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BLUE NOTE®



KANDACE SPRINGS INDIGO

Singer and pianist **KANDACE SPRINGS** returns with her second album which swirls classical composition with quiet-storm cool, jazz poise with hip-hop swing, tropical warmth with soulful depth, and earthen groove with airy psych. Produced by drummer-producer **KARRIEM RIGGINS**—the living bridge spanning Oscar Peterson and Diana Krall to Erykah Badu and J Dilla—*Indigo* creates a vibe as familiar as it is previously unheard featuring special guests including trumpeter **ROY HARGROVE** and guitarist **JESSE HARRIS**.



MARCUS STRICKLAND TWI-LIFE PEOPLE OF THE SUN

On his thrilling new LP, *People of the Sun*, saxophonist **MARCUS STRICKLAND** blazes a trail fully at the helm of his music—performing, writing, and producing with his Twi-Life band on deck and special guests including **BILAL** and **PHAROAE MONCH** along for the ride—as he sonically and socially traces the African diaspora from present to past in an effort to unpack his identity. It's an album that's busy and beautiful, inventive and contemplative, an amalgam of influences from West Africa (griot culture, Afrobeat, percussion) and America (post-bop, funk-soul, beat music) performed in the key of revelation.



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DECEMBER 2018

Inside

ON THE COVER

26 Medeski Martin & Wood

Thriving in the 'Omnisphere'

BY MICHAEL JACKSON

Each member of Medeski Martin & Wood pursues projects outside the band, yet these musical brothers still foster the strong camaraderie of their long-running trio. DownBeat catches up with keyboardist John Medeski, bassist Chris Wood and drummer Billy Martin to discuss *Omnisphere*, the band's latest album, which was recorded with the new-music ensemble Alarm Will Sound.



John Medeski (left), Chris Wood and Billy Martin perform at the Next Wave Festival in Brooklyn, New York, on Nov. 29, 1997.

Cover photo of Medeski Martin & Wood shot by Jimmy & Dena Katz at The New School in New York City on Aug. 29. From left: Billy Martin, Chris Wood and John Medeski.

FEATURES

32 **Ralph Peterson**
'The Music Is Why I'm Here'
BY BILL MILKOWSKI

READERS POLL

38 **Ray Charles**
DownBeat Hall of Fame
BY AARON COHEN

42 **Chick Corea**
Jazz Artist of the Year
Jazz Album of the Year
BY TERRY PERKINS

44 **Top Jazz Albums**

46 **Top Historical Albums**

48 **Stanley Clarke**
Electric Bassist of the Year
BY ANDY HERMANN

50 **Lizz Wright**
Beyond Album of the Year
BY AARON COHEN

52 **Complete Poll Results**



62 Yuhan Su



64 Muriel Grossmann



73 Reginald Chapman



79 Madsen/Vogel

SPECIAL SECTION

81 Holiday Gift Guide

DEPARTMENTS

8 First Take

Sanah Kadoura
Dennis Lichtman

10 Chords & Discords

59 Reviews

13 The Beat

100 Master Class
BY GEOFF BRADFIELD

22 Players
Marshall Gilkes
Rajiv Halim

104 Pro Session
BY BILL WARFIELD

106 Transcription
Michael Dease
Trombone Solo

108 Toolshed

110 Jazz On Campus

114 Blindfold Test
Marcus Miller

PATRICK LAMB

PERFORMED WITH GINO VANNELLI,
SMOKEY ROBINSON, BOBBY
CALDWELL, JEFF LORBER,
DIANE SCHUUR, DON FELDER,
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First Take > BY ED ENRIGHT



Hamiet Bluiett (1940–2018) performs at the Moers Festival in Moers, Germany, on May 26, 1996.

Standing up for the Bari

MUSICALLY, HAMIET BLUIETT MADE OUTRAGEOUS statements on the baritone saxophone. His work with the World Saxophone Quartet alone served as testament to that. Verbally, though, Bluiett sometimes spoke of a different kind of outrage—namely, the intense frustration he felt when he observed fellow musicians, bandleaders and composers treating the almighty bari as a lower form of life than other instruments commonly featured in jazz ensembles.

When Bluiett died on Oct. 4 at age 78, he left behind a legacy of always standing up for the bari. At one point in his prolific career, Bluiett formed an ensemble of four bari players—himself, Patience Higgins, Alex Harding and James Carter—backed by drummer Ronnie Burrage. Their seismic performance at the 1997 Montreal Jazz Festival is forever documented on the live album *Baritone Nation* (Justin Time).

After that show, which shook the earth below Montreal's Théâtre Gesù, Bluiett was eager to talk about the role of the bari in modern music.

"You've never heard the horn sound like this because the music is confined," he said. "You can't play the horn the way it's supposed to be played, because it's always in a support role with a bunch of other instruments. People don't know what it sounds like. It's immensely powerful."

It was the start of an insightful, enthusiastic rant that was heard by all of the bari players in the dressing room that night, myself included. Bluiett punctuated his comments with quick pulls on a joint, which might have stimulated his musings on the subject.

"Music is too high right now; they don't work on the lows," Bluiett said. "It's all 'ear' sounds. Nobody's playing in the pocket. ... The bottom now has to rule, and the people will say, 'Thank

you, good.' I think they're tired of it, too. We got notes that hit you in the ass; they're 'booty notes.' ... So, the horn can do that, and all the music these days is written for something else. And I'm tired of being subservient to it. ... I refuse to take the disrespect anymore."

Bluiett clearly saw his instrument as a force to be reckoned with, one that not only deserved more attention but practically demanded a stylistic realm of its own.

"It's like being in the water," he said. "The baritone is not a catfish, none of them small fish; it's more like a dolphin or a whale. And it needs to travel in a whole lot of water; we can't work in no swimming pools."

He suggested that the Baritone Nation group was his way of speaking out against what he perceived then as a lack of forward motion on the jazz scene.

In light of all that Bluiett accomplished, it's obvious that he made valuable contributions to the advancement of the art form. (For more information on his career, see our obituary in *The Beat*, on page 20.)

With the subsequent emergence of bari-playing improvisers and bandleaders of the highest order—contemporary artists including Carter, Gary Smulyan, Claire Daly, Charles Evans, Brian Landrus, Colin Stetson, Josh Sinton, Adam Schroeder, Lisa Parrott and dozens more—it's clear that Bluiett not only succeeded in helping to elevate the profile of the instrument itself, but he ultimately influenced today's jazz scene in a way that's noticeably more receptive to bari players in general. For that, I thank him.

Long live Hamiet Bluiett, and long live the Baritone Nation.

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RON LUCAS
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Editor's Note: Thanks for your letter. See "The Queen Still Reigns" on page 84.

HOF Candidates

I am a 68-year-old jazz fan, a former concert producer and a former employee of Verve/PolyGram. I would like to suggest some artists who should be inducted in the DB Hall of Fame.

The following list includes many artists whom I have met or worked with and admire: 1) Pharoah Sanders, 2) Dorothy Donegan, 3) Jimmy Garrison, 4) Billy Higgins, 5) Dewey Redman, 6) Don Pullen, 7) Geri Allen, 8) Nina Simone, 9) Jack DeJohnette and 10) Charlie Rouse.

I hope your readers and critics, as well as members of the DownBeat Veterans Committee, will take these names into consideration.

MICHAEL IKEDA
MIKEDA789@GMAIL.COM

Seeking Fine Wine

The star ratings in DownBeat's album reviews are far too generous. Most 4-star records are not memorable and pretty ordinary. While the average technical level of playing is far beyond any jazz in my living memory, many tunes are not memorable and the instrumentalists' sounds are not distinctive.

When I started out, people like Dan Morgenstern and Ira Gitler were reviewing for DownBeat. You could take their reviews to the bank! And I built my collection and knowledge on the albums they praised.

Thankfully, we can now stream music before buying it. If I relied solely on DownBeat reviews, I'd only have a collection of well-recorded, well-played, unmemorable *vin ordinaire*. Maybe you need to have split review ratings: one for technique and one for creativity.

Also, John McDonough should be in The Hot Box every month as an antidote to the other suck-ups who write your reviews.

MARC ALAN COHN (AKA DR. JAZZ)
HOST, GIFTS & MESSAGES, 96.9 WHYR-FM
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

Corrections

- In The Beat section of our November issue, on page 13, the correct photo credit for the concert shot of Camille Thurman is ©2017 Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos.
- In the Student Music Guide in our October issue, a young musician was misidentified. The alto saxophonist quoted in the article "NYO Jazz Players Tour as Ambassadors" is Kevin Oliver Jr.
- DownBeat's review of Roland's TD-17 series V-Drums ("Toolshed," November) incorrectly stated that there are four kits in the series. The correct number is three.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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



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The

Inside >

- 14 / Monterey Jazz Fest
- 16 / Vinyl
- 17 / Derek Brown
- 18 / Stefan Pasborg
- 19 / Jerry González
- 20 / Hamiet Bluiett

Beat

Rosnes, Hajdu Write with Precision

In casual conversation, artists might reveal their struggles with complacency, particularly when they feel they've already established their sound. Separately, pianist and composer Renee Rosnes and writer David Hajdu have spent their careers defying complacency, living in possibility. And together, they developed *Ice On The Hudson*, an SMK Jazz release that reflects two years of creative output and two temperaments of creative inquiry.

Though the two never had met, Hajdu approached Rosnes about five years ago to ask if she might be interested in writing songs. Rosnes responded enthusiastically. From that exchange, a partnership between composer and lyricist emerged. "Everything clicked," said Hajdu, whose past projects have included lyric-writing for Fred Hersch and Jill Sobule. He's also a music critic for *The Nation* and teaches at Columbia Journalism School in New York.

"There's a natural collaborative style in the way we deal with each other," said Rosnes, who has released 17 albums as a leader. "One reason we feel comfortable in the partnership is because we both have very open musical minds."

In early 2016, the pair embarked on the 11-track endeavor. From the start, they sought to abandon adherence to genre and consideration for distribution. "I don't think either of us thought for a second about the marketplace or trends or vogues," Hajdu said. "In every case, we started with having something that we really wanted to say. That was it."

Then the partners lined up personnel whom they felt would honor the musical and lyrical complexities presented in their work, including reedists Seamus Blake and Ken Peplowski, and vocalists René Marie, Janis Siegel, Dariusz de Haas and Karen Oberlin, among others.

Hajdu identifies as a consummate scholar of



David Hajdu and Renee Rosnes have released *Ice On The Hudson*, their first co-written album-length recording.

TAKAKO HARKNESS

the music. Musing over Lorenz Hart and Dorothy Fields, he lamented that today's music has lost what he considers to be a sophisticated degree of care and precision. In co-creating *Ice On The Hudson*, Hajdu tasked himself, along with Rosnes, with bringing those elements back into the music.

"I wanted to hear more songs that have the level of craft, meticulousness and deep musicality of the standards—but with a 21st-century orientation," he said.

Both artists describe each other's work as layered, and accordingly, their record intercuts themes of longing, tenderness and renewal. "Certainly the emotion of the lyric plays a role in the arrangement of the pieces," Rosnes said.

On "Little Pearl," the conversation between Erik Friedlander's cello and Rosnes' piano was a deliberately evocative choice by the pianist, who wanted to conjure the sensation of viewing

Earth from outer space.

With four exceptions, each song followed the same format for composition: Hajdu would write lyrics first and develop a "dummy" form—one Rosnes never wanted to see or hear. She would take only Hajdu's lyrics, composing music around his words. "The Passage" and "Little Pearl" derived from original instrumental compositions, but Rosnes wrote "Confound Me" and "All But You" specifically for Hajdu to complete.

Despite *Ice On The Hudson* being her first album-length project co-written with a lyricist, Rosnes dismissed any sense of apprehension. Instead, she attributes her exhilaration to the freedom the pair enjoyed during the process.

"Fear doesn't enter into it," she said. "I never felt any pressure when David and I began working together. I respected him as a journalist and an author, and thought, 'Why not give it a whirl?'"

—Stephanie Jones



Nubya Garcia

ADAMA JALLOH

New Nubya: UK-based saxophonist and flutist Nubya Garcia issued the albums *When We Are* and *Nubya's Five* within the past 18 months. But she's set for ensemble mode on Maisha's *There Is A Place* (Jazz Re:Freshed), which is due out Nov. 9. The five tracks offer an orchestral touch with the inclusion of a strings section and a harpist, despite maintaining a stunning persistence of groove that's beginning to be expected from the expansive London scene.

More info: jazzrefreshed.com

In Tampere: The 37th annual Tampere Jazz Happening in Tampere, Finland, is set to run Nov. 1–4, playing host to more than two dozen ensembles at three performance venues. This year's lineup includes performances by the Jamie Baum Septet+, Slovenian-born pianist Kaja Draksler, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Norwegian saxophonist Trygve Seim and Finland's Martti Vesala Soundpost Quintet, among others.

More info: tamperemusicfestivals.fi/jazz

Final Bar: Merging blues, soul and r&b gave Cecil "Big Jay" McNeely a unique angle on tenor saxophone, and enabled the Los Angeles-bred musician to record with the likes of Gene Vincent and Buddy Guy in addition to leading scores of his own dates stretching back to the 1940s. McNeely succumbed to cancer on Sept. 16 near Los Angeles at the age of 91. ... Drummer **John Von Ohlen**, who performed with Woody Herman and Stan Kenton, as well as helped to found Blue Wisp Big Band, died Oct. 3 in Cincinnati, Ohio. While not on the bandstand, Von Ohlen was an adjunct instructor of jazz drums at the University of Cincinnati. He was 77. ... Bassist **Max Bennett** contributed to hundreds of recording sessions during a career that stretched from the 1950s through the new millennium. His credits include sessions with Ella Fitzgerald, Quincy Jones, Peggy Lee, Joni Mitchell, Frank Zappa and Barbra Streisand in addition to scores of other well-known stars. Bennett died Sept. 14 in San Clemente, California, at the age of 90.

Thornetta Davis performs at the Monterey Jazz Festival.



DAVID ROYAL/MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL

Highly Charged: Monterey Jazz Festival

LAST YEAR MARKED THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY of the Monterey Jazz Festival, the longest continually running jazz festival in the world. This year, it ramped up its next chapter with women in marquee roles. The fest featured more than 60 women artists who appeared as band-leaders, co-leaders or side players. And at the arena-like Jimmy Lyons Stage on Sept. 21, festival veteran Dianne Reeves—winner of this year's MJF Jazz Legend Award—swept away the audience with her opening-night spotlight.

The Lyons den also featured this year's co-artists-in-residence, saxophonist Tia Fuller and trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, in a moving opening-night tribute to Geri Allen. The pair finished up together on Sunday, performing with Monterey's Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, with whom they had been working with throughout the year.

While the Lyons Stage performances played to a large crowd down the midway, the sunny and live-oak shaded Garden Stage treated audience members to a more relaxed setting of benches, blankets and bleachers. The Saturday afternoon tripleheader that began with Richmond, Virginia's highly charged No B.S.! Brass Band afforded crowds a more intimate feel that encouraged dancing in the grassy patch in front of the stage.

In her first time performing at Monterey, Detroit's Queen of the Blues, Thornetta Davis, sang with no-nonsense sass, fearless in her missives against lovers, as she preached the blues. She belted out castigations about liars and cheats with lyrics like, "You can tell that lie to somebody else/ I've heard it before," and "Don't appease me/ You ain't gonna please me." Her band was tight and supportive, especially her husband, James "Jamalot" Anderson, who introduced her after the opening two instrumentals and played congas throughout her set. It was particularly mov-

ing when Davis sang her touch-of-Womack tune "Honest Woman," dedicated to her husband. It was a love story about "all those times I gave up on love" and played at a slow tempo, so she and Anderson could dance together. But it didn't take long for her to bolt out with "I Need A Whole Lotta Lovin' (To Satisfy Me)," when she encouraged the adoring audience to sing along. She received her first standing ovation for her a cappella version of "Ain't No Sunshine" with call-and-response soul alongside her two backup singers, Roseann and Rosemere Matthews.

That tune proved to be the perfect set up for the next Garden Stage act, José James, who worked through his latest project—a moving tribute to songwriter Bill Withers, *Lean On Me*. Promising to deliver his songs "simple and profound" (no hip-hop beats under his music nor deconstructions with 10-minute bebop solos), the genre-bending James played it soulfully straight. Once he sang to the heart of Withers' storytelling tunes, he confounded jazz critics by playing it without harmonic embellishments, beginning with "Ain't No Sunshine" and continuing with well-known songs such as the upbeat "Use Me" and the uplifting "Lean On Me," with the audience happily singing along.

It was jazz at its most basic, with the melodies alone taking the lead and short improvisations by members of James' quartet—pianist James Francies, bassist Ben Williams and drummer Nate Smith.

While James played at the Lyons mainstage earlier in the afternoon (as did Davis), he seemed more in the vibe at the smaller Garden Stage, moving through the crowd with his mic. You could hear how he was grooving as he made his way to his concluding pair of songs, a funkified "Just The Two Of Us" and the dance-friendly "Lovely Day." The entire set was soulfully joyful.

—Dan Ouellette

Pianist Xavier Davis Salutes Motor City

EVEN THOUGH XAVIER DAVIS HAILS FROM

Grand Rapids, Michigan, and teaches jazz piano at Michigan State University in East Lansing, he's never lived in Detroit. Still, he claims the Motor City as his adopted hometown. He likens Detroit's towering significance in the Wolverine State to that of New York City's in the Empire State. "Detroit has had such an impact on [Michigan]," said the 47-year-old Davis, who remembers being excited at seeing so many established black people when he visited Detroit as a child. "When Detroit suffers, the whole state of Michigan suffers. When Detroit does well, the whole state does well."

Detroit's heralded jazz legacy understandably played a substantial role in Davis' artistic development. It provided his entry point into the jazz scene after he met bassist Rodney Whitaker, drummer Gerald Cleaver and fellow pianist Craig Taborn, while he was a freshman majoring in electrical engineering at the University of Michigan. After switching his undergraduate major to music and transferring to Western Michigan University, he encountered an icon: Betty Carter (1929–'98), a native of Flint. Carter recruited him for her trio in the mid-'90s after seeing him perform at a conference for the International Association for Jazz Education (the organization that preceded the Jazz Education Network).

On his new album, *Rise Up Detroit* (Detroit Music Factory), Davis tips his hat to the city that once was nicknamed "The Paris of the Midwest." Given the significance of the city's social, political, industrial and cultural history, Davis could have explored many of its facets. But he narrows his thematic focus on the Underground Railroad and the Great Migration, which brought many African-Americans from the South to the city and its booming auto industry. "I tried to focus on the role Detroit has had on the lives of African-Americans and on the world at large," Davis explained. "I was just in Tokyo; people there were listening to Aretha Franklin and Barry Harris. And they're driving cars."

Supported by a grant from Michigan State University's Humanities and Arts Research Program, Davis began composing music about Detroit. He also wanted to create arrangements for a string ensemble, which *Rise Up Detroit* wonderfully showcases. In addition to leading a splendid trio that features Whitaker and drummer Quincy Davis, the pianist buttresses his supple improvisations and haunting melodies with a string quartet led by violinist Regina Carter. The combined forces result in dynamic post-Motown bop, underscored with a sumptuous, cinemat-



Pianist Xavier Davis explores historical themes on his new album, *Rise Up Detroit*.

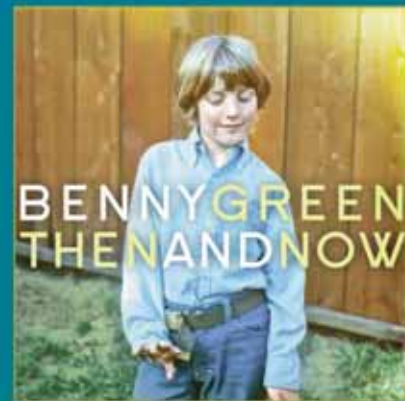
ic sweep. Although Davis previously has penned string arrangements for other musicians, notably trumpeter Tom Harrell, *Rise Up Detroit* provided a wider sonic canvas.

Carter praised Davis' writing for strings as being both "a joy" and a challenge. "His writing for the string quartet provided parts full of rhythmic and harmonic depth, and nuance," she said.

While Detroit's halcyon years are evoked, Davis doesn't avoid addressing some of the city's more somber issues, such as economic and population decline. "Black Paradise," the centerpiece of *Rise Up Detroit*, focuses on the Black Bottom, a once thriving African-American neighborhood that nearly was demolished by the construction of the Chrysler Freeway. "People ended up living in public housing or just leaving the city after Interstate 75 was built," Davis explained. "It's a very tragic part of Detroit's history for many people."

He depicts that departure on the blues-drenched, McCoy Tyner-ish "Exodus." "There's a section in 'Exodus' where [the mood] changes from sadness to something more upbeat, as if someone was having fond childhood memories while seeing Detroit's skyline from a rear-view mirror," Davis said. "I've come to appreciate Detroit even more with the more recent struggles it's going through. *Rise Up Detroit* is something that I can do to lift up the city. I put myself indirectly in Detroit's jazz lineage. I don't want to disrespect anyone from Detroit by saying that I'm a Detroiter. But just through my connections with the city, it's my adopted home, musically."

—John Murph

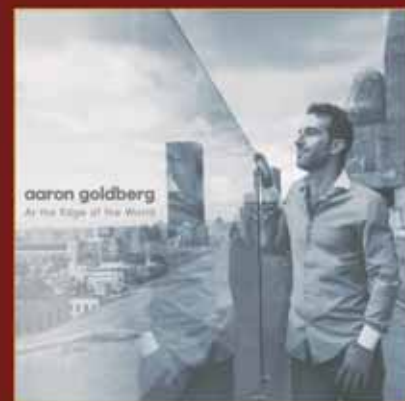


BENNY GREEN THEN AND NOW

SSC 1528 - IN STORES NOVEMBER 2

BENNY GREEN (piano & keyboards) DAVID WONG bass
KENNY WASHINGTON drums VERONICA SWIFT vocals
ANNE DRUMMOND flute JOSH JONES percussion

With drumming master Kenny Washington and revered bassist David Wong completing his piano trio, Green commands the stage. A recording session led by prodigy vocalist Veronica Swift made such an impact on Green that he expanded his own generally instrumental traditions and began collaborating with both Swift and his trio.



AARON GOLDBERG AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

SSC 1521 - IN STORES NOVEMBER 16

Goldberg's latest recording, *At The Edge of The World*, documents the recent collaboration with drummer and percussionist Leon Parker, a brilliant innovator and performer, in a new trio along with the gifted bassist Matt Penman. Together the three aim to engage the audience with spontaneous musical dialogues based around uncomplicated source material.



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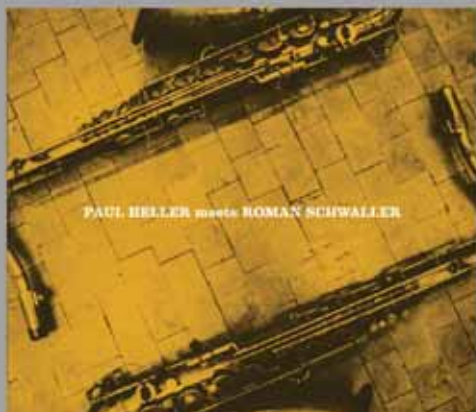
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'63 Monk Tapes Released

If the 1990s represented the golden age of the CD box set, we might be amid the Age of Found Sound. "Lost" recordings by John Coltrane have made a huge splash, and last year, jazz sleuth Zev Feldman unearthed a 1960 soundtrack by Thelonious Monk.

Now, Monk again is in the spotlight, thanks to the discovery of a March 5, 1963, Danish concert featuring the pianist alongside saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop. Released by London-based Gearbox Records on a number of media formats—including a deluxe, limited-edition LP—*Monk* captures the pianist's long-running quartet amid a triumphant European tour.

"That tour was a great success for Monk," said Robin Kelley, the Gary B. Nash Professor of American History at UCLA and author of 2009's *Thelonious Monk: The Life And Times Of An American Original* (Free Press). "In 1962, he hadn't done that much, but suddenly things were happening for him. Personally, he was in a great place, and in terms of his career, he was a rising star."

Kelley pointed to the pianist's new contract with Columbia Records, the stability of his quartet and his pending cover story in *Time* magazine as signs that Monk never had found himself in a better situation.

"He was recording a lot, the band had been together for two years, and this return to Europe gave him the opportunity to really showcase his music," Kelley said. "The tour was pretty well documented, but this Copenhagen gig [at the 210-seat Odd Fellow Palaeet] has never surfaced before."

The recording's journey to the consumer market is the stuff of audiophile's fantasy, and it began with the decision by a Danish producer to purchase almost 90 reels of tape about 20 years ago.

"He was going to use them for samples," said Gearbox's Darrel Sheinman, who helped master the recording. "He never got around to it, and he was going to give them to the Danish National Jazz Archive. I knew him through buying some rare jazz records in Copenhagen, so I bought the tapes from him about five years ago."

Sheinman said he began making his way through the tapes, discovering that most of them were "cracking titles procured by the Danish Debut label, which was Charles Mingus' franchise label," run by another Dane.

"It took us an age to review them all," he said. "Since they were mostly broadcast tapes, they were either quarter-track or half-track recordings, made at either 3.75 or 7.5 inches per second. To save money, broadcasters often used both sides of the tapes."



Despite its age and provenance, Sheinman said the Monk recording was in great shape—probably the best of his purchase, making restoration remarkably easy.

"We simply did some high-frequency riding on EQ to deal with drop outs, but that was it. We were very lucky with this tape; it was recorded onto quarter-inch tape at 15 inches per second, then straight to all the formats, from vinyl to CD and digital."

Gearbox prides itself on using a completely analog signal chain to create its products, even when the final format is digital.

"We feel analog sound has a bigger sound stage and some gentle, natural compression, while keeping good dynamic range," Sheinman said. "It often depends on the equipment used. We like Studer machines, and their tube ones, in particular, are astonishing."

Sheinman admits that staying true to the analog commitment and refusing to go down the road of full digital restoration is always a challenge.

What *Monk* showcases is a particularly raucous concert, with the pianist and his bandmates digging deep into their standard repertoire, including "Bye-Ya," "Nutty," "Body And Soul" and "Monk's Dream."

Kelley said that while this was standard fare for the quartet, the music continued to yield new secrets.

"Monk was a composer," Kelley said, "and he tried to make these songs perfect. He played this music in so many different ways. Take "Body And Soul" as an example. He played it over and over, and it reveals him as this master piano player who has this deep knowledge of structure. He could turn it around so many different ways, yet keep returning to that melody."

DB

Brown's One-Man-Band Approach

THE MUSIC VIDEO FOR "RUN AWAY," A song on Derek Brown's new album, *FiftyFifty*, begins with the Chicago-based saxophonist carrying his tenor saxophone as he limbs the stairs into a cobwebbed attic in Ithaca, Michigan. He puts his left leg atop a wooden box and starts stomping as he clicks the keys on his instrument, mimicking the sound of a kick drum and high hat. Finally, sticking the horn in his mouth, he alternates popping sounds and melodic notes to suggest simultaneous bass and lead-guitar lines.

Then, moving the mouthpiece just a half inch from his lips, he begins singing his own lyrics to the song, alternating each three beats of vocal with three beats of saxophone, while the stomping never stops.

"I've experimented with looping," Brown said, "but I was devoting so much energy to my footwork—which was like a dance routine—that it left no room for spontaneity. Giving up the looper forced me to create new techniques for creating bass and melody lines at the same time, for singing and playing at the same time. Imposing limits on yourself opens you up to new ideas you wouldn't have come up on your own."

Brown's extensive series of videos comes with a tagline, "BEATBoX SAX," which he accepted only reluctantly. The term isn't an exact fit, because Brown produces most of his sounds not with his body alone, as a beatboxer would, but with his saxophone. A more accurate description, he explained, would be "extended techniques on the saxophone that sound like beatboxing."

The 35-year-old musician studied classical saxophone at Hope College in Michigan, fell in love with jazz improvisation, went to grad school for jazz at the University of Cincinnati, and taught for six years in Texas. There, Brown began focusing on solo saxophone performances, inspired by the unaccompanied cadenzas of Sonny Rollins and Chris Potter. The biggest influence, though, was vocalist Bobby McFerrin.

"I saw his videos where he was performing for thousands of people by himself," Brown recalled. "And he was doing it without looping. He was singing bass lines and jumping up in pitch to sing the melody, alternating in such a way that the audience heard them simultaneously. To add some percussion, he beat on his chest. I said, 'Wow, you don't have to be a polyphonic instrument to do all those things.'"

Inspired, Brown quit his teaching job and moved to Chicago. He joined numerous bands, but soon found his solo performances got the biggest reaction. This year, Brown and his wife, Rachel, made the decision to quit their Chicago jobs, record *FiftyFifty* (with guest appearances by saxophonist Jeff Coffin and Chicago rapper Keith Harris), borrow a 25-foot RV and launch a nine-month tour that will take them to all 50 states.

"I talk to young musicians all the time about putting themselves in the audience's shoes," Brown said by phone from Indiana, during the third week of the tour. "You can't think of it as selling out. If music is a form of communication, you have to think about how that is coming across at the other end. In my case, this solo stuff was connecting with people in a way that the other stuff wasn't. That let me know what I should do."

—Geoffrey Himes



JILL M. FAGER

Saxophonist Derek Brown plans to visit all 50 states during his U.S. tour.

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Drummer and bandleader Stefan Pasborg is based in Copenhagen.

DITTE VALENT



Pasborg Aims To Keep Vinyl Vital

STEFAN PASBORG IS AN ENTHUSIASTIC vinyl advocate. Beginning in 2018 and continuing into next year, the Danish drummer is releasing a series of six recordings that will be available only as vinyl LPs—no streaming, no downloads, not even any CDs. Pasborg, who is much in demand throughout Europe, decided that vinyl was the only sensible way to release new music. By making it harder to access the music, he hopes that those who buy the LPs will devote more attention to his artistry.

“I’m trying to recapture the feeling I had as a kid,” he said by phone from his Copenhagen apartment. “When I went down to the vinyl shop and looked at 25 albums, I knew I only had the money to buy two. If I bought an album and I didn’t like it at first, I kept listening to it because I had already spent my money, and I would often learn to love it. Today, when people listen to a streaming service, if they don’t like the first part of the first track, they won’t listen to the end of the song. I truly believe music deserves time and patience.”

The music on the six LPs varies widely, with different personnel and a different theme for each title. The series includes a fusion trio playing Spaghetti Western themes on *Morricone*; a jazz quartet playing rock standards on *Love Me Tender*; an organ trio playing holiday music on *The Xmas Album*; a trio improvising over

Krautrock loops on *Man-The-Man*; a jazz piano trio revisiting Danish folk tunes on *Polkadelic Bebop Trio*; and Pasborg, unaccompanied, improvising in real time on *Solo*. What unites the six discs is their origins in Pasborg’s pre-professional youth.

When he was growing up in Copenhagen, he fell in love with the Booker T. & The MGs and Elvis Presley records that his parents played; they were as much a part of his childhood as the Danish folk songs he learned in elementary school. His mother, a ballet dancer, inspired a love for Igor Stravinsky, and his father, a doctor and documentary filmmaker, inspired an interest in Ennio Morricone. As a teenager, Stefan loved the Doors and Led Zeppelin, but also Art Blakey and Cecil Taylor. Pasborg’s godfather, Alex Riel, happened to be one of the top jazz drummers in Denmark. When Pasborg was 3, Riel gave the toddler a drum kit and soon became his teacher. Today, the 78-year-old legend and his 34-year-old protégé are friends and frequent collaborators.

“I love rock ‘n’ roll, but I also love to improvise, to tell a story on the drums,” Pasborg said. “I’m less interested in being the backbone of a rock group; that’s not my thing. Another album that meant a lot to me was Tony Williams’ *Emergency!*, with [organist] Larry Young and [guitarist] John McLaughlin. That was the exact

combination of improvised music and the sound of Hendrix’s guitar that I wanted. My organ trio, Ibrahim Electric, was based on that album and Booker T. & The MGs. For me, music should be a combination of everything I love: surf music and Charles Mingus, John Coltrane and Elvis Presley.”

At the 2004 Danish Music Awards, Pasborg won honors for best new artist and best debut album. He continued to record as both a leader and a sideman, contributing to *Occupy The World* (TUM), trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith’s 2012 collaboration with Finnish big band Tumo, and *Duo* (ILK Music), a 2016 program of duets with Gambian kora player Dawda Jobarteh that features arrangements of tunes by Don Cherry, Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler. With his new series of vinyl-only releases, Pasborg aims to bring back the careful attention that unusual music often provokes.

“We are losing so many things when we go away from physical recordings,” Pasborg said. “It used to mean something when you gave a friend an album. When you get an all-you-can-eat buffet, you get full in a not very satisfying way. You eat a little pizza, a little sushi and you don’t really taste the food. I believe in the importance of choosing. I’m trying to give a little more emphasis to the experience of listening to a particular record.”

—Geoffrey Himes

Jerry González Dies at 69

JERRY GONZÁLEZ—WHOSE TAKE-NO-PRISONERS personality, lucid intelligence, inquisitive spirit and fierce presentation on both trumpet and a five-conga drum setup won him fans around the globe—died Oct. 1 after a fire in his apartment in Madrid, Spain, his home since 2000. He was 69.

Born in the Bronx on June 5, 1949, González, of Puerto Rican descent, spent his last 18 years intersecting with key figures of Spain's nuevo flamenco community—including guitar legend Paco De Lucía, and vocalist Diego El Cigala and his guitar partner, Niño Josele—who dug his earthy clave knowledge, his way of sliding into a note, his harmonic erudition, his *rumbero* soulfulness. González also assembled a quartet of Madrid-based Cuban expatriates, The Commandos of Clave, who he trained to navigate the rhythmic structures that bedrocked the New York-based Fort Apache Band and its predecessor, Grupo Folklórico y Experimental Nuevayorquino.

But González will be best remembered for his authoritative synthesis of the codes of swing-based, hardcore jazz and clave-centric Afro-Cuban dialects with the Fort Apache Band, whose core personnel were his brother, bassist Andy González, drummer Steve Berrios, saxophonist Joe Ford and pianist Larry Willis.

The Fort Apache Band presented its singular hybrid on nine albums between 1988 (*Obatalá*) and 2005 (*Rumba Buhaina*), including *Rumba Para Monk*, *Earthdance* and *Moliendo Café*. On these, González—whose apprenticeship included work with Dizzy Gillespie, Eddie Palmieri and Tito Puente—imprinted on the jazz community not only his performance practice of fluid transitions from trumpet solos to forcefully executed conga patterns and back to trumpet, but also the notion of fully respecting the idiomatic particulars of the musical dialects in question.

In 1995, 1998 and 1999, the Fort Apache Band topped the Beyond Group category in DownBeat's Critics Poll and Readers Poll.

González was a trained musician who par-took of the excellent curriculum at Harlem's prestigious High School of Music and Art from 1963 to 1967, and later studied at New York College of Music. But at heart, he was an autodidact. He assimilated Latin music through his namesake father, a gigging *sonero* and building superintendent, who gave him and Andy their first instruments and filled the house with the sounds of the great Latin orchestras of the 1950s.

He began playing trumpet in seventh grade. At 14, when a broken leg kept him out of school, he immersed himself in the art of hand-drumming, poring over recordings by the folkloric Cuban drum ensemble Los Muñequitos de Matanzas. At 16, he apartment-sat on

Manhattan's Lower East Side, near the jazz club Slugs, where he regularly soaked up the sounds and nuances of the avatars of modern jazz.

So González's unique conception was a direct reflection of his lived experience. Like his heroes and mentors, this irreplaceable spirit gave no quarter, but, in matters of music, asked nothing of others that he wouldn't do himself.

—Ted Panken



Jerry González (1949–2018)

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MOUTHPIECES FOR CLARINETS AND SAXOPHONES

In Memoriam: Hamiet Bluiett

BARITONE SAXOPHONIST HAMIET Bluiett, a founding member of the World Saxophone Quartet, as well as the Black Artists Group, died Oct. 4 in St. Louis. He was 78.

During a career of more than five decades, Bluiett created an innovative approach to the baritone saxophone. With his extended range, circular-breathing technique and uncanny combination of power and precision, Bluiett reinvented the role of the baritone saxophone in small group, large ensemble and solo settings.

In a 1997 interview with *DownBeat* at the Montreal Jazz Festival, he explained his unique approach to the instrument. "This is my concept, and it's all about the baritone, really," Bluiett said. "The music has to change for us to really fit. ... We've got to play what this horn will sound like. ... So, what I'm doing is redesigning the music to fit the horn."

His discography includes more than 90 albums as a member of WSQ, as leader of his own sessions and as a contributor to recordings by Charles Mingus, Randy Weston, Gil Evans, Lester Bowie, Don Cherry, Anthony Braxton,

Larry Willis, Eddie Jefferson, Arthur Blythe, James Carter, Bobby Watson and Andrew Cyrille.

Bluiett topped the Baritone Saxophone category in the *DownBeat* Critics Poll eight times: first from 1990-'93, then from 1996-'99.

He was born Sept. 16, 1940, in Brooklyn, Illinois, a town also known as Lovejoy and located north of East St. Louis. While still in elementary school, he played clarinet with a local high school band under the tutelage of noted bandleader George Hudson. He began playing baritone sax at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, and joined the U.S. Navy in 1961, continuing to play in bands after enlisting.

After his discharge, Bluiett returned home and became a founding member of the BAG in 1967. He began playing with saxophonists Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill and other BAG musicians, and led the group's big band before moving to New York in 1969.

With his innovative approach to the baritone, Bluiett soon found work with Sam Rivers, Tito Puente and Babatunde Olatunji, and became a key player on New York's growing loft scene. In



Hamiet Bluiett (1940–2018)

1974, Bluiett got the call to join Mingus. A one-off New Orleans concert in late 1976—which featured Bluiett, Lake, Hemphill and David Murray—led to the founding of the WSQ a few months later. The group became an ideal setting for Bluiett's playing, songwriting and wide-ranging improvisations.

"He was a master, a natural teacher and a mentor to many musicians," Lake recalled. "He also had a wicked sense of humor."

Bluiett's influence as a mentor was especially important to saxophonist and Detroit native Carter, who first heard him play with the WSQ in 1982.

"I was 13 and my sax teacher took me as a treat," Carter said, "and it came at the proper time. I was ready for the next level. Hearing Bluiett play his low-A baritone up close was musical nirvana. It was just what I needed."

As Carter matured and developed musically, his relationship with Bluiett grew as well.

"I played with him in his group Baritone Nation and later subbed in World Sax," Carter said. "He always gave me good advice. I remember him telling me: 'Don't let them take your ears away—or your heart. Those will always tell you what to do.'"

After returning home to Lovejoy in 2002 to deal with health issues, Bluiett focused on teaching music at area schools. He eventually regained his health and played concerts again—often with his student orchestras.

Bluiett returned to New York in 2012, and was again active on the music scene. But after suffering a severe stroke in 2016, he retired from performing. Eventually, his family moved him back to St. Louis, and on Sept. 16, his 78th birthday, he was transferred to St. Louis University Hospital and later taken off life support.

"Bluiett was my soul brother," Lake said. "I will miss him."
—Terry Perkins

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Publisher Ira Sabin Dies at 90

IRA SABIN, WHOSE CAREER INCLUDED stints as a drummer, concert presenter, record store owner and magazine publisher, died Sept. 12 at the age of 90 in Rockville, Maryland. He had suffered from colorectal cancer, according to his son Glenn Sabin.

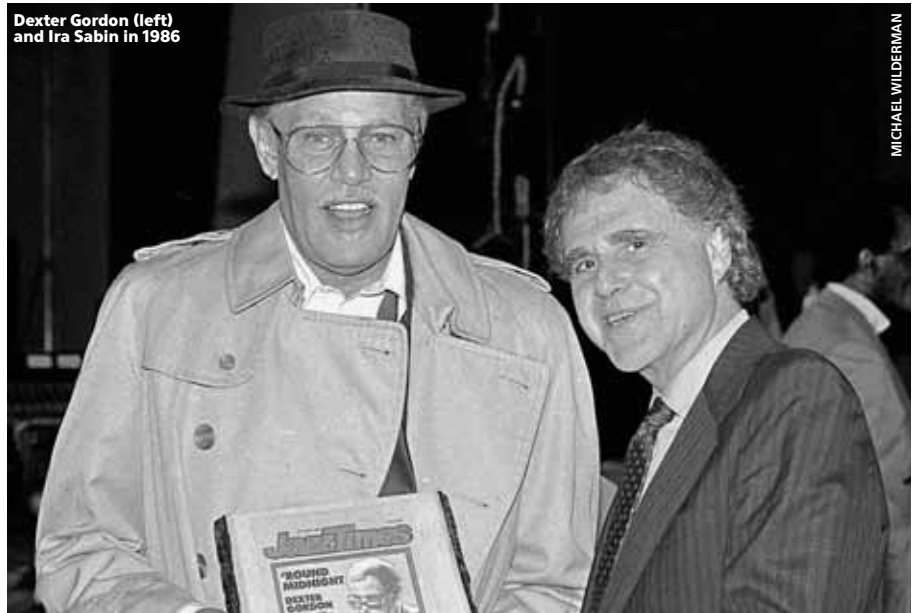
In 1962, while based in Washington, D.C., Ira Sabin bought a record store and renamed it Sabin's Discount Records. It was at this store that he founded the publication that would eventually become JazzTimes magazine. He began publishing Sabin's Happenings, an in-store newsletter, which listed new LP releases, tracked jazz airplay and publicized jazz shows at local venues. Renowned jazz critics, such as Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, contributed to the newsletter, which Sabin renamed Radio Free Jazz in 1970.

He renamed the newsletter JazzTimes in 1980. Then in 1990, his son Glenn took over the operation and transformed the publication into a monthly magazine. The Sabin family sold the magazine in 2009.

"I've been very fortunate," Sabin told journalist Dan Morgenstern for a 2000 article in JazzTimes. "I've always done what I wanted to all my life. Running a store may have seemed a drag, but I made it a happening thing."

As a young boy, Sabin played the drums, and by 15 he was gigging professionally in the D.C.

Dexter Gordon (left) and Ira Sabin in 1986



MICHAEL WILDERMAN

area. Sabin later served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, and played in an Army band.

In a tribute to his father, Glenn Sabin wrote: "After the war, Dad continued playing music full time, and established a music production company in the Washington, D.C. area. He played lots of D.C. society gigs, and he programmed shows

featuring the top musicians and comedians of the day—including Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis, Jonathan Winters and Redd Foxx."

Glenn's essay also included this line: "Anyone who knows Dad will tell you they never saw him not wearing a smile." **DB**



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A colleague of Marshall Gilkes said that the trombonist always is looking for a new challenge.

COURTESY OF ARTIST

MARSHALL GILKES

Acclaimed Nomad

In 2010, Marshall Gilkes bested at least 20 other trombonists to land a coveted spot in the WDR Big Band in Cologne, Germany. There, as a staff musician, he would enjoy the kind of benefits rare for any artist. So, he and his family decided to pull up stakes and move from the United States to Germany.

His tenure with the band was productive musically, and he was able to maintain some of his ties to the New York jazz scene. But, after four years in Germany, he decided again to uproot the clan and move back to the relative insecurity of life in the United States. The family now lives in upstate New York.

The moves fit a pattern established by a nomadic upbringing. As a youngster, Gilkes, the son of a conductor in U.S. Air Force bands, never lived in one place very long. Born on an Air Force base in Maryland, he grew up in at least five states, plus the District of Columbia.

While the family finally settled in Colorado,

he spent his senior year in high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. He then divvied up his undergraduate career among the University of Northern Colorado, William Paterson University in New Jersey and The Juilliard School in New York, where he earned a bachelor's of music degree and, later, an artist diploma.

In his professional career, he has been similarly peripatetic, trotting the globe as he moved freely among the worlds of Latin, classical, pop and jazz—becoming a fixture in New York as a first-call section player and soloist for numerous bandleaders, including Maria Schneider. Gilkes topped the category Rising Star–Trombone in the 2017 DownBeat Critics Poll, and over the course of four albums as a leader, he has earned a reputation as a highly respected composer.

“He’s restless in a good way,” said bassist John Goldsby, who has known Gilkes for about a decade as both a friend and colleague in WDR.

“He’s always looking for the next challenge.”

That quest has led to his fifth album as a leader, *Always Forward*. The album—like his last release, 2015’s Grammy-nominated concert recording, *Köln*—is a collaboration with the WDR Big Band. But perhaps more than *Köln*, the new album reflects Gilkes’ restless nature. In it, he probes previously unexplored realms of color, texture and compositional complexity.

“‘Always forward’ has been my mindset,” he said over coffee at a Manhattan pâtisserie in September.

The new disc—which, like all his albums, was released on his label, Alternate Side Records—includes eight originals and two covers. Among the originals, two are expansive arrangements of tunes he previously recorded with small groups. Both are emblematic of his predilection for reinvigoration.

“Puddle Jumping,” which first appeared on his 2004 quartet album *Edenderry*, transforms a piece built around a modest vamp into a big band exercise in theme and variation, with enriched harmonies and classically inspired cadenzas that display Gilkes’ remarkable command of the instrument.

