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A man with glasses and a dark t-shirt is playing a dark-colored electric guitar. He is looking down at the instrument. The background is dark and out of focus, with some musical equipment visible.

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JULY 2016

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24 Kamasi Washington *'All the Doors Opened'*

BY JOSEF WOODARD

The 35-year-old saxophonist, bandleader and newly anointed jazz star speaks at length about his collective of players, as well as matters of musical integrity and jazz lineages.

Kamasi Washington (center) performs with his father, Rickey Washington (left), and Ryan Porter at Webster Hall in New York City on Feb. 24.



Cover photo of Kamasi Washington shot by Paul Wellman in Los Angeles on March 8.

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Futuristic Vision

REGINA CARTER, DAVE DOUGLAS, STEFON HARRIS, INGRID Jensen, Brad Mehldau, Matthew Shipp, Ken Vandermark, Matt Wilson. What do these jazz artists have in common? Seventeen years ago, they were dubbed “rising stars” when they were included in the cover feature “25 For The Future” in the June 1999 issue of DownBeat.

That article included an amazing parade of talent, and it offered a prescient look at artists who would go on to have great careers.

As you can see in the image below, the cover for the June 1999 issue was an aerial portrait depicting Carter, then a promising young violinist, and Mehldau, who was riding a wave of acclaim for his *Art Of The Trio* discs and whose latest work was the solo piano album *Elegiac Cycle*.

Jason Koransky (then DownBeat’s associate editor) described the premise for the story: “We feature 25 musicians in this issue with the specific intent of not examining which artists will perpetuate the sounds of Phil Woods’ alto saxophone, Ray Brown’s bass, Milt Jackson’s vibes or Miles Davis’ trumpet. That’s a boring read: A magazine full of imitators wouldn’t tell us anything except for the fact that past generations of jazz musicians developed their own voices. Rather, we turn our attention to the sounds of a new generation.”



Fast-forward to 2016. The DownBeat editorial staff has enthusiastically revisited the “25 For The Future” theme. For this issue, we have compiled a list of 25 young artists—all of whom have made fantastic music and who have shown tremendous potential.

Leading our parade is Kamasi Washington, whose three-CD set *The Epic* (Brainfeeder) became the most talked-about jazz album of 2015. That sprawling work continues to be the subject of many debates (and downloads), thanks to its originality, its unusual length and its connections to jazz history. Also adding to the buzz surrounding Washington is his tireless touring aesthetic, his onstage rapport with his bandmates and his penchant for playing massive rock festivals.

Following our feature on Washington are brief profiles of two dozen other musicians who have made their mark. One thing these artists have in common with those in the 1999 roundup is a wholehearted commitment to pursue their artistic vision—without fear, without compromise.

But artists nowadays are navigating a jazz industry that is a far cry from the one in 1999—back when physical CDs and major labels played much different roles in the big picture. Today’s jazz artist has to be resourceful in a completely different way, thanks to shifting digital technology and social media.

In assembling this issue, our impulse was not to answer the question “Who’s going to become a big star?” Instead, the motivation was to explore a more important question: Which artists have the potential to significantly shape the direction of jazz in decades to come? We’re not implying that these players are the 25 *best* young jazz musicians on the planet; we’re merely shining a spotlight on an intriguing array of ascending artists. These are musicians to watch. Welcome to the future. **DB**

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Chords & Discords

Pelting DownBeat

I wish to express my extreme disappointment in the story written about me in the May issue of DownBeat. While I'm appreciative of a feature on me, I feel like this was a wasted opportunity.

While a portion of the story did deal with my latest HighNote release, *#JIVECULTURE*, a sizable portion had more to do with my appearances with Joe Farnsworth and Ben Allison, and sideman work in general.

I have been leading bands successfully for over 10 years. The feel of the story is that I'm still a sideman. I've been a part of this music scene for nearly 20 years, I have 13 releases to date, and I have appeared on over 100 recordings. In short, I have a legitimate body of work.

Also, it's just lazy journalism (and borderline disrespectful) to keep giving life to the Miles and Freddie comparisons and in general having discussions about past jazz icons in a



Jeremy Pelt

story that has to do with my work. We all have our heroes—and I can wax poetic about all of the past icons—but those are questions that you ask someone who's fairly new to the scene, not someone with the experience I have.

I expected more.

JEREMY PELT
NEW YORK CITY

Heartfelt Tribute

The Gretsch family joins everyone in the drum and percussion industry in mourning the passing of Remo Belli on April 25. As a veteran of that industry myself, I had the pleasure of knowing Remo for many years on a personal and professional basis. My wife, Dinah, and I shared visits with him at trade shows and other drumming events, and we always enjoyed our time together.

But Remo's connection to the Gretsch family goes back much further. My uncle, Fred Gretsch Jr., was a little more than 20 years older than Remo. When Remo was touring as the drummer for Anita O'Day and bandleader Billy May in the 1950s, Uncle Fred was running the Gretsch business. He welcomed Remo into the fold as a Gretsch drum artist.

In fact, Remo's smiling face graces the cover of the 1954 Gretsch drum catalog—right next to Louie Bellson, and in the company of other drum greats like Art Blakey, Jo Jones and Shelly Manne.

Just a few years later, when Remo went into business himself, Uncle Fred supported his efforts by becoming a major customer for his Weather King synthetic drumheads. Remo



Remo Belli

heads are still factory-installed on Gretsch drums today.

Fast-forward to when I entered the drum business 50 years ago. Returning the favor that my uncle had done for him, Remo (who was a little less than 20 years older than I am) served as a mentor to me, offering sound business tips and valuable personal advice.

Over the ensuing years I came to cherish his friendship, his guidance and his unparalleled professional example. I will miss those things—and Remo himself—tremendously.

FRED W. GRETSCH
PRESIDENT, THE GRETSCH COMPANY

End of a Purple Reign

I have been a jazz fan since the early '70s. I lived in Minneapolis during the '80s and '90s, and I am also a Prince fan. I'm sure I'm not the only jazz fan who misses Prince. Please include a piece on him in a future issue.

If you need a jazz connection, there are three that I can think of, all involving Miles Davis. When my future wife and I saw Prince perform in 1988, his horn section quoted "So

What." Prince told the thousands in attendance at the Minnesota North Stars' hockey arena that it was the "sexiest line ever." Prince and Miles recorded a tune together; you can check it out online. It sounds good to me, and it probably would have been on Miles' album *Tutu* if Prince hadn't pulled it.

Additionally, Prince wrote a tune for Miles called "Penetration," which is online as well.

BOB ZANDER
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

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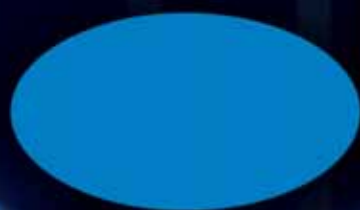
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Hiromi's Joyful Journey

On "Spark," the opening song (and title track) on Hiromi's new Telarc album, she plays a snippet of faint, delicate solo piano that conveys a sense of anticipation. Her goal was to create the musical equivalent of the first page of a book.

"It sounds like the orientation to everything," she said during a recent conversation at Yamaha Artist Services Inc. in Manhattan. "It's the beginning, the sparks that made me write all these songs."

Hiromi's fourth Telarc album with her Trio Project—drummer Simon Phillips and contrabass guitarist Anthony Jackson—debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's Jazz Albums chart. The Japanese pianist/keyboardist is reaching more and more listeners by injecting her monumental compositions with accessible melodic ideas, executed with ferocious energy.

"I always look for something singable, melody-wise," Hiromi said of her composing approach. "Some melodies, when you go to live performances, just stick in your head. That's what I look for when I write music."

In addition to being a major star in her native country, this 37-year-old pianist has long been a huge draw on the global festival circuit. Her current world tour includes shows at the Montreal Jazz Festival (June 30), Rotterdam's North Sea Jazz Festival (July 9) and Germany's Palatia Jazz Festival (July 22). By the end of the year, she and her group will have visited North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Synthesizing jazz, classical and rock and aided by near-telepathic communication, Hiromi, Phillips and Jackson have helped expand the definition of "power trio." The group's tunes typically feature dazzlingly interwoven riffs and complex time signatures.

On *Spark*, Hiromi plays a Yamaha CFX concert grand piano—exhibiting a rich, resonant tone—and a Nord Lead 2 synthesizer. Phillips, who has played with The Who and Toto, performs on a massive rock drum kit that includes two bass drums, seven toms, a gong drum, octobans and three snare drums. Jackson, a veteran who has worked with Paul Simon and Steely Dan, is famous for playing a six-string contrabass guitar, an instrument he pioneered decades ago.



MUGA MIYAHARA



Joe Temperley (1929–2016)

FRANK STEWART

Final Bar: Joe Temperley, whose virtuosic skill on the baritone saxophone and bass clarinet boosted numerous big band recordings, died May 11 at age 86. Born in Scotland, Temperley achieved his first acclaim in the United Kingdom as a member of Humphrey Lyttelton's band. After moving to New York in 1965, he performed and recorded with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, Jazz Composer's Orchestra and the big bands of Woody Herman and Buddy Rich. In 1974, Temperley joined the Duke Ellington Orchestra, replacing Harry Carney. He went on to hold the baritone saxophone chair in the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra for nearly 30 years. A strong advocate of jazz education, Temperley joined the faculty of The Juilliard School in 2001.

More info: jazz.org

Festival Grants: The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) has recognized five jazz organizations and related festivals that will receive grants totaling \$1 million. The Leadership Grants for Jazz will go to City Parks Foundation of the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival (\$75,000), Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation of the Detroit Jazz Festival (\$200,000), Jazz Institute of Chicago of the Chicago Jazz Festival (\$225,000), Monterey Jazz Festival (\$400,000) and Newport Festivals Foundation of the Newport Jazz Festival (\$100,000). More info: ddcf.org

Kirk Documentary: Rahsaan Roland Kirk, the late reedist and social justice activist who built a reputation on his ability to play multiple horns at once, is the subject of a documentary that will be available on iTunes May 31. Featuring archival footage as well as interviews and animated sequences, Adam Kahan's *The Case of the Three Sided Dream* will present a look at a musician who persevered through partial paralysis resulting from a stroke to pursue his passion for jazz. A DVD release is scheduled for the fall. Screenings are planned for later this year in New York, Los Angeles, Toronto and Europe. More info: itunes.com



Hiromi often plays piano and synthesizer in concert.

JAN PERSSON

Produced by Hiromi and Michael Bishop and recorded at Power Station New England Studio A in Waterford, Connecticut, over four days last year, *Spark* (Hiromi's 10th album as a leader) was conceived as a journey with a narrative arc, much like a book, play or film.

The album's nine original songs reflect the emotional states a reader or viewer might encounter while engaging with a story, according to Hiromi. Titles such as "In A Trance," "Take Me Away" and "Wake Up And Dream" represent conditions into which the viewer or reader might slip at particular moments in the work.

The song "Wonderland" illustrates how Hiromi composes material that exploits her trio-mates' specific strengths. This song's melody was specifically written to be played on Phillips' octobans—a set of high-pitched, melodically tuned tom-toms. The album's rollicking final track, "All's Well," is designed as the musical equivalent of a film's closing credits.

Spark reflects the trio's "biggest growth" as a group since it released *Voice*, its debut Telarc CD, five years ago, Hiromi said. "There is a way of playing with Simon and Anthony here that I've never heard before."

Phillips, reached at his home in Los Angeles, agreed. "Hiromi's compositions have matured beautifully," the London native said. "She knows exactly what we can do and she can still manage to find ways of pushing us, technically and creatively."

The overall sound is more cohesive than in the past, according to Phillips: "It really sounds like a band playing."

While Hiromi has been a hit with audiences worldwide, critics haven't always praised her work. In the May issue of *DownBeat*, two of *The Hot Box* reviewers gave *Spark* a 2-star rating.

Hiromi responds to criticism from both ordinary listeners and professional detractors pragmatically. "I think music is like food," she said. "Everybody has different tastes. I think

you can say exactly the same thing about music. Sometimes you feel you really want to listen to this music today. Or sometimes you are not really looking for music that much. But what can the chef do? So I just keep cooking and do my best."

Her main goal in music, she said, is to "make people happy." Pleasing listeners is an experience that dates back to her childhood.

"I was always surrounded by smiles whenever I played the piano," Hiromi said. "I started with my grandparents and my parents and my brother. Whenever I played, they were always smiling."

As an emerging player, Hiromi was mentored and praised by the likes of Ahmad Jamal and Chick Corea. Yet she was also deeply influenced by an idol from afar: Erroll Garner (1923–'77), whom she discovered in video clips when she was a precocious 8-year-old studying classical piano (and intrepidly superimposing alternate chords on works by Bach and Mozart).

"The first time I saw Erroll play on a video, he was smiling so much, it really was striking; it really spoke to me," Hiromi recalled. "And the audience [members] were smiling. It's like universal communication. It goes beyond all the boundaries, and people become as one. It's amazing what music can do."

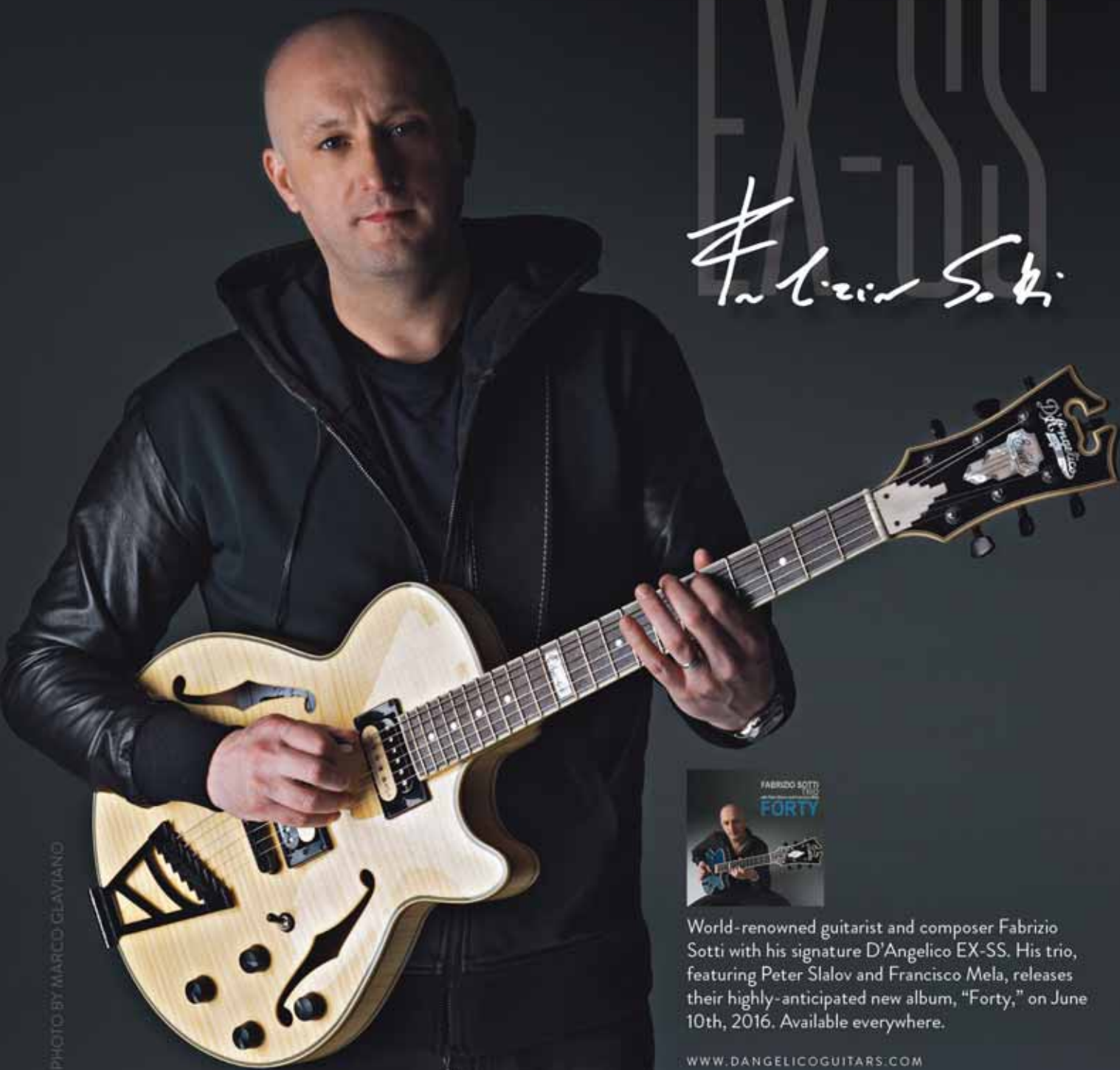
A preponderance of joy (along with plenty of athletic maneuvers) is part of a typical Hiromi concert. During her March 30 show with the Trio Project at New York's Highline Ballroom, Hiromi augmented her audience dialogue with a panoply of athletic moves from the piano bench, ranging from side leg kicks to spinal twists to stand-up squats.

During "All's Well," the concert finale, she turned from a reclining position on the piano bench to face the audience with a big smile. She seemed to enter a trance even while continuing to work the keys. As she explained later, "I do look, but I am not really looking. I am feeling the energy from the audience." —Michael Barris

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Jazz Legends Provide Bright Spots in Soggy New Orleans Festival

FOR DECADES, THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & Heritage Festival presented by Shell has been dogged by criticism of its pop-heavy programming. The trend began when the Jazz Tent began being pushed from a more central location to its current home on the edge of the Fair Grounds Race Track. It seemed to worsen after AEG Live came on board as a producing partner in 2004. That the festival's website url spells out "no jazz fest" hasn't helped matters.

This year, festival producer Quint Davis and his team made a concerted effort to change the "no jazz" bad rap. Davis felt he owed jazz and blues fans more than the festival had been giving them. He implied that he spent twice as much as usual on that programming for the 2016 edition, which ran April 22 through May 1. And it showed—particularly on April 24, when one afternoon in the Jazz Tent featured Herlin Riley, a Herbie Hancock/Wayne Shorter duo set and Terence Blanchard's E-collective.

The stack of stars drew a massive audience, filling the Jazz Tent to capacity and leaving a slew of fans relegated to listening from outside the tent for Riley's set, a hard-bop-fueled performance that drew from material featured on his latest recording, *New Direction*. Once Riley closed with a bouncing rendition of Danny Barker's "Tootie Ma," the aisles filled with Hancock and Shorter fans hoping to score a seat for their performance.

After a long welcome via standing ovation, Hancock and Shorter began to play, launching the meditative set with a pair of extended, mellow soprano saxophone lines. Hancock echoed his longtime collaborator's introspective vibe as he dug in on piano. Even when he engineered a series of fast, dark motifs with his left hand, things remained contemplative as the two indulged in 75 minutes of musical exchange.

As Hancock pressed on, seemingly anchoring much of the music's direction, Shorter bended his approach, shifting timbre and power to simultaneously play up and build out the narrative Hancock was creating.

For most of the first, nearly 50-minute-long tune, Hancock alternated between intensely cerebral figures, cascading harmonies and a use of time and space that said as much through silence as his more virtuosic moments said through sound. Shorter, meanwhile, mixed swirls of color with vaults into unexpected registers that seemed as if they could lift the top of the tent off and send it careening skyward.

Hancock moved to his Korg Kronos, and a series of extraterrestrial sounds wafted out over the crowd. Slowly at first and then building in intensity, he hammered out a sparse beat, alternating it with sheets of low, spaced-out soundscape waves. Shorter added restrained improvisations to the top of the mix, which by then had more in common with the EDM-meets-jazz feel of Hancock albums like *Future 2 Future* than with the pair's 1997 duo recording, *1 + 1*.

Another highlight came in the form of an unofficial focus on jazz drummers. One day before Riley's performance, Jack DeJohnette's trio with Ravi Coltrane and Matthew Garrison played an ethereal set of music that ranged from spiritual to groove-minded.

Among the headliners at the festival's second weekend, which was unfortunately marred by rainouts and flooding, was Joe Lovano's two-drummer-centric *Us Five* ensemble. Though Lovano's music selections for the set hewed more toward a note-heavy approach that feels slightly out of place in New Orleans, the spirited exchanges between drummers Francisco Mela and Otis Brown III consistently pushed the music forward. —Jennifer Odell



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President Obama Hosts Icons for 'Jazz Day' Concert

BITTERSWEET MOMENTS SEEPED INTO THE International Jazz Day Global Concert held in Washington, D.C., on April 29. After hosting the all-star event in Istanbul, Osaka and Paris in previous years, UNESCO and the Thelonious Monk Institute brought the event back to the United States—this time at the White House.

After President Obama greeted guests, announcing that with this concert the White House would become the “Blues House,” Aretha Franklin commenced with an impassioned rendering of Leon Russell’s “A Song For You.”

Accompanying herself on piano and aided by Brian Blade on drums, Christian McBride on bass and Herbie Hancock on keyboards, Franklin summoned her gospel and jazz roots, transforming the song into an invocation that seemed dedicated directly to the Obamas.

The White House felt like an appropriate setting for the International Jazz Day celebration, given that the Obamas have been ardent, vocal supporters of American music.

During the lead-up to the 2012 election, graphic artist JC Pagán issued a series of striking digital images that superimposed Obama’s image onto classic Blue Note LP covers. In June 2009, First Lady Michelle Obama opened the White House’s East Room to 150 high-school jazz students from Washington, D.C., New York City and New Orleans—and such jazz stalwarts as Paquito D’Rivera, Eric Revis and the Marsalis family—to launch a White House music workshop series that would later that year feature country and classical music.

Certainly, the Obamas aren’t the first to bring jazz into the White House. President Jimmy Carter did so famously in 1978 (with the help of Newport Jazz Festival impresario George Wein), as did President Bill Clinton in 1993 (in celebration of Newport’s 40th anniversary). But under the aegis of International Jazz Day at the White House, the genre enjoyed its grandest celebration yet, with a distinguished host, actor Morgan Freeman, and highlights packaged into a hourlong prime-time TV broadcast on ABC on April 30.

During his welcoming remarks, President Obama said, “There’s something fearless and true about jazz,” before comparing the music to “the story of our nation’s progress.” He went on to acknowledge that the music was “born out of the struggle of African-Americans yearning for freedom” and “forged in a crucible of cul-

tures—a product of the diversity that would forever define our nation’s greatness.”

After Franklin’s performance, jazz’s New Orleans origins came alive onstage as the Rebirth Brass Band delivered an exhilarating rendition of “Saint James Infirmary,” fronted by powerhouse vocalists Dee Dee Bridgewater and Kurt Elling. Both singers delved into the song with panache.

Elling injected some lyrics about Chicago and later slyly invoked the U.S. Treasury Department’s recent plan to replace the image of President Andrew Jackson on the \$20 bill with Harriet Tubman’s image. Bridgewater added some theatrical flair and traded vocalese banter with Trombone Shorty.

Another milestone of Obama’s presidency played out onstage when pianist Chucho Valdés and reedist Paquito D’Rivera, both from Cuba, led a global-minded ensemble through a vigorous rendition Bebo Valdés’ early 1950’s descarga “Con Poco Coco.”

Before they took the stage, Obama noted his commitment to rekindling diplomatic relations with Cuba. As for the performance, the cosmopolitan makeup of the ensemble—bassist (and Washington, D.C., native) Ben Williams, Beninese guitarist Lionel Loueke, Australian trumpeter James Morrison and Indian tabla player Zakir Hussain—re-emphasized Cuba’s musical significance and cultural interaction with other nations.

Under the guidance of musical director John Beasley, a rotating cast of musicians—including International Jazz Day mainstays drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, bassist Marcus Miller and trumpeter Hugh Masekela—gave way to an intriguing program that aimed for a balance between mainstream appeal and noteworthy surprises.

A few moments seemed intended to retain the interests of jazz novices: Al Jarreau leading a delightful rendition of Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond’s “Take Five”; the jazz-informed pop superstar Sting crooning his 1987 tune “Sister Moon”; an ensemble with McBride, Blade, pianist Chick Corea and trumpeter Terence Blanchard burning through the mid-’60s post-bop standard “Straight Up And Down”; and electric guitar hero John McLaughlin tearing into a jangly solo on Miles Davis’ early fusion nugget “Spanish Key.”

Other highlights included singer Dianne



Al Jarreau (left) Michelle Obama, Kurt Elling, President Barack Obama, Terence Blanchard, Dianne Reeves and Lionel Loueke celebrate International Jazz Day in Washington, D.C. (Photo: Steve Mundinger)



Herbie Hancock (left) and Aretha Franklin perform a duet. (Photo: Steve Mundinger)



Chick Corea (left), Wayne Shorter and Terence Blanchard perform on the White House South Lawn on April 29. (Photo: Steve Mundinger)

Reeves accompanying guitarist Pat Metheny during an explorative romp through his Brazilian-inflected composition “Minuano (Six Eight),” and an oblique reading of Shorter’s classic “Footprints” on which the reedist and 12-year-old pianist Joey Alexander goaded each other with antiphonic deconstructions of the melody while Esperanza Spalding’s probing acoustic bass lines spurred them forward.

Pianist and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock told the crowd that he had originally wanted to demonstrate his dual interests in jazz and hip-hop, but he changed his mind. Even though he did feature pianist Robert Glasper, saxophonist Terrace Martin and female MC Rhapsody, Hancock decided to turn his attention to Prince. Prior to the performance, he reminded the audience of the artist’s sad, untimely passing the previous week. “Prince epitomized the word *music*,” Hancock said.

The ensuing medley of Prince hits—“1999” and “When Doves Cry”—became notably melancholy when Franklin, America’s “Queen of Soul,” returned to the stage to lead the crowd in a heartfelt rendition of the chorus to “Purple Rain,” while the lighting backdrop turned appropriately purple as rain gently drizzled.

—John Murphy



Jeff Lederer's album *Brooklyn Blowhards* was inspired by sea shanties and Albert Ayler.

ROB LOWELL

Lederer Creates Avant-Nautical Mix

REEDIST JEFF LEDERER HAS OFTEN CREATED bold sounds borne of bizarre musical juxtapositions. Lederer's album *Shakers N' Bakers* matched Shaker religious "vision" songs with klezmer, swing and creative improvisation. His bawdy Dixieland confection, *Swing N' Dix*, was expressed with tongues firmly in cheek.

So when Lederer had the idea to combine the music of iconic free-jazz saxophonist Albert Ayler with 19th century sea shanties, somehow it made sense. Critics' and listeners' feelings about sea shanties may have dimmed over the years, but in the decades since Ayler's tragic death in 1970—apparently drowning after jumping off the Statue of Liberty ferry—the appreciation for his work has only grown.

"I have a history of putting things together that don't fit," Lederer explained from his Brooklyn home. "We've also done *Los Sazones*, a salsa version of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* performed by trombonist Jimmy Bosch's 11-piece salsa band and a baroque chamber orchestra."

Lederer and his latest group performed at Joe's Pub in New York in April to celebrate of Brooklyn Blowhards, issued by his label Little (i) Music. The octet's performance of Ayler's soaring sounds alongside doleful sea shanties was an act of inspired genius.

With Lederer playing saxophones and his wife, Mary LaRose, on vocals, the Brooklyn Blowhards consisted of John Irabagon, saxophones; Kurt Knuffke, cornet; Brian Drye, trombone; Art Dailey, accordion; Ches Smith, drums; and Stephen LaRosa, ship's bell, chains and concert bass drum. The ensemble blew and howled, thundered and quaked, as Matt Kish's illustrations of Herman Melville's epic sea tale *Moby Dick* were projected on a screen.

"Albert's music is very folk-like in its directness," Lederer said. "The melodies are really

expressive and digestible—and in some ways, simple. If you listen to *Love Cry*, [drummer] Milford Graves has this churning quality in addition to the way he vocalizes. The beat isn't driven by pulse, though it has momentum and is driven by *something*. The beat moves more in a feeling of waves than in beats."

The seed of the Brooklyn Blowhards project came about while drummer Matt Wilson was playing Ayler's *Love Cry* at his mother's home in Knoxville, Illinois. She remarked, "Matt, that music reminds me of sea shanties."

And Lederer has been studying nautical-themed tunes lately. Last year, Knuffke brought Lederer the Smithsonian/Folkways album *Foc'sle Songs And Shanties*, sung by Paul Clayton and the Foc'sle Singers, whose repertoire came mostly from field recordings of English shantymen.

"There's a mystical element to how Ayler and sea shanties merge," Lederer said. "I definitely hear the sound of the ocean in Albert's playing on *Love Cry*. When his body was found washed up in the East River in 1970, there were many theories. One was that he was murdered by the CIA. His girlfriend, Mary Maria Parks, said Albert committed suicide. Albert once said he had to 'shed his blood' to save his brother."

The Brooklyn Blowhards' performance at Joe's Pub often erupted into a New Orleans-like gumbo of rumbling rhythms and deep-gut tones, partially created by the nearly subsonic frequencies of concert bass drum, trap set and chains resonating under accordion, woodwinds and brass.

At press time, the Brooklyn Blowhards were planning concerts at the Nantucket Historical Association, the New Bedford Whaling Museum and Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

—Ken Micallef



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SSC 1414 - IN STORES June 3

For 20 years, Guillermo Klein has been creating some of the most singular and exciting music for his highly adept 11-piece ensemble, *Los Guachos*. Klein's musical voice has established a number of unique composing concepts. His new recording, *Los Guachos V*, heralds his use of a new method: symmetries. To highlight this work, Klein has created two suites, *Suite Indiana* and *Suite Jazmin*, that use familiar works of the jazz canon and his own material reworked using mirroring, inversions and retrogrades of harmonies and melodies to create new compositions.



CHRIS CHEEK SATURDAY SONGS

SSC 1453 - IN STORES June 24

On his new recording, *Saturday Songs*, Cheek has utilized a multitude of techniques and influences to generate compositions that are stimulating to musical theorists and foot tappers alike.

Much of his compositional style's effectiveness stems from his love and use of the guitar. The fret masters that he enlists for the recording include guitarist Steve Cardenas, pedal steel expert David Soler and electric bassist Jaime Llobard. The musical polymath Jorge Rossy rounds out the ensemble on drums, vibes and marimba.



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European Scene / BY PETER MARGASAK

Strandberg Pursues Sonic Poetry

Swedish trumpeter Emil Strandberg is a staunch devotee of improvisation, and over the last decade-and-a-half he has created some extraordinary music without any sort of written material. He's made a pair of surprisingly tender, tuneful recordings of free improvisation with veteran pianist Sten Sandell (one of Sweden's most ardent abstractionists) and bassist Patric Thorman. But as much as Strandberg loves playing without a net, he's a melodist first and foremost, with an abiding appreciation for composition no matter how loose or free.

Nothing has demonstrated those interests and strengths with as much clarity and power as his agile group with guitarist David Stackenäs and bassist Pär-Ola Landin, where plush balladry collides with raw dissonance and lines of gorgeous lyricism about passages using extended technique. The group's recent album &c. (ES) stands as one of the year's more arresting releases.

Strandberg, 36, grew up about 60 miles from Stockholm in the industrial town of Eskilstuna. He began playing trumpet at age 9 and gravitated from studying European classical music to falling for jazz. He played in marching band, brass ensembles, a symphony orchestra and various jazz ensembles, but he also spent hours checking out jazz records from the local library. The person in charge of the library's music collection introduced him to free improvisers such as Evan Parker and Axel Dörner as well as contemporary composers like Helmut Lachenmann.

In 2001, Strandberg moved to Stockholm to study at the Royal College of Music, but he left after one year, choosing instead to study literature at Stockholm University. "I think I just wanted to work on my music independently, but I also missed the analyzing of form, the discussion of aesthetics, the contextualization of a work of art—which was all we did studying literature and never did studying jazz," he said.

But music remained a key obsession, and he began making a name for himself in various projects, including recordings with pianist Jonas Östholm and participation in the quintet Seval, which applied free improvisation to loose pop-art songs written by American cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm and sung by Sofia Jernberg.

