includes such European standouts as Nils Landgren, Michael Wollny and Eberhard Weber. Rounding out the package is *Jazz Berlin Philharmonic*, which consists of live recordings from the titular concert series that Loch continues to curate to this day.

In the 80-page liner notes included with this deluxe box set—which feature scores of color and black-and-white photographs—Loch claims that it was his "knack for spotting new talent and identifying trends in pop music" that led to his meteoric rise through the record industry. That may be true, but at the heart of Loch's craft is also a profound love of music, which is evident on every track on this disc.

—Brian Zimmerman

Ordering info: actmusic.com



ACT founder Siggi Loch (left) with Dave Brubeck

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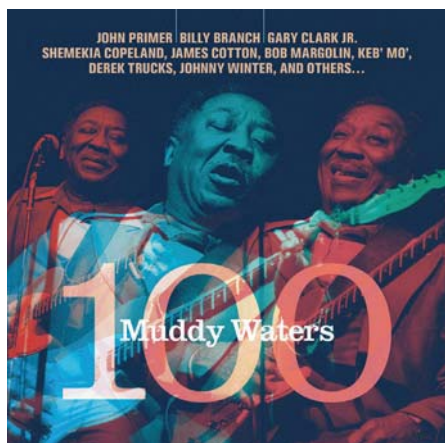
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Mud Fest

Though the exact date of Muddy Waters' birth is subject to debate, this much is certain: *Muddy Waters 100*, Raisin' Music's officially authorized centennial tribute to the late blues icon, is as festive a celebration as any fan could hope for.

Waters, a musical pioneer, was the indomitable force behind blues' transition from the twangy, acoustic style of the Delta to the hard-driving, electrified sound we know today. Though the songs on *Muddy Waters 100* represent the various stops along his musical path—from his 1941 recordings on a Mississippi plantation to his work for Chess Records in the early 1950s—they all embrace his trademark spirit of innovation, with reworked classics that incorporate elements of hip-hop, electronica, pop and funk.

The album includes 15 newly recorded tracks from Muddy Waters Band alumni and many of today's most preeminent blues artists, including John Primer, Gary Clark Jr., James Cotton, Keb' Mo', Derek Trucks, Bob Margolin, Billy Branch and Shemekia Copeland. The late guitarist Johnny Winter also appears on this disc, performing a moving rendition of "I'm Ready" that might be his last known recording. He died just five weeks after this album was released on July 24.

As a tribute CD, *Muddy Waters 100* isn't focused on preservation. It embraces Waters' inventive nature, and many of the best tracks on this recording incorporate new sounds into familiar songs. A fresh take on "Mannish Boy" carries a distinctly urban swagger, courtesy of the hip-hop drum loops of programmer Blaise Barton. And an updated "Last Time I Fool Around With You" moves with a powerful sense of funk, thanks to the incendiary bass of Felton Crews.

Produced by the Grammy-nominated Larry Skoller and recorded in Chicago, this commemorative CD comes housed in a hardcover booklet featuring 48 pages of illustrated and black-and-white photos of Waters, as well as an original essay by Robert Gordon.

The influence of the blues has spread throughout American culture, spawning a number of musical rivers and streams. But as this genre-spanning album proves, they all lead back to Muddy Waters.

—Brian Zimmerman

Ordering info: muddywaters100.com

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—Joe Locke, *New York City*, February 2015

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Centennial Strayhorn Celebration

Given Billy Strayhorn's aversion to the spotlight, it is slightly ironic that the latest effort to remedy his underrating as a shaper of the jazz canon takes the form of a coffee table book. *Strayhorn: An Illustrated Life* (Agate Bolden), published on the occasion of his centennial year, makes the bittersweet story of the mild-mannered pianist, composer and arranger who toiled in Duke Ellington's shadow a visually appealing light read.

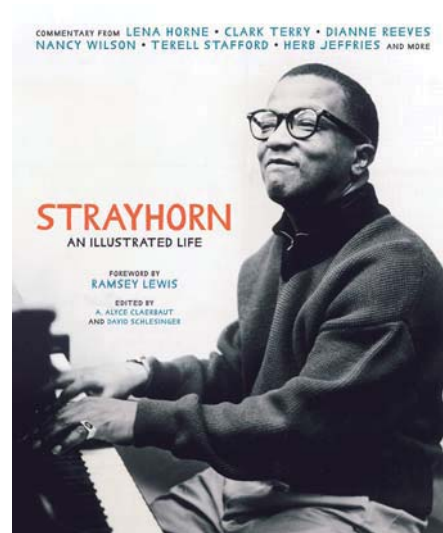
Produced by the family-owned company that publishes Strayhorn's music, this 209-page collection of interviews, photographs, essays and scores conveys the personal warmth and boundless creativity of the dapper, diminutive Swee' Pea, whose best work was harmonically and structurally ahead of its time. Of special interest to fans and scholars will be the book's replicating some of Strayhorn's handwritten manuscripts, including for the first time anywhere the original score for "Take the 'A' Train," which became one of the 20th century's seminal compositions.

The book comes in the wake of Robert Levi's 2007 PBS documentary, *Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life*, and David Hajdu's acclaimed 1996 Strayhorn biography, *Lush Life*, both of which are titled after Strayhorn's dreamy ballad. Like those works, the new book aims to raise awareness of what it calls the grossly overlooked and incomplete documented record of Strayhorn's written output.

Tapping the recollections of a host of friends and associates—including former Ellington band vocalist Herb Jeffries and bassist Jimmy Woode, Strayhorn's close friend Lena Horne, pianist Marian McPartland and singers Rosemary Clooney and Nancy Wilson—the book's splashy blend of candid photographs, quotations and sidebars evokes an image of the Dayton, Ohio, native as a self-assured but limelight-shy artist who struggled to be happy even as he won the love of many around him.

The straightforward text—half of which is written by Strayhorn's niece, Alyce Claerbaut, the book's co-editor (along with David Schlesinger) and president of the family-operated Billy Strayhorn Songs Inc.—points out that Strayhorn's open homosexuality may have driven him to keep a low profile in a homophobic jazz culture. The extent to which Ellington himself enabled Strayhorn's obscurity also is under scrutiny. Although Strayhorn possessed an uncanny ability to seamlessly finish dozens of uncompleted Ellington ideas, he seldom received a publishing credit. Moreover, when Strayhorn's originals became part of the orchestra's songbook, Duke often took a co-composer's credit, as was common practice among leaders at the time.

Putting all this in a coffee table book reflects how the effort to bring broader recognition to Strayhorn, whose best-known songs also include



"Satin Doll," is gaining traction. Today, the notion that Strayhorn was a jazz force beyond Ellington's "writing and arranging companion" is winning acceptance, borne out by fresh interpretations of his work by a new generation of musicians. This book will be an enjoyable read for knowledgeable jazz fans and neophytes alike.

