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DOWNBEAT

JANUARY 2023

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JANUARY 2023

Inside

ON THE COVER

24 Fred Hersch & esperanza spalding *Dreaming of Water*

BY GARY FUKUSHIMA

There is a true personal and musical fondness that 67-year-old Fred Hersch and 38-year-old esperanza spalding have for each other. It's a friendship that now has been documented on *Alive At The Village Vanguard* (Palmetto), an intimate lightning-in-a-bottle gig captured at the famed New York club in 2018.



Thumbscrew celebrates a decade of ambitious collective musical creation.

Cover photo of Fred Hersch and esperanza spalding by Erika Kapin

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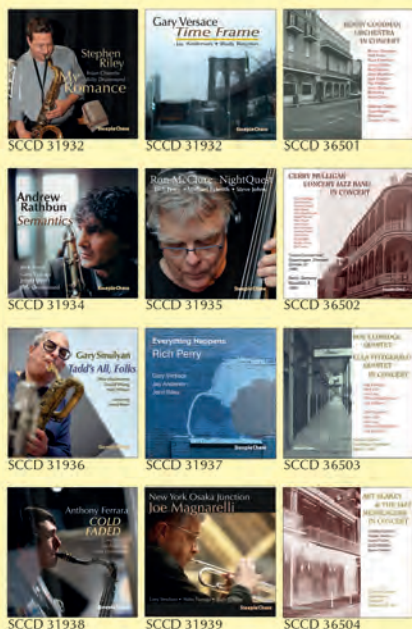
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First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER

Connections run deep between Paquito D'Rivera, left, and Chucho Valdés.



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Doin' Jazz Geography

THERE'S A THEORY CALLED SIX DEGREES of separation whereby any two people on earth can be connected to each other through six acquaintances or fewer. If you play that game with jazz musicians, take this piece of advice: Bet the under.

The world of improvising musicians is so nomadic and so far flung that there's a great chance that musicians have not only met, but also shared a stage somewhere on this planet, if only for an evening.

The pages that follow illustrate the point. For starters, there's a sweet letter to the editor (page 10) from Paquito D'Rivera, who takes out a moment to praise his friend Alex Acuña, who was featured in the November issue. D'Rivera and Acuña, of course, have crossed paths many times. Catch them both, for example, on Acuña's *Los Hijos Del Sol: To My Country* (NIDO, 2002) or Lalo Shifrin's *Latin Jazz Suite* (Aleph, 2017).

Trumpeter Jon Faddis also appears on that Lalo Shifrin record, and he and D'Rivera ring another one-degree-of-separation bell. Back in 2009, Faddis and D'Rivera appeared in Chicago to honor the 100th anniversary of Benny Goodman's birth. Their pre-performance press conference provided one of the most beautiful moments this writer has ever experienced in music. Both men spoke lovingly about Goodman, with Faddis commenting on the tune "Stomping At The Savoy."

"Wanna have a go?" Faddis asked D'Rivera. "Yeah," Rivera replied. "That's the beauty of this music. We don't know what we are going to play, but I bet it's going to be fun. What key?"

"Whiskey," Faddis said. They chuckled and launched into a heart-warming musical

conversation.

D'Rivera's connections run deep in this issue. His new album with Chucho Valdés, *I Missed You Too* (Sunnyside, 2022), lands on page 47 as one of DownBeat's Best Albums of 2022. The recording reunites two old friends who first became famous as founding members of the seminal Cuban jazz group Irakere. And for those musicians looking to 'shed a bit, Jimi Durso has transcribed D'Rivera's terrific clarinet solo on the tune "I Missed You Too" (page 80).

Beyond Paquito, these pages are loaded with reunions and longtime associations. On page 13, guitarist Jakob Bro and tenorman Joe Lovano were brought together by the late drummer Paul Motian. So, to honor him, they recorded a lovely record of Motian's music, *Once Around The Room* (ECM, 2022). We celebrate the 10th anniversary of Thumbscrew (page 32) — with Mary Halvorson, Tomas Fujiwara and Michael Formanek — which came together after they gigged with Taylor Ho Bynum's sextet. Guitarist Doug Wamble (see page 38) delivers blues with a jazzman's heart on his latest, *Blues In The Present Tense*, and reunites Branford Marsalis with longtime bandmates Jeff "Tain" Watts and Eric Revis.

And this month's cover celebrates two people who truly enjoy each other's company: Fred Hersch and esperanza spalding. They sat for a conversation that delved deep into music, but also the deeper connections playing music fosters.

"I love you, and I admire you so much, you know that," spalding said to Hersch at one point in the conversation. Their mutual respect and admiration would be well-served throughout the rest of the world.

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Photograph by Melanie Fazio

Chords & Discords >

Paquito Lauds Acuña, Ouellette

Due to his versatility, good taste, sense of humor and energy without exceeding the frequent abuse of volume in contemporary music, Alex Acuña is one of my favorite percussionists. That is why I greatly enjoyed Dan Ouellette's article in the November 2022 DownBeat, where the beloved Peruvian musician speaks eloquently about the advantages of sight-reading musical scores as well as his love for literature — Borges, Sartre, C.S. Lewis, et al. — which opens the minds and sensitivity of the musicians as well as expanding our vocabulary when



we have to express ourselves in public. Kudos to Alex and Dan!

PAQUITO D'RIVERA
VIA EMAIL

'Caliente!' Love

Kudos, for your inclusion of "Caliente!" [a special section on Latin jazz] in the November issue. It afforded a greatly appreciated spotlight to artists in need of greater recognition. Moreover, it served to introduce me to artists with whom I was unfamiliar. Please consider making "Caliente!" a recurring feature.

LARRY G
THE BRONX, NEW YORK

with Cameron Brown, John Beasley, Dewey Redman, Sy Johnson, Doug Wamble, Hank Jones (solo and with Joe Lovano), Elio Villafra, Edmar Castaneda, Herlin Riley, Organ Monk, Leni Stern, Mimi Jones and many more. Full performance videos from the awards remain on view at the JJA's 2022 Jazz Bash website, which on Sept. 11 hosted more than 200 attendees to an online event featuring this year's awardees including Jon Batiste, Terri Lyne Carrington, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Melissa Aldana, Kenny Garrett, Nicole Mitchell and panel discussions, live musical performances from five U.S. cities, a room of jazz elders telling stories, photo exhibits and more.

Awardees honored by the JJA going on three decades are profiled and indexed at jja-jazzawards.org.

The JJA Jazz Awards, produced independently of any institution or publication, has received generous support from entities like Berklee College of Music, the New School Jazz Program, Stanford Jazz Workshop, Cornish Institute, Jazz Foundation of America, the Joyce and George Wein Foundation, SFJAZZ, Jazz Institute of Chicago, PDX Jazz, Earshot, JazzBoston, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Monterey Jazz Festival, Kuumbwa Jazz Workshop, San José Jazz, the Jazz Cruise, ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, HIP Health Care of New York, Century Media Partners and labels including Blue Note, Mack Avenue, Resonance, HighNote/Savant, Delmark, Pi and Arkadia.

The JJA, promoting the interests of journalists covering jazz, wishes the Jazz Music Awards well. There cannot be too much celebration of jazz. However, promoting itself as the "first full-scale awards ceremonies devoted solely to celebrating jazz music and the artists who create it" does a disservice to 27 years of JJA efforts and its funders to celebrate jazz in all its glory, live and in the media as well.

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Jakob Bro, left, and Joe Lovano lead *Once Around The Room*, a tribute to Paul Motian.

For the Love of Motian

The sui generis septet album *Once Around The Room* (ECM) references the beautiful Paul Motian song “Once Around The Park,” so titled for Motian’s description of his daily 8-mile run around the perimeter of Manhattan’s Central Park.

Co-led by Joe Lovano and Jakob Bro, the date gestated in the early spring of 2021, as Bro, walking with his infant son around Copenhagen, pondered a follow-up to *Uma Elmo*, an atmospheric, textural trio date with trumpeter-electronics master Arve Henriksen and drummer Jorge Rossy.

“I’ve admired Joe for as long as can I remember,” Bro said via Zoom from his Copenhagen home, referencing Lovano’s 30-year tenure in the Paul Motian Trio with

Bro’s lodestar guitar hero, Bill Frisell. He himself played electric guitar in Motian’s Electric Bebop Band — usually with Ben Monder and Steve Cardenas, as on *Garden Of Eden* (ECM) — for much of the 2000s, and brought Motian on board with such luminaries as Lee Konitz, Mark Turner and Frisell for *The Stars Are All New Songs* (Loveland) and *Balladeering* (Loveland) in 2008 and 2009, respectively. Bro’s only prior bandstand encounter with Lovano transpired in 2009 over four days at a Copenhagen club, although they’d broken bread on several Bro pilgrimages to the Motian-Frisell-Lovano trio’s annual stand at the Village Vanguard.

“I’d been back and forth with Joe about doing something together ever since, and as it

was the 10-year anniversary of Paul’s passing, I had the idea to approach him with the idea of celebrating Paul,” Bro said. “When I got back from my walk, I wrote Joe an email, and he was interested.”

For the Copenhagen session, Bro invited three bassists, all Motian alumni: on acoustic, Thomas Morgan and Larry Grenadier, frequent presences in different Bro-led trios in recent years; on electric, Anders Christensen, an old friend who’d toured with Bro in Motian’s band. For the drums, he paired Rossy (who, since joining Bro a few years ago, has been using heavy drumsticks that once belonged to Motian) with Joey Baron, a friend of Lovano’s since the 1970s, who performs on Bro’s ECM albums *Streams* and *Bay Of*



"All these musicians are about listening," Jakob Bro said of the septet on *Once Around The Room*.

'He thought of playing the drums as notes. That deep root is why he played so amazingly through the years.' —Joe Lovano on Paul Motian

Rainbows with Morgan on bass. Both are devotees of, as Rossy once put it, Motian's "total openness of space and, at the same time, the thickest, hugest, best-feeling beat you can have in terms of pulse."

"Paul had his own feeling," Lovano said from a Fort Worth hotel room, the morning after performing a commissioned orchestral piece by Douglas Cuomo with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. "He opened up the rhythm and didn't just play beats. He thought of playing the drums as notes. That deep root is why he played so amazingly through the years. In Paul's trio with Bill and me, we'd have themes and then create music pretty freely together. That idea became our group's foundation, and most things I've done since then have contained that element. All these cats were informed by that way of playing from listening to us."

"At first the idea was to write music

inspired by Paul, but we recorded on Nov. 10, the same day that Paul passed," he continued. "It turned out to be a tribute after we started to play. We felt we had Paul's embrace to do what we wanted. I flew to Copenhagen from Paris, where I'd played with Chucho Valdés on part of his *Creation Suite*, and on the flight I was thinking about how we could start the session. I wrote an orchestration called 'Sound Creation' — no written notes, just an order of things, once around the room with the personnel, as we were set up. We spoke it down and then improvised the piece. That set the tone for the day. Especially the way the basses and the drummers communicated and the way Jakob plays — it felt like I was playing with a trio or quartet."

The question was how seven musicians could convene with no prior rehearsal and achieve a sufficient balance and equilibrium to create some 80 minutes of cogent, cohe-

sive music mostly executed in one take. But they did, then Manfred Eicher, ECM's proprietor-sound guru, and Bro whittled down the music in post-production to sculpt a vinyl-friendly six-song, 40-minute album.

"Usually, I'm very open in the studio," Bro said. "I'll start playing a piece, and hopefully what I'm doing is strong enough for the people to forget whatever anxiety they might have, and start making music and listening. All these musicians are about listening. Twice as many people could have been in the room and it still would have worked without a rehearsal. On this session, there was a lot of sound and a risk of people overlapping if we all played at the same time. It's because we want the energy to be there. We want the chaotic feel of seven people in the same room playing together at the same time. But then, if people think that's all we're doing, they'll just lay out — and if too many people lay out, it's going to be silence. So, somebody has to take responsibility and do something."

"Joe's arrangement was an icebreaker," Bro added. "He said, 'Let's start with me, and then Jakob comes in, and then the drums come in and the drums fade out, and then the bass comes in ...' He had ideas for where we would go in and out. That was fun, but also nerve-racking. This was the first thing we did, and Joe started defining the key in a way, not telling me which one it was, and I had to come in — with no idea about keys and tonalities — and make some music with him. I feel it turned out beautifully, and I learned so much from doing that. I have so much respect for Joe and the harmonic language he's created."

COVID-19 restrictions kept Eicher from attending the session, but he came to Copenhagen for mixing, also viewing Bro's rehearsals with trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg, percussionist Marilyn Mazur and cellist Anja Lechner for a recording made on Bro's own dime. "Manfred quickly saw that we had too much material, and wasn't interested in doing a double album," Bro said. "He's very intuitive. We pointed out pieces, he really liked one and we mixed it; and then, 'Let's do one of Joe's,' and we mixed it. Basically, when we'd mixed 40 to 50 minutes, Manfred was satisfied — 'We have enough music, and we probably also have too much.' He was doing the sequence while we were mixing."

The group will reunite in May for six nights at the Village Vanguard, the mise en scene for so much of the back story of *Once Around The Room*. Bro plans to document the last three nights, so perhaps ECM will revisit the project in a different context.

"It's too good an opportunity not to record it," Bro said. "The music will take off in a completely different way. I need that on tape."

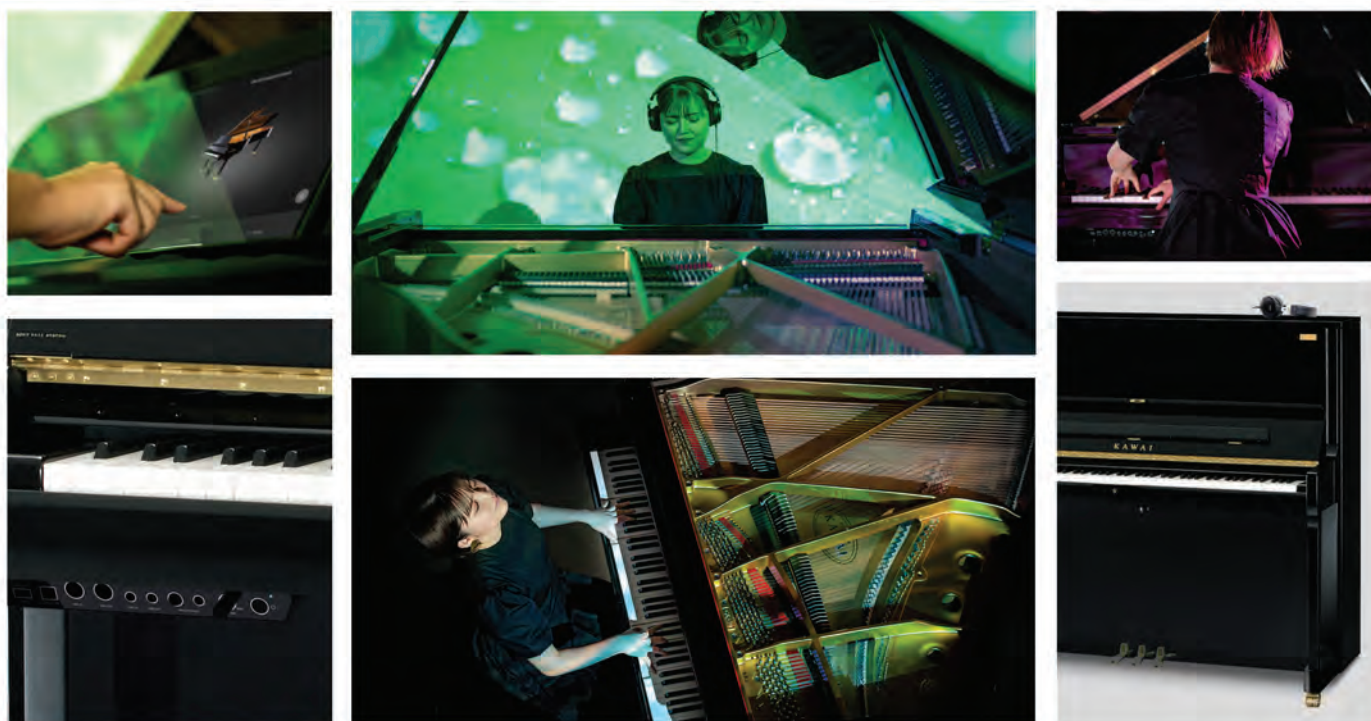
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Center for Classical Music, a spacious wood-paneled hall in the city's Midtown West neighborhood, Japan-based pianist-composer Satoko Fujii led an ensemble of heavyweight, first-call talent in an exhilarating single work, "One Hundred Dreams," recorded for what will become her 100th release, *Hyaku*.

Fujii's hour-long composition was marked by careening shifts in mood, tone, colors and soloist expression — at times a maelstrom of exploding dynamics and swirling action, at others, a sea of tranquility reflected in hushed moments and meditation.

Performed by a cast including trumpeters Wadada Leo Smith and Natsuki Tamura, saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock, bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck, laptop innovator Ikue Mori, acoustic bassist Brandon Lopez, and drummers Tom Rainey and Chris Corsano, "One Hundred Dreams" moved in tight ensemble sections split by unaccompanied solo terrain, each musician giving full breadth to the work. Fujii most often conducted, the players breaking off into solo sections seemingly at will, each energized by the pint-sized composer's electrifying composition and clever use of space.

Highlights abounded, from Chris Corsano's buzzsaw gyrations and Ikue Mori's buzzing globe of errant sounds to Wadada Leo Smith's hall-filling pronouncements, all gratefully documented by Grammy-winning recording engineer Joseph Branciforte. The results were scheduled for a December album release on Fujii's Libra Records and made possible through a grant from the

Robert D. Bielicki Foundation.

A prolific composer and performer, Fujii marked her 50th birthday in 2008 by releasing a half dozen recordings. A decade later she celebrated her 60th year by releasing a new album every month. She drew on a different, darker sustenance for *Hyaku*.

"The music that we played last night, I composed during the pandemic," Fujii said outside her Manhattan hotel the following morning. "The pandemic was a big emotional shock for me. I didn't expect that to happen. Some people expected something like that would happen, but not me. I didn't think anything like that would ever happen."

"Sometimes I had depression," she continued. "But at the same time, I took it in good way. I was so busy before the pandemic. I'd been touring every month. I never had time to stay home. So, I was very happy to be at my place, at home in Kobe."

How did "One Hundred Dreams" reflect her pandemic experience?

"Well, I wrote music before the pandemic," Fujii said. "After Fukushima [the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011], I wrote music. When Fukushima happened, I was in Tokyo, and we were so scared. That was a real nightmare. Of course, emotionally, I get something and it comes into my music. That actually affects me to write something."

At DiMenna Center, "One Hundred Dreams" began as a maelstrom, a cacophony, soon detouring into unaccompanied solos from each musician. Smith's bracing, lonely trumpet ruminations cut through the hall like swords of light.

Rainey's drumming, animated and dramatic, was contrasted by the smaller, intense motions of Corsano. Mori cast her web in noise and exotic sounds, while bassoonist Schoenbeck seemed to reframe the music's passion and force with consolation and warmth.

"Even during the pandemic, when I had depression, I still had hope," Fujii said. "After the pandemic, we would have a better world, I thought. So that was kind of hope. But, of course, I had many different feelings."

Recipient of a 2020 Instant Award in Improvised Music in recognition of her "artistic intelligence, independence and integrity," Fujii has, over the course of 26 years, released music with a stunning range of collaborators. Among them, seven albums with the trio of bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Jim Black; five albums by Fujii's avant-rock quartet featuring drummer Tatsuya Yoshida of The Ruins; eight solo recordings; and, eight duets with her husband and creative partner, Natsuki Tamura. Fully one-fifth of Fujii's recorded output — more than 20 albums — feature her compositions for large ensemble.

Upcoming Fujii recordings include a solo concert recorded in Matsuyama, Japan, and a duo work with multi-instrumentalist Otomo Yoshihide.

While Fujii's ensembles have consistently produced work of unswerving brilliance, she has also achieved stunning results with pick-up bands. Fujii's 100th release features one of the finest New York pick-up bands ever assembled, in an inspired performance for the ages.

—Ken Micallef



Hailing the Poetry of Leonard Cohen

THERE'S A REASON WHY, FOR MORE THAN five decades, Leonard Cohen's songs have been covered by countless artists across the musical spectrum. Nina Simone's ethereal "Suzanne" comes to mind, as does Johnny Cash's "Bird On A Wire," Roberta Flack's "Hey, That's No Way To Say Goodbye," Nick Cave's acoustic version of "Avalanche," Lana Del Rey's "Chelsea Hotel No. 2" and R.E.M.'s "First We Take Manhattan." And then there are the many artists who have recorded renditions of the iconic "Hallelujah," including Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, Jeff Buckley, k.d. lang, John Cale and Rufus Wainwright. *Here It Is: A Tribute To Leonard Cohen* (Blue Note) offers new windows into Cohen's catalog, with inspired interpretations of his music and a production that celebrates his songs while honoring his poetry.

The album was produced by musician, composer and Grammy winner Larry Klein, who shared a close friendship with Cohen. Here, 12 carefully selected cuts span the breadth of Cohen's oeuvre, from the 1967 debut *Songs Of Leonard Cohen* to his final album, *You Want It Darker*, released just days before his passing in 2016. With an exceptional level of musicianship, 10 diverse vocalists and a stellar ensemble of jazz musicians dig into Cohen's classics.

The featured artists span generations and genres. Cohen inspires a deep dive into the human condition, eliciting passionately felt and profoundly expressed performances that are also very different. Norah Jones opens with a delicate, wistful rendition of "Steer Your Way," followed by Peter Gabriel's haunting vocals on the title track. Steeped in gospel, Mavis Staples delivers "If It Be Your Will" as a prayerful supplication. Punk godfather Iggy Pop offers an aptly dark, gravelly "You Want It Darker." David Gray takes on "Seems So Long Ago, Nancy," followed by Nathaniel Rateliff's soulful "Famous Blue Raincoat."

The country-tinged "Coming Back To You," performed by James Taylor, hits the bottom of Taylor's range. Gregory Porter's nuanc-

es permeate "Suzanne." And Sarah McLachlan graces "Hallelujah."

The core band is, according to Klein, "a group of the most prescient and forward-looking musicians in the jazz world" featuring guitarist Bill Frisell, bassist Scott Colley, drummer Nate Smith, saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins and pianist Kevin Hays, with contributions by Larry Goldings on organ and Greg Leisz on pedal steel. "It was important that the core band think of music in a non-generic sense, that they didn't see specific lines between genres, hearing music as music, and also that they'd be able to work off of words" in developing a musical language together that re-contextualizes Cohen's poems.

Cohen's musicality and melodic talent, often overlooked, is perhaps most apparent on the album's two instrumental tracks. "Bird On The Wire," the album closer, features Frisell — a perfect conduit. "Bill has such a beautiful, understated lyricism to his playing that I knew just having him interpret that simple melody would be something touching," Klein reflects.

The second instrumental, "Avalanche," led by Wilkins on alto, showcases the 24-year-old and the timelessness and relevance of Cohen's music. Wilkins remembers hearing "Hallelujah" and "Suzanne" at his middle school talent show, students singing the songs "like they were the newest thing on the radio." What inspired Klein to enlist this promising young musician? "I could tell from his playing, and what he was doing in his own music, that he wasn't a player who felt he needed to prove something, and that he'd be able to access the poetic aspect of the project," Klein recalls.

"I once read that the purpose of poetry is to deepen the humanness in us. Leonard's poems certainly do that," says vocalist Luciana Souza, who delivers a tender rendition of "Hey, That's No Way To Say Goodbye." Touching the core of Cohen's universal allure, she notes that "we are invited to a quiet and powerful reconnection with our humanity — something much needed these days."

—Sharonne Cohen



★★★★★

Melissa Stylianou leaned into the *Great American Songbook* for a collection of brilliant reinventions.
—DownBeat Magazine

Vocalist Melissa Stylianou joins guitar master Gene Bertoncini and virtuoso bassist Ike Sturm for an intimate trio encounter. *Dream Dancing* documents the trio's effortless rapport as they explore well-loved standards and a moving Bertoncini original, "For Chet" (an homage to the guitarist's one-time employer, Chet Baker).



ANAT COHEN'S WORLD-FOLK BAND DEBUTS ON THE SPELLBINDING QUARTETINHO

Anat Cohen presents *Quartetinho* (pronounced "quar-te-CHIN-yo," i.e., little quartet) - featuring an international group of multi-instrumentalist-virtuosos. Bassist Tal Mashiach, pianist/accordionist Vitor Gonçalves, vibraphonist/percussionist James Shipp and Cohen share a deep love for music in all its heterogeneity and it's all amply documented on *Quartetinho*, which includes originals by Cohen, Mashiach and Shipp along with material by the great masters Antonio Carlos Jobim, Egberto Gismonti and more. The result is boundlessly melodic and lyrical, with a wide array of timbres and subtle details of orchestration.



The Many Lives of Little Freddie King, New Orleans Blues Royalty

THE ELDER STATESMEN OF NEW ORLEANS

blues — Little Freddie King and Guitar “Lightnin” Lee — are both octogenarians. But King has seniority and bragging rights over friendly rival guitarist Lee, a native New Orleanian who just turned 80.

“We’re not grown until we get 80,” King explained at his home in the New Orleans’ Musicians Village shortly after he mesmerized the overflow crowd celebrating his 82nd birthday at BJ’s, his longtime 9th Ward headquarters. “So, thank God I made 82.”

Little Freddie King is also the undisputed monarch of New Orleans blues, whose down-home, gut-bucket style emerged from the fertile crescent of the Mississippi. Born Fread E. Martin in Bo Diddley’s hometown of McComb, he crafted his first guitar from a cigar box tossed out by two “big shots” in a Cadillac while he was walking home from a seven-mile trek to the nearest store. The guitar was a project born out of neces-

sity — after his guitar-picking father gave him a whipping and revoked his picking privileges for breaking the old man’s strings.

“I just play what come to me from my heart,” King said about a sound that evolved over decades of hard living and hard drinking. (He got sober 48 years ago.) “And it come out clear, there’s no false sound to it. I’ve been dead so many times, it’s crazy.”

