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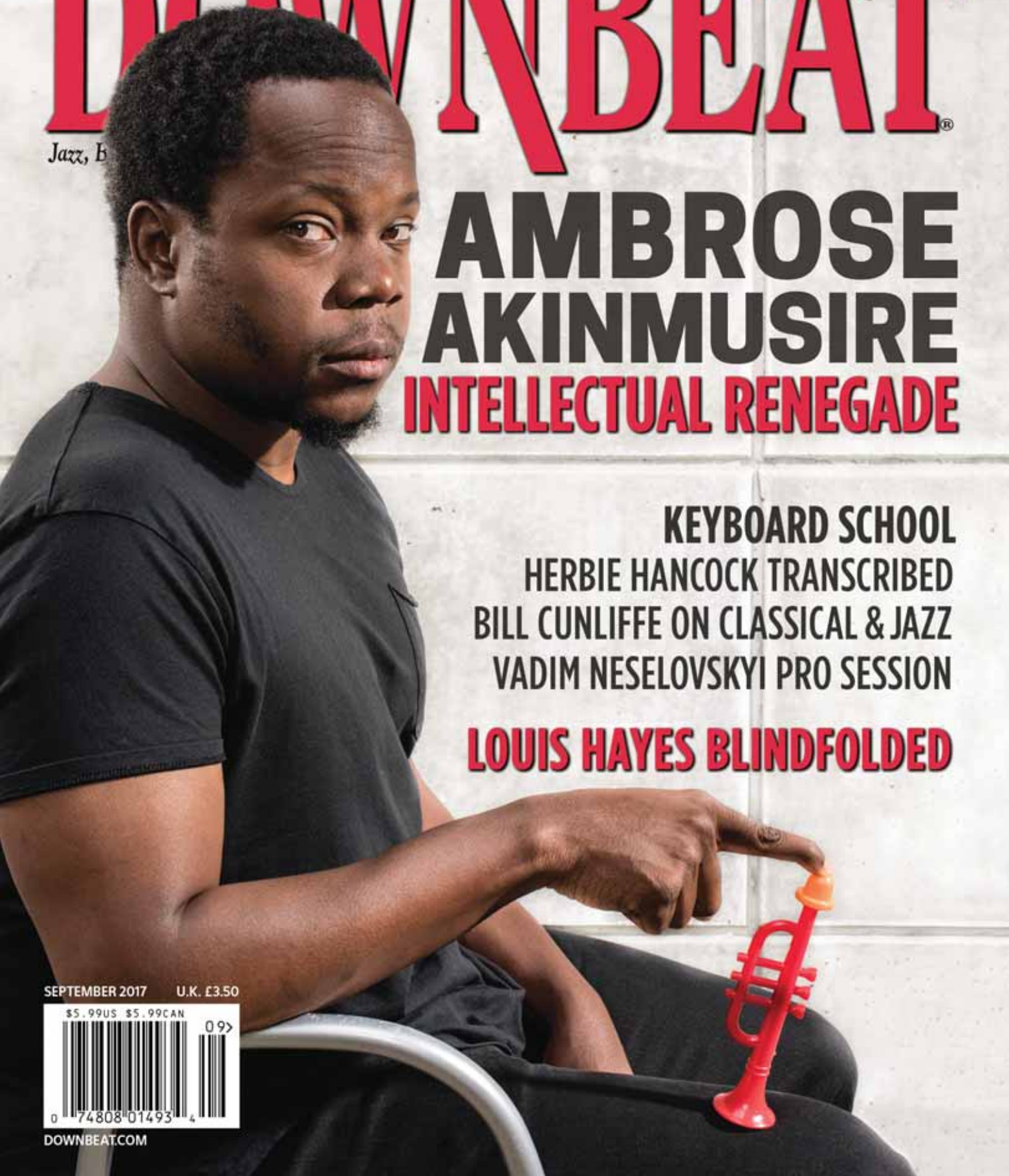

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The Acclaimed trumpeter and composer's new album is an expansive double album with his intuitive quartet recorded live at the hallowed **Village Vanguard** in New York City, a proving ground for jazz legends throughout the ages from John Coltrane to Sonny Rollins to Dizzy Gillespie to Bill Evans.

TROMBONE SHORTY
PARKING LOT SYMPHONY

Shorty's **Blue Note-debut** captures the spirit and the essence of The Big Easy, while redefining its sound. Blazing through 70s Funk, Rock, Hip-Hop and R&B, ***Parking Lot Symphony*** also delivers fresh covers of **The Meters' "It Ain't No Use,"** and **Allen Toussaint's "Here Come The Girls."**

TONY ALLEN
THE SOURCE

With his **Blue Note-debut**, ***The Source***, Nigerian drummer **Tony Allen** sees a childhood dream come true. Allen says this is the "best in my life," and with a career spanning over 50 years, that's quite the confession for the **Afrobeat pioneer** and former **Fela Kuti** fixture. ***The Source*** represents Blue Note's classic era while symbolizing the label's innovative present.

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SEPTEMBER 2017

inside

ON THE COVER

FEATURES

Jane Bunnett (left) and Maqueque members Celia Jiménez and Elizabeth Rodriguez at the Tri-C JazzFest in Cleveland on June 24.

Cover photo of Ambrose Akinmusire (and images on pages 28–30) shot by Jay Blakesberg at SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco on June 12. Info for this venue is at sfjazz.org.


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SPECIAL SECTION

DEPARTMENTS

TENOR SAXOPHONIST WITH THE MAYNARD FERGUSON ORCHESTRA, THE BUDDY RICH BIG BAND, AND THE TONIGHT SHOW BAND WITH JOHNNY CARSON

PHOTOGRAPHER | PATRICK FRISCHKNECHT | FRAUENFELD, SWITZERLAND

TRI-C JAZZFEST/JEFF FORMAN

Dan Polletta (left), Terence Blanchard, Ravi Coltrane and Kenny Barron share a laugh at the Tri-C JazzFest.

Mutually Beneficial Exchange

TEACHERS LEARN FROM STUDENTS. ASK any educator, and he or she will tell you that sometimes the instructor feels like the pupil. The same is true in the grand tradition of jazz mentorship. Art Blakey (1919–'90) is revered today not only for his artistry but also for the way that he served as a mentor to so many remarkable jazz "Messengers" who worked in his band over the years. Blakey (and his fans) benefited tremendously by having incredible, younger players in his band, including artists who would later become important leaders themselves, such as Wayne Shorter, Wynton Marsalis and Terence Blanchard.

During my experience at this year's Tri-C JazzFest in Cleveland (June 22–24), jazz mentorship emerged as a theme. Blanchard played in two contexts at the fest. On Friday night, he delivered a stunning set that focused on his score to the Robert De Niro film *The Comedian*, featuring the same musicians who played on the soundtrack, including tenor saxophonist Ravi Coltrane and pianist Kenny Barron (see review on page 22). Regarding Barron, Blanchard told the crowd, "If you've got Michael Jordan on your team, you don't leave him on the bench." That was how the trumpeter introduced Barron's brilliant trio rendition of the standard "Isfahan," which was a master class on elegance and swing.

After the concert, producer/host Dan Polletta of WCPN moderated a lively conversation with Blanchard, Coltrane and Barron in the festival's Jazz Talk Tent. At one point, Barron discussed his stint in Dizzy Gillespie's band, and he related a humorous anecdote about Diz and an unfortunate bout of flatulence. Barron learned a lot from Diz, and this funny tale made me realize that while the great trumpeter definitely belongs on the Mt. Rushmore of jazz—I revere him as much as anyone in music history—he was also a regular human being.

Polletta asked Blanchard about his role as Artist-in-Residence at the festival, and his work mentoring students at Tri-C (Cuyahoga Community College) in the art of scoring films. Blanchard said, "What they're teaching me is to keep my eyes and my ears open and to not settle. They're bringing innovation of their own." He went on to describe how young people with fresh ideas are key to maintaining the cutting-edge aspects of music (and other art forms) today.

Young musicians can also inspire elders to explore new avenues. This was illustrated by Blanchard's concert on Saturday night with his band The E-Collective, which is made up of young players, including the remarkable pianist Fabian Almazan (whose new album is the subject of a 5-star review on page 62).

This notion of artists from different generations learning from each other was also illustrated by veteran saxophonist/flutist Jane Bunnett's performance at Tri-C with her band Maqueque. Bunnett repeatedly told the audience how much inspiration she has drawn from these incredible young Cuban players. Fans at this show were dazzled by the energy radiated by this ensemble.

Mentors help youth, and youth help mentors. That two-way street—that exchange of ideas and energy—is one of the things that keeps jazz gloriously, perpetually moving forward. **DB**

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Our National Treasure

How could Wadada Leo Smith *not* be your August cover artist, pointing his horn up to the heavens, after convincingly winning Artist, Album & Trumpeter of the Year in the Critics Poll?

As Ted Panken's story, "Rising Up in Purity," conveys, sometimes the passage of time is necessary for listeners to catch up to an innovative artist like Mr. Smith. Panken mentioned that the pianist Anthony Davis heard Smith play a duo concert with Marion Brown in 1970 while he was a freshman at Yale in New Haven. My wife and I were there, too, getting an antidote to the stress of being a medical student at Yale. Unfortunately, there were less than a dozen attendees in the basement room for the concert and there was no newspaper coverage. I did some jazz record reviews at the time under the name "Dr. Jazz." That was before Smith had added "Wadada" to his name. Now we are both devoted grandparents.

Like his Jazz Album of the Year, *America's National Parks*, Smith is a national treasure.


Wadada Leo Smith
MICHAEL JACKSON

Please take care of yourself, Mr. Smith, as I'm sure you will provide us with many more of your musical treasures.

H. STEVEN MOFFIC, M.D.
MILWAUKEE

Eileen Southern Book

In your August issue, the cover story on Wadada Leo Smith misstated the title of one of Dr. Eileen Southern's books. The title is *The Music of Black Americans: A History.*

JERRY GARMAN
WHITEHALL, MICHIGAN


COURTESY OF THE ARTIST
Helen Gillet

NOLA Pride

I always look forward to the annual Critics Poll issue, and I was really pleased with *most* of the results this year. I loved seeing New Orleans greats Clint Maedgen and Aurora Nealand make the cut, but I was surprised that another New Orleans standout, Helen Gillet, didn't. She is a phenomenal cellist/composer/vocalist worthy of note. Anyway, thanks again for the poll!

SCOTT ARNOLD
SCOTT93WEST@GMAIL.COM

Missing Sonny

I've been depressed all day because I saw Sonny Rollins' name missing from the Tenor Saxophone category of the 65th Annual Critics Poll. I know that torches exist to be passed, especially in jazz, but I'm just not ready to accept Sonny's retirement.

The poll results made me appreciate once again Sonny's majestic, nearly 70-year contribution to our music.

ALLEN MICHIE
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Poll Criticism

At first, I was happy to see the results of the annual DownBeat Critics Poll because I usually agree with the critics' opinions.

But they missed out on one of today's best Rising Star acts, the saxophone-and-drums duo Binker and Moses. Also, the duo's new release, *Journey To The Mountain Of Forever*, has not been reviewed in DownBeat. You are doing the duo (and your readers) a disservice by not giving these musicians their due.

LAWRENCE BUCHAS
L.BUCHAS@COMCAST.NET

Editor's Note: *A review of the new Binker and Moses album will be in our October issue.*

Corrections

- In the August print edition, the article on Jen Shyu should have indicated that her name is pronounced like the word "shoe." Also, Shyu plays the Taiwanese moon lute, but not the Vietnamese moon lute.
- In the August issue, Jim Macnie's review of Matt Wilson's album *Honey And Salt* should have indicated that actor/singer Jack Black is the husband of Tanya Haden.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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TIM BERNE´S SNAKEOIL
GARY PEACOCK TRIO
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Mark Shim: Tenor Saxophone
Vijay Iyer: Piano, Fender Rhodes
Stephan Crump: Double Bass
Tyshawn Sorey: Drums

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Oscar Noriega: clarinet, bass clarinet
Ryan Ferreira: electric and acoustic guitars
Matt Mitchell: piano and elctronics
Ches Smith: drums, vibes, percussion, timpani

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Tangents

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Gary Peacock: double bass
Joey Baron: drums

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Lucus

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The Beat

Inside

Revisiting Sinatra's Bossa Gems

Singing softly and carrying a seven-string guitar, John Pizzarelli returns to the bossa nova on *Sinatra & Jobim @ 50* (Concord), commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1967 masterpiece *Francis Albert Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim*, an album that became a career highlight for both artists.

The iconic album was the ultimate summit meeting of American and Brazilian pop and jazz. Sinatra was at his most tender, yet intensely focused, singing in a whole new idiom. Jobim provided most of the songs, sang backup and played meticulous guitar and piano. Claus Ogerman wrote brilliant orchestral arrangements that combined yearning with restraint.

On Pizzarelli's tribute album, he prominently features singer Daniel Jobim, the maestro's gentle-voiced grandson, as his duet partner. Pizzarelli refers to the project as "a birthday present to two masters from their humble servants."

The album includes intimate, live-in-the-studio versions of Jobim's "Dindi" and "If You Never Come To Me" from the superstars' first meeting in 1967, and songs from their subsequent 1969 session, like "Agua De Beber" and "Bonita." The three American standards to which they gave celebrated bossa nova treatments in 1967 are here, too—"Baubles, Bangles And Beads," "Change Partners" and "I Concentrate On You"—as well as originals by Pizzarelli and his wife, singer Jessica Molaskey. Pizzarelli said that the inclusion of the originals and "Two Kites" (a later Jobim song) are meant to suggest the kind of material that Sinatra and Jobim might be doing today if they were still around.

This is Pizzarelli's second album devoted to Brazilian music. His 2004 release, *Bossa Nova*, which was a tribute to singer/guitarist João Gilberto, had a similar mix of Jobim classics with standards and original bossas. (Daniel contributed backing vocals on those sessions.) That album also had orchestral flourishes, which Pizzarelli avoided this time around.

STEPHEN SOROKOFF

Daniel Jobim (left) collaborated with John Pizzarelli on *Sinatra & Jobim @ 50*.

"I don't think I would have used strings even if the budget was not a consideration," he said. "This album also has a little more element of jazz to it. It wasn't formulated. We were doling out solos, so [pianist] Helio [Alves] got to play some, I got to blow on some things and [tenor saxophonist] Harry Allen does as well."

The week of the recording session, a last-minute travel glitch prevented Jobim from joining Pizzarelli and his band, so they collaborated via FaceTime and a dedicated high-speed Internet connection between the studio in New York and Jobim's grandfather's studio on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. "The whole album was recorded in three days," said Daniel Jobim, "but I was here in Brazil, in the rainforest, during [the occasional] thunderstorm. Sometimes we heard frogs and birds," some of which appear on the album.

Pizzarelli has high praise for his ensemble: pianist Alves, drummer Duduka Da Fonseca and bassist Mike Karn. The core group first perfected the arrangements to these songs two years ago at New York's Café Carlyle, with Daniel Jobim as guest. "The thing I'm learning at this point is, if you have the best guys, you don't have to do too much," Pizzarelli explained. Several songs end with inspired, improvised vamps. "They just felt so right, I didn't feel like stopping. It's like a locomotive—you don't want to get off."

Pizzarelli is on tour now, and he'll perform with Alves, Da Fonseca and Daniel Jobim on July 27–30 at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley in Seattle.

—*Allen Morrison*

Riffs

Colin Stetson at the Montreal Jazz Festival

Montreal Glory: Reedist **Colin Stetson** performed a superb solo concert July 1 at the Montreal Jazz Festival in support of his new release, *All This I Do For Glory* (52 Hz). The album was engineered, mixed and produced by Stetson, who is known for his extended techniques on saxophone. While in Montreal, DownBeat senior contributor and veteran jazz radio host **Michael Bourne** received the festival's Bruce Lundvall Award, presented annually to a non-musician who has left a mark on the world of jazz. For reviews of shows at this year's Montreal Jazz Festival, visit downbeat.com.

More info: montrealjazzfest.com

Mighty McLaughlin: On Sept. 15, Abstract Logix will release John McLaughlin's album *Live @ Ronnie Scott's*, which was recorded in March. The Meeting of the Spirits Tour, which launches Nov. 1 in Buffalo, New York, will feature separate sets by Jimmy Herring & The Invisible Whip and McLaughlin & The 4th Dimension, followed by the two guitarists joining forces for an jam based on Mahavishnu Orchestra material. McLaughlin has said this will be his final U.S. tour.

More info: johnmclaughlin.com

Berlin Lineup: The Berlin Jazz Festival (Oct. 31–Nov. 6) will feature commissioned pieces from trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpeter Amir ElSaffar and composer Geir Lysne, who will conduct a world premiere with the NDR Bigband. Drummer Tyshawn Sorey will serve as the festival's Artist-in-Residence. Also scheduled to appear are Nels Cline, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Ingrid and Christine Jensen and John Beasley's MONK'estra.

More info: berlinerfestspiele.de

Final Bar: Trumpeter Kelan Phil Cohran, a founding member of the AACM, died June 28 in Chicago at age 90. He performed with the Sun Ra Arkestra, founded the Artistic Heritage Ensemble, invented an instrument he called the Frankiphone (or Space Harp) and taught at Northeastern Illinois University's Center for Inner City Studies.

Tepfer's Mathematical Ingenuity

DAN TEPFER—WHOSE PIANISTIC EXPLOITS encompass an improvisatory take on Bach's Goldberg Variations, a running partnership with saxophonist Lee Konitz and a growing portfolio of explorations in digital multimedia—is widely praised for his erudite, eclectic sensibility.

No surprise there. His mentors include two similarly expansive piano legends: Martial Solal, who, in an email from his home near Paris, cited Tepfer for his "energy, originality, 'connaissance' ['knowledge' in French] of classical composers and history of jazz," and Fred Hersch, who, speaking in his New York apartment, called Tepfer "a really outstanding young musician" with "his foot in jazz" and "a lot of other things, too."

Tepfer's new trio album, *Eleven Cages* (Sunnyside), persuasively illustrates those points. The album, with Thomas Morgan on bass and Nate Wood on drums, consists of 11 tunes, most based on mathematically derived systems that, in their creative vision and precise articulation—if not stylistic particulars—echo masters of the Baroque, bebop and beyond.

A great example is "Hindi Hex." Written for a duo performance with Gilad Hekselman, the tune is based on the nine letters of the guitarist's last name. Each of the letters is assigned a pitch—forming a melody composed mostly of the diminished scale, around which the harmony is built and under which a tripartite Indian rhythmic pattern pulses.

The tune "Little Princess" is based on bars of regularly expanding and contracting length. The bars are set against a descending chromatic bass line paired with a constant structure of upper harmonies and a melody that works with the meter.

Throughout the album, such elements combine to create what Tepfer calls systems of constraint. They are the metaphorical cages of the album's title. Each tune operates within a cage. And the cages are meant to be rattled.

"A lot of things in the music aren't determined by the system," Tepfer, who was raised in France by American parents, said over lunch in June near his home in Brooklyn. "The life of these tunes is not about these constraints. It's about what we're able to do within these constraints."

What Tepfer's trio intuitively does—despite or, perhaps, because of the self-imposed rules—is imbue the music with a kind of elasticity that clarifies its logic and deepens its mystery, engaging both sides of the brain.

"Good music," he said, "always lives at the intersection of the algorithmic and the spiritual."

Tepfer's structured tunes contrast with the album's relatively short free improvisations—"Cage Free I" and "Cage Free II"—whose lack of predetermined form, in Tepfer's universe, serves to highlight the value of freedom with structure. The stronger the cage, the more compelling the sense of abandon.


Dan Tepfer has released a new trio album as well as a collaborative disc with singer Judy Niemack.

"Sometimes," he said, "the less free I think I'm being, the more free I sound when I listen back later."

For all the intellect that goes into fashioning Tepfer's cages—he earned an undergraduate degree in astrophysics from the University of Edinburgh and then a master's degree in jazz piano performance from the New England Conservatory—he does not come to his work with dispassion. His attitude toward playing popular tunes makes this clear.

"You should only play covers if you have a connection to the tunes, if they mean something personal to you," he said. And, based on their lyrics about human relationships, the album's covers—Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" and Gershwin's "I Loves You Porgy"—fit squarely in the album's theme. "Both are about freedom and constraints."

Singer Judy Niemack, who teams with Tepfer on her new album of standards and originals—an extended colloquy titled *Listening To You* (Sunnyside)—sums up the challenges and, ultimately, rewards of performing with a pianist unlikely to fill the conventional role of accompanist.

"There was a moment of conscious realization that he wouldn't be setting tunes up, providing me with a bed," Niemack said. "But it was total heaven. When we play, we're in the same place. I've met my match and I love it."

—Phillip Lutz

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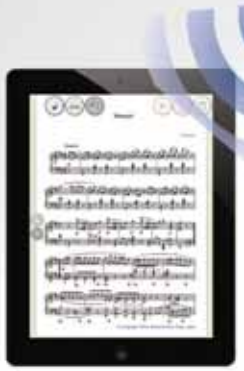

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Dave Chisholm is both a musician and a visual artist.

Blending Skill Sets

DAVE CHISHOLM HAS SPENT HIS LIFE IN VARIOUS AREAS OF THE arts. He has previously released a couple of jazz albums, along with a comic book in 2009, but just recently has the Rochester, New York, native figured out how to blend his different skill sets into a harmonious multidisciplinary work: *Instrumental*.

Instrumental is both a seven-chapter graphic novel and a seven-track album that accompany each other however the consumer sees fit. In the "Note from the Author" section of the graphic novel, Chisholm wrote: "One person might find that some of the music illustrates the events of the chapter. Another might find that the music serves more to enhance the mood of the book. Yet another might decide to consume the two works separately."

Chisholm said of his process, "I finished the bulk of the work—scripting, penciling, inking, scanning, lettering, composing, rehearsing, recording, mixing—over a very fevered and intense 10 months. Since then I've just tweaked stuff: redrawn a panel here and there, rescripted a few bits, mainly in Chapter 1. And then it's just wait, wait, wait for the giant wheel of publishing to catch up and to find a publisher courageous enough to put out something so unique."

The storyline, in a nutshell, is as follows: Tom Snyder is a trumpet player who can't seem to garner an audience until he is gifted a mythical trumpet, which makes him an incredibly compelling player, but also creates terrible disasters each time it is played. Snyder gets into a load of weird situations as his band rises to the top ranks of the jazz scene, and the story is interwoven with heady dialogue that keeps the plot a bit more involved than your typical battle of good versus evil.

The illustrations are similar to classic comic book style, but the world that Chisholm has created will be quite amusing to New York residents on the jazz scene. "Tiny's," a club that hosts after-hours sessions, seems to have replaced the niche that Smalls currently holds in Greenwich Village. "The Village Stage" looks identical to The Village Vanguard from the exterior, and its iconic awning was most definitely a nod to the real thing. The subtle differences make Chisholm's version of the Big Apple as similar as Gotham is in *Batman*.

While many readers generally enjoy background music, it's rare that a soundtrack is released especially for that purpose. Of the decision to accompany the novel with music, Chisholm said, "I wanted to tell this particular story for several years and I figured it would be a good one for me to add music to, since it's about music and musicians and has a lot of autobiographical elements."

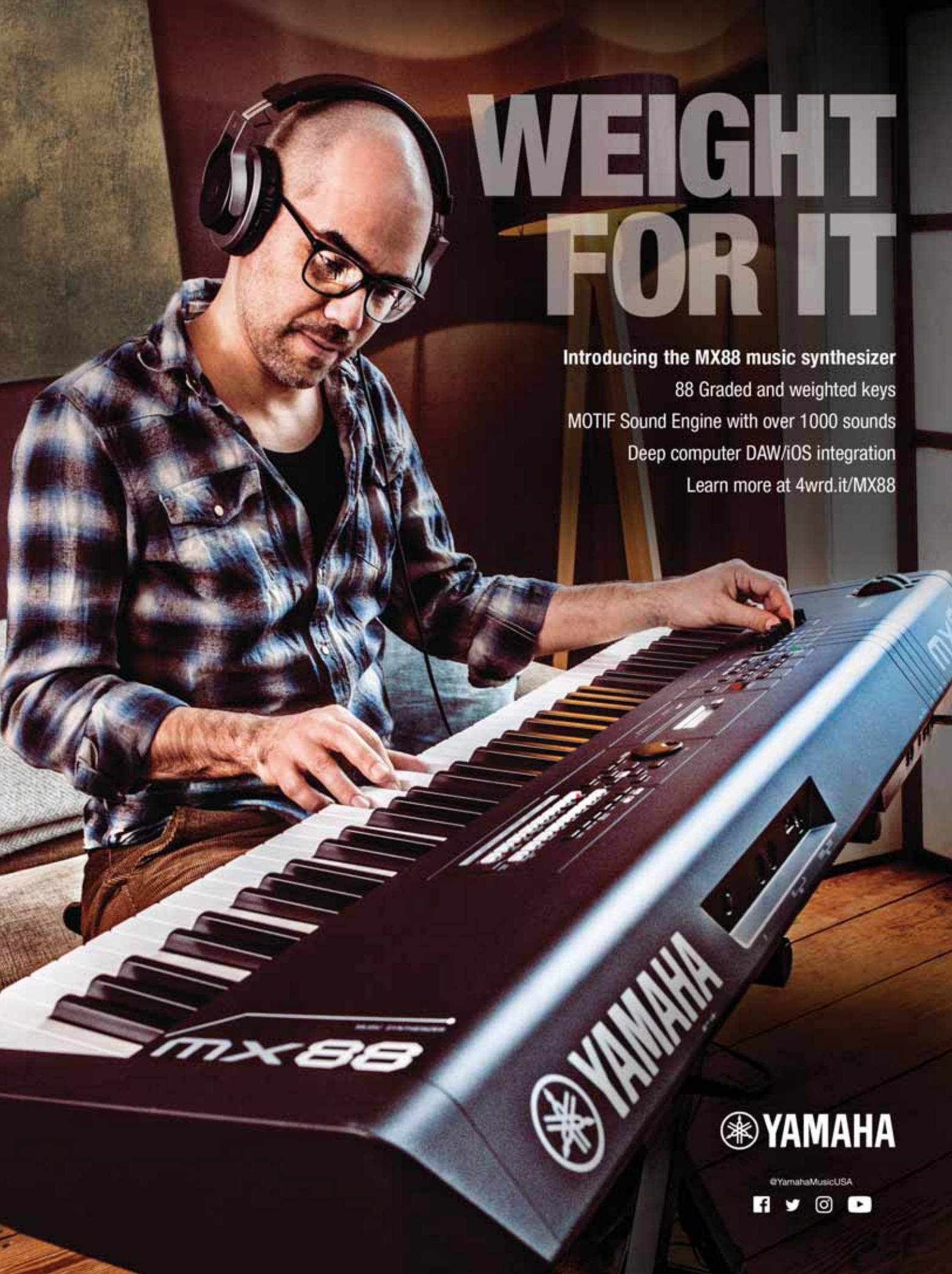

DAVE CHISHOLM

A panel from Dave Chisholm's graphic novel *Instrumental*

Through seven songs, which are titled the same as the chapters in the book, Chisholm delivers an emotive blend of jazz and rock that's gripping and intense. The gut-wrenching, modal style taken on in the introductory "The Void" sets the pace for music that matches—and definitely enhances—the story's mood. "Decompression" borders on minimalistic free-jazz, while the 13-minute epic "Death And The Narrator" is as suspenseful as the penultimate chapter of Chisholm's book.

"The overall sound concept is an extension of my [2011] album *Calligraphy*, which is inspired mainly by post-rock groups like Sigur Ros and Mogwai, but also by Christian Scott's quintet and Dave Douglas and 1970s Miles Davis," Chisholm said.

Chisholm's *Instrumental* proves that, even in the world of jazz, there's new ground to be broken. A comic book based around a jazz trumpeter may seem far-fetched, but it's a thoroughly enjoyable read that is only heightened by its exclusive soundtrack. —*Chris Tart*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Stax Celebrates 60 Years

WILLIAM BELL WAS STILL A TEENAGER when he began recording for Stax in Memphis. During the 1960s, he sang and wrote a number of r&b gems for the label and recently returned to it—now an imprint of Concord Music Group—for his 2016 album, *This Is Where I Live*. With Stax marking its 60th anniversary this year, he has warm memories of the upstart operation as well its founders, Jim Stewart and his sister Estelle Axton.

"Jim and Estelle gave us neighborhood kids an opportunity to come in and make music," Bell recalled. "Through our process of songwriting, and working with all of the different artists and musicians who came through, it was great to be alive during that era. We didn't know at the time that we were creating a whole new musical genre, but we knew we were enjoying what we were doing. To see that it has lasted 60 years is awesome."

Concord and Rhino Entertainment will celebrate the anniversary with a series of new compilations and reissues. In May, the companies released the Stax Classics series of CDs, which offer compilations of singles from such artists as Bell, Booker T. & the M.G.'s, The Staple Singers and Johnnie Taylor. Upcoming releases include a new pressing of Otis Redding and Carla Thomas' *King & Queen* (1967), Melvin Van Peebles' soundtrack to *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971), a repackaging of singer John Gary Williams' self-titled album (1973) and new version of *The Great Otis Redding Sings Soul Ballads* (1965). Forthcoming compilations will anthologize Isaac Hayes' recordings and Stax's singles.

Now considered milestones, these records originated from small beginnings. Early on, Stewart and Axton started recording people who lived near their studio and Satellite Record Shop in Memphis. The neighborhood was filled with young, talented artists who helped lay the foundation for what became Southern soul.

"Booker T. Jones, [drummer] Al Jackson, [songwriter] David Porter, [drummer] Maurice White and I all came out of a three-block radius," Bell said. "Booker and I could read each other's thoughts, musically and lyrically."

Stax was a racially integrated company in a time and place where such combinations were not easy, especially after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in Memphis in 1968. Deanie Parker, who served as the company's publicist in the 1960s and '70s, said that competing in a global market proved just as challenging to a Southern company as the local attitude toward its mixed musical family.

"We were at a disadvantage when it came to promoting our product and having access to mainstream media," Parker said. "We had to work three times as hard to get people to understand and appreciate what we were all about and embrace us and not try to kill us."

Although Stax shut down in 1975, Concord, which bought its name and catalog from Fantasy, reactivated the company 30 years later. Along with the ongoing reissue programs, Stax's history is being presented and taught to future generations in Memphis through other means. The former studio's site (926 E. McLemore Ave.) is now home to the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. Parker and former Stax musicians are frequent guests of the affiliated Soulsville Charter School.


William Bell

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"Right now, America could stand a good dose of the Stax philosophy—accepting people for who they are and what they bring to the table," Parker said. "We enjoyed learning different things from people who didn't look like us, didn't talk like us and didn't think like us. That's a lesson we pass on to the kids."

—Aaron Cohen

Pianist Geri Allen Dies at 60

GERI ALLEN, A PIANIST, COMPOSER AND educator with boundless technical facility and a far-reaching vision of jazz, died June 27 in Philadelphia at age 60. The cause was cancer.

While exploring diverse musical avenues, Allen maintained an aesthetic that was steeped in the African American folk tradition. A native of Detroit, she had an eclectic style that merged strains from early 20th-century swing, bebop, mid-century modern jazz and the avant-garde. Allen won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2008 in recognition of her exceptional scholarship in the creative arts. Her recorded work is documented on nearly 20 albums as a leader or co-leader.

In 1979, Allen was one of the first to graduate from Howard University with a bachelor of arts degree in jazz studies. During that time, she studied with Kenny Barron.

"I first met Geri when she was a student at Howard," Barron said. "She would take the train up to my house in Brooklyn for lessons. Even then it was apparent that Geri heard some things musically that others did not. In 1994 we performed a duo piano concert at the Caramoor Festival in New York and I realized how fearless she was and at the same time how focused she was. It was a lesson that I took to heart. Geri is not only a great musician, composer and pianist, she is a giant and will be sorely missed."

Allen arrived in New York City in 1982, having completed a master's degree in ethnomusicology at the University of Pittsburgh. Her recordings from this era find the pianist alongside such innovators as Oliver Lake, Betty Carter, Dewey Redman and Steve Coleman.

It was with Coleman and another close associate, Greg Osby, that Allen would make a name for herself as an affiliated member of the M-Base Collective. Allen also forged a strong bond with bassist Charlie Haden, with whom she recorded two live albums at the Montreal Jazz Festival in 1989. Among her many other collaborators were Ornette Coleman, Charles Lloyd, Joe Lovano, Jason Moran and Vijay Iyer.


Geri Allen (1957–2017)

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

Allen's first leader recording, *The Printmakers*, was recorded in 1984. Between 1990 and '96, she released a string of albums for the Blue Note label, and in her later years, she recorded primarily for Motéma.

At the time of her death, Allen was serving as the director of jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh. To read additional artists' tributes to Allen, visit downbeat.com. **DB**

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European Scene / BY PETER MARGASAK

Points of Focus

Ten years ago, the Danish pianist Simon Toldam traveled to the prestigious Banff International Workshop in Jazz & Creative Music in Canada. Although he was already a couple of years past graduating from the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen and had made a few albums of his own music, the experience was profound. He not only studied under a slew of heavyweight post-bop figures from the U.S., forcing him to advance his own playing, but he had his first encounter with two of the most important and original figures in European jazz: drummer Han Bennink and the late pianist Misha Mengelberg.

"When these guys came with this European Fluxus way of playing and being, I really felt quite at home," Toldam said during a recent interview in a Copenhagen cafe. I didn't really know that music at that point, but I was really into it."

The biggest impact of the meeting came later, however. "Half a year later I got a postcard from Han saying, 'Hello, Simon, how are you?'" he recalled. "He has this beautiful handwriting, so it was really like a piece of art—of course, I still have it."

Soon after, Bennink invited him to join him at a gig at Copenhagen's Jazz House. "I was totally shaking in my pants for half a year, waiting to play this gig. When we played, I really learned something about sound."

Bennink was impressed as well, and by 2008 he decided to organize the first band he'd ever led on his own—throughout a career stretching nearly 60 years—with Toldam and the Belgian reedist Joachim Badenhorst. The group has released three superb albums since then, including the recent *Adelante* (ICP), on which all three members function as equal partners. While the music Toldam had made prior to this partnership still sounds good—whether his quirky electronic hybrid ensemble Sekten or his large band Prügenlknabe—the Bennink trio energized him and brought a new focus to his work.

After finishing school in 2006, he deliberately shied away from piano trio music. Acutely aware of the accomplishments of disparate trios led by the likes of Red Garland, Keith Jarrett and Jan Johansson, among others, he initially felt he couldn't break through.

"I couldn't find my way into this heavy style, because there have been so many amazing piano trios, and there still are," he said. "I found it hard to find what my place in all of this would be. So I had a three- or four-year break just to see, and then I would start when I felt like I had found something fresh and new."


COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Simon Toldam

That happened in the fall of 2010, when he found himself with a few days off and little to do. "I had time to just sit down at the piano and just play, so there was like two days of new music coming out—just like *snap!*" he said. "I had the thought that this is definitely new to me and this sounds like piano trio music."

He brought five new pieces into a rehearsal session he'd organized with bassist Nils Davidsen and drummer Knut Finsrud. "I asked if we could try them and they sounded amazing, so I started to really compose. We made the album in the fall of 2011 and we played our first gigs in the same venue where it was recorded, and that is where the trio was really born. We played every week and had to find the shape of the tunes and the interplay and the vibe of it."

While Toldam continues to work with the Bennink trio, he has devoted more attention to other projects, including Sekten, which will soon release its next album as a portable digital device embedded into a headband, underlining its conceptual mission of finding "the sweet spot between workout music and a piece of art." His improv-oriented ensemble Stork and a new trio with the veteran Swedish bassist George Riedel and inventive reedist Nils Berg will drop its first album next year.

It's this trio that offers the clearest model of his vision, which deftly balances concise compositional gambits with ideas gleaned from bebop, spirituals, free-jazz and more, all with a distinctly Danish touch. Since 2012 it has released three albums for the ILK label. "I really agree that it feels like the whole of me in that trio—we just play everything that we want. We also share the same joy of playing a beautiful song, just the same as playing swing, just the same as playing totally abstract—it's the same joy of playing." **DB**

Rare Gems Stand Out at North Sea Fest

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN ATTENDING the three-day North Sea Jazz Festival is making choices. It's a daunting task to decide among 13 venues in the Ahoy convention center with all the jazz stripes imaginable, as well as an impressive dose of top-tier smart-pop stars.

Launching on opening night at roughly the same time were shows by the Wayne Shorter Quartet (with the Casco Philharmonic), Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Lettuce and John Beasley's MONK'estra project—not to mention a tribute to hip-hop producer J Dilla by Suite for Ma Dukes and Greg Ward & 10 Tongues.

While North Sea features stalwarts of the European jazz circuit, it also programs acts that are largely a rarity on the festival bandwagon. It's worth seeking those gems out. Two highlights exemplify this: U.K. tenor saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings and his beat-driven South African band Shabaka & The Ancestors, and the otherworldly ECM collective Atmosphères, comprising pianist Tigran Hamasyan, trumpeter Arve Henriksen, electronics guitarist Eivind Aarset and live sampler Jan Bang.

Playing a late show on opening night, July 7, Atmosphères delivered a set that ranged from sweet to abstract, with a melodic drive that spun off a series of deep improvisations. They quickly settled into their soundscape, one in which each member took turns sparking a high-voltage electronica fire. Hamasyan pounced on the piano keys, Henriksen blew trumpet waves, Aarset played piercing motifs and Bang created washes of electronics. The set was eerie, mysterious, meditative, even spiritual. Rhythm was minimal and lyricism non-existent until the group employed music by Armenian composer Komitas as an anchor to the free playing.

HANS TAK

Shabaka Hutchings performs at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on July 8.

The next evening, Hutchings, wearing a pork pie hat, took command of the open-air venue Congo. The saxophonist started the set with soulful tunes from last year's album *Wisdom Of Elders* (Brownswood). At times, he took the bass role on tenor, muscular and gentle all at once. He then charged into a jaunt-and-chase with alto saxophonist Mthunzi Mvubu while the groove deepened by way of percussionist Gontse Makhene and drummer Tumi Mogoros. Spoken-word vocalist Siyabonga Mthembu gave the show a hymn-like vibe with words of affirmation, premonitions and warning.

