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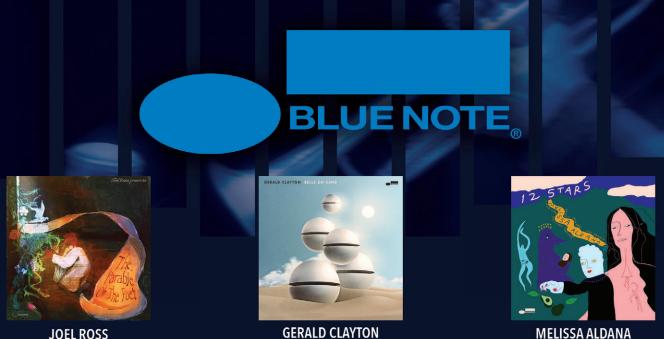
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THE PARABLE OF THE POET

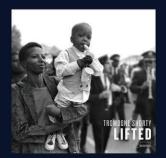
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Gerald Clayton on piano joins dad, aka John Clayton, on bass at the family home in California.

ON THE COVER

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Serving the Music

BY GARY FUKUSHIMA

DownBeat goes to Altadena, California — nestled into the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains, and a nice place to raise a family — to speak with John and Gerald Clayton, a famous father and son of jazz.

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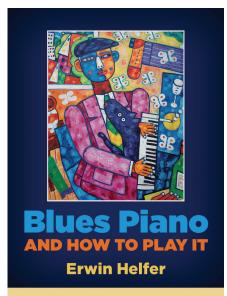
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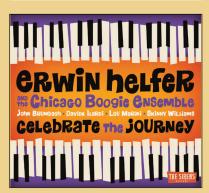




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> -KEVIN WHITEHEAD, NPR'S FRESH AIR, MARCH 2021

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First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



Themes of Family, Art & Angst

Gerald Clayton on the cover this month.

We wanted to honor them here for many reasons. First, Gerald has a new, beautiful album out called Bells On Sand (Blue Note). Go get it. It's a very worthwhile listen, and John plays bass on the record — effortlessly and elegantly, as always.

Beyond that, we celebrate Father's Day in June, and John and Gerald are an amazing example of father and son, as well as family and art — as you can read beginning on page 24.

In 2013, when Gerald took a live Blindfold Test given by Dan Ouellette at the Monterey Jazz Festival, in the audience were a beaming mom and dad, Tineke and John Clayton.

"Is he ready?" John was asked. "I'm a little nervous," he chuckled with a fatherly smile.

The warmth these two foster onstage is a direct outgrowth of the bond they share offstage. It's a family trait, as anyone who ever caught The Clayton Brothers band or the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra can attest. Sadly, Jeff Clayton — John's brother, Gerald's uncle — passed away in 2020. He, too, was part of this warmth.

This issue also announces the DownBeat Student Music Award winners, representing some of the best that jazz education offers.

So do John and Gerald Clayton.

John enrolled in bassist Ray Brown's class at UCLA as a 16-year-old back in the late '60s. He graduated from Indiana University's famed music program in the '70s, and has developed into one of the world's leading jazz educators (in addition to being one of the world's leading jazz composers, arrangers and band leaders.)

WE ARE PROUD TO FEATURE JOHN AND Gerald graduated from the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, as well as USC's Thornton School of Music, where he studied with Billy Childs. He also did a yearlong intensive study at Manhattan School of Music working with pianist Kenny Barron.

> Late last summer, Gerald became the teacher, again at the Monterey Jazz Festival, where he led the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra — an incredible cast of student musicians. He said it was his first time directing a large ensemble, but he looked like a seasoned pro.

> Other themes running through this issue are more a product of the times than any planning. Moving is a major one. This pandemic has focused people, even jazz artists, on what's really important. Gerald Clayton moved from New York back to California. So did saxophonist Mark Turner, who delivers a deeply insightful interview beginning on page 30.

> Michael League, best known as the leader of Snarky Puppy, moved to the Catalonian region of Spain (see page 36). And pianist Jean-Michel Pilc discusses his move to Montreal from New York beginning on page 13.

> Finally, in hard times, emotions run high, and our artists are feeling it. Be prepared: There are a lot of pointed opinions about equity, politics and life challenges running through these pages. We are dedicated to giving voice to our artists — what they are thinking, how it influences their art. And they have a lot to say.

For example, "I'm a lightswitch away from looking at everything as a farce," said Gerald Clayton in discussing inequality.

He's not alone.

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Chords ප Discords

Much Love for Abdullah

Tremendous accolades for the marvelous article on NEA Jazz Master Abdullah Ibrahim! Maestro Ibrahim is an African griot and recounts stories while uplifting the human spirit through his dissemination of sound from the piano. I was truly fortunate and blessed when he hired me for my first ever recording and tour of Europe in 1977.

Please note Maestro Ed Blackwell is not on *The Journey* (Chiaroscuro, 1977). The drummers on this recording are Roy Brooks and John Betsch. It's my first recording and I am playing oboe and alto saxophone under the name Talib Rhynie.

There's a mystery regarding Don Cherry, who played with us the preceding night at Alice Tully Hall. From what I heard, after he recorded one track, he went outside and ran into boxing legend Muhammad Ali. He never made it back to the studio!

May God continue to bless Maestro Ibrahim with great health and longevity.

T.K. BLUE JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

Editor's Note: Thank you, Maestro Blue,



a true student who has become a true teacher!

Thank you for your conversation with Abdullah Ibrahim in your April issue. As a non-musician I am always amazed at the many styles, rhythms and songs coming from the same 88 keys, and Abdullah Ibrahim/Dollar Brand's magic continues to amaze. Mr. Ibrahim deserves all the recognition in the world. Thank you again for sharing his spirituality and his humor.

DON SEXTON COLUMBIA CITY, INDIANA



Turbulent Terminology

Paul de Barros is fine when writing about music: His love and knowledge shine through. But I wish that, when writing about the "turbulent" '60s, he had said that Palestinian guerillas (or terrorists) assassinated Israeli Olympic athletes, rather than impugn an entire people, as he did when he fleetingly referred to "the Arab assassination of Israeli Olympians."

JAMES COLLINS VIA EMAIL

Regarding de Barros's spectacularly imprecise reference to "the Arab assassination of Israeli Olympians," despite a long history of Haganah, Irgun, Stern Gang and Mossad terrorist actions, would DownBeat consider running a music-related article that refers to "the Jewish car-bombing of Iranian scientists"? Elsewhere in the same sentence, de Barros describes the troubles in Northern Ireland as a "disturbance."

That's wrong, too.

RON ALDEN WASHINGTON, NEW JERSEY

Skip Kenny G?

Given how hard it is for artists and labels to get a review in Downbeat, why would you waste the time of your writers and the space in your magazine, especially as a Hot Box feature, on an obvious turkey like Kenny G's *New Stan-dards*? I didn't see his label listed in the advertising index, so that can't be an influence.

John Murph's one sentence comment was more than sufficient to sum up the music of the Milguetoast Maestro.

KEN DRYDEN OOLTEWAH. TENNESSEE

Corrections & Clarifications

DownBeat regrets these errors and omissions:

In the May issue, we misspelled the name of

Siggi Loch, founder of ACT Music, in a brief regarding Andreas Brandis becoming a partner. The photo of Loch and Brandis



is posted here. Loch is on the right.

- In the May issue, the excellent writer Allen Morrison was the author of our Charles Mingus centennial coverage, including his insightful First Take essay on *Epitaph*, considered Mingus' magnum opus.
- In the May issue, Whirlwind Records is the label for In Common III, the terrific new album by Matthew Stevens and Walter Smith.

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









Generation To Generation, Lynne Arriale, Michael Weiss, Tribute to Charnett Mofett



Pilc Celebrates Improv Freedom in Montreal

t was June 2021, just after the end of an extended COVID-19 lockdown, that Alive-Live At Dièse Onze, Montréal, a new album by pianist Jean-Michel Pilc, was recorded. It was a special moment for anyone yearning for human connection, and the return of live music.

Some eight months later, on a snowy Friday in February, DownBeat returned to Dièse Onze, a mainstay of the Montreal jazz scene, for the album's release party. Pilc's debut on Justin Time Records, Alive, features bassist Rémi-Jean LeBlanc and drummer Jim Doxas, two of Montreal's most prominent sidemen, and gifted leaders in their own right.

A prolific Paris-born pianist with a distinct style and a penchant for spontaneity, Pilc spent two decades in New York before relocating to Montreal in 2015 to teach at McGill University. "I like the vibe very much, the high level and dedication of the students, and the fact that it's about music and art, not about competition and efficiency of training," he mused in a post-concert interview. "We are forming musicians, not work of my colleagues here. Sharing the passion is what it's all about."

Immersed into the Montreal jazz community, Pilc has played the city's clubs as a leader, co-leader or sideman on a regular basis. "It's a vibrant scene, impressive for the size of the town. And it is more about exchange than competition which, after 20 years in NYC, is quite refreshing."

An autodidact, Pilc's mastery of both Western classical music and the jazz canon, especially jazz piano, are evident. Multifaceted and immensely inventive, adventurous and unpredictable, his playing draws on a vast body of music from baroque to bebop and beyond, evoking Bud Powell, Bill Evans and Thelonious Monk, oscillating between tender and poignant to angular and emphatic.

Pilc's performances are completely improvised, with no set list or pre-planning. In his album notes, he shares how he takes the stage "as a newborn, ready for a new life, a new journey, a new experience, every time." Witnessing

race horses, and in that respect, I admire the Pilc's attentiveness to bandmates throughout the evening's two exhilarating sets, it became clear that Doxas and LeBlanc were as much part of this experience as the pianist. "Every note they play becomes part of this life we are living together on the stage," Pilc said.

> The ever-evolving "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise" opened this set of extended explorations of standards and originals. At close to 15 minutes, it offered a deep dive into what would be in store. Navigating phases and moods, the trio at turns becomes tender and bluesy, then blistering into a thunderous roar. The recording captured the audience's warm reception, and Doxas' breathless, satisfied "Wooh!" after the final note is played.

> Next comes "11 Sharp," one of two Pilc originals — a reference to the "blue note," or sharp 11th, which translates into French as dièse onze, the name of the club. Alternating rhythmically, melodically and emotionally, it is followed by two Miles Davis staples — the lyrical "Nardis" and a temperamental rendition of "All Blues," which, over the course of

an extended workout, whispers and soars with intensity. Doxas rides the cymbals, propelling the music with equal parts inventiveness and emotion, while LeBlanc shifts the dynamics with an intimate solo. Pilc, quoting Stravinsky, flies across the piano, the audience enthralled.

Closing the album is the title track "Alive," a fully improvised piece showcasing a signature aspect of Pilc's playing — right and left hands completely independent, like two separate players, as if one alone can't possibly express everything he yearns to convey.

With the magic of improvisation woven

into his very being, Pilc co-led a three-year improv workshop project at McGill. Participants included jazz and classical musicians — both faculty members and students. "The beauty of this project," Pilc said, "is that it abolishes the separation between jazz, classical and other styles, and also the separation between composer, improviser, instrumentalist and conductor. So, in a way it's a return to how it was until the 20th century, when those activities split, and people became more specialized, and different styles of music became separated from each other."

Many of the improvisation sessions took place in Montreal venues, allowing the music to develop in a natural framework, and enabling a large audience to discover the "often poorly understood or even misunderstood possibilities" of collective improvisation — which, as Pilc sees it, leads to true instant composition when practiced with consistency and rigor. Participants gained a new perception and new knowledge of this practice, having "an essential influence on their artistic development, their future work and their educational activity." The project's archive, available online, expands this process to a wide range of musicians and students around the globe.

"Pilc has really influenced the way people play here," remarked Randy Cole from a neighboring table during the intermission. Cole, a Montreal filmmaker creating insightful, well-crafted projects on the local jazz scene, noted how "even some of the more straight-ahead players are quite adventurous on stage with him. His ideas about how to improvise have rippled out through the scene. I think it was kind of freeing."

Bassist LeBlanc shared a similar impression. "Playing with Pilc has been a huge learning experience for me," he said. "I had never played with someone as adventurous and free as he is, and it definitely unlocked the gates to a dimension of collective improvisation that I hadn't been exposed to." The album — "a snapshot of a very particular moment" following two years during which the trio hadn't played together — encapsulates this sense and vulnerability, and at the same time "made it feel like your favorite pair of slippers that you dug up years later."

The album's notes open with Pilc reflecting on how his vinyl collection includes treasured items on which "the sound is not perfect, but you can hear improvising musicians in their natural habitat, the jazz club, playing music for the sake of music, never repeating themselves, and creating sounds that they will never replicate." The only thing Pilc aims to replicate in his performances is that sense of adventure. There was a tangible feeling of heightened, wide-ranging emotion at Dièse Onze the night Alive was recorded. And so, despite its technical limitations, Pilc made the decision not to keep it under wraps, benefiting from Guy Hébert's skillful mastering.

"The music was vital to us and to the audience," Pilc writes. It's clear why he felt compelled to release this set, documenting not only a singular night, but also the vibe at this intimate, welcoming club with an appreciative audience. "Every performance is a new trip ... but it always feels organic, vital and alive. It's a communion, really, among us three and with the audience, and the club is perfect for that."

—Sharonne Cohen



FREE ADMISSON





A Generational Plea for Equality

IN SEPTEMBER 2020, IN THE WAKE OF PROtests that rocked cities across the United States, DownBeat published a cover story titled "How Does It Feel To Be Free?" referring to composer/pianist Jason Moran's wistful inquiry captured in the article — an inquiry that itself was echoing the 1963 Billy Taylor-penned jazz standard later popularized by Nina Simone. For Moran, a cry for racial equity was still on the money nearly 60 years later, a pensive sentiment that is, lamentably, still evergreen.

Comprising perspectives from a selection of artists that also spans generations, a potent new double album titled *Black Lives–From Generation To Generation* weaves a tapestry of commentary, complaints, visions and commands as a collection of ruminations on the state of affairs for Black people from Africa and across the diaspora.

In an exchange with DownBeat, producer Stefany Calembert said that she intentionally includes artists from ages 25 to 80 to illustrate that after the Civil Rights Era, "Things did not really change, even if many older composers thought a positive change [would] continue in the '80s." And yet, she continued, despite such continuity of struggle, those varied generational experiences are far from monolithic. "What Oliver Lake has lived the last 80 years in [the] U.S.A. is not what Cheick Tidiane Seck has lived in Africa and Europe the last 70 years. What Immanuel Wilkins has lived the last 25 years in Philadelphia is not what Tutu Puoane has lived the last 40 years in South Africa and Europe.

"These different places and times are essen-

tial to bring a concrete témoignage [or testimony] of what Black lives are living, thinking and expressing in 2022."

Songs on *Generation To Generation* both topically and musically run the proverbial gamut — from the struggle for equality to trumpeter Jeremy Pelt's "Anthem For A Better Tomorrow"; from Guadeloupe-born drummer Sonny Troupé's fusion guitar trio flecked with Muhammad Ali newsreel samples to a duet of electric guitarist Jean-Paul Bourelly and the poet/MC Sub-Z. The collection offers a worldview spectrum of Black realities articulated creatively and indelibly.

On "Walk" (performed by bassist Reggie Washington, DJ Grazzhoppa and Alicia Hall Moran), Hall Moran contributed what she classified as "a macabre lullaby," an expression of the threadbare fears held by parents of young Black boys just trying to interface with this sometimes hazardous world. It was inspired by her own experience as a mother of two. "In that global human tradition of singing to your children, that element of danger always enters in. So, [we have] songs about don't get bit by the spider, don't fall off the bow.

"Walk' is walking music," she continued, "I always imagine that somebody was listening on headphones. That's the vibe I'm coming from sonically." For Hall Moran, it's ultimately a conversation between generations: parent and child.

"Some of the steps are dangerous and some of the steps are very loving and tender," she said. "And that when you're on this walk, I am thinking of you. I'm telling you look out for the shadow, but I'm telling you [that as a Black child, you] are also a shadow. But what are you going to be ... afraid of yourself? People are afraid of these shadows, but no, that's just my child in a street lamp. He likes lamb chops and mashed potatoes, and his favorite class in school is history."

E.J. Strickland's "Language Of The Unheard" is also an intergenerational conversation of sorts, ruminating on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote that "riots are the language of the unheard." The statement profoundly resonated with the drummer, who shared with DownBeat that he "named the song before [he] wrote it." Though he says he doesn't condone riots, he "understands the frustration behind them," which he noted "is symbolic of an urgency."

"The Black community has been peacefully protesting, trying to pass legislation, and communicating in the best way possible our need for America to deliver its promise — liberty and justice for all — for centuries now. The overall pulse of this tune feels urgent. Two powerful downbeats make up the entire groove. But on top of that pulse is a beautiful melody that dances in celebration of Black lives who have triumphed despite our struggle. Beauty upon urgency is what I was going for." He augmented that beauty with inspired touches such as overdubbed tambourines that signify "chains of oppression" being shaken off.

Beauty upon urgency is, in many ways, the overall effect of *Generation To Generation* as a whole: a beautiful, urgent plea for racial equality.

—Ayana Contreras



Arriale Finds *Light* in Darkest Moments

LYNNE ARRIALE HONED HER SUPERB TECHnical skills as a pianist and composer from rigorous training she received to become a classical pianist. But she first glimpsed her musical destiny at the age of 4, when she sat down at a toy piano and started to improvise.

"I remember playing 'Moon River," Arriale recalled via Zoom from her home in Jacksonville, Florida, where she's the professor of jazz studies and director of small ensembles at the University of North Florida. "I remember thinking with that melody, I could use different chords." Bold for someone so young, but it would be years before she released her inner 4-year-old to become a nuanced and evocative artist.

"I didn't really hear jazz until I was like 25," said Arriale, who never heard of "Round Midnight" until a teacher put the chart on her piano. "He told me to play the melody, and then create new melodies over the same chord changes. I said, 'You're kidding — I get to do that?' And at that moment, I knew I had to learn to play jazz."

Arriale was a quick study. Beginning with *The Eyes Have It* (DMP), her 1994 debut, she continued to create new melodies over the chord changes of her own multilayered compositions, as well as melodic reinventions of composers from Thelonious Monk to Tom Waits. She also built a prestigious career, releasing albums that made multiple best-of lists, including DownBeat's Best

CDs of 2020 for *Chimes Of Freedom* (Challenge). *Chimes* cemented her bond with drummer E.J. Strickland and bassist Jasper Somsen, who went on to produce the latest and most compelling album of Arriale's career, *The Light Is Always On* (Challenge). The recording marks her 16th as a leader and her third release with this trio.

"March On," the opener, sets the stage for a ripped-from-the-headlines suite of compositions that walk softly but carry a big stick. While her initial chords invoke a call to arms, the piece evolves toward the light that shines throughout an album inspired by an interview with Dr. Prakash Gada, a Tacoma, Washington, surgeon who worked through the darkest days of the pandemic.

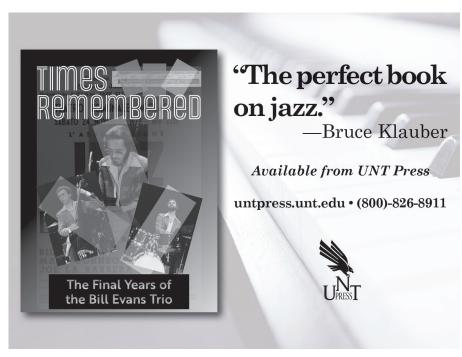
"Dr. Gada said, 'No one works from home," Arriale recalled. "The lights are always on.' There were all these remarkable people who took care of us, day after day, in an almost warlike time, and that became the focal point of the album." But Arriale took the concept a step further: "I extended it out to other people who stood up for their beliefs, even at their own peril. Heroes like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and John Lewis and Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman reaffirmed how much goodness there is in the world, even during times that can make us feel a sense of despair."

Amid the turmoil of the times, Arriale's art imitated life in many ways. The steadfast chords of "Honor" salute Vindman, who stood up for Ukraine and bore witness against then-President Donald Trump during his first impeachment trial, foreshadowing Putin's horrific invasion of Ukraine. "He's everything a patriot should be, and he's become an important voice in this horrible tragedy we're witnessing," Arriale noted. "The Notorious RBG" paid tribute to the legacy of Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg, but also presaged the inner strength of the latest Justice to join the bench, Kentanji Brown Jackson, who endured hostile Senate hearings before her appointment. "It was very inspiring to see her handle every question with such strength, grace and profound intelligence," said Arriale.

Though she instinctually reaches for the light, Arriale heads "Into The Breach" of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection with uncharacteristic dissonance. "The heroes protecting the Capitol faced their own fellow citizens," observed the composer, whose jarring chord collisions reflect the shocking events of that day. "I'm eternally grateful to them for defending our democracy."

Arriale bridges that breach in the harmonious "Sounds Like America," reflecting her belief that we're all connected. "I know that tensions are high and emotions are intense right now, but the beauty of music is beyond words," observed Arriale, whose lovely, meditative "Loved Ones" is a prayer for all those lost or separated during the pandemic. "When life brings us to our knees, somehow we get up again. There is always light. There's always goodness. The human spirit is really unconquerable."

—Cree McCree





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Riffs



Blue Note Africa Launches: Blue Note Records and Universal Music Group Africa have announced the creation of Blue Note Africa, a new imprint dedicated to signing jazz artists from across the African continent, bringing them to a global audience. Blue Note Africa launches this spring with the release of South African pianist-composer **Nduduzo Makhathini**'s new album *In* The Spirit Of Ntu. "The opportunity to create Blue Note Africa and provide a channel for African jazz talent to have a home in the U.S. is very exciting," said Sipho Dlamini, CEO of Universal Music Africa. Blue Note President Don Was added, "African music has been a major creative tributary for nearly every album in Blue Note's extensive catalog. It's a great honor for us to partner with Sipho and his talented Universal Music Africa team in this new endeavor. Together, we will shine a global light on the incredible music emanating from Africa today."

bluenote.com; umg.africa



NEA Inducts New Jazz Masters: The National Endowment for the Arts formally inducted its four new Jazz Masters on the eve of Jazz Appreciation Month with its first in-person tribute concert in three years. Alto saxophonist/cultural activist/ educator Donald Harrison Jr., drummer/ bandleader Billy Hart, vocalist/songwriter/ guitarist Cassandra Wilson and bassist/ producer/television and film scorer Stanley Clarke were honored in front of a near-capacity SFJAZZ Center audience. The March 31 presentation marked the first time the typically East Coast-based event was set in San Francisco. SFJAZZ, which produced the festivities, proved to be an ideal partner for the occasion with its 700-seat venue. an in-house band (SFJAZZ Collective) and eight remotely operated cameras. —Yoshi Kato



How Michael Weiss Found Himself

WHEN DOWNBEAT LAST RAN AN ARTICLE about Michael Weiss, the occasion was the 1998 release of his second album, the excellent quartet CD *Power Station* (DIW). For that report, saxophone icon Johnny Griffin, Weiss' steady employer between 1987 and 2002, described the pianist, then 40, as "a further branch of the tree" of Bud Powell, Elmo Hope and Thelonious Monk. "There's a oneness in their approach to comping and soloing," Griffin opined.

"Michael and the younger cats he plays with play with a certain freshness, compared to the way I feel things," Griffin added. "It's more cerebral than the way I choose to play. But Michael also has a feeling of blues in his playing that he didn't have when he joined me. He didn't grow up in that atmosphere. That's all from the street."

Griffin's encomium aptly describes the ambiance of Weiss's latest album as a leader, *Persistence* (Cellar Music), a title that defines the course of his career. It's an eight-cut program by Weiss' quartet (two are trio tracks) with tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, bassist Paul Gill and drummer Pete van Nostrand. Recorded in July 2021, the release came out in March followed by the vinyl reissue of Weiss' prior date, *Soul Journey* (Sintra), recorded in 2000 with a first-call New York septet.

On both albums, Weiss merges old-school idiomatic particulars with progressive aesthetics. He stretches out on *Persistence*, displaying his characteristically virtuosic pianism and lyric, efflorescent improvisations. His inventions, which feature a variety of clever quotes, display how comprehensively he's assimilated the language of Bud Powell via Barry Harris in his own argot and tonal palette, an attribute that attracted, apart from Griffin, such master practitioners as Junior Cook, Clifford Jordan, Charles McPherson and Frank Wess. But Weiss is equally fluent in dialects refracted from personal heroes Buddy Montgomery, Horace Silver and McCoy Tyner.

Soul Journey, a more ensemble-oriented project, highlights Weiss' harmonically and formally challenging compositions, with complexity masked by the composer's abiding melodic focus.

What animates Weiss is the idea of "bringing forth a basic expressiveness on simple or gnarly structures: how Wayne Shorter solos like Lester Young through the tremendously complex harmonic movement and orchestration on his songs on *High Life*; how Charlie Parker can play an extremely fast tempo with fast harmonic rhythm and sing simple melodies over the top of it."

In the process of realizing that aspiration during his persistently soulful journey, Weiss experienced several "aha" moments. One occurred on a 1985 tour with the Junior Cook-Bill Hardman Quintet. "I came to terms with my influences — accepting that I love this or that player, but being comfortable in my own skin, recognizing that I have an identity, a unique shape all my own on the piano, which I couldn't consciously create artificially."

Another came when Weiss heard Shorter play "Children Of The Night" at a gig supporting High Life's 1995 release. "I saw some of the music, and I was blown away by the compositional detail," he recalled. "It was the biggest epiphany, a huge turning point in my musical development. I liked so many things that I wasn't finding an avenue to get out because I was limiting my creative output to what I can improvise in a set number of choruses on a given song. My musical tastes were in these separate pots. I'd started composing in earnest, but this showed me clearly how in composition I could combine my classical interests — Scriabin, Szymanowski, Feinberg's sonatas, for example - and my rock and R&B roots in Led Zeppelin or James Brown or Tower of Power, and Miles Davis' bands or Bird or Coltrane. It opens up every possible influence I could have. Wayne showed me it's all one big pot." —Bill Milkowski





Erwin Helfer Celebrates His Jazz-Blues Journey

BLUES, BOOGIE, JAZZ AND AMERICAN roots pianist Erwin Helfer is the unlikely-but-grateful poster boy for survival of the COVID-19 pandemic. Having been hospitalized in spring 2020 for a severe depression brought on by enforced isolation, he was saved by electroconvulsive therapy — also known as shock treatment.

In January 2022, he celebrated his 86th birth-day at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music, following the release of a new album, *Celebrate The Journey*, and an instructional book, *Blues Piano and How to Play It*.

"There were three reasons I fell into that dark hole," Helfer explained in a phone interview. "First off, I couldn't play." Before music venues were shuttered against the disease, Helfer had been gigging weekly, solo and with a band. "Secondly, I couldn't teach," he said. Helfer has long given children and adults lessons in the living room of his home on a street which the city has designated Erwin Helfer Way. "Third, I couldn't access my finances," he lamented.

Although fiscally secure, Helfer, like many octogenarians, was not adept at online banking, typically riding his bicycle to the local branch to do business. At home alone, without that access, he slipped into unfounded fears that whipped into a whirlpool of delusion and pessimism. Friends got him admitted to Rush Memorial Hospital, where he spent six weeks and underwent multiple electroshock sessions.

After getting home, Helfer declined to play, feeling he'd lost motivation, not to mention his chops. But the music that he has immersed himself in since high school in the early 1950s drew him back in. When a local television newscaster had arranged for a piano to be in the stu-

dio where he interviewed Helfer for a piece on his rich life, the pianist wandered over to it, sat down and played a song. The feeling was still there. As opportunities gradually opened to play live again in 2021, he resumed both teaching and performing.

Onstage, Helfer is an outgoing and original entertainer. He revisits classic repertoire such as Jelly Roll Morton's "Sweet Substitute" and Avery Parrish's "After Hours." He re-energizes standards like "Swanee River" with an upbeat treatment or digs into showpieces including "Pinetop's Boogie." And he sprinkles in corny jokes as well as his own compositions such as "Daydreaming," which imbue blues forms with influences he's absorbed from Johann Sebastian Bach, Bela Bartók and Thelonious Monk as well as Jimmy Yancey and Otis Spann. In his hands, the disparate threads flow naturally. The organic nature of his artistry is genuine, developed over a lifetime of apprenticeship, appreciation and practice.

Born into a family that enjoyed weekend musical parties, Helfer in his teens became a protégé of Bill Russell — a co-author of *Jazzmen*, the first American book on New Orleans' early players as well as an avant-garde classical composer, record store owner, record producer, violinist and collector of ephemera that was eventually published in the encyclopedia scrapbook *Oh, Mr. Jelly.* Through Russell, Helfer met players who'd been at jazz's birth, like the drummer Baby Dodds.

Enrolling in Tulane University in New Orleans (where Russell had relocated), Helfer became friends with early jazz artists such as trumpeter De De Pierce and his pianist-singer wife, Wilhelmina Madson Goodson, better known for her stage name, Billie Pierce. In 1957,

he featured her along with Doug Suggs, James "The Bat" Robinson and re-discovered St. Louis-based boogie master Speckled Red on *Primitive Piano*, produced on his own Tone Records. It was the first of several projects Helfer initiated, convening blues and boogie players like Blind John Davis, Willie Mabon, Sunnyland Slim and Jimmy Walker for Heavy Timbre or Barrelhouse Chuck, Detroit Junior and Pinetop Perkins for 8 *Hands On 88 Keys*.

Helfer received a bachelor's degree from the American Conservatory of Music and a master's degree from Northeastern Illinois University. He made his professional debut while still in high school, substituting for Little Brother Montgomery as accompanist for Mama Estelle Yancy, the widow of famed pianist Jimmy Yancy. Their collaboration inspired one of his signature compositions, "Stella," and continued until her death at age 90 in 1986.