Again and again, King snatched life from the jaws of death, surviving a bloody litany of shootings, stabbings, electrocutions, near-fatal accidents and killer hurricanes, all while gigging almost constantly and recording a prodigious catalog of work that dates back to 1971, a year after he started his 50-year run at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

Blues Medicine serves as King’s latest release on Made Wright Records, a label he jointly owns with his drummer/manager, Wacko Wade. Back in 1993, Wade abandoned his career as an R&B

drummer to play with King. In 2021, King was also enshrined on 180-gram vinyl by Newvelle Records, shortly before the prestigious jazz label recorded Jon Batiste, who King calls “that Black kid from Kenner.”

Sporting a red vest, vintage tie and trademark flat-brimmed straw hat, the ever-dapper bluesman welcomes friends to a home bursting with memorabilia, outrageous stage wear and a world-class guitar collection that includes a custom Dr. Bones model. Back in the kitchen, the one-time TV repairman and auto mechanic tinkers with his Flying V guitar, the sole survivor of his Hurricane Katrina-destroyed home. Even after such tragedy, King spins fantastic tales about his long, almost-mythic life.

Let’s go back to the very beginning, when those big shots threw away that cigar box.

When I spotted that box in the ditch, I said, that’s just what I need to make my own guitar. So I

bring it home and cut holes in it with bottle glass, pulled pickets off the fence for my neck and made little tuner keys out of hickory. Then the horse started swishing horse flies off his tail, and when I hear that sound I said, wow, maybe I make strings out of them hairs. So I pulled some out, put 'em on and tightened 'em up. And when I plucked it, it made a sound! [laughs] But those hairs are delicate, so I kept going back for more until I pulled a great big bald spot in the horse's tail. And I said, "Uh-oh, now I'm gonna get another beating. But

help me." And wasn't five minutes before a white dude come by in a Cadillac and said, "Mister, you hurt? Want me to call the paramedic?" I said, "No, just pull me out the street, so another car don't come by and finish me off." Another guy helped me get up, and I got a piece of the same lumber that nearly killed me and made a crutch out of it.

Then I called Wacko [Wade], and he took me to the emergency room. They wanted to operate but I didn't want to stay, so he took me home, and

'The gut bucket, see, is really tribulation from stress and hard times.'

when my daddy got home he got so high on that corn liquor that he didn't pay no attention. He just run out like Gene Autry, jumped up on the horse and went down through the woods. So I missed that whooping.

They say a cat has nine lives, and you may have already outlived nine.

Yes, Lord, I'm telling you. One time, I went to the hospital with a hemorrhage, but the doctors couldn't stop the bleeding. So I prayed, "Lord, please spell my life a little longer." The next morning, when the vampires come, that's what I call the nurses, I said I ain't got no blood. The good Lord stopped me from bleeding. And they brought about 30 or 40 doctors and nurses to see me because they couldn't believe it.

You keep amazing people, like that time you nearly electrocuted yourself.

I was high, and I had to tune this man's TV and forgot it was plugged in. So when I grabbed it, boom! This big, blue-and-purple ball of fire popped outta my mouth. [laughs] Then my heart started beating fast and funny. So I called the cab and went over to Charity Hospital and the doctor said, "What's your problem?" I said, "I just got hit by 500 volts." And he said, "You didn't get hit by no 500 volts, because you would be dead." I said, "Well I ain't dead." Then I passed out and fainted.

That's pretty scary. What was your scariest close call?

My bicycle accident [in 2017]. I had to play at [the nightclub] DBA that night, so I goes down early to get my cigarettes, going as fast as I can go. When I got halfway there, I didn't see this lumber piled on top of a garbage can, and all that wood hit me and bust me up inside. I was in the middle of the street so I said, "Jesus, please

I laid on the couch for three days squeezing this little rubber ball to get my fingers back. I had to. We were going to play a New Year's Eve show at this jazz festival in [Orvieto] Italy. I played wearing a neck brace, and I couldn't bend my fingers right. But I just pushed through and faked it. Sounded good! We played the whole week at a cafe that packed 'em in. 300 people a night.

I love the title of the new album, *Blues Medicine*, because all music, and the blues in particular, really does have the power to heal.

That's the inside we put in. It's better than the doctor's prescription, a dose of medicine that will make you well. All the songs [on the album] are brand new, except for two. "Dust On The Bible" was originally done by Hank Williams, and "Caress Me Baby," that's a Jimmy Reed song. But they should be considered new because of the way I play them.

They've been Freddie-fied. There's no mistaking a Little Freddie King song.

The gut bucket, see, is really tribulation from stress and hard times. You don't have nowhere to stay. You got to lay out there and sleep with your head on a hollow log. Get up the next morning for breakfast you gotta drink muddy water. So that's gut bucket blues, all that heart and soul.

You've spread that heart and soul all over the world. Got a personal highlight?

Bourbon Street in Sao Paolo [Brazil]. It's a real high-end club with ladies in long dresses and high heels that also has this free block party for the people of Sao Paulo. We play on a small stage by the club, but they put up big-screen TV sets so the party stretches for blocks. That's a good one, mmmhmm. 80,000 people. [laughs]

—Cree McCree



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GABRIELA GABRIELAA

"One of our main goals is to invite people into the music who may not have known they liked jazz," says Cohen.

Emmet Cohen's Living Room Jazz

A PRESSING QUESTION IS ROUTINELY faced by musicians deprived of live music outlets during COVID times: "What did you do during the pandemic?" For the virtuosic and engaging pianist Emmet Cohen, the answer involves unusual degrees of resourcefulness and productivity. Not long into the pandemic, a restless Cohen turned his Harlem apartment into the weekly livestreaming affair known as "Live from Emmet's Place," which became hugely popular. Guest musicians joined his trio with bassist Russell Hall and Kyle Poole, each week, building momentum and an audience. He garnered more than 5 million views for a session with vocalist Cyrille Aimée and magnetized a vast online audience, especially by jazz standards.

These days, Cohen is back out on the road, old-school touring style, and has a new album on Mack Avenue, aptly called *Uptown In Orbit* — both a sly reference to Duke Ellington's *Blues In Orbit* and a play on Cohen taking his "uptown" Emmet's Place concept on the road and into orbit.

The in-house project became a training ground for the new album. As he says, in creating and building the weekly series, "The moving parts were many, including learning/practicing music, reaching out to and confirming guests, improving sound/video quality each week, fundraising, creating promotional content — mailing list, social media, etc. This album represents a cathartic release of all of the listeners in our 'orbit.'"

Born in Miami and raised in Montclair, New Jersey, Cohen studied both jazz and classical piano growing up and earned his master's at the Manhattan School of Music. His easy mastery of the keyboard and sensitive interpretive powers have earned him a place

in the crowded ranks of important young jazz pianists, performing with such artists as Christian McBride, Joe Lovano, Jimmy Cobb and Eddie Henderson.

Just within the past two years, his livestreaming adventure has expanded his reputation and ushered in listeners not necessarily attuned to jazz.

"One of our main goals is to invite people into the music who may not have known they liked jazz," Cohen says. "We like to make it fun and accessible, but also finding ways to challenge the listener as well. We love to provide a link back to the American masters. After hearing our versions of these tunes, they may go spend more time with Duke Ellington, Cedar Walton or Miles Davis. They might be more inclined to check out other musicians in our community as well."

While *Future Stride*, his 2021 Mack Avenue debut, featured trumpeter Marquis Hill and saxophonist Melissa Aldana, the new album features a quintet including trumpeter Sean Jones and saxophonist Patrick Bartley. Cohen notes that "after a couple years of 'Emmet's Place' recording sessions, I've learned to sit back and let the musicians do what they do, and that the result will always be surprising, in a natural and beautiful way."

Cohen adds, "More than the instrumentation, I think it's the musicians who inspire me. Patrick and Sean are artists who I feel like bring out the best in the trio in this moment, just like Melissa and Marquis were a couple of years prior."

True to the pianist's jazz history-spanning leanings, *Uptown In Orbit* is framed by early jazz workouts, opening with Jelly Roll Morton's "Finger Buster" and closing with a piano trio arrangement of Ellington's "Braggin' In Brass." Retrospective impulses come naturally to Cohen, who explains, "We play the music we love and

connect with. Willie 'the Lion' Smith, James P. (Johnson), Mary Lou (Williams) and so many others inspire me pianistically, artistically, and also as entertainers."

"There's also the mythological continuity surrounding our Harlem rent parties. We've entered the Roaring '20s again, 100 years later, doing our version of these house concerts — in the same neighborhood. I live on Edgecombe Avenue in Harlem, and so did Duke Ellington — just a few blocks up."

The new album's setlist veers through the jazz canon with Cohen's inventive touches in tow, including a playful, extra-behind-the-beat take on Neal Hefti's "Li'l Darlin'" and Cedar Walton's "Mosaic." He addresses his delicate balance of reverence for tradition and a re-thinking instinct, noting that "a study of the history is very important to any art form, but an over-reverence can sometimes run the risk of inhibiting an artist's ability to be present in the current environment."

"For me, I've enjoyed covering much of the history of the music in various formats, but there are also times where we play sets of entirely original music."

At 32, Cohen admits, "I still feel like I'm at the very beginning of my journey. My main goal is still to connect, play with and learn from the jazz masters, but a new goal has emerged: to share the things I've learned with the younger generation." His plans include intentions to "compose more, arrange for larger ensemble and connect with some musicians from different cultures."

"I'd also love to expand 'Emmet's Place' to be an online jazz club with different bands playing every week, as well as a media outlet for musicians to write and talk about the music."

—Josef Woodard

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Tomeka Reid

MacArthur Honors for Reid: Cellist, composer and bandleader Tomeka Reid was the sole jazz artist represented in the 2022 MacArthur Fellows awards, one of the highest honors an artist can receive. The award comes with a no-strings-attached stipend of \$800,000, paid out over five years.



Verve By Request Relaunches: Verve Records/UMe and Third Man Records have partnered to reissue the Verve By Request series, offering rare and requested jazz albums in new, and sometimes first, vinyl pressings. In November, the labels launched with Alice Coltrane's *Ptah, The El Daoud* from 1970 and Roy Brooks' *Beat* from 1964. Two titles will be released each month.

Arnold J. Smith: The jazz publicist, educator and writer passed away on Oct. 4 in Brooklyn, New York. He was 83. He served as DownBeat's East Coast Editor during the 1970s and was a founding member of the Jazz Journalists Association. Smith taught jazz history for more than a quarter century at the New School in New York as well as New Jersey City University. Smith amassed some 10,000 jazz records during his life, donating his collection to the University of Nevada Las Vegas several years ago.

Michael G. Nastos: The jazz DJ and journalist passed away in November. He was 70. Nastos enjoyed a long career as a DJ in the Michigan area for radio stations like WCBN-FM and WEMU-FM. In 1979, Nastos moved to New York to work as the publicist for Karl Berger's Creative Music Studio briefly before returning to Michigan. He served as the music critic for the Ann Arbor News, wrote liner notes and served as the Detroit correspondent for DownBeat and Cadence.

COURTESY ACT RECORDS



Siggie Loch (left) and Andreas Brandis. Inset: ACT's 30th anniversary album.

ACT Turns 30, Looks Forward

ACT Records has become one of the most significant European jazz labels during its 30-year existence. As the German label celebrates, it also moves into a fresh phase of development.

Founder Siggie Loch, entering his 80s, recently made Managing Director Andreas Brandis an official partner in the company. The process of handing over the reins began in 2015, when Brandis joined ACT, moving from Deutsche Grammophon.

Loch himself has a background with WEA, in the 1980s, so the pair share a similar grounding in mainstream record companies.

Prior to Jazzfest Berlin in November, Loch and Brandis sat down to discuss ACT's history, as well as its future.

"I started looking for a successor when I turned 70," says Loch. "I had no intention to either let my life's work end with me, nor sell it to anyone. ACT is my life, and my life is not for sale. It took a while and there really was no one suitable for a couple of years."

At the same time, Loch realized that the industry had changed, and the only way a label could survive is by becoming a 360-degree music company offering artists everything they needed, including live music opportunities.

"Eventually, a trusty friend from the music business recommended Andreas, whom he knew and valued from working with him in several constellations. So I called him up, and we met. It turned out that Andreas had the exact same view, and I knew after just an hour of talking, for the first time, that he was my man."

Brandis concurs. "It sounds a bit like an odd movie plot, that someone offers you his most important value in life right on the spot, and just knowing you from recommendations and references. But Siggie always had, and still has, this impressive instinct for people."

When asked about the genesis of ACT, Loch

looked back at his initial ambition. "I got the jazz bug from Sidney Bechet at the age of 15 during a concert in Hannover," he says. "My first record was *Summertime* on Blue Note. After reading the story of Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff, I started dreaming about my own jazz label. The first attempt was in 1967 when I chose ACT as the name for my label, but then I was offered the job as founding managing director of Liberty Records, Germany, the beginning of my career as a record executive that brought me finally to the presidency of Warner Europe. I left this position in 1988 and started the first phase of ACT with two partners, and failed."

In 1992, Loch tried again, and this time the momentum stuck. The history of ACT, having issued well over 600 releases, is so crammed with notable albums that it's a bewildering task to select favorites.

One artist who brought the label to many people's attention was the Swedish pianist Esbjörn Svensson, leading the band e.s.t. in a run of remarkable albums, prior to his cruelly early demise in 2008.

There were pianists like Joachim Kühn and Michael Wollny, multi-artist concept productions Jazzpaña and Europeana, and the early fusions of French guitarist Nguyễn Lê. Later signings included the Swedish players Nils Landgren (trombone) and Lars Danielsson (bass).

Landgren has just released *ACT30: Three Generations*, another multi-artist concept album, uniting players from the history of ACT, in a feast of collaborative action.

Considering the future of ACT, Loch is optimistic. "It was a relief to have found a person who could continue the work of ACT," he says. "But, of course, at the same time, I cared too much, and still do, to just let everything happen."

—Martin Longley

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Dreaming



of Water

By Gary Fukushima Photos by Erika Kaplan



"It's difficult to name any pieces written in the past three decades that one might add to the jazz canon," said Fred Hersch.

Fred Hersch was in good spirits, appearing relaxed on the video screen from his New York City loft. The pianist turned 67 just the day before, and celebrated in his usual fashion — by playing at the storied Village Vanguard in Greenwich Village, this time in a trio with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Johnathan Blake.

"I feel like this week at the Vanguard," he said, matter-of-factly, "I'm pretty much at the top of my game. I really feel like, you know, a different level."

Hersch has been around the highest levels of jazz for more than four decades, as an innovative pianist, composer and educator. "Fred was a big figure for me shortly after I arrived in NYC in 1988, in a few respects," said Brad Mehldau, perhaps his best and most famous student, in an email to DownBeat. Mehldau detailed how Hersch and he "focused on using the whole piano, getting away from the normative way of small-group jazz piano playing." One can hear how Mehldau developed, in part, his own intricate contrapuntal approach to the piano in the way Hersch has expanded the possibilities on the instrument in his own playing, especially in solo or duo settings.

Hersch's last duo project featured a recent

tour and recording in Europe with trumpeter Enrico Rava, who said to him, "It doesn't matter what you play, it's how you play it." Hersch expounded, "It doesn't have to be a new tune to be new. I mean, there is theoretically, possibly a mind-blowing version of 'Autumn Leaves' that has not been played. So, I'm just trying to concentrate on not getting wrapped up in having to do new this, that and the other — you know, just calling things that feel fun to play."

As if on cue, his phone chimed, signaling the arrival of a third party for this conversation, someone whom Hersch said he has more fun playing with than just about anybody. Within seconds, a screen popped up labeled "irma," for *irma neando*, derived from the Spanish phrase "*ir manejando*" — translated, to drive toward. *irma* is also known as *esperanza* spalding, the vocalist, bassist and composer, who once shocked the music world by becoming, in 2011,

the first jazz artist to win a Grammy for Best New Artist (over Justin Bieber, among others), the first of six Grammy awards she has received thus far. Chatting from the airport in her hometown of Portland, Oregon, spalding was about to embark on a trip to Brazil to attend Milton Nascimento's 80th birthday party. "It makes me want to cry, saying that to you, Fred," spalding gushed. "I know you are a fan of him." They talked about their shared love of Brazilians and their music, noting how it seemed like everyone in that entire country could play an instrument and sing.

Even through the screens that connected them from thousands of miles apart, the fondness Hersch and the 38-year-old spalding have for each other shines. It's a friendship that began a decade ago, when the pianist first invited the singer/bassist to share the stage with him during his long-standing duo series at the Jazz Standard in New York. Since then, they have reprised their duet performances, including in 2018 at Hersch's 63rd birthday bash at the Vanguard, an event he had the prescience to document. "I just had a feeling," he said. "It's lightning in a bottle." Four years later, that bottle has been uncorked with the release of *Alive At The Village Vanguard* (Palmetto) featuring Hersch on piano and spalding on vocals. They were scheduled to return to the Vanguard in January before heading out on



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The recording marks the sixth live appearance by Hersch at the Village Vanguard. “Maybe tied for the most with Kenny Burrell,” he guessed. “Probably, check that out.” (We did, and Burrell recorded seven albums there, although two of them were recorded on the same night, so Hersch might have a claim.) But the album also serves as the first extended documentation of spalding as a singer of traditional jazz standards (along with several original compositions by Hersch).

As of this writing, spalding has eight albums to her name. Every single one prominently features original compositions by herself or co-written with collaborators. There are only a handful of pieces one might recognize, along with a few Brazilian standards (including the Egberto Gismonti tune “Loro,” reprised on the new album with Hersch). The most well-known jazz song she has recorded is Johnny Green’s classic “Body And Soul,” (sung in Spanish by spalding

as “Cuerpo y Alma”). In every case, these songs are rearranged and adroitly produced in the spirit of spalding’s compositional vision.

With that perspective, hearing spalding sing “But Not For Me” — with only her voice and Hersch’s piano — transforms the potentially mundane into a revelation.

After an elegant rundown of the melody, spalding begins to ad-lib — not by scat-singing, but by singing an entirely improvised counter-storyline over the form and harmony of the original tune.

“Oh me, oh my,” she croons, “What a sad case I seem to be / It’s my fault, letting love to lead the way / I should know that there’ll be skies of grey / I can’t say that I’ve seen too many, but they say a Russian play is to boast of many grey skies, alright / And then some words that I don’t really understand / [speaks to the audience] Because it’s like Old English heigh-ho, alas and lack-a-day? / That’s how I feel, confused about the whole situation.”

She takes the spirit of Ira Gershwin’s original lyrics, elaborating on them and offering snarky commentary — all while offering spell-binding improvisation on multiple levels.

“The kind of improvised word stories that are on the album,” Hersch said, “were different all the time, as I recall. Those were really off the cuff, those were not scripted — is that correct, am I right?”

“Yeah, they came from whatever was happening, you know?” spalding replied, speaking between mouthfuls of a giant burger. “I like that dangerous stuff. ... When you’re truly on the edge of your capacity is when you set yourself up to do things that you don’t know if they’ll work or not, and I like that sensation of like, ‘Whoa, how do I get out of this?’”

On Charlie Parker’s “Little Suede Shoes,” after scatting her way through the head, she sings to the audience, “See, it’s not lost on us / It’s technically a Saturday night / And you generously, or foolishly, have chosen to spend that night in a jazz club sitting cramped behind a table / Bless you.” Then, she continues over the bridge, “But since there may not be any dancing in your evening / just imagine yourself in an old Whitney Houston music video / and you’re the only one / with suede shoes on.” One can almost hear the lightbulb ding as the audience suddenly realizes the connection.

A kind of hybrid of Ella Fitzgerald-meets-Amanda Gorman, this is certainly not common to most jazz singers, maybe not even to spalding, whose body of work is markedly different from this, running the gamut from her own eclectic solo projects to composing an entire opera (*Ifigenia*) with friend and mentor Wayne Shorter to performing later this spring at Walt Disney Concert Hall on a double concerto for bass and flute by composer Felipe Lara.

“It all kind of seems like the same milieu,” she said. “It just depends on what area of the pond you’re looking at ... but it’s all kind of the same body of water. There is this kind of through-line of some essence of that type of form, those types of melodies, those types of progressions. To quote Wayne Shorter, he says improvisation is composition sped up, and composition is improvisation slowed down. So, [maybe] other people haven’t heard me do this. But to me, it’s just like, how else would I get to all the other shit that I may be able to do sometimes, without this kind of language or foundation or palette?”

“I don’t want to embarrass esperanza here,” Hersch proffered, “but [because] she has done so many successful and marvelous other kinds of projects before now, I think people are really going to perk up their ears when they hear what an absolutely fearless, awesome jazz singer she is. And I think it’s really nice that we’re just putting this out there as evidence of her amazing talents in so many directions and making a statement that all she needs is a stool and a mic and a lyric.”

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"Thank you, Fred. I love you, and I admire you so much, you know that," Spalding replied. "I [would] just complicate that a little bit by saying for some people, everything I do sounds like jazz. I feel like everything I've done is 'jazz singer.' ... Maybe people have an affiliation with a [particular] version of what being a jazz singer is, and so people who are orienting from that edition will recognize this in that dimension of my expression of this lineage. But, this isn't any more or less [of] me being a jazz singer. It's just a particular flavor of it, and I don't want to feed into any sort of narrow stereotype of what it is to be a consummate jazz singer or not. I don't need to prove that to anybody. ... If people who didn't recognize [it] before dig this [album], that's cool, but this isn't what makes me a jazz singer."

"You know, Joni Mitchell was a jazz singer ... and you are, you've always been a jazz singer in all your projects," Hersch affirmed, clarifying that he felt what they did together was "the most pared down, I suppose." Spalding brought up how most people can appreciate poetry without knowing the register of that poem, or even what "register" (the level of formality) in writing is. "It's a luxury to not have all the associations of what 'this register/that register' means," she said, "because you maybe [then] have more space to just receive what the human is offering [with] this thing called 'music.'"

Spalding's analogy to poetry sheds some light on her fascination with words and language, and how she is able to weave poetry into her conversations, musical or otherwise. "I also do this a lot in jam sessions," she explained. "I like to do with language or story what we're doing with the music, you know what I mean? It's the same thing — I mean, it's literally what we're doing when we're soloing — it's just maybe there's more room for abstraction or interpretation when it's melody versus word, but it feels like the same muscle."

"Sorry, just to say — rap artists are doing that all the time. Sorry, let's just name the lineage."

"I still play with the hip-hop people in Portland. Maybe the difference [between rapping and melodic improvising] is there isn't a shifting harmonic environment that they're responding to, but they're responding to everything else."

This cross-generational conversation ("I could be her father, easily, that's not a stretch," Hersch quipped) seems to represent the evolving perceptions — and realities — of what it means to be a jazz musician in our current time. "I first started playing jazz in 1974, which is sobering to think," Hersch remembered. "Basically, you just showed up to the gig and they called tunes. So, the job was know tunes, be able to swing, know how to comp, show up on time. That was basically all you had to do. Now, young musicians are expected to be composers, they're expected to be bandleaders, they're expected to manage their own careers, in some cases book their own gigs."

Hersch has not withheld his opinions on what he sees or hears from that new crop of jazz artists. "I think with a jazz education — which I was sort of blessedly not involved in, except as a teacher," he said, "everybody is transcribing solos, learning all this advanced theory, a lot of stuff in odd meters, and everybody has access to notation programs, so it's easy to put stuff on a page. But, compositionally, does it stick? Is it interesting? Does it move you? Would you want somebody else to play it? Could you imagine playing it again for years and years?" Granted, it is difficult to name any pieces written in the past three decades that one might add to the jazz canon, that Great American Songbook.

For Hersch, those hallowed songs are still the gold standard to unlocking the true potential of a jazz artist, both compositionally and improvisationally. "A lot of young musicians, they just sort of get through the melodic material in order to shred ... but often there's a disconnect between what the actual thematic and harmonic material is and what is played afterwards," he said.

"Fred really opened up a lot of what makes certain jazz compositions tick compositionally, by doing some motivic analysis, particularly on Thelonious Monk tunes," Mehldau said while speaking about Hersch,

the teacher. “It was all new to me and [it] stuck, as I went forward, thinking about writing and improvising motivically. That is to say, taking a certain melodic germ — maybe only three or four notes — and letting the music grow organically out of that limited amount of material, which acts as a blueprint for everything else.” Mehldau, a prolific composer, has nevertheless performed and recorded many jazz and popular music standards, and he has a similar outlook to Hersch on those tunes. “It’s not just learning the standards — that’s easy enough,” he said. “It’s learning how to find a way of playing on them that’s compelling, and a way of collectively improvising with your musical colleagues that is fresh and has meaning.”

Hersch has demonstrated this ability time and again, often with younger artists: Julian Lage, Ambrose Akinmusire, Miguel Zenón, trumpeter Avishai Cohen and, especially, Cohen’s sister, Anat Cohen, are his particular favorites. “The good ones, they understand what it’s about and don’t feel weird about playing what we would loosely call a standard. But if all you’re doing is playing [a tune] to just crunch the changes ... maybe there’s a piece missing. Just because you’re a great player does not mean you’re a great composer, and vice versa. It’s hard to do all of it.”

Spalding has proven that she can do it all. “I remember when I met esperanza,” Hersch recalled. “I was playing at the Vanguard, and she was in with Leo Genovese, and they were sitting in the corner. Back then she had a famous Afro. She just came up to me and she said, ‘Hi, I’m esperanza,’ and I said, ‘Yes, I know, thank you for coming,’ and I just thought to ask her to play with me at the Jazz Standard.”

Genovese has known spalding since they met as students at Berklee back in 2003, and he has been her friend and pianist in her band for the past 20 years. “We did play duo many times over the years,” Genovese said in a message to DownBeat. “We’d play her songs, some of mine, some of Wayne Shorter’s, some standards and a lot of open improvisations.” He might know best how deep her traditional jazz roots run. “She sounds like she has been singing standards for the whole of eternity, the way she makes them her own songs,” he said, noting she diligently studied many masters of song. “From Ella to Joni and everyone in between. She is a fantastic rapper, too.”

Everything spalding does might be, as she inferred, coming from the same pond, but did she experience anything new as she worked with Hersch? “I was talking about [this] water feeling with Fred the other day,” spalding said, in reference to some dolphins she saw in the ocean during a trip to Los Angeles. “Where every direction you move, there’s this substance around you that’s holding you. ... You can go up, sideways, down, twist, any possible

three-dimensional range of motion is available when you’re in the water.