—Michael Barris

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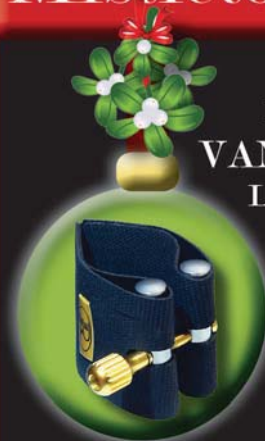
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Book Compiles McCann's Stunning Photos

When Les McCann began playing the piano as a child, he found himself drawn as much to his family's Kodak camera as to the instrument. By the early 1970s, he had received global acclaim as an influential keyboardist, but his photography remained a hidden talent. The collection *Invitation to Openness: The Jazz & Soul Photography of Les McCann, 1960–1980* (Fantagraphics Books) presents these vivid black-and-white shots, which reveal that his artistic sensibilities have been as much visual as musical.

While McCann led a successful piano trio in California during the 1960s, he became a jazz superstar when he teamed up with saxophonist Eddie Harris on the live album *Swiss Movement* (Atlantic) at the end of the decade. McCann not only revealed a distinctive take on blues changes and funk rhythms alongside the brawny saxophonist, but also had a crossover hit singing Gene McDaniels' "Compared To What" on that album. About four years later he experimented with an electric piano and a Moog synthesizer on the Atlantic album that lent this book its name.

McCann has continued to tour and perform (and paint) while numerous DJs have sampled his earlier work. As he suggests in an interview with Pat Thomas—who compiled this book along with Alan Abrahams—McCann's successes in different disciplines comes down to trusting his own intuition.

But McCann's photos are so stunning because many great artists trusted him. He captures warm, and not everyday, smiles from Miles Davis, Jimmy Smith and Wilson Pickett. Others, like Count Basie and Coleman Hawkins, are simply radiant while they're relaxing offstage (even if McCann's account of how Hawkins dealt with an obnoxious fan accompanies the photos). Also, McCann's bandstand perspective lent him the kind of angles—let alone accessibility—that would have been difficult, if not impossible, for any other photographer. This

collection is loaded with uncanny perspectives of hard-working musicians onstage: John Coltrane, Stanley Clarke, Tina Turner, Joshua Redman, Nancy Wilson and Eberhard Weber with Sarah Vaughan. In one particularly dramatic shot, blues legend B.B. King looks as he's stepping away from a shadow. In another, McCann captures trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie's famous bulging cheeks.


Invitation to Openness recalls the landmark 1988 collection of bassist Milt Hinton's photos, *Bass Line* (Temple University Press). Both musicians were not only accomplished enough to work with some of the biggest names in jazz, but also had the genial personalities that allowed those bandleaders to be relaxed when their colleagues' cameras clicked. The books' pictures also say a lot about American society surrounding the music. Hinton's photos of the Cab Calloway band on tour of the South revealed how jazz performers transcended Jim Crow segregation; McCann's photos of activists Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jesse Jackson and Stokely Carmichael—as well as such outspoken musicians as Nina Simone and Roberta Flack—remind the viewer of how much the country has changed over the decades.

McCann's book also offers numerous examples of his hilarious, frank and sometimes trenchant observations. That attitude comes through in his interview with Thomas and his comments throughout the book. One such quote, which runs alongside his vivid shots of Stevie Wonder, is too vulgar to be printed here. McCann's sense of humor could also be a reason why he also befriended so many comedians. The book includes his shots of a young, upstart Richard Pryor as well as a roguish Redd Foxx. Still, even after spending time with these comedy giants, McCann surprisingly claims that "the funniest person I think I've ever known" was "Mama" Cass Elliot. Clearly, this man will never deliver merely what's expected of him. —Aaron Cohen


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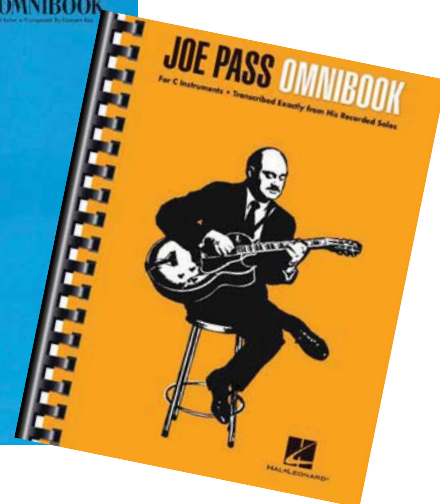
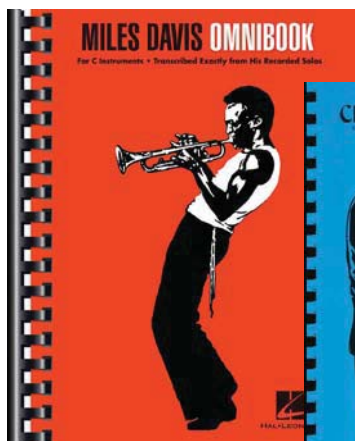


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More Omnibook titles are in the works, including collections spotlighting the solos of Stan Getz, Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, Oscar Peterson and Paul Desmond. Hal Leonard is also preparing an Omnibook featuring standout trombonists and another focusing on scat singers such as Ella Fitzgerald and Mel Tormé. Look for these additional titles starting late this year and into 2016. Hal Leonard is also planning to create Play-Along versions with backing tracks (similar to the *Charlie Parker Omnibook Play-Along* version) for all the titles in the series.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: halleonard.com

Literary Jazz for Kids & Adults

The merger of jazz and literature is the focal point of two delightful new releases, both of which spotlight some of the greatest names in the history of jazz.

Published by The Secret Mountain, *Dreams Are Made For Children: Classic Jazz Lullabies* is an illustrated storybook accompanied by a 12-track CD. This book is perfect for parents who want to introduce their toddlers to the music of Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Chet Baker and Frank Sinatra.

Each two-page spread in the book combines Ilya Green's whimsical, colorful illustrations with the printed lyrics to a song that's on the CD.

The lyrics to "Hit The Road To Dreamland" (sung by Mel Tormé on the CD) are accompanied by Green's smile-inducing illustrations of two children riding atop flying sheep while another lucky youngster zooms across the sky in a red rocket ship.

Elsewhere, the lyrics to the timeless tune "God Bless The Child" (sung by Billie Holiday) are paired with depictions of smiling kids of different ethnic backgrounds. A girl proudly holds up her pinwheel and a boy works on the back tire of his bicycle.

The book also includes a biographical paragraph about each artist on the CD, so kids can learn about icons such as Holiday and Peggy Lee.

One can imagine a child treasuring this book from the years when it was read to him—and then gaining a much deeper comprehension of the lyrics after he becomes a young reader himself. After all, kids are never too young to learn about the transcendent artistry of Sarah Vaughan.