“It’s not so much that I got tired of playing it that way,” Gilkes, 40, said of the small-group version. “I just decided, ‘Let me see if I can reinvent this.’ I wrote an arrangement as I would do it now, as opposed to when I was 22 years old.”

A similar maturing is revealed on “Lost Words.” Expanded from the title track of his 2008 quintet album, the piece is now a lushly orchestrated, episodic work with additional counterpoint, a stop-time section and a shout chorus that features the band at full wail.

Gilkes’ attention to compositional development was nurtured at Juilliard by composer Kendall Briggs. Gilkes’ facility on the trombone was, likewise, advanced there, under the tutelage of Joseph Alessi, the New York Philharmonic’s principal trombonist, who is now a colleague in Slide Monsters, an all-trombone quartet.

But Gilkes’ capacity for putting technique in the service of musicality has earlier roots.

“A big part of it was being attached to the classical foundations,” he said. “And then at a young age, I remember listening to saxophone players and trumpet players and thinking, ‘I want to play like that on the trombone.’”

Indeed, few trombonists have Gilkes’ gift for weaving lines with the easy lyricism of a saxophonist—an ability that has, from time to time, been showcased in a trio with bass and drums. In keeping with his penchant for change, he is considering that format for his next album—a shift that decidedly would highlight his first love, trombone playing.

“In some ways,” he said, “I feel like it’s the only thing I do.”

—Phillip Lutz

Rajiv Halim has worked with Chance The Rapper, among others, in addition to leading his own troupe.



RAJIV HALIM

.....

Collective Confidence

Rajiv Halim will tell it to you straight. He's ready to talk about today.

"A lot of people are stuck in the past," Halim said. "It's time to be relevant. I try to look at actual things that are happening."

The saxophonist still respectfully tips his hat to jazz forebears, the most significant being Charlie Parker. But Halim has emerged from Bird's shadow as an adept improviser. With a solo album under his belt and a newly formed quintet, the bandleader hopes to take it further as a musician, but more importantly, as a thought leader.

His optimism has created a fresh, collective confidence among the members of his quintet, many of whom the bandleader has cultivated longstanding relationships with. Bassist Junius Paul is perhaps the troupe's most seasoned member, playing with Halim for more than a decade. Trombonist Norman Palm, a fellow alum of Ron Haynes' funky Game Changers outfit, joins Halim on the front line. Add guitarist Matt Gold and drummer Sam Jewel to the mix, and with only a few shows under their collective belt, the group brims with limitless potential.

"[Rajiv] is fearless," Palm said. "He's very hands-on about what he wants and expects, and he has no problem articulating those ideas and presenting how it needs to be accomplished. He requires you to go above and beyond, and once you do, that's when you're able to incorporate your own personality."

Raised on soca and calypso, brought up on the funk circuit in Chicago, an evangelist of both AACM and Questlove, Halim's voracious consumption of all musics helps him "better gauge the cultural landscape," he said.

Halim's desire to test the social and political waters represents a logical extension of his 2015 leader date, *Foundation*, an autobiographical testament to his inspirations and influences that counted contributions by trumpeter

Marquis Hill and tenor saxophonist Ari Brown. Among the album's subjects are the bandleader's family and friends, as well as a stately homage to past masters—including the Bird tune "Donna Lee" and the straightforward bossa nova "Pasa Tiempo." Shortly after the album's release, Halim's work with other socially conscious artists, among them a contribution to Chance the Rapper's 2016 *Coloring Book*, furthered his dedication to high-minded art.

But the bandleader is laudatory about the contributions his own sidemen make to his music.

"They're all great composers and improvisors," he said. "Junius is one of the most creative bass players I know, and he just takes the music in a different direction, whereas Norman is incredible with phrasing. Matt just knows how to 'paint' on the music. They all add their own flavor."

Expectations are high, as the quintet commits itself to pushing the envelope onstage and off; each musician seems up for the challenge.

"This situation is different," Palm said. "They're probably the most intense outlet Rajiv and I have ever been in; we're able to stretch. It's liberating in terms of having the freedom, the creativity and a greater focus on individual practice to capture spirit and essence, rather than just learning parts."

With a solid quintet in place, Halim—a self-professed political junkie—is ready to move ahead. He's investing his own creative energies into studying American history and current events, as well as considering collaborations with rappers and spoken-word artists for his next project, an ambitious social commentary he hopes to release in 2019.

"I want the writing process to be organic," he said. "Whether it's the band, rappers, vocals, recordings on my phone. ... I'm ready to make the music as intimately personal as I can."

—Hilary Brown

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SANAH KADOURA

Reconfigured Pathways

Hawk Eyes serves as a chronicle of Sanah Kadoura's recuperation from traumatic brain injury.

In January 2017, drummer Sanah Kadoura fell in her New York apartment and hit her head on the corner of a windowsill. Three days later, she was on her way to a gig when she became disoriented and unable to breathe, and by the next day, she'd lost her vision, speech and ability to walk. At the hospital, she was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury, a condition that can cause permanent neurological damage and sometimes is fatal. The chilling diagnosis threatened to sideswipe Kadoura's budding career: She was forced to cancel the session for an album she was just two days away from recording—her debut release, *Hawk Eyes*.

By the time of the accident, Kadoura had been making a name for herself in New York, and she'd worked or toured with several jazz legends, including guitarist Ed Cherry, trumpeter Philip Harper and pianist Kirk Lightsey. As she began to recuperate, Kadoura tried to keep gigs going—curiously, she never lost the ability to play, despite her impairments. But the stress of performing proved to be overwhelming. So, after a gig with vibes player Joe Locke, she returned to her native Calgary in Alberta, Canada, to convalesce.

When she returned to New York six months later, it was with a changed album in mind. "I'm a completely different person now," Kadoura said, adding that the way her neurological pathways reconfigured after the accident altered her playing. "It was like something cracked open, and I was a much better player immediately. It was weird."

The album serves as a chronicle of Kadoura's recuperation, with the title, *Hawk Eyes*, referring to her need to rise above the pain of her injuries in order to soldier through. On the title track—a composition in four parts—she uses contrasting feels and melodies to give voice to the warring sides of her traumatized brain. Part one, the opener, is a solo violin playing a microtonal line,

reminiscent of the Middle Eastern songs of her childhood (Kadoura is of Lebanese heritage). Part two uses a tightly fused horn section on a complex, messy melody. Part three opens with a montage of whispers (disturbing questions, prayers, humming) before bursting into a crackling guitar solo. And the final portion concludes with the band soaring on a cathartic upsurge of energy.

Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, the other tunes on the release are similarly upbeat. The jaunty "Um ... (This Isn't Real)" not only shows off Kadoura's natural sense of swing, but her developed compositional skills for all the instruments in the band (besides drums, she plays piano, guitar and bass). The segue into "Amnesia," the next tune, is an ambulance siren; what follows is a rhythmically sophisticated, mesmerizingly motivic piece evoking her attempts to find solid footing in an ever-shifting internal world. The writing and recording of these tunes—and the launch of the album—go a long way to serve that purpose. "It's finally time to release all of that pain and fear," Kadoura said.

Kadoura's distressed internal dialogue, though externalized musically on *Hawk Eyes*, was not always obvious to outside observers. "I had no idea," said bassist James Genus, who has known Kadoura for years, but first played with her on the new album. He remembers her that day as "a strong player—very groove-oriented. She has a strong sense of what she wants as a leader and composer and player."

"Be Strong," Kadoura has this phrase tacked on a wall in her Upper East Side apartment—a reminder. Now that she's made it through to the other side of trauma, she can acknowledge just how hard the fight has been. The new album tells this story, and through that offers a message of hope and healing. "It's kind of beautiful, what's tucked away in the brain," Kadoura said.

—Suzanne Lorge



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Dennis Lichtman is an advocate for early styles of jazz.



DENNIS LICHTMAN

Something Communal

A decade before he became one of the instigators of New York's traditional jazz revival, Dennis Lichtman was studying music business and clarinet at the Hartt School at the University of Hartford.

"They didn't teach me to go play at a little dive bar on the Lower East Side that isn't really a music venue, and to make no money for the first couple of years, and to just have fun, and maybe a

scene will coalesce around it that you'll become known for 10 years later," he said recently. "But that's what happened."

That little dive bar is Mona's, where, since 2007, Lichtman has been packing them in, leading Mona's Hot 4 every Tuesday. The hot jazz scene at Mona's attracts many of the city's top musicians, who often drop by after their regular gigs. In recent months, guest collaborators have

included keyboardist Jon Batiste, singer Cécile McLorin Salvant, clarinetist Anat Cohen and mandolinist/vocalist Chris Thile.

Additionally, Lichtman is a longtime member (on clarinet) of Brian Carpenter's 11-piece Ghost Train Orchestra, which plays 1930s chamber jazz with crisp, period arrangements spiced by forward-looking soloists. "I've been playing with Dennis for 10 years," Carpenter said. "He has one of the most stunningly beautiful clarinet sounds in jazz. And then you find out how old he is and how many other instruments he plays—it's unbelievable."

Lichtman's new *Just Cross The River* pays tribute to the "unglamorous" borough of Queens, which, because of its affordability and location near Manhattan, was home to Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Fats Waller and Billie Holiday.

Unlike jazz musicians who strive to sound as contemporary as possible, Lichtman remains an articulate advocate for earlier styles. Asked why he plays this music, his response is immediate: "I love it. That's the short answer. The longer answer is that there's something communal about music from the earlier era of jazz. ... For me, it's the jazz version of three chords and the truth ... the perfect combination of broad appeal and deep sophistication. You can get as nerdy and intricate as you want. But if the rhythm section is thumping, any schmo can walk in off the street and be moved by it."

—Allen Morrison

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Check out the article on page 86



BY MICHAEL JACKSON | PHOTOS BY JIMMY & DENA KATZ

THRIVING IN THE



'OMNISPHERE'

Medeski Martin & Wood's new album offers a summation of the group's purpose three decades into its unconventional career.



Omnisphere (Indirecto), recorded in 2015 with new-music ensemble Alarm Will Sound, provides evidence of the trio's boundless creativity.

In the late 1990s, members of MMW were road warriors allied to progressive ideals with modest means, traversing the country, living gig-to-gig in a camper van. As the youngest in the band, it was bassist Chris Wood's daily task to scout out a picnic table on which to clamp a corn grinder to help prepare MMW's healthy breakfasts. But during the era when the trio was playing 200 high-profile shows a year, MMW occasionally shared bills with jaded rock acts that seemed to be phoning it in.

All three vowed they'd never succumb to that ennui.

Wood, keyboardist John Medeski and drummer/percussionist Billy Martin each had other projects beckoning as the trio transitioned out of those do-it-yourself days, their extra-curricular activities seeping in after a run of Blue Note albums that ended in the early 2000s. But

whenever the band has reconvened, the members have clicked. It's as though they were back in Hawaii, jamming in a shack out in the jungle together, a setting that spawned 1996's *Shackman* (Gramavision). The image of renegade hippies who gave up New York City apartments to live on the road—concocting spontaneous grooves for a fervent fanbase—is far from the whole story of these three musicians. Each is a deep thinker with voracious and distinct musical tastes.

Omnisphere is the full realization of a long-time goal for MMW to collaborate with a classical ensemble. The opportunity to record with Alarm Will Sound—a Brooklyn-based, 18-piece band conducted by Alan Pierson and known for innovative work with artists like Steve Reich and Björk—came about in 2015 with financial backing from Michael Watt, co-owner of Ronnie Scott's, the hallowed London jazz club.

Watt, a Runyonesque character with a kaleidoscopic life story, took Medeski Martin & Wood to dinner during its residency at his venue,

and Martin floated the idea of a live recording with Pierson's troupe.

"Perhaps he'd heard I was kinda crackers, as I'd recently sunk a lot of money into [composer/arranger] Vince Mendoza's Epiphany project [with the London Symphony Orchestra]," Watt said, discussing his role as executive producer on *Omnisphere*.

The New Zealander, who claims to have resided in 32 countries over the years, has helped several notable jazz clubs with spontaneous donations, and held a 25 percent stake in New York's cutting edge Tonic before real estate pressures and skyrocketing rents forced closure of the Lower East Side experimental music room. That MMW issued multiple recordings captured during the late '90s at the now-shuttered space might have cemented a bond.

"Owning a jazz club that's very successful, I wanted to put something back in," Watt said without fanfare.

Since he was kicked out of his posh high school in Christchurch for playing hooky at

a Ted Heath Orchestra concert, the jazz-loving Watt made the bulk of his money selling a sports rights company, after drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico and building ski-lifts in Canada, among other entrepreneurial thrills and spills.

"[MMW] were fit for purpose. They cut the mustard as far as I was concerned, even though this idea they put to me was far from the mainstream," Watt said. "I'd never heard of Alarm Will Sound, but they looked interesting, and the idea of these three adventurous dudes collaborating to make avant-garde musical art appealed to me."

Conductor Pierson knew little about Watt's involvement as the *eminence grise* behind MMW's ambitions, but was accustomed to taking on challenges. The native Chicagoan accrued notoriety for revamping the profile of the once-ailing Brooklyn Philharmonic and concocting unique strategies for integrating orchestral music into the community. And Alarm Will Sound, which he founded with producer Gavin Chuck at the Eastman School of Music in 2001, rapidly built a reputation for brooking few boundaries. The group's catalog includes a brilliant conflation of Reich's time-phase concepts with the music of Radiohead, as well as an ambitious theatrical presentation of The Beatles' sound collage "Revolution 9," reimagined by the band's late French horn player, Matt Marks (1980–2018).

"Several of our members were huge fans of Medeski Martin & Wood, including bassist Miles Brown, who has a jazz background, and percussionist Matt Smallcomb," said the upbeat Pierson. "I was thinking of the incredible energy and creativity that the three of them put out onstage and their extraordinary levels of spontaneity, fire and ideas. I was excited to hear how Alarm Will Sound would riff with and respond to that."

It was through Peter Robles, curator and director of Serious Media Music, that Medeski first connected with Alarm Will Sound. The keyboardist was impressed with the collective spirit of the group: Each member had a stake in the decision-making and creative processes.

"It reminded me of how we started out; none of us were invested in leadership," the keyboardist said. "Billy, Chris and I had a democratic attitude toward the band and a collective-improvisation aesthetic."

Pierson perceived an opportunity.

"The range of ways MMW are capable of working, I could see would stretch AWS and expand the way we create," he said. "The three of them came in for a workshop with us. We all brought material and we started to work with a mixture of written-out pieces and improvised, back and forth, to see how we could best bridge the experience."

Given the prohibitive cost of having 20 busy musicians rehearse, despite Watt's generous

\$75,000 windfall, the project was hung on a brace of gigs in Colorado, the second of which, at the Newman Center in Denver, ultimately would be captured for posterity by engineer Steven Vidau on Feb. 5, 2015.

The resultant album is unlike anything in the extensive MMW discography, which includes more than 20 titles. Hints of the trio diving headlong into abstraction, though, emerged on the *Radiolarians* trilogy, issued in 2008 and 2009. But those who embrace the band's restless musical quest will welcome *Omnisphere* and be duly curious.

Perhaps the most audacious opus on the album is Medeski's epic "Eye Of Ra," some 60 pages of score that runs just shy of 20 minutes—a full side of the 33rpm LP. It begins with some of the eerie foreboding of Bernard Herrmann's *When the Earth Stood Still* score; sparse primal drumbeats, a dial tone, and interstellar blips and beeps persist through a galaxy of textures that maintain an equilibrium.

A lot of the effects emanate from Medeski's keyboard cornucopia, but there are gamelan noises, and castanet scuttles that conjure scarab beetles inside an Egyptian sarcophagus—the work of Smallcomb, Chris Thompson and Martin—then oboe-, bassoon- and string-fusings manage to mimic theremins. Without warning, Wood and bassist Miles Brown then kick into reverberant surf-rock and grunge riffing.

Medeski digs in feverishly, as shards of descending lines periodically are hurled into the maelstrom by Alarm Will Sound. Finally, the players decide to destroy everything with a violent, slashing deconstruction, and the ancient-to-future temple implodes.

"I was shocked and surprised by where John

took the piece," Pierson said. "It was not what I expected. It began crunchy and new music-y and then filled in with unexpected gestures, quirky surprises that made more sense over time. It was really broad in outlook and yet understated with flute against bass drum, and then duet for Hammond and oboe."

The song title "Eye Of Ra" nods to the Afrogalactic ambitions of Sun Ra—one of Medeski's chief influences—and the mythological Eye of Horus.

Medeski studied classical composition at the New England Conservatory of Music, which might surprise devotees of his greasier work. He was as sold on Olivier Messiaen and Charles Ives as Jimmy McGriff and Larry Young, and anyone who has caught his solo acoustic piano performances realizes his talents are expansive. He was attracted to the Third Stream department at NEC and wasn't necessarily impressed with the prevalent jazz scene when he moved to New York in the late '80s.

"Sessions often consisted of horn players lined up like zombies, whacking off, not interacting. It sounded like jazz, but wasn't really creative to me," he recalled. Medeski soon gravitated to the so-called "downtown" scene of progressive musicians, which included frequent collaborator John Zorn.

Shortly before his phone conversation with DownBeat, Medeski had been performing Zorn compositions over three nights with three different groups in Portugal, including Simulacrum, a heavy metal organ trio with guitarist Matt Hollenberg and drummer Kenny Grohowski, who've recorded on Zorn's Tzadik imprint.

"John is the enlightened dictator—he's very clear about what he wants, very quick to make decisions," Medeski said about collaborating

BILLY MARTIN
(Madeski Martin & Wood)

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Billy Martin (left), John Medeski and Chris Wood

with the demanding musician and composer. “Like Mingus or Ellington, he pulls people out of their zones and encourages them to do more than they would do on their own.”

Martin, a native New Yorker, originally was involved in the Brazilian music scene through a connection with drum sage Bob Moses and was drawn to the less formulaic music of John Lurie’s Lounge Lizards, and such intellectual originals as reedist Ned Rothenberg. Martin dove deep into the scene and, Zorn-like, eventually began composing with specific configurations of musicians in mind.

Of the trio, Martin is possibly the most effective in codifying and disseminating his concepts; his Amulet label released *Mago*, a ferocious 2006 duo album with Medeski, and recently an intriguing solo effort, *Disappearing*, featuring a gloriously out of tune piano, prepared with bamboo, alligator clips and bells.

Essential understanding of his reflective bent and unique take on life and music education can be found in the pages of his 2014 book, *Wandering*, published through Amulet, which also released a companion compilation of interpretations of his graphic scores and other arranged pieces.

Martin’s acclaimed DVD *Life On Drums* further explains the unique notation system he’s devised, as well as concepts like stringing phras-

es together—or “exploring the Omnisphere.”

Actively disconnecting ideas to permit others to sprout was amply on display during the 2018 Montreal Jazz Festival, where Martin performed alongside fellow drummer Mark Guiliana. Rather than battle against Guiliana on a full kit, Martin deftly produced a succession of percussion items—gongs, shakers, gourds, ocarinas, cowbells—saliently and wittily acting as a foil for Guiliana’s breakbeats. This curatorial attitude to musical commentary bespeaks Martin’s lineage: His father was a classical violinist who performed on 1961’s *Focus*, a Third Stream album by Stan Getz and Eddie Sauter.

Martin remains a committed educator, serving on the faculty of The New School and conducting master classes at major institutions like NEC and New York University. But recently, he has become focused on a new position.

“Karl Berger handed over to me his role as the president, CEO and executive director of the Creative Music Studio, a progressive organization he co-founded that promotes a universal music vocabulary, all the possibilities of music and sound expression, which ties into what *Omnisphere* is about,” Martin said.

The nonprofit CMS was founded in 1971 by Berger, his wife, Ingrid Sertso, and Ornette Coleman to foster cross-genre improvisation. It has hosted performers like John Cage, Cecil

Taylor, Naná Vasconcelos and Carla Bley over the years.

“We’re based in Full Moon Resort, in Big Indian, New York, offering a retreat for those wishing to complement their academic studies with a more personal philosophical approach and for established artists to develop interdisciplinary skills,” Martin said.

Before NEC studies with Dave Holland, George Garzone and Geri Allen, and lessons from Chicago Symphony alum Robert Passenger, bassist Wood had some formative experiences in the classical realm, playing contrabass in the school orchestra. But Wood’s father, a Harvard-educated molecular biologist, was active on the Cambridge folk scene in the ’50s and collaborated with a young Joan Baez. Wood’s childhood home brimmed with albums by blues and roots artists like Josh White, Leadbelly and Lightnin’ Hopkins.

“To me,” Wood said over the phone from his Nashville home, “the blues and the black church music that spawned Ray Charles is as much a part of Americana as bluegrass and Appalachian traditions.”

Wood was pulled further in that direction when his mother died from the neurodegenerative disease ALS in 2007, tightening his bonds with his older brother, Oliver, a guitarist, vocalist and songwriter. The siblings formed The Wood

Brothers, a band currently working the Americana circuit. At one point, it even opened for MMW during 2006 and 2007 tours.

"When MMW cooled off, I gave up our eventual life of having a booking agent, tour manager and roadies, and started from scratch again with my brother, back in a minivan, sharing hotel rooms again, beginning a slow, but constant, rise to the middle," Wood wryly recalled.

The Wood Brothers' latest album, *One Drop Of Truth* (Honey Jar), which also includes versatile multi-instrumentalist Jano Rix, showcases the siblings' simpatico relationship, and the music video for the drolly ironic "Happiness Jones" features Wood's impressively lithe dance moves.

The songs make their own claim to Americana, and such narratives as "Can't Look Away" walk a line between what is expected of the genre and more equivocal meditations, counseling listeners not to default to predictable societal conclusions based on stereotypes.

Not a million miles away from this territory is Medeski's collaboration with Jack DeJohnette, Larry Grenadier and longtime MMW sparring partner John Scofield on the 2017 album *Hudson* (Motéma). All the members of that supergroup live in New York's Hudson Valley, and the music is informed by their relatively rural locale. The eponymous track shares some of the somber vibe of *Omnisphere*, with the added acidic twist of Scofield's entreatingly guitar.

A discussion with Medeski about DeJohnette's "Great Spirit Chant," which closes the album, uncovers the pianist's more-than-passing interest in Native American culture.

"My family and I have really close connections with that community," Medeski said. "We built a sweat lodge on our property and participate in those purifying ceremonies; we keep in touch with nature."

This from a man who had to move from New York City because, as he confessed, "It was turning me into a jerk."

Balanced auras are part of the chemistry that has kept Medeski Martin & Wood ongoing all these years. (The musicians' commitment to education has extended to a long-running annual MMW music camp in the Catskills.) Medeski—who was adopted and just acquainted with three younger half-sisters he knew nothing about until recently—found instant filial solace with comrades Martin and Wood, when they would gather at the drummer's funky Brooklyn apartment back in 1991.

The three, it appeared, cared about the same things: They sought additive-free food and resisted the prevailing dog-eat-dog system. Above all, they craved sonic and rhythmic simpatico and to create in the moment, and found it together.

Where Medeski would spirit cleanse with a sweat lodge, Martin built a Japanese-style tea house out of an old shed where he now lives in New Jersey, a private place conducive to making art pieces and playing solo drums freestyle, seeking to impress no one.

Despite the kinetic energy of the band's live shows, MMW's winning formula actually might be its members' mutual modesty, something that surprised Pierson as they held back during much of the *Omnisphere* project.

"It was Alarm Will Sound who were often hitting the grooves harder," he said. "I anticipated the lead drummer on 'Coral Sea' from a time perspective would be Billy, but he was often, with his astonishing percussion setup, creating colors—an orchestral role, rather than a time role."

A visual artist who devised the cover for *Omnisphere*, *Shack-Man* and other MMW works, Martin's score for "Coral Sea" was more impressionistic than Medeski's roadmap for "Eye Of Ra," although there was plenty of space left for improvisation on the latter as well. The hues that inhabit "Coral Sea" are luminous and fluorescent, Medeski's pellucid, globular notes drip beneath a dissonant sound-wave that suggests bow on metal. The trembling vibrato of the strings makes violin and cello uncannily redolent of voices—mermaids in distress?

"I sent [arranger Jason Price] a transcription of a double piano piece I'd recorded," Martin said about putting "Coral Sea" together, "not the phrasing, just the notes. And he took it even further out of the rhythmic context, making the piece even more impressionistic. It took me a while to feel com-

fortable about it, but it balances out all the other work, using the orchestra in a coloristic way."

Alarm Will Sound's Price wrote the poised arrangement of "Coral Sea" and makes a splash on trumpet on the opener to *Omnisphere*, Payton MacDonald's "Kid Tao Mammal (Unworldliness Weirdo)," which features sprite-like contrary lines, the icy leitmotif of a music-box keyboard and aching cello from Stefan Freund. Elsewhere, Freund offers an arrangement of "End Of The World Party (Just in Case)" off MMW's 2004 Blue Note album, *End Of The World Party*, and Wood at last gets to drive the groove on "Anonymous Skulls" from the same album, in a setting by violinist Courtney Orlando.

Brown penned two bass parts for "Northern Lights," so he and Wood could work in tandem. And as Martin articulates in the chapter "Exploring The Omnisphere" in *Wandering*: "The more unique ideas and variations we create, the more our Omnisphere expands . . . [I]n the Omnisphere, literally everything is possible."

His minutely detailed graphic scores and intriguing designs recall the innovations of Anthony Braxton and Wadada Leo Smith, but there's no doubting the sincerity and focus of Martin's own vision.

At press time, he was flying off to Zagreb, Croatia, for a solo show, three days of workshops and an art exhibit, just as Wood embarks on a European tour with his group, and Medeski heads to Japan for some solo performances before returning to tour with his New Orleans-centric quartet Mad Skillet, featuring guitarist Will Bernard, sousaphonist Kirk Joseph and drummer Terence Higgins. Mad Skillet's self-titled debut is scheduled for a Nov. 9 release on Indirecto, MMW's label.

Despite their multifarious activities, Medeski Martin & Wood recorded another album for spring 2019 release at Allaire Studio near Woodstock, and were filmed for a related documentary.

So, it appears that their presence in the Omnisphere is destined to continue, a 27-year-old partnership that has yet to get old. **DB**

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'THE MUSIC IS WHY I'M HERE'

By Bill Milkowski Photo by Steven Sussman

On a hot August afternoon in Boston, Ralph Peterson greets an incoming class of freshmen for orientation week at Berklee College of Music, where the drummer-bandleader-composer-educator has been teaching for 16 years. An imposing presence decked out in colorful African garb, he strolls across the front of the classroom, scribbling notes on the white board while intoning historical facts like a preacher addressing his flock.

"Congratulations! You guys have accomplished a lot by arriving here. You are the best in your communities, the best where you come from," he tells the students. "My job is to fuel your hunger, create more questions in your mind. And my goal is for you to leave with a sense of empowerment."

Professor Peterson presides over the class of 20 fresh-faced students, some of whom barely know who Miles Davis was, let alone Peterson's own mentors Paul Jeffrey and Michael Carvin, or his ultimate role model, Art Blakey. As he would later say, "They're so young, they don't know that they don't know."

For this primer on jazz history, Peterson is tasked with squeezing 100 years of information into a 105-minute talk. Because the class is made up entirely of African-American students, he pulls no punches about where the music comes from, tracing the slave trade from the west coast of Africa to Brazil, the Caribbean, Cuba, Puerto Rico and finally New Orleans.



Ralph Peterson dispenses jazz history in August to a class of incoming students at Berklee College of Music in Boston.

“Now, what was the first thing they took away from us when we got here?” he intones.

One student speaks up: “Drums!”

“Yes, the original cell phone: drums. Now, when I say New Orleans music, who is the patriarch? He was the first great improviser and the first great jazz vocalist.”

A chorus of voices chimes in: “Louis Armstrong!”

“Right. Can someone name a song that Louis Armstrong was famous for?”

Hearing no answers, Peterson plays a recording of Armstrong singing “What A Wonderful World,” and a few nod their heads in recognition.

Peterson continues his rapid-fire grilling of the class: “Who was from D.C. and became jazz’s most prolific composer? Who was known as ‘The Kid From Red Bank’? Who was the drummer with Fletcher Henderson and became one of the greatest bandleaders in jazz? Who was the young trumpeter out of St. Louis who played with Charlie Parker and turned the entire jazz world on its ear—not once but five times?”

As he continues quizzing his students, the white board in the front of the class begins filling up with facts about how New Orleans funerals blend spirituals and the second line, about military bandleader James Reese Europe being the link between ragtime and jazz and how Bird begat Miles and Miles begat Trane. The students hang on his every word.

Adroitly and without any notes, Peterson catalogs early bandleaders—from Fletcher Henderson to Chick Webb to Lionel Hampton and Panama Francis—then addresses bebop as “the music of rebellion, the hip-hop of its day.” He plays Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” as an

example of protest music and showcases Johnny Hodges’ playing on “Isfahan” as an example of classic Ellingtonia. He runs down Bird and Diz, covers Count Basie and his arrangers Frank Foster and Quincy Jones. He even delves into electric Miles, cuing up “Spanish Key” from 1970’s *Bitches Brew* and “Splatch” from Davis’ 1986 album *Tutu*; the young members of the class bobbing their heads in solidarity with the groove.

At a key point in his lecture, things turn personal. “I was the last drummer to be chosen by Art Blakey to play as a Jazz Messenger in his two-drummer Jazz Messenger Big Band,” he tells his young charges. “Our first gig was at the Berklee Performance Center in March 1983. My job was to mimic and shadow and play with Art Blakey. He was my teacher and taught me playing music was a service position. What I serve is the music, not my ego.”

Peterson next shows the class a picture of himself standing next to his mentor Blakey from back in the day, describing the young person in the picture as a 158-pound crack addict. “The good news is that I *was* a crack addict and that I am no longer,” he tells his students. “Thank God I’m 22-and-a-half years clean.”

After class, back in his Berklee office, the drummer reflects on other obstacles he has overcome. He has persevered through four cancer surgeries, follow-up radiation and chemotherapy in the past two-and-a-half years. “I guess it’s the Klingon in me,” Peterson laughs, alluding to the warrior race on *Star Trek*. “I’ve had enough chances to be dead, but I’m grateful to be alive. And the focus and intensity and pace at which I’m now working and living is directly related to the spiritual wake-up call

that tomorrow isn’t promised.”

Despite visible scars and an emotional toll, Peterson remains determined to carry on without interrupting his teaching and gigging schedules. “People think that when you reach Stage 4 cancer, you automatically have to get your affairs in order, but it’s not true. Stage 4 just means that it’s moved from its original spot to someplace else. I now have Stage 4 liver cancer, and so we have deal with that. I have an amazing surgeon, an amazing hospital, and Berklee has supported me through my health challenges. I’m down with Berklee, because Berklee’s been down with me.”

“I have always been deeply impressed with Ralph’s commitment to his students,” wrote Dr. Lawrence Simpson, Berklee’s senior vice president for academic affairs and provost, in an email. “Whether his students are on the bandstand, in the studio or lab, Ralph is demanding, honest and generously giving. He understands his honored place in the jazz lineage and he is devoted to seeing that the tradition remains strong and that the music expands.”

Meanwhile, Peterson has been prolific with two new albums on his own Onyx label: *I Remember Bu*, an Art Blakey tribute recorded live at Scullers in Boston with his Berklee student ensemble, the GenNext Big Band; and *Inward Venture*, a smoking quintet date recorded live at The Side Door in Old Lyme, Connecticut, with his Aggregate Prime. The GenNext Big Band album was recorded shortly before a cancer procedure on Dec. 11, 2017. The Aggregate Prime album was recorded three months later in March 2018. “After my last surgery, Michael Carvin told me, ‘Well, you still here. You know what that means? You ain’t done yet!’ And I took that to heart and have been feeling it ever since. Like I told the kids in the class this morning, death is inevitable and nobody gets out of this life alive. And so, it’s about the work. The music is why I’m here—to play it, to teach it, to share it. That’s what I’m here for.”

I Remember Bu casts Peterson as keeper of the flame, passing the torch to younger musicians. “Thirty-five years later, I find myself doing for the students what Art Blakey did for me,” says the drummer and charter member of Blue Note Records’ 1980s band of Young Lions, Out of the Blue. “With this big band record, I’m expressing myself as a guardian of what I’ve been left by masters like [Blakey], Curtis Fuller, Buster Williams, Woody Shaw and Sonny Stitt.”

The tribute album finds the GenNext Big Band tackling tunes associated with Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, including Wayne Shorter’s “Free For All,” Charles Fambrough’s “Little Man” and “Ms. B.C.” by pianist-composer Pamela Watson (wife of alto saxophonist Bobby Watson, musical director of the Messengers from 1977 to 1981). The title track is a Peterson-penned jazz waltz that originally appeared on his 1994 Blue Note

album, *Art*, dedicated to the then-recently deceased Blakey. Alto saxophonist Donald Harrison, a former Messenger, appears as guest soloist on several tracks, including Walter Davis Jr.'s "Uranus" (arranged by pianist and Berklee grad Antoni Vaquer), Clare Fischer's "Pensativa" and Donald Brown's "New York." The band's rendition of Todd Bayshore's "For Paul," a grand 6/8 vehicle dedicated to Paul Jeffrey, features some intensely searching tenor blowing by Tomoki Sanders, son of Pharoah Sanders. "He's definitely calling on the ancestors there," Peterson says.

Their big band interpretation of "Egyptian Dune Dance"—an 11/4 composition by former Jazz Messenger and Berklee faculty member Joanne Brackeen—is given an updated treatment with some inventive off-the-cuff rapping by student Ryan Easter, who not only name-checks Aretha Franklin in his freestyle showcase but also drops in references to Rosa Parks and Colin Kaepernick. "I told him that it needed to be family friendly, language-wise, but I also needed it to be a social sledgehammer," Peterson says. "And he knocked it out of the park. When we do the CD-release party, we have to find another rapper, because Ryan's out on the West Coast flexing his muscles in hip-hop production. So, now I have to put a call out through the student body to find the next MC who's got the skill set to come in and spit freestyle."

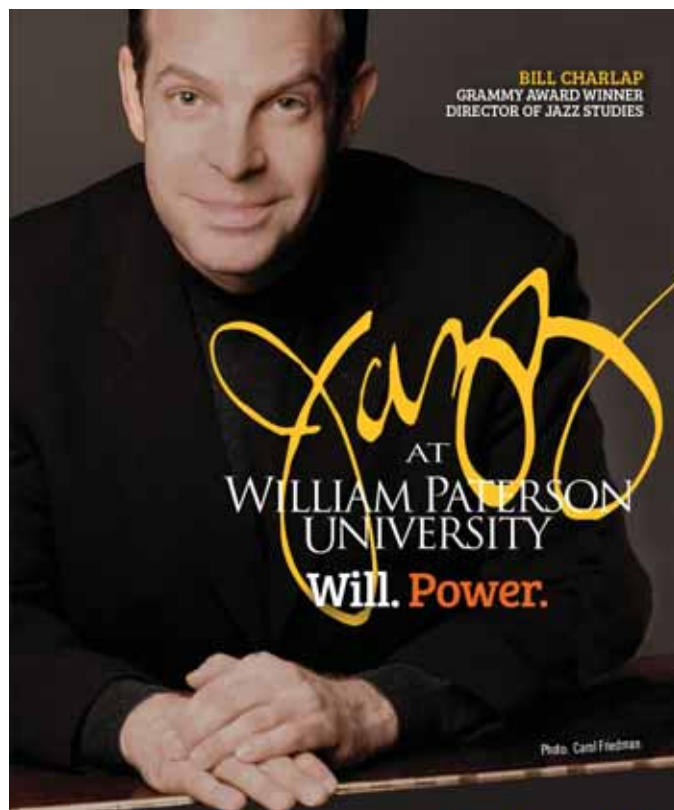
Peterson is one of four drummers appearing on the GenNext release. Student drummers Julian Pardo ("Uranus," "Pensativa," "Ms. BC") and Karol Zabka ("Free For All," "For Paul") play alongside him, recreating the two-drummer chemistry he shared with Blakey in 1983. Pardo and Zabka are the drumming tandem on "Little Man," which has Peterson playing trumpet. A third student, Jas Kayser, now touring with Lenny Kravitz, is the lone drummer on "Egyptian Dune Dance," which showcases Peterson on a lovely cornet solo.

"All these kids have inspired me in ways that aren't always easy to put into words," the bandleader says. "The precision and accuracy come from their willingness to show up for rehearsals. They put in 50 hours of rehearsal over eight weeks. And when I was either on the road or was dealing with medical issues, they would rehearse and hold sectionals without me. That's dedication. That's what being a band is all about. So, now the big band exists as a subculture at Berklee. And it don't sound like no damn college band."

Peterson also is actively gigging with his potent Aggregate Prime quintet, featuring tenor saxophone titan Gary Thomas, guitarist Mark Whitfield, his son Davis Whitfield on piano and Peterson's former Betty Carter bandmate Curtis Lundy on bass. "It's important for me as an artist to have this other expression that you hear, with Aggregate Prime going on at the same time as the big band," he explains. "[My] label's job is to present both aspects. The symbol of the label, that yin-yang insignia, is what it's all about."

Both big band and quintet recordings represent different aspects of Peterson's voracious musical appetite. "There's a demographic that wishes I'd stop doing tributes to Art Blakey," he confides. "But that's OK, because there's enough of a demographic that appreciates it. So, for those who want to hear the contemporary, cutting-edge, post-Messengers thoughts of Ralph Peterson, I give you Aggregate Prime featuring Gary Thomas, one of my three favorite saxophone players who are still alive. And he's the baddest flute player on the planet. Period."

Thomas demonstrates monster flute chops on the first track to Aggregate Prime's *Inward Venture*, a recreation of Eric Dolphy's "Gazzelloni" (named after classical flutist Severino Gazzelloni), which originally appeared on Dolphy's 1964 Blue Note classic *Out To Lunch*. The younger Whitfield impresses on hard-swinging uptempo fare, like Lenny White's "L's Bop" and Andrew Hill's "Venture Inward" (from the pianist's 1968 Blue Note album *Grass Roots*), while his father distinguishes himself with fleet-fingered picking throughout *Inward Venture*. "The real surprise in this group is Davis Whitfield," the leader says. "He sounds like a cross between John Hicks and McCoy Tyner with a little bit of Andrew Hill thrown in."



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Peterson explains the switcheroo on the album's title: "I flipped the words of ['Venture Inward'], because my journey has been an inward venture—spiritually and physically. And, like the insignia of the label, they are interchangeable and mean the same thing. So, that's not a typo. The record is called *Inward Venture*; the tune is called 'Venture Inward.'"

The drummer swings ferociously on the three uptempo romps and opens up a poly-rhythmic flurry on the kit on his 6/8 composition "Soweto 6," which originally appeared on his first album 30 years ago. He also displays a

sublime touch with brushes on the standard "I Hear A Rhapsody" and his own gorgeous ballad, "Mom." Says Peterson, "Walter Davis gave me my first gig in New York, so I better know something about playing brushes. My brushwork is not often talked about, but I take it as seriously as the bombast."

The striking cover art for *Inward Venture*—by Connecticut-based neo-expressionist artist Andres Chaparro, who also did the cover art for Peterson's previous Aggregate Prime release, 2017's *Dream Deferred*—is a provocative political statement in itself. Depicting a series

of dates in the background next to a Basquiat-like image of a figure (maybe Peterson himself), it includes bold capital letters sprawled in red: AMERIKKA. Underneath that heading is a list of dates corresponding to the deaths of Harriette Moore, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Hampton, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Eric Harris, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. "It also includes the date of the first arrest of Martin Luther King [Feb. 21, 1956] and his arrest number [7089] that hangs around his neck in that famous mug shot of him from the Montgomery, Alabama, jail," adds Peterson. "There's all kinds of subtle and not-so-subtle messages embedded in the cover. It reflects a social conscience and a desire to speak to the problem. So, I don't mind putting out projects that provoke the listener to stop and think."

Peterson formed his Onyx Records on Oct. 10, 2010, partly as a response to his entire Blue Note catalog of the late '80s and early '90s going out of print. "The whole concept, in a digital age, of a record being unavailable and out of print is so ass-backwards," he says. "It's beyond me why it's done. Rather than trying to figure it out, I'm working on a solution. Eventually, I will re-record on my label every tune I've ever recorded on every Blue Note record that's currently out of print."

He explains that the seed for forming Onyx was planted 30 years ago by a comment from saxophonist Gary Bartz. "After I got a recording deal with Blue Note in 1987, I was all pumped up about being in the music business, and Bartz told me, 'Man, you ain't in the music business. You're just employees.' And he was right. Now, I'm very mindful of telling my students, 'Recognize the game. It's about empowerment.'"

In the weeks following the initial interview for this article, Peterson received a new diagnosis. The cancer has returned and spread to his lymph nodes. He was scheduled to begin a new round of oral chemotherapy in September, yet he remained optimistic that his treatment would not cause him to miss any gigs or teaching. "Performance is vital to me keeping positive," he said over the phone. "It's therapeutic, it's cathartic, it energizes me, it strengthens me, it distracts me. Instead of sitting around worrying about what these test results are going to be, I gotta keep my head and my spirit in a place that inspires these kids who are just coming into Berkeley."

"I've got projects out in front of me; I'm not done," he continued. "I've got concerts coming up with the big band and Aggregate Prime, I've got another Fo'tet project coming and I will be touring with The Messengers Legacy band in the spring of 2019 in conjunction with Art's 100th birthday." He pauses, takes a deep breath and adds, "Yes, it's a lot, but it keeps me occupied, honest and the hell out of trouble." **DB**

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Ray
Charles

SOULFUL HUMANITARIAN

By Aaron Cohen | Photo by Jan Persson

A monumental artist whose music melded elements from numerous genres—including jazz and blues—**Ray Charles** (1930–2004) is a singular figure in music history. He is also the newest inductee into the DownBeat Hall of Fame. This accolade marks an occasion to celebrate Charles' accomplishments, as well as the expansive sense of inclusion inherent in his music and his uplifting life story.

CHARLES' CAREER, WHICH SPANNED MORE THAN 50 years, contained multitudes. He was a traditionalist in many ways—hewing closely to the big band era's format and arrangements, and turned to classic jazz for his own piano playing, especially in small groups. But in the early 1950s, Charles' voice took inflections from the church to create a whole new kind of music, which some call rhythm & blues, soul or rock 'n' roll. Not restricted to any idea of what he should play, one of his best albums is a personalized take on country. Frequently marketed as a singular mastermind, his expertise also came from bringing out the best from those around him—singers, songwriters, conductors and instrumentalists. Through it all, Charles' self assurance never wavered, whether through running his own company or refusing to give in to terminal cancer as he recorded *Genius Loves Company* (Concord), which arrived shortly after his passing.

Charles made these complexities flow as if such combinations just naturally emerged. In interviews, he tended to break it all down in elemental terms. As he said to the *New Musical Express* in 1963, "People call me a jazz singer and a blues singer, but I don't really know the difference. I just try to sing a song, and I only sing songs I like to sing. And I try to put a little bit of soul into everything."



Georgia native Ray Charles (1930–2004) is the newest inductee in the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

Born in rural Georgia amid Jim Crow-era segregation, glaucoma caused Charles to lose his sight as a child. Sent to a school for the blind in Florida, he was orphaned at 15. Music became more than a lifeline; he listened and performed with the intensity of someone who surmised his time would be limited. He absorbed everything from his boogie-woogie piano-playing childhood neighbor (Wiley Pitman) to hearing Count Basie and the Grand Ole Opry on the radio.

He also spent days in Baptist choirs, hearing the cadences of church ministers. After studying composition, he also played an array of instruments—keyboards, saxophone and trumpet. With this wealth of knowledge, he sounded older than his 19 years when he recorded mellow piano blues in the mode of Charles Brown for the Swing Time label on the West Coast.

Charles developed his own distinctive sound when he began recording for Atlantic in 1952. His total output for the company comprises the essential box set, *Pure Genius—The Complete Atlantic Recordings (1952–1959)*, which was released in 2005 and still is available. He recast the horn sections from swing and jump blues ensembles and gave them an energy that rocked harder. Charles' own singing adapted the moans, shouts and timing that he subsumed from gospel and brought them to a different kind of ecstasy on "This Little Girl Of Mine." This became a model that generations of soul singers followed—and still do today.

Those early Atlantic recordings also indicated what defined Charles' unique artistic personality. Bassist Tom Fowler, who worked with him periodically from 1993 until 2004, called it "the two brain thing." Fowler explained it as the split between his former bandleader's piano technique and singing voice. Essentially, this meant that

Charles used the keyboard to emphasize precision but took whatever liberties he wanted to with time while he sang.

"It's not the same guy, but it is the same guy," Fowler said. "The thing that bound them together that was accurate was that inner pulse. When you think about the way his talent bound [elements] together, then add the acting and emotions of selling the song: jazz swing, great chords, flat nines, juicy as hell and in the right place. Those voicings—nobody else could do that, so full, so tied to human emotion."