“That was [the] sensation that emerged from our dynamics,” she said of their duo playing, “and it was such a joy to be in that with Fred.”

“Sometimes I want to be sort of like a warm bath,” Hersch replied, “and maybe other times it’s a little more turbulent — more waves and surf — but I think water is a good image for both of us. There’s a crash once in a while, and I love that. If there’s one of those moments, nei-

ther one of us backs down. There’s a beautiful thing where it’s all synchronicity, and occasionally we both go in different directions and meet somewhere else. I mean you could make all kinds of visual diagrams, but we’re really swimming and having a good time — crashing of older and newer songs, styles and attitudes, finding a common equilibrium, relishing in the joy and fun it is along the way.”

“I wanna see those visuals,” spalding laughed.

DB

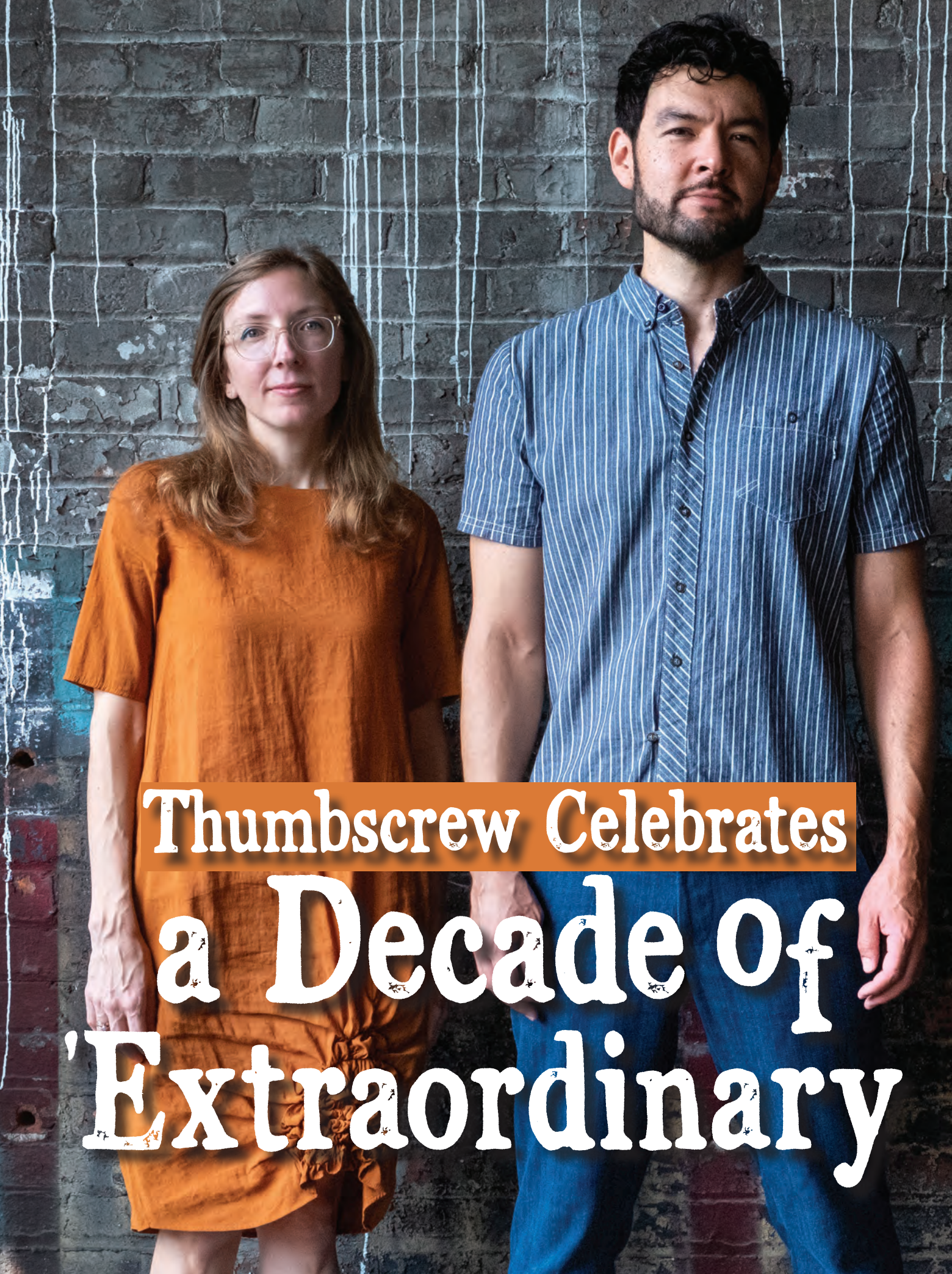
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Thumbscrew Celebrates
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Group-Think'

By Bill Milkowski | Photos by Brian Cohen



Thumbscrew is, from left, Mary Halvorson, Tomas Fujiwara and Michael Formanek.

Through countless gigs and seven studio recordings over the past 10 years, the members of the cooperative trio Thumbscrew — bassist Michael Formanek, guitarist Mary Halvorson and drummer Tomas Fujiwara — have hit on a formula that balances strictly composed, intricately arranged and finely articulated material with blistering, unbridled improvisation that often tips into the skronk/sonic-shrapnel zone.

Call it avant garde, new music or just wildly idiosyncratic, it's a collective dance based on trust and fueled by an extraordinary group-think these kindred spirits have forged over time. As Formanek acknowledged, "A lot of things don't have to be talked about much at all."

The group's 2014 self-titled debut on Cuneiform Records set the template for reacting in the moment while reading down extremely challenging charts. The trio followed with 2016's *Convallaria*, then addressed an aspect of dualism with two simultaneous releases in 2018: *Ours* (all original compositions) and *Theirs* (all covers of other jazz composers). Subsequent recordings, 2020's *The Anthony Braxton Project* and 2021's *Never Is Enough*, continued raising the bar on improvisational daring within structure.

The group's latest release, *Multicolored Midnight* (Cuneiform), incorporates some new hues into the band chemistry, courtesy of drummer Fujiwara's contributions on vibraphone, which allow for vivid unison and harmony lines alongside Halvorson's guitar on three tunes for vibes-guitar-bass trio. "Vibes, in the context of Thumbscrew, first came up when we were working on *The Anthony Braxton Project* album as a way of widening our palette and bringing as many sonic possibilities as we could to that recording," Fujiwara explained.

"I've always loved playing the vibes, so it was a perfect opportunity to focus on that more. As a composer, I find the vibraphone really speaks to me in a way that the piano doesn't. I hear harmony much more clearly and much more creatively on vibes than I might on the piano. So getting to write not only *on* the vibes but *for* the vibes on *Multicolored Midnight* was really fun. And because I know both Mary and Michael so well as composers, it was also great to interpret and play their compositions from the vibraphone chair as opposed to the drum chair."

"Having the vibes is nice because it gives us the option of having three melodic voices," Halvorson added. "It just gives another color and also takes it out of the guitar-bass-drums thing for a while, just for contrast." Halvorson's "Swirling Lives" and Formanek's "Shit Changes" find Fujiwara navigating the intricate heads with aplomb while his own spacious soundscape, "Future Reruns And Nostalgia," has him exploring on the vibes in an atmospheric rubato setting against Formanek's bowed harmonics and Halvorson's percussive picking before the piece segues to chamber-like precision.

Elsewhere, Fujiwara addresses his own jazz drumming roots on "Song For Mr. Humphries," dedicated to Pittsburgh drumming legend Roger Humphries, who played on the Horace Silver Quintet's classic 1964 Blue Note album *Song For*

My Father. While the tribute may carry the angular, wide intervallic lines favored by Halvorson and her mentor Anthony Braxton, there are moments of old-school tipping on the ride cymbal that connect directly to a lineage of swing. That quality was also apparent on *Theirs*, which included takes on Benny Golson's "Stablemates," Herbie Nichols' "House Party Starting" and Wayne Shorter's "Dance Cadaverous" as well as a radical deconstruction of the standard "East Of The Sun And West Of The Moon."

"That music, that lineage and all those heroes are very important to us," Fujiwara said. "They're not influences that we're trying to run away from or subvert. Swinging is never something that we're shying away from, if that's what the music calls for, if that's what we feel in the moment. We want that to be a part of our music, but we do it through our own personal lens."

The band members met Humphries in 2015 during Thumbscrew's first residency at Pittsburgh's City of Asylum, a local arts organization where they have workshopped material for their last six albums.

"I don't want to write a song in tribute to the great Roger Humphries that just sounds like some tune that he would write or he would play on," Fujiwara said. "I want it to be something personal that I'm offering to him as a tribute and as a thank you for the inspiration and the time that I've been able to spend with him, which has been really priceless to me. I think that kind of speaks to how we as individuals, and we as a group, kind of deal with our influences and our heroes. We don't run away from them, we embrace them."

Fujiwara still connects with the elder statesman on Thumbscrew's regular visits to Pittsburgh. "Every time we do a City of Asylum residency, I reach out to Roger and definitely go hear him play. I also had the opportunity to go over to his house a couple of times. It was very casual and very informal, but really meaningful to me to get to spend that time with him. It's always super-inspiring to see him play, and he always has some really illuminating perspectives and information about the music, in general, and drumming, in particular."

Multicolored Midnight was the sixth Thumbscrew album developed during the trio's City of Asylum residency. For each, the trio has lived in separate housing, written individually, then developed and refined the compositions together.

"We would get together every day from 11 to 3, pretty much like going to work, and rehearse the music," Formanek said. "It was more a matter of bringing in composed music and then fine-tuning it with everyone having input. And we've maintained that approach the whole time. The only exceptions are when we did *Theirs*, which was other people's music, and when we did the Braxton record, which

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ing composition and was interested in writing for strings and developing a more contrapuntal sense of music, experimenting with less purely harmonic forms and things like that. And when Tim joined my band, it kind of opened things up even more. We had a rapport right away and started to develop other ways of playing together."

Formanek was already anchoring the Mingus Big Band during the group's Thursday night residency at Fez under the Time Cafe when he began playing in Bloodcount. "I had to stop doing the Mingus gig because we were going on tour with Bloodcount, and I was much more into doing that as a main focus, so there was no question for me," he recalled. "Bloodcount was the first band I'd ever been in where I could really do what I wanted all the time, and I took that responsibility very seriously. But I also think I pushed it way past the point of good taste many times. I would play long, insane bass solos, and I just had so much freedom in that group. Bloodcount was loud and kind of skronky but it still had a lot of through-composed elements, and I definitely borrowed a lot of things from Tim during that period, ways of putting things together and developing them."

Formanek, Halvorson and Fujiwara first played together in 2011 when Formanek subbed for bassist Ken Filiano in Taylor Ho Bynum's sextet. As he recalled of their first meeting, "I had met Mary a couple of times, and I was a

was all Anthony's compositions."

Added Halvorson, "We don't work on the music at all until we get to City of Asylum because we know we're going to have a concentrated period to work on it every day. Most musicians, especially musicians living in New York, aren't used to rehearsing that much. It's so hard to get people together because everyone's always so busy. I remember telling one friend about our City of Asylum residency, and he was like, 'You're rehearsing every day for three weeks?' like it was such a foreign concept to have that much concentrated time."

Formanek, Thumbscrew's elder statesman, came up in the San Francisco Bay Area playing sideman to saxophone great Joe Henderson and drumming legend Tony Williams. After moving to New York, he played with Freddie Hubbard, Stan Getz, Fred Hersch and Atilla Zoller, among others, before diverting into more outre realms. A key trigger for that direction was playing in alto saxophonist/composer Tim Berne's band Bloodcount (with saxophonist/clarinetist Chris Speed and drummer Jim Black).

"Around the time of my first album [1992's *Wide Open Spaces* on Enja Records], I was study-

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fan of some of her recordings up to that point. When I got called to sub on that gig, there was a point in the music where the three of us had a trio improv. So we played, and we immediately had this thing together. And when it ended, we all just kind of looked at each other like, 'Wow, we should do that again!' And unlike every other time that happens, we actually followed through with it."

"Pretty quickly, it gained its own momentum," Halvorson added. "We started writing music, we booked a couple gigs, we made some recordings, and then 10 years flew by."

They played their first gig as Thumbscrew on March 11, 2012, and recorded their debut on April 7, 2013, at The Bunker in Brooklyn, where they also recorded *Multicolored Midnight*.

Since the trio's inception, Halvorson has emerged as one of the most singular voices in jazz guitar. Playing her 1970 Guild Artist Award archtop, she gets a beautiful acoustic sound. With her trusty Line 6 DL4 Delay Modeler with built-in expression pedal for radical pitch-shifting, echo, stereo delays and looping, she can create a kaleidoscope of sounds — like fireworks spiraling off of each note she picks (a quality that Taylor Ho Bynum once described as "Jim Hall on acid").

"I've always been interested in that duality of having a big archtop guitar with a really clean acoustic sound where you can hear the wood of

the instrument and the attack and the picking, so there's a very physical element to the guitar itself," she said. "But then I also really like messing with that by having the pedals. It's part of the fun of electric guitar. And I kind of like the idea that those two things can exist simultaneously."

"Mary's like any other excellent musician I know who just spends a lot of time working on the basics — chords, melody, harmony, tunes," said Formanek. "But she's also developed a very individual voice with effects pedals. Sometimes it sounds wacky because these notes sort of boomerang from out of nowhere, but she's got such great improvisational instincts and I really appreciate that about her."

"Sometimes I think about what she's doing in visual terms," he continued. "It's like a beautiful picture, but then there's all these sparks flying out of it with these incredible colors. And there's no reason why those things can't coexist."

While Formanek's big, woody tone on upright bass has been a constant, he used effects pedals himself for the first time on "Fidgety" from *Multicolored Midnight*.

"During the pandemic I was at home working on stuff all the time, and I just started to try different things. And I found that the pedals — and this is definitely influenced by Mary — would give me a lot of options to be able to sustain a note and do things with it, like reverse

and ring modulator effects. It's just something that I find interesting, but for very specific types of things. And it's really fun."

As for the band's evolution, Fujiwara noted, "In terms of process, everything has actually stayed pretty much the same since day one. We each compose music specifically for this trio. We compose separately, so we bring in charts that are basically finished, and we play through them together. And each time we play through a composition, we realize different options and remain open to different places we can go with it."

"You can't really analyze it too much," Formanek added. "At this point, I have endless amounts of musical trust in both Mary and Tomas because I know that no matter what happens we always find a way back."

"I always say, the longer you play with a band you get looser and tighter at the same time," said Halvorson. "You get tighter just from constantly playing together, but you also develop a lot of trust, so you can take more risks. So I always know if we ever make a mistake or things go totally haywire, it doesn't even matter because we all just find each other somehow. That element of trust frees you up to be able to experiment more and that kind of thing happens the longer you have a history with a band."

"Everyone's committed to keeping it going, finding opportunities for us to play and work on our music and record it," said Fujiwara. **DB**

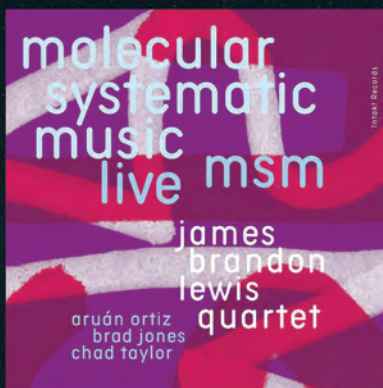


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DOUG WAMBLE'S COMPLEX BLUES

By Ted Panken

Photos by Jenny Anderson

Beyond is a good descriptor for Doug Wamble's compelling October release, *Blues In The Present Tense*, on which the 50-year-old singer/songwriter/guitarist — releasing his first album since 2013's *Rednecktellektual*, an overdubbed solo recital — artfully mixes multiple genres.

The title track convincingly imagines the subconscious mindset underlying the previous U.S. president's cynical grift, and songs like "MAGA Brain," "No Worries" and "If I'm Evil" portray psychological archetypes that fuel 21st century dystopia, depicting the cloistered, tribal worldview of Wamble's family, neighbors and friends in his hometown of Memphis. Other blues emanate from the inclusive, ecumen-

ical consciousness that has animated Wamble's three decades as a professional musician. The lyrics — some demotic, some anthemic — have an artfully vernacular quality. He sings in a pellucid, conversational tenor, phrasing like a horn, self-accompanying on a thick-stringed Resophonic guitar with "an old sound that can give me everything from Delta blues to a Grant Green-Kenny Burrell tone."





For the recording, Wamble convened a dream band. Branford Marsalis (under the sobriquet Prometheus Jenkins), Eric Revis and Jeff “Tain” Watts reunite on record for the first time in a decade, admirably fulfilling the function, swinging relentlessly.

The project gestated through Wamble’s relationship with Revis, a friend since the guitarist’s band opened for the Branford Marsalis Quartet on several concerts a few decades back. “We love a lot of music in common, from Chris Whitley to Son House to Prince to Dewey Redman,” said Wamble, who brought Revis on a 2012 Jazz at Lincoln Center concert that’s digitally available on his Bandcamp site as *The Traveler—Live In New York City*. He spoke via Zoom in early September from his studio in the Bronx.

“We’ve always tried to do something together, which is difficult because Eric hasn’t lived in New York in a long time and our schedules are always crazy. But I kept it in the back of my mind. I wrote a lot of this music in the year or so before COVID, when everything that shifted the ground underneath us in 2020 was already happening. As I got deeper into the writing, I found myself facing this strange turn of events I’ve seen in my lifetime. I grew up in a very conservative, churchgoing family. We’re close. I’ve been politically at odds with a lot of them for a long time, but never with the fervor of these last few years. It’s become more and more difficult to agree to disagree. My daughter is transgender, so we can’t agree to disagree that she has a right to live her life. And I can’t agree to disagree that racism isn’t a problem in America. It’s fundamental to my whole belief system that we must confront these things and talk about them honestly. When we don’t, it drives us further and further apart. That’s where my head was at when I was writing all these tunes. And

as I wrote them, the notion of what this could be if I put them all together took shape.”

The COVID-19 lockdown forestalled a planned March recording date. After the 2020 election, Wamble thought “it would no longer be relevant to put out this music.”

Then, the Jan. 6 riot happened at the Capitol in Washington D.C.

“It doesn’t really matter who’s president — the problems are just going to be there,” Wamble said. So he decided to persevere. He booked a date that suited the respective itineraries of Revis, Watts and a blues-and-roots oriented tenor saxophonist who canceled on short notice. Wamble called Marsalis, whose schedule fortuitously situated him in New York.

“I knew we’d have one day to make this record,” Wamble said. “I think it took four hours. We didn’t rehearse. We just went in and played. We didn’t listen back to anything. The simple forms let you internalize the feeling of the tune. I used to write complicated music with crazy time shifts and chord progressions — and that’s cool. But now I tend to like things where the form feels comforting and inviting, and allows the creativity of the moment to speak louder than if everyone’s trying to count: ‘Here comes that bar of 13 I’ve got to nail.’”

“Everybody liked the tunes, which placed us all in service of the music, of conveying the song, rather than session mode,” Revis said. “Plus, me, Branford and Tain hadn’t played collectively in a while. It was very relaxed. When Doug sent me the demos, I realized the songs are an amalgam of his whole thing. He’s expressing ideas that are relevant today in a blues singer-songwriter context; the songs all feel familiar, not like you’ve heard it before, but because of his deep roots, it’s like, ‘Oh, yeah, I know this.’ Then there’s a sophisticated twist that makes you go, ‘Wow.’”

“The sound of the blues is incredibly adaptable, and Doug has a really good relationship with the sound of the blues, not just blues as a harmonic construct,” said Marsalis, who blows up a storm on tenor and soprano throughout the proceedings.

Blues In The Present Tense is the first Wamble-Marsalis encounter since the early 2000s, when Marsalis produced two Wamble dates on Marsalis Music. On *Country Libation*, Wamble’s 2003 debut album, Marsalis played soprano saxophone on a well-wrought cover of Sting’s “Walking On The Moon”; on the 2005 followup, *Bluestate*, he uncorked a rollicking tenor declamation on Mahalia Jackson’s “Rockin’ Jerusalem.”

Although they’d intersected several times during the ’90s, they first conversed seriously at the end of the decade, when Jason Marsalis brought Wamble to Branford’s house. Wamble had recently performed on Wynton Marsalis’ epic *Big Train*, the first of six albums he’s done with Wynton, and then an opportunity to sign with a major label fell through.

“I was asking Branford’s advice on recording and other things,” Wamble said. “And he said, ‘Why don’t you send me some of your music? If you suck, I’ll tell you.’” He sent Marsalis a demo of complex, Wynton-inspired octet music he’d done for Blue Note, and live recordings of shows, both as a leader and with Steven Bernstein’s Millennial Territory Orchestra. “A few months after 9/11, Branford emailed me, ‘I’m starting a label. Let’s do a record.’”

“I liked the way he sounded,” Marsalis said. “The phrasing tends to be strange on instruments where you don’t have to breathe. But Doug was playing this electrified acoustic instrument, so I liked it already, and he breathes when he plays. He doesn’t use effects. It doesn’t sound like he’s playing well-rehearsed licks that he repeats over and over. So I was a fan.

“Ultimately, Doug likes the sound of jazz. We didn’t talk about killing solos. We talked about killing tunes — great sounds, great bands. That was refreshing.”

“Getting into jazz changed everything for me,” Wamble said. “It set me on the path I’m on today. Not least — and very related to this album — it made me confront my history of racism. I think we should be open about who we used to be and how we’ve changed. I used to say and do racist things, and I was homophobic — a lot of things I’m not proud of.”

Will the release of *Blues In The Present Tense* provoke Wamble to undertake more creative projects in the foreseeable future?

“I wrote a bunch of songs in my 20s with verses — very much in the style of American popular song,” he said. “I’d like to record some of those. I want to make the jazz side of my life more present than it has been because I’ve missed it. I enjoy playing that stuff.”

DB

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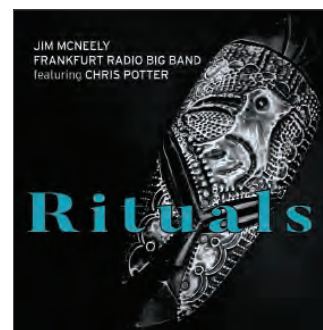
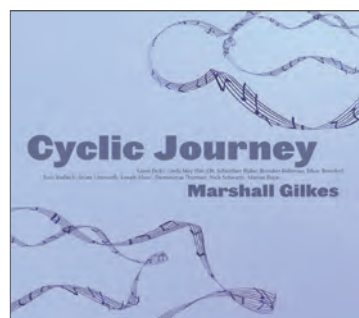
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xxxx

BEST ALBUMS OF 2022

MASTERPIECES ★★★★★



TOMASZ DĄBROWSKI *The Individual Beings*

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

—Carlo Wolff

MARY HALVORSON *Amaryllis/Balladonna*

Nonesuch July
It's hardly news that there are two levels of composition in jazz — first, the formal realm of tunes and arrangements, and second, the spontaneous magic of improvisation. With her twin solo albums *Amaryllis* and *Balladonna*, Mary Halvorson proves that she's top-of-the-field on both fronts, operating in two distinctly different milieus.

—J.D. Considine

CAMILLE BERTAULT & DAVID HELBOCK *ACT Playground*

ACT..... Sept.
Eclecticism can be the emptiest of gestures. The clue's in the title. David Helbock may look like a serious bloke, but there is an intense playfulness in his work; not whimsy, not satire or pastiche, but simply the sense that music is a playground in which impossible things become possible and unlikely things happen all the time. In this, he has the ideal partner in Camille Bertault, who has her own sense of mischief.

—Brian Morton

MELISSA STYLIANOU *Dream Dancing*

Anzic..... Oct.
For her latest outing, Melissa Stylianou leaned into the Great American Songbook for a collection of brilliant reinventions. She's accompanied by Gene Bertocchini on acoustic guitar and stand-up bass player Ike Sturm, but they play together like a band, not a singer with backing musicians.

—j. poet

NATE WOOLEY & COLUMBIA ICEFIELD *Ancient Songs Of Burlap Heroes*

Pyroclastic Oct.
This is intensely beautiful and contemplative work, full of heart-stopping solo and duo passages, often spotlighting Halvorson and Susan Alcorn more than the nominal leader, as well as powerful, almost hard-rock crescendos. The nature sounds place it into the context of life and the world, though of course it's all part of a large and elaborate illusion.

—Philip Freeman

FRANK KIMBROUGH *2003-2006*

Palmetto Nov.
The reissue of pianist-composer Frank Kimbrough's trio albums, originally released as *Lullabluebye* and *Play*, offers further evidence that he was an artist of the first order. Masterful though not immodestly showy; easily flexible and adaptive but with an indelible personal approach. Natural, flowing and always honest, Kimbrough was a truly free improviser in the best sense, knowing and stretching

the tradition, unafraid of trying something new, always feeling.

—Howard Mandel

MARSHALL GILKES *Cyclic Journey*

Alternate Side..... Nov.
This record makes one wish the old habit of not applauding in a church were revived. Listen to what is a genuine musical journey, full of wise and joyful observation, sit silently in appreciation and then get up and leave.

—Brian Morton

JIM MCNEELY/FRANKFURT RADIO BIG BAND FEAT. CHRIS POTTER *Rituals*

Double Moon Dec.
A jazz version of Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring* has been attempted many times before, but none as encapsulating of the complex harmonies and textures, the grandiosity and, yes — the terror — of the original. This is what Gunther Schuller had in mind espousing a “third stream” of music that was neither classical nor jazz.

—Gary Fukushima



**CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE
& INSIDE STRAIGHT**

Live At The Village Vanguard
Mack Ave. Jan.

HENRY THREADGILL ZOOID

Poof
Pi. Jan.

BLOCK ENSEMBLE

Hugs And Bugs
Clean Feed. Jan.

HAROLD MABERN

Mabern Plays Coltrane
Smoke Sessions. Feb.

ARBENZ X VISTEL/MOUTIN

Vulcanized | Conversation #4
Hammer Recordings. Feb.

**KEVIN BRADY ELECTRIC
QUARTET**

Plan B
Ubuntu. Feb.