And we can't think of a better way to prepare for a journey to Slumberland than listening to Nat "King" Cole soothingly croon "My Sleepy Head (Go To Sleep)."

While kiddies are the audience for Green's storybook, Sher Music has released a unique stocking stuffer aimed at grownups. *Poetry + Jazz: A Magical Marriage* is an audiobook CD with 23 tracks, featuring music by artists such as saxophonist Gene Ammons, bassist John Patitucci and guitarists John Abercrombie and Mike Stern.

Each track on the CD takes an existing musi-

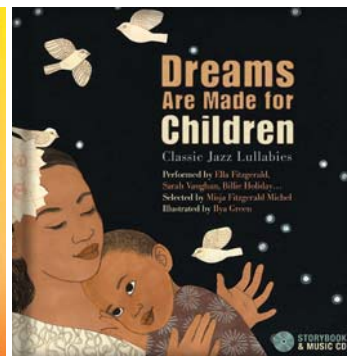
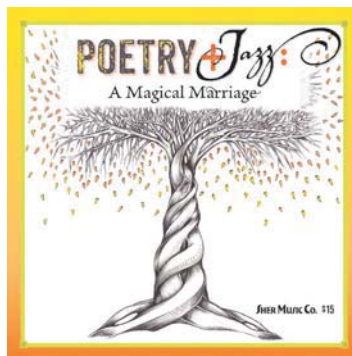
cal recording and combines it with a newly recorded spoken-word performance of a poem. For example, track 15 has the song "You're Blase" (as recorded by saxophonist Stan Getz on the Concord album *Spring Is Here*) merged with Cory Bihl's powerful recitation of "Orpheus Alone," which was written by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mark Strand.

Another highlight is Alison Luterman's poem "Accidents" melded with the Maria Schneider Orchestra's "Gush" (from the ArtistShare album *Evanescence*). The potent recitation here is by jazz singer René Marie.

Other poets represented on the CD include Rainer Maria Rilke, Kenneth Rexroth, Philip Levine, Stephen Dunn and Carol Snow.

—Bobby Reed

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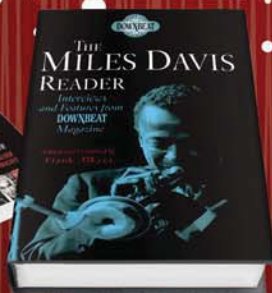
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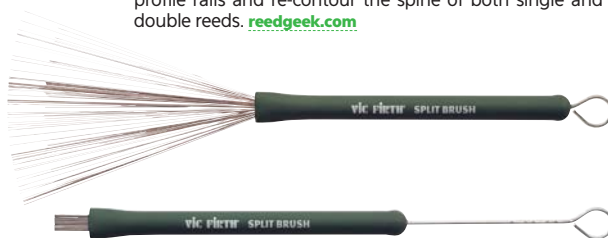
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Quartal Triads as Improvisational Devices

JAZZ MUSICIANS HAVE USED A TRIADIC APPROACH TO improvisation for many years. An excellent explanation of triadic playing can be found in the “Woodshed” section of DownBeat’s May 2009 issue. That particular article was written by saxophonist and educator George Garzone. Garzone is a true jazz luminary who has used and created several cutting-edge improvisational techniques that are intellectually and sonically very interesting. I would like to offer another device to broaden the triadic vocabulary to all of us who study our beloved art form.

Perfect fourth triads, or “quartal” triads, are among the most interesting improvisational devices included in the main components of music. Rhythmic, harmonic and melodic elements of music are very effectively served by the use of these types of triads. For those who need a definition of quartal triads for use with these exercises: A quartal triad is a triad built on consecutive perfect/alterd fourths. There are many permutations and adaptations of quartal triads that will not be discussed extensively in this article. For those who choose to adopt these as a serious discipline, I highly recommend Ramon Ricker’s book *Technique Development in Fourths Used for Jazz Improvisation* (Alfred Publishing).

I have found that the basic exercises outlined in this article have been most helpful to my students. If these exercises are mastered, it becomes much simpler to begin to adapt and create permutations of quartal triads. In my experience, it has become clear that quartal triads vary in ease or difficulty of execution from instrument to instrument. For instance, these exercises are very simple for guitar players but become increasingly difficult when played on saxophone, trumpet or trombone. I have found that the structure in the following exercises leads to a path that has produced the desired results with rather remarkable success for those students who persist until these have become “muscle memory” on their particular instruments.

For purposes of the focus of this article, the following exercises will concentrate on four areas of study:

- 1) Quartal triads in all 12 chromatic positions.
- 2) Adaptation of quartal triads to accommodate specific tonalities.
- 3) Triple and duple application of quartal triads.
- 4) Using perfect fourth triads over a basic “blues scale.”

Exercise #1 is designed to acquire the ability to play perfect fourth triads in all 12 positions on the chromatic scale. I use the top pitch of each of these as the reference pitch when creating scale- or chord-tone patterns using quartal triads as the medium of expression. In this exercise, I used the enharmonic factor for those who choose sharps as opposed to flats and vice versa. In the remaining exercises, I will not use the enharmonic factor. Some choose to master three or four positions at a time to overcome any technical or memorization stumbling blocks. It is highly recommended to master these patterns before attempting the following exercises.

Exercise #2 is designed to construct quartal triads using a C major scale while realizing that the 3rd and 7th positions will establish tonalities other than C major. The 3rd position will introduce a G major/E minor tonality or a C Lydian tonality. The 7th position will establish a D major/B minor tonal-

ity. Some improvisers like to refer to the 7th as playing over a D/C chord change. These can produce a really nice inside/outside approach to creating musical atmospheres.

Exercise #3 deals with adapting quartal triads to conform to specific tonalities. In this specific example, the 3rd and 7th are adapted to change F# to F natural and C# to C natural. I find that alternating between the perfect

Frank Caruso

DEONIA CARUSO PHOTOGRAPHY

Exercise #1: Perfect fourth triads in all 12 positions



Exercise #2: Perfect fourth triads (C major scale)



Exercise #3: Adapted quartal triads (C major)



Exercise #4: Adapted quartal triads (C dorian)



Exercise #5: Quartal triad (perfect fourth) triplets (C major)



Exercise #6: Quartal triad (perfect fourth) duple patterns (C major)



Exercise #7: Quartal triad triplet/duple patterns using C blues scale



fourth triads and adapted triads creates an interesting harmonic atmosphere.

In Exercise #4, quartal triads are constructed to conform to a C dorian tonality. In this specific example, E-flat and B-flat have replaced E natural and B natural. This is a darker, more dissonant use of quartal triads. When executed skillfully, it is a very interesting sound.

