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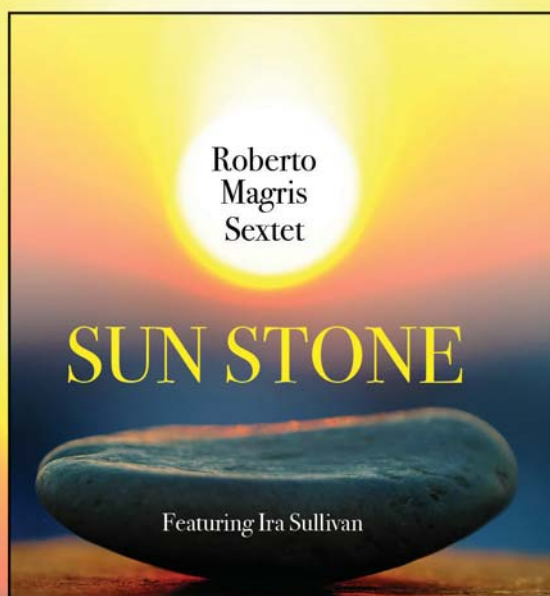
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FEBRUARY 2020

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'Creating Culture'

INTERVIEW BY MARQUIS HILL

Trumpeter Marquis Hill interviews one of his key influences: Nicholas Payton. In a wide-ranging conversation, the elder trumpeter discusses the music industry, and incorporating his own vocals and keyboard work into concerts and recordings. Journalist Phillip Lutz contributed to this article, which spotlights one of the most intriguing musicians on the scene today.

Members of Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band during a recording session



JOE MEYER

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Cover photo of Nicholas Payton shot by Jimmy & Dena Katz at Smoke in New York City on Nov. 1. Info for this venue is at smokejazz.com.

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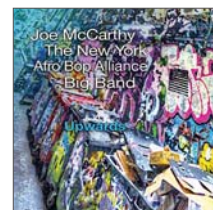
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Nicholas Payton (left) was interviewed by Marquis Hill for DownBeat.

Pure, Poetic Payton

NICHOLAS PAYTON EXUDES CONFIDENCE, BOTH ON AND OFF THE bandstand. He is a man confident in his musical abilities, his artistic vision and his views of society.

In our January issue, critic John Murph's review of Payton's new trio album, *Relaxin' With Nick*, concludes with this line: "Say what you will about Payton's polemics, there's no denying his artistry."

This month's cover story digs into those polemics—as well as the music on the two-disc concert album, which was recorded at the New York City jazz club Smoke, and released on the venue's affiliated label, Smoke Sessions Records. The album highlights the magic that transpired when Payton (trumpet, piano, Fender Rhodes, vocals, effects and samples) teamed up with two revered veterans: bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington.

After the DownBeat staff devoured the album, we decided to set up an interview and a photo shoot with Payton at Smoke. We commissioned acclaimed trumpeter Marquis Hill to conduct the interview. The results weren't exactly what we expected—they were better.

Payton's comments are those of a thoughtful artist who has a deep sense of history and a probing conceptualization of where his work fits into the rich river of music created in North America during the past 400 years.

DownBeat hired journalist Phillip Lutz to sit in on the interview with Hill and Payton, not really to moderate it, but rather to be "a fly on the wall." Lutz also attended a Payton show at Smoke and wrote the potent introduction to the interview, which begins on page 22.

On Dec. 17, Payton posted on Twitter, "Jazz is not the proper name for anybody's music. The truth is that jazz as a word is vulgar and profane and we should tear it down" We deeply respect his view, while simultaneously seeing the usefulness of the term "jazz club." In this issue of DownBeat, we present our International Jazz Venue Guide—a list of places (like Smoke) where you can hear the types of music our magazine spotlights each month.

We hope this issue of DownBeat sparks discussion. Let us know what you think. Do you agree with Payton's points? Is our venue guide helpful? Do our articles on Jimi Hendrix, Kris Davis and Gordon Goodwin adequately illuminate their diverse artistry? We welcome your constructive criticism. Send an email to editor@downbeat.com and please put "Chords & Discords" in the subject line.

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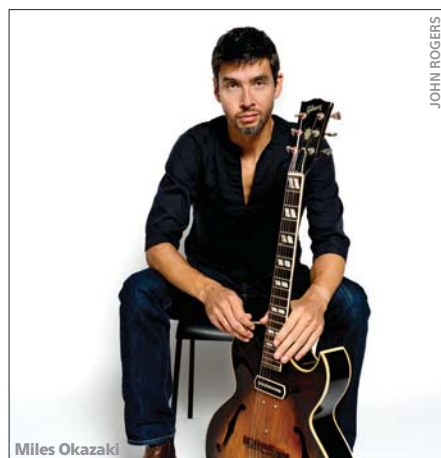
Chords & Discords

Miles of Intelligence

I always enjoy checking out the Blindfold Test, which reveals a lot about a participant's musical knowledge. Your January guest, Miles Okazaki, proved to be an extremely intelligent and thoroughly insightful analyst.

However, all the tunes in this edition of the Blindfold Test were from the period of 2015 to 2018, which fits a recent trend of utilizing an alarmingly narrow span of time. I have to wonder, is DownBeat afraid the artist won't be able to identify Joe Pass or a young Pat Martino? Or better yet, after a contestant is stumped by a guitar trio, tell them it was one musician and that his name was Lenny Breau.

MARK WRIGHT
WARSAW, NEW YORK



Miles Okazaki

JOHN ROGERS

Keep it to Yourself

After many years as a subscriber, I have let my subscription to DownBeat lapse. The main reason is the left-wing politics sprinkled through so many of the articles in the last few years.

In Nat Hentoff's book *Listen to the Stories*, Bing Crosby was quoted as saying, "I never thought it was proper for a performer to use his influence to get anyone to vote one way or another."

Personally, I really don't care what an artist's views are, but if they lead with those views too often, I won't buy their music.

DAN DARRAGH
GOLDEN, COLORADO

my radio." The internet and streaming have changed the game.

I live in Baraboo, Wisconsin. My state is the home of award-winning cheeses and other agricultural products, but there's little jazz on the radio. Thanks to the internet, I have found some great jazz stations. My favorite is WDCB (90.9 FM, from the College of DuPage in Illinois). In second place is WBGO (88.3 FM, from Newark, New Jersey). Please help me expand my choices by providing me with a list of other stations to check out.

BRYANT HAZARD
BARABOO, WISCONSIN

Barber Among the Best

I was quite disappointed to not see Patricia Barber's album *Higher* on the Best Albums of 2019 list in your January 2020 issue. Were the Best Albums list contributors handcuffed into only considering releases made available in mass distribution—as opposed to online direct purchases?

BOB MIHORA
DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

Editor's Note: The Best Albums of 2019 list compiles the titles that received a 5-, 4½- or 4-star review in the previous 12 issues of DownBeat. Instead of publishing a review of *Higher*, we ran an article on Patricia Barber in our August 2019 issue. The article is posted at downbeat.com.

Radio Is a Sound Salvation

How about doing an article on the Top 10 jazz radio stations? Thirty years ago, such an article would have been meaningless: Readers would have looked at the list and said, "So what? I can't get any of those stations on

Thriving in a Fractured World

A big shoutout to Chris Potter who, in the article about the Crosscurrents Trio in your November issue, speaks for (almost) all of us when he says, "In a deeper level, music is about sharing an experience, the generosity of the musicians and the desire, through music, to make something that's bigger than any single one of the participants." Those are words to live by as a musician and as a proactive citizen in this fractured world.

DAN WILENSKY
PORTLAND, OREGON

Timeless Art Down Under

It was with great interest that I read Matthew Kassel's article on trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and his love of the work of the sculptor Auguste Rodin ("The Rodin Chronicles," June 2019).

Should Mr. Pelt ever play Brisbane, we would like to show him the four Rodin sculptures we have in the Queensland Art Gallery.

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Nashville session player, Bob James,
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Beat

Samara McLendon Wins Sarah Vaughan Vocal Competition

Singers typically become more sophisticated interpreters of lyrics as they grow older and gain life experience. So, one can only imagine how the years to come will improve Samara McLendon, an immensely talented 20-year-old who took first place on Nov. 24 at the 8th Annual Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition.

With the interpretive skills of a far more seasoned singer, McLendon exhibited a mature sense of swing and a husky beauty in her lower register to emerge as the winner in the competition, held at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

McLendon, a Bronx resident who is a junior in the jazz studies program at the State University of New York at Purchase, received a \$5,000 cash prize and was guaranteed a performance slot at the 2020 Newport Jazz Festival.

On all three of her songs at the finals, the flexibility and purity that characterized McLendon's style easily referenced Vaughan—McLendon's idol—who was only a teenager herself when she won the Apollo Theater's amateur singing competition in 1942, in a career-launching performance. But in McLendon's horn-like scat singing, she evoked her other great influence: Ella Fitzgerald. With such an impressive toolkit, McLendon was well equipped to turn a song's lyrics into a meaningful story for the listener and herself.

"When I'm singing, I want to tell a story, and I want to do it my way," she told *DownBeat*.

Aided by networking skills, this gifted newcomer to the New York jazz scene already has managed to land gigs at Dizzy's Club, Mezzrow and the Blue Note, and perform alongside trum-



Samara McLendon accepts her plaque for winning the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition on Nov. 24.

peter Jon Faddis and pianist Barry Harris.

With her victory at NJPAC, McLendon joined the ranks of past winners, such as Cyrille Aimée (2012), Jazzmeia Horn (2013) and last year's winner, Laurin Talese.

This year, second place and a \$1,500 cash prize went to Daniela Spalletta, a Sicilian-born vocalist, composer, arranger and lyricist who has generated acclaim in Italy. Viktorija Gečytė, a Paris-based native of Lithuania, finished third and took home \$500.

The three-round singing competition—the final event of this year's TD James Moody Jazz Festival at NJPAC—was open to solo vocalists who were not signed to a major label. Nearly 600 contestants from more than 30 countries applied as competitors. Under the contest format, each singer performed two songs and then returned to sing one more.

The judges for the finals were six-time

Grammy-winning bassist Christian McBride; Grammy-winning vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater; vocalist Jane Monheit; WBGO DJ Monifa Brown; and record producer Matt Pierson. Accompanying the singers was a trio led by pianist Sergio Salvatore, with bassist Gregory Jones and drummer Buddy Williams.

McLendon's decision to open with "Sophisticated Lady" and "Perdido"—two songs from the canon of Duke Ellington—proved wise, effectively showcasing her versatility as both a singer of ballads and a hard swinger.

The contest featured both a high level of skill and a diversity of vocal styles. The host for the finals, WBGO on-air personality Gary Walker, congratulated members of the audience for being on hand "to witness the start of some spectacular careers."

"You can legitimately say, 'I knew them when,'" Walker said. —Michael Barris

Riffs >



SFJAZZ Collective

Streaming Jazz: SFJAZZ and Sirius radio have teamed to offer *Live From SFJAZZ*, a monthly broadcast of archival recordings from the Bay Area nonprofit that airs the first Saturday of each month at 8 p.m. EST. A rebroadcast follows Wednesday at midnight. The first installment of the show aired Dec. 7 and revisited a 2019 performance by vocalist Jazzmeia Horn. The second episode, slated to air Jan. 4, captures the SFJAZZ Collective working through music from Sly and the Family Stone's *Stand!* and Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way*.

sfjazz.org

Peterson Fest Premiere: As part of the third annual Oscar Peterson Jazz Festival, the namesake pianist's *AFRICA* suite is set to debut in Toronto at Koerner Hall on Feb. 12—more than 10 years after his death. An ensemble including pianist Benny Green, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Lewis Nash directed by John Clayton is set to perform the music, which initially was completed in 1983.

opjazzfest.org

Simon's New Post: Pianist Edward Simon has been appointed associate artistic director of Ridgeway Arts, a nonprofit label and presentation organization helmed by bassist Jeff Denson. "I view this as an excellent opportunity to bring forth my vision as a recording artist, performer, producer and educator," Simon said in a press release. "I look forward to working with Jeff Denson and Ridgeway's outstanding team." The imprint also is planning the release of *Edward Simon 25*, an album looking back at the pianist's two-plus decades of recorded work.

ridgewayarts.org

In Memoriam: Jan Erik Kongshaug, a Norwegian guitarist and engineer who helped produce hundreds of albums for labels like ECM, CBS and Polydor, and helmed Rainbow Studios in Oslo, died Nov. 15. He was 75. ... **Wee Willie Walker**, a Twin Cities soul and blues singer who recently had recorded in California, died Nov. 19 at his Minnesota home. He was 77.



Willie Jones III has worked on a pair of releases for the newly established Night Is Alive imprint, helmed by Kathy Moses Salem.

Night Is Alive Partners with Drummer Jones

"WE STARTED OFF VERY SMALL: I WAS only doing management for jazz musicians," said Kathy Moses Salem, managing director of Akron, Ohio-based Night Is Alive Productions. "But musicians come to me all the time, asking 'Can you do this, can you do that?' We realized that there were bigger needs, and we ought to be 360-degrees."

That's how Salem's five-person company expanded from focusing on artist management to a mind-boggling list of services. Night Is Alive's purview includes audience research, social media curation, digital and physical media design, advertising and promotion, and recording and production for the company's new eponymous record label.

But Salem, at 75, is a newcomer to most of these aspects of the music business. And at first, she didn't even plan on working as an artist manager. Salem's background includes advertising at the Cleveland Plain-Dealer and lobbying in Washington, D.C. But after her husband passed away in 2004, she decided to channel her energy into a lifelong love of music.

She began with charity events in 2008. Then, when the new BLU Jazz club opened in Akron, she booked tenor saxophonist Harry Allen there. "One thing led to another and Harry asked me if I wanted to manage him," she said. "I'd had no intention, but I said, 'I'd love to.' The next thing I know I have [drummer] Willie Jones III, [saxophonist] Jeff Rupert, [pianist] Bill Cunliffe, [saxophonist] Ralph Moore, [trumpeter] Terrell Stafford, and [pianist] Donald Vega. They liked the way I handled stuff, and liked me."

"It's the energy she brings to it," Jones said. "Her enthusiasm and desire to be part of the process—all that is a big deal. That's what makes it work."

Salem decided to expand into a one-stop shop after attending Jazz Congress, an industry

conference, in New York during 2019. "People who run festivals and book big clubs were speaking, and these people said, 'It's up to the musicians to get people into the seats. They have to do their own marketing,'" she recalled. "Most musicians have no idea how to do that."

She spent months reorganizing Night Is Alive, hiring media- and marketing-focused employees and building a mailing list and database of 60,000 venues and journalists. Starting a record label wasn't on her agenda, but it happened serendipitously when she asked Jones to organize an all-star band for a concert in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The WJ3 All Stars, which featured Moore, Stafford and Vega, among others, played to a sold-out crowd. "When they came out, they wanted to know if we had CDs," Salem said. "So, we did *Lovers And Love Songs*, my very first CD."

Although Jones runs his own WJ3 label, he happily produced the Night Is Alive record, as well as leading the session. "You can't have too many people presenting this music," he explained. "If I could be on the ground floor for a new one, that's attractive to me."

Lovers And Love Songs, released in September, was followed by *Night Is Alive's First Christmas*, where Jones and a batch of top-tier players accompany vocalist Christie Dashiell on classic repertoire.

Though her client list is small, the scope of her work is not. "I got six guys now, and I can barely keep track of them," she said. "I need to find more bodies, more staff."

But Jones is confident that she'll persevere: "You're talking about jazz, so it's a challenge. Are you ready to lose money? Are you ready for a marathon, not a sprint? Most people aren't, even if they say they are. But Kathy has a realistic view; I think Night Is Alive will be around for a long time."

—Michael J. West

Fefer Reveals 'Testament'

SAXOPHONIST AVRAM FEFER IS DRAWN to musicians who push the outer limits of what's possible. Ornette Coleman, Wayne Shorter and Eric Dolphy are key influences for Fefer, who has worked with legends like the Last Poets, Archie Shepp and David Murray.

Born in San Francisco and raised in Washington State, Fefer currently is based in Brooklyn, having logged time with forward-looking ensembles like Adam Rudolph's Go: Organic Orchestra and Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber—and leads a trio with bassist Eric Revis and drummer Chad Taylor. That unit expands to a quartet with the addition of adventurous guitarist Marc Ribot on its new album, *Testament* (Clean Feed).

Fefer has a long history with his trio mates, having first performed with Taylor in the mid-'90s. The bandleader and Revis met around the turn of the century, performing occasionally at the Tap Bar in New York's Knitting Factory.

Revis, a longtime member of the Branford Marsalis Quartet, reflected on their initial meeting: "I was really impressed by his honesty in playing and the tunes he was doing. From my perspective, having just got out of the Betty Carter gig and being part of the first wave of [players at] Smalls, I didn't hear many cats deal-

ing with Don Cherry tunes and such."

The saxophonist has deep respect for the bassist's style, describing it as "like a tree, where the roots go down so firmly that I can jump around, swinging on all the branches. His sound just gives you confidence—it's all syrup and wood and strength, something very beautiful."

The trio would go on to record a pair of albums, 2009's *Ritual* and 2011's *Eliyahu*, before parting ways. But in 2018, just as Fefer was ready to reunite them, an opportunity fell into his lap. He'd been playing at Brooklyn's Bar Lunático, and had seen Ribot's name on the schedule, too. "I wrote to Marc and said, 'I have this date; do you want to do it?'" Fefer recalled. "He wrote back, 'I'm not available that day, but if you ever want to record your material, I would love to do it.'"

Four of the songs on the new album—the title track, "Essaouira," "Wishful Thinking" and Taylor's "Song For Dyani"—are rerecordings from the trio's earlier albums. The new versions are longer and looser, with fierce interplay between saxophone and guitar that occasionally recall Ribot's 2005 album *Spiritual Unity*, an album on which he paid tribute to Albert Ayler.

For *Testament*, the ensemble had just one day to rehearse and another to record, which made



Avram Fefer expands his trio by adding guitarist Marc Ribot.

ROBERT I. SUTHERLAND-COHEN

Fefer a bit nervous going in. But when he listened back to the results, he was pleasantly shocked.

"There's an edge-of-your-seat quality to the music, a bubbly effusive energy that they created," Fefer said. "It's like being in the middle of a storm and you don't know what happened [until you listen] later."

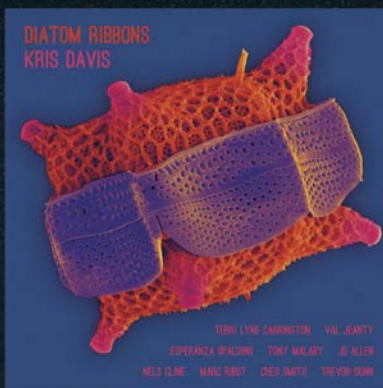
Revis has a theory about what makes the trio distinctive. "It's been my experience that musicians who are prone to a more experimental way of approaching things often omit groove ... or at least put less emphasis on it," he said. "With this group, all is relevant." —Philip Freeman



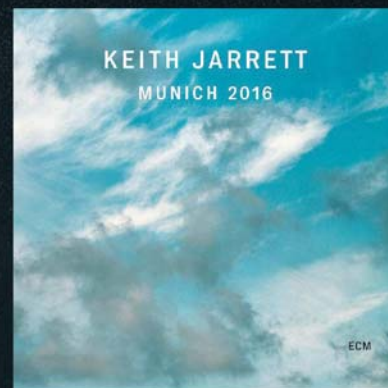
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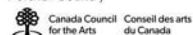


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Muriel Grossmann has lived all over Europe and draws influences from music of African origin.

COURTESY ARGEMS

Grossmann Gets to the Roots of Rhythm

MURIEL GROSSMANN CHARACTERIZES HER QUINTET'S LATEST album, *Reverence*, as a spiritual-jazz effort—the sum of her devotion to a lifelong exploration of rhythms, particularly those of African origin.

The album is Grossmann's attempt to combine what she calls the “reassuring elements of spiritual-jazz” and its antecedents. “Spiritual-jazz has its roots in African music, modal jazz, gospel, blues, free-jazz and Eastern music,” she said. And her explorations of African music and its percussion have helped forge her connection with polyrhythms.

“Every part of the African continent has a very specific sound set and focus points, but the way to play it is very similar to jazz,” said Grossmann. “I was always interested in composing melodies that were part of the poly-rhythmic structure, making the band sound like a drum.”

Born in Paris and raised in Vienna, Grossmann traveled to Tunisia and Morocco as a child; her first instrument was flute, which she studied for more than 15 years, before switching to alto and soprano saxophone. She'd been performing in r&b, funk and world-music bands, but when she moved to Barcelona in 2002, her career as a leader and recording artist began in earnest. She's been living in Ibiza since 2014.

Reverence opens with a wild percussive sound and eventually breaks into the wide-open melody of “Okan Ti Aye.” “Union” conjures Alice Coltrane's meditative moods, juxtaposed with freer horn lines, while “Chase” is a meditation on call-and-response.

“My deeper involvement in spiritual-jazz started in 2011 when I recorded the composition ‘Peaceful River,’ a marker for what I wanted to do next,” said Grossmann. The albums *Earth Tones*, *Natural Time*, *Momentum* and *Golden Rule*—recorded consecutively from 2015 to 2018—moved her more toward that center. On *Reverence*, most of the droning backdrops are performed by the bandleader, who largely goes uncredited on everything from Celtic harp to ngoni.

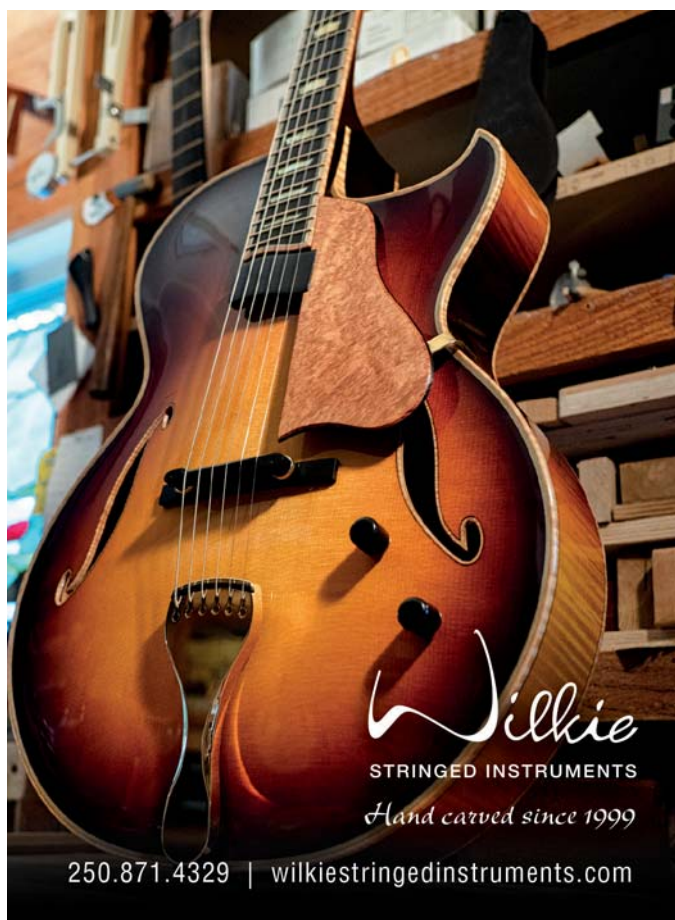
“We use them to color the ambient sound of the quintet or quartet. This time, I use a lot of instruments of African origin,” she said, pointing to balafon, krakebs and kalimba.

Grossmann also mentioned 1974's *Soul Of Africa* by Hal Singer and Jef Gilson as “a great spiritual-jazz record with African influence. Hal Singer just turned 100,” she said recalling how Singer's beginning as a tenor r&b player eventually led him to the roots of rhythm.

“Maybe because I live in Europe or particularly in Spain, I can generally say, ‘I am happy to live in a time where so many are starting to understand the human race as it is, one race, where gender doesn't matter,’” she said, discussing the lack of resistance in her pursuit of African and African American music. “African music is at the root of so much music.”

Reverence is Grossmann's way of giving thanks for those roots.

—Denise Sullivan



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Trumpeter Till Brönner (left) performs with saxophonist Igor Butman and his large ensemble, the Moscow Jazz Orchestra, during the third annual Jazz Across Borders conference in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Russian Jazz Forum Fosters Connections

LOCAL MUSICIANS MET JAZZ PROMOTERS

from around the globe and bridges were built at the third annual Jazz Across Borders conference in St. Petersburg, Russia.

The brainchild of tenor saxophonist, band-leader and Russian jazz entrepreneur Igor Butman, the event gave hundreds of local musicians hungry for exposure the chance to hobnob with, and play for, jazz festival producers, club owners, promoters, label managers and journalists from all over the world.

The conference, part of the multifaceted 8th St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum—which included theater, classical music, visual art and dance—was held Nov. 15–16 at Freedom Space, a palatial museum and exhibition hall in the city's downtown area. Simultaneous translation into English and Russian was provided at workshops, panel discussions and master classes. In addition, showcases presented a dozen jazz groups—eight from Russia and one each from Armenia, Switzerland, France and Estonia—selected by an international jury from several hundred applicants.

Butman, Russia's best-known jazz musician, has a long resume: In addition to leading the Moscow Jazz Orchestra, he owns two jazz clubs and a record label, and he produces the annual festival known as The Triumph of Jazz, which attracts top U.S. and international players. His talent, combined with his high visibility and organizational skills, explains why he often is referred to as “the Wynton Marsalis of Russia.”

The use of the word “triumph” in Butman's own festival is not accidental: Jazz in Russia has had a difficult history, according to longtime DownBeat contributor Cyril Moshkow, a jazz scholar and editor of jazz.ru. “[Jazz] went from an underground movement to a cultural reservation,” Moshkow said, explaining that jazz gradually was accepted in the country during

the 1960s. In 1926–'27, two African-American jazz bands, Benny Payton's Jazz Kings (featuring Sidney Bechet on clarinet) and the Sam Wooding Orchestra, toured the country, playing before large, enthusiastic crowds. But in the 1930s, Communists clamped down.

“Jazz was frowned upon by the authorities, if not outright prohibited,” Moshkow said. “It was considered an artifact of American capitalist culture.” Things began to loosen in the '50s. Then, in 1962, a remarkable thaw ensued when the Benny Goodman Orchestra became the first American jazz group to tour Russia since the 1920s.

“By the end of the Soviet era, jazz was accepted by the government, which allowed jazz programs in 29 Soviet colleges,” he said. After the fall of the USSR in 1991, as state financial support for the arts began to disappear, “we started to get out of the ‘reservation,’” he said. Today, it is not gone completely: The JAB conference is partly state-funded, with the remainder of the budget coming from private sources.

Among the dozen or so panel discussions, “Why Is Your Music Not On The Radio Yet?” featured Evgeny Petrushansky of Rainy Days Records, a privately owned Russian jazz label; two representatives from state-sponsored Russian radio stations; and, for a Western perspective, WBGO radio host and author Sheila Anderson, who offered practical advice on how Russian musicians might crack American radio. Anderson emphasized making connections with “the people at the station who actually choose the music” and “the importance of having a story” (i.e. something for the DJ to talk about other than the track credits).

A panel on “The Festival As Institution” featured Montreal International Jazz Festival co-founder André Ménard; Norwegian jazz presenter Jan-Ole Otnæs, managing director of Victoria Nasjonal jazzscene and president of the

European Jazz Network; and Mikhail Green, founder of the Moscow International Jazz Festival.

A highlight of the weekend was the Saturday night gala concert in The Grand Hall of St. Petersburg Philharmonia, an ornate, 1,500-seat venue, featuring Butman leading the MJO with guest trumpeter Till Brönner, the biggest-selling German jazz musician of all time. After opening sets by the modern, acoustic Euro-jazz LRK Trio and a fusion-oriented electric quintet led by trombonist Sergey Dolzhenkov, Butman's 17-piece big band took the stage, wearing their distinctive red-white-and-blue-striped ties.

The program alternated between the Butman band's post-bop charts, in a pocket reminiscent of the Woody Herman and Thad Jones/Mel Lewis orchestras, and selections from Brönner's repertoire, including a medley from his 2002 album, *Blue Eyed Soul*. The musicians were well matched, Brönner's sensitive trumpet and flugelhorn playing functioning as a mellow foil to Butman's fiery tenor playing. Although often compared to Marsalis in his importance to Russian jazz, the saxophonist is closer in style to Gato Barbieri, which is meant as high praise.

The most unbuttoned, joyous music of the weekend, however, was heard at two late-night parties. One took place at La Cucina, a local Italian restaurant, featuring Butman and stellar Russian players like altoist Alexander Dovgopoly, guitarist Gasan Bagirov, pianist Andrei Kondakov, and the Sinatra-inspired vocalist Dmitry Noskov. The other was a post-gala jam at the White Night jazz club, featuring a rotating rhythm section, notably including a piano whiz named Konstantin Khazanovich. The vodka, JAB's own house-labeled “Jazz Standart,” flowed freely as talented singers took turns testing their mettle with the band, while Russian, European and American attendees forged new friendships through a common language: jazz.

—Allen Morrison

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Newvelle: Worthy Material

Clear vinyl. Artful designs. A shiny, luxe collector's box. No question, albums from the Newvelle imprint are beautiful to the eye.

The story could end there, with these records sitting as totems to vanity on a shelf somewhere. You'd want to take them down, though. They sound as gorgeous as they look.

The 2020 edition of the Newvelle Records' box set—its fifth season—follows the same tradition as the four previous editions, with its high-quality production values, both in terms of sound and presentation. Each collection contains six LPs—rolled out individually, one every month or so through August—featuring a different ensemble on each album. The collections, available only through a subscription, are pricey, a whopping \$400 for the 2020 set. But they're investments—and the rare jazz commodity that can compete in this price range.

On the first release of the collection, due out in February, bassist Rufus Reid teams up with pianist Sullivan Fortner on the duo effort *Always In The Moment*. A mix of Reid originals and a few standards, the nine tracks demonstrate a palpable rapport between these two intuitive players, whether in the relaxed vibe of Reid's "It's The Nights I Like" or the fine-spun swing of Duke Ellington's "Sound Of Love." And their rendition of the haunting standard "The Peacocks" is one of the best around.

The Pablo Ablanedo Octet, led by the Argentine pianist/composer, comprises an attention-grabbing lineup of talent that includes clarinetist Anat Cohen, violinist Jenny Scheinman, saxophonists Chris Cheek and Jerome Sabbagh, and guitarist Ben Monder, among others. The combined musical gravitas on the album *Christreza*, set for release in April, seems light as a feather on tunes like the sweetly somber "Ti Mi Do" and the invigorating "Karmavaleando." Diego Urcola's trumpet solo on the title cut positively aches with feeling.

Newvelle's label head, pianist Elan Mehler, and trumpeter Dave Douglas turn out nine absorbing, all-new compositions on *If There Are Mountains*, the collection's third installment, slated to drop in May. Using haiku and poetry for the texts, Mehler and Douglas' compositions provide a singular showcase for the sinuous vocal lines of singer Dominique Eade and an occasion for the ensemble (reedist John Gunther, bassist Simón Willson and drummer Dayeon Seok) to cohere around some penetrating musical ideas. An outstanding collaboration.



Carmen Staaf

On *Woodland*, pianist Carmen Staaf writes bracingly energetic selections for her trio with bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Jeff Williams. From the opener—the neatly improvised "Caterpillars"—through a jauntily swinging "Waltz for Julian" to the deftly lyrical "Evergreen," the ensemble moves as a delightfully coordinated unit. Staaf does step away briefly, however, to execute a spry solo version of "Pannonica," the oddly satisfying Thelonious Monk tune. The album is set to come out in June, right after the trio's European tour in May.

Saxophonist Patrick Zimmerli puts his virtuosic playing on display on *Book Of Dreams*, a cluster of his original jazz tunes and sensitively arranged Songbook standards, set for release in July. He partners again with Nonesuch bandmates pianist Kevin Hays and drummer Satoshi Takeishi, both longtime collaborators. Their program here is varied, ranging from the seductive ("Algo Mas") to the ponderous ("Dreamscape"), with many stops in between. It's easy to get lost in the musical world that Zimmerli creates, and the album's end comes as an unwanted surprise.

The OWL Trio—bassist Orlando Le Fleming, saxophonist Will Vinson and guitarist Lage Lund—deliver compelling musical statements without the benefit of percussion on the final installment of the collection, *Life Of The Party*, slated for an August launch. The considerable impetus of their music derives from a shared awareness of an understated pulse; their arrangements are minimal, not meandering—weighty, not wanting. Vocal luminary Kurt Elling takes the mic on two eloquent originals.

DB

Ordering info: newvelle-records.com



Carla Thomas (left), Dee Dee Bridgewater, Steven Bernstein, Craig Handy and Natalie Cressman onstage at the WBGO gala on Nov. 6 in Manhattan

JONATHAN CHIMENE

WBGO Celebrates 40 Years

ON NOV. 6, NEWARK'S JAZZ PUBLIC RADIO station, WBGO, marked a milestone by throwing itself a 40th anniversary party. The Champions of Jazz gala was held in Manhattan, at Capitale, a high-end events space situated in an 1893 Beaux Arts building designed by Stanford White. Several hundred station members and friends sipped and mingled over a pre-show buffet, then filed into the grand 15,000-square-foot ballroom.

Trumpeter Steven Bernstein, whose groove-rich, blues-tinged concept of hardcore jazz aptly signifies the WBGO soundtrack, led a band through repertoire associated with the career of Dee Dee Bridgewater, one of the evening's two honorees. (The other was André Ménard, co-founder of the Montreal Jazz Festival.)

