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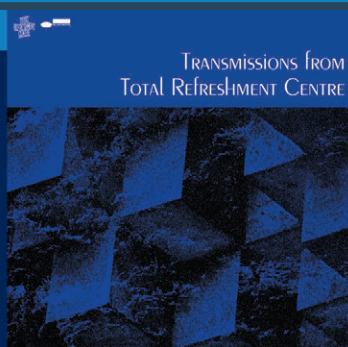
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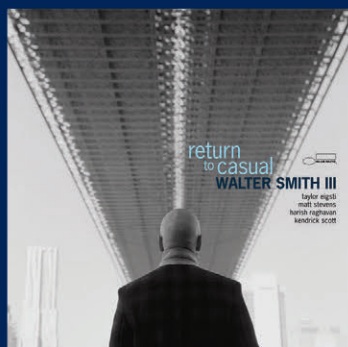
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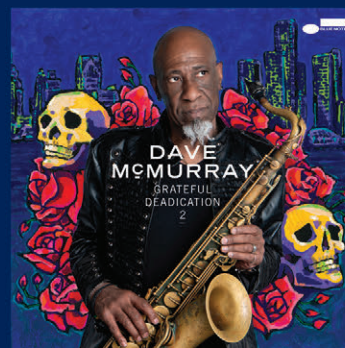
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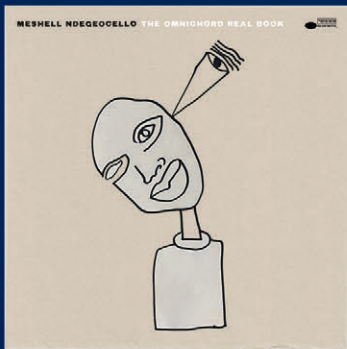
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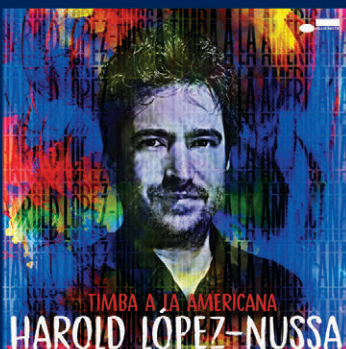
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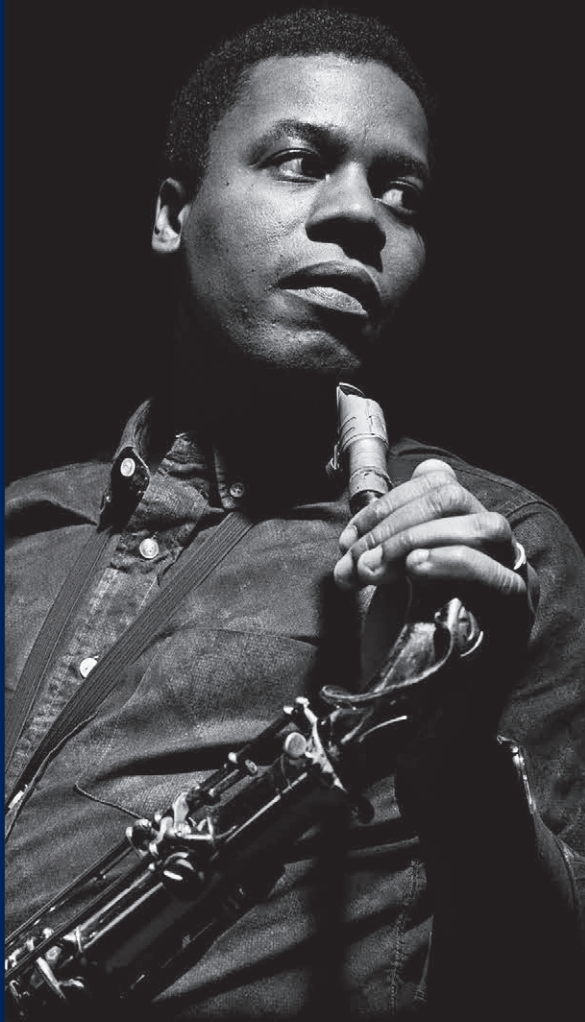
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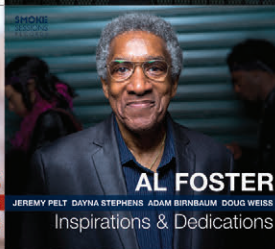
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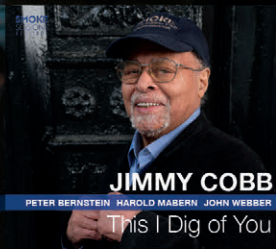
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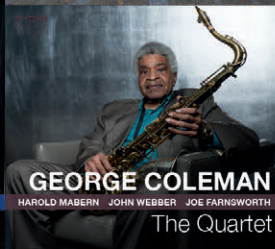
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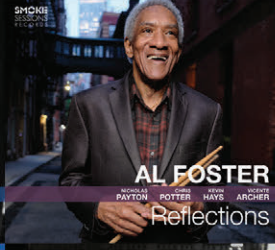
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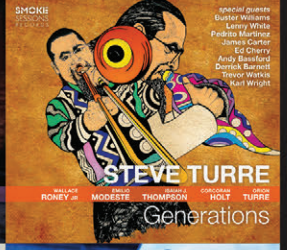
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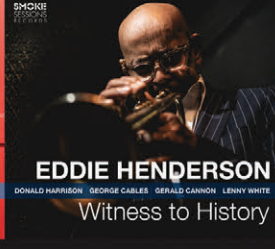
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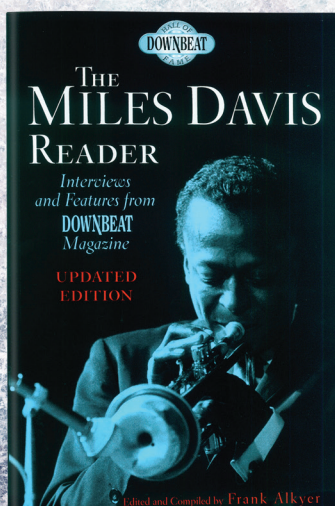
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The Promises of Pharoah Sanders

BY GARY FUKUSHIMA

The late Pharoah Sanders is on the minds of many these days — including the DownBeat readers who voted him into the Hall of Fame, and listeners who caught a live performance this summer of *Promises*, a project by Sanders and the minimalist composer Floating Points, at the Hollywood Bowl with saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings in the role of Pharoah.



What a year singer Samara Joy has had — from a Grammy as best new artist earlier this year to Album of the Year and vocalist of the year in the 88th Annual DownBeat Readers Poll.

Cover photo by Mark Sheldon

88TH ANNUAL DOWNBEAT READERS POLL

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First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



DownBeat honors Pharoah Sanders as he enters the Hall of Fame.

Correcting Jazz History

SOMETIMES YOU GET A SECOND CHANCE to do the right thing.

With that, here's a little inside baseball on how the publishing process works.

When Pharoah Sanders passed away on Sept. 24, 2022, DownBeat was able to post an obituary online at downbeat.com immediately, but we missed the window for running a proper obituary in the November 2022 issue of the magazine due to production deadlines. As you can guess, it takes time to write, edit, print and send a magazine, a bit of a disadvantage when it comes to reporting breaking news, to be sure.

Still, we thought there was an opportunity for Sanders to join the DownBeat Hall of Fame later that year via the Readers Poll, and figured we could run a great tribute in our December 2022 issue. But he took fifth place for the honor and the opportunity faded. At that point, in the world of publishing, the newsworthy ship had sailed.

It didn't go unnoticed.

We received several letters over the next few months, most of them reflected by this succinct note from Peter Probst in Berlin: "One of the greatest tenor players of all time dies, and I don't find a single line about it in your magazine (only online as of Sept. 27, 2022). Is this right? A cover story would be appropriate!"

Those letters stung, so the next hope was that there would be a memorial concert, a new historical album released, perhaps a new book to report on. For the next several months, it was stuck in the back of this editor's mind because Mr. Probst and the others were right: There should have been a major

feature article in DownBeat with the passing of Sanders.

When he placed second for the Hall of Fame in this year's Critics Poll (August), we felt certain that Sanders had a chance to win via the next poll. Sure enough, the readers of DownBeat finally made it happen this month.

Now, Pharoah Sanders and his beautifully plaintive music have been enshrined in the DownBeat Hall of Fame. He appears in his rightful place on the cover. And, as you can see beginning on page 28, writer Gary Fukushima offers a beautiful tribute to one of this music's most spiritual and soulful artists.

We're sorry it took so long. We regret that Sanders isn't here to enjoy such a well-deserved honor. And to Mr. Probst and all the fans who wrote in, we hope we've done the memory of Pharoah Sanders proud.

Along with remembering Sanders, readers cast some rather sentimental votes this time around, perhaps because we lost so many other jazz giants this year. Wayne Shorter won Artist of the Year one more time after passing away in March. Tony Bennett, who succumbed in July, was honored as Male Vocalist. And Joey DeFrancesco won Organist of the Year despite his early calling in August 2022. Let's not forget Ahmad Jamal, who died in April and went on to win Historical Album of the Year.

Before anyone even tries to say this music is dying — full stop. Jazz artists and improvising musicians continue to look to the future, play for the moment and revere the legends of the past and the joy they've brought to all. And we'll listen to and remember them always. **DB**



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Tyshawn Sorey
PLAYS IT HIS WAY
BY TED PANKEN PHOTOS BY JOHN ROGERS

When Tyshawn Sorey turned 40 a few months into the pandemic lockdown, he decided henceforth to focus on more explicitly foregrounding hardcore jazz roots within his musical production.

"COVID forced an immediate... [Sorey] decided to focus on more explicitly foregrounding hardcore jazz roots within his musical production."



Cover Tyshawn

Why did DownBeat pass on Tyshawn Sorey for the cover and cover story for the September 2023 issue. Please, please, please don't let this happen again.

LINDA LOUISE HUESTON
EDMONTON "JAZZ CITY"
ALBERTA CANADA

Editor's Note: We ran a major feature on Tyshawn in the September issue, which highlighted the great pianist Kris Davis on the cover. Sometimes we have to choose between our favorite children. But you are correct — Tyshawn Sorey is cover worthy!

Carla Bley's Beauty

While your [online] article noting the passing of the great Carla Bley is reverential in its praise for her amazing career, for inexplicable reasons, you have chosen to lead with remarks about her looks. Why?

Would the writer have done the same if it were Steve Swallow who died, to lead with remarks about his hairstyle and facial appearance? He's certainly equally striking in appearance to me. Has to be said.

TROY BOY
VIA EMAIL

Editor's Note: Carla Bley was a striking woman from the music that she made to the way that she dressed to the way she looked. James Hale was simply drawing a parallel. Carla's bangs were striking, almost as striking as her music. Readers who missed the online tribute can read it on page 20.

Pass the Pease

My grandmother's cousin, Sharon Pease, was an early writer for DownBeat in the 1930s and a lyricist and jazz pianist himself. My grandmother was very close to him and spoke of him often when I was growing up. Now, I'm compiling some family history and would like to include some information on him. He wrote an article with the famous headline, "I Saw Pinetop Spit Blood," in 1939, which is featured in a number of footnotes in various books on Boogie Woogie. I'd love to get a copy of this article, but can't find it online. Is it possible to obtain a copy from your archive?

ELLEN THALMAN
BERLIN, GERMANY/CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

Editor's Note: Forgive the headline pun, but it was there, just waiting. Yes, we can find that article for you. DownBeat is in the process of digitizing every issue of the magazine ever produced. Stay tuned for more details in the months to come!

Missing Brötzmann

Did Downbeat miss the passing of Peter Brötzmann last summer? He was a giant of the European free-jazz scene; I can't understand why this wasn't noted.

JOHN VEYLUPEK
LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA

Editor's Note: We ran a full obituary online on June 27, but due to deadlines and timing, it did not appear in the print edition. It's one of the challenges of publishing on many platforms. Thank you for mentioning this. We are happy to note the great saxophonist's passing here.

Ex Machina Anger

Suzanne Lorge's limited arrogant verbiage [for Steve Lehman's *Ex Machina* (November)] does not explain the 3.5 stars for an album that can be prophetic and fantastic at the same time. Faced with a small space to express yourself and a struggle to search for the best, so common in Down Beat, from my perspective, it limits the appreciation of a work that is recognized by European critics. Perhaps, you continue with a reactionary thought of what should be, according to you, jazz. Therefore I totally disagree with your opinion, but I do not argue. Lack of substance and seriousness. And of course I don't accept Paul de Barros's opinion either.

ALFONSO ZEPOL
VIA EMAIL

Clarification

In the October issue's Transcription column, the composer of "Portrait Of Jennie" is J. Russel Robinson.

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ADAM KENNEDY



"The first *Blues Deluxe* album took seven days to finish, this one took five," Joe Bonamassa says of *Time Clocks*, a tribute to, and continuation of, his first hit album 20 years ago.

Joe Bonamassa: (Still) Keeping the Blues Alive

Perhaps the highest-profile blues guitarist on the planet today, Joe Bonamassa has packed iconic venues all over the globe, from Royal Albert Hall in London to the Beacon Theater and Carnegie Hall in New York, Red Rocks Amphitheatre near Denver and Ryman Auditorium in Nashville as well

as the Sydney Opera House, Vienna Opera House and The Koninklijk Theater Carré in Amsterdam. The blues, it seems, travels well these days.

In late September, he played alongside his boyhood hero John McLaughlin on a version of Jeff Beck's "Cause We Ended As Lovers"

at Eric Clapton's Crossroads Festival in Los Angeles. Meanwhile, he's gearing up for his ninth annual Keeping the Blues Alive at Sea cruise, scheduled to travel from Miami to Cozumel, Mexico, in March 2024. If not the best, he's certainly the hardest-working blues guitarist around.



Bonamassa has a deep connection to guitarists Albert King, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, B.B. King, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, Danny Gatton and Eric Johnson.

Known for his incredible technique, which he has been flaunting in public since being trotted out on stage at the ripe old age of 12, the seasoned 46-year-old New York native has been in the spotlight his entire adult life. And while Bonamassa may also deftly incorporate progressive rock and heavy metal elements into the mix, which he did convincingly on 2021's *Time Clocks*, he remains a dedicated blues scholar at heart. In conversation with the busy blues ambassador, he seems genuinely humbled by talking about his own personal blues guitar heroes like Albert King, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy and especially B.B. King, who he opened for as a little kid during the summer of 1990.

A self-described "old soul," Bonamassa has said he felt he was a child of the '60s (even though he was born in 1977) because of his deep connection to the Holy Trinity of guitar gods from those days: Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix. Aside from B.B. King, he counts Danny Gatton as a significant mentor. (It was Gatton who introduced a young Bonamassa to recordings by iconic guitarists like Les Paul, Hank Garland, Gene Vincent, Cliff Gallup, Chet Atkins and Merle Travis). Another guitarist whose influence looms large is Eric Johnson, whose signature progressive lines can be heard in some of Bonamassa's more rock-tinged playing.

Bonamassa spoke with DownBeat correspondent Bill Milkowski by phone just before he embarked on his fall tour in conjunction with the release of the rootsy *Blues Deluxe*,

Vol. 2 on his J&R Adventures label.

Bill Milkowski: You had just come off a successful studio album with *Time Clocks* and followed that with your live concert film and album *Tales Of Time*, shot at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre last summer and released on CD/DVD/Blu-Ray. Why did you decide to return to the blues now?

Bonamassa: I never expected to make this album. Basically, I wanted to do something for the anniversary of *Blues Deluxe*, which kind of helped my solo career break out 20 years ago. That was my third album but the first one that really started to get some traction. And so instead of just remastering the original record, which is just a cheap way to sell it twice, I decided that we needed to cut another volume of songs. I got together with Josh Smith, who plays guitar in my band and is a great producer/artist himself, and we went into Sunset Sound studios in Los Angeles and just did it. The first *Blues Deluxe* album took seven days to finish, this one took five. It was a process of singing a guide vocal, doing a couple of takes, taking solos on the floor and then, "Are we all happy with it? Great, next." It was crazy how fast it all went.

Milkowski: There are a couple of tunes, like Bobby "Blue" Bland's "Twenty-Four Hour Blues" and Josh Smith's power ballad "Is It Safe To Go Home," that go beyond a straight shuffle blues by using full string and horn sections.

Bonamassa: Yes, our bassist and musical

savant Calvin Turner wrote all the horn and string parts. So nothing's canned. Everything is played live, I'm proud to say.

Milkowski: You also tip your hat to blues icons like Bobby Parker, Guitar Slim, Albert King and Pee Wee Crayton on this album.

Bonamassa: Yeah. Those are Mt. Rushmore-level blues singers and guitarists. You're never gonna get to where those guys got on those tunes, so you just have to kind of just relax and be yourself; just be who you are and do your own version of the tune. We obviously wanted to hit a couple of other marks along the way, like tipping the hat to the British blues scene with Fleetwood Mac's "Lazy Poker Blues." Because my blues journey started in London with Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton and Peter Green, then ended up in Chicago with Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Otis Rush and all those real-deal blues guys that the British cats worshipped. So our version of "Well, I Done Got Over It" is straight out of the Bluesbreakers playbook from *The Beano Album* (1966 John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers album featuring Eric Clapton). And when we picked the songs, it was like, "Let's just play it and have fun." And I think you can really hear the band responding that way throughout the album.

Milkowski: *Blues Deluxe* is named for a Jeff Beck tune on his first album as a leader, 1968's *Truth*. So there's the London connection again.

Bonamassa: Yeah, I cut my teeth on *Truth* and *Beck-Ola*. And if you listen to "Blues Deluxe,"

the song is, simply put, the first verse of “Gambler’s Blues” from B.B. King’s *Blues Is King* (1967) and Buddy Guy’s hit single “Stone Crazy” (1961). On *Truth*, it’s credited to Jeff Beck and Rod Stewart, but those verses are lifted straight out of Buddy Guy and B.B. King. Complete lift job.

Milkowski: Your version of Bobby Parker’s “It’s Hard But It’s Fair” is super funky with the punchy horns.

Bonamassa: My biggest regret is that Bobby never heard this version we did of his tune. I’m a huge Bobby Parker fan. Bobby was a friend. He had heard my version of his song “Steal Your Heart Away” (from 2010’s *Black Rock*), and he loved it. Bobby lived just outside of Washington, D.C., and he actually came and sat in with us in D.C. years ago, and he played “Steal Your Heart Away” with us. He was a good dude and we were really close to doing something with him. We were talking to him with (producer) Kevin Shirley about doing an album together. It was going to a kind of comeback album for him, but he suddenly died (in 2013). Bobby Parker had a moment in the ’60s, but he isn’t mentioned in the same company of the greats, and it’s sad. Because a lot of those great artists like Bobby, although they were kind of more obscure, were just absolutely talented to the highest level. But their business was all fucked up. Bobby’s story was no different than many of them — trouble with managers, labels, this and that. You know, he just never could catch a break.

Milkowski: Your love of Albert King comes across loud and clear in the first two notes of “You Sure Drive A Hard Bargain.”

Bonamassa: You know, I was leery of doing it. That was Josh Smith’s idea and I told him, “Josh, this is a big mountain to climb, man. I don’t know if I can even get to base camp on it.” And he said, “Let’s try it. The worst that can happen is we’ll just scrap it.” And it came out good. I was proud of it, especially the way I sang it. Sure, it’s a guitar-based album, but it’s really a singing gig in many ways because you’re covering songs by some of the greatest of blues singers of all-time, like Albert King.

Milkowski: It may well be a singing gig, but that Kenny Neal shuffle, “The Truth Hurts,” is a guitar extravaganza with you, Josh Smith and Kirk Fletcher all trading furious licks at the end.

Bonamassa: Basically, we wanted to do a tip of the hat to that great Alligator record from the mid-’80s, *Showdown!*, with Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Johnny Copeland. Anybody who’s in their 40s and plays guitar in the blues world had a copy of *Showdown!* That was standard ops back then. So we wanted

to do a little tribute to that, where everybody takes a verse, takes a chorus, then trades off at the end.

Milkowski: Your original tune “Hope You Realize It” is a stone tribute to Tower of Power with the swaggering horns and with bassist Calvin Turner copping that pumping 16th-note Rocco Prestia vibe from “What Is Hip?”

Bonamassa: Yeah, that was a song I wrote with Tom Hambridge. It was kind of funky to begin with and as we started flirting with the Tower

of Power vibe I said, “Listen, fellas, if we’re going to go there, let’s go all the way. Let’s not beat around the bush. Everybody knows where this shit is coming from.” So, you know, our guys speak all the languages, and Calvin definitely speaks Rocco. But the thing about a blues covers record, which is predominately what this is ... you got to get off the trail. You cannot follow the same deer trails that everybody’s followed. You got to dig and find something deeper than just the well-worn path. It’s about keeping the blues alive and just keeping going with it.

—Bill Milkowski

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Bley told *DownBeat* in 1984: "I'm just a composer, and I use jazz musicians because they're smarter, and they can save your ass in a bad situation. ... I need all the help I can get."

Hall of Fame Composer-Pianist Carla Bley Passes Away at 87

WITH HER ICONIC BANGS, SHARP FEATURES and free-flowing sense of the absurd, Carla Bley, who died Oct. 17 of brain cancer at age 87, was unable to go unnoticed in the male-dominated jazz world of the '70s and '80s. Her distinctive, sometimes-absurdist/always-adventurous compositions made her impossible to forget.

From early songs like "Jesus Maria" and "Ida Lupino" through her landmark jazz opera *Escalator Over The Hill* to her later works — mostly open-ended landscapes for impres-

sionistic collaborators like her third husband, bassist Steve Swallow, and saxophonist Andy Sheppard — Bley distinguished herself as a singular composer. She was elected to the *DownBeat* Hall of Fame in the 2021 Critics Poll.

While she claimed to only play "composer's piano" at best, she studied the instrument from the age of 3 with her father, an Oakland, California, church organist, and later was heavily influenced by Count Basie.

Born Lovella May Borg, she dropped out of

high school at 15 and moved to New York in 1953 to experience live jazz firsthand. Her primary vantage point was her job selling cigarettes inside Birdland, the Midtown jazz club. It was there she met Canadian pianist Paul Bley, who she married after relocating to Los Angeles in 1957.

With her husband's encouragement, the rechristened Carla Bley began writing music, including "O Plus One," which appeared on Paul's 1958 album *Solemn Meditation*. Returning east, she continued to compose while working in the

coat check rooms at New York's Basin Street and the Jazz Gallery, and her songs began to attract the attention of artists like Jimmy Giuffrè, who featured two of her compositions on *Fusion* (1961) and George Russell, who recorded "Dance Class" and "Beast Blues" for *George Russell Sextet At The Five Spot* (1960).

Bley's membership in the Jazz Composers Guild introduced her to Austrian trumpeter Michael Mantler, whom she married in 1965. Their daughter, musician Karen Mantler, was born in 1966, and survives her. Bley and Mantler formed the Jazz Composer's Orchestra, which brought together a broad range of musicians, including Cecil Taylor, Steve Lacy, Archie Shepp and Don Cherry, and an affiliated supporting organization: the Jazz Composer's Orchestra Association, which commissioned work, sponsored performances and functioned as a record label.

Bley's breakthrough came with three major works that were released in the late '60s: Gary Burton's *A Genuine Tong Funeral* (1967), Charlie Haden's *Liberation Music Orchestra* (1969) and the sprawling *Escalator Over The Hill* (1971), which was released under the Jazz Composer's Orchestra name but featured 36 musicians, stretching from singer Linda Ronstadt to guitarist John McLaughlin and a young Karen Mantler on vocals.

With lyrics by poet Paul Haines, *Escalator* drew wide praise, including an influential review in *Rolling Stone* that called it "an international musical encounter of the first order" and a French Oscar du Disque de Jazz award.

In 1972, Bley was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for composition and, with Mantler, founded a new label, WATT. Its first release, *Tropic Appetites* (1974), was Bley's debut as a leader. Following a brief sojourn in the U.K., where she worked with bassist Jack Bruce and Rolling Stones guitarist Mick Taylor, she formed the Carla Bley Band and entered a very active period of touring and recording, using a core that included her husband, trombonist Roswell Rudd, Swallow and drummer D. Sharpe.

In the mid-'80s, Bley downsized to a sextet and made a shift to more amplified music with Swallow, guitarist Hiram Bullock and drummer Victor Lewis. She and Swallow also formed a duo, which toured and recorded frequently for five years, during which time Bley left Mantler and formed a 32-year relationship with the bassist.