But Helfer had long since expanded his blues activities. During the '60s, he gave piano lessons to harmonica-playing bandleader Paul Butterfield, recorded the single "Drunken Boat"/"Whole Lotta Soul" (written by Nick Gravenites), took avant-garde breaks by AACM trumpeter Lester Bowie and saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell, and tried out the new technology of keyboard synthesisis on Chess Records' *Moogie Woogie*, (which he deplores). He also dipped into the Great American Songbook for his first solo album, *On The Sunny Side Of The Street*, with soprano saxophonist Clark Dean, drummers S.P. Leary and Odie Payne, and bassists Truck Parnham, Eddie Calhoun and Betty Dupree.

Helfer's discography continues to grow, with seven albums since 2002 on the Sirens label documenting his solos, trios and larger ensembles tackling compositions by Duke Ellington, Ray Charles and Fats Waller, among others. His Blues Piano and How To Play It is a comprehensive instructional volume for players of all levels, detailing basics and nuances, all underwritten by his dictum that "the best way to learn to play blues and jazz is by 'hanging out' with the people who play it and listening obsessively to recordings of the music."

Such was the pianist's blues-boogie-jazz-roots education, which he has enabled newcomers to similarly pursue when he's at the piano bench at home, teaching at the annual Augusta Heritage Center blues camp in Elkins, West Virginia, on tour in Europe and at parties and benefits for progressive causes in Chicago.

The extreme depression he suffered and the unusual health care that healed him seem to have left no lasting ill effects. A sweet-tempered and modest man, he's booking appearances into the future. His blues express the range of emotions from sadness to joy. He summarizes his experiences simply. "I feel real lucky," he said. Listeners share that luck when they tune into Erwin Helfer's music.

—Howard Mandel





In Memoriam: Charnett Moffett

ICAN STILL RECALL THE IMAGE OF A YOUNG Charnett Moffett, beaming from the other side of the glass in Manhattan's Songshop Studio while laying down tracks on guitarist Stanley Jordan's Blue Note debut, *Magic Touch*. It was September 1984. Charnett had turned 17. And yet, having already put in time on the road with Wynton Marsalis' quintet since December 1983, he seemed savvy beyond his years — an old soul in a young man's body.

He had a sweet smile then, and over the course of the next four decades, Moffett never lost that smile. It was an ever-present facet of his ebullient persona both on and off the bandstand. Those kind of good, positive vibes he exuded came as naturally to Charnett as his preternatural abilities on his chosen instrument. Charnett died on April 11 of a heart attack, which his wife—the singer-guitarist-composer, frequent collaborator as well as founder and president of Motéma Records—Jana Herzen, suspected was due to complications from the painful trigeminal neuralgia condition he had been struggling with for the past few years. He was 54.

The youngest son of drummer Charles Moffett, a member of Ornette Coleman's 1965 trio that recorded the live two-volume set *At The Golden Circle Stockholm* (Blue Note), Charnett Moffett was born June 10, 1967, in New York. His name is a contraction of the first syllable of his father's first name and the last syllable of Coleman's first name.

He began touring internationally with The Moffett Family Band in 1974 at age 7 alongside siblings Codaryl, Charisse and Charles Jr. Charnett later attended LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts before studying at Mannes College of Music and later at Juilliard. But perhaps his greatest learning experience came on the bandstand with Wynton Marsalis, who hired the precociously talented bassist at age 16 in 1983.

Charnett played on Branford Marsalis' 1984 recording debut *Scenes In The City* and subsequently appeared on brother Wynton's Grammywinning 1985 album *Black Codes (From The Underground)*. Two years later, he became a member of Tony Williams' hard-bopping acoustic quintet, appearing on 1987's *Civilization* and 1988's *Angel Street*.

Moffett's 1987 debut, Net Man, produced by Kenny Kirkland and featuring a guest appearance from Michael Brecker, found him playing primarily upright bass, with the exception of one cut, his original "One Left Over," which featured him doubling on acoustic and electric piccolo bass guitar. His 1989 followup for Blue Note, Beauty Within, had him introducing more electric bass on tunes like "Dancing With Love" and the ballad "Angela," named for his first wife. With 1991's Nettwork, on the Blue Note subsidiary Manhattan Records, Charnett overdubbed electric piccolo bass as his main voice on top of funky electric bass undercurrents, reserving only one track ("Truth") for upright acoustic bass. That same year he also played on the Bill Laswellproduced Ask The Ages (Axiom Records), which had him digging deep alongside such free-blowing icons as Sonny Sharrock, Pharaoh Sanders and Elvin Jones.

Moffett's 1994 release *Planet Home* (Evidence) was an ambitious trio outing with for-

mer Jazz Messengers pianist Geoff Keezer and drummer Victor Lewis, his mid-'80s bandmate in the Manhattan Jazz Quintet. Charnett alternated between acoustic and electric, showcasing his formidable arco and pizzicato chops on the upright. His fretless electric sings on "Peace Within The Struggle" in the spirit of his role models Jaco Pastorius and Alphonso Johnson. He also experimented with distortion pedal on the upright for a raucous, Hendrixian interpretation of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

After playing on two Ornette Coleman Sound Museum recordings in 1996, *Hidden Man* and *Three Women*, he released 1997's *Still Life*, a potent trio album with pianist Rachel Z and drummer Cindy Blackman. In 2007, Moffett toured Europe as part of Coleman's three-bass band (alonside Tony Falanga and Al MacDowell). I saw him backstage after a performance at the Palau de Musica in Barcelona that year and was greeted by that same beaming smile from the days at that Stanley Jordan session back in the 1980s.

On his 2009 Motéma debut, *The Art Of Improvisation*, Moffett joined drummers Will Calhoun, Eric McPherson and his 20-year-old son Max in a set of music that was typically intense and fiercely uncompromising. He followed with a string of outings on Motéma, including *Treasure*, which had him exploring a world music muse in the company of bass clarinetist Oran Etkin, sitarist Anjana Roy, Kugo harpist Tomoko Sugawara and bassist Stanley Jordan.

His daring, unaccompanied project in 2013, *The Bridge: Solo Bass Works*, found Charnett playing strictly upright acoustic on renditions of jazz standards, a pair of pop rock numbers and several originals. Also from 2013, *Spirit Of Sound* featured a rendition of Coleman's "Lonely Woman" that had Charnett carrying the lonesome melody on electric bass.

Following the 2016 death of his wife of 30 years, Moffett released 2017's *Music From Our Soul*, featuring Stanley Jordan, Pharoah Sanders, Cyrus Chestnut, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Mike Clark and Victor Lewis. By 2018, his longtime friendship with Motéma's Jana Herzen blossomed into a romance. They had previously collaborated on Herzen's 2012 duet album, *Passion Of A Lonely Heart*, and played together once again on Charnett's 2019 Motéma release *Bright New Day*.

Moffett and Herzen turned their musical partnership personal, being married in February 2020. The intimate Nett Duo album 'Round The World came out May 2020, and continued on 2021's Nothing But Love.

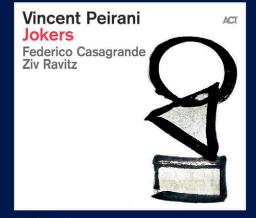
Moffett's 14th and final full album under his name, 2021's *New Love*, a live album performed with Herzen, drummer Corey Garcia and saxophonist Irwin Hall, was a fitting epitaph to the beloved bassist-composer who dedicated his life to "bringing a little light and joy to the world."

—Bill Milkowski



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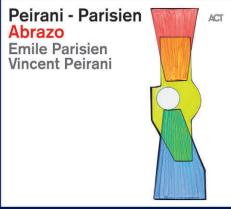
CD / 2 LP Vinyl

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CD / Vinyl (pink)





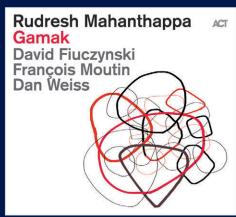


CD

CD

CD / Vinyl







CD / Vinyl

CD / 2 LP Vinyl (crystal clear)





JOHN & GERALD CLAYTON—



By Gary Fukushima. Photos by Paul Wellman-



Altadena, California, is nestled into the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains, a companion-community to its better-known neighbor, Pasadena.

pacious roads lined with quaint homes carve neat gridlines through the fir trees, which tower over everything save the majestic cliff-walls to the north. It's a few miles away, but a far cry, from Hollywood — no glitz or glamour, no high-rises, hardly any traffic. It would be a nice place to raise a family.

Bassist John Clayton would agree. After growing up in nearby Venice and spending five years of his early professional life on the road — first with Monty Alexander and then with the Count Basie Orchestra — and another five in the Netherlands as principal bassist for the Amsterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, he returned to Southern California in 1985 with his Dutch-born wife and two children in tow. His hometown of Venice was right on the Pacific Ocean, but not the best place for young children. "It was about people juggling chainsaws and G-strings," the 69-year-old Clayton said, sitting in the spacious, sunlit A-frame studio he built behind the home he has lived in for 35 years. His brother, the late saxophonist Jeff Clayton (who passed away in 2020), knew a bit about real estate, and suggested Altadena as a good place to raise an interracial family. As

one of the few areas that — despite Los Angeles' shameful history of discriminatory "redlining" housing policies — didn't restrict African Americans from applying and receiving mortgages, Altadena has been home to generations of Black families, including many prominent jazz musicians, some of whom Clayton recalled offhand: "Patrice Rushen; Billy Childs for a long time; Bennie Maupin lives on our street, a block away. Tootie Heath was here forever; John Levy, before he passed. Roy McCurdy, he was on the border of Pasadena; he's still in Pasadena."

Pianist Gerald Clayton was 1 year old when the family moved into this house. He sits opposite his father, on a bench facing away from the piano where the duo had just been playing "Blue Monk" while a photographer snapped some final pictures for this article. Some fathers and sons play catch; these two play tunes. They recently did so on the stage of the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco. A video of the performance reveals the elder Clayton's irrepressible smile while taking in the inventions his son conjured from the piano, those expressions mirrored in the face of the conjurer. "People will always say to me how happy I am when I

play, smiling and everything," John remarked. "They don't understand that my introduction to jazz was watching these incredibly intense, serious players who were not only playing music on that high level, but they were smiling."

The younger Clayton responded: "This whole narrative is also a good analogy for the evolution of the culture of Black expression in America. A lot of the freedoms and privileges I have are because of the struggles that came before me, directly from my dad but also throughout the history of America and the music.

"Maybe some people misinterpret the smile of gratitude and recognition of freedom and those that struggled before as an ignorance of that struggle. I've got the smile in me ... but I don't want to give you the sense that it's all peachy keen ... because part of what this music expresses is that struggle for peace, for equality, for better circumstances."

This depth-charge of introspection is indicative of who Gerald Clayton, at 37, has become as he moves into the prime years of his life and career. His latest album, *Bells On Sand* (Blue Note), is a ruminative turn from his previous work. *Happening: Live At The Village Vanguard* (Blue Note, 2020) was the buzzy arrival of a notable artist who, like so many others in jazz history, had been similarly crowned with a week's run and live recording at the hallowed New York jazz club. Shortly after that release, the Vanguard, along with all of New York and the

rest of the world, went into pandemic-induced isolation, giving Gerald many months to think about many things. "We've all had a good, long sit," he mused. "I think that creating a piece of art [is] supposed to reflect some truth in whatever moment you're in."

The resultant music is an evocation of internal reckoning and reflection.

But does the somberness accurately depict his disposition? "I'm a lightswitch away from looking at everything as a farce," Clayton said, rather jarringly. "It's all not that serious to me. Maybe surfing helps me double down on that. You can jump in ... and you're just a little dot on the ocean. That keeps things light, and I don't have to make everything a serious heartfelt statement on the evolution of injustice."

Altadena is a considerable distance from the beach, yet Clayton's affinity for the ocean compelled him to take up surfing as a youth. It eventually called him back to the West Coast after a decade in New York. He now makes his home in El Segundo, only minutes from LAX and even less time to the water.

Gerald Clayton inherited the tall, athletic build of his father. John intimated that his son was a competitive soccer player growing up, only to give it up in high school for Gerald's first love: music. He remembers young Gerald playing in the sandbox, singing along to the birds, to the ice cream truck — everything

was music to his son's ears. One would assume that a prominent musician — having discovered, early on, an exceptional musical aptitude — would seek to nurture and develop that gift. Not true. The 6-year-old Gerald and his 7-year-old sister Gina initiated the request for piano lessons, and Gerald took it further. "My wife and I really wanted Gerald to pursue music the way he wanted to," John explained, noting that he would consciously refrain from sharing his own likes or dislikes with his son for fear of prejudicing him away from his own path.

At what point did John Clayton think his son had a chance to become a successful musician? "I never thought that," he said softly. "Never. Like any parent, you just want them to be following a path that makes them feel good. I love hearing him play, and I love playing with him ... [But] if he said, 'I think I want to go into this [other] field, or just be a full-time surfer and not do music anymore,' I'd miss it, but ... I'm cool."

There's little chance of that happening. "I knew that I would be playing music, and that it would be part of my identity, the way that it's part of my dad's identity," said Gerald. "But that really does speak to my parents' approach in how to think about music and how to view your choices in life — that success is, 'You like music and you're doing it, and you continue to investigate it thoroughly and with passion.' It's not

like, 'OK, you're really into it, I bet you could pay rent doing it.'

"That truly is the way they raised me and my sister," he continued. "When I'm talking to other students or hungry young musicians — all the questions that start to get away from the focus of the music — it's like, 'Come on back. Serve the music the best you can, and let the rest take care of itself."

Gerald Clayton describes his dad to others as a "resiliently positive person." His father agrees with that assessment, stating, "I'm really upset when we create a 'fear-based' education for our students, where we tell them there's not enough work out there, it's really competitive. I want them to really focus on the music like Gerald was saying. That is going to be the door-opener."

Gerald's playing helped convince his father to open a door for him 14 years ago on an album they made with uncle Jeff called *Brother To Brother* (ArtistShare, 2008). On that recording, the young pianist sounds confident and polished, but the ensuing years would produce an astounding metamorphosis as Gerald relocated to New York and discovered a whole new community of brilliant jazz artists, including drummer Justin Brown, who has become like a brother to him. He also acquired some new mentors along the way, namely Roy Hargrove and Charles Lloyd. It is no surprise that Clayton



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LIFTED
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BELLS ON SAND Gerald Clayton



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pays tribute to those who helped him along the way, on a record that examines that very path. Lloyd, the master saxophonist, plays on one track with Gerald, the two of them sketching a mysterious tableau of sound-thought. "It's as much about what he's playing as it is about the spirit with which he plays it," Gerald said of his mentor. Brown has been a steady presence in Clayton's life and career, appearing on all but one of the pianist's solo projects, and he provides groove and textural support on "That Roy," a hip-hop-influenced homage to Hargrove, and he is subtly ubiquitous on the album, allowing Clayton to expand the original concept of solos and duets to formats slightly larger but no less intimate. For example, Clayton features Maro, a 27-year-old Portuguese singer and musician who, as an internet sensation, has amassed millions of viewers on social media.

The album also features his father. In asking John to play on the recording, Gerald essentially flipped the dynamic. He is now known less as his father's son and more as one of the great pianists of this generation, who happens to also have a famous father. How famous? For starters, who can say their dad was responsible for a multi-platinum-selling arrangement of the national anthem that Whitney Houston sang at the Super Bowl?

There are relatively few instances in jazz where this has happened. The Marsalis family certainly comes to mind, as does Ravi Coltrane,

son of another John. Here in Los Angeles, the renowned bandleader Gerald Wilson's son Anthony became an exceptional guitarist and would go on to play with Diana Krall (courtesy of her then-music director John Clayton). Anthony Wilson remembers bonding with his father over their shared love of jazz, too. "It was very warm, but there was always the sense that ... you have to be serious. That is part of the tradition, that you've got to hold this thing with a really great respect," he said by phone from Rochester, New York, where he was rehearsing with Krall in preparation for a five-week tour. Wilson felt the same fatherly mentorship from John Clayton, having played with him first in the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra (which Clayton founded with drummer Jeff Hamilton), and then, more personally, with both Clayton and Hamilton after they added Wilson to the rhythm section for Krall, where they played together for three years.

It was a constant lesson for him to be watching and hearing what John did on the bandstand. "If there would be something — a chord or some harmonic thing that I wasn't getting," Wilson remembered, "usually without words, on the bass, he would just show me where I needed to be. And I would learn."

John Clayton described almost the same type of lesson he once received from Count Basie. "During the concert, [Basie] might get my attention," he explained, "but he wouldn't look at me, and he'd be playing, and while I'm watching him, he'd lean back about three or four inches. He was teaching me, you know. Relax the tempo."

Both Basie and Ray Brown inform John Clayton's undeniable, paradisiacal time-feel, but what he does on Gerald's album departs from the swinging rendition of Paul Chambers' "Tale Of The Fingers" and a classical piece they performed together at SFJAZZ. On those works, the elder Clayton produces from his bow an otherworldly beam of vibrating energy that locks in perfect harmony and time with his son. One of those pieces is by 20th century Catalonian-French composer Frederic Mompou, a favorite of Gerald Clayton and many of his jazz pianist contemporaries. Both father and son are wellversed in classical music; the former having an emphasis on it for his performance degree at Indiana University (ultimately put to good use in the Amsterdam Philharmonic). "Classical music has always been important to what I do, but not more or less important than say, jazz," he explained. "It's all about love. If you love whatever it is as fully as you can ... that's what's going to allow you to bring it to the higher level. So, I'm not the kind of player who thinks classical music is [only] great for my technique, and then makes me play jazz stronger."

Gerald Clayton concurred. "I think it's because my dad and [I both] have an open-minded policy toward music in general,

that you welcome anything — no matter what part of the record store it's coming from — as valid and worth checking out," he said

The younger Clayton's open-mindedness is exemplified by two solo renditions of the standard "My Ideal" on *Bells On Sand*. Captured on different days at different studios, each take is completely its own. Gerald didn't intend for both takes to be included. "My dad sort of encouraged it more than anyone else did, but it actually fits very well with the themes," he said. "It's really very true to that narrative of you sit down to play today, and you sit down to play even five minutes later, it's something different."

One could argue the entire history of the piano is encapsulated in his playing, melting into a new creation altogether. John Clayton recalled how Ray Brown pointed a finger in his face one day and said, "Play your shit," in other words, to be himself. "I think that Gerald's got that," he said. "I hear different influences and different people ... [but] I end up hearing that he's Gerald when he plays. And by saying that, I also encourage anybody to [not] be afraid to put your feet in the shoes of the people that really inspire you ... that only helps to lay more foundation for you to find all these other things that frankly, people recognize as your own voice, because you don't recognize your own voice."

Gerald Clayton continued the thought. "And that's why I think it's important to not offer judgement. 'Hey man, you need to stop sounding like Herbie,' or whatever. That I find dangerous because [those thoughts] damage the soul and make people feel very self-conscious of what they are doing," he said.

Gerald Clayton now finds himself, as his father before him, in a position to mentor students of this music. Should they be more concerned with learning the music and methods of the past? "I'm wary of the word 'should.' I try not to include any 'shoulds' when I'm talking to other students or people who are curious about the music." He clarified, "I think the more effective way to do that is not through any sort of shaming or 'should-ing,' but hopefully enticing. 'Yo, Monk is killing, have you checked out Monk? Listen to this!"

Asked if he could see a common thread between his father and his mentors afterward, Gerald thought for a moment, and answered, "A real commitment to serving the music. They all view themselves not as more important than the music, that we're all in service of the music. Charles Lloyd says it exactly the same way. Roy was a living example of that. There's a selflessness about all of them in that way."

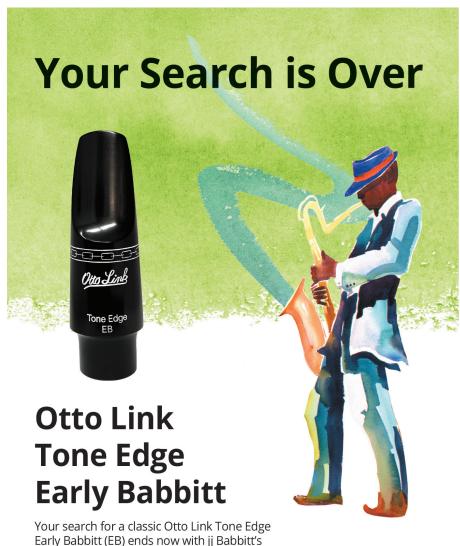
Anthony Wilson recognizes something else in John Clayton that he saw in his own father: "The sense of how the person is both in life and music — and the kind of merging of that into one being — ends up being the lesson." Wilson is also part of a trio with Gerald Clayton and

Lloyd, with a new album to be released in a few months. "We feel like his children, too," Wilson said of Lloyd. "There's that whole tradition in jazz of bandleaders who raise up the younger generation ... and I think [Charles Lloyd] looked up to my dad, in that way, as a mentor.

"The ripples and effects go ever outward."

John Clayton has served both the music and its keepers. He considers it a responsibility of the highest order. "If you think of mentorship as parenting, then its importance is clear," he said. "As a parent, you own the responsibility of raising your children. As a mentor, you have to own the responsibility of guiding, encouraging, feeding the people who are coming to you for that. It's kind of that simple to me."

Gerald Clayton acknowledges inviting his father onto this record was spurred in part from gratitude. "It could just be the fact that he plays so good, and I want to have somebody good on my record," he hedged. "But, yeah, there is a bit of feeling ... and thinking about all of what led me to today and wanting to honor what helped me get there."



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MARK TURNER RETURN TO RETURN TO

BY JOSEF WOODARD / PHOTO BY MICHAEL JACKSON

Mark Turner is sitting in a coffeehouse bakery in Westwood, California, talking in circles. Concentric, full circles, that is. The highly praised yet still underappreciated tenor saxophonist speaks softly and in thoughtful, cross-referential terms not unlike his expressive voice as player and composer, as heard on *Return From The Stars*, his sophisticated and soulful, quietly compelling "chordless" quartet album on ECM.

n the pandemic year of 2020, Turner made a return to his ancestral home of Los Angeles after living in New York and often working in Europe for more than a quarter century. That fruitful period found him as an emerging young artist recording with three albums on Warner Brothers, working as a sideman and ally for countless artists and building an impressive roster of projects for ECM. To date, his ECM discography includes the artful (and yes, chordless) trio Fly (with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jeff Ballard), work in the Billy Hart Quartet, the chamber-jazz-like Temporary Kings

from 2018 (a tenor-piano duet gem with Ethan Iverson, who is also in Hart's band) and now two distinctive albums with his own quartet.

Meanwhile, over afternoon coffee, adjacent to his current academic work-place of UCLA, Turner contemplates the full-circle sensibility of life in a city that drew his Black parents from less socially tolerant locales in Ohio and Louisiana in the mid-'60s.

"The Civil Rights [Movement] had just happened," Turner notes. "They were young and Black and educated and they wanted to come out where things were more open and free."





At 56, Turner and his wife, Dr. Helena Hansen, find themselves empty-nesters, and he admits that he has recently been processing his lineage out West, not only in familial terms but as a player of music connected with such influential West Coasters as Ornette Coleman, Hampton Hawes and, especially, under-recognized tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh. Marsh and his inspirational imprint are a direct link to the influence of pianist-visionary Lennie Tristano's cerebral methodology, and that left its mark on Turner's musical voice, too.

As testament to his evolving artistry, Turner's next recorded outing is a project recorded in March of this year, to be released in 2023 via Giant Step Arts. A suite based on the 1912 James Weldon Johnson book *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, the music features trumpeter Jason Palmer, who is also in Turner's quartet. It's mostly acoustic setting and includes some synthesizer and electric bass. As Turner explains, "It's got a little Sun Ra vibe happening. I don't know what to call it — maybe Afro-Futurist. I love that kind of music. A bit of avant-garde is coming into it, too. And the saxophone-trumpet writing is still there, but now with chords."

In turn, Turner played on Palmer's 2019 album *Rhyme And Reason* and this year's *Live From Summit Rock In Seneca Village* (both on Giant Step Arts).

As of this year, Turner's time in the spotlight is overripe. He has been dubbed a cult hero and musician's musician in jazz circles, a tenor player with a sound and language of his own, at once postmodernist and attuned to the lessons of pan-historical jazz lore.

Possessing a warm tone, an exploratory nature and sure command of his instrument, the somewhat mysterious and reluctant hero Turner — a prolific sideman for years — is now expanding his musical identity to include leader, composer and bandleader, and not a year too soon. The circle continues.

Return From The Stars was recorded in late 2019, just before the lockdown. Does it feel now like something flown in from an earlier chapter in life?

Yes and no. It definitely feels like there's a lot going on with all of us, and certainly a lot going on with me, in terms of music. Yes, it was from before the pandemic; but, no, it's part of a long continuum that I've come to be involved in. The earlier quartet record [Lathe Of Heaven] was a beginning, but this record — among others now coming out, and another one I just made — feels like a culmination of something, whatever that is.

I'm kind of figuring out my Blackness, what I think about that as a person who grew up on the West Coast in L.A. in the '70s. That has always come out in music, but there are other parts or aspects that I've held back that are starting to come out. It's partly because I'm old now. [laughs]

Things come out when you get older. Friends are starting to die, and parents. You've raised children. You've seen a lot of the world. Things start to come out that weren't there when you were 30. It's part of living.

Your horn writing for saxophone and trumpet is never predictable. There are unisons and harmonies that aren't necessarily parallel, and contrapuntal maneuvers. Is that changeable approach important to your concept for this project?

Yeah, it's definitely important for this quartet, but just in general. It started with writing for Fly. My tunes have two-part writing and harmony. It's basically a two-part chorale. That part's not new. My tunes are very contrapuntal, with just two voices.

I'm just trying to figure out what makes a melody sing. Why are some melodies better than others? What is it that makes the tune? Sometimes, it's your phrasing. Sometimes it's your tone quality. Sometimes it's the shape of the melody. Sometimes it's when you play in relationship with the rhythm.

There are all these details. That has helped me a lot to understand structure, form and all those things — basically, what makes things sing and what doesn't.

The quartet is "chordless," with qualifying quotations. There is always a sense of underlying chords and harmonic structure going

on in the music, even if only implied. Do you even write out chord forms on your charts?

I do write out chords for people, but mostly, it's just voice-leading and that's it. But sometimes, I do write out the chords.

When you're reading a chart, sometimes you just need to see a G7.

It must be comforting to see that G7.

Yeah, I write out chords and write options for the voice-leading. Sometimes the chords might be optional. It could be an inversion. Sometimes, chords have an option to be major or minor or dominant.

Sometimes unison is necessary. Sometimes you need that opaque sound that you get from unison.

But when there is more contrary motion, things become 3-D. Parallel motion or similar motion is somewhere between. It's interesting, all the things you can do.

You follow various historical traditions, but in a jazz context, this project relates to the classic quintet format with trumpet and saxophone up front — from Art Blakey to mid-'60s Miles Davis — with piano plucked out of the equation. Was that revamping of classic models in your mind?

Definitely. There's a lot of that going on, for

sure. Some of it is obviously intuitive. This is 2022, so things connect on their own. But some of it is deliberate. The tenor saxophone/trumpet combination is just very powerful to hear it in jazz. Even if the chordal instrument information is different and the language is different, you can't not hear the Miles and Wayne reference, for example.

But it has been reconfigured because most of the time, they were playing octaves or in unison, or sometimes in fourths and fifths. That's one thing that's totally different. As soon as we're on a record in fourths or fifths and especially unison, you can't help but think "Miles Davis!" [laughs] There's nothing wrong with that: I'm all about it.

You fleetingly dip into that pool, but then hightail it out of there.

You've got to dip in. The power of unison is super. It's 10,000 years old, or more. Unison is so beautiful and primal. The other thing is, you're in that format but in a totally different situation, with long tunes and the saxophone, trumpet and bass being in three-part harmony, especially those saxophone-trumpet performative functions. The saxophone is on top sometimes.

With Miles, the saxophone was almost never on top. It was always the trumpet. I'm

changing roles all the time.

For different parts of the song, the trumpet is king of beasts. You've got to let him reign. I don't know what tenor is, animal-wise. [laughs]

One reason I started doing that is that I've been playing with Tom Harrell for the last three or four years, and the saxophone's almost always on the top. It's so simple and beautiful. It's great to just hear that, and from a master like him, to be right next to him and hear how he does that in his compositions, when the saxophone is on the top. Usually, he's playing the super-low trumpet. I thought "OK, I have to try to get that in."

Also, there is Ornette Coleman's band, which had trumpet, but Ornette was on the top a lot. OK, my instrument is tenor, but just with the feeling of saxophone on the top and trumpet on the bottom or the near bottom, there's something powerful about that.

Ornette was obviously a pioneer and strong contender in that "chordless band" field. Did that music have a big impact on you?

Oh, man, huge. I can't say I know a lot of Ornette heads by heart. I need to learn more. I listened to a lot of that music — Ornette in the late '50s and the '60s, but particularly in the '70s. *Science Fiction* is my favorite. It made a huge impression on me.



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And featuring Bobby Bradford, another West Coaster, and one who stayed in Los Angeles.

Yes, exactly. It's that whole West Coast, a whole lineage of people who moved here — either they or their parents — from the Midwest and the South. It's part of this lineage thing of my grandparents and their friends. They didn't go north. Some people went north to Chicago. But a lot of Black people went west to L.A. It's a totally different thing, just the way the blues sounds and their version of African-diasporic folklore and music.