Bridgewater imprinted her personality on the proceedings, offering hugs and warm encomia to the singers. At about the 60-minute mark, she

placed a winning bid (\$4,500) for a signed guitar that Pat Metheny had donated to the auction. The event raised \$325,000.

"I thought if people saw that an artist who's been involved with WBGO was willing to pay that kind of money, they'd perhaps be inspired to contribute," Bridgewater said. Her popular radio show, *Jazz Set*, which she inherited from Branford Marsalis in 2003 and hosted until 2016, originated with WBGO, as does Simon Rentner's *The Checkout*, an hourly music magazine, and the Christian McBride-hosted *Jazz Night in America*.

"I consider WBGO part of my extended musical family," Bridgewater continued. "They've broadened their musical horizons beyond just straightahead jazz, but it's still, in my humble opinion, our premier jazz station."

During the past decade, WBGO—which covers the entire New York metropolitan area—also

has broadened its programming reach to operate on a global playing field via digital and streaming platforms.

"We've been innovators and risk-takers," said WBGO President and Chief Executive Officer Amy Niles, who took her post in 2014. During her tenure, WBGO's membership has numbered about 14,000 with an operating budget of \$5.5 million. The station employs a staff of 46.

"There's no bigger concentration of jazz music in the U.S. than where I'm sitting right now," Niles said by phone from her office. A former singer and actress who stepped away to raise a family, she grew up in a Greenwich Village apartment building whose tenants included guitarist Jim Hall and jazz journalist Nat Hentoff. Now a Newark resident, she discussed how WBGO addresses its international audience while maintaining roots in her adopted home, where Sarah Vaughan and Wayne Shorter grew up.

Niles emphasized that she continually exhorts WBGO's on-air programmers—among them veterans Michael Bourne, Gary Walker and, until recently, Rhonda Hamilton—to nurture an intimate relationship with their listeners.

"I always tell them, 'Every time you turn on the mic, you don't know who's going to hear something,'" Niles said. "We may broadcast to hundreds of thousands of people, but we do it one person at a time. Everybody's experience with us is personal, whether they're in Thailand or Brooklyn or Newark. Our community is Newark and our community is the music, and we endeavor to honor both always, because both are essential to who we are."

—Ted Panken

10 Years In, Hubro Imprint Still Issuing Expansive Sounds

ANDREAS RISANGER MELAND CHOSE TO celebrate the 10th anniversary of his label, Hubro, with a touring European showcase of three acts that work with the Norwegian imprint.

"I decided to focus on cakes," he joked about the treat he shared with attendees at the end of each concert. But ultimately, it was the creatively programmed bill that most effectively celebrated his accomplishments. The Erlend Apneseth Trio reinterpreted the traditional sounds of Norway, Building Instrument set fragile pop within a richly detailed bricolage of percussion and electronics, and Bushman's Revenge played post-bop guitar music informed by prog rock.

Prior to launching Hubro, Meland worked for labels like ECM and Rune Grammofon, and approached his boss at Grappa, a folk and pop label that serves as Hubro's distributor, about starting a jazz imprint. "I think I misled him," Meland said. "In fact, I started misleading him with the first releases. It has never been a pure jazz

label. It quickly grew in a way mirroring my interests, but also mirroring the scene in Norway."

Meland, who recently was appointed director of Sildajazz International Jazz Festival in Haugesund, did eventually launch a jazz-only label, running a revived incarnation of the Odin imprint. And while Hubro itself has released plenty of superb jazz from Norway—including work from bassist Mats Eilertsen's roomy trio—it's cast a much broader net, embracing contemporary classical, post-rock, art-pop and ambient music.

"There is a personal side to the label, and I feel a big responsibility to all of the artists I work with. But I also know that Hubro is not a big company and it's also a very demanding situation," Meland said. "I don't see it as an industry anymore—it's more like a being a missionary for good music."

That attitude and the label's nimbleness in eschewing the market-driven directives of bigger labels have earned respect from musicians.

Hardanger fiddler Nils Økland—whose pre-



Nils Økland, who performs in Lumen Drones, has released a handful of recordings in various settings through Hubro, a label based in Oslo, Norway.

viously released albums on ECM—has found a home at Hubro, which has issued multiple records from several of his projects, including the moody electric trio Lumen Drones and his own expansive Nils Økland Band. That he and Meland both live in Haugesund only sweetens the deal. "His office is a five-minute walk from my home, so very nice to have a chat about music or a cup of coffee at my favorite café," he said. "I think his energy and dedicated work with the music Hubro publishes, and the way he communicates with us artists, is special and gives a feeling that what you do is important."

—Peter Margasak



Clarinetist Oran Etkin teaches children about instruments and songs from around the world.

Etkin Brings Instruments to Life

IN A VIDEO FROM THE 2015 INTERNATIONAL Jazz Day, filmed in Paris, clarinetist Oran Etkin and keyboardist Herbie Hancock are joking around. “I wanna say hi to all the Timbalooloo kids,” says Hancock, directly to the camera. “Thank you so much for being part of this program and thank you for doing my music. Maybe I’m the Watermelon Man!”

Hancock’s 1962 classic “Watermelon Man” is one of the tunes that Etkin teaches to kids in Timbalooloo, his inventive, jazz-based music education program. In engaging with students, he sticks to the song’s fundamentals—humorous lyrics, syncopated rhythm, bluesy melody. At the same time, he gives students a lesson in music history—who Hancock is, what instrument he plays, the song’s backstory. Etkin does this in about five minutes—with kids who aren’t even in kindergarten yet. The young faces light up as the information sinks in.

Etkin, who founded Timbalooloo in 2005, would disagree with those who think that pre-K children are too young to understand complex music forms like jazz, blues and bebop. “In the United States, the approach [to music education] has been to water it down for kids—kids’ music is all in 4/4, on the quarter note, in major scales,” he recently explained. “But that’s not how kids learn language. I think it’s important to give them the

full vocabulary of music, the way you would express it yourself.”

His new album for Motéma, *Finding Friends Far From Home: Clara Net Around The World*, which launched Oct. 5 with a family-friendly concert at Symphony Space in New York, does just that. Recorded in five different countries, the album’s seven songs tell the story of Clara Net, a young woodwind surrounded by instrumental pals who represent a cross-section of the world’s musical languages.

The program includes “Chaye Shukariye,” an infectious Roma dance melody from the Czech Republic that spins happily against Etkin’s klezmer-inflected clarinet lines. The Zimbabwean chant “Kariga Mombe” is an inviting introduction to polyrhythm on the mbira (thumb piano). On the Japanese air “Sakura,” a shamisen (a three-stringed instrument) and a guzheng (a Chinese zither) join the clarinet to express an eerily beautiful Japanese scale. A folk tune from Etkin’s own childhood, “Tumbalalaika,” blends Yiddish and Russian traditions with the djembe (a West African drum). And on “Dandini Dandini,” the only actual children’s song on the album, Etkin trills a soothing lullaby over the strumming of a kopuz (a Turkish lute). Unhurried, unforced—the commingling

of sounds and cultures occurs naturally on these tunes.

“The basic idea behind Timbalooloo is that all the instruments come to life and talk to each other through their music. So, the children can see music as making the instruments talk,” Etkin said. “It’s an antidote to having kids just think about executing notes on a page.”

Lest there be any question about it, Etkin himself is an expert at executing notes on a page. He started playing instruments early and received tutelage from some high-profile reedists like George Garzone, Yusef Lateef, David Krakauer and Dave Liebman, the latter two at the prestigious Manhattan School of Music, where Etkin earned a master’s degree in jazz performance. He regularly plays many of the big jazz festivals and venues, and his five leader albums for Motéma—three for adults, two for children—have earned critical acclaim.

This kind of balance between the didactic and the artistic is one that many musicians might envy: Just off of a busy touring schedule with the *Clara Net* album this past fall, Etkin will start the roll-out of his next album for adult listeners in early 2020. But there’s no question about his commitment to education.

“I’ve always felt a responsibility to teach,” he said. “It’s the best part of being a musician.”

—Suzanne Lorge

Russian Guitarist Pobozhiy Tops Hancock Institute Competition

EVGENY POBOZHIY, A 30-YEAR-OLD FROM Seversk, Russia, took first place at the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition on Dec. 3 in Washington, D.C.

The honor comes along with \$30,000 in scholarship funding and a recording contract with Concord Records.

Of the three finalists competing at the Kennedy Center, Pobozhiy demonstrated the most expansive range in terms of sonic dexterity and emotional immediacy. Each performer played a pair of compositions alongside a rhythm section consisting of drummer Carl Allen, bassist Yasushi Nakamura and pianist Reggie Thomas. The three also had to play one song with alto saxophonist Bobby Watson added to the combo.

Pobozhiy rose to the challenge as he began his first song—an adventurous makeover of Jimmy Rowles’ “502 Blues (Drinkin’ And Drivin’),” which Wayne Shorter rendered on his 1966 LP, *Adam’s Apple*. The guitarist initiated the tune by stating the alluring melody unaccompanied before gliding across a medium-tempo waltz. He then unraveled the melodic material with a confident, well-paced improvisational zeal that included ear-grabbing textural manipulations. Toward the end, his passages gradually evolved into a howling testimonial that pushed toward the rock genre. It was a performance that instantly elicited rousing applause from the audience.

“He connected immediately in a way that you could feel his music,” said Pat Metheny, one of the competition’s judges. John Scofield, Lionel Loueke, Russell Malone, Lee Ritenour, Stanley Jordan and Chico Pinheiro also served on the panel. Metheny mentioned that all of the finalist played well, but what put Pobozhiy above his competitors were communicative skills with both the audience and band.

“It’s one thing to get onstage and play your behind off; that’s all well and good. But that’s not enough,” Malone added. “You have to communicate with the audience and the band. And [Pobozhiy] did both of those things.

The second-place winner—27-year-old Max Light, of Bethesda, Maryland—projected the best guitar sound of the three. He wielded a thick, cobalt tone, which he often let linger with single notes during his improvisations, especially on his glowing treatment of Duke Ellington’s “Prelude To A Kiss.” His performances netted him \$15,000 in scholarship funds.

Twenty-five-year-old Cecil Alexander, of Muskegon, Michigan—who won the third-place prize of \$10,000 in scholarship funds—demonstrated the strongest affinity for the blues. Toward the end of his brisk rendition of Herbie

Hancock’s “One Finger Snap,” he engaged Watson in some nifty banter as the rhythm section moved the pace from a blistering uptempo to a medium-tempo shuffle. Unfortunately, Alexander’s guitar got lost in the mix during the beginning of the tune. Once he emerged with a solo, though, his comely sound retained its presence.

Before the announcement of the winner, the institute paid tribute to trumpeter, composer and film scorer Terence Blanchard, who was awarded the 2019 Maria Fisher Founder’s Award. Under the direction of pianist John Beasley, the tribute highlighted some cherished moments from Blanchard’s expansive discography. The gala’s core ensemble contained such noteworthy musicians as bassist Alan Hampton, trumpeter Billy Buss, pianist Victor Gould, singer Michael Mayo, drummer Colin Stranahan and tenor saxophonists Walter Smith III and Dayna Stephens.

Gretchen Parlato’s soft yet piercing voice was electric on the moving rendering of the ballad “Ashe,” from Blanchard’s score of *A Tale Of God’s Will (A Requiem For Katrina)*. Lizz Wright also gave a majestic performance during “Detour Ahead,” a song famously recorded by Billie Holiday, which Blanchard interpreted on his 1994 disc, *The Billie Holiday Songbook*. Cassandra Wilson, too, turned in a fine version of “On The Sunny Side Of The Street,” which she sang on Blanchard’s 2001 disc, *Let’s Get Lost*.

The Herbie Hancock Institute Ensemble also delivered a feisty reading of Blanchard’s “If I Could I Would,” a modern jazz piece charac-



STEVE MUNDINGER

terized by a stubborn melody and a hard-boiled shuffle that the trumpeter taught students during his tenure as artistic director of the organization’s jazz performance college programs at the University of Southern California and Loyola University. After accepting the Fisher award, Blanchard led the ensemble through a blazing version of his edgy “Soldier.”

The gala also paid homage to late jazz and blues singer Joe Williams. With Emmy Award-winning actor and singer Keith David donning Williams’ signature attire (red blazer, white shirt and black trousers), his booming baritone led an ensemble through rip-roaring makeovers of “Every Day I Have The Blues” and “Alright, Okay, You Win.” Between those songs, he portrayed Williams, explaining his arrival to the music profession, as well as his time with Count Basie.

—John Murph



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“I was introduced to my first Bari reed in 1980 by none other than Dave Liebman. I was a freshman at Eastman after touring with Ray Charles, and Dave had come up to do a masterclass. He stopped me in the hallway, handed me a reed and said, “Here. Try this.” And the rest is history! I never played on a cane reed again. The tonal flexibility and constancy of Bari reeds have helped me immeasurably in a long career playing in all musical genres. And recently, after using a Dukoff on my alto for decades, I switched to the new metal Bari Raptor. It’s fabulous! Super easy blowing in all ranges, volumes and styles. Wish I had it back in 1980!”

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NICHOLAS PAYTON

INTERVIEW BY MARQUIS HILL PHOTO BY JIMMY & DENA KATZ

'CREATING CULTURE'

Nicholas Payton is very much a self-starter. The 46-year-old New Orleans native—known as much for the currency of his social criticism as for his fluency on trumpet and keyboards—needs little encouragement to spin a bracing narrative.



Little wonder, then, that when Payton and fellow trumpeter Marquis Hill, 32, met for a *DownBeat* interview on a November afternoon at the New York club Smoke, Hill, the designated questioner, was not unduly burdened. The Chicago native's own musical star is rising rapidly—likewise, his reputation for mixing art and activism—and he counts Payton as an important influence. Hill was judicious and polite as his elder expounded on a range of topics. All of Payton's comments were delivered in the understated but uncompromising tone for which he's become known.

So, too, was the music Payton made later that evening on the bandstand at Smoke, playing a coolly

vibrant set that complemented and clarified points he made during the interview.

Drawing on several of his albums, including his new trio release, *Relaxin' With Nick*—recorded live at Smoke and released in October on the venue's associated label, Smoke Sessions—Payton kicked up a quiet storm. Backed by the redoubtable team of Peter Washington on bass and Kenny Washington on drums—both of whom appear on the new disc—he moved seamlessly from Fender Rhodes to acoustic piano and back, at times comping for himself with his left hand while his right fingered the trumpet, which in turn was propped up by a kind of stabilizing rod.



Nicholas Payton strikes a pose during a DownBeat photo shoot at Smoke in New York City on Nov. 1.



Payton's new trio album, *Relaxin' With Nick*, was recorded live at Smoke in New York City.

Opening the set with the new album's tasty title tune, Payton unfurled nearly six minutes of tightly wound swing from the confines of the acoustic piano before opening things up with a switch to trumpet and Rhodes. In the process, he displayed brilliant musical dexterity and made a forceful argument for the relevance of mainstream jazz. Not that he would be happy with that term. Halfway through the set, he slipped into hip-hop mode with another tune from the new album, "Jazz Is A Four-Letter Word." Built around his hypnotic repetition of the title and a digitally altered spoken-word excerpt from a 1993 recording of a Max Roach interview, the tune constituted a devastating critique.

Combined with the interview, the performance suggested an artist still repudiating early attempts to pigeonhole him as the reincarnation of Louis Armstrong—a figure he dutifully reveres but one whose legacy he has fought, as a matter of labeling, to be liberated from. Liberation, in fact, is a subtext of his oeuvre generally—not least, liberation from what he characterizes as "so-called jazz," the way the genre name has been applied and what it means. Those concerns, among others, echo throughout the two-disc, 15-track *Relaxin' With Nick*.

—Phillip Lutz

Marquis Hill: Could you speak about the track listing and your motivation behind picking these particular tunes?

Nicholas Payton: There are a lot of originals, and a couple of new songs that made their debut, such as the title track, "Relaxin' With Nick." Also "1983," which is actually a part of a larger project where I have songs dedicated to a

particular year in each decade of the 20th century. Being a child of the '80s, that's really my favorite era of music. It's a happy feeling and like the last time when it was cool to be a bit corny. I feel like everything has become so serious and a bit cynical—you have to be hard and a gangster, just like the whole idea of being happy and having fun has become sort of lame and passé.

Have you ever felt pressure from labels or critics during your career to produce a certain type of music?

Yeah, I think of my first record deal when I was on Verve in the '90s. I was kind of labeled—I feel unfairly—as a traditionalist, and was branded as the second coming of Louis Armstrong, which in some sense felt like an honor because obviously he's the father of us all. He's the first pop star, he's the one who really was like the first virtuosic soloist in this whole black American idiom of music, and really set the standard for everything happens—to this day. So, to be looked at in the light of someone that great and powerful, who had such an original style, an original sound, was such a trendsetter, was cool. But also to be pigeonholed at the same time, as this idea that this is only what I do.

I was often seeking to break out of that idea, and one of the first projects where I felt like I really tried to embrace a different sound and aesthetic was *Nick@Night*, which came out in '99. I was favoring a lot of other keyboard instruments outside of just the piano because I was looking for a different sound. I know that you do a lot of that in your music, too—a lot of it is pianoless.

So, when I was doing *Nick@Night*, ... I was

writing more longer-form compositions at the time. And that was really the end of me writing more longer-form compositions, because right after that is where I began to write vamps. So, this was like the hilt of me writing my way out of having to write so much—almost a way of [acknowledging], "OK, I've done that." And with *Dear Louis* right after that, too, arranging and just going really big in terms of all the possible things and sections and interludes and whatever. That was sort of my farewell to my idea—or people's idea—of jazz at that time. I wanted to make music of a man of my age and a music more inclusive of things I grew up listening to.

How did you link up with Peter and Kenny for this record? Talk about their impact on your personal growth.

They're my elders by a decade or so, so I grew up listening to them and a lot of their work throughout the '80s with people like Mulgrew Miller, or Kenny with Betty Carter. Seeing Kenny's work with her, working together with [Peter] and Bill Charlap—they're like the A-team, first-call rhythm section in New York and have been for the last 30 years. But I feel like they're not given their due. I really wanted to highlight them, and have Kenny play on funk grooves, and play with a sampler and different things to highlight the things that I know they can do.

I saw you perform a tribute to Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue* around 2008 at the Chicago Theatre. I remember that you sang, played piano and played a little bit of trumpet. My friends were kind of

upset that you didn't play more trumpet. What was your thought process about incorporating Rhodes, vocals and the sampler into this new record?

As an artist, I want to use as many different mediums of expression to get my ideas across. So, the Rhodes playing, comping for myself, it came about because as my style developed and changed and I started playing more and more funny notes and different ideas that might trip up different keyboardists, it became increasingly harder to find people to comp for me. A lot of times, I'd want that rub: "Don't try to fix my notes by making my notes fit inside the chord. Do your thing and let me sometimes make these rubs against the chords, because that's actually what I'm going for. You're ruining my Picasso and putting my eye where it needs to be—on the face—where I want it displaced." I never get in my own way, playing for myself. I started as a multi-instrumentalist.

'PEOPLE LITERALLY DIED TO PLAY THIS MUSIC, FOR US TO HAVE A LIFE.'

On *Nick@Night*, I played harpsichord on "Beyond The Stars." It's [Anthony] Wonsey on the rest of the album. Then on *Dear Louis*, I played Fender Rhodes behind Dianne [Reeves] on "On The Sunny Side Of The Street." I played drums on "I'll Never Be The Same." So, I was kind of plotting, little by little, to eventually do the things I'm doing now. It became full-fledged in about 2006, after the flood in New Orleans, and the city was in a very depressed state. I wanted to help revitalize the community and bring back some life, particularly the night life, which ended early because of curfews and whatnot. This club I used to play at, Snug Harbor, they made their hours earlier, so late night there really was no place to hang. I was like, "Why don't we do a midnight set after you do your 8 and 10 [o'clock] sets?" There was this partition that sort of divided the music room from the bar. "Take that door down, let everybody in for free. I want a place that the community can come and hang and musicians can come and sit in on the second set and have a jam, like in the old days. Bring more of this communal spirit back to the city." And that's the gig where I really started comping for myself on keys. I also used effects—all kinds of delays and choruses—because that broadens the scope of the texture of what I can do on the Rhodes.

And the whole [concept of] standing in front of the band flatfooted, playing trumpet, has been

done so much it puts me now in a different category, where I'm at the precipice and the vanguard of creating culture and creating an idea. Dozens and dozens of motherfuckers have played their ass off, playing trumpet in front of a band. How many people have sat behind a keyboard and comped for themselves and played the trumpet? A lot of my fans and promoters and bookers are like, "Why is he doing this? I want to hear him play more trumpet." But the funny thing about it is, I wasn't playing less trumpet solos. I'm still taking the trumpet solo on pretty much every tune. It's just that now, as opposed to standing on the side of the stage doing nothing, I'm still working.

Getting involved in the music.

This way it allows me to create the vibe, and it's just easier for me to connect with my rhythm section. You can telegraph a certain amount of shit on the trumpet to give your band a focus and

ed, I was talking about these racial issues and the music of suffering, and I was met with a lot of vitriol—a lot of promoters not wanting to deal with me because they thought I was an angry black man, even though my reputation doesn't speak to that at all. Ask a promoter, "Does he show up on time?" I show up on time. I'm dressed well. I play my ass off. I check all the boxes. What's the problem?

Unfortunately, even though this music, and so-called jazz in particular, has always spoke truth to power, has always been counterculture, has always been underground, now I feel like we're in an era of artists who are afraid to speak up, afraid of losing gigs, afraid of so many things that it's become dangerous. The whole point of the art is to break down status quo, to put people in touch with themselves. At the moment in which artists feel they can't express themselves for fear of losing their livelihood, that negatively impacts the culture, because the whole point of the culture, the whole point of the music, is to serve as a light.

When black people were transported here during enslavement, they were not allowed to speak their native languages, their native tongues. So, they developed a new language—the work song, the field holler. And those things became the blues. And because of places like Congo Square, which was maybe the only place in America, one of the few, where the enslaved Africans were given a space on Sunday to practice their drumming rituals, dance, singing, playing instruments, so forth—that energy is what creates, many decades later, Louis Armstrong, who becomes the world's first pop star. Really, the music is the first civil rights movement. Many years before—all due respect to Martin Luther King—this music was the first time post-colonization where black people were put on the same level as Beethoven and Stravinsky and Picasso and a lot of the white purveyors of art. Now, they had to look at Duke Ellington in the same light as they do Mozart. So, these were the first people to begin the process of rehumanizing, in a sense, these black people who had been dehumanized.

I never thought about it from that perspective.

And when we look at all great movements, when we look at church, when we look at any spiritual procession, music is always a part of that, if it's to be effective. And that was kind of my problem with the recent Black Lives Matter movement. I felt like not enough music was a part of the message; you don't effectively have converts without music. That really ties you into it, pulls you in. Yeah, the word of God, that's what it is. But when you hear that organ come in or that sister singing, that makes you believe.

Now, we have the complete opposite. On social media, everybody's speaking about race all the time, every day. When I was doing it, 10 years

center. Miles is a master of that—playing a note a certain way to make the pianist play something. You're using the band as an instrument through yourself. But when I'm actually on the keys, on a chordal instrument, I can create those textures on the spot. I can orchestrate my own music and re-orchestrate it every night. It gives me more control. I feel like I'm giving more of myself, and people are hearing more of myself. And I'm not playing any less trumpet. I think it's taken about 10 years for people who swore they'd never book me to accept it. Sometimes, that's the problem with being ahead of your time, because the model doesn't exist. So, like being the one who has to kick the door down sometimes, you're not looked at or celebrated in your time.

I can't impress enough that as artists, you have to soldier for your vision. It took 15 years for people to recognize Monk for the force he was. But if you give up on yourself, give up on your ideas, you don't give your concept a chance for people to come to it, especially if it's something new they haven't heard.

I see university students—trumpet players—doing the whole thing. It's definitely become a thing you've created, part of the culture.

It's like BAM [the Black American Music movement initiated by Payton]. When it start-



MICHAEL JACKSON

During his concerts, Payton frequently plays keyboards and trumpet simultaneously.

ago, I was crazy, angry and black. Now, when I see a lot of cats of Instagram and social media #BAM, it's a rewarding feeling, because I stood for something to people.

Why do you think jazz audiences reacted in such a visceral way to BAM?

When people are asleep and comfortable, they don't want to be woken. Because I'm awakening you, you have to be responsible and actually think about these things. ... I got into a lot of spirited, sometimes ugly and heated, battles with certain musicians because I felt like, they know I'm right. Even those who didn't know or agree, give me a phone call. Some of them I've known since they were in high school. I might have mentored them, or people who are like my brothers. "How are you going to come out against me publicly like that, particularly as black people—you see what I'm trying to do? Even if you don't agree, pull me to the side. Call me." In many cases, I've had conversations with these people and know how they feel. But they're so scared that they're going to lose their gigs or sponsorships or support as a result of standing with me, that they threw me under the bus to make their career more secure. It angered me because it's like the cliché of the house Negro. I got into it heavily with a lot of cats. ... What I was fighting for benefits us all.

Back to the new record: The tracks that really stood out for me were the ones with vocals. What was your thought process into selecting the vocal tunes?

"Othello" is something I debuted on my *Afro-Caribbean Mixtape*. That's been in the books, often requested at gigs. People really love it. It's a two-bar song. Post-*Sonic Trance*, that was the genesis of me not writing music anymore, and letting the music write itself. The writing of the music, if ever, was the last part of the process. Whereas before, I'd sit at the piano, go through my ideas and try to craft them or say, "I want to write a tune today." *Sonic Trance* was the begin-

ning of me just playing direct into the recorder, wherever I have an idea.

Voice memos.

Yeah, voice memos. When I go to make an album, I'm a beat picker. I'm like, "Yo, which beats are going to work well for this project?" My ideas are everything from me singing on a plane in an airport or when I'm around a piano or any instrument, tapping a rhythm, playing some chords, playing a bass line. Whatever that is, in my phone. I feel like the music is more honest because I'm not trying to write. The ideas that come to me are something that exists in the ether. If I heard it, somebody else heard it. So, when it passes through me, I'm giving you a song that you've already heard.

We don't create anything. Ultimately, who created the scale? Who created the blues? Who created whatever? These things exist in nature; harmony exists in nature. That's the other thing I take offense to in the "jazz" argument. Oftentimes people say, "It's the marriage of European harmony with African rhythms." That's a slight way to diss us, like we're not intelligent enough to develop our own harmonic scope. First of all, harmony was not invented by Europeans, not even invented by Africans. It exists in nature. So, this idea that we haven't created our own harmonic palette to me is pretty false, and that's a big problem I have with [the term] "jazz" itself—that it obscures that it's black music at its root.

In other interviews, you've talked about being a vessel, being open for spirits of our ancestors—Bird, Diz—to come through. How does that relate to what you refer to as African rhythmic DNA.

African tribal DNA.

Yeah, thank you.

The whole point of this music was that it was a lifeline for black people, African people—I use those words interchangeably—to our roots

because we were disconnected as a means of enslaving us. Because you can't oppress somebody who knows who they are. So, the first rule of oppression is people can't communicate, speak their language, they can't worship their god. You cut them off from those things that make them who they are, that connect them to their ancestry. So, this music was us rebuilding that bridge—that our oppressor sought to destroy—back to Africa. And that's the most important part of it. So, for me ultimately that is what drives me, that is my purpose. But getting back to solos and lineage, it wasn't enough for me to just learn the notes; I wanted to be Clifford Brown. I wanted to know what he had for breakfast that day—how that influenced his playing.

The nuances.

Because to me, the more detailed you get in your extraction from those solos, then these elements become more foundational and elemental, so that you can use them however you want.

When your elders and your ancestors deem you worthy enough that they will use you to come speak to the people, to me there's no better affirmation that you're serving your purpose. That's why I'm here. So, no matter what somebody else tells me, I know these people chose me. I can feel it, and there's nothing anybody can tell me otherwise. To have been blessed enough to have known a lot of these people—like Ray Brown, Elvin Jones, Clark Terry, Doc Cheatham—young people can't touch them anymore. The closest they can get to that now is through those of us who served under them. And that's why I started going harder. I saw the scene changing and a lot of dangerous stuff going on in terms of a paradigm shift. It used to be the elders decided who was next in line, who the lineage was. And then it started shifting. The constructs started deciding who was next. And that's backwards.

People literally died to play this music, for us to have a life. And as enjoying, as entertaining and as fun as it is on a certain level, it's also serious. And when I see the very foundation of it at risk of extinction, I feel compelled to try to save it. That's really what BAM is all about, all of my output, everything. I'm just trying to get as much of this stuff done while I'm here, because I'm not saying I'm better than anyone else, but no one is going to do it in the same way I'm doing it.

This idea of lineage is really the hallmark of what this is, and that's why I created the Black American Music movement—to re-highlight that this is the essence of the music. And to be clear, once again: To say Black American Music is not to draw a line in the sand to say, "You can or can't play it." It's just an acknowledgment of where it comes from. It's about the respect of that which has come before you. If you don't have that, you're missing the most important part—to me, you're not really connected to what this is.

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Jimi Hendrix performs at the Fillmore East in New York on Dec. 31, 1969.
(Photo: Jan Blom/©Authentic Hendrix, LLC)

JIMI REVISITING THE 'STANK GROOVE' HENDRIX

BY BILL MILKOWSKI PHOTO BY JAN BLOM

For a generation of African-American guitarists growing up in the '60s, Jimi Hendrix's *Band Of Gypsies* was revelatory. The album, which introduced the guitarist's new trio with bassist Billy Cox and drummer Buddy Miles, reached the Top 10 on the Billboard album chart.

Hugely influential for Black Rock Coalition co-founders Greg Tate and Vernon Reid, as well as Parliament/Funkadelic guitarist Eddie Hazel, this intense cauldron of heavy-duty, rolling funk-rock deeply rooted in African-American cultural history—a mix of gospel, spirituals, Delta blues and r&b—also had a significant impact on guitarists like Ernie Isley and Lenny Kravitz.

Reid, who helped found Living Colour, recently recalled hearing the 1970 album for the first time: “It was a mind-altering experience. Fascinating, terrifying, beautiful, funky, incendiary ... it was all these different things. Buddy’s incredible pocket; he’s really holding it down. And the sound of Billy’s bass is so meaty and so crucial to the whole thing working. And what’s amazing is, it’s all happening in real time. Those three guys ... they became more than three in that concert.”

The trio’s appeal touched more than just six-stringers. Saxophonist Branford Marsalis called it “earth-shattering,” citing the freedom and imposing groove supplied by Cox and Miles as a compelling factor. “At the time, I didn’t know why it spoke to me, but it did, immediately,” he said. “Now, I dug the [Jimi Hendrix] Experience, believe me. But *Band of Gypsies* affected me in a much more powerful way. The shit was just funky, the way Led Zeppelin was funky and the way The Beatles had a little groove to their shit, too. But those two groups never could get their bottom to have that funky-ass, stank groove the way the *Band of Gypsies* did.”

Originally released as a six-song LP on March 25, 1970, *Band Of Gypsies* was the fourth and final Hendrix album released before his death six months later. The six tracks were culled from performances recorded during two days at promoter Bill Graham’s Manhattan venue, Fillmore East, as New Year’s Eve 1969 turned into New Year’s Day 1970. About 50 years later, Legacy Recordings, in collaboration with Experience Hendrix L.L.C., has released *Songs For Groovy Children: The Fillmore East Concerts*, which comes in a five-CD or eight-LP package.



Billy Cox, who met Hendrix when they were both in the U.S. Army, has extended the legacy of his late friend by participating in the Experience Hendrix tours.

It documents all four sets the band played (a total of 43 tracks, presented in chronological order). The compilation includes eight previously unreleased tracks, four songs now presented in a longer, unedited form, and several that are back in print on CD/LP for the first time in a decade.

The collection includes reworked versions of “Foxey Lady,” “Fire,” “Hey Joe” and “Purple Haze”—all from Hendrix’s 1967 studio debut, *Are You Experienced*—along with two renditions of “Stone Free” and premieres of Band of Gypsies tunes like “Who Knows,” “Message To Love,” “Power Of Soul” and the extraordinary Vietnam War protest song “Machine Gun.”

Songs For Groovy Children also includes freshly written Hendrix originals like “Earth Blues,” “Stepping Stone,” “Ezy Ryder,” “Burning Desire,” “Lover Man” and “Izabella,” as well as a frighteningly intense reading of his Delta blues-flavored “Hear My Train A Comin’,” extended slow blues jams on Elmore James’ “Bleeding Heart” and Jimmy Hughes’ “Steal Away,” plus a dynamic interpretation of Howard Tate’s r&b hit “Stop.”

“*Band Of Gypsies* was a strong statement from three brothers,” Miles, who died in 2008, said in an Experience Hendrix video. “Our music was a wide, wide spectrum—you had rockers, you had r&b and you most definitely had blues. When we did ‘Machine Gun,’ it was really taken from Delta blues and rural blues. That particular song was definitely not Chicago blues style; it was from the Deep South.”

But the backstory to the triumphant Fillmore East concerts reveals an artist awash in troubles. By July 1969, the Jimi Hendrix Experience—the guitarist’s trio with bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell—had broken up. Redding left the trio, returning to England to front his own group, Fat Mattress, while Mitchell joined Jack Bruce & Friends.

With a dwindling cash flow and huge bills mounting from the construction of his Electric Lady Studios in the heart of Greenwich Village,

Hendrix was feeling a financial squeeze.

