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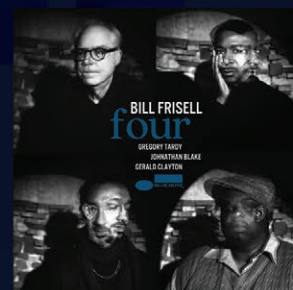
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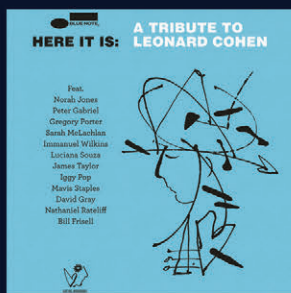
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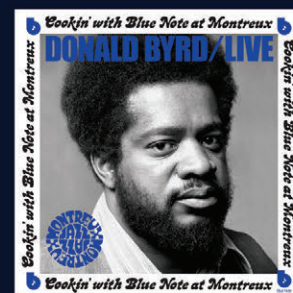
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First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER

Lakecia Benjamin maintains a keen eye toward the future and a thoughtful reverence for the elders.



Of Tributes and Blessings

DEC. 22, 2022 — LET'S LIFT THE CURTAIN for a minute on the inner workings of DownBeat. While the cover of the magazine says "February Issue," it's just a few short days before Christmas and we're wrapping up the issue in a holiday bow and sending it off to the printer.

So, in between the holiday parties, shows and gatherings with friends and family, the staff here has been working in overdrive to sort out and deliver the best music and stories we could find this month. There are some really good ones from sites near and far. The writers have delivered some thought-provoking prose and, as always, a few words that this old editor had to look up in the online dictionary. John Murph's use of "aboraceous" in The Bad Plus review on page 45 serves as Exhibit A. (It means woody, for the uninitiated.)

Let's start with the cover story. This is the first cover for saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin, whose latest recording, *Phoenix*, demands our attention. With this recording, she takes another step into her career — a strong, confident and, yes, powerful step. DownBeat has been following Benjamin's career for years now, and this project seemed like the right occasion to show some serious love to a serious artist.

Benjamin's story is one of thanks, and she tells it quite well beginning on page 20. The saxophonist and composer knows that the road to success is never easy, but has been made easier by generations of women instrumentalists who were consistently told "no" and shuttled into the category of "novelty" but continued to resist the system. She pays tribute to those mentors who broke down and continue to break down

walls by seeking them out and working with them. Pianist/composer Patrice Rushen plays on *Phoenix*, and drummer/composer Terri Lyne Carrington produced the record.

"I'm trying to work with the elders while they are here and get what they have to offer and their blessing on how to proceed," Benjamin says in the article.

That humility and dedication to the elders is one of the most special elements in jazz. Those who embrace it find a wealth of not just musical knowledge, but also life lessons.

Sometimes that knowledge is what to do; sometimes it's what not to do.

In Bill Beuttler's terrific review of *Saxophone Colossus: The Life And Music Of Sonny Rollins* on page 16, the legendary saxophonist talks about reconnecting with Lester Young.

Pres had sunk into alcoholism and depression to the point that several legendary musicians pitched in to help him. Rollins — looking at his hero, then considering his own life — vowed not to go down that road.

"I was determined to do a lot of positive things in life because of being around Lester," Rollins told the Detroit Metro Times. "I learned life isn't just about music, that you really have to know what to do when you are off the bandstand."

Doing positive things. That's a theme in the pages of this magazine. And a final positive is the return of DownBeat's Venue Guide. What once was a fun list of places to go and listen now serves as a standing ovation for those that made it through the pandemic. We hope you patronize these clubs and venues that are so essential to the beauty, and well-being, of this music. **DB**



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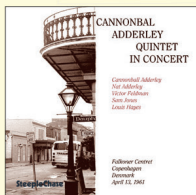
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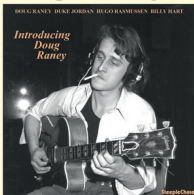
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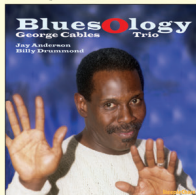
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Chords & Discords



Bravo, Kenny Barron

Paul de Barros' beautiful piece on the magnificent Kenny Barron made my day.

Strange to say, but Mr. Barron has always reminded me of Renoir: a superlative artist who walks the Earth with gentleness and humility.

The article has inspired me to spend several days in the company of *People Time*, the album Mr. Barron recorded live with Stan Getz at Copenhagen's Cafe Montmartre in March 1991 — just three months before Stan's death on June 6, 1991. I urge folks to read Mr. Barron's exquisite essay about his friend. Knowing that Stan was suffering, Kenny writes, "The music is real, honest, pure and beautiful in spite of the pain or perhaps because of it." Artists like Kenny Barron are yet another reason to cherish this world and our place in it.

MICK CARLON
CENTERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

More Kenny Barron Love

Many thanks for the very interesting article on Kenny Barron (December 2022).

I would nonetheless add that after his solo CD, *Kenny Barron At The Piano* (Xanadu), from 1982, one must not forget his formidable solo album *Live At Maybeck Recital Hall, Volume 10* (Concord) from 1991.

I look forward to his new solo album, *The Source* (Artwork/PIAS)!

MARIO LIBERTO
BERN, SWITZERLAND

Give Us More Lewis Nash!

As a continuing subscriber to DownBeat, I thoroughly enjoy and look forward to reading your Blindfold Test section in every issue.

May I recommend you consider the very creative and sought after drummer Lewis Nash in upcoming editions?

He has played with and is playing with most of the notable jazz giants past and present. He's an awesome player.

Everyone loves his playing, but he is not recognized in the world of music and the Jazz community as he should be.

I feel one day, he will become an NEA Jazz Master, as many of his drummer peers have.

I live in Phoenix, where The Nash Jazz Club happens to be. If you find yourself in the area, please come by.

WALTER NASH, SR.
NASH CLUB VOLUNTEER
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Vinyl, Schminyl

I noted with incredulity the collection of vinyl recordings in the Holiday Gift Guide in the December issue of DownBeat. I could detail all the science and blind listening tests

that prove that vinyl should have been dead for three decades now.

However, I will let the legendary Rudy Van Gelder speak for me. The RVG Edition remasters he did in the '90s of his '60s Blue Note recordings proved the point.

Rudy told Audio Magazine in 1995:

"The biggest distorter is the LP itself. I've made thousands of LP masters. I used to make 17 a day, with two lathes going simultaneously, and I'm glad to see the LP go. As far as I'm concerned, good riddance.

"It was a constant battle to try and make that music sound the way it should. It was never any good. And if people don't like what they hear in digital, they should blame the engineer who did it. Blame the mastering house. Blame the mixing engineer. That's why some digital recordings sound terrible, and I'm not denying that they do, but don't blame the medium."

I can only gaze at last year's Holiday Gift Guide's focus on vinyl with disdain. Great music poorly served by this tired, outdated medium.

CHUCK CURRIE,
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Lose the Polls?

As a reader/subscriber since the late '60s, I'd like to opine that perhaps the time has come for DB to stop ranking musicians. It is one thing to assign starred ratings to CDs, but in my view it is invidious to rank individuals. My "vote" is that both annual polls and the starred-rating system go the way of the dodo.

RICHARD FREEMAN
VIA EMAIL

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COURTESY ELIANE ELIAS



"Many artists have taken a shot at bossa nova, but *Quietude* is different. It is authentic," Elias said of her new album.

Eliane Elias Delivers a Bossa Nova Love Letter

Eliane Elias scored a rarity in 2022. The renowned singer and remarkable pianist won two Grammys in the same year for her radiant *Mirror Mirror* recording on Candid Records that featured her in scintillating duo adventures with close friends Chick Corea and Chucho Valdés — her first solo piano outing since 1995, when she delivered *Solos And Duets*, a Blue Note album fea-

turing duets with Herbie Hancock.

In the February 2022 Grammys, Elias garnered the Best Latin Jazz Album award for *Mirror Mirror*, then in the Latin Grammy Awards in the November, she swung another victory for Best Latin Jazz Album. It was a celebration of virtuosos in close improvisational conversation, all the more valuable since the four-song New York session proved to be the

final studio album before Corea's death.

"The wins are very special," said a buoyant Elias enjoying a rare moment at home during a tour break for her luscious new album, *Quietude*. "I did some research about the Grammys and Latin Grammys and found out that had never happened before. So what I did was historic. It was a validation of my work. Plus, it was a gift to Chick, who I met at the

beginning of my career in Brazil when he toured with Gary Burton. He encouraged me and helped me get my work visa to live in New York. He played with me so beautifully and so full of life at the end of his career.”

In the *Mirror Mirror* masterwork, the piano, of course, took center stage. For *Quietude*, Elias pivoted into a familiar setting, tapping into her bossa nova heritage with piano taking a cameo role. Her alluring vocals tell the stories here. It's the 31st album by the New York-based Elias, whose career has blossomed once again. The album quickly jumped

album. She first learned to harmonize the pop tune as a student when she was 10 years old.

Her goal for *Quietude*? To create an intimate, soothing soundscape for a disruptive time. “Right now, it's a world of angst,” Elias said. “It's been the pandemic, the politics, the need to transport ourselves to another world. Personally this album makes me feel good — at peace and relaxed”

She added that she had a conversation with Mark Wexler, the Candid label head, after she presented him with the *Quietude* music during the upheaval times. “He told me that he

ing in a sunny seaside setting for the album's cover photo. “Brazil's music came from there, and the best composers live there. And the music is always active with new movements like Tropicalia. Unlike São Paulo, the people are very calm there, the culture is influenced by Africa.”

As a whole, *Quietude* represents an endearing homecoming for Elias, whose career has deep roots in her native country, especially with her lifelong friend Jobim. As a piano prodigy, she was enlisted by de Moraes to tour the world with him, which in turn introduced her to his co-writer, Jobim. It proved to be a fruitful association.

“I spent quite a bit of time with him,” Elias said. “He was very bright, had a great sense of humor, was very observant and very playful. He always drank Scotch and smoked cigars. But he also showed a darker side and at one point felt so disappointed in the lack of appreciation that he thought his career was over.”

Elias reflected on the dark period that inspired his classic song “Waters Of March,” sung in Portuguese but also translated into English. It ended up being the most recorded song of his oeuvre, surpassing even “The Girl From Ipanema.” “Jobim thought it was all over, but then it exploded and more songs came,” said Elias, who paid tribute to him with her 1990 album *Eliane Elias Plays Jobim* (Blue Note). “I wanted to do his music differently by arranging them for jazz.”

She contacted him and asked for his blessing. He had an apartment on Madison Avenue in New York, so she brought the music to him, saying, “This is going to sound different.”

“When I was playing it, I could see his face brighten, and he opened his eyes wide,” Elias said. “He loved it. He was thrilled.”

Four years later, Elias received a call from Jobim when saxophone titan Joe Henderson was in the stages of recording his tribute that was released the following year as the part-jazz, part-Brazilian album *Double Rainbow: The Music of Antonio Carlos Jobim*. Jobim had gotten sick and wasn't well enough to participate. “Jobim called me and said that I knew all his tunes,” Elias said. “He wanted the music to be done his way, so he asked me to replace him.”

Jobim died in December 1994, but he's still alive to Elias. Asked what would he have thought about *Quietude*, she noted: “He would have loved the album, especially with my choice of material. And he would have been happy about the purity of the music, performed by masters as well as the swinging essence of my voice. He would have also been pleased with the honesty and sophistication. Many artists have taken a shot at bossa nova, but *Quietude* is different. It is authentic.”

—Dan Ouellette

‘Jobim called me and said that I knew all his tunes. He wanted the music to be done his way, so he asked me to replace him.’

up the charts and has drawn crowds into marquee clubs, from the Yoshi's in Oakland to Birdland in New York.

“This album couldn't be more opposite than the last,” Elias said. “I play some piano, but it's mostly doing some single-note melodies or playing the background. I do add in a couple of short piano solos, but this is really a voice for acoustic guitar in the tradition of bossa nova.” She uses three prominent Brazilian guitarists on *Quietude*: Marcus Teixeira, Lula Galvão and the legendary Oscar Castro-Neves, who played with Elias until his passing in 2013. She resurrects him here on a previously unreleased recording of the delightful “Tim-Tim Por Tim-Tim.”

Sung with the romance of Brazilian Portuguese, the lyrical songs Elias chose come from the heart of the bossa nova movement. She breathes harmonic new life into two Jobim songs — including his poignant “Brigas, Nunca Mais/No More Fighting,” co-written with Vinicius de Moraes — and two colorful gems by Dorival Caymmi, who she said Jobim celebrated as his favorite Brazilian writer. His top-tier melody “Marina,” recorded in a quartet setting with Teixeira, drummer Celso Almeida and bassist/co-producer/husband Marc Johnson, stands as Elias' favorite on the

listened to the album 25 times,” she said. “He talked about the calmness of the music [and] finding the center.”

At a recent concert, Elias introduced the lifeblood of *Quietude* and demonstrated why the guitar plays a central role in the music in lieu of her piano brilliance. “I talk about how bossa nova originated,” she said. “It started in little apartments where people got together and composers played the guitar and brought their songs and people sang in soft voices. It was quiet. Someone would play a little percussion on match boxes, brushing a newspaper and for more upbeat samba pieces maybe lightly hitting on a glass for rhythm. There weren't pianos. This is how the music started, so *Quietude* is the sound of the scene. I give short explanations of the songs and bring out the romance in the music. It's so gratifying to me because this is where I find myself.”

While born in São Paulo, Elias focuses *Quietude* on the northeastern state of Bahia, where bossa nova was born. She covers another memorable song from her youth, “Bahia Com H/Bahia With H” by Denis Brean, and duets with Galvão on Caymmi's “Bahias Medley,” a highlight of her vocal beauty.

“I've always had a love affair with Bahia,” said Elias, who made the point visually by pos-



The Quartet 5, from left, Steve Sanders, Josh Vadiveloo, Cole, Nathan England-Jones



Xhosa Cole Goes Full Griot

WITH THE RELEASE OF HIS DEBUT ALBUM, 2021's acclaimed *K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us* (Stoney Lane Records), the then-24-year-old tenor saxophone sensation Xhosa Cole projected the decided cool of a new young lion on the U.K. jazz scene. From his retro-looking pinstripe suit to his confidently swinging renditions of Woody Shaw's "Zoltan," Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation," Thelonious Monk's "Played Twice," Lee Morgan's "Untitled Boogaloo" and Tadd Dameron's "On A Misty Night," *K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us* heralded the arrival of an artist with potent chops who was clearly part of the swinging post-bop continuum. But a closer look revealed a subtle hint of something that belied the standard young lion: Cole was sporting royal blue nail polish matching his blue pinstripe suit.

With the release of his followup album, *Ibeji* (Stoney Lane), the Birmingham-born musician is not only presenting an entirely different look — blue lipstick, blue eye makeup and white face paint — he is also delving into an entirely different musical bag. "The makeup was really a nod to Afrofuturism," said the 26-year-old saxophonist, who identifies as a queer Black jazz musician. "It was a way of also expressing a queer identity within the Black space, researching and exploring some Grace Jones examples of other forms of Afrofuturism that have permeated popular culture. This is something that might be in the cards moving forward for recordings to come."

Ibeji, which features Cole engaging in duets with seven percussionists from across the African diaspora, addresses some deep ethnomusicological/sociological issues through various spoken-word testimonies that explore themes of duality, rituals, ancestors, masks, codes and brotherhood. In effect, Cole comes across as more griot than young lion.

"The first album was an acknowledgement of

the direct lineage from which my musical identity comes," he explained. "And a lot of my schooling as a musician and as an improviser has come through the school of bebop music of the African-American community of the 1930s onwards. However, a big part of my musical development has been working with a big breadth of musical forms and structures, lineages and traditions, and I've been very fortunate to connect a big range of really inspiring musicians who are really pushing and excelling their idiom of music."

"A lot of these connections have been me searching for and finding my musical identity within Black music, the music of African descendants from all parts of the globe," he continued. "And so, on the second album I wanted to explore the different threads of my musical path and the different elements that made me the musician that I am. And I wanted to frame my musical identity within different structures, so that people could appreciate the continuum and the thread that links all of the different styles of playing that I'm lucky and humbled to be engaged in."

Over the course of *Ibeji*'s 16 tracks, Cole connects the dots between West Africa and clave/rumba/second line/blues and even such pivotal figures in jazz as Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker, while also addressing the harsh realities of slavery, Jim Crow and lynchings.

"We cover a lot of topics within the record," he said. "Among the seven percussionists, we have a very wide breadth and outlook on different themes and elements that unite the experience of people of African descent. And in terms of the mentors in my life, several of them are represented on this record, including one of my first teachers in the arts, Ian Parmel. So I have these mentors and teachers who are always guiding me into alignment with these traditions and with these foundations that make up the Black experience."

Cole's brother Azizi appears on two tracks, "CDC" and "All Roads." "As this project explores the theme of brotherhood, it felt appropriate to collaborate with my brother Azizi, who is a world-class percussionist and composer," Cole said. "We share a common language which manifests in our collaborations. We obviously have a lot of shared influences growing up in the very culturally rich environment of Handsworth in Birmingham. Our experiences from childhood, listening to music together and playing music together in different ensembles, are priceless."

Another key presence on *Ibeji* is percussionist Lekan Babalola, who provides compelling testimony on five pieces. "Lekan has been a big influence and has had a significant impact on me and my conception of rhythm and my understanding of the roots of rhythm of these diasporic rhythms," Cole said. "Speaking to and interacting with a master percussionist like him has been a very eye-opening experience and a vital part of my development."

Cole is also quick to point out the contributions of in-demand New York drummer Jason Brown, who alongside the saxophonist conjures up some ferocious Elvin Jones/John Coltrane energy on the swinging sax-drums face-offs "Native Tongue" and "Andy's Shuffle." "Jason was my first direct exposure to an African-American perspective on jazz music," Cole noted.

While some pieces on *Ibeji* may harken back to his African ancestors, others push the envelope on Afrofuturism. For Cole, it's all different parts of the same tree that represents the African diaspora. "And one big branch of that tree that I've been heavily involved in is that of jazz music, bebop and the music of the great forefathers and foremothers of that music — Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Lester Young ... the list goes on." —*Bill Milkowski*

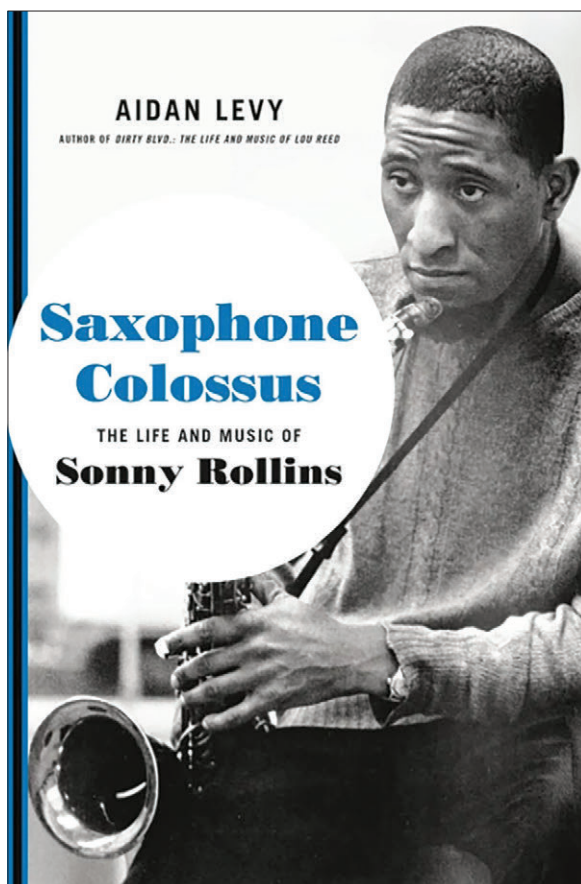
Review: Documenting Sonny

CLOCKING IN AT 700-PLUS PAGES, *Saxophone Colossus: The Life and Music of Sonny Rollins* (Hachette) is a well-written, comprehensive biography commensurate with its subject's great stature. Aidan Levy, whose previous books include a biography of Lou Reed, conducted hundreds of interviews with Rollins and others and appears to have scoured everything ever written about him — most importantly, the substantial archive of personal material collected by Rollins himself, acquired by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in 2017.

A chapter appearing not quite midway through the book provides a taste of how much detail Levy was able to pack into his account of Rollins' rich life and its connection to jazz's future and past. The year was 1958. The chapter had begun with Rollins recording his protest album *Freedom Suite* with Max Roach and Oscar Pettiford before moving on to an account of Rollins joining dozens of fellow jazz greats in front of a Harlem brownstone that August for the photo for *Esquire* magazine that, many years later, would inspire the documentary *A Great Day in Harlem*. In between, Rollins had reconnected with one of his tenor sax heroes, Lester Young, who had sunk deep into drink and depression. Rollins, Roach, Papa Jo Jones and Miles Davis paid to rent Young a room at the Alvin Hotel, where, writes Levy, "Pres waxed philosophical."

"If you can think of a godly person, and you're drinking some Gordon's gin, if you could put those two together, then you've got Lester Young," Rollins told Levy, who then splices that quote together with one from a 2007 interview Rollins gave to the *Detroit Metro Times*: "We would talk about his career and the things that went against him because of his color. I said to myself that I don't want to end up like Pres, drinking, you know, and have people taking advantage of me — not being able to take care of my affairs. I was determined to do a lot of positive things in life because of being around Lester. I learned life isn't just about music, that you really have to know what to do when you are off the bandstand. It's not just about being a gifted artist. It's also about being a person that stands up."

In that same chapter Rollins signals his intention to take what became his famous bridge sabbatical the next year; proposes marriage to Shirley Carter, whom he had recently taken on a boat cruise and dance featuring the Duke Ellington Orchestra; performs a concert with the Modern Jazz Quartet and joins Thelonious Monk for a couple of weeks at the Five Spot; overwhelms



Gerry Mulligan in a pair of friendly cutting sessions; records the album *Sonny Rollins And The Contemporary Leaders* (which is panned by Amiri Baraka); is discombobulated by Gunther Schuller's famous analysis "Sonny Rollins and the Challenge of Thematic Improvisation" in the debut issue of the *Jazz Review*; and more.

There is much engrossing material before and after that chapter. Some is well-known — Sonny's stints in prison and his kicking a heroin addiction — but fleshed out with less familiar detail (it was Kenny Drew's gun Rollins was carrying when he was arrested and sent to Riker's Island for the first time). Some is less familiar, such as Rollins' father being court-martialed, demoted and imprisoned on bogus charges stemming from his having hosted an interracial party in Annapolis in 1946.

The story of Sonny's relationship with his late wife, Lucille Rollins, is given the importance it deserves. He met her in Chicago in 1957, and they immediately hit it off and began corresponding. But he married and separated from one woman (Dawn Finney) and proposed to another (Shirley Carter) before he and Lucille moved in together in 1959, just ahead of Sonny's first reclusive period. Sonny and Lucille married soon afterward,

then were separated during Sonny's second reclusive period, which he spent in India and Japan, immersing himself in yoga and Eastern religions. But they reunited, and Lucille transformed herself into Sonny's trusted business manager and co-producer of his albums. It was Lucille who insisted that Sonny perform in Boston four days after 9/11, which resulted in a great live album.

Lucille's death in 2004 left Rollins bereft, though he kept performing and releasing albums. In 2012, Rollins was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis, possibly caused by his proximity to the toxic dust at Ground Zero on 9/11. He played what proved his final concert in Barcelona that November, and stopped playing entirely in 2014.

The average survival time for someone diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis is three to five years, but this past September Rollins turned 92. He uses a walker to get around and rarely leaves the house he moved to after Lucille's death. But he doesn't let his mortality bother him.

"We're not here to live forever," Levy quotes Rollins telling the *New York Times* in a 2020 as-told-to essay. "Humans and materialism die. But there's no dying in art."

For most of his book, Levy focuses straightforwardly on the facts he's accumulated rather than calling attention to his prose. But as the biography nears its end, he permits himself a lyrical flight in summarizing Rollins's legacy. After noting that Rollins will live on through his recordings, the Schomburg archive and the Rollins-endowed Oberlin Conservatory of Music Sonny Rollins Jazz Ensemble, Levy continues:

"Then there is the legacy of what Sonny Rollins means to American culture and to the global jazz tradition. Sonny was famously known as the architect of thematic improvisation, a concept he did not consciously create but that was thrust upon him. Yet his life was quite deliberately a thematic improvisation. Sonny was a freedom fighter for everyone, but also for himself. He was a 'second Paul Robeson,' a calypsonian who could dance around raindrops, a saxophone-toting cowboy chasing the new frontier, a lone figure wailing on the Bridge, a Mohawked warrior honoring the past, a yogi in Japan and India, the Saxophone Colossus holding the stage, and, finally, a jazz prophet preaching the Golden Rule. It was all a thematic improvisation defined by an enduring quest to find out what it truly meant to be free."

—Bill Beutler

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With Cervini's latest project, *Joy*, the drummer offers a paean to his musical family in Toronto.

Ernesto Cervini Finds Joy

TIME MANAGEMENT CARRIES MULTIPLE meanings for Ernesto Cervini. For one thing, the 40-year-old, Toronto-based drummer creates permutations of musical time on a daily basis. He leads or co-leads multiple bands, each with a different sonic personality, that play primarily original compositions, documented on 16 albums, most recently the magnificently kaleidoscopic *Joy*, the 10th release on TPR Records since March 2021, when Cervini launched the label with composer — and brother-in-law — Oded Lev-Ari.

Cervini also spends consequential time tending to Orange Grove Publicity, spreading word to the gatekeepers not only about his latest productions, but for releases by a variety of Canadian jazz artists. Then, too, Cervini teaches drums at University of Toronto and jazz business at York University and Humber College.

"Many days I wish I had a few more hours to get everything in," Cervini said in mid-November Zoom call from his neatly organized basement studio. This was one such day: Normally up at 6 a.m., he'd been thrown off-kilter after returning home late from a sideman gig at The Rex Hotel and Jazz Bar. "I had to do my Orange Grove work after dropping off my son at school, and my daughter is home sick — so I haven't practiced today. It's still manageable, though. Hopefully I'll write some music this afternoon."

"I think in small chunks and just get done today what needs to be done for tomorrow. You can get paralyzed when you have a lot of work, and end up doing nothing. I try to make sure I never get there."

Cervini adhered to that *modus operandi* when conceiving and executing *Joy*, a Duke Ellington-esque tone parallel to the oeuvre of the eminent Canadian mystery writer Louise Penny. It's a compositional tour-de-force, with strong melodies scored for diverse instrumentations. Cervini showcases three of his groups — the three-saxophone-and-rhythm-section unit Tetrahedron, and chordless instrument units Tune Town and Turboprop — plus a female vocal

trio (Felicity Williams, Emilie-Claire Barlow and Amy Cervini); two art songs for Alex Samaras; "concertos" for alto saxophonist Tara Davidson, pianist Adrean Farrugia and electric bassist Rich Brown; a contrapuntal alto saxophone-trombone-drums trio by McDonald, William Carn and Cervini; and a clarinet-trombone quartet for Virginia McDonald and Jim Lewis.

The project gestated in 2019, when Cervini, who'd been thinking about doing a project with an overarching Canadian theme, was reading *The Beautiful Mystery*, Penny's eighth novel, framed around a murder in a Quebec monastery. "She writes beautifully about music and the monks and their beautiful chants and how it makes people feel," he said. "I was inspired to write a song that could capture the monks singing and the idea of the music that evolves. Then it was a natural step to start writing a whole album's worth of music based on her books. As ideas arose for how I could portray these different characters, I started hearing these specific musicians."

In the process of composing, he refracted theory lessons from years of immersion in the piano and clarinet canons, his undergraduate studies in piano performance at the University of Toronto and his master's work on drums at Manhattan School of Music. "New York was inspiring, the kick in the ass that I really needed," he said. "The musical vibe in Canada can be laid back; in New York everyone's going for it. I relished the idea that, when you're playing, you're always all in. Being there helped solidify the way I play — and, to be honest, the way I've approached everything since I returned to Canada."