In the liner notes to the album, Hutchings wrote: "The ancestors are always with us. They teach us to harness energy and see into other worlds." With its pockets of beauty and insights into the world's injustices, the band succeeded in doing just that, with the leader captivating the standing-room-only crowd. *—Dan Ouellette*

Berroa's Jazz Crossroads


COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Ignacio Berroa's new album is ***Straight Ahead From Havana.***

THE PACKAGING OF DRUMMER IGNACIO Berroa's new album, *Straight Ahead From Havana*, includes a picture of a fictional street intersection. One arm of an urban signpost is for a famous Manhattan avenue, "Broadway," while the other arm reads, "Zequeira."

"That's the street where I used to live in Havana," explained Berroa, "where my passion for jazz began when I was 11. Ever since I became a musician, my dream was to come to New York and play straightahead."

The drummer's father and grandfather were both musicians in notable Cuban dance orchestras. Records spun constantly in Berroa's childhood home. "I heard the Nat 'King' Cole Trio, and that's when my passion began," he said. "Later, when I heard Gene Krupa with the Glenn Miller Big Band, I put down the violin and knew I had to be a drummer." By the mid-1970s, Berroa had achieved top-call stature in his homeland.

Yearning to fully pursue jazz in the States, Berroa fled Cuba on the dramatic 1980 Mariel boatlift. Arriving in Key West, Florida, with few possessions and scant English skills, Berroa made his way north, eventually setting his soles on his once dreamed-about Broadway. Cuban musician ex-pats aided him with gig connections, quickly resulting in a membership in Dizzy Gillespie's quartet. The drummer's fruitful relationship with Diz continued until the icon trumpeter's death in 1993. Over the past quarter-century, Berroa has played with a long list of jazz titans and become an innovative, influential rhythm master.

Berroa's new album—his third as a leader since his Grammy-nominated 2006 debut, *Codes*—features pianist Martin Bejerano and bassist Josh Allen. The program consists of classic Cuban songs, and the jazz treatments of those pop standards are an ideal showcase for Berroa's concepts.

"I heard these tunes a lot when I was a kid," he recalled. "I used to listen to my mom sing 'Nuestras Vidas.' The number 'Drume Negrita' is a very old Cuban tune, a famous lullaby about an African mother putting her little baby girl to sleep. And the number that [guest vocalist] Rubén Blades sings, 'Negro De Sociedad,' was a cha-cha-cha made famous by Enrique Jorrín."

Berroa stressed that his straightahead drumming doesn't necessarily mean the use of typical rhythmic patterns; it's more about concept, phrasing and interplay. "In playing Afro-Cuban music, my approach is like a straightahead drummer playing Cuban music," he said. "I combine both worlds without one imposing on the other. Both worlds can live together."

In December of 2015, Berroa relocated to Miami, partly to be close to his grandchildren and partly because of the climate. "I never got used to the New York winters," he laughed. This year, Berroa has enjoyed revisiting the music of his mentor via various Dizzy Gillespie centennial celebrations, including an Aug. 31 concert with the Chicago Jazz Festival Big Band led by trumpeter Jon Faddis.

On the same day as the concert, Berroa will present "Afro-Cuban Jazz & Beyond"—an educational audiovisual program augmented with a lecture and live trio demonstrations—at the Chicago Cultural Center. "It shows the whole evolution of Afro-Cuban music, from the arrival of the slaves in Cuba and how Cuban music influenced American music and vice-versa," Berroa explained. "When we go to universities and musical institutions, I tell everybody, 'The most important thing is the rhythm.'"

—Jeff Potter

Global Rhythms Enliven Tri-C


TRI-C JAZZFEST/JEFF FORMAN

John Clayton (left) and Diego Figueiredo perform at the Tri-C JazzFest in Cleveland on June 24.

THE 38TH ANNUAL EDITION OF THE TRI-C JazzFest in Cleveland (June 22–24) offered the type of diverse, top-tier talent typically found at a much larger festival, along with some adventurous programming that was spiced with compelling international flavors.

On June 24, fans who weren't drawn to the Cleveland Indians game at nearby Progressive Field (or the exhibits at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame) could have spent an entire marathon day indoors at ticketed concerts in the quaint, appealing Playhouse Square theaters.

A voracious jazz fan could have seen reedist Jane Bunnett collaborating with Maqueque, her dynamic band of young female Cuban musicians; clarinetist Anat Cohen working with a Brazilian ensemble in a set that incorporated some of the *choro* style that she focused on with Trio Brasileiro for her excellent new album *Rosa Dos Ventos* (Anzic); acoustic guitarist Diego Figueiredo playing solo and then partnering with bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton in a nimble trio; firebrand saxophonist Kamasi Washington and his Next Step band hurling anthems from his breakthrough album, *The Epic* (Brainfeeder); a double bill of singers of very different stripes, jazz vocalist Catherine Russell and rock icon Boz Scaggs; and trumpeter Terence Blanchard fronting his envelope-pushing ensemble the E-Collective. For hearty fans with the stamina, there was also a late-night jam at Bin 216.

The set by Figueiredo, Clayton and Hamilton illustrated remarkably agile teamwork, resulting in a beguiling jazz set influenced by bossa nova.

On June 23, Blanchard, who served his second year as the festival's Artist-in-Residence, reprised material from his score to Taylor Hackford's film *The Comedian*, convening the same elite musicians who appeared on the soundtrack. Pianist Kenny Barron, tenor saxophonist Ravi Coltrane, alto saxophonist Khari Allen Lee, bassist David Pulphus and drummer Carl Allen functioned as a cohesive, powerhouse unit in the recording studio and did the same onstage in Cleveland.

—Bobby Reed

Dreams and Daggers

CECILE McLORIN SALVANT

"She had emotional range, too, inhabiting different personas in the course of a song, sometimes even a phrase—delivering the lyrics in a faithful spirit while also commenting on them, mining them for unexpected drama and wit."
– THE NEW YORKER

"Salvant has a supple, well-trained voice with spot-on pitch. (No vibrato-teases; no meandering warbles passing as melisma.) Her low notes go from husky to full-bodied; her high notes float purely and cleanly. When she scats, it's not an ego trip but a musical game, where notes and syllables get to shape-shift."
– THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

"...winning a Grammy and several awards from critics, who praised her singing as 'singularly arresting' and 'artistry of the highest class.'"
– THE NEW YORKER

"You get a singer like this once in a generation – or two."
– WYNTON MARSALIS

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Guitarist Adam Rogers (left) recorded his album *DICE* with drummer Nate Smith and bassist Fima Ephron.

ADAM ROGERS

For the Love of Jimi

On the five albums that guitarist Adam Rogers recorded for Criss Cross Jazz—2002's *Art Of The Invisible*, 2003's *Allegory*, 2005's *Apparitions*, 2009's *Sight* and 2015's *R&B* (with saxophonist Dave Binney)—he crafted a clean, warm-toned, straightahead sound on his trusty Gibson ES-335 while blowing on swinging originals and standards.

On *DICE*, the first release on his new imprint Adraj Records, Rogers switches to a Fender Stratocaster fed through a Marshall amplifier set on "10" for a blistering approximation of his lifelong guitar hero, Jimi Hendrix. Anchored by the Rock of Gibraltar low-end presence of longtime bassist Fima Ephron (his bandmate in the '90s fusion band Lost Tribe) and the precision slamming of drummer Nate Smith (who played alongside Rogers in saxophonist Chris Potter's Underground), the guitarist and his crew summon up a powerhouse Band Of Gypsys aesthetic on the aggressive stop-time title track and other unmistakably Hendrixian numbers like "Sea Miner," "Elephant," "Chronics" and "L The Bruce."

"Jimi Hendrix is why I became obsessed with the guitar," said the New York City native, who has an extensive collection of Hendrix bootlegs and rarities in his East Village apartment. "*Band Of Gypsys* continues to be one of the most important records for me. I just listened to it the other day and my reaction to it is much the same today as it was when I was a kid, at least in terms of the energy. It's like standing next to a nuclear furnace. The shit is explosive!"

For Rogers, Hendrix's "Machine Gun" and "Power To Love" are as much a part of his musical landscape as Charlie Parker's "Dexterity" or Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy."

"When I first started playing guitar, all I did was try to learn Hendrix solos," he recalled. "And when I started studying and learning how to play bebop and classical music, I didn't stop loving Hendrix's music. Since I was in my teens, all of this music has been co-existing, but at different times I've wanted to focus on certain things. The five records I released as a leader, that's what I was compelled to focus on at that point. Now when I'm playing a Strat with *DICE*, I'm not inspired to play the same things on it that I am as when I'm playing my Gibson 335 with a clean sound. Each instrument elicits a different kind of musical inspiration from me. When I plug a Strat into a Marshall that's cranked, it's just like … oh, man! It such a rewarding and inspiring sound, in a different way, that I feel like I have to respond to that sound."

While the allusions to Hendrix are clear throughout *DICE*, Rogers also injects his signature legato licks—more Allan Holdsworth than Hendrix—into several of his solos. "That's also as much a part of my playing as anything," he noted. And on a couple of decidedly non-Hendrixian tunes, he pays tribute to two other significant guitar influences: Delta bluesman Mississippi Fred McDowell on "The Mystic" and Telecaster master Roy Buchanan on a rendition of the Patsy Cline hit "Crazy" (his answer to Buchanan's keening instrumental rendition of the Cline classic "Sweet Dreams").

"Those two tunes are also examples of Fima and Nate's ability to play something deceptively simple and infuse it with so much stuff," Rogers said. "Nate plays that train groove with brushes on 'The Mystic' so fantastically. And they almost sound like a '50s Nashville rhythm section on 'Crazy.' It's so easy to play with them on tunes like that because both of them have composer's ears as instrumentalists. And having played more as a sideman in my career than as a leader, that's something that I appreciate greatly. As a leader, I appreciate it when people that you're playing with can hear the big picture of the tune that you wrote and give that tune what it needs, just give it that essential vibe."

Said frequent collaborator Potter, "The guitar is an instrument with a huge range of different techniques that work for different styles, each of which demands a particular discipline. Adam has dealt with all of that thoroughly and his frame of reference is huge. He fits into any musical situation yet always sounds like himself."

Trumpeter Randy Brecker, who has used Rogers on past projects, concurred with Potter regarding the guitarist's versatility: "Adam can play anything—any style, any idiom, any sound. And the extraordinary thing is, he has his own thing going in whatever style or idiom he's in at any point in time."

Rogers gloriously does his thing, with respectful nods to Jimi, on *DICE*.

—Bill Milkowski

ANGEL ALVAREZ

Maureen Choi, who has a new quartet album, teaches at Berklee College of Music's campus in Valencia, Spain.

MAUREEN CHOI

The Lure of Spain

Maureen Choi was studying to be a classical violinist before she turned to jazz and eventually moved to Spain. While enrolled at Michigan State University as a violin major, she realized that there was more to her musical interest than her classical regimen.

"I met bassist Rodney Whitaker and took private jazz lessons with him," she said. "He started telling me, 'You're a jazzer; you just don't recognize it yet.'"

It took a near-death experience at age 25 for that recognition to sink in. Following the Christmas holidays, Choi was driving back to the University of Minnesota, where she was pursuing graduate work in classical music, when she was involved in a serious auto accident. In the two years it took her to recover, she reached the decision to switch to jazz and audition for Berklee College of Music.

At Berklee, Choi gravitated to the school's coterie of Latin musicians—from Spain, Central and South America. "I had never played Spanish music, but I loved salsa dancing and the rhythms just fascinated me," she said. "That syncopation and those crazy triplets were a challenge that I loved."

One of the musicians she encountered was Spanish bassist Mario Carrillo, who would became her musical and romantic partner. After graduation, the pair headed to New York, where, despite some high-profile gigs on Broadway and TV, Choi felt unfulfilled.

"I was 30, I didn't have any money and I didn't want to live like that," she said. "I just hit on the idea of going to Spain—which Mario didn't really want to do at first."

Now, five years after their move, Choi feels at home. She has a teaching position at Berklee's campus in Valencia, and the couple loves their quality of life.

Choi's new CD, the excellent quartet disc *Ida y Vuelta*, reflects influences from throughout the Spanish-speaking world. For her next project, she anticipates delving more deeply into the music of her adopted home: "I'm fascinated by the sound of Spanish guitar, that language, and I want to really capture the sound that is rooted in this country." *—James Hale*

The members of the New York Standards Quartet are David Berkman (left), Daiki Yasukagawa, Tim Armacost and Gene Jackson, who is holding a copy the band's 2014 CD *The New Straight Ahead*.

MEIKO YAKIRE JACKSON

NYSQ
The Long Run

The members of NYSQ (New York Standards Quartet) are rightfully proud of the sound they've developed over the course of six albums, including their latest swinging release, *Sleight Of Hand* (Whirlwind). But there's an additional badge of honor they hold especially dear: longevity. From the beginning, the members consciously committed to that goal, not as a means to itself, but as a path to what they sought artistically.

Tenor/soprano saxophonist Tim Armacost recalled a formative moment when drummer Gene Jackson imparted sage wisdom to the emerging group: "Gene articulated the idea that the business of jazz was not going to help us to stay together. He said, 'If we keep the group together long enough, the music will take care of itself.' Just as Gene predicted, once we were a few years in, we got to the point where we could arrive at a tour and just pick up where we left off."

NYSQ's long-term commitment is especially impressive considering that all four members are also busy leaders as well as in-demand sidemen. "Everyone in the band brings something special," pianist David Berkman explained, "so as a group we had to decide to prioritize NYSQ and invest in this project."

Now in its 12th year, NYSQ will embark on its 13th tour of Japan this summer. The band will also play U.S. and European dates in support of the new album, which Armacost cites as "the band's best studio representation of the openness and looseness we achieve live."

"At a workshop we did recently," Armacost recalled, "David pointed out that we have now been playing together long enough that if I find something I've never played before, he knows it immediately. If I get into something where I don't even know what I'm going to do, he's right there pushing me; it then becomes a group project to find new spaces that we haven't been in before. That, for me, is one of the best experiences that I have in my life."

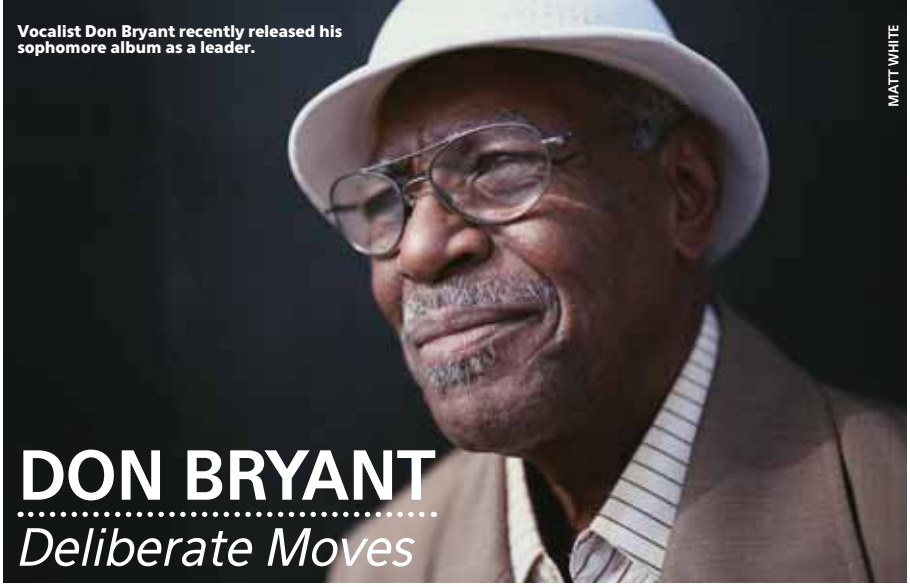
In addition to the band members' mutual love for standards, another bond influenced the inception: "It was also an excuse to go to Japan," Armacost said with a chuckle. The saxophonist grew up in Tokyo, both Jackson and Berkman have Japanese spouses and bassist Daiki Yasukagawa (who replaced original member Yosuke Inoue) is a native. "We love the culture. It's well known that Japanese [fans] are lovers of standards. So we thought it would be fun to reinterpret the songs that we know are beloved, in a way that would be fun for us to play."

Sleight Of Hand includes compelling renditions of gems such as "In A Sentimental Mood," "I Fall In Love Too Easily" and Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." Although NYSQ seeks to reimagine standards, their goal is not iconoclasm. The quartet's reharmonizations and arrangements establish an aesthetic that is neither too "out" nor too "in."

"That has to do with our influences," Berkman said, regarding the band's overall sound. "We [are] musicians who came of age in the '80s and '90s, who were looking back to the freedom of the '60s and '70s—to Miles, Wayne, Herbie, Coltrane and others—and we naturally view standards as vehicles of self expression that are changeable and highly negotiable. Playing a standard is often closer to playing 'free' than soloing over somebody's complex original. It's less a question of 'out' or 'in' and more a question of freedom."

One recurring NYSQ practice, as heard on their take of "Lover Man," is to leave a tune's melody unstated at the top, instead letting the music evolve until it organically emerges near the end. "That's a choice," Armacost explained. "You can get formulaic if you're not careful. You can play head, solo, head, out—and if it gets too predictable, then you start falling into a well-trodden path. And if it's uninteresting for us, then that's definitely going to be the case for the audience."

—Jeff Potter


Vocalist Don Bryant recently released his sophomore album as a leader.

MATT WHITE

DON BRYANT

Deliberate Moves

Don Bryant doesn't sound like he's in a hurry. The 74-year-old singer-songwriter's compelling, drawn-out delivery, punctuated with shouts and pleas, is showcased on his new album, *Don't Give Up On Love* (Fat Possum).

He also takes his time between recordings. This is his second full-length album—and the previous, *Precious Soul*, was released in 1969.

"I'm doing what I grew up in and what's a part of me," Bryant said from his Memphis home, regarding his return to the stage and studio. "The only difference is my voice has matured a lot. I sing with as much emotion as I can, always pushing to bring out what's in me."

Much of Bryant's best work has been done away from the spotlight. He was a key player on the production side for Memphis' legendary Hi Records during the 1970s. Bryant also composed numerous songs for his wife, singer Ann Peebles, including her biggest hit, 1973's "I Can't Stand The Rain."

Bryant began singing in church as a child, but as a teen hit the r&b circuit, where he met future Hi producer Willie Mitchell. While Bryant's early singles and *Precious Soul* feature a vigorous attack, Mitchell encouraged him to take his time.

"I was always trying to make sure that it was all understandable," Bryant said. "On the slow things you could emphasize a lot of different styles within one line of music."

But Bryant also remained close to the church, singing and writing gospel-themed material, such as "How Do I Get There," which appears on the new album. Gradually, he looked for more opportunities to perform.

Drummer Howard Grimes—who played on several Hi sessions as well as on *Don't Give Up On Love*—helped bring Bryant to that wider audience by connecting him with bassist Scott Bomar, who leads the Memphis soul band The Bo-Keys. Along with producing and playing bass on *Don't Give Up On Love*, Bomar co-wrote three of its tracks with Bryant, including the inspiring title track. Their contrasting approaches strengthened the end results.

"My writing style is I'll have a chorus and put things together with it," Bomar said. "But before Don gets too far into that, he'll say, 'Let's slow down. What's the *story*? What are we trying to say here?'"

In addition to backing Bryant on *Don't Give Up On Love,* the Bo-Keys also serve as Bryant's band for performances. He is excited about the prospect of more concerts, including numerous European shows scheduled for early September.

"It's like a fresh start and I'm so happy about that," Bryant said. "I'm going to do like I always do—I'm going to give it all I got to get the maximum out of it." *—Aaron Cohen*

AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE

Ambrose Akinmusire at SFJAZZ Center on June 12

THE THINKER

By Yoshi Kato | Photo by Jay Blakesberg

OAKLAND'S LAKE MERRITT HOUSES THE OLDEST DESIGNATED WILDLIFE REFUGE IN THE UNITED STATES. ITS SHORELINE IS VISITED ON A FAIRLY QUIET SATURDAY BY BICYCLISTS, PROTESTORS IN BRIGHT T-SHIRTS AND EVEN A BABY PIT BULL.

This tidal lagoon is a refuge of tranquility for Oakland native son Ambrose Akinmusire, who suggested meeting up at the scenic spot for a mid-morning interview. The trumpeter's fourth album, *A Rift In Decorum: Live At The Village Vanguard* (Blue Note), was released the previous day, but his quartet's tour in support of it won't start until mid-week. Appropriately, the group begins its tour with four shows over two nights at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, which means that the bandleader can sleep in his own bed afterward before hitting the road.


JAY BLAKESBERG

Akinmusire (seen here with trumpet valves) is one of the most acclaimed artists in jazz.

Akinmusire appeared on the international radar when he won the 2007 Thelonious Monk International Trumpet Competition. But the once-precocious 35-year-old has been a known quantity in Northern California since his early teen years.

His current quartet with pianist Sam Harris, bassist Harish Raghavan and drummer Justin Brown was founded in 2013. A quintet with that same rhythm section and tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III dates back to 2010.

Akinmusire and Brown were classmates at Berkeley High School. The trumpeter met Chicago area native Raghavan at a jam session when they were both studying at USC in the mid-2000s. Dallas-born Harris continues a tradition of impressive pianists in Akinmusire's groups, which previously included Gerald Clayton and Aaron Parks.

The first of two shows on June 7 at SFJAZZ Center's Joe Henderson Lab channeled the predictable energy of an opening night. With friends, family and some fellow musicians in the audience, the evening had, at times, the feel of a recital. The band's time-honed interplay and Brown's kinetic style of drumming were unimpeachable.

"When you play with people long enough—especially in the kind of environment Ambrose has cultivated as a bandleader—you don't have to prove yourself anymore," Harris observed. "I learn a little bit more about myself every night I play with this band."

"With Ambrose's band, he's always allowed everyone to be himself—even if that person is not the same person from the last show, the last tour, the last record," Raghavan concurred. "You can try *anything* … so long as it's honest."

A LIVE ALBUM CAN BE A MILESTONE FOR MANY JAZZ ARTISTS. WHAT WAS THE THINKING BEHIND HAVING YOUR THIRD RELEASE FOR BLUE NOTE BE A LIVE ONE?

It's always been in my head to do a live record to capture the band. And when I started playing quartet, I thought, "This might be an interesting time to do this." Because when you're playing quartet, that's when you have to build up your chops. And it really is a big commitment. I thought to myself, "I don't know how long I'll be able to have this set of chops." [*laughs*]

THERE AREN'T AS MANY TRUMPET QUARTET RECORDINGS AS ONE MIGHT EXPECT—WYNTON MARSALIS, FREDDIE HUBBARD … EVEN MILES DAVIS ONLY DID A COUPLE OF QUARTET SESSIONS.

Yeah, not too many people have done it. There's Blue Mitchell and Booker Little, too. There's a reason for that. It's also challenging because you have to deal with sound and timbre for variation. It's not like you can just have a saxophone player play the melody. You really have to be changing your timbre and how you're phrasing things to keep the music flowing and the set interesting.

***A RIFT IN DECORUM* GOES ALL IN: A DOUBLE ALBUM THAT WAS CAPTURED AT THE HISTORIC VILLAGE VANGUARD. WAS IT A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO "GO BIG," OR DID THAT COME ABOUT ORGANICALLY?**

It just came naturally. We just had so much music. And I thought to myself, "This may be the only time that I'm able to do this, so let me actually do it the way I want to do it."

I can remember being in high school and getting [fellow Berkeley High School alumnus] Josh Redman's album [*Spirit Of The Moment: Live At The Village Vanguard*] and thinking, "Man, this is *amazing!*"—hearing that band's energy and the crowd reacting to Josh.

WAS IT A DIFFICULT PROCESS TO CHOOSE AND SEQUENCE THE TRACKS?

We recorded four nights. It was a little bit hard because I like albums. I like things that I can listen to from the beginning to the end. And sometimes it doesn't necessarily mean picking the *best* version of that track. That may mean picking the shorter version. And live, it was a little different because everyone's emoting so much that everything tends to play up. For me, it's more important to pick or to control the ebb and flow of the entire album. Also, this is the first time I'm doing a double disc. So trying to figure out how to divide that over two CDs was a new challenge. I decided to make it feel like two sets that the same audience attended.

TALK ABOUT THE TIME-TRAVEL ASPECT OF LIVE ALBUMS—THE IDEA THAT AS A LISTENER, ONE CAN BE IN THE AUDIENCE AT CARNEGIE HALL IN 1938 OR AT NEWPORT IN 1956.

It also captures the spirits … or whatever you're comfortable calling it. When you listen to [John Coltrane], that same *thing* is on all of those Vanguard records. Like when you hear Bill Evans or Jason [Moran]. The room has a sound. But there's another thing that happens when you go into a place that hasn't really changed since the beginning. Like when you walk in the Vanguard, you feel it.

ALL TRACKS ON *A RIFT IN DECORUM* ARE NEW—OR AT LEAST PREVIOUSLY UNRECORDED—COMPOSITIONS THAT YOU WROTE. WAS THERE ANY HESITATION IN DEBUTING THESE ON A LIVE RECORDING?

As opposed to having live version of songs that were already recorded in the studio? You know, it's not something I ever considered. I guess that would've been cool: "This is the way we interpret it now as opposed to when we first recorded it." But I'm more concerned about the now.

Another thing is that a lot of people see this band as the quintet minus one. But to me, the quartet is completely different than a quintet. Sure, it's the same players minus Walter. But the music is completely different. So playing the older tunes doesn't really work, anyway.


Sam Harris (left) and Akinmsusire perform at the 2014 Montreal Jazz Festival.

MICHAEL JACKSON

GIVEN HOW MUCH YOU WRITE, I'M SURE THESE NUMBERS THAT YOU PERFORMED AND RECORDED BACK IN FEBRUARY MAY BE OLD CHESTNUTS BY NOW.

I've already written almost another full book of music for the quartet. I anticipate by the end of the summer, we won't be playing anything off the album.

AT WHICH POINT YOU'LL BE READY TO RECORD YOUR NEXT ONE?

I'm working on it now. We even have a tentative release for October.

AND THAT'LL BE WITH THE QUARTET?

No, it's completely different. It'll be with the Mivos [string] Quartet, Marcus Gilmore on drums, Sam playing keyboards and the rapper Kool A.D. It was a commission from the Ecstatic


STEVEN SUSSMAN

Akinmusire at the 2015 Newport Jazz Festival

Music Festival [in Manhattan]. We did it in February, actually, two weeks after this record. So while we were recording the Vanguard record, I was writing this commission.

IT'S NICE THAT THE COMMISSION IS GETTING A SECOND LIFE.

That's the thing: I've been doing *so* many commissions. I'm very fortunate to have had many opportunities recently, because it's kept me at home. But you write them for a year—however long you write them. Then they just *sit* in the bottom of your closet. And it's the worst feeling. So now when people ask me to do stuff, I say, "This *has* to have some type of life after this." I don't care what the amount of money is.

IN THE PANTHEON OF LIVE JAZZ RECORDINGS, ARE THERE ONES THAT STAND OUT TO YOU?

We can [talk about] individual tracks—Wayne [Shorter] playing "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" [from *Ugetsu: Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers At Birdland Vol. 1*, 1963]. Forget about it! *A Night At Birdland* [Art Blakey Quintet, 1954] and Jason Moran's *The Bandwagon* [2003, recorded live at the Village Vanguard] where he does the thing with the voices, like the Hermeto [Pascoal]-type thing.

JASON MORAN CO-PRODUCED AND PLAYED ON YOUR BLUE NOTE DEBUT AS A LEADER, *WHEN THE HEART EMERGES GLISTENING* [2011]. SO YOU'VE GOT A DIRECT CONNECTION TO THAT ONE.

Fred Hersch has some really nice things at the Vanguard. And it's kind of random, but Jay-Z's *MTV Unplugged* [2001] with The Roots. Lauryn Hill's *MTV Unplugged No. 2.0* [2002], too. That really had a big influence on me—just her ability to be so raw in a live setting.

And Joni Mitchell's *Shadows And Light* [1980]. Joni Mitchell has always been my biggest influence. Not too many people know this, but Joni and I are actually friends. I met her randomly at the Monk Competition. I can't remember if I even knew she was there, but she ended up performing that night with Herbie [Hancock]. That was when his Joni record came out [*River: The Joni Letters*], the one that he won the Grammys for.

I came off stage after playing, and during that time I was meditating and doing all these other things that kind of had me in this weird head-trip. And she was just standing there. I think that I'm about to pass out and that maybe she's an angel. So I walked up to her and asked, "Is it *really* you?" She said, "Yes, it's me. I was down in my dressing room, and they were playing this beautiful thing over the speaker. And people were talking, and I made them shut up. I had to come up and see what that was."

Then she asked me, "What do you check out? What are your influences?" And I said, "*You*." And she replied, "Yeah, I could tell."

YOU HAD QUITE AN EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY: FROM BERKELEY HIGH SCHOOL, THE STANFORD JAZZ WORKSHOP AND THE VAIL JAZZ WORKSHOP TO THE MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THE MONK INSTITUTE AND USC. HOW DID YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF EACH LEVEL OF SCHOOLING?

I'm good at choosing things, knowing what feels right and doesn't feel right. Even how I got into jazz: I just was walking past a flyer in middle school that said "Jazz Camp." And it made me feel a certain type of way. So I said, "Mom, I want to go to this." And she said, "OK, that's what you're doing." I met my mentor, [trumpeter] Robert Porter, there. And we started talking. Porter and these other guys told me about Stanford Jazz and Berkeley High School. It was mentors like him helping usher me through.

SO YOU HAD MENTORS IN THE CLASSROOM AS WELL AS ON THE BANDSTAND.

Exactly. [At Berkeley High School] I heard about this thing called Grammy Band. "OK. Cool. Let me try out for that." I get into that. Through Grammy Band, I meet Justin DiCioccio, who was the head of the jazz program at Manhattan School of Music. I had a full scholarship to New School and Berklee, but Justin called my house, and he talked to my mom. I'm an only child, and my mom was like, "OK, we can trust this guy." So I went to Manhattan School of Music because of that.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A COLLEGE COACH RECRUITING A STAR ATHLETE.

It was just like that. And then Walter came to do his master's [degree] while I was doing my undergrad. Someone said, "Wouldn't that be crazy if we just all auditioned for the Monk program?" So Walter, [bassist] Joe [Sanders], [saxophonist] Tim [Green] and I all did that and got in. While I was at USC, I got my master's.

WAS THAT PART OF THE MONK INSTITUTE?

It's completely separate, and it wasn't easy. I was in the library pulling a lot of all-nighters—after a whole day of Monk. So a lot of my days went from 9 in the morning to 8 at night. And God forbid if I had a gig!

ARE YOU GLAD YOU DID IT?

Absolutely. I'm even thinking about getting a Ph.D. soon. I love teaching, and I love the exchange. And I'm staring to accept my role as a mentor. That sounds *so* weird to say. But I can't avoid the fact that there are younger musicians who are watching me.

AS A WORKING JAZZ ARTIST, WAS IT DIFFICULT TO MOVE BACK TO THE EAST BAY AREA?

No, because I moved to L.A. first and lived there for four years. L.A. was kind of like the middle ground between the Bay Area and New York. And that was a cool place to transition because I was at USC and had beautiful coffee and beautiful conversation.

I didn't miss the artist community, because there are a lot of artists there. When I was at the Monk Institute, we had a regular gig every Monday at The Mint. We had it for two years, and by the time we left it would be packed every Monday. The band was Tim, Joe, me, Gerald, drummer Kevin Cannon and Joe and Harish would switch off. We played straightahead stuff, and then we opened it up for a jam session. It became this beautiful artist spot where there would be a painter painting something while we were playing music.

I HEARD FROM A FRIEND OF YOURS ABOUT A JAM SESSION HE ATTENDED WHERE THE EXTEMPORANEOUS GOAL WAS TO SOUND LIKE YOUR QUARTET. DO YOU HAVE A SENSE OF HOW BIG YOUR IMPACT IS NOWADAYS?

[*pauses thoughtfully*] It's a weird thing for me. I hate to say this because I know if it's written, people are going to say things. I mean, I guess I should just be honest: I can't hide from the fact that we have had influence on a lot of people around the world. I hear drummers that sound like Justin. I hear bass players playing like Harish. I'm starting to hear piano players playing like Sam.

And I hear trumpet players playing like me. At first I used to laugh. Then it turned into me just being confused. And now I find it inspiring. Not that it's a competition—but [if] people are listening, and people are copying this stuff, it does inspire me to find new things and to continue investigating who I am and then try to express that.

YOU'VE OFTEN TALKED ABOUT HOW, WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG, WYNTON MARSALIS AND ROY HARGROVE WOULD GIVE YOU LESSONS WHEN THEY WERE PERFORMING IN TOWN. SO IT'S NATURAL THAT THE GENERATION THAT CAME BEFORE THE CURRENT ONE WOULD BE SO INFLUENTIAL.

When I was coming up, all the trumpet players sounded like Roy Hargrove and Nicholas Payton. And it's not necessarily because they were the best guys in the world. Or maybe they were. But those were the people we had access to. They were the guys on Verve, they were they guys who had the better distribution. So when I went to [the record shops] Amoeba and Rasputin, *those* were the guys whose records I could easily find.

Now I'm that person, you know? Now I'm the person on Blue Note who has distribution around the world and has gigs. But there are many people who are deserving of that, people who could have the same influence—and should.

And there are a lot of great trumpet players right now. There are a lot of people doing interesting things right now, too. I'm not sure how many great *bands* there are because you need opportunities for that, right?

That's one area where I may have been a little bit more fortunate than other people. But it took some of me sticking to my guns, too. **DB**

FRED HERSCH

TRUTH TELLER

By Phillip Lutz | Photo by Jim Wilke

Settled into an aisle seat on a June night at the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville, New York, Fred Hersch betrayed little emotion as *The Ballad of Fred Hersch* unfolded before him. Even as the packed house responded robustly to the 2016 film—which documents the pianist's tumultuous life in unsparing detail—Hersch, the guest of honor, remained a study in stoicism.

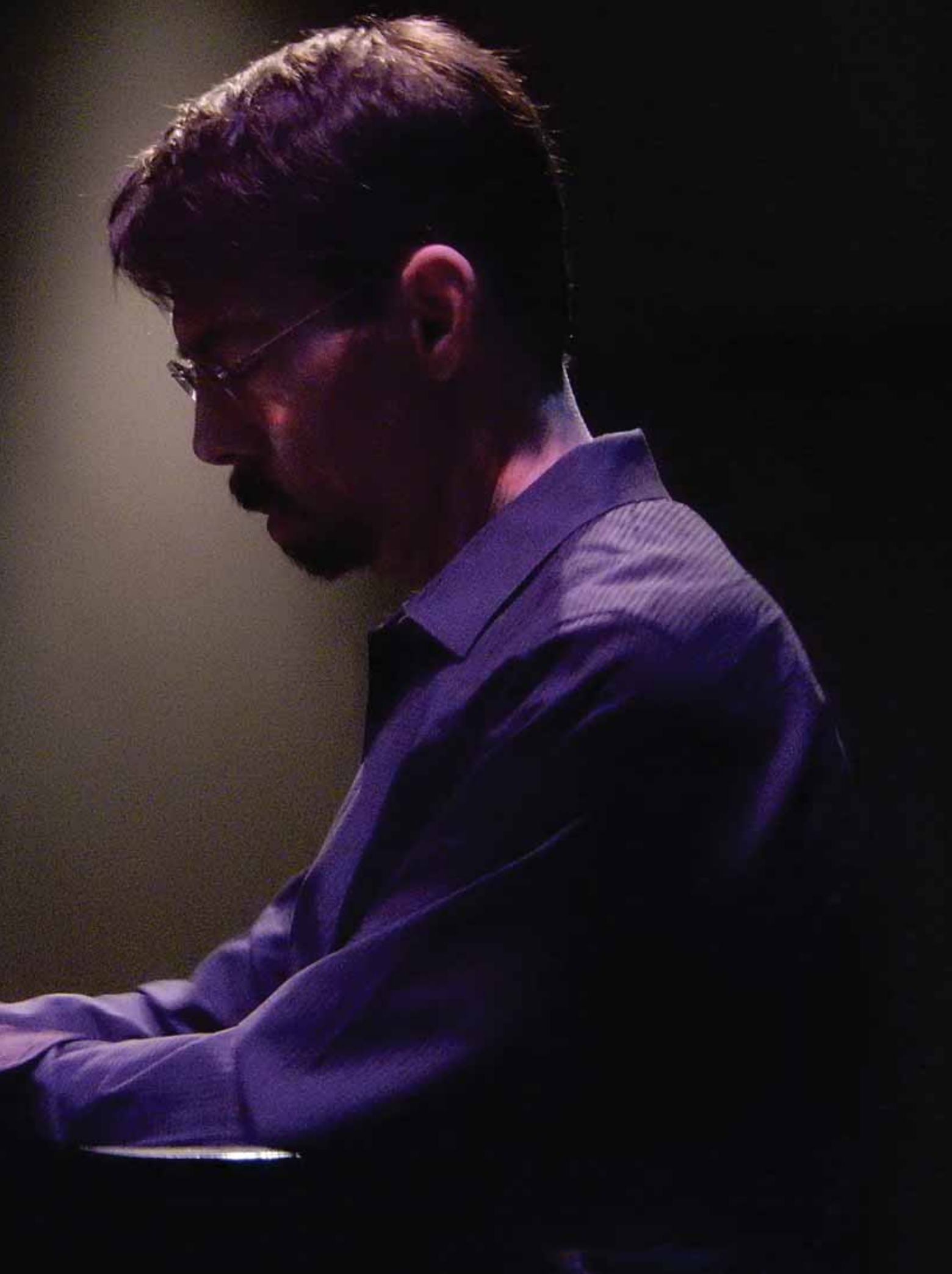
Little wonder. Hersch had been subjected to film-festival ritual before and, having experienced extraordinary highs and lows in his life and career—achieving a preeminent position among jazz pianists while overcoming the challenges of being openly gay and HIV-positive in a less-forgiving era—another recitation of the facts on film was unlikely to get a rise out of him.

But when it was time for him to perform, he came alive. After a short question-and-answer session, he stepped to the piano and weaved a striking solo set from the strands of a disparate playlist that included Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Olha Maria," George Gershwin's "Embraceable You," Paul McCartney's "For No One" and Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk."

In true Hersch fashion, the set was simultaneously edgy and elegant—each tune a series of beguiling statements that built, layer on contrapuntal layer, into a fully formed tale animated by wit, informed by a sense of proportion and delivered with urgency. In a word, Hersch made the house piano—by his own account, a less-than-ideal instrument—sing.

Asked in a follow-up email how he pulled it off, he replied with characteristic brevity: "It's my job."