In spite of achieving a higher profile, with tours that took her to Europe and Japan, Bley remained circumspect about her talent. As she told *DownBeat* in 1984: "I'm just a composer, and I use jazz musicians because they're smarter, and they can save your ass in a bad situation. ... I need all the help I can get."

Saxophonist Sheppard rejoined Bley and Swallow for *Songs With Legs* (1994) and they continued as a trio for more than 20 years. The '90s also saw Bley working more often in a big band setting — both with her own unit and as a guest composer — and with Haden in a reformed *Liberation Music Orchestra*, which released four additional recordings and continued to be active after Haden's death in 2014.

During their later years, Bley and Swallow became the most celebrated couple in jazz, touring in various formations and appearing as special guests on the festival circuit. In 2015, she was named a Jazz Master by the National Endowment for the Arts, and the following year, to celebrate her 80th birthday, ECM Records organized a special event at Steinway Hall in New York.

In speaking about Bley's many compositions that have become new standards in jazz — including "Jesus Maria," "Ictus," "Sing Me Softly Of The Blues," "King Korn," "Vashkar" and more — ECM founder Manfred Eicher said, "There are so many of them, each as well crafted as pieces by Satie or Mompou — or Thelonious Monk for that matter. Carla belongs in that tradition of radical originality."

—James Hale

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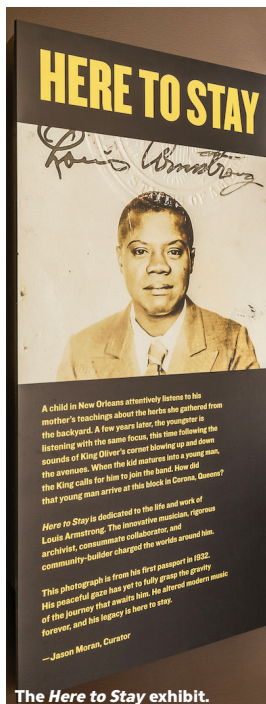
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Pops at home in Corona.



The *Here to Stay* exhibit.



Louis Armstrong Center Offers New Understanding of 'Pops'

ON JULY 6, THE HOTTEST DAY IN RECORDED history, a new institution devoted to the man who gave the world “hot” jazz — and infinitely more — opened its doors in Queens, New York, for the first time.

It was very cool inside.

The Louis Armstrong Center — with its sleek styling, multitudinous artifacts, acoustically attuned performance space and ethos of integration into the community — promises to set a standard for institutions dedicated to a musician’s legacy.

Not incidentally, it is also an impressively scaled edifice that, despite being squeezed between a row of modest homes, somehow seems a natural fit in the quiet neighborhood of Corona.

That is fitting. For 38 years, until his death in 1971, Armstrong lived in a home directly across 107th Street from where the center now stands. And like the center, Armstrong seemed to dominate the neighborhood even as he fit into it, according to Lori Jones, a Corona native who, as a girl, often encountered Armstrong on the block.

“We called it Louis Armstrong’s block,” she said, standing in the center’s swank lobby amid a swell of opening-day visitors and the piped-in sounds of Armstrong’s seminal Hot Five. Soaking it all in, she wistfully recalled the treats he and his wife, Lucille, bestowed on neighborhood children in and around their home — itself a national historic site and museum, thanks to Lucille’s efforts.

To be sure, the center, which has been drawing a steady stream of visitors since it opened, offers much to confirm Jones’ rose-colored view of Armstrong’s legacy. It is a view widely held by members of the public, many of whom will be familiar with the broad outlines of his rise from New Orleans waif to beloved global figure, even if they are unfamiliar with the details.

But Ricky Riccardi, director of research operations for the house museum and center, was ready to add nuance to that view. Tearing himself away from answering visitors’ questions on the welcoming first floor, he entered a wholly different world on the second: one of cubicles, offices and a heavily secured inner sanctum where he could mine the archival “stacks” for gold.

Many of the pieces in these stacks were precious — a book inscribed to Armstrong by Langston Hughes, rare big-band arrangements, four Armstrong trumpets, for starters. And Riccardi, a font of Armstrong minutiae with superior recall of the center’s holdings, instantly knew where the best stuff was stored.

Zeroing in on one of Armstrong’s 85 scrapbooks, he quickly found what he was seeking: a review from London’s Daily Herald of the 32-year-old Armstrong’s performance at the Palladium on his first trip to England, in July 1932. Smiling, Riccardi waved the review in the climate-controlled air before cheekily foreshadowing its contents.

“He saved the good, the bad and the ugly,” Riccardi said of Armstrong.

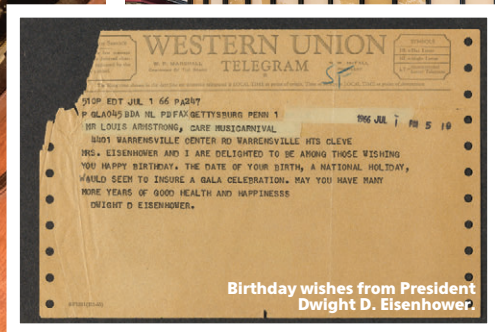
The review, to be blunt, was ugly. Clearly unmoored by the freedom implicit in a performer who could command a stage with such radical abandon — strutting, smiling, waving an ever-present handkerchief and using his gravelly voice to sublime effect before closing the show on trumpet with a hundred high C notes — the reviewer ripped Armstrong’s musical style, his stage presentation, even his physiognomy. And while that view was not universal among the press — Riccardi produced an editorial in the Evening News equating the critiques of Armstrong with those of other maligned geniuses — it was, in some manner or form, accepted by many high-minded scribes.

“The articles of the time — that’s DownBeat, too, all the magazines — had a very tough time trying to understand what was actually happening in the music,” said pianist and educator Jason Moran, who curated the center’s public-facing, first-floor exhibit *Here to Stay*. “But fortunately, with Armstrong we have this much distance after his life to really start to let that bake in with how complex a time he was dealing with and how complex that music was.”

In the 60,000-plus items housed within its 14,000 square feet, the Armstrong Center has enough material to deal with the complexities of Armstrong’s life and times. His United Kingdom



Four Armstrong trumpets.



Birthday wishes from President Dwight D. Eisenhower.



The facade of the new center.

experience is illustrative: In 1934, just two years after the performances that generated such critical vitriol, King George V gave Armstrong a gold-plated Selmer trumpet with “SATCHMO” engraved under the rim of the mouthpiece. On display in the Moran-curated exhibit, the gift highlights the stark contrasts in views of Armstrong — and that suggests the dangers of viewing his legacy simplistically. Doing so can obscure the man’s role in advancing social justice.

In the public imagination, Armstrong is often seen as a joyful ambassador for American values, a facet of his persona that the archives address in many ways. Among them is a benign photo of him meeting Pope Paul VI at the Vatican. The photo is incorporated in one of the 750 collages Armstrong assembled, modernistic works of art that, like the discursive reel-to-reel tapes they adorn, allowed him to shape the narrative of his life for posterity.

But the exhibit also alludes to a more complex side to Armstrong’s ambassadorial role by referencing a theatrical suite by Dave and Iola Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*. Brubeck was himself part of the elite group of jazz musicians who, starting in the mid-1950s, were sent overseas by the State Department on so-called goodwill tours. Brubeck asked Armstrong to star in his piece, which, the exhibit notes, was “inspired by Armstrong’s role as America’s cultural ambassador.”

The suite dealt with the cynical use of jazz musicians as vehicles to promote a vision of America abroad that was at odds with the reality at home. It drew on Armstrong’s role in the 1957 case of the Little Rock Nine, in which he castigated President Dwight D. Eisenhower for hesitating to pressure segregationist Arkansas

Gov. Orval Faubus to obey a court order allowing nine Black schoolchildren to integrate a local high school. The incident generated global headlines, and Armstrong, loath to become a tool of American propaganda, had second thoughts about a planned tour of the Soviet Union.

Armstrong was soon in the crosshairs of the F.B.I., as a redacted page of his bureau file, obtained in the 1990s under the Freedom of Information Act and displayed in the public exhibit, shows. Referencing a report dated Oct. 16, 1957, from the Washington News, the page notes that the Arkansas University student senate had withdrawn an invitation for Armstrong to appear at the school’s prom. “Armstrong, a vehement critic of Gov. Orval Faubus,” the page states, “had said he would be glad to play at Arkansas, but would be sorry if Gov. Faubus were to hear any of the ‘beautiful notes coming out of my horn.’”

“His career could have been over after he spoke out about the Little Rock Nine,” said Regina Bain, executive director of the house museum and center. “There were so many who didn’t want him to travel around the world as an ambassador.”

Public figures, from Bing Crosby to Jackie Robinson, spoke up for Armstrong. And, belatedly, Eisenhower sent in troops to enforce the desegregation order. Nine years later, Eisenhower, out of office, sent Armstrong a telegram wishing him a happy birthday. Three years after that, then-President Richard M. Nixon, Eisenhower’s vice-president in 1957, sent Armstrong a similar greeting. Both telegrams are in the center archives, odd counterpoints to the malevolence of the F.B.I. file.

“I wanted to make sure that was visible,”

Moran said of the file, “because that’s how treacherous the time was. I wanted people to see that — that he has to be watched because he’s telling people what freedom sounds like.”

Musicians today are hearing that call, and the center is encouraging them to do so. Under its Armstrong Now program, it is hosting performers at the center’s 75-seat Jazz Room, just off the main exhibition space. They include esperanza spalding and the Antonio Brown Dance Company and poet-musician Amyra Leon. All will explore the archives and create new material based on them while in residence the week before their shows.

The center commissioned Marquis Hill, with fellow trumpeters Bruce Harris and Giveton Gelin, to write pieces drawing on the Armstrong legacy that they performed at the Newport Jazz Festival. In developing the piece, Hill said he was originally inspired by a contentious incident in which Armstrong, booked for the 1957 Newport festival, made beautiful music despite his anger at unexpectedly being asked, as Dan Morgenstern put it in the *Village Voice*, “to serve as anchorman for a parade of performers at the expense of his own group’s self-respect.”

Hill was further inspired by archival tapes in which Armstrong expresses interest in all kinds of music — a sentiment supported by the diversity of his 2,000 archived records, which include Chopin, Verdi and Nelson Eddy singing Stephen Foster. With that as background, Hill, joined by pianist Mathis Picard, bassist Russell Hall and drummer Herlin Riley, created a piece that aimed to capture some of the man’s musical and emotional complexity.

“It’s rooted in beauty but also keeps in mind his anger and struggle,” Hill said. —Phillip Lutz



Davis says, "I wouldn't call myself a jazz musician; my music is more about crossing boundaries." Her band Alula, from left, Chris Tordini, Davis, Tyshawn Sorey and Val Jeanty.

Caroline Davis' Alula Soars High Above Prison Walls

A RIGOROUS INTELLECTUAL, CAROLINE

Davis makes intensely visceral music that mines everything from the cardiology of the human heart (*Heart Tonic*, 2018) to the anatomy of flight (*Alula*, 2019) to the shapeshifting nature of grief (*Portals, Volume 1: Mourning*, 2020). On *Captivity*, her incendiary new release with her band Alula, the superb alto saxophonist and composer transmutes her alchemical mix of art and science into a cry for justice for incarcerated heroes who've soared above prison walls by keeping hope alive.

And those walls come tumbling down, hard, pummeled by the sheer force of the electro-acoustic music that proclaims "The Day Has Come," the opening call to arms, which samples speeches by former slave, abolitionist and women's rights advocate Sojourner Truth.

"I wanted to open the album with a tremendous amount of energy," Davis recalled, speaking by phone from Brooklyn, where the peripatetic Singapore-born artist settled after spending her formative years in Chicago. "That piece was improvised in the moment and carries with it a sense of urgency."

Davis has long composed and improvised music informed by gender and racial equality. But her art and activism didn't really meld into a singular force until the pandemic turned her into a de facto prisoner. During lockdown, she began writing to Jalil Muntaqim, a Black Panther who spent decades behind bars before his late-2020 release. She also exchanged letters with, and visited, unjustly accused death-row prisoner Keith LaMar, who has languished for years in solitary confinement. Now she's on a mission to rally her

troops to the cause.

Davis organized a fundraiser to help Muntaqim transition after his release, played at Free Keith LaMar benefit concerts and is donating a portion of *Captivity's* sales to Critical Resistance, the reform group started by Angela Davis decades ago. *Captivity* also pays tribute to the legacy of three Black women — Joyce Ann Brown, Susan Burton and Sandra Bland — whose hope and resilience transcended their incarceration.

During conversation, Davis discussed everything from her late-blooming embrace of the saxophone to the evolution of *Captivity*, which was recorded live during the pandemic with turntablist Val Jeanty, bassist Chris Tordini, drummer Tyshawn Sorey and guest collaborators Qasim Naqvi and Ben Hoffman.

The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Cree McCree: You went all the way back to Galileo and the "Burned Believers" of the Middle Ages — was that part of your original agenda when you started conceptualizing *Captivity*?

Caroline Davis: I had people in mind throughout time who were incarcerated for long periods and still kept hope alive. I also had an uncle I was really close to who spent 12 years in prison, when my grandmother didn't visit him at all. Seeing how the whole system affected him really started coming into focus during the pandemic.

McCree: Was turntablist Val Jeanty responsible for integrating all the spoken word?

Davis: Yes. Some, like Sojourner Truth and the

Lorraine Hansbury speech, she already had in her repertoire of sound samples. Except for Sandra Bland, and the Jalil and Keith LaMar material, which I gave her, Val chose what to use. She's an incredible sound artist.

McCree: *Captivity* is credited to Caroline Davis' Alula, which is also the title of your 2018 album. What does "alula" mean?

Davis: Alula is this little set of hidden bones and feathers that helps birds take off, glide and land. It only pops out when they need to do those things [laughs], and that was like a metaphor for my music. Most of what I do is acoustic and I wanted to more fully embrace my electronic voice with a hidden structure that lets me fly.

McCree: When did you first find your voice on the alto saxophone?

Davis: I came to it kind of late. I grew up listening to gospel and classic R&B and first started trying to play my saxophone to En Vogue and Boyz II Men. I didn't start playing the kind of music I'm playing now until I was out of high school. I wouldn't call myself a jazz musician; my music is more about crossing boundaries. But when I was in my 20s, I started checking out Charlie Parker and transcribing John Coltrane.

McCree: What about Albert Ayler? I was sure I heard Albert Ayler speaking through you.

Davis: Albert Ayler was a visionary who helped shape the sound of the saxophone, but I wouldn't say he influenced my music. For me, especially on this album, Archie Shepp is much more of an influence.

McCree: The Last Poets were contemporaneous with all of that and really jumped out at me as an influence when I listened to the album, so I was surprised you didn't reference them.

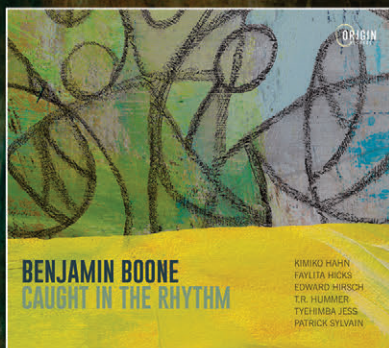
Davis: I just don't have a very personal connection to them. I'm good friends with Brian Jackson, who worked with Gil Scott Heron, and I know they've been active in the 2000s, collaborating with Wu-Tang Clan. But I only had an opportunity to reference a certain number of people and the majority have been connected to me personally.

McCree: What's the most important thing you'd like listeners to take away from this album?

Davis: A sense of hopefulness through the darkness. If someone's listening to the whole record, starting with Sojourner Truth and ending with Sandra Bland, whose words were taken from her self-made video series, I hope people hear the hopefulness in the hymn that I wrote for her. Because even though we live in dire circumstances, especially for black and brown people, there's a lot to be hopeful for in terms of what we can do. I want people to feel empowered to move forward, even in the places of darkness. —Cree McCree



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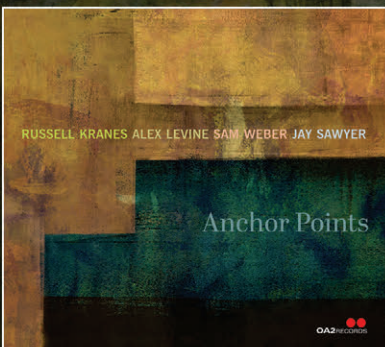
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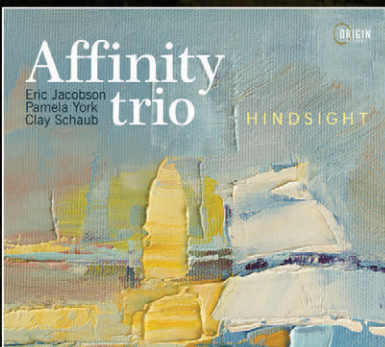
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A great Chicago blues night at SPACE, from left, Mike Wheeler, Roosevelt Purifoy, Cleo Cole, Bob Stroger, Billy Boy Arnold, Dave Specter, Sheryl Youngblood, Tad Robinson, Julia Miller, Larry Williams, Dick Shurman and Elbio Barilari.

MICHAEL JACKSON

Delmark 70th Bash Convenes the Blues

CHICAGO-BASED DELMARK RECORDS, founded by Bob Koester in St. Louis in 1953, is the oldest continually operating independent jazz and blues label around. Taken over after Koester's retirement in May 2018 by Julia Miller and Elbio Barilari, the label celebrated its 70th anniversary with a variety of events in 2023.

Known as a hub for traditional and progressive jazz, Delmark is equally famous for its deep blues catalog and long-term loyalty to the Windy City's independent music scene. Guitarist Dave Specter has been a Delmark artist for more than 30 years, recording his debut *Bluebird Blues* in 1991.

The most recent of his 14 albums, *Six String Soul*, celebrates his 30th anniversary on the label with a multi-flavored, highly recommended 28-track retrospective featuring such luminaries as Jimmy Johnson, Billy Branch, Ronnie Earl, Otis Clay, Jack McDuff, Steve Freund, Jesse Fortune, Sharon Lewis and Brother John Kattke.

Specter is also a partner at SPACE (an acronym for the rarely used full name, Society for the Preservation of Arts and Culture in Evanston), which has been the choice spot in Chicagoland to catch cannily curated blues/jazz/roots/pop/folk/funk for the past 15 years.

Where other venues have floundered with identity crises, SPACE maintains a dependable brand despite diverse bookings.

Specter suggested hosting a Delmark celebration at the club, so Barilari, Delmark's vice president and artistic director, assembled the band — one that initially convened for Chicago Blues Festival last June.

"Dave is as humble as he is musically devoted ... prefers to let the music speak for itself," said Barilari in liner notes to *Six String Soul*. Such was borne out by Specter's lack of grandstanding but tight attention to detail during an explosive set at SPACE, which included slap bass virtuoso Larry Williams and Roosevelt Purifoy.

"Roosevelt is one of the most versatile organ/piano/synthesizer players around," said Barilari. "And we used Larry in our band [Volcano Radar, a band he co-leads with Miller] because he's such a different player to [the late] Harrison Bankhead, who was irreplaceable. It took things in a new direction with electric bass, Larry adapted to free-jazz/open music without a second's hesitation."

Within the blues, both Purifoy and Williams bring it, balancing consummate musicianship with ebullient showmanship.

The latter pounced forward at SPACE for his staple star turn in Mike Wheeler's Band on Little Milton's burner "That's What Love Will Make You Do."

High-octane Wheeler and axe comrade Specter showed seamless rapport, each twanging strings in micro pockets in the rhythm, trading respective brands of stinging call-and-response. They shared facets of Otis Rush's indelible, spine-bending hooks on "All Your Love (I Miss Loving)," conjuring Rush's exciting 1975 live album of the same name from Wise Fools Pub (Delmark, 2005). The bassist on that date 48 years ago was also in the house, the unstoppable Bob Stroger, who brought the house down with a rocking version of Eugene Church's '50s hit "Pretty Girls Everywhere," which can be found on *That's My Name* (Delmark, 2022).

At 92, Stroger, sporting double-breasted butterscotch suit and feathered fedora, crouched at the stage lip, then launched into the capacity crowd, dancing with assorted ladies, illuminated by cellphones held aloft.

Another Chicago blues elder, Billy Boy Arnold, sat at the back of the room, ready to sign his autobiography (which he penned

with author Kim Rice), *The Blues Dream* (University of Chicago Press).

"The term 'legend' gets bandied around, but he's *it*," announced Specter, reminding the room that Arnold was both a blues and rock hall-of-famer with his songs being covered by the likes of British rockers David Bowie, Eric Clapton and The Animals. Blues historian Dick Schumer, who was in attendance, is producing a Delmark album of converted acetates bestowed on him by Arnold decades ago.

At 88 and a sufferer of vertigo, it seemed unlikely the veteran harmonica ace would join the fray. But such was the energy in the room, Arnold gingerly stepped toward the stage. As soon as he clutched his tin sandwich to the mic he tore into "I Wish You Would" like it was 1955 again, hanging with Bo Diddley (the hambone groove of his precocious hit was hatched alongside Diddley, and originally titled "Diddy Diddy Dum Dum").

Despite the decibels of the grinding all-star band, the sound at SPACE, upgraded during the pandemic, was superbly balanced, not deafeningly oppressive as it can be at other blues emporiums.

After singing a recent cut of his own, "Blues From The Inside Out" (from the 2019 Delmark album of the same name), Specter telescoped back to his first record (still available on cassette) with a slide rendition of "Bluebird Blues," inviting up formative cohort Tad Robinson. Robinson delivered with his soulful voice reminiscent of Robert Cray, and blowing killer harp. His auspicious Delmark debut *One To Infinity* (1994) has weathered well and still sounds sleek.

At SPACE, Robinson revived "What Love Did To Me," recorded with Specter at Buddy Guy's Legends in 2007 (*Live In Chicago*, Delmark).

Given the quantity of quality acts Specter has associated with over the years, the depth of the Delmark vaults and the longevity of veteran artists who live for the music, the show could have rolled until dawn.

The gospel-infused pipes of vocalist and drummer Sheryl Youngblood parlayed a brace of Junior Wells perennials: "Early In The Morning" and "Hoodoo Man Blues," cuts from Delmark's top seller from 1965, plus Jimmy Johnson's "Everyday Of Your

Life" (eponymous track from his last release in 2020).

"Playing with a new combination of musicians to celebrate the label's legacy was really inspiring," reflected Specter, who fielded all comers, all night. "Having Billy Boy join us for the encore topped off a great evening of blues."

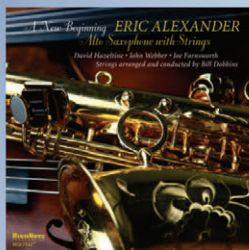
"The vibe was great, it couldn't have gone better," enthused Julia Miller. "We've been building the Delmark All-Stars roster and it's paying off."

Meantime, the octogenarian Arnold made a killing selling his memoir.

"As long as you don't think old, you're good," he advised.

The nonagenarian Stroger was one of the last to leave. Asked about his favorite of many Delmark recordings he's performed on, Stroger recalled 1975's *Cold Day In Hell* with Otis Rush. A warm night in blues heaven was in the books, and Stroger was satisfied.

"Beautiful people, I love this space, it's a listening room," he beamed. "I was sent to do this, and I'm still having fun. God has been good to me. We did our job when people go home with happy faces." —Michael Jackson



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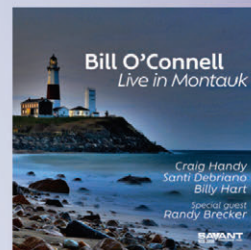
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HALL OF FAME

The Promises of PHAROAH SANDERS

BY GARY FUKUSHIMA PHOTO BY MARK SHELDON

The moment happened on a cloudy September evening in Los Angeles, in darkness around the neon-lit outline of the Hollywood Bowl. Some 12,000 people sat silent, lost in thought and reverence, held rapt by the upraised arms of conductor Miguel Atwood-Ferguson, whose image from the podium was glowingly displayed on the surrounding video screens. “It was one of the highlights of my life,” he said afterward. “I felt very much present, but also connected to other realms ... like we all traveled to so many different realms. In that moment I wanted to make this silence long enough so that we could really get into that space.”







Sanders with bassist Hayes Burnett at the 1977 Jazz Festival Willisau.

Perhaps Pharoah Sanders was also in that space, inhabiting some mysterious fold in the cosmos, having departed this world nearly a year to the day before that night at the Bowl. He is on the minds of many these days, including the readers of this magazine who have just voted him into the DownBeat Hall of Fame.

On that evening he was in the consciousness of both patron and player, as the in-absentia special guest for this performance of *Promises* (Luaka Bop), the critically acclaimed collaboration by minimalist composer Sam Shepherd (known as Floating Points) and Pharoah Sanders. It was the final recording the saxophonist would ever make. Shepherd took the stage with Atwood-Ferguson (Shepherd's handpicked conductor) and seven other keyboardists, the Los Angeles Studio Orchestra and saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings, who had the sublime honor of playing Sanders' part.