I'm not a musicologist, but if you want to talk about the blues, that's another version of it. It's got some country in it, some mystery, some calypso in there. It's totally different than the New York version or Chicago version.

Ornette and Dewey Redman came out from Fort Worth, Texas ...

Yeah, exactly. These musicians from Northern Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma have a totally different thing. I was thinking about Hampton Hawes.

The music is more relaxed, but still has the punch and intensity. I really relate to that. I was trying to figure out what that is and it started coming into my playing more and into my compositions. A lot of it is that space. With people like Hampton, just in his playing, he's got that space. It's not as dense.

You have expressed your admiration for

Warne Marsh, the Lennie Tristano disciple. How did you get into him and what was it about his music that appealed to you?

All this thing about space, the West appeals to me, and he was another manifestation of that. I ran into him in person in high school. I just knew about him from his work with Lew Tabackin and Toshiko Akiyoshi. We would play some of her arrangements. I heard this weird guy playing with them, and thought, "Who the hell was that?" I was super into it.

Much later, during college, I ran into a piano player, Mike Cain, who was studying with Harvey Diamond, who was completely into the Tristano thing. Like a lot of the Tristano acolytes, if you want to call them that, they have all these bootlegs. I thought, "Oh, let me check this out."

I was attracted just because I was trying to figure out how to improvise, with people who were really on the edge of their seat and really improvising. Improvisation is a large topic. [Most jazz musicians] were playing organized traditional information, meaning music from the '40s and '50s, on tunes. [Tristano acolytes] weren't playing that.

It was something different. I was just curious: What's that all about? I was trying to figure out how to create drama, excitement and anticipation without volume, without volume maximalism.

I liked all the other stuff, too — the maximalism, drama, volume — but it seems like that

is celebrated way more than the other, and I wanted to find something else.

Your project with alto saxophonist Gary Foster, another Tristano connection, came out in 2019, more than a decade after its recording. You do a great take on Lee Konitz's "Subconscious-Lee," among other things, speaking of Tristano links.

Oh, yeah. Man, it was super awesome. That came out finally. I met Gary because he heard through the grapevine that I was into Warne, and he had a good relationship with Warne. So, for me, it was incredible to meet someone still living but with a connection to that school, and to play with him. It was incredible.

Thinking about projects without chordal instruments, two examples were ECM projects — Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition, with Arthur Blythe and David Murray, and Dave Holland's band with Steve Coleman, Kenny Wheeler and Robin Eubanks.

Yeah, that's true. I remember the (Holland) albums *Triplicate* and *Jumpin' In*. I transcribed some of Steve's playing from that. This was 15 years ago or so. I heard them, but I can't say they influenced me directly, at least not in terms of this project.

Were there any specific models you can point a finger at, in terms of conceiving of your quartet?

I wouldn't say there was anything direct in

terms of writing patterned after a certain band. It's more like there are details about voicing or harmony or parts of tunes that relate to parts of jazz and parts of classical music.

The closing track on the new album, "Lincoln Heights," is also the "straightest." It's almost a gospel/soul tune, in 6/8 — though sometimes sneaking into 9/8.

Yeah, there's a little extra.

What's the story behind that piece?

It's just having a little bit of that R&B/gospel thing, which is a part of me, but which I've never been able to figure out how to put in before and make it not so different from the rest of the music.

You can have a lot of tunes from different genres. That happened a lot in the '90s, with records that were eclectic and celebrated that fact. I'm not saying it's wrong. It's just not what I wanted to do. It's easy to be eclectic, but hard to integrate the music.

The other thing is that I wanted to write a simple tune. I wanted to just write a one-page tune — which I usually don't. That's basically what it was, a simple, soulful melody. I wasn't sure about the rhythm, but I knew it would be something like what it turned out to be, some kind of 6/8. The rest of it unfolded on its own. The other thing that ended up happening was some kind of repetitive refrain, which tapped into R&B.

After many projects on ECM, how has it been working with Manfred Eicher? Is he a kindred spirit?

Yeah, in some ways. He has been really cool and great, personally, for sure. I've benefitted from it and enjoyed working with him. Through classical music, he's got that Germanic music cultural connection to music, which is interesting. When he's in the studio, he's able to describe what's going on, whatever that might be. It might be dynamics or something about the form or flow or pace of the music. That's unique to have that happening in the studio. Particularly when he's mixing, that's when it really goes down. He's really great at that.

He's very precise in what he wants, but he's also open to make things alive, in certain kinds of music.

I can see why he would be drawn to projects like Fly and your quartet, both open and spacious, but with musical intrigue attached. For instance, he loved the old Jimmy Giuffre Trio, which he reissued several years ago.

That was super amazing. *Whoo*. I used to listen to that a lot, in the '90s and early 2000s. You were asking about a direct influence — that's one. It's not chordal. Manfred seemed to like what we were doing enough to let us record.

On your early Warner Brothers albums, you were young but with a poise and maturity beyond your years, especially compared to the young bloods on the scene in the '90s.

Right, the young lions. I was anti-"young lion." [laughs]

So, you were a rebel in that case. How do you compare Mark Turner, circa 2022, and your musical self in that emerging era? Are they connected?

Yeah. I was on that trajectory then, and I was trying to figure out how to put things together. I still am. I would say the connection is like someone playing the long game. It's like a 2,000-mile pilgrimage in the Medieval era.

Back then, maybe I was at 100 miles. Maybe I'm at mile 1,000 now.

So your musical trek is an ongoing evolution?

Yeah, totally.

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MICHAEL LEAGUE'S By Ted Panken Photo by Txus Garcia A D / E N T D E

Before he founded Snarky Puppy, Bokanté and GroundUP Productions, before he produced a Grammy-winning album, even before he started to play the bass or guitar, Michael League was a devotee of team sports.

ports was my primary way to socialize," League said late last year. By high school, he added, his military family had moved from California to Alabama to Virginia. "We met a lot of different people, experienced different parts of the U.S., and never laid down deep roots anywhere. That immediately makes you a bit light on your feet; it makes it easy to say hello and goodbye."

League spoke, in person (a rarity during the pandemic), from his top-floor recording studio in Prats Del Rei, a Roman-era village of 500 souls in the foothills of Montserrat, an hour south of Barcelona, Spain. The windows gave an unimpeded view of a long access road from the main highway, the better for occupants a millennium ago to spot unwelcome strangers on the Catalonian plain.





"As the years go on, I see more of a relationship between how I deal with music, and how I dealt with sports," League continued. "This person plays this role great, so let's give them the ball in these situations. I often think of that on stage when I'm choosing a soloist, or, when I'm producing, considering who would be great to sing this chorus or play sax on a certain song. I think like a coach. The coach makes the decisions, makes the game plan off the field, and then leaves it to the players. I like that a lot."

League implied that this ingrained predisposition to flexibility and objective assessment facilitated his creative responses to the ongoing flux of road life — six to 10 months annually, he estimated — from Snarky Puppy's mid-'00s origins to March 2020, when COVID-19 shut down the world. That's when League, then shuttling between Brooklyn and another Catalonian town, made his way to Cádiz, where he conceived and executed a brilliant one-man album, So Many Me (GroundUP). Meanwhile, he bought the Prats Del Rei fixer-upper, cheap, midway through 2020, supervised a gut renovation and moved in near the beginning of 2021. Already fluent in Spanish, League absorbed the Catalan language, helping him assimilate into Catalonia's exclusive oenophilic and foodie communities - and to accumulate a formidable wine cellar.

"Michael responds to the moment; he can create something out of nothing," observed Bill Laurance, a regular on piano in the world of Snarky Puppy, the band and collective that brought League to fame. "He's a master of turning any disadvantage into an advantage. Even

when things go wrong, he sees that as an opportunity to create a new foothold."

As an example, Laurance cited a tour some years back when the band's laptops, instruments and other possessions were stolen from their school bus. "I remember thinking that this tour was done," Laurance said. "But Michael hustled. He got on Facebook and reached out to everyone we knew in the next town, and got musicians to bring instruments to the gig. We made it to the show and the tour carried on. That rallied us together. There [are] countless examples where, when our chips were down, Michael found a way to turn it around."

A London native, Laurance was bunking in League's guest room as they co-produced an album consisting of 16 tracks culled from 150 songs on the theme of conflict submitted by a global cohort of aspirants. The assignment came from the Swiss organization Beyond Music, whose ethos of breaking down barriers between different cultures through cross-pollinating styles on an online platform mirrors League's preoccupations over the past decade.

In April 2021, they documented years of duo playing with an album of new music yet to be released on which Laurance plays acoustic piano and League plays oud and fretless bass. "It's a pandemic project," League said. "Snarky Puppy gigs had been canceled. People from the U.S. were no longer allowed to enter Europe. But the festivals were going on, especially in Italy, because their really hard-hit moment was earlier. Our Italian agent called Snarky Puppy's manager and said, 'Mike's in Europe, Bill's in Europe, [keyboardist] Justin Stanton is in

Europe — can we figure something out?"

In response, League and Stanton conceived a project with vocalist-accordionist-composer Magda Giannikou and some Spanish musicians. "Then, I thought Bill and I could do a duo where he's not the only melodic voice," League said. "We put together songs from our back catalogue and some covers, and drove across Italy together, eating like kings. We had so much fun that we decided to write new music and make a record. We wrote all the music over Christmas."

That duo album is one outcome of a 12-projects-in-12-months extravaganza that League assigned himself after resettling. "A big part of moving to Catalonia was to refocus my life more as a producer than a traveling musician," League said. "Now, after being home, that lifestyle seems exhausting. It wasn't then, but I realized that at a certain point it would get tiring, and when it seemed inevitable that this pandemic would come and go in waves, I decided to commit to producing as much as possible without compromising quality. Artists come to me one at a time. We can do a record alone in my house or through Zoom. I figured one a month was reasonable. It was demanding, and sometimes became complicated because things got canceled and rescheduled based on travel restrictions. I'd produced 40 or 50 records, so this isn't new for me — but I've grown more as a producer in 2021 than in any year of my life.

"One thing I love about production is having to submit to a vision that isn't 100 percent my own. That ensures you have variety in your life — and in your creative life — and also that you learn things. You have to be ready for any-



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thing, to be an open channel. If I'm sole composer, producer and player, I control every idea. No new idea is coming from an outside source that I have to process, respect and actualize."

As examples, League mentioned his work on three 2021 GroundUP releases. Real Life is a trans-genre program of contemporary electronic music performed acoustically by ATTACA, a Grammy-winning classical quartet, then post-produced by League and engineer Nic Hard to impart an electronic feel while using only sounds generated by the quartet. He produced and played on several tracks of Portuguese fado star Gisela João's AuRora. He arranged all the songs for iconic Peruvian singer Susana Baca's Palabras Urgentes (No. 1 on the Transglobal World Music Chart as we spoke), entering the musical flow on riq and dohola darbuka (Arabic tambourine and hand drum) and electric guitar.

"People like Susana and Gisela, or Eliades Ochoa from Buena Vista Social Club, or Hamid El Kasri, who's the main Gnawa maâlem in Morocco, or [singer] Varijashree Venugopal from India, grew up playing and developed their sound in the folkloric music of their country," League said. "Now they're interested in finding possibilities for their music and artistry outside the box of their cultural context. So they reach out to producers not from their country, who are interested and hungry to explore different styles of music from around the world, and hopefully have enough taste and respect to carry their music to a new place without pulling its roots out of the ground.

"Not everyone has the same mission. Susana told me, 'I want to make a record with different flavors, that sounds unique, that the whole world can hear and understand, but that goes to the Blackness of Peruvian music.' For me, that was an interesting challenge, because I'm white and not from Peru. Gisela grew up in the fado tradition, but also went to raves. She told me repeatedly, 'Fado is not a genre; it's a feeling. Snarky Puppy has a fado song. I'll tell you which song it is.' She played it for me. So, my brief was

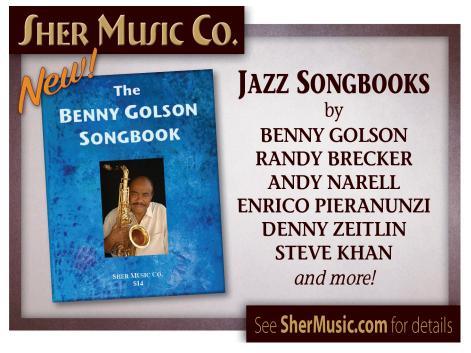
clearly to create an electronic soundscape without losing the essence of what fado is to her and without her feeling it's no longer fado."

Similar imperatives inform the September 2021 release *Becca Stevens And The Secret Trio* (GroundUP), on which the vocalist interacts with Ara Dinkjian, an oud player of Turkish-Armenian descent; Ismail Lumanovski, a clarinetist from Macedonia; and Tamer Pinarbasi, a qānūn player from Turkey. League met the band, which is New York-based, during a several-month residence in Turkey in 2017. He booked them at his 2018 GroundUP Festival in Miami, introduced them to singer-songwriter Stevens, and suggested a recording.

He mentioned one motivation for establishing an Iberian footprint was geographic proximity to Turkey and Morocco, where he's done quality fieldwork, developing relationships with master drum practitioners whose lessons filter into his contemporary musical production. He traced his immersive interest in Anatolian culture to matrilineal ancestors, ethnic Greeks from Smyrna (now Izmir) who were expelled by Ataturk's forces in 1922. "I grew up eating Greek food and drinking Greek spirits — and Turks and Greeks are brothers," he said. "The culture immediately resonated with me — then I started listening to the music. I'd visit for long chunks of time, studying the music all day, every day, reading books about Istanbul, exploring the food and drink, the people, the architecture, the vibe in the city. That's the most natural way to learn anything. It's how all our favorite musicians learn music — being in the midst of the culture that created the music."

That attitude has animated League since his teens, when he was invited to play at the First Baptist Church in Vienna, Virginia. "I had a revelatory experience," said League, then a devotee of Led Zeppelin, Frank Zappa and CSNY (he's served as David Crosby's musical director since producing and co-writing the 2016 album Lighthouse). "I grew up Catholic. I thought, 'How could this be the same God?' Paintings of 'The Last Supper' with everybody Black. It was a whole other space. I started playing at this church and joined a band called New Element, where my job was to play rock guitar solos over gospel music. The musicians, who are still my friends, exposed me to Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond, Erykah Badu and D'Angelo, whose first record, Brown Sugar, lit some fires in me."

After enrolling at the University of North Texas, League joined "a Black quartet that played in a Black restaurant in Dallas-Fort Worth as well as in Black churches in the area." For the next three years, he recalled: "Half my gigs were in Black churches and the other half with musicians from those churches. I played in churches three days a week; every Sunday I did three church gigs — one Methodist, one Catholic, one Baptist — in three different cit-







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ies. Just going to one Black church service will change the way you think about music, but when you immerse yourself, you start noticing everything clearly. You hear the same chords we play in jazz, but they feel different. You do something in response to the preacher; you've rehearsed a song you were supposed to play, but you won't play it because it's not the right moment — you can tell the congregation

doesn't feel it.

"Then you start hearing all your jazz heroes — Ellington, Mingus, Trane and Miles — in a way you couldn't by listening to their records, going to a white jazz school."

League had drawn deeply from that well of lived experience at Barcelona's Conservatori Liceu, where he gave a master class in spring 2020 and then, "when it looked like I'd be sitting at home for the next eight months," accepted an invitation to teach one day a week. In addition to a class on "every single step of the album-making process" and another on the bass, he's supervised a 17-piece Black American Music Ensemble, with five singers, through performances of repertoire by post-1950 Black American performers from Dallas, Philadelphia, the borough of Queens and Chicago.

"Living in a place that's geographically, culturally and attitudinally so far away from the Black Ameican culture that created the music these students are studying, I decided to create a class that emphasizes research through performance," League said a few days before his students presented a concert at the Voll-Damm Barcelona Jazz Festival. "In music, we don't get as specific about geography as we should. Especially in Europe, people lack the context.

"I like to learn things and include them in my way, without trying to be Black, without trying to be Turkish — being me, with the identity that I've developed over the years, which is 80 percent or 90 percent forged by either Black American music that I listened to and studied growing up or white musicians whose primary influences are Black American music.

"I like to share cool shit."

DB



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SFJAZZ CollectiveNew Works Reflecting The Moment

SFJAZZ COLLECTIVE

***1/2

The SFJAZZ Collective has paralleled the Lincoln Center orchestra in the sense that each has defined itself according to a body of historic and commissioned repertoire. But the Collective has limited itself more to the post-1960 age, whose inclusiveness continues to govern much of the contemporary jazz scene. That's true of the program here. Each player composes or arranges a piece reflecting a current concern. The issues are what you'd expect — race, insurrection, climate, COVID — all very 20/20-ish, and some better than others.

The politics are aired more in the musicians' program notes than in the music, which

is not always what you'd expect. Edward Simon's "8'46"" memorializes the George Floyd killing using Gretchen Parlato's lovely wordless vocal in a surprisingly reflective, soft and lyrical bit of tone poetry. And the through-composed "Sower" by Matt Brewer seems oddly disconnected from the dystopian world of 2024, which is its inspiration.

Equally unlikely but more resourceful is Chris Potter's tranquil, almost Third Stream remembrance of the failed election overthrow in which he camouflages patriotic quotes ninja-like in his skillfully drawn ensemble. (I couldn't find them.)

Not all the pieces are original. Abbey Lincoln's "Throw It Away" is coupled with Max Roach's 1960 "Freedom Day" by arranger/drummer Kendrick Scott in honor of their continuing consequence, which Parlato affirms. And Etienne Charles soothes the soul in

Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" in favor of a nice jazz punch.

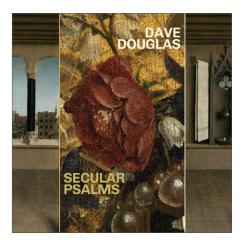
The longest of the pieces, "Ay Bendito," is among the least composed but most open. Sánchez is a restless dynamo in his three-minute tenor oration. And man-of-many-faces Chris Potter offers something of a virtuo-so tenor tear himself on "Mutuality," moving from an a cappella prologue to a raucous dialog with drummer Scott. Charles has some bracing trumpet space, too, but Parlato's words are partly buried under a too-rich mix.

-John McDonough

New Works Reflecting The Moment: Lift Every Voice; Vicissitude; Throw It Away; 8'46"; What's Going On; The Sowor; Ay Bendito, Can You See; Mutuality; All There Inside; Already Died For Her. (75:47)

Personnel: Etienne Charles, trumpet; Chris Potter, David Sánchez, reeds; Edward Simon, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums; Martin Luther McCoy, Gretchen Parlato, vocals.

Ordering info: sfjazz.org



Dave Douglas Secular Psalms **GREENLEAF MUSIC**

Viewing the Ghent Altarpiece by the 15th Century Flemish painters Hubert and Jan Van Eyck is an all-encompassing experience. Its 12 panels, each depicting in crisp and complicated detail the Holy Trinity, Biblical angels and Adam and Eve, surround the viewer in their rich, emotive intricacies.

It is a mammoth work, and responding to the 600th anniversary of its creation in musical form seems an equally mammoth task. Such

Brad Mehldau Iacob's Ladder

NONESUCH

There is a lot happening on Jacob's Ladder almost too much. As Brad Mehldau channels music of his youth — the extravagance of '70s prog rock and the pyrotechnics of fusion he underscores the album with soul-stirring Biblical themes

The book of Genesis story about Jacob's dream of a ladder leading up to heaven during a flight from his brother Esau provides the inspirational thrust for the album. The music unfolds in a programmatic manner that suggests a gaudy glam-rock opera. It depicts the protagonist's close association with God during his childhood and how his Christian faith loosens during adulthood, only for it to be restored through experiencing some of life's hard knocks then envisioning the ladder as the pathway back to God's grace.

Jacob's Ladder contains two three-part suites. The first is "Cogs In Cogs," on which Mehldau extrapolates upon Gentle Giant's tune of the same name from its 1974 LP The Power And The Glory. Here, Mehldau uses the song's baroque-like melody and intricate meter as improvisational fodder as he molds it into a kaleidoscopic suite that infuses gentle jazzis the endeavor undertaken by trumpeter Dave Douglas on Secular Psalms, a brave concept that produces mixed results.

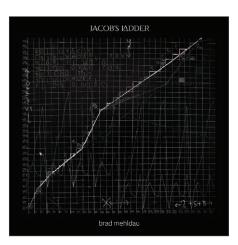
Combining the verse of Latin Mass with early medieval folk songs, electronic manipulations and improvised instrumentation, Secular Psalms takes a postmodernist approach of freewheeling influences. Douglas finds his strengths most clearly when focusing on instrumental mood music, such as on the ambient meditation of opener "Arrival," where Douglas' serpentine, high-register trumpet melody intertwines with the rhythmic consistency of Berlinde Deman's tuba. "Edge Of Night," meanwhile, artfully pairs Deman's rich tenor with the distorted low-end bowing of Tomeka Reid's cello to create the nocturnal atmosphere of its title.

Elements of the Latin Mass also fare well within Douglas' new context. The polyrhythmic propulsion of "Agnus Dei" is a jarringly intriguing setting for Deman's choral vocalizations, while "We Believe" creates a swooping, cinematic sense of grandeur.

—Ammar Kalia

Secular Psalms: Arrival; Mercy; We Believe; Agnus Dei; Instrumental Angels; If I'm In Church More Often Now; Hermits and Pilgrims; Righteous Judges; Ah Moon; Edge Of Night. (53.07) **Personnel:** Dave Douglas, trumpet, voice; Berlinde Deman, serpent, tuba, voice; Marta Warelis, piano, prepared piano, pump organ; Frederik Leroux, guitars, lute, electronics; Tomeka Reid, cello; Lander Gyselinck, drums, electronics.

Ordering info: davedouglas.bandcamp.com



tronica, haunting art-rock singing and modern chamber music shading. The other one is "Jacob's Ladder," which begins with an eerie collage of recitations from the book of Genesis about Jacob's venture from Beer-sheba to Haran, when he eventually dreams of the ladder. After its opening, "Liturgy," the suite progresses into an epic composition marked by suspenseful chords. —John Murph

Jacob's Ladder: Maybe As His Skies Are Wide; Herr und Knecht; (Entr'acte) Glam Perfume; Cogs In Cogs, Pt. I: Dance; Cogs In Cogs, Pt. II: Song; Congs In Cogs, Pt. III: Double Fugue; Tom Sawyer; Vou correndo te encontrar/Racecar; Jacob's Ladder, Pt. 1: Liturgy; Jacob's Ladder, Pt. II: Song; Jacob's Ladder, Pt III: Ladder; Heaven: I. All Once, II. Life Seeker, III. Würm, IV. Epilogue: It Was A Dream But I Carry It Still. (70:09)

Personnel: Brad Mehldau and numerous collaborators

Ordering info: nonesuch.com



Samora Pinderhughes Grief STRETCH/ROPEADOPE

With a dominant sonic landscape that's as quiet, tentative and introspective as prayer, Grief functions as a soundtrack for a meditative walk through a gallery of grave social injustices and loss. Highly cinematic and textured by the whispery vocals of Nio Levon and the strings of the Argus Quartet, Samora Pinderhughes' fulllength recording debut draws from the church, cabaret and contemporary jazz to look deep into the human condition.

Where some artists turned to anger in response to the presidency of Donald Trump, Pinderhughes takes a far more subtle approach on "Kingly," mixing Marcus Gilmore's darting drums with Levon's wobbly vocal and his own propulsive piano part to conjure a jarring environment where some are still "in love with the king," despite his appearance as "a self-made cliché."

It's in the combination of elements where Grief — which evolved from Pinderhughes' multimedia piece The Healing Project — truly succeeds, sounding like a pocket symphony on "Holding Cell" as he intermingles electronics, Levon's highly vernacular delivery and strings, and on "Masculinity," the work's multifaceted masterpiece. With the opening line, "Young man, come down from that tower/ It isn't yet your time," Pinderhughes establishes a compelling narrative on "Masculinity."

Although Pinderhughes' writing and Levon's flexible voice create a sense of tenderness on this powerful debut, it's tenderness with a core of steel. —James Hale

Grief: The Cry, Kingly; Election Time; Holding Cell; Internal Geographies; Time Loop; Masculinity, Rise Up; Breath; Grief; Refrain For Keith Lamar; Stare Straight Ahead; Hope Intro; Hope; Hum/A Prayer. (45:37)

Personnel: Samora Pinderhughes, piano, vocals; Nio Levon, Jehbreal Jackson, vocals; Elena Pinderhughes, flute; Immanuel Wilkins, alto saxophone; Lucas Pino, tenor saxophone; Brad Allen Williams, guitar; The Argus Quartet (Clara Kim, Giancarlo Latta, violin; Maren Rothfritz, viola; Audrey Chen, cello), strings; Clovis Nicolas, bass; Boom Bishop, electric bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.

Ordering info: ropeadope.com

The C

Critics	John McDonough	Ammar Kalia	John Murph	James Hale
SFJAZZ New Works Reflecting The Moment	***1/2	***	***½	***
Dave Douglas Secular Psalms	** ¹ / ₂	***½	***	N/A
Brad Mehldau Jacob's Ladder	**	***½	***	***
Samora Pinderhughes Grief	**	***½	***	***

Critics' Comments

SFJAZZ, New Works Reflecting The Moment

An all-star ensemble firing on all cylinders here, finding new ground in the much-covered "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye, as well as producing a fine quartet of new compositions, including Gretchen Parlato's pandemic-inspired meditation "All There Inside" and Edward Simon's yearning paean to George Floyd, "8' 46"."

—Ammar Kalia

Poignant early-21st century jazz addressing some of our most challenging times. — John Murph

A somewhat poppier version of the long-running ensemble with feathery edges, thanks to Parlato and Wolf. The performances seem to be constantly churning toward climax without an emotional payoff.

—James Hale

Dave Douglas, Secular Psalms

Balances austerity, warmth, and skepticism in a veneer of late medieval Flemish mysticism. An unlikely detour for the detour-prone Douglas, it comes laced with a ghostly piety voiced by Berlinde Deman, who lends a medieval severity to the music. Atmospheric and somber. I was not converted.

—John McDonough

Lofty program music that fascinates more than it seduces.

—John Murph

[James Hale did work for this recording and recused himself from rating the album.]

Brad Mehldau, Jacob's Ladder

Scripture meets '70s rock and find they have little to discuss. Mehldau's multi-lingual piano serves as mediator, makes a few elegant points here and there, but is not well showcased in the tedious emptiness of the dialog. $-John\,McDonough$

The prog spirit of bombastic grandiosity and intricate arrangements might seem to run counter to improvisatory freeness, but Mehldau somehow makes it work here. Seven-minute opus "Herr und Knecht" proves that he can get his fingers around almost any genre. Yet, the best moments come from stripping away the complexity on the quietude of piano solo "(Entr'acte) Glam Perfume."

—Ammar Kalia

As usual, Mehldau is unafraid to step outside where fans expect to find him. Whether you'll follow him on this multi-layered journey depends on how much you love overblown prog music.

—James Hale

Samora Pinderhughes, Grief

A grim, dark, fragmented procession of social lamentations framed in a nomadic musical context without a compass. The vocal and poetic particulars are played for sound and feel, leaving much of the fury obscured in an often echoey, overmixed fog of pop and chamber moods. A downer.

—John McDonough

There are shades of Bilal's frequent, emotive collaborations with Robert Glasper on this satisfying debut from Samora Pinderhughes. He hits his stride on the downtempo introspection of tracks "Holding Cell" and "Masculinity," but the record as a whole fails to shift out of this monotone into different, more enticing textures.

—Ammar Kalia

An elegiac debut of cinematic width and haunting lyricism.

—John Murph

THE SOUND OF SMOKE













Goldings Bernstein Stewart

Perpetual Pendulum SMOKE SESSIONS

After more than 30 years and a dozen albums together, playing with this much trust and cohesion is strictly second nature to organist Larry Goldings, guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Bill Stewart. Their communication skills are so finely honed by now that they are perpetually in sync, whether tackling an intricate head (Wayne Shorter's "United"), swinging lightly and politely in old-school fashion on a standard ("Come Rain Or Come Shine") or

Myra Melford's Fire And Water Quintet For The Love Of Fire And Water

ROGUE ART

The Fire And Water Quintet takes its name from a collection of drawings by the late American artist Cy Twombly, whose gestural art has long inspired pianist Myra Melford. But the group's music is so elemental that it's also tempting to take the name at face value. Perhaps it's best to let both meanings stand.

Melford originally convened the group as one of two new ensembles that she presented during a weeklong residency in 2019 at The Stone in New York. While she knew instantly that she wanted to keep the group going, the pandemic ensured she had plenty of time to think about what she wanted to do with it before she took it into the studio in summer 2021.

The resulting music is expansive, containing both artfully arranged ensemble passages and freeform encounters between a couple players within an album-length suite. The opening movement feels like a translation of vigorous, scrawling motions into sound, with each instrument laying its mark atop another's. But the group turns on a dime to realize an intricate, mobile configuration that twists

exploring spacier terrain (Stewart's In A Silent Way-inspired "FU Donald," his caustic salute to the former president).

Goldings' "Let's Get Lots" (with allusions to Frank Loesser-Jimmy McHugh's oft-covered "Let's Get Lost") has the organist setting a lush mood while also injecting a touch of playful humor. Stewart's swinging pulse ignites Bernstein's "Little Green Men," which appeared on the trio's 1992 outing Light Blue (as The Larry Goldings Trio), while his extended drum solo here is both furious and uncommonly melodic. A polyrhythmic marvel on the kit, Stewart never fails to surprise.