Despite his stoicism, Hersch has never taken that job for granted. Raised in a middle-class home in Cincinnati devoid of jazz, he nonetheless proved a natural improviser who willed his way into prominence on the local club scene. Moving to Boston, he studied with Jaki Byard at the New England Conservatory before landing in New York, where he quickly made his mark as a sideman for luminaries like Joe Henderson.



Hersch's new memoir is titled *Good Things Happen Slowly: A Life In and Out of Jazz.*

'The catharsis of doing a book is not going to freeze me in a time capsule.'

Gradually, in more than 40 albums and continuous touring as a leader, he established himself as a singular voice in jazz and beyond—all while battling illness, which, for two months in 2008, prompted doctors to place him in a coma. He emerged in a debilitated state, but regained his faculties and turned the experience into a groundbreaking piece of jazz theater, *My Coma Dreams*, which raised his profile.

Now, asserting that he feels better than he has in years, he is on the brink of extending his fame further. Crown Archetype will publish a new memoir, *Good Things Happen Slowly: A Life In and Out of Jazz*, on Sept. 12 (see sidebar on page 38). Palmetto will release an album of Hersch's solo performances, aptly titled *Open Book*, on Sept. 8, and Jazz at Lincoln Center will revive *Leaves Of Grass*, his setting of Walt Whitman's poems, on Sept. 15–16.

"I'm an overnight success at 60-something," he said on a June day at his loft in New York's Soho neighborhood.

The book and the album represent a new degree of candor—even for an artist who has been remarkably candid for years. "I talk about closets and musical closets," Hersch said, "and I think my closet has been wide open for a very long time. I've been out about everything for 25 years now in a big way; to my friends far longer than that."

The book, hammered out over two years in collaboration with journalist David Hajdu, explores Hersch's life and times before and after his coming out—repeatedly focusing on his struggle to reconcile his identity as a gay man with that of a jazz musician at a time when disclosing the former could make it difficult to find acceptance as the latter.

"My fear for the music had kept me closeted," writes the 10-time Grammy nominee. That fear is illustrated in anecdotes ranging from the farcical (he once scrambled to hide a second toothbrush from a visiting Stan Getz, lest it reveal he had a male partner) to the disconcerting (he was told in Bradley's, the onetime Greenwich Village haunt, that the late bassist Red Mitchell had accused Hersch of coming on to him—an accusation Hersch denied).

The book also details at considerable length his battles with illness, though Hersch, on reflection, posits a kind of creative upside to them. "My whole career as a bandleader has been under the cloud of HIV, which was pretty much a death sentence for many years," he said. "I had many years of ill health. But I decided that I was just going to do what I did musically and not think about the hipness factor, or what I could do to get over, or what current trends are. It forced me to be more true to myself."

Ultimately, the worst of the health crisis—the coma—has had a liberating effect on the emotional state he brings to his playing. Though it took time and no small amount of therapy for his chops to return after he emerged from the coma and left the hospital in late summer 2008, he said, "The thing I could still do—in fact do better than ever now—was feel."

The coma also appears to have had a salutary effect on his facility at the keyboard. After the coma, Hersch explained, his always-active left hand has enjoyed greater independence from his right hand than it had in the past—enlivening his countermelodies and enriching the textures of his sonic tapestries. The neurology behind the change remains a mystery.

The changes are amply showcased on *Open Book*. The album begins with the most personal piece in the program, "The Orb," a haunting take on a dream Hersch said he recalled from his coma. In the dream—one of eight such recollections that constitute the raw material for *Coma Dreams*—the smiling, radiant face of his partner, Scott Morgan, appears in a glowing orb. Obviously inspired, Hersch draws from the piano the shimmering, round sound that has become a signature.

"It has a great significance," he said of the piece. "It's sort of a valentine to my partner."

Jobim, a longtime favorite, is represented with a treatment of "Zingaro" that eschews an overt bossa feel for a turn toward the classical. "I merged it with the same kind of feel as the last Chopin nocturne," he said.

Hersch, whose improvisations make full use of the keyboard, often evokes the sensibility of a latter-day Chopin even when he is on a more traditional jazz footing, as he is in his kinetic interpretations of Benny Golson's "Whisper Not" and Monk's "Eronel." Monk, like Jobim, is a go-to composer for Hersch, though he came late to "Eronel," having picked it up at one of his residencies at the MacDowell Colony, an artists' retreat in New Hampshire.

The album's chief revelation is "Through The Forest," a loosely structured 20-minute dive into atonal abstraction recorded live at the JCC Art Center Concert Hall in Seoul, South Korea, in November 2016. The improvisation has no precedent in Hersch's discography in terms of length, form or, perhaps, mood in which it was rendered.

"I'd overslept," he said. "I wasn't in my usual frame of mind to play a solo concert. I walked out and I saw this sea of young Korean faces and I just sat down and started improvising. I was really in this place of not editing it, or judging it or controlling it.

"They sent me a recording of it. I remembered it as being something special that I wanted to check out. And when I listened back to it with a friend I said, 'Is this crazy or is this as good as I think it is?' He said, 'This is really awesome and you should do something with this.'"

That he did. The improvisation became the album's literal centerpiece when it was slotted as the fourth of seven tracks, most of which were recorded on a three-day return trip to Seoul in April of this year. The additional tracks, he said, were laid down amid conditions as similar to those of the original concert—same hall, engineer, piano and microphone setup—as could be

arranged, sans live audience.

In its spirit of free association, the piece provides something of a window into the kind of mindset Hersch maintains in his private moments—playing for himself on his meticulously prepared Steinway grand in his fifth-floor digs far above the din of Broadway and surrounded by the fastidiously organized LPs and CDs that line his walls.

The improvisation could have import for Hersch's future solo outings. While he conceives of repertoire in terms of tunes—he is one of the few pianists to play extended solo engagements at the Village Vanguard, for which he creates a written list that is divided into slow, medium and fast pieces—he said he might be motivated to do more free playing.

"I can't re-create that moment," he said of the Seoul concert. "But there may be other moments. It gives me the courage to do it." He's booked for six solo nights at the Vanguard in November.

For all the praise lavished on his solo playing—his 2011 Palmetto album *Alone At The Vanguard*, for one, was widely lauded, garnering Grammy nominations for best instrumental jazz album and best improvised jazz solo (for "Work")—Hersch may be just as renowned for the empathy he brings to the duo format.

Notable among his recent pairings have been those with guitarists Bill Frisell and Julian Lage, which are of interest for, among other things, the ease with which they rise above the inherent challenges of merging two unaccompanied chordal instruments without a sign of turf wars. That, Lage said, owed in large part to Hersch's "all-encompassing sensitivity." (Both of those duo projects generated albums.)

Hersch's fondness for bandstand twosomes has also focused of late on clarinetists like Jane Ira Bloom, with whom he has recorded in duo, and Anat Cohen, with whom he has not, though in moving about the scene in New York the two players have occasionally experienced what Cohen called "spontaneous encounters."

That is what happened in March at the nightspot Mezzrow, where, Cohen recalled, the atmosphere was casual enough that Hersch came to the bandstand armed and ready to run through freshly minted tunes with little rehearsal.

"With Fred, we are constantly experimenting," she said. "I'm always surprised where the music is going and how in-the-moment it is."

Cohen and Hersch have in fact recorded together. He was a featured soloist on *Tightrope* (Anzic), the 2013 album by 3 Cohens, the trio Anat maintains with her brothers Yuval on soprano saxophone and Avishai on trumpet. The album includes a bewitchingly sinewy take on Hersch's "Song Without Words."

That tune could be reprised in duo format if an album documenting their joint appearance at last year's Healdsburg Jazz Festival in California comes to pass.

"The show was magical," Cohen recalled, expressing enthusiasm about the prospect, still in the talking stage, of releasing the recording.

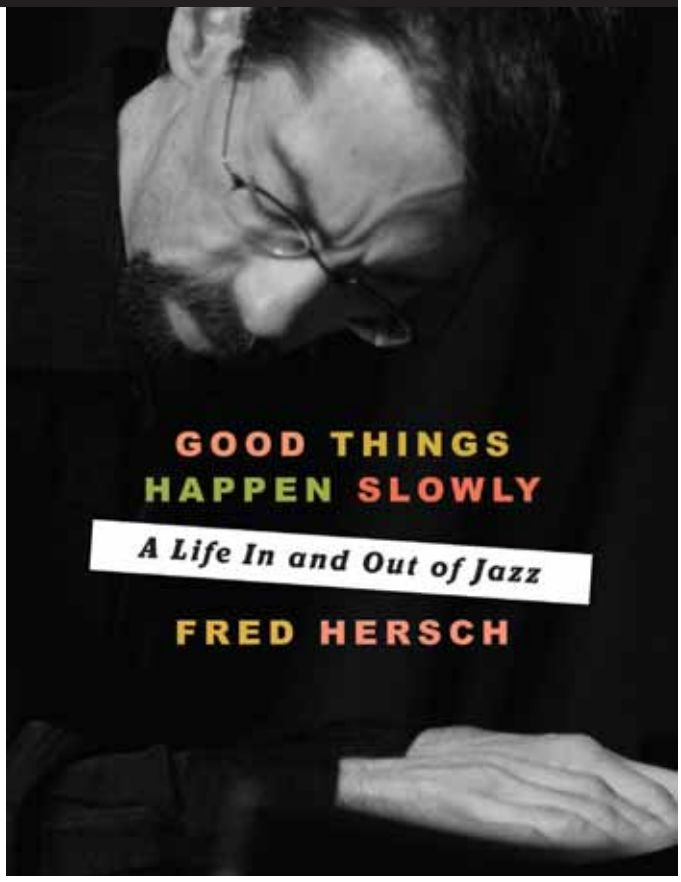
For now, Hersch is looking toward revisiting old projects that involve vocalists. Among them are his Pocket Orchestra, which features singer Jo Lawry, and *Leaves Of Grass*, with singers Kate McGarry and Kurt Elling interpreting his settings of Whitman.

Beyond these projects, Hersch said he has new music he wrote at MacDowell that he'd like to document with his long-standing trio of John Hébert on bass and Eric McPherson on drums. With his health relatively good and a full schedule of performances on tap—he and Cohen will hook up in 2018 for duo concerts in the Western states—new chapters in his life story will be written.

"The catharsis of doing a book is not going to freeze me in a time capsule," he said. "There's going to be more that's going to develop as things go on. I'm always looking for the next thing." **DB**

Jazz Epiphany

In this excerpt from Fred Hersch's forthcoming memoir, *Good Things Happen Slowly: A Life In and Out of Jazz* (Crown Archetype), the pianist recalls his introduction to jazz.



I had my jazz epiphany on wintery night near the end of 1973. I had recently returned to my hometown of Cincinnati after one term at Grinnell College. There was a small club in town called the Family Owl, and I went in expecting to catch some bluegrass in the basement. At the entrance I noticed a sign that said "Live Jazz Upstairs." On a whim, I climbed the stairs to the second floor, where a local saxophone quartet was playing.

The leader was a tenor saxophonist named Jimmy McGary, a fiery little man in his forties with a reddish-gray beard. He was a strong player with a full tone and a hard-swinging feel. The bassist was a wiry guy of indeterminate age named Bud Hunt—a solid player not quite on McGary's level. The drummer was a hulking, mad-looking bear of a man named Grover Mooney. He played in the mode I would later associate with Elvin Jones, with a kind of rolling approach to time. The pianist, who didn't make much of an impression on me, was playing a Fender Rhodes.

There was no sheet music on the stage. The musicians seemed to be creating the music out of thin air. I was mesmerized.

On the break at the end of the set, I worked up my courage, went up to McGary, and asked if I could sit in. He said, "Know any tunes?"

I said, "I think I can play 'Autumn Leaves.'" McGary nodded, and when it was time to start the second set, he waved me on. I took a seat at the Rhodes, trying to look casual about it, and played "Autumn Leaves." Actually, I overplayed it and messed up the form without knowing it. Adrenaline rushing, I went back to the bar.

After the set, McGary came up to me and said, "Come with me, kid." He brought me to a small break room in the back of the club. There was a table in the corner that held a portable record player and a few LPs stacked next to it. Jimmy lit a joint and passed it over to me. While I was taking my hit, he put the record on the turntable. "Now listen to this," he said. "Don't talk—just listen."

The LP was *Ellington At Newport*, the live recording of Duke Ellington and His Orchestra at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival. Jimmy picked up the tone arm and dropped the needle on the second track of the second side: "Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue," the number that made the performance a sensation, with 26 improvised choruses by the tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves. The energy was extraordinary, building with every chorus Gonsalves played. People were hooting and hollering like it was a rock concert. It was absolute hysteria. But beneath it all you could hear the fabric holding it all together, the shared sense of swing rhythm that brought the musicians together—the basic rhythm of jazz. At the end, Jimmy picked up the needle and looked me in the eye. "That's *time*," he said.

"Now, you have to have *time*. And you have to know some tunes. So, as soon as you've done some listening and you've worked on your time and you know some tunes, you can come back and play."

Later that week, I went to Mole's Record Exchange, a cluttered store in the university area that sold used albums for a buck or two. I rifled through the jazz bins, working my way from A to Z, and bought every album that had a version of "Autumn Leaves" on it: records by Miles Davis, Ahmad Jamal, Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson, Erroll Garner, Stan Getz, Chet Baker, Cannonball Adderley—more than a dozen. I brought the pile home and played each version of the tune, skipping all the other tracks. Then I played them all again, one by one. It was a revelation. Some were subtle, some virtuosic, some brisk, some meditative. Each version was unique, and all of them were all great.

It struck me: In jazz it's individuality, not adherence to a standardized conception of excellence, that matters most. Difference *matters*—in fact, it's an asset, rather than a liability. There is no describing how exhilarating this epiphany was for me, as a person who always felt different from other people.

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ROSCOE MITCHELL

'PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO BE CATEGORIZED'

By Ted Panken | Photo by Mark Sheldon

In spring 2014, not long after Roscoe Mitchell received a $225,000 Doris Duke Artist Award, ECM founder Manfred Eicher wrote a congratulatory letter to the iconic woodwindist-composer. Eicher proposed to Mitchell, then represented on ECM by three albums under his leadership since 1999, and by four with the Art Ensemble of Chicago since 1978, that they should start thinking about their next project.

Not long thereafter, Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) invited Mitchell to present an on-site concert in conjunction with its 2015 exhibition *The Freedom Principle: Experiments In Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, mounted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, of which Mitchell was an original member.

Beyond the realm of notes and tones, Mitchell contributed several paintings and his percussion cage, a "sculpture instrument" consisting of dozens of globally sourced bells, gongs, hand drums, mallet instruments, rattles, horns, woodblocks and sirens that MCA positioned on an installed stage alongside the percussion setups of AEC colleagues Joseph Jarman, Famoudou Don Moye, Lester Bowie and Malachi Favors Maghostut. The September performance was Mitchell's second AACM-related event in Chicago during 2015, following a March concert with cellist Tomeka Reid, bassist Junius Paul and drummer Vincent Davis documented on *Celebrating Fred Anderson*, on Nessa Records, whose catalog tracks Mitchell's evolution since 1967.

Although Mitchell "didn't even have an idea what music I would do" at MCA, he nonetheless contacted ECM. The end result is *Bells For the South Side*, a double CD featuring four separate trios embodying a 40-year timeline of Mitchell's musical production—James Fei on woodwinds and electronics and William Winant on percussion; Craig Taborn on piano and electronics and Kikanju Baku on drums and percussion; Jaribu Shahid on bass and Tani Tabbal on drums; Hugh Ragin on trumpet and Tyshawn Sorey on drums, trombone, piano and percussion cage.

On some of the 10 compositions, the units function autonomously; on others, some with Mitchell performing and some not, he assembles them in configurations ranging from quartet to full ensemble.

Mitchell, 76, sat amid half-packed suitcases in his downtown Brooklyn hotel room, a few blocks from Roulette Intermedium, where, the night before, he'd performed with a new edition of trio SPACE, a unit whose initial iteration, between 1979 and 1992, featured multi-woodwindist Gerald Oshita and vocalist Thomas Buckner. Joining

Art Ensemble of Chicago members Malachi Favors Maghostut (left), Roscoe Mitchell, Famoudou Don Moye and Lester Bowie perform at Tribeca Hall in New York on June 16, 1997.

'I enjoy long-lasting musical relationships with people. It takes time to develop certain musical concepts.'

Mitchell and Buckner was Scott Robinson, whose arsenal included such bespoke items as a reed trumpet with two bells, a slide sopranino saxophone, a contrabass saxophone and a barbell. Robinson elicited authoritative lines from each instrument, complementing and contrasting Mitchell's own sometimes circularly breathed postulations on sopranino, soprano, alto and bass saxophones, intoned with precision along a spectrum ranging from airiest subtone to loudest bellow. Buckner triangulated with micronically calibrated wordless shapes, timbres and pitches.

Mitchell's next stop was Bologna, Italy, where, four days hence, he'd participate in the latest instantiation of the ongoing concert project Conversations For Orchestra. The name references the transcriptions and orchestrations of improvisations that Mitchell, Taborn and Baku uncorked on some of the 21 pieces contained on *Conversations I* and *Conversations II* (Wide Hive), from 2013. As an example, Mitchell broke down two treatments of "They Rode For Them," originally rendered as a bass saxophone-drums duet.

"I took myself off bass saxophone and reinserted myself as an improviser on soprano saxophone," he said. "I used Kikanju's very complex drum part, giving one percussionist his hands and the other percussionist his feet. In New York, I took the bass saxophone part and featured bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck as an improviser."

On site in Bologna would be one-time Mitchell student Christopher Luna-Mega, who transcribed and orchestrated the improvisations on "Splatter," and current student John Ivers, who, on "Distant Radio Transmission," in Mitchell's words, "transcribed the air sounds the soprano is making with these gradual shifts of pitch, and then the real notes involved in that, and then transcribed those for strings, and orchestrated it for the string section."

The interchange not only satisfies Mitchell's predisposition "to put my students in the same space I'm in when I'm working," but is congruent with Mitchell's "studies of the relationships between composition and improvisation." He continued: "It's a new source to generate compositions from. I have these transcriptions and can do what I want with them, so it removes the element of 'What am I going to write?'"

A similarly pragmatic attitude toward the creative process informed Mitchell's approach when generating material for *Bells For The South Side*. He referenced the Note Factory, an ongoing project that debuted on the 1993 Black Saint sextet recording *This Dance Is For Steve McCall*, and scaled-up to octet and nonet on *Nine To Get Ready* (ECM, 1997), *Song For My Sister* (Pi, 2002) and *Far Side* (ECM, 2007).

"Because the Note Factory was big and didn't work all the time, I'd keep working with different elements of it—a quintet concert here, a trio there," Mitchell said. "That keeps everybody engaged with the music, so it's easier when I get the opportunity to put together the larger group. I enjoy long-lasting musical relationships with people. It takes time to develop certain musical concepts."

Few musicians have known Mitchell longer than Shahid and Tabbal, with whom Mitchell founded the Detroit-based Creative Music Collective along AACM principles after he relocated from Chicago to a Michigan farm near East Lansing in 1974. Colorado-based Ragin joined them in Mitchell's Sound Ensemble a few years later; Taborn entered Mitchell's orbit on a mid-'90s tour playing piano with James Carter opposite the Art Ensemble. The Fei-Winant trio coalesced after Mitchell joined them on the Mills College faculty in 2007 as the Darius Milhaud Chair of Composition; neighborly proximity has allowed ample rehearsal opportunities, as is evident in the uncanny mutual intuition they display on Mitchell's epic *For Trio: Angel City* (RogueArt).

Baku, a Londoner who plays in noise bands with names like Bollock Swine, had contacted Mitchell before a January 2013 engagement at London's Café Oto with Tabbal and bassist John Edwards. After inviting Baku to sit in on the second night, Mitchell decided to pair him with Taborn for the *Conversations* sessions 10 months later.

About a year earlier, Mitchell first played with Sorey (whose teachers include Mitchell's AACM peers Anthony Braxton and George Lewis) when he was invited to play duo with the younger musician at a Berkeley house concert. "He sounded so amazing playing solo, I thought, 'Now, what am I supposed to do with him?'" Mitchell recalled. The answer came that July, when Wide Hive recorded a Mitchell-Sorey duo encounter, with Ragin augmenting the flow on several numbers.

Three years later, at the MCA, Mitchell assigned Sorey to perform in the percussion cage on "Bells For The South Side," while having Baku open the proceedings by dancing with Favors' sleigh bells and ankle bells. The journey continued via a sonic roadmap that traced a route along vocabulary signposts Mitchell had heard each musician deploy.

"Prelude To The Card Game," a Mitchell-Shahid-Tabbal trio, is the latest in a series of card compositions Mitchell first developed during the 1970s. In them, he provides material on a set of six cards that fit together to be configured in different ways, whether overlapped, side-by-side or out of numbered sequence. The intention, Mitchell said, is to help inexperienced classically trained improvisers "to avoid making the same mistakes—that is, following, or being behind on a written piece of music."

He continued: "Each time the information comes up, it's done a different way. If you play something I like, I can store that and bring it back, say, when I'm running out of information.

By then, you're in another space. Suddenly, we have an important element—a musical composition. That's counterpoint. I can take your idea and put my own take on it and bring it in another way. Where we had one thing going on, now we have two. If what I'm doing registers to you and you want to put a different take on that, then we've brought three different things.

"Every moment is different. If I can remain aware of what's happening in the moment, it's helpful in constructing an improvisation. For instance, I might have done something really good last night, but if I try to do the same thing the next night, it might not work. An improvisation should never be a situation where there's only one option. To me, improvisation is trying to improve your skills so you can make these on-point compositional decisions. That takes practice."

"Panoply" features Fei on alto saxophone, Winant on xylophone, Ragin on trumpet, and Baku, Sorey and Tabbal on drumsets. It is also the title of the Mitchell painting on the back cover of the booklet jacket.

"The art came from my mother's side of the family, and the music came from my father's side," said Mitchell, whose father sang professionally until he developed problems with his vocal cords. "When I was growing up, one of my uncles created a kind of comic book structure of myself and my sisters and our friends, where we met all these different people from different planets. He used a crayon and ink, and then he'd put the crayon on the paper and then scrape it and mix colors. My other maternal uncle made a lot of my toys and stuff growing up."

Asked if his creative process involved synesthetic elements, Mitchell responded: "If you're an artist, sometimes you just make a choice which way you want to go. You're using the same thought patterns that create painting and music and writing."

In this regard, Mitchell mentioned early AACM colleague Lester Lashley, who played cello and trombone on *Sound*, the 1966 Delmark recording that vaulted Mitchell into international consciousness. And he mentioned Muhal Richard Abrams, whose paintings were also on display at the 2015 MCA exhibition, as were Anthony Braxton's graphic scores. Mitchell met Abrams in 1961, not long after he returned to Chicago from a three-year stint as an Army musician during which he grew from neophyte to well-trained practitioner prepared to follow Abrams' dictum of self-education.

"Muhal was painting then, and we talked about painting a lot," Mitchell said. "We always had a sketch pad with us. I enjoyed sitting in front of the canvas and trying to figure out what I was going to do next. I still try to keep something going on. I do a lot of drawing, and right now I'm working on a sculpture out of pieces of trees that were cut down at Mills—this thing I call the Cat. It's a two-faced sculpture—one side, to me, has a male image, and then, when you flip the head around, it's more of a female image. I made glasses for it, so you can display it in several different ways."

It was time for Mitchell to finish packing, check out and catch his flight to Bologna, but he took one more question: Considering the time he devotes to teaching, composing, traveling and art-making, how does he sustain his chops on the array of instruments on which he continues to perform as a virtuoso?

"I'm not doing so well with that right now," he said. "I'm longing to get back to practicing six or seven hours a day, like the old days, when all I did was play and I had a real embouchure. … I want to get past the point of practicing just to get my embouchure back together. I need to practice consistently until I can get to a point where I can start learning.

"As we live longer, people don't want to be categorized. I think the best thing, what I always encourage my students to do, is to study music, not categories, so that you can seek in any musical situation you're in. Certainly be aware of everything that has happened in music, and study that. But strive to study the big picture, which is music." **DB**

MATT WILSON
LIFE'S CALLING

By Dan Ouellette | Photo by Michael Jackson

The kinship between jazz and poetry has been a mainstay of the fine arts world, dating back to the 1920s and serving an essential cultural role during the Harlem Renaissance, the Beat movement and the jazz-meets-hip-hop era. Most often, the poets were inspired by the syncopated rhythms and fluid melodies of the music, whether it was compositionally structured or freely improvised. Likewise, poetry has also served as the wellspring of creative shifts with jazz artists.

Artists from multiple genres have been inspired by the long-lined exuberance of pioneering American poet Walt Whitman. Weather Report took the title of its second album in 1972 from Whitman's ecstatic poem "I Sing the Body Electric," and in 2005 Fred Hersch rendered the poet's magnum opus on his *Leaves Of Grass* album with reciters/vocalists Kurt Elling and Kate McGarry (detailed in DownBeat's October 2015 cover story on Hersch). Recently soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom launched a new quartet project fueled by the provocative work of Emily Dickinson, *Wild Lines*, with actress Deborah Rush reading snippets of poems in between and over the rush of the music.

The most unique and entertaining jazz/poetry album in recent memory arrives with 53-year-old drummer Matt Wilson's *Honey And Salt* (Palmetto), a joyful, bright and at times humorous tribute to Carl Sandburg (1878–1967), the Illinois-born writer who became the poignant poet laureate of industrial America and was championed as the poet of the people. Roughly broken into three parts representing Sandburg's urban life, his rural upbringing and an overlapping collision of the two, *Honey And Salt* is highlighted not only by Wilson's imaginative instrumental interpretation of the poems but also by his guest list of esteemed readers, including John Scofield, Joe Lovano, Bill Frisell, Christian McBride, Rufus Reid, Carla Bley and even actor Jack Black as well as members of the drummer's band—which he's dubbed Honey and Salt—featuring guitarist Dawn Thomson, who sings lyrics from several Sandburg poems throughout the recording.


JOHN ABBOTT

Martin Wind (left), Jeff Lederer, Matt Wilson, Ron Miles and Dawn Thomson collaborated on *Honey And Salt*.

'Sandburg addressed the idea of opposing forces, just like how a lot of music becomes beautiful because of collision.'

"It's been one of my life's callings to go for these things," said the amiable Wilson, sitting in Lincoln Center's Atrium, less than a week after his brother tragically died while mowing the lawn at his rural farm near St. Louis. "My brother was extremely influential for me. As kids, we were always thinking of things to do even if we didn't know we probably couldn't do them." He paused and noted that he was able to dedicate the album to him at the last minute of production. "So this project, the mix of poetry and the music is one of those things."

The eclectic album *Honey And Salt*—featuring a stellar band of longtime collaborator Jeff Lederer on multiple woodwinds, Ron Miles on trumpet, Thomson on guitar and Martin Wind on bass—has been long in coming. It's Wilson's ninth album for Palmetto. The Sandburg project was jumpstarted in 2002 when Wilson received a Chamber Music America New Jazz Works grant funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. (Bloom was awarded the same grant for her Dickinson project in 2015.) One of his first pieces was the poem "As Wave Follows Wave," which was the title track of his 1996 debut recording featuring Dewey Redman on saxophone, Larry Goldings on organ and Cecil McBee on bass. Wilson interprets the piece on *Honey And Salt* as a slow, contemplative reflection and recites the key line by himself and then communally with his band members: "As wave follows wave, so new men take old men's places," he said. "I wanted to revisit this as a tribute to all the years—that I'm still able to do this, that I'm still recording."

In 2003 on *Humidity* (Palmetto), Wilson returned to the Sandburg poetry anthology for the moody "Wall Shadows" with an undergirding of Yosuke Inoue's compelling bass craft, and then in 2012 on his Arts & Crafts album *An Attitude For Gratitude* (Palmetto), he used the poet's words to inspire the wildly rambunctious "Bubbles" with playful drum frenzy spiced by Gary Versace's accordion trills and the leader waxing poetic.

As he dug deeper into Sandburg's poetry for inspiration, Wilson began experimenting with solo, duo and full band instrumentations. He also explored different musical styles—from country-inflected to groove-charged to happy-go-lucky romps to marches to samba. He's been touring the music for a couple of years, trying out different combinations. "That's why the band is called Honey and Salt," he said. "I love Sandburg's volume of poems, *Honey And Salt*. I love his expression of the opposites in the poetry—sweet and salt. It's a collision, but also an alignment and a rub."

The drummer cites the influence of his college teacher at Wichita State University in Kansas, Dr. J.C. Combs. "He was one of the most creative and imaginative people on the planet," Wilson said. "He's the one reason why I went to school there. He was into everything. But his biggest lesson to me was when he said, 'How can we do something different with the ordinary?' So, for this project, we didn't have a check list of what to do. We changed the music by playing the music."

Lederer, Wilson's friend and collaborator for 25 years, has an integral role in manifesting the drummer's vision. He notes that their professional relationship has spanned a number of projects, but the Sandburg music has been particularly fulfilling.

"This music has been around for about five years," he said. "We even played at Sandburg's home in Minnesota. We've been playing along the way, and the music has developed. We're in a time period where's there not much spoken-word in jazz. With Matt, the words go deep. The way he phrases sound is like spoken-word."

On *Honey And Sand*, Wilson has freed Lederer to work his magic alongside Miles. Their teamwork is highlighted on tunes like the noirish "Night Stuff," where bass clarinet and trumpet add compelling textures to the arrangement, and the festive "Daybreak," where clarinet and trumpet hold celebratory conversations. "Ron is a spectacular musician and a true improviser," Lederer said. "He has a quiet, intuitive way in the studio, talking very little. It's astonishing that he's incapable of repeating himself. On this record, he helped Matt sketch out arrangements."

As for that connection, Wilson said, "Ron and Jeff make incredible individual statements and then together they're remarkable. They don't need eight choruses. They can make a statement right now."

Wilson's all-star list of readers brings a vibrant sense of community to *Honey And Salt*. "I decided to … invite my friends that I admire—to be guests as readers but not play their instruments. I wanted to hear their voices."

With a winking sense of humor and a cool baritone, McBride recites the whimsical Sandburg puzzle poem "Anywhere And Everywhere People," with such lines as "There are people so eager to be seen/ They nearly always manage to be seen" and "There are people who want to be everywhere at once/ And they seem to get nowhere."

With a scamper and shuffle, Wilson leads the band though a raucous take on another humorous Sandburg poem, "We Must Be Polite," where a deadpan Scofield playfully wonders about speaking to a gorilla "very, very respectfully" and what to do "if an elephant knocks on your door." Frisell softly and patiently voices lines like "I write what I know" at the beginning and end of "Paper 2" with a jubilation of wild playing in between, and actor Jack Black gives his comic read of "Snatch Of Sliphorn Jazz" with brio support by Wilsons' drum gusts and Lederer's soprano sax shouts.

Another guest slot featured Reid reading the romping "Trafficker," with a nod to the Beat era. "We had been doing that piece as a band

until Martin said, 'We need to get Rufus,'" Wilson recalled. "His voice turns it into a film noir. It's a real homage to that classic beatnik vibe. The content of that poem is dark, so it was intriguing to put that together."

Lovano recites "Are you a writer or a rapper" on "Paper 1." "At first, I didn't know how I would fit in, but I'm a storyteller," Lovano said. "As Matt explained it, I knew it was very different—unique, in fact. It was a challenge because I recited without hearing the music. Matt wanted us to read how we felt."

Wilson's interest in Sandburg stems from a mix of artistic sensibility, his fascination with jazz and family ties. Sanburg, like Whitman, freed himself from rhythm and meter and the governing rules of verse. The poet was born in Galesburg, Illinois, the next town over from Wilson's hometown of Knoxville, Illinois. Sandburg's first cousin Charlie Krans married Wilson's great aunt Emma, and for a Life magazine feature on Sanburg in 1953, he visited the Wilson household. "My mother would always remind us that Carl Sandburg ate off the same plates at the same table and sat in the same chairs," Wilson said. "He was a big deal, so when it came time to study poetry in grade school, Carl Sandburg was a primary subject. As I got older, I realized that he addressed the whole idea of opposing forces, just like how a lot of music becomes beautiful because of collision."

Krans' dilapidated barn inspired Sandburg to write the poem "Prairie Barn," which Wilson put to music with Lederer reciting on a scratch track waiting for a new voice. But as it turns out, his recitation on the Americana-type tune was perfect and made the final cut for the recording.

On *Honey And Salt,* Wilson samples an archival audio recording of Sandburg reading his most famous poem, "Fog" ("The fog comes on little cat feet/ It sits looking over harbor and city/ On silent haunches and then moves on"). That simple poem presented Wilson with one of his biggest problems, with its almost clichéd sentiment.

"It ended up getting complicated because I was going to track someone down to read it," he explained. "But once we got it cleared that we could use this audio, one day I was listening to it in my car on repeat. That's when I realized, 'Hey, I can play this solo.' So we kept it plain and improvised with song form. We erased and edited, we split up lines and traded them. It allowed for a completely different weight than the rest of the album—allowing the drums by themselves to come through in a different way."

The first line of Sandburg's early poem "Ten Definitions Of Poetry" reads: "Poetry is a projection across silence of cadences arranged to break that silence with definite intentions of echoes, syllables, wave lengths." This not only plays off the essence of jazz but also illuminates Bley's gentle and spare reading of Sandburg's "To Know Silence Perfectly," where she begins and ends the album's epilogue with the line: "To know silence perfectly is to know music."

Wilson says *that* is the cardinal rule for free speech in music. "Improvisation is the silence between musical interludes," he said. "So the improvisation is the silence. When we play this live, we leave a little more space to hear whatever is happening around us. Someone drops a program, a door slams, then there's silence. It's a great observation on what music is all about. Sound and silence. You need to welcome both."

Wilson will take the latest incarnation of the Honey and Salt band on the road this fall, including a night at the Monterey Jazz Festival on Sept. 15. He will perform with the core band and will be joined by artists playing at the festival as well as locals reading the poetry. "I'm into the interactive and the communal," Wilson said. "I want simple scenery, maybe a fabric screen of the [album] cover to drape in front of the music stands, drawings and pictures, the overlapping of voices. Everything doesn't have to be in line. Hey, we're hearing the music and having conversations. That's life. I want to have the show be start-to-finish like theater." **DB**

ROPEADOPE RECORDS

FOSTERING WIDESPREAD COLLABORATION


SAMANTHA J

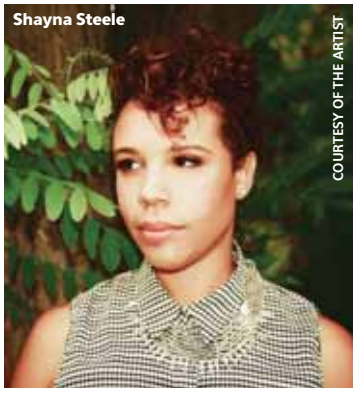
The Pollyseeds includes Chachi (left), Rose Gold, Terrace Martin and Wyann Vaughn, as well as other musicians.


ZACH GROSS

Maurice Brown


RIPPY AUSTIN

Trevor Lawrence Jr.


Shayna Steele

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Ropeadope Records was founded in 1999 as a feisty Philadelphia-based upstart that created a seminal music blog to promote its artists while also establishing a stylish merchandising presence. Today Ropeadope has evolved into something much larger, joining myriad artists and their fans across the globe in a true community environment.

"We think of ourselves as a distributed collaborative network," Ropeadope owner Louis Marks said. "It's a reflection that today people are connected through the Internet. We want Ropeadope to mirror the culture that its musicians share. Many are connected, and each has their local and global online networks. We try to plug those together so they can share resources instead of going it alone."

Ropeadope's success as a music company and tastemaker is attributable to an eclectic, diverse array of artists. In the past Ropeadope worked with The Philadelphia Experiment (featuring drummer Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, keyboardist Uri Caine and bassist Christian McBride), which released an acclaimed self-titled album in 2001, and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band (which recruited New Orleans icon Dr. John and a little-known singer named Norah Jones for its 2002 album, *Medicated Magic*).

Ropeadope's current roster includes pianist Eddie Palmieri; trumpeters Nicholas Payton, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah and David Weiss; vocalists Malika Tirolien and Shayna Steele; drummer Nate Smith; guitarists Matthew Stevens and Grant Green Jr.; pianist Mark de Clive-Lowe; and the bands Slavic Soul Party and Fresh Cut Orchestra.

Forthcoming Ropeadope releases include two albums from pianist Richard X Bennett—the quintet disc *Experiments With Truth* and a trio effort, *What Is Now*—both out Oct. 6.

Ropeadope's artists share resources and audiences via Bandcamp and SoundCloud web pages. Ropeadope's extensive website—which lists 13 labels, including Sounds of Crenshaw, Mobetta Music and Paytone—has a Rad TV page that compiles video webisodes and a store that sells vinyl.

Ropeadope's motto, "Music Culture Clothing," bears explaining: "It's a holdover from the early days of Ropeadope, but it still applies," Marks said. "We were one of the first labels to maintain a full blog, from 1999 to the mid-2000s. That's where the culture comes in. We used to write about happenings in the market and the


STEPHEN TAYLOR

Mark de Clive-Lowe (left) with Nia Andrews, who appeared on his album *Church*


SAMANTHA J

Adam Turchin


Eddie Palmieri

AYANO HISA

world. And our T-shirts and hats have become collector's items." (At press time, the Ropeadope store offered six T-shirts, including the "Renew Orleans" design, with its clever shout-out to the Crescent City.)

In an ever-shifting marketplace, Ropeadope has managed to successfully navigate the demands of a decentralized record industry. That includes partnering with many imprints.

"The relationship with our imprints is more complex than simply distribution," Marks said. "We release and distribute their records, but we also collaborate on their marketing; we coach the labels as they grow. Snarky Puppy's Ground Up label was our first imprint. There are entire communities [built] around a single artist."

Trumpeter Maurice "Mobetta" Brown, who enjoyed an acclaimed weekly residency at New York's Jazz Standard in April, is one of Roepadope's rising stars. His diverse resume reflects his musical versatility: Brown has recorded and/or toured with Aretha Franklin, John Legend, George Freeman and Lalah Hathaway. He wrote horn arrangements for Tedeschi Trucks Band and appeared on its Grammy-winning album, *Revelator* (Sony Masterworks). Brown's new album, *The Mood* (Ropeadope/Mobetta), features rapper Talib Kweli and and an ensemble that recalls both The Headhunters and A Tribe Called Quest.

