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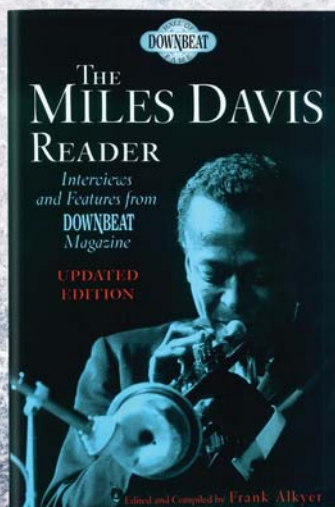


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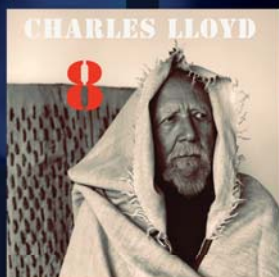
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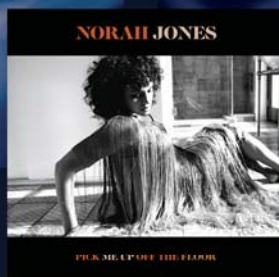
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CHARLES LLOYD
8: KINDRED SPIRITS
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Jazz legend **CHARLES LLOYD** celebrated his 80th birthday in 2018 with a grouping of musical friends including guitarist **JULIAN LAGE**, pianist **GERALD CLAYTON**, bassist **REUBEN ROGERS**, and drummer **ERIC HARLAND**, with special guests organist **BOOKER T. JONES**. **8** commemorates the first 8 decades of Lloyd's remarkable journey and arrives in a limited-edition deluxe box set that includes 3-LPs, 2-CDs, and a DVD, along with a 96-page hardcover book and 2 photo prints, as well as standard LP/DVD, CD/DVD, and digital versions.



NORAH JONES
PICK ME UP OFF THE FLOOR

NORAH JONES' seventh solo studio album grew out of her acclaimed singles series, as the unreleased songs unexpectedly congealed into an album of tremendous depth and beauty. Featuring a range of collaborators from **BRIAN BLADE** to **JEFF TWEEDY**, *Pick Me Up Off The Floor* is connected by the sly groove of her piano trios, lyrics that confront loss and portend hope, and a mood that leans into darkness before ultimately finding the light.



GOGO PENGUIN
GOGO PENGUIN

The Mercury Prize nominated instrumental trio from Manchester, England consisting of pianist **CHRIS ILLINGWORTH**, drummer **ROB TURNER**, and bassist **NICK BLACKA**—have enjoyed a success matched by precious few instrumental groups post-millennium. Now back with their self-titled album out on May 1st, which signifies their conviction that they've arrived at a point they've always striven for by fusing jazz, classical and electronic influences with a thirst for innovation.



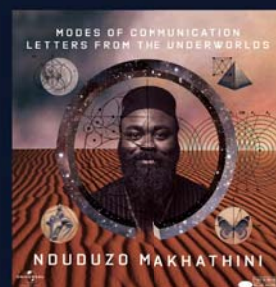
KANDACE SPRINGS
THE WOMEN WHO RAISED ME

Singer and pianist **KANDACE SPRINGS** pays tribute to the great female singers who influenced her growing up with this stirring collection of songs by Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Carmen McRae, Roberta Flack, Dusty Springfield, Astrud Gilberto, Bonnie Raitt, Sade, Lauryn Hill, Norah Jones, and Diana Krall. Produced by **LARRY KLEIN**, the album features guest appearances by **NORAH JONES**, **CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE**, **DAVID SANBORN** & more.



ART BLAKEY
& THE JAZZ MESSENGERS
JUST COOLIN'

A never-before-released studio album by **ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ MESSENGERS** recorded at Rudy Van Gelder's Hackensack, New Jersey studio on March 8, 1959, and featuring the legendary drummer—whose centennial is being celebrated this year—along with trumpeter **LEE MORGAN**, tenor saxophonist **HANK MOBLEY**, pianist **BOBBY TIMMONS**, and bassist **JYMIE MERRITT**. The 6-song set includes 2 previously unissued compositions: "Quick Trick" and "Jimerick."



NDUDUZO MAKHATHINI
MODES OF COMMUNICATION

After collaborations with Wynton Marsalis and Shabaka Hutchings, the visionary South African pianist and composer **NDUDUZO MAKHATHINI** is set to release his Blue Note debut *Modes of Communication: Letters from the Underworlds*, an expansive album in which lyrical, plaintive horns mingle with percussion, pained yelps and urgent lyrics in a musical exploration of ancestral realms.

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ON THE COVER

18 **Norah Jones** *Creativity Begins at Home*

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

Norah Jones says the jazz and pop worlds don't know what to make of her. So, DownBeat caught up with the singer-songwriter in Brooklyn for a conversation about her latest Blue Note album, *Pick Me Up Off The Floor*, her collaborative spirit and her work with the group Puss N Boots—as well as her decision to abandon the traditional model for releasing and promoting new recordings.



Aviv Cohen (left), Uzi Ramirez, bandleader Avishai Cohen, Yonatan Albalak and Ziv Ravitz of the group Big Vicious

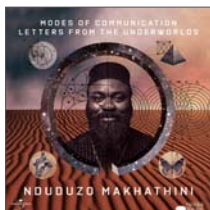
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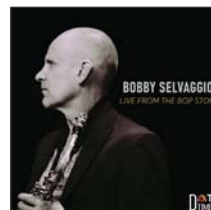
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YUCCO MILLER

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John and Bucky Pizzarelli

JIMMY KATZ

Jazz Family Love

April 15, 2020—The staff of DownBeat has been sheltering at home for four weeks now. It's not the way we like to make magazines, but we are extremely thankful that we still have a magazine to make. It might be smaller than usual, but this is one of the most important issues we've ever produced.

DownBeat exists to document the jazz community, and our community is deeply hurting in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Our musicians can't gig, can't tour. Our festivals are being canceled, our clubs closed, and we fear that many won't be able to reopen.

Most of us, as institutions or individuals, are keeping an eye on our money, wondering if we'll have enough to ride this thing out.

The following pages serve as a testament to some of the chaos, suffering and pain this virus has caused, but certainly not all of it.

The obituaries alone, on page 15, took my breath away. Reports that the virus was especially lethal to our elders proved to be too, too true.

Ellis Marsalis, 85, the patriarch of one of the greatest families in jazz history, leads the page. He was an understated, majestic soul who influenced generations of kids from New Orleans and around the world.

"Like many parents, he sacrificed for us and made so much possible," said trumpeter Wynton Marsalis on Twitter. "Not only material things, but things of substance and beauty like the ability to hear complicated music and to read books; to see and to contemplate art; to be philosophical and kind, but to also understand that a time and place may require a pugilistic-minded expression of ignorance."

Bucky Pizzarelli, 94, also succumbed to the virus. Pizzarelli was known as a big-hearted soul, who was beloved by guitarists trying to learn the craft, as well as audiences everywhere. A week later, Ruth Pizzarelli, his wife, passed away, too.

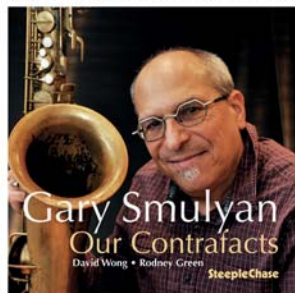
Last year, at the Detroit Jazz Festival, their son, guitarist John Pizzarelli, took a live Blindfold Test. The last song played for him was Bucky's solo take on "Last Night When We Were Young."

"If you like guitar playing, that's not a bad place to start," John said after a few notes, wiping away a tear. "You couldn't go wrong sitting next to him for 10 years. My first 10 years as a musician were spent sitting next to Bucky Pizzarelli."

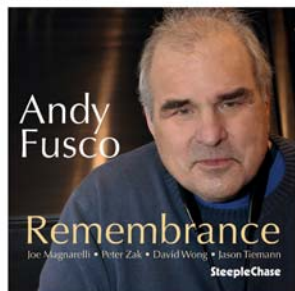
Our heart goes out to the families of the fallen and to our entire jazz family. Hang in there, we need you. DownBeat is still here. We're still reporting on this music and the musicians we love. And, we're still making magazines—for you, for our community. We love you. **DB**

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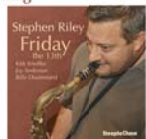
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Captivating Covers

What a great cover for your May issue! As a hobbyist drummer, I have loved Antonio Sánchez for quite a while, and as a longtime hobbyist photographer, I was struck by the poses and stares of Antonio and Thana Alexa in that cover shot. I must have stared at that cover for five minutes, just imagining how photographers Jimmy and Dena Katz were able to orchestrate those poses and looks from their subjects.

Also, in your April issue, thank you for the article about the Haden Triplets and their new album, *The Family Songbook*. After reading it I immediately searched for the album and listened straight through. The beauty of those voices and the purity of the unapologetic simplicity of the renditions are just captivating. Thank you to the artists, to journalist Bob Derschuk and to DownBeat for this gift.

JOHN LETT
PRUNEDALE, CALIFORNIA



The Real McCoy

I was deeply saddened to learn about McCoy Tyner's passing ("A Giant of Giants," May). He truly was a giant, and he left a huge, wonderful legacy.

In my humble opinion, he was the most important pianist of his generation. Besides having his own, singular sound, to my ears he blended post-bop and avant-garde tendencies seamlessly. A true original.

TOM GUILFOYLE
AMBLER, PENNSYLVANIA

song "Enlightenment" as being a "tongue-in-cheek composition" when she refers to "a musical invitation to join his 'space world.'"

Sun Ra invited the "people of planet Earth" to join his "space world" in every concert the Arkestra did (and the Sun Ra Arkestra continues to do so). "Tongue-in-cheek" implies intent, but intent—*unlike* beauty—lies in the heart of the creator.

DON GLASGO
NORWICH, VERMONT

Echoes of a Friend

I want to thank writer Bill Milkowski for the nice pieces on McCoy Tyner in the May issue. My hat is off to him for his choices of five essential McCoy Tyner albums.

One obvious choice he left off the list is *Echoes Of A Friend*, Tyner's moving tribute to John Coltrane, recorded in Tokyo five years after his death. Any list of essential Tyner albums should include this one.

Tyner didn't make many solo piano albums. There is so much power, beauty, creativity, spirituality and mystery on that album. I would recommend Milkowski's list, but I would also say to fans, please, if you haven't done so already, add this album to your Tyner collection.

BOB ZANDER
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

Note of Gratitude

Since I came to New York City many years ago—and even before then—I have read DownBeat every month. For me, as a journalist and consultant, DownBeat is a source of joy, study, information, news and pleasure. Now more than ever, in these horrible times, I look forward to my indispensable monthly rendezvous with DownBeat.

This letter is a message about gratitude, perseverance and continuous admiration for the great job the DownBeat staff is doing.

ENZO CAPUA
NEW YORK CITY

Correction

■ In the Toolshed section of our May issue, the review of JodyJazz's HR* Custom Dark tenor saxophone mouthpiece (pictured) failed to include the company's website, which is jodyjazz.com.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

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



Extraterrestrial Beauty

I appreciated reading the concert review "Nona Hendryx Honors Sun Ra" in your May issue. However, I object to writer Suzanne Lorge's characterization of Sun Ra's beautiful

KEITH JARRETT 75

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Warren Wolf, *vibraphone*



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Romain Collin took this photo from a cabin in Iceland, where the pianist stayed for weeks during the coronavirus pandemic.

Facing an Uncertain Future, Jazz Artists Get Creative

With the coronavirus pandemic spreading around the world, the United States government on March 11 announced tight restrictions on travel from Europe, prompting Romain Collin to book a flight back to New York. The pianist had been writing new music in a remote cabin in Iceland, and the sudden change in plans would shorten his solo retreat from one month to three weeks.

His bags were packed; his car, loaded. Then Collin paused. “I thought, ‘You know what? No,’” he recalled. “I have work to do.” He canceled his flight and booked another for one week later—on March 18—then canceled that one, too.

“When I set up my home studio, it felt like for the first time in a long time, I was making music for myself,” Collin said. “Only now, I face the worry: Can I actually go back home?”

Artists in numerous countries were asking similar questions and facing dilemmas of their own as airline travel became increasingly prohibitive and jazz clubs and large venues began closing. Hunkered down in Prague, Brooklyn-based organ player Ondrej Pivec was on tour with singer Gregory Porter in late February when the band heard whispers of cancellations. By the time they hit Zurich, the artists encountered a harsh shift in tone.

“The [venues] told us they were limiting the number of people to 1,000,” Pivec said. “There were cops counting heads.” In Germany, promoters initially instructed band members to leave their luggage on the backline truck while they flew roundtrip to Paris for an on-camera appearance. “The night before, the promoter told us, ‘You should probably take all your stuff,’” Pivec said, “‘because, chances are, you’re not coming back.’”

World tours ended abruptly, and Pat Metheny’s was no exception. His band arrived in Argentina on March 11, when all stops on their Latin American itinerary were still green-lit. The following day, national decrees limiting the size of public gatherings were announced. Metheny’s group held vigil in Buenos Aires for days awaiting news. First the show in Lima, Peru, was called off, then their two dates in Brazil, but promoters in Chile were hanging on. “Santiago really wanted to do it,” drummer Antonio Sánchez said. Against all odds, the band’s tour manager arranged a direct flight from Argentina to Chile. “As soon as he was able to change everybody’s ticket,” Sánchez said, “he got a text saying, ‘Chile’s out.’”

Metheny group bassist Linda May Han Oh lamented the lost dates for her bandmates and

for crews behind the scenes. “One promoter even flew to Buenos Aires to make sure everything was OK,” she told *DownBeat* in March. When they learned promoters had canceled their last date in Mexico City, the band finally returned home. Detailing how flight attendants in Singapore, Argentina and New Zealand, had infrared thermometers on hand to scan travelers before they boarded, Oh described a markedly different experience reentering the U.S. from Argentina: “Coming home to JFK [Airport there was only] a customs officer asking, ‘Have you been to China or Europe?’”

Across the Atlantic, tenor saxophonist Noah Preminger and his wife, Neira Pekmez, were among the Americans stranded in Morocco facing fear and frustration.

“[U.S. embassy officials] told us, no matter what we heard, we did not have a flight the next morning, and to [await] further instruction,” said Preminger, who was in Casablanca the week of March 16. So, they waited. The next morning, they learned their flight had taken off. “The U.S. government did nothing to help,” he said.

The couple eventually caught a British Airways charter flight to London, then to New York. In an email asking for clarification on protocol during emergency situations, the consulate



Joshua Redman

MICHAEL WILSON

Redman Returns: Saxophonist Joshua Redman reconvened an iteration of his namesake quartet that hasn't recorded together since the 1994 CD *MoodSwing*. His new album, *RoundAgain*, which features pianist Brad Mehldau, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade, is set for release July 10 on Nonesuch. Redman also recently was appointed as artistic director for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's Roots, Jazz and American Music program; his involvement helps to reflect a real-world model of artistic and administrative leadership.

nonesuch.com; sfcm.edu

Satchmo Award: Arbors Records owner Rachel Domber and her late husband, Matthew, were honored March 12 with the Satchmo Award at a Jazz Club of Sarasota event during the Sarasota Jazz Festival. The award was created "to honor those who have made a unique and enduring contribution to the living history of jazz," said Ed Linehan, president of the club and managing director of the festival. "I can't think of anyone who fits that definition better."

arborsrecords.com

In Memoriam: Bassist Jymie Merritt, an enduring member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, passed away April 10. He was 93. Merritt took part in genre-defining jazz recordings, including the 1958 sessions that yielded Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'," released on a self-titled Jazz Messengers album that same year. ... Bassist **Andy González**, known for the influential Latin-jazz recordings he made with the Fort Apache Band, died on April 9. He was 69. ... Latin-jazz drummer and percussionist **Ray Mantilla**, who recorded with everyone from Max Roach to Gloria Gaynor and Cedar Walton, died March 21. He was 85. ... **Onaje Allan Gumbs** passed away April 6 at the age of 70. In a career that stretched back to the 1970s, the pianist recorded with a range of players from across the jazz spectrum, as well as rapper Kurtis Blow. As a leader, he released albums on the SteepleChase and HighNote labels.



Mastering engineer Michael Fossenkemper, who worked on Nicholas Payton's new album, was on his bicycle when he took this photo of New York's nearly empty streets.

MICHAEL FOSSENKEMPER

in Casablanca declined to answer specifics about events during that week, instead noting that as of 12:30 p.m. March 21, passengers no longer required flight confirmation from its offices.

"The U.S.A.—the greatest country in the world—didn't lift a finger to help their 3,000-plus citizens in Morocco," said Preminger. "We were abandoned by our own government."

Yet, amid uncertainty, the impulse to work has persisted. When Oh returned home, she and her husband, pianist Fabian Almazan, took to Zoom to continue teaching at Berklee and The New School, respectively. "We're trying to get our livestream game on," said Oh, whose ensemble students have been video conferencing with Wayne Shorter, Berklee's remote Artist-in-Residence. Admittedly, the setup is a tricky one. "We're not playing for him," she said. "We're tracking stuff together and then playing it to him, but at least [the students] get to have this experience."

Like their more experienced counterparts, young musicians also have faced tough decisions during the pandemic. Guitarist Jocelyn Gould and bassist Joshua Crumbly are among many emerging artists determined to release and promote debut records, despite the mounting economic damage caused by COVID-19. The tracks on Crumbly's forthcoming release, *Rise* (Open Book), were inspired by key moments of impact and resilience in the young artist's life.

"I think it could really speak to people during this strange time," Crumbly said of the album. "You'll notice [on social media] a lot of people are using the word 'rise' [to remain] optimistic getting through this. So, hopefully that title—and the feeling of this music—will speak to people right now."

Posi-Tone released Gould's album, *Elegant Traveler*, on March 20. Her tour schedule sank, but her spirits buoyed as she witnessed an unexpected response. "People all over the world have been purchasing my record," she said. "It struck me as particularly surreal to have people from Italy ordering the new record amidst what's happening in their country. It gave me a sense

of everyone's humanness throughout all of this."

Many artists have faced the challenges with resilience—and even a bit of humor. Multi-instrumentalist Nicholas Payton rose to the sobering occasion, recording and releasing *Quarantined With Nick* through his own label, Paytone Records. Days before the New Orleans lockdown, guitarist and modular synth artist Cliff Hines and vocalist Sasha Masakowski joined Payton in his dining room to interpret a series of original compositions featuring such-of-the-times titles as "Social Distance" and "Charmin Shortage Blues."

"It starts off like it's in the middle of some shit, which is basically how this [pandemic] hit us," Payton said of the album. "The first two pieces represent the hysteria, fear and uncertainty. [Then] the album sort of warms up as it progresses, as I think we have to because, at the end of the day, we're beings on this planet."

After the two-day recording session, curfew orders rippled across the city, followed almost immediately by shelter-in-place decrees and the closing of nonessential businesses. "We needed to get this out to the public as soon as possible," Payton said. "I've never recorded and completed an album that quick before." And that feeling of urgency extended into post-production, as well. "The urgency of it had to resonate on all levels, even as I'm mixing it."

By mid-April, the U.S. had reported more than 24,000 COVID-19-related deaths. But slowly, and in the middle of tragedy, artists are looking for hopeful signs and yearning for a return to normal life.

The Metheny tour has been rescheduled for April 2021, and many of Oh's own leader dates in Finland and Italy—originally scheduled for spring 2020—have been rescheduled for February 2021. Prior to his follow-up interview with DownBeat, Collin received word that the last confirmed flight to the U.S. from Iceland would depart April 16. "[Isolating] has been a surreal and liberating experience," he said. "I made a record. Now, I can go back to New York."

—Stephanie Jones

COVID-19 Claims Lives of Artists

DOWNBEAT WOULD LIKE TO PAY TRIBUTE

to the musicians we have lost to the coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 was a factor in the recent demise of each of the following artists.

Ellis Marsalis, the patriarch of a famous New Orleans family that has produced some of the top bandleaders and trendsetters in jazz, suffered COVID-19 symptoms and was awaiting test results when he died April 1. He was 85. Highly regarded as a pianist and educator, Marsalis was enshrined as an NEA Jazz Master along with his sons Wynton, Branford, Delfeayo and Jason in 2011.

In addition to playing on several of his sons' albums, he also recorded many discs as a leader, including *Ellis Marsalis Trio* (1991), *Whistle Stop* (1994) and *On The First Occasion* (2013).

Marsalis was born in New Orleans in 1934. After earning a B.A. in music education from Dillard University in 1955, he played modern jazz with local colleagues until enlisting in the Marine Corps the following year. He soon became a member of the Corps Four, a Marines jazz quartet that performed on TV and radio to boost recruiting efforts.

In the 1970s, Marsalis studied music education at Loyola University, eventually earning a master's degree. In 1974, he became the director of jazz studies at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts high school, mentoring such artists as Reginald Veal, Terence Blanchard and Harry Connick Jr. After three years teaching at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, he joined the faculty of the University of New Orleans, where he spent 12 years heading the jazz studies department. To celebrate his retirement in 2001, the entire Marsalis family performed together, as heard on the live recording *The Marsalis Family: A Jazz Celebration*.

Bucky Pizzarelli, acclaimed jazz guitarist and father of guitarist/vocalist John Pizzarelli, passed away on April 1 at age 94. The cause of death was confirmed as the coronavirus.

As a leader, Pizzarelli released the albums *Green Guitar Blues* (1972), *Love Songs* (1981), *April Kisses* (1999) and *Back In The Saddle Again* (2009). Father and son recorded numerous albums together, including *Contrasts*, *Generations* and *Family Fugue*, all released on the Arbors label. Other collaborators over the years included Benny Goodman, Les Paul, Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, George Barnes, Dick Hyman, Stéphane Grappelli, Zoot Sims, Antônio Carlos Jobim, Stanley Jordan and Paul McCartney.

Born in Paterson, New Jersey, as John Pizzarelli, the guitarist received the nickname "Bucky" as a youngster from his father. He was a member of the house band for *The Tonight Show*



Ellis Marsalis performs at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival on May 7, 2017.

ERIKA GOLDRING



Wallace Roney

STEVEN SUSSMAN



Manu Dibango

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Mike Longo

CHRISTOPHER DRUKKER

in the late 1960s and early '70s, working with bandleader Skitch Henderson and then Doc Severinsen. Pizzarelli frequently performed on a guitar designed with a seventh string, allowing him to play an additional bass line. Revered by fellow guitarists and fans of straightahead jazz and standards, Pizzarelli performed at the White House for two presidents: Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.

Trumpeter **Wallace Roney**—a generous straightahead bandleader whose career put him in the path of legends like Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter and Chick Corea—died March 31 at age 59 due to complications from COVID-19.

Born in Philadelphia, Roney began playing trumpet at age 5 and took lessons as a child with Clark Terry. His first album as a leader, 1987's *Verses*, set the stage for the rest of his career, both as a player of dazzling intellect with a sharp, resolute tone, and as an artist who relished working with jazz musicians of a previous generation, as well as mentoring younger players. A crucial moment in Roney's career unfolded when producer Quincy Jones invited him to help rehearse with Miles Davis' band prior to a performance at the 1991 Montreux Jazz Festival. Davis was so impressed by what he heard that he invited Roney to sit in for the concert, which was released as a live album. Roney earned a Grammy paying tribute to his mentor on 1994's *A Tribute To Miles*, which featured a band consisting of players from Davis' past.

Pianist **Mike Longo**, best known for his long tenure with Dizzy Gillespie's band, died on March 22 in New York at age 81. His health was compromised by COVID-19.

Manu Dibango—the Cameroonian saxophonist who recorded the global hit "Soul Makossa" and helped expand African music's reach by fusing it with jazz, funk, r&b and reggae—died March 24 at age 85 after contracting COVID-19.

Marcelo Peralta, an Argentine saxophonist known for combining elements of the avant-garde with traditional South American music styles, died of complications from COVID-19 on March 10 in Madrid, Spain. He was 59.

Eddy Davis, a Grammy-winning banjo player and bandleader who performed frequently with filmmaker/clarinetist Woody Allen, died April 7 in New York due to complications from the coronavirus. He was 79.

Film and TV music producer **Hal Willner**, known for his work assembling tribute albums and creating movie soundtracks, as well as his long-running gig on *Saturday Night Live*, died April 7 after suffering from what appeared to be coronavirus symptoms. He was 64.

Among the other artists who have succumbed to COVID-19 are folk music legend **John Prine**, April 7, age 73; Somalian oud player **Ahmed Ismail Hussein**, April 7, age 91; and Denver-area saxophonist **Freddy Rodriguez Sr.**, March 25, age 89.

DB



Harmonica player Grégoire Maret collaborated with pianist Romain Collin and guitarist Bill Frisell on *Americana*.

Grégoire Maret Under the Influence of 'Americana'

THE HARMONICA GENERALLY ISN'T viewed as a supremely versatile instrument, steeped as it is in the blues tradition. But in the right hands, like those of Grégoire Maret, the harmonica can go just about anywhere. That's what has allowed the 44-year-old musician to collaborate with a dizzying array of musicians, from funk-pop polymath Meshell Ndegeocello to Canadian folk legend Bruce Cockburn.

Maret's varied resume also has had an effect on his own recordings as a leader, where the various tributaries he's explored have granted him a vast pool of sounds to play with.

"There's a wide spectrum of music that I've had the chance to explore," Maret said, speaking

from his home in New York. "I needed to be able to go in all those different directions for my next step."

That impulse, in part, inspired Maret to title his new album *Americana*. Released by the ACT label, it is hardly a roots/folk recording, but the nine-song program was informed by the same blend of sounds—jazz, bluegrass, gospel and blues—that falls under the huge Americana umbrella. In fact, the definition that Maret and one of his collaborators, pianist Romain Collin, had for that term felt broad enough to describe themselves—two musicians not born in the States—and British rock group Dire Straits, whose song "Brothers In Arms," stripped back to

its plaintive melody, opens the album.

"To us, it embodies the notion that we had of the American Dream," Collin said, speaking via Skype during a recent trip to Iceland. "When I was a kid, the idea of going to America to try and reach your dreams was so mesmerizing and extremely appealing."

That said, *Americana* doesn't carry the same fresh-off-the-plane feeling that an émigré might have on their first days in the U.S. Instead, there's a lush calm to the album, with originals and covers like Bon Iver's "Re: Stacks" and the pop standard "Wichita Lineman" that feel like surveying an expanse of farmland or the Grand Canyon. According to Maret, that feeling was crucial to his choice of material here.

"We felt there was such a disconnect right now all over the world," Maret said. "We were trying to go against that with beautiful melodies and to present a closer expression to how I feel."

The other element that was key to the sound and mood of *Americana* was the inclusion of guitarist Bill Frisell, who not only helped counterbalance the floating melodies of Maret and Collin but brought in two original compositions—"Rain, Rain" and "Small Town"—that ramble under the influence of country and blues. And, for Collin, it was a chance to finally work with one of his musical heroes.

"I was really excited, in maybe a selfish way, to explore some of his material and see how it worked for the ensemble," Collin said of working with Frisell.

The chemistry of the three players is evident in the sound of *Americana*, as even their few solos feel tipped to retain focus on an ensemble vibe. It exudes such a collective warmth that it's no surprise that everyone involved is already itching to get back into the studio with this lineup again.

"It's one of those experiences where you go into the studio and you're like, 'Man, making music is easy!'" Maret said. "You're just happy to be making music, and then you go home and feel like a better person for it."

With much of the world on lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, Maret predicts that it will be a while before he tours again.

"Having a record coming out during this pandemic is kind of surreal," he said. "It's a bit like walking into the unknown. The only thing that brings me peace is [knowing] that the music itself is a good instrument to help in these really difficult times. ..."

"In terms of promotion, it's still hard to say because people's minds are somewhere else. So, we will need to let the dust settle and see where we stand. But at the same time, the two singles on Spotify and the video on YouTube we released recently are getting a lot of attention. It seems like the depth and the honesty of this music is what a lot of people need today. ... I hope it can bring some comfort to the listener in these unprecedented times." —Robert Ham

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Roberts Explores Intense Overdubbing

SINCE RELOCATING TO NEW YORK IN 2012, Australian saxophonist Troy Roberts' edgy, articulate tone and commanding chops have landed him work with the likes of Jeff "Tain" Watts, Robby Ameen and Joey DeFrancesco.

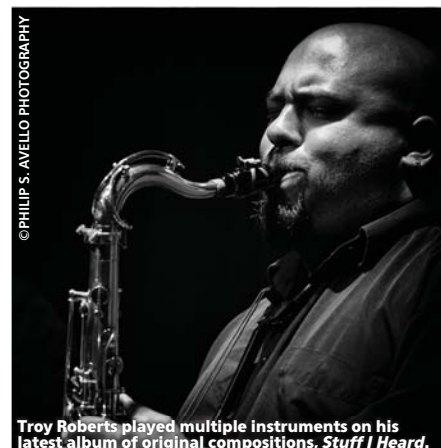
His recent acoustic leader dates all were done in conventional fashion with a group going into the studio and recording live. But for *Stuff I Heard*, Roberts took a completely different route, doubling bass parts (electric and upright) and creating rich, overdubbed saxophone sections before calling drummer Jimmy Macbride in to lay down drum parts alongside his own live solos. "It's a whole new world for me," said the Perth native and current Harlem resident. "I'm used to doing everything live with a band after rehearsing. This is completely against all my pre-conceived norms."

"It's a little unorthodox," Macbride said in a separate interview, referring to Roberts' process. "But I think when you listen to it, you wouldn't be able to tell. It doesn't sound 'Frankensteined' together or anything. Troy sent me the demos, but we didn't rehearse anything. Then I went into the studio, and as I was recording I was hearing this stuff for real for the first time. And that made for a very fresh, in-the-moment experience."

Opener "Little Room" is an exercise in counterpoint that floats on a rhythm Roberts learned from his longtime collaborator, Venezuelan pianist Silvano Monasterios. "It's my take on a *joropo* rhythm, but written in a kind of hypothetical fashion as if Bach were to go to Venezuela," Roberts said. The menacing "Harry Brown," his tribute to the Michael Caine character from the 2009 movie of the same name, showcases a particularly intense and remarkably facile tenor solo.