More than anything, Cervini asserts, *Joy* is a paean to his musical family in Toronto. "Louise Penny writes that although her books are about murder and death and darkness, they are more about light and goodness and decency and human interaction and community," he said. "I'm a joyful person, I love making music with people, and a lot of the people on this album are like family."

—Ted Panken



Gunn's Tribute to Baraka: On Feb. 18, The Apollo is scheduled to present the world premiere of *The Blues And Its People*, a new commissioned work by trumpeter Russell Gunn to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Amari Baraka's famed *Blues People*. The piece features seven new works performed by Gunn, his band The Royal Krunk Jazz Orchestra and a variety of special guests, including Jazzmeia Horn, Stefon Harris, Craig Harris, Oliver Lake, Weedie Braimah, Dave Crawford and poet Jessica Care Moore. apollotheater.org

Hagans, NDR Get Docu Treatment:

A new documentary from filmmaker Michele Brangwen titled *A Week in Hamburg: Rehearsing and Performing Tim Hagans' "A Conversation"* follows the NDR Bigband on a week-long journey with Grammy-nominated trumpeter and composer Tim Hagans. The hour-long film premiered in November on YouTube. Hagans' five-movement suite was released last year on Moon Records.



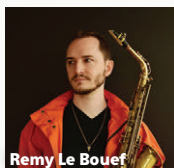
Vail Fest Lands

Clayton: The Vail Jazz Festival and Vail Jazz Party returns July 11–Sept. 4 under new artistic director John Clayton with support from Drew Zaremba. Clayton, the famed bassist and co-leader of the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, has served as the director of the Vail Jazz Workshop since its inception in 1996. vailjazz.org



Le Boeuf Named Chief Conductor:

Saxophonist/composer Remy Le Bouef has been named the chief conductor of the Nordkraft Big Band in Denmark. The 17-member ensemble, founded in 2010 in Aalborg, was previously led by John Clayton.



Free Lincoln Center Program Lifts Listeners with Dementia

THE CHARISMATIC REEDIST CALVIN

Johnson gazed out on the 70 or so people assembled in Lincoln Center's Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse and prepared to deliver a dose of spiritual uplift.

Johnson, a fourth-generation New Orleans musician, had seen audiences like this before: people who risked being marginalized, in this case because of their dementia. And he had managed to reach them through Big Easy culture, about as universal a medium as one could find. The hope was that history would repeat itself.

"The dance floor is officially open!" he declared as he and his quintet, Native Son, launched into Fats Domino's "I'm Walkin'," the first offering in a set largely drawn from Johnson's hometown canon.

As the music unfolded, much of the audience was roused to cheering, singing and all manner of excited gesticulation. If their gestures sometimes seemed out of sync with concertgoing ritual, that was OK. Rather than be put off by the mismatch, Johnson played to it. The result: disarming flashes of raw authenticity amid a performance of emotional depth.

"It went wonderfully, it was amazing, it exceeded my expectations," an elated Johnson said in a phone call after the performance.

The show was part of Lincoln Center Moments, a program that presents world-class entertainment for free to people with dementia and certain other conditions. It is part of a larger effort by Lincoln Center to improve access to and diversity in its programming.

In the program's eight years, it has often recruited performers from Lincoln Center's constituent organizations, including the New York Philharmonic and the Juilliard School. It has also reached outside these groups; veteran jazz trombonist Art Baron, for example, has had marked success engaging with the audience, according to Miranda Hoffner, associate director of accessibility.

Not all the artists recruited for the program have engaged so easily. Some have needed a fair amount of coaching. That was decidedly not the case with Johnson.

"Sometimes we try to gear our artists to highs and lows, a dynamic performance," Hoffner said. "That is often helpful for this audience — to keep things changing and moving. But for him, that was not necessary because he already created that so beautifully in a set."

Hoffner said that the program's organizers enjoyed a preview of Johnson and his New Orleans repertoire at a family concert that Native Son (trombonist Stephen Walker, pianist Andrew McGowan, bassist Nori Naraoka and drummer Errold Lanier along with Johnson on



vocals and tenor and soprano saxophones) gave in October at Lincoln Center's David Rubenstein Auditorium.

Johnson's sensitivity in executing the December performance at Lincoln Center owed in part to experience gained when, as a member of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and under the auspices of its foundation, he conducted workshops for people with Alzheimer's, Down Syndrome and autism.

"When [the organizers of Lincoln Center Moments] approached me and told me what they were trying to accomplish, I knew exactly how I wanted to approach it," he said.

His approach began with making a connection through rhythm. Keeping the improvisations concise also helped. He also considered the vintage of most people with dementia: "I was thinking, 'What songs will resonate with this generational demographic?' And it hit me like a Mack truck: Fats Domino. Their guards were immediately down. They were open to receiving what we were presenting to them."

After the performance, Johnson participated in workshops, including one co-led by teaching artist Linda Cholodenko, a livewire who, at key times during the performance, had circulated among the audience, exhorting those who were less engaged to respond more actively to their environment.

As the workshop broke and the day wound down, Ira, a longtime fan of Lincoln Center Moments, related a brief encounter with his dementia-diagnosed wife that seemed to capture the essence of the program: "Music is what she relates to the most. And when she suddenly reaches over and puts her hand on my leg and starts patting it a little bit, to me that's just a wonderful moment."

—Phillip Lutz

Final Bar >

ELVIN JONES COALITION



Keiko and Elvin Jones on the cover of his 1970 album *Coalition*

Keiko Okuya Jones: 1937–2022

Keiko Okuya Jones, widow of the hall-of-fame drummer and bandleader Elvin Jones, passed away Sept. 26 in the Manhattan apartment she shared with Jones for many years. She was 85.

Her death from a stroke was confirmed by her stepson Elvin Nathan Jones and drummer Alvin Queen, a longtime friend of Elvin and Keiko. Keiko Okuya was born in Nagasaki, Japan, on April 8, 1937, daughter of a father in the footwear business. She studied classical piano and was influenced by her father's love of American jazz. In 1966, he joined with a number of similarly inspired Japanese jazz fans to help organize a drummer-led tour that featured Art Blakey, Tony Williams and Elvin Jones as headliners. On this tour that Elvin and Keiko met and fell in love.

She returned with him to New York City in early 1967. Pivoting from his years as a sideman (including five legendary years with John Coltrane) to become a bandleader, Jones' career blossomed. Many friends and musicians credit Keiko's resolve, unflinching devotion and business acumen to helping Jones revive his career. All the while she faced disrespect in a system that dealt unkindly with women and those speaking English as a second language.

In 1971, they married and remained together until Jones' passing in 2004. Keiko served as his business partner and personal gatekeeper, band and tour manager and drum technician. She was credited as composer or arranger of a few tunes he recorded ("Mr. Jones," "The Children's Merry-Go-Round March" and "Shinjitsu," for example). "I feel like my husband is still living with me since May 18th," she said in a rare public statement at the 2004 Jazz Journalist Association Awards. "I still make him breakfast every day, and I have been a great friend of his since I met him many years ago in Japan. Carrying on for him is a mighty responsibility."

Keiko and Jones had no children of their

own. She is survived by two stepchildren: Elvin Nathan Jones of Seattle, and Rose-Marie Jones of Stockholm, Sweden.

Mick Goodrick: 1945–2022

Mick Goodrick, acclaimed guitarist and jazz educator, passed away Nov. 16. He was 77.

Goodrick taught at Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory, penning *The Advancing Guitarist*, a seminal text for young guitarists.



Goodrick became interested in jazz while attending a Stan Kenton Band Camp. He went to Berklee, toured with Gary Burton, then returned to Berklee to settle into a career in education.

Some of Goodrick's students included John Scofield, Mike Stern, Bill Frisell, Julian Lage and Lage Lund. As a performer, Goodrick worked with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, Jack DeJohnette and Steve Swallow. His death was said to be a result of Parkinson's Disease.

David Ornette Cherry: 1958–2022

David Ornette Cherry, the multi-instrumentalist son of Don Cherry, passed away after an asthma attack on Nov. 20 in his London hotel following a performance. He was 64.

Cherry grew up in Watts, California, and took up music at an early age. He was born the same year Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry recorded their first album, *Something Else*. The ambient music streaming through his childhood was generated by the early collaborations of his father with Coleman and the musicians who visited his parents' Mariposa Avenue home in Los Angeles.

He took up music seriously following a wood-chopping accident one summer in Sweden that sealed David's musical fate. He began performing with his father at the age of 16. A writer, arranger and improviser, Cherry won the 2003 ASCAP Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music.

His influences came from jazz, classical, African and world music, as well as from playing with some of the greatest jazz artists in history. He also worked training young musicians in world music, theory and piano.

Mark R. Feldman: 1940–2022

Mark R. Feldman, M.D., 82, the founder of Reservoir Records, passed away on Dec. 6 in New York after a short illness.

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FINDING PHOENIX

LAKECIA BENJAMIN ENTERS HER NEXT PHASE

BY AYANA CONTRERAS PHOTO BY ELIZABETH LEITZELL

When DownBeat caught up with Lakecia Benjamin in November via Zoom, the saxophonist and composer was clad in a cherry red sweatshirt, wearing angular, postmodern chrome eyeglasses. Her shirt was emblazoned in black with "Anyone who can't dance to John Coltrane can't dance," a quote attributed (on the garment) to Jean-Michel Basquiat. The shirt was a birthday gift from a friend.





“Right now I’m into artistic expression, all kinds, visual and every way,” she divulged, expressing the inkling to “make an impact with what you wear, what you say, what you do, how you dance, what you’re thinking.” The shirt was exceptionally fitting, bearing in mind that two tracks on her latest album, *Phoenix*, are titled “Basquiat” and “Coltrane.” Her connection to Alice and John Coltrane inspired her much heralded work on her previous album, 2020’s *Pursuance: The Coltranes*

(Ropeadope), as well as a 2018 tribute to John Coltrane at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Despite the accolades doled on *Pursuance*, *Phoenix*, on Whirlwind Recordings, is the album in her catalogue that Benjamin is most excited about. “I’ve been spending so much time with the Coltranes and doing their music: not just protecting their legacy, but honoring it. It feels good to find a way to move on, still honoring legacy, but then to actually make my own kind of claim to it,” she said.

Her first album was “years ago,” she continued. Because this album was created with a goal of confirming Lakecia’s composing prowess, the tracks on *Phoenix* consist of largely original material (with the exception of “Peace Is A Haiku Song” by Sonia Sanchez and a cover of Patrice Rushen’s “Jubilant”). In the case of “Haiku,” which is built around a recitation of Sanchez’s poem of the same name (itself a part of a larger collaboration between Sanchez and the City of Philadelphia’s Mural Arts Program), Benjamin made sure Sanchez received appropriate credit for the track. “I didn’t want to get in the way of the elders getting their money,” she explained.

The chiefly original nature of *Phoenix* sits in contrast with *Pursuance*, which was an Alice and John Coltrane composition-based project. And even though *Phoenix* contains no Coltrane-penned music, Benjamin said the recording is still indebted to her transcendental experiences with the power of their music.

In September 2021, Benjamin was returning from a Tri-C Jazz Festival performance in Cleveland when a tragic date with fate intervened. “I had an accident where I fractured my collarbone. I fractured my jaw, my scapula broke. I basically almost died in this car. And this was the time where I had just started getting *Pursuance* back on the road.”

“The first show I did after that accident was the Pittsburgh Jazz Fest [less than two weeks later]. And I actually have videos of that. I was playing with my jaw broken, and I just had to kind of bite down. Luckily, when I play, I really feel like I owe the ‘Tranes a lot. That music in itself pushed me.”

Mere weeks after the accident, she embarked on a grueling month-long European tour. She credits “the power of the Coltranes’ music” for sustaining her, “and God, of course.”

“It wasn’t until I came back that I spent two months going through the physical therapy. I had to regain the movement of my right arm and really get my jaw together. The excruciating pain that I was in forced me to leave my body. I had to really be like, ‘I cannot be in my body and do this show and interact with my audience — see what they need, what they’re doing — if I’m constantly focused on [the fact that] I can barely close my mouth.’

“It made me focus ... almost like a meditation, to sit into that feeling of ‘What is it?’ ‘What are you trying to communicate?’ And constantly staying in that vibe.”

Those meditations helped guide the process of naming the new album. “I don’t do projects that don’t have a story or motivation. That’s partially why I picked [the

album title] *Phoenix*. I said, ‘What is it like for me ... a whole country ... a whole world to pick themselves up from the ashes and try to recreate something?’

“Phoenix, that’s the most beautiful thing ever: to spontaneously combust into flames and come back. I really thought of the struggles I’ve had in my own life, even trying to get to a step where I can have an interview

rolling drum line reminiscent of Ahmad Jamal’s 1958 classic rendition of “Poinciana” — and featuring vocals by Dianne Reeves — the lyrics plead gently that “it’s time to turn the page and start anew with your mind and soul.”

Benjamin explained that her goal with “Mercy” was “to spread more awareness that we’re all humans. I feel we’re so discon-

nection to older generations of musicians, in Benjamin’s estimation, is an important hallmark of jazz. “When I started up, I was young going into the club, sneaking in, trying to get on a stage with Rashied Ali, trying to get on a stage with Clark [Terry]. All they can say is no. So it’s better to get a ‘no,’ and then ask again later, than to not try to have someone of that greatness for what she’s done.”

Benjamin’s sentiments mirror those expressed by iconic musician/composers Patrice Rushen and Terri Lyne Carrington, who each contribute to *Phoenix*. Carrington produced the effort, and Rushen played piano on “Jubilation,” a cover of her original composition. “Jubilation” was first included on Rushen’s 1975 sophomore effort, *Before The Dawn*, which was recorded when the pianist was just 20 years old.

According to Rushen, the song was composed in reverence to an artist who is one of her heroes, making the track’s inclusion a true “full-circle moment.”

“I also play flute,” the Grammy-winning multi-instrumentalist told *DownBeat* via telephone, “and I thought Hubert Laws was one of the best. I wanted to dedicate something in service to [Laws, who solos on the original recording].” She added that “reaching back” to older masters is something that isn’t “as present in today’s music. When I was starting out, it wasn’t unusual [for a young artist] to hope to get to the point where [they] could play alongside [their] heroes.”

Rushen plays piano on Benjamin’s rendition, and cited that she decided she wanted to be involved with the project when, after a few conversations with the younger artist, it was evident that Benjamin had “serious” intentions. A storied educator, Rushen asserted the importance of building and maintaining these intergenerational bridges, and praised Benjamin’s understanding of the fact that “we are all perpetual students of this music.”

Citing the inclusion of “progressive, radical women like Sonia Sanchez” on *Phoenix*, Carrington saluted Benjamin’s instinct to include these artists.

“It’s an interesting balance to me how you can honor the past and acknowledge it and its presence in your own artistry, and in your own life as you’re trying to push boundaries and move things forward,” Carrington said. “That’s the way it should be.”

Carrington added that her role on the project also falls under the umbrella of intergenerational collaboration. And while Benjamin had played in Carrington’s band as far back as 2015, more recently Carrington recognized a change in Benjamin’s perspec-

‘Phoenix, that’s the most beautiful thing ever: to spontaneously combust into flames and come back.’

like this, or just have something of recognition. This album really signified that for me.”

For the native New Yorker, scaffolded onto that transformative, character-defining experience was preceded by the lockdown — all of it in the midst of a global pandemic and a subsequent American civil rights uprising. cThe opening track, “Amerikkkan Skin,” hits listeners with the bone-chilling sounds of gunshots and sirens interplayed with a recording of Angela Davis’ 2019 speech “Revolution Today.”

“I wanted the listener to get into the mindset that I started in,” Benjamin explained. “When the pandemic started, I was fresh on *Pursuance*. That’s what my focus was, and we were engulfed in that. But the writing for this album took place during that lockdown. And the month I started [composing for *Phoenix*], that’s what I was hearing outside of my house. I was hearing sirens. I was seeing on the news, people getting shot. I was experiencing a violent virus in a violent world.”

The sounds, therefore, are intentionally immersive: “I wanted the album to feel like kind of an audio book,” she said, “and to recreate sonically what I was feeling each month and what was happening.”

For example, on “Mercy,” a track with a

nected. We’re really focusing on the different aspects ourselves and gender and race and religion and not focusing on the things that are the same and the things that make us one. We had this virus affecting all of us, didn’t matter any type of association you had.” Calling for all of us to exhibit more “grace” she added, “We need to learn how to lead with love.”

And while “Coltrane” and “Basquiat” are homages to artists who have departed to another plane, other tracks were created with the intention of uplifting living creators she admires — from Benjamin’s close friend Georgia Anne Muldrow to elders such as Davis and Reeves.

Like her work with the Coltranes, the inclusion of these artists also offered an opportunity for Benjamin to connect with the legacy of older artists she respects, including Wayne Shorter, who contributes a few sage words of advice on “Supernova.” “All of these artists have a deep place in my heart,” she noted, adding that her intention was to leave some type of legacy as well.

“I’m trying to work with the elders while they are here and get what they have to offer and their blessing on how to proceed. I wanted to emphasize people who, along my journey, have really spoken to me and showed me what the world could be like.” This con-



"I'm trying to leave whatever kind of imprint I can on society," says Benjamin.

tive. "When she came through this time, it was almost like she had a better understanding of my history and the things I've done," Carrington said. "People that are of a younger generation, they may kind of know who I am, but ... I'm not really a part of their scene. When she came back, I felt like she really understood more of my history and contributions, and it felt extremely genuine."

Benjamin shared that she sees Carrington as "someone who has excelled for a long time at her craft from a very young age and really is open to any genre, any possibility."

"And, in my opinion, [Carrington is] just now getting some of the flowers she should be getting. A lot of this project, I had the music together. I had everything I wanted to do together, but Terri really forced me to dig deeper and to find a way to make myself better. And I don't think I could have done that without her."

For Benjamin, a crucial objective of *Phoenix* was to use her platform to uplift the legacies of not just her elders, but also those

of women creators in general. "I wanted to announce how I was feeling about the world and announce the women of the project. ... Most of my guests are female."

Though the effort was noble, the process was not without snags.

After hitting scheduling roadblocks while working with Davis to record the spoken word passage for "Amerikkan Skin," the saxophonist found a recording of a speech Davis had given in 2017 at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona called "Revolution Today."

In that speech, Davis proclaimed, "Revolutionary hope resides precisely among those women who have been abandoned by history and are now standing up and making their demands heard."

After identifying appropriate passages, Benjamin asked the academic, "Are you OK with this being your message? Even though 'Amerikkan Skin' has multiple layers of meaning, one layer is the convenient blindness to some things happening to women across the world."

Carrington sees that. A long-standing

artist-as-advocate, she understands the need to uplift the legacies of women in jazz. In addition to her ongoing work in the performance and production space, and work as the founder and artistic director of the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, Carrington recently embarked on the New Standards project, a multi-pronged initiative encompassing an exhibition, a fresh compilation of 101 lead sheets by women composers and a Grammy-nominated album drawing from the compositions in the aforementioned compilation.

Citing a previous conversation with Benjamin, Carrington recognized that in the time that had elapsed between their interactions, the saxophonist had experienced "a bit of an awakening to this gender issue," an awakening she's witnessed many times before, even within herself.

According to Carrington, historically, successful women in jazz "patterned ourselves after our male colleagues and male mentors. So I think most of us shied away from really celebrating that part of us, hiring other women, all that, because we didn't want to be outcasts, or we didn't want to be siloed off to the side."

Citing her "New Standards" multimedia installation mounted at the Carr Center in Detroit — which serves to highlight and uplift the contributions of women in jazz — Carrington acknowledged that "people who were there, [like] Jazzmeia Horn, said, 'I didn't know I needed this.' We have to not only celebrate and lift them up and understand their contributions historically, but we also have to point to the issues and the systemic sexism that has permeated the music for so long."

It's a message Benjamin has taken to heart. She said that another goal of *Phoenix* is to inspire the next generation of jazz creators, particularly young women, perhaps reaching forward.

"This is what I'm here to do until I'm not," she explained. "I'm trying to leave whatever kind of imprint I can on society and leave my little stamp so maybe someone younger than me sees it. Patrice and [the other elders] see me doing something. They see me reaching for something and trying to break boundaries and molds. Maybe there is some 13-year-old out there, some 16-year-old out there who doesn't know which direction to go."

"They don't know what to do. And I just want people to realize that it's OK to follow your dreams and see what happens."

And if Benjamin's story is any indication, sometimes following that path means stepping out on faith and transcending proverbial ashes.

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Ahmad Jamal Surprise at the PENTHOUSE

BY J.D. CONSIDINE | PHOTO BY JEAN-MARC LUBRANO

Truth be told, the music on *Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse* was just as much of a surprise to Ahmad Jamal as to anyone else.

Although the pianist had performed frequently at the Seattle jazz landmark and was fond of the club's late owner, Charlie Puzzo, he had no idea that recordings of his early-'60s performances at the Penthouse existed — much less that there were six hours' worth. "I knew nothing about them except the fact that Puzzo had one of my favorite clubs," he said, over the phone from his home in the Berkshires. "I worked there for many, many years. And we did broadcasts.

"But I had no idea someone was going to unearth 59-year-old recordings," he laughed.

Recorded between 1963 and 1966, the material on the first two volumes (a third, covering 1966-'68, is forthcoming) captures Jamal in his creative and commercial prime. "I've known about these recordings of Ahmad Jamal probably for about 10 or 11 years now," explained producer Zev Feldman, whose Jazz Detective imprint released the *Emerald City Nights* albums. He had gotten to know Puzzo and his son, Charlie Jr., and through them was introduced to the Penthouse club archives.



Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse was recorded at a club that helped put Ahmad Jamal on the map.

Starting with 2015's *Groovin' Hard: Live At The Penthouse* by the Three Sounds featuring Gene Harris, the partnership between Feldman and the Puzzo family has yielded a number of albums, most notably John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme: Live In Seattle*.

But it was the stack of Ahmad Jamal tapes that most excited Feldman now. "I've kind of felt that these were the Holy Grail," he said. "I mean, we're very lucky to have this. This happens during his Argo phase, all those years recording with the Chess family, and there's something really magical about them. These are recordings that I personally kept listening to, over and over again."

"But I also had known, through reputation, that Mr. Jamal is very selective," he added. "For some artists, revisiting the past isn't something that they like to do. They like to be focused on moving forward." By chance, Feldman wound up speaking with Andrew Stayman, one of Jamal's assistants, about an unrelated matter, and happened to bring up the Penthouse tapes' existence. Would Jamal

be interested in listening to these tapes, with an eye to a possible album or albums?

"I really didn't know what was going to happen," Feldman said. But the tapes went out, and Stayman eventually called back to say that Jamal loved them.

"I can't tell you how happy that made me," Feldman said.

"I was reluctant, to tell you the truth, to go along with this project," Jamal admitted. But Feldman, Stayman and Maurice Montoya, Jamal's agent, were all in favor. "So I gave in. I relented, and started this work," he paused. "A lot of work, though. Listening, listening and listening and deciding what to use, and what not to use. A lot of work."

Then again, it was a collection of material recorded before an audience at a night club that put Ahmad Jamal on the map for many jazz fans. In the mid-'50s, Jamal was signed with Argo, an offshoot of Chicago's Chess Records, and for his third album wanted to try something different than the usual studio session. "I went to Leonard Chess, and told

Leonard I wanted to do a remote recording," he said. (He said he prefers the term "remote recording" because, as he points out, "All recordings are live. Remote means removed from the studio.")

The result was *At The Pershing: But Not For Me*, recorded at the Pershing Lounge in Chicago. Released on Jan. 16, 1958, it was a massive hit, spending 108 weeks on the Billboard album charts and selling more than a million copies. It even delivered a hit single with the grooving, tuneful "Poinciana," a track Jamal had to insist got given to DJs. "They said, you'll never get a seven-minute, 35-second record played," he laughed. "We got all the play we wanted, and then some. We're still getting airplay."

Rather than use the word jazz, Jamal prefers to refer to the music as American classical music. A child prodigy whose professional career began at age 14, Jamal is well-versed in European classical music, and notes the difference between the two approaches. With European classical music, the performer is

expected to interpret the music, faithfully following the score in the hopes of reflecting the composer's intention. With American classical music, the goal is to reinterpret the music, to find something the original composer never imagined.

"We interpreted the works beyond the concepts of the writers," he said. "The thing is, we pick and choose [material]." He mentions as an example John Coltrane's version of "My Favorite Things," the recording that

small — eight tracks cut between 1951 and '52 — but influential, mostly thanks to "Surrey With The Fringe On Top," which in Jamal's hands was transformed from a plodding cowboy song in *Oklahoma!* to a frisky, bop-inflected romp. Thanks to Jamal, the tune became a jazz standard, performed by Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, J.J. Johnson and a host of others.

The two volumes of *Emerald City Nights* underscore the range and variety of Jamal's

between solo and ensemble passages.

When asked about the technical challenges that went into playing like that, he responded, "Oh, nothing is easy. I would like it to be, but ..." He laughed. "People talk to me about what I have done. I think in terms of what I haven't done."

Perhaps the most audacious arrangement on the *Emerald City Lights* albums is "Like Someone In Love," from the second volume. It opens with a solo piano statement of the tune, played rubato and emphasizing the lushness of composer Jimmy Van Heusen's harmony. But when the bass and drums finally enter, it's not to shore up the changes but to set up a pedal-point vamp, over which Jamal free-associates snippets from Ferde Grofé's "On The Trail" and the title song from *The Sound Of Music* — until suddenly there's a four-chord transition and we're back in "Like Someone In Love."

"I listened to some of this stuff, and I said, 'Is that me?'" Jamal laughed. "I was surprised at some of the things I discovered listening [to these tapes]."

Listeners will make discoveries, too. For instance, "My First Love Song," a piece that Leslie Bricusse wrote with lyricist Anthony Newley for the now mostly forgotten musical *The Roar Of The Greasepaint, The Smell Of The Crowd*. "I didn't remember that I'd done that," Jamal admitted. "But I had done the whole score, [because] the record company wanted us to cover that particular Broadway show that Leslie Bricusse and Tony Newley produced. And, actually, they were very talented people."

"My First Love Song" is a beautiful ballad, but what makes the version on the second *Emerald City Nights* album so compelling is the trio's masterful control of dynamics, which ebb and swell like an incoming tide. There are quiet moments in which all three musicians seem to be playing at a whisper, and other bits where they're swinging hard and loud. Jamal takes full advantage of his instrument's wide dynamic range.

The liner notes mention that there was always a grand piano onstage when Jamal played the Penthouse. "I was the third artist in our particular American classical genre to join the Steinway roster," he explained. "When I went over there, they only had two other artists in the genre that we are working in American classical music. They had Hazel Scott, and John Lewis [of the Modern Jazz Quartet]. I've been with them since 1960."

These days, Jamal does not get as much use out of being a Steinway artist.

"I have two Steinway D's in my studio upstairs," he said. "I want to practice every day, but I can't. I'm retired now, so I have this thing, that thing, that thing, this thing to do. I'm very busy."

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'People talk to me about what I have done; I think in terms of what I haven't done.'

first brought broad attention to the saxophonist's solo career. "My Favorite Things" is how you know John Coltrane," he said. "But why did John Coltrane pick that? Because he found something in there that no one else did."

Jamal himself has been particularly adept at finding something that no one else did. It's unlikely that many listening to Bing Crosby's stagey, string-drenched rendition of "Poinciana" (1943) would have heard the makings of a groove tune, yet Jamal did. But he didn't just match a melody to a beat, as his reinterpretation turns a song that was mostly refrain into a mini-suite, driven by eighth-note afterbeats and Israel Crosby's insistently tuneful bass.

"My arrangement of 'Poinciana' is a classic that still is imitated and emulated every day," he said, with justifiable pride. Arranging has always been one of Jamal's strong suits. In particular, he's especially adept at two devices that figure heavily in European classical music: constructing a narrative structure out of variation on a theme, and using shifting dynamics to pull the most from a melody.