"My goal to create jazz that is contemporary," Brown said. "I love the classics but why regurgitate the music? I took my experiences producing hip-hop and r&b, rock and blues and jazz, and put it together. It's an honest sound. I wasn't pulling out my hair to get it to sound smooth; that's the way I hear music."

Brown feels at home on Ropeadope. "Unlike most labels, Ropeadope has a stronger sense of community and camaraderie among its artists," he said. "We all support each other and play on each other's projects and share our fan bases. Often, musicians can be standoffish if they share a label. But not at Ropeadope. Everyone is cool."

Marks is optimistic about the company's future. "It's a ridiculous challenge, but we're scaleable to weather the storm," he said. "People used to ask, 'Where is your office?' I said, 'We're in a small store behind the railroad tracks. We're not anywhere.' Today we pay close attention to changes with social media, the Internet and the streaming model. We approach social media differently: Rather than a broadcast medium, we have a chain of tastemakers—like old-school radio DJs—who talk directly to fans and music lovers to create a dialog. Our goal is to carve out a microbusiness inside the current environment—like a microbrewery."

INVENTIVE POLLYSEEDS

Ropeadope is championing one of the most anticipated albums of the year, *Sounds Of Crenshaw Vol. 1*, the debut from The Pollyseeds. The band consists of what Marks called "a rotating cast of producers and musicians." The group is fronted by multi-instrumentalist Terrace Martin, who earned rave reviews for his 2016 studio album, *Velvet Portraits* (Ropeadope/Sounds of Crenshaw). Martin and other members of The Pollyseeds appeared on Kendrick Lamar's Grammy-winning album *To Pimp A Butterfly* (Top Dawg/Aftermath).

The Pollyseeds include vocalists Chachi, Rose Gold and Wyann Vaughn, guitarist Marlon Williams, drummer Robert "Sput" Searight, keyboardist Robert Glasper and saxophonist Kamasi Washington. The collective also features a couple of musicians who have their own new leader projects on Ropeadope: saxophonist Adam Turchin, who plays 10 different instruments on his album *Manifest Destiny*, and a drummer Trevor Lawrence Jr., who has more than 70 recording credits and who recruited Brown, Martin, Payton and Washington to play on his album *Relationships*.

Sounds Of Crenshaw Vol. 1 opens with the atmospheric "Tapestry," and then The Pollyseeds get down to business with "Chef E Dubble." Offering a relaxed groove with Glasper's swelling Rhodes keyboard and Searight's pulsing rums, "Chef E Dubble" also incorporates a low-end hum, Williams' guitar and Washington's blustery tenor, creating an ethereal ride. That quickly changes with the distorted Linn LM-1 drum machine beat of "Intentions," which has got a big dose of P-Funk ladled with contemporary rapping from Chachi.

Gold takes the spotlight for the hip-hop/quiet storm ballad "You And Me," followed by the twinkling keyboard merriment of "Believe," which features keyboardist Chris Cadenhead, drummer Curly Martin, bassist Brandon Eugene Owens, and the percussion, alto saxophone and Minimoog of Martin, with a tenor solo courtesy of Washington. "Don't Trip" closes the record with yet more Rhodes plushness, ethereal vocals and Lawrence's big beat.

Mixing elements from old-school r&b and 21st-century hip-hop, *Sounds of Crenshaw Vol. 1* showcases a bevy of West Coast talent crafting compelling art for a 2017 audience. It's yet another example of Ropeadope's skillful way of identifying intriguing artists and helping them flourish.

—Ken Micallef

YOKO MIWA

Yoko Miwa's new release is a trio album titled *Pathways.*

ONE FAN AT A TIME

In May, when pianist Yoko Miwa played to a sold-out house at the Regattabar jazz club in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her trio, she looked out at an enthusiastic audience she had meticulously built, one fan at a time.

The Japanese-born Miwa, 47, has been working in the Boston music scene for years—teaching, performing as an accompanist and then leading her own trio. At the Regattabar, she was celebrating the independent release of *Pathways*, her seventh album as a leader, and her first in five years. A recent feature in The Boston Globe and a spot on JazzWeek's radio chart had created demand for the new album. But there was the kind of screw-up that any indie artist would recognize: Buyers weren't able to order the physical CD online (due to a restocking snafu that was later resolved).

"Yoko was overwhelmed with email, texts, Facebook messages and tweets from fans saying they wanted to buy the CD, but it was unavailable," recalled Scott Goulding, Miwa's husband, and the drummer in her trio since its inception.

It was a typical complication of being one's own distributor. Like a lot of independent musicians, Miwa has to balance music-business necessities with her day job as assistant professor of piano at Berklee College of Music and performing. "People ask me, 'How do you do it?'" said Miwa. "I tell them, 'Because we have to.'"

By any standard, Miwa is decidedly accomplished. A child prodigy with perfect pitch, she seemed destined for a classical career when she entered Koyo Conservatory in Kobe. But then a chance encounter at the movies with the standard "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" (which appears twice in the soundtrack to the 1989 Steven Spielberg romantic comedy *Always*) put her on a path to jazz. She got a job at a jazz club owned by musician and teacher Minoru Ozone (father of pianist Makoto Ozone) and began her long jazz journey.

In 1997, she came to Berklee on a full scholarship. She soon fell into a busy freelance life—giving piano lessons, playing jazz shows with faculty members and taking plenty of pop gigs. But at a certain point, she felt she had to focus on her own music and not just be "someone else's pianist." She formed the trio with Goulding, whom she had met at Berklee, and in 2001 they released their first CD, *In The Mist Of Time*, a collection of nine Miwa originals.

That album showcased Miwa's impressive technique and a tuneful lyricism that combines an Oscar Peterson-ish hard swing with Bill Evans-like introspection. Following her first three albums (originally released on the Japanese Polystar label), she has mixed her originals with inventively arranged covers.

Pathways includes two songs by bassist Marc Johnson, a rendition of The Beatles' "Dear Prudence" and an epic, exploratory take on Joni Mitchell's "Court And Spark." At 11 minutes long, it's the kind of track Miwa says is frustrating for her radio-promo man, who's desperate for shorter tunes. "But it's what we do," Miwa said. "We go for it."

Miwa's original compositions are equally capacious. The theme of "Lickety Split" follows the rhythmic pattern of Sonny Rollins' "Pent-Up House," but the piece soon veers into wide-open harmonic and rhythmic vistas that suggest McCoy Tyner. "The Goalkeeper" is a playful mix of bebop themes. The ruminative "Lantern Light" is quintessentially Miwa, featuring a lyrical main theme and a contrastingly dark, foreboding bridge.

Miwa (left) and her trio perform at Scullers Jazz Club in Boston.

Miwa said she wrote the piece "in 10 minutes," on her lunch hour at Berklee, with pencil and paper, avoiding the piano, not wanting the tune to be dictated by familiar finger patterns.

Miwa supplemented her income for years as a Berklee teaching accompanist as well as instructing at the small, all-ages Brookline Music School. But in 2011, she got a call from Berklee's then-piano department chair (now chair emerita) Stephany Tiernan regarding a part-time teaching position.

"I hadn't met her," Tiernan recalled. "But she was someone I needed to pay attention to because I was hearing about her from a lot of different places." Seeing Miwa perform, Tiernan was impressed by her technical mastery and emotional honesty. "She really connects with her audience. She came in and proved herself to be an extremely popular teacher."

In 2015, following the deaths of legendary Berklee jazz-piano master Ray Santisi (1933–2014) and longtime classical teacher Ed Bedner (1936–2014), Berklee began an international search for a full-time faculty member. The school fielded 182 applicants before hiring Miwa. She was, Tiernan explained, someone who could fulfill the needs of students from both jazz and classical backgrounds. Plus, it was extremely important to Tiernan that the new hire could serve as a role model as both an instructor and a performing/recording musician.

These days, Miwa teaches full-time three days a week and devotes her weekends to the trio. She and Goulding hire publicists and radio promoters to help with each new recording, but mostly they're on their own. (They've released all the albums independently in the States, except for 2012's JVC/Victor Japanese release *Act Naturally*.)

Still, there's always the danger of becoming, as Goulding put it, an academic "lifer," a musician whose performance career has been impeded by teaching duties.

Fortunately, the Yoko Miwa Trio is a steadily working band—for the past 12 years, they've had a weekly Saturday-night gig at the downtown Boston bistro Les Zygomates, and they've been a regular at the Sunday brunch in Cambridge's Ryles Jazz Club for 15 years. Two years ago, they added a Friday night at the Thelonious Monkfish restaurant in Cambridge, where the menu has a cocktail named in honor of Miwa.

Restaurants are not necessarily the most artistically rewarding gigs—they're often about socializing and food, not listening. But Miwa has learned how to convert those regular restaurant patrons into fans. She found early on that people wanted to talk to her between sets, something she at first resisted, asking Goulding to meet people instead. "But they want to talk to you," Goulding told her.

Over time she learned that if she talked to people after the first set, they'd pay closer attention during the second. "It helps to connect with the audience," she said. And those restaurant regulars would show up for the trio's gigs at jazz rooms like the Regattabar or Scullers in Boston. "They know it's special," Miwa noted.

None of the restaurant owners have pressed their will on the trio's set list. The only limits are self-imposed. "Are you really going to be able to hear my brushes?" Goulding is likely to ask when Miwa calls a ballad during a particularly noisy set.

On a Friday night in June at Thelonious Monkfish, the trio played for a crowd that talked noisily while dining on sushi and Asian "fusion" dishes. But they also applauded and cheered loudly after solos by Miwa and the trio's formidable bassist, Brad Barrett, especially after a long, mood-shifting journey through "Lantern Light." Thanking the audience at set's end, she encouraged them to try a Yoko Miwa cocktail. And then she stopped by a table down front—making another crucial, one-on-one connection with an appreciative fan. *—Jon Garelick*

BERTA MORENO

JORDAN MATTER

Berta Moreno, a native of Madrid, now lives in Manhattan.

DRIVEN & DETERMINED

For Berta Moreno, the path to fulfilling her lifelong dream of becoming a working jazz musician has been one of little steps—incremental advancements that, one after the other, brought the Spanish saxophonist to New York and the release of her debut album, aptly titled *Little Steps*.

Moreno, a 33-year-old native of Madrid, has lived in Manhattan for three years. During that time, she earned a bachelor's degree at City College of New York, where she was a star student of saxophonist Steve Wilson, who appears as part of the sextet on the richly textured, thoroughly swinging *Little Steps*. Wilson plays alto and soprano in the triple-sax front line, alongside Moreno on tenor and Troy Roberts on tenor and soprano. The rhythm section includes rising pianist Manuel Valera, plus the simpatico team of bassist Maksim Perepelica and drummer David Hardy. Moreno composed all the tunes, along with co-producing the album with Perepelica and releasing the record herself.

"I've been in love with jazz since I can remember," Moreno said. "Someone put on that Cannonball Adderley album *Somethin' Else* when I was little, and it was immediately, 'What is this?!' It was so beautiful that I recall almost crying. After that, I listened to a jazz radio program every day, listing all the names I heard in a little notebook with my limited English then—like, 'Dexter who?' As much as I liked learning classical clarinet at the time, I just had to switch to saxophone—it was a burning [desire] inside. I would fall asleep with headphones on, the sounds of Cannonball, Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Joe Henderson, Sonny Stitt, Kenny Garrett seeping into my consciousness.

"I played along to records, then went to workshops and took lessons," Moreno recalled. "But I had high ideals from all my listening—it was painful when I couldn't realize the sounds on the horn that I had in my head. It seemed like such a slow process, but looking back, it was truly lots and lots of little steps that got me here. The struggles are worth it, as long as you keep at it."

Moreno moved to New York from the Netherlands, where she earned the first of her degrees in music. She came with Perepelica, a Latvian with whom she had a prize-winning band in Holland called Kind of Brown (named after bassist Christian McBride's 2009 album with his band Inside Straight). Perepelica is now her fiancé.

Seated at an East Village café, Moreno radiated openhearted optimism and a can-do spirit. "To move to another country with a partner in both music and life was a huge help," she said. "Maksim and I share the same aspirations and support each other. I really wanted to be in the hustle here; I couldn't wait. It can be challenging to live here, though, with the expenses and the competition. After growing up in Spain, where it's so community-oriented, it can be hard to make friends here at first, as everyone is working all the time just to make it. But you can definitely feel the jazz vibe in New York. All the different music is so inspiring."

"A striking thing about Berta is her sincerity," said Wilson, who, in addition to being an associate professor and co-director of the jazz studies program at City College of New York, is a faculty member at The Juilliard School. "Berta invests emotional content into whatever she's doing, something you can sense whether you're in the audience or on the bandstand alongside her. She's smart, focused, dependable—serious about her music but an affable person, the sort you want to work with. She's all about making the music as good as it can be.

"There are more and more young women in jazz, from all over the world—not just Europe but also Japan, Korea, South America," Wilson continued. "In the 1980s, when I started out, that wasn't the case. But these women are every bit as capable as the guys. Berta has a special quality in her playing—an emotional vulnerability. You don't hear a lot of

that today, when there are a lot of thinkers and technicians in the music. To me, it's essential to reveal something of yourself in your sound. That's what a lot of us love about the jazz greats. It invites people in."

It took Moreno a few years to save the money to record *Little Steps* at Systems Two in Brooklyn. The bulk of the funds for the release came from a Kickstarter campaign that raised $12,000, which she used to pay for mixing, mastering, pressing, printing, a photo shoot, cover design, a promo video and a publicist. "I could've done a more homemade record, just using friends and a cheaper studio," she explained. "But having invested so much time in writing the music, the recording was important to me; I wanted to do it right. And the crowdfunding ended up being about more than money. It was also about getting people involved. I had no idea that I had fans not just in Spain, Holland and the U.S. but also in Japan, Brazil, Greece, Switzerland, Germany. It was so encouraging for me—you know, 'I'm not alone.'"

The recording session—which was completed in one day, lasting eight intense hours—was made easier thanks to the support of Wilson and the other veteran musicians in the room. "Steve is the sweetest guy, and I've learned so much from him," Moreno said. "He's such a wonderful musician, with that beautiful, personal sound on the horn that just lifts you up. It was so exciting to hear [Wilson] and the other guys play my music, with all their powerful solos. I thought through the arrangements carefully beforehand and wanted to make a swinging record, with the sound of a real band. The guys helped me realize that."

Moreno turned to CD Baby for manufacturing *Little Steps*, as well as digital distribution and physical distribution in the United States. For European distribution of orders via her website, she's using a mom-and-pop shop—literally. She shipped a batch of CDs home to Spain, where her mother fulfills the orders. As for live gigs, she has played clubs in multiple New York City boroughs, along with such alternative venues as the Queens Public Library. The saxophonist is also a teaching artist with pianist/bandleader Arturo O'Farrill's Afro Latin Jazz Alliance.

Last year, Moreno traveled to Kenya with her soprano saxophone to teach music and Spanish to small children through the Bilingual Birdies program. "It was life-changing to see how these people who live such challenging lives are so happy day to day, singing, dancing and laughing, with a real sense of community," she said. "I want to write music inspired by that experience. It's just the seed of an idea, but I know now that little steps can help you realize what's in your imagination."

—Bradley Bambarger

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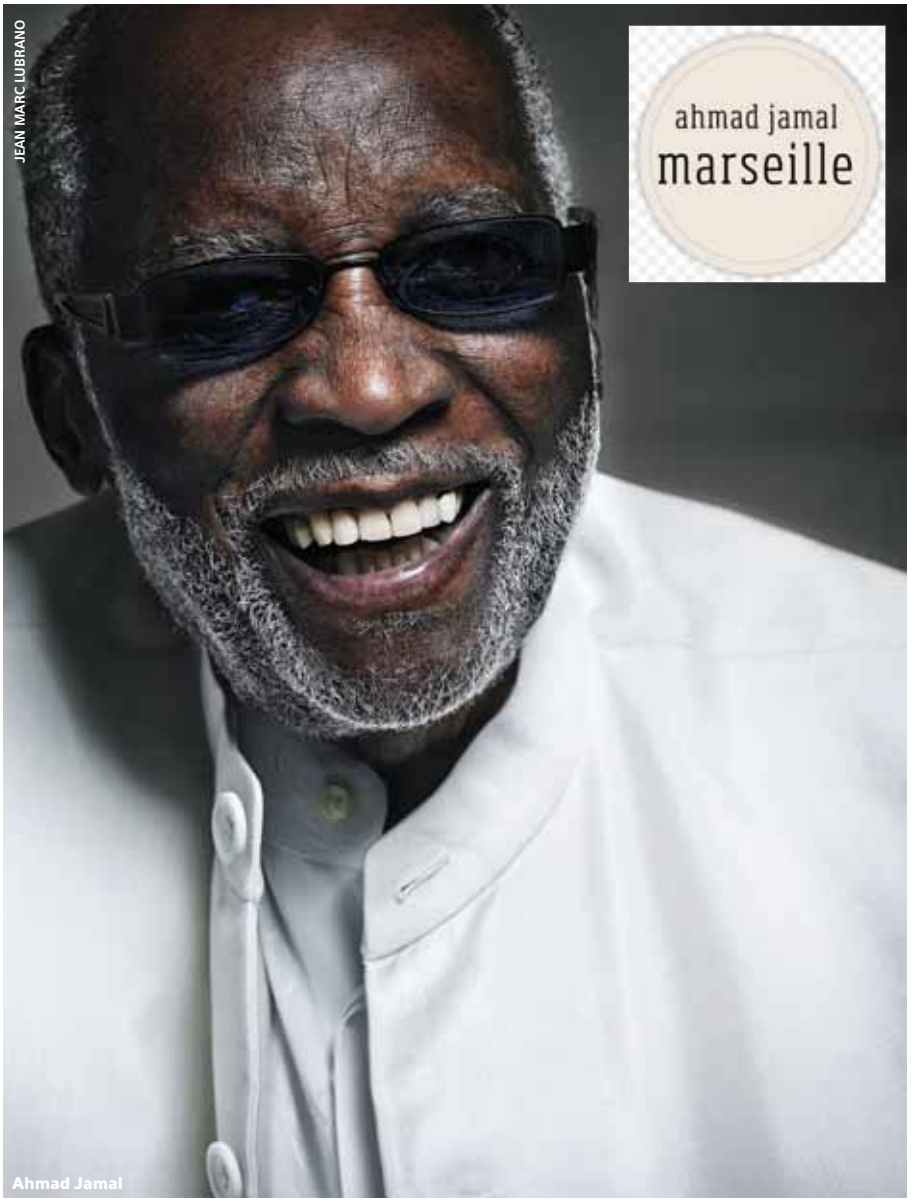
Reviews



Ahmad Jamal
Marseille
JAZZ VILLAGE/PIAS
★★★★

"Play like Ahmad," Miles Davis would tell his pianist Red Garland in the 1950s. This was just one of Ahmad Jamal's well-documented influences on Davis' music, which is to say on the development of jazz. There was also Jamal's affinity for show tunes, his classical drama and his concept of space, pauses rich with the resonance of the last chord and the possibility of the next one.

For all Jamal's technique, he had the courage to play pretty against dominant trends in bebop's era of firebrand artistes, and unlike Davis, he remained more or less devoted to one style through jazz's restless 20th- and 21st-century innovations.

With *Marseille*, it's as if the pianist took Davis' advice himself: Ahmad plays like Ahmad here, giving this solid session a mood of retrospection. *Marseille* is in the same vein as Jamal's recordings of the past 30 years, featuring sidemen who've played with him since the 1980s and '90s.

On six original tunes and two covers, we hear Afro-Cuban beats with drumming from Herlin Riley and percussion from Manolo Badrena; James Cammack's bass is foregrounded here, as Jamal's bassists have been for at least 65 years. We hear vamps, an enthusiastic embrace of repetition. We hear warm harmonies, miraculously soft swing and indelibly long, fluid lines, maybe a bit shorter than they used to be, but each 13-note figure on the title track, for example, can still tell a complete story as it stretches with tension and finds resolution.

Jamal has always been such a lyrical player that his notes feel shaped directly from a song's words. But *Marseille* features Jamal's first original lyrics, with rapper Abd Al Malik and singer Mina Agossi interpreting Jamal's spare, sentimental lines in French and English: "Marseille ... your sea and all its splendor and regret."

Despite its stated theme, *Marseille* is less a tribute to the city than a celebration of the Jamal style that the French adore, a victory lap toward the end of a fine career. Now in his mid-80s, Jamal might be self-conscious about his legacy, his mind on musical autobiography—and with the best younger pianists having gone in Herbie Hancock's direction, who better than Ahmad Jamal to play Ahmad Jamal?

It's to his credit that Jamal still has the confidence for such nonchalant virtuosity, even when he's performing his very own appreciation of his life's singular work.

—Michelle Mercer

Marseille: Marseille (Instrumental); Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child; Pots En Verre; Marseille (Feat. Abd Al Malik); Autumn Leaves; I Came To See You/You Were Not There; Baalbeck; Marseille (Feat. Mina Agossi). (59:33)
Personnel: Ahmad Jamal, piano; Manolo Badrena, percussion; James Cammack, bass; Herlin Riley, drums; Abd Al Malik, spoken word (4); Mina Agossi, vocals (8).

Ordering info: pias.com/labels/jazz-village

Charles Lloyd New Quartet
Passin' Thru
BLUE NOTE
★★★★

Live jazz albums have historically been about magnifying intimacy: On famous club recordings, you can feel the bodies listening, spreading a frisson throughout the room. A good portion of Charles Lloyd's albums have been recorded live, but they don't work exactly like that. He thrives in large halls, or outdoors, where sound has room to dart and float toward an escape. And while he's far from the only preeminent jazz musician to record at festivals, Lloyd has developed his own small canon of these recordings.

With *Passin' Thru*—recorded live at the Montreux Jazz Festival and at a theater in Santa Fe, New Mexico—the reedist celebrates 10 years with his illustrious New Quartet, featuring pianist Jason Moran, bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Eric Harland. Since 2007, this band has reanimated the approach that Lloyd first developed with his original quartet in the 1960s (with Keith Jarrett, Cecil McBee and Jack DeJohnette). Like that band, the New Quartet's music is a reminder that post-Coltrane jazz can chase both transcendence and a kind of shapely beauty at the same time.

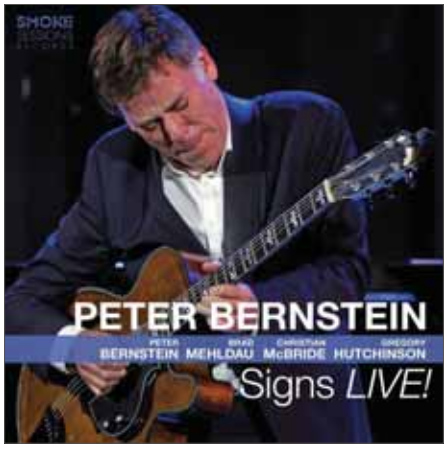
Lovely, plainspoken melody guides many of these seven original compositions, particularly "Tagore On The Delta," featuring Lloyd's wondrous alto flute work; the classic "Dream Weaver"; and the ballad "How Can I Tell You." In his solos, Lloyd raises the group into a higher groove through consonance, not skronk. In support, the rhythm section builds each song to a point of purgation; at the top of the climb, Lloyd often pushes through with accord and warmth, lifting things with a soaring declaration. *—Giovanni Russonello*

Passin' Thru: Dream Weaver; Part 5, Ruminations; Nu Blues; How Can I Tell You; Tagore On The Delta; Passin' Thru; Shiva Prayer. (74:47)
Personnel: Charles Lloyd, tenor saxophone, alto flute; Jason Moran, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Eric Harland, drums.
Ordering info: bluenote.com

Peter Bernstein
Signs LIVE!
SMOKE SESSIONS 17058
★★★★

This music flows so smoothly and often unobtrusively through these two CDs that it's easy to overlook the intricacy, detail and sheer intelligence that binds it together. Not that such estimable qualities should always be calling attention to themselves, but they deserve at least to be acknowledged and appreciated. It's hard not to be drawn into the snap and polish of Christian McBride's walking bass line on "All Too Real," which is instructive on the power of sheer simplicity. And Gregory Hutchinson's drum work on the same track is tight, disciplined and full of crisp, sharply articulate rhythmic ideas.

But out front it's Peter Bernstein and Brad Mehldau who have been frequent companions over nine CDs since their first joint work in the early '90s. They command the main ground here in a program of extended originals, mostly by Bernstein and five of which are now part of his own personal, and previously recorded, songbook. "Blues For Bulgaria," "Jive Coffee" and "Dragonfly" all go back to Bernstein's '90s output, while "Useless Metaphor" and "Let Loose" are from more recent projects, and Monk's "Pannonica" reprises his album of the composer's work nine years ago.



Bernstein is a guitarist so good he often sounds like two guitarists in a duet. It reflects a mastery that is elegant, mellow and gently swinging, but not especially surprising. This is music that can linger tactfully under civil conversation, yet has the kind of reserve power to invite closer listening when the conversation grows tedious. *—John McDonough*

Signs LIVE!: Disc One: Blues For Bulgaria; Hidden Pockets; Dragonfly; Jive Coffee; Pannoncia. (76:11) Disc Two: Useless Metaphor; Let Loose; All Too Real; Resplendor; Crepuscule With Nellie/We See; Cupcake. (69:33)
Personnel: Peter Bernstein, guitar; Brad Mehldau, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums.
Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com

Eric Revis
Sing Me Some Cry
CLEAN FEED
★★★★

Not many folks are as versatile as bassist Eric Revis. He'll be well known to many as the bassist for Betty Carter in the 1990s, and as a grounding force in the Branford Marsalis Quartet (he was one of the "MFs" on Marsalis' 2012 disc *Four MFs Playin Tunes*), but his work has extended into all sorts of other places in creative music, building bridges with European improvisers and forming partnerships with inventive Americans like the superb team on *Sing Me Some Cry*.

Chicagoan Ken Vandermark is a through line between this and another outstanding Revis quartet, with pianist Jason Moran and drummer Nasheet Waits, documented on *Parallax* (Clean Feed, 2013). On *Sing Me Some Cry*, Vandermark sticks to hefty tenor and nimble clarinet, contributing to "Good Company" in what has become a signature melodic style—tough and harmonically open, which makes for great interplay with pianist Kris Davis. She's been on the short list for the last decade, having added a startling and brilliant new voice to the mix, and here she's on top of her game, incisive and fearless.

Revis is a strong composer, utilizing some multi-dimensional rhythms that recall Steve Coleman, but with his own episodic and more narrative sensibility. With drummer Chad Taylor's immensely imaginative playing and catlike ability to move around behind the scenes, Revis, who has recorded four previous albums as a leader, can build energy without bludgeoning. On "Drunkard's Lullaby," the band lays into a hard walk, then breaks it up, making the title seem like an apt description.
—John Corbett

Sing Me Some Cry: Sing Me Some Cry; Good Company; Pt 44; Solstice...The Girls (For Max & Xixi); Obliogo; Rye Eclipse; Rumples; Drunkard's Lullaby; Glyph. (54:10)
Personnel: Eric Revis, bass; Ken Vandermark, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Kris Davis, piano; Chad Taylor, drums.
Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Michelle Mercer	Giovanni Russonello	John McDonough	John Corbett
Ahmad Jamal *Marseille*	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★½
Charles Lloyd New Quartet *Passin' Thru*	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★½
Peter Bernstein *Signs LIVE!*	★★★½	★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
Eric Revis *Sing Me Some Cry*	★★★★	★★★★	★★½	★★★★

Critics' Comments

Ahmad Jamal, *Marseille*

Jamal never needed loudness or might to have a serious physical effect on listeners. And on *Marseille*, he's in full command of his classic toolbox. Now, as ever, he's able to convert a ballad or spiritual into a dance tune without turning it glib. —*Giovanni Russonello*

Jamal's original start-and-stop style was openly friendly and rakishly infectious. Here is vintage Jamal. He breaks no fresh ground but provides what his fans would wish for. You walk away with it echoing in the head. —*John McDonough*

As improbable as a successful jazz/rap intersection seems these days, this works, not least because Abd Al Malik's delivery is smooth as beach sand, rich and serious, like Jamal's playing. —*John Corbett*

Charles Lloyd New Quartet, *Passin' Thru*

This band of true affinity improvises on Lloyd's entire body of work, from blues to bebop to the abstract truth. Real-time interpretive music historians mine his back catalog for new dreams, always finding time for both contemplation and joy. —*Michelle Mercer*

If you can endure the ponderous fanfare from Montreux, there's some fine tenor from the Santa Fe concert. Lloyd is suave, willowy and at ease on "Nu Blues." —*John McDonough*

If ever there were laurels to rest upon, Lloyd would have 'em. But he's a restless spirit, often heading into unexpected nooks of the music, and his not-so-New Quartet is the perfect ensemble for such exploration. —*John Corbett*

Peter Bernstein, *Signs LIVE!*

Having grown apart since their 1994 recording, the musicians moderate their more recent inclinations here. Hutchinson plays like he never left an older groove; Mehldau finds slipknots in Bernstein's precise lines; but McBride reins in his personality so tightly that it suggests sometimes you can't go home again. —*Michelle Mercer*

Where to begin with Bernstein? The cold slice of his guitar sound? How about his adaptiveness, which serves him well even when he's not playing with three of the greatest living improvisers? It all comes together on this album, which lives up to expectations. —*Giovanni Russonello*

Unimpeachable. Bernstein sounds wonderful at the helm, totally contemporary but evoking past masters. This is a band I'd travel to see. —*John Corbett*

Eric Revis, *Sing Me Some Cry*

This quartet approaches a tune from the outside, eschewing mainstream expression in favor of a ring of fire at jazz's edge. In the process Revis and friends make a convincing argument for the continued relevance of freer jazz. —*Michelle Mercer*

Thanks to his work with Tarbaby and solo efforts like this one, Revis is becoming an important ballast in a jazz avant-garde that grows more multivariate by the day. —*Giovanni Russonello*

This music prowls asymmetrically, never looking you in the eye. It may slide in sly, jumpy, quick-cut phrasing full of zigzagging arpeggios. It can be unruly and frenzied, then suddenly turn lyrical and romantic. —*John McDonough*

Steve Coleman's Natal Eclipse
Morphogenesis
PI 69

★★★★★

On *Morphogenesis*, his 30th album as a leader, saxophonist Steve Coleman introduces yet another element to his ever-evolving sonic universe: a chamber group of complementary instruments as well as a percussionist on five of the nine pieces.

One of the most inspiring things about Coleman is the way he has continued to evolve while maintaining the foundation of motivic cells and melodic interactivity that defined his M-Base philosophy in the 1980s. From his earliest recordings with Five Elements to his more recent ensembles with vocalist Jen Shyu and trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, Coleman has created music for both mind and body.

In the ultimate melding of mental process and physicality, Coleman takes inspiration from boxing for five compositions on this disc. Like Miles Davis, who dedicated a handful of studio concoctions to his favorite boxers, Coleman doesn't attempt to mimic the movement of the sport; rather, pieces like "Dancing And Jabbing" have layers of activity and counter-movement. Precision, speed and power mirror the essences of combat in the ring.

Created live in the studio, "NOH" and "SPAN" stand apart from the boxing-inspired compositions and the album's centerpiece, the 14-minute "Morphing." Built on the foundations of instrumental forays, this pair of improvisations capture organic call-and-response.

Morphogenesis sounds like another high point in the leader's ongoing journey to create his own language. *—James Hale*

Morphogenesis: Inside Game; Pull Counter; Roll Under And Angles; NOH; Morphing; Shoulder Roll; SPAN; Dancing And Jabbing; Horda. (60:35)
Personnel: Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Maria Grand, tenor saxophone; Rane Moore, clarinet; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Kristin Lee, violin; Jen Shyu, vocals; Matt Mitchell, piano; Greg Chudzik, bass; Neeraj Mehta, percussion (3, 4, 6, 7, 9).
Ordering info: pirecordings.com

Fabian Almazan & Rhizome
Alcanza
BIOPHILIA 0006

★★★★★

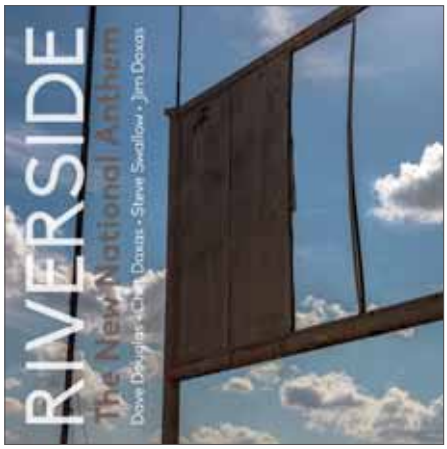
Jazz with strings typically means "jazz with sweetening," with violins and cellos doing little more than fluffing up the harmony. That was largely the case with *Rhizome*, pianist Fabian Almazan's last album, in which a string quartet added cushioning chords to the sound of his jazz quartet.

There's nothing saccharine about the nine-part suite that makes up *Alcanza*. Its flavors are bold and complicated, evoking a range of emotions—melancholy, wonder, passion, joy, awe—in what is often a densely contrapuntal swirl of sound. There are times when it seems more classical than not, as in the third part, "Verla," where the inner voices of the string quartet not only carry the harmonic movement but whisper the depths of the composer's feelings. But there are also moments where the playing delivers the energy of a collective improvisation, even though the interlocking melodies and rhythms follow a preordained compositional logic.

As is the case with music that blurs the lines between jazz and classical, it's not easy to discern what's written and what isn't. Almazan does provide solo slots—cadenzas, almost—for himself, bassist Linda Oh and drummer Henry

Cole, and there's a looseness to the pounding "Cazador Antiguo" that suggests a score with few commands. Then again, given that the album's title translates as "reach," it's fitting that *Alcanza* should offer such range to the listener, from the surfeit of melody to the inventively complex rhythmic structures folded into the interwoven themes. *—J.D. Considine*

Alcanza: I. Vida Absurda y Bella; II. Marea Baja; III. Verla; La Voz de un Piano; IV. Mas; V. Tribu T9; La Voz de un Bajo; VI. Cazador Antiguo; La Voz de la Percusión; VII. Pater Familias; VIII. Este Lugar; IX. Marea Alta. (59:30)
Personnel: Fabian Almazan, piano, electronics; Camila Meza, voice, guitar; Linda Oh, bass; Henry Cole, drums; Megan Gould, Tomoko Omura, violin; Karen Waltuch, viola; Noah Hoffeld, cello.
Ordering info: biophiliarecords.com



Riverside
The New National Anthem
GREENLEAF MUSIC 1056

★★★★

Riverside is not a tribute band in the standard sense. Although each of the group's albums has been dedicated to a specific jazz great—Jimmy Giuffre in the case of the quartet's debut, Carla Bley here—they don't do so by re-recording familiar repertoire. In fact, only three of Bley's compositions turn up on *The New National Anthem*, and nothing as obvious as, say, "Ida Lupino" or "Wrong Key Donkey." (Riverside featured only one tune by Giuffre.)

And yet, the album conveys the plain-spoken tunefulness of Bley's writing so vividly that a listener could be forgiven for assuming the album is mostly her work. Some of that seems intentional, like the way "King Conlon," Dave Douglas' tribute to piano avant-gardist Conlon Nancarrow, seems to echo the phraseology of Bley's "King Korn." But for the most part, what Douglas and co-leading reedist Chet Doxas are after isn't emulation so much as mastering the musical grammar of Bley's writing and incorporating it into their own expression. Hence Douglas' "Il Sentiero," a droll take on cowboy balladry that not only tweaks genre expectations the way Bley would have, but ends with a lively Italianate two-step—just the sort of twist we'd expect of Bley.

It can't hurt that Riverside's bassist is Bley's partner and long-time collaborator Steve Swallow, who played with Gary Burton on the original version of the title track (from *A Genuine Tong Funeral*), as well as on Paul Bley's 1963 recording of "King Korn." His role here remains sedulously supportive, deftly grounding the harmony while maintaining the sort of unobtrusive time that affords drummer Jim Doxas plenty of room for rhythmic elaboration. *—J.D. Considine*

The New National Anthem: The New National Anthem; Old Country; Never Mind; King Conlon; King Korn; View From A Bird; Enormous Tots; Demigods; Il Sentiero; If I Drift; Americano. (47:21)
Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Chet Doxas, clarinet, saxophones; Steve Swallow, electric bass; Jim Doxas, drums.
Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com

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JazzCuba.com

William Parker: A Sonic Trisection

The breadth of **William Parker**'s accomplishment is astonishing. Best known as the bass-playing linchpin of New York's ecstatic jazz community, he is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, improviser, poet and organizer. His free-form flights are sustained by his deep-rooted grasp of jazz fundamentals, and his Curtis Mayfield tribute ensemble routinely gets audiences on their feet. No matter what he plays, he strives to channel divine inspiration so that the music levitates Parker and his fellow musicians off the bandstand.

***Meditation/Resurrection* (AUM Fidelity; 56:05/66:11 ★★★★)** is credited to William Parker Quartets in acknowledgment of the fact that while the double album was recorded in a single day, it presents the work of two quite different groups. This difference is especially notable because the personnel overlap so much. Both the William Parker Quartet and the In Order To Survive ensemble feature Hamid Drake's drums and Rob Brown's alto saxophone. Trumpeter Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson completes the former, pianist Cooper-Moore the latter, but there is no overlap in the material they play. Cooper-Moore's fleet but forceful touch invests the themes that Parker brings to In Order To Survive with a paradoxical blend of rhythmic heft and mercurial ornamentation. Drake polices the periphery of the music like a sheep dog, nudging the its flare-ups back toward a swirling center of generative melody and brooding atmosphere.

The first track on the William Parker Quartet's disc bears a rather dire name: "Criminals In The White House." But it sounds like liberation and surprise. Drake is all over his kit, setting off bursts of energy that inspire lyric flights from both horn players. With the two-part "Horace Silver," Parker pays tribute to a departed modern jazz hero while exploring sound worlds that aren't very Silver-like. Parker's double reeds and the rest of the band's small percussion instruments suggest an ancient ritual on "Horace Silver Part 2"; Nelson's darting trumpet lines seem to dance upon Parker's springy, ever-changing groove on the ensuing "Part 1." The joy that infuses this set is a tonic to the pains of loss and political disappointment.

David S. Ware Trio's ***Live In New York, 2010* (AUM Fidelity; 62:52/66:41 ★★★★)** honors another fallen jazzman by documenting his determination to keep growing his music in the shadow of mortality. Parker's partnership with saxophonist David S. Ware dates back to the 1980s. Ware's quartet, which included pianist

William Parker

Matthew Shipp and a series of drummers, set a standard for intense, rigorously executed free-jazz until its disbandment in 2007. Three years later, Ware underwent a kidney transplant, which seems to have prompted him to renew old partnerships, start up new ones and return to instruments that he had not played publicly for years. But whenever he needed a bassist, he called Parker.