A stellar example of his vocal gravitas is the concert version of "I've Got A Woman" from 1958's *Ray Charles At Newport*. His improvised screams, utterances and spontaneous new lyrics direct the band's dynamics and seem to lift the audience higher. Yet his piano skills were sharp enough to dialog with such jazz musicians as vibraphonist Milt Jackson, with whom he recorded *Soul Brothers* (1958) and *Soul Meeting* (1961).

With success, Charles found himself in a position to record whatever he wanted during the 1960s. That included the orchestral *Genius + Soul = Jazz* (Impulse, 1961) and its lively arrangements from Quincy Jones and Ralph Burns. His deal with ABC-Paramount meant he could revisit his days listening to the Grand Ole Opry on his own terms for the 1962 *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music*. Charles also brought in top collaborators, such as saxophonists Hank Crawford and David "Fathead" Newman. They all depended on each other, as Newman told DownBeat in 2004: "All you had to do was write what he would tell you and that was it, you had a complete arrangement with all the I-III-V-VII's and all the extensions he would put on chords."

While Charles relied on such colleagues, he valued his independence. That included forming

his Tangerine company, which released records from Percy Mayfield and singer "Little" Jimmy Scott during the early 1960s. Charles did not chart different directions in soul music during the '60s and '70s like his disciple Stevie Wonder did. Instead, he went his own way. His slow take on funk infuses his 1972 *A Message From The People* with a sense of urgency that came from keeping his vocal flights under wraps.

During these times, and almost right up until his passing, Charles performed consistently as a celebrated international touring act. He did so as an exacting bandleader; stopping a song's performance to correct an errant musician was par for the course. But as Fowler said, Charles, who had perfect pitch, demanded that the ensembles respect his directives. His ears were incredible.

"He just wanted evolution," Fowler said. "A lot of people thought he was mean, but all you had to do was your job and you were cool. Time's time, but if I just play good time, he can go out come in and that was cool, too. One day, I said, 'I'm not going to be afraid, if he fires me, fine.' I just played what I wanted and I also got more aggressive. There were also places in the music where I'd have a little ad lib, then an answering ad lib. Every time I did it, I tried to push it a little forward. At first he didn't like it, but then he started digging it. And he'd remember every thing. He remembered what he played in each town and wouldn't repeat anything. Sometimes the blindness created a matrix, a visuality of organization, and he was extremely organized."

That discipline and organization became clear to Concord president John Burk when he approached Charles to record what would become *Genius Loves Company*. Burk and Phil Ramone produced the album, which featured him in duets with longtime friends, others who idolized him for decades and younger voices who were just awestruck. He and his singing partners revisited his catalog and interpreted Great American Songbook tunes. Some tracks featured his small group, others were orchestral. Charles did not live to appreciate the album's success—more than 5.5 million copies sold, eight Grammy awards—but he was determined to create it.

When Burk nervously spoke to Charles about the idea initially, he never had met him before and received a crash course in how this legend conducted business.

"They put me in front of Ray's desk—I had to sit there in front of him—and it was one of the scariest moments of my career," Burk recalled. "I went into a pretty long heartfelt discussion. I talked about his massive contributions to music, how he wasn't getting much attention, that we should do an event record, like a duets record, and I wanted to do it with him in the room with these people to capture that magic. And that we have a fantastic marketing opportunity [with Starbucks] to put the CD on the counter of its 7,000 stores. He kind of rocked back and forth,

with his sunglasses on, and leaned forward a little bit and said, 'All right, let's do it.'

"So I said, 'Oh, great, how do you want to want to talk about the business terms? Is there an attorney you'd like me to work with?' He cut me off: 'Listen, son, my attorney writes down what I say—you talk to me and nobody else. I told you that we're gonna do it; that means you can sleep at night.'"

Charles also insisted that Burk produce the album, although he allowed him to bring in Ramone. Burk also became physically close to Charles in the studio, which gave him not just a unique view of his working method, but his memory also shows how much mutual trust there was between them.

"When we set up a duet, we create a routine, which singer sings which line and where," Burk said. "It didn't occur to me that Ray would be reading Braille lyrics. On the Braille lyrics, there's no way to highlight which lines he's supposed to sing. So, I sat next to him at the piano, put my hand on the back of his shoulder when he was supposed to sing and the front of the shoulder when he was supposed to stop and let the other vocalist sing. To have your hand on Ray Charles when he's singing and to feel the vibration is just an awesome experience."

But halfway through the recording, Burk began to realize how crucial this record would become.

"[Charles] called me into his office one day and said, 'Listen, I got to tell you something: I got liver cancer. I had some surgery and they took a tumor out the size of a grapefruit. But I'm going to be OK.' I don't know of anyone who survived liver cancer. What I noticed, at that point, was he started to choose songs that were really about life, mortality, maybe things he wanted to say: 'It Was A Very Good Year,' 'Over The Rainbow,' 'Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word.'"

The last time Burk saw Charles was when he recorded "Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word" with Elton John. Ever the perfectionist, at one point he said to his popular singing partner, "Damn, Elton. I'm sick, but you sound like shit!" After laughter, they nailed a powerful take that is on the album. Charles was able to hear and approve final mixes, but died just as marketing decisions were made about its release. In 2014, Concord released a 10th anniversary deluxe edition of *Genius Loves Company*, which included two bonus tracks and a DVD.

Burk has overseen a number of important collections of Charles' work and is preparing a reissue of *Modern Sounds*. Charles recorded that music 56 years ago, and it reflects the way his artistry bridged—and continues to bridge—numerous types of divisions.

"Ray broke down genre barriers," Burk said. "He didn't see race; he didn't see any barriers. He was just a very real human being and a real humanitarian."

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Chick Corea

Collaborative SPIRIT

Pianist/keyboardist **Chick Corea** has amassed quite a collection of DownBeat honors over the decades. For the fourth time in the past five years, Corea has been voted Jazz Artist of the Year in the Readers Poll. In addition, The Chick Corea-Steve Gadd Band's *Chinese Butterfly* (Stretch/Concord) topped the Jazz Album category.

"COOL—I'M PROUD AND I'M HAPPY about that," Corea said of the accolades during a conversation with DownBeat the day after a stellar concert with his Vigilette Trio at the Ferring Jazz Bistro in St. Louis. "I'm happy for Steve and the musicians who played with us: [reedist] Steve Wilson, [guitarist] Lionel [Loueke], [bassist] Carlitos [Del Puerto] and [percussionist] Luisito [Quintero]. That was a beautiful, magical experience."

It's no surprise that Corea took the time to praise his longtime friend Gadd and the rest of the band on *Chinese Butterfly*. Or that during the interview, he also praised the members of his Vigilette Trio—bassist Del Puerto and drummer Marcus Gilmore.

For Corea, the concept of collaboration is a core element of his musical philosophy.

"I love to collaborate," he said. "My musical life is about two simple things. One is playing solo, and that's when I collaborate with myself. And anytime I work with other musicians, I always consider it a collaboration. And that's the real payoff for me in life: working with other musicians."

It was easy to see that payoff for Corea in his performance the previous evening. Opening with an energetic piano solo on "How Deep Is The Ocean," Corea was fully involved in subsequent solos by Del Puerto and Gilmore—adding precise keyboard accents to the mix.

Corea made sure to involve the audience in the performance, as well, asking the crowd, after a slightly askew ending on "Continuance," if it would be OK if "we gave it another shot." The trio did and nailed it.

"Without audience involvement, the meaning of the music is reduced to a bare minimum,"

Corea said. "I really enjoy the fulfillment of being able to bring my music to people, and have it understood and felt by others. There's a sharing that happens, and there's nothing like it."

Musical collaboration also led Corea to reignite his longtime musical collaboration with Gadd—the impetus that got the *Chinese Butterfly* recording sessions off the ground. Gadd has played drums on numerous Corea albums, including *The Leprechaun* (1976), *My Spanish Heart* (1976) and *The Mad Hatter* (1978).

"Chick and I played together at a jam session in 1965, and we've had a great rapport from the very start," Gadd noted in a phone conversation from Japan, where he was leading his own band. "Ever since I played on Chick's albums in the late '70s, we'd talked for years about trying to get back together. But we were both so busy—it was tricky. Then last year, we made plans to get together at Chick's house to jam and see what happens."

"When I knew Steve was coming, I decided to write something for us to play," Corea explained. "In the '70s, I used to really enjoy bringing in a new piece of music and playing it for Steve. He'd learn the part and lay his own beautiful contributions on it. So, I wrote two pieces, and when we played them, all the spirit we had in the '70s was there—and more. We both got inspired and said, 'Let's put a band together.'"

"I've always admired Chick's creativity and the way he can get a project rolling," Gadd said. "When he suggested bringing in Carlitos and Luisito, I'd already worked with them and looked forward to playing with them again. Steve Wilson is a monster, and playing for the first time with Lionel was fantastic. Everything

really clicked in the studio. You could tell it was special."

After a fall 2017 tour by the Corea-Gadd Band, Corea, 77, has kept up a 2018 performance schedule that would be daunting for a musician half his age. Among his recent activities are tours with the Vigilette Trio and his Elektric and Akoustic groups, solo performances and shows with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Additionally, Corea served as artist-in-residence at the Detroit Jazz Festival, played Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue* with classical pianist Lang Lang at Carnegie Hall and performed the first two movements of Roderigo's *Concierto De Aranjuez* plus an orchestral version of his own composition, "Spain," with both the Czech National Symphony and the Detroit Symphony.

In 2019, Corea will hit the road with both his Akoustic and Elektric bands. But he's definitely interested in playing more concertos with orchestras as well.

"I've got a whole new thing going on with orchestras that I want to expand," Corea said. "In addition to the *Aranjuez*, I'm working on a version of *Rhapsody In Blue*. I'd never performed it before I played it with Lang Lang, and when I got into the score, I discovered an old friend: Gershwin!"

"I found some of Gershwin's notes in the original score that talked about playing it the way he intended. He said, 'Most pianists with a classical training fail lamentably in the playing of our ragtime or jazz because they use the pedaling of Chopin when interpreting the blues of Handy.' So, I took that as a thumbs-up on the way I'm interpreting the piece. I'm really excited to be taking it around." —Terry Perkins

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READERS POLL
2018

JAZZ ALBUM
OF THE YEAR



1. CHICK COREA & STEVE GADD BAND

Chinese Butterfly (Stretch/Concord)

Pianist Chick Corea and drummer Steve Gadd began working together during the '60s, with Gadd contributing to a string of the bandleader's albums in the following decade. But it's the interplay among members of their troupe that enables the band to move from the buoyant groove of "Chick's Chums" to the acoustic pointillism of "A Spanish Song" and on to a baroque piece of funk, "Return To Forever," a sly nod to Corea's past, so effortlessly.



2. JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA WITH WYNTON MARSALIS

Handful of Keys (Blue Engine)

Culled from three 2016 concerts that celebrated a century of jazz piano, this album documents pianists Joey Alexander, Dick Hyman, Myra Melford, Helen Sung, Isaiah J. Thompson and Dan Nimmer playing a variety of styles, from 1920s Harlem stride to avant-garde, accompanied by big band arrangements.



3. BENJAMIN BOONE/PHILIP LEVINE

The Poetry of Jazz (Origin)

Pulitzer-winning poet laureate Philip Levine (who died in 2015) teamed with saxophonist/composer Benjamin Boone on this multi-dimensional anthology. Levine delivers texts with consummate confidence while Boone, who illustrates the writer's work with quasi-classical soprano saxophony, passionately balances intellect and emotion.



4. JOHN MCLAUGHLIN & 4TH DIMENSION

Live At Ronnie Scott's (Abstract Logix)

Guitarist John McLaughlin isn't touring any longer, but he did leave behind this live document of a 2017 gig at London jazz club Ronnie Scott's. Opening with the supremely recognizable "Meeting Of The Spirits," a tune off The Mahavishnu Orchestra's 1971 *The Inner Mounting Flame*, McLaughlin makes a case for booking at least a few more gigs.



5. JOEY ALEXANDER

Eclipse (Motéma)

Joey Alexander's genius was beyond question at 10; at 14 it only has deepened, as he ekes more imagination and nuance out of the piano than ever before. At the very least, then, his fourth album is a fine mainstream piano-trio record. Alexander seems more mature at some points than others, in ways difficult to reconcile with a 14-year-old's experience.



6. BRIAN BLADE & THE FELLOWSHIP BAND

Body And Shadow (Blue Note)

Brian Blade and his now 20-year-old Fellowship Band emphasize ensemble texture, gauzy landscapes and hypnotic vamps over attention-grabbing solo work on their latest release. "Body And Shadow (Night)" is the most engaging track, thanks to Myron Walden's mellow bass clarinet and guitarist Dave Devine's lightly reverbed chords.



7. KURT ELLING

The Questions (OKeh)

Vocalist Kurt Elling continues his interrogation of the old crooner's role, but—wisely—he's delving into something else, too. Elling's song choices are a major part of the disc's identity: American folk song, jazz standards and originals that blend famous poetry with his lyrics. But Elling has aging on his mind and is inquisitive about human insecurities.



8. KENNY BARRON QUINTET

Concentric Circles (Blue Note)

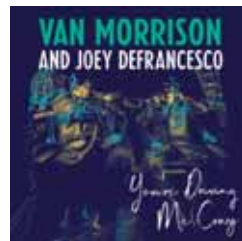
Pianist Kenny Barron debuted fronting a quintet in 1968 and now embodies progressive jazz continuity and post-bop traditions. There's nothing old-fashioned about the 11 tracks on his 47th album as a leader, featuring eight original compositions and four younger colleagues, unless tunefulness, fine touch and implacable swing have become passé.



9. JACK DEJOHNETTE/LARRY GRENADIER/JOHN MEDESKI/JOHN SCOFIELD

Hudson (Motéma)

Taking their common experience of life in New York's Hudson Valley as its backbone, drummer Jack DeJohnette, bassist Larry Grenadier, keyboardist John Medeski and guitarist John Scofield intertwine jazz and rock as they explore the music of Bob Dylan, The Band, Joni Mitchell and Jimi Hendrix.



10. VAN MORRISON & JOEY DEFRANCESCO

You're Driving Me Crazy (Sony Legacy)

Van Morrison's latest release is his 39th album to date, but the bandleader shows no signs of artistic fatigue. His verve and energy are at an all-time high, and the genuine enthusiasm with which he approaches this material is downright palpable. But the distinguishing feature on this latest project is the presence of organ icon Joey DeFrancesco.

11.	KAMASI WASHINGTON <i>Harmony Of Difference</i> (Young Turks)
12.	PETER BERNSTEIN <i>Signs LIVE!</i> (Smoke Sessions)
13.	ESPERANZA SPALDING <i>Exposure</i> (Concord)
14.	LARRY CORYELL'S 11TH HOUSE <i>Seven Secrets</i> (Savoy)
15.	CHARLES LLOYD NEW QUARTET <i>Passin' Thru</i> (Blue Note)
16.	BILL FRISELL <i>Music IS</i> (OKeh/Sony Masterworks)
17.	THE MANHATTAN TRANSFER <i>The Junction</i> (BMG)
18.	JOSHUA REDMAN <i>Still Dreaming</i> (Nonesuch)
19.	BILL CHARLAP TRIO <i>Uptown, Downtown</i> (Impulse!)
20.	VIJAY IYER SEXTET <i>Far From Over</i> (ECM)

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HISTORICAL ALBUM
OF THE YEAR

1. MILES DAVIS & JOHN COLTRANE

The Final Tour: The Bootleg Series (Columbia/Legacy)

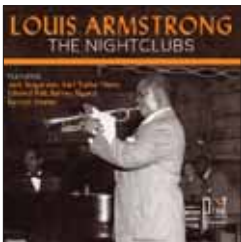
This collection showcases Coltrane's final performances with Davis during a spring 1960 tour of Europe in support of *Kind Of Blue*. Coltrane plays twisting melodic concepts and explores harmonic combinations that he'd put to use leading his own troupe in the following months. And while the time these two spent on the bandstand was coming to an end, both Davis and Coltrane would go on to change the genre through subsequent recordings.



2. BILL EVANS

Another Time: The Hilversum Concert (Resonance)

This recording of Evans with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette is only the third known recording of this particular trio, which performed together for a six-month period. Captured live at the Netherlands Radio Union Studios in Hilversum on June 22, 1968, the music originally was broadcast on the radio program *Jazz in Actie*.



3. LOUIS ARMSTRONG

The Nightclubs (Dot Time)

Drawn from live dates at five different clubs between 1950 and 1958, various versions of Armstrong's All Stars are captured on tape and feature contributions from Jack Teagarden, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Arvell Shaw, Cozy Cole, Marty Napoleon and Milt Hinton, among others. Regardless of the company, Pops clearly is ready to put on a show.



4. THELONIOUS MONK WITH JOHN COLTRANE

The Complete 1957 Riverside Recordings (Craft)

The only known recordings of Monk and Coltrane collaborating in the studio are celebrated in this three-LP set. The musicians performed together regularly, though, at New York's Five Spot Cafe in 1957, and their easy rapport reveals itself here on Monk repertoire like "Ruby, My Dear" and "Nuttty."



5. ELLA FITZGERALD

Ella At Zardi's (VERVE/UMe)

This high-quality live recording from Feb. 2, 1956, was released for the first time late last year. Fitzgerald performs two sets with pianist Don Abney, bassist Vernon Alley and drummer Frank Capp at Zardi's Jazzland in Hollywood—just a few days before she would begin recording the landmark album *Ella Fitzgerald Sings The Cole Porter Song Book*.



6. KEITH JARRETT/GARY PEACOCK/JACK DEJOHNETTE

After The Fall (ECM)

This two-disc live set from Jarrett's Standards Trio marks the pianist's first public performance after a two-year absence from the stage. Recorded on Nov. 14, 1998, at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the trio honors familiar repertoire like "Autumn Leaves," "When I Fall In Love," "Scrapple From The Apple" and "Doxy."



7. ORNETTE COLEMAN

The Atlantic Years (Rhino/Atlantic)

Between 1959 and 1961, Coleman released six studio albums on Atlantic that helped crack open the genre and led to free-jazz revelations. Those albums, along with more than two hours of session outtakes, are compiled in this 10-LP box set, which features newly remastered audio.



8. SONNY ROLLINS

Way Out West-Deluxe Edition (Craft)

Recorded in 1957 with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne, this Rollins classic presents the tenor saxophonist at the peak of vitality and creativity. The reissued vinyl edition supplements the landmark album with a second LP of previously unreleased bonus material, deluxe packaging and rare photos by William Claxton.



9. WES MONTGOMERY

In Paris: The Definitive ORTF Recording (Resonance)

Jazz aficionados consider Montgomery's March 27, 1965, performance at Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées—available on various bootlegs since the 1970s—to be among his best ever. Now, Resonance offers official recordings of this rare European appearance with remastered high-resolution audio, transferred directly from the original tapes.



10. JIMI HENDRIX

Both Sides Of The Sky (Legacy)

Mixed by renowned engineer Eddie Kramer, this album presents 13 studio recordings Hendrix made between 1968 and 1970—including 10 that previously were unreleased. Tracks include alternate versions of "Stepping Stone" and "Hear My Train A Comin'," as well as recordings where Hendrix is joined by guests Johnny Winter and Stephen Stills.

11.	OSCAR PETERSON <i>Oscar Peterson Plays</i> (VERVE/UMe)
12.	JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA WITH WYNTON MARSALIS <i>United We Swing</i> (Blue Engine)
13.	CHARLES MINGUS <i>Live At Montreux 1975</i> (Eagle Rock Entertainment)
14.	ESBJÖRN SVENSSON TRIO <i>e.s.t. Live In London</i> (ACT)
15.	THELONIOUS MONK <i>The Complete Prestige 10-Inch LP Collection</i> (Craft)
16.	ARETHA FRANKLIN <i>A Brand New Me</i> (Rhino)
17.	BOB DYLAN <i>Trouble No More: Bootleg Series Vol. 13</i> (Sony Legacy)
18.	BUDDY RICH <i>Channel One Set</i> (Scabebe/Lobitos Creek Ranch/Lightyear)
19.	JOE HENDERSON FEATURING ALICE COLTRANE <i>Elements</i> (JAZZ DISPENSARY/CONCORD)
20.	GRANT GREEN <i>Funk In France: From Paris To Antibes (1969-70)</i> (Resonance)



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ELECTRIC BASS

Stanley
Clarke

Stanley Clarke, who was trained as an acoustic bassist, rose to fame in the 1970s playing electric.

MERCHANT OF FUN

In the middle of **Stanley Clarke's** latest album, *The Message* (Mack Avenue), one track comes completely out of left field. It's the prelude to Bach's *Cello Suite No. 1*, which Clarke plays unaccompanied on a bowed acoustic bass in its original key—no tricks, no overdubs, no alternate tunings, just “everything in the upper position,” Clarke explained recently, sitting on the patio of his home in Topanga Canyon, nestled in the hills above Los Angeles. “It’s very difficult. It’s not something you can wake up and just do.”

IT'S A BRAVURA MOMENT, WHAT KIDS TODAY MIGHT CALL A “flex”—a master of his instrument, reminding his audience in the most dramatic way possible that, though he may be most famous for his distinctive, funk-influenced technique on electric bass, Clarke's talents run far deeper than that. He was inspired to record *Cello Suite No. 1* after his wife pointed out that hardly anyone knew he was classically trained—and he realized she was right.

“I never studied the electric bass. I'm an acoustic bass player,” Clarke said, sipping water as a massive set of wind chimes filled the air with soothing tones.

Growing up in Philadelphia, his goal was to become one of the few first-chair African-American musicians in a major orchestra. He picked up electric bass, he admitted, for the same reason many young men pick up

an instrument: to meet girls. “It's kind of a stupid thing to say, but it's honest. It was fun—and to me, it's still fun.”

That sense of amusement is all over *The Message*. Like its predecessor, 2014's *Up* (Mack Avenue), the album is credited to the Stanley Clarke Band, but it features a new lineup, including Georgian piano prodigy Beka Gochiashvili, Dallas-based drummer Mike Mitchell (aka Blaque Dynamite) and frequent Kamasi Washington sideman Cameron Graves on keyboards and synthesizers. Together, this core trio composed most of the album's music while holed up in a Paris hotel, waiting for their tour with Clarke to resume after a terrorist attack in Tunisia forced them to reroute their travels.

Clarke dropped by those early writing sessions occasionally, but mostly left his young band to its own devices. “With this record, what I want-

ed was their thing, without my influence,” he explained. “I really wanted it to be a band record.”

Two of the tracks—“The Rugged Truth” and “Enzo’s Theme”—were composed by Gochiashvili, Graves and Mitchell. Those three players, plus Clarke, get composition credit for the tune “Alternative Facts.”

After recording basic tracks with the band in Belgium, Clarke returned to his home studio in Topanga to add overdubs, horns, guest vocals and a few additional tracks, including *Cello Suite No. 1* and two of the album’s other big surprises, a pair of collaborations with rapper and beatboxer Doug E. Fresh.

“We did it right upstairs, right in the hallway up here,” Clarke said of the bass/beatbox duet “And Ya Know We’re Missing You,” pointing across the foyer of his rambling, Spanish-style home. “I’ve known Doug E. for a long, long time. We’re old friends. I just never thought of playing with him.”

It was Clarke’s son Chris, himself a rapper, who suggested that his dad team up with the hip-hop icon. Doug E. Fresh also appears on the album closer, “To Be Alive.”

Clarke, never one to confine himself to any given style or genre (when asked if he considers *The Message* to be a jazz record, his answer was an emphatic “no”), has found many a kindred spirit among those of his son’s generation. “That’s what I love about the young musicians,” he said. “These guys will be listening to Miles Davis, and then put on Biggie Smalls. And the same passion they have towards the Miles Davis record, they’ll have for Biggie. ... That’s the future, I hope, of music. It’s all open. No boundaries, no partitions.”

His current group of players includes drummer Shariq Tucker subbing for Mitchell, who is currently focused on his Blaque Dynamite leader projects. The young musicians appreciate their mentor as much as he appreciates them. “It’s been really cool just being with Stanley,” said Graves, speaking by phone from a recent East Coast tour with Clarke. “Stanley was one of those musicians back in the day where he was the young guy that was really fiery on his instrument. And he always had to deal with the older guys totally downing him. ... He has such an openness because of that. Now, when he approaches younger musicians, he lets us do our thing.”

Perhaps it’s that youthful spirit that continues to make Clarke, at 67, such a fan favorite. His first win in the Electric Bass category of the DownBeat Readers Poll came in 1974. That same year, he won the Electric Bass category in the DownBeat Critics Poll. His 2018 win in the Readers Poll is an honor he accepts gratefully, though he admits that in the past, he was skeptical of such accolades.

“I wasn’t a big person on polls when I was younger—even though we were winning all the polls,” he said, smiling. —Andy Hermann

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Lizz
Wright

Singer Lizz Wright will perform with drummer Terri Lyne Carrington and vocalist Jazzmeia Horn at Royce Hall in Los Angeles on Nov. 9.

LOVING **DEFIANCE**

Vocalist **Lizz Wright** has much to be proud of, including her latest accolade: Her latest release, *Grace* (Concord), topped the Beyond Album category in this year's Readers Poll. But Wright is not one to call undue attention to herself. She talks in the same way that she sings—with an engaging openness and warmth. Rather than brag about her musical chops, though, she likes to show off her skills as a gardener.

WRIGHT'S FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

thrive in small plots near the outdoor tables of the Carver 47 Cafe, part of the Little Black Pearl Art & Design Academy in the Kenwood neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. She moved to the city in 2017 to serve on the board of the institution, which offers arts education and technical training courses. Wright plans the menu at the cafe with the same consideration she gives to her performances.

"When I started falling in love with Chicago and the community here, I said I could not be anywhere without a garden," recalled Wright, a Georgia native. "I also needed to be on the receiving side of music, trying to hold a space where I interact with strangers who don't know me, because I don't carry myself in 'Lizz mode' here. And to think about the music in the space I share with them, where they don't know me, don't care, they just want to be served and to feel something that makes their day here. It's helped me think about what I want to do going forward."

Wright is conscious of the history of African-American migrants bringing Southern traditions to Chicago. Such sounds illuminate

Grace, whether through the vocal techniques she absorbed from singing gospel in her father's church or her dreamlike interpretation of "Stars Fell On Alabama." The album was informed by her response to the 2016 presidential election and how, despite political divisions, she remained close to her neighbors in North Carolina, where she previously was based. On "All The Way Here," which she composed with Maia Sharp, Wright quietly but strongly affirms her place in contemporary America.

"I have my own sense of belonging—no political tide will rewrite that for me. So, I wanted to sing from that place," Wright said. "It's a great time to have your banners and flags going for whatever you stand for. You can also make statements, even of revolt with great affection, even a loving defiance. It's what *Grace* is about."

Deep connections provided another foundation for *Grace*. Wright's longtime friendship with producer Joe Henry has revolved around numerous conversations about music and history, many of which influenced the album. She attributed her 20 years of working alongside pianist and choir leader Kenny Banks Sr. for the way her voice

engaged with his organ lines. And she has collaborated with guitarist Chris Bruce since recording 2005's *Dreaming Wide Awake* (Verve). Along with admiring Wright's vocal timbre and rhythmic command, Bruce praised the way she transformed Allen Toussaint's "Southern Nights."

"The original [version] motors along quite a bit, and Lizz was feeling more of that cut-time groove and started humming that beat to the drummer," Bruce said. "We all had to adjust to that, but it was cool. It opened all this space for the guitars in an unusual way. She gave more room to a lot of colors and made it more hypnotic."

Since relocating to Chicago, Wright has listened to some of her older recordings—an experience that triggered thoughts of how accomplishments should fuel new directions.

"You want to be humble and you want to be unmet in a way, so you stay thirsty," Wright said. "That's what I've been creating with this [arts education] experience—that I finally heard myself as a listener who didn't own that voice. I was grateful for where I've gone and what I've experienced, but then it's, 'OK, I've got to go back to work.'"

—Aaron Cohen

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 Mel Tormé 735
 Jack DeJohnette 666
 Les Paul 666
 Bob Brookmeyer 627
 Carmen McRae 627
 Kenny Barron 564
 Shirley Horn 549
 Toots Thielemans 549
 Steve Gadd 480
 Tito Puente 474
 Jimmy Heath 465
 Grant Green 453
 Larry Coryell 441
 Charles Lloyd 441
 Oliver Nelson 417
 Kenny Burrell 405
 Jon Hendricks 399
 Pharoah Sanders 393
 Dave Holland 363

JAZZ ARTIST

Chick Corea 969
 Diana Krall 684
 Wayne Shorter 648
 Wynton Marsalis 645
 Tony Bennett 609
 Pat Metheny 606
 Kamasi Washington 594
 Roberta Piket 531
 Esperanza Spalding 504
 Chris Potter 480
 Christian McBride 462
 John McLaughlin 462
 Kenny Barron 429
 Charles Lloyd 423
 Joey Alexander 393
 Maria Schneider 387
 Keith Jarrett 375
 Kurt Elling 369
 Trombone Shorty 366
 Bill Frisell 360

JAZZ GROUP

Snarky Puppy 1,419
 Pat Metheny Group 915
 Chick Corea Band 855
 Brad Mehldau Trio 645
 Wynton Marsalis Quintet 621
 Charles Lloyd & The Marvels 555
 Wayne Shorter Quartet 552
 Yellowjackets 501
 Esperanza Spalding Group 462
 Keith Jarrett Standards Trio 456
 SFJAZZ Collective 438

Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue 438
 Preservation Hall Jazz Band 402
 Chris Potter Underground 393
 The Bad Plus 384
 Stanley Clarke Band 384
 Branford Marsalis Quartet 383
 Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band 381
 Roy Hargrove Quintet 380
 Christian McBride Trio 363

BIG BAND

Count Basie Orchestra ... 1,821
 Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra 1,819
 Maria Schneider Orchestra ... 1,773
 Christian McBride Big Band .. 1,176
 Mingus Big Band 822
 Carla Bley with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra ... 798
 Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band 795
 Sun Ra Arkestra 765
 Vanguard Jazz Orchestra 738
 WDR Big Band 711
 Dave Holland Big Band 669
 Bob Mintzer Big Band 666
 Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band 654
 John Beasley's MONK'estra ... 573
 DIVA 558
 Darcy James Argue's Secret Society 483
 Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra 441
 Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra 408
 Roy Hargrove Big Band 399
 Metropole Orchestra 345

JAZZ ALBUM

Chick Corea & Steve Gadd Band, Chinese Butterfly (Stretch/Concord) 747
 Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, *Handful Of Keys* (Blue Engine) 564
 Benjamin Boone/Philip Levine, *The Poetry Of Jazz* (Origin) 498
 John McLaughlin & 4th Dimension, *Live At Ronnie Scott's* (Abstract Logix) 459
 Joey Alexander, *Eclipse* (Motéma) 432
 Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band, *Body And Shadow* (Blue Note) 408
 Kurt Elling, *The Questions* (OKeh) 408



Wynton Marsalis, winner of the Trumpet category

Kenny Barron Quintet, *Concentric Circles* (Blue Note) .. 393
 Jack DeJohnette/Larry Grenadier/John Medeski/John Scofield, *Hudson* (Motéma) 387
 Van Morrison & Joey DeFrancesco, *You're Driving Me Crazy* (Sony Legacy) 381
 Kamasi Washington, *Harmony Of Difference* (Young Turks) 360
 Peter Bernstein, *Signs LIVE!* (Smoke Sessions) 333
 Esperanza Spalding, *Exposure* (Concord) 312
 Larry Coryell's 11th House, *Seven Secrets* (Savoy) 309
 Charles Lloyd New Quartet, *Passin' Thru* (Blue Note) 303
 Bill Frisell, *Music IS* (Okeh/Sony Masterworks) 302
 The Manhattan Transfer, *The Junction* (BMG) 302
 Joshua Redman, *Still Dreaming* (Nonesuch) 291
 Bill Charlap Trio, *Uptown, Downtown* (Impulse!) 279
 Vijay Iyer Sextet, *Far From Over* (ECM) 279
 Christian McBride Big Band, *Bringin' It* (Mack Avenue) 279
 Cécile McLorin Salvant, *Dreams And Daggars* (Mack Avenue) ... 270
 Gregory Porter, *Nat "King" Cole & Me* (Blue Note) 258
 John Beasley, *MONK'estra, Vol. 2* (Mack Avenue) 255
 Monika Herzig, *SHEROES* (Whaling City Sound) 255
 Victor Wooten, *Trypnotyx* (Vix) .. 252
 Blue Note All-Stars, *Our Point Of View* (Blue Note) ... 243
 Ambrose Akinmusire, *A Rift In Decorum: Live At The Village Vanguard* (Blue Note) 234

Ahmad Jamal, *Marseille* (Jazz Village/Pias) 231
 Terence Blanchard featuring The E-Collective, *Live* (Blue Note) 216

HISTORICAL ALBUM

Miles Davis & John Coltrane, The Final Tour: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 6 (Columbia/Legacy) 3,489
 Bill Evans, *Another Time: The Hilversum Concert* (Resonance) 1,110
 Louis Armstrong, *The Nightclubs* (Dot Time) 1,026
 Thelonious Monk with John Coltrane, *The Complete 1957 Riverside Recordings* (Craft) 1,026
 Ella Fitzgerald, *Ella At Zardi's* (Verve/UME) 978
 Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack DeJohnette, *After The Fall* (ECM) 657
 Ornette Coleman, *The Atlantic Years* (Rhino/Atlantic) 654
 Sonny Rollins, *Way Out West-Deluxe Edition* (Craft) 534
 Wes Montgomery, *In Paris: The Definitive ORTF Recording* (Resonance) 510
 Jimi Hendrix, *Both Sides Of The Sky* (Legacy) 501
 Oscar Peterson, *Oscar Peterson Plays* (Verve/UME) 429
 Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, *United We Swing* (Blue Engine) 399
 Charles Mingus, *Live At Montreux 1975* (Eagle Rock Entertainment) 390
 Esbjörn Svensson Trio, *e.s.t. Live In London* (ACT) 384

FRANK STEWART

Thelonious Monk, *The Complete Prestige 10-Inch LP Collection* (Craft)..... 381
 Aretha Franklin, *A Brand New Me* (Rhino)..... 348
 Bob Dylan, *Trouble No More: Bootleg Series Vol. 13* (Sony Legacy) 330
 Buddy Rich, *Channel One Set* (Scabeba/Lobitos Creek Ranch/Lightyear)..... 294
 Joe Henderson featuring Alice Coltrane, *Elements* (Jazz Dispensary/Concord)..... 261
 Grant Green, *Funk In France: From Paris To Antibes* (1969-'70) (Resonance) 246

TRUMPET

Wynton Marsalis 1,959
 Ambrose Akinmusire..... 1,203
 Roy Hargrove 1,095
 Randy Brecker 1,056
 Tom Harrell 894
 Arturo Sandoval 783
 Chris Botti 744
 Terence Blanchard 741
 Ingrid Jensen..... 696
 Roger Ingram 633
 Sean Jones 489
 Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah .. 465
 Avishai Cohen 447
 Dave Douglas 405
 Eddie Henderson 402
 Wadada Leo Smith 375
 Terell Stafford 342
 Marquis Hill 339
 Tomasz Stańko..... 333
 Bria Skonberg 291

TROMBONE

Trombone Shorty 2,028
 Bill Watrous 1,224
 Wycliffe Gordon 1,209
 Steve Turre 810
 Robin Eubanks 807
 Roswell Rudd 678
 Curtis Fuller 654
 Steve Davis 627
 Nils Landgren 489
 Slide Hampton 432
 Delfeayo Marsalis..... 429
 Natalie Cressman..... 396
 Ray Anderson 369
 Conrad Herwig 330
 Luis Bonilla 327
 Sarah Morrow 327
 John Fedchock 312
 Michael Dease 297
 Marshall Gilkes..... 279
 Alan Ferber 252
 Ryan Keberle..... 252

SOPRANO SAXOPHONE

Wayne Shorter 2,694
 Branford Marsalis..... 1,938
 Dave Liebman 960
 Chris Potter 957
 Joshua Redman..... 927
 Ravi Coltrane..... 879
 Jan Garbarek..... 741



Anat Cohen, winner of the Clarinet category



Gary Smulyan, winner of the Baritone Saxophone category

Kenny Garrett..... 720
 Jane Ira Bloom..... 690
 Joe Lovano 600
 Anat Cohen 591
 Steve Wilson 522
 Jane Bunnett..... 462
 Lee Konitz 429
 Evan Parker..... 393
 Jimmy Greene..... 369
 James Carter..... 351
 Tia Fuller..... 351
 Ted Nash 309
 Donny McCaslin..... 267
 Ingrid Laubrock..... 264

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Kenny Garrett..... 1,785
 Grace Kelly..... 1,086
 David Sanborn 1023
 Lee Konitz 978
 Paquito D'Rivera 795
 Miguel Zenón 792
 John Zorn 702
 Steve Coleman..... 522
 Gary Bartz 507
 Rudresh Mahanthappa 507
 Dick Oatts 474
 Anthony Braxton 447
 Tia Fuller..... 420
 Ted Nash 411
 Bobby Watson 375
 Steve Wilson 366
 Vincent Herring 357
 David Binney 345
 Caroline Davis 315
 Tim Berne..... 309

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Wayne Shorter..... 1,362
 Chris Potter 1,305
 Branford Marsalis..... 1,035
 Joshua Redman..... 957
 Joe Lovano 930

Charles Lloyd 837
 Kamasi Washington 744
 Melissa Aldana 717
 Eric Alexander 507
 Pharoah Sanders 495
 Jan Garbarek..... 435
 Mark Colby..... 429
 Jimmy Heath..... 381
 Ernie Watts..... 381
 Mark Turner 348
 Donny McCaslin..... 345
 Scott Robinson 330
 Joel Frahm 318
 Kirk Whalum..... 282
 Seamus Blake 276

BARITONE SAXOPHONE

Gary Smulyan 1,767
 James Carter..... 1,650
 Ronnie Cuber 939
 John Surman..... 930
 Stephen "Doc" Kupka..... 813
 Claire Daly 795
 Scott Robinson 792
 Lisa Parrott..... 651
 Denis DiBlasio 615
 Mats Gustafsson..... 612
 Hamiet Bluiett..... 546
 Ken Vandermark 483
 Tim Berne..... 480
 Frank Basile 450
 Paula Henderson 444
 Howard Johnson..... 420
 Chris Cheek..... 425
 Vinny Golia 300
 Patience Higgins 273
 Charles Evans 252

CLARINET

Anat Cohen..... 3,330
 Paquito D'Rivera 2,148
 Eddie Daniels 1,638
 Don Byron 951

Ken Peplowski 927
 Victor Goines..... 690
 Beth Custer 426
 Gabriele Mirabassi 351
 Ben Goldberg..... 318
 Chris Speed 306
 Shabaka Hutchings..... 291
 Marty Ehrlich 252
 Louis Sclavis 234
 Aurora Nealand 231
 Gianluigi Trovesi 231
 Ab Baars..... 228
 Ken Vandermark 219
 Oscar Noriega 213
 Evan Christopher 207

FLUTE

Hubert Laws 1,884
 Charles Lloyd 1,254
 Nicole Mitchell..... 1,062
 Dave Liebman 777
 Ted Nash 726
 Jane Bunnett..... 675
 Lew Tabackin 672
 Steve Wilson 621
 Elena Pinderhughes 618
 Henry Threadgill 597
 Tia Fuller 579
 Jamie Baum 516
 Ira Sullivan 375
 Anne Drummond..... 348
 Erica von Kleist 339
 Holly Hofmann 318
 Robert Dick 285
 Ali Ryerson 273
 Roscoe Mitchell 270
 Andrea Brachfeld 267

PIANO

Herbie Hancock..... 1,551
 Chick Corea 1,263
 Brad Mehldau 966
 Joey Alexander 852



GREG HELGESON

Maria Schneider, winner of the Composer and Arranger categories

Keith Jarrett.....	849	Mike LeDonne.....	435
Geri Allen.....	726	Barbara Dennerlein.....	423
Roberta Piket.....	699	Sam Yahel.....	393
Kenny Barron.....	687	Gary Versace.....	387
McCoy Tyner.....	627	Amina Claudine Myers.....	291
Hiromi.....	468	Craig Taborn.....	291
Fred Hersch.....	444	Akiko Tsuruga.....	291
Cecil Taylor.....	426	Tony Monaco.....	267
Ahmad Jamal.....	414	Chester Thompson.....	255
Vijay Iyer.....	411	Rhoda Scott.....	243
Bill Charlap.....	393	Kit Downes.....	201
Monty Alexander.....	336	Jared Gold.....	195
Robert Glasper.....	309		
Lynne Arriale.....	282		
Renee Rosnes.....	243		
Eliane Elias.....	240		

GUITAR

Pat Metheny 1,770

Bill Frisell.....	1,065
John Abercrombie.....	945
John McLaughlin.....	867
John Scofield.....	765
Peter Bernstein.....	699
Al Di Meola.....	669
Mary Halvorson.....	621
Julian Lage.....	552
Mike Stern.....	522
John Pizzarelli.....	519
Pat Martino.....	417
Russell Malone.....	405
Kurt Rosenwinkel.....	396
John Russell.....	393
David Gilmore.....	363
Stanley Jordan.....	333
Kevin Eubanks.....	321
Nels Cline.....	312
Dave Stryker.....	297

BASS

Christian McBride 2,401

Ron Carter.....	1,707
Esperanza Spalding.....	1,491
Dave Holland.....	1,089
Stanley Clarke.....	957
John Patitucci.....	753
Victor Wooten.....	642
Linda May Han Oh.....	561
John Clayton.....	453
Avishai Cohen.....	402
Larry Grenadier.....	399

KEYBOARD

Herbie Hancock 3,183

Chick Corea.....	3,063
Robert Glasper.....	1,299
Lyle Mays.....	711
Hiromi.....	657
Craig Taborn.....	651
Larry Goldings.....	618
Booker T. Jones.....	528
John Medeski.....	504
Gary Husband.....	492
Django Bates.....	345
Gary Versace.....	315
Patrice Rushen.....	306
Henry Butler.....	285
Nik Bärtsch.....	279
Gonzalo Rubalcaba.....	276
Uri Caine.....	270
Eddie Palmieri.....	267
Jason Lindner.....	258

ORGAN

Joey DeFrancesco 4,119

Dr. Lonnie Smith.....	1,818
Larry Goldings.....	1,374
Booker T. Jones.....	1,050
Roberta Piket.....	840
Carla Bley.....	828
John Medeski.....	759
Brian Auger.....	582



JIMMY KATZ

Kenny Garrett, winner of the Alto Saxophone category

Gary Peacock.....	333	Pino Palladino.....	264
Rufus Reid.....	309	Mimi Jones.....	246
Peter Washington.....	294		
Thundercat.....	291		
Scott Colley.....	282		
William Parker.....	261		
Reggie Workman.....	249		
Mark Wade.....	243		
Nicki Parrott.....	228		

ELECTRIC BASS

Stanley Clarke 1,737

Marcus Miller.....	1,452
Victor Wooten.....	1,296
Esperanza Spalding.....	1,116
John Patitucci.....	1,083
Christian McBride.....	981
Steve Swallow.....	945
Thundercat.....	669
Tony Levin.....	636
Richard Bona.....	597
Tal Wilkenfeld.....	390
Avishai Cohen.....	339
Linda May Han Oh.....	336
Jimmy Haslip.....	333
Meshell Ndegeocello.....	321
Tim Lefebvre.....	318
Jeff Berlin.....	303
Matthew Garrison.....	267

VIOLIN

Regina Carter 3,576

Jean-Luc Ponty.....	2,373
Mark Feldman.....	846
Sara Caswell.....	792
Didier Lockwood.....	609
Jerry Goodman.....	537
Mark O'Connor.....	519
Jenny Scheinman.....	516
Zach Brock.....	450
Mat Maneri.....	360
Michal Urbaniak.....	342
Karen Briggs.....	309
Carla Kihlstedt.....	285
Nils Økland.....	279
Aaron Weinstein.....	261
Susie Hansen.....	249
Mary Oliver.....	246
Diane Monroe.....	237
Jesse Zubot.....	234
Christian Howes.....	219

DRUMS

Jack DeJohnette 1,308

Brian Blade.....	1,143
Steve Gadd.....	999



Snarky Puppy, winner of the Jazz Group category

Peter Erskine.....	753
Roy Haynes.....	612
Terri Lyne Carrington.....	585
Vinnie Colaiuta.....	564
Jeff Hamilton.....	546
Antonio Sanchez.....	525
Billy Cobham.....	495
Jeff "Tain" Watts.....	474
Billy Hart.....	393
Dave Weckl.....	384
Cindy Blackman Santana.....	366
Eric Harland.....	360
Matt Wilson.....	348
Joey Baron.....	333
Allison Miller.....	327
Mark Guiliana.....	303
Lewis Nash.....	291

PERCUSSION

Sheila E.	1,320
Poncho Sanchez.....	978
Zakir Hussain.....	948
Airto Moreira.....	876
Trilok Gurtu.....	819
Cyro Baptista.....	690
Mino Cinelu.....	537
Dan Weiss.....	486
Pedrito Martinez.....	462
Sammy Figueroa.....	450
Pete Escovedo.....	408
Hamid Drake.....	399
Bobby Sanabria.....	393
Susie Ibarra.....	390
Marilyn Mazur.....	384
Manolo Badrena.....	375
Giovanni Hidalgo.....	372
Satoshi Takeishi.....	333

