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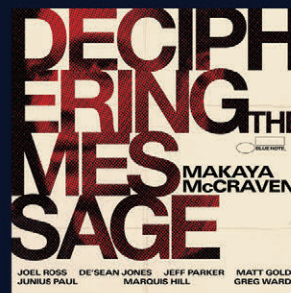
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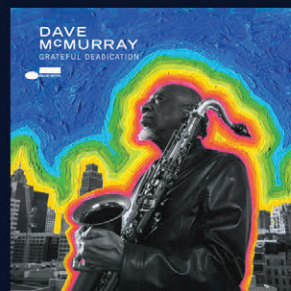
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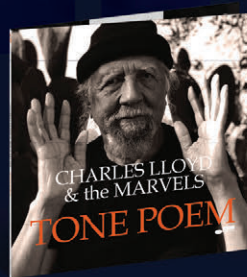
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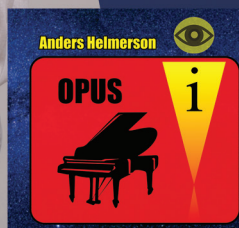


## SWEDISH COMPOSER/PIANIST ANDERS HELMERSEN RELEASING CONTEMPORARY JAZZ ALBUM *OPUS i.*

Jazz music, the album is both energetic and relaxing, showcasing the best of Helmersen's eclectic contemporary style.

The album, a lockdown project led by Helmersen, bassist Lukasz Chyla and drummer Juan Mejia, was written by Helmersen over a number of years. With obvious drama and an exciting intensity characteristic of Helmersen style, the timbre itself feels light, relaxing, and many tracks from the album have ended up on chill music playlists despite its complex metrics. Helmersen previously released three albums, with cult *Tripe Ripple* (2011) featuring collaborations with German drummer Marco Minnemann and American bassist Bryan Beller.

Following "Triple Ripple" Anders paused electronica to explore acoustic grand piano music in collaboration with his new trio. This new outfit came as a surprise to many with its more traditional conception. Some fans were disappointed, but Helmersen gained many new listeners with his ever-evolving style and ear for contemporary piano.



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# JANUARY 2022

# Inside

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#### *Inflamed Soul*

BY TED PANKEN

In July 2020, four months after COVID-19 locked down the world, The Cookers entered Van Gelder Studio to record *Look Out!* (Gearbox), its sixth album of original compositions created by members of the band. As on its previous five releases, the collective septet uncorks rarefied levels of inflamed soul improvisation emblematic of The Cookers' hard-driving brand.

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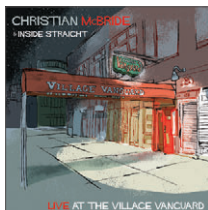
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BY JIMI DURSO



The Cookers, the ultimate band of burning legends

Cover photo by John Abbott



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A musician is seated at a desk in a dimly lit studio, playing a Korg Nautilus synthesizer. The desk also holds a large computer monitor displaying a digital audio workstation (DAW) interface, a white keyboard, and two studio monitors. A potted plant is visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is creative and professional.

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## First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



This month's cover serves as a long-overdue tribute to these artists.

# 500+ Years of Living Jazz

**WITH THIS ISSUE OF DOWNBEAT, WE TAKE** a step toward correcting history.

For the seven artists who grace this month's cover, it's their first time appearing there. That's hard to believe considering what each of them has contributed to this music during their lifetimes, experience that tallies 500-plus years.

DownBeat has certainly reviewed the music of Cecil McBee, Billy Hart, Eddie Henderson, Billy Harper, George Cables, David Weiss and Donald Harrison (listed oldest to youngest, as is right and proper). We have interviewed them over the years as bandleaders and sidemen. But never for the cover.

This writer has been around the magazine for three decades of that time. There's some blame to be pointed in this direction, but no good answer. These are some of the greatest artists on planet earth, and we wouldn't blame them for feeling slighted by the oversight, even though they have certainly received plenty of other accolades.

There are Grammy Awards aplenty among these fine players. Poll winners, sure. Hart and Harrison have been named NEA Jazz Masters. Still, trumpeter, arranger and composer David Weiss offers a sense of the frustration he feels for these artists in this month's long-overdue cover article on The Cookers.

"It's always about the history," Weiss told writer Ted Panken. "Everybody wants to talk about [some] record they were on in 1969, and not about what they're doing now. The Alice Coltrane and Roy Brooks things are great. But how do you explain that a living embodiment of this is happening right now? We're kind of

between a rock and a hard place. We're doing this unique thing that nobody else really is doing. But whatever the jazz industry is now, we are not embraced by that. We're pigeonholed as playing old music. We're not like the new, hippest young thing, which of course is not hip or young at all. How do I make it possible for these guys to work within that realm?"

Anyone who knows Weiss knows he is nothing if not passionate, especially about this group. He organized its first get-together and has served as a champion for its music and members, taking an us-against-the-world attitude — one that made critics and audiences take notice — because he is right: The music they make is just *that* good.

Back in 2015, The Cookers were named the Rising Star Group of the Year in DownBeat's annual Critics Poll. The award was well-deserved because the band had only been around for a few years, but also a bit of a novelty because most of its members were in their 70s.

In the article accompanying the award (again, not a cover), Harper hit on what makes The Cookers, well, *cook*.

"Our collective history allows for extra freedom, but we know exactly where we are," the saxophonist said. "I might deliberately play something a little louder than usual, and they know why — historically why."

We must respect working musicians who have carried instruments on their backs across the continents for decades and continue to do so with a shared respect for the jazz tradition. With this cover, we respect The Cookers and their enduring spirit.

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## Vitro Taps Legends for Parker Tribute

Roseanna Vitro is a Grammy-nominated vocalist, a member of the Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame, a jazz ambassador for the Kennedy Center and an all-around institution on the New York jazz scene. But her sense of awe and humility — particularly when faced with a Bird chart — remains intact.

“Have you ever tried singing a bridge to a Charlie Parker song? It just looks like the craziest thing in the world to me,” she said with a laugh.

Vitro, who’s been recording and performing in New York since 1978, is known for her immersive studies of artists like Bill Evans, Randy Newman and Clare Fischer, but she’s never recorded a full album of Charlie Parker’s music until now.

Last September, she released *Sing A Song Of Bird*, an expansive vocalese exploration of Parker’s songbook featuring three of Vitro’s mentors: the late Bob Dorrough, as well as Sheila Jordan and Marion Cowings. The album is Vitro’s third release on husband Paul Wickliffe’s Skyline Records.

“It all started with Bob Dorrough,” Vitro explained. “After it turned out he had cancer,

he was chatting with me at the Deer Head Inn [in Delaware] about how he’d always meant to do a Charlie Parker project. He’d written this great vocalese he’d been working on for years to Charlie Parker’s ‘Bluebird.’ I thought, this record would be a great thing for me to do. I think this will be a legacy with my mentors recording with me.”

*Sing A Song Of Bird* also features Sheila Jordan, the influential talent who was once married to Parker’s pianist Duke Jordan, and has long shared stories with her audiences about the impact Bird had on her career.

“She is known by jazz singers around the world. It’s not just her incredible authenticity and work, it’s also her heart and her personality and the way she carries herself,” Vitro said.

Rounding out the mentors, Vitro brought in Marion Cowings, a New York native and formidable scat master, whom she met in 1978 at a vocal workshop he was teaching.

On *Sing A Song Of Bird*, the foursome tackles select songs from Parker’s repertoire — performing six tunes with pre-penned lyrics and six with original lyrics. Vitro kicks off the album with a dexterous vocalese rendi-

tion of Parker’s “Steeple Chase” that she calls “People Chase,” a commentary on the hustle of the modern world.

Meanwhile, Jordan tackles her original vocalese for “Bird’s Song,” an account of her first encounter with Parker’s music, and Cowings performs that cool rendition of “Parker’s Mood” that first drew Vitro in more than 40 years ago.

For his part, Dorrough, who was 93 at the time of recording, shared his playful passion for ornithology through “Audubon’s New Bluebird,” the vocalese that first inspired Vitro to pursue *Sing A Song Of Bird*. Dorrough, who appears on a handful of tracks, passed away in 2018 shortly after the recording session.

Though Vitro sees herself as the mentee on this record, she more than holds her own. As the mentors stick to more traditional arrangements to underpin their vocalese, Vitro ventures to write unique lyrics and refreshing arrangements — like “Yardbird Suite” as a 6/8 waltz — a testament to her belief that everyone’s unique approach is valid and moves jazz, as a music, forward.

“There is room for everyone [in jazz],” she said. “I think once you give singers the basics of their musicianship, and you turn them on to all of the different styles of jazz, like Charlie Parker, you let each singer decide what they feel like their voice is. You learn your basics and then you decide what touches your heart, what speaks to you. And then you become part of that.”

If that sounds like the voice of an educator speaking, it is. Vitro, after all, taught for 25 years at New Jersey City University in the vocal jazz program. So, while this record was motivated by her desire to honor her mentors, it’s also about being a mentor herself and making the lessons that Bird’s music can teach more accessible to the next generation.

“[This music’s] good for your ear, it’s good for your intonation,” Vitro said. “You’ve got to sing it in twos, you’ve got to breathe properly. Your tongue and jaw have to be very relaxed to be able to pull this off.”

“I want to take these new songs to schools around the United States because, as far as I’m concerned, we’ve created a new book of wonderful lyrics and versions for kids to learn,” she said in conclusion.

“So, *Sing A Song Of Bird* is really a legacy-passing.”

—Alexa Peters





Farnsworth stayed in New York during lockdown, staying true to the city he loves.

# Joe Farnsworth Celebrates New York City's Vitality

**DRUMMER JOE FARNSWORTH, LIKE** countless other New York musicians, was largely out of work for more than a year-and-a-half because the pandemic leveled the city and demolished its entertainment core. But unlike some who sought shelter in safer places, Farnsworth stayed put at his home in Riverdale, north of Manhattan in the Bronx. It was a trying time for the city, he recognized. But he tried to figure out how he could possibly give back to it after it had nurtured him for so many years.

A key moment in Farnsworth's COVID-era life came in May 2020 with the Black Lives Matter march in the city following George Floyd's killing by police officers. He joined the march as an act of protest that started in the upper Manhattan neighborhood of Inwood and continued through an array of others, all of which confirmed to him how much he loved

— and was indebted to — this city.

"There were so many different sounds as we went to Washington Heights, then Harlem and the Upper West Side," he said. "From one neighborhood to the next, there was music in the streets and being blasted out of windows in apartments. It was jazz, Dominican and Puerto Rican salsa, funk and rap. All these different people — Eastern Europeans, Latin Americans, Japanese and African Americans — were marching because together we all wanted justice and peace. People were enraged, but they also expressed passion. It was all about speaking up. Where else could this happen than New York?"

That sentiment forms the core of Farnsworth's swinging new album, *City Of Sounds*, a superb trio date celebrating New York for its jazz legacy as well as its present vitality. Freshly recorded live at Smoke, it fea-

tures pianist Kenny Barron (his first date at the club) and bassist Peter Washington. "It is a pandemic album," said Farnsworth, who exhilarates, brushes and shimmers with the life force of his instrument. "But the coronavirus could never kill the music. Look at Roy Haynes. He's still here in this city. If he's here, I'm here, too."

The trio played a three-night gig at Smoke Feb. 19–21, 2021, while the Delta-variant was raging. The players emerged from the wings with Farnsworth remembering the advice that Junior Cook used to give him: The stage is a sacred place even if the circumstances are not ideal. With baffles placed in between each band member and no audience (note the lack of applause after each of the five originals and three reimagined standards), Farnsworth said, "We just walked in and forgot all the troubles."



With bebop in the air, Barron's original "New York Attitude" explodes as the intro to what's in the wings. "Kenny is a national treasure and to come all the way uptown shows how committed he is," Farnsworth said.

In the liner notes, written by George Cables, Farnsworth comments: "Kenny is jazz piano royalty ... his playing is just majestic. When you have someone like that available to you, it's a no-brainer to take advantage of it.

tender "Ojos Cariñosos," a lyrical beauty in which Farnsworth takes particular pride.

He suggested that the trio play the gem "Moonlight In Vermont," a 1944 hit by Karl Suessdorf and John Blackburn.

"I heard Betty Carter singing that from records in the '50s," he said. "This was a last-second request. I asked Kenny if he knew it. He said maybe, and then he got it perfect."

Brooks countered with a request that the band play the bright "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise," a hopeful number where the pianist ends the show by delivering playful harmonies.

Farnsworth hopes *City Of Sounds* sets the record straight on the city he loves.

"I'm not big on social media, but I've heard people are talking bad about the city," he said. "It's bombarded with negativity. The music is dying here. Students overseas wonder why they need to come to New York to study. I can't believe this narrative.

"I'm here to say that jazz in New York will never die. It may seem like all the music happened 3,000 years ago, but Charlie Parker, Billy Higgins, Max Roach and all the others are still here. You can feel their presence."

—Dan Ouellette

**'Charlie Parker, Billy Higgins, Max Roach and all the others are still here. You can feel their presence.'**

**—Joe Farnsworth**

"There's not a better city sound than what Kenny plays. He was very quiet, but you knew you had to be on your toes playing with him. He was 100% open to the tunes, making suggestions as we went along." Barron also set into motion "Bud-Like," his speedy tribute to his hero Bud Powell that opens into two drum choruses.

That's why I live in New York — it's as simple as that."

Farnsworth delivers three of his originals, including the bluesy-soul title track that sounds like an invitation to dance, the fast-flying "No Fills," which takes the listener on a Billy Higgins-dedicated trip fueled by the drummer's extended solo, and the sensitive,



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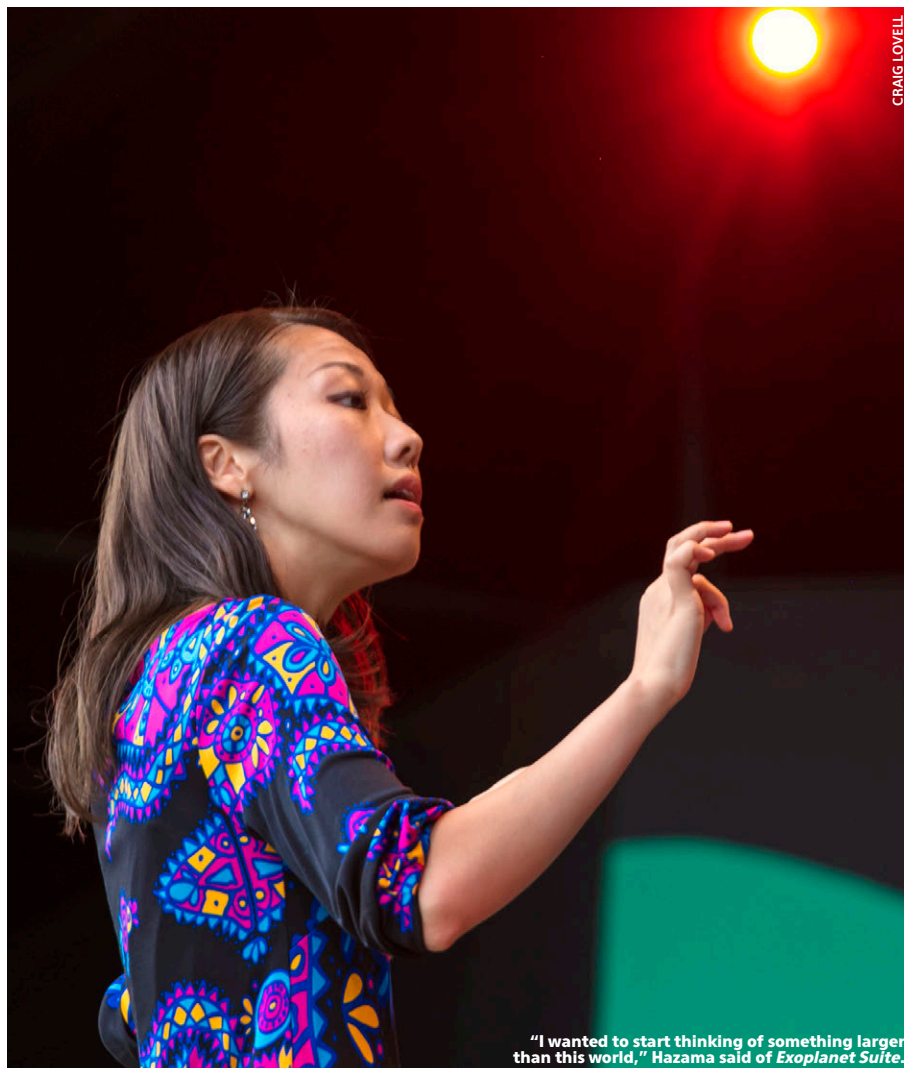
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"I wanted to start thinking of something larger than this world," Hazama said of *Exoplanet Suite*.

# Miho Hazama Earns Attention She Deserves

**THEY SAY GOOD THINGS HAPPEN IN** threes, and for 35-year-old New York composer and bandleader Miho Hazama that certainly applies. In 2019, she got her first Grammy nomination for Best Large Jazz Ensemble with her album *Dancer In Nowhere*, was appointed chief conductor of the Danish Radio Big Band — the first woman ever to hold that post — and received a commission for the Monterey Jazz Festival, one she premiered this year.

"It's been challenging, of course," said Hazama, with a disarming smile, over breakfast this past September in Monterey, "but it's a big challenge, and I like it."

Hazama's has been a long and unusual journey. Born in Tokyo, she started playing keyboards at age 5, went on to study classical composition at the Kunitachi College of Music, with "special study" in film scoring, and initially had her sights set on the movies. But when computers became de rigueur in film, Hazama refocused,

turning her attention to the jazz composers she was hearing while playing piano in her college big band, writers like Jim McNeely, Maria Schneider and Mike Holober.

"I was just in love with their music," she recalled. "Computer music? I don't know. But this? It's wonderful. And they're alive and active. I figured, I can't meet Stravinsky, but I can meet Jim McNeely."

Wasting no time, Hazama moved to New York in 2010 to study with McNeely at the Manhattan School of Music, where she received a master's degree in 2012 and formed a 13-piece jazz-classical hybrid orchestra for her graduation recital that would become the model for her regular band, *m\_unit* — two brass (including French horn), three reeds, four rhythm and string quartet. *M\_unit* issued its debut album, *Journey To Journey*, in 2012, followed by *Time River* and *Dancer In Nowhere*, all on Sunnyside and available in various formats today. Schneider,

who gave workshops at Manhattan, became an early advocate and recommended her for the Monterey commission.

"From the moment I first heard Miho's writing, I loved the surprises and contrasts she found," Schneider wrote in an email. "I'm just so happy to see her music get the attention that it deserves."

Like Schneider, Hazama integrates composed and improvised material as she develops her ideas, scoring with individual players in mind.

"I sketch a lot," she said. "Then once I start writing, I'm already hearing that guy's sound — say, [baritone saxophonist] Andrew Gutauskas — his notes. That's how I orchestrate it. I mean, I don't make any sounds. I feel like I have to be a good producer. That's how I think."

The commissioned piece, *Exoplanet Suite* — a cinematic three-partner with raucous changeups of meter, inventive timbral blends and passages of celebratory joy and quiet, celestial beauty — was premiered at Monterey and inspired by the frustration she felt at the negative insularity she and her colleagues fell into during the pandemic.

"I was just so sick of the online behavior of human beings on this planet," she said. "Everyone went kind of crazy and was complaining all the time. I felt, 'This is no good.' I wanted to start thinking of something larger than this world. And I realized how small human beings actually are."

The Monterey crowd enthusiastically took her point, leaping to its feet after the piece and again at the end of her extended set, which showcased Gutauskas' explosive baritone saxophone, as well as a deliciously knotty viola solo by Atsuki Yoshida, sweeping, harp-like improvisations from pianist Billy Test, biting solos from trumpeter Josh Deutsch, and keening alto and soprano saxophone work by Ethan Helm.

Hazama flew to Monterey from Tokyo the day before the show. She flew to Copenhagen the day after. That's the kind of life she's been leading since 2019, bouncing all year between Asia, Europe and North America.

When asked if she follows any regime to stay healthy, she laughed. "No. And my mom is really pissed off about that."

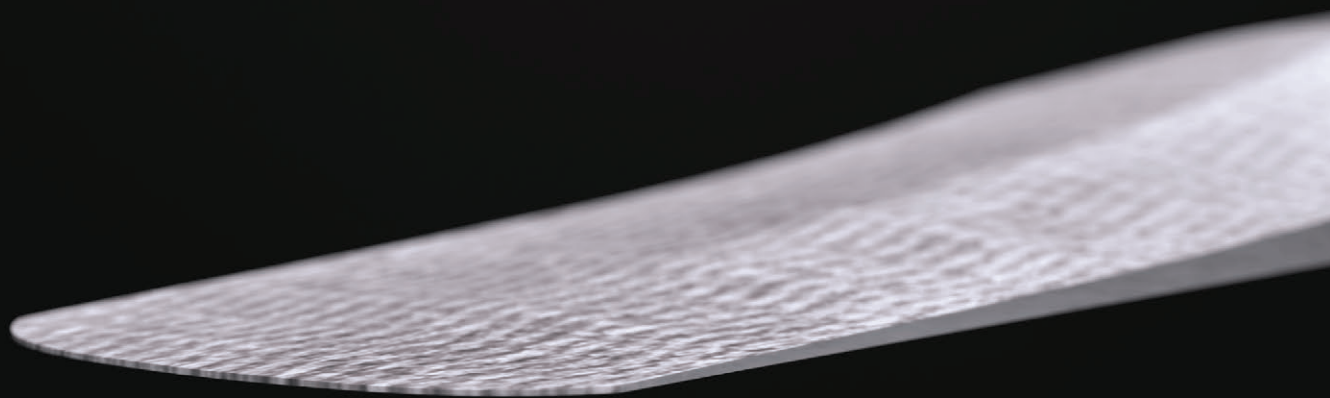
In Europe, she not only works with the Danish Radio Big Band, she is also a permanent guest conductor of Holland's Metropole Orkest, in Amsterdam. Those gigs have forced her to more fully digest traditional big band writing and integrate it into her Third Stream concept, an accomplishment on vivid display with her terrific new album *Imaginary Visions* (Edition Records) with the Danish Radio Big Band.

"The DR Big Band has an amazing library, so we actually play a lot of Thad [Jones] and Bob [Brookmeyer]," she said. "And playing that, my sound range is changing a little bit from symphonic to ... well, Jim McNeely sound, or Thad Jones sound."

—Paul de Barros



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# Caroline Davis Explores the Nature of Grief

**WHEN SHE ENTERED OKTAVEN AUDIO IN 2020**, Caroline Davis brought with her the enormity of a shapeshifting grief. The saxophonist and composer lost her father in the months before lockdown, and had taken up artistic residence at MacDowell, an artist residency in New Hampshire, following his funeral in Switzerland. The surrealism of that series of events accompanied solitude and wonder. “One thing that had been on my mind was trying to define those experiences of grief without relying on those that have already been defined,” said the Brooklyn-based artist.

Following solo-led releases *Alula* (2019) and *Heart Tonic* (2018), each piece in her collection of compositions that would become *Portals, Volume 1: Mourning* (Sunnyside Records) addresses living with death, and healing. But familiar models of grieving, namely Kübler-Ross, felt insufficient to Davis. And the peculiar way she experienced grief and mourning held center focus as she composed. “I was feeling moments of sensical softness and tactile

wetness, then heaviness or hardness — kind of burlap — and then tactile spikes,” she said. “So there were moments of my experience I wanted to classify into these categories.”

While Davis sought to organize her compositions around tactile responses to grief, the pieces themselves took on lives on their own. Deliberately, she offered few instructions and little context to her fellow artists who include quintet members Marquis Hill, Julian Shore, Chris Tordini and Allan Mednard, as well as violinists Mazz Swift and Josh Henderson, violist Joanna Mattrey and cellist Mariel Roberts.

“I never shared with them the concept,” Davis said. “There wasn’t really time for that.” Rather than hire an established quartet, she called string artists for their fierce commitment to exploratory improvisation, feeling the creative empathy they conjure through their instruments would serve the music.

“I [like to put] the music in the hands of the people I work with,” Davis said. “I’m not interested in there being more stress or more worry

about the music itself. I let a lot of that go, especially for the recording.”

This artistic choice informs the record’s visceral quality, particularly on longer, chambered compositions such as “Hop On Hop Off” and “Left.” The shorter pieces, textured and atmospheric — some almost meditative — developed from the sensical elements Davis shared with her fellow artists as loose points of reference. “I used those elements to help the rest of the band improvise and that’s where some of these interludes come from — ‘directed’ improvisations.”

Themes of repetition — patterns, displacement, permutations and inversions — emerge in nearly every corner of *Portals*. Compositionally, the concepts serve Davis’ desire to communicate her response to grief, as well as work through some of those recurrences of mourning. “These kinds of experiences return, sometimes with a vengeance,” she said. “Anyone who’s gone through something traumatic, they’ll know that replaying of the experience is what the trauma is.”

At MacDowell, Davis took the opportunity to explore linguistics of grieving. She spent time in the James Baldwin Library reviewing poetic works. Some, she knew; others, she discovered. Works by Omar Khayyam — whose words appear on *Portals* — Emily Dickinson, Lucille Clifton, Margaret Atwood, Rumi, Mary Oliver, Thich Nhat Hanh and Resmaa Menakem would inspire Davis’ poetry.

An interdisciplinary approach has motivated Davis’ expression for some time. Before moving to New York, she spent years of formative creative development in Chicago. Elements of her approach to composing — scripted and spontaneous — she traces to certain constants of the scene, particularly cutting-edge activity from the creative music nexus. “Hindsight is just very funny for me,” Davis said. “You start to realize all kinds of influences that come into your sound.” Citing Von Freeman and Phil Cohran (passing in 2012 and 2017, respectively) as influential elders, Davis admits Chicago’s climate of peer mentorship had a fundamental effect on her sound.

“[In] New York,” she said, “you see Lou Donaldson at Smoke; you’d see Lee Konitz hanging out; you see Henry Threadgill at The Stone and The Jazz Gallery. That doesn’t happen as much in Chicago. It may be different now, but that’s how I experienced it.”