The urgent "Rejekt" features funky electric bass and tight Brecker Brothers-ish orchestration for seven swaggering horns. "I actually wrote that horn arrangement for a middle section of Joey DeFrancesco's tune 'Awake And Blissed' from [the organist's 2019 CD] *In The Key Of The Universe*," Roberts said. "But the track was too long and it had to be cut. I thought it would have been a shame to waste all that arranging work, so I built another tune around it with a completely different, funky vibe. That's why it's called 'Rejekt'—because it was rejected from Joey's album but I was determined not to waste it."

In late March, the saxophonist was faced with adjusting to the harsh reality of the pandemic. He was on a two-week quarantine in an Australian hotel, mandated by the government for all inter-



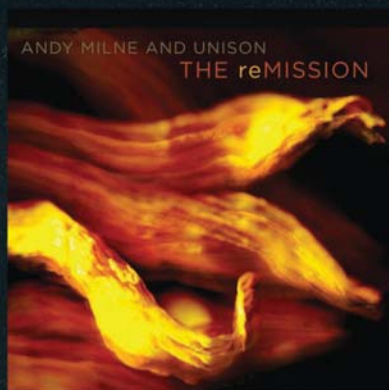
Troy Roberts played multiple instruments on his latest album of original compositions, *Stuff I Heard*.

national arrivals. He was waiting to get back home to take care of his elderly parents in Perth. "I've had absolutely every tour, gig and residency canceled through the end of June, and everything after that is unofficially on hold," Roberts wrote in an email. "As with everyone else, the future has become quite scary. ... I'm not actively pursuing online teaching or streaming for two reasons: depression, and I'm also behind the technology ball. But it may be time to start learning the best ways to do that."

—Bill Milkowski



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Norah Jones

Creativity Begins at HOME

By Phillip Lutz

Photo by Diane Russo

“I’m not going to explain my lyrics.”

With those words, coolly conveyed on a brilliant March afternoon at the Brooklyn café Bar Bruno, a smiling and slightly wary Norah Jones preempted any attempt to mine her lyrics for specifics—a move that, at first, proved deflating to a writer primed to do just that.

The poetry on her new album, *Pick Me Up Off The Floor* (Blue Note), a collection of 11 freshly minted songs, seemed well suited to forensic self-examination—a process that could have shed light on the thinking of an enigmatic and widely adored artist.

But her strategy made sense. Without specifics to grab onto, the listener’s imagination fills the void. And her voice—an alluring alchemy of the sweet, sultry, soulful and sorrowful—at once takes on both greater intimacy and universality.





Over the past 18 years, Norah Jones has collaborated with musicians from many different genres.

She also can seem prescient, which, in retrospect, proved to be the case on that March afternoon. Unaware that the coronavirus pandemic soon would bring a wave of devastation and anxiety to several more countries, including the United States, Jones, between bites of a burrito, sang a bluesy excerpt from her tune “This Life” that foreshadowed the crisis: “This life as we know it/ This life as we know it/ This life as we know it is over.”

At press time, Jones’ reality, like that of most musicians, had been transformed by the pandemic. Holed up in her home, she had by late March begun streaming performances on Facebook, including stripped-down versions of an eclectic mix of tunes—from “Patience” (the 1988 single by Guns N’ Roses) to “You And Me” (which she recorded with her band Puss N Boots, a roots-music trio with vocalist/multi-instrumentalists Sasha Dobson and Catherine Popper). During these online concerts, Jones was taking requests, offering advice and providing worthwhile links. By all indications, the public was responding.

Little wonder. Possessed of an expansive sensibility and a global reach, she is one of the most successful musicians of this century. Released in 2002, her debut, *Come Away With Me* (Blue Note), earned her five Grammy awards, and she later would win four more. According to her label, her discography now accounts for more than 50 million albums sold worldwide.

Unbound by the constraints of genre, she has performed for a wide variety of audiences—retaining her musical integrity before all of them, if occasionally at some cost.

“I never felt pinned down to make a certain style of music,” Jones asserted, even as she acknowledged that the approach had caused confusion early on. “The jazz world didn’t know what to do. The pop world didn’t know what to do. Nobody quite knew what to make of me.”

That confusion has eased, as has her sensitivity to it. “In the beginning it was a weird thing,” she said. “People either liked what I did or they

begrudged my success doing it. It became just words. If none of them are true or all of them are true, it doesn’t matter.”

While the new album largely is built around her voice and piano trio featuring jazz stalwarts like bassist John Patitucci and drummer Brian Blade, the environments they create are a varied lot. The album also includes collaborations with Wilco frontman Jeff Tweedy, who brings his own sonic predilections to the mix.

Tweedy is just one of a diverse group of collaborators with whom Jones has connected over the years. She has recorded with gospel legend Mavis Staples, rapper and producer Q-Tip, and country icons Willie Nelson and Dolly Parton. She made an entire album, 2012’s *Little Broken Hearts*, with pop-electronica wizard Brian “Danger Mouse” Burton.

“She’s not trying to impress 100 students at Berklee,” said Don Was, president of Blue Note Records, to which she has been signed since 2002. “She uses her knowledge subtly to enhance the emotional content of the music. She does something I really admire—annihilate genre.”

Expanding on that sentiment, Blade, whom Jones has known for nearly two decades, said: “She has a voice that speaks to people’s hearts.”

Onstage, her expansiveness has impressed impresarios. In 2016, she joined a select group of artists—among them Muddy Waters and B.B. King—who have led or co-led groups at both the Newport jazz and folk festivals. At the former, she previewed her album *Day Breaks*, on which she appears with Wayne Shorter, Patitucci and Blade. At the latter, she played with Puss N Boots. She was scheduled to play both festivals again this year.

“I don’t think she’s either folk or jazz,” said George Wein, who founded both festivals and is chairman of the Newport Festivals Foundation. “She’s a great singer. She knows how to tell a story with her singing, and her use of lyrics is perfect.”

The new album is her most substantial piece of work since a change in her recording habits that began to take shape after *Day Breaks*, in 2016.

Spurred by growing family obligations, Jones resolved to move away from the music-business model of recording an album, promoting it, touring behind it and then starting the cycle over again. By 2018, she was in the studio every month or so, laying down one or more tracks and leaving open decisions about their release.

“I had a second kid,” she explained. “I was talking to my husband. He said, ‘You can do anything you want. You have all that freedom.’ I said, ‘You’re right. I can figure out a way to do it and be home and happy.’”

Was confirmed that Jones had a wide berth to produce music when and how she wished. He recalled the conversations he and Jones had leading up to the change in approach: “She said, ‘Let’s get experimental and try something different.’ By stepping out of a routine, she started writing really different songs. The way she chose duet partners and recorded for that situation, it expanded the horizon.”

Was drew a connection between Jones’ change of approach and the disruption caused by the pandemic. “It ties in very much with Norah’s record. When you take all the patterns you’ve formed for being creative and throw them out the window, incredible things happen.”

Lacking, she said, both the inclination to write on a regular schedule and production deadlines to focus her attention, Jones increasingly has found the flexibility of digital voice memos useful in facilitating the creative process: “The past few years, I find myself having little ideas all the time. They’re just fragments, but it’s always the start of something—it could be the start of a whole song.”

Armed with her ideas, an open mind, an abundance of trust in her colleagues and sometimes little else, she has headed into the sessions with a new abandon.

“When I go into the studio with a musician I respect, I’m not worried,” Jones explained. “And that’s a nice feeling. It takes the nervousness out of it. Something will happen. It might not be a pop hit. But I don’t care about that.”

The initial session, with pianist, producer and old friend Thomas Bartlett, yielded three songs in two days, the first of which, the plaintive “My Heart Is Full,” was released as a single and appeared on the 2019 EP *Begin Again*.

The follow-up sessions, three days with Blade and bassist Chris Thomas, produced seven songs—three each appearing on *Begin Again* and *Pick Me Up Off The Floor*. The seventh song will be a bonus track. (At press time, the album’s release was slated for June 12.)

A bevy of other musicians have played at various sessions, with strings or horns overdubbed. Most of the sessions have been in Brooklyn, where Jones lives, and Manhattan. The outliers were three days in Chicago with Tweedy, which yielded four songs—two of which appear on *Pick Me Up Off The Floor*.

“It got to be a bit of a stockpile,” Jones said of

the tracks she accumulated. “But then they kind of all connected. The songs fit together; they wanted to be together. They all stand on their own, but I felt like they had a thread that worked.”

Given Jones’ reluctance to discuss her lyrics’ meaning, identifying a narrative thread on the new album is necessarily a speculative endeavor. Still, the sequencing of the tracks was quite deliberate, according to Was: “It’s safe to assume nothing was unintentional.”

From the opener, “How I Weep,” a spare vocal supported only by piano, cello and viola, the narrative is heavy going. The song begins

title, with Jones taking her sole turn on celeste. Sonically, the tune ends the collection much as it started—in meditative mode, absent of drums and with Jones’ voice rising above a bed of strings (in this case, Tweedy’s electric and acoustic guitars). But in the lyrics, it provides a far more positive message.

Jones said the shift in tone from the pessimistic to the providential is intended to moderate the despair: “I didn’t want it to sink into a hole of depression by the end of the record. I wanted it to somehow uplift a little bit toward the end.”

Truth be told, some form of melancholy

songs on her first album, but that number doubled on her second disc, 2004’s *Feels Like Home*. By the release of 2007’s *Not Too Late*, she said, “I was really depressed, and it felt like the world was falling apart—not *my* world, *the* world”; by 2009’s *The Fall*, she “had just gone through a big breakup.” But she wrote or co-wrote all the tracks on both albums.

The period of 2004–2009 yielded a parade of offerings drawing on country, folk and pop influences underpinned by a sense of jazz phraseology. The work paralleled that of another project Jones was developing: the piano-less band Puss N Boots. Though she, Dobson and Popper all regard that project as a vehicle for fun, they are fully focused on it when the time comes.

“Anything I’m involved in, I’m 100 percent involved, for the moment,” Jones said. “When we’re doing Puss N Boots, it’s my most exciting thing ever.”

The group felt a jolt of excitement on March 5, when they performed on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, not long before the show suspended in-studio production because of the pandemic. Jones frequently has appeared on TV over the years, and Dobson was well aware that her bandmate’s name helped secure the gig.

“A lot of our opportunities are a product of the resources that come with working with a celebrity,” Dobson said.

On camera, there was no hint of Jones’ pulling rank as they performed an easygoing mini-set of Tom Petty’s “Angel Dream” and the group-authored title track from their new album, *Sister* (Blue Note), released on Feb. 14. Jones chipped in with a modest electric-guitar solo on “Sister,” while Popper held the bottom on electric bass and Dobson provided laid-back propulsion on drums. But all contributed vocals, and the close harmony—in every sense of the word—was the true star.

The egalitarian dynamic apparent on-camera has been the norm off-camera, too. Dobson, who hung with Jones before and after *Come Away With Me*—gigging casually with her as a duo along the way—said their relationship remained remarkably unchanged, despite Jones’ acquired fame. Popper, who completed the trio as the designated bassist in 2008, said that before appearing on Fallon’s show, they worked through tunes in haunts like Sunny’s Bar in Brooklyn: “Norah takes her career very seriously. But she enjoys life and lets her hair down. We’re not fancy people—there’s a lot of equanimity.”

Back at Bar Bruno, that just-folks attitude prevailed. Dressed casually in jeans, a T-shirt and a denim jacket—and blissfully unaware that the café soon would be restricted to take-out, Sunny’s Bar would close indefinitely and she would be performing online instead of on concert stages—Jones was asked what grand plan she might have for the future.

“I’m doing it,” she said.

DB

‘People either liked what I did or they begrudged my success doing it.’

with lines that tell the tale: “How I/ How I/ Weep for the loss/ And it creeps down my chin/ For the heart and the hair/ And the skin and the air.” It closes with three repetitions of the title. There is no relief, comic or otherwise, in between.

The second tune, “Flame Twin,” proceeds along the same downcast lines, though the atmospherics are different. The trio locates a swampy groove, anchored by Patitucci’s electric bass and buttressed by Pete Remm’s Hammond B-3 organ and electric guitar—all of it intensified by the simpatico between Patitucci and Blade, long-time bandmates in Shorter’s acclaimed quartet. Lyrically, the piece summons an image of conflagration: “My twin, in flames.”

The bleakness of the material, made all the more powerful by Jones’ rejection of pyrotechnics, turns to desolation in the succeeding tracks—“Hurts To Be Alone,” “Heartbroken, Day After,” “Say No More.” But on the sixth track, “This Life,” the mood begins to brighten. Backed by Jones’ lush piano chords, the lyrics’ emptiness is tempered by a stack of vocal harmonies that seems divinely inspired.

With the next tune, “To Live,” the narrative itself starts to shift, placing Jones in a more resolute frame of mind. Operating in gospel mode and buoyed by Dave Guy’s trumpet and Leon Michels’ tenor saxophone, she declaims, “I’ll live in this moment/ And find my true place.”

The following track, the Tweedy collaboration “I’m Alive,” invokes the affirmative title eight times in the penultimate stanza. It completes a subset of three contiguous, life-themed songs.

Meanwhile, the album closer—the other Tweedy collaboration, “Heaven Above”—weaves its story around the celestial allusion of the

seems to have informed—and, in some cases, inspired—Jones’ musical life at least since the summer of 1999, when she migrated to New York City from Texas, where she had grown up and was preparing to be a jazz musician.

“When I moved to New York, I was homesick for Willie Nelson and country music,” she recalled. “I started changing. I started playing gigs with Jesse [Harris, who wrote “Don’t Know Why,” Jones’ biggest hit single] and Lee Alexander on bass, and we were all writing songs. And I started singing their songs and throwing a couple of mine in, and that’s what became *Come Away With Me*.”

Along with the obvious upsides, she said, the pressures of sudden fame became clear after the 2002 release of the album: “I just wasn’t happy that year. I was really busy and had a lot of weird family fame stuff with my dad [late sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar] that was not pleasant—having my relationship with my dad examined publicly, doing a lot of interviews.

“But I realized at a certain point that the record had taken on a life of its own and I didn’t have to keep pushing it. I stopped doing everything the label wanted me to do—pushing it and pushing it. It’s almost like going on a campaign or something. It’s too much. Then I got to focus on playing music and I had a ball.”

The ups and downs of fame, she added, “caused me to step back and think about why I’m doing this, what I want to do with all this sudden good fortune—I’m not talking only about money—and I realized that if I’m making music, then I’m happy making music. If I’m not happy making music, then I need to change things.”

In a sense, things did change: She blossomed as a composer. She wrote or co-wrote just three



AVISHAI COHEN

QUEST FOR TRANQUILITY

By James Hale | Photo by Mark Sheldon

As the coronavirus moved across Europe in mid-March, trumpeter Avishai Cohen sat in his Tel Aviv home, contemplating the growing probability that his monthslong tour in support of *Big Vicious*, his band's new ECM album, would be wiped out.



While someone else in his position might've been stressing about the situation—the loss of income and inability to share his music with listeners—Cohen sounded remarkably sanguine, in-line with the conscious decisions he's made during the past decade to step out of the mainstream and slow down his life.

"This is my main thing right now: Live in the here and now, take things one day at a time," he said during a phone interview. "I'm stopping everything I can, and stripping everything to the bone. I'm spending a lot of time listening to music, playing, going for walks, enjoying my kids."

To those who have known Cohen well over the years, his decision to step back from the mainstream—to move out of New York City and disconnect from many of the social networks that musicians must embrace to conduct business—is no surprise.

"I've known Avishai since 1997, when we went to Berklee together," said saxophonist Miguel Zenón, who was Cohen's bandmate in the SFJAZZ Collective from 2010 to 2014. "He's always struck me as someone who has a very laid-back attitude towards music and life in general, someone who lets things come to him. You can hear this in his playing and music making, but he's like that as a person as well."



In his band Big Vicious, Avishai Cohen plays trumpet and synthesizers.

© Caterina di Perri/ECM Records

Cohen, 42, has created a broad and deep body of work—encompassing multiple part-time projects, like his trio Triveni, with bassist Omer Avital and drummer Nasheet Waits; his quartet with Waits, pianist Yonathan Avishai and bassist Barak Mori; and the 3 Cohens, his “family band” with siblings Anat (clarinet) and Yuval (saxophone). In addition, the trumpeter has lent his distinctive instrumental voice to recordings by a diverse range of musicians that stretches from rock veterans like the Red Hot Chili Peppers to the up-and-coming singer/keyboardist Kandace Springs.

Having first played in public at 10 years old and toured with the Young Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Cohen was a seasoned performer when he arrived in Boston to attend Berklee College of Music on a full scholarship. He turned heads when he placed third in the 1997 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Trumpet Competition. Later, he relocated to New York and became a familiar face on the city’s club scene.

Zenón said it’s no surprise his friend’s career in the States had the trajectory it did.

“He’s one of those guys who can do pretty much anything,” the saxophonist said. “Nothing feels like it’s too difficult for him.”

With a tone and sense of spacious freedom steeped in Miles Davis’ work, Cohen was a welcome addition to the New York scene at a time when keyboardists were rediscovering electronics, drummers were looking outside the jazz canon for new rhythmic inspiration and string players were expanding their textural role in combos. But the trumpeter also had the type of jaw-dropping technical facility that drew comparisons to forerunners like Freddie Hubbard. And, as a composer, Cohen could create the kind of open-ended environments that invited collaborators to step inside and make the space their own.

“Even in through-composed pieces,

[Cohen] is not dogmatic about dictating the flow and shape,” said Waits, who played with the trumpeter for 10 years and recorded five albums under his leadership. “He leaves things open to interpretation, so it’s different every time we play it. He captures some of the vitality that you would feel in an Ornette Coleman tune, but there’s always a certain element of freedom in his compositions.”

While his first decade in the United States was marked by a series of increasingly high-profile gigs, life at the epicenter of the jazz universe wasn’t sitting well with Cohen.

“I wanted to get out of the rat race,” Cohen said. “In New York, if you want to take a few months off to rest, you need to get a new mortgage or something. I wanted something that was exactly the opposite of New York; something simple and cheap that would let me sit, stay put.”

In 2011, Cohen, his wife and two children left New York to return to Israel, although his schedule continued to keep him on the road for more than half of each year. But that pace of life began to pale as well.

“Eventually, we moved to south India,” Cohen said. “It seemed to be the right place for four years. We liked it a lot. The kids had a good school. Life was easy and simple. I stopped chasing my tail. I would just do yoga, run, spend time with the kids.”

Other than playing with tabla master Zakir Hussain in Mumbai, Cohen said his Indian sojourn was not about the music of the place. “It wasn’t a musical situation,” he said. “I didn’t study the music of the area at all. India was just a place where I could relax and practice.”

Eventually, though, Cohen’s marriage ended and he once again relocated to Tel Aviv in early 2019. “I just had enough of it, so it was time to go back to Israel. I missed my friends and needed musicians around me again.”

But once he was back, Cohen found himself wondering exactly what kind of music he

should pursue there. He realized one thing was clear: He didn’t want to start another quartet. It was time for something new—or at least a new spin on something old.

Around six years ago, he launched Big Vicious, a singular quintet in which he plays trumpet and synthesizers alongside guitarist Uzi Ramirez, guitarist/bassist Yonatan Albalak and drummers Ziv Ravitz and Aviv Cohen (no relation). While the material is new, the band has roots that reach all the way back to the bandleader’s youth in Israel.

The eclectic guitarists are friends from his high school, while Aviv Cohen—who also works under the name Sol Monk—is a Jerusalem native the trumpeter worked with in New York. The concept for a funk-influenced unit with double instruments is something its leader explored as far back as 2007.

“I worked with this type of repertoire for a while in New York with various personnel,” Cohen said. “I had two drummers, two bass players. Meshell Ndegeocello played in it, Adam Deitch [from the band Lettuce] played drums, Mark Kelley from The Roots, Jason Lindner. My sister played with us, too. The repertoire for it just continued to grow.”

Tel Aviv’s multifaceted music scene—where electronica, pop and trip-hop co-exist and spark hybrid approaches—proved to be the ideal setting to reignite what had been a nameless entity during its New York period.

Resurrected shortly after Cohen initially left New York for Tel Aviv, Big Vicious was originally on his mind when he signed a contract with ECM Records in 2015.

“We planned on recording a few years ago,” Cohen recalled, “but it took awhile to find the right aesthetics and figure out how to play properly with the two drummers. It was a challenge and a quest. At the time, recording it with ECM didn’t seem like the right move, so I went with the quartet,” which recorded *Into The Silence*, his 2016 ECM debut.

Along with the material Cohen developed for the band during his time in New York, Big Vicious began to build arrangements and new tunes. The sound of the ensemble began to reflect the diverse experiences of its members, according to Cohen, but one element—the presence of two drummers—continued to bother him.

“Working with two drummers, I kept wondering, ‘How tight can we get it?’ In the past few years, especially when Ziv joined, it started to change. I wanted to strip it down, find the simplicity. It’s all about reduction and repetition.”

Every band that has attempted to combine two drummers—whether it be the Grateful Dead, the Allman Brothers Band or saxophonist Joe Lovano’s Us Five—has had to find the sweet spot where percussionists like the Allmans’ Butch Trucks and Jaimoe com-

plemented each other's styles and touch, and flowed as one, rather than bumping against one another and drowning each other out.

"I think the most commonly known concept for multiple percussion instrumentalists in a situation like this is to work out parts and responsibility within each song to prevent train wrecks," Ravitz said. "But here, we wanted to find something else. We decide what the music needs and not what drum part is needed. We follow the idea of the song. We can change responsibility even within a phrase. For example, someone plays the main groove and the other colors around it, and midway through the song the other drummer can take over the main groove and we change parts. [Big Vicious producer and ECM Records head] Manfred Eicher described us many times as one big octopus. We listen to each other very deeply. We play less. We think of ourselves as one unit with the responsibility for the music and the freedom that comes from jazz."

Even with the drummers locked in, though, Cohen had to get over one more obstacle before taking the band into the studio. "We did a mini-tour in May 2019, just before rehearsals were to start for the recording," he said, "but I had just moved back to Tel Aviv, so my mind wasn't on writing. I told the guys, 'Look, I didn't bring anything, and I don't feel like spending four days just rehearsing old material.'"

So, the band spent four days writing new material and working up versions of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" and Massive Attack's 1998 trip-hop hit "Teardrop." Joining them was Tel Aviv-based Yuvi Havkin (aka Rejoicer), the influential producer, beat-maker and founder of the Raw Tapes label.

"The music was created with the mentality of pop music where the intention was our guideline followed by details of execution using the idiom itself," Ravitz said. "The self expression comes with the nuances and freedom that comes from jazz, without the improvisation parts being so grandiose. It forces us to be selfless with the intention of pop musicians, the execution of classical music and the mentality and freedom of jazz."

"We focused on what we wanted it to be and what we didn't want," Cohen said. "I said, 'Let's think about what we don't like about music, and let's make sure we don't do that.'"

That attention to the moment continued last August when the band convened in the same studio where Cohen's last quartet album—2017's *Cross My Palm With Silver*—was recorded, in the south of France.

"We used our environment to help shape the session," Cohen said. "Between tracks, we'd take a break and go outside. We were working in a beautiful setting; there was a beautiful breeze outside. I said to the guys, 'Let's inhale this feeling, feel the breeze on your skin. Let's

carry this into the next take.'"

Despite how easily the album came together in the studio, and how aware he'd been that Big Vicious represented a major departure from what he's done before, particularly for ECM, Cohen said the results still held a significant surprise for him.

"It was only when I listened to the playback that I noticed I have almost no solos on this recording," Cohen said. "It surprised me, but I didn't mind it. I said, 'We played the songs the way they needed to be played.' That place where I normally solo, we just let the music sing, and

played it the way it should be played."

From beginning to end, then, the gestation and recording of Big Vicious' debut seems to be the perfect culmination of Cohen's attempt to live life in the moment.

For those who have accompanied the band-leader on this part of the journey and know him well, like Waits, it all makes perfect sense.

"Avishai was always looking for that inner peace, and trying to resonate that through his music," Waits said. "He's always conscious and aware of what's happening, and trying to do the right thing. He's on the search." **DB**

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SONIC ARCHITECT

Andy Milne

By Suzanne Lorge

Photo by Anna Yatskevich

Pianist Andy Milne uses building metaphors to talk about music. Construction is “about how you bind two things together—and that’s how I think about composition,” he explained during a March interview in the Harlem apartment that he shares with his wife, singer La Tanya Hall.

Mere feet away sat the glossy Juno Award that he’d won in 2019 for *The Seasons Of Being* (Sunnyside), the fifth album with his long-running band, Dapp Theory. One of his idols, pianist McCoy Tyner, had just passed, and New York City’s sudden lockdown in response to the novel coronavirus outbreak was still 16 days away. But Milne didn’t know any of this yet.

Well before the Juno win, Milne had spent about a year renovating the couple’s apartment and pondering “how you design the bones of something,” as he put it, noting that “composers and architects, they have a way of figuring that out.” Soon, he’d be thinking about how to design the bones of a trio ensemble, a format that he’d never taken on as a leader. That Milne, accomplished in a multitude of small ensembles, had never led a trio recording during the course of his almost-30-year career puzzled some. Traditionally, jazz pianists make their most erudite statements in the format.

Milne was doing other things, though—big things—and he hadn’t felt the need. As an undergraduate student at York University in Toronto, he studied with legendary pianist and fellow Canadian Oscar Peterson. Soon after, saxophonist Steve Coleman tapped Milne to be the regular pianist for his game-changing M-BASE Collective, and in 1998 Milne formed Dapp Theory as a vehicle for his own inventive, syncretic compositions. He liked what he was doing.

But by spring 2017, Milne was ready to scale back. Several members of Dapp Theory would be unavailable for touring that fall, and Hall was preparing to record a standards album, with Milne serving as arranger and producer. Perhaps he, too, would do a standards-based album, utilizing the same trio for both releases.

“Then in the fall of that year, I got a cancer diagnosis,” Milne said. “I had to rethink everything. But I didn’t have any gigs with Dapp Theory then, so I just shifted gears.”





Andy Milne is fascinated by the connections between medical science, music and healing.

Unison, the trio whose construction he'd spent so much time pondering, had its first gig in December 2017, just a few days before Milne's surgery for prostate cancer. At the time, he didn't have much repertoire for a trio configuration. "But I had the musicians," he said, referring to bassist John Hébert and drummer Clarence Penn. "I had taken a long time [in selecting them] because I really wanted to feel how it was going to work with the musical personalities. So, that was a pretty profound first date."

That gig marked both a professional and personal transition for Milne. He moved from spearheading a seasoned, 10-person crew to nurturing a newly hatched chamber ensemble. And after surgery, he faced a long, uncertain road to remission. Although they were lengthy, both journeys were successful: On April 10, Sunnyside released *The reMission* and he's been officially cancer-free for more than a year.

These transitions were anything but straightforward, however. Soon after surgery, he was jetting to Europe for some concerts (in hindsight, "a bad idea," he admitted); finishing up Dapp Theory's *Seasons* album; recording Hall's sophomore release, *Say Yes* (Blue Canoe Records); recording and touring with prolific trumpeter Ralph Alessi; gigging throughout North America with Unison; and recording the trio's first album not once, but twice. All the while following a rigorous healing protocol.

"I still managed to [create music], which is incredible," Milne said. "But it was hard. I ended up having radiation treatment every day, for seven-and-a-half weeks, in the middle of the summer. And I rode my bike down there. Every day."

Milne gives some credit for his recovery to the exertion of that daily, 20-mile journey. Besides such strenuous physical exercise, he also changed his diet completely and fasted intermittently.

"I really did a lot to make sure that those typical radiation symptoms didn't happen to

me," he said. "So, I didn't end up being super fatigued, and I was able to do this stuff. Mind you, [that time] was a little nuts."

Milne's interest in alternative healing modalities would come as no surprise to Dapp Theory fans. In 2013, he received a commission from Chamber Music America to compose the music for *The Seasons Of Being* based on the unique homeopathic diagnosis of each musician in the group. And as the adopted son of a physician in Ontario, Canada, he grew up immersed in Western medicine. In fact, the interrelatedness of medical science, music and healing has long fascinated him.

But as Milne was putting into practice the homeopathic principles that he'd explored on his previous album, his concept for the new album had begun to change. "It ended up taking a turn when I realized that maybe [standards] were not going to be the primary focus," he said. "They were the primary focus of the arrangements that I did for La Tanya's record, but not so much for what we were doing as a trio. That material was just getting baked as we were on the road."

A seven-city tour in spring 2019 had a big impact on the group's sound. Milne had written nine originals for the trio and even recorded them—a first stab at a trio album—but the tracks didn't feel quite right.

"After we toured, though, we really had a vibe," Penn recalled, speaking by phone from his Brooklyn home, where he and his family have been sheltering since the coronavirus lockdown. "We ended that tour and went [back] into the studio maybe two days later, and that's what you're hearing now. I think every take was from that one session."

The emotionally complex album that came out of that session owes much to the single-minded focus of the three players as they moved fluently through Milne's dynamic compositions. Some tunes brim with hopefulness, like the crisp, brightly melodic "Winter Palace,"

or the final cut, "Sad To Say," with its reverently resonant outro. Others plumb the darker places, like "Dancing On The Savannah," a rhythmic tumble into jarring harmonies, and "The Call," a stark portrait in modern expressionism. But none of them lingers in any one state or mood very long. Milne's vision is changeable.

"The music for the trio is quite different from all of the other stuff that Andy's done out there," Penn said. "It's introspective and calm, but at the same time, there's an intense burning going on."

Milne included only one tune he hadn't composed himself: Tyner's "Passion Dance," from the groundbreaking pianist's first album for Blue Note, *The Real McCoy*. Milne's version, though faithful to the original, has its own surprising harmonic colors and unremitting forcefulness—as an homage, it took on greater meaning with the news of Tyner's death on March 6.