VIBRAPHONE

Stefon Harris	1,896
Joe Locke.....	1,338

Warren Wolf.....	1,077
Terry Gibbs.....	1,044
Mike Mainieri.....	987
Steve Nelson.....	945
Jason Marsalis.....	933
Cecilia Smith.....	639
Dave Samuels.....	462
Joe Chambers.....	441
Kenny Wollesen.....	426
Jason Adasiewicz.....	399
Mulatu Astatke.....	297
Khan Jamal.....	288
Jim Hart.....	234
Gunter Hampel.....	219
Karl Berger.....	216
Chris Dingman.....	215
Steve Hobbs.....	210

MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

Béla Fleck (banjo)	1,722
Pat Metheny (orchestron) ...	1,170
Chris Potter (bass clarinet)	918
Jon Batiste (melodica/harmoniboard)	744
James Carter (bass saxophone)	621
Anouar Brahem (oud)	558
Scott Robinson (bass saxophone)	531
Howard Levy (harmonica).....	480
Steve Turre (shells).....	471
Joe Lovano (aulochrome).....	465
Wycliffe Gordon (tuba).....	408
Chris Thile (mandolin).....	405
Rabih Abou-Khalil (oud).....	390
Howard Johnson (tuba).....	390
Richard Galliano (accordion) ..	387
David Murray (bass clarinet)....	386
Peggy Lee (cello).....	375
Brandee Younger (harp).....	375

Tomeka Reid (cello).....	348
Gary Versace (accordion)	312

MALE VOCALIST

Kurt Elling	2,517
Tony Bennett.....	2,472
Gregory Porter.....	2,127
Bobby McFerrin.....	1,533
Michael Bublé.....	879
Theo Bleckmann.....	684
Jon Hendricks.....	683
Jacob Collier.....	618
John Pizzarelli.....	507
Bob Dorough.....	426
Kevin Mahogany.....	414
Leslie Odom Jr.	405
Freddy Cole.....	381
José James.....	378
Dhafer Youssef.....	363
Jamie Cullum.....	339
Andy Bey.....	306
James Blood Ulmer.....	306
Phil Minton.....	303

FEMALE VOCALIST

Diana Krall	1,761
Cécile McLorin Salvant.....	1,473
Esperanza Spalding.....	1,440
Dianne Reeves.....	1,113
Dee Dee Bridgewater.....	1,002
Cassandra Wilson.....	870
Lizz Wright.....	522
Jazzmeia Horn.....	492
Sheila Jordan.....	414
Cyrille Aimée.....	405
Diane Schuur.....	402
Madeleine Peyroux.....	393
Luciana Souza.....	351
Roberta Gambarini.....	342
Norma Winstone.....	336
Janice Borla.....	330

Karrin Allyson.....	312
Gretchen Parlato.....	312
Catherine Russell.....	297
Stacey Kent.....	294
Becca Stevens.....	246

COMPOSER

Maria Schneider	1,437
Chick Corea.....	1,227
Wayne Shorter.....	1,092
Pat Metheny.....	927
Wynton Marsalis.....	714
Carla Bley.....	582
Benny Golson.....	582
Terence Blanchard.....	564
Bill Frisell.....	564
John Zorn.....	471
Muhal Richard Abrams.....	468
Vijay Iyer.....	408
Alan Broadbent.....	357
Dave Holland.....	351
Robert Glasper.....	321
Tom Harrell.....	318
Christian McBride.....	288
John Scofield.....	264
Henry Threadgill.....	261
Vince Mendoza.....	252

ARRANGER

Maria Schneider	1,668
Wynton Marsalis.....	1,101
Carla Bley.....	735
Vince Mendoza.....	684
Bob Mintzer.....	609
Esperanza Spalding.....	594
John Zorn.....	585
Dave Holland.....	576
Gordon Goodwin.....	561
Christian McBride.....	543
Bill Holman.....	393

Alan Broadbent	390
Robert Glasper	390
Muhai Richard Abrams	354
Terri Lyne Carrington	354
Jim McNeely	351
Billy Childs	348
Slide Hampton	348
John Clayton	336
Django Bates	273
Ted Nash	270

RECORD LABEL

Blue Note	3,327
ECM	1,821
MoonJune	990
Mack Avenue	562
Smoke Sessions Records	561
Impulse!	456
Verve	435
Nonesuch	354
ACT	339
Sunnyside	339
Concord	318
Criss Cross Jazz	276
Mosaic	255
Resonance	246
Abstract Logix	234
Origin	225
Brooklyn Jazz Underground	183
HighNote	180
Pi Recordings	179
SmallsLIVE	177
Delmark	174
Motéma	174
ArtistShare	166
Clean Feed	165
Posi-Tone	150
BluJazz	144
Columbia Legacy	144
Greenleaf Music	144

BLUES ARTIST OR GROUP

Buddy Guy	1,443
Eric Clapton	1,086
Joe Bonamassa	858
Robben Ford	669
Taj Mahal	615
Gary Clark Jr.	546
Mavis Staples	459
Keb' Mo'	444
Robert Cray	390
Susan Tedeschi	390
James Blood Ulmer	357
Rhiannon Giddens	312
Bettye LaVette	270
Charlie Musselwhite	252
John Mayall	249
Marcia Ball	195
Eric Bibb	186
Elvin Bishop	183
Shemekia Copeland	168
Lucky Peterson	165

BLUES ALBUM

Gregg Allman, <i>Southern Blood (Rounder)</i>	1,458
Joe Bonamassa, <i>British Blues Explosion Live (J&R Adventures)</i>	1,053
Ben Harper & Charlie Musselwhite, <i>No Mercy In This Land (Anti-/Epitaph)</i>	960



John Mayall, <i>Three For The Road (Forty Below)</i>	600
Mindi Abair & The Boneshakers, <i>The EastWest Sessions (Pretty Good For a Girl)</i>	417
Beth Hart & Joe Bonamassa, <i>Black Coffee (J&R Adventures)</i> ..	381
Mighty Joe Young, <i>Live From The North Side Of Chicago (Rock Beat)</i>	378
Sonny Landreth, <i>Recorded Live In Lafayette (Provogue)</i>	333
Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters, <i>The Luckiest Man (Stony Plain)</i> ..	330
North Mississippi Allstars, <i>Prayer For Peace (Legacy)</i>	273
Amy Black, <i>Memphis (Reuben)</i> ..	261
Samantha Fish, <i>Belle Of The West (Ruf)</i>	231
Big Shoes, <i>Step On It! (Big Little)</i>	225
Layla Zoe, <i>Songs From The Road (Ruf)</i>	219
Chris Cain, <i>Chris Cain (Little Village Foundation)</i>	201
Sue Foley, <i>The Ice Queen (Stony Plain)</i>	198
Andrea Marr, <i>Natural (Only Blues)</i>	198
Lurrie Bell & The Bell Dynasty, <i>Tribute To Carey Bell (Delmark)</i>	192
A.J. Croce, <i>Just Like Medicine (Compass)</i> ..	186
Jonny Lang, <i>Signs (Concord)</i> ...	180

BEYOND ARTIST OR GROUP

Jeff Beck	909
Zappa Plays Zappa	588
Donald Fagen	519
Stevie Wonder	414
Aretha Franklin	393
Tedeschi Trucks Band	387
Bob Dylan	378
Robert Glasper Experiment	378
Paul McCartney	357
Kendrick Lamar	351
Norah Jones	342
Erykah Badu	336
Dr. John	318

Buddy Guy, winner of the Blues Artist category



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Björk	315
Mavis Staples	276
Laurie Anderson	273
Alabama Shakes	267
Adele	264
Rhiannon Giddens	255
Radiohead	237
The Roots	234

BEYOND ALBUM

Lizz Wright, <i>Grace (Concord)</i>	1,008
King Crimson, <i>Live In Vienna (DGM)</i>	1,002
Dee Dee Bridgewater, <i>Memphis ... Yes, I'm Ready (OKeh)</i>	997
Ry Cooder, <i>The Prodigal Son (Fantasy)</i>	819
Björk, <i>Utopia (One Little Indian)</i>	741
Béla Fleck & Abigail Washburn, <i>Echo In The Valley (Rounder)</i> ..	636
Chuck Berry, <i>Chuck (Dualtone)</i> ..	579
Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings, <i>Soul Of A Woman (Daptone)</i>	525

Mavis Staples, <i>If All I Was Was Black (Anti-)</i>	519
Blind Boys of Alabama, <i>Almost Home (BBOA)</i>	474
Chris Thile, <i>Thanks For Listening (Nonesuch)</i>	417
David Byrne, <i>American Utopia (Todomundo/Nonesuch)</i>	399
Steve Reich, <i>Pulse/Quartet (Nonesuch)</i>	387
Various Artists, <i>Black Panther Soundtrack (Interscope)</i>	372
Brian Eno, <i>Music For Installations (Astralwerks)</i>	354
Janelle Monae, <i>Dirty Computer (Bad Boy Records)</i>	291
Leon Bridges, <i>Good Thing (Columbia)</i>	249
Bettye LaVette, <i>Things Have Changed (Verve)</i>	240
Steve Martin & The Steep Canyon Rangers, <i>The Long-Awaited Album (Rounder)</i>	222
Sting & Shaggy, <i>44/876 (Interscope)</i>	222

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Inside >

- 64 / Jazz
- 68 / Blues
- 72 / Beyond
- 74 / Historical
- 78 / Books

REVIEWS >



Rudy Royston's *Flatbed Buggy* features a unique ensemble, counting bass clarinet, accordion and cello in its instrumentation.

Rudy Royston *Flatbed Buggy*

GREENLEAF 1065

★★★★½

Fierce drummers who lift the bandstand with a blend of poise and push are some of jazz's most exciting improvisers. For the past several years, Rudy Royston has been one of these percussionists, an esteemed traps maestro whose sense of swing is marked by a catholic slant; he has a million ways to accent the action, and his playing—as repped by work with saxophonist JD Allen and guitarist Bill Frisell, among others—arrives with a joyous *oomph* that supercharges the music at hand. But his compositional interests are broad, and when leading his own ensembles, the stormy attack of a hard-hit snare and splashy ride cymbal isn't the only story he has to tell.

Flatbed Buggy illustrates just how expansive Royston's scope is these days. By stressing vari-

ety and dodging routine jazz tacks, the middle-aged whirlwind signals that he's a risk-taker who's ready to follow his muse down uncommon roads. This is his third album as a leader, as well as the third distinct ensemble he's presented. When you design a front line of bass clarinet (John Ellis) and accordion (Gary Versace), and build your string section with both bass (Joe Martin) and cello (Hank Roberts), you're banking on relatively unique blends to carry the day. In Royston's case, this setup is utterly refreshing.

Though the drummer grew up in Denver, he enjoyed visits with his father back to his native Texas. This new music harks to the childhood days he'd spend amid the pleasures of rural escapades. Mildly sentimental, often cinematic, the program boasts a willful sense of grace that sustains itself, even when the momentum truly starts to percolate. After a series of serene reflections, "The Roadside Flowers" arrives all hopped up on pulse, but still possesses an inner calm that

adds dimension to its emotional scope.

Royston has said that addressing parts of the classical repertoire in school goosed his imagination when it comes to crafting unusual hues in his own work. A handful of pieces bookend this thought. "boy...MAN" stresses melodic morphing over trad improvisation (the title references time passing), and its dark mix of strings and reeds offers an orchestral flair. Likewise, the eerie drama that wafts through the start of "girl...WOMAN" is one of album's most fetching moods. The band's cozy approach to interplay is spot-on, harking to pastoral beauty with the kind of poetry Frisell brought to *Big Sur* (Okeh). For Royston, *Flatbed Buggy* is a trip to the country that opens up several new vistas. —Jim Macnie

Flatbed Buggy: Soul Train; Bed Bobbin'; Flatbed Buggy; boy...MAN; Twirler; Dirty Stetson; Hourglass; Bobblehead; The Roadside Flowers; Hold My Mule; girl...WOMAN; I Guess It's Time To Go. (61:09)

Personnel: Rudy Royston, drums; John Ellis, bass clarinet, saxophone; Gary Versace, accordion; Hank Roberts, cello; Joe Martin, bass.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com



Donny McCaslin *Blow.*

MOTÉMA 0287

★★★★½

Donny McCaslin's experience on David Bowie's final album, *Blackstar*, continues to shape his work. If 2016's supercharged *Beyond Now* functioned somewhat as a howling reflection of his tenure with Bowie, then *Blow.* can be viewed as more of a snarling celebration of Bowie's art-rock legacy.

Many of the musicians from *Beyond Now* return on *Blow.*, but McCaslin places more emphasis on singers and lyrics than his eruptive

tenor saxophone improvisations. With themes of political and emotional discontent, the disc blasts off with its biting first single, "What About The Body," a propulsive rock song on which Ryan Dahle sings of current political unrest in America. Dahle takes the lion's share of the lead vocals, with his angst-ridden sensibilities setting the tone for the rest of the album.

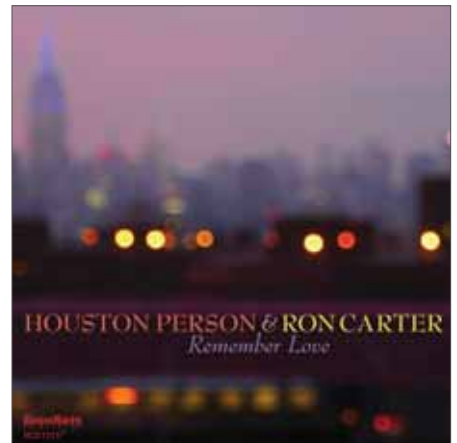
Jeff Taylor's rangy, phantasmagoric baritone proves the best of the male lead vocals, as evidenced by the cryptic "Tiny Kingdom" and the frantic "Tempest." On both, he brings a theatrical spark that manages to steer clear of callowness. But Gail Ann Dorsey's plaintive alto on the sensual "Eye Of The Beholder" takes top prize for vocal performance, as she articulates the languid melody and existentialism-laden lyrics with soulful conviction.

Blow. might polarize McCaslin's die-hard jazz fans, but it still has the magnetism to draw a broader audience. —John Murph

Blow.: What About The Body; Club Kidd, Break The Bond; New Kindness; Exactlyfourminutesofimprovisedmusic; Tiny Kingdom; Great Destroyer; The Opener; Beast; Tempest; Eye Of The Beholder. (55:11)

Personnel: Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone, flute, alto flute, clarinet; Jason Lindner, synthesizers, piano, Wuritzer; Tim Lefebvre, electric bass (1–3, 6, 9, 10); Jonathan Maron, electric bass (4, 5); Nate Wood, electric bass (6, 8), drums (4); Mark Guilliana, drums (2, 3, 6, 9); Zach Danziger, drums, programming (1, 5, 6, 11); Steve Wall, Wuritzer (9), drum programming (4, 6, 11), guitar (2); Ryan Dahle, vocals (1, 2, 4, 7), guitar (4, 7), Mellotron (4); Ben Monder, guitar (2, 10); Jeff Taylor, vocals (6, 10); Mark Kozolek, vocals (8); Gail Ann Dorsey, vocals (11).

Ordering info: motema.com



Houston Person & Ron Carter *Remember Love*

HIGHNOTE 7315

★★★★

Tenor saxophonist Houston Person and bassist Ron Carter first played together as a duo on their 1990 standards album, *Something In Common* (Muse). What these two distinguished players had in common then was a die-hard appreciation for the musical alchemy behind well-crafted standards. What they have in common now is six albums and nearly 30 years of collaboration on this voluptuous material, and *Remember Love* marks the next installment of their noteworthy oeuvre.

To the extent that some contemporary jazz eschews comely melodies and their related harmonic underpinnings, here Person and Carter embrace them. The tempos are measured and the arrangements spacious, so there's no missing the intention behind their musical choices: to transmute familiar melodies into the most golden tones possible. For the listener, this means that on Duke Ellington's "Day Dream," the minor intervals sound deeper; on Jerome Kern's "The Way You Look Tonight," the walking bass seems jauntier; and on Luiz Bonfá's "Gentle Rain," the bossa feels more kinetic. Purity, not profusion.

No tunes here are purer than the two solo tracks. Person's so faithful to the melody on Vincent Youmans' "Without A Song" that barely a note deviates; what stands out is his affinity for gospel and r&b. Carter's take on "You Are My Sunshine" is different—from the head of this simple folk tune, he launches into a cavalcade of improvised riffs. Two contrasting approaches, but one takeaway. "You hear different things when it's just the melody," Person said in the liner notes. "A single melody can be so powerful."

—Suzanne Lorge

Remember Love: Love Is Here To Stay; My One And Only Love; Why Not; Day Dream; Gentle Rain; The Way You Look Tonight; You Are My Sunshine; Blues For D.P.; Easy To Remember; Without A Song. (52:39)

Personnel: Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Ron Carter, bass.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Myra Melford's Snowy Egret *The Other Side Of Air*

FIREHOUSE 12 04-01-029

★★★★½

It's unsurprising to see pianist Myra Melford mention painter Cy Twombly in her comments about Snowy Egret's gorgeous new album, *The Other Side Of Air*. If you think of the sculptural values expressed in some abstract works—volume, density, balance—this music comes to life as a delightful series of intensely colorful, gently precise paintings composed in real time.

More intricate than the swinging narratives of *Snowy Egret*, the all-star quintet's lovely debut, *The Other Side Of Air* announces a distinctively lyrical approach to free improvisation. Working from what appears to be a bare script of melodic and rhythmic ideas, the simpatico players spin out concisely developed segments, never lingering anywhere for long. True to the title of the jagged first track, "Motion Stop Frame," there are lots of sudden pauses and acute angles. Ron Miles' cornet and Liberty Ellman's electric guitar pair for pertly pungent melodic statements, often answered or underscored by Melford's mellifluous runs. Drummer Tyshawn Sorey and bassist Stomu Takeishi rustle quietly beneath, abetting the tension and drama. Extended techniques



gently come into play—airy trumpet squeezes, keyboard rumbles, what sounds like prepared bass. On the long version of the title track (it's broken into two portions), Ellman swells with celebratory expressiveness.

Delicate yet sturdy, impassioned yet restrained, speedy but uncluttered, pretty but never sentimental, *The Other Side Of Air* is a lovely place to breathe. —Paul de Barros

The Other Side Of Air: Motion Stop Frame; City Of Illusion; Attic; Chorale; Small Thoughts; The Other Side Of Air I; The Other Side Of Air II; Living Music; Dried Print On Cardboard; Turn And Coda. (66:09)

Personnel: Myra Melford, piano; Liberty Ellman, guitar; Ron Miles, cornet; Stomu Takeishi, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums.

Ordering info: firehouse12.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Paul de Barros	Suzanne Lorge	Jim Macnie	John Murph
Rudy Royston <i>Flatbed Buggy</i>	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
Donny McCaslin <i>Blow.</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½
Myra Melford's Snowy Egret <i>The Other Side Of Air</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
Houston Person & Ron Carter <i>Remember Love</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½

Critics' Comments

Rudy Royston, *Flatbed Buggy*

Who can resist the reedy mix of accordion and bass clarinet? Not me, especially when there's a cello on hand to make like a walking bass or a singing violin. Wonderful chamber jazz writing, with moods ranging from bebop to Americana. —Paul de Barros

Royston has an unusual instrumental palette for this jazz-cum-Americana album—wistful accordion, temperate cello, smoldering sax. His unflagging attention to the beat defies most of this moodiness. But his playing directs each tune toward the satisfying endgame: a soft landing on the ear. —Suzanne Lorge

The leader wields as much power from his dynamic and often delicate drumming as he does from his enticing compositions, which elicit a sepia-toned, cinematic allure. —John Murph

Donny McCaslin, *Blow.*

Another obsessively driving, precisely executed, David Bowie-inspired art rock album by the saxophonist who played on *Blackstar*, but with better songs and more singers. —Paul de Barros

You can drop McCaslin anywhere along the rock-jazz spectrum and he'll find gold. On this one, he provocatively challenges the perception of stylistic divides. And while jazz purists might decry his pop leanings, others would applaud the same. —Suzanne Lorge

No real surprise here—you could feel his nod toward prog(ish) rock(ish) tunes in the wind. So, celebrate: Fetching textures and a sense of daring makes this date a thoroughly enjoyable wild ride. —Jim Macnie

Myra Melford's Snowy Egret, *The Other Side Of Air*

Melford's dynamism as a composer, player and leader continues unabated with this release. Searing in its intensity, the album contains all the things that Melford does so well—enticing tension, arching movement, a sense of majesty. —Suzanne Lorge

There's an itchiness to the tunes—they're often shifting gears. But the group interplay is so articulate, the contours swoop and glide with ease. —Jim Macnie

The exploratory musicianship and episodic compositions lure listeners deep inside a fascinating rabbit hole, one song at a time. —John Murph

Houston Person & Ron Carter, *Remember Love*

There aren't many warm, romantic tenor players left, people who make it all sound so easy as they get you in the mood for an after-hours rendezvous. This is Person's sixth album with sturdy partner Carter and, yet again, the exposed space around their conversation highlights casual mastery and cool. —Paul de Barros

They titled their previous album *Chemistry*, and that deep rapport marks this duo outing by master improvisers. As usual, refinement and eloquence are the lay of the land. —Jim Macnie

No fault-finding in this exquisite pairing between two jazz veterans who light a program of gems with flickering intimacy and sanguine warmth. —John Murph



RENÉ MARIE vocals
JANIS SIEGEL vocals
DARIUS DE HAAS vocals
KAREN OBERLIN vocals

with
RENEE ROSNES piano
SEAN SMITH bass
CARL ALLEN drums
STEVE WILSON saxophone
SEAMUS BLAKE saxophone
KEN PELOWSKI clarinet
ERIK FRIEDLANDER cello
ROGERIO BOCCATO percussion

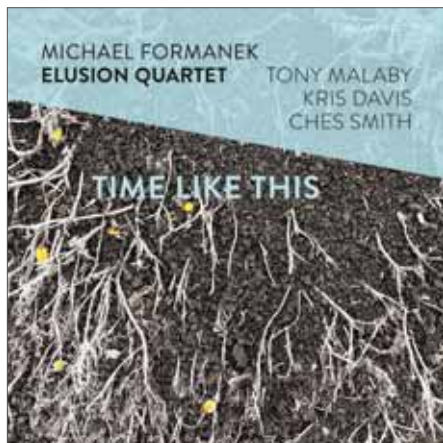


ALEXANDER CLAFFY bass
KURT ROSENWINKEL guitar
DAVID KIKOSKI piano

with
VERONICA SWIFT vocals
JOEL FRAHM tenor saxophone
BENNY BENACK III trumpet
ADAM ARRUDA drums
MARK WHITFIELD JR drums
AARON KIMMEL drums



A New Label from Smoke Sessions Records



**Michael Formanek
Elusion Quartet
*Time Like This***

INTAKT 313
★★★★

That music reflects the present—public events and private responses alike—is a jazz truism, and *Time Like This* by Michael Formanek’s Elusion Quartet exemplifies the dark, existential fears now rising in so many quarters. Saxophonist Tony Malaby, pianist Kris Davis and drummer Ches Smith join the widely experienced bassist in vivid expressions of sorrow, concern, fulmination, collaboration and resistance. These feelings,

**Josephine Davies’ Satori
*In The Corners Of Clouds***

WHIRLWIND 4730
★★★★½

This is saxophonist Josephine Davies’ second outing with her piano-less trio Satori, and it’s impressive to note how much the group has grown since its eponymous 2017 debut. Although the basic sound remains the same—densely rhythmic, with a sturdy sense of melody and deeply intertwined lines among saxophone, bass and drums—the execution has evolved into something more in the moment, sparking more often from improvisational interplay than compositional forethought.

Some of this might have to do with the difference in drummers. Whereas Paul Clarvis, on the first album, was assertively propulsive in the classic Elvin Jones fashion, James Maddren’s gracefully polyrhythmic playing seems somehow more intermingled with the others’ voices, underscoring the pulse without taking sole possession. That’s a crucial difference, because even though many of the tunes here are anchored to a central rhythmic pattern beneath Davies’ mournfully lyric themes, the real magic happens when that pattern goes from stated to implied, and each of the three work their own elaborations on it.

Some listeners might miss the bluesy tartness

just hinted at by song titles, come through clearly. We hear what this company means.

There’s little conventional prettiness here, but an overarching aura of weird beauty. Malaby spills out grainy, vocal-like saxophone lines, Coltranesque in reach and grandeur, yet also starkly restrained. Davis doesn’t swing, yet her ideas and execution sustain propulsion and deep moods. On vibes, Smith matches her, sometimes with perking glints of joy; on the Haitian tanbou and traps, he strikes against conformist beats. Formanek deploys numerous strategies on his instrument, commanding flux and flow, most in the fore on “The Soul Goodbye.”

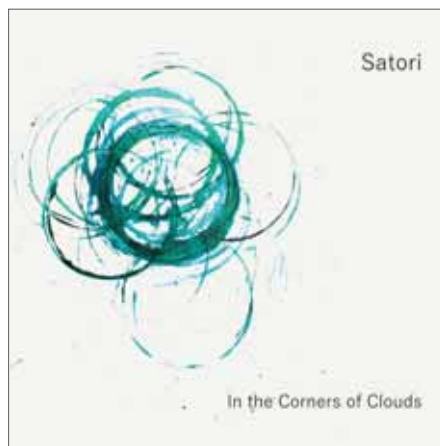
Indeed, exploration is the binding principle here. Free improvisations—as in fearless, not random—are launched from or coexist with preordained structures, without hyping the difference between written and spontaneous parts. The band’s organic cohesion in its debut is remarkable, all four players contributing to and taking advantage of their group’s intimate and orchestral nature. Each performer remains empowered, and all together assert sympatico union. Way to be in time like this.

—Howard Mandel

Time Like This: Down 8 Up 5; Culture Of None; A Fine Mess; This May Get Ugly; The Soul Goodbye; That Was Then; The New Normal. (58:43)

Personnel: Michael Formanek, bass; Tony Malaby, tenor, soprano saxophone; Kris Davis, piano; Ches Smith, drums, vibraphone, Haitian tanbou.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch



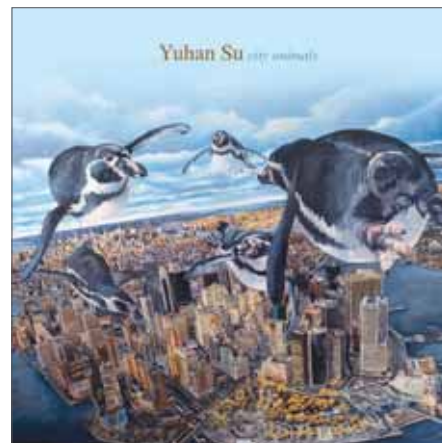
of Davies’ soprano, but her fondness for breathy, arpeggiated asides—a nice way for the saxophone to take on more of a rhythmic role—is better suited to the tenor, and we do get the bonus of overdubbed harmony on “Lazy.” Meanwhile, bassist Dave Whitford continues to amaze, offering assertive, rhythmically agile counterpoint that manages to deliver virtuosic intensity without ever distracting from what his bandmates are up to. Definitely a band to watch.

—J.D. Considine

In The Corners Of Clouds: Wabi-Sabi; Song Of The Dancing Saint; In The Corners Of Clouds; Oddities; The Space Between Thoughts; Cry; Lazy; Scattered. (43:41)

Personnel: Josephine Davies, tenor saxophone; James Maddren, drums; Dave Whitford, bass.

Ordering info: whirlwindrecordings.com



**Yuhan Su
*City Animals***

SUNNYSIDE 1529
★★★★

Taiwanese vibraphonist-composer Yuhan Su reflects on six years as a New York resident on her impressive third outing as a leader. As the lone harmonic instrument, her four-mallet approach allows Su to play pianistically alongside trumpeter Matt Holman, alto saxophonist Alex LoRe, bassist Petros Klampanis and drummer Nathan Ellman-Bell on her 10 compositions. That quality becomes most evident in rich voicings on “Poncho Song” and the gorgeous ballad “Tutu & D” (for Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama).

The centerpiece here is the three-movement *Kuafu* suite, which opens with the peaceful meditation “I. Rising,” features LoRe’s warm, inviting tones and segues to fugue-like interaction between LoRe and Holman against Ellman-Bell’s driving rhythm. The second movement, “II. Starry, Starry Night,” opens calmly with Ellman-Bell’s gentle brushwork underscoring Su’s sparse conversation with Klampanis’ bass, before the piece settles into a melancholy theme, highlighted by Holman’s most lyrical playing of the set. The third movement—“III. Parallel Chasing”—features some frantic trading of eights among the three principal soloists.

Su favors a labyrinth of lines in her heady compositions, allowing for adventurous tempo and metric shifting, exploratory rubato segments, disciplined through-composed sections and plenty of room for blowing. LoRe and Holman share a potent chemistry on the front line. And as they navigate the currents of Su’s challenging pieces, the pair also engages in rapid-fire exchanges, contrapuntal motion and tight unisons on tricky heads for “Y El Coche Se Murió.” Each is a talent deserving of wider recognition, as is Su herself.

—Bill Milkowski

City Animals: Y El Coche Se Murió; Viaje; Feet Dance; Poncho Song; City Animals; Kuafu (I. Rising); Kuafu (II. Starry, Starry Night); Kuafu (III. Parallel Chasing); Tutu & D; Party 2 A.M. (60:36)

Personnel: Yuhan Su, vibraphone; Matt Holman, trumpet, flugelhorn; Alex LoRe, alto saxophone; Petros Klampanis, bass; Nathan Ellman-Bell, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Fred Frith Trio *Closer To The Ground*

INTAKT 312

★★★★

Meta-musician and guitarist Fred Frith has been juggling disparate concerns for decades, moving from one project to another to tackle specific ideas. He pioneered a distinctly British take on progressive rock in Henry Cow back in the 1970s, applied improvisational impulses to art songs with cellist Tom Cora (and later, harpist Zeena Parkins) in Skeleton Crew, engaged in bracing free improvisation with John Zorn and composed for new music

ensembles like ROVA and Ensemble Modern, among others.

He's found simpatico collaborators in drummer Jordan Glenn and bassist Jason Hoopes—like Frith they live in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the guitarist long has taught at Mills College, an academic environment that's helped foster experimental music in the States. Together, they've formed a scrappy improvising trio that deftly unfolds many of the leader's long-term musical concerns into a gritty, unified attack. On the group's second album, its groove-oriented improvisations draw upon the energy of rock music, with each standalone piece flowing into the next. The rhythm section builds muscular, yet tensile, armatures for Frith to extrapolate over, shaping movements that glide and stutter in equal measure. Despite the unstinting propulsion, Glenn and Hoopes constantly are shape-shifting, with the intensity and density of their machinations steadily transforming, usually in lockstep with the leader's colorful sound splatter.

On the album opener, "Bones To Pick With Graveyards," the trio immediately establishes a broad-minded *modus operandi*, as Frith's pedal-driven mastery splinters his lines into a variegated spray of post-dub pointillism, terse melodic jabs and rhythmically exciting patterns that mutate in some kind of organic process where nothing ever repeats.

Simultaneously, Hoopes and Glenn do much more than treat time like putty, as their sometimes slithery, sometimes punishing output frequently serves up tuneful counterpoint to the guitarist. On "In The Grip Of It," the rhythm section embraces a far more visceral drive, stomping out a massive, lumbering lobe somewhere between doom and the fractal beats of Autechre.

"Stars Like Trees" veers toward harrowing ambience, as the guitarist unleashes dense, richly atmospheric shards of sound that hover and billow like viscous clouds, as the drummer toggles between silence and spastic, electronically treated rim-shot patterns, and the bassist injects a few low-end jabs between extended washes of atmospheric muck.

While melodic patterns constantly dot these turbulent soundscapes, the trio ultimately is more interested in exploring the nexus of groove and mood, although it consistently refuses to settle into any one spot for more than a few bars; the sense of movement is mirrored by that hearty musical impatience.

—Peter Margasak

Closer To The Ground: Bones To Pick With Graveyards; Alle Planmäßigen Ziele Werden Erreicht; In The Grip Of It; Ruhebereich; Stars Like Trees; A Path Made By Walking; Betting On The World; Love And Other Embers; Up In Smoke. (51:03)

Personnel: Fred Frith, electric guitar, organ; Jason Hoopes, electric bass, double bass; Jordan Glenn, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

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Very few artists stay at the top of their game for their entire career. But **FREDDY COLE's** velvety, unhurried singing style remains every bit as cool and hip as it was when his first record was released in 1964. However, it is his unimpeachable artistry, rather than longevity, that positions him as one of today's vocal jazz masters.



Saxophonist **JD ALLEN's** output on Savant has been steady since his 2012 debut, and this beautiful and riveting ballads album is an assured milestone in his career to date. The depth of Allen's timbre and phrasing and the work of his three colleagues proves again that this is one of the most highly accomplished small groups in contemporary jazz.



Over twenty-five years ago **HOUSTON PERSON & RON CARTER** began their first collaboration and now, six releases later, they remain committed to the format. With time on their side they have become empathetic and open-minded colleagues and deliver these standards with class and impeccable taste.



CYRUS CHESTNUT has here arranged works by great classical composers and takes their themes through a series of rhythmic and harmonic turns and twists while subjecting them to a wildly innovative series of transformations. Through it all Chestnut emerges as a multi-faceted artist who, through using the past creates something new which is always fresh and exciting.



Puerto Rican trumpeter **CHARLIE SEPÚLVEDA** has been a fixture of the Latin jazz world from the time he first played in the band of pianist Eddie Palmieri. After stints with Tito Puente, Hilton Ruiz, Wynnton Marsalis & others he launched his own group, The Turnaround, and has been fanning the flames of Latin Jazz ever since.



FRANK MORGAN & GEORGE CABLES played together frequently for the last 20 years of Morgan's life and this recording captures them live in concert in Montreal. The playing is remarkably spontaneous and full of joy throughout with even the chestnut "All the Things You Are" sounding fresh and newly wrought. This material is receiving its first commercial release.



For his first Savant recording organist **PAT BIANCHI** has put together a varied & imaginative setlist that guarantees this is going to be an auspicious debut. Featuring contributions from **Pat Martino, Joe Locke**, the late, lamented **Kevin Mahogany** and others.



The music of **JOEL HARRISON** stubbornly defies categorizing. From haunting psychedelia to rollicking Afro-Appalachian grooves; from the complex poly-everything of Charles Ives to the deceptively simple re-imagining of American folk ballads, Joel Harrison is perhaps the most imaginative, inventive & inclusive artist in contemporary jazz music.

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The Bowman Trio

MAARIT KYTOHARJU

We Jazz on Unique Terrain

Scandinavian jazz is its own thing. Affective, free-spirited and daringly improvisational. Finnish jazz, a vibrant constituent of the Nordic scene, pushes this individualism to an uncommon degree. Producer Matti Nives champions the effort through *We Jazz*, a music collective whose wingspan covers a magazine, an annual jazz festival and a record label. This fall, three new releases on the Helsinki-based *We Jazz Records* affirm the ascendancy of the Finnish small group approach to the music.

Helsinki-based drummer **Joonas Leppänen** leads the quartet **Alder Ego** on *// (WJ10; 38:07 ★★★½)*, the second recording for this ensemble of prominent Finnish players. The group aesthetic accentuates synchronized horns on disjointed melodies against cool, conversational percussive lines—the band is ever in motion, always presaging the next thing. With this in mind, the seven originals here proceed almost like chapters in a book: On “Leviathan,” the opening track, listeners first hear the discord between Tomi Nikku’s trumpet and Jarno Tikka’s sax. Later, on the angular “Cubism,” each player takes a turn in asserting his singular voice through masterly solos, and later still, on “Flight,” these individual statements begin to coalesce into a soaring narrative. By the final cut, “Solitude,” the soloists have settled into a unison voice held in place by bassist Teemu Åkerblom’s determined punch on the quarter note. To absorb the relatedness in these tracks, though, it’s best to listen to the entire album in one sitting. Leppänen, who spent some time developing his craft in Sweden, Germany and the U.S., raises the bar with these absorbing, expressionistic compositions.

We Jazz Live Plates, Vol. 1, Berlin 27.10.17 (WJ09; 46:27 ★★★★★) is the first of *We Jazz*’s live albums, recorded, as the title suggests, in Berlin during autumn 2017. The album captures two tunes each from the three Finnish trios that headlined at the Scope Festival, a German-Finnish event held in the heart of Berlin’s counterculture club district. Despite

the hipster locale and the raw vibe of the live recording—at times on different tracks a siren wails in the background—most of album features unadulterated swing, albeit of the contemporary Sámi variety. Don’t underestimate the excitement here—these aren’t your standard swing tunes. **The Bowman Trio** sets into an infectious bounce on “The Hillary Step” and offers up plenty of ardent, straight-ahead soloing all around, but the melody is strictly modern. Then the more lyric **Jaska Lukkarinen Trio** interjects smart, upbeat references to Charlie Parker’s burner “Donna Lee” on “Pengerkadulla 2017,” but the mood is otherwise decidedly relaxed. Finally, **Black Motor**, the third trio—which enhances its free composition with borrowings from world music (no swing here)—reprises the title cut from their 2017 *We Jazz* release *Branches*. The tune opens with a plaintive call on the South Indian *nagaswaram*—a signal that what follows will reach beyond the band’s Nordic horizons.

Swedish-born, Berlin-based saxophonist **Otis Sandsjö** makes his recording debut on *We Jazz* with the ambitious *Y-OTIS (WJ08; 36:42 ★★★★★)*. Of all the new *We Jazz* releases noted here, Sandsjö’s is the only one to use chordal instruments—in this case, a keyboard and three synthesizers. The use of keys has less to do with harmonic expression than with his exploration of jazz as a flexible (and accommodating) art form, though. On these compositions, Sandsjö pairs electronica with free improvisation to create what he dubs “liquid jazz,” a boundary-less genre that lies somewhere between post-bop and the avant-garde. Shifts between the two can seem impetuous: His tune “pata pata” starts with a sax riff in easily understood jazz-speak that morphs into an otherworldly techno section—a surprise, but not an unpleasant one. On tunes like “BOO!,” with its repeated folk licks and growling bass, and “ACINOR,” with its fast, fluttering cooperation between sax and synth, Sandsjö integrates the electronic bits more neatly. **DB**

Ordering info: wejazz.fi



Muriel Grossmann *Golden Rule*

RRGEMS 05

★★★★

The phrase “spiritual jazz” packs a promise and a threat. It plays into a mythology about the existence of a jazz that totally transcends commercial and material concerns. It also threatens the preponderance of someone explaining how they’re spiritual, but not religious. On her new album, saxophonist Muriel Grossmann avoids both these traps. *Golden Rule* conveys meditative tranquility and ecstatic joy without ever sounding overly pious. Most of the time, it’s also a lot of fun.

A chorus of instruments drone behind a number of tracks on *Golden Rule*, but Grossmann’s performance really is what makes it exceptional. Crisp drum and bass lines start off the stellar “Direction” as a guitar comps hypnotically and Grossman showcases her ability to get the best of a tune melodically. She plays a solo so lyrical every bar feels like a discrete composition. Bassist Gina Schwarz follows with a similarly inventive solo, the swirling drone below lending depth and color.

Golden Rule proudly wears John Coltrane’s influence, and “Traneing In” demonstrates Grossmann’s prowess on the soprano saxophone. Schwarz underpins the song with a spellbinding bass line that changes its pattern to great effect when guitarist Radomir Milojkovic takes a knotty, soulful solo. The tightness this group has built in its four years of playing sharpens its brisk take on the composition.

The practice of meditation deeply shaped *Golden Rule*. The drones underlying its tracks heighten the tension on certain offerings, but feel monotonous after a while. Fortunately, the dynamism of its soloists and the quartet’s telekinetic performance delivers the album’s aim: providing a listening experience akin to transcendence.

—Andrew Jones

Golden Rule: Golden Rule; Core; Promise; Direction; Traneing In; Trane; Light. (42:15/39:10)

Personnel: Muriel Grossmann, saxophones; Radomir Milojkovic, guitar; Gina Schwarz, bass; Uros Stamenkovic, drums.

Ordering info: rrgemsrecords.com



John Escreet *Learn To Live*

BLUE ROOM 1003

★★★★★

It's easy to fall into the trap of equating electronic keyboards—particularly synthesizers—with riff-heavy fusion. To do so, though, is to forget the radical avant-funkisms of Miles Davis' mid-'70s bands, to say nothing of Sun Ra.

UK-born keyboardist John Escreet has forgotten none of that, and with a formidable double-drum backline, a rock-solid bass-

ist and two all-star soloists, he's out to connect all the dots.

His band moves lithely between retro-synth romps featuring tones—blips, beeps and squawks—out of fashion since Keith Emerson's heyday to slick electronics that map to the drum snap of Eric Harland and Justin Brown. When he steps away from the all of that, though, Escreet displays the brawn and harmonic scope he became known for as a member of Antonio Sanchez's band.

That muscularity is essential when the bandleader goes toe-to-toe with Harland and Brown on "Global Citizen," a surging juggernaut that eventually downshifts for a final minute of playful dialogue between Nicholas Payton and Greg Osby. "Smokescreen," which follows, reverses the pattern, shifting from a long trumpet introduction to a raucous free segment, featuring both Payton and Escreet. The medium-tempo "A World Without Guns" extends the acoustic approach, providing Osby with the stage for a particularly compelling solo, and "Test Run" provides Escreet with his best opportunity to display formidable piano chops.

Once Escreet plugs in, he's only too willing to indulge his curiosity for decades-old sounds, churning up "Opening," which calls to mind the original Mahavishnu Orchestra

with its arpeggiated synth runs and Billy Cobham-esque drumming, and the title piece, which is filled with old-school synth tones that will sound novel to some listeners and merely annoying to others. The brief, closing "Humanity Please" also is something of a throwback, reminiscent of Alice Coltrane as channeled through *Welcome*-era Santana—shimmering synth and electric piano with a skein of saxophone floating above.

An album highlight, the strutting "Lady T's Vibe" sits somewhere in the middle, with a fat, popping bass line from Matt Brewer, subtle electronics, an attractive electric piano part and gorgeous trumpet work.

In lesser hands, this kind of high-contrast combination of contemporary acoustic improvisations and electronic explorations might come off as a binary loss, pleasing no one. But Escreet's genuine interest in both ends of the sonic spectrum is obvious, and his ability to bring such high-impact players along for the ride makes it work.

—James Hale

Learn To Live: Opening; Broken Justice (Kalief); Lady T's Vibe; Test Run; Learn To Live; A World Without Guns; Smokescreen; Global Citizen; Contradictions; Humanity Please. (67:28)

Personnel: John Escreet, piano, keyboards; Nicholas Payton, trumpet; Greg Osby, alto saxophone; Matt Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, Justin Brown, drums; Teresa Lee, vocals.

Ordering info: theblueroommusic.com

Fredrik Kronkvist *Kronicles*

CONNECTIVE 36541

★★★★½

Fredrik Kronkvist is one of many talented Scandinavian musicians who demonstrates that there's more to their jazz scene than the recondite Nordic tone. The Swedish alto saxophonist has been blazing across the European jazz scene for more than a decade, thanks to his flaring tone and propulsive improvisations. With frequent collaborations alongside esteemed American musicians, such as Jason Marsalis, Gregory Hutchinson and Aaron Goldberg, Kronkvist often anchors his music deep inside the modern hard-bop tradition.

That could play to his disadvantage, because the global jazz scene is overcrowded with such acolytes. That said, he delivers the goods persuasively and aggressively on his 15th disc, *Kronicles*. Showcasing all originals, the album brandishes Kronkvist's vivacious passages marvelously as the rhythm section sweeps them forward with combustible momentum. On most pieces, he and the ensemble charge forth in classic mid-'60s Coltrane fashion with Jeff "Tain" Watts' hyperkinetic polyrhythms and pianist Orrin Evans' spry accompaniments punctuating the bandleader's swaggering, often prolix excursions. The music burns so hot that listeners might want it to quell to better luxuriate in Kronkvist's iridescent tone and the quartet's flinty accord.

—John Murph



Kronicles: Oneness (Prelude); Fearless; Reborn; Ups And Downs; Devoted; Ancient To Future; Oneness (Interlude); Sunbeams; Daybreak; Nightfall; Oneness; Zenith. (79:40)

Personnel: Fredrik Kronkvist, alto saxophone; Orrin Evans, piano; Martin Sjöstedt, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

Ordering info: connectiverecords.com

Ran Blake/ Christine Correa

Streaming

RED PIANO 14599-4434

★★★★★

Ran Blake and Christine Correa have cultivated a unique musical relationship through their frequent collaborations, first by acknowledging the traditional lead/accompaniment approach and then charting a path that departs from precedent, sometimes radically.