The sprawling intimacy Davis and her cohorts conjure on *Portals* invokes her understanding of the word itself. “I was using all of the bodies as portals for communicating with the spirit world for healing,” she said. “The synchronicity that only we have between us, this is the secret that we have. This is how I communicate with the people who have passed in order to heal and make sense and carry through with my own life.”

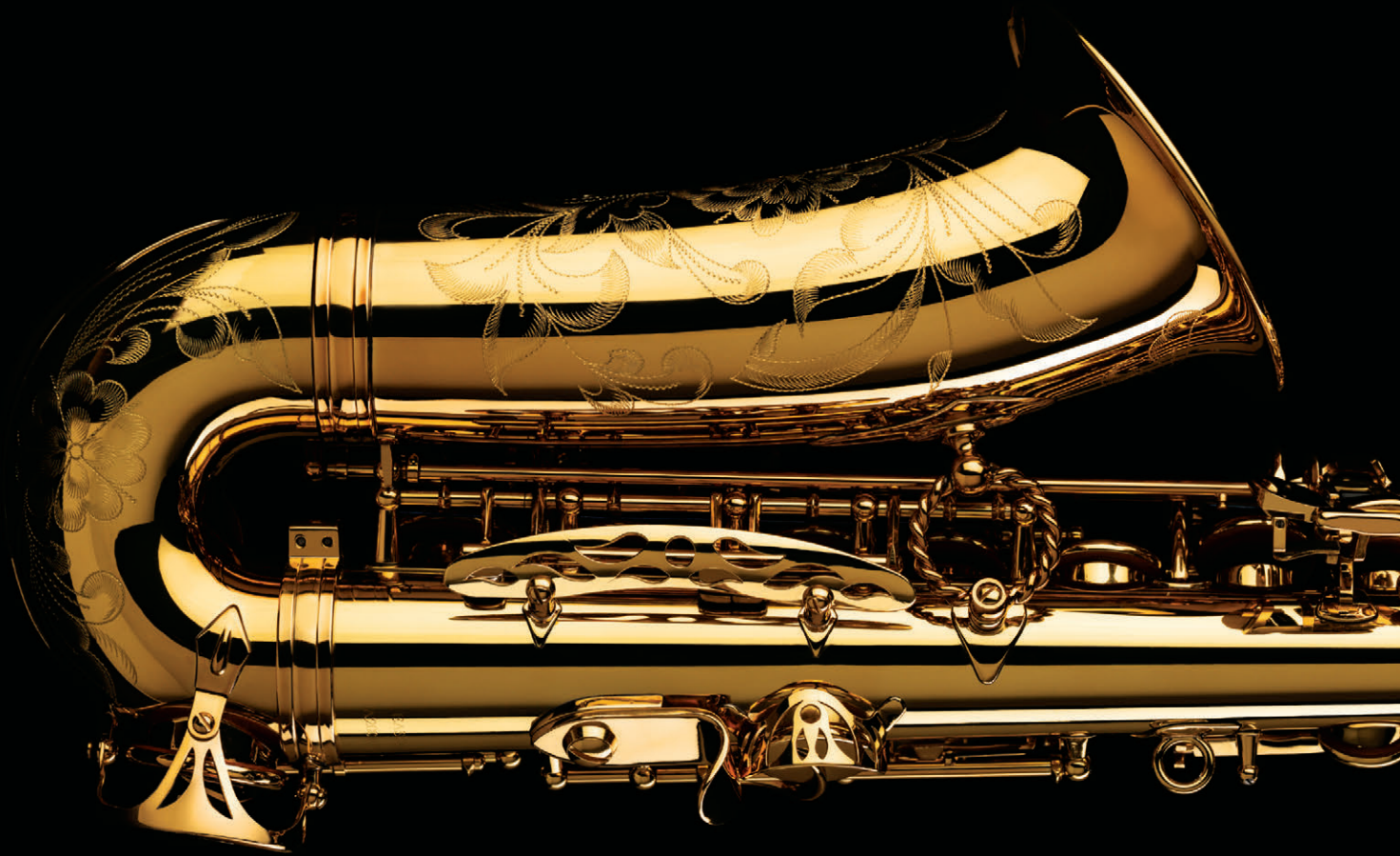
—Stephanie Jones



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Guitar great Pat Martino was 77.

**Final Bar:** Jazz guitarist **Pat Martino** passed away Nov. 1 at age 77 following a long illness. Known for his incredible guitar chops and a kind heart to match, Martino died after battling a chronic respiratory disorder that prevented his lungs from bringing in oxygen and required around-the-clock treatment. Martino had not worked since 2018 due to this chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Word of Martino's passing spread quickly over social media with an outpouring of love from musicians and supporters. "His legacy is a gift to us all," said Joe Donofrio, Martino's long-time manager. "From the moment he first picked up the guitar to his last day on earth, Pat never wavered from his true calling." DownBeat's February issue will feature a tribute to Martino.

### Rosenwinkel Ticks Ivories:

It seems almost unfair: Kurt Rosenwinkel, one of the world's greatest jazz guitarists, has now created an album of solo piano music. He released the single "Heavenly Bodies" in November, with the album, *Kurt Rosenwinkel Plays Piano*, dropping a month later on Heartcore Records. Rosenwinkel proves just as intriguing on piano as he does on guitar. [heartcore-records.com](http://heartcore-records.com)



### Keb' Mo' Tributes Withers:

Blues artist Keb' Mo' pays tribute to Bill Withers on his upcoming album *Good To Be* (Rounder) with a cover of the late vocalist's classic "Lean On Me." "I wanted to record it to honor my friend, who we sadly lost last year," Mo' said. "What makes this version special to me is the contribution from my lifelong friend, the Freedom Rider, Ernest 'Rip' Patton, who passed on this year. This was the last time I got to record his booming bass voice. I'm gonna miss calling on my brothers." [rounder.com](http://rounder.com)



Charlie Sepúlveda is planning to restart the Luquillo Beach Jazz Festival on a larger scale.

# Sepúlveda's Conservation Work Swings ... Both Ways

## THE MORNING AFTER HURRICANE MARIA

hit Puerto Rico in 2017, trumpeter Charlie Sepúlveda looked around his town of Luquillo and saw mostly destruction. His reflections on that disaster come through on "Estampas," which brings together jazz and his island's *danza*, aiming to preserve what may become lost as the song's title, translated as "Pictures," denotes. The track appears on Sepúlveda's 2021 album *This Is Latin Jazz* (HighNote), but his musical conservation work includes more than composition.

This album is part of Sepúlveda's preservation efforts. Last autumn, he completed building the C-Note, a multipurpose jazz club in his hometown. Sepúlveda is also restarting the Luquillo Beach Jazz Festival for Memorial Day weekend. These were all undertaken while he promoted *This Is Latin Jazz*, which was recorded at New York's Dizzy's Club just before the 2020 pandemic shutdown. So Sepúlveda knows all about urgent response.

"I'm just a trumpet player and bandleader, but never handled this aspect of the business," Sepúlveda said from his car while heading to one more business meeting. "But I have a great crew, and I'm eager. I just want to play."

The C-Note is a three-floor building overlooking the ocean. Currently, the music room can fit about 50 people, but Sepúlveda is knocking down walls for more performance space and constructing a recording studio as well as a restaurant. His goal is build to a place that's similar to where he worked when he lived in New York during the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as the Blue Note. He added that organizations like Jazz at Lincoln Center serve as a model for his club's educational mission.

"I'm planning to start with a trumpet work-

shop, then saxophones," said Sepúlveda, an experienced educator who taught at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico for 16 years. "We would get a group of students to see music for free, and that would be for children of the town."

While Sepúlveda is making room for bigger audiences at the C-Note, his plan for restarting the Luquillo Beach Jazz Festival means organizing on a larger scale. The event started in 2013 and typically brought in about 5,000 people. The hurricane curtailed the festival and COVID struck just as he was hoping to bring it back. None of which is blocking his determination this year as he speaks with potential performers and sponsors.

*This Is Latin Jazz* brought vital guests to join Sepúlveda's sextet, The Turnaround. Randy Brecker, Steve Turre and Miguel Zenón appear on a few tracks and lift his robust tone. Throughout, the bandleader reinforces the ties between core Cuban and Puerto Rican idioms — *danza*, *plena*, *bomba* — and jazz. He also adapts a vamp from his cousin Eddie Palmieri's "La Libertad Logico" for the melody to his "Liberty."

"What I try to do is combine the two musics without losing elements of hard-bop and not losing the element of Latin music," Sepúlveda said. "If you play Latin and then change to play hard-bop or bebop it has to swing both ways."

Sepúlveda knows that now's the time to carry that message forward.

"Almost everybody's gone — Cal Tjader, Mongo Santamaria," Sepúlveda said. "We have to maintain this music, that's the purpose. Even though it's a little more modern — with modern harmonies — it has the essential roots of the music. And we have to pass it on to other generations."

—Aaron Cohen





Igor Butman played two huge concerts in Russia to celebrate his birthday.

COURTESY IGOR BUTMAN

# Russian Jazz Star Butman Celebrates 60 in Style

**FORMER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON HAS** called him “my favorite living saxophone player.” Wynton Marsalis, a longtime friend and collaborator, once said of him, “I love Igor Butman’s playing, and I love him personally.”

Butman is a superstar in Russia but is less well known and underappreciated in the United States. Having just turned 60 in October, he’s busier than ever, launching a new album with a distinguished international band after hosting a pair of large-scale birthday concerts in Russia that included Marsalis along with his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

Known for his passion and melodicism on tenor saxophone, Butman has earned international critical acclaim for more than two decades. After emigrating to America in 1987, he studied at Berklee School of Music (Now Berklee

College of Music). His talent was noticed. In short order he was working with Grover Washington Jr., Lionel Hampton, Billy Taylor, Lyle Mays and many other A-list jazz stars.

“I was not a big fan of the communist era. That’s why I emigrated,” Butman said during an interview in July in Anzio, Italy, where he had come to play a private jazz party. He became an American citizen, ultimately deciding to return to Moscow following the fall of the Soviet Union; he retains dual Russian and American citizenship.

To say he has prospered in Russia is an understatement. He is easily the most famous jazz musician in a country where jazz is exceedingly popular, running the state-supported Moscow Jazz Orchestra, his own Moscow jazz club, a record label, the annual Triumph of Jazz festival, and

the country’s first jazz industry conference, Jazz Across Borders. In 2011, he was awarded the honorary title of People’s Artist of Russia, the nation’s highest recognition in the arts.

His career has not been without controversy. Butman is a high-ranking member of United Russia, Vladimir Putin’s political party, and he has been known to play ice hockey with the Russian president. That relationship led to a handful of pro-Ukrainian protesters objecting to his appearance in Boston last year as part of his American tour. Butman insists his sole aim is to create cultural bridges through jazz and that, as he wrote in the *Boston Globe* last year, “I have never supported any war and will never do so.”

Musically, his new album, titled *Only Now* (Butman Music), displays an easy command of styles ranging from New Orleans second-line blues (Butman’s “Blues For Wynton”) to hard-driving post-bop like “Only Now.” Butman employs an exceptional small group featuring Eddie Gomez, alternating with Matt Brewer, on bass; Antonio Sánchez on drums; guitarist Evgeny Pobozhly, the Russian prodigy who won the 2019 Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition; and blind pianist and vocalist Oleg Akkuratov, whose keyboard ability is almost eclipsed by his supple jazz vocals that earned second place at the 2018 Sarah Vaughan Vocal Competition. In addition to Butman’s bluesy tribute to his friend, the album features a song written by Marsalis, “Baby, I Love You,” sung — in English — by Akkuratov.

Butman and Marsalis both celebrated their 60th birthdays in late October — they were born nine days apart — in concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Moscow event was held in the gigantic State Kremlin Palace theater with 6,000 seats; the event in Butman’s hometown of St. Petersburg took place at the 3,000-seat Tinkoff Arena. The concerts marked the second time that Butman’s and Marsalis’ big bands have appeared together on the same stage; the first was at the season opener of Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York in 2003.

“My company will produce the events — we have to sell the tickets,” Butman said back in July. But he knew he could. Ten years ago, when he staged similar events in Russia to celebrate his 50th birthday, again featuring Marsalis (minus the big band) and Natalie Cole, “We sold out,” he said.

About his relationship with Marsalis, Butman said, “We met in Russia in 1998. We felt like we knew each other since we were kids. We drank. We played chess. We had sympathy for each other.” Butman first heard about the trumpet phenom on Willis Conover’s radio program on Voice of America in 1980 or ’81. “[Conover] said there’s a new young trumpeter playing with Art Blakey. I was blown away by the way he played.” Then, with a laugh, he added, “I thought I was the best young jazz musician in the world, but then I heard him.”

—Allen Morrison





# The Inflamed Soul of **THE COOKERS**

By Ted Panken Photo by Vincent Soye





The Cookers (from left): Billy Hart, Cecil McBee, Donald Harrison, George Cables, David Weiss, Eddie Henderson and Billy Harper.





'I think of them as post-Coltrane, post-Miles, post-free jazz,' said Donald Harrison of his bandmates.

JOHN ABBOTT

**In July 2020, four months after COVID-19 locked down the world, The Cookers entered Van Gelder Studio to record *Look Out! (Gearbox)*, its sixth album of original compositions created by members of the band. As on previous five, the collective septet uncorks rarefied levels of inflamed soul improvisation emblematic of the Cookers' brand. This is not hyperbole.**

Each member of The Cookers is a model practitioner of the go-for-the-jugular, kinetic, swing-oriented aesthetic that marked nearly all jazz-inflected Black American Music genres from the middle '60s through the latter '70s. Together, they boast some 500 cumulative years on the planet, playing music tempered by a master control that maneuvers the flame with a Michelin chef's finesse and discipline.

That's been the basis of operations for tenor saxophonist Billy Harper (b.1943), trumpeters Eddie Henderson (b.1940) and David Weiss (b.1964), pianist George Cables (b.1944), bassist Cecil McBee (b.1935), and NEA Jazz Master drummer Billy Hart (b.1940) since Weiss convened The Cookers in the early '00s. Alto saxophonist Donald Harrison [b.1960], also an NEA Jazz Master, joined the group in 2013. But it wasn't so simple for veteran, steadily working practitioners to pick up where they left off after protracted isolation.

On Feb. 28, 2020, two weeks before the lockdown, The Cookers had finished a short Western tour — in California from Los Angeles to San Diego to Half Moon Bay to Oakland, then over to Orem, Utah. Directly thereafter, Weiss recalled, he returned to Los Angeles to mix the *Lee Morgan The Complete Live At The Lighthouse* box set on Blue Note, while Hart, then 79, flew directly to Europe for a characteristically jam-packed itinerary of freelance gigs. Cables, then 75, flew to Germany for a two-week Euro run with Jeremy Pelt and Ray Drummond. And Henderson went to England — where DJ connoisseurs have long favored his 1970s disco/funk date *Sunburst* — for an 80th birthday celebration at London's Pizza Express.

"We were going to reconvene in two weeks in Europe, and George — who was in Paris — and Eddie were going to meet us at our first stop," said Weiss, The Cookers' music director and primary arranger since its inception. "Instead, they were stranded there because

of the travel ban proclamation, which forgot to say, 'Except for U.S. citizens.' That was on a Wednesday. We were supposed to leave for the tour on Friday. I spent Wednesday night into Thursday desperately trying to change flights so they could come back home. They got into those crammed last flights on Friday, which I have to think were total COVID petri dishes."

While everyone got back physically unscathed, the psychological toll was another story. "Some guys were losing their minds because they had never stopped [gigging] before," Weiss said. "Most of them have a workmanlike attitude — they do what they do, on an extremely high level, without giving a ton of thought to career trajectory, say, or how to promote something. Just play. The pandemic stopped that. Suddenly everybody was home. At the beginning, we all were talking with each other individually. That generation is a family, a close-knit community where everyone checks in on everyone to make sure they're OK."

"After a while, some guys figured, 'This is that dream where I get to sit home, work on my craft and compose — do all the things I haven't been able to because I'm so busy.' The question is whether you can make that transition. At a certain age, it's about maintenance, always staying physically — and mentally — at the top



of your game to do the gigs you have to do. And then you don't have the gigs. At that age, you might not be thinking, 'Here's my chance to finally get to that next level.' I can't say I verbalized this or got it clear in my head, but something told me that it was imperative to get these guys playing again, to get back to doing what they do best. Inactivity is detrimental."

On The Cookers' itinerary for that aborted March 2020 tour was a prospective live recording for Gearbox at London's Church of Sound, a promotional organization that's presented "songbook" homages to such cookin' '50s, '60s and '70s jazz heroes as Art Blakey, Bobby Hutcherson, Idris Muhammad and Leon Thomas at St. James the Great Church in the quickly gentrifying area of East London. That opportunity vanished with the pandemic. But by mid-June, Weiss said, "Things were starting to open up. The numbers were down. The guys were antsy — and we were trying to figure out how to do stuff." He sussed out the interest of his bandmates in an alternate plan, one involving several days of rehearsal at the Falcon, a popular club in New York's Hudson Valley, and then a self-produced session at Van Gelder, a capacious space where the protagonists could maintain reasonable levels of social distance.

"The point was to leave and find a quiet place, where you can just drive door-to-door — not stop anywhere, get in an elevator or a train or whatever," Weiss said. "We spent a few days running through the music, a lot of which we'd been playing for a year or two, and then we did the record in two days. Everybody was pretty impassioned, and it was intense. Everybody seemed to get everything back pretty quickly. Over the years, it gets tighter and tighter — though being a perfectly clean, polished thing isn't really what '70s guys were ever about."

**Upon the release of *Look Out!*** last September, a journalist from a mainstream publication called Weiss with a request to talk to McBee about his memories of the concerts that generated the posthumous issues of Alice Coltrane's *Africa: Live At The Carnegie Hall 1971*, and Roy Brooks' firebreathing *Understanding*, from 1969.

"It's always about the history," Weiss said. "Everybody wants to talk about that record they were on in 1969, and not about what they're doing now. The Alice Coltrane and Roy Brooks things are great. But how do you explain that a living embodiment of this is happening right now? We're kind of between a rock and a hard place. We're doing this unique thing that nobody else really is doing. But whatever the jazz industry is now, we are not embraced by that. We're pigeonholed as playing old music. We're not like the new, hippest young thing — which of course is not hip or young at all. How do I make it possible for these guys to work

within that realm?"


Of course, any talented, responsible Gen-X, Millennial or Gen-Z journalist assigned to write about the latest hot item unearthed from the good old days would want the first-hand testimony of eminent pre-Boomers who spent their formative years participating and collaborating in music that still shapes the sound and esthetic of hardcore jazz. Donald Harrison feels a similar pull.

"I think of them as post-Coltrane, post-Miles Davis, post-free jazz," said Harrison — a Mardi Gras Indian Big Chief, who is himself

an alumnus of the drum schools of Art Blakey and Roy Haynes, and a frequent participant in Eddie Henderson's recent projects. "They're connected to part of the music that I'm not, because I wasn't there to feel the nuance of what was going on. I always want to experience playing with the people who are masters and can really execute the sound of an era. But I also feel they're still exploring and taking the music to new heights."

The web of relationships within The Cookers is complex and consequential. Four members (Cables, Harper, Henderson and

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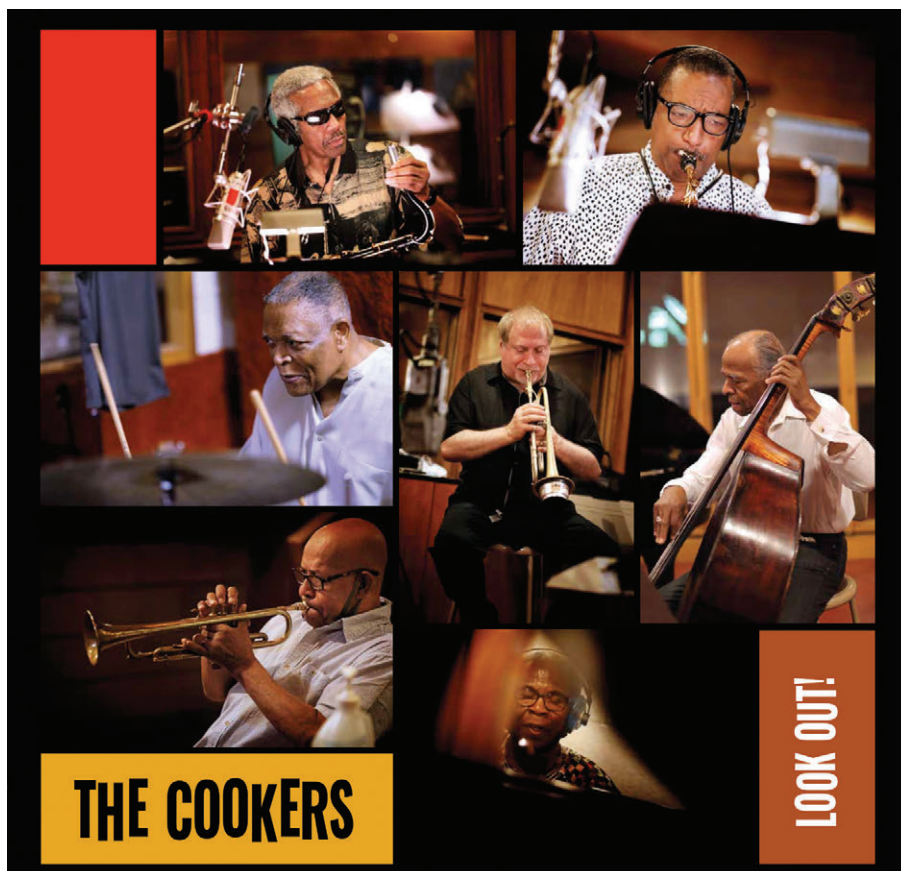
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Harrison) played with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. Cables — who contributes three characteristically distinctively percolating melodic gems to *Look Out!* from his 2016 date *The George Cables Songbook* (High Note) — provided relentless-yet-subtle comping, acoustic and plugged-in, to the working bands of Max Roach, Joe Henderson, Woody Shaw, Freddie Hubbard, Sonny Rollins, Roy Haynes and Bobby Hutcherson. His 30-plus leader albums include three trios propelled by Hart, one of which — *Night And Day* (DIW, 1991) — featured McBee on bass.

Cables also played keyboards on Henderson's 1977 disco date *Comin' Through* on Capitol, and forceful acoustic piano on Harper's breakthrough 1973 Strata East LP *Capra Black*, which established Harper's leader bona fides to go along with sideman credits that included Blakey, Lee Morgan, McCoy Tyner, Randy Weston, Gil Evans and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra.

Henderson plays trumpet on Harper's cusp-of-the-'90s albums for Steeplechase that introduced "Destiny Is Yours" and "Somalia." Both tunes are given four-horn treatments by The Cookers on *Look Out!* He and Hart — friends since their mid-'60s college days in Washington, D.C. — were bandmates in Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi during the early '70s.

IN THE

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McBee, The Cookers' elder statesman, contributes a new composition to *Look Out!* called "Cat's Out Of The Bag," which he describes as "an extended blues with a group of suspended chords that prompts you to realize other things before you return where you started." He also offered an older classic, "Mutima,"

— making sure that the quarter note is in the right place upon entering the measure and upon leaving the measure," McBee said. "This gives great liberty to any drummer I'm playing with to concentrate on the horns up-front, accenting and providing energy to support them. The pianist provides the color — he's at

are unpredictable, that excites me, because then I have a chance of learning something else. That's one thing this group offers. I'm constantly picking up things that broaden my capabilities."

Harrison gave concrete examples of how the his Cookers experience expands his own knowledge. First he mentioned a McBee piece, title unremembered, "that had all the elements of the blues, but with a lot of different moves inside it that I had to decipher — I could play just the straight blues, or I could play in the stratosphere. His approach to line is in its own hemisphere, so to speak. All of them share this. All of them orchestrate on a high level. There's a lot of specific moving parts, but still a lot of freedom."

He turned his attention to the qualities of his other bandmates. "Eddie can play the hardest music effortlessly; things people are afraid of he plays like it's nothing," Harrison said. "And he's played so many different types of music — straightahead and the funky fusion side. I call him '411' because he has so much information. He shows me ideas from all the people he played with, and he gives me great homework. All of it turns on another light switch to a room filled with so many other great ideas.

"George Cables has a myriad of influences in his sound, as they all do. He understands

**'We want to play challenging music, and push ourselves all the time – and we want to connect with everybody.' –David Weiss**

which means "from the heart" in Swahili, and was the title track of his 1975 debut as a leader on Strata-East. McBee most recently synchronized alongside Hart in the Saxophone Summit band; he characterizes their interaction as "very much akin to what I like to do on a stage."

"I concentrate seriously on keeping the beat

liberty to just float across."

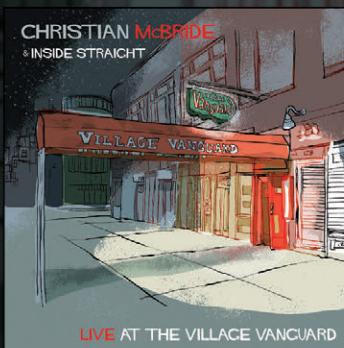
On the bandstand, McBee added, "I let naturally transpire whatever responsibilities pertain from doing the tune — which in this group are quite varied. Nothing is the same. George Cables, myself and Billy Harper — and Billy Hart on other records — have dynamically opposed concepts. I just play myself. If things

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from a pianist's view how to manipulate harmony, with different colors going in and out. He has a tremendous understanding of Latin influence; there's soulful stuff inside his compositions, like the icing on the cake.

"Billy Harper's music is very blues-inflected, and we still hear the influence of his time with all the great bands he was in. A song like 'Capra Black' has a section that, for me, feels like floating in space. The way he moves harmony around is genius — it moves things around in

a way you're not taught in school — it's genius. He turns the rules that I was taught inside out.