Pharoah Sanders' name also continues to

trend online, thanks to a reissue of *Pharoah* (Luaka Bop), a 1977 album considered a rare Sanders classic. Six days prior to the performance at the Bowl, aficionados packed a large, audiophile-tuned room a block north of Los Angeles' Sunset Strip for an exclusive listening of the newly pressed vinyl. A tallish, Swedish gent addressed the room, noting the plans he and Sanders had envisioned for this rollout. "I just saw this very exciting year ahead for us," said Eric Welles-Nyström, "but, yeah, that was just a week before he passed."

Welles-Nyström manages the record label Luaka Bop, and is responsible for the releases of both *Promises* and *Pharoah*. He told the audience, "There were so many people who loved *Promises*, and what [Pharoah] did on *Promises*. I wanted to have that same reaction for a record that was just his." He paused, then said softly, "We're here today, and it's very exciting that it's out, but we're not here with him, and that's — that's a shame."

The music began to flow from a \$30,000 stereo system. And the rapt crowd was there with Pharoah Sanders, sonically reincarnated. The opening track, "Harvest Time," starts casually with an affected electric guitar vamp.

"It's just what I felt was the right groove for the moment," said the guitarist, Tisziji Muñoz, who first played with Sanders in the mid-1970s when the saxophonist asked him to sit in at the Village Vanguard. "With this particular record you hear the sweetness and the love and affection that Pharoah delivered musically, and his kind, gentle spirit, but he could be, as we all know, ferocious."

Muñoz experienced Sanders' ferocity on that very first night at the Vanguard, exhorting Muñoz to play "on top of him," like improvising gladiators.

"I realized that this was not for any other reason except for the psychic interaction of the melodic creativity between both of us," said Muñoz. "Some people say that's what he may

have done with Trane. If he did it with John, then he would already know what the advantage could be if the vibrations between the two people were correct.”

Pharoah Sanders would not be who he became without John Coltrane. Born on Oct. 13, 1940, in Little Rock, Arkansas, Farrell Lee Sanders moved to New York in the early 1960s — penniless and homeless. He played when he could with a barely functioning saxophone, fortunately catching the ear of trumpeter Don Cherry, who invited Sanders to record with him and drummer Billy Higgins.

Later, Sanders was working as a cook at a club where Sun Ra was playing, and he asked the bandleader to consider him for future work. Ra obliged, bequeathing on him the name “Pharoah.” (Per Shepard’s request, the legacy Sun Ra Arkestra opened for Floating Points at the Hollywood Bowl.)

But in 1965, Sanders rose to another level when Coltrane, on the heels of his magnum opus, *A Love Supreme* (Impulse!), turned decisively but controversially toward free jazz with *Ascension* (Impulse!) for which Coltrane would amalgamate both seasoned and fresh-faced horn players: trumpeters Freddie Hubbard and Dewey Johnson, and saxophonists Archie Shepp, John Tchicai, Marion Brown and Pharoah Sanders.

Of the aforementioned, only Sanders was retained by Coltrane for the short remainder of his life. Sanders had gone to San Francisco a few months after recording *Ascension* to see Coltrane’s quartet at the Jazz Workshop, just as his soon-to-be-mentor was, in Sanders’ words, “thinking of changing the group and changing the music, to get different sounds.”

Sanders was invited to sit in, and the following week, he traveled up to Seattle with Coltrane for a week’s run at The Penthouse, documented by three remarkable albums made in a 24-hour span: *Live In Seattle*, recorded at The Penthouse; *Om*, recorded in a studio the next day; and *A Love Supreme: Live In Seattle*, captured that same night back at The Penthouse. All three have been released on the Impulse! label.

On these crucial albums, where Coltrane first elevated Sanders to his side, Sanders, who never felt he deserved that place of honor, rises to challenge Coltrane, at times playing over the venerated saxophonist, as he one day would instruct his guitarist Muñoz to do. Perhaps Sanders was a living arrow, pointing to where Coltrane himself wished to go. Surely his presence reminded Coltrane they had crossed the Rubicon — there was no returning to things he once did.

And there was no turning back for Sanders, either. Coltrane passed the baton to complete their mission. Before he died, Coltrane had convinced Impulse! to sign Sanders, who rewarded the label with indelible albums, including *Tauhid*, *Thembi*, *Jewels Of Thought* and, most notably, *Karma*, from which his best-known work, “The Creator Has A Master Plan,” has become a generation-to-generation spiritual anthem.

Eleven minutes into “Harvest Time,” a new instrument is heard: a harmonium, played by Bedria Sanders, who had travelled with her then-husband to the countryside of Rockland County, New York, to a modest studio owned by engineer Bob Cummings.

“We were inseparable — everywhere he went, I went,” Bedria said over the phone from Ohio, where she grew up and where she first heard Pharoah play, under a big revival tent at a music festival. She gave “Harvest Time” its name, for the overcast autumn day when they recorded. Another song, “Love Will Find A Way,” was dedicated to her, featuring Pharoah’s own voice as he sings with passion and sincerity to his love right there in the studio.

“I loved his singing, you know, because he was so soulful,” said Dwight Tribble, who himself sang with Sanders in Los Angeles,

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Sanders and Sam Shepherd (aka Floating Points) collaborated on the critically acclaimed album *Promises*.

where the saxophonist lived the last decades of his life. “I stole a few licks from him myself,” he confessed over the phone.

Tribble was mentored by Billy Higgins, who returned to L.A. in the late 1980s and co-founded the World Stage, a humble community space that became an incubator for multiple generations of West Coast jazz

musicians. Sanders was one of countless influential and inspirational artists invited by Higgins to play there, witnessed by a 9-year-old Kamasi Washington, attending his first jazz show with his father.

Higgins advocated for Tribble, whose deep voice conjures the power of a Paul Robeson, the sensitivity of a Johnny

Hartman, and the intensity of a Pharoah Sanders. “[Billy] would always try to get them to let me sing,” Tribble said of Higgins’ efforts with Sanders and other notable musicians. It was only until after Higgins’ death in 2001 that Sanders acquiesced, inviting Tribble on stage. Sanders soon relocated to Los Angeles, and Tribble joined his band, becoming a close friend.

“We were up in Oakland,” Tribble recalled, “and on his bedside [Pharoah] had a recorder or something and he was listening to John Coltrane, and I was like, “Wow, he’s still listening to John ... because, of course, he revered John Coltrane so much.

“They both had some kind of highly evolved spirituality about them ... how do you go that deep in the well, where everything is scary, where it’s life and death? That’s the thing with John Coltrane and Pharoah — they went all the way down in the well. I just wonder, when you go down there, sometimes you have to pay the price, and maybe that might be why John Coltrane didn’t live very long.”

John Coltrane has a church named after him in San Francisco, but part of his spirit moves through Los Angeles, even more so after Sanders’ arrival. Tribble is now the executive director of the World Stage, and

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there are whispers of his mentors in the endeavors of those from his community — Flying Lotus (a nephew of Alice Coltrane), Thundercat, Kamasi Washington, Terrace Martin, Madlib, Mark de Clive-Lowe, Carlos Niño. So much of the creative music crafted by current artists in Los Angeles has direct or indirect inspiration from the same spirituality that guided Higgins, Coltrane and Sanders.

In 2014, Luaka Bop invited Sanders to New York's Central Park to perform with Nigerian funk musician William Onyeabor, thus beginning Welles-Nyström's role to look after Sanders whenever he performed for the label.

"I started visiting [Pharoah] here in L.A. in 2016, and that was the same time that we started working with Sam [Shepherd]," he recalled. Welles-Nyström played one of Shepherd's albums for Sanders, who enjoyed it very much, and suddenly the quest materialized to get the two of them to record together. Furthermore, Welles-Nyström and Luaka Bop were keen on trying to make the reissue of *Pharoah* a reality.

The hardest part was convincing Sanders because he hadn't released a new album for well over a decade, and he wasn't eager to end his hiatus. Tribble explained that Sanders had become wary of producers and record labels, many whom had shamelessly exploited him. He was especially paranoid about *Pharoah*, due to the anguish he felt from the numerous bootleg recordings already in existence. Welles-Nyström confirmed, "It made it really hard in many ways to reissue it because it was emotionally really stressful for him. He would see it on YouTube or heard about people pressing it, and it would just upset him so much."

Welles-Nyström spent years trying to change Sanders' mind. He flew to Los Angeles repeatedly to meet with the saxophonist, careful not to push too hard. They would often just hang out, eating Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles or ordering his favorite sandwich at Langer's Deli. "Corned beef sandwich on egg bread with Russian dressing on the side," Welles-Nyström recounted, "and if you ate there he would have a hot chocolate."

It took the next three years for the friendship and trust to develop to the point where Sanders was finally ready. Welles-Nyström was, too, having secured a trove of archival photos (many from Bedria), press clippings and interviews, along with recordings of live performances of "Harvest Time," all to be compiled into a box set that rightfully honored the celebrated album and its creator.

As the production of *Pharoah* moved forward, Sanders recorded *Promises* with

Shepherd in June 2019. The entire piece revolves and evolves around a repeating four-chord sequence of intermittent arpeggiations between harpsichord and celeste. Sanders plays only occasionally but pivotally, his robust tone interchanging mysteriously with kaleidoscopic textures of keyboards and strings. It seems he is quite at home with this minimalist treatment, an epiphany that maybe Sanders has been playing his own version of minimalist music over his entire career.

The last time Welles-Nyström spoke with

him face-to-face, Sanders had suffered a stroke and was moved to a health care facility. Yet he seemed revitalized, eager to recover and perform the music from *Promises*. Welles-Nyström flew back to New York, only to receive an urgent message 10 days later.

"Sam and I got on the next flight to Los Angeles," he said, "And I think as we were touching down, he passed at like 2 a.m. that Saturday morning."

They managed to make it all the way back to him. "He was still in his bed; he was still warm. We held his hand, we listened to

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music. He was just so beautiful, his long beard kind of like a mane, like a lion.”

In getting to know Pharoah Sanders, Shepherd and Welles-Nyström grew to love him.

And their efforts at the end of Sanders’

requires of us as musicians, to make what we what we feel is deepest and most powerful for ourselves available to the public,” he said.

Bedria Sanders affirmed, “He was a very good person, very generous. He had the

would just be silent.”

Tribble had those same thoughts about Sanders’ shows as he was watching *Promises* performed at the Bowl.

“He would have those meditation bowls ... it would be completely quiet in [the club] for anywhere from five minutes to something ... And the thing about [*Promises*] is it felt like that same vibe ... but this thing went on for an hour, that same feeling that you felt at his concerts.” Tribble concluded, “I never would have thought to do a tribute to Pharaoh where you just play that sort of reverent kind of vibration to honor him.”

If Sanders’ life were a singular, epic performance, then the entire Hollywood Bowl vibrating into silent meditation was the ultimate ending.

“Sometimes the best moments would be in silence,” said Welles-Nyström of his time with Sanders. And so, the silence that Sam Shepherd wrote into the score, marking the end of his own time with Pharoah Sanders, was the best moment given to all of us that night, a quiet coda to this requiem for a ferociously generous spirit who was making one last journey down the deep well, exiting through some mysterious fold in the cosmos, to meet the creator of the master plan.

DB

‘[Pharoah] was on a level close to Trane with that kind of openness and ferocity.’ —TISZIJ MUÑOZ

life allowed others who knew and loved him to express those sentiments one final time. Muñoz did so by listening again to *Spirit World* (Anami), a favorite album of his from 1997, that Sanders played on. “[Pharoah] was on a level close to Trane with that kind of openness and ferocity — and I think I would call it generosity, because I think that’s what this spirit

heart of a baby, a baby’s heart.” She remembered Sanders often leading the crowd in meditation at the end of his shows with the aid of some metal, bowl-shaped gongs.

“The end of the concerts would be in complete silence,” she said. “He had the meditation bowls ... and he would wait until they stopped vibrating, and people got quiet as it went down, and at the end it



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WAYNE SHORTER IN HIS OWN WORDS

COMPILED BY FRANK ALKYER

PHOTO BY MICHAEL JACKSON

With Wayne Shorter's passing on March 2, the readers of DownBeat wanted to honor him one more time by naming him Artist of the Year. A sentimental vote, to be sure, but also a well-deserved recognition, as Shorter was active right up to taking his last breath, penning and premiering the opera *Iphigenia*.

In memory of Shorter, a true genius of jazz, here are four select quotes from his conversations with DownBeat over the years.

ON CREATIVITY

Is creativity good, in the sense of originality? How can you be so original, when you walk a little bit like your mother or father, or have the color of your father's eyes, or you make a gesture and someone says, "You did that just like your father used to do." Charlie Parker, for example, said that when he was young, his idols on the alto saxophone were Rudy Vallee and Jimmy Dorsey. If you've heard Bird, and if you've heard Rudy Vallee and Jimmy Dorsey, I think you'd have to dig very deep, tear off many layers of wallpaper, before you could find any similarity in sound, approach or technique. I would say that the only thing which would confirm what Bird said about his admiration would be the sophistication of his approach. It's the sophistication of Westernized music, Western scales. But let's go back even further. Western scales came from around Greece, Jerusalem and Arabia. They're world scales, really. People are taught music history this way, separating Western music from Eastern music, but I think it's one big circle. It's hard to keep from using labels. For instance, when I said that Bird idolized Rudy Vallee and Dorsey, some people's minds would stop and they'd say, "Ooo, that's who he dug!" But I tend to use those names as

a springboard into history, going all the way back to the great explosion that started this planet. You can't just go on what Mr. X said, you've got to do a little thinking on your own. —from "Creativity and Change," by Wayne Shorter, *DownBeat*, Dec. 12, 1968

ON GOING TO NEW YORK

I worked in a factory for a year, saving up money so I could study music in college, and during that time I played gigs on weekends, parties for wealthy people. I then went to NYU, graduated, and then got my greetings from the U.S. Army. I had just started playing jam sessions in New York. Everyone used to tell me how hard it was to get in these jam sessions — that you had to know someone. I was a bit worried about going in the service. I thought maybe my life was all over, even though it was peacetime then. So one day during this period, I went to the Cafe Bohemia and in that club were these people: Oscar Pettiford on bass; Kenny Clarke was alternating on drums with Art Taylor, Art Blakey and Max Roach; Jimmy Smith was there on organ; Cannonball Adderley; Bill Harman on trumpet; Jackie McLean; Walter Bishop on piano. I was standing at the bar by the door, and Max Roach, whom I'd never met, came up to me and said, "Hey, you're the kid from Newark." He'd heard about me through the grapevine. "Come on up and play," he said. I did what I could but won-

dered what kind of contribution I could be making with all of these giants up there. I started to leave the stand, but someone grabbed me by the back of my shirt — I think it was Max — and he told me to play more. It was a great night for me. —from "The Wayne Shorter Interview," by Scott Yanow, *DownBeat*, April 1986

ON MILES

Here's the way Miles would ask about somebody. ... He'd hear about somebody that he should investigate. "Everybody's talking about this new guy on the saxophone. You gotta check this guy out." And Miles would say, "Well that's all right, but can he see?" They didn't know what he was talking about.

Because everybody who worked with Miles and Gil Evans, that big band stuff, you had to read. Philly Joe Jones could read good. Miles could read. But one night he was talking to Trane at the Blue Coronet in Brooklyn. We were up on the bandstand doing a new tune I wrote called "Paraphernalia," and he read the music but was stumbling a bit in memorizing it. He stopped the band in front of the people — and this was the only time he had done this — held the music up and said, "Let's start it again." I mean, they called him a king, but that would have been considered vulnerable. He was a human being. —from "Wayne Shorter, The Final Interview," by Michael Jackson, *DownBeat*, May 2023

88th
READERS
POLL
2023

JAZZ GROUP
OF THE YEAR



Artemis is, from left, Allison Miller, Ingrid Jensen, Renee Rosnes, Nicole Glover, Alexa Tarantino and Noriko Ueda.

ARTEMIS: IN REAL TIME

BY SUZANNE LORGE PHOTO BY EBRU YILDIZ

In some ways, it's hard to believe that Artemis is only 6 years old. Not just for the group's rapid ascent into the jazz firmament, but for its players' cool-headed resilience in the face of tectonic change. First, there was the sudden spotlight of the 2018 Newport Jazz Festival and subsequent major-label record deal. Then the social justice movement and the jazz world's reckoning with its inequitable treatment of female musicians. And the global pandemic shutdown, just as the then-septet readied its debut album for release. Throughout all of this, the group continued to steadily build an admired presence with the listening public. DownBeat readers noticed: This year they voted Artemis the Jazz Group of the Year.



MARK SHELDON



MARK SHELDON



MARK SHELDON

Shown here performing at the Detroit Jazz Festival, the ever-evolving band Artemis has won the attention and hearts of DownBeat readers.

In other ways, however, Artemis' success is neither surprising nor unexpected. As individual artists, the group's core members have long graced all manner of concert stages and recordings: Artemis musical director/pianist Renee Rosnes has released more than 20 albums as a leader and racked up multiple Juno Award nominations and wins. Trumpeter Ingrid Jensen has led almost a dozen albums, garnered one Juno, and is a first call for bandleaders like Maria Schneider, Terri Lyne Carrington and Darcy James Argue.

Drummer Allison Miller, with almost a dozen albums under her name (several featuring her long-standing sextet Boom Tic Boom) works just as easily with pop stars as with leading avant gardists. Bassist Noriko Ueda, winner of the BMI Foundation Charlie Parker Jazz Composition Prize, has fronted her own successful big band for almost two decades.

Alongside such prodigious self-directed output, these players also have contributed to well over 100 albums as side musicians working with some of the world's most prominent artists. So, how could the combined talents of these formidable women be anything but blinding?

In 2020, the group turned out its first record, *Artemis* (Blue Note), an impressive showcase of smartly composed works written and/or arranged by its members. At the time, three similarly high-profile musicians were part of the band's lineup: tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana, clarinetist Anat Cohen and

vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, all of whom had been touring with the group since its formation for International Women's Day in 2017.

This past May, as a follow-up to this debut, Artemis released *In Real Time* (Blue Note), another massive ensemble effort featuring the band's latest configuration. Saxophonist Nicole Glover had taken over for Aldana just before the first album hit the streets, and multi-reedist Alexa Tarantino had replaced Cohen in 2022. Salvant, who received both MacArthur Foundation and Doris Duke grants in 2020, has been touring and recording seemingly without letup since these triumphs. Rather than signaling disruption within the band's ranks, however, this shape-shifting — from septet to sextet and sometimes quintet — speaks to the eminence of its individual members.

"Artemis is an evolving band, and from time to time the personnel change, and may do so again in the future," Rosnes wrote in an email to DownBeat, in between album-launch shows at New York's Birdland in September. "Because we are a band of leaders with busy schedules, we have to carve out time well in advance to make sure we can tour."

Notably, despite the exigencies of touring and leader projects, the group's rhythm section and principal horn soloist have remained unchanged, suggesting that the group's evolution augurs a deepening rather than a course adjustment.

"Since its inception, the sound of the band

has become more defined," Rosnes explained. "When we're in the moment, there's a laser focus that brings us into a zone of conversation, where one statement can alter the direction of the music. Trust and an open-mindedness to embrace each of our musical natures has led to some exhilarating music-making."

Even as deep listening and ready responsiveness to each member in the moment affects the direction of the music, it's hard to ignore Rosnes as the driver behind both the group's creation and its musical path forward.

"As musical director, I mainly act as an organizing force for the band," she said. "I do many of the arrangements, but every member contributes to the repertoire as well. In terms of rehearsal, each composer shapes and hones their own piece, and once we begin performing them, the music naturally morphs and expands in conception."

Quite clearly, each of the originals on the new album carries the stamp of its composer — both in sound and backstory. Jensen's contribution, "Timber," for instance, derives from the trumpeter's family ties to British Columbia, with its rugged, forested terrain. Her free, impressionistic intro invokes the wildness of this landscape, her clean brass sections conveying its majesty, and her sputtering solo revealing its imperilment. When Jensen plays, you can almost hear the intended words — part reverence, part warning.

Ueda, too, draws inspiration from nature



on “Lights Away From Home,” recalling a meteor shower that she witnessed while camping on a remote New York island. Counter to this romantic imagery, the composition bustles with fast-twitch solos and delight-driven full band sections.

Miller, whose rhythmic deftness firmly establishes the ensemble’s gravitational pull, again offers a tribute to Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, as on the group’s first album. Her composition “Bow And Arrow” remains tethered in a declarative big band swing, even as Miller pushes fluctuations in feel.

Likewise, Tarantino uses unflinching movement to create tension on “Whirlwind,” a fervent jazz waltz with a brooding head that changes color with each soloist; where Tarantino’s trilling flute conjures mystery, Glover’s deep tenor generates frenzied excitement — a reflection on Tarantino’s early days with Artemis. (Glover also writes for the group, though none of her tunes appear on this record.)

Rosnes’ two originals on the album, however, stand in contrast with each other, revealing different aspects of the pianist’s compositional self. First, the stimulating “Empress Afternoon” — previously recorded with tabla master Zakir Hussain on Rosnes’ *Life On Earth* (Blue Note) and rearranged for the sextet — evidences her extreme comfort with complex polyrhythms. And in what is arguably the most introspective track on the album, “Balance Of Time,” Rosnes embraces melodic simplicity as a vehi-

cle for emotional vulnerability. “When I’m writing and discover a melodic cell that I find interesting, I place a lot of trust in my intuition and instincts,” she said of her writing process. “The art of composing is basically improvisation with the luxury of time and an eraser, and the process itself is a balance of time.”

For the album, Rosnes also arranged two compositions by jazz innovators who’d influenced her work. On the first, “Slink,” by Lyle Mays (1953–2020), she applies a coordinated, unison melody line that flows through the tune’s ever-moving harmonic spaces. One of those lines is her own smooth vocals; though Rosnes doesn’t consider herself a singer, she’ll use her voice “for orchestrational purposes” and the “certain magic” that wordless vocals add to an otherwise instrumental piece.

“I’ve always really loved Lyle Mays’ playing, and especially his writing,” Rosnes said. “[This tune] is one of his great compositions, originally featured on his first, eponymously titled, solo album in 1986. I rearranged it for Artemis, with the addition of the flute, Rhodes and the vocals on top, and the band played it like it had been in the book for years.”

Rosnes also placed “Penelope” on the album’s set list, recorded before its composer, Wayne Shorter, passed away in March. A staple of the group’s live repertoire, Rosnes’ take on the tune features rangy horn solos and dark chords in an irresistible slow dance — a denser, more structured understanding of the original.

“Wayne Shorter was a visionary thinker, a genius, a hero and an influence to a large degree for all of us in the band,” wrote Rosnes. “The experiences I had as a member of his band 30 years ago helped to shape my entire view of music and certainly who I am as a player and composer today. He opened up my mind to new ways of thinking about music, and there isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t reflect on some lesson that I learned while working with him.

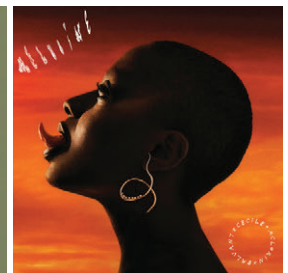
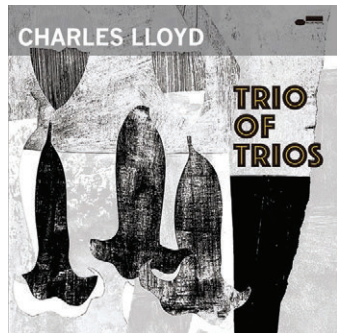
“I love that Wayne immortalized many women through his music — family members, friends and great women of history alike — through many of his pieces, including ‘Ana Maria,’ ‘Iska,’ ‘Miyako,’ ‘Joanna’s Theme,’ ‘Aung San Suu Kyi,’ ‘Sacagawea,’ ‘The Three Marias,’ ‘Midnight In Carlotta’s Hair,’ ‘Marie Antoinette’ and ‘Nefertiti.’”

This track, the album’s last, bears repeated listening if only to hear Shorter’s musical ideas channeled through these six musicians’ instruments. In coming to appreciate all that goes into their artistry behind the scenes — the arranging, the composing, the leading — it’s easy to forget that first and foremost these women are players. Players of the highest order.

Playing happens “in real time,” the album title reminds us. On the surface, this phrase alludes to the improvisatory abilities of these players and the ephemeral nature of music itself. Deeper still, though, it makes a statement about the strength required to face change — and about the women who take that on. **DB**



TOP 10 JAZZ ALBUMS OF THE YEAR



Samara Joy, *Linger Awhile* (VERVE)1,910

With this beautiful recording, a silky-voiced star is born.