Exercise #5 is designed to master quartal triads moving in a triplet rhythmic setting. The patterns are listed as descending/ascending. However, in this specific exercise the reference (top pitch) is following an ascending C major scale. All the quartal triads are in the perfect fourth forms. This is a good opportunity to adapt the quartal triads to conform to a specific tonality. I have chosen to not document that type of exercise due to the length of this article. This is where a book like Ricker's *Technique Development in Fourths Used in Jazz Improvisation* is an invaluable method.

Exercise #6 uses the same parameters in a duple/16th-note setting. The same opportunity

for adaptation is available here also.

Exercise #7 is designed to master triplet/16th-note patterns using the pitches of a C blues scale.

I am confident that these exercises will stimulate an interest in the use of quartal triads as an addition to your vocabulary of triadic improvisational devices. For some, it may help in analyzing when this device is being used as an improvisational/compositional device. Listen to the melodic line of "E.S.P." on the groundbreaking 1965 Miles Davis album *E.S.P.* I have found quartal triads to be very effective improvisational/compositional devices, and I hope you will find them useful in your vocabulary. **DB**

Pianist Frank Caruso is a jazz artist and educator currently serving on the jazz studies faculty at Elmhurst College. He has published a book on piano improvisation that can be found online at learnpianoimprovisation.com. His latest album with bassist Eddie Gomez, *Analea*, is available via CD Baby. Caruso has recorded and performed with trumpeters Randy Brecker and Maynard Ferguson, as well as The Count Basie Band. He has also worked on several projects with saxophonist Mark Colby. Caruso can be contacted at carusopiano@yahoo.com.

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Oz Noy's Guitar Solo on 'Steroids'



Oz Noy

"STERIODS" IS A FUNKY BLUES IN D FROM guitarist Oz Noy's latest CD, *Asian Twistz* (Abstract Logix). Though Noy is known as being a somewhat "outside" player, his solo here is mostly within the changes. When he does play more "out," it's to great effect.

The first example occurs in bars 5 and 6. Measure 5 is a simple intervallic pattern, a whole step above and below the fifth of the G7, repeated down a fourth so it resolves to the ninth (these tones are the root and fifth of the key, so it could be heard as relating to D). In the next measure, Noy takes the entire idea up a minor third. This causes it to resolve to the seventh and fourth of the chord (minor third and seventh of the key), but since he is keeping all the intervals the same as before, we hear the E_b (flat sixth on this chord, flat ninth of D) and B_b (minor third on this chord, flat sixth of the key). This is taking our ear farther away from the chord- and scale-tone-oriented playing he's done so far.

In measures 21 and 22 we hear Noy employ the same concept: He plays a lick against the A7 that fits fine (flat seventh, root, second and fifth), then transposes it up a minor third, just like before. This gives us that B_b on the G7 again.

This idea of playing the minor third against the major chord reappears in bars 17 and 20. In measure 17 we have a B_b on the G7. This could sound like minor pentatonic on the chord (a very bluesy sound, though one not as often applied to the IV chord), but Noy's addition of the E natural on this lick makes it sound more chromatic, especially considering he plays the B_b right after the E, producing an interval of a tritone (flatted fifth), a very dissonant sound.

Measure 20 is curious as he plays the minor third on the D7—which isn't so "out," as it's a minor pentatonic scale—but Noy plays the major third in the next beat, making the lick sound more chromatic than it really is. He has the same idea at the end of bar 23, playing a D minor pentatonic lick followed by the major third (F#).

There is another idea that Noy reuses verbatim, and that is the lick first appearing in bar 24, where he slurs E_b-D-C. This reappears verbatim in bars 28 and 38. In the last two, he plays it on the D7, giving us flat ninth, root and flat seventh. When it first occurred, however, it was on the A7 chord, making those same pitches the flat fifth, fourth and minor third. This sounds more like a blues scale in this context, whereas on the D7 it sounds more like an altered dominant lick.

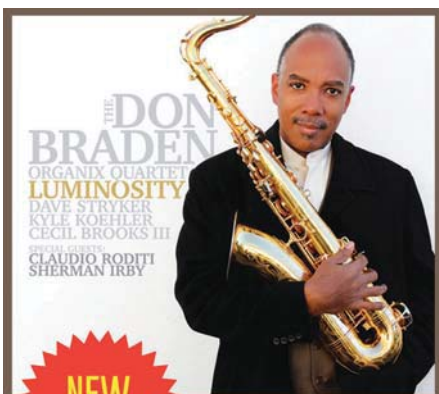
Noy goes further "outside" at the end of measure 30, but he brings us there in stages. Having played in G mixolydian for bar 29, on the second beat of bar 30 he emphasizes the F and A. These are

the ninth and seventh of G7, and they imply an F chord. For the next beat he plays what is clearly a C triad. Though all of those notes are in G mixolydian, it does create a sort of polytonality. And then for the final beat of measure 30, he goes another step out with a B_b minor triad. These notes have a relationship to G (the flat seventh, the minor third he's used before and the addition of the flat fifth "blue note"), but the D_b, which could be heard as C#, resolves quite nicely to the D natural in the subsequent bar, bringing us back "inside."

A similar thing happens at the tail end of measure 40, where Noy implies an A_b tonality. This is the tritone substitute for D7, and it resolves smoothly down a half step to the G7 he plays at the start of bar 41.

Another of these inside-outside-inside moves happens across bars 33–36. In measures 33 and 34, Noy plays repeated notes on the root of the chord. It doesn't get more "inside" than that. But in bar 35 he moves the idea up a minor third to the flat sixth on the D7 chord. Being the flat sixth, this is fairly dissonant. But in the next bar he goes up another minor third, which brings us to the third of the A7. That he achieves this by moving up in minor thirds (basically a G diminished triad) gives the line a sort of aural logic that tempers the dissonance of the B_b (also, he set up this minor-third modulation idea in two of the previous examples).

There is some more chromaticism in the barrage of notes in bars 45 and 46. Measure 46 is especially interesting, as Noy is playing in what is more of a B tonality. This is particularly "out" whether viewing it from D (the key) or G (the chord), but



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1:35 D7

5 G7 D7 bend A7 bend

10 G7 bend D7 A7 D7

14 bend bend bend G7

18 D7 bend 6

21 A7 G7 D7

24 A7 D7 bend 3

27 bend G7

30 D7 bend

33 A7 G7 D7 A7 3

37 D7 bend

41 G7 D7 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

44 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 A7

46 G7 D7 bend bend

48 A7 D7

51 G7

54 D7

at the end of the measure when he adds in the A and C naturals, it creates a B7(9), the upper portion of which can be heard as D# diminished. This resolves nicely down a half step to the D7 coming up, similar to how he resolves into measure 41.