"Billy Hart's compositions have an advanced rhythmic presentation that he can play with the greatest of ease. They find new spaces, but still feel connected and logical. He's like Art Blakey in that he'll hear something and immediately have an idea that only Billy Hart could come up with for the song. When we're playing live, he'll change at the drop of a dime and do something else — he's always

reimagining different ways to look at compositions. His ideas are relentless. He has such an immense understanding of what the tradition is that it's scary. He's heard everything. But he's changed all of those ideas to create a new style of music, a new style of playing, a new way of doing things."

In separate conversations over the years, all members have credited The Cookers' signature sound to Weiss' four-horn voicings of songs not composed by Harper, each a master class example of what Benny Golson has called "dearth writing."

"The lush arranging brings out the beauty in their music, plus, when it's time to make an impact, the horns really hit you in the face," Weiss said. "The four horns also retain the loose, flexible rhythm section, without locking it into just hits to enhance the horns like a big band."

"David's orchestrations and arrangements make the group sound like a bigger ensemble than it is," Harrison said. "He gets to the essence of each song. He loves and understands the music from the era these guys came from, and he understands each one of us, all the musicians in the band. He chooses the songs we play every night, and knows how to put them into a format where they make sense for the musicians and the audience. The music has what I call a good rub, a natural feeling, like the wind blowing on a warm day."

Weiss expects the attribute that Harrison describes to blossom anew now that The Cookers, all fully vaccinated, are touring again. He's looking for an opportunity to document what they do onstage.

"Hopefully, like the best of bands, we've developed something live that doesn't get exactly captured in a studio," Weiss said. "A number of tunes in our book take on a life of their own after we've played them live, so it's almost as if we have to record them again because the recordings from 10 years ago don't do them justice. Recordings are great, but part of the beauty of this band, The Cookers, is what happens when you we play together all the time. The music takes on a life of its own."

"Jazz has to move forward. Everybody's got to be daring and try something new. And that's the stuff that gets attention, because it's the next new thing. Yet the late-'60s Blue Note recordings, Miles Davis' and John Coltrane's recordings, or Art Blakey's recordings have a certain sound that attracted most people to this music. That stuff is alive. It was in-your-face and pretty intense. You can connect to it emotionally. These guys came up in that era playing that music. They've refined it and improved it over the years. We've been playing to large audiences. We want to play challenging music, and push ourselves all the time — and we want to connect with everybody."

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Artifacts, a trio consisting of (from left) Nicole Mitchell, Mike Reed and Tomeka Reid, perform at Estrada Poznanska in Poland.



# FINDING AR





# TIFACTS

By Aaron Cohen  
Photos by Lauren Deutsch





## Back in January 2021, the world was in deep lockdown and the jazz trio Artifacts performed a streamed concert to a nearly empty room at Constellation in Chicago.

**V**iewed online several months later, the silence and austerity within the room remain palpable. Masks worn by Cellist Tomeka Reid and drummer Mike Reed add to that sense of distance. Still, they express warmth and even joy in these conditions. That came when flutist Nicole Mitchell communicated to them through a raised eyebrow as much as through their musical exchanges. At the time of this set, Artifacts had been together for about seven years, but their collaborations went back much further. In fact, their school of thought stretches back through decades.

These bonds run throughout Artifacts' new album *...And Then There's This* (Astral Spirits). Layered original compositions that arose from collective improvisation run alongside succinct tunes built on upbeat grooves. Gradual shifts to outside harmonies are prominent, so are warm ballads. The timbral adjustments they make are their own, but also connect to a tradition of invention from their hometown.

Reid formed the trio in 2015 to perform at Seattle's Earshot Jazz Festival. At the time, Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) was celebrating its 50th anniversary, and since she could not attend the festivities, the cellist decided to bring its songbooks to the Pacific Northwest. Reid, Mitchell and Reed all have served as AACM

executives and were immersed in its historical compositions. They had also been longtime collaborators, including working together in Reed's Loose Assembly and Reid is a part of Mitchell's Black Earth Ensemble, which originated in the late 1990s. These shared personal connections are a key to this trio's bond.

"I'm someone who doesn't forget those who have looked out for me," Reid said. "This is an opportunity for me to say thank you and let's do something together. I wasn't specifically thinking about instrumentation necessarily, I was thinking more about these musical personalities. I love these guys, I would like to be in a group with them."

"We have grown in our adulthood together, so we're influenced by the same things and by each other," Reed added. "Maybe it took all this time of knowing each other to be able to pull off this trio in the right way."

Artifacts released its self-titled debut (on 482 Music) in 2015. That album highlighted the trio's fluid communication as well as its advocacy for AACM composers. The variety in this material provided the ideal platform for quick-thinking movements. The trio quietly blazed through tempo changes that highlight the lighthearted spirit in Anthony Braxton's "Composition 23B." Reed's fleet patterns direct Reid and Mitchell through the tonal changes

in Fred Anderson's "Bernice" as it gets mashed up with Jeff Parker's "Days Fly By With Ruby." Their unison fuels the crescendos in Amina Claudine Myers' gospel-derived "Have Mercy Upon Us." But the biggest tribute that Artifacts paid to this lineage was the striking arrangements that they brought to these pieces.

"We put a contemporary spin on things," Mitchell said. "Sometimes we might bring things into a groove, a different approach that maybe they might not have done previously. Most of the AACM composers are undefinable in terms of their stylistic approaches. We also can take things to different spaces and just the idea of having experiments with [them], we can do it in our own way. The tradition is being original. The tradition is challenging yourself to go outside boundaries and to be playful, to rebel sometimes, make your own rules, make your own paradigm where each moment you have the responsibility of freedom. When we're honoring another AACM member through playing their music, we have a responsibility to bring our own voice to it. Not to imitate what they've done."

The trio Air is a historical AACM group that connects with Artifacts. Its 1970s recordings of Jelly Roll Morton and Scott Joplin pieces reflect a shared belief in breathing new life into venerated repertoire. And, like Artifacts, Air's saxophonist Henry Threadgill, bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Steve McCall relied on their assets as individual writers as much as a sharp three-way dialog.

"That was a collaborative band, it wasn't Threadgill's band," Reed said. "There were three people in that group, and they all wrote music.





Another thing about Air that's interesting is they flip around the roles, and we also like to do that. With us, improvising isn't one dimensional, like with a fire-breathing loft scene kind of vibe — although we can do that, too."

With Artifacts' distinctive lineup, the group's performances of any songs would have their own character. Small jazz groups with a cellist are not totally unprecedented — Reid mentioned the early 1970s Black Unity Trio among bands that included Abdul Wadud. But they remain rare. Even more atypical is how this trio easily shifts the expected melodic, rhythmic and roles of each of their instruments through their playing and writing.

"There's a bass function, percussion function and treble function, that's how I'm thinking," Reid said. "It's just more fun and also pushes boundaries with what you do on your instrument: Trying to figure out a different approach than you would if I'm just the soloist. We all enjoy just making music. Nikki has a well of creativity she's always drawing from and can be really out there sometimes, but in a good way. With Mike, I like playing tunes written by drummers. Everyone has their own style, but it's different, too. You're in hot pink land, that one's dark — all in a similar world, and they all complement each other."

The members of Artifacts also readjust their instrumental textures in other ways. Mitchell's interest in electronics includes adding guitar pedals to the flute, which lends it more resonance. Reid has added fire alarm bells to his drum kit, but gliding across them with a bow, rather than striking them with a stick, complements Reid and Mitchell's dynamics.

"We can move to more traditional horn/bass/drum territory because I don't play on top of them or cover them up," Reid said. "They don't have to compete with cymbals and the rest of the drum kit."

While all three consider Chicago to be their artistic home base, they have resided in different cities for parts of the six years between albums. Reid relocated to Queens, New York, in 2016, moved back to Chicago four years later and started teaching at Mills College in Oakland, California. Mitchell had been on faculty at University of California-Irvine and is currently chair of jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Reid has remained in Chicago, where he continues running such venues as Constellation and Hungry Brain. Those distanc-

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Reid formed Artifacts in 2015 to perform at Seattle's Earshot Jazz Festival.

es have not been much of an ongoing concern.

"We've all gotten increasingly more busy since 2015, that's for sure," Reid said. "We would like to play more together, but it's where we all with our lives at the moment."

Still, the pandemic that struck in early 2020 kept everyone apart in ways that no one had anticipated. Through it all, the trio wrote and the resulting compositions constitute most of *...And Then There's This*. Gradually, Reid and Reed were able to woodshed their new pieces in Chicago with saxophonist Hunter Diamond. After a few more months, Artifacts recon-

vened and attempted to record. A few tries were unsatisfying until they returned home for a session in a makeshift studio at Constellation over Thanksgiving. As Reid said, "It's my house. It's also easy for folks to feel at home and not be too concerned about things."

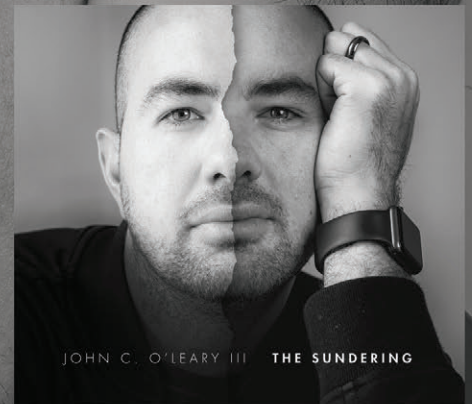
That comfort highlights the group's flexibility all through *...And Then There's This*. They continue paying homage to the AACM through interpretations of pieces by Roscoe Mitchell and Muhal Richard Abrams and the two pieces that arose from group improvisation are dedicated to the memories of Joseph Jarman and Alvin

Fielder. But the emphasis here is on the considerable idiomatic and emotional range among Artifacts' own composers. Nicole Mitchell's contributions illustrate this diversity. Her joyous "Blessed" is based on a simple dance form with a pocket groove, but "Reflections" takes a different route.

"Reflections' is kind of moody," Mitchell said. "Then it kind of moves around, from moody to angry to funny or silly, playfully moody, then it gets emphatic, then it gets silly, joyous at the end. The patterns on that one are kind of tricky. The form is not a traditional form on that piece. From one place to another, it's like taking a trip, but you don't go home. You just stay out there."

Reid also contributed two pieces that reflect diverging moods. Her "Song For Helena" is a minor-key ballad that she wrote as a tribute to her late mother-in-law. The feel throughout "In Response To" is lighter but also comes from her own approach.

"I just always end up playing tritones on the cello, they're comfortable," Reid said. "I was just moving around and came up with that kind of groove. I just wanted to write a fun playing tune. I was just fooling around with tritone, because it lays so comfortably on the cello. That's what I'm gravitating to even when I'm improvising."



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You don't have to be so serious all the time. I'm super silly. I used to be more shy about it, but now I don't care."

Reed, who comes across as more serious in conversation, also included tricky passages in his uptempo "Pleasure Palace," knowing that

mic improvising."

While several AACM artists were known for conveying pointed social messages, such ideas are also on the minds of Artifacts, even if they are not overtly stated. Mitchell expressed that consciousness when she discussed the

**'With us, there's never a concern that it's not going to keep happening. It will.'** —Mike Reed

this group can navigate the turns.

"Generally, 'Pleasure Palace' is in four," Reed said. "There is a bar of five that flips everything around in the melody part. The little break — that's a bar of five that makes it feel a little strange. I was writing these little puzzle pieces to make people scratch their heads, like 'Something's wrong here.' In the solo section of it, Tomeka has a lot more free rein to do what she wants, and so do I. So, I can do weird rhyth-

album's title.

"There are all of the intense, life-and-death things happening in the world," Mitchell said. "We're constantly, dealing with the virus, police brutality, crisis of what's happening throughout the world. The idea of putting out an album in the midst of all that, it's like, 'Well, then there's this.' We know it's not the most important thing in the world, but music can help us stay centered on positive energy. We have all these

things going on around us, all of these hard choices we're forced to make day by day, but we also need time to just listen."

Staying together as a musical family, where each member has equal levels of responsibility while retaining their individual identities, also makes a statement. Since the group's beginning, these roles have tended to include Mitchell and Reid as the eldest and youngest sister while Reed described himself as "the middle child."

Those ties became clear as the members of Artifacts spoke for this article. Bonds transcended geographic distance. At the time, Reid was on campus at Mills, Mitchell was at her home in North Carolina and Reed was traveling in Berlin. They all expressed shared perspectives about each other and how their affinity meant that they felt no pressure in planning for 2022.

"We've been doing this for such a long time, having this long relationship, it's not going anywhere so we can take our time," Reed said. "Other projects or other relationships may have more of a time stamp on them. A band or a moment happened, and they'll say, 'Let's do that again,' and then it doesn't happen, ever. With us, there's never a concern that it's not going to keep happening. It will." **DB**

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

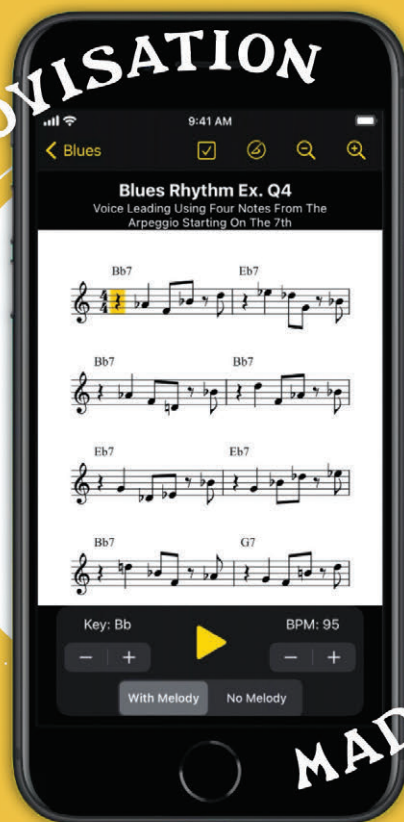


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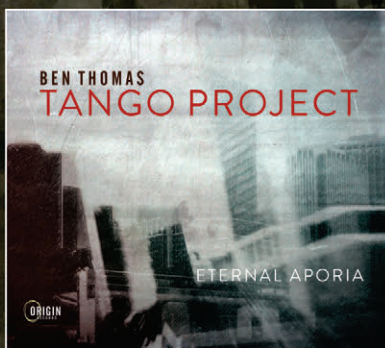
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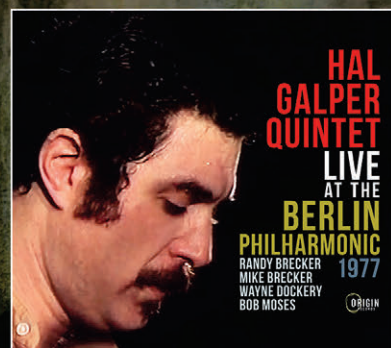
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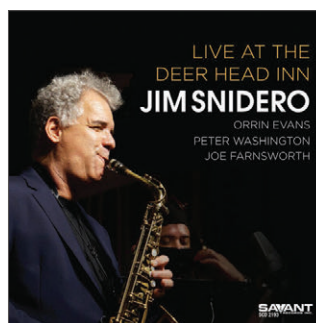
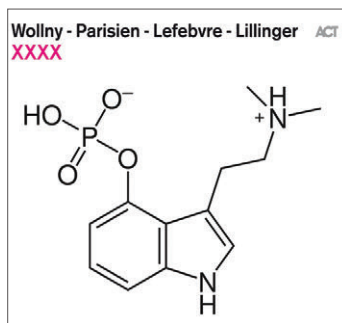
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# BEST ALBUMS OF 2021

## MASTERPIECES ★★★★★



### DJANGO BATES

#### Tenacity

Lost Marble.....Jan.  
Bates' most recent project marks the convergence of two birthdays — the pianist's 60th and Charlie Parker's centennial. It also explores a confluence of the bandleader's deep-diving, iconoclastic work in both large ensembles and the intimate piano-trio setting, combining his Belovéd trio (bassist Petter Eldh, drummer Peter Bruun) with the Swedish Norrbotten Big Band. Such classic Bird bop tongue-twisters as "Donna Lee," "Ah Leu Cha" and "Confirmation" are put through Bates' deconstructionist blender to thrilling ends.

—Josef Woodard

### VERONICA SWIFT

#### This Bitter Earth

Mack Avenue .....April  
Swift is a woman of many voices, and she uses every one of them to refract a dizzying kaleidoscope of moods on *This Bitter Earth*, the follow-up to 2019's *Confessions*. As on that earlier work, Swift digs deep into the American songbook to reveal new, often surprising truths. ... Swift is a supernova. And the players who help manifest

her vision make *This Bitter Earth* a musical bounty of depth and breadth.

—Cree McCree

### JIM SNIDERO

#### Live At The Deer Head Inn

Savant.....May  
For his first live album since 1989, Snidero, a seasoned saxophonist with more than 20 records to his name, brings together the incomparable Orrin Evans on piano, Peter Washington on bass and Joe Farnsworth on drums. Recorded at Pennsylvania's famed Deer Head Inn on Halloween 2020 in front of a small, socially distanced audience, the recording's immediacy is heightened by the quartet's interactions with their rapt audience and the way they refer to time-honored standards to contextualize these difficult times.

—Alexa Peters

### ISAIAH COLLIER & THE CHOSEN FEW

#### Cosmic Transitions

Division 81 .....June  
This is the third offering from the Chicago-based saxophonist, who at age 23 has transcended the realm of prodigy. Collier and his band, The Chosen Few, walk through several

moments of transition in the music, moving from its foundation in the blues directly into hard-bop. From the downbeat, with a literal tolling of the bell, until the final note that finds Collier improvising, forcing the limits of his soprano saxophone, *Cosmic Transitions* is like the moments after an afternoon rainstorm.

—Joshua Myers

### WOLLNY/PARISIEN/ LEFEBVRE/LILLINGER

#### ACT XXXX

ACT.....Sept.  
XXXX is mysterious and magical. The 10 tracks are derived from eight hours of live club performance by an electro-acoustic quartet that had not met before going onstage in Berlin in late 2019, yet achieved remarkable results. Keyboardist Michael Wollny, bassist/electronics player Tim Lefebvre, saxophonist Émile Parisien and drummer Christian Lillinger together created a wildly colorful and dramatic recording that partakes of a weird, wide and evidently processed instrumental palette — one that serves the fluid, propulsive interactions of these highly responsive, imaginative and daring musicians.

—Howard Mandel

### KENNY GARRETT

#### Sounds From The Ancestors

Mack Avenue .....Oct.  
Always a highly percussive saxophonist, Garrett has found an exceptional partner in drummer Ronald Bruner. Their connection pushes Garrett to some intense heights, and when the rhythm section expands to include Lenny White and Rudy Bird on additional snare drums for "Soldiers Of The Fields/Soldats des Champs," *Sounds From The Ancestors* moves into rarefied territory.

—James Hale

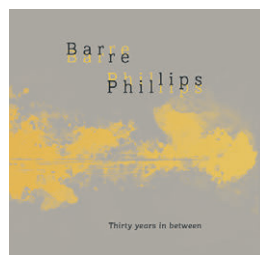
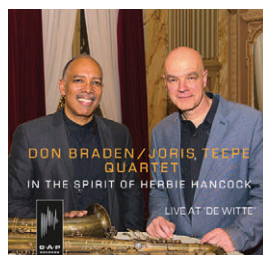
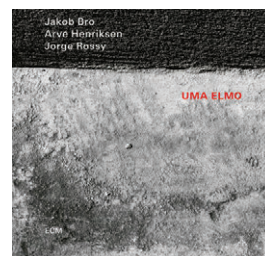
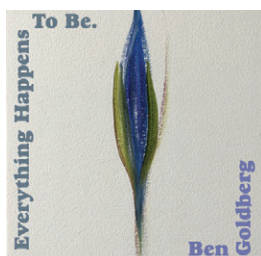
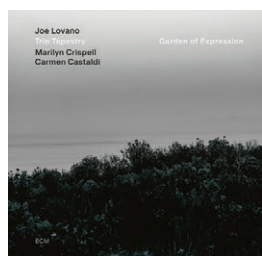
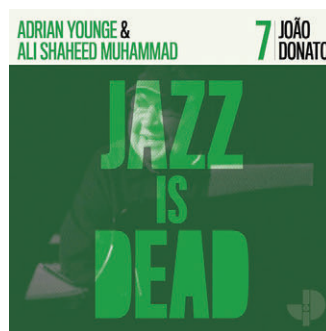
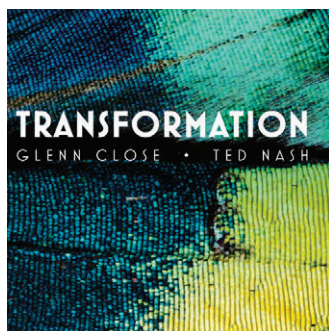
### THEO CROKER

#### BLK2LIFE // A Future Past

Sony Music Masterworks .....Dec.  
Croker's sixth album aims to send "coded frequencies to activate our sleeping, ancestral DNA" that bubble up throughout this ode to Blackness. It's a daring work of psychedelic jazz in which Croker, playing trumpet and flugelhorn, brings together forebearers like saxophonist Gary Bartz and rapper Wyclef Jean with futurists like U.K. blues singer/songwriter Malaya. Largely shaped by Todd Carder's production, Croker's horns occupy various sonic positions on these 13 tracks.

—Carlo Wolff





**DAYNA STEPHENS QUARTET**  
*Right Now! Live At The Village Vanguard*  
Contagious ..... Jan.

**TIM BERNE/MATT MITCHELL DUO**  
*Spiders*  
Out Of Your Head ..... Feb.

**GUY MINTUS TRIO**  
*A Gershwin Playground*  
Enja ..... Feb.

**KEITH JARRETT**  
*Budapest Concert*  
ECM ..... March

**BINKER AND MOSES**  
*Escape The Flames*  
Gearbox ..... March

**DON BRADEN/JORIS TEEPE QUARTET**  
*In The Spirit Of Herbie Hancock*  
O.A.P. .... March

**JOE LOVANO TRIO TAPESTRY**  
*Garden Of Expression*  
ECM ..... April

**JASON MORAN**  
*The Sound Will Tell You*  
Yes Records ..... May

**JAKOB BRO**  
*Uma Elmo*  
ECM ..... May

**LEON LEE DORSEY**  
*Thank You Mr. Mabern*  
Jazzavenue ..... May

**JOE LOVANO & DAVE DOUGLAS' SOUND PRINTS**  
*Other Worlds*  
Greenleaf ..... June

**MARK O'CONNOR**  
*Markology II*  
Omac ..... June

**BEN GOLDBERG**  
*Everything Happens To Be.*  
Bag Production Records  
July

**GLENN CLOSE/TED NASH**  
*Transformation*  
Tiger Turn ..... July

**ALEX SIPIAGIN**  
*Upstream*  
Posi-Tone ..... Aug.

**ADRIAN YOUNGE & ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMAD/JOÃO DONATO**  
*João Donato JID 007*  
Jazz is Dead ..... Aug.

**COCHEMEA**  
*Vol. II: Baca Sewa*  
Daptone ..... Sept.

**BARRE PHILLIPS**  
*Thirty Years In Between*  
Victo ..... Oct.

**BUTCHER BROWN**  
*Encore*  
Concord Jazz ..... Oct.

**ARTURO O'FARRILL & THE AFRO LATIN JAZZ ENSEMBLE**  
*...dreaming in lions...*  
Blue Note ..... Nov.



**FRANK KIMBROUGH**  
*Ancestors*  
 Sunnyside..... Nov.

**FRANCISCO MELA FEAT. MATTHEW SHIPP AND WILLIAM PARKER**  
*Music Frees Our Souls Vol. 1*  
 577 ..... Nov.

**PETER MCEACHERN**  
*Code 2*  
 Steeplechase LookOut..... Dec.

**HELEN SUNG**  
*Quartet+*  
 Sunnyside..... Dec.

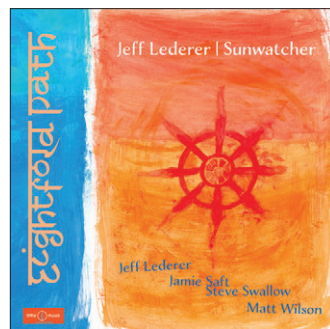
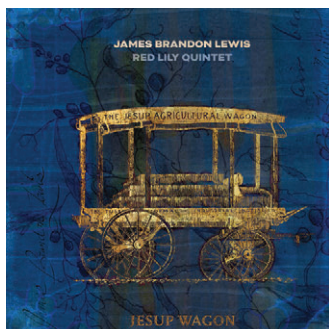
**BADBADNOTGOOD**  
*Talk Memory*  
 XL Recordings/Innovative  
 Leisure ..... Nov.

**MARC JOHNSON**  
*Overpass*  
 ECM ..... Dec.

**NICHOLAS PAYTON**  
*Smoke Sessions*  
 Smoke Sessions  
 Records..... Dec.

**JARED SCHONIG**  
*Two Takes Vol. I*  
*Two Takes Vol. II*  
 Anzic ..... Dec.

## NEW ★★★★★



**MELODY GARDOT**  
*Sunset In The Blue*  
 Decca ..... Jan.

**ALAN BROADBENT**  
**TRIO**  
*Trio In Motion*  
 Savant..... Jan.

**ELVIN BISHOP**  
**& CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE**  
*100 Years Of Blues*  
 Alligator..... Feb.

