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BLUE NOTE®

JAMES CARTER
JAMES CARTER ORGAN TRIO: LIVE FROM NEWPORT JAZZ

Saxophone master **JAMES CARTER** makes his Blue Note debut–his first new release since 2011. A soulfully robust dispatch from America's most storied jazz festival, it's also a follow-up of sorts to his acclaimed 2000 album *Chasin' the Gypsy* that *The New Yorker* called "an alternately reverent and audacious tribute to the Belgian swing-guitar legend **DJANGO REINHARDT**. It may be the rambunctious saxophone player's recorded masterpiece."

JOEL ROSS
KINGMAKER

An impressive debut album from an incredible young artist who has been omnipresent on acclaimed recent albums by **MAKAYA MCCRAVEN** (*Universal Beings*), **WALTER SMITH III** (*In Common*), **MARQUIS HILL** (*Modern Flows, Vol. 2*), and **JAMES FRANCIES** (*Flight*). Now Joel carries the Blue Note vibraphone legacy into the future on an album that finds him exploring the formative stuff that made him the man he is, first and foremost, family.

NORAH JONES
BEGIN AGAIN

On April 12, nine-time GRAMMY-winning singer-songwriter **NORAH JONES** will release ***Begin Again***, a collection of singles that gathers seven eclectic songs that Jones has recorded over the past year with collaborators including **JEFF TWEEDY** and **THOMAS BARTLETT**.

JAMIE CULLUM
TALLER

With **10 million albums sold** to date and a successful BBC Radio 2 show, **JAMIE CULLUM** is a celebrated musician with loyal fans in every corner of the globe. His incredible new album ***Taller***, is a 10-track journey that shows Jamie revealing a vulnerability and raw truth-telling that is both powerful and intimate. Featuring singles **"Taller," "Drink"** and **"The Age of Anxiety," *Taller*** bravely explores subject matter which has personally impacted him, with each song reflecting a desire to grow and learn and explore life for the beautiful muddle it is.

RON CARTER AND DANNY SIMMONS
THE BROWN BEATNIK TOMES – LIVE AT BRIC HOUSE

A unique and powerful collaboration between the artist and poet **DANNY SIMMONS** and legendary jazz bassist **RON CARTER**. This live recording from BRIC House in Brooklyn captured Simmons reading poetry from his collection of prose *The Brown Beatnik Tomes* with projections of his own striking Abstract Expressionist paintings providing the stage backdrop while Carter performed solo accompaniment along with instrumental interludes from his fleet trio.

TONE POET SERIES
ALL-ANALOG AUDIOPHILE VINYL

Recorded during the middle of **DEXTER GORDON'S** 1960s "golden period", ***Clubhouse*** finds the tenor saxophone legend joined by **FREDDIE HUBBARD** on trumpet, **BARRY HARRIS** on piano, **BOB CRANSHAW** on bass, and **BILLY HIGGINS** on drums. This album is part of the **Tone Poet Series: all-analog audiophile vinyl** reissues supervised by **JOE HARLEY** and mastered from the original analog tape by **KEVIN GRAY**. The records are manufactured at **Record Technology Inc. (RTI)** on **180g vinyl** in **Deluxe Gatefold Packaging**. For more titles from the Tone Poet Series visit **store.bluenote.com**.

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BY PHILLIP LUTZ

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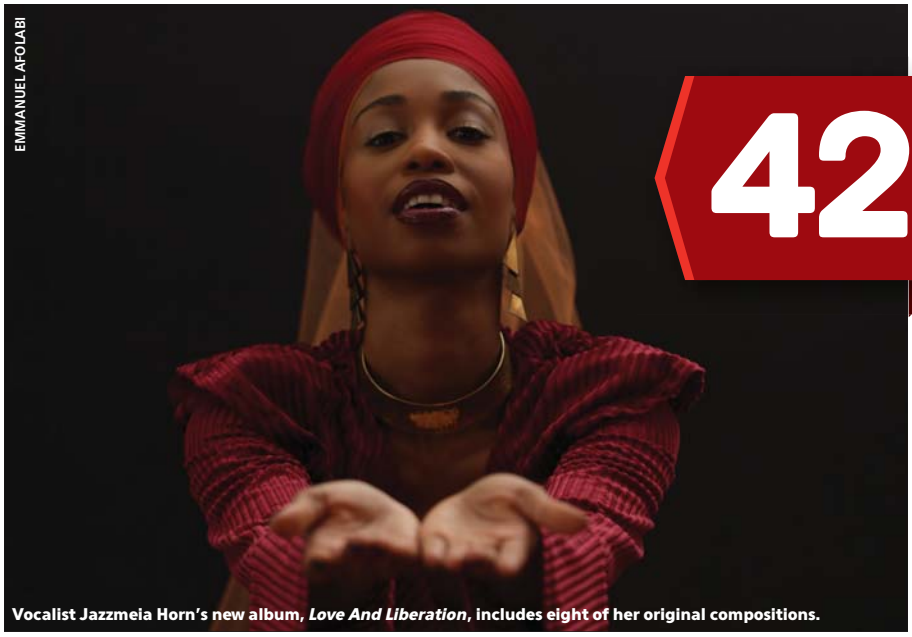

Vocalist Jazzmeia Horn's new album, *Love And Liberation*, includes eight of her original compositions.

Cover photo of James Carter shot by Jimmy & Dena Katz at the D'Addario Woodwinds Showroom in Manhattan on June 11.

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MICHAEL JACKSON

André Ménard and Alain Simard

André & Alain, *Merci Beaucoup*

The 40th edition of the Festival International de Jazz de Montreal was another work of beauty. During its closing days alone, fans could choose from hundreds of free and ticketed concerts. It was blissfully too much music to consume, but well worth trying a deep dive.

There were killer sets from The Django Festival All Stars, the Christine Jensen New York Quartet, pianist Kris Davis, Nik Bärtsch's Ronin, pianist Bobo Stenson, bassist Larry Grenadier and one of Canada's treasures: masterful pianist Wray Downes, a Toronto native. And those shows were all at Gesù, one of the coolest places on Earth to hear improvised music.

If you were in the mood for some soul music, the brilliant PJ Morton cooked up a mind-blowing set at L'Astral, while *Hamilton* star Leslie Odom Jr. elicited *oohs* and *aahs* with his suave sophistication at Théâtre Maisonneuve.

On the rock side, Peter Frampton, who is on his final tour due to a rare muscular degenerative disease, had one critic commenting on how much jazz influence there is in the British guitarist's playing. And young Australian rocker Courtney Barnett brought the attitude—and the guitar chops—with lots of flair and a big smile.

Granted, with its diverse programming, Montreal is not just a jazz festival. But most fans embrace the beauty of pitching such a big tent for music from around the globe.

The festival is no less than the realization of a dream by two local guys who have become legends: André Ménard and Alain Simard, who both retired at the end of this edition.

"I dreamed of a jazz festival for Montreal because jazz then, in the '70s, had no language; it was mostly instrumental," Simard said during a live interview produced by WBGO, metro New York's jazz radio station. "This was the birth of jazz-rock fusion, Latin jazz, world beat. My dream of doing a pop festival became a jazz festival. I thought it would fit Montreal … and be a port of entry for musicians from all over the world playing that form of musical expression."

"First and foremost, Alain and I are music fans," Ménard said. "And this [festival] has been put on for music fans with the greatest musicians in the world—those we could connect with and those who would come to Montreal. The rest was a bit of magic. You don't really prepare for it. It just happens."

But Montreal doesn't *just* happen. Ménard and Simard have skillfully guided a team that now exceeds 2,000 employees. WBGO announcer Michael Bourne, who moderated the interview, often has said that the festival staff "could run small countries." And he's right.

This epic festival's longevity is a tribute to tremendous vision and unflagging tenacity.

During a press conference on the festival's final day, both Ménard and Simard were visibly moved. Each had trouble finding the words to describe his pride in the festival and its staff.

And they are leaving the organization in good hands. Jacques-André DuPont, the president and director general, started at the festival 30 years ago as an intern; he knows every nook and cranny. Laurant Saulnier, the vice president of programming, has been with the festival for 20 years. "I'll be here for 20 more," he quipped.

When people say jazz has seen better days, send them to Montreal. Send them to the little festival André and Alain built. It's a place that will lift your spirits and where a dream came true. Congratulations to Messrs. Ménard and Simard. *Merci beaucoup.* **DB**


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Chords & Discords

Big Umbrella Approach

In the past, DownBeat always seemed to publish reviews for the albums that won poll categories. Yet, I did not see a review for The Chick Corea & Steve Gadd Band's *Chinese Butterfly* (Jazz Album of the Year in the 2018 Readers Poll), Wayne Shorter's *Emanon* (Jazz Album of the Year in the 2019 Critics Poll) or John Coltrane's *Both Directions At Once: The Lost Album* (Historical Album of the Year in the 2019 Critics Poll). What gives? All three of these records should have been in The Hot Box.

ALVIN STAN DAVIS
ASTANDAVIS@CHARTER.NET

Editor's Note: In those three cases, we published a story focused on the artist—rather than a review of the album—in order to shine a spotlight on a greater number of releases within that issue. Our March 2018 issue featured a conversation between Chick Corea and guitarist Lionel Loueke, who plays on *Chinese Butterfly*. We published an interview with Wayne Shorter, discussing *Emanon*, in our September 2018 issue. And our August 2018 issue included an article on the "lost" John Coltrane album.

Long-term Loyalty

There was great glee for me in 2008 when the DownBeat Veterans Committee was established for the purpose of electing into the Hall of Fame great musicians who had been overlooked. That year, the committee inducted Jo Jones, Jimmie Lunceford, Erroll Garner, Harry Carney and Jimmy Blanton. In 2009, the Veterans Committee inducted Oscar Pettiford and Tadd Dameron, and more greats have been voted in every subsequent year.

However, it is sad that Terry Gibbs, Buddy DeFranco, Red Norvo and Tony Scott have not been inducted. The only suggestion I can make is that those of us who have been reading DownBeat for more than 50 years should be allowed to select those artists who continually have been bypassed.

MARSHALL ZUCKER
WANTAGH, NEW YORK

Pleasant Problem

I recently started subscribing to your magazine—something I should have done long ago. What a great publication. Thank you for presenting so much great information on the current and historical jazz scene.

As I sit down with each issue, as I'm doing now with the August issue, I grab my iPad and make a Spotify playlist of new recordings to check out. Then I use the playlist to decide which albums to add to my vinyl (or CD) collection. My only complaint is that I simply cannot keep up. My "To Buy" list is now a financial challenge. But what a great challenge to have!

KURT RUHLIN
ATLANTA

Precious Metal

I just finished reading the interview with Branford Marsalis in your May issue ("Speaking His Truth"). My deepest respect and appreciation for what he said. It's pure gold!

ROBERTO MAGRIS
RMAGRISJAZZ@LIBERO.IT

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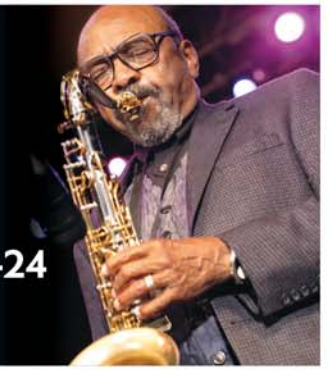

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The Beat

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In '61, Getz at His 'Most Aggressive'

It's late in fall of 1961, and tenor saxophonist Stan Getz is playing The Village Gate in New York. It's before the bandleader would cultivate worldwide popularity and a streak of Grammy nominations for now iconic albums like *Jazz Samba* (1962) and *Getz/Gilberto* (1964), which contained one of the biggest crossover hits of all time, "The Girl From Ipanema."

His quartet is in exceptional form on Nov. 26, with the saxophonist blowing uncharacteristically aggressive solos. Cole Porter's "It's Alright With Me" opens the set, Getz forming shapely fire as drummer Roy Haynes counterpunches his every note. Two ballads follow, before Getz introduces Miles Davis' "So What"; oddly, what follows is a 12-minute take of John Coltrane's "Impressions."

Throughout two sets that night, Getz covered familiar ground, but also went for broke on "Woody 'N You," a sparkling "Yesterday's Gardenias," an ascending "It's You Or No One" and a cathartic version of "52nd Street Theme."

Recorded to quarter-inch tape by lighting designer Chip Monck, the performance was stored and forgotten. Producer Richard Seidel recently discovered the tapes and assembled *Getz At The Gate: The Stan Getz Quartet Live At The Village Gate, Nov. 26, 1961*, which comes as a double CD or triple LP through Verve/Ume.

"This is Stan at his most aggressive that I've ever heard him," said producer Ken Druker. "Things like 'Airegin,' he really goes for it. 'Yesterday's Gardenias' really jumped out at me. From 'It's Alright With Me,' you know you're in for a ride, because it sounds like a different Stan. He's just back from Europe. I think he's having a hard time finding bands to work with, if he's not alienating them or firing them."

Live At The Village Gate adds another dimension to the saxophonist's storied discography, but the discovery's a curious one. Why wasn't it issued soon after being captured to tape?


LEE TANNER

Before *Jazz Samba* hit in 1962, saxophonist Stan Getz appeared to be on a different trajectory.

"It sounds like it was recorded to be issued," Druker said. "It's not a radio show. Announcer Chip Monck says at the top, 'We're here recording for Verve Records.' But this never appeared anywhere as a potential recording to release. I'm guessing it was recorded in 1961 and then *Jazz Samba* hit soon after, and this recording was forgotten, because Getz went in a whole different direction."

Steve Kuhn, who plays piano on the recording and worked with Getz for four years, suggested an alternate possibility: "Stanley was always very critical of his own playing, so he probably didn't want it to be put out."

Hypercritical of himself and his musicians, Getz could be a tough taskmaster, his battles with substance abuse being well documented.

"My father was the kindest guy when he was sober," Nick Getz, the bandleader's son, wrote in an email. "He had a wicked sense of humor, and was so smart and fun to be around. However, the minute drugs and alcohol touched his lips, he became a violent monster. Sometimes, he would arrive late for concerts, profusely sweating and having bloody knuckles from who knows what. But as soon as he picked up that saxophone, the demons instantly vanished."

Despite all the baggage, though, Getz's gorgeous tone and sprawling discography remain his overwhelming legacy.

"He was very paranoid about Coltrane," Kuhn recalled. "Stanley felt that Coltrane was '*the* guy' in the early 1960s, but that was unnecessary. Stanley had a beautiful sound. He called himself 'the Jewish Lester Young' and Paul Desmond 'the Christian Stan Getz.' He felt he stood between the two. He had such a wonderful sound."

—Ken Micallef

Riffs


JIMMY & DENA KATZ

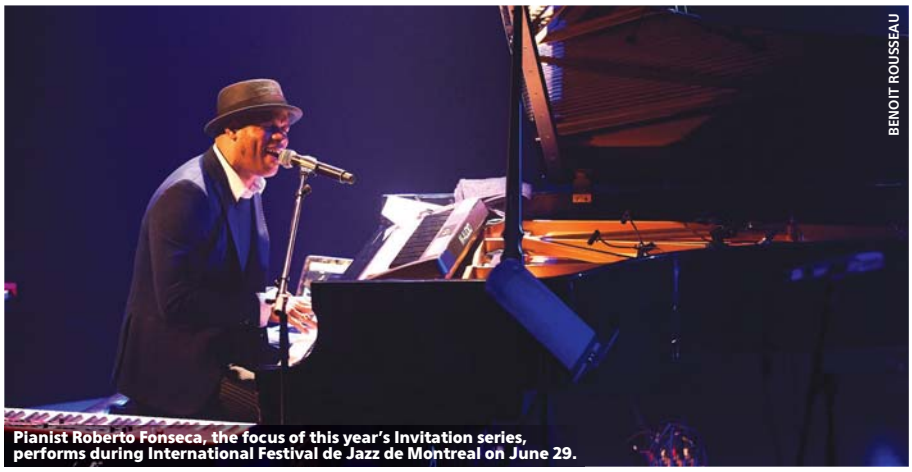
Terri Lyne Carrington

Doris Duke Artists: Drummer Terri Lyne Carrington and trombonist George Lewis are among the 2019 Doris Duke Artists. Alongside four other recipients from the worlds of theater and dance, the musicians each have been awarded $275,000. "The work of these six artists has inspired creativity, new ideas and awe across the arts sector and beyond," said Maurine Knighton, program director for the arts at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.
ddcf.org

London Town: Nérija, a London supergroup counting saxophonist Nubya Garcia and guitarist Shirley Tetteh in its ranks, is set to issue its first full-length album, *Blume*, Aug. 2 through Domino Records. The 10-track effort features all-original music composed by group members and serves to extend the ideas explored on the ensemble's self-titled EP from earlier this year.
dominomusic.com

A Chicago Tradition: Returning for its 41st celebration, the Chicago Jazz Festival is set to run Aug. 23–Sept. 1, with concert performances downtown in Millennium Park and ancillary gigs and events spanning the city. Slated to appear are Cécile McLorin Salvant, Ambrose Akinmusire, Christian McBride, Camila Meza and Eddie Palmieri, among others. Pianist-singer Freddy Cole will pay tribute to his brother, Nat, who would have turned 100 in March.
chicagojazzfestival.us

Final Bars: Co-founder of the Telarc label and Grammy winner **Jack Renner** died June 19 in Rhode Island. He was 84. Associated mainly with classical music, Cleveland-based Telarc has released a number of jazz and blues albums, including works by Dave Brubeck and James Cotton, among others. ... New Orleans trumpeter, composer and rock 'n' roll pioneer **Dave Bartholomew**, who helped launch the career of pianist and singer Fats Domino, died at age 100 on June 23. His funeral reportedly was attended by musicians Ivan Neville, Kermit Ruffins and Irvin Mayfield.


BENOIT ROUSSEAU

Pianist Roberto Fonseca, the focus of this year's Invitation series, performs during International Festival de Jazz de Montreal on June 29.

Chapter Closes at Montreal Festival as Ménard Departs

IN 1979, MONTREAL'S WARMER MONTHS weren't exactly vibrant.

"Summer was very quiet here," recalled jazz concert producer André Ménard. "Sometimes, one museum might have a blockbuster; that was it." Even Place des Arts, the spectacular complex that remains the largest performing arts center in Canada, closed each year on June 1 and didn't reopen until after Labor Day.

Then Ménard, alongside Alain Simard, founded the International Festival de Jazz de Montreal in 1980. It changed the city. Not only does Place des Arts remain open year-round, it's the streets around it that close for the summer—to make room for such festivals. "The jazz festival initiated a series of other events as well that have made Montreal what it is now," Ménard said. "Any day of the summer, you come to Montreal, and you can be sure that there's something going on."

FIJM isn't just the linchpin of Montreal's cultural life: It's one of the world's largest jazz festivals, featuring 3,000 artists and hosting more than two million attendees each year. In 2019—its 40th iteration and Ménard's last before retiring from his position as director—it hasn't lost a step.

The sheer scope of the festival is astonishing. On June 27, its opening night, one could catch avant-garde pianists Vijay Iyer and Craig Taborn at the 150-year-old Church of the Gesù; see post-bop pianist Brad Mehldau hold court at Place des Arts with his new quintet; trot around the corner and see the Steve Gadd Band playing fusion at the Monument-National theater; and finish by swing-dancing to the hot jazz of Royal Pickles at outdoor stage Place Heineken. Those concerts were among 40 that night.

The geographical spectrum was a vast one, too. Montreal's homegrown saxophonist/bass clarinetist Samuel Blais made intricate, spellbinding music at nightclub L'Astral on June 28, leading a quartet that featured guitarist Ben Monder, and dual drummers John Hollenbeck and Dan Weiss. Across the street, Istanbul-based saxophonist Ilhan Ersahin concocted an enticing brew of jazz, Turkish folk music and psychedelia.

The focus of this year's Invitation series, the Montreal festival's version of an artist-in-residence, was Cuban pianist Roberto Fonseca. And his June 29 trio performance at Gesù was a tour de force, with cascades of melody and *montuno* erupting from his grand piano. That said, the jewel of the set came when French trumpeter Erik Truffaz joined him for one song, a medium-tempo rumination with Fonseca's luminous piano conversing with Truffaz's pungent tones.

On June 29 at Club Soda, 25-year-old vocalist Nikki Yanofsky—who had her coming-out party at the 2006 FIJM as a 12-year-old prodigy—served notice of her maturity, steering away from the Great American Songbook, and sang originals and songs by Amy Winehouse, whose style serves as her new touchstone.

But Drummer Antonio Sánchez and his band Migration might have been the festival's zenith. On June 30, the group performed songs from its recent album, *Lines In The Sand*. The bandleader took pains to explain his music as a topical work: "This is about one kind of immigrant, one that's been demonized by a handful of very powerful people in the name of fake nationalism and populism." The songs—"Travesía" running about 30 minutes and "The Long Road" another 10—were intensely rhythmic, but even more intensely melodic, with vocalist Thana Alexa singing wordlessly alongside Chase Baird's saxophone and EWI. The display was evocative and moving, even aside from its politics.

All these performances and Ménard's planned retirement close a long chapter on FIJM. "At some point, you feel like you've done your part and you have to take a back seat," he said. Its 40th anniversary, however, makes clear that the festival won't fade in his absence. What he built is too powerful for that. —*Michael J. West*

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Janisch Holds Down Bass and Business

FIRST AND FOREMOST, MICHAEL JANISCH is a bassist. He's about to drop his third solo album after having worked as a sideperson with dozens of A-list jazz players and toured relentlessly with innumerable bands. So, yes, a bassist first.

But in 2010, Janisch started a label, Whirlwind Recordings, as a means of getting his own music out there. The imprint thrived, and during the past 10 years it's continued to rise in stature in the indie-jazz world, shifting as needed to embrace innovation in the music business. This is Janisch's doing. Besides his talents as a performing artist, his entrepreneurial skills as a record producer are undeniable.

The backstory for Janisch's new album, *Worlds Collide*, demonstrates as much. To start, after touring for almost three years following his 2015 release, *Paradigm Shift*, the bassist decided to make a switch in his usual personnel. "I had done a lot collaborative projects in the U.K. and wanted to play with an all-American band," the Wisconsin-born Janisch recalled during a phone call from London, his home for the past 14 years. "I don't know if I was feeling homesick or what."

After that decision, the album happened quickly. He wrote the music a month before the session, flew the band to London and recorded at the historic Abbey Road Studios only four days after the group's first rehearsal. Next, the band went on tour, debuting Janisch's new music at both the London Jazz Festival and the Hull Jazz Festival, both in the U.K., while the French channel Mezzo TV taped one of the ensemble's live performances for a globally syndicated broadcast. No pressure.

The tunes on *Worlds Collide* are not easy, either. For instance, the track "Another London" nods to the Afrobeat sound of Nigerian composer Fela Kuti with ringing vertical horn parts synced over an oddly metered, funkish drum feel. An electronic riff cycles throughout until an insistent bop saxophone solo reclaims jazz as the tune's fundamental context.

"A big movement in London now is post-acid jazz, very influenced by Afro-pop, so that's got into my blood a bit," Janisch said, in discussing the tune. "The music sounds electronic in the compositional elements, but you play it on acoustic instruments."

On the flip side of the "Another London" lies "Frocklebot," a contemporary jazz composition heavily weighted toward free horn solos; this track is more viscerally American in its feel than some others on the record. "'Frocklebot' is quite out and has an Ornette Coleman kind of vibe," Janisch explained. "I wrote it so that the album would have some more chill parts."


CARL HYDE

Bassist Michael Janisch helms Whirlwind Recordings and is set to release his latest leader date, ***Worlds Collide***.

European trends in electro-acoustic sounds have intrigued Janisch for a while, and he notes the irony of using an all-American band to tap into them. "This album is a real mix of influences, which is why it's called *Worlds Collide*," he said.

Even so, when it comes to business he draws clear boundaries; Janisch doesn't broach label concerns when he's working as a sideman. So, the bassist and critically lauded saxophonist Seamus Blake—longtime sideplayers together on others' projects—both were pleased when Blake's new management serendipitously chose Whirlwind for his 2019 *Guardians Of The Heart Machine*.

"[Whirlwind] seemed the best in terms of momentum and publicity ... and I think that Michael did a great job [with the release]," Blake asserted. "Whereas a lot of people are giving up hope on the record industry, Michael seems to find a way to keep a viable business model happening. That's rare nowadays."

Signed artists like Blake stand to benefit from Janisch's current plans for the label: As its 10-year anniversary approaches, Janisch expects collaborations with arts councils, outreach into new territories and residencies for its musicians. Janisch has plans, too, for his own music—to double down and release more of it. "I used to play bass for eight hours a day. It made me happy, and I want to get back to that," he said. As always, a bassist first.

—Suzanne Lorge


JIMMY KATZ

Jimmy Cobb, who turned 90 in January, recently issued a new quartet album, *This I Dig Of You*.

Cobb Still Keeping Unfaltering Time

ACHIEVING MAXIMUM IMPACT WITH MINIMAL FUSS HAS BEEN Jimmy Cobb's M.O. on the drum kit throughout his career, not least on his latest leader album, *This I Dig Of You* (Smoke Sessions), recorded two weeks after his 90th birthday. It's another session for which Cobb has retained the services of guitarist Peter Bernstein and bassist John Webber, both frequent bandstand partners since the cusp of the '90s, and his first with pianist Harold Mabern.

The 10-tune date includes standards, Great American Songbook ballads, less traveled torch songs, Mabern's modal "Edward Lee" and an original Bernstein blues. It's a swinging affair, propelled by Cobb's atomic-clock steady time feel and pristine touch on all his drum-kit components, not least the centered, resonant ride cymbal heard on iconic Miles Davis dates like *Kind Of Blue* and *In Person: Friday Night At The Blackhawk*, and classic sessions with Wes Montgomery, Sarah Vaughan, Cannonball Adderley and Dinah Washington.

"I developed it from not having something else," Cobb remarked of his ride-cymbal concept in June, during a week at the Village Vanguard with the *This I Dig Of You* band. "Once, on a gig with Dizzy Gillespie, I was playing a coordination thing out of Jim Chapin's book with figures he'd heard guys play without the bass drum being in 4, as guys had done in the big bands, so that everyone could hear the beat. Dizzy probably was used to hearing his guys play that way, and he came over and put his ear down by the bass drum. I told him, 'Well, Birks, I don't have a big 4/4 like that.' I had to have the beat somewhere, so I concentrated on making it heard on the cymbal. I always liked the way Kenny Clarke played the cymbal—nice and quiet, but definite and killing—and I got some stuff from him."

Bernstein got his first taste of the Cobb effect circa 1988, when he took the drummer's Rhythmic Development class at Manhattan's New School. "Jimmy just called tunes, which we still do," Bernstein said about the informal sessions. "He didn't say much about doing this or that. It was the feeling, the lift he provided. I'd never felt such a big or buoyant beat—that smooth ride, the little phrases and the way he resolved them, the accents that pushed the music and moved it forward."

Cobb continues to impart his "deeds, not words" philosophy to young drummers seeking to unlock the key to his magical ride cymbal. "I tell them the same thing I had to learn," he said. "Keep a good beat, and don't work too hard with it—just keep it straight, so everybody likes it.

"I don't believe in a whole lot of extra motion. I just try to make the guys feel good. That's all it is. It's a science, but it's also not. The part that's science is to keep the beat going. The art is to make it so we can all enjoy ourselves."

—Ted Panken

Repertoire and Beyond

Last year, the Paris-based Umlaut Big Band released one of most arresting jazz repertory projects in recent memory with *The King Of Bungle Bar*, a vibrant exploration of the compositions and arrangements of reedist Don Redman. The oft-overlooked figure enjoyed a lengthy career creating sophisticated arrangements, paving the way toward swing for the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra and McKinney's Cotton Pickers, leading his own big band in the 1930s and later thriving as a freelance arranger for the likes of Count Basie and Harry James. The leader and arranger of the Umlaut Big Band is alto saxophonist Pierre-Antoine Badaroux, a Frenchman born in 1986, whose research led the group to explore several unrecorded compositions he found in Redman's papers at the New York Public Library.


JOEL GRIP
Pierre-Antoine Badaroux

Since the orchestra formed in 2011, Badaroux has become a student of the art of arranging. "Enlarging the repertoire of the band made me look deeper into some more or less obscure recordings from the era and focus on the figure of the arranger," he said. "Jazz histories have rarely taken their contributions into account, and I feel like they should be considered auteurs, individual creators establishing an oeuvre, rather than technicians contributing to a genre."

The group previously has issued dynamic albums exploring the work of European arrangers during the swing era and Americans working in Europe during the same period. But more recently, it's turned to strikingly modern, experimental music composed by some of its own members—including Bertrand Denzler, Antonin Gerbal and Badaroux himself—as well as the brilliant German pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach, who created a number of pieces for Umlaut. For Badaroux, there's no disjunction between using the big band to play both vintage swing and jagged contemporary pieces. In fact, since he started playing the saxophone at age 7, he's looked beyond genre.

He credits his teacher, Yves Gerbelot, with instilling a holistic approach to music, which included an improvisatory practice early on. "It made me understand that I was learning to play music before playing saxophone," he said. "Therefore, playing an instrument became—unconsciously at first—a way to express musical ideas, rather than being a performer on the saxophone."

As a kid, he followed his absorption in recordings by Michael Brecker, Miles Davis and Oscar Peterson with landmark albums from John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton, unencumbered by the knowledge that those figures broke with jazz orthodoxy. In the years since, Badaroux steadily has reflected an elastic conception of music. Beyond leading the Umlaut Big Band, he's a member of the radical post-bebop quartet Peeping Tom—along with drummer Gerbal, trumpeter Axel Dörner and bassist Joel Grip—which twines the breakneck rhythmic impulses of the late-'40s style with the extended techniques of free improvisation. At the same time, he's been deeply involved in contemporary classical music: His Ensemble Hodos is devoted to indeterminacy through the compositions of Philip Corner, Christian Wolff and James Tenney, as well as younger figures like Luiz Henrique Yudo and Jean-Luc Guionnet, while the reeds-and-brass quartet Horns explores related terrain in its richly marbled drone pieces.

Badaroux also has been a key part of several collective enterprises, whether the Umlaut label, or his bimonthly Paris Jazz Series, a workshop focusing on members of the big band interpreting tunes by the likes of Henry Threadgill, Randy Weston and Don Cherry, in addition to original material.

His dedication to experimentation also led him to start the online label Remote Resonator with Denzler and Gerbal, offering listeners a glimpse of things that are often "more attempts than projects. Most of them are recordings that, without such a small-scale economy, would probably have never been released for different reasons—sound quality, duration or challenging esthetic boundaries."

Yet "challenging aesthetic boundaries" is something that pulses through everything Badaroux does. **DB**

Apicella Channeling the Past

IN MANY WAYS, GUITARIST CHARLIE Apicella has devoted himself to a kind of historical reenactment. On all of his previous albums, which have included tributes to Jack McDuff and B.B. King, Apicella faithfully has sought to channel an era of American music when hard-bop and r&b reigned and existed as a sort of *lingua franca*.

His latest album, *Groove Machine* (OA2), is no exception. There are a number of instances when Apicella nods to the past as he dutifully covers funky, down-home tracks like Lou Donaldson's "Hot Dog" and Willis Jackson's "Brother Elijah." But the guitarist still manages to keep things fresh. The album, his sixth as a leader, is made up primarily of his own compositions, including the cool, swinging "Three Sided" and "Along The Southern Coast"—with a soulful cameo from violinist Amy Bateman.

"They all sound like something you would have heard in 1954," Apicella recently said over the phone from his New York apartment.

The record showcases Apicella's Iron City band, which includes drummer Alan Korzin, tenor saxophonist Gene Ghee, trumpeter Freddie Hendrix, conguero Mayra Casales and organist Radam Schwartz, who contributed one composition, "Calypso Blue." "All the music grooves," Apicella said. "There are no intros to the tunes that are washy—we get right to the point, just like Jack McDuff."

If Apicella seems like a throwback, it's because he is. He is in his mid-30s, but doesn't listen to much contemporary jazz, most of which bores him—there is, he said, "an obnoxious level of improvisational hysterics."

Instead, he prefers to take inspiration from earlier jazz guitarists like Herb Ellis, Wes Montgomery and Kenny Burrell. And on his records, he tries to align himself with musicians who have performed with mid-century titans of jazz. Schwartz, for instance, played with Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and David "Fathead" Newman.

"He doesn't have super-duper chops, but he plays tastefully, and you can tell that he's studied the tradition of the guitar," said Hendrix, who's frequently collaborated with Apicella and further describes him as a deeply melodic guitarist along the lines of Grant Green.

Apicella picked up the guitar relatively late, buying his first instrument during his senior year of high school. He studied jazz on the side while a student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where Yusef Lateef was his teacher. And since coming to New York, Apicella has done his best to seek out elders, even though, as he puts it, "The way that guys used to learn isn't really around anymore." Still, he's managed to study under guitarists Pat Martino and Dave Stryker, who produced two of Apicella's records.


CHRISTOPHER DRUKKER

Guitarist Charlie Apicella says his band gets "right to the point, just like Jack McDuff" on *Groove Machine*.