This double CD reproduces both sets that Ware, Parker and veteran drummer Warren Smith played at the Blue Note on Oct. 4, 2010. Known mainly as a tenor saxophonist, Ware chose that night to devote more than half of his playing time to a straightened alto saxophone called a stritch. The instrument's light, nasal tone draws out a hitherto hidden Indian tinge to Ware's blues and also makes it easier to perceive his rapid and unerring articulation. The absence of a piano keeps the music spacious.

Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

The bassist strives mightily to make it happen on ***This Is Beautiful Because We Are Beautiful People* (ESP-Disk; 79:13 ★★★½)** by Toxic, a trio led by Polish woodwinds player Mat Walerian. This is Walerian's third recording with Parker's erstwhile associate Matthew Shipp, who plays organ as well as his customary piano, but his first with Parker. Things feel quite simpatico whenever the musicians play in duos, and each musician makes the most of lengthy solo opportunities.

But when the three play together, Walerian seems to be playing off to the side while Parker and Shipp sync up like the old mates that they are. It never sounds bad, but neither does it achieve a liftoff that defies gravity. **DB**

Ordering info: espdisk.com

Aruan Ortiz
Cub(an)ism
INTAKT 290
★★★★★

With his 10th album as a leader, and his first solo recording since 1996's debut *Impresión Tropical*, pianist Aruan Ortiz brings the spirit of his homeland, Cuba, into alignment with the visual art known as Cubism.

More than a play on words, this remarkable collection veers away from what we've already heard from an array of young Cuban jazz pianists in recent years, but also remains firmly rooted in the Cuban musical tradition.

Toques, rumba, yambú and Afro-Haitian gagá permeate as Ortiz seamlessly and simply blends a virtuosic voice on piano with contemporary classical and jazz techniques, all while being subtly emotional. Quite a mean trick, by any musical standard. In short, the cat can play and distract you at the same time.

Like Cubism, Ortiz's playing is disorienting. Building a bridge between the visual arts and music is no easy feat, but in Ortiz's music, one can hear how the pianist makes connections, looking, thinking and seeing as well as playing. Multiple perspectives pervade "Intervals (Closer To The Edge)" and "Passages," pieces that ask us to listen deeply for new forms and sonic architecture.

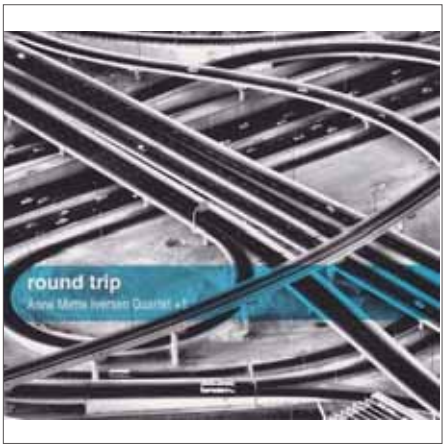
There's a clear reorientation/disorientation on "Monochrome," where structures are revised. The affect can be riveting, a new way to hear the piano as the rhythmic instrument it is.

Like much of his now-burgeoning catalog, *Cub(an)ism* reflects Ortiz's more implied jazz stance, one that includes an increasingly eclectic and an ongoing dive into other art forms.

—John Ephland

Cub(an)ism: Louverture Op. 1 (Chateau De Joux); Yambú; Cuban Cubism; Passages; Monochrome (Yubá); Density (Golden Circle); Dominant Force; Intervals (Closer To The Edge); Sacred Chronology; Coralaia. (51:52)
Personnel: Aruan Ortiz, piano.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch



Anne Mette Iversen Quartet +1
Round Trip
BJURECORDS 061
★★★★½

Anne Mette Iversen
Ternion Quartet
BJURECORDS 062
★★★★

Recorded in Poland on a single day in January 2016, the inventive double bassist/composer/bandleader Anne Mette Iversen's *Round Trip* documents her then-14-year-old quartet with tenor saxophonist John Ellis, pianist Danny Grissett and drummer Otis Brown III. Swedish trombonist Peter Dahlgren joined the band late in its existence and is the "+1" in its title.

Three years after relocating from New York to Berlin in 2012, Danish expatriate Iversen formed a European band with two Germans (drummer/percussionist Roland Schneider and alto saxophonist Silke Eberhard) and a Frenchman (trombonist Geoffroy De Masure). The Ternion Quartet, as it's known, recorded its debut in Berlin in October 2016, and Iversen released both albums concurrently.

Listening to *Round Trip* and Ternion's eponymous recording back to back provides an exercise in comparing and contrasting via some thoroughly compelling and wholly rewarding material. (The biggest difference is the presence of piano in the Quartet +1. Otherwise, it's alto as opposed to tenor saxophone, and De Masure doubles on bass trombone.)

Round Trip is sequenced like a live set. The title track opens the program with an adventurous tone set by Dahlgren's obstacle course-worthy lines and Brown's insistent rimshot patterns. "Lines & Circles" boasts pleasing hypnotic interplay among all five band members.

There's a looser, more straightforward feel to "Segue." Ellis and Grissett both shine with thoughtfully constructed and well-executed solos. "Red Hairpins" closes the album with a mysterious introduction by all members of the rhythm section and some effortless interplay between Ellis and Dahlgren.

With short pieces spread throughout *Ternion Quartet*, the group's debut comes across like an extended suite. "My Revised Head," "Their Revised Head" and "Your Revised Head" are between 45 seconds to a minute, and each precedes three longer compositions.

The brass-and-reeds introduction of "Ataraxia On My Mind" presents a chamber aesthetic that's soon blended with Iversen's buoyant pizzicato lines and Schneider's polished toms and snare work. Eberhard and Schneider share a mesmerizing section during "A Cygnet's Eunoia," while "Of Chapter Two" ends *Ternion Quartet* with a lean trek that includes a molten solo by De Masure that's stoked by Schneider's crisp accompaniment.

—*Yoshi Kato*

Round Trip: Round Trip; Lines & Circles; Segue; Wiinstedt's View; December Light; Scala; The Ballad That Would Not Be; Red Hairpins. (54:24)
Personnel: Anne Mette Iversen, bass; John Ellis; tenor saxophone; Peter Dahlgren, trombone; Danny Grissett, piano; Otis Brown III, drums.

Ternion Quartet: My Revised Head; Ataraxia On My Mind; Trio One; Solus; Their Revised Head; Debacled Debate; A Cygnet's Eunoia; Escapade #7; Your Revised Head; Eburnine; Postludium #2; Of Chapter Two. (63:56)
Personnel: Anne Mette Iversen, bass; Silke Eberhard, alto saxophone; Geoffroy De Masure, tenor trombone, bass trombone; Roland Schneider, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: bjurecords.com/store

Seeds Sown and Grown

Selwyn Birchwood, *Pick Your Poison* (Alligator 4975; 53:59 ★★★★) Selwyn Birchwood may be the best Alligator signing since Michael Burks in 2001. There's a deep-seated power about Birchwood's singing and six-string/lap steel guitar work on his second album, and there's also an unmistakable emotional honesty linking him to forebears like Muddy Waters. Thoughtful and persuasive, this 30-ish Floridian with a thing for performing in bare feet fills his rugged songs with topical words about, say, totalitarianism ("Police State"), outliers ("Haunted") and hypocritical church folks ("Even The Saved Need Saving").
Ordering info: alligator.com

The Mark Cameron Band, *Live At Blues On The Chippewa* (30th Records 1678; 43:24 ★★★½) Mark Cameron and his fellow Minneapolitans threw down with everything they had under the hot sun at Durand, Michigan's Memorial Park last year. Good entertainment suddenly shifted into the sublime with the tension-building original ballad "Borrowed Time." Savor the bandleader's assured vocal delivery and immaculate guitar playing plus a touch of the ethereal from his wife Sheri's flute.
Ordering info: markcameronmusic.net

Amy Black, *Memphis* (Reuben; 40:14 ★★★½) Amy Black's strengths are emphasized on her first studio outing since moving to Nashville. Her voice is pleasing to the ear, and her high regard for traditional Memphis soul and blues is newfound and sincere. Black has an affinity for songwriting, and she's found an ace producer in The Bo-Keys' head man, Scott Bomar. Still, she operates on a subsidiary level, not evidencing the volatile immediacy that marks elite soul-blues singers. Bobby Bland's "Further On Up The Road" lifts off because of Bo-Keys guitarist Joe Restivo.
Ordering info: amyblack.com

Paul deLay, *Live At Notodden '97* (Little Village 1016; 51:08 ★★★½) A few years out of jail and off hard drugs, Paul deLay gives all of his creative self to original material presented to a festival audience in Norway 10 years before his demise from leukemia in 2007. Though his singing can be uneven, his harmonicas are always right on the mark with declaratory statements that evidence the endurance of Chicago and West Coast blues.
Ordering info: littlevillagefoundation.com

Linsey Alexander, *Two Cats* (Delmark 851; 67:18 ★★½) Septuagenarian Linsey Alexander has stature on the Chicago scene due to his grasp of the essence of the blues. Above-average guitar skills and an offbeat sense of humor shown by his songwriting boost his credibility, too. His latest album starts off strong with "I'm Not Your Problem" and continues in good form till about halfway through the 15-track program. But when he loses consistency as a singer, there is a drop in song quality.
Ordering info: delmark.com

Laura Tate, *Let's Just Be Real* (811 Gold; 50:52 ★★★½) A Dallas native living in Los Angeles, classy r&b singer Laura Tate interprets tuneful cover songs about the ups and downs of love on her likable fourth album. (Songbooks she's rummaged through include those of Allen Toussaint, Texan Stephen Bruton and Irish rocker Phil Lynott.) Gifted with a sweet, attractive voice, she's entirely believable with her shadings of melodramatic expression.
Ordering info: musicbylauratate.com

North Mississippi Allstars, *Prayer For Peace* (Legacy 88985423992; 42:44 ★★) Despite their top credentials, the Dickinson brothers disappoint on their eighth release. They spout refried R.L. Burnside and engage in attitudinizing suggestive of Jimi Hendrix and The Rolling Stones. **DB**
Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Aaron Parks
Find The Way
ECM 2489
★★★★

In classical music, the piano trio—piano, violin and cello—is most often written for three distinct voices, a collection of soloists as opposed to voices in an ensemble. In jazz, the piano trio—piano, bass and drums—operates more like a classical string quartet, as an ensemble with a hierarchical system of lead and supporting voices.

On *Find The Way*, pianist Aaron Parks muddles the two approaches, playing jazz in a trio where bass and drums are afforded equal prominence in the music. Sometimes, as on the album-opening "Adrift," that makes the music sound a bit like pop, as Parks brews a gently percolating melody while bassist Ben Street and drummer Billy Hart offer a sort of rhythmic/melodic counterpoint. But where pop music tends to reinforce its ideas through repetition, Parks and company are more interested in working variations, inventing with enough freedom that, even as the players move between the roles of soloist and accompanist, each voice remains distinct.

Aaron's last album, *Arborescence*, was a forest-invoking solo piano effort marked by wonderfully detailed narratives and a harmonic palette worthy of Ravel. *Find The Way* drops the Impressionist flavor—one title, "Unravel," seems almost to make a joke of it—and extends the narrative aspect across the ensemble. "Hold Music," for example, opens with Hart using tuned tom-toms to sketch the melody before Aaron enters, layering chords over a pedal-point ostinato (that bass line is the "Hold" of the title—another pun). It's a remarkably even-handed approach to the tunes, one that benefits from each player's strength as an improviser, something the standard piano trio does too infrequently. —*J.D. Considine*

Find The Way: Adrift; Song For Sashou; Unravel; Hold Music; The Storyteller; Alice; First Glance; Melquíades; Find The Way. (50:17)
Personnel: Aaron Parks, piano; Ben Street, bass; Billy Hart, drums.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

JD Allen
Radio Flyer
SAVANT 2162
★★★½

On *Americana*, JD Allen's 2016 album and 10th as a leader, the saxophonist made a decisive move into the roots of jazz. In reining in some of his tendencies to take his horn outside, he conjured comparisons to Sonny Rollins for his way with a bluesy ballad.

Apparently, the presidential election and its aftermath shook Allen off that path, which in the normal course of things might've called for additional exploration. Instead, Allen has added guitarist Liberty Ellman to his band and taken a hard left turn into an aesthetic that is closer to free-jazz.

Both "Sitting Bull," which opens the album, and the title track are built around exclamatory solo statements that recall Ornette Coleman's elegiac themes. On the former, Ellman shadows and colors Allen's lines before the saxophonist shifts into a gruffer tone and Rudy Royston begins dropping huge cymbal splashes. On the title track, the guitarist contrasts with Allen by introducing some electronic chiming tones, and the piece finds a more traditional footing with strong forward momentum from Royston and bassist Gregg August.

If *Radio Flyer* has a weakness, it's that Allen pulls his punches when he might go for the throat. He and the band churn mightily after his delayed entry on "Ghost Dance," but it's churn without an epochal climax. On "The Angelus Bell" the issue is more one of execution, with Allen's uneven airflow undercutting the clout of his delivery.

As a new direction, *Radio Flyer* holds promise; as a standalone statement against political chaos, it seems unfocused.

—James Hale

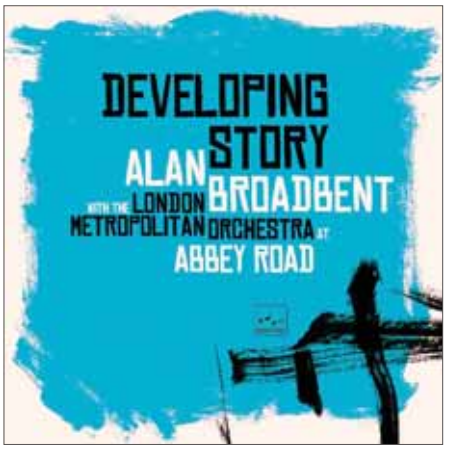
Radio Flyer: Sitting Bull; Radio Flyer; The Angelus Bell; Sancho Panza; Heureux; Daedalus; Ghost Dance. (54:04)
Personnel: JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Liberty Ellman, guitar; Gregg August, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Alan Broadbent
Developing Story
EDEN RIVER 02
★★★★

In 2006, pianist Alan Broadbent released an album called *Every Time I Think Of You*. With jazz trio and The Tokyo Strings, he played mostly standards and originals. Fast-forward 10 years, and Broadbent has recorded a similar project, this time with drummer Peter Erskine and bassist Harvie S. Now, it's the London Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, an aggregate that's been making waves with diverse talents like Paul McCartney, Quincy Jones, Diana Krall and Pink Floyd.

Recorded in 2015 and also available as a double-vinyl package, Broadbent's *Developing Story* begins with three movements, followed by a mix of jazz standards and two more from Broadbent. The movements make lots of room for the orchestra, the first two catering to an obvious romanticism. Next comes a livelier and at times bombastic third movement. One gets the sense this isn't some kind of genre-toppling, but rather an attempt to meet somewhere in the middle.

What follows is a realization of some of jazz's most celebrated compositions in an orchestral context. Eloquent, though a tad overwrought, the covers are somehow still



delicious, chief among them Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now," John Coltrane's "Naima" and the Miles Davis/Bill Evans tune "Blue In Green." These aren't improvising excursions; more like expositions on themes. Oddly enough, Broadbent the arranger/conductor/composer is best heard on his own intricate pieces, ones that prioritize his flair as a writer for orchestra. *—John Ephland*

Developing Story: Developing Story (1); Developing Story (2); Developing Story (3); If You Could See Me Now; Naima; Blue In Green; Lady In The Lake; Milestones; Children Of Lima. (65:24)
Personnel: Alan Broadbent, piano; Peter Erskine, drums; Harvie S, bass; London Metropolitan Orchestra.
Ordering info: eden-river-records.com


Tamikrest

International Studies

Except for disco-dancing Europe, the world in 1974 was oblivious to Afropop groove music, which caught on only eight years later when King Sunny Adé busted out of Nigeria. It was unfortunate South African trumpeter-humanitarian Hugh Masekela and his production partner Stewart Levine were stymied by legal issues as they tried to get African musicians wide recognition by releasing recordings of a spectacular concert in Zaire—a tie-in to the heavily hyped Muhammed Ali–George Foreman boxing match called "The Rumble in the Jungle."

At long last, good news: Masekela and Levine happily unveil ***Zaire 74: The African Artists*** **(Wrasse 349; 51:03/64:38 ★★★★)**. Sweet soukous singer Tabu Ley Rochereau puts his Afrisa band through its syncopated paces on five romping tracks. Guitarist Franco and his TPOK Jazz Orchestra are just as powerful, offering the work chant "Mosala" and nine more songs. Jangly electric guitar textures, horn sections and reams of Afro and Caribbean rhythms generate terrific dance excitement among the huge swaying audience.

A supernova of international fame despite career-harming racism, Miriam Makeba roots her beautiful singing in heartfelt concern for continental solidarity and Xhosa traditional music. The Congolese soukous group Orchestre Stukas, on four tracks, succeeds admirably in keeping the polyrhythmic proceedings rapturous. Influenced by Jimi Hendrix, featured singer-guitarist Abumba Masikini expresses anguished regret on "Limbisa Nga." Regrettably missing: Manu "Makossa Man" Dibango.

Ordering info: wrasserecords.com

Tamikrest has claim to distinction as a leading Saharan blues-rock band. Their fourth studio album, ***Kidal*** **(Glitterbeat 043; 44:48 ★★★★),** showcases these nomadic Tuaregs' bewitching expressions of pride and frustration, hope and suffering, freedom and servitude. Emotionally scarred by Al Qaeda's decimation of his people's short-lived Azawad home state, bandleader Ousmane Ag Mossa makes the listener feel like he or she is being addressed personally. The trancelike poignancy of "Atwitas" isn't unlike that of John Lee Hooker's "No Shoes." Prevalent guitar tones coruscate like sun beams through palm trees within an oasis.

Ordering info: glitterbeat.com

The return of **Fabrizio Cassol's** 2012 Blue Note album ***Strange Fruit*** **(Instinct 660; 59:42 ★★½)** is welcome whenever the Belgian saxophonist follows the lead of Malian singers Baba Sissoko and Oumou Sangare. Not enough, though. Two versions of "Strange Fruit," highlighting opera soprano Claron McFadden or a youth choir, are denuded of strong emotion. Singing a song apiece, Danish eccentric Kris Dane and Paris-based David Linx tend to be cold and pretentious.

Ordering info: outhere-music.com

On their fourth album since forming in 2009, **Big Mean Sound Machine** from central New York is so immersed in the gyrating dance music of Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America that ***Runnin' For The Ghost*** **(Peace & Rhythm/Black Slate 009; 44:08 ★★★½)** brims over with an intensity usually found only in bands from those countries. Exact and immaculate unison playing is this nonet's calling card with solos incidental to the fun of 11 "live" studio or concert tracks.

Ordering info: bigmeansoundmachine.bandcamp.com

As for ***Letters From Iraq*** **(Smithsonian Folkways 40577; 69:44 ★★★★),** Iraqi-New Mexican oud master **Rahim AlHaj** sees that eight gorgeous original songs graced by his superbly played oval stringed instrument, percussion and a Western classical string quintet limn the deep feelings raised by life-upending turmoil in his homeland since Saddam Hussein's demise. This exceptional world music exists on a high level of unstuffy artistry. **DB**

Ordering info: folkways.si.edu

Brian Charette Circuit Bent Organ Trio
Kürrent
SELF RELEASE
★★★½

The ever-prolific keyboardist Brian Charette has made a nice catalogue of music out of defying expectations. He is not afraid to wander into unexplored pop repertoire, and he's not afraid to smear a little mud on the walls. But through it all he is also an in-the-pocket organist capable of toe-tapping swing.

On this album, with help from guitarist Ben Monder and drummer Jordan Young, Charette gets a little freaky with the electricity on a set of originals that looks beyond the current scene. If Kraftwerk and Jimmy Smith were hired to score a video game in the early '80s, they may have put together a soundscape like this.

The trio deals in sounds more befitting castles and fireballs than the soul-jazz lexicon. With a few synthesizers and other widgets, Charette conjures an ethereal eight-bit funk—a hazy, reedy vibe that may occasionally startle household pets. "The Shape Of Green" is a great example of the band's far-out forays. Charette unspools sinister effects behind Monder, who whirs cosmically in support. A brief folksy melody pokes its head in the door before Charette shreds pentatonic mischief on a harpsichord.

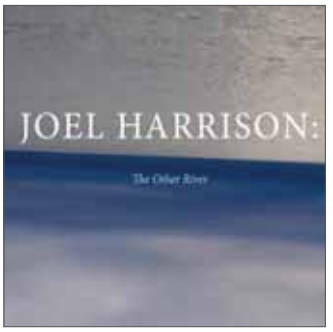
"Schooby's Riff" evokes a deep-space "Pannonica" broken up by snippets of a spoken-word sample. A synthesized trumpet plinks while Monder slays and Young pummels with all his might. Clearly the album is eclectic and a leap beyond the B-3 standard, but this trio has a lot of fun and puts together a unique sound playing with keyboard settings and cranking the amps up to "11."

—Sean J. O'Connell

Kürrent: Doll Fin; Time Changes; Mano Y Mano; Intermezzo 1; Honeymoon Phase; Schooby's Riff; Intermezzo 2; Conquistador; 5th Base; The Shape Of Green; Intermezzo 3; Catfish Sandwich. (57:36)
Personnel: Brian Charette, organ, electronics; Ben Monder, guitar; Jordan Young, drums, electronics.

Ordering info: briancharette.com

Joel Harrison
The Other River
WHIRLWIND RECORDINGS 4707
★★★★



There's a reason why the booklet that accompanies veteran guitarist Joel Harrison's *The Other River* includes song lyrics. The album gives us a good listen to Harrison *the singer*, who composes with what seems like a different voice for each song.

Harrison takes advantage of a core group with keyboardist Glenn Patscha, bassist Byron Isaacs and drummer Jordan Perlson, adding special guests on percussion (Jamey Haddad), strings (Christian Howes), voice (Fiona McBain), trumpet (Cuong Vu) and sarode, an Indian stringed instrument (Anupam Shobhakar). The arrangements are unique to each song, giving color and texture along the way.

Varied, intimate emotions course through *The Other River*, Harrison singing he "will not give in to despair" one moment, confessing "you're what matters to me" to that special someone the next. And then there's the mystery imbuing the title track, and a life filled with "ecstatic poems," "a world gone wrong" but ultimately "such peace ... in the other river."

—John Ephland

The Other River: My Beautiful Enemies; Scarecrow Ray; The Other River; So Long Chelsea Hotel; Made It Out Alive; You're All That Matters To Me; Yellow Socks; Still Here; I Wonder What Happened To Jordan; Reservation Blues; Bus To Brighton. (50:59)
Personnel: Joel Harrison, guitar, voice, lap steel, national steel, six-string banjo; Glenn Patscha, keyboards, voice; Byron Isaacs, bass; Jordan Perlson, drums, percussion, Jamey Haddad, percussion (3, 5); Christian Howes, strings (3, 9); Fiona McBain, voice (1, 2, 8, 10); Cuong Vu, trumpet (5, 8); Anupam Shobhakar, sarode (5).
Ordering info: whirlwindrecordings.com

ADHD
6
ADHD RECORDS
★★★½

As its title strongly suggests, here's the sixth album by this Icelandic quartet, who came together in 2009. ADHD are following the numeric titling path laid down by Led Zeppelin, and there's a pronounced prog aura.

The opening track highlights David Thor Jonsson's growling Hammond organ over a tricky rhythmic slow-stutter. Oskar Gudjonsson takes a husky tenor solo, chased by Omar Gudjonsson's guitar solo, but these events don't divert the tune from its melodic heart. With ADHD, the dividing lines between solos and themes are usually far from discernible.

A melancholy quality pervades, and the dominant pace is slow and stately. The tracks hover into each other, as if this is a suite, a soft, retro-noir shimmer pervading. An intensely intimate saxophone sound is to the fore on "Rebroff," and the pliant bass of "Tvöfaldur Víkingur" is sonically distinctive; as the unhurried procession continues, sinister organ feeds into the background. This sixth album is steeped in careful restraint, mood-painting, unselfish soloing and a devotion to the group atmosphere, eminently succeeding in all of these areas.

—Martin Longley

6: Magnus Trygvason Eliassen; Levon; Spessi; Rebroff; Alli Krilli; Fyrir Rúna; Tvöfaldur Víkingur; Med Ívari. (43:40)
Personnel: Oskar Gudjonsson, saxophones; Omar Gudjonsson, guitar, bass; David Thor Jonsson, Hammond B-3 organ, piano; Magnus Trygvason Eliassen, drums.
Ordering info: adhd-music.com

Dominique Eade & Ran Blake
Town And Country
SUNNYSIDE
★★★★½

Vocalist Dominique Eade and pianist Ran Blake are jazz mavericks who navigate the Third Stream sublimely. This recorded pairing completes the circle of when Eade was the early 1980s star singer at the New England Conservatory, Blake's academic home for decades. Deconstructing tunes, they're minimalists, but each can instantly access deep emotional and musical essences. Together their alchemy turns far-flung songs into a kind of suite.

Eade sings with an admirably unadorned purity that, while forsaking showy devices, is full of solid but well-hidden craft. Her versatility channels the Gaelic vein of Appalachia on "West Virginia Mine Disaster" and African American spirituals on "Elijah Rock"—chilling the bones and soothing the soul, respectively. Whether it's Lead Belly's "Goodnight, Irene," a wordless elegy to Gunther Schuller, or "Open Highway" (theme from *Route 66*), Eade and Blake offer enough material for listeners to mentally orchestrate the songs. These are miniatures, for the most part, but one will not be shortchanged by the circumscribed playing time. Like fine wine, it's best enjoyed sparingly. Sip it, don't gulp.

—Kirk Silsbee

Town And Country: Lullaby; It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding); Moon River; West Virginia Mine Disaster; Elijah Rock; Give My Love To Rose; Harvest At Massachusetts General Hospital; The Easter Tree; Moonglow/Theme From Picnic; Thoreau; Moti; Pretty Fly; Open Highway; Gunther: West Virginia Mine Disaster; Harvest At Massachusetts General Hospital; Moonlight In Vermont; Goodnight, Irene. (40:32)
Personnel: Dominique Eade, vocals; Ran Blake, piano.
Ordering info: sunnyside.com


Cedar Walton

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

A Trail of Cedars

Three recent albums featuring pianist **Cedar Walton** offer an embarrassment of riches. Two are the first domestic releases of CDs recorded for a well-heeled Japanese audiophile in 1988. Called ***Standards Vol. 1 & 2*** **(Fresh Sounds; 60:06/56:09 ★★★★)**, they were issued under the name of Pat Senatore, the Los Angeles jazz bassist and club owner who tapped Walton and Walton's favorite drummer, Billy Higgins, for these dates. The third, ***Charmed Circle*** **(HighNote; 54:31 ★★★★)**, arrives courtesy of longtime jazz producer Todd Barkan, former owner of Keystone Korner, the San Francisco club where these tunes were recorded in 1979.

The V.I.P. Trio's treatment of standards spans a startling deconstruction of "Summertime" and an arch take on "Fly Me To The Moon." The *Standards* albums are by definition more polished than the live CD, but they're not predictable: "Autumn Leaves" is downright perky; Kenny Dorham's "Blue Bossa" is robust and, with its quote from "Flight Of The Bumblebee," witty; Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Triste" is a power rhumba. Higgins' drumming never intrudes, and Senatore's round, deep tone is unusually expressive.

Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com

The Keystone Korner recording captures what Walton called his "Western Rebellion Group" (a play on his 1976 album *Eastern Rebellion*) in strong originals including the sanctified "Jacob's Ladder," a Fender Rhodes-flavored rendition of Stevie Wonder's "Another Star" and an interpretation of "For All We Know" with Walton at his most relaxed and conversational. The live date digs into funk on Walton's burly "Precious Mountain," ending brassy and angular with his "March Of The Fishman." *Charmed Circle* also showcases the bluesy saxophonist Manny Boyd, who burns on Walton's title track and the strutting Wonder tune, along with driving bassist Tony Dumas and busy drummer Ralph Penland. Steve Turre brings trombone muscle to five of the seven tracks.

Charmed Circle is a keeper from an exciting group that reaches forward in the "Fishman" track but also harkens back to jazz as truly popular music: Boyd's testifying solo on "Precious Mountain" conjures a soul saxophonist playing not just from his diaphragm but off his knees. It's telling that Walton chose to spotlight that luminous tune from Wonder's 1976 magnum opus, *Songs In The Key Of Life*, a double LP splashed with jazz; Walton also recorded it on *Animation*, a 1978 Columbia recording also featuring Dumas and Turre.

Taken together, these three CDs capture a remarkable pianist, who made his name in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, in different yet equally exceptional company. The *Standards* recordings are mainstream jazz at its best, and *Charmed Circle* evokes a time when bop and pop weren't mutually exclusive. **DB**

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Django Bates
Saluting Sgt. Pepper
EDITION RECORDS 1094

★★★★

A skeptical raised eyebrow could be proper, hearing of Django Bates' new *Saluting Sgt. Pepper*, timed with the pop masterpiece's 50th birthday hoopla. But Bates' superlative musicality and witty, creative vivacity should keep fear at bay, and after one good listen (and growing with each successive spin), it becomes clear that the distinctive keyboardist-composer-conceptualist has managed a remarkable feat—possibly the best "Beatles-meets-jazz" effort to date.

Built on a delicate balance of reverential fidelity to the original and plenty personalizing elements—sometimes in wild kaleidoscopic schemes—Bates' *Salute* is just that, plus a kick in the pants and an appeal to the cerebrum. He grants himself license according to the discrete flavor of each Pepper song, starting with a "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" refitted with 5/4 measures and a crazed sonic pageantry. "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" is suitably swathed in psychedelia, woozy tempo fluctuations and thickening harmonic plot, while "When I'm Sixty-Four" emerges initially groggy and then settles into a rubber-legged groove.

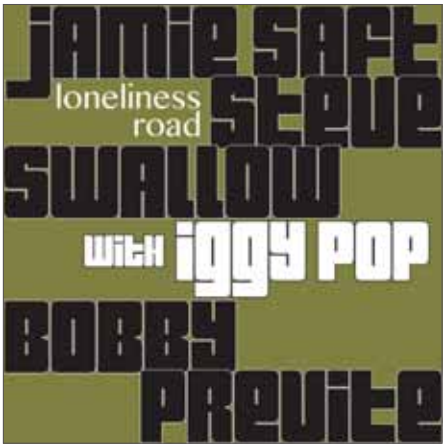
Funk playfully cross-breeds with swing on "Lovely Rita" (savoring the suspended chord coda). But he respects the innately experimental nature of "A Day In The Life"—up through Paul's idea of a cathartic orchestral crescendo—treading lightly with his arrangement, but then adds a zany extra coda section at the end, for good Bates-ian measure.

I think George Martin and the boys would approve. *—Josef Woodard*

Saluting Sgt. Pepper: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band; With A Little Help From My Friends; Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds; Getting Better; Fixing A Hole; Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite!; Within You Without You; When I'm Sixty-Four; Lovely Rita; Good Morning Good Morning; Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (Reprise); A Day In The Life. (45:00)

Personnel: Django Bates, keyboards, backing vocals, arranger, conductor; Stuart Hall, guitars, electric sitar, lap steel, violin; Frankfurt Radio Big Band; Eggs Laid by Tigers (Martin Ullits Dahl, lead vocal; Jonas Westergaard, electric bass, backing vocals; Peter Bruun, drums, percussion, backing vocals).

Ordering info: editionrecords.com



Saft/Swallow/Previte with Iggy Pop
Loneliness Road

RARE NOISE RECORDS 077

★★★★½

Jamie Saft—a keyboardist based in Upstate New York who blends jazz chops with a creative feel for rock, reggae and Jewish folk tunes—has reconvened his cross-generational trio with bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bobby Previte for a follow-up to their addictive 2014 album, *The New Standard*. Their new album, *Loneliness Road*, presents more of Saft's melody-rich compositions, with the trio grooving on the tunes with a level of simpatico that belies an emphasis on first-take spontaneity.

The album's guest vocalist on three tracks is art-punk icon Iggy Pop, in darkly crooning, existentialist mode. The singer, deep into the vibe, is no stranger to jazz audiences, having already worked with Medeski, Martin & Wood. Tracing Saft's instrumental for the title track, Pop came up with a languid vocal melody and beseeching lyrics, the effect like a post-punk cabaret for the small hours. The singer growls "Everyday" intimately, as if he were reciting a love poem across a pillow after a long night. "Don't Lose Yourself" finds Pop in a cautionary mood; the words aren't his most polished, but they are authentic. The man knows of what he speaks.

The instrumentals, though, are the true draw of *Loneliness Road*. Opener "Ten Nights" sets the atmospheric tone beautifully, as Saft evokes Alice Coltrane over Previte's oceanic undertow. "Bookmaking" feels like a soundtrack for trouble brewing after hours, while "Pinkus" is a deep-soul ballad with a Swallow solo that only deepens the emotion.

—Bradley Bambarger

Loneliness Road: Ten Nights; Little Harbor; Bookmaking; Don't Lose Yourself; Henbane; Pinkus; The Barrier; Nainsook; Loneliness Road; Unclouded Moon; Gates; Everyday. (61:38).
Personnel: Jamie Saft, piano; Steve Swallow, bass; Bobby Previte, drums; Iggy Pop, vocals (4, 9, 12).
Ordering info: rarenoiserecords.com

Irabagon/Hegre/Drønen
Axis

RUNE GRAMMOFON 2190

★★★½

Throughout his career, saxophonist Jon Irabagon has displayed an easy versatility and deep curiosity. The one-time winner of the Thelonious Monk Jazz Competition has fit in easily with mainstream piano titan Kenny Barron, tweaked post-bop convention in Mostly Other People do the Killing, explored the extremes of the sopranino saxophone in a solo setting and noisily abstracted the blues alongside the prog-leaning guitarist Mick Barr. *Axis* finds Irabagon pushing toward a new polarity with a pair of vaunted underground figures from Bergen, Norway—guitarist John Hegre, a sound artists known best for the noise music he created in Jazzkammer, and drummer Nils Are Drønen, a searcher who works in The Last Hurrah!!, the country-flavored rock band led by HP Gundersen, who introduced the saxophonist to his collaborators here. The two sidelong improvisations were recorded in two sessions spanning a year-and-a-half, and the fiery rapport shared by the trio is obvious.

"Berlin," the first of the excursions, opens with a meditative chill, a quiet, slow-moving series of bluesy whispers. But then Hegre's delicate, drifting arpeggios explode into abrasive shards of noise and Drønen's sparse cymbal play crashes into a rumbling mayhem. Ultimately, though, it's Irabagon that does the heavy lifting, pushing his alto through a coruscating flow of split tones and parched screams. "Fukuoka" jumps right into the maelstrom, although it does hold back the pure energy at first, opting for a wonderful series of stabs, sways and spasms. Eventually, the trio delivers an unhinged conflagration, with each player stoking the flames.

—Peter Margasak

Axis: Berlin; Fukuoka. (36:41)
Personnel: Jon Irabagon, saxophones; John Hegre, guitar; Nils Are Drønen, drums.
Ordering info: runegrammofon.com

Sassy's Story

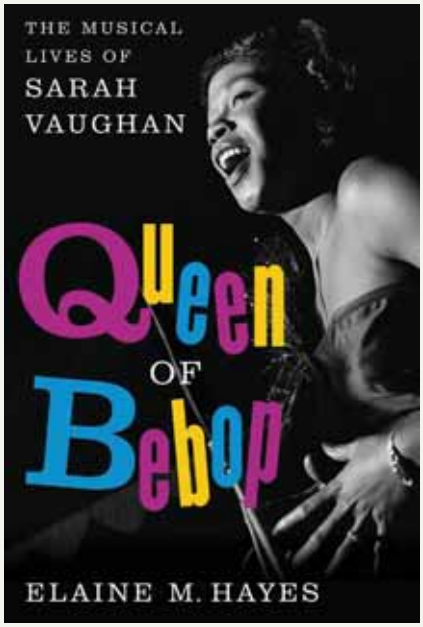
Elaine M. Hayes tells an interesting anecdote late into her excellent biography, ***The Musical Lives of Sarah Vaughan: Queen of Bebop*** **(Ecco/HarperCollins)**. It was the 1989 JVC Festival and as George Wein stopped backstage to give Vaughan a good-luck hug, the first thing she said as he walked into her dressing room was, "Why do your pay Ella more than your pay me?" Wein was offended and angered, in part because the answer was so obvious. Ella Fitzgerald was a generation older and the bigger star.

As the two most celebrated musician-jazz singers of the 20th century, each was formed in the overlap between swing and bop, but found ways to reach beyond jazz. But if Vaughan's remark suggests a persistent frustration working in Fitzgerald's shadow, it's not the story Hayes tells here. Instead, she concentrates on more personal shadows whose consequences she describes compellingly in the context of a contemporary feminist perspective.

She presents Vaughan as a smart and independent woman with a strong sense of who she wanted to become and how to make it happen. To Hayes what is important is that she grew up in a world of men in which she played Eliza to their Pygmalions. Think of her three marriages as variations on Doris Day and James Cagney in *Love Me or Leave Me*. "She always picked the wrong man," Buster Williams recalled. Hayes sees a woman "attracted to ... well-dressed, handsome men ... Men likely to be more invested in the same gender roles that she flouted." Her mistake was putting them in charge of her business affairs. "By elevating the men in her life to the position of manager," Hayes writes, she "formalized their role, giving them more standing and legitimacy. ... [It] allowed Vaughan to realize her ideal vision of marriage ... where husband and wife blended their professional and personal lives in the pursuit of a common goal." But each husband had covert goals of his own, and they would cost her.

The book is structured in three parts within which Hayes identifies three "crossover" points where she moves from bebop singer to pop vocalist and finally in 1974 to a diva of the symphonic world, where she achieve the kind of "legitimacy" that Marion Anderson represented to her as a young girl.