In an email, Milne responded to the loss of his idol: "One of my first jazz recordings was McCoy's *Inner Voices*," he wrote. "It was perhaps an unusual point of entry because it featured a large vocal chorus. I think that this, in some way, helped shaped my openness towards collaborating across genres and living outside of traditional ensemble structures. I also identified with how [Tyner] created a musical response to the unprecedented chair that he occupied in Trane's quartet at such a young age. This, for sure, inspired me, as I searched for ways of navigating my role when joining Steve Coleman's [M-BASE Collective] in 1991."

As Milne's email suggests, there are parallels between the two pianists' careers. As young musicians, both learned to swim in the deep end of a powerful group led by a master innovator, and both drew on that experience later in forming their own innovative ensembles. Tyner, too, went on to explore the trio format after leaving John Coltrane's quartet in 1965.

"There are ways of thinking of the piano inside of larger ensembles," Milne explained, pointing out that the piano line disappears in some configurations in a way that it doesn't with trios. "I've had to find my survival techniques to cope in all those years of touring with larger groups. It never felt like the piano really sang, because in order to make it work, you have to do things that just really suck the beauty out of the instrument. Then you can't appreciate the subtle textures."

Alessi readily attests to Milne's adaptability across a variety of musical contexts. The two first met at Banff Centre's jazz workshop in Alberta, Canada, in the early 1990s and have been frequent collaborators since, from the M-BASE Collective 25 years ago (when Alessi joined) through to *Imaginary Friends* (ECM), the trumpeter's elegant 2019 album, which he recorded with Milne, Ravi Coltrane (saxophone), Drew Gress (bass) and Mark Ferber (drums).

"Conceptually, Andy's music has really evolved dramatically over the years," Alessi said. "Partly because of the influence of playing in different situations with different musicians, but also because of the choice of musicians that he plays with. ... That kind of mix makes the music very compelling, when you have these disparate elements all working together."

Disparate, yes—but equal. All members of the trio are quick to emphasize the trilateral nature of the group's aesthetic; Penn and Hébert attribute this balance to Milne's insight into what makes a trio work.

"A lot of leaders want to solo all the time, and it's all about them," Penn said. "In this trio, Andy really gives an equal amount of space to the two of us. He wants to make sure that it's considered a trio—with three equal parts."

Hébert echoed Penn's sentiment, speaking by phone from his home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he and his family had relocated just before New York City locked down. "There's a lot more interplay and freedom in a trio setting, and within that, way more responsibility, because we're under the microscope. [In this setting], Andy has a way of delegating responsibilities that also allows us to be free. He wants us to explore who we are and what we can bring to his music. At the same time, he's holding us together, so it doesn't get too out of control. It's a fine line. But that's the beauty of a trio."

Two days after the interview in Manhattan, Milne flew to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he now teaches full-time in the Department of Jazz and Contemporary Improvisation at the University of Michigan. He'd received the job offer in 2018, when he was undergoing all those grueling cancer treatments, and started there that fall.

What he found at his new job surprised him. "I quickly discovered that I was in a huge research institution, doing wonderful things with a fabulous performing arts school," he said. "Opportunities to collaborate across disciplines as a full-time faculty member became very tangible. So, within a semester, all of a sudden I'm working on things that are important to me—like a platform to help people deal with chronic pain, with someone from medicine and someone from design."

As an educator, Milne can use these cross-disciplinary collaborations as another way to teach his students something about music that reaches beyond the fundamentals of time, pitch and voice leadings. Part of his work with students, he explained, is to demystify the uniqueness of their own creative struggle by putting it in the context of musicians who have come before them.

With the spread of the coronavirus throughout the United States, the University of Michigan has shuttered its classrooms and

switched to remote learning, as has Western Michigan University, where Hébert teaches, and Rutgers University, where Penn is finishing a master's degree. Milne and his two bandmates aren't sure if their trio gigs—or *any* of their spring and summer gigs—will happen as scheduled.

Even in this challenge, though, Milne finds opportunity. He's been using video conferencing platforms to work with his students from a distance, and through this technology he has moderated weekly guest-artist sessions, bringing expert musicians to speak—which might not otherwise have been possible.

Learning directly from masters, as Milne did, could help students develop what he calls an "aesthetic constitution." To elucidate, he again used a building metaphor: A plumber comes to your house to fix a broken pipe and goes right to the one tool among many needed to remedy the problem. Such mastery is about technical expertise, coupled with wisdom. That's what he's there to teach, he said.

"I see artistry in so many different domains," he continued. "The workshop, the kitchen, the painter's studio, the dance studio. In a surgeon who can carve you open and know that they can spare all those nerves, get the bad cells, and have you out of there in four hours. And you'll be OK. That's artistry. I identify with that."

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ELDAR DJANGIROV

'A NEVER-ENDING DANCE'

To display Promethean chops is pianist Eldar Djangirov's long-established default basis of operations, and his new, self-released album, *Rhapsodize* (Twelve Tone Resonance), is no exception. On this program of originals and covers, the pianist—joined in the studio by bassist Raviv Markovitz and drummer Jimmy Macbride—seamlessly blends the languages of classical and jazz.

"It represents all 12 tones on the keys, and the various resonances you can capture and replicate in how you want the flow of your song to sound," Djangirov said about the name of his label. "They can be melodic, or harmonic, or rhythmic—or the heart."

Then he addressed the album title. "Literally, a rhapsody is to speak about something with great enthusiasm, which I feel encapsulates the entire album," he said. "I'm interested in many different aspects of music. I want to incorporate them in a way that's genuine to me."

Synth-generated backgrounds complement the melancholic-to-joyful emotions contained in the funky title track and the gospel-meets-classi-

cal "In July," both original tunes. Elsewhere, the pianist delivers a reflective reading of "Willow Weep For Me" and creates an operatic arc for Soundgarden's "Black Hole Sun."

The trio operates with remarkable precision and interplay throughout *Rhapsodize*. "It's a never-ending dance, a micro-adjustment on a milli-second level that happens with three musicians who focus on their placement in context with each other," he said.

"Eldar's technical mastery is second to no one, but what's blown me away is his multifaceted approach and ability to evoke emotion in so many different worlds," Markovitz said.

In conversation, Djangirov breaks down complex ideas to fundamental components, an attribute he's deployed in taking control of his musical production since his 2015 trio album, *World Tour Vol. 1*. Djangirov sold that album via his website, with selected tracks posted on YouTube. Now he's "further circumventing the system" by releasing *Rhapsodize*—and, last December, *Letter To Liz*, which showcased his meditations on a cohort of Great American



DAVID PATINO

Eldar Djangirov's new album is titled *Rhapsodize*.

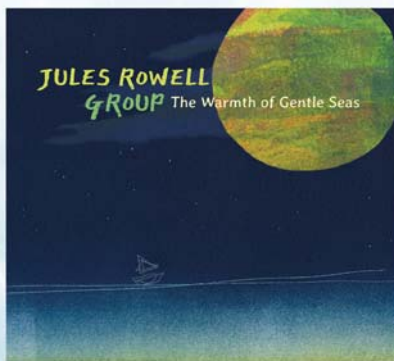
Songbook standards—on a variety of platforms.

The databases and infrastructure that Djangirov has accumulated over the years are helping him withstand the enforced isolation and gig cancellations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. He's generating income from increased online lessons, the membership platform Patreon, YouTube royalties and his catalog.

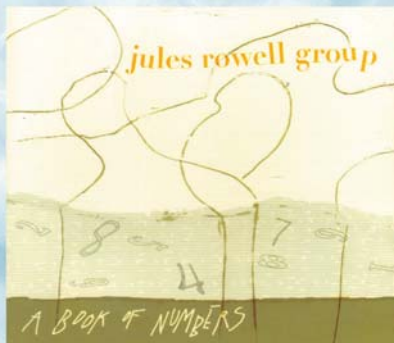
Key Madness Duo, a plugged-in project with drummer Ludwig Afonso, recently issued a live EP, and as of early April, the keyboardist was fast-tracking another electronic recording.

"It's really been therapy," Djangirov said of this phase of his creative process. "So much about the solitude is meditative and therapeutic; I think the music will reflect that." —Ted Panken

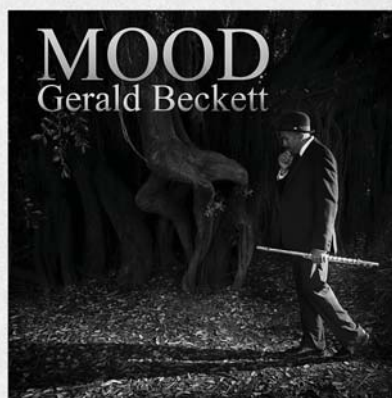
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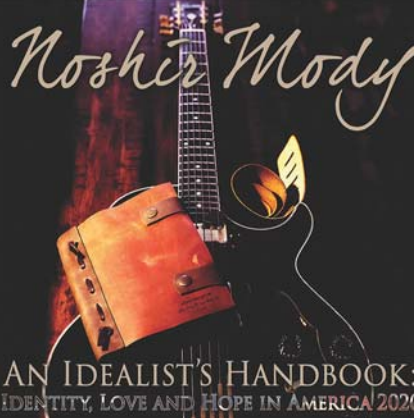
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RARENOISE

BLURRING THE LINES OF GENRE

Before he was a label owner, Giacomo Bruzzo was a frustrated finance bro. Born in Italy, he moved to the U.K. in 1991, attended university and, as the decade ended, began working in the financial industry. After a few years, he entered a Ph.D program in mathematics when, as he put it via Skype from London, “in 2006, I crashed. I locked myself at home for six months, and when I came out of it I realized I just could not go back.”

Adrift in his mid-30s, Bruzzo began searching for something that would be not just a career, but a passion. This eventually brought him into the orbit of multi-instrumentalist Eraldo Bernocchi, who was connected to a universe of players and producers busily blurring the lines of jazz, rock and electronic music. By 2008, Bruzzo and Bernocchi had the RareNoise concept in place, launching the label the following summer with a half dozen releases, including titles by Bill Laswell-associated projects.

Since that initial burst, RareNoise slowly has built a catalog filled with adventurous releases that no one else would have thought to support.

The primary qualification seems to be Bruzzo’s gut: “I like music that gives me a sense of vertigo, like I’m half a second away from the cliff’s edge.”

One of RareNoise’s most exciting 2020 releases is Belgian vocalist Sophie Tassignon’s *Mysteries Unfold*. She uses layer upon layer of vocals—and no other instruments—to create stunning reinterpretations of songs by Dolly Parton, the Cowboy Junkies and Vivaldi, as well as four originals. “What appealed to me about RareNoise was Giacomo’s interest in releasing albums that are very eclectic and powerful, but not genre-specific,” she explained, adding that Bruzzo “seems to enjoy letting artists be themselves.”

RareNoise opened its doors in the wake of the 2008 recession, which Bruzzo now sees as a boon. “If you start when everything doesn’t work, it’s good, because you get used to things not working.” This allows him to believe that the label will survive the music industry’s current coronavirus-related semi-paralysis. “It’s gonna be a kludge ... [W]e have to somehow make it work.”

Bruzzo said he expects numerous pandemic-related factors—increased lead times in vinyl



Giacomo Bruzzo’s RareNoise label has built a catalog filled with adventurous releases.

production, fewer indie stores selling product, less-efficient mail systems and the grounding of artists who would be touring—will result in a 30 percent revenue loss during the next 12 months.

But one way RareNoise has been making it work has been through its Leap of Faith program, where fans can pay in advance for the label’s entire slate of releases for a given year. “It helps quite a bit,” Bruzzo said. “The idea is, you have a boutique operation and you’re trying to create ambassadors. You try to create ties to people, and I’ve seen that recurrence in buying is very high.”

—Philip Freeman

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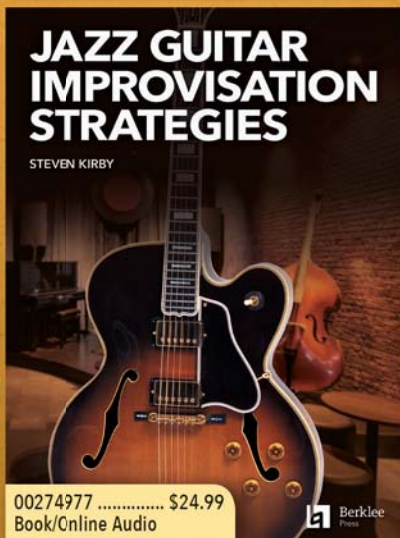
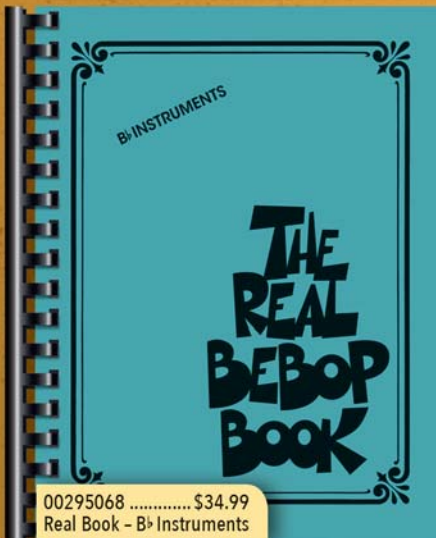
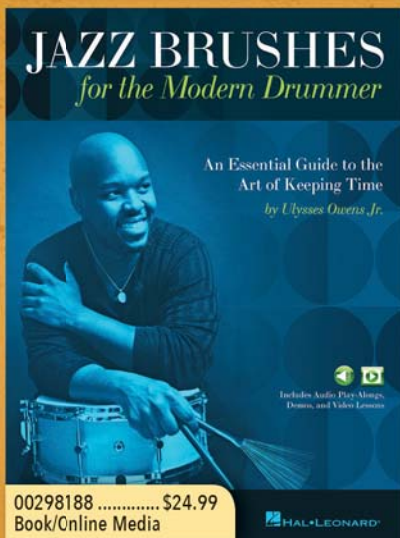
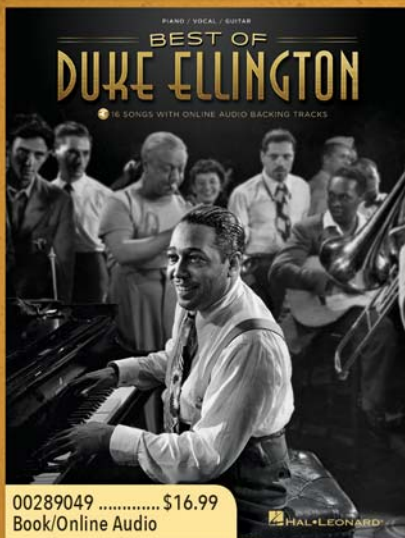
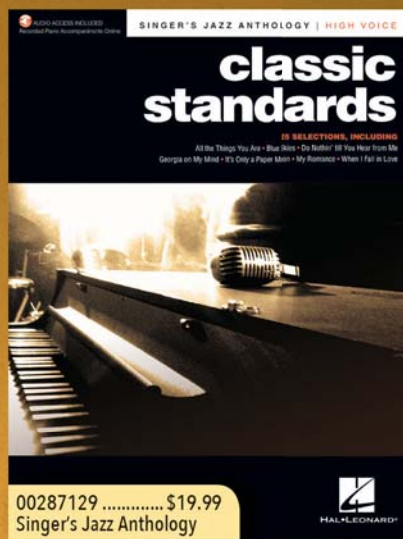
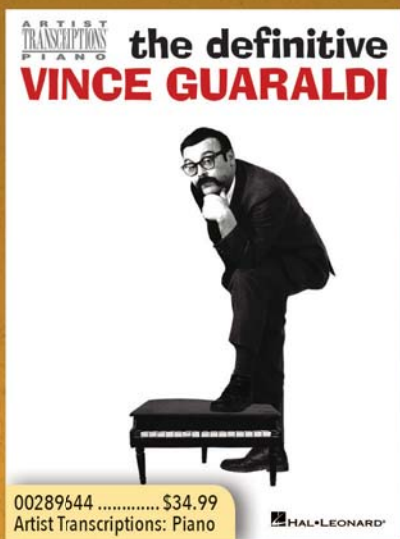
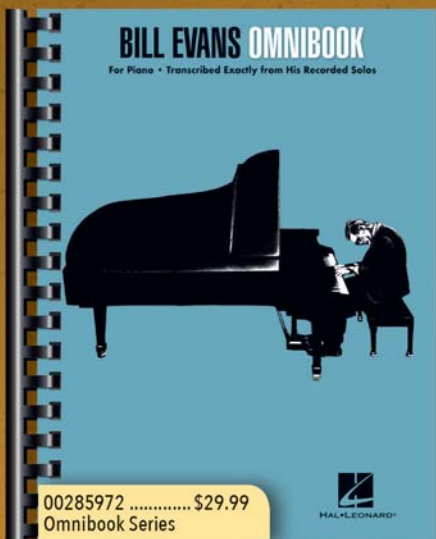
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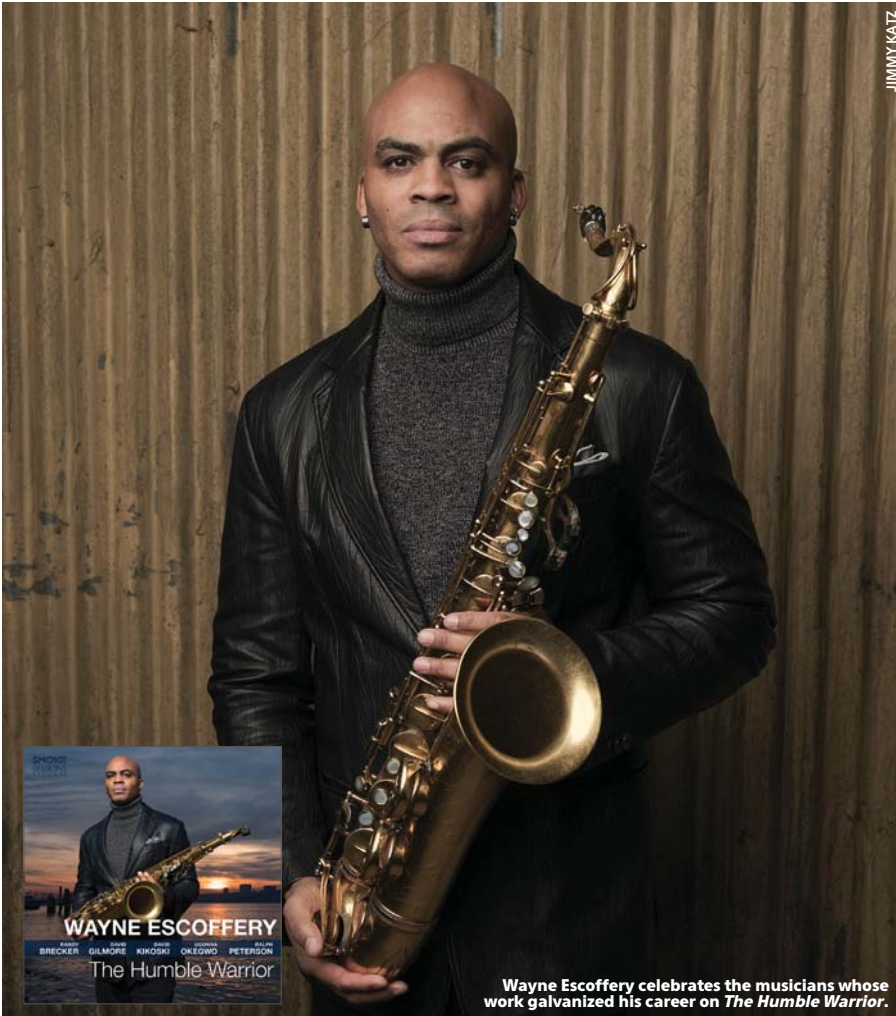
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JIMMY KATZ

Wayne Escoffery celebrates the musicians whose work galvanized his career on *The Humble Warrior*.Wayne Escoffery
The Humble Warrior

SMOKE SESSIONS 2002

★★★★

Tenor saxophonist Wayne Escoffery's music education didn't begin on the instrument that would earn him a Grammy as part of the Mingus Big Band. It began with the historic Trinity Choir of Men and Boys in New Haven, Connecticut, a stone's throw from Yale University, where his mother worked. The saxophone came later, in high school, eventually supplanting the voice as his instrument of

choice. But Escoffery never forgot the thrilling vocal harmonies of his choir days. His latest album, *The Humble Warrior*, is replete with them.

Escoffery devotes four of the album's 10 tracks to a jazz reconfiguration of composer Benjamin Britten's choral work *Missa Brevis In D*, which he'd sung as a child. For the "Kyrie" section, the bandleader plays Britten's vocal motif as a free intro to the sometimes sultry, sometimes tempestuous arrangement for his regular ensemble (pianist David Kikoski, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Ralph Peterson). But on "Sanctus" and its recapitu-

lation, he spreads Britten's three parts across a contingent of saxophone, trumpet (Randy Brecker) and guitar (David Gilmore), retaining the exultant circularity of the original, even as the soloists filter its classic lines through a modern-jazz lens. Most delightful of all is the pairing of saxophone and voice in unison on "Benedictus," a duet between Escoffery and his son Vaughn, age 11—Escoffery's age when he joined the Trinity choir.

In 2016, Escoffery returned to New Haven as a professor in the jazz department of the esteemed Yale School of Music. (Coincidentally, he now teaches in the same room where he began his saxophone studies.) In teaching about jazz traditions, he became intrigued by an Ed Lewis raw blues tune, "I Be So Glad When The Sun Go Down," and, inspired, penned what became the album's opening track, "Chain Gang." His goal here was to emphasize the connection between work song—the spontaneous expression of the enslaved—and jazz. In this case, Escoffery's modern composition for quartet invokes the unforgiving frenzy of contemporary life; like all work songs, "Chain Gang" is part commentary and part coping mechanism.

But it's on the title track, another original, that Escoffery makes his strongest statement about the musicians whose work galvanized his own career. The "humble warriors" in his life were mentors like saxophonist Jackie McLean and pianists Mulgrew Miller and James Williams, musicians who put artistry and humanity ahead of self-interest. His tribute to them centers on the dynamic between the trumpet and the saxophone; Escoffery uses melting two-part harmonies and commanding, interlocked solos in a persuasive statement about the power of musical synergism. The superb playing of quartet members Kikoski, Okegwo and Peterson—humble warriors in their own right—undergirds the soloists' clear success in this effort.

—Suzanne Lorge

The Humble Warrior: Chain Gang; Kyrie; Sanctus; Benedictus; Sanctus (Reprise); The Humble Warrior; Quarter Moon; Undefined; AKA Reggie; Back To Square One. (63:04)

Personnel: Wayne Escoffery, saxophone; David Kikoski, piano; Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Ralph Peterson, drums; Randy Brecker, trumpet; David Gilmore, guitar; Vaughn Escoffery, vocals.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com



Lynne Arriale Trio *Chimes Of Freedom*

CHALLENGE 73494

★★★★

Lynne Arriale has proven herself to be a lyrical pianist with a lovely touch and free-flowing ideas, but she has plugged into a sense of social urgency on *Chimes Of Freedom* that gives the album something extra—and something quite powerful. She hits her theme on all cylinders, invoking African American struggle with a passionately rumbling rendition of the spiritual “Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child” and her own catchy blues, “Journey,” with drummer E.J. Strickland testi-

fying unstintingly. “The Whole Truth,” a bluesy, 32-bar swinger, sounds like it could have come from the soulful pen of Bobby Timmons. On “The Dreamers”—tender, thoughtful and inspiring—Arriale nods to immigrant children stuck in legal limbo. The emotion we were encouraged to nurture by a previous president runs deep through the oceanic, Bill Evans-like “Hope,” with Strickland and bassist Jasper Somsen conjuring subtle inner rhythms. The island feel of “Reunion” has an Emancipation Day feel, as if the reunited families in question were free for the first time. The freedom theme continues on Arriale’s beautiful hymn “Lady Liberty,” which she reprises in the anxious, homesick lyric of the Paul Simon song “American Tune,” as vocalist K.J. Denhart describes the statue drifting away, and wonders, “What went wrong?”

Arriale seems to suggest that the answer might be found in the old Bob Dylan song—judiciously abbreviated—that gives the album its name, on which Denhart cries out that chimes are tolling for “every hung-up person in the whole wide universe.” Arriale surely will touch quite a few of those people with this empathetic and timely album.

—Paul de Barros

Chimes Of Freedom: Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child; Journey; The Dreamers; 3 Million Steps; Hope; The Whole Truth; Lady Liberty; Reunion; Chimes Of Freedom; American Tune. (48:52)
Personnel: Lynne Arriale, piano; Jasper Somsen, bass; E.J. Strickland, drums; K.J. Denhart, vocals (9, 10).

Ordering info: challengerecords.com

Duchess *Live At Jazz Standard*

ANZIC 0066

★★★

With all its fizzy energy, bubbly chatter and throwback repertoire, some stern jazz fans might dismiss this live date as kitsch. But even slapstick humor becomes a work of art when executed with keen ingenuity. And a work of art this is.

Singers Amy Cervini, Hilary Gardner and Melissa Stylianou channel a lot of bracing harmonies and the cheeky wit of the Boswell Sisters, then delve into a batch of vintage jazz tunes. Duchess also tips its hat to its other lode-star, the Andrew Sisters, with sterling versions of “Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen,” “Joseph, Joseph” and “Chattanooga Choo Choo.”

Like the best of live albums, sometimes the banter between songs is just as rewarding as the music. And while Duchess never goes for the ribald, it’s a delight hearing how the women jokingly objectify male members of their band as they introduce them to the audience. Duchess then sublimely segues into “It’s A Man,” a song that ignites with a double entendre: “There’s a three-legged animal roaming about.”

Joyous music reigns supreme, though. In addition to Duchess’ panache, the accompanying quartet—particularly guitarist Jesse Lewis



and pianist Michael Cabe issuing solos throughout the concert—is equally fabulous.

Duchess wisely avoids recontextualizing the tunes through a forced 21st-century lens, instead allowing the material to exude its own sense of veneration. And it does so on its own terms.

—John Murphy

Live At Jazz Standard: Introductions; (We) Love Being Here With You; Dialogue; Swing Brother Swing; Dialogue; Heebie Jeebies; Band Introductions; It’s A Man; Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen; On The Sunny Side Of The Street; Dialogue; Joseph, Joseph; Dialogue; Three Little Sisters; Dialogue; A Little Jive Is Good For You; Creole Love Call; Dialogue; Chattanooga Choo Choo; Dialogue; Everybody Loves My Baby. (55:33)

Personnel: Amy Cervini, Hilary Gardner, Melissa Stylianou, vocals; Michael Cabe, piano; Jesse Lewis, guitar; Matt Aronoff, bass; Jared Schoning, drums.

Ordering info: duchesstriotrio.com



Liberty Ellman *Last Desert*

PI 185

★★★½

There’s a fetching conundrum at the center of Liberty Ellman’s ensemble music. Though spry and potent, it carries itself with a grace that puts a ceiling on exclamation. That kind of self-containment seems like it could be a bummer—improv’s allure often stems from the music’s enthusiasm, right? But in Ellman’s case, it adds a dollop of intrigue by foregrounding etiquette; even as his tuba/trumpet/saxophone/guitar front line issues a tapestry of frisky salvos, a chamber temperament dominates. The pieces feel just as natural at a muted volume as they do cranked up high.

The guitarist’s producing and mixing skills gave 2015’s *Radiate* the kind of complex air that marks this new disc. Refining his approach, and bolstering a dedication to melody, *Last Desert* is an apt book-end to its predecessor. A tad more polished, a bit more stabilized, its attack arrives with poise.

“Last Desert II” is a baroque dirge that moves with stealth as it delivers both thorns and cushions. The rhythmic percolation that marks the work of Ellman’s occasional boss, Henry Threadgill, is front and center here, too. The smooth gusts of Jose Davila’s tuba and Steve Lehman’s alto boost the Threadgill parallels on “Rubber Flowers” and “Liquid.” But the attractive lyricism that the guitarist brings to his sideman role with Stephan Crump’s Rosetta Trio comes into play as well. The bandleader’s solo on “Portals” and his picking on “The Sip” have a signature lilt that makes the music glow a bit brighter, swirling rather than chopping—a clever way to pacify and provoke at the same time. Call it fetching conundrum number two.