Bernstein, who possesses one of the purest tones in jazz guitar today, carries the melody on Duke Ellington's beautiful ballad "Reflections In D" and the solo guitar intro to John Lewis' gorgeous "Django" with refined delicacy and masterly finesse. Yet, he is very capable of burning a blue streak (Gary Bartz's "Libra") or dealing in bluesy inflections (George Gershwin's "Prelude 2"). Individually, these three musicians are at the top of their respective fields. Together, they have become standard-bearers for the B-3 tradition.

—Bill Milkowski

Perpetual Pendulum: United; Let's Get Lots; Libra; Prelude; FU Donald; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Little Green Men; Reflections In D; Perpetual Pendulum; Lurkers; Django. (64:50)
Personnel: Larry Goldings, organ; Peter Bernstein, guitar; Bill

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com



sharply drawn lines around Melford's theme.

The performers likewise balance flamboyant, instantly recognizable actions with expressions that are necessary, but not showy. Each player's actions align with the artistic acts and natural phenomena that gave the project its name, which ensures that even the music's stormiest moments feel very much in

—Bill Meyer

For The Love OF Fire And Water: I; II; III; IV; V; VI; VIII; IX; X. (44.14)

Personnel: Myra Melford, piano, melodica; Susie Ibarra, drums, percussion; Ingrid Laubrock, soprano and tenor saxophones; Mary Halvorson, guitar; Tomeka Reid, cello.

Ordering info: roguart.com



Mostly Other People Do The Killing Disasters, Vol. 1

Disasters, Vol. 1

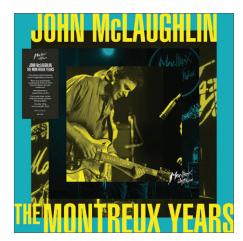
Disasters, Vol. 1 is an album of swirling trippiness that never loses focus. These tunes are both expansive and lean, with MOPDtK configured as a trio for the second time in this excursion. There's a greater accessibility in this collection of songs, a kind of weird that isn't off-putting or too in-jokey as they've been known to be from time to time. They're continuing to innovate on their 12th album while also falling into a pretty good groove for a group of two decades.

"Johnstown" is a 14½-minute epic that darts between concepts and turns on a dime. It's the main culprit of having so many ideas in a song that could be too big for its britches, but this thankfully isn't the case. The other songs named after Pennsylvania towns that underwent assorted disasters are tighter in execution though certainly not in feeling. Moppa Elliott's bass sassily struts on "Exeter," while Ron Stabinsky and Kevin Shea's electronic effects take that strutting to the cosmos, all while Stabinsky is still stolidly playing the melody on the piano and Kevin Shea gets all worked on up the kit, bubbling and fizzing all over the place.

There's just enough skeleton on Elliott's compositions and three guys who have all the right tools to do something interesting without getting in one another's way — as one would expect from a group that has played together in assorted configurations for nearly 20 years — that *Disasters Vol. 1* makes for yet another tremendous album that the jazz world will spend time talking about. It's what people do with MOPDtK albums. —*Anthony Dean-Harris*

Disasters, Vol. 1: Three Mile Island; Exeter, Marcus Hook; Wilkes-Barre; Centralia; Johnstown; Boyertown; Dimock. (50:32) Personnel: Ron Stabinsky, piano, Nord electronics; Moppa Elliott, bass; Kevin Shea, drums, Nord electronics.

 ${\bf Order\ info:}\ {\bf mostly other people do the killing.} {\bf band camp.com}$



John McLaughlin The Montreux Years

BMG

Fusion, funk and flamenco flow abundantly from John McLaughlin's The Montreux Years, an album of tracks that span from 1984 to 2016 highlighted by dates in 1987 with the late guitarist Paco de Lucia. McLaughlin's sonic vibrations combine with de Lucia's swift fingering, creating picturesque smears of sound that at the conclusion of "David" elicit a thunderous response from the crowd, giving the live performance an extended eruption. The duo replicates this fury on "Florianapolis," and later McLaughlin pays tribute to his departed companion on "El Hombre Que Sabia" (The Man Who Knew).

When McLaughlin is not with de Lucia, he finds comparable mates in Dennis Chambers, Joey DeFrancesco, Gary Thomas and Victor Williams, among others. On "Radio Activity," there is an exemplary sample of fusion and funk, and McLaughlin delivers a searing sermonette, mixing an array of keening high notes with guttural dips that bear all the hallmarks of a down-home Baptist preacher. His guitar sings and swoops in keeping with a gospel convocation.

The Montreux Years is a return to a bountiful time when McLaughlin set the pace and even abetted the ever curious and inventive Miles Davis to curate a fresh breakthrough. When he first met Davis, who asked him to join him on a date, McLaughlin confessed that he was nervous playing with his idol. "Just relax and play like you've been doing, and everything will be all right," Davis assured him. —Herb Boyd

The Montreux Years: Radio Activity; Nostalgia; Acid Jazz; David; Sing Me Softly Of the Blues; Florianapolis; El Hombre Que Sabia. (72:36)

Personnel: John McLaughlin guitar (1–7); Bill Evans, saxophones (1, 2); Danny Gottlieb, drums (1, 2); Mitchel Forman, keyboards (1, 2); Jonas Hellborg, bass (1, 2); Otmaro Ruiz, keyboards (3); Dennis Chambers, drums (3, 5); Victor Williams, percussion (3); Gary Thomas, saxophone, flute (3); Matthew Garrison, bass (3); Paco de Lucia, guitar (4, 6); Joey DeFrancesco, organ, trumpet (5); Gary Husband, keyboards (7): Etienne M'Bappe, bass (7): Raniit Barot, drums (7).

Ordering info: bmg.com

Miles Okazaki

Thisness PI RECORDINGS

Thisness is the natural evolution of guitarist Miles Okazaki's surrealist machinations and whimsical lyricism. Okazaki and his band Trickster, featuring keyboardist Matt Mitchell, bassist Anthony Tidd and drummer Sean Rickman, explore astral jazz, blues motifs, and rock instrumentation through a labyrinth of divergent musical themes. The result is cinematic in scope, absurdist in substance: a freewheeling journey of rhythmic tapestries, cerebral improvisation and whimsical melody.

"In Some Far Off Place" opens with a flamenco flourish, and gracefully layers in Okazaki's muscular phrasing and ephemeral vocals. It's a playful, frenetic tune that swells into a rapid-fire call-and-response between Mitchell's mentholated keys and Okazaki's elastic acoustics. Buoyed by Anthony Tidd's reliable bass and Rickman's sumptuous drums, the song builds in heat gradually, exploring distinct but interconnected channels of creative energy and improvisation. The band moves into electronic funk territory in "Years In Space," a methodical jam anchored by Tidd's languid bass and Rickman's dynamic drums. Mitchell's piano explores soulful melodies, a foil to



Bright Dog Red Under The Porch ROPEADOPE

On its Ropeadope debut, Bright Dog Red remains committed to blending a potpourri of styles, while presenting a sonic personality and conceptual direction that's focused in sound and narrative intent. This is largely due to drummer Joe Pignato's vision for the album's assembly. Donning a producer's hat during recording, Pignato discerned Under The Porch's arrangements through decisions based around the artistry of Bright Dog Red's members and



Okazaki's acoustic musings. The way the quartet moves from one distinct theme to the next can feel disjointed at times, and yet the transitions are exquisitely subtle. "Years In Space" is characterized by this juxtaposition. What started as a funk piece devolves into deconstructed free improvisation by the end.

"I'll Build A World" starts off similarly, with an R&B backbeat and straightahead jazz melody. —Ivana Ng

Thisness: In Some Far Off Place; Years In Space; I'll Build A World; And Wait For You. (39:05)

Personnel: Miles Okazaki, guitar, vocals, "robots"; Matt Mitchell, piano, Fender Rhodes, Prophet-6; Anthony Tidd, electric bass; Sean Rickman, drums.

Ordering info: milesokazaki.com

which parts and whose personal musical style would best complement the creative path of developing tracks.

The genesis of said paths were rooted in improvised drum tracks passed to bassists Anthony Berman, Tyreek Jackson, and newest Bright Dog Red member, Tim Lefebvre, before undergoing transformation via more musical layers. Collectively, the album alternates between intricate instrumental tracks bursting with tonal effects, and tracks propelled by gripping narratives of sociopolitical struggle. Matt Coonan's assertive freestyling and shrewd vocal punctuation on "Trickle Down," for example, ensures the impact of unflinching lyrics ("It all just trickles down, down down/ That's what they told the poor man.") This oscillation can feel emotionally erratic. However, the whimsical breadth of sounds Bright Dog Red employs, like the cosmic radar beeps on "You To Be," nimble and carefree jazz flute on "Peach Tea" and the exasperation on "Away For Breaks."

-Kira Grunenberg

Under The Porch: Under The Porch: On The Avenue: Trickle Down; Away For Breaks; Pardon Me; Let The Song Play; You To Be; Peach Tea; Cardinal; Drowning; Matter You Can't Feel; Time To Rest. (64:30)

Personnel: Joe Pignato, drums, percussion; Tim Lefebvre, electric bass (2, 4, 7, 10); Tyreek Jackson, guitar, electric bass (1, 3, 5, 12); Anthony Berman, acoustic bass (6, 8, 9, 11); Eric Person, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, flute, effects; Mike LaBombard, tenor saxophone, effects; Cody Davies, sounds; Matt Coonan, poetry, freestyling, voice

Ordering info: ropeadope.com

Stand Outs

Diunna Greenleaf: I Ain't Playin' (Little **Village; 55:20** ★★★★) Many blues singers settle for histrionics rather than engage with sincere feelings. Not Diunna Greenleaf, a gospel-trained flag bearer of Houston blues with a characterful, battle-tested voice which sweeps along the continuum between Koko Taylor blues and Aretha Franklin soul. On her first album in 10 years, she is stimulated to forceful singing by durable songs from the repertoires of Taylor (her strong advisory "Never Trust A Man"), Houston's Johnny Clyde Copeland ("Let Me Cry") and Nina Simone (her guardedly optimistic "Feel To Be Free"). Doubling down on the album title. Greenleaf also responds emotionally to a 1960s soul obscurity (Joe Medwick's "Damned If I Do") and a redemptive hymn ("I Know I've Been Changed"). The Texan doesn't match up well with a Vince Gill country tune ("When I Call Your Name"), though, Producer-quitarist Kid Andersen and his coterie of blue-ribbon musicians keep in close touch at all times with Greenleaf's passionate vocals

Ordering info: littlevillagefoundation.org

Trudy Lynn: Golden Girl (Nola Blue; **45:51** ★★★★) Trudy Lynn, like her Space City neighbor Greenleaf, is as authentic as they come. For more than five decades, her strong soul-blues voice has been boldly expressive, at its apex of potency when lyrics are sung with the right meld of sensuality, melancholy, flamboyance, street sense. Lynn's working at that high level here on what is the most complete album in her discography. She's encouraged to get to the bottom of human experience by her own high-quality new songs (not counting "Take Me Back," dulled by nostalgia) and ones written by Terry Wilson, the bass player with Teresa James & the Rhythm Tramps. For her standout performance, the 74-year-old turns Big Mama Thornton's forlorn ballad "Life Goes On" into a bailiwick of stoicism, a shelter in a world gone mad. Lynn's richness of spirit rubs off on Texas guitar authority Anson Funderburgh and the other musicians.

Ordering info: nola-blue.com

Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne: Blues From Chicago To Paris (Stony Plain; 69:37 ★★★½) Kenny Wayne is the perfect pianist to pay tribute to the collaboration of Chicago string bassist-songwriter Willie Dixon and Paris-based pianist Memphis Slim in the early 1960s — and, to Dixon's late-1940s The Big Three combo. The youthful septuagenarian has the ability to nail real connections to the rollicking joy and the downheartedness in Slim's barrelhouse-and-blues work. Though imperfect and lacking Dixon's hearty wicked wit, Wayne's vocals score decently on the entertainment meter. Faultless accompaniment



comes from regular sidekick Russell Jackson, slapping a string bass, and quiet drummer Joey DiMarco.

Ordering info: stonyplainrecords.com

Kurt Crandall: Starts On The Stops (Yester Year; 42:40 ★★★★) On his fourth album, journeyman Kurt Crandall shows fealty to Chicago blues harmonica titans Little Walter and Shakev Horton. He's as quick to give loyalty to jump blues, the 1940s union of jazz and blues identified by the rallying cry "swing it, daddy-o!" In addition to tactfully spotlighting his diatonic and chromatic harmonicas. Crandall asserts himself as a fairly strong, personable singer; he's at his most arresting with a wry-and-wistful revival of Little Willie John's "Home At Last." The well-traveled Virginian is also an above-average songwriter, hitting a sweet spot of smart and sensitivity in slow-sizzling showstopper "Devil Got A Hold On You" and showing off a good sense of humor with "Razz My Berries." His fun instrumental "Skedaddle" links to the swinglike-the-dickens glory days of Gene Krupa - Crandall even quotes the horn line from "Drum Boogie." Well deserving of shout-outs are veteran jazz-blues pianist Bill Heid and Kansas City guitarist Karl Angerer.

Ordering info: kurtcrandall.com

Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters: Mercy Me (Stony Plain; 79:59 ★★★½) Long-running guitar virtuoso Ronnie Earl's regular routine is refining attributes of blues and jazz styles in a palette of sadness, exaltation, composure, discretion, hopefulness. Most of his playing on his latest album, his 28th overall, is striking, though there are signs of a reduction in energy. As blessings, Earl sends stirring original instrumentals of peace and compassion to friends Duke Robillard. Ruthie Foster and Dave Limina (the Broadcasters' fine keyboardist), respectively. He kneels with open-hearted suppliance at the altars of his idols Muddy Waters (shuffle "Blow Wind Blow") and John Coltrane ("Alabama." the doleful eulogy for four Black victims of a 1963 church bombing). No one in the blues wrings tears from a guitar so convincingly.

Ordering info: stonyplainrecords.com



Flora Purim If You Will

STRUT

For her first studio album in 15 years, Purim combines a career spanning retrospective of tunes, formerly recorded with her favorite collaborators, with new numbers that showcase her continuing artistic growth.

The singer recently celebrated her 80th birthday, but her voice remains supple and expressive. The set opens with the title track, a new version of a song she recorded with George Duke 21 years ago. She steps back and lets her daughter Diana sing lead, adding her own wordless improvisations between verses.

The percussion supplied by Airto Moreira and Mika Mutti intensify the arrangement's Brazilian feel. "This is Me," written by Diana and her husband, Krishna Booker, is based on Airto's "I Don't Wanna Be Myself Again." Flora's lead vocal is impressive, sliding up and down the scale to show off her range, supported by the impressive keyboard work of Bryan Velasco.

Purim cut Chick Corea's "500 Miles High" for the second Return To Forever album in 1972. Corea passed as she was finishing this recording and her understated vocal adds an element of poignancy to this take.

José Neto's "Newspaper Girl" gets a sparse treatment, featuring Neto's acoustic guitar, with Flora and Moreira scatting in a manner that suggests the full range of Brazilian percussion instruments.

—j. poet

If You Will: If You Will; This Is Me; 500 Miles High; A Flor Da Vida; Newspaper Girl; Dandara, Zahuroo; Dois + Dois = Tres; Lucidez. (42:31)

Personnel: Flora Purim, Diana Purim, Claudia Villela, vocals; Mika Mutti, keyboards, percussion; Fábio Hess, bass; Léo Costa, drums; Airto Moreira, vocals, percussion; Grecco Buratto, guitar, backing vocals; Bryan Velasco: piano, keyboards; Andre de Santanna, bass; Léo Costa, drums; Alberto Lopes, Gibi dos Santos, percussion; Krishna Booker, backing vocals, percussion; Davi Sartori, electric piano; Thiago Duarte, bass; Endrigo Bettega, Stéphane San Juan, drums; José Neto, guitar, Frank Martin, keyboards; Gary Brown, bass; Celso Alberti, drums, percussion; Café da Silva, bata; Flió Machado, acoustic guitar, backing vocals; Vitor Pinheiro, backing vocals; Fabio Nascimento, guitar, Todd M. Simon, flugelhom; Léo Nobre, bass; Filipe Castro, percussion.

Ordering info: strut.k7store.com



Tomasz Dąbrowski The Individual Beings **APRIL** ****

Like his mentor Tomasz Stanko, the Polish trumpet visionary Tomasz Dąbrowski prefers to work without a safety net. The Individual Beings is a fitting homage to the late Stanko on which Dąbrowski plays Stanko's own trumpet. And while Dabrowski is the star, six other musicians — four Polish, two Scandinavian - help celebrate this dazzling testament to individuality.

Each of these eight Dabrowski originals creates its own universe. "IR" sets the stage. Percussion launches it, then Dabrowski steps in confidently, followed by saxes all stately and bright, coiling and uncoiling, the

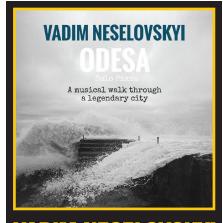
mix ever denser. Max Mucha's bass seizes the spotlight, spurring free percussive interplay that builds into an ominous soundscape blending electronics and piano. Melody succumbs to atmosphere as the tune clusters and vibrates.

Consider "Sandy." Keyboardist Grzegorz Tarwid unfurls it, all chiming and pensive, giving way to burred, subtle Dabrowski. Tawid anchors "Sandy" as its texture amasses, percussion loping irregularly beneath the chording of the winds. Saxes and trumpet accelerate against the deliberate percussion and Tawid's regulatory piano. The tune deconstructs midway only to reassemble, this time packing attitude in saxophone bleats protesting thunderous drums. It unwinds loud and argumentative, saxes and a muffled Dabrowski attempting to block the rhythm section. That doesn't work, and that's just

On "Troll," Irek Wojtczak's alto saxophone gives Tawid a worthy opponent. Like many tracks, this is about tension — until Dabrowski enters halfway through, a kind of peacemaker who, buttressed by Mucha's bass, gives the tune focus even as it increases in intensity. Mlynarski's electric drums pop. Such a fearless —Carlo Wolff

The Individual Beings: JR; Old Habits; In Transit; Sandy; Troll; Queen Of Mondays; Short Gesture; Spurs Of Luck. (41:49) **Personnel:** Tomasz D browski, trumpet; Knut Finsrud, drums;
Fredrik Lundin, saxophone; Jan Emil Mlynarski, electric and acoustic drums; Max Mucha, bass; Grzegorz Tarwid, piano, keyboards; Irek Wojtczak, tenor and soprano saxophone, electronics

Ordering info: tomaszdabrowski.bandcamp.com



VADIM NESELOVSKYI A MUSICAL WALK THROUGH A **LEGENDARY CITY**

SSC 1667 available 6/17/2022

VADIM NESELOVSKYI piano solo

hile the storms of war gather, pianist and composer Vadim Neselovkyi chooses to remind people of the country's beauty and cultural legacy. More specifically, Neselovskyi looks to his hometown on the Black Sea to inspire his new solo recording.

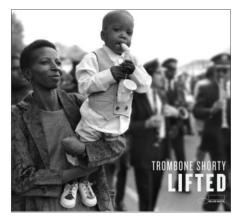
Trombone Shorty Lifted **BLUE NOTE** ****

If you've never attended a Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue performance, you should probably fix that. But in the meantime, Lifted offers a capsule of what that experience entails. While this is not a live album, there is a real attempt to embody the electricity of the groups world-renowned live set.

With Trombone Shorty providing vocals in equal measure with his consistent, New Orleans-produced brass sound, this offering more than reaches its goal of lifting us.

The title track, "Lifted," is pure hardcharging funk, a song about love's unrelenting grip delivered with huge guitars, sneering horns and a trombone solo for the ages.

Inspired by the memory of his recently departed mother, Lifted is a welcome addition to the growing legacy of one of this music's most exciting acts. —Joshua Myers

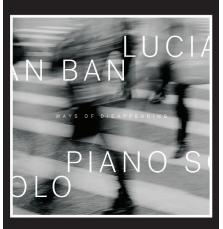


Lifted: Come Back; Lie To Me; I'm Standing Here; What It Takes; Everybody In The World; Lifted; Forgiveness; Miss Beautiful; Might Not Make It Home; Good Company. (36:28)

Personnel: Troy Andrews, trombone, trumpet, vocals; Alvin Ford

Tr, drums, Mike Bass-Bailey, bass guitar, Peter Murano (1, 6), Josh-ua Connelly (3, 7, 9), Gary Clark Jr. (3), guitar; Chris Seefried, guitar, Moog bass, bass, Rhodes (4, 5, 7, 8, 10); Brandon Butler, organ, Rhodes, synth bass (1, 3, 6, 9); BK Jackson, tenor saxophone; Dan Oestreicher, baritone saxophone; Jenard Andrews, snare drum (5, 8); Tyreek Andrews, bass drum (5, 8); Paul Robertson, sousaphone (5); Chris Pierce, vocals; Derek Thomas, vocals, Cobi Mike, vocals, (3); Lady Blackbird, vocals; Raion Ramsey, vocals (4, 5, 7); Lauren Daigle, vocals (4); Tracci Lee, vocals (5), Stefan Abington, vocals (5).

Ordering info: bluenote.com



LUCIAN BAN WAYS OF DISAPPEARING

SSC 1657 available 5/13/2022

LUCIAN BAN piano solo



sunnysiderecords.com



Ches Smith Interpret It Well PYROCLASTIC ***1/2

A firebrand drummer with Tim Berne's Snakeoil, Marc Ribot's Ceramic Dog, Mary Halvorson's trio/quintet/octet, Ben Goldberg's quintet and the experimental band Xiu Xiu, drummer-vibraphonist Ches Smith is joined once again by his like-minded colleagues Craig Taborn on piano and Mat Maneri on viola (they teamed up on Smith's 2016 ECM debut, *The Bell*). It's the addition of special guest guitarist Bill Frisell, with all of his effects pedals

George Winston Solo Piano: Night DANCING CAT/RCA



Despite the veteran Santa Cruz pianist George Winston's enthusiasm for Fats Waller, Professor Longhair, Hawaiian guitar and Applalachian fiddle tunes, and his often wise choice of material, this solo piano album doesn't deliver the promising interpretations that might have been expected. Instead, Winston seems bent on sapping this selection, whether his originals, or works by Allen Toussaint, Leonard Cohen and a clutch of island folk songs, diluting the essence of strong styles into a decelerated, overly spacious, near-New Age set of absent-minded diversions.

Winston's piano sound is unusual, so close-miked, cranky and reverb-soaked that he sounds like he's playing an old upright in a deserted wooden-beamed church. This idio-syncratic sound is one of the album's successes. Winston removes the distinctive elements that originally attracted listeners to the above-mentioned musical styles, reducing them to dry skeletons. Yes, he leaves spaces, and savors the action of his keys, sometimes prepared by inserting his hand inside the piano, but Winston sounds tired rather than minimalist, lackluster rather than delib-

and loopers in tow, that pushes things into a far more caustic zone than the ethereal and fairly delicate *The Bell*.

There are moments here — the minimalist opener "Trapped," the dark soundscape "Morbid" or the brief closer "Deppart," each with the leader contributing sparse patterns on vibes — where the ensemble takes a gentler approach, exploring space and lyricism with zen-like restraint. It's when Smith sits behind the kit and unleashes, as he does on "Mixed Metaphor," "Interpret It Well" and "I Need More," that things get decidedly more intense.

The intrepid improvisers find plenty of room within the repeating motifs to explore freely, often with reckless abandon. For Frisell, that means lots of reverb-soaked arpeggios, sped-up and backwards looping and the kind of distortion-laced fusillades we haven't heard from him in quite a while (particularly on "Clear Major," "I Need More" and the marathon title track). Those who have been pining for the guitarist's more ferocious edge, a nasty quality that harkens back to his Naked City days, will savor the skronk factor here.

—Bill Milkowski

Interpret It Well: Trapped; Interpret It Well; Mixed Metaphor, Morbid; Clear Major; I Need More; Deppart. (69:29)

Personnel: Ches Smith, drums, vibes; Craig Taborn, piano; Mat Maneri, viola: Bill Frisell, quitar.

Ordering info: chessmith.com; pyroclasticrecords.com



erately calming. Cohen's "Hallelujah" was already flogged remorselessly years ago, and the Hawaiian guitar numbers don't sound remotely Hawaiian. Nor does the Okinawan sanshin player Shoukichi Kina's "Hana" sound anything close to his own springing, joyful nature. A trembling reverb hangs over Winston's prettified, snail-paced explorations, but his tendency towards lyrical blandness sabotages his own fine music repertoire taste. —Martin Longley

Night: Beverly; Freedom For The Stallion; Hallelujah; Making A Way; He's A Runner; Kai Forest; Wahine Hololio; At Midnight; Pua Sadinia; Dawn; Hana. (52:34)

Personnel: George Winston, piano.

Ordering info: dancingcatrecords.bandcamp.com



Whit Dickey Quartet Astral Long Form: Staircase In Space TAO FORMS

Drummer and project maker Whit Dickey has been expending significant creative energies as a connective agent to world of free improvisation, through his TAO Forms label, rising out of the pandemic-era ashes in May 2020. But his own efforts as a marquee leader and musical matchmaker command respect and attention. Astral Long Form: Staircase In Space, the follow-up to last year's bold and brasher TAO debut and trio date Expanding Light, is another free-ranging force to reckon with, albeit rooted in softer general musical soil.

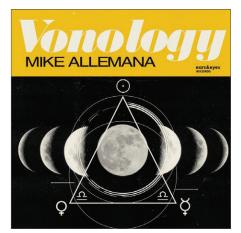
Led by Dickey, but clearly in benevolent leader mode, the free improvisational quartet with Rob Brown, Mat Maneri and formidable young bassist Brandon Lopez has cooked up an unusually empathetic gem in the realm of the free. Conversational delicacy and an appreciation of space give the musical flow a sense of narrative-on-the-spot storytelling. Listening is obviously a high priority, as the players tread the fine line between responding to a musical moment and creating new ones.

Beyond the salient matters of nuanced dynamics and creating separate identities for each of the five discrete pieces, textural balance is another important key to success here. With Dickey's subtle drum work as a flexible, breathing foundation, connections and kinships develop between Brown's melody-inclined alto sax lines and Maneri's viola assertions, and the variations between Lopez's purposefully ambling pizzicato and overtone-enriched arco parts. Bowed sonorities between Lopez and Maneri form fleeting bonds, as do the revisited rhythm-section linkage of bass and drums.

—Josef Woodard

Astral Long Form—Staircase In Space: Blue Circuit; Space Quadrant; The Pendulum Tree; Staircase In Space; Signify. (102:55) Personnel: Whit Dickey, drums; Rob Borwn, alto saxophone; Mat Maneri, viola; Brandon Lopez, bass.

Ordering info: taoforms.com



Mike Allemana Vonology EARS&EYES

Von Freeman (1923-2012) was not only a skilled tenor saxophonist who had a very distinctive tone, but for more than a half-century he was an important mentor to a countless number of up-and-coming jazz artists in Chicago. One of those was guitarist Mike Allemana, who worked with Freeman during the tenor titan's last 15 years.

Vonology, Allemana's five-part suite, which is influenced by his use of astrological research, sums up Freeman's life rather than seeking to duplicate his music or his sound. The guitarist utilizes an octet plus two singers, many of whom consider Freeman to have been a mentor.

The opening "Welcome, Enter" is a spiritual

Tigran Hamasyan StandArt **NONESUCH** ****

In his first album of standards, Tigran Hamasyan is doing what this music was meant to do: reveal the ways different musicians hear and respond to our common possession and inheritance. Perhaps this was an album that had been long-awaited, but there is nothing rushed or restless about these interpretations.

We find Hamasyan playing in registers that remind us that this music is as vibrant as ever, that it is as generative as when it was first brought into the vocabularies of the artists who made them standards. And so it is refreshing. And it also easy, not in the sense that it lacks complexity—the one departure from the standards, "Invasion During An Operetta," demon-

Yet it is music that gives one a sense of ease, a fluidity that settles one's soul. Hamasyan's engagement with the tradition is backed by bassist Matt Brewer and drummer Justin Brown, and special guests Mark Turner, Joshua piece that can be thought of as a depiction of Von Freeman starting life. It alternates gospel singing of a warm and inviting melody with concise yet adventurous solos by tenor saxophonist Geof Bradfield, trombonist Kendall Moore and drummer Michael Raynor. "Libra, The Mediator" is about how Librans like Freeman enjoy having dialogues with others. Allemana's guitar is in the lead at first over a groove, preceding some wailing alto by Greg Ward and a rather wild trumpet solo from Victor Garcia.

Of the five pieces, it is easiest to imagine Freeman performing on "Communion And Renewal," a ballad with 1950s-type harmonies. The avant-funk of "Libra Channeling" can be thought of as symbolizing Freeman's desire to work with younger modern players. Bradfield, cellist Tomeka Reid and Allemana (who displays his rockish side) are the stars.

"The Mentor's Benediction" wraps up the suite. Bill Brickley gives a sermon about creating beauty out of pain and the importance of music. During the piece's second half, an energetic theme emerges and there are some exuberant and intense ensembles before Vonology concludes with a reprise of the opening gospel melody. One imagines that Von Freeman would have appreciated this heartfelt tribute.

-Scott Yanow

Vonology: Welcome, Enter; Libra, The Mediator; Communion And Renewal, Libra Channeling; The Mentor's Benediction. (38:25) Personnel: Michael Allemana, guitar; Victor Garcia, trumpet, flugelhorn; Kendall Moore, trombone; Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Geof Bradfield, tenor saxophone; Tomeka, Reid, cello; Matt Ferguson, bass; Michael Raynor, drums; Bill Brickley, Lindsay Weinberg, Sue Dernel, Gabriela Allemana, Austin Burgett, Alton Smith, Angel Rodriguez, vocals.