"I've been writing since I was 10 years old, writing arrangements," he said. That didn't become a professional strength until he was 20, and moved from sideman to bandleader after violinist Joe Kennedy Jr. left the Four Strings, and Jamal became the head of the Three Strings. "I inherited leadership," he said. "It was something I didn't want, but it happened. And I've been writing ever since."

The Three Strings' recorded output was

abilities as an arranger and pianist. "Johnny One Note," which opens the first volume, is typical, opening with a gruffly propulsive blues riff that repeatedly dissolves into an effervescent, major-key melody. The heart of the performance is a long solo over that bass line, in which Jamal shows off both his chops and his imagination, but the impact of that solo is amplified by the arrangement, which uses tempo shifts, block chords and a wonderfully melodic drum solo by Chuck Lampkin to transform the tune into a small-scale suite.

Then there's "Minor Adjustments," which opens with piano and bass playing counterpoint that could have come from a Bach three-part invention before veering off into a stomping blues. "That was by [bassist] Richard Evans, a very talented bassist and composer," Jamal said, adding that it was through Evans — who was at that point teaching at Berklee — that he was introduced to the pianist Hiromi, an artist his wife, Laura Hess-Hay, now manages.

"Tangerine," also from the first volume, finds Jamal using dynamic contrasts with such finesse that his piano sounds like a virtual big band. "That was Joe Kennedy's arrangement, adapted from his arrangement of 'Tangerine,'" he said, referring to a 1959 album with orchestra called, appropriately, *At the Penthouse* (although in this case, the penthouse in question was Nola's Penthouse Studio in New York). Jamal not only manages to convey both the piano and string parts, but adjusts his attack to make it easy to hear the difference

Etienne Charles

THE MAKING OF **SAN JUAN HILL**

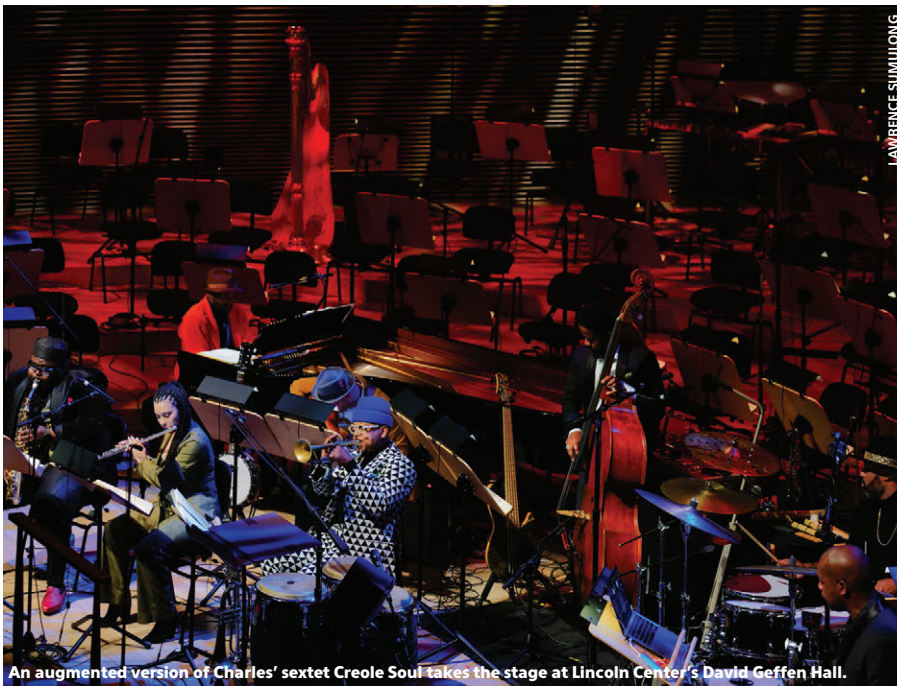
BY PHILLIP LUTZ | PHOTO BY LAURA FERREIRA

Nearly half an hour into the Oct. 8 premiere of Etienne Charles' epic suite *San Juan Hill*, the members of the New York Philharmonic began taking their seats onstage at a packed David Geffen Hall, triggering a round of applause so effusive that it seemed to shake the foundation of the hall's home, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

No surprise there. The hall was reopening after a major make-over, and the return of the philharmonic to its longtime base of operations was bound to be a seismic event. But even before the orchestra joined the fray, Charles' sextet Creole Soul — augmented by a flutist, a turntablist and multimedia partners — set off a few tremors of its own, presenting five movements of the suite that left the audience slightly shaken but pleasantly stirred. Judging by the buzz in the room, they wanted to hear more from this man with the sweet trumpet and stinging pen.

A flamboyant stylist with radical instincts, Charles, 39, had emerged from the jazz world proffering a provocative collaboration between the philharmonic and his sextet. The piece would address, in historical context, Lincoln Center's supplanting of the economically poor, culturally rich San Juan Hill neighborhood in Manhattan. And, as the piece played out on that afternoon, it addressed what happened — offering an intoxicating mix of sonic pleasures and seldom-heard social truths.





An augmented version of Charles' sextet Creole Soul takes the stage at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall.

"It was a way to no longer have things swept under the proverbial rug," Charles said in an interview a few days after the concert.

The small-group portion of the program laid bare some disquieting realities, opening with the soft strains of "Lenape," a melancholy ode to the original inhabitants of the slice of Manahatta that became the Afro-diasporan redoubt for which the suite was named, and closing with the blunt force of "The Destroyer," a devastating indictment of the policy of so-called slum clearance that leveled it. A sense of foreboding prevailed throughout.

That sense was established up front by the spectral presence of poet Eljon Wardally. Reciting lines offstage, Wardally appeared only as a disembodied voice, her words drifting in while filmmaker Maya Cozier's moving pictures, projected onstage, showed children of color at play. Were they from the neighborhood, blissfully unaware of their impending displacement? To Wardally, it didn't matter. They had a universality to them, as well as personal resonance. And both qualities echoed in her haunting lines.

"I saw a reflection of myself," she said in an interview, noting that, like Charles, she is of Afro-Caribbean ancestry.

In "Lenape," her voice, sonorous yet distant, intoned that the people of Lenapehoking were vanquished by the Dutch. With the poet's words still hanging in the air, Elena Pinderhughes' flute and John Davis' toms summoned the native culture, even as Charles' airily modern harmonies foreshadowed a 20th-century analog to its decimation.

The foreshadowing became fact in "Destroyer." Opening with Wardally's rumina-

tion on two views of San Juan Hill ("What one saw as trash / Another saw as treasure"), the poem closed with an unequivocal statement on where she and Charles, who wrote the concluding lines, stood: "What some first saw as a developer / Was revealed to be a destroyer." A modal firestorm followed, sparked by DJ Logic's turntable scratches and manipulated sound samples of real-world destruction.

With that sublime exercise in agitation as a lead-in and the orchestra members ready to play, it fell to their principal clarinetist, Anthony McGill, to up the ante with a dynamic reading of the opening to the next chapter in Charles' work, "Riot: 1905." In cool and clear tones, he delivered an anxious and impassioned clarion call to all who would listen that neither the issues addressed in San Juan Hill nor its composer could be ignored.

The movement depicted an actual event in which a small incident, fueled by a racist mob and the complicity of police, grew into a full-scale uprising in San Juan Hill. Building on McGill's opening, Charles made full use of the textures available to him in the combined ensembles, layering an increasingly dense series of cross-rhythms and stacked harmonies across the canvas in disorienting brushstrokes. The effort yielded an indelible aural image of the chaos that reportedly ensued 117 years ago.

"They understood that it was about painting a picture," Charles said of the musicians.

That picture, McGill said, was well realized. And he was well placed to know. Like Charles, who rose from steel bands working the streets of Trinidad to his newfound status as an elite orchestral composer, McGill had risen against the odds to become the first Black principal in

the philharmonic's 180-year history. And, like Charles, he had a history of denouncing racial injustice with his art. So he spoke with authority when he said that Charles was the right person to articulate the message and "Riot: 1905" was the right vehicle to convey it.

"It's dissonant and it's jarring and all those things that you can feel when the powers-that-be are against you," he said. "That is the history of so many Black and brown people in a lot of our cities, it's a part of that history. That did inform my interpretation. But it's in the music. He wrote it."

The bulk of the writing, which ultimately encompassed five orchestral movements, had yet to be completed when, at a March gathering at Lincoln Center's Kaplan Penthouse, the philharmonic announced its 2022-'23 schedule. At the gathering, Charles stood out, the bright colors and vivid patterns of his outfit matching the audacity of his offering.

Lincoln Center was, like other tradition-bound cultural institutions in the city, seeking new audiences. Addressing the history that led to its creation was considered critical to that mission. And commissioning Charles — whose oeuvre included unsparing historical works like *Greenwood*, a small-group suite about the destruction of the Black business district in Tulsa, Oklahoma — was seen as a means of doing so. Speaking at the gathering, Lincoln Center President and CEO Henry Timms said the commission would help demonstrate that "we're engaged with that history."

"We try to tell the story of where we come from as a way of navigating where we're going next," he said. "This is the piece that's telling the story: This is your home."

How seamlessly the philharmonic could integrate its 80 pieces with the jazz sextet was an open question. In an interview at the gathering, Jaap van Zweden, the philharmonic's conductor and music director, expressed little doubt. He noted that his personal tastes extended beyond the realm of classical music, remarking that his son was a DJ and that he, himself, listened to popular music at home, as did philharmonic players.

"It fits in my whole body and in my spiritual life," he said, adding: "The open minds of the orchestra members are amazing. The soul of the city comes out of these people. It feels very natural."

In the months after that gathering, Charles began to compose. By August, during a break in a publicity photo shoot at Lincoln Center, he was able to lay out a full score at the Kaplan Penthouse. The score, which seemed well within the bounds of conventional orchestral writing, fleshed out key elements that in March had been conceived of in outline. Transferring paper to performance was the challenge ahead.

To be sure, the small-group portion of the

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show had required little rehearsal. The charts were basic, and for the veteran jazzmen of the sextet — saxophonist Godwin Louis, pianist Sullivan Fortner, guitarist Alex Wintz and bassist Ben Williams, as well as Davis and Charles — movements like “Swing Culture” were hardly a stretch. In nods to San Juan Hill luminaries like pianists Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols and clarinetist Russell Procope, that movement featured open blowing over Williams’ walking bass. Part of another movement, “Where Two Or More Are Gathered,” was freely improvised at the concert.

But the orchestral portion was not so simple. Fortner — whose scene-stealing stride turn on “Charleston At The Jungles” elicited the strongest audience reaction of any solo in the concert — recalled that, after two days of rehearsal with the full contingent of musicians on both the jazz side and the classical side, the complexities of working together became apparent.

“There [were] a lot of compromise that had to be made,” he said.

Timekeeping was an issue, Fortner noted, recalling one rehearsal where the concertmaster raised a point: “He asked, ‘Who should we listen to? Should we listen to the drummer or should we follow the conductor?’ I said, ‘The New York Philharmonic is a 100-year-old train. We’re going to follow you guys.’”

Charles, who exchanged subtle cues with van Zweden during the performance — at the same time juggling his congas, cajon, trumpet and hat used as a mute — acknowledged some give on the drummer’s part. But he also likened the situation to that of any large ensemble. “It was a little bit of a yield, but you have to do that when you’re playing with a big band as well,” he said.

“In terms of grooves,” Charles added, “I was learning how to play with the orchestra because you have all these people onstage. To find the time, I was listening back to front: I’m listening for accents, not for the upbeat.”

The accents of “Charleston,” he said, were especially important to advancing the movement’s narrative, which traced how the Gullah people brought their brand of two-beat syncopation from the low country of Georgia to San Juan Hill. There, pianist James P. Johnson incorporated it in his playing at the Jungles Casino, on 62nd Street. Adapted for popular consumption, it precipitated a national dance craze.

A long orchestral stretch was meant to illustrate the Gullah migration. But the heart of the movement was Fortner’s improvisation, a fantasia on the piano culture that was integral to the community’s social fabric. “It was like hip-hop in the ’80s — the hip, cool style,” Charles said. “So I tried to channel all that into this movement.”

Fortner found himself translating the syncopated vernacular for the orchestra’s players. “They’re not used to it,” he said. “It wasn’t that they couldn’t do it, but in talking with them about it, it was something that was a little wonky. Jazz musicians have a different kind of sensitivity than classical musicians have. It’s something we all had to adjust to.”

Knotty rhythmic issues required untangling throughout the suite, and Charles, alone save for his percussion, focused on that during a day of rehearsal with the orchestra. The challenges reached a peak with “House Rent Party,” a rousing final movement that employed a dizzying series of styles, starting with a waltz, ending with funk and alighting in between on stride piano, blues, ragtime, swing, mambo, calypso and disco.

“It was intense,” McGill recalled. “There was so much focus, our brains were on fire.”

For Charles, it was a bit of déjà vu. He personally embodied the migration of so many people of Afro-Caribbean descent bound for New York, having landed at the Juilliard School, part of Lincoln Center, in 2006. As it happened, he first learned of San Juan Hill and its Caribbean connection while at Juilliard, where, in studying about Nichols, he discovered that the pianist, born and raised in the neighborhood, had roots in Trinidad. “A hundred years ago, if I was moving from Trinidad, I would have moved to San Juan Hill,” Charles said. “It’s almost as if I’ve come full circle.”

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DownBeat's 2023 Venue Guide is a tribute to the enduring spirit of jazz presenters everywhere. Through the most trying period of our lifetime, they worried, improvised and survived. Here are 106 clubs serving improvised music and doing it well.

Edited by Frank Alkyer

Pancho Sánchez at The Jazz Kitchen in Indianapolis/Photo by Mark Sheldon

UNITED STATES

Jimmy's Jazz & Blues Club, New Hampshire, a new entrant to the scene.



musician's training ground." As the first Black-owned jazz club in New England, the tiny room showcases the talents of students from Berklee College of Music and other area music schools.

wallyscafe.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Jimmy's Jazz & Blues Club

Portsmouth, NH

Filling a former YMCA landmark structure, Jimmy's is new venue featuring beautiful architecture and great sound and good food. An array of local and international artists grace the club. Early 2023 bookings include the Maurice Brown Quintet, Tierney Sutton and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra featuring Jazzmeia Horn.

jimmysoncongress.com

NEW JERSEY

Shanghai Jazz

Madison, NJ

Combining a top-flight dining experience with first-rate jazz, Shanghai Jazz hosts a wealth of talent in the New York/New Jersey area, including Finnish guitarist Olli Soikkeli, vocalist Ty Stephens and trumpeter Warren Vache. In business since 1995, the club was opened by David Nik and Martha Chang to pay homage to the vibrant music scene of Shanghai, China, in the 1920s.

shanghaijazz.com

NEW YORK

Birdland

New York, NY

The original Birdland dominated 52nd Street in the '40s, but went silent in the mid-'60s before reemerging in the 1980s. Today the club is planted in Manhattan's theater district, near Times Square. Birdland features some of the finest jazz players in the world. January's lineup is no exception, with a celebration of saxophonist Joe Lovano's 70th birthday, the Delfeayo Marsalis Uptown Jazz Orchestra and Tuesday night hits by vocalist Nicole Zuraitis.

birdlandjazz.com

Blue Note

New York, NY

Blue Note New York maintains its historical excellence while delivering a range of culturally rich experiences. At its Greenwich Village location, the club has hosted legends including Dizzy Gillespie, Oscar Peterson, Sarah Vaughan, Lionel Hampton and Ray Charles, along with contemporary jazz masters Dave Brubeck, Wynton Marsalis, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett and Chris Botti.

bluenote.net

Dizzy's Club

New York, NY

With an incredible view of Central Park, this large, beautifully appointed space is a crown jewel in the Jazz At Lincoln Center family, presenting jazz every night. Bookings in January include Herlin Riley, Lauren Sevian &

EAST

CONNECTICUT

Firehouse 12

New Haven, CT

Firehouse 12, the multi-use space offering a bar, record label, concert venue and recording studio, suffered severe water damage during Hurricane Ida, prompting a complete remodeling project. The venue plans to reopen for a spring 2023 concert series. Located in the historic 9th Square district, Firehouse 12's recording studio doubles as an intimate 75-seat auditorium, where its Jazz Series runs for 12 weeks during the spring and fall. Past performers include saxophonist Anna Webber, saxophonist Tim Berne, bassist Michael Formanek and guitarist Mary Halvorson.

firehouse12.com

The Side Door Jazz Club

Old Lyme, CT

Billed as the "only club" between Boston and New York City, The Side Door rests in the historic Old Lyme Inn. The club opened in 2013 and is operated by an ambitious, jazz-loving couple in Ken and Chris Kitchings. In January/February 2023, The Side Door planned to present artists like trombonist Steve Turre and trumpeter Jeremy Pelt.

thesidedoorjazz.com

FLORIDA

Blue Bamboo Center for the Arts

Winter Park, FL

This humble, community-serving center has three goals: to provide affordable, family-friendly music; to provide an income for artists; and to serve the community through the arts. Sundays tend to feature big bands. The JazzPro Series has featured the likes of Tamir Hendelman.

bluebamboocenter.com

Heidi's Jazz Club & Restaurant

Cocoa Beach, FL

Heidi's nails the combination of ambiance, music and food in a jazz club delivering

great regional artists in a classy, intimate setting. With a 100-seat capacity, Heidi's features world-class local and touring artists Wednesdays through Sundays. Recent performers include Tinsley Ellis, Nicole Henry, and Mike Zito.

heidisjazzclub.com

MARYLAND

An Die Musik Live!

Baltimore, MD

Located on the second floor of the former Eubie Blake Museum in Baltimore's historic Mt. Vernon district, the venue offers 20-plus concerts each month ranging from a Monday night jazz jam, monthly big band concert and jazz concerts featuring local and internationally renowned artists. The venue also offers parking discounts and neighborhood restaurants discounts. In March 2020, An Die Musik Live immediately reinvented its production to a broadcast model, keeping musicians playing and audiences entertained during the pandemic.

andiemusiklive.com

MASSACHUSETTS

The Lilypad

Cambridge, MA

The Lilypad programs an array of musical styles with a heavy dose of jazz from local legends like The Fringe and saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi, as well as a recent New York-Boston matchup of Marty Erlich and Stan Strickland.

lilypadinman.com

Scullers Jazz Club

Boston, MA

Scullers has been a fixture on the Boston jazz scene since 1989, featuring top names on weekends like Jeremy Pelt, Eddie Palmieri and Dave Stryker, and occasional weekday sets by area musicians.

scullersjazz.com

Wally's Café Jazz Club

Boston, MA

Wally's, founded in 1947, bills itself as "the

Alexa Tarantino, Kenny Washington, Daahoud Salim and Allison Miller.

jazz.org/dizzys

The Iridium

New York, NY

The cozy, 180-seat basement room offers a variety of music styles with a heavy dose of blues. The club's January lineup offers a glimpse at the club's programming including The Immediate Family, Cherry Poppin' Daddies, Albert Lee, Snarky Puppy's Mark Lettieri, Popa Chubby and more.

theirdium.com

(le) Poisson Rouge

New York, NY

Located in the same subterranean warren that once housed The Village Gate, LPR is renowned for its genre-bending ambitions, hosting jazz, classical, new music, avant-garde and indie rock. LPR also hosts readings, comedy, film, DJs, theater and burlesque. Marc Ribot: The Jazz Bins hits the "Main Space" stage Feb. 24.

lpr.com

Mezzrow

New York, NY

Under the umbrella of the SmallsLIVE Foundation, Mezzrow is a sister club to Smalls featuring an über intimate listening experience with great acoustics in this tube-shaped, underground club. It's cozy and intimate, with lineups in January featuring pianist Marc Copland, as well as the trio of guitarist Pasquale Grasso, bassist Ari Roland and drummer Clifford Barbaro.

mezzrow.com

Minton's Playhouse

New York, NY

Billed as "the place bebop was born," Minton's was founded in 1938 by the saxophonist Henry Minton in Harlem. The revived Minton's strives to live up to its fabled namesake. Spacious yet intimate, Minton's is joined to the Cecil Steakhouse. Recent performers include Ted Nash, Nat Adderly Jr., Calvin Jonson and the JC Hopkins Biggish Band.

mintonsharlem.com

Nublu

New York, NY

This East Village nightspot hosts jazz, funk, electronic and vinyl-only nights in a three-level space with excellent sightlines. In December, the club featured the Elvin Jones "Lighthouse" Project with George Garzone, Jerry Bergonzi, Gene Perla and Adam Nussbaum; and its annual Nublu Jazz Festival each October is a can't-miss hit. The two locations are 151 Avenue C, and Nubu Classic at 62 Avenue C.

nublu.net

Smalls

New York, NY

Another of the great, tiny New York basement clubs with terrific jazz, Smalls serves as a hub for established players and upstarts, delivering burning performances. December shows featured the Wayne Escoffery Quartet; Joe Farnsworth with Brad Mehldau and Peter Washington; and the Duane Eubanks Quintet. Jazz is an all-night, every-night affair at Smalls.

smallslive.com

SMOKE

New York, NY

Located on Manhattan's Upper West Side at Broadway and 106th Street (aka Duke Ellington Boulevard), Smoke Jazz Club reopened in the summer 2022 after an expansion and renovation that anchors its place as a destination for classic and modern jazz. Smoke stands apart with its candlelit dining room, stellar acoustics and classic American cuisine. Founded in 1999, SMOKE also boasts a Grammy-nominated label, Smoke Sessions Records, and a celebrated streaming concert series, Smoke Screens.

smokejazz.com

The Stone at The New School

New York, NY

Located in The New School, The Stone serves as a great listening room for creative improvisation beyond borders. Founded in 2005 by John Zorn, The Stone has played host to such forward-looking artists as Henry Grimes, Dave Burrell, Laurie Anderson, Mary Halvorson, Nels Cline and Gerry Hemingway.

thestonemusic.com

Village Vanguard

New York, NY

Founded in 1935, the Vanguard is the most-revered room in New York and continues to be a bucket-list destination for music lovers from around the globe. January features Fred Hersch & esperanza spalding, the David Murray Quartet, the Brad Mehldau Quintet and Jon Cowherd: Mercy Project. The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra swings on Monday nights.

villagevanguard.com

PENNSYLVANIA

Chris' Jazz Café

Philadelphia, PA

With sets six nights a week, Chris' is the longest continuously running jazz club in Philadelphia. National acts and strong local talent — as well as owner/chef Mark DiNinno's gourmet menu — make for a great night out. January's schedule includes a Gary Smulyan record release party for *Tadd's All, Folks*; the Chris Watts Quintet; the Jonathan Michel Trio featuring Joel Ross and Jeremy Dutton; and The Benny Bennack III Sextet featuring vocalist Anais Reno.

chrisjazzcafe.com

MCG Jazz

Pittsburgh, PA

MCG Jazz is a division of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, a non-profit arts and learning center in Pittsburgh. For 36 years, the MCG Jazz concert series has been a safe place for artists to share their art and discuss relevant issues facing our times. Recent acts have included Yellowjackets, Keiko Matsui, Dee Dee Bridgewater, the Jazz at Lincoln Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, SFJAZZ Collective and Stefon Harris & Blackout.

mcgjazz.org

South Restaurant & Jazz Club

Philadelphia, PA

Southern cuisine and jazz hit Philly's Spring Garden neighborhood bringing the South to the Midwest. Operated by brothers Robert and Benjamin Bynum, the club takes advantage of Philadelphia's



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LISBON



wealth of jazz talent as well as booking internationally known artists. Upcoming shows in early 2023 include Alan Harris, Nicole Henry, the Terrell Stafford Quintet, Jazmin Ghent and Gerald Veasley.

southjazzkitchen.com

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Blues Alley Washington, D.C.

Open nightly (except major holidays), Blues Alley showcases an array of national and international acts as well as area jazz performers. A full menu features New Orleans cuisine. Arrive early because seating is general admission. February's schedule features sets by the Bill Charlap Trio, Joey Alexander and Tito Puente Jr.

bluesalley.com

Studio K at The Kennedy Center Washington, D.C.