—Jim Macnie

Last Desert: The Sip; Last Desert I; Last Desert II; Rubber Flowers; Portals; Doppler; Liquid. (45:06)

Personnel: Liberty Ellman, guitar; Steve Lehman, alto saxophone; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Jose Davila, tuba; Stephan Crump, bass; Darnion Reid, drums.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com

The Hot Box >

Critics	Paul de Barros	Suzanne Lorge	Jim Macnie	John Murph
Wayne Escoffery <i>The Humble Warrior</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
Lynne Arriale Trio <i>Chimes Of Freedom</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Duchess <i>Live At Jazz Standard</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★
Liberty Ellman <i>Last Desert</i>	★★★★	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½

Critics' Comments

Wayne Escoffery, *The Humble Warrior*

What a creative program. Escoffery sometimes pulls too much Trane into his path but hits his own stride on the title tune. —Paul de Barros

A pleasant reminder that overt swing still contains plenty of pleasures. Extra points for the authority of the leader's horn playing and the band's keen pliability. —Jim Macnie

The heroic verve that elevates this set comes not only from the leader's forceful improvisations and searing tone, but also from fetching arrangements and flinty group accord. —John Murph

Lynne Arriale Trio, *Chimes Of Freedom*

Arriale spins narratives with her articulate playing—you might find yourself inadvertently leaning in to make out the words. She prefers bright chordal voicings, which means that these narratives conjure up hopeful visions, despite the gravity of the compositional themes. When words are needed, vocalist Denhart drives them home. —Suzanne Lorge

Though it occasionally sits on the precious side of pretty, the pianist's essay on personal and collective rights still has lots of charm. Strickland certainly was the right choice for the drum seat. —Jim Macnie

The pianist/composer delivers a powerful and beautiful testament to the resilience needed to overcome seemingly insurmountable sociopolitical injustice. —John Murph

Duchess, *Live At Jazz Standard*

I get the verité reasoning behind including the patter of a live show here. But it's distracting, and the dramatic arc of the set isn't all that great, either, since part of what we came to hear is Boswell Sisters razzmatazz. Still, they're fizzy and fun, but they can do better. —Paul de Barros

The Duchess trio's smart humor and modern feministic stance reinvigorate classic swing tunes. They tell good jokes, flirt relentlessly and flip the script on the heteronormative stereotypes of their midcentury source material. But above all else, these are serious vocal musicians with astute ears, impeccable intonation and unflappable grooves. —Suzanne Lorge

The Andrews and Boswell covers are sweet, and the esprit of the trio's performance bolsters the giddy yesteryear vibe. Their super-tight vocal unison game is the trump card, though. —Jim Macnie

Liberty Ellman, *Last Desert*

Love the tuba counterlines in this carefully organized and energetically improvised Ornette-like outing, with Ellman's single-note guitar phrases braiding and trading with alto saxophone and trumpet—buoyant, exposed, hocket-like at times. —Paul de Barros

Ellman's compositions encourage deep listening: Random sounds reveal their destination, and seemingly disconnected musical ideas coalesce into surprising contours. This album is as much about how things fit together as it is about Ellman's impressive improvisational aesthetic. —Suzanne Lorge

The guitarist superbly executes picturesque evocations of desert landscapes and treacherous conditions. —John Murph

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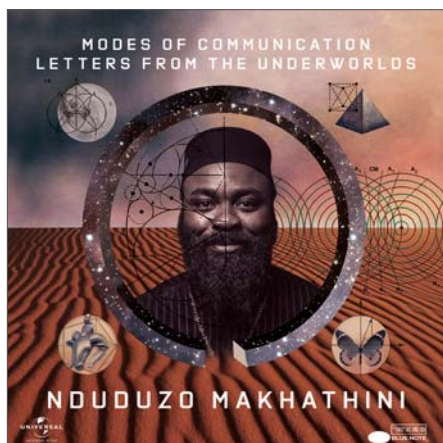
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Nduduzo Makhathini *Modes Of Communication: Letters From The Underworlds*

BLUE NOTE B0031575

★★★★

Nourished equally by jazz and its African antecedents, Nduduzo Makhathini's Blue Note debut features noteworthy performances from all participants, in particular the bandleader's brilliantly understated work at the piano. More importantly, it challenges us to look at the craft through a different prism.

The more this music unfolds, the more it

detaches from the structures that inform most of us. Some of Makhathini's compositions do reflect a familiar verse/chorus form, though he alters these, perhaps to thwart expectations and draw us more into the heart of what's being played. This also creates a narrative impression: Rather than subconsciously anticipate when eight bars have ended and the bridge begins, we take in the music as we would a story being told.

Makhathini often builds these songs over a four-bar ostinato, spelling one out with gospel-like voicings at the top of "Saziwa Nguwe," played rubato and framed by short pauses similar to breaths between sentences. When playing together, the wind instruments sometimes move in clusters, sometimes in unison. They don't punch the groove; they conjure atmosphere.

Modes Of Communication avoids "the capitalist framework associated most readily with 'jazz' music," the liner notes exert. The idea can be debated, but its thrust is correct: This is music of the spirit, released at a time when it's most critically needed.

—Bob Doerschuk

Modes Of Communication: Letters From The Underworlds: Yehlihan'uMoya; Saziwa Nguwe; Beneath The Earth; Unyazi; Isithunywa; Umlotha; Shine; On The Other Side; Umyalez'oPhuthumayo; Indawu; Emaphusheni. (75:07)

Personnel: Nduduzo Makhathini, piano, vocals; Logan Richardson, alto saxophone; Linda Sikhakhane, tenor saxophone; Ndabo Zulu, trumpet; Zwelakhe-Duma Bell Le Pere, bass; Ayanda Sikade, drums; Gontse Makhene, percussion; Omagugu Makhathini, Nalaih Makhathini, Thingo Makhathini, Moyo Makhathini, MXO, vocals.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

Jimmy Greene *While Looking Up*

MACK AVENUE 1154

★★★½

Saxophonist Jimmy Greene recorded *While Looking Up* in March 2019 while he continued seeking inspiration after a family tragedy. With the world's crises still ongoing, the sense of transcendent joy that he and his group exude throughout the album sounds just as crucial today.

Greene knows that conveying an upbeat attitude still can complement surprising musical shifts. Along with his fluidity on different reeds, Greene's accomplished group makes myriad quick-thinking changes within his own warm compositions and gospel inflections. One vivid illustration is the way they use perfectly timed pauses and turnarounds on the title track. On "No Words," Aaron Goldberg's Rhodes repeats notes that sound like an ominous heartbeat, while providing Greene with a foundation for his own twists and turns. The saxophonist also sounds as if he's directing a labyrinthine exchange among guitarist Lage Lund, bassist Reuben Rogers and Stefon Harris' marimba on "Always There." Greene's familial loss is addressed on "April 4th"—the birthday of his daughter Ana, who was murdered in the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting. The piece is a lovely hymn with Greene's tone



sounding especially warm. But the most startling track here might be Greene's introspective take of Whitney Houston's "I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)." Taken at a slow tempo, his dynamic performance transforms the song into a moving lament, his simple gestures speaking volumes.

—Aaron Cohen

While Looking Up: So In Love; No Words; Always There; April 4th; Good Morning Heartache; Overreaction; Steadfast; I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me); While Looking Up; Simple Prayer. (68:06)

Personnel: Jimmy Greene, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet; Lage Lund, guitar; Aaron Goldberg, keyboards; Reuben Rogers, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums; Stefon Harris, marimba (3), vibraphone (4).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com



Gary Versace *All For Now*

STEEPLECHASE 31889

★★★★

Gershwin's "The Man I Love" is a fairly protean standard, the sort of song that can be dressed up in almost any style and still retain its essential longing. Except here. Two tracks into *All For Now*, pianist Gary Versace not only recasts the song as a warped New Orleans shuffle, gently nudged along by Jay Anderson's prodding bass and Obed Calvaire's clattering ride cymbal, but he puckishly dresses the melody in Monk-style seconds. So, where we'd usually get torchy blues, the bandleader gives us itchy dissonance over an off-kilter groove. It's almost like hearing a whole new song.

Versace also plays around with the harmony on "Good Morning Heartache," slyly working enough dissonance into the B-section to undercut the melody's uplift. But *All For Now* is less about upending the way we think of standards than it is about Versace articulating his approach to jazz piano. Although he's recorded extensively as a sideman on piano, most of his sessions as a leader have been on B-3 organ. And while those albums have given him ample opportunity to show off his harmonic ingenuity (*Organic-Lee*, with the late Lee Konitz, is especially fine in that regard), *All For Now* makes a solid case for what an all-around inventive player he is.

Take, for instance, "Two Peas." Instead of the usual melody/harmony/rhythm hierarchy, Versace has the trio playing in counterpoint, and his skittering phrases draw out the others while keeping the tune delightfully off-balance. Likewise, the rangy "Favorite Places (Room 448)" seems more a conversation than a composition, changing mood and rhythm as it goes along, with Versace's control of dynamics keeping the playing focused and directed.

—J.D. Cosidine

All For Now: Anchors; The Man I Love; Good Morning Heartache; Favorite Places (Room 448); Ours; Two Peas; Backs And All; Celia; Child's Song. (62:17)

Personnel: Gary Versace, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



Connie Han

Iron Starlet

MACK AVENUE 1171

★★★★½

It takes a moment for Connie Han to join the fray on *Iron Starlet*, her second album as a bandleader. She hangs back on the opening title track for a few seconds, letting trumpeter Jeremy Pelt set the tone. But she's soon off and running, following every peak and valley of Pelt's fleet melody, interjecting quick showers of notes. And as the song reaches its halfway mark, Han takes the wheel with a solo that's like a great gymnastics floor exercise—twisting notes combining with

the hard slap of chords being laid down by her left hand. From that point on, *Iron Starlet* becomes a showcase for Han's skills as a bop player of fearless ability, a supple balladeer and a groove merchant par excellence. It's that last talent that the album could have used a touch more of.

When Han sets herself at the Rhodes, which she does only on a pair of tracks here, her approach to the music shifts considerably. The emphasis turns to repeating melodic phrases and finding the right glassy tones to apply to a Latin-esque shuffle ("Nova") and a funk joyride ("Hello To The Wind"). Her firm handle on pure jazz vernacular is substantial, but knowing how capable she is at pushing in other directions only makes a hunger for some variety on *Iron Starlet* that much greater.

Those excursions might be forthcoming as, at the age of 24, Han still is in the early stages of what should prove to be a long and fruitful career as a performer and recording artist. On *Iron Starlet*, she's firmly established herself as a talent to watch—and listen to—closely so as not to miss one moment of her already remarkable evolution.

—Robert Ham

Iron Starlet: Iron Starlet; Nova; Mr. Dominator; For The O.G.; Hello To The Wind; Detour Ahead; Captain's Song; Boy Toy; The Forsaken; Dark Chambers. (62:55)

Personnel: Connie Han, piano; Fender Rhodes; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Ivan Taylor, bass; Bill Wysaske, drums.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

Tony Allen/ Hugh Masekela

Rejoice

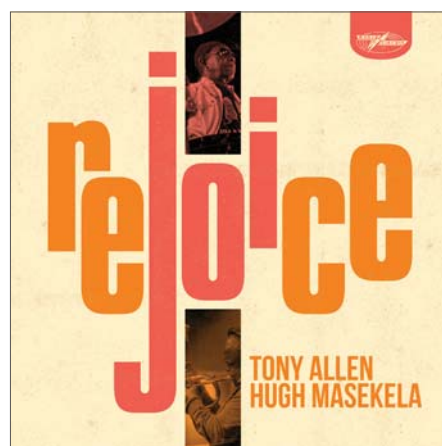
WORLD CIRCUIT 0094

★★★★★

No-brainer collaborations between titans such as these become all the more notable when it takes decades for them to actually happen.

The late South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela met Nigerian drummer Tony Allen back in the 1970s, when Masekela was in exile from his home country and was visiting Fela Kuti in Lagos. It wasn't until 2010 that Allen and Masekela actually recorded together, and then it took another decade for those songs to be released as *Rejoice*. What initially was captured were mere skeletal arrangements, suggesting a loose jam session, and before the music could be completed, Masekela passed away in 2018. But with the blessing of his estate, Allen recruited dynamic, young jazz players to finish the album.

Luckily, the séance-like stitching didn't yield patchy results. There's a cozy nonchalance pervading the album, particularly on the laid-back "Slow Bones" and the percolating "Coconut Jam." On both, Allen lays down protean Afro-beat clave rhythms alongside jutting bass lines, while Masekela's flugelhorn spits darting motifs. "Never (Lagos Never Gonna Be The Same)," a



tribute to Kuti, is a standout, featuring Masekela alternating between horn and vocals. The other marvel here is "Obama Shuffle Strut Blues," which charges on a militant groove that's gradually underscored by Elliot Galvin's thick, goeey keyboard bass figures. Those two cuts alone elevate *Rejoice* to landmark status. —John Murph

Rejoice: Robbers, Thugs And Muggers (O'Galajani); Agbada Bougou; Coconut Jam; Never (Lagos Never Gonna Be The Same); Slow Bones; Jabulani (Rejoice, Here Comes Tony); Obama Shuffle Strut Blues; We've Landed. (38:13)

Personnel: Tony Allen, drums, percussion, vocals (8); Hugh Masekela, flugelhorn, vocals (1, 4, 6); Steve Williamson, trumpet, saxophone; Lewis Wright, vibraphone; Joe Armon-Jones, Elliot Galvin (7), keyboards; Tom Herbert, Mutale Chashi (4, 5), bass; Lekan Babalola, percussion.

Ordering info: worldcircuit.co.uk

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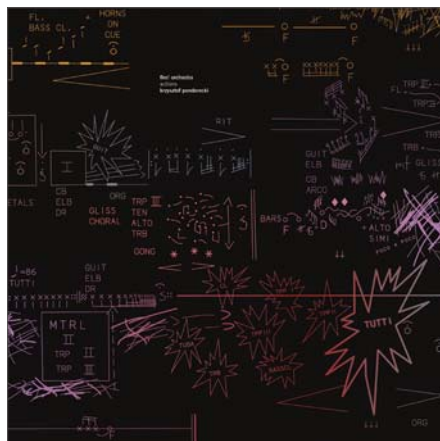


Grégoire Maret
Romain Collin
Americana
Bill Frisell



Harmonica virtuoso Grégoire Maret and acclaimed pianist Romain Collin team up to paint an egalitarian vision of the American Dream, exploring the varied roots of American music alongside guitar visionary Bill Frisell

Grégoire Maret harmonica
Romain Collin piano & keys
Bill Frisell guitars & banjo
Guest: **Clarence Penn** drums



Fire! Orchestra *Actions*

RUNE GRAMMOFON 2212

★★★★★

Late Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki conducted the original "Actions For Free Jazz Orchestra," which was performed in 1971 by top European improvisers. He was eager "to call on [the] unlimited technical possibilities" jazz musicians offered over nonimprovising orchestral performers, according to the liner notes of Fire! Orchestra's latest album. And he achieved a rare balance between free-improv and composition, using visual scores instead of standard notation.

Baritone saxophonist Mats Gustafsson's revisitation of the piece with his trans-European ensemble doubles the original's length, but adheres to Penderecki's plan for episodic engagement among select instruments, creating variable densities and occasionally emerging bass lines. The single-track *Actions* unfolds gradually with subtle timbral contrasts—a spare ringing guitar, festering organ pads—and solos that imbue colors rather than explosive energies. There's even a harmonized tutti section with an emphatic end point. Gustafsson, who also conducts, turns in a climactic passage—beginning at 28:31—that's just as gutsy as Peter Brötzmann's spotlight part was the first time around. The European players here all seem to have open ears, collaborating with a suspenseful linear sense, yet different "actions"—a flute air, tom-toms on low boil—emerge as key points after each listen. There's some wild polyphony as the orchestra approaches its conclusion, but kudos are most deserved for Fire!'s sensitive deployment of creative freedoms within generous, although still defined, boundaries.

—Howard Mandel

Actions: Actions For Free Jazz Orchestra. (40:01)

Personnel: Goran Kajfeš, Niklas Barnö, Susana Santos Silva, trumpet; Reine Fiske, guitar; Per Åke Holmlander, tuba; Maria Bertel, trombone; Anna Högberg, alto saxophone; Mats Gustafsson, baritone saxophone; Per Texas Johansson, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Christer Bothén, bass clarinet; Alex Zethson, Hammond organ; Elsa Bergman, bass; Torbjörn Zetterberg, electric bass; Andreas Werliin, drums; Céline Grangey, live sound.

Ordering info: runegrammofon.com

Rebecca Trescher *Where We Go*

ENJA 9771

★★★★★

Rebecca Trescher's *Where We Go* is a suite of sonic journeys that tells a story and brims with a sense of discovery.

The expedition begins with "Spiral": A laid-back saxophone soli evolves into a spacious free-jazz trio, featuring the vigorous alto saxophone of Anton Mangold, who leads the band as they steadily gain in intensity. With that, "Anflug" (German for "a trace") features Trescher's dynamic improvisations on bass clarinet while the ensemble simmers underneath.

Where We Go continues to build: glittering with high flute, piano and vibraphone on "Movement 8," and on "Danach," Agnes Lepp's vocalizations emerge above the fray. Subtle hints of treble glockenspiel and swelling harp add to a musical landscape that towers in pitch and intensity, and then quickly finds quiet and space. This anxious mood builds on "Green Day" with an eerie, plodding line shared among harp, piano and the moaning strings that give way to Trescher's cascading clarinet improvisations. "The Lonely Ride" homes in on the repetition of a dark, dissonant piano pattern beneath a rising, triumphant melody and soaring tenor



and vibes solos.

In the end, the focus on cascading timbres, punctuated by intricate saxophone counter-melodies and the often-foreboding—and totally locked in—rhythm section, creates an elaborate world on *Where We Go*, and Trescher guides the listener through it with a skillful, cinematic touch.

—Alexa Peters

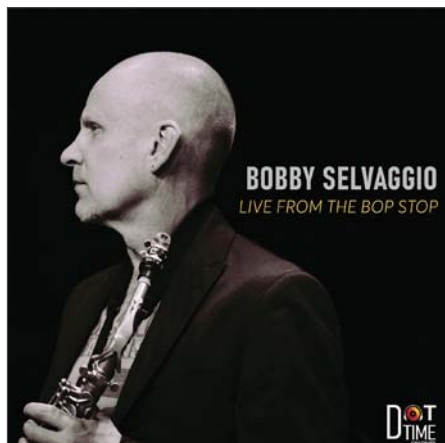
Where We Go: Spiral; Anflug; Movement 8; Danach; Green Day; The Lonely Ride; Where We Go. (63:07)

Personnel: Rebecca Trescher, clarinet, bass clarinet; Markus Harm, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute, clarinet; Konstantin Herleinsberger, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute, clarinet; Hironaru Saito, flute, piccolo; Juri Kannheiser, Agnes Lepp, vocals; Anton Mangold, harp, flute, alto saxophone; Volker Heuken, percussion; Andreas Feith, piano; Sebastian Klose, bass; Silvio Morger, drums.

Ordering info: rebeccatrescher.com

NAXOS
OF AMERICA INC

www.actmusic.com



Bobby Selvaggio
Live From The Bop Stop
 DOT TIME 9091

★★★★½

Jazz soloing tends to feed on the energy of a live audience, which is why albums like Bobby Selvaggio's *Live From The Bop Stop* are so exciting. Selvaggio has considerable experience in the control room—10 previous studio albums as a bandleader—but with this latest effort, he drops his first live release.

The appeal of Selvaggio's work—here captured at an intimate venue near Lake Erie—stems as much from his dexterous playing as his

clean writing. On the buoyant waltz "Hope," he moves dynamically along the swing-bop continuum—soloing fiercely, syncing in unison, laying out—before falling into an impassioned repartee with guest guitarist Dan Wilson on the outro. You can't not listen. Selvaggio's rhythm section, all unyielding musicians when it comes to feel, provided ample horsepower for the evening's performance. Some standout moments: drummer Zaire Darden's solo, a fusillade of unerring strikes, on the impressionistic "Spy Movie"; pianist Theron Brown's extended improvisation on "Bella," peppered with incidental blues riffs and briskly articulated scales; and bassist Paul Thompson's joyous solo on Selvaggio's elegant arrangement of "Blackbird."

Of late, Selvaggio has been moving into writing for woodwind sections, and in line with this interest, he opened and closed the album with tunes featuring four additional horns. The tunes gave him the opportunity to experiment with some warm chordal blends. This broader palette suits his sleek aesthetic, certainly, and opens a window to some new sonic possibilities for the versatile bandleader.

—Suzanne Lorge

Live From The Bop Stop: Times A Changin'; Hope; Run Away; Deniable Plausibility; Spy Movie; Blackbird; Bella; Too Soon. (77:56)
Personnel: Bobby Selvaggio, alto saxophone and pedals; Theron Brown, piano, keyboards; Zaire Darden, drums; Paul Thompson, bass, electric bass; Dan Wilson, electric guitar (2, 3); Tommy Lehman, flugelhorn (1, 8); Liz Carney, clarinet (1, 8); Summer Cantor, bassoon (1, 8); Kent Larmee, French horn (1, 8).

Ordering info: dottimerecords.com

Keith Oxman
Two Cigarettes In The Dark
 CAPRI 74161

★★★★★

Tenorist Keith Oxman is well known in Denver jazz circles, and has made a handful of albums for the Capri label with groups ranging in size from trio to septet. These all feature local musicians, but once in a while a special guest stops by.

On 2006's *Dues In Progress*, trombone legend Curtis Fuller was Oxman's front-line partner, and on 2018's *Glimpses*, reedist Dave Liebman showed up. For *Two Cigarettes In The Dark*, he's joined by soul-jazz titan Houston Person on tenor. The pair essay versions of standards like "I've Never Been In Love Before," "Everything Happens To Me" and the title track, as well as a few lesser-known but excellent tunes. On three originals by the bandleader and one by pianist Jeff Jenkins, Oxman is the sole horn, and those have a classicist feel that will appeal to fans of Prestige-era Coltrane or mid-'60s Hank Mobley.

The contrast between the two tenor players' styles is stark, but complementary: Oxman is a tough-toned bopper who pushes hard, whereas Person relaxes into the groove, aiming for seduction rather than bluster. They're clearly having a blast, too. At the end of a take of Mobley's "Bossa For Baby," Person says, "Yeah—that's raggedy



enough to be good!" Vocalist Annette Murrell also makes two appearances, singing "Everything Happens To Me" and "Crazy He Calls Me"; her voice is low and almost conversational, like she's singing directly into your ear.

The album is an excellent reminder that quality jazz is being made all over the place, not just on the coasts and in Chicago.

—Philip Freeman

Two Cigarettes In The Dark: I've Never Been In Love Before; Voss Is Boss; Everything Happens To Me; Two Cigarettes In The Dark; Bossa For Baby; Murphy's Law Impacts L.E.A.P.; Crazy He Calls Me; Wind Chill; Sweet Sucker; Murrellancholy. (55:17)

Personnel: Keith Oxman, Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Jeff Jenkins, piano; Ken Walker, bass; Paul Romaine, drums; Annette Murrell (3, 7), vocals.

Ordering info: caprirecords.com

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From Solemnity to Swing

With the coronavirus pandemic, global economic uncertainty and the prospect of a chaotic and divisive election, a lot of us have been feeling anxious lately. **Ian Carey** can relate. As the Bay Area trumpeter and composer wrote in the liner notes to *Fire In My Head: The Anxiety Suite (Slow & Steady 12; 49:24 ★★★)*, he's been struggling with anxiety his "whole life," and the music on the album is his "five-part [attempt] to translate that emotional cyclone into music."

Recorded by his Quintet + 1, *The Anxiety Suite* is a tightly wound concept album, with a mix of through-composed and improvised passages that keep the music's emotional flow focused while giving the players plenty of room to stretch. In addition to Carey's cool, lyrical trumpet, the winds include Sheldon Brown on bass clarinet and Kasey Knudsen on alto saxophone, a timbral combination that often makes the ensemble sound bigger than it is. There's an admirable amount of freedom in the way bassist Fred Randolph and drummer Jon Arkin keep time, particularly with the playful 3/4 of "IV. Internal Exile," and the solos—particularly Brown's rangy, impassioned statement on "III. Thought Spirals"—are powerful and emotionally cogent.

Ordering info: slowandsteadyrecords.com

In recent years, trumpeter **Farnell Newton's** albums have seemed to reflect a split personality. On one hand, the Portland-based brass player seems perfectly comfortable in a straightahead, post-bop setting, blazing away in the tradition of Woody Shaw and Freddie Hubbard on his 2017 release *Back To Earth*. On the other hand, he simultaneously released an album of hip-hop flavored recordings in conjunction with dance-music producer Toranpetto.

Rippin' & Runnin' (Posi-Tone 8206; 46:03 ★★★) sort of squares the difference. As with *Back To Earth*, the tunes are solidly grounded in the sound and aesthetic of hard-bop, but the rhythm section—organist Brian Charette and drummer Rudy Royston—powers things with the sort of groove that would be the pride of any chicken shack. There's a nice edge to the more boppish tunes, and tenorist Brandon Wright shines on "Another Day Another Jones." But the band as a whole is at its most appealing on groovers like "The Roots" and the fatback blues of "Gas Station Hot Dog," where the rhythm section carries most of the weight.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

There's also organ on **John Snider's** *The Scrapper* (Cellar 072619; 58:38 ★★★½), but little in the way of fatback.



Instead, this album—his second in 20 years—finds the New York-based session player working solidly in the '60s Blue Note tradition, with a heavy nod to Lee Morgan, Blue Mitchell and Kenny Dorham. The playing is solid and swinging, and Snider's consistently tasteful improvisation is well matched by the soulful polish of tenorist Joel Frahm and rhythmic spice of organist Larry Goldings.

But it's guest vocalist Andy Bey who takes this album to another level. He joins for the Miles Davis chestnut "Solar" and immediately assumes command, taking the first solo and raising the bar for everyone with his inventive and erudite scat singing. A pity there's not more of him on *The Scrapper*.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

Canada has produced a striking range of trumpet greats, from Maynard Ferguson to Kenny Wheeler. And in recent years we can add the singular Ingrid Jensen, free-jazz poet Lina Allemano, singer/trumpeter Bria Skonberg and avant-garde experimentalist Steph Richards to that list. **Rachel Therrien** might not have garnered as much attention as her fellow Canadians, but that could change if *Vena (Bonsai 200201; 50:21 ★★★★★)* is any indication.

Currently based in New York—but much in demand across the Atlantic—the bandleader recorded *Vena* with her European ensemble, and makes much of her rich, dark tone and brash phrasing. Yes, there is organ featured on a couple tracks, but most of the work here relies on piano, double bass, drums and Therrien's deeply songful phrasing. Keyboardist Daniel Gassin and bassist Dario Guibert parry her solos with grace and wit, while the redoubtable Mareike Wienen ensures that when drums are called for, the music will be swinging.

Ordering info: bonsaimusic.fr

DB

NEW FOR 2020



Gina Schwarz

Pannonica

CRACKED ANEGG 0072

★★★★

Austrian bassist Gina Schwarz leaves no room for doubt as to who occupies the driver's seat on *Pannonica*. A few measures into the opening number, "GM's Musicbox," Schwarz's muscular bass melody is high in the mix, doubled by Lisa Hofmaninger's bass clarinet, setting the tone for the rest of this two-disc affair.

The ensemble she's gathered for *Pannonica* is a versatile nonet that traverses rock, folk, swing, chamber jazz and free-improvisation—although

the group's not convincing in each format. The strongest moments come during open improvisations, many as short episodes highlighted as "Cut" on the second disc. The band swings hard, too, during the handful of moments that call for it—such as "Abibliophobia" and "Four Steps." The rhythm section tends to struggle, though, summoning the intensity needed to sustain a convincing rock feel. Good horn writing and outstanding solo work, such as trombonist Alois Eberl's turn on "Toronto," redeem some of these challenges. Schwarz's compositions are thoughtful and clever, making good use of stylistic range by highlighting the timbral strengths of different sections of the ensemble—tightly orchestrated contrasts between quietly energetic string passages and Primus Sitter's raucous distorted guitar, for instance. Taking its inspiration from revered bebop patron Pannonica de Koenigswarter, *Pannonica* shows Schwarz demonstrating another way for a woman to support the music: by leading it themselves.

—Alex W. Rodriguez

Pannonica: Gm's Musicbox; Toronto; Dark Glasses; Off The Records; Flip Trip; Via Terra; Windmills; Four Steps; Lily Of The Nile; Passing; New Year's Eve. Disc Two: Free Landscape; Cut I: Bienenschwarm; Chai Waltz; Cut II: Quadratlichter; Road Trip A22; Cut III: Zirkel; Cut IV: Schneefall; Baharat; Abibliophobia; Cut V: Quantenmechanik; Cut VI: Drei Tage Bei Oma; Free Landscape Reprise. (51:56/32:53)

Personnel: Gina Schwarz, bass; Lorenz Raab, trumpet, flugelhorn; Lisa Hofmaninger, soprano saxophone, bass clarinet; Alois Eberl, trombone; Florian Sighartner, violin; Clemens Sainitzer, violoncello; Philipp Nykrin, piano; Primus Sitter, guitar; Judith Schwarz, drums.

Ordering info: crackedanegg.com

Gerald Beckett

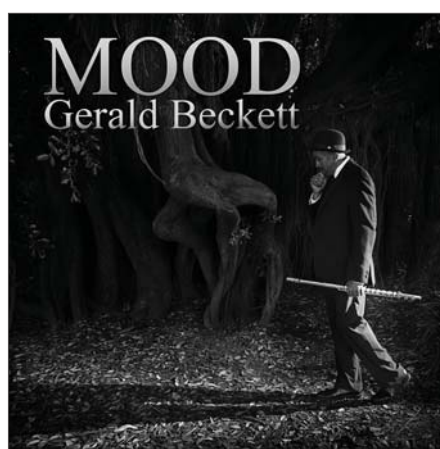
MOOD

PEAR ORCHARD 101

★★★★½

A common juke-joint sound is pervasive on several of flutist Gerald Beckett's compositions—particularly on "Down Low," "Club Raven" and "Shacktown." Each tune has a rollicking mood that resonates with a gut-bucket blues feeling.

But there are other sounds on *MOOD*, and none more chocked with hard-bop ingredients than "Minor Funk." Beckett is led on this furious Cyrus Chestnut-penned jaunt by drummer Greg German, impelling the flutist to exert the full range and force of his instrument. Was that a Hubert Laws orchestral turn, an Eric Dolphy flutter? Perhaps, but mostly it's Beckett's personal arsenal of tonality and exposition. Appealing, too, is the way Beckett blends his shimmering flute effects with Ruben Salcido's tenor saxophone and Steve McQuarry's piano on Wynton Marsalis' "Waterfalls." A torrent of notes merge here to create a tapestry of expressive beauty and enchantment. And the bandleader's shift to the alto flute gives the tune an even deeper lushness. Despite the often changing ensemble of musicians from track to track, there is an unerring sense of completeness, and this might be attributed to Beckett's unifying direction. On "John



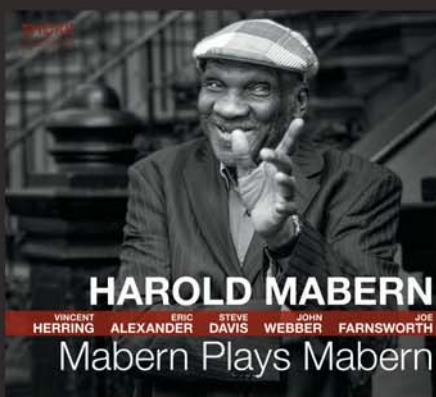
Neely-Beautiful People," Beckett offers a relaxed feeling that could very well be background music for a social affair—a stark contrast to the blistering nightclub beat he evokes on "Ode To Ray Wood," where Noah Frank's trumpet is a delightful embellishment. The moods here are as variable as Beckett's artistry—and that is profound and lustrous.