**KOICHI MATSUKAZE TRIO
FEAT. RYOJIRO FURUSAWA**

At The Room 427
BBE. March

ANDERS KOPPEL

Mulberry Street Symphony
Unit Records/Cowbell. March

KHRUANGBIN/LEON BRIDGES

Texas Moon
Dead Oceans. April

TINSLEY ELLIS

Devil May Care
Alligator. April

MICHAEL FORMANEK

DROME TRIO
Were We Where We Were
Circular File. May

TIM BERNE/GREGG BELISLE-CHI

Mars
Intakt. May

PASTOR CHAMPION

*I Just Want To Be
A Good Man*
Luaka Bop. May

**MARTIN WIND NEW YORK
BASS QUARTET**

Air
Laika. May

ADAM LARSON

With Love, From Chicago
Outside in Music. May

ARMEN DONELIAN

Fresh Start
Sunnyside. May

**TOMAS FUJIWARA'S TRIPLE
DOUBLE**

March
Firehouse 12. May

WHIT DICKEY QUARTET

*Astral Long Form: Staircase In
Space*
Tao Forms. June

TIGRAN HAMASYAN

StandArt
Nonesuch. June

BRIAN JACKSON

This Is Brian Jackson
BBE. July

CHASE ELODIA

Portrait Imperfect
Biophilia. July

CHRIS GREENE QUARTET

Playspace 2: Play Harder
Single Malt Recordings. July

CAMERON GRAVES

Live From The Seven Spheres
Artistry/Mack Avenue. July

DAVID BINNEY

Tomorrow's Journey
Ghost Note Records. July

KIRK KNUFFKE TRIO

Gravity Without Airs
Tao Forms. Aug.

TERRY JENNINGS

Piece For Cello And Saxophone
Saltern. Aug.

PJ MORTON

Watch The Sun
Morton/Empire. Aug.

KEITH HALL

Made In Kalamazoo
Zoom Out. Aug.

JON BALKE SIWAN

Hafra
ECM. Aug.

TYSHAWN SOREY TRIO

Mesmerism
Yeros7 Music. Sep.

GRANT STEWART

The Lighting Of The Lamps
Cellar. Sep.

AARON SEEBER

First Move
Cellar Live. Sep.

ANSON JONES

A Way With Words
Ropeadope. Sep.

MARK GUILIANA

the sound of listening
Edition. Nov.

BILL ORCUTT

Music For Four Guitars
Palilalia. Nov.

STEVEN R. SMITH

Sun Spar
Worstward. Nov.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Blue Note Re:imagined II
Blue Note. Nov.

GARD NILSEN ACOUSTIC UNITY

Elastic Wave
ECM. Nov.

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON

New Standards Vol. 1
Candid. Dec.

CRAIG DAVIS

Tone Paintings
MCG Jazz. Dec.

TAUREY BUTLER

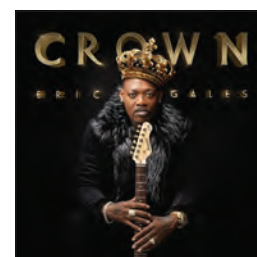
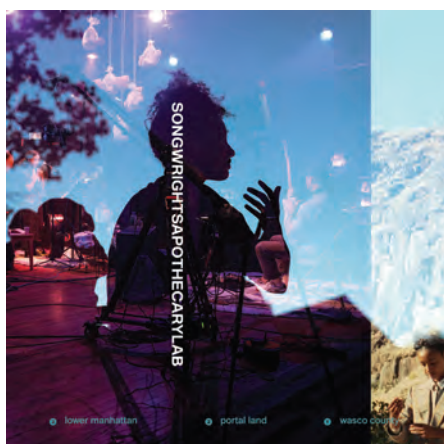
One Of The Others
Justin Time. Dec.

KATE BAKER & VIC JURIS

*Return To Shore: The Duo
Sessions*
Strikezone. Dec.

SUN RA ARKESTRA

Living Sky
Omni Sound. Dec.



CRAIG TABORN

Shadow Plays
ECM Jan.

ESPERANZA SPALDING

Songwrights Apothecary Lab
Concord Jan.

BILL CHARLAP

Street Of Dreams
Blue Note Jan.

THEON CROSS

Intra-I
New Soil Jan.

BRIAN LYNCH

Songbook Vol. 1: Bus Stop Serenade
Hollistic Musicworks Jan.

CHARNETT MOFFETT TRIO

Live
Motéma Jan.

JAMES BRANDON LEWIS QUARTET

Code Of Being
Intakt Jan.

MEHMET ALI SANLIKOL

An Elegant Ritual
Independent Release Jan.

MATTHEW SHIPP

Codebreaker
Tao Forms Jan.

KAREN MARGUTH

Until
OA2 Jan.

JOÃO LENCASTRE'S COMMUNION

Unlimited Dreams
Clean Feed Jan.

ALLISON MILLER/JANE IRA BLOOM

Tues Days
Outline Feb.

STEVE COLEMAN AND FIVE ELEMENTS

Live At The Village Vanguard II (MDW NTR)
Pi Recordings Feb.

JALEEL SHAW

Echoes
Independent Release Feb.

ENRICO RAVA

Edizione Speciale
ECM Feb.

EBERHARD WEBER

Once Upon A Time-Live In Avignon
ECM Feb.

TONY MALABY'S SABINO

The Cave Of Winds
Pyroclastic Records Feb.

NICK FINZER

Out Of Focus
Outside in Music Feb.

THOMAS HEBERER

The Day That Is
Sunnyside Feb.

SARA SERPA

Intimate Strangers
Biophilia March

ED PARTYKA/UMO HELSINKI JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Last Dance
Neuklang March

OPEN QUESTION

Open Question Vol. 1
577 March

JOSH SINTON

b.
FIP March

ROSWELL RUDD & DUCK BAKER

Live
Dot Time March

THE SMUDGES

Song And Call
Cryptogramophone March

OSCAR HERNÁNDEZ

Visión
Ovation March

SCARY GOLDINGS

IV
Pockets March

NIKARA WARREN

Nikara Presents Black Wall Street
Independent Release March

JEFF PARKER

Forfolks
International Anthem/Nonesuch Mar.

ERIC GALES

Crown
Prologue March

CARN DAVIDSON 9

The History Of Us
Three Pines March

COOPER-MOORE/STEPHEN GAUCI

Conversations Vol. 2
577 March

ETHAN IVERSON

Every Note Is True
Blue Note April

DAVE SPECTER

Six String Soul
Delmark April

DELVON LAMARR ORGAN TRIO

Cold As Weiss
Colemine Records April

IMARHAN

Aboogi
City Slang April

LEE OSKAR

Never Forget: Passages Through Music
Independent Release April

MARTA SANCHEZ

SAAM (Spanish American Art Museum)
Whirlwind April



SCATTER THE ATOMS THAT REMAIN

Emancipation Suite
Mobility Music.....April

LITTLE NORTH

Familiar Places
April.....April

TARU ALEXANDER

Echoes Of The Masters
Sunnyside.....April

THE OGJB QUARTET

Ode To O
Tum.....April

JOEL ROSS

The Parable Of The Poet
Blue NoteMay

AVISHAI COHEN

Naked Truth
ECMMay

CHRIS DINGMAN

Journeys Vol. 1
Independent Release.....May

ILHAN ERSAHIM/ DAVE WARRINGTON/KENNY WOLLESEN

Invite Your Eye
Nublu.....May

DEDICATED MEN OF ZION

The Devil Don't Like It
Bible & TireMay

DIEGO RIVERA

Mestizo
Posi-ToneMay

MILES OSLAND

Collaborations, Vol. 3-Swedish Connections
Mark.....May

MICHAEL LEONHART ORCHESTRA

The Normyn Suites
Sunnyside.....May

JULIETA EUGENIO

Jump
Greenleaf MusicMay

ZACC HARRIS GROUP

Small Wonders
Shifting ParadigmMay

CALVIN JOHNSON

Notes Of A Native Son
Native SonMay

ROKIA KONÉ/ JACKNIFE LEE

Bamanan
Real World.....May

SAMORA PINDERHUGHES

Grief
Stretch/RopeadopeJune

GOLDINGS BERNSTEIN STEWART

Perpetual Pendulum
Smoke Sessions.....June

MYRA MELFORD'S FIRE AND WATER QUINTET

For The Love Of Fire And Water
Rogue Art.....June

MOSTLY OTHER PEOPLE DO THE KILLING

Disasters, Vol. 1
Hot Cup.....June

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

The Montreux Years
BMGJune

MILES OKAZAKI

Thisness
Pi.....June

BRIGHT DOG RED

Under The Porch
Ropeadope.....June

DIUNNA GREENLEAF

I Ain't Playin'
Little VillageJune

TRUDY LYNN

Golden Girl
Nola BlueJune

KURT CRANDALL

Starts On The Stops
Yester Year.....June

FLORA PURIM

If You Will
StrutJune

TROMBONE SHORTY

Lifted
Blue NoteJune

BENJI KAPLAN

Something Here
Inside
WisecatJune

KIND FOLK

Head Towards
The Center
Fresh Sound New Talent..June

GIACOMO GATES

You
Savant.....June

TANIKA CHARLES

Papillon de Nuit:
The Night Butterfly
Record Kicks.....June

JACOB GARCHIK

Assembly
Yestereve.....June

JOHN SCOFIELD

John Scofield
ECMJuly

NDUDUZO MAKHATHINI

In The Spirit Of Ntu
Blue NoteJuly

NATALIE CRESSMAN & IAN FAQUINI

Auburn Whisper
GroundUPJuly

STEVE DAVIS

Bluesthetic
Smoke Sessions.....July

KALEIDO

Elements
Exopac.....July

QUINN STERNBERG

Cicada Songs
Mind Beach Records.....July

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Alternative Guitar Summit:
Honoring Pat Martino,
Volume 1
HighNoteJuly

OUMOU SANGARÉ

Timbuktu
World CircuitJuly

DOUG MACLEOD

A Soul To Claim
Reference.....July

YU NISHIYAMA

A Lotus In The Mud
Next Level.....July

I AM

Beyond
Division 81Aug.

CAROL SLOANE

Live At Birdland
Club44.....August

BILLY MOHLER

Anatomy
ContagiousAug.

FRANCISCO MELA/ SHINYA LIN

Motions Vol. 1
577 RecordsAug.

YELENA ECKEMOFF

I Am A Stranger In
This World
L&H ProductionAug.



THEO CROKER

Live In Paris
Sony Masterworks Aug.

TODD MARCUS JAZZ ORCHESTRA

In The Valley
Stricker Street Aug.

JANE IRA BLOOM/ MARK HELIAS

See Our Way
Radiologs Aug.

STEVEN FEIFKE

*The Role Of
The Rhythm Section*
La Reserve Aug.

BLOODMIST

Arc
5049 Records Aug.

MARTIN KÜCHEN

Utopia
Thanatosis Aug.

TRAVIS LAPLANTE

Wild Tapestry
Out of Your Heads Aug.

MARK WINKLER

Late Bloomin' Jazzman
Café Pacific Aug.

SPANISH HARLEM ORCHESTRA

Imágenes Latinas
Ovation Aug.

ODED TZUR

Isabela
ECM Aug.

PETER ERSKINE/ ALAN PASQUA/ DAREK OLES

Live In Italy
Fuzzy Music Aug.

LUCIAN BAN

Ways Of Disappearing
Sunnyside Aug.

CHUCO VALDÉS/ PAQUITO D'RIVERA REUNION SEXTET

I Missed You Too!
Sunnyside Sep.

ALUNE WADE

Sultan
Enja Sep.

DANIEL CARTER/MATTHEW SHIPP/ WILLIAM PARKER/ GERALD CLEAVER

Welcome Adventure! Vol. 2
577 Records Sep.

TASHI DORJI/SUSIE IBARRA

Master Of Time
Astral Spirits Sep.

LINDA SIKHAKHANE

Isambulo
Ropeadope Sep.

SASS JORDAN

Bitches Blues
Stony Plain Sep.

DAVID MURRAY/BRAD JONES/ HAMID DRAKE

Seriana Promethea
Intakt Sep.

T.S. MONK

Two Continents One Groove
Storyville Sep.

WILL BERNARD

Pond Life
Independent Release Sep.

NOAH PREMINGER

Some Other Time
Newvelle Sep.

PASQUALE GRASSO

Be-Bop!
Sony Masterworks Sep.

MIGUEL ZENÓN

Música de Las Américas
Miel Oct.

JON IRABAGON

Rising Sun
Irabbagast Oct.

BRIAN CHARETTE

Jackpot
Cellar Live Oct.

HARISH RAGHAVAN

In Tense
Whirlwind Oct.

KOKOROKO

Could We Be More
Brownswood Oct.

JEREMY CUNNINGHAM/DUSTIN LAURENZI/ PAUL BRYAN

A Better Ghost
Northern Spy Oct.

CORKY SIEGEL'S CHAMBER BLUES

More Different Voices
Dawnserley Oct.

BENNIE MAUPIN/ADAM RUDOLPH

*Symphonic Tone Poem For
Brother Yusef*
Strut Oct.

MATT ARONOFF

Morning Song
Adhyaropa Oct.

DASHAWN HICKMAN

Drums, Roots & Steel
Little Village Oct.

ALLISON MILLER/CARMEN STAAF

Nearness
Sunnyside Oct.

COREY CHRISTIANSEN

Standards
Independent Release..October

SAM REIDER

Petrichor
Slow & Steady October

JULIAN LAGE

View With A Room
Blue Note Nov.

SHORTER/CARRINGTON/ GENOVESE/SPALDING

Live At The Detroit Jazz Festival
Candid Nov.

REDMAN/MEHLDAU/ MCBRIDE/BLADE

Long Gone
Nonesuch Nov.

BRIAN LYNCH AND SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

*Songbook Vol. 2--Dance The
Way U Want To*
Hollistic Musicworks Nov.

MAKAYA MCCRAVEN

In These Times
Nonesuch/XL Recordings.. Nov.

BILLY DRUMMOND & FREEDOM OF IDEAS

Valse Sinistre
Cellar Music Group Nov.

BOBBY BROOM

Keyed Up
Steele Nov.

GARY SMULYAN

Tadd's All, Folks
Steeplechase Nov.

STEVE TIBBETTS

Hellbound Train--An Anthology
ECM Nov.

STEVE LEHMAN & SÉLÉBÉYONE

Xaybu: The Unseen
Pi Nov.

STEVE TURRE

Generations
Smoke Sessions Nov.

OREN AMBARCHI

Shebang
Drag City Nov.

CLEARED

Of Endless Light
Touch Nov.

DOUGLAS ANDREW MCCOMBS

*VMAK<KOMBZ<<<DUGLAS
<<6NDR7<<<*
Thrill Jockey Nov.

STEVE KNIGHT

Persistence
Independent Release Nov.

ETHAN PHILION

Meditations On Mingus
Sunnyside Nov.

JON COWHERD TRIO

Pride And Joy
Le Coq Nov.

KEITH JARRETT

Bordeaux Concert
ECM Dec.

BOBBY WATSON

Back Home
In Kansas City
Smoke Sessions Dec.

JD ALLEN

Americana Vol. 2
Savant Dec.

RUFUS REID TRIO/SIRIUS QUARTET

Celebration
Sunnyside Dec.

ENRICO RAVA/ FRED HERSCH

The Song Is You
ECM Dec.

TOM HARRELL

Oak Tree
HighNote Dec.

CLIFF KORMAN

Brasilified
Tiger Turn Dec.

ESBJÖRN SVENSSON

HOME.S.
ACT Dec.

DAFNIS PRIETO FEATURING LUCIANA SOUZA

Cantar
Dafnison Dec.

MICHAEL FORMANEK QUARTET

Other Zones
Circular File Dec.

GENERATION GAP ORCHESTRA

Generation Gap Orchestra
Cellar Dec.

MILLENNIAL TERRITORY ORCHESTRA

Popular Culture
(Community Music, Vol. 4)
Royal Potato Family Dec.

SONICA

Sonica
Outside In Music Dec.

SAMARA JOY

Linger Awhile
Verve Dec.

SIRINTIP

Carbon
Ropeadope Dec.

HILARIO DURAN/ DAVID VIRELLES

Front Street Duets
Alma Dec.

HISTORICAL ★★★★★

HASAAAN IBN ALI

Retrospect In Retirement Of Delay: The Solo Recordings
Omnivore RecordingsFeb.

OTIS SPANN

Otis Spann Is The Blues
Candid Records July

MAX ROACH

We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite
Candid Records July

CHARLES MINGUS

Mingus Presents Mingus
Candid Records July

LITTLE FEAT

Waiting For Columbus Super Deluxe Edition
RhinoSep.



HISTORICAL ★★★★★ ½

SHEILA JORDAN

Comes Love: Lost Session 1960
Capri Jan.

BOLA SETE

Samba In Seattle: Live At The Penthouse (1966-1968)
Tompkins Square Jan.

CALVIN KEYS

Proceed With Caution
Black Jazz RecordsFeb.

EDDIE HAZEL

Game, Dames And Guitar Thangs
Black Jazz RecordsFeb.

MASAYUKI TAKAYANAGI NEW DIRECTION UNIT

Eclipse
Black Editions GroupApril

ABBEY LINCOLN

Straight Ahead
Candid July

RAY CHARLES

Live In Stockholm 1972
Tangerine Aug.



HISTORICAL ★★★★★

DOUG CARN

Adam's Apple
Black Jazz RecordsFeb.

CECIL TAYLOR

The Complete, Legendary, Live Return Concert At The Town Hall NYC November 4, 1973
Oblivion March

ORNETTE COLEMAN

Round Trip: Ornette Coleman On Blue Note
Blue Note March

MASAYUKI TAKAYANAGI NEW DIRECTION UNIT

Station '70: Call In Question/ Live Independence
Black Editions GroupApril

PETER BRÖTZMANN/ MILFORD GRAVES/WILLIAM PARKER

Historic Music Past Tense Future
Black Editions GroupApril

LENNIE TRISTANO

Lennie Tristano — Personal Recordings
MosaicApril

SON HOUSE

Forever On My Mind
Easy Eye Sound May

LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

Lightnin' In New York
Candid July

RAY CHARLES

A Message From The People
Tangerine Aug.

MILES DAVIS

That's What Happened 1982-1985: The Bootleg Series Vol. 7
LegacyOctober

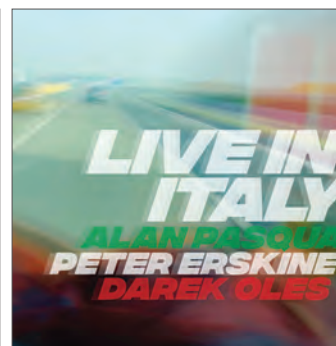
HAMPTON HAWES

Four! Hampton Hawes!!!! With Barney Kessel, Shelly Manne & Red Mitchell
Craft Recordings Nov.



EDITORS' PICKS FROM

★★ DOWNBEAT.COM ★★



JOHN MAYALL

The Sun Is Shining Down
Forty Below Jan.

JOSH SINTON

b.
FiP Jan.

ANDREW HADRO/ PETROS KLAMPANIS

Regarding The Moon
Music Jan.

FRED HERSCH

Breath By Breath
Megaforce Jan.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Summer Of Soul
Sony Legacy Jan.

RUDRESH MAHANTHAPPA'S HERO TRIO

Animal Crossing
Whirlwind Feb.

NINA SIMONE

Feeling Good: Her Greatest Hits & Remixes
Verve Feb.

ISAIAH COLLIER & THE CHOSEN FEW

Lift Every Voice And Sin
Division 81 Feb.

NEW STANDARD QUINTET

Another Time, Another Place
CD Baby/New
Standard Music Feb.

ILHAN ERSAHIN/ DAVE HARRINGTON/ KENNY WOLLESEN

Invite Your Eye
Nublu Records Mar.

MARK WADE TRIO

True Stories
AMP Music & Records Mar.

CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

Ghost Song
Nonesuch Mar.

OREN AMBARCHI/ JOHAN BERTHLING/ ANDREAS WERLIIN

Ghosted
Drag City April

JEAN-MICHEL PILC

Alive-Live At Dièse Onze, Montréal
Justin Time April

CHARLES MINGUS

Mingus: The Lost Album From Ronnie Scott's
Resonance April

KAREN DALTON

In My Own Time/Shuckin' Sugar
Light In The Attic/Delmore
Recording Society April

MIKE HOLOBER & BALANCING ACT

Don't Let Go
Sunnyside April

GERALD CLAYTON

Bells On Sand
Blue Note May

MARK TURNER

Return From The Stars
ECM May

MARQUIS HILL

New Gospel Revisited
Edition May

MONGO SANTAMARIA

Sofrito
Craft May

BEN MARKLEY BIG BAND

With Ari Hoenig Ari's Funhouse
OA2 May

DIEGO FIGUEIREDO

Follow The Signs
Arbors June

BILL EVANS

You Must Believe In Spring
Craft June

BRIAN LANDRUS

Red List
Palmetto June

LIZZ WRIGHT

Holding Space, Live In Berlin
Blues & Greens July

CALEB WHEELER CURTIS

Heatmap
Imani July

GEORGE COTSIRILOS

Refuge
OA2 July

PAYTON MACDONALD/BILLY MARTIN/ELLIOTT SHARP/ COLIN STETSON

Void Patrol
Infrequent Seams July

THE ENDEAVOR JAZZ ORCHESTRA NEW ZEALAND

Solipsis-Music Of Ryan Brake
Skydeck Music July

TOM HARRELL

Oak Tree
HighNote Aug.

ELLA FITZGERALD

Ella At The Hollywood Bowl: The Irving Berlin Songbook
Verve Aug.

BITCHIN BAJAS

Bajascillators
Drag City Aug.

JIM MCNEELY/FRANKFURT

RADIO BIG BAND FEAT. CHRIS POTTER
Rituals
Double Moon/Challenge ... Aug.

BUTCHER BROWN

Triple Trey
Concord Jazz Sep.

BASHER

Doubles
Sinking City Records Sep.

TIM FITZGERALD'S FULL HOUSE

Tim Fitzgerald's Full House
Cellar Music Group Sep.

JOHN ESCREET

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VIRGILIO ARMAS Y SU GRUPO

Espejismo
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JOSH SINTON

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FiP Oct.

OWEN BRODER

Hodges: Front And Center, Vol. 1
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CHAD TAYLOR TRIO

The Reel
Astral Spirits Oct.

MUTZABAUGH PINTO DEITEMYER

Volume 1
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MIGUEL ZENÓN

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

Haunted High
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Reviews

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



Pianist Aaron Diehl, saxophonist Greg Osby, bassist Russell Hall and drummer/bandleader Tyshawn Sorey perform at the Jazz Gallery in New York.

Tyshawn Sorey Trio + 1 *The Off-Off Broadway Guide To Synergism*

PI

★★★★½

Y'all know about synergy, right? It's where two or more entities cooperate to create something more potent than "the sum of their separate effects." Throughout this three-disc set, recorded during a five-night stretch at New York's Jazz Gallery last March, the drummer-bandleader nurtures such results, music robust enough to have you believe the energy generated by the group is its own discrete force, a crucial presence that marks this parade of shifting ideas with vitality.

Whether lilting through a ballad or hurtling toward a roar, *The Off-Off Broadway Guide To Synergism* is a blowing date with rigor woven into every gesture. Sorey's ensemble of pianist Aaron Diehl, bassist

Russell Hall and saxophonist Greg Osby is an agile little outfit, able to give this blend of standards ("What's New," "I Remember You," "Jitterbug Waltz") and under-sung gems (Coleman's "Mob Job," Hill's "Ashes," Tyner's "Contemplation") plenty of elbow room while still prioritizing thrust. A 20-minute excursion on "Three Little Words" is an apt example. A palpable tension dominates, even when the improvisers choose to slack the music a bit by employing a stealthy approach.

Live dates are sometimes about identifiable moments, Point A and Point B being more important than the transitions between. Not here. The band's constant braiding of ideas is paramount in these performances. Osby's solo intro to the first version of "Ask Me Now" (some pieces are repeated) kicks off a series of shared micro episodes that beget flutters from the drummer, whispers from the pianist and saunters from the bassist. You hear it on "Out Of

Nowhere," too. The magic is in the continuity that keeps everything afloat as the focal point moves from player to player.

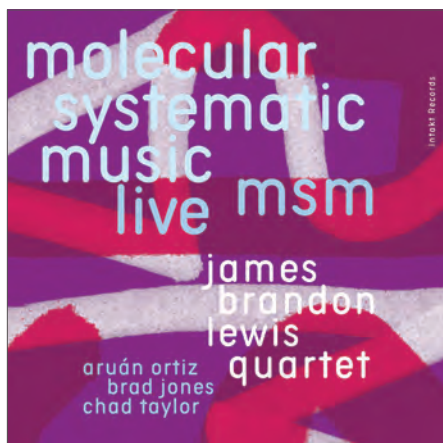
TOOBGTS is the rough side of Sorey's recent trio release *Mesmerism* — a little less polished, a little more mischievous. And it arrives with a precedent: Osby's 1998 *Banned In NYC*, a killer club document with extended moments as roiling as those found here. Join me in a chorus of huzzahs for the sublime wonders that arise when like-minded rascals attempt the not so simple act of raising the bandstand.

—Jim Macnie

The Off-Off Broadway Guide To Synergism: Night And Day; Please Stand By; Chelsea Bridge; Three Little Words; Mob Job; Ask Me Now; Out Of Nowhere; Ashes; Three Little Words; Jitterbug Waltz; Mob Job; It Could Happen To You; I Remember You; What's New; Contemplation; Out Of Nowhere; Solar; Ask Me Now.

Personnel: Tyshawn Sorey, drums; Aaron Diehl, piano; Russell Hall, bass; Greg Osby, alto saxophone.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



James Brandon Lewis MSM Molecular Systematic Music Live

INTAKT

★★★★★

The music on *Molecular*, James Brandon Lewis' previous album for Intakt, almost ended up a casualty of the pandemic. Recorded in January 2020, two months before the virus virtually shuttered the concert industry, it came out to no small critical acclaim. But it wasn't until the following spring that Lewis and his quartet performed the album, at a festival in Zurich, and even that was almost scuttled by pandem-

ic restrictions.