“Jimi’s life had taken him to a place where the studio was a big expenditure,” said Hendrix archivist and author John McDermott, who co-produced *Songs For Groovy Children*. “Due to litigation he was involved in at the time, his royalties had been frozen both here and abroad. So, when the band stopped touring at the end of June 1969—other than the Woodstock show—there was no money coming in.”

The litigation was the result of a claim made by Ed Chalpin, who was suing Hendrix, Warner-Reprise Records and Jimi’s manager, Michael Jeffery, for breach of contract. Hendrix previously had signed a contract (for \$1 and the promise of 1-percent royalties on all records he made) with Chalpin’s PPX Enterprises on Oct. 15, 1965, when the guitarist was a little-known sideman for Chalpin’s client Curtis Knight & The Squires. The contract bound Hendrix “to produce and play and/or sing exclusively for PPX Enterprises” for three years from the date of the signing.

All of Hendrix’s royalties due from Warner-Reprise were ordered placed into escrow by the court pending a settlement. That settlement involved the release of *Band Of Gypsies*, which Chalpin (who could not be reached for comment) then licensed to Warner Bros. rival Capitol Records—in effect, a live album banged out fast and cheap in order to appease the claimant.

“Jimi was an itinerant sideman who did a lot of session work in the mid-’60s before he achieved his fame,” McDermott explained. “In this particular instance, he was recording at PPX on some Curtis Knight records and signed what he [apparently] thought was a work-for-hire release. He looked at it as something you sign to just get paid, but he ended up signing a three-year agreement for anything that he did.

“And, of course, to Ed Chalpin, these contracts were like lottery tickets,” McDermott continued. “I think Chalpin did this to folks so that if they ever hit [it big], he had a hold of them. And, of course, come fall of ’66 with the release of ‘Hey

Joe’ in England, and then certainly by the early part of ’67, once ‘Purple Haze’ and ‘The Wind Cries Mary’ hit, Chalpin took notice of what was happening in England. That’s when he kind of stepped up and said, ‘I have a claim.’

“Warner Bros. pushed for a settlement because Hendrix was so hot at the time, so they just said, ‘Look, let’s just get rid of this guy. Give Capitol a record and let’s be done with it. It’s not a big deal.’ And Jimi went along with it, as did his manager.”

By the fall of ’69, Hendrix’s relationship with Jeffery, his manager, was damaged beyond repair; Warner Bros. was pressing him for new product in the wake of the Experience dissolving; and he was facing the prospect of a lawsuit with PPX. Additionally, he was hampered with a massive creative block, driven in part by stress, drug abuse and sheer exhaustion. Amid the mounting pressure, Hendrix was facing a drug trial in Toronto on Dec. 8, after a May 3, 1969, bust, when he was detained and charged with illegal possession of narcotics. (A jury would acquit him of all charges on Dec. 10.)

“He was struggling to kind of confirm his next direction,” McDermott said. “In the end, with the pressure on, he just finally said, ‘OK, we’re going to come together and we’ll do this thing at the Fillmore East and make a live record.’”

The result was a throbbing display of earthy blues- and r&b-rooted rock—the work of three kindred spirits. “Billy and Buddy had a lot of common ground with Jimi,” McDermott said. “As a session man, Billy had played on recordings by Gatmouth Brown and Slim Harpo, and he and Jimi had played on the Chitlin’ Circuit together. ... And like Jimi, Buddy had been on the road with Wilson Pickett and he also played with the Ink Spots, Ruby & The Romantics and the Delfonics. So, r&b was part of his roots, also.”

Cox recently explained the band’s camaraderie: “I sensed there was something very special about the marriage of Jimi, Buddy and myself. We jelled right from the get-go. We were all friends, we were about the same age, we had come up under the same type of music and shared a deep love of the blues. So, Jimi didn’t really have to verbalize much at all during the rehearsals. He’d come up with a riff and we just played up against what he did, and we made it all work.

“We were like brothers and we shared that same feeling. Jimi used to say, ‘We’re just musicians, we’re just a band of gypsies. We go from city to city, town to town, doing our thing, and we’re completely free.’ And that’s why the band worked so well, because there was no pressure. Creative musicians work very well when they are not under pressure.”

McDermott suggested that Hendrix’s hand-picked rhythm team was a key to the success of the Band of Gypsies project. “When Noel Redding left the Experience, Jimi could’ve had any bass

player in the world, but he went back to a guy he knew, who was a solid player and a great friend in Billy Cox. I think he knew what he needed in his life at that time, which was some certainty, a solid guy he could trust, who understood the journey he had been on to get there. Billy represented that. And Buddy was just a vivacious, funny guy who attacked the drums with such a passion that Jimi loved him for it. And Buddy's feel was so different from what Mitch had given Jimi that it had to be exciting for him to be dealing with this totally different flavor that allowed him to take it out as far as he wanted to."

Hendrix had plenty of previous experience with Miles, who had played drums on "Rainy Day, Dream Away" and "Still Raining, Still Dreaming" on 1968's *Electric Ladyland*. And the guitarist co-produced and played on Miles' 1969 album, *Electric Church*.

The bandleader started demoing ideas on Nov. 7 with Cox and Miles at the Record Plant

wound up on the doorstep of Service Club No. 1 and heard this guitar playing, coming through an open window where the practice rooms were. The person was making a lot of mistakes, trying to get his soloing together, using his scales. But I heard something in the melodic flow of his playing, so I went in and introduced myself to him, and I told him I played upright bass. And he said, 'Well, they got these new electric basses here. You can turn in your service card and we can do some jamming.' So, I did that and, man, magic happened. That's how it all started."

Cox and Hendrix became fast friends and began entertaining at Army service clubs while also playing off-base at lounges in nearby Clarksville, Tennessee. After being discharged on June 29, 1962, Hendrix and Cox began playing five nights a week at the Pink Poodle in Clarksville. It was there that they were discovered by a Nashville club owner, who invited them to audition for a spot at the Del Morocco. Cox

off to London to become a star."

In April 1969, after the disbanding of the Experience, Hendrix again would call Cox to New York to begin experimenting on new material in a new band, Gypsy Sun and Rainbows. In addition to the bassist, the ensemble included drummer Mitchell, rhythm guitarist Larry Lee and conga players Juma Sultan and Jerry Velez. That band, which closed the three-day Woodstock Festival, lasted only one month.

Band of Gypsies also had a short existence: After the Fillmore sets, the group headlined an all-star concert/rally on Jan. 28 for the Vietnam Moratorium Committee that was billed as "Winter Festival for Peace" at Madison Square Garden. It proved to be a disaster, leading to the dissolution of the new group. They didn't go on until 3 a.m. and struggled through two songs before Jimi dropped his guitar and walked off stage, dissatisfied.

In a backstage showdown, Hendrix's manager—who begrudgingly had gone along with what he perceived to be the far less commercially viable Band of Gypsies while harboring plans for an Experience reunion—fired Miles and then recruited Mitchell to return as drummer. Redding already had opted to tour with guitarist Jeff Beck, so Cox stayed on as a salaried employee of the newly reformed Jimi Hendrix Experience.

At the time, Hendrix shrugged off the Band of Gypsies breakup as a temporary detour in his career path. "The reason for the record was to fulfill an old record contract," he insisted in a Rolling Stone interview. "We won't be back together again."

The reformed Experience commenced touring on April 25 at The Forum in Inglewood, California, and ended its run on Sept. 6 at the Love & Peace Festival in Fehmarn, Germany, with performances at the Atlanta Pop Festival and the Isle of Wight Festival in between.

Hendrix's last public appearance came Sept. 16, when he sat in with Eric Burdon and War for a jam at Ronnie Scott's in London. Two days later, Hendrix was dead, leaving behind a recorded legacy that continues to be tapped to this day.

"Jimi was great," Cox said of his friend. "And he was dedicated. He applied grit—part passion and perseverance—which enabled him to learn to play that guitar the way it was supposed to be played. And his music is as relevant today in the 21st century as it was in the 20th century."

"He was a 'future man,' you might call it, but he wrote in 'the now,' and it impacted lives in many untold ways—like the soldiers in the rice paddies and the jungles of Vietnam, to the brothers and sisters in the 'hood, from the young people who were lovers of peace and justice to those musicians who were looking for a new direction in music. And to countless people who held onto the music because ... some of them have told me that it was all that they had. And it spoke to those empty places in their lives."

DB

'Jimi didn't have to verbalize much during the rehearsals. He'd come up with a riff and we just played up against what he did.' —*Bassist Billy Cox*

in New York, then intensified rehearsals at Baggy Studios on Dec. 15, 18 and 19. It was there that Band of Gypsies quickly developed a repertoire in preparation for their upcoming Fillmore East concerts on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. The aesthetic explored at these rehearsals brought out something different in Jimi's playing. Whereas Mitchell emulated Elvin Jones' jazzy triplet feel and flowing-over-the-barline elasticity, Miles' strength was maintaining a steady, imposing backbeat. Together with Cox's solid, uncluttered bass lines, they grooved in a powerful, undeniably funky way on slamming vehicles like "Power Of Soul," "Who Knows" and "Message To Love," as well as the Miles compositions "Them Changes" and "We Gotta Live Together." The band reaches a mesmerizing peak with the transcendent "Machine Gun," accented by Miles' snare shots.

Cox, now 80 and still active with the Experience Hendrix Tour (an all-star event that pays tribute to Jimi), has vivid memories of his initial meeting with the guitarist. In November 1961, Cox and Hendrix were stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, as part of the Army's 101st Airborne Division.

"I was coming from the movie theater and it was raining, so I ran for cover," Cox recalled. "I

and Hendrix subsequently moved to Music City, where they formed a band—the King Casuals—and began touring clubs. By January 1964, Hendrix was ready to move to the Big Apple.

"Jimi felt he was about ready to go to the big city," Cox recalled. "I advised him not to go, but he left anyway. But a month later, Jimi was broke and wanted to come back. He called, and I sent him some money, and he returned to Nashville."

In the intervening years, from 1964 to 1966, Hendrix honed his guitar-playing skills as a sideman for the likes of Little Richard, Wilson Pickett, King Curtis and The Isley Brothers. He would eventually form his own band, Jimmy James & The Blue Flames.

On Sept. 24, 1966, having signed a management contract with 'The Animals' bassist Chas Chandler, Hendrix flew to the U.K. to meet his Experience bandmates: Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell. He also would be introduced to London's glitterati. But before leaving New York, he called Cox in Nashville: "[Hendrix] said, 'Billy, these guys are going to take me to Europe and make me a star, and I told them about you. Can you get up to New York?' But I told him, 'No, Jimi. I can't.' I didn't have money to buy strings for my bass, let alone buy a bus ticket to New York, so I remained in Nashville and Jimi went



Kris Davis

INNOVATION AS MOTIVATION

By Howard Mandel

Photos by Caroline Mardok

Energized and inspired by her opportunities, pianist Kris Davis is gaining a higher profile and more listeners by being at the crux of multiple scenes and movements. But she's no overnight sensation.

A native of Alberta, Canada, Davis started on classical piano at age 6, discovered jazz during high school, started gigging to support herself when she left home at 17 to attend the University of Toronto and has never stopped. Today, she eagerly books herself into projects with a vast array of groups. She has released more than a dozen albums as a leader or co-leader since 2003, and that many more as a sought-after collaborator.

Davis, 39, has earned the admiration of colleagues, journalists and fans, demonstrated through her busy performance calendar, critical acclaim and high poll placements. (She was co-winner of the category Rising Star–Jazz Artist in the 2018 DownBeat Critics Poll.)

She also has a new, prestigious and unprecedented academic post—associate director of creative development at the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, Terri Lyne Carrington's program—following a two-year stint teaching at Princeton and The New School. Living in Ossining, New York, with her husband-guitarist Nate Radley (they're heard together on her 2015 Clean Feed album, *Save Your Breath*) and their son, Davis might be assumed to have achieved both professional and domestic security.

Still, innovation is her motivation, and the urge to explore is at her core.

"I like variety in my life," she said with a laugh, while waiting to do a sound check before her first completely "free" concert (no written or predetermined material) with trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and drummer Nasheet Waits at the University of Chicago's Logan Center during last September's Hyde Park Jazz Festival. "I like each recording to be different and to then go on to the next project, which will also be different.

"I've always thought of music from the audience's perspective, after having gone to so many shows, often seeing pretty much the same thing, learning what works and what doesn't. I'm interested in keeping the audience engaged. So, if things are starting to feel stale, or just droning on, I'll address the problem. Although sometimes the concept is to stay in one place, even maybe for a long period, and face the challenge of that. Maybe the common thread is that there's always—and especially in my writing—some sort of larger idea or plan."

Davis' new album, *Diatom Ribbons* (on her own non-profit Pyroclastic Records), demonstrates that, though it



Davis with two of her collaborators on the album *Diatom Ribbons*: Val Jeanty (left) and Terri Lyne Carrington

might not be obvious on first listen. It incorporates contrasting elements—multi-leveled synchronizations, explosive blowouts, quiet interactions, spoken-word samples of Cecil Taylor and Olivier Messiaen—and is unusually sequenced, yet coheres as a whole. “I thought of it as an Oreo cookie,” Davis quipped. “Horns on the outside, guitars around the core, piano-drums-turntables and sometimes vibes at the center.”

On this program of Davis’ original compositions—plus her arrangements of a song each by Michaël Attias and the late Julius Hemphill—the leader recruited a remarkable cast: saxophonists JD Allen and Tony Malaby, guitarists Nels Cline and Marc Ribot, percussionists Carrington and Ches Smith, bassist Trevor Dunn, turntablist Val Jeanty and Esperanza Spalding, who contributes vocals. Seldom have players from such diverse niches of jazz and rock convened so productively in various combinations on the same album.

Davis is at the center of the mesmerizing mix (courtesy of engineer Ron Saint Germain and producer David Breskin), venturing beyond conventional jazz parameters, whether she’s waxing lyrically, hammering a motif as propulsive accompaniment or reaching inside her instrument’s to plink, pluck and stroke its strings.

Named after the one-celled microalgae that reveal startling structures from both micro and macro points of view, *Diatom Ribbons* has been hailed in *DownBeat*, *Pitchfork*, the *Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere for blurring, if not transcending, genre categorization. It’s far from the first time Davis has demonstrated such audacious originality.

Earlier, she won acclaim for her duets with fellow pianist Craig Taborn, documented on *Octopus* from 2016 and *Duopoly* (both on Pyroclastic) from that same year, which also showcases her one-on-one encounters with Don Byron, Tim Berne, Billy Drummond, Bill Frisell, Marcus Gilmore and Julian Lage. Besides her unusual touring group with Carrington and Jeanty, Davis has another ensemble with bassist

Stephan Crump and drummer Eric McPherson. “That’s an improvising trio,” she said, “but the music often sounds composed.”

Further expanding the intersection of composition, improvisation and interpretation, Davis is due to record John Zorn’s bagatelles; she was in his troupe performing them on a 2019 tour of Europe. And she’s among the notable pianists paying tribute to Cecil Taylor on Zorn’s 2018 production of Winged Serpents’ *Six Encomiums For Cecil Taylor* (Tzadik). The pianist also shines on saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock’s 2018 leader album, *Contemporary Chaos Practices* (Intakt), cast amid an exacting studio orchestra.

After recording Thelonious Monk’s “Evidence” on her 2013 disc, *Massive Threads* (Thirsty Ear), in 2018 she gave a solo Monk concert at SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco.

Paul Bley, Wynton Kelly, Keith Jarrett and Andrew Hill are among the other pianistic influences she cites, but few obvious borrowings emerge from her fingertips. She sounds incontrovertibly like only herself. Indeed, “Eight Pieces For The Vernal Equinox,” her through-composed work performed by Rory Cowal on the New World Records album *Clusters: American Piano Explorations*, was recognized by *The New York Times* as being among 2018’s top 25 classical recordings, cited for its “explosive melodic movement, successfully evoking her own playing style.”

“She’s like a sponge, very open and always checking out what’s coming around the corner,” Malaby said of Davis during a phone interview.

The two met at Canada’s Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, where he was teaching in 2000. He recalled that he was “blown away by how fast she got the lessons and was able to execute them, adding her personality as well. She’s got great time, great energy and ideas, always making the right decisions in the moment, pushing the envelope with forward motion and harmonic advances.”

Malaby first recorded with Davis on her 2003

album *Lifespan* (Clean Feed) and has kept doing so ever since. “I’ve always had sessions at home, which Kris came to,” Malaby continued, “and in the early 2000s, we’d talk about how we wanted to improvise differently than what was common then. We wanted to get away from the lengthy energy burnout style, and also away from the ‘downtown’ attitude of making fun of jazz. We wanted to bring more real jazz feel into improv.”

On *Diatom Ribbons*, Davis teamed him up with Allen and Carrington for the first time. He characterizes the album as “really thick, and fun. There’s so much happening, a multi-layered environment with Kris’ [accompaniment], Terri Lyne’s grooves and the DJ’s special contribution that’s great to blow over and through. I feel free to do whatever I want, knowing Kris is there to cover me, to make me sound good. I really trust her.”

Carrington has a similar view of Davis. The two musicians have a strong kinship that began to develop when Carrington invited Davis to perform at concerts in honor of pianist Geri Allen (1957–2017) and was further solidified via subsequent collaborations.

In an email, the drummer wrote, “Kris’ sense of rhythm and mine are connected, whether we’re playing in time or not. We’re like-minded; the time between us feels solid and elastic simultaneously.” That sense of flexible time is illustrated throughout *Diatom Ribbons*, especially on “Sympodial Sunflower” (a lovely piano/drums duet), “Corn Crake” (a trio piece with Jeanty on turntables) and “Stone’s Throw” (a quartet number with Ches Smith on vibraphone and Trevor Dunn on upright bass).

“This is what makes it cool for me, and I hope for Kris, too,” Carrington wrote. “I don’t approach her like I’m just laying down a groove for her to play over. I like creating tension with the groove, and knowing when to move away from it or dig in deeper. Harmony affects rhythm, so what I do really depends on what she’s playing. I try to think texturally as well, so I may play against what she’s doing, for counterpoint. I’m not trying to be challenging. Instead, we find each other’s frequency, to have a dialogue and make music that’s fulfilling.”

Carrington’s drumming is consistently powerful and definitive, even when it’s sonically subtle and diffuse; Jeanty’s use of samples and effects is imaginative and compelling. The two tenors roar together on the title track, and they blend achingly a 12-minute rendition of Hemphill’s “Reflections.” Spalding’s voice, gracefully crooning Attias’ lyrics on “The Very Thing” and intoning Gwendolyn Brooks’ words on “Certain Cells,” balances the Taylor and Messiaen audio clips that Jeanty triggers and manipulates.

Dunn is impressive throughout, Smith effective with unflashy contributions. And, as one might expect, Cline and Ribot steal thunder for the rave “Golgi Complex,” while Ribot rips it

up on “Golgi Complex (The Sequel),” and Cline rocks out ringingly on “Rhizomes.”

The question is how Davis thought to bring all these folks together.

“They’re all people I work with,” she explained. “[The album is] representative of my musical life. When we did the sessions in 2018, I was playing in all these different communities, and feeling like, ‘All these people need to meet.’ I thought there could be some really cool things going on, if we could make music together.”

They have, and so cooperatively that Davis’ unique ways of holding them together while expressing herself—with piano preparations, suddenly emergent figures, warm, crisp or crashing chords, lustrous note sprays, high-register filigrees, artful emphases and thoughtful runs resulting in evocative passages—sometimes are subsumed. Which is, after all, a composer’s, rather than a soloist’s, concept.

“Yeah, for *Diatom Ribbons* my compositions are my contribution,” she acknowledged. “I’m in there playing, but there are many people involved, and I wanted to create frameworks for them to come together.”

That Davis is a big-picture thinker with a wide, penetrating overview is a strength she brings to her new role at Berklee. When Davis spoke with DownBeat, she just had started there, teaching improvisation and composition ensembles, planning outreach to Boston-area middle schools and beginning to compile a series of Real Books focusing on the works of women composers. “The job was created for me,” Davis said, “and we’re still figuring out all it encompasses.”

But Carrington, founder and artistic director of the institute with a mission to “recruit, teach, mentor and advocate for musicians seeking to study jazz with gender equity as a guiding principle,” has a vision for their future. “Kris is a brilliant and important artist of her time—and for certain is unconventional. So, my goal with inviting her to join us is to unleash some of her creativity in support of the work we are doing, and to bring her style of creative process to our students. I find it very inspiring, so I feel strongly that they will, too.

“We are encouraging students to look at improvisation through a different lens than they may be used to, which is exciting. Personally, I feel it is important (for the students) to strike a balance of free improvisation, traditional jazz language/vocabulary and connection to rhythm (groove/funk/head-nod elements—whatever you want to call it). Kris is masterful with that balance as her discography, especially *Diatom Ribbons*, displays. I’d like for our institute to carve out our own little cutting-edge corner of jazz education at Berklee.”

Davis is up to that task—and several others. In early November, she led a Berklee student quartet at Dizzy’s Club in Jazz at Lincoln Center. She was back in Chicago to engage in probing and frolicsome duets with Taborn: One of their

forays was a mash-up of Eric Dolphy’s “Hat And Beard” and Conlon Nancarrow’s “Study For Player Piano, No. 9”; they also delved into Sun Ra’s “Love In Outer Space.”

She has acquired staff to help with her Pyroclastic label, which in addition to issuing Davis’ own works has released recordings by bassist Chris Lightcap, reedist Ben Goldberg and pianist Cory Smythe. At press time, the pianist was looking forward to engagements with Carrington and Jeanty, musing about recording with them, and also collaborating with other art-

ists, including poets and dancers.

And she spoke of larger ambitions: “I want to see gender balance. I’d still like to see some of the older, more established players reach out to younger women and include them in bands, because we know that’s how you get your start, being mentored by someone a little older and established. I’d like to see some structure for artists to be able to make their music and not go bankrupt. I want to make a positive impact on the jazz community.”

Toward that goal, Davis is well on her way. **DB**



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Composer, multi-instrumentalist and bandleader Gordon Goodwin knows that accolades can't make his music better or worse.

TOTAL GORDON DEVOTION GOODWIN

By Gary Fukushima Photo by Joe Meyer

Gordon Goodwin gracefully balances the pros and cons of life in Southern California. He recently moved into a gated community in Westlake Village, about 30 miles from Hollywood (or two hours in rush-hour traffic).

It's November, and by 10 a.m. the temperature is above 90 degrees. His house is big but not especially lavish, with a modest sedan and a minivan—both made by Honda—parked safely out of the blistering sun, visible through the open garage. At one point, the NFL player who lived next door owned a few large canines that created a noise issue for Goodwin's weekly jazz radio show, *Phat Tracks* on KJAZZ-FM, an hourlong program recorded in a studio in the pianist's converted basement. Goodwin is settling into the neighborhood, having moved from nearby—hopefully farther from the threat of wildfires, which had caused him considerably more disruption than those barking dogs.

"I used to live about a mile away ... we only got evacuated three times," he said, in all seriousness. Goodwin was on tour in Paris when it last happened. His son had to rush over to save some instruments and hard drives. "Leave the clarinet, let that burn," he quipped, reenacting his instructions to his son. "He drove through the 101 freeway, and there were flames on either side."

Goodwin lamented the hot and windy months "where you wonder, 'Is today the day when I lose my house?'" Still, he's not moving away from Los Angeles any time soon. "It's so

crowded, it's so expensive, and now, it's kind of dangerous," he admitted. "But for me, having the proximity to the great talent pool, it's pretty important."

Goodwin has dipped his toes into that pool virtually his whole life. As a boy growing up in Southern California, he idolized Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass, starting his own version of it in middle school, before being turned on to Count Basie. Many of his idols and mentors were here, from Sammy Nestico to Stan Kenton (he was a student at Kenton's summer jazz camp), from Buddy Rich and Bob Florence to Steven Spielberg, who hired him weekly to score music for the children's animated TV show *The Animaniacs*. One of his first high-profile jazz gigs was playing second alto for Louie Bellson at Disneyland's historic Carnation Plaza Gardens, where all the best bands of the day used to do weeklong runs for a summer jazz series.

Goodwin came of age as a professional musician alongside others who ended up carrying the torch passed to them from the elite Hollywood studio recording community, some of whom now form the core of his signature ensemble, The Big Phat Band. Now in its 20th year, the BPB has released its ninth album, *The Gordian Knot*, named after

the Turkish phrase that Goodwin defines as "an intractable problem ... kind of like running a big band." The new recording continues the band's longstanding penchant for racing through a dizzying array of musical styles, handling all the twists and turns with an improbable degree of execution and precision.

Improbable, but not impossible. Gordon ruefully notes that some people think, incorrectly, that their music has been "fixed" in Pro Tools. Those who hear the band live know there's not much to fix. That the band sounds too good to be true is a testament to the players, who to a person all have survived and thrived in the competitive L.A. studio session scene for one reason only: They have proven time and again that they are the most accomplished sight-readers, performers and improvisers that money can buy.

"I think that the band represents some of the very best that we have to offer in Southern California," said Wayne Bergeron, speaking by phone. Bergeron is Exhibit A of those representatives. He is the predominant, first-call lead trumpeter for big-budget film or TV scoring sessions and is inarguably the defining voice of the Big Phat Band. He is surrounded by an exemplary cast that includes



Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band performs at a charity event in Newport Beach, California, on July 8, 2018.

saxophonists Eric Marienthal and Sal Lozano, trombonists Andy Martin and Francisco Torres, guitarist Andrew Synowiec, bassist Kevin Axt, drummer Ray Brinker and percussionist Joey DeLeon. In addition to arranging and composing material for the new album, Goodwin plays piano throughout, along with saxophone in certain spots.

The cohesion is reinforced by a shared commitment to performing together as a band. "We're as close as you can get to being a road band," said Bergeron, recalling his time touring with Maynard Ferguson. "When you play the same music every night ... things evolve, and great things happen to the music."

Goodwin's band has something approaching that mentality. Currently, they average about 50 shows a year around the world, remarkable considering how busy these studio professionals are.

The leader acknowledges the sacrifices his players make for the sake of his band. He tries to pay them as best he can, but concedes, "It's nothing compared to what they make playing commercial music. I'm competing ... with a week at the Hollywood Bowl. My one gig [competes] with a movie session that not only pays them thousands of dollars for the day, but the potential of thousands, tens of thousands of dollars in royalties. I'm going to ask him to give that up? Yet, sometimes he does. Because he believes in the mission statement of the band, and [in] being a link in the chain—from Basie and Thad and Mel, Maynard and Buddy Rich—to what we're doing."

"We don't play in that band for the money, God knows," said bassist Axt. The Burbank native earns a comfortable living playing for movie soundtracks like *La La Land*, *Crazy Rich Asians* and *Ford vs. Ferrari*. Despite that, he embraces the tradeoff: "We're all really dedicated to being a part of his music, and we really love playing with each other as well."

"Gordon's music is just incredibly special," said saxophonist Marienthal, speaking by phone from his California home, fresh off a European tour. "It's some of the most brilliantly written music, and some of the most fun to play."

Marienthal, who was in high school when he first met Goodwin, was a guest soloist on the Phat Band's debut recording, and has played regularly with the group since its first live gig. To him, it's on par with the challenge and satisfaction he gets playing with Chick Corea, albeit a much different style of music. "It is like nothing else I do in my career," he said.

"It's a musical outlet for me," Bergeron said. "It's a place for me to go explore the extremes of what I can do, within the music and the stylistic differences of the writing, compared to what I do at work every day. I go in to work and sometimes I get to use these skills, but most of the time I don't."

He continued, "Most of the time, it's just music by the pound and I just play some notes. That's my day job. My fun stuff is doing Gordon's band. I love the music, and I believe in the music. That's why I continue to do it."

Goodwin is a wearer of many hats—pianist, saxophonist, bandleader, promoter, businessman—but has won his greatest acclaim as an arranger and a composer. He arranged the music for a new Christmas album by *Frozen* star Idina Menzel, and he recently arranged and orchestrated the score for the live-action version of Disney's *The Lion King*. Thanks to his contributions, Goodwin's fingerprints are quite visible on the soundtracks for two landmark animated movies: *The Incredibles* (2004) and *Incredibles 2* (2018). The films' spy-jazz motifs were composed by Michael Giacchino and brought to life by Phat Band players, including Bergeron.

One of the tracks on *The Gordian Knot*, "The Incredibles," moves Giacchino's writing even further into Phat Band territory. The track is representative of the new album as a whole, in that it illustrates Goodwin's consummation of his dual roles of commercial scorer and big band arranger. It's harder than ever to distinguish between those two things on the new album. The title track adds a string orchestra, moving seamlessly between the two entities like a new Third Stream that might please the ghosts of Gunther Schuller and Leonard Bernstein. It's a step beyond Goodwin's

earlier "jazzification" of classical themes, like Gershwin's "Rhapsody In Blue" and Mozart's *Symphony No. 40 in G Minor*, creating an entirely new hybrid vehicle with elements of both classical and jazz.

Another track, "Deja Moo," pays tribute to two American inspirations, Aaron Copland and county & western music, à la "Hoe-Down." Synowiec's guitar work manages to capture the intricacies of the Copeland-esque themes, shifting gracefully into improvising over changes while never losing the twangy affectations of a seasoned blues guitarist. (The remarkably versatile Synowiec has recorded with Marc Anthony, Barbra Streisand and The Who.)

Goodwin also salutes Buddy Rich with a 10-minute piece he wrote in 2017 in honor of the legendary drummer/bandleader's 100th birthday. "The Buddy Complex" is a mash-up of some of the Buddy Rich Big Band's most memorable themes, including the *Channel One Suite* and Bill Reddie's iconic *West Side Story* arrangement.

Goodwin, who cites Rich's band as a major influence, recounted meeting the drummer as a young man. "He threw me out of Disneyland once," he said, describing how he and his friends went to see the Buddy Rich Big Band at Carnation Plaza. From the stage, Rich caught them rolling their eyes in disappointment for not playing some new arrangements. Goodwin recalled, "He played a long drum solo, an amazing drum solo, and he came over after the set, and he grabs my friend by the shirt and says, 'Did you learn something? Did you learn something?'"

While Goodwin might borrow musical elements from Rich, he certainly hasn't emulated his hero's mercurial personality, or his penchant for colorfully worded reprimands. Axt recognizes Goodwin's ongoing humility and appreciation for his players, noting the rise in morale "when you have a leader who's so sincere in expressing the gratitude for what the players give him. ... Gordon's really conscientious about that."

"I have a pretty positive worldview," Goodwin intimated. "I've been able to retain my gratitude that I can do [this]. That's why the music is always

a little optimistic-sounding. Tempos are a little bit brighter. Harmonies and different things that convey those emotions are more on the proactive side than a dirge or a comment on the woes of our culture.”

Pushing back on negativity has been something Goodwin has had to do in response to critics of his large ensemble. Online discussions and comments reveal a few pointed criticisms of the Big Phat Band, accusing them of being too showy, too sterile, too produced, too “studio” and even too white. (There are several Latino players in the band, but currently no African Americans, Asian Americans or women in the lineup. However, female singer Vangie Gunn contributes vocals to the standard “Summertime” on the new album.) Regarding the issues of identity politics, Goodwin would prefer not to get into it at all. “I just wish that would happen in culture, as a rule, is that we don’t define ourselves by our tribes as much as we do,” he said. “I don’t have to identify myself as a male, or as a white guy, or as ‘this kind of musician,’ or by my age ... it all goes into who I am. But that’s a bit of an uphill climb these days.”

This non-tribal attitude is reflected in Goodwin’s writing. The genre-shifting that some find jarring is an indelible part of the bandleader’s aesthetic, and is vigorously defended by the musicians. “I think it will go down [in history] as one of the most eclectic, exploratory bands, in terms of stylistic range,” Axt said. “In terms of the level of execution, I honestly think that they’ve established the gold standard.”

“Gordon’s writing stretches the bounds of what a big band can do,” Bergeron said. “A jazz purist might look at some things we do and go, ‘That’s not jazz.’ Well, how can you say that? It’s all really jazz. If you listen to Mahler, you hear jazz chords. Not all jazz goes *ding-ding-da-ding*.”

Both Bergeron and Axt agree that the Phat Band operates like a well-oiled machine. “As a lead trumpet player,” Bergeron said, “it’s like driving a Rolls Royce. You don’t have to think about much, you just do it. Everything works.”

Axt, preferring a sportier analogy, said, “The Big Phat Band is like a Ferrari: It’s capable of doing a lot of things really well.”

As for Goodwin, the man with two Hondas in his garage, ruminating about luxury vehicles could strike a nerve. “Do you know what kind of car I’d be driving if I didn’t spend \$75,000 on a record?” he asked, incredulously. “How many vacations did we miss? I was lucky that my family was supportive.”

He paused to reflect.

“Having said all that, there are reasons to do things besides money, and that’s of course why I’m doing this.”

The numerous awards he has received provide only so much motivation. The four-time Grammy winner recalled what he said to an interviewer after one of his triumphs: “As good

as this feels to my ego, I know that this Grammy doesn’t make my music any better. Just as there are four guys out there who just lost, that doesn’t make their music any worse.”

A theme all the instrumentalists kept coming back to was how the Phat Band represents for them a chance to reclaim the music as a labor of love, a meaningful shared experience that transcends the workman-like industry model they have entered into (and profited from). “It’s like if you were a sous-chef in a restaurant,” Marienthal suggested, “and you just respect the head chef so much that you want to work as hard as it takes to make sure that the dream of a leader is realized. That’s how we feel about Gordon.”