According to Hendrix, Apicella has "really come into his own within these past few years." The guitarist also has established himself as an educator with his TrueFire video lessons and as an instructor at the New York Jazz Workshop.

But Apicella still seems to view himself primarily as a student of the past. Regarding future albums, he said that he's like to record a tribute to Jimi Hendrix, as well as another paean to B.B. King—this time with a vocalist.

—Matthew Kassel

KATJA WEBER

Charenée Wade lends her vocals to three tracks on *Pannonica*, a tribute to Pannonica de Koenigswarter recorded live at the Jazz at Berlin Philharmonic series.

ACT Devises Tribute to de Koenigswarter

ORGANIZED BY THE ACT LABEL'S ARTISTIC director and founder Siggi Loch, the Jazz at Berlin Philharmonic series celebrates the late baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter and the legendary artists she helped support on the recently issued live set *Pannonica*.

"When she heard 'Round Midnight,' she said she had to go to New York. But I think that was [only one] side of the coin," said pianist Iiro Rantala, who served as musical director for the project.

From the outset, *Pannonica* included collective input. Loch brought together six artists representing five countries, inviting their perspectives on the repertoire, arrangements and overall messaging. American singer-composer Charenée Wade greeted the invitation with enthusiasm: "It's always a bit of a collaboration, working with other jazz musicians. I can come with an arrangement idea, and then we can tweak it here and there."

But for Wade, who delivered performances on Thelonious Monk's "'Round Midnight," "Little Butterfly (Pannonica)" and "Get It Straight," the kind of impromptu arranging that only happens on the bandstand gives *Pannonica* its arc. "What attracts me to jazz music is the sense of spontaneity," she said, "the sense of improvisation—of creating something that hasn't been done before—or at least trying to constantly take risks and to reach for something new."

That freshness bubbled up in a number of places throughout the project, which also includes music by Horace Silver, Sonny Rollins and Bud Powell. The Feb. 6 performance captured on *Pannonica* also reflected a milestone for Wade, who graced the Berlin stage for the first time. "It was a beautiful space," she said, "and the acoustics are great."

Across her work, Wade remains inspired by the possibility of "expressing a deeper meaning to a lyric or a story that may not have been explored before." Because she's spent years getting inside the music handed down from those who came before her, Wade's connection to *Pannonica* was immediate and profound. "That's the place that I come from, in general, when I'm performing," she said. "Thelonious Monk and Betty Carter are the greatest examples of that playfulness and risk-taking."

Along with Wade, Rantala found the story of de Koenigswarter's connection to the music—and the musicians—teeming with truths waiting to be uncovered. He posits her friendships emerged from parallel experiences of isolation. "I think [Nica] wanted to get out from the Rothschild family," he said. "And black musicians in America, they felt they were not accepted. I think that was the foundation of the connection between [them]."

Loch enlisted Rantala to help uncover every composition dedicated to the jazz patron, "but there wasn't enough," said the pianist, who pushed to add "Celia" to the repertoire as a trio tune. "I wanted to play 'Celia,' which has no direct connection to Nica—but it's great bebop tune."

Another of the project's features is the artist-to-artist connection. Of the personnel—which also includes saxophonists Ernie Watts and Angelika Niescier, bassist Dan Berglund and drummer Anton Eger—"everybody was new to everybody," said Rantala. "And I think that was an advantage—everyone was listening very carefully. That was part of the magic."

Wade, who always seems to find new ways of expressing her unique voice by interpreting existing language, echoes Rantala's sentiment. "That's that jazz thing," she said. "You meet the musicians for the first time, y'all have a quick rehearsal then y'all do the gig. They were all amazing to work with. I had a great time with them, collaborating and creating music together."

While the project's repertoire and narrative inspired Rantala and his fellow European artists, *Pannonica* resonates with Wade as a representation of the music's legacy—her legacy.

"It's really important to me to honor those that came before me," said Wade, who has participated in Betty Carter tributes at Jazz at Lincoln Center. "It's a part of me now. And I don't know another way to say that." —*Stephanie Jones*

Blues Scholars Search for Facts

CONTRARY TO A WIDELY ACCEPTED mythology, Robert Johnson did not sell his soul to the devil at a crossroads in exchange for wondrous talents. Most people, it turns out, actually know very few facts about the guitarist and singer's life.

Authors Bruce Conforth and Gayle Dean Wardlow each roamed the back roads of the Mississippi Delta for decades, locating and interviewing Johnson's friends, family members and fellow musicians, and uncovering documents—marriage and death certificates, census records, maps and details of his only two recording sessions. Combined and placed in context, these documents retrace his movements from cradle to grave. And in *Up Jumped the Devil: The Real Life of Robert Johnson* (Chicago Review Press), the scholars make a case that the truth is more compelling than the myth.

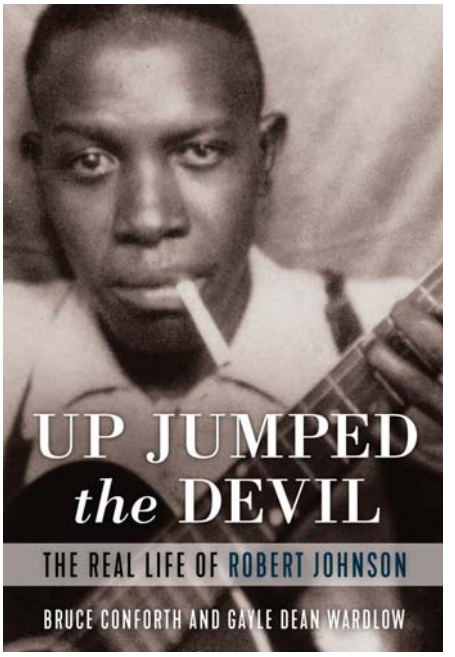
The authors' collaboration came about, Wardlow explained, because "Bruce was writing about Ike Zimmerman [Johnson's mentor and a skilled guitarist], and I saw that in *Living Blues* [magazine]. I had written 18 chapters and couldn't get a publisher. They said there were already too many books about Johnson." So, Wardlow proposed that they join forces.

Their sources eventually would contradict some details in previous, diligently researched Johnson biographies.

Conforth, a retired University of Michigan professor, said he was glad to poke holes in the crossroads myth. "Johnson turned into 'a business' as far as I'm concerned," he said. "Every time that happened, it was a form of identity theft. They just kept taking Robert further and further away from who he was. People were in it for their own self-aggrandizement. I wanted to return Robert's identity to him. Enough is enough: Stop making a profit off of false claims. Let's finally think about him as a man."

Despite their penchant for scholarly research, the authors aren't above hypothesizing when it comes to Johnson's lyrics. About "Cross Road Blues," they write, "Although the folklore is clear, we have no way of knowing what Robert meant by the song. He never mentioned a deal, the devil, or any other supernatural element." His pleading, urgent tone, they suggest, might reflect his fear of being stuck out on the road after dark in a town where "sundown laws" were enforced against African Americans.

Conforth, the first curator of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, said he hopes the music outlives the myth. "Robert wrote some really good songs that didn't get attention during his lifetime—'Sweet Home Chicago,' '[I Believe I'll] Dust My Broom,' 'Cross Road Blues,' 'Love In Vain'—those songs have endured." *—Jeff Johnson*



The Tierney Sutton Band includes Kevin Axt (left), Christian Jacob, Sutton, Trey Henry and Ray Brinker.

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Sutton's Band Crafts an Intimate Language

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD STUDIO CITY is on the business end of the Hollywood machine, more likely to be bustling at 7 a.m. than 7 p.m., but there's the occasional lively corner—if you know where to look. Located up a set of stairs and down a hallway, Feinstein's at Vitello's is a venue that frequently features cabaret or comedy. In front of a packed house on June 24, the Tierney Sutton Band celebrated the release of its latest album, *ScreenPlay* (BFM jazz), an homage to the songs of cinema.

"Often my response to seeing jazz concerts is that I feel a lot of testosterone," said vocalist Sutton, following a set of film-related standards, new and old. "'OK, you can play. That's great. Now what happens?' With that energy, it's not a conversation anymore. It's a loud monologue with no feedback, and I get really weary of that."

The Tierney Sutton Band has been together for 27 years and moves as a whole, members using a shorthand language formed through thousands of hours spent together.

"They are crazy virtuosos. I do my best to keep up," Sutton joked. "The way that we arrange is in a way that exposes everybody. We try to have precision. It's a matter of what you hone over the years. We're always challenging ourselves to do something that keeps you on the edge."

In 2015, the band gained a prominent new fan; during a run of Hollywood shows, actor/director Clint Eastwood was in attendance on multiple nights. It's not uncommon to see Eastwood standing tall in any California jazz room, but two consecutive nights is something to notice. By the end of the week, all involved were colleagues.

Eastwood invited Sutton and pianist Christian Jacob to see a rough cut of his work-in-progress, *Sully*, the Tom Hanks-led biopic about pilot Chesley Sullenberger. Eastwood wanted the band to record a soundtrack for the film, and with little fanfare Sutton and company were in the studio that weekend, recording for two days with Eastwood present for nearly the entire time.

ScreenPlay features songs used in the film, as well as five tunes penned by Alan and Marilyn Bergman. A crowd-pleasing rendition of "If I Only Had A Brain" (from the *Wizard of Oz*) features bassists Kevin Axt and Trey Henry swaggering in tandem, a pizzicato bass stabbing over a funky electric riff. The use of two basses is one of TSB's hallmarks.

"It's seamless," Sutton said of the passage. "They are incredibly united. ... It's hard to explain, but it adds so much."

The musicians' commitment to unity was evident at Feinstein's. Each instrumentalist throughout the night showed flashes of greatness, but never commanded the spotlight.

"Nobody plays better than my band, but they show restraint," Sutton said. "They are masters of serving the music. The feeling of singing with my band and how they're listening is such a tangible thing that if I sing in other situations with less sensitive players, I feel teary and upset. ... I'm [the princess in] 'The Princess and the Pea' after playing with these guys." —*Sean J. O'Connell*

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João Gilberto (1931–2019) performs at Carnegie Hall in New York on June 22, 2002.

In Memoriam: João Gilberto

JOÃO GILBERTO, WHOSE SERENE, INTI-mate vocals and gently insistent guitar playing made him the archetypal voice of bossa nova, died July 6 in Rio de Janeiro. He was 88.

His son, João Marcelo Gilberto, confirmed the death on Facebook, writing, "My father has passed. His fight was noble, he tried to maintain dignity in light of losing his sovereignty."

Although he was often referred to as "the father of bossa nova," a title he shared with Antônio Carlos Jobim, the genre's preeminent composer, it was Gilberto's unique voice and guitar style that became synonymous with the genre. His recording of Jobim's and Vinícius De Moraes' "The Girl From Ipanema," with his then-wife Astrud Gilberto, Jobim and Stan Getz, became one of the 20th century's biggest hits and launched a bossa nova craze, introducing Brazilian music to millions worldwide. The 1964 recording on which it appeared, *Getz/Gilberto*, won the Grammy Award for album of the year.

"Bossa nova"—which approximately translates to "the new groove"—contained elements of samba and other Brazilian styles, European classical music and American jazz. The songs, whether upbeat like "One Note Samba" or full of longing and regret, like "How Insensitive" (both composed by Jobim and recorded by Gilberto), were written in a deceptively simple style that masked their harmonic and rhythmic sophistication. With poetic lyrics mostly about love, bossa nova reflected the optimism of Brazil in the period between military dictatorships.

In his book *Bossa Nova: The Story of the Brazilian Music That Seduced the World*, journalist Ruy Castro described the impact of Gilberto's version of "Chega De Saudade," which became the first bossa nova hit upon its release as a 78-rpm single in 1958: "Jobim's melodic sophistication, in itself, was startling enough ... . But what really caught people's attention was the gently dizzying interplay between Gilberto's voice and his guitar. Shamelessly unadorned by vibrato or emotion, that voice danced with breathtaking precision around the quiet beat of the guitar, which in turn danced unpredictably around the conventional rhythms of the samba. A generation of Brazilians listened raptly."

Gilberto's soft voice, inspired by American jazz trumpeter and vocalist Chet Baker, was understated, often little more than a whisper. "The way he sang, and especially his phrasing, was an enormous influence on my singing," pianist and singer Eliane Elias told DownBeat. "He kept the groove with his guitar, but he phrased over the bar line in a way that had not been done before, even in Brazil."

His characteristic guitar style, using quiet, plucked chords, implied the rhythms of samba in a simple, spare fashion. Guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves, quoted in *The Brazilian Sound: Samba, Bossa Nova and the Popular Music of Brazil*, said, "[Gilberto] imitated a whole samba ensemble, with his thumb doing the bass drum and his fingers doing the *tamborins* and *ganzás* and *agogôs* [tambourines, shakers and bells]. The rhythm was right there with his voice and guitar alone. You didn't feel anything was missing."

Born João Gilberto Prado Pereira de Oliveira in 1931, he grew up in the small town of Juazeiro da Bahia, in the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia, the son of a local businessman. At age 15, he left boarding school to play music.

By 1950, Gilberto was singing with a vocal group in Rio. He developed his original guitar technique and introspective singing style while living with his sister in Minas Gerais state during the mid-1950s.

At 25, however, with no success in the music world and battling depression, he returned home. His father, concerned about his son's mental state, had him visit a clinic for counseling. According to Castro's book, João stared out the window and said to the psychologist, "Look at the wind tearing out the trees' hair ... ."

"But trees don't have hair, João," she said.

"And some people have no poetry in their souls," he replied.

After spending a week at the clinic, he returned to Rio, where he eventually met Jobim and pianist João Donato, both of whom became his musical partners.

Reached in Rio, the legendary Brazilian bossa nova singer Wanda Sá described meeting Gilberto and singing with him at small gatherings for musicians in Rio, circa 1960. "What an experience to sing with such a master," she said. "His voice and guitar were so pure. There was no noise in his guitar; it was technical perfection. But always very emotional. Although he said that he sang without emotion, I don't believe him."

Gilberto's last public performance was in 2008, after which he rarely was seen in public and developed a reputation as a recluse.

His perfectionist nature and his deep respect for music are evident in one of his most famous quotations: "Não se pode machucar o silêncio, que é sagrado."

In English, it translates to, "You must not injure silence, for it is sacred." —*Allen Morrison*

Sprawling Variety at DC Jazz Festival

THE DC JAZZ FESTIVAL MIGHT HAVE ITS weak points, but musical variety is not one of them, as this year's edition proved.

The 10-day festival, which ran June 7–16, maintained a commitment to geographical variety, featuring performances in every part of the nation's capital—from the Washington glamour of the Kennedy Center to the far-flung, homier landmark, The Big Chair. It's an effective formula for putting the city's breadth on display.

The festival offered disparate, but fully formed, perspectives on jazz. On opening night, a straightahead bebop quintet led by bassist Kent Miller (at Busboys & Poets restaurant in the Anacostia neighborhood) preceded an intense set of progressive clarinet playing by Anat Cohen (at The Hamilton, a downtown venue). On June 10, one could hear driving, slightly quirky bop from tenor saxophonist Jordon Dixon at the University of the District of Columbia, then cross town and catch saxophonist Brad Linde's BIG OL' Ensemble playing the intricate, classically influenced compositions of Australian visionary Elliott Hughes.

At the Kennedy Center, a single concert—a themed concert, no less—managed to showcase a remarkable diversity of styles. June 9's "Celebrating Randy Weston" was a tribute to the deceased pianist, composer and NEA Jazz Master. The concert's core unit comprised three of Weston's band members—saxophonist T.K. Blue, bassist Alex Blake, percussionist Neil Clarke—all mixing up the pianist's trademark pan-African blend of flavors. The variety came in the form of the rotating piano seat, with three players of celebrated, idiosyncratic styles.

First came Rodney Kendrick, whose dense chordal attack also employed the irregular figures and spacing of Thelonious Monk. Next, Vijay Iyer brought his acclaimed percussive touch to bear, in this case with a deeper-than-usual reservoir of blues feeling. Marc Cary's soulful, often delicate lyricism rounded out the pianists, a trio of stylists who couldn't be more different—though they each proved a fit for Weston's work, as they showed with a concert-closing round robin on the late bandleader's "Hi-Fly."

The Anthem featured headline acts Snarky Puppy, José James and Jon Batiste in a resounding atmosphere, perhaps too large for this music. But the sheer grandeur was hard to argue with.

As ever, though, the fest's calling card is its closing free marathon of music, held on The Wharf's District Pier and Transit Pier on June 15–16, where big names included singer Michael Franks, tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman and pianist Joey Alexander. Its spotlight-stealing performance, however, was an electrifying set by D.C.-based pianist Allyn Johnson and his Sonic Sanctuary quartet, with a darkened, dramatic version of "Summertime" as its centerpiece. It was yet another outlet for the festival's breathtaking variety of jazz. *—Michael J. West*


JATI LINDSAY

Jon Batiste performs June 15 at City Winery during the DC Jazz Festival.

Chris Stamey Takes Retro Approach

AGING ROCK MUSICIANS FROM ROD Stewart to Bob Dylan have turned to the Great American Songbook to revive their creative juices. But Chris Stamey, co-founder of the dBs and producer of such indie-rock acts as Alejandro Escovedo, Le Tigre and Yo La Tengo, has taken a different approach.

Instead of singing other people's compositions, he's rearranged a handful of his old songs and written a raft of new ones that are akin to material for a 1958 recording session by Frank Sinatra or Ella Fitzgerald—complete with strings, horns and guest solos by jazz stars. Stamey is releasing the results on a two-disc set, *New Songs For The 20th Century* (Omnivore), and as a sheet-music book of the same title.

"More and more I feel pop music is living in a harmonic wasteland," Stamey said from his home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. "Early rock songs had exciting rhythms but simple changes. But Paul McCartney had a dad who knew the American Songbook tradition, and he started putting diminished chords and sharp-nine chords in Beatles songs, and a lot of people followed his lead. But when the Swedish songwriters took over, that all went away; it all became become four chords again."

Though Stamey is a likable vocalist himself, he doesn't sing on the new album. Instead, his compositions are handled by a handful of stars (pop-rock artist Marshall Crenshaw and Whiskeytown alumna Caitlin Cary) and a host of gifted, lesser-known singers, such as Kirsten Lambert and Django Haskins. Though the music is spiced by guest soloists—including saxophonist Branford Marsalis and guitarists Bill Frisell and Nels Cline—the core band is anchored by saxophonist Will Campbell, a veteran of Harry Connick Jr.'s band and head of the jazz department at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

"I've been friends since grade school with Dan Davis, the drummer, and Dana, Chris' wife," Lambert said. "Four years ago, Chris wanted to send some of his songs to Diana Krall with jazz arrangements and my vocals—in hopes she might record them. Then he called me and said, 'This should be your record.' At first, we were rearranging his old songs, but when he got his childhood piano from his father, he started writing new songs. Even when I said, 'Chris, I have more than enough songs for my album,' he kept writing."

When Stamey began collaborating with rocker Alex Chilton in the 1970s, he and Chilton would go out together to see Charles Mingus and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Stamey also knew Frisell from that time, when the punk and jazz worlds intersected at Manhattan's Knitting Factory.


JATI LINDSAY

Chris Stamey has written new material in the style of the Great American Songbook.

"Even when I was writing rock songs," Stamey said, "I always tried to have a really tight connection between the words and the music. The music has to match the cadence and intent of the lyrics. I never write melodies without words—or vice versa. On the song 'I Don't Believe In Romance,' the final syllable of 'romance' lands on the ninth of an unexpected minor chord, which in this context lets you know she's lying. It's so much fun to write like that." —*Geoffrey Himes*

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CHASING DJANGO

By Phillip Lutz | Photo by Jimmy & Dena Katz

On a temperate night in April 2017, JAMES CARTER was veering dangerously close to the intemperate. Jamming with other saxophone stars onstage at the State University of New York at Purchase, he seemed a man possessed—his tenor saxophone by turns wailing and whimpering, bleating and braying with a musicality so muscular it threatened to consume him.

It never did. Carter, a big man with a big heart, is by nature a maximalist. And the vehicle at hand—Sonny Rollins' aptly titled "Tenor Madness"—seemed attuned to his more-is-more aesthetic. Among such distinguished players operating at full tilt—Jimmy Heath, Joe Lovano and Ravi Coltrane were part of the mix—Carter's search for new sounds fit the moment, even as its urgency set him apart.

"I think it's going to be a perpetual search," he said between bites of quiche at a Manhattan pâtisserie this June.

At 50, Carter remains relentless. A child of Detroit and builder of the modern jazz scene in that city—where he still lives when not holed up in a pad on New York's Upper West Side—he retains a reputation as an iconoclastic seeker of truth for whom each rush of air through his horn both aspires to rebellion and respects tradition.

"There are certain people God puts something extra in their pot; he's one of them," said violinist Regina Carter, his cousin and sometime collaborator. "But he definitely worked for it."

In a career that's encompassed symphonic collaborations, solo concerts and nearly everything in between, Carter's expansive art has never quite settled into a comfort zone. Nor has the restless saxophonist sought one. But he has returned to a few subjects repeatedly—none, perhaps, more productively than Django Reinhardt (1910–'53).


JIMMY & DENA KATZ

Playing with European guitarists indebted to Django Reinhardt stuck with saxophonist James Carter.

First turned on to the iconic gypsy guitarist as a teenager by the programming of Detroit radio host Jim Gallert, Carter today is reimagining Reinhardt's work for the second time. The project is one in which he and his bandmates—Gerard Gibbs on Hammond B-3 organ and Alex White on drums—incorporate rhythms and riffs from contemporary culture into songs associated with Reinhardt. The resulting sounds, in Carter's words, give Reinhardt "a 'hood pass." Fresh even by Carter's high standards, those sounds hold the promise of wide appeal.

"This particular hybrid could be made available and relevant to new listeners," he said.

The project has been gathering steam, generating excitement at both the 2017 Monterey Jazz Festival and last year's Newport Jazz Festival. The upshot, Carter said, is that Blue Note Records, which had been weighing an in-studio Reinhardt album, decided instead to release *James Carter Organ Trio: Live From Newport Jazz* (produced by label head Don Was). The program includes five tunes by Reinhardt—including 11-minute renditions of both "Le Manoir De Mes Rêves" and "Mélodie Au Crépuscule"—and one by his contemporary Auguste "Gusti" Mahla, all recorded at the 2018 festival.

The new album, on which Carter plays soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, has its roots in an earlier encounter with Reinhardt, documented on Carter's sixth album, 2000's *Chasin' The Gypsy* (Atlantic). For that project, he employed some of the more obscure horns in his considerable arsenal. Among them: the F-mezzo soprano saxophone and the bass saxophone, on which he rendered gems like "Nuages" and "I'll Never Be The Same" with a lyricism that offers striking evidence of his ability to coax the most unlikely sounds out of the most unwieldy instruments.

That album's debt to Reinhardt is clear in the way its two acoustic guitars, accordion and violin evoke the deep and sometimes dark colors of wartime Paris. Yet Carter's imprint is unmistakable in the twists and turns the treatments take as he shapes his sonic world within Reinhardt's universe. In a series of structured colloquies, for example, James and his cousin Regina recall the heat of Reinhardt's interplay with violinist Stéphane Grappelli—while also molding the melodic contours in a manner that reflects a risk-it-all, Motor City sensibility.

"When you're playing with James, you have to lose any preconceived expectations of what you think the music is and be willing to trust and hear James' vision and put yourself out there," Regina explained. "It can be uncomfortable because it's so different."

If *Chasin' The Gypsy* proved the start of James' reckoning with Reinhardt's oeuvre, he achieved an intimacy with it as an indirect result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He was in Paris on the day of the attacks, waiting for the *Chasin' The Gypsy* band to arrive from the United States for a gig that week at the Jazz en Touraine festival in Montlouis-sur-Loire. When planes were grounded, festival organizers replaced Carter's band members with a group that included the celebrated European guitarists Stochelo Rosenberg and Romane (aka Patrick Leguidecoq), both of whom are steeped in the gypsy tradition. Carter later jammed with other similarly oriented musicians, the experience staying with him when he returned to playing the Reinhardt book with his old bandmates.

"For me, it made it a bit more legit because it wasn't just about playing the music without having the true experience of playing with gypsies who were keepers of this music," he said.

But for all the insight, knowledge and appreciation Carter gained by playing with authentic practitioners, the experience didn't weaken his resolve to treat Reinhardt's music as he wished; if anything, it encouraged him to unleash his subversive side. Around 2002, during a tour with the *Chasin' The Gypsy* band, he and the musicians came up with the approach that, more than a decade later, would take form in the current Reinhardt project.

"We had a sound-check one day, and jokingly played around with 'Nuages,' and funked it up,

basically," Carter said. "That was the first inkling of it. But as far as making it a formal objective, it was late 2013, '14. We said, 'Let's get two different ways of playing these tunes, to beef up the repertoire.'"

Intent on devising tactics for transforming Reinhardt's tunes, Carter and Gibbs began holding brainstorming sessions in the driveway of the saxophonist's Detroit home. One tactic they came up with was simply to draw themes from the raw material of common existence.

"We like to introduce a lot of what occurs in our everyday lives into the music: what may be happening in our families or news events we encounter traveling around the world," Gibbs explained. "That's one of the big things I've learned with James: 'Keep your ears open.'"

Their ears were wide open when they heard a story about a local judge who, brought up on corruption charges involving a mistress, claimed that she "used me." The turn of phrase called to mind the signature riff from Bill Withers' 1972 hit "Use Me," and, in short order, the musicians had fused it with Reinhardt's "Mélodie Au Crépuscule"—along the way adding an element of social commentary.

"Joking," Carter recalled, "we took that phrase and popped it in Bill Withers mode and just took it from there. So 'Melody Of Crepuscule' unofficially became 'Melody Of [The Judge's Name],' and that's how we would list it on our song list, so we'd know what groove to play. We'd also play 'Melody Of Crepuscule' as a Cuban bolero—that was our second way of doing it."

Similarly, they created alternate versions of other Reinhardt-associated tunes. Onto the ballad "Anouman" they grafted material from Johnny "Guitar" Watson's boudoir-funk tune "I Want To Ta-Ta You Baby," providing a sweet bed for Carter's tart alto. Into "La Valse Des Niglos," they injected elements of the John Coltrane Quartet's take on "My Favorite Things," with Carter's soprano summoning a physicality that might have turned Coltrane's head. And "Pour Que Ma Vie Demeure," rendered in almost tender fashion on Carter's 2008 album, *Present Tense* (EmArcy), received repeated jolts of his mind-bending multiphonics atop fragments of Philly soul singer Teddy Pendergrass' "Turn Off The Lights."

But the most salient treatment might be on the album's dazzling closing number, "Fleche d'Or." On it, the band is set thrumming, sparked by Carter's flashes of brilliance, his alto nodding at once to a riff from r&b group New Edition and Reinhardt's prescient original. "This is one of Django's later tunes where he started showing more of an electrical influence," Carter said. "There's a bit more dissonance and an electrical implication as a result, looking forward to individuals such as [Jimi] Hendrix and the blues guitarists."

"We played around with 'Nuages,' and FUNKED it up, basically."

Carter said that he takes cues from electric guitarists—no great shock, given his supercharged performances. Onstage, he can be a kinetic presence; offstage, as well. During the June interview, he punctuated his comments with the gesticulations of an air-guitarist.

"One of the individuals I really started thinking about was George Freeman," he said, referring to the Chicago guitarist and brother of saxophone legend Von Freeman. His "long sustained tones and little distortions" functioned as gestures saxophonists could adapt and play off of, Carter said, citing the interaction between Freeman and Charlie Parker on a 1950 live date, *One Night In Chicago*.

Carter said he was moved by artists "who have lifted the guitar from an accompanying instrument"—among them Eddie Durham, Charlie Christian, T-Bone Walker and Muddy Waters, as well as Hendrix and the Hendrix-inspired Eddie Hazel, a luminary in the Detroit-based Parliament/Funkadelic orbit. "With electricity being involved, there's a certain freedom given to those instrumentalists. I try to share in that same sort of freedom, to strive for it as much as possible."

Carter put his penchant for electricity into action with the release in 2000 of the free-funk outing *Layin' In The Cut* (Atlantic). The album—featuring Jef Lee Johnson and Marc Ribot on electric guitars, Jamaaladeen Tacuma on electric bass and G. Calvin Weston on drums—owes much to Ornette Coleman's Prime Time, which counted both Tacuma and Weston as members. That *Layin' In The Cut* was released the same year as the all-acoustic *Chasin' The Gypsy* emphasizes the breadth of Carter's artistic vision.

But *Layin' In The Cut* didn't spur the creation of a band. Carter only took up electrification as an ongoing pursuit with the establishment of his quartet, Elektric Outlet, which remains active. In the band, Carter uses effects pedals, while Gibbs switches to electronic keyboards and Ralphe Armstrong fills the bottom on electric bass. White still sits behind the drums, his sticks getting a workout.

The group grew out of an encounter Carter had with saxophonist Keith Anderson's DigiTech effects pedal when both musicians were playing on a cruise ship in 2007. Intrigued by its sonic possibilities, Carter began collecting his own pedals. "I'm still learning how to work them," he said. "But it caters to that aforementioned frustrated guitarist thing and that electric freedom aspect of it."

Carter's search for new sounds has few limits. But one might be an aversion to the electronic wind instrument, which he avoids in favor of the standard horn with attachments: "I think it's a lot more personal than having the EWI and various things at your disposal that are all digital, because the electronic apparatuses basically have sensors that anticipate what your breath envelope is and shape and all that stuff, and it's based on numbers, as opposed to what you can put into an instrument."

For early exemplars of saxophonists who enhanced their freedom of expression by using attachments, he reached backed to the work of Eddie Harris and Sonny Stitt in the 1960s. "It's a combination of exploring that freedom and paying homage to those guys for opening that sonic passageway," he said.

Carter's search for new sounds has extended to the classical realm, too. That move, Regina said, reflected his preternatural inquisitiveness: "We were all exposed so much to different styles of music. But one thing about James—he's extremely curious. His listening range—you can't pin him down. He's influenced by everything. He always wants to try new things. A lot of times that's what you hear in his playing—he doesn't shut himself off from any good musical experience."

This year, he's revisited two classical pieces written for him by the Puerto Rican composer Roberto Sierra. The first, "Caribbean Rhapsody," a composition for string quartet and solo violin and saxophone, originally featured Regina and James. The title track of a 2011 album on EmArcy, it was expanded for chamber orchestra and performed with Symphony Tacoma in April. The second piece, *Concerto For Saxophones And Orchestra*, which had its premiere with the Detroit Symphony in 2002 and also appeared on *Caribbean Rhapsody*, was adapted for and performed by Carter and the Eastman Wind Ensemble in February.

Carter's role in developing and performing


Gerard Gibbs (left), Carter and Alex White perform at the Twin Cities Jazz Festival in St. Paul, Minnesota, on June 22.

ANDREA CANTER

these pieces, which arguably integrates notation and improvisation on a level more profound than most so-called jazz-classical hybrids, provides ample evidence of a musical gift that appeared in his earliest years. Family lore has it that his spot-on imitation of a birdsong both amazed and disrupted his elementary-school class, marking him as a precocious conjurer of sound.

That pattern has, to one degree or another, persisted. His extraordinary facility—and fearlessness about using it—have sometimes been misunderstood. "Some people tend to think my goal is the virtuosic thing," he said. "That's not my primary thing. But everybody's going to have a certain amount of virtuosity to get their ideas across."

He said that one person's idea of virtuosity might center on fleetness of fingers; another's on the ability to sit on one note and shape it. But he isn't interested in defining—or being defined by—anyone's take. He's about "having that kind of freedom at your disposal," Carter said. "I guess I owe a lot of that to Kevin." The reference is to his older brother Kevin Carter, another guitarist to whom he looked for guidance.

Carter's teenage years were a whirlwind of jamming, often at drummer Leonard King's Detroit home, where James, Regina and their cohort all joined in regular basement sessions. When James formed his organ trio, he recruited King—for his skills, to be sure, but also out of a sense of community, Regina said: "James has a tendency to keep his ties to folks in Detroit and try to include them in some way."

King helped hold on to Gibbs when the organist was, in the first year or two of his tenure with Carter, feeling the pressure. "I was going to quit," said Gibbs, who now has been with the trio for 18 years. "I just didn't think what I brought to the group was going to be enough. But Leonard said, 'I'm going to come to your house and go through some stuff.' He helped me get an understanding of what James was looking for."

Carter said that, at the time, Gibbs needed to expand his thinking beyond the Jimmy Smith/"Groove" Holmes organ-trio paradigm to include concepts put forth by groups like the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. "He needed to grow," Carter said. "But he's been able to grow and hear other things." Gibbs has contributed tunes to the trio's book, notably "J.C. Off The Set," a harmonically inventive counter to Carter's "J.C. On The Set," the title track of his first album, released on the Japanese label DIW in 1993.

White also felt the heat from Carter. He recalled the day in January 2014—before he was in the band—when the saxophonist, an imposing figure apparently on a scouting expedition, sat in at his gig at Bert's Market Place, a jazz club in Detroit. "He wanted to see if I'd back down at his musical pressure," said White, who was 23 at the time. "Apparently, I did well. He called me a couple weeks later for a gig."

