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APRIL 2018

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BLUE NOTE ALL-STARS OUR POINT OF VIEW

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GREGORY PORTER NAT KING COLE & ME

The **GRAMMY-winning** vocalist releases his stunning fifth studio album, a heartfelt tribute to the legendary singer and pianist **Nat King Cole**. With the help of **six-time GRAMMY-winning arranger VINCE MENDOZA**, and the **LONDON STUDIO ORCHESTRA**, Porter revisits some of Cole's most cherished classics such as "Smile," "L-O-V-E," "Nature Boy," and "The Christmas Song."



CHRIS DAVE AND THE DRUMHEDZ CHRIS DAVE AND THE DRUMHEDZ

The Drumhedz are the session players and **The Drumhedz** are the session players and road warriors, fronted by bandleader **Chris Dave**, who's drummed for everyone from **Adele** to **D'Angelo**. The group's *self-titled debut LP* showcases a family of musicians, from core musicians like **Pino Palladino** (bass) and **Keyon Harrold** (horn), to guests like **Anderson .Paak**.



BRIAN BLADE & THE FELLOWSHIP BAND BODY AND SHADOW

Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band marks its **20th anniversary** with this graceful meditation on lightness/darkness that arrives like a balm for the soul. *Body and Shadow*, which was recorded at the historic **Columbus Theatre** in Providence, Rhode Island, was written, produced and arranged by band leader and namesake **BRIAN BLADE** and pianist **JON COWHERD**.

APRIL 2018

Inside

ON THE COVER

30 The Bad Plus *'Everybody Took Off Their Mask'*

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

The members of The Bad Plus discuss the trio's new lineup, which includes acclaimed pianist Orrin Evans, and their new album, *Never Stop II*. Evans, bassist Reid Anderson and drummer Dave King reflect on why they collectively wanted to launch a new chapter for the veteran band.

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Orrin Evans (left), Reid Anderson and Dave King of The Bad Plus

Cover photo and above image of The Bad Plus shot by Jimmy & Dena Katz in New York at The Jazz Gallery on Dec. 28. On the cover, from left: Reid Anderson, Orrin Evans and Dave King.



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A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is smiling and playing a light-colored electric violin. She is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with black accents. The background is dark and moody.

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Ndugu Chancler (1952–2018)



A Great Day with Ndugu

THE GREAT LEON “NDUGU” CHANCLER passed away on Feb. 3 from undisclosed causes. He was 65.

You might not recognize his name, but I guarantee that you’ve heard his work. Chancler has been called the most-heard drummer in history—a claim that would be difficult to deny.

He drummed for Herbie Hancock, Freddie Hubbard and Miles Davis; Joe Henderson, Thelonious Monk and Eddie Harris; Alice Coltrane, Harold Land and John Carter; Carlos Santana, Weather Report and Marvin Gaye; Hugh Masekela, Jean-Luc Ponty and Frank Sinatra; Lionel Richie, Tina Turner and James Brown; Eric Clapton, George Benson and Donna Summer. That’s the short list. But he might be best known for the drumbeat he laid down on “Billie Jean” from Michael Jackson’s album *Thriller*, which has sold a mere 120 million copies.

In December 2014, I enjoyed one of the best days of my DownBeat career. I had the opportunity to interview Mr. Chancler onstage at the Midwest Band Clinic, an annual music education gathering in Chicago that attracts more than 20,000 educators and students.

Ndugu took this appearance very seriously. He insisted that we have lunch together before the interview. He wanted to go over the topics that he wanted to convey; in short, his “set list.” With all of his success, Ndugu wanted people to know he was, first and foremost, a *jazz* drummer.

“The attraction for me playing music wasn’t the blues, wasn’t the church gospel music,” he said. “It was jazz. It was jazz that I heard on the radio not being called ‘jazz,’ because on the radio stations I listened to at the time, they just played music. They played Horace Silver and Cannonball

Adderley and Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. and Sam the Sham & The Pharaohs and Sly Stone and James Brown and Motown.”

Mr. Chancler was not only a brilliant drummer, but also a caring, giving soul who felt his career was the result of wonderful connections and coincidences. Because of his good luck, he wanted to “pay it forward” to the next generation.

“He’s an amazing musician; he’s incredible,” said legendary jazz educator José Diaz in introducing Chancler that day in 2014. “As amazing a musician as he is, he’s an even more amazing human being. He helped me get my music program together, my jazz ensembles, as I was starting out teaching. And he took an interest with the students and kept up with them.”

“I couldn’t have gotten any of this on my own,” Chancler said. “Stix [Hooper], Shelly Manne, Earl Palmer, Clarence Johnston: Those are the guys that gave me the tools that I needed on a day-to-day basis. The drummers.

“We’re talking about this magical, mystical connection. All the guys around the country were starting to hear about me through all the other guys that were coming through town.”

Those connections included Miles Davis, Quincy Jones and concert producer Bill Graham—three icons he looked up to as mentors.

“Those three guys turned my thinking around and opened me up to just put your heart into it, and it will happen,” Chancler said.

Now that his story is complete, we can enjoy the river of music that came from that heart. At downbeat.com, we have posted a feature on Chancler from our June 2015 edition, along with the audio file from our Midwest Band Clinic interview. We hope you check it out.

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Chords & Discords

Jazz in the Poconos

On a recent snowy Saturday evening, the quartet of guitarist Vic Juris, vocalist Kate Baker, bassist Harvie S and drummer Anthony Pinciotti served up Beatles and Jobim classics, and original tunes, to a sparse yet attentive audience at the Deer Head Inn (which is listed in the International Jazz Venue Guide of your February issue).

This is a homey club perched near the Appalachian Trail in the idyllic Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. The walls are adorned with portraits of revered, deceased musicians like saxophonist Phil Woods and pianist Mulgrew Miller, whose tunes are played on the sound system between the live sets.

On its website, the Deer Head Inn claims to be "the oldest continuously running jazz



club in the country." It's a great hang that serves up comfort food and comforting jazz.

ROB STEVENS
RKSTEVENS53@GMAIL.COM

United Jazz Kingdom

In your February issue, in the International Jazz Venue Guide, I was disappointed to see that the only venues listed in England are all located in London. Capital city, yes, but just about every other large city in the United Kingdom has clubs and pubs that offer as much, maybe even more, than some of your lesser Stateside venues.

Newcastle has the Jazz Café, The Globe, Hoochie Coochie and the Bridge Hotel. There are also lunchtime trad sessions, plus a lot of student jazz in Durham.

So, whilst your worldwide coverage was great, it could have been deeper.

LANCE LIDDLE
LANCE-BEBOPSPOKENHERE.BLOGSPOT.COM

Jazz Fans in Shanghai

Thank you for your dedication and service to the jazz community. DownBeat provides me with inspiration, new discoveries and different sets of opinions. Your February issue just reached me here in my native northern Germany; after living in China for 20 years, I returned last summer.

In 2019, when you compile your International Jazz Venue Guide, you should include Shanghai's House of Blues and Jazz, established by Lin Dong Fu and located at No. 60 Fuzhou Road. Lin—who made my early days in Shanghai more enjoyable with the early version of the House, then located near the Hongqiao Airport—presents authentic blues bands and the occasional jazz band for three-month periods.

Meanwhile, Shanghai's JZ Club had to close in May 2016, but it has found a new location—No. 158 Julu Road. It was inaugurated appropriately with a concert by the WDR Big Band on Oct. 14, 2016, the night before the JZ Festival weekend, the highlight of which was the marvelous duo of Brad Me-

hldau and Joshua Redman.

DownBeat readers traveling to Shanghai should know about the JZ Club. It has presented shows by David Binney, Wayne Krantz, Nir Felder and Sinne Eeg. The venue's operators are passionate about, and dedicated to, jazz.

THOMAS BUSCHMANN
 NORTHERN GERMANY (FORMERLY BASED IN SHANGHAI)

Horn's Travels

In your March issue, an article in The Beat indicates that the singer Jazzmeia Horn made her European debut on Dec. 28 at the Umbria Winter Jazz Festival in Orvieto. In fact, she had performed on Nov. 18 during the jazzOUT! Festival in Heerlen, The Netherlands, where I enjoyed a marvelous concert.

STEPHAN BRAESE
 AACHEN, GERMANY

Corrections

- In the March issue, a Hot Box comment misidentified a soprano saxophone soloist on "Elf," a track on the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble's *All Can Work*. The soloist is Tony Malaby.
- In the March issue, the Blindfold Test with saxophonist Tim Berne did not correctly list the song title "Blue Twirl: A Portrait Of Sam Gilliam," a track on Sherman Irby & Momentum's *Cerulean Canvas*. Also, there was an editorial error in the section with Berne's comments on Steve Lehman & Sélébéyone's track "Are You In Peace?" on the CD *Sélébéyone*. Berne's actual comment indicated that it is he—not Lehman—who uses a "big open mouthpiece."

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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Beat

GULNARA KHAMATOVA



Dee Dee Bridgewater (left), Esperanza Spalding and Lizz Wright perform on Jan. 15 at the star-filled tribute to Geri Allen at Winter Jazzfest in New York.

Geri Allen's Spirit Fills Winter Jazzfest During All-Star Tribute

On the evening of Jan. 15, Martin Luther King Day, the New York City Winter Jazzfest hosted a splendid and heart-felt all-star tribute concert to Geri Allen, whose death from cancer on June 27 at age 60 shocked and saddened the jazz world.

As revered as she was among musicians, Allen was under-appreciated in her lifetime, despite having been deeply influential to a generation of jazz players and a shining example of how jazz can embody a sense of spirituality, nobility and commitment to the human family.

She seems finally to be getting her due. Some of that might be our lamentable tendency to value artists more in retrospect than in the here and now. Some of it probably had to do with her gender in a male-dominated field.

Context is everything: Amid raw feelings and public outcry over racist sentiments coming from the highest office in the land, as well as the reinvigorated feminism inspired by the #MeToo

and #TimesUp movements, the stars seemed aligned to celebrate Allen and the virtues she represented.

Many of the artists she inspired came to pay tribute to her music at The New School's Tishman Auditorium in a program for which her friend and collaborator, drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, served as musical director. As pianist Vijay Iyer noted, expressing the sentiments of many, "Geri Allen was one of my greatest musical heroes. I've been obsessed with and influenced by her music for 30 years."

The event began with a film of Allen playing "Flying Towards The Sound," a rhapsody for solo piano, full of meditative rumblings and fiery arpeggios that ultimately resolve into a solemn, haunting nocturne. As the film's music began to fade, Craig Taborn, seated behind the hall's Steinway grand, seamlessly took over—a metaphor for the continuity of Allen's vision.

Scholar Angela Davis, a co-emcee of the

event along with actor S. Epatha Merkerson, cited Allen as a major advocate for women jazz players and introduced Carrington, bassist Linda May Han Oh, altoist Tia Fuller and pianist Kris Davis to play Eric Dolphy's frenetic "Miss Ann." The composer was the focus of Allen's master's thesis in ethnomusicology.

The sublimely bluesy vocalist Lizz Wright followed, singing Allen's ethereal version of the folk ballad "Barbara Allen," backed by a shape-shifting Helen Sung on piano, drummer Carrington, bassist Kenny Davis, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and percussionist Mino Cinelu. Allen had rewritten the lyric, replacing the original's tragic romantic drama with a spiritual quest, including the lines, "The greatest gift is the gift of love/And I have known its mercy."

In an evening of extraordinary pianists no one seemed to embody the fire hydrant of creativity and technical perfection that was Geri Allen more than Sung.

"RTG," originally written for Allen's trio with Ron Carter and Tony Williams, was played by the TEN Trio, comprising Carrington, Esperanza Spalding on bass and vocals, and Nicholas Payton alternating between piano and trumpet. Easing into Allen's "Unconditional Love" from *Twenty One*, Spalding conjured Allen's presence as she intoned, "Trust the sound is Geri ... in the presence ... in the absence ... the presence surrounds us." It was almost like a jazz séance.

The finale was a doozy: The entire cast assembled to play Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues"—which Allen recorded on her 2017 Detroit-themed *Grand River Crossings*—featuring Taborn on piano and Iyer on Fender Rhodes; James Genus and Oh on electric and acoustic bass, respectively; and both Jack DeJohnette and Carrington on drums. When Dee Dee Bridgewater, Spalding and Wright combined their voices to sing the chorus, "Make me wanna holler," both Geri and Marvin must have been smiling somewhere. —Allen Morrison

Riffs >



Mary Halvorson

PETER GANNUSHKIN

Girl on Fire: Guitarist Mary Halvorson is set to issue an eponymous first recording with Code Girl, a new ensemble featuring a raft of top-tier players, on the Firehouse 12 imprint. A unique aspect of the 14-track album, when contrasted with Halvorson's previous work, is its focus on vocals, here contributed by Amirtha Kidambi. The quintet also is planning a tour, which is set to run March through August.

maryhalvorson.com

New Partnership: Sony Corporation and Blue Note Media Group, operator of the Blue Note jazz clubs, are set to collaborate on Sony Hall, located at 235 W. 46th St. in New York. The 12,000-square-foot venue is set to open this spring with a 1,500-person capacity. The companies also plan to work together on the Blue Note Jazz Festival, running this year June 1–30.

sony.net/blue-note.net

Recording at Lincoln Center: Part of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis' mission helming Jazz at Lincoln Center is to document a canon of American music. *United We Swing: Best Of The Jazz At Lincoln Center Galas* collects performances at the iconic venue that span Willie Nelson playing "Milk Cow Blues" and Audra McDonald singing "Creole Love Call." The previously unreleased live recordings on this 16-track compilation were captured between 2003 and 2007 and will be available March 23 on CD and LP, and at streaming and download outlets.

store.jazz.org

In Memoriam: Jazz guitarist Heinz Jakob "Coco" Schumann, who lived through the Holocaust, died at the age of 93, according to his label, Trikont. Playing in a troupe called the Ghetto Swingers, Schumann survived internment at Auschwitz, eventually returning to his hometown, Berlin, following World War II. He died Jan. 28 in the city of his birth, where he'd worked with Trikont since 1997.

trikont.de



Robert Glasper performed in a variety of settings during the recent Blue Note at Sea.

TUKE PHOTOGRAPHY

Blue Note at Sea Finds Footing

FOR YEARS, ENTERTAINMENT CRUISE Productions Executive Director Michael Lazaroff has been trying to strike the right balance for a "contemporary jazz" cruise—more swinging than ECP's Smooth Jazz outing, but more edgy than the straightahead Jazz Cruise.

Lazaroff hit his stride with Blue Note at Sea 2018, a casual, musically layered, diverse and luxurious week that began in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, on Jan. 27 and stopped by the white sands of Haiti, Jamaica and the Bahamas. With 65 artists, 140 shows and about 2,000 fans filling the 11-deck Celebrity Summit to capacity, Blue Note at Sea offered A-list stars such as Chick Corea, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Robert Glasper at the 1,000-seat Celebrity Theater, as well as a neap tide of up-and-coming artists, including pianist Aaron Parks and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, in more intimate rooms. Revealing interviews, late-night jams led by saxophonist David Sanborn and stand-up comedy by Alonzo Bodden rounded out the program. Though the week leaned a bit heavily on funk, soul and r&b, one continually came upon delightful surprises: pianist Sullivan Fortner powering through "Donna Lee" with bassist Boris Koslov; Parks and Akinmusire floating through "Body And Soul"; Cuban pianist Harold Lopez-Nussa clanging out a montuno. And that was just one night, on one deck.

Appearing on his first jazz cruise ever, Corea played first with bassist Marcus Miller (who co-hosted the cruise with Blue Note Records President Don Was), offering an ineluctably tender duet on "When I Fall In Love," with Miller on bass clarinet. Corea's main-stage set with Cuban bassist Carlitos Del Puerto and drummer Marcus Gilmore nodded to Bill Evans ("Alice In Wonderland"), the trio breathing in and out as one, and Bud Powell ("Tempus Fugit"), as Gilmore's percussion flowed like water under the

ship's keel. Spontaneous, charming and casual, Corea did not play "Spain," but in good nature, he made up for this at an informative Q&A, leading the audience in a sing-along of the hit. Later, the 76-year-old, 22-time Grammy winner dropped by for one of Sanborn's jams. Where else but on a cruise could you hear such variety, with such a living-room vibe?

Like Corea, Glasper also popped up in a variety of exhilarating environments, including an enchanting set with his acoustic trio (bassist Vicente Archer and drummer Damion Reed) that took in open spaces, disjunctive changeups and pairings of lyrical piano against nervous, hip-hop-influenced bass and drums. Glasper bracketed a dynamite set with the Blue Note All-Stars with Ornette Coleman's "Turnaround" and an infectious, African-fueled number inspired by a solo guitar-and-voice piece by the dazzling Lionel Loueke.

Trombonist Wycliffe Gordon and vocalist Niki Haris tore up a refreshingly cliché-free Sunday morning gospel show, making saints of sinners with a rousing "The Presence Of The Lord Is Here."

Delving into another side of spirituality, Miller transported the crowd Monday night with more haunting bass clarinet on his "Goree," a meditation on that hell's gate of the slave trade. He matched wits with fellow funkmeister Maceo Parker, who played a little flute and a lot of biting alto saxophone.

That was soul-satisfying stuff, but vocalist Lalah Hathaway's sleepy, nostalgic outing—emo-soul?—was not. Bridgewater, essaying her 2017 soul project, *Memphis ... Yes, I'm Ready* (OKeh), was more plausible here than in Monterey last year, but it still felt like she was trying too hard.

That said, Blue Note at Sea was an embarrassment of riches. —Paul de Barros



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LaVette Revamps Dylan Tunes

A FEW YEARS AGO, SINGER BETTYE

LaVette was backstage at a festival in Italy and found herself walking about 50 feet behind Bob Dylan. Never one to hold back an impulse, she simply shouted out, “Hey, Robert Dylan!” His response came as a surprise.

“He came over to where I was, grabbed my face in both his hands, kissed me full on the lips and walked onstage,” LaVette said. “My whole band just fainted.”

LaVette’s boldness shapes how she’s reworked 12 of Dylan’s songs for her new disc, *Things Have Changed* (Verve). For the soul artist—who started recording at 16 in 1962—the album represents a considerable milestone. It is her debut for Verve, a label long associated with classic jazz vocalists. While LaVette has interpreted an array of material throughout the years, this is her first album dedicated to the work of a single songwriter.

“I told [Danny Bennett, Verve Label Group president and CEO] that it’s hard to excite an old woman, but I am really excited,” LaVette said. “This is maybe one of the only times I wish I was a little younger, so I could live up to the excitement.”

Last autumn, LaVette and her husband, singer Kevin Kiley, began narrowing down selections from Dylan’s massive oeuvre. While a couple of his famous compositions appear on *Things Have Changed*, LaVette mostly focuses on lesser known, yet equally substantial songs, such as “Don’t Fall Apart On Me Tonight.” She began recording them in November.

“It took me weeks to put his words into my mouth,” LaVette said. “I had to change the gender an awful lot, because it wasn’t going to be a cover—where I sang straight down as he sung the songs—and it wasn’t going to be a tribute, because I don’t do tributes to anybody. But I knew I had to make them songs that I would sing. I took as many as three verses out of some

of the songs.”

Drummer Steve Jordan produced the sessions, which featured a core of veterans: bassist Pino Palladino, keyboardist Leon Pendarvis and Dylan’s longtime guitarist Larry Campbell. The Rolling Stones’ Keith Richards plays guitar on “Political World,” and when LaVette said she wanted a solo trombonist for “What Was It You Wanted,” Jordan called in Trombone Shorty.

“I’m calling Steve ‘The Bettye Whisperer,’ because I was talking in gibberish and he was understanding everything I was saying,” LaVette recalled. “Larry Campbell was an absolute, brilliant joy. With him being with Bob Dylan, he said, ‘Thank you for letting me a part of this. I’ve wanted to play these songs differently for so long.’”

As LaVette revamped the songs, she felt especially eager to work through Dylan’s more challenging lyrics, such as “Ain’t Talkin’.”

“When I did start to understand what he meant, then I could say it the way I would say it,” LaVette said. “But it took a little while to understand what he meant, because he doesn’t speak directly. He gives you situations and you figure out what actually happened in the situation.”

Some songs that LaVette selected for *Things Have Changed* convey themes that remain topical, even though Dylan wrote them decades ago. She views “The Times They Are A-Changin’” and “Political World” as being particularly relevant.

“Those songs sound as if they were written last January 20,” LaVette said in reference to President Donald Trump’s inauguration. “That line in ‘Political World,’ about ‘Wisdom has been thrown in jail.’ Well, have you seen the president? We’ve just forsaken wisdom. Everything in those two tunes are universally specific and timely.”

—Aaron Cohen

'Way Out West,' Take 2

Last year saw the 60th anniversary reissue of saxophonist Sonny Rollins' mono recording of his landmark *Way Out West*. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the album's first stereo release.

Both albums come by way of the Craft Recordings imprint, a label Concord Music Group formed with the sole focus of reissuing material. Thus far, prime recordings include not only jazz, like last year's Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane title, *The Complete 1957 Riverside Recordings*, but other classics from the likes of Little Richard, R.E.M., Isaac Hayes and The Pharcyde.

Newly pressed on 180-gram vinyl from lacquers cut by George Horn at Fantasy Studios and produced by Nick Phillips, *Way Out West* originally was recorded for Contemporary Records during Rollins' first visit to California in 1957. At a 3 a.m. session (to accommodate the musicians' busy schedules), the tenor saxophonist was joined by bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne in what was to be jazz's first full recording of trio music sans piano, according to Neil Tesser's liner notes.

The idea behind the repertoire stemmed from Rollins' childhood appreciation of old cowboy movies, combined with his first California recording session. The booklet includes rare photos from jazz photographer William Claxton in addition to Tesser's well-researched liner notes, all housed in a snazzy, hinged box. And again, this two-album set is graced with that iconic photo of Rollins sporting a comically mean cowboy pose and featuring a Tom Mix-style 10-gallon hat along with an empty holster, and trusty, slightly concealed "axe," ready to fire.

The first LP is the original stereo release of six tunes: the Johnny Mercer standard "I'm An Old Cowhand," Duke Ellington's "Solitude," Rollins' "Come, Gone" (after the ballad "After You've Gone"), "Wagon Wheels," "There Is No Greater Love" and Rollins' title track. The second LP includes the trio amid a brief discussion, along with two alternate takes of "Way Out West" and one each of "I'm An Old Cowhand," "There Is No Greater Love" and "Come, Gone." And while this was the first time this particular trio had worked together, the results clearly indicate a fluency with the material, an uncanny knack for group interplay and a kind of seemingly effortless give-and-take that has one thinking Rollins' concept of "strolling" was here to stay.

When asked what makes this reissue



Sonny Rollins

COURTESY CRAFT RECORDINGS

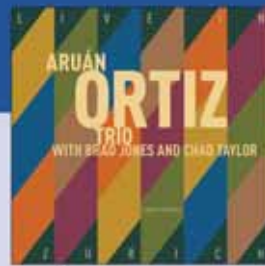
of *Way Out West* (CR00021) particularly special or more "official" than previous stereo reissues of the album, producer Phillips had this to say: "This isn't, by any means, the first 'official' reissue of this classic album in stereo. There have been other official, authorized reissues, including both vinyl and CD in the Original Jazz Classics series. But, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first two-LP deluxe edition reissue of this classic album. And it's certainly the first time that some of the material that's included on the bonus LP has ever been released."

But why did Contemporary release the two versions of *Way Out West* at different times? "My understanding," said Phillips, "is that although stereo recording technology had been around for a while, the first stereo vinyl LPs weren't actually manufactured until late in 1957. That would explain why Contemporary Records would release the original mono edition of *Way Out West* in 1957, but wait until 1958 to release the original stereo edition of the same album; and why the first stereo album release of *Way Out West* was on Stereo Records, an imprint that Contemporary Records founded in 1958 to distinguish the release of stereo editions."

Posted to streaming outlets, *Way Out West* also is available as a download at both 24-bit/96kHz and 24-bit/192kHz. Additionally, in 2017, Craft Recordings reissued another landmark Rollins title, *Saxophone Colossus*.

DB

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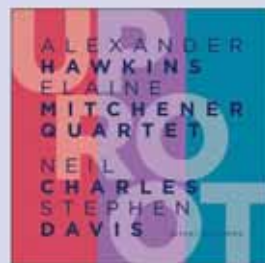
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Jimi Hendrix working in the Record Plant Studios in New York on April 21, 1969.

Hendrix's 'Sweet' Vision

NEARLY 50 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, JIMI Hendrix's legacy is still flourishing. Experience Hendrix—the official family company that manages the iconic guitarist's name, likeness and music—has teamed with Legacy Recordings to release *Both Sides Of The Sky*. The new album features 13 studio recordings made between 1968 and 1970—including 10 that are previously unreleased. The album is set to be issued March 9 in multiple formats: CD, digital and an audio-ophile vinyl two-LP set.

The third volume in a trilogy of albums intended to present the best and most significant unissued studio recordings remaining in the Hendrix archive, *Both Sides Of The Sky* is the follow-up to 2013's *People, Hell And Angels* and 2010's *Valleys Of Neptune*. The new album is of historic importance because it chronicles the first recording session, on April 22, 1969, of Band of Gypsys (Hendrix, bassist Billy Cox, drummer

Buddy Miles). The album also includes a previously unreleased version of "Hear My Train A-Comin'," featuring the guitarist's bandmates in the Jimi Hendrix Experience: drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding.

The program documents sessions at New York's Record Plant Studios and includes the instrumental "Jungle" (a variation on Hendrix's Woodstock Festival anthem "Villanova Junction"); a moody "Cherokee Mist" (featuring Hendrix on Coral sitar guitar); an instrumental of "Angel" (titled "Sweet Angel" here); and a previously unheard original, "Send My Love To Linda," purportedly written about Linda Keith, the woman who introduced Jimi to his future manager, Chas Chandler.

Guests on *Both Sides Of The Sky* include Stephen Stills, blues guitar great Johnny Winter (who flaunts some wicked slide chops on a version of Guitar Slim's "Things I Used To Do") and

saxophonist-vocalist Lonnie Youngblood.

Newly mixed by Eddie Kramer, who served as recording engineer on every Jimi Hendrix album made during the artist's lifetime, *Both Sides Of The Sky* was co-produced by Kramer, Janie Hendrix, president and CEO of Experience Hendrix, and John McDermott, catalog manager of Experience Hendrix.

"There are a bunch of songs on the new album that have not been bootlegged," said McDermott. "Fans will be surprised to hear these recordings."

"Sweet Angel" sounds like a template for the tune that Hendrix would craft two years later, with vocals and lead guitar, at his Electric Lady Studio. That track appeared on a posthumous 1971 release, *The Cry Of Love*. Regarding the instrumental rendition, Dermott said: "We felt it revealed an entirely different approach to what he would later redo entirely with the song in 1970. Remember that he really tinkered with this—another early version can be heard on *The Jimi Hendrix Experience* box set [nicknamed the "purple" box set and released by MCA in 2000]. It serves as a great example that Jimi was changing, adapting, creating all of these songs right up to the last minute. His creativity was relentless, and 'Sweet Angel' helps make clear how Jimi would take any path to achieve the creative vision he desired for each song."

A super-funky studio version of "Power Of Soul," recorded three weeks after Band of Gypsys' legendary set at the Fillmore East on Jan. 1, 1970, was mixed by Hendrix and Kramer in August 1970. The version of the mystical "Cherokee Mist" included here takes a much different approach than the one that appeared on the Jimi Hendrix Experience box set.

Hendrix's version of "Mannish Boy," an homage to two of his blues heroes, is a hybrid of Muddy Waters' "Mannish Boy" and Bo Diddley's "I'm A Man." Said McDermott, "This is a very different take than the one that appeared on the *Blues* compilation [released by MCA in 1994]. It's much better and more fully realized than that version. ... Jimi sneaks a little of Bo Diddley's 'Before You Accuse Me' during his version of 'Things I Used To Do' with Johnny Winter. He obviously dug Bo and it is a nice homage."

Hendrix died on Sept. 18, 1970, and a few months later, readers voted him into the DownBeat Hall of Fame. Over the decades, his stature has grown and fans have been hungry for additional recordings from his too-short life. While there is still plenty of Hendrix material of varying quality in the vaults, McDermott said that *Both Sides Of The Sky* represents the cream of the crop.

"These are the recordings that we felt fans should be able to access," McDermott said. "Hopefully, it provides them with a deeper appreciation and understanding of just how talented Jimi truly was." —Bill Milkowski

Scope of Panama Jazz Festival Expands

THE VISION AND DETERMINATION THAT built the Panama Jazz Festival into a thriving institution was characterized in public comments at a festival reception a few weeks ago.

"We think we're here for a jazz festival," Artistic Director Danilo Pérez said. "But we're really here to build possibility together."

Pérez handed the mic to his wife, Executive Director Patricia Zarate Pérez. "My job is to listen to the men around me and separate fantasy from reality," she joked, deadpan.

The Pérezes' harmony of dreams and practicality has grown the festival from 2003's three-day event attended by 8,000 people to 2018's sprawling six-day event attended by about 30,000, which occupied Panama City Jan. 15–20.

During the day, an intergenerational crowd filled City of Knowledge workshops and panels to capacity. A panel of powerhouse jazz education leaders discussed "Alternative Pedagogies For a New Millennium," but could have benefited from a more tightly focused discussion. Panelists also announced the establishment of the Global Association for the Interconnective Arts, a promising organization that aims to cultivate young musical ambassadors.

The festival's cultural tourism included a press visit to the Frank Gehry-designed BioMuseo, a biodiversity museum that sits like a tropical bird at the Pacific mouth of the Panama Canal. A day trip to the jungle involved canoeing to a hidden waterfall, and eating and dancing at an Embera Indian Village. And though a stop at the Panama Canal's famous Miraflores locks might seem obligatory, the 20th-century engineering marvel inspires true admiration. But the festival's music shone brightest.

A gala concert at the Teatro Anayansi launched with the savvy marketing tool of a red carpet. Performances included the Global Jazz Big Band playing agile arrangements, giving Luciana Souza's vocals rhythmic and melodic space to dip and soar. In a short, potent set that included "Orbits" and "Lost," the expressive rapport of the Wayne Shorter Quartet seemed heightened by an awareness that dates for the group are increasingly rare. Still, larger events hovered over the festival.

In early January, U.S. Ambassador to Panama and jazz superfan John Feeley announced his resignation because of his unwillingness to serve under President Donald Trump. "The best thing we can do is keep being the Americans we know ourselves to be," Feeley told me at his home. "And hear every concert at the Panama Jazz Festival this week."

It's sage advice. Most festivals offer time apart from everyday concerns, a pleasant vacation from reality. But with its principled mission of building a more ethical culture, the Panama



Danilo Pérez (left), Wayne Shorter, Brian Blade and John Patitucci appear at the 2018 Panama Jazz Festival in Panama City.

COURTESY PANAMA JAZZ FESTIVAL

Jazz Festival is an engaged carnival of resistance.

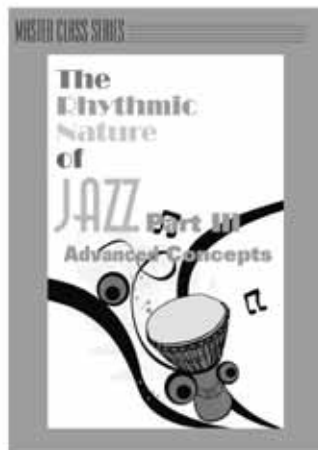
One evening, I was having a drink when some Americans broke out into the chorus of Van Halen's "Panama," one of the songs blasted by U.S. troops during the 1989 invasion. As I left and visited nearby festival venues, the contrast was striking: A diverse audience packed an elegant jazz club to hear the global sounds of India's Four On A Swing. Just across the plaza, a younger crowd danced in the graffiti-bedecked court-

yard venue Villa Agustina.

The festival showcases the country's richest legacy of cultural diversity, and plays a central role in Panama's new intentional globalism. During this festival's 15th edition, it was telling that every Panamanian I met was familiar with the event. "You are lucky to be here for the festival," a cab driver told me. "This is the very best way to experience our country."

—Michelle Mercer

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Taylor Haskins plays an EVI (electronic valve instrument) on his new album, *The Point*.

er that is played like a trumpet. “I saw a video of Marshall Allen playing an EVI, and he was making some insane sounds on it,” Haskins explained. “It sounded like a real instrument, and I became curious enough to investigate.”

On *The Point*, the aesthetic nods to guitar icons Chet Atkins and Jim Hall—if they were jamming with Kraftwerk.

“My label is called Recombination Records and my studio is called Recombination Labs, because my philosophy is to ‘let it all in’ and let it blend,” Haskins said.

His commitment to “green” living affects more than just his music, though. It influences how his family lives: “We generate more than 80 percent of our hot water from the sun. We use solar power for about 50 percent of our electricity consumption via batteries. We get all of our food from local farms ... It’s our individual responsibility to be as proactive as we can in the conservation of our physical environment.”

Does Haskins recommend urban musicians forgo those \$50 gigs and move up country?

“I think the future of culture does involve more artists leaving the big cities and developing something like cultural ‘outposts’ around the world. It’s already happening,” he said. “My wife and I organized and ran a summer concert series for four years up here, and leaving the city seemed to be a fairly constant topic. I think it’s in the zeitgeist.”

—Ken Micallef

Haskins’ Green Commitment

TRUMPETER TAYLOR HASKINS’ NEW album, *The Point* (Recombination Records), is an electro-acoustic treatise on green living from a man who walks the walk. Recorded with his band Green Empire, the album is a sunny meeting of analog synthesizer, yearning steel guitar, brushed drums and upright bass. It’s like a country-jazz band channeling the spirit of Brian Eno’s *Another Green World* for a new century.

Haskins and his family moved from bustling

Manhattan to upstate New York’s bucolic Lake Champlain. “We moved to reclaim space and time for our own work and for our son to grow up in nature,” Haskins said.

The Point captivates from the first note of its opening song, “Palisades,” with its sci-fi synths and rumbling country rhythms, to the closing title track’s childlike rumination. Throughout, Haskins plays a Steiner/Crumar EVI (electronic valve instrument)—a fully analog synthesiz-



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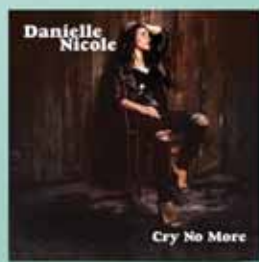
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Brits Binker & Moses Storm Brussels

THERE WERE THREE DOMINANT ARTIST groupings during the 2018 Brussels Jazz Festival. Naturally, there was a considerable Belgian contingent, plus a strong showing by U.S. artists. But there also was a powerful wave of featured British players. These acts mostly were gathered into the marathon UK Night on Jan. 13, but also were spread out across the rest of the programming.

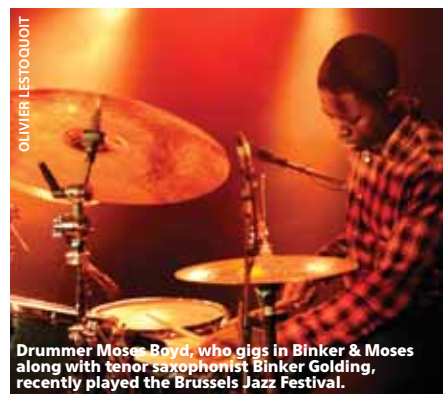
The 10-day festival, held Jan. 11–20, was located at Flagey, an arts complex in Ixelles, which lies southeast of the city center. And UK Night opened with alto saxophonist and rapper Soweto Kinch's trio in the Studio 1, followed by the linear pulsations of Portico Quartet in the larger Studio 4. Perversely, the night's most powerful set happened in the foyer/café area on the ground floor with Binker & Moses.