Goodwin recognizes their loyalty in the context of fulfilling his dreams. “I am amazed by the chances I’ve had ... and the life I’ve been able to lead,” he said. “I’m stumbling as I say these words because it feels like I’m just getting started. I hope that I always feel that way. That’s how you stay alive and relevant.”

“Music has been my driving force since I was very young. I know that whatever else is going on—on my worst day, I still get to write music—and what’s better than that? What’s better than having a kid come up and tell me, ‘I listened to the Phat Band, and it inspired me so much I want to learn music.’ What’s better than *that*? Is a Grammy better than that? I don’t think so.” **DB**

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Alligator Bogaloo • The Chicken • Cissy Strut • Cold Duck Time • Comin' Home Baby • Mercy, Mercy, Mercy • Put It Where You Want It • Sidewinder • Tom Cat • Watermelon Man.
HL00196728 Book with Online Media\$17.99

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00218264 Book with Online Media\$17.99

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00232768 Book with Online Media\$17.99

8. THE BEBOP ERA PLAY-ALONG

Au Privave • Boneology • Bouncing with Bud • Dexterity • Groovin' High • Half Nelson • In Walked Bud • Lady Bird • Move • Witches Pit.
00234111 Book with Online Media\$17.99

12. 1950s JAZZ PLAY-ALONG

Con Alma • Django • Doodlin' • In Your Own Sweet Way • Jeru • Jordu • Killer Joe • Lullaby of Birdland • Night Train • Waltz for Debby.
00275647 Book with Online Media\$17.99

13. 1960s JAZZ PLAY-ALONG

Ceora • Dat Dere • Dolphin Dance • Equinox • Jeannine • Recorda Me • Stolen Moments • Tom Thumb • Up Jumped Spring • Windows.
00275651 Book with Online Media\$17.99

11. JOHN COLTRANE

Blue Train (Blue Trane) • Central Park West • Cousin Mary • Giant Steps • Impressions • Lazy Bird • Moment's Notice • My Favorite Things • Naima (Niema) • Syeeda's Song Flute.
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14. 1970s JAZZ PLAY-ALONG

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DOWNBEAT 2020 INTERNATIONAL JAZZ VENUE GUIDE



106 CLUBS WHERE JAZZ THRIVES

Our Jazz Venue Guide is a passport to awesome music rooms around the globe. On the following pages, the listings are divided by geographic region, and a venue's name in capital letters indicates there is an advertisement for that establishment within this guide.

Cyrille Aimée onstage at Dakota in Minneapolis on April 3, 2019 (Photo: Andrea Canter)

Information for the guide was compiled by Yoshi Kato, Ken Micallef, Sean J. O'Connell, Terry Perkins and the DownBeat staff.

UNITED STATES

Smoke, a jazz club in New York City



NEW YORK

55 Bar

New York, NY

This beloved bar has hosted some of the city's most innovative players, from Wayne Krantz and Zach Danziger to Mike Stern and Nate Wood. Jazz is heard here two or three nights a week, with blues and funk rounding out the schedule. This popular Greenwich Village haven fills up fast, so come early.

55bar.com

Birdland

New York, NY

The original Birdland dominated 52nd Street in the '40s, moved to the Upper West Side in the '90s, and today is firmly planted in Manhattan's theater district, not far from Times Square. Then as now, some of the finest jazz players in the world can be heard in this spacious club. Performers in January include Kurt Elling, Stacey Kent and John Pizzarelli with Jessica Molaskey.

birdlandjazz.com

Blue Note

New York, NY

The Blue Note packs them in every night of the week, and avid jazz fans often have the opportunity to speak to the musicians after the set. There is consistently a dazzling lineup at this Greenwich Village hot spot: January brings Christian McBride, Antonio Sánchez and the Dizzy Gillespie All Stars. In February, it's Dee Dee Bridgewater and Bill Frisell.

bluenote.net

Dizzy's Club

New York, NY

Where else can you get a spectacular view of Central Park while hearing some of the greatest names in jazz? The large, beautifully appointed space is a crown jewel in the Jazz At Lincoln Center family, presenting jazz every night and Late Night Sessions for the adventurous. Bookings in January include Jimmy Cobb, Nelson Matta, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Christian Sands and Benny Green.

jazz.org/dizzys

Fat Cat

New York, NY

Where should you go if your ping-pong, pool and shuffleboard skills are rusty but you're also up for some New York City jazz? Fat Cat is the place to exercise your hands, ears and soul, all in one relaxed Greenwich Village spot. Trio, ensemble and big band jazz performances are presented every night. Recent performers include David Weiss & Point of Departure, Willie Martinez y La Familia and the Ed Cherry Trio.

fatcatmusic.org

The Iridium

New York, NY

A 180-seat room devoted to all styles of music seven nights a week, The Iridium presents jazz from the trio of Wayne Krantz, Keith Carlock and Tim Lefebvre, as well as blues from Ana Popovic and Otis Taylor.

theiridium.com

EAST

CONNECTICUT

Firehouse 12

New Haven, CT

Firehouse 12 is a bar, a record label, a concert venue and a recording studio. Located in the historic 9th Square district, Firehouse 12's recording studio doubles as an intimate 75-seat auditorium, where its Jazz Series runs for 12 weeks during the spring and fall. Guitarist Lage Lund and clarinetist Aaron Novik are among the artists who have played here.

firehouse12.com

The Side Door Jazz Club

Old Lyme, CT

Located in the historic Old Lyme Inn (midway between Boston and New York), this club was opened in 2013 by jazz impresario George Wein and his Newport All-Star band, ensuring its future for years to come. Operated by jazz-loving couple Ken and Chris Kitchings, the venue will present the Tamir Hendelman Trio in January.

thesidedoorjazz.com

MARYLAND

An Die Musik Live!

Baltimore, MD

Located in a historic townhouse, this intimate 75-seat venue offers an eclectic mix of jazz, classical and other genres. There's a bi-monthly jazz jam plus weekend sets by the likes of Regina Carter and Dennis Chambers.

andiemusiklive.com

MASSACHUSETTS

The Lilypad

Cambridge, MA

The Lilypad features jazz, alt-rock and other styles seven nights a week (aside from holidays). The Joe Hunt group and the Jerry

Bergonzi Quartet frequently perform at this Inman Square venue.

lilypadinman.com

Regattabar

Cambridge, MA

Since 1985, this 225-seat club overlooking Harvard Square from the third floor of the Charles Hotel has been a stop for national acts. Look for upcoming performances by Bill Frisell and the Peter Bernstein/Larry Goldings/Bill Stewart Trio.

regattabarjazz.com

Scullers Jazz Club

Boston, MA

Scullers has been a fixture on the Boston jazz scene since 1989, featuring top names on weekends like Robert Glasper, Etienne Charles and Keyon Harrold, and occasional Thursday sets by area musicians. An appetizer menu is available.

scullersjazz.com

Wally's Café Jazz Club

Boston, MA

Wally's was founded in 1947, and bills itself as "the musician's training ground." The tiny room lives up to that motto by showcasing talented students from Berklee College of Music and other area music schools over the course of three sets every night.

wallyscafe.com

NEW JERSEY

Shanghai Jazz

Madison, NJ

Combining a world-class restaurant and jazz venue, Shanghai Jazz has hosted some stellar talent, including saxophonist Harry Allen, vocalist Sarah Partridge and drummer Bernard Purdie. In business since 1995, Shanghai Jazz upholds jazz tradition and offers exquisite dining.

shanghaijazz.com

The Jazz Gallery

New York, NY

Winner of the 2016, 2014 and 2010 CMA/ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming, The Jazz Gallery maintains a balance between fostering new jazz talent and booking jazz celebrities. Hear jazz live, three nights per week, 50 weeks per year.

jazzgallery.org

Jazz Standard

New York, NY

Boasting terrific acoustics and equally renowned Southern cuisine, Jazz Standard has for more than a decade brought new talent to prominence while hosting jazz luminaries. One of the few non-tipping establishments in New York City, Jazz Standard presents artists like the Maria Schneider Orchestra, Louis Hayes and Matt Wilson.

jazzstandard.com

(LE) POISSON ROUGE

New York, NY

Located in the same subterranean warren that once housed The Village Gate, LPR is renowned for its genre-bending ambitions, hosting jazz, classical, new music, avant-garde and indie rock. And like the Village Gate of the 1960s, LPR also hosts readings, comedy, film, DJs, theater and burlesque. Cyrille Aimée hits LPR's "Main Space" stage on Feb. 20.

lpr.com

Mezzrow

New York, NY

Tiny, tube-shaped, underground Mezzrow is a bit like revisiting the glory days of speakeasies and prohibition—but with fine acoustics. Residencies by guitarist Pasquale Grasso and various vocalists and pianists make the joint hum, while regular visits by artists like reedist Scott Robinson keep customers glued to their seats. Cozy and intimate, Mezzrow is the sound of old New York, today.

mezzrow.com

Minton's Playhouse

New York, NY

Founded in 1938 by the saxophonist Henry Minton in Harlem, the revived Minton's does its best to live up to its fabled namesake. Spacious yet intimate, Minton's is joined to the Cecil Steakhouse. The Jason Marsalis Big Band plays here frequently.

mintonsharlem.com

Nublu

New York, NY

East Village nightspot Nublu hosts jazz, funk, electronic and "Vinyl Only" nights in a three-level space that offers excellent sightlines and people-watching. The club's recent 10-night jazz festival included the Sun Ra Arkestra, Dave Douglas and Donny McCaslin. The two locations are 151 Avenue C, and Nubu Classic at 62 Avenue C.

nublu.net

Smalls

New York, NY

A tiny place with terrific jazz, Smalls is where established players and upstarts co-mingle, and fire-burning performances are the norm.

January shows include Ari Hoenig, Joe Farnsworth, Mike DiRubbo, Chet Doxas and Simona Premazzi. Jazz is an all-night, every-night affair at Smalls.

smallslive.com

Smoke

New York, NY

Located at the historic junction of 106th Street (aka Duke Ellington Boulevard) and Broadway, Smoke boasts excellent food and its own record label. And though it seats only 50, the club stays open until 3 a.m. Among the artists performing in January are Emmet Cohen, Bill Charlap and Vincent Herring.

smokejazz.com

The Stone at The New School

New York, NY

Now located in The New School, The Stone is New York's number-one night spot for creative improvisation beyond borders. Founded in 2005 by John Zorn, The Stone has played host to such forward-looking artists as Henry Grimes, Dave Burrell, Laurie Anderson, Mary Halvorson, Nels Cline and Gerry Hemingway.

thestonemusic.com

Village Vanguard

New York, NY

Founded in 1935, the most revered jazz room in New York is a bucket-list destination for music lovers from around the globe. Upcoming January residencies include the Julian Lage Trio, the Joe Lovano & Dave Douglas Quintet and the Jakob Bro Quartet. The Fred Hersch Trio arrives in early February. The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra occupies the Monday-night slot.

villagevanguard.com

PENNSYLVANIA

Chris' Jazz Café

Philadelphia, PA

Celebrating its 30th year of six-nights-a-week sets, Chris' is the longest continuously running jazz club in Philadelphia. National acts and strong local talent—as well as owner/chef Mark DiNunno's gourmet menu—add up to a winning combination.

chrisjazzcafe.com

MCG Jazz

Pittsburgh, PA

The Manchester Craftsman's Guild has been presenting an outstanding annual concert series in a 350-seat space since 1987, as well as issuing live recordings of the performances. Recent and upcoming bookings include the SFJAZZ Collective, Nicole Mitchell and Cécile McLorin Salvant.

mcgjazz.org

WASHINGTON, D.C.


Blues Alley

Washington, D.C.


Open every night (except major holidays), Blues Alley showcases a blend of national names and area jazz performers. A full menu features New Orleans dishes. Look for February/March sets by Cyrille Aimée and Kevin Eubanks. But be prepared to arrive early: Seating is general admission.

bluesalley.com


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AKRON

STUDIO K AT THE KENNEDY CENTER

Washington, D.C.

This 160-seat venue (or 250 standing) is booked by Jason Moran, the Kennedy Center's Artistic Director for Jazz, and the calendar reflects his wide-ranging tastes. Upcoming shows include Jazzmeia Horn, Linda May Han Oh, Bilal, and Kassa Overall with Carmen Lundy.

kennedy-center.org

Twins Jazz

Washington, D.C.

This intimate club has been around since 1987, with a move to its current U Street location in 2000. Sets run Wednesday through Saturday with an emphasis on area talent and jazz jams. The international menu has an Ethiopian accent.

twinsjazz.com

SOUTH

GEORGIA

The Velvet Note

Alpharetta, GA

Billed as an "acoustic living room," this venue presents jazz Thursday through Sunday in a space designed for comfort with excellent acoustics. A full restaurant/bar adds to the ambience. Recent bookings include Jeff Coffin and Mary Stallings.

thevelvetnote.com

LOUISIANA

Blue Nile

New Orleans, LA

One of the original clubs on the Frenchmen Street scene presents music every night on a main-level stage, as well as an upstairs space with a balcony. Regular performers include NOLA fave Kermit Ruffins as well as occasional national acts.

bluenilelive.com

Preservation Hall

New Orleans, LA

Several sets happen every night at this famed French Quarter club, with an emphasis on traditional NOLA jazz and a rotating cast of musicians in the Preservation Hall All Stars. Late-night performances during Jazz Fest sell out quickly.

preservationhall.com

Prime Example

New Orleans, LA

This intimate, triangular-shaped club in the 7th Ward at Broad and St. Bernard isn't far from Fairgrounds Park, home of Jazz Fest. You'll find a strong focus on modern jazz and blues Tuesday through Saturday.

primeexamplejazz.com

Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro

New Orleans, LA

Snug Harbor has been presenting jazz continuously ever since it opened in 1983.

A two-level seating area features excellent sightlines for a lineup of the top musicians on the NOLA jazz scene, including regular performances by Ellis Marsalis.

snugjazz.com

Tipitina's

New Orleans, LA

Featuring a lineup that covers the musical spectrum from funk to jazz to rock, Tip's is a legendary NOLA venue with roots that go back to 1977. Now owned by the band Galactic, it has a strong commitment to music education through the Tipitina Foundation.

tipitinas.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

THE JAZZ CORNER

Hilton Head Island, SC

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, this 99-seat venue offers music and gourmet food every night. The Martin Lesch Band plays every Monday in January. International star Tierney Sutton is scheduled for Feb. 8.

thejazzcorner.com

TENNESSEE

Rudy's Jazz Room

Nashville, TN

A 2017 addition to Nashville's music scene, Rudy's presents jazz every night in an intimate setting, with a strong focus on



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Photo: Dee Dee Bridgewater, Fall 2019, The Jazz Kitchen by Mark Sheldon



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regional musicians, as well as the occasional national act. Rudy's offers a New Orleans-based menu and a full bar.

rudysjazzroom.com

TEXAS

SCAT JAZZ LOUNGE

Fort Worth, TX

This basement club has music every night but Monday. There's an emphasis on regional musicians, and the Black Dog Jam, the longest-running jam session in the city, happens every Sunday.

scatjazzlounge.com

MIDWEST

Cornetist Josh Berman performs at Constellation in Chicago.



BRETT SWINNEY

Jazz in Chicago

Downtown Chicago's premier venue for multi-night jazz residencies, the historic **Jazz Showcase** presents top-tier talent from the world of straightahead jazz in an elegant, spacious environment (jazzshowcase.com). Uptown, the **Green Mill** consistently draws top-notch local and national jazz artists to its Prohibition-era environs and buzzing late-night scene (greenmilljazz.com). **Andy's Jazz Club**, located in the bustling River North district, is a great place to grab a bite to eat and enjoy an after-work cocktail while listening to some of the area's most popular jazz practitioners (andysjazzclub.com). Sporting a pair of concert spaces, **Constellation**, located on the city's northwest side, offers a variety of disciplines: jazz, contemporary classical, dance and the occasional film screening (constellation-chicago.com). A spiritual home for Chicago's avant-garde for more than a decade, the **Hungry Brain**'s scruffy ambience belies the exploratory nature of its bookings. Appearing alongside local players are international bandleaders tugging at the edges of jazz (hungrybrainchicago.com). Interspersed with soul, r&b and hip-hop shows, **Promontory** in Hyde Park hosts road-tested jazz players, as well as younger talent expanding the genre (promontorychicago.com).

INDIANA

THE JAZZ KITCHEN

Indianapolis, IN

This 140-seat room showcases jazz or blues acts every night, with a full menu and bar. Recent bookings include Gerald Albright, John Pizzarelli, Regina Carter and Kneebody. There's a jazz jam every Monday.

thejazzkitchen.com

MICHIGAN

Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe

Gross Pointe Farms, MI

The 65-seat suburban Detroit club offers music and food Tuesday through Saturday. Guitarist Ron English holds down the Tuesday slot, and a mix of regional musicians and national names like Freddie Cole and Tia Fuller perform here.

dirtydogjazz.com

MINNESOTA

Crooners Lounge & Supper Club

Minneapolis, MN

Crooners offers three unique concert stages for dinner-shows, with an emphasis on regional artists. The Jerry Bergonzi Quartet comes to town on Jan. 6 for two sets.

croonerslounge.com

Dakota Jazz Club

Minneapolis, MN

Open every night on the first floor of the Target Plaza building, the Dakota features an eclectic mix of jazz, rock, blues and folk. Upcoming shows include the Rebirth Brass Band (Jan. 25), Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials (Jan. 31), Manhattan Transfer (Feb. 10-11) and Stacey Kent (Feb. 23).

dakotacooks.com

MISSOURI

Ferring Jazz Bistro

The Harold & Dorothy Steward Center for Jazz

St. Louis, MO

The Center has a strong focus on jazz education and community outreach, and the 200-seat Ferring Jazz Bistro hosts jazz performances year round, featuring national acts every other week, as well as area musicians. Upcoming performances feature The Bad Plus and Tim Warfield.

jazzstl.org

Murry's

Columbia, MO

Great food and jazz are a winning combination at Murry's. Local acts are presented Monday through Saturday. And the "We Always Swing" concert series brings big names to the intimate club for Sunday sets September through May.

murrysrestaurant.net

OHIO

BLU JAZZ+

Akron, OH

This general-admission club, open five nights a week, mixes it up with a Tuesday blues jam, a Wednesday solo piano series, and area musicians and occasional national acts. The venue's Masterclass Foundation promotes jazz education and mentorship.

blujazzakron.com

Nighttown

Cleveland, OH

Founded in 1965, Nighttown has expanded to six dining rooms and three bars. But for music fans, the center of attention is the small stage that features jazz up to seven nights a week. The focus is on area talent, but big names also hit the stage.

nighttowncleveland.com

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Pianist Lynne Arriale, vocalist Charnée Wade and saxophonist Grace Kelly perform at Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society in Half Moon Bay, California.

WEST

ARIZONA

The Nash

Phoenix, AZ

Named after drummer Lewis Nash, a Phoenix native, this club presents concerts, as well as an extensive offering of classes during the day. From big bands to touring small groups led by the likes of Jimmy Cobb and Katie Thiroux, no room swings harder in Arizona.

thenash.org

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

BACH DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY

Half Moon Bay, CA

Established in 1964, this jazz salon presents artists a few times a month, with Sunday concerts starting at 4:30 p.m. Upcoming shows include Kenny Garrett, The Cookers and Terence Blanchard.

bachddsoc.org

KUUMBWA JAZZ

Santa Cruz, CA

Since 1975, this surf-friendly college town

has boasted one of the best jazz clubs in the world. Miguel Zenón and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band can show up on the same week, rivaling some of the finest concert hall bookings the West Coast has to offer.

kuumbwajazz.org

YOSHI'S

Oakland, CA

The pre-eminent East Bay music room hosts jazz artists such as The Cookers and hip-hop artists like Talib Kweli. Victor Wooten comes to town Jan. 20–21. This revered room has been offering sushi and swing since the early 1970s.

yoshis.com

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Baked Potato

Studio City, CA

Fusion bands and other electric groups call this funky bar home. With music six nights a week, this is a great spot to find top-shelf session musicians playing for an appreciative yet low-key crowd.

thebakedpotato.com

Blue Whale

Los Angeles, CA

Open since 2009, this third-floor Little Tokyo nightclub has established a sterling reputation with its combination of live jazz, a visual art space and a bar. Listeners can balance food and drink while seated on small blue cubes for acts both local and international. Live music six nights a week.

bluewhalemusic.com

[le] poisson rouge

2/2 - Ghost train Orchestra with Joan Wasser, Karen Mantler, JG Thirwell, and Theo Bleckmann

2/7 - CEG Presents: Brass Against

3/26 - The Necks (2 Shows!)

4/3 - Julian Lage & Chris Eldridge

LPR.com

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Catalina Bar & Grill

Los Angeles, CA

This sprawling performance space is one of the last places in Hollywood to host multi-night headliners like Chick Corea, Poncho Sanchez and Arturo Sandoval's big band. Live music is featured six nights a week.

catalinajazzclub.com

Sam First

Los Angeles, CA

This intimate, modern cocktail bar is within walking distance of baggage claim at LAX. Up-and-coming artists from the nearby Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz fill in the week, while big names like Billy Childs perform on weekends.

samfirstbar.com

COLORADO

Dazzle Jazz

Denver, CO

Located in the nearly 150-year-old Baur Building, this venue takes pride in its menu and eclectic music fare. From gamelan to soul, this room places jazz in a global context with upcoming visits from Etienne Charles and Javon Jackson among the diverse options.

dazzlejazz.com

OREGON

The 1905

Portland, OR

This venue is straightforward about your



Drummer Tommy Igoe and his band perform at Yoshi's in Oakland, California.

evening and brunch plans: "Food. Booze. Jazz." The jazz portion features both local and touring bands, with a lot of straightahead acts playing tableside in the dining room.

the1905.org

WASHINGTON

Dimitriou's Jazz Alley

Seattle, WA

For more than 30 years, this magnet for big-name touring jazz acts has served Seattle with a capacity of 350-plus and balcony

seating. Upcoming shows include Chris Botti (Jan. 14–19), Harriet Tubman (Jan. 21–22), David Sanborn (Feb. 20–23) and Cécile McLorin Salvant (March 31–April 1).

jazzalley.com

The Royal Room

Seattle, WA

Located in the Columbia City neighborhood, this nearly 10-year-old venue was the brainchild of musician Wayne Horvitz. The warm space hosts educational programs and evening sets by local jazz artists.

theroyalroomseattle.com

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Stockwerk Jazz in Graz, Austria

COURTESY STOCKWERK JAZZ

venue/bar/Arta Records label shop hosts local jazz artists nightly and international, touring musicians such as drummer/vocalist Jamison Ross.

aghart.cz

The Jazz Dock

Prague

Creative architecture, high-end meals, appealing drinks, a view of the Vltava River and concerts by top-shelf artists make this a bucket-list destination.

jazzdock.cz

DENMARK

Jazzhus Montmartre

Copenhagen

Born in 1959 and reborn in 2010, this nonprofit space hosts Scandinavian and other touring jazz artists most nights. Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and guitarist Jakob Bro are recent headliners.

jazzhusmontmartre.dk

ENGLAND

Cafe OTO

London

Commissions, residencies and concert recordings are part of the programming at this venue, which presents music nightly.

cafeoto.co.uk

Jazz Cafe

London

Pairing gourmet food with nightly concerts, Jazz Cafe has seated views upstairs and a downstairs dance floor. Funk and soul bookings share the marquee with the likes of iconic jazz drummer Billy Cobham.

thejazzcafelondon.com

Ronnie Scott's

London

Since 1959, Ronnie Scott's has been presenting and celebrating the biggest names in jazz and blues in the heart of London's Soho district. The legendary club has a reputation among world-renown artists for its great sound, excellent sight lines, storied history and highly supportive patrons. Many memorable albums have been recorded here.

ronniescotts.co.uk

The Vortex

London

This intimate nonprofit establishment features straightahead jazz, modern styles and free-improv. British saxophone titan Evan Parker has a monthly residency.

vortexjazz.co.uk

ESTONIA

Philly Joe's Jazz Club

Tallinn

Founded in 2014, the club has partnered with local organizations to present concerts, workshops, master classes and films.

phillyjoes.com

AUSTRALIA

Foundry616

Sydney

Located near Sydney's Darling Harbour, this club features the best of the Australian scene, as well as international guests.

foundry616.com.au

Venue 505

Sydney

Jazz jams, groove-oriented bands and straightahead explorations are presented six nights a week on this 16-year-old bandstand.

venue505.com

AUSTRIA

Blue Tomato

Vienna

From Thursday through Saturday, traditional and modern jazz is presented in this comfortable spot. Sun of Goldfinger and Ballister are among recent headliners.

bluetomato.cc

Jazzland

Vienna

The 48-year-old cellar-level club presents concerts Monday through Saturday. There's an exciting Rising Star series, as well as shows by the likes of pianist/vocalist Dena DeRose and trumpeter Valery Ponomarev.

jazzland.at

PORGY & BESS

Vienna

A favorite of musicians, this nonprofit space champions European jazz, as well as presenting bands from around the world. The Austrian Jazzcomposers Orchestra and Portuguese vocalist Carmen Souza headlined in late 2019.

porgy.at

Stockwerk Jazz

Graz

Taking its adult beverages as seriously as it does its jazz, this club presents everything from solo shows to big bands. International artists stop by amid a schedule of regional talent.

stockwerkjazz.mur.at

BRAZIL

Blue Note Rio

Rio de Janeiro

Part of the famous Blue Note chain of clubs, this venue is temporarily closed, but is scheduled to reopen in a new location in Rio during the first quarter of 2020.

bluenoterio.com.br

CANADA

Dièse Onze

Montreal

This cozy, 14-year-old club is a favorite spot for dedicated jazz fans. Anchored by the Kim Richardson Trio's vocal jam sessions on Sundays, the club also offers flamenco on Mondays, as well as local and touring musicians. A superb kitchen offers tapas, salads, entrées and desserts.

dieseonze.com

FRANKIE'S JAZZ CLUB

Vancouver

Italian cuisine, West Coast musicians and touring talent (including organist Larry Goldings) all can be enjoyed here Wednesday through Sunday nights.

The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar

Toronto

For 18 concerts weekly, this musicians' congregating point is the place to catch local artists and touring musicians. Affordability is one of its hallmarks, and craft beer connoisseurs will rejoice.

therex.ca

Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill

Montreal

From midweek student jams to weekend showcase headliners like pianist Jean-Michel Pilc, concerts at this 25-year-old gem embody a communal spirit.

upstairsjazz.com

CZECH REPUBLIC

AghaRTA Jazz Centrum

Prague

Launched the day after Miles Davis died (in 1991) and named after his 1975 album, this

FINLAND

Storyville

Helsinki

Storyville's cuisine is as much a signature as its namesake neighborhood's musical heritage. This two-story venue has a piano bar above and a supper club below for four lively musical nights each week.

storyville.fi

FRANCE

Duc Des Lombards

Paris

Between jam sessions and concert tributes to greats such as McCoy Tyner, the 35-year-old hot spot alternates between presenting touring talent (vocalist/pianist Patricia Barber) and local artists (violinist Aurore Voilqué).

ducdeslombards.fr

Le Caveau de la Huchette

Paris

Whether one looks back to its start as a jazz club in 1946 or vibraphonist Dany Doritz's 49 years of guidance, this "temple of swing" is home to music seven nights a week.

caveaudelahuchette.fr

New Morning

Paris

Blues, klezmer, funk and disco nights mix with straightahead and fusion styles at this 38-year-old musical and social hot spot.

newmorning.com

Sunset-Sunside

Paris

Offering music nightly, this club has hosted stars such as pianist Jacky Terrasson and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel.

sunset-sunside.com

GERMANY

A-Trane

Berlin

Bassist/vocalist Katie Thiroux and tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana are among the touring artists to play this 27-year-old spot, which serves German and international cuisine.

a-trane.de

BIX Jazzclub

Stuttgart

Mouth-watering food options and live music Tuesday through Saturday make this 13-year-old space pop. It has hosted local artists such as pianist Olivia Trummer and touring talent such as Raul Midón.

bix-stuttgart.de

Jazz im Prinz Karl

Tübingen

The 42-year-old membership-driven institution recently has presented bands led by trumpeter Wallace Roney, saxophonist Nubya Garcia and bassist Ben Williams.

jipk.net

Jazzkeller

Frankfurt

Featuring a jam session on Wednesdays, this cellar spot is one of the oldest jazz venues in Europe. It presents a variety of ensembles, from piano trios to big bands.

jazzkeller.com

ISRAEL

Beit Haamudim

Tel Aviv

From classic guitar and saxophone trios to quartets, quintets and jam sessions, Beit Haamudim hosts the best of Israeli's jazz scene seven days a week.

facebook.com/BeitHaamudim

ITALY

Alexanderplatz

Rome

Celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2020 after a brief closure, Italy's premier jazz club continues to emphasize trio and quartet concerts in classic and modern styles.

alexanderplatzjazz.com

JAPAN

Body & Soul

Tokyo

Since 1974, this venue (which seats about 50) has presented mostly domestic talent.

bodyandsoul.co.jp

Shinjuku Pit Inn

Tokyo

Known for showcasing domestic artists and serving snacks and drinks, this 53-year-old venue (27 years in its current location) is a serious and revered listening room.

pit-inn.com

MEXICO

Zinco Jazz Club

Mexico City

With an enviable menu and a simple decor, this club has earned a reputation for hipness. On-stage shows have included a tribute to Billie Holiday, a big band and a Gypsy jazz unit.

zincojazz.com

THE NETHERLANDS

Bimhuis

Amsterdam

Located near Amsterdam's Central Station, this internationally acclaimed concert hall boasts a 45-year history and more than 300 concerts annually by the likes of Transylvanian pianist Lucian Ban and American vocalist Becca Stevens.

bimhuis.com

NORWAY

Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene

Oslo

Housed in a stylish setting, Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene can accommodate 300 people. Norway's vibrant jazz scene is represented here, as are touring musicians like vocalist Kurt Elling.

nasjonaljazzscene.no/en

PORTUGAL

Hot Clube de Portugal

Lisbon

This 70-year-old club has hosted the likes of Sidney Bechet and Count Basie. It presents a Tuesday-night jam session, and touring artists and tribute shows Wednesday through Saturday.

hcp.pt

RUSSIA

IGOR BUTMAN JAZZ CLUB

Moscow

Famed saxophonist Igor Butman often leads his own big band at his namesake club, which also presents other Russian instrumentalists, as well as vocalists and international touring jazz musicians.

butmanclub.ru

SENEGAL

La Cave du Djoloff

Dakar

Since 2017, the Djoloff Boutique Hotel's subterranean venue has hosted local and international artists like vocalist Lisa Simone, drummer Tony Allen and national treasure Orchestra Baobab.

hoteldjoloff.fr

SOUTH AFRICA

The Crypt

Cape Town

Located in St. George's Cathedral, this unique venue recently reopened. It has a Monday night jam session, concerts through Saturday night, a restaurant and a bar.

cryptjazz.co.za

SPAIN

Harlem Jazz Club

Barcelona

Like its namesake, this venue is rooted in jazz but now includes genres such as salsa, flamenco and soul.

harlemjazzclub.es

Jamboree

Barcelona

From Duke Ellington and Ornette Coleman to Barcelona native son Jorge Rossy, Jamboree has hosted jazz greats since 1960.

jamboreejazz.com

SWEDEN

Fasching

Stockholm

Founded in 1977, Fasching is a hybrid concert venue/restaurant/bar/nightclub. Jazz, dance and folk artists are all presented, including trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, German pianist Florian Weber and the Brooklyn Funk Essentials.

fasching.se

SWITZERLAND

Marian's Jazz Room

Bern

This 130-capacity, 27-year-old room is open from September through May. It offers two sets a night Tuesday through Saturday.

mariansjazzroom.ch

TURKEY

Nardis Jazz Club

Istanbul

Housed in a historic building and seating 120 people, Nardis presents mostly local musicians, two sets a night, Monday through Saturday.

nardisjazz.com



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Trumpeter Dave Douglas (third from left) convenes a new ensemble for *ENGAGE*, an album that harnesses frustration to fuel a campaign of positivity.

Dave Douglas *ENGAGE*

GREENLEAF MUSIC 1074

★★★★

There are various ways to fight the power, and when it comes to ending the current assaults against equality, science, social justice and good old common sense, trumpeter Dave Douglas likes to use his exasperation to fuel a campaign of positivity.

The bandleader titled a 2018 outing *UPLIFT* and this new album *ENGAGE* because activism—especially creative activism—has transformative effects. Speaking of change, Douglas, heralded since his 1993 debut as a conceptualist whose ever-shifting interests steadily have yielded a wealth of distinct ensembles, introduces a new outfit here that creates a music of optimism.

Encouragement and assurance waft through the 12 pieces comprising the bandleader's umpteenth album, and though the music sounds familiar—style becomes an artistic signature, even when you dodge for-

mulas as doggedly as Douglas—it remains potent. A clarity of purpose is prominent in many of these tunes, with golden melodies leading the charge and the sextet's feisty interplay exploding the themes. Rather than coming off like an ornery indictment of kids being caged at the border, "How Are The Children?" radiates a dark-hued idealism that offers solace while suggesting transcendence, with saxophonist Anna Webber digging in to offer a variety of emotions in a perpetually flourish solo.

That's a tad different than *UPLIFT*, a record that echoed some of the turmoil afoot in the States and abroad. Douglas, in *ENGAGE*'s liner notes, explained that writing and playing the tunes here is a reminder to "stay positive and engaged through music daily." He's recruited some deft improvisers for assistance, and there's an enviably anemic atmosphere to several tracks, some boasting pop savvy forms, adding an attractive undercurrent to the performances.