**ANGEL BAT DAWID AND**  
**THA BROTHERHOOD**  
*Live*  
 International Anthem..... March

**ROB MAZUREK EXPLODING**  
**STAR ORCHESTRA**  
*Dimensional Stardust*  
 International Anthem/  
 Nonesuch ..... Jan.

**MARIUS NESET**  
*Tributes*  
 ACT..... Jan.

**PAPO VÁZQUEZ & MIGHTY**  
**PIRATES TROUBADOURS**  
*Chapter 10: Breaking Cover*  
 Picaro..... Feb.

**MARQUIS HILL**  
*Soul Sign*  
 Black Unlimited  
 Music Group ..... March

**MARSHALL ALLEN/ROSCOE**  
**MITCHELL/MILFORD GRAVES/**  
**SCOTT ROBINSON**  
*Flow States*  
 Scien sonic ..... Jan.

**MARSHALL GILKES**  
**TRIO**  
*Waiting To Continue*  
 Alternative Side..... Jan.

**THE AWAKENING ORCHESTRA**  
*volume ii: to call her to a*  
*higher plain*  
 Biophilia..... Feb.

**RUSS LOSSING**  
*Metamorphosis*  
 Sunnyside..... March

**THE ROYAL BOPSTERS**  
*Party Of Four*  
 Motema ..... Jan.

**DELVON LAMARR**  
**ORGAN TRIO**  
*I Told You So*  
 Colemine..... Feb.

**DOXAS BROTHERS**  
*The Circle*  
 Justin Time ..... Feb.

**THE WARRIORS OF THE**  
**WONDERFUL SOUND**  
*Soundpath*  
 Clean Feed..... March

**LUBA MASON**  
*Triangle*  
 Blue Canoe ..... Jan.

**THEO BLECKMANN**  
**& THE WESTERLIES**  
*This Land*  
 Westerlies ..... Feb.

**FRANK WOESTE**  
*Pocket Rhapsody II*  
 ACT..... Feb.

**IVO PERELMAN**  
*The Garden Of Jewels*  
 Tao Forms..... March

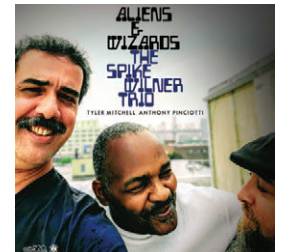
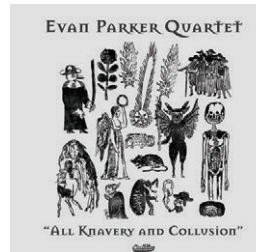
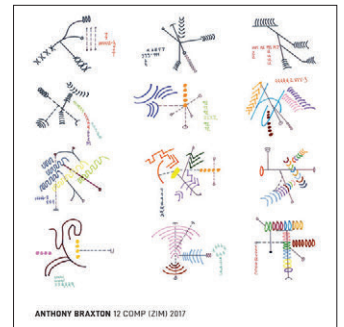
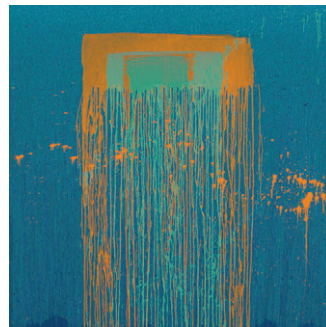
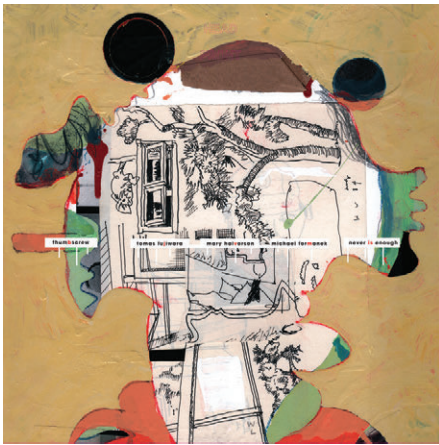
**TANI TABBAL TRIO**  
*Now Then*  
 Tao Forms..... Jan.

**RHYTHM CITY**  
*Rhythm City*  
 Autumn Hill..... Feb.

**ROSCOE MITCHELL**  
**& MIKE REED**  
*The Ritual And The Dance*  
 Astral Spirits..... March

**MATT PIET**  
*(pentimento)*  
 Amalgam..... March





**ARCHIE SHEPP  
& JASON MORAN**  
*Let My People Go*  
Archieball .....April

**CHARLES LLOYD  
& THE MARVELS**  
*Tone Poem*  
Blue Note .....April

**CHRIS POTTER**  
*Sunrise Reprise*  
Edition .....April

**SHAI MAESTRO**  
*Human*  
ECM .....April

**LARRY CORYELL  
& PHILIP CATHERINE**  
*Jazz At Berlin Philharmonic XI:  
The Last Call*  
ACT .....April

**LOGAN RICHARDSON**  
*Afrofuturism*  
Whirlwind .....April

**R+R=NOW**  
*R+R=NOW Live*  
Blue Note .....April

**CHRISTIAN LILLINGER/  
CHRISTOPHER DELL/JONAS  
WESTERGAARD TRIO**  
*Beats*  
Plaist.....April

**MARK FELDMAN**  
*Sounding Point*  
Intakt.....April

**TONY TIXIER**  
*I Am Human*  
Whirlwind.....April

**LEO GENOVESE**  
*Sin Tiempo*  
Ears & Eyes.....April

**MICHAEL DEASE**  
*Give It All You Got*  
Posi-Tone .....April

**SACHAL VASANDANI/  
ROMAIN COLLIN**  
*Midnight Shelter*  
Edition .....April

**PAT METHENY**  
*Road To The Sun*  
BMG .....May

**REGGIE QUINERLY**  
*New York Nowhere*  
Redefinition .....May

**GUSTAVO CORTINAS**  
*Desafio Candente*  
Woolgathering .....May

**JANE IRA BLOOM/  
MARK HELIAS**  
*Some Kind Of  
Tomorrow*  
Self-Released .....May

**LINA ALLEMANO  
FOUR**  
*Vegetables*  
Lumo Records.....May

**VINCENT HERRING**  
*Preaching To The Choir*  
Smoke Sessions .....June

**THUMBSCREW**  
*Never Is Enough*  
Cuneiform .....June

**MICHAEL FORMANEK**  
*Imperfect Measures*  
Intakt .....June

**DAMON LOCKS  
BLACK MONUMENT  
ENSEMBLE**  
*Now*  
International Anthem.....June

**NOAH HAIDU**  
*Slowly: Song For  
Keith Jarrett*  
Sunnyside.....June

**BRIAN CHARETTE**  
*Power From The Air*  
Steeplechase.....June

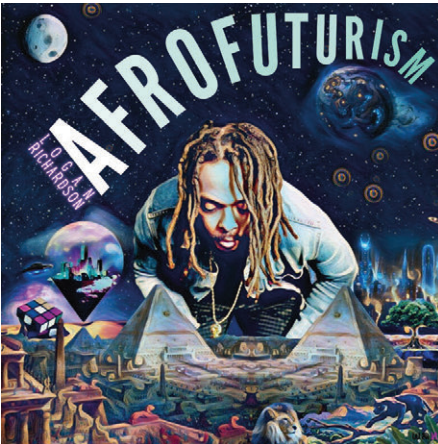
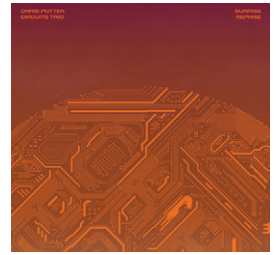
**SPIKE WILNER TRIO**  
*Aliens & Wizards*  
Cellar Music Group .....June

**TOBIAS MEINHART**  
*The Painter*  
Sunnyside.....June

**JAMES FRANCIES**  
*Purest Form*  
Blue Note .....July

**THE CITY CHAMPS**  
*Luna '68*  
Big Legal Mess .....July





**JAMES BRANDON LEWIS  
RED LILY QUINTET**

*Jesup Wagon*  
Tao Forms..... July

**EVAN PARKER QUARTET**

*All Knavery And Collusion*  
Cadillac..... July

**BROKEN SHADOWS**

*Broken Shadows*  
Intakt..... July

**KEVIN HAYS/BEN STREET/  
BILLY HART**

*All Things Are*  
Smoke Sessions..... July

**RAHSAAN BARBER**

*Mosaic*  
Jazz Music City..... July

**ICP SEPTET + JORIS  
ROELOFS + TERRIE EX**

*Komen & Gaan*  
ICP..... July

**JOHN HART**

*Checkmate*  
Steeplechase..... July

**REMPIS PERCUSSION  
QUARTET**

*Sud Des Alpes*  
Aerophonic..... July

**AMARO FREITAS**

*Sankofa*  
Far Out..... Aug.

**STEPHAN MICUS**

*Winter's End*  
ECM..... Aug.

**RICHARD X BENNETT**

*RXB3*  
Ubuntu..... Aug.

**TODD COCHRAN TC3**

*Then And Again,  
Here And Now*  
Sunnyside..... Aug.

**KEITH BROWN TRIO**

*African Ripples*  
Space Time..... Aug.

**THE MODERN JAZZ TRIO  
WITH JERRY BERGONZI**

*Straight Gonz*  
Jazzfuel..... Aug.

**ANTHONY BRAXTON**

*12 COMP (ZIM) 2017*  
Firehouse..... Aug.

**PATRICIA BARBER**

*Clique*  
Impex SACD/MQA..... Sept.

**ROY BROOKS**

*Understanding*  
Reel to Real..... Sept.

**MIKE CLARK/  
MICHAEL ZILBER**

*Mike Drop*  
Sunnyside..... Sept.

**LARS DANIELSSON  
LIBERETTO**

*Cloudland*  
ACT..... Sept.

**SAM PILNICK'S  
NONET PROJECT**

*The Adler Suite*  
Next Level..... Sept.

**BEN AYLON**

*Xalam*  
Riverboat..... Sept.

**ALCHEMY SOUND PROJECT**

*Afrika Love*  
ARC..... Sept.

**PIERRICK PÉDRON**

*Fifty-Fifty [1]*  
*New York Sessions*  
Gazebo..... Sept.

**PETE RODRIGUEZ**

*Obstacles*  
Sunnyside..... Sept.

**FRANCESCO CINIGLIO**

*The Locomotive Suite*  
Whirlwind..... Sept.

**ARTURO O'FARRILL AFRO  
LATIN JAZZ ORCHESTRA**

*Virtual Birdland*  
Zoho..... Sept.

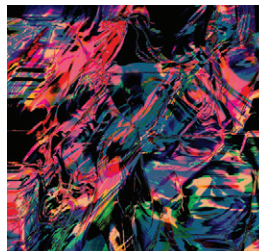
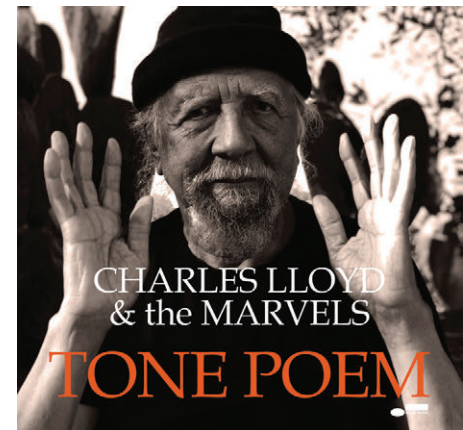
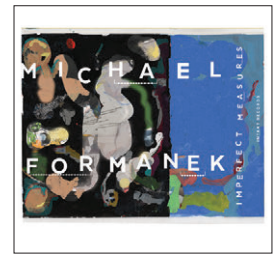
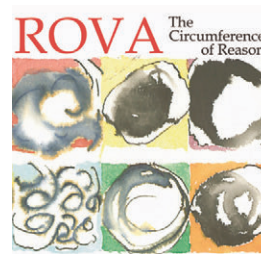
**SOMI**

*Zenzile: The Reimagination  
Of Miriam Makeba*  
Salon Africana..... Sept.

**RENEE ROSNES**

*Kinds Of Love*  
Smoke Sessions..... Oct.





**ANGEL BAT DAWID**  
*Hush Harbor Mixtape Vol. 1*  
*Doxology*  
 International Anthem.....Oct.

**JOEL FRAHM**  
*The Bright Side*  
 Anzic .....Oct.

**PRISM QUARTET**  
*Heritage/Evolution Volume 2*  
 XAS Records.....Oct.

**LYLE MAYS**  
*Eberhard*  
 Lyle Mays Music.....Oct.

**TIMO LASSY**  
*Trio*  
 We Jazz Records .....Oct.

**JOHANNES WALLMANN**  
*Elegy For An*  
*Undiscovered Species*  
 Shifting Paradigm .....Oct.

**BOB MINTZER & WDR BIG BAND COLOGNE**  
*Soundscapes*  
 MCG Jazz .....Oct.

**JOHN CHIN FEATURING RICHARD JULIAN**  
*Anything Mose!*  
 Jinsy .....Oct.

**JEREMIAH CYMERMAN**  
*Citadles & Sanctuaries*  
 5049.....Oct.

**JAZZMEIA HORN AND HER NOBLE FORCE**  
*Dear Love*  
 Empress Legacy .....Nov.

**AMIR ELSAFFAR RIVERS OF SOUND**  
*The Other Shore*  
 Outthere.....Nov.

**KATE MCGARRY + KEITH GANZ ENSEMBLE**  
*What To Wear In The Dark*  
 Resilience Music  
 Alliance .....Nov.

**ERIC BIBB**  
*Dear America*  
 Provogue.....Nov.

**JEFF LEDERER**  
*Eightfold Path*  
 Little (i) Music.....Nov.

**MARY LAROSE**  
*Out Here*  
 Little (i) Music.....Nov.

**RUSSELL GUNN & THE ROYAL KRUNK JAZZ ORKESTRA**  
*The Sirius Mystery*  
 Ropeadope.....Nov.

**LUCY YEGHIAZARYAN/ VANISHA GOULD**  
*In Her Words*  
 La Reserve Records .....Nov.

**ELIANE ELIAS**  
*Mirror Mirror*  
 Candid Records .....Nov.

**BRASUKA**  
*A Vida Com Paixão*  
 Outside In Music .....Nov.

**BRANDON GOLDBERG**  
*In Good Time*  
 Self-Released.....Nov.

**CARLOS HENRIQUEZ**  
*The South Bronx Story*  
 Tiger Turn.....Nov.

**KEN VANDERMARK**  
*The Field Within A Line*  
 Corbett Vs. Dempsey .....Nov.

**BECCA STEVENS & THE SECRET TRIO**  
*Becca Stevens & The Secret Trio*  
 Groundup Music .....Nov.

**JONATHAN BLAKE**  
*Homeward Bound*  
 Blue Note .....Dec.

**NUBYA GARCIA**  
*Source+We Move*  
 Concord Jazz.....Dec.

**KAZEMGE GEORGE**  
*I Insist*  
 Greenleaf .....Dec.

**MAKAYA MCCRAVEN**  
*Deciphering The Message*  
 Blue Note .....Dec.

**ROVA**  
*The Circumference Of Reason*  
 ESP .....Dec.

**OMAR SOSA/ SECKOU KEITA**  
*Suba*  
 bendigedig.....Dec.

**KEVIN SUN**  
*<3 Bird*  
 Endectomorph Music .....Dec.

**RAPHAEL WRESSNIG & IGOR PRADO**  
*Groove & Good Times*  
 Pepper Cake.....Dec.

**STACI GRIESBACH**  
*My George Jones Songbook*  
 StaciGriesbachMusic.....Dec.



## HISTORICAL ★★★★★

### HAL GALPER QUINTET

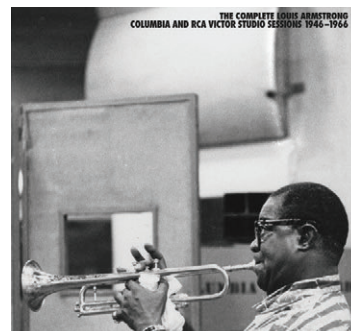
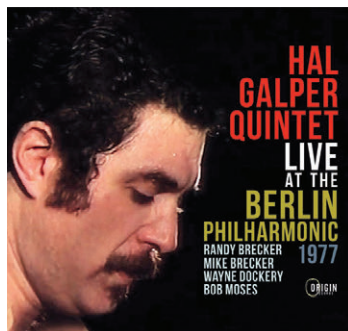
*Live At The Berlin Philharmonic 1977*  
Origin ..... May

### KEITH JARRETT

*Sun Bear Concerts*  
ECM ..... July

### LOUIS ARMSTRONG

*The Complete Louis Armstrong Columbia And RCA Victor Sessions 1946-1966*  
Mosaic ..... Oct.



## HISTORICAL ★★★★★ ½

### THELONIOUS MONK

*Palo Alto*  
Impulse ..... Jan.

### DAVE BRUBECK

*Time Out Takes*  
Brubeck Editions ..... Jan.

### OREGON

*1974*  
Moosicus Records ..... Nov.

### JAMES CLEVELAND

*The King Of Gospel Music: The Life And Music Of Reverend James Cleveland*  
Malaco ..... Nov.



## HISTORICAL ★★★★★

### ELLA FITZGERALD

*The Lost Berlin Tapes*  
Verve ..... Jan.

### JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

*Live In Maui*  
Experience Hendrix/Legacy Recordings/Sony Music Entertainment ..... Feb.

### HAROLD LAND

*Westward Bound*  
Reel to Real ..... May

### DON CHERRY

*The Summer House Sessions*  
Blank Forms Editions ..... June

### DON CHERRY

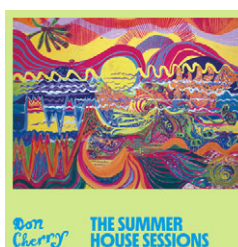
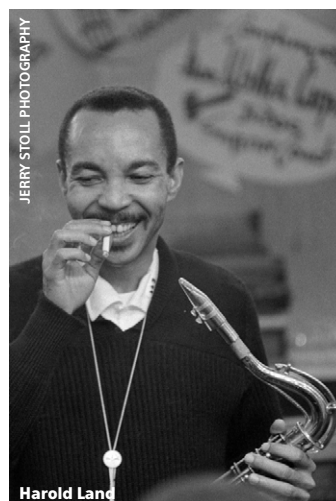
*Organic Music Theatre: Festival de Jazz de Chateauvallon 1972*  
Blank Forms Editions ..... June

### ALICE COLTRANE

*Kirtan: Turiya Sings*  
Impulse! ..... Sept.

### VARIOUS ARTISTS

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# Reviews

Masterpiece ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

DAVID SALAFIA



Christian McBride with members of Inside Straight, from left: Warren Wolf, Steve Wilson, Peter Martin and Carl Allen.

## Christian McBride & Inside Straight *Live At The Village Vanguard*

MACK AVENUE

★★★★½

At the end of a brightly swinging run through “Fair Hope Theme,” bassist and bandleader Christian McBride tells the Village Vanguard audience, “This band was born here.” Indeed, apart from a pandemic-induced break in 2020, Inside Straight has played the Vanguard every year since 2009; *Live At The Village Vanguard* was recorded there in 2014.

Funny thing is, the album has such a strong sense of connectedness and familiarity that

it’s easy to believe we’re listening to a performance from much later in that run. Take, for instance, vibraphonist Warren Wolf’s solo on “Fair Hope Theme.” After a driving two-bar break, he unleashes a string of swung eighth notes. Carl Allen’s drums respond by kicking accents across the beat, which Wolf answers with a bouncy, broken cadence. Immediately, McBride’s bass goes from walking to punching afterbeats, filling the holes in Wolf’s line as Peter Martin’s piano slams accents on two and four. It’s just the start of Wolf’s solo, yet it delivers more rhythmic magic in a few seconds than many bands manage in an entire set.

*Live At The Village Vanguard* is full of bravura moments — the bass and drums exchange

at the end of “Stick & Move” is especially spicy — but the band’s real strength is the writing. Between their varied rhythmic structures and use of orchestrated countermelody, the tunes are intricate and complicated, and because the thematic elements are sometimes continued under the solos, as on “Uncle James” or “Gang Gang,” the music offers the breadth of big band writing while maintaining the turn-on-a-dime immediacy of a small group. More, please.

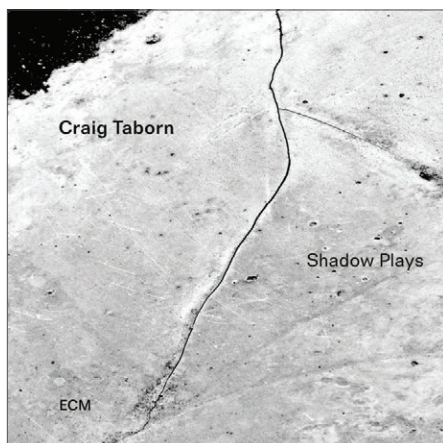
—J.D. Considine

**Live At The Village Vanguard:** Sweet Bread; Fair Hope Theme; Ms. Angelou; The Shade Of The Cedar Tree; Gang Gang; Uncle James; Stick & Move. (1:19:51)

**Personnel:** Christian McBride, bass; Steve Wilson, alto and soprano saxophone; Warren Wolf, vibes; Peter Martin, piano; Carl Allen, drums.

**Ordering info:** [mackavenue.com](http://mackavenue.com)





## Craig Taborn *Shadow Plays*

ECM

★★★★★

Ten years after Craig Taborn introduced *Avenging Angel*, the studio album that first captured the composer's singular approach to improvised solo piano, he releases *Shadow Plays*. This time recorded live, in the Mozartsaal of the Vienna Concert Hall, while on tour in early 2020 for evening billed as *Avenging Angel II*, an extrapolation of the earlier achievement.

To hear Taborn in person is a riveting experience and, listening to the seven tracks on this

new release, it's easy to tap into the immediacy of his concert performances. Certain ideas leave a visceral impression in the ear: The high-pitched ostinato on "Birds Templar," for instance, flutters like wings against the deep chordal movements below. The exchange of wild improvisation with snippets of contrasting swing underscores the agnosticism of "Conspiracy Of Things." And the sweetly melodic "Now In Hope" hints at the blues and the jazz waltz without fully embracing either.

Taborn titles his improvised pieces after the fact, so he isn't playing to a literal theme as he works on stage. Thus, if you hear fleeting dissonances juxtaposed with well-articulated arpeggiation, it's because Taborn was responding to an inner prompt, not an outer one.

The title cut serves as the masterstroke. At more than 18 minutes, it's the most dramatic of the collection. Here, he places brusque chords and skittering interjections alongside flowing melodies and intervallic repetition, transcending toward a cusp where these opposing impulses no longer seem to conflict. The line where shadow and light converge, Taborn seems to say, is a thin one.

—Suzanne Lorge

**Shadow Plays:** Bird Templars; Discordia Concors; Conspiracy Of Things; Concordia Discors; A Code With Spells; Shadow Play; Now I Hope. (01:16:21)

**Personnel:** Craig Taborn, piano.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

## Esperanza Spalding *Songwrights Apothecary Lab*

CONCORD

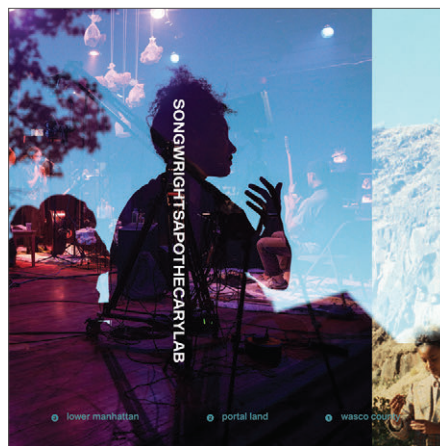
★★★★★

Stressing music's therapeutic qualities is a goal both noble and lofty. Timbres, cadences and mantras are often key elements for those artists concocting treatments for the parade of ills tainting life, and of late, Esperanza Spalding has wielded them with aplomb.

With *Songwrights Apothecary Lab* crafting a suite of 12 fetching art-songs with curative intentions, Spalding consulted with therapists and neuroscientists to shape the program as an antidote to modern maladies. Scrutinizing it on that level is slippery, but the insightful way her decidedly non-pop song structures work to foster pop-adjacent ditties remains impressive.

Each track is deemed a "formwela" and entitled numerically. "Formwella 5" is more Reichian than Reikian, with a repeated piano pattern grabbing the ear. Number six is a whispered prayer by Spalding and Corey D King over a thrusting bass ostinato.

Spalding's influences are many, as you'd expect from a Grammy-winning Harvard professor with a bevy of critical kudos. So flecks of prog motifs share space with folkie tangents, and the 11-minute romp in the middle



of the album harkens Abdullah Ibrahim's gentle excursions. Not sure of the record's specific medicinal impact, but I do know I feel better when this imaginative songwright's music is swirling inside my head.

—Jim Macnie

**Songwrights Apothecary Lab:** Formwella 1; Formwella 2; Formwella 3; Formwella 4; Formwella 5; Formwella 6; Formwella 57; Formwella 8; Formwella 9; Formwella 10; Formwella 11; Formwella 13. (60:54)

**Personnel:** Esperanza Spalding, upright bass, piano, vocals; PHOELIX, Rhodes (1), vocals, piano, xylophone, synthesizer, Hammond B-3 (3); Thrive Choir, vocals (1, 2); Ganavya Doraiswamy, vocals (2); James Greeley, bone whistle (2); LaMont Hamilton, bells; Chris Sholar, electric guitar; Steve Turre, conch shells (2); Justin Tyson, drums (2, 3); percussion; Corey D King, guitar (4–6); Wayne Shorter, saxophone (3); Leo Genovese, piano (2, 7–11, 13), piano; Matthew Stevens, guitar (7–11, 13); Aaron Burnett, saxophone (7–9, 11, 13); Francisco Mela, drums (7–11, 13); Gretchen Parlato, vocals (8); Shamell Bell, Luke Titus, vocals (8).

**Ordering info:** [concord.com](http://concord.com)



## Bill Charlap *Street Of Dreams*

BLUE NOTE

★★★★★

Bill Charlap's restrained elegance, bell-like tone, understated phrasing and deep sense of swing already set him apart from the pack, but his repertoire is a special bonus. How many other piano jazz trio programs forego Monk, Bud and bossa, but include a couple of seldom-played show tunes? Charlap's first album since 2017 with his seamless, 25-year-old trio featuring the (unrelated) Washingtons — Peter (bass) and Kenny (drums) — *Street Of Dreams* is a dandy.

The Grammy-winning pianist's skill as both a soloist who artfully varies his attack, dynamics and phrase-lengths and as an ensemble player, who can suddenly pull back to let the bassist and drummer share the space, are on full display here. The album kicks off with Dave Brubeck's nod to Ellington, "The Duke," with Charlap navigating the tune's notorious journey through all 12 keys — first rubato, then launching into lightly snapping swing. Duke's own tune with Johnny Hodges, "Daydream," follows, fulfilling the promise of its title.