That approach clicked with the trumpeter. "I wanted to lead a jazz group that



Emil Strandberg

I could write for, but still, I wanted it to be about improvisation first and foremost," he explained. "I wanted to work more on applying some aspects of free improvisation on tonal material, and I thought David and Pär-Ola might be the right persons for it. To simplify, Pär-Ola comes from lyric post-bop, while David is best known as a free improviser."

Despite the investment in open forms, there's no missing the group's interest in jazz history. As Strandberg noted, his composition "Konish," from the trio's excellent 2014 album *More Music For Trumpet, Guitar And Bass* (ES), is based on a phrase from a Lee Konitz solo. On the album &c., Landin's opening bass figure on "Känd och Uppskattad I Jazzens Underjord" twists around the opening phrase of Cannonball Adderley's 1958 version of "Autumn Leaves." Additionally, Strandberg pointed out that his work with the adventurous Paris-based Umlaut Big Band has allowed him to bring out touches of Rex Stewart and Bix Beiderbecke in his playing.

Equally striking in the trio is the restraint at work. "I've got sensitive ears and don't enjoy loud music too much," Strandberg said. "But taking some heat off the music is good for me. Slowing things down and keeping lower dynamics make me more alert to what the other musicians play and to new ideas that arise in the course of the music. You should react fast to what the others do, but playing fast is a different thing—I tend to play more mechanically then. Sometimes I feel musicians are expected to be more athletes than poets. In any case, I think having more space and a slower pace helps bring out the poet." **DB**

Adam O'Farrill Forges His Own Path

EVEN WHILE SITTING IN THE FAMILY LIVING room—filled with memorabilia and awards of his father, Arturo O'Farrill, his grandfather, Chico O'Farrill, and his classical piano playing mother, Alison Deane—Brooklyn-based trumpeter Adam O'Farrill, 21, shows no signs of being pressured to carry the weighty torch of his namesake in any strict idiomatic fashion.

"I feel like I need to know where I come from," O'Farrill said while lounging on the sofa. "But that doesn't need to define me; it just needs to inform me."

Perhaps the reason why Adam is comfortable in his own musical skin is because his father encouraged him to be creative instead of replicating the past.

Evident by his late-March concert the night before at Bed-Stuy's hipster club, C'mon Everybody, O'Farrill is resolute to embark on his own artistic path. He guided his quartet—which features older, drum-playing brother Zack providing the ensemble's combustible drive—through an exploratory set that showcased his plangent trumpet tone, his pithy sense of melodic improvisation and his fondness of vigorous group interaction. With both of his parents in attendance in the stand-

ing-room-only crowd, O'Farrill delivered an intriguing program of music that included such incongruous tunes as Kenny Dorham's 1961 hard-bop gem "Sunset," Gabriel Garzón-Montano's electronica ballad "Pour Maman" and a traditional Mexican song, "Siiva Moiiiva."

O'Farrill pens beguiling compositions, too. But he only played two of them: "Monochrome Fantasies," a sardonic play on the harmonic and rhythmic repetitiveness of some of today's pop music, and "Survival Instincts," a probing piece marked by an implied 12/8 Afro-Cuban motif. The latter tune—oddly enough—was the only one in the set that came from O'Farrill's new solo debut album, *Stranger Days* (Sunnyside).

As with the concert at C'mon Everybody, *Stranger Days* prospers not only because of O'Farrill's compositions (like the rapturous "The Cows And Their Farmer Walt," the pensive "The Courtroom" and the episodic "Alligator Got The Blues"), but also the frolicsome interaction he engages in with his brother, bassist Walter Stinson and tenor saxophonist Chad Lefkowitz-Brown. Adding more suspense is the absence of a pianist.

"A lot of my writing and playing before *Stranger Days* and this band were heavily



STEVEN SUSSMAN

dependent of the piano," O'Farrill said, citing Ornette Coleman's late-'60s LPs *New York Is Now!* and *Love Call* as significant touchstones. "I needed to give myself a challenge."

The trumpeter's love for film shapes how he composes and launches into intricate, overlapping conversations with his cohorts. "In film, there's dialogue between the characters—but there's just as much dialogue among the story, the score, the cinematography and the editing," O'Farrill said. "That greater dialogue is what really transfixes me about good film."

—John Murph

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Set Preserves 'Divine' Legacy

DURING HER LIFETIME, SARAH VAUGHAN, who died at age 66 in 1990, ranked among the most celebrated of singers, earning the appellation "The Divine One" for her heavenly way with a musical phrase. While her star faded a bit after her death, it has been burning more brightly of late, with the issuing of both a stamp in her honor and a first-rate collection of tunes representing her small-group sound: *Sarah Vaughan—Live At Rosy's* (Resonance Records).

The new album features Vaughan onstage at Rosy's, the short-lived, long-lamented New Orleans club, on a night in May 1978. In two thoroughly swinging sets, Vaughan displays the improbably wide vocal and emotional range that earned her a designation as an NEA Jazz Master in 1989, four years after she gained entry into the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

"She would have been in top form," said Carrie Jackson, a singer and, like Vaughan, a native of Newark, New Jersey. Jackson—a Vaughan expert who was not involved with the album—appeared on March 29 at Newark's Symphony Hall in an event marking the release of the stamp. The event, which attracted more than 2,500 people to Symphony Hall's Sarah Vaughan Concert Hall, provided continuing

evidence of Vaughan's drawing power.

The new album, two CDs with 22 tracks in total, reveals how Vaughan exercised that power. Backed by her longtime trio—Carl Schroeder on piano, Walter Booker on bass and Jimmy Cobb on drums—she works her way wittily through a diverse array of tunes, including "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)," "East Of The Sun," "I Remember You" and "My Funny Valentine."

And while the selections tend toward the pre-'60s material for which Vaughan became famous, she gives songs of later vintage their due, offering a propulsive "Watch What Happens" and a tender "Send In The Clowns."

There is no shortage of drama, pathos—or, for that matter, brilliant improvisation—on the Resonance album, which was largely the initiative of producer Zev Feldman. A Vaughan aficionado, Feldman said he was offered access to the archives of National Public Radio's *Jazz Alive!* in 2012 after connecting with the show's producer, Tim Owens. Among the multi-track tapes he unearthed, he said, the Vaughan sets immediately stood out.

"I felt very passionate about the recordings," Feldman said.

Along with nearly 90 minutes of music—

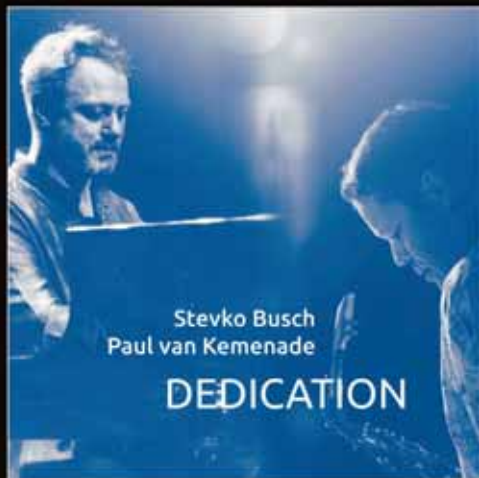


A new album from Resonance documents a Sarah Vaughan concert from 1978.

only some of which was heard on the radio program, whose host, Billy Taylor, is heard in brief—the package includes a 36-page booklet with essays, photos and interviews. All of which, Feldman said, is intended to provide a detailed portrait of Vaughan for present and future generations.

"It's how I want to remember Sarah Vaughan," he said.

—Phillip Lutz



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A vintage Ibanez Artstar guitar with a sunburst finish and a black pickguard is the central focus, leaning against a black guitar case. The background is a dimly lit music store filled with various instruments, including a violin and a trumpet, and decorative items like a bust and a clock. The lighting is warm and atmospheric, highlighting the guitar's details.

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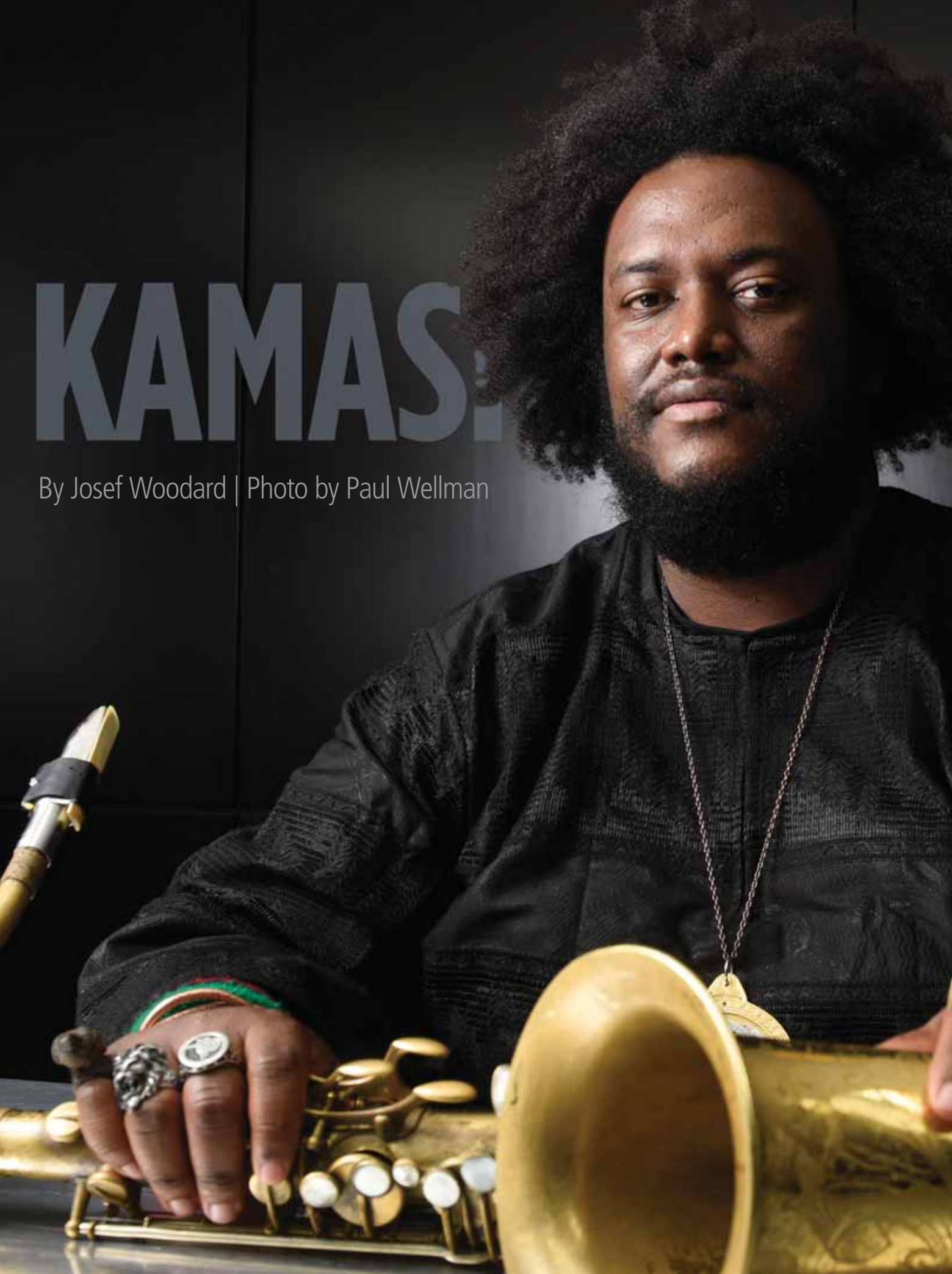
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‘All the Doors Opened’ WASHINGTON

ON A RAINY MARCH DAY IN LOS ANGELES, newly anointed jazz star Kamasi Washington was out to meet the press. Donning a colorful dashiki and with his ample complement of an Afro tucked into a knit cap, he sat in a conference room in the offices of his management firm, Atom Factory. The occasion? A DownBeat cover story. The 35-year-old saxophonist and bandleader spoke at length about his collective of players, who go by the moniker the West Coast Get Down, and of matters of musical integrity and jazz lineages. He emphasized how the jazz world has not fully appreciated the long tradition of serious jazz in inner-city L.A.—the scene from whence he sprang, nurtured by his father, the reedist Rickey Washington.

Relevant to Washington's meteoric rise in the past 14 months is the fact that Atom Factory is based in a building located just a few blocks away from the massive Sony Pictures compound in Culver City, California. It's also a mere five crow-flying miles—yet a cultural chasm away—from The World Stage, a grassroots jazz club and community hub in the Liemert Park area of South Central Los Angeles. Owned by the late, great Billy Higgins, The World Stage was, in the '90s, a vibrant training ground for the young Washington and many of his dedicated musical friends now touring the world with him.



Washington was a collaborator on rapper Kendrick Lamar's Grammy-winning album, *To Pimp A Butterfly*.

Washington, whose star has risen precipitously based on the power of his distinctively uncompromising three-disc set, *The Epic*, is one of the more surprising and artistically respectable “overnight sensations” in recent jazz history. In 2016, he’s already played the massive Coachella rock festival, and he’ll bring his jazz message to other high-profile events, such as Bonnaroo (June 10), the Ottawa Jazz Festival (June 22) and the Newport Jazz Festival (July 29 and 31), as well as riding the groove of the fest circuit in Europe, including the Lowlands Festival in the Netherlands (Aug. 20) and the Dimensions Festival in Croatia (Aug. 25). These bookings are a far cry from the L.A. venues where he and his collective honed their music over a 10-year period before the world came calling.

Recorded over a creatively dense month with a dozen musicians, including vocalists and strings, *The Epic* was released on the Brainfeeder label, owned by Flying Lotus, aka Steven Ellison. It came out May 5, 2015, in fateful, cosmic sync with the critical and commercial buzz surrounding Kendrick Lamar’s jazz-infused hip-hop masterpiece *To Pimp A*

Butterfly, on which Washington and others from his collective also play important roles.

Musicians in Washington’s crew bring to the table a dizzying wealth of experience. Their resumes include work with Rihanna, Snoop Dog, Chaka Khan, Lauryn Hill, Raphael Saadiq, Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder. Keyboardist Brandon Coleman, a dedicated member of the West Coast Get Down ensemble, spoke about the sense of musical rightness in the group, going back a decade. “I already knew, from the git-go,” he asserts, “that this music was going to be as big as it is. I think all of us kind of knew. We just didn’t know exactly how to facilitate it, how to get it out to the people. We were literally strategizing. Once we all got together and recorded, that’s when we knew we had something, for sure.”

One hallmark of the band’s sound is the taut yet relaxed interplay of Washington’s tenor saxophone and Ryan Porter’s trombone parts, a key benefit of their long stint as collaborators. As Porter says of his connection with Washington, “Knowing somebody as a friend and then trading records, we have a lot of the

same references and gig experiences. We don’t have to do much talking. It’s more intuitive, as far as how we might interpret a line or phrase it. Once you’ve got two guys focused on the importance of that sound, the blend works.”

Porter notes that the connective thread in the coalition of players in Washington’s band, and the local scene itself, ends up informing the content of the material as well. “When Kamasi sat down and wrote for *The Epic*,” Porter says, “he had those guys in mind and [knew] what he wanted to do and how they would take certain parts. Once he put the music in front of us, it jelled so well, because we had such strong communication. Right now, we just want to communicate, so that we can have a conversation. Once we can focus on that as a whole, that’s when we just make magic.”

Obviously, that magic and a conveyance of energy to the crowd has led the band into some unexpected places and turned some heads toward the lure of jazz. At shows, says Coleman, “We go out and meet people and sign autographs and see what people are about. A lot of these people haven’t even heard of George Duke or Herbie Hancock, whereas we grew up on that. It’s like, ‘What is this?’ That is a big part of the appeal.”

Washington’s charismatic ability to introduce fans of rock and hip-hop to the world of jazz is one of the reasons he’s the hottest artist in jazz today. Another is the way that hardcore jazz fans see a deep connection between him and John Coltrane.

A funny thing happens when you experience *The Epic* in the manner intended, as a three-hour tour: A whole identity begins to emerge from the many parts, and you’re left wanting even more. It’s almost a subversive statement in the brevity-centric culture of our time.

DownBeat spoke with Washington during a break from his itinerant lifestyle, just before he was scheduled to take off to New Zealand and Hawaii—two places he had yet to visit.

You have experienced a whirlwind year. Does it feel like things are suddenly converging for you after years of effort and commitment to the creative life?

Yeah. It’s like being in a room with all these doors that have all been locked, and all of a sudden, they’re all open. I’m just walking around saying, “Oh, I guess I’ll go through here now and see what that’s like.”

I always felt like we had something to give, but we just didn’t have a chance to give it. I always felt that if we had an opportunity to play our music for people, it would speak to them. I could feel it from playing with other artists, and I could feel where people were at. It seemed like we were doing something that people were searching for.

It’s like the door is locked and you have



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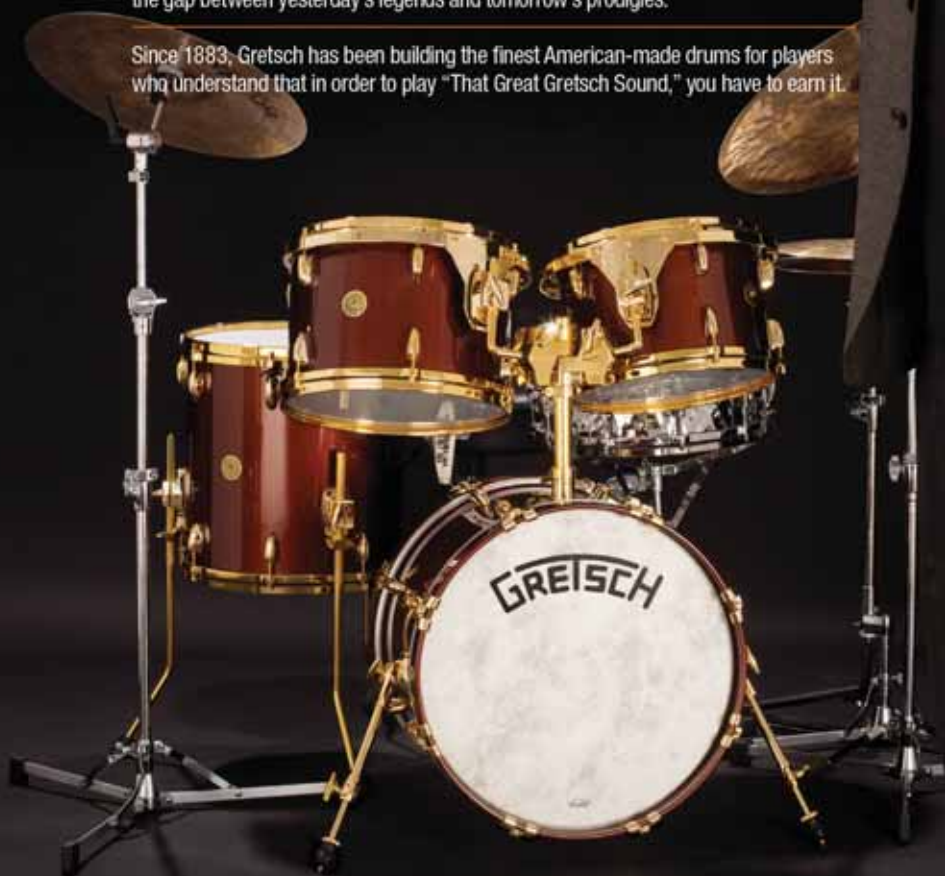


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Now we’re thinking, “Where else do we want to go with this?” Maybe we’ll put some ice in the water, or make some lemonade, something new and interesting.

I’ve been listening to *The Epic* as a whole, in sequence. Do you think that is the proper, ideal way to listen to the album?

Yeah, that’s how I like to listen to it. When I finished it, I heard it several times from beginning to end. That’s when you get the best experience, because things are inter-related. You can hear the connections, the styles and the musicians. ... You can break it up a little bit, but I think you get a clearer sense of what it is when you listen to it all the way through.

But everyone has different attention spans. I have a pretty long attention span. I can listen to music all day.

Each of the three discs in the set—“The Plan,” “The Glorious Tale” and “The Historic Repetition”—has a different emphasis or point of view. On the third disc, you have the only cover material of the album—“Claire De Lune,” “Cherokee” and Terence Blanchard’s theme from *Malcolm X*—revisited in fresh ways. That opens up a new portal in the musical outlook, after being entirely in an original musical language prior to that. Was that the idea with those covers?

That whole hour is its own thing. The first part has songs I wrote a long time ago, during a time in my life when I was pushing towards something. The next album of songs I wrote while I was on the road, while I was playing with other people. You can kind of get the connection between where you’re trying to get and where you end up being.

With the last part, I wanted to show the connection that we have with music that came before, with “Cherokee” and “Claire De Lune,” two really old songs, and with “Malcolm’s Theme.” It’s a bit of a time warp. I wanted to take songs and deal with them in a way that might show the connection between the past and the present. “Cherokee” is taken in a different direction, but it still sounds like “Cherokee.” “Claire De Lune” sounds like this solemn, soulful kind of thing, but you can’t always hear the original in the context of the solo piano.

I tried to pull on that connection that is inherent between what is being done in the past and in the present. Sometimes, you can look at it like they’re separated, but they’re really not.

Washington performs with bassist Miles Mosley (left) at the Okeechobee Music & Arts Festival on March 4.



I recently spoke with John Scofield, whose latest album is *Past Present*, and he talked about how, with music, you almost can’t separate the past and the present, because what happens in memory—your own or a collective memory trust—continues to live on in the present. What you play or write in the present reflects on echoes from the past. It’s a continuum.

Absolutely. But at the same time, there are new things going on. There are new experiences that people didn’t have in the past, and there are old experiences in the past that we don’t necessarily have now. Like taking a train tour. In the ’30s or the ’40s, people went on tour and were riding a train the whole time. In the past, people wouldn’t have experienced the modern tour bus.

If you see a human skeleton, it’s pretty hard to tell one from the next. Past, future, present, they all kind of look the same. But once you start adding the meat, the skin, the organs, the facial features, then you can see where they’re from. In music, there are parts that are universal, that are the same as they were thousands of years ago. But there are other parts that weren’t present 10 years ago.

On *The Epic*, there are parallels that arise. I hear the tenor-trombone blend and I think of Sonny Rollins. You also have a unique way of dealing with voices and strings, maybe with a nod to Sun Ra and models from the ’60s and ’70s.

For me, it didn’t necessarily come from any one place. I’m a big fan of Max Roach, the *Freedom Now Suite* and *Percussion Bitter Sweet*, and Abbey Lincoln. There is stuff that Donald Byrd did with voices, and then there’s *Symphony Of Psalms*, by Stravinsky. I also grew up playing in choirs, so that aspect of the music has also always been in there. It comes from

a lot of different places. That’s true of most of the things in my music. There are a lot of connections between things, which people might not always see or expect—with Max Roach and Stravinsky, for instance. That’s a pretty big block of culture that connects.

The album has an overall feel of a narrative through-line. Are there other precedents or examples of three-hour jazz albums? It’s hard to think of any.

It’s funny. When I made that decision and told Flying Lotus about it, it was hard to think of comparisons. You have Keith Jarrett’s 10-LP set [*Sun Bear Concerts*], and John Coltrane’s *The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings* or Miles Davis’ *The Complete In A Silent Way Sessions*, all those reissues. I wasn’t trying to sneak a fast one. I just told him the story and let him listen to the album in sequence. After I brought up those other examples of albums that did well, and were more than a single disc, he said, “We’ve got to do this.”

You’ve said that you were led to accept the epic form via dreams that you had.

Sometimes, you don’t know what you want, but a part of you does know. Dreams can inform that. I already knew what I wanted to do, but was kind of fighting it. I’m a comic book, anime kind of person anyway, so my having that story helped me find my groove. It definitely loosened me up to that idea. I knew, “This is it.”

I’m weird. I’m very indecisive until I decide; but once I decide, it’s hard for anyone to change my mind. We talked about staggering the releases and not putting them all out at once, but we thought, “No, this is one thing—it’s not different things. It doesn’t make sense to put them out separately.”

You start the album with “Change Of The

Guard." Does that title have significance, in terms of you wanting to change things up and introduce a new voice in the music?

I am really a second-generation musician. My dad and his friends were so good. I remember being a kid. I liked Lee Morgan and Wayne Shorter and Herbie, the generation before him. I always used to wonder why people like my dad, [drummer] Sonship Theus, [pianist] Horace Tapscott, [pianist] Nate Morgan and people like them weren't better known. They used to come to my house and play. I got a little older and realized how good they were.

["Change Of The Guard"] was a song I wrote a long time ago, when I was 19 years old. It was written for my dad, for the generation of musicians who didn't necessarily make albums or get out there in a way that people would really know about them. It was almost like a generation lost, that generation of guys who graduated from high school in the '70s.

The generation after them, with Wynton and those guys, got the spotlight. That's why I wrote "Change Of The Guard"—for that generation of musicians in L.A. Usually, the whole world sees this passing of the baton, but nothing like that happened here. All of us who grew up around them, we knew them and respected them.

Why do you think that was—just being in the wrong place, wrong time for that mode of jazz?

I think that was the beginning of a homogenization of music, if you think about music coming out of New York. New York is definitely the center of jazz, but people have been doing it in other places, too. You have the Art Farmers of the world who did it from somewhere else.

If you think about Los Angeles, in particular, that is when Hollywood really exploded, in the '70s. That's when the identity of L.A. became that. People thought, "Los Angeles? That's Hollywood." But the style of jazz in L.A. has often been avant-garde and not commercial like that, so it doesn't really match the stereotype. People's idea of Los Angeles is not that kind of music: dense, avant-garde, heavy music.

But that artistic strain has always been there.

It has always been there. People like Mingus, Dolphy and Ornette, and [others] from California in general. They were all from the deep end.

There's an aspect of L.A. jazz that isn't well-known beyond its borders, like Horace Tapscott's Pan-Afrikan Peoples Orchestra, which your band taps into, and Gerald Wilson's orchestra, which you were a member of. And there are so many others.

There is a huge scene, geographically. That whole area of Liemert Park and South Central L.A. is an older jazz scene, especially in the '90s.

Where else in L.A. could you go where there were four jazz clubs, poetry, a blues club and people playing in the park—all in a two-block area? Definitely, people like Horace Tapscott and Gerald Wilson, that whole dense scene—that is the sound.

When most people think of South Central L.A., they think of gangsta rap. That was a part of it. We heard that. That is in the music, as well, that aspect of life, for sure, but Liemert Park was a big part of it, too. That energy was not just the jazz clubs, but the people who lived there. There was a social consciousness and a great sense of community.

People embraced us when we played music. They'd get mad at us if we played too loud, too fast, too long, but still they loved the fact that we were there. Billy Higgins was always encouraging us and Horace Tapscott was encouraging us.

Regarding your work on *To Pimp A Butterfly*, the way it fuses hip-hop with jazz breaks new ground and is done so fluidly. That's vastly different than *The Epic*, where you are dealing with very different musical issues.

Hip-hop and jazz have a more entangled history than some people think. At one point, hip-hop was dealing with jazz in terms of jazz samples of older records. The thing with *Butterfly* is that it is fused with jazz, but [with] new jazz musicians playing on the record. It's not samples at all, but people actually playing. That's what's really different about it.

Where do you go from here? You were talking before about having so many open doors and possibilities.

Yeah, the funny part is that we did [*The Epic*] in 2011. And a lot of those songs are older than that. For me, I'm looking forward to getting back to where we were. And since we've been touring, we've been writing new tunes and had new ideas of what we can do. I want to move along to different approaches to writing and harmony. I have all these songs now. I want to record them.

What's next is where we are now. It's kind of simple: You always just do what you're doing, and not do anything else.

I'm writing out a story that I did. That's one of those things with doors opening up. I've had a lot of stories that come to me over my life. This story, I want to write it out maybe like a graphic novel and put it out there.

There is other music that was recorded when I was recording mine. I want to help those guys find a place and a vehicle to get it out to the world. Miles Mosley is putting out one of his songs in April. [Pianist] Cameron Graves is close to putting out his stuff. Terrace Martin is putting out his record in April. There is all this music right there on the dock, waiting to get out there.

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FOR THE FUTURE

Welcome to our exuberant, optimistic look at the future. On the following pages, DownBeat proudly presents short profiles of two dozen musicians who, like Kamasi Washington, will shape the direction of jazz in the decades to come.



MELISSA ALDANA

Much as visual artists conclude a period of intensive investigation with a gallery exhibition, tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana regards her new album, *Back Home* (Wommusic), as denoting a transition.

"This marks the end of a period with my trio," said Aldana, who sustains conversational simpatico with bassist Pablo Menares and drummer Jochen Rueckert through four of her originals, two apiece by her partners, and a rendition of Kurt Weill's "My Ship."

"I started playing trio to hear different things than with piano or guitar, to strengthen my harmony and melody," she said. "I've learned a lot, but now I'll also be exploring more quartet and even some sextet things."

Aldana rose to fame when she won the 2013 Thelonious Monk International Saxophone Competition, earning \$25,000 and a contract with Concord Records. A native of Santiago, Chile, whose father (Marcos Aldana) and grandfather (Enrique "Kiko" Aldana) are virtuoso saxophonists, she's habituated

to focusing on her process. That's why, when pondering what to present on her 2014 album for Concord, she decided to document her trio music rather than do "the commercial thing."

Even before the Monk Competition, Aldana—who had already recorded two albums for Greg Osby's Inner Circle label—was making an impression in New York, where she relocated in 2010, the day after graduating from Berklee College of Music.

On her two trio albums, Aldana tells a story that's deeply connected to jazz history. Although she might operate on her forebears' terms of engagement, the rhythmic and harmonic language is decidedly in her own argot.

"It's important to know where you come from to find what you like, or what you want to say," she noted. "That's why some of my music is strongly rooted in tradition—as part of a process to go to whatever is next. These days it's so hard to define what's next. But the whole meaning of jazz is that it's constantly changing in relation to the times." —Ted Panken

SULLIVAN FORTNER

Since winning the American Pianists Association's prestigious Cole Porter Jazz Fellowship in 2015, Sullivan Fortner has found himself in new and unfamiliar situations. A case in point was a recent duo gig at New York's intimate club Mezzrow where the 29-year-old pianist was paired with singing sensation Cécile McLorin Salvant.

"Man, I was so nervous, my teeth were sweating," he said with a laugh. Nevertheless, he did well enough that when DownBeat reached him for an interview, Fortner was in Santa Barbara, California, subbing for Salvant's regular pianist, Aaron Diehl (the APA's 2011 Cole Porter Fellow in Jazz), during a series of West Coast dates.

The New Orleans native was an 11-year-old piano prodigy when he came to the attention of Ellis Marsalis, who approved his admission to the New Orleans Center for Creative

Arts. Fortner graduated as class valedictorian, going on to study at Oberlin Conservatory and the Manhattan School of Music, where he earned a master's degree in jazz performance.

After years of playing with such masters as Roy Hargrove, Fortner released his acclaimed debut, *Aria* (Impulse!), last fall. Fortner's got post-bop technique to burn. Better yet, he's got *ideas*—as exemplified by his adventurous version of Thelonious Monk's "I Mean You" and his originals, which range from frenetic ("Aria") to lyrical, like the lilting "Ballade."

Fortner is inspired by artists like Monk, Bud Powell, and the great stride players James P. Johnson and Willie "The Lion" Smith. "With them it was more about a feeling," he said. "There's a certain level of expression that goes beyond accuracy and articulation. It was muddy—'ugly beauty.' A certain rawness, but it was still *right*. It's human." —Allen Morrison



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Cyrille Aimée

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Cyrille Aimée had just returned from her native France, where the singer played to overflow crowds at the Paris club New Morning. So it was fitting that, as she sat in a café in her adopted home of Brooklyn in April, the gypsy jazz of Frenchman Django Reinhardt provided the recorded backdrop to her conversation.