The core group—Douglas, Webber, guitarist Jeff Parker, cellist Tomeka Reid, bassist Nick

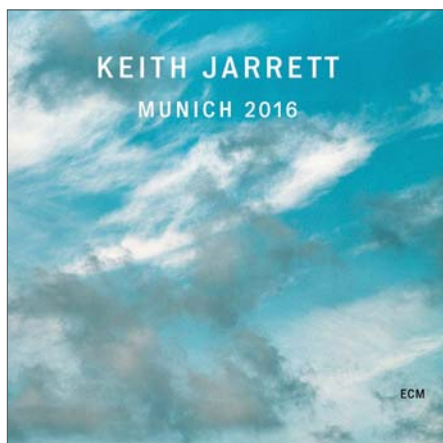
Dunston and drummer Kate Gentile—is united in purpose. The sway of "Free Libraries" is substantial; the swing of "Living Earth" is deep; and the pliant changes of "One Sun, A Million Rays" are gripping. There's plenty of old-school blowing, too. "Where Do We Go From Here" turns into a blast of brass when trumpeters Dave Adewumi and Riley Mulherkar join the action. And there are passages when the music recalls the clarion swag of Henry Threadgill's early sextet—a reminder of how crucial group participation is to the success of any vibrant endeavor. That kind of spirited cooperation has political parallels as well. If we'd all activate and unite, Douglas seems to be saying, we could dump the pernicious bastards now in power and accomplish so much more.

—Jim Macnie

ENGAGE: Showing Up; In It Together; How Are The Children?; One Sun, A Million Rays; Where Do We Go From Here; Sanctuary Cities; Everywhere But Here; Faith Alliance; Free Libraries; Whole Souls; Living Earth; Heart Science. (72:33)

Personnel: Dave Douglas, trumpet; Jeff Parker, guitar; Tomeka Reid, cello; Anna Webber, alto flute, bass flute, tenor saxophone; Nick Dunston, bass; Kate Gentile, drums; Dave Adewumi, trumpet (3, 4, 5, 11); Riley Mulherkar, trumpet (5, 7, 11).

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com



Keith Jarrett *Munich 2016*

ECM 2667/68

★★★★½

From the 1970s to the 1990s, most of Keith Jarrett's extended improvisations—a marvel of the jazz world—were long, clocking in at about 30 to 45 minutes apiece. You can hear this in the celebrated live recordings of his solo piano concerts in Bremen, Cologne, Kyoto, Paris, Vienna and Milan. But in the 2000s, his solo pieces became shorter, hardly ever topping 15 minutes. This stylistic shift pulled attention from the capaciousness of Jarrett's extemporaneous playing and

focused instead on his freakish ability to improvise sonata-like movements on the fly.

With *Munich 2016*, the overall pattern in his spontaneous composing is easy to spot: He starts with a free-form exposition (*Part I*), returns to it ever so briefly (*Part VII*) and recapitulates in a raucous conclusion (*Part XII*). But following the first two such maneuvers, he pulls back into serene contemplation (*Parts II and VIII*) just long enough to obliterate expectations. In the sections that follow, he highlights tension between the segments by accelerating on gospel grooves (*Parts III–IV*); skipping along through breezy arpeggios (*Part V*); riffing on dark, sharp-edged chords (*Part VI*); vamping on cool blues (*Part IX*); and soothing with warm harmonizations (*Parts X–XI*).

Jarrett recorded the album at Munich's Philharmonic Hall almost four years ago; each track ends with roaring applause echoing through that large room. The encores—three familiar standards, low on suspense, high on comfort—earned the most noise. But even on these well-known melodies, the pianist managed to find something uniquely fascinating.

—Suzanne Lorge

Munich 2016: Disc One: Munich, Parts I–V. Disc Two: Munich, Parts VI–XII; Answer Me, My Love; It's A Lonesome Old Town; Somewhere Over The Rainbow. (44:49/48:46)

Personnel: Keith Jarrett, piano.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Maria Mendes *Close To Me*

JUSTIN TIME 8621

★★★★

Portuguese jazz vocalist Maria Mendes collaborates with pianist and arranger John Beasley (best known for his band MONKestra) and Holland's Metropole Orkest on *Close To Me*, a bold album-long riff on traditional *fado* music.

Singing with crisp clarity in Portuguese and scatting in a hauntingly melismatic manner, Mendes reimagines classics associated with fadista Amália Rodrigues, experimenting with and cutting to the heart of these sorrowful songs. From a grandly orchestrated, dreamy opener Mendes turns to charming, 3/4 swing on “Tudo Isto É Fado” and “Foi Deus”; takes an operatic tour on “Barco Negro”; delivers a passionate, lushly orchestrated “Asas Fechadas”; and gives a deliberate, singer-songwriter-like feel to the gorgeous “E Se Não For Fado,” which playfully asks, as does the album, “What if this isn't *fado*?”

A songwriter of considerable invention, Mendes contributes three originals, the Brazilian-flavored “Dança Do Amor”; a jaunty jazz meditation, “Fado Da Invejosa”; and a Bach-like scat duet with Vincent Houdijk on vibraphone. Mendes sings two other wordless vocals:



a free take on the film theme “Verdes Anos” and an appropriately zig-zagging “Hermeto's Fado For Maria,” by Hermeto Pascoal with Beasley on Fender Rhodes.

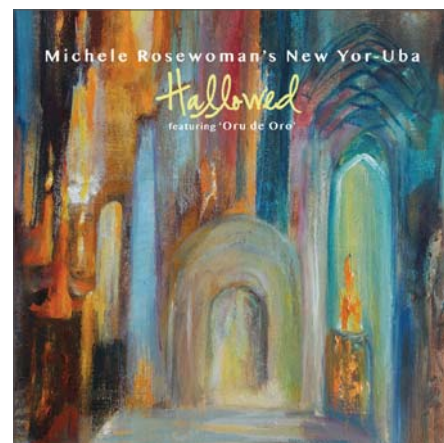
Like the blues, *fado* is a music of both longing and joy, or as Portuguese speakers say, *saudade*. And Mendes conveys it with every breath.

—Paul de Barros

Close To Me: Há Uma Música Do Povo; Tudo Isto É Fado; Dança Do Amor; Verdes Anos; Barco Negro; Fado Da Invejosa; Foi Deus; Hermeto's Fado For Maria; Tempo Emotivo; Asas Fechadas; E Se Não For Fado. (50:20)

Personnel: Maria Mendes, vocals; John Beasley, keyboards, percussion; Karel Boehlee, piano; Jasper Somsen, bass; Jasper Van Hulten, drums, percussion; Vincent Houdijk, vibraphone (9); Metropole Orkest (1, 5, 6, 10).

Ordering info: justin-time.com



Michele Rosewoman's New Yor-Uba *Hallowed*

ADVANCE DANCE DISQUES 355

★★★★½

Michele Rosewoman's juggernaut ensemble made its 1983 debut at The Public Theater in New York. But it took the pianist almost 30 years to record *New Yor-Uba: A Musical Celebration Of Cuba In America*, her 2013 album that superbly sets modern American avant-garde jazz inside sacred Afro-Cuban rhythms. Fortunately, it took only another six years for her to release *Hallowed*.

Master percussionist Román Díaz serves as the music's spiritual guiding light, as the band-leader's originals call to various Santería deities. In addition to some of the stirring harmonies, concocted by a five-piece horn section, it's Rosewoman's sterling piano playing that makes the music burst with such fresh aplomb, sounding simultaneously ancient and futuristic.

She frees herself from the need to anchor the music with *montuno* and *tumbao* patterns, while her estimable piano improvisations are in service of the music, instead of simply being an exhibitionist showcase. Her restive, percussive playing is the secret ingredient, even as the horns dispense fragmented motifs that sometimes expand into harmonically striking, impressionistic accompaniments. But when the pianist's instrumental work comes more to the fore—as on the sparkling “Color Crown” or the title track—the brilliance of her musicality shines all the more.

Overall, it's Rosewoman, the composer and superlative bandleader, who reigns supreme on this near-flawless outing.

—John Murphy

Hallowed: We Need You Now; Mountain Sky; Healthy Sky; Forest Of Secrets; Color Crown; Hallowed; Puntilla's Gift; Two Bodies, One Heavenly Soul; The Heart Of It; Flowers That Bloom In The Dark; There Is Here, Then Is Now; The Wind Is The First To Know; Alabanza. (60:10)

Personnel: Michele Rosewoman, piano, Fender Rhodes, vocals; Alex Norris, trumpet, flugelhorn; Román Filiú, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute; Stacy Dillard, tenor saxophone; Chris Washburne, trombone, bass trombone, tuba; Andrew Gutasukas, baritone saxophone (11, 12); Gregg August, bass; Robby Ameen, drums; Román Díaz, Mauricio Herrera, batá, congas, vocals; Rafael Monteagudo, batá, congas; Nina Rodríguez, vocals (11).

Ordering info: michelerosewoman.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Paul de Barros	Suzanne Lorge	Jim Macnie	John Murph
Dave Douglas <i>ENGAGE</i>	★★★½	★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
Keith Jarrett <i>Munich 2016</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★
Maria Mendes <i>Close To Me</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★
Michele Rosewoman <i>Hallowed</i>	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½

Critics' Comments

Dave Douglas, *ENGAGE*

Anxious, elbows-out punk-jazz; another call to action from the politically engaged trumpeter, who is in fine form, as are cellist Reid and multi-instrumentalist Webber. Ironically, the music becomes more convincing as dense fury gives way to a more traditional sound. —Paul de Barros

Douglas works with five distinct improvisers here, asserting a positive message through poised collaboration. The hidden dissonances in their playing, however—though quickly resolved—underscore the reality that even agreement sometimes is messy. —Suzanne Lorge

A masterful follow-up to last year's politically charged *UPLIFT*, the trumpeter leads yet another intrepid ensemble through a song cycle that's optimistic in tone, but still evokes today's disquieting sociopolitical climate. —John Murph

Keith Jarrett, *Munich 2016*

With Jarrett, you get what he's feeling at the time, and this summer night in Munich, especially on a 12-part feature, he appears to have felt conflicted, even slightly roiled. But there's wistfulness, too, and even a little triumph, as he uncannily pulls melodies out of the air that make you feel like you've known them all your life. —Paul de Barros

It almost seems like a potpourri of his signature feels, moving from gnarled lyricism with a sly thrust to preciousness infatuated with melody. Hard to beat the emotional candor of his Nat "King" Cole reflection. —Jim Macnie

Jarrett's gifts as a free-improviser and spontaneous composer are unimpeachable. But even here, he manages to raise the astronomical bar even higher. —John Murph

Maria Mendes, *Close To Me*

With her plaintive rubato and lyrical, straight tones, Mendes' singing embodies the pathos of the so-called Portuguese blues, while her assured vocal soloing and firm grasp of groove broadcast her identity as a jazz singer of the highest order. It's a delightful mix. —Suzanne Lorge

A revelation to me. I don't recall hearing her wondrous voice previously. But once it's in your head, it sticks. Her poise is as impressive as her power. —Jim Macnie

Mendes' emotive yet crystalline voice enchants on symphonic and imaginative explorations of the Portuguese *fado* idiom. Through both her singing and poetic lyrics, she gives the music a wonderful modern makeover. —John Murph

Michele Rosewoman, *Hallowed*

Batá drums are the key to *Oru De Oro*, a 10-part Santeria suite, with melodies extrapolated from percolating invocations. Strong turns by tenorist Dillard, trombonist Washburne and vocalist Rodríguez. —Paul de Barros

Drenched in rhythmic vitality, the excitement of Rosewoman's opening suite rarely subsides. More friendly than obdurate, the batá-led pulse of her music grabs the ear and doesn't let go. —Suzanne Lorge

A testament to the power of percussion, it's easy to be swept away by the ensemble's inspired cross-rhythms. Especially with Díaz's batá expertise leading the way. —Jim Macnie



MICHAEL WOLFF BOUNCE

MICHAEL WOLFF piano
BEN ALLISON bass
ALLAN MEDNARD drums

SSC 1574 - Available February 7

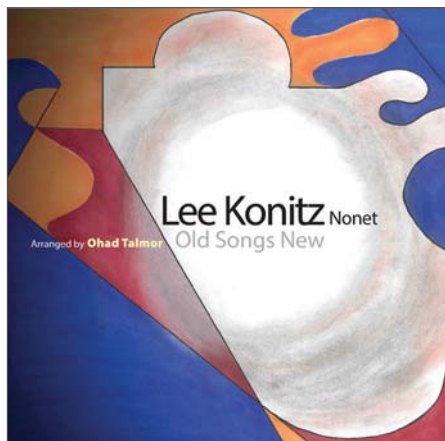
Acclaimed jazz pianist Michael Wolff has confirmed a February 7th, 2020 release date for his joyful new album, **Bounce**. Exuberant, beautiful and able to convey a range of emotions, **Bounce** reflects Wolff's upbeat state of mind following his 'miraculous' recovery from aggressive cancer. He comments, "Isn't it great to be alive? I'm celebrating life every day. This album is dedicated to that celebration. I have the good fortune to play with these fantastic musicians: Ben Allison on bass and Allan Mednard on drums. Their playing, ideas and vibes imbue this music with creativity and soul. It's really a listenable album. I thought about what I'd like to listen to at home, and tried to make that album."

Bounce features an engaging range of songs, including the aptly named 'Cool Kids', written by Wolff's son Nat (and featuring Nat on lead vocals as well). Other tracks evoke 'West Side Story' or nods to the Great American Songbook. Album highlights include the memorable title track, the lovely ballad 'Long Lost', the strong 'Caribbean Rain Dance' and 'Omar Sharif' by David Yazbek, from THE BAND'S VISIT musical. In all, the album is mostly original compositions by Wolff, a tune by Ben Allison, and two covers: 'Omar Sharif' and the standard, 'You and The Night and The Music'.

Wolff notes, "**Bounce** is filled with music like the music I grew up listening to and playing. It transcends jazz and it feels like the best album I've ever made. It also comes at such a perfect time for me. It expresses my inner soul and the joy of living and making music. It's the most important release of my life."



www.sunnysiderecords.com



Lee Konitz Nonet *Old Songs New*

SUNNYSIDE 1572

★★★★½

For his latest recording, saxophonist Lee Konitz presides over a chamber ensemble of strings and woodwinds orchestrated by his longtime collaborator, Ohad Talmor. The result is a spirited collaboration brimming with joyful nostalgia that draws on choice repertoire: songbook-era standards that Konitz has a history with, even if he'd not previously recorded the tunes. The bandleader luxuriates in the lush, slow to medium-tempo interpretations that evoke the mid-centu-

ry radio orchestras of his youth on numbers like "Goodbye" and "I Cover The Waterfront." It feels as if the 92-year-old saxophonist—born not too many years after Charlie Parker—is at work evoking the ghost of *Bird With Strings*.

The one Konitz original, "Kary's Trance," brings the bandleader back to the angular, bop-pish grooves for which he's best known. And on the final improvised number, simply titled "Trio Blues," Konitz stretches out over a laid-back groove, trading occasional phrases with drummer George Schuller, while Christopher Tordini anchors the group. Indeed, Tordini's bass is a ballast throughout, often serving as the reference point for both the impeccable ensemble arrangements and Konitz's own melodic explorations.

Thanks to the dexterous interpretation of all involved, Konitz and Talmor have shepherd-ed something unique into being: *Old Songs New* manages to shine a spotlight on Konitz's famously personal approach to the alto saxophone while injecting his relaxed angularity with the vitality of an energized, supportive chamber orchestra.

—Alex W. Rodriguez

Old Songs New: Goodbye; Foolin' Myself; In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning; Kary's Trance; I Cover The Waterfront; This Is Always; You Go To My Head; Trio Blues. (49:07)

Personnel: Lee Konitz, alto saxophone; Ohad Talmor, tenor saxophone (5); Caroline Davis, flute, alto flute; Christof Knoche, clarinet; Dennis Lee, bass clarinet; Judith Insell, viola; Mariel Roberts, Dimos Goudaroulis, cello; Christopher Tordini, bass; George Schuller, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Julia Hülsmann Quartet *Not Far From Here*

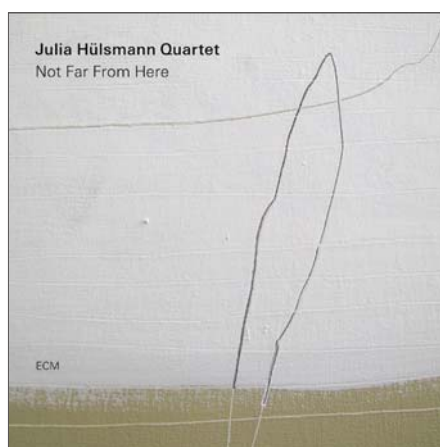
ECM 2664

★★★★

Fans of pianist Julia Hülsmann's work will find familiar flavors enhanced by the unique spice of tenor saxophonist Uli Kempendorff being added to her long-running ensemble. He's most vividly showcased on "Le Mistral," one of two tunes contributed by bassist Marc Muellbauer. What begins with a quiet stirring develops into a freely interlocking sound—one honed by years of experience and held together by the band's open-ended circuitry.

The poetry of Kempendorff's playing is forthcoming, and the same holds true of his writing, even as "Einschub" is harmonized enigmatically. Most of the composing credits, though, go to Hülsmann. From the opening caress of "The Art Of Failing" to the masterful "No Game," she treats every instrument as a vital ligament of the same appendage, pointing and flexing to the rhythms of emotional desire. With the tenderness of morning light gaining slow but steady purchase on the corner of a bedroom window, she follows a natural order of things.

Drummer Heinrich Köbberling throws two of his own coins into the proverbial fountain,



including "Colibri 65," which furthers the bandleader's apparent mission of summoning placid, distinct airs.

The set is upheld by two versions of "This Is Not America," a song written by David Bowie in collaboration with Pat Metheny and Lyle Mays. With broken nostalgia, it winds a melodic tangle from which escape is an easy but deeply unattractive option.

—Tyran Grillo

Not Far From Here: The Art Of Failing; Le Mistral; This Is Not America; Weit Weg; Streiflicht; Not Far From Here; No Game; Einschub; If I Had A Heart; Colibri 65; You Don't Have To Win Me Over; Wrong Song; This Is Not America (Var.). (59:50)

Personnel: Uli Kempendorff, tenor saxophone; Julia Hülsmann, piano; Marc Muellbauer, bass; Heinrich Köbberling, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Kurt Rosenwinkel *Bandit 65*

Searching The Continuum

HEARTCORE 07

★★★★★

Because jazz remains a mostly acoustic music, the striking thing about guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel's new trio, Bandit 65, is how overwhelmingly electronic its sound is. Not only do Rosenwinkel and fellow guitarist Tim Motzer employ a wide array of tone-altering technology to expand their instrumental palette to near orchestral range, but along with drummer Gintas Janusonis, all three members are credited with "electronics," a catch-all term that embraces all sorts of computer-based synthesis and sound-sculpting.

And fair enough, because large swatches of the album are given over to rich, coloristic soundscapes. "Sagrada (Madrid)" opens with a series of organ-like chords that are shadowed by all sorts of electronica, from rasping square waves to bubbling arpeggios to tinkling ice crystals. The range of tones and textures are so deep and beguiling that it's easy to get lost in the sheer lushness of the sound. Doing so, however, would be a bit like missing the forest for the trees, because the real genius of *Searching The Continuum* is that each of these tracks were spontaneously conceived of and recorded live.

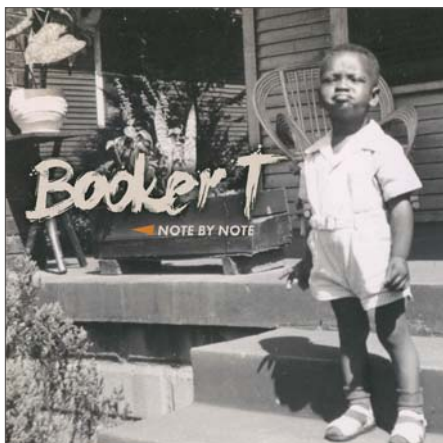
Rosenwinkel and company aren't simply composing on the spot, but orchestrating in real time. Listened to from that perspective, it's hard to express how amazing this music is, as each track offers a cohesive logic that works both on a melodic/harmonic axis, as well as a timbral/orchestral one. Even if you adjust for the assumption that each track represents the best performance from disparate concerts, the overall achievement remains jaw-dropping, as if jazz improvisation just moved from two dimensions to three.

—J.D. Considine

Searching The Continuum: Inori (Stockholm); Sagrada (Madrid); Bloomer (Philadelphia); Interstellar Suite (Vienna); At The Gates (Berlin); In Time (Los Angeles); Magical (Philadelphia). (69:45)

Personnel: Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar, electronics, vocals; Tim Motzer, guitar, electronics; Gintas Janusonis, drums, percussion, electronics.

Ordering info: heartcore-records.com



Booker T. Jones

Note By Note

EDITH STREET 51182

★★★★★

On *Note By Note*, Booker T. Jones chronologically catalogs his contributions to American music, moving from his early days at Stax through his solo career, his collaborations with Carlos Santana and Willie Nelson, and culminates in recent tunes with his son, guitarist Teddy Jones.

Opening with “Cause I Love You,” a bouncy duet originally recorded by Rufus and Carla Thomas with a 16-year-old Jones on baritone saxophone, Booker T. recreates its loping feel,

sustaining its funkiness while subtly updating it. On “Born Under A Bad Sign,” which he co-wrote, the bandleader takes a medium-tempo approach, subtler and more personal than the iconic Albert King version. When Jones sings it, the lyrical substance of the song emerges and the blues get bluer.

With the MGs, Jones, Al Jackson Jr., Duck Dunn and Steve Cropper formed an integrated band at the height of segregation in the South. While British and American rock reached out to the blues for inspiration, the ensemble reached back, absorbing the ambience of the times, adjusting the music accordingly. The song “Time Is Tight”—a rare instrumental hit—demonstrates how soul, rock and jazz all can be the same thing. For the take on *Note By Note*, Jones fleshes out the arrangement, enhancing the intertwining grooves found on the original.

The two newest songs on the release—“Maybe I Need Saving,” a contemporary blues, and “Paralyzed”—find Jones collaborating with his son, continuing the tradition of tunes for the times in well-crafted settings. —Hobart Taylor

Note By Note: Cause I Love You; Born Under A Bad Sign; B-A-B-Y; I Want You; Precious Lord; These Arms Of Mine; Havana Moon; Stardust; Time Is Tight; Maybe I Need Saving; Paralyzed. (48:48)

Personnel: Booker T. Jones, Hammond B-3 organ, piano, vocals (2, 7); Teddy Jones, guitar, vocals; Stephen Ferrone, drums; Melvin Brannon, bass; Wesley Smith, Justin Kirk, Chris Bautista, horn section; Amanda Lo, Pete Jacobson, Thomas Lea, strings (4, 8); Evvie McKinney (1), Joshua Ledet (1), Ayanna Irish (3), DeAndre Brackensick (4), Charlotte Gibson (5), Ty Taylor (6), Matt Berninger (8), vocals. Lenny Castro, percussion.

Ordering info: bookert.com

John McLaughlin/ Shankar Mahadevan/ Zakir Hussain

Is That So?

ABSTRACT LOGIX 061

★★★★★

After continuing along the fusion trail for 2018's *Live In San Francisco*, guitarist John McLaughlin returns with something far more mellow and sublime than the blistering fusillades he offered on that earlier outing. Harkening back to Shakti, the bandleader's 1970s ensemble, *Is That So?* finds the guitarist blending beautifully with tabla master Zakir Hussain, and renowned Indian vocalist and Bollywood film composer Shankar Mahadevan on tunes that bring Western harmony to classical Indian ragas. The results are divine.

Six years in the making, *Is That So?* showcases the majestic voice of Mahadevan, who began collaborating with McLaughlin on the 2000 live album *Saturday Night In Bombay*. With his commanding pipes, Mahadevan soars over the percolating undercurrent of Hussain's tablas and McLaughlin's orchestral textures that he meticulously created with multiple layers of synthesizers, as on “Kabir,” “Tara” and “The Guru.” In fact, there's only one track where McLaughlin plays conventional guitar, providing simple, clean-toned arpeggios as a kind of



drone beneath the proceedings for the peaceful “Sakhi.” McLaughlin's fabled chops come to the fore in his burning exchanges with Hussain on “The Search” and “The Beloved,” though his warm, flute-like timbres on those tunes create a more enchanting effect than his past aggressive, fleet-fingered fretboard excursions. But the real star here is Mahadevan, whose emotive, keening vocals—from a tender whisper to powerhouse crescendo—are breathtaking. —Bill Milkowski

Is That So?: Kabir; Sakhi; Tara; The Search; The Guru; The Beloved. (51:52)

Personnel: John McLaughlin, guitar, guitar synth; Zakir Hussain, tablas; Shankar Mahadevan, vocals.

Ordering info: abstractlogix.com



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Lloyd's Latest Lavish Set

On the occasion of his 80th birthday, saxophonist **Charles Lloyd** staged a concert of homecoming proportions. The show on March 15, 2018, was set in his adopted hometown of Santa Barbara, California, at the Lobero Theater—a historic and fitting locale which also was the site of Lloyd's 2006 live recording *Sangam*.

This 2018 concert—now lavishly preserved on a two-CD (or three-LP) live recording/DVD set, with a 96-page book and two lithographs in the mix—also touches on the city of Lloyd's birth, Memphis, and gets a boost from organist Booker T. Jones making a guest appearance.

8: Kindred Spirits (Live From The Lobero) (Blue Note B0030781-01; ★★½ 59:48/67:17) clearly is a multidimensional box set, and ranks as Lloyd's most expensive and elaborate dispatch to date. The saxophonist's fifth release on Blue Note since signing to the label in 2015—following years recording for ECM—also arrives at a ripe moment in the bandleader's still-fruitful career. The same year Lloyd moved over to Blue Note, he also entered the ranks of other revered NEA Jazz Masters, helping to propel buzz about his status as an *éminence grise* from a generation of players that seemed slowly to be disappearing.

Considering the significant symbiosis of activities during the past several years, a stately, sagely status hums beneath the surface of the 2018 concert—and over the entire heady package.

Setlist-wise, Lloyd taps his own 50-plus years of recording, going back to such originals as "Island Blues" (which he first performed in drummer Chico Hamilton's ensemble) and his best-known composition, "Forest Flower," from the 1967 album of the same name. "Requiem" is a melancholic musing in the vein of John Lewis' "Django," and his arrangement of the traditional Mexican folk tune "La Llorona," awash in handsome sorrow, serves as a showcase for the talents of pianist Gerald Clayton.

For the performance, Lloyd also indulges his proclivity for select guitarists, a short list including '60s soulmate Gabor Szabo, Bill Frisell (from the saxophonist's current band, The Marvels) and here, with the ever-elastic and gig-suitable Julian Lage. That last player comes off as strong and sensitive foil for the elder bandleader, as well as providing some of the show's most enticing solos.

Signature moods of Lloyd's musical persona make their way through the generous concert, from the unabashedly Coltrane-esque modal intro to "Dream Weaver" (Lloyd long has grappled with comparisons between his own groups and Trane's classic quartet) to



Charles Lloyd

DOROTHY DARR

the tasty morsel of mid-'60s kitsch that crops up on his jaunty "Sombrero Sam."

Jones' tasteful work on B-3 lends a beautiful textural glow to Lloyd's freewheeling sound, as on the soul-flavored coda to "Forest Flower," the apt gospel coloration on the hymn "Abide With Me" and a fresh twist on Jones' signature "Green Onions" (with Blue Note boss Don Was contributing bass). Interestingly, the veteran keyboardist also laid out some of the evening's most purely jazz-infused and impressionistic harmonic turns when he took to the piano to play and sing the sweet "Song For Charles," an original dedicated to the saxophonist on his landmark birthday.

The overall topography of the show (and box set) emphasizes the terrain of Lloyd's life in music, accentuating material from the earliest phase. But the familiarity of that nostalgic "been there, done that" agenda takes an illuminating detour into what might be the concert's highlight, "Part 5: Ruminations," which features Lloyd's most engaging sax work on the album. Opening with some ambling, rambling free play by the ensemble, Lloyd interacts with his longtime drummer, Eric Harland, in a bright flash of Ornette-bop phrasings before leading the freely structured suite-like piece into fetching piano and drum solos.

Closing out the performance, Lloyd called Billy Preston's ballad "You Are So Beautiful" for an encore, a tune that showed up on his first recording with The Marvels back in 2016. Leaning into both his penchant for singing through his horn and his recent tendency to fold pop-soul repertoire into his work, the saxophonist seems to be channeling Joe Cocker's distinctive rendition of the tune—with pleading emotion and cracked tones in tow.

Cocker, too, spent several years living in Santa Barbara, bringing yet another resonance to the performance and recording that serves to remind listeners of Lloyd's undiminished creativity.

DB

Ordering info: bluenote.com

RALPH PETERSON'S

GEN-NEXT BIGBAND



LISTEN UP!

Ralph Peterson's Gen-Next Big Band Listen Up!

ONYX PRODUCTIONS

★★★½

In 1957, Art Blakey experimented with expanding the Jazz Messengers to a 14-piece band, featuring smart arrangements by trombonist Melba Liston. Thirty years later, he returned to the format, enlisting a young Rutgers grad to sit in the second drum chair. Ralph Peterson had that spot until Blakey's 1990 death, and he's never forgotten the experience. Peterson's Gen-Next Big Band is a direct tribute to that erstwhile large group, a student ensemble in the Blakey mold, right down to a second drummer next to Peterson.

The band's first offering, *I Remember Bu*, was recorded during a 2017 live gig at Boston's Scullers Jazz Club, right around the time Peterson was beginning treatment for liver cancer. Some life events affirm the preciousness of time, and teacher and students have focused their urgency on *Listen Up!*, the group's first studio album. Blakey continues to get his due, with Peterson enlisting trombonist and Jazz Messenger alum Kuumba Frank Lacy as a featured soloist, and drawing plenty of selections from the Blakey canon. Most of the arrangements were done by Berklee students, a testament to that school's well-established curriculum. And while no wheels are reinvented here, they are well-oiled, easily spinning out professional-grade work. Lacy and Peterson provide the star power, but they're pushed by the relentless enthusiasm of the younger players. Somewhere, Blakey's roaring approval through an angelic grin.

—Gary Fukushima

Listen Up! Arabia; Acceptance; Time Will Tell; Skylark; Down Under; Sweet N' Sour; This Is For Albert; In Case You Missed It; The Art Of War. (65:38)

Personnel: Ralph Peterson, drums, cornet, trumpet; Robert Vega-Dowda, Yuta Yamaguchi, Milena Casado Faquet, Will Mallard, John Michael Bradford, trumpet; Brandon Lin, Stephan Tenney, Dean Scarlett, Kuumba Frank Lacy (5, 6), trombone; Ethan Santos, bass trombone; Eric Nakanishi, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Craig Jackson, Morga Faw (4), alto saxophone; Solomon Alber, Tim Murphy, tenor saxophone; Gabe Nekrutman, baritone saxophone; Joe Melnicove, flute; Chloe Brisson, vocals; Christian Napoleon, Samuel Bolduc, drums; Youngchae Jeong, Nikos Chatzitsakos, bass; Ido Hammovich, piano; Manfredi Caputo, percussion.

Ordering info: ralphpetersonmusic.com

Dr. John & The WDR Big Band Big Band Voodoo

ORANGE MUSIC 982

★★★★★

"Ya know, dis would be dat thing I was always using my head for: a big band thing with my New Orleans riffs."

Thus spake Mac Rebennack, a.k.a. Dr. John, while tossing around ideas with his manager Stanley Chaisson ahead of a 1995 tour. Not long afterward, he manifested that vision in Cologne, Germany, where he recorded 16 tracks with the WDR Big Band. It remained on ice, until now.

On the opening "Indian Red," Mac name-checks Mardi Gras Indian tribes and soars to new heights when WDR jumps in with the gale-force gusto of a truly big band, summoning a real second-line rave-up. "New York City Blues" swings with enough swagger to light up Times Square, while "I'm Just Lucky" invokes the glitz of Vegas in its Rat Pack heyday. Both put a new spin on songs from *Afterglow*, the 1995 album Dr. John was touring behind, which also included moodier pieces like "Gee Baby." Though not every track is one for the ages, this live set makes a fine addition to every Dr. John fan's library, and delivers exactly what the good doctor intended to conjure: *Big Band Voodoo*.

—Cree McCree



Big Band Voodoo: Indian Red; I'm Just Lucky; Blue Skies; Tell Me You'll Wait For Me; Gee Baby; Stag-ger Lee; New York City Blues; I Know What I Got; I Still Think About You; I'm Confessin'; Mess Around; There Must Be A Better World; So Long; Going Back To New Orleans; JC's Blues; Tipitina. (68:44)

Personnel: Dr. John, piano, vocals; Phil Upchurch, guitar; Milan Lulic, guitar; Frank Chastenier, piano; John Goldsby, bass; Jeff Hamilton, drums; WDR Big Band horn section.

Ordering info: orangemusicrecords.com

Rez Abbasi/ Isabelle Olivier OASIS

ENJA/YELLOWBIRD 9774

★★★★½

"Olivier Abbasi Sound In Sound" is the full title concept behind *OASIS*, a project on which genre-blending guitarist Rez Abbasi and harpist Isabelle Olivier joyfully combine forces.