But Vaughan shunned any characterization that limited her artistically. After her beginnings with Billy Eckstein and record dates with Dizzy Gillespie, she broke through as a pop singer on the small Musicraft label with "It's Magic." For the next few years, jazz fans pulled her one way, Musicraft the other. She



was caught in an art vs. commerce dilemma that became even worse at Columbia under Mitch Miller. Then, in 1953, it seemed to resolve. She moved to Mercury, where she would focus on hit singles for the parent label and build a classic body of more personal work on Mercury's jazz subsidiary, EmArcy. But tenures with Roulette and Mercury again petered out when royalty payments vanished and publicity support became indifferent. By then, however, records had become more an instrument of publicity than revenue.

By the late '60s she was becoming a victim of the collapse of American song writing. They "could not bear the weight of Vaughan's creative vision," says Hayes, who is consistently good about placing her subject in the larger cultural contexts of her times. It gives her narrative a meaningful intelligence and consequence. It is particularly rewarding in the way she uses Vaughan's success as a mirror of race in America of the '40s and '50s, not only in surveying the absurdities of Jim Crow but in the more nuanced distinctions by which white and black singers were measured and sorted. "The vocabulary developed by white critics to differentiate white and black voices," she writes, "was informed by larger social and cultural constructions defining ideal beauty ... race and gender." In its subtle way, it helped maintain "clear boundaries between music sung by black ... and white vocalists." Ultimately Vaughan's story is one of triumph and fulfilment, both musically and socially. She died in 1990. Ironically, her final record date would be her only pairing with Ella Fitzgerald. **DB**

Ordering info: harpercollins.com

Brian Landrus Orchestra
Generations
BLUELAND 2017

★★★★

Ambitious in scope and vision, baritone saxophonist/composer Brian Landrus has bet the ranch with *Generations*. In his own words, this first-time orchestral adventure "is a culmination of everything I've listened to and loved over the years." For Landrus, that means Bach to J Dilla, along with inspirations Gerry Mulligan, John Coltrane, Miles Davis and many others.

The players include flutist Jamie Baum, trumpeter Ralph Alessi, vibraphonist Joe Locke and drummer Billy Hart. Produced by Landrus mentor Robert Livingston Aldridge and Frank Carlberg, the album refers to generations of not only composers and genres but family as well.

Conducted by JC Sanford, the music is generally bright, with a bounce to even some of the more measured pieces such "Warriors." In fact, while the five-piece "Jeru Concerto" is a strong opening statement, full of energetic brass and Landrus' hearty baritone, it's the slower pieces where the music really breathes, allowing for other dimensions and sounds, not to mention a variety of tonal colors.

Reflecting Landrus' love of all things musical, and considering the fact that he's now a veteran of some of the top jazz orchestras in the world, *Generations* is, no doubt, just the beginning for a player-composer who is well-versed and right at home painting on a big canvas.

—John Ephland

Generations: Jeru Concerto, Mvt. 1; Jeru Concerto, Interlude; Jeru Concerto, Mvt. 2; Jeru Concerto, Mtv. 3; Jeru Concerto, Mtv 4; Orchids; The Warrior; Arrow In The Night; Arise; Human Nature; Ruby; Every Time I Dream. (59:47)
Personnel: Brian Landrus, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Jamie Baum, flute, alto flute; Tom Christensen, oboe, flute; Darryl Harper, clarinet; Michael Rabinowitz, bassoon; Alden Banta, contrabassoon; Debbie Schmidt, horn; Ralph Alessi, Igmar Thomas, trumpet; Alan Ferber, trombone; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Brandee Younger, harp; Joe Locke, vibraphone; Billy Hart, Justin Brown, drums; Mark Feldman, Sara Caswell, Joyce Hammann, Meg Okura, violin; Lois Martin, Nora Krohn, viola; Jody Redhage, Maria Jeffers, cello; Jay Anderson, Lonnie Plaxico, bass.

Ordering info: brianlandrus.com

Jason Kao Hwang
Sing House
EUONYMUS 03
★★★★

Violinist Jason Kao Hwang's group Sing House makes its recording debut as a unit on this CD. They perform four lengthy and episodic selections that clock in between 11 and 14 minutes. Hwang's avant-garde compositions develop as they progress, expertly mixing planned ensembles with free playing, and giving each musician his opportunity in the spotlight.

When evaluating and attempting to describe performances of this sort, the main questions become, "Are the results colorful and interesting or merely dull? Will it most likely hold the listener's attention or does it decrease in interest as it goes?"

Due to the variety of moods, the brilliance of the musicians and the mixture of composition and improvisation, *Sing House* is a success. The music is never predictable and the journey passes through many unexpected areas.

The opening "No Such Thing" has a fast theme that sounds like free improvisation. Drummer Andrew Drury takes the initial solo, and trombonist Steve Swell creates the first of his many rambunctious and highly expressive improvisations on this CD.

"Dream Walk" sounds very much like the soundtrack to an eccentric dream. The group, with pianist Chris Forbes in the lead, sometimes gives the impression of a staggering walker trying with only mixed success not to fall. Quiet sections alternate with riotous parts with bassist Ken Filiano's bowing a strong asset. "When What Could" starts out somber but picks up in tempo and spirit as it progresses. "Inscribe" closes the set with a colorful melody, more bowed bass, some unusual patterns and a drum solo.

—Scott Yanow

Sing House: No Such Thing; Dream Walk; When What Could; Inscribe.(49:24)
Personnel: Jason Kao Hwang, violin, viola; Steve Swell, trombone; Chris Forbes, piano; Ken Filiano, bass; Andrew Drury, drums.

Ordering info: jasonkaohwang.com

The Vampires/ Lionel Loueke
The Vampires Meet Lionel Loueke
EARSHIFT MUSIC
★★★★

Eclectic Australian jazz outfit The Vampires have collaborated with esteemed African-born guitarist and vocalist Lionel Loueke for an exciting new collection of songs, aptly titled *The Vampires Meet Lionel Loueke*. The album combines a variety of influences including Afrobeat and jazz to deliver a fresh and lively sound over the course of 10 tracks. Jeremy Rose, alto and tenor saxophone player in The Vampires, wrote all but three songs on the album (the others were spearheaded by trumpeter Nick Garbett).

The loose feel from the versatile LP is attributed to The Vampires' homeland of Australia, where they invited Loueke to record and tour for the project. "Hard Love" is influenced by Jamaican Nyabinghi music, and the succeeding "Freedom Song" is a powerful dub-reggae number that is dedicated to the refugees held on Australia's controversial offshore detention centers. "Bendalong" keeps the reggae vibe going, albeit a bit lighter on the vibe, before "Torta Salata," one of Garbett's numbers, keeps things upbeat.

The album is a worthy addition to the catalogs of both The Vampires and Loueke, without either party succumbing fully to the other's bag of tricks. If jazz music is about continuously reinventing and staying on your toes, then *The Vampires Meet Lionel Loueke* is a phenomenal jazz record by a worldly, talented and newly minted five-piece band. *—Chris Tart*

The Vampires Meet Lionel Loueke: Endings & Beginnings Pt. I; Hard Love; Freedom Song; Green, Green, Green; Bendalong; Torta Salata; Suck A Seed; Ubud Bubble; Brand New; Endings & Beginnings Pt. II. (54:49)
Personnel: Jeremy Rose, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Nick Garbett, trumpet; Lionel Loueke, guitar, vocals; Jonathan Zwartz, bass (except 3, 5); Danny Fischer, drums (except 3, 5); Alex Masso, percussion.

Ordering info: earshift.com

Avi Avital & Omer Avital
Avital Meets Avital
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 26723
★★★½

They aren't brothers, but they do share a similar lineage, both familial and musical, one going the way of classical, the other jazz. And on *Avital Meets Avital*, Israeli bassist Omer Avital (the jazz half) "meets" compatriot mandolin player Avi Avital (classical) for a musical cross-fertilization that transports to another world.

Opening track "Zamzama" sets the stage: A ruminative, roving theme with a quartet in tow, the music is bold, with pianist Yonathan Avishai and percussionist Itamar Doari right there with the leaders. It's jazzy while also implying ethnic origins, loose yet precise. "Lonely Girl" follows, with Avi's gentle, mournful theme painting a song traditional in scope yet full of life.

While the coming together of these two disparate artists is a cause for celebration, there are points where the music suggests a revisit to Lawrence Welk camp: authentic yet also sounding a tad folkloric, perhaps belying the true "meeting" of jazz with classical. Case in point: "Ana Maghrebi," one of eight originals by the Avitals (with one cover). Omer gets into the game with a brief solo on this energetic dancefloor number that's fun if light.

And that may be the aim of this convergence of two accomplished artists, the music played marvelously, the main players' virtuosity clearly on display. "Avi's Song" is the album's "Mahavishnu Moment" as the band whips it up and we get to hear Avi burn and Doari let loose (the addition of accordionist Uri Sharlin is a nice touch). *—John Ephland*

Avital Meets Avital: Zamzama; Lonely Girl; Ana Maghrebi; Avi's Song; Ballad For Eli; Prelude; Maroc; Hijazain; The Source And The Sea (Balada Al Maayan Ve'yam). (47:53)
Personnel: Avi Avital, mandolin, mandola; Omer Avital, bass; Yonathan Avishai, piano; Itamar Doari, pecussion; Uri Sharlin, accordion (5).

Ordering info: deutschegrammophon.com

Kirk Knuffke
Cherryco
STEEPLECHASE 31832
★★★★

Given cornetist Kirk Knuffke's nonchalant versatility and ebullient melodic gifts, it should come as no surprise that he's an admirer of the great Don Cherry. Naturally, he came to Cherry through the music of Ornette Coleman, but Cherry's inherent curiosity is more than worthy of its own focus, and even though Knuffke's repertoire on this terrific outing includes five indelible Coleman themes from 1958–'59, such as "Lonely Woman" and "The Sphinx," the trio setting leaves no doubt who the cornetist is thinking about. He gets spry, limber support from the excellent rhythm section of bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Adam Nussbaum.

Occupying the front line with only a cornet is no easy task—especially on music that was so famously shaped by a duo—but Knuffke nails it, conveying the melodic content of these super catchy themes without a hiccup, wielding his plush, tensile tone like it was molding clay. It helps that Anderson and Nussbaum expertly fill out the sound field for him.

Knuffke doesn't imitate Cherry in the slightest; his agile smears and muscular sallies on "The Sphinx," for example, sound bigger, while his navigation of "Art Deco" conveys more swagger and sass than its composer's own tart, modest performances. What comes through in the end is a shared spirit of generosity and the durability of Cherry's writing. Knuffke may be more of a technician than Cherry, but here he puts the emphasis on ensemble interplay, forming an airy, malleable bond with his deft rhythm team while still uncorking one convincing and lyric solo after another. *Cherryco* feels like a love letter and it's hard not to share in the ardor.

—Peter Margasak

Cherryco: Roland Alphonso; The Sphinx; Art Deco; Remembrance; Golden Heart; Lonely Woman; Jayne; Song In D; Paris Ambulance Song; Angel Voice; Mind And Time; Cherryco. (63:30)
Personnel: Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Jay Anderson, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

Bill O'Connell
Monk's Cha Cha
SAVANT RECORDS
★★★½

This live set splits down the middle between standards and the pianist's own material. In both contexts, O'Connell's approach to improvising is evident, though with the familiar tunes we have the advantage of hearing how he works within a pre-existing composition. The originals offer no such hallmarks, which encourages the assumption that they were created from scratch in the moment.

O'Connell favors irregular momentum. At medium and above clips, both hands often play off of each other in dynamic interaction. The same applies in more flexible time, as on Jobim's "Dindi": Here, he fades in and out of tempo, at times resting his left hand for a couple of beats or bars to shift the impetus to the right.

This track also illustrates differences in O'Connell's approach when playing a well-known tune. Jobim's lush harmonic movement cues him to play languorously, pausing to linger or to draw attention to a particular change by slowing things down a bit. Without an obvious blueprint to illuminate his compositions, he tends to keep to steadier tempo. Each of these pieces seems to grow from its own single seed—a turnaround at the end of each verse on what would otherwise be a straight blues on "Zip Line," for example. On the other hand, O'Connell ensures that his work never sounds repetitive. Yes, he has his stock phrases, but he also knows how to surprise—check out his amusing paraphrase of "Misterioso" in the title track. And he also knows how to find new dimension in works we've all heard before.

—Bob Doerschuk

Monk's Cha Cha: The Song Is You; Dindi; Monk's Cha Cha; It Could Happen To You; Zip Line; Afro Blue; Hither Hills; Gibberish; White Caps. (78:26)
Personnel: Bill O'Connell, piano.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Larry Coryell's 11th House
Seven Secrets
SAVOY JAZZ
★★★★

Dylan Taylor
One In Mind
BLUJAZZ
★★★★

The late Larry Coryell didn't live long enough to see the official CD release of this 11th House reunion. Neither did his longtime colleague and 11th House charter member, drummer Alphonse Mouzon. But on *Seven Secrets*, Coryell and Mouzon recreate that energy and daredevil vibe with original 11th House member trumpeter Randy Brecker and a member of a 1975 edition of the group, fretless bassist John Lee. With Coryell's guitarist son Julian flaunting considerable chops himself, particularly on his Steve Vai-esque wah-wah solo on Lee's quintessential fusion anthem "Dragon's Way," this band packs a dynamic punch.

Papa Coryell contributes the mysterious, arpeggiated '70s-style fusion opus "Mr. Miyake" and the earthy "Mudhen Blues," which has Julian pulling out his best Stevie Ray Vaughan licks and Larry digging into his Texas blues roots while also blowing over the bar line with impunity. Brecker, whose playing is dazzling and authoritative, contributes the fusion-flavored "Philly Flash," which has him cutting some impossible unisons with Coryell on the rapid-fire head and the urgent, Brecker Brothers-style funk-fusion number "The Dip," laden with high-note wah-wah trumpet work. Mouzon's explosive flurry around the kit on the intro to his potent title track is a fitting final statement from this fusion pioneer.

The elder Coryell also turns in bristling, toe-curling solos on Mouzon's "Some Funky Stuff" and "Zodiac." And for a change of pace from all the electric fusillades, he delivers a brilliant solo acoustic "Molten Grace," showing yet another avenue the guitar hero pursued in his illustrious career.

Coryell is in a more subdued swing mode on a trio session led by bassist Dylan Taylor, recorded live in a Pennsylvania studio with drumming great Mike Clark underscoring the proceedings with a deft, interactive touch. Coryell and Clark, both of whom know the real deal when it comes to funk, hook up in a James Brown goodfoot sense on Clark's "Loft Funk," then the three swing in a more free-blowing vein on Bud Powell's "John's Abbey," as well as on the guitarist's "Alabama Rhap Corollary" and the bassist's loping medium-tempo swinger "Song For Dennis." And as a refreshing aside, Coryell switches to acoustic guitar on "Jem'N'Eye'N," a brisk medium-tempo swinger paced by Taylor's insistent walking bass and enlivened by Clark's hip, melodic approach to the kit.

—Bill Milkowski

Seven Secrets: Alabama Rhap Corollary; Mr. Miyake; Dragon's Way; Philly Flash; Molten Grae; Seven Secrets; The Dip; Having Second Thoughts; Some Funky Stuff; Mudhen Blues; Zodiac. (64:00)
Personnel: Larry Coryell, Julian Coryell, guitar; Randy Brecker, trumpet; John Lee, bass; Alphonse Mouzon, drums; Dennis Haklar, acoustic guitar (3).

Ordering info: savoyjazz.com

One In Mind: The One Or The Nine; Loft Funk; Jumbo Liar; Song For Dennis; War And Peace; Hittin' And Missin'; John's Abbey; Jem'N'Eye'N; Alabama Rhap Corollary; The Dragon Gate. (65:00)
Personnel: Dylan Taylor, bass; Larry Coryell, guitars; Mike Clark, drums.

Ordering info: blujazz.com

T.K. Blue
Amour
DOT TIME
★★★★

One of the most impressive facets of a jazz musician's talent is making the hard stuff sound easy. T.K. Blue, a New York-born saxophonist who, in his youth, studied with Jimmy Heath, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Yusef Lateef, exudes armloads of dexterity and guileless charm on his latest album, *Amour*. Its 11 tracks, a nice balance of originals and covers, overflow with evidence of a craftsman so in love with his work that it doesn't even feel like work.

There's a reason for all that *joie de vivre*. More than just his 11th album as a leader, *Amour* is also a tribute to Blue's time spent in Paris, where the saxophonist lived for more than a decade, and in the process acquired a taste for the musical flavors of Europe and Africa.

While elements of world music are evident in the margins of this disc, the overwhelming emphasis is on swing. Individual efforts contribute significantly to that overall sound. Guest Warren Wolf adds a soft-lens vibraphone solo to the upbeat waltz number "Parisian Memoir," which makes the song shimmer like a distant memory, and Blue entwines with harmonicist Grégoire Maret for a blistering Havana-on-the-Delta take on John Coltrane's "Resolution."

—Brian Zimmerman

Amour: Banlieue Blue; Infant Eyes; Parisian Memoir; A Single Tear Of Remembrance; Resolution; Dream Time; 204; Abdoulaye (Prospere)' Requiem For A Loved 1 (Part II); La Petite Fleur; Elvin Elpus. (60:00)
Personnel: T.K. Blue, saxophones; Etienne Charles, trumpet; Warren Wolf, vibraphone; Zaccai Curtis, piano; Winard Harper, Eric Kennedy, drums; Roland Guerrero, percussion; Grégoire Maret, harmonica; Essiet Essiet, Jeff Reed, bass.

Ordering info: dottimerecords.com

Stanton Moore
With You In Mind: The Songs Of Allen Toussaint
MASCOT LABEL GROUP/COOL GREEN

★★★★

Galactic drummer Stanton Moore formed his own trio (with Astral Project pianist David Torkanowsky and bassist James Singleton) a few years back to explore music beyond the confines of that New Orleans jam band's funky base. Their 2014 outing, *Conversations*, featured Moore on straightahead swingers inspired by New Orleans hard-bop drummer James Black along with a couple of second-line groovers that showcased his street-beat chops. On this follow-up album, a tribute to the late Crescent City icon Allen Toussaint, the interactive trio is joined by a host of special guests who put a personal spin on tunes by the prolific New Orleans songwriter.

Trombone Shorty, the hottest commodity out of New Orleans these days, contributes some earthy tailgate lines on "Here Come The Girls," a 1970 hit for Ernie K-Doe. Moore and his crew put a 7/8 spin on Toussaint's "Life," and they deliver a slamming 5/4 version of the 1969 Lee Dorsey tune "Everything I Do Gone Be Funky," which features guest Maceo Parker on vocals and alto saxophone.

The biggest surprise here is "The Beat," based on a Toussaint poem from a little-known book of poetry he wrote back in the day. Recited by Cyril Neville, this rare spoken-word number, underscored by Moore's entrancing Afro-Caribbean rhythms, is another ingenious way that the drummer was able to put his own stamp on the legend's music. *—Bill Milkowski*

With You In Mind: Here Come The Girls; Life; Java; All These Things; Night People; The Beat; Riverboat; Everything I Do Gone Be Funky; With You In Mind; Southern Nights. (61:00)
Personnel: Stanton Moore, drums; David Torkanowsky, piano; James Singleton, bass; Cyril Neville, vocals (1, 2, 6); Trombone Shorty, trombone (1, 3); Nicholas Payton, trumpet (2, 3, 7, 10); Donald Harrison, alto saxophone (3, 7), Maceo Parker (5, 8); Skerik, tenor saxophone (2); Jolynda Kiki Chapman, vocals (4); Wendell Pierce, vocals (10).
Ordering info: usa.mascotlabelgroup.com

Pete Malinverni Trio
Heaven
SARANAC 1010

★★★½

Veteran pianist Pete Malinverni lost his wife, singer Jody Sandhaus, in 2012 and had a health scare of his own a year ago. Fortunately, the latter was a false alarm, but during its peak, Malinverni vowed that if he had the opportunity to make one more recording, it would focus on spirituality. *Heaven* is the result.

The songs on *Heaven* come from a variety of sources, from Duke Ellington and Curtis Mayfield to traditional folk songs and hymns. Malinverni's trio with bassist Ben Allison and drummer Akira Tana is augmented by three notable guests on one song apiece.

Ellington's "Heaven" opens the program and is a swinging showcase for the trio. Malinverni's lone original of the date, "Psalm 23," is somber but hopeful, while the traditional "Down In The River To Pray" is transformed into a romp in 5/4.

The traditional ballad "Shenandoah" features Karrin Allyson's singing along with bass and piano solos. "Eili Eili," a song for a Jewish martyr from World War II, moves at a slow pace, sticks mostly to the theme, and has Malinverni often playing out of tempo as if he is thinking aloud. Trumpeter Jon Faddis is the lead voice on much of "Come Sunday," using a mute on his trumpet and playing tastefully. After a tender version of "A City Called Heaven" with bassist Allison taking a fine solo, altoist Steve Wilson and the trio romp through a modernized rendition of "Wade In The Water." The set concludes with a heartfelt version of "Ashokan Farewell."

—Scott Yanow

Heaven: Heaven; Psalm 23; Down In The River To Pray; Shenandoah; Eili Eili; People, Get Ready; Come Sunday; A City Called Heaven; Wade In The Water; Ashokan Farewell. (55:48)
Personnel: Pete Malinverni, piano; Ben Allison, bass; Akira Tana, drums; Jon Faddis, trumpet (7); Steve Wilson (3), alto saxophone; Karrin Allyson, vocals (4).
Ordering info: petemalinverni.com

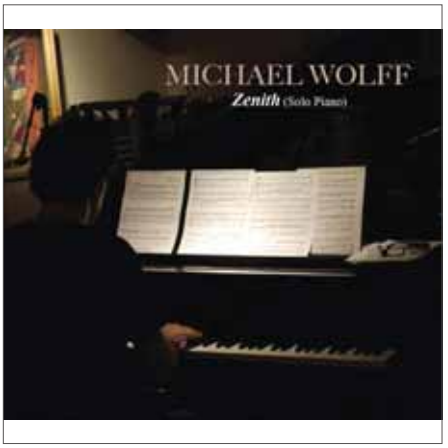
Jesse Lewis & Ike Sturm
Endless Field
BIOPHILIA

★★★★

In nature, as in music, it's often the case that the widest, most expansive spaces can inspire the deepest moments of self-reflection. Think of the serenity that washes over the body as one looks into the depths of the ocean, or onto a vast mountain range or, in the case of guitarist Jesse Lewis and bassist Ike Sturm's new collaboration, across an endless field. It's that sensation of awe-inspired tranquility that guides the music on this disc, one of distant horizons and airy, windswept melodies. Stylistically, it draws equally from genres as diverse as folk, jazz, indie rock, contemporary classical and even ambient sound. But elements of nature are clearly an influence, too, as the duo harness a palette of sounds that are refreshingly organic in this age of industrialization: rain-like shakers on opening track "Unending Season," primal wordless vocals on "A Run Through The Woods" and soft, celestial synths on the Americana ballad "Daybreak In Canyonland."

On *Endless Field*, Lewis and Sturm are joined by a circle of like-minded musicians that add depth and vitality to the duo's compositional vision. Saxophonist Donny McCaslin is characteristically full-throated and purposeful on "Supermoon," emitting long, bell-like tones in moments of calm and throttling up the rhythmic complexity as the song's momentum builds. Trumpeter Ingrid Jensen is by turns regal and mysterious on the anthemic "Airglow," hitting stratospheric high notes near the song's peak-of-the-mountain climax. And pianist Fabian Almazan and vibraphonist Chris Dingman enrobe the music in a cool, soothing mist. *—Brian Zimmerman*

Endless Field: Undending Season; Ember; Supermoon; A Run Through The Woods At Night; Infinite Cascades; Airglow; A Voice In The Open Wild; Kilde; Dinosaur Dreams; Daybreak In Canyonland; The Curious Fox And The Dear. (43:00)
Personnel: Jesse Lewis, guitar; Ike Sturm, bass; Fabian Almazan, piano; Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Nadje Noordhuis, flugelhorn; Rich Stein, percussion; Misty Ann Sturm, vocals; Donny McCaslin, soprano saxophone (3); Ingrid Jensen, trumpet (6).
Ordering info: biophiliarecords.com



Michael Wolff
Zenith
INDIANOLA

★★★

For more than 20 years Michael Wolff has been releasing albums under his own name. He's recorded and performed with Sonny Rollins, Cannonball Adderley, Nancy Wilson—even co-starred in a Nickelodeon TV series. Dude's done it all except for one thing.

With *Zenith*, Wolff scratches that item from his bucket list. Hard to believe, but this is his first-ever solo piano album. One hopes it won't be his last, not only because of his credentials but also because it shows where he might challenge himself and expand his range further in this format.

There are beautiful moments on *Zenith*, particularly on the ballads and especially on those written by Wolff. "Polly" settles on the tonic note repeated in the left hand, over which a line drifts gently in slow eighth-notes between the octave, minor seventh and minor sixth. This movement nicely sets up a shift in the "B" section, which deepens the piece's stately, almost solemn ambience. So it's hard to understand why Wolff suddenly shatters that vibe with a few staccato jabs.

Maybe showing his expressive range in this and other instances on *Zenith* was a higher priority than sustaining effective emotional moments. This quality amplifies on some of the uptempo tunes. Wolff's treatment of "All The Things You Are" juggles different rhythmic elements, spins lines in parallel or opposite directions, goes for dramatic effect in veering from high-impact, string-ringing attack to whispered pianissimo. What it doesn't do is address the composition or the lyric.

Wolff has proven himself in a variety of settings. Working solo may be one worth revisiting in the near future. —*Bob Doerschuk*

Zenith: The Doc; Giant Steps; Makin' Whoopee; Flint; Euphoria; All The Things You Are; Blue Couch; Billie's Bounce; Cry Me A River; Little M; Madimba/St. Thomas; Polly; Too Long At The Fair; Hush. (46:29)
Personnel: Michael Wolff, piano.
Ordering info: michaelwolff.com

Arve Henriksen
Towards Language
RUNE GRAMMOFON

★★★★

The Norwegian trumpeter Arve Henriksen is once again working with his countrymen, Eivind Aarset (guitar), Jan Bang and Erik Honoré (electronics), who gather closely around their leader's pure mountain-stream rivulets. Henriksen is again combining horn, voice and extremely subtle effects, while Aarset's contribution is mostly inextricable from the doctorings of Bang and Honoré.

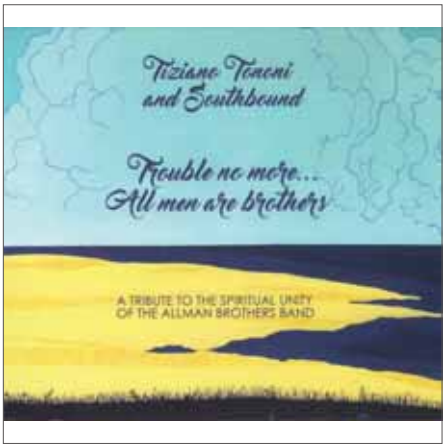
As Henriksen himself is prone to making sonic alterations, it's not so necessary to classify each artist's input, particularly as this is a collective soundworld, even if the group aims to surround and complement the central presence of Henriksen's pollen-light horn-motes.

Amidst the low-level sparseness of "Groundswell," Henriksen's colleagues surround him with a halo of billowing particles over a gentle bed of beats and bass lines, making this is a more accessible manifestation of their work together. (It's hard to avoid a comparison to the late-1970s collaborations between Brian Eno and Jon Hassell.) Elements of robot sleekness and organic rootedness are combined, as Henriksen's close-miked voice burrows into our ear canals.

The spaces in this music are finely chosen, as the shorter pieces tend toward impressionistic minimalism, and the longer numbers inhabit a more layered structure. The penultimate "Vivification" begins with solo trumpet before the electronic tendrils steadily creep deep inside Henriksen's intimately recorded bell.

—*Martin Longley*

Towards Language: Patient Zero; Groundswell; Towards Language; Demarcation Line; Transitory; Hibernal; Realign; Vivification; Paridae. (38:24)
Personnel: Arve Henriksen, trumpet, voice, electronics; Eivind Aarset, guitar, electronics; Jan Bang, Erik Honoré, electronics.
Ordering info: runegrammofon.com



Tiziano Tononi & Southbound
Trouble No More … All Men Are Brothers
LONG SONG 141
★★★★

Tribute albums can be tricky. The key is to give greater priority to spirit than to style. Of course, the Allman Brothers created a unique style before guitarist Duane Allman's death just weeks before his 25th birthday. To deny that, or to step so far away from it that the tribute being paid loses clarity, would be as mistaken as mere mimicry would be.

On *Trouble No More*, Tiziano Tononi accepts this challenge and delivers the goods. His arrangement of "Whippin' Post" acknowledges the original version, from the surging 6/8 to the humongous climax on the chorus and the 11/8 hook. It also charts a new path through the tune. The most obvious change here, and on most of the rest of the album, is to substitute Carmelo Massimo Torre's airy accordion for Gregg Allman's meaty B-3 as the dominant textural element. This gives Tononi a little more space in the mix to conjure the freedom and energy that it took two drummers to generate with the Allmans.

The big distraction here is the horn players' tendency to play as fast as possible rather than invent with more restraint on their solos. But that's not enough to detract from the success Tononi achieves with *Trouble No More*. He pays his respects with love and originality, which is what sincere tributes are all about.

—Bob Doerschuk

Trouble No More … All Men Are Brothers: Whippin' Post; Midnight Rider; Whippin' Post (Reprise); For Berry O.; Les Brers (In G Minor); Don't Want You No More; It's Not My Cross To Bear; Kind of Bird; Clouds On Macon; Hot 'Lanta; Requiem For Skydog; You Don't Love Me; Soul Serenade; You Don't Love Me (Glorious Ending). (78:26)
Personnel: Tiziano Tononi, drums, percussion, gongs, Udu drum; Carmelo Massimo Torre, accordion; Joe Fonda, acoustic bass, electric bass; Piero Bittolo Bon, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, flutes; Emanuele Passerini, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; Daniele Cavallanti, tenor saxophone; Emanuele Parrini, violin, viola; Pacho, congas, bongos, percussion; Marta Raviglia, vocals.
Ordering info: longsongrecords.com

Brian McCarthy
The Better Angels Of Our Nature
TRUTH REVOLUTION
★★★★½

From one of the bloodiest, most divisive episodes in American history—the Civil War—saxophonist Brian McCarthy finds inspiration for a jazz album that makes a cavernous impression for its arresting beauty and conceptual brilliance. Harmony and accord pervades across the album's nine illustrious tracks, many of which date back to the Civil War era, others that McCarthy wrote to reflect on the song and spirit of the War Between the States and its aftermath. "Jazz came from the African-American experience here in America," he writes. "Out of the darkness of terrible slavery, Reconstruction and Jim Crow came this really beautiful art form."

A self-professed history buff as well as an accomplished musician, McCarthy imbues his original compositions with a scholar's perspicacity and a melodist's ear. The title track, a three-part suite, uses the cadence of substance of Abraham Lincoln's inaugural address as a compositional framework, while "Shiloh," a poignant ballad, evokes the loss and suffering of its namesake battle, in which Confederate

troops ambushed Union soldiers in Tennessee. Joining McCarthy in his interpretive efforts are members of a fierce and agile nonet. With copious tensile strength, the unit adds muscle to a funkified version of "Bonnie Blue Flag," carefree swing to "Battle Hymn Of The Old Republic" and emotional transparency to the spiritual "Oh Freedom." *—Brian Zimmerman*

The Better Angels Of Our Nature: The Bonnie Blue Flag; Battle Hymn Of The Republic; Shiloh; The Better Angels Of Our Nature; Battle Cry Of Freedom; Weeping, Sad And Lonely; I Wish I Was In Dixie's Land; Oh Freedom; All Quet On The Potomac To-Night. (77:00)
Personnel: Brian McCarthy, Stantawn Kendrick, Andrew Gutauskas, Daniel Ian Smith, saxophones; Bill Mobley, trumpet; Cameron MacManus; Justin Kauflin, piano; Matt Aronoff, bass; Zach Harmon, drums.
Ordering info: truthrevolutionrecords.com

João Barradas
Directions
INNER CIRCLE MUSIC
★★★★½

One of the reasons João Barradas stands apart from the fairly slender ranks of virtuoso jazz accordionists is his taste for adventure, in a field not necessarily given to same. Concurrently, his roots are intact and entrenched in jazz and classical traditions, as well as other niches in the musical world where accordion is known to travel. We get a winning introduction to the young Portuguese dynamo on his aptly named debut album, *Directions*, a sensitive, open-minded, multi-directional and undeniably chops-endowed set of music.

Our first indication of venturesome thinking arrives at the outset, as Barradas spins off a philosophical essay on the fly. Alto saxophonist Greg Osby, also the album's producer, lends his gymnastic, spidery instrumental voice to the mix on this track, titled "Expressive Idea," and later cameos on "Unknown Identity" and the album's finale, "Ignorance"—all tracks that lean into a more angular, harmonically exploratory zone. Poised balladic beauty is at hand on "Varazdin's Landscape," and elsewhere on the album, he latches on to an odd-metered Slavic folkloric groove on "Amalgamat," and nods to the Piazzolla-ish realm of nuevo tango on "The Red Badge Of Courage."

Among Barradas' many champions is Gil Goldstein, who embarks on a thrilling accordion duet with the younger player to the tune of Goldstein's "Tiling The Plane," loosely built off of the changes of "Giant Steps." Here, as throughout *Directions*, the nimble young accordionist acquits himself like the new, true musical sensation his nascent reputation promises him to be. *—Josef Woodard*

Directions: Expressive Idea; Letter To Mother's Immersion; Varazdin's Landscape; Unknown Identity; Amalgamat; Tiling The Plane; Manners Of Normality; The Red Badge Of Courage; Homeric Hymn; Ignorance. (58:00)
Personnel: João Barradas, accordion, MIDI accordion; Greg Osby, alto saxophone (1, 4, 11); Gil Goldstein, accordion (7); Sara Serpa, vocals (6); André Fernandes, guitar; João Paulo Esteves da Silva, piano; André Rosinha, bass; Bruno Pedroso, drums.
Ordering info: innercirclemusic.com

Vadim Neselovskyi Trio
Get Up And Go
JAZZ FAMILY/BLU JAZZ PRODUCTIONS 3449
★★★★½

I'm not even done listening to this album—three tracks to go as I write this—yet already I'm giving *Get Up And Go* the stellar rating it deserves. Neselovskyi is a rare artist even at this early, post-Berklee stage of his career: technically assured as both pianist and composer and, more important, already in possession of a distinctive vision.

His music is complex, often studded with metrical hiccups that he and his trio negotiate with a dizzying aplomb. Yet it's also accessible: On "Who Is It?" an aggressive motif, played solo on piano at the top, gives listeners something to hang onto as it powers through the shifting time.

The same thing happens with the opening cut, "On A Bicycle," whose foundation and momentum derive from a 16th-note ostinato that runs through most of the tune, breathing dimension into the momentum it creates.

Another thing about "On A Bicycle," "San Felio" and several other tracks: Though sophisticated if not complicated in their structure, the impression they make is fundamentally emotional, even joyful.

In contrast, as the title suggests, "Winter" is deep and still. The opening piano figure offers a promise of optimism, like the tinkle of a music box. But then Dan Loomis' arco bass pulls us back to a wider perspective—open, cold, even a little bleak yet also beautiful.

On the album's final song, Sara Serpa's wordless vocal animates a kind of hushed wonder. These last moments confirm what the earliest ones suggested: *Get Up And Go* is a marvel.

—Bob Doerschuk

Get Up And Go: On A Bicycle; Winter; San Felio; Station Taiga; Who Is It?; Krai; Interlude I; Prelude For Vibes; Get Up And Go; Interlude II; Almost December. (58:41)
Personnel: Vadim Neselovskyi, piano, melodica; Dan Loomis, bass; Ronen Itzik, drums, percussion; Sara Serpa, vocals (4, 11).
Ordering info: vadimneselovskyi.com

Jason Miles
Kind Of New 2: Blue Is Paris
LIGHTYEAR ENTERTAINMENT
★★★

This new release from keyboardist Jason Miles is tied to the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks. *Blue Is Paris* came in the wake of Miles having visited the city soon after. Needless to say, he was inspired by the "incredibly resilient" people of Paris to put out an album consisting of one song, done with nine variations all hovering at around five minutes, and with a different lead soloist for each.

This being Miles' second *Kind Of New* album, the first with trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, *Kind Of New 2* furthers that voice through four more trumpet players, each influenced by former Miles employer Miles Davis. The concept of reinventing just one song from start to finish, a gamble, comes across with mixed results.

Miles' band, consistently playing the relaxed, funky groove with subtle alterations along the way, includes drummer Gene Lake, bassists Reggie Washington or Adam Dorn, guitarist Vinnie Zummo and Jay Rodrigues on tenor saxophone and bass clarinet.

Titled with each special guest's name ("Theo Croker," "Jeff Coffin"), the versions amount to a kind of easy-on-the-ears, enticing smooth-jazz exercise. With an affecting melody that lingers, and a song that stays pretty much intact, *Blue Is Paris* rests on the strengths of the tune itself but also on each soloist's contributions, given the somewhat narrow range in which they play, the arrangements altered just slightly from track to track. *—John Ephland*

Blue Is Paris: Russell Gunn; Ricky Kej; Theo Croker; Maya Azucena; Patches Stewart; Jeff Coffin; Jukka Eskola; Ricardo Silveira; Jason Miles (Remix). (45:22)
Personnel: Jason Miles, keyboards; Russell Gunn (1), Theo Croker (3), Patches Stewart (5), Jukka Eskola (7), trumpet; Ricky Kej, tabla, high tabla, santoor, dumbek, vocals; Maya Azucena (4); Jeff Coffin, saxophones (6); Ricardo Silveira (8), guitar.
Ordering info: lightyear.com

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KEYBOARD SCHOOL

MELDING CLASSICAL MUSIC & BIG BAND JAZZ

By Bill Cunliffe | Page 82

Bill Cunliffe

Bill Cunliffe

KEYBOARD SCHOOL

THE MELDING OF CLASSICAL PIANO & BIG BAND JAZZ

By Bill Cunliffe

I'm a devoted classical music fan, and in fact was one before jazz hit me in the gut. A few years ago, I began to play with mixing the genres and found that classical masterpieces varying in tempo and mood lent themselves well to interpretation as extended jazz works. I look for pieces that have memorable melodic and harmonic content—half-jokingly, I like to say that the Great American Songbook is largely Russian: Gershwin, Berlin and Vernon Duke, for example (not to mention the blatant repurposing of Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff).