Tenor saxophonist Binker Golding and drummer Moses Boyd strafed the area with full force, clearly desperate to release the day's accumulated energy. They made a searing impact on the closely grouped crowd, who filled the foyer and ranged up an overlooking staircase. Golding was armed with a tough, biting tenor sound, his phrases thrown out with an almost percussive force. He operated a strict control over the sometimes frenzied rush, a sharp edge that collided with Boyd's precision clatter. The drum-

mer's concern with simplicity found him working around his tightly resonating skins, shaping a metallic resonance with splashing cymbals.

Nearly a week later, on Jan. 19, The Comet Is Coming performed a similar feat of transcendence. Also from London, this trio features tenor saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings, keyboardist Danalogue The Conqueror and drummer Betamax Killer in an orgy of groove-based extremity. Hutchings employed his characteristically riff-based thrust, freely blowing along a linear path, while Killer made tightly snapping funk explosions and The Conqueror provided completely out-there synth excursions. The mash-up included heavy dub, techno and space-jazz elements, always uniting abstract overlays with a pulsating dancecore, peaking with "Neon Baby."

In an opposite sonic state, a Sunday afternoon performance dubbed "The Sleep Of Reason" and set in the medium-sized Studio 1 involved a collaboration between keyboardist Fulco Ottervanger (one-third of De Beren Gieren) and the two artists who had been drawing and painting throughout the entire festival. During the set, Pieter Fannes and Yann Bagot spontaneously made black-ink strokes across a large paper panorama, swapping sides, so that their shadings and brush-flicks took on a



Drummer Moses Boyd, who gigs in Binker & Moses along with tenor saxophonist Binker Golding, recently played the Brussels Jazz Festival.

communal character. Meanwhile, Ottervanger began on piano, graduated to synthesizer, traveling from delicate impressionism to hard-nosed grooves. The waves of activity continued staggering along, as one artist or the other found fresh inspiration. Soon, the visual spread became too overworked, as all available space was filled. But Ottervanger continued to explore many different musical avenues. Perhaps this wasn't about the composition, but more about the act of improvisatory brushwork, as images were built, then obliterated, just like a spontaneous musical creation.

—Martin Longley

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BOP Trio, which comprises bassist Linda May Han Oh (left), drummer Johnathan Blake and saxophonist Chris Potter, recently played Giant Step Arts' opening event, a two-night run at Manhattan's Jazz Gallery.



JIMMY KATZ

Nonprofit Giant Step Arts Hosts its Inaugural Shows

IT'S HARD TO THINK OF A JAZZ PHOTOGRAPHER with a more personal and identifiable pictorial personality than Jimmy Katz, whose prolific corpus during a three-decade career comprises resonant images of the most luminous practitioners of the idiom.

Last November, Katz and his wife, Dena, launched Giant Step Arts, an artist-focused nonprofit that coalesces his established skill set, adding audio recording and video to the mix. Using donor funding, Katz is producing

for spring release three concert recordings—one each from drummer Johnathan Blake's BOP trio with bassist Linda May Han Oh and tenor saxophonist Chris Potter; trumpeter Jason Palmer's quartet; and alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa in a trio.

"I felt that very often when I heard the musicians I'd worked with in photographic situations in a live setting, the music was even better than in the studio. What interests me is to try to record the way the musicians sound as

accurately as I can, whatever the context," said Katz, who is a frequent DownBeat contributor. "I'm very exacting when I do photography or when I do engineering. I'm working with the greatest musicians in the world. I want to respect that and do the absolute best job I can do every single time."

Giant Step Arts, which functions as a quasi-granting foundation, offers each artist it works with ownership of masters, and provides them with a short film and promotional services through Braithwaite & Katz Communications.

The creativity flowed throughout Giant Step Arts' opening event, a two-night run by BOP Trio at Manhattan's Jazz Gallery on Jan. 21–22. Blake launched the first set on the second night with a cohesive, coruscating drum overture that set up Potter's lovely melody statement and dynamic solo on Sting's "Synchronicity," which Oh concluded with an enveloping solo, showcasing both her dexterity and luminous tone.

"I was totally floored and honored that Jimmy and Dena chose me," Blake later said. "He's come to a lot of my shows and, out of the goodness of his heart, was willing to tape them for me just as documentation. I want to have full say about my music; I want to control what's out there, and he's given me a professional product."

—Ted Panken

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Born in South Africa in 1939, Hugh Masekela spent 30 years living in exile, before returning in 1990.

In Memoriam: Hugh Masekela

HUGH MASEKELA, A BELOVED MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST AND activist from South Africa whose long career included a surprise pop hit and collaborations with Herb Alpert and The Byrds, died Jan. 23 in Johannesburg after a battle with prostate cancer. He was 78.

Considered the father of South African jazz, Rampolo Hugh Masekela was born on April 4, 1939, in Witbank. While he began singing in local groups and learning the piano, Masekela became enamored of the trumpet after seeing *Young Man With A Horn*, the 1950 Kirk Douglas film inspired by the life of Bix Beiderbecke. Masekela quickly mastered his chosen instrument, seeking out every opportunity to perform. That would find him backing the Manhattan Brothers, a vocal ensemble featuring Miriam Makeba, and playing in the bop combo the Jazz Epistles.

Troubled by the daunting weight of apartheid, Masekela left his home in 1960, first landing in London, then emigrating to the U.S., thanks to a scholarship at the Manhattan School of Music. It was there that he made a connection with another student, Stewart Levine, who would become one of Masekela's closest friends and collaborators.

"He was extremely erudite," Levine recalled. "He was involved with music from anywhere, particularly the music of his homeland, and obsessed with jazz like I was. And he was one of the funniest guys I've ever met."

The pair eventually moved to the West Coast, where Masekela cemented his signature sound—a buoyant mix of jazz, pop, r&b and African music—and found his greatest commercial success. After relocating to Los Angeles, Masekela became a sensation, earning a spot in at the Monterey Pop Festival and time in the studio with The Byrds, providing the trumpet solo for "So You Want To Be A Rock 'n' Roll Star." Masekela also landed a No. 1 single with the breezy and instantly catchy "Grazing In The Grass," a song from his 1968 album *The Promise Of A Future*.

While Masekela made concessions to the pop marketplace, like recording with fellow trumpeter Alpert, his work also took on a political edge. Albums like 1976's *Colonial Man* made bitter reference to Vasco Da Gama, the explorer who helped open Africa to the West, while "Bring Him Back Home" demanded the release of anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela.

"[O]ver the last five years I've traveled extensively all over Africa, and I understand it more ... as a collection of small colonies. The colonial intention was to separate the different states so they could serve the mother country, and to make sure the natives never met," Masekela told writer Howard Mandel for a story in the May 6, 1976, issue of *DownBeat*.

After three decades in exile, Masekela returned to South Africa in 1990, where he lived for the remainder of his life. Through that time, he remained busy, recording his own albums and appearing on sessions with a wealth of other performers.

"One thing I'd like to say about Hugh Masekela is that he had a good time," Levine remembered. "In spite of all of the problems and issues he was born into and adopted, he had a good time. And the world's a better place for him having been here."

—Robert Ham



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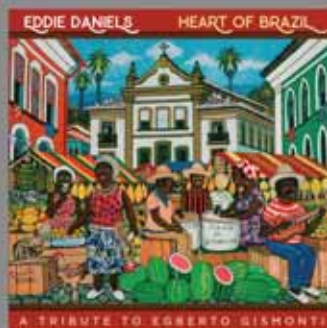
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ANDREAS VARADY THE QUEST

Guitar virtuoso **Andreas Varady's** Resonance debut, **The Quest**, is his clarion call artistic statement. Discovered by the legendary **Quincy Jones** at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 2012 at a mere 15 years of age, Varady has gone on to wow established music icons such as **George Benson** and **Marcus Miller**, as well as fans around the world. Features the acclaimed Venezuelan pianist **Benito Gonzalez**.



AVAIL JUNE 1ST

EDDIE DANIELS THE HEART OF BRAZIL Tribute to Egberto Gismonti

Clarinet icon **Eddie Daniels** pays tribute to the legendary Brazilian composer and multi-instrumentalist, **Egberto Gismonti**. Featuring pianist **Josh Nelson**, bassist **Kevin Axt** and **Mauricio Zottarelli** on drums, plus the Grammy-winning **Harlem Quartet**. **The Heart of Brazil** collects songs from Gismonti's classic '70s albums on EMI Records.



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WES MONTGOMERY IN PARIS: THE DEFINITIVE ORTF RECORDING

In Paris, the critically-acclaimed official release of **Wes Montgomery's** legendary live recording from the famous **Théâtre des Champs-Élysées** in 1965. Features remastered audio transferred directly from the original tape reels. Includes 32-pg booklet with rare photos and memorabilia, plus multiple essays and interviews.



JODI PROZNICK

Metaphoric Sunrise

Ten years ago, bassist Jodi Proznick's ascending career hit a plateau due to family matters. After earning a Juno nomination for her 2007 quartet album, *Foundations*, Proznick discovered she was pregnant, and she learned that her mother had been diagnosed with early-onset dementia and therefore would need a great deal of assistance and care.

Today, Proznick is re-energizing her career as a bandleader with the new album *Sun Songs* (Cellar Live), a collection of eight original compositions and an interpretation of Stephin Merritt's "The Book Of Love." Proznick's top-notch band includes pianist Tilden Webb (who is also her husband), saxophonist Steve Kaldestad, drummer Jesse Cahill and vocalist Laila Biali. Featuring emotionally charged material, *Sun Songs* is a powerful artistic statement.

Music was central to Proznick's life even as a toddler. Starting on the piano at 3 years old and musically literate by age 5, Proznick settled on the bass in the eighth grade. "I had not seen many girls play the bass and that was cool," she recalled. "I dug the idea that the bass was in the back of the band and I could just do my thing and play and be a support [player]."

At age 13, she experienced a pivotal moment at the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, where she saw a trio performance by pianist Gene Harris, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Jeff Hamilton. "We were in the fourth row," she reminisced. "I was a 13-year-old kid with my jaw on the floor.

It felt like the most joyful thing I had ever seen in my life."

A first-call bassist, Proznick has played on 40 recordings. Among the luminaries with whom she has performed or toured are pianist Harold Mabern, saxophonists George Coleman and Seamus Blake, singer Dee Daniels and multi-instrumentalist Phil Dwyer. A dedicated jazz educator, Proznick is a faculty member at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and serves as the artistic director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's School of Music Summer Jazz Workshop.

Her accolades include numerous National Jazz Awards in Canada, and she was the featured bassist for the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games' closing ceremonies and soundtrack.

Sun Songs represents a new chapter in her career. Proznick and her bandmates Webb, Kaldestad and Cahill began playing music together at Montreal's McGill University in the 1990s. These musicians, along with Biali, helped Proznick craft an album that honestly and sensitively explores her experiences of motherhood, as well as the difficulties of her own mother's struggle with dementia.

Because Proznick had so many caretaking responsibilities for several years, she didn't have a great deal of time to compose music. During those years, whenever inspiration struck, she would sing a melody into her cell phone. "[Musical ideas] were coming from my body, my voice, my words," Proznick explained. "This

whole album is not about showing what a good bass player I am or how clever. It is just about the heart."

The opening track, "Listen," features a luminous, uplifting lyric collaboration with songwriter Shari Ulrich. The exquisitely emotional and cathartic "Let Go" was inspired by Proznick's life: "One day, Mom was crying and kind of panicking, and I watched my dad put his hands on either side of her face, look her in the eye and just say, 'Patty, I'm here. It's OK; you are safe.' That changed me forever."

Another collaborator on the album is poet, dancer and scholar Celeste Snowber, who co-wrote "Ancient Yearning" with Proznick. Inspired by Snowber's lyrics, the bassist recalled, "I was imagining if Trane was to write a lyric, what would he write? That's what I hear in *A Love Supreme*—that longing, that crying out."

"It was pretty remarkable," Kaldestad said regarding the process of creating *Sun Songs*. "[Proznick] had such a clear inspiration for this project. The music is just something she had to do. It is powerful and so personal."

Proznick is planning to promote the album with a tour of intimate concerts. "Everyone has been through difficult times, and I am hoping people will feel their own stories in these songs and know they are not alone—because we are all in this together," she said. "At the end of the day, it's about love." —Kerlie McDowall

ECM

Returns



Keith Jarrett / Gary Peacock / Jack DeJohnette After The Fall

Keith Jarrett piano
Gary Peacock double bass
Jack DeJohnette drums



Mathias Eick Ravensburg

Mathias Eick trumpet, voice
Håkon Aase violin
Andreas Ulvo piano
Audun Ertlien electric bass
Torstein Lofthus drums
Helge Andreas Norbakken drums, percussion



Jakob Bro Returns

Palle Mikkelborg trumpet, flugelhorn
Jakob Bro guitar
Thomas Morgan double bass
Jon Christensen drums



Arild Andersen / Paolo Vinaccia / Tommy Smith In-House Science

Arild Andersen double bass
Paolo Vinaccia drums
Tommy Smith tenor saxophone

OTHER ANIMAL

'Open for Everything'

The Berlin-based Meyer brothers—guitarist Peter and bassist Bernhard—are best known as the force behind the Melt Trio, an ongoing variation on the guitar trio involving a highly personalized mixture of jazz, rock and atmospheric. The Meyers' new band, the aptly named Other Animal, is a fascinating quartet project that teams them with Wanja Slavin (alto saxophone, clarinet, flute and synthesizer) and the ever-flexible drummer Jim Black.

The Meyers' resume, alone and as a tight sibling unit, includes work with drummer Nasheet Waits, guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, Portuguese bassist Carlos Bica and Norwegian live-remix king Jan Bang. Slavin has won much acclaim in jazz circles, particularly through this work in the quartet Amok Amor. Black had a particular influence on the Meyers' aesthetic, thanks to his work in such post-fusion outfits as Pachora, Human Feel and AlasNoAxis.

Other Animal's eponymous debut album, on the Traumton label, traverses turf both familiar and fresh. A core progressive jazz-rock element, carried over from Melt Trio, is further colored by abstract free-improv sections within the Meyers' custom-tailored compositions.

For this project, the Meyer siblings wrote a batch of tunes and booked time in the legendary Funkhaus studio, located in what formerly was East Berlin. "We played maybe two concerts before the recording," Bernhard explained. "We wanted to take the [opportunity] when Jim was in town and free, and just wanted to do it. Of course, we couldn't tell what would come out. We really focused on getting a band sound, actu-

ally, before going into the studio."

One hallmark of the *Other Animal* album is the unpredictability and license to creatively wander within the scored material. Structured components often peel away and new ambient free zones appear, sometimes returning to the head, sometimes not.

"With a lot of contemporary jazz tunes," Bernhard said, "you have the form, lots of difficult harmonies and all this stuff, and then people want to play over this structure. But we don't care. Maybe we'll do that, but if the improv part is something totally different and is better for the song, we always prefer that. If we have a melody that's written, and a certain harmony, that's fine. But sometimes, on the improv, we try to get to something else, something new."

"The improv part has the function like a bridge in a pop song," Peter explained. "We want it to be in the vibe of the song, the vibe of the band."

The brothers' formative years preceded the YouTube boom. "When we grew up," Peter said, "we didn't have everything available all the time, so we had to listen to what we knew. That was Bill Frisell and atmospheric stuff. Later, we started to listen to Coltrane and all that, and we loved that music, too—but not when we were young teens and started to develop our own tastes."

The 12 tracks on *Other Animal* cover a diverse range of stylistic and emotional terrain, from the quirky groove-driven tracks "Mr. Manga," "Drown Dreams" and "Qubits," to introspective ECM-ish numbers like "Name Of Cold Country," "Spectral" and the melancholic gem "Downbear."

Peter noted, "Sometimes I write songs where

I had the feeling in the end that they sounded like [Charlie] Parker chords but with an indie/Radiohead-ish vibe. There is a lot of half-tone skipping and transitions, but we always have a pop or indie vibe."

So where does Other Animal fit in the given landscape of genres and sub-genres within jazz? Bernhard replied, "We got a lot of our inspirations from jazz—like Weather Report, John Abercrombie, John Hollenbeck. For us, it's always hard to say what we are. We studied jazz and try to get better, and still like to play the classical bebop jazz language. ... I like Mahler and Bach, and I like Jim Black and Grizzly Bear. We don't mind if someone calls it jazz or progressive jazz. But if someone says, 'It's kind of instrumental indie music with improvised parts,' maybe that's right."

"We're open for everything," Peter said. "Coltrane was open for everything. Miles Davis—*Bitches Brew*—all these famous records are great because the musicians were open for what was around them. If someone says 'No, that's not jazz. It's rock,' that's OK for me. If he wants to call it that, that's fine for me. People can decide what they call it."

Other Animal represents a concept-come-true. "It was a dream to play with Jim," Bernhard said. "And we also wanted to play with Wanja. When we start a new project, we ... really want to do it as best we can."

Peter added, "We want to develop this band and its sound. We want to do a second recording. This is just the beginning, hopefully."

—Josef Woodard

Pianist Takaaki Otomo's new album includes contributions from producer, composer and arranger Bernard Hoffer.

TAKAAKI OTOMO

Flourishing in a New Land

On an unremarkable day in 2008, pianist Takaaki Otomo was daydreaming in a business class at Japan's Kwansei Gakuin University when he was overcome by melancholy. Suddenly, he realized that he wasn't enjoying his courses; they didn't include music. Even more disheartening, his longtime drummer was about to decamp for New York.

But Otomo never has been one to let the blues keep him down. As the professor droned on, Otomo grabbed his ever-present notebook and scribbled down a rhythmic pattern. That pattern suggested a harmonic progression and soon he had the beginnings of "Evening Glow," an emblematic composition in his growing oeuvre.

"That one made me happy," he said over tea in a Manhattan patisserie.

The tune—which kicks off his new trio album, *New Kid In Town* (Albany Records)—embodies the sense of proportion he brings to his music. Opening with a rubato improvisation, the tune moves into a 5/4 section, which segues into a section of medium swing. The transitions are seamless and the symmetry is pure.

Otomo's touch is light and unforced. His improvisations float easily above the rhythmic and harmonic shifts, straying just far enough from the tonal center to add interest without calling undue attention to themselves.

"I don't want to overplay, because my personality is not like that," he explained. "I like to be subtle. That makes things very interesting, music-wise and life-wise."

Otomo's subtleties were discernible Jan. 24 at Saint Peter's Church in Manhattan, where he was part of a trio backing singer Erli Perez. Working within standard forms, Perez was freewheeling, moving between hip scatting and romantic crooning. Otomo responded with clarity and

restraint, his contributions supportive and assertive, but never showy.

Those qualities have boosted his value as an accompanist. Since he moved from Japan to New York three years ago, he regularly has worked with singers. And that has proved fortuitous. At a May 2015 restaurant gig accompanying Pamela Knowles, he impressed a diner: veteran composer Bernard Hoffer, who immediately saw the possibilities of packaging the pianist's gifts.

"Even the first time I heard him, I had an inkling," Hoffer said.

New Kid In Town—which features a few of Hoffer's arrangements—varies widely in tone and treatment, from heated (Neal Hefti's "Repetition") to cool (Otomo's "Grandma's Song"). Some tracks revel in mainstream convention (Jule Styne's "People"), while others are more ambitious (reductions of "Mars" and "Venus" from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*).

Otomo pulls it all off with aplomb, reflecting a deep immersion in both traditional and modern schools of jazz piano, according to bassist Noriko Ueda, who plays on the new album.

"He has both sides of the vocabulary," said Ueda, who has known Otomo since they first gigged at the Royal Horse in Osaka a decade ago.

Otomo, 31, still works hard building that vocabulary, spending three hours a day at an upright piano in his Queens apartment. In April, he plans to take what he has learned back to Japan, where he's booked 15 dates. Having absorbed the Big Apple's multiculturalism, he'll be returning informed and transformed. And that will present its own challenges going forward.

"I don't know who I am now," he said. "There is definitely a difference in culture between Japan and America. Every time I see my old friends, there's a different vibe. I've changed."

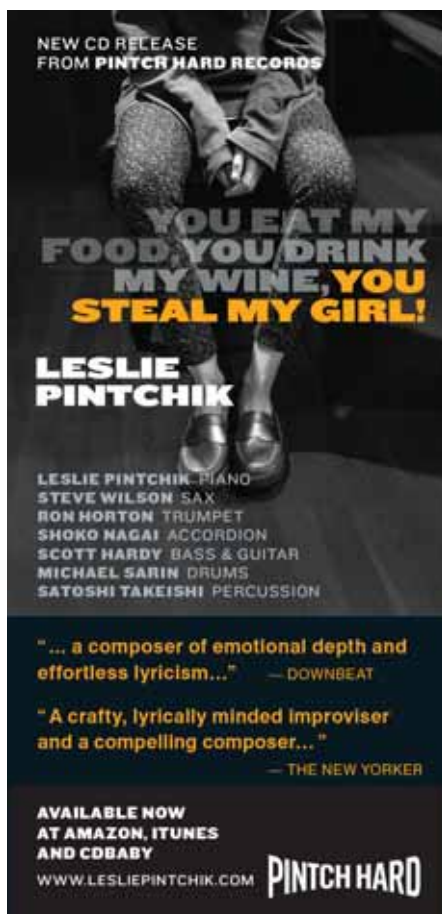
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Robert Finley's new album is titled *Goin' Platinum!*



ROBERT FINLEY

'Work the Hurt Out'

Singer Robert Finley started recording earnestly in his 60s, but that late start hasn't dimmed his confidence. In fact, he titled his new album *Goin' Platinum!* (Easy Eye Sound). It's a collaboration with producer/songwriter Dan Auerbach, of The Black Keys. Determination also fuels Finley's conversation.

"I was talking to Dan and his wife, and I said, 'We're going platinum,'" Finley said. "We got to get a Grammy for this thing. She said she'd be my date for that day. So I said, 'You got to focus on what you're going to wear, so we'll look good on camera.'"

Auerbach's songs for the project cover multiple styles—from acoustic blues to modern soul ballads. Finley enthusiastically makes his voice fit the diverse material. On "If You Forget My Love," his gravely enunciation creates a compelling contrast to the cheery backing vocals. Finley also stretches into falsetto on "Holy Wine."

"We had finished the record, and I was just messing around in the studio and did the song in falsetto," Finley said. "I looked over and Dan and the other guys were laughing and said, 'Can you do the whole song like that?' That's the good part; you go up until it hurts. After a while, anything that hurts you means you're not using it enough, so you have to work the hurt out."

Auerbach crafted songs that connect to Finley's life story. The bluesman reflected on his childhood in a small Louisiana town: "My dad was a sharecropper and, to be honest about it, I still don't think we got our share." As he learned to play guitar around the age of 10, he responded to the narrative lyrics in classic r&b and gospel tunes by artists such as Ray Charles and The Staple Singers. He sees that feature as a key element of the *Goin' Platinum!* songs.

"All those songs told a story, and when you finished singing a song, it was just like you just

read a book," Finley said. "That comes back to me dealing with Dan. His songs all seem to pertain to something that happened to me in my life. There had to be something where heaven intervened for us to meet."

As a soldier in the Army in the early 1970s, Finley played music during a stint in Europe. He later studied drawing blueprints through the G.I. Bill. He worked as a carpenter in Louisiana for decades while only performing occasionally. A few years ago, though, his eyesight deteriorated to the point that he was unable to construct buildings, but, as he explained, "I could still read the frets on a guitar neck."

A friend took him to the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Arkansas, in 2015, and after playing on the street, Finley went after a bigger audience. "The stage manager said, 'This is a rough crowd, so you'll either be discovered or you'll be the laughingstock of this town,'" Finley recalled. "I was like, 'Sounds fine to me.'"

A representative of Music Maker Relief Foundation, which assists older musicians, noticed Finley and helped him make connections in the music industry. Finley released the defiant album *Age Don't Mean A Thing* (Big Legal Mess) in 2016.

Finley will tour with Auerbach in 2018, playing shows in Brooklyn (March 27), Chicago (April 2) and Denver (April 5). Afterward, he'll "be trying to create some new dance moves," he said. Still living in northern Louisiana, Finley has enjoyed promoting the album, and he's reveling in the newfound attention.

"Who would have thought I'd be making videos?" Finley marveled. "I get up in the morning and my grandkids are watching me on the screen and imitating me. I need to make the best of this, because I've got too many people depending on me. So I just say, 'Get it while you can.'"

—Aaron Cohen

17

20

TO

2018

MAY

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LAN TUNG

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'EVERYBODY TOOK OFF THEIR MASK'

THE BAD
PLUS

By Phillip Lutz

Photos by Jimmy & Dena Katz

Holed up in a second-floor session space on Manhattan's West Side, the new lineup of *The Bad Plus*—with *Orrin Evans* replacing Ethan Iverson on piano—was winding down an end-of-year rehearsal with an upbeat “Dirty Blonde,” a tightly structured warhorse from the old band’s 2004 album *Give* (Columbia).

The trio was still three weeks away from its Jan. 17 debut, which would be at Jazz St. Louis. But Evans—an imposing bandleader and provocative phrasemaker on the scene for more than 20 years—was already putting his stamp on the tune, subtly altering its flow with the kind of angular, elliptical flashes of wit for which he is known.

While not every kink had been ironed out, the interplay among Evans, bassist Reid Anderson and drummer Dave King had a seasoned feel. In that, it resembled the back-and-forth that the old *Bad Plus* would display in its farewell appearance four days later, on New Year’s Eve, at the Village Vanguard. That performance, a rousing exercise in egalitarianism, argued eloquently for the band’s reputation as singular innovators of the piano-bass-drums format.

Based on a sampling of the rehearsal in the waning days of 2017—and on the evidence of the new trio’s first album, *Never Stop II* (Legbreaker)—the new group will offer its own take on the format, one that is at once fresh and respectful of the band’s history. And that bodes well as the band looks to a full schedule of performances in 2018.





The new lineup of The Bad Plus: Reid Anderson (left), Orrin Evans and Dave King



Anderson (left), Evans and King share a laugh.

The Bad Plus' future was hardly guaranteed when, early in 2017, Iverson announced his intention to leave the band. Caught at the Vanguard before the final performance by the original lineup, Iverson stressed that he was moving on because, after 17 years, his "statement had been made." He also said he would have preferred that the band not continue.

That might have been its fate. In a roundtable discussion among King, Anderson and Evans after the late-December rehearsal, the drummer and bassist asserted that they would have retired The Bad Plus as a working unit had Evans not agreed to come on board.

As the year unfolds, the group—which, in its first incarnation, made its name deconstructing songs by bands like Blondie, Nirvana and Black Sabbath—might continue to mine popular culture for material. It could venture into more ambitious territory, as the old band did when it reimagined Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* and Ornette Coleman's *Science Fiction*. Those decisions, the bandmates explained, remain to be made.

But, they said, the band will certainly draw liberally on its vast book of originals, like "Dirty Blonde," an Anderson composition. Prominent on the set lists for the 2018 tour will be tunes from *Never Stop II*. Recorded in September, the album is a kind of follow-up to 2010's *Never Stop*: Like the earlier collection, it is distin-

guished in the Bad Plus discography in that it contains all originals.

The new material instantly identifies the composers with favorite themes. Anderson expounds on spatial relations in his sonorous opener, "Hurricane Birds." King offers the latest in a series of deft tributes to anthemic totems in his stirring "1983 Regional All-Star." Evans, echoing his trio Tarbaby, alludes to West African influences in his rumbling "Boffadem."

All of which is executed with authority, heralding the emergence of a collective sensibility. Though most of the tunes on *Never Stop II* are new, the relationships behind them aren't. And that provides a firm foundation for the group's future and an opening for the present discussion.

YOU ALL KNEW EACH OTHER FOR YEARS BEFORE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF BECOMING A TRIO. COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE INTERPERSONAL DYNAMIC LEADING UP TO THE NEW ALBUM?

Orrin Evans: My relationship goes back to '93 with Reid. We met in Philadelphia. Reid was one of the people who put the bug in me to move to New York. A few of us had been playing together in Philly and moved to New York at the same time. A couple of years later, when The Bad Plus started, I had always heard about them through Reid. Every time they were in town, it felt like I was going to see my brothers. And that's what it feels like now.

Dave King: There's a neighborhood relationship to it, and that goes to the longevity of the relationships. When I'm in Philadelphia, I always look forward to seeing Orrin. I've been a fan of his playing for a long time, but I've also really respected him as a man. I'm still acclimating to the way some of these older tunes sound with this very large heart—very real joy and energy—which is where I try to play from all the time. I have to be celebrating.

Reid Anderson: The first tune on the record [Anderson's "Hurricane Birds"] is the first tune we played in the studio.

DK: And everyone just started playing, instead of gripping it. That feel and that way of placing the beat—it happened instantly. Most of the tunes are first and second takes. We were done way early—by the middle of the afternoon the second day. You want to believe that's the way it would always go.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE WRITING WILL CHANGE, IF AT ALL, WITH A VERY STRONG NEW VOICE IN THE BAND?

OE: For me, the writing comes first. I've never been in a situation where I've composed specifically for a group of people. When I bring the music to these gentlemen, and they do what they do, with minds like these, I haven't specif-

ically thought about writing for The Bad Plus. It's more like, "What's The Bad Plus going to do with this?" You take the music where it goes.

REID, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

RA: The Bad Plus has been around a long time, so I naturally think about everyone's strengths and try to write something that's ultimately going to be satisfying for everybody based on what they do well. And for myself, I was very much thinking about Orrin.

er Josh Redman. It was more like, "We're not backing up Josh Redman; he's absorbed into the thing." With Orrin, it's not like we have to hold on to something about what The Bad Plus was. We know that it sounds like us, but it also sounds like Orrin.

WAS ANYONE OTHER THAN ORRIN CONSIDERED AS A THIRD MEMBER OF THE GROUP?

DK: We wouldn't have continued the band if he'd said no. Reid and I have artistically direct-

DK: It's not that we have to continue this band because it's part of our living. It's never been that with us. It's always been this family-style art project. Not to sound pretentious, but it's always been where these leaders come together and they share the space. We always thought that's the strongest statement you can make if you're able to handle it.

We want to be doing this band. Why wouldn't you want to be in a band where you bring something in and the band plays the shit out of it, and then you go and play it for people? And you have fans of the band?

THAT FAN BASE EXPANDED WHEN YOU BECAME WIDELY KNOWN FOR YOUR COVERS OF POPULAR TUNES. YOU'VE ALSO DONE SOME OUTLIER MATERIAL, LIKE *RITE OF SPRING*. WHERE DO YOU INTEND TO GO IN TERMS OF REPERTOIRE?

RA: We don't have a fixed idea of where it's going to go. If something comes along and we feel inspired to do whatever it is, we'll do it.

OE: There's going to be a time for everything.

DK: In the early years with Ethan, we didn't set out to cover certain repertoire. We didn't say, "Now we're going to cover 'Smells Like Teen Spirit.' That was all very organic. That was for the first shows. Reid and I had talked about deconstructing some pop music because we had made a record like that years ago when I lived in Los Angeles that we never put out; we were messing with the idea of not just jazzifying pop tunes but, like Ornette Coleman, using the melody as a jumping-off point. We were just putting together tunes to play a couple of sets.

We didn't want to just play some standards and some originals. We started naming tunes. The attention we were getting was because our method of doing it was different. But right now, it just felt like a natural space to get inside everyone's tunes and throw that down.

WHEN YOU HAVE COVERED A TUNE, HAVE YOU MADE SURE THAT YOU FELT SOME AFFINITY FOR IT BEFORE YOU REALLY DEVELOPED IT? OR HAS IT EVER BEEN, "LET'S TAKE ON THIS TUNE AS A CHALLENGE BECAUSE IT'S SO WEAK?"

DK: No, it was always that we liked the tune. People say, "Is it ironic what you're doing?" I don't spend five-and-a-half months away from my children for a joke. I'm deadly serious about this. Do I see that it can be viewed as slightly ironic? Sure. It's a beautiful thing to have all these different colors and emotions in the music. That's fine. But where it's coming from for me is a well of real.

DK: Back in the old band, now and again one of us wouldn't connect with a tune and it would be trashed. You give it a shot and you say, "I just can't quite understand what to do here." It was rare on originals, but sometimes, after playing it live a few times, it happened.

'WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE SOUND OF THIS BAND, IT'S BEEN ABOUT THREE EQUAL VOICES.' —DAVE KING

SO THE WRITING FOR THE ALBUM WAS DONE AFTER YOU KNEW ORRIN WOULD BE IN THE BAND?

RA: Yes. But that's just my approach.

HOW WAS THAT REFLECTED IN THE MUSIC?

RA: It's like you have an image in your mind of the person, and then the music writes itself through that projected image of who you're writing for. It's more an abstract conceptual approach than a literal one: "Oh, Orrin does this well, Orrin does that well."

DAVE, WHAT WILL BE YOUR WRITING APPROACH?

DK: I just write, like Orrin was saying. But I would say that, when we talk about the sound of this band, it's been about three equal voices, taking the music of any one of us and trying to make it our own. We don't think, "OK, now we're playing Orrin's tune, or Reid's tune—I'm just serving the composer." The sound of the band to me is not thinking like it's a piano, it's a bass, it's a drum, it's a piano trio, it's anything. And it's the same thing with the ownership of the music.

Our sound is that you have three composers. It doesn't mean that when you get to the drummer's tune, it's just a funk jam in E minor. There are compositions there. Everybody's got an idiosyncratic compositional style and everything is thrown down equally.

Josh Redman mentioned to me that when he was playing with us, he started thinking very differently. We sounded like The Bad Plus with Josh. It wasn't that we were overpowering Josh Redman—you can't overpower

ed this band since its inception. That doesn't minimize Ethan at all. For us, it's always been like it's about someone we can relate to and contribute—share the space with. I was excited about what Orrin would do.

So it was impossible to consider a cattle call. It was: "If this particular guy wants to do it, then we'll do it." And we really wanted to do it. We had been thinking about this for a few years. It was probably January [2017], and Reid was going to call him.

HOW DID THE CALL GO DOWN?

RA: Orrin had just gotten off a plane from Europe. The timing was perfect. But I [want to] elaborate a bit on what Dave was saying about the sound and the space and how it works in The Bad Plus: The point is that it's a conceptual space—a compositional space and a really curated space in the sense that everyone is a unique composer with a very identifiable voice. Everybody has to come to the table and take the compositions on their own terms and figure out their way through them. The music makes sense, but it's also not conventional. Each piece is its own little world you have to navigate.

IT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ARTISTIC CONSIDERATIONS HERE, AND COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AREN'T REALLY ENTERING INTO THE CONVERSATION.

RA: One of the reasons Orrin is here, besides his playing, is that he's a friend. That's just as important.



The Bad Plus performs during a DownBeat photo session at The Jazz Gallery in New York on Dec. 28.

RA: Everyone has a right to say they don't feel like doing a certain song, but we want to err on the side of being open-minded and openhearted.

ON THE NEW ALBUM, THERE ARE EIGHT SONGS. REID, YOU WROTE FOUR, AND ORRIN AND DAVE, YOU SPLIT THE OTHER FOUR. HOW DID YOU CHOOSE WHAT MADE THE CUT?