This is clear from the opening cut of *Streaming*, a bracingly original exploration of Billie Holiday's "Don't Explain." Playing in a very flexible rubato, they each perform freely, with Blake alluding to, rather than replicating, the structure of the tune through clusters, dissonances and an occasional consonant voicing. His "solo," if that's the right word, floats around the composition in a way that honors it and keeps it in a clear, if abstract, light. And Correa's vocal, crisply articulated but bitingly emotional, defines a space that's parallel to Blake's; when the piano drops out for a few bars, she sails on, buoyed on a silence that nonetheless evokes the foundation Blake already had laid for her.

The unique dynamic of this first track heralds all that follows. The point is that when combining knowledge of tradition with wide-open ears and fearlessness, the road opens to exhilarating possibility. —*Bob Doerschuk*

Streaming: Don't Explain; Out Of This World; Lonely Woman; Stratusphunk I; Bebopper; All About Ronnie; Ah, El Novio No Quere Dinero; Stratusphunk II; Love Dance; Wende; Stratusphunk III; No More. (41:37)

Personnel: Ran Blake, piano; Christine Correa, vocals.

Ordering info: redpianorecords.com



Andy Milne & Dapp Theory

The Seasons Of Being

SUNNYSIDE 1482

★★★★★

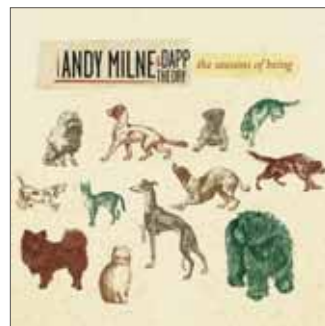
The music of Andy Milne & Dapp Theory always has been a balancing act between ethereal mystery and vigorous polyrhythm. As one might expect from a student of Steve Coleman, rhythms have had the upper hand. *The Seasons Of Being*, however, tips the balance toward mystery—by amplifying it, rather than diminishing the polyrhythm.

For one thing, Ben Monder's distorted guitar offers Robert Fripp-like lines that cross bar lines and accents. The cellos usually are arco and highly emotive, weeping delicately over the piano on "The Guardian." Informed by Milne's recent bout with cancer, *The Seasons Of Being* is intended as healing music, perhaps determining its gentler flow. Still, there's plenty of groove; drummer Kenny Grohowski does the funk-swinging on "Surge & Splendor" and plays a punctilious march on "The Cusp." But bassist Christopher Tordini is no slouch, and the horn players carry considerable weight as well. Trumpeter Ralph Alessi's clean, bright tone and virtuosity act as rhythmic agents of their own. There's still a balance on *The Seasons Of Being*, it's just been recalibrated with satisfying results. —*Michael J. West*

The Seasons Of Being: Surge & Splendor; The Cusp; The Guardian; Scotopia; Satanama; Three-Way Mirror; Ancestree; Luminescence; Capturing The Castle. (51:36)

Personnel: Andy Milne, piano; Aaron Kruziki, soprano saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet, douguk; Christopher Tordini, acoustic, electric bass; Kenny Grohowski, drums; Ben Monder, guitar; Ralph Alessi, trumpet; John Moon (1, 4, 6), La Tanya Hall (1, 3, 6, 8, 9), vocals; Michael Attias, alto, baritone saxophone; Christopher Hoffman (2, 4, 5, 6, 9), Judy Redhage (1, 3, 4), cello.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Brad Goode Quintet

That's Right!

ORIGIN 82764

★★★★★

Practically every possible sound explodes from Brad Goode's trumpet on *That's Right!*

Goode's pyrotechnics begin with a flourish on "Half Moon," and his full-throated melodic lines quickly are repeated by Ernie Watts on tenor saxophone; his passages equal and often extend Goode's solos and ideas. On "Regret," essentially a ballad, Goode makes a spectacular ascent up the scales, before settling into a relaxed mode. But even here, with a matching efficiency from Watts, the trumpet is given a thorough workout. Kelly Sill's bass tones things down, his expressive pulse accentuated by drummer Adam Nussbaum's laidback beat. One of the pleasures of "Perplexity" is pianist Adrean Farrugia's opening, which prefigures the sass and sizzle of Nussbaum's drums and Goode's muted, but tantalizing, sprints. "We Three" could have been named "We Five," because the group meshes with a smooth intensity, ushered along by the indistinguishable notes by Farrugia and Goode.

Perhaps, as expected, "Jug Ain't Gone" is Watts' opportunity to take the spotlight. The final exchanges of fours drives this point home and also suggests the ensemble's desire to prolong the session. —*Herb Boyd*

That's Right!: Half Moon; Regret; Perplexity; Blues In The Night; A Sense Of Fairness; Letter From Home; We Three; Who Parked The Car?; I Want To Talk About You; Jug Ain't Gone. (55:54)

Personnel: Brad Goode, trumpet; Ernie Watts, tenor saxophone; Adrean Farrugia, piano; Kelly Sill, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums.

Ordering info: originarts.com



Charlie Porter

Charlie Porter

PORTER HOUSE PRESS 001

★★★½

With Wynton Marsalis as his mentor at The Juilliard School, trumpeter Charlie Porter, 40, could have been eager to record. Yet, Porter is releasing his first album as a leader alongside 21 of Oregon's finest musicians and New York's Majid Khaliq. It's been worth the wait.

Porter begins with virtuosic solo trumpet on "Prologue," where he foreshadows the album's compositional themes. "Mel Smiles," a playful duo with drummer Mel Brown, is followed by a locked-in trio and a sizzling quartet setting. A fiery quintet leads to "Brown Study," then a feature of horns in a sextet. Porter moves across the instrumentation palindrome—compositions for solo trumpet through sextet and back—with another quintet, then a country-infused gypsy jazz quartet. A swinging trio then a piano/trumpet duo move toward the palindrome's conclusion. "Epilogue" closes the series with Porter's poignant solo trumpet. Juggling 22 musicians, Porter captures sundry moods within his clever compositional framework, the bandleader's technical wizardry patiently unfolding. —*Kerlie McDowall*

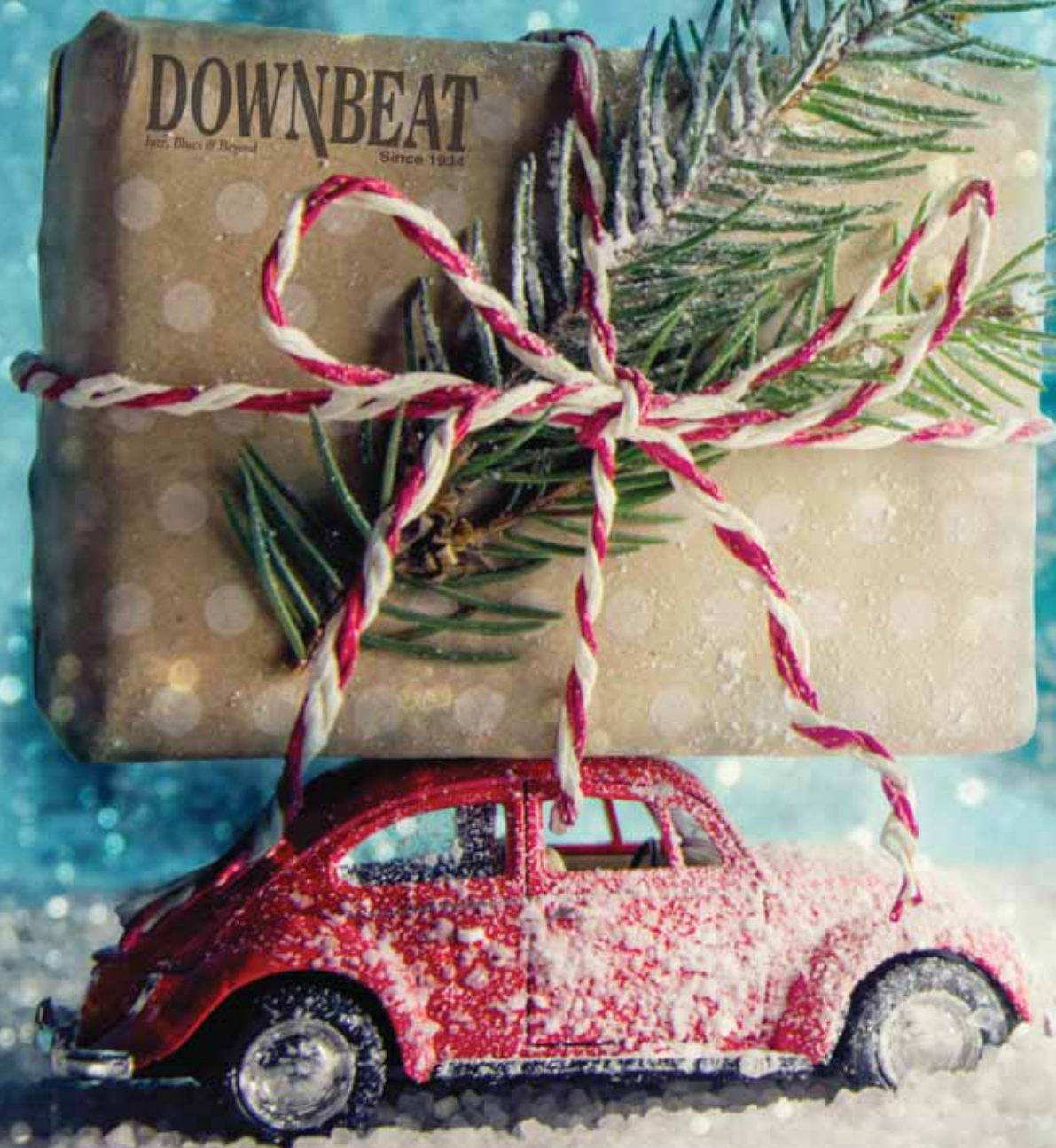
Charlie Porter: Prologue; Mel Smiles; Rondo For Sticky; New Beginnings; A Lover Scorned; Brown Study; Messenger; Skain Train; Morning Glory; Anthem; Epilogue. (64:08)

Personnel: Charlie Porter, trumpet; Mel Brown (2), Alan Jones (3, 6, 7), Michael Raynor (4), Timothy Rap (8), drums; David Goldblatt (4), Greg Goebel (5), Dan Gaynor (7), George Colligan (10), piano; Jon "Sticky" Lakey (3), Bill Athens (4), Dylan Sundstrom (5), Tim Gilson (6), Tom Wakeling (7), Cary Miga (8), Chuck Israels (9), bass; John Nastos, alto, soprano saxophone (5, 6); David Evans, tenor saxophone (6, 7); John Moak, trombone (6); Majid Khaliq, violin (8); Christopher Woitach, guitar (9).

Ordering info: charlieportermusic.com



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Judi's compositions are like her paintings – Magical!
- Sheila Jordan, NEA Jazz Master

"After careful listening to Silvano's thought provoking lyrics, all I can say is the album has become a permanent fixture on my iPhones playlist."
- Eric Alan, alljazzradio.co.za

"Judi Silvano is an amazing vocalist and improviser! Her communication with guitarists Bruce Arnold and Kenny Wessel is telepathic and the music they create is fresh and inspiring!
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www.judisilvano.com www.unitrecords.com

Blues / BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

A Seemingly Endless Reach

Kiran Ahluwalia, *7 Billion (Six Degrees 2018; 30:34 ★★★★★)* Kiran Ahluwalia's superb new album will be tagged as a "world" release, yet it's such a genre-jumper that any label fails to do it justice. There's a lot going on in the New York-based singer's bracing music, with the Punjabi folk and Indian classical music she was raised on interfacing with Malian blues, American blues, blues-rock and soul. Singing in Urdu and reaching peaks of self-affirmation, Ahluwalia gives an emotional richness to originals about, say, tearing down the religious barriers separating people ("Khafa" and "Jhoomo") and overcoming the scourge of regret ("Kuch Aur"). Across the six-track program, her husband, Rez Abbasi, plays guitar, Louis Simao plays accordion and organ, and four more performers reveal a technical and inspirational breadth on par with Ahluwalia's. Abbasi's innovative arrangements probe a palette of timbres.

Ordering info: kiranmusic.com

Darren Watson, *Too Many Millionaires (Beluga 004; 32:45 ★★★½)* Showing his measured approach to country blues, New Zealander Darren Watson takes on the moneyed class, deceitful politicians and two-timing lovers in the words to his well-drawn, engaging tunes, all eight respectable of tradition without seeming unctuous or archaic. There are, indeed, fresh qualities to his vocals and guitar work, and the resulting warm vibe can suggest Guy Davis'. Locking right into Watson's dramatic range are the harmonica of Terry Casey and string bass, piano and percussion.

Ordering info: darrenwatson.com

Various Artists, *Chicago Plays The Stones (Raisin' Music 1701; 54:09 ★★★★★)* Every few years, Larry Skoller produces a celebratory album of Chicago blues. The latest has three generations of talent following arrangements by French harmonica player Vincent Bucher (part of Skoller's alert Living History Band) that change Rolling Stones standards, such as "Satisfaction" and "Let It Bleed," into models of South Side orthodoxy. Everyone from elder statesmen Buddy Guy and Billy Boy Arnold to modernists Omar Coleman and Ronnie Baker Brooks appear involved with the words they sing well or passably. Nice cameos by both Mick Jagger and Keith Richards.

Ordering info: chicagoplaysthestones.com

Frank Bey, *Back In Business (Nola Blue 006; 42:30 ★★★★★)* Frank Bey, who used to open for his friend Otis Redding, invokes a particular vibe of blues-tinctured



Kiran Ahluwalia

REZ ABBASI

soul music. After three well-praised albums and occasional concerts with Bay Area guitarist Anthony Paule's band, he's switched over to producer-drummer Tom Hambridge in Nashville. Bey's singing retains its undeniable integrity and magnetism, but songs by Hambridge aren't up to inviting him into the fascinating emotional territory that Christine Vitale explored when working with Paule. The septuagenarian's knowing version of Mighty Sam McClain's "Where You Been So Long?" is the highlight.

Ordering info: nola-blue.com

Ana Popovic, *Like It On Top (Artist-eXclusive; 42:35 ★★)* The view's not all that good. Singer and guitarist Ana Popovic, originally from Serbia, uses this concept album about female empowerment to shift from her contemporary blues style into one aligned with producer Keb' Mo's. But her sensibility isn't so distinct. Just the ballad "Slow Dance" sets a poignant tone. Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Robben Ford guest.

Ordering info: anapopovic.com

Tony Joe White, *Bad Mouthin' (Yep Roc 2593; 50:15 ★★★★★)* Swampy dread and heat wave-languor co-exist in old-timer Tony Joe White's blues: a skeletal construct of his near-whispered gruff voice, his stylized guitar and harmonica, plus sidekicks' subdued bass and drums. The Louisiana man responsible for "Polk Salad Annie" long has had a picturesque way with melodies and lyrics, here placing five moody originals amid revamps of genre staples like "Big Boss Man" and "Boom Boom." Best appreciated in the pitch dark at 3 a.m. **DB**
Ordering info: yeproc.com



David Hazeltine *The Time Is Now*

SMOKE SESSIONS 1806

★★★

All evidence suggested that the new album from David Hazeltine was going to be a thing of wonder. The veteran pianist had written a sturdy set of originals with a trio in mind and chosen a nice selection of standards and pop-oriented covers. More importantly, he brought in two legendary players, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Al Foster, to join him on the session. While there are moments when the stars align on *The Time Is Now* and some genuine sparks start to fly, the overall mood of the album is surprisingly starchy and stiff.

Much of that feeling is the result of Foster's performance on the album. The drummer opts for a minimalist approach, relying primarily on ride cymbal strides, punctuated with little splashes of snare. It's an interesting approach that leaves a lot of space for Hazeltine and Carter to dash around in, but it feels tentative and often unsteady. He serves the music better on tracks when he sticks to brushes, giving "In A Sentimental Mood" and the bobbing "Cabin In The Sky" a warm flush.

Carter keeps a steady, if indistinct, hand on these tracks. He seems perfectly content to provide the ballast, so that Hazeltine can bob and dance like a leaf in the wind. The pianist is in fine form; high in the mix and dashing off languid melodies, marked by angular flourishes and punchy ostinatos. He sounds like he's in his element in the full trio setting, even more so on his solo cover of James Taylor's "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight," where his sound evokes a flow from gentle courtship into giddy thrall with ease. If only the rest of *The Time Is Now* could have been infected with that same energy.

—Robert Ham

The Time Is Now: The Time Is Now; The Odd Couple; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes; Cabin In The Sky; Blues For Eddie; Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight; When I'm Here With You; The Parlayer; In A Sentimental Mood; Muse Of Montgomery; Signals. (60:04)

Personnel: David Hazeltine, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Al Foster, drums.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com

Ivo Perelman & Rudi Mahall

Kindred Spirits

LEO RECORDS 840/841

★★★

Ivo Perelman & Jason Stein

Spiritual Prayers

LEO 842

★★½

Tenor saxophonist Ivo Perelman has to be one of the most prolific instrumentalists of the 21st century, regularly releasing as many as a half-dozen albums a year—often in league with top players on the New York avant-jazz scene. The 57-year-old Brazilian's latest venture is two duo albums, each pairing him with a bass clarinetist: Rudi Mahall and Jason Stein, remarkably fleet players based in Germany and Chicago, respectively. Perelman has titled both albums in keeping with his ideal of free improvisation as a spiritual bonding practice, though track names are strictly utilitarian, merely being the runtime of each song.

Perelman has chosen apt partners for what he is aiming to achieve, even if the resulting swirl of severe, serrated blowing will be as maddening to some ears as it is mesmerizing to others. As a double album, *Kindred Spirits* certainly can be overwhelming, with Perelman and Mahall—sans chordal color—going at it seemingly without end. Dip into the set, though, and listeners will find such noir-ish highlights as the woozy "12:00," which sounds like the score to a pair of drunk pals taking the long way home after a night of trouble. The squeaks and squawks of "2:24" will



appeal only to the hardy faithful, though the two horns—their tones assuming an almost brotherly resemblance—keen in an uncannily kindred way on "6:23."

While *Spiritual Prayers* can set one's teeth on edge with the squealing of "2:12," this album has its pools of ruminative allure. Midway through "7:54," Perelman breaks out his circus wail to rise tunefully above Stein's woody riffs and key-clacking effects. Both players wind and whisper around each other to start "6:50," eventually ending on a striking unison cry. Perelman's music can be easier to respect than it is to love, but his indefatigable energy across a discography of nearly 100 titles remains admirable, even incredible.

—Bradley Bamberger

Kindred Spirits: Disc one: 7:21; 5:56; 12:00; 12:51; 12:22. Disc two: 8:49; 9:36; 2:24; 3:36; 12:26; 5:11; 6:23. (50:41/48:43).

Personnel: Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Rudi Mahall, bass clarinet.

Spiritual Prayers: 6:50; 8:02; 7:54; 2:12; 9:01; 9:06; 8:59; 6:42. (58:31)

Personnel: Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Jason Stein, bass clarinet.

Ordering info: leorecords.com

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Rachel Caswell *We're All In The Dance*

TURTLE RIDGE 003

★★★★½

Rachel Caswell has a distinctive, versatile voice and a flexible style.

The singer's latest recording, *We're All In The Dance*, features her performing a diverse set of material arranged by guitarist Dave Stryker, while joined by an all-star group. The tight and intuitive interplay between pianist Fabian Almazan and bassist Linda May Han Oh—with subtle support from drummer Johnathan Blake—is a constant joy.

The program begins with a medium-tempo rendition of Sting's "Fragile," one of three pieces on which the singer's sister, violinist Sara Caswell, makes an appearance. "A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening" is swung and contains some horn-like scatting, while the next two songs (the folkish "We're All In The Dance" and a surprisingly abstract rendition of Bob Dorough's "Devil May Care") offer a change of pace. But Caswell is at her best on a Brazilian-tinged ballad version of "Two For The Road" and in her lowdown blues singing on "Drown In My Own Tears." This worthy set concludes with a thoughtful, drumless treatment of "Reflections (Looking Back)," Jon Hendrick's words set to Thelonious Monk's "Reflections."

—Scott Yanow



We're All In The Dance: Fragile; A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening; We're All In The Dance; Devil May Care; Two For The Road; Drown In My Own Tears; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; Tell Me A Bedtime Story; Dexterity; Reflections (Looking Back). (58:26)

Personnel: Rachel Caswell, vocals; Dave Stryker, guitar; Fabian Almazan, piano; Fender Rhodes; Linda May Han Oh, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums; Sarah Caswell, violin (1, 3, 5).

Ordering info: rachelcaswell.com

The Necks *Body*

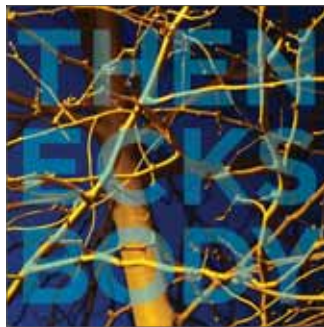
NORTHERN SPY 104

★★★★½

By now, the Australian trio's music has garnered a solid reputation. And true to their habit, The Necks' new recording consists of one single epic composition. However, four clearly distinct sections emerge.

The first one is typical. Drummer Tony Buck sustains a hard-driven tempo, bassist Lloyd Swanton maintains a simple heartbeat and pianist Chris Abrahams literally tickles the keys of his piano to provide the unique variations through single-note arpeggios or progressions. The music then dissolves into a more open sequence, where piano and bass are intertwined in a pulse, while a dripping organ and strummed guitar ebb and flow. (Buck and Abrahams often overdubbed to provide a full and expansive backdrop.) Then, the music swells before breaking into a hard-rocking frontal assault. This is where *Body* begins providing a different experience and offers some unsuspected moments. Front and center is Buck's screaming electric guitar, which creates a wall of sound backed by a trio tightly locked in a pattern dominated by a banged five-note piano motif. This segment ends almost as abruptly as it began, moving toward a contemplative mood. For those who might lose their patience with The Necks' modus operandi, *Body* could encourage further investigations of their take on minimalism and trance music.

—Alain Drouot



Body: Body. (56:42)

Personnel: Chris Abrahams, piano, keyboards; Lloyd Swanton, bass; Tony Buck, drums, percussion, guitar.

Ordering info: northernspyreccs.com

Pierre Dørge *Soundscapes*

STEEPLECHASE 31846

★★★★½

Veteran Danish guitarist Pierre Dørge has traversed many contexts during the past few decades. On *Soundscapes*, Dørge, alongside a malleable group of three horns, stretches in appealing ways, branching out into new terrain.

The album opens with "Mingus' Birthday Party," which counts some identifiably Mingus-esque twists of earthy, arty melody, then moves into "Lullaby For Sun Ra." That "lullaby" nods in the direction of that late artist's musical thinking, a mediation between tradition and experimentation central to Dørge's ethos. The guitarist offers a tenuous, echoey tone and a spindly rhythmic sense, sometimes leaning into the sound of oozing chords via volume-pedal swells, which can sound slightly at odds with his acoustic allies' richer sonorities. While the leader provides a sturdy compositional foundation and guides players through varied terrain, the star soloists are the organically virtuosic trombonist Conrad Herwig and tenor saxophonist Stephen Riley, who summon muscular might or lyrical breathiness in balladic moments. Down in the rhythm section, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Adam Nussbaum provide the necessary flex, swing and grounding for Dørge's latest musical gaming project.

—Josef Woodard



Soundscapes: Mingus' Birthday Party; Lullaby For Sun Ra; Enigmatic Twilight; Alligator In Paradise; Bambla Jolifanti; Afrikaa Mbizo Dyani; A Rose For Laurent; Mirjam's Dada Dance; Sim Sim Ba. (61:36)

Personnel: Pierre Dørge, guitar; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Stephen Riley, tenor saxophone; Conrad Herwig, trombone; Jay Anderson, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

Brandon Seabrook Trio *Convulsionaries*

ASTRAL SPIRITS 076

★★★★½

Brandon Seabrook is no stranger to the trio format, but this one is different. Instead of the power-trio setting he's used to frantic effect with Needle Driver and Seabrook Power Plant, this is a percussion-free string ensemble with cellist Daniel Levin and bassist Henry Fraser.

Seabrook confines himself to electric guitar on *Convulsionaries*, eschewing both banjo and metal-influenced shredding. But he's still dealing with rock influences. The choppy chords he lays down at anxiety-inducing tempos and the crabbed picking that pokes out of the cracks between thick bowed textures suggest Robert Fripp's playing in the 1972-'75 edition of King Crimson, if he'd been stripped of pop influences.

Effects-warped electricity faces off against woody resonance, dramatic bowed passages wrap around terse twangs and grinding riffs challenge prickly pizzicato sound-bursts. Some of the most exciting playing comes during free passages, as during the rustling cello-bass exchange bisecting "Qorikancha." It's also in such moments that *Convulsionaries'* dourness briefly relents. While the knottiness of Seabrook's pieces invites and rewards close listening, it would be nice to hear the music open up a bit.

—Bill Meyer



Convulsionaries: Bovicial; Groping At A Breakthrough; Crux Accumulator; Vulgar Mortals; Qorikancha; Mega Faunatic. (45:24)

Personnel: Brandon Seabrook, guitar; Henry Fraser, bass; Daniel Levin, cello.

Ordering info: astralspirits.bandcamp.com



Jo Lawry
The Bathtub And The Sea

SELF RELEASE

★★★★½

The title track on *The Bathtub And The Sea* feels more orchestral, and then more indie folk, than anything expected of a jazz album. Legato brass offer a tone that's given room to breathe, instead of perhaps the sharp and loudly pronounced style of big-band or free-form jazz. Brush-stroked snare, tambourine and Jo Lawry's delicate voice float along with crisp strums of the cornerstone acoustic guitar, making it difficult not to consider a crossed path or two between Lawry and sing-

er-songwriter Aoife O'Donovan. The 7/4 time signature only adds to the intriguing parallel.

Even with so much folk stylization, jazzy artistry breaks through. Chromaticism on "The Kitchen Sink" pairs with Lawry's rhythmic guitar, prominent shakers, twinkling piano and gracefully bowed violin to evoke a Latin flair, and the slower tempo creates a sensual air. Remnants of the lighter Latin fare resurface on "Olive Tree." An easygoing upright bass swings the music closer to jazz, as the acoustic guitar's notes trade definition and clean edge for a tonal softness befitting classical Spanish guitar. And while Lawry's collaboration with Sting on "Unlearning" isn't the finale, it feels the most fantastical of her relationship-driven inspirations. The synchronous harmonies draped in a choir-like reverb, accents of poised pizzicato and a gradual crescendo that run the entire song toward a grand apex, epitomize how Lawry brings emotion and imaginative metaphors to a fully fleshed-out place.

—Kira Grunenberg

The Bathtub And The Sea: The Bathtub And The Sea; Please Don't Think; Unlearning; Jenny Kissed Me; If I Saw You; So Far, So Good; The Kitchen Sink; Wedding Song; Olive Tree; Open Me Up; The End Of The World. (47:07)

Personnel: Jo Lawry, vocals, guitar; Adam Levy, guitar; Will Vinson, piano, keyboard; Nate Wood, bass; Dan Rieser, drums; Theo Bleckmann, vocals; Jamey Haddad, percussion; Ben Wendel, bassoon; Orlando Le Fleming, bass; Nadje Noordhuis, trumpet; Chris Komer, French horn; Ryan Keberle, trombone; Alan Ferber, trombone, bass trombone; Hideaki Aomori, clarinet; Sting, vocals (3); Attaca Quartet, strings.

Ordering info: jowlawry.net

Jerome Sabbagh & Greg Tuohey
No Filter

SUNNYSIDE 1522

★★★★½

French saxophonist Jerome Sabbagh, a member of Paul Motian's last trio, and New Zealand-bred guitarist Greg Tuohey rekindle a close musical partnership from their Berklee College of Music days on this engaging quartet outing. Joined by the flexible rhythm tandem of bassist Joe Martin and drummer Kush Abadey, Sabbagh and Tuohey present seven fresh originals that pack a potent punch, swing with a quiet authority and tug at the heartstrings.

Sabbagh's sinister opener, "Vicious," has Tuohey bringing a decidedly rockish edge to the proceedings with his distortion-laced abandon, while Abadey swings freely, before unleashing a dynamic solo of his own. Tuohey flows with clean, warm tones on his melodic groover "Lurker" and his gentle ballad "No Road," the latter underscored by Abadey's sensitive brushwork and showcasing Sabbagh's patient, singing tones on the poignant melody. Tuohey's "Chaos Reigns," the most adventurous track of the set, opens with a delicate arpeggiated guitar solo, before the full band delves into some collective exploring in a rubato mode. Sabbagh's through-composed "Cotton" strikes a som-



ber note with Tuohey's minor-key chording, the tenorist's plaintive long tones and Abadey's mallets on the kit setting a dramatic tone.

This superb-sounding album, which was recorded live in the studio without edits or overdubs to half-inch, two-track analog tape, ends on an cheerful note with Sabbagh's lilting "You Are On My Mind," recalling some of the relaxed, buoyant melodies from John Scofield's *Quiet* or *A Moment's Peace*.

—Bill Milkowski

No Filter: Vicious; Lurker; No Road; Chaos Reigns; Ghostly; Cotton; You Are On My Mind. (42:25)

Personnel: Jerome Sabbagh, tenor saxophone; Greg Tuohey, guitar; Joe Martin, bass; Kush Abadey, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

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New Music Makes the Past Present

Since forming in 2005, the New York ensemble **Yarn/Wire** has displayed a relentless adventurous streak, whether in its unusual instrumentation (two pianists and two percussionists) or its diverse, deeply experimental repertoire. **Images Of Duration (Northern Spy 103; 56:48 ★★★★★)** by composer Alex Mincek stands among the most visceral and interesting pieces in the group's history. The composer wrote the work, which takes its title from the writings of philosopher Henri Bergson, to investigate scale and duration—specifically exploring how our perception of something, including a lengthy piece of music, shifts over time. Pianists Lisa Barger and Ning Yu play instruments tuned a quarter tone apart from the other (which results in wonderfully biting harmonics), and percussionists Russell Greenberg and Ian Antonio deploy tuned gongs, air canisters, waterphone, a baby monitor and a white noise machine in addition to standard drums, tuned percussion and chimes. The piece offers a wild, dynamically jarring ride through passages of delicateness and punishing volume, as sustained stretches of abstract sound are punctuated by harrowing, sudden spasms. As a whole, the hour-long piece covers vast terrain, nearly all of it riddled with exquisite tension.

Ordering info: northernspyrecs.com

Morton Feldman's 1982 masterpiece **For John Cage** also uses time to influence perception, organizing a handful of set patterns within three discrete sections, spread out over the course of about 75 minutes. The length of the work challenges the listener in hearing its form, as repetition of a set number of pitch patterns makes it increasing difficult not simply to become immersed in the delicate play of microtonal violin passages and hushed, resonant piano phrases. London-based musicians **Aisha Orazbayeva** (violin) and **Mark Knopp** (piano) deliver a gorgeously austere, decidedly quiet reading of the pared-down epic (**All That Dust 01; 74:01 ★★★★★**). The pair cycles through

the composer's simple patterns with exquisite precision, each utterance voiced with different bow techniques and amounts of pressure, to imbue the sense of stasis with endless change.

Ordering info: allthatdust.com

The music featured on **Harmonium (New World 80803; 64:20 ★★★★★½)**, by James Tenney (1934–2006), eschews extended duration, but the works composed between 1971 and 1984 vigorously investigate how our ears perceive sound. Beautifully performed by members of the Amsterdam-based **Scordatura Ensemble**, most of the piece embraces the harmonic series, which tends to peel apart pitches contained within a single tone, most of which we hear as a single sound. "Harmonium #1" layers arcing long tones chosen from a set of available pitches; singer Alfrun Schmid, violist Elisabeth Smalt and keyboardist Bob Gilmore produce a dazzling atmosphere of rising-and-falling tones, overlapping in shapes with the natural grace of sand dunes. The shifting combinations create a kind of sonic house of mirrors that suggest a motionless surface. But beneath the calm, the movement of harmony feels thrillingly unstable.

Ordering info: newworldrecords.org

The remarkable Montreal string ensemble **Quatuor Bozzini** masterfully articulates the music of London-based Canadian composer Cassandra Miller on **Just So (Another Timbre 129; 48:23 ★★★★★½)**, tackling works inspired by birdsong, as well as the music of J.S. Bach. The centerpiece of the album is clearly "About Bach," an expansion of an earlier piece for solo viola. Miller transcribed a melody from Bach's *Chaconne* into a warm, affecting chorale, repeating in subtle mutated iterations for nearly 25 minutes, shadowed by one of the violins, tracing out a ghostly, high-pitched scale through the entire work. The results are both otherworldly and seriously bracing. **DB**

Ordering info: anothertimbre.com



Miki Yamanaka *Miki*

CELLAR LIVE 020718

★★★★½

On her witty, appealing debut as a leader, pianist Miki Yamanaka runs free and easy with a fresh spin on mainstream pop. Her light touch tickles airy tunes with will-o'-the-wisp turns and oddly formal grace notes. Yamanaka amps up these excursions with celebratory out-choruses, flecked with two-fisted chords and sharp-eyed phrases. The democratic pianist gives plenty of solo space from the git-go to her top-notch bandmates. "Mr. Pancake," a quirky number with flippant chord sequences, quickly defers to Orlando Le Fleming's bass, brisk fours with Steve Nelson's vibraphone and Bill Stewart's drums rising over a late vamp.

There's plenty of metric mischief afoot, too. "Eyes" is a breezy waltz, direct and honest.

An exuberant "Monk's Dream" takes shape, bright and playful, as it floats between 3 and 4 with sneaky bar extensions. Phrase lengths stretch on the strutting "Stuffed Cabbage," with sizzling drums fours.

Sprinkles of Andrew Hill's adventurous spirit and Aki Takase's potent punch imbue the companionable set. "Book" is a serious read with a deceptively easy backbeat; the catchy tune "A Fake Hero" opens up fluid, easy solos; and "Sea Salt" is a quixotic diversion, marrying stark piano with Stewart's spray, pan-cymbals and mallets. The lone standard, "For All We Know," showcases Nelson's glancing lyricism. Wait for it: The most puckish, curiously omnidirectional track is the bustling closing blues, "What About Food," unconventional à la Herbie Nichols—or David Chang.

What a tasty, jolly journey.

—Fred Bouchard

Miki: Mr. Pancake; Eyes; Monk's Dream; Sea Salt; Stuffed Cabbage; Book; A Fake Hero; For All We Know; Wonder; What About Food. (57:57)

Personnel: Miki Yamanaka, piano; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Bill Stewart, drums; Orlando Le Fleming, bass.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com



Reginald Chapman *Prototype*

FRESH SELECTS 027

★★★★

Reginald Chapman's latest album, *Prototype*, is foundationally a jazz album that, with its brass-heavy push, recalls the second-line lineage of New Orleans, meshed with the funk-inspired grooves of '70s fusion. But this Richmond, Virginia-born multi-instrumentalist's resume, which includes stints with indie rockers The Mountain Goats and Foxygen, should reveal that this vibrant new collection—the first released under his own name—plumbs much deeper musical reserves than can be summed up by a single genre descriptor.

A primary influence of Chapman's work, particularly his 2017 release under the name Pressure Fit, is hip-hop, and that certainly finds its way into *Prototype*. The sinuous "Hoodie" recalls the cut-and-paste productions of J. Dilla with drummer Corey Fonville hitting stutter-step beats that sound like slowed down samples, as horns and keys flow like viscous liquid around him. Chapman also shows the debt he owes to '70s quiet-storm r&b on the seductive "Starting Now," a swirl of electric piano, modular synth and rubbery bass. There's even a touch of Autechre-like electronica found within the skittish grooves of album closer "Jebbish."

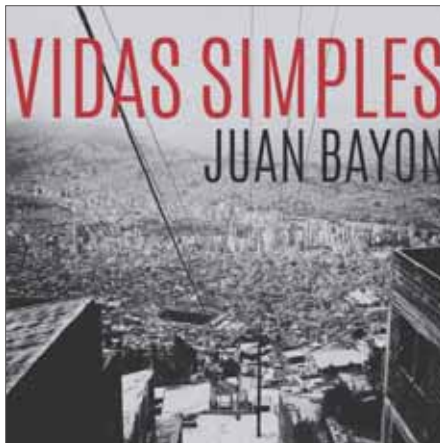
Chapman's spongy, pliable solos soak up the mood, reflecting and reacting with quick clusters of notes and smears of tonal color. And for an album that bears his name alone, the young musician subsumes his ego, sliding into a chorus of other trombonists and playfully nudging his cohort into the spotlight. Everyone rises to the occasion on *Prototype* with dauntless performances and ample heart.

—Robert Ham

Prototype: Prototype (Intro); You Go To My Head; Hoodie; Hoodie (Reprise); Starting Now; Mysterious Hope Of Glory; We Shall Overcome; Jebbish (Prelude); Jebbish. (35:51)

Personnel: Reginald Chapman, Ben Ford, Reggie Pace, Bryan Hooten, Karl Lyden, Scott Flynn, trombone; Marcus Tenney, John Lilley, David Hood, saxophone; Rob Qualllich, Ryan Easter, trumpet; Devonne Harris, Macon Mann, keyboard; Andrew Randazzo, bass; Corey Fonville, drums; Sam Reed, vocals (2).

Ordering info: freshselect.net



Juan Bayon *Vidas Simples*

EARSE&EYES 18-078

★★★★½

Issuing music both through his own label and others, bassist Juan Bayon is an exciting conduit for the fertile Argentine jazz scene. Buenos Aires has evolved a savvy collective of versatile players, and with his voracious, brow-raising new recording, Bayon's *Vidas Simples* manifests that scene's potential—an unexpected jazz frontier, marked by the unorthodox, groovy and impassioned.

Throughout the venture, Bayon and his cog-

nizant cohort exchange and accentuate musical personalities, while pushing the envelope. What's most enticing is the organic unraveling of the album's storyline—a testament to the recording's eponymous "simplicity" lies in its chemistry.

Opening track "Cumbia De Gambartes" and the climactic bossa-infused "Rupturas" showcase some true musicality from dual storytellers, pianist Santiago Leibson and saxophonist Lucas Goicoechea. Both teeter on the edge of an airtight pocket amid a labyrinth of textures and time changes—all anchored by microbes of a punctuated Latin influence. Look to the album's title track, too, for a subdued sampling of classic Buenos Aires rhythms awash in percussion and vibes.

You won't find any audacious solos in the mix, though Leibson's intro and vibraphonist Diego Urbano's conclusion on "Aural" unfold with passionate, painfully expressive energies. And even on his rare solo, during the cynically titled "Ego," Bayon weaves through a frantic bass maze of turnaround and runs with certainty and technique, leading dutifully, learning simultaneously and moving on, simply. —Hilary Brown

Vidas Simples: Cumbia De Gambartes; Pausa; Aural; Rupturas; Ego; La Vida Simple; Fortaleza. (36:49)

Personnel: Juan Bayon, bass; Lucas Goicoechea, alto saxophone; Santiago Leibson, piano; Diego Urbano, vibraphone; Sergio Verdine, drums.

Ordering info: earsandeyesrecords.com

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Past Pepper

For many jazz fans, the high point of **Art Pepper's** late-'70s comeback was a four-night stand at New York's Village Vanguard that was recorded for Contemporary Records and released, at first, as four albums, and later as a nine-CD set. These rangy, sometimes raucous performances (with pianist George Cables, bassist George Mraz and drummer Elvin Jones) captured the questing, Coltrane-inflected sound of his later years, while still reflecting the lyric, bop-schooled virtuosity of his early work.

But like most great moments in recorded jazz, those albums didn't just happen. Those sessions were the culmination of what was, unbelievably, Pepper's very first tour as a bandleader, and the whole thing likely never would have happened had it not been for the persuasive charm of Artists House Records chief John Snyder. According to Laurie Pepper, the saxophonist's widow, it was Snyder who suggested that he play the Vanguard (also a first), convinced club owners outside of New York to book Pepper, and who—after a return engagement at the Vanguard was requested—pitched making a live album there (although Lester Koenig and Contemporary, who had Pepper under contract, ultimately made the recording).

In that sense, **Unreleased Art Pepper, Vol. 10: Bourbon Street—Toronto, June 16, 1977 (Widow's Taste; 60:34/50:47/60:27 ★★★★★)** is a dry run for those sessions. Recorded six weeks before the Vanguard shows, it finds Pepper in front of a different rhythm section, but obtaining much the same results.

The three-CD set starts, impressively, with a semi-rubato introduction to Joe Gordon's "A Song For Richard," during which Pepper invokes the mood of *A Love Supreme*-era Coltrane without actually copping licks. After almost three minutes of mood setting, the bandleader states the theme and spends another four slow-building minutes working out the melodic and dramatic possibilities within the tune. It's breathtaking.

Listening to how easily the band follows Pepper's lead, it's hard to believe the group hadn't played together before that gig. At one point, Pepper warmly compliments Bernie Senensky, saying, "There's a certain rapport between a horn player and a piano player that, if it isn't there, nothing can happen."

Just as crucial, though, are the bassists, 17-year-old Dave Pilch, who was the mainstay for Pepper's Toronto gig, and 37-year-old Gene Perla, who sat in as preparation for accompanying him at the initial Vanguard



Art Pepper

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

show. Part of their dominance has to do with the way their basses were amplified, using a bridge pickup and a presumably powerful amp. But mostly, it's because each player moved freely between straight time-keeping and melodic, contrapuntal lines, a strategy that let Pepper move easily between a hard-driving bop approach and a freer, more harmonically daring line.

To make an easy comparison, when the group launches into a medium-tempo reading of "All The Things You Are," Perla maintains a straight-ahead walking line, sticking reasonably close to the roots. As Pepper pushes the harmonic boundaries, Perla doesn't merely follow, but prods, playing extensions that propel the saxophonist into evermore inventive extrapolations. But when they launch into an up-tempo run through "I'll Remember April," Perla seems to intuit where Pepper wants to stretch, and where he wants a more straightforward grounding.

Just as crucial, but in some ways more unsung, was drummer Terry Clarke, who manages to be almost imperceptible on the more balladic moments, but provided robust rhythmic support on up-tempo numbers without crowding Pepper out. Some of this has to do with Clarke's uncanny sense of swing, but also reflects the way he listened to the rest of the group and tempered his dynamics, so that the drumming delivered maximum drive with minimal intrusion.

Toronto jazz DJ Ted O'Reilly recorded this show for broadcast on CJRT-FM, the predecessor of the city's current JAZZ-FM. Mono air-check recordings of some performances previously have been bootlegged, but Laurie Pepper's lovingly restored set not only provides a stereo mix, but augments O'Reilly's takes with her own stereo cassette recordings. It's not quite the same as having been there, but is close enough to give the average listener the sense of being on a wave that's just about to break. **DB**

Ordering info: artpepper.net



Jakob Bro *Bay Of Rainbows*

ECM 2618

★★★★★

Danish guitarist Jakob Bro has said much of his music is constructed around melodies, but on this new album, melodies merely are suggested. That's not a criticism; Bro's music, closer to art song than pop, is atmospheric and painterly. And these six tunes, recorded during two nights at New York's Jazz Standard, are shimmering sonic homes Bro built with bassist Thomas Morgan and drummer Joey Baron.

Bracketed by versions of "Mild" that access the same tune through different doors, *Bay Of Rainbows* is a minimalist album of maximal depth and beauty. The first "Mild" builds slowly, Bro's guitar swelling from low coax to clarion declaration, before collapsing into Baron's cymbals and brushes. In the concluding version, Bro toys with volume, working small variations to shush the shimmering wisp to silence.

Most of the tunes here feature similar dynamics, evolving organically and without flash. "Copenhagen," a kind of round, is both economical and vivid in its very understatement. Bro is a man of few deeply played notes—his attack, no matter its force, makes a note ring until it's spent—and Morgan and Baron deepen his sonorities with their own. Bro's guitar is luminous, perhaps more at home with single notes than chording, and at times, one can't tell where Bro ends and Morgan begins, as at the end of "Evening Song."

Although repetition is part of his arsenal, Bro's nuanced touch and resonant tone make his music both hypnotic and dramatic. "Dug," a squall of a tune at the heart of *Bay Of Rainbows*, deploys wild electronics and shows how fearless this group can be. It puts the exquisite architecture of Bro's calmer constructs into perspective.

—Carlo Wolff

Bay Of Rainbows: Mild; Red Hook; Copenhagen; Dug; Evening Song; Mild (Variation). (47:11)

Personnel: Jakob Bro, guitar; Thomas Morgan, bass; Joey Baron, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Phronesis *We Are All*

EDITION 1118

★★★★

Phronesis now is up to its eighth studio album, offering no massively altered strategy, but consolidating a dynamic clashing of rigorous composition and improvisatory flight. Based in London, this crew consists of members from England, Denmark and Sweden, sticking to its stable lineup of keyboardist Ivo Neame, bassist Jasper Høiby and drummer Anton Eger.

The opening Høiby number, "One For Us," is nine minutes of evolving moods, beginning with a morose classical feel, as bowed bass and rippling keys herald the explosive entrance of the drums. It soon develops into a chase, as Neame ripples and races like an alternative Oscar Peterson, Eger's sticks clacking around rims. Eger's "The Edge" has an arty lounge quality, as if its cocktails are spiked, while "Breathless" is more concerned with enunciating its melody, rather than serving as a platform for individual's flash. The closing "The Tree Did Not Die" (another Eger tune) is the odd track out, as Neame plays keyboards and acoustic piano, creating cycling electronic textures. Staccato prodding ensues, roughing up the swirls, with all three players hitting the same percussive points, repeating alongside misty vocal chorus samples. This is the point where Phronesis moves confidently into a new musical space.