Aimée, 31, came to the United States a decade ago to absorb jazz in the country where it was born. In recent years she reconnected with the sensibility of her free-spirited youth, when she visited the gypsy encampment in her hometown of Samois-sur-Seine, the onetime home of Reinhardt. With the help of hard-pumping acoustic guitarist Adrien Moignard, that sensibility has informed her two latest albums—*It's A Good Day* and *Let's Get Lost*, both on Mack Avenue.

But the scope of her oeuvre is wide, and Aimée was quick to point to the Dominican influence, reflecting her mother's heritage. "I feel like the Latin part is even deeper," she said. "It's not something you can put your finger on, but to me it's the groove. For me, dance music and dancing are one and the same."

The very French purr with which she made her assertion seemed to belie it. But any concertgoer who has seen Aimée's shoulders grab the downbeat as she performs Latin love songs like "Estrellitas y Duendes" would not dispute the claim.

Aimée's diverse multicultural influences make the singer hard to categorize. Drawing on sultry chansons, hip originals, pop and bop standards as well as the Latin repertory, she has garnered victories in major competitions from Montreux to Newark; raves on Broadway from Stephen Sondheim in a revue of his music; and plaudits in clubs from Tokyo to New York, where long lines are common at her performances.

What draws people to her—beyond the azure eyes and disarming smile—is a vocal quality that is at once innocent and worldly, with an uncanny facility for mining a musical phrase, extrapolating from it the kind of improvisation that is both risky and relevant to the material at hand. Look no further than her duo turn with bassist Shawn Conley on Oscar Pettiford's "Laverne Walk," an extended scat that's a highlight of *Let's Get Lost*.

She also has an intimate way with a lyric, one that she—along with Moignard, Conley, Michael Veleau on electric guitar and Dani Danor on drums—will, into 2017, be bringing to stages in the United States and Europe, including a nostalgic stop at a Reinhardt festival in Samois.

Precisely how Aimée's future will unfold is unclear, and she likes it that way. What is clear is that a free spirit will guide her, much as she hopes it will shape the future of jazz as an art form.

"Jazz has a connotation that it is a music just for old people or only for people who understand it," she said. "That's why I want to break the jazz box." —Phillip Lutz

BEN WILLIAMS

According to 31-year-old acoustic bassist Ben Williams, there's no reason to fret about the future of jazz, because it is actively expanding to reach new audiences.

"There's a very strong wave of musicians in my generation making intense statements," he said. "There are no gatekeepers in the music anymore; we can make the music we want. The tree is really branching out. It's jazz but it's growing outside of the 'jazz' box. I'm proud to be part of this generation that is writing its own rules."

Since winning the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Bass Competition in 2009, Williams' career has hit warp speed, as evidenced by two genre-spanning leader albums, *State Of Art* and *Coming Of Age* (both on Concord); membership in Pat Metheny's Unity Band and Group; and sideman work with Herbie Hancock, Jacky Terrasson, Stefon Harris, Dhafer Youssef and Christian McBride's big band.

Williams recently scored an interpretive work, *Dearly Beloved—The Music Of Prince*, for a 13-piece ensemble to be performed at New York's Harlem Stage.

A fall tour will take Williams on global travels with Etienne Charles, Billy Childs and singer-songwriter Somi. The bassist is also focused on confirming dates for his own group, Sound Effect. But challenges abound.

"There's a disconnect between the people who want to see us and the promoters who want to book us," Williams said. "The promoters should evolve with us and understand the audiences we are speaking to." —Ken Micallef



JATI LINDSEY

MARCUS GILMORE

When drummer/composer Marcus Gilmore is on the road or in the studio with the groups of Vijay Iyer, Chris Potter or Chick Corea, he doesn't separate their music by genre.

"When I make music, I'm trying to be as sincere as possible and make *personal* music," the 29-year-old said. "A lot of people believe for music to be jazz it has to deal with a certain amount of improvisation. I can see that. My own music deals with improvisation and spontaneous composition. The only constant with all the people I play with is a strong rhythmic foundation, from Gonzalo Rubalcaba to Vijay Iyer."

Gilmore—the grandson of Roy Haynes—has developed a streamlined, multi-directional, multi-sourced approach that places him in the vanguard of improvising, creative drummers. Gilmore will spend time in late 2016 and early 2017 on tour and in recording sessions with Corea, Potter and Taylor McFerrin.

Gilmore is also busy writing material for his own group, Actions Speak, which includes pianists David Virelles and David Bryant, guitarist Rafiq Bhatia and bassist Burniss Earl Travis II. The group is currently recording compositions by Gilmore that originated on the drum set.

"I'm taking melodies, harmonies and rhythms from the drums and then composing to that—as opposed to composing from a harmonic point, such as the piano," Gilmore explained. "Some of the music is based on improvisation, and there will be solo drumming pieces as well." —Ken Micallef



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MARIUS NESET

At last summer's Ystad Jazz Festival in Sweden, Marius Neset delivered a spellbinding set. The bright and powerful tenor saxophonist led his group through tricky but emotionally enriched musical routes of his devising—mostly on themes from his 2015 album *Pinball*—in a show at once energetic and controlled, innately progressive and naturally melodic.

Finding the elusive balance of energy and control has been at the core of what makes the dynamic Neset—raised in Bergen, Norway, but long based in Copenhagen, Denmark—one of the most exciting artists in jazz. At 31, he's still young but already well established, having released a handful of albums for the Edition label (*Golden Xplosion*, *Birds*) and ACT Records (*Lions*, *Pinball*). On April 29, ACT released the intriguing album *Sun Blowing*, recorded by Neset with bassist Lars Danielsson and drummer Morten Lund.

Neset's discography reveals not only an impressive technician but also a formidable composer. Studying with the witty virtuoso Django Bates at the Rhythm Music Conservatory in Copenhagen and playing in Bates' vivid and brainy projects has instilled in Neset a sense of musical seriousness and a serious sense of play.

Neset strives for deep originality in his music. "I try to think like a classical composer when I compose," he said. "What's difficult is to integrate freedom and spontaneity in a natural way, but when it works, it gives an incredible energy and freshness to the music."

—Josef Woodard

KRIS BOWERS

At this year's Winter Jazzfest in New York City, pianist and composer Kris Bowers displayed his cinematic flair, complementing his set with various loops, samples and ambient sounds that meshed with kaleidoscopic video images. The multimedia performance featured transfixing versions of disparate material ranging from the jazz standard "Caravan" to Tune-Yards' 2011 rock tune "Gangsta."

Cinematic images have long been a passion for the 27-year-old Bowers. He earned a master's degree at Juilliard in jazz performance with a focus on film composition. Even before Concord Records released his 2014 debut, *Misfits + Heroes*, he'd already scored two documentary films—Chiemi Karasawa's *Elaine Stritch: Shoot Me* and Sandy McLeod's *Seeds of Time*. Since then, he's scored seven more, three of which are Showtime documentaries on famous athletes: *Kobe Bryant's Muse*; *I Am Giant: Victor Cruz*; and *Play It Forward* (about Tony Gonzalez). Also coming to movie theaters soon are the documentary *Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You* and Rob Meyers' dramedy *Little Boxes*, which respectively premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and the Tribeca Film Festival.

While Bowers acknowledges differences between penning music for film and jazz performances, he believes that one informs the other. "Whether I'm writing, performing or even improvising, it's very hard for me to do something that's void of context, reasoning or emotion," Bowers explained. "There are a lot of musicians, especially those who come through music conservatories, who don't do that. For them, it's more about the notes and technique. Oftentimes, they lose the emotions of the storytelling."

—John Murphy



Aaron Diehl

Whether he's on tour with his own trio or leading the band for vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, 30-year-old pianist Aaron Diehl has enjoyed a meteoric rise in recognition and popularity. Mentored by Wynton Marsalis, who took him on the road in Europe at the age of 17, Diehl has recorded four albums as a leader and has been branching out on different projects, including a performance of George Gershwin's *Concerto In F* with the New York Philharmonic at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall on Sept. 21.

Envisioning what jazz will look like in the near and far future, Diehl said, "It's impossible to tell. The beauty in this day and age is that there are several resources on the Internet to access a copious amount of recordings and live performances." For Diehl—who has distinct memories of trekking to a store to buy CDs as a high school student—the advent of streaming music became a game-changer.

"Exposure to the music is so essential," he said. "You type in a few keywords and the whole world comes to you. That's critical for the art form to survive and attract more musicians to learn to play the language. There's no longer any excuse not to investigate."

Diehl doesn't put much stock in the notion of trends in jazz. "I look at it more as a broader connecting thread, like seeing common ground from Jelly Roll Morton through Chick Corea," he said. "Art is eternal."

Diehl feels that a strong work ethic, perseverance and business savvy are keys to breaking the old paradigm of how to make it in jazz.

He cited the sibling saxophone team of Peter and Will Anderson, whom he ran into recently in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio. They told Diehl that they were embarking on a 30-day tour. "I thought, Wow, when I play with Cécile, we tour maybe three weeks and have nights off," he explained. "But these guys were hustling in remote areas of the country and playing at random places like pizza parlors. They were taking a risk just so that they could play. I think doing that breaks that old paradigm."

—Dan Ouellette



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TYSHAWN SOREY

Drummer Tyshawn Sorey is perpetually on the move these days. He's got another "crazy writing deadline," as he put it, but that's par for the course for the 36-year-old who topped the category Rising Star-Drums in last year's DownBeat Critics Poll. While he's got a new trio album, *The Inner Spectrum Of Variable*, with three string players ready to launch on Pi Records, he's also making plans for another trio recording that he'll track in the studio this fall.

Additionally, Sorey has worked on new adaptations of Josephine Baker songs (*Josephine Baker: A Portrait*). The world premiere will be performed by the International Contemporary Ensemble with soprano Julia Bullock at the 70th edition of California's Ojai Music Festival on June 11.

Sorey has received a George Wein/Doris Duke Artistic Programming Fund commission for a piece that he and his trio will perform at the 2016 Newport Jazz Festival on July 29.

"Right now, it's exciting for the creative music community," Sorey said, noting Steve Coleman's MacArthur Fellowship and Henry Threadgill's Pulitzer Prize. "We're getting recognition for music that doesn't fit into a jazz box. I'm hoping this will open up more opportunities for the current generation of artists creating great works. The scene is changing as to what is accepted as the norm. Artists want to be challenged and also challenge the listener."

Sorey likes the linkup of jazz and hip-hop, but he noted, "I love to listen to that as long as it's personal and honest and not superficial. I appreciate that connection—but not in my music."

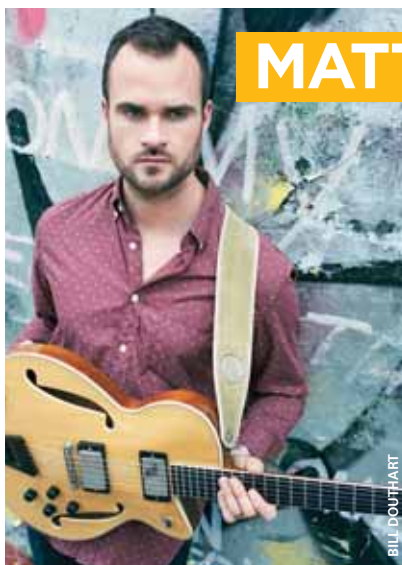
More in his wheelhouse is the exploration of electronic music created by artists like Evan Parker, Peter Evans and Mark Dresser. "I'd like to see more work done in that area—exploring electronics beyond beats and sequencing," he said. "I'm looking forward to collaborating with electronic musicians."

—Dan Ouellette



JOHN ROGERS

MATTHEW STEVENS



BILL DOUTHART

Since working as the de facto MVP in the making of Esperanza Spalding's genre-defying disc *Emily's D+Evolution* (Concord) and its supporting tour, 34-year-old guitarist Matthew Stevens has been taking notes as he readies the follow-up to his debut 2015 disc, *Woodwork*.

"Being on this tour with her gives me the opportunity to really investigate a lot of my early musical influences, which are based in rock and blues, but as a more experienced and proficient musician than what I was 15 years ago," Stevens said while resting on a tour bus parked outside of the 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C. "My interest in playing more electric guitar is reignited."

Spalding's commitment to her brazen if polarizing new material also inspired Stevens to follow his own vision without reservation. "Ultimately, you have to be completely fearless in following through with your ideas," Stevens said. "You need to be able to tune out all the other white noise and move forward. That's where's it at for me right now."

For his sophomore disc, Stevens pares his ensemble to a trio with drummer Eric Doob and bassist Vicente Archer. In addition to focusing more on electric guitar, he is experimenting with electronica beats and textures, and embracing more pre- and post-studio production. "We're continuing with somewhat the same harmonic and melodic landscape that I've been developing since the last disc," Stevens explained. "But the new record will have a heavier sound."

As he continues to map out his solo career, Stevens will keep collaborating with other band-leaders. In some situations, like the forthcoming albums by trombonist Corey King, saxophonist Chet Doxas and pianist Jamie Reynolds, he will also function as producer. "I love being involved with the overall sound of a project and contributing to the larger idea."

—John Murphy

KRIS DAVIS

Soft-spoken and modest, pianist Kris Davis has quietly built a reputation as one of the most critically acclaimed players in jazz. The Vancouver native has displayed a remarkable versatility, with 11 albums that range from minimalist solo meditations to thorny ensemble pieces with collaborators like clarinetist Ben Goldberg, violist Mat Maneri and drummer Tom Rainey. She is also a highly in-demand contributor to other artists' projects, including Michael Formanek's Ensemble Kolossus, Ingrid Laubrock's band Anti-House and Eric Revis' trio.

Davis' new quartet, with guitarist Mary Halvorson, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tyshawn Sorey, has a number of engagements this year to perform some of John Zorn's *Bagatelles*, a collection of 300 short pieces he composed in 2015.

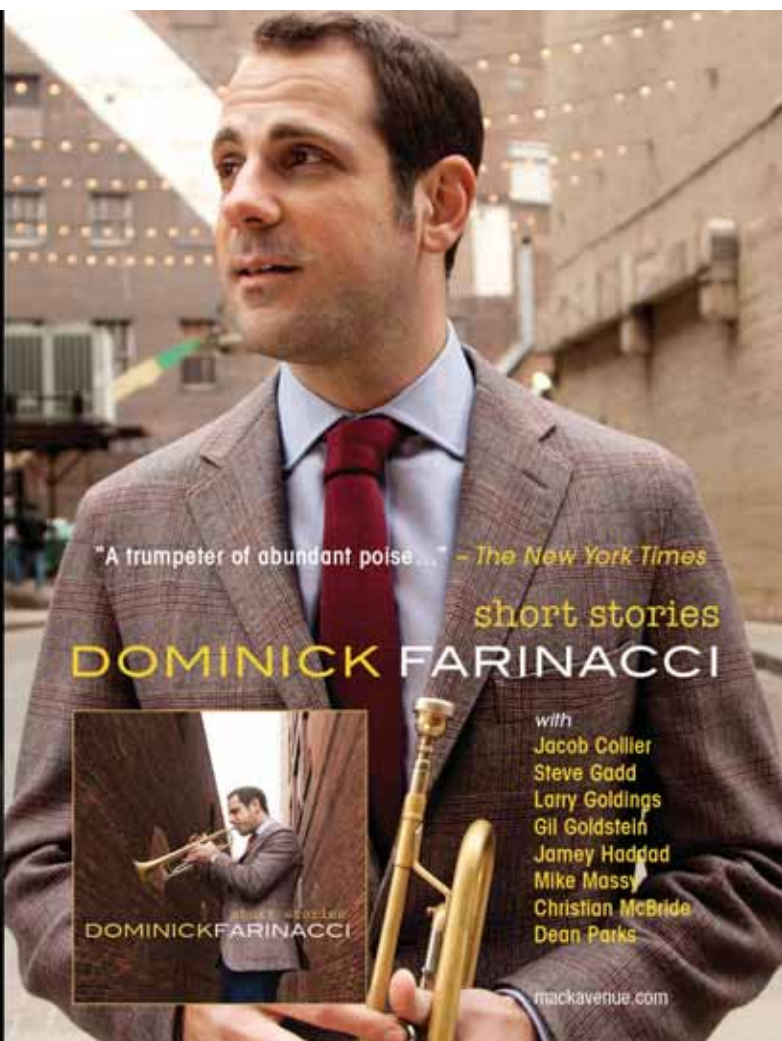
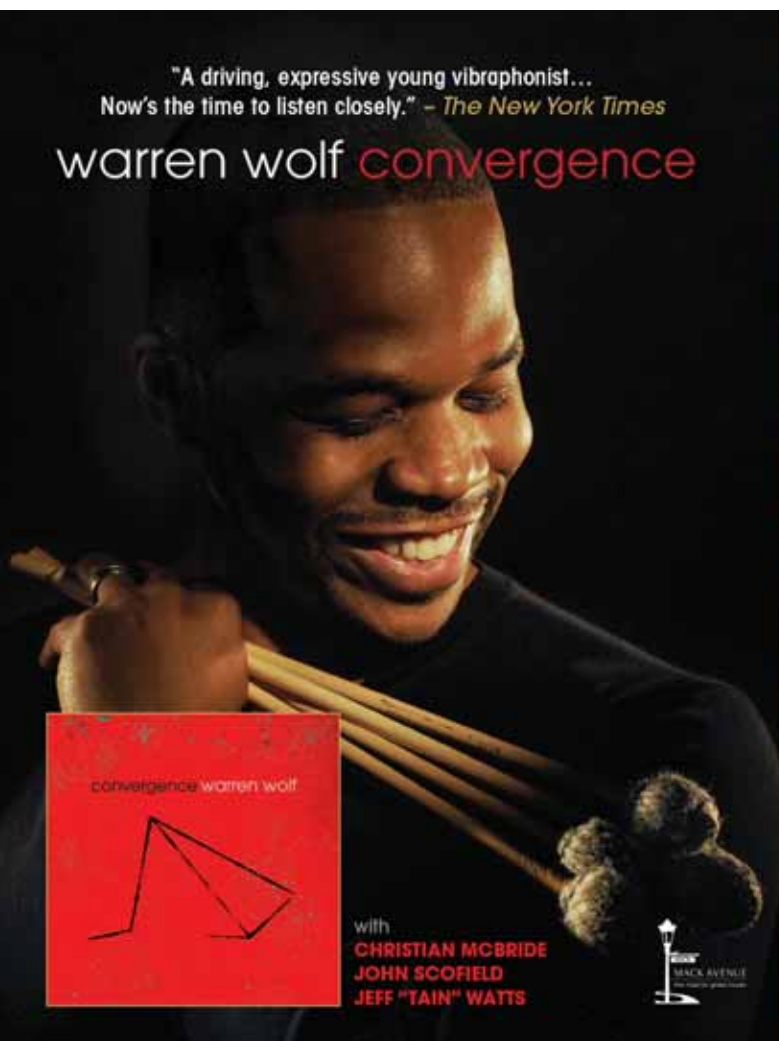
At press time, Davis was preparing to launch her own label, Pyroclastic Records. The first release will be *Duopoly*, an album of duets featuring Davis and musicians such as keyboardist Craig Taborn, guitarist Bill Frisell, reedist Don Byron and drummer Marcus Gilmore. In the fall, Davis and Taborn will tour North America, playing piano duets (thanks to funding from the Shifting Foundation, the Salt Lake City-based organization that previously has commissioned solo compositions from her). The duo is booked for Chicago's Constellation on Oct. 5.

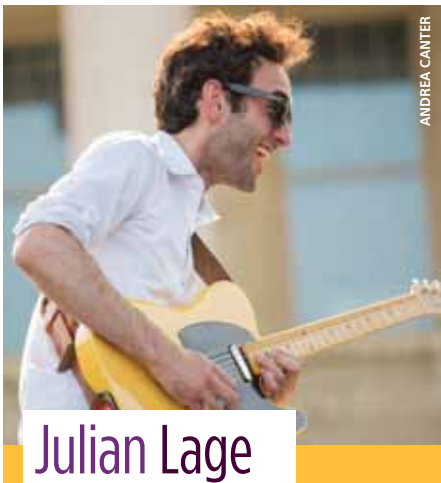
Davis has other entrepreneurial ventures beyond her own label in mind for the longer term, including the possibility of curating a concert series or collaborating with other artists to create a small music festival. She would also like to compose for other projects, including a vocal group and string ensemble.

With a deep background in classical piano that began at the age of 6 in Calgary, Davis is also interested in returning to the symphonic realm—something she doesn't consider a huge step away from her recent work.

"The lines are really blurring in jazz now, and I think that's going to continue," she said. "Everyone I work with is mixing and matching different styles and influences. It seems like a free-for-all, and I find that refreshing."

—James Hale





ANDREA CANTER

Julian Lage

The word *gifted* is often—and appropriately—used to describe guitarist Julian Lage. He was the subject of a documentary film when he was merely 8 years old, he's been on the faculty at the Stanford Jazz Workshop at Stanford University since he was 15, and he was commonly referred to as a child prodigy while growing up in Santa Rosa, California.

Now based in New York, Lage, 28, has recorded four albums under his own name, including his latest, the celebrated *Arclight* (Mack Avenue), as well as his Grammy-nominated debut, *Sounding Point* (EmArcy, 2010).

Lage maintains ongoing collaborations that span musical genres with artists such as vibraphonist Gary Burton, pianist Fred Hersch and guitarist Nels Cline, with whom he recorded 2014's *Room* (Mack Avenue).

Classically trained and a graduate of the Berklee College of Music, it's hard to peg Lage to any one style, as his love of and fluency on both electric and acoustic guitars sends him off in many directions, from solo and duo work to various group ensembles.

"In light of the new album," Lage said, "my focus has been to go out on the road with Kenny Wollesen and Jorge Roeder, and do some stuff with Scott [Colley] and some other people. Beyond that, Chris Eldridge and I have this bluegrass-related project, and we are working on a new record. We'll be recording this summer. So, my spare time is devoted to writing for that."

"Nels and I are working on a strategy for our second record. Then there are two John Zorn projects I'm a part of, and we're slated to play festivals for the next couple of years: Sarajevo, Milan, Victoriaville, Paris and Germany. I want to find an even keel, because everything has been a new, upstart project, which has been fabulous. But I want to commit to a few things and do them as thoroughly as possible."

Because he plays in so many different genres—but remains rooted in jazz—Lage has an open mind about where jazz is headed: "It's kind of anyone's game, and that's exhilarating." —John Ephland

MIHO HAZAMA

Jazz history is filled with artists who thought differently, defied expectations and took listeners to places they'd never been. Pianist-composer-bandleader Miho Hazama, 30, follows that tradition, while simultaneously blowing apart the musical tradition her forebears created. She grew up in Japan, where she studied and wrote symphonic music. Then she moved to New York City to learn jazz composition, but she encountered a hurdle. "My brain didn't work that way," she said. In her mind she heard strings, French horn and vibraphone instead of the standard brass, and she envisioned jagged, cinematic movements and thorny harmony. The result was the compelling new approach to jazz orchestration heard on her first two albums, 2012's *Journey To Journey* and last year's *Time River* (both on Sunnyside).

"I want to build a jazz chamber sound, take stimulus from everything I hear and apply it to my own music," Hazama said.

Though Hazama is determined to steer her own course, she also has a pragmatic side. To supplement the income from her jazz ventures, she works as a copyist, arranges music for Japanese orchestras and writes pop music for TV shows in her native country.

In addition, she's revising her chamber orchestra compositions for more traditional big bands and plans to publish the scores this year. She's currently juggling several roles in the Big Apple, including associate director of the New York Jazz Harmonic and organizer of a jazz composers' showcase at the Jazz Gallery. Plus, she's writing a couple of big band commissions.

Hazama is also preoccupied with developing social media networks to promote her music: "Today, it's essential to get people to know about you, to get them interested in what you're doing. By the time I make my next recording I plan to have a way of doing that." —James Hale



SHITOMI CHI (VALE)

AARON PARKS

For much of the past decade, pianist Aaron Parks spent more time traveling to engagements around the world than enjoying the comforts of familiar venues in New York. But on Dec. 13, four nights into a 10-day tour with Russian alto saxophonist Zhenya Strigalev, Parks passed out before the second set at London's Vortex. After four days in the hospital, he returned directly to New York, where he has stayed put ever since, working hard, as he puts it, at "keeping it mellow."

"Since I got back, I've been trying to cultivate a sense of community," Parks said. Toward this end, he's held "salons" at his apartment with many young musicians. "For so long I was the youngest guy in most of the bands I played in. I enjoy getting this next generation's dose of adrenaline."

Parks, 32, frequently hops between numerous New York venues nowadays, playing with a diverse array of bands, welcoming the challenge of "unfamiliar circumstances that force me to call upon resources that I may or may not have access to."

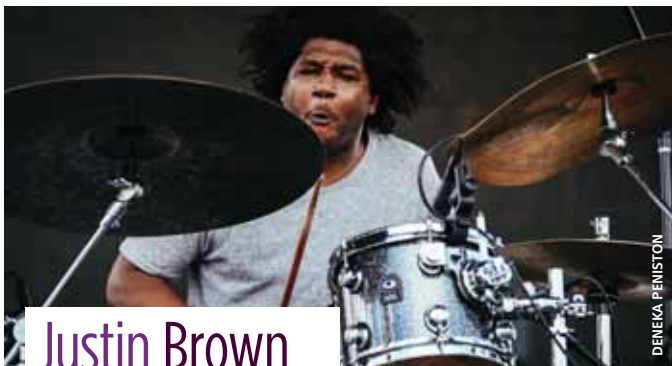
In addition to a Jazz Gallery-sponsored mentoring program with vibraphonist Joel Ross, Parks' explorations include a deconstructed standards trio with bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Tyshawn Sorey; a "mostly improvised project focusing on duos and trios" with vocalist Jen Shyu, Prophet 5 synthesist Pete Rende, alto saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins, electric bassist Stomu Takeishi and drummer Ben Perowsky; and a rock project called Little Big.

An October 2015 recording with bassist Ben Street and drummer Billy Hart will become Parks' second release for ECM, and he will begin touring again this fall with oud player Dhafer Youssef, bassist Ben Williams and drummer Mark Guiliana.

"The biggest trend I see is cross-pollination, regardless of style," Parks said of the current jazz scene. "Things are blurring together. It's easy to be a dilettante who knows a little bit about a lot of things, but doesn't work on mastering any particular recipe. Still, every generation has diligent folks who work hard to learn different traditions and piece them together." —Ted Panken



MICHAEL JACKSON



Justin Brown

DENEKA PENISTON

Justin Brown is an erudite musician who has recorded with New York City's elite while carving out his own identity.

The 32-year-old drummer frequently gigs with trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and bassist Thundercat, two extended poles of Brown's own diverse musical message. He can play any style, as evidenced by his work with pianist Gerald Clayton, vocalist Gretchen Parlato, saxophonist Steve Lehman and vibraphonist Chris Dingman.

Brown's group, Nyeusi (Swahili for "black"), is as compositionally provocative as its members are instrumentally brilliant. "I often hear compositions from a drummer's standpoint," Brown said. "I'll be at the drums playing beats to chords and melodies in my head."

Brown's music clearly acknowledges the past while stepping into the future. "The reason jazz sounded vibrant in the past is because it was the music of the now in that time period," Brown said. "Those musicians were influenced by the turmoil, the issues, day-to-day life. Maybe there was a time when jazz was derivative of the past, but today's influence of hip-hop or techno will make people realize that you can be yourself in the now. That jazz might not necessarily have a swing beat, but the musicians are truly reflecting their influences. People relate to honesty." —Ken Micallef

JACOB GARCHIK

For trombonist Jacob Garchik, neither instrumentation nor genre—nor even instrument—is predetermined.

The Brooklyn resident's longtime trio features two of his Manhattan School of Music classmates—pianist Jacob Sacks and drummer Dan Weiss. Garchik recorded his latest album, *Ye Olde* (Yestereve), with guitarists Mary Halvorson, Brandon Seabrook and Jonathan Goldberger, drummer Vinnie Sperrazza and himself on trombone and alto and tenor horns.

"I like to put together groups based on people that I know: I know their playing, and I admire their playing," he said. "And that doesn't always translate to a conventional ensemble. As an arranger/composer, you're able to bridge the gap that might be felt without a bass player."

The 39-year-old San Francisco native grew up immersed in both the jazz and classical worlds. He attended summer jazz camps in Northern California and was a member of the prestigious San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. Additionally, he studied arranging at Tanglewood in Boston and at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Tuba is also a part of Garchik's instrumental arsenal, and his other main group is the Mexican brass band Banda de los Muertos.

"Everything is equally important and meaningful," he said. "That's really the future for musicians—to be incredibly flexible and open to many different things."

—Yoshi Kato



ELIZA MARGARITA BATES

MARQUIS HILL

At 29, with the top spot in the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Trumpet Competition—and its attendant Concord Records recording contract—under his belt, Chicago native Marquis Hill is justifiably optimistic about the future.

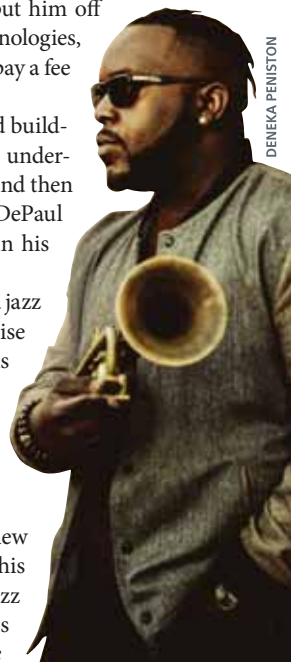
Even nagging doubts about how artists will get their music into the hands of listeners in the future don't put him off his game. He's keeping his eye on various technologies, including download cards, which give fans who pay a fee a code to access the music.

In parallel with developing his technique and building performance experience, Hill pursued an undergraduate degree at Northern Illinois University and then a Master of Music degree in jazz pedagogy at DePaul University in Chicago. Teaching holds a place in his plans for the future.

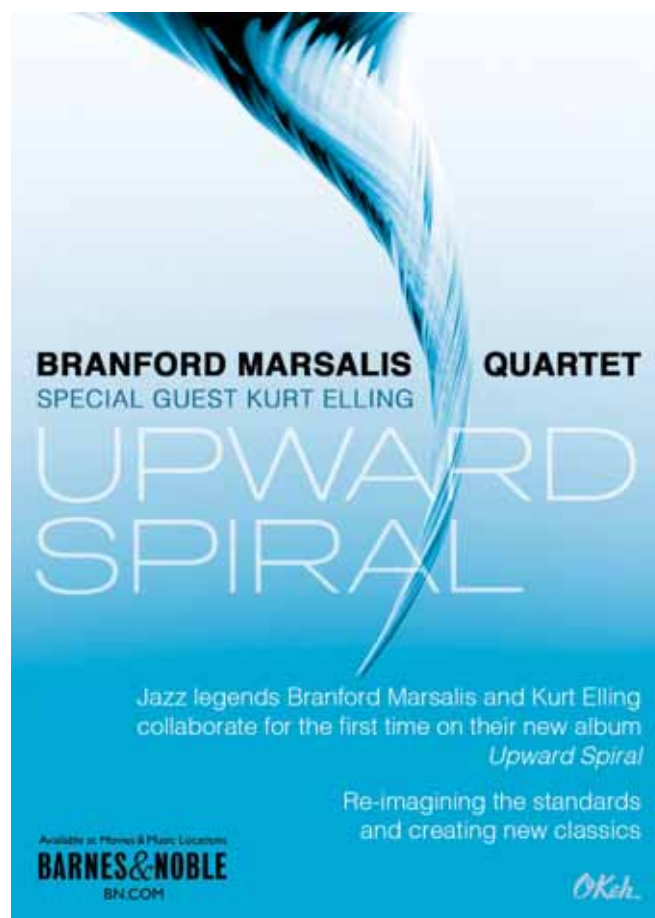
"Eventually, I'd love to get a position leading a jazz program somewhere," he said. That might surprise some who know Hill's love of hip-hop and his interest in combining it with improvisation.

"One of the most important things that we're losing in music education now is the oral tradition," he said. "We're losing that authentic part of going outside the classroom and playing."