—Herb Boyd

MOOD: Down Low; Spirit Song; Doom; John Neely-Beautiful People; Club Raven; Waterfalls; Shacktown; Minor Funk; Ode To Ray Wood. (52:39)

Personnel: Gerald Beckett, flute, alto flute; Ruben Salcido, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone; Noah Frank (3, 4, 9), Larry Douglas (1), trumpet; Ari Caprow (7), guitar; Steve McQuarry, Terry Rodriguez (3, 4, 9), piano; Carl Herder, Paul Federighi (3, 4, 9), bass; Greg German, Fred Johnson (4, 9), drums; Vincent De Jesus, congas (2).

Ordering info: geraldbeckett.com



available now



available now



previews available now; full album on 5/1



previews available now; full album on 6/26

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Ricardo Grilli 1962

TONE ROGUE 009

★★★★½

Ricardo Grilli's fascination with time and space inspired *1962*, a follow-up to his *1954*, where the guitarist contemplated the year of his father's birth, when bebop seemed to invoke the technological advancements of the coming Space Age. This current album is a philosophical sequel and commemorates his mother's birth year, when bop had begun to decline in popularity and the NASA space program was just ramping up. But instead of relying on the usual electronic tropes to conjure the future, Grilli grounds the album in modern bop ideas. On "E.R.P.," jagged melodies are doubled in the guitar and Mark Turner's tenor saxophone, while Eric Harland focuses attention on the ride cymbal. The guitarist was born and raised in Brazil, and he lets its rhythmic lyricism infuse "Lunático," where a subtle Afro-Brazilian feel presses against Joe Martin's melodic bass solo. On the slow, infectious samba "Coyote," Grilli's understated fret work speaks to his comfort in riding the pulse, as well as his fluency in complex harmonic idioms. The simplest statement here, though, is the one that pulls it all together: the opening track, "1954–1962." A reverberating solo guitar line, a second shy of two minutes in length, and the first of many stirring moments on *1962*.

—Suzanne Lorge

1962: 1954–1962; Mars; Signs (Blues For Peter Bernstein); Coyote; E.R.P.; The Sea And The Night; Lunático; 183 W 10th St; Virgo (Oliver's Song); Voyager. (66:31)

Personnel: Ricardo Grilli, guitar; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Kevin Hays, piano; Joe Martin, bass; Eric Harland, drums.

Ordering info: toneroguererecords.com



Laila Biali Out Of Dust

CHRONOGRAPH 085/ACT 9050

★★★★★

A collection of songs about loss and empowerment, Laila Biali's *Out Of Dust* is melodic, catchy and personal. More pop than jazz, it seems cathartic, a way for the Vancouver-based vocalist to move beyond sorrow over the death of a good friend, fear for her own fragility and anxiety about the world. Biali would rather celebrate.

The album spans the prairie folk strains of "Wendy's Song," the amusing funk of "Sugar" and "Take Me To The Alley," a Gregory Porter tune. With the exception of "Revival," a call to arms against political suppression, and the dreamy "Alpha Waves," Biali's songs tell stories elegantly and efficiently. One of the most memorable tunes here is "Au Pays De Cocagne," an offering distinguished by Biali's rubato piano and glowing strings. It's also the most romantic tune on the album, and though it's in French, it fits right in.

The album's production is shimmering, the arrangements are lush and Biali's voice—spanning registers—is pure and warm. She's also fearless on piano and, above all else, in her imagination.

—Carlo Wolff

Out Of Dust: Revival; Monolith; Glass House; Wendy's Song; Sugar; Alpha Waves; Au Pays De Cocagne; Take Me To The Alley; The Baker's Daughter; Broken Vessels; Take The Day Off. (49:23)

Personnel: Laila Biali, vocals; piano; Rich Brown, electric bass; George Koller, bass; Glenn Patscha, organ; John Ellis, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone; Alan Ferber, trombone; Remy Le Boeuf, alto saxophone, flute; Godwin Louis, soprano saxophone; Mike "Maz" Maher, trumpet; Dennis Collins, Adam Thomas, Lisa Fischer, Michelle Willis, Jo Lawry, vocals; Lydia Munchinsky, cello; Shannon Knights, viola; Drew Jurecka, Rebekah Wolkstein, violin; Larnell Lewis, drums.

Ordering info: actmusic.com



Rhoda Scott Movin' Blues

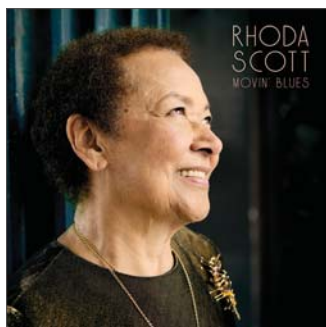
SUNSET 027

★★★★½

There's a tension in black music between Saturday night and Sunday morning, between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, between lust and the Lord. Organist Rhoda Scott, bare feet on her pedals, trods between these.

Based in France since 1967, Scott came up in both the church and Harlem jazz clubs, and on "Movin' Blues" she lingers deep in the groove before rocking out and trading eights with her sole accompanist, drummer Thomas Derouineau. That's her marker, deliberate tremolo-filled affairs that are almost professorial in approach, authoritative and relaxed, that often explode into ecstatic finales. The real strengths of the album, however, are in Scott's sanctified sounds: "Come Sunday" begins with an eerie deep bass hum that hushes the church with casual stateliness. "Let My People Go" is definitively a folk tune, so much a part of America's musical DNA that any elaboration can seem superfluous. Yet, Scott includes echoes of Bach fugues and stride playing in the mix while maintaining a subliminal connection to this familiar melody. Finally, "Prière" is a praise song—a prayer summoning and summarizing Scott's own devotion. It's a personal statement that's meant to speak directly—and in unadorned fashion—to her faith.

—Hobart Taylor



Movin' Blues: Blue Law; Movin' Blues; Come Sunday; Blues At The Pinthière; Caravan; Dans Ma Vie; Honeysuckle Rose; Watch What Happens; I'm Looking For A Miracle; Let My People Go; Prière; Yes Indeed; Fais Comme L'Oiseau; In A Sentimental Mood. (61:09)

Personnel: Rhoda Scott, Hammond B-3; Thomas Derouineau, drums.

Ordering info: sunset-sunside.com

Andy Jaffe Nonet +3 Chorinhoso

PLAYSCAPE 072519

★★★★½

Hermeto Pascoal long has been an inspiration for Andy Jaffe, a pianist who once had a "life-changing" encounter with the master musician in Rio de Janeiro. Pascoal's influence has stayed with Jaffe through the years and is evident on *Chorinhoso*, an album whose title is a play on the Portuguese *choro*, the intricate and active instrumental music that flourished in Brazil during the 19th century.

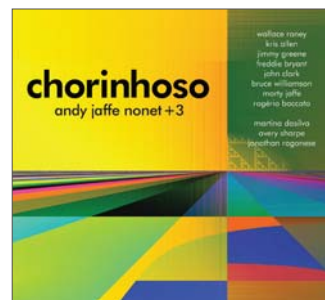
Jaffe's orchestrations are lush and impeccably voiced, as expected from a college professor who literally wrote the book on jazz harmony. *Chorinhoso* allows for plenty of improvising, featuring virtually every bandmember on "Duende" and "Olhos Fechados," tunes based on the chords to "Isfahan" and "I'll Close My Eyes." "Chorinho Pra Hermeto" lurches with unexpected chromatic shifts—à la Pascoal—transforming a common blues form into a wicked little puzzle for the improvisers to solve. The album's harmonic weightiness is balanced with the ethereal lucidity of a rhythm section that understands Brazilian music. If Miles Davis had instructed his *Birth Of The Cool* ensemble to explore *choro*, perhaps this would have been the result.

—Gary Fukushima

Chorinhoso: Duende; Chorinhoso; 12 For Tom; Chorinho Pra Hermeto; Chorinho Pra Mulgrew; Olhos Fechados; A Coisa Com Penas; Cariocas; You Know I'm Ready. (58:31)

Personnel: Andy Jaffe, piano; Wallace Roney, trumpet; John Clark, French horn; Jimmy Greene, Jonathan Ragonese, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Freddie Bryant, guitar; Kris Allen, alto saxophone; Bruce Williamson, bass clarinet, clarinet; Marty Jaffe, Avery Sharp, bass; Rogério Bocatto, percussion; Martina DaSilva (7), vocals.

Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com





Jasper Høiby *Planet B*

EDITION 1149

★★★★

In these unusual times, Danish bassist Jasper Høiby's *Planet B* feels timely and surreal. The first installment of a four-album project about humanity, climate change, artificial intelligence and monetary reform, *Planet B* examines the vices and tensions of today's reality, and imagines a more inclusive, connected world.

Høiby's high-octane compositions lay the groundwork for introspective dialogue with saxophonist Josh Arcoleo and drummer Marc

Michel, as they respond to thought-provoking words from philosophers and activists like Ram Dass and Grace Lee Boggs.

"Story Of Self" sets the tone with dark, cinematic strings backing a voice sample from Charles Eisenstein, who declares that the idea of seeking control over "whimsical arbitrary forces of nature" no longer resonates, and that we must "step into a new story of self and a new story of the people." Samples of Boggs and civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis galvanize the trio in breaking down social constructs that no longer serve us. Arcoleo's blustery horns in "Consciousness" give way to a simmering discourse of deliberate bass lines and melodic percussion. Michel oscillates between introspection and forceful rhythms on "Interconnectedness" and "Never Forgotten," while Arcoleo and Høiby construct methodical bebop soundscapes. On "Life Is A Gift," the trio begins to home in on themes of collective power and gratitude to envision a better world, Arcoleo's horns dynamic against Michel's vigorous drums and Høiby's reflective bass lines. *Planet B* has provoked vital conversations that should leave listeners awaiting the rejoinder, and luckily, there are three more installments to come. —Ivana Ng

Planet B: Story Of Self; Reimagine; Consciousness; Interconnectedness; Never Forgotten; The Dinosaur; We Didn't Earn The Sun; Life Is A Gift; Never Give Up; Reimagine (Outro). (45:28)

Personnel: Jasper Høiby, bass, electronics; Josh Arcoleo, saxophone; Marc Michel, drums.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com

Monika Herzig *Eternal Dance*

SAVANT 2182

★★★★½

Pianist Monika Herzig's third release leading the all-woman jazz collective SHERoes—*Eternal Dance*—was forged out of support, empathy and humility, and arrives just as humanity is seeking emotional refuge.

Opening with Queen's "We Are The Champions" seems like a choice derived from a desire to highlight self-empowerment—a key element of the ensemble. Yet, the rendition, beyond being set within the jazz genre, manages to shift the song's delivery without changing its inherent mood. Herzig's piano isn't overly grandiose; rattling percussion makes sonically intriguing, yet delicate, splashes, and a softer timbre in Jamie Baum's flute is chosen to carry the melody. The anthem's energy is conveyed in a way befitting SHERoes' approach to large-ensemble jazz; it's both poised and spotlights powerful performances.

"Dear Geri" continues the approach. When its unambiguous 7/4 meter propels a bass line written based on the birthday of its late namesake, pianist and composer Geri Allen, the song becomes especially profound.

Herzig's deference to others is another quiet-



ly enduring quality of the ensemble's latest effort. Not only is prominence often given to other instrumentalists, but even the album's solo piano closer, "Memories Of Petra"—which seems like a suitable place for Herzig to highlight her own personal and professional struggles—is dedicated to a friend.

—Kira Grunenberg

Eternal Dance: We Are The Champions; Eternal Dance; Dear Geri; Rabbit Fly High; We Can Be (S)HERoes; Fall In Reading; Seas Of Change; Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child; Up In The Sky; Memories Of Petra. (66:35)

Personnel: Monika Herzig, piano; Jamie Baum, flute; Reut Regev, trombone, vocals (10); Jennifer Vincent, bass; Rosa Avila, drums; Lakecia Benjamin, alto saxophone (1, 5); Leni Stern, guitar; Akua Dixon, cello (3, 6, 12); Mayra Casales, percussion (2, 4).

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Karen Sharp Trio *Another Place*

KLS 001

★★★

An easygoing, straightforward venture, *Another Place* is a fitting title for Karen Sharp's latest effort. The U.K. saxophonist, a member of the Nikki Iles Jazz Orchestra, has pared down to a trio forged after a few nights together on the bandstand, allowing room for each player to roam.

A take of Lee Kontiz's "Thingin'" might be the record's hardest swung moment as Sharp weaves through the buoyant melody with a faint growl curling along the edge of her tone before giving way to a delicately drawn turn from guitarist Colin Oxley. His light and bright touch also provides a sterling start for Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Caminhos Cruzados," which marks one of Sharp's two ventures into bossa nova; the other being a breezy sway through Clare Fischer's "Pensativa." Works by Steve Swallow and Bill Evans sit alongside these other choice interpretations.

Though there are originals here as well—including "To Billy And TM," bassist Simon Thorpe's heartfelt tribute to Billy Strayhorn and Thelonious Monk—the overall mood tilts toward a deeply held reverence for classic material. Even Sharp's lone composition, the appropriately indigo-shaded "My Blue Jacket," originally was written for the late English trumpeter and presenter Humphrey Lyttelton, whose band Sharp joined early on in her career.

With such an emphasis on taste, space and mood, there's not a lot here that's going to blow your hair back or set your ears on edge, if that's what you're looking for. But there's something satisfying in the record's clean lines and thoughtful understatement.

—Chris Barton

Another Place: Lady Luck; Another Place; Caminhos Cruzados; Funkallero; October; Peau Douce; Pensativa; Thingin'; To Billy And TM; My Blue Jacket. (53:38)

Personnel: Karen Sharp, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; Simon Thorpe, bass; Colin Oxley, guitar.

Ordering info: karensarp.co.uk

NEW RELEASE!



With the impressive *Two Cigarettes In The Dark*, Denver-based saxophonist Keith Oxman delivers what is most probably one of the finest albums on the contemporary jazz scene today. ★★★★★½
—Edward Blanco, *All About Jazz*

COMING SOON!



A reliably inspired entity for almost 30 years, the Jeff Hamilton Trio confirms with this captivating new recording that it remains one of the premier ensembles of its day.



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Attaining Rarefied Heights

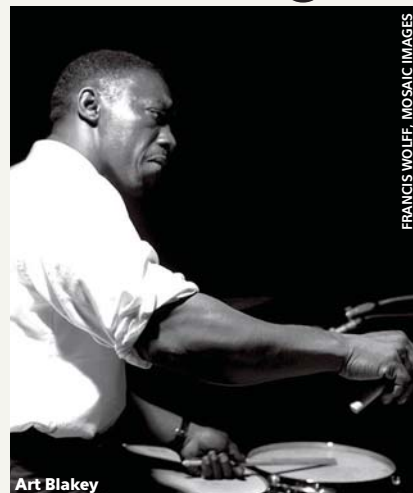
With the possible exception of John Coltrane, no jazz artist from the '50s and '60s has had their iconic status recharged more powerfully in the present than **Nina Simone**, whose fierce expressions of black pride and womanhood reverberate more than ever. She was suffering from mental illness when she recorded *Fodder On My Wings* (Verve/UMe B003115802; 44:49 ★★★★★) in France in 1982. But she transcends her condition, radiating joy with upbeat tunes and artfully reining in her anger on the laments. Typically, the moodiest tunes on *Fodder*, including her transformation of "Alone Again (Naturally)" into a brooding epic about her father's death, have drawn the most critical attention. (The Gilbert O'Sullivan hit is one of three bonus tracks from a 1988 French reissue.) But equally worthy are "Liberian Calypso," which boasts a punchy horn arrangement and lighthearted theatricality: "Hey, Nina!" her background singers call out, charmed by her patois. And "Heaven Belongs To You," a gospel-driven winner, occasions some spoken autobiography. "I learned it in English, even though it's an African song," Simone said, celebrating her American birthright.

Ordering info: vervelabelgroup.com

Though the release of **Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers' *Just Coolin'*** (Blue Note 64201; 38:59 ★★★★★) is attached to Blue Note's ongoing reissue campaign in celebration of the bandleader's centennial, this 1959 studio effort never had been issued before. A few months after it was recorded, label head Alfred Lion captured the same ensemble at Birdland, after which he decided to shelve *Just Coolin'* and release four of its tracks in extended live versions on *Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers At The Jazz Corner Of The World*. More than 60 years later, this studio album arrives like a long-unopened gift, attaining rarefied heights of its own via the quintet's elegant sense of control and nuanced blues. Rejoining the Messengers after several years, in a place-holding role ahead of Wayne Shorter's arrival, the ineffable tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley wrote three of the six songs, including the title track, a loosey-goosey foxtrot and the warmly relaxed, groove-tight "Hipsippy Blues." Released for the first time are pianist Bobby Timmons' sturdy and soulful "Quick Trick" and the uncredited "Jimerick," a speedy, stop-start hard-bop vehicle on which Mobley is in prime-ripping mode and the bandleader defies gravity with his levitational solo.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

The Giant Is Awakened (Real Gone Music 1012; 38:49 ★★★★★), the **Horace**



Art Blakey

FRANCIS WOLFF, MOSAIC IMAGES

Tapscott Quintet's memorable document of late-'60s Los Angeles, was reissued on CD in 2014 by the classy International Phonograph label. Now, the recording makes its first appearance on LP—on neon green vinyl, no less—since its original 1969 release on Flying Dutchman. A sometimes hypnotic, sometimes starkly expressive reflection of those fractious times, *Giant* opens with a fervent battle cry from alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe (making his recording debut) and never lets up in intensity. Alternating between and sometimes juxtaposing keening calls to action and minimalist, folktinged melodies, the band is powered by pianist Tapscott's stormy percussive attack, which sometimes makes the acoustic keys seem electric. With its swooshing effects and two bassists, David Bryant and Walter Savage Jr. (the drummer is Kansas Cityite Everett Brown Jr.), the album is ahead of its time. To the great disappointment of those who thrilled at this music, Tapscott didn't make another recording for 10 years. But *Giant* is as enrapturing now as it was then.

Ordering info: shop.realgonemusic.com

In reissuing the fine Seattle-based trio **New Stories' *Speakin' Out*** (Origin 82372; 67:24 ★★★★★½) on the occasion of the album's 20th anniversary, the Origin imprint celebrates one of its key releases—and, in "Highway Blues," which became a worldwide phenomenon after being embedded in Windows' XP operating system, one of the label's key tracks. Composed by pianist Marc Seales, the song is ignited by saxophone great Ernie Watts' muscular, Coltrane-esque solo. Watts also lifts four other band-penned originals, and the album includes fresh three-man covers of Herbie Hancock's "I Have A Dream" and Pat Metheny's "In Her Family."

Ordering info: origin-records.com

DB

Johanna Summer *Schumann Kaleidoskop*

ACT 9681

★★★★½

Johanna Summer built her unique ACT debut, *Schumann Kaleidoskop*, around the music of Robert Schumann. Initially drawing on pop and classical repertoire, Summer subtly moved closer to jazz with the realization that the motifs of the classical music she grew up with could be molded and expounding upon through jazz stylization and improvisational design.

Schumann Kaleidoskop is praiseworthy in its pursuit of merging genres; Summer's meticulousness arrangements and performances are beautiful. She applies downbeat emphasis to the 16th notes during the beginning half of "Knecht Ruprecht-Träumerei." And despite the slower tempo and wide melodic gaps in "Von Fremden Ländern Und Menschen," Summer's elongated variation unfurls like an emotive ballad, leaving ample room for notes to decay, contrasting with the stoic modernist writing.

Summer doesn't leave elemental evidence of splicing together genres and she doesn't hold listeners' hands. And ironically, shrewdly straddling the Romantic era and the modern day is both the album's biggest strength and weakness. Striving for creative heights at the cost of some approachability isn't a bad thing, though.

—Kira Grunenberger

Schumann Kaleidoskop: Glückes Genug—Erster Verlust; Mai, Lieber Mai—Ritter Vom Steckenpferd; Knecht Ruprecht—Träumerei; Von Fremden Ländern Und Menschen. (37:52)

Personnel: Johanna Summer, piano.

Ordering info: actmusic.com



Ross McHenry *Nothing Remains Unchanged*

FIRST WORD 198

★★★★★

Ross McHenry's *Nothing Remains Unchanged* features the Australian bassist's collaboration with an esteemed crew, drawing from music that the bandleader wrote during a monthslong stay at the Leighton

Artist Studios at Canada's Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

Further establishing the composer's reputation for crafting material drawn from a broad range of influences—jazz, chamber music and electronica—the album is influenced by the solitude and majesty of the environment, while also being a meditation on the past and present. "Complicated Us" sets the tone: Eric Harland's shuffling drums, a supple bass line and Ben Wendel's sultry saxophone float atop Matthew Sheens' muscular piano in a composition that nods toward post-bop before exploding into chaos. "Woods" features an expressive piano solo within a composition that effortlessly toggles between breakneck swing and hushed, Zen-like mediation. And "Perspectives" offers incredible exchanges that find each player intuitively knowing when to lead, follow and push the composition as far as it can go. As a whole, *Nothing Remains Unchanged* is as meditative and oceanic as it is breathtakingly beautiful and turbulent.

—William Ruben Helms

Nothing Remains Unchanged: Complicated Us; Adelaide; 1 East West; Forest Dance; Processional; Woods; Perspectives; This I Give To You; Highway Morning. (64:06)

Personnel: Ross McHenry, electric bass; Matthew Sheens, piano; Ben Wendel, saxophone; Eric Harland, drums.

Ordering info: firstwordrecords.com



Peter Hum *Ordinary Heroes*

SELF RELEASE

★★★★★

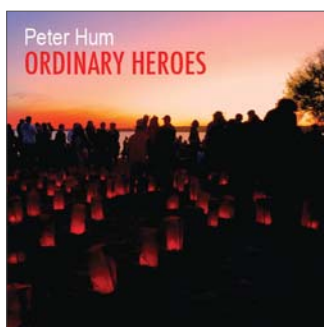
Coherence defines pianist Peter Hum's third album, *Ordinary Heroes*, which aims to reflect "the political and social tumult of the current day."

The opening tune, upbeat and strewn with intersecting melodic and percussive lines, belies its title—"Crises And Reckonings." Rather than Hum composing a mournful, 12-bar blues to match the title's tenor, "Crises" measures the ebb and flow of humanity as it faces pressing issues that will determine how human we all actually can be.

Trumpeter David Smith and tenor saxophonist Kenji Omae marry alternating melodic lines and stretch on their solos during "Cassandra." Hum's no slouch on the electric piano here, but he's a composer who highlights the talents of the band, refraining from a solo until "Rabble Rouser," a cut about midway through the album. His understated performance speaks to a need for inclusivity, restrained ego and an acknowledgment of each person's capability and culpability in being an ordinary hero.

There's not enough space here to point out all of the album's highlights, but *Ordinary Heroes* could push Hum into the wider jazz consciousness.

—Michele L. Simms-Burton



Andy Bianco *NYC Stories*

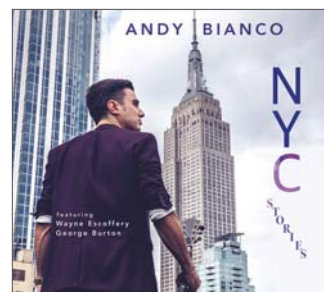
NEXT LEVEL 2009

★★★★

In New York, musicians continue to find inspiration along city streets and avenues. With generations drawing sounds from the five boroughs, finding a distinctive portrait has gotten harder. And that partially might be what hampers guitarist Andy Bianco's latest album.

Far from aiming to be a comprehensive portrait or travelogue, *NYC Stories* aims at depicting a sense of triumph over adversity, which comes through on album opener "For Those Who Battle Demons." Inspired by those in the guitarist's life who have fought their addictions, the track gets off to a thorny start with Bianco's stinging runs before a turbulent guest turn from saxophonist Wayne Escoffery calls down the heavens with a stormy middle section befitting the sound of the struggle. Escoffery returns alongside pianist George Burton to navigate calmer waters on "TSK" before kicking against the track's contemplative pace with another fiery turn. That sort of dissonance runs through any view of the city, but such raw-throated upheaval goes missing through some of Bianco's other ventures. The barbed "Drone Battery Slow," though, accelerates into uncharted areas atop the drive of bassist Nathan Peck. New York might be the most written about city in the country, but Bianco still has stories of his own.

—Chris Barton



Ordinary Heroes: Crises And Reckonings; Cassandra; Fake News Blues; Nebulous Compensation; Rabble Rouser; Embers; Tears For The Innocent; Spare Hearts; Safe Passage; Ordinary Heroes. (72:55)

Personnel: Peter Hum, piano, electric piano; Kenji Omae, tenor saxophone; David Smith, trumpet; Mike Rud, guitar; Alec Walkington, Dave Watts (4, 6, 7, 10), bass; Ted Warren, drums.

Ordering info: peterhum.bandcamp.com

NYC Stories: For Those Who Battle Demons; Mag Lev Ride; Bottom Dollar; Politricks; Two Ducks Crossing; Ballad For Mallards; Get To The Chopper; The Pigeon Whisperer; Tsk; Wild Geese; Drone Battery Slow. (69:13)

Personnel: Andy Bianco, guitar; Glenn White, Wayne Escoffery (1, 9), saxophone; George Burton, piano; Nathan Peck, bass; Paul Wells, Allan Mednard (1), Wayne Smith Jr. (8, 11), drums.

Ordering info: outsideinmusic.com



How I Learned To Sing Through Changes Like a Horn Player

We've all heard it before: Someone scats through a blues, and you think to yourself, "Pretty good for a singer." So, why is it so rare to hear a singer really make the changes?

Perhaps the biggest reason is that it is not our main stock in trade. Mostly, our job is to tell a story, to make the audience feel some-

thing. That said, for those who are interested in becoming real vocal improvisers, here's how I learned to do it.

First off, I love jazz.

I remember walking around outside in rural New Mexico trying to find the best FM radio signal so I could listen to a program on Albuquerque's college station called *The*

House that Jazz Built. I recorded a live version of "Blues For Alice" and sang it over and over again until I learned it. Listening and repeating what you hear is one way to learn, but it only takes you so far.

Music is a language. In the same way that memorizing French or Spanish phrases doesn't make you conversant in those lan-

guages, memorizing notes doesn't make you an improviser.

So, now we come to the meat of the matter: the study of modes and scales.

At this point, I have a confession to make. Along with singing, I am also a guitar player. I say this because I believe that the representation of modes and scales as physical motion really helps to wrap your mind around their fundamental importance as the building blocks of improvisation.

How did I learn the modes as a singer?

For the purposes of improvisation, we can think of the modes in two ways. First, remember that each mode is a part of the same scale starting from a different note. D dorian, for example, is the C major scale beginning on D. Likewise, E phrygian is the C major scale beginning with E. We can think of these as the major modes. While this is useful for a cursory understanding of the modes, it didn't help me very much when it came to improvising.

The second, and far more useful way to think of modes, is to hear them as individual scales with very particular characteristics. For me, in order to hear them properly, I had to sing them. To use our earlier example, D dorian mode is D-E-F-G-A-B-C-D. So, what notes in this scale make it dorian?

As a blind musician who has never seen a written note in his life, it is easier for me to think of numbers instead of notes. So, when I sing this mode, I remember the specific notes that make it sound dorian. The F is a minor third away from the D, thus making it the flat 3. The A is a whole step away from the G, making it a natural 6. You end up with a minor scale whose special characteristics are a flat 3, a natural 6 and a flat 7.

How the hell does this help me as a singing improviser, you might ask? Well, believe it or not, singing the modes as distinctive entities helped me to connect the notes through different keys.

Here's how I think about it. When you sing a major scale, you are singing in the key of C. If you then sing a C dorian mode, you are now singing in the key of B \flat . Moving to C phrygian mode, you are now singing in the key of A \flat . Lydian mode is the key of G, and so on down the line to C locrian mode, which is the key of B major.

As you go through the modes, from C to C, singing out of the diatonic box and learning to connect the keys, you are doing what I call "stretching your ear brain."

What do I mean by "ear brain"? I mean that I can learn to wiggle my fingers to create a C dorian mode, but that doesn't mean that I am hearing it. When you sing the modes, you are burning them in to your ear brain.

Put in another way, you are finding the pitches with your voice and your ears with-

out relying on rote finger memory. In this way, you learn to connect the keys and achieve good voice-leading.

There is a lot more to say about this, but I promise you that if you start singing the modes every day, you'll be on your way to being a real singing improviser.

DB

Singer/songwriter and guitarist Raul Midón has collaborated with such artists as Herbie Hancock, Stevie Wonder and Bill Withers, along with contributing to albums by Queen Latifah and Snoop Dogg and the soundtrack to Spike Lee's *She Hate Me*. A native of New Mexico who now lives in Maryland after spending years in New York, Midón has earned acclaim the world over. After receiving Grammy nominations for his two previous Artistry Music/Mack Avenue releases—*Bad*

Ass & Blind and *If You Really Want* (each for Best Jazz Vocal Album)—he released *The Mirror*, his 11th studio album and fourth for the label, in March. The new album finds Midón breaking new ground, including two solo spoken-word pieces ("If I Could See" and "One Day Without War"). The album also features a studio meeting with veteran jazz vibraphonist Joe Locke ("A Certain Café"), as well as a songwriting collaboration with pianist Gerald Clayton, "Deep Dry Ocean." Another highlight is the road-weary jazz ballad "Cold Cuts And Coffee," while "The Mirror" beguiles with its easy tropical groove, lyrical sophistication and Midón's flowing electric guitar. As National Public Radio set the stage before his captivating edition of its Tiny Desk Concert broadcast: "Raul Midón lives in a world of sound. Blind since birth, Midón's interpretation of his surroundings is borderless. He sings with the passion of the best classic soul singers, and his instrumental chops stand alongside the most accomplished jazz musicians." He recently performed in a Homecoming Week music series at his alma mater, University of Miami's Frost School of Music, where he was surprised onstage with the Distinguished Alumni Award. Visit him online at raulmidon.com.