In addition to providing a generational perspective, useful in the execution of the Reinhardt project, White's joining the group has boosted its already high adrenalin level. "Alex not only rises to the occasion but presents other possibilities," Carter said. "That was one of the biggest differences. Being young and thinking young keeps the eternal spring going in us as well."

Carter's own prospects were in doubt early on. "There were times," he said, "I would go out with my fellow classmates or neighborhood kids, we'd be getting into trouble or just hanging out." He even considered giving up music. But in 1981, he met Donald Washington, a saxophonist and teacher. "It was through him that everything basically fell into place."

Washington helped build his technique and confidence. In 1982, he enlisted Carter in the well-regarded young-adult band Bird-Trane-Sco-Now! With the band, Carter logged his first professional credit, a concert at Detroit's Jefferson Avenue United Methodist Church, and opened for Jackie McLean and Donald Byrd at the Detroit Institute of Arts. There, he first heard the World Saxophone Quartet, with Julius Hemphill, David Murray, Oliver Lake and Hamiet Bluiett.

"I was just floored," he recalled, "because I saw four men on the saxophone who didn't need a rhythm section and took the viability of the instrument I was playing to a whole other level." He would go on to play with the quartet.

Meanwhile, the young Carter was scouring the media for jazz. He found Oscar Brown Jr.'s PBS TV show *From Jumpstreet: The Story of Black Music*, on which artists like McLean appeared. And he taped Gallert's WDET radio show *Jazz Yesterday*, where, in addition to Reinhardt, he first heard Don Byas, whose tenor saxophone, a 1950 custom Dolnet, he later would own and play in a fierce and loving tribute at the 2015 Newport festival.

A Byas tribute album might be in the future, he said.

Through it all, the basics about Carter have changed little. "Everyone always saw James as really special, a hard worker, always had his horn, always playing," Regina Carter said. "When he put the horn in his mouth, it was fire. Without seeing him you could hear, 'It's James.' He's still the same way." **DB**

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Nat "King" Cole
TRANSFORMATIVE POWER

By John McDonough

It's amazing how much Nat "King" Cole material we have to forgive in order to find the man we revere in this, the 100th year since his birth. It's my guess that you won't find anyone within the gilded and gated community of America's supreme singers who recorded as many silly songs as Cole.

I wrote something very different in these pages in 2005, reflecting on the 40th anniversary of his death and marveling at how such a brief life (1919–'65) could enjoy such a long afterlife. The reason lay in the quality songs he chose—songs future singers would value because good songs always challenge serious talent. I remembered mostly the Capitol albums of the 1950s and the signature singles: "Lush Life," "Mona Lisa," "A Christmas Song," "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons." Baby boomers will find their childhoods sealed in these songs deep into their dementia. More important, younger musicians and singers will discover and reinvent them in Cole's name.

But music journalists are not bound by the *stare decisis* of their past opinions. Since 2005, I've learned how many musical skeletons there are in Cole's king-size closet. When I caught up with Mosaic Records' 18-CD set of his Capitol trios and the many transcription sides he did, I understood that Cole had no strategy at all about material. It would seem that he'd perform just about anything he was handed: "Jumpy Jitters," "Fla-Ga-La-Pa," "Call The Police," "Hit That Jive, Jack," "I'm An Errand Boy For Rhythm."

"He had all these little rhythm tunes that were just built around a punch line at the end," explains John Pizzarelli, whose recent trio album, *For Centennial Reasons: 100 Year Salute To Nat King Cole* (Ghostlight Deluxe), captures the pure fun in some of these jive tunes without ever patronizing them. "I felt like a lot of them were just an excuse to get to the blowing, like 'Errand Boy.' They pulled the audience in so he could do the 'Rhythm' changes. You can't try to make too much of a song out of it."

Singers like Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett looked for a dramatic narrative in their songs. But Cole was a great jazz pianist who could toss the script after the first chorus, and that instinct carried into his early singing, which often implied a certain tongue-in-cheek consciousness of their insignificance; not as self-mocking as Fats Waller, but a self-awareness just the same. Fundamentally, they are the work of an intuitive entertainer whose purpose is to amuse, not elevate.

Today, Cole is still connecting at 100, as a long procession of tributes and reissues roll out, much of it with the cooperation of the Cole Estate. Capitol Records, which has nurtured and refreshed its vast Cole catalog regularly and with care for decades, began the parade modestly this spring with *Ultimate Nat King Cole*, a compact summary of 21 signature Cole landmarks spanning the mid-1940s through the '60s; and *International Nat King Cole*, which focuses on his multilingual work, including five versions of "L-O-V-E," each in a different tongue.

Cole's pre-Capitol years are thoroughly documented in Resonance Records' *Hittin' The Ramp: The Early Years (1936–1943)*, which compiles on seven CDs (or 10 LPs) the private transcription dates from Standard, Keystone and MacGregor, plus a CD of unissued material, alternate takes and even some early live work.

For Cole's younger brother, Freddie Cole, now 87, this is a busy year. The singer-pianist performs very much within his own style and never has been a stand-in for his brother. But it will be hard to escape that aura, especially on Sept. 1 when he plays the Nat Cole Jazz Festival in Montgomery, Alabama, the city of Nat's birth; and two days earlier, the 40th annual jazz festival in Chicago, where he grew up.

Cole endures like an indelible watermark in American music through the work of those who have been influenced by him—most famously his daughter, Natalie, who won a 1991 Grammy for *Unforgettable*, a tribute to her father. Contemporary audiences get it through the work of part-time proxies like Pizzarelli, Diana Krall, Marlena Shaw and Gregory Porter, who released the

Nat "King" Cole sat at the crossroads of jazz and pop.

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES/CAPITOL RECORDS

Cole with his daughter, Natalie, who introduced a new generation to her father's work with 1991's *Unforgettable*

tribute album *Nat "King" Cole & Me* (Blue Note) in 2017, and revisited the material on a 2019 concert album, *One Night Only: Live At The Royal Albert Hall* (Blue Note). Even the late Marvin Gaye has a place on the current Cole train, as Motown released an expanded version of his 1965 memorial, *A Tribute To The Great Nat King Cole*.

"I have tried to learn as much as possible about Nat Cole by collecting every record that could be found and by seeking out people who knew Nat and made music with him," Pizzarelli wrote in the forward to *Nat King Cole: Straighten Up and Fly Right*, a book by Will Friedwald due out by early 2020. "The joy that man and that group brought me ... has never faded, and the musicality of his trio sides remain[s] fresh and as vibrant as the day they were recorded."

For those who view the world through jazz-colored glasses, the great schism in Cole's career came in the early 1940s, when he emerged from being just a great pianist and moved toward becoming a great singer as well. Most music lives on a playing field of perception and, by extension, self-perception. Cole came of age in Chicago as an Earl Hines disciple in the mid-'30s, precisely as jazz was becoming the most popular music in America. It's not surprising that it was perceived as neither serious nor as art. It was just show business. So, when Cole made his first records at age 17 in 1936 and put together his first trio two years later, like Fats Waller, he found nothing demeaning in being embraced by a broad audience. From the beginning, he accepted that entertaining was an honorable art in itself and needed no greater ambitions.

By the mid-'40s, as Cole was hitting his stride, jazz was beginning to separate itself from pop music, and the word "commercial" had become a snide put-down among critics and would-be artists.

"In those days," Cole told DownBeat's John Tynan in a 1957 profile, "I really didn't think about singing ... . My main interest was playing piano." That was a dodge more artful then accurate. He might not have thought much about singing, but he certainly did a lot of it. By 1942, of the 18 records he had made under his name, 15 of them had vocals. Tynan was less evasive. "From the very outset," he wrote in the same story, "Nat Cole had his eye trained on commercial success ... . He well knew that the jazz road is seldom paved with gold."

Born in Alabama, Cole had grown up amid racist Jim Crow laws. Like Armstrong, Ellington, Waller, Lionel Hampton and other African American musicians who had beaten the odds to become stars, Cole understood how each had wrapped his music in a unique personality that immediately connected to a wide audience. He also recognized the risks of black stardom and the expectations that went with it.

At this point, around 1942–'43, Cole found himself at a career fork between a good jazz life and the less certain prospect of major pop fame. Compromise could not be indefinitely postponed. Ground zero for Cole would be Glenn Wallichs' shop, Music City, a record-and-music superstore on the corner of Sunset and Vine in Hollywood. It was the headquarters and hub of Los Angeles' music and entertainment scene at the time, across the street from NBC's West Coast studios and a minute's walk to Grauman's Chinese Theatre and the Palladium.

Though Cole had worked mostly in the "Black Broadway" area along L.A.'s Central Avenue before 1940, he was becoming known, particularly at Music City, whose opening he had played that year. It was here that two key figures would converge upon Cole, each a connoisseur of a particular kind of quality. Cole was a unique blend of both. They offered him two very different futures, two very different paths ahead. But he had to make the choice.

One was Carlos Gastel. Several years Cole's senior, he was a stylish, educated man who had come from Honduras to Los Angeles and learned the business end of the industry working at Music City. The store attracted a lot of aspiring musicians and singers, in part because Wallichs had set up a small recording studio where audition records and private sessions could be done cheaply. These were the sort of people Gastel was eager to meet because some of them might be looking for the kind of promotion and management services he could offer. In September 1941, he had hitched his wagon to Stan Kenton's rising star and was gaining career altitude himself.

If Gastel was all show business establishment, Cole's other would-be mentor epitomized the more cultish elitism of the jazz underground. He was Norman Granz, future founder of Jazz at the Philharmonic and Verve Records. "In the beginning of my jazz career," Granz later wrote, "the man most responsible for my success was Nat Cole. Not only was he inextricably tied to my professional mode, but he became my best friend and mentor into the black musician's way of life." As Granz slowly built his irregular network of local jam sessions, Cole became its titular leader and backbone, working them into his schedule as a sidebar to his bread-and-butter trio bookings.

Aside from his first record date in 1936 (as a sideman with his brother Eddie) and two Victor sessions for Hampton in the summer of 1940, virtually all of Cole's trio work had been done for noncommercial transcription services and were largely heard only on black radio stations. In December 1940, Decca began recording the trio, but its marketing reflected the old-time assumptions that black artists are best marketed primarily to black audiences. So, Cole was confined to the company's 8000 or "sepia" series, reserved for black performers with some crossover potential. And indeed, Cole did begin to cross over.

Granz was eager to accelerate that success, though he had no record company, no connections and no prospects. He also had little interest in Cole as a singer. Instead, he arranged a few straight jazz dates on his own, not with the trio

but with ad-hoc groups of selected musicians. And the cheapest place in town to make a record was none other than Wallichs' Music City.

Thus converged upon Cole the very different visions of Gastel and Granz, two men who soon would be in undeclared competition over his future career. On July 15, 1942, Granz produced his first record session in the Music City studio as little more than a souvenir of his two favorite musicians—Cole and Lester Young with bassist Red Callender—with the thought of releasing it in the future. But the future was moving fast, and World War II was raging. Within a month, the draft would take Granz out of the picture. During that time, Cole would begin talks with Gastel about a possible management arrangement.

In early 1943, with Granz enlisted in the U.S. Army, Gastel and Cole shook hands—and that was that. Gastel's one provision was that he would take no commission until Cole's performance fee hit $800 per week. Cole, who then was pulling in about $200, was soon to learn the first lesson of show business: Never underestimate your value when you have a good agent. Gastel quickly booked him into The Orpheum Theatre at $1,000 per week, and the golden eggs began to hatch.

By the time Granz returned to L.A. as a civilian less than a year later, a lot had changed. In June 1942, that little record studio in Music City had become Capitol Records. The original partners were Wallichs, songwriter Johnny Mercer and Paramount Pictures executive Buddy DeSylva.

With that kind of paternity, a fast breakout seemed a foregone conclusion for the new label. But fate and the American Federation of Musicians would intervene, giving Granz a few months of breathing time. Six weeks after Capitol released its first record, the AFM shut down the entire record industry with a strike that would last into October 1943. Unable to record, Capitol went shopping for neglected masters from small companies. It found a couple of 1942 Cole trio sides at a black-owned label called Excelsior, bought them for $25, and immediately reissued them. "All Of You" was among the first Capitol discs to chart in the top 20. And by the fall of 1943, Gastel signed Cole to a seven-year pact at Capitol.

When Granz returned to L.A. in May 1943, Cole was beginning to taste the big time. But he hadn't lost his interest in jazz. The two resumed their local road show of jam sessions, using their swelling success to aggressively dismantle decades of encrusted Jim Crow notions that had kept both bandstands and audiences in L.A. largely segregated.

Granz also resumed his recording with Cole, doing combinations that would never happen at Capitol. In November 1943, with the AFM strike over, Cole recorded his first breakout hit at Capitol, "Straighten Up And Fly Right." In the same month, Granz produced a straight jazz date with Cole and Dexter Gordon, then three months later, another with Illinois Jacquet. But the Granz dates lay unreleased until 1945–'46, which is why they weren't noticed, while the Capitols kept coming and coming.

Cole endures like an indelible watermark in American music through the work of those who have been influenced by him.

By the time Cole did the first Jazz at the Philharmonic concert on July 2, 1944, "Straighten Up And Fly Right" was making him a popular star. Capitol was a new company and had no use for any "sepia" or race line; it gave Cole complete promotional support. The final Granz-Cole collaboration came in the spring of 1946—the famous trio date with Lester Young and Buddy Rich. But this was also the year of Capitol releases 304 and 311—"(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons" and "The Christmas Song." Time would not wait for Granz. By the time the Cole-Young-Rich date came out on Clef/Mercury a year later, Cole's name had become far too valuable an asset for Capitol to share. It had to be camouflaged behind the pseudonym "Aye Guy." That session effectively ended his years of moonlighting in the underground of jazz. Granz lost Cole forever at that point, and Gastel had won the big game.

The trio would linger into the early 1950s, increasingly augmented by orchestral accompaniments. Within a few years, though, a whole new generation of Baby Boomer fans would have no idea that Cole had ever played jazz piano. Capitol trusted him with just about anything from teenage bubblegum tunes ("Pigtails And Freckles") to commercial country ("Ramblin' Rose") and even unlikely pop covers ("Mule Train"). But his immortality rests on a catalog of albums done with Nelson Riddle, Gordon Jenkins and Pete Rugolo, and his sub-rosa brilliance as one of the great pianists of jazz history. He was incomparable.

As racial tensions rose in the 1950s, Gastel persuaded NBC that Cole's low-key appeal was broad enough to sustain his own variety program. Numerous pop singers had their own shows in those days, and *The Nat King Cole Show* began airing in November 1956. The ratings were excellent. But after two years, no sponsor had dared to touch the program, despite the biggest stars in show business doing guest shots at scale. One episode was devoted entirely to Norman Granz's current JATP ensemble, the only time it ever appeared on nation television. But NBC canceled it after 13 months, the move remaining one of the more craven examples of Madison Avenue hypocrisy taking cover behind a pretext of practicality.

Cole was of a generation of black stars that kept its politics to themselves. His response to racial affronts and his willingness to tolerate segregated audiences was seen as passive. But if Cole lost that social-justice skirmish with NBC, he had already won a war of far greater cultural consequence and without fully realizing it, maybe because it was almost subliminal.

Some might be surprised to learn that as late as the mid-'40s race protocols in America did not recognize the black singer as an agent of romance. "It sounds ridiculous, but it's true," vocalist Billy Eckstine told DownBeat years later. "We weren't supposed to sing about love. We were supposed to sing about work or blues and some dumb crap." Eckstine became famous just before Cole by singing precisely that kind of "dumb crap" ("Jelly Jelly"). It's why Cole's early trio repertoire is full of novelty tunes and jingles—the kinds of things we forgive him for today because they were obligatory for him in ways they were not for Bing Crosby, Sinatra or Bennett.

But in transitioning at Capitol from jazz pianist to commercial pop singer of the highest order, Cole, his music and his manner combined to accomplish what no performer of color ever had done: make it acceptable for a black vocalist to sing intimate, sexually implicit, love songs to white audiences without anyone breaking a sweat. Later audiences who would embrace Johnny Mathis and Johnny Hartman without a second thought no doubt did so without ever imagining that it had ever been otherwise.

One wonders who might have achieved such a velvet victory if Cole had decided in 1943 to go with Norman Granz and JATP, instead of Carlos Gastel's show business course. The jazz world's loss might, in the end, have been a net gain for American civility. Revenge is sweetest when it changes the world. **DB**

Abdullah Ibrahim at the 2019 INNtöne Jazz Festival

ABDULLAH IBRAHIM

'THE PROFUNDITY OF SIMPLICITY'

By Dan Ouellette | Photo by Tom Mesic

AT THIS YEAR'S INNTÖNE JAZZ FESTIVAL IN AUSTRIA, ABDULLAH IBRAHIM VIVIDLY DEMONSRATED THE INTIMACY AND COSMIC BEAUTY OF SOLO PIANO TO A HUSHED CROWD OF 800. THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE PLAYED AS IF HE WERE COMMUNING WITH THE NATURAL SURROUNDINGS, CREATING VERDANT ROLLING SOUNDSCAPES THROUGHOUT HIS 90-MINUTE SET.

In front of him was a tattered spiral notebook that at first glance looked like a setlist. But it was a crossword puzzle of song titles that reminded him of where to go on the keyboard when the time was right. Without uttering a word during the set, the 84-year-old weaved a series of tunes interspersed with recurring fragments of such well-known songs as "The Wedding" and "Blue Bolero."

Known by the name Dollar Brand until his conversion to Islam in 1968, Ibrahim is a recipient of a 2019 National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters fellowship. And recently, he released his first new album in five years, *The Balance* (Gearbox), recorded with his longtime septet Ekaya (translation: "home"). The program enchants with lyrical upbeat beauties featuring the full band and dazzles with Ibrahim's solo meditations. It's a perfect balance of the master's repertoire; hence, the title.

During a two-hour conversation with DownBeat prior to his INNtöne performance, the relaxed, youthful-looking Ibrahim discussed the cruelty of the South African government during the apartheid era, his exile from his homeland and his return to perform at the 1994 presidential inauguration of Nelson Mandela, who called him "our Mozart."

Congratulations on receiving the NEA Jazz Masters Award this year. What was it like going to Washington, D.C., to perform at the Kennedy Center for the awards show?

At first, I didn't quite catch the scope of it. It was nice to be honored in the same breath with all the great musicians I've always aspired and still aspire to [emulate]. They continue to be my teachers and mentors without them knowing it. It was also getting the recognition of my music. It was not just an accolade for myself but also my band Ekaya. They were ecstatic about it. [Saxophonist/flutist] Cleave Guyton and [bassist] Noah Jackson were there playing with me.

And the award itself?

It was like being honored by my Japanese Budo teacher, Sansei Tonegawa, who I've been practicing nonviolent martial arts with since 1960. He's taught me to enter places where I hadn't been before but with an understanding that you are well-equipped to handle the situation. He gave me a diploma that was a license to teach Budo.

So, I said to him, "Master, you're giving me this diploma, but I don't know anything." Then he said to me, "That's why I gave it to you. I don't know, either." He was saying it was the beginning of a new phase. And then you have to strive harder.

When you and I spoke at the 2004 Cape Town Jazz Festival, you said, "Many of us fell into drinking alcohol, smoking joints, womanizing. We thought that was what the music was all about. We couldn't explain what it was that we were feeling, but I finally realized that music is a deeply moving spiritual experience. It's guidance from God." Do you still believe in that guidance?

Absolutely. We were living in this horrendous regime [in South Africa], but at the bedrock of our understanding of who we were—and what we were—was our parents and other mentors, along with the unsung people in the community. We were living where everything was negated. Our traditional medicine was banned because it was considered witchcraft. So much was called witchcraft, but this is what our mentors helped us understand. It has nothing to do with religion.

From early on, in the community and with my parents and family, the focus was on spirituality. We mixed with every-

Ibrahim plans to record with a pair of orchestras in the future.

body—Christians, unbelievers. We all understood that this was the cosmology of living together. I've carried this understanding to what we are doing with the music. It encompasses everything.

And that relates to your life as a jazz musician?

For me, jazz is the highest form of music. Early on I'd listen to Louis Armstrong and Count Basie and the boogie-woogie playing of Albert Ammons. We used to play in house parties, carnivals, in church on Sunday, at picnics, and I'd play with this stride-piano sound. What I liked was the incessant drum sound. I found that the bass lines were actually the same rhythm of traditional Swazi drumming. Boogie-woogie gave me a way of developing my left hand. It was a grounding point for training independence between the left and the right hands. So I was playing this along with music from Africa.

Can you talk about the origin of Jazz Epistles in the late 1950s?

I had been composing and—being opposed to playing alone—wanted to play with a band, so we could start to break boundaries. The boundary we had to overcome was this governmental thought process that blacks were inferior. We were forced to live in a system that said we do not have the mental capacity to deal with intricate things such as mathematics. But for me, I knew that was wrong from listening to the various styles of traditional African music and realizing their complexity.

So, we were forever relegated to the role of being subservient. I started composing music that wasn't logical. We had already gone through the whole process of playing the traditional music, the church music and the carnival dance music. But then swing came along. There's massive complexity that people miss. When I started getting on to jazz, I loved [Thelonious] Monk and Herbie Nichols and Duke Ellington.

Your playing is also steeped in classical music. What did that bring to your playing?

It still informs it. But you first have to talk about the government in South Africa and not wanting the music to include intricate things. But with the African music, a lot of that trickles down into the communities. When I started playing things on that level, I was booed off the stage: You know, "What the hell are you doing?"

In Cape Town, across from a cinema, there was a cafe that had an old, broken grand piano. The gangsters in town were always having a holiday there. I used to compose in that room, and you'd get completely stoned even if you didn't smoke. They liked the music because they could see pictures. I didn't know if it was because they were enjoying the music or their joints.

I listened to everything. We had a gramophone that broke, but we didn't have money to fix it. So we spun the disc with one finger. I was 14. I played one 78 over and over, but the label was so old I didn't know what the music was. Years afterwards I discovered it was Debussy's "Prelude To The Afternoon Of A Faun." My ears were open to this, and I transcended the instruction they were trying to place on us. Then it was *The Rite Of Spring* and the *Brandenburg Concertos*.

I realized that it was serial music and there's this formula. So, why not crack the formula? All of this music was composed by other people, so you bow to it, of course.

I studied with Hall Overton in New York [circa 1965], and he gave me Bach preludes and fugues to study. Then he said, "OK, play it to me." Because Bach was not recorded, it had to be my interpretation. So, then I realized, "Bach's phrasing is how he breathes, but that's not my breathing." I had to find my own voice.

You recorded one album with the Epistles. Is that what led you to be viewed as incendiary by a government that didn't understand or trust jazz?

The music can be very political in a bigger sense than you can even think. Here's someone who is breaking the rules. Did they really understand what we were doing? We knew it was subversive beauty. But a big thing for me was being asked to play on a significant broadcasting corporation radio show by this woman who had a weekly show. I think she was one of those musicologists. I'm sure she thought that she would keep what I played for posterity without us getting paid, of course. So, I played Monk's "Crepuscule With Nellie," and the government banned it. They thought it was insurgent; they didn't know what "crepuscule" meant.

This was right after the Sharpeville Massacre [1960], a violent protest against the pass laws. Soon after, they clamped down. It became awful for all of us, painful even. At four o'clock in the morning the police knocked on my door at my house and brought me to the police station. They claimed that I hadn't paid a speeding ticket in Free State, which was the equivalent of the deep South in the U.S. then. I remembered that some years earlier, I got a ticket, but the officer tore it up when we gave him cigarettes. The police in Cape Town said I had a violation there and wanted to take me there to fix it. I said I'd pay for the violation, but they wanted to take me there. But I didn't want to because I could be disappeared. I left the country right after that.

How did you get out with a clampdown going on?

There was a commercial artist living in Cape Town who was into the music. He said, "You've got to get out of here." I said, "But we don't have any money." So, he withdrew money from his bank and had us buy tickets on a propeller plane. After a few attempts to land first in the Congo, then Algeria, then Paris—which were all going through political issues—we ended up in Zurich. Somebody introduced us to the owner at Club Africana, where we played every month. When we weren't playing we went to see American artists touring, like Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Freddie Hubbard, Wayne Shorter, John Coltrane.

Was your music accepted in Zurich?

Not really, but later I heard that small groups of students used to come and listen for hours and sip on one Coca-Cola. We did have a lot of support from the musicians there. We were playing as a trio of fellow exiles with Johnny Gertze on bass and Makhaya Ntshoko on drums. The funny thing is we lived in Zurich on the second floor of a student's house. I didn't have a piano. One day, there was a knock on the door and a piano was delivered. To this day I don't know who did this for me.

Then, in 1963, Duke Ellington gave you a lift up.

The club owner wouldn't let us go to see Duke and his orchestra, who were [on tour in Zurich]. So, my girlfriend, [the singer] Sathima [Bea Benjamin], went and met Duke. She told him

he must come to hear us. I don't know what she said to him, but we were just about to close when Ellington and some of his band came. The next day, he met with us, and three days later had us come to Paris to record an album for Reprise Records, where he was an A&R representative. That was *Duke Ellington Presents The Dollar Brand Trio.*

Then you moved to New York because of the album.

The reaction to the Dollar Brand record was good. I felt like I won the election, even though I was still a fledgling. Coming to New York [in 1963] was like living in the golden ages. I met everyone. I hung out with Coleman Hawkins an entire day, just listening to him play "Picasso."

And then I met Monk. I liked his music, but I thought, "This guy is crazy." I introduced myself. I said, "I'm from South Africa. I think you're great and thank you very much for inspiring me." He looked at me quizzically and walked around the room a couple of times and came back again and said that I was the first piano player to tell him that. At the time, many people were talking negatively about him, how he couldn't play, he didn't know the scales. I wanted to study with Monk, but I knew that was impossible. But I met Hall Overton, who arranged the music for Monk's big band, and he said he would teach me. But I had no money.

How did you take the next step?

I went through the Yellow Pages to look for philanthropic societies. There were 120 of them, so I hand-wrote letters to each of them. They all came back negative. But then one came back from The Rockefeller Foundation. I had said that I wanted to study, and they gave me a grant to study with Hall Overton. That's how I got to understand Monk better. Of course, I got a lot of flack from the local musicians. "You come from Africa, and you get this money. Why did they give you this?" And I replied, "Because I asked for it."

So, you and Sathima stayed in New York?

We went back and forth from New York to Zurich, and then at one time back to South Africa. In New York, we lived in the Chelsea Hotel for ... years. We needed a place to stay when we first arrived, so Don Cherry introduced me to Stanley Bard, who was manager and part-owner. It was quite a place, known as an artists' hotel. It was really incredible. You didn't care about neighbors playing music at 2 o'clock in the morning, and it was just a walk away from all the clubs in the Village.

Let's talk about your new album, *The Balance*. Originally it was going to be titled "Jabula," which means "rejoice." Why the change?

"The Balance" is an older song that we retitled; it's upbeat. It's about the concept of joy after this arduous trip that we all embark on individually. You get to a point after you think that you've accomplished all this, and you get this brief respite of joy. But you know that the road is ongoing, and that there will be more of these moments.

It's a balance between all of these different moods or modes. It's like the album. There's Ekaya on many of the tracks and three solo pieces that are totally improvised. They start from scratch and can never be played the same way again.

What does your future look like?

I've formed two philharmonic orchestras of young musicians in South Africa and Milan, and we'll be doing my songs with their words. Every song I've written has lyrics, but they never come out in an instrumental setting. A long time ago, I wanted to record an album with Johnny Hartman singing, but that never happened. So, the words will finally come out. These young players are unbelievable. This is a new generation. We're calling it the AI Pops Philharmonic, and Gearbox is totally into recording this.

That sounds like a major challenge.

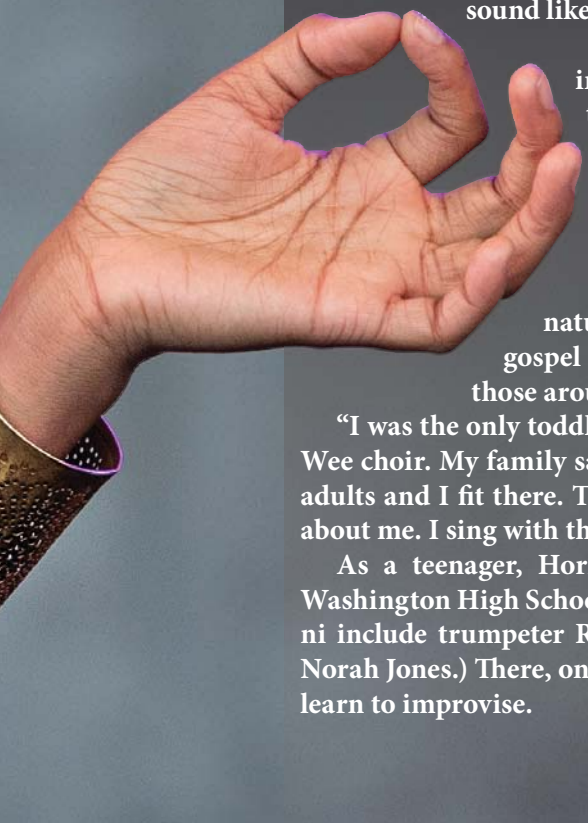
It's like anything else. It's a mental exercise where sometimes we paint ourselves into a corner. But it is very simple and profound at the same time. It is the profundity of simplicity. That's been my career. **DB**

JAZZMEIA HORN

'I'M NEVER LYING'

BY SUZANNE LORGE | PHOTO BY STEVEN SUSSMAN

On the third night of her June run at Jazz Standard in New York, Jazzmeia Horn leapt into her opener, the Betty Carter signature tune "Do Something," with a fleet, peripatetic scat. As she progressed further into the improvised number, the references zipped by without pause—Wayne Shorter's "Footprints," Ann Ronell's "Willow Weep For Me."



Tempting as it is to listen to Horn's performances for informed quotes like these, such an exercise would miss the point. Horn is a new breed of jazz singer and composer, thoroughly steeped in tradition, yet fully planted in contemporary music and messages. She doesn't sound like anyone else.

"Think of me as a machine, only in this moment," she said in a recent interview at the Greenwich Village offices of Concord Records, the label that's releasing her second album, *Love And Liberation*. "From the time I was born, all the music I've heard has gone into a database. When I'm writing my own songs, I'm using that database. That's why [my music] sounds maybe like pop, maybe jazz, maybe this, maybe that—because it is. All of my experiences are in my music."

Horn, 28, began accruing musical experience at a young age, and her naturally big voice set her apart. Raised in Dallas, she started singing in gospel choirs at age 3, and it was in those early church groups that she—and those around her—first realized her gift.

"I was the only toddler singing in the choir with adults, [because] I was too loud for the Pee Wee choir. My family said, 'We can't hear anybody else,'" Horn recalled. "So, I sat in with the adults and I fit there. That was the moment [when I noticed], 'Oh, there's something different about me. I sing with the adults.'"

As a teenager, Horn auditioned for and was accepted into the prestigious Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. (The school's many notable alumni include trumpeter Roy Hargrove, singer Erykah Badu and vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Norah Jones.) There, one of her teachers suggested that she listen to a variety of jazz singers and learn to improvise.

Jazzmeia Horn has begun writing a follow-up to her recently released album *Love And Liberation*. The vocalist has also started work on a book of poetry.

So, she delved into recordings by the likes of Little Jimmy Scott, Chet Baker, Nat "King" Cole and Ella Fitzgerald. And when she listened to Sarah Vaughan, the young musician became fascinated. "I couldn't get rid of what her sound did to me," Horn said. "So, I really started to shed Sarah Vaughan and learn her solos."

The jazz world soon took notice. As a student, Horn received an Outstanding Performance honor in the Vocal Jazz Soloist category of the DownBeat Student Music Awards in both 2008 and 2009. Then in 2010, as a student at The New School in New York, she won the Vocal Jazz Soloist category for the Undergraduate College division of the SMAs.

Impressive enough—but as honors go, Horn was just getting started. She began to audition "for everything," she said, just to see what would happen. What happened was a cascade of accolades: the Rising Star award in the 2012 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition; the first-place spot in the 2013 edition of the Vaughan Competition; a first-place finish in the 2015 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Vocals Competition; and a win in the category Rising Star–Female Vocalist of the 2018 DownBeat Critics Poll.

"Once the recognition started happening, I started thinking about my brand and about music as a business," Horn went on. "New York helped me do that. When I was back home, I only thought about the singing—what I would wear to perform, how I would sound. I'm grateful for that, because when I moved to New York, I already had my stage presence; I already had my style. So, the next thing to do was to focus on the business."

Much of that business would center on the breathtaking success of her 2017 debut, *A Social Call* (Prestige), which landed in the Top 10 of the Billboard Jazz Albums chart. Later that year, the recording received a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album. Then, at the 2018 Grammys pre-show concert, when Horn performed her fearless rendition of "Moanin'," she received a standing ovation. Since then, borne aloft on newfound visibility, she has toured almost constantly.