OE: I think there was only one that we started and reworked it.

WHICH ONE WAS THAT?

RA: "Kerosene" [a bonus track, written by Anderson and available digitally].

OE: Once the music comes in, the goal for us is to make the music feel at home. Sometimes, that takes a little longer. Sometimes, the music must take its shoes off; sometimes you have to show it the closet, until it's really comfortable at home. You very rarely want to kick somebody out of the house. That's the same thing that happens with the music. Our goal is to make all the songs work and not kick them out.

DOES THE MUSIC CHANGE VERY QUICKLY FROM WHAT'S ON THE PAGE WHEN YOU START DEVELOPING IT?

DK: Just like there are different temperatures between members of the band, there are different temperatures in how the music is ingested and shown to each other. Reid is typically more detailed, and you deal with the details as things start to emerge.

My approach is that I have those details, but I also have these sorts of wanton forms, like, "Maybe we reach some epiphany if you take some of this and realize it can be smudged here

and there or it can be personalized." The end result, though, is detailed. Everyone is a composer and they deserve your full attention.

[Turns toward Evans] One thing I like about working on your music is, instantly, you felt "band." We're trading ideas. To me, the two tunes on the record by Orrin ["Boffadem" and "Commitment"] yield the most, on some level, incredible interplay, especially "Boffadem." A lot of people who've heard that tune talk about it to me. The way that we're playing together, the circular polyrhythms—it just felt like all the details of the tune are there and everybody has the highest responsibility to make it happen.

That happened with everybody, but this is the first time I've played Orrin's music. I just felt that openness to contribute. At the same time, I knew he has these details, just like everybody, in the writing.

ORRIN, YOU'VE DONE A LOT OF TRIO WORK, AND SOME PRETTY IMPRESSIVE STUFF LATELY. HOW DOES THIS BAND DIFFER FROM YOUR MOST RECENT TRIO?

OE: Every time I get on the bandstand, I hope and pray it's going to be a collective experience. With some of the people I've played with, I've really felt that. So coming into this, it was just like walking into home because it was just as collective. But [in the other trios] it wasn't necessarily everyone's compositions. Maybe here, the fact that you're playing everyone's compositions—you're getting to know everyone compositionally—really lets you into another part of their soul.

In playing with other groups, we may all be wearing the mask of what the leader may want. In this situation, everybody took off

their mask. By the time you hit the bandstand, you know totally who you're with. And that's a beautiful thing. From the first day, it was, "Put the mask down."

DK: We believe the band is stronger when you honor the band members. The [John] Coltrane quartet—are you kidding me? That relationship between [drummer] Elvin [Jones] and Coltrane—I mean, that's *the* relationship. I'm a fan of [drummer] Rashied Ali, but I'm sorry, that's not the same thing.

That transcendental space that Charlie Haden and Ornette Coleman got into; I love every period of Ornette, but that relationship—Don [Cherry], with [Ed] Blackwell and Billy [Higgins]—you cannot say that's possible unless those people are on the stand.

RA: If you talk to any jazz musician, [he or she will say] it's always a collective experience. But it's so often reduced to something very much about a single individual or individual virtuosity. Unless you're out there playing a solo piano concert or something like that, it's a band. That's the way this music works; that's the way it's made.

DK: That's why going out and getting some random virtuosic pianist to join The Bad Plus would become this thing that isn't what it is. This isn't about one agenda above another agenda. When you're here, it's about sharing the space and feeling like you're honored.

AT THIS POINT, DO YOU AGREE THAT MANY MUSICIANS STRIVE FOR SOMETHING BEYOND RAW CHOPS? NOT THAT ORRIN DOESN'T HAVE THEM, BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

DK: It's not. What are your *ideas*? Ethan is this very idiosyncratic genius, and so is Orrin. It's like this whole other set of coordinates coming into things we can play with.

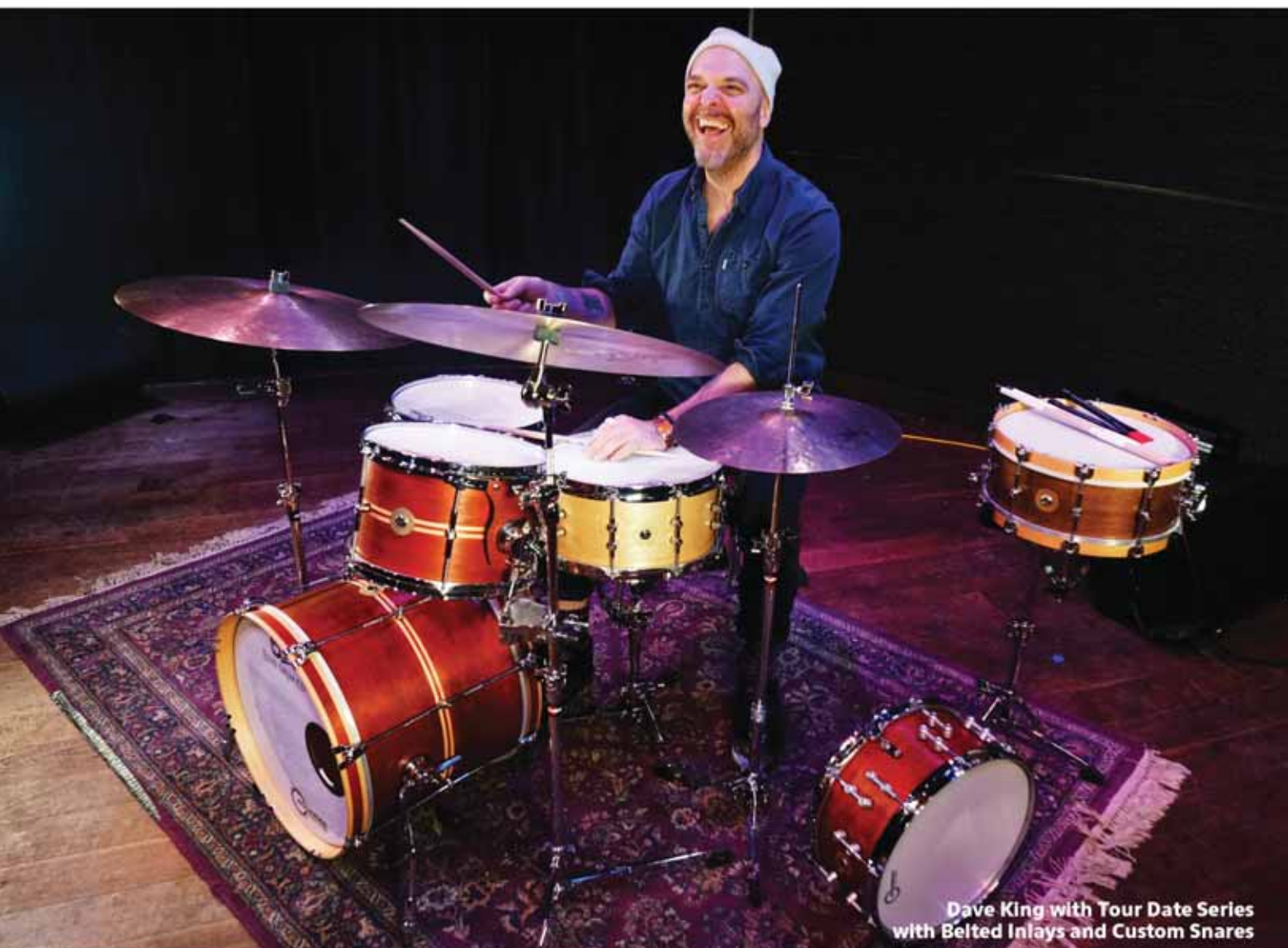
OE: As a piano player, one of the terms that's bothered me for years is the term "melting pot." What bothered me was that, when you have a melting pot, everything melts together and becomes one. But The Bad Plus is a salad bowl. [After you mix it] Dave is still going to be lettuce, I'm still going to be an olive—sometimes I like pickles, though—and Reid is still a tomato. We're all going to have our flavors and come together.

RA: There isn't a specific category of player that has to be here. We're all really different and have our specific likes and dislikes that don't necessarily intersect, and that's fine. It's the understanding that we're going to respect each other's interest and voice. That's the result of working together to create something from whoever's compositional vision or whatever ideas are there. That's the sound of the band; that's how it gets made.

DB

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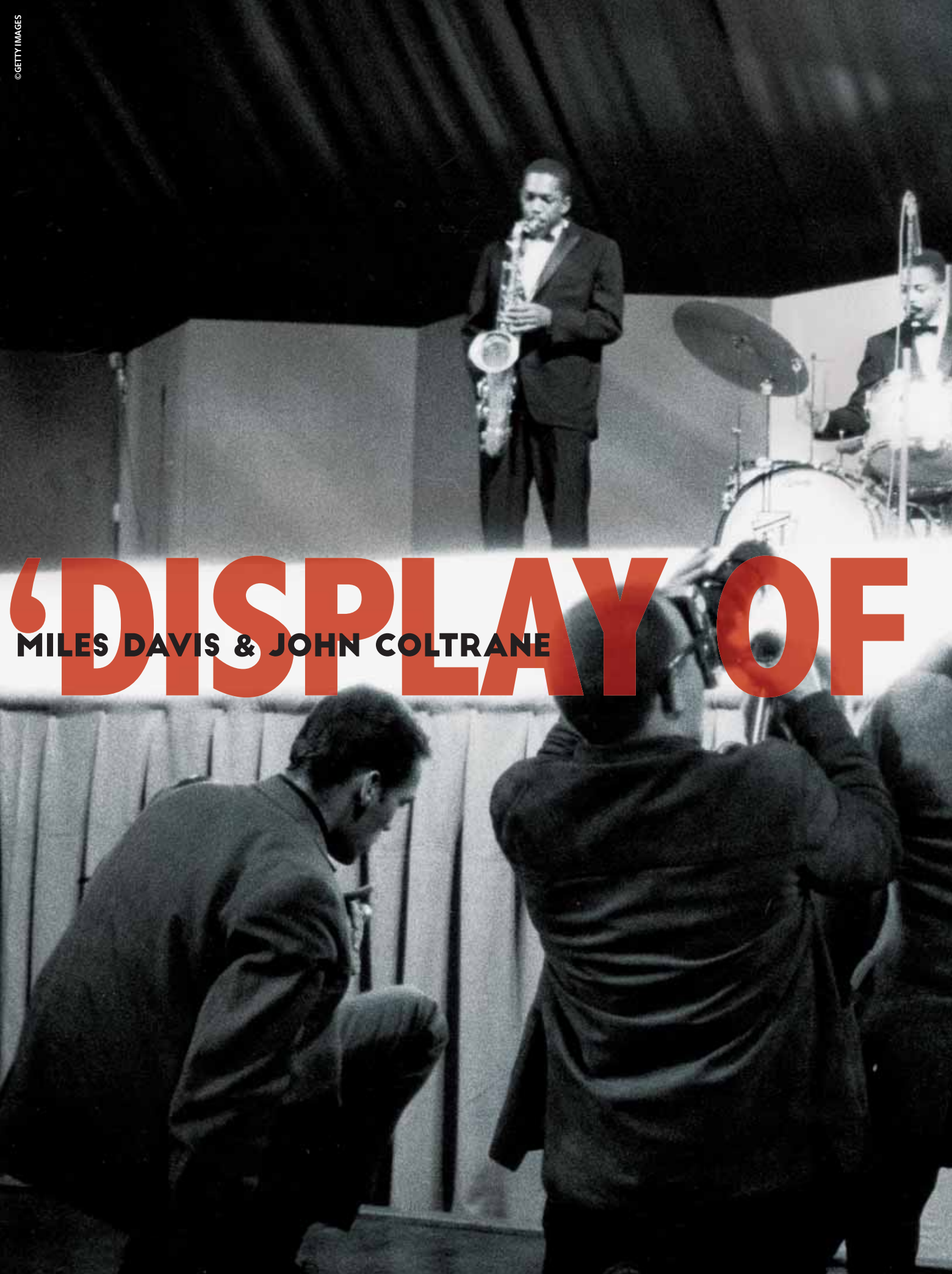


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'DISPLAY OF

MILES DAVIS & JOHN COLTRANE



DIFFERENT MINDS'

BY JAMES HALE

Radical changes in musical direction don't always sit easily with listeners. The shock of the new can be convulsive. But, in retrospect, these artistic schisms frequently provide important milestones. For example, consider the 1913 Paris debut of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring* or Bob Dylan "going electric" at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. Better yet, dig into Volume 6 of Columbia/Legacy Recordings' Miles Davis "Bootleg" series: *Miles Davis & John Coltrane—The Final Tour*.

Prior to flying to Europe for the tour, John Coltrane had made it clear he intended to leave the quintet.



© JEAN-PIERRE LÉLOR

Recorded at five concerts during Davis' spring 1960 tour of Europe, the 20 tracks showcase Coltrane's final performances with a band in which he had been an integral member since 1955 (with the exception of a nine-month gap). Deep into what critic Ira Gitler called his "sheets of sound" period, Coltrane played long and hard—twisting melodic concepts and exploring harmonic combinations that would form the foundation of his next phase of musical development. Some members of the audience, particularly during the two shows on March 21 in Paris, made their objections known, while others clearly wanted to hear more.

"That wasn't just a European thing," said 89-year-old drummer Jimmy Cobb, the sole surviving member of Davis' 1960 quintet, which also included pianist Wynton Kelly and bassist Paul Chambers. "A lot of places we played in the States before that tour weren't ready for Trane's thing, either. At one club, a woman stood up and yelled at Miles, 'Make him stop.'"

Coltrane's presence on the tour—a Norman Granz Jazz at the Philharmonic production that also included pianist Oscar Peterson and saxophonist Stan Getz—wasn't guaranteed until just days before the entourage left for France. The Davis quintet's previous gig had been in Oakland, California, on March 5, and Coltrane had already served notice. In fact, he had booked his new band into New York's Jazz Gallery for May 3. (See sidebar on page 39.)

As jazz historian Ashley Kahn points out in his liner-notes essay, the 1960 tour represented a career breakthrough for Davis in Europe: It was his first trip to the continent leading his own band. Kahn writes that the trumpeter was "upgrading from the jazz club circuit in the U.S. to the level of international music star, playing major theaters in the capitals of Western Europe, appearing in tailored tuxedos ..."

It was little wonder, then, that Coltrane's potential departure gave him pause.

"Trane didn't want to make the European trip and was ready to move out before we left," Davis wrote in the autobiography he co-authored with Quincy Troupe in 1989. "If he had quit right then he would have really hung me up because nobody else knew the songs, and this tour was real important. He decided to go with us, but he grumbled and complained and sat by himself all the time we were over there."

"[Coltrane] was there knowing it would be his last hurrah with the band," Cobb recalled. "He only had one little airline bag with him, and not much but one extra white shirt. I don't know if Miles had to beg him to do that tour or what, but he was all there onstage. We were having a great time. Everybody in that band could really play, and Miles let us play."

While much of the focus on the music performed on the European tour—which has been previously peddled via inferior audio recordings on underground labels—has fallen on Coltrane because of his radical experiments and the audiences' reactions to him, the entire band is in top form.

"Miles sounds amazing; he's very energized," said Michael Cuscuna, who co-produced *The Final Tour* box set along with Steve Berkowitz and Richard Seidel. "I don't think Miles sounded this aggressive again until 1969."

"Miles [is] very creative in his solos, and well-focused during the theme/exposition segments," said Italian guitarist Enrico Merlin, who recently published the book *Miles Davis 1959: A Day-By-Day Chronology*. "In 1960, Miles was expressively as far from *Kind Of Blue* as Trane was."

Cobb added, "You had to be strong enough to keep up with those guys. John wanted that support and interaction from a drummer, and I

was young and strong then."

The wild card for many first-time listeners likely will be Kelly, who had joined the band in early 1959. With the departure of alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley in the fall of 1959, Kelly had already assumed a larger role as a soloist in the band. But during the winter of 1960, Davis had brought the band back up to a sextet with the addition of vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery. The younger brother of guitarist Wes Montgomery, Buddy had played some West Coast dates and was set to do the European tour, making it as far as the departure lounge at New York's Idlewild Airport before his phobia of flying won out.

"So, because neither Adderley nor Montgomery are there, you get to hear a lot more Wynton Kelly," Berkowitz said. "That's a bonus, and I think fans will be thrilled to hear him playing his ass off."

Cuscuna noted that Kelly's exceptional playing at Copenhagen's Tivolis Koncertsal on March 24 influenced the decision to include that show in the box set. The tracks from the Copenhagen show include "So What" and "All Blues," both from the landmark *Kind Of Blue*.

The handful of opening shows on the tour featured long versions of Davis' favorite live vehicles, including "On Green Dolphin Street," "Walkin'," "Round Midnight" and "Oleo." *Kind Of Blue* had been released in the States on Aug. 17 the previous year, but few copies had yet found their way into the hands of European fans. Although Davis was moving toward the use of musical modes as a harmonic framework for his compositions—introducing the Parisian audience to "So What" at the opening concert on March 21—he still favored tried-and-true pieces that the band had been playing live since the mid-'50s.

"*Kind Of Blue* was a spectacular moment in Miles' career," said Merlin, "but the sextet [with Adderley] never played like that live. There was a great dichotomy between live and studio playing, whether it was Red Garland, Bill Evans or Wynton Kelly on piano, and Philly Joe Jones or Jimmy Cobb on drums."

As Kahn writes, on the 1960 tour, Davis was "staking a stylistic middle ground between, on the one hand, the familiar standards of the 1940s and '50s—'Bye Bye Blackbird,' 'On Green Dolphin Street,' 'All Of You'—[and] new, open-ended structures with an emotionally ambivalent effect—'So What,' 'All Blues'—modal compositions demanding a focus on personal lyricism."

Kahn speculates that it was the crowd's vociferous reaction to Coltrane's unexpected extrapolations of the standards that influenced Davis' decision to include more of the modal work on the later shows.

"What Miles picks for his set list is always fascinating to study," Cuscuna said. "Certainly

what we see here shows a trajectory away from the standards toward the modality of *Kind Of Blue*, with Coltrane working out his own steeplechase harmonics through the music.”

As new and challenging as it was, the outspoken audience members, who can be heard whistling or shouting, were in the minority. Following a show, Swedish pianist Lasse Werner (1934–’92) praised the band in a review he penned: “They showed the listeners the confidence never to resign and just play the known and safe phrases, and they invited us to be part of a creative process in which everything can happen.”

Selecting representative shows from among those played in 20 cities—which included Oslo, Berlin, Stuttgart and Milan—was a challenge for the three producers. Several shows were recorded by state-owned broadcasters, and as the number of bootlegs that have appeared over the years illustrate, there is no shortage of unauthorized audience recordings.

“We knew Paris and Stockholm were the strongest, from both the sound and performance basis,” Cuscuna said. “I also felt Copenhagen was outstanding, but there was a phasing problem with the sound, so we had to get it to a point where it stood up to the others.”

“I’ve had a high-resolution copy of the Paris shows for years, so I knew that was rock-solid,” Berkowitz said. “I also knew there was a quarter-inch tape that was made the day of the Copenhagen show, but the question was, how could I get my hands on it?”

The quest for a usable version of that Copenhagen show is the stuff of record collectors’ fantasies, even while it belies the image of how a major international corporation like Sony Music might work. It began with a call to a former executive with Sony Europe, which led into the depths of the bureaucracy of the Netherlands’ public radio system. Officials there told Berkowitz that all that existed of the quintet’s performance was a DAT copy. Berkowitz persisted, convinced of the presence of a source tape.

“Several weeks went by, and the date for mastering the set was coming up fast,” Berkowitz recalled. “Finally, the week before our deadline, we discovered the Dutch radio people were confusing what we were looking for with a radio documentary that had been done on Miles. They had been looking for the wrong thing.”

On the Thursday prior to mastering, Berkowitz finally received a photo of

the source tape. He located an engineer in the Netherlands who could do a digital transfer of the tape and dispatched a bicycle courier to pick up the tape and deliver it to the engineer’s remote studio.

“I went to bed that night with the image of the bike courier frantically pedalling out into the woods to deliver that historic tape,” Berkowitz said.

On Saturday night, with just days to spare, the digital file arrived.

So now, Berkowitz, Cuscuna and Seidel had five shows—close to four hours of music—along with a six-minute interview with Coltrane, conducted by saxophonist Carl-Erik Lindgren. Why stop there when recordings of other shows exist, like the March 22 Stockholm concert and the April 8 gig in Zurich?

“There are commercial considerations in creating sets like these today,” Berkowitz said. “These are the shows that were the best quality. You get to hear the acceptance and non-acceptance by the audience, and you hear the band take things pretty out in Paris and Stockholm. It’s a pretty concise size.”

“My goal is to legitimize this music and get it out to regular jazz fans who may never have heard this,” Cuscuna said. “This gets this amazing music out to beyond what I call the ‘cassette crowd’—fanatics who have always collected music like this, trading it from hand to hand.”

For vinyl collectors and audiophiles, Columbia/Legacy will release a single 12-inch album of the Copenhagen concert, and a two-LP edition of the Paris concerts will be released by Vinyl Me, Please on 180-gram vinyl with special listening notes.

“The vinyl sounds fantastic, and we really wanted to get this out to younger people who are so into vinyl now,” Berkowitz said.

For Berkowitz—an enthusiastic music veteran who has worked with artists as diverse as Leonard Cohen and Henry Threadgill—the music Davis’ quintet made during those three weeks in 1960 has another gift for young listeners.

“Here you have two of the century’s giant thinkers, doing what they do best. They’re coming together and diverging. They’re together and untogether. In this binary era, when people seem to be for or against things, we all could use this display of different minds working together to create something beautiful.”

“What you hear,” said Cuscuna, “is a band at the end of its run, and you hear this genius, Coltrane, breaking out and moving on.” **DB**

John Coltrane was free to experiment while playing as a sideman with Miles Davis, but still sought a way forward on his own.



‘I’ve Been So Free’

“I have a whole bag of things I’m trying to figure out,” John Coltrane told Swedish saxophonist Carl-Erik Lindgren in a radio interview that’s included on *Miles Davis & John Coltrane—The Final Tour*. The challenge, he said, was determining a way forward. When Lindgren inquired if being a member of Davis’ quintet had influenced his exploration, Coltrane replied: “It has led me into most of the things I do now. I’ve been so free here. Almost anything I want to try, I’m welcome to do it.”

Coltrane admitted he was splitting from the group but said he hadn’t chosen new bandmates yet. But within three weeks of returning to New York, he was leading the first of his own bands at the Jazz Gallery. Although it would take him several months to settle on pianist McCoy Tyner and drummer Elvin Jones, with bassist Jimmy Garrison joining 18 months later, Coltrane recognized that he had to lead his own band to fully realize the radical harmonic ideas that were forming in his head.

Coltrane first had broached the subject of leaving Davis for good while the band was playing a two-week engagement at Birdland in early 1959. It would take him more than a year to extricate himself, and his departure left Davis with a huge void to fill. Davis’ first choice, Wayne Shorter, was unavailable. So, instead, he went with bopper Sonny Stitt, and debuted the new lineup at Philadelphia’s Showboat on May 9. But Stitt departed after just seven months, leaving Davis to scramble again to find a replacement. Hank Mobley was a suitable stopgap, but the stylistic momentum Coltrane brought to the band stalled and wouldn’t be restarted until Shorter came on board at the end of 1964.

In later years, Davis made no secret of how much respect he had for Coltrane, but his pride made it difficult to admit how much he missed Trane’s blazing creativity. In his autobiography, Davis remarked on Coltrane’s reluctance to join him in Europe: “Before he quit, I gave him [a] soprano saxophone ... I could already hear the effect it would have on his tenor playing, how it would revolutionize it. I always joked with him that if he had stayed home and not come with us on this trip, he wouldn’t have gotten that soprano saxophone, so he was in debt to me for as long as he lived.” —James Hale

By Yoshi Kato | Photo by Mark Sheldon

WALTER SMITH III

Expanding the Foundation

Despite the fact that many musicians take a tour break for the holidays, late December is a great time in Southern California for catching live jazz. Every year, at the Blue Whale club in Los Angeles fans pack the house to hear specially assembled local groups.

Tenor and soprano saxophonist Walter Smith III has played several of these nights over the years. On Dec. 22, the longtime L.A.-area resident was playing in a rare organ trio setting with Larry Goldings and drummer Christian Euman.

Smith—a veteran of bands led by artists such as drummer Roy Haynes and trumpeters Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah and Ambrose Akinmusire—was already in promotional mode for the Feb. 9 release of *Twio*, his fifth album as a leader (distributed by Whirlwind Recordings). The Berklee College of Music, Manhattan School of Music and Monk Institute alumnus recorded eight standards (including Thelonious Monk’s “Ask Me Now” and Gigi Gryce’s “Social Call”) and one original with a band that included drummer Eric Harland and, alternately, bassist Harish Raghavan or Christian McBride. Tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman contributes to two tracks.

Earlier in the year, the Indiana University Associate Professor of Music (Jazz Studies) was name-checked by Ice-T’s character on an episode of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. “Not only was Walter compared to Coltrane, but he indirectly helped solve the crime,” marveled pianist and *SVU* enthusiast Taylor Eigsti, Smith’s bandmate in drummer Eric Harland’s band *Voyager*.





Eric Harland

HARLAND HELMS VOYAGER

February will be a momentous month for two alumni of Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA) and members of Voyager. Saxophonist Walter Smith III is releasing *Twio*, and Eric Harland, the drummer and leader for the quintet Voyager, is putting out *The 13th Floor*, the group's third studio album.

The two discs complement one another. *Twio* features three members of Voyager—Smith, Harland and bassist Harish Raghavan—on half of the tracks playing standards. Guitarist Julian Lage and pianist Taylor Eigsti round out the group on *The 13th Floor*, which contains all original compositions.

Although Smith and Harland were not enrolled at HSPVA at the same time, the two knew each other as youngsters because they met at a summer jazz camp in Houston. "That's when Walter still played *alto*," the drummer recalled with a warm chuckle.

The current "core quintet" incarnation of Voyager celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2017. Eigsti, Raghavan and Harland were playing as a trio, and the pianist introduced the bandleader to Lage, a friend from his youth and long-time musical collaborator, and reintroduced him to Smith when Harland wanted to expand the group's sonic palette.

Presented with the idea that Smith doesn't consider himself a bandleader type at this point, Harland countered: "I *do* think of him as a leader. I think he's just a little shy about his leadership things, because he's not really looking to put himself in the limelight.

"And that's what I really, truly enjoy about him: He's really just trying things out musically, and that's leadership skills right there," Harland continued. "Leadership can just be someone in the position to say, 'Well, let's just try this out. If this doesn't work, don't worry about it.' That's kind of how I feel about Voyager."

"Walter lets people be themselves musically while still knowing what he's trying to achieve," confirmed Eigsti, who played on Smith's fourth album, 2014's *Still Casual*. "He's got a sense of humor and humility that goes hand-in-hand with his extreme capabilities on his own instrument."

Harland praises Smith's organizational skills, discipline and open-mindedness as both a bandleader and an instrumentalist.

"The most beautiful thing about Walter's playing is that he's always trying something new—messing around with different mouthpieces and different horns, even," the drummer said. "He's just figuring out different ways to achieve a different sound. He's not really attached to one particular way. That allows room for so much creativity."

—Yoshi Kato

Smith made a hilarious, three-minute promotional video in which dozens of his friends—ranging from guitarist Mary Halvorson to WCPO television reporter Keenan Singleton to the entire Branford Marsalis Quartet—try to pronounce the title *Twio*. Online, it has gone viral.

Smith spoke with DownBeat in Blue Whale's dressing room prior to the first set.

YOUR NEW ALBUM FEATURES A SAXOPHONE TRIO PLAYING STANDARDS. HOW DID THIS PROJECT COME ABOUT?

I've been wanting to do it for a while, for all the obvious reasons. Everybody learns to play standards first. Somehow for me, after spending 10, 15 formative years learning to play that kind of stuff, as soon as it got to the point where I was making a living and having a career playing music, none of that music was a part of it.

It's just been only original music, by other people or my own writing. There's such an emphasis on that and your own individual sound, related to writing, in every band I've played with—dozens of them. So it's always been in my mind that I'd like to go back and do something with the stuff that I spent more than half of my musical life learning how to do.

IT SEEMS THAT THE MUSICAL POINTS OF REFERENCE WERE LESS EMPHASIZED AS YOU PROGRESSED.

One of the things that I also want to highlight with this album is the aspect of community. With everyone playing original music, it's almost impossible to invite people up to play with you on a gig at this point.

When I play in New York or wherever, there are always a bunch of cats in the audience. And it's, like, "Hey, would you like to come up and play on this song that I've been practicing for the last year? And it's in 11 and 9? And the bridge is in 13?" [laughs]

With this scenario, it's music that everyone knows. So everywhere we go when touring for this, whoever's there, we'll definitely invite people up.

DID YOU ALWAYS FEEL THE TRIO FORMAT WAS THE BEST WAY TO DO THAT?

Growing up, the first record that really grabbed me—where I really wanted to play saxophone and was, like, "This is exactly what I want to do"—was Kenny Garrett's *Triology* [Warner Brothers, 1995].

I remember Robert Glasper—he was one of the few people that could drive in high school [at Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts]. He's a couple of year older, and he drove me to McDonald's one day [laughs]. We listened to it in the car, and I was, like, "Man, this is ridiculous!" And from that moment, it's always been what I wanted to do.

Eventually, I got to Sonny Rollins' and Trane's trios.

SO YOU FELT THAT AT THIS POINT IN YOUR CAREER, AN ALBUM OF STANDARDS MADE SENSE?

I wish I had done this 10 years ago, because at that point, I hadn't segmented my playing so much. Right now, I feel like there's me when I'm playing over functional harmony, and then there's me when I'm playing over original music. The two halves have very different personalities.

HARISH RAGHAVAN AND ERIC HARLAND ARE YOUR BANDMATES IN VOYAGER. WAS IT NATURAL TO CHOOSE THEM FOR THE PROJECT?

The first call was to Roy [Haynes, who is now 92], and that's another reason why I wish I'd done it 10 years ago. Health-wise, it wasn't going to work out. But that's who I'd always pictured—coming full-circle.

After that, it was Eric and Christian [McBride]. Maybe two days after we finished the session, I went to Japan with Harland's Voyager—quartet, though, without [guitarist] Julian [Lage]. There was a night where Taylor stayed in, and Harish, Eric and I went to a jam session.

We ended up getting up to play, and it was just the three of us. And I was, like, "Man, yeah, this is a different energy. So maybe we should go in and do something, too." Then the next week I was back in New York for something else, and we went to Eric's studio, GSI, for an hour and did maybe six or seven tunes, just all one take of each.

I ended up using half of that and half of the other.

YOU ARE RELEASING *TWIO YOURSELF*. STILL CASUAL, YOUR 2014 ALBUM, WAS ALSO AN INDEPENDENT RELEASE. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE DIY APPROACH?

There were a few of us that signed to Concord at the same time: [alto saxophonist] Logan Richardson, [guitarist] Matt Stevens and myself ... They put together this band called Next Collective where we did cover tunes.

I had put out an album [the 2010 Criss Cross Jazz disc *III*], so the plan was that I'd record the next year and put it out. And things just kept getting delayed. We finally recorded [*Still Casual*], and we had booked a tour, a whole bunch of U.S. dates. We were working on Europe, and then the release date got pushed back six months.

And that caused a lot of personal problems for me with having to pay back advances to certain places and having a weird relationship with certain venues. Then there was *another* release date [and the album didn't come out]. So I ended up getting the master from them.

I had talked to Miguel Zenón, and he told me [how he sold his] records through CD Baby. It ended up being a best-case scenario. The only thing was, it was kind of an unceremonious release because there was not really any press behind it. But it had been three or four *years* at that point. And I just wanted to get it out and be done with it and move along.

IT CERTAINLY HELPED THAT YOU HAD ESTABLISHED YOURSELF AS AN ARTIST BY THEN.

Sure. There's still room to grow, though, as far as leader stuff. But I'm not a person that cares about that. I'm the consummate sideman [*laughs*]*—happy not to do any work except learn the music and show up where I'm supposed to be.*

BUT A DISCOGRAPHY OF FIVE LEADER ALBUMS AND THE FACT THAT YOU HEADLINE GIGS MIGHT SUGGEST OTHERWISE.

If you're honest with yourself, you know where you fit in. I've always liked trumpets. From high school on, I was always obsessed: I wanted to be Ron Blake in Roy Hargrove's quintet. I wanted to be Tim Warfield in Nicholas Payton's thing. And I would see them play live, and I'd be like, "Oh, my God! I would love to be Brice Winston in Terence's band." (*Ed Note: Smith ended up replacing Winston in Blanchard's band.*)

And I do enjoy being a leader. I enjoy writing and playing that music and getting it just right after playing it over and over and over, where it actually has that life to it. But there's also a lot of work involved with that, which I'm not necessarily super-excited about. And in the end, I also look at other people that I view as leaders and

think, "Well, that's not really me."

I look at people that I've played with, like Ambrose or Jason Moran, where their scope is so much broader than what I can bring to the table. Tyshawn Sorey—those kind of people where any scenario that they're in, I feel like they [excel] in it. I hope to get that point.

EDUCATION HAS BEEN A BIG PART OF YOUR CAREER, BOTH WHEN YOU WERE A STUDENT AND NOW IN YOUR ROLE AS A PROFESSOR. HOW DOES EDUCATION FACTOR INTO YOUR CAREER PATH?

Talking to people and finding out what they're interested in and trying to help them

on the path that they're into at the moment—that's something that I find interesting and fun, because sometimes it's things that I'm not aware of. So I'm learning it myself. Maybe I can learn it quicker than they can; maybe I can help them in that way. So I get a lot out of the time that I spend teaching.

The challenge is balancing touring, family and teaching, because they're all full-time jobs. It's just trying to balance all those things and the amount of planning that's involved and the amount of saying "no" to things you really want to do.

DB

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"It doesn't matter how hard you play, these cymbals are never too much for the mics onstage or the crowd in the room."
- Gregory Smith (Drummer)

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Mentor & Musical **‘MANIAC’**

By Jennifer Odell

Photos by Erika Goldring

Late one night after a gig, Jason Marsalis found himself poking around online, reading the backstory on a pop song that had been big when he was growing up in New Orleans in the 1980s. The vibraphonist played the song to check it out again and was surprised to hear how intricate the harmony was.

“I was like, ‘Man, these changes are incredible,’” he recalled, speaking on the phone from San Francisco ahead of a gig at SFJazz in January. His voice nearly cracked with excitement as he recounted the discovery. “After that, sometimes I would just go to the piano and play those chords.”

Determined to find a way to use the chord progression, he eventually opted to write a ballad-tempo melody with a groove, then made a few other tweaks before putting it all together as a new composition.

At the time, Marsalis was in the process of selecting music for his new album, *Melody Reimagined: Book 1* (Basin Street), which features new compositions based on the harmonic structure of songs by icons such as Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Charlie Haden and Paul Barbarin. Marsalis showed his band the new tune at a rehearsal in Detroit, telling them only that it was slated to appear on the next album.

“Everyone was like, ‘What tune is this based on?’ ‘What in the world did you ...,’” Marsalis said with glee in his voice. “I’m like, ‘I’m about to show you!’” He cued up the ’80s chart-topping hit on his phone and handed it to the soundman.

Jason Marsalis said that music for *Melody Reimagined* grew, in part, from moments on the bandstand.