Terri Lyne Carrington, *New Standards Vol. 1* (CANDID).....1,350

Putting her music where her mouth is, Carrington brings much-needed attention to the composing voices of women in jazz.

Redman/Mehldau/McBride/Blade, *Long Gone* (NONESUCH)1,190

A breathtaking reunion of four of the brightest stars in jazz.

Kenny Barron, *The Source* (ARTWORK).....1,110

The master at 80, alone at the piano...perfection!

Charles Lloyd, *Trio Of Trios* (BLUE NOTE)1,080

Three different trios, three full albums, one work of beauty, poise, joy and ambition.

Brad Mehldau, *Your Mother Should Know* (NONESUCH)810

The music of The Beatles channeled through the mind of one of our greatest living pianists.

Shorter/Carrington/Genovese/Spalding, *Live At The Detroit Jazz Festival* (CANDID)730

A beautiful moment captured not long before Wayne Shorter left the planet. Thank you, Detroit and Candid.

Fred Hersch & esperanza spalding, *Alive At The Village Vanguard* (PALMETTO)620

Two masters, one magical evening — Hersch at piano, spalding with just her lovely voice.

Julian Lage, *View With A Room* (BLUE NOTE)580

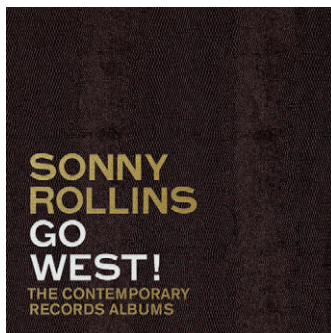
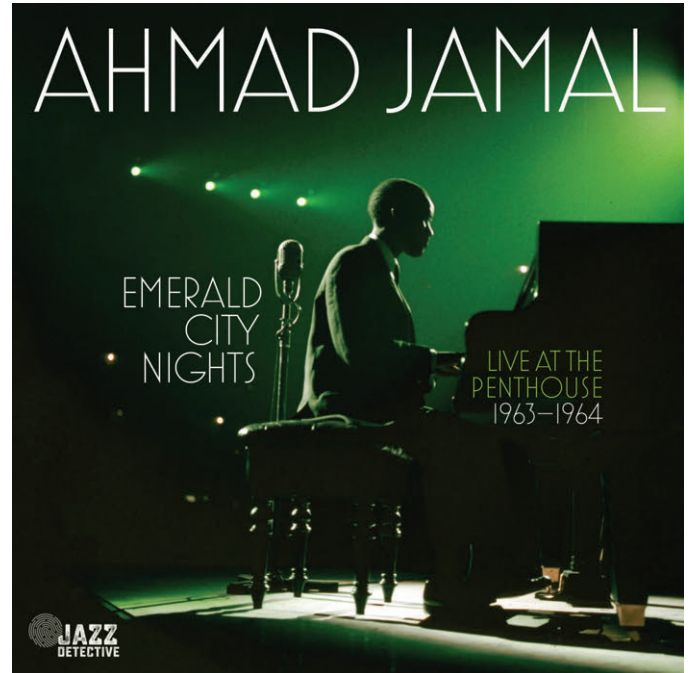
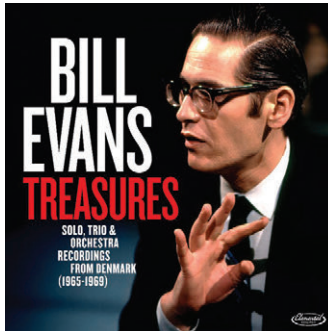
The amazing guitarist continues to thrill with another recording full of heart and soul.

Cécile McLorin Salvant, *Mélusine* (NONESUCH)500

The leading lady of jazz vocals creates a masterpiece of thoughtful, adventurous music.

[For the complete list of Jazz Albums of the Year, see page 47.]

TOP 10 HISTORICAL ALBUMS OF THE YEAR



Ahmad Jamal, *Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse* (JAZZ DETECTIVE).....2,376

Winner of the DownBeat Critics Poll also gets the nod from the Readers!

Bill Evans, *Treasures: Solo, Trio & Orchestra Recordings From Denmark (1965-1969)* (ELEMENTAL).....2,167

A collection of previously unissued performances demonstrate the genius of Bill Evans.

Miles Davis, *What Happened 1982-1985: The Bootleg Series Vol. 7* (LEGACY) 1,738

Unreleased material from *Star People*, *Decoy* and *You're Under Arrest*.

Keith Jarrett, *Bordeaux Concert* (ECM) 1,441

The final Jarrett live performance with elegance, angst, taste and storytelling.

Sonny Rollins, *Go West!* (CRAFT) 1,397

Rollins' classic West Coast adventure.

Oscar Peterson Trio, *On A Clear Day: The Oscar Peterson Trio—Live In Zurich, 1971* (TWO LIONS/MACK AVENUE) 1,232

Captures the stunning musicality of Peterson.

Charles Mingus, *Changes: The Complete 1970s Atlantic Recordings* (RHINO).... 1,221

Captures Mingus at the end of his musical run between 1973 and his passing in 1979.

Charles Mingus, *The Lost Album From Ronnie Scott's* (RESONANCE)..... 1,045

Two Mingus historical records in one poll

truly divided the votes, but this is a beauty, too. The project was shelved when the label literally dropped its entire jazz roster except for Miles Davis.

Chet Baker, *Blue Room, The 1979 Vara Studio Sessions In Holland* (JAZZ DETECTIVE/ELEMENTAL).....968

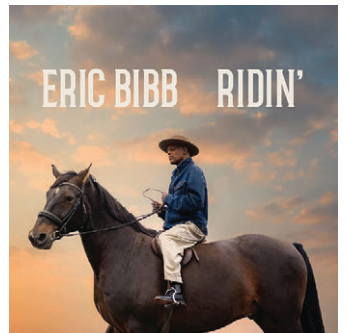
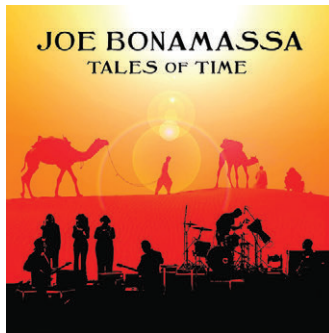
Beautifully recorded, lovingly packaged, capturing the chill nuance of Baker's art.

Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Los Angeles Forum, April 26, 1969* (SONY LEGACY)858

Sony/Legacy has been releasing a host of great, live Jimi Hendrix recordings.

[For the complete list of Historical Albums of the Year, see page 47.]

TOP 10 BLUES ALBUMS OF THE YEAR



Buddy Guy, *Blues Don't Lie* (RCA/SILVERTONE) 4,664

The elder statesman of the blues delivers the truth and another win for Blues Album of the Year.

Taj Mahal, *Savoy* (STONY PLAIN) 3,113

Taj Mahal mixes a bit of jazz with his blues this time for a nostalgic trip in memory of New York's famed Savoy Ballroom, one of the great dance haunts of jazz's golden age.

Shemekia Copeland, *Done Come Too Far* (ALLIGATOR) 2,002

The reigning queen of the blues offers up tales of love and longing on this terrific set.

Joe Bonamassa, *Tales Of Time* (J&R ADVENTURES) 1,485

Joe Bonamassa offers a live take on his most recent studio album, *Time Clocks*. Once again, the guitar slinger rocks the blues.

Eric Bibb, *Ridin'* (STONY PLAIN) 539

Bibb continues to ride the civil rights train with another superb entry into the blues canon.

Ruthie Foster, *Healing Time* (BLUE CORN) 528

Foster assembles an all-star cast for this 12-song set of prodigious blues.

Fantastic Negrito, *White Jesus Black Problems* (STOREFRONT) 462

Always pushing the envelope, Fantastic Negrito developed the concept for this fantastic album after learning that his seventh great-grandmother was a white indentured servant from Scotland.

Duane Betts, *Wild & Precious Life* (ROYAL POTATO FAMILY) 440

Is it blues? In a Southern, swampy, rocking way, hell yes!

Doug Wamble, *Blues In The Present Tense* (HALCYONIC) 374

The guitarist and singer/songwriter slathers his blues in jazz with a tight band that also features Prometheus Jenkins, also known as Branford Marsalis.

Rory Block, *Ain't Nobody Worried* (STONY PLAIN) 341

Here's Rory Block's pandemic project where she plays plenty of her favorite songs — and it's killing.

Tracy Nelson, *Life Don't Mess Nobody* (BMG) 341

On her first album in more than 12 years, Tracy Nelson shows she's still got the goods on a bluesified album that owes just as much to classic R&B.

[For the complete list of Blues Albums of the Year, see page 53.]

STARTING NOVEMBER 1

WHO'S NEXT?

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Awards**

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Mikayla Smith of King's Academy High School in West Palm Beach, Florida is an outstanding performance winner in the Vocal Jazz Soloist category (High School division) in the 2023 DownBeat Student Music Awards.

COMPLETE RESULTS



HALL OF FAME

Pharoah Sanders.....1,925

Jack DeJohnette.....	1,903
John McLaughlin.....	1,617
Charles Lloyd.....	1,507
Grant Green.....	1,199
Ramsey Lewis.....	1,177
Kenny Burrell.....	1,155
Oliver Nelson.....	1,144
Shirley Horn.....	1,056
Ellis Marsalis.....	957
Bob Brookmeyer.....	924
Terence Blanchard.....	814
Maria Schneider.....	781
Billy Higgins.....	759
Bobby Hutchinson.....	682
Bill Frisell.....	649
Anthony Braxton.....	638
Dr. Lonnie Smith.....	605

Paul Bley.....	594
Buddy Guy.....	572
Dave Holland.....	572
Randy Brecker.....	550
Dr. John.....	550
Dee Dee Bridgewater.....	539
Dianne Reeves.....	484
Joe Lovano.....	473
John Scofield.....	462
Jan Garbarek.....	440
Abdullah Ibrahim.....	429
Henry Threadgill.....	429

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Wayne Shorter	2,277
Samara Joy	1,452
Herbie Hancock	1,408
Christian McBride.....	1,309
Kenny Barron	1,232
Charles Lloyd.....	1,221

Emmet Cohen.....	1,188
Joey DeFrancesco.....	1,089
Terri Lyne Carrington.....	1,056
Pat Metheny.....	1,012
Jon Batiste.....	847
Wynton Marsalis.....	847
Brad Mehldau.....	704
Bill Frisell.....	649
Cécile McLorin Salvant.....	649
Mary Halvorson.....	605
Esperanza Spalding.....	572
Terence Blanchard.....	539
Chris Potter.....	484
Lakecia Benjamin.....	451
Jack DeJohnette.....	451
James Brandon Lewis.....	451
Henry Threadgill.....	407
Ambrose Akinmusire.....	385
Anat Cohen.....	385
Kenny Garrett.....	374

Joshua Redman.....	363
Julian Lage.....	352
Nicholas Payton.....	341
Immanuel Wilkins.....	330

GROUP

Artemis.....1,903

Redman/Mehldau/McBride/Blade: A MoodSwing Reunion.....	1,848
Pat Metheny Side-Eye.....	1,749
Emmet Cohen Trio.....	1,628
Snarky Puppy.....	1,584
Terri Lyne Carrington + Social Science.....	1,342
Branford Marsalis Quartet.....	1,298
Charles Lloyd New Quartet.....	1,254
Bill Charlap Trio.....	1,111
Bill Frisell Four.....	979
Jon Batiste & Stay Human.....	858
The Cookers.....	781
Joe Lovano Trio Tapestry.....	715



Kenny Garrett at the Detroit Jazz Fest



Trombone Shorty at the Tri-C Jazz Fest



Chris Potter

Buddy Guy & Junior Wells, *Live From The Chicago Blues Festival 1964* (GOOD TIME) 440
 Andrew Hill, *Dance With Death* (BLUE NOTE) 440
 Albert Ayler, *Europe 1966* (ORG) 407
 Medeski Martin & Wood, *It's A Jungle In Here* (REAL GONE) 396
 Dizzy Gillespie, *Portrait Of Jenny* (BBE) 352

TRUMPET

Terence Blanchard 3,058
 Wynton Marsalis 2,695
 Ambrose Akinmusire 2,046
 Randy Brecker 1,936
 Ingrid Jensen 1,815
 Tom Harrell 1,375
 Nicholas Payton 1,155
 Terell Stafford 913
 Jeremy Pelt 869
 Wadada Leo Smith 781
 Sean Jones 770
 Jaimie Branch (PASSED AUG. 22) 715
 Dave Douglas 704
 Eddie Henderson 693
 Avishai Cohen 671
 Marquis Hill 638
 Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah (FORMERLY CHRISTIAN SCOTT) 583
 Enrico Rava 561
 Jon Faddis 539
 Theo Croker 517
 Etienne Charles 385
 Michael Rodriguez 363

Brian Lynch 330
 Jason Palmer 319
 Kirk Knuffke 308

TROMBONE

Trombone Shorty 3,289
 Steve Turre 2,552
 Wycliffe Gordon 1,540
 Steve Davis 1,408
 Curtis Fuller 1,397
 Michael Dease 1,232
 Robin Eubanks 1,199
 Delfeayo Marsalis 1,199
 Marshall Gilkes 924
 Nils Landgren 759
 Natalie Cressman 715
 Ray Anderson 616
 Conrad Herwig 583
 Slide Hampton 561
 Ryan Keberle 550
 John Fedchock 528
 Curtis Fowlkes 484
 Alan Ferber 396
 Nick Finzer 385
 Sarah Morrow 363
 Steve Swell 330
 Gianluca Petrella 319
 Vincent Gardner 297
 Samuel Blaser 253
 George Lewis 253

SOPRANO SAXOPHONE

Branford Marsalis 3,366

Dave Liebman 2,145
 Kenny Garrett 1,969
 Joshua Redman 1,650
 Ravi Coltrane 1,518
 Jane Ira Bloom 1,441
 Jan Garbarek 1,188
 Joe Lovano 1,177
 Chris Potter 1,144
 Jane Bunnett 968
 Steve Wilson 935
 Tia Fuller 737
 James Carter 660
 Alexa Tarantino 627
 Roscoe Mitchell 605
 Ingrid Laubrock 539
 Wayne Escoffery 517
 Ted Nash 506
 Evan Parker 396
 Walter Smith III 396
 Donny McCaslin 374
 Joel Frahm 352
 Vincent Herring 308
 Sam Newsome 297
 Jimmy Greene 275

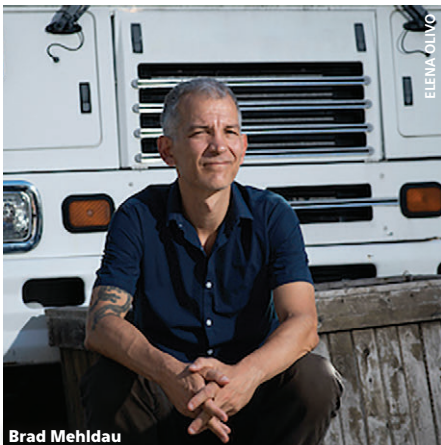
ALTO SAXOPHONE

Kenny Garrett 3,245
 Immanuel Wilkins 1,837
 Lakecia Benjamin 1,551
 Chris Potter 1,276
 Miguel Zenón 1,265
 Greg Abate 1,034
 Paquito D'Rivera 1,001

David Sanborn 1,001
 Gary Bartz 946
 Tia Fuller 825
 Bobby Watson 803
 Charles McPherson 770
 Vincent Herring 671
 Rudresh Mahanthappa 561
 John Zorn 561
 Donald Harrison 528
 Steve Wilson 495
 Anthony Braxton 484
 Grace Kelly 465
 Henry Threadgill 451
 Marshall Allen 440
 Ted Nash 407
 Tim Berne 363
 Jim Snidero 352
 Steve Coleman 341
 Sharel Cassity 330
 Caroline Davis 330
 Peter Brötzmann 308

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Chris Potter 2,420
 Charles Lloyd 2,321
 Joe Lovano 1,738
 Joshua Redman 1,705
 Melissa Aldana 1,661
 Branford Marsalis 1,474
 Houston Person 1,133
 Pharoah Sanders 1,111
 Kamasi Washington 1,012
 Eric Alexander 957



James Brandon Lewis	682
Joel Frahm	561
Walter Smith III	550
James Carter	506
Wayne Escoffery	495
Jerry Bergonzi	429
Nubya Garcia	418
George Garzone	418
Archie Shepp	407
JD Allen	396
Billy Harper	396
Peter Brötzmann	385
Mark Turner	363
Roxy Coss	352
Donny McCaslin	341
Scott Robinson	341
Ingrid Laubrock	297
David Sánchez	297
Shabaka Hutchings	286

BARITONE SAXOPHONE

James Carter	3,421
Gary Smulyan	3,212
Grace Kelly	2,299
Ronnie Cuber	1,573
Scott Robinson	1,529
Claire Daly	1,386
John Surman	1,243
Ken Vandermark	748
Lauren Sevian	737
Tim Berne	649
Stephen "Doc" Kupka	627
Dave McMurray	627

Mats Gustafsson	616
Paula Henderson	561
Jason Marshall	550
Brian Landrus	440
Lisa Parrott	407
Patience Higgins	385
Chris Cheek	374
Vinny Golia	286
Mikko Innanen	286

CLARINET

Anat Cohen	7,711
Paquito D'Rivera	2,662
Ken Peplowski	1,870
Don Byron	1,694
Eddie Daniels	1,650
Victor Goines	880
Shabaka Hutchings	561
Ben Goldberg	495
Ted Nash	473
Vincent Herring	385
Chris Speed	385
Peter Brötzmann	352
Marty Ehrlich	341
Evan Christopher	330
François Houle	286
Aurora Nealand	286
Rebecca Trescher	264
Gabriele Mirabassi	253
Ken Vandermark	242
Louis Sclavis	231
Beth Custer	220
Jeff Lederer	209

Gianluigi Trovesi	209
Angel Bat Dawid	200

FLUTE

Hubert Laws	3,575
Charles Lloyd	2,893
Nicole Mitchell	1,881
Elena Pinderhughes	1,419
Lew Tabackin	1,001
Jane Bunnett	990
Tia Fuller	957
Henry Threadgill	913
Alexa Tarantino	814
Dave Liebman	759
Ted Nash	726
Jeff Coffin	638
Roscoe Mitchell	550
Anna Webber	539
Anne Drummond	517
James Spaulding	506
Ali Ryerson	484
Jamie Baum	473
Steve Wilson	462
Holly Hofmann	418
T.K. Blue	363
Shabaka Hutchings	352
James Newton	341

PIANO

Brad Mehldau	2,431
Kenny Barron	2,376
Herbie Hancock	2,222
Emmet Cohen	1,958

Ahmad Jamal	1,232
Jon Batiste	1,001
Bill Charlap	1,001
Kris Davis	792
Fred Hersch	781
Joey Alexander	726
Renee Rosnes	682
Gerald Clayton	649
Sullivan Fortner	649
Vijay Iyer	572
Monty Alexander	517
Eliane Elias	506
Jason Moran	429
Craig Taborn	418
Chucho Valdés	418
Aaron Parks	407
Benny Green	396
Helen Sung	396
George Cables	385
Robert Glasper	363
Abdullah Ibrahim	330
Orrin Evans	319
Matthew Shipp	308
Joey Calderazzo	297
Cyrus Chestnut	297

KEYBOARDS

Herbie Hancock	6,710
Robert Glasper	2,178
Larry Goldings	1,672
Hiromi	1,221
Craig Taborn	902
John Medeski	792



Marcus Miller



Regina Carter at the Detroit Jazz Festival



Joey DeFrancesco

Gary Versace	715	Tony Monaco	429
James Francies	693	Kit Downes	407
Patrice Rushen	693	Akiko Tsuruga	396
Cory Henry	682	Jared Gold	352
Danilo Pérez	649	Jamie Saft	330
Gary Husband	572	Delvon Lamars	286
Geoffrey Keezer	561	Rhoda Scott	275
Jeff Lorber	561	Wayne Horvitz	253
Eddie Palmieri	561	Chris Foreman	220
John Beasley	495		
Uri Caine	462		
Omar Sosa	429		
Marc Cary	407		
Leo Genovese	374		
Nik Bärtsch	352		
Matthew Shipp	352		
Zaccai Curtis	319		
Kit Downes	319		
Brian Charette	308		

GIUITAR

Pat Metheny 4,081

Bill Frisell	2,541
Julian Lage	1,892
John McLaughlin	1,661
Mary Halvorson	1,639
John Scofield	1,595
Peter Bernstein	1,320
John Pizzarelli	1,254
Kurt Rosenwinkel	1,122
Dave Stryker	957
Pascquale Grasso	880
Lionel Loueke	682
Mark Whitfield	528
Bobby Broom	473
Charlie Hunter	440
Jeff Parker	440
Gilad Hekselman	341
Romero Lubambo	341
Ben Monder	319
Marc Ribot	319
Bruce Forman	231
Miles Okazaki	209
Wolfgang Muthspiel	198
Jakob Bro	187

Rez Abbasi	176
Nir Felder	176
Stephane Wrembel	176

BASS

Christian McBride 5,643

Ron Carter	4,114
Dave Holland	1,727
Linda May Han Oh	1,650
Esperanza Spalding	1,606
Stanley Clarke	880
John Patitucci	825
Larry Grenadier	682
John Clayton	627
Peter Washington	561
Avishai Cohen	506
William Parker	407
Reggie Workman	385
Victor Wooten	374
Dezron Douglas	363
Luques Curtis	330
Scott Colley	319
Rufus Reid	319
Cecil McBee	286
Thomas Morgan	286
Michael Formanek	275
Arild Andersen	264
Mimi Jones	242
Jorge Roeder	209

ELECTRIC BASS

Marcus Miller 3,311

Stanley Clarke	2,365
Christian McBride	2,134
Steve Swallow	2,079

John Patitucci	1,804
Esperanza Spalding	1,694
Victor Wooten	1,518
Linda May Han Oh	913
Thundercat	880
Meshe Ndegeocello	847
Richard Bona	704
Tony Levin	693
Brian Bromberg	561
James Genus	528
Pino Palladino	462
Avishai Cohen	451
Derrick Hodge	418
Jamaaladeen Tacuma	396
Larry Grenadier	385
Tim Lefebvre	374
Matthew Garrison	319
Felix Pastorius	308
Mimi Jones	297
Ingebrigt Håker Flaten	220
Stomu Takeishi	209

VIOLIN

Regina Carter 8,514

Jean-Luc Ponty	3,146
Sara Caswell	1,573
Jenny Scheinman	1,276
Mark Feldman	1,034
Mark O'Connor	957
Zach Brock	693
Jerry Goodman	660
Michal Urbaniak	506
Mat Maneri	385
Jason Kao Hwang	374
Sarah Bernstein	363

Tomoko Omura	352
Karen Briggs	341
Eyvind Kang	341
Christian Howes	297
Mads Tolling	275
Carla Kihlstedt	253
Scott Tixier	242

DRUMS

Brian Blade	2,937
Jack DeJohnette	2,211
Terri Lyne Carrington	2,145
Steve Gadd	1,342
Johnathan Blake	902
Roy Haynes	902
Tyshawn Sorey	825
Jeff Hamilton	792
Allison Miller	726
Billy Cobham	682
Jeff "Tain" Watts	682
Cindy Blackman Santana	671
Peter Erskine	671
Billy Hart	660
Lewis Nash	572
Kenny Washington	539
Bill Stewart	495
Herlin Riley	429
Matt Wilson	429
Makaya McCraven	418
Nate Smith	396
Joey Baron	352

Kendrick Scott	319
Marcus Gilmore	297
Eric Harland	286
Rudy Royston	286

PERCUSSION

Zakir Hussain	2,673
Poncho Sanchez	2,431
Sheila E	2,046
Airto Moreira	2,046
Pedrito Martinez	1,199
Trilok Gurtu	1,133
Bobby Sanabria	1,078
Kahil El'Zabar	957
Cyro Baptista	902
Mino Cinelu	803
Manolo Badrena	726
Hamid Drake	715
Susie Ibarra	693
Marilyn Mazur	616
Rogério Boccato	605
Pete Escovedo	605
Giovanni Hidalgo	484
Ches Smith	429
Sammy Figueroa	418
John Santos	407
Kate Gentile	319