Right now, Hill is focused on promoting his new album, *The Way We Play* (Concord). He and his ensemble, the Blacktet, will play the Iowa City Jazz Festival on July 2, as well as dates in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Europe. —James Hale



DENEKA PENISTON





Becca Stevens

Singer-songwriter Becca Stevens had a breakout year in 2014, when she appeared on two of that year's most highly praised albums: Billy Childs' *Map To The Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro* (Sony Masterworks) and Ambrose Akinmusire's *The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier To Paint* (Blue Note).

The Becca Stevens Band's third album, 2015's *Perfect Animal* (Universal Music Classics), confirms that she is fast becoming one of the most sophisticated and original songwriters of her generation. Her music blends jazz phrasing and harmonies with elements of indie rock, acoustic folk, Appalachian, Irish and West African music, and even electronica. She marries them to piquant, allusive lyrics, sung with an ethereal, pure soprano that projects a mysterious inner light.

Stevens grew up in North Carolina, often performing with her family's band. After studying classical guitar at North Carolina School of the Arts, she moved to New York, where she graduated from The New School with a bachelor's degree in vocal jazz and composition. That's where she met bandmates Liam Robinson (accordion, keyboards and vocals) and Chris Tordini (bass, vocals). Berklee-trained drummer Jordan Perlson arrived shortly after. The band has become integral to Stevens' unique sound, both as a singer and composer.

Her songs are full of melodic and rhythmic surprises and unusual chords that just feel right. "Obviously, studying jazz has influenced that," she said. "But growing up with different kinds of music around me made weird harmony sound normal to me."

Stevens' current dance card is full: Her writing partners include musical polymath Jacob Collier and folk-rock legend David Crosby. She has collaborated with Snarky Puppy, Esperanza Spalding and pianist Taylor Eigsti's group Free Agency with fellow singers Gretchen Parlato and Alan Hampton.

Lately, she's been rediscovering jazz standards. "My songwriting has been more inspired than ever by these perfect pearls," she said, citing numbers by Ellington, Gershwin and others. "They have gorgeous melodies that span your entire vocal range." —Allen Morrison

GERALD CLAYTON

At 32, Gerald Clayton happily finds himself a free agent again after recording two albums for Decca/Emarcy and one for Concord. The pianist is currently finessing new tracks he's recorded as an intriguing expansion of his trio—with horns and vocals.

"I'm sitting on them right now and figuring that I'll self-release them next year," he said. "I'm open to the idea of working with a record label, but it just doesn't feel like a good fit anymore, especially with artists who have an established fan base. So I think it's going to be a good experiment to do everything myself."

In the meantime, he's working on a commission project from Duke University after conducting a master class there. "They wanted me to compose after researching the Piedmont Blues tradition," he explained. "It has a language and history that was foreign to me. It's been illuminating—tapping into the essence of the blues."

When asked what's in store for the future of jazz, Clayton turned the question on its head. "Shouldn't we be questioning the notion of the word *jazz* in the first place?" he asked. "As musicians, we prefer a bigger umbrella than most people see. I feel jazz represents the freedom of expression and improvisation. It's the human instinct to experience the expression of suffering and pain and joy. The creative form will forever be there; I'm not worried about listeners following the narrative of changes as long as the gatekeepers don't control the narrative."

As Clayton has toured the world, he's taken note of social changes—and how new audiences are finding him. "We just played a show in Kiev and it was our youngest crowd. It was an intense audience of youth in a country going through intense revolutionary and social change. But, wow, what a soulful audience in tune with what we were doing"

—Dan Ouellette



MARK GUILIANA

Mark Guiliana is the exception to the stereotype that it can be difficult for drummers to get steady gigs as bandleaders. He has assembled and maintains two working bands, in addition to playing in other high-profile settings.

On the acoustic side, the Mark Guiliana Quartet features tenor saxophone plus a rhythm section that includes double bassist Chris Morrissey. For Guiliana's electro-acoustic Beat Music, Morrissey switches over to bass guitar in an ensemble that includes keyboards and electronics.

"One of my singular goals is to support the music as best I can in each moment," Guiliana said. "Each of those groups provides a different landscape musically but also sonically."

The tirelessly creative Guiliana is best known for his work in three groups: saxophonist Donny McCaslin's dynamic quartet; trumpeter Dave Douglas' modern unit High Risk, which incorporates electronics; and as half of the keyboard-drums duo Mehliana with pianist Brad Mehldau (who was included in the "25 For The Future" feature in the June 1999 issue of *DownBeat*).

As likely to cite drum 'n' bass pioneers Goldie and Photek as he is to reference Elvin Jones or Tony Williams, Guiliana often channels the programmed precision of electronic drum tracks when he plays in Beat Music and High Risk (and to an extent, the Donny McCaslin Group and Mehliana). But that's only when he's not straight-up swinging.

"Aesthetic aside, genre aside, styles aside, taste aside, I think something that's universal and really difficult to deny is *energy*—and commitment to the moment," Guiliana said. "With every-one I play with, that's very important."

—Yoshi Kato





ETIENNE CHARLES

Growing up in Trinidad, Etienne Charles often heard the sound of steel drums. Yet by the time the trumpeter and bandleader came to the United States at age 19, he had absorbed a slice of North American culture, courtesy of Trinidadian radio, which played r&b hits by Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder along with local fare.

"It was a very vast pot of culture," he said. Today, at 33, Charles has mined that culture with regularity. Drawing on personal experience as well as field research that has taken him back to old haunts and beyond, he has fashioned a distinctive jazz aesthetic—one that promises to yield distinguished work well into the future.

His debut album, 2006's *Culture Shock*, offered a vivid introduction to the evocative melodies and compelling rhythms that would mark his oeuvre. The title tune, begun as an assignment from his mentor at Florida State University, Marcus Roberts, announced the theme of the outsider—"the culture shock of being a Trinidadian in the deep South of the United States of America," as he put it—and gave his record label its name.

The work that followed explored his heritage explicitly (*Folklore*, which conjured up legendary characters and "got me in touch with who I am as a Trinidadian") and implicitly (lending a Trinidadian twist to tunes like Thelonious Monk's "Green Chimneys," on *Creole Soul*). Sometimes Charles searched slightly far afield, drawing on the Sephardic Jewish contours of Trinidadian bandleader Lionel Belasco's "Juliana" on *Creole Christmas*.

All of which prepared him for *San Jose Suite*. Supported by a grant from Chamber Music America, this suite for sextet took him to Costa Rica, Trinidad and California, where he gathered information from indigenous peoples and members of the Africa diaspora and translated their experiences into music.

The music ranges widely but has a thematic consistency. The piece, which Charles said will have its premiere in 2017, filters the sounds of a "rapidly diminishing" history through the prism of jazz convention—as interpreted by the descendants of those who made that history. In doing so, it suggests a template for a jazz future tied to the art form's past.

—Phillip Lutz

JOHN COLTRANE

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Jamison Ross

As a singing drummer, Jamison Ross lives in rarified air. With the exception of Grady Tate and Terri Lyne Carrington, few jazz timekeepers have made the leap from behind the drum set to in front of the microphone, and even among the aforementioned company, Ross, at 28, is a standout.

"Hey, even Grady Tate got up from the drums," he said. "To actually sit behind the drums and continue to play, that's what makes me push the music ahead."

Ross, who resides in New Orleans, has been steadily advancing his music since first making a splash as the winner of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Drums Competition in 2012, a victory that netted him a contract with Concord Records.

But when the drummer first approached the label with the idea of making a mostly vocal album, they were wary. "They didn't even know I could sing," he recalled. "So they definitely took some risks."

Those risks paid off. *Jamison*, Ross' Concord debut, was nominated for a Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal album in 2015. Though surprised at the album's success, Ross never doubted his vocal abilities. For him, singing is a deeply personal form of expression.

"Singing is a very vulnerable thing," he said. "You're out there with your voice, your instrument, your body. The same thing that comes out of my mouth—I try to relate that on the drums. Sometimes that leads me to very cool places."

For Ross, those places are as much geographical as they are musical. The success of *Jamison* has taken the young drummer to countries around the world. Though Ross' touring schedule can be demanding, he's currently assembling music for a new project, which he hopes to start recording over the summer.

"The stuff I'm writing now is about being as open as possible" he said. "I can guarantee that the next album will be a very transparent project—it'll be more of who I am."

—Brian Zimmerman

BRIA SKONBERG

The town of Chilliwack, British Columbia, isn't exactly the center of the jazz universe. But for trumpeter and singer Bria Skonberg, it was the launching pad for a double-threat career. By the time she enrolled at Vancouver's Capilano University, she was already hustling gigs up and down the Pacific Coast.

New York beckoned and, after a period of intermittent trips to the city, she made the move in 2010, quickly establishing her bona fides in clubs and concert halls. A 2013 booking at the swank Café Carlyle—titled "Brass and Belles," the show found her playing the parts of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, Clifford Brown and Sarah Vaughan, Roy Eldridge and Anita O'Day—affirmed her potential as a cabaret performer.

But, like so many musicians who play an instrument *and* sing, she has undergone something of an identity crisis. Is she a trumpeter who sings? A singer who plays trumpet? Does it really matter? Skonberg has addressed these questions head-on.

"It's been a process—and a welcome challenge—to figure out where the two voices intersect and complement each other," she explained. "With my trumpet voice, I love gritty, plunger, growly sounds. But vocally I love Anita O'Day—a raspy but definitely softer sound. Part of the fun has been finding vehicles or writing for both of those sounds."

Parallel to that challenge has been broadening her appeal beyond the traditional-jazz community from which she has emerged. In a couple of albums—*So Is The Day* (mostly originals, from 2012) and *Into Your Own* (mostly covers, from 2014), both on Random Act—she has begun to do just that, showing new depth throughout.

Building on that progress, she has signed with Sony Masterworks, which will release her new album on its Portrait Records imprint on Sept 23. Titled *Bria*, the album makes full use of an urbane set of gifted accompanists: Aaron Diehl on piano, Stefon Harris on vibraphone, Evan Arntzen on clarinet and tenor saxophone, Reginald Veal on bass and Ali Jackson on drums.

—Phillip Lutz



JOEY ALEXANDER

Between May 12, 2015, when his debut album (*My Favorite Things* on Motéma) was released, and April 29, 2016, when he played at the White House as part of International Jazz Day (a performance that was broadcast to millions on ABC TV), the astounding pianist Joey Alexander has ridden a rocket ship to fame in the jazz world. His triumphant appearances in 2015 included a showcase at the Newport Jazz Festival and a gala encounter with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra at Town Hall. Then, in January 2016, he was profiled for the CBS TV show *60 Minutes* (a piece done by Anderson Cooper entitled "Little Man Jazz").

To say that Alexander is a rising star of the future is an understatement. What is most promising is not how much he has accomplished at such a young age (he turns 13 on June 25) but rather how much he has already grown as a player, composer and improviser since he hit the scene at the ripe old age of 11. To witness Alexander taking liberties with the harmony and melody of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" at the White House in an expansive and freewheeling trio performance with bassist Esperanza Spalding and Shorter himself was to see a gifted technician blossom into a bold improviser who can confidently swim in the deep waters.

Alexander takes all the newfound attention in stride. "I'm thankful to God for all the opportunities that I had in 2015 and grateful for the people who believed in me and those who have given their love and support," he wrote in an email interview. He added, "I will perform quite a lot this year with Ulysses Owens on drums and Dan Chmielinski on bass."

On his second Motéma release, due out in September and tentatively titled *Countdown*, Alexander pushes the envelope a bit further. He offered some advice for aspiring young jazz musicians who might want to follow his own example: "Keep playing, keep exploring and do it because you love it."

—Bill Milkowski



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Larry Grenadier (left), Brad Mehldau and Jeff Ballard of the Brad Mehldau Trio



Brad Mehldau Trio *Blues And Ballads*

NONESUCH 554678

★★★½

In jazz, where do ballads end and blues begin? That's the question Brad Mehldau raises on this somber, deeply felt rendering of seven tunes, only one of which is formally a blues, though that genre's pain and loss constantly seep through the cracks of the ballads' tenderness and romance. Mehldau distills each melody to its aching essence, sometimes leaving it just so. Elsewhere, he rips into brilliant, open-ended variations on a motif.

The album is bookended by some of the bluesiest piano Mehldau has ever recorded, starting with a sexy, achingly slow version of "Since I Fell For You" in which the pianist seems to have channeled the staccato alto saxophone of Hank Crawford and the rumbling tremolos of pianist Gene Harris, but with Beethoven on board.

At the end of the set comes a similarly thrilling exploration of Paul McCartney's recently composed minor-key ballad "My Valentine." Mehldau gets bluesy here, too, but also develops a repeated note into an impassioned climax. He takes "These Foolish Things (Remind Me Of You)" at a late-Billie Holiday tempo, offering a similar rubato excursion that cuts to the heart of the song's pathos. By contrast, Lennon and McCartney's "And I Love Her" feels vapid, like the instrumental filler on the *A Hard Day's Night* soundtrack.

Also disappointing is the trio's take on Jon Brion's faux-naïf melody "Little Person," which features subtle interplay between the three instruments, but never gathers steam. Perhaps because it feels like such a changeup, one of the strongest tracks is Charlie Parker's classic bebop blues "Cheryl," which showcases Mehldau's wit, light touch and dazzling speed.

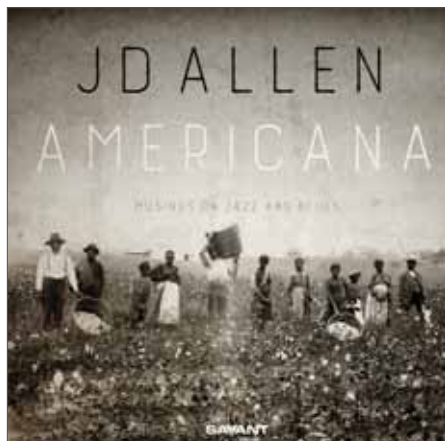
This is the first album by Mehldau's trio in four years. Despite some conceptual misfires, the return of its magic, sympatico blend is welcome.

—Paul de Barros

Blues And Ballads: Since I Fell For You; I Concentrate On You; Little Person; Cheryl; These Foolish Things; And I Love Her; My Valentine. (55:24)

Personnel: Brad Mehldau, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com



JD Allen *Americana: Musings On Jazz And Blues*

SAVANT 2155

★★★★½

Eight of these nine tunes are simple 12-bar blues. This tells you little, of course, because the blues is nothing more than a form. It lacks the literary content and exclusive character of a unique composition. It is an empty glass of a certain shape and measurement waiting to be filled in a performance.

If I understand saxophonist JD Allen's brief note of explanation correctly (and ignore his

claim that the blues is the "gateway" to all American music), that seems to be his point. And the performances he pours into these pieces offer more than enough to install life and identity into the form. His sound has a sturdy warmth about it, but with none of the optimistic sentiment of the great romantic tenors. Instead, there's a kind of tough love at its center that no post-Coltrane player has entirely evaded, yet smaller in mass and without spiritual intent.

"Sugar Free," "Bigger Thomas," "Lightnin'" and "Lillie Mae Jones" are moderately fast blues that roll with a driving and elegant flounce. All but "Lillie Mae," which swings from the first beat, delight in alternating the tensions and rationing the intervals of a straightahead 4/4 feel. "Another Man Done Gone" has a starkly contemplative piety about it, with a slow and nomadic bowed bass solo. "Americana" is a softer ballad piece. The one non-blues, "If You're Lonesome, Then You're Not Alone," is an ever more tactile performance that could be an accompaniment to Sinatra's "In the Wee Small Hours." Allen showcases his skills in fine form in this pianoless trio.

—John McDonough

Americana: Tell The Truth, Shame The Devil; Another Man Done Gone; Cotton; Sugar Free; Bigger Thomas; Americana; Lightnin'; If You're Lonesome, Then You're Not Alone; Lillie Mae Jones. (45:59)

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

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

The Claudia Quintet *Super Petite*

CUNEIFORM 427

★★★★½

After eight albums, the Claudia Quintet has forged its own special nook in creative music, somewhere between post-minimal classical music, prog-rock and jazz. Led and composed for by drummer John Hollenbeck, the five-some has maintained a steady lineup, swapping in Red Wierenga for original accordionist Ted Reichman a few years ago, otherwise holding strong for nearly two decades. No mean feat.

Planning for *Super Petite*, Hollenbeck sought to focus on more compact pieces, which in this case means that the rhythmic complexities—the band's forte and one of its defining features—are even more concentrated. At just over a minute long, "Pure Poem" feels like a fife and drum fed into a computer, with an unrelenting roll and static harmony underpinning constant shifts in a simple accordion-and-clarinete line. At its outset, "Mangold" evokes Morton Feldman, though it's more expressive and freely lyrical, until the trademark overlapping chords and kaleidoscopically shifting colors emerge, bringing Mike Oldfield more to mind.

The looser moments are relatively scarce, and welcome, like Chris Speed's soft tenor solo



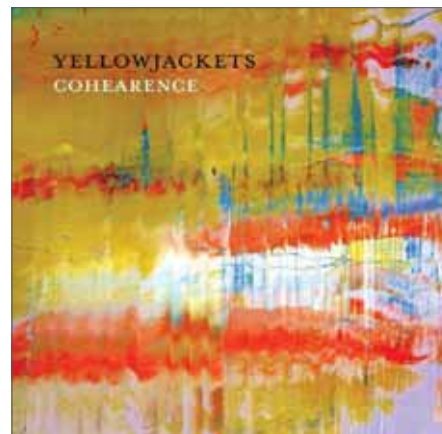
on "Philly," a track based on a Philly Joe Jones lick, or the smeary open section at the outset of "Rose Colored Rhythm," the album's longest and best cut. With rapid-fire shifts and unexpected repetitions, this is the Claudia Quintet at its finest, defiantly propulsive but at the same time hyper-arranged. In Hollenbeck's case, concise isn't necessarily better.

—John Corbett

Super Petite: Nightbreak; JFK Beagle; A-List; Philly; Peterborough; Rose Colored Rhythm; If You Seek A Fox; Pure Poem; Newark Beagle; Mangold. (47:28)

Personnel: John Hollenbeck, drums, percussion; Chris Speed, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Red Wierenga, accordion; Matt Moran, vibraphone; Drew Gress, bass.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com



Yellowjackets *Cohearence*

MACK AVENUE 1108

★★★★

In 1969 saxophonist Eddie Harris brought a typically snaky tune called "Cold Duck Time" to the Montreux Jazz Fest for a set with pianist Les McCann. The song is all about coiled funk, steadily unfurling itself while digging its own groove. On *Cohearence*, the Yellowjackets glide through a tune called "Eddie's In The House," a stylistic echo of the Harris nugget. Instead of pulsing with heat, the jazz outfit colors inside the lines, rationing its ardor and ultimately becoming a victim of its own meticulousness. Call it a battle between precision and volition.

Like several tracks on *Cohearence*, "Eddie's In The House" is well designed and notable for its possibilities. The group—pianist Russell Ferrante, saxophonist Bob Mintzer, drummer Will Kennedy and new bassist Dane Alderson—keeps everything percolating with just enough steam to entice, but they never really cut loose. "Inevitable Outcome" is a twisty romp with funk lines folding in on themselves, but ultimately it's all pastels and polish. "Trane Changing" bends the maestro's "Giant Steps" inside out, and while Mintzer's authority is right up front, the rhythm section's gleam neuters the verve. Some of it has to do with production choices: The band is occasionally on the cusp of ferocity, but their adherence to smooth aesthetics just won't let them step into true abandon.

Accept that, and you'll find *Cohearence* is flecked with cool nuances: Ferrante's touch on "Anticipation," the shifting pulses of "Golden State," the MJQ-esque articulation of the title track. Subtlety is this unit's strong suit. Maybe focusing on the micro is the way to go with this record. The macro leaves a bit to be desired.

—Jim Macnie

Cohearence: Golden State; Guarded Optimism; Anticipation; Inevitable Outcome; Trane Changing; Eddie's In The House; Fran's Scene; Child's Play; Shenandoah; Cohearence. (59:44)

Personnel: Russell Ferrante, piano, keyboards; Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone; Will Kennedy, drums; Dane Alderson, electric bass.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

The Hot Box

	Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Brad Mehldau Trio <i>Blues And Ballads</i>		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
JD Allen <i>Americana</i>		★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
The Claudia Quintet <i>Super Petite</i>		★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
Yellowjackets <i>Cohearence</i>		★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Brad Mehldau Trio, *Blues And Ballads*

There is a soft and smoky after-hours quality in this leisurely mix of saloon classics and emergent standards. Mehldau achieves a quiet freedom of reaction where the intentions of romanticism and modernism can converge in comfort.

—John McDonough

Mehldau's always explored the elasticity of form, so it's intriguing to hear him work the most familiar form we have in the American musical repertoire. The trio ricochets from directness to obliqueness, turning the known into something unfamiliar and new.

—John Corbett

Love the way the rambling reveries blossom from the straightahead firmament. Also love the way the rhythm section gives Mehldau enough support and leeway to guide those reveries toward eloquence.

—Jim Macnie

JD Allen, *Americana: Musings On Jazz And Blues*

Allen's been making great records one after the other, this one perhaps the finest. The trio is a marvel, the tenor a constant pleasure. A real meditation on source material.

—John Corbett

There's more grit in his horn with each new disc. Allen's dedication to the process of digging deep pays off in the design of his lines and the purpose that drives them.

—Jim Macnie

Allen applies his piping, soulful tone and deliberate intelligence to a timely project—asserting the primacy of the blues in a popular music genre usually associated with bluegrass or string band music. Love the hoedown feel of "Sugar Free."

—Paul de Barros

The Claudia Quintet, *Super Petite*

These manifestly enigmatic and fragile chamber compositions offer a whimsical and capricious Third Stream eccentricity. The music's soft-sell froth wraps adventurousness in a charm that makes it intriguing in a brainy sort of way.

—John McDonough

Hollenbeck is fascinated with the opportunities that repetition provides, and the echoes of minimalism that drive a few of these pieces bloom radiant abstractions. Pulse as rhythmic thrust.

—Jim Macnie

Hollenbeck's creative chamber quintet spins quirky rhythmic cells into colorful balls of yarn. When Claudia combines math with elemental folksiness, it captures something unique, but sometimes the music feels overly cerebral.

—Paul de Barros

Yellowjackets, *Cohearence*

A rather lightweight but well-put-together program. Mintzer, the quartet's principal jazz voice, delivers the group's cleverest, most engaging tracks, but the music still has the gloss of top session guys at play.

—John McDonough

Not nearly as "lite" as the Yellowjackets of three decades ago. Mintzer is consistently impressive, and there's not much of the pop-synth pablum of "Child's Play" spread across these 10 tracks.

—John Corbett

This jazz-rock quartet's brittle, glossy chatter usually sounds like a Los Angeles cocktail party, but on this album Yellowjackets interweave counter lines in an often sophisticated, playful conversation that lives up to the album's punning name.

—Paul de Barros

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Daniel Freedman *Imagine That*

ANZIC 0054

★★★★★

In recent years, drummer Daniel Freedman has quietly, almost surreptitiously, become a primal force, creating a kind of people's music built on rustling folk rhythms, ethnic melodies and joyous performances. *Imagine That* is an offering of Freedman's creativity and intellect, expressed by musicians that share his mission. From first note to last, the album emanates from the heart and captivates the mind, body and soul.

Players with a collective history on the

Brian Bromberg *Full Circle*

ARTISTRY MUSIC 7047

★★★★★

Bassist Brian Bromberg's first instrument was the drums. This album showcases a return to the traps, but—via overdubbing—doesn't neglect his bass. And while the material may be close to something of a personal statement, he's joined by some of the most gifted and hard-charging jazz players in Los Angeles for a galvanizing display of ensemble playing.

The disc is replete with marvels of technical and musical engineering. Bromberg dubs his bass onto a 78-r.p.m. record of "Jazz Me Blues" and "Washington And Lee Swing" that his late father had recorded in Tucson, elevating the sides while staying in musical character. And on "Sneaky Pete," what sounds like Wes Montgomery's guitar is actually Bromberg's piccolo bass—a neat trick.

His original tunes are all attractive and swinging, so it's no surprise that saxophonists Doug Webb and Bob Sheppard are brilliantly engaged throughout. Likewise, Arturo Sandoval's sterling trumpet and Alex Acuña's percussion make "Havana Nights" move along at a nice clip, while pianist Randy Waldman demonstrates a genre-encompassing style.

New York City scene, Freedman and his group—guitarist Lionel Loueke, keyboardist Jason Lindner, bassist Omer Avital and percussionist Gilmar Gomes—play as one, the music coalescing as if from a single mind. The spirit alights on different musicians as the album progresses, but possession is total.

The power of *Imagine That* comes from a place of silence. Even when the band is wailing, delicacy permeates. "Determined Soul" bubbles forth from Lindner's electric piano and Loueke's shimmering guitar, the band gleaming over an infectious Fela-worthy groove. The jewel-like melody of "Baby Aya" recalls a lost standard, Loueke's guitar elevating the song's trance, while guest vocalist Angelique Kidjo's vocal adds the icing. Lindner's "Love Takes Time" releases the music to the light, followed by the prayerful "Eastern Elegy" and triumphal closer "The Sister's Dance."

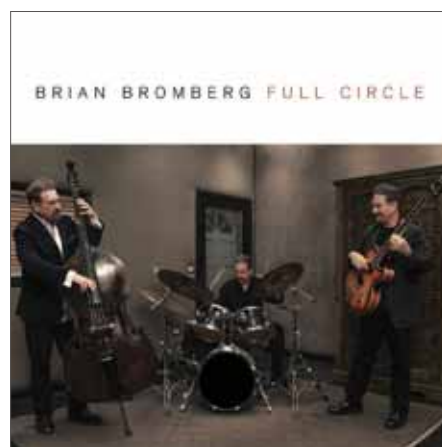
Throughout *Imagine That*, Freedman's chattering hands and stomping feet exhilarate the senses. First, Matt Wilson's *Beginning Of A Memory* (which received a 5-star review in DownBeat's June 2016 issue), now Daniel Freedman's masterpiece, *Imagine That*.

—Ken Micallef

Imagine That: Determined Soul; Baby Aya; Big In Yemen; Codex; Mindaho; Love Takes Time; Eastern Elegy; The Sisters Dance. (49:00)

Personnel: Daniel Freedman, drums; Lionel Loueke, guitar, vocals; Jason Lindner, keyboards; Omer Avital, bass, oud; Gilmar Gomes, percussion; Angélique Kidjo, vocals.

Ordering info: anzicstore.com



Bromberg's triumph here is not that he makes a prodigious statement by himself, but that he excels among such righteous company.

—Kirk Silsbee

Full Circle: Jazz Me Blues; Full Circle; Sneaky Pete; Saturday Night In The Village; Boomerang; Havana Nights; Bernie's Bop; Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough; Naw' Lins; Susumu's Blues; Washington And Lee Swing. (62:56)

Personnel: Brian Bromberg, acoustic bass, piccolo bass, nylon piccolo bass (6), steel-string piccolo bass (9), drums; Charlie Bisharat, violin (9); Jimmy Saunders, trumpet (1, 11); Lee Thornburg (3, 6, 8, Arturo Sandoval, trumpet (6); Phil Washburn (1, 11), Nick Lane, trombone (3, 6, 8, 9); Bob Sheppard (2), Kirk Whalum (9), tenor saxophone; Doug Webb, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; Randy Waldman, piano; Mitch Forman, accordion (9), piano (2, 3), Hammond B-3 organ (3, 9); Otmario Ruiz, piano (6); Craig Fundyga, vibraphone (6, 10); Howard Bromberg, drums (1); Alex Acuña, percussion and congas (3, 6, 8).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Murray/Allen/Carrington *Perfection*

MOTEMA 193

★★★★½

While all-star collaborations between older musicians like Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Jack DeJohnette have proven to be popular draws on the festival circuit—and sources for some compelling recordings—younger generations have been slow to adopt the approach.

For 61-year-old saxophonist David Murray, though, the format is old hat. After all, he's one of the founders of that enduring supergroup, the World Saxophone Quartet, and during his most prolific period he recorded and performed with a raft of other artists without seeming to have a permanent group of his own. His co-operative venture with pianist Geri Allen and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington came together for the 2015 version of Winter Jazzfest in New York City, and coalesced on this album around the deaths of Ornette Coleman, Charlie Haden, Marcus Belgrave and Peter O'Brien, the Catholic priest who was the longtime manager of Mary Lou Williams.

Coleman's "Perfection"—a composition from the early '60s the saxophonist never recorded—is the cornerstone, with the trio filled out by three musicians with Ornette connections. The inclusion of the 17th-century Scottish ballad "Barbara Allen" was inspired by Haden's version of it, and "Samsara," composed by Carrington for Wayne Shorter, gives each member of the group an opportunity to explore a beautiful song with distinct, parallel parts.

The bass-free configuration works well, with Carrington's particularly resonant bass drum filling the role usually played by a string instrument. Let's hope this all-star lineup will stick around for longer than just the summer.

—James Hale

Perfection: Mirror Of Youth; Barbara Allen; Geri-Rigged; The David, Geri & Terri Show; The Nurturer; Perfection; D Special; Samsara; For Fr. Peter O'Brien; Cycles And Seasons. (57:36)

Personnel: David Murray, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Geri Allen, piano; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums; Wallace Roney Jr., trumpet (6); Craig Harris, trombone (6); Charnett Moffett, bass (6).

Ordering info: motema.com

Melissa Aldana

Back Home

WOMMUSIC 0006

★★★★

As on her self-titled major label debut from 2014—her reward for winning the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition in 2013—Melissa Aldana exhibits exceptional technique on her sophomore recording, but reveals something else, too. Check out that passing nod to Gioachino Rossini on “Alegria,” or her breezy athleticism on the title track: Sonny Rollins’ influence rules.

Along with her father—a second-generation jazz saxophonist himself—Rollins was Aldana’s major inspiration on tenor when she was developing her sound in her native Chile, and his scope and sense of adventure seem to guide her throughout *Back Home*.

Like Rollins in his greatest years, she continues to work without the net of a chordal instrument, confident in her ability to carry the freight on challenging pieces like Kurt Weill’s “My Ship” and her own “Before You.” Her rhythm section—bassist Pablo Menares and drummer Jochen Rueckert—provides a particularly broad soundscape behind her, pushing her assertively on Menares’ “Desde La Lluvia” and shifting artfully behind her on the aptly titled “Obstacles.” Let this album serve as a reminder of how far she’s advanced at the age of 27.

—James Hale

Back Home: Alegria; Desde La Lluvia; Obstacles; En Otro Lugar; My Ship; Servant #2; Before You; Time; Back Home. (53:07)

Personnel: Melissa Aldana, tenor saxophone; Pablo Menares, bass; Jochen Rueckert, drums.

Ordering info: wommusic.com



Snarky Puppy

GROUND UP MUSIC

★★½

There’s something that cannot survive in an overly produced jazz record: space. You can keep adding paint to a canvas, but rarely will the painting improve after a certain point. Eventually you’re left with a puddle that takes forever to dry.

Snarky Puppy bassist and bandleader (and occasional keyboardist) Michael League wrote many of the compositions for this disc, but his tunes too often feel like intricate genre exercises: technically precise but lacking soul. The dozen-year-old band has been heralded for its live shows, and many of the compositions leave lots of room for stretching out, but in the studio those exploratory opportunities are cut short. League’s cracker-jack ensemble can play a wide variety of genres, but here they wind up sounding like a studio orchestra with too much material at their disposal. Want some bossa nova? Want some George Duke-style funk? Need a score for a ’70s-style police chase? It’s all here, but it floats by like the wind, with many of the most jagged edges worn smooth.

—Sean J. O’Connell

Culcha Vulcha: Tarova; Semente; Gemini; Grown Folks; Beep Box; GØ; The Simple Life; Palermo; Big Ugly Jefe. (74:27)

Personnel: Michael League, bass, Moog bass, ukulele bass, keyboards, nylon-string guitar; Justin Stanton, Bill Laurance, Cory Henry, Bobby Sparks, keyboards; Shaun Martin, vocoder, talkbox; Bob Lanzetti, Mark Lettieri, Chris McQueen, guitar; Jay Jennings, Mike “Maz” Maher, trumpet, flugelhorn; Chris Bullock, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, flute, alto flute, keyboards; Bob Reynolds, tenor saxophone; Zach Brock, violin; Nate Werth, Keita Ogawa, Marcelo Woloski, percussion; Justin “J.T.” Thomas, Robert “Sput” Searight, Larnell Lewis, drums.