Bassist Washington walks jauntily through Johnny Green's "Out Of Nowhere," offering a lithely melodic solo. Like Fred Astaire, the insouciant star of the 1951 film *Royal Wedding* from which "You're All The World To Me" is drawn, Charlap hovers a half-inch above the dance floor à la Oscar Peterson.

The pianist makes you feel the youth of an ingenue on "I'll Know" (from *Guys and Dolls*), as well as the mature gravitas of the Bergmans' classic "What Are You Doing For The Rest Of Your Life." Kenny Burrell's obscure "Your Host" gets a swinging turn, and the trio closes with "Street Of Dreams" that evokes the feel of Ahmad Jamal.

—Paul de Barros

**Street Of Dreams:** The Duke; Daydream; You're All The World To Me; I'll Know; Your Host; Out Of Nowhere; What Are You Doing For The Rest Of Your Life; Street Of Dreams. (45:11)

**Personnel:** Bill Charlap, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

**Ordering info:** [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)



# The Hot Box >

Critics	J.D. Considine	Suzanne Lorge	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>Christian McBride</b> <i>Live At The Village Vanguard</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
<b>Craig Taborn</b> <i>Shadow Plays</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
<b>Esperanza Spalding</b> <i>Songwrights Apothecary Lab</i>	★★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★
<b>Bill Charlap</b> <i>Street Of Dreams</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★

## Critics' Comments

### Christian McBride & Inside Straight, *Live At The Village Vanguard*

McBride leads a streamlined group of exceptional charisma, unerring in its straightahead stagecraft. While the members solo handily in turn, the remaining players form a phalanx so immersed in cool-headed swing that any resistance would be useless. —Suzanne Lorge

Come for the group empathy and deep swing, stay for Steve Wilson's ingenuity and the precision that's on display when the boss solos. Secret weapon: Warren Wolf. —Jim Macnie

This straightahead quintet highlights the piquant alto saxophone of Steve Wilson, the ferocious vibes of Warren Wolf, the unstoppable piano of Peter Martin and a barn-burning closer, "Stick & Move" with McBride and drummer Carl Allen trading licks like Bird and Diz. —Paul de Barros

### Craig Taborn, *Shadow Plays*

Recorded live and solo at a concert in Vienna, this captures Taborn at his most incisive, forging pulsing rhythms, trance-like repetition and shimmering harmonies into episodes of transcendent beauty. Could this be his Keith Jarrett moment? —J.D. Considine

The reveries on this live solo date come in myriad forms, from aggressive blocks to flowing ruminations. Each new turn is more engaging than the last. The pianist is all about imagination. —Jim Macnie

This draws the listener in the way a vast canvas by Cy Twombly might. Sometimes the drama flags, but Taborn maintains rigorous, witty attention to the development of his ideas, employing a dazzling technique that ranges from Butoh-dance-slow to Cecil Taylor-fast. —Paul de Barros

### Esperanza Spalding, *Songwrights Apothecary Lab*

Trying to not just harness but also focus the healing powers of music is the work of a saint. Managing to do so through music this tuneful verges on the miraculous. —J.D. Considine

Spalding again brushes the outer edges of creative musicianship. Ever-focused on uplift and understanding, Spalding the composer invites listeners into a place of auditory healing. Once there, Spalding the singer-instrumentalist engages with soothing repetition, stimulating effects and an appeal to higher sensitivities more felt than heard. —Suzanne Lorge

If even half the tunes on this album came up to the level of the strikingly powerful "Formwela 10," the Africanish "Formwela 8" or the lyrical acoustic guitar piece "Formwela 4," Spalding's bold song lab might be judged a moderate success. But, sadly, the outcome is mostly sprawling, awkward and wildly disparate. —Paul de Barros

### Bill Charlap, *Street Of Dreams*

Charlap remains a master of harmonic invention. He reframes these chestnuts with customary grace. Still, it's hard not to wish his "Street Of Dreams" was a bit less somnolent. —J.D. Considine

Any tome on the Great American Songbook should have a chapter devoted to Charlap and his trio. With superb touch and disarming insight, the longtime bandmates find fresh hue and deep-buried richness — a triumph not to be underestimated. —Suzanne Lorge

Never underestimate the power of poise. And never doubt that this agile threesome wields it wisely. The boss seems particularly clever on this return to Blue Note. —Jim Macnie



From the hive-mind of Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber's Greg Ionman Tate, Lisala Beatty, Lewis "Flip" Barnes, Satch Hoyt, Marque Gilmore tha' Inna•Most, V. Jeffrey Smith, & Jared Michael Nickerson comes "Angels Over Oakanda." A four-song suite of Conducted Improvisations and home studio orchestrations which treat space, time and genre like trans-dimensional silly-putty while giving polyphonic and multi-rhythmic dap to the visionary legacies of The Moors and the Black Panther Party.

"Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber returns to form with 'Angels Over Oakanda', a swinging, hip tune reminiscent of '70s funk and Electric Miles, and a head-bopping gem." ~ Sheila Anderson/WBGO

"Whether you buy the four-track CD or the six-track digital version, this is right up there with the best of Burnt Sugar's work, and shows that well into their third decade of existence, they have yet to reach the limits of their potential." ~ Phil Freeman/Burning Ambulance

"Marque Gilmore tha' Inna•Most plays an important role on Repatriation of the Midnight Moors which is built over a tumbling bass hook by Jared Michael Nickerson and flutes and loops from Satch Hoyt. This is an atmospheric and infectious slice of d'n'b that feels much closer in spirit to On The Corner than Chase & Status." ~ Adam Sieff/London Jazz News

"The bassist Jared Michael Nickerson, Tate's co-leader, underpins "Angels Over Oakanda," the band's first album in four years, with rhythms that sweep the music along like a tide." ~ Michaelangelo Matos/The New Yorker

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## Henry Threadgill Zooid *Poof*

PI  
★★★★½

The supposed contention between improvisation and composition now seems a remote and irrelevant as the squabble between the Big-Endians and Little-Endians in *Gulliver's Travels*.

Threadgill bestrides both realms colossally, probably the most important composer/improviser around at the moment. His extraordinary journey as a composer has, though, been one of dogged simplification.

## Theon Cross *Intra-I* NEW SOIL ★★★★

Theon Cross, perhaps best known for his role in buzzy British outfit Sons of Kemet, is bringing the tuba back into the jazz vanguard.

On *Fyah*, his previous album as a leader, Cross cooked with Nubya Garcia and Moses Boyd, mixing his love for early New Orleans bass lines with modern rhythms and synths. This go-round finds the gutsy tuba player in a duo formation with drummer/percussionist Emre Ramazanoglu and a wide-ranging slate of featured artists.

*Intra-I* is punching well above its weight in terms of the size of its sound, perhaps due to Ramazanoglu and Cross' heavy use of effects that amplify and distort their respective instruments to nearly epic proportions. Cross' tuba is rendered almost unrecognizable on certain cuts (such as "Play To Win" and "The Spiral").

*Intra-I* plays well with scale, at times leaning towards cinematic. "Watching Over" is the perfect representation of a sound that towers like a plywood Jamaican sound system, while "Forward Progression II" is a monster dub cut that could pass for a lost recording from the soundtrack to the 1980 film *Babylon*. And yet "We Go Again" is as intimately scaled as a glass

Where the 1980s Sextett, and its successors Very Very Circus and Make A Move, often seemed clotted and verbose (albeit always busy with ideas), Zooid has steadily pared things down to the point where, on "Poof" itself, Threadgill teases out a saxophone line that seems always to have been in the air before us, as clear and declarative as speech, one of those instant-classic moments that makes this his most communicative and accessible album to date. Grounded as ever in root values, as "Come And Go" insists right at the beginning, it voyages out through calm and choppy water with equal authority.

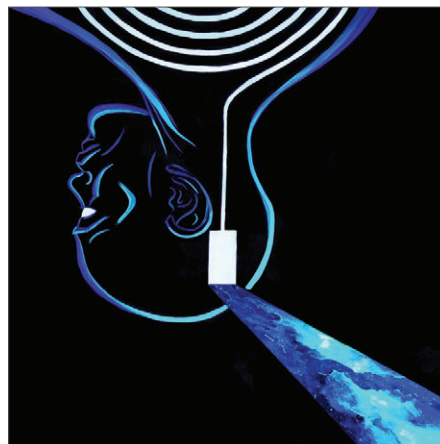
The absence of an apostrophe on the credit is telling. This isn't a horn-man and his group. Nor is it a self-denyingly anonymous "name" band. Henry Threadgill Zooid is a concept and a now long-established collective entity that visits strange territories, upsets our sense of scale and value but delivers whole new musical worlds. He's our Gulliver and we should put out flags every time he returns to port.

—Brian Morton

**Poof:** Come And Go; Poof; Beneath The Bottom; Happenstance; Now And Then. (38:00)

**Personnel:** Henry Threadgill, alto saxophone, flute, bass flute; Liberty Ellman, guitar; José Davila, tuba, trombone; Christopher Hoffman, cello; Elliot Humberto Kavee, drums.

**Ordering info:** [pre recordings.bandcamp.com](http://pre recordings.bandcamp.com)



of wine shared between lovers.

This album is a proper mashup of a variety of sounds, from jazz to dubstep to afrobeats.

Plump with too many tropical flavors to accurately list here, it's an enormously appealing sonic interpretation of the diversity found within the African diaspora of London.

—Ayana Contreras

**Intra-I:** Intro; We Go Again; Roots; The Spiral; Trust The Journey; 40tude; Watching Over (Bless Up Dad); Forward Progression II; Play To Win; Universal Alignment. (35:16)

**Personnel:** Theon Cross, tuba; Emre Ramazanoglu, drums, percussion, effects, keys, programming; Remi Graves (1), Shumba Maasai (3), Afronaut Zu (4), Ahnansé (4), Estephane Mathurin (6), Amelina Mathurin (6), Consensus (9), vocals; Oren Marshall, tuba (10).

**Ordering info:** [newsoilmusic.com](http://newsoilmusic.com)



## Sheila Jordan *Comes Love: Lost Session 1960*

CAPRI  
★★★★½

Sheila Jordan has long been a beloved singer, educator and interpreter of song, who recently touring Europe at the age of 92.

She sang in Detroit in the late 1940s, moved to New York in 1951, was a friend of her mentor Charlie Parker, was married to Duke Jordan during 1952–'62, recorded "Yesterdays" with Peter Ind in November 1960, waxed a haunting version of "You Are My Sunshine" with George Russell and made what was believed to be her first album as a leader, *Portrait Of Sheila*, for Blue Note in 1962.

Yet, despite all of that, she would not become a full-time jazz singer until the 1970s.

However her history now has to be amended a little. *Comes Love*, which is subtitled "Lost Session 1960," unearths a long forgotten and unheard session from June 10, 1960, that is Jordan's true recorded debut.

Joined by an unidentified rhythm section (possibly led by pianist John Knapp), the 31-year old Jordan shows that she was already a top-notch vocalist although not yet that recognizable. Performances such as the slow ballad "I'm The Girl" and her scat-filed "It Don't Mean A Thing" would be perfect for a Blindfold Test.

Jordan sounds closer to herself on a pair of Billie Holiday-associated songs ("Comes Love" and a magnificent version of "Don't Explain"), as well as her reshaping of "A Sleeping Bee" and her passionate take on a very slow "When The World Was Young."

Her voice is a little higher than the one audiences came to know later in her career, but Jordan already had something personal and special to contribute to these standards, making the 61-year-old *Comes Love* an important discovery.

—Scott Yanow

**Comes Love:** I'm The Girl; It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing; Ballad Of The Sad Young Men; Comes Love; Don't Explain; A Sleeping Bee; When the World Was Young; I'll Take Romance; These Foolish Things; Glad To Be Unhappy; They Can't Take That Away From Me. (34:17)

**Personnel:** Sheila Jordan, vocals; unidentified piano, bass, drums.

**Ordering info:** [caprirecords.com](http://caprirecords.com)

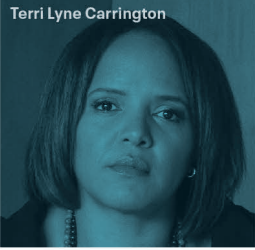


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## Brian Lynch Songbook Vol. 1: Bus Stop Serenade

HOLLISTIC MUSICWORKS  
★★★★

Brassman Brian Lynch has been a mainstay of the New York scene for 40 years in bands led by Horace Silver, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Art Blakey, Phil Woods and Eddie Palmieri, among others. Now 65, he means to establish definitive versions of his compositions from the mid-1990s to mid-2000s in *Bus Stop Serenade*, described as first of a series of his songbooks.

It's a worthy effort, especially as he's revisiting pieces, recording them on his own label for

better copyright control. Longtime collaborators constitute Lynch's quintet, and the two-disc album offers two takes on eight of his works ("Keep Your Circle Small" is played only once), differences between the tracks being matters of length and expressive details of the solos. Split between "The Express Route" and "The Alternate Route," the finely wrought compositions are also presented in different sequences: "24-7," for instance, opens CD 1 but ends CD 2.

Listeners will turn to this recording for an elegant dose of present-day post-bop. The band works within that sub-genre's preferences for sophisticated harmonies and piquant lyricism. Lynch's tone is particularly lovely on flugelhorn, and Snidero is an empathic companion in the front line. Evans is supportive while self-effacing, Kozlov buoyantly dependable, Edwards quick and propulsive, regardless of his habit of splash cymbal accents. Tempi vary from moderate to fast — no problem for Kozlov as he shows in his statement on "Clairevoyance." Lynch can be rightfully proud.

—Howard Mandel

**Songbook Vol. 1:** Bus Stop Serenade: (CD1) 24–7; Afinique; On The Dot; Bus Stop Serenade; Clairevoyance; Woody Shaw; Before The First Cup; Charles Tolliver; Keep Your Circle Small; (CD 2) On The Dot; Charles Tolliver; Before The First Cup; Woody Shaw; Clairevoyance; Bus Stop Serenade; Afinique; 24–7. (64:44/67:25)

**Personnel:** Brian Lynch, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jim Snidero, alto saxophone; Orrin Evans, piano; Boris Kozlov, bass; Donald Edwards, drums.

**Ordering info:** [hollisticmusicworks.com](http://hollisticmusicworks.com)

## Charnett Moffett Trio Live

MOTEMA  
★★★★

This brief EP is a companion piece to bassist Moffett's latest studio album, *New Love*, released in June 2021. Recorded at Yoshi's on July 25 of this year, it features versions of two tracks from that album — "Flying In The Air" and "Higher Dimensions" — and two new pieces, "Remembering Your Love" and "Inside/Outside," along with a version of the George Gershwin song "Summertime." The music is performed by a stripped-down trio: Jana Herzen on guitar and vocals, Moffett on fretless electric bass and Corey Garcia on drums.

Moffett has a long and wide-ranging history in jazz. He was 17 when he played on Wynton Marsalis' *Black Codes (From The Underground)* in 1985, and has subsequently worked with artists ranging from McCoy Tyner, Kenny Garrett and Wallace Roney to Ornette Coleman (for whom his father Charles drummed in the 1960s), Sonny Sharrock and Pharoah Sanders. He's an adventurous player comfortable in almost any context, stepping out when the moment calls for it but happy to play a supporting (and supportive) role behind Herzen on the first two tracks here.



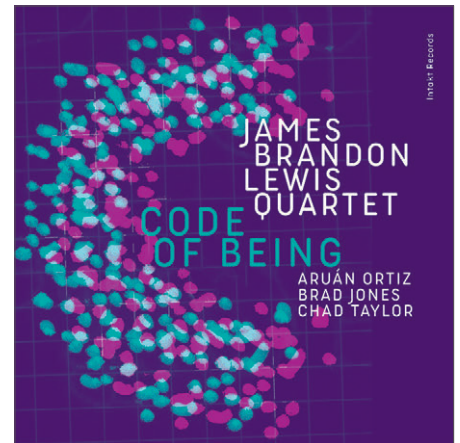
Once the vocal numbers end, though, the musical polarity shifts. The group becomes a jazz fusion trio combining '60s-inflected rag-rock with speedy, high-energy fusion, and Moffett is very much the leader, his impossibly fast (and sometimes fiercely loud) bass runs shadowed by Garcia's dancing cymbals and thumping toms, as Herzen provides subtle harmonies, her versions of the unison melodies just a hair slower and more considered than his.

—Philip Freeman

**Live:** Summertime; Remembering Your Love; Flying In The Air; Higher Dimensions; Inside/Outside. (20:15)

**Personnel:** Charnett Moffett, bass; Jana Herzen, guitar, vocals; Corey Garcia, drums.

**Ordering info:** [motema.com](http://motema.com)



## James Brandon Lewis Quartet Code Of Being

INTAKT  
★★★★

*Code Of Being* is James Brandon Lewis' second recording with his "Molecular" quartet (pianist Aruán Ortiz, bassist Brad Jones and drummer Chad Taylor) — for which the tenor saxophonist writes in a system based on biological cell processes. The album also mines his interest in African American visual artists. Putting that aside, what matters is that *Code Of Being* features some of Lewis' most beautiful music.

In fact, it opens with the absolutely exquisite "Resonance," a wistful, pondering tune that works itself into a pugilistic, M-Base-like attack. If the rest of the album never quite equals that zenith, it comes close. "Every Atom Glows" is a haunting ballad featuring the leader, though a suspenseful Jones solo might be its finest moment. The title track and "Where Is Hella" constitute back-to-back dramatic episodes.

Two tracks, "Per 4" and "Per 5," share a description in Lewis' notes: "the rhythmic explorations of my Molecular Systematic Music inspired by circadian rhythms in biological cells." Only the first, though, sounds like a mathematical experiment. It starts as a winding solo, and though the others (especially Taylor) eventually bring in some rhythmic energy, melodically it falls into a rut. "Per 5," on the other hand, is compelling, with Lewis and Ortiz playing scampering counterpoint over an insistent 6/8 groove from Jones and Taylor.

None of this is to say that the cerebral components of Lewis' art aren't fascinating. Certainly "Every Atom Glows" will push one to find the eponymous painting by Norman Lewis. But enjoy the tune, and the album, for its pure musical glory first and foremost.

—Michael J. West

**Code Of Being:** Resonance; Archimedeian; Every Atom Glows; Per 4; Code Of Being; Where Is Hella; Per 5; Tessera. (67:20)

**Personnel:** James Brandon Lewis, tenor saxophone; Aruán Ortiz, piano; Brad Jones, bass; Chad Taylor, drums.

**Ordering info:** [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch)





## Bola Sete *Samba In Seattle: Live At The Penthouse* (1966-1968)

TOMPKINS SQUARE

★★★★½

Among guitar legends, Brazilian guitarist Bola Sete has long been semi-hiding in plain sight, a natural virtuoso and distinctive stylist championed by many, yet failed to achieve due lofty status. To the Brazilian tool of the nylon-string guitar, Sete brought a vulnerable, raw and sophisticated approach — an electric intensity, sans amplification. He possessed an ever-active (sometimes hyperactive) musical mind, attached to quicksilver, spidery fingers.

Thankfully, this superb new compilation of live tracks from Seattle's Penthouse in the late 1960s — assembled by master archivist Zev Feldman for Tompkins Square — should help rectify Sete's stature in the jazz and broader music world.

What makes the three-disc set special are twin attributes, as something at once sweeping and intimate, offering a fuller measure of what set him apart than some of his tidier studio recordings. We hear Sete, in clean, you-are-there fidelity, moving smoothly or brusquely (he expertly melded the two) through nearly 30 tracks. Avant-folk icon John Fahey was an acolyte, and his poetic essay about Sete for *Guitar Player* magazine is featured in the booklet.

Sete's musical range roved from Brazilian favorites — Antonio Carlos Jobim, Baden Powell, Luis Bonfá's "Black Orpheus," and originals — to standards, Spanish guitar repertoire, a pinch of decidedly unfussy Bach and Sete's interpretive charisma throughout. Highlights include inventive recreations of "Satin Doll," his chordal arabesque around "Corcovado," a vibrant shake-up of "Meditação" and a bittersweet take on Villa-Lobos' "Prelude No. 3 in A Minor."

*Samba In Seattle* offers a dive into Sete's raw goods in hearty portions — ample evidence that this outlier deserves a more central spotlight in the guitar pantheon.

—Josef Woodard

***Samba In Seattle: Live At The Penthouse (1961-1968):*** Consolação; Meditação; Prelude No. 1; Soul Samba; Deve Ser Amor; Valsa de Uma Cidade; Garota de Ipanema; Malagueña; The Shadow Of Your Smile; Satin Doll; Spanish Dance No. Five; Prelude No. 3 In A Minor; Manhã de Carnaval; A Felicidade; Samba de Orfeu; Samba de Avião; Valsa de Uma Cidade; Asturias; Partis In E Major; BWV 1006a III. Gavotte 'en Rondeau; Trizteza; Corcovado; Deve Ser Amor; Consolação; O Barquinho; One Note Samba; Satin Doll; Recuerdos de la Alhambra. (2:35:12)

**Personnel:** Bola Sete, guitar; Sebastião Neto, bass; Paulinho Magalhães, drums.

Ordering info: [tompkinssquare.com](http://tompkinssquare.com)

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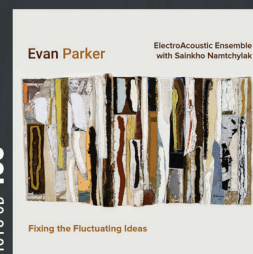


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D'ORION / ROBBIE KUSTER  
MARTIN TÉTREAU

PRINTEMPS 2021

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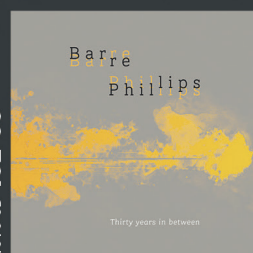
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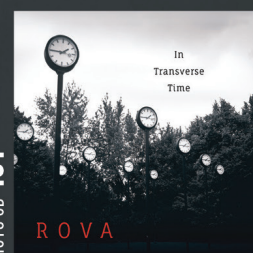
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## Brian Wilson *At My Piano*

DECCA

★★★★½

Given our collective memory of Beach Boys tunes from the 1960s, it's not an exaggeration to say that (for those of a certain age) they are deeply ingrained in our DNA. To hear them rendered in such succinct and poignant fashion by the composer himself on solo piano is, as one friend and die-hard Wilson fan put it, "a benediction."

Some of these familiar melodies have the simple, almost naive feel of Chick Corea's

*Children's Songs*, though they are also effective earworms that burrow deeply into the memory banks. One of the earliest gems of the collection, "In My Room" from 1963's *Surfer Girl*, has a calming, "Pachelbel's Cannon" vibe to it while "You Still Believe in Me" from 1966's *Pet Sounds* sounds here like a heartwarming Christmas carol. "California Girls" from 1965's *Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!)* carries the loping bass line from Roy Rogers' "Happy Trails," the theme song for a 1940s and 1950s radio program that Wilson no doubt grew up with, while "Wouldn't It Be Nice" from *Pet Sounds* carries some intricate, harmonically moving bass lines that suggest an interest in Bach. And "Friends" is clearly influenced by Satie's "Gymnopédie No. 1."

By far the most interesting and eclectic track here, aside from sparse recreations of favorites like "God Only Knows," "Good Vibrations" and "Don't Worry Baby," is "Sketches Of Smile," a medley of four songs from the legendary unfinished concept album *Smile*, Wilson's collaboration with Van Dyke Parks.

—Bill Milkowski

**At My Piano:** God Only Knows; In My Room; Don't Worry Baby; California Girls; The Warmth Of The Sun; Wouldn't It Be Nice; You Still Believe in Me; I Just Wasn't Made For These Times; Sketches Of Smile; Surf's Up; Friends; Till I Die; Love And Mercy; Mt. Vernon Farewell; Good Vibrations. (48:07)

**Personnel:** Brian Wilson, piano.

**Ordering info:** [decca.com](http://decca.com)

## Mehmet Ali Sanlikol *An Elegant Ritual*

SELF-RELEASE

★★★★

Mehmet Sanlikol's immersive *An Elegant Ritual* passionately melds Western jazz and traditional Turkish music. Recorded live, it displays Sanlikol's versatility: He sings and plays a Middle Eastern flute called the ney while he plays the piano, making this trio sound bigger than it is.

A keening Sanlikol ushers in "The 7th Day," the first of five long, symphonic tracks connected by brief interludes and a postlude. Beautiful and strange, it conjures meadows and mountains, Sanlikol's voice spanning the oracular and trumpet-like scatting.

The ney stars in "Arayis/In Search," a tune of pliable, non-Western sonorities one might encounter in a Middle Eastern souk. Exotic and seductive, it settles into apprehensive interplay among Sanlikol, bassist James Heazlewood-Dale and drummer George Lennis.

The impulse to sing along rules in "Hasret," a showcase for Sanlikol's vocals. Both declamatory and confessional, they are the lasting power behind this memorable album.

The title track starts with drums and Sanlikol's plangent ney, its woody sound evoking an otherworldly Pied Piper. This bewitching



tune stacks sonics from Sanlikol's ululations to Lennis' blocky percussion and Indonesian gongs. Its character shifts from formal dance to something darker, more ceremonial. Visualize a minuet, the men in powdered wigs and the women in hoop skirts, in a sandy desert plaza.

The only non-original, "Invitation," caps this soaring work. The Bronislaw Kaper classic also is the album's one pure trio foray; no vocals, ney, Turkish drum or Indonesian gongs here. No lack of drama, either.

—Carlo Wolff

**An Elegant Ritual:** Prelude; The 7th Day; Interlude 1; Lost Inside; Interlude 2; Arayis/In Search; An Elegant Ritual; Interlude 3; Hasret; Anadolu Jazz; Postlude; Invitation (55:01)

**Personnel:** James Heazlewood-Dale, acoustic bass; George Lennis, drums, gongs, bendir; Mehmet Ali Sanlikol, piano, voice, ney.