This 160-seat venue (or 250 standing) is booked by Jason Moran, the Kennedy Center's artistic director for jazz, and the calendar reflects his wide-ranging tastes. Upcoming shows include Igmar Thomas' Revive Big Band, DOMi & JD Beck and René Marie & Experiment in Truth.

kennedy-center.org

SOUTH

GEORGIA

The Velvet Note Alpharetta, GA

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, The Velvet Note is billed as an "acoustic living room." The venue presents jazz Thursday through Sunday in a space designed for comfort with excellent acoustics. A full restaurant/bar adds to the ambience. Recent bookings include the Gilad Hekselman Trio, vocalist Badu Assad and a sold-out JodyJazz Christmas show.

thevelvetnote.com

LOUISIANA

Blue Nile New Orleans, LA

One of the original clubs on the Frenchmen Street scene presents music every night on a main-level stage, as well as an upstairs space with a balcony. Regular performers include NOLA fave Kermit Ruffins, The Soul Rebels and the Where Y'at Brass Band as

well as other occasional acts outside of New Orleans.

bluenilelive.com

Kermit's Treme Mother-In-Law Lounge New Orleans, LA

Founded by legendary New Orleans musician Ernie K-Doe in 1994, this low-tech beauty serves as a brass band party starter. It was closed for several years before trumpeter Kermit Ruffins opened it back up with great music and great food, often cooked by Ruffins himself. Red beans and rice? So nice!

kermitlounge.com

Preservation Hall New Orleans, LA

Here's a slice of the past meeting the present. Intimate, acoustic, pure and swinging, several sets happen nightly at this famed French Quarter club. The emphasis is on traditional NOLA jazz and a rotating cast in the Preservation Hall All Stars. Late-night performances during Jazz Fest sell out quickly.

preservationhall.com

SNUG HARBOR JAZZ BISTRO New Orleans, LA

For more than 35 years, Snug Harbor has offered the best in live jazz and regional cooking at reasonable prices. Snug is located in three rooms of a renovated 1800s storefront located in the historic Faubourg Marigny including a dining room, a bar and the intimate live music room. Snug Harbor is the longest-running music outlet on the now legendary Frenchmen Street music corridor. Delfeayo Marsalis, Joshua Redman, Herlin Riley and Emma Cohen are just a few names that have graced the stage in the past year.

snugjazz.com

Tipitina's New Orleans, LA

Tip's is a legendary NOLA venue with roots that go back to 1977. Now owned by the band Galactic, it has a commitment to great music as well as music education through the Tipitina Foundation. From the painting of Professor Longhair over the stage to the great acts on it, Tip's delivers eclectic musical experiences. January features sold-out dates with the Radiators, the Rebirth Brass Band, The Soul Rebels and fairs do do with the Bruce Daignepont Cajun Band.

tipitinas.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

The Jazz Corner

Hilton Head Island, SC

Celebrating its 23 years of presenting jazz on an island known for golf, this 99-seat venue offers music and gourmet food with two shows nightly. The Martin Lesch Band plays every Monday in January.

thejazzcorner.com

TENNESSEE

Rudy's Jazz Room

Nashville, TN

A 2017 addition to Nashville's music scene, Rudy's presents jazz every night in an intimate setting with a strong focus on regional musicians, as well as the occasional national act. Chef and co-owner Michael Braden offers a New Orleans-based menu and a full bar.

rudysjazzroom.com

TEXAS

Scat Jazz Lounge

Fort Worth, TX

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

scatjazzlounge.com

MIDWEST

ILLINOIS

The Jazz Showcase

Chicago, IL

The Showcase was founded in 1947 by the late Joe Segal. It's now owned and operated by his son, Wayne, who maintains the club's high standards. The Showcase books a combination of rich Chicago talent and nationally touring acts. Recent bookings have included Russell Malone, Tim Warfield and Marquis Hill.

jazzshowcase.com

The Green Mill

Chicago, IL

Featuring perhaps the coolest jazz club ambience in Chicago, or anywhere for that matter, the Mill is set up in an old prohibition-era speakeasy offering an immediate old-school vibe to the new-school music being played.

greenmilljazz.com

Andy's Jazz Club

Chicago, IL

A staple of the River North neighborhood of Chicago, Andy's digs deep into Chicago's wealth of jazz talent while offering up top-notch food and drinks.

andysjazzclub.com

Constellation

Chicago, IL

For those seeking the outer edges of improvised music, Constellation is the place. Low-key with excellent acoustics, the club founded by drummer/presenter Mike Reed offers more than 200 concerts a year focusing on forward-thinking music. Recent

shows have featured Hamid Drake and Michael Zerang, Mars Williams and more.

constellation-chicano.com

Hungry Brain

Chicago, IL

Born out of Mike Reed and Josh Berman's Sunday Transmission concert series, Hungry Brain sees its mission as serving as an incubator for the city's up-and-coming musicians.

hungrybrainchicago.com

Winter's Jazz Club

Chicago, IL

This cozy jazz room, just a short walk from Navy Pier, hosts a wealth of local artists in a great listening room dropped into a hip location. The musical mix for January includes the Spider Soloff Quartet, the Chris Greene Quartet, the Chicago Jazz Orchestra and more.

wintersjazzclub.com

INDIANA

THE JAZZ KITCHEN

Indianapolis, IN

Since 1994, The Jazz Kitchen has brought the jazz world to Indy with an intimate 140-seat room that showcases jazz and blues nightly. The club offers a full menu and bar. Early 2023 bookings include Chucito Valdés, Kim Waters, Jim Snidero and Emmet Cohen. There's a jazz jam every Monday.

thejazzkitchen.com

MICHIGAN

BLUE LLAMA

Ann Arbor, MI

Blue LLama Jazz Club was born from a love of music and food, combining live jazz every night from nationally recognized artists and locally known musicians with world-class cuisine. As an established music venue and restaurant in downtown Ann Arbor since 2019, the club is a great destination for jazz lovers, food enthusiasts or wine connoisseurs.

bluellamajazzclub.com

Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe

Grosse Pointe Farms, MI

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

dirtydogjazz.com

MINNESOTA

CROONERS LOUNGE & SUPPER CLUB

Minneapolis, MN

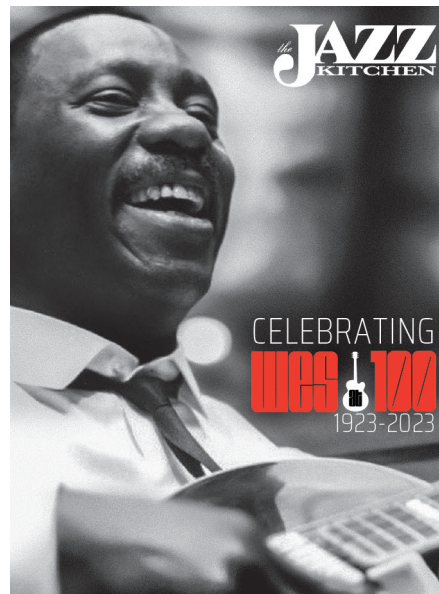
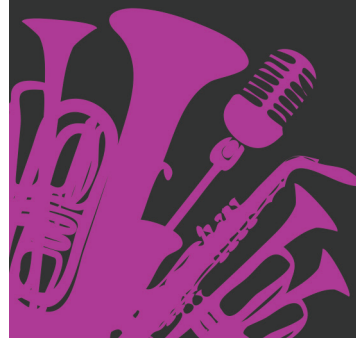
Crooners is a lakeside supper club located 10 minutes north of downtown Minneapolis. The club offers three concert stages for intimate dinner shows. The MainStage seats 180, the Dunsmore Jazz Room seats 90 and the outdoor Belvedere Tent seats 250. Regional artists spotlight many different genres and styles, and out-of-town jazz stars like Kurt Elling, the Count Basie Orchestra and Karrin Allyson visit regularly.

croonerslounge.mn

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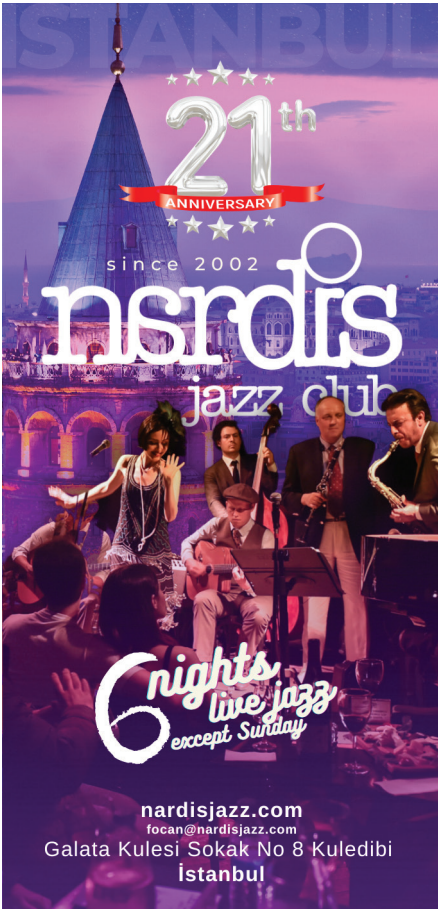
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The Blue Llama brings jazz to Ann Arbor, Michigan.

COURTESY THE BLUE LLAMA

Dakota Jazz Club Minneapolis, MN

The Dakota combines great music and food since opening in 1985. Internationally acclaimed and regionally revered jazz artists, as well as great musicians from Americana, soul and blues fill the calendar seven days a week. The menu, created by award-winning chef Remy Pettus, serves up Southern style dishes with the occasional Minnesotan twist. Recent acts include Charles Lloyd and Kindred Spirits, Victor Wooten, Cecile McLorin Salvant, SFJAZZ Collective and Michael Feinstein.

dakotacooks.com

musicians and occasional national acts. The venue's Masterclass Foundation promotes jazz education and mentorship.

blujazzakron.com

Bop Stop Cleveland, OH

Great acoustics, views of Lake Erie and a swinging dose of local jazz — that's what makes the Bop Stop a first-rate jazz room. And everything from purchasing a ticket to the tasty menu of bar food and drinks goes toward The Music Settlement, an organization that provides music and arts experiences to people of all ages.

themusicsettlement.org/bop-stop

MISSOURI

Ferring Jazz Bistro The Harold & Dorothy Steward Center for Jazz

St. Louis, MO

The Center has a strong focus on jazz education and community outreach, and the 200-seat Ferring Jazz Bistro hosts jazz performances year round, featuring national acts every other week, as well as area musicians. Under the auspices of Jazz St. Louis, expect renewed programming energy as saxophonist and clarinetist Victor Goines has been hired as president and CEO of the organization. Upcoming performances feature The Bad Plus in January and Sean Jones Dizzy Spellz in February.

jazzstl.org

Murry's Columbia, MO

Great food and jazz are a winning combination at Murry's. Local acts are presented Monday through Saturday. And the "We Always Swing" Sunday at Murray's concert series brings in big names. Early in 2023, check out the Hermon Mehari Quartet, the Ryan Cohan Quartet or the Tia Fuller Group, to name a few.

murrysrestaurant.net

OHIO

BLU JAZZ+ Akron, OH

This retro, mid-century modern club gives New York flair in the heart of Northern Ohio. This general-admission club mixes it up with a blues jam, a solo piano series, and area

WEST

ARIZONA

Dazzle

Denver, CO

For the past 25 years, Dazzle has melded community and culture with intimate music and arts experiences. A chef-driven menu, specialty cocktails and a finely crafted wine menu round out the evening. The club celebrates everyday life in an inclusive space where Denver audiences hear some of the best jazz and improvised music in the world. Recent acts performing include Christian McBride and Inside Straight, Roberta Gambarini, Eliane Elias, Samara Joy with the Pasquale Grasso Trio and Joel Ross.

dazzledenver.com

The Nash Phoenix, AZ

Named after drummer Lewis Nash, a Phoenix native, this club celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2022, presenting concerts as well as serving as an expansive jazz education facility. Thursdays feature Delphine Cortez and Joel Robin. Weekends feature a mix of great local and national talent.

thenash.org

RAVENSCROFT Scottsdale, AZ

Ravenscroft opened in October 2021, offering two new performance spaces for

jazz in Scottsdale. Jazzbird hosts a variety of regional and national artists every week on Friday nights (September through June). And Ravenscroft Hall is an intimate, 200-seat concert hall showcasing world-renowned performing artists in a remarkable acoustic space. Ravenscroft also hosts performances by local Valley Jazz Cooperative students. Recent performers include Kenny Barron, Billy Childs, Corey Christianson, Tierney Sutton and more.

theravenscroft.com

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

BACH DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY

Half Moon Bay, CA

The Bach presents world-class jazz in an intimate setting. Like having a concert in one's living room, the club includes stunning views of the ocean. Musicians who have played at the Bach include Betty Carter, Bill Evans, Dexter Gordon and McCoy Tyner. It continues to book musicians like Joshua Redman and John Scofield and up-and-coming artists such as Samara Joy.

bachddsoc.org

Keys Jazz Bistro

San Francisco, CA

Simon Rowe, the noted jazz educator and pianist, has turned his attention to presenting jazz as a co-owner of Keys Jazz Bistro, a new entry on the scene that opened in November. The club and its booking philosophy look interesting, with early acts including Mary Stallings and Clairdee with the David Udolf Trio and an Hammond B-3 Organ Summit, Craig Handy with the Simon Rowe Trio and Kenny Washington. This one's being named on potential.

keysjazzbistro.com

Kuumbwa Jazz

Santa Cruz, CA

Kuumbwa Jazz has been celebrating creativity since 1975. From grassroots beginnings, Kuumbwa has grown to present more than 130 concerts annually, as well as year-round music education programs. Its listening-room environment is filled with welcoming character and sets the stage for artists and audiences in shared musical experiences. 2022 artists included Dianne Reeves, Christian McBride, Grace Kelly, Immanuel Wilkins, The Hot Sardines, Artemis, Sons of Kemet, Chris Potter, Marcia Ball and Billy Cobham

kuumbwajazz.org

LOBERO THEATRE

Santa Barbara, CA

Celebrating its 150th anniversary, the Lobero Theatre's Jazz at the Lobero series places the biggest names in jazz into one of the most beautiful small theaters in the nation. The 2023 edition, beginning in February, features Arturo Sandoval, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, a Charles Lloyd (the hometown hero) 85th Birthday Celebration and much more.

lobero.org

YOSHI'S

Oakland, CA

The legendary East Bay music room celebrated 50 years of presenting music in 2022 — a true tip of the cap to its founders, Kaz Kajmura, Hugh "Hiro" Hori and Yoshie Akiba. With a

great Japanese menu and even better music, in January the club hosts the likes of Lalah Hathaway, Najee, Robert Cray, Fred Hersch and esperanza spalding and more.

yoshis.com

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Baked Potato

Studio City, CA

Since 1970, fusion bands and electric groups have called this funky bar home. With music six nights a week, find top-shelf session musicians playing for an appreciative crowd. January's programming includes the Scott Kinsey Group, the Luis Conte Band, Marvin "Smitty" Smith New Standards, Jeff Lorber Fusion and more.

thebakedpotato.com

Catalina Bar & Grill

Los Angeles, CA

This sprawling performance space brings together great music and food in a warm, inviting environment. Legendary for hosting such greats as Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Chick Corea and many others, Catalina's early 2023 lineup includes Peter Cincotti, Roberta Gambarini, Karrin Allyson, Ben Vereen and more. Live music is featured six nights a week.

catalinajazzclub.com

Sam First

Los Angeles, CA

This intimate, modern cocktail bar is within walking distance of baggage claim at LAX and wraps its performance space with a record label and recording studio. Up-and-coming artists from the nearby Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz fill in the week, while big names take weekends. An early 2023 booking includes The George Colligan Trio featuring Anna Meyer. Recent shows have featured Gerald Clayton, the Remy Le Boeuf Quartet and more.

samfirstbar.com

COLORADO

Dazzle Jazz

Denver, CO

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

dazzlejazz.com

OREGON

The 1905

Portland, OR

This venue gets to the point in its branding: "Food. Booze. Jazz." The jazz portion features both local and touring bands, with a lot of straight-ahead acts playing tableside in the dining room.

the1905.org

WASHINGTON

Dimitriou's Jazz Alley

Seattle, WA

For more than 30 years, this magnet for big-name touring jazz acts, especially in the fusion and smooth-jazz veins, has served Seattle with a capacity of 350-plus and balcony seating. Hometown hero Kenny G did a December residency there culminating in a New Year's Eve show. Early 2023 bookings include Yellowjackets, Chris Botti, Fred Hersch and esperanza spalding and more.

jazzalley.com

The Royal Room

Seattle, WA

Located in the Columbia City neighborhood, this funky, cool venue was the brainchild of musician Wayne Horvitz. The warm space hosts educational programs and evening sets by local jazz artists. Mondays feature a jazz jam hosted by trumpeter Thomas Marriott.

theroyalroomseattle.com



Yardbird Suite
EDMONTON jazz SOCIETY

Edmonton, Alberta's home for jazz since 1957
yardbirdsuite.com

INTERNATIONAL



Hilario Duran performs at Yardbird Suite in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

AUSTRIA

Blue Tomato

Vienna

The Blue Tomato offers a breadth of jazz — from traditional to avant garde in an intimate bar. Ken Vandermark and Paal Nilssen-Love as well as Joe McPhee and John Edwards are among recent headliners.

bluetomato.cc

Jazzland

Vienna

Jazzland, the quaint cellar-level club billed as the oldest jazz club in Austria, celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2022 presenting concerts six days a week.

jazzland.at

Porgy & Bess

Vienna

The non-profit organization bills itself as a jazz and music club with a multifaceted program. A favorite with musicians, recent shows have included James Blood Ulmer, John Scofield, Dave Holland and Lizz Wright.

porgy.at

CANADA

Dièse Onze

Montreal

This cozy club is a favorite spot for dedicated jazz fans, and was the recent site of the latest recording by pianist Jean-Michel Pilc. Anchored by the Kim Richardson Trio's vocal jam sessions on Sundays, the club also offers flamenco on Mondays, as well as local and touring musicians.

dieseonze.com

FRANKIE'S JAZZ CLUB

Vancouver

A live jazz hub featuring local, national and international artists, Frankie's serves as Vancouver's home for live jazz and blues. Showcasing up-and-coming musicians and anchored by renowned talent from across the continent, Frankie's offers a dining menu of fresh house made pastas, signature entrées and appetizers. Libations include classic cocktails, local craft beer, and a wine list featuring Italian and BC VQA wines.

frankiesitaliankitchen.ca

The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar

Toronto

With some 60 shows monthly, this musicians' congregating point is the place to catch a host of great Canadian talent.

therex.ca

Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill

Montreal

From midweek jams to weekend headliners featuring Montreal and Canadian talent, as well as touring musicians from the States, Upstairs offers a cool, throwback vibe.

upstairsjazz.com

YARBIRD SUITE

Edmonton

Founded in 1957 and supported by volunteers, the venue presents jazz from the middle of September to the end of June. With 75 concerts a season and a Tuesday night jam session, Yardbird Suite also focuses on music education with its Littlebirds Big Band and Jazz for Kids.

yardbirdsuite.com

CZECH REPUBLIC

AghaRTA Jazz Centrum

Prague

AghaRTA is a basement venue housed in a building dating back to the 14th century. As one of the most popular jazz spots in Prague, this venue/bar/Arta Records label shop hosts local jazz artists nightly and international touring musicians.

agharta.cz

The Jazz Dock

Prague

Hip architecture, high-end meals, great drinks, a view of the Vltava River and concerts by top-shelf artists make this a bucket-list destination. Recent performances include The Bad Plus, Gretchen Parlato, Joe Lovano and Steven Bernstein's Sexmob.

jazzdock.cz

ENGLAND

Cafe OTO

London

Cafe OTO offers space for creative new music and musicians going beyond the

mainstream. Commissions, residencies and concert recordings are part of the programming at this venue.

cafeoto.co.uk

Jazz Cafe

London

With gourmet food and an eclectic array of concerts, Jazz Cafe has seated views upstairs and a downstairs dance floor. Funk and soul bookings share the marquee with the likes of John Cleary and Samora Joy, both early 2023 bookings at the club.

thejazzcafelondon.com

Ronnie Scott's

London

Since 1959, Ronnie Scott's has been celebrating the biggest names in jazz and blues in the heart of London's Soho district. For early 2023, the venue has booked Incognito, Kevin Hayes, The Stacey Brothers Big Band doing Steely Dan and more.

ronniescotts.co.uk

The Vortex

London

This intimate nonprofit establishment features a variety of jazz styles focusing on free-improv. British saxophone titan Evan Parker performs here regularly.

vortexjazz.co.uk

ESTONIA

Philly Joe's Jazz Club

Tallinn

Founded in 2014 to be a jazz incubator, Philly Joe's was selected Club of the Year in 2021 by the Estonian Music Industry Awards. Weekends are packed with Estonian jazz talent.

phillyjoes.com

FINLAND

Storyville

Helsinki

This two-story venue has a piano bar above and a supper club below for four lively musical nights each week.

storyville.fi

FRANCE

Duc Des Lombards

Paris

With weekend late-night jam sessions and series like The New Scene for up-and-coming musicians, Duc Des Lombards features European talent and U.S. artists.

ducdeslombards.fr

Le Caveau de la Huchette

Paris

Since 1946, this "temple of swing" has been a jazz staple in the Latin Quarter. It's home to music seven nights a week.

caveaudelahuchette.fr

New Morning

Paris

Blues, klezmer, funk and disco nights mix

with straightahead and fusion styles at this musical and social hot spot. Early 2023 bookings include a mix of French artists and U.S. tours by the likes of Kenny Barron, John Scofield, José James and more.

newmorning.com

Sunset-Sunside

Paris

Offering music nightly, this club has hosted stars such as pianist Jacky Terrasson and vocalist Rebecca Martin and Larry Grenadier.

sunset-sunside.com

GERMANY

A-Trane

Berlin

Immanuel Wilkins and Jerry Granelli are among the touring artists to play this 30-year-old spot, which serves German and international cuisine.

a-trane.de

BIX Jazzclub

Stuttgart

Mouth-watering food options and live music Tuesday through Saturday make this 13-year-old space pop.

bix-stuttgart.de

Ella & Louis Jazz Club

Mannheim

This club is a tastefully furnished jazz venue in downtown Mannheim. Since 2018, it has presented four concerts weekly, mixing national, international and local artists.

ellalouis.de

JAZZCLUB UNTERFAHRT

Munich

Jazzclub Unterfahrt presents adventurous contemporary jazz from the international, European and national jazz scenes geared for attentive lovers of forward-thinking music. Founded in 1978, the club has hosted Julian Lage, Gilad Hekselman, James Brandon Lewis, Theo Croker and more.

unterfahrt.de

Jazz im Prinz Karl

Tübingen

The 45-year-old, membership-driven institution recently has presented Miguel Zenón & Luis Perdomo and Chris Potter.

jipk.net

Jazzkeller

Frankfurt

Jazzkeller is another subterranean beauty with great acoustics and the feel of old-school, intimate performances.

jazzkeller.com

ISRAEL

Beit Haamudim

Tel Aviv

Beit Haamudim hosts the best of Israeli's jazz scene seven days a week.

facebook.com/BeitHaamudim

ITALY

Alexanderplatz

Rome

Italy's premier jazz club was refurbished a few years back and continues to emphasize

small-group concerts in classic and modern styles. Recent performances have Rick Marguitza with the Marcello di Leonardo Trio.

alexanderplatzjazz.com

JAPAN

Body & Soul

Tokyo

Since 1974, this venue — which seats about 50 — has presented high-quality Japanese jazz artists.

bodyandsoul.co.jp

Shinjuku Pit Inn

Tokyo

Known for showcasing domestic artists, this 56-year-old venue (30 years in its current location) is a revered listening room.

pit-inn.com

MEXICO

Zinco Jazz Club

Mexico City

With a great menu and intimate, modern decor, this underground club has earned a reputation for hipness.

zincojazz.com

THE NETHERLANDS

Bimhuis

Amsterdam

This internationally acclaimed concert hall boasts a 48-year history and more than 300 concerts annually by the likes of Transylvanian pianist Lucian Ban and American vocalist Becca Stevens. Early 2023 shows include the Dave Holland Trio and Indian violinist Arun Ramamurthy Trio.

bimhuis.com

NORWAY

Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene

Oslo

Housed in a stylish setting, Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene can accommodate 300 people. Norway's vibrant jazz scene is represented here, as are touring musicians like the trio of Craig Taborn, Tomeka Reid and Ches Smith.

nasjonaljazzscene.no/en

PORTUGAL

HOT CLUBE DE PORTUGAL

Lisbon

Hot Clube has been presenting live jazz since 1948. With the mission of both being a window for the Portuguese jazz scene, and the preferred stage for touring bands, it has been recognized as one of the best jazz clubs in Europe. Benny Golson, Joe Lovano, Eddie Henderson, Miguel Zenón, Ethan Iverson, Mark Turner, Sheila Jordan and many others have played there.

hcp.pt

RUSSIA

Igor Butman Jazz Club

Moscow/St. Petersburg

While relations with Russia make it impossible to travel there at this time, famed saxophonist Igor Butman's two clubs present Russian artists as well as international touring acts.

butmanclub.ru

SCOTLAND

The Jazz Bar

Edinburgh

The Jazz Bar was founded in 2005 showcasing world-class, multi-genre live music in a cool setting. Harnessing Edinburgh's kaleidoscopic musical talent, the club offers daily live gigs.

thejazzbar.co.uk

SENEGAL

La Cave du Djoloff

Dakar

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

hoteldjoloff.fr

SPAIN

Jamboree

Barcelona

This classic club has hosted the greats since 1960 — from Duke Ellington and Ornette Coleman to Barcelona native son Jorge Rossy.

jamboreejazz.com

SWEDEN

Fasching

Stockholm

Founded in 1977, Fasching is a hybrid concert venue/restaurant/bar/nightclub. Jazz, dance and folk artists are all presented, including the likes of Lee Fields, Stacey Kent and Hannes Bench.

fasching.se

SWITZERLAND

Marian's Jazz Room

Bern

This 130-capacity, 30-year-old room is open from September through May. Known for great acoustics its 2023 jazz festival, running from March 21-May 23, features residencies by Jane Bunnett and Maqueque, the Bill Charlap Trio and the James Morrison Quartet, to name a few.

mariansjazzroom.ch

TURKEY

NARDIS JAZZ CLUB

Istanbul

Founded in 2002 and housed in a historic building and seating 120 people, Nardis presents mostly local musicians, two sets a night, Monday through Saturday. Recent touring artists have included Willie Jones III, Seamus Blake and the Gary Smulyan & Ralph Moore Encounter Quintet.

nardisjazz.com

The Badau

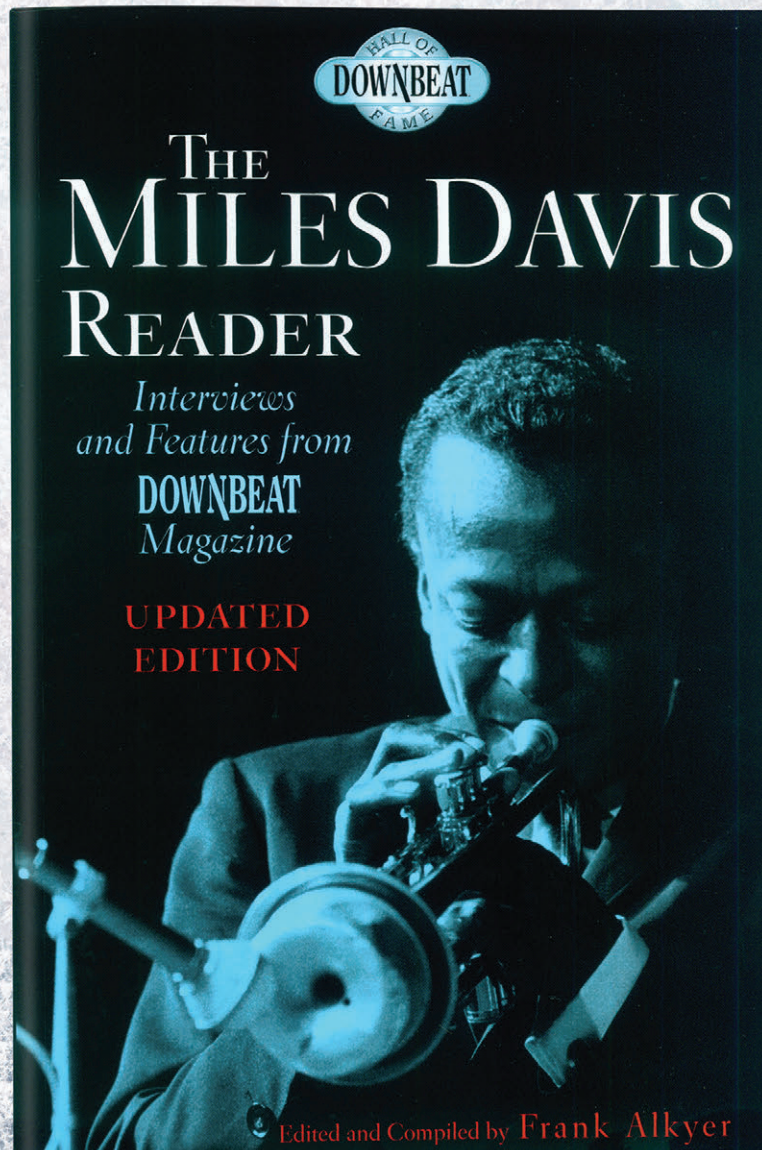
Istanbul

The foundations of The Badau, Turkey's only gastro-jazz club, were laid in 2015 as a small chef's kitchen and jazz club in Istanbul by Eren Noyan, owner, chef and a jazz singer. The room has become home to many local musicians as well as international acts passing through the region.

instagram.com/thebadau.istanbul

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Reviews

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



The latest incarnation of The Bad Plus includes saxophonist/clarinetist Chris Speed (left), guitarist Ben Monder, drummer Dave King and bassist Reid Anderson.

The Bad Plus *The Bad Plus*

EDITION

★★★

The Bad Plus hits the reset button. It's the second eponymously titled entry in the group's 20-plus-year history. And with good reason. The album introduces yet another new lineup that expands from its long-established trio format. The new configuration also features no piano — a risky gambit considering that for the longest the piano was the Bad Plus' dominant voice.

Instead of recruiting someone to take the piano chair once occupied by founding member Ethan Iverson and later Orrin Evans, the remaining Bad Plus founders — bassist Reid Anderson and drummer David King — opted for guitarist Ben Monder and saxophonist and clarinetist Chris Speed. The new members not only widen the combo's harmonic palette, they

rejuvenate the band's volatile chemistry, which can explode into alt-rock mayhem or simmer down into gusty, compelling music, marked by succinct pop melodicism.

Reid's thick, arboraceous bass line initiates the band's new chapter with his medium-tempo composition, "Motivations II." He's soon joined by King's sinewy drum accompaniment, Monder's airy chordal voices, and Speed's pensive, riff-oriented tenor saxophone melody. The opening cut conveys a sense of exploring new sonic terrain armed with a weathered soul and renewed spirit.

And the spirits certainly come more alive on the proceeding cut, "Sun Wall," a jolting piece composed by King that finds the new members pairing up on an oblique melody that is soon buoyed briefly by a harmolodic rhythmic vibrancy. The song also allows Monder to unleash a snarling electric guitar improvisation, brimming with joyous melodic passages and scabrous textures. Speed follows Monder's

lead by spitting an equally invigorating solo that soars above a hammering alt-rock vamp.

The adventuresome vibe continues on the pulverizing "Not Even Close To Far Off," the knotty "Sick Fire" and the howling "Stygian Pools." All of the tunes contain a melodic stickiness and a rhythmic undertow that induces agreeable head-nodding, even if the ironic humor of the band's yesteryears may be missed by some diehard fans.