—Martin Longley

We Are All: One For Us; Matrix For D.A.; The Edge; Emerald Horseshoe; Breathless; The Tree Did Not Die. (40:58)

Personnel: Ivo Neame, piano, keyboards; Jasper Høiby, bass; Anton Eger, drums.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com



Alex Skolnick Trio *Conundrum*

PALMETTO/MRI 02

★★★★½

During his tenure with metal band Testament, Alex Skolnick earned guitar-hero status. But since 2001, he's taken a left turn, forming a jazz trio. Skolnick's attention to sound and touch is of note in this newer group, especially given his previous work.

Favoring a shimmering, crystalline sound, Skolnick employs an array of axes, including solidbody and hollowbody electrics, among others. The trio's initial works explored jazz treatments of classic metal repertoire. And it wasn't a gimmick: Skolnick proved those tunes to be intriguing canvases for improvisation. And on *Conundrum*, the guitarist emphasizes his own originals and his fine compositional skills. Open-eared drummer Matt Zebroski swings and rocks as called. But the unsung hero here is bassist Nathan Peck. Playing primarily upright, Peck rallies the collective power, but also injects a fat acoustic sound that lubricates the ensemble's phrasing and timbre. The bandleader covers a lot of ground, including the gorgeous chordal work and fingerpicking of "Unbound" and the lovely atmospheric of "Key Of Sea." On the finale, "Protect The Dream," Skolnick finally erupts into over-driven interplanetary shredding. After all, there's nothing wrong with shredding; it's about knowing where and why to do it. And Skolnick knows precisely that.

—Jeff Potter

Conundrum: Unbound; Django Tango; Conundrum; Gymnopédie, No. 1; Culture Shock; Dodge The Bumbula; Key Of Sea; A Question Of Moral Ambiguity; Protect The Dream. (54:50)

Personnel: Alex Skolnick, guitar; Nathan Peck, bass; Matt Zebroski, drums.

Ordering info: alexskolnick.com



Doug Webb *Fast Friends*

POSI-TONE 8187

★★★★★

L.A.-based saxophonist Doug Webb is an extremely busy player with a number of TV and movie credits, including *Law and Order* and *The Simpsons*, where he was Lisa Simpson's saxophone "voice." But every time he steps out as a leader, Webb makes the most of the opportunity, teaming up with high-quality musicians and choosing top-shelf material to go along with his traditional, but creative, originals.

On *Fast Friends*, he's brought in trombonist Michael Dease, pianist Mitchel Forman, bassist Chris Colangelo and drummer Roy McCurdy, and put together a program that explores multiple facets of the classic hard-bop sound. Webb contributes four originals, but the album also includes tunes by Lee Morgan and Charlie Parker, among others. The majority of the pieces are played fast and forcefully, with plenty of quick-witted interaction between saxophone and trombone. One notable exception is "Dream Stepper," which is set to a gently swaying Brazilian groove. "A Night In Tunisia," by contrast, starts out fast and becomes a rocket ride, with McCurdy slamming the kit in a way that belies his 81 years.

—Philip Freeman

Fast Friends: Last Trane To Georgia; Friends Again; High Groove, Low Feedback; Surfing The Webb; Ah-Leu-Cha; Dease Things; Dream Stepper; A Night In Tunisia; Dig Doug; The Things We Did Last Summer; Nopolo. (36:42)

Personnel: Doug Webb, tenor saxophone; Michael Dease, trombone; Mitchel Forman, piano; Chris Colangelo, bass; Roy McCurdy, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



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Justin Kauflin *Coming Home*

QWEST 003

★★★

There is a moment on “Country Fried” when pianist Justin Kauflin and his cohort interrupt what essentially is an album of tranquility, replete with all the overtures of a lazy afternoon in a bucolic setting. The sudden feeling of a hoedown or a Southern front-porch jam session gives guitarist Alan Parker space to explore some territory beyond general languidness.

Kauflin’s execution, his ability to ripple waves of notes from the keyboard flawlessly and evoke

Shai Maestro *The Dream Thief*

ECM 2616

★★½

The Israel-born, Brooklyn-based pianist Shai Maestro forged his reputation in bassist Avishai Cohen’s band between 2006 and 2011. His first ECM release as a leader finds Maestro with partners bassist Jorge Roeder and drummer Ofri Nehemya, but includes several stretches of solo piano. Most of the compositions here are the bandleader’s, but the album opens with “My Second Childhood,” by the Israeli singer-songwriter Matti Caspi. There are strong Middle Eastern ballad inflections to this solo piano interpretation, an introspective flow, with grand gestures and intimate decorations. It’s romantic, in an old-fashioned way.

The trio is complete for “The Forgotten Village,” with Roeder’s measured tread and drummer Nehemya’s fidgety details. There’s a similarity to labelmate Tord Gustavsen’s spiritual aura, but not as profoundly articulated. By the third track, there’s a feeling that the pace and tone aren’t going to vary much, but the title cut abruptly accelerates halfway through, agitating the restrained drama. The strongest piece, “New River, New Water,” offers closely entwined piano and bass, percussion dancing around them, Maestro’s right hand stuttering and scampering as he shouts out encourage-

colorful meadows of sound is unquestionably superb. But listeners wait in vain for the bandleader and his group to break out of an emotional sameness, to apply at least a patina of blues and a frisson of funk.

Except for bassist Chris Smith’s inventive interlude during his solo on “Strawberry Fields” and elements of drama from drummer Corey Fonville on “Somethin’ Somethin’,” the band seems content to spin in an unbroken circle of repetition. That’s not to say that repetition is valueless, it’s just that the music should take listeners somewhere other than over the same chord changes, the same chromatic, cascading runs and fills.

If *Coming Home* were a film score, it vividly would capture a young man walking down a country road on his way back from some venture abroad, happy to again see a small farmhouse or a welcoming family. If Kauflin had this in mind, he accomplished it magnificently. But it’s possible to add more than a filigree of groove to the backwoods. In short, *Coming Home* is a slow, modestly eventful trip with a destination that keeps receding on the horizon.

—Herb Boyd

Coming Home: Coming Home; Looking Forward; Pendulum; Transition; Lost; Country Fried; John My Beloved; Present Day; Strawberry Fields; Somethin’ Somethin’; Somethin’ Somethin’ (Revisited); The Carousel; Strawberry Fields Solo. (55:32)

Personnel: Justin Kauflin, piano, keyboards; Chris Smith, bass; Corey Fonville, drums, percussion; Alan Parker, guitar.

Ordering info: justinkauflin.com



ment. Following this surge, there’s a solo rumination on the standard “These Foolish Things (Remind Me Of You)” and a closing number, “What Else Needs To Happen (For Ana),” that includes samples of a Barack Obama speech on gun control. After the core of the recording, these two tracks seem like tacked-on afterthoughts, programmed at the end because they didn’t quite fit into the flow.

—Martin Longley

The Dream Thief: My Second Childhood; The Forgotten Village; The Dream Thief; A Moon’s Tale; Lifeline; Choral; New River, New Water; These Foolish Things (Remind Me Of You); What Else Needs To Happen (For Ana). (48:12)

Personnel: Shai Maestro, piano; Jorge Roeder, bass; Ofri Nehemya, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Abelita Mateus *Mixed Feelings*

VIVENDA 002

★★★½

On her second album, and her first self-produced effort, Abelita Mateus shows off an impressive ability to synthesize the sounds of her Brazilian home with jazz, the music that inspired her move to the States. Born in São Paulo, Mateus studied classical piano in her teens, but it was the sound of jazz, and the opportunities it offered for improvisation, that truly inspired her.

In Brazil, she played professionally with first-tier musicians, including Hermeto Pascoal. After moving to New York and studying jazz at William Paterson University, she met Grammy-winning guitarist Romero Lubambo, who produced her debut, 2017’s *Vivenda*; he sits in again on *Mixed Feelings*. On “Vamo N’eca,” he adds acoustic embellishments, engaging in a playful call-and-response with Mateus’ piano during the tune’s coda, and complements her quiet vocal and minimal Rhodes on songwriter Djavan’s “A Ilha.”

The title track opens with drummer Alex Kautz supplying a subtle samba rhythm to support the harmonic variations Mateus lays down with the help of Peter Slavov’s bass. The remaining tracks delve into the pianist’s love of jazz, generously granting her bandmates ample opportunity to show off impressive chops. On “Paizinho (Little Daddy),” Mateus dances around the melody, trading phrases with Matt Maranta’s tenor. “Patience” lives up to its title with a laid-back tempo, highlighted by Slavov’s bass solo and the ticking of Kautz’s snare. “Ligia” lets Mateus explore her improvisational skills, closing the album on a bossa nova pulse that’s more implied than stated outright. Currently, Mateus splits time between the Dizzy Gillespie Afro-Cuban Experience and her own Chameleon Music Trio, each situation allowing her to exhibit the range of her vocal and improvisational skills.

—j. poet

Mixed Feelings: Mixed Feelings; Vamo N’eca; A Ilha; Valquíria; Paizinho (Little Daddy); Bonita; Patience; Ligia. (49:16)

Personnel: Abelita Mateus, piano, Rhodes, vocals; Romero Lubambo, guitar; Peter Slavov, bass; Alex Kautz, drums; Matt Marantz, tenor saxophone; Phillip Gillette, drums, percussion (6:8).

Ordering info: abelita.com.br



Annie Chen Octet *Secret Treetop*

SHANGHAI AUDIO & VIDEO

★★★★

New York-based, Beijing-born Annie Chen follows her 2014 debut and her prior experience performing funk, soul and jazz in China with a naturally diverse set, showcasing her unique vocal styles and ability to fluidly blend a wide swath of influence and render it as a cohesive whole.

Trained on classical piano, Chen's scat vocals are her improvisational instrument, a percussive tool and way to communicate beyond language; her understanding of music from the Eastern Hemisphere and the ways it's fused to jazz melody is her unique skill as a singer, composer and leader. Consisting of musicians with connections to cultural traditions from Poland, Japan and North America, her octet brings additional spheres of influence to the global soundscapes.

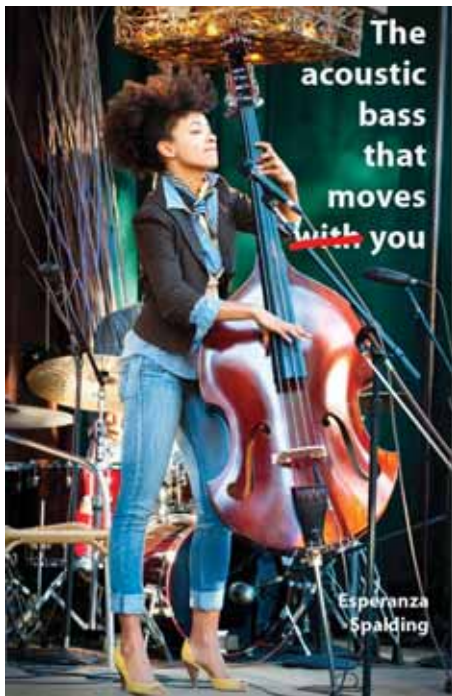
Leading off with "Ozledim Seni," Chen's brand of scat has a proximity to the cappella tradition of Balkan choirs. "Orange Tears Lullaby" is as otherworldly as its title suggests, while "Leaving Sonnet" strictly adheres to the rhyming poetry form that inspired it. The title track is an exquisite blend of flute and strings, scat and explosive horns that unfolds into a suite, and pushes toward Brazilian sounds with Alex LoRe's flute at centerstage. And if the strains of "Gan Lan Shu" and "Ao Bao Xiang Hui" sound particularly Eastern to American listeners, they are respectively Taiwanese and Mongolian traditional songs (though the latter's piano lines are born of free-jazz, while the horns are more straightahead). This clear-eyed fusion of East and West with an avant-garde twist is Chen's contribution to contemporary currents of international jazz.

—Denise Sullivan

Secret Treetop: Ozledim Seni; Majo Kiki In 12 Days; Ao Bao Xiang Hui; Secret Treetop; Orange Tears Lullaby; Mr. Wind-Up Bird; Strange Yearning; Leaving Sonnet; Gan Lan Shu; My Ocean Is Blue In White. (58:40)

Personnel: Annie Chen, vocals; Tomoko Omura, violin; Alex LoRe, alto saxophone, flute; David Smith, trumpet, flugelhorn; Rafal Sarnecki, guitar; Glenn Zaleski, piano; Jerad Lippi, drums; Mathew Muntz, bass.

Ordering info: anniechenjazz.com




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Jazz in a Closed Society

You might be excused if your reaction to a book titled **Jazz in China: From Dance Hall Music to Individual Freedom of Expression** (University Press of Mississippi) was, "That must be a short book." After all, given the Republic of China's reputation as a closed society prior to the 1949 communist revolution and the brutal repression of subsequent regimes, jazz doesn't seem like a natural fit for the world's most populous nation. Yes, the country's move toward a more open economy and its diplomatic openness to the West have paved the way for visits by contemporary artists like Pat Metheny, Victor Wooten and McCoy Tyner, but it remains far removed from the jazz hot spot that Japan has become.

Yet, encouraged by what he learned during visits to China in 2000 and 2004, composer and university professor Eugene Marlow devotes about 75,000 words to the topic.

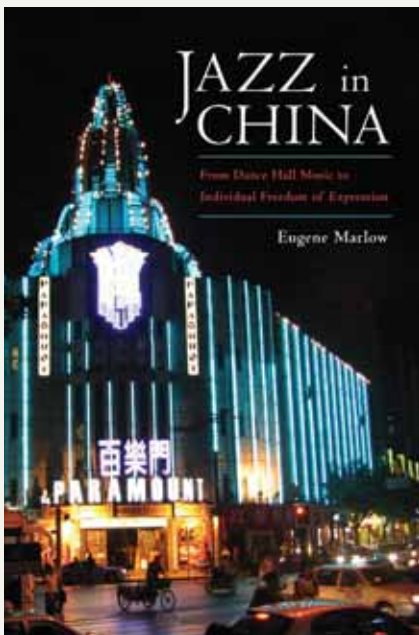
Cleaving to the historical schism that defines China in the 20th century, Marlow splits the book into two sections—before and after the revolution that brought Mao Zedong to power. He follows those two blocks with a lengthy appendix that details known jazz musicians who have performed in China and extensive notes. This is, both in tone and content, an academic book rather than a popular history. It is also a book that takes its time getting to the heart of the matter.

While Marlow is plain regarding his thesis—"The story of jazz's thread-like presence in China in the last hundred years ... (is) also the story of China's evolution as seen through the prism of the United States' indigenous, classical music: jazz"—he still weaves through some boggy ground.

His 16-page preface and first four chapters continuously approach the subject at hand, only to sidestep into material that might charitably be called filler. His brief sections on Chinese folk music and a 7,000-year-old reference to the minor third seem more like feints than steps to any concrete connection between traditional Eastern culture and what became known as jazz. Even more frustrating is his reliance on banal truisms, such as "Jazz is a highly democratic form of music" and "China is a country with a very long history."

There are additional forays into the history of train transportation, the gramophone and early film without tangible signs of moving his thesis forward. Throw in a hackneyed quote from Marshall McLuhan—yes, the world is a global village—and his argument truly seems to be on shaky ground.

Eventually, Marlow gets to Shanghai in the 1920s, when jazz actually did make an appearance in the Republic of China, but here



he relies on a handful of secondary sources, among them Aaron Copland, whom he subsequently undercuts for neglecting to mention black jazz pioneer James Reese Europe. Some interesting material from early-century journalist Burnet Hershey and contemporary historian Stella Dong promise to reveal Shanghai's "jumpin'" jazz scene. But his dependence on quotes from Chinese bassist Da Ren Zheng, a member of the Jimmy King Band, fails to unearth many vibrant details. To his credit, Marlow cites the important contribution of American trumpeter/singer Valaida Snow to the development of jazz in Shanghai, but comes up flat compared to what veteran jazz historian Mark Miller conjured in his 2007 Snow biography, *High Hat, Trumpet and Rhythm* (Mercury Press).

The section that begins with the ascendancy of Mao provides more substance, although due to the anti-Western bias of the People's Revolution, it doesn't really get going until Mao's demise in 1976. From there, it's relatively easy recent historical analysis, burnished by first-person stories from musicians like Liu Yuan and various expatriates who have made careers on the modern Chinese jazz scene. There is no shortage of interesting material about jazz education, and descriptions of Shanghai and Beijing jazz clubs, but that seems disconnected from the early parts of the book.

Hardly comprehensive and devoid of color, *Jazz in China* might not be a small book, but it definitely is a thin one. **DB**

Ordering info: upress.state.ms.us



Mark Masters Ensemble *Our Métier*

CAPRI 74150

★★★★

After 10 albums on which he applied distinctive arranging skills to the work of others—a group that includes George Gershwin, Clifford Brown, and Steely Dan's Becker and Fagen—it's only fair that Mark Masters finally gives us an album of his own writing. That he has done so in a way that trains focus on the incandescence of his soloists speaks volumes about the band-leader's talent and intentions.

Our Métier presents itself not as an offering of a traditional big band, but a sextet working with a larger ensemble. That's not simply a distinction between soloist and accompanist, as several ensemble members also are featured soloists; rather, it reflects the extent to which Masters uses the larger ensemble as a sort of framing device.

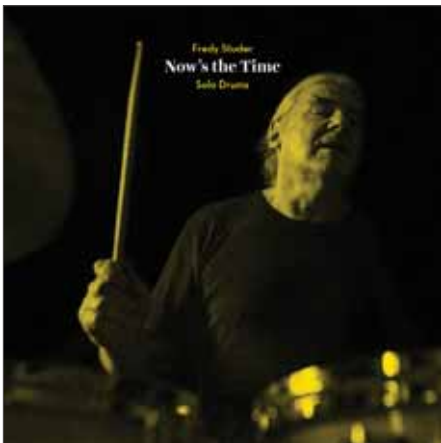
Given the caliber of the players here—saxophonists Oliver Lake, Gary Foster and Mark Turner, trumpeter Tim Hagans, bassist Putter Smith and drummer Andrew Cyrille—that seems a wise move. And the solos, from Lake's mournful, fractured lines on "Borne Towards The Stars" to Smith's sly, bluesy turn on "Lift," are regularly astonishing. And though Masters' writing tends a bit too much toward boppish convention, the best tunes ("51 West 51st Street," "Ingvid's Dance," "Luminescence") are hauntingly catchy, and make inventive use of the ensemble's voices and textures, particularly Anna Mjöll's overdubbed vocal harmonies. And the naturalness of the recording itself, from the convincingly acoustic sound of Smith's bass to the stereo pan on Craig Fundyga's vibes, is a delight.

—J.D. Considine

Our Métier: Borne Towards The Stars; 51 West 51st Street; Lift; Ingvid's Dance; A Précis Of Dialogue; Dispositions Of The Heart; Obituary; Luminescence; In Our Time; Our Métier. (55:22)

Personnel: Tim Hagans, trumpet; Gary Foster, Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Putter Smith, bass; Andrew Cyrille, drums; Anna Mjöll, vocals (2, 3, 8); Scott Englebright, Les Lovitt, trumpet; Stephanie O'Keefe, French horn; Les Benedict, Ryan Dragon, Dave Woodley, trombone; Kirsten Edkins, alto saxophone; Jerry Pinter, tenor, soprano saxophone; Bob Carr, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Ed Czach, piano (4, 6, 7); Craig Fundyga, vibes.

Ordering info: caprirecords.com



Fredy Studer *Now's The Time (Solo Drums)*

EVEREST 089

★★★★

Think “solo drums” and even if the player in question is an acknowledged master, the listener might cringe. But when the drummer incorporates random percussion within freely played rhythms, resulting in a complete music that barely resembles Western notions of the drum set, listeners are in for a treat.

Fredy Studer, 70, is a notable European drummer, with 90 album credits stretching from '70s electric free-jazz to collaborations on

a handful of '70s and '80s ECM records and various avant-garde outings. Using extended techniques and various percussion in novel ways, Studer creates an enchanting and unique language on *Now's The Time (Solo Drums)*.

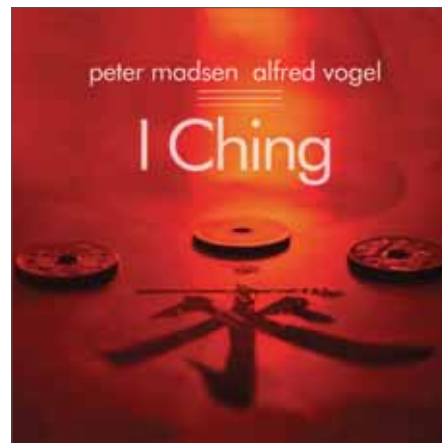
Opener “InPuls” establishes a standard 4/4 pulse over which Studer orchestrates lovely cymbal and tom timbres. Playing everything with an alert, delicate touch, Studer makes drums sing with tone and cymbals rustle like tuned wind. “Katharina San” explores what sounds like detuned cymbals played with mallets. “Another Day” is a waterfall of shimmering bells, ricocheting cymbal slices, brushed snare drum and ringing bass drum. And on “Joysticks,” Studer plays a distinct double-stroke on the middle of a snare drum head, the edge and the drum’s shell, with humorous strikes leading to a long bell tone and brushed flams.

Extremely well-recorded, the album’s percussive subtlety immerses the listener, creating great sonic impact. Released as digital download or as a double-LP set with a 250-page book, *Now's The Time (Solo Drums)* is a must for any percussion fan. —Ken Micallef

Now's The Time (Solo Drums): InPuls; Brubber; Can I?; Katharina San; Noisy Groove; Lies Mehr Nadeln; Circle Stomp; An Open Window For Frasi; Now's The Time; Another Day; Lonely Breathing; Joysticks; Risky Edge; Rostiger Himmel. (64:36)

Personnel: Fredy Studer, drums, cymbals, percussion.

Ordering info: everestrecords.ch



Peter Madsen/ Alfred Vogel

I Ching

PLAYSCAPE 100415

★★★★

Brevity, conceptual overview and controlled freedom are among the hallmarks of this inviting, venturesome duet project from veteran pianist Peter Madsen and Austrian drummer Alfred Vogel. Underscoring the recording’s sonic fruits are elements of chance operation, hence the album title, *I Ching*—the ancient Chinese system, which served as a determining factor in the shape and titling of the pair’s improvisations, and also was a source of inspiration for John Cage.

Whereas many free-minded improvisational projects savor the sprawl of extended tracks, this duo keeps each piece compact and focused. Over the course of 16 tracks, a variety of textural and attitudinal approaches are scattered and balanced. The sum effect is mosaic-like, built on the strength of disparate parts feeding an integrated whole. Atonal, yet crisply, articulated piano flurries set a modernist stage for the album on the opening track, “Fire/Light Over Wind,” but rumbling toms and alien autoharp-like strum of the piano strings aim for a more atmospheric objective on the following tune, “Thunder Over Deep Water.”

The lyrical aside of “Earth Over Heaven” segues into the rumbling turbulence of “Deep Water Over Thunder,” and later, the jagged conversation of prepared piano and fervent percussion on “Lake/Marsh Over Fire/Light” fans out over the ethereal terrain of “Mountain Over Mountain.”

With minimal instrumental means and generous intercommunication skills, the pair has conjured an impressive artistic statement in the realm of free music. —Josef Woodard

I Ching: Fire/Light Over Wind; Thunder Over Deep Water; Fire/Light Over Lake/Marsh; Mountain Over Wind; Deep Water Over Mountain; Mountain Over Fire/Light; Earth Over Heaven; Deep Water Over Thunder; Heaven Over Lake/Marsh; Thunder Over Thunder; Earth Over Earth; Wind Over Earth; Thunder Over Earth; Lake/Marsh Over Fire/Light; Mountain Over Mountain; Lake/Marsh Over Lake/Marsh. (52:50)

Personnel: Peter Madsen, piano, percussion; Alfred Vogel, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com

John Bailey *In Real Time*

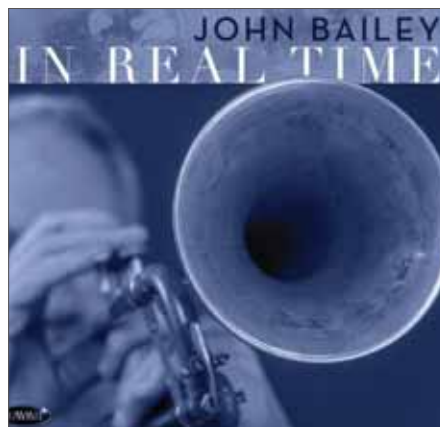
SUMMIT 720

★★★

After lending his considerable trumpet chops to an array of luminaries’ work, including Ray Charles, Ray Barretto and Frank Sinatra, 52-year-old John Bailey emerges as a solo artist. Notching about 30 years of experience in the music biz is no small feat, but evolving from a journeyman to distinguished solo talent is no easy task, either.

The bandleader’s tone on *In Real Time* is warm and his improvisations brim with fluid, rhythmic agility while retaining a sense of melodic cogency and harmonic invention. Inside all of that lies a maturity that comes across through his well-paced soloing and suspenseful phrasing. He knows how to pen delightful material, too. The disc’s stylistic focal point is mostly modern post-bop with some subtle Latin rhythms lurking beneath. On uptempo pieces, like the intricate “Triplcity” or the spry “Stepping Up,” Bailey and his band boast the joyful aplomb reminiscent of classic Clifford Brown LPs. Drummer Victor Lewis and bassist Cameron Brown keep Bailey and his frontline saxophone partner Stacy Dillard swinging forcefully, yet comfortably, while guitarist John Hart provides economical harmonic padding and additional rhythmic bite.

Bailey’s brightest moment on *In Real Time*



occurs on the bewitching ballad “Lovely Planet.” Brown initiates the piece with a ruminative bass solo, which gives way to Bailey’s pensive melody that grows more emotionally persuasive once Dillard and Hart slide underneath with accompanying variations of the melody. That glowing performance alone—and there are plenty more—offers ample proof that Bailey might have even brighter moments to come. —John Murph

In Real Time: Rhapsody; My Man Louis; Triplcity; Lovely Planet; Blues For Ella; Morro Velho; Stepping Up; Children’s Waltz; Ensaio Geral. (54:21)

Personnel: John Bailey, trumpet, flugelhorn (8); Stacy Dillard, tenor, soprano saxophone; John Hart, guitar; Cameron Brown, bass; Victor Lewis, drums; Janet Axelrod, flute (6); Leo Grinhaus, cello (6).

Ordering info: summitrecords.com

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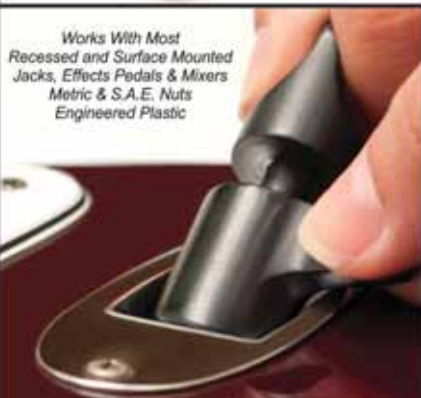
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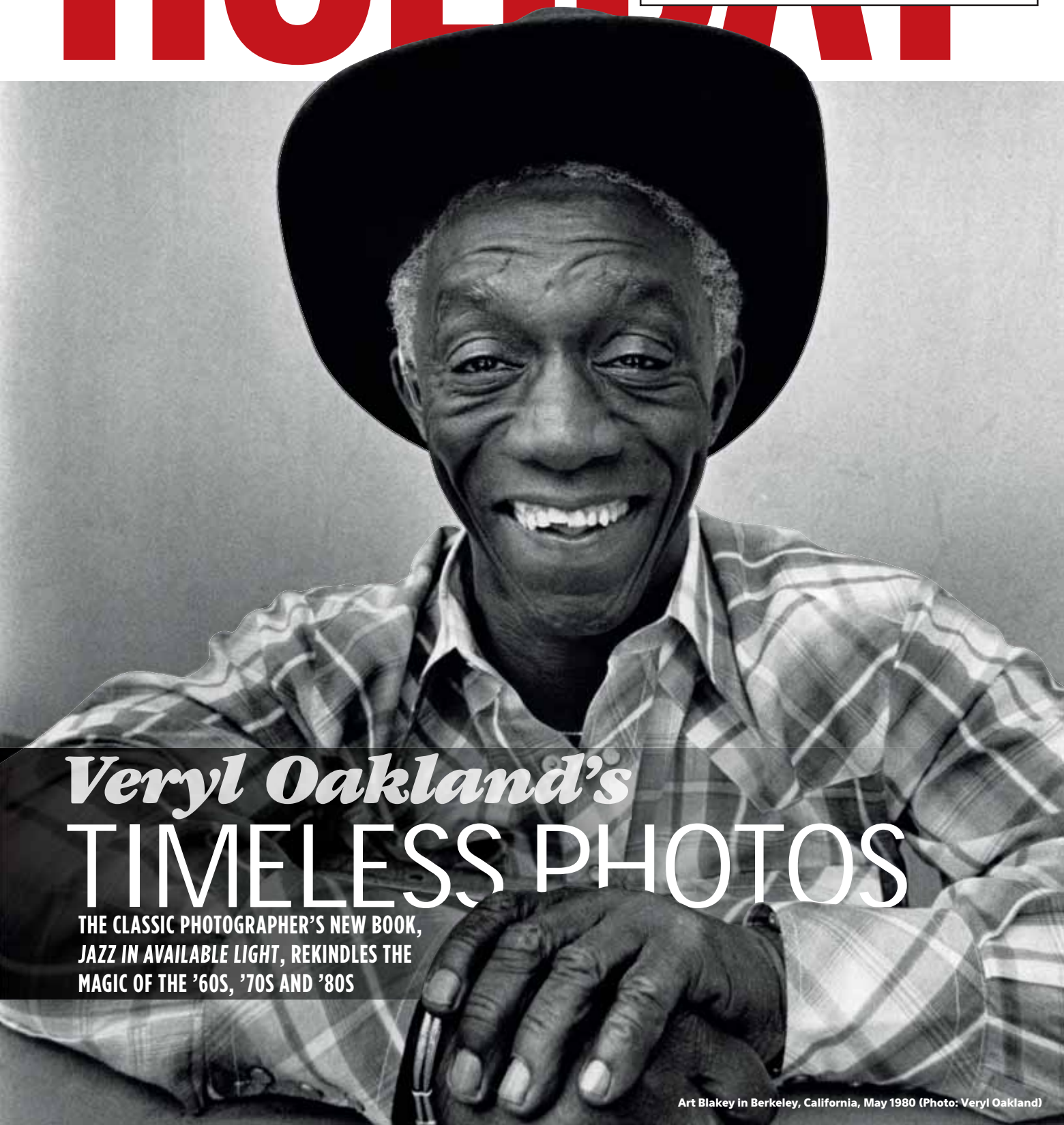
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TUNES FOR HOLIDAY REVELRY

Below is a bountiful bevy of new and reissued albums vying for listeners' attention during the 2018 holiday season.

Jake Ehrenreich is a classy jazz singer who projects pure tones and pleasantries on *A Treasury Of Jewish Christmas Songs* (Self-Released; 42:00 ★★★★★), his tribute to the Jewish tunesmiths responsible for "The Christmas Song" (Mel Tormé), "White Christmas" (Irving Berlin), "Winter Wonderland" (Felix Bernard) and 10 more. Ensuring that he doesn't drift into soft sentimentality are esteemed pianist Roger Kellaway and his trio.

Ordering info: jewishxmassongs.com

Nils Landgren has recorded six holiday albums during the past dozen years, but he hasn't yet overstayed his welcome at Santa's workshop. *Christmas With My Friends VI* (ACT 9872; 51:37 ★★★½) proves the Swede still has lots of vitality left as a trombone soloist of expressive intelligence, a skilled singer and a specialist in adaptations of fairly uncommon material, such as John Rutter's choral composition "Christmas Lullaby." Although Landgren dips into blues and funk on two tracks, he favors laid-back jazz moods, where cheer and gladness intersect. Beautiful singing from Jessica Pilnäs, Jeanette Köhn, Ida Sand and Sharon Dyllal is important to the allure of this glad-hearted music.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

With personnel drawn from all over the United States, **The King's Brass**—three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, keyboards and percussion, plus guests, including organist Samuel Metzger—brings stately poise to the jazz-classical-pop holiday spirit displayed on *Christmas Joy* (Summit 733; 65:13 ★★★★★). Trumpeter-bandleader Tim Zimmerman and company mine spirituality in age-old carols and fun in secular tunes. The band gives dramatic animation to pleasing arrangements of Bizet's "Farandole—The March Of The Kings" and Paul Dukas' "Fanfare," from his ballet *La Péri*.

Ordering info: summitrecords.com

Not long before Johnny Carson retired from

his talk show in 1992, the 19-piece house band recorded *Merry Christmas From Doc Severinsen & The Tonight Show Orchestra* (Amherst 94406; 54:37 ★★★★★). There's a marked nonchalance to the swinging jazz from trumpeter Severinsen and his merry men on 16 obvious tunes, like "Jingle Bells" and "Winter Wonderland," all expertly arranged by saxophonists Tommy Newsom or John Bambridge. Alas, the producers sometimes intrude on the ace studio musicians with icky strings, handbells and a children's chorus.

Ordering info: apple.com/itunes

Anyone interested in Yule-themed pop of the 1930s, '40s and '50s should seek out the reissued triple-disc set *The Merriest Christmas Album* (Dynamic 3527; 75:22/74:01/76:14 ★★★★★). Ella Fitzgerald, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Kay Starr and Fats Waller sing with such genuine feeling and interpretive charm that triteness is held at bay. However, with 75 tracks by a platoon of artists, there are bound to be pockets of unctuous slop, so keep clear of tracks by Gracie Fields, Jimmy Boyd and Hugo Winterhalter.

Ordering info: mvdshop.com

Gospel superstar **CeCe Winans**, rejoicing with her first Christmas album, *Something's Happening!* (Pure Springs Gospel 002; 40:01 ★★★½), squares the sweeping beauty of her powerful voice with an earnest sense of conviction over the sacredness of her Lord's birth. Whether introducing songs written by her son, Alvin, or giving immediacy to a carol like "Silent Night," she wrests every shred of meaning from the lyrics—even as strings and production bombard clamors, rather than supports.

Ordering info: cecewinans.com

On *The Stylistics'* modestly enjoyable 1991 pop-r&b album *Christmas* (Amherst 4410; 48:37 ★★★½), the usual diet of Santa's songs, along with producer Jeff Tyzik's "When I've Got You, It's Christmas All Year Long," are inscribed with fresh feelings by the three vocalists. Russell Thompkins Jr.'s wonderful falsetto

even makes you believe all's well in the world, at least for the minute-and-a-half of "I'll Be Home For Christmas."

Ordering info: amazon.com

One of the don't-miss releases of 2018 is *Hey! Merry Christmas!* (Mono Mundo; 31:12 ★★★★★) by **The Mavericks**. Infectious Yuletide spirit informs the smooth, superb lead singing of Raul Malo and his eclectic Americana band. Malo has a gift for composing melodious, high-quality songs, none better than "Christmas Time Is (Coming 'Round Again)," a rush of sublime '60s-ish pop. Disparate elements animate the Mavericks' compelling sound: Tex-Mex, country twang, *Elvis' Christmas Album*, 1950s r&b, jazz, Roy Orbison's pop and *A Christmas Gift For You From Phil Spector*.

Ordering info: themavericksband.com

Swiss band **Dub Spencer & Trance Hill** buck Yuletide conventions by delivering dub syncretized with rock and electronic music. "Silent Night," "Jingle Bells" and the nine other tracks on *Christmas In Dub* (Echo Beach 131; 42:22 ★★★★★) offer plenty of spacey innovation. A melodica, in the spirit of Augustus Pablo, conspires with guitar, banjo and organ in bringing an organic presence to the stylized dub. Several famous melodies are obscured or unrecognizable till the listener teases them out.

Ordering info: forcedexposure.com

Thanks to bassist David "Solid" Gould's band, **The Temple Rockers**, there is stirring new Hanukkah music this year. The group cleverly fuses traditional Jewish melodies and rich reggae rhythms on the measuredly joyous *Festival Of Lights* (Fresh Roots 001; 40:31 ★★★★★). Gould, who has worked with the U.S. reggae band John Brown's Body, wisely recruited veteran Jamaican vocalists Linval Thompson, Wayne Jarrett and Ansel Meditation as guests. Listeners can light candles to the syncopated bounce of "Almighty Light," "Rock Of Ages" and other trance-like tracks.

Ordering info: davidsolidgould.com

—Frank-John Hadley



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THE QUEEN STILL REIGNS

When Aretha Franklin died Aug. 16, many journalists tried to quantify the impact of an artist who had won 18 Grammys, placed 100 songs on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart, and whose estate perhaps is worth millions of dollars. But such figures represent an infinitesimal sliver of the artistic and entertainment value the "Queen of Soul" generously gave to rapt listeners over the decades.

Franklin made numerous productive visits to the recording studio during her long reign. Even when following a tame mainstream pop-jazz direction on Columbia Records in the early 1960s, she cut impressive jazz-oriented sides with the Ray Bryant Combo. She also made credible early soul music, especially "Soulville," on a Dinah Washington tribute album released in 1964. Flash forward to the mid-'80s: Franklin was enjoying a comeback with the hits "Freeway Of Love" and "Who's Zoomin' Who" (both in 1985) and "I Knew You Were Waiting (For Me)," a 1987 duet with George Michael that topped Billboard's pop singles chart. As recently as 2015, the singer extracted emotional gold with a rendition of Adele's "Rolling In The Deep."

The artistic zenith of Franklin's career came in the late '60s when Atlantic Records producer Jerry Wexler allowed her full creative license in Rick Hall's studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Her teaming with Southern soul musicians of considerable musical strength and rapport was a godsend. Moreover, backup singers engaged Franklin in call-and-response exchanges that evoked her testifying as a young singer in Detroit's New Bethel Baptist Church, where her father was minister. Some fans started calling her "Lady Soul" (the title of a 1968 album), and the nickname was perfect for the powerhouse vocalist and embodiment of African-American pride.

An American music treasure-trove if ever there were one, *The Atlantic Singles Collection, 1967-1970* (Atlantic/Rhino, available from Amazon) is offered in double-CD and double-LP formats. The program draws us into Franklin's world of complex emotional depth with 34 singles (compiled from six albums) that fully display her vocal authority. Franklin turned musical performances into high drama, digging into songs with grit, affirmation, ache, sensual pleasure, tearfulness and ferocity. And, oh, what songs they were.

Franklin transformed Otis Redding's 1965 crossover hit "Respect" into a shout-out for civil rights, gender equality and sexual expression,



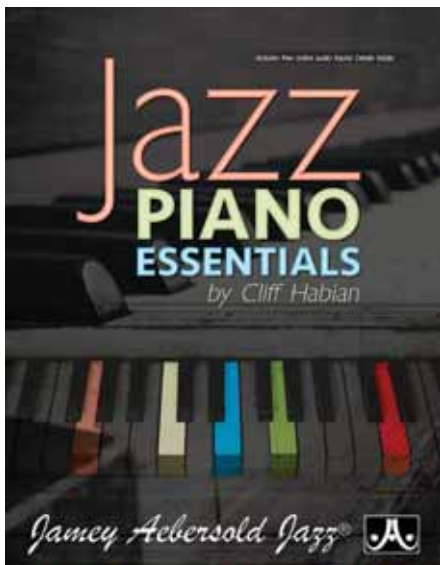
fiercely punctuated with her own gospel-infused piano chords. Backup singing by her sisters, Erma and Carolyn, had its roots in Sunday morning worship. But it was a Southern soul performance all the same, and the song, which topped the pop chart for two weeks in 1967, widely is regarded as one of the greatest singles in rock and soul history.

Also a standout among the 34 tracks is Don Covay's "Chain Of Fools." Franklin ramps up her displeasure over a suitor's unforgivable transgressions into a rage that's the stuff of a hell-fire sermon. Another of the richest gems, Gerry Goffin and Carole King's "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman," extols female sexuality, with the Queen's impassioned vocals reflecting joyous confidence while strings, horns and the rhythm section add to the sensual mood.

Still another song secure in the soul music pantheon is an original written by Franklin and her husband, Ted White: "(Sweet Sweet Baby) Since You've Been Gone." Her voice pleads for the return of her guy at a sky-high emotional peak that almost defies belief; Tommy Cogbill's bass line and the horn parts are marvelous. Franklin gave it her all, too, when emoting with poignancy and perfect execution on Chips Moman and Dan Penn's ballad "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man," released as the B-side to "I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You)," written by Ronnie Shannon.

Franklin sustained a high level of confident assertion on all the other chronologically ordered songs of this compilation, which features startling makeovers of The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" and The Band's "The Weight," as well as songs popularized by Glen Campbell ("Gentle On My Mind") and Dionne Warwick ("I Say A Little Prayer"). As natural as breathing, Franklin conjured emotion from an unbelievable bounty of expressive means.

—Frank-John Hadley



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Elsa Nilsson



Wayne Shorter (left) and Jaco Pastorius

REDISCOVERED PHOTO TREASURES

From the 1960s through the '80s, Veryl Oakland wielded his camera the same way an improviser might his axe—snapping photos of jazz musicians in the moment, with only his wits, experience and the stimulation of his environment to guide him.

The photos, an invaluable contribution to the history of jazz, were stored in what seemed like a secure spot in Oakland's home in Sacramento, California. Then, in 1990, a flood engulfed the home, damaging priceless negatives and prints.

"I had pretty much written the whole thing off as a lost cause," Oakland said. "It took me 20 years to get out of the funk."

But that he did. In 2010, with the encouragement of his daughter, he began the painstaking work of sifting through what remained. In the process, he discovered a treasure trove of salvageable material that he has compiled in a beautiful, 9- by 12-inch coffee-table book titled *Jazz in Available Light* (Schiffer, schifferbooks.com).

The hefty tome, for which Quincy Jones wrote the foreword, contains 340 black-and-white photos, strikingly displayed with accompanying text by Oakland. All the photographs were shot using natural light, lending them an improvisatory quality that, given the art form that is the book's subject, strengthens their impact.

The artists are depicted engaging in a variety of activities—Joe Zawinul sawing limbs off a tree, Joe Henderson peering through a telescope—in or near their California homes. Even more revealing are the photos that document musicians in the act of creation. Among those shots, some of the earliest—when Oakland himself was new to the process and coming at it with a fresh eye—seem particularly illuminating. Among those early pictures, one each of Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Bill Evans stand out.

At a Sunday matinee in April 1967, Oakland caught the charismatic Kirk at San Francisco's Jazz Workshop. As usual, Kirk was playing multiple horns—often simultaneously—and creating a spectacle that the camera loved, though on that afternoon, the light at the North Beach club was unpredictable. Oakland recalled that he did not have the highest expectations for the photos.

But when he saw them, he was moved—so much so that, on a whim, he sent several rolls of film to *DownBeat*, which used a shot for the cover of its May 18, 1967, issue. The sale to *DownBeat* yielded Oakland's first paycheck for his photography. The magazine cover—depicting Kirk blowing into three mouthpieces—is reproduced in the book.

Two years later, in April 1969, Oakland had another pivotal experience, this time with Evans at Bear's Lair, an intimate basement room at the University of California, Berkeley. By the late '60s, jazz fans were accustomed to seeing Evans hunched over the keys and profile shots of the pianist in such a position were legion.

What happened next produced a shot that will be far less familiar. In the confines of the small room, Oakland said, the creative tension attendant to Evans' pianistic restraint had become intense. Armed with a telephoto lens, Oakland moved to the rear of the space and, facing Evans' back, began snapping just as the pianist's head disappeared from view. One remarkable shot—an illusory image of a headless torso playing a piano—suggests a man literally being absorbed by his instrument.

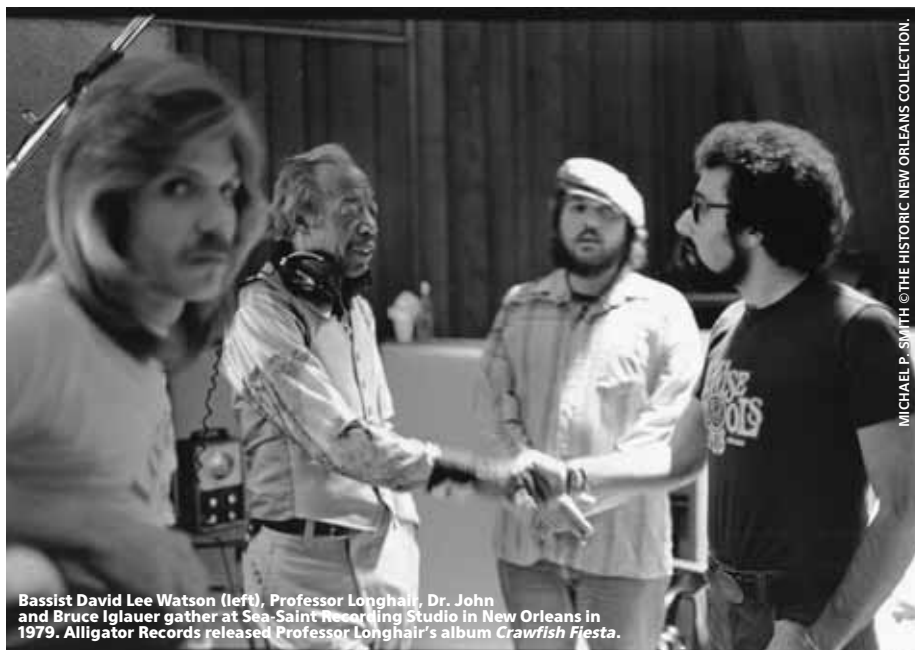
"It gave me the shivers," Oakland said.