"He plays the song and [drummer] Dave Potter just starts dying laughing right away," Marsalis said. "The other musicians look at me like, 'What? Are you crazy?' And I'm like, 'But look at these chord changes!'" It was the 1983 synth-pop hit "Maniac," a song from the *Flashdance* soundtrack.

In Marsalis' hands, "Maniac" became the sophisticated "Passionate Dancer," a study in sustained elegance featuring Latin rhythm underpinnings and a cascading piano interlude.

While he admitted it was fun to see where he could go with something like "Maniac," Marsalis said he wrote "Passionate Dancer" because he felt a genuine creative spark. From his perspective, limiting sources of musical inspiration to certain eras, sounds or genres means limiting the potential for musical progress and growth, both for himself and for jazz in general: "The way I see music that inspires is that it's important to expand on what you know."

It might sound simple, but that kind of broad-minded thinking, along with Marsalis' perfect pitch and keen memory, have helped him develop a base of knowledge his peers regularly describe as "encyclopedic." The drive to continually build on that foundation long has been reflected in other aspects of Marsalis' musical life, too, from his decision to shift his instrumental focus from drums to vibraphone to his work with fusion projects that explored terrain outside the parameters of straight-ahead jazz. When it comes to seeking out new musical terrain, Marsalis said the main appeal is learning more about different cultures, which is something his 2016 relocation to France has helped foster. "It also allows for more possibilities for the music to explore," he said. "There's so many places that this music can go and there's a lot yet to be discovered."

Using the chord progressions from other

songs as a springboard for the creation of new music, as he does with his 21st Century Trad Band on *Melody Reimagined*, is a case in point.

"The music on this album grew mostly on the bandstand," Marsalis explained. "A lot of these tunes were moments that happened on shows and I decided to codify them into songs."

The album opener, "Ratio Man Strikes Again," for example, was inspired by the band's live take on "Ratio Man," from its 2014 album, *The 21st Century Trad Band* (Basin Street). At the time, the band frequently was concluding its concerts with "Ratio Man." One night, pianist Austin Johnson introduced a riff that inspired Marsalis. He started playing it on vibes, too, and soon, they began playing it together. Eventually, Marsalis wrote something with the riff that used some elements from the bridge of the tune "Ratio Man."

"As I was writing it, I realized that the chord progression was in some ways similar to John Coltrane's 'Traneing In,' where he has a blues with a bridge. And so I decided that's the progression I'm going to use for the tune."

As Potter pointed out, Marsalis tends to write and arrange with an eye to the role of the group dynamic—which makes sense, considering his background in producing, his unusually strong sense of timing and pitch, and the fact that he's the last son to be raised in a musical dynasty where each member of the family plays a different instrument.

"Jason's music is very mentally demanding," Potter said. "Everybody has a specific part, and that part has a lot of room for interpretation in it, but ... he writes all this music for all these four interlocking parts. They all work together and if one thing is off, it's just much more noticeable than in a lot of other music."

That interconnected feel is part of what gives the 21st Century Trad Band, formerly the Jason

Marsalis Vibes Quartet, its increasingly unique sound. Nearly a decade after 2009's *Music Update* (Elm) reintroduced the gifted drumming member of the Marsalis family as a vibes player, the quartet continues to raise its own bar with original music that's complex without shying away from the inherent quirks that give it a kind of accessible playfulness.

Those moments tend to be generated by Marsalis, who writes most of the band's material. But he has strong and like-minded support in Johnson, Potter and bassist William Goble.

Marsalis met his bandmates in the early 2000s. This was after he'd left Los Hombres Calientes—an Afro-Cuban jazz outfit—to join pianist Marcus Roberts' band. When Roberts was named Artist-in-Residence at Florida State University, where Potter, Johnson and Goble were students in the jazz program, Marsalis joined him.

Potter was eager to take advantage of having a drummer like Marsalis in his midst and made an effort to pick his brain about music as often as possible, as was Goble.

"A lot of people are not receptive to that—especially people in the older generation—in terms of taking folks in my generation under their wing and teaching them," said Potter, who's a few years younger than Marsalis.

The mentorship that began when Potter, Goble and Johnson were students at FSU continued after Marsalis hired them.

Potter points out that Marsalis was still relatively new to the vibraphone at the time, giving him and his bandmates some common ground with regard to experience. But Marsalis' challenge was also unique because of the preconceptions and expectations attached to his family's name.

Switching instruments can be risky for any established musician. When your surname happens to be Marsalis, the risk comes with a set of preconceptions and expectations.

Despite being between 10 and 17 years younger than his brothers—saxophonist Branford, trumpeter Wynton and trombonist Delfeayo—Jason's early display of drumming skills earned him a niche in jazz by the time he was a teenager. At 14, he recorded with his father, the pianist and educator Ellis Marsalis; he also appeared on Delfeayo's widely hailed 1992 album, *Pontius Pilate's Decision*.

Both Ellis and Delfeayo Marsalis make cameos on *Melody Reimagined*'s "80"—a tune based on a chord progression Ellis used to play over "The Very Thought Of You"—in honor of both his father's 80th birthday and his mother, Dolores Marsalis, who died at age 80 last year.

After putting out two albums as a leader on drums—*Year Of The Drummer* in 1998 and *Music In Motion* in 2000—Marsalis slowly began making the move over to vibraphone.

"It was really tough in the beginning. I got

the instrument when I was in high school, but honestly I didn't practice as much as I should have," he said. He got more serious about vibes after he quit Los Hombres Calientes.

"For my first show, I decided to just do duets with my father, because he could kind of hold things together. It was like I was 6 years old again. I wasn't that good. I really didn't have a lot of technique."

Asked to reflect on that performance, the detail he recalled first is that the audience at New Orleans' Snug Harbor was "understanding." The venue's staff was less forgiving.

"The first year I was playing vibes—I heard [about] this later—some of the staff hated what I was doing. They were like, 'Why is he playing vibes?' Fair question, but after two years, they started to like it. And it got better; there was more of a concept. But initially it was tough."

One of Jason's longtime friends and frequent collaborators, saxophonist John Ellis, explained that there's a double-edged sword to taking creative risks when you have a famous last name.

Ellis, who leads the band Double Wide, said, "Jason is someone with an omnivore approach to music ... and because he's a Marsalis, he's often saddled with a legacy that's not the most natural fit for him."

"People imagine that he has this conservative [viewpoint]," Ellis continued. "He has strong opinions but he's interested in a much wider range of material than people might give him credit for. [In Double Wide], we'd be doing weird things, and critics would sometimes put their stance on Wynton into the discussion about Jason in a way that really wasn't relevant."

Jason does share his brothers' proclivity for speaking out on music-related topics that might be deemed controversial. But he does so in his own way, often adopting an open-minded perspective that gives his own music room to grow and progress.

In fact, that's how "The 21st Century Trad Band"—which is the name of one of his compositions and albums and now, his quartet—came to be. Years ago on a message board, he saw someone griping about what happened to the world of jazz in the early '80s.

"That points to Wynton, because there's a lot of people who didn't like what happened after he hit the scene," Jason said. "And there was a conversation about the music in the 1970s. What they said was, 'The guys in the '70s had their eyes on the future and they were looking forward, and everything was great until you 'Young Lions' came and messed it up.'"

Jason pondered the argument, and at some point—while listening to guitarist John McLaughlin's fusion band Mahavishnu Orchestra—a light bulb went off.

"There was a viewpoint that anything with the swing element was in the past, and that any-

thing with funk and rock was the future, and that was looking forward," he explained. "It's funny because that point of view still exists. When I thought about that, I thought, 'This is flawed, because all of these musics are old. Why is it that traditional music has to be seen as this old thing when in reality it's still moving forward?'"

"That's when I thought of the idea [for] 'The 21st Century Trad Band.' That tune was musically about using traditional rhythms in new, modern ways. Because the rhythm comes out of

trad music, but the [new] music is very modern, very progressive."

Using that concept for his band's name demonstrates his interest in moving music forward by constantly building on what he has learned.

In his Twitter bio, Marsalis declares, "The further you look back, the further you can look forward. Don't worry, music will grow on its own."

In 2018, Marsalis is giving that progress a welcome boost.

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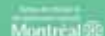
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COURTESY WJ3 RECORDS



The culmination of pianist Eric Reed's search for hope is his latest recording, *A Light In Darkness*.

Eric Reed *A Light In Darkness* WJ3 RECORDS 1020

★★★★

In an October 2015 blog post, pianist Eric Reed wrote that his faith was “undaunted by the ugliness of racism, greed and blatant ignorance of, seemingly, a world gone even madder than one can imagine.” By that point in 2015, to put things in perspective, Freddie Gray had died in police custody, Donald Trump had launched a presidential campaign and nine people had been murdered, mid-prayer, in a historically black Charleston, South Carolina, church. In the post, Reed wrote that he was preparing to record a “highly emotional” new project intended to “illuminate love.”

The result is *A Light In Darkness*. With its mix of gospel-tinged lyricism, sophisticat-

ed warmth and occasionally astounding flourishes of technical dexterity and intricate form, the disc more than lives up to its name. It also evinces Reed's apparent determination to maintain hope amid some serious soul-searching—something his listeners arguably need even more in 2018 than they did a few years ago, when the project was starting to take shape.

Consisting mostly of Reed's original compositions, *A Light In Darkness* features a number of soulful vehicles for the bandleader and Jamison Ross' near-perfect musical simpatico. It's hard to imagine Reed had any voice but that of his frequent collaborator, Ross, in mind for “The Way To Love” and “Hope In View.”

On Reed's arrangement of “Calvary,” saxophonist Tim Green's tone and Ben Williams' beautifully executed, mid-mark bass solo give the hymn an arc that draws it out of the

past and into a more modern, swinging fold. The past-meets-present feel grows stronger on “The Promised Land,” a road-to-freedom homage driven by Reed's dazzling and unfailingly graceful feel for time.

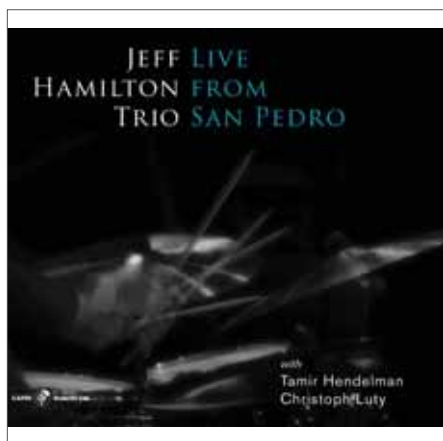
The cornerstone here, though, is the Reed, Ross and Williams jam “Shine.” If the album represents a journey from darkness into light, that message is captured by this tune's rhythm and sheer joy. When Ross' velvet-voiced promise—“I wanna be light in the darkness”—becomes an invitation to the listener to do the same, it's hard not to commit to the challenge.

—Jennifer Odell

A Light In Darkness: The Way To Love; Calvary; The Promised Land; Beauty For Ashes; Hope In View; Shine; Garden Of Sorrow; Yesterday—Yesterdays. (46:07)

Personnel: Eric Reed, piano; McClenty Hunter, drums; Tim Green, saxophone; Ben Williams, bass; Jamison Ross, vocals.

Ordering info: williejones3.com/wj3-records.html



Jeff Hamilton Trio *Live From San Pedro*

CAPRI RECORDS 74147

★★★★

Now in its 18th year, the Jeff Hamilton Trio makes joyous, unpretentious yet highly sophisticated music inspired by the take-no-prisoners swing of Oscar Peterson.

Two of the best tracks on *Live From San Pedro* flow from the pen of Clayton-Hamilton Big Band co-leader John Clayton. "Gina's Groove," a tribute to his daughter, kicks off with a toe-tapping, three-note piano-bass vamp that climbs from deep in the well to glimpse a sur-

prising vista. The trio boils down Clayton's soft-shoe big band feature for Hamilton, "Brush This," showcasing the drummer's deft, melodic brushwork. Also notable is Tamir Hendelman's riffish paean to pianist Benny Green, "Bennissimo," which highlights what a fluid, harmonically rich player he's become since the trio first recorded the tune 17 years ago.

From the onset, Hamilton makes no bones about what his trio is up to, opening with his in-the-pocket swinger "Sybille's Day," then taking a turn with a warm and lyrical "Poinciana."

No Hamilton outing would feel right without a nod to his home state, and there are two: "Gary, Indiana," with a Brazilian tint, and fellow drummer Joe LaBarbera's "Hoosier Friend," which features a brushes solo over Cristoph Luty's sturdy walking bass. The trio's willingness to put feelings forward is refreshing, though Hendelman's broken chords and declamatory octaves on the ballad "I Have Dreamed" slide into sentimentality. By contrast, his distillation of Thelonious Monk's "In Walked Bud" is surprisingly fractured, before slipping into a clean, humming swing, which is what this music is all about. —Paul de Barros

Live From San Pedro: Sybille's Day; Poinciana; Hammer's Tones; I Have Dreamed; In Walked Bud; Gina's Groove; Brush This; Bennissimo; Gary, Indiana; Hoosier Friend. (53:46)

Personnel: Jeff Hamilton, drums; Tamir Hendelman, piano; Christoph Luty, bass.

Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Dave Liebman & Mike Murley Quartet *Live At U Of T*

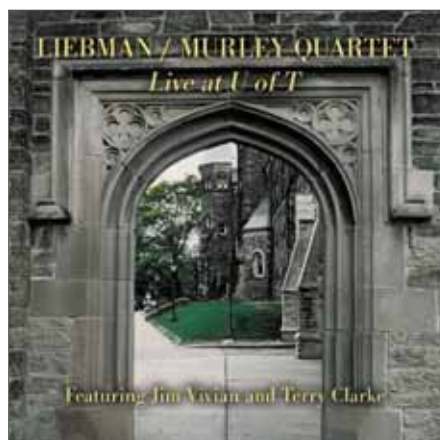
U OF T JAZZ

★★★★

I've said it before, probably in these pages. From that late-'50s John Gilmore/Clifford Jordan Blue Note gem to Billy Mintz's recent "Ugly Beautiful," connecting Tony Malaby and John Gross, I've always loved a band that sports a two-saxophone front line. So, into the waters we go on a freewheeling performance that features a hard-nosed icon of soprano expression and his impressive tenor colleague. Long story short, *Live At U Of T* is fetching. Quite fetching.

The stage is where truth stands naked; if a spirited vibe is absent, there's no way to shroud it. From the program's get-go, Dave Liebman and Mike Murley spark each other, riding a buoyant groove provided by bassist Jim Vivian and drummer Terry Clarke. Whether purposefully blending or diverging, the horn players create an allure greater than the sum of their parts. The rhythm section gracefully bolsters this rich equation, providing a fertile backdrop.

Inventive lines that the co-leaders conjure are essential to the enterprise, but ever-present tunefulness shapes the music's character even more. Liebman's "Small One" coos as it glides,



and Murley's "YBSN" is a free-bop jaunt with a dash of swagger. By the time they tackle the Ornette-ish theme of Joe Lovano's "Blackwell's Message," the enchantment is in full effect.

Aided by Vivian and Clarke's supple maneuvers, this two-man squad of teacher and former student deliver enough panache to make everything sound like it was designed to be exactly as it is. Pretty hip gig. —Jim Macnie

Live At U Of T: Split Or Whole; YBSN; Off A Bird; Small One; Open Spaces; Nebula; And The Angels Sing; Missing Person; Blackwell's Message. (55:58)

Personnel: Dave Liebman, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Mike Murley, tenor and soprano saxophones; Jim Vivian, bass; Terry Clarke, drums.

Ordering info: apple.com/itunes



Adam Nussbaum *The Lead Belly Project*

SUNNYSIDE RECORDS 1500

★★★★

The Lead Belly Project arrives not in response to a worldwide centennial, celebrating the life of influential blues figure Huddie Ledbetter or the anniversary of one of his releases. Instead, this fascinating disc comes straight from the heart of drummer Adam Nussbaum, who became entranced with Leadbelly's music when he was 5 years old.

Apart from the evocative "Grey Goose," during which Nussbaum displays a mastery with brushes, his contributions seldom take the spotlight. He keeps the focus squarely on the quartet's accord, and more importantly, the gossamer arrangements of some of Leadbelly's most cherished songs.

On the racy "Bottle Up And Go," the group replaces Leadbelly's danceable rhythm with a countrified, reggae feel as saxophone and guitar articulate the melody while Nussbaum's rickety rhythms gleefully shuffle about. And on the legendary waltzing ballad "Goodnight Irene," the drummer softens the textures by employing toms and brushes beneath tenor saxophonist Ohad Talmor's almost lullaby approach to melody. One of the album's most transfixing tunes, however, is Nussbaum's "Insight, Enlight," a diaphanous ballad on which saxophone and guitar state a haunting melody with pithy lyricism atop a slow-moving harmony bed, suspended cymbals, shimmering brushes and rumbling toms.

The Lead Belly Project unquestionably stands on its own, without requiring listeners to be Leadbelly aficionados. Still, it's the kind of sublime album that will inspire neophytes to plunge into the honoree's life and music.

—John Murphy

The Lead Belly Project: Old Riley; Green Corn; Black Girl (Where Did You Sleep Last Night); Bottle Up And Go; Black Betty; Grey Goose; Bring Me A Little Water, Sylvie; You Can't Lose Me Cholly; Insight, Enlight; Sure Would Baby; Goodnight Irene. (42:17)

Personnel: Adam Nussbaum, drums; Nate Radley, guitar; Steve Cardenas, guitar; Ohad Talmor, tenor saxophone.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Paul de Barros	Jim Macnie	John Murph	Jennifer Odell
Eric Reed <i>A Light In Darkness</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★
Jeff Hamilton Trio <i>Live From San Pedro</i>	★★★★	★★½	★★★	★★★★½
Liebman/Murley Quartet <i>Live At U Of T</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
Adam Nussbaum <i>The Lead Belly Project</i>	★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Eric Reed, *A Light In Darkness*

With impassioned vocals by Jamison Ross and a sense of focused intention all Reed's own, this album's yearning for Christian salvation might put some people off, but there are sweet moments, including saxophonist Tim Green's spirituality on "Calvary." —Paul de Barros

Soul, patience, agility, poise, sentiment, swing, humor—they've been the pianist's hallmarks for decades, and they continue to guide him through all kinds of adventures. —Jim Macnie

The zealous antiphony between Reed and saxophonist Green on "The Promised Land," as well as the pianist's thoughtful mashup of The Beatles' "Yesterday" and Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach's "Yesterdays," are but two bewitching moments on this gospel-laden disc. —John Murph

Jeff Hamilton Trio, *Live From San Pedro*

If there's one powerhouse drummer who excels at the art of serving the music, it's Hamilton. On this affable live date, he shows that he can be a gentle giant while shuffling brushes on ballads and flex his muscle on undeniable swingers. —John Murph

Hamilton's on fire throughout most of this album. His more powerful solos often stand out, but the most compelling Hamilton-centric moments happen when he balances delicacy with muscle, as he does on "Hammer's Tones" and "Hoosier Friend." —Jennifer Odell

Always impressive and always a tad more obvious than I wish it was. The interplay is irrefutable and their alignment-game is strong. But you can see the maneuvers coming from a mile away. —Jim Macnie

Dave Liebman & Mike Murley Quartet, *Live At U Of T*

Two saxophonists sparring live with bass and drums. Liebman, the elder, spirals through zig-zag patterns and eccentric groupings; Murley, a sometime-Liebman student, offers piping tenor tone and is lyrical when he wants to be. Delightful, spontaneous stuff. —Paul de Barros

A sleeper of a release, containing no obvious song titles, personnel or trendy conceits. Instead, the twin saxophonists and accompanying ensemble opt for gripping communal rapport, flinty improvisation and intriguing dialogue. —John Murph

This recording is an all-too-rare treat on multiple levels, not the least of which is my rediscovery of Murley, who's in top form alongside his mentor here. "Open Spaces" displays the wide range of ideas contained and mutually appreciated within this quartet. —Jennifer Odell

Adam Nussbaum, *The Lead Belly Project*

Nice idea, but pretty boring stuff. Others have visited Americana territory before—Bill Frisell being an obvious precursor. But what this album needs more of is the kind of wit and originality Nussbaum brings with his marching snare on "Black Betty." —Paul de Barros

Though groove and syncopation weigh in, grace defines this romp through the roots prism. It's gorgeous. —Jim Macnie

The band's at its best when exploring the softer side of its personnel's interactions, as on "Bring Me A Little Water, Sylvie," where brushed drums and subtle guitar work play beautifully off the breathy, gentle approach Ohad Talmor brings to the track. —Jennifer Odell



CAROLINE DAVIS HEART TONIC

SSC 1506 - IN STORES 3/23/18

To assist in the recording *Heart Tonic*, Davis employed a brilliant ensemble of young musicians, more aligned to swinging, straight ahead jazz, but who could also handle the challenges the composer posed for them in her idiosyncratic music. Pianist and keyboard player Julian Shore and percussionist Rogerio Buccato had been friends with Davis since her time at Litchfield Jazz Camp nearly a decade ago. Trumpeter Marquis Hill is a Chicago contemporary and a perfect foil for Davis's lithe alto. Originally from Israel, Tamir Shmerling is unwavering on acoustic and electric bass, while longtime friend and drummer Jay Sawyer always insures the music is remarkably propulsive.



DUDUCA DA FONSECA TRIO PLAYS DOM SALVADOR

1507 - IN STORES 4/13/18

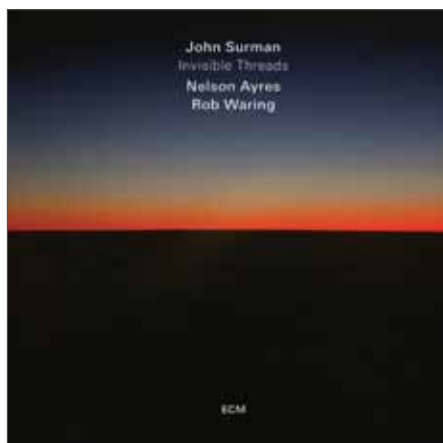
Fonseca's initial exposure to Salvador's music came as a teenager in Rio de Janeiro. The budding drummer could hear Salvador's original trio rehearsing, featuring bassist Sergio Barrozo and drummer Edison Machado, while walking to school.

Duduca Da Fonseca Trio Plays Dom Salvador was born from the leader's love of Salvador and his music and Fonseca's effort to make a proper tribute to his friend and mentor. The featured trio was born of a 2000 meeting with pianist David Feldman, who was studying then at the New School in New York, and with whom Fonseca recorded with later in 2009 in Brazil, where he also met the trio's bassist, Guto Wirtli.



itunes.com/CarolineDavis
itunes.com/DuducaDaFonseca
www.sunnysiderecords.com





John Surman *Invisible Threads*

ECM 2588

★★★★

English reedist John Surman possesses a searching musical quality that seems ideally suited for ECM. So, it's no wonder that the label and saxophonist have a fruitful relationship. Surman's debut for the imprint, 1979's *Upon Reflection*, was an ambitious solo project notable for its inventive use of overdubs and loops. Since then, the saxophonist has released several outstanding albums, including 1981's *The Adventures Of Simon Simon* and 2012's

Saltash Bells. Those and a bevy of other ECM releases helped cement Surman's status as one of England's most visionary improvisers and a keen interpreter of the country's folk songs.

On *Invisible Threads*, he's joined by pianist Nelson Ayres and vibraphonist/marimbist Rob Waring, a unique pairing of chordal instruments that adds fathomless nuance and depth to Surman's originals. Melody—uncomplicated and uninhibited—always has been chief among Surman's compositional priorities, which is why the songs on *Invisible Threads* ring with such unguarded emotion and pristine simplicity. A kind of bittersweet melancholy animates "Autumn Nocturne," which Surman conveys through an emotive soprano saxophone, while "On Rippling Waters," featuring Surman on baritone, revolves with a brooding, centripetal force, pulling mass toward its center.

Invisible Threads is an exceptional addition to Surman's discography, balancing both the heft of a concept album and the levity of a folk revue. The saxophonist's ability to create such lush landscapes from delicate, minimal parts never ceases to amaze. —Brian Zimmerman

Invisible Threads: At First Sight; Autumn Nocturne; Within The Clouds; Byndweed; On Still Waters; Another Reflection; The Admiral; Pitanga Pitomba; Summer Song; Concentric Circles; Stoke Damerel; Invisible Threads. (59:14)

Personnel: John Surman, soprano saxophone, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Nelson Ayres, piano; Rob Waring, vibraphone, marimba.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

George Cotsirilos Quartet *Mostly In Blue*

OA2 RECORDS 22151

★★★★

Though there are potential dangers of harmonic clash, timbral muddying and rhythmic redundancy in the contemporary guitar-meets-piano format, George Cotsirilos and Keith Saunders neatly avoid them on *Mostly In Blue*. Via shared sensibility and close communication, guitarist Cotsirilos leads his quartet in a mellow program deeply indebted to the Wes Montgomery–Wynton Kelly model.

Performing originals with bluesy connotations and occasional Brazilian inflections alongside the standard "I Wish I Knew" and Charlie Parker's "Crazeology," the band achieves a like-live, late-night ambiance. Cotsirilos favors a warm, pearly tone and long, flowing phrases, which dip into his lowest reaches. Saunders adds lightly percussive chordal accompaniment and takes graceful solos that expand the melodic material, as on the 6/8 title track. He may feint toward funk, but like Cotsirilos, stays on the sophisticated side of that territory.

Bassist Robb Fisher and drummer Ron Marabuto are in Cotsirilos' working trio, so their comfort level is established. I find the



drummer's moves sometimes veering from those of the other players, but they aren't bothered, and he is at some remove in the recording's mix. A drummer's appropriate independence might be one of the markers that distinguish a contemporary mainstream group sound from what Wes Montgomery expected 60 years ago. Still, the format seems timeless. This music isn't wildly innovative, but it's nonetheless personal and a pleasure. —Howard Mandel

Mostly In Blue: Mostly In Blue; Wes Side Blues; I Wish I Knew; Ms. Luna; Blue Dusk; Crazeology; Lights Out; Down, Not Out. (48:47)

Personnel: George Cotsirilos, guitar; Keith Saunders, piano; Robb Fisher, bass; Ron Marabuto, drums.

Ordering info: originarts.com/oa2



Papo Vazquez *J.S. Bach, Goldberg Variations*

PICARO

★★★½

Not one to shrink from a challenge, trombonist Papo Vazquez has transformed Johann Sebastian Bach's 18th-century classic. As he's done with previous reworkings of Latin rhythms, Vazquez mixes up jazz and the baroque with forceful confidence.

Along with pianist Rick Germanson, Vazquez selected 12 Bach variations, and their themes become the basis for improvisational flights. Vazquez's fluid shift from legato to staccato phrases on such pieces as "Aria Jazz Var." swing hard, Germanson's sparse approach creating openings for the trombonist to explore.

Vazquez interprets Bach's romanticism through his rendition of "Var. 10" as a warm ballad, featuring a quietly bold vibrato. But what's interesting is how this ensemble makes Bach's harmonic framework for harpsichord and piano work for a small contemporary jazz group. In classical work for keyboard, melodic accompaniment can shape a variation as much as the main line. On "Var. 9," bassist Derzon Douglas creates the template for Vazquez's lead. Bach showed how contrasting time signatures can flow together, and drummer Jerome Jennings adds his own shifting beats on "Var. 18."

Numerous joyful and succinct moments also spark up the big concepts behind the *Goldberg Variations*, such as the bluesy chord changes on "Var. 21." The bandleader's own concluding "Vazquez Variation" is a fun commentary on it all, but fades out too soon. Undoubtedly, Vazquez has abundant thoughts on how he made all of these parts flow together. So, full liner notes that include his commentary would have been instructive. —Aaron Cohen

J.S. Bach, Goldberg Variations: Aria, Duet; Aria Jazz Var.; Var. 1; Var. 7; Var. 8; Var. 9; Var. 10; Var. 15; Var. 18; Var. 21; Var. 22; Var. 27; Vazquez Variation. (59:11)

Personnel: Papo Vazquez, trombone; Rick Germanson, piano; Dezron Douglas, bass; Jerome Jennings, drums; Alvester Garnett, drums (8, 12, 13).

Ordering info: papovazquez.com



Bobo Stenson Trio *Contra La Indecisión*

ECM 2582

★★★★

Like its American—and better-known—counterpart, the Keith Jarrett Trio, Swedish pianist Bobo Stenson's group flavors all it touches with decades of experience. While Stenson and bassist Anders Jormin have been together for 40 years, even "newcomer" Jon Fält—who replaced Paul Motian when the American drummer declined to leave New York—has been in the trio since 2007. Together, they are like veteran stage actors, bringing layers of meaning to their

interpretations of diverse material.

On the trio's first new album in six years, that material includes Erik Satie's 1887 "Élégie" and Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez's "Canción Contra La Indecisión," along with a handful of originals by Jormin. Together, the 11 pieces form a meditative whole that draws listeners in with a stillness that settles like snow.

Even when Fält stirs up some fractious accompaniment, as on the center section of "Doubt Thou The Stars," the overall mood retains its core of contemplation. "Alice," a rare Stenson contribution to the band's repertoire, is built on an aching arco movement by Jormin and filled in by a minimalist piano melody and sensitive cymbal work. While producer Manfred Eicher bristles at the notion of an "ECM sound," the space and clarity of this recording could stand as the leading example of Scandinavian chamber jazz.

When the trio does swing, it is in a laconic, behind-the-beat way. But rhythmic drive is beside the point here. This is about texture and tone, and on those counts the trio excels.

—James Hale

Contra La Indecisión: Canción Contra La Indecisión; Doubt Thou The Stars; Wedding Song From Poniky; Three Shades Of A House; Élégie; Canción Y Danza VI; Alice; Oktoberhavet; Kalimba Impressions; Stilla; Hemingway Intonations. (63:55)

Personnel: Bobo Stenson, piano; Anders Jormin, bass; Jon Fält, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Laila Biali *Laila Biali*

CHRONOGRAPH 060

★★★★½

Here's a bright-plumaged alpine songbird, migrating between Toronto and Brooklyn, to confound purists with crossover genres and chill ideals. Laila Biali emblazons her dazzling persona on a cheekily stylish foldout jacket, then sings her wide-embrace jazz-pop fusion in steadily varied, blues-tinged song forms with keen passion and witty humanism. Biali's fresh, but no ingénue: She's toured with Chris Botti, Sting, Suzanne Vega and Paula Cole, hosted a top-rated radio show and copped a Juno Award for 2011's *Tracing Light*.

Biali's assertive, pleasing voice and insistent piano take center stage, as influences peek in from Joni Mitchell, Lady Gaga, Alicia Keys and Motown. Diversity reigns and Biali presides with ebullient grace amid canny aid from drummer/producer/husband Ben Wittman. Choice trumpet solo spots by Mike Maher and Ambrose Akinmusire, and Sam Yahel's sturdy B-3 afford jazz cred; rhythm perks between bassist George Koller and Chaka Khan drummer Larnell Lewis; and tight choristers hail from jazz, pop and rock.

The well-paced date drives hard, then eases



off, its production meticulously detailed. Originals stand out: the cosmic singsong "Satellite" poignantly musing on the loneliness of touring, a kick-ass "We Go" and a Rumi poem set to a Pat Metheny-esque tango. And covers range from moody to arena-transcendent. This performer's aim is true and her vision is set far and wide.

—Fred Bouchard

Laila Biali: Got To Love; We Go; Satellite; Yellow; Refugee; Dolores Angel; Queen Of Hearts; Serenbe; Code Breaking; I Think It's Going To Rain Today; Wind (Rumi Poem); Let's Dance. (56:08)

Personnel: Laila Biali, piano, keyboards, lead vocals; George Koller, bass; Larnell Lewis (1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12), Ben Wittman (3, 5, 6, 7), drums; Mike Maher (2, 8, 9, 11), Ambrose Akinmusire (3, 5), trumpet; Sam Yahel (1, 2, 5–9, 12), Glenn Patscha (1, 12), organ; Jo Lawry, Lisa Fischer (1, 2, 5–8), Carlos Ricketts (1, 2, 6, 7), vocals.

Ordering info: lailabiali.com

ANTONIO SANCHEZ
CHANNELS OF ENERGY

WDR Big Band Arranged and conducted by Vince Mendoza

ANTONIO SANCHEZ
CHANNELS OF ENERGY
WITH
WDR BIG BAND
ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY
VINCE MENDOZA
CAM5060 - March 23, 2018

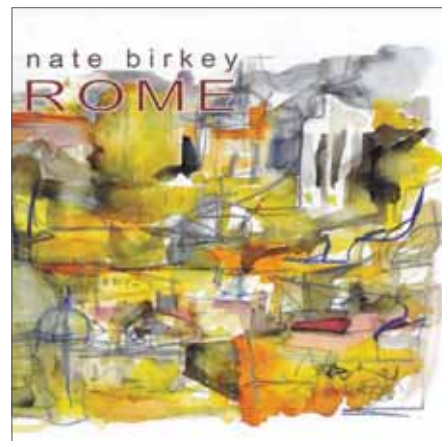
"This album should be thought of as a trio in a sense between Sanchez, the scope of Mendoza's arranging and the WDR Big Band... Sanchez truly is one of the eminent innovative drummers and composers of our time." (CJ Shearn)

Photo by Elise Calabrese

www.CamJazz.com



Danny Fox Trio



Nate Birkey *Rome*

HOUSEHOLD INK 150

★★★★

Nate Birkey is a veteran American trumpeter whose signature style favors a laid-back and low attack; he sings in a husky deadpan whimper, as evidenced by any listen to his work. Spurred by an invitation from drummer Alessandro Marzi, Birkey toured Italy and recorded this session, his 10th as a leader, in Rome. And—surprise—far from swooning into *la dolce far niente* (literally, the sweet do-nothing), Birkey surfaces positively energized in the Eternal City. Is he drawn to the heady joys of wake-up espresso or peering up into the Pantheon's rotunda? Perhaps, but this animated date for Household Ink suggests it's more likely that Birkey was enthralled by a fine Italian rhythm section.

Pianist Roberto Tarenzi unfurls energy in leafy sustains and rich tone across an exploratory palette, recalling Tete Montoliu or Stefano Bollani. Marzi lays down a Turkish bump-and-grind to open "Adriatico," bossa nova touches to "Estate" and "Bianca" and a saucy take of Charlie Haden's "Our Spanish Love Song." Still low-key, but less languid and with no fluffed arpeggios, Birkey echoes the poised, brassy tone of ECM-dreamers Tomas Stanko and Enrico Rava, and his Harmon mute swatches tint a post-Miles Davis aura. His unabashed melodicism, always to the fore, splashes onto his own "Enea" and "Roma di Notte," as well as on a vampy take of Michel LeGrand's "Windmills Of Your Mind." He also revisits favorites of West Coast idol and steady Italophile Chet Baker, "You Go To My Head" and a booting "Let's Get Lost." Heck, Birkey even looks like Ray Liotta. Replays are as addictive as amaretto cookies.

—Fred Bouchard

Rome: Adriatico; You Go To My Head; Estate; Cinema Paradiso; Our Spanish Love Song; How I Find You; Windmills Of Your Mind; Let's Get Lost; Roma Di Notte; Enea; Bianca. (65:52)

Personnel: Nate Birkey, trumpet; Roberto Tarenzi (2, 4, 5, 7–11), Manuel Magrini (1, 3, 6), piano; Luca Bulgarelli, bass; Alessandro Marzi, drums.