VIBRAPHONE

Warren Wolf	3,223
Joel Ross	3,025

Stefon Harris	2,937
Joe Locke	2,189
Jason Marsalis	2,002
Steve Nelson	1,672
Patricia Brennan	990
Joe Chambers	869
Sasha Berliner	693
Kenny Wollesen	539
Chien Chien Lu	506
Jason Adasiewicz	473
Hendrik Meurkens	385
Simon Moullier	352
Warren Smith	341
Karl Berger	308
Behn Gillece	308
Matt Moran	308
Mulatu Astatke	297
Tomas Fujiwara	264

MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

Béla Fleck (BANJO)	2,882
Jon Batiste (MELODICA/HARMONABOARD)	2,046
Brandee Younger (HARP)	2,046
Chris Potter (BASS CLARINET)	1,177
Tomeka Reid (CELLO)	1,166
David Murray (BASS CLARINET)	979
Steve Turre (SHELLS)	935
James Carter (BASS SAXOPHONE)	847
Wycliffe Gordon (TUBA)	825

Scott Robinson (BASS SAXOPHONE)	803
Grégoire Maret (HARMONICA)	781
Gary Versace (ACCORDION)	660
Richard Galliano (ACCORDION)	616
Edmar Castaneda (COLOMBIAN HARP)	605
Anouar Brahem (OUD)	583
Chris Thile (MANDOLIN)	561
Howard Levy (HARMONICA)	550
Greg Leisz (PEDAL STEEL GUITAR)	528
Hendrik Meurkens (HARMONICA)	473
Theon Cross (TUBA)	396
Peggy Lee (CELLO)	363
Toumani Diabaté (KORA)	319
Ben Wendel (BASSOON)	319
Dino Saluzzi (BANDONEÓN)	308

FEMALE VOCALIST

Samara Joy	4,477
Cécile McLorin Salvant	2,937
Diana Krall	1,782
Laila Biali	1,386
Dianne Reeves	1,221
Esperanza Spalding	1,221
Veronica Swift	1,199
Dee Dee Bridgewater	1,166
Cyrrille Aimée	924
Jazzmeia Horn	814
Cassandra Wilson	814
Sheila Jordan	561
Lizz Wright	495

RSD BLACK FRIDAY

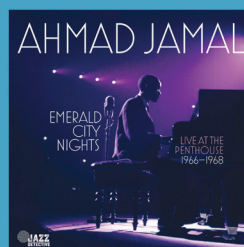
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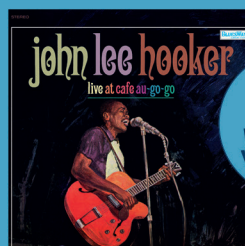
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Jon Batiste



Tedeschi Trucks Band



Gretchen Parlato	462
Catherine Russell	451
Thana Alexa	407
Tierney Sutton	385
Patricia Barber	374
Melody Gardot	374
Roberta Gambarini	352
Karrin Allyson	341
Stacey Kent	330
Madeleine Peyroux	297
Luciana Souza	297
Sara Serpa	242

MALE VOCALIST

Tony Bennett (PASSED AUGUST 2023)	5,291
Kurt Elling	4,752
Gregory Porter	4,246
Bobby McFerrin	1,309
Theo Bleckmann	825
Jacob Collier	803
José James	803
Benny Benack III	781
Harry Connick Jr.	748
John Pizzarelli	572
Michael Bublé	451
Leslie Odom Jr.	429
Dwight Trible	396
James Blood Ulmer	385
Sachal Vasandani	385
Jamie Cullum	374
João Bosco	352
Kenny Washington	319
Giacomo Gates	308
Johnny O'Neal	308
Allan Harris	297
John Boutté	275

COMPOSER

Maria Schneider	3,014
Terence Blanchard	2,255
Pat Metheny	2,068
Wynton Marsalis	1,100
Benny Golson	990
Carla Bley	979

Christian McBride	891
Mary Halvorson	792
Renee Rosnes	737
Henry Threadgill	682
Bill Frisell	583
Robert Glasper	539
Vince Mendoza	539
Tom Harrell	495
Fred Hersch	495
Kamasi Washington	495
Dave Holland	484
John Scofield	440
Tyshawn Sorey	385
Arturo O'Farrill	374
Anthony Braxton	363
Jim McNeely	363
Ambrose Akinmusire	330
Melissa Aldana	330
Darcy James Argue	297
Kris Davis	297

ARRANGER

Maria Schneider	3,806
Terri Lyne Carrington	1,518
Wynton Marsalis	1,507
Carla Bley	1,419
Christian McBride	1,364
John Clayton	924
Vince Mendoza	924
Darcy James Argue	836
Billy Childs	836
Esperanza Spalding	814
Bob Mintzer	759
John Beasley	715
Gordon Goodwin	627
Robert Glasper	605
Kamasi Washington	528
Jim McNeely	473
Gil Goldstein	407
Arturo O'Farrill	396
Nicholas Payton	352
Steven Bernstein	341
Miho Hazama	330
Lakecia Benjamin	319
Makaya McCraven	308

Miguel Zenón	308
Myra Melford	275
Ed Palermo	264
John Daversa	253
Sullivan Fortner	242

RECORD LABEL

Blue Note	6,479
ECM	2,497
Mack Avenue	1,177
Smoke Sessions	1,166
MoonJune	627
Verve	583
ACT	528
Impulse!	517
Mosaic	506
Origin	495
Nonesuch	473
Sunnyside	396
ArtistShare	341
Jazz Is Dead	319
Posi-Tone	319
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Pi Recordings	264
Whaling City Sound	264
Criss Cross Jazz	253
SmallsLIVE	253
International Anthem Recording Co.	242
HighNote	231
Concord	220

PRODUCER

Christian McBride	2,508
Manfred Eicher	2,420
Terri Lyne Carrington	2,299
Don Was	1,419
Robert Glasper	1,177
Michael Cuscuna	913
Dave Holland	814
Zev Feldman	781
John Zorn	781
Cory Weeds	539
Makaya McCraven	528
John Beasley	517

Vince Mendoza	451
Bill Laswell	440
Dave Douglas	418
Larry Klein	418
Kris Davis/David Breskin	374
Ambrose Akinmusire	319
Tyshawn Sorey	319
Paul Stache	308
Matt Pierson	297
Miguel Zenón	297
Flying Lotus	253
Ben Allison	242
Charlie Hunter	231
Marty Ashby	209

BLUES ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Buddy Guy	3,696
Taj Mahal	1,936
Keb' Mo'	1,243
Gary Clark Jr.	1,188
Joe Bonamassa	1,133
Shemekia Copeland	1,111
Christone "Kingfish" Ingram	1,034
Robert Cray	1,023
Robben Ford	847
John Mayall	836
James Blood Ulmer	671
Charlie Musselwhite	462
Marcia Ball	440
Duke Robillard	418
Eric Bibb	407
Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters	385
Samantha Fish	374
Sue Foley	341
Fantastic Negrito	319
Ruthie Foster	319
Eric Gales	308
Otis Taylor	242
Sonny Landreth	231
Kenny Wayne Shepherd	231
Elvin Bishop	220
Doug Wamble	209
Billy F. Gibbons	198
Bobby Rush	198

BLUES ALBUM

Buddy Guy, <i>Blues Don't Lie</i> (RCA/SILVERTONE)	4,664
Taj Mahal, <i>Savoy</i> (STONY PLAIN)	3,113
Shemekia Copeland, <i>Done Come Too Far</i> (ALLIGATOR)	2,002
Joe Bonamassa, <i>Tales Of Time</i> (J&R ADVENTURES)	1,485
Eric Bibb, <i>Ridin'</i> (STONY PLAIN)	539
Ruthie Foster, <i>Healing Time</i> (BLUE CORN)	528
Fantastic Negrito, <i>White Jesus Black Problems</i> (STOREFRONT)	462
Duane Betts, <i>Wild & Precious Life</i> (ROYAL POTATO FAMILY)	440
Doug Wamble, <i>Blues In The Present Tense</i> (HALCYONIC)	374
Rory Block, <i>Ain't Nobody Worried</i> (STONY PLAIN)	341
Tracy Nelson, <i>Life Don't Mess Nobody</i> (BMG)	341
Marc Broussard/Joe Bonamassa, <i>S.O.S. 4: Blues For Your Soul</i> (KTBA)	330
Fenton Robinson, <i>Somebody Loan Me A Dime</i> (ALLIGATOR)	330
Matt Anderson, <i>The Big Bottle Of Joy</i> (SONIC)	308
The Cash Box Kings, <i>Oscar's Motel</i> (ALLIGATOR)	308
Joe Louis Walker, <i>Weight Of The World</i> (FORTY BELOW)	286
Blue Moon Marquee, <i>Scream, Holler & Howl</i> (ILDA)	264
Kenny Wayne Shepherd, <i>Trouble Is ... 25</i> (PROVOGUE)	264
Walter Trout, <i>Ride</i> (PROVOGUE)	264
Sass Jordan, <i>Bitches Blues</i> (STONY PLAIN)	253
Mike Zito/Albert Castiglia, <i>Blood Brothers</i> (GULF COAST)	231
Jimmy Hall, <i>Ready Now</i> (KTBA)	198
Peter Case, <i>Doctor Moan</i> (SUNSET BLVD)	154
Chris Duarte, <i>Ain't Giving Up</i> (PROVOGUE)	154
Angela Strehli, <i>Ace Of Blues</i> (ANTONE'S)	154

BEYOND ARTIST

Jon Batiste	2,574
Tedeschi Trucks Band	1,397
Rhiannon Giddens	1,342
Tower of Power	1,045
Bob Dylan	1,034
Bonnie Raitt	1,034
Robert Glasper	869
Rickie Lee Jones	770
Björk	759
Gregory Porter	726
Trombone Shorty	715
DOMi & JD Beck	704
Van Morrison	605
Antonio Sánchez	605
Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer, Shahzad Ismaily	517
Neil Young	517
Melody Gardot	484
Kendrick Lamar	429
Thundercat	429
Caetano Veloso	385
Lucinda Williams	385
Billie Eilish	363
Booker T. Jones	363
Bettye LaVette	341
Beyoncé	308

BEYOND ALBUM

Tedeschi Trucks Band, <i>I Am The Moon</i> (FANTASY)	2,629
Ralph Towner, <i>At First Light</i> (ECM)	2,035
Rickie Lee Jones, <i>Pieces Of Treasure</i> (MODERN)	1,936
Antonio Sánchez, <i>Shift (BAD HOMBRE VOL. II)</i> (WARNER)	1,793
Van Morrison, <i>Moving On Skiffle</i> (EXILE)	1,419
Eva Cassidy/London Symphony Orchestra/Christopher Wells, <i>I Can Only Be Me</i> (BLIX STREET)	1,221
Beyoncé, <i>Renaissance</i> (COLUMBIA)	1,078
Björk, <i>Fossora</i> (ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT)	1,023

Steve Lacy, <i>Gemini Rights</i> (L-M/RCA/SONY)	924
Arooj Aftab/Vijay Iyer/Shahzad Ismaily, <i>Love In Exile</i> (VERVE)	858
Ali Farka Touré, <i>Voyager</i> (WORLD CIRCUIT)	770
Ryuichi Sakamoto, <i>12</i> (KAB AMERICA/MILAN/SONY)	759
Lizzo, <i>Special</i> (NICE LIFE)	495
Khruangbin/Vieux Farka Touré, <i>Ali</i> (DEAD OCEANS)	429
Yo La Tengo, <i>This Stupid World</i> (MATADOR)	407
Aoife O'Donovan, <i>The Apathy Sessions</i> (YEP ROCK)	330
boygenius, <i>the record</i> (INTERSCOPE)	308
Natalia Lafourcade, <i>De Todas Las Flores</i> (SONY)	253

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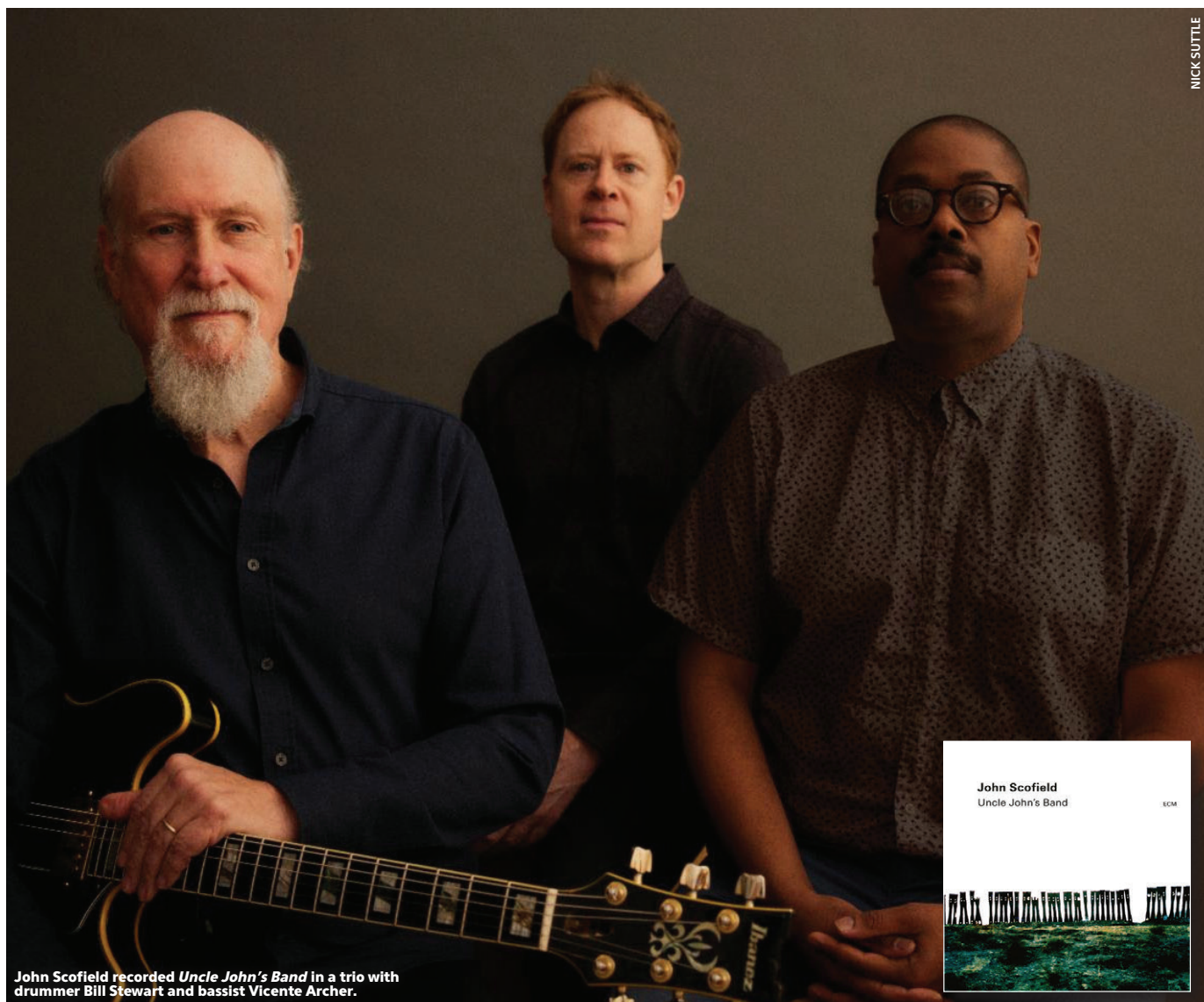


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Reviews

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



NICK SUTTLE

John Scofield recorded *Uncle John's Band* in a trio with drummer Bill Stewart and bassist Vicente Archer.

John Scofield *Uncle John's Band*

ECM

★★★★

It's only in scanning his entire musical output that you can truly appreciate how many styles guitarist John Scofield has pursued since his first Enja recording in 1977, and how he has exhibited his aversion to stepping in the same water twice. There's barely a genre he hasn't touched, and signed as his own.

The handful of compositions from the '60s, '70s and further back make it seem like Sco's feeling nostalgic, like many men his age. That analysis is too shallow by half, and overlooks the fact that the guitarist's approach has always

been to explore compositions with good bones. Some of these bones are just older than others.

Like his closest contemporary, Bill Frisell, Scofield puts his own stamp on pieces like Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," Neil Young's "Old Man" and the Grateful Dead's "Uncle John's Band," but he also digs deep into a pair of compositions associated with his former bandleader, Miles Davis.

If there's an overarching approach, it's the relaxed vibe the trio maintains throughout — revving up a bit for Scofield's own "How Deep" and slowing it down for Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere" — ideal for the trio setting and the tight connection between the leader and his frequent drummer, Bill Stewart. Their ability to communicate has seldom sounded more

evident than on "Mo Green," which extrapolates Scofield's "Green Tea" with a clever bow to one of *The Godfather's* more memorable villains. The leader also makes sly allusions to pop music classics like The Monkees' "Last Train To Clarksdale" and Stan Jones' "Ghost Riders In The Sky." It all adds up to a casual-sounding session.

The only exception is "Nothing Is Forever," a spiky composition with unexpected turns that Scofield wrote for his son Evan, who died of sarcoma a decade ago. — James Hale

Uncle John's Band: Mr. Tambourine Man; How Deep; TV Band; Back In Time; Budo; Nothing Is Forever; Old Man; The Girlfriend Chord; Stairway To The Stars; Mo Green; Mask; Somewhere; Ray's Idea; Uncle John's Band. (89:41)

Personnel: John Scofield, guitar; Vicente Archer, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Miho Hazama's m_unit *Beyond Orbits*

EDITION

★★★★★

For a decade, Japanese composer Miho Hazama's m_unit band has existed as the repository for her expansive and often complex arrangements. Operating somewhere between the intricacies of an orchestra and the weighty grooves of a jazz big band, the group's three previous records have traversed everything from atonal explorations to heady swing, hip-hop beats and cinematic strings.

For *Beyond Orbits*, the m_unit is as deft as always. The record takes lofty inspiration from

exoplanets — planets orbiting stars outside of our solar system — and as such the album revolves around its three-part “Exoplanet Suite.” “Part I: Elliptical Orbit” centers on Christian McBride's resonant bass playing, bestowing a propulsive foundation to the string section's trilling ascensions. We move from plaintive solo violin and downtempo balladic introspection on “Part II: Three Sunlights” to frenetic breakbeats and intricate horn lines on “Part III: Planet Nine.”

With so much ground covered in the suite, the remaining five tracks can feel like filler. Yet for each potential mismatch there is a moment of formidable grace. Opener “Abeam” explodes horn fanfares over a lively clave rhythm, giving the brass section a welcome chance to trade phrases, while closing track “From Life Comes Beauty” provides a magnificent showcase for guest saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins' lyrical playing, soaring into a dextrous solo over drummer Jake Goldbas' groove. —Ammar Kalia

Beyond Orbits: Abeam; A Monk In Ascending And Descending; Exoplanet Suite: I. Elliptical Orbit; Exoplanet Suite: II. Three Sunlights; Exoplanet Suite: III. Planet Nine; Can't Hide Love; Portrait Of Guess; From Life Comes Beauty. (64:21)

Personnel: Miho Hazama, conductor; Steve Wilson, alto, soprano saxophone, flute; Jason Rigby, Jeremy Powell, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Andrew Gutasukas, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Jonathan Powell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Adam Unsworth, French horn; Tomoko Akaboshi, Ben Russell, Maria Im, violin; Atsuki Yoshida, Matt Consul, viola; Meaghan Burke, cello; James Shipp, vibraphone; Billy Test, piano; Sam Anning, bass; Jake Goldbas, drums; Christian McBride, bass (3); Immanuel Wilkins, alto saxophone (8).

Ordering info: editionrecords.com

Gonzalo Rubalcaba *Borrowed Roses*

TOP STOP

★★★★★

By far, any jazz musician's greatest challenge is to perform a song from the canon that has been played hundreds of times before and locate a new route through it. On *Borrowed Roses*, Gonzalo Rubalcaba not only takes up that challenge, he does it solo. The repertoire gives him both an emotional safety net and familiar foils to play with and against. But he's in no hurry. He journeys through “Chelsea Bridge” as if it might be booby-trapped, pausing cautiously at nearly every turn and peeking around the corners before making his moves. His manner is consistently soft, pensive, but to the point. He rarely overstays his welcome beyond two choruses and resists wandering into excess abstraction.

Where the melodic material rules, he obeys respectfully. “Someone To Watch Over Me” and “Lush Life” loom large in the first chorus, then retreat a bit behind the flitting pirouette, an arching arpeggio or thoughtful substitution. But Rubalcaba provides clear markers, so the listener always knows where he is the piece. On “In A Sentimental Mood,” he introduces a lovely introductory motif at the top that effectively echoes at two other



points. In subtle ways, he manages to find creative space.

“Take Five” offers the widest latitude. Rubalcaba frequently manipulates the rhythmic tension with his left hand while permitting his right hand an extra openness. It is the one piece that possesses a momentum. But his larger intent here is not to swing but to seduce the senses with a mix of familiarity and quiet surprise. —John McDonough

Borrowed Roses: Chelsea Bridge; Summertime; Someone To Watch Over Me; Take Five; Here There And Everywhere; Windows; Lush Life; Night And Day; In A Sentimental Mood; Very Early; Do It Again; Shape Of My Heart. (60:05)

Personnel: Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano.

Ordering info: topstopmusic.com



JD Allen *This*

SAVANT

★★★★★

JD Allen consistently maximizes an air of mystery in his music, either by giving his compositions and albums provocative titles or unraveling haunting improvisations on the tenor saxophone that elude melodic expectations but tug the heartstrings. Even in his music's brightest moments, a sense of danger always lurk underneath.

For more than a decade, he's showcased his unrepentant playing in sparse instrumentation, oftentimes without the benefit of springy harmonic beds. Piano-less trios remain his favorite instrumentation.

This, however, rehals his trio formation by swapping out bass with Alex Bonney's electronics. (Allen's penchant for pugilistic repartee with drummers remains intact thanks to Gwilym Jones' limber improvisational rhythms.) Within this new trio context, Allen's music casts a more subtle technicolor splendor. If anything, songs such as the ghostly “Know Dogs Allowed” and the strutting “Boom-Bap” provide ample evidence that the leader could score films inspired such sci-fi novelists as Octavia Butler or Sameul Delaney.

In short, *This* is a very modern jazz album containing gems such as the transfixing title track, on which Allen's howling tenor saxophone melody sounds like the last surviving human in a post-apocalyptic city; the menacing “Beeyondsay,” a tongue-in-cheek shoutout to Beyoncé that still sounds restless and eerie thanks to Jones' rumbling drumming and Bonney's arresting electronic textures; and the jostling “See It, Say It, Sorted,” on which Allen tussles with Jones' snapping rhythms like a jostled London commuter jockeying for position on The Tube. —John Murphy

This: This; The Revelator; Know Dogs Allowed; Boom-Bap; Beeyondsay; Mx. Fairweather; The Knight Of Swords; See It, Say It, Sorted. (43:02)

Personnel: JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Alex Bonney, electronics; Gwilym Jones, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

The Hot Box

Critics	James Hale	Ammar Kalia	John McDonough	John Murph
John Scofield <i>Uncle John's Band</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
Miho Hazama's m_Unit <i>Beyond Orbits</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
Gonzalo Rubalcaba <i>Borrowed Roses</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
JD Allen <i>This</i>	★★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★

Critics' Comments

John Scofield, *Uncle John's Band*

Scofield's latest trio record is typically freewheeling and expressive. His playing is crisp and determined, yet the sparseness of this trio format often leaves too much room for the mind to wander. —Ammar Kalia

Two CDs where one would have done the job. Still, relaxed with nothing to prove and no expiration date on the diverse set list. High-end Scofield swings with cool eloquence on "How Deep," "Ray's Idea" and "Budo." Casual but smart. —John McDonough

Apparently, the guitarist is not ready to take on the elder's statesman role, opting instead for the jovial avuncular leader who engages his younger bandmates as someone who just wants to hang, cut loose, yet still have meaningful conversations. —John Murph

Miho Hazama's m_unit, *Beyond Orbits*

Rich, rangy and unpredictable, Hazama's compositions sparkle in the hands of her 16 band members and two guests. Conceived during COVID lockdown, the scope of her music suggests her mind was wandering far afield. —James Hale

Hazama's sort-of big band begets a blend of smartly balanced classical and jazz expedients, performed with care and detail. Its energy emerges in contrasting clashes rather than thematic appeal, save for the charm of "Can't Hide Love." —John McDonough

This 10th anniversary celebration of this brilliant large ensemble provides that there is still much bristling imagination and vitality left to uncork. —John Murph

Gonzalo Rubalcaba, *Borrowed Roses*

Forget that hoary cliché about Cuban pianists leaning into rococo muscularity. Rubalcaba expresses his soft side as he explores the harmonic beauty of a dozen balladic mainstays. —James Hale

Lightness, lyricism and emotive expression are the calling cards of this solo record. There is little new ground to be covered but Rubalcaba satisfyingly embodies the essence of these timeless compositions. —Ammar Kalia

This solo piano exploration into the venerable American songbook and jazz canon allows listeners to gleam the leader's wondrous touch on the instrument as well as interpretational prowess. —John Murph

JD Allen, *This*

Electronics can be additive. Here, they too frequently overshadow the Trane/Ali-type interplay between Allen and Gwilym Jones. —James Hale

Allen goes electric for his latest release, and it's an admirable experiment. In Alex Bonney, Allen finds an unnervingly deep and dark accompaniment for his hard-blowing, fast-moving sound. One for blasting on a heavy soundsystem. —Ammar Kalia

Eight tenor-drum encounters where the electronics are a third wheel. Allen's themes make for permissive guardrails, but his commanding sound and discipline provide a sense of order. Qualities to value in music whose stern passion is not always easy to love. —John McDonough

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Chris Botti Vol. 1

BLUE NOTE

★★★½

Chris Botti has never been easily written off as a smooth-jazz sellout (hard though he sometimes seemed to try). From his arrival in the 1990s, the trumpeter had the chops and the vocabulary for the real thing, even as he restrained them in service to Richard Marx and R. Kelly songs. Finding himself on the most hallowed of jazz labels, though, Botti has at last made an honest-to-god acoustic jazz album. *Vol. 1* is a ballads record, with the star interpreting the stan-

dard repertoire via the Miles Davis–Chet Baker romance he’s always channeled.