It was in this spirit that I recorded my new big band album *BACHanalia* (Metre Records, available on iTunes and CD Baby and at billcunliffe.com). The album features pieces primarily from the classical repertoire, including the Goldberg Variations and "Sleepers, Wake" of J.S. Bach, the "Solfeggietto" piano solo of his son C.P.E. Bach, the first movement of the Prokofiev Third Piano Concerto and the Manuel de Falla ballet The Three-Cornered Hat.

Big band-y adaptations of classical works with swinging quarter-note feels have rarely appealed to me. But one day I heard a piece by Duke Ellington that was medium tempo and hip. Something rang familiar, and I realized in amazement that not only was he riffing on the Tchaikovsky *Nutcracker Suite*, but also that almost every note in the piece came directly from the original.

It's good to question your beliefs once in a while.

MY INITIAL ADAPTATION

The first piece I adapted to a jazz style was the first movement of the Prokofiev Third Piano Concerto. It has a strong rhythmic engine that suggested a samba to me. Other sections, in 12/8 time, suggested an Elvin Jones-like beat. Prokofiev's harmony is complex but often static, which makes it ideal for Latin grooves. Unlike my later pieces, this one was fairly faithful to the melodic material, and the formal structure echoes the original.

In the live-audience recording sessions for the album, we performed each selection twice in an evening. This gave us, thankfully, enough material to choose the best takes. I don't do this much editing in small-group recordings, but this was a more intricate project, and I had to get it as close to right as I could while still keeping the live feel.

In the Prokofiev, I converted the opening slow section featuring the clarinet into a Bob Sheppard soprano saxophone feature, ballad tempo, pretty much harmonized the same way as the original. The main uptempo tune on the piano remains pretty much unchanged, bolstered at times with added octaves and accents. See Examples 1a (Prokofiev's original) and 1b (my adaptation) on the following page.

The fiery transitional interlude is percussive and march-like in Prokofiev's version and salsa-ish in mine. His harmony, as you can see, is gnarly but slow-moving, making the montuno very logical, and I can usually come up with a conventional jazz chord-symbol translation. See Examples 2a and 2b.

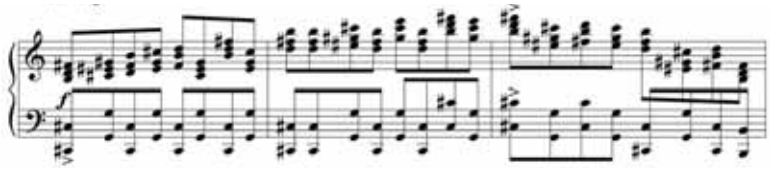
The slower second theme shows up in my chart as a tango, not far off from Prokofiev's feel. See Examples 3a and 3b.

The transitional 12/8 section I turn into a twisted

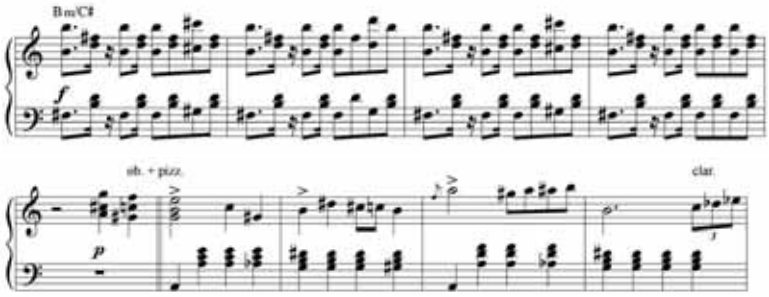
Example 1a (original)

Example 1b (adaptation)

Example 2a (original)

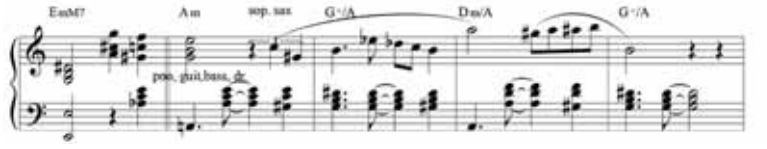


Example 2b (adaptation)

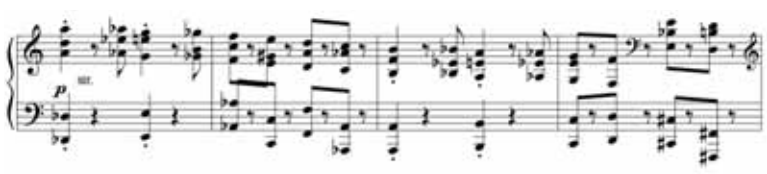


Example 3a (original)

Example 3b (adaptation)



Example 4a (original)



jazz soft-shoe. I love this part. See Examples 4a (below) and 4b (on page 86).

When we arrive at an A minor (and varied tonalities) pedal, I do an unaccompanied piano cadenza, just to give the proceedings a breather, and then, for a real shock to the system, a burning modal 4/4 uptempo piano romp. Prokofiev's movements often feel like a rondo, where instead of one big recapitulation, you have two or three of them, varied somewhat. He also does this to spectacular effect in his first concerto, a wonderful piece that he wrote when he was 21. Legend goes, he played it in a concerto competition at the St. Petersburg Conservatory because he thought no one would know whether he had played it badly. (He won, by the way.)

When Prokofiev starts to build toward the first of three recaps, a rather climactic part of the piece, what do I choose? What else but a trombone solo in 12/8. Andy Martin rips into it, and when we arrive at the recap, it is, in both versions, initially grand and then calmly reflective, and I am close to Prokofiev's harmonies here—hard to do better. The composer's use of harmony presages what jazz writers did in the '70s and still do today. Example 5 shows what I did—basically Prokofiev's piano part plus bass and drums.

I slow the tempo in the reflective section a bit so that I can treat it like a jazz ballad. Initially, I was playing Prokofiev's solo part verbatim (or as well as I could), but these days I free it up, as an improviser can.

The wonderful dreamy section that follows needed another color, so instead of having the piano play the lovely harmonic ripples over the slow-moving tonalities underneath, as Sergei does, I assign them to the guitar—in my mind a welcome change, especially given what Larry Koonse plays. The underlying harmonies become a wonderful slow-tempo "blowing" vehicle. See Example 6.

In the recap, the 16th-note figures (or eighth notes in an uptempo jazz 4/4) are handled by the saxophones rather than by the piano as was done the first time around.

The transitional 12/8 theme returns, leading to a series of contrasts between it and a "soft-shoe" swing thing using my version of that great Prokofiev harmony. See Example 7.

The tango theme comes back, this time much bigger and more raucous.

It gradually weakens and fades away, just as it did in Prokofiev's version. Mine leads to an extended Joe La Barbera drum solo. Whatever he comes up with, I feel certain, will be great. He doesn't disappoint.

Finally, the samba theme returns, abbreviated, with flourishes and extended modulations up in minor thirds, just to heighten the excitement. The piece ends with piano trading with orchestra, employing Prokofiev-like "wedge" figures with extended harmonies (often, but not always, with increasing dissonance) and then drum trading, and, finally, a big, jazzy ending. See Example 8.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

For my version of Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat*, a commission from the great Doc Severinsen, I took an entirely different approach. I listened to the first of the two suites and tried to find nuggets that suggested jazz to me, then built a piece based on those fragments rather than trying to retain the original structure. Falla's music

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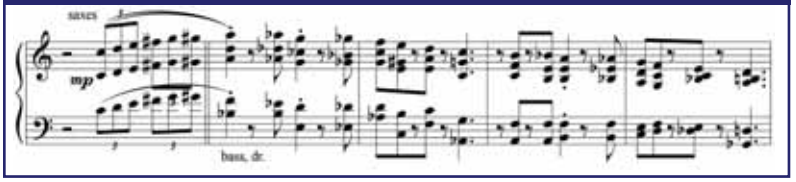
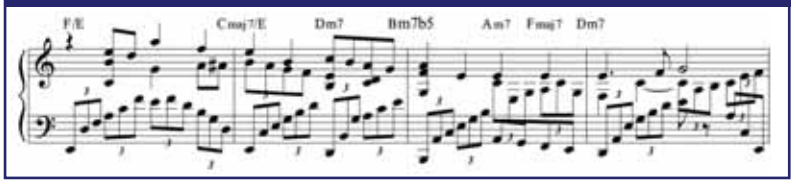
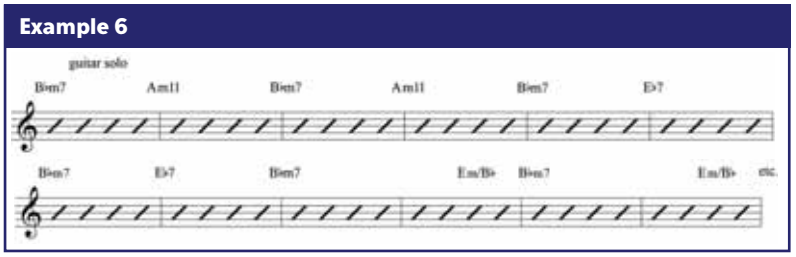
Example 4b (adaptation)



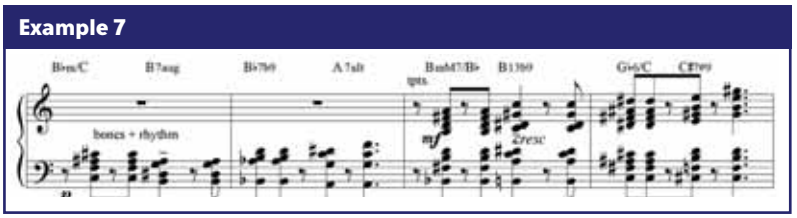
Example 5



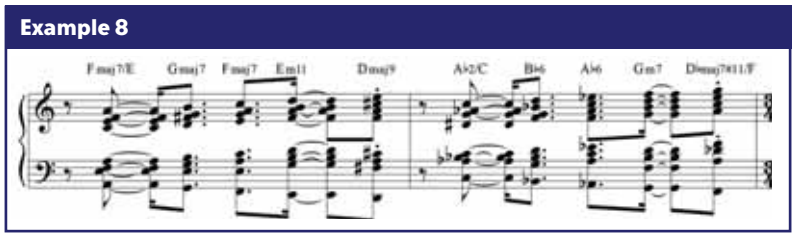
Example 6



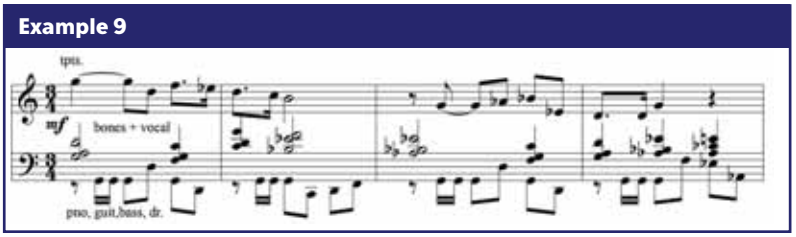
Example 7



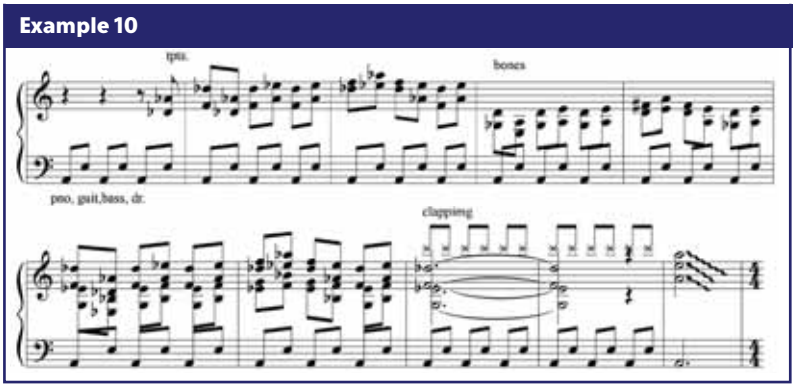
Example 8



Example 9



Example 10



has the added advantage of borrowing heavily from flamenco, an idiom somewhat related to jazz in rhythmic feel, tonality and improvisation; the flamenco style of course has already been exploited by many jazz composers, starting with Gil Evans and leading to Maria Schneider and others.

The ballet times out at about 43 minutes in one recording, and on a later hearing, I found that I had missed many more opportunities to give this wonderful music a jazz hue. I was of course working within a time restriction (six to eight minutes), so my arrangement became an assortment of impressionistic snapshots based on the opening scenes of the ballet. In this part of the story, a government magistrate attempts to seduce a miller's wife, and she and her husband respond by playing a trick on the official.

Falla's writing serves the story beautifully. Rather than follow the plot, though, I set out to create the best musical flow I could. Andalusian folk music was Falla's inspiration; the opening I came up with employs folk elements, such as use of the phrygian mode, 3/2 cross-rhythms and guitar strumming, amplified by the entire rhythm section. There is also a healthy dose of melody, often handled in the oboe in Falla's version but given to the trumpet in mine, with Denise Donatelli's wordless vocals added. See Example 9.

Next we hear a theme that accompanies the dancing of the miller and his wife, and the mood is romantic and graceful. We build to a drum solo (again showcasing La Barbera's boundless creativity), and this brings us to a section with brass flourishes, harmonically expanded and reminiscent of the fanfares you'd hear at a bullfight, leading to much hand-clapping and foot-stomping. See Example 10.

In the original, we hear a chant foreshadowing the approach of a bird of evil portent, and I decided to elaborate on this in a series of solo cadenzas, over various orchestrations of A-minor pedal points, first by voice and guitar, second by trombone, and finally by trumpet, played by Jon Papenbrook. I join him on the piano in a free passage that goes in various directions but ends up evoking flamenco and blues elements.

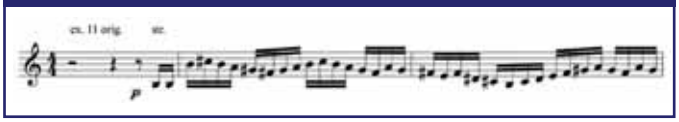
Another brief drum interlude and we are into an uptempo samba, the trumpets and saxophones tossing back and forth a somewhat lighthearted and bebop-ish 16th-note melody corresponding to the part of the ballet where the miller and his wife trick the gullible magistrate. This leads to a powerful Jeff Ellwood tenor saxophone solo backed by full brass using the implied harmonies of the bebop-ish melody. See Examples 11a (original) and 11b (adaptation) on the following page.

It's time to build to the climax, so I adapted the lovely melody (pretty much unchanged, harmony a little more jazzy, more seventh chords) from the scene in which miller and wife gleefully throw the official off the stage and dance in celebration. Again, trumpet and wordless vocal. Finally, brass hits, punctuated by La Barbera drums, lead to a fiery Andalusian ending. Hard to resist! See Example 12.

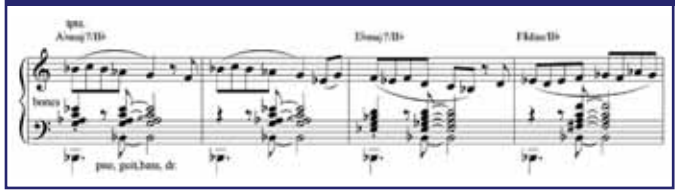
USEFUL TECHNIQUES

Here are some techniques I've used to move a classical piece into a jazz idiom:

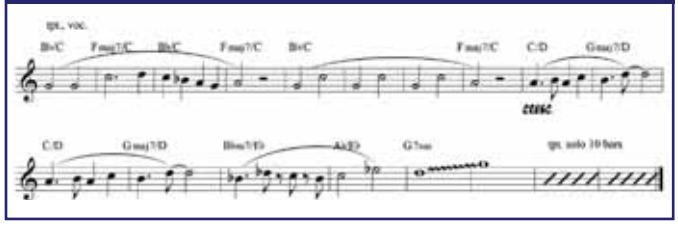
Example 11a (original)



Example 11b (adaptation)



Example 12



• Adding the rhythm section. This can be dangerous if done without discretion. I prefer that the rhythm section enter and exit as needed and for the drummer to act as a percussionist who employs jazz as well as classical elements.

• Taking melodic material from the tune and giving it a jazz sensibility through jazz phrasing and tonal colors (think Ellington and Thad Jones) and rhythmic devices such as off-beat accents and idiomatic rhythmic figures.

• Employing a specifically jazz harmonic language. The modern jazz language is heavily influenced by tonal 20th century classical music, so when you're arranging a piece from this era, your work is partially done. With earlier styles, it can be more challenging to find an approach that fits. (The first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony filtered through a Bill Evans harmonic sensibility, for example, seems problematic to me.)

• Adding improvisation. Not required, but in the hands of the right arranger and performers, it generates spontaneity and excitement.

Regarding form, there are of course many ways to adapt a classical piece to a jazz format. Pianist Jacques Loussier was well known for taking Bach pieces and keeping their structure somewhat intact, adding bass and drums. Ellington's riffs on Tchaikovsky, on the other hand, became almost entirely Ellington. I enjoyed tackling the Goldberg Variations, in my "Goldberg Contraption," because a set of variations is what jazz is to begin with. Some of it sounds more like Bach, some of it sounds more like me, and a lot of it is in between, where some magic can be found. **DB**

Bill Cunliffe, 1989 winner of the Thelonious Monk International Piano Competition, began his career as pianist and arranger with the Buddy Rich Big Band and went on to work with Frank Sinatra, Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Benny Golson and James Moody. He has since established himself as a solo artist, bandleader and composer, with more than a dozen albums under his name. Cunliffe currently plays with his trio, his big band, his Latin band Imaginación and his classical-jazz ensemble Trimotif. His latest recording is *BACHanalia* (Metre Records). Other recent releases include the Bill Cunliffe Trio album *River Edge, New Jersey* (Azica Records), *Overture, Waltz And Rondo For Jazz Piano, Trumpet And Orchestra* (BCM+D Records) and *Concerto For Tuba And Orchestra* (Metre Records). Cunliffe's books *Jazz Keyboard Toolbox* and *Jazz Inventions for Keyboard* (Alfred Music Publishing) have become standard reference works. His most recent publications are *Uniquely Christmas* and *Uniquely Familiar: Standards For Advanced Solo Piano*. Cunliffe was awarded a Grammy for Best Instrumental Arrangement for "West Side Story Medley" on the 2009 album *Resonance Big Band Plays Tribute to Oscar Peterson* (Resonance Records). In 2010, he was named a Distinguished Faculty Member of the College of the Arts at Cal State Fullerton, where he is a jazz studies professor. Cunliffe also teaches at the Skidmore Jazz Institute and the Vail Jazz Workshop. Visit him online at billcunliffe.com.


KEN TANNENBAUM

David Lopato

East-West Fusions: A Delicate Balance

In the majority of "world music" fusions, Western improvised musics (jazz, rock, blues, funk, Latin, etc.) tend to be fused with musics from Africa, most notably the African subcontinent. These fusions tend to mix dynamic African rhythms with harmonies derived from European musics. The results tend to be texturally rich and rhythmically contrapuntal, and the forms tend to be short (sometimes as short as two bars), repetitive and groove-based. In a sense, these musics swim in the same large pool, since the origins of so many of the Western styles mentioned above can be traced back to sub-Saharan Africa, anyway.

But what about East-West fusions—for example, those involving Western improvised music with the music of India or Indonesia? These tend to grapple with very different musical issues, both in terms of their formal structures and the ways in which they incorporate improvisation. I'd like to take a quick look specifically at music involving the melding of Western improvisation with Indonesian gamelan music, a potentially rich, relatively untapped form of "world music" fusion, and I'll view it through the lens of my own music of that nature, a recording of which is being released this September as *Gendhing For A Spirit Rising* (Global Coolant).

One of the main issues is melody. Is it diatonic, chromatic or modal? And what does "modal" mean? Jazz musicians tend to interpret the concept very loosely. In jazz, the basis for modal improvisation is most often a seven-note diatonic mode related to the major scale, for example the dorian mode, and it may be applied over different roots, such as in Miles Davis' "So What" where the "changes" are D dorian and E♭ dorian. Even in that context, while Bill Evans and Davis adhere rather strictly to the pitch constraints of the mode while soloing (in the original version, at least), John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley do not—and, as we all know, that worked out just fine. In classical Indian music, the composition and the improvisation, microtones aside, exist entirely within the pitch confines of a *raga*, which is somewhat analogous to the Western "scale" concept, but typically involves strict rules for how the improv is created. In Indonesian gamelan, the pitch choices boil down to one of two pentatonic tunings, *pelog* and *slendro*. You're in one or the other, but never both at the same time. In fact, a gamelan (the Indonesian word for both the orchestra and the music itself) has separate sets of instruments for the two tunings. (An aside worth mentioning is the fact that tunings within those two systems may vary from village to village, which can be seriously disorienting

for a Westerner.) For our purposes, we'll map them onto (or squeeze them into, as it were) Western chromatic 12-tone tuning, which is precisely what I did in the second movement, entitled "This Life." Since it will be much easier to digest all this if you can hear what's going on, I've uploaded an MP3 file containing relevant excerpts of the piece to my website: http://www.davidlopato.com/thislife-excerpts.html.

My pelog scale in this case is B–C–E–F–G, and the slendro is B♭–C–E♭–F–G. The fixed melody of the head dances between both scales and involves only those seven pitches. Example 1 on page 90 shows how that dance plays out.

This is clearly a hybrid approach, one not found in gamelan. Nor do the two scales get "mashed up" in the rest of the head. The fragments of one scale are discreetly separated from those of the other, even though the melody flows from one to the other throughout. During the piano solo, the improvisation starts by alternating between one scale and the other, phrase by phrase, and eventually veers off into free chromatic improv, returning to the alternation of those two scales near the end of the solo.

The solo segues directly into the top of the head. At a cadence point early on (a sustained note on F below middle C, coinciding with a gong of the same pitch), the head transitions into a middle section and the rhythmic groove shifts to straight eighths. This section is distinctly different from the opening one. The opening section has a long, intricate, loping melody in swing time with constantly shifting meters and a free-form solo with irregular phrasing, albeit a 4/4 metric feel. The middle section is an entirely other ball of wax. It's inspired by music from the western part of Java (Sunda), more specifically a popular music form derived from classical Sundanese court music called *Jaipongan*. (Google the names Dedeh Winingsih and Idjah Hadidjah for examples of that music performed by two of the greatest singers you'll ever hear.)

This section, like most gamelan music, is "colotomic" in structure. In colotomic music, repetitive cycles are nested within other ones. The lengths of all cycles, as well as the lengths of phrases within those cycles, expressed in number of beats, are powers of two, i.e. eight, 16, 32, 64, 128 on up to 256 beats long, with the basic structural unit, a *gatra*, being four beats long. The ending of a cycle (or, to a Westerner, what would feel like the beginning of one) is marked by a gong. There are many sizes of gongs in gamelan, and the general concept is this: the bigger the cadence, the larger the gong (although the size doesn't always correspond to pitch). In this piece, the cycle is 64 beats long (16 bars of 4/4) and there are two types of gong employed, a large gong (*gong suwukan*) and a smaller one (*kempul*). The gong suwukan occurs every 64 beats and the kempul every eight beats, except during the last two bars before the gong suwukan, where it is struck in each bar.

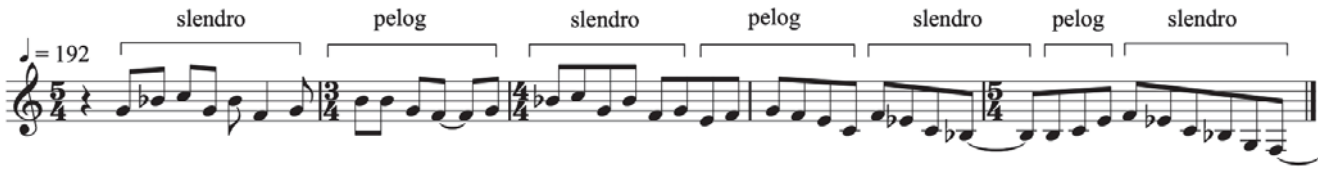
The instrumentation is also quite different and is modeled after Sundanese instrumentation. The trap set is replaced by a set of Sundanese *kendhang* (a two-headed hand drum similar in shape and construction to the Indian *mridangam*). In Jaipongan, a set typically consists of one large drum parallel to the floor and at least two small ones that stand upright. The pitch of the large drum is varied for melodic phrasing by pressing the heel of the foot against it while playing. The "rhythm section" now consists of a very different collection of instruments complementing the hand drums: glockenspiel, vibraphone, marimba, piano and the aforementioned gongs. In gamelan, metallophones of various sizes and the Javanese equivalent of a marimba called *gambang* are important instruments that create both melody and texture. Since the tuning is Western, the glock, vibes and marimba all seemed logical (and, I think, effective) representations. Because the gongs must conform to the Western tuning, they are sampled and played via keyboard. As is typical of gamelan, there are multiple tempos in this section, arrived at through gradual accelerandos, and the nature of the parts varies depending on the tempo.

Back to the issue at hand, namely improvisation and how it relates to the scale content and formal structure. In this "Sundanese" section, the scales are the same, but the mode of the scales is different. The pelog scale is expressed as F–G–B–C–E and the slendro F–G–B♭–C–E♭. The form to which all of the pitched instrument parts conform is an alternation of two bars of slendro, with two bars of pelog for the entire 16 bars of the gong cycle, cadencing on the pelog with a strike of the gong suwukan pitched at F below middle C.

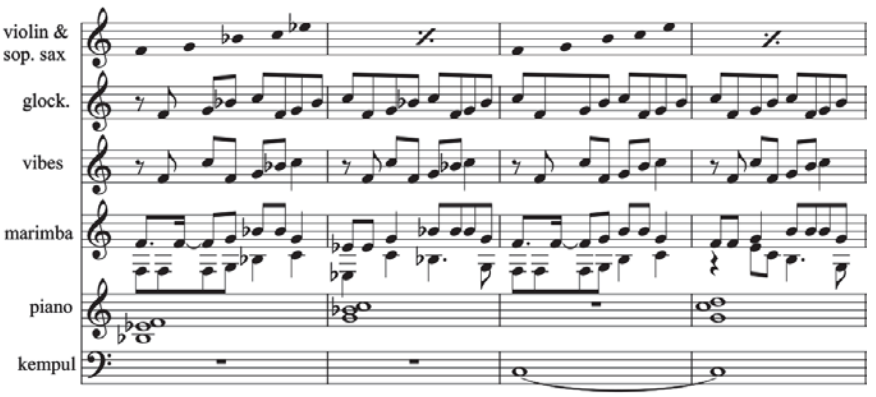
In the particular modal configuration mentioned above, this *roughly* translates in Western parlance to two bars of F7sus alternating with two bars of F lydian, but here's the critical point: *It's not the same*. The improv is a duet between soprano saxophone and violin, with the violin primarily in a responsorial role, which mirrors the role of the singer and the *rebab* (a two-stringed spiked fiddle) in Jaipongan. If either player were to, say, inject the pitch A or D into their improvisation on either of those scales, a normal inclination for any jazz musician who sees F lydian or F7sus in a jazz chart, it would seriously compromise the harmonic and melodic fabric of the music.

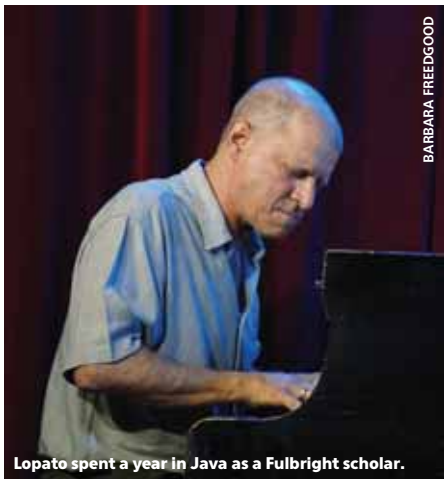
The performers on the recording, Marty Ehrlich and Mark Feldman, did a wonderful job of navigating that terrain, something very natural for a classical Indian musician but quite unnatural for a jazz musician. Different disciplines are at work there. The score is notated in such a way as to provide the "pitch classes" upon

Example 1



Example 2





BARBARA FREEDGOOD

Lopato spent a year in Java as a Fulbright scholar.

which to be improvised (not indicative of range, just scale tones). They are written as stemless note heads—see Example 2.

You may notice that all of the accompanying parts are written out. (The kendhang and gong suwukan are omitted here for spatial considerations, but it should be noted that the kendhang part is entirely improvised.) While the glock, vibes, piano and kempul do play strictly notated ostinato-based parts, the marimba part, although also notated in the score, would ideally be improvised. In Javanese music, gambang is one of the main improvising instruments. Players learn how to improvise around a given melody much in the way that jazz musicians learn how to blow over changes. A Western musician who familiarizes himself or herself with Sundanese gambang improvisation would, then, improvise the entire part, with the exception of the transition back into the head. This is not as daunting as it may seem, provided the Western musician is an improviser to begin with. The kendhang part must, however, be played by someone who has studied that tradition more extensively, which raises obvious logistical issues for anyone venturing into this complicated world of East-West fusions. Often it is not feasible to hire the very people who are best qualified to perform the music. For recordings in this digital age, amazing things can be done remotely. For live performance, it's another matter entirely, and one to be taken seriously when writing such music.

After the section undergoes a tempo shift to a faster, hotter pace, a second acceleration segues back into the head, with the trap set sneaking in during the last four bars to help transition the music back into swing time. The full head is played to conclude the movement.

What we have here is an example of Western music that is heterophonic (the harmonic aspect in the opening section supplied not by the piano, but rather the bass, much in the way it might in an Ornette Coleman tune, for example), in swing time, co-mingling with Eastern music that is, for all its rich texture, essentially monophonic, in straight-eighth time. Those aesthetically and structurally disparate musics are brought together by a combination of compositional devices. The main one is the rigorous use of particular scales derived from one culture and tweaked to fit into another's tuning system. The way those scales co-mingle is foreign to the culture of origin but less so to the other culture. Then there is the introduction of Western diatonic harmony into music that is essentially modal, i.e. the harmonic nature of the piano part in the middle section. There is a discreet sharing of musical values within the piece. All of this is done with care, though, so as to respect the aesthetic of a musical system very different from our own. For me, this is an important aspect of any pan-cultural undertaking, musical or otherwise.

That notion of difference calls to mind a basic tenet of Eastern philosophy, namely the rejection of goal-oriented movement in favor of a more contained, circular flow that anyone who has studied Eastern martial arts knows quite well. In musical terms, this could be viewed through the differing approaches to harmony. In most composed Western tonal music, there is the concept of the tonic, or "home base," that is established at the onset, then ventured away from and returned to, as though a mission were taken on, struggled through, accomplished and then triumphantly drawn to a conclusion. Gamelan is much less goal-oriented. The explorations are perhaps more internal, more subtle. Both the circular form and the limited monophonic pitch constructs allow for much less "roaming" or "achieving." In the large movement of *Gendhing For A Spirit Rising*, I actually infuse the cyclical form with a much larger dose of Western harmonic motion and it does have the effect of creating, in addition to heightened emotion, a journey away from and back to a home base, even though the final cadence probably sounds completely unresolved to a Western ear. This was one of the attractions of writing that movement. I felt as though I was expanding upon a tradition without violating the core aesthetics of it.

Just as one philosophy is not necessarily better than the other, neither is one musical approach. From my vantage point, the possibilities of such fusions are truly exciting. Much beautiful music is yet to be made through them.

DB

Pianist, composer and educator David Lopato has performed his own compositions throughout the world. His double album *Gendhing For a Spirit Rising* (to be released Sept. 8 on Global Coolant Records) is an East/West encounter that finds musical influences flowing back and forth between cultures. Lopato, whose studies included a year in Java as a Fulbright scholar, is featured on piano, marimba, vibraphone, glockenspiel, Sundanese kendhang, gongs and electronics. He has been a core faculty member of the Jazz and Contemporary Music Department of The New School in New York since 1991. Visit him online at davidlopato.com.

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Vadim Neselovskyi

DAYOUNG LEE

Improvising Freely Over Complex Left-Hand Keyboard Figures

Every pianist has to deal with a very complex left-hand part at some point. This is the essential pianistic experience—to split your brain into two halves and execute two very different tasks at the same time.

Classical music is full of challenges like this. Think, for example, about the opening movement of Chopin's B♭ Minor Sonata Op. 35. Starting from measure 9, this music always sounded to me as if played by four hands: The left-hand figuration provides very distinct rhythm and harmony, and the melody in the right hand comes on top of it as if played by a different instrument. This effect only comes to life, though, if the pianist is capable of playing different parts with separate dynamics and touch.

Another beautiful example is Chopin's Prelude in G Major Op. 28 No. 3 with its truly unbelievable left-hand part. The right-hand melody here is flying like a bird over a vast colorful landscape of left-hand figuration.

Jazz pianists also have been dealing with elaborate left-hand lines for a long time. Keith Jarrett's unbelievable improvisations over left-hand ostinatos during his solo concerts simply made me speechless when I heard them for a first time.

I've been trying to develop my left hand as far as possible ever since. And if the classical pianist has to work very hard on creating different sounds for left and right hands, managing both parts technically and musically at the same time, the jazz musician's challenge is even harder: We have to learn how to improvise over our left-hand figures.

I created a solo piano version of Jerome Kern's standard "All The Things You Are" for my 2013 CD *Music For September* (Sunnyside Records), produced by Fred Hersch. My idea was to bring this amazing harmonic progression that is beloved by all jazz players into a sound territory of something like a Chopin prelude.

This, of course, had to start with compos-

ing a left-hand part. I came up with the left-hand accompaniment shown in Example 1 on page 94.

After I wrote this left-hand part I had to ask myself: How will I ever be able to improvise over such a complex left-hand structure? I knew that I would have to start small, just like drummers practice their polyrhythms: one step at a time. So I created my very first exercise (see Example 2 on page 94). Improvise one note only with your right hand on beat 1 of each measure while playing the left-hand figure from Example 1 continuously.

Please note: All exercises imply that you are playing the left-hand part as indicated in Example 1 continuously while improvising with the right hand. For all exercises, start practicing very slowly (quarter note = 64bpm). Then raise tempo gradually. I suggest playing all the exercises using a metronome.

For the next exercise, improvise one note only with your right hand on beat 2 of each measure. Then, improvise one note only with your right hand on beat 3 of each measure. Next, improvise one note only with your right hand on beat 4 of each measure, and so on.

When you're done with strong beats of the 7/4 measure, you can start experimenting with offbeats. For the next series of exercises, improvise one note only with your right hand on 1-and upbeat of each measure. Then improvise one note only with your right hand on 2-and of each measure, then 3-and, etc., until all the upbeats are covered.

After you become comfortable playing one note per measure on all the strong beats and upbeats, move on to quarter notes.

Improvise continuous quarter notes over the whole 36-bar left-hand figure (see Example 3 on page 94). Again, you will need to start very slow. Sometimes it's easier to write things out and to see visually how quarter notes fall against the left-hand rhythm. If you are comfortable with continuous quarter notes (a big achievement), try now to create quarter-note phrases (short and long) and separate them by silence.

It's important to learn how to play continuously in bigger rhythmic values. Improvise continuously in half notes over the left-hand figure. Then improvise continuously in dotted half notes over the left-hand figure. Then improvise continuously in whole notes over the left-hand figure.

If you have completed all these exercises, congratulations. We can now move on to eighth notes.

Improvise continuous eight notes over the whole 36-bar left-hand part (see Example 4 on page 94). This will take some time getting used to. Use your melodic ideas and vocabulary, and try to apply leaks and fragments from transcribed jazz solos. Everything will be helpful here to fuel your eighth-note stream with as many ideas as possible.

Just like with quarter notes, you will discover that playing interrupted eighth-note phrases is much harder than to play continuously. Now it's time to practice it. Improvise short and long eighth-note phrases and separate them with rests (see Example 5 on page 94).

Experiment with starting your eighth-note phrases from any point in the measure: 1, 1-and, 2, 2-and, 3, 3-and, and so on. Also, try ending your phrases at any possible place in the measure.

If you get through this exercise, you'll be in a great shape. Your left hand is already used to playing the whole figure by repeating it so many times, and your brain is used to combining the left-hand rhythm with many different rhythms in the right hand. Now, let's go beyond that.

Dotted quarter notes seem to be an opening point into rhythmic flexibility for many musicians. Here's an exercise that I find to be very important: Play continuous notes of dotted-quarter rhythmic value over the whole left-hand structure (see Example 6 on page 94). This exercise is not easy at all, but when you are able to do it, you can really say that you have mastered this left-hand figure.

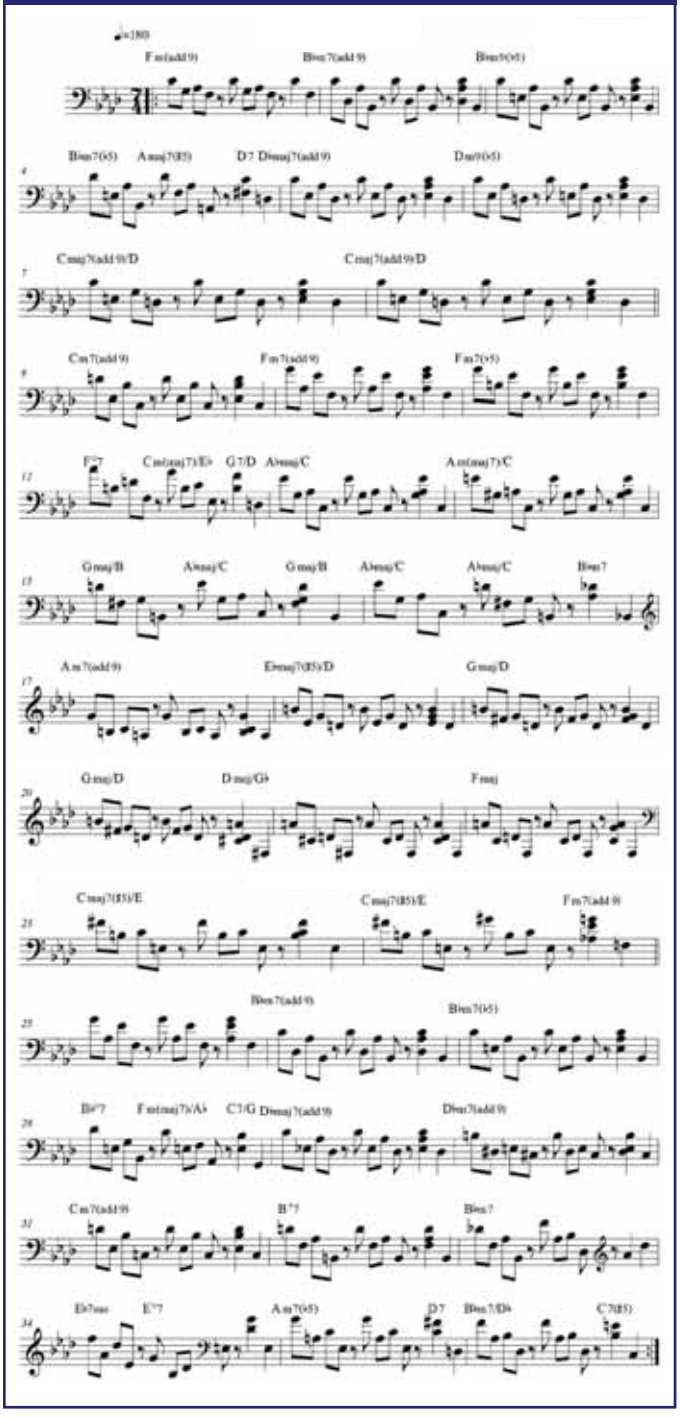
At this point, you should be getting your own ideas on how to move forward. You can start to experiment with different groupings of eighth notes (groups of five, seven, nine and so on). Explore 16th notes using the same approach as stated above, then triplets, quintuplets and so on.