"The biggest problem with Jazzmeia is that she's just always gigging," said Chris Dunn, a veteran producer who shepherded both *A Social Call* and *Love And Liberation*. "The hardest part is to get her in one place for a little bit of time."

Dunn was speaking half in jest—an artist like Horn who is still touring an album two years after its release is the kind of problem producers like to have. But he acknowledged that a breakout debut adds pressure to succeed with the second album, even when the artist is readily available to record it.

Adding to his concern about a sophomore slump was Horn's desire to release an album of mostly original compositions. "I was thinking that these [songs] were going to be terrible," Dunn laughed. "I mean, how can she sing that well and then write, too? We were just grabbing her audience, so I suggested that we be careful with the originals. I was hoping that she wouldn't veer too much from what she started [with *A Social Call*], because I really think she started something. She just said, 'When you hear them, you're going to think that they're jazz standards.'"

Horn's originals do sound like standards—but with some twists. For one thing, they feature protagonists who use modern terms to talk about modern realities: insecurity, too little time, unreasonable expectations, boundary violations and the evergreen Great American Songbook malaise—unrequited love. For Horn, these themes, while universal, are also intensely personal. "The lyrics are always a story of mine," she said. "I'm never lying."

Compositionally, too, the tunes reflect Horn's lived life. In with the blues, the swing and the scatting, one hears smatterings of the "maybe this, maybe that" from Horn's musical background—a hybridization that not just anyone can sing, and not just anyone can play.

From working on the first album, "I already knew where she was coming from, conceptually," said Ben Williams, Horn's bassist for both albums. "I knew what the vibe was, and it was something I was very comfortable with because I come from that same [artistic] place: jazz and r&b and gospel and hip-hop all mixed together."

Jamison Ross, who played drums on all of the *Love And Liberation* tracks, sang on one and contributed a spoken-word passage to another. "It was a really big deal that she thought of me as a singer for this album," he said. "Especially for a singer like her—the epitome of a jazz singer, with the spirit of all the greats in her voice. I do not call myself a jazz singer, so I don't take it lightly. It was the biggest compliment ever."

Not coincidentally, all three of these musicians emerged victorious at the Monk competition and then recorded an acclaimed debut album. Williams won the 2009 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Bass Competition and released *State Of Art* (Concord) in 2011. Ross won the 2012 Monk drums competition and released *Jamison* (Concord) in 2015. All of them had won or were nominated for a Grammy before age 30. While achieving these milestones so early in their careers gave them a welcome leg up in the industry, it also landed them in career situations that they can share with few musicians of their age. As leaders of their generational cohort, they not only feel pressure to turn out impressive albums but also to find solid ground in a rapidly changing music industry.

"I think that what Jazzmeia is going to do is to revitalize the [timeless] spirit of the music and let [non-jazz audiences] know that they can listen to this music, too," Ross said. "Right now, the jazz clubs and festivals have built-in fan bases, but there's no new influx of listeners, because we keep offering the same thing in the same spaces.

"So, if [the younger generation of jazz artists] want to have people to play in front of, we have to change that. I think that with her vocal ability, her songwriting—the whole artistic package—Jazzmeia can bring us one day to a point where we can all go sit down in front of Live Nation and get millions of dollars for a jazz tour ... . Our fan base will come to see us, not in a situation that's tailor-made for jazz, but in a situation that's tailor-made for the artist and their artistry."

These are issues that Horn and her peers discuss among themselves: How to honor one's musical heritage while embracing new creative impulses. What to do with unprecedented access

to a global audience. And how to navigate the seeming intractability of some social problems.

Like her jazz predecessors, Horn addresses these issues head-on: On *A Social Call,* she dished out thoughtful commentary with songs like The Stylisitics' 1972 hit "People Make The World Go Round," a critique of materialism and greed, and the medley "Lift Every Voice And Sing/Moanin'," with its telling juxtaposition of the anthem alongside the classic blues tune. Horn's commentary is no less thoughtful on *Love And Liberation*.

The first track on the album is "Free Your Mind," a glittering, straightahead swing tune that opens with Horn's metronome-precise count-off and an a cappella pickup. The tune's message—"free your mind and let your thoughts expand"—receives reinforcement in trumpeter Josh Evans' bracing, boppish solo. As with all of Horn's soloists, Evans' unfettered improvisation carries the song's message as much as Horn's lyrics do.

"When you listen to ['Free Your Mind'] maybe you'll think, 'I can do something different—think differently,'" Horn said about her intent in writing the song. "Maybe it will spark something. All the time we hear, 'Buy this, wear this.' No. Free your mind. I want each person to think how they're contributing to society."

Horn herself thinks deeply about how she contributes and her place in the world as an African-American woman. In discussing her own experiences of bias and discrimination she stays clear of confrontation, she said—but she doesn't back away from the discussion.

She recalled that on a recent trip to China—a country that historically has had little exposure to the African diaspora—everywhere she went people took photos of her. "As a black person, it's like that for me everywhere I go," Horn said. "People look at me like, 'Why are you in this neighborhood or in this grocery store or on this plane?' They look at me like I don't belong, no matter where I am.

"Trying to talk about this with my audience is not very easy, because people think that as a jazz singer, people love me all over the world. But not everybody likes jazz music, and not everybody knows I'm a jazz singer. [Also], my audience is not coming to my show to hear this ... . They're coming to be uplifted and healed, and my mission is to uplift and heal them. However, my platform is also a place where I can heal myself, and that is my reality. So, there has to be a balance."

On Sept. 9, after a balance-restoring break from touring in August, Horn will mark the release of her new album with a concert at (Le) Poisson Rouge, the eclectic cabaret space in New York that's hosted performers as disparate as punk progenitor Iggy Pop and opera star Anna Netrebko. Then, with the album launched and a new tour underway, Horn will turn her sights to the next album.

She's started writing songs for that, too—no surprise to those who know her, who suggest that she might already have it all planned out. When asked about the future, Horn offers "Out The Window," from *Love And Liberation*, as a preview of what's to come—a fast-clip swing tune featuring stacked horns, cymbal rides and classic changes. "I'd like to work with a big band," said Horn with a smile. "So, I'm thinking about it."

She's also planning to publish a book of poetry soon after the album drops, maybe before the holidays or in early 2020. "I have a publishing company," she said. "So, right now, I'm just looking for distribution. I love poetry, and I have so many poems that are not published and songs that are not recorded."

She keeps her jottings for all of these in a notebook that she carries everywhere. It's curious to think that in that small volume might lie one path to the future of modern jazz. But Horn sums it up her own way.

"I want to encourage people to be open," she said. "Because my approach to [music] is something you have never heard. It's going to sound like a standard, but it's not. It's music that takes the torch and carries it forward." **DB**

Barrett Martin's recent creative endeavors include a book and a related album.

DRUMMER'S DIY JOURNEY CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

Many musicians who thrived during the alternative-rock gold rush of the 1990s have, by now, hopped onto the nostalgia circuit to cash in on their past glories. Others, however, have sought out new lands and new interests. Henry Bogdan, former bassist for neo-metal quartet Helmet, has carved out a comfortable niche as a guitarist for traditional Hawaiian music ensembles and old-time jazz groups. And John Frusciante, ex-guitarist for Red Hot Chili Peppers, now tests the outer limits of electronic music as a solo artist.

Few, though, have ventured as far, physically and musically, as Barrett Martin. Best known in the rock world for his drumming on the last two studio albums by Screaming Trees and post-grunge supergroup Mad Season, the 52-year-old has spent the majority of his life traveling the world, seeking enlightenment and new musical terrain to cultivate. Those journeys have included government-sponsored jaunts to Cuba, explorations of the Peruvian rainforest and recordings with Brazilian singer Nando Reis and with tribes in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

Martin's travels and studies have led to two professional titles on his resume: educator and author. For the past seven years, he's taught music and theory classes at Antioch University Seattle. In addition to writing a blog for The Huffington Post, he has penned two books—*The Singing Earth: Adventures from a World of Music* (2017) and the recently released *The Way of the Zen Cowboy: Fireside Stories from a Globetrotting Rhythmatist*. (The latter book includes a free download of the Barrett Martin Group's new album, *Songs Of The Firebird*.) Martin has filtered his ongoing interest in ethnomusicology, his own personal studies and his many stories from the field into smart, edifying prose meant to open up fellow curiosity-seekers to the possibilities of sound and culture.

"At the end of the day, it's just one person telling a story to other people," Martin said during a phone call from his home in Port Townsend, Washington, situated on the Olympic Peninsula just west of Seattle. "Music's the same thing. I studied a lot of linguistics, because within music is a language. And what a lot of people don't realize is that music itself is a language. We hear it in European classical music and we hear it in jazz. There's a lot of very old, world instrumental music and it's all a form of dialogue. It's a form of communication."

The most direct route into what Martin seeks to express is through any of the seven studio albums he's written and recorded with his namesake ensemble. The free-flowing band is a perfect outlet for its leader's growing interests, eschewing the heavy attack of former projects—such as the Screaming Trees and his early '90s stint in the noise-rock band Skin Yard—and focusing instead on club-ready rhythms, jazz fusion and fearless world-beat jams. Sonically, things get particularly interesting when Martin and his cohort start blending those genres together, creating a vibe that works like small electrodes firing into joints and muscles. Listeners can't help but move to them.

The Barrett Martin Group has honed that aesthetic on the ambitious *Songs Of The Firebird*, a double album with 20 tracks that were crafted to reflect some of the themes of *The Way of the Zen Cowboy*.

"At the same time as I was developing these songs," Martin recalled, "I was also writing these stories. I realized that they're coming from the same being, and they're really two sides of the same coin: a body of music and a body of stories. [The music] sounded like a soundtrack to the stories, and the stories gave me inspiration to come up with the song titles. As I was completing the two, I would embed the song titles within the story as little secret clues."

While the two releases complement each other well, the book and the album each can stand on their own as accomplished works of art. *Firebird*, especially, feels like a perfectly singular statement, driven by Martin's fluid, splashy playing—augmented throughout by percussionists Lisette Garcia and Thione Diop—and a compositional style that flows between genres with ease. The versatile, 10-member ensemble can mesh the jerking beats of drum 'n' bass with post-bop horn figures or generate a Steve Reich-like pattern played on marimba and kalimba to fuel a gentle samba.

Firebird also stands out because Martin recruited a few high-profile guests who happen to be his pals from the Northwest music scene. One memorable track, the psychedelicized post-rock tune "Requiem," features an electric guitar line played by Soundgarden's Kim Thayil and a steady acoustic strum from R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck, with whom Martin has collaborated in the band Tuatara.

Also joining the festivities is jazz keyboardist Wayne Horvitz, who adds squelching solos to two *Firebird* tracks. (Horvitz and Buck also played on the Barrett Martin Group's 2018 album, *Transcendence*.)

"Barrett fits in this tradition of artists who were well known in the rock scene and who have gone on to do great things and been really supportive figures," said Horvitz, one of the founders of the jazz-centric Seattle music venue the Royal Room. "So many [musicians from] other cities with a scene like they had in the '90s would have taken off to New York or L.A. [But] all the big bands from the Seattle scene have stayed true to Seattle and invested in it. I see this project as being part of that vibe."

Nowadays, Martin is fully committed to a DIY approach. His albums and books are released through his imprints, Sunyata Records and Sunyata Books. For the Barrett Martin Group albums, he handles everything: paying for studio time and paying his musicians, as well as designing the packaging and filling orders for distribution. He does the same for his books, overseeing the design and printing, and then distributing the titles via companies like Amazon and Barnes & Noble, or even shipping out copies himself.

Martin's need to control the means of production is, in part, a result of his uneasy experiences working with record labels as a member of Screaming Trees, Mad Season and Tuatara.

"The Trees toured all over the world and didn't make any money," Martin said. "Then Tuatara did our first record [1997's *Breaking The Ethers*], and the president of Epic at the time loved it. That president got immediately fired and Tuatara got dropped in 1998. We were just abandoned. So, I thought, 'All right, I'm going to start my own label.'"

In the years since that decision, Martin has endured some bumps in the road—like losing all of his physical product held by a distributor in the early '00s. But today, his small machine runs smoothly with the help of a dedicated group of folks who handle the business activities that he doesn't do himself, such as publicity and radio promotion.

"They're all old-school professionals who have adapted to the new business models and refined their approach," Martin said of his business collaborators. "We're all these old veterans who keep going because we love music. I mean, some part of us must love the music business or we wouldn't keep doing it."

—Robert Ham

CÉLINE RUDOLPH


JOACHIM GERN

Céline Rudolph, shown here with collaborator Lionel Loueke, says her upbringing readied her to embrace a global vision of music.

A PASSION FOR BORDERLESS MUSIC

Berlin-based singer-songwriter Céline Rudolph grew up immersed in multiculturalism, surrounded by different languages, the grooves of several continents and the tones of various instruments. Her mother taught her French and introduced her to the melodic richness of *chanson*. Her father taught her German and presented Rudolph with the compelling grooves of African drumming and the soft sweetness of Brazilian vocal jazz. And later, at Berlin University of the Arts, she studied jazz under the tutelage of several prominent American instrumentalists: vibraphonist David Friedman, drummer Jerry Granelli and pianist Kirk Nurock.

"It's a gift being raised with two languages, because then your ear is very open to all different sounds," Rudolph said in a recent phone call to discuss her latest release, *Pearls*, newly launched on her own label, Obsessions. "The ear is my tool—everything comes in through the ear."

The distinctive aural impressions of Rudolph's upbringing find expression on the album, more than a dozen tracks of original songs, jams and radio edits. Recorded in Brooklyn with an impressive assemblage of protean musicians—guitarist/singer Lionel Loueke, pianist Leo Genovese, bass clarinetist John Ellis, bassist Burniss Travis and producer/drummer Jamire Williams—these individualistic compositions don't land easily in any one bucket.

Rudolph, however, is clear about what defines her sound. "My main approach to music is through jazz—always from the point of view of a jazz musician," she said. "So, in my music, the cultures blend and meld together, and the music doesn't fall apart. [Instead], the different genres are very inspiring to me and lead me to new horizons."

One of these new horizons was the 2017 formation of the Obsessions label, undertaken in large part to self-release a duo album of the same name, recorded with likeminded musician Loueke. Born in Benin, trained at Berklee College of Music and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, and now residing in Luxembourg, Loueke's musical interests reflect Rudolph's—French *chanson*, African rhythms, American jazz. So, the fit seemed natural. "Céline is indeed my musical soulmate," Loueke wrote in an email while on tour in Europe. "We are connected when we play, and our vision of music is very similar."

That vision is, in a word, global—and according to Rudolph, this global vision is not one that many recording companies share. "I started the label to be independent and to make my music heard internationally," she said. "A lot of labels—especially European labels—don't think that way. So, you can record a lot of albums and stay in your country, but it's hard to get heard outside of that. This is a step toward promoting [my music] outside of Germany—in other European countries and in the U.S.—I have this freedom now."

It's hard to doubt Rudolph's expertise in the matter, given her years of experience working with some of Europe's best labels.

She released *Salvador*—in both French and German versions—in 2011 on Verve/Universal Music; *Metamorflores* in 2009 and *Brazaventure* in 2007 on Enja Records; and *Book Of Travels* in 1996 and *Paintings* in 1994 on Nabel Records. And on the Swiss imprint ZeroZero, she released *Berlin, 1999* and *Segredo*, both in 1999.

Loueke concurs with Rudolph's assessment of the challenges that polyglot, polymath musicians face in their efforts to reach an international audience. "The major labels are in crisis these days, as we all know," he asserted. "I truly believe that it's time for us musicians to own our music, and I think that Céline is doing the right things for her career. She's a positive voice in the music community, and she is making a great impact as a singer and independent label owner."

With label ownership comes new responsibilities, however, especially regarding international promotion. Last year, Rudolph and Loueke toured seven West African countries with *Obsession* on behalf of the Goethe-Institut—Rudolph would like to devise a similar jaunt to promote *Pearls* throughout the United States.

"I've started touring the album in Europe already, and I'm looking for partners in the States because I know it's going to be really difficult to organize a [U.S. tour] from here," she said. "My wish would be to find a partner who could [sponsor] the band, maybe with some of the original lineup."

As she contemplates her next steps as an indie artist, what drives Rudolph—as ever—is her passion for borderless sounds. "I'd love to perform [the album] worldwide," she concluded. "This music is my way of loving life."

—*Suzanne Lorge*

DELMARK RECORDS

LOLA REYNAERTS

Julia A. Miller (left) and Elbio Barilari run Chicago's Delmark Records.

DELMARK FOCUSED ON NEW ERA OF CREATIVITY

After six decades as the overachieving offspring of founder Bob Koester, Delmark Records was purchased in May 2018 by Julia A. Miller and Elbio Barilari. One year into their ambitious five-year plan to bring the label into the 21st century, this labor of love has been "everything and more" they expected it to be, said Miller, Delmark president and CEO. "And we're even ahead of our expectations for the first year."

Interviewed at Delmark's combination Riverside Studio, offices and warehouse on Chicago's Northwest Side, the two musicians, educators and radio hosts admitted that Koester and his wife, Sue, have proven tough acts to follow. At the same time, they bring a different perspective than the octogenarian Koester, who often remarked that jazz and blues fans are unlike other music consumers in that they prefer physical products in the form of CDs or LPs, rather than streams or downloads. Not that the new owners aren't exploring retro formats.

There are 782 products now offered on the Delmark website, most of which are available digitally. But while the site proclaims "A New Era for Delmark Records," the label is wooing audiophiles with reel-to-reel reissues of classics from its catalog, starting with albums by Junior Wells, Jimmy Forrest, Magic Sam and Sun Ra. Prices range from $139 to $400, Barilari said.

Miller said she and Barilari have complementary skills that served them well during the transition. "I have five music degrees, guitar performance and composition degrees, and it's been a learning curve," she said. "We bring different things to this partnership. As the president of the business, if I didn't take on those responsibilities of organizing things, the business would implode. A lot of people talk about Elbio as the Uruguayan composer, and he's more than that. Having a female CEO and a Latino artistic director [and vice president] gives us a unique perspective. We're more than the sum of our parts."

Providing continuity as the third member of the team is Steve Wagner, Delmark's label and studio manager. Widely respected for delivering a classic sound as engineer and producer on countless Delmark recordings, Wagner paused during a recent editing job to discuss the studio's recent purchase of Pro Tools music production software. This addition to his toolbox, Wagner said, offers him greater flexibility. "Steve is also an archivist," Miller said. "He knows all the technology, runs the studio and organized all the masters."

Barilari and Miller said being musicians themselves helps, too, enabling them to relate to Delmark artists. "For example, we'd never ask a musician to sign a contract that we wouldn't sign ourselves," Miller pledged.

Blues and jazz artists in Chicago and beyond are on board. Veteran Chicago jazz singer Dee Alexander, who is recording her first solo disc for Delmark, said, "That plays a big, important part, that they are actually jazz musicians themselves. They know what jazz musicians need and require, and know how to deal with temperamental musicians. We all care about the music and want to be treated with kid gloves, and that's exactly what they do." *It's Too Hot For Words*, scheduled for an August release, pairs Alexander with the Metropolitan Jazz Octet for a deep exploration of the Billie Holiday catalog.

Willie Buck, whose latest Delmark release, *Willie Buck Way*, marks the dedication of a Chicago street to the bluesman, said he barely gave the ownership change a thought while working on the album. "I don't see a lot changing," the Mississippi native said.

An important benefit for Barilari and Miller in buying Delmark was finding a home for their own experimental jazz-rock group, Volcano Radar. For *Paquito Libre*, their recent Delmark release, Barilari recruited his old friend Paquito D'Rivera to play clarinet and alto saxophone. "We exemplify the breadth of the label with our playing," Miller said. "We look at Delmark as a platform for creativity. Creative control and vision are really important to us, and that was what Delmark was really all about. In our market, we're not a major-label thing. It's a very specific creative and intellectual project, and we wanted it to be a joyous outgrowth of what's happening with our label."

—Jeff Johnson

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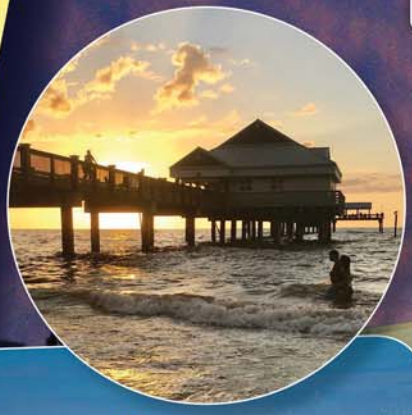

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*Artists Subject to Change

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JACOB BLIKENSTAFF

Esperanza Spalding's *12 Little Spells* was inspired by Reiki healing practices.

Esperanza Spalding
12 Little Spells

CONCORD 00896

★★★½

Esperanza Spalding's music frequently has embraced the esoteric. Ranging from the 77-hour, live-streamed writing and recording of her 2017 record, *Exposure,* to collaborating with pop juggernauts Janelle Monáe and Bruno Mars to now releasing a project inspired by Reiki healing practices, the bassist/composer certainly takes inspiration from disparate sources. While tangential tie-ins to the music could be seen as a distraction from its substance, Spalding has proven during her career that each album matches its intricate theme. And *12 Little Spells* is no different.

Initially released over the course of 12 days via 12 videos on Facebook and Instagram, *12 Little Spells* is a complex and multifaceted piece of work, one that functions through Spalding's poetic lyricism as much as her thematic arranging. Opener "12 Little Spells" bursts to life with a cinematic sweep of flutes, rumbling horns and fluttering guitar as Spalding expounds on the virtues of the thoracic spine: "Twelve little wells of golden ink/ Bone bottles stacked mouth to tail."

The expressionistic lyricism continues throughout 12 tracks and four bonus numbers, with highlights coming on the considered irreverence of "'Til The Next Full," describing eyeballs as "hollow but presently holding shape around a gooey filling," as well as the full-voiced refrain of "The Longing Deep Down": "It's fucking hard to be longing/ And at the same time to feel your own belonging." Here humor intertwines with the melodramaticism of Spalding's arranging to create a tongue-in-cheek aside to the spiritual themes of the album; her meditations on the mind and body commune with musical energies.

Taken as a whole, though, the composer's musings can feel crammed into each of these "little spells." While members of her band, such as drummer Justin Tyson, excel on the beat-programming of "Lest We Forget" and guitarist Matthew Stevens provides a languorous, charming progression on "'Til The Next Full," Spalding jams many of the tracks too full with her poetry, stifling the chance for the music to breathe.

Of course, she's the star of the record, a polymath prodigy with ideas seemingly pouring out of her ears at every turn. She's a thoughtful lyricist, crystalline-clear singer, groove-steady bassist and textural pianist. *12 Little Spells* pushes Spalding further into a pop-influenced space of songwriting, a trajectory begun on 2012's *Radio Music Society,* where jazz motifs met hook-laden melodies. Yet, its current hybrid pop-jazz-poetic state can't contain the mass of Spalding's ideas. The recording likely would benefit from giving listeners more time to take in its message and more space for its music to convey the depth of Spalding's creativity. —*Ammar Kalia*

12 Little Spells: 12 Little Spells; To Tide Us Over; 'Til The Next Full; Thang; Touch In Mine; The Longing Deep Down; You Have To Dance; Now Know; All Limbs Are; Readying To Rise; Dancing The Animal; With Others; Lest We Forget; How To; Move Many; Ways Together. (71:31)

Personnel: Esperanza Spalding, vocals, piano, organ, bass; Matthew Stevens, guitar, electric bass; Justin Tyson, drums, synthesizer; Aaron Burnett, saxophone; Burniss Travis, electric bass, vocals, acoustic bass; Rob Schwimmer, synthesizer; Corey King, Atheel Elmalik, Azza Gallab, Britni Lonesome, Gemma Weekes, Lana Homeri, Morgan Guerin, vocals; Yves Dharamraj (1), cello; Julietta Curenton (1), flute, piccolo flute; Eric Reed, Laura Weiner, French horn (1); Richard Harris (1), tenor trombone, bass trombone; Brandon Ridenour, John Blevins, trumpet (1); Margaret Dyer Harris, viola (1); Katie Hyun, Sami Merdinian, violin (1).

Ordering info: concordrecords.com

Sylvie Courvoisier/ Mark Feldman
Time Gone Out
INTAKT 326

★★★★

When Sylvie Courvoisier plays with Mark Feldman, the fleeting dances with the eternal. Courvoisier's piano and Feldman's violin tend to have such a startling, physical confidence that the pair seems to be playing from memory, even when they're improvising. Conversely, phrases that feel loose, atonal and free suddenly become airtight duets, proving that they've been mapped out.

There's little of the scattered, spinning-in-the-mud aesthetic that characterizes so many avant-garde improvisers. Instead, Courvoisier and Feldman bring the upright and sharp execution of Western concert music to their free improvisations. In Feldman's deep, scooping bow strokes and Courvoisier's crisply sculpted harmonies, there's a happy balance between forthright clarity and sensuous depth. What's really being made up on the spot feels somehow permanent, lapidary, implacable.

It's this balance between chance and stability that answers the question, "Why listen?"—one that a lot of virtuoso improvisers don't seem too worried about addressing. As far and as freely as they travel, as acrid and bent as their lines might be, the pair pulls a lot of warm, resonant power out of every note. On pieces like the 20-minute title track—with passages of darting crossfire between Courvoisier and Feldman, then a lulling segment in a minor key—they're explaining something about the myths of planning and the myths of freedom. They're giving you a way to feel comfortable in something unfixed and uncertain. *Time Gone Out* is an album of mystery and insecurity, but one of great, healing comfort, too.

—Giovanni Russonello

Time Gone Out: Homesick For Another World; Éclats For Ornette; Limits Of The Useful; Blindspot; Time Gone Out; Cryptoporticus; Not A Song, Other Songs; Blue Pearl. (56:31)
Personnel: Sylvie Courvoisier, piano; Mark Feldman, violin.
Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

Charnett Moffett
Bright New Day
MOTEMA 0333

★★½

There is plenty to like about Charnett Moffett's new quintet, especially his choice to concentrate solely on fretless electric bass. The opposing poles of Moffett's dark, springy tone and Scott Tixier's violin provide sonic contrast—particularly when they weave tightly together on the stirring "Holy Spirit"—and the decision to use the leader's former boss, Ornette Coleman, as an influence for a pair of songs injects tuneful improvisation. If only the entire album had the spontaneity and cohesion of "Netting" and the title composition.

Because the album is a mere 43 minutes long, the distance between the two pieces inspired by Coleman and singer/guitarist Jana Herzen's gentle, Celtic-tinged "Precious Air" is especially stark. While the instrumentals flow organically, "Precious Air" seems forced, with a melody deeply indebted to Enya and a dozen other Irish New Age artists, and hackneyed lyrics that allude to air that is "unseen, but always there." The gulf is so evident, the songs seem like they were intended for different projects.

In the middle sit "Free The Slaves"—which threatens to explode into a Mahavishnu Orchestra-style blowout, but lacks a lead instrument as galvanizing as John McLaughlin's guitar—and "Set It Free," the most effective twinning of bass and violin in the collection, even if the bridge doesn't measure up to the promise of the main theme.

Too frequently, Moffett seems intent on creating an environment—as with the three-minute bass introduction of "Waterfalls"—without providing enough content for it to pay off. That's the risk with music meant to evoke spiritual transcendence: If the listener doesn't commit to the journey, it can seem like a trip to nowhere.

—James Hale

Bright New Day: Holy Spirit; Free The Slaves; Precious Air; O My God Elohim; Set It Free; Waterfalls; Netting; Bright New Day. (43:30)
Personnel: Charnett Moffett, electric bass, vocals; Jana Herzen, guitar, vocals; Scott Tixier, violin; Brian Jackson, piano, synthesizer; Mark Whitfield Jr., drums.
Ordering info: motema.com

Ryan Keberle & Catharsis
The Hope I Hold
GREENLEAF MUSIC 1072

★★★½

Trombone, guitar and voice are a scarce combo in jazz, which is why this version of Ryan Keberle's unit, Catharsis, often wanders into interludes of a preeminently striking character. The group formerly included a trumpet, but this time trades sharp brass for the softer, more feathery feel of Scott Robinson's tenor. Yet, the essential disposition of the group largely is shaped by guitarist/vocalist Camila Meza, whose accompaniments and counterpoints alternately orbit around and melt into the layered harmonic blends.

It might be ironic that Keberle chooses to express a "hope" for America in such uncanny wrapping. Yet this set is also a subtle polemic and protest against Trumpian xenophobia and strongman vulgarity. The cornerstone of its "theme" is a 1935 piece by Langston Hughes, part of which is incorporated into "America Will Be." Whatever the political message, the words tend to get camouflaged in the rich mix of hovering harmonic clouds. Woody Guthrie would never let his protest get lost in such ambiance. But Keberle's lyrical precision and Meza's voice steer through mirror-image crosscurrents and con-

junctions on "Despite The Dream," "Fooled And Pushed Apart" and "Peering."

While the nine originals here are attentive to pacing, dynamics and timbre, the thematic atmosphere is thin and powdery; they don't adhere easily in emotional memory. The exception is "Zamba De Lozano," an evocative Portuguese song sung with overdubs, but still with a plush Brazilian intimacy.

—John McDonough

The Hope I Hold: Tangled In The Ancient Endless Chain; Despite The Dream; America Will Be; Fooled And Pushed Apart; Campinas; Para Volar; Peering; Zamba De Lozano; Become The Water; Epilogue/Make America Again. (56:17)
Personnel: Ryan Keberle, trombone, keyboards, piano, vocals; Camila Meza, vocals, guitar; Scott Robinson, tenor saxophone; Jorge Roeder, acoustic bass, electric bass, vocals; Eric Doob, drums.
Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com

The Hot Box

Critics	James Hale	Ammar Kalia	John McDonough	Giovanni Russonello
Esperanza Spalding *12 Little Spells*	★★★½	★★★½	★★	★★★★★
Courvoisier/Feldman *Time Gone Out*	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Ryan Keberle & Catharsis *The Hope I Hold*	★★★★	★★★★	★★★½	★★★½
Charnett Moffett *Bright New Day*	★★½	★★★½	★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Esperanza Spalding, *12 Little Spells*

Equal parts Carla Bley sound painting, Joni Mitchell wordplay and Lauryn Hill solipsism, *12 Little Spells* constantly reveals small treasures of phrasing—both verbal and instrumental. What's missing is a focal point, betraying the conceit of a dozen connected bagatelles. *—James Hale*

Grey's Anatomy becomes a Disney musical with a Spalding score of elusive Sondheimish tunes; admirable at a distance but hard to get close to. That old bland magic. *—John McDonough*

A masterstroke from one of the great musician/poet/philosophers of our age. Spalding is modeling a fully integrated kind of brilliance: staunch but open-hearted, sensual but independent, assertive but inquisitive, rich with insight and textural thinking. *—Giovanni Russonello*

Sylvie Courvoisier/Mark Feldman, *Time Gone Out*

From their first concerts together, Courvoisier/Feldman duets always have been intimate and enthralling. *—James Hale*

A knotty and deeply intricate collaboration from Courvoisier and Feldman, weaving classical and free-jazz traditions through a prism of voices as diverse as Shostakovich and Ornette Coleman. *—Ammar Kalia*

Nervous dialogs of precision and a strike-and-parry alertness evoke Bartók and Stravinsky. Notes clash in serialish storms, then slide into serenity. Themes are rare, giving the music a waiting-for-Godot indecision. But conversation is the point—lean, restless, ambiguous. *—John McDonough*

Ryan Keberle & Catharsis, *The Hope I Hold*

Musical polemics never have held much attraction for me, but Meza puts Keberle's lyrics across so sweetly that the punch comes swathed in silk. The pair's connection creates a shimmering contrast to the tougher elements beneath. *—James Hale*

A beautifully optimistic selection of compositions from Keberle, accompanied by Meza's soaring vocals. Highlights come on the opening suite and closing track, using a Langston Hughes poem as an incisive counterpoint to Trump's shortsighted sloganeering. *—Ammar Kalia*

Each instrument here maintains its own grain and its own fit within the pocket. And thank goodness for that sense of amalgamated looseness: With Catharsis, Keberle always seems to be hinting at something dangerous, maybe the danger of getting lost. This time, swimming in more colors, the music really starts to go there. *—Giovanni Russonello*

Charnett Moffett, *Bright New Day*

While compositions such as "O My God Elohim" and "Set It Free" allow the intricacies of Moffett's melodic style to shine through, his mutable textures are otherwise lost in the fuzz. *—Ammar Kalia*

The '70s wasn't exactly the Camelot of jazz history. Today, it offers slim pickings for serious inspiration. But it shaped Moffett's youth, and he finds in the debris much to spark an interesting set. More Tixier would have added some needed color. *—John McDonough*

An air of L.A. fusion from the '70s and '80s predominates, with shades of Stanley Clarke in Moffett's playing, and Jean-Luc Ponty in the violin of Tixier. The appearance of keyboardist Brian Jackson (of Gil Scott-Heron fame) is a rare treat. *—Giovanni Russonello*

Eliane Elias
Love Stories
CONCORD A00140
★★★★★

Life's luxurious moments offer sweet comfort. And Eliane Elias' *Love Stories* is an example of such splendor.