Ordering info: householdink.com

Sunshine and Shadows

Sometimes music needs only to make you smile. It doesn't have to swing or spin your head with amazing solos. It might just take a light touch, a little humor, a different kind of originality. And, of course, some music follows a darker path. Let's start in the light.

Alfredo Rodriguez, *The Little Dream* (Mack Avenue Records 1130; 48:32 ★★★★★) With the incomparable plus of having Quincy Jones producing, Rodriguez enjoys the exhilaration of being able to explore freely with his mentor's full support. His technique is obviously of the first order, yet he reins it in throughout *The Little Dream*. His focus, instead, is on composition and encouraging unusual performances. The drums deserve special mention, as Michael Olivera's busy backgrounds play a more atmospheric than rhythmic role. For traditionalists, his double-time brush work on "Besame Mucho" provides satisfaction. But cut the drums from tracks such as "Alegri" and you might mistake Rodriguez's ambitions for sophisticated new-age reverie.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

Danny Fox Trio, *The Great Nostalgist* (Hot Cup Records 162; 48:03 ★★★★★)

Somewhat like Rodriguez's release, *The Great Nostalgist* showcases the pianist's deft touch as player and composer. Both occasionally present their composition's motif in arpeggiated form. This allows Fox to vary that motif's presentation by altering or using the figure as a springboard toward different improvisational dynamics. On "Truant," it morphs into a skipping single line with repeated references to the motif's key notes. Fox also shares Rodriguez's vision for using drums not to lay down a groove, but to bring the performance into a more intimate perspective. Whether listening to "Theme For Gloomy Bear" or "Emotional Baggage Carousel," Max Goldman's toy-store rattles and

taps are essential to Fox's intent.

Ordering info: hotcuprecords.com

Leslie Pintchik, *You Eat My Food, You Drink My Wine, You Steal My Girl!* (Pinch Hard Records 004; 46:32 ★★★★★)

A similar drum aesthetic colors much of Leslie Pintchik's new release, though like Rodriguez on "Besame Mucho," she offers some respite for those who prefer their elements in more familiar order. Start with her old-school approaches to standards: "I'm Glad There Is You" and "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" evoke upscale listening rooms, where ballads open like flowers in the hands of empathetic caregivers. There's nothing ambitious, or even mildly alarming, on these tracks. But they're gorgeously rendered. Having established her insight into this form, Pintchik presents an equally lovely original, "Mortal," with Steve Wilson and Ron Horton joining her trio to deliver tasteful solos on alto and fluegelhorn, respectively. Beyond that, *You Eat My Food* ... mirrors many of the virtues of the Rodriguez and Fox projects: compositional small-group complexity that nonetheless is easy to savor and humor.

Ordering info: lesliepintchik.com

Joachim Kühn Trio, *Love & Peace* (ACT 9861; 46:31 ★★★★★) Now it's time to

send the kids off to bed. Nighttime settles in. On cue, *Love & Peace* begins to play. Gone are the sprightly drums; the piano sinks down to its lower-mid register. Except for some unexpected flourishes on "Barcelona—Wien," tempos slow. There is poetry in these tracks, but they speak solemnly through Kühn's deliberate articulation and Eric Schaefer's tom and open-snare thuds. They even perform the Doors' hallucinatory "The Crystal Ship," with appropriate gravity. It's definitely worth hearing, as long as sunrise is a few hours away.

DB

Ordering info: actmusic.com/en

Josh Deutsch's Pannonia

The Road To Pannonia
SELF RELEASE
★★★★★

Nestled along the Danube River in the center of Europe, Pannonia was a real place a few thousand years ago. It's long gone now, and any jams produced there were gobbled up by Huns, Slavs and Romans. Trumpeter

Josh Deutsch's mythological *Pannonia* further pushes those roots of Eastern European melody and rhythm into a land that seamlessly rattles and chimes among the sounds of the world. And that's rather hard to do with a front line consisting only of trumpet, trombone and violin.

The centerpieces of the album are three tunes Deutsch co-composed with author Chris Tarry. They piece together a portrait of Pannonia in a style evocative of Sergei Prokofiev's "Peter And The Wolf." Narrators weave between storytelling and singing, intertwining their voices with Deutsch's stripped-down chamber orchestra, contributing an occasional "turn the page after the bell" lilt. Vocalist Sofia Rei is a playful narrator with a coy Argentinian accent. She sings in line with the horns over Ronen Itzik's concise brushstrokes. The band lives a lifetime over the course of the tune as Ryan Keberle's funereal trombone reanimates in a funky trade with Deutsch.

—Sean J. O'Connell

The Road To Pannonia: Overture; Traveling Tune; Dogman; Arstotzka's Path; Piat; Altato; Days Shortening; Allegretto. (48:51)

Personnel: Josh Deutsch, trumpet; Zach Brock, violin; Ryan Keberle, trombone; Gary Wang, bass; Ronen Itzik, percussion; Sofia Rei (3), Heather Masse (5, 6), vocals.

Ordering info: pannoniaband.com



Satoko Fujii Orchestra New York Fukushima

LIBRA RECORDS 214-044
★★★

This 10th Orchestra New York album by pianist Satoko Fujii presents an hour-long composition, reflecting its creator's response to the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and resultant nuclear plant accident in Japan's Fukushima Prefecture. Although divided into five sections, *Fukushima* effectively is a single, extended piece. Fujii, though, doesn't play piano here, instead concentrating on conducting a 13-piece ensemble.

A barely audible opening has trumpet-breath sounds being gradually joined by other horns, creating a desolate cloud. Guitar and percussion drift in, with a busy scrabbling eventually growing into a roused state. The structure of extreme quiet, then full processional strength, lends an introspective nature, where it perhaps needs a more consistent momentum. As expected, the final third of the disc is the most exciting, as guitarist Nels Cline sets up aggressive loops and horns issue a fanfare. *Fukushima*, though, doesn't bear its intended narrative weight, too often broken up by minimalist investigations. Still, its overall authority remains intact throughout this ambitious effort.

—Martin Longley

Fukushima: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5.

Personnel: Satoko Fujii, conductor; Oscar Noriega, Ellery Eskelin, Tony Malaby, Andy Laster, saxophones; Dave Ballou, Herb Robertson, Natsuki Tamura, trumpets; Joey Sellers, Joe Fiedler, Curtis Hasselbring, trombones; Nels Cline, guitar; Stomu Takeishi, bass; Ches Smith, drums.

Ordering info: librarecords.com










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Eddie Gale *Ghetto Music—The Remake And Beyond* MEPCO RECORDINGS 81517

★★★★

Trumpeter Eddie Gale created a cult classic, turning his 1968 Blue Note debut, *Ghetto Music*, into a soulful, unconventional hybrid. Fifty years later, Gale—whose resume includes work with Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor and Larry Young—revisits and reshapes his best-known recording.

The five compositions from the album's initial release, "The Remakes," take listeners through myriad terrain. And on his five new tunes—"The Beyonds"—Gale, with the spare poetry of his trumpet, perpetuates and expands on an older musical vocabulary: heavy on modal structures and flowingly open playing from Inner Peace Orchestra. The passage of time and musical fashion suggest circularity in Gale's work. And the presence of Bay Area vocalist Faye Carol on a few tracks takes listeners back to a sound from decades back. But by closing the album with a raw live recording of "Meditation On World Peace," Gale's emphasis on loose expressivity and optimistic spirit over musical polish achieves its timeless, finalizing statement.

—Josef Woodard

Ghetto Music—The Remake And Beyond: The Rain; Fulton Street; A Walk With Thee—The March; Graceful Giving—A Understanding; And Now, Gwili; African Sunshine; Children Of Peace; Peace In The Night; The Jazz Rapp; Meditation On World Peace. (76:00)

Personnel: Eddie Gale, trumpet; Faye Carol, Virginia Roberts, Carolyn Jones, Deena Angeletti, vocals; Marcus Shelby, bass; Valerie Mih, piano; Destiny Muhammad, harp, vocals; Sandy Poindexter, violin; Karl Evangelista, Dennis Kyne, guitar; Teresa Orozco, Forrest Stevens, flute; Eric Marshall, Cedric Edwards, bass; Tim Siefert, Dante James, trap drums; Yusef Martinez, Claude Ferguson, Mark Farley, Keith Hames, hand drums.

Ordering info: eddiegale.com



Justin Gray & Synthesis *New Horizons* SELF RELEASE

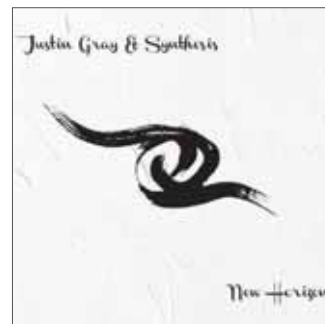
★★★★

Performing a unique East-West fusion, Justin Gray & Synthesis features the leader's multi-stringed invention, the bass veena, which resembles a thin acoustic guitar with six strings on its neck, augmented by an additional 10 strings on its body.

The bass veena's sound is somewhere between a fretless acoustic bass and a sitar, making *New Horizons* sound recognizable enough as it adds in instruments originating in Nepal, Bangladesh, Iran and India. And while Synthesis' bubbling songs are familiar, they're anything but clichéd.

Of particular interest is the music's platform for solo instruments. In much South Indian carnatic music, everyone seems to solo at once, not unlike free-jazz. Gray adds a Western turn here, though. Often, the ensemble plays classical-like unison lines, then breaks off into separate solos. Maintaining the group's collective hypnotic spell, each soloist plays with subtlety and discipline, slithering through arrangements like vessels of fire and grace.

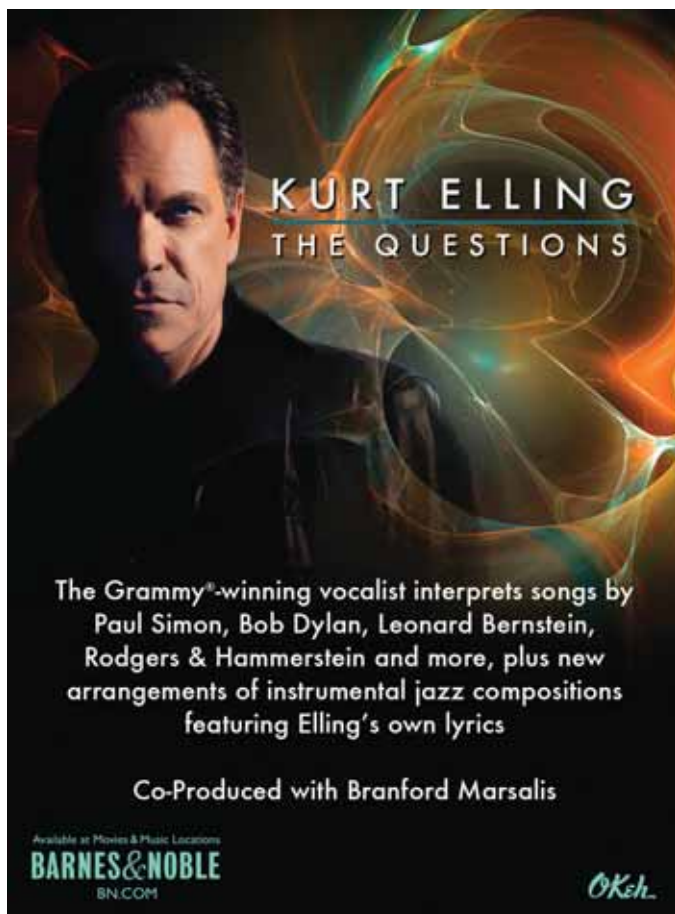
—Ken Micallef



New Horizons: New Horizons; Reflections; Migration; Eventide; Unity; Break Of Dawn; Rise; Serenity; Ebb And Flow. (52:15)

Personnel: Justin Gray, bass veena, electric bass; Ed Hanley, tabla; Derek Gray, drums, percussion, singing bowls; Ted Quinlan, electric guitar, acoustic guitar; Drew Jurecka, violin, baritone violin; Rebekah Wolkstein, violin; Shannon Knights, viola; Lydia Munchinsky, cello; Naghme Farahmand, tombak, daf, udu; Todd Pentney, piano, Hammond organ; Dhruva Ghosh, sarangi; Trichy Sankaran, mridangam, Steve Gorn, bansuri; Alam Khan, sarod; Joy Anandasivam, guitar; Gurpreet Chana, hang drum; Demetrios Petsalakis, oud; Joel Schwartz, resonator, electric guitar; Jonathan Kay, esraj.

Ordering info: justingraysynthesis.com



Marvin Pontiac *The Asylum Tapes* STRANGE & BEAUTIFUL MUSIC

★★★★½

Just as Esperanza Spalding created her alter ego Emily for the power-rock of *Emily's D+Evolution*, John Lurie created Marvin Pontiac as an outlet for his twisted take on country blues. The saxophonist and composer first hit on the notion amid a '90s run with the Lounge Lizards, releasing *The Legendary Marvin Pontiac: Greatest Hits* in 2000. Following a bout with Lyme disease that robbed him of his ability to play, Lurie became a primitivist painter, and a rather successful one at that. He recently returned to the recording studio to resurrect Pontiac, who, as the story goes, was holed up at Esmeralda State Mental Institution, where his ideas were documented on 4-track.

The simple, sing-songy lyrics here go no deeper than the titles, and Pontiac/Lurie delivers them in a bullfrog blues voice, close-miked and croaking over functional fingerstyle acoustic guitar and banjo. There's kitsch appeal on *The Asylum Tapes*, but the rawness of it all is on par with the nastiest of the Fat Possum Records stable. This digital-only affair, Lurie's first recording in 17 years, comes across like a merging of Junior Kimbrough and Ali Farke Toure, with just a touch of Wild Man Fischer.

—Bill Milkowski



The Asylum Tapes: Unbelievable; I Hope She Is Okay; My Bear To Cross; Hollerin'; I Don't Have A Cow; It's Always Something, It's Never Nothing; We Are The Frog People; Let Me Tell You; I Am A Man; I Don't Like To Stand On Line; Baby Pigs; You're Going To Miss Me; I Want To Get Out Of Here; Beastliness; I Am Not Crazy; Temple Of Banjos; Santa Claus; Godzilla; Don't Fuck With Me; My Little Garden Gnome; Horse Fell Down The Well; I Like To Wear Funny Outfits; Little Banjo; I Am Not Alone. (51:28)

Personnel: Marvin Pontiac, guitar, banjo, vocals, harmonica.

Ordering info: strangeandbeautiful.com



Chris Dave And The Drumhedz

Chris Dave And The Drumhedz

BLUE NOTE B002705401

★★★★

On Chris Dave And The Drumhedz's debut album, the group is aimed to blend neo-soul and hip-hop artists with its veteran, virtuosic chops. The result is an upbeat listen, complete with r&b hooks, conscious couplets and instrumental greatness.

Dave is best known drumming behind the likes of D'Angelo and Maxwell, but with the Drumhedz, his goal is to carve out space as a bandleader and play music that's better suited for a late-night dance floor than a sit-down supper club. By collaborating with modern jazz titans like bassist Pino Palladino, guitarist Isaiah Sharkey and trumpeter Keyon Harrold, the backing tracks are perfectly suited to r&b stars like Anderson .Paak, Bilal and Anna Wise.

.Paak is an artist who has made huge strides during the past two years, going from Dr. Dre's secret weapon on 2015's *Compton* (Aftermath) to a headliner at festivals around the country. Here, he's featured on two different tracks. The first is the Afrobeat-flavored "Black Hole," and the second is the experimental, rocking "Clear View," which is the longest cut on the album, clocking in at more than six minutes.

Just about every song has a featured vocalist, which makes the group's first long-playing effort seem more like a pop album than a jazz record. On "Sensitive Granite," Kendra Foster weaves heavily reverberating vocals into the psychedelic instrumentation created by Dave, Palladino, Sharkey and company. "Cosmic Intercourse," despite the title, is a bit more grounded with Stokley Williams' hooks. Veteran neo-soul crooner Bilal is featured on "Spread Her Wings" along with Tweet, who cut her teeth collaborating with the likes of Timbaland and Missy Elliot in the early 2000s.

Dave has, overall, created an album that unites his closest friends and collaborators together with the common theme of musically challenging r&b and soul. It's not only a testament to his drumming abilities, which universally have been praised for ages, but also his ability as a songwriter.

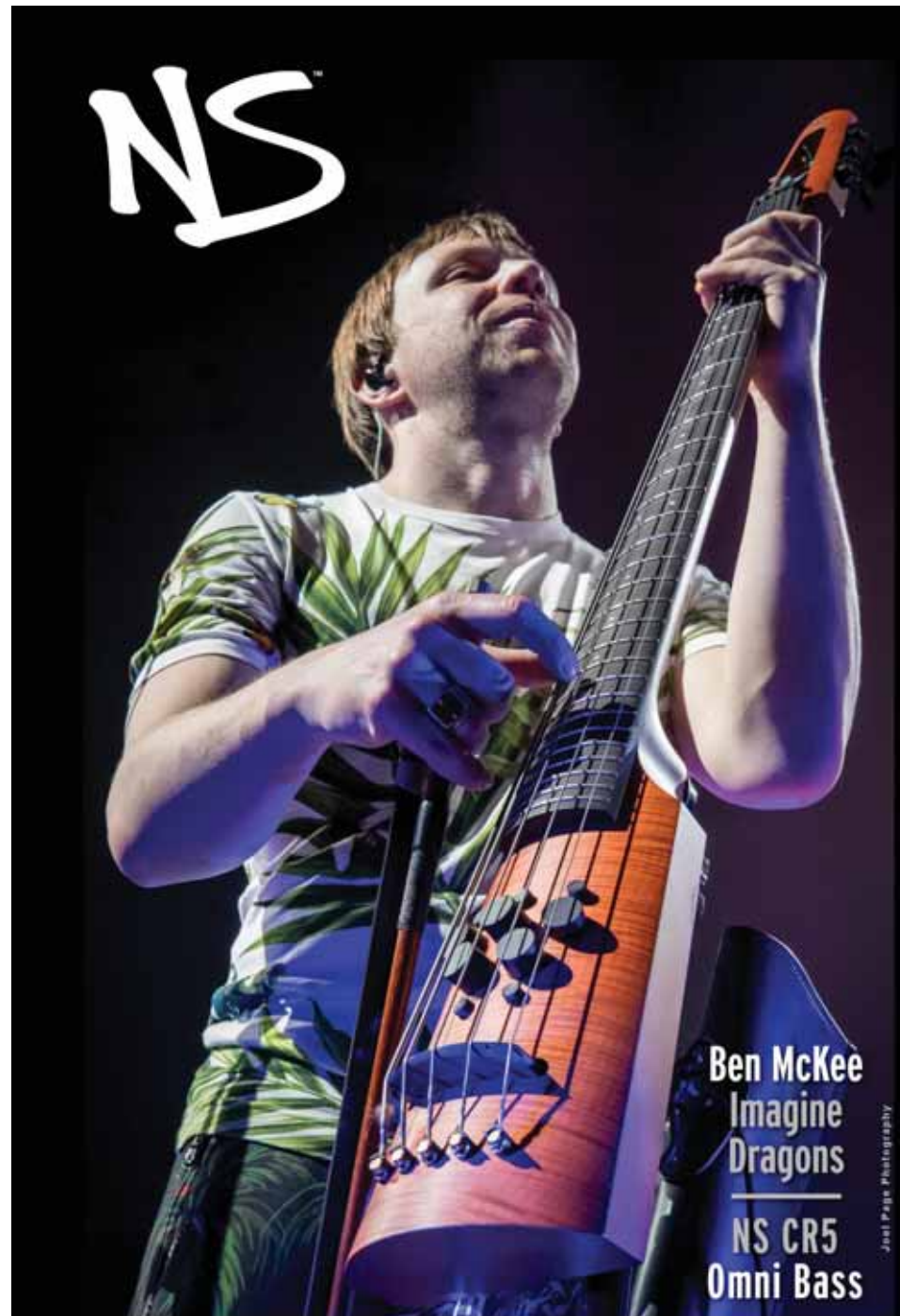
—Chris Tart

Chris Dave And The Drumhedz: Rocks Crying; Universal Language; Dat Feelin'; Black Hole; 2n1; Spread Her Wings; Whatever; Sensitive Granite; Cosmic Intercourse; Atlanta, Texas; Destiny n Stereo; Clear View; Job Well Done; Lady Jane; Trippy Topsy. (59:05)

Personnel: Savvy (1), KRNDN (2), Leolin Dockins III (2), Sy Smith (2), Donald Rose (2), Marshall York (2, 7), Shafiq

Husayn (2, 7, 10), Rozzi Daime (2, 7, 10), Sir Darryl Farris (2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 13), Anderson .Paak (4, 12), Charmelle Cofield (6), Tweet (6), Kent Morrison (7), Ali Shaheed Muhammad (7), Kendra Foster (8), Sharief Hobley (8), Casey Benjamin (9), Goapele (10), Elzhi (11), Phonte Coleman (11), Eric Roberson (11), Jermaine Holmes (12), Tiffany Gouche (3, 10), Anna Wise (13), vocals; Pino Palladino, Nick McNack (4, 9, 12, 13), bass; RC Williams, Moog bass (2); Robert Glasper, piano, Rhodes (2); Keyon Harrold, vocals, trumpet (3, 4, 11, 15); Marcus Hodge, organ (3, 10); Marcus Strickland, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone (3, 15); Melvin Watson, guitar, sitar (4); Aaron Draper, percussion (8, 11); Sharief Hobley (8), Luke Austin, organ, piano (9); Miguel Ferguson, strings (9); Kebbi Williams, flute, saxophones (10); Grégoire Maret, harmonica (10); Glenn Piper, sound effects (11); Preservation (11), DJ Jazzy Jeff (11), DJ; Michael Feingold, glass, bells, celesta, guitar (12), sitar (13); Isaiah Sharkey, Stokley Williams (4, 9), Tim Stewart (7, 10), Fink Greenall, guitar (13); Cleo Sample (2, 11, 14), Andre Harris (5), James Poyser (3, 6, 15), keyboards.

Ordering info: bluenote.com



www.NedSteinberger.com



JESSICA KEAVENEY

Alan Hager (left) and Curtis Salgado

Wading in Muddy Waters

Muddy Waters, *The Best Of Muddy Waters* (Chess/UMe 1427; 35:40 ★★★★★)

Muddy Waters fired the shot heard around the world with this priceless collection of Aristocrat and Chess singles (1948–'54), originally released as an LP in 1958 and back on vinyl after a 30-year hiatus. In Chicago, Waters sang a dozen songs with such a conviction that listeners almost can see pools of sadness or gleams of pleasure form within his eyes. "I Can't Be Satisfied" and "Louisiana Blues" embody the spirit of the Delta he'd left behind. Waters' distorted guitar on "Still A Fool" is an amazement. R&B hits "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man" and "I Just Want To Make Love To You," both written by bassist Willie Dixon and intensified by Little Walter's piping harmonica, are full-flowerings of the revolutionary Chicago ensemble sound Waters so royally pioneered.

Ordering info: universalmusicenterprises.com

Curtis Salgado & Alan Hager, *Rough Cut* (Alligator 4980; 50:27 ★★★★★) First working together in 2003, Curtis Salgado and Alan Hager at long last consummate their off-and-on blues partnership in the studio. These Portlanders feast on sizing up their own tradition-oriented tunes and treasures from Muddy Waters, Son House and Big Bill Broonzy. Salgado's singing voice and harmonica are convincingly expressive in tone, range and subtlety. Hager's guitar creates a momentum that bespeaks a synthesis of honest emotion, unstudied instinct and technical deftness. The occasional additions of piano, bass, drums and percussion are incidental to the backporch allure of the voice-guitar-harmonica conversations.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Backtrack Blues Band, *Make My Home In Florida* (Harpo; CD 49:34/DVD 51:23 ★★) At the St. Petersburg, Florida,

Palladium Theatre, singer and harmonica brawler Sonny Charles, and his similarly capable co-workers, apply a traditional, natural-seeming approach to four originals and untarnished gemstones connected to Sonny Boy Williamson II, B.B. King and T-Bone Walker. The quintet leans hard into stock phrases with proficiency and enthusiasm.

Ordering info: backtrackbluesband.com

The James Hunter Six, *Whatever It Takes* (Daptone 051; 27:11 ★★½)

Six albums into his still-ascending career, James Hunter remains an effective singer who internalizes his blues, r&b, ska and soul influences (notably Ray Charles and Sam Cooke), while sounding notes of emotional validity that inform words on deep, lasting romance in his tunes. Two saxophones and the rhythm section, respectively, mirror his calmness and urgency. Hunter's whiplash guitar, befitting of Freddie or Albert King, is forcibly to the fore on the instrumental "Blisters."

Ordering info: daptonerecords.com

Sue Foley, *The Ice Queen* (Stony Plain 1398; 53:20 ★★)

Since this native Canadian got noticed in Austin a quarter century ago, she's summoned her gifts as a guitarist to record a string of mainly three-star albums. On her latest, Foley again gives eloquence, rather than excess, to her playing, showing regenerated confidence in her musical intelligence. Yet there remains a recurrent cause of concern. Her singing voice lacks richness and expressivity, seemingly not coming from the depths of her gut. This doesn't complement her solid songwriting, though the slow blues of the title track is an admitted standout. Old and new Texan friends, including drummer George Rains and guitarist Jimmie Vaughan, do their creditable best to support Foley's music. **DB**

Ordering info: stonyplainrecords.com



Anders Svanoe *State Of The Baritone, Volume 2*

IRRABAGAST RECORDS 011

★★★★½

Exceptional saxophonist Jon Irabagon knows when he's sighted a fellow virtuoso. So, baritone specialist Anders Svanoe gets to display his skills for a second time on Irabagon's imprint. Produced by the label head, it's an intimately framed trio setting, best heard on headphones, where players sound close together. It's a muscular session, too, combining frequent groove propulsion and multiple tune sections, making a harmonious marriage between bebop and free blowing.

Svanoe's originals often hover around the five-minute mark, succeeding while including one or two twists of intent in concise fashion. He looms close to the microphone, gruffly dominant, all three members playing percussively with a bullish push.

The tunes usually are deeply embedded in Svanoe's wandering explorations. "Point Of Reference" is free-form and aggressive for two minutes, but the abstraction continues into "One On One," a longer reveling in suspended bass tones and held baritone breath. It's nearly five minutes in when a drum chase prompts a frenetic awakening. Such variety isn't bewildering, as it all stems from the trio's collective personality. Svanoe can sound like he's simultaneously hearing Gerry Mulligan and Mats Gustafsson inside his head. But in contrast, "First & Winnebago" offers a cheerfully ambling, churchy nature. There's also a clump of lighter pieces toward the disc's end, before the leader is left alone again for the almost nine minutes of "Soloist." It's a bit calmer than what precedes it, but still wriggles out a complex note-stream, getting into some clipped honking during its second part. —Martin Longley

State Of The Baritone, Volume 2: Baby Toys; Space-Time; Beagle Pilot; Point Of Reference; One On One; Free Harris; Power Up; Happy Turtle; First & Winnebago; Soloist. (52:51)

Personnel: Anders Svanoe, baritone saxophone; John Christensen, bass; Rodrigo Villanueva Conroy, drums.

Ordering info: jonirabagon.com



Steve Reich *Pulse/Quartet* (Nonesuch)

★★★★½

The two recent works by composer Steve Reich, recorded for the first time on this new disc from Nonesuch, are perfect counterparts.

The octogenarian minimalist has said that he composed "Pulse" in 2015, partially as a reaction to "Quartet" (written two years earlier), the measured calm of the former contrasting with the circuitous movement of the latter.

Taken as a whole, these pieces represent

the steadying of Reich's gaze: The busy, hypnotizing polyrhythms of groundbreaking works such as "Music For 18 Musicians" and "Six Marimbas" have evolved into something more restful and Zen-like.

Long, droning notes from woodwinds and strings, as well as the steady chords throbbing from an electric bass and piano, are the foundation of "Pulse." They're placed much lower in the mix than the more active melody lines that swirl around like birds in flight. But those quieter elements give the work its calm, warm radiance. For 16 minutes, the members of The International Contemporary Ensemble let this work flow through their languid performances and reverent restraint.

By contrast, The Colin Currie Group has a more difficult job as the ensemble follows the unspooling rhythms and cyclical momentum that constitute "Quartet." Written for two vibraphones and two pianos, the piece feels as if Reich notated a particularly knotted-up bit of computer code or the constantly updating stream of a social media feed.

The work only offers brief moments of steadiness, but otherwise is broken up by time signatures and keys in a constant state of flux, interspersed with brief moments of silence.

It would feel dismissive to refer to these pieces as minor works by the composer. They each are suffused with the depth of feeling that listeners have come to expect from any great Reich composition.

But his most notable achievements always have felt like shocks to the system or were built from a political or personal premise. As worthwhile as "Quartet" and "Pulse" are, neither composition seems to fit neatly into those categories.

Given that Reich was approaching his 80th birthday at about the time he was composing this pair of pieces, he surely can be forgiven for coasting a little bit with these most recently released works. The good news is that his latest composition, "Runner," which premiered late last year, is another vital effort from Reich that still sparks with energy and verve.

There's still plenty of fuel in his tank, even if he doesn't burn off much of it on *Pulse/Quartet*.
—Robert Ham

Pulse/Quartet: Pulse; Quartet Mvt. I; Quartet Mvt. II; Quartet Mvt. III. (31:03)

Personnel: Josh Modney, Gabby Diaz, Michi Wiancko, Pauline Kim, violin; Kyle Armbrust, Wendy Richman, viola; Claire Chase, Alice Teyssier, flute; Joshua Rubin, Campbell MacDonald, clarinet; Jacob Greenberg, piano; Greg Chudzik, bass; Colin Currie, Sam Walton, vibraphone; Philip Moore, Simon Crawford-Phillips, piano.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com



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Fela Through the Badu Lens

Fela Kuti's expansive catalogue has been well-curated—one would be hard-pressed to find another prolific, vintage African artist whose music has been made available on CD in such exhaustive detail. With his legacy secure on digital formats, Knitting Factory Records has set out to bring it back to vinyl as well. This, the fourth in a series of vinyl box sets curated by well-known acolytes of Kuti's music, compiles seven albums spanning 1976 to 1992. Past curators Questlove, Ginger Baker and Brian Eno were each given wide latitude in deciding what to include in their sets, and that appears to be true of this set's curator, Erykah Badu, too.

This is not an attempt to highlight any particular era or facet of Kuti's music. Rather, Badu chose the seven LPs on the basis of their meaning to her. Her idiosyncratic, highly personal liner notes connect moments of her own life to Kuti's frequently polemical lyrics, and fellow liner-note author Chris May provides historical context for each album. If the selection tells any kind of story about Kuti's music, it is one of expansion: The funk workouts of 1976's superb **Yellow Fever (28:58 ★★★★★½)** seem concise when set against the sweeping Afrobeat monsters of 1992's **Underground System (32:50 ★★★★★)**, the last LP released during the bandleader's lifetime.

Underground System's high-velocity grooves are bracing settings for Fela's angry lyrics—even if listeners can't follow his pidgin English lyrics well, it's impossible to miss their urgency. The songs' length allows those grooves to simmer and boil, with massive crescendos and an almost symphonic horn sound. The two albums from 1977, **No Agreement (30:30 ★★★★★)** and **Johnny Just Drop (JJD) Live! At Kalakuta Republic (23:31 ★★★★★½)**, also pack a visceral wallop, capturing Kuti's Africa '70 band, with Tony Allen on drums, at the peak of its powers. *JJD*, which excoriates Nigerians who return from abroad with an air of superiority, could scarcely move any faster, and the band is tight as a drum.

The other albums, 1979's **V.I.P. (Vagabonds In Power) (23:12 ★★★★★½)**, 1980's **Coffin For Head Of State (23:19 ★★★★★)** and 1985's **Army Arrangement (30:02 ★★★★★½)**, feature the Egypt 80 band. Until the late '80s and the clutch of albums leading up to *Underground System*, that band generally pursued a slower, spacier sound, which is evident on all three records. The last in a series of albums to



Fela Kuti

RICK MCGINNIS

address the Nigerian government's brutal raid on his Kalakuta Republic compound in Lagos, which led to the death of his mother and the destruction of his home, *Coffin For Head of State* is dominated by Kuti's jazz-influenced organ playing in its first several minutes and follows his formula of opening with an instrumental that features several soloists before reaching the vocal portion of the song. A haunted atmosphere presides over the whole 25-minute song, which also digs at Islam and Christianity, religions that Kuti regarded as alien to Nigeria.

Regardless of which band is playing, there are common elements binding things together. Burbling guitar lines, endless grooves built on two chords, a backing choir and that big horn section, anchored by Lekan Animashaun's sonorous baritone saxophone, all are hallmarks of Kuti's Afrobeat sound that are omnipresent throughout the set. The sound is superb, essential for a set like this that hinges on already invested listeners who want to be able to hear these albums on vinyl. *Army Arrangement* is mastered from the original tapes, rather than the vastly inferior post-production treatment given to the initial release of the album by Bill Laswell.

The utility of the curatorial approach to assembling these sets is debatable. It is interesting to read Badu's thoughts on this music, and certainly of a piece with playlist culture. But the archival thoroughness of the Kuti CD reissue campaigns that Knitting Factory did so well is sacrificed in the process. While mileage might vary on the approach, nearly all the music remains righteous and unimpeachable decades later. **DB**
Ordering info: knittingfactoryrecords.com



Porta Palace Collective + Rob Mazurek

Stone

RUDI 1036

★★★

Sometimes an established ensemble will invite an august guest to play a featured role on a project. American cornetist Rob Mazurek is no stranger to this situation: His own Exploding Star Orchestra has partnered with Roscoe Mitchell and Bill Dixon. But on *Stone*, he's the guest, along with tenor saxophonist Pasquale Innarella. The Porta Palace Project, an episodic endeavor led by Italian trumpeter Johnny Lapio, already has made two albums that count guests joining the core band, and *Stone* is a recording of the climactic concert for this iteration's partnership at a club in Turin, Italy.

The question that faces the organizer of an encounter like this is what to do with such guests. Do you write something that might exploit their strengths, let them call the shots or ask them to play your repertoire? Such matters might not have been completely sorted in this case. Perhaps PPP could have done more to prepare for the concert, ensuring the best material for their guests was at hand. That said, *Stone* does front-load compositions playing to its guests' strengths.

Both guests and hosts execute the pieces' transitions with aplomb, and even indifferent recording quality can't keep the music down. Especially remarkable is the way "Instants" evolves from a brooding, orchestral chamber piece into a Basie-meets-Sun Ra stomp without missing a beat. But ambition leaves the house before the musicians during the album's final third, as the music devolves into a string of solos over a syncopated soul-jazz groove. They might have done better to end the concert while they were ahead.

—Bill Meyer

Stone: Stone; Instants; Neuroplastic Groove; Itineraries; Why Not? (50:43)

Personnel: Johnny Lapio, trumpet; Rob Mazurek, cornet; Pasquale Innarella, tenor saxophone; Giuseppe Ricupero, baritone saxophone; Lino Mei, piano; Donato Stolfi, drums; Gianmaria Ferrario, bass, electronics.

Ordering info: rudirecords.com

Kate McGarry/ Keith Ganz/ Gary Versace *The Subject Tonight Is Love*

BINXTOWN 46170

★★★½

Kate McGarry often has teamed up with her husband, guitarist Keith Ganz, during the past decade. They also have worked in different settings with keyboardist Gary Versace, although *The Subject Tonight Is Love* is the first time they've recorded as a trio.