The Bad Plus is more of a master play than a masterpiece. After emerging 23 years ago, The band has since become a 21st century jazz institution. But it's one in which its original DNA remains intact, regardless of who enters.

—John Murphy

The Bad Plus: *Motivations II*; *Sun Wall*; *Not Even Close To Far Off*; *You Won't See Me Before I Come Back*; *Sick Fire*; *Stygian Pools*; *The Bright Future*; *The Dandy*. (42:47)

Personnel: Reid Anderson, bass; David King, drums; Chris Speed, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Ben Monder, guitar.

Ordering info: editionrecords.com



Dezron Douglas *Atalaya*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM

★★★★

The electric unpredictability of the live room has governed much of bassist Dezron Douglas' recent work. Most notably, 2020's album with his partner harpist Brandee Younger, *Force Majeure*, saw the duo channel the intensity of COVID-19 isolation into a suite of luscious and lyrical melodic improvisations — producing intimacy from a forced proximity.

On his latest album, Douglas is freed from the confines of home recording and brought

back into the studio with a formidable quartet. Fizzing with an energetic back-and-forth, the result is 10 tightly crafted compositions, containing a depth of complexity within their brief runtimes.

The opening title track sets the tone, progressing from a syncopated drum beat into a deep swing, as saxophonist Emilio Modeste plays through a keening, high-register melody. As the listener settles into the groove, it suddenly breaks apart into a double-time cacophony of cymbal textures and stabs on the piano, before finding stability once more to close.

This veering between a confident, full band swing and the freedom of competing, individual expression continues throughout the album, making for an often unexpected listening experience. On “Coyoacán,” for instance, drummer Joe Dyson Jr.'s cascading groove switches into an almost triple-time feel, pushing to the point of becoming subsumed with its own pace, while highlight “More Coffee Please” sees Douglas providing a punchy foundation as Modeste gives voice to a soaring solo that tests the bounds of the rhythm section's solidity.

—Ammar Kalia

Atalaya: Atalaya; Rosé; Coyoacán; Luna Moth; Weeping Birch; Jones Beach; More Coffee Please; J Bird; Octopus; Foligno. (46:14)
Personnel: Dezron Douglas, bass; George Burton, piano and rhodes; Joe Dyson Jr., drums; Emilio Modeste, saxophones; Melvis Santa, vocals (5).

Ordering info: intlanthem.bandcamp.com

Ramsey Lewis *The Beatles Songbook*

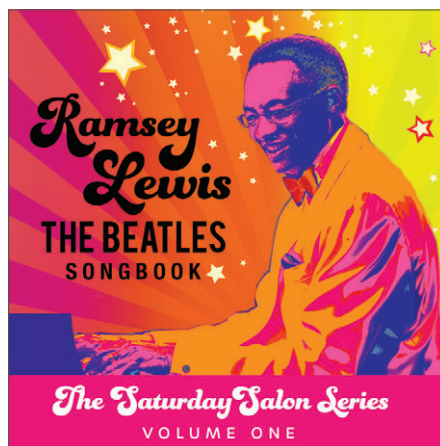
STEELE

★

The piano sounds like it might've been in the next room from the microphone, and it seems like Ramsey Lewis played these 12 Lennon and McCartney compositions through only once. That amounts to a mediocre, misleading send-off to the exceptional pianist, who died last September.

Rather than dwell on how abysmal the recording technique is — gentle compositions like “The Long And Winding Road” and “Yesterday” really suffer from the harsh sonics — one might look for sparks of joy as Lewis works his way through these masterful compositions.

On “Blackbird,” a song Paul McCartney acknowledges was partly inspired by racial tensions in the U.S., Lewis discovers — and enriches — a gospel strain he finds in the song's DNA. During “Let It Be,” you can hear the fun he's having ornamenting the melody, and he has a joyful just-us-musicians approach to deconstructing “Here, There And Everywhere.” He discovers particular riches within McCartney's “And I Love Her,” and you can hear him laughing to himself as tries to find his way into the song's chordal structure. He even finds a way



to bring some personality to “A Hard Day's Night,” injecting a barrelhouse feel to his piano accompaniment.

If there's a positive side to *The Beatles Songbook*, it's the combination of wit and imagination Lewis brings to exploring the compositional bones of tunes he must've played many times.

—James Hale

The Beatles Songbook: Here, There And Everywhere; And I Love Her; Hey Jude; Blackbird; Imagine; A Hard Day's Night; Yesterday; Rocky Raccoon; Michelle; Golden Slumbers; The Long And Winding Road; Let It Be. (36:59)
Personnel: Ramsey Lewis, piano.

Ordering info: ramseylewis.com



Charles Lloyd *Trios-Sacred Thread*

BLUE NOTE

★★½

This is the third of Charles Lloyd's cycle of three trio albums for Blue Note, which is marketing them individually and as a deluxe three-LP box set for the more prosperous post-holiday shoppers. If I were discussing earlier volumes — say, *Trios: Chapel* with Bill Frizel and its beautiful revisitations “Blood Count” and “Dorotea's Studio” — I would be in a more generous mood. Unfortunately, the last seems to be the least of the litter.

Perhaps because it is most dependent on what Lloyd calls “Mother India,” a sensibility that has more in common with the Gregorian chant than the down-to-earth bristle of jazz. Although Lloyd has long straddled both worlds, world music cocktails often seem awkward, inspired more by ideological discontent over Western materialism than musical rapport. Here the music oozes in a meditative piety, captive to an elusive spirituality that leaves one hungry for a touch of sin. It is a scant substitute for the uplifting drive of jazz, where the gods are on the bandstand, not in one's afterlife.

Between the serenity of “Desolation Sound” and the drone of “The Blessing,” Lloyd's tenor is a light, wispy but infrequent voice. He is absent entirely on “Guman,” where Julian Lage adds fills to Zakir Hussain's rather strangled vocal chant. “Nachekita's Lament” languishes in another vocal mantra, and only springs to life as Lloyd and Lage engage on flute and guitar. Lloyd indulges in a short, winding cadenza on “Saraswati,” using a Turkish tarogato. But it takes us nowhere and ends by simply stopping. According to the notes, the name references a Hindu goddess. She would seem to deserve more.

—John McDonough

Trios-Sacred Thread: Desolation Sound; Guman; Nachekita's Lament; Saraswati; Kuti; Tales Of Rumi; The Blessing. (38:53)

Personnel: Charles Lloyd, tenor saxophone; Julian Lage, guitar; Zakir Hussain, percussion.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

The Hot Box

Critics	John Murph	Ammar Kalia	James Hale	John McDonough
The Bad Plus <i>The Bad Plus</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★
Dezron Douglas <i>Atalaya</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
Ramsey Lewis <i>The Beatles Songbook</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★	★★★★½
Charles Lloyd <i>Trios—Sacred Thread</i>	★★★	★★★★	★★	★★½

Critics' Comments

The Bad Plus, *The Bad Plus*

With saxophonist Chris Speed and guitarist Ben Monder expanding the ranks of The Bad Plus, following the departure of pianist Orrin Evans, their quartet formation still produces arresting compositions, from the psychedelic distortions of "Not Even Close To Far Off" to the free jazz improvisations of "Sick Fire." It's largely hard-hitting and the album could benefit from exploring tender moments like "Stygian Pools" further. —Ammar Kalia

Anderson and King seem to have found the ideal partners to rejuvenate the formula, while fresh adds Monder and Speed sound re-energized, too. New colors; same canvas. —James Hale

Mellow or wild, this new quartet finds considerable balance and texture in the rhythmic rigor of King and Anderson. I wish I could say the composing matches the collectivity. But this is progressive rock where hooks masquerade as melodies. —John McDonough

Dezron Douglas, *Atalaya*

Solid modern jazz that builds upon the spiritual-jazz renaissance zeitgeist without relying on threadbare clichés. —John Murph

Perhaps album sequencing is passé. It seems to be here, based on how scattershot this sounds. Although there's some very engaging playing, it just doesn't appear to have much connective tissue. —James Hale

Douglas has something for everyone in this mosaic of post-war modernism, from the swagger of bop to a few free-jazz firecrackers. Despite the ups ("Bird") and downs ("Jones Beach"), Modeste threads it together with journeyman tenor and soprano command. —John McDonough

Ramsey Lewis, *The Beatles Songbook*

Far from essential, but nevertheless rewarding. —John Murph

The Beatles back-catalog is fruitful inspiration for the late Lewis' first solo record. Bluesy licks and pensive voicings are scattered throughout the timeless melodies of tracks like "Hey Jude" and "Yesterday." —Ammar Kalia

Jazz feel with the clarity of pop. Lewis' interprets and concertizes a beloved catalog with a decorative, contrapuntal, percussive, often bluesy formality. No melody slips from sight or becomes a point of departure. Enjoyable comfort listening. —John McDonough

Charles Lloyd, *Trios—Sacred Thread*

Gorgeous heartfelt music, brimming with improvisational intricacy that could still nevertheless use a strong dose of seething ugly beauty. —John Murph

Lloyd's "trio of trios" series concludes with a gorgeously delicate, melody-forward offering featuring Julian Lage and Zakir Hussain. While Lloyd and Lage interweave effortlessly with melodic lines on saxophone and guitar, it is Hussain's vocal and tabla performance that steals the show, providing warm, enveloping melody on tracks like "Guman" and "Kuti." —Ammar Kalia

The third of Lloyd's trio showcases has some compelling moments, but they are only moments. Overall, it lacks focus and a sense of direction. And, at a mere 39 minutes it barely makes a ripple. —James Hale

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Paul de Barros, Downbeat Magazine

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George Colligan *King's Dream*

PJCE

★★★★★

Pianist George Colligan's fifth album as a leader is a balm for turbulent times. No matter the style, the 11 tracks on *King's Dream* are soothing but never fatuous. Bracketed by the aspirational "Clearing The Mind" and the magisterial "Finally A Rainbow," these Colligan originals help reclaim the landscape of hope.

The centerpiece is the title track, a roiling, joyous homage to Martin Luther King Jr. It's a power surge unto itself, its foundation a repeti-

tive, ascending motif that conjures the marches King led in times not so different from our own.

What makes this album a satisfying whole is Colligan's touch. He is forceful but not heavy-handed, impressive but not inflated. His piano prances and swoops on the Monkish, Tristanoesque "Doom Sandwich" and waxes minimalist on "Weightless, Rising Towards The Sun," his keyboard stylings all sweep and hush.

"Liam's Lament" presents several moods, blending dirge and jig before it ends on a high, ringing note. "Wishing For Good Things To Happen" segues perfectly into "Finally A Rainbow," the multifaceted tune that ends this thoughtful album. Each track has its own personality.

The production is excellent, and the sequencing, blending fresh originals with older ones, feels inevitable.

Colligan grew up in Columbia, Maryland, a planned city with racial harmony among its goals. He dedicates *King's Dream* "to those who believe in, as drummer Al Foster would say, 'Peace, Love, and Jazz.'" May this help make that dream come true.

—Carlo Wolff

King's Dream: Clearing The Mind; Change; Daddy Go Bye Bye; Doom Sandwich; Golden Years; Blues For Dwayne Burno; King's Dream; Weightless, Rising Towards The Sun; Liam's Lament; Wishing For Good Things To Happen; Finally, A Rainbow. (66:47)

Personnel: George Colligan, piano.

Ordering info: pjce.bandcamp.com



Laszlo Gardony *Close Connection*

SUNNYSIDE

★★★★★

Béla Bartók believed that folk melodies, far from being slipshod or "primitive," were the highest expression of musical economy. His countryman and musical descendant — Laszlo Gardony studied at the Bartók Conservatory in Budapest — has long been inspired by them and they form the basis hereof the opening "Irrepressible" and the improvised "Cold Earth." But he's boldly blending them with influences that might seem diametrically opposite, the sometimes sententious prog rock of his youth.

Not many jazz musicians namecheck Emerson, Lake & Palmer or, bless us all, Atomic Rooster these days. One senses quickly that it's the undoubted energy of those bands and not the Persian carpets and towering drum risers that he finds inspiring.

Close Connection could hardly be better named. Gardony has been recording for Sunnyside for 30 years and has been working with John Lockwood and Yoron Israel since the turn of the millennium. Bill Evans always wanted to keep a trio together for a minimum of three years, but rarely managed it. The logic presumably was that artistic relationships needed to mature through steady work and yet a listen back to this trio's *Ever Before Ever After* from 2003 suggests that the chemistry was immediate rather than gradual. After a couple of bold solo ventures, including the frankly bonkers but delightful *La Marseillaise*, Gardony had reconvened the group and basically handed them a round-the-world ticket, taking in African rhythms on the lovely "Savanna Sunrise" and contrasting "Everybody Needs A Home" to New Orleans and Harlem.

—Brian Morton

Close Connection: Irrepressible; O Solo Mio; Sweet Thoughts; Cedar Tree Dance; All That Remains; Times Of Discord; Savanna Sunrise; Walking In Silence; Everybody Needs A Home; Hopeful Vision; Night Run; Cold Earth. (69:34)

Personnel: Laszlo Gardony, piano; John Lockwood, bass; Yoron Israel, drums, kalimba.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band *Live From The Archives*

STONER HILL

★★★★★

For those who could not be around to see Brian Blade & the Fellowship Band in the early 2000s, *Live From The Archives* is a gift. It perhaps may not always be true that bands are rarely ever again what they were at the moments of their birth. But it feels true here.

This record is truly a time capsule. Recorded two years after the ensemble's formation at Washington, D.C.'s famed Blues Alley, the date is filled with compositions from Perceptual released two months earlier.

Alongside the consistently inviting play and compositional brilliance of Blade and Jon Cowherd, Kurt Rosenwinkel is riveting. And what Melvin Butler and Myron Walden contribute here is almost dreamlike.

Formed in 1997, The Fellowship Band sprung from Blade and Cowherd meeting in the late 1980s while they were music students at Loyola University in New Orleans.

The group had produced five studio albums before *Live From The Archives*, thankfully, came to light. The album fits perfectly into the collection and even fills in some gaps between



Brian Blade Fellowship (1997) and *Body And Shadow* (2017).

Nostalgia is often a trap, concealing the fact the reality that there was nothing or little of value there. But if anyone is nostalgic about hearing The Fellowship Band back in those days, I imagine that they too will discover that this album is a gift.

—Joshua Myers

Live From The Archives: Announcement And Introduction; The Fall Of Summer; Perceptual; Improvisation #1; Variations Of A Bloodline; Improvisation #2; Patron Saint Of Girls; Improvisation #3; Introduction To Return Of The Prodigal Son; Return Of The Prodigal Son; Steadfast. (71:36)

Personnel: Brian Blade, drums; Melvin Butler, tenor and soprano saxophone; Jon Cowherd, piano; Christopher Thomas, bass; Myron Walden, alto saxophone and bass clarinet; Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar.

Ordering info: brianblade.com



Song Yi Jeon/ Vinicius Gomes

Home

GREENLEAF MUSIC

★★★★½

On “Eleven Houses,” the opening track of *Home*, an altogether luminous and deeply musical collaboration between vocalist Song Yi Jeon and guitarist Vinicius Gomes, the varied and evolving terrain of the tune hints at the beauties and challenges to come on the album. On the Gomes original, a sweet melody line, underscored by Gomes’ shifting harmonic base, segues into an improvisatory free zone

before locking into an intricate and serpentine unison line, returning to the resolving theme, with a gentle smile.

Consider the song a prelude to a musical feast.

Home, released on Dave Douglas’ Greenleaf Music label, glows from within and impresses on multiple levels. A powerful empathetic link binds the Brazilian-born, New York-based Gomes and Korean, Swiss-based vocalist Jeon — a virtuoso blessed with glorious tone and phrasing — as they explore a near-perfect example of a duet project. Highlights among original material includes Gomes’ impressionistic “Flow” and Jeon’s introspective “Expecting Spring.” These weave naturally with such selective covers as Keith Jarrett’s ballad “Prism.”

Gomes switches from the standard Brazilian tool of fingerpicked classical guitar to pick-driven fat-body electric guitar only once, for a captivating version of “A Timeless Place,” veteran singer Norma Winstone’s lyrical version of Jimmy Rowle’s moving and intricate classic “The Peacocks.” Jeon’s radiant takes one of the song’s finest interpretations to date.

—Josef Woodard

Home: Eleven Houses; Dancing Stars; Prism; Expecting Spring; Albany; Milonga Gris; A Lonesome Place; A Timeless Place; Nilopolitano. (49:27)

Personnel: Song Yi Jeon, voice; Vinicius Gomes, acoustic and electric guitar.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com

Patricia Brennan

More Touch

PYROCLASTIC

★★★★½

More Touch is Patricia Brennan’s second solo album, and her first as a bandleader. It advances her individual approaches to both mallet instrumental technique and composition.

A veteran of work with Michael Formanek, John Hollenbeck, Vijay Iyer, and Mary Halvorson, Brennan plays both vibraphone and marimba. Her use of effects pedals imbues her playing with a slippery quality that bears a striking tonal similarity to Halvorson’s guitar sound. Brennan twists notes into bent and flickering forms. As heard on during the onrushing opening and midsession meltdown of “El Nuahalli (The Shadow Soul),” this can be woozily psychedelic, but it’s not a mere novelty. Rather, Brennan’s use of technology extends the sound of her vibes beyond the wave-like decay one usually associates with the instrument, placing both clarity and disorientation within her compositional reach.

The percussion-heavy configuration of Brennan’s quartet emulates Cuban and Mexican precedents, which she learned firsthand growing up in Veracruz, Mexico. But the episodic structures, understated melodies and



windows for improvisation within her compositions draw more from her classical training and jazz practice; even when she uses a Cuban rhythm as the foundation of “Square Bimagic,” her music does not sound particularly folkloric. Rather, the vibes and bass turn a son vamp into a platform for exchanges between drums and hand drums that stray far from that idiom.

—Bill Meyer

More Touch: Unquiet Respect; More Touch; Space For Hour; El Nahualli (The Shadow Soul); The Woman Who Weeps; Square Bimagic; Convergences; Robbin; Szigia (Syzygy); And There Was Light. (70:45)

Personnel: Patricia Brennan, vibraphone with electronics, marimba; Kim Cass, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums; Mauricio Herrera, percussion.

Ordering info: patriciabrennanpyroclastic.bandcamp.com



Nicholas Payton

The Couch Sessions

SMOKE SESSIONS

★★★★½

Nicholas Payton emerges from the pandemic blur with creative energy to spare and attributes we’ve come to expect; chops and taste as one of his generation’s finer trumpeters, gestures of contextual/semantical rebellion and ample respect for titans in the jazz pantheon. (A caveat: Payton maintains his stern advocacy against the j-word, as reminded by a new version of his “Jazz Is A Four-Letter Word.”)

Payton literally checks in with heroes, flying in interwoven spoken-word testimonials from such artists as Geri Allen, Keith Jarrett, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Max Roach. From the purely musical angle, *The Couch Sessions* boasts the potent rhythm section of Buster Williams and Lenny White on bass and drums, with Payton eloquently completing the sonic canvas on keyboards and horn.

Although the smoky voice of Miles Davis is missing here, his presence and influence is embedded in multiple ways, not limited to the potent imprint of Davis’ touch and attitude on the horn.

Payton draws attention to Davis’ landmark mid-’60s quintet, with commentaries from Shorter and Hancock. Musically, Payton serves up affectionate, personalized takes on classic from Davis’ undervalued gem of an album *Nefertiti*, Shorter’s “Pinocchio” and a groove/Rhodes-lined redux of “Fall,” as well as Hancock’s title cut from *The Sorcerer*, in fervent, full swing.

Payton also tips his respectful hat to important women in jazz who have passed in recent years, framing the sequence: Geri Allen’s “Feed The Fire” opens the set, closing with with “From A Flicker To A Flame.”

—Josef Woodard

The Couch Sessions: Feed The Fire; Bust-a-Move; Blossom; Pinocchio; His Name Is Lenny; Bleek’s Blues; Along Came Betty; Fall; Cristina; The Sorcerer; Jazz Is A Four-Letter Word; From A Flicker To A Flame ... (for Meghan Stabile). (1:14:11)

Personnel: Nicholas Payton, trumpet, piano, Rhodes, clavinet; Buster Williams, bass; Lenny White, drums.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com

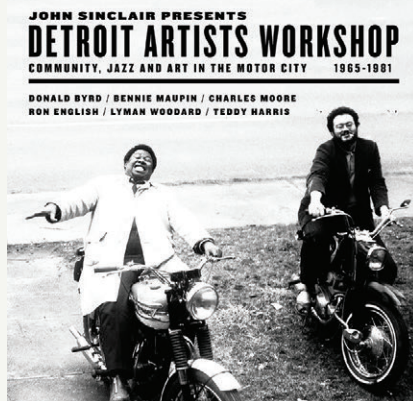
Old, but Stylistically Current

Different though they are, the five albums in this grab-bag of four-decades-old music sound stylistically current today. Each aspires to jazz-level expressivity and creativity in the moment; mastery, exploitation and reconsideration of traditions; appeal through rhythmic propulsion and melodic imagination. Note: Tastes may account to some extent for one's measure of their success.

Best news first: the **Jimi Hendrix Experience's** 80-minute concert at the 17,000-seat Los Angeles Forum from April 1969 is thrilling, terrifically produced and informatively packaged. **The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Los Angeles Forum, April 26, 1969 (Sony Legacy; ★★★★★)** is a splendid introduction for anyone innocent of Hendrix as an unparalleled performer, catnip for those of us touched back then by his incandescent fire. The guitarist is simply inspired, whipping off lyrical, aching, far-reaching runs with a luscious amplified tone and vocabulary as distinctive, rich and free as any jazz icon's. He fearlessly explores free-improv sound improv without losing the beat. He's deeply rooted in blues, has unfailingly with-it wit, and is uniquely gifted — beyond B.B. King or Robert Johnson — at singing while playing, amazing whether unaccompanied (check out "Red House") or locking in at highest pitch with drummer Mitch Mitchell (rock's best drummer) and electric bassist Noel Redding. Besides their hits from *Are You Experienced?* and *Axis Bold As Love*, the trio slays with previously unreleased material — "Tax Free" (a 16-minute jam), "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," Cream's "Sunshine Of Your Love" and "The Star Spangled Banner," four months before his era-defining rendition at Woodstock. Disclosure: I caught the Experience eight days later in Syracuse. This album time-travels.

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Less fulfilling: the **Oscar Peterson Trio's** **On A Clear Day (Mack Avenue; ★★★)** from Zurich in 1971 celebrates the brisk virtuosity of this pianist, 20 years into his career, more than his emotional investment in material or audience. Remarkable dexterity at break-neck speed is this album's hallmark, as bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen for the first time backs the man he'd continue with for 15 years (Louis Hayes, by then drumming with Peterson for six years, is deft, understated). Except for "Soft Winds," the eight tracks (average length: 8 minutes) are uptempo romps regaling in the pianist's superfast single-note runs, left hand independence, big chords and fanciful embellishments. But should "Younger Than Springtime" sound like "Mack the Knife"? Peterson's skills remain dazzling, but his early trios with interactive guitarists are still



more fun.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

With Peterson in the mid-'50s (after Barney Kessel), guitarist **Herb Ellis** earned accolades for his relaxed, bluesy lyricism. The spikier guitarist Remo Palmieri (aka Palmieri) was a first-generation bebopper who opted for mundane studio work until 1978, when Ellis brought him to Concord Records for **Wild-flower (Real Gone; ★★★½)**, reissued here as limited-edition vinyl. Contributive bassist George Duvivier and drummer Ron Traxler support the duetting plectrarians throughout a pleasantly swinging, autumnal program. A lovely "Stardust," touching "Foolish Heart," and the less frequently heard "Close Your Eyes" are highlights of the program's easy compatibility.

Ordering info: realgonemusic.com

As influenced by Hendrix (d. Sept. 1970) and Miles Davis, among others, the '70s are better remembered for hotter jams. Riding the fusion crest, well-established Detroit-bred hard-bop trumpeter **Donald Byrd**, whose instincts had proved prescient with *A New Perspective*, his 1963 gospel-jazz hybrid, again struck gold fronting a collective of Howard University students. Byrd's Blackbyrds had a stellar night together as a tentet at the 1972 Montreux fest. The Mizell Brothers (Larry, synths; Fonce, trumpet/vocals); keyboardist Kevin Toney; saxophonists Nathan Davis and Allan Barnes; electric guitarist Barney Perry; bassist Henry Franklin; drummer Keith Killgo, and percussionist Ray Armando jam loosely, brightly. Like Miles and Freddie Hubbard, Byrd used electronics instruments, hooks, ostinatos, vamps, soul beats, pop airs (Stevie Wonder's "You've Got It Bad, Girl") and proto-rap chanting to frame his high-flying solos. This recording, **Live-Black Byrd (Blue Note; ★★★★★)**, never before out, is a fine discovery.

Byrd also blows his themes "Christo Redentor" and "Black Jack."

DB

Ordering info: strut.bandcamp.com



StarkLinnemann Trio *Transcending Liszt, Vol. 1*

UCM

★★★★

The StarkLinnemann Trio, consisting of pianist Paul Stark, drummer-percussionist Jonas Linnemann and bassist Maciej Domaradzki, was founded in 2012 with the goal of taking classical pieces and transforming them into modern jazz explorations. They had previously recorded two volumes titled *Transcending Beethoven*.

Franz Liszt (1811-'86), in addition to being one of the most significant classical composers of the 1800s, was a renowned virtuoso pianist who it was reported sometimes added subtle improvisations to his performances. For *Transcending Liszt, Vol. 1*, the trio performs their new versions of four of Liszt's works, with the first two numbers being rearranged by Linnemann, while Stark was responsible for the other two reinventions. Rather than just swing the main melody of each piece, the trio digs into several sections of each work, forming four lengthy suites that clock in between 10:48 and, in two cases, nearly 24 minutes apiece.

The main theme of the opening selection, "Liebestraum," was a minor hit for Tommy Dorsey in 1937, highlighted by a heated Bunny Berigan trumpet solo. Listening to that version first can be helpful in finding the melody in this new version which has the theme played in abstract form with different chords. It evolves from a thoughtful ballad into a fast and furious romp.

"Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2," which normally can be enjoyed as a deliriously joyful piano exercise, in this rendition utilizes Domaradzki's bowed bass in its opening part, has Stark's piano sounding a bit like McCoy Tyner and early Herbie Hancock.

—Scott Yanow

Transcending Liszt, Vol. 1: Liebestraum; Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2; Ave Maria; Valée d'Obermann. (74:10)

Personnel: Paul Stark, piano; Maciej Domaradzki, bass; Jonas Linnemann, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: ucm-records.com



Monty Alexander *The Montreux Years*

BMG

★★★★★

Pianist/composer Monty Alexander's exceedingly splendid *The Montreux Years* draws from four different recording dates between 1993 and 2016. He opens this anthology of remarkable moments with "The Serpent," as if to showcase and introduce the various musical impulses of his extensive repertoire. At once you realize the unbroken brilliance that permeates his performances, how easily he shifts in moods, and tones from major to minor.

Jeff Parker *Mondays At The Enfield Tennis Academy*

EREMITE

★★★★★

Here's a record that ought to make you go all Hemingway and reject abstract words, vacuous concepts of musical value and critical "importance," furrowed discussion of artistic "development" in fact, except names, dates, places, personnel and timings. Jeff Parker's group turns up, switches on and plays. Comes again another night and plays some more. And then again, with no impression of mere routine, but no special-occasion whooping, either. Following on the heels of his first ever solo record, *Slight Freedom*, which came out on Eremita last year, it's even more homestyle and direct for being made in company with others who share his quietly individual sound-world.