Elias' romantic vocals invite the listener to delve into her timeless grace and sophisticated presence as a commanding vocalist and pianist, the bandleader's stately arrangements enhanced by a majestic string orchestra conducted by Rob Mathes. Standards, Brazilian classics and three originals are locked in with a laid-back ease, supportive of the bandleader's soothing vocals and seemingly effortless musings on piano.

Celebrating tales of mystique, "A Man And A Woman" sets up a seductive balance, Elias' lush vocals complemented by her masterful arranging and perfectly executed improvisation. Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Bonita" showcases her breezy, mellow vocal bliss with flawless piano, and celebrating love, Elias' lyric is entwined with her husband, co-producer and collaborator, bassist Marc Johnson. Gentle bossa nova from the impressive Brazilian rhythm section resurfaces on the bandleader's "The Simplest Things" and "The View," while erotic lyrics from the latter explore the suggestive imagery of a woman teasingly rolling down her stocking. Flowing, dreamy ballad "Silence" finds the bandleader pondering love's nuances.

Elias' intoxicating vocals emote the ambient calm of a forest after a soft rain; her vibrancy is a force unto itself. With powerfully artistry, her naturally prodigious talent is even stronger as the years pass—a feat capable only by the true elites of the music world.

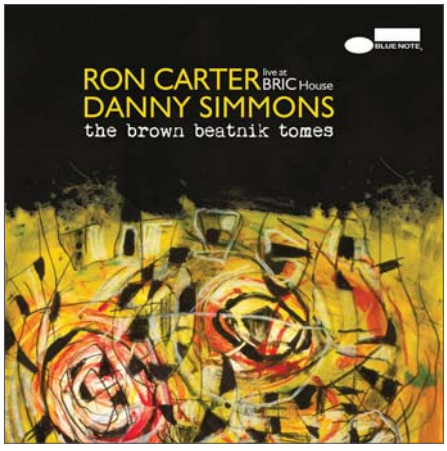
—Kerilie McDowall

Love Stories: A Man And A Woman; Baby Come To Me; Bonita; Angel Eyes; Come Fly With Me; The Simplest Things; Silence; Little Boat; The View. (43:39)
Personnel: Eliane Elias, vocals, piano; Marc Johnson, bass; Marcus Teixeira, Daniel Santiago (2), Roberto Menescal (8), guitar; Edu Ribeiro, Rafael Barata (5, 8), Paulo Braga (4), Celso De Almeida (6), drums; Mark Kibble (2), vocals.
Ordering info: concordjazz.com

Ron Carter/Danny Simmons
The Brown Beatnik Tomes: Live At BRIC House
BLUE NOTE
★★½

With *The Brown Beatnik Tomes: Live At BRIC House*, painter and poet Danny Simmons—older brother of Def Jam impresario Russell Simmons and Run DMC's Rev. Run—imagines in verse a black version of the beatnik scene, something reflective of the African American experience. Even better, he does so live, as Ron Carter's bass snakes beneath the poetic cadences, grounding the verbal flights in angular jazz and blues.

And for a little more than eight minutes, it actually works like that. "The Jigaboo Waltz" is a cuttingly creative evocation of the role-playing American culture has demanded of black men, and Carter responds to the bitingly sarcastic, sometimes openly angry verse with bass playing right out of the '60s avant-garde. Elsewhere, though, the concept sputters and stumbles. "For A Pistol," a tribute to Amiri Baraka, offers only a single metaphor (poet as pistol) over a loping ostinato. And while Liza Jesse Peterson's declamation against the needless deaths of young black men opens with a good head of steam, the lack of spark between Carter and beatboxer LuQuantumleap



ensures that the groove doesn't match the power of the polemic.

Carter's trio with pianist Donald Vega and guitarist Russell Malone contributes two tracks, and the bassist offers a lovely, allusive solo on "There Will Never Be Another You." Between them, though, the cuts don't amount to five minutes of music, which even on an album as short as this seems miserly. *—J.D. Considine*

The Brown Beatnik Tomes: Live At BRIC House: For A Pistol; The Final Stand Of Two Dick Willie; Feeling It Coming On; Tender; Here's To Oscar; Where Do I Begin; There Will Never Be Another You; The Jigaboo Waltz; The Brown Beatnik Tomes. (31:17)
Personnel: Ron Carter, bass; Danny Simmons (1–4, 8, 9), Asha Bandele (1), Liza Jesse Peterson (6), vocals; Donald Vega (5, 7), piano; Russell Malone (5, 7), guitar; LuQuantumleap (6), beatbox.
Ordering info: bluenote.com

JD Allen
Barracoon
SAVANT 2177
★★★★

Coming on the heels of his luxuriantly melodic ballads project, *Love Stone*, the gruff aggression of *Barracoon* feels like a sharp left turn. It isn't that tenorist JD Allen has markedly changed his sound or style, but he has doubled down on the questing, rhythmically knotty side of playing. From relentless chromaticism of the hard-bop "Communion" to the Coltrane-inspired cadences of the title tune, Allen digs in deep, as if to wrest every possible twist from each tune's changes.

It probably doesn't hurt that he's got a whole new band here. Instead of bassist Gregg August and drummer Rudy Royston, who have backed him since 2008's *I Am I Am*, *Barracoon* introduces Ian Kenselaar on bass and Nic Cacioppo on drums, a team that lends an eddying, contrapuntal fury to the music. Cacioppo is busily impressive, layering polyrhythms the way horn players stack chords, while Kenselaar occasionally switches from driving double bass to electric bass lines that, as on "Ursa Major," function as a secondary melodic voice.

Still, describing how the individual instrumentalists amp up the intensity doesn't entirely explain the emotional impact of the album. In his typically gnomic liner notes, Allen lets the listener know that part of what is heard on the album reflects the saxophonist's reaction to "the political climate (the world over)," and it's not hard to make a connection between the roiling emotion of the title tune and the actual slave life recounted in Zora Neale Hurston's anthropological study *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo.* To his credit, though, most of Allen's titles aren't so obvious, leaving it to the listener to decode the emotional narrative, and occasionally exclaim, "G Sus!" *—J.D. Considine*

Barracoon: Barracoon; G Sus; The Goldilocks Zone; The Immortal (H. Lacks); 13; Beyond The Goldilocks Zone; Communion; Eye Scream; Ursa Major; When You Wish Upon A Star. (59:27)
Personnel: JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Ian Kenselaar, bass, electric bass; Nic Cacioppo, drums.
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Bley/Peacock/Motian
When Will The Blues Leave
ECM 2642
★★★★

When Will The Blues Leave, recorded 20 years ago in Switzerland, takes its name from an Ornette Coleman composition, a tune that served as a leitmotif throughout Paul Bley's career.

The pianist's version of the song here is played ridiculously fast, almost as if he's rushing to get the melody out of the way so he can start improvising. But the piano cuts out, and it's just drummer Paul Motian and bassist Gary Peacock charging ahead for a while in a straightforward, swinging manner. Bley jumps back in to play the melody, Motian takes a short solo and the bandleader re-enters with Peacock as the tune begins to move more slowly. Then it's just Bley, solo, doing his bluesy dissonant-rhapsodic thing for a bit, after which they all come back in for an abrupt, spasmodic ending.

If that seems overly specific, it's a useful description in that all the songs here basically function in the same unpredictable manner. Throughout, the musicians put forth halting, mysterious music, toying with form and composing on the fly.

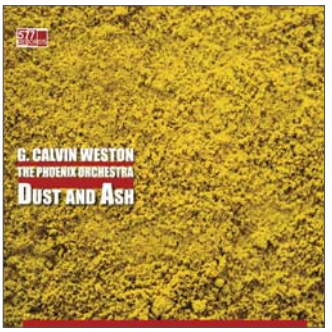
Bley died in 2016 and Motian five years before that, this album now functioning as a potent reminder of what made them so important.

—Matthew Kassel

When Will The Blues Leave: Mazatlan; Flame; Told You So; Moor; Longer; Dialogue Amour; When Will The Blues Leave; I Loves You, Porgy. (56:11)
Personnel: Paul Bley, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Paul Motian, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

G. Calvin Weston The Phoenix Orchestra
Dust And Ash
577 RECORDS 5826
★★★★



Having toured and recorded with Ornette Coleman and James Blood Ulmer, and more recently with Marc Ribot's Young Philadelphians, drummer G. Calvin Weston long has occupied a spot at the outer reaches of jazz. A flexible, intuitive player with huge ears and rapid-fire hands, he initially jammed out the material for this set in the studio before composing string parts.

Going from the serene opener, "With Open Wings," to the pulse-quickening title track—fueled by Weston's Cobham-esque attack and Elliot Garland's fuzz bass—will have Mahavishnu Orchestra fans recalling the two-part "Eternity's Breath." The funky "Incarnate," grounded by Weston's slamming backbeat and Tom Spiker's slashing rhythm guitar, is augmented by angular string lines, while "Abstraction" offers a brief free-improv with piano, strings and voice, before the ensemble returns to funk on another Mahavishnu-flavored offering, "Dance With Shadows." The six-minute solo drums showcase "Thunder" gives Weston a chance to stretch and tell a story, while the cooking closer, "Endurance," finds the bandleader in a frantic race with the strings to the finish line.

—Bill Milkowski

Dust And Ash: With Open Wings; Dust And Ash; Incarnate; Abstraction; Dance With Shadows; Thunder; Endurance. (33:39)
Personnel: G. Calvin Weston, drums, pocket trumpet; David Dzubinski, piano, keyboard; Tom Spiker, guitar; Elliot Garland, electric bass; Carlos Santiago, Benjamin Sutin, violin; Ashley Monique Vines, viola; Ajibola Rivers, cello; Kayle Brecher, vocals.

Ordering info: 577records.com

Yoko Miwa
Keep Talkin'
OCEAN BLUE TEAR 0011
★★★★

Yoko Miwa's ebullient *Keep Talkin'* showcases the drive and lyricism of a pianist and composer at home in bebop, gospel, pop and classical. Bracketed by her title track and the rhapsodic, wistful "Sunshine Follows The Rain," this is a beautifully constructed album from the Boston-based pianist.

The opener suggests Miwa's familiarity with '60s jazz titans, while the closer hints at her adoration of early 20th-century Romantic composers. A classically trained pianist, Miwa doesn't wear her influences on her sleeve, though. She incorporates them into her own bright style, crafting memorable melodies along the way. "Sunset Lane" is a waltz that conjures an autumnal noon; Miwa's pearly interplay with drummer Scott Goulding and bassist Will Slater make the tune exciting and at the same time soothing. The bandleader's five originals effortlessly twine with six thoughtfully curated interpretations, including tunes by The Beatles and Joni Mitchell. Miwa stresses the brooding tenderness of Lennon and McCartney's "Golden Slumbers/You Never Give Me Your Money" and magically squeezes Charles Mingus' churchy "Boogie Stop Shuffle" into a trio format. The bandleader clearly revels in the challenge of rearrange tunes she loves, as well as the blend of intimacy and power this unusually gifted trio can muster.

—Carlo Wolff

Keep Talkin': Keep Talkin'; In Walked Bud; Secret Rendezvous; Sunset Lane; Boogie Stop Shuffle; Golden Slumbers/You Never Give Me Your Money; Tone Portrait; Casa Pre–Fabricada; Conversation; If You're Blue; Sunshine Follows The Rain. (73:57)
Personnel: Yoko Miwa, piano; Scott Goulding, drums; Will Slater, Brad Barrett (11), bass.

Ordering info: yokomiwa.com

George Winston
Restless Wind
DANCING CAT/RCA 19075941132
★★½

Pianist George Winston always will be best known for leading the 1980s New Age movement. The idiom essentially was dedicated to mood, using repetition, space and subdued playing that often arrived at something akin to background music.

Restless Wind finds the pianist performing interpretations of others' material, contributing two of the 13 songs here. The music is thoughtful and sometimes taken out of tempo, but not quite as sleepy as some of his New Age-era works. Winston's "Autumn Wind (Pixie #11)" utilizes a repeated left-hand pattern, while his right improvises in a bluesy fashion. There's some barrelhouse piano on "Judge, Judge," soul on "A Change Is Gonna Come" and a dreamlike atmosphere on "Summertime." Of the other performances, the most interesting are the 1915 Mexican folk song "Cancion Mixteca (Immigrant's Lament)" and the hymnlike treatment given to Mark Isham's "The Times Of Harvey Milk." A medley that begins with the Dixieland standard "Muskrat Ramble" moves into Country Joe McDonald's "I Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag" and then Winston's own maddingly repetitious "Stop The Bleeding." It's difficult to sit through. *Restless Wind* is a mixed bag, and maybe not restless enough.

—Scott Yanow

Restless Wind: Autumn Wind (Pixie #11); Judge, Judge; A Change Is Gonna Come; Summertime; Cancion Mixteca (Immigrant's Lament); The Good Earth; For What It's Worth; Medley: Muskrat Ramble/I Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag/Stop The Bleeding; The Times Of Harvey Milk; The Unknown Soldier; The Wayward Wind. (53:31)
Personnel: George Winston, piano.

Ordering info: dancingcat.com

Inside Austin's Astral Spirits

Astral Spirits proprietor Nate Cross, who dabbled in the rock scene during his formative years, had an avant-garde jazz epiphany in college after hearing Peter Brötzmann's *Die Like A Dog*. And when he launched his Austin, Texas-based label in 2014, Cross made a point of trying to be more inclusive of non-jazzers. "I really wanted to connect this music with a younger audience, which is why I started with releasing cassette tapes only," he explained, taking a cue from underground noise-rock labels. "It was about trying to introduce this music to a lot of people that wouldn't necessarily listen to avant-garde jazz." More recently, he's begun offering adventurous listeners vinyl, CD and digital options, as well as cassettes.


COURTESY ASTRAL SPIRITS

Burton Greene

Free-jazz pioneer **Burton Greene**, a member of the Jazz Composers Guild beginning in 1964, places a premium on space and drama on ***Life's Intense Mystery*** **(Astral Spirits MF193/AS090; 52:17 ★★★½)**. Recorded live at The Lily Pad in Cambridge, Massachusetts, this unorthodox piano trio shifts from the purely improvised three-movement suite *Life's Intense Mystery* to a quirky, Ivesian piano sonata, "Anything That Ain't Yes, Get Rid of It!," a two-fisted number that gradually devolves into a free-spirited cacophony with bassist Damon Smith sawing and drummer Ra Kalam Bob Moses traversing the kit with impunity.

On **Harris Eisenstadt's *Old Growth Forest II*** **(Astral Spirits MF196/AS093; 61:39 ★★★★)**, the Brooklyn-based drummer and bandleader is joined by two superb Chicago musicians in trombonist Jeb Bishop and bassist Jason Roebke, as well as New York tenor saxophone titan Tony Malaby. Eisenstadt and crew hit on all cylinders during a live set that deftly balances composed material and free improv. Uptempo burner "Rustling" and medium-tempo "Pit And Mound" both explore variations on swing, with the powerhouse Malaby and the bold-toned trombonist delivering raucous solos. While dancing on the edge, this crackling quartet still provides a swinging undercurrent for less adventurous listeners to grab onto. Eisenstadt's jaunty "Standing Snags," which has Malaby switching to soprano, firmly is rooted in the Steve Lacy-Roswell Rudd tradition, swinging persuasively, while dealing in taut unisons and wild abstraction along the way. The evocative, minor-key "Shaded Canopy" and the relaxed closer "Song With Owen" are additional examples of Eisenstadt's accomplished writing and further demonstrate the free-flowing nature of Malaby and Bishop's hookup here.

The experimental Chicago-based duo of cellist **Macie Stewart** and violinist **Lia Kohl** explores textures, overtones and other sonic seasonings on ***Pocket Full Of Bees*** **(Astral Editions AE001; 23:33 ★★★)**. By blending extended techniques on their respective instruments with wordless vocals, the two daring improvisers come up with a world of sound, ranging from serene longtones to noisy onslaughts, as on "Big Space Little Nothing." The *col legno* vehicle, "Toothpick Bicycle," eerie vocal number "Honey Not Sweet" and purely percussive exploration "There's Something In My Sock (It's Good)" are strictly for adventurous listeners.

A forceful player whose pungent tone recalls Arthur Blythe's while his vision for the trio is reminiscent of Ornette Coleman's Golden Circle Trio, Chicago alto saxophonist-composer **Nick Mazzarella** leads bassist Anton Hatwich and drummer Frank Rosaly on ***Counterbalance*** **(Astral Spirits/Spacetone Records MF210/AS106; 46:25 ★★★½)**. A six-movement suite that Mozzarella wrote to commemorate the trio's 10th anniversary, the recording reveals the kind of deep listening and trust that takes bands years to develop. Highlights include the angular, probing opener "Phonetic," the frantic freeblower "The Puzzle," the raging title track and the freeboppish "Headway."

Lisbon-based tenor saxophonist **Rodrigo Amado** and Upstate New York free-jazz drummer **Chris Corsano** come out of the gate with their wheels screeching on ***No Place To Fall*** **(Astral Spirits MF207/AS103; 48:56 ★★★½)**. Recorded at Manouche Studios in Lisbon, this dynamic duo unleashes with abandon on the opening "Announcement," explores tumultuous skronking and whirlwind bashing on the title track, summons up *Interstellar Space*-like intensity on "Into The Valley" and then settles into a Zen-like calm on a lyrical ballad, "We'll Be Here In The Morning," which ultimately builds to pulse-quickening levels. **DB**

Ordering info: astralspirits.bandcamp.com

Jamie Cullum
Taller
BLUE NOTE B0030454

★★★

It's been 20 years since English jazz sensation Jamie Cullum released his debut, *Heard It All Before*, establishing himself as a wunderkind interpreter of the Great American Songbook and sounding something like a hybrid of Billy Joel, Diana Krall and Michael Bublé. At this point in his career, the 39-year-old singer and pianist has almost entirely abandoned the somewhat fusty feeling that defined his earlier releases. In many ways, *Taller* draws on an aesthetic lineage that runs parallel to jazz—the brassy neo-soul offered during the aughts by the late Amy Winehouse.

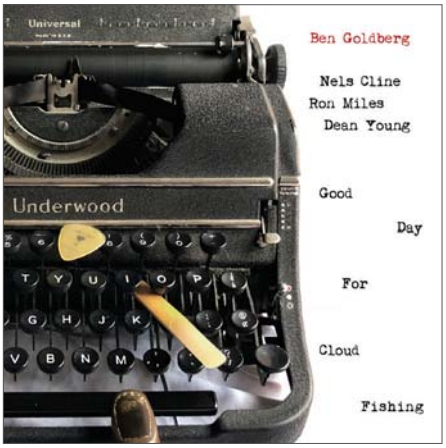
He doesn't possess the pathos, humor or mystery with which Winehouse infused every song she performed, but Cullum does summon her spirit on originals like "Mankind," "Usher" and the title track. On the tune, he projects a raffish and slightly earthy charm with his gravelly voice and witty lyrics: "I wish I was taller," Cullum, who's just 5 feet, 5 inches, longingly intones. The album filters through several other moods and styles, too—rockish, confessional, introspective, anthemic. But the best moments come when Cullum, mostly unaccompanied, save for some piano embellishments, backing strings and soft drums, slows things down. "You Can't Hideaway From Love" and "Endings Are Beginnings"—both sweet, affecting ballads—possess the romantic quality of the standards he mastered in his youth. With a whispered voice, Cullum sounds as if he's channeling Blossom Dearie. It's an approach he easily could employ on an entire album because, though he's about to turn 40, Cullum sounds as if he's old enough to sing from experience. He's is no longer a precocious jazz star, and that works in his favor.

—Matthew Kassel

Taller: Taller; Life Is Grey; Mankind; Usher; The Age Of Anxiety; For The Love; Drink; You Can't Hideaway From Love; Monster; Endings Are Beginnings; Love Is In The Picture; Work Of Art; The Man; Good Luck With Your Demons (Demo); Marlon Brando (Demo); Show Me The Magic. (59:40)

Personnel: Jamie Cullum, vocals, bass, keyboards; Troy Miller, drums, piano, synthesizer, Hammond organ, Moog bass, kalimba, Wurlitzer, orchestra; choir.

Ordering info: bluenote.com



Ben Goldberg
Good Day For Cloud Fishing
PYROCLASTIC 05

★★★

The concept behind Ben Goldberg's erudite *Good Day For Cloud Fishing*, an album of original tunes inspired by Dean Young's poems, is best summed up by guitarist Nels Cline. The album, he writes in the liners, comprises "music inspired by poetry and performed while the poet who inspired it sat typing new poems inspired by the music he inspired." The smartly packaged album comes along with 24 poems, two to a card, meant to be read with each track.

The setup seems too clever by half, but the result is exhilarating; grouping Cline and trumpeter Ron Miles with Goldberg's various clarinets is inspired. Miles' timbre—a dark, masked tone—sinks into the reedy warmth of the clarinet. Cline's guitar can be unobtrusive or forceful—both with sublime effect.

On a whole, the album is full of serene, composed music, some pieces rooted in a jazz aesthetic, while others drift away, poking through imaginary genre boundaries. It's beautiful, both in its integrity and in its quiet blend of sonorities, until it isn't.

Cloud Fishing is part of the renewed trend that uses poetry as a symbiotic partner to make the collaborative whole better than its parts. Goldberg's contribution is not as whimsically madcap as Matt Wilson's Carl Sandburg interpretation, nor does it rely on spoken word, like pianist Lawrence Hobgood's intimate collaborations with Robert Pinsky. Many of the tracks here stand on their own, but some of the more impressionistic tunes, which function as an abstract sound world, beg for a resonant recitation of Young's verse. —*Jon Ross*

Good Day For Cloud Fishing: Demonic Possession Is 9/10ths The Law; Parthenogenesis; Phantom Pains; A Rhythmia; Corpse Pose; Because She Missed A Test, She Introduces Me To Her Boa; Reality; Sub Club Punch Card; Ant-Head Sutures; Someone Has To Be Lowered Into The Whale Skull For The Ambergris; Surprised Again By Rain; An Ordinary Day Somewhere. (59:59)
Personnel: Ben Goldberg, B-flat clarinet, contra-alto clarinet; Ron Miles, trumpet; Nels Cline, guitar; Dean Young, typewriter.

Ordering info: pyroclasticrecords.com

Elephant9
Psychedelic Backfire I/II
RUNE GRAMMOFON 2206/2207

★★★★

On record, Elephant9 sounds like a band you'd want to see live. The Norwegian trio's marriage of exacting musicianship, thunderous improvisational trips and grinding electronics begs for proximity to its source. And two volumes of *Psychedelic Backfire*, albums featuring highlights from a four-night residency at a small Oslo venue, take listeners there.

I opens with "I Cover The Mountain Top"—off the band's 2008 debut—a suitably droning, dirge-like spell presupposes the main theme's sudden, rumbling interruption. Then, keyboardist Ståle Storløkken intercedes with a nightmarish slice of distortion before the song collapses into a stew of interlocking rhythms and stacking harmonies. It swirls hypnotically, Nikolai Hængsle's bass binding everything together and allowing Storløkken to pluck the occasional poetic phrase out of the morass.

Reine Fiske—a versatile guitarist best known for his time in Dungen—joins the trio on *II*. Tracks like the album's closer, "Freedom's Children/John Tinnick," a suite combining closing tracks from *Atlantis* and *Walk The Nile*, demonstrate his closeness with the ensemble. After tearing through the first portion's endearing dinosaur-rock stomp, Fiske and Storløkken dialog above drummer Torstein Lofthus' simmering percussion. As "John Tinnick" reaches its crescendo, Lofthus' contribution shines through, easily transitioning from ambient to propellant. *II's* opening track, "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life," follows the quiet-loud progression ubiquitous across most of these performances. It also features some of the most striking harmonic interplay between Storløkken and Fiske.

—*Andrew Jones*

Psychedelic Backfire I/II: Cover The Mountain Top; Farmer's Secret; Habanera Rocket; Skink/Fugl Fonix; Actionpack 1; Dodovoodoo; You Are The Sunshine Of My Life; Skink/Fugl Fonix; Habanera Rocket 2; Freedom's Children/John Tinnick. (71:16/62:19)
Personnel: Ståle Storløkken, keyboards; Nikolai Hængsle, electric bass; Torstein Lofthus, drums; Reine Fiske, guitar (*II*).

Ordering info: runegrammofon.com

Pureum Jin
The Real Blue
CELLAR 020219

★★★★

A few years back, a lot of young European players seemed to be channeling Phil Woods. You don't often hear that tight, controlled wail any more. Pureum Jin, though, pops up with her first album and the impression is strong. Like Woods in his early years, she's one of those players who sounds like she was never a beginner, already having found her tone, speed of execution and a generously filled ideas bag. Not many young players can put out an hour of top-tier material without filler.

The originals predominate, and an opening pair, "Trembling Forward" and "Ah-Oh-Owa," introduce an instrumentalist who's not just a natural melodist, but also intensely rhythmic in the Woods manner. She seems to play off the drums, rather than the harmony instrument, making Willie Jones III her Elvin.

Jin clearly thinks in terms of song, and the third track (with Sabeth Pérez guesting on vocals) is cleverly paired with a neat, but by no means routine, shakedown of "Night And Day," just to confirm that she's well-studied in the Broadway tradition as well as bop. Luke Sellick consistently impresses on these early tracks as well. He's one of those bassists whose musicality and metrical efficiency seem in perfect balance. He comes to the fore more than once with sweetly telling fills. But it's Jones who really gets the leader moving on a Woods tribute and on "Seminole Trail," a tune that's going to be called for many times over the years.

This isn't just a confident—or, God forbid, "promising"—start. It has presence and finish and power. —*Brian Morton*

The Real Blue: Trembling Forward; Ah-Oh-Owa; The Song Of Silence; Night And Day; Remembering Mr. Woods; Fireflies; Night Shift Blues; Seminole Trail; Speak Low; When Blue Gets Blue. (63:51)
Personnel: Pureum Jin, alto saxophone; Jeremy Manasia, piano; Luke Sellick, bass; Willie Jones III, drums; Sabeth Pérez (3), vocals.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

The Realization of Ambition

Billy Branch & The Sons Of Blues, *Roots And Branches: The Songs Of Little Walter* (Alligator 4992; 58:22 ★★★★) Within his element as a committed Chicago blues harmonica player, Branch has almost no rival. He's set the gold standard for studio homages to grandmaster Little Walter with the likes of "Son Of Juke" (on his 1984 Red Beans album *Where's My Money?*) and "Who" (on the 1990 Alligator summit meeting *Harp Attack!*). Now, almost a half century since first getting noticed in Windy City clubs, he's crafted a full-bore tribute album: His commandingly controlled harmonica invigorates "Mellow Down Easy" and 14 more staples with newness of spirit, spry personality and emotional persuasiveness. Though not as stirring, Branch's vocals capably mine the vagaries of hard blues. The latest edition of his Sons Of Blues band shows its fidelity to Walter in a modern way, reseeding old furrows.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Zac Harmon, *Mississippi BarBQ* (Catfood 028; 48:52 ★★★½) Once a producer for the O'Jays and other bands, Harmon has been touted as the "hottest new blues act" for about 15 years now. Six albums haven't backed up the hype, but finally, his seventh matches his ambition. Harmon's found the right producer to address a blend of blues, soul and r&b in Jim Gaines, and connected with one of the best organic bands anywhere, The Rays, in Texas. The native Mississippian has also found an outstanding writing partner in Bob Trenchard. Harmon's singing is smooth, attractive and rarely cloying, while there's a jaunty confidence to his guitar soloing. But the Zac Harmon Band, on four tracks, doesn't proffer the refreshing soulfulness that The Rays do.

Ordering info: catfoodrecords.com

Fruteland Jackson, *Good As Your Last Dollar* (Electro-Fi 3457; 49:24 ★★★½) Jackson, a Chicagoan, has recorded sporadically during the past three decades, working as a musician and educator. His sixth album—and first for Electro-Fi in a dozen years—is welcome: It's a clear window on the musical worldview he shaped from mentorships with original Delta luminaries like Honeyboy Edwards. Relying on his throaty, pierced-to-the-soul singing and his heartfelt acoustic guitar work, Jackson approaches Johnny Shines' "Two Steps To Hell" and Robert Johnson's "Love In Vain" with a crisp clarity of plangent expression. Mississippi-born Jackson's passion seems truest to these two classics and to the bonus field holler, "Blues 2.0." Nine more tracks are less riveting. Occasional helpmates include pianist Julian Fauth and harmonica player-singer Harrison Kennedy.

Ordering info: electrofi.com

Billy Branch

Whitey Johnson, *More Days Like This* (Blue Corn 1910; 43:05 ★★★½) Gary Nicholson, a Texan living in Nashville, has an excellent reputation for his songwriting. Far less known is that he's an easygoing, but unsentimental, vocalist and a guitarist with blues tendencies who goes by the nom de blooze Whitey Johnson. Tunes of his that were recorded by Buddy Guy, Arthur Alexander, and Taj Mahal and Keb' 'Mo shine for his self-confidence and genuineness. Guitarist Colin Linden and the other sidemen here perform at a high level of craft.

Ordering info: bluecornmusic.com

J.B. Hutto & His Hawks, *Things Are So Slow* (Space 701; 26:34 ★★★★) This 10-inch record from Japan has eight songs that slide guitarist Hutto cut for Chance in 1954, five years after arriving in Chicago from Georgia. On his very first recordings, the 27-year-old bandleader dispensed plenty of raucous slide-guitar excitement while under the spell of Elmore James; "Dim Lights" mirrors "Dust My Broom." Hutto's voice passes muster, hinting at timbres revealed years later. Harmonica player George Mayweather, in thrall to Little Walter, fared pretty well, even though his technical gears lock up on a previously unissued instrumental, "Mouth Harp Mambo." Mandatory listening for Chicago blues fans.

Ordering info: amazon.com

Heather Newman, *Rise From The Flames* (VizzTone 002; 55:09 ★★½) Newman, a singer-bassist in her twenties, makes emphatically sure her band is poised for a national breakout, like fellow Kansas City residents Trampled Under Foot. On her second release, she hurls her voice into a set of 13 lightly interesting originals about the ending of a romance and the emergence of self. But Newman's mannered seriousness drags things down, and her blues-rock band's efforts at suspense are overdone. Taking an ironic approach to lyrics would have helped. Better songs, too. **DB**

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Alexa Tarantino
Winds Of Change
POSI-TONE 8197
★★★½

The benefit of Alexa Tarantino having spent years in the trenches, serving as a sideperson for a variety of ensembles and building a reputation as a pliable and thoughtful saxophonist, is that when it was time to put together *Winds Of Change*, her leader debut, she had a huge cast of players to choose from to join her.

She chose wisely.

Pianist Christian Sands, bassist Joe Martin and drummer Rudy Royston throw themselves fearlessly into each song here, giving the leader a perfect foundation to build upon. With their help, Tarantino dusts off some of her oldest compositions, including the Kenny Wheeler-inspired "Square One" (apparently the first piece she ever wrote), which gently sputters and hums as the saxophonist takes a carefully measured solo turn, and "Wisp After Wisp," an ode to her grandmother that the band helps steer away from its melancholic source material into brighter, modal territory.

The troupe also inspired Tarantino to write material showcasing the assembled players, as well as her various instruments of choice. On the swinging "Face Value," that spotlight gets turned on trombonist Nick Finzer, who responds to the bandleader's solo with a run that wittily employs discordant tones and the splashy honk of his horn. Tarantino switches to flute briefly for a rendition of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Zingaro," leaning into the romantic elements of the melody and the instrument's floating timbre. Throughout *Winds Of Change*, though, Tarantino keeps her playing open to enable her compatriots to rise to the fore. For someone whose name and image dominate the album's cover, Tarantino offers up a selfless work. *—Robert Ham*

Winds Of Change: Wisp After Wisp; Face Value; Seesaw; Breeze; Zingaro; Square One; Calm; Undercurrent; Ready Or Not; Without. (54:08)

Personnel: Alexa Tarantino, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute; Nick Finzer, trombone; Christian Sands, piano; Joe Martin, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

Chick Corea & The Spanish Heart Band
Antidote
CONCORD JAZZ 00138

★★★

The man who wrote "Spain," and recorded *My Spanish Heart* and *Touchstone,* is a man who is serious about the possibilities of marrying flamenco and jazz. He's returned to these possibilities regularly during his career, but 1982's *Touchstone* was Chick Corea's last album-length exploration of the concept. Nearly 40 years later, *Antidote* brings them roaring back, much of the recording revisiting tunes from Corea's prior "Spanish" albums. As if to leave no doubt about his seriousness, though, he incorporates a flamenco dancer, Nino De Los Reyes, to act as a virtuoso percussionist.

The presence of his Fender Rhodes and synthesizers remind listeners that Corea is, as ever, a fusion pioneer. But Panamanian singer Rubén Blades' appearances on "Antidote" and "My Spanish Heart" make use of sonorities and rhythms that draw from Afro-Caribbean cultures, not Europe; "My Spanish Heart" also places Afro-Cuban clave front-and-center. Then there's the Brazilian "Desafinado" and "Pas De Deux," a snippet of a Stravinsky ballet.