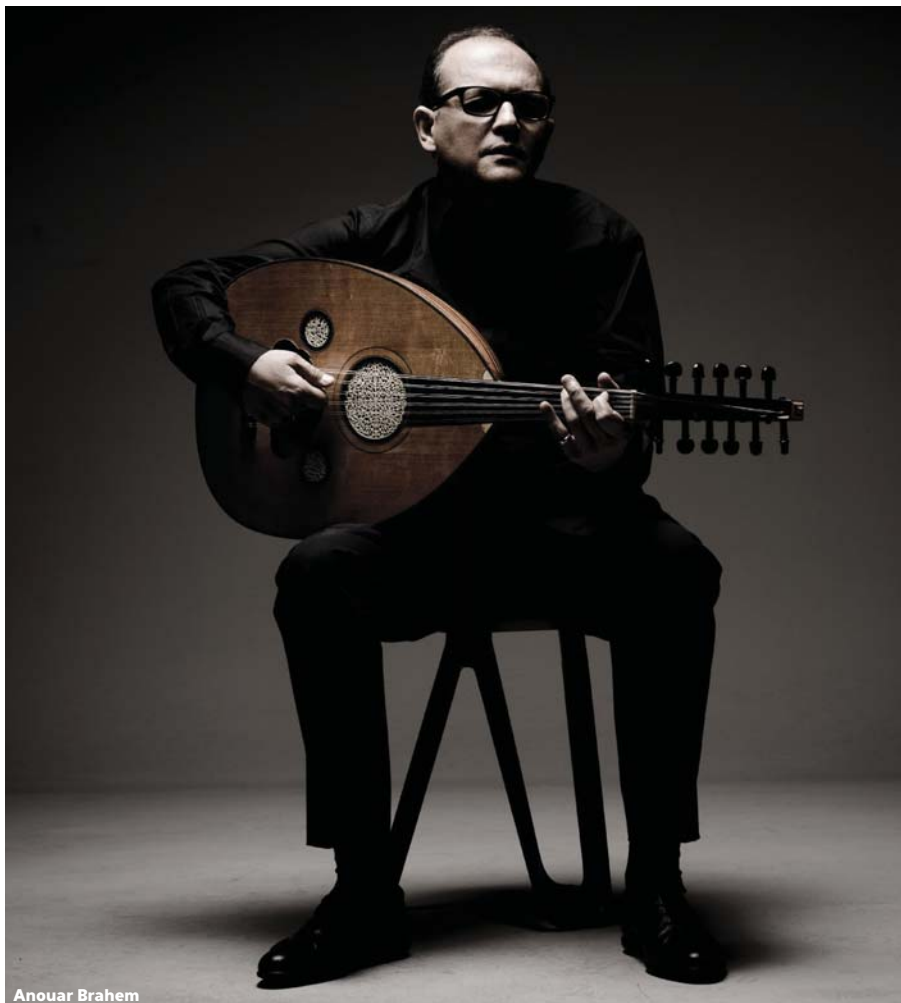
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Anouar Brahem

Anouar Brahem's Oud Solo on 'Opening Day'

For his 2017 album *Blue Maqams* (ECM), Anouar Brahem put himself at the front of a jazz quartet backed by piano, string bass and drum kit. However, the music still exhibits the potpourri of influences that Brahem, who plays the Middle Eastern string instrument the oud, exhibits in any context. Here, we'll examine his solo on the album's first track, "Opening Day." Though an oud isn't a guitar, I've chosen to present the notation like a guitar, in treble clef up one octave from pitch.

Brahem improvises over a vamp (shown in the first line), and the vamp comes out of the D harmonic minor scale. The entire improvisation sticks to this; not a single note is outside D harmonic minor. Those are the simple elements.

The tricky bits are that the vamp is seven

bars long and fluctuates between 3/4 and 4/4. (Some might consider it two bars of 7, a measure of 8 and then one of 6, but I felt that representing it this way makes everything easier to read.)

Brahem navigates this with aplomb. He plays through these meter changes, but he doesn't overemphasize the downbeats. There are points where he resolves to a downbeat, such as measures 5, 9, 30, 31, 47 and 62, as well as anticipations of these, before bars 11 and 34. One thing about all of these examples is that none of them are at the beginning of the vamp. So, Brahem does give us some downbeats to make sure the rhythm is somewhat clear, but doesn't land on the top of the phrase, making the rhythm a bit obscure.

To make things even more obscure-sound-

ing (and to show off how comfortable he is in this rhythmic scheme), Brahem often culminates his phrases at other points in the measure. Take a look at bar 2, where he lands on the anticipation of beat 3 (as he does in the following bar as well). Throughout this improvisation, we hear a variety of resolving points—such as when he delays the resolution to the “and” of 1 (10, 18, 37 and 57), or the middle of the bar (12, 26, 35 and 44), as well as other points that help make the rhythm sound less metronomic.

To make it more amorphous, check out the note choices Brahem uses for resolving points. From a Western perspective, we'd expect a lot of D's, F's and A's, the chord tones of D minor. And we do hear those in measures 2, 3, 5, 34, 35 and 62.

What's more interesting are the instances when Brahem resolves to other pitches. One of his preferred is the E natural, the ninth of the key. He lands on this pitch in measures 9, 12, 23 and 60, and leans on it in bars 24–25. Another one is the fourth, G natural, which we hear emphasized in bars 18, 26–32, 47–49 and 57–59. Brahem's use of such devices creates a kind of tension that juxtaposes the resolutions landing on stronger resolutions.

Something that makes these choices more powerful is their unpredictability. If the G naturals had appeared on the first and fifth measures, with the B \flat and D underneath, we might assume that Brahem was hearing these bars as G minor. And that does happen in measures 8, 26, 29, 33, 47 and 57. But check out all the times these G's land on other bars (such as 18, 27–28, 30–32, 48, 58 and especially 59, where Brahem actually plays a G minor triad, while A and D are being played in the bass), as well as the times these bars have non-G-minor sounds above them: measure 5, where he lands on A; measure 12, which would fit great over an A7; as well as bars 15, 19, 22, 36, 50 and 54, which you'll notice are all very not G minor. It would appear that Brahem is not hearing this vamp as a series of chord changes, but is approaching it more from an intervals standpoint.

And, of course, Brahem's use of rhythmic density should be examined. The first two phrases (bars 1–15) are mostly eighth-note based, with a few 16th-note ornaments. At measure 16, the 16th notes start showing up in quadruplets, but in the next phrase Brahem brings the rhythm back to mostly eighths, creating intensity by playing almost exclusively on offbeats (bars 24–29). He then repeats this formula: 16ths appearing in bars 30–34, and then back to mostly eighth notes, and emphasis of offbeats in measures 40–43. This boomeranging of the energy is quite an effective means

At measure 51, Brahm jumps into a long string of 16ths without much of a let-off until bar 57, the beginning of his final phrase. And, in a move many might find peculiar, he dissipates all that built-up energy and plays the most sparsely we've heard for this entire improvisation. It's quite an unusual, yet effective, means

DB

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

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JUNE 2020 DOWNBEAT 51

Eastman Rue Saint-Georges

Elegant, High-End Saxophone with Flute Touches

Eastman named its new top-of-the-line Rue Saint-Georges series after the street in Paris where instrument inventor Adolphe Sax operated his shop and came up with his original designs for the very first saxophone models in the 1840s. It's an appropriate moniker considering that the company—with substantial input from David Schipani, director of R&D and flute stringing and body making manager for Wm. S. Haynes Co.—created this new saxophone series from the ground up, introducing some brilliant mechanical innovations and subtle design adjustments that improve ergonomics and contribute to a desirable tonal core. With the new Rue Saint-Georges EAS850 Alto Saxophone and ETS850 Tenor Saxophone, the Eastman team has revolutionized many aspects of saxophone design that have remained standard for decades.

When I initially play-tested the Rue Saint-Georges ETS850 tenor, I hadn't yet given it a complete visual inspection. I just picked it up, chose one of the two necks that comes with it, slapped on my D'Addario Select Jazz mouthpiece and started blowing. I immediately discovered the focused, classic sound that dwells in the very center of the horn's core. It responded with promptness and obedience; I could do anything I wanted with this tenor. As I played some long-tone swells that spanned an extreme dynamic range, a full sonic image of the ETS850 emerged like a revelation. Once I began zipping through some scales and arpeggios, I realized how incredibly fluid and comfortable the keys felt under my fingers. This is one of the fastest-playing and most ergonomic saxophones I've ever encountered.

Taking a closer look at the ETS850, I was fascinated. Eight keys (B–A–G–F–E–D, bis and G-sharp) have sterling silver flute touches, which provide for a fantastic grip. The octave key and thumb rest are sculpted in a way that fits the shape of your thumb and minimizes movement. The palm-key “teardrops” and side-key touches are all slightly different from each other, shaped to lay under the fingers and touch the hand at just the right point. The pinky keys are redone as well, in particular on the left hand, where the low C-sharp is built up right under your finger and you barely can feel any interruptions when transitioning from low C-sharp to B and B-flat. In essence, the ETS850's keys all have a natural flow from one to the next.

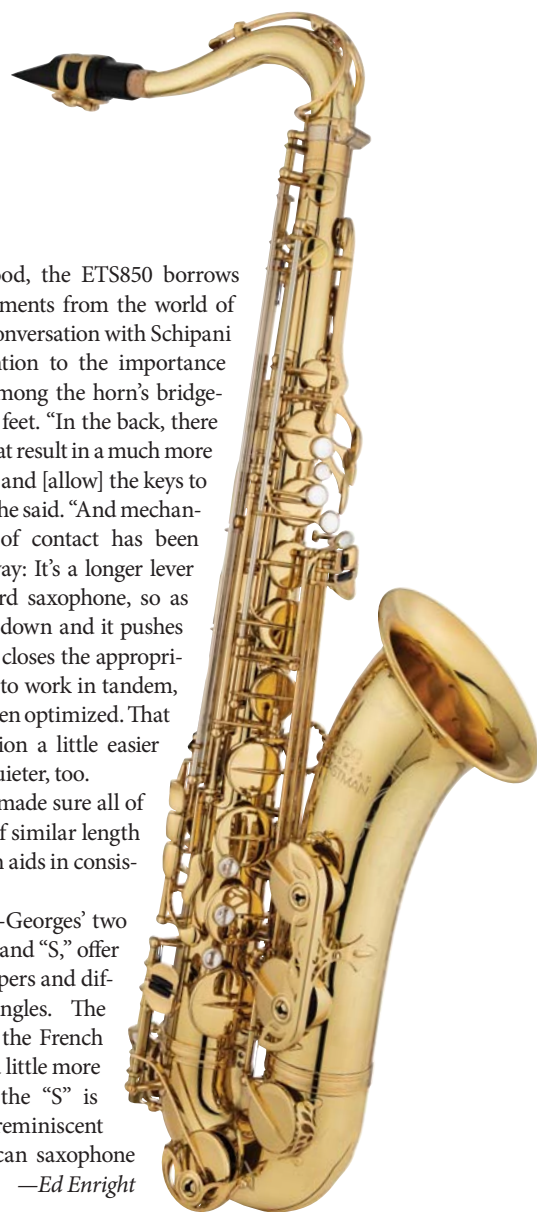
Under the hood, the ETS850 borrows further design elements from the world of custom flutes. A conversation with Schipani brought my attention to the importance of the interplay among the horn's bridge-work, kickers and feet. “In the back, there are wider plates that result in a much more stable mechanism and [allow] the keys to move in tandem,” he said. “And mechanically, the point of contact has been moved further away: It's a longer lever than on a standard saxophone, so as you press the key down and it pushes the bridge up and closes the appropriate keys that have to work in tandem, the leverage has been optimized. That makes the operation a little easier and smoother.” Quieter, too.

Schipani also made sure all of the springs were of similar length and tension, which aids in consistency of feel.

The Rue Saint-Georges' two necks, labeled “R” and “S,” offer a choice of bore tapers and different playing angles. The “R” comes out of the French school and offers a little more resistance, while the “S” is more open and reminiscent of vintage American saxophone designs.

—Ed Enright

eastmanwinds.com



Zoom V6 Vocal Processor

Foot-Controlled Multi-Effects Unit Liberates Singers

As a longtime vocal performer, I often have found myself standing on stage, looking down longingly at the guitarist's prodigious collection of stompboxes and processors. “What I wouldn't give,” I would think, “to have that sort of limitless, on-the-fly flexibility with my vocal ‘instrument.’” Guitarists always had all the fun, and the concept of a dedicated, personal vocal processor was just that—a concept.

Recently, as digital technology has advanced, floor-based vocal processors have started to become more common, with each of the major players bringing something distinctive to the table. Zoom, an established leader in the guitar pedal and multi-effects processor arena, has stepped up to the plate with its new multi-effects unit for voice: the V6. And it's clear that the company is serious about stepping directly to the head of the pack.

What is especially exciting for singers is that this puts the control of all your vocal effects right at your feet. The V6 features three main pedals that,

when used together, offer stunning creative power to the user.

First up is the Voice pedal, which can be used to create the basic character and quality of your sound. It includes octave shifts, vocoder, everyone's favorite chromatic and diatonic pitch corrections, the uniquely entertaining whistle and more. Next up is the Harmony pedal, which allows for the automatic, and disarmingly realistic, harmony generator. Harmonies are defined by an innovative Key Signature knob that lays out all the major keys and their relative minors. The settings on this pedal also let you choose the structure of your harmonies, allowing for up to three-part harmonies defined by simple buttons labeled High, Higher, Low, Lower and Fixed. The final pedal is an Effects block that includes everything you would expect: reverb, delay, chorus, plate, hall and echoes, plus special effects like distortion, beat box and telephone.

Just below the three main pedals on the V6 are three multi-function

footswitches that serve to control a fantastic comprehensive digital looper feature. These switches also help you move your way around the 40 pre-loaded memory patch selections. There are also 100 user slots available so you can create and save your own settings. The digital looper offers up to 3:30 worth of recording capability.

One thing that sets the V6 apart is its integrated expression pedal for shifting the formant of your voice. This can provide radical changes to a singer's vocal characteristics without changing the pitch, allowing the user to truly turn their effects use into part of their performance.

Another huge plus is that the system comes with its own dedicated mic, the SGV-6, which has a "shotgun" design to isolate your voice by suppressing sounds from other instruments on stage so they don't leak into your vocal effects. The mic is a solid addition to this package.

Turning our attention to the rear of the unit, the connections include an XLR mic input, phantom power switch, USB output for using the unit as an audio interface in your DAW, control pedal input for adding an extra expression pedal, a 1/8-inch headphone output with its own volume control, and an XLR output for connecting to a mixing desk. The V6 is powered by

an included AC power supply, although it can also run on four AA batteries for around three-and-a-half hours. The signal output is mono only.

The Zoom V6 is geared toward creative vocalists who want to push the limits of their creativity in a live setting. It's not a simple product with a few set-and-forget effects. This is a beast by design, and at the feet of the right vocalist, it undoubtedly will be a powerfully creative tool.

—Vince Clark

zoom-na.com



Lâg Tramontane HyVibe THV20DCE

Smart Guitar Speaks for Itself

The physics of an acoustic guitar are fairly simple. Vibrating strings produce sound that is amplified by a hollow chamber and projected out via a soundhole. In essence, the chamber, or body of the guitar, functions much like a speaker cabinet. What if this acoustical chamber could be used to deliver more than just the musical notes generated via the instrument's strings? The folks at HyVibe have raised this very question and answered it with the introduction of the HyVibe series of smart guitars that utilize the instrument's natural resonance to deliver onboard digital effects, looping capabilities and even playback of external audio right out of the soundhole.

The instrument is the result of a collaboration between two French companies, HyVibe and Lâg Guitars. HyVibe is responsible for developing the electronic system in the guitar, the brainchild of CEO Dr. Adrien Mamou-Mani. The system captures the guitar's signal from a piezo sensor mounted under the bridge and passes it on to a pair of actuators mounted internally on the instrument's top. The output of the actuators combine with the guitar's natural acoustic signal to create the final processed sound. Although other companies have developed systems that utilize a similar concept, the HyVibe technology offers significant advancements over its competitors. According to HyVibe co-founder and COO Matt Volsky, "Other solutions use one actuator on the guitar's back. We use two actuators on the top, where the vibration is best." Another key to the HyVibe system is its "active vibration control" where it actually measures the incoming vibrations and adjusts itself in real time with zero latency. "We can control feedback and provide better quality and volume," Volsky added.

HyVibe acknowledges that it is a sound company and not a guitar company. So, to provide the vehicle for its technology they reached out to Lâg Guitars. HyVibe's design is based on Lâg's Tramontane model, which is manufactured in China under the supervision of luthier Maurice Dupont. Dupont redesigned the bracing pattern in order to maximize the response of the guitar's top to the actuators. The HyVibe system is offered in three Lâg models: the THV10DCE, THV20DCE and THV30DCE, priced at \$999, \$1,299 and \$1,499, respectively. All three utilize the same Tramontane specs but provide different tonewood options.

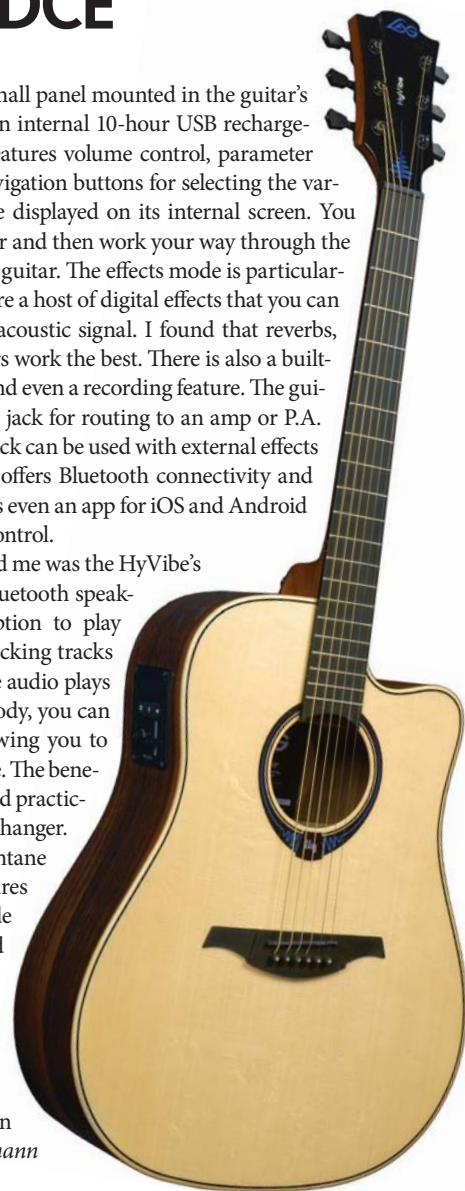
The guitar I play-tested was the Tramontane HyVibe THV20DCE, which features a spruce top, ovangkol back and sides, and a mahogany neck. It is a nicely crafted instrument that plays well with a pleasant acoustic tone and keeps the HyVibe system at a reasonable price point. The HyVibe

is controlled through a small panel mounted in the guitar's upper bout and utilizes an internal 10-hour USB rechargeable battery. The panel features volume control, parameter adjustment slider and navigation buttons for selecting the various functions, which are displayed on its internal screen. You can use the onboard tuner and then work your way through the numerous options on the guitar. The effects mode is particularly interesting, and there are a host of digital effects that you can mix in with the guitar's acoustic signal. I found that reverbs, chorus, delays and phasers work the best. There is also a built-in looper, a metronome and even a recording feature. The guitar has a standard output jack for routing to an amp or P.A. and along with its input jack can be used with external effects pedals. The HyVibe also offers Bluetooth connectivity and MIDI control, and there is even an app for iOS and Android that provides enhanced control.

What really impressed me was the HyVibe's ability to function as a Bluetooth speaker. This provides the option to play along with recordings, backing tracks or metronomes. Since the audio plays right out of the guitar's body, you can really feel it vibrate, allowing you to easily sync up to its groove. The benefits of this as a teaching and practicing tool could be a game-changer.

The HyVibe Tramontane guitar offers a lot of features that will appeal to a wide variety of players. And with future firmware updates to look forward to, I recommend this guitar not only for what it does today, but also for what it will be capable of in the future. —Keith Baumann

lagguitars.com





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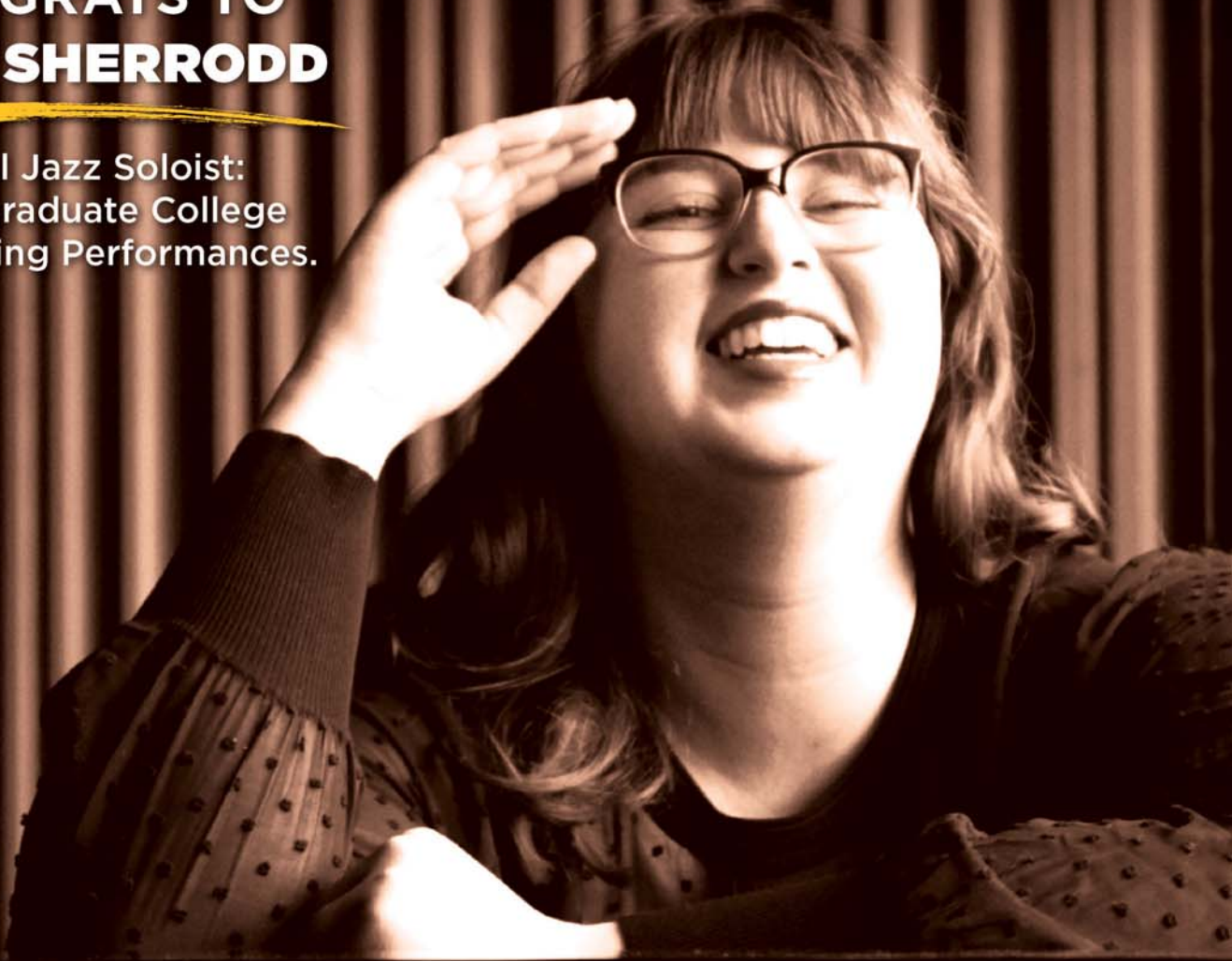
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Drum Set

Scott Turpen

Saxophone

Gonzalo Teppa

Bass

Ryan Fourt

Guitar

COMPLETE

DOWNBEAT 43RD ANNUAL STUDENT MUSIC AWARDS

RESULTS



George Mason Latin American Ensemble
from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia

JAZZ SOLOIST

Junior High School Winner

Mitchell Furniss

Trumpet

Willowcreek Middle School
David Faïres
Lehi, UT

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

Austin Snavelly

Drums

Daniel Boone Area Middle
School
Sarah McAdams
Douglassville, PA

Luciano Soriano

Trombone

Los Cerritos Middle School
David Blake
Thousand Oaks, CA

Felipe Feldman

Alto Saxophone

Easterbrook Discovery School
Nils Johnson
San Jose, CA

Vincent Maclauchlan

Guitar

Oakland School for the Arts
Patrick Anseth
Oakland, CA

Junior High School Honors Winner

Brandon Goldberg

Piano

Pine Crest School
(Fort Lauderdale, FL)
Giselle Brodsky
Aventura, FL

Junior High School Honors Outstanding Performances

Ben Walker

Guitar

The Shea Welsh Institute of Jazz
Shea Welsh
Los Angeles, CA

Diogo Feldman

Trumpet and Flugelhorn

Easterbrook Discovery School
Jeff Lewis
San Jose, CA

High School Winners

Aaron Ouellette

Trumpet

RHAM High School
Nicholas Kokus
Hebron, CT

Kellin Hanas

Trumpet

Wheaton North High School
Kent Krause
Wheaton, IL

High School Outstanding Performances

Connor MacLeod

Alto Saxophone

Plano West Senior High School
Preston Pierce
Plano, TX

Ethan Avery

Trumpet

Crossroads School for the Arts
and Sciences
Evan Avery
Santa Monica, CA

Grady Flamm

Trumpet

Rio Americano High School
Josh Murray and Mitch Evett
Sacramento, CA

Oliver Mayman

Vibraphone

Community High School
Jack Wagner
Ann Arbor, MI

Santiago Lopez

Tenor Saxophone

Los Alamitos High School
Justin Padilla
Los Alamitos, CA

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance

Aidan Taylor

Bass

A.W. Dreyfoos School of the
Arts
Pedro Hernandez
West Palm Beach, FL

High School Honors Winner

Gianna Pedregon

Violin

Colburn Community School
of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

High School Honors Outstanding Performance

Henry Acker

Guitar

Duxbury High School
Frank Vignola
Duxbury, MA

Undergraduate College Winners

Artem Badenko

(aka Art Baden)

Tenor Saxophone

Berklee College of Music
George Garzone
Boston, MA

Luca Mendoza

Piano

University of Southern California
Thornton School of Music



The Jazz Band from Las Vegas Academy of the Arts

Alan Pasqua
Los Angeles, CA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Alec Schulman
Piano

Berklee College of Music
Laszlo Gardony
Boston, MA

Benjamin Turner
Guitar

Temple University
Terell Stafford
Philadelphia, PA

Rico Jones
Tenor Saxophone
Manhattan School of Music
Donny McCaslin
New York, NY

Tal Kalman
Tenor Saxophone
University of the Pacific
Patrick Langham
Stockton, CA

Varun Das
Drums
Manhattan School of Music
John Riley
New York, NY

Graduate College Winner

Yessaï Karapetian
Piano
Berklee College of Music
(Global Jazz Institute)
Danilo Pérez
Boston, MA

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

Annie Booth
Piano

University of Colorado Boulder
Thompson Jazz Studies
John Gunther
Boulder, CO

Pongsakorn Lertvanitsutha
Trumpet

University of Music and
Performing Arts, Graz
Jim Rotondi
Graz, Austria

Small Jazz Combo

Junior High School Winner

Harvard-Westlake Jazz Explorers

Harvard-Westlake Middle
School
Starr Schafel Wayne
Los Angeles, CA

Junior High School Outstanding Performance

Jazz Band
Folsom Middle School
John Zimny
Folsom, CA

High School Winners

Plano West Jazz Sextet
Plano West Senior High School
Preston Pierce
Plano, TX

Children Hearing Music

Rio Americano High School
Josh Murray and Mitch Evett
Sacramento, CA

High School Outstanding Performances

Bad Dudes

Community High School
Jack Wagner
Ann Arbor, MI

Combo A

Downey High School
Corneliu Olariu
Downey, CA

Performing Arts High School Winners

Dreyfoos All-Stars

A.W. Dreyfoos School of the
Arts
Pedro Hernandez
West Palm Beach, FL

Jazz Combo

New World School of the Arts
Jim Gasior
Miami, FL

High School Honors Ensemble Winners

New Soil Ensemble

Young Lions Jazz Conservatory
Gilbert Castellanos
San Diego, CA

**SFJAZZ High School All-
Stars Combo**
SFJAZZ

Dann Zinn
San Francisco, CA

High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance

Advanced Jazz Workshop I

The Jazzschool at California
Jazz Conservatory
Dr. Michael Zilber
Berkeley, CA

Undergraduate College Winners

Identities Project

Conservatorium van
Amsterdam
Simon Rigter
Amsterdam, Netherlands
Outstanding Soloist: Martin
Diaz, Alto Saxophone

Rico Jones Trio

Manhattan School of Music
Donny McCaslin
New York, NY

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

**Los Angeles College of
Music Combo**

Los Angeles College of Music
Bryan Lipps
Los Angeles, CA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Soloist

Laura Zöschg
Vocalist
Quonundrum Trio



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DOWNBEAT 43RD ANNUAL
STUDENT
MUSIC AWARDS

JAZZ INSTRUMENTAL SOLOIST

Artem Badenko



Annie Booth



Kellin Hanas



Gianna Pedregon

Ambitious Improvisers

IMPROVISATION IS THE ESSENCE OF jazz, and the ability to deliver a well-crafted solo is a vital skill. A powerful solo performance requires dedication and commitment to improve that skill through practice and continually meeting musical challenges. Those qualities clearly are present among the honorees in the Jazz Instrumental Soloist category of the 2020 DownBeat Student Music Awards.