Leaping from traditional repertoire to time- and space-tripping avant-garde, the musicians fuse groove and improvisation, and perform with a kind of measured steadiness that only could be delivered by their highly skilled hands.

Opening with a melodically linear—but sonically dreamy—version of "My Favorite Things," the selection ranks as one of the few straightahead moments on a collection of intentionally off-kilter material. "Lemongrass" is a lovely evocation of exotic lands, where melody takes unexpected shapes and rhythm is a constant (thanks to tabla and drum accompaniment by Prabhu Edouard and David Paycha, respectively). Olivier's "Timeline" is a frantically paced, dissonantly charged effort, a perfect counter to the sweetness often associated with her instrument. Abbasi's "Stepping Stone" also goes through some unexpected shifts and changes.

Warm, intimate and challenging all at once, *OASIS* is a natural pairing of two pros making beautiful music as a duo.

—Denise Sullivan



OASIS: My Favorite Things; Lemongrass; Cherry Blossom; Timeline; Ceour Qui Bat; Stepping Stone; Road Movie; Dodeca; Other Tones; Looking For Dad. (47:16)

Personnel: Rez Abbasi, guitar; Isabelle Olivier, harp; Prabhu Edouard, tabla; David Paycha, drums.

Ordering info: yellowbird-records.com

Amirtha Kidambi/ Lea Bertucci Phase Eclipse

ASTRAL SPIRITS 118/MONOFONUS

PRESS 219

★★★★★

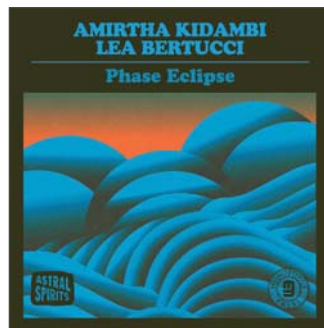
Amirtha Kidambi and Lea Bertucci have fast become pillars of the avant-garde landscape, wunderkinds carving out an indelible mark by pulling from jazz, free-improv and electroacoustic sounds.

Considering both performers have navigated New York's experimental music underground with creative aplomb, it's fitting they'd join forces for *Phase Eclipse*. Kidambi's magical, off-the-cuff vocals fed through Bertucci's tape and electronic gizmos results in a Technicolor slab of squeals, howls, grunts and whispers that dizzies the senses. And while the recording's completely free-form, there's a scientific precision to the four exploratory studio improvisations and the 24-minute live track that make up the program.

A sound artist of the highest order, Bertucci's blender-like treatment of the human voice provides moments of cathartic beauty that quickly can transform into earsplitting dissonance, the quiet/loud dynamic in full effect on "Smoldering, Seething" and "Brood." Both pieces begin with calm, séance-like chanting before flying off the rails with jolting, playful intensity.

Phase Eclipse is a clinic in psychedelic shapeshifting from two of today's premier improvisers, so let's hope it's not a one-off.

—Brad Cohan



Phase Eclipse: Extensions & Distortions; Smoldering, Seething; Brood; Under The Influence; Live At The Kitchen. (49:55)

Personnel: Amirtha Kidambi, vocals; Lea Bertucci, tapes, electronics.

Ordering info: astralspiritsrecords.com

Marius Neset Viaduct

ACT 9048

★★★★★

The London Sinfonietta has a long track record of collaborating on jazz-related projects, and they approach *Viaduct* with a punch and energy still uncommon in "classical" ensembles, even now. At first, this

might seem to be an early modernist work with jazz elements, but it came out of a commission from the Kongsberg Jazz Festival, allowing saxophonist Marius Neset to team his regular quintet with this larger force.

The opening movement is a complex overture, sometimes thoughtful, sometimes frantic and sometimes cinematic, punctuated by Stravinskyian stabs of sound, followed by slow reflective phases; it contains much of the musical information that's played out later, some sections perhaps not quite distinct enough to stand alone, but connected like creaky architectural arches. Pianist Ivo Neame and vibraphonist Jim Hart interpose contrasting lines, and it's to the eternal credit of the rhythm section that it doesn't get lost in the mix. "Viaduct Part 2a" is a mighty 11 minutes and a compelling exercise in control. The orchestra's on its toes and ready for anything, and there isn't a moment when the two parts don't seem to work as one. Such commissions come along infrequently, but on the strength of *Viaduct*, someone ought to sign Neset up quickly.

—Brian Morton



Viaduct: Viaduct, Parts 1a–2d. (65:29)

Personnel: Marius Neset, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; Ivo Neame, piano; Jim Hart, vibraphone, marimba, percussion; Petter Eldh, bass; Anton Eger, drums, percussion; London Sinfonietta.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

Reelin' and Rockin'

Mike Zito And Friends, *Rock 'N' Roll: A Tribute To Chuck Berry* (Ruf 1269 67:43 ★★½) It's not surprising that Zito has recorded a homage to the incalculably influential pioneer Chuck Berry. In addition to playing Berry licks since childhood, Zito lived for many years in Berry's home town, St. Louis, and knows Berry's son. What's surprising is how this album transcends being just another so-so salute. Beyond singing and playing guitar stirringly himself, Zito has a knack for matching other guitarists with Berry's songs, in style and story line. Twenty-one six-stringers are in fine fettle on a track apiece; it's only minor harm that a few pack heat-scorching bluster into their performances. Acolytes include Joe Bonamassa, Luther Dickinson, Tinsley Ellis, Robben Ford, Ally Venable and grandson Charlie Berry III.

Ordering info: rufrecords.de

Joanna Connor, *Rise* (M.C. 0086; 51:12 ★★½) Spurred by a crisp, eclectic new band, Connor fires up her creative muse and tugs at the blues' boundaries on her first album in three years. Her minatory, scalding slide guitar figures are in plentiful supply on carnal blues-rock like "Earthshaker." Even more interesting are her forays into blues-connected hip-hop (social-minded "Dear America" and "Flip," both with Chicago rapper Alphonso BuggZ Dinero), funk (Sly Stone's "If You Want Me To Stay") and jazz ("Joanna In A" and "Rise"). The standard "Since I Fell For You," though, shows her limitations as a singer.

Ordering info: mc-records.com

Teresa James & The Rhythm Tramps, *Live!* (Jesi-lu; 53:26 ★★★★★) Texas-raised Californian James has during the past several years been one of the genre's blue-ribbon singers. Onstage at Bogies near Los Angeles, she exudes largeness of spirit and interpretative authority by way of her natural, wide-ranging voice. Clearly, she's fully invested in lyrics written by her bass playing husband Terry Wilson and old gems, such as The "5" Royales' "I Like It Like That" and the Betty Wright-linked "Shoorah, Shoorah." What lifts her soul-blues band, which includes an on-call trumpeter and a saxophonist, above most peers is a keen sense of barely throttled excitement. The Wilson ballad "Forgetting You" is particularly memorable.

Ordering info: teresajames.com

Waylon Thibodeaux, *Here We Go Again* (Rabadash 042; 42:18 ★★½) One can count on exciting, high-quality Louisiana party music when Thibodeaux raises a bow to the strings of his fiddle or when he sings. His latest album finds nail-tough blues more



Teresa James

on his mind than on past albums, mixing it with Cajun music, New Orleans r&b, swamp pop and Southern rock. The biggest stimulator of all is "When Love Comes Back," borrowed from Baton Rouge songwriter-guitarist Doc Hearl. Guest bluesman Johnny Sansone, on harmonica, helps dissect the heart of Thibodeaux's "Our Life's Another Old Blues Song."

Ordering info: waylont.com

11 Guys Quartet, *Small Blues And Grooves* (VizzTone 1141; 45:53 ★★★★★)

In the 1980s, the 11th Hour Band was at the forefront of the Boston blues scene, recording one album before dissolving. The quartet casually regrouped in 2006 to cut eight-bar shuffles and variations over different rhythms; now these appealing instrumentals finally see the light of day. Harmonica player Richard Rosenblatt is a hip calligraphist of melody with his graceful, effortless flow of notes delivered in the spirit of Little Walter and other revered forebears. Similarly disinclined to be sloppy or overbearing, guitarist Paul Lenart turns in his most stirring work on "Four Maypops" and "Midnight Streetcar." Control of craft and depth of feeling obviate any need for vocals.

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Crystal Thomas, *It's The Blues Funk!* (P-Vine 6960; 35:57 ★★½) With Texas music legend Eddie Stout producing this record, singer Thomas conducts herself decently in the fast company of keyboardist Lucky Peterson, bassist Chuck Rainey and guitarist Johnny Moeller. Her church-trained voice doesn't have distinction, lacking an aura of specialness, but her sincerity of purpose is unquestionable, and she gives emotional heft to her updates of songs by Albert King, Toussaint McCall and Janis Joplin. Thomas plays trombone on the instrumental title workout.

DB

Ordering info: p-vine.jp



Peter Brötzmann *I Surrender Dear*

TROST 190

★★★★★

The distance between *Machine Gun*, German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann's 1968 call-to-arms, and *I Surrender Dear*, his unaccompanied, rubato investigation of mostly standards and blues, is a 50-plus-year career.

Revolutionized by the expressionism of Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, Brötzmann led European power-players in full-out assaults on conventions they identified with society's past. Playing out that intensity for decades, Brötzmann, now 78, prolifically and internationally embodies unfettered improvisation.

He's mellowed, but surrendered nothing, offering unfiltered, stream-of-feeling horn blowing. He's still a burry, tough and sometimes frustrated soul, but more than on any other recording, here he's by turns transparently tender, bluesy, jaunty, tentative, self-reflective, gnarly and aspirational. In the liner notes, he writes that he means "to show—mostly to myself—the connection between what has been and what there is right NOW—[that] one can't exist without the other."

With respect and evident affection, he addresses melodies that have stayed in his mind even as he's exploded song form, abandoned chord changes and advanced raw energy in a *cri de coeur*. Each track is a soliloquy, comprising personal references, investigations and reminiscences: "I Surrender Dear" and "Lady Sings The Blues" are curmudgeonly sweet; "Dark Blues" is deeply sincere. He worries a bit in "Lover Come Back To Me" and mulls over Sonny Rollins' "Sumpin'," but only on "Brozziman" does he briefly squeal and squall. Whatever his affect, Brötzmann transforms breath into sound, providing a measure of peace. —Howard Mandel

I Surrender Dear: I Surrender Dear; Lover Come Back To Me; Lady Sings The Blues; Con Alma; Nice Work If You Can Get It; Dark Blues; Improvisation Über Ein Thema Von Bach; Churchsong; Sumpin'; Brozziman; Ballade/Love Poem Nr. 7/Blues; I Surrender Dear. (57:04)

Personnel: Peter Brötzmann, tenor saxophone.

Ordering info: trost.at

CUP
Spinning Creature
 NORTHERN SPY 117
 ★★ ★★

The first album by CUP, the duo of guitarist Nels Cline and keyboardist-producer Yuka C. Honda, opens with a meditative, raga-esque vibe. Airy bamboo flutes and sitar-like guitar patterns flutter and quietly spill out. As synth patter opens up, Cline chants the titular phrase, “every moment,” projecting a Zen-like center from which he extrapolates in effects-heavy waves over gently twinkling bells. But the recording doesn’t cling to such tranquility, adding percolating electronic beats, needling guitar lines and swells of billowing harmony in shifting combinations. Both musicians are sublimely versatile and skilled: Cline a jazz veteran, whose reputation has been stoked by his endlessly imaginative work in Wilco, and Honda, who made her mark in Cibo Matto. Together, the married couple delivers moody art-pop rich in ambience and texture, but a little short on songcraft. Still, the exploratory, rock-fueled solo Cline drops on the Bowie-esque “Don’t Move” is priceless. And the post-bossa framework of the title track, with two layers of sashaying acoustic guitar and subdued tandem singing, hints at what the duo is capable of when they spend a bit more time on songwriting to give their exquisite sound arsenal a more memorable container. —*Peter Margasak*



Spinning Creature: Every Moment; Berries; Don’t Move; Soon Will Be Flood; Spinning Creature; Tokyo Night Janitor; As Close As That. (41:08)
Personnel: Nels Cline, guitars, percussion, bamboo flute, vocals; Yuka C. Honda, electronics, drum machine, piano, synthesizers, vocals.

Ordering info: northernspyreccs.com

Lisa Hilton
Chalkboard Destiny
 RUBY SLIPPERS 1024
 ★★ ★★

Since 1997, pianist Lisa Hilton has released scores of records under her own name, a one-woman factory of sound. And yet, despite her staggering output, she remains somewhat under the radar of the broader jazz-listening public.

On *Chalkboard Destiny*, Hilton plays alongside some frequent collaborators: tenor saxophonist JD Allen, bassist Luques Curtis and drummer Rudy Royston. Hilton’s approach on each song, for the most part, is to build on a motif that she then recasts and reinterprets as the tune progresses. Her compositions aren’t so much whistleable melodies as they are cubist suggestions of melodic shapes—as on the frenetic opener, “Rush Hour Rhapsody,” which wastes no time getting right to the point. Hilton often plays in the lower register of the keyboard, offering deeply rhythmic and bluesy patterns. On “Blue Boy,” she sounds like a folk musician à la Carole King; and on “Café Au Mojo,” she sounds like she’s performing barrelhouse piano at a saloon.

Hilton’s chords are dark, watery and mysterious, and she has a tendency for pentatonic runs, spraying blue notes all over the place. But her style doesn’t seem disingenuous or trite, as it would from a lesser pianist. When Hilton channels the blues, it feels entirely appropriate. —*Matthew Kassel*



Chalkboard Destiny: Rush Hour Rhapsody; Sympathy For Blues; Chalkboard Destiny; Temporary Lullaby; Blue Boy; Tropic Of Tango; Waltz From Nowhere; Myths & Fantasy; Café Au Mojo; Adventures & Allis. (52:52)

Personnel: Lisa Hilton, piano; JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Luques Curtis, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: rubyslippersproductions.com

Roger Kellaway
The Many Open Minds
Of Roger Kellaway
 IPO C10265
 ★★ ★★½

There’s an inescapably pleasant air of nostalgia to this live album, recorded at Los Angeles’ Jazz Bakery in March and April 2006. Released in conjunction with Roger Kellaway’s 80th birthday on Nov. 1, 2019, the dispatch is an expertly delivered, hard-swung run at the classics.

In terms of expertise, the pianist has few peers. An L.A. fixture who served as music director for the likes of Elvis, Bobby Darin and Barbra Streisand, and composed the closing theme for *All in the Family*, Kellaway has been releasing jazz records since 1963. He’s in energetic form here, fronting a drumless trio: A take on Sonny Rollins’ “Doxy” is an early standout with the pianist’s cascading runs wittily punctuated by thumping chords from his left hand, before giving way to Bruce Forman’s crisp and nimble guitar ventures. Paul Desmond’s “Take Five” begins in a shadowy, spare framework that stakes out some distance from Dave Brubeck’s version, before Kellaway swings the melody back toward the light. With rewarding—if unsurprising—trips through “Night And Day” and a hard-driving “Caravan,” the set covers a lot of ground. But Kellaway and company dig in with care and a tastefully drawn sense of adventure. Plus, it’s hard to begrudge a look back when there’s still this much to see. —*Chris Barton*



The Many Open Minds Of Roger Kellaway: 52nd Street Theme; Have You Met Miss Jones; Doxy; Take Five; Take The ‘A’ Train; Night And Day; Caravan. (62:40)

Personnel: Roger Kellaway, piano; Bruce Forman, guitar; Dan Lutz, bass.

Ordering info: iporecordings.com

Jana Herzen
Nothing But Love
 MOTÉMA 0356
 ★★ ★★

Jana Herzen’s biography is a bohemian jigsaw puzzle that’s revealed a bountiful image for modern jazz fans. Herzen first pursued a life in the theater, bouncing around the world, remembering her adventures in song. She was in her mid-40s before jumping

into the music business and issuing her first album of global pop. But her desire to release Babatunde Lea’s *Soul Pools* led to the creation of Motéma, a modern jazz label that’s issued work by the likes of pianist Geri Allen and vocalist Gregory Porter since 2003. With that commanding responsibility, it’s impressive that Herzen had two consecutive days to head into the studio with a solid quartet and get some things down on tape. *Nothing But Love* is a dozen tunes of mostly medium-tempo singer-songwriter explorations, all in the pocket, showcasing Herzen’s clean guitar work as a confident dance partner for her sly vocal style. Bassist Charnett Moffett along with drummer Mark Whitfield Jr. are the engine on this set, even-keeled and out of the way. In lieu of any horns, violinist Scott Tixier is there to provide a bit of support and tension. And on the reggae-fied “Like A River” and the bouncing “On The Outside” he gets a little more room to cut loose, even as Herzen’s storytelling remains first and foremost. —*Sean J. O’Connell*



Nothing But Love: Nothing But Love; Speak; On The Outside; My Latin Love; Night Blooming Jasmine; With An Open Heart; Lightening The Load; High Time; Like A River; Thinking Of You; Precious Air; In The Name Of Love. (50:32)

Personnel: Jana Herzen, guitar, vocals; Charnett Moffett, electric bass; Brian Jackson, keyboards; Scott Tixier, acoustic violin, electric violin; Mark Whitfield Jr., drums.

Ordering info: motema.com

Possibilities Are Endless

Despite what the name **Bohren & Der Club Of Gore**—and the skull-adorned cover art of the German trio's 10th studio album, **Patchouli Blue** (Ipecac 218; 59:26 ★★★★★)—might imply, the gorgeous cinematic music the band makes seems more fit to score film noir, dark romance or spy capers than slasher flicks. And though we've lumped the ensemble in under the "experimental" tag here, its fusion of jazz, ambient, metal and lounge music never has a note out of place. Formed in 1992, Bohren focused on "uneventful" music from the outset, the band's characteristic creepingly slow tempos leaving little chance for sudden twists to sneak in. But the instrumental group summons such vivid and varied moods on *Patchouli Blue* that each song feels like a chapter in a sonic epic. "Sollen Es Doch Alle Wissen" centers around a lonely saxophone lead before shifting to a relatively upbeat conversation between piano and bass, and "Total Falsch" layers pools of hushed electronic atmosphere into the mix before the album peaks on its sprawling, ominous title track.

Ordering info: ipecac.com

For minimalist noise explorer Casey Chittenden Jones, an entire city can be a musical canvas. The Seattle performer, who releases music as **noisepoetnobody**, merges field recordings, synths, homemade instruments and more in disquieting compositions that embrace the feel of urban decay as much as they aim to confront conventional societal trappings. Inspired by the concepts of *musique concrete*, the four pieces on **Concrete Vitalist** (Scry 14; 36:59 ★★★★★) incorporate material Chittenden Jones collected over the span of a year, using contact mics on unlikely instruments like public-art sculptures and road overpasses, and atmospheric nature recordings (including some angry hummingbirds with a menacing air that could rival the avian terrors in Alfred Hitchcock's classic). But for all of its jarring and haunting qualities, there are periodic bursts of light, and a hint of playfulness that's likely to cause some listeners to consider heading out with contact mics and seeing what sort of soundscapes they can make on their town.

Ordering info: scryrecordings.com

Nous is the brainchild of Christopher Bono, a roots-guitarist-turned-compositional dynamo whose work has found favor among classical, metal and prog audiences. After spending years developing his 2014 orchestral full-length, *Bardo*, he launched **Nous** as a vehicle for unbridled experimentation through communal musicianship; each incarnation of the project features a different conceptual starting point and a different set of musicians (improvisers Billy Martin and Kato Hideki



have taken part in previous configurations of the ensemble). But for **Nous II (Our Silent Canvas 032; 47:16 ★★★★★)**, Bono wrangled the same core players who appeared on 2014's *Nous I*: drummer Greg Fox, multi-instrumentalist Shahzad Ismaily, percussionist Thor Harris and guitarist Grey McMurray, as well as an assortment of guests, including ambient pioneer Laraaji. Informed by post-rock, *Nous II* ranges from uplifting and majestic ("Here In My Chest It Is What It Is") to caustic and anxiety provoking ("World Map One"), with plenty of vibrant textures and shapes in between. A worthy listen for anyone with an open mind and an unquenchable desire for music that can't be categorized.

Ordering info: oursilentcanvas.org

In one of music's most spectacularly fun examples of life imitating art, **OOIOO** formed in the mid-'90s when YoshimiO (best known as the drummer in Japanese experimental legends Boredoms) assembled some girlfriends to pose as a fake band for a photo shoot, and then made that band a reality. They've become cult darlings in indie rock, psychedelic and experimental circles for their deconstructive approach to their craft; in tossing the rules of song structure, rhythm, vocals—and even how to play rock instruments—out the proverbial window, they've tapped into something warm and inviting. The ensemble's **Nijimusi (Thrill Jockey 509; 51:43 ★★★★★)**, which translates to "rainbow" in English, is its first studio album in six years, and its first with drummer Mishina, who joined the band in 2016. Churning through a charmingly weird mix of sounds with bits of retro-funk and prog weaving in and out of discordant vocals and atonal guitar work before the band bursts into total cohesion, *OOIOO* shows that the only expectation to have when pressing play on its recordings is the expectation that anything can happen.

DB

Ordering info: thrilljockey.com



Junius Paul

Ism

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM 0028

★★★★★

Ism, Junius Paul's leader debut, is stitched together from multiple creative directions. Alongside many Chicago peers, the bassist received his education in the hothouse of Fred Anderson's Velvet Lounge, graduating to current membership in the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and starring roles in Marquis Hill and Makaya McCraven's groups. Each of these troupes carries a specific and distinct sound that Paul is an integral part of; and *Ism* (recorded with a cast of 15 players over eight sessions between 2016 and 2019) touches on multiple generations of the city's improvisers and its various musical approaches.

Half of *Ism* features fleet-fingered, omnivorous and precise quartet music—hot, organic group flights like "You Are Free To Choose" and "Collant Denier." Functioning as *Ism*'s literal centerpiece, the 20-minute "Spocky Chainsey Has Re-Emerged" is an electronics-filled landscape with pockets of gloriously open space, the quartet sketching a vibe somewhere between electric Miles Davis and synthy mid-'80s Sun Ra. Another third of the album consists of McCraven-produced, sampler-aided cut-ups—pieces like "Baker's Dozen" and the 11-minute "Paris," essentially a Paul-McCraven duet with flourishes of Hill's trumpet. Such moments of intensity are interspersed with deep breaths of ambience—some spiritual, some absurd—quilting a musical pattern as current as the city Paul reps. Gusting and sprawling, *Ism* is genuine in both its comforts and surprises. —Piotr Orlov

Ism: You Are Free To Choose; Bowl Hit; View From The Moon; Baker's Dozen; Asé; The One Who Endures; Spocky Chainsey Has Re-Emerged; Georgia; Twelve Eighteen West; Collant Denier; Paris; Tune No. 6; Sprouts; Fred Anderson And A Half; Ma And Dad; Two Minute Warning; Outro. (82:42)

Personnel: Junius Paul, bass, electric bass, percussion; Vincent Davis, drums; Justin Dillard, piano, organ, synth; Corey Wilkes, trumpet, shofar; Isaiah Spencer, drums, percussion; Jim Baker, piano, ARP synthesizer; Rajiv Halim, alto saxophone; Makaya McCraven, drums, sampler; Tomeka Reid, cello; Marquis Hill, trumpet (11); Scott Hesse, guitar (13); Shanta Nurullah, mbira (13); Irvin Pierce, tenor saxophone (13); Xavier Breaker, drums (17); William Kirk, synth (17).

Ordering info: intlanthem.bandcamp.com



Blicher Hemmer Gadd *Get That Motor Runnin'*

C-NUT 12/13

★★★★½

There was a time in the late '50s and early '60s when urban nightclubs were suffused with the sounds of organ trios. That tradition gets a nostalgic turn with Blicher Hemmer Gadd's *Get That Motor Runnin'*. Drummer Steve Gadd, organist Dan Hemmer and saxophonist Michael Blicher might not be exemplars of the organ trio, but the sound they create embodies familiar, hard-driving r&b elements.

The trio rips into the title track with a heavy-foot on the pedal, Gadd drumming like a speedy 1954 Mercury Monterey, windows down and a breeze whipping by. On "Mr. T," there's no deceleration, and Hemmer and Blicher know how to tuck into the groove alongside Gadd's feverish pace.

Only when the drummer shuffles the trio into "Samba De Menino" and "The First One To Know" (with vocals by Paul Carrack) is the gut-bucket, in-the-pocket tempo given a rest. Like the title tune, "Roll" has all the ingredients of a gritty, roadside joint, and Hemmer's organ captures the dynamics of a science experiment that at any moment might explode.

Get That Motor Runnin' is the trio's third album, and the soul, funk and a tinge of gospel is freshly revisited without losing any of the energy once exemplified by Ray Charles or James Brown.

Overall, it's a rollicking trip down memory lane and through the smoky corridors of soul-jazz that's increasingly a thing of the past. It's by no means a jaded journey, but one remembered with sweaty nuance to its bounce. Yes, it's a blast from the past, but garnished with a modernity that makes it less a retreat and more an advance.

—Herb Boyd

Get That Motor Runnin': Get That Motor Runnin'; Mr. T; The Moment She Falls Asleep; Samba De Menino; The First One To Know; Roll. (33:06)

Personnel: Steve Gadd, drums; Dan Hemmer, organ; Michael Blicher, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone; Paul Carrack, vocals.

Ordering info: blicherhemmergadd.com

Tomeka Reid Quartet *Old New*

CUNEIFORM 465

★★★★

Geometry *Geometry Of Distance*

RELATIVE PITCH 1096

★★★★½

Cellist Tomeka Reid released her self-titled debut as a leader about four years ago after logging considerable time in various Chicago-based bands. Since then, she's moved to New York, begun teaching at Mills College in California and returned to the studio with her quartet to record *Old New*. What that new leader date and her work in the open-ended improvisatory group Geometry seem to indicate is that Reid's dialogues only have become sharper with time.

As *Old New's* title implies, Reid has her own way of reworking musical traditions, particularly through her recent compositions and the recurring ebullient shifts in mood that comprise the album. "Niki's Bop" is named in honor of flautist/mentor Nicole Mitchell and along the way, the performance reimagines exchanges from earlier times in the 1940s-born genre. Reid's duo with guitarist Mary Halvorson here sometimes echoes the phrasing of Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry, especially with their enthusiastic and surprising responses to each other's lines.

Every performer in Geometry has spent time receiving guidance from Anthony Braxton and, reflecting his approach, a subtle sense of exuberance underlies the quartet on its sophomore out-



ing, *Geometry Of Distance*.

Breaking through extensive silent passages, Reid's tone provides a telling response to cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum's abstract declarations on "The Erstwhile." The cellist also simultaneously guides and answers Kyoko Kitamura's wordless vocal leaps as guitarist Joe Morris' determined frenzy fills the background. With no drummer in the group, each member of Geometry handles rhythmic roles their own way, and Reid's resolute percussive sense anchors the concluding "Bravery's Consequence." —Aaron Cohen

Old New: Old New; Wabash Blues; Niki's Bop; Aug. 6; Ballad; Sadie; Edelin; Peripatetic; RN. (46:10)

Personnel: Tomeka Reid, cello; Mary Halvorson, guitar; Jason Roebke, bass; Tomas Fujiwara, drums.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

Geometry Of Distance: Space Chat; The Erstwhile; Veil Of Imagination; The Zoo Hypothesis; Sun Grazing; Magnificent Desolation; Bravery's Consequence. (55:20)

Personnel: Joe Morris, guitar; Tomeka Reid, cello; Taylor Ho Bynum, cornet; Kyoko Kitamura, vocals.

Ordering info: relativepitchrecords.com

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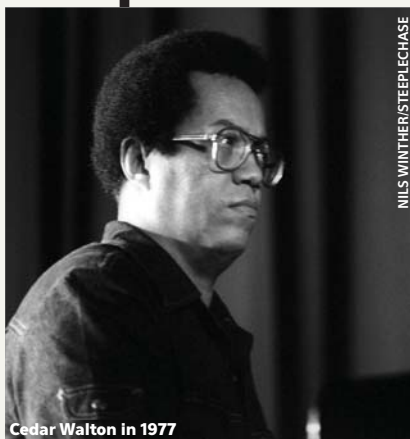
As we prepare to wade into the third decade of the 2000s, historical reissues from the 20th century seem to be taking on an increasing significance in the jazz world, granting listeners a new view of old bands and older tunes. This quartet of recent reissues demonstrates the wide spectrum of material that continues to be uncovered from label vaults, venues and community archives: Encompassing many of the threads that have been weaving themselves together since the 1960s, these recordings represent wildly different approaches to the genre.

Johnny Griffin & Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, *Ow! Live At The Penthouse* (Reel To Real 003; 48:29 ★★★½) This album documents "The Tough Tenors," Griffin and Davis, at the tail end of a three-year collaboration that saw them cut a handful of LPs. The live session in Seattle, recorded in 1962, showcases both doing what they did best at the time: confident, fast-paced and virtuosic turns through multiple choruses of hard-swinging standards. Davis, who had perfected his approach as one of the dueling tenors of the classic Count Basie Orchestra in the 1950s, grounds himself in swing-era giants like Ben Webster and Lester Young; Griffin, already known as a champion of the cutting contest format from records like *A Blowin' Session*, incorporates more bebop language into his improvisation. The tenors somehow never lose steam, despite the long solos and blazing tempos, interspersing barn burners with some surprising curveballs like "Bahia" and "Sophisticated Lady."

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

Azar Lawrence, *Summer Solstice* (Jazz Dispensary CR00262; 40:58 ★★★½) This reissue from the mid-1970s Prestige catalog features Lawrence, one of the few headliners from that era still active today, exploring the fertile intersections of straightahead, bossa nova, fusion and free-jazz. Two compositions by Brazilian guitarist Amaury Tristao, "Novo Ano" and "Highway," offer balanced counterpoint to Lawrence's evocations of early-'60s Coltrane. "Summer Solstice," the cathartic, fast-paced title track, yields the most striking moments of this unique group's powerful sound, a synthesis of frenetic groove and determined energy that characterizes the best of the eclectic sounds of the 1970s. Featuring a bevy of talented sidemen, from bass virtuoso Ron Carter to Brazilian trombone superstar Raul De Souza, Lawrence's ensemble brings together a spirited mixture of grooves and riffs that displays a vibrant conversation that was flourishing in Los Angeles among U.S.-based and Brazilian innovators.

Ordering info: jazzdispensary.com



Cedar Walton in 1977

Cedar Walton Quartet, *Third Set* (SteepleChase 1179; 51:06 ★★★★★) Recorded in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1977, this classic set from the legendary pianist has been reissued by Steeplechase producer Nils Winther. Walton's quartet is a paragon of hard-swinging 1970s post-bop: The band-leader's impeccable pianism presides over the dynamic rhythm section of drummer Billy Higgins and bassist Sam Jones, with Bob Berg's muscular tenor adding energy to the proceedings. The all-star group performs exploratory renditions of two Walton originals, a Billy Higgins composition and two Thelonious Monk standards. The ensemble takes plenty of time to explore each of the five songs, showcasing each members' brilliant improvisatory solos. By the time the band gets to the two Monk classics at the end of the album, its immersed in delightful, no-holds-barred blowing: Walton and Higgins' final solos on "Rhythm-A-Ning" are both masterpieces of the genre.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

Tribe, *Hometown: Detroit Sessions 1990–2014* (Strut 210; 82:09 ★★★★★) The Tribe collective—founded during the 1970s by community organizers saxophonist Wendell Harrison and trombonist Phil Ranelin—has spearheaded jazz initiatives in Detroit since its inception. This expansive compilation highlights the troupe's activity starting in the 1990s, when the effects of deindustrialization already had taken a toll on black life in the city. But this album is no lament: From Ranelin's exuberantly funky "Freddie's Groove" to the title track's simmering riffs, penned by long-time Tribe organizer Pamela Wise, it is a testament to the vibrancy of black Detroit's creativity in the face of the city's struggles. Brimming with power and joy, *Hometown: Detroit Sessions 1990–2014* serves as a reminder of the sounds that keep the flame of Black radical possibility alive today.

Ordering info: strut-records.com

NILS WINTER/STEEPLECHASE



Mat Maneri Quartet *Dust*

SUNNYSIDE 1566

★★★★½

Viola player Mat Maneri first emerged during the 1990s, and has delivered introspective, at times mournful performances in a broad range of contexts ever since. In recent years, he's been working a lot with saxophonist Ivo Perelman and pianist Matthew Shipp, contributing memorable moments to a slew of albums. *Dust*, though, is his first release as a leader in a while, so it's no surprise he's brought in players with whom he's got a history. Maneri and pianist Lucian Ban released a duo disc, *Transylvanian Concert*, in 2013. They also recorded with bassist John Hébert on 2010's *Enesco Re-Imagined*, with violinist Albrecht Maurer on 2015's *Fantasm*, and with Evan Parker on 2017's *Sounding Tears*. Maneri's relationship with drummer Randy Peterson, meanwhile, goes back to the first decade of the bandleader's career.

"Two Hymns" and "Retina" first were performed on *Transylvanian Concert*, and reappear on *Dust*. The new versions are tighter—"Two Hymns" is only six-and-a-half minutes long, while the live version was almost 11—but they still have a soft, ECM-ish feel, like the musicians are slowly inching toward one another in a dark room. In fact, most of the music here is subdued; when Peterson takes a solo on "Losed," it's a series of gentle rattles, like a small animal pushing a ping-pong ball back and forth across the surface of a snare drum. (He does erupt on "Last Steps," though.) Hébert's notes come so far apart, he rarely seems to be playing a melody at all, and Maneri is the leader only in that he logs the most playing time. There's never a feeling that the other three musicians are there to support or spotlight him. This is a collective music, suspenseful without being tentative, and it's as much about listening as playing.