Corea presents it all as a unified package, and it all works, primarily because of his distinctive pianistic presence, along with Jorge Pardo's flute and Niño Josele's sublime guitar. Even with their fine solos on "Duende" and "Armando's Rhumba," trumpeter Michael Rodriguez and trombonist Steve Davis often seem like window dressing, supplemental, mostly ensemble colors for the heavy lifting that Corea, Josele and Pardo are doing on tunes like "Zyriab" and "Admiration." It's not just the horn players; even the dance interlude on "The Yellow Nimbus (Part 1)" sometimes comes off as glorified accompaniment for flute, piano and guitar.

Antidote also suffers from its inevitable (and apparently, given the band's name and repertoire, desired) comparison with its flamenco-ridden predecessors. *My Spanish Heart* and *Touchstone* displayed the thrill of discovery and daring. But there's a certain diminished audacity on the just-over-a-minute intro to "My Spanish Heart," featuring an overdubbed choir of voices (all courtesy of Gayle Moran Corea, the bandleader's wife), and restrained passion from all involved on "My Spanish Heart" proper. The rest of the recording consists of bland professionalism, the work of confident technicians who feel no pressure to play at the edges of their abilities. The most bravura runs, like Corea and Josele's fast unisons on "The Yellow Nimbus (Part 1)," recycle passagework the bandleader has done thousands of times with Return To Forever or his Elektric Band.

Corea is incapable of less-than-solid, competent work, and *Antidote* is no exception. But its flamenco seasoning lacks zest.

—Michael J. West

Antidote: Antidote; Duende; The Yellow Nimbus (Part 1); The Yellow Nimbus (Part 2); Prelude To My Spanish Heart; My Spanish Heart; Armando's Rhumba; Desafinado; Zyryab; Pas De Deux; Admiration. (74:35)

Personnel: Chick Corea, piano, keyboards; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet; Steve Davis, trombone; Jorge Pardo, saxophone, flute; Niño Josele, guitar; Carlitos del Puerto, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums; Luisito Quintero, percussion; Rubén Blades (1, 6), Gayle Moran Corea (5, 6), Maria Bianca (8), vocals; Nino De Los Reyes, dancing (3).

Ordering info: concordjazz.com

Old Structures Crumbling

While there always were dilettantes, the culture around music used to be pretty factionalized. Historically, jazzers, punks, hippies and ravers rarely mixed, and all these subcultures operated with different tenets and customs. In the 21st century, though, things have bled together, and a generation weaned on streaming services is having a hard time grasping any hoary ideas about musical tribalism.

Already Dead Tapes & Records—a prolific label with operations spread across five U.S. cities—is doing its part to disavow the borders, using the label to give equal voice to free-jazz, noise-rock, lush indie-pop and beyond. The self-titled release by **Fibrill (Already Dead 318; 43:29 ★★★)**, a side project of More Eaze's Marcus Maurice, is somewhere smack dab in the middle of it all, equal parts tender melody and digital abrasion. It's a fine lo-fi update on the noise/dance/rock tightrope once walked by the Folk Implosion, My Bloody Valentine and their ilk.

Ordering info: alreadydeadtapes.com

Rafael Anton Irisarri's record collection likely has some crossover with Maurice's, and on ***Solastalgia*** **(Room40 4105; 39:11 ★★★)**, he showcases a shoegaze-indebted propensity for dreamy harmonic washes. Irisarri's music, though, leans more toward suites than songs, and sounds cinematic, whereas Fibrill comes off as almost claustrophobic. As the title suggests, the instrumental pieces here evoke the horrors of encroaching environmental change, complete with cheery titles like "Kiss All the Pretty Skies Goodbye." Despite their considerable tumult, it's not hard to imagine numbed ambient music fans blissing out to this thick, heaving silt as if the world weren't ending.

Ordering info: room40.org

Come to think of it, the self-titled LP by Seattle group **somesurprises (Drawing Room 0036; 39:39 ★★★★)** owes its own debt to shoegaze, but the end product is far removed from either artist above. Initially singer/songwriter Natasha El-Sergany's solo outlet before expanding into a band, somesurprises' early cassette releases could lean toward abstraction, but here they've pushed melody to fore. Some comparisons are inevitable: Mazzy Star, early Cat Power, Grouper. But the way the band occasionally grafts that brand of songcraft onto a Velvets/Hawkwind/Stereolab psychedelic throb sets them apart, with the interweaving of El-Sergany's hazy vocals and Josh Medina's extended guitar excursions floating the listener high into trippy, purple-clouded vistas.


MOHSIN ALI

Natasha El-Sergany of somesurprises

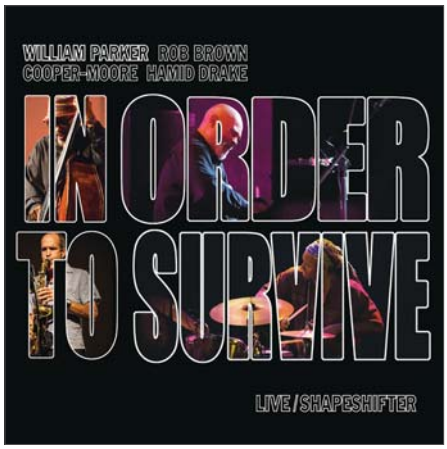
Ordering info: drawingroomrecords.com

If somesurprises soars free, the latest from **Waxy Tomb**, ***Imminent Fold*** **(Gilgongo 096; 40:25 ★★★½)**, careens just above the cloud cover in a malfunctioning spacecraft. Jules Litman-Cleper's brief, damaged electronic songs shine harsh light on the symbiotic, if not outright cybernetic, relationship we share with technology. It's not lighthearted stuff. But it's hard not to laugh nervously at the extremity of its alienated techno-garble, a sound akin to all recorded music to date rapidly pixelating, melting down and undulating in new forms, with a ghost in the machine barking out overmodulated warnings through the chaos.

Ordering info: gilgongorecords.com

Music and borders also are melting down on **Dave Sharp Worlds'** collaboration with **NDIO SASA, *Nairobi Music* (Dagoretti 16; 41:37 ★★★½)**, but in a more humanistic way. In 2016, journeyman bassist Sharp traveled to Nairobi to visit Dagoretti Records founder Dr. Peter Larson (whose earlier influential label, BULB, introduced the world to the likes of Andrew WK and Wolf Eyes, among others), and found himself sitting in with Larson's multinational folk-metal band, whose members and instruments hailed from several continents. Attempts to stir the "fourth world" melting pot can be as shallow as sitar-laden 1960s pop, but the group here sounds earnest and ancient; they've found a sweet spot where African trance music and Japanese folk melodies can cozy up to rock-adjacent rhythmic propulsion and not sound at all contrived. If this is what it sounds like when all the old walls are crumbling, the future is actually looking pretty good. **DB**

Ordering info: petelarson.bandcamp.com



William Parker/In Order To Survive
Live/Shapeshifter
AUM FIDELITY 110/111
★★★½

Bassist William Parker's In Order To Survive formed back in the mid-'90s, and although a number of horn players have passed through the group, the combo always has featured alto saxophonist Rob Brown and pianist Cooper-Moore, both mainstays in other Parker ensembles. Drummer Hamid Drake has been playing with the bassist for more than two decades in different configurations, and long ago they established themselves as the most voluble rhythm section in free music. On this double-disc set, recorded live at New York's Shapeshifter in July 2017, the pair extend, compress and explode time in endlessly simpatico ways—a fulcrum of motion that provides Brown and Cooper-More plenty to dig into.

The first disc features Parker's five-part suite, *Eternal Is The Voice Of Love*, which toggles between heavy grooves and ecstatic supernovas of emotion. The rapport and intuition of Parker and Drake allows them to morph into a single organism with four limbs, constantly realigning rhythm and shifting tempo. The muscularity and assurance of their fluid armature requires quicksilver reactions from the other players. Brown rides atop like a seasoned surfer, gliding and cutting back against the grain with a gorgeously tangy tone. The second disc features avuncular chants from Parker, bringing a more earthy spirit to the proceedings, as well as "Newark," a strutting gem dedicated to trombonist Grachan Moncur III, an early member of the group.

Parker believes in the transformative power of this music, but as a listener, there are times when the unrelenting drive numbs more than it uplifts. —*Peter Margasak*

Live/Shapeshifter: Disc one (*Eternal Is The Voice of Love*): Entrance To The Tone World; Color Against Autumn Sky; If There Is A Chance; A Situation; Birth Of The Sunset. Disc two: Demons Lining The Halls Of Justice; Drum And Bass Interlude; Newark (For Grachan Moncur III); In Order To Survive; Eternity. (52:12/58:10)
Personnel: William Parker, bass, shakuhachi, vocals; Rob Brown, alto saxophone; Cooper-Moore, piano; Hamid Drake, drums.

Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

Peter Eldridge/ Kenny Werner
Somewhere
ROSEBUD
★★★

Peter Eldridge is not an ordinary singer, nor is he an extraordinary one, but his engaging baritone is appealing and he gets the job done.

On "Ballad For Trane," when George Garzone adds his tenor to the mix, intimations of John Coltrane's tonality and harmonic tincture blend impressively with Eldridge's mellowness. After pianist Kenny Werner's intro, Eldridge renders the lyrics atmospherically, never more lovely than on the line, "drifting through galaxies." The track epitomizes not just Eldridge's romantic inclination but all the ballads on the album, whether composed by the vocalist or not, and makes the title tune inevitable. "Somewhere" neatly morphs into "A Time For Love," another warm and wonderful evergreen with lyrics by the redoubtable Paul Francis Webster. And on "Minds Of Their Own," a lush tapestry of strings conspire, augmenting the tune's gentle finality. Eldridge's voice and Werner's piano and arrangements are commanding throughout, but Matt Aronoff's bass solo on "Autumn In Three" deserves a special nod. Like Garzone, he finds a way to complement Eldridge's voice, registering a most sustained resonance. *—Herb Boyd*

Somewhere: You Don't Know Me; I'm So Glad You're Mine; That Which Can't Be Explained; Autumn In Three; Minds Of Their Own; Less Than Lovers; Difficult; Ballad For Trane; Somewhere/A Time For Love; Untitled Lament; Day Is Done (Prayer For Diego). (54:25)
Personnel: Peter Eldridge, vocals; Kenny Werner, piano, electric piano; Yoron Israel, drums; Matt Aronoff, bass; George Garzone (8), tenor saxophone; Eugene Friesen, cello; The Fantastical String Orchestra.

Ordering info: petereldridge.com; kennywerner.com

Tori Freestone Trio
El Mar De Nubes
WHIRLWIND 4739
★★★

El Mar De Nubes is the second consecutive album by British saxophonist Tori Freestone to reference the natural phenomena of the Canary Islands; on the cover, she views the titular sea of clouds from atop Mount Teide. Viewed from 12,000 feet up, sea and sky can seem to commingle in a limitless vastness, and it's tempting to make a connection between the cover's wide-open vista and the chordless configuration of her trio.

But how free is the album? Freestone's music rarely strays from metric time, and when it does, it quickly returns to a swinging groove; there's more Billy Higgins than Sunny Murray in the trio's rhythmic approach. And Freestone always has time for melody. She draws warmth and good humor from the theme of Sam Rivers' "Beatrice," which the group plays at a sauntering pace. And she taps into the reverent sentiment of "Shenandoah," which appears twice—once as a soulful dirge, and again in a voice and violin-led rendition that looks back to Freestone's time spent playing in folk groups. But sometimes she doesn't know when to let a tune go, spending too much time on the herky-jerky head of "Hiding Jekyll" before the trio tangles in the track's free-form middle section. *El Mar De Nubes* might benefit from a bit more of the vigor evidenced there. *—Bill Meyer*

El Mar De Nubes: El Mar De Nubes; Hiding Jekyll; Shenandoah; Hasta La Vista; El Camino; Beatrice; Los Indianos; La Nochevieja; Shenandoah (Reprise). (70:03)
Personnel: Tori Freestone, tenor saxophone, violin, vocals (9); Dave Manington, bass; Tim Giles, drums.

Ordering info: whirlwindrecordings.com

Vyacheslav Ganelin/Deniss Pashkevich/ Arkady Gotesman
Variations
JERSIKA 003
★★★★

Why does this album work? Vyacheslav Ganelin, Deniss Pashkevich and Arkady Gotesman aren't at all afraid of getting weird. In the world of avant-garde jazz, the vibe here isn't all that uncommon. But there's something about the way Pashkevich's tenor saxophone knows the right way to float in the middle of this environment—like a plane gliding through turbulence.

On each of the four tunes named "Variation," magic happens. And what might seem like free-jazz really is more of an exploration of shapes and colors, all of them dark, but still evenly balanced. Chaos seems to easily take form on this live date, captured during September 2018 at the Latvian Academy of Culture: The quiet build of "Variation 3" feels like visiting the eye of a storm, just before another wind hits, as Ganelin chooses to deploy his synths as tinny, electronic accents to Pashkevich's saxophone. Ganelin, Pashkevich and Gotesman's pushing at the edges on each of these variations just feels a lot like a brilliantly cheesy '80s score, something that evokes horror films or a documentary about the anarchic formation of the universe.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Variations: Variation 1–4. (71:02)
Personnel: Vyacheslav Ganelin, piano, synthesizers, percussions; Deniss Pashkevich, tenor saxophone; Arkady Gotesman, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: jersikarecords.bandcamp.com

Out To Dinner
Different Flavors
POSI-TONE 8200
★★★★

Inspired by Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch!*, Out To Dinner presents a collaborative musical experience, one less avant-garde than the 1964 effort. But *Different Flavors* nevertheless remains open and communicative throughout.

Drummer Rudy Royston's performance—consistently engaged and responsive—emerges as the driving force, drawing attention to melodic statements, conversing with soloists and maintaining the power of groove, while spinning out complex rhythmic interjections. The combination of space and motivic development allow both Royston and bassist Boris Kozlov to interject and contribute as equals, rather than as accompanists. Alternatively, trombonist Michael Dease and alto saxophonist Tim Green approach the communicative environment with a different perspective. Dease's use of quick lines and timbral variety continually push the rhythm section to new levels of energy, as on "Magic Square." Green takes the most straightahead approach here, finding creative ways to weave bop-like lines through the musical environment.

Following Dolphy's example, this band makes interaction and communication its first priority, achieving a strong group dynamic during solos and ultimately crafting a compelling recording. *—Jonathan Gomez*

Different Flavors: Day Zero; Magic Square; Blue Sojourn; Skittles; Night Glow; Pay The Piper; Rio; Spun Around; Grave Concerns; Two Down. (54:54)
Personnel: Michael Dease, trombone; Behn Gillece, vibraphone; Tim Green, alto saxophone; Boris Kozlov, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

Cultivating Rivers' Legacy

There's a photo of **Sam Rivers** at the White House, most likely from the so-called "White House Jazz Festival" on the South Lawn during Jimmy Carter's administration. "That blue suit he had on? He made that," said Monique Rivers Williams, daughter of the revered multi-instrumentalist. "He sewed all his own clothes ... he wasn't just a musician."

Hundreds of artifacts like that photo—including some of Rivers' own handmade dashikis—tell a more personal story of this renaissance artist, who, along with others like Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman and Andrew Cyrille, helmed the free-jazz movement. The responsibility for telling this story falls to Williams, who grew up in Studio Rivbea, Rivers' Greenwich Village loft where free-jazz flourished in the 1970s. Since 2006, she's been organizing a catalog of her father's personal effects, all of which recall a childhood spent at the epicenter of the New York jazz scene. "These are memories I can't let go of," she said.

Among Rivers' lifetime collection of materials—more than 50 storage containers' worth—lie a trove of mostly never-heard recordings in every format available during the past 50 years, from reel-to-reel to cassette to CD and VHS. "There's an extraordinary amount of historical information there from a critically important decade in jazz," asserted Ed Hazell, the music writer and producer currently tasked with curating the collection. "For someone like me, who's loved [Rivers'] music since I was a teenager, all of this information was just heart-stopping."

With Williams' permission, Hazell spent a year poring over Rivers' archive with an ear toward selecting the most choice recordings for release on NoBusiness Records, a pre-eminent imprint for free-jazz and improvised music based in Lithuania. The time seemed right, he said, to start unveiling these important works. "The Loft Era [in jazz] is just starting to get attention from scholars," he pointed out. "A lot of books have been written on it lately, and I think it's just the tip of the iceberg."

In May, the label released ***Emanation* (NBCD118; 76:40 ★★★★)**, the first of eight albums in the Sam Rivers Archive Project. The album depicts a 1971 concert at the Jazz Workshop in Boston, after Rivers had completed stints with Miles Davis' and Cecil Taylor's bands. He was heading up his own trio with bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Norman Connors, and feeling out the limits of extended improvisation. "It's fascinating as an early example of what he was setting out to do ... developing a characteristic voice for each instrument, letting the rhythmic feel be fluid and changing without any preagreement," Hazell noted.

Sam Rivers (1923–2011)

The two tracks that make up the album, each more than 30 uninterrupted minutes, crackle with intensity as Rivers uses horns, flute or piano to navigate the unsettled terrain that lies between bop and the avant-garde, classical and modern. The ephemeral moments of these lengthy improvisations begin to take on a restless shape as the trio borrows from these lexicons; on each, what starts with a simple (albeit out) melodic intro descends into cacophonic splendor before too long. But hidden in and among the squeals and screams are moments of quiet impressionistic beauty. It's a masterly display.

After *Emanation*, the label plans to release two albums a year for four years, in roughly chronological order, drawing from the archive and Rivers' own portfolio of intended releases; the label will choose the album titles from a list of possibilities written in Rivers' own hand. "There's still a lot to go through, so we haven't finalized all the releases yet," Hazell said.

With the launch of her father's legacy recordings, Williams concedes that it's probably time to find a permanent home for his carefully maintained collection. Organizations and scholars have expressed interest in acquiring it, and she's begun to take these proposals seriously.

"It's time for me to turn it over, hopefully, to an educational institution that will teach and play Sam Rivers' music," she said. "Because that's what my father wanted." **DB**

Ordering info: nobusinessrecords.com

George Colligan
Again With Attitude
IYOUWE
★★★★

The piano trio epitomizes the idea of balance. Its members create their own blueprint, leaving the line between improvisation and composition as blurry—or rigid—as they like. Movement between these worlds happens in real time and in advance, on charts or in the moment. In this sense, the trio is both elemental and endlessly intriguing.

On *Again With Attitude*, the lineup is stellar: three distinguished journeymen, including bassist Buster Williams and drummer Lenny White, open to any possibility. And pianist George Colligan wrote most of the muisc here, which means they have solid material to work with.

Take, for example, "Lost On 4th Avenue," which opens and ends with sections rooted on the I chord. The first unfolds languidly, after which the composition takes shape as a stream of changes punctuated by occasional accents or truncated phrases. It spins far enough away from conventional structure to feel fresh, enabling a more deft and intensifying interaction, until that second I-chord section begins. By this time, the trio slips into a funk feel, heavy on the backbeat, which contrasts with and satisfactorily recalls the top. Again, balance.

A similar approach enriches "Always And Forever," a ballad beautifully tailored for exploration, artfully harmonized with hints of "The Way We Were" and "Skylark" in the melody. A few Monk standards appear, too, "Well You Needn't" being the most adventurous with its sizzling tempo and playful animation of the theme. So what if no new trails are blazed? When the format is perfect and the players are masters, an album this strong is more than enough.

—Bob Doerschuk

Again With Attitude: L's Bop; Lost On 4th Avenue; Again With Attitude; Waltz 1; Christina; A Different Place; Monk's Dream; False Valse; Well You Needn't; Always And Forever; Usain. (54:31)
Personnel: George Colligan, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Lenny White, drums.

Ordering info: iyouwee.com

Jenny Scheinman & Allison Miller's Parlour Game

Parlour Game

ROYAL POTATO FAMILY 1909

★★★½

Violinist Jenny Scheinman long has been a part of drummer Allison Miller's circle of friends and collaborators, contributing mightily to Boom Tic Boom albums. But *Parlour Game* is the first time that the pair's names both have been featured prominently on the cover of an album.

In part, that move was a simple reflection of the collaborative spirit of a record in which the two performers share compositional credits for all 11 tracks. Yet, it's also a fitting shorthand for how Scheinman and Miller have melded their various musical interests into one pleasant and verdant whole, resulting in some of the most easygoing tunes that either have lent their names to.

The title of the album—and the project as a whole—also shares some secrets as to what's in store, referencing the age-old practice of getting family and friends together in a shared space to play together. That feeling of *bonhomie* flows through *Parlour Game*, as—despite a collective history that includes an interest in avant-jazz and experimental music—everything included on the recording is pitched toward accessibility and easy relistening.

That's the spirit of a track like "The Right Fit," a lucid bit of funk-jazz that announces its intentions from the jump with Scheinman's violin swinging right into a bouncy melody while Miller, bassist Tony Scherr and pianist Carmen Staaf settle into a tight groove behind her. They dabble in the verse-chorus-verse structure of a great pop tune, while leaving some room for quick-hit solos. That mood is mirrored on tracks like "Miss Battle's Cannonball" and the hip-hop-inspired "Fake Weather." This band seemingly came to build an underground tunnel between a Bonnaroo-like outdoor festival and a cramped nightclub.

Surrounding those tunes are several variations on jazz themes, some more successful than others. The swinging "Top Shelf" (a woozy ode to drinking the good stuff), the New Orelans-inspired "Beans & Rice" (driven by some especially spirited playing from Staaf) and the aching ballad "Sleep Rider" (which closes out *Parlour Game*) are the clear standouts, with the featherlight "Lead With Love" and the flat "Michigan" serving as small dead spots in the mix. But even within those songs, moments of brilliance pop out, like Scherr's fluid electric bass work on the latter or a piano solo that feels like it's spilling over the sides of the former song.

Taken as a whole, then, Schieman and Miller's collaboration is a fine opening salvo for a new project, and one that promises more fine music in the future. They haven't quite settled into their collective voice yet, but, if this album is any indication, they're well on their way.

—Robert Ham

Parlour Game: Play Money; 116th & Congress; The Right Fit; Michigan; Fake Weather; Lead With Love; Beans & Rice; Meanwhile; Top Shelf; Miss Battle's Cannonball; Sleep Rider. (48:19)
Personnel: Jenny Scheinman, violin; Allison Miller, drums; Tony Scherr, bass; Carmen Staaf, piano.

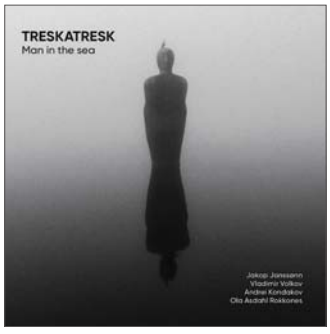
Ordering info: royalpotatofamily.com

Treskatresk

Man In The Sea

FINITO BACALAO 246

★★★½



If Treskatresk's *Man In The Sea* mostly evades American vernacular jazz and blues, it offers plenty of unique strains of its own—not to mention more than a little experimental weirdness. Sometimes, it has both at once.

What sounds like a plaintive flute in the opening of the lovely "Ballad" is in fact Ola Asdahl Rokkones' treated saxophone. It appears again in the stately, funereal "Hospital," this time sounding more like a bass clarinet—and alongside similarly affected drums, Jakop Janssønn replacing his snare with a djembe covered in reindeer skin. These are among *Man In The Sea's* least interesting tracks, though. They and other slow tunes are pretty, but conventional, even with their deceptive tonal palettes. It's on the upbeat numbers, where the rhythmic element is used as something more than incidental, that things get hip: "Wild Dog" is served by a bass line and syncopation that nearly, but don't quite, evoke hard-bop before the piano and saxophone negate the flavor. But "Kabelvåg" is the album's outlier, an avant-garde soundscape, the opening portion comprising quiet saxophone and arco bass groans. It haunts, it intrigues and it might be worth exploring in greater length and fuller detail on a project of its own. However, it's thoroughly out of place in this expanse of thoughtful, folk-derived melody and groove.

—Michael J. West

Man In The Sea: Ballad; Wild Dog; Kabelvåg; Pat; Promenade; Architeuthis; Ukrainian Song; Blues; Hospital; Operation Tarmac; Man In The Sea. (62:43)
Personnel: Ola Asdahl Rokkones, tenor saxophone; Andrei Kondakov, piano; Vladimir Volkov, bass; Jakop Janssønn, drums.

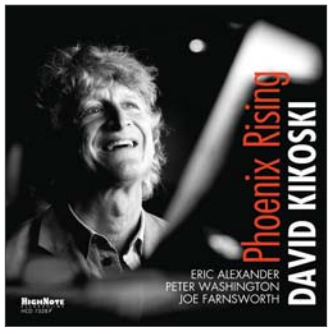
Ordering info: finitobacalaorecords.com

David Kikoski

Phoenix Rising

HIGHNOTE 7328

★★★½



While pianist David Kikoski's new album conveys a bold mythological title, he hardly is rising from the ashes. He's been a first-call sideman in numerous bands led by the likes of Roy Haynes and Randy Brecker since the 1990s and has recorded several fine albums under his own name. But his debut on HighNote and his rock-solid ensemble should bring him wider attention.

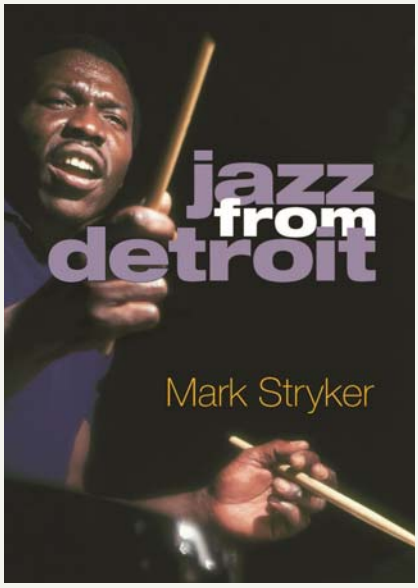
The title track exemplifies a warm and lively dialogue among all four group members, something that runs throughout the disc. Kikoski shares a writing credit with saxophonist Eric Alexander here, as the upbeat "Phoenix Rising" plays around with time signatures and opens room for the pair's high-velocity conversation. Similarly, Alexander's "Kik It" highlights Kikoski's bluesy approach that also has a surprising tonal shift. With an aggressive feel for blues—as well as funk—the bandleader transforms "Love For Sale" and "Willow Weep For Me" from the typically lachrymose versions and lends each a fresh perspective. But this quartet's interpretations also are convincing in the subtle changes that develop: Kikoski finesses succinct flourishes on "My One And Only Love," drummer Joe Farnsworth's adroit brushwork helping the leader's solo register perfectly.

—Aaron Cohen

Phoenix Rising: Phoenix Rising; Kik It; Wichita Lineman; If I Were A Bell; Emily; Love For Sale; My One And Only Love; Lazy Bird; Willow Weep For Me. (59:19)
Personnel: David Kikoski, piano; Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone; Peter Washington, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Stryker Excavates Detroit



Detroit's contribution to American music has been monumental, but its rich jazz legacy has not been as fully documented as its role in shaping r&b and rock. Journalist **Mark Stryker's *Jazz From Detroit* (University of Michigan Press)** addresses that imbalance through vivid profiles of more than two dozen artists who have called the city home. At the same time, he offers crucial information on how Detroit has nurtured its musicians through both prosperous and difficult times.

A few precedents have looked at the area's musical past, and Stryker mentions Lars Bjorn's 2001 book, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz In Detroit, 1920–60*, as a key text. But Stryker takes a distinctive approach, primarily through including more recent artists. Rather than attempt a definitive chronicle, *Jazz From Detroit* connects specific themes, such as education and how African American (as well as white) musicians defied entrenched segregation. Along with presenting accomplished individuals, Stryker documents impactful collective movements from the 1960s and '70s.

Previously a longtime reporter for the Detroit Free Press, Stryker has interviewed innumerable artists, and these encounters constitute a significant portion of the text. The scope of the profiles here reaffirms this city's jazz diversity and shows how musicians took their local experiences worldwide. In referring to 1940s and '50s Detroit as a golden age for the music, Stryker designates chapters to legends like Milt Jackson, Barry Harris and Joe Henderson. Another part of the book portrays the Jones brothers (Hank, Elvin and Thad). Following through to the present, Stryker concludes with people he considers to be the inheritors of trumpeter Marcus Belgrave's musical largesse, including violinist Regina Carter and drummer Karriem Riggins. Throughout, the writer details each artist's abiding significance.

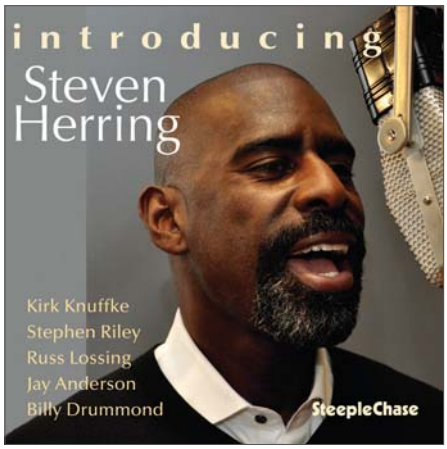
But he gives equal weight to the institutions that helped form these musicians, particularly Cass Technical High School and its band director, Dr. Harry Begian, who taught from 1947 to 1964. Stryker also traces larger trends that shaped musical communities, including the auto industry's shifting fortunes. Other recurring threads include Tommy Flanagan recalling unjust police harassment when he was a child, and Sheila Jordan explaining how she received similar treatment from officers, because of her friendships with black performers.

Detroit also was home to co-operative artistic organizations that responded to the late-'60s free-jazz and black consciousness movements. Stryker devotes an especially valuable part of the book to this period. Indeed, while contemporary artists' organizations in the Midwest have garnered considerable press (primarily Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), the Michigan counterparts have been overlooked. The Tribe collective arose after the 1967 riots and financed its own recordings along with producing a politically engaged magazine. Stryker also sheds much needed light on pianist Kenny Cox and his group, whose 1968 Blue Note album, *Introducing Kenny Cox And The Contemporary Jazz Quintet*, might have warranted more attention than it initially garnered. Even though the ensemble's inventive compositions failed to generate much support from the New York label, Cox remained undeterred. He stayed in the Motor City and for a few years co-directed Strata, an ambitious musician-run corporation that advocated for jazz within academia.

While Stryker doesn't ignore the ongoing economic struggles and racism that continue to infect the region, he provides reasons to feel optimistic about the city's artistic endurance. He describes a sense of mutual affinity among veteran and upcoming musicians, as well as an audience that remains "robust, passionate and discerning," while also citing the corporate philanthropic efforts that fund the Detroit Jazz Festival and other smaller initiatives.

Even as the author laments Michigan's significant cutbacks in school music programs, Stryker writes that a rebuilding process has begun. As he quotes bassist and educator Rodney Whitaker telling young players in 2018, "That's what we do in Detroit. We make cars, and we make jazz musicians." **DB**

Ordering info: press.umich.edu



Steven Herring
Introducing Steven Herring
STEEPLECHASE 31873

★★★½

Search singer Steven Herring's debut recording for a tinge of irony, a touch of nostalgic posturing; you won't find it. What you will find is a vocalist unafraid to wrap his weighty baritone around 80-year-old lyrics and musicians who have jumped off the speeding bullet train of the 21st century to embrace a gauzy, scarcely moving sonic landscape.

Over and above his operatic voice, Herring gets full marks for sticking to the script. Most artists who reach back this far for material will shake things up with an original interpretation or a little-heard song that will have you scratching your head. Not Herring; he's all in here, and he takes modernist cornet player Kirk Knuffke, one of Brooklyn's brightest lights, and tenorist Stephen Riley along with him, encouraging them to play with a warmth and attention to detail that's far out of favor.

Still, Herring is a classically trained singer, not a Sinatraesque barfly, so his vowels remain pear-like and his pitch even. You can never escape the reality that this is a singer performing, rather than living, these songs, as beautiful as they are. But you won't likely find the lyrical beauty of Livingston and Evans' "Mona Lisa" on better display than it is here.

Elsewhere, on "That Old Black Magic" and "The Girl From Ipanema," the perfection of Herring's delivery seems ill suited to the wordplay or harmonic turns of the material, but the band never fails him.

Herring, Knuffke and pianist Russ Lossing tackled a more diverse bag of compositions on last year's *Witness* with mixed results. Their tight focus here pays off. —*James Hale*

Introducing Steven Herring: That Old Black Magic; They Didn't Believe; Begin The Beguine; In The Wee Small Hours; They Can't Take That Away From Me; Mona Lisa; The Girl From Ipanema; They Say It's Wonderful; Poor Butterfly; The Nearness Of You. (64:50)

Personnel: Steven Herring, vocals; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Stephen Riley, tenor saxophone; Russ Lossing, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

Cécile Verny Quartet
Of Moons And Dreams
JAZZHAUS RECORDS 171
★★★

The instrumental foundation of the Cécile Verny Quartet's *Of Moons And Dreams* doesn't stray far from jazz keystones: Bass, Hammond organ and piano, drum kit and percussion back Verny's pristinely delivered vocals.