Ordering info: earsandevesrecords.com



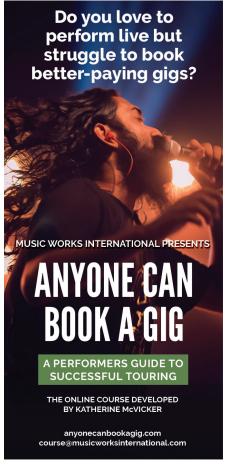
Redman and Ambrose Akinmusire, all stalwarts of the scene, who narrate this feeling, whose care for these classic tunes manifests beautifully. —Joshua Myers

StandArt: De-Dah: I Didn't Know What Time It Was: All The Things You Are; Big Foot; When A Woman Loves A Man; Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise; I Should Care; Invasion During An Operetta;

Personnel: Tigran Hamasyan, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Justin Brown, drums; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet (7, 8); Mark Turner (3); Joshua Redman (4), saxophones

Ordering info: nonesuch.com





European Beat / BY PETER MARGASAK

Few Sparks of Surprise

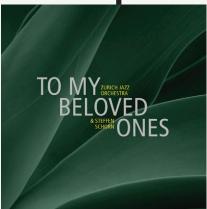
German composer and reedist Steffen Schorn took the helm of the Zurich Jazz Orchestra — which formed in 1995 — in 2014, serving as the big band's musical director for six years. Although he stepped aside from that role in 2019, his association has continued, and To My Beloved Ones (Mons; 40:13 ★★) is the last of three albums consisting of compositions he wrote for the group, which number more than 100 pieces. ZJO executes his well-crafted writing with unerring precision, timbral warmth and harmonic depth, but in the end the expertise trumps creativity, a quality that mars most of the recordings featured in this column. European jazz has come a long way, but as in the United States, there's a class of jazz professionals that treat a fiery art form as a tame discipline. There are gorgeous arrangements on display, with Schorn extracting layers of breath-driven luminosity, particularly on the title track, but ultimately the music lacks the spark of surprise.

Ordering info: monsrecords.de

The Danish drummer and percussionist **Stefan Pasborg** sets out more ambitious goals on his album Ritual Dances (Sun**nyside**; 69:02 $\star\star$ ½), creating a set of style-stretching pieces based on two Igor Stravinsky ballets: The Rite of Spring and The Firebird. In his liner note essay, Pasborg reflects on how he was impacted by experiencing the former work as a child in 1978, explaining that both the music of Stravinsky and dance have been steady aesthetic influences through decades working as a jazz musician. Unfortunately, most of the music — performed by either the UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra or the Danish large ensemble Blood Sweat Drum+Bass — feels heavy-handed, cleaving to a rhythmic thrust that crushes the sort of magisterial dynamics of his source material. There are improvisations here and there with superb quest soloists like trumpeter Goran Kaifes and saxophonists Anders Banke and Fredrik Lundin, but the music is built around the high-octane, insistently dense band arrangements, melding contemporary jazz orchestrations with fusionoid flurries that include lots of needling synthesizer parts and overwrought electric guitar.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

European professionalism is a glaring quality on *Kismet* (Losen; 32:20 **) by the **Tobias Lindstad Collective**. The leader spent several years in school studying music in the early 1990s as a budding jazz trombonist, but early on he changed paths, opting for a career in psychology while retaining his passion for music. Over the years he continued to write pieces in his free time, but after catching a performance by a sextet led by trombonist



Øyvind Brække, with whom he took some lessons in 1993, he decided to hire a band to record his compositions. The superb ensemble includes guitarist Jacob Young, drummer Andreas Wildhagen and bassist Adrian Myhr, and they inject plenty of craftsmanship into Lindstad's pretty post-bop tunes, but the album never really transcends its vanity project status, especially when the composer joins in on several tracks to croon with wobbly romantic pathos.

Ordering info: losenrecords.no

Belgian pianists Amaury Faye and Igor **Gehenot** join forces for a series of duets on Magic Ball (Hypnote; 46:21 ★★½), braiding influences as disparate as chamber jazz. contemporary classical, samba and rock. There's an impressive clarity and concision to the performances, especially on more straightahead jazz material like Gehenot's spry title composition, but too often I found myself surprised that the musicians didn't embrace more counterpoint and harmony considering the instrumentation. On "Eternité" one of the pianists adds wan percussive touches to what's otherwise a solo. Some of the material is cloying in its quasi-romantic mawkishness, such as on "Egberto," Fave's jaunty salute to Brazilian guitarist Egberto Gismonti. The album's treacly quality reaches its apex on a wholly unnecessary reading of the Police hit "Message In A Bottle."

Ordering info: hypnoterecords.com

The Louis Matute Large Ensemble, led by the titular German-Honduran guitarist, explores a wide range of global styles on *Our Folklore* (Neuklang; **), with a particular focus on traditional styles from South America. The performances are spirited and adroit, but heard cumulatively they convey a schematic quality, as is the leader and composer envisioned the music as a global hodge-podge. Matute's broad aesthetic erases stylistic hierarchies.

Ordering info: bauerstudios.de



Benji KaplanSomething Here Inside wisecat

A A A A

Intricate acoustic guitar fingerpicking, executed with feeling, is admirable from every aspect of musical craft and goes down easy as listening. Benji Kaplan's sixth album, returning to the nylon-string solo format of his 2011 debut, is no exception: eight songs re-imagined, deftly plucked, recorded so closely his fingers on the frets become part of the sound and you're right thora.

The intimacy emphasizes immediacy in performances that might otherwise seem preplanned — as if such complexly spun creations are only marvelous if they're not figured out in advance. Kaplan doesn't use beats or jazz rhythms for underpinnings, though he clearly could. Kaplan has been mostly associated with Brazilian-influenced projects, but he obviously knows this repertoire of standards inside-out, allowing him to give even the overly familiar melodies fresh depths via unusual arrangements, imaginative counterpoint and complex internal voicings. Saudadé shadows his sensitive renditions of a selection weighted towards romance (is that a trope of COVID-19 recordings?), but everything's complicated. It's all in the lineage of the modern classical style, established by Andres Segovia, adopted and advanced by such virtuosi as Leo Brouwer and the Assad Brothers. Like them, and the late steel-string Americana master John Fahey, Kaplan takes time with his renditions, the better for their details and implications. The expressivity of his interpretations resonates in the notes and phrases he lets ring. Regardless of the degree of improvisation involved, this music is flows, skillfully, thoughtfully and freshly realized. -Howard Mandel

Something Here Inside: The Song Is You; With A Song In My Heart: If Ever I Would Leave You; Smoke Gets In Your Eyes; So In Love; Anything Goes; But Not For Me; Easy To Love. **Personnel:** Benji Kaplan, quitar.

Ordering info: benjikaplan.com



Club d'Elf You Never Know **FACE PELT**

***1/2

Boston's Club d'Elf is heading for its 25th anniversary, founded by bass man and composer Mike Rivard. The band's most distinctive element is the Moroccan gnaoua music input, from Rivard himself, and from Brahim Fribgane, who plays oud, plus a sackload of North African percussion.

Rivard has studied gnaoua extensively, and sometimes plays the sintir, a resonant string instrument from that tradition. He's also the prime composer, although this set additionally includes several traditional folk tunes, as well as old chestnuts from Miles Davis and Frank Zappa. Rivard, Fribgane and drummer Dean Johnston are the core trio, playing on all 10 tracks, but the album's second half switches to a lineup that features John Medeski (multiple keyboards) and Dave Fiuczynski (fretted and fretless guitars). Club d'Elf have an endlessly transforming collective sound, but Rivard always selects artists who he knows will be compatible with the overall groove. Multiple elements share the space, evolving in the weave.

Strings are sensitively bent, whether by Fuze or by lap steeler Kevin Barry. Around eight minutes is the favored tune-length, facilitating building grooves and a procession of solos. Mister Rourke manipulates turntables on six cuts, often via vinyl selections that feature vocals. The slower numbers adopt a hazily swirling U.S. country style, completely contrasting with the faster funk striders. -Martin Longley

You Never Know: Boney Oscar Stomp; Zeed Al Maal; Now Open Your Eyes; Golden Hour; In A Silent Way/It's About That Time; Dark

Kona. (75 mins). Personnel: Mike Rivard, basses, sintir, tamboura; Brahim Fribgane, oud, percussion; Dean Johnston, drums; Duke Levine, guitars, mandocello; Kevin Barry, lap steel; Paul Schultheis, John Medeski (keyboards); David Fluczynski, guitars; Mister Rourke, turntables, Amit Kavthekar, tabla, Andrew Fogliano, saxophones,

flute; Phil Grenadier, trumpet; Gaukur Davidsson, harmonica (3).

Fish; Dervish Dance; Lalla Aisha In Jhaptal; Allah Ya Moulana; King

Ordering info: clubdelf.bandcamp.com

he Black Diamond by







Bugge Wesseltoft JAZZLAND

The Norwegian keyboardist Bugge Wesseltoft has lately been most visible as a member of the Rymden trio. He's recorded this solo album in his own studio, Buggesroom, and released it on his long-running Jazzland label, which is now celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Be Am exudes a shining aura of solitary meditation, as Wesseltoft moves between acoustic piano and a toned-down Fender Rhodes. When he adds electronic effects, they are subtly whispering. Wesseltoft's more powerfully noisy keyboards are left locked up. Even with Rhodes and sonic trimmings, the central aura remains acoustic in nature. These are short reveries, mostly with simple one-word titles, slow anthems, quietly navigated.

Wesseltoft is softly lyrical, emotional in content, sometimes sharing the hymnal concerns of fellow Norwegian pianist Tord Gustavsen. He's not so much soloing as methodically discovering the heart of his melodies, savoring them without too much diversion. Perhaps we can hear the sound of Wesseltoft's chair? Or was that the exposed innards of his veteran Rhodes, creaking?

Tenor saxophonist Håkon Kornstad



dropped around to play on a couple of tunes, although it's really one piece, split into two tracks. Wesseltoft adds kalimba thumb-piano to "life," one of the album's most evocative works, which also features piano, birdsong and softly crunched small percussion.

Other strong tunes arrive in the shape of "messenger" and "green," as Wesseltoft dwells deeply on both miniatures. —Martin Longley

Be Am: Resonate; Tide; State; Emerging; Roads; Messenger; Green; Be Am; Life; Gonna Be OK; Deeper; Sunbeams Through Leaves Softly Rustling. (38:20)

Personnel: Bugge Wesseltoft, piano, Fender Rhodes, kalimba, electronics; Håkon Kornstad, tenor saxophone (4, 5).

Ordering info: jazzlandrec.com



FLORIAN HOEFNER TRIO Desert Bloom

This is a Jazz Piano Trio playing at an astonishing level. "A composer-bandleader of insightful resolve." -New York Times ALMA RECORDS

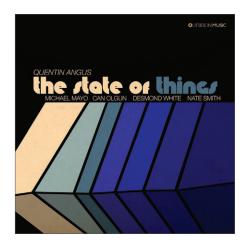


SHARON AZRIELI

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Quentin Angus The State Of Things OUTSIDE IN MUSIC

***1/2

Guitarist Quentin Angus' fourth album wears its gushing heart so freely on its sleeve in its song choices, but perhaps this is to be expected for Angus' first release with his new position of father and professor on his mind. Still, to go for the saccharine sweet standards, one can play "Pure Imagination," "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" or "What A Wonderful World," but it's asking a lot to play all three.

Kind Folk Head Towards The Center FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT

The second Kind Folk album was planned carefully, and recorded in a hurry, but the music has an almost zen-like calm. The group formed and released its debut, Why Not, in 2018, but then trumpeter John Raymond moved to Indiana. and drummer Colin Stranahan headed to Denver to ride out the pandemic. The group members stayed connected online, and finally reconvened in June 2021: two days of rehearsal in bassist Noam Weisenberg's Brooklyn apartment, followed by a day in the studio. Head Towards The Center contains five original compositions - "Power Fall" and "Sweet Spot" by Raymond, "Around, Forever" by alto saxophonist Alex LoRe, "Mantrois" by Weisenberg, and the title piece by Stranahan and LoRe along with two short, fully improvised pieces ("Where Am I" and "Distant Signal") and arrangements of guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel's "Mr. Hope" and singer-songwriter Elliott Smith's "Between The Bars."

Raymond is originally from Minnesota, and there's a fundamental niceness and sense of welcoming to his style. He solos like he's telling you a story at a party, and his flugelhorn sound has the gentle embrace of a Midwestern

Nevertheless, this is a talented group releasing peppy music with lift and loft. Michael Mayo is a lovely vocalist with a pure tone that seems to strive for a pop sound through jazz conventions, which fits distinctly for this project. This music is affable, and these players have chops, but the direction of the tone Angus is expressing in his arrangements feels so much like a wet blanket that means well, particularly in *meaning* to be a *warm* blanket. It's not hard to forget one is listening to it, it's that pleasant.

Album centerpiece "Enigma," one of the few largely instrumental songs on the album (with Mayo scatting throughout), truly grabs attention because the composition finally facilitates them letting loose, and Nate Smith definitely does on the drums; Can Olgun does as well, though he had been all along in the fits and starts allowed alongside bassist Desmond White

All these folks sound great, Angus included. "Enigma" makes one wonder why the rest of the album doesn't sound more like this. What could they do with better material?

—Anthony Dean-Harris

The State Of Things: Broken Bones; Pure Imagination; The State Of Things; Enigma; Somewhere Over The Rainbow; New York Muster; What A Wonderful World; New Beginnings. (47:53) **Personnel:** Quentin Angus, guitar; Can Olgun, piano; Desmond White, bass; Nate Smith, drums; Michael Mayo, vocals.

Ordering info: outsideinmusic.bandcamp.com

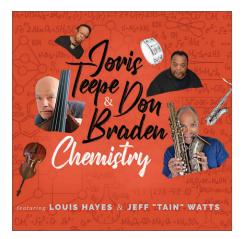


church ceremony in winter. LoRe is an ideal counterpart, calm and slightly distanced, but leaping excitedly into bebop when the tempo picks up, as on "Mr. Hope." Weisenberg's bass is the music's unstoppable heart, particularly on "Around, Forever," and Stranahan — also part of Raymond's bass-less trio, Real Feels — keeps time by not seeming too concerned with it, hanging ornaments on the music with precision and a gentle touch. —*Philip Freeman*

Head Towards The Center: Where Am I; Power Fall; Mantrois; Around, Forever; Mr. Hope; Between The Bars; Distant Signal; Sweet Spot; Head Towards The Center. (44:22)

Personnel: John Raymond, trumpet/flugelhorn; Alex LoRe, alto saxophone; Noam Weisenberg, bass; Colin Stranahan, drums.

Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com



Joris Teepe & Don Braden Chemistry

CREATIVE PERSPECTIVE

With either Louis Hayes or Jeff "Tain" Watts on drums, you'd expect nothing less than a confident, swinging album from veteran tenor saxophonist Don Braden and his fellow chemist, bassist Joris Teepe.

Five tunes are cover versions radically different from the originals. Braden wrote the questing, powerful "Steps" and "Morning," a pensive, thorough duo with Teepe. Credit Teepe for "The Optimist," a tune that starts cloudily and ends happily, largely thanks to the immersive pulsations of Watts.

The second Braden-Teepe album without a chordal instrument, *Chemistry* represents what Braden calls a "more open style of jazz improvisation." Flexibility and suppleness are the aims here; how successful the group is in meeting those goals comes clear particularly in Herbie Hancock's demanding "One Finger Snap," an exciting exchange between a demonic Hayes and a determined Braden.

The album starts strongly with Kenny Kirkland's "Steepian Faith," Hayes churning and shimmering behind Braden as he digs in, ever more gnarly and absorbing. Everyone solos economically, maintaining the tension. "Morning" is a sweet midpoint for this surging recording. It features Braden at his most personal, and his twine with Teepe draws the listener in as its beauty soars.

Hayes' rolling drums, Teepe's taut bass and Braden's edgy tenor toughen up Horace Silver's smoothly melodic "Song For My Father," and Braden soars on flute on "Unit 7," a blues by bassist Sam Jones that was a staple of Cannonball Adderley's band. "Unit 7" is a fittingly earthy conclusion.

—Carlo Wolff

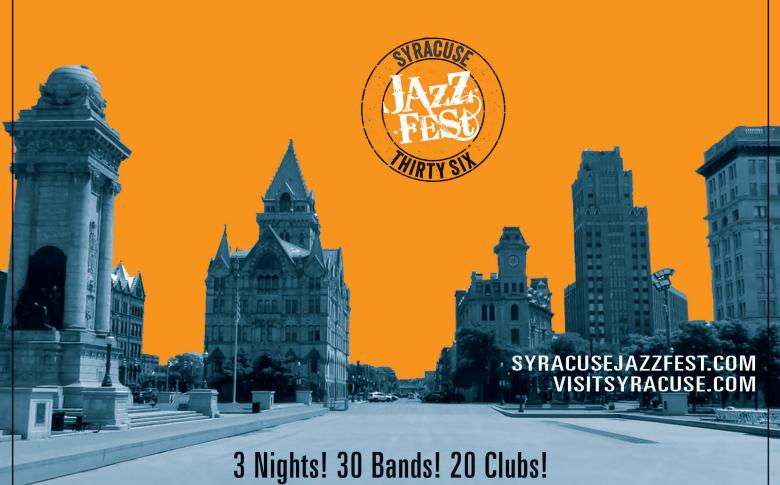
Chemistry: Steepian Faith; One Finger Snap; Steps; Song For My Father; Morning; The Optimist; Dizzy's Business; Unit 7. (48:31) Personnel: Don Braden, tenor saxophone, flute; Louis Hayes, drums (1–3, 6); Joris Teepe, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums (4, 7, 8).

Ordering info: joristeepe.bandcamp.com



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Incentive & Revelation

Standards, blues, theater, rock, R&B — jazz singers find musical incentive everywhere that groove and verse intersect. Six new releases show how this incentive, in a skilled vocalist's hands, leads to artistic revelation.

Since her 2011 win at the Montreux vocal jazz competition, Italian singer Chiara Izzi has led two label-sponsored releases, both showcases for her dexterous vocals and sleek arrangements. Her third such release, Live In Bremen (Dot Time; $\star\star\star$), is riskier: just seven tunes recorded in a simple piano-voice session four years ago. Immediate and unfiltered, Izzi's performances lie all the more exposed for the open setting, as on a breathily improvised "Poinciana," in Spanish, or the bittersweet "Samba In Preludio," in Italian. She sings just once in English, on "Pavane For Peaceful Times," her own lyrics superimposed on composer Gabriel Fauré's famous flute melody. "Don't let the dark shut out the light." she advises, as the tremolo in her voice shifts to resolve.

Ordering info: dottimerecords.com

Giacomo Gates, a standout among traditional scatters, rhapsodizes the romantic other on **You** (Savant: ***). a collection of 18 tightly packed standards and his 10th solo release. As is his wont, Gates handily diverts with funny lyric deviations ("It Had To Be You"), clever interpolations ("Exactly Like You") and sultry flirtation ("I Want To Talk About You"). Underneath this light-heartedness. however, Gates advances a cool musicianship, with his innate feel for back-phrasing ("I Didn't Know About You"), effortless melodicism ("You've Changed") and consummate soloing ("I've Got News For You"). Not surprisingly, his deep-textured voice is perfectly suited for the blues ("You Never Miss The Water 'Till The Well Runs Dry"), even as a smile informs his growl.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

An experienced theater professional, Kristen Lee Sergeant brings a strong sense of story to her vocal jazz performances. Already an adept arranger — listen to *Inside/Out* and Smolder, her first two self-releases — Sergeant steps fully into her own as a songwriter on **Falling** (Tiger Turn; $\star\star\star$), her newest offering. The album's eight contemporary jazz originals and two masterful remakes set forth the concept behind the title: how we manage the dips, plunges, and surrenders of everyday life. The music provides the visceral context for Sergeant's smart lyrics, where the blues evoke both the torment of bad romance ("Honey"); a fluid, recurring melody the resignation of being stuck ("Sisyphus"); and gorgeous legit vocals the yearning of past love ("Autumn Nocturne").

Ordering info: kristenleesergeant.com



Ordering info: kristinakoller.net

Like Koller, Canadian neo-soul singer and two-time Juno Award nominee **Tanika Charles** occupies the common ground between R&B and jazz. The 11 co-written tracks on her newest record, *Papillon de Nuit: The Night Butterfly* (**Record Kicks**; ****), not only put her enormous vocal talent on full display but show how easily she finesses both retro idioms and contemporary issues. In her vocal lines she'll often reference traditional funk or soul singers.

Ordering info: recordkicks.com

Grammy-nominated U.K. vocalist James Hunter, too, commands a retro R&B sound on his originals, albeit one that is closer to rock-blues than Koller's modern syncretism or Charles' flawless soul. The 12 tunes with his regular quintet on With Love (Daptone; ★★★½) captivate with mid-century pop conventions like coordinated horn riffs ("Heartbreak"), harmonizing vocal backgrounds ("He's Your Could Have Been") and tremoring electric organ ("This Is Where We Came In"). It's the grainy voice belting out a seemingly limitless profusion of infectious, blues-derived melodies, though, that firmly establishes Hunter as one of the foremost European rhythm and soul artists. Just when you think he's said everything there is to say about love, loss, and moving on, he comes back with another idea. It's impossible not to listen.

Ordering info: daptonerecords.com



Jacob Garchik Assembly YESTEREVE

The title of Jacob Garchik's latest recording binds two separate, but essential, concerns. How does one resolve the matter of getting musicians together to play socially based music in the middle of a pandemic? And how does one put this stuff together? Assembly addresses both problems with remarkable success. February 2021 in New York was not the best time and place to bring together a live band with a couple horns. So, the trombonist convened his ensemble at EastSide Sound, a Manhattan recording establishment with six isolation rooms. In that pre-vaccinated time, it afforded the quintet the chance to get together and play with a substantially reduced risk of infecting each other. The setting also enabled him to get separate recordings of each musician playing simultaneously with their four counterparts, which he took away to cut, paste and reorganize into new arrangements. The resulting music's immediacy belies its protracted production. While the title "Bricolage" augurs a cobbled-together result, Sam Newsome delivers a probing, cohesive solo over bass and trombone loops. But you don't have to care about the recording methodology to be touched by the music's emotional core. "Homage" may have been constructed from several overlaid performances, but it's the music's grand, bluesy cry, not the cleverness with which its parts were combined, that commands attention. And while the pieced-together ensemble sequences that open and close "Fanfare" dazzle with their intricacy, a listener is just as likely to be lured back for another listen to the intimate warmth of the exchanges between Sacks and Garchik during the composition's languorous midsection. —Bill Mever

Assembly: Coolage; Pastiche; Bricolage; Homage; Fanfare; Idee Fixe; Fantasia; Impromptu; Reverie. (44.08)

Personnel: Jacob Garchik, trombone; Sam Newsome, soprano saxophone; Jacob Sacks, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass; Dan Weiss, drums.

Ordering info: jacobgarchik.bandcamp.com



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The Young Composer Showcase spotlights young jazz composers ages 14-30, giving students an opportunity to have an original composition recognized and performed at an international level at the 2023 JEN Conference in Orlando, FL. photos by René Huemer



The Perfect Instrument

The following master class is an excerpt from Kenny Werner's new book, Becoming the Instrument: Lessons on Self-Mastery from Music to Life (Sweet Lo Press). Brimming with insights and anecdotes from his 40 years of studying, performing and teaching music, Becoming The Instrument follows the world-class pianist's landmark 1996 book Effortless Mastery: Liberating the Master Musician Within, which revolutionized how musicians approach their craft. A followup article and interview with Werner, artistic director of Berklee's Effortless Mastery Institute, will appear in DownBeat later this year. Meanwhile, we turn to Chapter 3, "The Perfect Instrument," which begins with the invocation of a popular Christian prayer.

your peace . . . " The St. Francis Prayer points the way to the ultimate purpose of a human being, not being the doer but the instrument of the Doer. Wherever one comes down on who the

ord, make me an instrument of Doer is, or even if the Doer exists, the fact is, from a philosophical, psychological, religious, spiritual or even scientific perspective, we become more effective, more alive, more grateful, less fearful, more intuitive, creative, improvisational, funnier, more

focused, productive, compassionate, peaceful and more of service — when we think there is a Doer!

"Where there is hatred, let me sow love." This action takes work. Sometimes we have to initiate the willingness, "act as if," "fake it till we make it." But if I become the instrument of another power, then that conversion may be automatic.

I have had the benefit of experiencing the difference between being the doer or the channel of the Doer quite clearly by being a musician. The groove works best when it works alone. My desire to direct it is the only thing that can get in the way. Or, as I like to say, perfection already exists, it's people who mess it up!

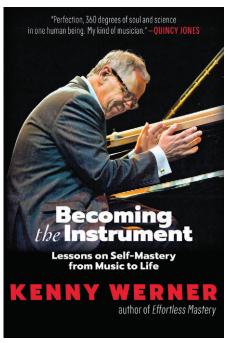
Creating the Perfect Instrument

The Perfect Instrument requires the physical, emotional, neurological, psychological, and spiritual components in a human being to be in alignment. All those elements are compromised by the *world of thoughts*, something I cover here and in later chapters of the book as well.

In this understanding we accept the idea that we are not the players who play the instrument. We are the instruments who play the instrument. To do that we have to reprogram the mind to stay out of the way so we can "receive." We must train the body to execute without conscious thought. We will investigate all the ways the mind interferes with one's true potential. First and foremost, it's the body that plays the instrument. Without self-judgment and other ruses of the ego, the body can learn the most efficient ways for a particular body to play a particular instrument. So, what does the mind do? In its proper place, it enjoys the music, it beholds music, it becomes grateful for the music. That takes lots of deprogramming and reprogramming. One wants to cultivate a profound acceptance and love of whatever one plays. Full disclosure; musicians can also use this gift to manipulate others. Music history reveals that even a son-of-a-bitch can be the voice of God! Letting the body play and the mind enjoy opens a channel. After all, if criticizing and browbeating ourselves made us play better, we'd all be virtuosos. If you accept what wants to come out, what comes begins to flow.

Leaving the mind (desire) out of the equation, one can program the body to be the physical instrument, the one that plays. Programming the body to play is more sport than art. Hitting a baseball requires a quiet body. Less moving parts. Programming the body requires repetition and patience. Getting the conscious mind out of the way then becomes essential. Impatience, after all, is a tendency of the mind. In allowing the body to adapt, we sharpen our tools, our bodies. We tune our instrument.

The psychological component of the perfect instrument is a mind empty of desire. The spiritual flavoring might be a mind full of gratitude. This keeps one in balance while muscle memory is established in the body. When technique is muscle memory you don't have to manage technique. The body performs automatically. So, you can see the different components that make up the instrument — you! It also clarifies the subtle differences in the level of performance. The level of one person's playing or another's could be seen as what one does with concentration, the other does automatically. Assessing one's level of technical mastery can then be quantified



by how much their body falls short of that goal. In what ways does one have to seek out what to another comes naturally? The perfect instrument is one that embodies precision without management or conscious control. That makes improvising, or *creating and adjusting on the fly*, possible. It also differentiates the classical musician's performance from very good or even excellent to virtuosic. This explains the many levels of golf, tennis, etc. If one adds the spiritual dimension of *gratitude*, one achieves adjectives such as miraculous, revelatory or inspiring.

The body as the programmable instrument should open a whole new level of coaching rather than teaching. It only takes one lesson to teach something. Coaching a student until they *own it* takes as long as it takes.

Who's Playing?

If the musician is the instrument, who's playing? That implies that he is the one to be played or played through. For that to take place, the perfect instrument (musician) is not just a perfect motion machine, but also a perfect thinking machine. If his body has been programmed to perform, the mind may be empty of intent, preferring the sensation of receiving the performance, dancing with intuition or responding with split-second reactions. If one has achieved the awareness of being played, then the question is, who's playing? Ah! Now, that is the journey of a lifetime! Some may be absolutely sure of who is playing from the outset via their religion or spiritual belief. Or they may embark on a lifetime journey of discovering just who or what that is. They can also decide that The Force will be forever beyond description. Rather

than defining it, they will simply and happily yield to it. They may allow it to possess them entirely, knowing not where it comes from but having ample evidence that it sure does sound and feel good, whoever is doing it. Or it feels so good to just let the music do its thing using the player's skills and tools. It's such a relief when, after performing, someone comes up to me and says, "You sucked!" I can then say calmly, "Wasn't me. Don't blame me! Talk to Him." (Pointing upward!)

Instead of playing, become the vessel through which music is played. My spiritual pursuit has given names to some of these tendencies. For me, the source is known as The Self. That's just for me. To be fully connected on the instrument, whether that instrument is the piano, the violin, the paint brush or the golf club, I imagine The Self is expressing Itself. By reminding ourselves of the real purpose of all action, we can settle into the inner chops that allow the body to find its natural alignment and become the instrument that plays the instrument. The energy that courses through me and escapes into the piano is The Shakti, which I understand to be the Goddess energy that is the personification of all creativity, among other things. It guides the music in my mind and following it is a decision I made a long time before I ever knew the word.

The Space

What separates the *instrument* from the instrument? The mind.

The simplest idea of *Effortless Mastery* is that we can live in or act from the conscious mind, or from what I call *The Space*.