**Ordering info:** [sanlikol.com](http://sanlikol.com); [dunyainc.org](http://dunyainc.org)

## MATTHEW SHIPP CODEBREAKER

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## Matthew Shipp *Codebreaker*

TAO FORMS

★★★★

Ever prolific, Matthew Shipp has only gotten moreso in recent years. *Codebreaker* is the eighth CD with his name on the front to be released in 2021, and his third solo piano album in just 18 months. This torrent of music invites the listener to regard any individual effort as being something like a single star in the universe, simultaneously miniscule part of a whole and the locus of immense variety and activity.

Arrayed against Shipp's vast catalog, the recording definitely possesses a character of its own. In recent times, he has described his approach to the piano as "vibrational," and while his intent is to express his music's relationship to the cosmos, the term can also be taken quite literally in this case. There are moments across *Codebreaker* when one can sense the instrument's timber shivering as sustained notes engage in a dialogue with tones that fade more quickly.

Other exchanges manifest, as Shipp's right hand draws a line away from a piece's structure and then returns to it, or as the listener considers the interaction between Mia Hansford's poetic, track-by-track notes and Shipp's piano playing.

And yet, this web of crosstalk imparts a sense of solidity. The record's 11 tracks, each succinct and complete, project a common character. Not only is the music instantly identifiable as Shipp's, it has a unifying feeling of focused reflection. This music isn't a stream of consciousness, but a series of abstract musical thoughts crystalized into a sequence. You might listen to this album over and over, pondering its code; but you'll know from the first that Shipp is in tune with his codebook's contents.

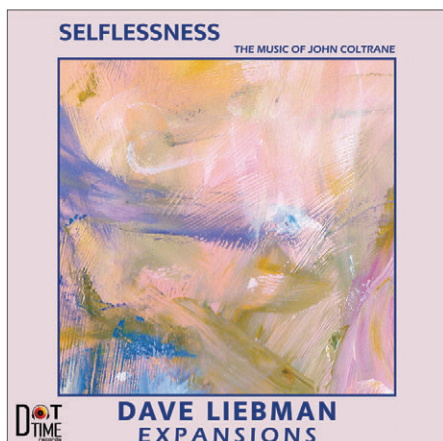
—Bill Meyer

**Codebreaker:** Codebreaker; Spiderweb; Disc; Code Swing; Letter From The Galaxy; Green Man; Raygun; Suspended; Mystic Motion; Stomp To The Galaxy; The Tunnel. (44:23)

**Personnel:** Matthew Shipp, piano.

**Ordering info:** [aumfidelity.com](http://aumfidelity.com)





## Dave Liebman Expansions *Selflessness: The Music Of John Coltrane*

**DOT TIME**  
★★★★½

Saxophonist Dave Liebman exudes an air of humility throughout this John Coltrane tribute album. Despite being a Grammy-nominated artist and NEA Jazz Master, Liebman put his Expansions bandmates and Coltrane's music at the forefront of the creative appeal with "selflessness" setting the tone for this session. Other

choices — like Liebman's decision not to play a note of tenor on the date, placing an Alex Ritz's 6/4-and-4/4 chart of "Mr. Day" at the top of the program, and playing wooden flute on Coltrane's iconic "Olé" as a way to acknowledge the piece's Spanish folk roots — reinforce this altruistic mindset.

All of this sharing is what gives the album a spontaneous, fresh character. Even devoted Coltrane listeners will hear intriguing stylistic pivots. The band wastes no time presenting time changes when "My Favorite Things" shifts from 3/4 to 4/4. The spicy melodic flow in Matt Vashlishan's arrangement of "Lazy Bird" hits notes and makes chord changes that entirely dismiss the thought of unengaged performance. Meanwhile, "Dear Lord," the finale, pursues equal ingenuity, but ends in "selflessness" on a united note; the music blends under an umbrella of rounded, gentler and more fluid timbres in flute, brush strokes, soft keys and Liebman's distinct-but-delicate soprano tones. Come for Coltrane's concepts. Stay for the adventurous reinventions. —Kira Grunenber

**Selflessness:** Mr. Day; Compassion; My Favorite Things; Olé; Lazy Bird; Peace On Earth; One Up One Down; Selflessness; Dear Lord. (54:51)

**Personnel:** Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone, wooden flute (4); Matt Vashlishan, alto saxophone, flute (6, 9), clarinet (4), wind synth (2); Bobby Avey, piano, keyboard, synthesizers (2, 4, 8, 9); Tony Marino, acoustic bass; Alex Ritz, drums, frame drum (4).

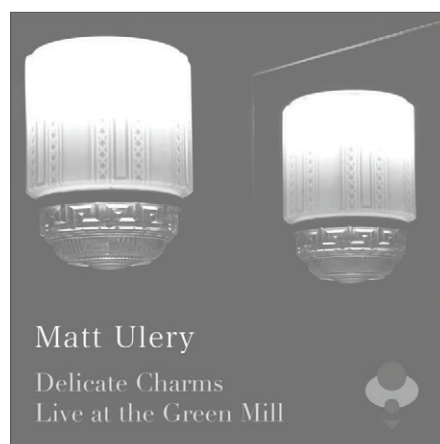
**Ordering info:** [dottimerecords.com](http://dottimerecords.com)

## Matt Ulery *Delicate Charms: Live At The Green Mill*

**WOOLGATHERING**  
★★★★

Matt Ulery first conceived of Delicate Charms as vehicle for long-form pieces that expressed sentiments that the Chicago-based composer and bassist could not put into words. In its original form, the quintet possessed a non-standard front line of violin and alto saxophone. While each musician is an accomplished improviser, the group's first pieces were mostly written out. A lot has happened since, and *Delicate Charms: Live At The Green Mill* reflects those changes.

Travel became complicated in COVID times, so out-of-towners Zack Brock and Rob Clearfield have been replaced by James Davis and Paul Bedal. The change of personnel brought a change in instrumentation, and swapping violin for trumpet brings the group's chamber sound closer to that of a straight-ahead jazz combo. And instead of getting things just right in the studio, Ulery captured shared urgency of musicians and audiences returning to live performance by recording live at Chicago's Green Mill. This decision likely contributed to the album's greatest strength: the players' spirited performances.



Ulery composed six new pieces, and each zips like a bullet train. But the themes are not as memorable as what the musicians do with them. "Consumer Of Time," snaps taut during Ulery's introduction and Davis' ardent solo, but sags during ensemble passages. "The Arrival" comes to life as Bedal uses the melody as a launching platform, and peaks when Ward builds from nimbly articulated phrases to an impassioned climax. —Bill Meyer

**Delicate Charms: Live At The Green Mill:** We Are Just At The Limit; Oceans Away; The Arrival; Undertow; That Hideous Strength; Consumer Of Time. (62:44)

**Personnel:** Matt Ulery, bass; Paul Bedal, piano; James Davis, trumpet; Quin Kirchner, drums; Greg Ward, alto saxophone.

**Ordering info:** [mattulery.com](http://mattulery.com)



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**Denise Donatelli**  
*Whistling In The Dark ... The Music Of Burt Bacharach*  
SAVANT  
★★★★

As one the great American songbooks, Burt Bacharach's back catalogue is ripe picking for jazz-inflected interpretations. Vocalist Denise Donatelli is the latest in a long line to take on his magisterial compositions.

Collaborating with producer Larry Klein, the pair chose an artful selection; from the eternally-recognizable "The Look Of Love," "Walk On By" and "A House Is Not A Home," to less-

er-known collaborations with Elvis Costello on "Toledo" and "In The Darkest Place."

Klein's arrangements are sparse, highlighting Bacharach's melodic sensibilities, as well as Donatelli's vocal phrasing that pitches itself between spoken word and singing. It is a technique that works better on some songs than others. The title track, for instance, is delightfully tender, allowing Donatelli's voice to sit atop drummer Vinnie Colaiuta's brushstrokes, while the poetry of "The Look Of Love" is brought to fore over Anthony Wilson's guitar.

Yet, things fall apart on tracks that require greater gusto. It takes a brave soul to attempt "A House Is Not A Home" following Luther Vandross' version and Donatelli sidesteps his soul for a more plaintive interpretation that lacks the gut-wrenching emotion. The same goes for "Walk On By," where Dionne Warwick highlighted Bacharach's sprightly rhythm, Donatelli draws out notes over Larry Goldings' keyboard voicings, and the song drags.

*Whistling In The Dark* reminds us of Bacharach's genius, but might be a prompt to seek better-known versions. —Ammar Kalia

**Whistling In The Dark ... The Music Of Burt Bacharach:**

Whistling In The Dark; The Look Of Love; In Between The Heartaches; Toledo; Anyone Who Had A Heart; Walk On By; In The Darkest Place; Mexican Divorce; A House Is Not A Home. (41:35)  
**Personnel:** Denise Donatelli, vocals; Larry Goldings, piano, keyboards, organ; Anthony Wilson, guitars; Larry Klein, bass, additional keyboards; Vinnie Colaiuta, drums.

Ordering info: [denisedonatelli.com](http://denisedonatelli.com)

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**Lena Bloch & Feathery**  
*Rose Of Lifta*  
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★★★★½

Exile. Loss. Wandering. Immigration. Lena Bloch & Feathery draw deep from the well of the Russian-born saxophonist's personal journey while charting a course toward home with the universal language of music. And during the pandemic-shadowed years since *Heart Knows* (2017), Bloch's previous release with Feathery's current lineup, the quartet's intuitive conversation has grown both deeper and wider.

The core collaboration between Bloch and pianist Russ Lossing, whose rising star shined brightly on *Metamorphism* (2021), produced all seven of *Rose Of Lifta's* originals (four by Bloch, three by Lossing). But Feathery's shimmering flights of fancy wouldn't soar as high without the booster rockets launched by bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Billy Mintz.

"Promise Of Return," the Bloch-penned opener, evokes the divinations of snake charmers on an album infused with the Middle Eastern motifs that continue to inspire Bloch, who lived in Israel and cites Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish as a guiding light. On the eponymous track Bloch devotes to Darwish, Lossing caresses the keyboards as sensuously



as a dancer dropping her veils. Then, powered by Bloch's tenor saxophone, the whole quartet explodes in whirling-dervish fashion, taking the stage in New York, her new hometown and the latest stop on her journey.

Best listened to in its entirety, *Rose Of Lifta* is a musical migration that climbs out of the past toward the future, but always leaves a trail of breadcrumbs to find your way back home.

—Cree McCree

**Rose Of Lifta:** Promise Of Return; Mad Mirror; New Home; Climbing Rose Of Lifta; Old Home; Mahmoud Darwish; Wintery Mix. (61:59)

**Personnel:** Lena Bloch, saxophone; Russ Lossing, piano; Cameron Brown, bass; Billy Mintz, drums.

Ordering info: [freshsoundrecords.com](http://freshsoundrecords.com)



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## Antonio Adolfo *Jobim Forever*

AAM

★★★★½

Antonio Carlos Jobim is canonized in the annals of jazz history for firmly implanting the term "bossa nova" into public consciousness, and for his gift as a composer. Reharmonize this music at your own peril, for it's hard to improve on perfection.

Such was the challenge facing pianist and composer Antonio Adolfo, who presents these timeless, but well-worn, standards in a fresh light. He might be uniquely suited for the task,

given his prominent stature as one of Brazil's preeminent composers and arrangers.

Out of the gate, Adolfo tackles Jobim's best-known tune, "The Girl From Ipanema," maintaining the song's unusual beauty while shifting toward darker moods, as if she were spotted later that night in an elegant evening gown. "A Felicidade" introduces a more portentous sentiment with a modal pedal point over the opening melodic statement. The tragic harmony of "How Insensitive" remains intact, its Chopin-inspired harmonic descent uplifted through transpositions of the form.

Overall, the arrangements move fluidly between the composer and arranger's harmonic innovations, the subtlety of the changes illustrating a high degree of deference. The band of Brazilian first-call players executes the music with precision and a radiant, but effervescent, energy indicative of that country's version of West Coast California cool.

—Gary Fukushima

**Jobim Forever:** The Girl From Ipanema; Wave; A Felicidade; How Insensitive; Favela (O Morro Nao Tem Vez); Inutil Paisagem; Agua De Beber; Amparo/Intro: Por Toda A Minha Vida, Estrada Do Sol. (48:56)

**Personnel:** Antonio Adolfo, piano, arranger; Jesse Sadoc, trumpet, flugelhorn (4, 6, 8, 9); Marcelo Martins, tenor and soprano saxophone, flute (4, 9); Danilo Sinna, alto saxophone; Rafael Rocha, trombone; Lula Galvao, guitars; Jorge Helder, double bass; Rafael Barata, drums (1-3, 7), percussion (1, 3, 5, 8, 9); Dada Costa, percussion (2-5, 7, 8); Paulo Braga, drums (4-6, 8, 9); Zé Renato, vocals (3).

**Ordering info:** [antonioadolfo.com](http://antonioadolfo.com)

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## Champion Fulton & Stephen Fulton *Live From Lockdown*

SELF-RELEASE

★★★★

When COVID lockdown went into effect, pianist and singer Champion Fulton received notice that her concert dates had been canceled.

After a period of readjustment, she regrouped and started a series of virtual Sunday evening concerts at her home, some solo and some featuring her dad, trumpeter Stephen Fulton. The series was successful, with upwards of 20,000 viewers a week.

Now that things are slowly returning to normal in New York, she's compiled some of those performances into this album. With the exception of two original instrumental compositions — the bluesy "Midnight Stroll" and "Pass The Hat," — the material draws on the Great American Songbook. "You've Changed" has Champion's minimal piano figures, heavy on the bass notes, supporting her dad's improvisations. Her description of an absent lover rings true, describing the attitude of anyone dealing with the pandemic.

Stephen's muted trumpet ornaments "What Will I Tell My Heart." Champion's delivery, alternates between drawn out notes and quiet phrases. When she sings, "I'll tell



them you'll soon be back, dear," the implication is her hope for a return to normal interactions. "Blow Top Blues" shows off Champion's keyboard chops, with clusters of shimmering notes and a resolute walking bass line. Stephen's muted trumpet adds to the playful aura as Champion sings she's losing her mind, something everyone can relate to in these times.

—j. poet

**Live From Lockdown:** I Hadn't Anyone Till You; You've Changed; Satin Doll; Blow Top Blues; Moonglow; What Is This Thing Called Love; What Will I Tell My Heart; Look For The Silver Lining; I Had The Craziest Dream; Pass The Hat; I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles; Midnight Stroll. (63:00)

**Personnel:** Champion Fulton, piano, voice; Stephen Fulton, flugelhorn, trumpet.

**Ordering info:** [champion.net](http://champion.net)





## Sara Schoenbeck

**Sara Schoenbeck**

PYROCLASTIC

★★★★½

Sara Schoenbeck knew from an early age that she did not want to play bassoon in a symphony, not on a regular basis. Early on, she was much more interested in exploring improvisation and experimental music. She has performed everything from avant-garde jazz to hip-hop and rock to music from India, Ghana and Haiti.

For her self-titled release, Schoenbeck performs duets with nine artists — three free improvisations, three of her originals and three compositions by others.

The opener, “O’Saris,” is a mostly soothing, folkish piece performed with drummer Harris Eisenstadt. “Sand Dune Trilogy” with flutist Nicole Mitchell starts and closes with some energetic interplay, sandwiching a quiet dissonance. “Lullaby” with guitarist Nels Cline becomes a ballad with Schoenbeck’s long tones on bassoon, with a three-note guitar pattern, and background electronics.

The fairly brief “Chordata” is a fiery free improvisation with Roscoe Mitchell on soprano saxophone. It contrasts with pianist Matt Mitchell’s mostly through-composed “Auger Strokes,” which is quietly moody and a bit long. “Absence” with bassist Mark Dresser is a tribute to the late bassoonist Marcuselle Whitfield, alternating between somber and celebration. A fairly peaceful “Anaphoria” with pianist Wayne Horvitz” and a more passionate “Suspend A Bridge” with cellist Peggy Lee are both free improvisations. The intriguing set, generally more peaceful than expected, concludes with the piano and haunting voice of Robin Holcomb on “Sugar.” —*Scott Yanow*

**Sara Schoenbeck:** O’Saris; Sand Dune Trilogy; Lullaby; Chordata; Auger Strokes; Absence; Anaphoria; Suspend A Bridge; Sugar. (58:55)

**Personnel:** Sara Schoenbeck, bassoon; Harris Eisenstadt, drums; Nicole Mitchell, flute; Nels Cline, guitar, bass; Roscoe Mitchell, soprano saxophone; Matt Mitchell, piano; Mark Dresser, bass; Wayne Horvitz, piano, electronics; Peggy Lee, cello; Robin Holcomb, piano, voice.

**Ordering info:** [pyroclasticrecords.com](http://pyroclasticrecords.com)

## Acme Jazz Garage

**Sharkskin**

SOLAR GROOVES

★★★½

*Sharkskin*, the sophomore release from the Acme Jazz Garage, feels like it’s trying to do a lot, but only passably well. The album feels less like a concert of inspired takes on standards and tropes and more like a night out at a cheap bar with a cover band, seemingly fulfilling every bit of their garage band name.

It’s an album with occasional high points that only highlight how anodyne other moments become. Moments like Pat Close and Michael Washington’s percussive “Rumba Jam” breathe fresh air into entire sections of stagnancy.

Is this rendition of Bob Dylan’s “Watching The River Flow” anything more than aggressively fine? Was this milquetoast version of “Nature Boy” even necessary? What’s exactly so “deluxe” about “Phil’s Blues Deluxe”? It certainly has the feel like it’s selling the listener on something more than what they’re actually getting. The “Springs Piano Interludes” interspersed throughout the album maintain a thematic throughline that ties these songs together into an overall suite, as if to say that all the bad of this must come with the good.

Ultimately, *Sharkskin* has all the soul of a



side project that can play in the background and please a generally uncritical crowd. It’s certainly more than enough for a garage band.

—*Anthony Dean-Harris*

**Sharkskin:** Sharkskin Suit; Watching The River Flow; Rumba Misterioso; Rumba Jam; Springs Piano Interlude, No. 1; Phil’s Blues Deluxe; When October Goes; Springs Piano Interlude, No. 2; Nature Boy; Springs Piano Interlude, No. 3; Mercy Mercy Mercy; Sharkskin Suit (Radio Edit). (62:28)

**Personnel:** Matt Swenson, guitar; Bryan Lewis, piano (1, 3, 5–8, 10, 12), Hammond B-3 organ (2, 6–7, 9, 11) synthesizer (1, 12); Philip Booth, double bass (2–11), bass guitar (1, 12), French horn (1, 7, 12); Pat Close (1, 3–4, 6, 12), Dave Reinhardt (2, 7, 9, 11), drums; Michael Washington, congas and percussion (1, 3–4, 7, 9, 12); Jeremy Powell, tenor saxophone (9); Christian Taylor Ryan, baritone saxophone (9); Peggy Morris, flute (3); Imperial Polk Horns (6); Rick Runion, tenor saxophone; Christian Taylor Ryan, alto saxophone; Jen Peacock Ryan, trumpet; Alex Belliveau, trombone; Shelby Sol, vocals (2).

**Ordering info:** [acmejazzgarage.com](http://acmejazzgarage.com)

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## Jake Shimabukuro

### *Jake & Friends*

MASCOT

★★★★½

Jake Shimabukuro has been described as the Jimi Hendrix of the ukulele. That may be flattering, but the title doesn't do justice to his wide range of interests, or his musical prowess.

His ability to leap genres and play jazz, rock, blues, bluegrass, folk and classical is impressive. His friends on this album include a sampling of pop, blues, country, rock and bluegrass greats. On "A Day In The Life," Shimabukuro's ukulele plays off of the multi-tracked vocals of Jon Anderson (Yes) and the ambient rhythms of Dave Preston's guitar and Evan Hutchings' drums to reinvent a masterpiece of psychedelia.

Shimabukuro's bluesy fills weave in and out of Anderson's shimmering vocals. George Harrison's "Something" features Vince Gill and Amy Grant. Shimabukuro plays the hook at a slowed-down tempo, while the tension Grant and Gill bring their performance echoes the uncertainty of the lyrics: "I don't know, I don't know." He shows off his chops on a pair of instrumentals. "Smokin' Strings" features bluegrass guitarist Billy Strings. It starts slow and bluesy with Strings and Shimabukuro trading bluesy, jazz-like solos. Then the tune accelerates into a fast-moving bluegrass jam with Shimabukuro playing mandolin-like leads on his uke. He gets deeper into the blues on "Sonny Days Ahead," trading solos with electric blues guitarist Sonny Landreth.

The album closes with a trio of duets. Shimabukuro's understated ornamentations add lively touches to Willie Nelson's rendition of "Stardust," Bette Midler's crooning on "The Rose" and Jesse Colin Young's whispered vocals on "Get Together."

—j. poet

**Jake & Friends:** A Place In The Sun; Sonny Days Ahead; All You Need Is Love; Why Not; Smokin' Strings; Find Yourself; On The Road To Freedom; Warren Haynes; Come Monday; Something; Two High; Moon Taxi; A Day In The Life; Go Now; Wrapping Paper; Stardust; The Rose; Get Together. (79:00)

**Personnel:** Jake Shimabukuro, ukulele; Nolan Verner, David Sutton, bass; Dave Preston, Spencer Thomson, Sonny Landreth, Billy Strings, guitar; Trevor Terndrup, ukulele, vocals; Evan Hutchings, drums; Willie Nelson, Bette Midler, Jimmy Buffett, Kenny Loggins, Amy Grant, Ziggy Marley, Paula Fuga, Katie Shore, Dennis Ludiker, Gary Burr, Georgia Middleman, Hana Aluna, vocals; Mac McAnally, Vince Gill, Warren Haynes, Jack Johnson, Jesse Colin Young, Ray Benson, Lukas Nelson, guitar, vocals; Michael McDonald, baritone ukulele, vocals; Jon Anderson, vocals, percussion; Brian Mann, keyboards, accordion.

Ordering info: [mascotlabelgroup.com](http://mascotlabelgroup.com)



## Nishla Smith

### *Friends With Monsters*

WHIRLWIND

★★★★

Insomnia can captivate even when we're desperately trying to escape its grip for much-needed physical, mental and emotional relief. Finding the artistic allure to pull listeners in this often hellish terrain, then crafting emotional and imaginative beauty is a lofty task. Australian-born and U.K.-based singer Nishla Smith accomplishes the feat winningly.

Jazz, with its storied legacy surrounding nightlife, makes it an ideal musical foil. But Smith doesn't position her comely voice in a fevered-pitch to articulate the buzzing energy associated with nightlife. Instead, she personalizes the theme of sleeplessness, relying on her own struggles. Through her often languid phrasing, very intentional enunciation, and evocative compositions, she creates a darkly gorgeous interior sonic world.

Smith's empathic quartet doesn't attempt to match the intrepid theme with outlandish arrangements, even though some compositions such as "3 A.M.," "Julian" and "Dawn" unfold with episodic grace. While Smith's singing is an entrancing beauty of its own, the true trump cards are the lyrics and melodies. The somber "Julian," which ponders the future after a devastating loss, mesmerizes in its plaintive melodicism and emotional poignancy. The buoyant "I Want To Make You Happy" bursts like ray of sunshine piercing rumbling clouds. Then, there's the giddy closer, "Up" where Smith's gushing lyrics evoke the fleeting feeling of finding peace and joy in this sleep disorder.

Some listeners may find Smith's *Friends With Monsters* a bit too twee, but for others, seeking lyrical and thematic ingenuity, it's worthy listening.

—John Murphy

**Friends With Monsters:** Twilight; Friends With Monsters; Julian; Midnight; Home; Starlight; 3 A.M.; It Might As Well Be Spring; I Want You To Be Happy; Dawn; Up. (48:45)

**Personnel:** Nishla Smith, vocals; Aaron Wood, trumpet, flugelhorn; Richard Jones, piano; Joshua Cavanagh-Brierley, bass; Johnny Hunter, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: [whirlwindrecordings.com](http://whirlwindrecordings.com)

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## Clean Feed's 20th Anniversary

The last batch of Clean Feed releases for 2021 also marks the 20th anniversary of this Portuguese label. Besides being prolific, and creating a catalogue of adventurous jazz (and beyond), Clean Feed has maintained high sonic standards throughout, featuring visually striking album artwork. The label presents mostly native Portuguese acts, but also runs multiple threads that represent innovative music scenes of other lands with notable bodies of work from Norway, the U.K. and the U.S.

"It feels great," said founder Pedro Costa, looking back over two decades. "Never thought we'd last so long, especially with over 600 releases. I feel that we were right about opening up to so many horizons, geographically, but also in artistic terms. I wouldn't change anything, really."

How is the next decade looking? "I would paraphrase Keith Richards saying that I hope to be doing the same in the decades to follow, knowing that history never repeats," Costa said. "I hope to keep up to date in releasing the music that is crucial to documenting an era."

The label has been sensitive to the Norwegian pulse, with a pair of significant Scandinavian releases joining this 14-strong October clutch. Saxophonist Kristoffer Berre Alberts (a member of Cortex) doesn't play on **Hugs And Bugs (39:33; ★★★★★½)**, by Block Ensemble, but is the initiator, assembler and editor of individual lockdown recordings. He "blocked, stacked and bunged up" these isolated contributions, aided by mixer and co-producer Lasse Marhaug. A pair of extended tracks, around 20 minutes each, feature a starry cast of 14 mostly Norwegian artists, including singer Maja Ratkje, alto saxophonist Mette Rasmussen (Denmark), guitarist Jasper Stadhouders (Netherlands), trombonist Mats Ålek-lint (Sweden), accordionist Frode Haltli and bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten.

The results are gripping and calming, in turn, involving some of the most impressive improvising heard in recent times, even though these elements are "comprovisations," filtered by the mind of Alberts. Wrenching bass work is disturbingly close-up, often providing the leading force, around which all else orbits. Ratkje sounds like a courting fox, squealing over the bow-dragging, both elements beautifully shaped. The inspired palette also includes two cellos, organ and a hardanger fiddle. Although initially sparse, the eventual destination is a frightening intensity of frenetic dismantling.