He’s not that far out from his bread-and-butter, in other words, and he throws in a Coldplay song (“Fix You,” the only track with percussive muster) to acknowledge it. There’s not much real adventure in his songbook choices: “Danny Boy”? “My Funny Valentine”? Still, he renders them with delicacy and often loveliness, the former nearly a duet with piano (were it not that there are actually two pianists, David Foster and Taylor Eigsti), the latter a quintet with classical violinist Joshua Bell sharing the front line and doing credibly well.

Botti is unsurprisingly pretty as well on Davis and Bill Evans’s “Blue In Green” and Willard Robison’s “Old Folks,” and does a nice job on his co-written (with vocalist John Splithoff) smooth bossa “Paris.” Indeed, those words, “nice” and “unsurprising,” best sum up *Vol. 1*. Botti’s first expedition through acoustic jazz is along the (admittedly pleasant) path of least resistance. Surely he’s got some originality in there somewhere.

—Michael J. West

Vol. 1: Danny Boy; Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered; Two For The Road; Paris; Blue In Green; Someday My Prince Will Come; Time On My Hands; My Funny Valentine; Fix You; Old Folks. (47:19)

Personnel: Chris Botti, trumpet; Taylor Eigsti, piano; David Foster, piano (1, 6); Julian Pollock, piano (9); Rhodes (2, 3); Zach Moses, bass (2–7, 9, 10); Thomas Morgan, bass (8); Vinnie Colaiuta, drums; Leonardo Amuedo, guitar (3, 4, 6, 7, 9); Gilad Hekselman, guitar (2); Shane Fontayne, guitar (4); Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, saxophone (6, 7); Patrick Warren, strings (1, 3, 4, 6, 9); Joshua Bell, violin (8); John Splithoff, vocals (4).

Ordering info: bluenote.com

Lafayette Gilchrist Undaunted

MORPHIUS

★★★★

On the title track of *Undaunted* veteran pianist Lafayette Gilchrist mounts his melodic statement over a beautiful groove, which also sounds like a march. It is both opening and passing through in one fell swoop.

It is a moment that might be thought to parallel Gilchrist’s career. Emerging in the broader DMV (DC, Maryland, Virginia) region’s jazz scene first in the 1990s, Gilchrist has kept on the move, appearing in several prominent bands as well as having music featured in hugely popular cultural moments such as HBO’s *The Wire*. With each pass, Gilchrist’s sound makes us consider what lay on the other side of the break.

In that way, *Undaunted* continues to reflect a meditative relationship to hip-hop, go-go, and other rhythmic influences. In this effort, Gilchrist is joined by the drummer Eric Kennedy and Kevin Pinder, a percussionist who brings an Afro-Latin and Caribbean flavor to the proceedings. This union is notable for the space it creates on “Ride It Out.” As well as in the middle section of “Into The Swirl,” where the rhythm section is rounded out with another DMV mainstay, bassist Herman Burney, who



provides a pulsating bass line. Together with the horns, Brian Settles on tenor saxophone and Christian Mizon on trombone, this album features moments that would suggest we get up and dance. It recalls the days in the DMV where one could encounter bands playing straight-ahead, go-go or salsa on the same streets. Whatever else *Undaunted* provides, there is an insistence on taking care of the rhythm. And keeping our pulses moving.

—Josh Myers

Undaunted: Undaunted; Ride It Out; Into The Swirl; Southern Belle; Metropolitan Musings (Them Streets Again). (40:41)

Personnel: Lafayette Gilchrist, piano; Brian Settles, tenor saxophone; Herman Burney, bass; Christian Mizon, trombone; Eric Kennedy, drums; Kevin Pinder, percussion.

Ordering info: morpheus.com



Rhiannon Giddens You're The One

NONESUCH

★★★★

Rhiannon Giddens has been writing songs that examine America’s racial, sexual, political, cultural and musical contradictions since she started her career with the Carolina Chocolate Drops. Although she’s won two Best Folk Music Album Grammys and a Pulitzer Prize for her work with Michael Abels on the folk opera *Omar*, this is her first full album of original songs.

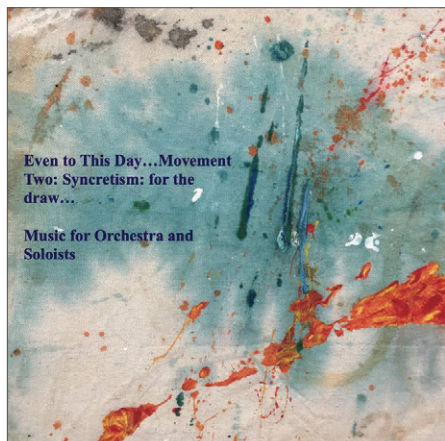
The arrangements cover the entire range of American popular music, with Giddens’ impressive vocals taking center stage. She dips into the sound of Muscle Shoals on “Too Little, Too Late, Too Bad,” growling out a warning to an unfaithful spouse in a tone that would make Aretha proud. Cajun fiddling, a second-line backbeat and a rock ‘n’ roll bass line drive “You Louisiana Man.” Giddens sings the lovesick lyric with an ironic air, lightening things up on the bridge with some gospel-accented melismas and jazzy scats. Giddens belts out “Hen In The Foxhouse,” a potential feminist anthem, against a funky, Latin-tinged percussion track highlighted by bluesy organ fills. The rich string orchestration of “Who Are You Dreaming Of” echoes the sound of a classic from the Great American Songbook, with Giddens delivering a swooning vocal.

—j. poet

You’re The One: Too Little, Too Late, Too Bad; You’re The One; Yet To Be; Wrong Kind Of Right; Another Wasted Life; You Louisiana Man; If You Don’t Know How Sweet It Is; Hen In The Foxhouse; Who Are You Dreaming Of; You Put The Sugar In My Bowl; Way Over Yonder; Good Ol’ Cider. (41:34)

Personnel: Rhiannon Giddens, minstrel banjo, modern banjo, viola, vocals; Jason Isbell, vocals; Dwayne Bennett, Hammond B-3, keyboards; Eric Escanes, electric guitar; Terrence “Teajai” Grizzle Jr., drums; Humberto Ibarra, percussion; Eryn Allen Kane, background vocals; Tadarus “T Ray” McCombs, electric bass; Dirk Powell, accordion, piano, fiddle, guitar; Niwel Tsumbu, nylon-stringed guitar; Francesco Turrisi, piano, tamburello, piano accordion, frame drum; Jack Splash, percussion, guitar, drum programming; Rhodes, Wurliizer, string arrangements; Jason Sypher, upright bass; Lalenja Harrington, background vocals; Leyla McCalla, cello; Amelia Powell, triangle, background vocals; Gene Sxip Shirey, National Reso-Phonic guitar; Lester Snell, Jennifer Puckett, Yennifer Correia, Andy Yum, violins, string arrangements; Beth Luscombe, viola, violins, string arrangements; Aaron Tubergen, viola, string arrangements; Jonathan Kirksey, cello, string arrangements; Ted Zimmerman, trumpet; Scott Klarman, saxophone, flute; Jose Miranda, trombone.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com



Vinny Golia
*Even To This Day... Music
 For Orchestra And Soloists,
 Movement Two: Syncretism:
 For The Draw...*

NINEWINDS
 ★★★★★

"Let us say 'Yes' to our presence together in chaos!" That was John Cage, I think, but it will do for the urgent, joyful spirit of this American masterpiece. Musically, it sounds more like a meeting between Anthony Braxton and Frank Zappa. The heavy guitar sounds are redolent of FZ, but the multi-instrumentalism clearly belongs to L.A. leg-

end and NineWinds founder Vinny Golia, whose *Music For Like Instruments* series was an exhaustive primer to his various horns. He's gone a step further here, in what was originally intended to be a bridging movement between parts one and three of *Even To This Day*... but developed out of a short suite for guitarist Alkis Nicolaides into a wholesale exploration of electronic sound.

It was, and is, Golia's typically generous attempt to help his friends out of COVID stasis and despair. But what could have been a work of apocalypse, done in stygian tones, is actually and genuinely affirmative.

The music is also, of course, in the lineage of Charles Ives, though even his totalizing imagination never got quite this far. Soloists come and go, with Golia strongly featured on his Whole Earth Catalog of horns and aerophones, though Wayne Peet takes a strong hand in the overall organization of the music.

A track-by-track analysis — there are 110 of them — is available on polite request (and your credit card number), but this for free: *Even To This Day*... might look like a loose, baggy monster, but it's a vital piece of modern music, an improvised symphony for the times, and it lifts the heart.

—Brian Morton

Even To This Day... Music For Orchestra And Soloists, Movement Two, Syncretism—For The Draw... : Make A Joyful Noise (for my friend Alex); Suite For Alkis—1st movement, The pandat is a sword from Borneo (now called Miramar); Gravel Notes; The Line; Diachronic—4; Tengmo; Elide, Not That Again; Zana; Follow

The Tracks; HM-1; Install/Reinstall/Install/Reinstall...; Are Your Papers In Order?; Diachronic—3; GS; Full Metal Body Punch; Suite For Alkis—4th movement; Slight Of Hand; Words, like broken diamonds; The Age Of Window; Seeing The Field; Armoured Car!!; With Movement; Going Big On The Scottsman; EP-1; We're Moving On Now, part 1; Bonecrusher; C Bell Intro; Teology; Monkey Problems; Tell Me Howard...; First In A Series Of Events, part 1; For Harp; Brass Trio; Exclusion, Bowed Gong For The Intro; Wood Block Event; For Tim Perkis; Eustasy—a beginning point-1; For Nels Cline; Nothing personal Mr Decker, but it's the paper bag for you; Watching Watching Waiting Waiting; Ok, Wow! It's Five!!!!; The Big Gong Improv Of 1642; Bob & June Wheeler... enough said!; Turning Your Back On Time; Bass Flute Improv; 'Little after I'll call you (he's a nice fela); Gong Zili; It has not title, but title...; Wind The Stage, Bellows & The King; Eustasy—Piano; 2-17 Rock; Which myself, I am; Wood Sounds; Anne Bissell Sweeps The Competition; The 12 Strings of Karlo; Andas, part 2; New-1; A Poem For Eli Wallach; Eschatological Visions; You Could Have Had All This Too; Andas (intro-outro & version 1); Bowls; Eustasy—Good One; Wilfred's lycanthropic desires have a dilemma with Dr Yogami's needs; Two Views; Samson & The Return of the 300 lb Man vs 1; Duo M; Why George... Why?; The Lennie Tristano Memorial Homecoming Lunch; Brutus' Removal Syndrome' Will Salmon-3; Guaze The Academic; Scott's Got A Headache; Suite For Alkis—5th movement; We're Moving On Now, part 2; First In A Series of Events, part 2; Bernie; Music For Planetary Shifts; Intro 1—It Needs To Be Slower; Mock Rupperts; Moai-6 vs 2; Moai-3-6; Suite For Alkis—3rd Movement—Are you sure you didn't see anyone?; Moai-3-1; Slap-1; New-2; Sketch-2l Andera, or?; He Wore Penguin Shoes; Henry One; Samson & The Return of the 300lb Man vs 2; Mike & Clay; Spring Wood, a few heads above all others (is it reborn?); Diachronic-2; Slightly Altered; Diachronic-1; Talos; Kong's Island; Revisited; Suite for Alkis—2nd Movement—L one A and I one B Broadway; There it is! 1428 elm... is Freddy home?; The Chamber Of Echoes; I'm Known As The Lotus Man; Taiko & Strings; Gongs & Bells; P-T part 2; Hey! (When Dogs Talk); Requiem. (810:00)

Personnel: Vinny Golia, soprillo, soprano, alto, curved soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone and bass saxophones, tubax, clarinet, Eb clarinet, Bb clarinet, alto clarinet, contrabass clarinet, basset horn, piccolo, flute, alto flute, bass flute, contrabass flute, Indonesian bamboo flute, fujara flute, Japanese flute, Maori flute, Tibetan trumpet, bagpipes, gongs, bells; Wayne Peet, piano, electric piano, organ, synthesiser, electronics; Dan Rosenboom, trumpet; Ethan Marks, trumpet, electronics; Wayne Peet, trombone; Mason Moy, tuba; Mike Fink, Alex Noice, Jake Vossler, Nels Cline, Josh Gerowitz, Henry Kaiser, G. E. Stinson, electric guitar; Alkis Nicolaides, electric guitar, bass; Susan Alcorn, pedal steel guitar; Steuart Liebig, synthesiser; Ellington Peet, drums; Greg Lewis, drums, percussion; Cheryl Leonard, Chas Smith, percussion, kep flute; Tim Feeney, percussion; Clay Chaplin, Tim Perkis, electronics; Tany Ling, Andrea Wolper, voice; Will Salmon, voice, harmonium.

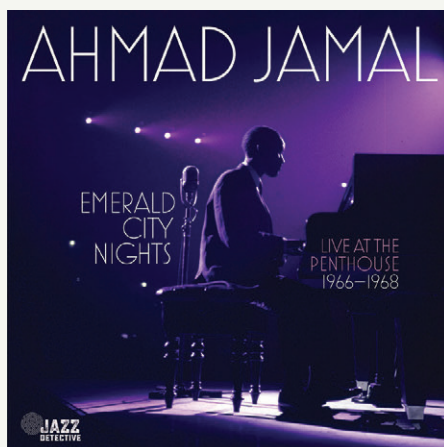
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Bygone Jazz Heroes, Live and Well

While the pursuit of and intrigue over secret treasure-styled unreleased projects and alternate takes from the vaults can entice us in particular ways, the in-the-moment immediacy of live recordings speak boldly in a different fashion. Much-accoladed producer, historian and self-described “jazz detective” Zev Feldman recognizes this special quality of live jazz recordings special, and three of his new projects deepen his ongoing mission and archivist narrative. Not incidentally, they also deepen and broaden our appreciation of the specialness of each jazz legend and give us much to listen about.

Although **Cal Tjader** (1925–’82) enjoyed success as a leader and is widely hailed as a Latin jazz pioneer, his place in the jazz pantheon is too often understated. Short of a dive into Tjader’s studio album discography, we get a compacted, crystallizing portrait of the musician on **Catch The Groove—Live At The Penthouse 1963–1967 (Jazz Detective/Elemental; 161:00 ★★★½)**, significant in part as the first batch of previously unreleased Tjader recordings in two decades.

Captured with a vivid you-are-there clarity by Jim Wilke, this set covers a swath of Tjader’s vital ‘60s work, demonstrating the clean-burning power of the vibist/bandleader leader in live action. Among other virtues, the package exposes Tjader’s broader interests, beyond Latin-inflected material, from the standards land of “Take The ‘A’ Train” and “In Your Own Sweet Way” to “Cuban Fantasy,” “Mambo Inn” and a Latin-flavored “Along Comes Mary” to close.

The album is produced by celebrated archivist Feldman and Brent Fischer, son of another Latin jazz legend deserving greater credit, pianist Clare Fischer. Fisch-

er is one of the album’s sideman stars, as well as Monk Montgomery on acoustic bass, in easy lockstep with drummer Carl Burnett on the later dates.

In an album note, master vibist Gary Burton decrees Tjader as one of four important vibists in the instrument’s early stage, alongside Lionel Hampton, Red Norvo and Milt Jackson. Catch the Groove helps to illustrate the validity of the connection and legacy.

Individualistic pianist **Ahmad Jamal** is, in his own way, less lionized than he should be in jazz circles. As is often noted, no less a myth than Miles Davis was one of his admirers and acolytes. **Emerald City Nights: Live At The Penthouse 1966–1968 (Jazz Detective/Elemental; 93:00 ★★★★★)**, the latest historical issue of his Penthouse recordings from the ‘60s, is the third and final installment of the series, and this entry rings with a certain added poignancy coming close on the heels of Jamal’s death in April of this year.

Heard in the expansive, twisting and turning context of Jamal’s unique approach to musical structure, in a live setting, this recording resonates all the more deeply than a studio date could. (It is instructive to note that Jamal’s timeless classic 1958 recording of “Poinciana” was also recorded live at the Pershing Hotel in Chicago.)

Jamal puts his mercurial reinterpretive impulses to artful ends even on the ultra-familiar turf of “Misty,” shapeshifted into a 13-minute invention on the fly, and he similarly elasticizes the core material into something fresh on an epic rendering of Henry Mancini’s “Mr. Lucky,” “Corcovado” and “Naked City Theme,” with allies Jamil Nassir and Frank Gant in close, follow-the-leader

accord on bass and drums. His solo treatment of “Emily” is a singular gem and intimate insight into Jamal pianism.

Ordering info: deepdigsmusic.com

Fidelity-wise, the archival bounty of **Wes Montgomery–Wynton Kelly Trio’s Maximum Swing: The Unissued 1965 Half Note Recordings (Resonance; 124:00 ★★★½)** doesn’t boast the cohesive and lucid sound quality of the Penthouse recordings covered in this column. Regardless, the album’s rough edges are more than compensated for by the captivating force of Montgomery’s guitar work, rippling octaves, serpentine single-note-line playing and all. In some way, the raw raggedness of the presentation suggests a kind of guerilla archivism at work: capturing a wise, wild energy force by whatever means available.

To hear the rapid-thumbed wonder tearing it up on “Cherokee” (as does the fiery Kelly) and “Birk’s Works,” or delivering beautifully on such originals as his wistful ballad “Mi Cosa” and the angular classic “Four On Six,” is its own reward, whatever the fidelity at hand.

The frequent intrusions of emcee Alan “stay beautiful” Grant on the WABC-FM broadcast recordings from the Half Note do establish historical context and color on first listen but prove a distraction upon repeat lessons. And this is definitely an album warranting repeat listens, thanks to Montgomery’s warm-toned yet always venturesome and propulsive improvisations.

Maximum Swing arrives in the glowing light of Montgomery’s centennial year (he died at the far-too-young age of 46 in 1968), and the evidence here accentuates the timeless appeal of the guitarist’s signature touch and ever-active musical mind.

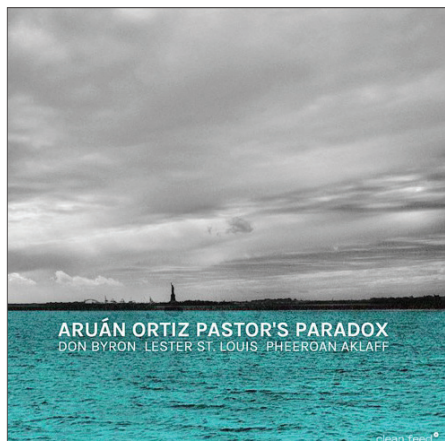
Ordering info: resonancerecordings.org

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Aruán Ortiz *Pastor's Paradox*

CLEAN FEED

★★★★

Pastor's Paradox constitutes a departure from Aruán Ortiz's recent work in several ways. It is his first recording for Clean Feed after seven albums on Intakt. It derives form from the sounds and structures of spoken language, unlike the primarily instrumental focus efforts that preceded it. And instead of abstracting rhythms from his native Cuba, as he did to splendid effect on *Serranías* (which was released earlier this year), *Pastor's Paradox* deploys a combination of text and turbulent sound to confront the problematic racial circumstances of the USA, which has been his home for the past two decades.

The album expands upon a program of music that Ortiz originally composed in

2020. Responding to the unrest that arose in response to the deaths of unarmed Black Americans, he undertook a deep study of Martin Luther King's speeches. Three of the record's seven tracks feature recitations by Mtume Gant of King's words, which are placed into frameworks that replicate the chaos and discord of the time in which they were composed.

Despite the lean line-up of four instrumentalists, Ortiz's arrangements feel orchestral. Stark, foreboding percussion and dynamic, pungent strings enhance the unease of Gant's stern declamation on "The Dream That Wasn't Meant To Be Ours"; probing reeds and strings lance the composer's emphatic piano figures over a driving backbeat on "Turning The Other Cheek No More."

Only the intricate, chanted introduction to "No Justice, No Peace, Legacy!" foregrounds the rhythms that surge through Ortiz's recent trio recordings. Whereas *Serranías* is as thrilling as shooting some white-water rapids, *Pastor's Paradox* is as sobering as a morning-after survey of a still-smoking field of conflict.

By turns brooding and stormy, this music effectively conveys the gravity of living social realities that stubbornly refuse to remit.

—Bill Meyer

Pastor's Paradox: Autumn Of Freedom; Pastor's Paradox; Turning The Other Cheek No More; The Dream That Wasn't Meant To Be Ours; From Montgomery To Memphis (To April 4th); An Interval Of Hope; No Justice, No Peace, Legacy! (39:20)

Personnel: Aruán Ortiz, piano, voice; Don Byron, clarinet, bass clarinet, voice; Pheeroan Aklaft, drums, voice; Lester St. Louis, cello (1, 2, 4–6); Yves Dhar, cello (3, 7); Mtume Gant, spoken word (1, 4, 6).

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



Joey Alexander *Continuance*

MACK AVENUE

★★★

The poet Ogden Nash famously wrote, "The trouble with a kitten is that it eventually becomes a cat."

Joey Alexander, who is said to have taught himself the piano at 6, recorded his first album at 11: a collection of standards and one "original" blues, backed by veteran professionals. He's released five more albums since, as well as a Christmas EP. With each release, though, his status as a Facebook meme — "OMG, look at that little kid playing jazz piano! Wait, is he playing for Obama?" — has waned.

Now, on album number seven, he's 20 and being forced to compete as just another jazz musician. The results are mixed. He's written most of the material himself (the exceptions are a version of the spiritual "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," and the pop song "I Can't Make You Love Me," made famous by Bonnie Raitt) and is backed by bassist Kris Funn and drummer John Davis, well-regarded and skillful players who mostly stay in the background and don't assert themselves.

The exception is "Zealousy," which features an extended Funn intro and an intricate shuffling groove, over which Alexander lays Fender Rhodes and Theo Croker shows up to deliver a questing, investigative solo.

Alexander is not a distinctive or exciting player — he's a gifted student without the courage to plagiarize — so the album perks up most when he adds Mellotron; the string sounds on "Hear Me Now" and flute-like noises on "Aliceanna" are more interesting than what he's doing at the piano.


—Phil Freeman

Continuance: Blue; Why Don't We; Hear Me Now; I Can't Make You Love Me; Zealousy; Great Is Thy Faithfulness; Aliceanna. (45:59)

Personnel: Joey Alexander, piano; Fender Rhodes; Mellotron; Theo Croker, trumpet; Kris Funn, upright bass; John Davis, drums.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com


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Kevin Hays, Ben Street, Billy Hart *Bridges*

SMOKE SESSIONS

★★★★½

Bridges is the follow-up to this trio's 2021 pandemic-era debut *All Things Are*. True to its title, it is a bridge between generations and sensibilities. But as appealing as the originals are — especially pianist Hays' pastoral, Jarrett trio-inspired "Butterfly" and the soothing, contemplative "Song For Peace," and drummer Hart's "Irah" — and as beautifully as they convey Wayne Shorter's harmonically searching "Capricorn," it's the album's two pop covers that demonstrates the trio's depth and range.