Since I wrote Effortless Mastery, people have often asked me what that means. In the proceeding years of teaching and lecturing I have hit upon the clearest definition, one that I didn't articulate in my first book. Effortless Mastery means the perfect and precise commitment of a complex action without thought or effort. In this sense, those of us blessed with normal motor functions are already effortless masters. We walk, talk, use eating utensils, write, read and perform all sorts of amazingly complex actions that no other species is capable of.

Imagine if your execution of playing an instrument, wielding a golf club or any physical act of sport, art or whatever were as natural and *precise* as walking or using a fork? Shoveling snow, which I just did, is a complex action that can be done from muscle memory. But there's a psychological aspect to it as well. One can shovel snow from the mind, i.e., with impatience and resentment. "Shit, this snow is wetter than last night's snow. It's much heavier. Look how much I have left to do," etc. Or they can do it from a sense of

being the instrument, The Space. One of the most endearing qualities of being an instrument is staying in the moment, which happens naturally from The Space. Maintaining an inner connection, one shovel full of snow at a time. I once had this experience while vacuuming the rug in my loft in NYC. I started focusing very deeply on each little square inch of the rug, getting down into the fibers in ways I never had before. Eventually I took off the attachment that allowed me to vacuum standing and got on my knees and started scrubbing every little inch of rug. Every once in a while, I looked back on my work and

anything. Mistakes are only relevant to the conscious mind.

When I give workshops, I describe this state and ask, "Has anyone ever had a gig where you were almost watching yourself play?" Most people say they have. Then I ask, "Weren't you playing really great, the way you've been hoping to?" Again, most respond in the affirmative. "You played so great and inspired on that gig that you still know where you were and who you were playing with, right?" Lots of heads nodding in agreement. Then I ask, "How was the next gig?" Some downturned faces on that one. The next gig

thought. One is physical. Without the mind's desire to become good at something the body is free to take whatever time it needs to really adapt to the act. The other is removing mental patterns and blocks that stand in the way of what wants to happen.

For example, when I shovel my driveway with the desire to be done with it, I might hurt my back by moving too much snow at too fast a pace. I'm ignoring the messages my body is giving me as to how it wants to use the shovel, whereas my mind just wants to get it over with. From The Space, or tuning into my body free of my thoughts, my body will use every physical law to its advantage, gravity, leverage, etc. But also, by committing a physical act from The Space, one finds that it extends the body's ability, much as how exercise increases one's capacity for exercise. Ironically, it is the one whose mind is unconcerned with how long it will take or where he is in the process that will allow that process to go forward. Slow and steady wins the race!

Once motor skills or muscle memory are established, the act is automatic and we perform on a very high level. The results may vary but the programming of the body does its job. To allow the body the opportunity to learn its most effective way of performing, a whole new way of practicing music must be established. Actually, it is a very old way of practicing. A long time ago, students studied with masters, not people with master's degrees. It harkens back to an age when we valued the quality of mastery over a quantity of skills pursued.

Creating precision from an effortless place is what the music world calls virtuosity. When we hear a virtuoso, we are aware of how great they play but we're not aware of how natural it is for that person to be virtuosic. It must be easy or it wouldn't happen all the time.

Mastery doesn't refer to an act done well occasionally or only if one gets enough sleep. The skill or ownership doesn't diminish if one has a cold or is a bit foggy that day. It doesn't refer to something well done two out of five times. It doesn't even mean doing something well five out of five times. Effortless Mastery means the instrument plays itself. The virtuoso doesn't play the piece. The piece plays itself while the musician watches, appreciates or dazzles.

One can train squarely towards that trajectory but one has to believe they have the capacity, or at least not be attached to whether or not they have the capacity. Why not go for

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We are not the players who play the instrument. We are the instruments who play the instrument. To do that we have to reprogram the mind to stay out of the way so we can "receive."

was shocked to see the clear definition of how much territory I had covered, one minute spot at a time. I was literally more patient with each square than I normally would be skimming the entire carpet much more quickly. Because of this detailed work, I was amazed to discover the true color of the carpet! It was a much darker and richer green than I was aware of. It was a watershed moment. Unfortunately, it was over 40 years ago and I was on psychedelic drugs at the time. It's taken me this long to realize that if I keep the mind an empty vessel (no expectations) there is no driveway to shovel. There is only the next shovel full. Also, if I imagine the mind to be empty (of desire) then the act of shoveling is not me, but my higher power, however I define that. I become the instrument!

As an improvisor, I watch my hands and imagine they are someone else's hands. I may say to myself, "Oh yeah, this feels great," but after a while I'm not really involved. Or I may stare into space or into the lights from the stage with no consciousness of my hands and it truly feels like someone else is playing. I'm just listening and enjoying what is coming out. As I receive this sound, everything develops perfectly, organically and authentically. Many musicians seek to be original, more ego than service. One cannot affect originality, but the true hope and the doable task is to become authentic. Authenticity is what happens when you're not trying to do

is always horrible. I explain why. "You've all had this experience, but it always visits you when you're not expecting it. Most cruelly, it never happens when you want to show it to someone else!" I think I spoke of this in my first book, but everyone can relate to throwing darts. Once in a while, you have a premonition a split second before you throw the dart that it's going to hit the bullseye. Everything feels just right and you indeed hit it. Where does the next dart go? You try to repeat the exact relaxation and flow you had from the previous dart but the desire to hit another bullseye makes the toss too precious and the dart heads towards the bullseve but ends up hitting the bottom of the wall. Becoming the instrument means programming the perfect motion while programming the mind to be free of desire to hit the bullseye. That requires cultivating the great spiritual attribute of detachment.

The different components I referred to before can all be practiced separately. They are separate issues but at many points interdependent. For example, as stated before, one could not even cultivate the right level of practice without some degree of self-control, actually, self-mind-control. One's practice can lead to having the bullseye experience or the *ultimate gig* experience more reliably.

There are two very important benefits to creating the perfect instrument. Both benefits require a withdrawal from conscious

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Anyone Can Book a Gig

usic Works International was founded with the view that developing careers through live performance is a team effort requiring collaboration with all the stakeholders in the concert industry. Especially important is to build partnerships between performers and presenters. MWI has used this cooperative approach to help create strategic plans for artists with sound business principles to ensure both the artist and the promoter can succeed. The company's flagship, six-part course, titled *Anyone Can Book a Gig*, was written to support artists who are looking to begin or to expand their music careers with a

better understanding of the business of live performance.

In this article, we explore the topics of the course: Getting Started, Setting Up Your Business, Research and Development, Negotiation, Contracts and Riders, and Marketing and Promotion. Each section builds on the information from the previous section and provides practical information about the concert business. Though MWI primarily represents jazz, Americana and world music artists, the concepts in this course can apply to booking any genre of music. This course will also be helpful to someone who wants to be a manager or a booking agent.

There is an incredible amount of time, energy and money involved in launching any new artist. It may be difficult for an unknown artist to secure an agent, a manager or a record deal. In today's music industry, it's possible for an artist to pursue a music career without a label or a team. The explosion of social media platforms, streaming services, YouTube and the sheer amount of information on the internet makes it possible for an artist to release and promote music independently with the click of a button. The do-it-yourself model of today is incredibly valuable to those who must start their performing careers on their own.

Anyone Can Book a Gig is for any artist ready to start developing their professional career. The course explains how to assemble promotional and marketing materials, do research, make strategic plans to execute career goals, book concerts and tours and promote your shows. In short, we teach you how to set up your business. The topics covered in Anyone Can Book a Gig are presented in easy-to-follow steps to give the artist a foundation of knowledge so he/she can book themselves.

Getting Started & Setting Up

The first step is an assessment guide to help you evaluate where you are in your professional career. It's imperative to take inventory of your experiences and achievements, even if your experience has been limited to a recital at school or studies with a renowned teacher. When you know where you've been and what you've achieved, you can build on that and plan where you want to go next in your career. It's also important to know how to describe your music. If you can't describe your own music, how will you know how to market and promote it? All of these elements - educational and professional background, achievements, descriptions of your influences and of your music - are pulled together into an artist biography. This is your first chance to tell audiences of your accomplishments, skills and what makes you unique as an artist. The consumer is curious, they want to know who you are and why you do what you do: the influences, motivations and passion behind your projects. Every musician needs a biography in a series of formats. Both a long and short version should be on hand, as well as any project specific summaries for special projects or collaborations.

There are several other tools you need to set up your business in addition to a biography: photos, recordings, video links, and electronic press kit, press reviews, quote sheets, a

technical and contract rider, current and active social media pages, a website and any resume-worthy achievements related to music (workshops, masterclasses, past collaborations or projects). We go into great detail about these materials, which we call assets. You may not have all of these items when you start out, but knowing what you need will help you stay focused on compiling your press kit.

Your promotional materials should showcase your brand and establish your portfolio. What interest or age group are you trying to attract? What visual and audio materials best represent the sound of your music? Do you have any quotes or reviews about your music? Studio recordings are best. Get professional video recorded — not live video from someone's cell phone. Put your best materials forward so they show you are professional and your production is high quality. If you take the care to make great materials, you will also have them for others to help publicize your shows. Anyone Can Book a Gig guides you through how to create assets, organize and present them. When you have all your assets organized into a folder, your materials are always ready at a moment's notice to send to a promoter, to the media, to a graphic designer or anyone who is interested in your music. And do take the care to make sure all your links work before you send them out. With these professional assets and a clear message about your music, you will have the tools to book gigs, expand your fan base and make money.

Research & Development

The next step in setting up your business is something all companies do. It's worth doing some research to see what other artists, who are at or beyond your level, are presenting on their websites. Do they have a live video that captures the energy of their show? Do their photos and biography clearly indicate the kind of music they play? What do their concert postings look like? The internet is an endless source of inspiration and ideas you can use to promote yourself. Not only do you need to research how your competition is presenting themselves, you need to research where they are playing. The next activity is to create a tour history and list of performance targets.

If you have ever played a show, you have at least one entry for your tour history (a compilation of all your performances). A tour history is best organized in an Excel-type spreadsheet that captures the following information: date of show, name of venue, city, state and country (if you have played outside of the U.S.), ticket prices, the guarantee or fee earned, the number of tickets sold (you



should always get the final ticket count after any show) and any comments about the venue for future reference. You may include a note about how many CDs you sold or any media events you did to support the show. Agents and managers use tour histories to know where and when an artist has played, to create a strategy for future shows, improvements in fee and increases in ticket prices. Many artists don't keep their tour books or keep information about their shows. This is a missed opportunity to keep information that will help you expand your bookings. As you build your tour history, you will have the information at your fingertips when you are speaking to a promoter about your previous ticket prices and how many tickets you sold on past shows. Next, we add a new tab to your tour history and make your venue targets.

Research into venues and events is the wish list of where you want to play. Look for venues where bands similar to yours play. Your Excel sheet columns will look similar to the tour history. Make sure to record the details of the venue: capacity, usual ticket prices, who has played there recently, how many shows per night, contact for booking. Besides clubs, you will want to gather information about festivals and other kinds of gigs: local series, clubs or city events that have concerts. Generally, it's a good idea to start locally then expand regionally. I like to make a list of the major cities and major events in a region — say, New England — and look for the best possibilities for the artist I'm working with.

This is also the point where you should understand the terms used to describe the concert industry and the kinds of deals you can make for performances. Every industry has a lexicon. When you speak with the same terms as the promoter, you will communicate more clearly and demonstrate that you understand the business of live performance. We define dozens of terms you will encoun-

ter in your negotiations. In this section of *Anyone Can Book a Gig*, we give you sample letters of solicitation as well as advice on how to approach promoters. We define dozens of terms you will encounter in your negotiations. When you take the time to do your research, make a plan and learn the industry terms, you will be better equipped and more confident in your discussions with promoters.

Negotiation

Section 4 is about negotiation. All of us negotiate with each other in our daily lives. Bartering and making agreements goes back to the start of civilization. In my opinion, the best deals are when both sides benefit. I represent the artist, so my role is to

protect them and advocate for the best terms. That said, if a deal is too risky for the promoter because we have demanded too high a fee, over promised on the size of the audience who will buy tickets, or made the financial outcome too uncertain for the promoter, they may request a reduction in the fee or worse, cancel the show if the tickets don't sell. This benefits neither the artist or the promoter.

Negotiating financial deals in any business is based on speculation. When you grasp the concept of financial risk, you will be better able to work effectively with a promoter because you will be discussing the financial outcomes of a concert based on facts like ticket price, capacity, show costs, profit and loss; in short, a business deal. When you create an agreement for a performance, you are entering a temporary business partnership with a promoter where they want to make sure they don't lose money, you want to be paid fairly and both of you benefit from a well sold show. Negotiation takes maturity, knowledge, diplomacy and practice. You will get better the more you do it. There are ways to reduce risk. This has the added benefit of helping you build solid relationships with promoters because it's based on partnership with both sides having a stake in the outcome.

There are lots of different kinds of deals you can make. Common deals include a flat guarantee, a fee *plus* a percentage share of the profits after expenses, a guarantee *versus* a percentage of the profits or a door deal with a high percentage where your fee is based solely on ticket sales. Each option has a different risk factor. Shows dependent on ticket revenue are called hard ticket shows. Hard ticket shows are where a fan buys a ticket to see your concert. In other words, you are the reason for the ticket sale. These shows are more risky because the finances are dependent on ticket revenue. Festival events are usually soft tick-

et shows where fans are paying to experience an event and your band is not entirely responsible for bringing in the paying audience. You will often be on a multi-act bill, so it's impossible to know which band brought the audience. In these situations, you will usually get a flat guaranteed fee. This means you get paid the agreed-upon amount regardless of ticket sales. When you are developing your fan base, the soft ticket event can introduce you to new fans who might not know you otherwise. You are part of an event. After you perform at a festival, it's important to return to that same

be sold to cover expenses. Based on a reasonable calculation of income (how many tickets you think you can sell) less the costs, you will both know the level of risk for your show: how much money the promoter is willing to risk versus how many tickets you think you can sell. Often, developing bands are offered door deals, which gives you performance opportunities but also requires you to partner with the promoter on a strong promotion campaign because your income is entirely dependent on ticket sales.

When your negotiation is finished and

Every industry has a lexicon. When you speak with the same terms as the promoter, you will communicate more clearly and demonstrate that you understand the business of live performance.

city (or market) a few months later and play at a club to attract those new fans to see just your show. This builds your fan base.

The biggest factor that will impact your artist fee are the show costs. These include backline (the instruments and gear you need to play your show), marketing expenses, venue staff costs, costs for promotion and ticket costs. Your show has to sell enough tickets to pay the costs of putting the show on. You should have a technical rider to give to the promoter so they can see the production costs for your band. The rider can simply include stage plot, a list of backline needed and an input list. Venues have different costs. Club costs are cheaper than theater costs. A club usually sells food and drinks, which adds to the bottom line profit and can offset the cost for talent. Think about those two drink minimums on top of ticket costs when you go to a club in New York. A club may also have in-house backline: a piano (digital or acoustic), a drum kit, amps. Theaters, on the other hand, may be unionized or have to rent backline and sound systems. They have larger staffs and higher rents. These costs will also affect the ticket prices needed to cover costs. This is why artists usually start by playing clubs until they can sell enough tickets at a higher price to cover the greater costs to play a theater. If you agree to a deal that includes a percentage of the profit after expenses, the promoter should tell you the costs or, better yet, give you a show budget so you understand how many tickets have to

you have a deal in place, you should finalize everything in writing. An email confirmation with all the details is essential. Details should include the billing of the band (how you want to be advertised), the date, time and place of the event, how many sets and what length, ticket prices, additional amenities the promoter is offering such as dinner or backline and the schedule for deposit and balance payments. Request that the promoter responds with agreement to your confirmation.

Contracts & Riders

Once you have your agreed upon terms, the next step is to put all the details into a contract that both you and the promoter will sign. Most professional bands will also attach a rider that details essential information that won't fit on your contract face — such things as policy on photography, comp tickets that are needed, hospitality like catering, hotel rooms or local ground transportation, and technical needs such as backline, sound and lights, stage and lighting plot.

A rider should also state the policy of *force majeure* events — those things like natural disasters, sickness, civil unrest or other unforeseen circumstances that could cause one of the contracted parties to cancel the show. These are standard clauses in any performance contract. Lastly, you may also issue invoices for the deposit and balance payments that state payment in cash or have your banking information and dates when the money should be paid. We have examples of riders,

invoices and standard contracts in *Anyone Can Book a Gig.*

Marketing & Promotion

The final step in booking a show is described in the last section of the course. Section 6 gives you lots of ideas on how to guarantee a successful show or tour with great marketing and promotion samples and strategies. We give you tips on how to be your own publicist, build a database of local media contacts, create press releases and plan a marketing campaign. We give some information on streaming services and on building your fan base. This is another area where you can work in partnership with a promoter. The promoter should tell you what they have planned to promote the show (their marketing plan) and you can add in your efforts, too. Promotion and Marketing are courses unto themselves and there are many professionals who specialize in these areas. The information we offer will get you started in thinking about effective ways to grow your profile, your brand and your fan base.

Once you have your self assessment, your tool box of marketing assets together, you've done your research and created your plan, you will be ready to solicit your project, negotiate deals, create and understand contracts and riders, and execute successful promotion and marketing plans to ensure successful outcome of your shows and tours. Remember, it took you many years to become a great musician. We have only scratched the surface with this summary of *Anyone Can Book a Gig.* The course has dozens of worksheets, samples, examples and more than 200 pages of text to help you get your career — your business — started.

Ultimately, it is up to you to direct your performance career. So much of any entertainment career is based on luck, but with knowledge and experience, you can make your *own* luck. Though it takes time and consistent effort, you will be a better advocate for your interests if you take the time to learn the business. There is no one better qualified, better informed and better equipped to take the lead than you yourself.

As an industry expert and founder of the talent agency Music Works International (musicworksinternational.com), Katherine McVicker has developed international careers for a wide range of world music. Americana and jazz artists for three decades. Over the last seven years, McVicker has expanded the focus of MWI from a traditional booking agency to offer marketing services to artists and has created arts networks in Africa (Cultural Connections Africa, CCA) and in Latin America (Cultural Connections Latin America, CCLA). These non-profit networks foster professional development, education, cultural exchange and economic development through culture. McVicker also works as a consultant and as a guest lecturer on the live music industry at colleges and festivals across the globe. Recent accomplishments include the creation of Anyone Can Book a Gig, a six-part practical course designed to prepare aspiring artists for a career in the live touring industry. For more information, visit the website anyonecanbookagig.com.

Toolshed GEAR BOX

1. You Rang?

Orange Amplification's Guitar Butler is a complete guitar rig in a pedal. Like its sibling, The Bass Butler, this dual-channel guitar pre is intuitive to use and is ideal for gigging, playing at home, recording, touring, and for use with a P.A. system or DAW. Designed to give guitarists a comprehensive service to their signal chain, The Guitar Butler can be used either as a standalone or as part of a rig.

More info: orangeamps.com

2. Pitch-Shift Possibilities

The MXR Poly Blue Octave offers a full palette of pitch-shifting possibilities with four separate octave divisions — one down, two down, one up and two up. Players can control the level of each in the mix as well as decide whether to run them with the contemporary clarity of polyphonic mode or the raw vintage grit of monophonic mode.

More info: jimdunlop.com

3. Hit the Books

Sher Music has published *The Jazz Saxophone Book*, by New York saxophonist Tim Armacost. His approach is geared to helping saxophonists learn how to play beautiful, flowing lines based on a practical approach, not just dry theory. Working through *The Jazz Saxophone Book* can be compared to taking a series of music lessons from a intelligent and joyful teacher. The 261-page book comes with access to more than 30 videos of Armacost demonstrating various exercises in the book. It's available in printed and PDF versions.

More info: shermusic.com

4. Space Carbon Snare

Drum Workshop has extended its range of custom Collector's series snare drums with the Ultralight Edge snare. The 5.5- by 14-inch super-lightweight snare utilizes a carbon weave cylinder fitted precisely over machined aluminum Edge rings, creating a high-tech hybrid that delivers brightness, articulation, volume, sensitivity and unique tonality.

More info: dwdrums.com

5. Powerful, Versatile, Portable

JBL's EON700 series of P.A. loudspeakers and subwoofer with Bluetooth bring power and versatility to portable PAs for both live sound and installed applications. With four models available — the 10-inch EON710, the 12-inch EON712 and the 15-inch EON715 powered P.A. speakers and the 18-inch EON718S subwoofer — EON700 systems cover the needs of today's working musicians and sound engineers.

More info: jblpro.com

6. Muscle Shoals Sound

IK Multimedia has released Fame Studio Reverb for T-RackS, which achieves the vibe of Fame Studios and the Muscle Shoals sound in any studio. It offers a total of nine spaces, with two live rooms, five iso booths, an EMT plate reverb and Fame's newly restored echo chamber, plus modern and vintage modes for each, giving users a full suite of reverb effects.

More info: ikmultimedia.com





INDIE LIFE



EUGENIE JONES' CREATIVE STRATEGY

Booking record dates in Seattle, Chicago, Dallas and New York demands a brand of grit, and high-level organizational skills. But tenacity and project management was elemental to Eugenie Jones' creative output long before she conceived *Players*, her new release on her own label, Open Mic Records.

In 2010, the Seattle-based marketing and communications professional and philanthropic activist launched her career in music. "I'm a creative by nature," Jones said. "My approach is more from a business acumen and creative standpoint, also a point of personal growth. Once the seed is planted, I start figuring out how to make it happen."

Regions away from her native West Virginia, the singer and songwriter received what she considers divine inspiration following the death of her mother, choir soprano Tommie Lee. "I realized I missed hearing her sing around the house. In trying to reach a place

of solace I said, 'I wonder if I can carry on that part of her.'"

Three albums later, Jones has honored Lee's legacy and expanded her own artistic vision, recording with Marquis Hill, Lonnie Plaxico, Bobby Sanabria, Bernard Purdie and Quincy Davis — a mere handful of the 32 instrumentalists who appear on *Players*. "One morning, it just came to me: I'll record in each region of the U.S. with a different set of master artists," she said. "You'd think there'd be some tremendous difference among these places, but you find a likeness — a shared dedication to craft."

And craft was at the focus of her Down-

Beat conversation, which has been edited for clarity and space.

Speaking of master artists, please share how you connected with Reggie Workman, who serves as a major collaborator on *Players*.

I was at Jazz Congress in 2018 when I introduced myself. When I realized who he was, I gulped. I'm talking to Reggie Workman! But he was very congenial. I shared this concept with him, and he encouraged me. The more I've gotten to know Reggie, the more simpatico I've realized we are. We're both up all hours of the night working. He's driven and

I'm driven. Moreover, Reggie is a facilitator — connecting people, acting as a mentor.

Being driven has its challenges. What's your method for prioritizing creative pursuits?

I try to have that connection back to the community. I enveloped that into my music by starting my nonprofit Music for a Cause. When I present an event, which hires artists at a worthwhile fee, we identify a charity in the community where people can make donations. One year, I did the Jackson Street Jazz Walk and the admission was a canned food donation for Seattle food bank Northwest Harvest. Because of my background in donor development, I was able to solicit businesses for donations to actually present the Jazz Walk and pay the performers. There wasn't a need for a cover fee.

Your songs share very detailed stories. Are you composing at the piano, with a guitar, into your phone?

Songwriting is intuitive for me. I have flash-backs of hearing my mom humming, and I would ask her, "What's that song?" She'd say, "Oh just something I made up." When I start writing, I'm singing into the recorder; melody and lyrics are coming simultaneously. For "There Are Thorns," I wanted to write a song that encouraged people to pull through difficult experiences. For "Sittin' At The Bar," I wanted to create a picture of a smoky bar

where you're just sitting there having a drink and you don't want anybody to bother you. And I never sing standards that don't resonate with me. Like Billy Strayhorn's "Multicolored Blue" — it was genius of him to use colors of flowers to articulate emotion.

Another standard you include is "I Got Rhythm," which opens on this swinging solo gesture from Quincy.

I said, "Quincy, I just want you to get a rhythm going. Then I'll come in, and when I'm ready for the whole band, I'll say, 'Right there.'" That's what we did.

Would you share your inspiration for "The Gift of Life" which you co-wrote?

What's so important about that song is that we're collaborating with the Kidney Foundation so it can be given [as a gift] when someone makes a donation. My friend, piano player Peter Adams, is waiting for a kidney right now. He asked me, "Would you be interested in writing this song with me?" He'd started it, but his feel was almost like a funeral dirge, and I thought it should be more celebratory. So, we worked together, and that's how that came to be.

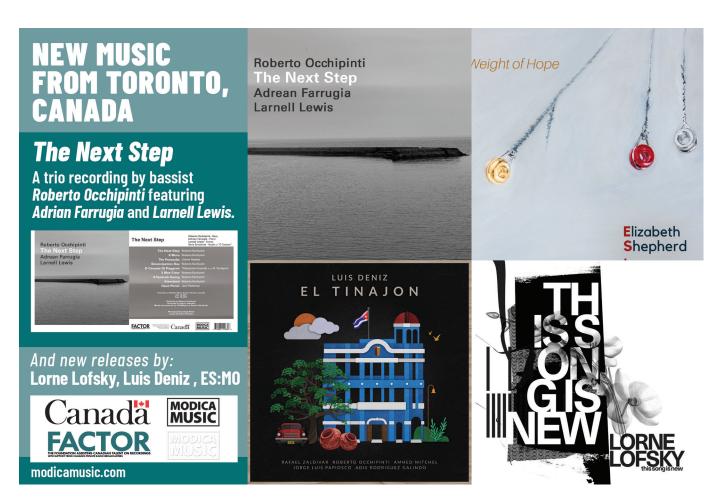
Alex Dugdale delivers a strong statement on "Ey Brother." It feels as though you wrote that song, in part, for your fellow artists.

Central Seattle has a legacy where a lot

of African Americans got their start, musically — Quincy Jones, Ray Charles, Ernestine Anderson. The Black and Tan Club was a place where they could go, and be accepted. That's what that line is, "No matter how dark your skin, you can step into this light." There were red lines, places they couldn't perform because of racism. I wrote this song to acknowledge that legacy, and also to figure out how to get through my feelings of what happened to George Floyd, and the racism that we still encounter. There are red lines. Every day you walk outside in brown skin, you experience it. Alex became the perfect counterpart to this sage Black woman putting her arm around a young musician and saying, "Hang in there. Keep playing. Keep going." It was cathartic for me.

There's an unusual way songwriting informs your approach to existing material.

I make sure it's what I want to say, and how I want to say it. I wanted to do "You Can Have Him" but, to make [the lyrics] more digestible for the modern woman, I added that line, "A woman truly loved will do anything for her man." Then it becomes reciprocal. In Strayhorn's tune, I added more of the verse so I could offer different levels of expression. In "Blue Skies," those lyrics "as far as the eye can see" — that was all me. It's not part of the original song. I Eugenie-ize it so it has more meaning for me. —Stephanie Jones





LISA HILTON'S 'BEAUTIFUL' INDIE

Pianist and composer Lisa Hilton is living an indie life where life is beautiful. Since 2001, with her debut album *Seduction*, distributed on her own label (Ruby Slippers Productions), Hilton has been living as an artist who manages her own career — all of it.

Over the past two decades, the jazz pianist and composer has self-produced two dozen albums, most with her longstanding trio that includes drummer Rudy Royston and bassist Luques Curtis. Make that two dozen and one. Her latest release, *life is beautiful*, is her 25th, a recording milestone that took her by surprise.

"I never planned to make a 25th CD," Hilton said, speaking from her Southern California home not far from the coast. "I never planned to be a music publisher, and I definitely never planned to be a producer." Indeed, she never even planned to be a musician. Hilton studied art and design in college before rediscovering her dexterous fingers and childhood passion for the piano, which quickly became her lodestar.

"I always let the music lead me, and it's led me to a really rich life," Hilton noted. "The first time I went to New York, I played with Christian McBride, Lewis Nash, Steve Wilson and Jeremy Pelt, That was a big deal." So was playing at Carnegie Hall, where she performed six times in various configurations before the pandemic.

As a bandleader, Hilton has worked with an impressive roster of musicians, from Mc-Bride to drummer Antonio Sánchez, trumpeter Sean Jones and saxophonist J.D. Allen, among many others. She's also written dozens of compositions influenced by ascended jazz masters (Monk, Ellington and Miles) early blues greats (Jelly Roll Morton, Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters) and the tonal modalities of impressionists (Debussy and Seurat).

Like the natural world that inspires her, Hilton's career follows its own seasons. While COVID-19 sabotaged her touring season, it didn't stop her musical flow. She released three albums with what she jokingly called her "pandemic trio," and was at the beginning of her composing season when Down-Beat caught up with her.

Your composing season coincides with spring, which is a real time of renewal. How does that work for you?

It's probably my favorite season because I have a passionate relationship with my piano. I don't sit there and say, "OK, my record label needs 10 new songs." I just start playing around on the piano. And before I know it, I have what I call embryos, little starts to new pieces of music. Right now I have a bunch of embryos, and I'm curious: What will the next album be?

Life is beautiful could almost have been titled "life is a beach," because your piano takes flight like a gentle breeze over the rhythmic lapping waves of the bass and drums on tracks like "Stepping Into Paradise" and "Santa Monica Samba." And "Unforgotten Moments: Half Forgotten Dreams" is very ephemeral, like the last couple years have been.

I like to swing all kinds of ways, and those simple Latin swings are like a good mood at sunset in a beautiful environment. "Unforgotten Moments" is absolutely about the time that we're in. We will never, ever forget this moment, which has been quite fertile for me as a composer. There's also a part of us that remembers who we were 2019, and that life is a half-forgotten dream. We need to look for, and curate, the beautiful moments, to help see us through the difficult times we're seeing now.