Something else that's interesting to notice is the flow of Noy's improvisation. He waits until the fourth chorus before assailing us with strings of

16th-note triplets and 32nd notes. He also waited until this chorus to venture down to the low E (in bar 42, the lowest note possible on a standard-tuned guitar) and until the next chorus to travel all the way up to the high B in measure 52. **DB**

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



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Sabian HH Remastered

Dark, Complex Cymbals

Sabian has remastered and reintroduced its flagship Hand Hammered (HH) line, first introduced in 1982. The company has tapped into its past by applying more hand hammering to all HH cymbal profiles—in fact, depending on size, each remastered HH cymbal can be hammered up to 3,000 times. The result is a series of premium cymbals that are more traditional, musical and complex than the originals.

The HH line is made with a B20 metal, which means 80 percent copper and 20 percent tin—the most common type of bronze that offers the widest frequency range. Sabian classifies the whole line as vintage dark with a pitch range from mid to low.

The 14-inch X-Celerator Hats come with a rippled bottom cymbal that greatly reduced any issues with airlock. I never had to spin the cymbals in order to find that sweet spot when closing with the foot. I found myself playing with dynamic range more than usual because they cut through so well. But it wasn't an overwhelming type of sound like when your hats are too thick for the gig. I found they had a nice wash when played with sticks compared to how well the "chick" cut through. It was the best of both worlds.

I also tried a 16-inch and 18-inch Thin Crash that sounded very consistent with the rest of the line. They produced fast crashes and decays, a bit on the dark side and never overwhelming. On listening back to some recordings, they blended nicely with the other cymbals when going for louder passages with lots of crashes. I could hear the punchy attack and quick fades on the loud shout-type sections, making for a punctuated wash of sound.

Of the four rides I play-tested, there were two that stood out as my personal favorites, but they all had their own identity.

The most braggadocious ride by far was the 21-inch Raw Bell Dry. As the name suggests, it's a thick, heavy cymbal with a somewhat larger unlathed bell. This was probably my favorite at first. The stick definition is bright and huge with a nice character and a dry tapering off. Over the course of playing the cymbals in context (almost entirely acoustic settings), it was a bit overwhelming, but for the person who is looking for a cymbal to cut through a louder or amplified environment, this would be the one.

Next down the line in relative thickness was the 22-inch Medium Ride. This cymbal surprised me, as I thought it would be a bit too thick for my needs, but it really sat well within the context of a live group. And similar to the hi-hats, the crashability of the ride versus the stick definition was a nice

pairing. I found it was a versatile cymbal with nice, dark undertones.

Next on the thickness scale was the 21-inch Vintage Ride. It had a slightly larger bell similar to the Raw Bell, giving it a bit more attack than I thought a cymbal of that weight would give me but sacrificing some of that crashability.

The fourth ride was the 21-inch Thin Ride. As expected, it was probably the washiest of the rides but still had a nice attack with warm overtones.

For me and the sound I am going for, I preferred the 22-inch Medium and 22-inch Thin. After examining all the rides, I realized it was probably due to the lower-profile bell on these two and a slightly subtler attack.

Now for the O-Zones, which are perforated with approximately 2-inch holes scattered strategically around the cymbal. As any drummer who has had to drill out a crack in their favorite cymbal knows, drilling small holes in a cymbal will cut down on the sustain and alter the sound. Putting a bunch of 2-inch holes in a cymbal will really mangle it—but in a good way. The holes discourage vibrations as they travel about the cymbal while also producing a distinctively trashy/china quality with minimal sustain. The great thing is it's a subdued type of trash sound, so it's not overwhelming like some chinas. You can really lay into it and it will have much less impact on overall volume than a similar-sized crash cymbal. At points with a big band, I started riding on the O-Zone during solos or sax ensemble sections, and it had a great effect. There was a bit less attack than if I was riding a normal china, but I made up for that with either a cross-stick on 2 and 4, or I would lay my foot into the hi-hat a little bit harder to emphasize those beats.

Overall, the O-Zones are a great color addition, and they're very flexible. They are both great-sounding cymbals. I don't own a perforated cymbal yet, but this is probably the point where I decide to invest in one. The O-Zone is the type of cymbal that could make a convert of even the most stubborn cymbal traditionalists out there.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: sabian.com



Shure PSM 300

Free-Range Personal Monitor System

Shure's new PSM 300 Stereo Personal Monitor Systems is designed to deliver wireless stereo monitoring with improved clarity and reduced feedback over traditional stage wedge monitoring. The PSM 300 is available in an entry-level system for first-time in-ear monitor users (P3TR112GR) and a professional system for rental houses, monitor engineers and musicians requiring more advanced or sturdy road-use options (P3TRA215CLA). The P3TR112GR retails for \$699, and the P3TRA215CLA is \$799. Both PSM 300 systems provide either mono or stereo monitor mix options in clear, 24-bit digital audio sound. I received the entry-level system for this review.

The system is grounded by the P3T wireless transmitter, which has a one-touch frequency scan-and-sync button to find and assign an open wireless channel. An input knob controls the amount of audio signal

you are transmitting from the mixing board to the P3R bodypack receiver and ultimately to the performer's earphones. The back panel includes the power source adapter input, a mono/stereo mix switch, line/aux switch and RCA jacks for right and left input as well as left and right loop outputs.

The transmitter has a capacity of up to 15 compatible frequencies per band, delivering 24MHz tuning bandwidth (dependent on region of use). The P3T is a sturdily built half-rack-size single-channel wireless transmitter that includes rackmount mounting hardware. Of course, you can save the rackmount hardware and just place the transmitter on a level surface near the mixing board.

The SE112 sound isolating earphones came in





a drawstring carrying pouch that included a few adjustable ear fittings and a cleaning tool. The earphones fit comfortably, but it was apparent that hiding their black wires would be a challenge if I desired a discreet stage appearance. The user guide shows how to tuck the wires down the back of your shirt and loop them up the back of your head around the ears. But depending on your skin, hair color and complexion, an upgrade to the SE225 earphones with translucent (clear) wires could serve you better.

The AA battery-powered P3R bodypack receiver features a two-inch antenna, earphone output, power LED indicator and combined power switch/volume control knob that turns the receiver on/off and adjusts the master headphone volume level.

On the side of the bodypack receiver is the MixMode control knob, which allows you to create a personal mix from two channels of audio out. In the professional version of the PSM 300, the metal-bodypack P3RA pro model receiver is rechargeable, and is probably much sturdier than the plastic P3R.

During setup, I placed the P3T transmitter near my mixing board, where I had prepared a simple eight-channel mix of instruments, vocals and bussed instruments to one output, and vocals to another, to test the system's MixMode capability. After quickly clipping the bodypack receiver on my belt, plugging in and affixing the earphones, I was ready to be free-range with a personal mix.

Dialing in a wireless frequency was as simple as clicking the scan button to survey available channels (within a group of available frequency channels at my test site) and then tuning the transmitter to the same frequency as the bodypack receiver.