The program begins unusually as the singer reads a poem by the 14th-century mystic Hafiz that gives this recording its title. Along the way, the trio swings on a cooking "What A Difference A Day Made" and an Irish medley of McGarry's "Climb Down" and "Whiskey You're The Devil."

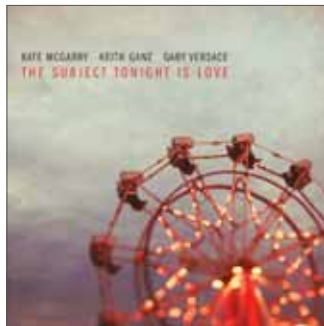
Ganz and Versace take concise solos throughout the set, with the organ playing on "Whiskey You're The Devil" and Ganz's guitar on "Secret Love" being standouts. However, McGarry is the star here, displaying a sweet voice, subtle phrasing and a consistent willingness to take chances while singing at a quiet volume.

—Scott Yanow

The Subject Tonight Is Love: The Subject Tonight Is Love; Secret Love; Climb Down/Whiskey You're The Devil; Gone With The Wind; Fair Weather; Playing Palhaco; Losing Strategy No. 4; My Funny Valentine; Mr. Sparkle/What A Difference A Day Made; She Always Will/The River; Indian Summer; All You Need Is Love. (61:09)

Personnel: Kate McGarry, vocals, piano; Keith Ganz, guitar, bass guitar; Gary Versace, piano, keyboard, organ, accordion; Ron Miles, trumpet (12); Obed Calvaire, drums (3).

Ordering info: katemcgarry.com



Mark McGrain *Love, Time And Divination*

IMMERSION RECORDS & MEDIA 18

★★★★

As the leader of PLUNGE, New Orleans trombonist Mark McGrain redefined chamber jazz by modifying it for a Fat Tuesday house party. Where PLUNGE focused more on harmonic improvisation, McGrain is in the mood for melody on *Love, Time And Divination*. Here, the composer is working in a drum-less trio, accompanied by Matt Lemmier on piano and fellow PLUNGE member James Singleton on contrabass.

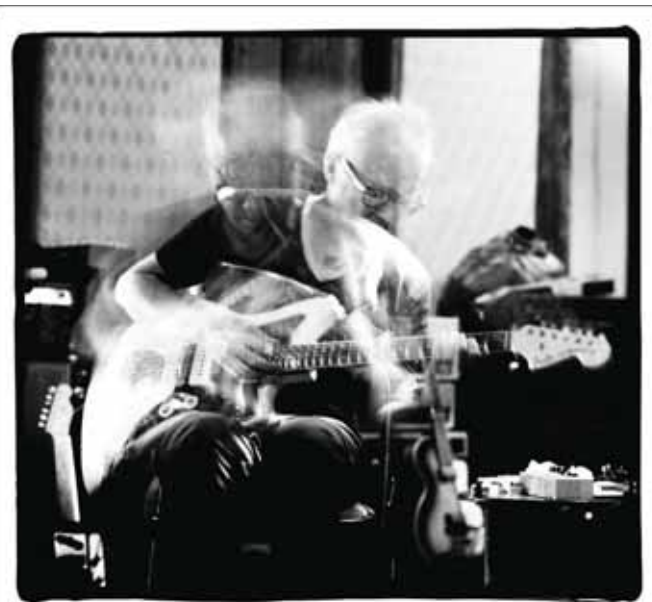
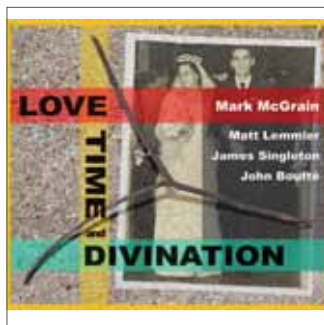
The original intent was to pay homage to McGrain's parents with a set of songs from the World War II era, but the trombonist found inspiration to create some original material in the spirit of that time. The rendition of Herman Hupfeld's "As Time Goes By" preps listeners for the mellow moods ahead. But the album's true beauty exists in the presence of the "Voice Of Tremé," Mr. John Boutté. His golden moment occurs at the record's midpoint, delivering a stirring performance of "On The Turning Away," a Pink Floyd single from its underrated 1987 *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*. Inspired and illuminating, *Love, Time And Divination* easily represents the calm and cool of an American city.

—Ron Hart

Love, Time And Divination: As Time Goes By; It All Comes Down To Love; Blossom; 3:27; On The Turning Away; Hola Brah; I Thought About You; Étreinte Bleu; Arise; Love, Time And Divination; I Can't Get Started. (54:79)

Personnel: Mark McGrain, trombone; Matt Lemmier, piano; James Singleton, contrabass; John Boutté, vocals (2, 5, 7).

Ordering info: markmcgrain.com



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Lowdown Brass Band *Lowdown Breaks*

SELF RELEASE

★★★★½

The Chicago-based Lowdown Brass Band proves you don't have to be tied to New Orleans to produce a powerful brass band album. With its latest disc, the eclectic *Lowdown Breaks*, the group works to pay homage to the institution of hip-hop, setting its gaze specifically on the breakbeat, while keeping an eye trained on the jazz genre.

Just as proto-DJs did before them, Lowdown creates a unified style from diverse musical

influences, sounding at various points like a New Orleans trad band ("2nd Line Hop"), a funkified Tower of Power-style outfit ("Live It Up") and a Chicago-esque horn-rock group ("Ponder This"). But what unifies the album is its horn lines. This ensemble is a little more subdued than its N'awlins counterparts, with precision taking priority over all-out power. But the album doesn't suffer for its laid-back vibe. Quite the contrary: The clean sound grants MCs and guest vocalists space to shine.

Featured MC Billa Camp flexes some serious lyrical muscle, with a silky delivery that filters poetic themes through colloquial language. Part of that is a product of his influences. Though based in Chicago, his work clearly has been informed by legends of East Coast hip-hop, especially Nas and Q-Tip. Meanwhile, reggae artist Fada Dougou adds a stormy ferocity to his feature, "Don't Wait, Right Now," and The Dread contributes a gritty, hard-bitten refrain to "Ghost Town," a song that sports the melody of The Specials' classic.

—Brian Zimmerman

Lowdown Breaks: Intro; Second Line Hop; Cold Shoulder; Grind It Out; Don't Wait! Right Now; Ponder This; Ghost Town; Live It Up; Dividends; Can I Kick It?; The Climb. (45:17)

Personnel: Dave Levine, Chris Neal, Lance Loissele, saxophones; Shane Jonas, Sam Johnson, trumpet; Andrew Zelm, Raphael Crawford, Steve Duncan, trombones; John Barbush, drums; Michael Agust, bass drum, cymbal; MC Billa Camp, Ang13 (3), Fada Dougou (5) The Dread (7), vocals.

Ordering info: lowdownbrassband.com

Audun Trio *Rondane*

LOSEN RECORDS 191

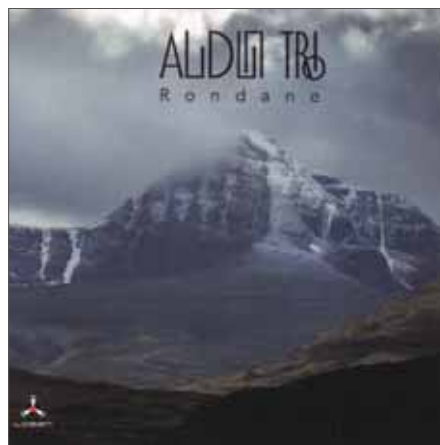
★★★★

Pianist Audun Barsten Johnsen, the leader of Audun Trio, is 24, has degrees from the University of Agder and the Oslo Music School, and is based in his native country, Norway. He considers Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett to be two of his main influences, and certainly some of the music on *Rondane* sounds closely related to the latter player's style.

Johnsen performs eight of his own compositions on this Losen Records release, which feature concise performances that set a mood, but don't overstay their welcome.

"Present Joy," the album opener, has a simple and likable melody, which is surprisingly sung by the trio halfway through the piece. This accessible performance made me wonder if this group counts as the Norwegian Ramsey Lewis Trio. But that comparison ended with the second number here: the slowly paced, cinematic "Do Smalltalk With Me, Please." The Jarrett influence is felt on "Nattkjoring," a number on which the musicians seem to be playing three independent but overlapping songs before coming together.

Other performances include the easy lis-



tening groove of the title track, the pretty "Ragtime" (which has nothing to do with Scott Joplin), the picturesque "Dei Fem Disiplane" and the quietly passionate "Sundaze."

A bit more stretching out, as well as some more mood and tempo variations, would have added to the value of this set. But *Rondane* is an excellent early effort for this Norwegian Trio.

—Scott Yanow

Rondane: Present Joy; Do Smalltalk With Me, Please; Nattkjoring; Gondola In Sunrise; Rondane; Ragtime; Dei Fem Disiplane; Sundaze. (42:11)

Personnel: Audun Barsten Johnsen, piano; Håkon Norby Bjørge, bass; Magnus Sefaniassen Eide, drums.

Ordering info: losenrecords.no



Steve Swell *Music For Six Musicians: Hommage À Olivier Messiaen*

SILKHEART 161

★★★★

For this tribute, trombonist Steve Swell assembled a new band featuring longtime collaborators as well as musicians one might not immediately associate with the trombonist. But pianist Robert and drummer Jim Pugliese share eclectic backgrounds, and their extensive experience in contemporary music makes them well suited for this project.

Unlike his previous tribute to Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, Swell's homage to Olivier Messiaen is built on stronger connections. "Sextet For The End Of Democracy" might be a play on "Quartet For The End Of Time," but more importantly, it shares some of the French composer's spirit and sound. The composition, too, makes extensive use of church organ, and if the opening segment doesn't summon Messiaen's mysticism, it surely evokes a ghostly afterworld.

While the pieces blur the line between genres, there are times when jazz clearly rears its head. On "Joy And The Remarkable Behavior Of Time," another unaccompanied viola solo by Wang leads to a vamp à la "A Love Supreme." Pugliese is actually swinging, Ulrich playing the role of walking bass, and Swell, first, and then Boston, launch into riveting solos that would suit any modern jazz recording.

Early in his career, Swell worked with Buddy Rich and Lionel Hampton, establishing his jazz credentials, before asserting himself as a first-rate free improviser. This new recording allows him to tackle some fresh challenges and to gauge the potency of his skills as a composer.

—Alain Drouot

Music For Six Musicians: Hommage à Olivier Messiaen: Opening; Sextet For The End Of Democracy; Vautour Fauve; Joy And The Remarkable Behavior Of Time; Exit The Labyrinth. (76:12)

Personnel: Steve Swell, trombone, Aerophone; Jason Kao Hwang, violin, viola, electronics; Tomas Ulrich, cello; Jim Pugliese, drums, percussion; Rob Brown, alto saxophone; Robert Boston, piano, organ.

Ordering info: silkheart.se

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Space-Age Jazz Gets Psychedelic

While the first wave of free-jazz in the late 1950s and early 1960s set out to transform musical practice, many of the musicians who stepped into the breach that they opened were as concerned with changing minds and spirits as with transforming music itself.

Consider Michael Cosmic and Phill Musra, the twin brother multi-instrumentalists whose respective mid-1970s recordings recently have been reissued as the double LP/triple CD ***Peace In The World/Creator Spaces* (Now-Again; 46:14/56:09/20:23 ★★★★★)**. Song titles like “We Love You Malcolm X,” “Space On Space” and “The Creator Is So Far Out” should leave no doubt of their aspirations to spread peace and expand consciousness.

The brothers, whose given names were Thomas Michael Cooper and Phillip Anthony Alfred Cooper, grew up in Chicago, where they matriculated to the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music school. In 1971, they joined Boston’s grassroots Afrocentric cultural community, which operated separately from the city’s more established new music and straight-ahead jazz scenes. Their most crucial collaborator was drummer Hüseyin Ertunç, a Turkish artist and musician. Cosmic’s session features the leader on piano, while a host of horn players join his brother to ride a roiling, percussive foundation that pulses more than it swings. He switches to organ on Musra’s *Creator Spaces*, which features the core trio. Throughout, they merge AACM’s “little instruments” concept, Don Cherry and Edward Blackwell’s pan-ethnic percussion and Sunny Murray’s meter-less drumming with Albert Ayler into a platform from which to launch alternately ecstatic and solemn expressions of spiritual yearning and cultural uplift. The third disc’s music, which comes as a download with the LP, features a performance by the Worlds Experience Orchestra, a larger band the brothers sometimes joined.

Ordering info: nowagainrecords.com

***Drum Dance To The Motherland* (Eremite; 43:16 ★★★★★½)**, by vibraphonist Khan Jamal’s Creative Arts Ensemble, has been reissued before. But this is the first American vinyl edition and the first to reproduce the handmade artwork of the original, which was released by Byard Lancaster’s Dogtown imprint in 1972. Two trap drummers join Jamal, who occasionally doubles on keening clarinet. Assisted by psychedelic levels of tape echo, they simultaneously sustain a swinging cadence, define a tune and lull listeners into a trance.



Monnette Sudler’s electric guitar and Billy Mills’ bass exchange languid phrases, navigating the percussionists’ labyrinthine reverberations without losing sight of a more conventionally idiom. The main precedent within jazz for such music is certain similarly echo-laden sessions that Sun Ra laid down in the 1960s; the rarity of such genuinely psychedelic jazz only makes it more precious.

Ordering info: eremite.com

There are some pretty obscure corners in Sun Ra’s own discography, and until now, ***Discipline 27-II (Corbett Vs. Dempsey; 53:38 ★★★★★½)*** has been one of them. Drawn from the same 1972 session that yielded the Blue Thumb LP *Space Is The Place*, but long overshadowed by its better-distributed sister session, this CD reissue reveals it to be a key document in Ra’s oeuvre. While its sister album functioned as a handy sampler of what Ra and his Arkestra could do, this record focuses on just two aspects—riffs and chants. Lyric brass and massed percussion orbit around Ra’s relentlessly grooving keyboard; on “Discipline Eight,” a discordant, repeating horn figure performs the same function, while the leader casts explosive synthesizer bursts and Eloë Omoe’s savage bass clarinet tears across the music’s grain. Having evoked a cosmic conflict between chaos and order, a side-long title track lays out Ra’s reasons for living as a big band leader from Saturn with belly-busting wit, a preacher’s fire and redemptive compassion.

DB

Ordering info: corbettvsdempsey.com



Pablo Held *Glow II*

PIRQUET 3102

★★★★★

Pablo Held has been making richly poetic albums for a decade, and the German pianist is only 31 years old. Along with five records featuring his symbiotic trio with bassist Robert Landfermann and drummer Jonas Burgwinkel, Held produced the beautiful large-ensemble album *Glow* in 2010. For the worthy sequel, Held has varied the instrumentation, with guitar now adding more grain to a texture marked by horns, multiple basses, coloristic keyboards and, at its core, his trio. But Held’s latest music weaves in some growl to go along with the glow.

The bulk of *Glow* was recorded in a Cologne radio studio, which is also the setting for much of the sequel—apart from the pair of live tracks bookending the sequence. Held said his writing for large ensemble increasingly tends toward sketches for the group to fill in, making the music “a little looser, more free-flowing.” The opener, “Terra,” begins like dawn breaking, the piece rising out of quiet guitar picking and a piano line brimming with melodic possibilities.

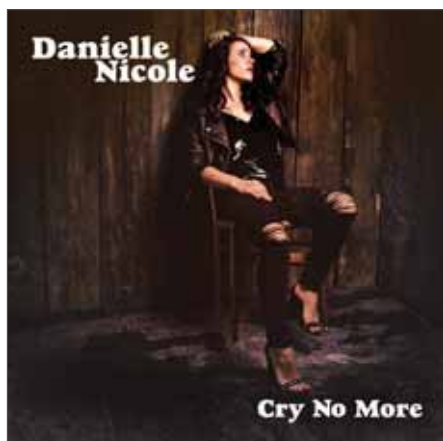
Held’s trio albums regularly reveal classical music influences, but here “Longstreth Blues” hints at the inspiration of Dave Longstreth, leader of indie act The Dirty Projectors. An acoustic solo by guitarist Ronny Graupe leads the way to long-tone chants from the horns, eventually ceding space to Held as he unspools an extended solo across sotto voce accompaniment. Another highlight is “Tausendschön,” inspired by a German radio play of *Beauty And The Beast*; the arrangement, with its tolling bass line and wisps of horn figuration, evokes an apt sense of mystery and magic.

—Bradley Bamberger

Glow II: Terra; Pinatubo; Smaragd; Longstreth Blues; Tausendschön; Chiffre. (55:01)

Personnel: Pablo Held, piano; Claus Stötter, trumpet (2–6); Niels Klein, saxophones, clarinet; Philipp Gropper, tenor saxophones (2–6); Ronny Graupe, guitar (2–6); Hubert Nuss, harmonium, celeste, pocket organ (2–6); Henning Sieverts, Robert Landfermann, bass; Jonas Burgwinkel, drums; Christian Weidner, alto saxophone (1); John Schröder, acoustic guitar (1).

Ordering info: pirouet.com



Danielle Nicole
Cry No More
 CONCORD 00630
 ★★★★★

For two decades, Shemekia Copeland fans have been waiting for her to make a great album. She's come close, but now there is urgency in the challenge. Danielle Nicole is knocking at the door with *Cry No More*, her own near-great Shemekia Copeland album.

The similarities between the music of reigning blues queen Copeland and upstart Nicole are striking. Both work in a soul-blues and rock hybrid, and each are from musical homes, with Nicole emerging from the Missouri-rooted family band Trampled Under Foot. Nicole might not have Copeland's virtuosic pipes, but she does out-emote other young blues rockers, such as Samantha Fish and Kenny Wayne Shepherd, who guests on the album. And, like Copeland, Nicole is a talented songwriter—and more prolific, as evidenced by nine writing credits here.

Producer-drummer Tony Braunagel knows how to make great albums (Taj Mahal's *Shoutin' In Key*, among others), giving Nicole an edge. He understands that Nicole's bass is an essential part of her work, so her instrument is so far up in the mix that car stereos will be rattling windows. And Nicole knows how to record a cover song, particularly the seductive "Hot Spell," which she says Bill Withers bestowed upon her. And Blind Willie Johnson's "Lord I Just Can't Keep From Crying" is a welcome antidote to some of the swirling organ intros and flashy guitar riffs of several earlier tracks.

Shemekia, you're down a set in this intriguing match. —Jeff Johnson

Cry No More: Crawl; I'm Going Home; Hot Spell; Burnin' For You; Cry No More; Poison The Well; Bobby; Save Me; How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore; Baby Eyes; Pusher Man; My Heart Remains; Someday You Might Change Your Mind; Lord I Just Can't Keep From Crying. (61:11)

Personnel: Danielle Nicole, vocals, bass; Johnny Lee Schell, guitar, cig fiddle; Mike Sedovic, organ, piano; Tony Braunagel, drums, percussion; Nick Schnebelen, guitar (1); Maxanne Lewis, Kudisan Kai, background vocals (1, 2, 4, 5); Sonny Landreth, slide guitar (2); Mike Finnigan, organ (2, 4); Walter Trout, guitar (4); Kelly Finnigan, organ (6, 11, 13); Kenny Wayne Shepherd (8); "Monster" Mike Welch (9); Brandon Miller (10); Luther Dickinson, guitar (14).

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

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Ornette, for the Kids

Most jazz books are written for people who already know a lot about jazz, such as subscribers to this magazine. That makes sense, for those readers are far more likely to shell out 20 or 30 dollars for a new book about, say, John Coltrane or Randy Weston. This is preaching to the choir, in a sense, but the choir needs preaching, too, if only to deepen their knowledge of scripture and theology—or, in the case of jazz literature, music history and theory.

But such discourse doesn't produce the conversions that jazz needs if it is to increase its congregation. It also needs books that will explain the music to the uninitiated in a way that will bring them into the fold. That's what Michael Stephans is trying to do in ***Experiencing Ornette Coleman: A Listener's Companion*** (Rowman & Littlefield).

An author attempting such an outreach has to decide which portion of the unconverted to go after, though. Should they address the progressive-rock fan, the contemporary art-music lover or the well-rounded cultural consumer? And what kind of previous knowledge can the author presume?

Stephans assumes the reader doesn't know much of anything at all. He decides he has to explain everything: who Miles Davis is, how a chord is constructed, even basic English vocabulary. At one point, he informs his audience that "integrity" is a kind of honesty. It seems that his intended readers are middle-school students.

Young music fans, as much as anyone else, certainly deserve a shot at understanding Coleman. Once those readers have absorbed enough history, theory and vocabulary, they should be ready for an argument about why Coleman is worth our listening time.

But that argument never arrives. Instead, the book repeats ad nauseam the bromide that one shouldn't be afraid of music that's different, that one should suspend judgment and give the unconventional a chance. Fair enough. But surely there comes a time when you've given the music a chance and it's time to bring judgment back in to assess if there's something of value there. How else can one differentiate between Coleman's unusual music and the unusual music of your uncle's out-of-tune clarinet playing? *Free Jazz, Harmolodics and Ornette Coleman* (Routledge), by Stephan Rush, another relatively recent tome, perhaps works more toward this goal.

Because Stephans, a drummer for the likes of Pharoah Sanders and Joe Lovano,



and a teacher at Bloomsburg University, can't quite put into words the value of Coleman's music, he relies instead on biography and description. His descriptions of specific recorded performances from all periods of Coleman's career are actually quite detailed and helpful. But when it comes to explaining why this solo or that tempo shift has artistic value for the listener, he comes up short.

To justify this omission, he repeatedly trots out the empty platitude that reading about music is no substitute for listening to music. True, but writing about music can provide an invaluable expansion of the reader's pleasure from music, if the book or article has an idea worth arguing for. In lieu of such an idea, Stephans offers the kind of bland aphorisms and imagination exercises one might find in new-age poetry or the workbooks that museums hand out to students on a field trip.

"Writing about music—or any art form for that matter—can be a difficult task," Stephans writes, "in that a writer can write a thousand words about a musician or a piece of music and still not get to the heart of the creative act." It's difficult, yes, but not impossible, though it proves to be beyond Stephans' talents. Just as you should think twice about hiring a jazz critic to play drums in your band, you should think twice about hiring a drummer to write a book of jazz criticism.

DB

Ordering info: rowman.com



James Hall *Lattice*

OUTSIDE IN MUSIC 1801

★★★★½

Nebraska native and Brooklyn-based trombonist James Hall has gained recognition for his compositions during the past decade. He's shown interest in Third Stream forms, and a close listen here indicates graceful instrumental combinations and linear development. *Lattice* follows up his 2013 debut, *Soon We Will Not Be Here* (Self Release), with an engaging group of performances.

The bandleader's front-line work with flute player Jamie Baum produces pastel tonalities. They often follow a close harmony on themes, then one player will improvise counterpoint melodies as the other solos. When the writing turns to a minor key, Baum switches to alto flute. Deanna Witkowski's piano is a third voice at times, yet she sturdily undergirds much of the music throughout.

Baum shines with a flute outing that manages to be introspective, yet sunny, on "Kind Folk." The gently rolling tune brings out Witkowski's lyrical side and the indispensable pulse of Tom DiCarlo's bass. With the understated combustion of Alan Menard's drums—with well-calibrated tones and well-placed accents—this piece could be considered an heir to the chamber aesthetic introduced by the Chico Hamilton Quintet more than 60 years ago.

Hall is a warm-toned lyrical player who takes an expressive detour on "Terrace." With his harmonic sophistication, his writing begs for more front-line voices and more fulsome voicing. But the tone of the album suffers from a somewhat limpid dynamic. A few bust-out solos from more extroverted voices here would add some needed aural spice. Somebody sign him and give him a budget.

—Kirk Silsbee

Lattice: Shoy; Black Narcissus; Lattice; Brittle Stitch; Gaillardia; Traveler; Kind Folk; Terrace. (47:55)

Personnel: James Hall, trombone; Jamie Baum, flute, alto flute; Sharel Cassity, alto saxophone (2, 4); Deanna Witkowski, piano; Rhodes; Tom DiCarlo, bass; Allan Menard, drums.

Ordering info: outsideinmusic.com

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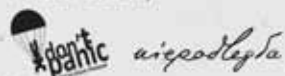
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Nick Hempton *Trio Stonk: Live At Smalls*

SMALLSLIVE 0053

★★★★½

Confidence and daring permeate this live date from saxophonist Nick Hempton, bassist George DeLancey and drummer Dan Aran. A mash-up of blues, bop and free-jazz, the seven tracks on *Trio Stonk: Live At Smalls* intersperse engagingly bluesy originals with pretty takes on the classics “Poor Butterfly” and “When I Grow Too Old To Dream.”

Recorded at Smalls Jazz Club in New York during April 2017, *Trio Stonk* is consistently

approachable. It leavens blues tropes with bop economy, particularly amid Hempton’s tenor excursions on “Droppin’ A Franklin,” the set’s most dramatic tune. It features Hempton’s warmhearted style at its most curious, navigating a twisty tune that incorporates cha-cha, quotes from “A Night In Tunisia” and Sonny Stitt-style forays that turn a leisurely tune fiery.

After Aran validates his prowess on “Transition Vamp,” Hempton slides into “A Whistlin’ Blues,” the most orthodox track here. His alto and tenor solos exhibit a vocal quality that keeps one’s focus on the story. Hempton also goes outside on “Not The Sort Of Jazz That Stewart Lee Likes,” a tune attributed to him and Sonny Rollins that showcases Hempton’s dirtiest lines. This variegated work, with Hempton on tenor again, namechecks Lee, a British comedian and occasional jazz critic. The bandleader toys with this tune and goes wide and weird, even turning abstract in an exchange with Aran that makes it all the more dramatic. References to bebop precursors only deepen the increasingly heated mix, making “Not The Sort...” the highlight of a likeable album. —Carlo Wolff

Trio Stonk Live At Smalls: A Blues To You, Rudy; Poor Butterfly; Droppin’ A Franklin; Transition Vamp; A Whistlin’ Blues; Not The Sort Of Jazz That Stewart Lee Likes; When I Grow Too Old To Dream. (60:42)

Personnel: Nick Hempton, saxophones; George DeLancey, bass; Dan Aran, drums.

Ordering info: smallslive.com

Andrew Distel *It Only Takes Time*

JERUJAZZ RECORDS 9

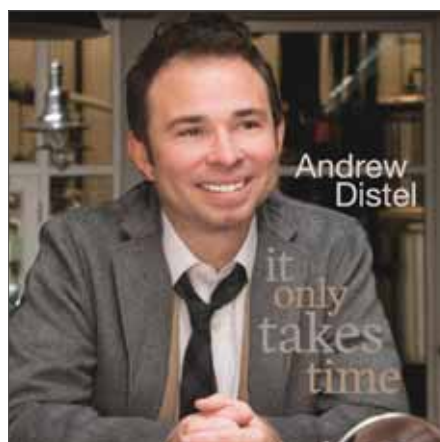
★★★★½

Add Chicago-based Andrew Distel to the list of trumpet-playing singers contributing to long-standing tradition stretching back to Louis Armstrong. Distel, a multi-talented bandleader, displays his imaginative arrangements and budding skills as a composer on *It Only Takes Time*.

His ambitious sophomore outing includes “Wait For Me,” one of two originals among the album’s 11 tracks. What unfolds here is an invigorating blend of tradition and improvisation, coming together to reveal an exemplary ensemble that includes world-class musicianship.

Ease, versatility and sophistication permeate the collection, including standout tunes like “Amor.” Distel sings with conviction in Portuguese, and the guitar solo from Dave Onderdonk, coupled with a full 12-piece string section, is truly breathtaking.

As a unit, the band performs flawlessly on “Smoke Gets In Your Eyes,” when Distel contributes some solid middle-register playing. The real brilliance, though, comes at the album’s end with “Your Last Song.” Based on the Kenny Dorham tune “Blue Spring Shuffle,” Distel adds a bit of scatting and trumpet flair. Clearly, his experi-

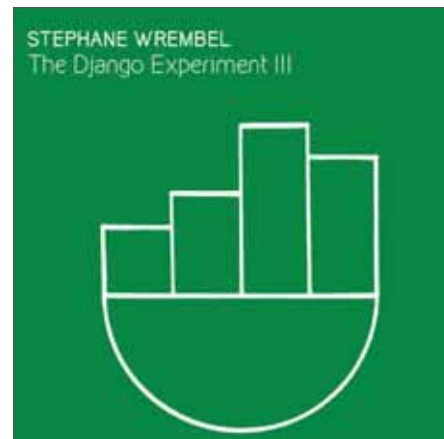


ence working with jazz, classical and pop singers, including Barbra Streisand, has paid off. But it gets better: “Into Each Life” opens with a Carlos Enriquez bass line alongside eyebrow-raising drumming from Geraldo DeOlivera and is capped off with an impressive harmonica contribution from Howard Levy, bolstering an already notable release. —Robin James

It Only Takes Time: Speak Low; Alfie; One Morningstar Away; Amor; Wait For Me; Who Cares; Too Soon To Tell; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes; Your Last Song; Into Each Life; You Are There. (44:55)

Personnel: Andrew Distel, vocals, trumpet; Peter Martin, piano; Carlos Enriquez, bass; George Fludas, drums; Jim Gailoretto, woodwinds; Howard Levy, harmonica; Dave Onderdonk, guitar; Geraldo DeOlivera, percussion; Brian Schwab, trumpet; Raphael Crawford, trombone.

Ordering info: jerujazzrecords.com



Stephane Wrembel *The Django Experiment III*

WATER IS LIFE

★★★★

French guitarist Stephane Wrembel, a New Yorker since 2003, is widely known for “Bistro Fada,” the theme song from Woody Allen’s 2011 *Midnight In Paris*. He continues waving the flag for gypsy jazz on this third release in his Django Reinhardt trilogy. The opening track, a recreation of an 1880 Romanian waltz, cleverly recreates Django’s pedal-point motif at the outset, which Reinhardt recorded in 1947 as “Les Flots du Danube” with the Quintette du Hot Club de France. Wrembel also introduces a droning sampled tamboura sound, which sets the tone for this upbeat romp.

The gypsy jazz crew luxuriates in “Manoir De Mes Reves,” a lovely showcase for second guitarist Thor Jensen, then collectively burns on André Dedjean’s “Swing Gitan,” which Wrembel melds with his own composition “Apocalypse.” Clarinetist Nick Driscoll contributes to a jaunty, chugging interpretation of Reinhardt’s classic “Nuages,” then switches to soprano sax, running challenging unisons alongside Wrembel on Reinhardt’s uptempo swinger “Flèche D’or.” Driscoll’s solo here is uncharacteristically out, alluding to Middle Eastern tonalities and intense, Trane-like searching over the course of two minutes.

Wrembel brings a poetic touch to his reading of Georges Ulmer’s “Si Tu Savais,” a slow number the Hot Club of France recorded in 1947. And for a show-stopping closer, “Indifference,” the ensemble reinvents the valse musette with Driscoll once again pushing the harmonic envelope and exploring with wild abandon on soprano saxophone and Wrembel turning in some of his most aggressively scintillating fretboard work of the session. —Bill Milkowski

The Django Experiment III: Les Flots Du Danube; Melodie Au Crépuscule; Fate; Manoir De Mes Reves; Swing Gitan/Apocalypse; Nuages; Flèche D’or; Si Tu Savais; Indifference. (48:57)

Personnel: Stephane Wrembel, Thor Jensen, guitar; Ari Folman Cohen, bass; Nick Anderson, drums; Nick Driscoll, saxophone, clarinet (2, 6).

Ordering info: stephanewrembel.com



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BEST OF 2018 NAMM SHOW



Reporting by Frank Alkyer, Dave Cantor, Ed Enright, Kasia Fejklowicz, Alex Harrell and Bobby Reed

Artist sightings are a thrilling aspect of The NAMM Show, the global music industry's annual showcase for new instruments and gear. This year's edition, held Jan. 25–28 on the campus of the Anaheim Convention Center in Southern California, welcomed a cast of visiting musicians who browsed the exhibit areas, gave product demonstrations and took part in the convention's after-hours concerts, all-star jams and awards ceremonies. In the following pages, DownBeat presents the best of The 2018 NAMM Show.





1. Melissa Etheridge performs at the Yamaha All-Star Concert on the Grand (Photo by Jesse Grant/Getty Images for NAMM).
2. Bootsy Collins on the show floor.
3. Marcus Miller demonstrates his new line of bass amplification gear.
4. Don Braden (left), JodyJazz President Jody Espina and Andy Snitzer play at the Jazz Jam, sponsored by Légère, JodyJazz and Rovner.
5. Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen strikes a pose.
6. Lindsey Stirling at the Yamaha All-Star Concert (Photo by Jesse Grant/Getty Images for NAMM).
7. Singer-songwriter Jackson Browne (on mic) performs at the TEC Awards with keyboardist Craig Doerge (left), drummer Russ Kunkel, bassist Leland Sklar and guitarist Danny Kortchmar of "The Section" (Photo by Jesse Grant/Getty Images for NAMM). Browne received the Les Paul Award, and The Section members entered the TEC Hall of Fame.
8. Wallace Roney (right) plays at Kanstul Musical Instruments headquarters in Anaheim with saxophonist Emilio Modeste, pianist Oscar Williams II, bassist Curtis Lundy and drummer Kojo Roney.
9. Joey DeFrancesco (left) plays the Viscount Legend Classic organ as Viscount's Maro Galanti, Lorenzo Galanti and Enzo Tabone look on.
10. Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah stops by the DownBeat booth.
11. Vandoren endorser Chris Madsen at the VandoJam.
12. Dave Weckl performs at Casio's Steve Weingart album-release party.
13. Stanton Moore (left) and Wil Blades (Photo by Jesse Grant/Getty Images for NAMM).
14. Brian Charette at the Hammond USA booth.
15. Kurt Rosenwinkel at the D'Angelico Guitars exhibit.
16. Grace Kelly demonstrates the Yamaha Venova Casual Wind Instrument.
17. Joe Lovano at the Sax Dakota booth.

← DEPENDABLE LIGATURE

JodyJazz has expanded its Power Ring Ligature range with the introduction of the Soprano and Baritone models for DV series mouthpieces. The ligatures feature a concave inner design, which reduces the touch points on the reed, thereby maximizing reed vibration.

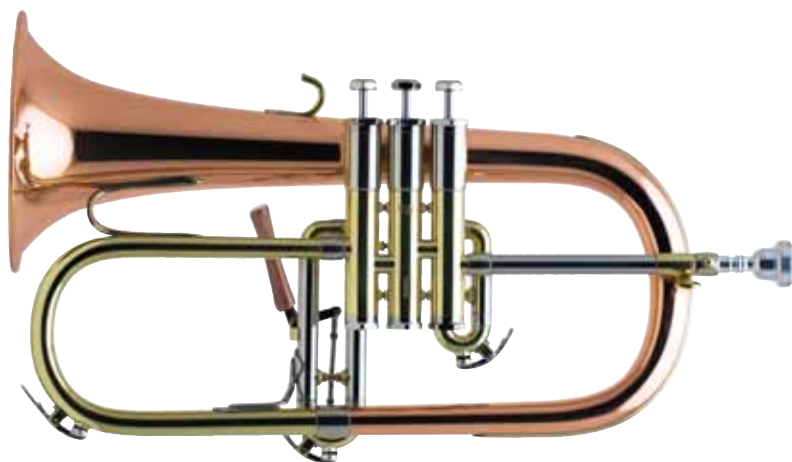
More info: jodyjazz.com



→ TERRIFIC TENOR

A follow-up to P. Mauriat's Master-97A alto saxophone, the Master-97T tenor saxophone is a dual-alloy instrument, utilizing a rose brass Super VI neck and sterling silver octave pips. Features include an ergonomic left-hand thumb rest, a four-point body-to-bell brace and extensive hand-engravings. The Master-97T is finished in a honey-gold lacquer and comes with a case and accessories.