MSM *Molecular Systematic Music Live* not only captures that premiere but gives us a glimpse of Lewis and company at their absolute peak. Obviously, the exhilaration of finally playing together after a 16-month hiatus plays a part, but the album's greatest strength is the way it crystallizes Lewis' vision of his "molecular systematic music."

Lewis has written much about MSM, which draws parallels to the helix structure of DNA. Most of the tunes build off of melodic cells that sketch intertwining rhythmic and harmonic ideas, and develop them through repetition. Moreover, where his forebears relegated the rhythm to a supporting role, Lewis takes a more integrated tack, with all instruments emphasizing the music's rhythmic content.

As illustrated by the live "Molecular," this approach pays its greatest dividends in groove, building over 12 minutes from an insistent, bass-heavy throb to a funky, full-band stomp. Even downtempo material remains rhythm-focused, so that even with half the tracks clocking in at 10 minutes or more, the energy onstage never lags.

—J.D. Considine

MSM Molecular Systematic Music Live: A Lotus Speaks; Helix; Of First Importance; Molecular; An Anguish Departed; Cesaire; Neosho; Loverly; Breaking Code. (1:29:55)

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

Ordering info: intaktrec.bandcamp.com

Anat Cohen Quartetinho

ANZIC

★★★★★

Three multi-instrumentalists from Anat Cohen's tentet join her on *Quartetinho* ("little quartet"), an album that suggests ties between a sweet vein of Brazilian music and the home-spun, earthy fare we call "Americana" up north. This intimate, quietly beautiful chamber music sparkles with originality.

Cohen's clarinets naturally play starring roles. On the B-flat horn, she gallops through Egberto Gismonti's madcap "Frevo," luxuriates in her chalumeau register on his bittersweet "Palhaço" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's mysteriously throbbing "O Boto," squirts Monk-ish soda pop over "Louisiana" and caresses the melody of her own "Birdie." Her mellow bass clarinet delivers the melody of "Going Home" with stately, anthemic grandeur, meanders through surprise switchbacks on vibraphonist/percussionist James Shipp's avant-classical opener, "Baroquen Spirit," pops on Maria do Carmo Barbosa De Melo's "Boa Tarde Povo" and swells mysteriously on her own brief "Canon."

Quartetinho is blessed with a diversity of ensemble textures. Tal Mashiach's warm, round bass is the quiet anchor for everything. Vitor



Gonçalves' piano enlivens a gamboling pas de deux with Cohen on "Frevo," while his Rhodes waxes light and creamy on "Boa Tarde Povo." Shipp's vibes and percussion shimmer atmospherically; his stealth electronics create tension and texture.

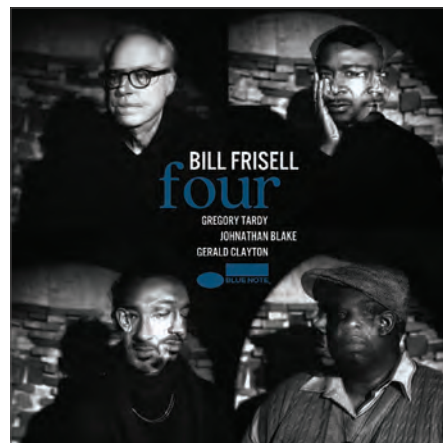
In spirit of bossa nova, this album finds yet another marriage North and South American traditions.

—Paul de Barros

Quartetinho: Baroquen Spirit; Palhaço; Boa Tarde Povo; Birdie; Canon; O Boto; The Old Guitar; Frevo; Louisiana; Going Home; Vivi & Zaco. (56:59)

Personnel: Anat Cohen, clarinet, bass clarinet; Vitor Gonçalves, piano, accordion, Fender Rhodes; Tal Mashiach, bass, guitar; James Shipp, vibraphone, percussion, Glockenspiel, analog synthesizer.

Ordering info: anzicrecords.com



Bill Frisell Four

BLUE NOTE

★★★★★

With *Four*, the third Blue Note release under Bill Frisell's own name, the guitarist honors several close friends who recently passed. From this place of loss springs a serene work inspired by those deep, lasting bonds.

The title refers to the band's configuration, a spectacular quartet with Frisell, horn player Greg Tardy, pianist Gerald Clayton and drummer Jonathan Blake. Like Frisell, Clayton and Blake — newcomers to his sphere — bring a preternatural sensitivity to their playing. Collectively, the group intuition serves Frisell's Americana-derived themes well, unearthing levels of meaning in the simple melodic forms.

On "Dear Old Friend (For Alan Woodard)," for instance, Tardy's homey, Foster-esque clarinet solo brushes against the passing dissonance in Clayton's piano accompaniment. Frisell opens the whiskey-warm improvisation "Blues From Before," with halting licks — a teasing invitation to the band's carefree extrapolation. Blake catalyzes the oddly whimsical "Holiday" with bold dashes of rhythmic color, and on "Dog On A Roof" the ensemble emerges from the tumult to join in unison on Frisell's ominous melody.

Against expectation, though, the album doesn't dwell in mournfulness. For contrast, listen to "Good Dog, Happy Man," a lighthearted ramble through harmoniousness. Or "Waltz For Hal Willner," with its jaunty lilt and shiny edges.

In the album bio, Frisell dedicates *Four* to the late trumpeter Ron Miles, his "closest, longest brother-friend." Miles lives on in the musical wisdom that this relationship engendered, Frisell says — wisdom that he in turn passes on. In this way, he asserts, their friendship endures.

—Suzanne Lorge

Four: Dear Old Friend (for Alan Woodard); Claude Utley; The Pioneers; Holiday; Waltz For Hal Willner; Lookout For Hope; Monroe; Wise Woman; Blues From Before; Always; Good Dog, Happy Man; Invisible; Dog On A Roof. (57:50)

Personnel: Bill Frisell, electric, acoustic, baritone guitars; Greg Tardy, clarinet, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Gerald Clayton, piano; Johnathan Blake, drums.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Jim Macnie	J.D. Considine	Paul de Barros	Suzanne Lorge
Tyshawn Sorey Trio + 1 <i>The Off-Off Broadway Guide ...</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½
James Brandon Lewis <i>MSM Molecular Systematic Music ...</i>	★★★★½	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★½
Anat Cohen <i>Quartetinho</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★★	★★★★½
Bill Frisell <i>Four</i>	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★

Critics' Comments

Tyshawn Sorey Trio + 1, *The Off-Off Broadway Guide To Synergism*

Sorey's second standards-based album in six months makes excellent use of its +1, saxophonist Osby, whose dry tone and elliptical lines fit neatly within the aesthetic of Sorey's trio. Even at three hours plus, this is all meat, no filler. —J.D. Considine

Three-and-a-half hours of pure synergy, yes, but sometimes cutting to the chase is nice, too — something Sorey and the incomparable bassist Russell Hall seem better at than stubbornly oblique saxophonist Osby. Great to hear pianist Diehl let his hair down, though. —Paul de Barros

These standard tunes lose their usual harmonic identities to Sorey's brash playing, only to find new coherence in deconstruction. They're not so much revived as reborn. —Suzanne Lorge

James Brandon Lewis, *MSM Molecular Systematic Music Live*

First off, if you've got Chad Taylor on your side, thrust is front of center. That's the case here. The leader's brawn is equal to his savvy, so the blowing is very wise, indeed. —Jim Macnie

This live recording of the muscular, modal material released on *Molecular* not only offers the gruff-toned Lewis and his driving band room to stretch, it highlights their post-pandemic delight in playing the music live, including some chatter perhaps better left out. —Paul de Barros

Stoked in the immediacy of live performance, Brandon's quartet easily harnesses the shifting cross-currents of real-time improvisation. Whether scorching through a post-bop rant or lost in an elegiac reverie, the group retains a singular focus on the moment at hand — and commands the same attention from its listeners. —Suzanne Lorge

Anat Cohen, *Quartetinho*

I like it when she gets elaborate, because her sense of order is as fetching as her lyricism. What's remarkable is how luxurious she gets with just four pieces. —Jim Macnie

A little quartet with big promise, using chamber music dynamics to make the most of this music. Cohen's clarinet is eloquent as always, but it's particularly lovely to hear her interact with Gonçalves' accordion and Shipp's vibes. —J.D. Considine

Cohen solidifies her reputation as a gifted interpreter of syncretic Brazilian jazz. Informed and engaging, her music induces hard-to-shake moods: the glee of an uncommon world groove, the thrill of a purple-hued orchestral motif, the calm of a solitary rubato line. —Suzanne Lorge

Bill Frisell, *Four*

His most elaborate outing since the *Big Sur* album, and in a few ways his most fetching, too. What you lose in unfurled improv, you gain in thoughtful arrangements. Goosebumps guaranteed. Moments of glee, as well. —Jim Macnie

Frisell and pianist Clayton ought to be a winning combination, particularly given the Americana tilt of the material here. But the album is somehow more pretty than interesting, while the elegiac tempos too often turn the music soporific. —J.D. Considine

Pianist Clayton, reed man Tardy (nice clarinets!) and drummer Blake fall pleasantly into Frisell's endearingly twangy, wistful spirit, including a welcome update of "Good Dog Happy Man." But overall, a rather slight addition to the great guitarist's catalog. —Paul de Barros

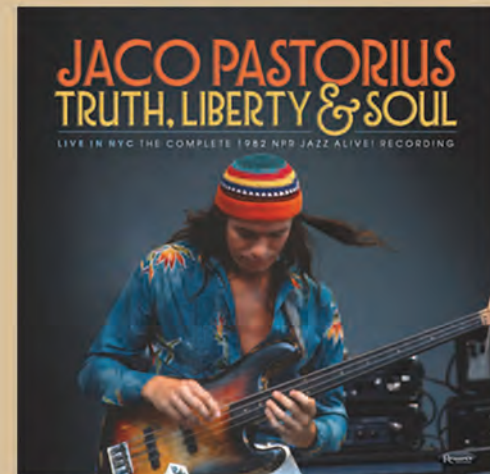
TAWANDA SMILE



Smile is the debut release from the rising start vocalist Tawanda Suessbrich-Joaquim, known simply as **Tawanda**, co-winner of the 2020 Sarah Vaughn vocal competition. On *Smile*, Tawanda finds the jazz in tunes recorded by popular artists such as **Sting**, **Donny Hathaway**, **Maureen McGovern** and others.

JACO PASTORIUS

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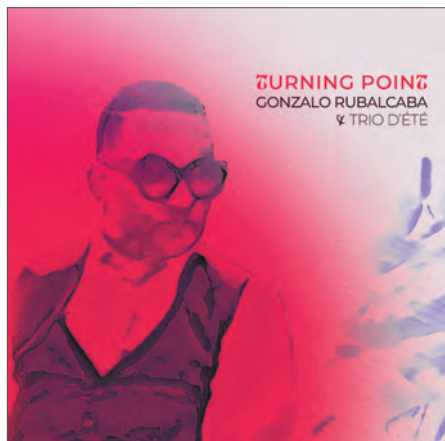
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Gonzalo Rubalcaba/ Trio D'été *Turning Point* SPASSION ★★★★

Gonzalo Rubalcaba's beautifully produced *Turning Point* is part two of a planned trilogy exploring the piano trio format following *Skyline*, Rubalcaba's 2018 recording with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jack DeJohnette.

Bassist Matthew Brewer and drummer Eric Harland have been working with Rubalcaba since 2007. Their ability to flex and to share their common energy makes *Turning Point* a

conversation the listener wants to join.

Rubalcaba's technique is astonishing and unmistakable. No matter whether high right hand or low left, each note he plays is clearly defined and has equal sonic value. Those notes are brilliantly chosen.

The seven tracks here span "Otra Mirada," a bolero Rubalcaba debuted on the 2001 album *Supernova*, the punchy "Hard One" and the dazzling interludes "Turning I" and "Turning II."

Turning Point begins with "Infantil," repurposed from the 2007 quintet album *Avatar*. Rubalcaba tries on one rhythm, shrugging it off only to dive into another. The tune is spiky and shiny, driven by Rubalcaba's crazy right hand. The rumble Harland and Brewer bed him in has independent power, but together, the three are even more formidable. This is a hell of a launch track, ending with Harland's cymbal shimmer and rimshot *rat-tat-tat*.

"Otra Mirada" is the heart of the album and its longest, most leisurely tune. After a rubbery Brewer solo, Harland's minimalist brushwork and subtle cymbals heighten the tension, preparing for the re-entry of Rubalcaba, whose glassy octave splits near the end are startling and powerful.

—Carlo Wolff

Turning Point: Infantil; Otra Mirada; Turning I; Iku; Turning II; Hard One; Joy, Joie. (43:27)

Personnel: Matthew Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano.

Ordering info: spassion.com

Franco Ambrosetti *Nora* ENJA ★★★★½

Producer Jeff Levenson has lined up all-star collaborators and a 22-piece orchestra to abet 80-year-old Franco Ambrosetti's long-envisioned entry in the super-romantic jazz-with-strings subgenre, influenced by classic albums of Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown, Ben Webster, Stan Getz and Miles Davis. *Nora* earns a proud place among those, attaining distinction as an especially reflective, autumnal vision of beauty and connectedness.

Throughout the entire low-light, hold-me-close program, the Swiss brass man applies limpid fluidity and mournful grace with enormous conviction to rich writing and exacting conducting by Alan Broadbent — who inspires the strings to swing and sway naturally on the waltz "All Blues," and elsewhere hover like spirals or plumb deep blue depths. On "After the Rain," gloriously, they do both at once.

As for the jazz players: Scott Colley's solid bass serves as their spine, connecting with Erskine's thoughtful, uplifting, subtly propulsive drumming. Guitarist John Scofield shadows Ambrosetti on George Gruntz's "Morning Song" then reconceives it; they're reverent



on Coltrane's ballad, while sustaining their own sounds. Pianist Caine is complementary to dynamics and mood, at times adds drive, contrast and even touches of funk, modestly throughout.

Ambrosetti's long, unhurriedly floating lines, his aching upward reaches and rueful low confessions add up to a heroically conclusive statement, and it's set in gold. —Howard Mandel

Nora: Nora's Theme; Morning Song Of A Spring Flower; All Blues; Falling In Love; Autumn Leaves; Sweet Journey; It Happens Quietly; After The Rain. (55:32)

Personnel: Franco Ambrosetti, trumpet, flugelhorn; John Scofield, guitar; Uri Caine, piano; Scott Colley, bass; Peter Erskine, drums; Sara Caswell, violin; Alan Broadbent, arranger, conductor.

Ordering info: enjarecords.com



Ray Anderson *Marching On* DOUBLE MOON ★★★★

In any solo recital, the player's exposure is total, all their all skills and flaws on public display. But most instruments require the mediation of direct expression via intricate machines involving valves, keys, reeds or strings. A trombone has a mouthpiece, slide, tubing and bell, but in Ray Anderson's hearty paean to life, *Marching On*, they seem invisible, as if we're hearing the man's lungs, lips, hand-to-ear accuracy and very inner-being manifest in his improvisations and renditions of familiar songs.

Anderson's music is bold, warm, energetic, melodic, not without intricacy, abstraction or virtuosity but not given to showboating either. His playing seems rooted in physicality, and there's nothing pretentious about it. The most vocally oriented of slide trombonists, he tells stories in hilarious call-and-response or as touching monologues. He sequences the oldies "Just Squeeze Me" and "You Brought A New Kind Of Love" along with a freely raucous sketch of family life, a dedication of "Moon River" to his late wife and a bifurcated version of Coltrane's "Equinox." His tonality is secure from rumbling gruff low notes through middle-register shakes and angelic singing up high. It's all marked by inherent swing and phrasing out of the American vernacular.

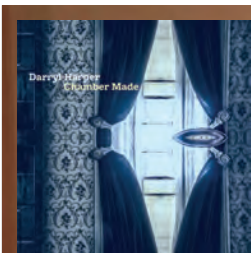
Anderson was taught by symphony musicians, worked early on in Latin dance bands and has been omnipresent on albums and tours as a leader, co-leader or collaborator of everyone from AACM friends to the Bob Thiele Collective. He draws on New Orleans parade traditions, Chicago street smarts, New York assertiveness and a lifetime of often challenging experiences to provide this enriching album.

—Howard Mandel

Marching On: Keep Your Heart Right; Blues For John Lewis; Just Squeeze Me; Early Morning In The Andersonian Jungle; Equinox; You Brought A New Kind Of Love To Me; Choppers; The Sisyphus Effect; Moon River. (37:46)

Personnel: Ray Anderson, trombone.

Ordering info: challengerecords.com



A symbol of rebellion against confining narratives.

COURTESY STRICKER STREET RECORDS

Darryl Harper *Chamber Made*

STRICKER STREET

★★★★

Darryl Harper's *Chamber Made* shines as a symbol of rebellion against confining narratives. Tackling what Harper refers to as "the fascinating question of where chamber music begins and ends" and the ingrained understanding of what genres with which Black cre-

atives are most often associated, the album provides answers through various elements: titles, compositional inspirations, collaborative participation and, of course, Harper's clarinet itself.

"Kaleidoscope" incorporates these facets well from the outset. Harper teams up with Matthew Parrish and Harry Reed as the Onus Trio, performing Freddie Bryant's work from the 2000 album *Live At Smoke*. The absence of chords gives the piece a sense of pliable freedom, evident in the way Harper leads and his

clarinet dances through the twirling harmonic minor melody.

The album's three-movement *Suite For Clarinet And String Quartet* reflects the uniqueness of Third Stream music. This style speaks directly to the heart of what listeners perceive as chamber and jazz music, emphasizing a true blending of artistic approaches from both styles, as opposed to fixed characterizations — a sentiment that can and should be applied to racial associations between music and musicians. Xavier Davis' "Silence" is modest but powerful. Harper conveys intentions, moods and the subtle flow between the two with shrewd nuance, all within the context of Langston Hughes' bold poem of the same name.

Chamber Made displays the many avenues that a musician can take to share a message and Harper's avoidance of a one-size-fits-all approach ties together the idea of learning to embrace openness. —Kira Grunenbergl

Chamber Made: Kaleidoscope; Suite For Clarinet And String Quartet Movement I. Shadows At Dawn; Suite For Clarinet And String Quartet Movement II. Branches Of Night; Suite For Clarinet And String Quartet Movement III. Fire And Flowers; Silence; Spatial Décor Movement I. Wound; Spatial Décor Movement II. Pressing; Spatial Décor Movement III. The Important Thing; Cash In Your Face. (43:34)

Personnel: Darryl Harper, clarinet; Matthew Parrish, bass (1); Harry "Butch" Reed, drums (1, 9); Sarah Briggs, Kaila Graef, violin (2–4); Delores Thayer, viola (2–4); Wayne Smith, cello (2–4); Alec Spiegelman, Kenny Pexton, clarinet (6–8); Brian Landrus (6–8), Todd Marcus (9), bass clarinet.

Ordering info: darrylharperjazz.com

Sonido Solar Eddie Palmieri Presents Sonido Solar

TRUTH REVOLUTION

★★★★½

On this rousing record, the legendary Eddie Palmieri hands the baton to the next generation of the Latin and Afro-Cuban musical traditions. Sonido Solar translates to "solar sound." It evokes Palmieri's moniker as the "The Sun of Latin Music."

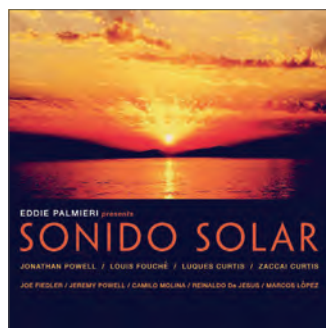
That sun shines brightly, illuminating the sonic paths of the groups four principals: trumpeter Jonathan Powell, alto saxophonist Louis Fouché and the Curtis brothers, Zaccai and Luques, on piano and bass, respectively. Each take their turns in the arranger's chair developing resonant takes on these Afro-Cuban standards. In their hands, the tradition feels both safe and newly invigorated. The group comes together as alums of Palmieri's bands and the anticipation of the maestro making an appearance is almost too much. By the seventh track, "Picadillo," he appears and we are rewarded for our patience. It is a showstopper. And, again, on the culminating track, the album's only original, co-composer Palmieri is featured to great effect. Still it is the four leaders who take their chance to shine, who become the rising of the next sun.

—Joshua Myers

Eddie Palmieri Presents Sonido Solar: Almendra; Mambo Influenciado; Mambo Inn; Maria Cervantes; Morning; Obsession; Picadillo; Ran Kan Kan; Suite 176. (58:02)

Personnel: Eddie Palmieri, piano (7, 9); Jonathan Powell, trumpet; Louis Fouché, alto saxophonist; Zaccai Curtis, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Jeremy Powell, tenor saxophone; Joe Fiedler, trombone; Camilo Molina, timbalero and trap drum; Reinaldo De Jesus, congas; Marcós Lopez, bongos and cowbell.

Ordering info: trstore.bandcamp.com



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Olli Hirvonen *Kielo*

ROPEADOPE

★★★★

A sojourn in the U.S. has added new beats and a certain tinge of urban urgency to Olli Hirvonen's music. His earlier work was reminiscent of native Finnish models like Tasavallan Presidentti, Edward Vesala's *Lumi*, Raoul Björkenheim and some of Jimi Sumén. Those roots are most evident here in the slow, almost processional pace of "Lento," but it's mitigated elsewhere with new encounters, reflected in the slide guitar wail of "Unceasing," which captures

the shut-in anxieties of the pandemic, and on a closing version of Big Thief's "Vegas."

Building on Hirvonen's past two albums and with the same core trio — powerfully controlled drumming from Nathan Ellman-Bell, and what sounds like a six-string bass pitched down from the guitar — he's created a very live, very intimate group sound with no artificial separation.

"Kielo" itself opens the album with a sound that could be from the backroom of a house in the Finnish countryside. "Erode" has strong rock associations, while "Outline," seemingly inspired by novelist Rachel Cusk's recent trilogy, has all the discursive melancholy of its source. On "Current," Hirvonen indulges a little Bach-like figure, further sign that he's casting his net ever wider for new approaches and methods.

At all stages, it's very much a group record, rather than lead-and-rhythm. Hirvonen's too modest and generous a talent to strut in front of the music rather than serve it from within. If you know *New Helsinki* and *Displace*, the two pre-COVID records, this will feel like a big, but understated, step forward. —Brian Morton

Kielo: Kielo; Erode; Outline; Current; Placeholder; Lento; Unceasing; Vegas. (52:50)

Personnel: Olli Hirvonen, guitar; Mary Kenney, bass; Nathan Ellman-Bell, drums.

Ordering info: ollihirvonen.bandcamp.com

Francisco Mela/ Zoh Amba *Causa Y Efecto, Vol. 1*

577 RECORDS

★★★★½

Francisco Mela and Zoh Amba's first outing as a duo is an atmospheric and meditative showcase of Mela's dynamic percussion and evocative vocals, and Amba's cerebral, vibrato-driven woodwinds. The two New York-based musicians weave free-jazz, avant-garde concepts and their respective cultural traditions together on *Causa Y Efecto, Vol. 1*.

Amba's lilting flute and throaty saxophone pay homage to the folk tradition of her Appalachian roots, while Mela's heartrending lyrics and pulsing rhythms evoke the poeticism of Cuban campesino music. Mela's poignant baritone voice is well matched by Amba's lilting flute and measured notes.

Amba's tonal and textural range is boundless. She is equally comfortable in the robust vocal range as she is in the extended techniques of the saxophone and flute. You can easily hear the influence of free-jazz pioneers David Murray, whom she studied under directly, and Albert Ayler in her wide vibrato and fast tempo. There is also a meticulousness and introspection in how she crafts melodic phrases and har-



monic motifs.

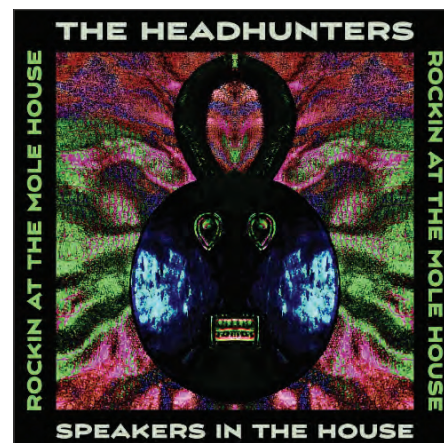
Mela and Amba go head to head on "Serenata," an unrelenting call-and-response between robust, melodic woodwinds and drums that are at turns somber, frenetic and forceful. Their regional roots can be heard throughout the record, but there's no doubt that they are also very much making their mark in the current New York avant-garde scene.

—Ivana Ng

Causa Y Efecto, Vol. 1: Maria; Dos Vidas; ZOME; Serenata; Desafíos. (39:40)

Personnel: Zoh Amba, tenor saxophone, flute; Francisco Mela, drums, voice.

Ordering info: 577records.com



The Headhunters *Speakers In The House*

ROPEADOPE

★★★★

Many of these cuts were self-released by the band in 2018, and distributed primarily at their gigs, but Ropeadope is doing the Lord's work in providing the material's first official release. The first recording from the Headhunters since 2011, *Speakers In The House* also contains fresh recordings of the compositions "HH 75" and "Over The Bar." Recorded in New Orleans, tracks like the aptly titled "Kongo Square" contain a praline-sweet melange of African, Latin and funk sounds alongside the collective's signature electric "out" sounds.

The Headhunters, formed in the early 1970s by Herbie Hancock, initially included Bennie Maupin, bassist Paul Jackson Jr., drummer Harvey Mason and percussionist Bill Summers. The unit supported Hancock beginning on 1973's *Head Hunters* through 1976, while individual members continued to play with Herbie throughout the 1970s. Their 1975 solo debut, *Survival Of The Fittest*, was co-produced by Herbie.

Speakers is clearly part of the continuum of that early edgy jazz fusion sound: the funky throughline between 1975's "God Made Me Funky" and "Over The Bar" from this release is evident. Opening with a cleansing kora solo provided by Fode Sissoko, the entire album is as forward leaning as it is in reference to the pioneering sounds from the collective's catalog.

The group, which retains the services of multi-instrumentalist Bill Summers in addition to drummer Mike Clark, also folds in a fresh cast of characters and sensibilities. This record serves as "Actual Proof" that the sources behind jazz fusion's fount still have a lot to say.