Ordering info: groundupmusic.net



Cheryl Bentyne

Lost Love Songs

SUMMIT RECORDS 675

★★★★

Cheryl Bentyne has always had profound, if sometimes under-appreciated, skills as a jazz vocalist. In addition to her 30-plus year career as The Manhattan Transfer’s high soprano, Bentyne released 10 previous solo albums before landing on the Summit label. She won a Grammy for her stunning arrangement (with Bobby McFerrin) of “Another Night In Tunisia” on the Transfer’s *Vocalese* album.

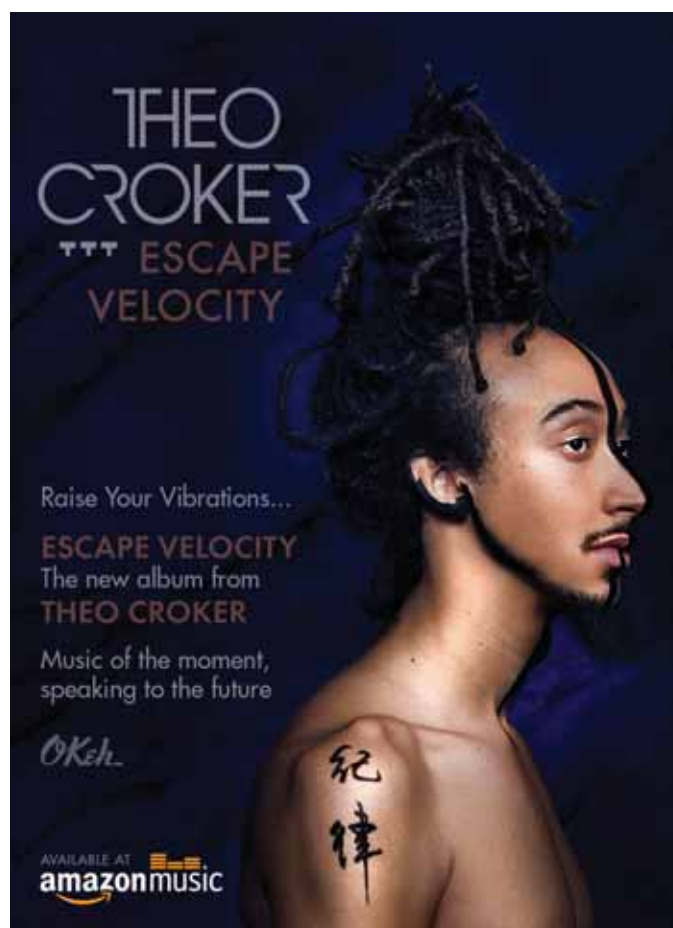
On *Lost Love Songs*, Bentyne is in typically fine voice: Her singing is classy, understated and appropriately torchy. Curated from three albums previously released in Japan but not in the U.S., the program includes familiar tunes like Gordon Jenkins’ “Goodbye” and Rodgers and Hart’s “He Was Too Good To Me,” as well as rare gems like Jimmy Webb’s heartbreaking “Shattered.” Most of the material is arranged by Bentyne’s longtime producer (and former husband), pianist Corey Allen, who makes excellent use of L.A. studio cats like bassist Kevin Axt and the late percussionist Don Alias. A standout track is an Afropop treatment of Chuck Mangione’s “Land Of Make Believe,” arranged in 12/8 time with an African-inspired men’s chorus.

—Allen Morrison

Lost Love Songs: This Masquerade; The Lights Still Burn In Paris; Land Of Make Believe; Black Coffee; If Ever; He Was Too Good To Me; Shattered; Blue Prelude; You Taught My Heart To Sing; Love’s River; Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow; Goodbye. (51:35)

Personnel: Cheryl Bentyne, vocals; Corey Allen, piano, keyboards; Kevin Axt, bass; Don Alias, percussion; Dave Tull, drums, percussion, vocals; Van Dyke Parks, accordion; Grant Geissman, guitar, mandolin; Gannin Arnold, guitar; Tom McCauley, guitar, percussion; Doug Webb, saxophone, recorder; Roger Treece, Mark Kibble, vocals; Nico Cani, Steve Scharf, violins; Armen Ksajikian, cello; Ray Tischer, viola.

Ordering info: summitrecords.com



Alan Ferber Nonet *Roots & Transitions*

SUNNYSIDE 1452

★★★★★

Roots & Transitions is a suite of compositions inspired by the birth of trombonist Alan Ferber's first child. And it's hard to say which is more impressive—that Ferber has delivered such thematically unified, dramatically coherent work, or that he was able to do so despite having a newborn in the house.

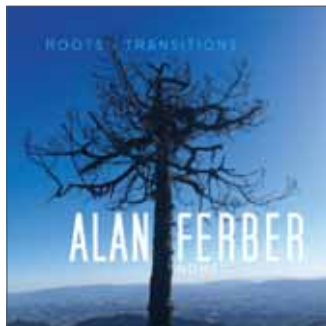
These eight pieces were commissioned by a grant from Chamber Music America, and there's definitely a chamber music aesthetic at work. Listen to how "Quiet Confidence" slowly unspools, voices accumulating until Ferber attains an almost choral deployment of the horns. Then there's "Cycles," which opens with an itchy, improvised counterpoint between muted trombone and alto, then gradually expands to reveal the melodic structures that informed the initial improvisation. Of course, Ferber leaves plenty of room for straightahead blowing, particularly on the boppish "Wayfarer" and the rhythmically dynamic "Flow," with its searing exchange between trumpeter Scott Wendholt and guitarist Nate Radley. But as great as the playing is, it's the depth and ambition of writing that makes this album worthy of repeated spins.

—J.D. Considine

Roots & Transitions: Quiet Confidence; Hourglass; Clocks; Wayfarer; Flow; Perspective; Echo Calling; Cycles. (57:20)

Personnel: Alan Ferber, trombone; Scott Wendholt, trumpet (tracks 1, 2, 4-7); Shane Endsley, trumpet (tracks 3, 8); Jon Gordon, alto saxophone; John Ellis, tenor saxophone; Charles Pillow, bass clarinet; Nate Radley, guitar; Bryn Roberts, piano; Matt Clohesy, bass; Mark Ferber, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com



Instant Composers Pool *Restless In Pieces*

ICP 054

★★★★★

Restless In Pieces is an apt title as any for a new Instant Composers Pool recording. With nifty cover art by a central figure in the ICP crew—drummer/percussionist Han Bennink—the album comes to life over and over again with their typical zeal. Part of the reason for that aliveness is the ICP's ongoing search for new approaches to music. Each track brings the expectedly unexpected.

ICP favorites Herbie Nichols and Thelonious Monk are visited with swinging, gently idiosyncratic renditions of "Blue Chopsticks" and "The Lady Sings The Blues" (Nichols) and the rare Monk chestnut "Locomotive." Arrangers, ever an essential ingredient with the ICP, include reedist Michael Moore and Misha Mengelberg, with bassist Ernst Glerum and reedist Ab Baars also contributing.

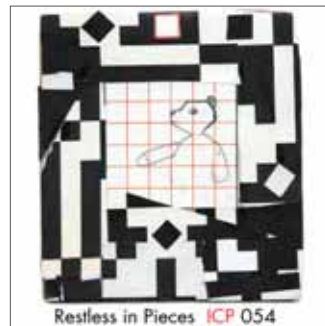
It's Baars who contributes the album's centerpiece: an 11-minute-long medley of music by Charles Ives. It's classical, ruminative and drenched in a dreamy blend of New Orleans funk, folk antics and Ellingtonian spice.

—John Ephland

Restless In Pieces: Restless In Pieces; Rear/Murmurs; Blue Chopsticks; Kwijt; Lady Sings The Blues; Samba Zombie; C.E.I.: Where The Sunflowers Grow, Rambling Rake, Yon Horizon; Rollo I; Locomotive; Rollo II; One Thing All At Once; Jojo Jive; Anatole. (60:24)

Personnel: Ab Baars, Tobias Delius, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Wolter Wierbos, trombone; Mary Oliver, violin, viola; Tristan Honsinger, cello, vocals; Ernst Glerum, bass; Michael Moore, clarinet, alto saxophone (4); Thomas Heberer, cornet, trumpet; Guus Janssen, piano; Han Bennink, drums; Mattijs van de Woerd, vocals.

Ordering info: icporchestra.com



Nik Bärtsch's Mobile *Continuum*

ECM B0024627

★★★★★

Nik Bärtsch's Mobile is a unique acoustic group that creates shapely and pristine chamber jazz. The eight tracks on *Continuum* are marvels of control and tension—as much atmosphere as groove. At the same time, these deeply worked cuts are intensely rhythmic, if irregular. This is an album of edgy beauty.

Continuum is sonic sculpture; contour and form are always paramount. You can relax to the album's low-key, subliminal music, but best keep your eyes wide open, as this is an album of edgy beauty.

The eight "moduls"—there are no song titles for Mobile or Ronin, Bärtsch's electric group—delivered by Bärtsch and his core quartet (augmented on three tracks with a string quintet) gain power through repetition, rhythmic dislocation and nuance. While several are so subtle they threaten to fade into the background, others, like "Modul 4," "Modul 8_11" and the bright-eyed opener, "Modul 29_14," build dramatically, ultimately releasing the listener into wonder. What begins as reverie becomes a race as thrilling as it is disquieting.

—Carlo Wolff

Continuum: Modul 29_14; Modul 12; Modul 18; Modul 05; Modul 60; Modul 04; Modul 44; Modul 8_11. (68:19)

Personnel: Nik Bärtsch, piano; Kaspar Rast, drums, percussion; Nicolas Stocker, drums, tuned percussion; Sha, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet; Etienne Abelin, violin; Solme Hong, cello; Ambrosius Huber, cello; David Schnee, viola; Ola Sendek, violin.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Rudd/Saft/Dunn/Pándi *Strength & Power*

RARENOISE 060

★★★★★

This record can accurately be billed as a congress of generations. Trombonist Roswell Rudd is 80, which makes him 32 years older than the next oldest member of this quartet. He cut his musical

teeth playing Dixieland before falling in with Archie Shepp and Steve Lacy, while the rest of the band—pianist Jamie Saft, bassist Trevor Dunn and drummer Balázs Pándi—grew up with rock 'n' roll before gravitating to various forms of the avant-garde. This may explain the breadth one hears throughout this generously dimensioned album.

The session that yielded *Strength & Power* may be the first time the four have recorded together, but whether stretching out on a languid ballad or clambering a bold, brash Escher-meets-Monk edifice, they interact with understanding and respect. Saft's production leaves space around each musician's sound, but not so much that you miss the balancing assertiveness evident in Rudd's pithy utterances, Pándi's swaggering grooves or Dunn's undertow of low tone. By turns flowing and swaggering, this album feels less like any sort of meeting than a performance by a solid, empathetic band.

—Bill Meyer

Strength & Power: Strength & Power; Cobalt Is A Divine; The Bedroom; Luminescent; Dunn's Falls; Struttin' For Jah Jah. (64:38)

Personnel: Roswell Rudd, trombone; Jamie Saft, piano; Trevor Dunn, bass; Balázs Pándi, drums.

Ordering info: rarenoiserecords.com



Lina Nyberg

© MIKI ANAGRIUS



Voices Across the Ocean

Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides, Now" begins Danish singer **Caecilie Norby** and Swedish guitarist/bassist/cellist **Lars Danielsson's** *Just The Two Of Us* (ACT 9732; 51:02 ★★★★★). Danielsson's acoustic bass enhances the song's wistful lyrics, and Norby's seasoned voice is close to perfect. The album's an intimate, charming peek through lesser-known standards (by Abbey Lincoln and Leonard Cohen, for example) and satisfying originals. Their "Double Dance" doubles down on this series of 13 songs that, at times, feels like a folksy campfire gathering.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

Camille Bertault's *En Vie* (Sunnyside 1438; 48:32 ★★½) is straight-up jazz, and here her band—pianist Olivier Hutman, bassist Gildas Boclé and drummer Antoine Paganotti—is an extension of her sweet, pixie-ish voice. The album begins with Herbie Hancock's "Empty Pockets" (rendered here as "Quoi De Plus Anodin"), sung in her native French. Elsewhere, she engages in some serious scat on the swinging waltz "Course" and animates Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes" with lively articulation. An emotional uptempo version of Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks" (here called "Cette Nuit") and Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss" round out a program that contains six originals.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Sweden's **Carin Lundin** delivers *What Now My Love?* (Prophone 157; 40:05 ★★★★★) a standards reboot featuring songs played true to form with her jazz quintet. Her alternating feathery/hefty voice might recall your favorite lounge singer as she visits the boogaloo of "Get Happy," the tenderness of "Second Time Around" and the sassiness of "Peel Me A Grape." Pianist Mathias Algotsson and trumpeter Johan Setterlind are encouraging bandmates, and

Lundin's natural delivery might have you thinking she was reared Stateside.

Ordering info: carinlundin.com

Gabriela Martina's Swiss roots offer an incredible range as she practically yodels her way through "Narcissus" en route to her mostly originals program on *No White Shoes* (Self Release; 55:42 ★★★★★). Her delivery is a blend of jazz with pop improvisation, and her creative, invested covers of Wayne Shorter's "Witch Hunt" (stunningly sung as overdubbed a cappella) and Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night In Tunisia" (a flat-out rocker featuring pianist Jiri Nedoma) uproot convention.

Ordering info: gabrielamartina.com

Somehow Life Got In The Way (Ladybird 79556835; 63:42 ★★★★★), the latest from Sweden's **Isabella Lundgren**, is a mix of (mostly) lush ballads. At 28, her maturity shows with heart-heavy material, including "Everything Must Change" and "While We're Young" followed by strong originals, all sung in English. Her delivery is patient and potent, recalling Judy Garland in her prime. "Why Was I Born" and "Down With Love" offer juicy, free-spirited swing.

Ordering info: ladybird.se

Lina Nyberg's *Aerials* (Hoob Jazz 057; 44:19/46:11 ★★★★★) follows another double-CD, *The Sirenaes*, from 2014. Featuring 17 tracks split between jazz quartet (disc one, *Space*) and half string quartet (disc two, *Birds*), *Aerials* is a theme-based gem on which standards like "Skylark" and "Fly Me To The Moon" (both sung as ballads) share company with unconventional arrangements, original music and fictional stories. The Swedish vocalist's writing is stunning, especially for strings, and her singing is more personal than ever. **DB**

Ordering info: hoobrecords.com



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Finding Their Way Home

Janiva Magness, *Love Wins Again* (Blue Elan 1017; 42:45 ★★★★★) Janiva Magness is one lucky woman: Her semi-scorched singing voice is intimate and soulful. On the fifth album overseen by guitarist David Darling, and her 12th overall, she isn't the least bit shy in presenting a personal bias for the power of carnal love. Delivering emotional weight to original tunes of mainly high worth, the singer retains possession of her aura even when the band sounds automated.

Ordering info: blueelan.com

Luca Giordano Band, *Off The Grid* (GG Records 002; 60:57 ★★★½) Italy is a minor hot spot for talented homegrown guitarists, and 35-year-old Luca Giordano belongs to this group. His work on his second outing is authentic and vibrant at any tempo. There's no shame in lacking the crisp inventiveness of his mentor, the Chicago bluesman Otis Rush. Two tracks feature an organ trio, while eight others use a full band with a horn section including itinerant saxophonist-arranger Gordon Beadle.

Ordering info: lucagiordanoband.com

Guy King, *Truth* (Delmark 843; 71:08 ★★★★★) Israel-born Chicagoan Guy King, a vocalist with charm in reserve and a guitarist in control of his craft, presents his smooth soul-blues take on gems hailed for their association with titans like Percy Mayfield, Ray Charles, Johnny "Guitar" Watson and B.B. King. His updates are well done, though of course he's facing strong headwinds. Like those covers, "My Happiness" and two more King compositions (written with music biographer David Ritz) are hallmarked by an infallible sense of purpose.

Ordering info: delmark.com

Various Artists, *The Rough Guide To Bottleneck Blues* (Rough Trade 1346; 74:28 ★★★★★) More than two dozen slide guitarists of the 1920s and '30s are enshrined for perpetuity through this fine collection. Blind Willie Johnson confesses his transgressions on the eve of Judgment Day on "It's Nobody's Fault But Mine" and Son House laments over the Delta's barren cotton fields with "Dry Spell Blues." These two dignitaries, along with others of equal rank like blues legends Tampa Red and Lead Belly, find their way to the crux of pained or euphoric human experience.

Ordering info: worldmusic.net

Curtis Salgado, *The Beautiful Low-down* (Alligator 4970; 47:53 ★★★★★) At once ardent and disciplined, Curtis Salgado has shown the strong voice, narrative skill and musical instinct to stay near the top of the soul-blues field for the past few de-



Janiva Magness

acades. His streak continues here, and this time, unlike on previous albums, he's showing off his gift for songwriting. (Long-trusty sidekick David Duncan and others help out.) Forays into funk and reggae aren't so productive.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Stone The Crows, *Stone The Crows/Ode To John Law* (Angel Air 463; 61:33/52:05 ★★★) Maggie Bell's vocals flared with an intensity almost rivaling Janis Joplin's in 1970, and the proof is heard in parts of two blues-rock records she made with undervalued guitarist Les Harvey (later electrocuted onstage) and the Scottish-English band Stone the Crows. The ghost of Bessie Smith stands tall at Bell's shoulder when she tackles "Blind Man," and she shows full understanding of Percy Mayfield's "Danger Zone." Several of the other songs, though, have aged poorly.

Ordering info: angelair.co.uk

DB

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Pat Metheny *The Unity Sessions*

NONESUCH 554569

★★★★½

Cuong Vu Trio *Meets Pat Metheny*

NONESUCH 554650

★★★★

In the past, Pat Metheny's Unity Band has flirted with perpetual clutter. At times it's been hard not to get tied up in knots with some of the arrangements, which leave little breathing room for the unexpected. There's still some of that on *The Unity Sessions*, but the band seems to have come into their own in ways that let that breathing include a few more exhales.

Taken from a filmed performance (which is available on DVD), this two-CD set definitely has a "live" feel to it. Hard to believe, but when Metheny brought saxophonist Chris Potter on board in 2013, it marked the first time the guitarist had collaborated with a saxophonist since Michael Brecker and Dewey Redman joined for his *80/81* album. On *The Unity Sessions*, some of that energy is revisited with "Two Folk Songs (#1)," Potter's tenor playing reaching for the stars as Metheny madly strums his acoustic guitar. Antonio Sanchez's drumming sounds even more ferocious than Jack DeJohnette's from that 35-year-old release.

Part of the charm to this followup of *Kin*, the band's initial release in 2013, is Metheny's knack for pacing. Following the serene acoustic guitar intro "Adagia," the gradually building "Sign Of The Season," the relaxed "This Belongs To You" and jaunty, blazing "Roofdogs," Potter and Metheny proceed with the left-field insertion of Ray Noble's standard "Cherokee." There's also the tender, intimate "Medley," a solo piece in which the guitarist revisits more catalog, including parts of "Minuano (Six Eight)," "Midwestern Nights Dream" and "Last Train Home."

Metheny delves into freer material with former bandmate/trumpeter Cuong Vu on *Cuong Vu Trio Meets Pat Metheny*. With bassist Stomu Takeishi and drummer Ted Poor, this date includes five by Vu and one each by Metheny and saxophonist Andrew D'Angelo. Vu takes sonic freedom into his own hands with searing overdubs before Metheny's synth soars in on "Acid Kiss," the loose-limbed funkiness provided by Poor and Takeishi reinforcing a measured sense of pulse. On the boppish blues "Not Crazy (Just Giddy Upping)," Metheny reverts back to his more straightahead voice, while Vu's fleet phrasing recalls a blend of Don Cherry and Miles Davis. Vu's parched tone also soars in tandem with Metheny's on the soft-spoken "Seeds Of Doubt" and restless "Tiny Little Pieces."

In tandem with *The Unity Sessions*, Vu's

Meets Pat Metheny serves to remind us of this guitarist's unceasing curiosity and versatility, not to mention collaborative spirit.

—John Ephland

The Unity Sessions: Disc One: Adagia; Sign Of The Season; This Belongs To You; Roofdogs; Cherokee; Genealogy; On Day One; Medley. (59:39) Disc Two: Come And See; Police People; Two Folk Songs (#1); Born; Kin; Rise Up; Go Get It. (56:32)

Personnel: Pat Metheny, guitar, guitar synth, electronics, Orchestronics; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; bass clarinet, flute, guitar; Antonio Sanchez, drums, cajon; Ben Williams, bass; Giulio Carmassi, piano, flugelhorn, whistling, synth, vocals.

Meets Pat Metheny: Acid Kiss; Not Crazy (Just Giddy Upping); Seeds Of Doubt; Telescope; Let's Get Back; Tune Blues. (53:23)

Personnel: Cuong Vu, trumpet; Stomu Takeishi, bass; Ted Poor, drums; Pat Metheny, guitar.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com



MARK GUILIANA

Photo: Deneka Peniston

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Donald Edwards *Prelude To Real Life*

CRISS CROSS JAZZ 1386

★★★★

Donald Edwards' music possesses a subtle originality, and something else that's harder to pin down. His music, like his drumming, has depth as well as darkness, even a sense of danger, the unknown. Recorded in Brooklyn, *Prelude To Real Life* inhabits an older New York City. I'm thinking late 1980s: graffiti-covered subways, all-night diners, a seedy Times Square—a pre-Disney Manhattan that was truly gritty.

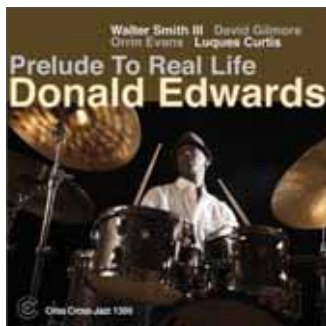
The album presents Edwards' adventurous original compositions, and while a suite form isn't spelled out, it's nonetheless there. The hop-scotching "Apple Street" is as humid as a city block in summer, the winding melody performed by saxophonist Walter Smith III and guitarist David Gilmore with heated intensity. "King" ricochets off a booming, tumbling groove and Gilmore's torrid sci-fi guitar, quickly subsumed by "Queen And The Princess," with its darting melody and splintered shapes. Edwards includes Benny Golson's classic "Stablemates," but the hard-bop standard is altered by a kind of steaming inner-city swagger.

—Ken Micallef

Prelude To Real Life: Taking Shape; Incantation; Hop Scotch; Apple Street; Way To Her; King; Queen And The Princess; Stablemates; Beautiful Intuition; Thought For The Day; Skippy; Prelude To Real Life. (67:12)

Personnel: Donald Edwards, drums; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone; Antoine Drye, trumpet (12); David Gilmore, guitar; Orrin Evans, piano; Nicholas Payton, Fender Rhodes, piano, organ (1, 3, 6); Luques Curtis, bass; Vivian Sessoms, vocals (3, 5, 10).

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com



Michael Blake *Fulfillment*

SONGLINES 1615

★★★★½

Michael Blake is stretching his conceptual legs. The Montreal-born saxophonist created a warped past-meets-present tribute to tenor masters Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins on 2014's exquisite *Tiddy Boom*, and now he's mining a historical event for a futuristic amalgam of acoustic and electronic textures.

The inspiration for *Fulfillment* is the refusal, in 1914, of Canadian officials to allow a shipload of economic migrants from India to claim refugee status. Blake, stunned to learn that a relative had played a role in refusing the migrants, decided to compose an eight-movement suite.

His writing here is characterized by strong rhythmic motifs, which shift from a galloping tempo paired with a stalking bass/guitar combination on "Perimeters" to a floating, Coltrane-esque feel on "Battle At Baj Baj" and a slow, rolling tabla groove on "Exaltation." Vancouver mainstays Peggy Lee (cello) and Ron Samworth (guitar) both fill important roles, with Lee playing a beautiful, mournful lead on "Arrivals" and the guitarist adding distorted counterpoint to "Exaltation" and "The Soldier And The Saint."

—James Hale

Fulfillment: Sea Shanty; Perimeters; The Ballad Of Gurtid Singh; Arrivals; Departures; Battle At Baj Baj; Exaltation; The Soldier And The Saint. (54:47)

Personnel: Michael Blake, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; J.P. Carter, trumpet, electronics; Peggy Lee, cello; Chris Gestrin, piano, MicroMoog; Ron Samworth, guitar, banjo; Aram Bajakian, guitar (1, 6, 7); André Lachance, bass; Dylan van der Schyff, drums, percussion; Neelanjit Dhillon, tabla (7); Emma Postl, vocals (1, 3).

Ordering info: songlines.com



Bill O'Connell/The Latin Jazz All-Stars *Heart Beat*

SAVANT 2154

★★★★

From its surging beginning to its aspirational finale, pianist Bill O'Connell's *Heart Beat* delivers rich, layered work. On seven originals and covers of Wayne Shorter's openhearted "ESP" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's yearning "Waters Of March," O'Connell and some of his favorite musicians play as one. Standouts in this dream band are woodwind authority Steve Slagle, trombonist Conrad Herwig and bassist Luques Curtis.

O'Connell, who has written arrangements for bands led by conguero Mongo Santamaria and Puerto Rican flutist Dave Valentin, composes with freedom and authority. The title track and the brooding "The Eyes Of A Child" may best illustrate O'Connell's diversity. "Eyes" is particularly entrancing, thanks to its rhythmic nuance, O'Connell's caressing piano and the braid of Herwig's ruddy trombone with Slagle's rippling flute. "Heart-Beat" literally sets the pulse racing. Propelled by Richie Barshay's drums and the triple bata-drum attack of Roman Diaz, Clemente Medina and Diego Lopez, it starts hot and gets hotter.

—Carlo Wolff

Heart Beat: Vertigo; The Eyes Of A Child; Awani; Waters Of March; Tabasco; ESP; Heart-Beat; Wake Up; Peace On Earth. (56:33)

Personnel: Bill O'Connell, piano; Steve Slagle, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, flute; Richie Barshay, drums; Luques Curtis, bass; Roman Diaz, congas, percussion, bata drums, vocals (9); Conrad Herwig, trombone; Diego Lopez, bata drums (2, 9); Clemente Medina, bata drums (2, 9); Melvis Santa, vocals (3, 6, 9).

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Avataar *Petal*

INSOUND RECORDS 003

★★★★½

Blending jazz and traditional Indian music, Avataar's *Petal* might be an acquired taste, but such is to be expected from an album that so nimbly combines idioms of the East and West.

The album is saxophonist Sundar Viswanathan's project, which offers a ripe story unto itself. The Canadian-born artist's resume points to serious jazz encounters and obvious connections with so-called world music, and the 10-track program evinces as much. "Banda Aceh" offers jazz-inflected music with vocals and tabla, Viswanathan's solo meandering through the song's contours as Michael Occhipinti's guitar voice gently plucks and probes. Clearly, this band—with tabla master Naimpally adding vocals—has an intimate group sound.

Simple and unassuming, "The Long Dream" anchors *Petal* with its best mix of East and West, the groove implied more than stated, while "Infinite Open," on the other hand, provides a subtle yet uptempo groove, Naimpally's tabla and Occhipinti's guitar attaining just the right amount of edge. "Petal (Ephemerata)" invokes the spirit of universal harmony to conclude what is a mixed bag of stellar compositions executed by surging talent.

—John Ephland

Petal: Agra; Banda Aceh; Monsoon; The Long Dream; Infinite Open; Raudra; Petal (The Space Between); Ishwar; Annapoorna; Petal (Ephemerata). (61:38)

Personnel: Sundar Viswanathan, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, bansuri, flute; Felicity Williams, vocals; Michael Occhipinti, guitar; Justin Gray, bass, mandolin, taut; Ravi Naimpally, tabla, percussion; Giampaolo Scatozza, drums; Robi Botos, piano (7, 10), Fender Rhodes (8); Samidha Joglekar, vocals (6).

Ordering info: sundarmusic.com



Caetano Veloso (left) and Gilberto Gil



Beyond Bossa: Brazilian Jazz

A slate of new albums of Brazilian music prove that no matter how deep the country's economic and political doldrums get—as of this writing, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff had been suspended by the Senate to face an impeachment trial—Brazilian jazz is diverse and thriving.

Vocalist **Renato Braz** shines on *Saudade* (Living Music 48; 72:34 ★★), a star-studded album also featuring Paul Winter, a smooth, sensitive saxophonist whose mellow style fits Braz's yearning vocals well. Braz sings beautifully, and tunes like "Acqua Marcia" and "Sodade, Meu Bem, Sodade" speak to the album title, which, roughly translated, means "yearning" or "longing." The musicianship is impeccable, the arrangements are nuanced and Braz's voice is hypnotic. More rhythmic variety would have helped, however; 12 tracks on, what was once enthralling turns sleepy, and what was previously rooted in jazz takes on the slick veneer of New Age.

Ordering info: paulwinter.com

Catina DeLuna, too, has a gorgeous voice—and a great collaborator in her husband, Otmaro Ruiz, the fabulous pianist and arranger who gives their fine album *Lado B Brazilian Project* (Self Release; 63:10 ★★★★★) such buoyancy and grain. The tracks are flowing and melodic, from the bright, colorful opener to "Fotografia," the sultry Antônio Carlos Jobim tune that brings the album to a fortifying close. The tunes span "Garota De Ipanema," Ruiz's reimagining of the watershed song "Girl From Ipanema," the lovely "Contrato De Separação" and "Chovendo Na Roseira," Jobim's mini-symphony about a rain forest. That last one serves as a testament to the depth and daring of this album, a keeper bringing the traditional into modern line.

Ordering info: catinadeluna.com

Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil's *Dois Amigos, Um Século de Música: Multishow Live* (Nonesuch B01D-2B2H3G; 42:25/56:37 ★★★½) finds two masters of Brazilian music in fine form, unplugging 28 tunes for a rapt audience far louder than they are. The setting is simple, with just two voices and two guitars. The concert was recorded for television in Brazil last year, and the audience is clearly familiar with the work of these touchstones, who invented the genre known as Tropicalia.

Veloso and Gil are such natural singers, they seem to be talking to each other, switching leads every verse or so to keep the texture dynamic and interesting. As might be expected, this album is multilingual, befitting the cultural range these legends offer: "Tres Palabras" and "Tonada De Luna Llena" are sung in Spanish, "Nine Out Of Ten" in English and "Come Prima" in Italian. A sweet, preternaturally swinging souvenir of a tour these two have been on for a while now, and seem only happy to prolong.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com

The Rough Guide To Brazilian Jazz (World Music Network RGN1345; 68:02 ★★★★★) is above all great party music. The rowdy rhythms and stabbing brass of Fernando Moura and Ary Dias's "Mexidão," the supercharged hip-hop of Tássia Reis' "Meu Rapjazz," the guitar-laden saunter through Juçara Marçal's "Pena Meis Que Perfeita"—it's all designed to drive you off your seat. The flavors are international and time-spanning: Funk, salsa, dancehall and dub pepper these vibrant selections, not the folk or West Coast cool that informed so much Brazilian jazz in the past. Like the Veloso/Gil set, *Rough Guide* is great music to drive by. **DB**

Ordering info: worldmusic.net

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Colin Stetson

Sorrow

52HZ 001

★★★★½

Reedist Colin Stetson has carved a niche for himself over the last decade or so, masterfully applying a slew of extended techniques to create moody, sometimes cathartic instrumental pop music.

His latest project, a reimagining of Polish composer Henryk Gorecki's Third Symphony, arrives as something of a surprise. His choice to interpret the material—a masterpiece from 1976 famously recorded by soprano Dawn Upshaw and the London Sinfonietta in 1992—isn't that shocking, but the fact that he enlisted help is.