His ability to find the telling moment in disparate subjects indicates a capacity for genuine empathy. That capacity is nowhere more evident than in the book's epilogue. In it, Oakland discusses Phineas Newborn Jr., a prodigious pianist who suffered from mental illness and died penniless. In a 1975 shot taken at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium, Newborn, with a joyless gaze, stares straight into Oakland's lens. To Newborn's left is organist Jimmy Smith in an ebullient mood, hoisting a can of beer above his head.

The image will haunt many readers, but could draw new attention to Newborn's work. "It gives me an opportunity to reinvigorate his standing with a lot of people," Oakland said.

This book, it's fair to say, might do the same for Oakland.

—Phillip Lutz



Bassist David Lee Watson (left), Professor Longhair, Dr. John and Bruce Iglauer gather at Sea-Saint Recording Studio in New Orleans in 1979. Alligator Records released Professor Longhair's album *Crawfish Fiesta*.

MICHAEL P. SMITH © THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

IGLAUER CHRONICLES BLUES HISTORY

Bruce Iglauer has devoted the last half-century to helping blues musicians realize their full potential, while rarely tooting his own horn. He sticks to that approach with *Bitten by the Blues: The Alligator Records Story* (University of Chicago Press, press.uchicago.edu), his new memoir about life as head of the Chicago-based independent blues label he founded in 1971 to record Hound Dog Taylor & The HouseRockers.

For every triumph recounted here, there is another self-effacing tale of a missed opportunity or questionable business decision.

"It seemed the right time to document all these marvelous experiences I've had and these amazing people I've met and worked with," he said. A who's-who of the Chicago blues world (and beyond) flows through *Bitten by the Blues*, including Alligator stalwarts Koko Taylor, Lonnie Brooks and Shemekia Copeland, and international stars Professor Longhair, Albert Collins and Johnny Winter. Iglauer and co-author Patrick A. Roberts provide an enlightening view of the music-making process—from scouting talent in obscure clubs to the quest for originality in the studio to marketing and distribution.

Iglauer has a unique perspective of modern blues. "I've been in the presence of and worked with so many of the great blues artists of the contemporary era," he said. "If fans want to get a sense of what these people were like as human beings, how they created their music, how they created their records, this book gives good insight into that process. I tried hard not to build the

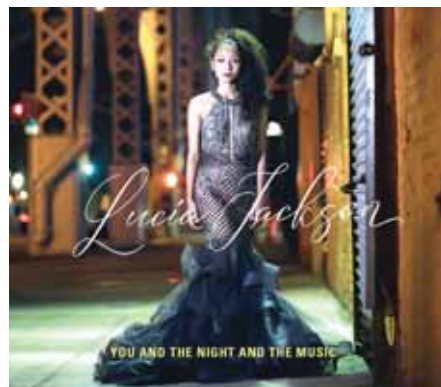
book around myself, but rather to be the camera."

Other labels, including Chicago label Delmark Records—founded by Iglauer's first blues boss and mentor, Bob Koester—have made significant contributions to the blues during Alligator's reign. But Iglauer reluctantly accepts credit for his innovative full-service approach, particularly in forging close personal and management relationships with his artists.

One of Alligator's budding stars, Chicago bus-driving bluesman Toronzo Cannon, raved about how his affiliation with Iglauer's label has affected his career. "As far as being put on a path of promotions, stability and being taken seriously as an artist, it's refreshing and satisfying," he said. "It feels comfortable when somebody needs something to say, 'Just call the label.' It's cool to be handled."

But Iglauer became contemplative when asked about the label's future. "I don't have an answer to your question," he admitted. "I do not have a protégé. I have all these great people who work for me, but none of them is a producer. They've got good ears and they're responsive, but they're not talent scouts the way I am. ... I look at talent that could be important blues talent 20 and 30 and 40 years into the future. Selwyn Birchwood [a Florida bluesman first spotted by Iglauer winning the 2013 International Blues Challenge] is 33, and I think, 'Is he the guy who will become the B.B. King of the future?' I'm hoping to find and nurture that person."

—Jeff Johnson



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ECM founder Manfred Eicher writes that he saw new possibilities in the improvised music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago.



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ART ENSEMBLE CHRONICLED IN MASSIVE BOX SET

In the comprehensive, 296-page booklet that accompanies ECM's 21-CD box set *Art Ensemble Of Chicago And Associated Ensembles*, label founder Manfred Eicher states that, from the time he launched the label in 1969, it was his desire to work with Roscoe Mitchell, Lester Bowie, Joseph Jarman and Malachi Favors, who named themselves "The Art Ensemble of Chicago" after transplanting from Chicago to Paris in the summer of that same year.

The band's music, Eicher writes, "seemed to propose a new and exciting model for improvised chamber music, opening a fresh chapter after the seismic achievements of Coltrane, Ornette and Cecil Taylor had brought 'jazz' to a culmination of sorts." That impression deepened after Eicher witnessed AEC concerts in Paris and other cities, "where the polystylistic complexity of the music was paralleled by the uniqueness of the presentation, with movement, costumes, face-paint, and billowing clouds of incense smoke."

In 1978, after ECM producer Thomas Stöwsand introduced Eicher to the band, he recorded the Art Ensemble's *Nice Guys*, as well as the eponymous album by drummer Jack DeJohnette's band New Directions and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith's *Divine Love*, each featuring trumpeter Lester Bowie. Over the next four decades, Eicher generated four more AEC albums (*Full Force*, *Urban Bushmen*, *The Third Decade* and *Tribute To Lester*), and another 13 dates that embody what he describes as the "lines of influence radiating outwards" from it.

Prepared in acknowledgment of ECM's 50th

anniversary in 2019, this compilation includes four Bowie-led albums from the 1980s—*I Only Have Eyes For You* and *Avant Pop* by Brass Fantasy, and *The Great Pretender* (an instrumental quintet with his then-wife, vocalist Fontella Bass) and *All The Magic* (a double-disc set—one features the same unit augmented by vocalist David Peaston; the other is a phantasmagoric solo recital by Bowie).

On *In Europe*, from 1980, Bowie again played with New Directions (which also featured guitarist John Abercrombie and bassist Eddie Gomez). A more recent DeJohnette location date, *Made In Chicago* (2015), features the leader with Mitchell and Henry Threadgill, his classmates at Chicago's Wilson Junior College in 1962 and 1963, and their mutual mentor, Muhal Richard Abrams (1930–2017). DeJohnette has led or been a sideman on more than 70 ECM sessions, beginning in 1971.

In addition to Mitchell's appearances with the Art Ensemble, the collection includes his double-disc 2017 extravaganza *Bells For The South Side*, which features nine musicians, including Tyshawn Sorey on trombone, piano, drums and percussion; *Nine To Get Ready* (1999) and *Far Side* (2010), both by The Note Factory; and two iterations of a 2007 project called The Transatlantic Art Ensemble, one led by Mitchell (*Composition/Improvisation Nos. 1, 2*), the other by saxophonist Evan Parker (*Boustophedon*).

ECM's state-of-the-art production values are palpable on the recordings from 1978 to 1985. As Paul Steinbeck observes in his 2017 book, *Message To Our Folks* (University of Chicago

Press), audio engineer Martin Wieland "accurately captures the Art Ensemble's unique sound spectrum while bringing out nuances in the high frequency range that had been neglected on the band's earlier recordings." Steinbeck quotes AEC percussionist, Famoudou Don Moye, as saying, "It sounds like us."

"I think Manfred showed people how to run a successful recording company," Mitchell remarked, perhaps remembering that *Nice Guys* and *Full Force* each sold 40,000 units in the United States alone. "They pay all the royalties, they're often present at the recordings, and they help with getting tours and concerts. They pay special attention to detail."

The oft-reserved Mitchell was particularly effusive about the box set's booklet, a feat of design ingenuity and editorial intelligence that does the music justice, augmenting well-reproduced album covers with a slew of archival documents and photographs, and essays by luminaries like George Lewis, Vijay Iyer and Steve Lake. "ECM has totally outdone themselves here," Mitchell exclaimed as he glanced through a digital version of the booklet. "They put some effort into this. These are serious people here."

The Art Ensemble of Chicago is planning to release a new album—featuring live and studio tracks—on the Pi Recordings label around the time of the band's performance at the 2019 Big Ears Festival (March 21–24) in Knoxville, Tennessee.

"This is exciting," Mitchell said. "I'm ready to get back to my eight hours of practicing a day."

—Ted Panken

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Luther Allison performs at the 1995 Chicago Blues Festival.



REMEMBERING BLUES LEGENDS

Mick Jagger and Keith Richards have been quick to express their ardor for authentic American blues, their dedication ironclad since their struggling days in the early 1960s as members of Little Boy Blue & The Blue Boys. In 2016, these two musicians and the other Rolling Stones—Charlie Watts and Ron Wood—honored several of the key figures in blues history by renovating a dozen of their classics on the Grammy-winning album *Blue & Lonesome* (Interscope). Now, the Stones roll out *Confessin' The Blues* (BMG/Universal, therollingstones.com), their handpicked collection of 42 songs by blues masters. The set, which has album cover art by Wood, is available in vinyl and CD formats, including a vinyl bookpack, featuring five 10-inch records and six prints by illustrator Christoph Mueller.

Confessin' taps a rich vein of American music. The personalities of these blues greats are so distinctive that the fire and mettle of their recordings rage fiercely across the decades with no expiration date. Given that the Stones grew up enthralled by Chicago blues, it makes perfect sense that the Chess label's heavyweights are present. Chuck Berry shows off his prowess with "Carol" and "Little Queenie" (the former covered by the Stones' on the band's first U.S. album in 1964). Little Walter unleashes his genius on "Blue And Lonesome" and three other crown jewels. Muddy Waters' honest expressionism sanctifies "Mannish Boy" and three more canonical tracks, while Howlin' Wolf pulveriz-

es four with outbursts of sensual pleasure and/or melancholy. Bo Diddley's present also, placing "Mona" (check out the Brits' version on 1965's *The Rolling Stones, Now!*) and two other ham-bone-beat favorites.

Moving on from the Chess royal roster, the Stones endorse Slim Harpo's "I'm A King Bee," another tune they covered in the early years, before Jagger and Richards took flight as songwriters. Jimmy Reed has a seat in their Hall of Fame, represented by his 1961 hit "Bright Lights, Big City" and the lesser-known "Little Rain." Robert Johnson? Of course. Find "Stop Breakin' Down Blues," treated by the Stones on 1972's *Exile On Main Street*, and the brokenhearted "Love In Vain Blues," famously reimagined on the band's 1969 album, *Let It Bleed*.

Still another source of timeless creative nourishment for the Brits is Rev. Robert Wilkins' "Prodigal Son," interpreted on their *Beggars Banquet* LP (1968). The high quality of the Stones' choices is continually unflinching, from B.B. King's "Rock Me Baby" and John Lee Hooker's "Boogie Chillen" to Magic Sam's "All Your Love" and Buddy Guy's 1991 manifesto "Damn Right, I've Got The Blues."

Another blues icon being saluted this season is guitarist and vocalist Luther Allison (1939–'97). Producer and label founder Thomas Ruf pays homage to Allison in a huge way, stuffing the box set *A Legend Never Dies: Essential Recordings, 1976–1997* (Ruf Records, rufrecords.com) with seven CDs, four DVDs and an

88-page hardback book that features an essay, reflections on the man by members of his inner circle and a complete discography. Silenced by cancer just as he was attaining international fame, Allison combined dazzling technique with an intense stage presence. An Arkansas native who logged many hours in Chicago blues taverns before relocating to France, Allison was often a singer and songwriter of depth during his affiliation with Ruf Records.

Whether in straight-ahead blues, blues-rock or soul-blues grooves, Allison shone brightly on concert stages. There's plenty of evidence here, including the live albums *Montreux 1976* and *Let's Try It Again* (1989), as well as nearly seven hours of film documenting appearances in Europe, the States and an island off the coast of Africa. Allison can be seen performing with customary fieriness, heroically, just days before dying.

While he often reveled in a visceral vibe, Allison also took great pleasure in moderating himself to various degrees, bringing a sense of modulated suspense to stretches of his concerts and to many studio tracks. One stirring example finds his packing layers of painful resignation into "Drowning At The Bottom," on his *Reckless* album. Fans should take special note of Allison's one acoustic album, *Hand Me Down My Moonshine*. On that album, his singing and guitar phrases temper all the hopes and disappointments that compose the human condition.

—Frank-John Hadley



CURATORIAL DELIGHTS

The Blue Note label is following up its inaugural Blue Note Review set, 2017's *Peace, Love & Fishing*, with a second volume in the subscription series. Like its predecessor, the set *Spirit & Time* features a vinyl pressing of exclusive tracks with a corresponding CD. The new set is filled with audio and visual treasures. The hefty box includes new, 180-gram vinyl pressings of rare albums by drummer Art Blakey and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, lithographs of photos of Blakey and drummer Elvin Jones taken by Francis Wolff, a magazine and a pack of Topps trading cards featuring Blue Note musicians.

The compilation included with *Peace, Love & Fishing* (which now is sold out) featured a variety of previously unreleased recordings. The compilation for *Spirit & Time* includes eight tracks, seven of which are newly recorded versions of drummer Tony Williams' original compositions (which he recorded during his second stint on Blue Note). The eighth is "Juicy Fruit," an unreleased track from Williams' 1993 album, *Tokyo Live*, recorded with his quintet.

Don Was—Blue Note president and Blue Note Review publisher—curated both volumes in the subscription series. *Spirit & Time* focuses primarily on the work of drummers. "I was off on a kick, listening to the six records that Tony Williams made for Blue Note from '85 to '93," Was recalled. "They are among the greatest records in the catalog, and they really don't have the requisite amount of appreciation that they deserve."

The bandleaders represented on *Spirit & Time* include Brian Blade, Kendrick Scott, Tony Allen and Chris Dave, all of whom are currently on the Blue Note roster, as is the British trio GoGo Penguin. Also featured are Eric Harland, who has collaborated extensively with Blue Note saxophonist Charles Lloyd, and Nate Smith, who frequently has worked with Blue Note vocalist José James.

"Juicy Fruit" is a Williams composition that

appeared on his album *Native Heart* (1990). "I went through all the tapes from *Tokyo Live*. He recorded two sets for five nights," Was explained. "This was from the first night, which was a little raw. They don't quite have the balances right. But the playing is everything you love about Tony: He had that unique mixture of eloquence and power and musicality. He defined a new way of playing drums."

The vinyl reissues in the new set are Blakey's *Africaine* (recorded in 1959, first released on vinyl in 1981 and then on CD in 1998) and Hutcherson's *Patterns* (recorded in 1968 and released in 1980). In contrast, the sole reissue included with *Peace, Love & Fishing* was Blue Mitchell's *Step Lightly*. That set also included a scarf designed by John Varvatos. Was opted for more vinyl for the new box set: "Last time, we had a scarf, which was expensive, and we didn't have a suitable item like that. So we thought, 'Let's just do more music.'"

Spirit & Time includes a magazine titled *Out of the Blue*, which features interviews with Billy Hart and Victor Lewis, as well as a paragraph of text and a sketch of Bud Powell by Colleen Williams, Tony's widow. There's also a collection of quotes from other drummers, writings about Williams by Blade and a comic strip in which Terence Blanchard shares the story of when fellow trumpeter and Jazz Messenger alumnus Freddie Hubbard sat in with Blakey's group. "There's a lot of insight into jazz drumming," Was said of the publication. "I learned a lot from it."

Vinyl collectors and audio nerds will be drawn to the subscription series. "This time we had Joe Harley from Music Matters overseeing the mastering," Was noted. "So, everything is audiophile and all done according to Music Matters specifications."

Spirit & Time is limited to 2,000 units, and the set is scheduled for a November release.

—Yoshi Kato

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—Jazz Corner



BEN ALLISON

On the box set *Monk's Dreams*, pianist Frank Kimbrough leads a quartet through interpretations of all of Thelonious Monk's compositions.

KIMBROUGH GOES ALL MONK

The first time pianist Frank Kimbrough heard Thelonious Monk's music, he wasn't impressed. "I didn't appreciate it," said Kimbrough, on the eve of the release of his six-CD tribute to the master, *Monk's Dreams: The Complete Compositions Of Thelonious Sphere Monk* (Sunnyside). "I was a classical music pianist, and I thought he was bumbling in his playing. I didn't understand it. But then when I was in my early twenties and living in Washington, D.C, it hit me. I was in an apartment listening to music with friends. We were all unemployed and just hanging out during the day. I think we were listening to a compilation of [music released by the] Riverside [label]. The conditions were right. And Monk just hit me. I started to get it."

Soon, Kimbrough jumped into Monk's repertoire and began studying his compositions, harmonic language and conceptions of playing. After moving to New York, Kimbrough got a steady gig at The Village Corner, a now-defunct club that was located one block east of The Village Gate (now Le Poisson Rouge). "From

1985 to '90, I played solo piano for six hours," he said. "So, I studied a lot of jazz solo music by Bill Evans and, of course, by Monk, and how they approached standards. Over the years, I learned a good number of Monk tunes and committed them to memory."

Later, Kimbrough would co-found the Jazz Composers Collective, study with Andrew Hill, become friends with Paul Bley and collaborate with Ben Allison and Maria Schneider in her namesake orchestra. Throughout all of Kimbrough's endeavors, Monk (1917-'82) continued to hold a gravitational pull on him.

Last fall, Seth Abramson, the artistic director at Jazz Standard, asked Kimbrough to participate in a series of Monk centennial shows. The pianist agreed and then recruited drummer Billy Drummond, bassist Rufus Reid ("That was a no-brainer") and his longtime friend Scott Robinson on reeds. The two shows took place Nov. 27-28. "I was happy to be included in the series," said Kimbrough, who figures the band played 15 Monk tunes. "I thought it was just

going to be a one-off gig with no future to it beyond those shows."

Then Maitland Jones—co-founder of Princeton University's JazzNights concert series and someone who had seen Monk perform at the Five Spot in 1957—approached Kimbrough with the idea of recording all of Monk's compositions. "That was a tough one that Mait suggested," Kimbrough recalled. "This is not something I would do on my own initiative. But Mait presented me with a challenge, so I figured, 'Why not?' Still, I thought, 'Am I sending myself off on a fool's errand?' It would be a risk aping Monk's style; it could come off as mawkish or go the other way, meaning, taking all the melody out of his compositions. So, I decided to play the tunes correctly, with the respect they deserve, not playing *at* them. I wanted to give the tunes the full weight of what he wrote, to give each tune its own space."

Kimbrough, Robinson, Reid and Drummond reconvened in April at Kitano for two nights, expanding their set list to 30 Monk tunes. Then the quartet was invited by producer Matt Balitsaris to record for six days at his Maggie's Farm Recording studio in Pipersville, Pennsylvania. The band recorded 68 Monk tunes—30 of which were first takes. Kimbrough also played solo renditions of "Crepuscle With Nellie" and "Blues Five Spot."

Robinson, who brought his arsenal of horns to the sessions, provided some marvelous surprises, including a dark-toned reading of "Straight, No Chaser" on contrabass sarrusophone. "Scott will play the melodies and will displace them by a beat to bring the tune to a different place than you expect them to be in the time," Kimbrough said. "Scott had complete freedom. I didn't tell him what to play. He had studied the pieces and knew what he wanted to do. So, on 'Thelonious,' he alternated between trumpet and tenor saxophone. The only time I asked him for an instrument was on 'Locomotive,' which I was hearing with a bass clarinet."

The pianist met with Sunnyside head François Zalacain to discuss the milestone project, which he green-lighted. "François got it," Kimbrough said. "I had the funding for the recording and I met him, not having ever worked with him before. He was the first and only person I approached. Call it informed intuition."

Kimbrough said that each Monk composition has its own distinct personality. "Duke wrote hundreds of songs—some great ones, some chaff or filler. I didn't find that with Monk's works. All 70 are worth playing. When a composer writes, the melodies have meaning. Our intention was to play respectfully. Everyone was aware of the centennial last year and all the Monk projects, but can there ever be too much in recognizing Monk as an important composer? His music is past, present and future all at once."

—Dan Ouellette



The book *Art Kane: Harlem 1958* explores the origin of one of the most famous photos in jazz history and includes this version, identifying the 57 musicians.

HERDING CATS: HARLEM 1958

Many jazz fans have seen the iconic image, but few know its complete backstory. On Aug. 12, 1958, graphic designer and fledgling photographer Art Kane took a 35mm photograph of 57 jazz musicians on the doorstep of a Harlem brownstone at 17 E. 126th St.

Five months later, it was the lead photo in *Esquire* magazine's spread on the past, present and future of jazz. In 1962 it became part of the first jazz coffee table art book, *Esquire's World of Jazz*. In 1994, Jean Bach assembled an hour-long documentary, *A Great Day in Harlem*, on the making of the photograph. And 10 years after that, the photo provided a key plot point in Steven Spielberg's *The Terminal*.

"It was a still," Kane said years later, "but it was a living thing." And so it remains.

Now, tied to the 60th anniversary of the photo comes the ultimate homage, *Art Kane: Harlem 1958* (Wall of Sound Gallery, wallof soundgallery.com), which assembles every frame shot that afternoon. It's like stumbling into tapes of all the rehearsals of a classic record, plus dozens of alternate takes of the same tune. Also included are brief essays by Quincy Jones, Benny Golson and Kane's son, Jonathan; short profiles of each musician in the photo; and some related photos.

The volume captures an eye-popping convergence in jazz history. In 1958, it was possible to hear many of the most important figures in jazz history still at the peak of their powers—Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Mary Lou Williams, Coleman Hawkins and John Coltrane. Such artists gathered fairly often in various settings. In December 1957, many appeared on CBS's *The Sound of Jazz*. A week earlier, a studio reunion of the old Fletcher Henderson Orchestra produced one of the wildest big band sessions in jazz history. And every July there was the annual festi-

val at Newport.

Yet, this remains an extraordinary summit of the jazz establishment, and the camaraderie is evident. Most were more interested in visiting than posing. Rex Stewart was the only one who brought his horn. Others brought cameras, intuitively understanding the sense of occasion. Dizzy Gillespie and Milt Hinton shot several rolls. Hinton's wife, Mona, took 8mm movies, many of which were used in the Bach documentary. The early shots make clear that Kane's major challenge was to impose some order, giving new meaning to the phrase "herding cats." What he couldn't control, he used. Musicians assembled themselves in no particular hierarchy. Three kids looked out from an open window. A dozen more sat on the curb alongside Count Basie.

Looking at the photography today, one thinks of two things. First, we note some who were not there. Duke Ellington was in Milwaukee. Davis, Coltrane and Armstrong were on the road. Benny Goodman was in Los Angeles. Ella Fitzgerald was recording at Mr. Kelly's in Chicago. But where were Billie Holiday and Ruby Braff? Or Ben Webster?

Second, like a class picture, a large group photo like this also becomes a metaphorical clock. As time passed, it became a prolonged measurement of jazz's ineluctable roll call of mortality. Eight months later, Lester Young was suddenly gone. He was the first. Sixty years later, the clock is still ticking: Only Benny Golson and Sonny Rollins still are with us.

Not since Esther Buley and Hank O'Neal's *Charlie Parker* in 1995 has a single moment in jazz been so fully visualized in book form. In addition to the standard hardcover edition, it is available in a limited edition, signed by Golson, Jones and Jonathan Kane. —John McDonough

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A BURST OF ZAPPA REISSUES

Frank Zappa died in 1993, but his career still is going strong with each year bringing new recordings, merch, controversies and commentary.

This year, production company Eyellusion announced a Frank Zappa hologram tour in the near future with early-'70s footage of the guitarist accompanied by former bandmates. Meanwhile, LUNO (iamluno.com) produced a limited-edition Frank Zappa stereo console, complete with turntable, speakers and Zappa whiskey glasses.

More interesting, though, is the release of *The Roxy Performances* (UMe), a seven-disc set presenting the entirety of the Dec. 9-10, 1973, run at the West Hollywood theater. This year also saw the release of *Burnt Weeny Sandwich* and *Chunga's Revenge* on vinyl for the first time in three decades, both on 180-gram and issued through UMe (universalmusicenterprises.com). These are part of the ongoing collaboration between the Zappa Family Trust and the imprint to introduce new titles and to restore old ones to circulation.

To help overwhelmed Zappa fans cope with this onslaught of new music, academic Charles Ulrich has published a 798-page book, *The Big Note: A Guide To The Recordings Of Frank Zappa*

(New Star, newstarbooks.com), a doorstop if ever there was one. For each of Zappa's 1,663 tracks on his 100 albums legally released through 2015, Ulrich details the circumstances of the recording session or live performance, the musicians involved, the solos, edits to the track, the original plans for the piece and any arcane reference in the lyrics. This is bolstered by quotes from Zappa or his collaborators about the track, followed by a discussion of where else the song surfaced on other albums and tours.

Accompanying these track-by-track notes are similar descriptions of each album as a whole, sidebars on every musician who toured with the bandleader, sidebars on other interesting characters and topics, plus a long introductory essay. What's interesting is that, although it presents plenty of pointed opinions by Zappa and his sidekicks, it doesn't present any by the author.

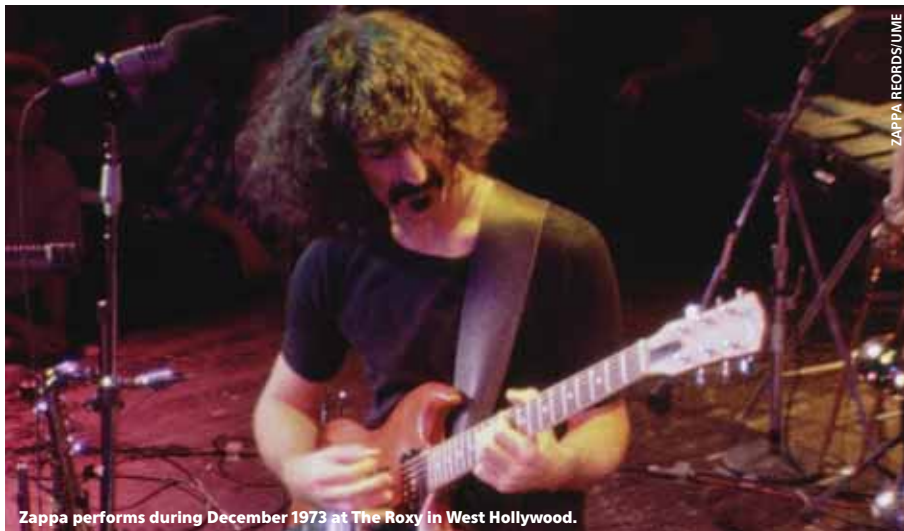
"Who cares about my preferences?" Ulrich said. "*The Big Note* is about Frank Zappa, not about me. ... Certainly, I have favorites and not-so-favorites. But I felt readers would be better served by detailed factual descriptions than by critical assessments. Let them make up their own minds."

Such self-effacing humility is rare in a writer.

And it could be welcomed by those who crave information more than analysis, though it could frustrate anyone looking for new perspectives, rather than more data.

The book's title comes from a Zappa quote recounted in the intro: "Perhaps the most unique aspect of The Mothers' work is the conceptual continuity of the group's Output Macrostructure. There is, and always has been, a conscious control of thematic and structural elements flowing through each album, live performance and interview. ... The Project/Object (maybe you like Event/Organism better) incorporates any available medium, consciousness of all participants (including audience), all perceptual deficiencies, God (as energy), The Big Note (as universal basic building material). ... It is not fair to our group to review detailed aspects of our work without considering the placement of detail in the larger structure."

Ulrich never explains how that is different from, say, the collected music and repeating themes and motifs of George Gershwin, Thelonious Monk or Stevie Wonder. Every composer and performer has a "tell," as poker players put it, a recurring signature trait. For artists such as Zappa or the Grateful Dead, who present



ZAPPA RECORDS/UMI

Zappa performs during December 1973 at The Roxy in West Hollywood.

songs in many different studio and concert situations, it can be helpful to take micro looks at each performance and a macro look at the entire body of work.

Ulrich does provide useful insights into Zappa's methodology as a stage conductor, composer, arranger and sound editor in the introduction. The author's discussion of the composer's use of odd meters, nested tuplets, suspended second chords, lydian modes and musical quotations is necessarily technical, but it opens a window on the unpredictable harmonies and

rhythms underlying seemingly silly songs.

"The mixture of low-brow humor and high-brow music was intrinsic to much of Zappa's work," Ulrich said, "so much so that it's hard to imagine it any other way. While it may turn off some listeners, others love it. And certainly the mixture of different types of music on his albums exposed listeners to things they wouldn't otherwise have heard. On *Sheik Yerbouti*, 'Bobby Brown Goes Down,' a big hit in Europe, is immediately followed by 'Rubber Shirt,' a xenochronous work superimposing a

bass line in 4/4 on a drum track in 11/4."

That juxtaposition of ambitious music and dormitory-style jokes is omnipresent on *Roxy*. Zappa was notoriously caustic in his comments about jazz, but he liked to hire jazz musicians who could read, because they were better prepared to handle odd meters, unusual chords and fast passages than most rock musicians. At these Roxy shows, the band behind Zappa was keyboardist George Duke (Cannonball Adderley), drummer Chester Thompson (Weather Report), trombonist Bruce Fowler (Toshiko Akiyoshi), bassist Tom Fowler (Jean-Luc Ponty), percussionist Ruth Underwood (Billy Cobham), saxophonist Napoleon Murphy Brock (George Duke) and drummer Ralph Humphrey (Don Ellis).

Lyrics easily can be deduced from such titles as "The Idiot Bastard Son," "Hollywood Perverts," "Penguin In Bondage" and "The Dog Breath Variations." This would be more enjoyable if the jokes were as funny as Zappa seems to think they are, and if his vocal pitch were as precise as the instrumentation. But some of the instrumental passages are exquisite, especially Duke's bluesy Rhodes solo on "Cosmik Debris," Underwood's lyrical marimba solo on "Uncle Meat" and Zappa's solo on "Penguin In Bondage." It would have been helpful if *The Big Note* had identified such gems in the catalog, but it's just not that kind of book.

—Geoffrey Himes



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TONY BENNETT'S PERPETUAL YOUTH

Several agendas come together in *Tony Bennett: Onstage and in the Studio* (Sterling Publishing, available from Amazon), an attractive, cleanly designed coffee table volume that arrives as an exceptional holiday value at only \$29.95.

It serves as something of a companion piece to director Unjoo Moon's 2012 documentary, *The Zen of Bennett*. Both projects bear the imprint of Danny Bennett, the 66-year-old son who, in a loopy sort of irony, became the father of his own father by conceiving, engineering and guiding the modern Tony Bennett we know today: the benign elder statesman whose classical cool has made him an admired symbol of integrity among younger generations. It comes from very different times and places. But in the zone of generational détente and fellowship in which Bennett resides, everything is cool.

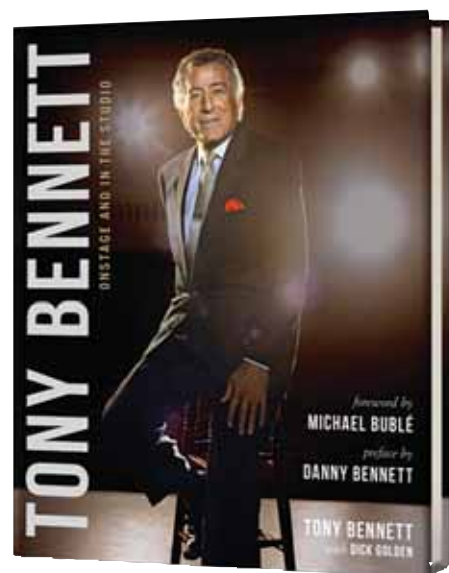
Artistic integrity is the narrative backbone that ties the pictures and text of this book together. Danny Bennett's voice is both brief and deep. In an introduction, he discusses how and why he left a minor career in rock to become his dad's business manager. But that doesn't mean he disappears or that this book doesn't have other purposes.

Its publication date was Sept. 14, and Tony Bennett's new Gershwin project with Diana Krall, *Love Is Here To Stay* (Verve/Columbia), came out on the same day, the book enhancing the album and vice-versa. It's a symphony of symbiosis under master conductor Danny Bennett, who is CEO and president of the Verve Label Group.

The main text here is provided by radio personality and family friend Dick Golden, whose first-person observations are interwoven with extended quotes and conversations with Tony and the Bennett clan, critics' kudos and even an occasional handwritten note from Lady Gaga or Keith Richards. The picture of Bennett leans toward profile, not exhaustive biography.

"And so, the whole premise of all the success you've earned," Golden writes of a recent conversation, "the core value of what motivated you ... was love!" This is a lovely, but rather lightweight, explanation of a seven-decade career, but the "love" theme grows contagious. When k.d. lang is asked what was the most important thing Bennett taught her, she says, "He's taught me to love life."

You can learn a lot about a man from his heroes. When discussing his work, Bennett is an inveterate name-dropper, not in order to



impress, but to associate himself with a litany of cultural idols from whom he took lessons: Frank Sinatra, Count Basie, Fred Astaire, Ella Fitzgerald, Bing Crosby, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Harold Arlen and others. There is no ennui or weariness in Bennett, only awe at the footsteps in which he walks. He is like a star-gazing child who never outgrew the need to revere a handful of gods—even after he joined their rarified peerage. He loves to connect himself to these legends in a personal way. It gives him authenticity to be able to say that Sinatra taught me this, Astaire once told me that, or that Richard Rodgers advised him to "always listen to the audience." He even learned from the entertainer Ted Lewis. They are the accumulated nuggets of wisdom on which Bennett's career rests, and he is proud that he was able to get it all straight from the source.

A good coffee table book often relies as much on its art as its text—in this case, more so. The full-page photo spreads here are rich in texture, especially the big, spontaneous black-and-whites that capture the intimacy of the old-fashioned night club, when Bennett worked in a tux and people dressed up to see a star at ringside. His other working environment was the recording studio, where we see him in Columbia's legendary 30th Street studio conferring with Mitch Miller and surrounded by RCA 77-D ribbon microphones. Such images make the period come to life in a way text alone cannot.

—John McDonough

LUMINOUS DEBUT

When The Band was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, it was a well-deserved accolade based on the group's monumental accomplishments and influence.

During the past quarter-century, reverence has grown for the quintet: guitarist Robbie Robertson, organist Garth Hudson, drummer Levon Helm (1940–2012), bassist Rick Danko (1943–'99) and pianist Richard Manuel (1943–'86). And yet, the roots-rock ensemble remains partially in the shadow of Bob Dylan, thanks to a long, fruitful association.

Dylan recruited the group to back him on tour in 1965–'66, and he repeatedly would work with these musicians onstage and in the studio. The quintet plays on Dylan's studio album *Planet Waves* and the collaborative concert album *Before The Flood* (both released in 1974), as well as the recordings compiled on *The Basement Tapes* (widely bootlegged but officially released in 1975). When The Band performed its (supposed) farewell show in San Francisco on Nov. 25, 1976, the array of guest artists included Muddy Waters, The Staples Singers, Joni Mitchell, Dr. John and, of course, Dylan.

Although Dylan doesn't sing or play on The Band's luminous debut, *Music From Big Pink* (1968), his contributions are significant. As a composer, he had a hand in three of the 11 songs. He and Manuel wrote the transcendent "Tears Of Rage," which opens the album; Dylan and Danko wrote "This Wheel's On Fire." Dylan composed the album closer, "I Shall Be Released," and he did the painting that was used for the album cover art. (The portrait depicts six people, five of whom are playing instruments.)

Capitol/UMe is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the album with various editions, including a Super Deluxe set. Also available as a single CD, the album has six bonus tracks, with-outtakes and alternate recordings from the studio sessions held in New York and Los Angeles. These tracks provide entertaining insight into the vibe the five musicians collectively created. One outtake, Robertson's "Yazoo Street Scandal," matches the high quality of the original program. Another, Dylan's "Long Distance Operator," is intriguing but not essential.

In the liner notes, journalist David Fricke cleverly describes some of the sources upon which The Band drew in 1968: "Robertson and



A painting by Bob Dylan was used as the cover art for The Band's 1968 debut, *Music From Big Pink*.

Manuel, at that point The Band's primary composers, wrote like determined modernists with public-domain souls, digging at the previously unmapped common ground of Appalachian folk, old Atlantic R&B 45s, *Louisiana Hayride* broadcasts, the treble lightning of the mid-'60s Dylan and the grooving spirit of the San Francisco ballrooms."

Though Dylan's fingerprints might be slightly visible in the corner of the canvas, this album is a masterpiece painted by The Band. Half a century later, the music's timeless charm still mesmerizes. —Bobby Reed



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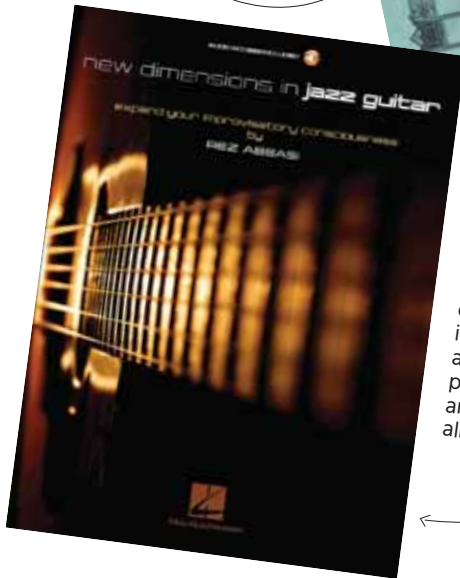
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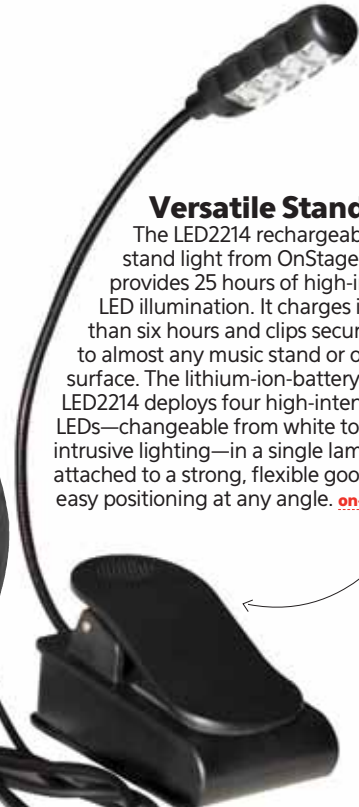
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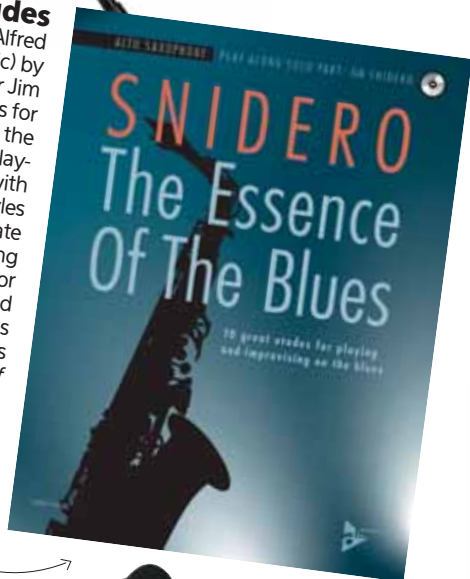
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Transcription-Based Practice: Warne Marsh's Use of Hemiola on 'April'

Jazz musicians long have considered transcription of improvised solos essential to their development. Charlie Parker transcribed Lester Young—you can hear the evidence in an early recording on which Bird quotes Lester Young's famous "Shoe Shine Boy" solo—and John Coltrane in turn learned Bird's solos during his formative years. As early as the 1940s, pianist Lennie Tristano codified a transcription method for his students (most famously saxophonists Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz) that is very similar to that put forward today by Dave Liebman and other modern jazz educators.

Most of us teach some variation on a three-part transcription process:

- 1) Listen repeatedly and sing the solo.
- 2) Learn it on your instrument.
- 3) Write it down.

I find that many students do fairly well up to this point, but then the question arises: What now? How do I understand and incorporate the material in my own playing? The common practice of identifying ii7-V7 licks, learning them in 12 keys and employing a collage-like "drag-and-drop" method to insert them into other tunes is not entirely without merit, but doesn't really tap into the student's creativity. Furthermore, it largely privileges harmony over rhythm, despite the central role the latter plays in jazz. Whatever particular elements of the craft a transcription reveals, the most excit-

ing aspect is the window it offers into the mind of the artist who improvised that solo. I want my students to figure out how Parker and other masters are working with their raw materials and then have a go at molding that same clay in their own practice.

Marsh's solo on Lennie Tristano's "April" offers many inroads to do just this. Recorded live at the Half Note by Lee Konitz and Marsh with Jimmy Garrison, Paul Motian and Bill Evans in 1959, bootlegs of it circulated among musicians for years. The solo appeared on an official release titled *The Art Of Improvising* (Revelation) in 1974, but the track was edited by Tristano to only include Marsh's solos. Verve issued full versions of 12 tunes in 1994

on *Lee Konitz Live At The Half Note*.

“April,” a contrafact on the standard “I’ll Remember April,” is replete with Tristanoisms: sophisticated harmonic substitution, chromatically embellished melodic lines and rhythmic displacement. That last device was a calling card of the Tristano school. For a particularly striking example on a familiar vehicle, check out the 1955 recording of “Donna Lee” on *Lee Konitz With Warne Marsh*. After trading eights with drummer Kenny Clarke, Konitz and Marsh intentionally start the melody one beat early. They maintain this high-wire rhythmic tension until the end, then flip things back around by inserting a couple extra eighth notes into the last phrase.

I’m going to focus on Marsh’s use of another rhythmic device—hemiola—in his improvised solo on “April.” I’m using the term broadly to include any repetitive rhythmic figure with groupings that don’t evenly divide into a measure of the prevailing meter. Groupings of three, five and seven eighth notes would all qualify in 4/4.

In the first and last “A” sections of his second chorus on “April,” Marsh groups eighth notes in both five-note and three-note rhythmic cells, creating 5:4 and 3:4 hemiolas, respectively. Not incidentally, this creates an effective contrast with the relatively static A-major harmony in those measures. (All examples are transposed in the tenor saxophone key.)

3:4 Hemiola: Groupings of 3 in 4/4

Marsh begins the last “A” section of his solo with a three-note pickup, but it’s easier to look at the hemiola in these measures as starting on beat 2 of the first full measure of the “A” section. (See Figure 1a.) From there, you clearly can see the bracketed hemiola, each segment beginning with middle E. Because the meter of “April” is 4/4 and Marsh is playing a 3/4 rhythm, the rhythm “walks back” with each repetition: It starts on beat 2, then on beat 1, then 3, 4, and finally back to 2. If he finished the last, incomplete cell, it would resolve to beat 1 of the next measure as the harmony changes to A minor.

In Figure 1b, I’ve moved the rhythm back one beat to start at the beginning of a four-bar phrase. Here you can see that it would resolve to beat 1 in bar 4 of that phrase.

The A at the top of each cell is roughly the middle of the rhythm (I say “roughly” because it’s a triplet, rather than an exact eighth-note division), so we could simplify the hemiola to look something like Figure 1c, a series of dotted quarter notes. Dotted bar lines indicate the 3/4 hemiola cells (or dotted half notes), and “x” note heads indicate resolution points where the 3/4 and 4/4 rhythms come together on downbeats. Notice that four measures of our 3/4 hemiola equals three measures of the

Figure 1a



Figure 1b



Figure 1c



Figure 1d



Figure 1e



Figure 2a



Figure 2b



Figure 2c



Figure 2d



Figure 2e



Figure 2f



4/4 meter. Keeping track of these resolution points, or rhythmic cadences, is key to successfully utilizing hemiolas in your improvisation. Learning compositions that incorporate hemiolas—such as Tristano’s “317 E. 32nd Street” or “Lennie’s Pennies”—is helpful in this regard.

Now that we’ve done some analysis and reduced it to a simpler construction, the clay is ready to mold. You could create countless exercises on 3:4 hemiolas displaced to different parts of the beat in four-measure phrases, varying them through changes of melodic contour, rhythm and harmonic content and applying them to any tune you’re working on.

I encourage you to keep a notebook and compose your own exercises. Writing them down forces you to commit to an idea and carefully work through the process of applying it. It also slows the improvisation process down to a pace where we effectively can control and integrate new ideas.