The first is John Lennon and Paul McCartney's "With A Little Help From My Friends," from The Beatles' seminal 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. It reveals Hays' love of rock, though with an unexpected, slippery modulation at the bridge. Bassist Street works hand-in-glove with Hart throughout (they've worked for two decades together in Hart's quartet), and there's a closing hint of a catchy vamp by bass and drums at the end. Fittingly, as the senior member of the trio, Hart gets the last word.

The second is the gorgeous, life-affirming title track "Bridges (Travessia)," composed by Milton Nascimento and Fernando Brant, also from 1967. There's a delicate rubato solo piano intro stated by Hays, with deft drum beats blended in from Hart. It's obvious they all know the lyrics and they paint the text with colors and brushstrokes that uplift listener's spirits. You can imagine Nascimento's sky-high vocal inviting you to sing along with what Hays calls "one of my favorite compositions ever, by anyone." —Larry Appelbaum

Bridges: Butterfly; Capricorn; Song For Peace; With A Little Help From My Friends; Row Row Row; Throughout; Irah; Bridges (Travessia). (43:23)

Personnel: Kevin Hays, piano; Ben Street, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com

Adam Birnbaum *Preludes*

CHELSEA MUSIC FESTIVAL

★★★

I don't come to jazz for Bach and I don't know why anyone would. Bach's music has been regarded as ingenious, "genius," even transcendent by two centuries of artists of all kinds. I respect that he established or refined many of the practices that are fundamental to music I love, so accept my being unmoved and disinterested as a personal failing.

However, Bach's works are formative influences for Adam Birnbaum, a rapidly rising, acclaimed and honored pianist. He studied them as a child, has played them all his life and debuted his transformative approach on a previous release. *Preludes* is his reworking of material from the 18th-century German composer's *Well Tempered Clavier*.

Birnbaum is clearly a virtuosic keyboardist, masterfully dexterous and quick, with precise, flowing, expressive touch. On *Preludes*, he extends Bach's compositions into "jazz" territory with rhythmically fluid melodic extrapolations and harmonic complications, Caribbean-inflected vamps and balladic sensitivity. He's accompanied with skillful and subtle ideas and accents by Clohesy (superbly pizzicato) and Ogama (often on hand drums). My pleasure perks the further they step away from the Baroque and into African-American-Caribbean stylings (as in "D-flat Major") with nods to Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett (both of whom recorded Bach) or Gonzalo Rubalcaba, swing ("D Major"), harder drive (curtailed, sadly, on



"C-sharp Major") or something like open improvisation (as on "E Major").

Prelude's focus on Bach's compositions can't be ignored, though; they are central to this project. Bach's vocabulary, gestures, motives and esthetic (and Birnbaum's use of them) surely has meaning to jazz pianists, yet my bias is for what they arrive at by departing from it: the rolling power, the infusion of blues irony and humor, the embrace of ugly beauty introduced by European Romanticism, set as a default by modernism. I associate Bach fun with Glenn Gould's probing and the Swingle Singers' flippancy. This is a "good" record, but not for me.

—Howard Mandel

Preludes: Prelude In C Major; Prelude In D Minor; Prelude In D-flat Major; Prelude In E Minor; Prelude In C# Minor; Prelude In D Major; Prelude In E-flat Minor; Prelude In G Major; Prelude In B-flat Minor; Prelude In F Major; Prelude In C Minor. (61:26)

Personnel: Adam Birnbaum, piano; Matt Clohesy, bass; Keita Ogama, percussion.

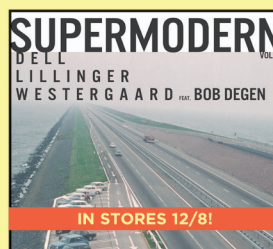
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Jennifer Wharton Bonegasm *Grit & Grace* SUNNYSIDE

★★★★

If you're a fan of that soaring, many-voiced brass band sound, Jennifer Wharton's *Grit & Grace* is bound to catch your ear. Featuring Wharton's nimble bass trombone and the bold original works of several women composers, *Grit & Grace* elevates bass trombone as a lead instrument, as well as a myriad of talented, resilient women in jazz. Indeed, Wharton named the album for the two characteris-

tics women need most to thrive in the business world (according a 2019 article in Forbes magazine).

Wharton, a New York-based trombonist, composer and arranger, is joined on *Grit & Grace* by her band Bonegasm, comprising trombonists John Fedchock, Nate Mayland and Alan Ferber, pianist Michael Eckroth, bassist Evan Gregor, drummer Don Peretz and percussionist Samuel Torres.

Their simpatico elevates the story of *Grit & Grace*, which iterates on themes of resilience, beauty, and solidarity, often from the perspectives of women composers. Highlights include "Virtual Reality," a tense, Latin-inflected composition by Wharton, the energetic "Mama's Alright," written by trombone legend Melba Liston, singer/trombonist Natalie Cressman's "Menina Sozinha" or "girl on her own," and the mournful "In Our Darkest Hour," written by Australian composer Vanessa Perica about the political upheaval in the U.S. in 2020.

Stirring, fresh, and emphatic, *Grit & Grace* makes a statement worth hearing.

—Alexa Peters

Grit & Grace: Be Normal; In Our Darkest Hour; Anita; Mama's Alright; Norhala; Uncertainty; Menina Sozinha; Virtual Reality; La Bruja; Coop's Condiments. (61:00)

Personnel: Jennifer Wharton, Bass trombone, Vocals; John Fedchock, trombone; Nate Mayland, trombone; Alan Ferber, trombone; Michael Eckroth, piano; Evan Gregor, bass; Don Peretz, drums; Samuel Torres, percussion.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Pete Zimmer *Dust Settles*

TIPPIN'

★★

This is the kind of lineup that convenes at Smalls in New York, although if this quintet played the tunes on this album in a live setting they'd probably appear in a rougher, energy-charged guise. (Drummer Zimmer has recently moved to Chicago.) *Dust Settles* is slickly recorded and performed but has a well-behaved mainline smoothness that, despite its fine combination of artists, makes it lurk within the crowd.

Zimmer's sixth album as a leader mostly features his original compositions, but a pair of the best numbers are bluesy, early works. "504 College Blues" makes a determined stomp, with a slightly sleazy aura, saxophonist Stacy Dillard pushing himself further, slurring and testifying, along with a talkin' Yasushi Nakamura bass solo to finish. "5am Blues" can't get more after-hours, with Peter Bernstein delivering a guitar solo that oscillates between picking and chording, Dillard throaty on tenor, bending his phrases. Kurt Weill's "Speak Low" represents a softer approach, with a slinky slowcoach reading, soft and delicate. This is the only track where Bernstein sits out, so the palette is sparser, highlighting Dillard's tender reed-rasp. Several tunes devote equal time to the



solos, with increased interaction. Dillard might choose soprano, while Bernstein is prickly-picking with aplomb.

"Judgement" maintains its swift pace with a flowing saxophone solo, bounding along the tracks, and "The Point" is a brisk walker. These faster pieces help make this a friendly album, but still in need of some more tempestuous outbreaks.

—Martin Longley

Dust Settles: Smooch The Pooch; Dust Settles; Bush Walked In; Speak Low; Judgement; Idle Moments; 504 College Blues; Sweet Love Of Mine; 5am Blues; The Point. (63:00)

Personnel: Pete Zimmer, drums; Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Miki Yamanaka, piano; Peter Bernstein, guitar; Stacy Dillard, soprano and alto saxophones.

Ordering info: petezimmer.bandcamp.com

The Depths of Memory

Kevin Sun

Kevin Sun *The Depths of Memory* ENDECTOMORPH

★★★★½

Waxing lengthy is part of Kevin Sun's vision. In 2019 the New York-based saxophonist dropped *The Sustain Of Memory*, a double-disc set housing a trio of extended pieces that ranged from 29 to 48 minutes long. Heady stuff, and its suite-like atmosphere — circular but not redundant, prolix but seldom tedious — sets the stage for this fifth record, a work that again braids a series of pithy movements into drawn-out statements.

Happily, in Sun's hands, waxing lengthy isn't necessarily waxing verbose. He dodges the crimes associated with protraction by shaping the music around a parade of curt rambles. Things are always morphing in these thoughtful excursions; the action trickles along, each miniature movement standing up for its own value.

This is most evident in "From All This Stillness," whose seven sections make a case for composure being just as engaging as clamor. Sun's tenor lines are measured and secure, not unlike *Dharma Days*-era Mark Turner, and his band of pianist Dana Saul, drummer Matt Honor and bassist Simón Willson glides through the elliptical designs he's cooked up, a collective poker face marking their moves. When trumpeter Adam O'Farrill joins for 24-minute exercise of "Eponymous Cycle," the poise remains and the steadily swooping phrases present themselves as elastic melodies, referencing where they've been as often as they allude to where they're going.

The "slow motion" part of "The Depths Of Slow Motion" (the nine-part composition that constitutes the album's second half) might dismay a few listeners. However, as it drifts along, Honor and bassist Walter Stinson build a creative tension that sustains the moody percolations of trumpet, piano and horn. Somewhat studious and a tad academic, Sun's arrangements nonetheless bolster the imaginative landscapes he trusts will seduce us.

—Jim Macnie

The Depths Of Memory: From All This Stillness: Frozen In Profile; Interior Choruses; From Some Unseen Center (I); Elliptical Blue; Ghosts Of Repetition; From Some Unseen Center (II); Shadow Meridian; Eponymous Cycle (I); Eponymous Cycle (II); Eponymous Cycle (III); The Depths In Slow Motion; Before Depths, Depths I, Depths II, Depths III, Depths IV, Depths V, Depths VI, Depths VII, After Depths. (82:24)

Personnel: Kevin Sun, tenor saxophone; Adam O'Farrill, trumpet (2, 3); Dana Saul, piano; Walter Stinson (3), Simón Willson (1, 2), bass; Matt Honor (1, 3), Dayeon Seok (2), drums.

Ordering info: endectomorph.com

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Mike Reed's Separatist Party



Kate Gentile

Studies in Modern Percussive Dynamics

Drummer **Mike Reed** is an invaluable musical leader in Chicago, with each album highlighting his continuing reinventions. ***The Separatist Party (We Jazz/Astral Spirits; 43:42 ★★★★★)*** brings together longtime bandstand colleagues — vocalist/poet Marvin Tate and cornetist Ben LaMar Gay — with synth players Cooper Crain and Dan Quinlivan as well as multi-instrumentalist Rob Frye of the electronics group Bitchin Bajas.

The music reflects Reed's thoughts about isolation, a process that began before the COVID pandemic. This blend of electronic and acoustic instruments — along with a shared aesthetic on spontaneity and structure — always sounds warmly human. That comes across especially when the interwoven electronics support LaMar Gay's lyrical tone on "A Low Frequency Nightmare" and Tate's shouts of desperation on "Hold Me." Tate's words also reconfigure the direction of "We Came To Dance" from lighthearted to stark. Reed's sparse-yet-firm approach and intuitive melodic feel clearly guide everyone through these turns.

Ordering info: astralspiritsrecords.com

Like Reed, Brooklyn-based drummer **Tomas Fujiwara** continues to change directions with the help of familiar and new teammates, such as his trio with bassist Tomeka Reid and vibraphonist Patricia Brennan on ***Pith (Out Of Your Head; 38:52 ★★★★★)***. This assemblage sounds as vibrant here as its combination of instrumentalists is distinctive. Fujiwara emphasizes subtleties, and while his recent compositions sometimes highlight bluesy vamps ("Josho") he stealthily shifts up the meters. Reid (whose own quartet includes

Fujiwara) and Brennan sound more than ready for all of these challenges. On "Resolve," Fujiwara's deceptively light touch provides a frame for Brennan's myriad tones as Reid adds unexpected harmonies that land just right as they build the track's rhythmic foundation. A quick-witted Fujiwara/Brennan duo on "Other" also grants the right kind of space for Reid to sneak in before the group's crescendo. Although "Breath" is the concluding track, the entire album sounds like they always know how to breathe together.

Ordering info: outofyourheadrecords.com

New York-based drummer/vibraphonist **Kate Gentile** is an ambitious composer who packs a lot into different-sized spaces for her three-disc ***Find Letter X (Pi; 196:35 ★★★★★)***. The set asks for close attention over a long haul, even if it is half the length of her previous collection, *Snark Horse*. For those who devote the time to share her quartet's adventure, the trip is frequently exciting. Gentile's force and keyboardist Matt Mitchell's electric distortion build compelling fusillades in both short bursts and unfurling extended pieces but also shifts from the aggressive to the lyrical.

For some pieces, like "Ore Whorls," they surprisingly double back on themselves. On "zislupme tnilyive tsoam ath..." a sharp break invites an oblique and compelling angular bass clarinet solo from Jeremy Viner. The group's kind of absurdist humor (and enigmatic track titles) works throughout the set, which suggest ideas that Gentile may have gleaned from such former colleagues as Anthony Braxton. But she wrings them all through changes that are distinctly her own.

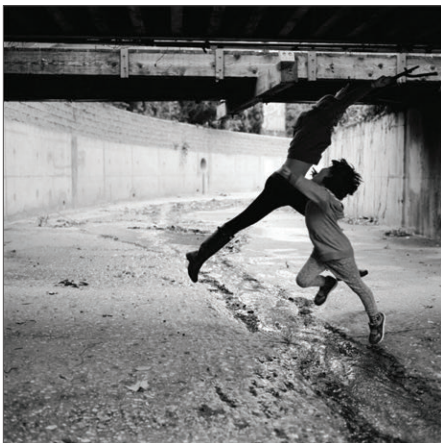
Ordering info: pirecordings.com

While Cuba-born drummer **Francisco Mela** and Brooklyn-based Israeli saxophonist **Jonathan Reisin** came to jazz from different places, their duet album ***Earthquake (577; 45:02 ★★★★★)*** shows how they share a sense of tonal openness and spontaneous composition. Throughout the 26-minute title track, Reisin's vibraphone with its echoes of Albert Ayler matches Mela's palpable urgency. Along with Reisin's upper-register bursts on "Thunderclouds," Mela never lets up in building a sense of tension throughout their dialogues. Sometimes a well-placed vocal shout says as much as his polyrhythmic drive but so do the duo's more subdued and introspective moments.

Ordering info: 577records.com

Veteran drummer (and film producer) **Richard Baratta** put together an ace quintet to revisit pieces from the 1960s and '70s for the joyous ***Off The Charts (Savant; 54:06 ★★★★★)***. For this celebration, he astutely selected a host of jazz composers' lesser-known works. Baratta's finesse on cymbals combined with pianist David Kikoski's touch on Wayne Shorter's "Lost" convey the legendary musician's standout blend of beauty and mystery. Bassist John Patitucci cues up Baratta's explosive solo on Charles Lloyd's "Sombrero Sam." Baratta's deep affinity for Latin rhythms also shape the group's take on McCoy Tyner's "Peresina." Jerry Bergonzi's warm tone is a highlight on Alec Wilder's "Blackberry Winter." The whole group emphasizes the funk on Joe Henderson's "Afro-Centric." A few odd fadeouts don't spoil the party. **DB**

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Jeff Babko/Mark Guiliana/Tim Lefebvre *Clam City*

SAM FIRST

★★★★

Clam City blends the talents, artistic instincts and openmindedness of pianist Jeff Babko, bassist Tim Lefebvre and drummer Mark Guiliana. The album's eight tracks, recorded at Los Angeles club Sam First, are delightfully natural pearls — each unique but tied together under a single identity.

The easygoing melodic swings heard in the motif of "The Church Of Bill Hilton" resonate

with the innocent sophistication Vince Guaraldi often gave to the music floating behind the *Peanuts* gang. When speaking about "New Wave Theater," it's ironic that Babko says he, Guiliana and Lefebvre stay apprised of "contemporary music and enjoy exploring the production and compositional style of a post-1980 world." The way the trio unite behind the track's repeated and low octave phrase, the track sounds decidedly older — like something out of a 1960s or '70s spy film.

"New Jersey Ballad" is remarkable in how it both steepens in and expands its contemplative mentality so much in just 97 seconds. "Boo Boo's Birthday" is a couple clicks faster than its source material but after the serenity of Guiliana's work, it's a welcome spark. This piano driven take feels closer in heart to the Monk family and increases its sense of melodic complexity due to its limited timbre set. "Return To Jerz" is a delicate and perfect reprisal ending for *Clam City*, even more emotive in even less time. *Clam City* is immensely thoughtful in its performances, tracklisting and consideration of the memories and feelings that inspired each piece in the first place.

—Kira Grunenberger

Clam City: The Church Of Bill Hilton; New Wave Theater; New Jersey Ballad; This West; Boo Boo's Birthday; Fugue Robotique; Chongo's Song; New Jersey Ballad—Return To Jerz. (74:25)

Personnel: Jeff Babko, piano; Tim Lefebvre, bass; Mark Guiliana, drums.

Ordering info: samfirstrecords.com

Angelica Sanchez *Nighttime Creatures*

PYROCLASTIC

★★★★

Michaël Attias's wandering alto saxophone on "Cloud House" keeps the listener guessing, never waning in interest, and finding its way back to the rest of the ensemble. It's a fascinating breakdown that finds form again. Such is the case with all the songs on the album, making new twists in their arcs or uncovering new rooms to explore in improvisation, but never quite straying too far from the origin point.

It's remarkable how much this album has a little of everything. Everyone in this group could be lockstep in a march, buzzing like bees or serenading souls. There isn't one concrete idea for what this album is, yet it doesn't sound unfocused. Much like the album as a whole, each song frays from its themes before coming back to them. The journey this group takes in "Astral Light Of Alarid," for example, as Thomas Herberer's quarter-tone trumpet runs us from the edges of free-jazz to a Latin blues before the rest of the nonet calls us to attention with a new movement is just plain inspired arranging.

In an album full of angular zigs, the gorgeous zagging ballad "Lady Of The Lavender Mist" is a remarkable turn in an album full of



remarkable turns. It's an unbelievably sweet tune, like an oasis in calm in the midst of so many skittering ideas, the chewy, chocolatey center in this Tootsie Roll Pop, and Sanchez has so much more in mind than to rush to biting through the hard compositional candy.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Nighttime Creatures: Nighttime Creatures; C.B. The Time Traveler; Cloud House; Astral Light Of Alarid; Lady Of The Lavender Mist; Land Here; Ringleader; Big Weirdo; Wrong Door For Rocket Fuel; Tristeza; Run. (79:27)

Personnel: Angelica Sanchez, piano; Michaël Attias, alto saxophone; Ben Goldberg, contra alto clarinet; John Hébert, bass; Thomas Herberer, quarter-tone trumpet; Sam Ospovat, drums; Chris Speed, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Omar Tamez, guitar; Kenny Warren, cornet.

Ordering info: angelicasanchezpyroclastic.bandcamp.com

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GEORG STERNWEISS

Shuteen Erdenebatar, a rare Mongolian export to the jazz world, marks her arrival with *Rising Sun*.

Five Fruitful, Far-Flung Freshman Forays

In recent years there have been so many talented new jazz artists that those who have not been following the music very closely since 2010, or even 2015, might be a bit bewildered by the many unfamiliar names. Five musicians who recently made their recording debuts as leaders are among the scores who are worth discovering.

One does not think of Mongolia as being one of the music's centers, but pianist-composer **Shuteen Erdenebatar**, who moved from Mongolia to Munich in 2018, has been creating a stir in the European jazz scene. ***Rising Sun*** (Motema; 46:53 ★★★½) features her on eight thoughtful originals that fall into the modern modal mainstream without hinting at her Mongolian heritage. She sounds fine in a quartet with the powerful and inventive Anton Mangold (another major new talent) on soprano, alto and flute; Nils Kugermann on bass and Valentin Renner on drums. Erdenebatar's piano playing is at its most original on ballads (including "I'm Glad I Got To Know You" and her unaccompanied feature on the picturesque "Summer Haze"), although Mangold is often the dominant soloist.

Ordering info: motema.com

Savannah, Georgia-based pianist **Aaron Lehrian** forms a tight and often-telepathic trio with bassist Stan Piper and drummer Stefan Klein on ***A Joyous Opus*** (Independent Release; 49:03 ★★★★★). Lehrian has impressive classical technique and a mastery of dynamics that he uses to convey a variety of different moods during his 10 originals. The title cut has a repeated bass note that functions as a fanfare while

"Time's Knockin' At The Door" uses repetition quite dramatically, almost sounding like the background for a silent-movie melodrama. Other highlights include the melancholy jazz waltz "Echoes Of A Portrait," the Asian-tinged "Joy Takes Flight," a quietly spooky "Whispers Of A Sleepless Night" and a menacing strut on "Prayer's March" that is worthy of Keith Jarrett.

Ordering info: aaronlehrian.com

Alto-saxophonist **Maddie Vogler's** ***While We Have Time*** (Origin; 50:53 ★★★½) defies expectations a bit. Some of her music is dedicated to her grandmother, who left Cuba for Chicago with her family when she was 16. While the opening number, "The Need To Be," is Latin-flavored jazz, the other pieces are modern hard-bop with just subtle hints at Vogler's Latin background. She has an original sound on alto and takes fluent solos throughout this outing with a group that includes trumpeter Tito Carrillo, pianist Jake Shapiro, bassist Samuel Peters, drummer Neil Hemphill and, on four of the nine songs, guitarist Matt Gold. Her originals have attractive melodies and fertile chord changes that inspire the musicians. Vogler is generous in featuring her sidemen, with Carrillo's blazing solos often taking honors. "While We Have Time" and "Check Engine Light," which are mostly heated tradeoffs by the two horns, are among the highlights of this stirring maiden effort.

Ordering info: originarts.com

The virtuoso bassist **Jesse Dietschi**, who is based in Toronto, keeps busy in both the classical and jazz worlds. On ***Gradient*** (Independent Release; 71:34 ★★★½),

he performs 10 originals in a trio with pianist Ewen Farncombe and drummer Ethan Ardelli. Dietschi (who sometimes takes bowed solos) consistently plays intuitive ideas behind Farncombe (himself a major talent) during the group's lengthy explorations of the bassist's songs. The trio's sensitive interplay and quiet creativity (even on the hotter pieces) make these atmospheric performances worthy of several close listens.

Ordering info: jessediestchi.bandcamp.com

Violinist **Aline Homzy**, who is originally from Montréal, performs music on ***Eclipse*** (Elastic; 49:22 ★★★★★½) that will certainly keep one guessing. She is joined by vibraphonist Michael Davidson (also heard on piano and marimba), guitarist Thom Gill, bassist Dan Fortin and drummer-percussionist Marito Marques. The ensembles are colorful and often electronic, and there are often many tempo and mood changes within a piece. The episodic "Caraway," an outer-space trip on "Cosmos," the out-of-tempo romantic ballad "Hanakotoba" and "Aliens Are Pieces Of Wind," which evolves from a quirky waltz to a medium-tempo romp and finally a ballad, are among the highlights of this unpredictable set. Even Charlie Parker's "Segment," the one "cover" on these five albums, goes to unusual places. The blend between violin and vibes by itself would be enough of a reason to recommend this album, but there is often so much of interest going on that it will take time to fully savor its beauty and originality.

DB

Ordering info: alinehomzy.bandcamp.com



Emmet Cohen
Masters Legacy Series,
Vol. 5: Houston Person

BANDSTAND PRESENTS

★★★★½

Since 2017, pianist Emmet Cohen has been

jamming with legendary players and staying squarely in the pocket in his Masters Legacy Series. For the fifth volume with tenor saxophonist Houston Person, Cohen isn't messing with a good thing. He's got good ears and great taste and he knows exactly when to shine and when to stay out of the way.

The 88-year-old Person still has a great deal of pep in his step and it shows all throughout this album. He's become more seasoned and this is yet another session, and it's a pretty good one. He defines the mood here, and everyone else curves around him, wherever he wants to take things.

That said, this is a pointedly straightforward album. It's not breaking boundaries, and it isn't trying to do so. It's merely a celebration of the fundamentals.

It's the kind of reverent work one would typically make with an elder. Person is Cohen's guest in this endeavor; the host is doing everything possible to make his guest comfortable, and it shows. This is a very comfortable set of songs, easygoing like a BarcaLounger.

This is also to say that it's not all that challenging, which is fine, but not negligible. This is a collection of songs that are smooth and unflashy, rarely raising one's heart rate, which makes sense for a project revolving around an octogenarian. *Masters Legacy Series, Vol. 5* is like the musical equivalent of Lipitor.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Masters Legacy Series, Vol. 5—Houston Person: Why Not; Isn't It Romantic; If You Could See Me Now; Just The Way You Are; I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart; All My Tomorrows; Blues Everywhere; Sunday Kind Of Love; Just The Way You Are (alternate take). (60:38)

Personnel: Emmet Cohen: piano; Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Kyle Poole, drums.