Prioritizing pop on "I Heard An Angel Singing," jazz-leaning tropes still define the song's tonal color, as opposed to functioning as its structural driver. That's not to say Verny's part comes across with pop's commercial tendencies, though. She doesn't throw her voice around recklessly, belting it out just for show. And her unique vocal character—clearly shaped by time in Côte d'Ivoire, France and Germany—boasts an intriguing and adaptive quality. The bandleader's clear, almost classically formal enunciations augment the rhythmically assertive "Krakatoa Moon" and "Top Shelf Life."

The decision to have *Of Moons And Dreams* reckon with pop might seem like an impulsive choice, spurred by the quartet's multidecade longevity. But this project hardly is the result of creative tedium. Verny's experimentation feels like a natural progression, the bandleader embracing constant change and accepting difference. —*Kira Grunenberg*

Of Moons And Dreams: I Heard An Angel Singing; Krakatoa Moon; The Garden Of Love; Birds In Your Heart/Hear I Call; There's No Way Back; Mon Avenir S'est Envolé; This House; Top Shelf Life; The Dream; The Same Dream; Kissing The Moon; Witch; Talkin'; New Moon; The Power To Be; My Steps Their Beat; Je Ferme Les Yeux. (69:57)
Personnel: Cécile Verny, vocals; Bernd Heitzler, bass; Andreas Erchinger, piano, keyboards; Lars Binder, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: jazzhausrecords.com

Sam Dillon
Force Field
POSI-TONE 8196
★★★½

With sizzling high-energy quests taking flight between comfortably laid-back tracks, Sam Dillon's sophomore release, *Force Field*, boasts five post-bop originals alongside the session's well-crafted covers.

The tenor saxophonist's prefatory title track blows through shifting tonalities with his collective locked together. Alluding to McCoy Tyner, Theo Hill's piano contributions summon fiery strength through an exploratory modal romp as it supports the bandleader's intensely played tenor lines. A few tracks on, Dillon's reverent Chick Corea cover—a grooving modal take of "Straight Up And Down"—is driven by tightly arranged horns, and dexterous tenor and keys, featuring Hill's dazzling work on Fender Rhodes. Ripping it up with his swinging original, "Hit It," Dillon's spiritual-jazz influences take over. Spurred on by modal grooviness from Hill, the writing hints at John Coltrane's changes on "Resolution," Dillon thriving in the transcendental setting.

Charlie Parker's "Dexterity" seems out of step with the album's inclinations, Dillon's searching tenor wrapping around the "Rhythm" changes, still closing out the disc with a powerful display. —*Kerilie McDowall*

Force Field: Force Field; Go For The Jugular; Straight Up And Down; Shift; Two Part Problem; Flight Of Mind; Hit It; Marionette; Dexterity. (54:08)
Personnel: Sam Dillon, tenor saxophone; Max Darché, trumpet (2, 3, 4, 7); Andrew Gould, alto saxophone (2, 3, 4, 7); Micheal Dease, trombone (2, 5); Theo Hill, piano, Rhodes (3, 6, 8); David Wong, bass; Anwar Marshall, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

Mattson 2
Paradise
COMPANY CHI13
★★★½

While psychedelia tends to portend an instrumental arsenal far different from that of a straightahead jazz band, one could argue that the styles share an appreciation for the free-flowing and abstract. And it's those two overlapping qualities that Mattson 2 integrates on psych-jazz offering *Paradise*.

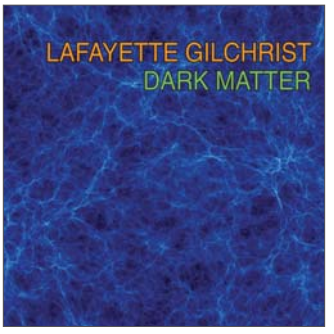
Jonathan and Jared Mattson—the California-based identical twins behind the group—seemingly aimed for a bolder musical aesthetic than in the past, adding in lyrics and a newfound level of musical playfulness. Opening track "Naima's Dream" starts with a serenade of lightly swinging rhythms beneath seesawing notes summoned by gently bent guitar strings.

Sounds like Jared's octave-harmonizing guitar parts on the title track and the duo's vocals on songs like "Shell Beach" and "Seacliff" might usher in anticipation of compositional spontaneity. That premonition only serves to further enhance *Paradise*'s calm atmosphere, allowing listeners to bask in uncertainty. And even when tonal contrasts—like the reverse-phased guitar, soft-edged bass and delicate cymbal work on "Darkness Surrender"—create singular textures, none of it ever demands so much attention that the album's easygoing mood gets sullied. —*Kira Grunenberg*

Paradise: Naima's Dream; Wavelength; Darkness Surrender; Essence; Moonlight Motel; Shell Beach; Paradise; Isela; Seacliff. (31:52)
Personnel: Jared Mattson, guitar, bass, vocals; Jonathan Mattson, drums, vocals.

Ordering info: mattson2.com

Lafayette Gilchrist
Dark Matter
SELF RELEASE
★★★½



Because he first made his mark with the rumbling "Assume The Position," featured on David Simon's *The Wire*, pianist Lafayette Gilchrist frequently is linked with the brassy, beat-heavy sound of his New Volcanoes band. But *Dark Matter* offers another view of the pianist. Recorded during solo a concert in his hometown of Baltimore, *Dark Matter* includes material from his past two albums with the band, but this isn't acoustic revisionism. Recorded in 2016, before either *New Urban World Blues* or *Deep Dancing Suite* were released, the versions here of "Happy Birthday Sucker" and the title tune are instructive. Played solo, the former might lack the hypnotic intensity of the full-band version, but there's a swagger to Gilchrist's left hand that underscores his debt to New Orleans piano. That rhythm was a recurring motif on his previous solo album, *The View From Here*, but this time it's just one of a number of arrows in his quiver. "For The Go–Go" has its share of Crescent City spice, but its central groove derives from the bounce of D.C.'s go-go scene. Gilchrist's best moments, though, come when he broadens the music's dynamic range, "Spontaneous Combustion" being a particularly good example: sometimes pensive, sometimes pounding and blessed with a harmonic playfulness that evokes Thelonious Monk at his most whimsical. —*J.D. Considine*

Dark Matter: For The Go-Go; Childs Play; Dark Matter; The Love Bind; Spontaneous Combustion; And You Know This; Blues For Our Marches To End; Old Whale Bones; Happy Birthday Sucker; Black Flight; Greetings. (67:23)
Personnel: Lafayette Gilchrist, piano.

Ordering info: lafayettegilchristmusic.com

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KEYBOARD SCHOOL

JAZZ ORGAN BASS LINES

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Joey DeFrancesco (Photo: Michael Woodall)

Jazz organist Joey DeFrancesco also plays trumpet during his live shows.

MICHAEL WOODALL

JAZZ ORGAN BASS LINE TECHNIQUES & BEYOND

By Joey DeFrancesco

The organ can be an intimidating instrument to learn. Faced with two keyboard manuals, a pedalboard, a volume pedal, banks of preset sounds, adjustable "stops" and an external rotary speaker with controls of its own, keyboard players easily can become overwhelmed by all of the choices the organ presents.

Newcomers to the instrument need to become familiar with all of the ways these various facets work together in order to emulate the sounds and techniques of the masters, and eventually develop their own personal style. And any jazz musician who wants to actually perform on the organ first needs to master the art of doing multiple things simultaneously.

One of the most important aspects of playing jazz organ is providing a proper bass line—not just for yourself, but for the rest of the ensemble as well. The bass line typically is played by the left hand on the organ's lower keyboard manual. A lot of people have the misconception that all of the instrument's bass notes are generated from the pedalboard, but most jazz organists play the bass with their left hand, occasionally employing the pedalboard for emphasis, effect or simply as a practical alternative. In the past, r&b and gospel organists often played most of their bass lines on the pedalboard. However, that's never been the approach of the jazz organist.

BASIC PATTERNS

When you're working out bass lines on the organ, start by developing simple patterns. Come up with something that you can play over and over again, that feels good and that swings. I always say start with the blues, in whatever key you like to play in. Find some patterns that groove. If you listen to the majority of jazz organ players, they usually play a very repetitious bass line, and that's not a negative thing. That tends to happen because there's so much going on and it's very difficult to improvise simultaneously with both hands. Gradually work to build your coordination, so that when you're walking that bass line and you go to do something with your right hand, you don't throw your left hand off, play wrongs notes, or start dragging or rushing.

The best bass setting on the organ is to have the first drawbar (a 16-foot drawbar) and your 8-foot drawbar pulled all the way out and set to "8"; then pull the 5 1/3-foot drawbar that's in between them out to about "4." This sound works for your left-hand bass, as well as comping with your right hand on the upper portion of the lower manual.

Say you're playing a blues in F. Line your fingers up by putting your left pinky on the first F of the lower manual. When you start walking, don't go past D, which is the sixth of F. Begin with a basic pattern like this: F–A–B♭–B–C–D♭–D and then back to F. When you get to your IV chord, do the same thing starting on low B♭. You'll want to stay in a very comfortable hand position, so you're not moving around a lot and just walk that bass line. Or you could walk a triad like F–A–C. To get that happening, play a Charleston rhythm in the right hand (on the downbeat of 1 and the "and" of 2). That will get your coordination to start happening.

Now, start playing some simple right-hand lines—for example, the melody of "Sonnymoon For Two"—while you're walking the bass line. It's a perfect way to get your coordination together. And then once that starts to feel comfortable, and your time is good, you can try some other ideas with the right hand. Then, add a wider range of bass notes. Start by walking all the way up to F (one octave above your starting point) and back down again, and keep developing that.

PEDALBOARD APPLICATIONS

Played by themselves, left-hand bass notes on the organ can be a little bit mushy. There's no "point" on the note like you'd get from an acoustic or electric bass, which gives you a percussive attack or thump. When you introduce the pedalboard to the bass line, that adds a little percussive sound to the beat of each note that you're walking and gives you that little pulse. It's very similar to a drummer "feathering" the bass drum.

Take a section of the pedalboard—usually around the F, the G or the A—and tap it very staccato-like along with your left-hand line. You don't have to play the same note; it's just for that *thump-thump-thump* pulse. When you get more into it, you can vary that. I go back and forth: Sometimes, I tap every note in unison with my left hand, but many times I'm just tapping around to get that pulse to groove.

All organ players definitely should learn how to play with their foot, because you never know when you might need to. For example, sometimes the lower manual of the organ malfunctions. I've had to play gigs where the entire lower manual wasn't working and I had to rely on my foot to play bass all night. There's a connection between your left hand and your left foot, so it's fairly easy to apply bass lines from one realm to the other. Picture the pedalboard in your mind: It's the same keyboard layout, and it's fairly automatic for you to be able to play those lines with your foot once you've got your left hand together.

There are two pedalboard drawbars: 16-foot and 8-foot. Pull out the 16-foot one to where you think it's not overpowering your left hand. Every organ is a little bit different in this regard, as is every room you play in.


© MARK SHELDON

DeFrancesco's *In The Key Of The Universe* was released March 1 on the Mack Avenue label.

MORE POSSIBILITIES

The next step is to practice playing bass figures in different keys. When you play the blues in all keys, you start moving around the keyboard and seeing other harmonic possibilities for building some interesting bass lines. If you're already a keyboard player with a fundamental understanding of harmony, start translating some of that information into your left hand and turn it into bass lines—but be careful not to make the lines too awkward-sounding. You want your listeners and fellow musicians to be able to follow the harmony without trying too hard.

Of course, you don't always have to play the root note every time. You could start on the third or you could start on the fifth and descend from there. Once you've practiced playing blues bass lines in multiple keys, introduce some standards and more complicated chord changes into the mix. You'll begin to figure out that you can walk from your I to the III, to the IV, to the flat V, to the V. Then start adding fifths—add the fifth and the octave to the root note, along with those other notes. Or you could rock a fourth or a root and a fifth together, or even all four notes on the downbeat for a few bars.

LISTEN TO THE GREATS

When I was coming up, I listened to all the classic jazz organists. But we had all these other straightahead jazz records in the house. Listening to Oscar Peterson trio records, I was not only attracted to the way Oscar played, but also the way Ray Brown played the bass. That had a powerful effect on my concept. Jimmy Smith played really nice bass lines, but they were nothing extraordinary; they were very basic. Unlike the stuff he played in his right hand, the things Smith played in the bass were very easy to figure out, especially on his early recordings. That's the place to start. Jack McDuff played some pretty cool bass lines. He was a bass player before he was an organ player; he played bass with Johnny Griffin. When McDuff wasn't soloing, he got pretty good at playing stuff in the left hand, but as soon as he started to solo, things started to get repetitive. That's tricky. It's very difficult to improvise with two hands. It's got to be very natural. Richard "Groove" Holmes played the most like a bass player in the left hand out of that group of organ players. He played a lot of the *fick-a-digang*s, and he could play funky bass lines that were extraordinary. I heard him live when I was 10 years old, and he blew my mind. He had the organ hooked up with effects, with the left hand sounding like a Moog bass. I'd say for the most creative bass lines from that era of musicians, "Groove" Holmes is the one to check out.

In addition to Ray Brown, bassists that I dig include Ron Carter; Oscar Pettiford, who was very modern; and, of course, Paul Chambers for the feeling. I came up in Philly with a cat named Arthur Harper who was incredible. Reggie Workman, Keter Betts, Bob Cranshaw—you've got to check them all out. Even those bass players, when the groove starts getting into a certain thing, they'll play a repetitive bass line. It makes you want to dance. It's about the feeling, not always about the notes. There are some bass players who didn't always play the right notes, and maybe their intonation was a little weird, but their pulse was so great and it felt so good that you might prefer them over somebody who had perfect technique and intonation, but didn't groove as hard.

PRACTICAL OPTIONS

Many organ players today really want to play the whole organ. They're determined. They move the organ to the gig. They bring the pedals and all that. But you can't always do that on the subway. Some of these cats have done some creative things with equipment so that they're able to do that. Jared Gold, for instance, made a small set of pedals—he even sells them. He made an instrument that he can fold up, because he realized if he was going to play the organ, he had to have two manuals and pedals. Brian Charette adds a lot of other sounds from synthesizers and the like, and he sometimes walks with a Moog bass sound. He's playing the full instrument, and that's important.

One of the things I talk about in my instructional videos is how to make a gig on a single-manual organ. Because when you're in the city, you can't turn down a gig. You've got to play and always keep it moving forward. If you can, you should try to have pedals and a full setup. But if you can't, there are techniques to make it sound like you have the pedals. And these days, with gear becoming more and more portable, it's a lot easier to do that.

I have a JD Signature model organ made by Viscount, called The Legend. There are three versions of it: a full-console version that's a four-leg instrument for stage use; another more portable version with a full-size look that requires a bit of assembly; and a version called the Legend Live that is very portable. Viscount makes a single-manual organ, too. To me, those have the best sound of the organs out there today. But you should check out those things for yourself. There currently are a lot of excellent alternatives to lugging "the monster" around.

If you're going to play an organ gig using a single-manual keyboard, you'll need to set up your presets in advance and split the keyboard. The left side of the split, from low C up to the second B natural, is where you can walk bass lines and comp chords like you would normally do on the lower manual of a console. The right side of the split, from middle C up, becomes your upper manual for soloing. That way, you can chord and play bass lines with both hands, and as soon as it's time for you to solo, you hit the preset you want for your right hand. You can go back and forth between these configurations as often as you want.

Once you become adept at playing bass on the organ—whether using your left hand, your foot, or some combination of the two—your lines will start to automatically follow what you're doing harmonically with your right hand. It's almost like the bassist in you knows what you're going to do before you do it. Just remember to always listen to the other players around you and provide bass lines that are appropriate for the entire ensemble. **DB**

The online learning portal "Organ, Keyboards, The Band and Beyond with Joey DeFrancesco" can be accessed at joeyd101.com.

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Luke Gillespie

How To Listen to Jazz: a 10-Step Guide

In January 1977, the middle of my junior year at Indiana University School of Music, I was in the office of my jazz teacher and mentor, David Baker, and I noticed an LP on the turntable. The LP cover was so worn it was two pieces of cardboard making a kind of record sandwich (with no paper sleeve), and I could barely see that it was *Kind Of Blue* by Miles Davis.

Baker walked in and I said, "Wow, you have gotten a lot of mileage out of this record." What he said next changed my life: "Yeah, that's my seventh copy." "Seventh copy?" I gasped, knowing that it takes hundreds of times to listen to an LP before wearing it out. He had listened to this album thousands of times. I thought I had listened a lot, but I had never worn out any of my records. I realized I hadn't even begun to really listen.

Duke Ellington once said, "I am the world's greatest listener," and the most important quality he looked for in a musician was the ability to listen. All music (even written music) is "played by ear" and needs to be studied by ear.

For the past 25 years, I have worked with students on their listening skills, in lessons, combos and Jazz Styles & Analysis classes, and about 15 years ago, I started to incorporate the following 10-step listening guide for my students.

1. Overall sound and basic elements: What is the mood (tempo/dynamics)? What are the primary rhythmic motives that occur? Determine the form and tune type: 32-bar AABA or ABAC, 12-bar blues, blues with a bridge, through-composed or something else (see Jerry Coker's *How To Listen to Jazz* for five tune types).

What is the meter, and does it change? Is it in a major or minor key, and does it change keys? How does the tune begin and end? Are there any interludes? What is the texture (monophonic/homophonic/polyphonic)? What is the instrumentation?

Can you sing along with any or all of it? Can you sing the rhythmic groove and comping patterns? Can you sing the melody?

2. Listen to just the drums: How do the drums play "spang-spang-a-lang" ride cymbal patterns? Do they play just quarter notes like Jimmy Cobb frequently does on *Kind Of Blue*? Notice how drummers switch from one cymbal to another for color variety, especially between soloists.

Pay attention to how various elements of the drum kit are used, including snare chatter, hi-hat, feathering the bass drum, sticks vs. brushes, and rim clicks (Jimmy Cobb plays rim clicks on beat 2 of the third chorus and beat 4 of the fourth chorus of Wynton Kelly's piano solo on "Freddie Freeloader" from *Kind Of Blue*).

Try to identify the time-feel, meter, groove, dynamics, style and form. Rhythmically speaking, can you detect any subdivisions, polyrhythms, syncopation, metric groupings (duple, triple, etc.), double-time/half-time, metric modulations or hemiolas? Does the drummer tend to play on top of the beat, behind the beat or right in the middle of the beat?

3. Listen to just the bass: Is there a walking bass line, or ostinato pattern? Does the bass line outline the chord changes? Does the bassist play mostly roots (and other chord tones) on downbeats? Are downbeats approached by a half-step above and/or below, or from each chord's dominant, etc.? Does the bassist play with conjunct (step or scalar) and/or disjunct (leap) motion? Listen for pedal points, time-feel, style, register, sound/tone, attack, length of notes, dynamics and legato versus non-legato. Does the bass play in "2"? Does the player make use of double-time or half-time feels? Does the bass play on the first, second or third part of the triplet?

4. Listen to just the piano/guitar/vibes: Pay attention to all of the following: comping

patterns, language/vocabulary, chord changes, textures (block, broken, etc.), range/tessitura, voicings, "voicing" in the classical sense (playing some notes louder and/or softer than others), sound and touch. Remember that all musicians must be "drummers"; rhythm is at the core. Does the piano/guitar/vibes comp differently for different soloists? Where and how does the comping instrument make use of space? If more multiple comping instruments are playing, how do they play together and stay out of each other's way?

5. Listen to the drums and bass together: This is the most important "hook-up" in any jazz group. How do their quarter notes line up, and how are they hooking up together? How are they dealing with rhythmic subdivisions? If the bassist and drummer are not listening to each other closely, the foundation of the music likely will be unstable and lack organic energy and forward motion.

6. Listen to the drums and piano together: How do they interact? How is their mutual comping related (for example, the rhythms of the snare drum chatter and the piano comping rhythms)? Do they interact with or anticipate each other's rhythms? Is there call/response?

7. Listen to the bass and piano together: How do they interact in their various roles? Do they employ chord substitutions? Does the pianist tend to rely on Bud Powell-style "shell" voicings or rootless voicings—or a combination? Do they play any lines or ostinato patterns together? How does the pianist comp for the bass solo? Some bassists prefer the piano to be less busy or even lay out during bass solos, while other bassists prefer that the piano comp for them like any soloist. Others prefer a mixture depending on the tune and what the textures were in previous solos (on that particular tune or previous tunes in the set).

8. Listen to the whole rhythm section: How do they hook up and play together as a section? How do they interact with the horns during the melody, interludes and solos (this overlaps with the next step).

9. Listen to the horns, melody instruments and soloists: How do they interact with the rhythm section? How do they interact rhythmically with each other, and how do they interact harmonically with bass/piano/guitar/vibes? What about sound, blend and intonation? What chord substitutions do the soloists play? My college schoolmate, saxophonist Ralph Bowen, often would ask me to surprise him with different chord substitutions when we practiced, and he would do the same for me, to help improve our ears.

What chord/scale relationships are involved? Are the solo changes the same changes as the tune? Are the solo changes the same for each soloist? Do the piano and guitar alternate comping for soloists or do they comp at the same time? This step will take multiple listens to understand what the soloists are playing (rhythm, melody, harmony) and how they are interacting with each other and members of the rhythm section.

10. Repeat Step 1: You will be surprised how much depth in listening awareness you have acquired by just listening to a recording 10 times (or more) like this.

Your main teacher for studying music is always going to be the music itself: recordings and live performances.

In addition to listening alone, get together with your musician friends and listen to recordings together. Another college schoolmate of mine, bassist/educator Robert Hurst, wrote an outstanding DownBeat article (January 2018) on this kind of "communal listening." Learning collectively and understanding how others listen will enhance your own listening skills and make you a better team player.

Other jazz artists/educators have offered excellent listening advice, including pianist Fred Hersch. Check out his online article "Active Listening" (Jan. 12, 2015, jazzpianoschool.com).

Enjoy the listening process, whether you do it by yourself or communally with others, and also during your own performance. Notice how many musicians make "ear" contact when they play together, and how they often are looking at each other. My colleague, drummer Steve Houghton, always looks at the other musicians on the bandstand, supporting the music and the musical process with his ears and eyes. In a sense, we should learn to hear synaesthetically with our eyes and watch with our ears.

Listening is a kind of sacred ritual that should be part of our lives on a daily basis. We can only learn through listening. Listen actively with full concentration. That means not doing email, social networking or something else that will distract from your full attention while you listen.

When I recorded my *Moving Mists* CD last year, I noticed my colleague, tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III, was listening carefully to the rhythm section and using his surroundings to generate and develop his improvisations. This was also true with my other colleagues. In my duo with vocalist Tierney Sutton, she phrased in ways to converse with the piano accompaniment perfectly. Every musician on the recording was careful to blend, listen to each other and play as a collective, not just as a soloist. This allowed for musical conversation and dialog to take place as the musicians wove musical fabrics to create a colorful sonic tapestry.

Your main teacher for studying music is always going to be the music itself: recordings and live performances. Active and close listening will help you to imitate and assimilate all of the elements at work in any piece of music you encounter. **DB**

Pianist/educator Luke Gillespie is a professor of music at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. His latest CD, *Moving Mists* (Patois), features current and former colleagues Jeremy Allen, Steve Houghton, John Raymond, Walter Smith III, Tom Walsh, Dave Stryker, Tierney Sutton, Pat Harbison, Wayne Wallace, Todd Coolman and Brent Wallarab. Gillespie's book *Stylistic II/V7/I Voicings for Keyboardists* is published by Jamey Aebersold, and he recently adapted Aebersold's classic *Play-A-Long Volume 1* for jazz piano. Visit him online at lukegillespie.com.

SUGGESTED READING

Books by jazz educator David Baker:

- *A New Approach to Ear Training for Jazz Musicians* (1975)
- *Jazz Improvisation: A Comprehensive Method for All Musicians* (1969, rev. 1988)
- *Modern Concepts in Jazz Improvisation: A Comprehensive Method for All Musicians* (1990)
- *How To Play Bebop, Volumes 1, 2, 3* (1988)
- *How To Learn Tunes, Jamey Aebersold Play-A-Long, Vol. 76* (2000)

Books by jazz educator Jerry Coker:

- *How To Listen to Jazz* (2010)
- *Elements of the Jazz Language* (1991)
- *Hearin' the Changes* (1997)

Other recommended publications:

- *NPR Curious Listener's Guide to Jazz* (2002), by Loren Schoenberg
- *How To Listen to Jazz* (2016), by Ted Gioia
- *The Primacy of the Ear* (2011), by Ran Blake
- *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (2005), by Pauline Oliveros
- *The Jazz Musician's Guide to Creative Practicing* (2007), by David Berkman
- *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (1994), by Paul Berliner
- *What to Listen for in Music* (1957), by Aaron Copland


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Anne Sajdera

Exploring Solo Piano Textures

Playing solo piano is a creative adventure that calls into action the capabilities of both the player and the instrument. The piano has a range that rivals an orchestra, yet it simultaneously can convey the rhythmic complexity of a drummer or percussion ensemble. These characteristics make the piano ideal for solo exploration, and pianists have developed countless techniques for producing a range of textures to creatively convey musical ideas.

Not much has changed in the design of the modern piano since the middle of the 19th century, when manufacturers adapted to the aggressive playing styles of Beethoven and Liszt (among others of that era) by strengthening the frame with metal to accommodate the greater string tension required for thicker strings in the upper register. And it was in those days that the development of modern piano technique, with its cascades of melodic virtuosity and avalanches of chords, produced the shapes, sounds and textures that we still use today.

That key word—*texture*—is the thing that can transform a simple melody with harmony into an atmosphere we can inhabit. But what is texture, exactly? Among the definitions of *texture* in the dictionary (WordBook XL), we find:

1. the feel of a surface or a fabric
2. the essential quality of something
3. the musical pattern created by parts being played or sung together
4. the characteristic appearance of a surface having a tactile quality
5. the physical composition of something (especially with respect to the size and shape of the small constituents of a substance)

Based on definitions 2 and 5, the word implies a foundational function, while the other definitions refer to the perception of something. Perception is intrinsic to the word *texture*. Derived from a Latin word that means "to weave," *texture* finds its foundation in the visual arts, regarding the physical feeling of touch. Music also connects to the tactile world through texture—it's not just that sound waves are hitting your ear drums, it's *how* the sound waves hit.

There is an entire universe of textural possibilities at every pianist's fingertips, and the history of piano music brings us three centuries of creativity in that department. Not surprisingly, the jazz piano masters did not leave this particular stone unturned. But before we get into specific examples, how does texture manifest itself in music? Dynamics, articulation and timbre taken together are at the foundation of all texture. After that, it becomes the art of spreading a chord across an instrument or set of instruments. Texture is at the center of every arranger's decision-making, and for the solo pianist it plays a role in how we create variety as we lead listeners through a tune from beginning to end.

Being creative with musical texture is similar to painting, except we're doing it with sound. It's not surprising that we sometimes refer to timbre as color, especially when arranging for multiple instruments—we change the "color" of a melody or chord when we add an instrument with a different timbre to an existing texture. Let's look at some different texture-related techniques we can use to expand our palette at the piano:

- **Register, dynamic and articulation changes.** High notes versus low notes, soft notes versus loud notes, short notes versus long notes, and everything in between—these are the building blocks of texture that define and sculpt a melody.
- **Contrapuntal textures.** Counterpoint is the art of layering two or more independent melodies on top of one another. The resulting texture forms the basis of harmony. Figure 1 shows a two-voice texture: bass line plus melody or solo line (in a 2-feel or walking). Figure 2 is a static chorale-type harmony. Figure 3 shows three or more voices moving freely: melody and bass plus inner voices.
- **Arpeggiation versus blocked chords.** This is usually the first way pianists learn to alter the harmonic texture. To arpeggiate something means to play the notes of a chord in quick succession, often across multiple octaves, imitating the sound of a harp. (See Figure 4.) Blocked chords, as the name suggests, are the opposite of arpeggiation: The notes of the chord are heard at the same time, creating a block of sound. The chords can be in root position or inverted. (See Figure 5.)
- **Rhythm textures.** Changes in the groove often signal changes in the texture. Groove and texture go hand in hand, since each groove has its own way of expressing the interaction between the rhythm and the harmony. Figure

6a shows a bossa nova groove, and Figure 6b shows a stride groove.

The following listening examples from jazz pianists Herbie Hancock, Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson and Robert Glasper show how the four elements of texture listed are just a platform off of which vast creativity can spring. Listening to these tracks, you will hear how much variation an artist can draw out of just one element, so that even if you apply only one of them to an arrangement, a whole new perspective on the tune opens up.

Hancock's exquisite melody for "Joanna's Theme," featured in a duet performance between Hancock and Shorter on Shorter's 1975 Columbia release, *Native Dancer*, opens with a complete statement from the piano through the changes of the tune, after which the saxophone enters and the tune begins. Hancock uses a technique for creating a sense of movement in an otherwise slower-moving progression of chords by breaking the tones of a chord into two pairs of intervals and oscillating between the two in eighth notes. He also uses arpeggiation in polyrhythms between the two hands in a texture similar to late-Romantic classical harmony or the French Impressionists of the late 19th century and early 20th century. Using these and other similar techniques throughout the entire tune, Hancock contrasts Shorter's melody, which sustains long notes over the movement of the piano, creating tension and intensity, eventually bringing the piece to a passionately churning and emotional end.

In a more standard expression, Evans sets off the head versus the solo sections in his masterful rendition of Ray Noble's "The Touch Of Your Lips," from his 1977 Fantasy release, *Alone (Again)*, by transforming the texture between those sections. For the head in and head out, he relies more on blocked chords, often harmonizing each melody note. But for the solo sections he takes a more linear approach, thinning out the harmony and making sure the solo line is easy to hear, all the while keeping the tempo steady. He ends with swiftly ascending arpeggiated triads that float cadenza-like up to the highest register.

Peterson's extraordinary rendition of Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose," from his 1970 solo album, *Tracks* (MPS Records), is a virtuosic tour through a kaleidoscope of standard solo piano textures: rhythmic definition, call and response, linear solos accompanied with a 2-feel bass line, chains of speeding blocked chords whipping by like roller-coaster cars, abrupt changes of dynamic and groove—all of which come to a loud and exuberant final statement that calls to mind a gospel choir or a big band. This performance is an étude of textural possibilities if there ever was one.

Dave Brubeck's standard "In Your Own Sweet Way" gets a radical treatment from Glasper on his 2006 solo recording of the tune released on Blue Note. Like the other pianists highlighted here, Glasper uses blocked chords, two-voice counterpoint, abrupt contrasts in register, dynamics and articulation to create variety and movement, but his approach is angular, modern and uses one of his characteristic polyrhythmic grooves as an interlude to depart from and return to throughout the performance. He consistently presents common-practice jazz language in a completely modern light, spending time developing the groove during the interludes, while offsetting the harmony between the hands rhythmically to create contrast during the choruses.

Even with just the choices listed here, a pianist can think cinematically and create entire paintings of sound, constructing arrangements that flow effortlessly from enigmatic implied atmospheres surrounding a melody, through the first emanations of rhythm that convey the vernacular of a piano trio or even a big band, all the way through to a gigantic orchestral ending or to a delicate fade into the distance. **DB**

A graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, pianist/composer Anne Sajdera performs regularly in the Bay Area as a leader of her own ensembles and as a supporting player with such artists as Alexa Weber Morales and Terrence Brewer. Her first album, *Azul* (Bijuri Records, 2012), featured percussionist Airto Moreira. Sajdera's second album, 2018's *New Year*, features saxophonist Bob Mintzer, trumpeter Miroslav Hloucal and alto saxophonist Jan Feco. Sajdera has performed at the San Jose Jazz Festival, Fillmore Jazz Festival, The California Jazz Conservatory, Herbst Theater and SFJAZZ. Visit her online at annesajdera.com.