I’m going to stick with the same measures of “I’ll Remember April” and offer a couple examples from my own notebook. Figure 1d is a contour variation on diatonic seventh chords in the key of A phrased in 3/4. It emphasizes the longer hemiola, or groupings of three quarter notes, and ignores the dotted quarter subgrouping. In contrast, Figure 1e emphasizes the dotted quarter hemiola, or groupings of three eighth notes. It is a truncated variation on Figure 1d, but also incorporates triplets, like Marsh’s original idea.

In both examples, sequence and accents help to emphasize the hemiola. The hard landing on the tonic on beat 1 of bar 4 is for practice purposes. It provides a moment to check in and make sure everything is lined up. In performance, I would hope to get out of the hemiola with a little more subtlety and finesse. These examples could be varied further through any number of compositional tools, including but not limited to expansion,

diminution, and both diatonic and chromatic transposition.

5:4 Hemiola: Groupings of 5 in 4/4

The hemiola Marsh plays in the first “A” section of his second chorus is much more slippery—both because it’s a grouping of five and because the triplet in the middle of the figure crosses the bar line if notated in 4/4 (Figure 2a). I’ve rewritten it in 5/4 (Figure 2b), which is a bit easier to read. It could also be notated as two measures of 5/8 (Figure 2c), which more clearly shows the smallest unit of the hemiola.

We can simplify this hemiola rhythm by getting rid of the subdivisions, particularly the triplet ornamentation, leaving a much simpler and more flexible asymmetrical grouping of eighth notes: quarter plus dotted quarter, or units of two eighths plus three eighths (2+3). It might help to think of this figure as “short-long” (Figure 2d), as many jazz musicians do when dealing with asymmetrical meters like 5/8 (short-long) or 7/4 (short-short-long).

If we notate this short-long rhythm in 4/4, you can see that it goes through a full cycle after five measures, and would start over on beat 1 of measure 6. You can think of this as four measures of 5/4 (Figure 2e). Similar to the 3/4 version, four bars of a 5/4 hemiola equals five bars of 4/4. It’s one beat longer than the actual meter, so the figure “walks forward” rather than back, beginning first on beat 1, then 2, and so on.

To practice, begin by clapping Figure 2e while tapping your foot, first in quarter notes and then in half notes. A metronome will help keep you honest here, but it’s important to pat the foot or even walk in time while clapping the hemiola. This has to be learned at the physical level to be accessible in improvisation. Once you can do this, sing the melody of “I’ll Remember April” while you clap the hemiola and tap your foot or walk.

Record yourself, so you can check your accuracy, especially at the beginning. Again, this has to feel easy before you move on to the next steps. As with most new ideas, slow, focused practice is the key. This same method should be applied to the 3:4 hemiola.

The next step is to compose some new ideas based on the hemiola we’ve taken from Marsh’s solo. Figure 2f transforms the diatonic seventh chord idea in Figure 1d from a 3:4 hemiola into a 5:4 hemiola with slight alterations of rhythm and contour. Because the 5:4 variation goes through a full cycle in five measures of 4/4, in “April” it moves from A major to A minor harmonically. To accommodate this, I’ve changed C# to C natural beginning in the fourth measure, anticipating the harmonic change by one beat.

This is only a starting point with either of these hemiolas. You could create more variations on the diatonic seventh chord sequence here using any of the tools we’ve already discussed, or move on to a new melodic idea—scale fragments, thirds or the motif from “A Love Supreme.” You could also explore each of these hemiolas in their inversion: groupings of four in 3/4 and 5/4. Change the basic unit of subdivision from the eighth to the triplet or the 16th note, and another world of possibilities opens up. Even more importantly, the idea of working from a transcription in this way can be applied broadly in a second, complementary three-step post-transcribing process:

- 1) Analyze and identify specific concepts in your transcription. Harmony, rhythm, motivic development, melody and timbre are all worth exploring. Sonny Rollins’ solos are often excellent models for motivic development, while a Johnny Hodges solo might lead to exploration of pitch bends and vibrato.
- 2) Reduce those concepts to their simplest form.
- 3) Compose and practice your own exercises to internalize and apply the concepts.

The result is transcription-based practice that is simultaneously grounded and creatively engaging. It is precisely that thrill of discovery which continues to inspire me to transcribe.

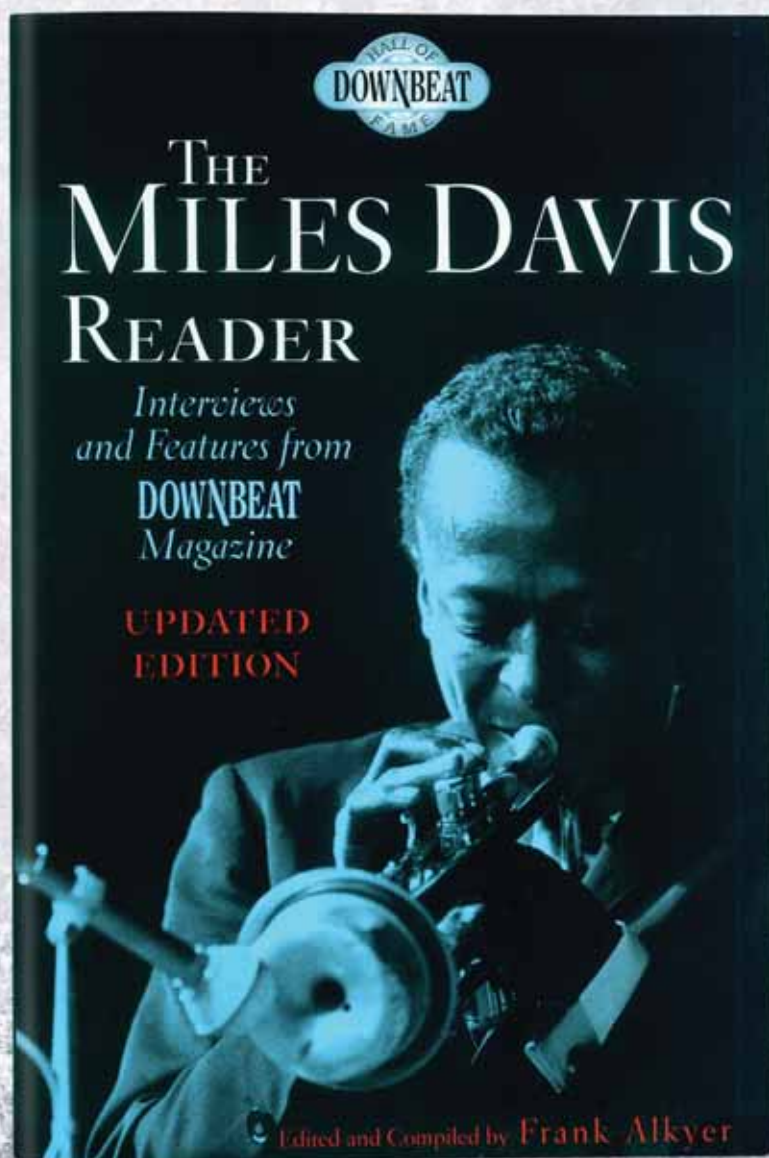
The complete Marsh solo transcription and additional resources are available online at therealitybook.com. *The Reality Book* is an immersive HD video and studio audio play-along experience, combining charts, transcriptions and exercises in a visceral playing and learning environment for jazz musicians of all levels.

DB

Geof Bradfield is a saxophonist and composer based in Chicago. His latest CD, *Yes, And ... Music For Nine Improvisers* (Delmark), received a 4-star review in the October 2018 issue of *DownBeat*. Bradfield is an associate professor of jazz studies at Northern Illinois University. Visit him online at geofbradfield.com

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JOHN ABBOTT



Bill Warfield

How to Market Your Craft from the Inside Out

When most people think of the word “marketing,” they envision powerful Madison Avenue executives and expensive advertising campaigns. But when I think about marketing myself as a musician, I embrace the idea that no amount of money, no carefully researched demographic targeting or promotional photo can substitute for solid organization of thought. The internal organization of well-constructed music arrangements communicates to a listener far better than any clever copywriter’s description of your art.

The emotional impact of your music on your audience is the one element that we as composers/arrangers can control. It is here that we determine if the consumer will want more or move on to the next experience. Below, I describe a few methods I have employed to help achieve this end. Without a well-constructed

product, a sustained marketing effort will not only be unsuccessful, it probably will never *be*.

Getting Started

I attended a master class by Herbie Hancock many years ago where he said he got the idea for “Dolphin Dance” by listening to the Frank Foster tune “Shiny Stockings.” I would have never put the two together. I listened to “Dolphin Dance” again, and there it was—obvious references to “Shiny Stockings,” especially in the last 14 bars of the tune.

I fell in love with Béla Bartók’s composition “Music For Strings, Percussion And Celesta.” There is a sequence of ensemble “hits” from bar 200 to bar 240, scored for piano and strings. The “ensemble” plays a homophonic rhythmic figure over percussion. The development required to reach this section logically took a long time. I decided to extract the idea and

ended up with a completely new piece of music titled “Mad Dog 245.” It sounds almost nothing like the Bartók piece, but it was a concept that I discovered and could work with.

Learning the craft is a requirement for any type of arranging or composition, but you don’t have to know everything before you start. You just need an idea. For Hancock, it was “Shiny Stockings”; for me, it was the Bartók piece. Pick a bass line that you like, borrow it, vary it and use it to build a new musical work. Choose a tune that speaks to you and use it as a guide.

Another idea is to pick a scale that has a great deal of color and design a melody based on it. Move it around to different key centers, and use the three serially based variations of your line: retrograde (backwards), inversion (upside-down) and retrograde inversion (backward and upside-down). It is a starting point.

You will, as I have discovered, learn more by doing than by formal analysis alone.

A Line That Works

My wife is a painter. Once I was attempting to draw a tree or something and it wasn’t looking much like the object I was studying. My wife, however, can sit down and in a short time, with a pencil and paper, create a drawing that looks just like the object she is observing. So, I asked her what I was doing wrong. Her answer has had a lasting impact on my composition. She said that she never tries to draw “the perfect line,” that instead her goal is to come up with “a line that works.” So, rather than spending hours trying to come up with the perfect countermelody, background figure or harmony, just find “a line that works.” Once you have a framework that holds together, you always can change it. Your creative intuition will create your direction, and your craft level will define your ability to present your direction with clarity—just as the intuitive placing of marks on a page becomes an image.

Bill’s Axiom

I live by one simple set of guidelines when composing or arranging. Actually, it’s a fairly complex rule, but it is a musical axiom that can be applied to any musical system with consistency:

- 1) Repetition creates excitement to a point, and then becomes boring.
- 2) Variation creates interest to a point, and then becomes confusing.
- 3) Your job as a composer or arranger is to use repetition and variation to create music that is exciting and interesting without ever becoming boring or confusing.

Let's examine a composition by one of our greatest arranger/composers who has made use of this axiom.

Motivic Development

One of my favorite tunes is "Tiptoe" by Thad Jones. This can be found on the 1970 Blue Note album *Consummation* by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, or on YouTube.

Look at the first four notes: F, D, E \flat , and then an E \flat an octave lower. This is the motive of the piece. If you study the score or listen to the recording, you will notice this four-note motive repeated and varied in different ways. It is a small idea that is used to create all of the material in the chart. That all of the material is drawn from such a small source gives the chart unity. It requires organization to use all of these variations and make them hold together, but your thematic material is taken care of. You have a source for ideas that can grow organically and create a unified statement when you start to develop your arrangement.

One of the most interesting things to me about "Tiptoe" is the contrasting material presented by the trombone section and bass at the 1:40 point of the chart. This section introduces a completely different emotional feeling. At 2:30, we again hear the first four notes, but instead of saxophones with soprano lead, we have the full ensemble setting up a sort of asymmetrical call-and-response with Mel Lewis on drums. The chart ends with an almost literal repetition of the original motive.

Beginning arrangers often have enough material for multiple compositions, but make the mistake of attempting to fit all of it into one arrangement. A small source of information that is highly developed is a better way to go.

Rhythm

When I first moved to New York, I was fortunate to have some friends playing in the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra. I subbed periodically, but most importantly I became friends with Mel. I recorded my first demo in 1987 and asked him to listen to it and give me some feedback. After not hearing from him for several weeks, I called. He kept me on the phone for nearly two hours going over each arrangement and giving me what was one of the greatest composition lessons I've ever had.

The thing I remember most about the conversation was Mel saying, "I'm a drummer, I like rhythm." He went on to say that what communicates most, to even the most uninitiated listener, is rhythm. He told me that while he liked my harmonies and thought the charts were interesting, he would like to hear more rhythmic ideas. Now when I write, I try to remember to compose rhythmically, as well as melodically.

It often is helpful to use varied, but comple-

mentary, rhythmic feels to create interest. I use very specific Afro-Cuban beats, or Brazilian rhythmic patterns, when I compose or arrange. Specific Latin patterns add interest to your arrangement and ensure a certain amount of control. Books such as *Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset* by Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner are a great resource. Study the pattern before you use it, particularly issues such as clave alignment. Make sure that your melodies and background figures fit with the clave, etc. Two of my favorite patterns are the mozambique and the songo. Both patterns specifically are derived from Afro-Cuban rhythms by drummers using a standard drum kit.

I also vary the rhythmic style of compositions when programming a concert or recording. It's not interesting to listen to tune after tune with identical rhythmic feels and harmonic structures.

Melodic, Rhythmic Hooks

A hook is a group of notes, musical event or rhythmic pattern used in popular music to make a tune appealing and to capture the imagination of the listener. Most often it is catchy and repeated. The hook is most common in rock, r&b, hip-hop and dance, but it also applies to other types of music. The four-note motive that begins Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*, the release to Bob Brookmeyer's "Samba Con Getchu" and a leitmotif in German opera are all devices employed to capture the imagination of the listener. Finding some sort of hook for a jazz piece is an easy way to ensure that your music will stand out to your audience.

Program Music

Music such as "Prelude To The Afternoon Of A Faun" by Debussy or "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" by Dukas conjure a mental image. The Walt Disney film *Fantasia* makes use of several of these, because it was easy to come up with illustrations to go along with the music.

I've done tone poems such as "Streetcorner Supermarket" and "Scootzie", both on my recent Planet Arts release *For Lew*, to summon images that were part of my life when I first moved to New York, living in Hell's Kitchen.

They both are programmatic by nature, which gives me great stories to relay to my audience when I perform them. It adds a dimension to the music to help my audience relate to me through experience, as well as expression.

Finally, you have to figure out what audience might be attracted to your work. Building a following is easier if your target audience embraces a broader demographic. I spent a great deal of my career lamenting that if it weren't for the repetitive, lowest-common-denominator music on the radio, that real jazz would have an audience.

It finally occurred to me that this same repetition when coupled with variation and applied to a more complex idiom could work to my advantage.

Conclusion

I've spent most of this article talking about the internal musical elements that will help you present your music to your public in the most memorable manner. In addition, I'd like to mention a few things I've learned during my 52-year-long career:

1) Dress up for your gigs.

2) Talk to your audience. Speak kindly to the people who showed up to hear you. It's an honor to present your art to others.

3) Be prepared. Rehearse.

If you find your own way to attract and hold an audience, you'll be successful. The process starts inside your work. When you reach out to a group of listeners who aren't obligated to come to your show, you must have something special to offer them. Your commitment to integrity and professionalism is a time-proven method of delivering your product with clarity. **DB**

Bill Warfield is a trumpeter, composer, arranger, bandleader and educator who has performed with Sonny Stitt, Ornette Coleman, Dave Liebman, Mel Lewis, Paul Anka, The Spinners and numerous artists on the New York scene. Warfield has taught arranging clinics internationally and frequently appears as a solo artist in Europe. He has written and arranged for the Dave Liebman Big Band, the Bill Kirchner Nonet, Eddie Palmieri and Paul Shaffer, as well as for TV and film. Warfield has released 14 recordings as a leader, and he currently directs the Hell's Kitchen Funk Orchestra, The New York Jazz Octet, The New York Jazz Repertory Orchestra and the Bill Warfield Big Band. For the past 22 years, he has been the director of jazz and brass studies at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Visit him online at billwarfield.net.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Bill Warfield recommends the following reference books and online resources as essential tools for "marketing your craft from the inside out."

• *Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset* (Alfred Music), by Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner

ISBN-10: 0897245741

ISBN-13: 978-0897245746

• *Inside The Score* (Kendor Music), by Rayburn Wright

ISBN-10: 9991739661

ISBN-13: 978-9991739663

• *Changes Over Time: The Evolution Of Jazz Arranging* (Advance Music), by Fred Sturm

ISBN-10: 0206303130

ISBN-13: 978-0206303136



Michael Dease's Solo on 'Blackfoot'

Trombonist Michael Dease draws his style from a diverse group of influences, including J.J. Johnson, Steve Turre and Conrad Herwig. His 2018 album *Reaching Out* (Posi-Tone) is a mixture of original tunes and tunes from some of his biggest influences. Here is his solo on Steve Turre's contrafact of "Cherokee" titled "Blackfoot."

One thing Dease is known for is his harmonic freedom when improvising. He will frequently alter the upper extensions of dominant chords, as in measure 31, where he plays the flat ninth of the F7. He makes similar alterations in measures 35, 39 and 43.

He also makes use of delayed resolution by prolonging the harmony of a chord (usually a

dominant chord) for longer than the rhythm section, resolving it anywhere from a few beats to an entire measure later. In bar 2, he is still implying the F7(♭9♭13), waiting until bar 3 to resolve to a B♭maj7. In bar 44, he continues to outline a D7(♭9#9). He doesn't resolve to the Gmaj7 until measure 45.

Another interesting technique is the superimposition of different chords altogether. In bars 14–15, he implies a condensed version of the usual chord changes, making each chord last just two beats, instead of four. In measure 50, he superimposes a Johnson-style dominant cycle starting on the flat sixth of the key.

Dease uses several different melodic devices in this solo. In bars 10–12, he plays a lick very reminiscent of Turre, Dease's former teacher. It begins using notes exclusively from the F major pentatonic scale and a repeating rhythmic motive. In bar 12, it deviates from the scale, but continues the rhythmic pattern. At the top of the second "A" section (measure 34) he quotes from the Billy Strayhorn standard "Raincheck." In bar 26, Dease outlines a series of diatonic seventh chords. All of the chords are diatonic to B♭ lydian, making it fit over both the B♭maj7 and the C7.

Rhythmically, the bulk of the solo is a steady stream of eighth notes, which is typical in a bebop setting like this. Dease does add some interesting rhythmic variety in select places, though. He often will juxtapose eighth notes with quarter notes to break up the rhythmic monotony, as in bars 4–8, 10–13, 26–33 and almost the entire bridge (34–49). In each of these cases, we see several measures of mostly eighths, followed by one or two bars of quarters. He also uses a motive that alternates triplets and duplets in bars 62–64. The irregular frequency of the alternation between the two makes for an interesting rhythmic passage.

There are some features to this solo that are idiosyncratic to the trombone as well. Dease was kind enough to point out some of his specific uses of alternate slide positions. The bulk of these are the playing of D and F (above the staff) in fourth position, as in measures 1, 2, 15, 16, 23, 47 and 56. He also plays high B♭ in third position in bar 24. These uses of alternate positions are imperative to facilitate playing at the breakneck tempo of 370 beats per minute.

He finishes the solo with a blues lick that's once again reminiscent of Johnson. It's a perfectly simple way to round out an otherwise complex solo.

DB

Trombonist, composer, arranger and educator Dr. Andrew Hamilton (andrewhamiltonmusic.com) holds a bachelor's degree from University of North Florida, a master's degree from DePaul University and a doctorate from University of Miami.

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0:45
Cmin7 F7 (F7alt.) (Bbmaj7)
Bbmaj7

4 Fmin7 Bb7 Ebmaj7

8 Ab7#11 Bbmaj7

12 C7#11 (G7) (Cmin7) (F7)
G7#9

16 Cmin7 F7 Bbmaj7

20 Fmin7 Bb7 Ebmaj7

24 Ab7#11 Bbmaj7

28 C7#11 Cmin7 F7

32 Bbmaj7 Cmin7 F#7

36 Fmaj7 Bmin7 E7

40 Amaj7 Amin7 D7

44 (D7alt.) (Gmaj7) Gmin7 C7

48 Cmin7 (Gb7) (B7) (E7) (A7)
Bbmaj7

52 (D7) (G7) (C7) (F7) (Bb7) (Ebmaj7)
Fmin7 Bb7

56 Ab7#11 Bbmaj7

60 C7#11 Cmin7 F7

64 Bbmaj7



Blessing BBTB-62R Bass Trombone

Pro Features, Warm Tone, Entry-Level Price

The complexity of the bass trombone makes it an advanced instrument by its very nature, which is why most bass trombone models are high-end horns with price tags to match.

New bass trombonists typically have to go right to the top of the line or settle for worn-out, old beater horns (or instruments with only a single valve). That makes the new BBTB-62R bass trombone from E.K. Blessing a welcome addition to today's band instrument scene: It's an instrument with an entry-level price tag that doesn't skimp on professional-level features.

The BBTB-62R has a two-piece 9.5-inch rose brass bell and two independent rotors in the most common tuning option of B \flat /F/G \flat and D. The G \flat lever has an adjustable paddle, and the F thumb-lever has a stylish round paddle like those seen on custom instruments. The valve linkages are of the durable ball-and-socket variety. The slide is all nickel-silver with a double radius crook. The clear lacquer is well executed—I really had to get up close to find any finish issues that wouldn't show up on a trombone costing twice as much.

The “made in China” stamp on the main bell brace made me nervous at first—I've seen some Chinese-built instruments that were not worthy of any level of trombonist at any price. But, rest assured, the Blessing BBTB-62R bass trombone is not one of those. Right out of the case, the slide was smooth and the valves were ready to go.

The stylish case is a hard-plastic shell featuring a zippered black cordura cover with brown vinyl accents. It has removable interior blocks for a custom fit and more than enough storage for supplies thanks to the removable base and the zippered side pocket. It also has built-in backpack straps and a permanently attached back pad—very impressive.

The tone of this instrument is big and warm—the way a proper low brass instrument should sound. A good balance has been struck by the resonant rose brass bell and the nickel-silver slide. I thought this bell/slide combination would be a little bright, but that isn't the case. I found the pitch center to be good, and the intonation predictable in every tuning. The slide positions are exactly where any experienced bass trombonist would expect them to be.

The horn does play with a fair amount of resistance. The removable leadpipe system found on many other horns with similar features is missing here, so advanced players might have trouble dialing in the “feel” of the horn. Intermediate players might not miss this, but professionals who like this level of customization are likely to notice.

The BBTB-62R has a lot to offer. A bass trombone with these features at this price likely will inspire more young tenor trombonists to play bass trombone, and might even inspire more school band programs to add a quality bass trombone (or two) to their inventory.

—Ryan Miller

blessingbrass.com

Eastman DM-1, Godin Multiac Gypsy Jazz

2 New Models Honoring the Django Reinhardt Tradition

In the early 1930s, as traditional jazz evolved into swing in the United States, Europeans were creating their own style of jazz. With roots in Musette music, and heavily influenced by American artists, players like Django Reinhardt began to form a new sound. Known today as manouche or gypsy jazz, this string-based acoustic music features an aggressive rhythm style and a highly improvisational structure. The guitars utilized by these gypsy jazz players also were unique. Designed specifically to project without amplification, these instruments produce a distinctive sound that has become an integral part of the music. Recently, two well-known guitar manufacturers have decided to enter the gypsy jazz guitar market, and although they each take a very different approach, the Eastman DM-1 and the Godin Multiac Gypsy Jazz are both worthy instruments for the musician looking to follow the manouche tradition.

Performing unamplified, gypsy jazz players required a guitar that could produce the necessary volume to be heard. Instruments originally designed by Mario Maccaferri in 1932 featured a large D-shaped sound

hole with a 12-fret neck—the model first used by Reinhardt. Later in 1933, Henri Selmer developed a new design with a smaller, oval-shaped sound hole and longer, 14-fret neck. Considered better for lead work, the Selmer design became the preferred guitar for Reinhardt and many others.

The Eastman DM-1 is based closely on the original Selmer guitar design with its “petite bouche” oval sound hole and 14-fret neck. It's extremely traditional in both its feel and workmanship. In the Selmer tradition, it has a solid Sitka spruce top, laminate rosewood sides and back and a maple neck with slotted headstock. The floating bridge is the classic “moustache” style, and the brass tailpiece is the traditional gypsy design. The finish is a very lightly sprayed lacquer, which Eastman refers to as “open pore,” allowing the guitar to vibrate more freely. Overall, the guitar plays well and definitely retains the sound and feel of a gypsy guitar. It performed nicely in play-testing, whether churning out heavy “La Pompe”-style rhythm or digging into some single-note soloing. The DM-1 handled the extra-heavy gypsy pick easily. I did find the action set a little low for

my tastes, and with a non-adjustable bridge these guitars often require shimming to fine-tune them. This is extremely common on gypsy guitars and very easy to resolve. All in all, at a street price of \$999, the DM-1 is one of the better gypsy guitars I have played in this price range.

The Godin Multiac Gypsy Jazz offers musicians a completely different option, with a Selmer-inspired acoustic-electric guitar design that excels in live performance environments. Tailored toward reproducing the gypsy jazz tone and feel, the body is made of chambered mahogany with a solid spruce top and mahogany neck. It features a traditional gypsy tailpiece, slotted peghead and floating “moustache” bridge like the Selmer, but that is where the similarities end. The real magic of this guitar is in the electronics, and that is something Godin does extremely well.

The Multiac Gypsy Jazz has two complete electronics systems on board. The acoustic system is built into the bridge, which houses an L.R. Baggs dual-source system with an under-saddle pickup element and a Lyric microphone. This system runs through an internal preamp with sliders for volume, three-band EQ and a blend control for adjusting the mix between the under-saddle transducer and microphone. There is also a “tape saturation emulation” slider that can add a warm coloration to the signal. This acoustic system is designed to be sent directly out to a P.A. or to an acoustic instrument amplifier.

The second system is the electric side, featuring a single Seymour Duncan lipstick pickup mounted in the neck position and controlled by standard volume and tone controls. The guitar has two individual output jacks. One delivers the combined acoustic and electric signals, and the other sends just the electric signal. For optimum results, Godin recommends using both jacks and sending the acoustic signal through a DI or acoustic amp, and the electric signal to a standard guitar amp. With this configuration, the tonal possibilities are endless.

Playing the Godin through a dual amp setup, it took some experimentation to find the gypsy jazz tone I desired. As an electric instrument, it will never sound exactly like an actual acoustic, but for playing on stage it is a great solution for getting that Django color in an amplified guitar. The Multiac Gypsy Jazz is available for a street price of \$2,350.

—Keith Baumann

eastmanguitars.com
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Yamaha CSVR-ASP Clarinet

High-End Accuracy, Enhanced Artistry

The Yamaha CSVR-ASP B-flat clarinet is a professional-level instrument designed to meet the high standards that top-level players demand. The ASP stands for Atelier Special—*atelier* meaning an artist’s workshop—which is an apt moniker for this clarinet, as it is obviously the work of a team of extremely knowledgeable and capable instrument-makers. The new line builds upon the strengths of Yamaha’s Custom CSVR clarinets, introduced in 2015.

Features of the CSVR-ASP include metal tenon rings, a reshaped register key and A key, thicker silver plating on all keys and a new barrel design for improved response. It also has an auxiliary left-hand A \flat /E \flat key. Although the silver plating is mostly cosmetic, it does give the horn a nice shine that can be polished to regain its luster from time to time.

In general, the keywork on the CSVR-ASP is very comfortable. Despite the fact that I have played Buffet clarinets for 30 years, I found it relatively easy to get used to the key placement. After starting off with some warm-ups, I began to enjoy the instrument’s quick response and even scale. Going “over the break” is smooth and easy. The shape of the register key being slightly offset responds nicely to the angle of the left-hand thumb, enabling a smooth transition over the break.

Yamaha always has made horns with noticeably even and consistent

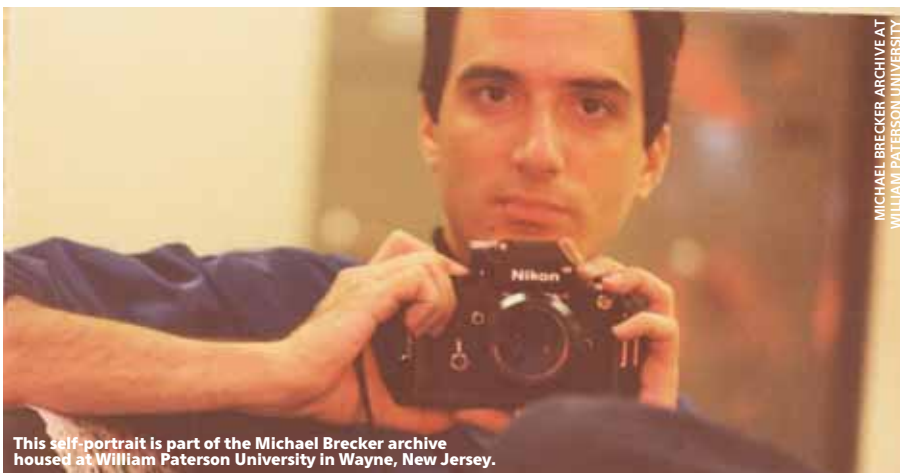
tuning, and the CSVR-ASP is no exception. The problem of adjusting for intonation from the lower notes of the instrument to the 12th above is all but eliminated. The throat tones that sometimes are stuffy and sharp in other clarinets are quite clear and easy to tune. In fact, tuning is exceptional throughout the entire range of the instrument.

Possibly the most important criteria for judging any instrument is its tonal quality, and when it comes to choosing a clarinet, this is often a make-or-break factor. The CSVR-ASP possesses a dark and compact tone that makes it easy to project. I use a handmade Walter Grabner K13 mouthpiece with a large chamber, which helps me create a rather dark sound with my vintage 1960 Buffet. Playing the CSVR-ASP with this mouthpiece and a #3.5 Vandoren reed, my tone became more focused and controlled, which helped me to project on the bandstand. I tested this horn on a jazz quartet gig and found it a joy to play. I found I could play quiet ballads expressively and still be heard over drums, bass and piano on louder uptempo tunes.

The CSVR-ASP is all about accurate performance—it makes those difficult clarinet runs easier to execute, so advanced players can focus more on the subtle nuances of their art. (Yamaha’s new Atelier Special line also includes the CSVRA-ASP, pitched in the key of A.)

—Matt Wifler

usa.yamaha.com



MICHAEL BRECKER ARCHIVE AT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

This self-portrait is part of the Michael Brecker archive housed at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey.

Legacy Runs Deep in Brecker Archive

MICHAEL BRECKER HAD SUCH A RICH musical life—leading influential groups with and without his older brother, Randy, appearing as a sideman with an array of jazz and pop stars, breaking ground on both the saxophone and the EWI (electronic wind instrument)—that, long before he died from leukemia at age 57 in 2007, there was little doubt his legacy would be preserved. Among Brecker’s accolades are 15 Grammy awards and induction in the DownBeat Hall of Fame. But did he ever think about creating an archive himself?

“Absolutely not,” said Susan Brecker, who was married to Michael for 25 years. “That was the very last thing that would occur to him.”

Fortunately, the faculty at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey, thought differently. And in August 2013, they established a Michael Brecker archive. Housed in a three-room suite along with the archives of other notable musicians—among them Clark Terry and Thad Jones—the Brecker archive contains thousands of diverse items, including memorabilia, mouthpieces, sheet music and personal photos.

“There’s so much material, it’s mind-boggling,” trumpeter Randy Brecker said.

Researchers can examine some intriguing items. A 1967 yearbook from Pennsylvania’s Cheltenham High School states that Brecker was homeroom president. Three decades later, a note from Tipper Gore thanks him for the “magic” he and his band created at a post-inaugural party for the 1996 Bill Clinton-Al Gore ticket.

Students searching out the music will find boxes full. This is material that, according to David Demsey, coordinator of jazz studies, is

“woven through the curriculum” in William Paterson’s 24 ensembles and big band.

There’s also a prototype of a wind synthesizer, built by Nyle Steiner, sitting in a tour case. The instrument, which allowed Brecker to play sampled sounds and multitrack in real time, showed a mind intent on incorporating new technology.

But students exploring how Brecker developed his craft can explore eight 100-page notebooks, which contain ideas, sketches, melodies, chord changes and the like that he created for his own practice sessions. The notes suggest hours spent writing and working through patterns of four or eight bars, some with explicit labels like “II-V-I in F” or “pentatonics in major thirds.”

“You can see him teaching himself,” Demsey said.

Brecker’s practice never was without purpose. In fact, the patterns would sometimes work their way onto the bandstand. “Every once in a while, he’d play a new lick,” Randy said. “That was the stuff he wrote down.”

The earliest entries in the notebooks are from his student days at Indiana University, where, in one example, he follows a theoretical analysis of a Bach chorale with a John Coltrane transcription. Later entries include production notes for his final album, *Pilgrimage*, with Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock, Brad Mehldau, John Patitucci and Jack DeJohnette.

The production notes’ sustained attention to detail is remarkable, given that Brecker was gravely ill and died two weeks after finishing the album. The notes specify everything from fixes to be dubbed (“lower tenor note a half step”) to takes to be used (“tenor solo from Take 7”).

—Phillip Lutz



COURTESY OF ARTIST

Greg Yasinitsky

Studio School: Saxophonist Greg Yasinitsky recorded nine original tracks for his new big band album, *YAZZ Band*, in the Washington State University Recording Studio. Yasinitsky is a Regents Professor in the university’s School of Music, where he teaches composition, jazz studies and saxophone. An in-demand clinician and author of the book *Improvisation 101: Major, Minor and Blues* (Advance Music), he has been involved in education for more than 40 years.

gregyasinitsky.com

Purchase Jazz Turns 25: Purchase College Conservatory of Music will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its jazz studies program by presenting concerts in Westchester and New York City featuring students from the highly competitive program. Highlights of the 2018–19 jazz season include a performance by the Purchase Latin Jazz Orchestra on Dec. 5, a concert by the Purchase Jazz Orchestra on Dec. 6 and a celebration of Black History Month featuring the Purchase Symphony and Jazz orchestras on Feb. 15, 2019. Spring performances will include engagements at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola and at the Blue Note and Birdland jazz clubs. purchase.edu

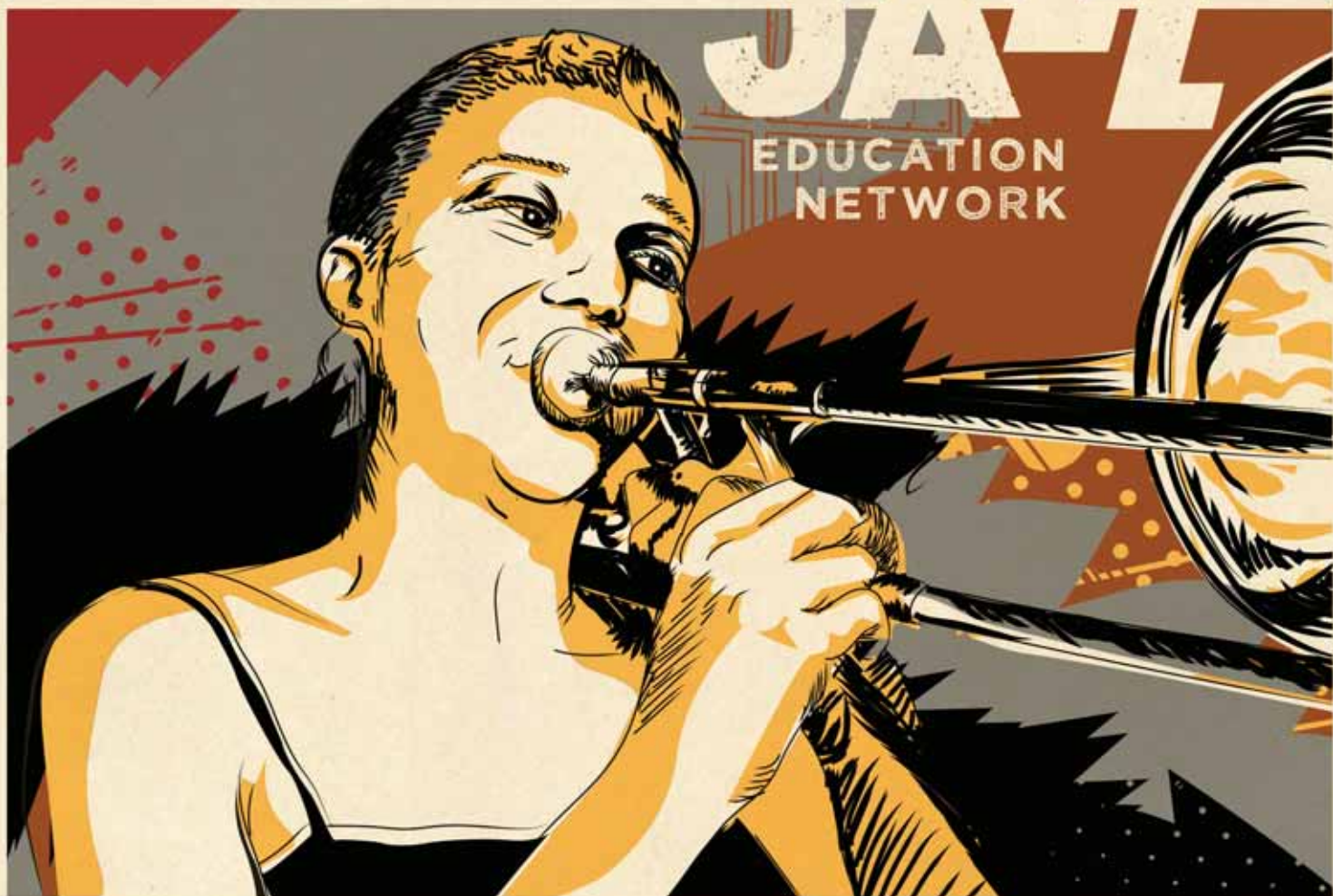
Jazz Forum: The fourth International Jazz Composers’ Symposium, co-sponsored by the University of Northern Colorado and the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and Composers, will be held in the new School of Music facilities at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, May 16–18, 2019. The symposium will include Ron Miles, Bill Frisell, Christine Jensen, Vince Mendoza, Darcy James Argue and Chris Potter, among others, in a series of concerts, lectures, master classes, panel discussions, research presentations and industry sessions. isjac.org

Therapy Summit: The American Music Therapy Association’s national conference will take place Nov. 15–18 in Dallas. Music therapists, researchers and students will come together to share information about the growing music therapy industry. musictherapy.org

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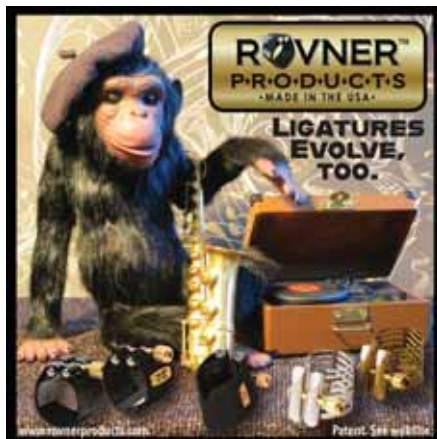
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Marcus Miller

Bassist and bass clarinet player Marcus Miller has appeared on more than 400 albums, including Miles Davis' *Tutu* and *Amandla*, both of which he arranged and produced. Miller's most recent album is *Laid Black* (Blue Note). A UNESCO Artist for Peace, Miller cohosts the Blue Note at Sea jazz cruise and hosts a radio show, *Miller Time*, on Sirius XM. The day before Miller took the Blindfold Test in front of an audience at this year's Detroit Jazz Festival, Aretha Franklin had been laid to rest in Detroit, where she grew up. This was Miller's second Blindfold Test. (His first one was in 1988.)

Wynton Kelly

"Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me" (*Kelly Blue*, Riverside, 1959). Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums.

I think it's Ray Brown, because he's swinging hard and his ideas are really definite. A lot of bass players don't get to all their ideas, especially in the '50s, because with upright basses, they used to keep the strings so far away from the neck that it was really hard to play. Ray Brown could get to his ideas. [after] Paul Chambers is my other favorite from that era. At first, I thought it was him, but the sound is different. Usually, with Paul, it has more string noise. You can hear his fingers attacking the strings. And that group with Paul, Wynton and Jimmy Cobb is my favorite group.

Art Farmer

"Work Of Art" (*The Art Farmer Septet*, Prestige, 1953). Farmer, trumpet; Monk Montgomery, electric bass; Jimmy Cleveland, trombone; Cliff Solomon, tenor saxophone; Oscar Estell, baritone saxophone; Sonny Johnson, drums; Quincy Jones, piano.

I'm not sure who that is. If it's Miles, it's very early Miles. The arrangement reminds me of *Birth Of The Cool* and Lennie Tristano, so that's how I'm gonna guess. But he's making all his notes, the trumpet player, and Miles would have made at least three flubs by now, not that anybody cared about Miles' flubs. [after] Oh, Art Farmer. His ideas were so strong. Is [the electric bassist] Monk Montgomery? He was one of the first guys to play electric bass on a jazz record. He did it so well, you couldn't recognize it as an electric bass.

Graham Central Station

"The Jam" (*Ain't No 'Bout-A-Doubt-It*, Warner Reprise, 1975) Larry Graham, electric bass; Hershall Kennedy, Robert Sam, keyboards; Manuel Kellough, drums; David Vega, guitar; Patryce Banks, drum programming.

All right! That's Larry Graham, Graham Central Station. We were in Japan, and Larry Graham was already in Tokyo and I was getting ready to play, and they said, "Would you want to have Larry as your special guest?" And I said, "Yes!" Larry came to the sound check and he said, "How we gonna do it?" Because when you have two bass players you've got to decide, so it doesn't get to be too much. And I said, "Don't worry, man, I'm going to play every note you play and it's going to sound like one, fat-ass dude, OK?" [audience laughs]. And that's what we did, man.

We played all his songs, me and him playing the exact same things. We played that song, "The Jam." [Larry is] one of the most influential bass players of all time. He created this whole style of thumping and plucking. Some people call it "slapping." Of course Stanley Clarke, myself, Bootsy [Collins], Louis Johnson and all these other guys ended up incorporating that into their technique.

Steve Swallow

"Item 4, D.I.T." (*Damaged In Transit*, Xtra Watt, 2003) Swallow, bass; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone; Adam Nussbaum, drums.

Wait, could you rewind that? I don't know who this is, but he's killin' it. It sounds like a piano player came out of nowhere. Is that the piano player?



Marcus Miller (left) talks to Paul de Barros during a Blindfold Test at the 2018 Detroit Jazz Festival.

C. ANDREW HOVAN

[after] Steve Swallow? Wow, that thing is high. The bass must have more strings. That's against the rules! It's very nice. Steve Swallow, he's kind of in that in-between area, between the acoustic bass and the bass guitar. He played a bass guitar, but he used a sound that you're not sure whether it's an acoustic bass with the strings really low or whether it's a bass guitar.

Oscar Pettiford

"But Not For Me" (*Oscar Pettiford: Germany 1958/1959*, Jazzhaus, released in 2013) Pettiford, bass; Dusko Gojkovic, trumpet.

Is that Ron Carter? Only other guy I can think of is Oscar Pettiford. [after] The reason I thought it was Ron Carter was because that's a very well-recorded version of O.P. Usually, when you hear O.P., the recording is a bit more lo-fi. But O.P. was one of Ron's guys. As a matter of fact, I remember being on the side of the stage and watching Ron play, with Lenny White, at the Village Vanguard, and every two choruses he would say to Lenny, "Paul Chambers!" and he'd walk two choruses just like Paul Chambers. Then he'd say "O.P.!" and he'd walk like O.P.

Derrick Hodge

"Message Of Hope" (*Live Today*, Blue Note, 2013) Hodge, bass; Travis Sayles, keyboards; Mark Colenburg, drums.

That's nice! Oh, that's Derrick? I'd never heard him playing up there. The bass guitar, it's an interesting instrument, because it's a bass and it's a guitar, and we, as bass guitarists, are free to jump between the two. You can hear Derrick Hodge really exploring the guitar part of his instrument there.

Aretha Franklin

"Precious Lord" (*Aretha Gospel*, Checker, 1956) Franklin, vocal, piano.

Is that her on piano, too? People don't give it up enough for her piano playing. That girl in the audience [on the recording] is feeling it, isn't she? You know, the thing with this black music, there's always back-and-forth. If the people in the church aren't yelling back at you, there's a problem. Incredible. She's somebody who for me was always there, the bedrock of music. A lot of people, if they could sing like that when they were 14, they'd just stay there for the rest of their life. But Aretha Franklin, she always was growing. She was always saying, "What else can I do?" **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.

A man with short brown hair and a slight smile is leaning against a blue metal wall. He is wearing a dark blue patterned button-down shirt over a grey vest and blue jeans. He is holding a large brass trumpet with both hands. The background is a dark, industrial-looking setting with a large, faint 'B' logo in the upper right.

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