Like the invasion of Ukraine. That's been so horrific it's almost impossible to turn away from what's happening there. How do you feel about *life is beautiful* coming out during the biggest crisis we've had in many years?

There are a lot of amazing people in Ukraine right now. The Ukrainians themselves, and the people putting their lives at risk to help them.

And as musicians, I think the best thing we can do is to lift people's spirits and help them find relief through nature, art and creativity. The music that is coming through me is intended to help others.

And *life is beautiful* is very healing. It's also amazing what you've accomplished as an independent artist.

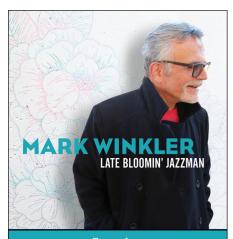
Once upon a time I was thought that the only way to have a music career was to be with a record label and an agent. But it's not the only way, and it's been really rich so far. And I've got, I don't know, maybe 50 more albums to go, right?

—Cree McCree









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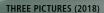
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DEDICATIONS (2021)



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ELI DEGIBRI OFFERS AN ODE TO HIS PARENTS

Israeli-born saxophonist Eli Degibri first began turning heads stateside after winning the 1999 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition.

First to come calling was Herbie Hancock, who recruited the Jaffa native for his sextet, where Degibri remained for the next two and a half years while playing music from the pianist's Grammy-winning album *Gershwin's World*. After moving to New York in 2002, the big-toned tenor saxophonist joined drummer Al Foster's working quartet and remained a fixture of the group through 2011, appearing on 2008's *Love, Peace And Jazz! Live At The Village Vanguard*.

Along the way, Degibri released two albums as a leader on the Fresh Sound New Talent label (2004's *In The Beginning* and 2006's *Emotionally Available*) and two more on Anzic Records (2008's *Live At Louis 649* and 2010's acclaimed *Israeli Song* featuring Foster, Ron Carter and Brad Mehldau). After returning to his homeland in 2011, Degibri opened his own label, Degibri Records,

releasing *Twelve* in 2014, followed by *Cliff Hangin'* in 2016 and 2018's *Soul Station: A Tribute To Hank Mobley*.

Now, he has released what is easily his most personal recording to date: *Henri And Rachel*.

Recorded on March 9, 2020, days before the onset of the pandemic, *Henri And Rachel* serves as a paean to parents. His father, Henri Degibri, a native of Bulgaria, died in the fall of 2020. And his mother, Rachel, a native of Iran, battles Parkinson's and dementia.

Accompanied by pianist Tom Oren, bassist Alon Near and drummer Eviatar Sliavnik, the Tel Aviv-based saxophonist plays with a muscular authority on the title track, swings with Getzian grace on the delicate 5/4 "Don Quixote" and testifies on the gospel-tinged "Preaching To The Choir," a potent number that reveals his strong affinity for the African-American church sermon experience.

Elsewhere on the recording, Degibri delivers a 5/4 version of the jazz standard "Like Someone In Love" that reflects his recent classical training. As he explained, "In the four years prior to the pandemic, I took classical piano lessons and counterpoint with Professor Menachem Wiesenberg, who is an incredible musician, teacher and encyclopedia of music of any kind. This period with him opened my eyes, ears and soul, and expanded the way I hear and write music."

On soprano, Degribri conjures a stirring, meditative vibe on "Noa" and something more celebratory on "The Wedding," both dedicated to his fiancé. He officially proposed to Noa on stage while performing these songs at the Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eilat, Israel, with his father in the audience, just four months before his passing.

A profoundly moving work, Henri And Rachel is Degibri's musical love letter to his parents, whom he called "the main keys in my life," citing their incredibly supportive nature from the time he announced his intentions to become a musician. "My father was not a jazz fan, but he was definitely my number one fan," he said. "He could recognize my saxophone tone and compositions from a mile away. Many times when I had difficulties naming a new composition, I would play it to him and ask him for a name. He would nail it every single time. My mother loved music of any kind but mainly classical music. She even had a fantasy that I would become a classical pianist one day. The amount of love and support that I received from both my parents is rare. I wish this kind of unconditional love for every kid on this planet."

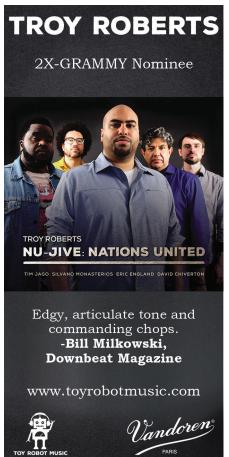
Those deep feelings are evident on the uplifting, hymn-like title track, which incorporates a choir of wordless vocals that carry the buoyant melody before tenor saxophone and bass repeat the catchy refrain in unison. When Degibri launches into his powerful solos on this tune, it speaks of his primary tenor saxophone influences: Stan Getz, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins. "They all find a way to come out at the right time and 'accompany' me with their presence," he explained. "Just like my parents who raised me to be who I am today, all my musical influences live inside me, in my bloodstream forever, as if they were my musical moms and dads."

The saxophonist added that starting his own label was an inevitable step in his development. "The face of the industry has changed tremendously, allowing many individual artists to take control of their own hands. As I grew older, I sought independence in my artistic and business decisions. I was also thinking about the options and possibilities of helping other young musicians with their dream of releasing their first albums."

Those lofty goals are now coming to fruition for Degibri and his label.

-Bill Milkowski





NEW FROM BLUE LINE MUSIC RECORDS



NATE NAJAR Jazz Samba Pra Sempre

2022 MARKS 60 YEARS OF JAZZ SAMBA

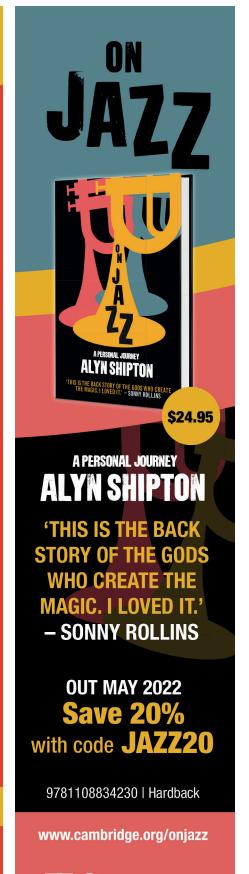
The landmark 1962 album by Charlie Byrd and Stan Getz that launched Bossa Nova to international stardom. Nate Najar pays homage to the spirit and iconic repertoire of Jazz Samba with Jazz Samba Pra Sempre (Jazz Samba Forever!), a loving "reimagining" of this seminal album. Playing Charlie Byrd's own guitar, Najar is joined by Jeff Rupert on tenor sax, Herman Burney on bass (playing Keter Betts' bass played on the original Jazz Samba) and Chuck Redd on drums (previously of the Charlie Byrd Trio) navigating the track list with equal parts reverence and invention. Brazilian vocalist Daniela Soledade guests on two tracks, João Gilberto's O Pato and Ary Barroso's É Luxo Só, with her own unmistakeable



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LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance Iowa All-State Jazz Choir Various Iowa High Schools Guest Conductor: John Stafford II

LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE Community College Outstanding Performance The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble Directed by John Stafford II ASYNCHRONOUS LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE Community College Outstanding Performance The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble Directed by John Stafford II

ASYNCHRONOUS LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE Community College Outstanding Performance Directed by John Stafford II Outstanding Soloist Maddie Huwe on "Magnolia"

BLUES/POP/ROCK SOLOIST Community College Outstanding Performance Calvin Haverkamp, Electric Guitar

BLUES/POP/ROCK SOLOIST Community College Outstanding Performance Jaylen Ward, Drum Set

BLUES/POP/ROCK GROUP Community College Outstanding Performance Luck 20 BLUES/POP/ROCK GROUP Community College Outstanding Performance Samuel Anderson Band

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION SMALL ENSEMBLE Community College Outstanding Performance Henry Fears, "Frost"

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION SMALL ENSEMBLE Community College Outstanding Performance Jordan Faught, "Apology Peach"

ENGINEERED LIVE RECORDING Community College Outstanding Recording Joe Straws

FULL-TIME FACULTY:

Dr. Justin Binek - jbinek@kckcc.edu, Music Theory and Jazz Studies | Dr. Ian Corbett - corbetti@kckcc.edu, Audio Engineering and Music Technology

Jim Mair - jmair@kckcc.edu, Instrumental Music | John Stafford II - jstafford@kckcc.edu, Choral Music



STUDENT MUSIC AWARDS

COMPLETE RESULTS













JAZZ SOLOIST

Junior High School Winner

Diogo Feldman

Trumpet & Flugelhorn
Easterbrook Discovery School
Nils Johnson
San Jose, California

Junior High School Outstanding Performance

Annemarie Faul

Bass Eckstein Middle School Moc Escobedo Seattle, Washington

Junior High School Honors Winner

Elie Samouhi

Guitar The Shea Welsh Institute of Jazz Shea Welsh Los Angeles, California

High School Winners

Benjamin Collins-Siegel

Piano
Newark Academy
Julius Tolentino
Livingston, New Jersey

Nathan McCann

Baritone Saxophone Valley Christian High School Dr. Michael Jones San Jose, California

High School Outstanding Performances

Adam Zilberman

Westlake High School Brian Peter Thousand Oaks, California

Jasper Zimmerman

Piano
Hastings High School
Eric Day
Hastings-on-Hudson, New York

Ryota Sato

Guitar Adrian Wilcox High School Philip Aduan Santa Clara, California

Performing Arts High School Winner

William Schwartzman

Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Alex Hahn Los Angeles, California

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance

Ari Pereira

Guitar Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts Christopher De Leon West Palm Beach, Florida

High School Honors Winner

Henry Acker

Guitar Duxbury High School Duxbury, Massachusetts Frank Vignola Warwick, New York

High School Honors Outstanding Performance

Jack Lieberman

Alto Saxophone
Colburn Community School
Lee Secard
Los Angeles, California

Community College Winner

Joshua Wong

Piano
Los Angeles City College



Jazz Soloist

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Varun Das, drums Student of John Riley

Vittorio Stropoli, piano Student of Marc Cary

Small Jazz Combo

Graduate College Winners

Retrospective Quintet Ingrid Jensen, Director

Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist

Undergraduate College Winners

Nick Marziani, alto saxophone Student of Donny McCaslin

Original Composition — Large Ensemble

Graduate College Winner

Eliana Fishbeyn, "Unknown Knowns" Student of Jim McNeely

Jazz Arrangement

Graduate College Winner-Big Band

Eliana Fishbeyn, "Three Women" Student of Jim McNeely

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Guitar MiraCosta College Steve Torok Oceanside. California

Jaylen Ward

Drums

Kansas City Kansas Community College Jim Mair Kansas City, Kansas

Undergraduate College Winner

Esteban Castro

Piano

The Juilliard School Ted Rosenthal New York, New York

Undergraduate College **Outstanding Performances**

Derris Lee

Drums

University of Florida José Valentino-Ruiz Gainesville, Florida

Summer Camargo

Trumpet

The Juilliard School Joe Magnarelli New York, New York

Tal Kalman

Tenor Saxophone University of the Pacific Patrick Langham Stockton, California

Varun Das

Drums

Manhattan School of Music John Rilev New York, New York

Vittorio Stropoli

Manhattan School of Music Marc Cary New York, New York

Graduate College Winner

Mikailo Kasha

Upright Bass University of Miami, Frost School of Music Chuck Bergeron Coral Cables, Florida

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Duncan McElman

Baritone Saxophone California State University, Sacramento Steve Roach Sacramento, California

SMALL JAZZ COMBO

High School Winner

Jazz Combo I

William H. Hall High School James Antonucci West Hartford, Connecticut

High School Outstanding Performance

Valley Christian Combo I

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

Performing Arts High School Winner

ChiArts Jazz Combo

The Chicago High School for the Arts Anthony Bruno Chicago, Illinois



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LACHSA Blue Note Combo

Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Alex Hahn Los Angeles, California

High School Honors Ensemble Winner

Advanced High School Jazz Workshop I

California Jazz Conservatory Michael Zilber Berkeley, California

High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performances

Advanced High School Workshop II

The Jazzschool Colin Hogan Berkeley, California

New Soil Ensemble

Young Lions Jazz Conservatory Gilbert Castellanos San Diego, California

Community College Winner

BC Jazz Combo A

Bakersfield College

Kris Tiner Bakersfield, California

Undergraduate College Winner

Sergio de Miguel Trio Berklee College of Music

Berklee College of Music Nando Michelin Boston, Massachusetts

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

Fred Fox Jazz Ensemble

University of Arizona Brice Winston Tucson, Arizona

Undergraduate College Outstanding Soloists

Joey Curreri, Trumpet

Joey Curreri Quintet University of Miami, Frost School of Music Brian Lynch Coral Gables. Florida

Raphael Silverman, Guitar

Raphael Silverman Trio Columbia College Chicago Bobby Broom Chicago, Illinois

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DB AWARD WINNERS — THE SOLOISTS

AMONG THIS YEAR'S WINNING SOLOISTS.

there are a pair of atypical instruments — at least as far as this category goes — as well as plenty of ambition, extra-musical expression and a curiosity to explore.

It's rare that a Student Music Award winner will already have a hearty IMDB (Internet Movie Database) page. Guitarist Elie Samouhi, who was recognized in the junior high school category, can already be seen in Disney's *Bizaardvark* and Netflix's *Team Kaylie*. But he's a serious music student, too, as guitarist-educator Shea Welsh of The Shea Institute of Jazz in Los Angeles can attest. (Samouhi is also featured in a guitar performance video on YouTube that had over 1 million views as of mid-April.)

"Elie came to me four years ago as a pretty accomplished young rock player already." Welsh said. "And I think he just saw this as another challenge. And then he really started to enjoy jazz and the improvisational side of playing. He's also gotten into Miles Davis and has recently taken up the trumpet" — à la fellow multi-instrumentalist and one-time Davis associate Joey DeFrancesco.

"He's always been fearless as an improviser and is willing to take chances, and he never had a lot of filters," Welsh observed. "I think that was from his early success as an actor."

As for Samouhi's submission, "Donna Lee," "I just really helped him with arpeggios and deciding what key centers we were in. And he took all that by himself and worked out his own solo. To me, it was amazing because he actually played his solo with Charlie Parker's language, as an eighth grader. I just helped him push the tempo up on the head. He does really have good ears as far as playing back what he hears."

A senior at Valley Christian High School in Northern California's Silicon Valley, Nathan

McCann plays baritone saxophone — winning in a category typically featuring tenor and alto players. He switched over from alto in junior high, according to Michael Jones, his band director then and now.

"Nathan has the technique and charisma in his playing and the history and knowledge of the baritone saxophone in his improvisations," Jones said. "And now it really seems like it's an extension of his voice.

"He lit it up from an early age, just in terms of not being shy of using air," Jones added. "And he wasn't satisfied playing glorified tuba parts. He wanted to take to the next level, so he always treated it like a soloist instrument. He took on the instrument and understood the role the bari would play in our band at the time, and why that was important.

"He can play some piano, he can play some guitar. And he's writing tunes," Jones continued. "He's very comfortable in front of people and very comfortable extending himself."

Self-extension has been part of pianist Joshua Wong's makeup, too.

"Joshua already sounded really beautiful when I first heard him play piano," said Jake Leckie of Community College winner Wong. "But where I've noticed development has been as a composer. Of course, composing is just really improvising slowed way down. I think his playing is benefiting from his composing, and his composing is benefiting from his playing."

Wong studies with Leckie at Los Angeles City College and has taken advantage of L.A.'s status as an entertainment industry town. "The courses that I've taught have been opportunities for him in either original creative music, like creating beats and those kinds of productions, or writing for film," Leckie explained. "He's a quick study who has great ears. He can pick things up quickly and then apply some of

those concepts to his own work."

After scoring some fellow students' films, Wong has gone on to work as a professional film scorer's assistant. "Josh also has a lot of drive," Leckie said. "He's quiet — a humble guy, really. But he's a hustler." The variety of cues that Wong has scored, ranging from electronic dance pop to a jazz trio plus orchestra, has given him a broader palate from which he can solo, Leckie said. "His work in class has been informed by all this other work he's doing. And I know he's still spending a lot of time practicing, too."

Another gifted soloist and musical go-getter is Graduate College winner Mikailo Kasha of University of Miami's Frost School of Music. "He's the definition of entrepreneurial spirit," said Chuck Bergeron, the head of the Jazz Bass Studio at Frost. "He basically just functions very comfortably with the producer's hat on. He sees what needs to be done, and he will write or arrange the music for any given number of instruments or musicians. And he also has good recording skills."

Kasha and Bergeron are both contrabassists and bass guitarists, and the latter isn't afraid to admit that he's pleased that a bassist won a Student Music Award in the Soloist category. "It makes me really happy," he confessed. "Part of Mikailo's success might actually be the fact that he doesn't approach it in the normal orthodox manner. So, he doesn't see himself restricted to an accompanist role."

Nor does he restrict himself to typical instrumentations.

"He builds and plays drum kits," Bergeron shared. The band for Kasha's senior recital, in turn, featured him on bass plus two keyboardists and two drummers. "Mikailo's just creating a ton of content for his website. He's the one guy I will never have to worry about making a living in the music industry."

—Yoshi Kato

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Large Vocal Jazz **Ensemble Graduate College Outstanding Performance:**

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Graduate College Winners

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WMU Advanced Jazz Ensemble

Western Michigan University Andrew Rathbun Kalamazoo, Michigan

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Mikailo Kasha Trio

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

Graduate College Outstanding Soloists

Jason Arkins, Alto Saxophone

The Frost Septet University of Miami, Frost School of Music Chuck Bergeron Coral Gables, Florida

Robert Papacica, Guitar

Robert Papacica Trio New York University Peter Bernstein New York, New York

Tim Watson, Guitar

The Frost Septet University of Miami, Frost School of Music Chuck Bergeron Coral Gables. Florida

ASYNCHRONOUS SMALL JAZZ COMB

Junior High School Winner

Jazz Explorers

Harvard-Westlake Middle School Starr Schaftel Wayne Los Angeles, California

High School Honors Winner

Former SJZ High School All-Stars U19s

San Jose Jazz Mason Razavi San Jose, California

Community College Winner

BC Jazz Virtual Combo

Bakersfield College





Award Winners

Large Jazz Ensemble

Graduate College Winner UNC JAZZ LAB BAND I Dana Landry, Director

Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist

Graduate College Winner

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Steve Kovalcheck, Professor

Blues/Pop/Rock Group

Graduate College Winner

UNC FUNK LAB

Brian Claxton, Director

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Graduate College Outstanding Soloist

VI DANG

Marion Powers, Professor

Asynchronous Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

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Outstanding Soloists: Jillian Shively & Hannah Rodriguez

Blues/Pop/Rock Group Soloist

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

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Emiliano Lasansky Group

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LARGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Junior High School Winner

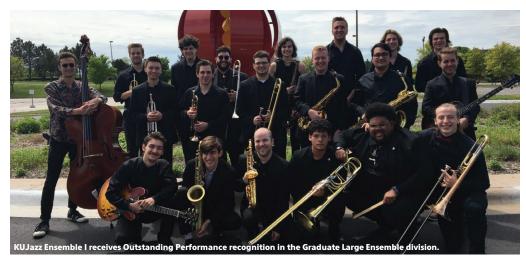
Jazz Ensemble

Farmington Junior High School Heath Wolf Farmington, Utah

Junior High School Outstanding Performance

Jazz Band B

Eckstein Middle School



Moc Escobedo Seattle, Washington

High School Winners

Hall High School Concert Jazz Ensemble

William H. Hall High School James Antonucci West Hartford, Connecticut

Plano West Jazz Orchestra

Plano West Senior High School

Preston Pierce Plano, Texas

High School Outstanding Performances

AM Jazz Ensemble

Rio Americano High School Josh Murray Sacramento, California

Byron Center Jazz Orchestra

Byron Center High School

Marc Townley Byron Center, Michigan

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Jazz Ensemble I

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LACHSA Big Band

Los Angeles County



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Jazz Band

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

High School Honors Winner

SFJAZZ High School

All-Stars Big Band

SFJAZZ Paul Contos San Francisco, California

High School Honors OutstandingPerformances

Jazzschool Studio Band

California Jazz Conservatory Dave Eshelman Berkeley, California

Miles Ahead Big Band

Stanford Jazz Workshop

Mike Galisatus Stanford, California

Community College Winner

Oceanside Jazz Orchestra

MiraCosta College Steve Torok Oceanside, California

Community College Outstanding Performance

Jazz Ensemble

Riverside City College

Charles Richard Riverside, California

Undergraduate College Winner

Blair Big Band

Vanderbilt University Ryan Middagh Nashville, Tennessee

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Fredonia Jazz Flextet

The State University at Fredonia Nick Weiser Fredonia, New York

Jazz Band I

Central Washington University Brian Lawrence Ellensburg, Washington

Graduate College Winner

Jazz Lab Band I

University of Northern Colorado Dana Landry Greeley, Colorado

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KU Jazz Ensemble I

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The Frost Vocal Quintet Small Vocal Jazz Group

Small Vocal Jazz Group Kate Reid, director

Janelle Finton, "I Love You" Jazz Arrangement

Kate Reid, faculty mentor

Graduate College Winners

Mikailo Kasha, Jazz Soloist (Upright Bass) Chuck Bergeron, faculty mentor

Frost Extensions, Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble Kate Reid, director

Outstanding Soloist: Daniel Fiamengo on "Round Midnight"

Gary (Kaiji) Wang, "Pearls" Jazz Arrangement, Studio Orchestra

Jazz Arrangement, Studio Orchestra Stephen Guerra, faculty mentor

Undergraduate Outstanding Performances

Emma Hedrick, Vocal Jazz Soloist Kate Reid, faculty mentor

Will Ryan III, Vocal Jazz Soloist Kate Reid, faculty mentor

Frost Jazz Vocal II

Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble Kate Reid, director

Outstanding Soloist:Jameson Falconer on "The Kicker"

Joey Curreri (Trumpet)

Joey Curreri Quintet

Outstanding Soloist, Small Jazz Combo Brian Lynch, faculty mentor

The American Music Ensemble,

Blues/Pop/Rock Group Daniel Strange, director

Graduate Outstanding Performances

Bailey Hinkley Grogan, Vocal Jazz Soloist Kate Reid, faculty mentor

Katie Oberholtzer, Vocal Jazz Soloist Kate Reid, faculty mentor

Frost Jazz Vocal 1, Small Vocal Jazz Group Kate Reid, director

Mikailo Kasha Trio, Small Jazz Trio Chuck Bergeron, faculty mentor

Tason Arkins (Alto Saxophone)

The Frost Septet

Outstanding Soloist, Small Jazz Combo Chuck Bergeron, director

Tim Watson, (Guitar)

The Frost Septet Outstanding Soloist, Small Jazz Trio Chuck Bergeron, director

Casey Dickey, "I've Never Been in Love Before" Outstanding Jazz Arrangement, Studio Orchestra Stephen Guerra, faculty mentor

Connor Rohrer, "Too Soon To Tell" Outstanding Original Composition, Small Ensemble Chuck Bergeron, faculty mentor







ASYNCHRONOUS LARGE Jazz ensemble

Undergraduate College Winner

Jazz Band I

Central Washington University Chris Bruya Ellensburg, Washington

Graduate College Winner

Jazz Big Band

Washington State University Greg Yasinitsky Pullman, Washington

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Jazz Asynchronous Ensemble I

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Dave Loeb and Nathan Tanouye Las Vegas, Nevada

VOCAL JAZZ SOLOIST

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Eckstein Middle School Moc Escobedo Seattle, Washington

High School Winner

Tessa Korver

Roosevelt High School Jean-Marie Kent Seattle, Washington

Performing Arts High School Winner

Chelsea Chiu

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High School Honors Winner

Jesse Iroanyah

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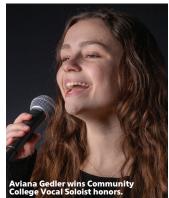
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Elijah Thiessen

Southwestern Community College School for Music Vocations Jeremy Fox Creston, Iowa

Undergraduate College Winners

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Western Michigan University Gregory Jasperse Kalamazoo, Michigan

June Cavlan

University of Miami,

Frost School of Music Kate Reid Coral Gables, Florida

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Dominique Bianco

George Mason University Darden Purcell Fairfax, Virginia

Emma Hedrick

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

Will Ryan III

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

Graduate College Winners

Gracie Jay

North Carolina Central University Lenora Helm Hammonds Durham, North Carolina

Kira Goidel

University of North Texas Rosana Eckert Denton, Texas



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DB AWARD WINNERS — LARGE ENSEMBLE

THE WINNING MUSIC SCHOOLS IN THE Large Jazz Ensemble category share a common denominator: They all place a strong focus on creating a musical environment built on continuity and community.

Heath Wolf has been the director of bands at Farmington Junior High in Farmington, Utah, since 1999. During his tenure, he has led the Junior High Jazz Ensemble to wins in the Large Jazz Ensemble category in three of the last four years. The ensemble has also performed at the Midwest Clinic and the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival in recent years. In addition, the school's Concert Band and Percussion Ensembles have also achieved state and national recognition.

"We focus on building a culture of trying to play the best you can — and to have fun doing it. I don't preach competition," Wolf said. "However, it does make me happy that they want to play and compete. I just want them to love music, appreciate it and keep playing as long as they can."

Preston Pierce, associate band director at Plano West Senior High School in Plano, Texas, has also built a strong music program. Plano West students won 11 Student Music Awards combined in 2020 and 2021. The Plano West Jazz Orchestra has also been a finalist in several Essentially Ellington Competitions over the last few years and was selected to play at the JEN Conference in 2018 and 2022.

Since the Plano High School system is split into 9th and 10th grade students at a feeder school, with 11th and 12th grade students then moving on the Plano West, Pierce is only able to teach music students for two years. He decided to start a summer music camp to help build continuity in the music program and also developed a partnership with the Herbie Hancock Institute.

"With the help of jazz drummer Stockton Helbing, I started a summer combo camp to connect with the freshmen and sophomore music students — and junior high kids as well — before they got to Plano West," Pierce explained. "And with the Hancock partnership, we were able to create all-star middle school and high school groups. It really gave the kids the tools they needed to grow as musicians."

Paul Contos, director of the SFJAZZ High School All-Stars Band in San Francisco, doesn't have to confront the issue of connecting with students before they are part of the All-Stars Band, or working to attract potential music students. The SFJAZZ program is free of charge, and the annual August audition process attracts hundreds of students from the extended Bay area to compete for the 20–25 slots in the band.

Designed as a pre-professional program, the All-Star Band — as well as a SFJAZZ All-Star combo — rehearses once a week during the school year at SFJAZZ, playing winter and spring concerts there, recording a professional studio album and embarking on a yearly tour.

"It's definitely a competitive program," Contos said. "Once a student goes through the audition process and becomes a member of the band, they aren't assured a spot the following year. They have to go through the audition again and be accepted to continue. Despite the intense competition, the students grow together musically and support each other throughout the year."

Steve Torok, chair of the music department at MiraCosta College in Oceanside, California, has built a strong community college program after joining the teaching faculty in 2008. Since DownBeat began awarding Community College Student Music Awards in 2015, MiraCosta has won a total of 15 awards in various categories — including vocal jazz, outstanding jazz soloist, and a 2017 Large Jazz Ensemble award for the Oceanside Jazz Orchestra, which won again this year. In addition, the music program has won several engineered recording awards.

"When I first started at MiraCosta, the school didn't even have a jazz ensemble," recalled Torok. "The musical emphasis was on choral music and especially music technology, since the school had a great recording studio. I formed a small jazz band that rehearsed in the afternoon, started plugging away and developed it into the Oceanside Jazz Orchestra. At the same time, we increased our commercial jazz emphasis, as well as [built] our focus on recording technology classes."

Ryan Middagh, chair of the Department of Jazz and Global Music at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music in Nashville, joined that faculty in 2014, replacing Billy Adair after his death. Under Middagh's leadership, a new jazz curriculum was created, and professional musicians such as saxophonist Jeff Coffin and bassist Roger Spencer were added to the faculty. In 2017, the Blair Big Band won the Undergraduate College Large Jazz Ensemble award and received an Outstanding Performance award last year.

"At Blair, it's all about progress year to year," Middagh said. "There are a ton of incredible musicians in Nashville in all areas — including jazz. By bringing them in as faculty members, and leveraging other Nashville musicians for clinics and workshops, we can really work to make students well-rounded musicians and expose them to professional best practices."

According to Middagh, another unique aspect of the Blair Big Band and other combos is that they are open to all students at Vanderbilt — not just music majors.

We get students playing in the big band and combos who are in the engineering school and from science studies," Middagh added. "That speaks to the [role] that music can play in a well-rounded educational experience. It creates a great synthesis between what they're majoring in and their passion for music."