More info: pmauriatmusic.com



↑ COPPER BELL

Schilke now offers a copper bell option for its 1040-FL flugelhorn. This model also includes an upgraded third slide trigger outfitted with exotic wood. The design also features an improved shape and length to the trigger for more balance and comfort.

More info: schilke.com

→ DENIS WICK AT 50

Denis Wick has released a limited-edition 50th anniversary gold-finish straight mute for B-flat trumpet and trombone. Based on the top seller in the line, the special-edition mute features the company's 50th anniversary logo and will serve not only as a high-performance mute, but also as a visually striking keepsake.

More info: deniswick.com



← BASS 'BONE PROJECTION

The S.E. Shires Jazz Bass Trombone offers immediate response and a nimble feel paired with a dense and projecting sound. Its two-piece, 9½-inch BI 2G gold brass bell features a more focused BI taper. Its standard weight and unsoldered bead work with this taper to provide a sound that is responsive while still retaining a strong core fundamental.

More info: seshires.com



↓ ELITE TRUMPET

Yamaha's YTR-9335VSII is a limited-edition, second-generation model trumpet that was designed in consultation with Allen Vizzutti. It features brass piston stems and resin valve guides that allow players to execute very fast passages. It also has an upgraded leadpipe, improved bell design and square-style bend for more color and tonal balance across the sound spectrum.

More info: usa.yamaha.com



← CENTENNIAL POWER

The Bach Stradivarius Centennial Trombone and Centennial Trumpet commemorate the 100th year of Vincent Bach's business. The trombone features a traditional model 42 bell; a European-designed "open-flow" valve, creating an ease of playability in the low register while maintaining a great free bracing; and "bell-free" which allows the bell to vibrate freely.

More info: bachbrass.com

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NEW
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The new YTR-5330MRC was developed with the trumpet section of the legendary group *Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán*. The trumpet is designed to meet the demanding needs of lively and energetic mariachi-style trumpet performance. Many unique design elements offer players a crisp and projecting sound, a visually compelling two-tone silver and gold visual, and the flexibility to adjust the weight to fit each player's unique needs.





← LOUDSPEAKER BOOST

Mackie's redesigned Thump Series powered loudspeakers deliver more power and reliability. Newly added to the series are Thump Boosted models: the 12-inch Thump12BST and 15-inch Thump15BST. By utilizing Bluetooth technology, the 1,300-watt Thump Boosted models can wirelessly link directly to each other at a distance of up to 100 meters, giving users wireless control over the whole system.

More info: mackie.com



↑ HI-RES MIXERS

Allen & Heath debuted its SQ series of digital mixers for live sound applications. The SQ-5 and SQ-6 deliver high-resolution, 96kHz audio with a latency of less than 0.7 milliseconds. The SQ-5 has 16 onboard pre-amps and 17 faders, while the SQ-6 provides 24 pre-amps and 25 faders. Both consoles feature an audio networking slot for optional Dante, Waves and other card formats.

More info: allen-heath.com

← **HAVE P.A., WILL TRAVEL**
Bose Professional's S1 Pro is an all-in-one portable P.A., floor monitor and practice amp that can be set up in various positions depending on the application. An onboard three-channel mixer offers independent ToneMatch, reverb and EQ controls on two channels, with a third dedicated channel for either wired or wireless music sources.

More info: pro.bose.com



← 1-MIC MULTITRACKING

The USB-compatible Zylia ZM-1 microphone lets users record multiple instruments simultaneously and then separate individual instruments from the mix while preserving the natural acoustic color of each. Featuring a 19-capsule array with 24-bit resolution, the Zylia ZM-1 introduces a live multitrack experience where a full band can be recorded and mixed with only one microphone.

More info: zylia.co



↓ EFFICIENT DAW

Avid's Pro Tools 2018 digital audio workstation enhances the creative experience and accelerates workflows with new features including Track Presets, retrospective MIDI recording, MIDI editing enhancements and playlist comping enhancements. Shortcuts to transpose, trim notes and edit velocities make music creation more efficient, and sessions are easily converted to cloud-enabled files.

More info: avid.com



ENTRY-LEVEL RIBBON ➔

Royer Labs' R-10 is an entry-level ribbon microphone that's warm, full-bodied and natural sounding. Suitable for studio and live use, the R-10 features a 2.5-micron ribbon element and a David Royer custom-designed transformer. Its ribbon transducer is wired for humbucking to reject electromagnetically induced noise.

The mic incorporates a three-layer windscreens system and internally shockmounted ribbon transducer originally developed for Royer's R-101 ribbon mic. The windscreens protect from air blasts and plosives while reducing proximity effect.

More info: royerlabs.com



↓ FREEDOM TO CRASH

Sabian's FRX (frequency-reduced) cymbals have been designed for environments where traditional cymbals are just too much. The FRX cymbals are ideal for lower-volume environments like churches, weddings, corporate gigs, small venues, schools, musical theater, cruise ships and band rehearsals.

More info: sabian.com



COATED BASS HEADS →

Evans Drumheads by D'Addario Percussion has expanded its patented UV coating technology to a new line of bass drum heads. The patented UV-cured coating provides durability and consistency of texture, making the heads extremely responsive for brush playing, while the 10-mil film delivers exceptional strength and versatility for a range of applications.

More info: evansdrumheads.com



← JUST BEAT IT

Vic Firth has introduced the VicKick Wood Shaft Beater for drum set and cajon players. A standard-size rod and tapered wood shaft ensure that the beater fits universally into the hub with plenty of clearance over the cam. The beater features a 1.75-inch felt ball.

More info: vicfirth.com



DRUM SET ENHANCEMENT →

Yamaha's EAD10 is a standalone acoustic drum module system that lets drummers easily capture the sounds of an acoustic drum set with a single microphone/trigger component connected to a digital processor. For hybrid drum expansion, the central module features a snare trigger input and two three-zone trigger inputs that are compatible with the Yamaha DT50S snare trigger and DTX series pads.

More info: yamahadrums.com



↑ FRESH LOOK

Zildjian has updated its 5A and 5B drumsticks. More than 30 models have been redesigned to improve their style, durability and response. All 5A and 5B models now feature a reduced tip size, increased neck size, longer tapers and improved balance, response and durability.

More info: zildjian.com



↑ BOUTIQUE FEEL

Dixon has launched a series of professional, roadworthy drums, the Cornerstone Drum Kits. Dixon's Cornerstone Drums feature an 18- by 22-inch bass drum, 8- by 10-inch tom, 9- by 10-inch tom, 16- by 16-inch floor tom and an optional matching snare. The two color options are piano black and natural.

More info: stlouismusic.com



↑ AMP COMPANION

The Katana Cabinet 212 from Boss is a companion speaker cabinet for the Katana-Head guitar amplifier. It delivers powerful tones for all genres of music, from blues, jazz and country to the heaviest rock styles. Equipped with two 12-inch speakers, the cabinet handles up to 150 watts and can be used in a horizontal or vertical configuration. It features a detachable back panel section that lets users switch from a closed-back stack tone to the open-back sound of a classic combo amp.

More info: boss.info

→ WARM & BALANCED

Ibanez's full-hollow AF95FM features a flamed maple top, back and sides, with ivory binding on the body, headstock and fingerboard. A three-piece maple/mahogany set-in neck is fitted with an ebony fretboard featuring contrasting pearl block inlays. Jazz fans will recognize the Ibanez original Super 58 Custom pickups from the company's George Benson, Pat Metheny and John Scofield signature models.

More info: ibanez.com



SWEET SOUNDS →

Vintage Guitars' V100 includes a solid mahogany body and neck mated in true "set neck" fashion for maximum tone-enhancing rigidity. A carved, gently arched body top adds to the V100's distinctive look. The mahogany and maple tonewoods help produce the kinds of sounds this style of guitar is known for: sweet-toned, bluesy licks with a warm, jazzy feel.

More info:

vintageguitarsus.com



↑ 12-STRING SOLUTION

Takamine's EF400SC TT is a 12-string solution for players who want the advantage of Takamine's thermal-top technology. Offering the tone of a vintage, played-in 12-string, the EF400SC TT provides a solid thermal spruce top, solid Indian rosewood back and a slender mahogany neck that allows for a no-compromise performance feel. While its tone is vintage, this guitar is full of modern amenities like CT4B II electronics.

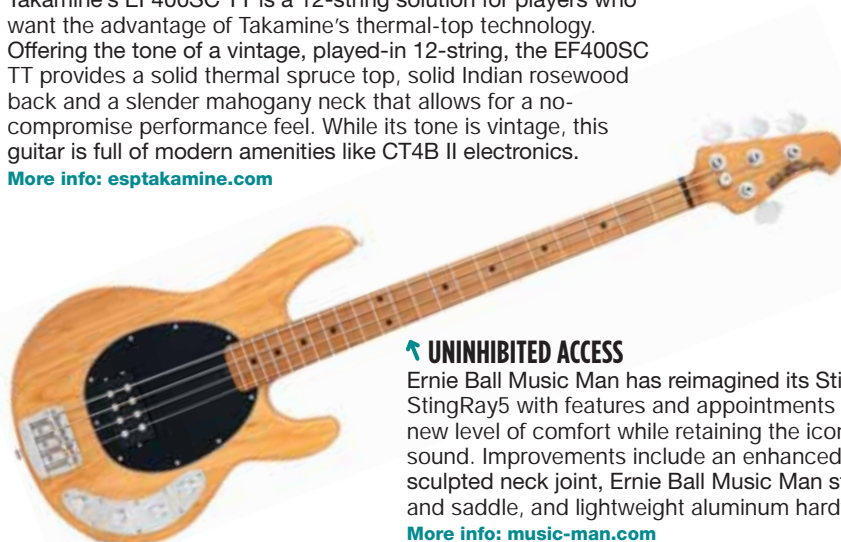
More info: esptakamine.com



← CHARGED UP

Lightweight, portable and equipped with a rechargeable battery, Fishman's Loudbox Mini Charge has dedicated instrument and mic channels with input gain controls. In addition to a battery life of 12 hours at average volume, it includes Bluetooth wireless connectivity that lets users easily add a variety of backing tracks and recorded accompaniments.

More info: fishman.com



↑ UNINHIBITED ACCESS

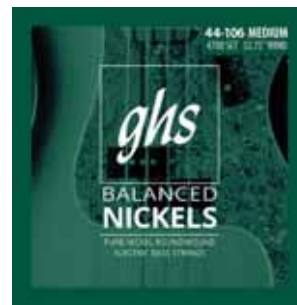
Ernie Ball Music Man has reimagined its StingRay4 and StingRay5 with features and appointments that provide a new level of comfort while retaining the iconic StingRay sound. Improvements include an enhanced contour, a sculpted neck joint, Ernie Ball Music Man streamlined bridge and saddle, and lightweight aluminum hardware.

More info: music-man.com

↓ BASS STRING SYMMETRY

GHS Balanced Nickels for bass guitar feature a combination of traditional string materials and modern design. GHS manufactures the G and the E strings by wrapping two covers around the core, bringing a fresh symmetry to the sets. The result is an equilibrium between tonality, tension, flexibility and playability.

More info: ghsstrings.com



PIANOS & KEYBOARDS



← DRAWBARS ADDED

The Nord Electro 6D features a streamlined user interface and seamless transitions for program changes. Physical drawbars have been added for organ players who prefer a hands-on experience, while both the piano and synth sections sport more filters and expanded memory.

More info: nordkeyboards.com

PIANO-IPAD INTEGRATION →

The Hailun iPiano aims to make piano players better musicians. Through a Bluetooth connection, the upright piano can be integrated with an iPad to help with practice and provide performance critiques. The iPiano also facilitates sharing new work by enabling users to record and upload music to the internet.

More info: hailun-pianos.com



← PROLOGUE'S POSSIBILITIES

Building on the minilogue and monologue, the Korg prologue polyphonic synthesizer is fully programmable. Its powerful analog circuits, digital multi-engine and DSP-based effects expand the variety of sounds and the possibilities for customization.

More info: korg.com



↑ TONEWHEEL RE-CREATION

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More info: viscountinstruments.com

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More info: roland.com



← RESONANCE MODELING

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More info: kurzweil.com



↑ SUPREMELY PORTABLE

The CT-X line of portable keyboards from Casio features Acoustic and Intelligent Multi Expression (AiX), the company's next-generation sound source. Models include the CT-X700, CT-X800, CT-X3000 and CT-X5000, each offering a wide range of tones and rhythm patterns. The series offers a redesigned chassis in addition to enhanced speaker systems.

More info: casio.com/home





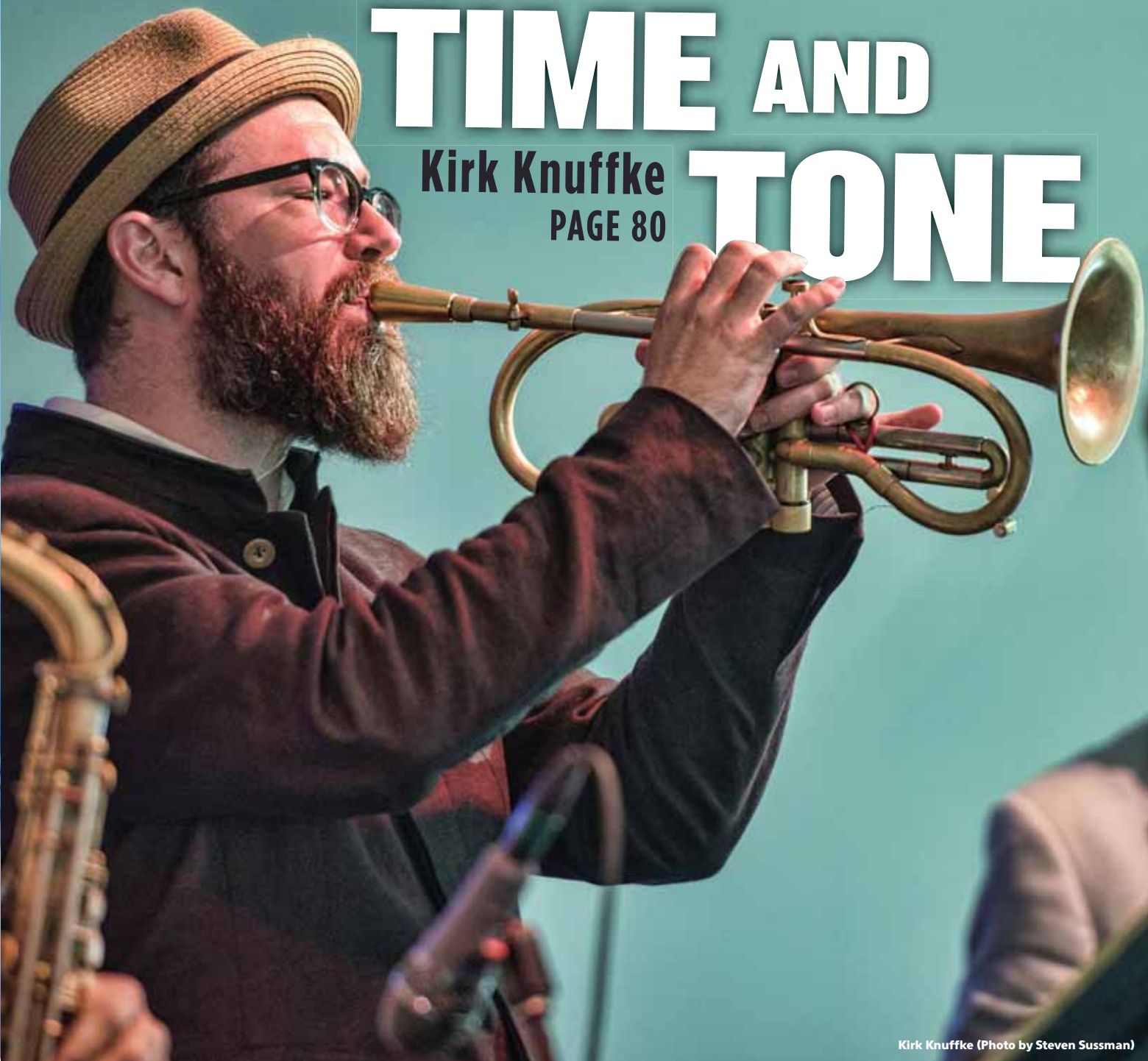
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TIME AND TONE

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Kirk Knuffke (Photo by Steven Sussman)



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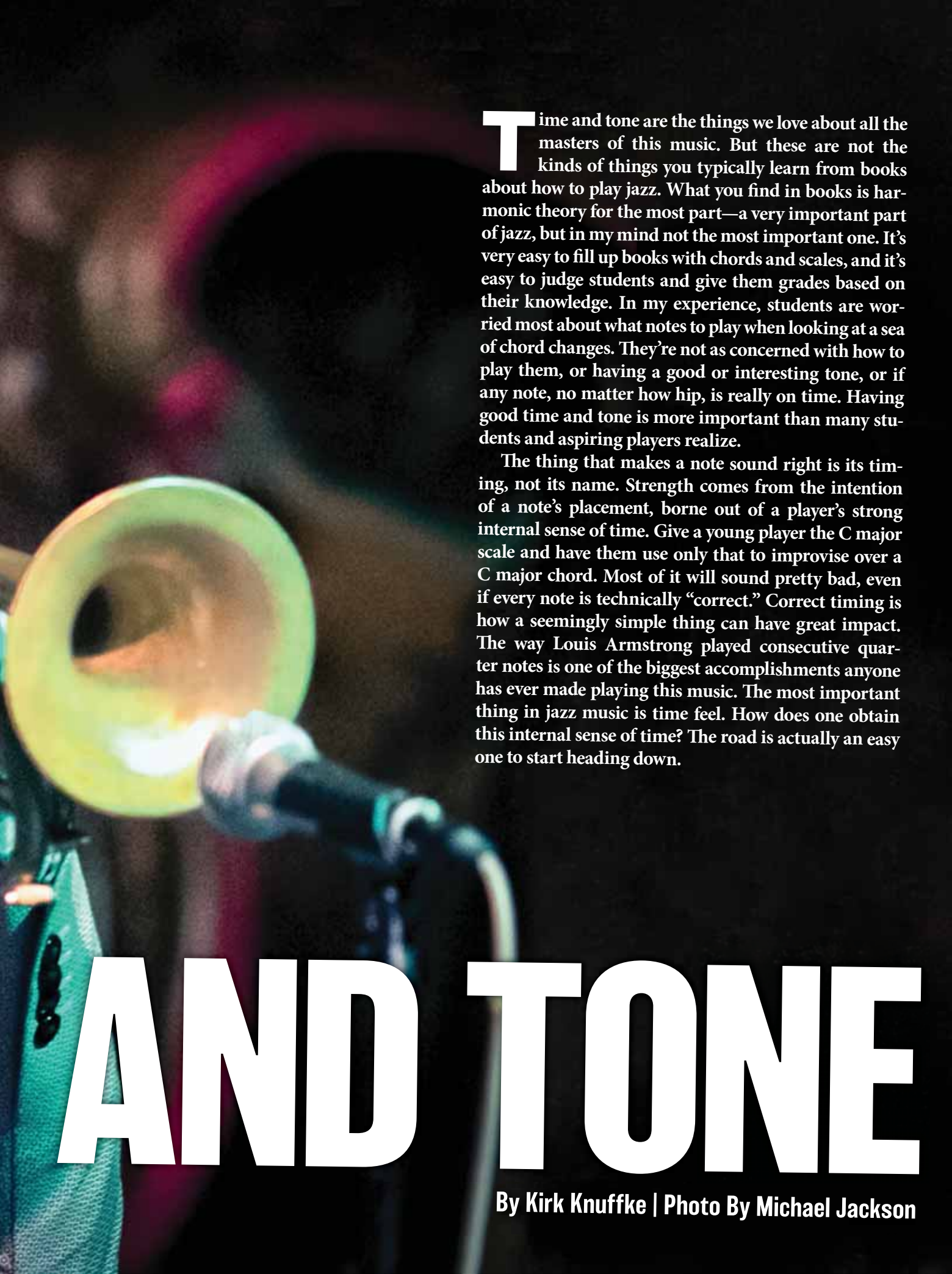
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**The 2 Most Important
Ingredients in Jazz**

TIME



Time and tone are the things we love about all the masters of this music. But these are not the kinds of things you typically learn from books about how to play jazz. What you find in books is harmonic theory for the most part—a very important part of jazz, but in my mind not the most important one. It's very easy to fill up books with chords and scales, and it's easy to judge students and give them grades based on their knowledge. In my experience, students are worried most about what notes to play when looking at a sea of chord changes. They're not as concerned with how to play them, or having a good or interesting tone, or if any note, no matter how hip, is really on time. Having good time and tone is more important than many students and aspiring players realize.

The thing that makes a note sound right is its timing, not its name. Strength comes from the intention of a note's placement, borne out of a player's strong internal sense of time. Give a young player the C major scale and have them use only that to improvise over a C major chord. Most of it will sound pretty bad, even if every note is technically "correct." Correct timing is how a seemingly simple thing can have great impact. The way Louis Armstrong played consecutive quarter notes is one of the biggest accomplishments anyone has ever made playing this music. The most important thing in jazz music is time feel. How does one obtain this internal sense of time? The road is actually an easy one to start heading down.

AND TONE

By Kirk Knuffke | Photo By Michael Jackson

INTERNALIZING TIME

Shortly after I joined the Matt Wilson Quartet, we were on tour and listening to music after a sound check. I was tapping my foot, and Matt pointed to it and exclaimed, “That’s why you are in my band!” I’m proud of that story, and the funny thing is I actually practiced tapping my foot and still do. An effective path to take in music is mathematician Edward Burger’s concept “to understand simple things deeply.” I wanted to have the perfect foot-tap. Just tapping the foot does nothing if done incorrectly. Tell a bunch of kids to tap their feet, and you will see wildly differing results by beat 2.

I wanted to internalize the feeling of the beat at every tempo on a very high level. This all needs to be done with a metronome. I don’t advocate using metronome apps because phones are bad for study and too distracting. An old-school metronome with a headphone jack is what you need. What you are doing by studying the foot-tap is the same as working out anything on your instrument. The success of anything in music (especially brass playing) is governed by correct “movement in time.” If all the movements are not perfectly in time, the result will be incorrect.

To begin, just listen to the beat. Most folks have never just listened to the metronome without any other agenda. But focus on it and do not let the mind wander, as in a meditation.

After a great deal of time without forcing any activity on it, begin to move in time. The idea is that the foot hitting the ground will be the perfect downbeat, the steady pulse. Also, the rising foot should reach its highest point exactly at the “and” or midpoint of the beat. When subsequent subdivisions are applied, you see how they fall on either side of the rise-and-fall. That is the beginning: tapping the foot with the metronome. Staying in the moment. I ride the subway listening to my metronome with the headphone jack, meditating and tapping my foot.

Next, work on different tempos. The secret is not to just speed up or slow down. Though this can be helpful at first, later on a random order of tempos should be used. Write every tempo range down on a set of cards, then shuffle them and go one by one. This idea of random procedures is used in all my practicing and was inspired by John Cage and Steve Lacy.

Count aloud with the metronome while tapping and saying, “One, two, three, four.” Notice the way you say each beat’s name. Do you rush when you say the word “two”? With a simple exercise like this, people will notice they often rush to “one” after “four,” or say “three” late. Every beat within a measure has its own distinct identity. Following this, play quarter notes on one pitch with the metronome at each tempo, as long (legato) as possible. What is the shortest amount of time you can have between each note? I love when a bass player like Charlie Haden or Greg Cohen plays

a quarter note as long as possible.

Then work with the division of just one beat into the subdivisions of 2, 3 and 4, drilling those figures over and over: equal eighths, equal 16ths, dotted-eighth–16th, 16th–dotted-eighth, 16th–eighth–16th. Next, play even triplets, then tie the first two and then last two notes of the triplet. Then, isolate one, two, three and four differ-

I see if I’m really on time. The most important thing about practicing is honesty. Be honest with yourself about how correct your timing is, and fix it. Give yourself a definable goal and judge it honestly.

It might sound funny, but one of the things I love most about music is being alone and working on simple things. The only way to stay sane

Having good time and tone is more important than many students and aspiring players realize.

ent parts of a single beat (using individual 16th notes and triplets and combinations). Make a chart of all the possible rhythms that can occur in one beat, and then mix and match. It is in all this study that you will find how to swing. Swing is not constant across tempi. This is why swing is impossible to ultimately define. It is also very effective to vary the amount of swing within a tempo by using these different divisions. Swing is also achieved by emphasis and volume—more on that later.

This brings me to an idea I call “moving the metronome around,” something I found in a book about how to play bass lines. What I mean by “moving it around” is having the metronome clicks state things that are not all four-beats-to-the-bar (if in 4). The first step is to have all four clicks representing beats 1, 2, 3, 4 at 160bpm. Then, turn the metronome to 80bpm (two clicks per bar), where the clicks can represent quarter notes 1 and 3, and then 2 and 4. Now turn it to 40bpm (one click per bar), and you can shift it to represent each of the beats individually (1, 2, 3, 4). You can even shift this 40bpm click to each eighth-note or 16th-note subdivision.

The next equally important tool, and one so few people use, is an audio recorder. So few students take this advice and record themselves. On most days, I record every sound I make and listen back. This has many bonuses. As a brass player, this builds in breaks for your chops, breaks where you stay in the headspace of practice. You can work for more than twice as long as opposed to just keeping the horn on your face. And in the listening, you practice the phrase again mentally.

Record yourself with the metronome on during the recording. I put it right by the microphone so it is very loud in the playback. Then

is to achieve goals. The only way to truly define what you have achieved is to have proof. The practice room really is a laboratory. Be scientific.

DEVELOPING YOUR TONE

My theory of putting time and tone at the top of the hierarchy comes by way of listening to and recognizing the best players. Some of the greatest players like John Coltrane are rightly known for their harmonic invention, but what comes across most to me is their sound, and where they put it. When I think about Miles Davis, Chet Baker, Roswell Rudd and Ornette Coleman, I think of their sound first.

It is my belief that tone comes from time. The alignment of the moving parts that conjure sound are all ruled by time, made or broken by it—from the physical ability to accomplish a task to that task’s ability to emote.

Your sound is all the things you love combined. I made a list of the aspects of sound that I loved from different players and worked to emulate them: the attack of Rafael Mendez, the breath of Chet Baker, the cry of Ornette Coleman, the sass and nuance of Lester Bowie, the vibrato of Freddie Hubbard and Archie Shepp, the hollow core of Jon Hassell.

Put work into each aspect and be able to employ different takes on all. This will distill into “your” tone. Take into account that you are born with a sound, right down to your embouchure, skull, teeth, lungs and central nervous system. You will also arrive at a different equation naturally based on all the definable parts, because you are a unique individual.

Let’s quickly list and explore the five “aspects of sound.” These constitute the scientific definition of what makes any sound. By working on them individually, you will unlock

Kirk Knuffke's most recent album is titled *Cherryco*.

and develop your tone.

1) Loudness (measurable quantity) = amplitude of pressure oscillation. Dynamics are impact in music; they are emotion, plain and simple. When you ramp up or calm down the volume, that is what communicates. Work out as many different volumes as you can on one pitch.

When classical musicians talk about dynamic ranges from *ppp* to *fff*, that covers at least seven different volumes. Can you make seven distinctly different dynamics on each note in your range, and call them up at will? It's more challenging than you might imagine. Emphasis by volume makes things swing as well: Think of a bass player playing louder on beat 2 of a walking line. Also, many great players play the higher note of an interval a little louder than the lower one. I love Bill Dixon's dynamics.

2) Duration (measurable quality) = time interval. This is about the length of the sound (or silence). The longs and shorts in music are of utmost importance, especially when it comes to swing. This is also where musical rhythm in general comes in as a way to emulate speech. To think about one sound at a time, how many

different lengths can you come up with? This is a good exercise with and without a metronome. Play a sound on one pitch, followed by a silence of a different duration, followed by the same pitch again of a different duration, and so on. Miles Davis is famous for his use of space. Think of silence as having the same importance as sound, or even more so. Karl Berger said the silence after a sound is where you invite the listener in to hear what happened. If music is a constant barrage, the listener can't get inside and will take away very little.

3) Pitch (measurable quality) = frequency of sound waves. Your intonation has a lot to do with your sound; the two are inseparable. Whether someone plays high or low on the pitch, or right down the middle, is part of their identity. All possible pitches should be studied, especially if you're a jazz player.

Someone once asked me if I had a quarter-tone trumpet. My answer was that the trumpet is a quarter-tone instrument!

Being able to move a pitch up and down is very effective. Think of players intentionally flattening a pitch (e.g., Chet Baker) or raising

one (Jackie McLean, John Coltrane). This brings up the next tool you need: a pitch generator that gives every possible pitch by the "cent." Play long tones on each: A = 440, A = 441, A = 439 and so on. Make a random list. Play them all with the generator and record it. At what point does the pitch definitely become an A \flat or a B \flat ? These are definable. Make a chart. Learning to control this will also make your lip and ear very strong. Check out Joe Maneri.

4) Timbre (measurable quantity) = pressure oscillation waveform. Timbre can explain hearing the difference between a saxophone or trumpet playing the same note, but also the difference between trumpeters Don Cherry and Freddie Hubbard playing the same note. Work on playing the same note with many different timbres. How many different qualities can you get?

Vary the embouchure by changing the horn angle up and down (à la Cootie Williams). Try using vocalized sounds and flutter tongue (Henry Red Allen). Shift from side to side, altering lip vibration (Lester Bowie). Experiment with using faster, highly pressurized air (Al Hirt) or slow, relaxed air (Jon Hassell, Chet Baker). Work with different palette shapes based on vowel sounds.

Timbre will also be informed by your unique instrumental setup—your choice of horn and mouthpiece. For me, my David Monette cornet with a big mouthpiece is the jam.

5) Envelope (definable quality) = measurable energy flow. This aspect is often called "direction," but I prefer "envelope." Direction, to me, implies a movement from point A to B. But a sound can go from A to B and back to A, or into outer space. This is how within one sound we have a shape and life. Consider things like attack and decay, crescendo and diminuendo, the change from dark to light or the change from flat to sharp within a note. Scoops, dips, smears and half-valve effects apply as well.

This is also where vibrato comes in. How much do you like? Do you prefer a variable vibrato or a static one? Listen to many different players in one sitting and check out the huge differences between artists like Albert Ayler, Lee Morgan, Dewey Redman and Phil Woods.

It is the study and manipulation of time and tone that makes music human. Otherwise, everything would be nothing more than a sine wave. Use these tools deliberately. Measure and evaluate everything.

Then, when you're on the bandstand, open up your chest and let it all hang out. **DB**

New York-based cornetist and composer Kirk Knuffke has released 15 recordings as a leader or co-leader. He has played with Butch Morris, Matt Wilson, Michael Formanek, Mary Halvorson, Allison Miller, Todd Sickafoose, Ray Anderson, Uri Caine, Mark Helias, Bill Goodwin, Karl Berger and Ted Brown. Knuffke's most recent release, *Cherryco* (SteepleChase), with Jay Anderson and Adam Nussbaum, celebrates the music of Don Cherry and Ornette Coleman. Visit him online at kirkknuffke.com.

Where Did the Trombonists Go?

Over the past few years, while playing at a number of international jazz festivals with my band Catharsis, I couldn't help but notice the overwhelming number of guitarists, pianists and saxophonists performing as featured soloists and/or leading bands. Conversely, there appeared to be an unfortunate lack of trombonists leading bands, taking solos and, more generally, a lack of trombonists in today's vanguard of trendsetters.

I oftentimes look back to the 1930s and 1940s with a sense of awe and a bit of jealousy, wishing we still lived in a time when jazz was popular and your average American music fans would debate the merits of Lester Young's improvised solos versus those of Coleman Hawkins. This was also a time when many of the most successful bandleaders and soloists were trombone players like Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Trummy Young and Jack Teagarden.

Since that time, during the next 70-plus years, almost all notable jazz soloists, composers and bandleaders have been non-trombonists. In fact, one could argue that over that time span there hasn't been a single game-changing, language-defining jazz musician who played the trombone. The one exception to this assertion might be the great Bob Brookmeyer's innovative big band arranging techniques. But this innovation, unfortunately, seems to have fallen into relative obscurity outside of the big band community.

To be clear, I'm not discounting the musically significant and beautiful soloists and composers on the trombone during that time-span, including J.J. Johnson, Slide Hampton, Frank Rosolino, etc. I'm saying that none of these musicians made an impact on the music the way Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Freddie Hubbard or Chick Corea did.

The first question that comes to my mind is, "What Happened? Where did all the trombonists go?" Without going into too much detail here, I think it's safe to say that there are many answers to this question.

One reason is the fact that the trombone's technical limitations led to its absence in the early years of bebop, a musical language that still constitutes the bulk of our vernacular(s) almost 75 years later. Another reason could be the lack of "genius" on the instrument. J.J. Johnson was an inspiring musician, but his impact on jazz's development does not come close to that of Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock or



Michael Brecker.

Yet another reason might have to do with the extremely physical nature of the trombone, something that leads to more visually apparent hard work while playing fast passages. This is especially true in comparison with the relative ease in which a pianist or saxophonist can appear to execute the same material.

However, in my opinion, the most significant

reason for the lack of genre-defining trombonists in modern jazz is *intonation*, or lack thereof. So much of post-swing era jazz has been defined by saxophonists (Parker, Coltrane), pianists (Bill Evans, Brad Mehldau, Hancock, Corea), guitarists (Wes Montgomery, Kurt Rosenwinkel) and trumpet players (Dizzy Gillespie, Clifford Brown, Hubbard), and all of these instruments have a fixed system of pitch

production. So, assuming the instrument is in tune with itself and with the rest of the ensemble, and assuming the musician is a professional who has consistent pitch and tone, the necessity to *work* for accurate intonation is significantly diminished. The trombone is the only common jazz instrument, besides bass, that must constantly work towards playing each and every note in tune. Only the string family shares this technical feature.

Of course, this feature also lends itself to incredible expression, blues-influenced playing, etc., but those aesthetics are not as prominent a part of the mainstream modern jazz vernacular, and haven't been since the bebop

cal activity and is directly related to other physical activities involved in the music-making process like dancing, foot-tapping, head-bobbing, etc. In other words, becoming a good listener will directly influence your ability to more deeply feel and sense tempo, groove and subdivision, and therefore create a better sense of time and rhythm within the performer.

Below, I've listed a number of tips on becoming a better listener. Some of these I've developed on my own and others I've borrowed from teachers, colleagues and exercise books.

• **Active listening.** Although listening is an involuntary action, listening with the kind of

transcription process focuses on the improvised solo. However, in this case, I think it's more beneficial to transcribe the bass part, piano part, the arrangement and even the drum part. And remember, it's the process of listening with focus that is most important rather than the notation itself or analytical process.