The "reimagining" of the title is a bit misleading, as Stetson didn't mess with the score, but instead brought a modern edge to his interpretation by changing the instrumentation. Although there is a small complement of strings, including Sarah Neufeld of Arcade Fire on violin, the bulk of the sound features billowing horns and searing electric guitar sounds that move easily between jazz, new music and rock. His arrangements are lush and powerful, a salute both respectful and individualistic, and an exciting look at his talent as an arranger.

—Peter Margasak

Sorrow—A Reimagining Of Gorecki's Third Symphony: I. Lento—Sostenuto Tranquillo Ma Cantabile; II. Lento E Largo—Tranquillissimo; III. Lento—Cantabile—Semplice. (52:23)

Personnel: Colin Stetson, contrabass clarinet, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, bass saxophone, lyric; Megan Stetson, voice; Sarah Neufeld, violin; Rebecca Foon, Gyda Valtysdottir, cello; Matt Bauder, clarinet, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; Dan Bennett, clarinet, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; Justin Walker, keyboards, EVI; Ryan Ferreira, Grey McMurray, guitar; Shahzad Ismaili, synthesizer; Greg Fox, drums.

Ordering info: colinstetson.com



Mala Waldron

Deep Resonance

SOULFUL SOUND 22247

★★★★

Mal Waldron was a prolific but overlooked pianist who recorded countless albums with Prestige Records in the '50s and '60s. His work with Charles Mingus and Eric Dolphy were essential contributions to the expansion of the piano's range, employing gnarled harmonies and unique textures. His daughter Mala has a far less dissonant approach to her music, performing on this album in a singer-songwriter vein. She accompanies herself on piano with sparse help from a handful of other musicians and sings on every track.

The positive sentiments written and sung by Waldron ring with a New Age vibe. Her tone is clearly influenced by Joni Mitchell, whose "Jericho" she covers rather faithfully, but it is on the following track, "I Know," where she sounds most Joni-esque, aided by bassist Maurizio Rolli doing his best Jaco imitation. Ideas fully coalesce on the last track, "Feelin' For You," on which Waldron pipes in some overdubbed vocal harmonies that would have been welcome on every track. With a running time under a half an hour and minimal production, the album feels a little unfinished. Just when things start to pay off, it all ends. Another day in the studio could have opened up even more promising ideas.

—Sean J. O'Connell

Deep Resonance: Life Is Now; Mon Amour; Jericho; I Know; Free As The Wind (Margot's Song); Feelin' For You. (27:56)

Personnel: Mala Waldron, vocals, piano; Vincent Gardner, trombone; Allen Won, bass flute; Akua Dixon, cello; Jonathon Peretz, percussion; Maurizio Rolli, bass.

Ordering info: malawaldron.com



Leslie Pintchik

True North

PINTCH HARD 003

★★★★

Jazz pianists aren't scholastic slouches by any means. Many have academic credentials. But a Master of Philosophy in 17th-century English Literature? Let's take a wild guess that Leslie Pintchik might be the only jazz pianist with that achievement.

It wasn't until college that Pintchik decided to become a professional musician, leaving a career in academia to study piano with Bruce Barth. You can read all about this unusual decision in this album's liner notes, but suffice it to say that Pintchik was a genuine late bloomer.

She's also a pianist who favors thoughtfulness and melody over dazzling keyboard forays. Generally she plays with a light touch, but picks her spots to get more rambunctious. On *True North*, her five bandmates—Steve Wilson (alto and soprano saxes), Ron Horton (trumpet), Scott Hardy (bass), Michael Sarin (drums) and Satoshi Takeishi (percussion)—enliven several exciting tunes.

A highlight of the album is a sensitive reading of Henry Mancini's "Charade," on which Pintchik's understated playing embellishes a wonderful melody. And the program ends with a lovely reading of "For All We Know," that finds Pintchik offering a subtle and deeply personal performance.

—Bob Protzman

True North: Let's Get Lucky; Tumbleweed; Just Sayin'; Imagine; Crooked As A Dog's Hind Leg; True North; Falling In Love Again; Charade; Discreet; For All We Know. (63:21)

Personnel: Leslie Pintchik, piano; Steve Wilson, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Ron Horton, trumpet, flugelhorn; Scott Hardy, bass; Michael Sarin, drums; Satoshi Takeishi, percussion.

Ordering info: lesliepintchik.com



Ark Ovrutski

Intersection

ORIGIN 82709

★★★★

There are some nifty passages that emerge on bassist Ark Ovrutski's new album, a collection of originals mixed with a few covers. The playing is top-notch, and the interaction between group members is at a consistently high level, making *Intersection* a fine acoustic jazz outing.

Starting with Bill Evans' "Waltz For Debby," the mood is framed within a straightahead paradigm, with trombonist Michael Dease and reed player Michael Thomas offering stimulating counterpoint. But *Intersection* is notable in the democratic way in which all members get solo space, leaving ample room for individual statements from the accomplished Brazilian pianist Helio Alves and drummer Duduka Da Fonseca.

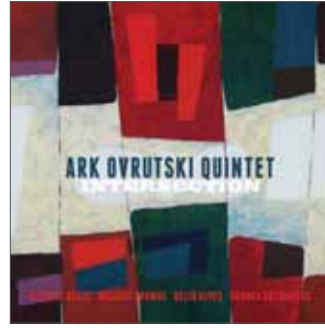
There's an undeniable mid-1960s Blue Note feel to this music, originals like "Twister" pointing to the quintet's obvious facility with different styles. This uptempo swinger offers the band a blowing platform, over which Dease and Thomas engage in a lively conversation full of modern phrases. Along other lines, "Good And Terrible," with its quasi-rock feel, suggests something Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers might pull off. Perhaps the titular "intersection" is simply a convergence of past and present.

—John Ephland

Intersection: Waltz For Debby; Tom Thumb; La Mesha; Manhattan Style; The Craft; Twister; Bolero; Good And Terrible. (47:30)

Personnel: Ark Ovrutski, bass; Michael Dease, trombone; Michael Thomas, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Helio Alves, piano; Duduka Da Fonseca, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: oa2records.com



Song Birds

Great singers need to sing in front of audiences. They can get it letter-perfect in the studio, improving on successive takes—and removing audio blemishes or dropping in edits via the engineer's hand—but singers worthy of the title are trained to perform, eager to show what they can do. Two new discs offer vital live performances by a pair of the greatest jazz singers ever, giving listeners a chance to compare their respective gifts.

Ella Fitzgerald's live sets from Jazz at the Philharmonic established her as something other than the pop and novelty song mill of her Decca recordings. The legendary 1949 Carnegie Hall sides cast her as a great improviser with world-class scat ability and a grasp of bebop. **Jazz At The Philharmonic: The Ella Fitzgerald Set (Verve 24612-01; 60:05 ★★★★★)** shows a vocal innovator worthy of standing toe-to-toe with the big boys on the tour (Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Roy Eldridge, Flip Phillips and others). Much of this material has been released over the years, but this is the most complete grouping of the Carnegie material and a 1954 JATP set from Hartford, Connecticut.

She's a young woman in '49, almost giddy with the musical possibilities before her—in the songs and the interaction with Hank Jones on piano, then-husband Ray Brown on bass and Buddy Rich on drums. She swings at all tempos, but the spontaneous invention displayed on "Old Mother Hubbard" is awe-inspiring.

Though never an effective blues singer, Fitzgerald invests credible blues feeling into "Black Coffee" and "Why Don't You Do Right." And while deeply emotional ballads weren't her strong suit, the rarity "Bill" and a touching "The Man That Got Away" presages her best songbook efforts for Granz. She impressively mixes pop, bebop, r&b and swing on Tiny Bradshaw's "Later," all the while swinging joyously.

Ordering info: vervemusicgroup.com

Sarah Vaughan is heard with her 1978 road trio of pianist Carl Schroeder, bassist Walter Booker and drummer Jimmy Cobb at a New Orleans nightclub. This previously unreleased set, **Live At Rosy's (Resonance 2017; 38:45/44:58 ★★★★★½)**, is a stunning document, originally recorded for the National Public Radio-syndicated radio program *Jazz Alive* with host Dr. Billy Taylor, some of which has never been aired before.

Vaughan is playful, though some of her sharper asides fly under audience radar. After introducing the bearded Schroeder as "Abe," for example, she clarifies: "He freed us, fool!"



Ella Fitzgerald

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

A ludicrous request for "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" nudges her competitive nature, so she gamely tears off a quick romp. A fast, scatted "Sarah's Blues" shows she could comfortably rifle off hornlike improvisations with the band—even moving up half steps—and stay in tune.

Sarah's set piece of the period, "Send In The Clowns," is among her greatest live offerings on record. She flies her gossamer falsetto off the trapeze, with Schroeder to catch her every time. The purity of her held notes ("losing my timing this late in myyyyy career") conjures chapels and cathedrals. Such a capacity for understated drama was a hole card that Fitzgerald was never dealt.

If Vaughan was a well-oiled precision instrument on the first disc, she can be a little too loose on disc two. The set is marbled with her ever-more-daring redesigns of songs—from "The Man I Love" to the '70s favorite "Everything Must Change." She can seemingly do anything that comes to mind: navigate any rhythm, calibrate her vibrato at will, inject any amount of melisma to a word, jump octaves while scatting, scat effortlessly, gliss up the scale and drop down into her mahogany chest tones in a heartbeat.

But her superlative instrument and her sure-footedness bring out her Baroque excesses: letting the vibrato wave, phrasing so far behind the beat, slurring her melisma and devaluing the lyrics in favor of her gymnastics. Even at that, it's a magnificent recording.

DB

Ordering info: resonancerecords.org

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Peter Zak Standards

STEEPLECHASE 31815

★★★

The bar for piano trios that take on a set of standards sits so high that it might as well be the high jump competition at the Olympics. Not only does Keith Jarrett's rapturous standards trio come immediately to mind, but close behind are pianists as diverse as Bill Charlap, Kenny Barron, Fred Hersch and Ethan Iverson, to say nothing of the legendary trios led by Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson and many others. The obvious question is: What are you going to bring the party?

For veteran pianist Peter Zak, the approach is truly unique, if not brave, given the format and the material. Zak put the band together specifically for the recording, and had never even played with bassist Jay Anderson (drummer Billy Drummond rounds out the trio). He held no rehearsals, picked some songs that weren't in his own repertoire and recorded everything in one afternoon.

The results, particularly considering that background, are quite good, if not spectacular. Here, Zak steers a center course, sticking close to the melodies and not throwing his unfamiliar bandmates any surprising rhythmic or harmonic curveballs. These are solid, interesting pieces—things of beauty on their own, and things of beauty in this trio's capable hands.

—James Hale

Standards: Moon And Sand; I Loves You Porgy; The Night Has A Thousand Eyes; I Had The Craziest Dream; So In Love; The Star-Crossed Lovers; I'm All Smiles; The Very Thought Of You; Wives And Lovers; Indian Summer. (68:57)

Personnel: Peter Zak, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



Conrad Herwig/ Igor Butman Reflections

CRISS CROSS JAZZ 1385

★★★

An easy rapport and unforced musical camaraderie prevades on this fine collaboration by trombonist Conrad Herwig and Russian-born tenor saxophonist Igor Butman. A quarter century ago, the fifty-something players met in Moscow—Moscow, Idaho, that is, home of the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival—and what they bring to the expressive table is a sturdy example of unabashedly mainstream jazz wisdom.

It helps that the album features a stellar complement of players, with Russian-born trumpeter Alex Sipiagin completing the classic sax/bone/trumpet front line, and a turn-on-a-dime rhythm section of drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, pianist David Kikoski and bassist Kenny Davis. Apart from Gershwin's "Who Cares?," the material is penned within the group, mostly by Herwig, and consciously heeding an ever-shifting stylistic mandate: No two tunes heed a similar vein. From the semi-brooding balladic nature of the title track, "Reflections," to the intricate, Shorter-esque designs of "King Of The Mountain," esprit de corps and artfully directed chops flow easily here, as does the reflective instinct.

—Josef Woodard



Reflections: Falling Out; King Of The Mountain; Wingspan; Reflections; Olvidame; Who Cares?; Samba De Igor; Big O's Blues. (60:17)

Personnel: Conrad Herwig, trombone; Igor Butman, tenor saxophone; Alex Sipiagin, trumpet, flugelhorn; David Kikoski, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com

Brandee Younger Wax & Wane

REVIVE MUSIC

★★★

Some albums are destined to become cult classics—albums that hardly garner massive mainstream attention but nevertheless make lasting imprints. Harpist Brandee Younger's latest disc is one of them.

Wax & Wane is undeniably aware of its historical lineage, particularly on the soul-jazz continuum. Younger explicitly pays homage to her lodestar, harpist Dorothy Ashby, twice. She opens the disc with a makeover of "Soul Vibrations," a late-'60s Richard Davis-composed gem that Ashby featured on her classic *Afro-Harping*. Younger's version is less trippy than the original, but it's anchored with rugged funk by way of Dezron Douglas' electric bass line and Dana Hawkins' hip-hop-centric drumming, which underpins a billowing melody by Younger and flutist Anne Drummond.

Younger retains a level of retro-chicness on the originals, too. The alluring "Essence Of Ruby" sounds like an obscure, mid-'70s collaboration between Alice Coltrane and the Mizell Brothers, while the upbeat title track could easily pass as an outtake from Stevie Wonder.

If Younger continues to evolve as an improviser, bandleader and composer, a masterpiece will surely be in her future.

—John Murph



Wax & Wane: Soul Vibrations; Essence Of Ruby; Ruby Echo; Afro Harping; Wax And Wane; Ebony Haze; Black Gold. (27:00).

Personnel: Brandee Younger, harp; Anne Drummond, flute; Chelsea Baratz, tenor saxophone; Mark Whitfield, guitar; Dezron Douglas, bass; Dana Hawkins, drums, percussion; Chargaux, violin, viola.

Ordering info: brandeeyounger.com

Luis Perdomo Montage

HOT TONE MUSIC 109

★★½

Pianist Luis Perdomo can burn—no doubt about it. Check YouTube for his solo on "Giant Steps" with Ravi Coltrane, impeccably conceived, building momentum and intensity nonstop. It's the kind of solo that launches audiences to their feet, which makes *Montage* puzzling.

Whether playing someone else's tune or something of his own, there's no sign here of that intensity and focus. For example, Perdomo interprets two standards without any dynamic variation: a rather quickly sinking "Thinking Of You" and a version of "Body And Soul" that seems more sleepy than passionate.

Several original tracks are flagged by the word "montage." My guess is that these are free improvisations, perhaps based on the words that follow "montage" in the title. Thus, "Montage: Fleeing" opens with two wandering lines in the lower register, and "Montage: Angst" is essentially a sequence of rumbling clusters. This is slender evidence on which to base any conclusions, but it does suggest that an ability to tear through a performance with other musicians doesn't necessarily promise similar successes at driving alone with only a minimal roadmap.

—Bob Doerschuk



Montage: Montage: Fleeing; Monk's Dream; Montage: Sleepwalker; Mambo Mongo; Amani; Montage: Angst; Cal Massey; Si Te Contara; Thinking Of You; Montage: Air; The Sky Beyond; La Revuelta De Don Fulgencio; The Boundary Law; Montage: The Ascent; Body And Soul. (57:36)

Personnel: Luis Perdomo, piano.

Ordering info: hottonemusic.com

All Ears

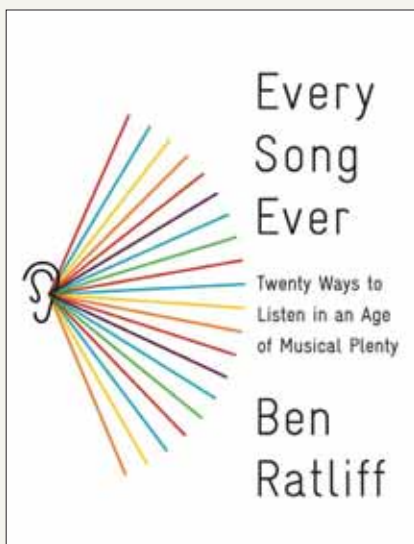
"We are listening in the time of the cloud," writes Ben Ratliff in his new book, ***Every Song Ever: Twenty Ways To Listen in an Age of Musical Plenty*** (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux). "Now we can hear nearly everything, almost whenever, often for free: most of the history of Western music and a lot of the rest."

Ratliff isn't exaggerating. At the time of this writing, the streaming service Apple Music had more than 43 million songs in its library. Though some might find this unheralded proliferation of music overwhelming, signaling a shift to haphazard, unfocused listening, Ratliff believes that with unlimited access to music comes unlimited power. Music fans are permitted opportunities for greater reflection and scrutiny. They can recall a song at anytime, on any number of devices, for as long as they want to hold on to it. The time is ripe for close listening.

In this regard, Ratliff's approach to musical analysis is akin to that of the New Critics, those early 20th-century literary scholars who, in a radical turn, insisted that texts should be understood as intrinsic works, studied in isolation of their social or historical context. "This book is about the listening experience, and therefore about resisting factual descriptions of what the composer desires you to know regarding a piece of music," Ratliff writes. As a jazz and pop critic for The New York Times, whose expertise comprises everything from Bach fugues to Blind Willie Johnson bootlegs, Ratliff may be our generation's leading New Critic of music. Though his is hardly the first work of pop musicology (last month's Books column featured another, *How To Listen To Jazz*, by Ted Gioia), it is no doubt among the most conceptually engaging.

Much of the book's theoretical intrigue derives from its organization. Instead of arranging his chapters around specific artists or types of music—a method he says would be too limiting and subjective—Ratliff chooses to anchor his theories to properties and concepts inherent in all music, including Loudness, Softness, Repetition, Slowness and Speed. Most of the time, this methodology yields juicy philosophical fruit.

In a chapter on virtuosity, for example, he finds a portal into the metaphysics of listening: "Music opens up a door, moves you through the alternative time-grid parallel to the life of obligations and immediate needs. And so music can be a relief, or a corrective balance. You can see what role virtuosos have in society: they are gift givers. ... When you are listening, you are a virtuoso yourself." It's a staggering statement.



But on other occasions, the organizing principle backfires, and the book suffers because of Ratliff's hazy codification. Chapters on Audio Space, Wasteful Authority and Memory and Historical Truth struggle against cohesiveness, and it's in these chapters that Ratliff's philosophizing meanders into obscurantism and hyperbole, as in his multi-paragraph assessment of Miley Cyrus' 2009 hit "Party In The U.S.A.," which he calls "a song about listening: one of the greatest ever made." The same is true for his description of an Elvin Jones and John Coltrane duet on *Live At The Half Note: One Down, One Up*, which he says achieves a state of "bicameral consciousness." Compelling as that duet may be, the analysis seems overblown.

Still, the book brims with important and challenging ideas, most of them eloquently articulated, and none more central than the frequently cited notion that genre, in this age of musical plenty, is an almost obsolete term. In fact, Ratliff's overarching thesis seems to be that in order to fully engage with the current abundance of digital music, one must do his or her best to shed any predisposition for personal taste: "Genre is a construct for the purpose of commerce, not pleasure, and ultimately for the purpose of listening less," he writes.

Again, like the New Critics, Ratliff makes the case for a methodology of listening that examines a song as a thing unto itself—a wonderfully complex, slippery, multifaceted thing—rather than in relationship to things you've heard before. Ratliff doesn't just want you to listen to your favorite songs *more closely*. He hopes that you will listen to more, closely.

DB

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Ralph Peterson Trio *Triangular III*

ONYX

★★★★

Tucked inside this effervescent 2015 live date is a miniature tribute to unsung pianist and composer Walter Davis Jr. He served as an early mentor to powerhouse drummer Ralph Peterson, who steers this third edition of his Triangular group. This time, the trio showcases the burgeoning talents of siblings—bassist Luques Curtis and pianist Zaccai Curtis.

The disc kicks off with a barreling reading of Davis' "Uranus," a delightful hard-bop number with transient bossa nova turnabouts, writ-

ten for Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. Several tunes later, the trio launches into a capricious reading of Davis' "Backgammon"—another tune written for Blakey and the Messengers—and Luques initiates the fantastic romp through "400 Years Ago Tomorrow," the final Davis composition, which is greatly animated by Zaccai's spry reading of the Afro-Latin melody and Peterson's tussling yet never intrusive rhythmic interjections.

—John Murph

Triangular III: Uranus; Beatrice; Inner Urge; Backgammon; Manifest Destiny; Skylark; 400 Years Ago Tomorrow; The Art Of War; Moments; Blues Cooch. (60:07)

Personnel: Ralph Peterson, drums; Zaccai Curtis, piano; Luques Curtis, bass.

Ordering info: ralphpetersonmusic.com



Theo Croker *Escape Velocity*

OKEH/SONY MASTERWORKS 88875107562

★★★★

Theo Croker is a trumpeter of splendid contrasts, his tone warm but piercing, his phrasing gentle but insistent. His latest album, *Escape Velocity*, is a declaration of these fruitful juxtapositions, inhabiting the fascinating intersections of thought and action, passion and politics, melody and groove.

While the governing aesthetic is instrumental r&b, the album's conceptual range is vast. Several songs touch on Croker's commitment to social issues, including the poignant "We Can't Breathe," which he wrote in response to the tragic deaths of Eric Garner and Trayvon Martin, and "It's Gonna Be Alright," his life-affirming anthem of hope. In these and a number of other fine compositions, Croker, a young man with a strong jazz lineage (his grandfather was New Orleans trumpet legend Doc Cheatham), has hit upon a powerful message, one that is entirely his.

—Brian Zimmerman

Escape Velocity: Raise Your Vibrations; Transcend; This Could Be; In Orbit; No Escape From Bliss; The Right Time; A Call To The Ancestors; Meditations; We Can't Breathe; It's Gonna Be Alright; Because Of You; Real Episode; Love From The Sun; Changes; Respect (Amen). (55:45)

Personnel: Theo Croker, trumpet; Kassa Overall, drums; Irwin Hall, alto saxophone, flute, bass clarinet; Michael King, keyboard; Eric Wheeler, bass; Anthony Ware, baritone saxophone; Ben Eunson, guitar; Femi Temowo, guitar, Dee Dee Bridgewater, vocals (13).

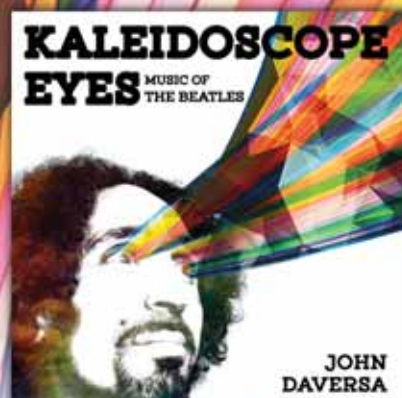
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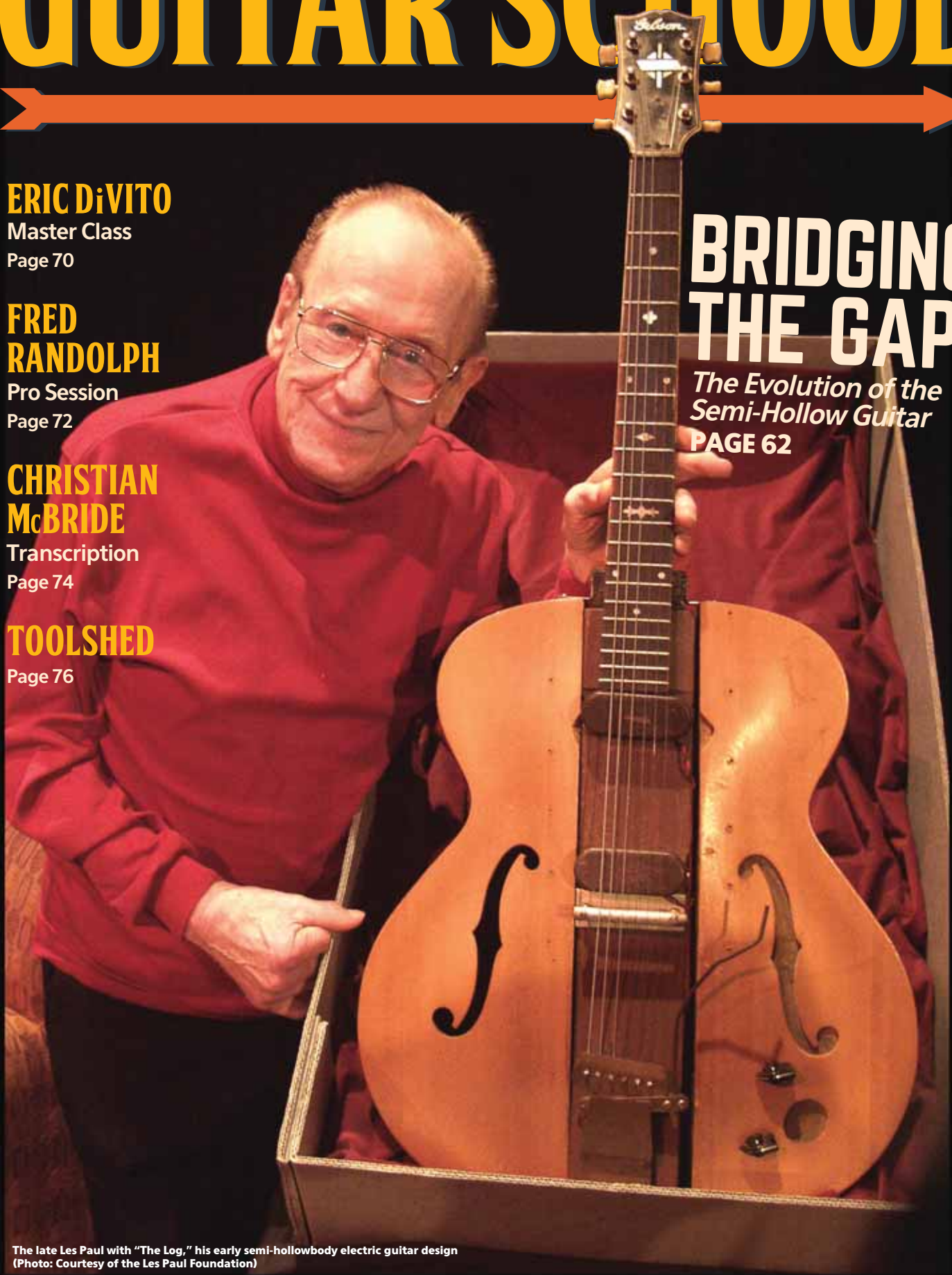
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**BRIDGING
THE GAP**

*The Evolution of the
Semi-Hollow Guitar*

PAGE 62



The late Les Paul with "The Log," his early semi-hollowbody electric guitar design
(Photo: Courtesy of the Les Paul Foundation)



By Keith Baumann

BRIDGING

THE ONGOING EVOLUTION OF

.....

The semi-hollow electric

guitar—a popular choice for jazz musicians seeking the subtlety of an acoustic voice but with power enough to scream—provided the missing link in the evolution of guitar design.

Over the decades, guitar design has been driven by visionary manufacturers and highly skilled luthiers but navigated by players whose needs are impacted by the popular music of the day. From early jazz through swing into bebop, blues, rock 'n' roll, country, folk and heavy metal, there has always been a guitar built to meet players' ever-changing musical demands.

The quest for volume has remained a key factor in the evolution of guitar design. Lloyd Loar's L-5 acoustic archtop guitars, which he designed for Gibson in 1922, were capable of projecting at impressively high levels and quickly replaced the tenor banjo in dance orchestras. The demand for louder instruments continued with the introduction of larger-bodied archtops, but a major turning point occurred with the introduction of the magnetic pickup, ushering in an entirely new era and forever altering the musical landscape.

The history of electrified instruments begins in 1932, when the National Guitar Corporation introduced the "frying pan" lap steel guitar, the first electrified production instrument. The popularity of Hawaiian music at the time drove the production of these instruments,

and in 1935, the Rickenbacker corporation decided to attach a Spanish guitar neck to its Model B lap steel body, creating the world's first solidbody production electric guitar.

It is interesting to note that guitars with solid bodies actually appeared before hollowbody electrics, which entered the market in 1936 with Gibson's ES-150, the first in the company's "new Electro-Spanish" line. Electrified hollowbody guitars continued to increase in popularity throughout the late 1930s and '40s, and although they did provide the ability to perform at much higher volumes and opened the door for single-note soloing styles, they also suffered from feedback issues when pushed beyond a certain level. The solution came in 1951 in the form of the Fender Telecaster, the first in a lineage of new mass-produced solidbody electric instruments that would literally "rock" the world.

Gibson responded to the Telecaster in 1952 with its Les Paul model, named for the iconic guitarist and inventor who had previously developed his own innovative electric guitar design in 1941. Dubbed "The Log," Paul's design featured a solid wood plank running down its center, flanked by two hollow wings cut from an Epiphone archtop. His continuing experimentation eventually led to the building of "The Clunker," based on a highly modified Epiphone Broadway. He recorded for many years with his Log and Clunker until Gibson presented him with its Les Paul prototype, which featured a solidbody design and bore little resemblance to Paul's original vision. However, several years later, Gibson decided to revisit the "Log" concept, and in 1958 the company introduced the ES-335 semi-hollow guitar, which utilized a slimmed-down hollow archtop body with a solid block of maple running through its center. The guitar was revolutionary and offered the best of both worlds, providing the rich acoustic resonance of a hollow body with the strong feedback resistance of a solid body.

This hybrid design, commonly referred to as "semi-hollow," successfully filled the gap between fully hollow electrified guitars and solidbody electric models. Gibson's center-block ES-335 quickly gained a reputation as an extremely versatile guitar capable of functioning in a wide variety of musical situations.

The huge success of the ES-335 has resulted in numerous copies over the years. Indeed, luthiers and guitar manufacturers the world over have introduced their own versions of the semi-hollow guitar, with prices ranging anywhere from \$500 to \$15,000. Many are simply clones of the original design, but others who have built upon the foundation established by Gibson have added innovations and enhancements that take

THE GAP

THE SEMI-HOLLOW GUITAR

the semi-hollow to the next level. We spoke with a select variety of luthiers and manufacturers and asked them to share their experiences, insights and opinions with us so that we may gain a deeper insight into the evolution of the semi-hollow guitar and the appeal this now-classic design has inspired in guitarists who inhabit the realms of jazz, blues and beyond.

Eastman Music Company launched its guitar division in 2004 with a line of hand-carved acoustic archtops that set new standards for quality at an affordable price. After establishing a firm foothold in the jazz market, Eastman felt it needed to expand its horizons and offer electric guitars. According to Otto D'Ambrosio, guitar designer at Eastman Guitars, "A semi-hollow was a logical step into the electrified world from the conservative acoustic jazz world."

Eastman introduced its first thinline electric, the T-146, in 2005. The terms *thinline* and *semi-hollow* are frequently confused, so let's take this occasion to define the two terms more precisely. Thinline guitars in general are slimmed-down versions of archtops and can either be fully hollow with a floating bridge or feature a solid block to support the bridge, which is generally pinned into the block. True semi-hollows use the full center block, which divides the body into two separate tone chambers. *Semi-acoustic* is another term that is frequently used to describe both types of designs.

Expanding further into the electric guitar market, Eastman introduced its first center-block semi-hollows, the T386 and T486, in 2012. The company currently offers nine models of semi-acoustic instruments in both laminate and solid woods, with about half being center-block electrics.

D'Ambrosio said that the challenge for Eastman in building these guitars was educating themselves in electronics and learning how pickups interact with the physical acoustic properties of the instrument. "The combination of the player, acoustic sound and electric amplification create a trilogy that can transcend the music," he said. D'Ambrosio believes that the market is growing because younger players are looking for different sounds, and he sees semi-hollows crossing over from jazz and blues into a wider variety of music.

Yamaha entered the electric guitar world in 1966 with the SA5, a fully-hollow thinline guitar, and followed up by adding several center-block models to its Semi-Acoustic series in the late 1960s. Currently, Yamaha offers only one semi-hollow, the SA2200, which had previously only been available overseas or through select custom order but has recently been reintroduced to the U.S. market due to high customer demand.