It's not exactly themeless improvisation but nor is it abstract jamming. As on the solo record, Parker can imply a bossa nova rhythm, or something closer to reggae, and then an echo of all those Tal Farlow records on Verve that had more or less the same title but not a drably repeated lick among them, and then maybe it's more like Sonny Sharrock in reflective mode. Fact is, no one sounds quite like Jeff Parker and

Nat Adderley's "Work Song" is a tantalizing plateau of melody and harmony for any creative musician, and Alexander invokes several forms of labor, mimicking Oscar Brown Jr.'s lyrics, in one long and lilting phrase he strikes the keys like a delicate typist and then suddenly in a barrage of heavy chords, like breaking rocks on a chain gang. If it were not for his enthralling homages to Bob Marley on "No Woman No Cry/Get Up Stand Up (Medley)" and to the renowned Trinidadian man of pan Leonard "Boogsie" Sharpe's "Crying," his interpretation of Adderley's classic could well be the hallmark of this album.

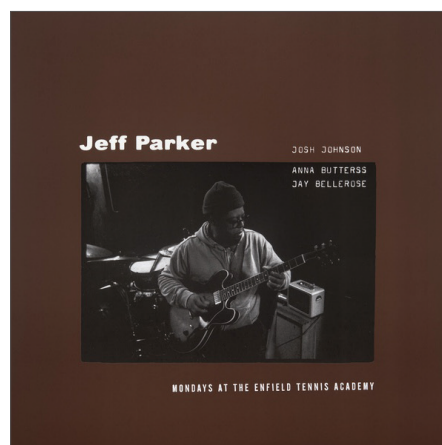
This doesn't mean that "Night Mist Blues" falls short of Alexander's impeccable standards. In fact, in its slow, deliberative approach listeners are given an opportunity to meditate on each carefully selected note that when accompanied by bassist Hassan Shakur plunges into an even deeper poignancy of the blues.

—Herb Boyd

The Montreux Years: The Serpent; Work Song; Hurricane Come and Gone; Night Mist Blues; Linstead Market; Crying; No Woman No Cry/Get Up Stand Up (Medley); Renewal; A Nod To Bob. (84:77)

Personnel: Monty Alexander, piano; Robert Thomas Jr., body percussion (1, 6, 9); Rolando Wilson, drums (1, 6, 9); Ernest Ranglin, guitar (1, 6, 9); Robert Angus, guitar (1, 6, 9); Dwight Dawes, keyboards (1, 6, 9); Hassan Shakur, bass (2–4, 7); Jason Brown, drums (2, 3); Karl Wright, drums and percussion (2–4, 7); Leon Duncan, electric bass (2–4); Andy Bassford, guitar (2–4, 7); Ron Blake, saxophone (2, 3); Obed Calvaire, drums (4, 7); Ira Coleman, bass (5); Ed Thigpen (5); Carlton Messam, bass (6, 9).

Ordering info: montreuxjazzshop.com



there is no single abstract noun or generic label that will do for him. He's completely sui generis.

A wise man once said that we put too much emphasis on "works," artistic creations that became cultural fetish objects and icons, and not enough on "work" as an honorable process and one of the things that makes us truly human. These extraordinary sides document a man at work, and it's a privilege to be able to witness it.

—Brian Morton

Mondays At The Enfield Tennis Academy: 2019-07-08 I; 2019-07-08 II; 2019-05-19; 2021-04-28. (89:40)

Personnel: Josh Johnson, alto saxophone; Jeff Parker, electric guitar; Anna Butterss, bass; Jay Bellerose, drums.

Ordering info: eremite.com



Kris Allen *June*

TRUTH REVOLUTION

★★★★½

Subtlety, suppleness and a sense of urgency immediately strike the listener as alto saxophonist Kris Allen launches *June*, the diverse and impassioned album he created in the shadow of the pandemic.

Backed by his regular band, with guest trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and guest vocalists Michael Mayo and Shenel Johns, Allen delivers six originals and a sharp version of "I Have A Dream," Herbie Hancock's homage to Martin Luther King Jr.

Allen's voicings and quicksilver saxophone shape the tunes without being overbearing. Yes, he's the leader, but does he interact. Check out his hot exchanges with pianist Carmen Staaf on the hard-driving "Ember."

Allen shines particularly on "Fallow," a tune about hope that lies in waiting. His tone is sweet, his lines comforting, and Staaf's ruminations are understated on this gorgeous ballad. The tempo accelerates on "Morning," Allen's love letter to his girlfriend. Allen threads his way through the celebration, vocalist Johns expresses Allen's feelings saucily and vibraphonist Chris Dingman adds to the tune's lift.

What Johns does for "Morning," Mayo does for "Trees," a recasting of the Joyce Kilmer poem that bolsters that sentimental touchstone with one of Allen's tightest solos, Luques Curtis's propulsive bass, Jonathan Barber's dramatic drums and Mayo's colorful voice.

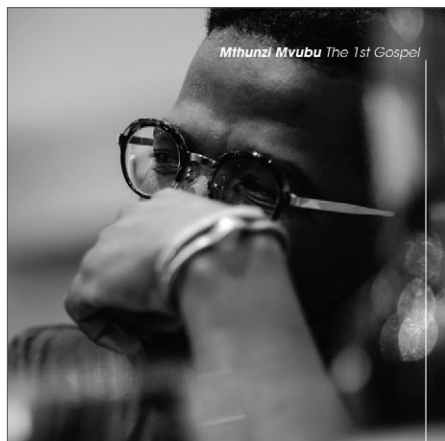
The album ends with the title track, a heartfelt exchange between Allen and Curtis. The two listen into each other, creating a conversation that ends on a querulous, moving note. A solid, hopeful album.

—Carlo Wolff

June: Sunlight; Trees; Ember; Fallow; I Have A Dream; Morning; June. (42:29)

Personnel: Kris Allen, alto saxophone; Jonathan Barber, drums; Luques Curtis, bass; Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Shenel Johns, Michael Mayo, vocals; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Carmen Staaf, piano.

Ordering info: trrstore.bandcamp.com



Mthunzi Mvubu *The 1st Gospel*

ROPEADOPE

★★★★

Since the early-20th century invention of the jazz form “marabi,” and particularly since the end of apartheid, a distinct brand of jazz, informed by the American avant-garde and a multifaceted, resilient spirit all its own, flourishes in South Africa. Of this, the debut record from South African saxophonist and flute player Mthunzi Mvubu, *The 1st Gospel*, which shines with Mvubu’s sweet-fat alto tone and diverse compositions, is a perfect example.

Kirk Lightsey *Live At Smalls Jazz Club*

CELLAR LIVE

★★★★

When one’s jazz career nears seven decades, as pianist Kirk Lightsey’s has, it’s understandable that a new recording elicits excitement and anticipation. This rings especially true if the recording preserves a live performance, as *Live At Smalls Jazz Club* does. Bandleader and venue alone set expectations high, and Lightsey’s supporting cast of guitarist Mark Whitfield, bassist Santi Debriano and drummer Victor Lewis stokes an eager outlook.

It’s unfortunate then, that in the opening performance of Dave Brubeck’s “In Your Own Sweet Way,” the quartet get off to a rocky start. Everyone excels in their musical roles and the individual character of each is prevalent throughout. However, at least in how they’re conveyed on this recording, Whitfield and Lightsey sound unexpectedly out of sync. At 10 minutes long, weaker moments are the minority but, the guitar and piano seem to be jostling for space and who is leading sometimes feels uncertain. Thankfully, this disconnect is temporary and the group gels together the rest of the way. Lightsey’s decisive, punctuated chords and Lewis’ booming tom hits in “Freedom Jazz

Dance” propel the album to a unified place and the occasional murmurs of audience noise give the album just the touch of character that makes a live album feel immersive. Lightsey’s original “Heaven Dance” is a beaming redemption for the aforementioned struggles, made even more enjoyable by the energized, bold syncopation driving the music. *Live At Smalls* is a treasure and a recording that the concert loving public is lucky to have.

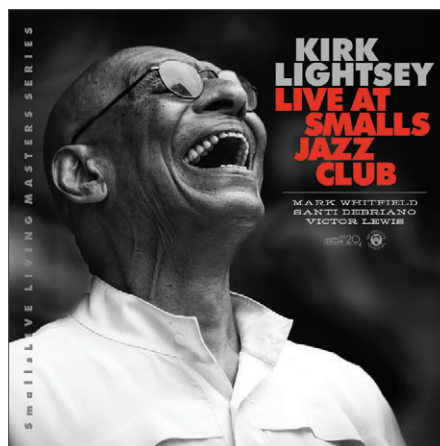
Mvubu reveals a talent for writing compositions that innovate within tradition, like “Zig Zag,” featuring an inexhaustible eighth-note melody drawing on American bebop and cyclical African rhythms, and “Shwele,” which mixes tenacious free improvisation with South African singing. *The 1st Gospel* also showcases a dexterous band of African musicians, including tenor sax players Tobias Meinhardt and Mpumi Dhlamini, Dalisu Ndlazi on bass, Afrika Mkhize on keys and Sphelelo Mazibuko on drums.

By its close, *The 1st Gospel* paints an enticing portrait of jazz vibrancy. —Alexa Peters

The 1st Gospel: Zig Zag; Mom vs The Badman; The 1st Gospel; Shwele (Part 1); Voice; In The Wake Of Your Song; Sea Line; Shwele (Part 2). (72:13)

Personnel: Mthunzi Mvubu, saxophone, flute, vocals; Tobias Meinhardt, tenor saxophone; Mpumi Dhlamini, tenor saxophone, Hammond B3; Sphelelo Mazibuko, drums, vocals; Dalisu Ndlazi, double bass, vocals; Afrika Mkhiza, piano, synthesizers, vocals.

Ordering info: ropeadope.com



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Live At Smalls Jazz Club: In Your Own Sweet Way; Freedom Jazz Dance; Pee Wee; Heaven Dance; Lament; Lament. (56:31)

Personnel: Kirk Lightsey, piano; Mark Whitfield, guitar; Santi Debriano, bass; Victor Lewis, drums.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com

Nils Landgren *3 GENERATIONS*

Joachim Kühn
Michael Wollny
Ilro Rantala
Lars Danielsson
Viktoria Tolstoy
Wolfgang Haffner
J. & R. Wasserfuhr
David Helbock
Jan Lundgren
Marius Neset
Vincent Peirani
Emile Parisien
Johanna Summer
Youn Sun Nah
Anna Gréta
Jakob Manz
Ida Sand
Nesrine + more



Nils Landgren *3 Generations*

ACT

★½

Here’s a three-disc box set to celebrate three decades of the renowned German label ACT. Founder Siggie Loch produces, and has selected one of his early signings to act as host for a full stable of guest players.

This is a fine concept, carried out to a technically high level, well-presented and featuring a highly impressive cast, but sadly there is a problem at its aesthetic and conceptual heart. The trombonist and singer Nils Landgren tends to coerce this very diverse posse inside his own sonic universe, which in this case involves a puzzling bias towards songs sung by guest vocalists.

Landgren also prefers compositions that move at a gentle pace. This is a long listen, and its mood is largely singular. Players who are often known for their challenging instrumental bite have been co-opted into a world of pop-jazz, or even cabaret-jazz, so Michael Wollny, Marius Neset and Lars Danielsson appear as rarely heard before.

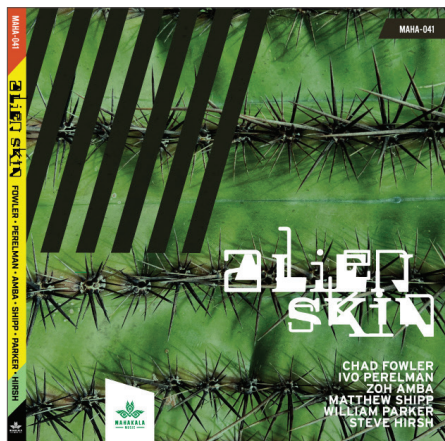
A lightweight compromise is at play. There’s little depth, darkness or melancholy present. The best tracks feature smaller formations, either duos or trios. Disc 3 is a haven for such oddities, and is also primarily instrumental. Two of the best contributions are by Joachim Kühn (in duo with Landgren) and the French team of Vincent Peirani and Émile Parisien, joined by the trombonist.

The best vocal performances are provided by Camille Bertault and Youn Sun Nah. Guitarist Nguyễn Lê and pianist David Helbock stir up Bertault’s song, and YSN appears with Peirani, effectively matching Robert Burns verse with Arvo Pärt music. —Martin Longley

3 Generations: A total of 30 tracks on three CDs. (134:00)

Personnel: Joachim Kühn; Michael Wollny; Ilro Rantala; Lars Danielsson; Viktoria Tolstoy; Wolfgang Haffner; J. & R. Wasserfuhr; David Helbock; Jan Lundgren; Marius Neset; Vincent Peirani; Emile Parisien; Johanna Summer; Youn Sun Nah; Anna Gréta; Jakob Manz; Ida Sand; Nesrine; and numerous others.

Ordering info: actmusic.com



Fowler/Perelman/Amba/Shipp/Parker/Hirsch

Alien Skin

MAHAKALA

★★★★½

The inspiration for this session was William Parker's closing set at the 2021 Vision Festival, which was a tribute to free-jazz percussionist and polymath Milford Graves. In the audience was Chad Fowler, who was so transfixed by the collective's impassioned performance that he regretted leaving his horns at home. Unable to join in the moment, the Arkansan reedist planned a session that might recreate its vibe.

Later that year, he returned to New York, bringing drummer Steve Hirsch with him. Joining them were two players who had been on stage that night, Parker and woodwinds player Zoh Amba, as well as pianist Matthew Shipp, who had also been in the crowd. Tenor saxophonist Ivo Perelman, Shipp's most enduring duo partner in recent years, was a last-minute recruit. *Alien Skin* presents the music they performed in the order that it went down.

The ensemble navigated by feeling, not a score. They start off rough, for while Amba and Perelman instantly respond in kind to Fowler's gutbucket kick-off, Hirsch sounds lost until the performance breaks into an exhilarating steeplechase. The second track achieves success by not trying to be as cohesive; instead, one subgroup transmits highly charged phrases to another, picking up energy from the players' contrasting styles. As they build rapport, the pieces grow longer, more varied, and less idiomatically centered. Someone desiring a cohesive synthesis of the ensemble's strengths might confine their attention the album's final two tracks, which span nearly 39 minutes. But a more process-oriented listener will appreciate hearing how the sextet finds its voice in the earlier tracks.

—Bill Meyer

Alien Skin: Occupation Day; In Pairs; Alien Skin; Sentient Sentiment; Broken Language. (64:56)

Personnel: Chad Fowler, stritch, saxello; Zoh Amba, tenor saxophone, flute; Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Matthew Shipp, piano; William Parker, bass; Steve Hirsch, drums.

Ordering info: mahakalamusic.com



Iago Fernández

Luzada

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT

★★★★

Although probably unfamiliar to most folks, the Spanish drummer Iago Fernández surrounds himself with a high-profile Stateside band that includes tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, pianist David Virelles and bassist Ben Street. His fourth album's opener is atypical: a Brazilian-style song handled by Yumi Ito, apparently sung in the leader's native Catalan, although sounding quite close to Portuguese. Fernández penned a poem for Ito to interpret,

and does so again on the fourth track. The drummer also provides a secondary vocal line and intones another poem, respectively.

Aside from these vocal numbers, the main body of largely original tunes levitates around a highly sensitive instrumental palette. Central to these detailed works is the reed relationship between Turner and the bass clarinetist Joris Roelofs, whether soloing, exchanging phrases or harmonizing with an exquisite low-toned oneness.

Street solos eloquently on "Arrolo da Alba," then "Cadeas Por Fin" rides with an assured pulse. Fernández stays in the background for much of the time, and Virelles is calmer than usual, only soloing forcefully on the closing "Curarei."

The players are intimately miked, creating a spread where magnified details can be savored. The reeds nestle well together throughout, warmly textured and human in tone. A Fernández tune's aura might be relaxed, but it's always rich with meaningful substance.

—Martin Longley

Luzada: Almas Viadeiras; Doces; Arrolo da Alba; Flor Esvelta; Cadeas Por Fin; Lonely Child; Springtime Paradox; Luz da Paz; Purple Light; Curarei. (62:00)

Personnel: Iago Fernández, drums, voice, organ; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Joris Roelofs, bass clarinet; David Virelles, piano; Ben Street, bass; Yumi Ito, voice (1, 4, 9); Wilfried Wilde, guitar (1, 4); Sam Barnett, alto saxophone (6); Song Yi Jeon, voice (9); Kuba Dworak, bass (1).

Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com

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Creative Scene Changes

The jazz sound of multi-cultural Amsterdam has changed a lot over the last few decades, but **Chance And Change (Casco; 62:50 ★★★★★)**, the second album from the multi-generational **Blue Lines Trio**, harks back to the golden era of New Dutch Swing. More than half of the tracks played by pianist Michiel Scheen, bassist Raoul van der Weide and drummer George Hadow are full improvised, but that doesn't mean the group forsakes its abiding love for swing. In fact, the gap between pithy originals like the rollicking opener "Diddleville" and spontaneous excursions bearing deceptively descriptive titles like "Improvisation 2155" is much smaller than one might expect at times thanks to a seriously locked-in rapport. Hadow evokes the relentless springy propulsion of Han Bennink, while Scheen's granite-tough attack reinforces the trio's fierce rhythmic drive, unleashing chords that splinter and sparkle. The lines warmly intoned by van der Weide root the music in something innately human and melodically irresistible. The trio does go out, too, but it all happens along an unflappable continuum.

Ordering info: cascorecords.bandcamp.com

Oùat is an excellent Paris-Berlin piano trio also invested in seriously swinging bebop verities, evoking the sound of brilliant eccentrics like Elmo Hope, Herbie Nichols, and Thelonious Monk. The group updated that tradition with the original tunes that filled its superb debut *Elastic Bricks*, but on the new **The Strange Adventures Of Jesper Klint (Umlaut; 64:10 ★★★★★)** they pay homage to the overlooked Swedish pianist Per-Henrik Wallin, who deftly straddled bebop and free-jazz during his career.

This new recording interprets the full repertoire from Wallin's knockout trio album *Coyote* — recorded in 1986–'87, but unreleased until 1998. Over the fleet, high-velocity swing of bassist Joel Grip and drummer Michael Griener, French pianist Simon Sieger carves out his own take on the seven indelible themes, funneling them through the same quirky aesthetic of those '50s pianists mentioned above. *Oùat* reveals a genuine ardor for Wallin's music, while strutting its own fierce sound — a perfect combination.

Ordering info: umlautrecords.bandcamp.com

Drummer **Konrad Agnas** and reedist **Per "Texas" Johansson** are fixtures on the sprawling Stockholm creative music scene, performing in disparate stylistic contexts, but together they've steadily explored the ideas of Lennie Tristano and his disciples Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh, including an album updating some of their best known tunes. On **All Slow Dream Gone (Moserobie; 39:52 ★★★★★)**, where they are joined by fellow



Swede Mattias Ståhl on marimba and vibraphone and Norway's Ingebrigt Håker Flaten on bass, they embrace another Tristano tactic, freely improvising tunes based on the chords of beloved standards like "Darn That Dream" and "Tea For Two."

The results are terrific, maintaining a clear connection with the aerated cool of their historic subjects while also privileging a wide-open melodic sensibility that feels thoroughly contemporary. The way Johansson — sticking exclusively to the clarinet family here — and Ståhl braid their simultaneous lines on a tune like "Slow" is especially rewarding, revealing a shared buoyancy and empathic lyricism that would sound fresh in any era.

Ordering info: agnasflatensthitexas.bandcamp.com

From A Story Now Lost (Smalltown Supersound; 30:00 ★★) by Norwegian keyboardist **Anja Lauvdal** isn't a jazz record, but trying to parse her multi-layered aesthetic is a fool's errand. Whether playing free improv with drummer with Joakim Heibø, recording exploratory improvisations with her long-running trio Moskus, or engaging in a first-time trio with Hamid Drake and William Parker—all projects I've heard or scene in 2022 — she's a committed explorer who won't be limited by any single approach or genre.

Ordering info: anjalaauvdal.bandcamp.com

Philip Zoubek, a keyboardist from Cologne, Germany, is another shape-shifter, a musician of broad curiosity who's equally at home within over-the-top electronic jamming and heady post-bop. His trio with bassist David Helm and drummer Dominik Mahnig has made a couple of terrific acoustic albums, but with **Labyrinthus (Why Play Jazz; 44:57 ★★★★★)** Zoubek adds some synthesizers to the mix without necessarily changing the shape of the music. Instead, electronics deliver a mix of unsettling ambience and eerie counterpoint. The music is composed, but it's deliciously loose.

Ordering info: whyplayjazz.bandcamp.com

DB



Ant Law/Alex Hitchcock Same Moon In The Same World

OUTSIDE IN MUSIC

★★★★½

Guitarist Ant Law and tenor saxophonist Alex Hitchcock's pandemic album (it should be considered a subgenre in itself) has that late pandemic kind of feel, not so elegiac as other artists' work recorded earlier in the global isolation, but feistier and more anxious to play. *Same Moon In The Same World* is a late-period pandemic album due to be an amalgamation of sent demos with assorted players around the world who riffed off of Law and Hitchcock's demos.

It's through these remote collaborations where the pair can have Shai Maestro dazzle on the piano on "Low Glow" alongside Jasper Hoiby's resounding backing on bass, Jeff Ballard on drums. "Chrysalis" glides into a steady groove with Law and Hitchcock trading lines near the end with real joy, working off the energy Ben Williams is building on bass and giving Sun-Mi Hong plenty of space to unwind on the drums. "Vivid" is a gorgeous, lush tribute from Law to Linda May Han Oh with plenty of room for her to play her bass and sing with backing from Tim Garland's bass clarinet and stirring drums from Sun-Mi Hong.

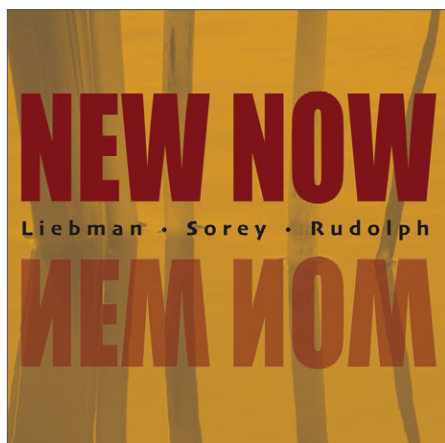
This is the thing about the construction of the album: Every composition here has these "insert featured solo here" spaces that feel necessary for their construction as a remotely made pandemic album. This isn't the band in the room burning together; it's expert level shedding over tracking. Playing with so many impressive players like Joel Ross and Kendrick Scott is cool, but it can also feel like connected K'Nex links.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Same Moon In The Same World: Outliers; Haven't Meta Yet; Low Glow; Third I; Chrysalis; Vivid; Salvo; Don't Wait Too Long; After The Rain. (51:48)

Personnel: Ant Law, electric, acoustic, eight-string guitars; Alex Hitchcock, tenor saxophone; Joel Ross, vibraphone (6–8); Shai Maestro, piano (3, 4); Linda May Han Oh (1, 6), Jasper Hoiby (3), Ben Williams (5, 8), bass; Eric Harland (1, 2), Jeff Ballard (3, 8), Kendrick Scott (4, 7), Sun-Mi Hong (5, 6), drums; Tim Garland, bass clarinet (6, 8).

Ordering info: antlaw.bandcamp.com



Liebman/Sorey/Rudolph

New Now

META/YEROS

★★★

Dave Liebman

Trust And Honesty

NEWVILLE

★★★★½

Dave Liebman has followed in the footsteps of such predecessors as Chet Baker, Lee Konitz and Steve Lacy in his willingness to record prolifically for many different labels. No matter what the setting, whether it is free impro-

vising, paying tribute to Sidney Bechet, playing unaccompanied solos or with a big band, Liebman always follows his own musical path and sounds like himself.

Liebman and percussionist Adam Rudolph have had an occasional duo since 2016, and Rudolph and drummer Tyshawn Sorey first formed a percussion duet in 2018 although Liebman and Sorey do not seem to have previously recorded together. At the Jazz Gallery on Sept. 30, 2021, for the first time the three musicians formed a trio. The result is *New Now*, a continuous hour-long free improvisation that on their CD is divided into seven parts.

The soprano-drums-percussion trio does its best to not only react spontaneously to each other but to include some variety in moods. "Part 1" starts out sounding a bit mystical, becoming more passionate as the music evolves. On "Part 2," Liebman makes musical comments that are answered by the other two, the music gets a bit ferocious, and it finally becomes a fiery drum-percussion ensemble. "Part 3" utilizes a lot of space with some speech-like percussive sounds from Rudolph and occasional comments by Liebman, a contrast to the dense ensembles of "Part 4." Liebman briefly plays some free-form piano on "Part 5" while "Part 6" (which has a little bit of his flute) is primarily another explosive drums-percussion duo. Sorey is on piano at the beginning of

"Part 7," setting a desolate mood accentuated by Liebman's soprano before the rumbling piano, heated percussion, and high-pitched soprano bring the performance to its conclusion.

While it has its intriguing moments, much of *New Now* would be more interesting to experience live than on record, particularly during some sparse sections where one is waiting for inspiration to strike.

Trust And Honesty, a recent LP, finds Liebman in a more conventional trio with guitarist Ben Monder and bassist John Hébert. Other than the leader's melancholy ballad "Designs," the intimate group performs six jazz standards including "Lover Man," "Bye Bye Blackbird" and a warm rendition of Jobim's "Zingaro." In addition, Liebman (who plays soprano throughout except for a very brief spot on flute during "Zingaro") takes "Blue In Green" as an unaccompanied solo.

—Scott Yanow

New Now: Part 1; Part 2; Part 3; Part 4; Part 5; Part 6; Part 7. (59:04)

Personnel: Dave Liebman, soprano, wooden flute, piano; Tyshawn Sorey, drums, piano; Adam Rudolph, percussion, hand drums, electronic processing.

Ordering info: metarecords.com

Trust And Honesty: Designs; Lover Man; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Stella By Starlight; Moon And Sand; Blue In Green; Bye Bye Blackbird; Zingaro. (40:10)

Personnel: Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone; Ben Monder, guitar; John Hébert, bass.

Ordering info: newville-records.com



Ernie Vincent

Original Dap King

CORNELIUS CHAPEL RECORDS

★★★★½

Ernie Vincent is a bona fide legend. *Original Dap King* is a showcase of a legendary sound

that has defined many a nighttime jaunt through the vibrant streets of New Orleans. But it is also a sound familiar to the Saturday afternoon tailgates at Black colleges throughout the South. It is a sound familiar to the to those "midnight rendezvous" at end-of-the road-shacks where the smell of sweat, Pepsi-Cola and

fried fish punctuate the air.

These arrangements are ever so familiar on this record, reminding us that it is indeed possible to use the blues to "get the blues offa you" as Willie King once remarked. We can sense here that that's the point of it all. There is also a mix here of what coalesces around the labels "funk" and "Southern soul." For Vincent, who has been at this for nearly 60 years, there is no lack of feeling or rhythm in his playing.

The band, a relatively new formation rises to the occasion as well. Together, they transport us to spaces that are all too familiar, places we hope to never forget.

While Vincent refers to himself as a basic blues player, his deep knowledge of the guitar and its limits is what sets him apart. "I started playing guitar in the '60s when rock 'n' roll first started happening," said Vincent, who received hands-on instruction from the town's resident bluesman.

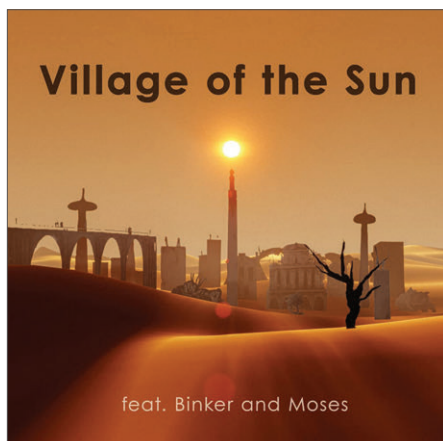
"There was an old fella named Po' Will that could play all kind of blues on the guitar."