Andre Roligheten is the most familiar player on **The Earth Is # (50:45; ★★★★★½)**, by Friends & Neighbors, bringing low sonorities with his bass clarinet and bass saxophone. Bassist Jon Rune Strøm also brings a very



Friends & Neighbors

woody, forceful twang to the proceedings, with a lovingly recorded loose-string action. Roligheten also plays flute and tenor saxophone, the lineup completed by trumpet, piano and drums. The overall aura is one of melodic abstraction, transported from the dawn of free-jazz, spiritually aware rather than roughshod and roaring. There's space to reflect, with crisp-muted trumpet and shaken bells, with restless, swift and with a coiled organic tension throughout.

João Lencastre's Communion is a mainly Lisbon-based octet, featuring twinned saxophones, guitars and basses, piano and the leader on drums. There is also liberal use of electronics on **Unlimited Dreams (39:03; ★★★★★)**, with Lencastre composing all material on piano. His tightly organized palette recalls the sound of 1970s British jazz rock, following the late Soft Machine period. This is no bad situation. The alto and tenor horns shoot out probing tentacles, across the combined lines of acoustic and electric basses. The mighty "Insomnia" has melodic piano progressions overlaid by Ricardo Toscano's actively serpentine alto soloing. This band's added power comes courtesy of guitarists André Fernandes and Pedro Branco, providing angular sparring, breaking out into manic escalations, followed by howling excesses, emboldened by an insistently pumping electric bass, courtesy of João Hasselberg.

Violinist Carlos "Zingaro" and marimba player Pedro Carneiro offer **Elogio Das Sombras (51:04; ★★★★★)** revealing a Portuguese duo coiled for improvisatory action. It was recorded in 2012, with a clipped violence emerging out of silent spaces. Both of these classically rooted players are ever-aware of the silences that lend their rationed activities a greater import. On the longer pieces they become hyperactive, violin scything and stinging, marimba scampering and rippling. **DB**

Ordering info: [cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com)



### Karen Marguth *Until*

OA2

★★★★★

Karen Marguth has hit the trifecta. That is, she's one of the few active jazz singers to have three DownBeat "Best Albums" of the year: *Karen Marguth*, in 2010, *A Way With Words*, in 2013, and now, *Until*.

*Until*, an assemblage of previously unreleased tracks recorded over the past 10 years, promotes the elevation of the spirit that one demands of a truly outstanding release. Marguth, with typical control and confidence, carries poetry in music to an enthralling level. In the studio she's a magician, listening hard and responding in the moment to the playing of trusted colleagues like pianists David Aus and John R. Burr, the late drummer Brian Hamada, and trumpet soloists Gilbert Castellanos and Erik Jekabson and.

One or two takes conjure urgency and joy.

The Californian lends expression to moods and feelings drawn from her deep connection to the lyrics of songs she's specially chosen for refashioning.

She has her way with the title song by Sting, the Billie Holiday-identified "Comes Love," the Terry Callier ballad "What Color Is Love," the Columbian children's tune "La Ronda" (sung in Spanish), classics from Joni Mitchell and Paul Simon and, among a few more, the lovely original song "Maureen."

Close inspection reveals that grace — a triumphing good will, a tolerance for human error — is the unifying theme throughout.

—Frank-John Hadley

**Until:** Comes Love; Until; Black Crow; What Color Is Love; La Ronda; Hearts And Bones; Maureen; Close Your Eyes; Twistable Turnable Man; Old Friends-Bookends; Days Of Wine And Roses. (53:01)

**Personnel:** Karen Marguth, vocals; Erik Jekabson (1, 7), Gilbert Castellanos (4, 5), trumpet; David Aus, piano (1, 4, 10, 11), digital piano (5); John R. Burr, piano (7–9), electric piano (3); Richard Giddens (1, 4, 5), Dan Feiszli (8–10), Matt Finders (3, 7), bass; Brian Hamada (1, 4, 5, 10), Kelly Zaban Fasman (3, 7), drums; Omar Ledezma, Jr., percussion, voice (5); George Ramirez, percussion (5); Espacio band (2, 6); Mike Taylor, guitar; Eva Scow, mandolin; Pat Olivera, bass; Nathan Guzman, drums.

Ordering info: [originarts.com](http://originarts.com)





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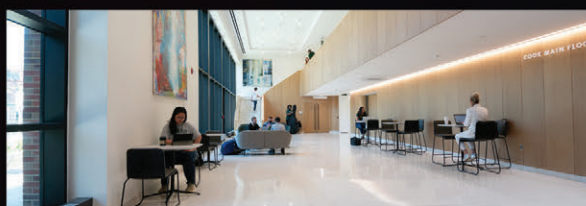
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Soloing with the Eastman Jazz Ensemble.





The Eastman Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of Bill Dobbins, takes a bow.

by Terry Perkins

# EASTMAN CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL

***Eastman School of Music was founded in 1921 in Rochester, New York, and over the next century it became one of the premier music institutions in the world. Enrollment has grown from just over 100 back in 1921 to more than 500 undergraduate and 400 graduate students enrolled during the 2021–'22 academic year.***

Jazz greats such as bassist Ron Carter, drummer Steve Gadd and composer and orchestra leader Maria Schneider are among the more than 10,000 Eastman alumni who have made significant contributions in jazz, classical music, popular music, Broadway musicals and film soundtracks over the years.

Three years of planning went into creating a year-long centennial celebration that was originally scheduled to begin in September 2020 and continue through the academic year. The COVID pandemic temporarily suspended that celebration, but according to Jamal Rossi, Eastman School of Music dean, the centennial

events are back on track.

“When COVID hit, we didn’t know what we’d be able to do for fall semester 2020,” he explained. “For example, last fall we could have a maximum of 200 people in our 2,200-seat concert hall. And we didn’t want to do the celebration with those limitations. But last summer the mandates eased, so we were able to start the celebration this September, and we’re extending it into December 2022.”

“We’re making a very intentional effort to celebrate every aspect of school,” added Rossi, “and jazz is such an important part of Eastman.”

The celebration will feature world pre-

mieres of more than 40 compositions and fanfares, acclaimed guest artists and artists-in-residence performing alongside Eastman’s ensembles. In addition, three major music festivals as well as national academic and music conferences and alumni events are scheduled throughout the country.

For Eastman’s Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media department, world-premiere compositions will include works by Wynton Marsalis, Billy Childs, Bill Holman, Allen Vizzutti and faculty members Bill Dobbins and Dave Rivello.

And this year, for the annual Gateways



A black and white portrait of Bill Charlap, a man with short dark hair, wearing a dark suit and tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. His hands are clasped in front of him on a wooden surface.

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Music Festival, founded to connect and support professional musicians of African descent, the Gateways Orchestra will travel to Carnegie Hall in April to perform an original work by Jon Baptiste.

"I'm really looking forward to hearing the Jon Baptiste piece," said Jeff Campbell, dean of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media. "From what I understand, he's calling it a concerto grosso for big band with a faculty rhythm section. But that's just one element of what's going on with the centennial for us. We're also bringing in Maria Schneider, one of our alums, to be a guest artist. She'll work with our students while she's here, and that will be a great experience for them."

Campbell, who maintains an active role as a professional jazz bassist in addition to his academic duties, has seen quite a few changes in the jazz studies curriculum at Eastman since his days as a student.

"The most important change in the department was the introduction of the undergraduate curriculum back in 1995," he explained. "Before that, Eastman only offered a master's degree in jazz, and there were only eight or 12 majors. Before that, we depended on the classical majors at the school to play in the band and the jazz students were the soloists. Now we have an enrollment of about 60 jazz majors, and that's allowed us to really expand the curriculum. And with that many students, they have the chance to play lots of gigs in town. They're the largest population of jazz musicians in Rochester."

Campbell also emphasized the importance of the words "Contemporary Media" in the name of the department. "That's a key element, because we teach classes in film scoring techniques as well as contemporary style composition, media-related projects and entrepreneurial thinking — the business of music."

According to Campbell, the relationship between Eastman School of Music and the Community Music School, founded at the same time as Eastman, is a vital link between Eastman and the city of Rochester. More than 1,000 students — from toddlers to retirees — enroll in the Community Music School annually for classes and lessons.

"We actually teach several jazz combos at the Community Music School that consist of adults from a wide variety of professions," he said. "They come faithfully to play. There's also a jazz orchestra, a youth jazz band and a summer camp for kids as well. There's a healthy curriculum of classes in theory and arranging for high school students. As a result, we get young people who go on to enroll at Eastman after participating in the Community School program."

There's much more going on at Eastman than a three-semester centennial celebration, however. Rossi emphasized that celebrating the past 100 years has prompted the School of Music to plan for the future.

"We just finished a six-year strategic plan in which we really laid out a number of initiatives to focus on going forward," he explained. "There are great things going on in our traditional strengths of classical and jazz, but we want to expand our curriculum in the area of music leadership. We started working in that area 25 years ago, and it's become central to the DNA of what we do. Many of our graduates get the leadership certificate in addition to their degrees. We launched a master's degree in Music Leadership about three years ago, and now it's fully online with students around the world enrolled. Another area we're focused on expanding is contemporary and commercial music. We're seeing students merging and exploring many different genres of music, and we want to foster that. We're also looking at opportunities to partner with the University of Rochester's engineering school to teach audio and music engineering."

A fund-raising campaign announced in April is also vital to make enrollment at Eastman available to talented students who otherwise couldn't afford to attend.

"We want to make certain that finances are not the obstacle for any student who wants to attend Eastman," Rossi concluded. "For any student accepted here, we want to make it financially viable for them to attend. That's even more important with our increased focus on building diversity and focusing on social and racial justice."





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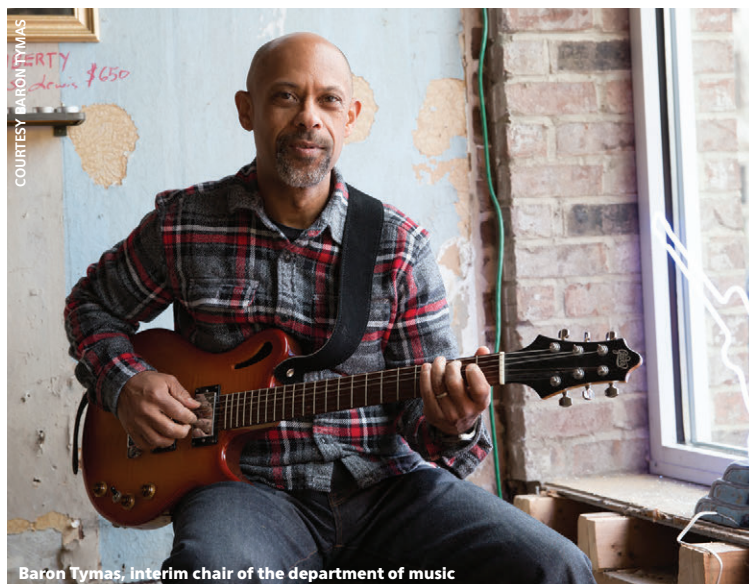


Joey Calderazzo (left) and Branford Marsalis, artists-in-residence



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Baron Tymas, interim chair of the department of music



TANISHA WALKER

Lenora Helm Hammonds heads the school's Vocal Jazz Ensemble.





NCCU Vocal Jazz Ensemble

# NCCU SETS NEXT COURSE FOR JAZZ STUDIES *by Eugene Holley*

***Jazz, and change, is in the air at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) in Durham, one of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).***

As reported in *DownBeat* (October 2021), Dr. Ira Wiggins retired as the director of the jazz program of NCCU last June after more than three decades of guiding jazz education efforts at the school. His departure posed both challenges and opportunities for this program established in 1977 by famed trumpeter and educator Donald Byrd. But a vision for the future of the school's lauded jazz program is taking shape.

"One of the things that's really a hallmark of this program is the element of swing," said Baron Tymas, a professor and guitarist who is serving as the interim chair of the department of music at NCCU. "What we teach here has to do with the way that swing was brought

to its pinnacle by artists like Count Basie and Thad Jones. So, when I talk about the element of swing, I don't mean swing music; I'm talking about the quality of swing. And that's something that Wiggins really stressed."

According to Tymas, the goal of the program is to produce students who swing, but are also well-rounded. "In our curriculum, we stress the traditional rudiments; learning to read is really important," Tymas said. "We want our students to be versatile. And we want them to know how to interpret everything in the score. They do a lot of listening, but it's not to the exclusion of learning."

That invaluable, but practical, approach — which largely stems from the African-American

aural method of jazz instruction that gave birth to the art form — is the pedagogical basis of the NCCU Jazz Ensemble, currently under the direction of saxophonist Brian Horton.

The ensemble — which performed at Jazz at Lincoln Center's inaugural Jack Rudin Jazz Championship in New York in 2020 — has an impressive list of alumni including Grady Tate; Leon Pendarvis, who served as music director for *Saturday Night Live*; and Albert Strong IV, a trumpeter, composer and bandleader who earned his undergraduate degree in jazz studies from NCCU (before receiving a master's from Northern Illinois University), and now serves as an adjunct trumpet professor at NCCU. Strong co-founded The Art of Cool Project and



its Art of the Cool Jazz Festival, and has performed with everyone from Branford Marsalis and Aretha Franklin to Clay Aiken and The Foreign Exchange. He is also a recording artist and plans to release a new album later this year.

"My mom was really adamant about me attending an HBCU and NCCU, specifically, because she was an alumna," Strong said by phone. "I was playing in the Duke Ellington School of the Arts Jazz Band at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1996, and Dr. Wiggins heard me and several other students in the band, and

offered us the opportunity to come to NCCU and study. My experience here was great. And the impact that it had on me is that it gave me a grounding in what jazz is when it swings. ... I grew great respect for the tradition of the music, and its historical significance to Black people in America."

That significance spills over to vocal jazz, too. The college's Vocal Jazz Ensemble is led by Lenora Helm Hammonds, who also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in vocal jazz performance, ear training and songwriting.

A Chicago-born artist and a graduate of Berklee College of Music, Hammonds came to NCCU in 2005 after working as a vocalist in New York.

"I was recruited by Dr. Wiggins," Hammonds said by phone. "He asked me to help build the vocal component of the program ... and today, we're still the only one in the state where there's a full-time vocal jazz teacher. And the degrees have components where the vocalists are integrated [with the jazz ensemble], not on a separate track where they learn classical music, and then they can do cameos with the big band. But they work as integrated members of all of the combos, big bands and the classes, and that so this is crucial."

In 2018, NCCU's Vocal Ensemble won the Best Choir 2018–2019 award from HBCU Digest, and was the first vocal ensemble invited to perform at the Notre Dame Collegiate Jazz Festival. The school's dedication to vocal jazz runs deep as the only HBCU currently offering an Ella Fitzgerald Scholarship in vocal jazz.

For Hammonds, the addition of having critically acclaimed, locally based artists-in-residence like pianist Joey Calderazzo and saxophonist Branford Marsalis have become another crucial component of the program.

"Branford doesn't have a doctorate degree from a university. He has a PhD from the bandstand," Hammonds said. "He has honorary doctorate degrees from two different universities. But he has half a dozen Grammy awards in classical and jazz. To be able to sit across the room from him and learn from him means that you can ask him practical questions instead of theoretical questions."

In addition to being practical, NCCU is taking a proactive approach, adding an online master's degrees in jazz performance, composition and arranging beginning in summer of 2022.

With NCCU as a model, HBCUs could provide a template for the shape of jazz education to come. The school is part of the HBCU Jazz Education Initiative, created to augment jazz education, programs, ensembles and curriculum at Black institutions of higher learning.

In addition, "We bring with us the information from the experience of being on the road, and being in bands touring and recording," Hammonds said. "We're not textbook faculty. So, when students are looking for the kind of faculty that have tried-and-true experience, that's what we have to offer at an HBCU." **DB**

**Editor's Note:** NCCU will present two groups at the 13th Annual Jazz Education Network (JEN) Conference to be held Jan. 5–8, 2022, in Dallas. Both the Jazz Vocal Ensemble and the Jazz Ensemble will perform. In addition, Lenora Helm Hammonds will conduct a research presentation at the conference titled, *A Jazz Orientation of the Three-Dimensional Developmental Trajectory of the Intercultural Maturity Model*.

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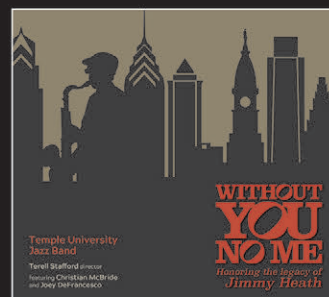


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By Gary Guzman

# STRATEGIC SHOPPING

*The Personal & Professional Advantages of Living with 'Gear Acquisition Syndrome'*

**S**o many musicians around the world suffer from GAS. No, they don't have digestive issues. They have a condition that is often incurable: Gear Acquisition Syndrome.

Hello, I'm Gary and I've been living with GAS for years now. It doesn't matter how I get the gear or where I get it, as long as my craving is satisfied. It can be at a fancy dispensary such as a full-service music store or in someone's dingy basement or garage. But, hey, it's not a problem. I can quit at any time. And it usually ends up working to my advantage.

I acquire these tools of the trade for different reasons and to satisfy various cravings. As a gigging musician, I'm always updating my guitar rig and buying the necessary accessories needed for gigs. As a collector, I'm constantly on the lookout for instruments that are on my wish list.

But on top of that, I also have a very reasonable excuse for GAS: I'm a staff producer for a music production company. My main gig is writing music for television shows, commercials, gaming and music libraries. To stay competitive, current and relevant, we have to keep up with all of the modern production techniques and sounds. To achieve that, we surround ourselves with the latest and greatest music gear — not only to make our productions the best they can sound, but also to make our creative workflow easier and more efficient.

The first and most important step in our process before

purchasing any gear is research. Our eyes and ears are constantly open: We read gear reviews, watch producers' videos online explaining how they achieved certain sounds and what they used, and we listen to all kinds of music to hear the latest sounds and production. We also have an ongoing group e-mail chain with all of the music producers in our company, where we share our current favorite pieces of gear — whether it's instruments, plug-ins, software or sound libraries.

Having friends in your network who are also fellow musicians can have many advantages. I have found out about many pieces of gear by going to see a friend perform, or visiting their studio. Word of mouth is very useful: A fellow producer may rave about a new plug-in and highly recommend it, or a fellow musician may post a video playing a new synth and demonstrating some of the cool sounds coming out of it. Music gear reviews can be very helpful in learning about specs, price and general info. However, most reviews are usually based on a shiny, brand-new item right off the box.

The best reviews come from your working musician friends who have lived and worked with that gear for quite a while. How does it stand up after working with it in the studio for a few months, or using it live for dozens of performances? Is it road-worthy? Did it meet up to the hype and expectations? They can offer their honest opinion to you about a product, based on their experience with it.









Shawn Fields, VP of Sweetwater marketing, says: "We want to make sure our customers get all the information they need before they even make a purchase."

You never know where you might find your next bargain for any kind of music gear. There are various music instrument conventions all around the world for musicians and collectors — everything from guitar expos and drum shows to band-and-orchestra clinics and conventions for synthesizer enthusiasts. Find out if any such shows are in your local area and check them out. I was able to get many deals on instruments at these kind of shows — with dealers who want to off-load some of their gear at great prices. And, yes, you can haggle with a lot of these dealers to get a better price. I've found that dealers are more willing to negotiate price toward the end of the

day, especially if it's gear that they don't want to haul away when the convention is over.

I'm a big fan of second-hand instruments and I believe they offer the best deals for music gear. If you can find a gently used instrument and don't mind a few minor scratches and dents, you'll definitely save some bucks as opposed to buying new. Fortunately, all my experiences with buying second-hand gear have been good ones, with sellers who have kept the instrument well set up, well maintained and were honest about any flaws or issues. I have found deals at garage sales, pawn shops and even musical instrument repair shops that have sold refurbished instruments.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

The internet has become an invaluable resource for researching and purchasing gear. When I find out about a product I'm interested in, I always end up going online to learn more about it, research pricing and hopefully hear what the product sounds like via demos. A simple search on Google will provide you with a wealth of information. You simply enter in the product name in the search bar, and in an instant you see a list of which vendors are selling that product online with their price included, so you can easily compare stores and find the best price. You will also find helpful links for videos with online demos for that product, as well as additional links for online reviews and stores carrying that product.

My online experience varies greatly, depending on what the product is. For example, if it's software-based, such as a plug-in or sound library, my entire buying experience may start and end online. Thankfully, we no longer have to order physical installation CDs or DVDs and wait for them to be shipped to us. Thanks to a high-speed internet connection and secure credit card transactions online, we can have a full sound library purchased, downloaded and installed in minutes.

This has been a life-saver for my co-producers and me in recent years. In what has become the norm for us lately, our music

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supervisor will call us and ask for a track to be placed in a TV show and sometimes we only have four hours to create a track from start to finish — because the editors are just waiting to place that music in the show. It just happened to me again recently, when a particular track called for a Japanese koto. Since I don't own one and didn't have any decent samples of that in my arsenal, I went online and rather quickly found a very realistic and useable sound library. As much as I would love to record a real musician playing an authentic koto, I just didn't have the time that day to compose the track, book the musician, wait for him or her to arrive to record, and then mix the track afterwards — all within four hours. So in this case, online purchasing saves the day for such a quick turnaround time.

Shopping online can have other perks as well. If you follow certain companies on their social media channels, they will often post specials or coupon codes exclusively for their followers, and you can get great deals and discounts that way. Musician's Friend has a "Stupid Deal of the Day" and Guitar Center has their "Daily Pick" every day on their sites, and I have purchased many items from those specials at a significant discount. Apps such as Honey and Capital One Shopping are free extensions that act as plug-ins for your internet browser. When you activate it, these apps

will automatically find and apply coupon codes at checkout when you shop at many retail sites online. And, yes, these really work. I've watched these apps search through multiple coupon codes and automatically apply the best one for me in my shopping cart so that I get the best deal and save some dough.

Reverb.com has grown to be a great online marketplace for new, used and vintage music gear since 2013. The site is easy to use, and I like the variety of sellers available. "Musicians come to Reverb because the marketplace gives them access to music gear from more than 100,000 shops in one place," explained Tiffany Miller, senior director of customer experience at Reverb. "From mics and audio interfaces to portable synths and amps, all the gear that musicians are looking for is here."

Reverb has become one of the first sites I go to when researching and shopping for gear online, because it lets me really narrow down the search. You can specify "new" or "used" and also search by condition (such as "excellent" or "mint"). Since I am always searching for the best price, I will sort the search results from lowest to highest price first. Right away you see if it's new or used, if there's a sale price on that item and also if that vendor is offering free shipping. You can also sort the results by location by simply entering your zip code. You can see where the product is located and

also find out if the seller store offers local pick-up. This feature has been helpful for me if I need the gear quickly for an upcoming gig or session, and don't want to wait or pay for shipping.

"As far as scoring deals, I'd encourage folks to sign up to receive emails from Reverb so you can be notified when both sales and deals on particular items go live," Miller said. "Also, many sellers on Reverb accept offers, so don't be afraid to negotiate. It's a completely normal part of buying music gear, both in a store and online."

Sweetwater is a great place to purchase gear online — from all kinds of instruments (including guitars, basses, horns, keyboards and drums) to live sound and studio recording equipment. I appreciate the excellent customer service, the massive selection of items and the personalized gear advice as well as the great prices.

Sweetwater's website has been really helpful in researching products as well. "Our website has become a go-to research destination for many, with thousands of helpful articles and videos," said Shawn Fields, vice president of Sweetwater marketing. "We want to make sure our customers get all the information they need before they even make a purchase." I have found gear at great prices in their DealZone section, where they offer clearance

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# JAZZ

# ARTS

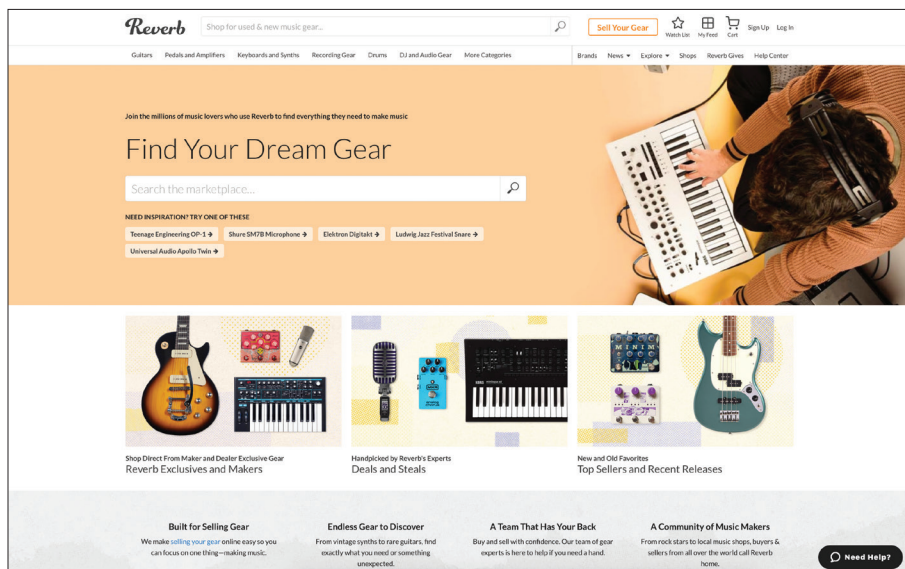
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Reverb's customer portal is a great starting place for online gear shopping.

items, B-stocks and demo products. Besides selling new gear, they also have a Used Gear Marketplace on the site, and you can browse listings close to your location.

Fields says that "great products, great prices and a commitment to ongoing, amazing support" are what make Sweetwater a regular shopping destination for musicians. "Also,

an attention to detail that's second to none and giving our customers more. Oh, did I mention the candy? It's our 'sweet' way of saying thanks to anyone who purchases from us. Who wouldn't want to come back for that?" And yes, he's right: The free candy that comes in every shipment is an awesome bonus.