Kellin Hanas, a High School division co-winner who will graduate from Wheaton North High School in Illinois this spring, has earned national recognition for her talent on trumpet. Hanas was a member of the 2019 and 2020 editions of Jazz Band of America, as well as the 2019 and 2020 Next Generation Jazz Orchestra and 2020 Next Generation Women in Jazz Combo.

Kent Krause, band director at Wheaton North, has seen recognition grow for Hanas—and knows the hard work she has put in to achieve it.

"Kellin has tremendous natural ability," Krause said. "But what sets her apart is a work ethic that allows her to take it to the next level. She's always practicing and listening, and she even plays piano to figure out how changes work. She has incredible integrity as a player."

Like Hanas, High School Honors division winner Gianna Pedregon was a member of the 2020 Next Generation Women in Jazz Combo, and was part of the 2019 Next Gen Combo as well. A student at Orange County School of the Arts, she also attends the acclaimed Colburn Community School of Performing Arts in Los Angeles.

"I studied classical violin for six years," Pedregon said. "But I attended a String Project Los Angeles workshop and heard a violinist using a looping pedal and playing a solo over it. I wanted to do that, and that's how I started playing jazz."

In addition to her school band and ensemble performances, Pedregon tries to play with other musicians as often as she can.

"I especially like playing with different drummers because it challenges me," she explained. "There's a place in my neighborhood that has older musicians performing, including a teacher in my school, and they let [other players] sit in with them. That's a good challenge, too."

Undergraduate College division co-winner Artem Badenko's musical journey began in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, and eventually led him to Berklee College of Music in Boston. He started playing alto saxophone at age 10, switched to tenor at 13 and formed his first band and recorded his debut album at 16. Badenko then moved to the Netherlands to attend Prince Claus Conservatoire, where he met visiting instructor Joe Locke.

"Joe was coming twice a year to teach," Badenko recalled. "I was stunned listening to him; I heard so much Coltrane and Parker coming from a vibraphone. I asked to play with him, and afterward we talked about what I wanted to do, which was to go to America and study. He helped me get an audition at Berklee, and I got a full-tuition scholarship."

Badenko—who performs under the stage

name Art Baden—leads his own quartet and plays with the Nikos Chatzitsakos Tiny Big Band. (The namesake leader of that ensemble is a Berklee student who is the Undergraduate College division winner in the Jazz Arrangement category.) The Art Baden Quartet's debut album is scheduled to be released later this year.

Graduate College Outstanding Performance honoree Annie Booth grew up playing the piano, and became interested in jazz in her teens thanks to the non-profit Colorado Conservatory for the Jazz Arts. She earned her undergraduate degree in the Thompson Jazz Studies program at the University of Colorado–Boulder, and is currently working on a master's degree there.

Booth won a Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award in 2017 and earned an honorable mention in the 2011 competition. Her SMA entry this year, "Jolly Beach," was chosen for performance at the 2020 Jazz Education Network conference in New Orleans as part of its Young Composer Showcase.

Booth has recorded three albums, and has two more recordings set to be released. In 2017 she led and helped found Shebop, a jazz workshop for young women ages 10–18.

"The Colorado Conservatory for the Jazz Arts was very important for my musical development, and it's a huge passion of mine," said Booth, who now is a program assistant for CCJA. "It's so important to show young women that they have a voice and a place in jazz, and to give them female mentors." —Terry Perkins

UNC JAZZ

DownBeat Student Music Awards 2020



LARGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Graduate College Winner

UNC Jazz Lab Band I

Dana Landry, Director



LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

UNC Jazz Vocal Lab

Brennan Baglio, Director



VOCAL JAZZ SOLOIST

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Amanda Roswick

Brennan Baglio, Professor



ORIGINAL COMPOSITION LARGE ENSEMBLE

Graduate College Outstanding Composition

Greg Weis, "The Imitator"

Drew Zaremba, Professor



OUTSTANDING SOLOIST

Marc Schwartz, Alto Saxophone

Marc Schwartz Quartet

Andrew Dahlke, Professor



OUTSTANDING SOLOIST

Zach Rich, Trombone

Matteo Sabattini Septet

Drew Zaremba, Professor



BLUES/POP/ROCK SOLOIST

Undergraduate College Outstanding Soloist

Samantha Costigan, Vocalist

Brennan Baglio, Professor

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Performing Arts, Graz
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Graz, Austria

Graduate College Winner

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Frost School of Music
Chuck Bergeron
Coral Gables, FL

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

The Void-Quintet

University of Music and
Performing Arts, Graz

Ed Partyka
Graz, Austria

Thornton Monday Night Band

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Thornton School of Music
Vince Mendoza
Los Angeles, CA

Graduate College Outstanding Soloists

Marc Schwartz

Alto Saxophone
Marc Schwartz Quartet
University of Northern
Colorado
Andrew Dahlke
Greeley, CO

Zach Rich Trombone

Zach Rich & Matteo Sabattini
Septet
University of Northern Colorado
Drew Zaremba
Greeley, CO

Large Jazz Ensemble

Junior High School Winners

"A Train" Jazz Band

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David Faires
Lehi, UT

Jazz Band

Sutter Middle School
John Zimny
Folsom, CA

Junior High School Outstanding Performances

Jazz Band

Easterbrook Discovery Middle
School
Nils Johnson
San Jose, CA

Jazz Band

Folsom Middle School
John Zimny
Folsom, CA

Jazz Ensemble

Gulliver Academy
Robert Keating
Coral Gables, FL

Jazz Band

Prairie Trail Middle School
Jena McElwain
Olathe, KS

Junior High School Honors Winner

Little Big Band

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

High School Winners

Jazz Band I

Green Valley High School
Cara Froelich
Henderson, NV

Jazz Ensemble

Downey High School
Corneliu Olariu
Downey, CA

Waukee Jazz One

Waukee High School
Chris Strohmaier
Waukee, IA

High School Outstanding Performances

AM Jazz Ensemble

Rio Americano High School
Josh Murray

Sacramento, CA

Byron Center Jazz Orchestra

Byron Center High School
Marc Townley
Byron Center, MI

Jazz Band I

Folsom High School
Curtis Gaesser
Folsom, CA

OHS Jazz Ensemble I

Oswego High School
Kevin Schoenbach
Oswego, IL

Performing Arts High School Winners

Jazz Band

Las Vegas Academy of the Arts
Patrick Bowen
Las Vegas, NV

Jazz Workshop Orchestra

Denver School of the Arts
Dave Hammond
Denver, CO

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performances

Jazz Ensemble I

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West Palm Beach, FL

LACHSA Big Band

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School for the Arts
Alex Hahn
Los Angeles, CA

High School Honors Ensemble Winners

Colburn Jazz Workshop Big Band

Colburn Community School
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Los Angeles, CA

Crescent Super Band

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
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COLLEGE

Jazz Soloist

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Varun Das, drums

Student of John Riley

Rico Jones, tenor saxophone

Student of Donny McCaslin

Small Jazz Combo

Undergraduate College Winners (co-winner)

Rico Jones Trio

Donny McCaslin, Director

Latin Group

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Rico Jones Trio

Donny McCaslin, Director

Rico Jones Nonet

Donny McCaslin, Director

Original Composition – Small Ensemble

Graduate College Outstanding Compositions

Rin Seo, “Jazz Suite”

Student of Jim McNeely

PRECOLLEGE

Large Jazz Ensemble

High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance

Precollege Big Band

Chris Rosenberg, Director

Engineered Studio Recording

High School Honors Student Outstanding Recording

Esteban Castro

Student of Phillip Kawin

Jazz Arrangement

High School Honors Winner

Esteban Castro, “Little Rootie Tootie”

Student of Phillip Kawin

Original Composition – Small Ensemble

High School Honors Outstanding Compositions

Esteban Castro, “Entranced”

Student of Phillip Kawin

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Freddie Mendoza—jazz trombone
Dr. Scott Routenberg—jazz piano, jazz composition
Joel Tucker—jazz guitar
Nick Tucker—jazz bass

bsu.edu/music



Frost Women's Jazz Vocal Ensemble from the University of Miami

Community College Winner

RCC Jazz Ensemble

Riverside City College
Charles Richard
Riverside, CA

Thornton School of Music
Bob Mintzer
Los Angeles, CA

Community College Outstanding Performance

Jazz Ensemble

Mt. San Antonio College
Jeff Ellwood
Walnut, CA

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Junior High School Winner

Sivan Green

Eckstein Middle School
Moc Escobedo
Seattle, WA

High School Winner

Brooke Lambert

Roosevelt High School
Jean-Marie Kent
Seattle, WA

High School Outstanding Performances

Christiana Ruthann Schiller

Valley Christian High School
Dr. Michael Jones
San Jose, CA

Tessa Korver

Roosevelt High School
Jean-Marie Kent
Seattle, WA

Will Ryan III

New Trier High School
Nathan Landes
Winnetka, IL

High School Honors Winner

Ava Preston

Tri-C JazzFest Academy
Dominick Farinacci
Cleveland, OH

Community College Winner

Sasha Ortega

Long Beach City College
Andrea Calderwood
Long Beach, CA

Undergraduate College Winner

Jazz Ensemble

Butler University
Matthew Pivec
Indianapolis, IN

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

BYU Synthesis Big Band

Brigham Young University
Ray Smith
Provo, UT

Graduate College Winner

Jazz Lab Band I

University of Northern Colorado
Dana Landry
Greeley, CO

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

Jazz Band I

Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Paul Hageman
Kingsville, TX

Jazz Ensemble I

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Dave Loeb
Las Vegas, NV

USC Thornton Jazz Orchestra

University of Southern California

Congratulations to Tri-C JazzFest Academy student **Ava Preston**, 43rd annual DownBeat Student Music Award winner for

Vocal Jazz Soloist,
High School Honors Division

Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist,
High School Honors Outstanding Performance

Preston, of Solon, Ohio, is a four-year student in the Tri-C JazzFest Academy where she studies with director and artist-in-residence Dominick Farinacci at the Metropolitan Campus in Cleveland.

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SMALL JAZZ COMBO

The Frost Septet
Spring Group

Combo A



Rico Jones



Plano West Jazz Sextet

Power in Unity

ATYPICAL INSTRUMENTATION, DREAM teams and original compositions were all common threads with this year's Small Combo honorees.

A co-winner in the Undergraduate College division, the Rico Jones Trio from Manhattan School of Music is a tenor trio with double bass and drums—a challenging instrumentation usually not pursued early in a saxophonist's development.

"It's a challenge," said Jones, a senior at MSM, in describing the chordless instrumentation while sheltered in place at his family's home in Denver. "It puts a lot more musical responsibility on each of us and demands that we're more creative in the way that we depict harmony, the way that we use rhythm and the way that we arrange standards or even originals."

Jones, bassist Gabe Rupe and drummer Julian Archer were high school classmates at Denver School of the Arts. Jones' two bandmates were a year behind him and started at MSM during his sophomore year there. "We do have a history, and we've been fortunate enough to develop that over the years," Jones reflected.

Jones fared remarkably well in numerous SMA categories. In addition to the aforementioned honor, his trio and his namesake nonet both received an Undergraduate College division Outstanding Performance honor in the Latin Group category. In the Jazz Instrumental Soloist category, he was named an Outstanding Performance honoree in the Undergradu-

ate division for his work on tenor saxophone.

The winner of the Graduate College division of the Small Jazz Combo category—The Frost Septet Spring Group from University of Miami's Frost School of Music—boasts an unusual combination of trumpet, trombone, alto saxophone, vibraphone, guitar, bass and drums. The SFJAZZ Collective and vibes legend Gary Burton's various bands were points of reference for the septet's vibraphonist, Mackenzie Karbon. "It makes you realize that there's so much you *don't* have to play," Karbon said when asked about interacting with six other musicians.

"I would say the overarching goal was to play with cohesion and solidarity," she added. Addressing the Frost collective's approach, she pointed out that some members of the group were undergraduate students who had played with each other for more than three years.

Of the members' original compositions that the septet has performed, Karbon specifically highlighted "Year In A Glow," written by guitarist Jordan Rattner. "It was a ballad, and it was gorgeous," she reflected. "Having a ballad played by seven people is extremely challenging. It forced us all to be really mature, and open up our ears as much as possible and be really creative."

At Plano West Senior High School in Texas, the on-the-bandstand talent level of the Plano West Sextet, a High School division co-winner, was exceptional. "It was just one of those really special years where all the stars are aligned," said Preston Pierce, associate band director.

"It's like every kid on every instrument, in any other year, would have been the star of the band. At the beginning of the [school] year, these kids were already where we usually are three-quarters of the way into a typical year."

Pierce can trace the group's success directly to 2017, when his Plano West Jazz Ensemble was selected as a finalist for Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington Competition & Festival. Members of that band went down to the Plano West feeder schools to help run jazz band rehearsals—a practice that continues to this day. "Now, these current kids talk about how impactful it was having those high school kids there [to mentor them]," Pierce said.

Combo A, an Outstanding Performance honoree in the High School division, has thrived on imagination and discipline. "It's a very talented group of people who got together—very creative," said Corneliu "Coco" Olariu, a 20-year veteran music teacher at Downey High School in Southern California.

With a front line of alto saxophone, trumpet and trombone, and a rhythm section of guitar, piano, bass and drums, the members of Combo A were guided to delve into personal expression through composition. "We encourage them to write their own stuff," Olariu said.

Olariu has helped Downey High's jazz program to expand. When he started in 2001, it had a single group, and today it has three bands. Regarding Combo A, he marveled, "They worked on communication between each member, and by the end everyone was listening to everyone at all times." —Yoshi Kato

BU Jazz Ensemble with guest artist Stefon Harris

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piano

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*saxophone, ensembles,
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Frost Fusion Ensemble from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami

Community College Outstanding Performance

Adam Bender
Kansas City Kansas Community College
Dr. Justin Binek
Kansas City, KS

Undergraduate College Winners

Caitlyn Hearne
University of Adelaide
Elder Conservatorium
Anita Wardell
Adelaide, Australia

Faith Hatch
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Dr. Timothy Buchholz
Wausau, WI

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Damoyee Janai Neroes
Berklee College of Music
Eric Gould
Boston, MA

Lexie Lakmann
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Dr. Timothy Buchholz
Wausau, WI

Lora Sherrodd
University of Wyoming
Ben Markley
Laramie, WY

Lucille Wijnands
Purchase College, State University of New York
Alexis Cole
Purchase, NY

Patrick Hogan
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dave Loeb
Las Vegas, NV

Graduate College Winner

Kathryn Sherman
University of North Texas
Rosana Eckert
Denton, TX

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Amanda Roswick
University of Northern Colorado
Brennan Baglio and Julia Dollison
Greeley, CO

Small Vocal Jazz Group

High School Winner

Leyden High Schools Vocal Jazz Ensemble
Leyden High Schools
Stacy Cunningham
Franklin Park, IL
Outstanding Lead Soloist on 2nd Verse:
Katie Dermody on "New Day"

High School Outstanding Performance

Cary-Grove Jazz Choir
Cary-Grove High School
Patrick Whalen
Cary, IL

Community College Outstanding Performance

JAZZ-ology
Contra Costa College
Dr. Stephanie Austin

TUNED TO PERFECTION



Congratulations to our students and faculty for the following 2020 *DownBeat* Student Music Awards!

Blues/Pop/Rock Group

Community College Winner: The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble
John Stafford II, Director

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Community College Co-Winner: The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble
John Stafford II, Director

Outstanding Scat Soloist

Noah Haskin for "Reparations" with The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble
John Stafford II, Director

Vocal Jazz Soloist

Community College Outstanding Performance: Adam Bender
Justin Binek, Instructor

Honors Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Outstanding Performance: 2019 Oklahoma Choral Directors Association All-State Jazz Chorus
Justin Binek, Director

Outstanding Soloist

Sarah Teel for "Taking A Chance On Love" with the 2019 Oklahoma Choral Directors Association All-State Jazz Chorus
Justin Binek, Director

JAZZ FESTIVALS AT KCKCC

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September 12, 2020

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November 16-18, 2020

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April 27-30, 2021

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Ian Corbett | Audio Engineering | corbetti@kckcc.edu

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The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble



San Pablo, CA
Outstanding Lead Soloist:
Matthew Chamberlain on "Lazy
Bones"

Undergraduate College Winner

Vox Now

Sacramento State University
Gaw Vang Williams
Sacramento, CA
Outstanding Lead Soloist:
Brianne Gonzalez on "Jackie"

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

Frost Women's Jazz Vocal Ensemble

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Kate Reid
Coral Gables, FL

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Junior High School Winner

Eckstein Vocal Jazz I

Eckstein Middle School
Moc Escobedo
Seattle, WA
Outstanding Lead Soloist: Nadia
Luke on "Deedle's Blues"

Junior High School Outstanding Performance

Grass Valley Vocal Jazz

Grass Valley Elementary
Natalie Wilson
Camas, WA

High School Winners

Impressions

Meadowdale High School
Jeff Horenstein
Lynnwood, WA
Outstanding Lead Soloist on
1st Verse: Joshua Reynolds on
"Endless Lawns"

Two N' Four

Valencia High School
Christine Tavares-Mocha
Valencia, CA
Outstanding 2nd Soloist: Sophia
Bellefeuille on "The Sound Of
Silence"
Outstanding Lead Soloist on 1st
Verse: Jaden Lewis on "I'd Stop
Time"

High School Outstanding Performances

Jazz and Madrigal Ensemble

Fort Zumwalt West High School

The UNL Glenn Korff School of Music says Congrats!

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Jazz Singers

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Glenn Korff School of Music
David von Kampen
Lincoln, NE
Outstanding Beginning Soloist:
Stefanie Vanderbeek on "Fly Away Birdie"

About Jazz Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The award-winning UNL Jazz Studies Area is a vital part of the Glenn Korff School of Music. Offering graduate degrees in jazz studies (MM and DMA), the program is designed to be an intimate course of study, allowing our renowned faculty to work closely with our students to develop them as comprehensive teachers and performers. Area ensembles are open to any UNL student, regardless of major, through auditions held in the first week of the fall and spring semester.

2021 Graduate Audition Dates

February 5-6

2021 Undergraduate Audition Dates

January 22-23
February 19-20

Jazz Studies Faculty

Peter Bouffard, guitar
Paul Haar, saxophone
Dave Hall, percussion
Tom Larson, piano
Greg Simon, trumpet
Hans Sturm, bass
Darryl White, trumpet



Beth Enloe Fritz
O'Fallon, MO
Outstanding Lead Soloist:
Joelle Aaron on "Send One Your Love"

Jazz Choir

Folsom High School
Curtis Gaesser
Folsom, CA
Outstanding Male Lead Soloist:
Nino Cayabyab on "Moody's Mood For Love"
Outstanding Lead Female Soloist: Kira Freestone on "Moody's Mood For Love"

Take One

Niles North High School
Daniel Gregerman
Skokie, IL

High School Honors Ensemble Winner

Southern California Vocal Jazz Contemporary A Cappella Honor Choir

Various California High Schools
Christine Helferich Guter, Guest Conductor
California State University, Long Beach
Bob Cole Conservatory of Music
Long Beach, CA

High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance

2019 OKCDA All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Various Oklahoma High Schools
Guest Conductor: Dr. Justin Binek
Outstanding Soloist: Sarah Teel (Mustang High School), on "Takin' A Chance on Love"

Community College Winners

Singcopation

Mt. San Antonio College
Bruce Rogers
Walnut, CA
Outstanding Scat Soloist: Summer Greer on "Spinnin' Wheel"

The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Kansas City Kansas Community College
John Stafford II
Kansas City, KS
Outstanding Scat Soloist: Noah Haskin on "Reparations"

Community College Outstanding Performance

Bellevue College Jazz Singers

Bellevue College



OHS Jazz Ensemble I from Oswego High School in Illinois

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Photo: Kelly Maxwell



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LARGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE



Vibraphonist Stefon Harris (center) with the Butler University Jazz Ensemble



Byron Center Jazz Orchestra



"A Train" Jazz Band



University of Northern Colorado Jazz Lab Band I

Mentorship Yields Results

DURING HIS RUN AS BAND DIRECTOR at Willowcreek Middle School in Lehi, Utah, Dave Faires loved introducing jazz to kids. DownBeat recognized the effectiveness of his efforts by giving Willowcreek's "A Train" Jazz Band its first Student Music Awards honor, as a co-winner in the Junior High School division of the Large Jazz Ensemble category.

"I was an adjunct college band director for a couple of years while teaching at Willowcreek," said Faires, now a professor of music education at Brigham Young University–Idaho. "I oftentimes felt that I could have the same discussions with both groups of students. All ages can make great music, but sometimes the middle school kids embraced things more quickly and were more flexible."

Faires sees improvisation as the key to opening the door toward jazz for middle schoolers. "I try to establish a culture that everybody is an improviser," he explained. "Learning the blues was a major step toward music that gave everyone an opportunity to experiment a little bit."

Community involvement also has been important. "A few years ago, I went to the 7-Eleven across the street from the school and asked if we could come over and play on their Free Slurpee Day," Faires said. "It was like a three-hour jam session. Improvising in front of people in a low-pressure situation really built their confidence. And the 7-Eleven brought us back and paid us with a check for \$711 every year ever since."

As band and jazz director, Marc Townley

guided the Byron Center Jazz Orchestra to its first SMA: an Outstanding Performance honor in the High School division. "I love working with high school students because at that age they're refining a lot of their skills," Townley noted.

Townley's students benefit from his commitment to bringing famous jazz musicians to the school. "When we started the jazz program 15 years ago, my goal was to bring in a lot of my heroes—the people I'd grown up reading about in DownBeat," he said. "We raise funds for that through ticket sales for the concerts these artists give."

Christian McBride, Wycliffe Gordon, Marcus Printup and Ali Jackson have all visited the school. What was the secret in persuading such heavy hitters to make the trek to Western Michigan? Townley laughed and answered, "I just asked."

Naturally, by the time student musicians enroll in college, they're no longer beginners. Yet their education is by no means complete; here, as in their primary schools, what they learn goes beyond music and enhances their pursuit of whatever goals they set for themselves as adults.

Amaya Arevalo can testify to that. Now a junior at the University of Northern Colorado, with a double major in saxophone and piano, she grew up near the campus in Greeley. During summers in middle school and high school she attended the UNC Jazz Camp.

She took private lessons from Kenyon Brenner, who continues to work with her as

professor of saxophone.

Her loyalty to UNC is understandable, considering the caliber of musicians it produces. The school's Jazz Lab Band I, in which Arevalo plays tenor saxophone, is the winner in the Graduate College division. She credits teachers and fellow students alike for boosting her musicianship and confidence.

"I've heard that other schools are pretty competitive, with people always trying to cut each other—even in practice rooms," Arevalo said. "That's so surprising to me, because this school is so loving and accepting. That's what's so great about this school: People are there for each other."

A supportive environment is also a key factor at Butler University in Indianapolis, home to the BU Jazz Ensemble, which was the winner in the Undergraduate College division.

"We're fortunate to have many great faculty members who foster an environment of cooperation and teamwork," said Matthew Pivec, Butler's director of jazz studies.

The university has established a tradition of bringing to campus international stars for master classes and concerts. Among the jazz artists who have worked with students are Kurt Elling, Stefon Harris, Donny McCaslin, Bobby Sanabria and Maria Schneider.

"Our students quickly realize their heroes are just people who worked really hard and are very passionate," Pivec said. "Students envision the possibilities for their careers by hearing the relatable stories of the professionals."

—Bob Doerschuk

Thomas Alml
Bellevue, WA
Outstanding Soloist: Jade Perry
on "I Know What I've Got"
Outstanding 1st Vocalese
Soloist: Marly Mitchell on "Flight
Of The Foo Birds"
Outstanding 3rd Vocalese
Soloist: Santiago Sosa on "Flight
Of The Foo Birds"

Undergraduate College Winner

Point of Departure Vocal Jazz

Berklee College of Music
Grant Heineman and Claudia
Gruber, Student Directors
Michael Johnson, Faculty
Advisor
Boston, MA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Advanced Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Berklee College of Music
Ned Rosenblatt
Boston, MA
Outstanding Lead Soloist:
Alianora Reilly on "Song Of Life"

Jazz Singers

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
David von Kampen
Lincoln, NE
Outstanding Soloist: Stefanie

Vanderbeek on "Fly Away Birdie"

Graduate College Winners

Pacific Standard Time

California State University, Long
Beach
Bob Cole Conservatory of Music
Christine Helferich Guter
Long Beach, CA
Outstanding Scat Soloist: Sarah
Baiedi on "Nana Das Aguas"

UNT Jazz Singers

University of North Texas
Jennifer Barnes
Denton, TX
Outstanding Scat Soloist: Wes
Dziedzic on "Course"
Outstanding Improv Soloist:
Vaughn Faison on "Estrogenia"

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

Avenue C

University of North Texas
Kathryn Sherman
Denton, TX
Outstanding Scat Soloist: Hanna
Song on "Beautiful Moons Ago"

Vocal Lab

University of Northern Colorado
Brennan Baglio
Greeley, CO
Outstanding Lead Soloist: Jim Eads
on "The Beauty Of All Things"



Robert Acevedo Jr. from the University of Florida in Gainesville



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PA Leadership Charter School
Sean Townsend
West Chester, PA

Junior High School Honors Outstanding Performance

Madelyn Smith
Vocalist

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Evan Wharton
Salt Lake City, UT

High School Winner

Miles Magnini
Saxophone

Cary-Grove High School
Patrick Whalen
Cary, IL

High School Outstanding Performances

Joy Best
Bass

Alpharetta High School
Charles Laux and Michael Walsh
Alpharetta, GA

Victoria Lourdes Whatley
Vocalist

Baldwin County Virtual School
Teresa Hunter and Dr. Maryann Kyle
Daphne, AL

Performing Arts High School Winner

Matthew Jazwinski
Bass

Chicago Academy for the Arts
Jason Patera
Chicago, IL

High School Honors Winner

Daniel Baldwin
Alto Saxophone

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

High School Honors Outstanding Performance

Ava Preston
Vocalist

Tri-C JazzFest Academy
Dominick Farinacci
Cleveland, OH

Community College Winner

Kaprice Maxwell
Vocalist

The School for Music Vocations
at Southwestern Community
College
Dr. Jeremy Fox
Creston, IA

Undergraduate College Winner

Maya Stepansky
Drums

Princeton University
Rudresh Mahanthappa
Princeton, NJ

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

Samantha Costigan Vocalist

University of Northern Colorado
Brennan Baglio
Greeley, CO

Graduate College Winner

Grayson Nye Piano

Western Michigan University
Matthew Fries
Kalamazoo, MI

Patrick Whalen
Cary, IL

High School Outstanding Performances

Plano West Jazz Sextet

Plano West Senior High School
Preston Pierce
Plano, TX

Quincy Avenue Rhythm Band

Kent Denver School
Justin Adams
Englewood, CO

RCC Jazz Ensemble from Riverside City College in California



BLUES/POP/ROCK GROUP

Junior High School Honors Winner

Jukebox Antihero

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Evan Wharton
Salt Lake City, UT

High School Winners

Briarcrest Soundscape

Briarcrest Christian School
Michael Parsons
Eads, TN

Cary-Grove Jazz Combo

Cary-Grove High School

High School Honors Ensemble Winners

Max Headroom

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Evan Wharton
Salt Lake City, UT

Voodoo Orchestra

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Caleb Chapman
Salt Lake City, UT

High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performances

Deep Pocket

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse
Steven Ramos and Evan Wharton
Salt Lake City, UT



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Kansas City Kansas Community College
John Stafford II
Kansas City, KS

Undergraduate College Winner

Frost Funk Ensemble

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Steve Rucker
Coral Gables, FL

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Rock Ensemble I

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Kevin Kjos
Kutztown, PA

Commercial Break

Vanderbilt University
Ryan Middagh and Jeff Coffin
Nashville, TN

Frost Fusion Ensemble

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Steve Rucker
Coral Gables, FL

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JAZZ-o-logy

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Community College
Small Vocal Jazz Group
Outstanding Soloist - Matthew Chamberlain

Jazz Faculty: Dr. Stephanie Austin, Clinton Day, Roger Letson, Fred Randolph

School of Applied and Commercial Music

CONTRA COSTA COLLEGE

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Lushh

Western Michigan University
Andrew Rathbun
Kalamazoo, MI

Latin Group

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance

Dreyfoos Latin All-Stars

A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts
Pedro Hernandez
West Palm Beach, FL

Undergraduate College Winner

Lawrence University Latin Jazz Band

Lawrence University
José Encarnación
Appleton, WI

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Rico Jones Trio

Manhattan School of Music
Donny McCaslin
New York, NY

Rico Jones Nonet

Manhattan School of Music

Donny McCaslin
New York, NY

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

George Mason Latin American Ensemble

George Mason University
Juan Megna
Fairfax, VA

Jalousie

Western Michigan University
Scott Cowan
Kalamazoo, MI

Original Composition – Small Ensemble

Junior High School Honors Winner

Brandon Goldberg, “Unimagined Enemy”

Pine Crest School (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
Dave Ballou
Litchfield Jazz Camp (Washington, CT)

High School Winners

Connor MacLeod and Colman Burks, “Dunes”

Plano West Senior High School



Benjamin Turner from Temple University in Philadelphia

Congratulations to our

Jazz Band

A large group of students in white uniforms are playing various instruments like saxophones, trumpets, and tubas outdoors. They are arranged in rows, with some standing and some sitting. The background shows a building and trees.

Outstanding performance for a Junior High School Large Jazz Ensemble

The Jazz Band is a nationally-recognized group of musicians adhering to a performance-based curriculum. This ensemble participates in as many as fourteen main performances during the year, including community concerts and judged performances. The Jazz Band has scored Superior Ratings at Florida's Music Performance Assessments 11 years in a row, recently performed at the 71st Midwest Clinic, was invited to perform at JEN, and has won two DownBeat Student Music Awards in the last two years.

The Jazz Band is open to students in grades 7 and 8 with previous instrumental experience.