—Joshua Myers

Original Dap King: Body Shop; Midnight Rendezvous; Possession; Jealousy; Mr. Good Daddy; Black; Blues Filler; Seven Sisters; Guilty As Funk; Early Times. (39:00)

Personnel: Ernie Vincent, vocals and guitar; Jimbo Malthus, piano; Taylor Hollingsworth, guitar; Hank West, horns, horns/string arrangements; Jamison Hollister, strings; AJ Haynes, backing vocals; Matt Payton, bass, backing vocals; Bronson Tew, drums.

Ordering info: corneliuschapelrecords.myshopify.com



Village of the Sun First Light

GEARBOX

★★★★½

Binker and Moses have always felt like riding a river through rapids, drifting through calm, deep waters until times when things get rocky, the bottom gets shallower, and the ride gets a bit hectic.

The pair has always known how to ride out a feeling, and in their latest foray, they've included producer Simon Ratcliffe (of Basement Jaxx) to fill out their sound with additional instrumentation and production to see where else the

river may take them. His inclusion with this pair makes sense considering their dancy, soaring music has always at times been begging for something in the realm of house music to play with if they weren't reaching for it themselves.

This neat half-hour album never wears out its welcome. These are six tunes that steadily rise to a climax, bathe in the warmth, and politely exit your ears. You could set your watch to what this trio is doing if it weren't so easy to get consistently lost in their sleight of hand.

This isn't uncommon for Binker & Moses' compositional style, but Ratcliffe's additional instrumentation and production allows for more options and without Golding having to do all the heavy lifting melodically. They're quite effective as a trio.

Once one gets past the confusing nature of having both a self-titled song and an album's title track, making for real fun trying to relay song titles to folks, one can be easily hypnotized by these rhythms. Perhaps the effective confusion in nomenclature is part of being put off kilter and the right state of mind.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

First Light: Cesca; First Light; Village of the Sun; The Spanish Master; Tigris; Ted. (32:50)

Personnel: Binker Golding, tenor saxophone; Moses Boyd, drums; Simon Ratcliffe, other instrumentation.

Ordering info: thevillageofthesun.bandcamp.com

Leo P Comin' Up Aces

SHANACHIE

★★★★½

While Leo P's *Comin' Up Aces* doesn't go the live recording route, which may have allowed for more of the spontaneous spirit Leo P fans know and love, the concept of "less is more" works in Leo P's favor.

He is able approach band collaboration in a more methodical way — particularly as he and several guest artists take on a variety of beloved cuts like Earth Wind and Fire's "Serpentine Fire," Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" and Eddie Harris' "Cold Duck Time."

Leo P's soloing on the latter, for example, remains nimble and lively. Yet there's a touch of restraint to the flow of the notes. Think of this not as a loss of character but as a honing in on personal artistry and execution — like striking just the right spot on a tree to chop it down, rather than wasting energy. David Mann's flute contrasts Leo P's baritone saxophone on "Black Cat," while matching the instrument's energy with perfect flutter-tongue flourishes.

When the song moves from a low and slow swinging groove to a high, light and sparkly Latin jazz flair, that's when Leo P's affinity



for fun unpredictability comes through. The structure of studio recording doesn't take away from Leo P's latest homage to Charles Mingus, either. There's an abundance of heart and soul put as much into long sustained notes as piercing bursts. *Comin' Up Aces* demonstrates Leo P's ability to showcase his artistry, even when using a different method to share it.

—Kira Grunenberg

Comin' Up Aces: Serpentine Fire; Comin' Up Aces; Cold Duck Time; Tokyo Blue; Black Cat; Issa Blues; Amanda; Timeless Love; Broke; Goodbye Pork Pie Hat. (43:08)

Personnel: Leo P, baritone saxophone, vocals; Max Calkin, Ray Cetta, background vocals (2); Frank Cohen, trombone (7); Sydney Driver, drums (1–5, 7–10); Richard Elliott, tenor saxophone (3); Josh Holcomb, trombone (2, 3, 6); Antoine Katz, bass; David Mann, flute (5); Nadav Niremborg, trombone (1, 3, 4, 7); Matt Owens, trumpet (1, 3, 4, 7); Stephen Salcedo, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone (1, 3, 4, 7); Finn Singer, guitar; Stanton Moore, drums (6); Tom Wilson, piano, Fender Rhodes, Wurliizer, Hammond B-3, background vocals (2).

Ordering info: shanachie.com



Hedvig Mollestad & the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra Maternity Beat

RUNE GRAMMOFON

★★★★

Norwegian guitarist Hedvig Mollestad has been prolific in recent years, stretching beyond work with her long-running trio to launch several evolving ensembles, including the medium-sized lineups that expanded a more elaborate timbre on albums like *Ekhidna* (2020) and *Tempest Revisited* (2021). While her choogling mix of John McLaughlin and Terje Rypdal at their most furious has retained its presence, this new project is her most ambitious outing and she's found the perfect collaborators in the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra, a long-running collective with a wildly versatile cast that's worked with musicians as diverse as Chick Corea, Jason Moran and Anna Webber.

The music was commissioned by Molde Jazz Festival and premiered there in 2019, with Mollestad addressing braided themes of motherhood, immigration and climate change through original, impressionistic lyrics that convey a steady sense of compassion in an often uncaring world.


Mollestad unleashes a few typically explosive, metallic solos, but this is an ensemble work and the band gets plenty of space, whether the searing soprano solo Martin Myhre Olsen unspools during "On The Horizon, Part 2" or the slashing violin solo by Adrian Løseth Waade on "Donna Ovis Peppa," with the piece's unexpected, humorous "Salt Peanuts" quote.

—Peter Margasak

Maternity Beat: On the Horizon, Part 1; On the Horizon, Part 2; Do Re Mi Ma Ma; Donna Ovis Peppa; Little Lucid Demons/Alfons; All Flights Cancelled; Her Own Shape; Maternity Beat; Maternity Suite. (RUNNING TIME???)


Personnel: Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen, guitar, vocals (9); Mai Elise Solberg, vocals; Ingebjørg Løe Bjørnstad, vocals; Adrian Løseth Waade, violin; Trine Knutsen, flutes; Martin Myhre Olsen, soprano, alto, and baritone saxophones; Petter Kraft, tenor saxophone; Thomas Johansen, trumpet; Ståle Storløkken, Hammond organ, Fender-Rhodes, synthesizers; Ellen Brekken, bass; Ingvald André Vassbø, percussion; Torstein Lofthus, drums; Erlend Skomsvoll, conductor.

Ordering info: runegrammofon.com



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More than a "tribute", *Dear John*, the 2nd album of saxophonist Benjamin Petit is conceived as a letter addressed to John Williams. The musician rearranges in the jazz universe the most beautiful titles of the American composer, signing an album both personal and universal.



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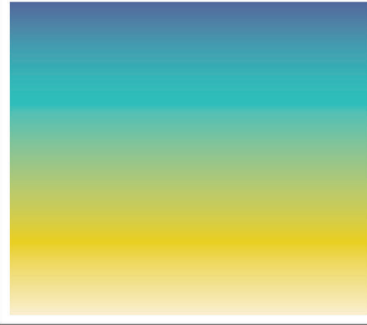


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DAVE REMPIIS WORKS THE CHICAGO SCENE

Although he operates in a musical milieu that treasures spontaneity, agility and invention as much as anything else, Chicago reedist Dave Rempis has only been able to maintain a life in music thanks to his impressive discipline and rigor.

He possesses a rarely matched firepower and intensity deployed in explosive ensembles like Ballister, with cellist Fred Longberg-Holm and drummer Paal Nilssen-Love, or more measured ones like his collective with cellist Tomeka Reid and bassist Joshua Abrams, but he's developed and honed his specialized technique on saxophone over decades, forging a unique language through endless practice and steady gigging.

Rempis has long been a vital part of the city's jazz and improvised music since emerging in 1998 as a member of the Vandermark 5, when he replaced Mars Williams in Ken Vandermark's old flagship group. It wasn't long before he became involved in the infrastructure of the scene, launching a weekly improvised music series at the defunct Humboldt Park space 3030 back in 2002. When 3030 had to shut down due to noise complaints, Rempis took the program to Elastic Arts, the vibrant multi-arts space he helped create and for which he's served as board president since

2015. He was also involved in Umbrella Music, a collective enterprise where several weekly presenters in Chicago worked together to present concerts and festivals, including a long-running endeavor that brought important European musicians to Chicago to present their work and collaborate with local musicians. Rempis also works as operations manager for the annual Hyde Park Jazz Festival. He's long had his hands involved in logistical and business concerns with presenting jazz and improvised music, so it was no surprise that he eventually launched his own label.

Before starting Aerophonics Records in 2013, he'd released music on a variety of small independent labels in the U.S. and Europe, but over time grew frustrated with the lack of control such arrangements yielded. He reached the end of his rope in 2012, perpetually waiting for the delivery of a new album by a collective trio called Wheelhouse with bassist Nate McBride and vibist Jason Adasiewicz. A local album release concert he'd organized

was quickly approaching. The trio ended up playing in support of a recording that wouldn't drop for almost another year, when Rempis took it upon himself to release it.

Rempis doesn't compromise his music, but he's extremely pragmatic and realistic about the financial reality of what he does. He did plenty of research, consulting other musicians, label owners, distributioners and music journalists so he'd be informed about each aspect of running an imprint. Although he didn't necessarily realize it at the time, he now says, "I think Nate McBride gave me the best piece of advice — and this came more from his work as a contractor than as a musician. He said, effectively, what you're selling is yourself. You're branding yourself. And that's what people are buying into."

Since then Rempis has released 37 albums — mostly on compact disc, with several as vinyl-only titles — in addition to some 15 live recordings posted to the label's Bandcamp page. Aerophonics generally releases four albums annually, and some of those are scheduled to coincide with tours, where Rempis relies on selling titles from his catalog since performance fees often don't cover the various expenses. "I generally try to get a record out before my spring touring, after my spring touring, before the fall touring, and then after the fall touring, because I actually have to be here to fill orders," he says.

Every release has turned a modest profit. Although he's paid some of his contributors in cash, most of his collaborators accept payment in product, which they can sell at gigs or on their online platforms. Rempis noted that while he lost a primary source of income during the pandemic, his followers made up for the difference. "It was a remarkable period of time," he says. "During 2020, my sales jumped by 200%." While things have come back down, he says sales still remain 50% over the pre-pandemic average.

One of the reasons Rempis was able to weather the pandemic is that he's in-tune with the people that support his music, and that relationship helped him recognize the merit of what McBride had told him years earlier. "At this point I have a very dependable customer base who are people I know and communicate with," he says. "When every release comes out, I'm gonna spend hours sending emails to my regular customers. A lot of them are friends at this point. They're people who were buying my music even before I started the label, but now I know who they are. I see them when I go to concerts."

While digital and streaming music have cut sales of physical releases, even in this particular niche of the music world, selling catalog items on tour remains crucial. "What I make in fees is almost matched by my merch sales," he says of Aerophonics product at gigs. "It's a major economic part of making tours work."

—Peter Margasak

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On October 8, 2022, the Finals of the inaugural Bob Ravenscroft International Jazz Piano Competition were held at Ravenscroft in Scottsdale, AZ. Pianist Michael Clement (Denton, Texas) bested a remarkable group of Finalists from France, Hungary, and the United States to be crowned the First Place prizewinner by an esteemed panel of adjudicators.

Congratulations, Michael Clement!



2022 Bob Ravenscroft International Jazz Piano Competition First Place prizewinner Michael Clement (r), pictured with founder Bob Ravenscroft. (Photo: Redd Legend Media)

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(d), Eliel Lazo (congas)



Karl Berger - Kirk
Knuffke
HEART IS A MELODY
CD: STUCD 22092
Karl Berger (vib, Rhodes, p,
Melodica), Kirk Knuffke (Cornet), Jay
Anderson (b), Matt Wilson (d)



Wollesen Ferm
HEART IN HAND
CD: STUCD 22022 / LP: STULP 22021
Ned Ferm (ts, cl, fl, vin, perc, el-p),
Rune Kjeldsen (g), Anders "AC"
Christensen (b), Kenny Wollesen (d,
perc, p, vib, a.o.)



Jakob Dinesen feat.
Jeff "Tain" Watts
UNCONDITIONAL LOVE
CD: STUCD 22052 / LP: STULP 22051
Jakob Dinesen (ts), Jacob Arved
(g), Felix Moseholm (b), Jeff "Tain"
Watts (d)



Snorre Kirk
TOP DOG
CD: STUCD 22132 / LP: STULP 22131
Stephen Riley (ts), Michael Blicher
(ts), Magnus Hjorth (p), Mads Kjolby
(g), Anders Fjeldsted (b), Snorre
Kirk (d)

Stunt Records

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Distribution: Stateside Distributors/statesidemusic.com



Vocalist Paul Marinaro seeks to make up for lost time with a slew of projects coming out.

PAUL MARINARO HURDLING ROADBLOCKS

Every jazz musician faces challenges in gaining exposure for their music — especially without the support of a major record label. And it's even more difficult gaining a listening audience as well as critical attention for independently released recordings.

But those challenges can be heightened for male jazz vocalists, according to Chicago-based singer Paul Marinaro, who has built a solid career on the Windy City scene since moving there in 2003.

"A major difficulty for male jazz singers is being defined and typecast as only one version of what that means," Marinaro explained during a recent interview. "And that version — especially if you sing standards — is being constantly compared to Frank Sinatra. It's funny, some critics would rather label you as a Sinatra imitator instead of just recognizing his influence. For me, there's a lot of creative space between Sinatra and a singer like Kurt Elling, who's found his own approach. And I believe that's where I fit in, and where I like to create."

Born in Buffalo, New York, Marinaro discovered an early love for jazz after finding old acetate recordings that belonged to his father, who had an unfulfilled dream of being a professional singer. After studying the music and sitting in at clubs in Buffalo to build his reputation, Marinaro moved to Chicago.

Working in a duo with pianist Judy Roberts, Marinaro began to build a following, working steadily in area clubs such as the Green Mill, the Jazz Showcase and Winter's Jazz Club. In 2013, he released his first album, *Without A Song*, in tribute to his father's dream of singing jazz. He gained national airplay and critical acclaim, and followed up with a live recording, *One Night In Chicago*, in 2015.

After singing at the 2017 Chicago Jazz Festival with legendary jazz vocalist Sheila Jordan, Marinaro's musical career was put on hold due to a serious bout with diverticulitis that sent him to the emergency room. A lengthy hospital stay and several operations put his career on hold for more than a year. His friends on the Chicago jazz scene put together a fundraiser to offset his medical expenses, and Jordan flew in to headline the event.

Once he recovered and began to work again, the pandemic hit, adding another roadblock to a full return. But the time off gave Marinaro an opportunity to plan, and even explore the music of David Bowie.

"I heard Bowie's last album, *Blackstar*, and really realized I had missed a lot of his earlier recordings. I hadn't paid as close attention to it as I should have," he said. "And while I was thinking through my next recording project — especially coming out of the pandemic — there were certain songs of his that I knew I wanted to record."

Marinaro's latest album, *Not Quite Yet*, turned out to be an expansive project that featured his backing quartet (Mike Allemana, guitar/arranger; Tom Vaitsas, keyboards; John Tate, bass; and George Fludas, drums) plus a six-piece horn and woodwind section, the KAIA String Quartet and backing vocalists Alyssa Allgood and Sarah Marie Young.

In addition to interpretations of two Bowie songs, "No Plan" and "5:15 The Angels Have Gone," Marinaro fashioned winning takes of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Someone To Light Up My Life" and Ivan Lins' "The Island," plus fresh versions of standards "Remind Me," "Born To Be Blue," "Taking A Chance On Love," "On A Wonderful Day Like Today" and Stephen Sondheim's "I Remember."

"For this album, I didn't want to hit anything too hard to force a narrative that this album is about a specific theme," Marinaro said. "I don't think that's necessary. But there's an underlying feeling I wanted to convey about the uncertainty of a world coming out of the pandemic, and how that experience has affected us on several levels."

The song sequencing of *Not Quite Yet* clearly follows what Marinaro calls an "old-school approach."

"That's always been my connection to how I listen to music," he explained. "I want to know, where does that song come from? Where does it fit in the album, why was it chosen? And this is really a throwback, but even how it's laid out on a slab of vinyl. What ended side A and what started side B? Is there a connection between the two sides or a different vibe? I think of that now when I program my albums. I'm not sure anyone notices anymore, but I do it for my own enjoyment."

Marinaro performed the new album live at the renovated Studebaker Theater in early November and is now in the process of editing a video of the concert. He's also recorded a full album of Bowie songs with the Metropolitan Jazz Octet, which is set for release in late January on Origin Records.

"We'll be performing the album, *The Bowie Project*, live at Studio5 Performing Arts Center in Evanston on Feb. 10," Marinaro said. "And I'm already in the studio with another recording project featuring some heavy-hitter arrangers that will come out at the end of 2023. I want to make up for lost time and do projects I've wanted to work on for quite a while. Singing is a passion for me. That can ebb and flow, but now I've really got the perseverance and desire to make these projects happen."

—Terry Perkins



ROB SILVERMAN DRUMS FOR CAUSE AT AUTUMN HILL

Drummer-entrepreneur Rob Silverman has garnered loads of attention of late for his St. Louis-based label, Autumn Hill Records. It comes on the strength of a series of three *Drumology* recordings he made with a Who's Who in fusion and prog-rock drumming.

While the first two volumes carried such high-profile names as Billy Cobham, Dave Weckl, Steve Smith, Simon Phillips, Kenny Aronoff, Gregg Bissonette and Mike Mangini, the recently released *Drumology Volume III* boasts a potent lineup of drummers Roy "Futureman" Wooten, Gavin Harrison, Greg Sobel and Budapest-born fusion monster Gergő Borlai.

Weckl returns for this latest edition of *Drumology*, playing alongside his former Elektric Bandmates Frank Gambale, John Patitucci and Eric Marienthal on a searing tribute to Chick Corea. That powerful, Spanish-tinged homage, "The Alchemist," written by keyboardist and longtime Weckl collaborator Jay Oliver, also features drummer Steve Gadd, a key Corea sideman since 1976. Silverman and his keyboardist-composer brother Michael both play on all seven tracks of this epic gathering of drumming brethren.

As with the first two volumes, all proceeds from *Drumology Volume III* will benefit the Neil Peart Fund for brain cancer research at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. "Neil Peart and Dave Weckl are my two biggest influences, though Neil is probably much deeper in my DNA," Silverman said.

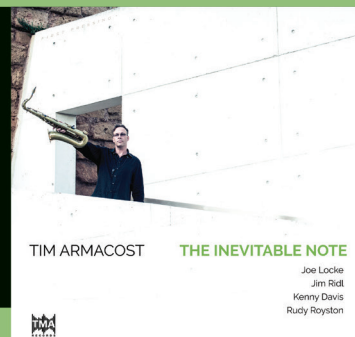
The *Drumology* projects are just one aspect of what Autumn Hill Records has done since its inception in 2008. The catalog also includes 2020's *Rhythm City*, featuring the Silverman brothers with keyboardist Ptah

Williams, electric bassist Larry Kornfeld, saxophonist Marienthal and trumpeter Randy Brecker; Italian songstress Clivia Tanisi's 2020 album *Learning How To Fly* with Weckl, electric bassist Tom Kennedy, saxophonist Bob Franceschini and keyboardist George Whitty; guitarist Scott Jones' 2020 album *Fictional Characters* with keyboardist Steve Hunt, bassist Romain Labaye and drummer Archibald Ligonnière; the Dave Weckl Band's 2021 album *Live In St. Louis*; and Kennedy's 2021 outing *Stories*, featuring Randy Brecker, saxophonists Bill Evans and Ada Rovatti, drummer Weckl and guitarist Mike Stern. In 2022, the label released *In These Times* by the Michael Silverman/Eric Marienthal Band, as well as the Pat Petrillo Big Rhythm Band's *The Power Station Sessions*.

Rob and Michael's other ongoing concern is Bach to the Future, an adventurous group featuring saxophonist Marienthal and electric six-string violinist Tracy Silverman that reimagines familiar classical music pieces like "Flight Of The Bumble Bee," "Jesu, Joy Of Man's Desiring" and "Pachelbel's Canon." Silverman exclusively plays the wireless Zendrum MIDI controller in this innovative ensemble. As he explained, "The Zendrum is the commercially available version of the SynthAxe Drumitar, which is the instrument that Roy Wooten introduced in The Flecktones. And it just gives you an unlimited array of sounds at your fingertips." —Bill Milkowski

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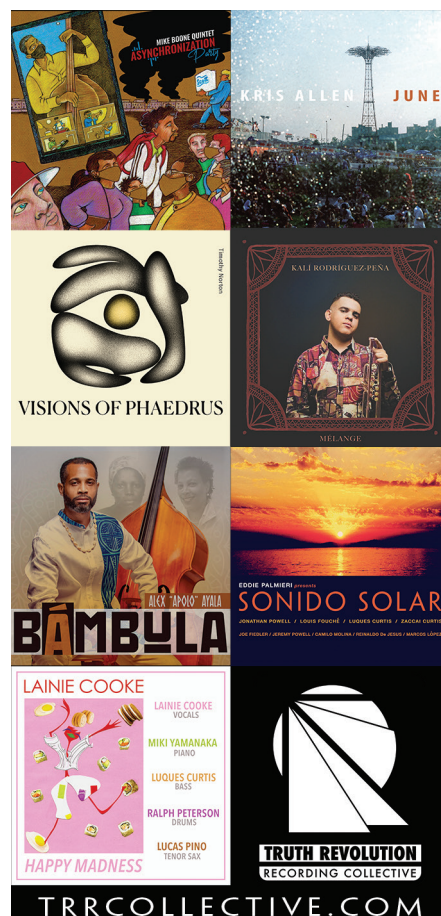
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Making a High-Production Recording on a No-Frills Budget

My recording career as a solo artist has been predominantly in the jazz genre, with 15 such albums to my name. Budgets for my recording projects have ranged from \$30K for my debut album, *Cauldron* (Windham Hill, 1991), with a major jazz label, to the last one I just released

in November 2022, an indie project called *Holidaze* with an extremely limited budget.

Why do musicians go to the trouble of recording, especially when budgets can be “starving artist” situations? We play because it’s our calling. We record because it’s a tangible document for a legacy, but also because we

have the urge to share our art with the world. We share a human need to see if others like what we’ve created.

Even if we have no budget or a low budget, we persist. If we are given the key to the kingdom, we blitz! I’ve worked on around 250-plus records and count 20 as a producer. Here are

my tips using the KISS (keep it simple, stupid) method when you have a no-frills budget to have an enjoyable recording experience and make a great-sounding album.

Keeping Things Simple

Pre-production is key to keeping the recording process simple. Plan your course of action diligently.

Find the studio to fit the sound you want with the right equipment at the right price. Music charts should be written for the budget. They should be ready and easy to read with clear roadmaps. There is nothing wrong with writing difficult music; we all love a challenge. Just don't expect to get it done in a short time. Better to write for your budget than to half-ass your music with subpar performances.

Spend your money on making music rather than editing. Bring more tunes to the studio than you need, but aim for about 35–45 minutes of music. Longer records mean more expenses.

Keep the following tips in mind when casting your ensemble and leading rehearsals for your recordings:

- Hire top-talent musicians and engineers who are artful and know your identity, vision and intention for the recording.
- Rehearse elsewhere to work out kinks and get the feel and the essence of the music. Book gigs (where you're paid to rehearse), rent a union hall (\$25/3 hours) or use free school facilities if they're available during non-school hours. (Remember, favors cost \$0.)
- At the studio, do a run-through, but press "record" to capture spontaneity. After the run-through, listen to make sure you like the sounds. Then start doing takes.
- Create an atmosphere of relaxation and camaraderie in the studio, because this will help reduce the number of takes you need. Tell jokes if you have to. And take breaks for the clouds to clear up and restore creativity.
- Talent is what really makes a record. Hell, music can be recorded on an iPhone. As long as the music is good, that's the key.

Keeping 'Stupid' Things Simple

Always remember to mind the ticking

clock. Do whatever is necessary to not waste time and money in the studio.

Avoid stressors, distractions and drama. Time is money, so don't waste it.

Avoid "microscoping." Do a maximum of three takes. I recommend doing two takes and then listen — you'll know how it feels when you are recording and can make changes to forms, solo lengths, etc.

Time is wasted when you go back and forth to listen to every take. Remember, you are all good musicians — and you heard it the first time! After you've done two takes, go in and listen. If you still don't have it, do another. But after three takes we all start to lose spontaneity. I recommend leaving it and going back to the song later.

Task someone to handle the administrative work and logistics of the rehearsals and recording sessions such as parking, food orders, errands, answering phones and facilitating guests or photo/videographers.

Partnership Recordings

My trilogy of MONK'estra albums were successful recordings that were cheap to make compared to other big band records. How?

MONK'estra Plays John Beasley (Mack Avenue) had three different size bands: trio, septet and 16-piece big band. Legendary engineer Al Schmitt handpicked me to offer a day in the famous Capitol Recording studio along with his right-hand man, Steve Genewick, at no charge in exchange for the recording to be filmed and used as masterclass content for a popular online music production school called "Mix with the Masters," which features Schmitt's genius behind the board. The recording ended up costing me far less than it would have if I didn't have that partnership with the school. The MONK'estra members all learned their parts before rehearsals and showed extreme dedication to the project, making lots of sacrifices for the greater good.

Self-Funded Outings

Holidaze is a trio album of Christmas music, six songs recorded in a three-hour session with no rehearsal (because I've worked the drummer and bassist before). Christian

Euman would bring his creative spontaneity and Edwin Livingston would give the music his big sound and swing. Recorded by Tally Sherwood at True Tone Studios, I knew Tally had the experience to mix live. And because we recorded at his studio, we were up and recording in no time.

We talked through the vision: Since we were familiar with the timeless Christmas songs, we discussed the personality we wanted to give to each song, whether it would be lush, humorous but with a lot of groove. The idea was to listen, respond and to trust each other that we would take the song through the arc of the story with some surprises. It was to be a press-and-play — so keep the not-so-obvious blemishes because we wanted to make a record that captures being in the moment, like the iconic jazz records of the '50 and '60s before multitracks.

It doesn't take a fortune to create a successful record. Plan, be prudent, anticipate moving parts, surround yourself with a purposeful and passionate team, and you will make a record that you will hold dear to your heart and be proud of for many years to come.

And, as the great Quincy Jones once advised, "Leave the door of the studio open for God to walk in." That's my mantra: Be flexible, and always be open to new ideas. **DB**

Grammy winner and Emmy nominee John Beasley is a versatile pianist, composer, arranger and session player who distills decades of technical and creative experience and knowledge from playing on or producing music. Beasley began his career in his 20s backing jazz icons Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard. Since then, Beasley has performed with a wide range of artists, including Dianne Reeves, Ivan Lins, John Patitucci, Chaka Khan, Christian McBride and Carly Simon. His work as a composer-arranger extends beyond jazz. He was music director for international tours with Steely Dan, AR Rahman and Queen Latifah and comusical director/arranger for Chucho Valdés' *La Creación* project. Beasley is the music director for the International Jazz Day global gala concerts hosted by the Herbie Hancock Jazz Institute, which earned him an Emmy nomination for 2016 "Jazz at the White House" hosted by President Barack Obama. As a recording artist, Beasley has released more than a dozen albums, three of them with his MONK'estra big band. His latest album is the Charlie Parker project *Bird Lives* (ACT Music) with Stuttgart's SWR Big Band. Beasley was commissioned by Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra to write a song ("Fête dans la Tête") for its 2020 program. He wrote a commission for the LA Philharmonic's Youth Orchestra Los Angeles called *A History Of Jazz*. Currently, he is working with several European jazz orchestras on programs featuring the music of Chick Corea and Weather Report, as well as Beasley's original symphonic works. Visit him online at JohnBeasleyMusic.com.