—Ayana Contreras

Speakers In The House: Kongo Square; Rockin At The Mole House; HH 75; Over The Bar; Vaspurakan; Stoop; Actual Proof; Stop Watch. (44:31)

Personnel: Mike Clark, drums; Bill Summers, percussion, keyboards, vocals; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Stephen Gordon, piano, keyboards; Reggie Washington, bass; Scott Roberts, drum programming (1–3); Fode Sissoko, kora, vocals (1); Jerry Z, organ (5).

Ordering info: ropeadope.com



The duo interprets a wide range of music.

Aubrey Johnson/ Randy Ingram *Play Favorites*

SUNNYSIDE

★★★★

Singer Aubrey Johnson gained experience early on working with Jimmy Cobb, Lyle Mays,

Bobby McFerrin and in a variety of ensembles in New York. She has a higher than expected voice, always sings in tune, and is not shy to stretch herself and improvise fairly freely.

Johnson and pianist Randy Ingram first performed together in 2015, enjoyed the musical encounter, and seven years later recorded this full set of duets. *Play Favorites* features

the duo interpreting a wide range of music, starting out with Billie Eilish's "My Future" and then creating their own fresh versions of veteran standards, including "If Ever I Should Lose You" and "My Ideal," and pieces by Jobim, Joni Mitchell, Jimmy Webb and Lyle Mays, among others.

Due to her high range, it may take a little time to get used to Aubrey Johnson's voice but she is comfortable whether scat-singing, including on Lennie Tristano's "April," which logically follows "I'll Remember April," interpreting lyrics in English or Portuguese or sounding like a 1970s singer/songwriter on some of the ballads. Ingram accompanies her expertly, contributes plenty of his own melodic solos and is very much an equal partner throughout their project.

In general, the songs with the strongest melodies, which tend to be the vintage pieces, result in the most rewarding performances since they give the duo a more solid foundation to work off of. Overall, *Play Favorites* is an intriguing set that grows in interest with each listen.

—Scott Yanow

Play Favorites: My Future; If Ever I Would Leave You; Prelude; If I Should Lose You; Conversation; Olha Maria; Didn't We; Chovendo Na Roseira; Quem E Voce (Close To Home); Medley: I'll Remember April, April; Born To Be Blue; Bons Amigos; My Ideal. (54:57)
Personnel: Aubrey Johnson, vocals; Randy Ingram, piano.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



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6-Stringers & Blues Singers

Buddy Guy: *The Blues Don't Lie* (RCA; 63:37 ★★★½) After B.B. King's demise in 2015, Buddy Guy became the towering figure of the blues — a status the preternaturally spry 86-year-old continues with his 19th solo album, arguably the best of five with producer-songwriter Tom Hambridge. Guy's singing has gained greater personality, his lung-power efficacy intact, but the main attraction of course is his Stratocaster. It fires on all turbocharged cylinders, with loads of hurt, joy, emotional elaboration. The legend's deep-seated humanity especially comes out in the quiet, sad "Gunsmoke Blues." Long keen on having fawning rock and country stars appear on his albums, Guy this time extends invitations to singers James Taylor, Elvis Costello, Bobby Rush, Wendy Moten and Jason Isbell. Well, OK. Way better, Mavis Staples breathes in sync with Guy, poignantly recalling the old days on "We Go Back."

Ordering info: buddyguy.net

Jeremiah Johnson: *Hi-Fi Drive By* (Ruf; 41:59 ★★★½) Over the years found in Houston or St. Louis, Jeremiah Johnson has shown the dogged perseverance to raise his international profile with road work and a German record label. On the latest, his seventh overall, he regulates his expressive engine productively on old-school rockin' showpiece "68 Coupe Deville" and nine more quality originals. An above-average singer and guitarist, Johnson follows a familiar Southern blues-rock-soul road until unexpectedly swerving off course with closer "The Band." It's a fantastic place, divided between Curtis Mayfield soul turf and south-of-the-border territory inhabited by jazz-savvy horn players and others from St. Louis along with Johnson himself, seeming to possess all manners of Santana-ish magical powers.

Ordering info: rufrecords.de

Grant Dermody: *Behind The Sun* (Independent Release; 50:10 ★★★) Now living in Lafayette, Louisiana, after a long time in the Pacific Northwest, Grant Dermody for the third time recording utilizes the services of Louisianian roots-music multi-instrumentalist Dirk Powell. Rather than predictably slide into Cajun, Creole or swamp-blues moods, Dermody joins with Powell with two more local luminaries, bassist Lee Allen Zeno and drummer Gerard St. Julien, in working up a maverick type of Chicago/Southern blues that creates its own state of feeling. Dermody's a talented harmonica player, and he and Powell are able songwriters. They have a good idea what songs by Muddy Waters, Otis Rush, Rick Estrin and others are adaptable to their individual style. The drawback is Dermody's singing, uninteresting and deficient in grain and steady-



COURTESY OF RCA

ness. Gospeller Teka Briscoe stamps her mark on the duet "Time Ain't Due."

Ordering info: grantdermody.com

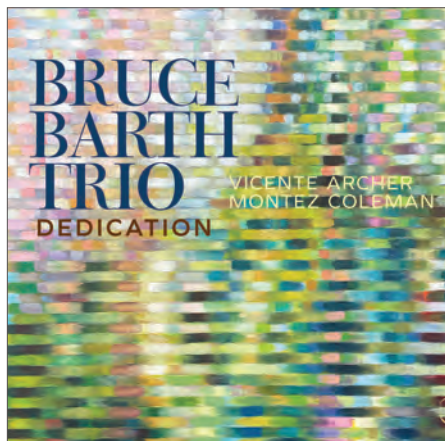
Kenny Wayne Shepherd: *Trouble Is ... 25* (Mascot/Provogue; 63:42 ★★★½) Kenny Wayne Shepherd doesn't settle for a 25th anniversary reissue of his second album *Trouble Is...*, the best-selling towering inferno of 1990s blues-rock made when he was 18. Instead, the 45-year-old replicates his original thunder-and-lightning guitar work, even using the same Stratocaster and amps he used before. He even reunites with producer Jerry Harrison and most of the supporting musicians from the 1997 sessions. The core of Shepherd's musical nature is as strong as ever, thanks to his admiration for Stevie Ray Vaughan, and, like his mentor, he's only done his job when leaving the listener breathless with awe over his virtuosic technique. "Blue On Black" is the thriller with an emotional core. Shepherd's sidekick Noah Hunt used to be ordinary lead singer; now he has strong and striking presence.

Ordering info: kennywayneshepherd.net

Brian Auger, Julie Driscoll & The Trinity: *Far Horizons* (Soul Bank; 45:19/35:00/74:00/39:54 ★★★½) During the late-1960s U.K. blues boom, former jazz purist Brian Auger gave free rein to his unusually fertile imagination and without artifice managed in his music to balance and combine blues, jazz, R&B, soul, soul-jazz, classical, gospel, pop and psychedelic rock. The Jimmy Smith-influenced organist and his band, at times joined by idiosyncratic singer Julie Driscoll, still sound fresh and interesting today, here on a CD or vinyl set of their four albums: *Open* (with Driscoll), *Definitely What!*, *Befour* and, the one disappointment among them, *Streetnoise* (with Driscoll). Highlights include inventive redesigns of Miles Davis' "All Blues," Lowell Fulson's "Tramp" and Mose Allison's "If You Live."

DB

Ordering info: soulbank.k7store.com



Bruce Barth Trio *Dedication*

ORIGIN

★★★★½

Bruce Barth is heard most often at the head of his own trio, which for a long period included bassist Vicente Archer and drummer Montez Coleman. *Dedication*, his 17th album as a leader, is dedicated as a whole to Coleman, who passed away five months after this recording at the age of 48 in January 2022 from heart failure. Consisting of eight of the pianist's originals, the set also has individual tributes to close neighbors, George Floyd, as well as Tommy Flanagan

and McCoy Tyner.

Throughout *Dedication*, there is an impressive amount of variety displayed within the modern jazz mainstream along with near-telepathic reactions by the musicians. The album is well programmed with medium-tempo pieces generally alternating with ballads. The opener, "George's Dance," is a swinger on which Barth effectively builds up his solo including several climaxes while regularly returning to the melody. "Courage" is a melodic jazz waltz while "In Memoriam" (a tribute to George Floyd) is thoughtful and a bit mournful without being a dirge. "Let's Go," which is dedicated to Tyner, sounds like the beginning of a road trip with excitement being felt due to its potential.

The second half of the album starts with the slightly funky "Better Days," which focuses on the tightness of the trio as it improvises around a catchy rhythmic riff. "Golden Glow" is a warm ballad taken out of tempo at first before it picks up steam. A happy and sophisticated piece in memory of Tommy Flanagan ("That's How It Sometimes Goes") and the softly swinging ballad "Softly, In A Garden Path," wrap up the satisfying trio outing. —Scott Yanow

Dedication: George's Dance; Courage; In Memoriam; Let's Go; Better Days; Golden Glow; That's How It Sometimes Goes; Softly, In A Garden Path. (43:57)

Personnel: Bruce Barth, piano; Vicente Archer, bass; Montez Coleman, drums.

Ordering info: originarts.com

Tawanda *Smile*

RESONANCE

★★★★½

Tawanda Suessbrich-Joaquim's debut album *Smile* takes its title from an included version of the oft interpreted Chaplin-penned standard (here combined in a medley with "I'm All Smiles"). This collection thankfully digs deeper into the annals of recorded music, however: She interprets music popularized by Donny Hathaway (a pleasant take on "Sack Full Of Dreams" from his posthumously released album *In Performance*) and takes on Sting's "Sister Moon" (from 1987's ... *Nothing Like The Sun*), for instance. Her voice is a comforting constant throughout.

Let's say I pour you a martini (gin, not vodka)? Do you prefer clarity in a champagne coupe, or a handblown goblet with texture? I suppose it all goes down the same, but something is to be said about how a vessel impacts the experience. Tawanda's voice is so clear, its nearly transparent. Truly lovely. This record is well-hewn and tasteful, but not risky. I found myself hoping for some occlusions.

Fortunately, *Smile* offers a few welcome surprises, including Tawanda's laidback-yet deft take on "What A Little Moonlight Will Do."



And this album absolutely sticks its landing: full steam from a perfectly seasoned habanero-flavored rendition of "You And The Night And The Music" into a lovely overdubbed a cappella stab at "Smile." It's enough to put me firmly in the camp of those anticipating what comes next for Tawanda. —Ayana Contreras

Smile: Smile/I'm All Smiles; Out Of This World; Bridges; Sister Moon; What A Little Moonlight Will Do; A Child Is Born; I'm Okay; Lucky To Be Me; Sack Full Of Dreams; Bring Back My Dreams; You And The Night And The Music; Smile. (57:00)

Personnel: Tawanda Suessbrich-Joaquim, vocals; Josh Nelson, piano (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12); Tamir Henderson, piano (2, 4, 6, 8, 10); Kevin Axt, bass; Gene Coyne (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12), Ray Brinker (2, 4, 6, 8, 10), drums; Anthony Wilson, guitar; Gary Meek, saxophone.

Ordering info: resonancerecords.org



Arild Andersen Group *Affirmation*

ECM

★★★★

Bassist Arild Andersen has been a key presence on the Norwegian jazz scene for more than five decades, emerging as a vital sideman on the early groundbreaking early recordings of Jan Garbarek before launching his own prolific run as a bandleader. This recent quartet consists of musicians more than half his age, revealing his ongoing curiosity and openness to new stylistic threads.

After sharpening its rapport and finessing new material with shows around Norway the group convened in Oslo to make a new album, but the country's tough pandemic restrictions made it impossible for ECM honcho Manfred Eicher to produce the sessions. On the second day Andersen suggested some group improvisations, and ultimately those spontaneous excursions form the bulk of this new album, with the bassist's "Short Story" serving as the sole, composed coda.

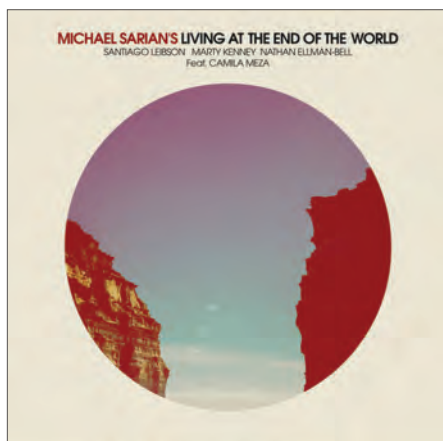
Tenor saxophonist Marius Neset's nasal sound harks back to Garbarek's tone, and, between Andersen's trebly amplified timbre there's a strong '70s vibe to the music, particularly when the explorations are more measured and gentler. Pianist Helge Lien extends that reverb-drenched sense of contemplation, but when the group begins to generate heat and friction in the first extended piece, with the superb drummer Håkon Mjåset Johansen propelling his colleagues toward more unknown and voluble terrain, the ensemble seems to gel in real-time. Obviously, the group had already developed a connection, but the decision to improvise was a smart one, yielding music with a sense of danger and edge, even if the musicians naturally gravitate to a rise-and-fall arc fueled by complementary lyricism.

—Peter Margasak

Affirmation: Affirmation Part I; Affirmation Part II; Short Story. (45:25)

Personnel: Marius Neset, tenor saxophone; Helge Lien, piano; Arild Andersen, bass; Håkon Mjåset Johansen, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Michael Sarian *Living At The End Of The World*

EARS AND EYES

★★★★

Melody is both a binding agent and inspiration for this new quartet outing by trumpeter Michael Sarian, who reveals an endlessly renewable strain of lyric improvisation regardless of context or material. He achieves a luxurious sprawl that summons the classic spaciousness of vintage ECM albums, an admitted influence on the trumpeter who was born in Toronto, raised in Buenos Aires, and has lived

in New York for the last decade. He trawls widely for inspiration, opening with “Yis Ku Ghimetn Chim Gidi (I Don’t Know Your True Value),” an inventive arrangement of the piece by 18th century Armenian poet and composer Sayat Nova, while later tackling the gorgeous Meshell Ndegeocello ballad “Oysters.” On the former the band pulls the tune apart for a stretch of wide-open playing that doesn’t halt the leader’s lyric command at all, even as he pushes toward abstraction, while on the second tune he operates with pop-like concision.

His own compositions cover plenty of terrain, whether saluting the great Italian trumpeter Enrico Rava on “The Pilgrim,” while “Picklepuess Romp” is a rhythmic workout borrowing from New Orleans parade grooves and hip-hop beats. “Cinta Marina” is a collaboration with Argentine actress-singer Belén Pasqualini, who wrote the Spanish-language lyrics recited and sung by Camila Meza. While there’s melody even in her spoken parts, the tune feels overripe and a bit toothless on a collection that otherwise balance tunefulness and grit pretty well.

—Peter Margasak

Living At The End Of The World: Yis Ku Ghimetn Chim Gidi (I Don’t Know Your True Value); The Pilgrim; Oysters; Maverick Road; Cinta Marina; Picklepuess Romp; Regarding Kobe; Living At The End Of The World; Max. (***RUNNING TIME***)

Personnel: Michael Sarian, trumpet, flugelhorn; Santiago Leibson, piano, Rhodes, Minimoog; Marty Kenney, bass; Nathan Ellman-Bell, drums; Camila Meza, guitar, voice (5).

Ordering info: michaelsarian.bandcamp.com

SeaJun Kwon Walking Cliché Sextet

Micro-Nap

ENDECTOMORPH

★★★★½

Winston Churchill and Salvador Dalí were both great fans of the micro-nap. Those odd liminal moments between waking and sleep can be packed with strange imagery.

Composer SeaJun Kwon uses the idea to explore patterns of sound within an infinitesimal of time, allowing them to overlap and interfere one with the other in such a way that what might seem like chaos actually reveals structure, order and form.

Frank Herbert obviously plays a part in all this, too, and it’s hard to believe he didn’t come up with some of his ideas between waking and sleep. The opening “Muad’Dib” by pianist Erez Dessel, along with Michael Prentky’s “Commune,” the only composition not by the bassist, is named after the heroic protagonist of Dune. It’s quite freaky stuff, then, but SeaJun’s willingness to put pieces by colleagues ahead of his own is a sign that he regards the sextet as a free-standing unit and not just as a vehicle for his own writing. In contrast to their previous *Suite Chase Reflex*, the music on *Micro-Nap* is surprisingly accessible, even in its mad bustle.



The multi-horn front line may be reminiscent of some of Anthony Braxton’s ensemble pieces, but the principle of order is different, with few of Braxton’s “language music” props in evidence. SeaJun Kwon writes unsettling themes to express unsettling times and mindsets, but the music offers the consolation of order and human contact, too, which is exactly what we need at the moment.

—Brian Morton

Micro-Nap: Muad’Dib; Commune; Micro-Nap; Anamorphosis No 1; Rumination; Suite Transient—Trio, Interlude; Suite Transient—Transient. (50:33)

Personnel: SeaJun Kwon, bass; Michael Prentky, trombone, tuba; Aaron Dutton, alto saxophone; Jacob Shulman, tenor saxophone; Erez Dessel, Jacob Hiser, piano; Avery Logan, Charles Weller, drums.

Ordering info: endectomorph.com



Nicole Mitchell/ Fabio Paolizzo

Medusae

DON GIOVANNI

★★★★

Medusae, the cerebral new album by Nicole Mitchell and computer savant Fabio Paolizzo, attests to the creators’ intelligence. It highlights the artificial intelligence at the heart of Video Interactive VST Orchestra, the system Paolizzo programs to respond to Mitchell’s flute, piccolo and voice. The album and its cover art conjure science fiction as much as jazz.

The 16 sonic environments Mitchell and Paolizzo craft for their curious work span the joyous howl and croon of “Make Fertile,” the scary whoosh and wail of “Replicas,” the plush sonics of “Perils to Beauty, 2nd Frame” and “Wings,” a joyous display of Mitchell’s instrumental command.

The album’s title references jellyfish, which lack eyes, hearts and brains. All jellyfish do is absorb and react, much like Paolizzo’s interactive orchestra. “Apotropaic,” the brief final track, joins flute and VIVO in singular sonic expression. “Apotropaic” refers to something designed to ward off evil — like Medusa, the Gorgon whose gaze could turn one into stone.

This recording is all about sound and nuance; melody doesn’t figure, infectious rhythm rarely comes within earshot, and there’s no particular arc. There are virtuosity, creativity and fearlessness. As one becomes accustomed to the way Mitchell, who is Black, and Paolizzo, who is Italian, shape their highly atmospheric excursions, the strangeness recedes.

Be sure to read the liner notes. The conversation Mitchell and Paolizzo conduct there is as thought-provoking as their unusual, imaginative recording.

—Carlo Wolff

Medusae: Courtship Dances; Gametes; Make Fertile; The birth; Transformation Of A Simple Life Form; Replicas; A Baby Jellyfish; Perils To Beauty, 1st Frame; Perils To Beauty, 2nd Frame; Perils To Beauty, 3rd Frame; Perils To Beauty, 4th Frame; Shade, Inception; Shade; Memory Of A Violence; Wings; Apotropaic. (50:56)

Personnel: Nicole Mitchell, flute, piccolo, voice; Fabio Paolizzo, Video Interactive VST Orchestra.

Ordering info: nicolemitchell.bandcamp.com



Arturo O'Farrill/ Congo Patria Son Jarocho Collective *Fandango At The Wall In New York*

TIGER TURN
★★★★

Several years ago, Arturo O'Farrill, the pianist/composer born in Mexico and raised in New York, began a musical quest of *Fandango at the Wall* that includes a new release to accompany the HBO documentary. *Fandango At The Wall In New York* is O'Farrill's latest album,

and from the opening track a feverish, rhythmic Latino pulse is established with "Bemba Y Tablao." Like most traditional folk music, the voices here blend almost symphonically, and the guitars of varying sizes amplify the celebratory sound.

One track that is sure to attract listeners is "La Bamba." But O'Farrill and his entourage give the popular rendition a different spin, embellishing the song with a spirited, hard-driving tempo that is so essential to the repertoire of the Congo Patria Son Jarocho Collective, his special guests on this recording. "BeboChicoChuchoturo," perhaps a tribute to the great Cuban pianist, is full of dramatic intensity with an Art Tatum-like verve, the pianist galloping along with the congas.

The music here definitely transcends the barriers that divide. —Herb Boyd

Fandango At The Wall In New York: Bemba Y Tablao; Cielito Lindo; BeboChicoChuchoturo; El Pijul; Fly Away; Las Poblanas; El Maquech; Xalapa Bang!; La Bamba; Congo Patria. (58:40)

Personnel: Alejandro Aviles, Larry Bustamante, Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, Ivan Renta, Alexa Tarantino, woodwinds; Seneca Black, David Neves, James Seeley, Bryan Davis, trumpet; Frank Cohen, Rocky Arner, Rafi Malkiel, trombone; Earl McIntyre, bass trombone; Keisel Jimenez, Carlos Maldonado, percussion; Gregg August, bass; Vince Cherico, drums; Rahim Alhaj, oud, vocals; Regina Carter, violin; Akua Dixon, cello; Humberto Flores, guitar, jarana; Sahba Motallebi, tar; Alberto Villalobos, violin, viola, vocals; Ernesto Villalobos, violin, vocals; Luis Villalobos, violin, vocals; Jacob Hernandez, marimbo; Claudia Montes, jarana, vocals; Julia del Palacio, zapateado; Sergio Ramirez, guitar, jarana; Congo Patria Son Jarocho Collective.

Ordering info: afrolatinjazz.org

The Manhattan Transfer *Fifty* CRAFT

★★½

The Manhattan Transfer celebrates its 50th anniversary with a symphonic album. The group's longevity is remarkable, but most impressive is the fact that its veteran vocalists (Janis Siegel and Alan Paul are original members, while Cheryl Bentyne has been with the group a mere 43 years) are still in their musical prime and singing as well as ever. Trist Curless, who succeeded the late Tim Hauser in 2014, fits in that difficult role quite well.

While having swinging jazz as its foundation, the Manhattan Transfer has always been eclectic with some of its projects being less jazz-oriented than others. *Fifty* has the singers joined by the WDR Funkhausorchester with arrangements by Vince Mendoza, Blake Morgan, Mervyn Wallace, Callam Au, Andrew Kesler, Amanda Taylor and Janis Siegel, and important contributions made by Jorge Calandrelli and Yaron Gershovsky.

All that said, *Fifty* will be a disappointment to those who are interested in the Manhattan Transfer's more creative projects. Other than "The Man I Love," most of the music is outside of jazz. While "Paradise Within" is surprisingly effective and "Chanson D'Amour" is charming,



the arrangements of many of the other remakes including "Aguas," Curless' feature on "The Man Who Sailed Around His Soul," "Twilight Zone/Twilight Tone" and "What Goes Around Comes Around" are rather dull and forgettable. A lot of work obviously went into this project, but the results are far from inspiring.

—Scott Yanow

Fifty: Aguas; The Man I Love; Paradise Within; On A Little Street In Singapore; The Man Who Sailed Around His Soul; Twilight Zone/Twilight Tone; Blues For Harry Bosch; Chanson D'Amour; What Goes Around Comes Around; God Only Knows. (49:46)

Personnel: Cheryl Bentyne, Janis Siegel, Alan Paul, Trist Curless, vocals; WDR Funkhausorchester, Yaron Gershovsky, piano; Boris Kaslov, bass; Ross Pederson, drums; Cliff Almond, Jay Graydon, James Chirillo, guitar; Bobby Sanabria, percussion; Les Pierce, Andy Miles, clarinet; Gilda Razani, theremin; Ryan Carniaux, trumpet.

Ordering info: craftrecordings.com



Marilyn Mazur's Shamania *Rerooting*

CLAP YOUR HANDS
★★½

Marilyn Mazur's Shamania updates a concept that the Danish percussionist first explored four decades ago. Between 1978 and 1986 she led the Primi Band, an all-women ensemble, the music of which was informed by dance, theater and world music as well as jazz. In 2015, she formed Shamania, another ritually oriented, all-female group.

Shamania's musicians come from various Scandinavian countries, and are associated with pop, world music and free improvisation. The material on *Rerooting*, its second album, reflects the breadth of their collective experience. Hildegunn Øiseth's goat horn and Josefine Cronholm's ornate vocal line are suspended over an international array of hand percussion and dense synthetic tones on "Solnedgangskanon," opening the proceedings on a ceremonial note.

The next track, "The Birds Are Early Out," blends chant and spoken word with rubbery funk bass. The changes keep coming, with successive tracks devoted to tight, punchy horn charts, garrulous free improvisation and lush, Brazilian-steeped melodies. Sometimes the shifts occur within a composition. The wordless ululations and tolling gongs in the first section of "Shadow Tune" sound like an excerpt from a ceremony enacted in some hidden rainforest clearing; the second is a sunny, feel-good sing-along. The material's variety reflects the ensemble's diverse backgrounds, but the album's biggest approach works better as an expression of collective purpose than as a listening experience.

—Bill Meyer

Rerooting: Solnedgangskanon; The Birds Are Early Out; Colored Minds; Virtual Towers; Spring Princess; Gongs For Peace 1; Rerooting; Shadow Tune; Circular Chant; Shamamalibas; Vindbas; Bali Bala; Unison Towers; Drungudans; Largo Of Voices; Gongs For Peace 2. (58:02)

Personnel: Lotte Anker, tenor and soprano saxophone; Josefine Cronholm, voice; Lisbeth Diers, congas and percussion; Ida Gormsen, electric bass; Makiki Hirabayashi, piano, keyboard; Anna Lund, drums; Marilyn Mazur, percussion, balafone, kalimba; Sissel Vera Pettersen, voice, alto saxophone; Hildegunn Øiseth, trumpet, goat horn.

Ordering info: clapyourhands.ch/shop



Icelandic singer-songwriter Laufey's latest EP features sparse, relaxed arrangements.

Standards Old & New

There are as many ways to sing a song as there are songs to sing. A vocalist is limited only by her imagination.