• **Nitpick your intonation.** Don't be easy on yourself when it comes to playing with perfect intonation. Remember that all other instruments will be playing with close-to-perfect intonation (at least on a professional level); the same should be expected of trombonists. In order to practice this you'll need to record yourself or find a practice buddy whom you trust. Pick a melody that you know very well and play through it slowly and deliberately with the intent to play each and every note with perfect intonation. When you listen back, count how many notes you were successful with and calculate the percentage of in-tune vs. out-of-tune notes. Each time you do this exercise, strive for a higher percentage.

• **Use a tuner.** This might be a no-brainer, but I can't believe how many students don't use a tuner on a regular basis. Nowadays there are some great tuner apps for your smartphone, including some very handy visual strobe tuner apps. Get in the habit of opening your tuner app and placing it on your music stand directly in front of you for each and every practice session. This should be the first thing you do, even before you warm up. In fact, warmup exercises can be the most useful practice material for intonation since they are methodical, codified and played almost every day.

Given the increased baseline level of technical ability for aspiring trombonists, thanks to players like Steve Turre, Conrad Herwig, John Fedchock, Robin Eubanks, Mike Davis, Wycliffe Gordon, Marshall Gilkes, Elliot Mason, Mike Dease, Rudd and Anderson, I'm optimistic that the trombone is poised to assume a more central role in today's jazz world—especially if the next generation of trombonists begin to pay more attention to the details of their intonation and how it affects audiences and other musicians on stage. **DB**

Don't be easy on yourself when it comes to playing with perfect intonation. All other instruments will be playing with close-to-perfect intonation; the same should be expected of trombonists.

language became the standard jazz language in the mid-1940s.

As a side note, further proof of this point can be seen in the more avant-garde jazz community, with its less formal or codified expectations of pitch, and where the trombone has played a much more prominent role in the hands of incredible trombonists like Ray Anderson, Albert Mangelsdorff and the late Roswell Rudd. Performers and listeners alike in the mainstream jazz community have become accustomed to hearing melodies and harmonies played perfectly in tune. It is an integral part of most mainstream jazz vernaculars.

As a trombonist, to play with great intonation requires one to also be a great *listener*. It's important to mention that great listeners also tend to be those musicians with great time, a large and creative musical vocabulary, and great composers and arrangers. Most importantly, with a cultivated and refined sense of listening, the trombone is suddenly transformed from an instrument with intonation issues into an instrument with an opportunity to *always* be in tune.

Becoming a Better Listener

Although it takes place in the head, listening is not a purely cerebral activity. It is a physi-

cal activity and is directly related to other physical activities involved in the music-making process like dancing, foot-tapping, head-bobbing, etc. In other words, becoming a good listener will directly influence your ability to more deeply feel and sense tempo, groove and subdivision, and therefore create a better sense of time and rhythm within the performer.

Below, I've listed a number of tips on becoming a better listener. Some of these I've developed on my own and others I've borrowed from teachers, colleagues and exercise books.

• **Focus on hearing things that you don't typically listen to.** This can include listening for variations in tone color and resonance, intonation, tempo or groove (e.g., Jimmy Cobb's swing feel vs. Philly Joe Jones'). Remember, listening is a physical activity, so some of what you "hear" will be experienced and felt throughout your body. This can also include listening for instruments in the band that you never focused on before. For example, try listening only to the walking bass line of Paul Chambers on Miles Davis' "Freddie Freeloader" from beginning to end. It's mind-blowingly beautiful and musically informative. I think you'll also find it's quite hard to stay focused solely on the bass from start to finish.

• **Transcribe.** More specifically, transcribe those parts you don't typically focus on from recordings of music that you already love and have listened to many times. Typically, the

Ryan Keberle is a jazz trombonist, composer and educator living in New York City. Leading his pianoless quartet Catharsis or arranging for the little big band setting of his Double Quartet, Keberle draws upon lessons learned playing alongside masters of a multitude of forms, from jazz legends to indie rock groundbreakers, r&b superstars to classical virtuosos. These include Maria Schneider, Wynton Marsalis, Beyonce, Justin Timberlake, Alicia Keys, Pedro Giraudo, Ivan Lins and Sufjan Stevens. He has played in the *Saturday Night Live* house band, as well as on the soundtrack of a Woody Allen film. Since 2004, Keberle has directed the jazz program at City University's Hunter College. Other notable teaching credits include frequent improvisation clinics conducted throughout New York City and beyond, guest conducting local school jazz bands and all-region jazz bands, and his own private studio of trombone and improvisation students. Keberle's most recent album, *Reverso-Suite Ravel* (Phono Art/Alternate Side Records), was recorded with pianist Frank Woeste through a French American Jazz Exchange grant. Visit him online at ryankeberle.com.



ERIC RYAN ANDERSON

Discovering a Voice That's All Your Own

It's no secret that, in the world of jazz education today, there are an abundance of resources to help musicians become more competent improvisers. You can learn from great teachers and players in school, by checking out a plethora of books and pedagogical material, watching videos or finding other resources online. A higher number of musicians than ever before understand jazz theory, know all their scales, have learned lots of tunes, transcribed solos and have a good, general grasp on how to play this music.

There's only one problem. Knowing all there is to know about playing jazz doesn't necessarily mean you'll sound different than anyone else. You might be able to hang playing any tune at any tempo and be able to play "all the right stuff," but at the end of the day, you'll still be just one fish in a large ocean of musicians who can do all the exact same thing as you.

Thus, it's no surprise that the question, "How do I find my own voice?" is arguably the most frequently asked by jazz students around the world. In an effort to find the answer, most

jump to thinking that they need to learn more things—more scales, more theory, more vocabulary, etc. But what if we thought more carefully about how we do what we do, instead? What if we paid more attention to the emotional and intuitive side of things, rather than focusing on the intellectual side? Maybe if we did things this way, we'd come closer to embodying the essence of this music that our heroes personify when they play. We'd develop an approach that is genuine and unique to who we are, and we ultimately would have a musical voice that is all our own.

Develop Your Taste

A major step in developing your own voice happens through the process of listening and developing your taste for what you like and don't like. Often, particularly in academic environments, musicians feel as though they need to dig everything they hear. In my opinion, though, this shouldn't be the case. We should respect and appreciate things, yes, but we don't need to like it all. Ultimately, your musical preferences and inclinations play a major role in distinguishing your style and your voice as an artist. So we shouldn't avoid having opinions, even if they don't meet the status quo. If this was the case throughout jazz history, many of the musicians we revere wouldn't have shaped the music in the myriad of ways they have.

First, we simply have to digest lots of music. Literally, listen to everything you can get your hands on. Don't just listen to one or two people that you really like. Listen to as many different musicians and albums as possible. Get underneath and inside of every recording, hear past the notes and rhythms, and hear the nuances of what makes someone sound the way they do. A good routine could be to schedule time every single day to listen to one record you already know, as well as one new record you don't (at the very least). Also, switch up what you listen to in terms of when it was recorded. Listen to old records, new records and everything in between. Doing this helps give you context, and without context you can't have an accurate picture of the evolution of the music (let alone figure out where you fit into things).

A lot of musicians get this far. But, if the process stops here and you don't form opinions about what you like and dislike, then you miss the opportunity to learn something about yourself. The key here is that you have to be honest. Make note of what resonates with you and try to figure out why it does so. You might not be able to define it right away, but once you can you'll have a window into understanding who you are as an artist. For me, this happened



Raymond's trio Real Feels released the album *Joy Ride* this year.

when I got hip to Art Farmer. There was something about the way he played, how melodic and unique it was, that I couldn't help but be enamored with him (it even led me to adopt the flugelhorn exclusively in my band Real Feels). I remember reading an interview where he talked about how one thing that helped him find his voice was when he realized he was a ballad player. That really stuck with me for some reason. As I thought about it more and more, I realized that this resonated with me because I, too, was a ballad player. It was in that moment that I had discovered a major clue to who I was as a musician. And that is precisely the goal of listening: to give us clues into what our musical voice is.

Get a Concept

From here you can put all the clues you find together to start formulating a concept that genuinely reflects your influences. This concept will then shape how and what you practice, and it ultimately will guide all of your musical decisions. To start, make a long list of the musicians you love, as well as their specific traits that resonate with you. This should include (but not be limited to) areas of your playing like sound, time/feel, melodic approach, harmonic approach, phrasing, articulation, dynamics, etc. Don't be afraid to list multiple influences for a particular aspect of your playing, too. For example, when I made a list like this years ago, I wanted my sound to be a hybrid of the warmth of Art Farmer's sound, the soaring quality of Kenny Wheeler's sound and the consistency

and evenness of Kurt Rosenwinkel's sound. (Not all of your influences have to be from your instrument.)

Oftentimes, though, there are musicians or recordings that inspire us in ways that don't fit into any of these categories. Perhaps there's an album you love the vibe or mood of, and whenever you want to feel a certain way you put it on. Put it on your list. Or maybe you seem to notice how "assertive" a particular musician sounds and you're drawn to this. Write this on your list, too. We often become aware of specific things in recordings because they're things that we want more of in our playing. The more specific and exhaustive you are about your tastes, the more complete of a picture you're going to start to envision in your head of who you are and what you want to sound like.

One other thought here. You can also begin to find your musical voice by figuring out who you are personally, outside of music. The truth is that all of the different aspects of our personality should reflect themselves in our music in one way or another. Thus, the more self-aware you become, the more that can help you in determining how you can honestly express yourself through your instrument.

Imitate the Logical & the Emotional

You've listened to and digested a lot of music. You've started to develop a concept based on your influences. Now it's time to get down-and-dirty by transcribing the musicians and sounds that you're most inspired by. But

what's important here is our motive for transcription. We want to do so for the purpose of imitation, not to directly copy someone else. This is *huge*. It's the one degree of difference that, while you might not see it in the short-term, has a massive long-term effect on the trajectory of your growth.

The key with imitation is that we have to deal with both the logical and the emotional aspects of the music. We have to internalize specific notes, rhythms and gestures, as well as conceptual ideas like the feeling you get from a certain sound, someone's time feel, or the humor or pain you sense in their playing. If we only learn one or the other, it will be impossible to fully understand—and to synthesize into our own playing—what we're influenced by.

For the logical side of things, we have to be able to internalize the things we transcribe on an intuitive level. Why? Because the process we use to improvise is an intuitive one, not a conscious one. (I'm sure we've all had the experience of trying to insert licks we've learned into solos, and we all know how poorly that works out.) In order to do this, I've found that singing an idea and specifically not focusing on what notes or rhythms you're playing helps us get outside of how we intellectually conceive of it. This often results in immediately being able to play the idea with much more clarity and confidence.

You can also take notice of the context in which the things you transcribe occur. What chord is an idea being played over? What's hap-

pening in the rhythm section? At what point in the overall development of the tune or solo does it take place? Once you've determined these sorts of things, you can then practice applying what you've transcribed to other situations (trying it over different chords, in different keys, on different tunes), which helps build a more vivid aural imagination of what something sounds and feels like.

Likewise, we can also take an abstract, emotional concept and work on it in logical and intentional ways. You can create your own exercises to help you focus on applying the ideas you're trying to incorporate into your playing.

For example, say you feel a distinct sense of spontaneity in how a musician crafts his or her melodic lines. While there might be a logical reason why this is (which you could decipher through transcription), it is likely that there's a direct correlation to how they naturally approach playing. So, why not try to, in a sense, "transcribe" their approach? Get inside their head and imagine how they're processing the music. Then create an exercise where you try to improvise in that same headspace. You might not be focusing on the minutiae of notes and rhythms, but you will focus on a specific concept that will ultimately train your subconscious mind to approach things the same way your influences do. And this makes the pro-

cess equally as valuable as learning the logical aspects of the music.

Don't Sleep on Composition

It's also worth mentioning how important composition is in this entire process. Many of our improvisational heroes also had a singular voice as a composer, and this was no accident. There's an inexplicable link between composing and improvising: They complement each other and they also inform each other.

Composition is yet another avenue that can give us clues into what our musical voice is, yet I often find that many student musicians don't take near enough advantage of how valuable the process can be in their development. Perhaps this is because we only view composition in terms of composing tunes or songs. But it's much broader than this. Spend time composing your own exercises, scale patterns, solos, new melodies over existing chord changes, etc. Anything and everything that you can write out will only help connect the dots in your progress toward defining who you are as an artist.

Your Voice Matters

The process of "finding our own voice" is a long journey that ultimately never ends. As Miles Davis said, "Man, sometimes it takes you a long time to sound like yourself." It's a process

of constant searching that takes lots of energy, honesty with yourself and humility to continually assess where you're at. Frankly, that's why there are so few who go down this road. But the feeling of cultivating a more intimate connection with your instrument—so that it becomes an extension of who you are—is one of the most rewarding gifts of playing this music.

Moreover, upon spending years and years imitating and drawing from the musicians you admire most, you realize that everyone has something unique and special to offer—including yourself. You recognize that who you are, what you have to say and how you want to say it are all valid. You can be yourself, and in fact you *need* to be yourself. It would be a loss for everyone if you settled for trying to be a clone of someone else. This is one of the most liberating and exciting parts about playing this music: Your unique and individual voice matters, now more than ever.

DB

With a singular voice on trumpet and flugelhorn, John Raymond is making his mark as an up-and-coming international jazz musician. He has performed with Billy Hart, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Orrin Evans, Linda Oh, Dan Tepfer and Gilad Hekselman, among others. He has also released five albums since 2012, his latest being *Joy Ride* (Sunnyside), which features his trio Real Feels. Raymond has established himself as a sought-after educator, both as the Professor of Jazz Trumpet at Indiana University and as a guest clinician and soloist at schools around the world. Contact him at johnraymondmusic@gmail.com or visit his website, johnraymondmusic.net.

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Steve Turre's Trombone Solo on 'Rhythm Within'

Trombonist Steve Turre's 1995 album *Rhythm Within* (Antilles) showcases many Latin rhythms. The title track, an Afro-Cuban waltz, is one example. Though it's based on a couple of suspended-sounding chords, the fact that they're harmonic relatives to each other gives the song a modal feel. Over this, Turre demonstrates some wonderful phrasing concepts.

Let's look at how he ends his phrases. The first phrase ends on a B \flat on the downbeat of bar 2 (in actuality, the top of the form). The next phrase ends on a G \flat . Both of these are chord tones of E \flat m, and so sound like resolutions, but the second phrase ends a quarter note before the downbeat. Turre's next line goes over the chord change to resolve to the G \flat root, but this time a quarter note after the downbeat. He continues to vary his rhythmic points of resolution throughout this solo.

Thus far, Turre has been careful to make his lines resolve to chord tones, but his next phrase ends on an F natural right before the downbeat

of bar 14, right in front of the chord change. F isn't a chord tone of either G \flat /C \flat or E \flat m/A \flat , and this makes the lick sound incomplete, and more like a question than a statement. Cutting the last note short makes this more so, as well as creating a contrast to Turre's previous lines. And since questions deserve answers, his next phrase culminates on the chord tone E \flat in the middle of measure 16.

Turre quickly mimics this question/answer pattern at the start of his next chorus, leading to the F at the end of measure 18 and resolving to the E \flat at the end of bar 19, but this time it's the chord tone that's cut short and the scale tone that's held. We still get the sense of question/answer, but the attitude has changed.

We have resolution to a chord tone again at the end of bar 21 (G \flat). The next lick, however, terminates in a non-chord tone, C natural (measure 23). Up until this point all we've heard are C \flat 's (though only two of those), which makes sense. If we're in E \flat minor, it's not surprising to use the aeolian mode, especially as the sec-

ond chord has a C \flat under it. But this C natural makes it sound more like E \flat dorian, and the A \flat underneath gives this chord a more major texture. It has less of that questioning quality and more of that of altering the harmony underneath. In the answering phrase, Turre keeps this C natural going, but resolves it to a B \flat , bringing us back to E \flat minor chord tones. It's still question/answer, but the question is a bit more obscure.

For the remainder of this chorus, and the first lick of the next, we hear Turre again resolving to chord tones, and on the downbeat of bar 38 resting once more on that questioning F. His next lick, however, doesn't fully answer this question, concluding on a D \flat in bar 39. Though D \flat is the seventh of E \flat m, it's not as strong a tone as the notes of the triad, and the fact that this harmony is placed over its fourth makes it sound even less like a resolving point. It sounds as if Turre has asked two questions in a row.

This creates an increased need for resolution, which happens as the next line ends on

a chord tone in measure 41. The clever thing is that this is the same $D\flat$ as before, but since the chord is now $G\flat/C\flat$ it comes off as more of an answer than a question. Turre finishes this chorus with one more line that ends on a chord tone ($G\flat$ in bar 46). So this time we had question/question/answer/answer, providing some more variety.

For his final time through the form, Turre's playing becomes busier, with longer lines and less space. His first phrase extends from bar 49 through 55, and ends on a short $A\flat$. As this is the fourth of $E\flat m$, we would expect it to sound like the "question" part. But because the chord is over an $A\flat$ bass, it sounds like a root, making this the most conclusive-sounding line Turre

has played so far.

His next two phrases provide the question/answer dynamic once again, with an $E\flat$ on the $G\flat/C\flat$ in measure 59 (though, this being the third of the bass note, it's similar to the C natural we heard back in bar 23) and a $D\flat$ two bars later. Then we hear another chord tone in measure 63, though it's worth pointing out that this $B\flat$ is the lowest pitch we've heard so far in this solo, bringing the energy down and leading us to a close. This closure is provided with Turre's final line, which resolves once again to the $A\flat$ bass note he teased us with earlier. **DB**

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

4:42 $E\flat m/A\flat$
3

8 $G\flat/C\flat$
3

13 $E\flat m/A\flat$ $E\flat m/A$
3 3

18 $E\flat m/A\flat$
3

24 $G\flat/C\flat$ $E\flat m/A$
3 3

29 $E\flat m/A\flat$ $E\flat m/A$
3 3

34 $E\flat m/A\flat$
3

40 $G\flat/C\flat$
3

45 $E\flat m/A\flat$ $E\flat m/A$
3

50 $E\flat m/A\flat$
3

56 $G\flat/C\flat$
3

61 $E\flat m/A\flat$ $E\flat m/A$
3

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Austin Winds Balanced Ballad 1 B-flat Trumpet, Ballad Flugelhorn

Mellow Sound, Fluid Feel

Austin Winds, a trumpet pro shop based in Austin, Texas, specializes in custom trumpets, flugelhorns, cornets and mouthpieces. The company's Balanced Ballad 1 B-flat Trumpet and Ballad Flugelhorn are professional-line instruments designed for musicians looking for a specific sound and feel from their gear.

The Balanced Ballad 1 Trumpet is not intended to be an all-around trumpet. Rather, it's designed to be a mellow, dark, fluid-playing trumpet suitable for small group performance and intimate musical settings. To accomplish this objective, a number of features were incorporated into the horn's design. The bore size is large, at .466 inches. The bell has an extra-large flair and is finished in red brass (other custom finishes are available). And it's a relatively heavy instrument. The lead pipe, braced tuning slide, extra-heavy finger buttons, stems, top caps, bottom caps and finger rings all add considerable heft. The Amado-style water keys are newly designed and work very well. The mouthpiece that came with the trumpet was an Austin Winds 660M-27, and it seemed very well suited to the horn.

All of the above features and characteristics combine to create an instrument that has a dark, rich sound. For trumpet players looking to move away from a bright, crisp sound, the Balanced Ballad 1 trumpet makes creating a warm, intimate sound a fairly easy task. Play the Balanced Ballad 1 for 10 minutes or so, and then pick up a more standard trumpet (in terms of bore and design)—the difference in sound will be readily apparent and fairly dramatic.

The large bore size of the Balanced Ballad 1 trumpet demands that you keep the air support happening at all times, and it requires a sizable quantity of air as well. The weight of the horn takes a bit of getting used to. The heavy-duty finger rings are where you are going to be supporting much of the weight of the instrument. Spending a short time experimenting with how you balance that weight will result in a comfortable position for your left hand to hold the instrument.

As with all Austin Winds horns, the Balanced Ballad 1 Trumpet is handmade in the U.K. Workmanship on the instrument is excellent; fit and finish all appear to be superb. The stainless steel pistons create a valve action that is quick and smooth.

This horn is not intended to be your only trumpet. But most serious players tend to have multiple instruments, and if you're looking for a horn that produces a dark, rich sound for use in small group settings, the Balanced Ballad 1 is worth your consideration.

Austin Winds' Ballad Flugelhorn incorporates a number of the design features that are present on the Balanced Ballad 1 Trumpet, but it's a bit more traditional in design and execution. As on the Balanced Ballad 1 Trumpet, you will find extra-heavy finger buttons, stems and caps on the Ballad Flugelhorn. Improved Amado water keys also are present (three of them—one on the piping leading to the bell, and one each on the first

and third valve slides). The horn's bore is a .433, with .395 on the mouth pipe. The red brass bell has a large flair sized at 6.5 inches.

These features combine to create a flugelhorn with a heavier feel. However, the overall effect of that weight is not as dramatic as it is on the Balanced Ballad 1 trumpet. The instrument is well balanced and comfortable to hold.

The Ballad Flugelhorn is a very responsive instrument. It produces a soft, rounded sound that is warm and dark, which is exactly what most people are after in a flugelhorn. The ease of response is consistent over the range of the instrument, providing the performer with confidence when moving around the horn.

As with the Balanced Ballad 1 Trumpet, the workmanship on the flugelhorn was first rate, and the fit and finish were at a very high level. The instrument has stainless steel pistons, and the valves were excellent. The horn also has a trigger on the third valve slide. The trigger is well placed, making pitch issues on low D and low C# easy to remedy.

The Ballad Flugelhorn deserves a serious look. It produces a wonderful sound and is easy to play in a flowing, lyrical manner. And it makes a nice pairing with the Balanced Ballad 1 B-flat Trumpet.

—Doug Beach

austinwinds.com



Yamaha YTR-5330MRC

Clear Projection, Sizzling Tone, Mariachi-Style

Mariachi music as we know it derived from the rhythms and harmonies of colonial Mexico, and was formalized during the mid-1800s within the rural towns and ranches in the country's western region. Original mariachi instrumentation included only traditional string instruments, such as violin, vihuela (a type of early Spanish guitar) and guitarrón (an acoustic bass guitar). The trumpet wasn't added until the early 20th century, but since has become one of the genre's most iconic sonic elements.

As any mariachi trumpeter will tell you, however, the genre can be demanding. Mariachi playing requires technical precision, physical endurance and musical confidence. And it's typically played in outdoor, unamplified settings.

With the popularity of mariachi music surging in both Mexico and the United States, the market for mariachi instrumentalists is expanding. Yamaha has taken a bold step toward catering to that market with the design of the YTR-5330MRC, a trumpet designed specifically for mariachi players.

With input from several of my trumpet-section mates in a big band, I put the horn through its paces in Latin, swing and modern jazz contexts. I also evaluated the horn in a solo setting at home by playing mariachi parts over a backing track. Overall, we found the horn to be well suited not just for mariachi playing, but for any genre or setting that calls for crystal clear projection and a bright, sizzling tone.

Yamaha sought input for this horn from several well-regarded mariachi musicians in Mexico, working primarily with the trumpet section of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, an ensemble that dates back to the 1800s (making it one of the oldest continually operating mariachi groups in existence). It's no wonder that the resulting horn, with its unique combination of features, manages to achieve that classic "mariachi" sound—clean, brassy and crisp—while cutting an exceptionally striking visual profile.

Obviously, this horn would make a prime choice for any serious mariachi trumpeter. But even if you're a player of other genres, or if you're simply looking for a trumpet that balances a massive, free-blowing sound with sleek aesthetics, this just might be the model for you.

The most prominent acoustic attribute of the YTR-5330MRC is its strong, gleaming tone, which manages to harness some serious power without sacrificing clarity. That's due in part to special silver plating and a unique base coat, which Yamaha applied to the horn's leadpipe, bell and valve casing. The tuning slides are coated in gold lacquer, and the contrast between the two finishes lends the horn some visual flair. Other unique design elements include a third valve slide with no water key, a closed-circle third-valve saddle and a braceless, reverse-constructed tuning slide.

That last feature is crucial to the trumpet's distinctive sound. Typically, when trumpets are made with reverse tuning slides, the inner slide intentionally is designed to be short. On the YTR-5330MRC, however, the reverse inner slide has been made longer.

This construction was meant to accommodate the more extreme tuning adjustments required for outdoor performances, as well as to provide a wider, more flexible tuning range. The added flexibility was noteworthy. I certainly noticed that my vibrato—yet another iconic component

of mariachi trumpeting—had a more dynamic quality when exercised on long notes in nearly all segments of my range. The YTR-5330MRC also comes with two optional heavy bottom valve caps, which can be applied to the second or third valve (or both) to alter the resistance and darken the horn's tone. I found that these attachments had a noticeable "warming" effect on the trumpet's timbre, but not enough to significantly diminish the trumpet's bite and overall brightness.

Projection is central to this instrument's appeal. Befitting its origins in mariachi, in which the trumpet often plays unamplified, the horn projects cleanly well into the fortissimo range, free of sonic distortion.

Not surprisingly, it can accommodate a massive amount of air, thanks to its .459-inch bore and two-piece gold brass bell. Yet it still manages to slot accurately and easily between intervals, especially in the upper-middle range, where the bulk of mariachi trumpet playing takes place.

I would occasionally notice some stuffiness in the below-the-staff register, but my high note playing felt secure, with a nice balance of openness and resistance. More importantly, my playing felt sure-footed and authoritative, finding an equilibrium between dexterity and power. This makes the YTR-5330MRC a solid choice for lead players of pop or jazz ensembles, session players or trumpeters who routinely perform in unamplified settings, such as members of ceremonial or parade bands. The horn might also make an excellent secondary trumpet for jazz or classical players who want a brighter voice during outdoor performances.

While the YTR-5330MRC might not be the horn to take to a quiet café gig or concerto performance, it certainly has its place in any professional trumpeter's repertoire, especially those considering serious mariachi playing.

—Brian Zimmerman

usa.yamaha.com





Altruism: Tony Award winner Larry Magid and his wife, Mickey, have made a pledge to establish or support multiple scholarships for Philadelphia-area students at Temple University, including gifts to the Boyer College of Music and Dance. Namesakes for the scholarships include Miles Davis, Bruce Springsteen and others. Magid, a Philadelphia native and Temple alumnus, founded Electric Factory Concerts, a promotion company tied to a venue of the same name that the philanthropist currently owns. The pledge also will support students with financial need enrolled in Klein College of Media and Communication; School of Theater, Film and Media Arts; and the Lewis Katz School of Medicine. temple.edu

New Faculty: Beginning this fall, singer Carmen Bradford will join the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in its Roots, Jazz and American Music department. Bradford has performed with Nancy Wilson, Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, among others. She contributed to a pair of the Count Basie Orchestra's Grammy-winning albums, in addition to work with guitarist George Benson on a recording that also won the honor. sfcm.edu

Eminent Detroit: Saxophonist Wendell Harrison has been named the 2018 Kresge Eminent Artist by the Kresge Foundation. The honor comes with a \$50,000 prize. The Detroit native is known for his work alongside luminaries such as Grant Green, Sun Ra and Lou Rawls. Harrison also headed up the Tribe imprint during the 1970s, with the label's output being anthologized in the mid-'90s on *Message From The Tribe (An Anthology Of Tribe Records: 1972-1976)*, which was reissued in 2010. kresge.org

Jazz at UCLA: Three UCLA ensembles will perform on March 6 at Schoenberg Hall: the Latin Jazz Big Band, directed by Dr. Bobby Rodriguez; the Contemporary Jazz Ensemble, directed by Hitomi Oba; and the Jazz Orchestra, directed by Charley Harrison. The program will include standards and new compositions by students and faculty. schoolofmusic.ucla.edu

UArts Trains 'Creative Thinkers'

CREATIVITY DOESN'T RECOGNIZE BOUNDARIES, which is why so few young artists stick to one craft. Dancers paint; musicians write. For burgeoning jazz musicians who don't want to limit themselves, Philadelphia's University of the Arts is the place to be.

"We are the only university in the nation solely dedicated to the arts," said Marc Dicciani, dean of the institution's College of Performing Arts. "Our majors include dance, acting, musical theater, music business and the visual arts. There are innumerable opportunities for students to take courses in any and every other area of study across campus."

About 1,900 students attend UArts, with 400 of those enrolled in music programs. The average class size is about 10 students.

In addition to a degree in music business, UArts offers a bachelor of music degree, a one-year master of music in jazz studies and a one-year MA in music teaching, along with BFAs in various combinations of majors and minors.

"UArts develops alumni who are not only leaders in their disciplines, but also creative thinkers able to succeed in any path they choose," Dicciani said.

"Our goal is to create citizen artists," said Micah Jones, a bassist who is director of the school of music. "We want to give them the broadest possible picture of the art they create, and allow each artistic discipline to inform the others."

The term "co-mingle" frequently comes up in conversation with Jones and Matt Gallagher, a trumpeter who is an associate professor in the program and leads UArts' award-winning "Z" Big Band, which performed at the 2017 Monterey Jazz Festival.

"Music students have the biggest opportunity to work across disciplines," Jones said. "They're co-mingled with dance students, for example, but they'll often just connect with a game developer or a poet who needs some original music."

That open-minded approach is reflected in the way jazz is taught, too. Although Gallagher starts trumpet courses from a conservatory model, it's easy for students to develop into a study of less-traditional playing—if they show an interest in trumpeters like Wadada Leo Smith or Lester Bowie (1941–'99), for instance.

"It's never about just one idiom here," Jones said. "It starts with our theoretical belief that jazz is, at its core, Western classical music, but it's always about jazz being a bridge to other things. We look at the parallels in other types of music, and we encourage students to explore."

Gallagher said that the "Z" Big Band embodies those principles.

"Our repertoire is our secret sauce," Gallagher said. "I follow the Airmen of Note model. So while we honor the 'performance' aspect of a big band, we're not overly academic. Our material is written by our members with the goal of making great music that's attainable. ... We cover a wide mix and try to always keep it fresh."

The formula has worked well so far, and UArts plans to expand.

"We are planning to build two new recording studios this summer," Dicciani said. "And we're working with a major Philadelphia developer to partner on a new building that will house performance spaces for all of our performing arts, new ultra-modern dorms and a restaurant/performance space." —James Hale



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Blindfold Test > BY DAN OUELLETTE

Jason Moran

In late December, the Umbria Jazz Festival in Orvieto celebrated its 25th anniversary of presenting top-tier performances in the historic Italian village. Additionally, the fest commemorated the 100th birthday year of Thelonious Monk (1917–'82). Festival founder/artistic director Carlo Pagnotta enlisted pianist Jason Moran to pay tribute to the master with his eight-piece multimedia project *In My Mind: Monk At Town Hall 1959*. Moran, who participated in a special edition of the Blindfold Test dubbed the “Monkfold Test,” played four shows during the course of the festival.

Moran met up with DownBeat on New Year's Eve day at the Palazzo del Popolo stage to reflect on several renditions of Monk compositions recorded by a variety of musicians. He was asked to name the song title, make educated guesses on who the interpreters are and, most importantly, to reflect on the music.

John Beasley MONK'estra

“I Mean You” (*MONK'estra Vol. 2*, Mack Avenue, 2017) Beasley, piano, synthesizers; Bijon Watson, Jamie Hovorka, James Ford, Brian Swartz, trumpets; Francisco Torres, Wendell Kelly, Ryan Dragon, Steve Hughes, trombones; Bob Sheppard, Danny Janklow, Tom Luer, Thomas Peterson, Adam Schroeder, woodwinds; Ben Shepherd, bass; Terreon Gully, drums.

Can you play me an original version of Thelonious Monk playing “I Mean You”? This is hard. I like this version. I enjoy how they treat the intro and the writing for the backgrounds. And I like the use of repetition because Thelonious' life was all about repetition. His songs are about repeating things but not in a monochromatic way. Here's the way I think about Monk's music: Part of his insistence on repetition is to drive home the point that he has to be recognized. Slaves were not recognized in their daily work, so jazz emerges from that in a way to insist that you're complex and that your music and your sounds and your thoughts matter.

Danilo Pérez

“Bright Mississippi” (*Panamonk*, Impulse, 1996) Pérez, piano; Avishai Cohen, bass; Terri Lyne Carrington, Jeff Watts, drums.

Is this “Bright Mississippi”? Is this Danilo Pérez? This one is kind of easy. What Danilo sees is the same way we all observe Monk and express how we feel. Since he is a person who grew up near the equator, Danilo is feeling the music in that way. The arrangements are beautiful. But the most beautiful part is how Danilo uses his left hand. For real piano players, the left hand [represents] the world, while the right hand is just the person playing. The left hand is the environment. It makes everything. The way Thelonious Monk used his left hand was to show you how deep the earth is. Danilo nails it in that way, right at the end of his melody. He just falls down into the earth.

Carmen McRae

“Get It Straight”/“Straight, No Chaser” (*Carmen Sings Monk*, BMG/Bluebird 2001, rec.'d 1988) McRae, vocals; Charlie Rouse, tenor saxophone; Larry Willis, piano; George Mraz, bass; Al Foster, drums.

Beautiful. It's “Straight, No Chaser.” I'm thinking about singers I love who addressed Monk. I don't think it's Shirley Horn. I'm not sure. [An audience member guesses correctly.] Oh, yes, of course. That's the record—when it came out—for my generation to go to. I loved how she addressed Monk. I remember this so well. I loved it. The band is great, and I want to hear it forever because of the way she delivers the lyrics. The lyric that jumped out was “The time is the dancer” because that's one of the most important things about Thelonious Monk. He had a deep relationship to his body as a dancer. The tenor saxophonist here, I believe, is Charlie Rouse from Monk's band.



Jason Moran performs at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Orvieto in late December.

Russell Gunn

“Epistrophy” (*Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 2, Justin Time, 2001) Gunn, trumpet; Andre Heyward, trombone; Kebbi Williams, tenor saxophone; Marc Cary, piano, Fender Rhodes; Carl Burnett, guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, acoustic bass; Woody Williams, drums; Gunn Fu, vocals; D.J. Apollo, turntables.

The song is “Epistrophy,” which Thelonious used as the outro song of his set. He would play it with a churning rhythm underneath. That's what's happening here with the beat that is from a hip-hop song by Q-Tip, “Vivrant Thing.” They're remixing that with “Epistrophy” at the same time. They're combining histories. I thought who might do that; the trumpeter who took the solo might be behind it. I think it's Russell Gunn. Russell is an architect for combining histories. It's part of the Atlanta-based scene of OutKast and Goodie Mob. Russell lives in that world.

Wynton Marsalis

“Hackensack” (*Marsalis Plays Monk: Standard Time Vol. 4*, Columbia, 1999) Marsalis, trumpet; Walter Blanding, Victor Goines, tenor saxophones; Wessell Anderson, alto saxophone; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Eric Reed, piano; Ben Wolfe, Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley, drums.

I forget the name of the tune. But I love the rhythm section. The way the piano player comped behind the bass solo was unbelievable. Is this the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra? This is a Wynton Marsalis band, and the rhythm section is very special. There's a patience in their playing that allows for the horns to sit on top and emit another wave of eighth notes that are felt. That's the counterbalance that makes the group really work.

I asked Steve Lacy once what Monk's thing was. And he said, “Never stop swinging,” which is why I think Herlin [Riley] makes this song work. The rhythm section knows what's happening, and then Wynton offers a weight of feel to this song. Then that becomes a school. That's the beginning of Wynton's school. I thought of Wynton and his crew when I was coming up. They sent out little blips that said, “These are the things that you should pay attention to. It doesn't matter if you're paying attention to us or not, but you should pay attention to Jelly Roll Morton, Duke and, of course, Thelonious Monk.”

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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