Production on the Fly: In-Studio Learning Experiences with John Beasley

One of John Beasley's early jobs as a producer was for alto saxophonist and composer Yosvany Terry's 2005 album *Metamorphosis* (EWE). "At that point, Yosvany had a working band in New York, and they played all the time," Beasley said. "We had two days in the studio. They came in, rehearsed and just played what they played on their gigs. My role was just to usher. When you're working with a musi-

cian and a composer at that caliber, it's about facilitating. So, I was there to make sure the music got down on tape and sounded good, and then listen with fresh ears. I remember taking some of the tunes down from 11 or 12 minutes to 7, that kind of decision. After recording, we noticed we had a pretty long record. I talked with Yosvany and the executive producer of the label about cutting a tune. At that time in

the early 2000s, we were trying to make records that were 50, 52, 55 minutes long."

Lee Ritenour's 2015 album *A Twist Of Rit* (Concord) was a totally different kind of affair, with a larger budget and a larger cast. "That record was older tunes of Lee's that he'd recorded in the past, so we had access to the original arrangements done by Tom Scott and others," Beasley remembered. "Because it was

live in the studio, kind of like doing a direct-to-disk record, pre-production was so important. We prepared the charts exactly as we wanted them before we started. I think we cut that quick — in two days maybe. It was two keyboard players playing at once, two guitar players playing at once, the horns were live in the room with us; everything was live. So, my role was sort of rearranging, reharmonizing some of these tunes to make them a little different. The challenge for Lee and me was that we were both playing and producing — we had to play as good as we could and also listen, objectively, at the same time.

“At that point, we started listening back for

takes that felt really good. We had to decide whether to go with either a good-feeling take that may not have been perfect, or a perfect take that didn't feel as good — those kinds of decisions. For me, it's usually what feels good. It was recorded live to Pro Tools multitrack — we could fix certain things, and we had enough of a budget where you can spend an hour or two after every tune tweaking and punching. But what's important to me for jazz records or jazz-type records is that you pick a good take because you like the way it feels, and you just fix what glaringly needs to be fixed. Because you want the intention of the take to be there. It's still jazz, it's still that essence.”

Beasley has produced a number of recordings with vocalist Dianne Reeves, including a new version of her song “Freedom Dance” recut with a trio and overdubbed percussion and guitar for a dance troupe based in Denver. “The percussionist Munyungo Jackson has a studio at his house, so he layered a bunch of stuff and sent it back to me, and I kind of weeded through it in my home studio and figured out what worked and ended up using a lot of it,” Beasley said. “Same thing with Romero Lubambo playing guitar, who sent tracks and we used what we wanted to use. And then a guy in New York was mixing, using the Audio Movers online platform to send mixes back and forth. And then Paul Boothe, Dianne's road manager and a great engineer himself, was in Texas listening to the mixes. Working with great jazz singers like her, you don't need to do a lot of takes, which is great.”

Pivots in the Studio

Sometimes being a good producer means changing course in the middle of a project in order to improve a recording — or save it outright. The triple-Grammy-nominated 2021 album *Bird Lives* (ACT), co-produced by Beasley and Magnus Lindgren and recorded in Germany with the SWR Big Band, was just such a project. “We get to the first day of rehearsals in this big soundstage, and the drummer is a mile away from the lead trumpet player, strings are all baffled off — it seemed impossible,” Beasley said. “They wanted to record live in that room that way. Charlie Parker's music is challenging. And on the second day, one of the string players came down with COVID, which a couple others caught despite all the precautions we had taken in the studio. That shut down the production for 10 days. Meantime, I started talking to executive producer Hans-Peter Zachary, saying, ‘This could be a blessing — why don't we just layer this record?’ We had two-and-a-half weeks to record. We recorded the rhythm tracks and the brass together, in two separate rooms. And the woodwinds were separate, so it ended up being a layered record. It doesn't sound like that because the rhythm section tracks are so burning. But we did what we had to do.”

The first MONK'estra CD Beasley recorded with his award-winning big band, 2016's *John Beasley Presents MONK'estra Vol. 1* (Mack Avenue), was another important learning experience for the bandleader and producer. “It showed how I had made mistakes, and I had to pivot in the studio to make up for some of my lackadaisical pre-production planning,” he said. “I started with six arrangements. So I paid for the band to go to United Recorders for a day and told them it would take three to four hours. The lesson learned: It always takes longer than you think.”

—Ed Enright



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Johnson recorded three basses on the track "Samurai Fly" from his solo album *Overpass* (ECM).

Marc Johnson's Bass Solo on 'Samurai Fly'

Marc Johnson's composition "Samurai Hee-Haw" must be special for him. Besides recording and performing it with his Bass Desires project in the '80s, revisiting it in the '90s for his *Magic Labyrinth* album and being a staple in performances when he was part of the late guitarist John Abercrombie's trio, Johnson has revisited the piece on his 2018 solo album *Overpass* (ECM) and re-titled it "Samurai Fly."

For this track, Johnson recorded three basses, with one pizzicato bass playing the groove shown at the beginning of the transcription (adjusted to match the chord changes). I'm considering the entire thing an A6 chord, though it could just as easily be perceived as an A chord moving to an F#m.

The other two basses are played arco, doubling the melody in octaves, and improvising over the form as presented in this transcription. It's panned wonderfully, with the pizzicato bass placed in the center and the arco basses on either side. Not panning the upper basses hard-right and hard-left was a great choice, as it makes it sound less like overdubs, and more like the three basses are playing together in the same room.

I've notated the bass on the right in the top staff and the left-side bass on the bottom staff, partly because the right-side bass is generally in a higher register and partly because I believe that was the one Johnson recorded first. The interaction between the parts makes this difficult to say with certainty, but the upper part

not only starts off, but many times the lower part plays in answer to the upper part, typically playing in the spaces left by the upper part. The interaction is so conversational, it adds to the sense that the two basses were improvising together.

Also, even though I'm referring to the upper part as the "upper" part, there are points where the parts cross. From the very beginning we have some ambiguity, with bass two's first lick (measure 3) coming in below bass one's first lick but above its second lick. In measures 26–27 we have a bit of overlap, but between bars 32 and 33, bass two actually goes above bass one. There's some more overlap in the upcoming bars (35–37, 39), so although Johnson is viewing bass two as a

lower part, he's clearly not considering that a hard rule. It also furthers the sense of two bassists playing together.

I've opted to present the basses as they would be notated for bass players (bass is written an octave higher than it sounds). Though some of those high notes may be difficult to read, I found that if I wrote the high part 8va, it didn't make sense looking at both parts and seeing the upper part lower than the bottom part, and writing both parts an octave down put some of the notes below the low E under the staff (which bass players like myself are loath to read).

I also didn't want to do the classical approach of putting the higher bits in tenor clef, as not all bassist read tenor clef (as a rule I don't enjoy reading tenor clef, so I would feel guilty forcing others to do it).

Some other aspects of the improvisation that not only create the sense that the two players are improvising together but also produce a feeling of cohesion and development are the motivic approach Johnson takes and the call-and-response manner in which he plays the parts.

For instance, almost all his lines come from the A major pentatonic scale. The exception are when the G# replaces the A, producing the E major pentatonic scale. This always happens on the E6 sections, and this use of purely pentatonic scales connects the improvisations to the melody (which is based on the same elements) but also creates the Asian/country-western sound that gives the song its title.

Also, notice how at the beginning the two basses play in the spaces between each other, with the bottom part typically playing punctuating bits for the upper part (one of the reasons I believe the upper part was recorded first). There is little overlap, and it's only when one bass starts on the same beat as the end of the other.

Both parts typically play two-note motifs consisting of adjacent pitches from the respective scales. This is another technique that helps make the basses sound more conversational and develops the improvisation. Johnson is exploring this simple idea. It's a much more compositional approach to improvisation, and one that proves very effective in the context of playing all the parts on his own.

The motif is played as just two eighth notes until bar 9, when the lower part connects two motifs, and then two measures later when we hear Johnson play straight up the scale from its fifth, but slurs it in such a way to make it still sound like variations on the two-note motif.

From here we get more rhythmic development, which leads to some wonderful effects. One is when the upper part starts answering the lower (furthering the illusion of three

cloned Marc Johnsons) in measures 24 and 26 where the lower bass ends on a high E-F# and the upper parts plays the same motif right after. Also, bars 34–35 have both basses not answering one another but playing the motif together in harmony. This is not only in service to the previously mentioned illusion but is also a nice culmination to the solo. Johnson

must have felt so, as well, since two bars later the upper bass quotes the melody to bring about its recapitulation.

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.

Getting Your Command Center up to Speed

Update Your Project Studio with Affordable New Home Recording Tools

For those of us who have home studios, we all had to start somewhere. Some have put money away from various gigs and jobs to build their dream studio setup. Others may have started on a more basic setup, with only a computer, recording software and a microphone. With the ever-improving technology, there comes a time when you want to update and add to your existing studio setup to simplify your workflow and improve the sound quality of your recordings. As you grow and build your recording skills, clientele and finances, your needs will change — so your studio gear needs to grow and change with you.

As you improve your studio, the first question should be: What is the weakest link in your recording setup? Which gear can use some improvement to help you produce higher quality recordings? Fortunately, recording equipment has become affordable enough that you can produce entire albums almost anywhere, and you don't need to book a recording studio for thousands of dollars to do so. Hard to believe? Just ask singer Billie Eilish, whose debut album sold millions of copies worldwide, became the No. 1 album on Billboard's Top 200 and earned Grammy awards for Album of the Year and Best Pop Vocal Album. Oh, and the entire album was recorded with her brother Finneas in their bedroom studio.

Room Acoustics

When updating your studio, the first step should be upgrading your room and your listening environment. Your studio room is the most important piece of gear that you have. Treating your room properly can improve the sound quality of every mic that you own, as well as improving the sound quality of your studio monitors dramatically. It is like an instant upgrade on both. It is important to reduce any reverberations, background noises and echoes, and absorb all sound reflections as much as you can. Fortunately many of the soundproofing and acoustic treatments can be done at a low cost.

Many DIY YouTube videos show you various acoustic treatment options and how to build your own affordable acoustic panels. If building isn't your thing, there are a few options at great prices. The ProSoCoustic WaveRoom Pro Mini panels not only absorb sound waves, but diffuse them as well. Their Mini 8 kit includes eight 12-inch by 12-inch panels, and has a street price of \$469. Primacoustic's London 8 Acoustic Room Kit contains four 36-inch control columns and eight 12-inch scatter blocks. They're made from high-density fiberglass, and this denser material provides almost five times more absorption than typical foam. You can pick up this 12-piece package for \$370.

Monitor Upgrades

Regarding your studio monitors: Are you getting an accurate representation of what you're creating? Are you unhappy with your mixes if you listen on another system? Are you missing some mids or low end when listening, and then overcompensating at the mix stage? Some producers may have started on entry-level monitors, which may not have used the best components in their construction, but the price was right for their budget at the time. If you choose to upgrade your studio monitors, you can always keep your original monitors and use them as a secondary audio source and mix reference. Many options are out there lately for affordable, high-quality monitors. ADAM Audio monitors have become popular among many engineers and producers for their professional level of quality and reasonable price points. Their products range

from their pricier high-end S series to their really affordable T series, with monitors as low as \$200 each. ADAM's new A series stands somewhere in between, and this range replaces their long-running AX models. These updated monitors feature all-new bass drivers, newly designed midrange dome drivers on the three-way models and Sonarworks room correction DSP. Prices start at \$499 for the single A4V model and \$799 for the A7V model.

Focal is a company known for its high quality studio monitors and headphones. Focal's Alpha Evo line is ideal for home studio owners, with accurate detailed sound, compact size and a more affordable price. Many producers have been recommending Alpha Evo monitors lately for their versatility, clarity and natural reproduction of dynamics. These monitors also look as great as they sound, with a sleek, modern design that will add a nice visual touch to your home studio. The 5-inch Alpha 50 Evo monitors are worth checking out, and can be found for around \$300 each.

Microphone Updates

Updating your microphone will have a large impact on the sound quality of your recordings. A \$100 microphone can serve you well while you save up for higher-end equipment. But if you started with an entry-level microphone when you initially put your home studio together, you will want to eventually consider an upgrade. Does your current microphone offer an accurate representation of your source, whether it's a vocal or instrument? If the recording sounds too harsh or dull, and you always rely on fixing it in the mix, you should upgrade your mic. Many high-quality mics are available that won't break the bank.

One studio microphone getting a lot of praise lately is the Avantone Pro CV-12, which is a large-diaphragm tube condenser mic. Many producers like its clean, warm sound, and it performs especially well with vocals and acoustic instruments. At \$399, you get that vintage tube mic tone for an affordable price. The Aston Microphones Spirit is another large-diaphragm condenser mic getting some attention and praise lately for its warm, open sound and shimmering harmonics. Engineers have found this mic to be very versatile, and an accurate, true-sounding rendition of the source. The Spirit is another great value for \$349.

Editing Consoles

Many producers have been raving about the Monogram Creative Console. This creative editing console is made up of fully modular MIDI controllers that can be connected magnetically in any configuration you like. It is highly customizable, and you can assign each module to control any parameter in any application that uses MIDI Control Change.

Producers like using the Monogram console because it is versatile, easy to use, and is a huge time-saver. It can be as detailed or as simple as you want it to be, so if you just need a few MIDI controls for volume level, expression, mute switching and writing in automation, this controller can work well for you. The Monogram Mini Console is the most basic package, and includes their Core and Essential Keys modules that can be customized however you choose for \$329. As your controlling needs grow and change, you can always add on more modules for your ultimate custom console.

Keyboard Control

New studio gear always sparks inspiration and creativity, and can



Monogram Creative Console Studio



Cherry Audio Memorymode



Cherry Audio DCO-106



Aston Spirit



iZotope Ozone 10 screen shot

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also add a bit of fun and cool vibe to your studio. One such device is the LUMI Keys Studio Edition by Roli, which isn't your average keyboard controller. It's a very responsive and expressive keyboard, enabling you to deepen sounds by pressing down harder into each key. You can also control pitch bend for each individual note by gliding your finger left to right on the key. Every key illuminates in different colors, which is not only aesthetically pleasing for your studio, but serves a purpose as well. You can set up LUMI Keys to illuminate scales, chords and arpeggios in every key. So, for example: If you want to record a keyboard solo in B lydian, it will only illuminate the keys in that mode, so you can fly through the solo without hitting the wrong notes. You'll be able to explore unfamiliar keys and educate yourself with different modes and scales. On top of that, LUMI Keys' compact size allows you to place it on a crowded studio work desk, or take it on the road with you so you can create music anywhere. The LUMI Keys Studio Edition is available for \$299.

Sonic Expansion

For synth lovers who want to upgrade and expand their sonic palette, check out Cherry Audio. The company was launched in 2018, and it offers high-quality, reimagined emulations of classic analog synths — with expanded, modernized features. A few of their many soft synth offerings include the CA2600, which is reminiscent of the ARP 2600; the DCO-106, which recreates the classic sounds of the Roland JUNO-106; and the Mercury-4, which is an emulation of the Roland Jupiter-4.

In addition, Cherry Audio also offers its own original synths, such as their new Sines synth, which features four sine-wave oscillators that can be waveshaped into unique and complex shapes. The best part is that all of these instruments are priced affordably, with the average price between \$25 and \$49 for each synth. The affordable price points are an attraction for sure, without any sonic compromises. So you can buy an original 1982 MemoryMoog Synth for \$25,000, or maybe just buy Cherry Audio's Memorymode soft synth for \$39.

Software & Plug-ins

Music production software and plug-ins are plentiful, and the choices can definitely be overwhelming. The company Output creates very unique-sounding software synths and plug-ins, and the content and sounds are very inspiring and fun to experiment with.

Output created a software-as-a-service (SaaS) product called Arcade, and it quickly became a favorite for music producers and creators. It is a hybrid sample library/virtual instrument, and your \$10 monthly subscription gives you full access to Arcade's 50,000-sound library, which is constantly being updated with new sounds and loops. Arcade is a great tool for adding more colors to your compositions. For example, if you don't know how to play a saxophone or a sitar, Arcade allows you to add those sounds to your composition, royalty-free. Also, if you are under a tight deadline or don't have the budget to hire a musician or vocalist, Arcade is a great additional tool to add high quality sounds to your production quickly. Output gives you a free 30 day trial to check it out — so check it out.

Mixing & Mastering

For some music composers, mixing and mastering audio may seem like a daunting task. iZotope develops software for audio recording that is very user-friendly, and their products have become favorites for producers and engineers for their ease of use, and professional sounding results. They help you improve your sound, and they also focus on work-

flow. What makes iZotope distinctive is their assistive audio feature on many of its plug-ins, which is based on machine learning technology. It analyzes your audio and automatically adjusts parameters in the plug-in, which quickly provides you with an excellent starting point for you to tweak and customize your EQ and mix. This feature is perfect for producers who may not have a budget to hire an engineer to mix their project, and for composers who may not have formal sound engineering training or experience.

If you are looking to upgrading your mixing and mastering software, you should consider looking into some of iZotope's products to simplify your workflow and improve your mixes. One popular plug-in is RX, a powerful audio tool that can remove buzz, clicks, hiss and hum. Some noise factors in your studio are out of your control. RX is the perfect solution to remove unwanted noise. Neutron is iZotope's channel strip mixing plug-in, with 7 processing modules: Unmask, Sculptor, Transient Shaper, Exciter, Gate, Compressor and Equalizer. What sets it apart from others is the Track Assistant feature, which analyzes your audio and creates a custom preset for it.

Mastering can sometimes be perceived as an art that only specialist engineers can take on. Fortunately, iZotope makes mastering more accessible and achievable with Ozone. It's feature-packed with all the modules you will need to make great masters, with a very intuitive interface. The Master Assistant listens to your audio and automatically adjusts parameters in the software, to give you a helpful starting point to create a professional-sounding master. Even if you currently own some of the iZotope plug-ins, it's always worth looking into upgrading to their latest versions, since they are constantly adding new and helpful features. iZotope offers a few creative and useful plugins on their site absolutely free for their users. You can't get more budget-friendly than that.

Abide Your Budget

While buying shiny, new gear is always exciting and appealing, you should keep a few things in mind. One of the most important is, don't go into debt buying gear. If you're not making a lot of money with your productions at the moment, don't be in a hurry to upgrade your studio equipment. Assess your current studio gear, identify the weakest links in your setup and upgrade as your budget allows. Also, learn your existing gear as much as you can before considering an upgrade. Are you familiar with all of the features and capabilities of your equipment? You may be spending money on gear unnecessarily because you think that attractive new piece of gear has features you don't have, when in fact you may already have those features but aren't aware of it.

Many options exist for acquiring professional gear at affordable prices, and that gear can have a big impact on your workflow, inspiration and the quality of your productions. Make a wish list of the gear you're interested in, do some research and also ask your fellow musician friends for recommendations — so you can upgrade and take your studio setup to the next level.

DB

Gary Guzmán has been a professional music producer and composer for more than 25 years. He has written and produced music for national and international TV shows, radio and television commercials, toys, video games and slot machines. He has produced, played, sung and/or composed music for hundreds of commercials for companies including McDonald's, Mazda, Gatorade, Budweiser and Wrigley. His music has won prestigious advertising awards such as the London International Advertising Award, Telly Award, Association of Independent Commercial Producers Awards, Visual Excellence in Multimedia Arts Awards, Mobius Awards and Communicator Awards. Guzmán is a staff producer/composer at Sonixphere, a music production company (sonixsphere.com). He is currently composing and producing music for TV programs on networks such as ABC, NBC, CBS, VH1, the Discovery Channel, TLC, the History Channel and The Food Network. Guzmán is currently producing sonic content for online gaming and various internet projects.



Primacoustic London 8 Acoustic Room Kit



Avantone Pro CV-12



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Toolshed > GEAR BOX

1. All-Arounder

With the OC16, Austrian Audio has introduced a new microphone in its Open Condenser large-diaphragm series equipped with Open Acoustics technology. Featuring a handmade-in-Vienna CKR6 capsule, the OC16 is a flexible, all-around mic that can be used on a wide variety of instruments — from drums to guitars to winds, strings, pianos and vocals.

More info: austrian.audio

2. Deep Sea Blue Wins it

Audio-Technica has launched its ATH-M50xDS Professional Monitor Headphones in a Deep Sea Blue finish. A limited-edition version of A-T's ATH-M50x, this model is the result of a global crowd-sourcing campaign where end users voted on their favorite color.

More info: audio-technica.com

3. USB Mic & Interface

Samson's G-Track Pro is a USB microphone and audio interface with an instrument input and mixer for recording two independent channels simultaneously at 24-bit/96kHz. Its dual 1-inch large-diaphragm condenser capsule captures the detail and nuance of vocals and instruments. Offering three selectable pickup patterns (cardioid, omnidirectional, bidirectional), the G-Track Pro includes a ¼-inch instrument input for recording line-level devices.

More info: samsontech.com

4. Big Muff Pi Hardware Plugin

The EHX Big Muff Pi Hardware Plugin takes the analog circuit of the Ram's Head Big Muff Pi and injects it into a DAW. Hook up the Big Muff Pi Hardware Plugin to a computer via USB and run recorded tracks or virtual instruments through the circuit to add signature warmth and distortion.

More info: ehx.com

5. Desktop Recording Hub

Avid's MBOX Studio provides everything you need to create, record, edit and mix music and audio in your personal studio with exceptional clarity. Features include low-latency tracking; real-time EQ, delay and reverb; and 21 x 22 simultaneous I/Os — including Variable Z mic/line inputs, which open a range of tonal options. A massive collection of instruments, plugins and loops are included.

More info: avid.com

6. Creative Collaboration Tools

Universal Audio has introduced the Volt 476P and Volt 4 USB audio interfaces. Featuring four-in/four-out audio connections with onboard tone shaping, each model brings 48 volts of phantom power, direct monitoring for latency-free recording, a suite of audio software and iPad/iPhone connectivity. The 476P (pictured) is UA's first Volt model to feature four analog preamps, with 76 compressor and vintage mic preamp modes on every input channel. The Volt 4 is a portable, bus-powered interface with four-in/four-out audio connections, including dual analog mic preamps with vintage mic preamp mode.

More info: uaudio.com



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Julian Lage

When Julian Lage sat down for this live Blindfold Test at the North Sea Jazz Festival last July, the guitarist/composer was in the throes of a summer-long tour and preparing to launch his latest, well-received recording, *View With A Room* (Blue Note). As always, no hints were given beforehand, and the test was delivered by noted author Nate Chinen, who serves as editorial director for WRTI, a non-commercial public radio station serving greater Philadelphia from Temple University. This was Lage's first Blindfold Test.

Charlie Christian

"Flying Home" (*The Radio Broadcasts 1939–1941*, Stardust/Cleopatra, 2001) Christian, guitar; Benny Goodman, clarinet; Lionel Hampton, vibes; Fletcher Henderson, piano; Artie Bernstein, bass; Nick Fatool, drums.

I would venture to say that's Mr. Charlie Christian. It's with Benny Goodman, and is it Red Norvo? Ah, Lionel Hampton. I would think late '30s or early '40s. Those are very interesting years, especially in the evolution of the guitar. It changed rapidly. From the beginning of the '30s to the end of the '30s, it was a revolution. Going from basically banjo being the closest thing in a jazz band to being a full-fledged, lyrical, narrative-driven soloing kind of instrument. Charlie Christian's the greatest ever, in my opinion. What's so beautiful about this example is not only do we hear his phrasing, which is iconoclastic, and I wish I could do that — but you also hear his accompaniment, which isn't as well documented on the records with Benny Goodman. You hear how rhythmically interactive he is. It's just stunning. ... How many stars? All of 'em.

Lenny Breau

"Don't Think Twice, It's Alright" (*Guitar Sounds From Lenny Breau*, RCA Victor, 1969) Breau, guitar; Ronnie Hallidorson, bass; Reg Kelln, drums.

At first I thought it was Bola Sete, and it's not. And then I'm between Charlie Byrd and Lenny Breau. It must be Charlie.

Chinen: It's Lenny Breau. Recorded in 1968. This is from *Guitar Sounds From Lenny Breau*, which was his debut album. Chet Atkins was at RCA, and he recorded this at RCA studios in Nashville.

Lage: That's what threw me off. It sounds like an old country record, honestly. Lenny Breau's style especially toward the end of his life was so idiosyncratic. And you hear it in the closing chord of that, when he does his famous artificial harmonics. But for the majority of that, it's just the earlier stages of such a legendary sound. That's fantastic. The whole concept of a jazz guitarist playing a nylon-string or gut-string guitar is kind of novel, even to this day. ... What I loved was how seamlessly he moved from whatever the song is to the improvisation. 5 stars.

Jim Hall

"Skylark" (*Magic Meeting*, ArtistShare, 2004) Hall, guitar; Scott Colley, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

[almost immediately] It's Jim, right? That's so good. ... Jim famously played quiet enough that even if he was using an amplifier, you could still hear the acoustic sound of the guitar. And on that recording they captured it beautifully, where you hear the fingers on the strings, you hear the pick on the string, you hear, you know, the sensuality of it. And it's blended with this very warm, very cohesive Polytone or Walter Woods amplified sound. That alone is kind of untouchable. No one quite had that together. I would almost make the argument that if you heard Charlie Christian's acoustic sound with his acoustic sound, it would be similar. Another thing that's interesting is that for a lot of guitar players, we have six strings, right? We tend to live on the higher ones most of the



time and leave the lower ones out, because they can have conflict. For 75 percent of that, Jim's playing completely in the low part of the guitar where you're told never to play, because it's going to get in the way of the bass. It just kind of proves that those are fake rules, and if you're musical about it, there's a lot of freedom there for you. So a lot of Jim's thing is extreme courage. It's like Picasso: he just did the thing that we all want to do, and he did it better than anybody. 5 stars, without a doubt.

Nels Cline

"The Angel Of Angels" (*Draw Breath*, Cryptogramophone, 2007) Cline, electric and acoustic guitars; Devin Hoff, bass; Scott Amendola, drums and effects.

It's beautiful. I don't know that recording. You know, first I thought of Ralph Towner, but it's two guitar players, right?

Chinen: It's overdubbed.

Lage: And is it the guitar player's record, or the bass player's record?

Chinen: Guitar player's.

Lage: And the year?

Chinen: This is 2007.

Lage: It's not Wolfgang [Muthspiel], is it? Well, who is it? I love it. [afterwards] Man, I thought of Nels! I know that album, too. Oh, it's so good! I should have known because there's no solo that it was Nels. That's a very Nels Cline thing to do.

Chinen: This occurred to me not only because you and Nels have this relationship, but also because this composition felt like it's in your world.

Lage: Absolutely. I've been playing with Nels for many, many years now. I've been with him when he overdubs guitars. And one of his superpowers is that he can overdub guitars in such a way that you'd never lose sight of the primary instrument. It doesn't become a sparring match. It's just orchestration; he's a really good orchestrator. And I've witnessed him do it, and he does it there beautifully.

Mary Halvorson

"Nodding Yellow" (*Belladonna*, Nonesuch, 2022) Halvorson, guitar.

It's definitely Mary. Is that the new record on Nonesuch? Absolutely wonderful. Mary's a dear friend of mine. My old neighbor. And I admire her so much. What's so striking is, I know her individuality as a guitar player. As an interpreter, as an improviser. And the liberty she has as a composer to translate that vocabulary to these other instruments and still maintain it as an expression of chamber music is just the highest, most inspiring level. And, similar to Jim, her sense of humor is what I always find. You know, it's not deadly serious. It's fun and it's adventurous and it's risky. It just reminds me of all the things I love in music. ... 5 stars.

DB

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



JOSH LEE

SAXOPHONIST, COMPOSER
AND ARRANGER

Grammy nominated Saxophonist Josh Lee has performed with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia, the Sun Ra Arkestra, and Ms. Lauryn Hill. He is co-founder of Jazz Lives Philadelphia and leads Josh Lee and the Extended Family, an ensemble dedicated to swing era music of Jimmie Lunceford and Count Basie. Josh is currently on faculty at Temple University and is the baritone sax player for The Count Basie Orchestra, Abdullah Ibrahim, and Igmar Thomas and the Revive Big Band. He depends on P. Mauriat to give voice to his art.

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