—Terry Perkins





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graduate college
outstanding performance



WMU Advanced Jazz Ensemble Small Jazz Combo - graduate college winner



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Graduate College Outstanding Performances

Bailey Hinkley Grogan

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

Katie Oberholtzer

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

SMALL VOCAL JAZZ GROUP

Community College Winner

Jazz-ology

Contra Costa College Dr. Stephanie Austin San Pablo, California **Outstanding Soloist:** Jesse Chao on "Ain't No Sunshine"

Community College Outstanding Performance

Vocal Jazz Ensemble

American River College Art LaPierre Sacramento, California

Undergraduate College Winner

The Frost Vocal Quintet

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

Graduate College Outstanding Performances

Frost Jazz Vocal I

University of Miami, Frost School of Music Kate Reid Coral Gables. Florida

West Mulberry Trio

University of North Texas Lynn Seaton Denton, Texas

Outstanding Soloist: Rachel Azbell

ASYNCHRONOUS SMALL VOCAL JAZZ GROUP

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Vocal Jazz Ensemble

North Carolina Central University Dr. Lenora Helm Hammonds Durham, North Carolina

Outstanding Soloists: Grace Jessop and Lillian Park on "Naima"

LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE

High School Winner

Voltage

Liberty High School Robert Williams North Liberty, Iowa Outstanding Soloists: Deucalion Martin and Tyson Baker on "Come Back to Me"

High School Outstanding Performance

Vocalese

Valley High School Heather Nail West Des Moines, Iowa

Outstanding Soloist: Lanie Anthan on "Tight and Agua de Beber"

High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performance

Iowa All-State Jazz Choir

Various Iowa High Schools Guest Conductor: John Stafford II Kansas City Kansas Community College Kansas City, Kansas

Community College Winner

Singcopation

Mt. San Antonio College Bruce Rogers Walnut, California

Outstanding Soloist: Estelle Ocegueda on "World on our Shoulders"

Community College Outstanding Performance

The Standard Vocal Jazz Ensemble

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

Community College Outstanding Soloist

Eva Luna Smith

Soloist on "Hurry on Down" The Lyrical Workers Long Beach City College Andrea Calderwood Long Beach, California

Undergraduate College Winner

Advanced Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Berklee College of Music Ned Rosenblatt Boston, Massachusetts

Outstanding Soloist: Gabrielle Dodaro on "Never Give All the Heart"

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Frost Jazz Vocal II

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

Outstanding Soloist:

Jameson Falconer on "The Kicker"

Jazz & Tonic

California State University, Long Beach, Bob Cole Conservatory of Music Jonathan Arenas Long Beach, California

Outstanding Soloist:

Alyssa Curielon "New Day"

Undergraduate College Outstanding Soloists

Mady Frei

Soloist on "The World Keeps You Waiting"

Now's the time.











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The Vail Jazz Party

"Funny How Life Works Out"

Howard Stone and wife Cathy did not set out with the intent of founding a full-blown Vail Jazz Festival. "We had on numerous occasions attended Dick Gibson's Jazz Party; we loved spending our Labor Day weekends listening to jazz, "notes Howard. Gibson retired in '93, bringing an end to a 30-year run. "One snowy night in '95, I was sitting around with friends. I drank way too much wine and the next thing you know I had made the commitment to throw the Vail Jazz Party the following Labor Day weekend." The commitment was intended to be a one-off event, with no plan for an encore the following year.

"It's funny how life works out," muses Howard.



The Party that Started it All

The first Vail Jazz Party (VJP) was held at the Westin Hotel (now the Grand Hyatt) in Vail. Twenty-seven great jazz musicians performed that weekend including John and Jeff Clayton, who would go on to co-found the Vail Jazz Workshop. Other notable year-one performers were Tommy Flanagan, Slide Hampton, Jack McDuff, James Moody, Joe Wilder and Phil Woods, to name a few.

"I had a chance encounter with John Clayton at the end of our first Party. I didn't know him personally at that point, having only seen him as a member of the audience. When I thanked him for his participation, he asked me, "Will you do this again?" I was so high from the three days of music and the feeling of community we engendered, that I blurted out, "I know what I'm going to do with the rest of my life."

Build It and They Will Come...

Howard recalls that the initial community interest in the Party was light. "History is important here. The 1995 summer season in Vail ended in mid-August because families were returning home for the start of the school year. There was a significantly smaller year-round population back then." In those early years the burgeoning Jazz Festival was known as Howard's [Stone's] Foley. "I thought about quitting many times early on because it hurt to see those remarkably talented musicians play to a sparse crowd," Howard remembers. But he never did quit. "Maybe I am just too stubborn." Slowly, the audience for both the summer Festival and the culminating Vail Jazz Party began to grow.

A One-of-a-Kind Celebration

The VJP is unique in that it presents a combination of bands that all play together. Soloists take the stage as well, sitting in with the bands; everyone jams together. VJP also presents original, themed programming, such as Wycliffe Gordon's Nu Funk Machine dance party, multimedia shows, a Sunday morning gospel "prayer meetin" and late-night jam sessions. The atmosphere is one-of-a-kind as well. "The audience is such a major part of the VJP because of the intimacy of our settings and the very special opportunity to 'hang' with the musicians," Howard explains.

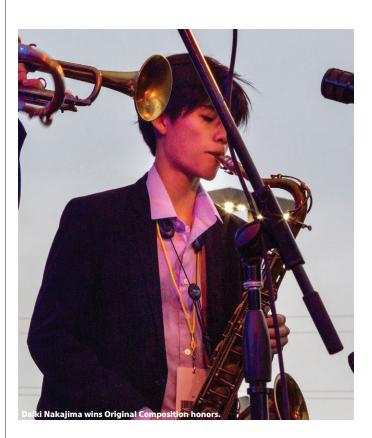
Come for the Music, Stay for the Friendships

Ask VJP "regulars" why their attendance has become tradition and a common answer may surprise you. "I meet the most interesting people, year after year," says Bettan Laughlin, a Vail resident who has attended every VJP. Twenty-seven years later, Labor Day festivities draw hundreds of jazz lovers to Vail.

Special rates for lodging (Hythe hotel in Vail) and transportation (Epic Mountain Express) are available for Vail Jazz Party patrons.

More information and discount codes at VailJazz.org.

Be Part of the Experience Purchase Your All-Access Pass at VailJazz.org



Cal Poly Vocal Jazz Ensemble California Polytechnic State University Arthur White San Luis Obispo, California

Matthew Ahn

Scat soloist on "Boplicity" Point of Departure Vocal Jazz Berklee College of Music Michael Johnson Boston, Massachusetts

Graduate College Winners

Frost Extensions

University of Miami, Frost School of Music Kate Reid Coral Gables. Florida

Outstanding Soloist: Daniel Fiamengo on "Round Midnight"

Pacific Standard Time

California State University, Long Beach, Bob Cole Conservatory of Music Christine Helferich Guter Long Beach, California

Outstanding Scat Soloist: Joe Buzzelli on "So in Love"

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

UNT Jazz Singers

University of North Texas Jennifer Barnes Denton, Texas

Outstanding Scat Soloist: Tyler Thomas on "Too Close for Comfort"

Graduate College Outstanding Soloist

Vi Dang

Soloist on "A Few More Miles" Vocal Lab University of Northern Colorado Marion Powers Greeley, Colorado

ASYNCHRONOUS LARGE VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Community College Outstanding Performance

The Standard Vocal Jazz **Ensemble**

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

Outstanding Soloist: Maddie Huwe on "Magnolia"

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

Cal Poly Vocal Jazz Ensemble

California Polytechnic State University Arthur White San Luis Obispo, California

Graduate College Winner

Pacific Standard Time

California State University, Long Beach, Bob Cole Conservatory of Music Christine Helferich Guter Long Beach, California

Outstanding Soloist:

Dakota Noxon on "Reflections of Dizzv"

Outstanding Soloist:

Natalie Gonzalez on "The Times They Are A Changin"

Outstanding Duo Scat Soloists:

Anna Crumley & Joe Buzzelli on "Where I Belong"

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Vocal Lab

University of Northern Colorado Marion Powers Greeley, Colorado

Outstanding Soloists:

Jillian Shiveley and Hannah Rodriguez on "Art's Groove"

BLUES/POP/ROCK SOLOIST

Junior High School Winner

Griffin Kelleher

Guitar Derby Academy Brian Martin Hingham, Massachusetts

High School Winner

Owen Underwood

Guitar Plano West High School Preston Pierce Plano. Texas

High School Honors Winner

Ava Preston

Vocalist Solon High School Dominick Farinacci Cleveland, Ohio

Community College Winner

Jessie Glennon

Flectric Guitar Kansas City Kansas Community College Justin Binek Kansas City, Kansas

Community College Outstanding Performances

Calvin Haverkamp

Electric Guitar Kansas City Kansas Community College Justin Binek Kansas City, Kansas

Javlen Ward

Drums Kansas City Kansas Community College Justin Binek Kansas City, Kansas

Undergraduate College Winners

Coleman Hovey

Keyboard and Synthesizer

University of Massachusetts, **Amherst** Jeffrey Holmes Amherst, Massachusetts

Nick Marziani

Alto Saxophone Manhattan School of Music Donny McCaslin New York, New York

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Alison Banchero

Vocalist Central Washington University Mark Samples Ellensburg, Washington

Delacey Lora

Vocalist Kutztown University of Pennsylvania Kevin Kjos Kutztown, Pennsylvania

Hannah Rodriguez

Vocalist, Guitar, Piano and Bass University of Northern Colorado Marion Powers Greeley, Colorado

Graduate College Winner

Denin Slage-Koch

Guitar

University of Northern Colorado



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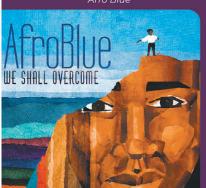
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Junior High School **Honors Winner**

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

High School Winner

American Music Ensemble

St. George's Independent School Tom Link and Nathan Dumser Memphis, Tennessee

Performing Arts High School Winner

Combo Prime

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

Evan Wharton

Salt Lake City, Utah Max Headroom

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse

High School Honors Ensemble Outstanding Performances

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Performance ChiArts Jazz Combo

Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse

Anthony Bruno Chicago, Illinois

Evan Wharton Salt Lake City, Utah Crescent Super Band Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse

Caleb Chapman Salt Lake City, Utah

Deep Pocket

High School Honors Ensemble Winners Lo-Fi Riot

The Chicago High School for the Arts

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

Community College Winner

Blue Devil Funk Band

Kansas City Kansas Community College Justin Binek Kansas City, Kansas

Community College Outstanding Performances

KCKCC Luck20

Kansas City Kansas Community College Jim Mair

Kansas City, Kansas

Samuel Anderson Band

Kansas City Kansas Community College Justin Binek Kansas City, Kansas

Undergraduate College Winner

Blues and Rock Ensemble I

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania Kevin Kios Kutztown, Pennsylvania

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performances

Alison Banchero Band

Central Washington University Mark Samples Ellensburg, Washington

The American Music Ensemble

University of Miami, Frost School of Music Daniel Strange Coral Gables, Florida

Graduate College Winner

UNC Funk Lab

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LATIN

Undergraduate College Winner

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University of Northern Colorado Brian Claxton Greeley, Colorado

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Contemporary Ensemble

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Julian Tanaka Las Vegas, Nevada

ASYNCHRONOUS BLUES/POP/ ROCK/GROUP

Undergraduate College Winner

Blues and Rock Ensemble I

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania Kevin Kjos Kutztown, Pennsylvania

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

The Columbia College Fusion Ensemble

Columbia College Bill Boris Chicago, Illinois

Graduate College Winner

NYU Pop/Rock Ensemble

New York University Steinhardt Justin John Moniz New York, New York

Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Contemporary Ensemble

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Julian Tanaka Las Vegas, Nevada

LATIN GROUP

High School Honors Ensemble Winner

Fat Cats Combo

Afro Latin Jazz Alliance Jim Seeley New York, New York

Undergraduate College Winner

UTA Latin Combo

University of Texas at Arlington Christian Valdes Arlington, Texas

Undergraduate College Outstanding Performance

UMASS Vocal Group

University of Massachusetts, Amherst Catherine Jensen-Hole Amherst, Massachusetts

Graduate College Winner

Latin Jazz Lab Band

University of North Texas José Aponte Denton, Texas















DB AWARD WINNERS — THE ARRANGERS

DEEP STUDY, EUROPEAN CLASSICAL FOUN-dations and vocal a cappella treatments were some of the common themes among this year's Jazz Arrangement honorees.

Graduate College winner Eliana Fishbeyn, a composer-pianist from Manhattan School of Music, had a unique source for her arrangement of Jaco Pastorius' "Three Women" — a 90-second live YouTube recording of the late bass pioneer playing his original composition on piano.

"It just sounds like a series of ideas," she said of the piece, which she first heard at a friend's gig. "It doesn't really have a form, and some of it feels like it's just gluing little random ideas together in a really cohesive, nice way. But you do, in this case, have to expand both the idea of what the piece is and the orchestration of it"

"Eliana really took it from this raw material of him just sitting at the piano, and I think really did an amazing job with it," said renown arranger Jim McNeely, a faculty member at MSM

Fishbeyn was studying classical piano and composition as an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill when she discovered jazz. "As a relative newcomer to the jazz world, she's really dug into the history of it. I think her classical upbringing has influenced her in terms of form," McNeely reflected. "And she's now really in the process of creating her own voice."

Another Graduate College winner, drummer Marcello Carelli, studying at the University of Southern California, recorded his arrangement of Cole Porter's "It's All Right With Me" for his album *The Era* while attending the University of Miami's Frost School of Music as an undergraduate. "He obviously has great talent, and that great talent is informed by a lot of listening," observed Peter Erskine, di-

rector of drum set studies at USC's Thornton School of Music. "So he's a musician who has an excellent grasp of the vocabulary — and the tradition of the music. He's able to utilize the different things in his playing, as well as in his writing, that I think reflects a fair amount of breadth as well as depth. "There are no good shortcuts for that. You've got to learn the language of it. And that takes a lot of listening.

Double threat trumpeter-vocalist Janelle Finton also chose a Cole Porter classic, the composer-lyricist's "I Love You." An Undergraduate winner from the Frost School, the jazz trumpet major wrote an a cappella arrangement for three soprano and three alto voices.

"I was very fortunate that all my vocal jazz program high school directors allowed me to bring in my arrangements," Finton said. "It was a really cool experience as a high schooler. People were singing something that I just wrote in my room."

The vocal octet version of "I Love You" that she submitted to the DBs combined two recording sessions: an earlier asynchronous and a later live one. The experiment in studio technology would likely get a nod of approval from one of her artistic inspirations, musical wizard Jacob Collier. "I think that's why Jacob Collier inspires me. He has all these different color palettes and doesn't just have to be one thing, though he still does have a sound," she said.

Vocalist Damien Blair, a Performing Arts High School winner from Milwaukee High School of the Arts, also submitted an eightpart a cappella arrangement. His choice of the Mancini/Mercer classic "Moon River" didn't surprise Raymond Roberts, MHSA vocal music director

"Damien gravitates toward good music, from any time period and in any style," he said. "He wanted to do something kind of classic and treat it with a blend of extended vocal jazz harmonies, but then also nod toward contemporary a cappella types of arrangements. I hadn't heard many vocal jazz arrangements of this particularly song. That's one thing that makes Damien unique. He is an amazing singer who gravitates towards all genres: classical, musical theater, jazz, gospel.

"It's nice for him to have this arrangement acknowledgement as a singer, because it's an area of musical creation that's dominated by instrumentalists," he noted.

Trumpeter Skylar Tang, a sophomore at Crystal Springs Upland School in the San Francisco Bay Area, has already been recognized by DownBeat for performances in late March at the NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concert and last September at the Monterey Jazz Festival as a member of the festival's Next Generation Jazz Orchestra. Due to time restraints, she was only able to submit in the Arrangement category, she said.

"I felt like I could play around with the harmony," she replied, when asked why she chose the Tizol/Ellington classic. She had arranged it for the SFJAZZ High School All-Stars Combo, in which she plays. That group's instrumentation mostly mirrors the classic SFJAZZ Collective model with a trumpet/trombone/tenor/alto front line and a piano/double bass/drums rhythm section. The combo features guitar rather than vibraphone. "I especially like writing for guitar blending with the horns," she said.

Tang started on piano before picking up the trumpet. And she's still expanding her palate.

"I'm always messing around on different instruments in the practice room," she said. "I've been trying to teach myself a little bit of everything that I'm writing for, and that has honestly really helped my arranging."

—Yoshi Kato

CONGRATULATIONS

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY BLAIR SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Director of Jazz Studies Ryan Middagh

WINNERS

Undergraduate Large Jazz Ensemble Blair Big Band

Undergraduate Composition – Small Ensemble Kevin Shinskie, "Cannon's Groove"

Undergraduate Composition – Small EnsembleJonathan Salcedo, "Mambo No Nombre"

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Graduate College Outstanding Performance

Latin Jazz Ensemble

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Uli Geissendoerfer Las Vegas, Nevada

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION — SMALL ENSEMBLE

High School Winner

Alex Heidelbaugh, "Goliath"

Plano West Senior High School Preston Pierce Plano, Texas

High School Outstanding Composition

Sean Kiefer, "Salsa Picante"

Denver Senior High School Dan Cooper Denver, Iowa

Performing Arts High School Winner

Luke Sterling, "Apotheosis"

Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Alex Hahn Los Angeles, California

Performing Arts High School Outstanding Composition

Wyatt Pepper, "Camperdown Elm" Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School

Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts Kevin Blancq New York, New York

High School Honors Winners

Asher Pereira, "The Leopard and The Crane"

Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts West Palm Beach, Florida David Valdez Lenexa, Kansas



Brandon Goldberg, "Circles"

Pine Crest School Ft. Lauderdale, Florida Giselle Brodsky Aventura, Florida

High School Honors Outstanding Compositions

Brenda Greggio, "Save It For A Rainy Day"

Young Lions Jazz Conservatory Gilbert Castellanos San Diego, California

Gabriel Severn, "Venture"

Loyalsock Township High School Eddie Severn Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Kaela Seltzer, "High Water"

Colburn Community School Lee Secard Los Angeles, California

Sebastian Blue Hochman, "Nitemare"

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

Community College Winner

Joshua Wong, "Mystical"

Los Angeles City College Jake Leckie Los Angeles, California

Community College Outstanding Performances

Henry Fears, "Frost"

Kansas City Kansas Community College Jim Mair Kansas City, Kansas

Jordan Faught, "Apology Peach"

Kansas City Kansas Community College Jim Mair Kansas City, Kansas

Undergraduate College Winners

Kevin Shinskie, "Cannon's Groove"

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Ryan Middagh Nashville, Tennessee

Jonathan Salcedo, "Mambo No Nombre"

Vanderbilt University Ryan Middagh Nashville, Tennessee

Undergraduate College Outstanding Composition

Keegan Carter, "Destino de la Suerte"

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

Graduate College Winner

S'yo Fang, "Tree"

Conservatorium van Amsterdam Jurre Haanstra Amsterdam, Netherlands

Graduate College Outstanding Composition

Connor Rohrer, "Too Soon To Tell"

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

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION — LARGE ENSEMBLE

High School Honors Outstanding Composition

Joe Durben, "Tachyon" Buffalo High School

Buffalo High School Aaron Hedenstrom Buffalo, Minnesota

Undergraduate College Winner

Daiki Nakajima, "Nostalgic Already"

Stanford University Dann Zinn Stanford, California

Undergraduate College Outstanding Compositions

Camila Cortina Bello, "Bop & Hop"

Berklee University Greg Hopkins Boston, Massachusetts

Daniel Hofecker, "Politics"

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

Graduate College Winner

Eliana Fishbeyn, "Unknown Knowns"

Manhattan School of Music Jim McNeely New York, New York

Graduate College Outstanding Composition

Tobias Hoffmann, "Relentless"

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

JAZZ ARRANGEMENT

High School Winner

Adam Zilberman, "Ugly Beauty"

Westlake High School Brian Peter Thousand Oaks, California

High School Outstanding Arrangement

Oliver Kringel, "Gunslinging Bird"

Rio Americano High School Josh Murray Sacramento, California

High School Honors Winner

Skylar Tang, "Caravan"

Crystal Springs Upland School, Hillsborough, California Mike Galisatus Redwood City, California

High School Honors Outstanding Arrangement

Brenda Greggio & William Schwartman, Let's Cool One

Colburn Community School Lee Secard Los Angeles, California

Performing Arts High School Winner

Damien Blair, "Moon River"

Milwaukee High School of the Arts Raymond Roberts Milwaukee, WI

Undergraduate College Winners

Eric Banitt, "Darn That Dream"

University of Michigan

Ellen Rowe Ann Arbor, Michigan

Janelle Finton, "I Love You"

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

Undergraduate College Outstanding Arrangement

Peter Lehmann, "Up A Lazy River"

Ball State University

Mark Buselli Muncie, Indiana

Graduate College Winner — Vocal

Joe Buzzelli, "Night and Day"

California State University, Long Beach Bob Cole Conservatory of Music Christine Helferich Guter Long Beach, California

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James Abernathy, "Castaways"



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Community College Small Vocal Jazz Group

Outstanding Soloist - Jesse Chao

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





University of Florida Scott Wilson Gainesville, Florida

Graduate College Winner — Small Ensemble with Strings

Kenton Luck, "After the Rain"

University of Southern California Vince Mendoza Los Angeles, California

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangement — Small Ensemble with Strings

Cheuk Yin Ho & Sora Kim, "The Christmas Song"

New York University Michael Wolff New York, New York

Graduate College Winner — Medium Ensemble

Marcello Carelli, "It's All Right With Me"

University of Southern California Peter Erskine Los Angeles, California

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangement — Medium Ensemble

Alex Annan, "Everything I Love"

University of Northern Colorado Erik Applegate Greeley, Colorado

Graduate College Winner — **Big Band**

Eliana Fishbeyn, "Three Women"

Manhattan School of Music Jim McNeely New York, New York

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements — Big Band

Addison Tharp, "L's Bop"

University of Southern California Michael Stever Los Angeles, California

Tom Call, "Mo Ghile Mear"

University of Northern Colorado Drew Zaremba Greeley, Colorado

Graduate College Winner — **Studio Orchestra**

Gary (Kaiji) Wang, "Pearls"

University of Miami, Frost School of Music Stephen Guerra Coral Gables, Florida

Graduate College Outstanding Arrangement — Studio Orchestra

Casey Dickey, "I've Never Been in Love Before"



THANK YOU!

DownBeat would like to thank our world-class adjudicators for making the 45th Annual Student Music Awards a great success.

Jim Anderson Jeff Baker Janice Borla Don Braden Jeff Coffin Claire Daly John Daversa **Orbert Davis** Miho Hazama Les Hooper Fred Irby III **Bart Marantz** Miles Osland **Bob Parsons** Dave Rivello Albert Rivera John Santos **Gregory Tardy** Roger Treece

Ryan Truesdell James Warrick



The SMTD Jazz Program has a strong spirit of collaboration across genres and traditional boundaries. Both my peers and professors have encouraged me to explore the areas of music that speak most to me."

- Eric Banitt (BFA '22)



Outstanding Collegiate Big Band Arrangement Recipient

smtd.umich.edu/jazz









University of Miami, Frost School of Music Stephen Guerra Coral Gables, Florida

ENGINEERED LIVE RECORDING

Community College Outstanding Recording

Joe Straws

Kansas City Kansas Community College Justin Binek Kansas City, Kansas

Undergraduate College Winner

Joshua Weinfeld

Vanderbilt University Ryan Middagh Nashville, Tennessee

Undergraduate College Outstanding Recording

Van Barnes

Butler University Matthew Pivec Indianapolis, Indiana

ENGINEERED STUDIO RECORDING

Community College Winner

Aviana Gedler

Southwestern Community College

School for Music Vocations Jeremy Fox Creston, Iowa

Undergraduate College Winner

Keegan Carter

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

Undergraduate College Outstanding Recording

Esteban Castro

The Juilliard School Ted Rosenthal New York, New York

Graduate College Winner

Ursula Reicher

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

Graduate College Outstanding Recording

Joe Buzzelli

California State University, Long Beach Bob Cole Conservatory of Music Christine Helferich Guter Long Beach, California

JUDGING CRITERIA

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

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

ENGINEERING CRITERIA

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

AWARDS & PRIZES

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

HIDGES

Jim Anderson: Professor with the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music, President of the AES Educational Foundation.

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

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

Don Braden: Saxophonist, flutist, composer, arranger; Director, Harvard Jazz Combo Initiative. Jeff Coffin: Saxophonist, composer, bandleader, educator/clinician.

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

John Daversa: Chair, Department of Studio Music and Jazz, Frost School of Music, University of Miami. Orbert Davis: Emmy Award-winning trumpeter, composer, educator; co-founder and conductor of the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic.

Miho Hazama: Composer, arranger, bandleader, Chief Conductor of Danish Radio Big Band, Permanent Guest Conductor of Metropole Orkest.

Les Hooper: Composer and arranger for film, TV, commercials, orchestra and recordings; clinician.

Fred Irby III: Howard University coordinator of Instrumental Music, trumpet instructor and Director of the Howard University Jazz Ensemble.

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

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

Bob Parsons: Saxophonist, arranger and composer. Dave Rivello: Eastman School of Music Assistant Professor of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media, and Director, New Jazz Ensemble.

Albert Rivera: Saxophonist, composer, educator; Director of Operations, Litchfield Jazz Camp. John Santos: Percussionist, clinician, label owner;

U.S. Artists Fontanals Fellow; writer/historian.

Gregory Tardy: Recording artist, Assistant Professor of Jazz Saxophone, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Roger Treece: Arranger/composer, UNC Jazz Press author and educator

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

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

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Blindfold Test > RY GARY FIJKIJSHIMA

Rudresh Mahanthappa's Hero Trio (Part 2)

previously on The Blindfold Test: Our three heroes, led as always by the indubitable alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa, and ably assisted by his sideman sidekicks François Moutin and Rudy Royston, added to their legerdemain with a perfect four-for-four on last month's treacherous playlist, a feat they accomplished even while blindfolded (figuratively speaking). After easily nailing the mysterious Ornette Coleman and killers Jerry Bergonzi and Melissa Aldana, a bit of high drama occurred as their last unknown audio assailant proved elusive until Mahanthappa deduced the culprit to be Chris Speed at the 11th hour. But this month, new and more dangerous challenges lie ahead. Can our heroes pull of a perfect score, or will they succumb to the weight expectations they've already set? Read on to find out!

Branford Marsalis

"Gutbucket Steepy" (Trio Jeepy, Sony, 1989) Marsalis, tenor saxophone; Milt Hinton, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

Rudresh Mahanthappa: Sounds like Arnett Cobb. It's not rough enough

Rudy Royston: Sounds like Turrentine right there.

François Moutin: It's not Turrentine?

Mahanthappa: It's so of another generation. It reminds me of Houston Person records, or even Lockjaw. But I could also see Seamus Blake totally playing like this, and doing it convincingly, and sounding like an old cat. I could see Josh Redman playing like this too. But I'm stumped. Moutin: It's not Ron Carter, is it? There's something in the sound ... I don't know.

[afterwards]

Mahanthappa: I would have never gotten that.

Moutin: You tricked us.

Mahanthappa: Branford definitely has his own sound, but then he can kind of inhabit all these other things, historically.

Royston: "Tain" came to my mind with that ride cymbal, but I was like, "I don't think so." I needed to hear a "Tain"-ism.

Moutin: 5 stars.

Royston: I didn't know Branford could do that. Branford was getting a lot of lip back then, going to Sting's band, and all the jazz cats were like,

Moutin: Makes me realize how much Ron Carter borrowed [from] Milt

Mahanthappa: I'm a little embarrassed; Branford and I just hung out last week.

Anna Webber

"Forgotten Best" (Idiom, Independent Release, 2021) Webber, tenor saxophone; Matt Mitchell, piano; John Hollenbeck, drums.

Mahanthappa: It's killing, whoever it is.

Moutin: European?

Mahanthappa: Sounds like Anna Webber, kind of? With Matt Mitchell and John Hollenbeck? Anna's ridiculous, she can do anything. 5 stars, 5½! I had Anna come and speak to my advance improv class last semester. She was amazing. She's actually kind of codified and demystified "free improvisation." She had this beautiful list of all these techniques to work on. Imagine Jamey Aebersold's scale syllabus, but it was techniques and strategies for free improv. It was literally just one sheet of paper, and



it was a lifetime of stuff to work on.

Moutin: Matt Mitchell is amazing.

Mahanthappa: Matt was in Bird Calls. He was practicing [his piano etudes] in sound checks for every gig we did.

Royston: He did those every day when we were in Dave Douglas' band. You just knew it was going to come [mimics atonal piano sounds]. I used to try to play with him to figure out [the time].

Jeff Ballard Trio

"Frederic" (Timshel, Pi, 2010) Ballard, drums; Jacob Sacks, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass.

Moutin: It's killing. I don't know what it is, but it's great!

Mahanthappa: That's insane. I can't even ...

Royston: And that wasn't Jeff on drums? Jeff Ballard?

[afterwards]

Mahanthappa: I never would have guessed that.

Moutin: I should have guessed that.

Royston: I thought that was Jeff, because you can hear that staccato style. When Jeff plays, he plays "off" the drums. Everything is precise and staccato.

Moutin: Beautiful. 5 stars. Royston: I've got to get that.

Joshua Redman

"Mantra #5" (Trios Live, Nonesuch, 2014) Redman, soprano saxophone; Matt Penman, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums.

Royston: Sounds like Branford. Moutin: Ravi? Not Ravi Coltrane?

Royston: That's definitely Brian Blade. Mahanthappa: Is that McBride?

Royston: Joshua? That's not Hutch on drums?

[afterwards]

Mahanthappa: Oh, god, Matt sounds amazing. That sounds great. I don't know Josh's playing well enough to recognize it, to tell you the truth. But he always sounds great.

Royston: Hutch man, wow. We're friends. He came to Denver when I was in high school. He was playing with Roy [Hargrove's] band. We had this jam session in Diane Reeves' basement. I was trying to play all this "Tain" stuff. Roy was there. Then, Hutch comes in, he's got the flu. He has this big bomber coat on, he sits on my drums and my cymbals and he just [gestures a seriously minimal ride pattern]. I wanted to leave after that. That was a lesson learned right there. I went upstairs and ate some of Diane Reeves' cooking.

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



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