Ibanez JSM100VT John Scofield Signature



According to Armando Vega, marketing manager for Electric Guitars, Basses and Amps at Yamaha, it was changes in musical taste that originally prompted the company to expand from acoustics into semi-hollow electrics. "It was a sign of the times," he said. Vega noted that Yamaha's 50 years of experience building guitars, coupled with the knowledge gained from 120 years manufacturing other instruments and electronic components, has been a key factor in producing a quality product.

Vega also pointed out that Yamaha has extensive resources for quality wood due to its piano and marimba business. The company currently sees a growing interest in semi-hollow guitars among young musicians looking further back for influences. "There is no way to duplicate the sound of a semi-hollow," Vega said. "The combination of acoustic resonance and amplification creates magic."

Luthier Roger Sadowsky has been creating guitars since 1972, when he built his flattop acoustic. In 1980 he moved into solidbody electrics and later basses. A collaboration with jazz guitarist Jim Hall resulted in his first archtop signature model, released in 2003, and was followed up by his second archtop artist model, the Jimmy Bruno. Adding a semi-hollow to the line was a natural step for Sadowsky, who felt that there was a demand for a guitar that could produce a traditional jazz tone but also be extremely versatile and comfortable with a high level of feedback resistance. In designing his guitar, Sadowsky said, "My semi-hollow has to be a jazz instrument first." With a strong conviction that the world did not need another Gibson 335, his semi-hollow design features several innovations that separate it from the pack.

In order to reduce mass and increase resonance, Sadowsky utilizes a fully ported spruce center block design in his semi-hollow. Basically, there are openings cut in the block to allow vibration to pass through the entire body. In contrast, the Gibson 335 uses a solid maple center block, which completely isolates the two bouts of the guitar. Sadowsky also constructs his guitars using a special

laminated material that is about half the weight of what the 335 features. "I have always focused on the wood and acoustic resonance as a primary factor in my guitars," he said.

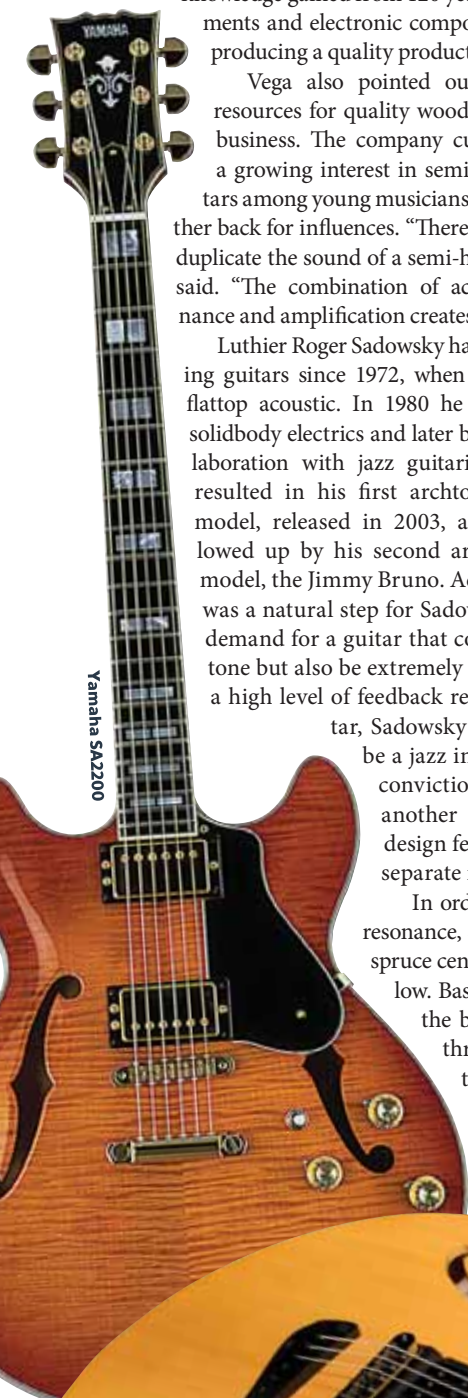
Although the name Ibanez dates back to 1929, the company gained its foothold in the guitar market in the early 1970s by offering Japanese-manufactured copies of classic American instruments. During this time, often referred to as the "lawsuit era," Ibanez quickly gained a reputation among players for quality and value. Later branching out into producing its own guitar designs, Ibanez now features a full line of instruments with numerous semi-hollow models available.

The semi-hollow holds a significant place in guitar history, filling the large gap created by an industry that had made the giant leap from amplified archtops directly into solidbody electrics.

With several Japanese companies producing Fender and Gibson clones in the '70s, Ibanez was the company that altered our perception of these import guitars by setting new standards and gaining the respect of the professional community. In fact, their hollowbody jazz boxes were among the first Japanese instruments to break into the American jazz market with artists like George Benson and Pat Metheny. Ibanez currently offers a variety of semi-hollows in several lines with its John Scofield and Eric Krasno Signature models at the top, followed by their Artstar Prestige offerings. Known for its exceptional value, the Artcore series is the company's standard line. As Ken Youmans, communications and promotions specialist for Ibanez, put it: "You won't find a better a guitar for the money."

Steve Marchione has been building fine guitars since 1990. He individually hand-carves each of his instruments in the tradition of Jimmy D'Aquisto and John D'Angelico. As with many luthiers, Marchione began his career making violins before moving into archtop guitars. His entry into the semi-hollow world was sparked by a customer request, and the resulting guitar has since become a regular model for the builder. Regarding his semi-hollows, Marchione said that he strives for "the ring and feel of an acoustic instrument, but with a great controllable electric tone."

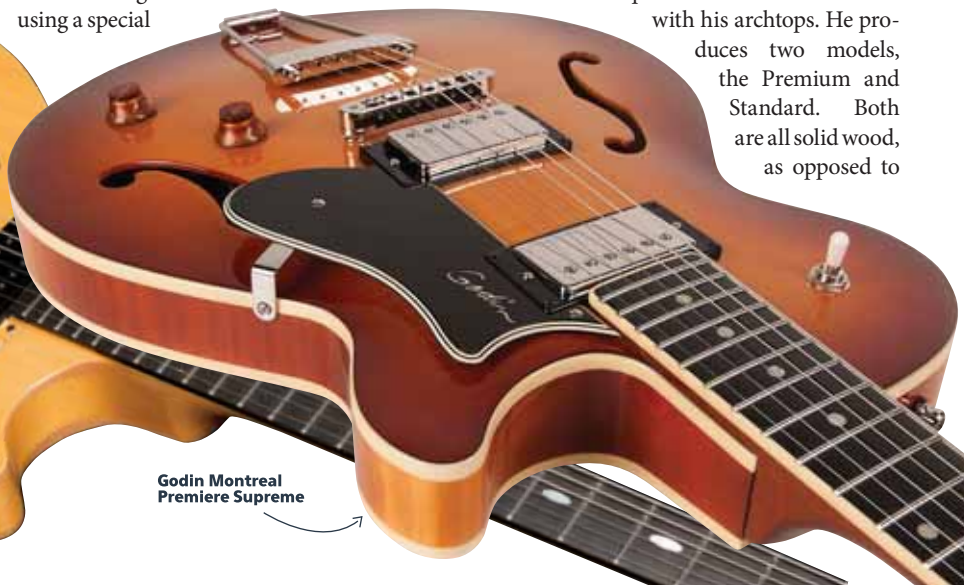
As a custom builder, Marchione applies the exact same hand-carving techniques to his semi-hollows as with his archtops. He produces two models, the Premium and Standard. Both are all solid wood, as opposed to



Yamaha SA2200



Butter by Westville



Godin Montreal
Premiere Supreme

the laminate construction common to many other semi-hollows. He also does not utilize a center block but features a thinline-type bridge support that is actually carved directly into the top and back, requiring no additional wood to be glued inside of the body. This results in an extremely light and resonant instrument. Even his f-holes are custom designed to maximize vibration of the top. Marchione pointed out that he uses only hide glue in constructing his instruments and that all facets of his guitars are built in his workshop, including the components.

D'Angelico is a name that needs no introduction among guitarists. The handmade archtops built by John D'Angelico between the early 1930s and the late 1950s are among the most sought-after jazz instruments in the world.

The D'Angelico legacy was given new life when the trademark was purchased in 1999 and again when the company underwent a major rebranding in 2011. The revitalized company entered the market by manufacturing a reproduction of one of John D'Angelico's most prolific archtop models, the EXL-1. According to Ryan Kershaw, who directs artist relations at D'Angelico Guitars, they actually used MRI imaging to study an original D'Angelico model. The company now offers a full lineup of instruments, including flat-top acoustics, electric and acoustic archtops, and basses.

"With strong roots in acoustic archtops, it is a very natural progression to go from fully hollow to semi-hollow guitars," Kershaw said. He noted that the company considers it important to reach an expanded market and introduce their existing customer base to new options. The D'Angelico line features a center-block semi-hollow, the EX-DC, and a thinline hollowbody with only a post behind the bridge, the EX-SS. Kershaw said that achieving a balance between weight, tone and shape was a particular challenge on these guitars, which went through many different prototypes during their development stages.

Masaki Nishimura of Westville Guitars in Japan began designing

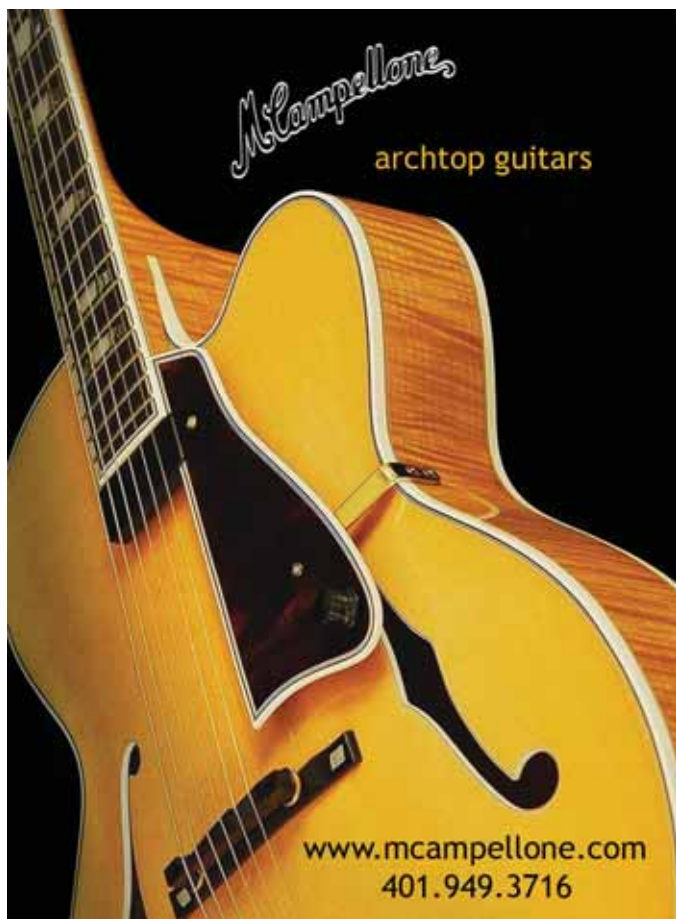


Marchione Premium



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and building guitars in 2013 with two semi-hollow models that he calls Butter and Water. Westville Guitars now offers a Kurt Rosenwinkel signature semi-hollow as well. Nishimura, who was inspired to design semi-hollows through his love for jazz, produces only about 20 to 30 hand-built guitars each year. While running a jazz guitar store in Tokyo, he got the idea to build a semi-hollow using a fresh approach that would set it apart from the Gibson 335.

Rather than using the standard laminate materials, Nishimura went with a solid carved spruce for his guitar tops and solid hard maple for the backs. Inspired by an archtop guitar built by luthier Tom Ribbecke, Nishimura sensed that these materials produced a mellower and richer tone than plywood. Borrowing from the Fender Telecaster, he also routed the strings from the back of the body up through the maple center block into an ebony tailpiece, which helps increase the guitar's overall vibration.

Nishimura said that the attraction to the semi-hollow lies in its ability to produce the sustain of a solidbody while providing the acoustic warmth of a hollowbody. Looking forward, he said that although the 335 is a truly great design, he sees opportunity to improve on the classics. And that, he believes, will inspire players to explore new music.

Guild Guitars, which has been in the guitar business for more than 60 years, offered its first semi-hollow, the Starfire, in the early 1960s. Over the years, the company has been focused mainly on its highly successful acoustic guitar line, eventually discontinuing the bulk of its electric offerings. However, in the past few years, Guild has been reviving its electric guitar line and reintroducing many of its classic Starfire semi-hollows and thinline models.

According to Brandon Schmidt, product manager at Guild Guitars, the original Starfire was introduced as a lower-priced competitor to Gibson's 335. The evolving musical scene of the '60s drove the need for Guild to expand from the jazz guitar market into the rapidly growing rock world. Now, some 50 years later, the company has once again sensed the need to expand its reach by bringing these models back to life. The new laminate Starfires come in a wide variety of configurations; some are center-block models, while others are bridge-block models. Guild refers to them as vintage reproductions with modern components.

"The challenge with these instruments is setting yourself apart from the 335 yet maintaining a certain level of familiarity with the player, keeping it unique, yet useable," Schmidt said. He noted that these guitars have a definite appeal among younger players looking for a retro vibe. "These guitars feel completely different than a solidbody. You can feel the connection to the archtop world, you can feel the DNA."

Paul Reed Smith founded his company, PRS Guitars, in 1985, offering custom-made solidbody electrics. PRS later moved into producing thinline hollowbody archtops and eventually added semi-hollows to its roster. The company now manufactures an exten-

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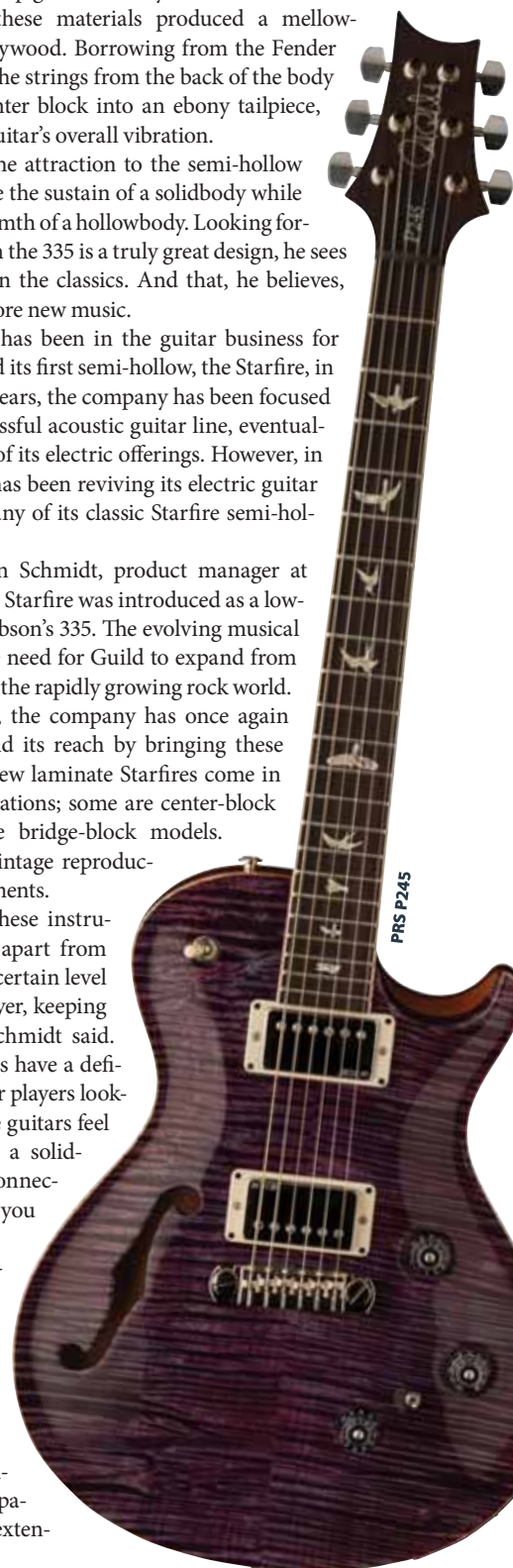
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sive variety of these guitars in several distinct lines, with instruments built both overseas and in the U.S. According to PRS, expansion into the jazz and indie markets were two primary reasons for bringing these guitars to market.

Although PRS does use the term semi-hollow on several of its models, the company typically does not offer a traditional center-block style guitar (though some artist signature models and Private Stock one-off guitars are built that way). Their usual/production version of the semi-hollow is constructed by routing out a chamber in a solid guitar body and then capping it with a separate piece of wood that has a single f-hole cut into it. This proprietary design results in a modified version of a solidbody with reduced weight and added resonance. PRS also offer its Hollowbody models, which are essentially bridge-block thinline-style guitars with a piezo pickup system built into the bridge for added acoustic color.

"PRS Guitars believes that if a guitar looks good, it makes you want to pick it up," said Judy Schaefer, marketing manager at PRS. "If you pick it up, it feels good and it makes you want to play it. If you play it, it will sound good, and it will make you want to keep playing it and make some music. When you plug a semi-hollow guitar into that thought process, the look of the guitar changes pretty dramatically, and if you're like me, an f-hole just looks cool. When you pick it up, it will be just as comfortable and familiar as any solidbody guitar we make—because the back carve is the same, not to mention the care we take in our neck shapes. And when you play it, even acoustically, the tone simply has a nice, subtle warm and woody overtone to it. It is resonant, but won't feedback. And that can be a great experience for players from all walks."

Quebec-based Godin Guitars—with an impressive array of products that include its innovative multiac and electro-acoustic models, archtops and solidbodies—is a company that has mastered the art of building amplified stringed instruments. Godin entered the archtop market in 2008 with the 5th Avenue acoustic, and quickly followed up with an electrified version, the Kingpin. The company now offers a full array of 5th Avenue laminate archtops, which it lists as part of its semi-hollow guitar line—but these guitars really fall into the fully hollow archtop category.

Godin's first entry into the semi-hollow arena actually came in 2011 with the release of its Montreal Premiere, the first model in what the company now calls its archtop thinlines. According to Andy Dacoulis, Godin employee and endorsing artist, "There was a need in the market for a more affordable but North American-made semi-hollow guitar."

Godin felt that versatility, weight and ergonomics were extremely important elements

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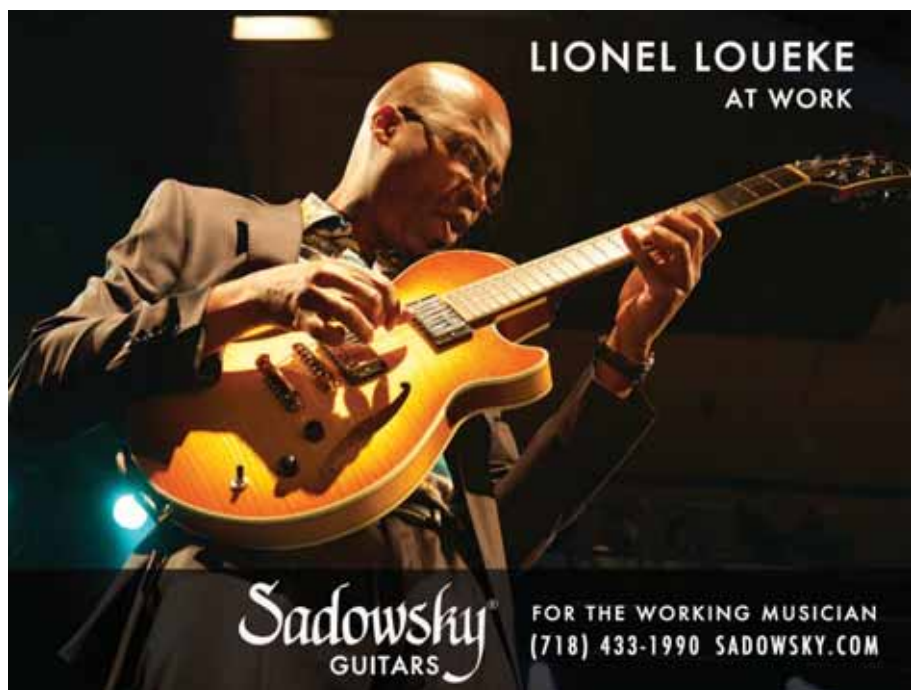
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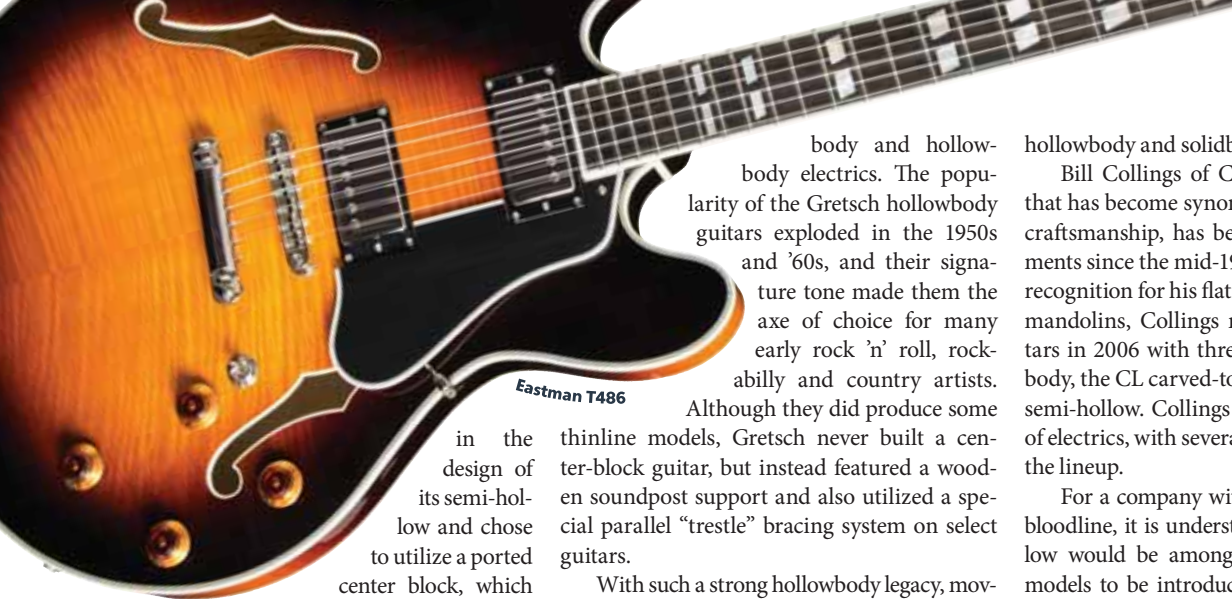
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Eastman T486

in the design of its semi-hollow and chose to utilize a ported center block, which it calls a “breathe-through core.” This helps reduce weight and increase the acoustic response. The Montreal Premiere line is now available with a variety of pickup configurations and tailpiece options. Dacoulis said that these guitars are seeing an increase in popularity with musicians catching on to the true diversity of the semi-hollow and its ability to handle any type of gig. He also points out that Godin always strives to build something a little different and put its own stamp on every instrument.

Gretsch has been a family-run company in the instrument business since the late 1800s. Gretsch released its first Synchronomatic archtops in 1939 and went on to develop a line of solid-

body and hollowbody electrics. The popularity of the Gretsch hollowbody guitars exploded in the 1950s and '60s, and their signature tone made them the axe of choice for many early rock 'n' roll, rockabilly and country artists.

Although they did produce some thinline models, Gretsch never built a center-block guitar, but instead featured a wooden soundpost support and also utilized a special parallel “trestle” bracing system on select guitars.

With such a strong hollowbody legacy, moving into semi-hollow guitars was a rather delicate move for the company, which was careful not to alienate its existing fan base. The release of the Center-Block series in 2013 offered a perfect compromise since it featured classic Gretsch design and tone in a thinner, lighter, more ergonomic and feedback-resistant package.

Jason Barnes, director of category management at Gretsch Guitars, noted that the real challenge was in deciding what should stay the same and what needed to change on these new semi-hollows. “It is hard for a legacy company like us,” he said. “We had to build center blocks that look and sound like a Gretsch.” Barnes also said that the new Gretsch Center-Block guitars produce a fresh voice that sits right between

hollowbody and solidbody.

Bill Collings of Collings Guitars, a name that has become synonymous with impeccable craftsmanship, has been building fine instruments since the mid-1980s. Gaining worldwide recognition for his flattop guitars, archtops and mandolins, Collings moved into electric guitars in 2006 with three models: the 290 solidbody, the CL carved-top solidbody and the I-35 semi-hollow. Collings now offers a robust line of electrics, with several semi-hollow options in the lineup.

For a company with such a strong acoustic bloodline, it is understandable that a semi-hollow would be among the first electric guitar models to be introduced. According to Aaron Huff, manager of electric guitars at Collings, the company's acoustic experience with archtops and mandolins has played a significant role in creating these guitars. He also said that building a semi-hollow was a bit more of a challenge than expected, with even the smallest changes in design and materials making a noticeable impact. Huff also mentioned that it took several attempts to get the pickups voiced just right for the guitars.

Collings produced only solid-top semi-hollows at first but has now moved into laminates as well. In its solid-top line, the company utilizes the standard solid maple for a center-block. But with its laminates, the company has developed a special laminate block composed of maple sandwiched between two layers of spruce. Collings found that this adds warmth and provides better balance to the laminate guitars.

When it comes to the use of CNC machinery in guitar manufacturing, Bill Collings is widely recognized as an industry guru who has raised this technology to the level of a true art form. According to Huff, “CNC machinery allows us to get closer to the finish line so we can focus more energy on the finer details of the instrument.” He went on to say, “But in the end, these are still handmade instruments built with a perfect blend of human interaction and automation.”

The semi-hollow holds a significant place in guitar history, essentially appearing to fill the large gap created by an industry that had made the giant leap from amplified archtops directly into solidbody electrics. The impact of the Gibson 335 has been undeniable, inspiring new music and generating countless devoted fans. And although there will always be those who seek the original, it appears that the semi-hollow market is still very much alive and well. As luthiers and manufacturers continue to explore new designs to accommodate today's generation of players, we can look forward to exciting new innovations in the quest for the elusive tone that sits perfectly between acoustic and electric.

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A jazz musician might play the same tune literally thousands of times during their lifetime. One of the most important things about being an improvising musician and about jazz music in general is being able to keep those tunes seeming new each time. While a lot of that has to do with the musicians themselves, it can be a useful skill to arrange tunes in new, creative ways to keep them fresh, unique and interesting for both the listener and the performers.

Often, an interesting arrangement of a familiar tune can breathe new life into it and motivate and inspire musicians to look at it from a fresh and different perspective. Some of the areas of arranging standards I would like to focus on include form, ensemble and solo texture, reharmonization, contrafact, variation and techniques idiomatic to the guitar.

Some tunes are so well known and so deeply ingrained into our vocabulary that just the first few notes of the melody, or even just one or two chords, can easily make them recognizable—without ever having to play even a full measure of the tune itself. This can work to your advantage when doing an arrangement. When changing things like harmony, melody or form, the essential DNA of the tune is always there for us to find, no matter how hidden or arranged it is.

Letter “A” shows a familiar tune set to some chord voicings that are more unusual than the traditional changes but are very idiomatic to the guitar. These voicings often utilize clusters of half or whole steps, or other dissonant intervals such as major sevenths. Often open strings are used to achieve this. These particular voicings lend themselves to having this statement of the melody played as a chord solo without the rest of the rhythm section, creating a very beautiful and often dark and haunting setting. This treatment is very different than the original version. Letter “A” can sort of function as an introduction to the tune as well, which is a good way to start rearranging the form and varying the ensemble texture.

Letter “B” introduces an aspect of form that is often overlooked when arranging tunes—ensemble texture—particularly the use of unaccompanied solos. While it is optional to have the bass solo unaccompanied, the lack of any time or meter restrictions from the drums or harmonic restrictions from the guitar gives the bassist the freedom to follow, deviate from or completely abandon the harmony—or perhaps do all three. Or, maybe the bass and drums play together without a strong sense of tempo or meter and the guitar lays out. There are many interpretations that can work to keep it fresh, and that is the point here. This adds an element of freedom that can seem welcoming to a set of chord changes that can often feel restricting and a tune that can at times feel stale. The biggest challenge here is having the ensemble cue back together at letter “C,” where the time and harmony return. Iconic ensembles and rhythm sections do this in an almost telepathic way (Bill Evans Trio, Miles Davis’ second Quintet, Wayne Shorter Quartet, etc.), so be sure to give them a close listen.

At letter “C,” we have the full ensemble playing together, in a very chromatic contrafact (a new melody overlaid on a familiar harmonic structure). The constant chromatic motion of the melody often changes the implied harmony but always works due to the strong and familiar harmonic progression. In terms of variation of form, the more strict,



almost exercise-like approach here is a nice contrast to the previous two sections, which have more freedom.

Letter “D” keeps the alternating variation of form going with another solo interlude, this time in the drums. Again, the bass and guitar have the option of playing or laying out. They have the option to adhere to or disregard tempo and meter and cue the ensemble back again at letter “E.”

Letter “E,” another contrafact, is meant to be almost the extreme opposite of the contrafact in letter “C.” This one is meant to sound almost as if it was an improvised solo, utilizing motivic rhythmic development, leaps of larger intervals and some diminished scale runs (bars 68 and 72). There is also another idiomatic guitar technique used here of letting particular notes ring together to create a beautiful harp-like sound (bars 75–80) often used by guitarists such as Bill Frisell. Again, the use of open strings helps to achieve this, much as in letter “A.”

Letter “F,” which now has the same function as letter “B” and letter “D,” keeps the varied alternating solo form consistent. Again, this can be just guitar, certain members of the rhythm section or an entire ensemble solo. Time, meter, tempo and harmony are just guidelines or suggestions. Have fun with how you interpret this section and the others like it. The order of instrumental solos is open to change; guitar is offered here merely as a suggestion.

Letter “G,” the last section of this arrangement, is a chromatic reharmonization of the main melody. This time the chromatic approach is applied to the bass line of the harmony rather than the melody as in letter “B.” Pretty straightforward, but with some interesting chord choices that again provide a unique setting of a familiar melody.

Also added is an optional outro or coda at the last measure where the ensemble vamps on the last chord, treating it as a new section of the tune. This added section further plays with the form and elaborates on it in a modal way (B \flat m/C or C phrygian), opening it up to either more soloing or ensemble playing.

While each section here can be looked at on its own as a useful arranging technique, they can also all be strung together to create an interesting and flexible arrangement that experiments with melody, rhythm, harmony, form and ensemble texture without once stating the

original melody with the original chord progression. Reinventing the tune this way breathes new life into it that might help players look at it in a new way and not become tired of it. It also is a good way to reimagine a tune and make it stand out from the usual way others might traditionally perform it. Use the ideas and techniques presented here and apply them to other tunes—especially your own original compositions—to further develop your creative arranging skills.

DB

Guitarist Eric DiVito has been active on the New York City music scene since 2003. He frequently performs at jazz clubs and festivals as both a leader and a sideman, including several tours in Canada and work for Carnival and Bateaux Cruises. DiVito also teaches music and directs ensembles in the New York City public school system, and he maintains a private studio where he teaches guitar techniques, jazz studies and composition privately and via Skype. He has released two albums on the Pioneer Jazz Collective (PJC) label: *Breaking The Ice* (2012) and *The Second Time Around* (2013). DiVito endorses Eastman guitars and Flite Sound Innovations speaker cabinets. Visit him online at ericdivito.com.

A

17 **B** (Bass Solo)

25

33 **C**

37

41

45

D (Drum Solo)

57

E

70

75

F (Guitar solo)

89

G

104

108

(rump/tide)



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Chart Notation: The Essential Tool Kit

One of the most important—and most neglected—skills a professional musician must develop is the ability to notate compositions and arrangements clearly and effectively. By giving proper attention to some basic principles, you can create charts that will solve many potential rehearsal and performance problems. As a guiding principle: When writing charts, your biggest goal should be clarity.