At some point you might experience a beautiful phenomenon: You can simply play freely with your right hand while the left hand is there for you playing the figure. That means that through your hard work on the exercises described above you have trained your brain to split into two and to perform some serious multitasking that is difficult to achieve on piano.

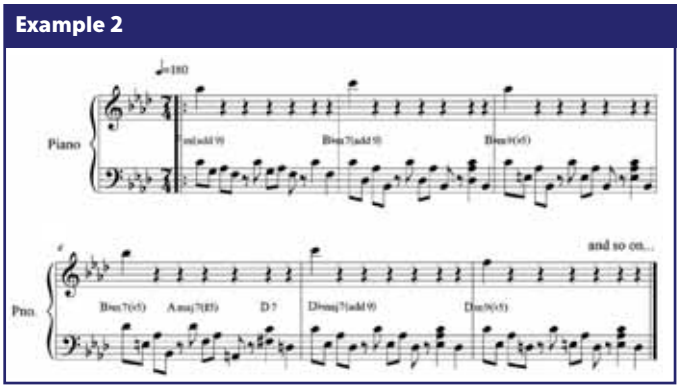
The tradition of solo keyboard or piano that goes back to Bach, Mozart, Shumann, Chopin, Rachmaninov is constantly developing and growing through such present-day jazz artists as Jarrett, Hersch, Brad Mehldau, Craig Taborn and others. I hope that sharing my modest experience will help to inspire some beautiful new music for solo piano. **DB**

Vadim Neselovskyi is a Ukrainian pianist and composer based in New York. He currently serves as professor of jazz piano at Berklee College of Music in Boston. Neselovskyi joined six-time Grammy winner Gary Burton's Generations Quintet featuring Julian Lage, Luques Curtis and James Williams in 2004, and he has been working as Burton's pianist and arranger for more than a decade, touring the United States, Europe and Japan. Neselovskyi's new trio album *Get Up And Go* (Jazz Family/Neuklang/BluJazz) is currently available. Visit him online at vadimneselovskyi.com. To see and hear Neselovskyi perform his solo-piano version of "All The Things You Are" on YouTube, go to https://goo.gl/eqAqMy.

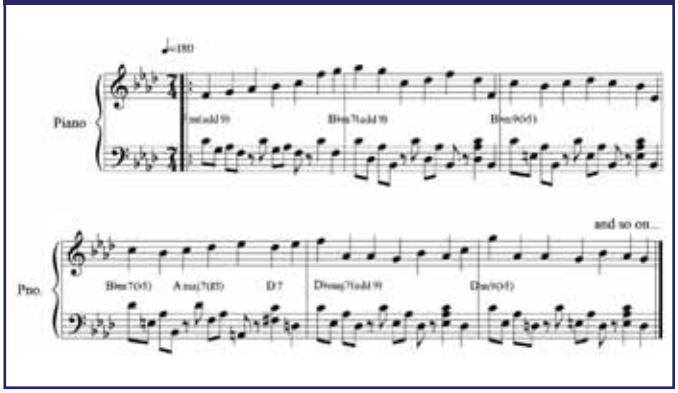
Example 1



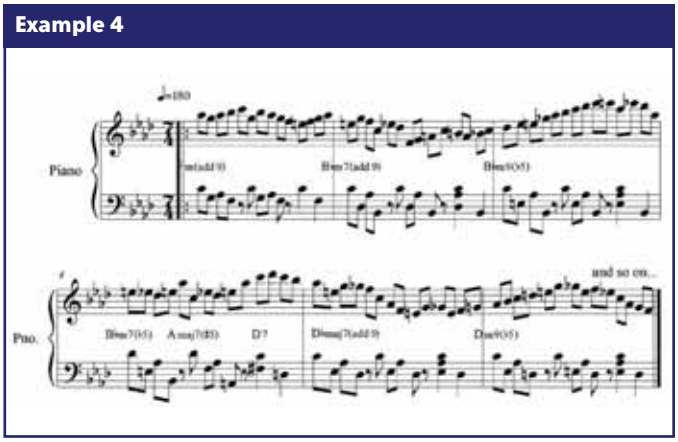
Example 2



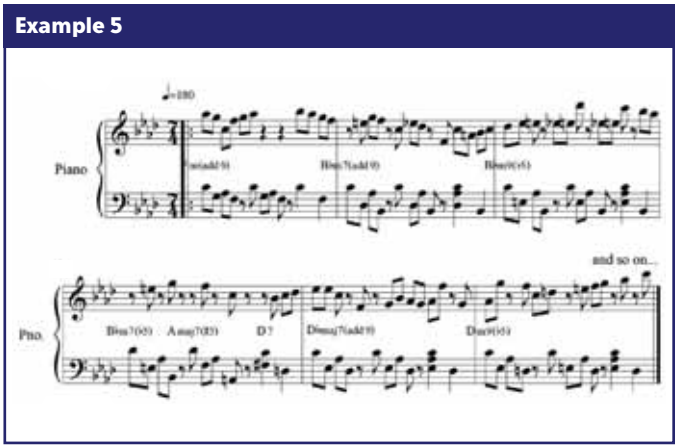
Example 3



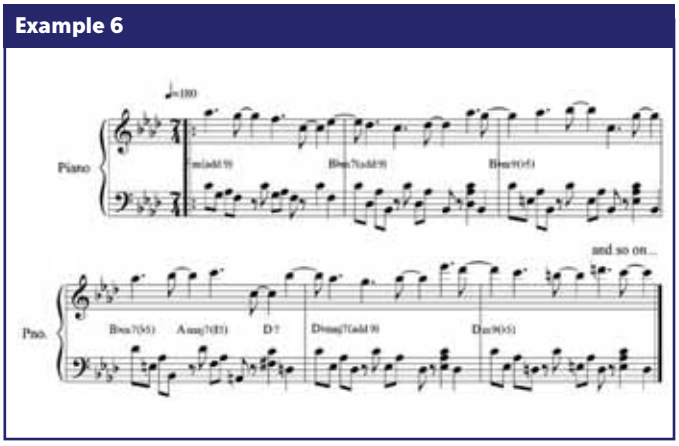
Example 4



Example 5



Example 6



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Herbie Hancock's Synthesizer Solo on 'Chameleon'

You'd be hard pressed these days to find a musician who hasn't played Herbie Hancock's funk classic "Chameleon," much less one who hasn't heard it. Since it first hit the scene in 1973 on Hancock's *Head Hunters* album (Columbia), this funky groove has been much covered and copied—even high school bands are know to perform arrangements of it. Here, we're going back to its origins to examine Hancock's first solo (he takes two) on the original recording.

The basis of this section is a two-chord vamp in B♭ dorian, and Hancock's solo (as well as the opening bass line) are played on an ARP Odyssey synthesizer, which was still a fairly new instrument at the time of this recording. Hancock makes good use of its abilities, with portamentos and tonal variations. Often he seems to be soloing with one hand while altering the oscillators with the other, which makes certain passages difficult to notate, such as the noises he creates in bars 22, 27–31 and 44–49, the pitches being obscured by the effect.

Two foundations of his solo here, often used together, are repeated phrases and polyrhythms. Both ideas are introduced in measure 18, where Hancock starts repeating two notes over and over. But whereas he starts playing them in 4 (on the beat), at the end of bar 18 he starts playing the motif in 3, creating a polyrhythmic effect that continues until resolving on the anticipation to measure 22.

The ante is raised in bars 27–31, where Hancock plays a repeated idea consisting of four high notes and one low note (a five-note group) played as a 7-against-2, creating a sort of poly-polyrhythm. He does deviate from the five-note group a couple of times—I'd expect by accident—but the line is still super-hip.

For his next idea Hancock goes simpler, playing a B♭ sliding up to an A♭ (another two-note idea). But he alters the rhythm, so although the notes repeat, the rhythm doesn't. He does the opposite next (bars 39–41), playing what is termed a sequence: the same rhythm and direction of notes, moving this motif down the scale. A curious thing about this line is that although the song is in B♭ dorian (which he starts this line in), Hancock puts in the blues flat-fifth, then the flat-ninth and ends with the sequence in B♭ aeolian.

Then we're back to polyrhythms on one "note" in measures 44–49. Notice how he changes the rhythm from three eighths to three 16ths, intensifying the energy.


Herbie Hancock

TED BERNSTEIN/COURTESY SONY/LEGACY

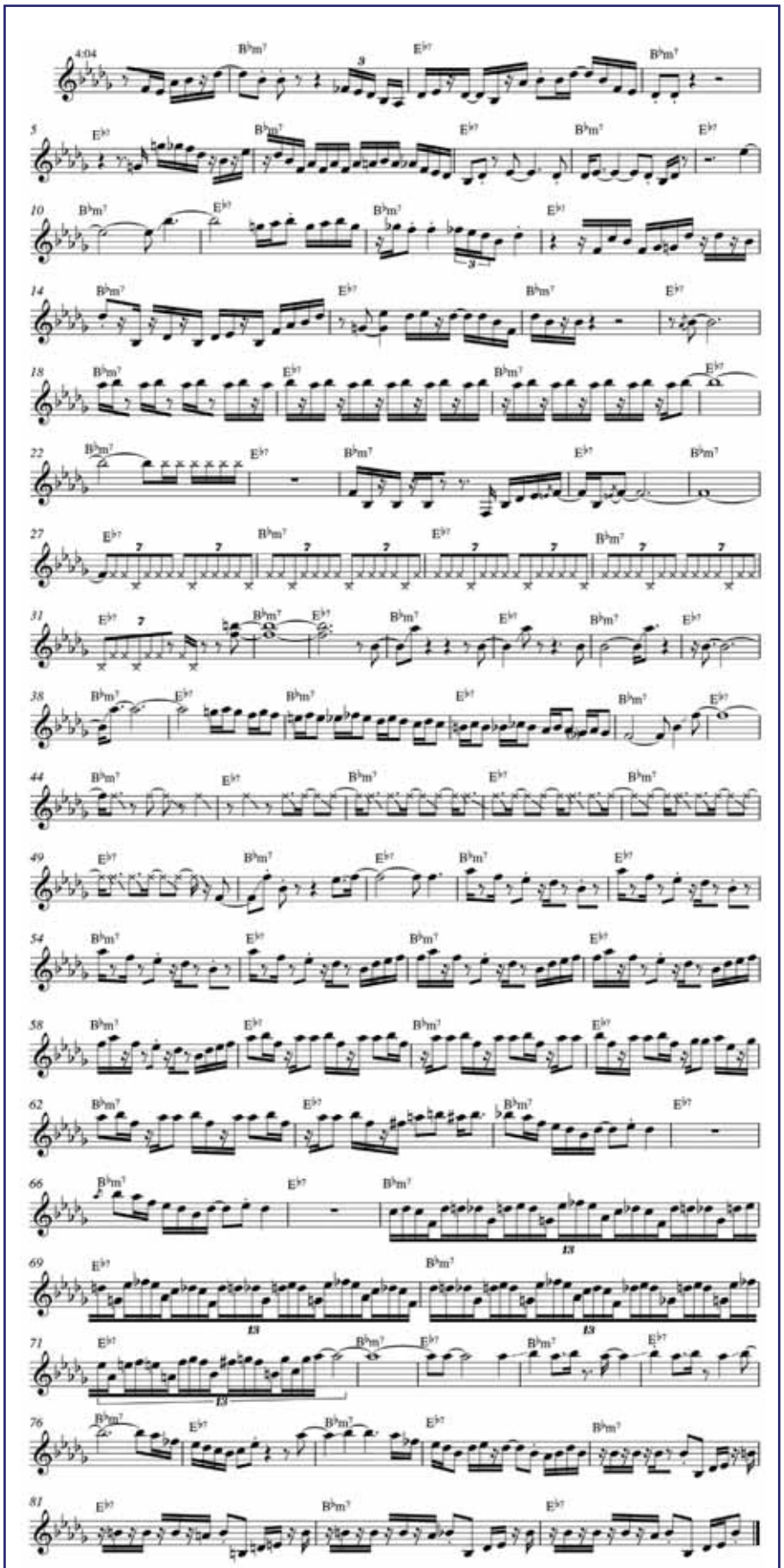
Measure 52 signals another change toward a simpler idea as Hancock plays a one-bar descending minor pentatonic scale, and repeats this idea verbatim for the next two bars. But rather than stick with this, or go away from it, he keeps the solo flowing by altering the tail end of this lick, and then puts an extra note at the beginning, and then repeats that for another three measures, creating a simultaneous sense of consistency and variation.

But he can't stay away from those polyrhythms. In measure 59 he comes off the repeated lick into another 3-against-4 idea, which he repeats (more or less) for the next five measures. He alters the pitch toward the end, likely using the pitch controller.

Which brings us to the killer lick in bars 68–71, which is a simple four-note idea in B♭ dorian, but moved up and down in half steps (possibly with the pitch controller, possibly with great dexterity). He seems to be playing it in another 3-against-4 rhythm, but is rushing it a bit, so we get this odd "13" rhythm. Hancock also continues moving the idea up at the end, resolving to the seventh, which sets up another simpler idea. In fact, this slide from A♭ to B♭, played with variations in rhythm, refers back to the B♭–A♭ slide back in measures 34–38.

To wrap it up, Hancock then plays a descending blues lick that he varies on the repeat, and then a syncopated lick that gets repeated until the end, but once again using the trick of bending the pitch upward (for the iteration in bar 81). **DB**

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



Roland RD-2000

Monster Stage Piano, Performance Board

Roland's RD-2000, while technically a "stage piano," offers a ton of functionality that puts it more into the "workstation" category than much of the competition. It also has a deeply integrated MIDI controller feature set.

At 48 pounds—a bit lighter than most stage pianos—the RD-2000 features an aluminum construction that feels solid and lends to an overall feeling of quality. The real standout is the keyboard—Roland's new PHA-50 action is a joy to play. The hammer action is fantastic, and the ivory-like quality of the keys feels satisfying under your fingers. The front panel controls feel pretty good, too, although I felt the knobs and faders could have been a little more substantial given the build of the rest of the instrument.

The layout is well thought-out and offers instant access to a wide array of parameters on the fly. The knobs can access tone control, detailed EQ, effects, filter parameters and more. The faders control zones, but are also used as drawbars for many of the organ programs, oriented correctly (pull-down). The bank and sound selector buttons are thoughtfully laid out, and the instant-access "One Touch Piano" button is a really handy feature. The LCD screen is a touch on the small side, but still very readable and useful.

The voice architecture is also well done, with "tones" being the most rudimentary single sounds, and "performances" containing up to eight tones set up however you want, and switchable and volume-controlled from the front panel. Beyond this are "scenes," which provide more options for storing edited tones and up to eight zones, which also can be external. The external MIDI control options are very robust, so this could be the brain for your performance rig.

The piano sounds are marvelous. Roland included two sound engines to generate pianos. The first is the same engine from the company's acclaimed V-Piano, which is a modeling engine, not a sampler. These sounds are my favorite, and offer a level of depth and realism that is unmatched. You can also redesign these pianos to your taste using the "Tone Designer," which allows you to customize the pianos. The second engine is driven by Roland's SuperNatural Engine, which offers a more traditional sample-based approach—but this is one of the best going.

Electric pianos are well represented, and sound great, with enough options to find exactly the tone that you are looking for, whether that's a warm, round Rhodes tone or a gritty Wurli. You will also find clavs and harpsichords, and all are detailed and well crafted. The organs are pretty good, and certainly usable, but seasoned players will miss the vibrato/chorus out of the box. The Leslie simulation is fine, and the drawbars are responsive and sound good. This is one of the more capable simulations I've heard out of a stage piano, or even a workstation.

Once you get past all these standard expectations, the RD-2000 really steps up: There is a bewildering array of additional sounds included. There are many strings, choir pads and various sampled instruments as well as an extensive library of synth timbres, which can be tweaked very effectively using the panel controls.

In addition to its ability to act as your audio interface, the RD-2000 has a plethora of other features. Suffice it to say that it's a monster stage piano and performance board in general. *—Chris Neville*

roland.com

Yamaha MX88

Deep Synth Features, Real Piano Feel

I received the Yamaha MX88 a week before an r&b gig and was hoping to replace my behemoth Motif ES8 with this ultra-portable, 88-weighted-key synth. At first play, I was stoked with the classic sounds and great piano action of such a lightweight board. I discovered that the MX works a bit differently than the Motif in how you select sounds (which on the MX88 are called "performances"), and because of this unfamiliarity, I decided to stick with my trusty Motif for the gig. But once I had more time to dedicate to the MX88, it revealed itself to be an amazing instrument for both live and studio productions.

Yamaha has done an incredible job of incorporating a solid, weighted key bed into a lightweight synth. It feels completely realistic and has full dynamic action. The stock piano that first comes up works well in most musical situations that I frequently come across—playing jazz especially.

The MX88 comes with a huge array of sounds, primarily from the Motif line and with some additional features like VCM (Virtual Circuit Modeling) for vintage effects, and FM Essential, which allows iOS control over an FM synth app. Improved effects have helped breathe new life into the existing Motif sound engine, and the new FM Essential app has good potential. It even comes with a software bundle that includes Steinberg Cubase AI, with a Remote mode that lets you control common DAW functions from the MX—nicely done.

There are some unusual settings on the default sounds, like the Vintage

'74 Rhodes, which has a tremolo speed that could make a headphones user seasick; fortunately, the speed can be changed easily enough, or even bypassed. And regarding the organ sounds, I believe the new effects improve things a bit, but beware of some presets with Leslie on at modulation wheel 0 and off at 127. It would be nice if there were drawbar controls, but the editor allows for some control over the organ sounds, and you can use the filter controls for tonal variation.

The MX88's sound bank has a lot of carry-over from previous models. But this does not strike me as a synthesist's board. It's a working musician's ax, and it's up to the task. There are 128 user memory voices and eight drum voices to customize, and according to Yamaha, additional sounds are in the works, including more pianos, more splits/layers, etc.

The performance controls on the MX88 are well done and include four knobs that can alter three banks of parameters (Bank 1: cutoff, resonance, chorus and reverb; Bank 2: ASDR; Bank 3: volume, pan, plus two assignable controls). The frequency filter has come a long way from the original Motif and sounds convincingly analog. These settings can be applied to either active voice or to both voices via a Part 1–2 Link button. The performance patches are limited to two voices, in either split or layer mode.

Another big piece of the MX88 is its rhythm capabilities. Rhythm Pattern mode includes 200-plus patterns, and while you can't create your own, there is good depth in the presets. You might call it "sound-check goodness." There is also a sophisticated arpeggiator with MIDI-sync and a USB port that can be used to play WAV files from a drive. The performance presets are almost entirely dedicated to a rhythm-activated patch—which can be fun to play with but is less helpful when setting up for gigs. One important note: Pressing "stop" on a performance will stop the drums, but many patches are arpeggio-enabled and must be stopped separately via the "arp" button. While the arpeggios are not editable, there are 999 different presets that are narrowed down based on the type of patch selected.

With an MSRP of $1,299, the MX88 is an amazing value—well under the competition's price point—though I would like to see a few of its eccentricities cleaned up in a software upgrade.

One final point from Yamaha product specialist Blake Angelos that's well worth mentioning: "For people who want to use virtual instruments live, you have a built-in USB audio/MIDI interface so you don't have to take an audio interface with you. One cable connects it all to the computer."

I rate the MX88 a buy, especially for those who want to save their backs or are in need of a significant upgrade. *—Rick Gehrenbeck*

usa.yamaha.com

Kawai ES110 Digital Piano

Detailed, Elegant, Compact

Not long ago "digital piano" meant, by default, "enormous and heavy." But progress marches on, and to the relief of musicians everywhere, many manufacturers are now making digital piano options that are more manageable and portable. The ES110 is Kawai's latest offering in the realm of lightweight digital pianos under $1,000.

Weighing 26.5 pounds, the ES110 packs a surprising array of options and features into a streamlined package with an elegant, uncluttered interface. This pianist appreciates that the keys are the same size as on her 1954 Steinway—some other brands sneak a smaller key size into the mix.

An internal speaker is suitable for practice, but you'll want to use an external speaker/amp for gigging. The back panel features separate left and right 1/4-inch audio out jacks in addition to MIDI in and out, plus dual headphone jacks on the front. The external two-piece power supply involves an AC adaptor coming out of the back, then another cord that plugs into the adaptor and the wall. I would prefer a standard one-piece IEC power cable that my other keyboards use—these are so much safer for a gigging musician who has seen the other type bite the dust.

The main event of this keyboard is the sounds. The default "Concert Grand" piano patch is a real treat with lots of attention to detail—as with all included piano patches, each note was sampled separately, so there is a true character to the sound. Put on your headphones and enjoy how the imaging moves from left to right as you go up the keyboard.

There are 19 onboard sounds to explore, most with usable applications—nice variations on the acoustic piano ("Mellow Grand," "Modern Rock," etc.), a handful of electric pianos and organs, strings, bass and mallets, which are available for splitting and layering. However, the aforementioned interface can make these features a bit challenging to access—with a minimal number of buttons and no actual display of the chosen sound, this reviewer needed to consult the manual repeatedly during play-testing.

But tinkering around is a worthwhile endeavor, as there are a surprising number of tweakable parameters including reverb, damper noise, and—most valuable to me right away—voicing; plus a few more, allowing the pickiest among us to customize an already solid sonic offering. If a pianist were to use these additional sounds and features on a regular basis, a Bluetooth connection to Kawai's apps allows for easier adjustments.

The lightness of this keyboard is a blessing to those of us who move gear every day, but can lead to a bit of a delicate feeling in the physical product. Using an extra-stable stand will go a long way toward offering a feeling of solidness. The included sustain pedal is substantial, but if you're planning to park this in one place, I recommend investing in Kawai's reasonably priced F-350 triple pedal stand assembly. *—Jo Ann Daugherty*

kawaius.com

1. Tone-Building Blocks

With Blocks, ROLI has introduced a modular music-making system that lets users make sounds in simple and creative ways. Blocks are Lego-like 4- by 4-inch silicone touchpads that snap together magnetically into scalable music production units. Each colored light on the pad represents a different tone, and users can manipulate the sonic effects of each note by varying the pressure and/or finger movement across the pad. **More info:** roli.com

2. Footswitchable Keyboard Mixer

The Key-Largo from Radial Engineering combines a multi-channel keyboard mixer with the performance attributes of footswitch control. Designed for stage use, the compact Key-Largo features three dual ¼-inch analog inputs for standard performance keyboards along with a USB interface to connect a laptop for use with soft-synths. Each stereo input is equipped with an individual level control for quick onstage adjustments along with an effects loop to interface an external multi-effects device. The effects loop can then be turned on or off using the built-in footswitch to activate an echo or reverb. A built-in sustain footswitch lets you connect the Key-Largo to your master keyboard or digital piano using a standard guitar cable, eliminating the need to bring a separate sustain pedal to the gig.
More info: radialeng.com

3. Grand Authenticity

The Celviano Grand Hybrid GP-300WE features Casio's AiR Grand Sound Source, which provides expressive recreations of three of the world's most distinctive grand pianos (dubbed the Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna grands) and enables rich, realistic-sounding reverberation. The GP-300WE's keyboard action was jointly developed by piano maker C. Bechstein so that a vertical hammer mechanism simulates grand piano hammer movements. **More info:** casio.com

4. microKORG Goes Platinum

Since its release in 2002, the microKORG has been one of Korg's best-selling synthesizers to date. To honor the 15th anniversary of the classic synth, Korg has released microKORG Platinum, a limited-edition variation featuring a vibrant top panel complemented with black wood ends. Equipped with 37 keys, 128 sounds, an eight-band vocoder and included microphone, the microKORG offers a wide range of sounds and functionality.
More info: korg.com

5. Moog Resumes Model D

Moog Music has resumed production of the Minimoog Model D, the world's first portable synthesizer. Though no changes have been made to the original sound engine or audio signal path, the reissued Model D now includes a series of functional modifications that expand its sonic capabilities. **More info:** moogmusic.com

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COURTESY WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

WSU jazz students perform at the Detroit Jazz Festival.

Wayne State Faces Bright Future

FROM THE CREATION OF DISTRICT Detroit—50 blocks of shopping, sports venues and apartments—to the $2 billion investment in the city's core by entrepreneur Dan Gilbert, the signs are everywhere that the Motor City is rebounding from its 2013 Chapter 9 bankruptcy. Those signs extend into Wayne State University's jazz studies department, which was the beneficiary of a $7.5 million gift from Detroit businesswoman and philanthropist Gretchen Valade.

"We call her the Angel of Jazz," said Chris Collins, the saxophonist who directs the jazz studies program at WSU. Part of Valade's gift will fund an academic chair that Collins currently holds, as well as a graduate assistantship, but the largest portion will go toward the construction of the Gretchen Valade Jazz Center. Valade, the 91-year-old owner of the Dirty Dog Jazz Café and founder of Mack Avenue Records, is also the principal benefactor of the Detroit Jazz Festival. As president and artistic director of the festival, Collins has seen the impact that Valade's support has had on jazz in the city.

"She's created tremendous synergy," he said. "It's a great reflection of the jazz heritage here, and the university is becoming the new gravity center of the city's arts community."

"This is an exciting time to be here," said saxophonist Russ Miller, an associate professor in the program. "The new jazz center will allow us to increase our visibility and viability."

Offering a bachelor of music in jazz studies and a master of music in jazz performance, WSU has one of the country's oldest degree-granting jazz programs.

"We have a proven curriculum," said Collins, "and we offer a lot of unique opportunities." In recent years those opportunities have included an excursion to Panama, where students performed with pianist Danilio Pérez, and an annual gig at the Detroit Jazz Festival. In addition, students have an opportunity to work as interns with the festival or join the large corps of volunteers who come from the community.

"Being head of the jazz festival has really helped me understand what students need to know to work in the business," Collins said. "It's given me much more insight into what it takes to nurture sponsors and other stakeholders, and to write grant proposals. Apart from my own work as a musician, I get to see what other musicians go through when booking gigs and negotiating fees. I try to pass all that on."

Miller added, "Many of our adjunct professors have grown up and made their living in the area, so students' interaction with professional musicians goes beyond the typical classroom setting. It's not unusual for instructors to bring more advanced students to gigs or into the studio, or to hire student groups for performances."

This all forms part of what Collins calls WSU's mixture of "street" and school: "We want to set the foundation of their craft as musicians, but also provide the opportunities for them to practice that craft."

A native of Detroit who watched his hometown suffer from the downturn of the automobile industry and other economic problems, Collins gets excited when he talks about the city's turnaround.

"It's incredible to see the diversity on the streets near WSU," he said. "The youth culture has really taken over in a positive way. I know that some parents who are not from Detroit might have second thoughts about their child coming to school here, but I have to assure them that our city is diverse, rich and growing."

—James Hale

School Notes ⟩


Tierney Sutton

Jacobs Faculty Additions: Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music has appointed vocalist Tierney Sutton as associate professor of music in jazz studies, effective Aug. 1. Sutton taught for more than a decade at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music and spent six years as head of the vocal department at Los Angeles College of Music. Other recent additions to the Jacobs faculty include trumpeter John Raymond and saxophonist Walter Smith III. music.indiana.edu

Honorary Degree: Trumpeter Doc Severinsen was presented with an honorary Doctor of Music degree at Elmhurst College's commencement ceremonies in May in Elmhurst, Illinois. At the ceremony, Elmhurst College Director of Jazz Studies Doug Beach cited Severinsen as being "renowned around the world as a jazz trumpeter, bandleader and recording artist whose contributions to the art of jazz and jazz education have found their place in the annals of music history." Severinsen has made frequent appearances with the Elmhurst College Jazz Band, including a tour of Ohio in October 2016. elmhurst.edu

JEN Turns 9: The Jazz Education Network celebrated its ninth anniversary on June 1. JEN has presented more than $70,000 in awards and scholarships, in addition to raising upwards of $30,000 to benefit the organization's new scholarship programs and initiatives via its inaugural Scholarship Concert earlier this year. Currently made up of thousands of members from 23 countries, including all 50 U.S. states, the organization has connected with more than 40,000 students through its outreach programs. JEN's ninth annual conference will take place Jan. 3–6 in Dallas. jazzednet.org

Final Bar: Jazz educator Thara Memory passed away on June 17 after an extended illness. He was 68. Among his accolades were a Grammy for his arrangement work with Esperanza Spalding on her song "City Of Roses," an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Berklee College of Music and induction in the DownBeat Jazz Education Hall of Fame.

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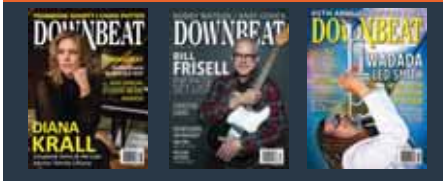


DB Buyers Guide ⟩

Louis Hayes

In celebration of Louis Hayes' 80th birthday, Blue Note has released *Serenade For Horace*, the drummer's 11-tune homage to pianist-composer Horace Silver (1928–2014). Hayes was 19 when Silver brought him from Detroit to New York to play with him from 1956 to 1959, launching the drum icon's still-thriving career.

Louis Hayes

Brian Lynch Sextet

"The Outlaw" (*Peer Pressure*, Criss Cross Jazz, 1986) Lynch, trumpet; Victor Lewis, drums; Jay Anderson, bass; Ralph Moore, tenor saxophone; Kirk Lightsey, piano.

I know this melody because I recorded it. It's "The Outlaw." It's one of Horace [Silver's] most difficult compositions because of the number of bars. Horace never wrote out any music out for me. I'd listen to him play his compositions on the piano, and play what he was playing. He was happy with the way I conceived and played the parts.

These guys are playing the composition right. The solos are very good. The drummer is swinging—playing basically something I played. He's playing the structure of the composition. I can't identify anyone. The tempo could have been a bit faster, which would have made it more complicated, more interesting to play. 3½ stars.

Roy Haynes

"My Heart Belongs To Daddy" (*Birds Of A Feather: A Tribute To Charlie Parker*, Dreyfus, 2001) Haynes, drums; Kenny Garrett, alto saxophone; Roy Hargrove, trumpet; Dave Holland, bass; David Kikoski, piano.

I like the interpretation—they've thought it out, and it's interesting. I'm thinking of the alto saxophonist from Detroit, Kenny Garrett. We did a duo once, years ago in Brooklyn, that I'll never forget. The drummer is very creative, and I like that the other artists are playing along with him. He's not out there by himself. I like his concept. He's a young person. He's not young? You got me on that one. 4 stars. [*after*] Although Roy is older, he plays like a young person. I should have got him.

Tommy Flanagan

"I Love You" (*Super-Session*, Enja, 1980) Flanagan, piano; Red Mitchell, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

They're enjoying themselves. They're loose, making the composition their own. I don't know who they are. But I'm enjoying their way of handling this wonderful melody and music. They fit together. Each one plays his instrument very well. I came up hearing this way of playing. [*after a drum solo*] It could be Elvin. Is that Tommy? 5 stars. Those are heroes and friends. Elvin Jones was a free spirit. I heard Elvin quite a bit when I was a youngster in Detroit. He was too much for me then. Elvin played very complicated and loose—and he did Elvin Jones. I was more or less straight life. I've always been good at keeping time, and the person who affected me a lot was Kenny Clarke. I didn't begin to understand what Elvin was doing until I was in New York.

Once I was playing a club in Philadelphia with Cannonball [Adderley], and they were at the Showboat. I went over to see them. During that time it was play 40 [minutes] and off 20. It was hard to get back sometimes. Elvin didn't make it back. Coltrane saw me. "Louis, come on up." Another time in L.A., the same thing happened. I went to see Elvin at Shelly's Manne Hole, and he was missing, so I went up and played.

Benny Green

"Bish Bash" (*Live In Santa Cruz!*, Sunnyside, 2015) Green, piano; David Wong, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

The facility is brilliant. This player reminds me of things Oscar Peterson did when I was with him—you had to remember the arrangements. I love it. I have no idea who's playing, but these artists play together on a high level, and they have rehearsed. They play the tradition really well. It's difficult to play with a trio and command the audience's attention. It's easier to be effective with more horns, because you have so much to work with. Now the drummer is playing with the brushes, which a lot of drummers don't do all the way. 4 stars.

The Very Tall Band

"Salt Peanuts" (*What's Up?*, Telarc, released in 2007, recorded in 1998) Oscar Peterson, piano; Milt Jackson, vibraphone; Ray Brown, bass; Karriem Riggins, drums.

[*immediately*] This sounds like Oscar. Is that Buddy Rich? The problem I had with Oscar was that he wanted you to play a certain way—not get too busy. He didn't want me to be me. But I'm the only drummer who was in his trio twice. We liked each other, though we'd get in arguments. I respected Oscar as a person, and naturally, his ability to perform was on the highest level. He was one of the greatest, a big-time musician. The drummer sounds good. All the stars in the world.

David Hazeltine

"Cedar's Blues" (*I Remember Cedar*, Sharp Nine, 2014) Hazeltine, piano; David Williams, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

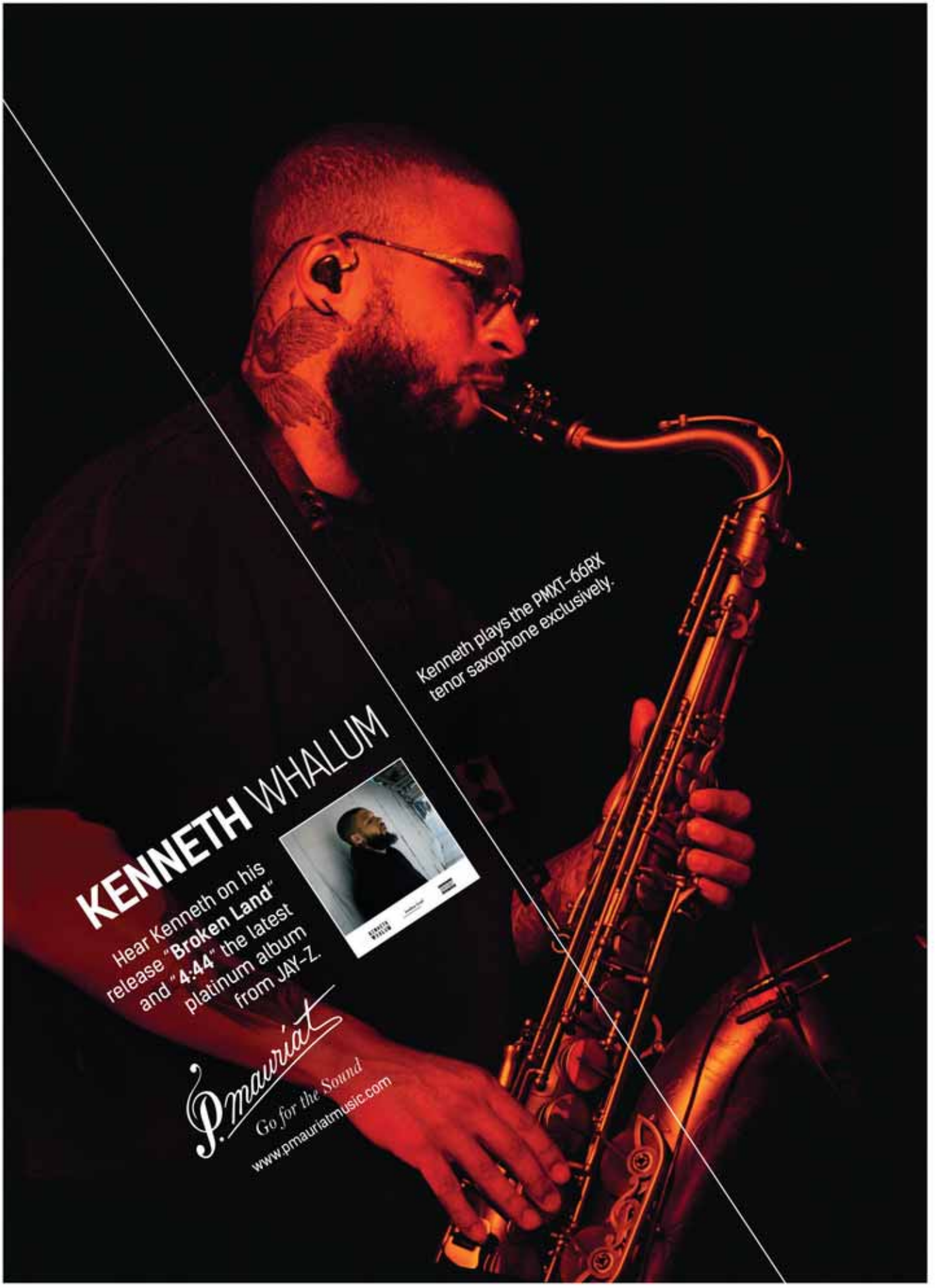
Is that Cedar? No? But that's his composition. Whoever they are, you've got to be hip to be playing a composition like this. What they're doing is the way it's supposed to be played. This is the way it works. Now, it could be Hazeltine. That's my friend. I made several recording dates with him. 4 stars.

Emmet Cohen

"If This Isn't Love" (*Masters Legacy Series, Volume 1*, Cellar Live, 2016) Cohen, piano; Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.

The piano player plays very well. I mean, he can *play*. The drummer plays well, too. I don't know who it is. Everybody's playing the art form well. But I don't see any distinctiveness—anything outstanding about it. 4 stars. [*after*] Jimmy is a survivor. He's still here, and he's kept his craft, and he plays his style on a high level. That's a magnificent thing. He's able to do the Jimmy Cobb. **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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