You can use the P3T transmitter to transmit wireless signals to multiple bodypack receivers in a group channel setting by assigning each receiver to the group channel and syncing the transmitter frequency to other receivers one at a time. Of course, that would require outfitting each of your band mates with their own bodypack receiver and set of Shure earphones, but the single P3T transmitter can transmit to multiple receivers provided they are all grouped to the same wireless frequency.

Shure says that the PSM 300 system has a range of more than 300 feet (90m) of wireless transmission thanks to the venerable microphone company's patented Audio Reference Companding, which ensures clear sound in outdoor and indoor performance situations. I wandered from the transmitter more than 100 feet without any breakup, feedback, distortion or any other noise artifacts getting in the way of the wireless mix I sent to the earphone monitors. The MixMode capability was particularly liberating as I could adjust a stereo mix of instruments and vocals from the receiver bodypack to gain further control over what I wanted in my personal mix.

The PSM 300 is not limited to musical performance, as any broadcaster or presenter who needs to monitor a live audio feed can benefit from the individual freedom the system offers.

—John LaMantia

Ordering info: shure.com

Eastman AR380CE John Pisano Signature Archtop

A True Workhorse

Eastman Guitars and jazz artist John Pisano—who have collaborated in producing two signature instruments over the past decade—have teamed up once again to create a third signature model guitar, the AR380CE. Offered at a surprisingly modest price, this latest addition to the line is the first to feature laminate construction and a dual pickup configuration.

Eastman entered the guitar market in 2002. The company gained immediate recognition for its high level of craftsmanship, causing many to reevaluate their opinions of Chinese-manufactured instruments. Among those was Pisano, who was so impressed that he actually purchased a guitar for himself and was later contacted by Eastman with a request to endorse its archtops, which soon led to the creation of his first signature guitar.

The Eastman Pisano series now consists of the AR880CE, the AR680CE and the new AR380CE. The maple 880 and mahogany 680 models are both 16-inch hand-carved solid-wood archtops featuring a single floating pickup and retailing for \$3,750 and \$2,900, respectively. As with all the models in the signature series, Pisano was involved in every aspect of the 380's development. The choice to go with a laminate guitar makes perfect sense, and the 380 fills out the line nicely by offering an affordable price tag of \$1,600 retail/\$1,200 street.

The new model shares a lot in common with its older brothers, including its cutaway body dimensions (16 by 2.75 inches) along with the deco styling cues, ebony pickguard and tailpiece plus the trademark Pisano "frog" inlay and side fretboard markers. It continues the tradition of the clever magnetic mounted truss rod cover first featured on the 680. Although it may be the least expensive in the series, the 380CE is probably the most visually stunning guitar in the series with its highly flamed tobacco stained maple, gold hardware and rosewood control knobs.

Eastman prides itself on offering exclusively hand-crafted instruments, and the Pisano 380CE is no exception. Two things come to mind in playing this guitar: playability and versatility. The 380 is set up extremely well and plays smooth and silky up and down the African mahogany neck with its warm, inviting rosewood fingerboard. The dual humbucker pickups—custom-designed by Kent Armstrong with input from Pisano himself—are controlled by four knobs that provide separate volume and tone adjustments for each pickup. The pickup selector switch is cleverly placed on the lower bout to avoid interference with the player's arm, a departure from the standard placement common to guitars like the Gibson ES-175.

Dual pickups plus the laminate construction result in an instrument that is extremely versatile. Although it is offered as a jazz guitar, it is capable of a lot more. I played the Pisano on several gigs and found that utilizing just the neck pickup alone will provide a smooth, warm tone acceptable for jazz playing. However, when you begin to explore the wide range of tones available using both the neck and bridge pickups, the possibilities seem limitless. Switching to bridge-only gave me tons of bite, and blending the two results in a guitar that can hold its own in a variety of applications including rock, blues and country. In addition, the laminate wood offers great feedback resistance.

The John Pisano AR380CE is a really nice guitar for the price and performs like an instrument costing much more. Pisano has always strived to provide quality instruments to aspiring young players and students on limited budgets, and with the 380 he has certainly accomplished his goal.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: eastmanguitars.com



1. Larger Crashes

Zildjian has made two additions to its K Custom Dark Crash cymbals, which are now available in 19- and 20-inch diameters. The two new sizes, which feature a large bell, put out a warm, rich sound that cuts through and sings out. **More info:** zildjian.com

2. Duet Power

Kendor Music has published *The Power of Two* by Doug Beach and George Shutack. This series of 12 easy to medium-difficulty jazz duets can be performed with the accompanying rhythm section MP3 tracks, with parts fully interchangeable among various instrument editions. The book also comes with four downloadable MP3 tracks for each duet, allowing an individual to play either part while the MP3 plays the other. **More info:** kendormusic.com

3. Classic Amp Effects

The VHT Melo-Verb is a pedal recreation of the tremolo and reverb effects that were first introduced as built-in amplifier features in the 1960s. The two effects sections are completely independent, with separate true-bypass switching. The all-analog tremolo section features classic speed and intensity controls with modern shape and level controls. The reverb section replicates the classic tube-driven spring reverb tone. **More info:** vhtamp.com

4. Micro Bass Amp

Epifani's Piccolo 999 is a small yet powerful micro bass amplifier that features the clarity of Epifani's UL series preamps, plus the power and precision necessary to drive multiple stacks of speakers. The Piccolo 999's Vintage circuit adds a warm, tube-like tone to the overall circuit. The proprietary Class D amp makes the Piccolo 999 full-sounding yet lightweight. **More info:** epifani.com

5. Mic Preamp/Converter

The PreSonus DigiMax DP88 eight-channel mic preamp and A/D/A converter combines eight remote-controllable, high-headroom mic preamps with advanced remote control features, connectivity and integration with the Studio 192 interface. The 24-bit, 96kHz DP88 features eight XMAX Class A preamps and Burr-Brown A/D/A converters with 118 decibels of dynamic range. **More info:** presonus.com

6. Laptop Stand

On-Stage has introduced the MSA5000 Laptop Mount with 5/8-inch adapter. The MSA5000 is a versatile solution to incorporate laptops, tablets and other electronics into stage or studio rigs. The adapter lets the stand be mounted straight onto microphone stands. **More info:** on-stage.com



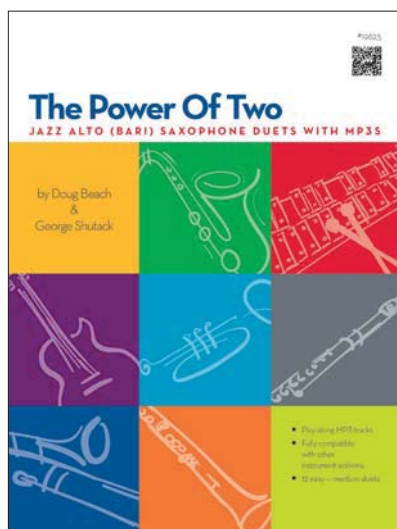
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Pictured: Florian Alexandru-Zorn with the New Split Brush SB
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The New School Enlists Weston for Residency

IN 1967, AFTER RANDY WESTON HAD taken an apartment in Tangier, the pianist found himself entranced by a musician named Abdellah El Gourd. Though El Gourd was young and firmly rooted in a Moroccan aesthetic, he seemed to reach across time and space when he played his *gimbri*, a three-stringed lute favored by local Gnawan musicians.