—Philip Freeman

Dust: Mojave; 51 Sorrows; Red Seven; Motian; Two Hymns; Losed; Last Steps; Retina; Dust. (56:47)

Personnel: Mat Maneri, viola; Lucian Ban, piano; John Hébert, bass; Randy Peterson, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Jay Leonhart

Joy
SUNNYSIDE 1556
★★½

Jay Leonhart can be forgiven for playing it safe on *Joy*. That's the leverage you earn after cultivating a long career in the jazz industry, backing up legends like Judy Garland, Tony Bennett and Gerry Mulligan. And at 79, Leonhart's still playing the bass with the nimble hands of a youngster. That said, if you've been following his discography since he started releasing leader dates in the '80s, you'll notice that much of *Joy* seems fairly familiar; the bassist recorded a good chunk of the material here previously. Leonhart, though, doesn't stray too far from the source texts; not that people play his albums seeking innovation or anything extreme. His music is pure comfort food, uplifted by his plainspoken delivery and his dry, dad joke-heavy sense of humor. Where he does allow the material to shift and adapt is through the work of the other musicians on the album. Pianist Tomoko Ohno and drummer Vito Lesczak are ideal foils, talented musicians who stick to the basics, taking quick and crisp solos with minimum showiness. And they're agile enough to add a feathery samba backdrop to "Bass Aboard A Plane"—Leonhart's ode to the struggles of traveling with his instrument.

Joy simply holds true to its title while accepting its fate as a fleeting pleasure and a quick musical diversion. —Robert Ham

Joy: Bass Aboard A Plane; Joy; Playboy Club; Gasparo; Momma Don't You Think; Tulips; Life Out On The Road; Doublecross; Robert Frost; Very Few; For Real. (52:24)

Personnel: Jay Leonhart, bass and vocals; Tomoko Ohno, piano; Vito Lesczak, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Joe McCarthy

Upwards
ZOHO 201909
★★★★

Joe McCarthy's ascent as one of today's strongest practitioners of Nuyorican Afro-Latin jazz continues with the irrepressible *Upwards*. The drummer steers The New York Afro Bop Alliance Big Band through an enticing program of originals and three standards with sparkling energy and finesse. Like Art Blakey, McCarthy allows his combo to become a vehicle for bandmates to exercise their compositional skills. Pianist Manuel Valera wrote the punchy title-track, which comes along with a sashaying motif that recalls Wayne Shorter's "Beauty And the Beast." Valera, however, loads "Upwards" with zigzagging contrapuntal lines and rubato rhythmic shifts, on top of which alto saxophonist Matt Hong and trombonist John Yao issue dynamic solos. Meanwhile, guitarist Vinny Valentino's "J Ben Jazz" showcases the band in a more pastoral mood while retaining an infectious rhythmic pulse.

With the emphasis on compositions and impressive solos from ensemble players, it's tempting to underestimate the leader's instrumental prowess. McCarthy certainly doesn't hog the spotlight, but his rhythmic agility and accord with percussionist Samuel Torres can't be ignored. —John Murph

Upwards: Upwards; J Ben Jazz; Caravan; Five For Elvin; Nostalgia In Time; Isabelita; Afternoon In Paris; Positano. (63:40)

Personnel: Joe McCarthy, drums; Matt Hong, Kristy Norter, Ben Kono, Dave Riekenberg, Eden Bareket, saxophone; Sara Jacovino, John Yao, Sam Blakeslee, Jen Hinkle, trombone; Nick Marchione, Raul Agraz, Bryan Davis, Dave Smith, trumpet; Manuel Valera, piano; Boris Kozlov, bass; Vinny Valentino, guitar; Samuel Torres, percussion.

Ordering info: zohomusic.com



Olivier Le Goas & Reciprocity

On Ramp Of Heaven Dreams
CHALLENGE 73493
★★★★½

The work of French drummer-composer Olivier Le Goas has a tendency to summon the music of Pat Metheny. And *On Ramp Of Heaven Dreams* is no exception.

Le Goas wrote all of the songs here, except for a brief rendition of Paul Simon's "So Long Frank Lloyd Wright" toward the end of the program. While the music is melodically adventurous and utilizes original chord changes, none of the melodies are particularly memorable. The songs range from scalar pieces, such as the jazz waltz "Realize" to the brooding ballad "Highway Dreams" and the purposely repetitive "Oblique Songs."

While one can't imagine any of these pieces becoming standards in the future, their complexity clearly challenged and inspired consistently inventive solos from guitarist Nir Felder and pianist John Escreet. The guitar-piano tradeoffs throughout "Light Size Dreams" display their individual musical personalities, and Felder sounds comfortable improvising over the one-chord piece "Oblique Songs," while Escreet shows plenty of passion during his concise solo on the relatively joyful "Break Light." Their Metheny-esque blend and interplay always is attractive. —Scott Yanow

On Ramp Of Heaven Dreams: Realize; Light Size Dreams; Early In The Morning; Highway Dreams; A Day With You; Oblique Songs; Resurrection Row; A Place Inside; Break Light; So Long Frank Lloyd Wright. (48:37)

Personnel: Olivier Le Goas, drums; Nir Felder, guitar; John Escreet, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass.

Ordering info: challengerecords.com



Fay Victor

Barn Songs
NORTHERN SPY 121
★★★★

While vocalist Fay Victor has earned more than enough recognition on the New York scene to freely embrace her idiosyncratic writing, *Barn Songs* isn't about making a strictly jazz-oriented statement. The record starts with cellist Marika Hughes bouncing a bow on her strings for "Dream State." The delicate, but unadorned, notes resonate more with minimalist contemporary classical music, but their exposed state also works to support poetic improvisation. The introduction makes clear that *Barn Songs* is focused on creating moods to help emphasize messages more than simply flaunting virtuosity.

What was first written as a standalone commentary on superficial existence, functions like a prequel: Victor sings about "struggl[ing] to keep it together" and "thinking about being stressed out" on "Sometimes," then switches to boldly spoken verses, investigating the frustration of human stagnancy on "Talk Talk Pt. 2."

Despite being a mostly revisionist release—five of the seven songs here were conceived while Victor lived in Amsterdam more than two decades back—*Barn Songs* reveals the finesse of the vocalist's accrued experience and demonstrates how time grants the work continuing social relevance. —Kira Grunenberg

Barn Songs: Dream State; Last Night's Dinner; Stealaway; Sometimes; Talk Talk Pt. 2; Nico; There They Are. (56:58)

Personnel: Fay Victor, vocals; Marika Hughes, cello; Darius Jones, alto saxophone.

Ordering info: northernspyrecs.com



Irving Berlin: Musical Emperor

A song is a mysterious abstraction. It enters the world without identity. It has little character or context. No one can know its destiny, even a pro like Irving Berlin.

We learn in **James Kaplan's** new biography, *Irving Berlin: New York Genius* (Yale University Press), that after laboring over a few ideas in the summer of 1932, all Berlin had to show for it was "Say It Isn't So" and "How Deep Is the Ocean."

Not good enough, his inner critic fretted. He discarded both.

Fortunately, each tune found the light of day and began to infiltrate the inner lives of unsuspecting listeners. They whistled it, hummed it, sang it, danced to it and, without noticing, enfolded it into their being. That's how songs work—good or bad, it makes no difference. They quietly attach themselves to moments in our lives and become the lock boxes of our emotional memory.

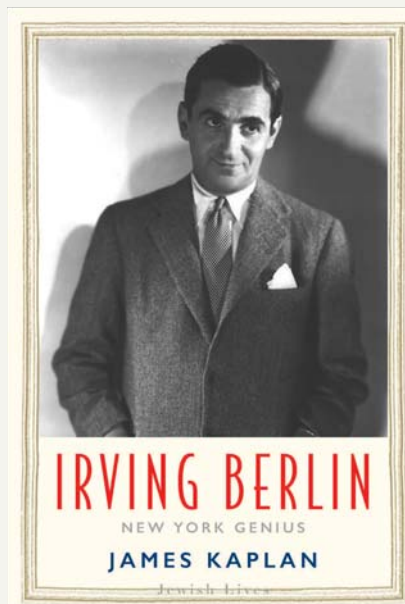
Kaplan is a good custodian of memory, too. As a youth, he had a fascination with old age as a souvenir of the past that he had missed. And at the impressionable age of 21 in 1972, he came upon a 1909 Berlin record, "Oh How That German Could Love." For Kaplan, it was "modernism on the hoof. ... formal innovation smuggled into a seemingly banal idiom."

A cultural historian was born.

The literature on Berlin is small. In interviews, he could be "a little murky, probably because [he] wanted it that way," Kaplan writes. "He preferred to be the one in control of his own backstory."

Aside from an early biography by his Algonquin Round Table contemporary Alexander Woollcott in 1925, he declined to cooperate with any a biographer in his lifetime. Laurence Bergreen's 1990 work remains the definitive Berlin story, supplemented by Ed Jablonski's 1999 book and a memoir by the composer's daughter. They are the roadmap of this relatively compact (335 pages) narrative. In place of new revelations, Kaplan writes in the readable voice of an observant journalist and profiler.

New York Genius is part of the Yale series *Jewish Lives*, but Berlin's Jewishness is a secondary theme here. Kaplan respects his passion to shed the Old World and assimilate into a new one without any multicultural scolding about deserting his heritage. Berlin just used his background when it was useful. And because he wrote principally from his imagination, not his experience, no genre was beyond reach. His first truly personal work came when the death of his first wife made him a widower at 24. The result was "When I Lost You," whose craft was



impeccable in its simplicity. He understood that repetition is "the soul of a song," and Kaplan finds Judaic method in that insight. "Reiterated lines sometimes beget music," he points out, "and much of Jewish musicality grew from the resonance of repeated words." Berlin's passion to assimilate never completely displaced his background. "His Jewishness permeated his songs," Kaplan writes.

Berlin understood his value and how to turn in into power. Composing both music and lyrics, he became the complete auteur. And after becoming his own publisher in 1914, Berlin became a vertically integrated musical empire. His terms were not always easy, though. In Hollywood to score *Top Hat* in 1935, he was the first songwriter to get a piece of the picture's profits.

Kaplan's final chapter is short but moving, covering Berlin's final 20 years, largely spent alongside his friends and contemporaries in a world that had outpaced them. He came to distrust strangers and held the outside world at bay. It was a remarkable outcome for a man who had been such a cultural lightening rod for so long.

I attended his 100th-birthday celebration in 1988 at Carnegie Hall, but Berlin wasn't there. Still, I never saw as many legendary figures in one place in my life, singing his songs and hoping for a word from 17 Beekman Place, where the composer lived in New York. But the reclusive Berlin was silent. He left them all alone by the telephone. A good name for a song, come to think of it—one that Berlin wrote in 1924.

DB

Ordering info: yalebooks.yale.edu



Anders Svaneoe *Solo Flight: State Of The Baritone, Vol. 4*

IRABBAGAST 016

★★★★

Beyond the musical pleasures and sonic adventure of Anders Svaneoe's latest solo dispatch, the project's appeal is bolstered by a sense of crusading zeal. Specifically, this fourth edition of the saxophonist's *State Of The Baritone* series casts a layered spotlight on the expressive possibilities of the instrument.

In keeping with the aeronautical theme of earlier work, Svaneoe's song titles usually cling to flying motifs—"Aerial View" and melancholy-tinged closing track "The Open Blue Sky." More generally, he latches onto the concept of flying solo, but the "solo" definition is somewhat deceptive; Svaneoe performs by himself, while overdubbing parts.

His self-generating ensemble generally involves bari duos, as with the breezy blues opener "Grounded" and the pensive, rubato "Long Runways," where Svaneoe uses his horn in twin roles as melodic voice and low-end bass, capitalizing on the instrument's flexibility. The saxophonist's truly solo "Solo Flight" opens gently, garnering concentric force as it goes. But denser trio pile-ups can suggest the rangy accretion of the World Saxophone Quartet, whose wily persona is echoed on "Bird Turbulence" and "Parker's Wings."

Like Jon Irabagon, Svaneoe's sometimes-collaborator, the baritone player commands a diverse, fairly full-service musicality on his horn. And on this recording, he keeps the improvisatory spirits in check without sacrificing melodic logic or other time-honored jazz values. With the *State Of The Baritone* series, the saxophonic underdog has been duly served and celebrated.

—Josef Woodard

Solo Flight: State Of The Baritone, Vol. 4: Grounded; Nose In The Wind; Solo Flight; Courage; Bird Turbulence; Long Runways; Brilliant Maneuvers; Aerial View; Parker's Wings; The Open Blue Sky. (43:55)

Personnel: Anders Svaneoe, baritone saxophone.

Ordering info: anderssvaneoe.bandcamp.com

Giuseppe Millaci & Vogue Trio *The Endless Way*

HYPNOTE 013

★★★★½

Two years ago, Giuseppe Millaci & Vogue Trio debuted with *Songbook*, receiving some solid reviews. And with *The Endless Way*, that praise doesn't seem to have been a fluke.

Pianist Amaury Faye sets a blistering tempo on Bud Powell's "Dance Of The Infidels," which is just the comfort zone bassist Millaci and drummer Lionel Beuvs need to apply their own breathtaking creativity. It's a dazzling display of unity and exchange on the bouncy bebop classic.

"Escape Bass" is the shortest track here, and as the title suggests, it's Millaci's moment to showcase his considerable talents. The bandleader does so in a manner that recalls Charlie Mingus and evokes an almost conversational tone. But there's also an Oscar Pettiford touch, and legato. The only objection a listener might have is that the tune could have been a bit longer. The trio resumes its hard-bop angling on "Highway 132D," and except for the Autobahn, there is no road capable of handling the group's collective momentum.

The Endless Way seems to show that Millaci's a consummate leader who allows neither speed nor the slow, meditative pace of a tune obstruct him.

—Herb Boyd

The Endless Way: Timeless; Pra Dizer Adeus; Dance Of The Infidels; Mi Ritorni In Mente; Escape Bass; Highway 132D; Iberian Waltz; A; Calavera. (48:59)

Personnel: Giuseppe Millaci, bass; Amaury Faye, piano; Lionel Beuvs, drums.

Ordering info: hypnotorecords.com



Simone Baron & Arco Belo *The Space Between Disguises*

GENREFLUID 0001

★★★★½

Simone Baron wields an instrument that's not exactly common in the jazz world: the accordion. But the bandleader showcases her impressive agility on the 11 eclectic tracks here, where about half of the compositions are Baron originals. Her arrangements include Walter Bishop Jr.'s "Those Who Chant," with richly textured strings and fiery quartal accordion accents. But Baron reminds listeners with a recurring "truth motive" that the album is intended to investigate struggle. Layering text from mental-health case studies in different languages atop the title track, the bandleader explores the history of hysteria and mental health care, and how women go "treated and untreated" by society. Alongside co-producer Ray McNamara, her recurring melody connects roving radio static on three relatively short collaged interludes, flavored by jazz, hip-hop and avant-garde sounds. The 2-minute "Disguise Interlude V" closes Simone's splendid recording, confirming that she's a blossoming talent and an inventive composer on the rise.

—Kerlie McDowall

The Space Between Disguises: Post Edit Delete; Disguise Interlude I; Angle Of Incidence; Who Cares; Disguise Interlude II; Passive Puppeteer; The Space Between Disguises; Those Who Chant; Valsa; Buciumeana/Kadynja; Disguise Interlude V. (51:39)

Personnel: Simone Baron, accordion, piano, vocals (7); Michael Pope, bass, electric bass (3, 6); Lucas Ashby, drums, percussion; Patrick Graney, percussion; Aaron Malone, violin, viola; Bill Neri, viola; Peter Kibbe, cello; Sandeep Das, tabla (4); Mark Schatz, banjo, bass (4); Nelson Moneo, Laura Colgate (1, 10), Ellen McSweeney (9), violin.

Ordering info: simonebaron.com



Landline *Landline*

LOYAL LABEL 022

★★★★

Landline is an experiment in collectivism, each composition written in an approximation of the children's game "Telephone." One member of the quartet would start a piece, send it on to the next to develop, embellish, completely revise and pass along. It doesn't always work, but when it does, Landline is on fire.

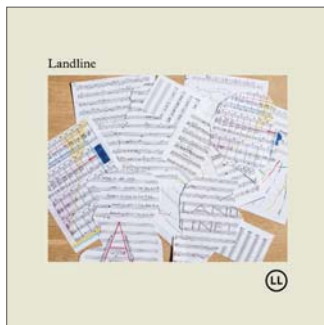
For whatever reason, the album's strongest material is packed into its central third; the stuff on either end is a bit spottier. Opener "Michael Attias" wanders in circles; "Twelve Years" seems determined not to go anywhere; and "An Anecdote Regarding Anthony Braxton" plays like an afterthought. The A-grade material begins with "Flim Flam," a tough swinger that alternates a slightly off-synch melody from tenorist Chet Doxas and pianist Jacob Sacks with responses from bassist Zack Lober, and continues through the affirming "Yup!," illuminated by a beast of a piano solo. The fun part is wondering how these pieces all came together: "Crystalline" is a fragment of eerie solo piano that neither coalesces nor resolves. Did Sacks write it and the others let it be? Did someone else do the bulk of the composing? Perhaps listeners' speculation wasn't intended. But it becomes part of the experience, and, when the stars align, part of the enjoyment.

—Michael J. West

Landline: Michael Attias; Modern Jazz; Twelve Years; Doot Wop; Flim Flam; Crystalline; Power Up; Feel The Bernstein; The Ghost; Yup!; Shiny Things; After The Money; An Anecdote Regarding Anthony Braxton. (37:22)

Personnel: Chet Doxas, tenor saxophone; Jacob Sacks, piano; Zack Lober, bass; Vinnie Sperrazza, drums.

Ordering info: loyallabel.com



La Tanya Hall *Say Yes*

BLUE CANOE 1426

★★★★

Given the 10 years since *It's About Time*, one might fear a lack of artistic vision on La Tanya Hall's follow-up, *Say Yes*. And to some extent, there is. Despite supporting other performers in the studio and working as an educator during the past decade, Hall never lost the drive to pursue a solo recording career. Still, the vacillation between conceptual adventurousness and performative safety here makes *Say Yes* a less immediately lovable experience than Hall's warm and well-practiced voice might intimate. Melodies and lyrics from artists like Cannonball Adderley and Jon Hendricks alongside pianist Andy Milne's arrangements shape many of the song selections. However, *Say Yes* also dips into the past, revealing an undeniable flirtation with poetry and music outside the traditional jazz canon; Hall takes on Joni Mitchell's "The Fiddle And The Drum," for example. The rendition here emphasizes the creative cohesion between the vocalist and Milne, while Clarence Penn's clever percussion creates an illusion of ambient nature sounds. Unfortunately, the rest of the album doesn't command the same sort of attention. And even as Hall never falters, *Say Yes* isn't much more than a well-recorded—but tediously straightforward—studio session.

—Kira Grunenberg

Say Yes: All You Need To Say; Because I Told You So; Pensativa; Poor Butterfly; Whisper Not; Softly As In A Morning Sunrise; Jitterbug Waltz; Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye; Well You Needn't; Pannonica/Con Alma; Fiddle And The Drum. (56:58)

Personnel: La Tanya Hall, vocals; Andy Milne, piano; John Hébert, bass; Clarence Penn, drums; Michael Leonhart, trumpet (1, 11).

Ordering info: bluecanoerecords.com





Rosana Eckert

Bebop Language Drills for Vocalists

More and more vocalists today are wanting to journey into the world of uptempo improvisation, employing bebop language and instrumental sensibilities. Like learning any language, it requires intentional practice and a lot of repetition. In my teaching, I have found that vocalists on this journey make significant strides when they focus on implementing chromaticism and neighbor tones, building their rhythmic

vocabulary, and developing idiomatic scat syllable coordination to be able to sing long eighth-note lines with ease. The following practice drills address those three areas.

Enclosures

Enclosures are a common tool found in bebop language in which the soloist surrounds a basic chord tone (1, 3 or 5) with neighboring tones of a half step or whole

step. It is an organized way to add chromaticism to your solo, creating small moments of tension-and-release.

To sing enclosures successfully, a singer must be able to intentionally land on a particular chord tone, knowing exactly where they are in the scale. Without a button to press or perfect pitch, a singer might find this challenging, but just like learning a melody, it is possible to memorize where particular chords tones are in a song. If this is a new concept for you, I suggest focusing on one chord tone at a time, beginning with the roots. For example, choose a song to practice, and sing the roots of each chord with a play-along track until you have memorized them. Check your pitch accuracy regularly at the piano. When you are confident you have memorized the sound of the roots on every chord, move on to the enclosure exercises that correspond with that chord tone. Do the same thing for the thirds and the fifths of each chord.

Enclosures can be done one of two ways. The first way, and likely the more accessible way, is by singing the target chord tone (1, 3 or 5), enclosing it and singing it again. This is demonstrated on the first two staves of Example 1. The second, more advanced way is to start with the enclosure, putting the non-chord tone on the downbeat, as demonstrated on the bottom two staves of Example 1. Sing through each line many times to get to know these sounds. Notice that the shapes of the enclosures for the root and the fifth are the same, utilizing a half step below and a whole step above. The shapes for enclosing the major thirds are opposite, utilizing a half step above and a whole step below. This makes them easier on the ear. Note that if the third of the chord is minor, the shapes of these enclosures can mirror those of the root and fifth.

Practicing within a set of limitations is a great way to solidify new ideas. Choose one chord tone to focus on (for example, the third of each chord). Then choose one enclosure to apply. (In Example 1, each measure contains one enclosure, beginning with more basic figures and moving toward longer, more chromatic examples.) Practice until you can apply the enclosure to the chosen chord tone of every chord with a confident tone, a solid time feel and without error. (Note: These can be done with swung or straight eighth notes, and they work best with one chord per bar. If there are bars with more than one chord, you might have to simplify the chords or sing the figure with a double-time approach). Work out any difficult jumps from one enclosure to the next.

Don't shy away from awkward leaps. Slow the tempo down and repeat the process until you reach total accuracy at the desired tempo. It might take quite a bit of time.

Building Rhythmic Vocabulary

Vocalists sometimes can get so busy trying to target chord tones and outline changes by ear that they forget to give attention to their rhythmic delivery. Rhythms, however, are half of the story, giving a solo its personality and authenticity. To build rhythmic language and improve delivery, I find it best to take the notes away and just focus on the rhythm and general shaping of each line.

Example 2 shows some one-bar and two-bar rhythmic ideas with shapes implied. Read through them in a swing style at the tempo of your choice, delivering them with more of a speech-like quality rather than singing. Shift the pitch of your speech tone up and down to follow the shaping of the rhythms, but don't actually try to sing any particular pitch.

All focus should be on the rhythm and swing feel. Give a little

Example 1

Target chord tone

Diatonic Enclosures Beginning with Chord Tone

Root

Third

Fifth

Chromatic Enclosures Beginning with Chord Tone

Diatonic and Chromatic Enclosures Beginning with Neighbor Tone

Example 2

One bar

Two bars

Example 3

1 Scales

Cmaj7

Fmaj7

Bbmaj7

Continue around the circle of 5ths

2 Scales - "and" of 1 start

Cmaj7

Fmaj7

Bbmaj7

Continue around the circle of 5ths

3 Scale sequences

A. Cmaj7

B. Fmaj7

C. Other sequence starters...

D. E.

4 Descending scale on "and" of 1

Cmaj7

Fmaj7

Continue around the circle of 5ths

5 Arpeggios

C7

F7

Continue around the circle of 5ths

6 Descending Arpeggios

7 Chromatic patterns

C7

Continue around the circle of 5ths

Circle of 5ths:
C F Bb Eb Ab Db Gb(F#) B E A D G

breath accent on any rhythms that are syncopated, and use a metronome to make sure your time-feel is solid. Add musicality to your spoken rhythms with the use of dynamics (following the implied shape, giving a bit more volume to higher notes and less volume to lower notes).

Experiment with a variety of tempi. Once you feel comfortable with this process, go ahead and use a singing tone, aiming for actual notes that follow the shape of the rhythm (they don't have to be the exact notes implied in this example—merely the implied shapes). There are no chord changes at this point, so any note you choose is fine. Keep your tone confident and supported.

It's time to apply this to a song (it helps if you have already done some chord-tone memorization). Here are two practice routines you can try.

- **Rhythmic Limitations:** Choose one rhythmic cell from Example 2. Using a play-along, improvise a solo, restricting yourself to only the rhythm in the chosen cell. Repeat that rhythm over and over, changing the notes to fit the changes as they go by. Try this with many different rhythmic cells. (A variation to this exercise could be that you incorporate two or three rhythmic cells, rather than just one.)

- **Rhythm-Only Solo:** Using a play-along, speak a solo with a speech-like quality to the voice as you hear the changes go by. Without aiming for actual notes, allow your speaking voice to move up and down, focusing only on the rhythm and shaping. It is important not to allow your ear to focus on any exact pitches during this exercise. Doing so sometimes can water down the shaping and rhythmic choices as the ear gets bogged down harmonically. Be adventurous—utilize big shapes, lots of syncopation, triplets and offbeats. Try to mimic the rhythms and shaping of your favorite bebop solo. If you get stuck and find you are out of rhythmic ideas, throw on a recording of Charlie

Parker or any other great bebop soloist and repeat some of the rhythms you hear as they go by. Speak-sing alongside the solo, aiming only to repeat rhythms and shapes, rather than notes.

Scat Syllable Coordination

When it comes to syllables, a basic school of thought that I subscribe to is that syllables are merely articulation. For uptempo bebop-style improvisation, this works well, requiring minimal face energy and allowing for a quick and smooth approach to eighth-note lines. Syllables should also reflect staccato notes, slurs and other stylistic inflections without drawing too much attention away from the musical ideas themselves.

The easiest way to approach syllables, especially for those new to uptempo singing, is to keep things simple and efficient. For eighth-note lines, I think of syllable delivery in two ways: single-tonguing and double-tonguing. Single-tonguing in this context incorporates only one syllable in a line (the trumpet-like *duh duh duh* or the saxophone-like *vuh vuh vuh*), good for lines with a slow or medium tempo. Trumpeter/vocalist Chet Baker frequently used single-tonguing in his scat solos, approaching it very lightly with a “half-tonguing” airiness. Double-tonguing in this context incorporates two syllables (*duh-vuh duh-vuh*, for example), good for long eighth-note lines and anything uptempo. Again, the approach is to be very light and legato with accents coming primarily from the breath, rather than from the syllable. Ghosted notes can be done by singing an “n” sound (like *duh 'n duh 'n duh*). There are certainly more syllables one can use, but this is a great way to get started. The key to singing fast eighth-note lines with ease is energy efficiency, both vocally and facially.

Example 3 on the preceding page shows some exercises to try. Sing with notes connected and a confident tone, keeping your mouth movement to a minimum. The smoother your vocal technique (evenness of register), the more legato these lines will be. Don't forget to match your dynamic to the shape of the lines, increasing volume for higher notes, decreasing volume as you descend. Start slowly, working around the circle of fifths and aiming for perfect pitch accuracy. Work these lines up to 250 BPM.

It also helps to master “doodle”-tonguing, particularly for soloing faster than 250 BPM. Doodle-tonguing utilizes the “l” syllable in double-tonguing as though you were saying *doodle-oodle-oodle-oodle*. Example 4 shows a few doodle-tonguing exercises. I suggest taking the first two-bar idea and singing it around the circle of fifths. Then take the second two-bar idea and sing that around the circle, and so on.

Finally, to tie all these ideas together, you can build eighth-note lines by linking enclosures together with scales, arpeggios, partial scale figures and chromatic notes, as shown in Example 5. I have also identified the use of syncopation, as well as a couple of “punctuation marks,” at the ends of phrases (which usually are leaps to a short note, often with a change of direction). It's effective for the ending of a line to sound intentional. Note: The chord C7 would incorporate a B \flat , but the enclosure calls for a half-step approach from below, resulting in a B natural. The B natural is not a wrong note because it is part of the enclosure, used to create tension, resolved when the C is sung on beat 3.

With intentional practice and the necessary repetition, these tools can help you get started on your bebop vocal improvisation journey. Keep your standards high and don't worry if it takes awhile. If you put in the time, you will succeed.

DB

Example 4

Example 4 displays four staves of musical notation, each featuring eighth-note patterns with corresponding syllables. The first staff includes the syllables "doo-dle oo-dle leh dut" and "doo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle ley". The second staff includes "doo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle ut" and "doo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle ley". The third staff includes "doo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle aht" and "doo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle oo-dle ley dat". The fourth staff includes "vuh duh vuh doo-dle uh doo vuh dey".

Example 5

Example 5 displays four staves of musical notation, each featuring eighth-note patterns with various musical concepts labeled. The first staff includes "C7", "Root enclosure", "Scale", "Fifth enclosure", and "punctuation mark". The second staff includes "Third enclosure", "Arpeggio", "Root enclosure", and "punctuation mark". The third staff includes "Arpeggio", "Root enclosure", "Chromatic note", "Third enclosure", and "punctuation mark". The fourth staff includes "Fifth enclosure", "Scale figure", "Root enclosure", and "syncopation".

Rosana Eckert is an internationally renowned jazz vocalist, composer, arranger and educator. She has performed with a long list of jazz luminaries including Lyle Mays, Bobby McFerrin, Kenny Wheeler, George Duke, Christian McBride, Jon Faddis and New York Voices. Praised as “a world-class artist” (Jazz History Online) and “one of the best scat singers around” (Scott Yanow), her solo recordings *At the End of the Day*, *Small Hotel* and, most recently, *Sailing Home* (Origin OAE Records) have received critical acclaim. Also a respected educator, Eckert is Principal Lecturer of Jazz Voice at the University of North Texas. For the past 20 years, her work teaching private jazz voice, song writing and vocal pedagogy has helped establish UNT as one of the premier jazz vocal programs in the world. Visit her online at rosanaeckert.com.

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How To Play in a Band with 2 Chordal Instruments

During the past few years, I've been very fortunate to collaborate with guitarist Peter Bernstein, who I consider to be one of the most deeply musical cats out there. I've also been lucky to perform with great Montreal guitarists, including Gabriel Lambert (who I've been playing with for 15 years), Mike Rud, Carlos Jiménez and Sam Kirmayer.

Having played in so many piano/guitar settings, I've learned a lot about how to navigate a musical situation involving two chordal instruments. All the advice found in this article can apply equally well to vibes/piano or guitar/vibes bands, as well as duo settings with two pianos or two guitars.

Comping Decisions

Simply put, great chord accompanying ("comping") is about striving to always play the right thing at the right time. This extends, for example, far beyond playing an E \flat 7 on the fifth bar of a B \flat blues. The best compers—artists like Wynton Kelly and Herbie Hancock—have an almost telepathic ability to play exactly the right voicing at exactly the right moment. You have to use your judgment to determine what that exact right thing is, based on what the soloist and the rest of the band is playing. And there is more than one right answer—it's an entirely subjective decision based on your own taste and musical reference points.

Your role as a compers is to support the soloist and contribute to the groove being laid down by the bass and drums. Think about what you can do to help propel the music forward. After all, the job of the rhythm section is to create a magic carpet for the soloist to ride on.

Since there is a musical conversation taking place, you can respond or comment on ideas presented by the soloist. Generally, as in regular conversation, you'll want to make sure not to interrupt or "talk over" them. However, you also occasionally can be a disrupter if the music calls for it—this can contribute some drama to the collective story being told by the band.

Comping decisions have to be made when there are two chordal instruments in the band. Although this can be done in the moment, it can also be helpful to talk down the tunes and discuss comping roles before hitting the stage or studio.

Defining Roles

Unless you're taking the Grant Green approach (where the pianist comps for all the solos), you'll want to think about how to share the chord work between the two chordal instruments. It can be musically effective to alternate the comping role, for example, by having piano comp for guitar and then guitar comp for bass. Over the course of a live set or recording session, you also can change which chordal instrument accompanies which soloist, creating different ensemble textures in the process.

Harmonic Framework

Many musicians have their own particular set of chords that they like to use on a given tune. In a band that has only one chordal instrument, it can be less of an issue if the soloist and the compers diverge harmonically, but when two chordal instruments are playing together the possibility for harmonic clashes increases exponentially. (Not to mention the additional divergences that can be created by the bass player's note choices.) While clashes are a part of this music, deciding upon a set of blowing changes as a point of departure can be useful for avoiding them.

Listening Before Comping

Even if you establish a basic harmonic framework as mentioned above, many players eventually will incorporate substitutions into their solos. Because there are myriad possibilities for chord substitution in jazz harmony, it's a good idea to listen for the type of scale or color the soloist is implying on a given chord before you comp. For example, if you hear them play an

altered dominant sound, it likely will work better if you play a voicing with that sound, rather than a dominant chord with a natural 13th. This “listen and respond” approach means that, for example, when the harmonic rhythm is one chord per bar, you will often end up comping more on the second half of the bar. Remember, it’s their solo, not yours. Let the soloist choose the harmonic direction most of the time.

Top Note

It’s equally important to think about the top note of your voicing. Because of its register, it often can stand out as a countermelody to what the soloist is playing, so make sure it’s musical and doesn’t overshadow them. If you hear the soloist repeat a certain note, putting the same note in your top voicing can add support and weight to their solo. That said, you don’t want to be a talking parrot, so avoid excessive imitation.

Less Is More

You also don’t have to play every chord in the progression all the time. This is especially true when comping for another chordal instrument, since they probably will incorporate some chord work into their solo at some point. Very often, less is more. Think about how minimal yet effective Count Basie’s style of accompaniment was. Leaving some chords out creates more space in the music and also can add an element of surprise to your comping.