New York-based Sam Ash Music has been

around since 1924, and it's the largest family-owned chain of musical instrument stores in the U.S. Walk into a Sam Ash store and the GAS symptoms immediately go into overdrive. Since I'm a multi-instrumentalist, I'm a kid in a candy store here. Whether I go in to buy a tambourine or to pick up some bass strings, gear from all departments will always catch my eye while walking through the store. Sensory overload occurs in the best way possible — and in a way you could only experience by physically going into a music store. Price tags are usually displayed prominently on every piece of gear in the store. When browsing any department, keep an eye out for sale, clearance or used items.

"We are constantly engaging our customers with multiple opportunities to get the gear they need and want, outside of simply clicking and purchasing," said Ben Ash, content marketing manager at Sam Ash. "We've been finding new ways to reach out to specific types of musicians by either creating sales dedicated to specific instruments or highlighting newer brands and products that customers may not be familiar with, so they know we're the one-stop shop to get those products."

Social media has also helped bring more customers to Sam Ash. On its online channels, the company highlight products, demonstrate

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gear and keep customers informed with industry news. “We’re incredibly engaged with our audience on a wide array of social media platforms,” Ash said. “First and foremost, we use the messaging and comment features of all of our platforms to answer and guide many of our customers to the products they need.”

It’s important for any music store to have a presence on the internet in this day and age. It’s nice to know that Sam Ash provides this additional outlet to connect with customers more. It allows followers to message or comment directly to the company via social media, to ask any questions and provide them with instant feedback.

### THE BRICK & MORTAR EXPERIENCE

Despite the convenience of online purchasing and internet research, musicians will agree that nothing beats the thrill of going into a brick-and-mortar store to actually try out an instrument. A guitarist isn’t able to just look at a photo online and feel the width of a fretboard, the thickness of the neck or how much the guitar weighs, let alone how the instrument sounds through an amp.

There is a misconception that prices are always better on the internet because online stores don’t have a large overhead and can keep prices low. That’s not always the case. I have found many deals going into one of my local stores — either from clearance sales, returns, “scratch and dent” instruments and open-box items. Many music retail outlets have their new and used gear inventory online, and their sites will show you which of their stores have the item in stock. I will often search local stores’ inventory for an item and if it’s at a store near me, I will go to that location and take it for a test drive.

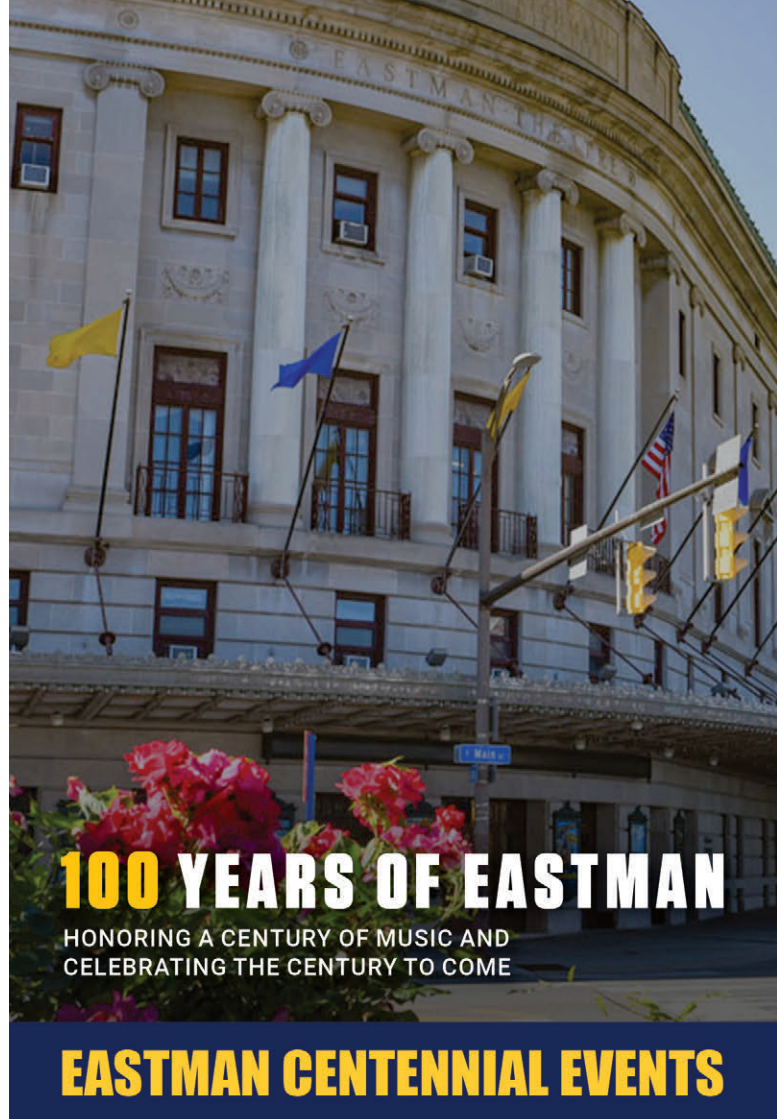
With any type of gear, you do indeed get what you pay for. Chances are the less you pay for something, the lower quality it will be. Many musicians will rely on high-end instruments because of a builder’s attention to detail, exceptional quality and the instrument’s reliability. Bass Club Chicago is the only bass-specific retail store in the Midwest, and it specializes in high-end basses and amplifiers. Owner Mark Konzen believes it’s the store’s reputation for being an experienced and knowledgeable bass specialty store that keeps customers coming in.

“We’ve been told that customers may purchase three or four basses from other vendors, but still aren’t able to find exactly what they are looking for,” Konzen said. “Purchasing a high-end instrument is an investment for them, and hopefully their ‘lifetime’ bass guitar. They don’t mind spending a little extra, if it’s going to be the instrument that serves them for many years to come.”

Another thing I’ve learned from years of going into music stores: Take advantage of your network by contacting friends who work in music retail or try to befriend an employee in one of your local stores who knows what kind of gear you’re interested in. I recall a time when a buddy of mine called me about a high-end acoustic guitar that came into the store where he worked. The customer had a bit of buyer’s remorse more than a month after purchasing, but the return window had passed. The store bought the guitar back as a used item, even though it was still in “like new” condition. I had first crack at it and was able to purchase that guitar at a price that was almost half-off retail.

I have been dealing with GAS for quite some time, as I’m sure every musician has at some point. I have many different causes and reasons for it, and I also have different methods and remedies for dealing with it. Plenty of outlets exist for acquiring music gear at great prices — seek them out and figure out which ones work best for you. **DB**

Gary Guzman has been a professional music producer and composer for more than 25 years. He has written and produced music for national and international TV shows, radio and television commercials, toys, video games and slot machines. He has produced, played, sung and/or composed music for hundreds of commercials, and his music has won prestigious advertising awards. Guzman is a staff producer/composer at Sonixphere (sonixsphere.com), a music production company. He is currently composing and producing music for TV programs on networks such as ABC, NBC, CBS, VH1, the Discovery Channel, TLC, the History Channel and The Food Network. Guzman is also producing sonic content for online gaming and various internet projects.



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# That's My Style

## Finding Your Own Personal Sound as a Jazz Vocalist

**M**usicians are often asked to find and develop their sound, but rarely find strategies for doing so in academic or other structured learning environments for musical training. Most voice training is either centered on technique and the precise control of the instrument or the acquisition of quantifiable style characteristics such as chord/scale relationships and learning to sing melo-

dies in the style of “(fill in the blank).” While these approaches may be essential components of training, strategies for developing the most crucial part, *the singer's unique expression*, are often omitted. This article provides an entry point to exploring artist development from three components: the sound of you, the intention of your story and the development of style.

### The Sound of You

The voice is an incredible instrument. The number of variations and combinations of colors, textures, qualities and dynamic levels possible from the human voice is immeasurable. The wildest part of our instrument is that we are born with it. Our instrument is our body, and our ability to create sound is merely a neurological response.

A healthy infant comes out of the womb already knowing how to cry; this is considered a primal sound. In a matter of months, the baby recognizes that it can make other sounds. When we teach a baby to talk through imitation, we are not actually teaching them to create the sound. We are simply guiding their ability to shape the sound. Generally, babies are allowed to “sound” the way they sound when they speak or sustain other expressive utterances (i.e., laugh, cry, giggle, yell, etc.).

As the baby evolves into an adult, the sound/timbre and frequency of these utterances develop based on the physical growth of the body and vocal instrument, personality, and the cultural and social expectations for self-expression to which an individual is exposed. Yet through all of the possible variables that can influence one's unique sound, their sound and their manner of expression are still unique to them.

The sound of jazz, like many other styles of music that grew out of folk traditions, is the collective reflection of the people and culture the music represents, their personalities and expressive nuances. The singer's individuality, the genuineness of their sound and the subtleties of their nuanced expression, as determined by their personality, make an artist compelling and unique. Therefore, developing and enhancing your unique sound during musical expression starts first with recognizing and developing the sound of your natural self during emotional expression.

When we talk with our friends and tell them about our joys and concerns, we don't stop to think about the “placement of our voice.” We don't think about if we're breathy or clear in our sound, we don't even think about how much breath we have to take to finish the phrase. We don't even think about how loud or soft we are unless we're in a public space and trying to be mindful of our surroundings. We don't think about these things because it's not the point at that moment in communication. We say what we have to say, with the expectation of some response in return. We allow our sound, intensity and phrasing to be determined by our current



emotional state.

If we agree that compelling singing is emotional communication through song, then capturing one's unique sound as a singer starts with capturing the natural sound and texture of the person's emotive range and tendencies. The goal for training the instrument's unique sound would be to condition the singer's ability to freely release and sustain those natural, emotive sounds and textures on specific pitches, and in the context of emotional expression.

### Importance of Story

The function of a story is to communicate an idea, a feeling, a sentiment and to charge the listener to action. The beauty of jazz lies in the artist's freedom to continually shape and interpret the story according to their own experiences and intentions in the context of the conversation.

Similar to the variations in one's approach to retelling a story as when shifting from one friend group to the next, so do the subtle variations occur in retelling the story in a performance context from one night to the next. The same story can take multiple shapes depending on the context the story is told. Ability, comfortability and motivation to elaborate on the subject content; energy for animation; the egging on of the co-conspirators both musically and verbally; and the receptiveness and interactions of the listeners all impact how the story is told.

As artists, we need to take the time to ensure the music we select has stories that are meaningful to our life experiences and contain sentiments we are motivated to share. Often developing singers will pick songs to sing based on how *they* felt when they heard someone else singing the song. And because of the way that the singer made them feel, the developing singer will aim to imitate every vocal texture, phrasing and nuance that the singer used to retell the story exactly as the singer did.

The problem with this method of storytelling is often these singers don't stop to listen to the words and relate the story to their own experiences and emotional response. As a result, they can't retell the story from their own perspective. They copy the sentence with disregard for the sentiment. They imitate the emotional storytelling of the person they're imitating, without the emotional connection themselves to what the person was emoting in the first place. This is equivalent to hearing someone cry and then trying to imitate and approximate their same cry in an effort of making someone else cry. The result is often perceived as forced and disingenuous. So, too, is the retelling of a musical story without personal context.

When developing your story as an artist, start with the text. Begin with the story and ask yourself the following questions: What is the context you would retell the story? How would you feel at the beginning of the conversation, and how would you describe the sound of your voice in that moment? What would be the texture and volume of your voice? Would the dynamic level of your voice remain consistent from beginning to the end of the conversation, or would there be moments where you get louder or softer, and why?

Find the words within the phrase that are not just weighted with emphasis, but also loaded with experiences. Explore the cadence of your natural speech when you are restating the words in real-time within a real emotional context. Does your voice naturally go up in pitch? Does your voice naturally drop at the end of a phrase? Do you hesitate as you're trying to figure out what it is you *really* want to say to the person? Find ways to articulate those nuances and utterances in the music.

### Importance of Style & Culture

Need ideas? This is where style and cultural exposure come into play. Style is merely sentiment articulated within the context of a cultural vocabulary of expression. When you're immersed in a culture, you absorb and rearticulate the mannerisms in communication and expression of those around you. Whether it be a family culture, a regional culture or a music culture, various expressions and sounds exist within an established social construct.

Most often, and without active consciousness, the result of the immersion and ultimately inclusion is the assimilation of sounds and mannerisms. This could be in the form of dialect, colloquial phrases and manner of speech. Sometimes even the actual sound and texture of your voice can be so similar to the people you are around the most that it can be almost indistinguishable. For example, on the phone, I sound like my mother. We have the same texture and weight in our voices, so much so that it can even confuse our relatives. My sisters and I sound different in terms of vocal texture, but our mannerisms are so similar that our relation is undeniable, even to strangers.

This is what happens when you listen and are immersed in the culture of a style of music. The mannerisms and nuances appear into your everyday conversation without an intentional effort or awareness. When immersed within a culture, similarities start to appear, yet distinctions of personalities are clearly apparent.

From the standpoint of a vocalist, jazz represents a particular mannerism and tendency in storytelling that is different from other styles of music. When learning to sing the music and being introduced to the sounds



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of the style and culture, listening to and imitating your favorite artists is necessary and essential for development. Just as a baby learns to shape their sounds into words by imitating the people around them and further learns to combine their words into specific phrases that articulate their emotions based on the vocabulary of the people they are exposed to, so, too, is the path for the singer new to the music.

The key to absorbing the influences of the great singers is not simply to copy their nuances and sound note for note. Instead, it would help to recognize how their nuances and textures are being used to communicate their intentions. Don't only focus on what the singers are doing, but also realize why singers made that choice, what emotion or sentiment the singer was communicating, and how their choice enhanced your perception. Think why did the singer bend or slide into that note? Was it intentional, or was it merely a vocal effect resulting from the singer's emotional state? And most importantly, are these sounds and mannerisms something I would use in my everyday communication to tell this story. If the answer is no, then it's not a mannerism you should try to adapt.

One of my favorite exercises for developing a singer's story is to take a jazz standard

whose lyrics contain a story and sentiment the singer can relate to and has the desire to share.

After analyzing the story and organizing strategies and context for retelling (as mentioned above, recognizing your own emotional journey from the beginning to the end of the story and finding meaningful words and phrases), listen to five other established and legendary artists telling the same story.

Notice which musical choices and vocal nuances the singers use to articulate various sentiments. Notice which characteristics are consistently used between the artist and which are different, and how their choice to be different impacted your perception of the story. Notice how the tempo or musical arrangement influences the mood and your perception of the singer's feelings about what they are singing. Compare this to what you established as your natural approach and see which singer(s) most appropriately captures your sentiment on that phrase.

### Your True Primal Self

Everything you need to communicate emotion as a vocalist you already possess. It's primal, and you're most likely born with the ability. Sometimes our desire to be good

at what we do and sound good when we sing, intentionally or unintentionally, makes us disregard our natural, expressive sounds. We look to the established or legendary artist as a measure to define what we should sound like to be effective communicators, often at the expense of devaluing our natural sound and thus suppressing our own ability to communicate freely and authentically. Finding your unique voice starts with permitting yourself to sound like your true, primal emotive self; exposing yourself to people who can expand your emotional palette and vocabulary; and having the courage to share your story honestly and genuinely.

DB

Dr. Trineice Robinson-Martin has dedicated her career to performing and developing resources for teaching jazz, gospel/Christian, R&B, rock, country and pop singing styles in an applied/private voice lesson setting. She maintains faculty positions at Princeton University and, newly formed in fall 2021, Roc Nation School of Music, Sports and Entertainment at Long Island University-Brooklyn Campus. The creator of Soul Ingredients Methodology, Robinson offers virtual and in-person Teacher Training courses and operates the Soul Ingredients Voice Studio. She serves on the National Faculty in the academic division of Gospel Music Workshop of America, serves as the Executive Director of the African American Jazz Caucus Inc., serves as a Board of Director for the Jazz Education Network, serves on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Singing and is a member of the distinguished American Academy of Teachers of Singing. Her performance experience spans a variety of musical styles, venues and settings. Her debut album, *All Or Nothing*, was released August 2021. Visit her online at [drtrineice.com](http://drtrineice.com).

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Shabaka Hutchings

## Shabaka Hutchings' Solo on 'My Queen Is Mamie Phipps Clark'

Saxophonist and composer Shabaka Hutchings improvises over a dub groove on his tune “My Queen Is Mamie Phipps Clark,” from Sons of Kemet’s 2018 album *Your Queen Is A Reptile* (Impulse!). Typical of dub, it’s modal on a minor chord, and making it even more authentic, he put it in E minor,

rather than a more saxophone-friendly key such as F minor (solo is shown here in concert key). Maybe this helps offset the lack of traditional instrumentation.

A key component of Hutchings’ improvisation is repetition. Sometimes this is done verbatim, as in measure 11, where he plays

the same lick three times, or a bit more subtly in bars 13–16, where each measure starts with the same phrase, with various endings. But more often he takes a theme-and-variation approach.

The solo opens up with this: a simple flat sixth to fifth (C to B) reiterated in the second bar with a variation in rhythm, and then in the next bar he varies not only the rhythm (it’s been increasingly dense, building the energy), but also the direction, resolving the C up to the flat seventh. In the next bar he creates an even denser rhythm and uses both the D and B on either side of the C. The first three measures all resolve to the “and” of 4, but for this lick Hutchings plays over the bar line to the “and” of 1 in the next measure.

The use of repeated notes adds to the dub aspect of this improvisation. Hutchings started out using repeated C’s, which as the flat sixth carries a lot of tension, and resolves it to a chord tone. In measure 6, Hutchings starts applying this repeated note idea to other tones, starting with A (another non-chord tone) but then moving on to other parts of the scale. These repeated tones seem just as likely to start or end on weak beats as strong.

He even varies the amount of repeats, from only playing pairs of notes, like the doubled A, B, D, E and G from the end of measure 7 to the middle of bar 8, up to the string of nine A notes he plays right after that. Pushing it even further are the D–C# slurs that run from the end of bar 22 through the beginning of 24, played 16 times in total. This is especially effective as C natural has been established as being in the key, so shoving this chromatic note in our face creates quite a heightened emotion.

Another dubism is how often the downbeat is de-emphasized. There are eight bars where Hutchings doesn’t play on the downbeat at all (1–4, 7, 9, 11 and 22, though in this last Hutchings holds a note over the bar line). That’s more than a quarter of the solo.

But more commonly are the times he plays runs over the bar line, such as across the downbeats of 5, 6, 8, 12, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26 and 28. That’s close to two-fifths of the improvisation. Put the two together and that’s two-thirds of Hutchings’ solo.

Measure 21 is the main point at which he really leans on a downbeat. This creates a kind of rhythmic climax, and it should come as no surprise that right after this is when Hutchings introduces finer rhythmic subdivisions, starting with 16th note triplets in the following bar and 32nd notes in bar 26. This helps build the solo to a conclusion.



Measures 17–20 combine the ideas of repeating phrases and de-emphasizing the downbeat, and this is a particularly dub-sounding line. This may be due to the vacillation between triplets and 16ths (we hear this in dub and Jamaican rap quite often), but also his lines leading to the root and fifth (A and E). All the above in combination would make this a great reggae bass line. Except A and E aren't the root and fifth, they're the fourth and root. So, playing a line that would be a great bass line in A minor, but doing it in E minor, creates a harmonic ambiguity. It could even be heard as Am/E to Em, but that's the advantage of not having a chordal instrument: It remains ambiguous.

At the beginning of this improvisation the actual bass line, played on tuba, emphasizes the A and F natural in the second half of the bar. This implies an Em–F chord progression. By bar 17 the tuba has switched to leaning more on the root, but this has set up the environment that makes Hutchings' emphasis on non-chord tones work so well. As already noted, he started out with a lot of C naturals, but he also spends a lot of time leaning on A natural, as in bars 6, 9, 12–16, as well as the measures we'd been examining, 17–20. So, he not only downplays the strongest rhythmic beat, but also doesn't lean on the main notes of the tonality. Add in the repeated notes and phrases, and we have a solo that is at once both ambiguous and grounded. **DB**

Jimi Durso is a New York musician currently working on an album of Indian classical music played on the string bass. Find out more at [jimidurso.com](http://jimidurso.com).

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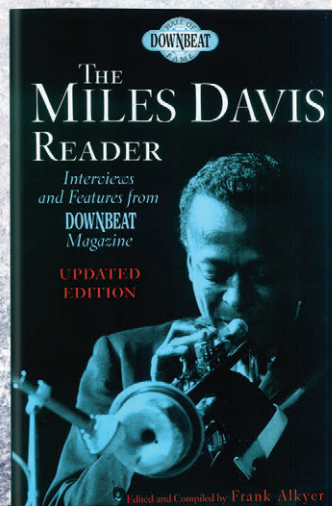


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## Lakecia Benjamin

Alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin continues her upward arc on the heels of her stunning 2020 release *Pursuance: The Coltranes* (Ropeadope), for which she assembled an all-star cast to plumb the music of Alice and John Coltrane. Results of that release included her copping the DownBeat Critic's Poll Award for Rising Star Alto Saxophonist and the Jazz Journalist Association's Up and Coming Artist of the Year in their respective 2020 polls. This was Benjamin's first Blindfold Test, administered live during the 17th annual DC Jazz Festival before an audience at The Wharf on the scenic banks of the Potomac River. Later that day she thrilled an energized audience with the music from *Pursuance*, artfully performed by her band of bassist Lonnie Plaxico, drummer E.J. Strickland and pianist Zaccai Curtis.

### Kenny Kirkland

"Steepian Faith" (*Kenny Kirkland*, GRP, 1991) Kirkland, piano; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums; Charnett Moffett, bass; Branford Marsalis, soprano saxophone.

My first impression is that it was swingin', the bass player really stood out. Is it a piano player's record? That's what I figured. It was swingin', had kind of that old-school Blue Note, Wayne Shorter vibe and even though that's not what it was; this was newer. I couldn't figure out who was playing the soprano. It reminded me of some of the records I was studying when I was in college. That drum feel ... and then when you said Kenny Kirkland, it had a familiar feel to me.

### Gary Bartz

"Dahomey Dance/Tunji" (*Coltrane Rules: Tao Of A Music Warrior*, OYO Recordings, 2011) Bartz, alto saxophone; James King, bass; Greg Bandy, drums; Barney McAll, piano.

Is this Coltrane? That's a Trane piece, "Dahomey Dance." My issue is that the recording is not the original Trane, but it sounded exactly like the Trane vibe, just like the original. I'm not sure if the person was trying to mimic Trane, or if that's just who they are. I don't know the record, but I knew it wasn't Trane because I didn't hear the little nuances that Trane had. He got the alto sounding almost like a tenor!

### Melissa Aldana

"Liquescence" (*Second Cycle*, Inner Circle Music, 2012) Aldana, tenor saxophone; Gordon Au, trumpet; Joseph Lepore, bass; Ross Pederson, drums.

No idea what this is. It felt like from the more modern era, definitely felt more contemporary. It seemed very polite, it had a warm sound to it. The CD breathed a lot, and I like the interaction with the other horn. It was very easy on the ears.

### Donald Harrison Jr.

"Indian Blues" (*Indian Blues*, 1992, Candid) Harrison, alto saxophone; Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Carl Allen, drums.

I like that, I like the tambourine, I like that whole thing. I thought at first it was a contemporary, but it's got a lot of blues in it so that kinda scaled it back. In this generation it's not that common that you hear that type of approach, coming from a real rootsy type of place. But it's definitely somebody who studied, and somebody from that spirit and that vein.

### Camille Thurman

"Forward Motion" (*Origins*, Hot Tone Music, 2014) Thurman, tenor saxophone; Rudy Royston, drums; Corcoran Holt, bass.

I don't know where you're getting these cuts from. You gotta get some alto players! I won't say this is in the same contemporary vein as Melissa's record. It had that '90s/2000s feel. I thought they explored a lot. I don't



Lakecia Benjamin

want to say it was a free performance, but they definitely had that open feel, open to spontaneity and whatever happens. I don't think it's Mark Shim, but it had that kind of vibe — I don't think it's JD [Allen], either, but it had that kind of openness. Is it Walter Smith? [afterwards] That's like a behind-the-scenes cut from her record, that's not one they play on the radio.

### Kenny Garrett

"Dear Lord" (*Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane*, Warner Bros., 1996) Garrett, alto saxophone; Pat Metheny, guitar; Rodney Whitaker, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

That's "Dear Lord," right? This one I'm pretty sure. I got that chill in my spine. So I'm guessing that's Kenny Garrett. The changes are "Dear Lord," I could hear that, so I thought maybe it was from that Trane record [Garrett] did. I call Kenny Garrett a preacher; there's something about the vibrato that he uses. Even when he doesn't play much, it just pierces right through you ... the fluidity, almost like a deep, ancient, spiritual vibe to it. I could just feel it, even though I haven't listened to that record in a long, long time. Kenny Garrett, I call him the King of the Alto.

### Randy Weston

"African Sunrise" (*The Spirits Of Our Ancestors*, Verve, 1992) Weston, piano; Idrees Sulieman, trumpet; Benny Powell, trombone; TK Blue, alto saxophone, alto flute; Billy Harper, Dewey Redman, tenor saxophone; Alex Blake, Jamil Nasser, bass; Idris Muhammad, drums; Big Black, Azzedin Weston, percussion; Melba Liston, arrangement.

If it is who I think it is, they're rooted in the culture, rooted in the blues. It's got an African thing to it; there's roots in that record. It's the piano player's record, right? I could feel that. That flute solo reminded me of a teacher I had, TK [Blue]. It's Randy Weston. In his pieces, he has so many different movements within the song. It's almost as if you're at sea going to different neighborhoods, different places, different cultures. So that's what made me think it was Randy Weston, but I haven't heard too many composers that appreciate him enough.

### Branford Marsalis

"The Mighty Sword" (*Four MFs Playin' Tunes*, Marsalis Music, 2012) Marsalis, soprano saxophone; Joey Calderazzo, piano; Justin Faulkner, drums; Eric Revis, bass.

This is the first one you played that I felt like I didn't know, but I *should* know. It had a little Latin thing in it, but it kept the swing. My feeling is that it's a contemporary, but not super contemporary, just because they kept playing the melody throughout the swing; kinda had that Jeff "Tain" Watts thing to it. That definitely sounded like a 21st century recording. I liked it.

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