"He played this instrument, [and] I heard Jimmy Blanton," Weston said, referring to the virtuosic American bassist who died in 1942 at age 23. "From that moment, I could hear that the way we approach the European string bass is an African approach."

That's the type of connection Weston will make this semester and next as the inaugural artist-in-residence at The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. "Randy is a story master," said Martin Mueller, executive director of the School of Jazz at the progressive, New York-based university. "He pulls up every memory, and, in those stories, he spans the entire continuum: the story of jazz, Pan-Africanism."

As the residency unfolds, Weston will bring to bear the totality of his story, one that began with him as a gangly but gifted student in his Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, where his father owned a restaurant that doubled as a cultural hub, counting musicians like Miles Davis and Max Roach as patrons.

"My father was the key," Weston said. "He gave me Africa—he gave me the music."

Over the years, Weston's deeply researched forays into African themes began to occupy a more prominent place in his music. At the same time, he developed strong associations with New School faculty members like historian Marshall Stearns and trombonist Benny Powell.

Now 89, Weston is the logical choice to launch the artist-in-residence program, Mueller said. The post is an outgrowth of the school's history as an educational magnet for practicing artists and will help further its ethos of promoting the values of the community, as Weston has done throughout his career.

"This is the right time for us to focus more specifically, where everything is about Randy Weston," Mueller said. "We're seeking to engage our students, remind them where we're coming from."

The residency has included three public events this fall: a profile of Weston in conversation with historian Robin D.G. Kelley in September; an exploration of Moroccan music with El Gourd and others in October; and a tribute to the late Senegalese drummer Doudou N'Diaye Rose, scheduled for Nov. 17.

In the spring, the residency will offer two events on dates to be determined. The first is a wide-ranging symposium on the influence of the



Randy Weston (left) with The New School's Martin Mueller

SCOTT WYNN PHOTOGRAPHY

African drum, with Candido, from Cuba; Big Black, from South Carolina; El Gourd; and, from New York, Neil Clarke and Lewis Nash, who will moderate a discussion.

Closing out the residency, Weston will lead a concert. Still in the planning stages, it will most likely feature one of Weston's well-known works, perhaps *Uhuru Afrika* or *An African Nubian Suite*.

Weston said he hopes to instill humility among the student musicians, even as he inspires them. "I tell the kids, 'I know nothing. I've been in 18 countries in Africa, been in Morocco seven years. I can tell you I know nothing. Do your research on the music of Africa and tell me.'"

He will be able to convey that message as a presence around the school's Greenwich Village campus, where he will be invited to lecture and act as a student adviser. He will also be the fall semester's Common Composer, a curriculum feature in which his works become the focus of student ensembles.

Weston, whose physical stature is as imposing as his resume, will lend visibility to the School of Jazz at a time when it is being incorporated into the larger College of Performing Arts. With The New School's Mannes College for Music now sharing a building with the School of Jazz, Mueller wants his institution to maintain its identity and values.

Having Weston centered in the jazz studies program will help further that goal. Residencies involving artists whose work has strong historical and sociological underpinnings—like Weston's—are often organized in history or ethnic studies departments. The result, Mueller said, can be a weaker connection between the art and issues of race or gender.

"Too often in the academy they're separated so that they're dealing with them in a very theoretical, historical continuum," he said. "For us to do it in a living, thriving professional development program of artistry is a significant difference."

—Phillip Lutz

David Joyce



Vocal Power: Los Angeles College of Music (LACM) has hired faculty member David Joyce as its Vocal Department Chair. Joyce is a Grammy-winning singer, keyboardist and composer whose long list of credits includes work with Clare Fischer, Frank Sinatra, Natalie Cole, Elvis Costello, Ray Charles and U2. He also has done extensive soundtrack work for TV and film. Joyce, who holds a master's degree in jazz from the University of Southern California (USC), has taught at USC and Pasadena City College. Tom Aylesbury, LACM president, said, "We are very happy to welcome David Joyce to our administration as Vocal Department Chair. We value his expertise in both vocal performance and vocal education, and are confident that under his leadership, this program will continue to cultivate graduates who raise the bar in vocal performance and artistry in the music industry worldwide." lacm.edu

Cultural Allies: "Jazz, Jews, and African Americans: Cultural Intersections in Newark and Beyond"—on view through Dec. 13 in the Jewish Museum of New Jersey at Congregation Ahavas Sholom in Newark, New Jersey—is the centerpiece of a community-wide celebration of jazz. Created by the Institute of Jazz Studies and curator-archivist Tad Hershorn, and presented in partnership with seven religious, educational and cultural institutions, the exhibition delves into some of the most fruitful and sometimes contentious relationships in jazz history through photos, documents and text. It profiles influential figures from the 1920s to the present day and reveals how their roles in performance, artist management, media and recording informed "America's classical music." Co-producers include the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers-Newark, the Jewish Museum of New Jersey at Congregation Ahavas Sholom and local radio station WBGO Jazz 88.3FM. njpac.org

Newport Workshop: The Berklee Global Jazz Workshop at the Newport Jazz Festival debuts in 2016 for student vocalists and instrumentalists ages 15–18 to study with faculty and students from Berklee's Global Jazz Institute. The program will take place July 25–29 at the Salve Regina University campus in Newport, Rhode Island. At week's end, students will perform on the Newport Jazz Festival stage. Newport Jazz Festival founder George Wein and the Newport Festivals Foundation will provide 30 students with full scholarships to the workshop. berklee.edu

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Blindfold Test > BY DAN OUELLETTE

Pete Escovedo & Sheila E.

The Blindfold Test at the Monterey Jazz Festival featured the father-daughter combination of Latin jazz great Pete Escovedo and virtuoso drummer Sheila E. The next day, they would celebrate Pete's 80th birthday by performing with his Latin big band, joined by his percussion-playing sons Juan and Peter Michael Escovedo.

Tito Puente

"3-D Mambo" (*Dance Mania: Tito Puente And His Orchestra*, RCA Victor/Sony Legacy, 2009, rec'd 1957) Puente, timbales; Vincent Frisaura, Frank Lo Pinto, Gene Rapetti, Leon Merian, trumpets; Gerry Sanfino, Rafael "Tata" Palau, Scheppe Pullman, Tony Buonpastore, saxophones; Ray Concepción, piano; Robert Rodriguez, bass; Ray Barretto, congas; Ray Rodriguez, bongos.