Figure 1: Two-voice texture of melody and bass

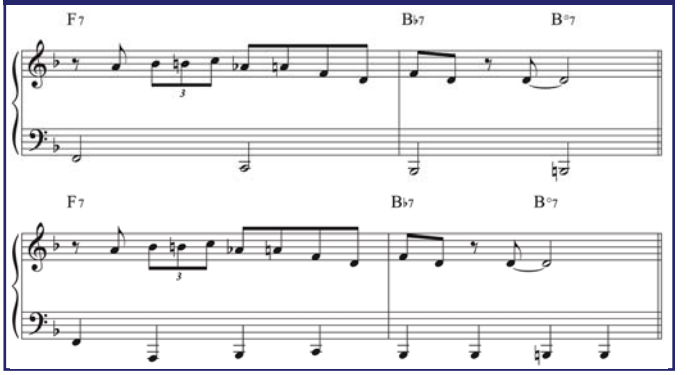


Figure 2: Four-part chorale-style harmony

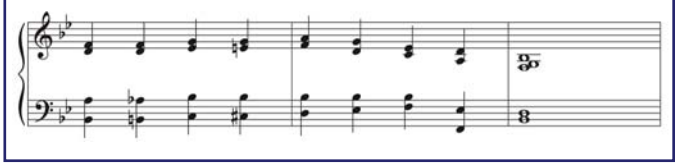


Figure 3: Freely moving multivoice counterpoint

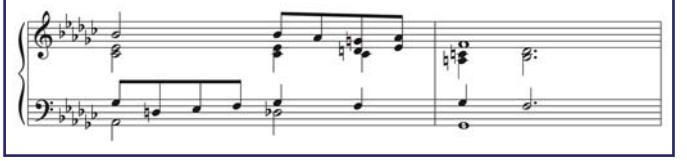


Figure 4: Arpeggiation

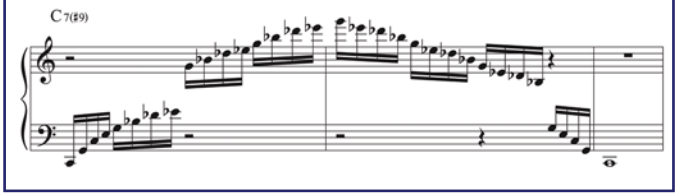


Figure 5: Blocked chords

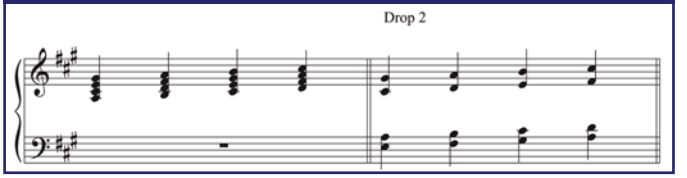


Figure 6a: Bossa nova groove

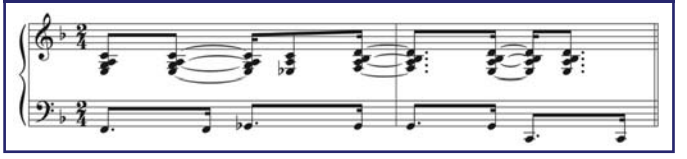
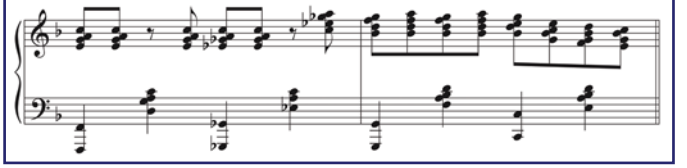


Figure 6b: Stride groove



Vijay Iyer

Vijay Iyer's Piano Solo on 'Geese'

Based on a 13-beat cycle, Vijay Iyer's solo on "Geese," from the pianist's 2015 album *Break Stuff* (ECM), is written here as alternating measures of 7/8 and 6/8 to make it easier to read and digest. But, as Iyer wrote to DownBeat: "We just treat it as a shuffle but with the first beat 'fattened'—it's notated as 13 parsed as 4+3+3+3, i.e. yet another Iyer-style 'fucked up backbeat.' … We honestly almost never play in 'changing time signatures' (even though it is commonly and erroneously reported that we do). This is meant to feel like a stable cycle, not a constantly shifting one." Also, the written harmonies on this transcription should be considered approximations at best. In the same email, Iyer noted, "I don't use chord symbols, ever."

This relates to the iconoclastic nature of Iyer's improvisation here. Traditionally, a jazz pianist solos by playing melodies with the right hand and chordal support with the left. In this case, Iyer creates more of a dialogue between his hands, with the left hand sometimes answering the right hand's melodies with melodies of its own, or sometimes adding to the upper melodies. The two hands almost never play simultaneously.

The left hand also has a tendency to emphasize the bass notes, and the downbeats as well, doubling bassist Stephan Crump in these instances. This makes the groove sound a bit more grounded, so the unusual backbeat and lack of conventional harmonies sounds a little less "out there." A lot less, actually. When Iver plays fifths with these (bars 9, 11, 19, 25, 27), it starts to sound almost conventional.

One place where he tends to avoid fifths is after the F (measures 5, 13 and 29). In these bars, he follows the low note with a minor seventh. On one hand, this makes it sound like an F dominant chord, but the emphasis on the ninth (bars 5–6, 13) and avoidance of the fifth can make it sound more like E♭/F. Though there is a subtle difference between these two harmonies, Iyer never really defines it as either. Maybe not using chord symbols is a good idea.

Since Iyer is using his hands separately, if the left hand is hitting the downbeats, that means the right hand is waiting until after to play its licks. (When I say "downbeats," I'm referring to beat 1 of the 7/8 measures, since the 6/8 is the second half of what's really a 13/8 bar). The first point that we hear the right hand playing on the downbeat is at bar 15, quite a ways into this improvisation. But after this, Iyer's right hand starts getting bolder, encroaching on the left hand's territory. Measure 17 is the next instance, though it's a bit tame, with the right hand doubling the root stated in the left. But bar 23 has the right hand taking over the beginning of the 7/8 measure again. On one hand, this takes away some of the groove that he'd been establishing, but at the same time it helps the solo develop.

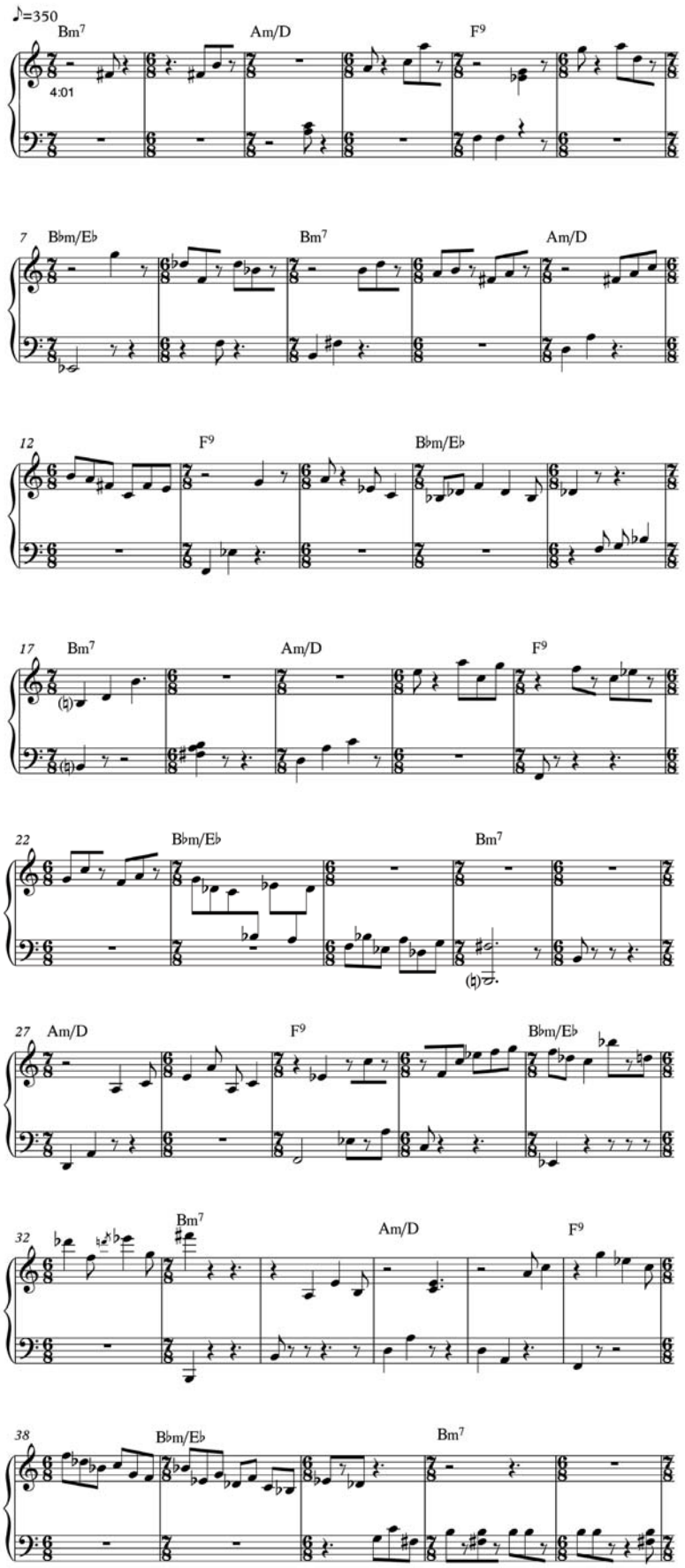
There are also rhythmic motifs that Iyer uses to hold his improvisation together. On the first part of the 7/8 bar, he has a tendency to play two quarter notes (measures 5, 9, 11, 13, 17, 19, 21, 27, 29). Bar 31 is the only instance of eighth notes happening in this spot, and by this time the rhythmic concept is well established. These quarter notes do help the odd meter groove more, but also take away from the shuffle feel it's based on.

Which brings us to the groups of threes that follow. In a shuffle, triplets have the emphasis on the first and third notes, usually skipping the second note and creating swing eighths. There is some of that here, as in the second half of bars 15, 27 and 31, the first half of bars 16 and 28, and all of bar 32. But more often we hear Iyer playing a "reverse shuffle," stressing the first two notes of the triplet. On one hand, this makes the groove less shuffle-like. But because he plays this pattern so often, it creates a groove of its own.

The descending line in bars 23–24, as it goes into the threes, presents a pattern of two ascending notes that descends to the next downbeat. Since the notes are rhythmically grouped in threes, we hear a polyrhythm. But starting at the end of bar 31, the line that leads us to the highest note, we hear the same two-note ascending pattern—but now it is not only ascending, but the polyrhythm has been taken away and Iyer plays it with conventional swing eighth notes. This is wonderful solo construction, as the listener is getting something that's similar but not the same, giving the improvisation a sense of development.

The construction of this improvisation (and the entire song) is a bit unconventional as well. After leading our ears down to the basement at bar 25, Iyer slowly brings us to the upper reaches, hitting the highest pitch so far in measure 33, supported by a very low root note (notice that the high note is once again the fifth of the low note). This would be a fantastic ending point, and in some sense it is, as Iyer goes on to play some rhythmic-sounding things. But after that, he continues improvising in a soloistic manner. **DB**

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



Korg minilogue XD

Expanded Functionality, Waveforms

There has been a renaissance in the analog synth world of late, and Korg has staked out its position as a major player in this realm. The company continues to push the envelope (pun intended) with the minilogue XD, a four-voice analog synth with some new digital options.

When the original minilogue was released in 2016, there were few options that could compete at the price point. And while there are more choices now, the new XD version adds a ton of functionality and depth. The original minilogue is still out there, so the XD represents a new tier in Korg's "-logue" line of synths, nestled between the minilogue and the prologue, borrowing features and strengths from both.

The XD has the same basic chassis as the minilogue, in the same form factor. The build quality is high, and the knobs and switches feel solid and beg to be tweaked. It features a slightly enlarged display, which functions as an oscilloscope most of the time but also gets you through the menus. There is a new joystick that feels great and adds some excellent functionality. It can be programmed to manipulate a number of parameters on both axes, saved per patch—a nice filter sweep can add a lot to your standard pitch-bend. There is also a portamento knob and a switch to bounce between the four voice modes: poly, unison, chord or arpeggiator. The buttons are the same hard-plastic rectangles, lit from behind and extremely solid-feeling. The keyboard is also the same as on the minilogue—a three-octave velocity-sensitive mini-keybed. The slim keys have a bit longer than standard mini keys, which I found made them easier to play. You can really fly on it once you get the feel.

Connectivity on the minilogue XD is everything you would expect: phones, stereo outs, MIDI in and out, a damper pedal jack and USB (MIDI and programming access). There are also two sync jacks, and two CV ins, a nod to the growing eurorack modular market, which will prove useful if you own a lot of the synths built in the past couple years.

The analog oscillators are the same as on the original mini, and they still sound nice and fat. They each sport saw, triangle and square (pulse waveform with PWM), plus pitch and a shape parameter. Waveforms can be synced, and there is a ring mod option, too, as well as a knob to control cross mod depth. This can give you some truly edgy growls and barks.

The new addition to the XD is the Multi Engine Oscillator, brought in from the flagship prologue. This is a great addition that allows not only for the preloaded bank of digital waveforms and noise waveforms, but there is also a user bank that allows you to load some of the great third-party waves out there, or design your own and drop them in with the XD librarian software. You can mix these three oscillators together to make some truly unique sounds, from huge and warm to pointed and shimmering.

The filter is the same 2-Pole on the prologue, and it includes a drive switch that allows you to add some serious bite to your sounds. I have always liked the sound of Korg's filters, and this one is no exception. The Filter EG is only 2-pole, but pretty snappy. The LFO has a few shapes, and is now beat-syncable—a welcome addition.

The step sequencer gets some upgrades from the mini. There are now 16 step buttons, which double as menu controls. This menu control system is very intuitive and quick, making for a nice interface touch.

Korg also added a new effects section to the XD, which includes reverbs, delays and a mod effect (one of either ensemble, phaser, flanger or chorus). These can be used all together or in any combination, and they are in stereo—an upgrade from the minilogue, which offered a single mono delay. The reverbs in particular sounded great, and there are plenty of onboard choices (10 types), as well as the option to load user-programmable reverbs. The Riser and Submarine verbs are particularly interesting. The delay also has a lot of variations, and now can be BPM-synced.

The minilogue XD is a well-designed, powerful synth. The only decision now is what you want/need in a synth. The original minilogue might be all you want, if you're only interested in the analog oscillators, or possibly the Korg monologue, if you only need a mono synth. But for just a little more money, you can get a whole lot more synth with the minilogue XD.

—Chris Neville

korgusa.com

Dexibell VIVO S7 PRO

Realistic Responsiveness, Unlimited Polyphony

Dexibell, a recent entrant to the digital piano market with its innovative VIVO series, has released the VIVO S7 PRO. Designed, engineered and manufactured in Italy, the VIVO S7 PRO stage piano represents the natural evolution of Dexibell's S7 model, introduced in 2017. Designed for live performance—and highly capable of functioning as a master keyboard controller—this latest addition to the VIVO line features updated, studio-quality sounds powered by Dexibell's cutting-edge T2L (True to Life) hybrid sampling/modeling technology. A 73-key VIVO S3 PRO model also is available.

On the gig, the VIVO S7 PRO did a remarkable job of simulating an acoustic piano's responsiveness. The feel was right there in the sweet spot—solid like the real thing, yet light enough for speed. Credit that to a Fatar TP/40 graded hammer action, with its weighted Ivory Feel Triple Contact keybed. I could switch quickly between great-sounding grands, uprights and electric pianos via the instrument's well-designed front control panel. Those and dozens of other onboard sounds—113 total, including synth brass, guitar, bass, chromatic percussion, strings and more—are all in high-definition 24-bit/48kHz audio, upping the realism factor significantly. A wave memory bank of 1.5GB gives users the ability to fully reconfigure the VIVO S7 PRO using downloadable sounds from the Dexibell library or from third-party sources.

The VIVO S7 PRO's powerful quad-core CPU is capable of processing 320 digital oscillators—a huge arsenal that allows for virtually unlimited polyphony. It simulates all elements of acoustic sound, including the

natural resonance and subtle mechanical noises of grand pianos. This is a vibrant instrument with deep sustain and incredible realism. The recorded waveform length of each individual note on the VIVO S7 PRO is between three and 15 times longer than the typical digital piano.

If you're a keyboardist whose setup incorporates everything from software plug-ins to synth hardware, you'll find that the VIVO S7 PRO puts the controls right where you need them. It has four MIDI zones (accessible via a button-touch), precision pitch and mod wheels, seven rotary encoders, two assignable switches, multiple pedal inputs and MIDI in/out/thru ports, as well as USB-to-host and USB-to-device.

Exploring the Keyboard Mode section of the VIVO S7 PRO, it took me no more than a couple of seconds to figure out how to layer piano with strings and other instruments, split the keyboard between any two sounds or add an upright-bass line in my left hand.

There is an ample supply of effects (including 24 reverbs) onboard the VIVO S7 PRO, all of them easy to control and tweakable to the max. They sound especially groovy when applied to the electric pianos—saturate a clav patch with funky wah-wah, overdrive the wurli until you can feel it growl, or send the rhodes spinning through a phased-out time-warp.

A recommended accessory is Dexibell's DX HF7 Headphone, tuned to maximize the reproduction of digital piano sound. These comfortable, compact phones bring out the best of the VIVO S7 PRO and come in a cool carrying case. *—Ed Enright*

dexibell.com

Yamaha CP88 Digital Stage Piano

Stellar Voices, Reimagined Interface

With the introduction of the 73-key CP73 and 88-key CP88, Yamaha has virtually reinvented the digital stage piano. Designed for working keyboard players, these new instruments offer Yamaha's best piano, electric piano and synth sounds, plus a completely reimagined user interface that simplifies operation and enhances the overall playing experience.

The CP series features three main sections, which can be split or combined as desired: Piano, Electric Piano and Sub. The grand and upright pianos sound remarkable and include voices sampled from a Yamaha CFX, a Bösendorfer Imperial, a Yamaha U1 upright and a Yamaha CP80 electric grand. Selectable damper resonance adds even more realism to the Piano section.

The Electric Piano section offers variations on three 1970s-era models of the classic tine piano, bright and dark versions of the wurli, a bevy of clean and dirty clav sounds, and a collection of DX7 patches ranging from woody and crisp to mellow and shimmering. Effects like tremelo, touch wah, phaser and chorus do a great job of providing the proper ambiance for each electric piano emulation.

The Sub section of the CP series offers strings, pads, organs, chromatic percussion and other voices suitable for layering. Among this section's effects is an outstanding rotary speaker simulation that tonewheel organ players surely will appreciate. Further sonic sculpting can be done using the attack, release depth and speed controls.

All of these sections are neatly arranged into a one-to-one user interface that eliminates deep menu-diving and gives players the ability to make lightning-quick decisions and adjustments as they play. There are independent controls for sound selection, volume, tone, on/off, split and octave-shift. Voice-and-effects setups are savable as Live Sets that are easy to recall via eight buttons. Seamless Sound Switching ensures that sustained notes will continue to ring out even as a new Live Set is selected. This is vital for executing smooth transitions on the gig.

I play-tested the CP88 and found its natural-wood graded-hammer keyboard to be great for playing all types of voices and sound combinations, and for making the most of the instrument's velocity-sensitive nature. Its synthetic ebony and ivory keys provide an authentic, textured feel and are among the finest you can find in a mid-priced digital piano.

Master effects include a tempo-syncable delay and lush reverb. For tweaking the CP to room acoustics, a three-band global master EQ offers a sweepable midrange band.

Thanks to internal Flash memory, the CP73 and CP88 are expandable. Yamaha will add acoustic and electric piano voices (as well as other sounds) in planned OS updates.

Whatever demands modern gigs might throw at keyboardists, the CP73 and CP88 stage pianos stand ready to deliver stellar sounds and unmatched playability in a highly flexible, brilliantly reimagined format. *—Ed Enright*

usa.yamaha.com

1. Grand Piano Emulation

Roland's LX708, the flagship of the company's LX700 series of digital pianos, includes an eight-speaker Acoustic Projection System and PureAcoustic Modeling technology that emulates the way that acoustic pianos produce sound. The instrument's Hybrid Grand Keyboard has a longer key action compared to most digital pianos. The pivot point of each key is set further back, so you don't need to press harder the further up the key you play.

More info: roland.com

2. Samples + Synthesis

Sequential's Prophet X is a bi-timbral, eight-voice stereo, 16-voice mono/stereo, 32-voice paraphonic synth with a newly developed sound engine that powers two simultaneous 16-bit, 48kHz sample-based instruments, plus two high-resolution digital oscillators—all processed through analog filters. Sample import and mapping are done via a free software application created by 8Dio. On the synth side, the Prophet X gives you the power of a classic Prophet.

More info: sequential.com

3. Breath Power

Yamaha's P37E Pianica is a breath-powered keyboard instrument featuring a rich, warm tone and simple, elegant design. The sound of the P37E is best described as between a harmonica and an accordion, but with more body and depth than other melodica-type instruments. Available in black or brown, the P37E comes with its own padded carrying case and an extension pipe mouthpiece.

More info: usa.yamaha.com

4. Motorized Stand

König & Meyer's 18800 Omega-E is a height-adjustable keyboard stand that's ergonomically optimized for playing while seated or standing. Made from ultra-durable steel, the stand features an integrated electric motor that does the adjusting for you based on four different preset height settings.

More info: k-m.de

5. Expression Dimensions

The K-Board Pro 4 from Pearl Corp. and Keith McMillen Instruments is a four-octave MIDI keyboard controller with Smart Sensor Fabric technology that allows multiple dimensions of touch sensitivity in each key. It sends attack velocity, release velocity, continuous pressure, horizontal position and vertical position data to offer the deepest level of musical expression.

More info: pearldrum.com; keithmcmillen.com

6. Padded Bags

The KBA4000 Keyboard Bag series from On-Stage includes three different models to accommodate 49-, 61- and 88-key instruments. Constructed with a weather-resistant nylon exterior, the bags feature a dense, ¾-inch interior foam padding. The 49- and 61-key models include backpack-style straps and carry handles, while the 88-key model has sturdy wheels for ease of transport.

More info: on-stage.com

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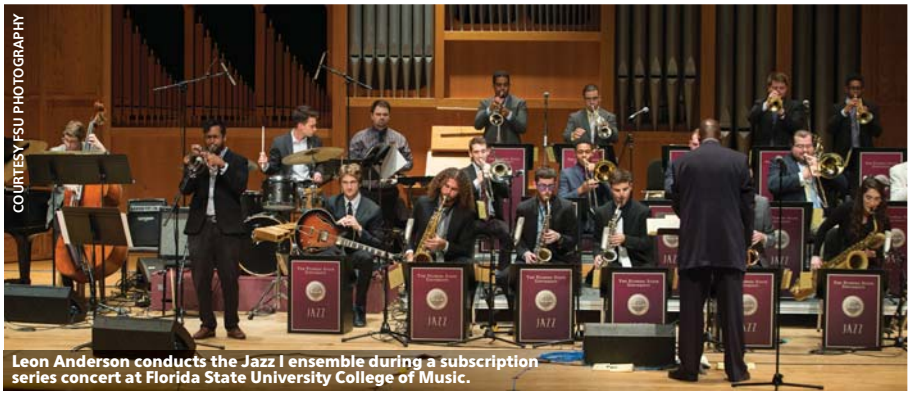
COURTESY FSU PHOTOGRAPHY

Leon Anderson conducts the Jazz I ensemble during a subscription series concert at Florida State University College of Music.

Florida State Preps Music Students for Diverse Careers

WHEN DRUMMER LEON ANDERSON started teaching at Florida State University in Tallahassee 21 years ago, he was one of three jazz professors at the school. He realized the program had plenty of room to grow. Now, thanks to a full faculty and several distinguished alumni, the jazz program has become a strong presence on campus.

"We are diligent about teaching the tradition of the music, making sure [students] understand the meaning of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Count Basie, but also being open to the fact that we're living in modern times," said Anderson, director of the Jazz Studies program. "We don't only do swing and bebop. We encourage students to compose music of the tradition, but at the same time be reflective of modern music, too."

Currently, 51 of FSU's 1,050 music students major in jazz, according to bassist and professor Rodney Jordan. One high-profile mentor is pianist Marcus Roberts, an alumnus who teaches on campus. FSU offers a bachelor of arts in music, a bachelor of music in performance and a master of music in performance. (Jazz Studies is a specialized studies program for degree-seeking College of Music students.) FSU also has a Liberal Arts Studies program for music majors, who can pursue a track that emphasizes general music, sacred music or commercial music.

"Under the commercial music umbrella, you're getting a music degree but you're also getting a minor in business," Jordan explained. "It's connected with the College of Business and you might study film scoring or recording. We have a full recoding studio with state-of-the-art equipment. There is an entrepreneurship component as well—how to present concerts. They might learn about contracts and various other business practices. It's a well-rounded professional degree."

Music students are encouraged to perform in the university's numerous ensembles, which include three big bands and several jazz combos. Tallahassee's location, near other music hubs, is beneficial to students, too.

"We're roughly a four-hour radius from Atlanta, Jacksonville, New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama," Jordan said. "You get to study where jazz actually came from and interact with the cultures that are still vibrant there. Culture in New Orleans is different than in Charleston, South Carolina. The Gullah culture in Charleston and Creole culture in New Orleans are unique. We encourage all of our students to visit these places."

Trumpeter Etienne Charles took advantage of these offerings when he was a jazz major at FSU from 2002 to 2006. A native of Trinidad, his albums have received considerable acclaim for his twists on Caribbean styles. He credits his studies at FSU with enhancing his outlook.

"When I was there, FSU had a Balinese Gamelan ensemble, a Chinese music ensemble, blues lab, salsa, a Ugandan ensemble, an early music ensemble, gospel choir and many other groups to broaden students' perspectives," said Charles, an associate professor of jazz trumpet at Michigan State University. "It wasn't just a Western European or American perspective."

Jordan said that social interactions on campus are key to preparing young players to succeed in the music industry.

"Everyone is so busy now with their computers—it's just the way our society is today," Jordan said. "I work on getting students to realize that the music goes way beyond taking courses. They have to get to know each other, and that makes the music better. That's the most rewarding part of this for me."

—Aaron Cohen

School Notes ⟩


ROY ELDRIDGE COLLECTION AT SHERMAN JAZZ MUSEUM, PARTNER TO THE PORTAL TO TEXAS HISTORY, UNT LIBRARIES

Gene Krupa (left) and Roy Eldridge, circa 1942

Eldridge Artifacts: The Sherman Jazz Museum in Sherman, Texas, has acquired the Roy Eldridge Collection. It consists primarily of photos of the jazz trumpeter, spanning the 1930s to the '80s. The collection also includes datebooks, advertisements, festival programs, itineraries and other memorabilia documenting the life of Eldridge, a member of the DownBeat Hall of Fame. Scholars can view the photos online at the Portal to Texas History website. Founded in 2010, the museum also houses thousands of jazz LPs.
shermanjazzmuseum.com; texashistory.unt.edu

New Degree: On May 17, the College of Performing Arts at The New School in New York granted degrees to 13 students from its M.A. in Arts Management and Entrepreneurship program, which was launched in fall 2017. The program is for active artists who want to add skills in areas such as creative producing, community development and engagement, leadership, entrepreneurship, finance, fundraising and marketing. The class included four dual-degree students who attended one of the three conservatories at CoPA and who added a fifth year, graduating with both a bachelor's and master's degree; and nine direct-entry students who graduated from other universities before enrolling in the two-year program.
newschool.edu/performing-arts

Bridges Winner: Ravinia's Steans Music Institute in Highland Park, Illinois, announced that the winner of its second annual Bridges competition is Michael Orenstein, for his composition *Staircase*. He was awarded the David Baker Prize and $2,500. The competition is devoted to original compositions scored for string quartet and jazz rhythm section. The jury included pianist Billy Childs and bassist Rufus Reid. RSMI alumni performed Orenstein's piece at Ravinia's Bennett Gordon Hall on June 7. ravinia.org/page/steans

CalArts Album: The 30th annual *CalArts Jazz* album features 11 original compositions by students at California Institute of the Arts. The album was recorded at Capitol Studios in Hollywood on April 17–18. music.calarts.edu

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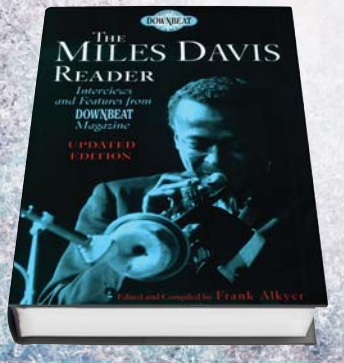

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Ralph Peterson

Ralph Peterson has raised the Art Blakey flag high in 2019, the centennial year of the master drummer's birth. During the latter portion of Blakey's career, when he led a big band and desired a second drummer—or needed a drummer to hold auditions for his band the Jazz Messengers—he would often call upon Peterson.

The drummer/bandleader recently released two Blakey tributes: *I Remember Bu,* by his GenNext Big Band, consisting of students from Berklee College of Music (where Peterson is on faculty); and *Legacy Alive,* by a crew of Jazz Messengers alumni known as The Messenger Legacy. Both albums are on Peterson's Onyx label. After leading the GenNext Big Band through an explosive set at the 15th annual DC Jazz Festival in Washington, D.C., on June 16, Peterson sat down for a Blindfold Test.


ZACH JOHNSON

Ralph Peterson takes the Blindfold Test at the 2019 DC Jazz Festival.

Albert "Tootie" Heath

"Reets And I" (*Philadelphia Beat*, Sunnyside, 2015) Heath, drums; Ethan Iverson, piano; Ben Street, bass.

That's an amazing composition from the Bud Powell book. I remember playing that piece with Walter Davis. The piano player smacks of Geri Allen and Jaki Byard. If it's not either of those two, it's someone of that ilk. I sat up trying to hear the texture of the ride cymbal, because the drummer was playing very Roy Haynes-esque, but it didn't have that quintessential flat ride sound of Roy. 5 stars.

Manu Katché

"Keep On Trippin'" (*Third Round*, ECM, 2010) Katché, drums; Tore Brunborg, soprano saxophone; Jason Rebello, piano; Pino Palladino, electric bass; Jacob Young, guitar.

Often you can identify a piece if you can identify the sound of the drummer, or the sound of one particular player, or the sound of the recording. For a moment, I thought it might be Terri Lyne Carrington. Then I thought it might be Marcus Baylor. This is the kind of jazz that I was first introduced to. It has that pocket you can dance to.

Neal Smith

"The Cup Bearers" (*Some Of My Favorite Songs Are ...*, NAS Music, 2005) Smith, drums; Mark Whitfield, guitar; Rick Germanson, piano; Peter Washington, bass.

Something wants me to say Rick Germanson on piano, Neal Smith on drums. Neal, that's my dog; we have neighboring offices at Berklee. He has such an amazing, nuanced touch, and I know he loves this tune, so I thought it was Neal's record.

Sons Of Kemet

"Burn" (*Inner Babylon*, Naim, 2013) Shabaka Hutchings, tenor saxophone; Oren Marshall, tuba; Tom Skinner, Seb Rochford, drums.

Is that Pheeroan akLaff? It reminds me of the music I used to play with David Murray and the music of that tour circuit: Craig Harris and Tailgater's Tales, Hamiet Bluiett, Bob Stewart. I was able to identify the sound of tuba, as opposed to bass, which led me to think that the group is Europe-based. I like it.

Randy Weston

"Pam's Waltz" (*The Randy Weston Trio*, Riverside, 1955) Weston, piano; Sam Gill, bass; Art Blakey, drums.

Two pianists come to mind right away: Horace Parlan and Walter Bishop Jr. I don't know if it's them because there's a quality there that I know from my association with Walter Davis. It sounds like it was written for a movie. The role of the drums here is pretty low-key—Connie Kay comes to mind, maybe Vernel Fournier. [*after*] It just goes to show that artists the caliber of Art Blakey can't be put in a box. His brilliance and his ability to be subtle and supportive was just as powerful as his ability to be bombastic and a leader.

Terri Lyne Carrington

"Jazz Is A Spirit" (*Jazz Is A Spirit*, ACT, 2002) Carrington, drums; Wallace Roney, trumpet; Darryl "Munyungo" Jackson, Ed Barguiarena, percussion; Danny Robinson, guitar; Greg Kurstin, keyboards; Malcolm Jamal Warner, spoken word.

I thought it was Keyon Harrold on trumpet. [*after*] I didn't think it was Wallace [Roney], but what I find most interesting about it is Wallace's ability to not wade too deep into the harmonic explorations of Miles [Davis] playing against the tonality. And that made it deceptive to me, because usually Wallace's connection to Miles is obvious and direct, so this more subtle approach is nice to hear. There's a lot of cats out here who can do it, but Wallace is to Miles what I try to be to Art Blakey.

Matt Wilson's Arts & Crafts

"Teen Town" (*An Attitude For Gratitude*, Palmetto, 2012) Wilson, drums; Terell Stafford, trumpet; Gary Versace, organ; Martin Wind, bass.

Is this Joey [DeFrancesco]? I like it. It's a fresh approach to this Weather Report tune. This was one of the first complicated pieces of fusion that got my attention in high school. This was [originally] on *Heavy Weather* with Wayne Shorter, Joe Zawinul, Alex Acuña and Jaco [Pastorius].

[*after*] Matt and I are the same generation, so we were probably similarly influenced. I really respect what Matt does as a leader.

Mike Reed's People, Places & Things

"Sharon" (*Clean On The Corner*, 482 Music, 2012) Reed, drums; Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Tim Haldeman, tenor saxophone; Jason Roebke, bass; Craig Taborn, piano.

Vijay Iyer? It reminds me of work that Greg Osby, Gary Thomas and Steve Coleman have done together. The tune is based on Miles Davis' "Four," but they're playing on the upper harmonic partials of the tune. It swings and it's out, and I like that.

Olodum

"Olodum Maré" (*Pela Vida*, Abril, 2002) Various musicians: vocals, drums, guitar.

Samba school! Duduka da Fonseca? I love the feeling of this music of Brazil. My people are from Trinidad and Barbados, islands closest to Brazil. That music is connected to Ghana and Ghanaian drumming. Other than Africa, there are more Africans in Brazil than anywhere else. I love that. **DB**

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

Photography by Adam MacBlane

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