Jackie Ryan's mother grew up in Mexico, and filled the family home with the music she loved. ***Recuerdos de mi Madre* (OpenArt, 45:59 ★★★)** is Ryan's tribute to her mother. With the help of pianist/trumpeter Marco Diaz and a long list of guest artists, Ryan brings her vision to 10 of the Latin standards she grew up with. "El Dia Que Me Quieras" is delivered quietly and soulfully, accompanied only by the piano of Diaz and Paquito D'Rivera's clarinet. D'Rivera also contributes a measured sax solo on "Quizas, Quizas, Quizas." Although known for her powerful vocals, Ryan takes a measured approach on this outing, befitting the nostalgic aura of the material.

Ordering info: openartproductions.com

Many of the songs on ***Blank Canvas* (Ropeadope; 47:46 ★★★)** were composed by **Sarah Elizabeth Charles** and her band SCOPE during the COVID lockdown, the singer's miscarriage and the birth of a son. The album incorporates elements of jazz, R&B, rock and world music. The arrangements treat her vocals as another instrument in the mix, often blending into the experimental soundscapes. Her muted approach on "Freedom Day" adds another layer of irony to the song's satiric lyric. "Brother" blends overlapping vocal rounds, spoken word and wordless harmonies, to celebrate the life of her recently deceased brother. Funk, rock, drum loops and Charles' wordless melismas on "Borders" suggest the erasure of spiritual, as well as personal, boundaries.

Ordering info: sarahelizabethcharles.com

Roberta Donnay has an intimate vocal style, with a warm low end and a fondness for the music of the jazz era. Live, she digs deep into the catalog of the '20s through the '50s, with a low-key elegance. She's always been a fan of Blossom Dearie, another woman who wowed her fans with her sly confidence and understated sensuality. On ***Blossom-ing* (Village Jazz Café; 51:29 ★★★)** she takes

on 16 tunes from Dearie's repertoire, with arrangements that should make these classics resonate with today's listeners. Dearie's "Blossom's Blues" is reinvented as "Roberta's Blues," with a smooth walking bass line supporting Donnay's playful take. Donnay's treatment of more obscure tunes like "Moonlight Savings Time" and Yves Montand's "A Paris" shine as showcases for her delivery and the subtle piano work of Mike Greensill.

Ordering info: robertadonnay.com

The Great American Songbook also inspired **Nica Carrington's** debut, ***Times Like These* (Independent Release, 48:46 ★★★)**. Unable to take live singing lessons in New York during the pandemic, she found L.A.-based pianist and composer John Proulx online. Carrington flew to L.A. and they cut the tunes with a trio featuring Proulx on piano, Chuck Berghofer on bass and drummer Joe LaBarbera. The songs are standards, featuring the interplay between Carrington's simmering vocals and the flourishes Proulx brings to the brief solos he plays on every tune. Carrington never calls attention to herself, but her nuanced vocals and use of volume, timbre and occasional melismas pack plenty of emotion into every syllable.

Ordering info: nicacarrington.com

Icelandic singer-songwriter **Laufey** has been on the path to stardom since 2014, when she made the final round on *Iceland's Got Talent* at age 15. Last year she released her first album, *Everything I Know About Love*, featuring sparse arrangements that combine elements of jazz, pop, bossa nova and classical music to highlight bittersweet stories about love and romance. Her follow-up EP, ***The Reykjavik Sessions* (AWAL; 22:00 ★★★★★)**, is even more relaxed, with five of her debut's best songs, including "Valentine," "Fragile" and "Slow Down" performed only with guitar, piano and minimal percussion. Both sets are impressive, full of songs that will quite possibly become standards as time goes by.

Ordering info: awal.com



Michael Blake *Combobulate*

NEWVILLE

★★★★

How can an album so technically stripped down feel like it has the potential to do anything? What did Michael Blake find in this formula and these players to make the wind in these guys' instruments lift this sextet to such extraordinary heights? *Combobulate* is a collection of songs that works to refashion the brass band into whatever Blake needs it to be, and he's got some ideas ready.

The album's title track is a haunting march that soothes as much as a propels with Bob Stewart and Marcus Rojas swirling about on tubas and Steve Bernstein's trumpet hovering above them. It's a playful portal through time. "Bob The Bob" takes the same tack, with Blake baring his soul, making his tenor saxophone moan and wail the melody and solos from some deep place.

More conventional songs like the first half of "Bills In The Bell" or bonus track "Contemplation" come up when not blowing minds. They swing. They jam. They definitely impress on their own terms. But there's that extra oomph here that makes them exceptional like the other more genre-twisting tunes throughout the album. It's notable that this is an album playing on another level.

The thing is this sort of brass sextet has always existed since the beginning of the genre, filling great halls with stentorian sound and rattling skulls. This configuration isn't anything out of the ordinary, it's Blake who uses these tools and the masters who wield them to put out such inventive music. It's nice to be reminded of all a group like this can do.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Combobulate: Henry's Boogaloo; Combobulate; Focus Pocus; Cuyahoga Valley; Strange Affair; Bills In The Bell; Bob The Bob; Malagasy; Anthem For No Country; Contemplation; The Parting Glass. (49:30)

Personnel: Michael Blake, tenor and soprano saxophones, flute; Steven Bernstein, trumpet; Clark Gayton, trombone; Bob Stewart, Marcus Rojas, tuba; Allan Mednard, drums; Elan Mehler, piano (10).

Ordering info: newville-records.com

Dan Weiss Trio *Dedication*

CYGNUS RECORDINGS

★★★★

Perhaps the best way to describe the mood of this record is gentle. Joined by pianist Jacob Sacks and bassist Thomas Morgan, drummer/tablo player Dan Weiss' third trio effort revolves around statements of musical influence that manage to evoke a suite-like consistency.

The compositions flow into each other while also working beautifully as standalone pieces. While the balance of the tunes are direct reflections on musical influences, like Tim Smith, Elvin Jones and Burt Bacharach, Weiss' dedication to intrepid filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky is one of the album's highlights. Befitting its namesake, the tune spends eight minutes carrying the listener through a metaphysical dreamscape. Other notable moments are Weiss' compositions made in honor of bandmate Jacob Sacks, as well as the third track, a piece written for composer Conlon Nancarrow. Described by Weiss as "the most demanding piece" on *Dedication*, this tune asserts itself as the pivot around which a truly explorative and moving album projects itself onto our consciousness. The journey passes on to a memorial to George Floyd, a rare political statement from Weiss' pen, and several more tunes before returning to consider the memory of his own grandmother.

—Joshua Myers

Dedication: For Tim Smith; For Vivienne; For Nancarrow; For George Floyd; For Jacob; For Andrei Tarkovsky; For Bacharach; For Elvin; For Grandma May. (53:55)

Personnel: Dan Weiss, drums and tabla; Jacob Sacks, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass.

Ordering info: cygnusrecordings.bandcamp.com



Jussi Reijonen *Three Seconds/ Kolme Toista*

CHALLENGE

★★½

Jussi Reijonen is a Finnish guitarist who was born in Lapland, raised in the Levant and East Africa, and currently receives mail in New York, Boston and Amsterdam. Given his international background, it would be remarkable if his music didn't deal in some way with combinations of cultures. The decade that separates this album, Reijonen's second as a leader, from his debut, *Un*, has afforded him plenty of time to consider how these influences should coexist. It is a programmatic, five-part suite that depicts an insight that he experienced during this time of reflection: that hitherto unseen others, presumably previously unrecognized aspects of a fragmented self, can be combined without losing their essential distinctiveness.

The album's immaculate recording and precise arrangements suggest that Reijonen's method for achieving this unity involves making sure that everything is put carefully in place and represented with maximum transparency. This strategy benefits certain aspects of the music, but also leaves its flaws with nowhere to hide.

—Bill Meyer

Three Seconds/Kolme Toista: The Veil; Transient; The Weaver, Every So Often Shifting The Sonda Beneath Her; Verso; Median. (42:31)

Personnel: Jussi Reijonen, fretted and fretless electric guitars, classical guitar, oud; Jason Palmer, trumpet, flugelhorn; Bulut Gülen, trombone; Layth Sidiq, violin; Naseem Alatrash, cello; Utar Artun, microtonal piano; Kyle Miles, fretless electric and upright basses; Keita Ogawa, percussion; Vancil Cooper, drums.

Ordering info: jussireijonen.com



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CREATING NEW PATHS WITH NEXT JAZZ LEGACY

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Ivanna Cuesta, drummer in Next Jazz Legacy's inaugural class

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PAQUITO D'RIVERA'S CLARINET
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JODYJAZZ'S HAND-HAMMERED (HH)
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The inaugural class of the Next Jazz Legacy, from left: Kalia Vandever, Anastasiya Petrova, Ivanna Cuesta Gonzalez, Keyanna Hutchinson, Loke Risberg, Alexis Lombre and Lexi Hamner.



Next Jazz Legacy members perform at the Kennedy Center during the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival.

CREATING NEW PATHS WITH NEXT JAZZ LEGACY

By Terry Perkins

As the Next Jazz Legacy — an initiative created to provide a wide-ranging year-long apprenticeship program to support selected young women and non-binary jazz musicians — completes its first year, it's important to note that the planning for the project began long before launching.

Terri Lyne Carrington, NEA Jazz Master, Grammy-winning drummer/bandleader and founder and artistic director of the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, began working with Vanessa Reed, president and CEO of New Music USA, to craft the various elements of the program in 2019. The Mellon Foundation provided three years of

funding, and in 2021 applications for the inaugural apprenticeship opened.

The selection process began with an open call for applications, followed by a review process employing a diverse panel of jazz musicians and music industry professionals that included Carrington, who also serves as the artistic director for Next Jazz Legacy. Applicants were

required to be U.S. citizens, fully vaccinated and not currently enrolled in an academic institution program or contracted with a third-party recording company.

The results came in when seven musicians were selected for the 2022 class: Anastassiya Petrova (piano/organ), Ivanna Cuesta (drums), Lexi Hamner (voice/trombone), Keyanna

Hutchinson (guitar), Alexis Lombre (piano), Loke Risberg (guitar) and Kalia Vandever (trombone).

Once they were chosen, the Next Jazz Legacy team worked to pair them with established jazz bandleaders as well as with a musical mentor. Bandleaders for 2022 included Chris Potter, esperanza spalding, Tia Fuller, Lizz Wright, Marcus Miller, Linda May Han Oh and Mary Halverson. Musical mentors included Kris Davis, Wayne Shorter, Bobby McFerrin, Brandon Ross, Georgia Ann Muldrow and Bill Stewart.

In addition, applicants received a \$10,000 stipend, music business sessions and the opportunity to perform with other Next Jazz Legacy members.

As the first year of the Next Jazz Legacy project began to close and the deadline for 2023 applications approached, DownBeat spoke with several artists and administrators involved in the project.

Speaking from the New Music USA offices in New York, Harris, who moved to the United States in 2019 from London, described how the Next Jazz Legacy project began.

“When I was in England working with PRS Foundation, a similar new music organization, I was already thinking a lot about gender equity,” she said. “I started a global campaign called KeyChange, encouraging live music festivals around the globe to sign up to a gender balance pledge. And at New Music USA, I wanted to think about what we could do in genres where there was a particularly big gap between the number of male and female creators involved. I began to talk to Terri Lyne to brainstorm about what New Music USA might be able to do to raise awareness of gender equity in jazz — and do something concrete that would have a national impact and encourage both men and women in the community to really think about how they’re identifying talented musicians.”

Gender equity in jazz has also been on Carrington’s mind for many years, serving as the impetus behind her involvement in the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice.

In an email, she referenced a quote from an essay she wrote for Billboard magazine in February 2022: “We not only have to face the facts that misogyny and sexism are still very much a part of the music industry, we also have to change the systems and patterns that have remained oppressive in order for the music to fully flourish and match how humanity is evolving.”

Harris and Carrington discussed the possibility of how New Music USA and the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice could partner to create a program to advance gender equity in jazz — and what that program could offer.

“Terri and I talked for about 18 months about different ideas, and I was also working on ways to fund the program,” Harris said. “Finally, we managed to come up with a program that we believe combines all the elements that an emerging artist needs to get to the next level: an apprenticeship with an established bandleader, a mentorship, investment in their own career and other forms of promotion. And both Terri and I felt that we wanted to have men and women working together to bring about change that would be positive for the whole community.”

For both, a key element of the program stems from limiting applicants to those not currently enrolled in an academic institution program.

“The reason behind that is because the moment that you’re finished with your education and the brilliant opportunities you get in education — suddenly you have no infrastructure around you,” Harris said. “You’re trying to work out your next step, do the right thing, get to the next level, but you’re feeling quite lonely. It’s also possible someone may not have gone through traditional education in music, either. That’s the reason we focus on that stage of people’s careers. So it’s really about giving people

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Another focus is working to match the musicians chosen for Next Jazz Legacy with the bandleaders and mentors who will be best suited for each member of the group.

“As part of the application process, we asked each applicant to name three mentors they wished to work with,” said de la Rosa. “They also completed a survey in which they listed their long-term and short-term goals, and another where they stated what they’d like to learn from music business experts. Using that information, we were able to identify who would best help them to reach those individual goals.”

“In addition to apprenticeship performances during the year and mentoring sessions and business information meetings, the seven musicians chosen were also able to all play together several times,” Harris added. “They did a live concert for WBGO radio, as well as a performance at the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival in Washington, D.C. — a very appropriate context for this group.”

For her apprenticeship, trombonist and vocalist Lexi Hamner chose Tia Fuller, who also happened to be one of her professors while Hamner attended Berklee.

“I chose her because I wanted to dive deeper beyond my relationship with her as a professor,” Hamner explained. “I wanted to learn about being a band leader and balancing that with her teaching career. My first gig with Tia was nerve-racking, but the second was near and dear to my heart because it was in my hometown, Cincinnati. My family and friends were able to come out and see me perform with her and the other musicians. And having Bobby McFerrin as a mentor was amazing — the insights he provided talking about his career and advice on how to build my own.”

“It’s been tough figuring out what I’m going to do, how I’m going to use this degree from Berklee now that I’ve graduated, and how I can push my music. But being a part of Next Jazz Legacy has given me all the tools I need. It gave me the chance to learn from mentors who are real professionals, and the stipend allowed me to buy all the equipment I needed. All the other resources — from mentors, my cohorts as well as music business advisors — have given me great guidelines to follow. The path has been made clearer for me.”

Next Jazz Legacy pianist Alexis Lombre had the opportunity to be part of several of Marcus Miller’s performances in 2022, including at the Montreal Jazz Festival. She also flew to Los Angeles to spend several days with her mentor, musician and producer Georgia Ann Muldrow.

“The chances to play with Marcus and his band were wonderful experiences,” said Lombre. “And when I met Georgia, I learned so much about how she functioned day-to-

day to build her success. The whole year has definitely expedited my 10-year plan — smashing all the things I’d hoped to do into just this one. It’s been very impactful and has given me a lot of confidence. In beautiful ways, it required a great growth spurt on my part, because all these barriers were removed and I’m building up an amazing network.”

“I’m very proud of how the first year has gone,” Carrington said. “A few hiccups, of course, as any new program will have. But, overall, it’s been a very successful year, with our artists doing shows or in the studio with some of their biggest

inspirations musically. The business mentorships have been quite useful as well. As the proverb goes, ‘It takes a village.’ And this program allows the ‘village’ to step up and help usher in some fine additions to the next generation of jazz.

“I’m excited about the next two years of the program. We have experiences to share with the next round of band leaders, as well as the next round of emerging artists. We see nothing but growth on the horizon and hope that we can continue past the next two funded years. At the end of the day, it’s our hope that we are contributing to a paradigm shift in jazz.”

DB



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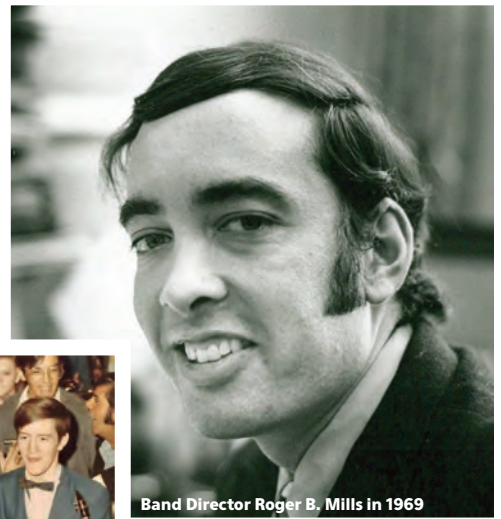
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The 1968 New Trier West Jazz Ensemble



Band Director Roger B. Mills in 1969



The 1970 band in Mexico



The 1976 saxophone section



The band's 1977 edition

HOW THE CLASSROOM REPLACED THE JAZZ CLUB

By John McDonough

There are many emblems of accomplishment, from a Wikipedia bio to a Nobel Prize. But the most coveted is a place in the curriculum. It weeds the passing from the permanent and confers perpetual standing in the hierarchy of human experience.

Like many nouveau-upstarts, jazz had to fight for recognition. Academia frowned on fun, especially when its venues were hotspots like clubs, hotels, ballrooms and bars. Only as its popularity waned on the pop charts did jazz become a contender for academic favor. In October 1947, the world's first jazz studies program was established at the University of North Texas in Denton.

Today, 75 years later, UNT still wails, the ballrooms have all closed and the largest single big band jazz venue in America has become the classroom. Or, more properly, the high school and university environment.

How did this happen? To get a peek into this transition at ground level, we have to go to the surviving pioneers of early jazz education. Not the leaders, but the younger foot soldiers who

took the initiative to pry new options from what were then stuffy, tradition-bound high school music programs.

One was such pioneer was Roger B. Mills. Starting in 1966 as a young music grad from Northwestern University, he received a student teaching assignment at New Trier High School in the upscale Chicago suburb of Winnetka. By 1982 he had built one of the model high school

jazz programs in the country. Recently former students Gregg Dorner, Mike Friedman and other alumni combined to create a website of the history of the New Trier West Jazz Ensemble (ntwjazzstory.com) before it was too late. “The program became a phenomenon,” says Friedman, “and encompassed performances across two continents and drew national attention.”

This writer attended New Trier between 1956 and 60. It was a public prep school that sent 90 percent of its grads to college. In those days, it was also a school whose teachers’ noses would wrinkle at the mere mention of jazz in any music appreciation class, as if some acrid aroma had wafted into the class from the wrong side of town. Count Basie once played in the New Trier gym, but he never got near the music building for a clinic. If you were a young musician interested in running down a new Neal Hefti or Thad Jones chart, you were out of luck.

“The closest thing to jazz then were the ‘stage bands,’” recalls Mills, who at 80 still gives far more credit to his students than to himself for his accomplishments. “Stage bands played contrived stock arrangements of things like ‘One O’Clock Jump’ and ‘In The Mood’ with the solo parts written out. They never did anything contemporary by Kenton, Herman or Buddy Rich. The emphasis was on accurate reading. It was a very formalized thing. Improvisation was not emphasized at all.

In 1966–’67, Mills was appointed a teaching assistant at New Trier West in Glenview, a new sister school built to absorb the coming suburban baby boom. With no programs, precedents, history or traditions to tell him he was wrong, he began bringing in current charts and watched student interest suddenly spike. Parents noticed, too, and preferred that enthusiasm to “In The Mood.” When Mills’ contract was not renewed, parents protested. Mills was rehired at nearly twice his salary, and New Trier West joined the procession of early jazz programs.

That summer Mills met with other pioneer jazz educators at the National Stage Band Camp at Indiana University. They included many whose names would soon become familiar as curriculum and content leaders — David Baker and Jamie Aebersold — and familiar names like Stan Kenton and DownBeat publisher Chuck Suber. All were true believers in the mission, but their purposes varied. For Kenton, jazz education was a potential lifeline of high school and university venues in which a combination of clinics and concerts could help keep his band on the road. For Suber, the challenge was keeping DownBeat a jazz-oriented publication as rock threatened to marginalize its advertising market. He saw an important future in jazz studies and a major role for it in for DownBeat.

“I owe half my life to Chuck Suber,” Mills reflects today. “Around 1969, he and I put together a plan called Discover Music to utilize high school jazz groups within grade schools to help kids get good training. Then around 1970 Chuck wrote a story about the NT West ensemble that really put it on the map and made us the model for others. I began getting calls from all over from people who wanted to know what we do and how we do it. Man, I tell you, Chuck was the key jazz education person in the world.”

The program was among the first multi-tier jazz curriculums at the high school level. In addition to the jazz ensemble and improvisation elements, it reached into composition, conducting and advanced levels of theory, performance and recording. A series of LPs documented the NT Jazz Ensemble’s growth through the 1970s, and they can be heard on the website.

Mills says that to his knowledge nothing like it existed anywhere in the country and credits its success to the quality of the students,



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who made it a dialogue between mentor and protégé. “Kids would buy records,” he remembers, “and play them for me. The learning was absolutely a two-way street.”

If Suber brought Mills’ program attention, Kenton helped bring it content. “Music is the key to any good jazz ensemble program,” Mills says, “and in the beginning we didn’t have much. Stan helped me a lot. When he’d come to

Chicago, he’d always bring me new charts. We once did a 1968 Kenton suite called *Adventure In Emotion*, and I think the New Trier band was the only one that ever did it. Stan opened up a partnership between working bands and educators. His heart was really in it because he believed that kids need it. Same with Clark Terry. And soon with Louie Bellson, Don Ellis, [Woody] Herman and others.”

The original Roger Mills program would continue to evolve after his departure in 1982 under successors Jim Warrick (now retired) and currently Nic Meyer. But the story of its beginnings was in danger of being lost, which prompted the creation of the website. It is one of the more important, but less known, chapters charting the arrival of jazz into the canon of the curriculum. **DB**



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Andrés Vial observes that three-note chord voicings can be tremendously useful and expressive musical tools.

Exploring 3-Note Chord Voicings

Many of the greatest jazz pianists, such as Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock and Keith Jarrett, are renowned for their ability to improvise complex chordal passages using voicings with six, seven or eight notes. While it is hugely inspiring to listen to these masters, for beginner and intermediate jazz pianists it can seem practically impossible to develop this chordal ability. Where do you even start?

Thankfully, voicings with fewer notes can be equally effective in many musical situations. They also have the benefit of being easier to play technically, and best of all, can greatly expand the player's conception of possibilities for orchestration and reharmonization at the piano.

The Voicing Toolkit

Master jazz pianists know how to voice chords in myriad ways. They employ the full textural spectrum, from dyads (two-note chords) and triads all the way up to eight-note chords, typically. They vary the density (number of notes in the chord), intervallic content and register of their voicings, along with their touch, balance and dynamics, to best suit the musical moment.

It can be very beneficial to work your way through a standard with specific voicing parameters in mind. To have a wide variety of voicings in your toolkit, you need to be methodical and dedicate time to mastering each type.

This article will focus on three-note voic-

ings constructed with two adjacent tones (minor or major second) and a third tone with a larger interval (major third, perfect fourth, or perfect fifth).

Advantages of 3-Note Voicings

Three-note voicings can be used diatonically or chromatically to weave in and out of harmonic progressions.

They can be played as left-hand voicings while the right hand plays a melody, or as right-hand voicings with or without left hand bass notes. They can also serve as an entry point into playing bigger, more complex chords; when played in the right hand, they can be combined with wider-spread left hand voicings such as 1) root and fifth, 2) root, fifth

and 10th, and 3) McCoy Tyner-type stacked fourths (e.g., root, fourth and flat-7).

In my experience, three-note voicings are also much easier to grab than denser chords, allowing you to improvise in the moment with a greater amount of rhythmic variation and spontaneity.

The reader is greatly encouraged to try and figure out the voicings discussed in this article by ear, before looking at the transcribed examples.

From Gil Evans to Herbie Hancock

Pianists are lucky. Because our instrument has more than a seven-octave range, we can draw inspiration from classical and jazz large

ensembles and replicate orchestral voicings at the keyboard.

Example 1a features some brass chord stabs from the 1964 recording of Gil Evans and Miles Davis' composition "Time Of The Barracudas," which appears as a bonus track on the 1988 CD reissue of *The Individualism Of Gil Evans* (Verve).

At 0:16, over a C pedal in the bass, we hear a series of descending three-note chords played by two French horns and one trombone. The lower two notes are a semitone apart, creating an exposed dissonance, and a top note is added a major third above. This momentary splash of chromatic color is nearly identical to what pianist Herbie Hancock

Example 1a

Example 1b

Example 1c

Example 2a

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Example 2b

Example 3

Example 4

plays on his tune “Maiden Voyage” (from his eponymous 1964 Blue Note album), as shown in example 1b. Indeed, Hancock has repeatedly acknowledged Evans as one of his most significant influences.

During a pause in saxophonist George Coleman’s solo, Hancock fills the space with two of the same voicings, suggesting Fmaj7 and Dmaj7 chords. These are completely outside the F7sus harmony we expect to hear in that moment; the effect is surprising and colorful.

In both these examples, a compact three-note voicing descends in parallel motion over a

bass pedal note, keeping its intervallic structure intact. In Evans’ piece it moves down a whole step and then a half step, while in Hancock’s the chord moves down by a minor third.

Example 1c shows voicings played by Hancock at the outset of his composition “The Sorcerer,” from his 1967 Blue Note album *Speak Like A Child*. On this trio track (with bassist Ron Carter and drummer Mickey Roker), the head arrangement begins with Carter playing the root (D₂) and Hancock playing open fifths (D₂ and A₂) in the left hand. Hancock plays the initial melody notes (A₂–E₂–A₂) and then har-

monizes the rest of the phrase with three-note chords in the right hand. The melody note F is supported by two lower notes, D \flat and C, to express a D \flat maj7 chord. The next melody note, A, is underpinned by B and E, creating a stacked fourths sound. Over the D \flat bass pedal, this suggests a D \flat m7 \flat 6 chord. F \sharp , the next melody note, is harmonized with a C \sharp and D suggesting a Dmaj7 chord over the D \flat pedal.

In contrast to the parallel movement of the previous examples, the top two notes in these chords move in similar motion as the lowest note moves in contrary motion, creating a texture with an opening and closing effect.

Red Garland & Bill Evans: 'Milestones'

Example 2a shows how pianist Red Garland comps on Miles Davis' original 1958 version of "Milestones." On the A section, Garland plays mostly diatonic seventh chords and occasional triads expressing G dorian and related modes, while Paul Chambers walks a bassline often outlining Gm7 to C7.