If the guitarist goes into a Wes Montgomery-inspired chorus of chord melody soloing, there’s a good chance that they’ll be incorporating chromatic II-Vs and chord substitutions that might fly by too quickly for you to catch them all. In those moments, you might want to switch to playing only guide tones (thirds and sevenths) or just punctuate the tonic chords every time they come around. Or even lay out entirely.

Go for a Stroll

Laying out—or strolling—is the ultimate way to create space in the music. It gives the soloist freedom to explore more complex ideas without being constrained by chordal accompaniment. Put on any Thelonious Monk record and you undoubtedly will hear many choruses where he strolls during a saxophone or bass solo. McCoy Tyner also layed out frequently with the John Coltrane Quartet; so did Herbie Hancock with Miles Davis’ second great quintet.

As my New School University arranging professor Kirk Nurock used to say, every time an instrument comes in or drops out, it creates a special “moment” in the music. Strolling is a perfect example of this: an instant arrangement decision that often is overlooked. It creates a textural contrast with what came before and allows the listener to hear a different trio configuration within the already established quar-

ter setting. And it can be so exciting when the comp comes back in.

Your Place in the Groove

The opposite side of the comping spectrum is when both chord instruments play simultaneously. In music with African roots, every instrument is a rhythm instrument. If you listen to funk and Afrobeat—for instance, James Brown or Fela Kuti—you often will hear multiple guitars and keyboards playing different ostinato figures that interlock to create a poly-rhythmic texture. This also happens in jazz, but the rhythmic interactions are usually more varied and the individual components that make up the groove more malleable. Jazz musicians dance around each other in unpredictable ways.

“Dovetail” Approach

If the pianist and guitarist are playing with harmonic and rhythmic clarity, it is possible for both to play chords simultaneously in a jazz context—Wes Montgomery and Harold Mabern were masters at this. Check out their 1965 television performances (including “Jingles,” “Twisted Blues” and “Impressions”) where they both comp during each other’s solos and also for those by bassist Arthur Harper. They frequently use what I call the “dovetail” approach: playing call-and-response, clave-based rhythms that fit perfectly together. These mirror-image patterns are played in different parts of the bar, sometimes resolving to a unison rhythmic figure.

Art Tatum/Tiny Grimes Lineage

There is a lineage of pianists and guitarists playing together (in a trio setting with a bass player) that begins with Art Tatum’s work with Tiny Grimes (and later Everett Barksdale) and extends to Nat “King” Cole with Oscar Moore, Ahmad Jamal with Ray Crawford, and Oscar Peterson with Barney Kessel, Herb Ellis or Joe Pass.

All of these groups had intricate arrangements that took full advantage of the harmonic possibilities inherent in this specific instrumental combination. It’s worthwhile to examine the various ways that they would orchestrate melodies.

Melody Orchestration

The pianists and guitarists in these trios often would harmonize melodies in thirds, sixths and occasionally fourths or fifths, as well as play them in unison at different octaves. One or both chord instruments sometimes would play the melody in block chords; or the pianist would play the melody in octaves, leaving the chords to the guitarist. While working on orchestrating a melody with two chordal instruments, take note of the “weight” of the melody when the guitar doubles it an octave below the piano—or when the two instruments swap registers. In fact, the possible options for orchestra-

tion are too numerous to describe here.

Texture/Register/Rhythm Differentiation

All of the groups in this lineage made a conscious effort to differentiate guitar from piano through register, voicing density and rhythm, while maintaining ensemble balance. For example, Tatum often would accompany himself with left-hand stride, while Grimes strummed four quarter notes to the bar. This technique of differentiation is one of many that harken back to the Louis Armstrong Hot Five and Hot Seven groups, which featured pianists (Lil Hardin Armstrong, Earl Hines) and guitarists/banjoists (Johnny St. Cyr, Mancy Carr). During the swing era, the Count Basie Orchestra (with guitarist Freddie Green) and the Benny Goodman Sextet (with pianist Teddy Wilson, guitarist Charlie Christian and vibraphonist Lionel Hampton) expanded upon this approach, and generally offer outstanding examples of how to create contrast with chordal instruments.

On Jamal repertoire like “New Rhumba” and “All Of You,” Crawford famously used the Pittsburgh guitar technique of muting over the neck pickup to create a bongo or conga drum effect. This added a new percussive texture to the drummer-less trio setting, and players like Ellis and Tal Farlow began incorporating it into their styles as well.

Unison chord voicings can have a lovely “chorus” effect when played on piano and guitar. These are especially effective when playing repertoire by composers such as Duke Ellington or Thelonious Monk, whose specific voicings were essential to the character of their individual works.

Duo Settings

All of the aforementioned techniques can be employed in a duo setting. The absence of a bass player also means that guitar or piano can play bass lines to accompany each other—a great example of the latter is Dave McKenna’s left hand on Ed Bickert’s 1984 album *Bye-Bye Baby* (Concord Jazz).

Some other duo albums to check out are Bill Evans and Jim Hall’s *Undercurrent* (United Artists, 1962) and *Intermodulation* (Verve, 1966), Fred Hersch and Bill Frisell’s *Songs We Know* (Nonesuch, 1998) and Pat Metheny and Brad Mehldau’s *Metheny/Mehldau* (Nonesuch, 2006). These albums offer superb examples of improvised linear counterpoint between guitar and piano, in addition to many of the key approaches described in this article. **DB**

Andrés Vial (pronounced Vee-all) is a pianist and composer from Montreal. In 2018, he released *Sphereology Volume One*, a Thelonious Monk tribute album featuring guitarist Peter Bernstein. His most recent album is *Gang Of Three*, a set of original compositions recorded with bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Eric McPherson. Vial is a doctoral candidate and instructor at McGill University’s Schulich School of Music. Visit him online at andresvialmusic.com.



Dan Wilensky's Tenor Saxophone Solo on 'Reckless Tongue'

Many of you have read saxophonist Dan Wilensky's Woodshed articles in this very magazine. But have you heard his music? If not, 2011's *Group Therapy* (Speechless Productions) is a good place to

start. Covering a wealth of genres and moods, it's a great listen from beginning to end. Let's look at the wry humor in Wilensky's solo on the first track, "Reckless Tongue."

The laid-back tempo and emphasis on

dominant chords makes this track sound like a blues. But with all the side-stepping and 30-bar form divided into two 15-measure sections, this is not your basic blues. Starting both sections in A \flat but ending the first one in D (about as harmonically far away from A \flat as you can get) and the second one in C minor, it's hard to even say what key this might be in (hence the lack of key signature).

Wilensky adds to the bluesiness with his frequent use of pentatonics, but often in manners that aren't typical of the blues. He opens up with major pentatonic licks based off the underlying harmonies. This is a gentle way to bring us into this solo, and gives it an old-school vibe.

But at the end of bar 3 into bar 4, Wilensky decorates the F with the very outside G \flat /F \sharp , which makes it sound more akin to D7 (D and C being the only other notes in this lick enforce that). D7 is the tritone substitution for A \flat 7, which is the chord coming up, and this first 15 bar section ends on D, so Wilensky could be foreshadowing, setting our ears up for these harmonies.

Some other clever uses of pentatonics can be found in measures 14–16, where Wilensky starts out with F major pentatonic, very inside and old-school on the F chord. Crossing the bar line into A \flat territory, he stays with this scale, but resolves the A natural down to A \flat . This makes the lick sound like 6–#11–3– \flat 9–R, a very altered sound (or like he's stayed in F major a little too long before resolving to the A \flat).

However, the flat third is often used to decorate the major pentatonic (some call this the "country blues scale"), so the A \flat is in the territory of F major pentatonic. And Wilensky plays a lick from this at the end of bar 16. Is this A \flat , or is he still in F? It's quite artful how he morphs across chord changes in this manner.

Bars 26–27 are ingenious as well. We're on a B minor chord, but Wilensky starts off playing B major pentatonic, which might sound very wrong if he played the major third. But he only plays the other notes of the scale: second, root, sixth and fifth, which at worst make the harmony sound dorian. By grouping them in a typically major pentatonic manner, it creates a bit of surprise.

In the next measure he settles this by adding the minor third, but the rest of this measure is total major pentatonic. It's like playing the country blues scale without the major third (actually, that's exactly what it is).

Adding to the inventiveness of this is that Wilensky already hit us with this sound back

in measure 11, when the B minor had previously appeared. But he blasted through it in a string of 32nd notes, not giving our ears the time to fully appreciate this unique sound, but setting us up for it to reappear.

His final pentatonic lick follows the same typical/atypical usage. Measure 29 is plain old C minor pentatonic, played on a Cm chord. In the next bar Wilensky omits the fifth in favor of the flat fifth, giving us a bluesier sound. The brilliance is when he resolves to this flat fifth just as the chorus ends and the A \flat 7 comes up. This G \flat was the flat fifth on the C minor, but it's the flat seventh on the A \flat , a chord tone.

Once again, Wilensky is crossing bar lines with his scales. But he cleverly morphed the C minor pentatonic into a C blues scale (without the fifth), slowly leading us to the A \flat 7.

Wilensky certainly uses more than pentatonics, and his use of other colors makes this solo a wonderful gumbo of sounds. But his individual use of pentatonics and blues scales adds to the bluesy quality of the song, and his offbeat means of applying it adds to the quirkiness. **DB**

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

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Warm Audio WA-84, WA-251

Modern Recreations of Vintage Studio Microphones

Recognizing the need for affordable high-quality studio components in today's pro audio marketplace, Warm Audio has set out to replicate some of the world's most iconic recording gear. Among its many budget-priced offerings, the company recently has unveiled the WA-84 and WA-251 microphones—inspired by the Neumann KM84 condenser and the Telefunken ELA M 251E tube mic.

Warm Audio is not a “clone” manufacturer—since true clones are much more expensive to build—but they do use some of the same internal components. To keep costs down, the company assembles its products in China but imports boutique components that offer a higher quality than their Chinese equivalents.

Unboxing the two microphones, which look and feel nearly identical to their vintage counterparts, I was impressed with their quality. The build is first-rate and each is packaged with a sturdy metal shock mount. The WA-84 came as a matched stereo pair with two shock mounts and everything packed into a protective hard case, suitable for travel. The stereo pair sells for a \$749, with a single mic package available for \$399. The WA-251 comes with a shock mount, and the mic is encased in an attractive wooden box. The WA-251 also includes its external power supply box and all necessary cables for operation.

I first tested the WA-84, and since I am fortunate enough to own a set of vintage Neumann KM84s, a side-by-side comparison was in order. The original KM84, a 48-volt phantom-powered small diaphragm fixed cardioid pattern condenser released in 1966, was revered for its warm and detailed tone and was widely used on acoustic instruments, drum overheads and even amp cabinets. After careful comparison, I discovered the WA-84 to be nearly identical to the Neumann in both its tone and gain characteristics. I sampled the mic on mandolin, guitar, banjo and dobro and absolutely loved the results. It has a clear, yet flat, frequency response that produces a warm sound without adding undesirable color or harshness. Although I felt the vintage Neumann had a slight edge over the WA-84, they are impressively close in performance. Under the hood, a U.S.-manufactured Cinemag transformer and custom designed vintage-style capsule really add to this mic's magic.

The original 1960s Telefunken 251 ELA-M was manufactured via a

partnership between Telefunken and AKG, and it utilized the legendary CK12 brass capsule, which first appeared in the iconic AKG C12 microphone. Like the original, the WA 251 recreation (pictured) is a tube-driven multi-pattern large diaphragm condenser housed in a sturdy metal enclosure. To achieve the nuance of the original Telefunken, Warm utilizes a custom WA-12-B-60V brass capsule and a Slovak Republic JJ 12AY7 vacuum tube. Even the Gotham Audio power cable has been specifically chosen for its superior performance.

Tracking both female and male vocals, the WA-251 was absolutely wonderful, with smooth, lush and accurate results. It also shines on acoustic instruments and drums, adding some pleasing tube-driven color to the mix. Priced at \$799, the WA-251 is a truly versatile microphone that works great on vocals, acoustic instruments, brass and woodwinds, cabinets and even drums and percussion.

The WA-84 and WA-251 microphones would be valuable additions to any studio setup, whether you're a home-recording hobbyist or a seasoned professional. Warm Audio has done an amazing job of capturing the subtle nuances of classic pieces that are highly coveted but far too expensive for most musicians' budgets. Considering that an original KM84 will set you back about \$1,000, and a vintage 251 closer to \$30,000, you simply can't go wrong here.

—Keith Baumann



WTS Artistry Series Drum Sets

Effortless Tuning, Resonant Tone

Welch Tuning Systems has introduced an approach to tuning your drums that offers so many advantages over traditional tuning, you'll wonder how you ever got by before without it.

The Welch Tuning System is basically a cabled pulley system where the top and bottom heads are pulled against each other and are anchored by a big tuning peg on the drum (you don't need to use a drum key). When turning the peg (to tighten or loosen), both heads are affected at the same rate, meaning they both have equal tuning throughout the entire process. While the two heads are not at exactly the same pitch, they are pretty close, and each head changes pitch evenly with each turn.

Tuning your kit through wide ranges, quickly, is now possible without ever getting off your drum throne. And by “quickly,” I mean you can go up

or down an entire octave in about 10 turns of the tuner. So, tuning your kit for individual songs on the fly now is possible.

Once you have a chance to play WTS drums, a few benefits become clear. The first is initial tuning. Since the heads stay in tune with each other, and there is 90 percent less hardware bolted on to a WTS drum compared to a normal drum, the shells resonate easily and over a wide range. With this system, I found I could go way beyond any range I had tuned before (in either direction) and find multiple sweet, resonant spots. And all of this is possible in real-time. There is no criss-cross tuning of the drum, then turning it upside down to repeat. You literally play the drum, turn the tuning peg and decide what you want your sound to be.

Being able to tune between songs to match the style of the upcoming

song is another obvious benefit. You can crank the heads up for some funk, then bring them back down for some thicker backbeats on the next tune. In fact, tuning is so easy you can tune during a song if you have a free hand. This concept can add an entirely new layer to drum soloing.

A few different configurations of WTS drum sets are available, all with six-ply maple shells (made in the United States). I play-tested the bop-style kit from the company's Artistry Series, and while I usually like a 20-inch kick, the wide range of tuning options on the 18-inch kick made this a non-issue. For the 14-inch floor tom, I tuned it as low as it could go and it sounded like a cannon. This tuning system provides a wider range of sound than you currently have access to with traditional lugged tuning. And it's far easier to deal with, which will lead to new avenues of creativity.

One snare size is currently available, a 14- by 8-inch. It's a somewhat unusual size for a single snare offering, but I loved it. According to CEO Samuel Welch, "We felt the 8-inch shell really showed off the full range and versatility of WTS. It's amazing how many drums it can be: from high, tight and funky to low, fat and swampy. I've seen players from every genre find a sound they like out of that drum."

The Welch Tuning Systems concept is something you'll want to keep on your radar when considering your next drum purchase.

—Matt Kern

welchtuningsystems.com



Wyatt Wilkie Cento Archtop

Jazzy Feel With Gypsy Appeal

As advancing technology continues to influence how we produce instruments, there are still those select luthiers who choose to stick with tradition, individually hand-carving each and every guitar they create. Wyatt Wilkie is one of those luthiers, and his obsession with the craft has driven him to build some truly stunning archtop guitars during the past two decades. His latest creation, the Cento model, pays tribute to the Selmer/Maccaferri guitars favored by gypsy-jazz players.

Wyatt offers several standard archtop models, and spends a large portion of his time creating one-of-a-kind custom builds. Each instrument is hand-built without the use of any automated machinery or laser cutting techniques. Even Wilkie's design are hand-drawn.

Wilkie loves putting his archtops in the hands of great musicians; however, he noticed that they were underused by guitarists in the gypsy-jazz idiom, a style that requires a guitar with a specific look and feel. That set him on a mission to build a gypsy-inspired archtop, and the Cento was born. With its name taken from the birthplace of Mario Maccaferri, who originally designed the guitars played by Django Reinhardt, this archtop exudes a distinct gypsy vibe while retaining a classic archtop feel and playability.

Much of the guitar utilizes standard archtop design and construction, and according to its maker, "It's really more of a vibe than anything else." The body features a 16-inch bout with a venetian-style cutaway and spruce top with flamed maple sides and back. The two-piece maple neck features a 14-fret, 25-inch scale and ebony fingerboard with an attractive inlay on the headstock. The binding is highly flamed maple and the guitar has an ebony nut, ebony bridge and solid brass tailpiece.

What gives the guitar its gypsy soul is the elongated oval soundhole, reminiscent of the D-hole Maccaferri guitars. The bracing also is a unique feature, with Wilkie's own "V" style pattern supporting the top. The pickup is a Kent Armstrong floating "Jazzy Joe" Johnny Smith-style humbucker with a basic volume and tone control mounted into the top.

Playing the Cento is a joy, and in my book, there is nothing like a hand-built instrument. The neck is comfortable and the Kent Armstrong pickup is smooth and clear. The guitar plays and feels very much like a standard archtop, but the large oval soundhole does offer up a slightly more open sound compared to a standard f-hole guitar. I tried the Cento with both

flat-wound and round-wound strings, and it sounded great with both. The acoustic tone is naturally wonderful on this guitar, and it could definitely hold its own playing through a microphone and strung with acoustic strings. Not only is this a beautiful instrument, but at \$8,500 it is extremely reasonable for a master-built guitar of this quality.

—Keith Baumann

wilkiestringedinstruments.com



1. Tuning Stability

G7th has released its Performance 3 Capo with Adaptive Radius Technology. The ART active string pad mechanism adapts to match the radius over the strings on any guitar, delivering tuning stability by applying even pressure across the fretboard. Coupled with the tension control system on the Performance range, the mechanism helps solve many of the problems associated with capos in the past. Performance 3 capos are available in a silver finish, satin black and 18-karat gold plate.

More info: g7th.com

2. Increased Realism

Superlux's S502MKII ORTF stereo microphone is a new and improved version of its S502 ORTF model. It features specialized diaphragm technology that provides better directivity, a lower signal-to-noise ratio and improved total harmonic distortion. The S502MKII delivers a flatter frequency response with a clear, natural sound quality that captures a wide stereo field with increased realism.

More info: avlex.com

3. Striking a Balance

Promark has expanded its Shira Kashi Oak drum stick line to include Select Balance acorn tip models. The Select Balance line was designed to give players different balance options on their preferred drum stick model. Forward models feature a short, 2¼-inch taper, which shifts the weight and momentum of the stick toward the front for improved power and speed. Rebound models feature a longer 3-inch taper, giving the stick extra bounce for optimized finesse and agility.

More info: daddario.com

4. Tube Compressor Plug-in

Overloud has released Comp670, a plug-in recreation of a rare tube compressor/limiter. The original unit has a distinctive, warm tone thanks to the large number of transformers in its signal chain. Comp670 faithfully models the nuances of the original hardware and expands its capabilities. Three different example units are recreated in one plug-in, each with unique dynamics and coloration.

More info: ilio.com

5. Guitarist's Interface

IK Multimedia's Axe I/O is a high-end audio interface and controller designed for guitarists to record with pristine tone. The two-in/five-out Axe I/O offers a range of recording features, including high-end mic preamps, top-of-the-line converters, 192kHz operation, a wide dynamic range and an extended frequency response.

More info: ikmultimedia.com

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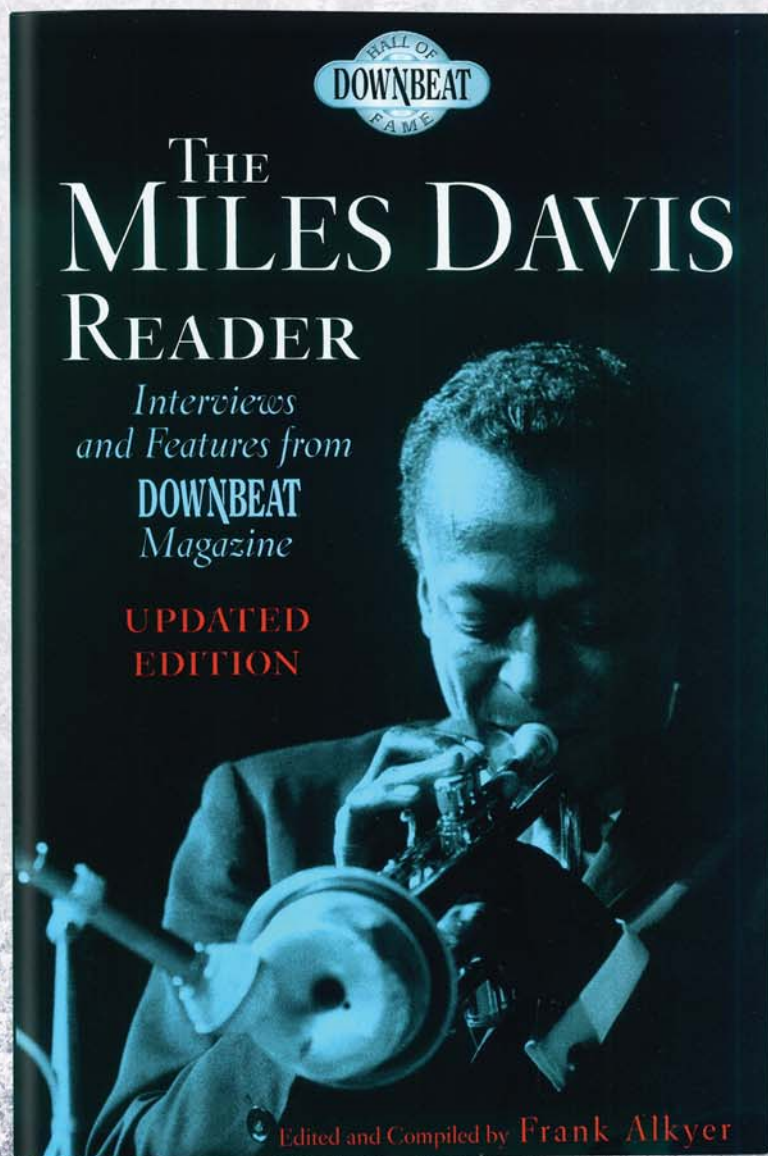
Mackie's FreePlay series of personal P.A. and portable Bluetooth speakers deliver superior sound quality and high headroom power in a compact format. Available in three models—the FreePlay Live, FreePlay Home and FreePlay Go—the series is ideal for musical performances and speech presentations. FreePlay units can run on either AC or battery power, with a built-in high-capacity rechargeable battery offering up to 15 hours of sound reinforcement.

More info: mackie.com



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Hartt faculty member Steve Davis (left) works with students in the Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz at the University of Hartford.

Hartt School Extends McLean's Legacy

IN 1968, NOT A LOT OF JAZZ MUSICIANS

were abandoning the life of a road warrior to take jobs in academia. But for saxophonist Jackie McLean, accepting a university position seemed like a great opportunity to put down roots and build a program that could pass on the hard lessons he'd learned on the bandstand.

McLean (1931–2006) established the African American Music Department at University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music, which offered a bachelor's degree in jazz studies. Two decades after starting the program, McLean said he was discouraged that more of his peers hadn't followed him into post-secondary institutions. "I just wish that more performing musicians would get involved in teaching, rather than just those who have learned about the music through research," McLean said in 1997.

At 54, saxophonist Javon Jackson is exactly the kind of artist McLean had in mind. With a career that has included stints with Elvin Jones and Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and years leading his own bands, Jackson took over directorship of the renamed Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz six years ago, and draws his arc directly back to the school's namesake.

"Jackie is the main reason I'm at Hartt," Jackson explained, just hours before his group hit the stage during a weeklong run at the Village Vanguard in New York. "He brought me in to do a master class, and I saw what an incredible program he had built."

During Jackson's time at the helm, the jazz program has expanded and now offers a mas-

ter's degree, a summer camp and an endowed scholarship. "I brought [the late jazz educator] David Baker in to help develop the master's program, and the first thing we established was that we would have a course devoted to Duke Ellington," Jackson recalled. Other graduate credit courses include "Analysis of the American Songbook," which ranges from Bix Beiderbecke to Ornette Coleman, as well as ear-training and music theory classes.

The undergraduate degree program continues to stress a sociopolitical element—something that was important to McLean. "Young people grow up in such a different environment today," Jackson said. "The historical context is even more important than [ever]. My goal is to give today's musicians a comprehensive understanding of where this music comes from."

To help achieve that goal, Jackson has brought to campus several renowned African American scholars and artists, including Nikki Giovanni, Angela Davis, Sonia Sanchez and Cornel West. Visiting musicians have included Eddie Henderson and Jeff "Tain" Watts.

Among Jackson's esteemed colleagues on the faculty are Abraham Burton, Zaccai Curtis, Steve Davis and Rick Germanson.

Jackson said he draws on his own experience and the lessons he has learned from his elders to illustrate how young musicians need to take control of their own careers.

"I remember being on tour with Jackie in Europe and just soaking up his lessons," Jackson recalled. "I hope what we're doing here now captures some of Jackie's spirit." —James Hale



University of Toronto Jazz Orchestra

Student Music: The University of Toronto's Faculty of Music will release *Embargo*, an album of new music by the University of Toronto Jazz Orchestra, on Jan. 10. The collection represents several facets of the school's jazz program, with students demonstrating their skills as composers, arrangers, large-ensemble performers and improvisers. *Embargo* includes a tribute to the late Rob McConnell, an influential figure in Canadian jazz, on a performance of his arrangement of "Take The 'A' Train." McConnell's papers and scores are part of the archives at the U. of T. Faculty of Music Library. music.utoronto.ca

New Era: Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo has hired bassist and composer John Hébert as a full-time professor. Hébert will teach bass, jazz improvisation and jazz theory courses, and coach combos. He joins a faculty that includes Greg Jasperse (vocals), Scott Cowan (trumpet), Andrew Rathbun (saxophones), Matthew Fries (piano), Keith Hall (drums) and new adjunct guitar professor Matt Landon. wmich.edu/jazz

DCJazzPrix Applications: The DC Jazz Festival has launched its 2020 international emerging jazz bands competition, DCJazzPrix, by issuing a call for applications. Potential applicants who visit dcjazzprix.org will find guidelines regarding eligibility, review criteria, terms and digital submission requirements for the application, which will close March 3. The entry fee is \$49 per band. dcjazzfest.org

ISIM Proposals: The International Society for Improvised Music invites proposals for performances, workshops, academic papers and panel discussions related to any aspect of improvised music for the organization's 12th festival/conference, to be held July 3–7 at the University of Melbourne in Australia. improvisedmusic.org

63rd Conference: The College Music Society will hold its 63rd National Conference Oct. 22–24 at the Hilton Miami Downtown in Miami, Florida. The annual conference presents a broad array of higher-education topics dealing with music. music.org

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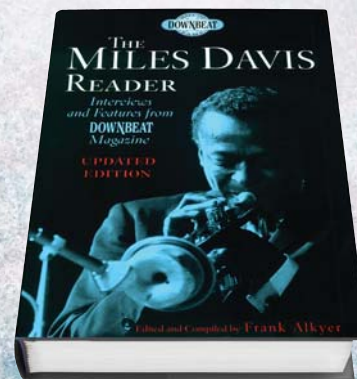
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Roxy Coss

With the release of 2019's *Quintet* (Outside In), tenor and soprano saxophonist Roxy Coss offers the sixth album in her rapidly growing discography. Coss is the founder of the Women In Jazz Organization, which has more than 400 members and aims to improve the experience of women and non-binary people in jazz. This is her first Blindfold Test.

Eric Alexander

"Everything Happens To Me" (*Second Impression*, High Note, 2016) Alexander, tenor saxophone; Harold Mabern, piano; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

Eric Alexander. And that's Harold Mabern. I know from the joy—it's bouncing. Maybe Buster Williams on bass? Is it "Everything Happens To Me"? Super swinging, even at the ballad tempo, and the tenor sound is so rich and beautiful. The phrasing was relaxed and felt very natural. With any standard, but especially ballads, the truer you stay to the melody, the better. Great recording quality—perfect amount of reverb. 4 stars.

George Colligan

"Empty" (*More Powerful*, Whirlwind, 2017) Colligan, piano; Nicole Glover, tenor saxophone; Linda May Han Oh, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

I really liked that composition. The tenor took a brawny, fuzzy approach. Incredible interaction between the tenor and piano in the beginning, and then I like how it developed in the second section. It's cool to hear the tenor being used to explore more textural things. 3½ stars.

Sara Serpa

"Quiet Riot" (*Close Up*, Clean Feed, 2018) Serpa, vocals; Ingrid Laubrock, soprano saxophone; Erik Friedlander, cello.

4 stars. It made me smile and laugh a few times. The solo was fun, and it felt free, like they were being fearless, just talking with each other, having a conversation. I heard a Jimmy Garrison *Love Supreme* quote. The soprano sound is beautiful—voice-like and buttery. I think the vocalist is Sara Serpa, but I have no idea who the saxophone player is.

Mark Turner/Ethan Iverson

"Myron's World" (*Temporary Kings*, ECM, 2018) Turner, tenor saxophone; Iverson, piano.

I know that song, but I can't remember the name. It's off of something else I've heard. It's very influenced by Mark Turner, but the time feel is different. I assume Mark would have a much drier recording—there's a lot of reverb. I'm not sure who the player is. At the beginning, I loved the beautiful sound and appreciated that they really took their time—a very thoughtful recording. There's an evenness of tone throughout the range, a sort of breathy attack, and a roundness, which is nice. 3 stars.

[after] I'm shocked. At the beginning, I thought it was obviously Mark, but I haven't heard this recording. But when they started blowing, I thought there's no way it's Mark. Thinking it was someone trying to impersonate him made me give less stars—so I'll amend to 4 stars. 5 stars for the beginning of the track.

Melissa Aldana

"Acceptance" (*Visions*, Motéma, 2019) Aldana, tenor saxophone; Sam Harris, piano; Joel Ross, vibraphone; Pablo Menares, bass; Tommy Crane, drums.

At first it sounded like Walter Smith, III, and then it sounded like Mark Turner to me. Was it Melissa Aldana? I really liked the track. The time felt great. The altissimo is great. There's a perfect amount of blues in there. The tune was cool. The interaction was true. All the elements are there for me. I'd love to hear that played live, and see what they do with it. I give it 4½ stars.



STEVEN SUSSMAN

Four Visions Saxophone Quartet

"Legions" (*Four Visions*, Sunnyside, 2019) Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone; Dave Binney, alto saxophone; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Samuel Blais, baritone saxophone.

At first, I thought the soprano was a voice, and the alto was a tenor. Very unique tones—both soprano and alto vocalizing a lot. Ridiculous sax solos all around. Very cool composition. It told a story; went on a journey. The time was so solid throughout, which is impressive for a sax quartet. The tenor player reminded me a bit of Chris Potter. Awesome. 4½ stars.

Chase Baird

"As You Are" (*A Life Between*, Soundsabout, 2019) Baird, tenor saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano; Nir Felder, guitar; Dan Chmielewski, bass; Antonio Sánchez, drums.

Interesting, because they're playing so much, but there's this relaxed vibe through the whole piece. It felt like the tenor player wasn't trying to prove anything. I could hear some Trane and a little Brecker and Lovano, but a different tenor sound—a fuzzy, less direct tone, a little on the brighter side. I think I recognize the song, but I don't know who it is.

The guitarist has a beautiful sound. I heard different influences, but the content, the phrases, makes me think it's somebody younger. No idea who the pianist and drummer are. 3½ stars.

Dave Holland

"Tenor-Bass W1" (*Uncharted Territories*, Dare2, 2018) Holland, bass; Evan Parker, tenor saxophone.

At the beginning, the bassist reminded me of Dezron Douglas. The bassist and tenor player both have big, fat, beautiful sounds. The piece is very free, and it didn't have much of a grounded sense—it felt very ethereal. 3 stars. [after] If we compare that to an abstract painting, it was more an approach of splatter on the canvas, throwing sounds out there, sound for sound's sake, rather than using the style as a way to interpret a form—shaping the flow, going in specific, deliberate directions and coming back to the themes.

Randy Brecker/Ada Rovatti

"The Queen Of Bibelo" (*Sacred Bond: Brecker Plays Rovatti*, Pilo, 2019) Brecker, trumpet; Rovatti, tenor saxophone; David Kikoski, piano; Alex Claffy, bass; Rodney Holmes, drums.

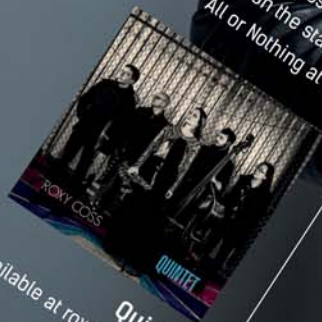
The tenor player reminded me of Jimmy Heath, George Coleman, Joe Henderson. The recording itself sounded like that '70s or '80s era. The rhythm section is very familiar, but the context is throwing me off. It sounds like somebody very rooted in the tradition, and just having fun. Impeccable trumpet playing—I should know who it is. 4 stars. **DB**

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

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saxophonists from far and wide were flocking to Jody's New York loft to buy the mouthpieces and in 2000 JodyJazz Inc was formally established. Over the next few years Jody worked tirelessly to create numerous new models and develop the line and in 2008 he moved the operation to its current home in Savannah, Georgia greatly expanding his manufacturing capabilities and capacity. Today JodyJazz mouthpieces are played by many of the world's leading saxophonists and are highly prized by players in all countries across the globe.



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