Pete: It's an old recording from the '50s. I have a couple of guesses. The first is Tito Puente and his orchestra. But then I thought it could be an arrangement that Mario Bauza did for the Machito Orchestra. I'm in between, but I favor Tito.

Sheila: It's hard because this was in my dad's expansive collection when I was growing up. He played it a thousand times but I was only 6 or 8. But if he says Tito, then it must be him.

Pete: He was so great. I met Tito when I was 18 in San Francisco at the club Macumba near Chinatown. My brother and I used to hang out when he came to town because we wanted to learn music. In those days, nobody was teaching percussion, so we'd watch them playing—Tito, Willie Bobo, Mongo Santamaría. Tito took to us and we became close friends. He also took to Sheila and ended up adopting her as his godchild.

Sheila: Early on, I grew up with Pops playing records. He'd put a record on in the living room and practice bongos, congas and timbales every day. This music brings me back to home when I was sponge for taking this music in.

Machito

"Cannonology" (*Kenya: Afro-Cuban Jazz With Machito*, Roulette/EMI/Capitol, 1999, rec'd 1957) Machito, leader; Mario Bauza, musical director; Francis Williams, Doc Cheatham, Paul Cohen, Paquito Davilla, Joe Livramento, Joe Newman, trumpets; Santo Russo, Eddie Bert, Bart Varsalona, trombones; Cannonball Adderley, alto saxophone; Ray Santos Jr., Jose Madera, tenor saxophone; Leslie Johnkins, baritone saxophone; Rene Hernandez, piano; Roberto Rodriguez, bass; Jose Mangual, bongos; Uba Nieto, timbales; Candido Camero, Carlos "Potato" Valdes, congas.

Pete: This is back in that same time frame. For some reason, it sounds like the orchestra wasn't put together by Latin musicians. The solos were very jazzy, and the sax player sounded like he was from way back, almost as if he were like Bird. The rhythm section was very Latin but I don't know the orchestra.

Sheila: I have no idea. At first, I thought it was something like Benny Goodman's band. But no. I'd say Machito. *[the crowd applauds and she does a little dance onstage]* But the alto saxophonist, I don't know. *[after opening it up to the audience, one audience member guesses Cannonball Adderley]* That's a good guess. This guy deserves a hug *[she gives him one]*.

Marc Ribot

"Como Se Goza En El Barrio" (*Marc Ribot Y Los Cubanitos Postizos*, Atlantic, 1998) Ribot, guitar; Anthony Coleman, organ; Brad Jones, bass; Robert J. Rodriguez, drums, percussion; EJ Rodriguez, percussion.

Pete: That's a tough one. It sounds like my dad when he'd been out drinking all night. I'll take a wild guess and say it's Arsenio Rodriguez music.

Sheila: I don't know, either, but it reminds me of a band I was playing with in the Bay Area when I was 15. It was OK, but this is definitely not my cup of tea.

Gabriel Alegría Afro-Peruvian Sextet

"Take Five/El Condor Pasa" (10, Zoho, 2015) Alegría, trumpet, flugelhorn, guapeo; Laura Andrea Leguía, saxophones, guapeo; Freddy "Huevito" Lobatón, cajón, quijada, guapeo, cajita; Yuri Juárez, acoustic and electric guitars; John Benítez, bass; Hug Alcázar, drums, guapeo, cajita.

Pete: This was really great. At first I thought it might be Arturo [Sandoval] but then there were no high notes. Arturo always wears his shorts really tight to get those high notes. So I knew it wasn't him.



Sheila: I have no idea who this is, but I love the arrangement. I definitely knew it wasn't Arturo after the first eight bars because of the phrasing—not just the high notes. This trumpeter sounded a little rushed. Are they from Peru? They are? Well, at least I'm half right.

Pete: Or are they from Peru Street in Los Angeles? I liked the arrangement. I've never heard "Take Five" like that before. They made it fresh. It was new.

Prince and the N.P.G.

"Clockin' The Jizz" (*Prince And The N.P.G. Gett Off*, Paisley Park/Warner Bros., 1991) Prince, multiple instruments; Tommy Barbarella, Rosie Gaines, keyboards; Levi Seacer Jr., guitar; Sonny T., bass guitar; Michael B., drums.

Sheila: That's interesting. The drum beat is from a Prince song, but I'm not going to say its title because I don't say those words anymore. Also the scream is from a Prince song. It's almost like samples from his records. It could be Prince.

Pete: It's strange for me. I'm 80 years old. I'm old-school.

Sheila: It sounded like someone trying to be Prince except it didn't sound like him playing the guitar. It was Levi Seacer Jr.? He used to be in my band, and I brought him to Prince.

Joni Mitchell

"The Jungle Line" (*The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, Elektra/Asylum Records, 1975) Mitchell, vocals, acoustic guitar, Moog synthesizer; Drummers of Burundi.

Sheila: At first I thought this song was so weird, but then I found it interesting with the rhythm playing underneath. When she puts together these rhythms it's almost like a trance. The rhythms keep changing from verse to chorus and build up without any chords. It's a whole different rhythm section like playing logs or an instrument from Hawaii or even taiko. Playing all the rhythms makes it sound tribal. I do a lot of this kind of building when I work on movie scores with people like Hans Zimmer. You can build tracks with a lot of drums to make a statement of power/not power—20 people in the same room playing at a low volume is very intense. When you bring it up to a level of intensity, you react. That's what it was like on this tune. ... I don't know who the singer is.

Pete: Me, neither. This didn't strike me as something I'd really like to listen to. I didn't get the message of what she was trying to convey. It sounded more like an intro to a song. But as a complete song, there's too much repetition.

Cal Tjader/Carmen McRae

"Evil Ways" (*Concord Picante 25th Anniversary Collection*, Concord Picante, 2005, rec'd 1982) Tjader, vibes; McRae, vocals; Al Bent, Mark Heathman, trombones; Mark Levine, piano; Rob Fisher, bass; Vince Lateano, drums; Poncho Sanchez, congas, percussion; Ramon Banda, timbales, percussion.

Pete: That's the great Carmen McRae and Cal Tjader. I've always loved her singing. You don't hear people like that anymore. One of the cool things is that this song was written by Sonny Henry, and the first person who recorded it was Willie Bobo. Then Santana made it a hit and when I was playing with him, we'd play that all the time. This had a great groove—nice and slow. Carmen's rendition was incredible.

Sheila: The style and the sound takes me back to when I was young. It reminds me of the Bay Area—my dad, my family having fun, the food, the dancing all the time. When it was playing, it makes you want to stand up and do a cha-cha. In fact, I could see people in the back doing that. DB

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

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