In contrast, example 2b illustrates pianist Bill Evans' voicings on "Milestones," from his 1962 album *Waltz For Debby* with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian. Evans changes the diatonic voicings from seventh chords, built with consecutive thirds, to three-note chords with a more unusual inter-

vallic structure. The first voicing, A-B \flat -F, has a greater emotional pull to it because of the exposed and dissonant minor second interval on the bottom, and the wider perfect fifth on the top.

Different pedal points also change the vibe of this version: On the A section, LaFaro plays D and A, which together with Evans' first voicing create a dark Dm \flat 6 sound, before eventually resolving to a C7sus. These harmonic and voicing changes create a springboard for the group to explore new intervallic sound combinations and modal colors, while remaining true to the original ethos of Davis' composition.

McCoy Tyner: 'Passion Dance'

Example 3 shows the voicings that pianist McCoy Tyner uses to support the melody of his composition "Passion Dance," recorded with saxophonist Joe Henderson, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Elvin Jones for his 1967 album *The Real McCoy* (Blue Note).

Tyner punctuates the end of each melodic phrase with three-note chords in the right hand, while playing a bass line in unison with Carter. These chords, in addition to the principal melody Tyner doubles with Henderson, emphasize the "sus" quality of the tune by reinforcing the major second (G) and the perfect fourth (B \flat) intervals of the home key of F.

In contrast to the previous examples, where the second interval was on the bottom of the chord and the larger interval was on top, Tyner does the inverse.

'La Nuit Est Un Soleil Voilé'

Example 4 shows voicings I used in my composition "La Nuit Est Un Soleil Voilé," which I recorded with bassist Martin Heslop and drummer Tommy Crane for my 2020 album *When Is Ancient?* (Chromatic Audio) For the chord melody, I used three-note voicings in the right hand with second and fifth intervals, combining them with traditional voicings in the left hand, including root, fifth and 10th spreads, open fifths and closed-position triads.

'Barracudas' Voicing Exercises

Here are some exercises you can use to experiment with three-note voicings, such as those from Gil Evans' "Time Of The Barracudas." While sustaining a bass pedal tone in the left hand, start moving a three-note voicing up or down chromatically or by specific intervals (e.g., in minor thirds). When you land on a certain combination that you find compelling, take a mental note of it, or write it down. What kind of chord does the combination voicing/bass note imply? What kind of



scale could go well with this combination?

You can also try harmonizing a simple diatonic melody with three-note voicings. If you maintain the intervallic content of the voicing, this could lead to an interesting and unexpected reharmonization that moves outside of the diatonic harmony. This reharmonization could in turn become the basis for a new arrangement or composition.

'Milestones' Voicing Exercises

Take Evans' diatonic "Milestones" voicings and practice playing them stepwise, up and down through a scale, building them on

every scale degree. Then try to play these voicings all the way through the harmonic progression of a tune: to do so, assign a specific scale type to every chord in the progression to create a harmonic "map," which you will navigate with the voicing.

Try to improvise chord melodies that have stepwise motion but also leaps. Although you might stumble in a few places, you will certainly learn to better hear the inner intervallic tensions that exist within each scale, and you will undoubtedly discover new possibilities for voice-leading as you connect the different scale sounds using these voicing structures.

General Tips

It is important to practice transposing each voicing to all 12 keys. This will help you to internalize the sound of the voicing as well as how its shape feels across the keyboard. Start by playing the voicing up and down chromatically, and then up and down in major seconds, minor thirds, perfect fourths, etc.

Once you are comfortable with a certain voicing, try to connect it to a different one, with the same chord density or number of notes. As with any other voicings or chord progression, it is crucial to sing the movement of each individual voice in the chord as it leads to the closest voice in the next chord.

Hearing Vertically & Horizontally

While this article focuses on three-note voicings as a vertical harmonic expression, it is equally important to hear chordal movement in a horizontal or linear way. After all, chords are multiple melodic lines sounding simultaneously. I recommend reading Fred Hersch's DownBeat article "Back to Bach: Keys to Jazz Piano Prowess" (September 2012 issue, pp.76-77). Hersch offers excellent advice on how to use Bach chorales to develop the ability to improvise chordal passages with four independent moving lines.

Emotional Impact

While it is essential to learn voicings associated with different jazz styles and eras, it is equally important to consider what kind of emotion these voicings elicit in you, the performer, as you play them, as well the rest of the band and the audience. Ask yourself: What is the emotional impact of these voicings? What do the sounds of these voicings suggest to the listener? Do they sound full and rich, or sparse, or skeletal? Do they sound closed or open? Familiar or otherworldly?

Make sure to experiment. Try playing voicings in a variety of registers, and in combination with different chord voicings in your other hand, as mentioned earlier. Find the interval combinations and voicings that you feel a connection to and incorporate them into your own personal chordal conception. Three-note voicings are sometimes overlooked, but they can be tremendously useful and expressive musical tools.

DB

Andrés Vial (pronounced Vee-al) is a pianist, multi-instrumentalist and composer from Montréal. He has performed with Joe Chambers, Peter Bernstein, Greg Cohen, Ingrid Jensen, Malika Tirolien (Bokanté), Ivan Neville, Michael Blake, Ethnic Heritage Ensemble, Bassekou Kouyate and Ngoni Ba, Kevin Dean, Al McLean, Kalmunity and others. Active as a leader and sideman, he has performed at more than 50 festivals around the world. He has released seven albums as a leader, including the Juno-nominated *Gang Of Three* and *When Is Ancient?* He appears on Joe Chambers' forthcoming album *Dance Kobina* (Blue Note), to which he contributed two originals, including the title track. Vial is a doctoral candidate and instructor at McGill University's Schulich School of Music, and has given jazz piano masterclasses at Dartmouth College, Vanier College and UQAM. He also composes music for film and contemporary dance. Visit him online at andresvialmusic.com.



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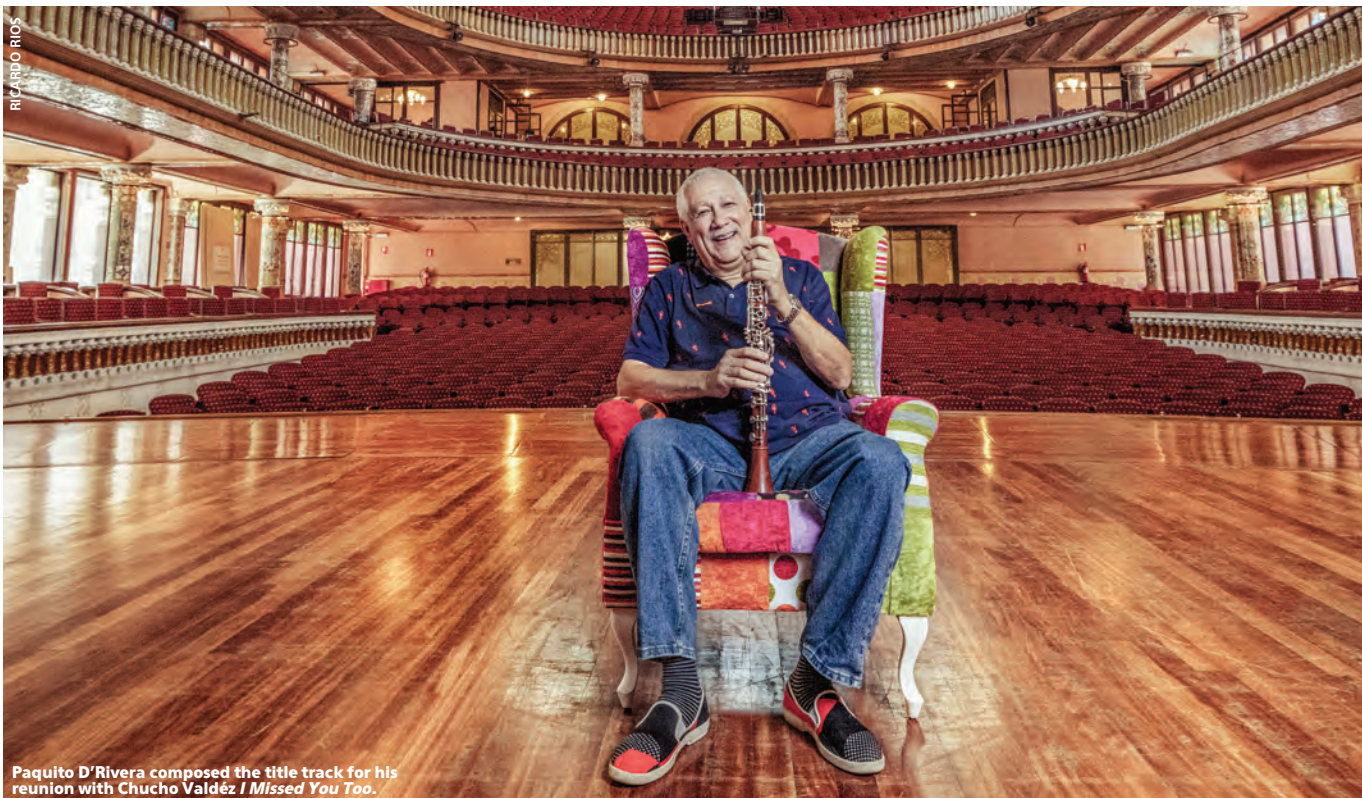
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Paquito D'Rivera's Clarinet Solo on 'I Missed You Too'

Back in 1979, clarinetist/saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera and keyboardist Chucho Valdéz recorded together with the group Irakere. Putting out a reunion album more than 40 years later, they appropriately entitled it *I Missed You Too*, and D'Rivera composed the title track. On it, he plays Bb clarinet, though for this transcription we've presented it in concert key.

The form would be 32 bars in 3/4, but D'Rivera adds two bars in a very clever manner. The composition is very much in A minor, until the final 10 measures, when it switches to Bb minor, but does so by jumping to the iv chord. To get back, D'Rivera adds two bars, so he can have the tonic chord suddenly shift to the V chord of A minor to get us back to measure 1.

One thing that I believe helps give this solo a sense of consistency and development is how often D'Rivera will start phrases on the and of beat 1. Look at bars 6, 10, 14, 24, 29, 32, 38, 42, 44, 45, 48, 55 and 58. In all of these instances D'Rivera is silent on beat 1 and then uses

the next eighth note as a jumping-off point. It may only be 13 bars, but that's a significant amount of his improvisation. And not doing it every phrase prevents it from becoming stale. It's something that the listener might not consciously notice, but it still creates a continuity that unifies his statement.

Also producing coherence are those 16th-note-triplet trills (or mordents, if you happen to be from the 17th century). These are a staple in bebop, and just like the and of 1 phrases mentioned above, D'Rivera uses it enough to create a motif but doesn't overdo it. The form is always the same: up a step, back down a step, and down another step.

This move is used twice in the opening phrase: the last beat of the first bar and first beat of the second. It's hip how the first one ends on the F# (making the Am sound dorian) and the in the next bar he ornaments the E with an F natural (which makes the E7 sound like an altered dominant). This also sets up the chromaticism that follows.

We hear this motif again at the end of

measure 16, the beginning of 33, and then another chromatic pairing in bar 46. The final time we hear it is in measure 65. That may only be eight times in total, but I feel that's still enough to create a familiar sound (familiar not just from hearing it here, but also as a recurring sound in jazz).

Some other takeaways from this solo are D'Rivera's use of larger intervals and various rhythms. Besides the standard eighths, triplets, 16ths and 16th-note triplets (and switching comfortably between those with the facility shown here is already impressive), there are the quarter-note triplets in bars 17–18. Using quarter-note triplets in duple meters can be fairly common; but when they take up two-thirds of the bar, leaving an odd beat, it doesn't sound right to most ears. By playing the first quarter-note beat and then placing the triplet starting on the second beat, D'Rivera makes the polyrhythm resolve to the first beat of the next bar.

Even hipper are measures 63–64. Here D'Rivera plays a 4:3, which can be sweet on

triple meters, but then plays a quarter-note triplet in the following bar. To switch between these very different polyrhythms requires quite a bit of skill.

As for intervals, as is typical, this improvisation is mostly scalar with some larger intervals peppered in. What's impressive is that D'Rivera doesn't shy away from larger and more dissonant intervals, like sevenths. Across the bar line from 12–13 we hear E–F and then E–E \flat , one octave higher. That kind of jump can be arresting to the ear, so he tempers it by descending in half steps afterward.

Bar 18 is similar but reversed: After dropping a seventh, D'Rivera ascends, but in this case in thirds. Bars 29–30 get a bit more extreme: Low G jumps to high F, and he works his way down to a D \flat , which then leaps to a very high C. And in the next beat, the E jumps to high E \flat , and then we get some descending scalar motion. All that bouncing around in sevenths makes for a pretty intense lick.

Some other sevenths are over the bar line from 32–33, the F to E in bar 43, and in the next measure the same lick is played up a minor third, giving us A \flat to G, and then E \flat to D in the very next bar. Three bars in a row with sevenths — how often do you hear that? **DB**

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. He recently released an album of Indian classical music played on the string bass, titled *Border Of Hiranyaloka*. Find out more at jimidurso.bandcamp.com.

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A 'Striking' Origin Story

JodyJazz's Hand-Hammered HH Tenor Saxophone Mouthpiece

The mouthpiece is an integral part of any saxophonist's sound, but what if transforming your tone was just one blow away? That's what JodyJazz set out to achieve with its new Hand-Hammered HH Tenor Rose Gold Limited Edition Mouthpiece line. Launched earlier this year, the JodyJazz HH mouthpieces feature the same hand-hammering technique cymbal makers use to warm up the sound of bronze and other metals, opening up a totally different tonal palette that some have described as sweeter, more mellow and even easier to play.

But how did JodyJazz get to the idea of hand-hammering mouthpieces?

"It's an interesting story," said Jody Espina, founder and president of JodyJazz. "Colin Schofield [vice president of sales and marketing for JodyJazz] worked with Zildjian for many years and was good friends with former Zildjian cymbal craftsman Paul Francis. One day he asked me, 'What about hand-hammering a mouthpiece?' And I was like, 'Whoa, I never thought of that.' At first I didn't think it would work because the metal of a mouthpiece is thicker than a cymbal."

But after considering Francis' 32 years of experience and expertise at Zildjian, Espina decided to give it a try.

"We went through a lot of experiments and a lot of different steps with

Paul, but once we got to try a mouthpiece that was hand-hammered, we found that it made a huge difference to the overall sound," Espina explained. "I had obviously never done this before, but we had a finished version back in February 2022 — it was actually going to be in our DB series — and we finished it to the point where I had about 100 models plated in Rose Gold. But, at the last minute, I decided it wasn't special enough, so I went back to the drawing board and went through tons of prototypes again until we found what we have today."

The Hand-Hammered Difference

When first approached by JodyJazz to hand-hammer mouthpieces, Francis said he was intrigued by the idea.

"I didn't have a deep familiarity with mouthpieces, but I was very interested," he said, adding that he has been making cymbals in his Massachusetts workshop for his own company, Cymbal Craftsman, since leaving Zildjian. "Hand-hammering a mouthpiece is a little different because a mouthpiece is cylindrical, so we went through a lot of prototyping with mouthpiece designs. It was about a year-long R&D process. We wanted to make sure that hammering the mouthpiece didn't change the



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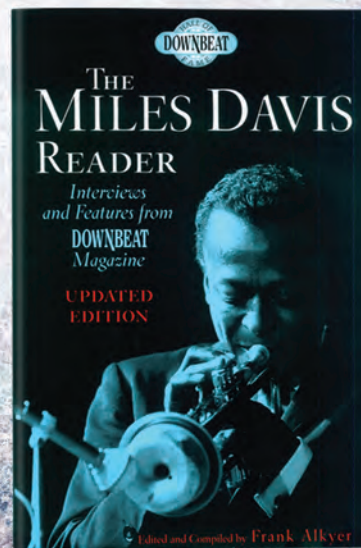
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cylindricality of it. The biggest goal was to compress the metal.”

Francis explained that hand-hammering brass and bronze compresses the metal, making it stronger, which changes the sound.

“When you compress the materials used for cymbal making, the sound waves travel more quickly through the area where its been hand-hammered,” he said.

Espina noted that hammering the HH line changed the company’s production process.

“We typically use machines to make our mouthpieces and then do the hand work,” he said. “But when we put that hand-hammered blank on to cut a mouthpiece with a 7-star tip opening, that process makes it an 8-star because it has this hardness, and harder material cuts better and easier on a machine. It cuts 10 thousandths of an inch difference in the tip opening. We were shocked by that.”

Expert play-tests are a normal part of JodyJazz’s R&D process. Espina said the company gave its artists both unhammered and hammered mouthpieces to try in the development stage.

“With the hammered models, you’d hear a sweetness in the tone,” Espina said. “When you play it, it vibrates better. It’s more mellow and more pleasing. People have even said it’s easier to play. The mouthpiece is designed to be right in the center where a lot of people can really like it, and it’s got a huge, massive bottom.”

“When we brought them to the Savannah Jazz Festival a few months back, we got saxophonists telling us that they thought it was some of our finest work,” he continued. “They liked how they could transform their sound from one week to the next.”

Espina added that the weight of the hammered mouthpiece also plays an integral part in its tone production.

“It’s very heavy,” he explained. “It’s the heaviest tenor mouthpiece



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Cymbal craftsman Paul Francis says the main goal of hand-hammering a mouthpiece is to compress the metal.

you've ever held. Many players and manufacturers are experimenting with more mass. You would think a big, heavy mouthpiece wouldn't vibrate as much, but the hand-hammering process makes it more alive."

Espina came up with an innovation for a different type of bite plate on the HH line as well.

"I put a recessed pocket and a patch in there," he said. "With this recessed pocket, you can just put another patch right in if you wear it out. It's a very comfortable feel on a metal mouthpiece."

Espina said he thinks the HH line is "one of the most exciting mouthpieces to come down the highway in a long time."

"The amount of sound it delivers along with the quality of sound and the deep fullness of it, it's just really cool," he said. "The HH line is a limited edition in a special Rose Gold finish; only 300 models are available. Because they looked so beautiful once finished, I couldn't stand to put a regular ligature on them, so we also made a hand-hammered JodyJazz Power Ring and, as you'd have it, the hand-hammering made the Power Ring play better."

Espina said he plans to apply his company's hand-hammering techniques to more than just HH Tenor Saxophone Mouthpieces and Power Rings.

"The hand-hammering process is something we have to continue doing. This is a technique that we want to keep experimenting with. I want an alto version, too," he said. "The end result is so beautiful, and Paul is an expert craftsman."

When asked who should consider giving the hand-hammered mouthpieces a test-drive, Espina said "everyone."

Francis agreed, concluding with, "Anyone who plays saxophone needs try this."

—Katie Kailus

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More info: tracktion.com

2. Multipurpose Mixer

CAD Audio's MXU4-FX is a multipurpose, compact four-channel analog mixer with a built-in USB interface and digital effects processor. The on-board two-band EQ and +48-volt phantom power make it suitable for live performance, broadcasting, podcasting or home recording. The MXU4-FX includes a USB output, a USB input and a built-in effects processor.

More info: cadaudio.com

3. Greater Polyphony

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More info: usa.yamaha.com

4. Authority & Sensitivity

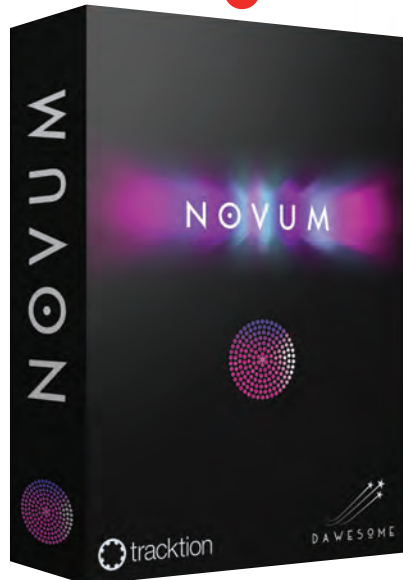
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More info: rovnerproducts.com

5. Women Jazz Composers

Terri Lyne Carrington, founder and artistic director of the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, has curated a range of jazz compositions written by women in the collection *New Standards: 101 Lead Sheets by Women Composers* (Berklee Press). The compositions span nearly a century, including Lil Hardin Armstrong's work from 1922 to songs written in 2021 by recent Institute graduates. The soft-cover book features compositions from Mary Lou Williams, Alice Coltrane, Esperanza Spalding, Geri Allen, Maria Schneider, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Cassandra Wilson, Dianne Reeves, Nubya Garcia, Nicole Mitchell and many others.

More info: halleonard.com



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Blindfold Test > BY MICHAEL JACKSON

Jason Marsalis

Drummer/vibraphonist Jason Marsalis, in town with the New Orleans Groovemasters, took time for a listening session and chin-wag at Detroit Jazz Festival's Carhartt Amphitheater on a rather rainy afternoon during Labor Day weekend. The test, taken before an attentive audience under umbrellas, focused on vibraphone, presented in a variety of styles. This was Marsalis' first Blindfold Test.

Stefon Harris

"Portrait Of Wellman Braud" (*African Tarantella—Dances With Duke*, Blue Note, 2006) Harris, vibraphone; Steve Turre, trombone; Derrick Hodge, bass; Xavier Davis piano; Anne Drummond, flute; Louise Dubin, cello; Terreon Gully, drums; Greg Tardy, clarinet. The first thing I want to talk about related to this track, though it's a bit of a tangent, is the role of my mother in the Marsalis family. There were a lot of musicians on my mother's side, and one was a bassist by the name of Wellman Braud and the tune that you just heard was "Portrait of Wellman Braud" from Duke Ellington's *New Orleans Suite*. The recording that you are hearing is not Ellington but vibraphonist Stefon Harris from an album entitled *African Tarantella*. It's great because it's Ellington music but it's got its own sound, not some replica of what Duke did back on a 1970 recording. Stefon is one of the most important players of the new generation, if you will. A great solo with a lot of blues and modern elements, great to hear it! 5 stars.

Bob Moses

"Glitteragbas Solo" (*Bittersweet In The Ozone*, Amulet Records, 1999, rec'd 1973) Moses, vibraphone and mallets.

Some overdubbing must have taken place because I hear vibraphone, but some glockenspiel, too. Xylophone, as well. It's more of an avant garde approach in terms of the abstract harmony. Often the vibraphone can create this abstract mellow mood. It sounds like something from the '60s/'70s, something Gary Burton would be familiar with. [afterwards] I wouldn't have guessed Bob Moses, but that actually makes sense. I did a workshop at a school one time and the gentleman who was hosting the workshop before me was Bob Moses. His approach to music was almost from a different culture, and I loved it because I knew it was going to be completely different from my workshop. Two totally different perspectives about the drums that these students were going to get hip to. 4 stars.

Gary Burton

"Prelude For Vibes" (*Next Generation*, Concord Jazz, 2005) Burton, vibes; Julian Lage, guitar; Vadim Neselovskyi, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; James Williams, drums.

When the music first started I was thinking of the duets with Gary Burton and Chick Corea, and then the band joined in ... and there was a group album called *Like Minds* (Concord, 1998). I'm going to go with Gary Burton because that's the sound he is known for and has developed into. 4 stars. When Burton started in the '60s, he was dealing with swing, standards and bebop tunes. Honestly, he wasn't the hardest swinging player, per se, like a Milt Jackson. But there was so much facility, and the way he would play ballads with four mallets was unbelievable. In the '70s he found a sound of his own, and the feeling of the music was different and technically incredible. He played a lot with pianist Makoto Ozone, and he created this whole scene around him, raising young players.

Tyler Blanton

"Good Ol' Joel" (*Botanic*, Independent Release, 2010) Blanton, vibraphone; Joel Frahm, soprano saxophone; Dan Loomis, bass; Jared Schonig, drums.

Nice tune based on Charlie Parker chord changes — a modern take on



Jason Marsalis left, takes a live Blindfold Test with journalist Michael Jackson at the Detroit Jazz Festival.

that. I know from experience that playing the head like that with a horn player is not an easy thing to do, and I thought he did a pretty good job, even if some of the groove wasn't as strong. It reminds me of a lot of vibraphonists out there. I enjoyed the performance. 4 stars.

Nicole Mitchell

"Today, Today" (*Aquarius*, Delmark, 2012) Mitchell, flute; Jason Adasiewicz, vibes; Joshua Abrams, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums.

I thought the tune and the form was an interesting approach. It's more of an open feel, and sometimes that doesn't groove as hard. There's a way to keep things open and groove hard. I thought the accompaniment of the vibes and the overall approach was interesting, but I don't recognize any of the players. [Hint: the players were all Chicago-based at the time of the recording.] There's one guy in Chicago that made me think it might be him, Jason Adasiewicz. I'll admit, I was never a big fan of his pedal. There were moments when it was down for a while here, where it did work a little better. It seemed like he was using it more effectively in this instance. 3 stars.

Tubby Hayes

"Who Can I Turn To?" (*Commonwealth Blues*, Art of Life, 2005, rec'd 1965) Hayes, vibraphone; Jeff Clyne, bass; Gordon Beck, piano; Johnny Butts, drums.

I was enjoying that. Definitely that '50s/'60s bebop language. It reminded me of an Eddie Costa album called *Guys And Dolls Like Vibes* (1958), and the rhythm section was Bill Evans, Wendell Marshall on bass, Paul Motian on drums. Standard tunes, swinging out, such joy in the melody. It's reminiscent; I'm trying to place the tune, a standard or an original. [afterwards] I know of Tubby Hayes as a saxophone player. The U.K. scene is not one, historically, I know much about, but I know there was a scene of players in the '50s and '60s. I'd definitely give that 5 stars.

Dave Pike

"Esteem Cleaning" (*Bophead*, Ubiquity, 1998) Pike, vibes; Anthony Wilson, guitar; Richard Simon, bass; Albert "Tootie" Heath, drums; Jane Getz, Milcho Leviev, piano.

I like the melody of that, and there's definitely a belief when I'm hearing them play. I'm guessing it was recorded in the '80s or '90s. I dug the belief in the swing, and the groove was real strong and the melody was nice, especially everyone playing it in unison. The vibraphone was really fluid with playing the chord changes, the harmony and swinging out, so that was enjoyable. Dave Pike is one of those gentlemen that I haven't checked out enough, but he's somebody, along with Lem Winchester, that I'd like to investigate more. That was a 5-star performance.

DB

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

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