For more information, contact Robert Keating, Director of Bands, at kear@gulliverschools.org or visit us at gulliver.life/jazz

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Yessaï Karapetian from the Global Jazz Institute at Berklee College of Music in Boston

Preston Pierce
Plano, TX

High School Outstanding Compositions

Chris Ghaffar, "Slanted"
Plano West Senior High School
Preston Pierce
Plano, TX

Dan Ventura, "Waves"
North Kingstown High School
Toni Silveira
North Kingstown, RI

Leo Major, "Rising Embers"
Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences
Evan Avery
Santa Monica, CA

Performing Arts High School Winner

Luke Sterling, "Signifier"
Los Angeles County High School for the Arts
Daniel Rotem
Los Angeles, CA

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Composition

Oliver Tuttle, "Backyard Boogie"
Oakland School for the Arts
Dave Ellis
Oakland, CA

High School Honors Winners

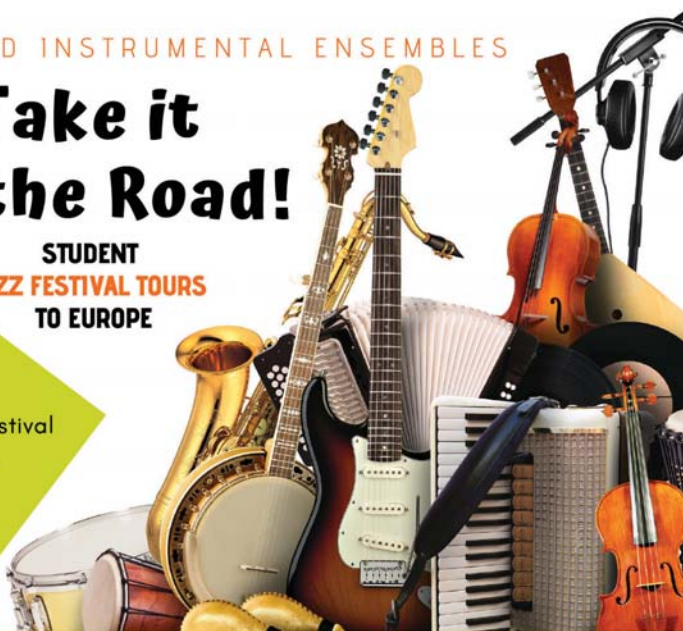
Joshua Wong, "Rolling With The Punches"
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of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Lucas Perry, "Salt And Pepper"

San Francisco University High School
Peter Horvath
San Francisco, CA

**High School Honors
Outstanding Compositions**

Esteban Castro, "Entranced"

Bergen County Academies
Phillip Kawin
(Manhattan School of Music
Precollege program)
New York, NY

Ethan Avery, "Hopefully I'll Know"

Colburn Community School
of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Jasper Talwani, "Eschatology"

Colburn Community School
of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Sean Harbour, "Harbour Lights"

Colburn Community School
of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Undergraduate College Winners

Luca Mendoza, "Contract"

University of Southern California
Thornton School of Music
Bob Mintzer
Los Angeles, CA

Marcello Carelli, "Resilience"

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Steve Rucker
Coral Gables, FL

Seth Giles, "Paul's Carpentry"

Oklahoma State University
Paul Compton
Stillwater, OK

**Undergraduate College
Outstanding Compositions**

Joseph Mueller, "The Truman"

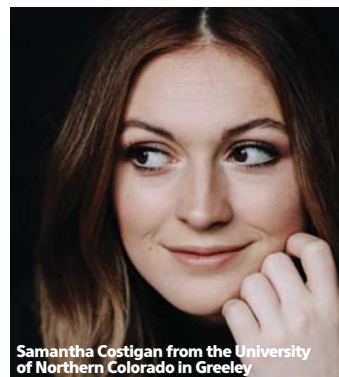
University of Adelaide
Elder Conservatorium



Henry Acker from Duxbury High School in Massachusetts



Victoria Lourdes Whatley from Baldwin County Virtual School in Daphne, Alabama



Samantha Costigan from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley

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Chuck Bergeron

Original Composition — Small Ensemble
Undergraduate College Winner
Marcello Carelli, "Resilience"
Steve Rucker

Undergraduate College Outstanding Compositions
Mackenzie Karbon, "Song for Irving's Lemon Tree"
Chuck Bergeron

Engineered Studio Recording
Graduate College Winner
Bryan Kennard
Gary Lindsay

Graduate College Outstanding Recording
Christian George
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Jazz Arrangement
Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements Big Band
Eli Feingold, "Naima"
Gary Lindsay

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements Small Ensemble
Bryan Kennard, "Beat 70"
Gary Lindsay

Graduate College Winner Vocal
Alan Hsiao, "James"
Gary Lindsay

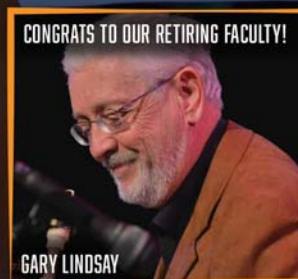
Original Composition — Large Ensemble
Graduate College Outstanding Compositions
Bryan Kennard, "Mine"
Gary Lindsay

Engineered Live Recording
Graduate College Winner
Bryan Kennard
Gary Lindsay

Small Vocal Jazz Group
Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance
Frost Women's Jazz Vocal Ensemble
Kate Reid

Blues/Pop/Rock Group
Undergraduate College Winner
Frost Funk Ensemble
Steve Rucker

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances
Frost Fusion Ensemble
Steve Rucker



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It is my distinct pleasure that for two years in a row my students have received Outstanding Performance nods from DownBeat in the Jazz Soloist category: Max Holm was an honoree in 2019, and Alec Schulman is an honoree this year.

I'm very proud of Max and Alec, and I feel privileged that - as a Berklee Piano Professor - I am in the position to help these young, talented musicians!



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BLUES/POP/ROCK SOLOIST



Grayson Nye



Maya Stepansky



Kaprice Maxwell



Joy Best

Talented Players Soar

THE HONOREES IN THE BLUES/POP/ROCK SOLOIST CATEGORY clearly have superb talent as a common denominator.

High School Outstanding Performance honoree Joy Best is a senior at Alpharetta High School in Georgia. Best started out playing piano, became interested in guitar and then began playing bass. Attending a Berklee College of Music camp last summer turned out to be a defining moment. "It was a life-changing experience being surrounded by people as passionate about music as me," Best said. "I also met Victor Wooten, and we ended up going out for pizza. My SMA submission included a version of 'Isn't She Lovely' that was inspired by him."

Kaprice Maxwell, a winner in the Community College division, is a vocal student at The School for Music Vocations at Southwestern Community College in Creston, Iowa. She grew up in Milwaukee with an early focus on church choir music.

"I started singing very early," Maxwell said, "I joined the Milwaukee Children's Choir when I was 7. I went on to sing with the Milwaukee Youth Symphony, and at Milwaukee High School of the Arts I was in choir, orchestra and the vocal jazz group."

Maya Stepansky, winner of the Undergraduate College division, started her musical career in Montclair, New Jersey, with her grade school's precision drum corps. In high school, she performed and recorded with the Brubeck Institute Jazz Quintet. She is now finishing her sophomore year at Princeton University, where she's had the opportunity to study with Rudresh Mahanthappa, the university's director of jazz, and visiting artists Terri Lyne Carrington and Ambrose Akinmusire. She performs with rising pop musician Julien Chang's band, The Deep Green.

"Although I'm a jazz-trained drummer, it's cool to be recognized in other styles," Stepansky said. "I love to be as versatile as I can."

Graduate College division winner Grayson Nye will receive his master's in jazz studies this spring at Western Michigan University, where he also earned his bachelor's. His SMA submission, "Into The Grey Havens," reflects an eclectic approach to combining different elements.

"It's an original composition that combined rhythm section and sax with an extra keyboard, a string quartet and Western's vocal jazz group, Gold Company," Nye said. "The lyrics are from a poem in *The Lord of the Rings*, and they include the line, 'west of the moon, east of the sun.' I took the melody of the standard 'East Of The Sun And West Of The Moon' and flipped it for the melody of my song."

—Terry Perkins

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Adelaide, Australia

**Mackenzie Karbon, "Song
For Irving's Lemon Tree"**

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Chuck Bergeron
Coral Gables, FL

**Tommy Schilb,
"Tank"**

Ball State University
Scott Routenberg
Muncie, IN

Graduate College Winner

**Yessaï Karapetian,
"Ti(m)es"**

Berklee College of Music
(Global Jazz Institute)
Danilo Pérez
Boston, MA

**Graduate College Outstanding
Compositions**

Rin Seo, "Jazz Suite"

Manhattan School of Music
Jim McNeely
New York, NY

**Ursula Reicher,
"What"**

University of Music and
Performing Arts, Graz
Ed Partyka
Graz, Austria



BYU Synthesis Big Band from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah

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Large Ensemble**

High School Winner

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"For Mr. Mintzer"**

Rio Americano High School
Josh Murray and Mitch Evett
Sacramento, CA

**High School Outstanding
Composition**

**Bryce Hayashi,
"The Place I Call Home"**

Northgate High School
Greg Brown
Walnut Creek, CA

**Performing Arts High School
Winner**

**Aron Stornaiuolo,
"A Midnight In Detroit"**

North Carolina School of the Arts
Ronald Rudkin
Winston-Salem, NC

High School Honors Winner

**Benny Conn,
"Lava Cake After School"**

Colburn Community School
of Performing Arts
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, CA

Community College Winner

**Victor Ochoa,
"De La Rosa"**

Long Beach City College
Patrick Sheng
Long Beach, CA

Undergraduate College Winners

**Jason Mountario, "Fake
People"**



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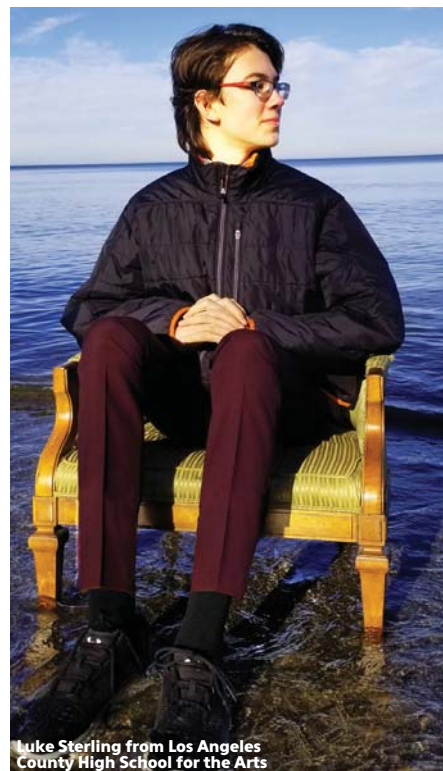
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for his award: Winner,
"A Midnight In Detroit" in
the Original Composition,
Large Ensemble category,
Performing Arts High
School division.

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Luke Sterling from Los Angeles
County High School for the Arts

Berklee College of Music
Bob Pilkington
Boston, MA

Yoko Suzuki, "Hmmm"
Berklee College of Music
Greg Hopkins
Boston, MA

Graduate College Winner

Benjamin Morris, "Ymir's Bones"
University of Colorado Boulder
Thompson Jazz Studies
Carter Pann
Boulder, CO

Graduate College Outstanding Compositions

Bryan Kennard, "Mine"
University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Gary Lindsay
Coral Gables, FL

Greg Weis, "The Imitator"
University of Northern Colorado
Drew Zaremba
Greeley, CO

Summer Kodama, "Wind Over Water"
McGill University
Joe Sullivan
Montreal, Canada

Jazz Arrangement

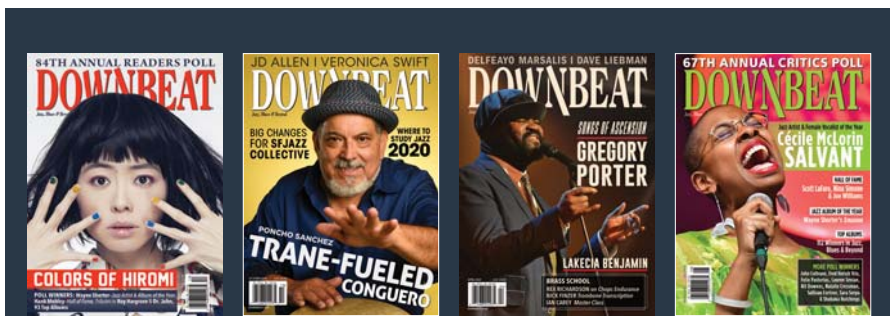
Junior High School Honors Winner

Brandon Goldberg, "Blackbird"
Pine Crest School (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
Giselle Brodsky
Aventura, FL

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Brian Leff
Stevenson Ranch, CA

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Jackson Irvine, "Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk"

Rio Americano High School
Josh Murray and Mitch Evett
Sacramento, CA

Performing Arts High School Winner

Tal Kalman, "I Loves You Porgy"

Thelma Yellin High School of the Arts
Eli Benacot
Givatayim, Israel

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Arrangement

Samuel Martin, "I Thought About You"

Booker T. Washington High School for
the Performing and Visual Arts
Bob Lawrence
Dallas, TX

High School Honors Winner

Esteban Castro, "Little Rootie Tootie"

Bergen County Academies
Phillip Kawin (Manhattan School of Music
Precollege program)
New York, NY

Community College Winner

Bralen Martin, "Eye Of The Tiger"

Hutchinson Community College
Neal Allsup
Hutchinson, KS

Undergraduate College Winner

Nikos Chatzitsakos, "I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face"

Berklee College of Music
Jackson Schultz
Boston, MA

Undergraduate College Outstanding Arrangements

Grant Heineman, "I Can't Help It"

Berklee College of Music
Michael Johnson
Boston, MA

Paulo Santos, "Seven Steps To Heaven"

University of Texas at Austin
John Mills
Austin, TX

Graduate College Winner-Vocal

Alan Hsiao, "James"

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Gary Lindsay
Coral Gables, FL

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangement-Vocal

Reginald Bowens, "Our Love Is Here To Stay"

Case Western Reserve University
Paul Ferguson
Cleveland, OH

Graduate College Winner- Small Ensemble

Jorge Machain-Vega, "Boplicity"

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Nathan Tanouye
Las Vegas, NV



Kathryn Sherman from the
University of North Texas in Denton



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Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements—Small Ensemble

Anastassiya Petrova, "All The Things Evidence Is"

Berklee College of Music
Eirini Tornesaki
Boston, MA

Bryan Kennard, "Beat 70"

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Gary Lindsay
Coral Gables, FL

Graduate College Winner—Big Band

Nerya Zidon, "All The Way To Sendai"

Berklee College of Music
Alain Mallet
Boston, MA

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements—Big Band

Eli Feingold, "Naima"

University of Miami
Frost School of Music
Gary Lindsay
Coral Gables, FL

Nathan Poehlke, "Come Rain Or Come Shine"

University of Oregon
Steve Owen
Eugene, OR

Seulah Noh, "Have You Heard?"

New England Conservatory
Ken Schaphorst
Boston, MA

Graduate College Winner—Studio Orchestra

David Weinstein, "Little Sunflower"

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Undergraduate College Outstanding Recording

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Christian George
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Jazz artists often come to their music a little later in life than counterparts in other genres. A case in point is Hanna Song. Born in South Korea and trained on piano, she wasn't even acquainted with jazz until enrolling at Glendale Community College in California. On a whim, the graphic design major signed up for jazz choir and became so enamored that she transferred to the University of North Texas.

A crash course followed, with Song targeting Carmen McRae, Sara Gazarek and Darmon Meader as guiding lights. She applied what she'd learned about intervals and harmonies from her piano study to get inside the charts as she began singing with the UNT ensemble Avenue C, which received an Outstanding Performance honor in the Graduate College division. The results can be heard in her wordless solo on the band's rendering of "Beautiful Moons Ago," which earned her a special Outstanding Scat Soloist distinction.

Sara Baiedi, a jazz studies major at California State University, Long Beach, received an Outstanding Scat Soloist distinction for her performance with the group Pacific Standard Time, a winner in the Graduate College division. The jazz studies major began singing in elementary school, memorized scat solos by Ella Fitzgerald, drew from Anita O'Day's lyricism and got into jazz with help from a guitar-playing friend in high school.

"He helped me learn jazz chords on the guitar and how to comp," she remembered. "That was super helpful as a jazz singer, to be

in the rhythm section first."

On Pacific Standard Time's version of "Nana Das Aguas," Baiedi begins her scat improvisation with a quote from "Anthropology." "People hear you do Charlie Parker over a samba and go, 'That's cool!'" she said. "Then I just saw where things went in terms of fitting into the changes."

Noah Haskin earned an Outstanding Scat Soloist recognition for his performance on "Reparations" with the Kansas City Kansas Community College's Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble, a winner in the Community College division. Haskin also wrote the arrangement.

"Scat is not about filling up the time with notes," said John Stafford II, director of the ensemble. "Spacing is important. I've been working on the idea of using syncopation and long, sustained notes, the character of the scat and the line, more than teaching scales to scat over. Noah gets that."

Joshua Reynolds' lead vocals on "Endless Lawns" with Impressions—the vocal jazz ensemble at Meadowdale High School in Lynnwood, Washington—earned him an Outstanding Lead Soloist distinction.

Jeff Horenstein, choir director and music department chair at Meadowdale, said that the group's performance was based on a Kurt Elling recording. "When I heard the tune, I thought it would be a cool fit for these singers and for Josh in particular," Horenstein said. "Josh is a super-talented musician. He's our first-chair viola player in the orchestra, as well as a singer in all of our choirs. One time, when we had a gig and the guitar player was unavailable, he said, 'I can figure this out.' He didn't just comp and play changes; he read the notes perfectly, too."

—Bob Doerschuk

JUDGING CRITERIA

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- 1) Overall sound
- 2) Presence or authority
- 3) Proper interpretation of idiom
- 4) Improvisation or creativity
- 5) Technique
- 6) Intonation
- 7) Phrasing
- 8) Dynamics
- 9) Accurate rhythm/time
- 10) Material

ENGINEERING CRITERIA

- 1) Perspective: balance of channels; amount and type of reverb; blend (Do all sounds seem to have been performed at the same time and place? Do solos seem natural or do they stick out?).
- 2) Levels: saturation or other overload, under modulation resulting in excessive hiss, consistency of levels, left/right balance, etc.
- 3) Transparency and apparent transient response.
- 4) Special effects: Are they appropriate? Do they add or detract?
- 5) Extraneous noises, clicks, hum, etc. (for a non-live performance, any non-musical sound).
- 6) Professional etiquette.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Plaques are awarded to the music department of each winning middle school, high school and college. Certificates are awarded to each winner (or Outstanding Performance honoree) and to the director of ensembles.

JUDGES

Jim Anderson: Grammy winner and professor at NYU's Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music.

Darcy James Argue: Composer, arranger and bandleader.

Jeff Baker: Recording artist, educator, producer, composer and co-founder of The Reality Book, the Jazz Forward Competition and Next Records.

Justin Binek: Vocalist, pianist, composer, arranger, educator; member, NAJME Council for Jazz Education.

Janice Boria: Vocalist; Director of Vocal Jazz, North Central College; vocal jazz camp founder.

Don Braden: Saxophonist, flutist, composer, arranger; Music Director, Litchfield Jazz Camp.

Jeff Coffin: Saxophonist, bandleader, composer, educator/clinician.

Claire Daly: Baritone saxophonist, recording artist, composer, educator/clinician.

John Daversa: Chair, Department of Studio Music and Jazz, Frost School of Music, University of Miami.

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Bart Marantz: Legendary jazz educator whose bands have won 245 DownBeat Student Music Awards.

Miles Osland: Saxophonist; Director of Jazz Studies, University of Kentucky.

Bob Parsons: Saxophonist, arranger and composer.

Dave Rivello: Eastman School of Music Assistant Professor of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media, and Director, New Jazz Ensemble.

Albert Rivera: Saxophonist, composer, educator; Director of Operations, Litchfield Jazz Camp.

John Santos: Percussionist, clinician, label owner; U.S. Artists Fontanals Fellow; writer/historian.

Gregory Tardy: Recording artist, Assistant Professor of Jazz Saxophone, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Ryan Truesdell: Bandleader, composer, arranger, trombonist, clinician.

James Warrick: Educator/clinician, former Director of Jazz Studies at New Trier High School.



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Sound Alliance is the premier jazz ensemble of BYU–Idaho, located in Rexburg.

BYU–Idaho Expounds on the Jazz Tradition

DR. MARK WATKINS, WHO HEADS THE jazz studies program at Brigham Young University–Idaho, has a long history with the school. He left the music department at North Dakota State University in 1999 to join the faculty at what was then called Ricks College, a two-year institution in Rexburg, Idaho. And he saw the potential for growth, especially in the area of jazz.

“Wilson Brown was running the music program,” Dr. Watkins recalled. “[It] had a commercial focus, but Wilson and Matt Miles, the music librarian, had started an improv class in the evening and a lab band that rehearsed in the track locker room under the stadium. They developed an ensemble, and that was the starting point for the jazz studies program.”

Jazz at Ricks grew more quickly than Watkins had envisioned. An annual festival began in 1999, and in 2001, Ricks transitioned into a four-year university under its current name. On-campus enrollment grew from 9,000 to more than 19,000 today, and the addition of online courses pushed total enrollment to nearly 40,000 students.

Working within the university’s newly implemented three-semester track system, Watkins, who became director of the jazz program in 2001, augmented the music department faculty with adjunct and visiting faculty members, as well as guest lecturers. The school now offers a variety of bachelor’s options, including degrees in jazz studies and performance.

“We hired Kobie Watkins, a talented drummer who substituted for Terri Lyne Carrington at our 2014 jazz festival, as our jazz percussion

guest lecturer,” Watkins said. “And pianist Justin Nielsen, who is an outstanding performer and teacher from Boise, now teaches our rhythm section students as a guest lecturer.”

“I live in Durham, North Carolina,” Kobie Watkins explained. “So, I fly up to BYU–Idaho two times a semester. I come in for three to five days to teach and conduct master classes, as well as doing outreach to area high schools. ... It’s about creating a base-learning experience and strong fundamentals—and building on that, so they can move forward, further and faster.”

Currently, the BYU–Idaho program has two big bands, three jazz combos and a 12-voice group called Vocal Union. The premier band, Sound Alliance, has toured nationally and internationally.

“We now have a curriculum that includes two improv classes, one in composition and arrangement, two levels of jazz history, as well as classes in audio engineering, Pro Tools, jazz ensemble and jazz big band,” Dr. Watkins said.

But he emphasized that the growth of jazz studies is dependent on the support of the entire music department—and the Rexburg community. “We focus on the student body as a whole,” he said. “Music education majors are most of the music school population. They need experience in jazz, and we provide that.”

At press time, BYU–Idaho students’ lives had changed drastically due to the coronavirus pandemic, as the state of Idaho was under a stay-at-home order, and university officials were planning to conduct spring semester classes remotely and online.

—Terry Perkins



Cassandra Wilson

Honorary Doctorates: Berklee College of Music and Boston Conservatory at Berklee will present honorary doctorates to five influential artists in the performing arts during virtual commencement ceremonies on May 9. Musicians Cassandra Wilson, Sheila E. and John Legend will receive honorary Doctor of Music degrees from the college, and dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov and stage actor André De Shields will receive honorary Doctor of Arts degrees from the conservatory. From remote locations around the world, a group of student performers representing the college and conservatory class of 2020 will unite as a collaborative virtual ensemble to record a multi-genre tribute to the honorees, with accompanying split-screen-style videos. The prerecorded tribute will air on May 8 on Berklee’s YouTube channel, and the ceremonies will be streamed on Berklee social media accounts the following day. berklee.edu

Emergency Fund: The Board of Directors of the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation has created The Louis Armstrong Emergency Fund for Jazz Musicians to provide \$1 million in financial support to musicians (vocalists and instrumentalists) in the New York metropolitan area who have lost income due to coronavirus-related closures. The fund will award one-time grants of \$1,000 to assist individual freelance jazz musicians who work with regularity in the five boroughs of New York City. A selection committee consisting of area club owners, scholars, presenters and media activists will evaluate each application.

louisarmstrongfoundation.org

Intense Summer: The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will add two new programs, Global Jazz and Songwriting, to its lineup of weeklong online Summer Intensive Programs for high school musicians ages 14–18 this year. The programs are designed to expand knowledge and performance skills while helping students engage with expert instructors and UCLA faculty. Returning for its second year, the Voice Online Intensive Program, which caters to a range of vocal styles and repertoire, will run alongside the Global Jazz program from June 22 to 27. ucla.edu

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Walter Smith III

After almost a full year as chair of Berklee College of Music's Woodwind Department, 39-year-old tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III sat for his first Blindfold Test while in New York for a Village Vanguard engagement with the Bill Stewart Trio. A Houston native, Smith's most recent album, *TWIO* (Whirlwind Recordings) features drummer Eric Harland, bassists Christian McBride and Harish Raghavan, and, on two tunes, tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman.

Emmet Cohen

"On Green Dolphin Street" (*Masters Legacy Series, Vol. 4: Emmet Cohen Featuring George Coleman*, Self Release, 2019) Cohen, piano; George Coleman, tenor saxophone; Russell Hall, bass; Bryan Carter, drums.

Something about the rhythm section feels like a younger band, but the saxophone player is not in the same generation. Could it be George Coleman? It's something in the sound, the way he plays the melody, some specific things he does towards the end of the form—though a lot of choices sound like someone of the younger generation. It was a strong solo—creative, too. From phrase to phrase, you don't see what's coming, and he's interacting with the band. Emmet Cohen on piano?

Saxophone Summit

"Carousel" (*Street Talk*, Enja/Yellowbird, 2019) Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone; Greg Osby, alto saxophone; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Phil Markowitz, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Osby. Mark Shim on tenor? Oh, Joe Lovano. So, Osby and Joe ... Liebman? So, that's Billy Hart, Phil Markowitz and Cecil McBee. Whose tune is this? It's great writing, very creative, as is Greg's playing. I knew it was Osby from the intro; playing in the open section, his time is ridiculous, and his phrasing is cool. My ear is drawn to him through the whole thing. I've been listening to Greg since early in high school. I'm from Houston; all the Houston heroes—Jason Moran, Eric Harland—were in his band.

Joey DeFrancesco

"Soul Perspective" (*In The Key Of The Universe*, Mack Avenue, 2019) DeFrancesco, organ; Troy Roberts, tenor and soprano saxophone; Billy Hart, drums.

The saxophone sound is familiar, very full and even. Joel Frahm? My other guess, partly because his sound is similar—and because I'm guessing the organ is Joey DeFrancesco—is Troy Roberts. The saxophone does not inhibit Troy in any way; he moves around like it's nothing. And I love that sound. Joey's incredible. I don't know anyone whose left hand is that independent.

Dayna Stephens Trio

"Faith Leap" (*Liberty*, Contagious Music, 2020) Stephens, tenor saxophone; Ben Street, bass; Eric Harland, drums.

That's Dayna—Harland and Ben Street? I could tell Dayna 10 seconds in, from his sound—how he articulates, his inflections even when playing the melody. There's a lot of patience. Great writer. Articulation might be the thing I mess around with most when I'm playing. A lot of my interest in that came from listening to Dayna, who was the first person I met when I got to Berklee. He does unique things, especially in the upper register, that tell you it's him when he's playing a melody.

Chris Speed Trio

"Yard Moon" (*Respect For Your Toughness*, Intakt, 2019) Speed, tenor saxophone; Chris Tordini, bass; Dave King, drums.

Is that a contrafact of "Diverse"? It's in a different key—in F minor, and in 9. Going by the tenor sound—Chris Speed, who I saw play a couple of



times in L.A. on a Monday night session he has with Jeff Parker. That's killing. Great time. Creative. Hard tune to play, especially trio.

Kamasi Washington

"Hub-Tones" (*Heaven And Earth*, Brainfeeder, 2018) Washington, tenor saxophone; Dontae Winslow, trumpet; Ryan Porter, trombone; Cameron Graves, piano; Brandon Coleman, keyboards; Miles Mosley, bass; Ronald Bruner Jr., Tony Austin, drums; Allakoi Peete, Kahlil Cummings, percussion.

"Hub-Tones." Definitely Kamasi. The trumpet player is Dontae Winslow. Tony Austin and Ronald Bruner on drums. The band sound is rich, a lot going on, a lot of people involved—that's the hallmark of his music. He finds a way to do something simple, like the drum chant, and then plays that melody over it in a way that keeps you engaged the whole time. I'd describe his instrumental personality as relentless. Once he starts, it just keeps going. He pulls that momentum until he's done.

Jacques Schwarz-Bart

"Oseh Shalom" (*Hazzan*, Enja/Yellowbird, 2018) Schwarz-Bart, tenor saxophone; Gregory Privat, piano; Stéphane Kerecki, bass; Arnaud Dolmen, drums.

I was thinking of someone influenced by Michael Brecker or Bob Berg. I can't guess who it is. A very accomplished player—played all over the saxophone, comfortable in all the registers, everything is even.

Quinsin Nachsoff

"Clairvoyant Jest" (*Quinsin Nachsoff's Ethereal Trio*, Whirlwind Recordings, 2017) Nachsoff, tenor saxophone; Mark Helias, bass; Dan Weiss, drums.

When it started, the way they get into the arrangement felt like something from JD Allen's trio, but after the high E-flat I could tell it wasn't JD. During the solo, I was thinking of Seamus Blake, but then it became clear that it wasn't. I need to know who this is, because I'm going to steal a lot of that stuff for the trio playing.

David Kikoski

"Lazy Bird" (*Phoenix Rising*, High Note, 2019) Kikoski, piano; Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone; Peter Washington, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

Eric Alexander. Is Kikoski on piano? I didn't know they played together. As soon as Eric played the melody, I identified him by his sound. I met him in high school, when he was teaching at a Jamey Aebersold camp, and I've always followed his records. Eric's a bad dude. A lot of vocabulary. Great time. He knows all the substitutions. Every note is accounted for, and I appreciate that. I once toured with Kikoski in Poland, and a lot of what he was playing jogged a memory. He's probably the only person who would add even more changes—"Countdown" chords—to what's already in "Lazy Bird."

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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