Layout & Form

Good sight-readers look first at “the big picture.” Most Western music is constructed in eight-measure phrases, with inner phrases of two or four measures. Therefore, a standard default of four bars per line is a good way to start. Obviously, there will be occasional phrases that are not even. When this happens, make the odd phrase obvious by writing it all on one line or splitting it up between lines that reflect the phrasing. For example, if you have a 10-bar phrase made up of a six-bar sub phrase plus a four-bar sub phrase, use one line of music for the six-bar phrase and another line for the four-bar phrase. This way, the chart will flow in the same manner that the music does.

Proper notation of the form or “roadmap” is critical to making sight-reading easy. Use carefully placed rehearsal-letter names such as “A,” “B,” “C” to denote the different sections of the chart. A good sight-reader will look over the form first, so you want to make this clear. When using first and second endings, if possible put them both on the same line so that the section following the second ending begins at the start of the following line (see Example 1).

When a section ends, utilize a double bar to add visual clarity. Try to start new sections at the beginning of a line of music rather than in the middle of a line. If the tune has an intro, separate this clearly and label it, followed by the first section of the main melody, which you’ll call letter “A.”

Proofread your charts to be sure you have things like D.S. and coda signs in the correct place on all parts. As a performer, there is nothing more frustrating than finding a D.S. sign with no coda sign following it. Always put the coda itself on a separate line, and indent that line if possible. Since codas and their related signs are so important, I use a Sibelius function that colors them bright red so that they are



impossible to miss. Always specify whether the coda itself is to be taken before or after a repeat. And always use a final double-bar to signify the ending of a piece.

Harmony

The key to good harmonic progression is the bass line. If you have a strong bass line, the harmonic contours tend to be clear. For example, when naming diminished chords, use the bass line to show direction and to name the chord in question. To illustrate, if you have the three-chord progression Gmaj7–A_bdim7–Ami7, the A_bdim7 leading to Ami7 should be notated as G#dim7 (or G#°7) instead, because it is built on the leading tone in the key of A minor. And although this chord could be construed as Bdim7, Ddim7 or Fdim7 in various contexts, none of these reflect the bass movement of this progression, so stick with calling it G#dim7 (see Example 2).

When writing out chord symbols for rhythm section players and soloists, keep in mind that this type of musical shorthand is not completely standardized. When distinguishing between major and minor chords, don’t simply use “M” or “m.” The clearest way is to use “maj” or “mi.” Triangles (for major chords) and dashes (for minor chords) are commonly used by jazz arrangers, but spelling out “maj” or “mi” leaves no dispute.

If the chord in question has complex alterations, putting parentheses around the alter-

ations makes them easier to “grab” visually. If you want to specify the exact notes in a chord, spell the notes to the alterations. For example, in a C7(#9,5) chord, use D# for the raised ninth; use Gb for the flat five rather than F#; and use Bb for the lowered seventh rather than A#. Also include a chord symbol above the chord even when writing the notes out. Reading fully notated chords is difficult at fast tempos, and the use of a chord symbol helps to give the pianist or guitarist a fighting chance.

Rhythm

Don't overwrite rhythm section parts. Drummers, for example, don't want to read written-out parts other than that which is absolutely essential. You can specify a groove by writing it out once, then use measure-repeat symbols and the word “simile” to indicate that the player should continue in a similar manner until the next musical event (see Example 3). Bass players don't need every note of a walking bass line written out. Just provide them with chord symbols and say “swing,” “walk,” “two-beat,” etc., at the beginning of the section. I have often seen complex 12/8 bass-line notations that, unless they're played in unison with another instrumental part, could be better indicated by writing “afro 12/8” with the appropriate chord symbols.

In all the instrumental parts, be sure to

space the notes correctly with regard to the beat and to leave enough room for the rhythms to be clearly understood. Use beams to group notes such as eighths and 16ths (write eighths in groups of four). Make sure that the sight-reader can see rhythmic subdivisions easily. This primarily involves “seeing” the middle of the measure. To do this, the writer should use ties if going past beat 2 in a 4/4 measure.

Summary

Good chart notation is a critical element in bandleading, rehearsing and performing. Remember that while notation software can make your job easier, it won't teach you how to notate charts well. The best teachers are your fellow professional musicians: Ask them what works and what doesn't. Learn from every mistake or criticism (assuming it is positive or constructive criticism). Always ask yourself, “How can I make this chart easier/simpler to read?” And don't hesitate to consult reference books such as *The Art of Music Copying* (Roerick), by Clinton Roemer, and *Music Notation, Theory and Technique* (Berklee Press), by Mark McGrain.

DB

Fred Randolph is a professional bassist, composer, arranger and educator based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has released three CDs as a leader. His most recent, *Song Without Singing*, is available through cdbaby.com. Visit Randolph online at fredrandolph.com, or write to him at fredran@comcast.net.

Example 1

Example 1 shows two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system has two measures, each with a red bracket above it. The second system has two measures, each with a red bracket above it. Chord symbols are written above the notes.

Example 2

Example 2 shows a single system of piano accompaniment with three measures. Chord symbols are written above the notes.

Example 3

Example 3 shows a single system of piano accompaniment with four measures. The first measure is marked “TAXI GAMB” and the second measure is marked “(SIMILE)”. The notation uses measure-repeat symbols and ties.

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Electro Parables/Electro Parábolas (PYR164) is Volcano Radar's first studio recording as a duo and their second release for the label Pan y Rosas, following *Refutation of Time* (PYR075), a quartet recording with Harrison Bankhead and Avreeayl Ra.

Uruguayan multi-instrumentalist/composer Elbio Barilari and American guitarist/composer Julia Miller first played together as Volcano Radar in 2012. Their music has been described as noise-funk, post-jazz, avant-rock, improvised experimental music, jazz-electronica and neo-psychedelia.

"It might be hard to pick out what instruments are being played for a lot of the sounds heard on this album (and I won't attempt to make any guesses here), but Miller and Barilari kind of made that un-essential, anyway. They strive for a unique collective din, the means by which it's achieved isn't nearly as interesting as the end result."

—S. Victor Aaron (somethingelsereviews.com)



Available at CD Baby



Christian McBride's Bass Solo on 'Grove'

Assist Christian McBride has been on the scene for a long time, and for this transcription we go back 20 years to his second album as a leader, *Number Two Express* (Verve, 1996). McBride's composition "Grove" (for trumpeter Roy Hargrove) is a medium swing number. It's a 16-bar form that moves through a handful of keys in classic bebop manner. McBride does something unexpected with the arrangement by writing in half a shout chorus and soloing on the second half, doing this twice before taking a full chorus of his own.

McBride reuses other ideas, especially rhythms, intervals and phrasing contours, paraphrasing himself as a means of creating ideas that sound connected but also move in a direction. Measures 3 and 4 are the first example. McBride sets up a rhythmic idea of two triplets with a rest on the first beat of the first triplet grouping. He repeats this rhythm three times (and implies it at the end of bar 4). For the first two iterations, they even share a simi-

lar contour, making them sound more related.

In the very next measures, he does the same thing with notes, going from a fifth to a fourth in bar 5, and repeats the same notes in bar 6, only with variations on the rhythm. So he's gone from retaining the rhythm and altering the notes to repeating the notes with different rhythms. In both cases we get a combination of variation and repetition, giving us ideas that are related but also move forward. He even brings back the same motif in bar 13, but with a different rhythm. This adds more cohesion to his solo.

McBride's second half-chorus starts out with another triplet lick, but he implies a poly-rhythm by repeating two notes across the triplet. These two notes are a whole step apart. After a couple of low notes, he plays an intervallic lick that goes down a minor third and up a whole step. In the next bar, McBride plays the same intervals in the same rhythms, only moves the whole thing down a fifth, with the exception of

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the second two notes on beat 3's triplet, keeping those the same. Moving the lick down a fifth makes sense, since the chord moves down a fifth from C7 to Fmaj7, so it's the same motif modulated to fit the chord. And since there are no sevenths in the lick, he doesn't have to alter it at all to fit the new chord quality.

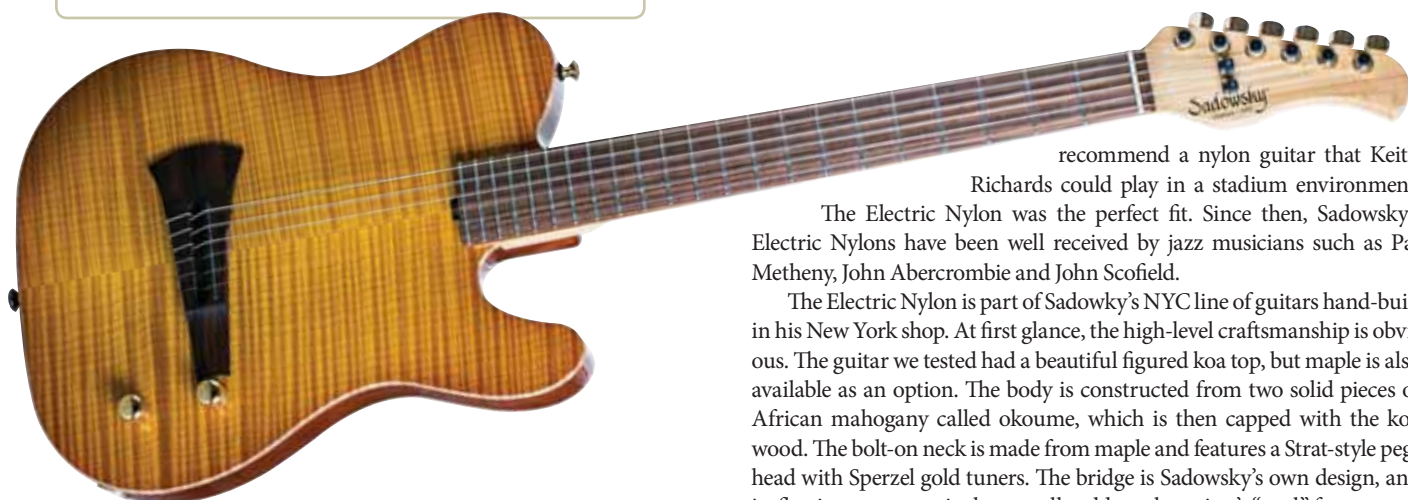
There's another example of McBride doing this with intervals, only in a smaller time-frame. In bar 23, he plays a 16th-note run where each beat consists of descending major second-minor third-major second, and brings this entire sequence down a minor second and then a major second. One curiosity is that the middle iteration, F#-E-C#-B, doesn't fit the sound of the underlying harmony. The seventh of D7 is C natural, so the C# is an "outside" note, but because the ear hears it as part of an interval-

lic pattern, it doesn't come across as jarring (the fact that it's in the middle of a bunch of 16th notes helps as well).

Another example of moving an idea around happens in bars 29 and 30, where McBride plays up a major triad (from the third), does the same thing down a whole step and then back up a whole step. It's especially effective since these triads are the actual chord changes. Also, he couples the ideas of repeating an intervallic idea with repeating a rhythmic idea. He even uses the rhythm from the beginning, the back-to-back triplets with a rest on the first beat. This helps bring his solo back around to the opening, setting up the finish.

DB

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



Roger Sadowsky Electric Nylon

Professional-Grade Hybrid Guitar

In the late 1980s, luthier Roger Sadowsky began to hear complaints from New York session musicians about the shortcomings of the Gibson Chet Atkins solidbody nylon guitar. So, he decided to build a better one. In 1990, Sadowsky unveiled his Electric Nylon Guitar, a true professional-grade hybrid instrument designed to offer the nylon string experience to non-classical players.

At the time, Gibson's Chet Atkins model was the only option available in the electrified nylon string category, but it had a few drawbacks in terms of its excessive weight, intonation problems and issues with tone. Sadowsky took all of this into consideration in building his nylon hybrid and went with a chambered body design to reduce the instrument's weight and increase resonance. This is accomplished by routing out numerous small pockets in the guitar's two-piece mahogany body. Upon completion of his first Electric Nylon, fate stepped in when Sadowsky, who was then working with the Rolling Stones to prepare for their Steel Wheels tour, was asked to

recommend a nylon guitar that Keith Richards could play in a stadium environment.

The Electric Nylon was the perfect fit. Since then, Sadowsky's Electric Nylons have been well received by jazz musicians such as Pat Metheny, John Abercrombie and John Scofield.

The Electric Nylon is part of Sadowsky's NYC line of guitars hand-built in his New York shop. At first glance, the high-level craftsmanship is obvious. The guitar we tested had a beautiful figured koa top, but maple is also available as an option. The body is constructed from two solid pieces of African mahogany called okoume, which is then capped with the koa wood. The bolt-on neck is made from maple and features a Strat-style peg-head with Sperzel gold tuners. The bridge is Sadowsky's own design, and its flowing asymmetric shape really adds to the guitar's "cool" factor.

Picking up the guitar, I was immediately impressed by its light weight. The second thing that hit me was how comfortable the instrument felt in my hands. Classical guitars can be quite awkward for players who are not used to them, and building a nylon-string that would fit into the hands of a non-classical player was a priority for Sadowsky. "I designed it for someone coming to it from the steel-string acoustic or electric world as opposed to classical," he said. The guitar features a hybrid 1 7/8-inch neck width that is slimmer than a traditional nylon but wider than a standard steel-string guitar. In addition, the morado fingerboard has a slight radius to it as opposed to the typical flat board on classical guitars.

Although the Electric Nylon feels more like an electric than a classical guitar, the instrument definitely has its own voice. A customized Barbera transducer system is installed into the saddle under each string and controlled by a simple volume and tone knob. Sadowsky's onboard buffer pre-amp insures that the guitar will sound good through a wide variety of amplifiers and also when going direct into a PA system.

Overall, the Sadowsky Electric Nylon represents everything that a good hybrid guitar should be: functional, comfortable, versatile, reliable and with great tone. Available for \$4,700, it's no surprise that this model has become popular among jazz and Latin jazz players. —Keith Baumann

Ordering info: sadowsky.com

Fishman TriplePlay FC-1 Controller

Versatile MIDI Guitar at Your Feet

When Fishman released its TriplePlay wireless guitar USB controller in 2013, MIDI guitar was forever changed for the better. Offering an affordable, highly accurate plug-and-play solution, TriplePlay has given guitarists access to an entirely new world previously dominated by keyboardists. Pushing the door open even further, Fishman has introduced the TriplePlay FC-1 Controller, a \$199.95 floor pedal unit that provides direct access and control of MIDI synths and sound modules.

Prior to the availability of the FC-1, use of the TriplePlay required connection to a computer or iOS device in order to trigger software patches. This could be done through the bundled TriplePlay software or via any MIDI-compliant application. Although the wireless USB connection made things fairly easy, hauling an expensive computer to a gig or recording session can definitely be seen as a drawback. According to Triple Play Product Manager Jason Jordan, Fishman wanted to eliminate this potential obstacle and provide access to MIDI sounds through a floor pedal. The

FC-1 was the solution, and although it is a fairly simple device that stores very little actual data and mainly functions as a controller box, it offers a significant boost to TriplePlay users in terms of added convenience and increased possibilities.

The FC-1 appears as a fairly standard floor box with three momentary foot switches and an LCD display. Wireless connection to a TriplePlay-enabled guitar is accomplished by simply plugging a USB dongle directly into a port on the FC-1. The controller uses the same dongle that comes with the TriplePlay pickup and is hot-swappable between the controller and computer. Once paired with the guitar, the FC-1 can be connected to any MIDI device such as a sound module or synth via a standard MIDI out connection on the controller.

For basic guitar synth capabilities, this simple configuration is all that is required, but the FC-1 is capable of a whole lot more. The unit also has a hardwire USB connection that allows it to connect to your computer for

control over the TriplePlay software or MIDI-compliant package. In addition, the FC-1 can serve as a standalone USB MIDI controller. For those planning to keep a computer in their rigs, the FC-1 provides the advantage of allowing it to now be placed safely off stage.

The controller also features a guitar in and out connection, which allows you to access your instrument's standard signal in addition to the synth sounds. There are a host of possible configurations here, and apparently users are coming up with new ways to use the FC-1 every day. According to Jordan, "People are using the FC-1 for a lot more than its original intention."

I connected the FC-1 to an external sound module, and setup was quick and easy. The LCD display provides configuration information such as patch name and number, connection status, battery level and the state of the Guitar/Mix/Synth switch on the controller. There are three footswitches: two that control patch up or down, and one for controlling the assignable hold feature within a patch. An onboard tuner is available, and an expression pedal can also be connected to the FC-1. The unit even offers control over individual string sensitivity, avoiding the need to adjust these settings via the TriplePlay software. Overall, the FC-1 does its job very well and the ability to perform without a computer is a huge benefit. Adding a computer

to the mix offers even more potential, allowing you to program the controller's individual footswitches and providing access to the entire universe of software patches and MIDI-aware applications.

With the addition of the FC-1 Controller, Fishman has taken yet another major leap forward in MIDI guitar technology and brought its TriplePlay product to a whole new level.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: fishman.com



Spector CodaBass Pro

Punchy, Versatile 'Jazz' Bass

Spector has been producing distinctive, quality instruments for bassists and guitarists since 1976. Known for their unique contoured design, the original NS-1 and NS-2 basses were designed by none other than Ned Steinberger in collaboration with Stuart Spector out of his Brooklyn workshop. Those instruments became an industry standard known for workmanship, playability and aggressive, powerful tone.

Based on feedback from their artists, back in 2009 Spector set out to create a bass with a more traditional design that remained consistent with the sound and superior playability that their instruments were known for. Enter the CodaBass.

The Spector CodaBass comes in a variety of styles and price ranges. The American-made basses were first made available in 2010 and are at a price point consistent with the other American Spector basses. Demand for a more affordable instrument led to the CodaBass Pro series, constructed in Spector's Korean factory (same one since 1995). My test bass was the four-string Coda P4 Pro featuring two Stuart Spector passive Jazz-style pickups. Other models, including five-strings, are available with either one Precision-style pickup or in a P/J configuration.

Out of the box, it was clear that this is no ordinary "Jazz" bass. This particular Coda P4 Pro featured a gorgeous Tobacco Burst finish (new this year) on an equally impressive figured maple top. Also striking was Spector's black hardware, including a locking, top-loading bridge and modern tuning pegs.

The select alder body was surprisingly light, and the one-piece maple neck with rosewood fingerboard contributed to making the bass well balanced and comfortable. The fits and finishes of this instrument were top notch, and playability out of the box was superb—fast and smooth. I did not need to make a single adjustment before taking the bass "to work." This is a testament to the new relationship that Spector has with distributor Korg USA, where each bass is inspected and adjusted before being sent out to the public.

Integral to the sound of the CodaBass Pro models is the Stuart Spector (SS) passive pickups and the Czech-made TonePump Jr. preamp. The newly designed pickups were released last spring and feature a more traditional look with exposed alnico pole pieces. Controls are master volume,

pickup blend, treble boost (+12db) and bass boost (+12db). While not traditional, the controls are intuitive and provide the player with a wide range of tonal possibilities.

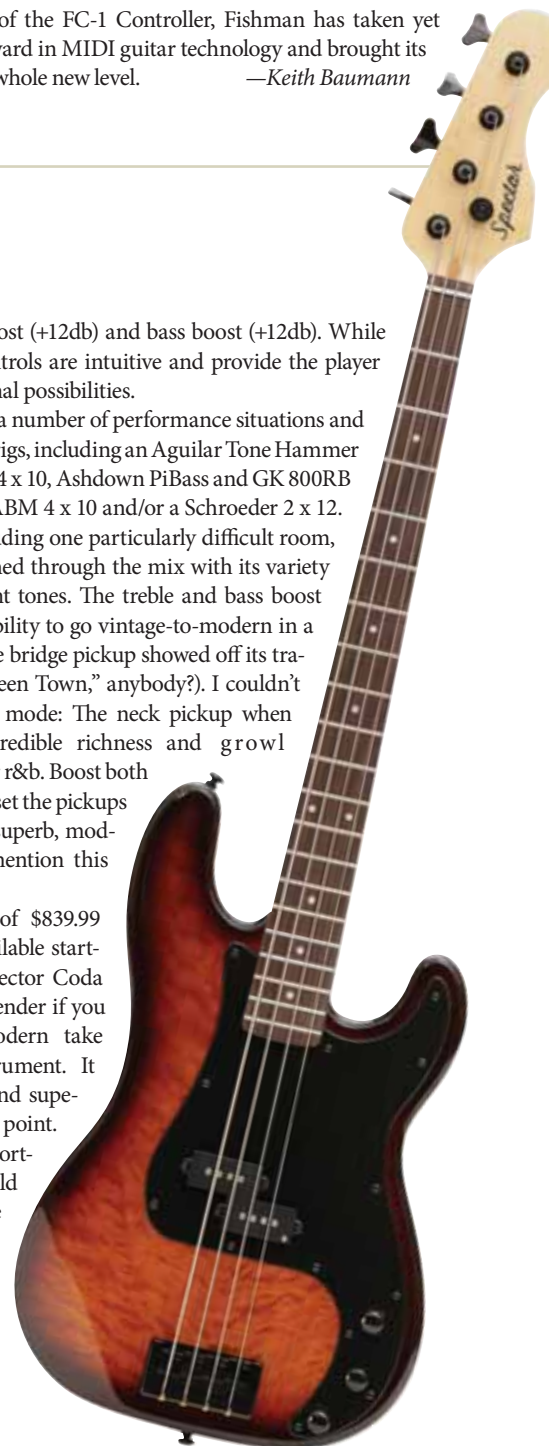
I tested this bass in a number of performance situations and through a few different rigs, including an Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 through a Bag End 4 x 10, Ashdown PiBass and GK 800RB through an Ashdown ABM 4 x 10 and/or a Schroeder 2 x 12. In every situation, including one particularly difficult room, the Coda P4 Pro punched through the mix with its variety of powerful and present tones. The treble and bass boost controls give you the ability to go vintage-to-modern in a hurry. During solos, the bridge pickup showed off its traditional jazz punch ("Teen Town," anybody?). I couldn't help going into "Jaco" mode: The neck pickup when soloed was huge. Incredible richness and growl made it great for rock or r&b. Boost both the treble and bass and set the pickups equally, and you get a superb, modern slap tone. Did I mention this bass was versatile?

At a street price of \$839.99 (five-string models available starting at \$899.99), the Spector Coda P4 Pro is a strong contender if you are considering a modern take on a traditional instrument. It would be difficult to find superior quality at this price point.

With Korg USA supporting Spector, you should be seeing more of these top-notch instruments on stages everywhere.

—Jon Paul

More info: spectorbass.com



1. Health Monitor

D'Addario's Humiditrak is a climate-monitoring system designed to decrease damage to musical instruments with real-time temperature, humidity and impact updates via Bluetooth. By placing the small Humiditrak device inside a musical instrument or instrument case, environmental updates can be viewed using the system's free smartphone application. When Humiditrak detects that conditions are less than ideal, a push notification is sent to the owner's phone, allowing them to take action before damage occurs.

More info: daddario.com

2. Melodic Harmony

Jamey Aebersold Jazz has published *Jazz Guitar Harmony: The Melodic Approach*, by guitarist and educator Zvonimir Tot. The book-and-CD package explores the melodic possibilities that are inherent to good harmonic voice-leading and aims to provide creative yet systemized solutions for players who frequently find themselves in a chord-voicing rut. Tot gets straight to the heart of explaining the relevant principles of harmony used in jazz and how they apply to the guitar.

More info: jazzbooks.com

3. Guitar Hang

Ultimate Support's Genesis Series GS-1000 Pro guitar stand and GS-10 guitar hanger feature improvements to the yoke mechanism from previous versions. The new models have been engineered to work better with guitars featuring unique shapes and asymmetrical bodies. A dual-spring yoke design, updated indentation shape and Santoprene coating allow the mechanism to more effectively support guitar designs that were once difficult to showcase in a hanging stand format.

More info: ultimatesupport.com

4. 6-String Solos

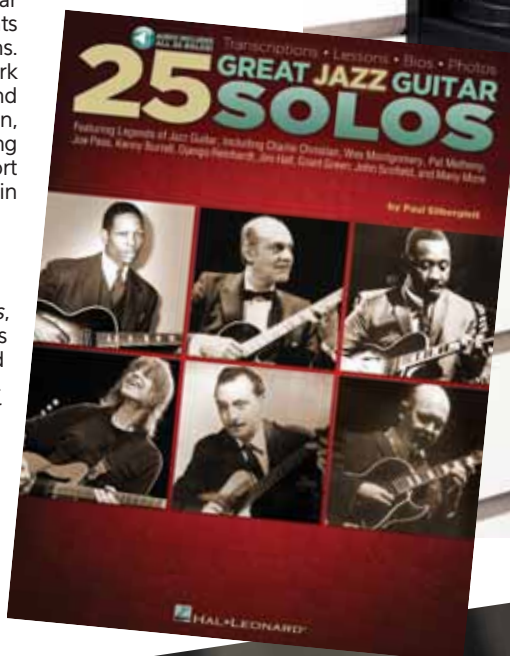
Hal Leonard has released *25 Great Jazz Guitar Solos*, a book and audio compendium that provides solo transcriptions in standard notation and tablature, as well as lessons on how to play them. The accompanying audio (available online for downloading or streaming) contains full-band demonstrations of every guitar solo in the book and allows players to set loop points, change keys, pan left or right and slow down tracks without changing pitch. Songs include "Days Of Wine And Roses" (featuring Pat Martino), "I've Found A New Baby" (Charlie Christian), "Like Someone In Love" (Tal Farlow), "Lover Man (Oh, Where Can You Be?)" (Joe Pass), "Nardis" (Mike Stern), "Nothing Personal" (Pat Metheny), "Orange, Brown And Green" (Herb Ellis), "Whisper Not" (Jim Hall), "The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise" (Django Reinhardt) and more.

More info: halleonard.com

5. Squeal-Free Pickup

Seymour Duncan has released the Apollo Jazz Bass Linear Humbucker, available in neck and bridge models for four- and five-string electric basses. The hand-built pickup is completely noiseless and can be purchased individually or in matched sets.

More info: seymourduncan.com





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Sherman Irby

Eleven years into his second stint with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Sherman Irby embodies the notion of the versatile jazz musician; he's widely celebrated for his skills as a soloist on alto, soprano and sopranino saxophones, as a first-call section player, as a composer-arranger and as a combo leader, as documented on four albums released on his Black Warrior Records label.

Logan Richardson

"Slow" (*Shift*, Blue Note, 2016) Richardson, alto saxophone; Pat Metheny, guitar; Jason Moran, piano; Harish Raghavan, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.

Sounds like Eric Marienthal. This person has a lot of technique. Miguel Zenón? I can't tell who this is. It's an interesting type of chaos—not in a bad way; I think they're going for that. I can't pat my foot to it, but that may be its purpose. There's art in that, too. The guitar player is bad! Not my thing, but it's creative. 3 stars.

David Binney

"Curious About Texas" (*Lifted Land*, Criss Cross Jazz, 2013) Binney, alto saxophone; Craig Taborn, piano; Eivind Opsvik, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums.

There's some Greg Osby in there. Playing with moods. Trying to create colors. Double-time swing on top of slower time. I like how they get mad now. Whoever it is, is creating drama with different colors and feelings, using different parts of the instruments to create different sounds, everybody communicating. The saxophone is not sitting on top of the band, but is part of the whole tapestry, and, when he does step out, it creates another type of drama. It's not swinging, but this is art. It's like improvised classical music. I like it. 3 stars.

The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra

"I Love You" (*Forever Lasting: Live In Tokyo*, Planet Arts, 2011) Dick Oatts, alto saxophone solo; Billy Drewes, Walt Weiskopf, Ralph Lalama, Gary Smulyan, saxophones; John Mosca, Luis Bonilla, Jason Jackson, trombone; Douglas Purviance, bass trombone; Nick Marchione, Tanya Darby, Terrell Stafford, Scott Wendholt, trumpet; Michael Weiss, piano; David Wong, bass; John Riley, drums.

This person is playing the heck out of that ballad. I like the air in the sound, the way it tapers so you can feel the emotion at the end of the note. Steve Wilson? The use of the mutes, the colors, made it sound like Maria [Schneider]'s band, but I can see it's not. It's "I Love You," changed around a bit. He's going for it, without worrying about cracking a note—it's all emotion. The vibrato is beautiful. Beautiful technique in the upper register, too. 4½ stars. That was a treat.

Maria Schneider Orchestra

"Nimbus" (*The Thompson Fields*, ArtistShare, 2015) Steve Wilson, alto saxophone solo; Dave Pietro, Rich Perry, Donny McCaslin, Scott Robinson, saxophones/woodwinds; Tony Kadleck, Greg Gisbert, Augie Haas, Mike Rodriguez, trumpet/flugelhorn; Keith O'Quinn, Ryan Keberle, Marshall Gilkes, trombone; George Flynn, bass trombone; Gary Versace, accordion; Lage Lund, guitar; Frank Kimbrough, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; Clarence Penn, drums.

This sounds like Maria's writing. Charlie Pillow on alto? Ah, that's Steve Wilson. I thought he was playing the flute part. When you play together so much, you pull a lot from each other. 4 stars.

Paquito D'Rivera

"Tojo" (*Panamericana Suite*, MCG Jazz, 2010) D'Rivera, alto saxophone; Dana Leong, trombone; Diego Urcola, trumpet; David Samuels, vibraphone; Andy Narell, steel pans; Alon Yavnai, piano; Oscar Stagnaro, bass; Mark Walker, drums.

Robin Eubanks on trombone? SFJAZZ? No? Mike Rodriguez on trumpet? That's Paquito. The upper register. He has impeccable technique. Very aggressive. It's tight. It has virtuosity, passion and soul. 4½ stars.



Sherman Irby

Arthur Blythe

"Odessa" (*Lenox Avenue Breakdown*, Columbia, 1979) Blythe, alto saxophone; James Newton, flute; James Blood Ulmer, electric guitar; Bob Stewart, tuba; Cecil McBee, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Guilherme Franco, percussion.

You said it's [from] the end of the '70s—I hear a lot of Kenny Garrett coming out of that! I'm stumped. Great alto saxophonist. This is sincere. It's not, "I'm going to do something just to sound like I'm doing something." That's a blues guitar player. Bob Stewart on tuba? 4½ stars.

Rudresh Mahanthappa

"Talin Is Thinking" (*Bird Calls*, ACT Music, 2015) Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; Adam O'Farrill, trumpet; Matt Mitchell, piano; François Moutin, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

This reminds me of Chris Potter, but Chris isn't playing alto now. A lot of that style comes out of what Steve Coleman was doing in the 1990s, playing melodic and cold at the same time—but cold like Miles was cold. This isn't my thing, but it's good, with a lot of emotion, drama, dynamics—things that make good music. 3½ stars.

Alan Ferber Nonet

"Clocks" (*Roots & Transitions*, Sunnyside, 2016) Ferber, trombone; Jon Gordon, alto saxophone; John Ellis, tenor saxophone; Charles Pillow, bass clarinet; Shane Endsley, trumpet; Nate Radley, guitar; Bryn Roberts, piano; Matt Clohesy, bass; Mark Ferber, drums.

The level of technique tells me this is strictly an alto player; you can't achieve that by touching the horn every so often. Listen to how clear the jumps are. It's hard to identify the alto player. It's a vibe kind of tune, with a long melody, different movements, different statements, but not much thought into what the soloist is going to play. 3 stars.

Donald Harrison

"Cut & Paste" (*This Is Jazz: Live At The Blue Note*, Half Note, 2011) Harrison, alto saxophone; Ron Carter, bass; Billy Cobham, drums.

"Rhythm" changes. Older cat? I wanted to say Lee Konitz. Bobby Watson? Oh, it's Duck. He doesn't articulate real hard. None of his stuff is done with bell tones; that's just his style. What Ron Carter is doing on the bass is just about impossible for anybody. Very complex fingerings and approaches. The drummer is Billy Cobham? I wouldn't have guessed him. 5 stars.

DB

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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