Ordering info: bandstandpresents.com



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**Hugh Masekela/
Siparia Deltones**
Siparia To Soweto
MONK MUSIC GROUP/GALLO

★★★★½

When it came to music and culture, Hugh Masekela was as intrepid as he was open-minded. Before his death in 2018, his boundless curiosity took him on several trips to Trinidad and Tobago, where the sound of calypso entranced him and beckoned his voice and horn. *Siparia To Soweto* is a lively sample of the musical venture to the islands, a tour guided and undergirded by the Siparia Deltones.

Appropriately, on the opening track, “The Meeting Place,” Masekela’s often declarative, triumphant trumpet establishes a festive blend of jubilee and celebration. Against the continuous rhythmic pulse of Siparia’s pans, his voice forges a spirited tapestry of harmony. Masekela invests here the same intuition and energy he gave to jazz when he arrived in America from South Africa.

On “Lady,” the slowest track, the vocals and pans are high-pitched almost to a breaking point against a reggae lope. For all his love and fascination for world music, Masekela is never more than a note or two from the Soweto township sounds of marabi and mbaqanga.

There are several standout moments, particularly for the steelpan orchestra, on “Mango Tree” and “Dis Soca Is For You,” and on both occasions Masekela applies lovely tonal extensions to the tinny pans. His staccato phrasing intensifies Siparia and together they are a collaborative collage of calypso sonority. Before his earthy departure Masekela merged several cultures of the world into soundscapes that makes his legacy all the more significant — and missed.

—Herb Boyd

Soweto To Siparia: The Meeting Place; Sugar Bum Bum; Bongo Day; Love In The Cemetery; Dingolay; Esto Se Paso; Lady; Mae Mae; Mango Tree; Radica; Roll It Gal, Dis Soca Is For You; The Meeting Place (Live Pan Version). (60:31)

Personnel: Hugh Masekela, trumpet, vocals; Siparia Deltones, steelpans.

Ordering info: gallo.africa

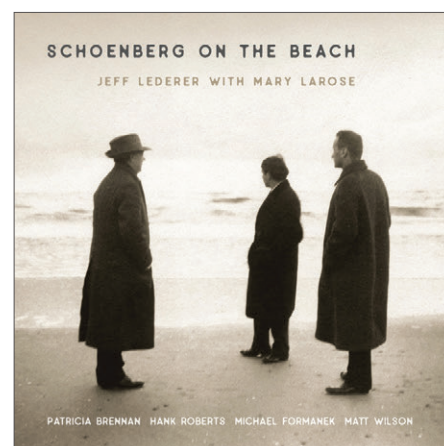
**Jeff Lederer/
Mary LaRose**
Schoenberg On The Beach
LITTLE (I)

★★

The superb, versatile reedist Jeff Lederer grew up in Pacific Palisades, California, not far from where Arnold Schoenberg, the father of 12-tone music, spent his later years. Schoenberg’s music planted a seed in the reedist’s early work, and now, decades later, he’s created dynamic new arrangements of early, pre-serialist songs by the composer — plus several by his famous student Anton Webern — for an agile quintet. Lederer’s arrangements are dynamic, teasing new harmonies and melodic elaboration from the source material, and giving the music a vibrant rhythmic thrust.

The band Lederer has assembled matches his ingenuity, whether in the way Patricia Brennan warps and smears her translucent vibraphone lines or how Matt Wilson straddles deep swing impulses with the precision inherent in the source material. Turntablist Arktureye adds some woozy interstitial soundscapes, twisting bits from a vintage collection of field recordings made at Coney Island into trippy palate cleansers.

If this recording was instrumental, I would rate it much higher, but the presence of singer



Mary LaRose, delivering English translations of texts written by Goethe, Rilke and Nietzsche, is a distraction at best, and more often an albatross, as she gives the music’s Sprechstimme articulation a heavy dose of show-tune theatricality. Her instrument hits the notes, but her loopy phrasing has proven insurmountable for this listener.

—Peter Margasak

Schoenberg On The Beach: On The Beach; Blummengruss; Beneath The Shelter; The Pale Flowers Of The Moonlight; Heiter; I Gaze Upon; Moondrunk; Summer Evening; Summer’s Weariness. (60:06)

Personnel: Mary LaRose, voice; Jeff Lederer, clarinet, flute; Hank Roberts, cello; Patricia Brennan, vibraphone, electronics; Michael Formanek, bass; Matt Wilson, drums, percussion; Arktureye, interstitial electronics; Marty Ehrlich, bass clarinet (4).

Ordering info: littlemusic.com



Butcher Brown *Solar Music*

CONCORD JAZZ

★★★★

Even in the post-everything era of music, Butcher Brown is expansively cross-genre. The Richmond, Virginia-based quintet touts itself as “rooted in jazz,” but they could swap that out with “funk” or “hip-hop” and be no less apt — and that roots system seems to be expanding all the time.

Case in point: Try, on first pass, to identify a style for “Espionage,” the second track on the band’s new *Solar Music*. In less than four minutes, streaks of ’60s lounge, hip-hop, jazz both acoustic and fusion (the latter thanks to guest guitarist Charlie Hunter), George Clinton-P-Funk, soul, rock and a dash of Blacksploitation film music show themselves.

Not every piece is quite so everything-everywhere-all-at-once, but their mergers are solid and surprising. “No Way Around It” affirms the (not so) secret link between rap and disco; “Turismo” puts neo-soul songstress Julia Shuren under a gauzy shroud of EDM kinesis and dub-reggae-style production; “DYKWYD” marries an acid-jazz groove to a gruff delivery from band MC Marcus “Tennishu” Tenney and a gorgeous alto saxophone improvisation from guest Braxton Cook. What they leave out is surprising, too: “This Side Of Sunshine” has a slow-jam funk beat, beautiful groove lines from guitarist Morgan Burrs (on acoustic) and trumpeter Tenney, and jubilant, squiggly fills from keyboardist DC Harrison. It feels destined to undergird an R&B ballad singer; none materializes, and it’s perfectly wonderful anyway. (This doesn’t always work so well; the similarly vocal-less “BubbleBath” is such an obvious bed for an MC that it just feels incomplete without one.)

Scads of guests join the quintet on *Solar Music*, most of them rappers; Nappy Nina (“Half Of It”) and Michael Millions (“Pink Fur”) are simultaneously deft and charismatic. But — as is usually the case with Butcher Brown — *Solar Music*’s most valuable players are drummer Cory Fonville and bassist Andrew Randazzo, whose wide, round, deep sound is the constant across the whole stylistic mélange. The two rhythm players ensure that this ambitious eclecticism remains fun to listen to.

—Michael J. West

Solar Music: Cozumel; Espionage; I Can Say To You; MOVE (RIDE); Turismo; Eye Never Knew; No Way Around It; Half Of It; DYKWYD; Happy Hour; Run It Up; Pink Fur; This Side Of Sunshine; BubbleBath; Touring Pains; It Was Me; Around For A While. (46:07)

Personnel: DJ Harrison, keyboards; Marcus “Tennishu” Tenney, trumpet, saxophone, MC; Keyon Harrold, trumpet (6); Braxton Cook, alto saxophone (9); Morgan Burrs, guitar; Charlie Hunter, guitar (2); Andrew Randazzo, bass; Cory Fonville, drums; Vanisha Gould (3), Julia Shuren (5), vocals; Jay Prince (4), Pink Siifu (6, 11), Nappy Nina (8), Michael Millions (12), MC.

Ordering info: butcherbrownmusic.bandcamp.com

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WES MONTGOMERY WYNTON KELLY TRIO MAXIMUM SWING: THE UNISSUED 1965 HALF NOTE RECORDINGS



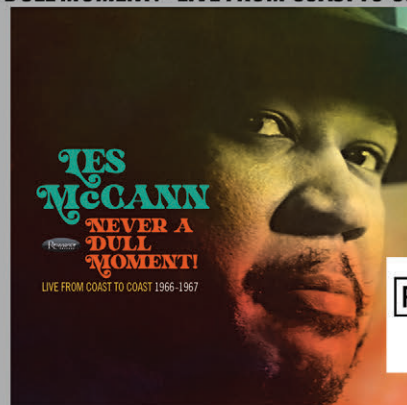
RSD BLACK
FRIDAY

NOV 24TH

The first official release of complete previously unissued recordings from jazz guitar giant **Wes Montgomery** with the **Wynton Kelly Trio** at the Half Note jazz club in New York City in 1965 with drummer **Jimmy Cobb** and bassists **Paul Chambers**, **Ron Carter**, **Herman Wright** and **Larry Ridley**. Limited-edition 3-LP 180-g (and deluxe 2-CD) includes an elaborate booklet with interviews with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Bill Frisell, Mike Stern, Marcus Miller, and more! 2023 is also Wes Montgomery’s Centennial (born March 6, 1923).

LES McCANN

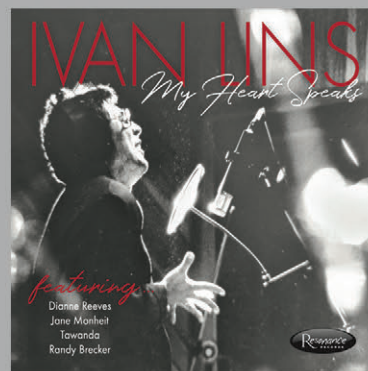
NEVER A DULL MOMENT! - LIVE FROM COAST TO COAST (1966-1967)



RSD BLACK
FRIDAY

NOV 24TH

Never A Dull Moment! - Live from Coast to Coast (1966-1967) is a previously unissued pair of live recordings of unsung pianist/ vocal icon Les McCann captured at the Penthouse in Seattle in 1966 and the Village Vanguard in 1967. An official release in cooperation with Les McCann, the limited-edition 180g 3-LP edition (and deluxe 3-CD set) includes an extensive insert with rare photographs, liner notes by **A. Scott Galloway** and **Pat Thomas**, plus quotes and statements from **Roberta Flack**, **Monty Alexander**, **Roger Kellaway**, **Emmet Cohen** and others. Pressed at Le Vinylist.



IVAN LINS MY HEART SPEAKS

My Heart Speaks is one of the most lush albums of Brazilian singer-songwriter **Ivan Lins**’ iconic career and features the acclaimed vocal stars **Dianne Reeves**, **Jane Monheit** and newcomer **Tawanda**, trumpet great **Randy Brecker** and the 91-piece **Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra** from the country of Georgia.



Immanuel Wilkins - New York Model Alto



Seamus Blake - Tonamax Hard Rubber



Mark Turner - Florida Model Hard Rubber



Abraham Burton - New London Model

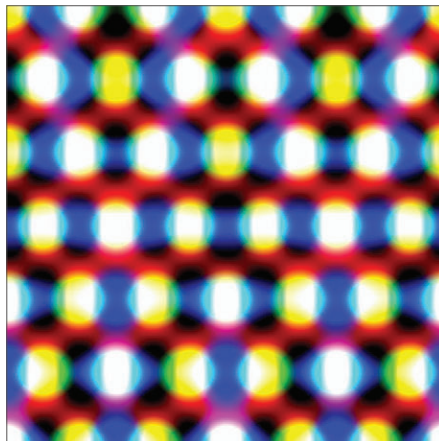


Sarah Hanahan - New London HR Alto

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Darius Jones *fLuXkit Vancouver (itssuite but sacred)*

WE JAZZ/NORTHERN SPY

★★★★½

From the beginning, Darius Jones has refused to allow boundaries to contain his creativity. His catalog includes duets for saxophone and electronics; duos with pianist Matthew Shipp; noisy, clanging postpunk squall with Little Women; conventionally structured trios and quartets under his own name; an album of a cappella vocal pieces; a solo saxophone performance with the intensity of an exorcism; and now this com-

posed four-movement work for alto sax, string quartet, and drums.

A lot of Jones' music is extremely patient: he'll let a single note sustain until you start to feel like your teeth are coming loose in their sockets, and he's very comfortable with slow tempos. There aren't many long drones here, but the third movement, "Rainbow," devotes much of its nearly 18 minutes to an extended bass solo by James Meger that seems to stop time, whether he's strumming ferociously in the style of Jimmy Garrison or thumping out single low notes like distant undersea explosions.

When creating the score, Jones combined traditional Western musical notation with a set of 25 self-designed graphics intended to spark both improvisation and thought about the emotional impact of sound. This has allowed for some beautiful string writing, but also given us "Damon and Pythias," a sustained explosion lasting nearly 17 minutes and featuring some genuinely harrowing, almost Albert Ayler-esque playing from Jones as Cleaver unleashes thunder behind the kit and the strings whirl and lash at the listener. All in all, this is a work of stunning beauty.

—Phil Freeman

Fluxus VST 151; Zubot; Rainbow; Damon and Pythias (51:56)

Personnel: Darius Jones, alto sax and composition; Jesse Zubot, violin; Josh Zubot, violin; Peggy Lee, cello; James Meger, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums

Ordering info: wejazz.fi

Simon Moullier Trio *Inception*

FRESH SOUND

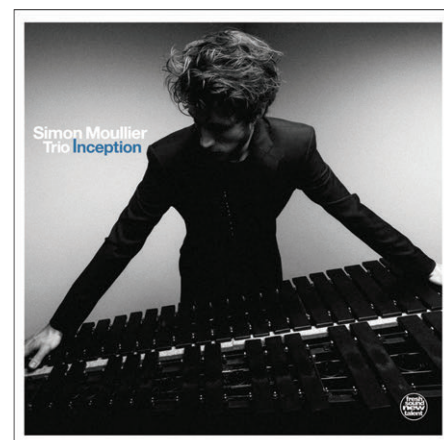
★★★★

Simon Moullier is the unchallenged new star of jazz vibraphone. His debut record *Spirit Song* tended to bury his technique in an over-produced "sci-fi" (his term) landscape of world sounds.

Since then, stripped down to his excellent trio, he has concentrated here (and with the previous *Countdown*) on adapting classic jazz themes to the vibes.

Don't be put off by the relative familiarity of the material. The playing is out of this world (in the better sense). Those who frequent "the bars" tend to play either percussively or pianistically. Moullier seems capable of both, with a legato, singing tone that often sounds like saxophone is somewhere in the mix — saxophones were part of the problem on Moullier's first record — or another harmony instrument.

Wayne Shorter's composition "Lost" and McCoy Tyner's "Inception" are perhaps the two most challenging themes here. But the speed of Moullier's articulation and his ability to sustain overtones and harmonics often make it sound as if some post-production



magic has been applied, when, in fact, this is exactly the sound he gets in a live setting.

It's exciting and vibrant, and it may well be that the necessary next step is the development of some new material, rather than repertory modernism.

Only the solo closing "RC" is a Moullier composition, but there's a composer at work all the way through.

—Brian Morton

Inception: Ecaroh; Inception; Desafinado; Peggy's Blue Skylight; Lush Life; Pfrancing; Lost; You Must Believe In Spring; RC. (42:20)

Personnel: Simon Moullier, vibraphone; Luca Alemanno, bass; Jongkuk Kim, drums.

Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com



Donald Vega *As I Travel*

IMAGERY/TIGER TURN

★★★★★

Pianist and composer Donald Vega crafts an elegant sonic autobiography with *As I Travel*, an ode to the family and community that empowered him on the physical and metaphorical journey to where he is today.

From studying under jazz legends such as John Clayton, Billy Higgins and Kenny Barron, being a staple member of Ron Carter's Golden Striker Trio and most recently being selected as a Guggenheim Fellow, Vega, a native of Nicaragua who emigrated to the United States at age 14, has had a wide-ranging career that has pushed him into the upper echelons of the jazz landscape. *As I Travel*, his fourth album as a bandleader, is a programmatic, autobiographical suite of compositions inspired by his voyage.

The album is off on a jump-start with "Baila!—Dance Like No One's Watching," a jubilant statement that reflects the culture and outlook of Vega's homeland. The positive vibe continues with the cool breeziness of "I Know You Can Fly," the flowing melody and sophisticated harmonies of "Dear Mayra," and a crisp retelling of "Tomorrows," one of Vega's oldest compositions.

As I Travel reaches a point of maximum depth and density on "Disturbios," while "Isabel—The Enchanting Nature Of You" comes across as graceful, rhapsodic and downright embraceable. The album closes with the dancing energy of "Beautiful Ladies," on which Vega, Chick Corea-like, uses short, stinging ostinato passages to propel the music forward; a percussion solo ultimately leads the way back home from Vega's travels, ending on a carefree fadeout that feels like walking into a sunset.

A recording with such high-caliber vision and carefully crafted compositions requires a band of aces to pull it off, and Vega assembled a perfect cast for the task: Lewis Nash on drums, John Patitucci on bass and Luisito Quintero on percussion. With a body of work that flows between classical, Latin and swing idioms, such highly refined levels of musician-ship and interconnected trust are a must.

—Ed Enright

As I Travel: Baila!—Dance Like No One's Watching; I Know You Can Fly; Dear Mayra; Tomorrows; Alegria; Disturbios; Isabel—The Enchanting Nature Of You; As I Travel; Beautiful Ladies. (50:08)

Personnel: Donald Vega, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; Luisito Quintero, percussion.

Ordering info: donaldvega.com



VIEJA ESCUELA

(Machete Records M214)

the new album by

The John Santos Sextet

Marco Diaz - piano, trumpet

Saul Sierra - bass

Dr. John Calloway - flute, keyboard

David Flores - drums

Charlie Gurke - alto & baritone sax

Melecio Magdaluyo - soprano & tenor sax

John Santos - percussion, coro

Special Guests:

Ernesto Oviedo (RIP) - vocals

Orestes Vilató - bongó

Jerry Gonzalez (RIP) - trumpet

Raul Gonzalez Brito (Lali) (RIP) - tumbadoras

Willie Ludwig - vocals

Anthony Blea - violin

Rico Pabon - spoken word

José Roberto Hernandez - vocals

Fernanda Bustamante - violin, coro

Sandra García Rivera - coro

Ismael Rodriguez - coro

Christelle Durandy - coro

Elena Pinderhughes - coro

José Luis Gómez - coro

Release date: Jan 13, 2024

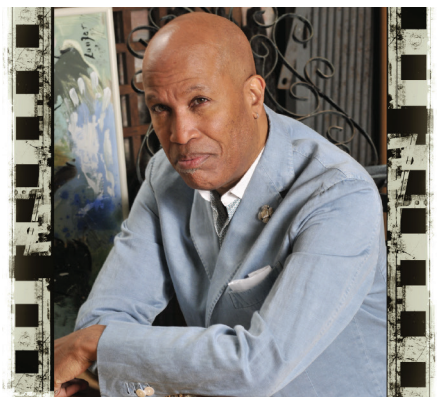
Album release concert:

Sat. Jan 13, 2024

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FSNT 661
SIMON MOULLIER TRIO
INCEPTION
with Luca Alemanno, Jongkuk Kim
"We wanted to develop the trio sound and expand on the possibilities," says Simon. *Inception* is a bridge to unfold futures realms. But on its own merits, it's a realm worth lingering in. —Morgan Enos



FSNT 669
VANISHA GOULD
CHRIS MCCARTHY
LIFE'S A GIG
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FSNT 666
TOM OLLENDORFF
ARI HOENIG
CONOR CHAPLIN
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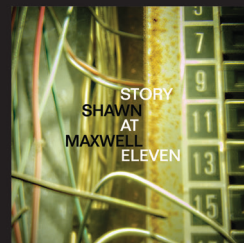
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DOWNBEAT 2023

HOLIDAY

GIFT GUIDE»

HOLIDAY HIP!

Christian Sands' Christmas Stories leads a slate of jazzy new releases for the season

BOUNTIFUL BOXED SETS | 76
VOLUMES OF VINYL | 80
YULETIDE HITS | 84
12 GREAT GEAR GIFTS | 88

COURTESY OF CANDID RECORDS



Chick Corea Elektric Band, from left, Frank Gambale, Eric Marienthal, Corea, John Patitucci and Dave Weckl. Inset: One of two test pressings available for sale.

BOXED BEAUTIES BY FRANK ALKYER

Looking for that perfect gift for the music fan who wants everything? Check out these 7 great, new boxed sets coming out just in time for the holidays!

CHICK COREA ELEKTRIC BAND

The Complete Studio Recordings 1986–1991
(Candid)

On Dec. 1, Candid Records releases a limited edition, five-album box of the Chick Corea Elektric Band's output on the label. The collection includes *The Elektric Band*, *Light Years*, *Eye Of The Beholder*, *Inside Out* and *Beneath The Mask*. The CD version comes in at just under \$70, but there's also five-LP, limited-edition box at just under \$200. And, if you're lucky to have \$1,000 burning a hole in your pocket, there are two 10-LP test pressings available. The lineup is the quintessential band with bassist John Patitucci, drummer Dave Weckl, saxophonist Eric Marienthal and

guitarist Frank Gambale.

And for the Chick-o-files out there, Candid will also be separately issuing a never-before-released live album that was compiled by Corea himself before his passing. *The Chick Corea Elektric Band, The Future Is Now* was selected from live shows recorded between 2016 and 2018 in a three-disc vinyl set.

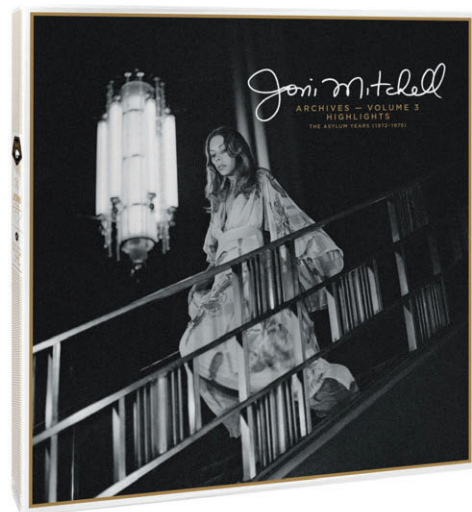
Finally, for a classical-jazz fusion of Corea's art, the label will be releasing *Sardinia: A Night Of Mozart & Gershwin* with the Orchestra da Camera Della Sadegna. It's a mind-expanding live recording demonstrating once again the absolute breadth of Corea's creativity.

(candidrecords.com)

NINA SIMONE

Four Women: The Nina Simone Complete Recordings 1964–1967
(Verve)

This limited-edition, seven-LP box is being released in honor of the soulful singer/pianist's 90th birthday. The collection features all seven albums Simone recorded for Phillips during that time, remastered by Kevin Reeves from original analog tapes. The albums include *Nina Simone In Concert* (1964), *Broadway-Blues-Ballads* (1964), *I Put A Spell On You* (1965), *Pastel Blues* (1965), *Let It All Out* (1966), *Wild Is The Wind* (1966) and *High Priestess Of Soul* (1967). The set includes 18 pages of rare photos as well as liner notes by noted author Ashley Kahn



and features some of Simone's most indelible anthems including "Mississippi Goddam," "I Loves You Porgy," "Don't Smoke In Bed," "I Put A Spell On You," "Feeling Good" — and that's just scratching the surface. The package is beautiful, the music astounding. All-in-all, a treat for the eyes and ears. (ververecords.com)

BRIAN AUGER'S OBLIVION EXPRESS *Complete Oblivion* (Soul Bank)

Here's one for lovers of '70s fusion. Brian Auger's Oblivion Express danced between the grooves of jazz, pop and r&b with a British cool that remains indelible to this day. The folks at Soul Note Records have boxed up the group's six studio albums into one fantastic package, completely remastered from the original master tapes by Bill Smith at United Archiving in Los Angeles. The two-piece box features six LPs and six CDs with the original covers of each album presented as they were on these recordings released between 1970 and 1975. The booklet is packed with rare photos and a

great interview with Auger, whose keyboard work and vocals drove the band. (soulbankmusic.com)

JONI MITCHELL *Archives—Volume 3: The Asylum Years (1972–1975)* (Rhino)

This five-CD, four-LP box features never-before-heard demos, alternate takes and rare live performance recordings along with a 40-page book packed with photos and an intimate conversation between Mitchell and writer/filmmaker Cameron Crowe. This volume documents Mitchell's art at a time when she was questioning the scrutiny of her music and her life as laid out in the tabloids. She announced an early retirement from the stage in 1970, moved to British Columbia and became inspired by her new surroundings. In doing so, the singer, songwriter and guitarist created three of her most endearing works: *For The Roses*, *Court And Spark* and *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*. As Mitchell approached her 80th birthday this year, Rhino col-

lected a stellar crop of fascinating demos and alternative takes of music from these albums. Also included is her triumphant return to Carnegie Hall in 1972, another live show from the *Court And Spark* era featuring a backing band of Tom Scott & the L.A. Express as well as other cuts featuring James Taylor, Graham Nash and Neil Young. (rhino.com)

PETER BERNSTEIN *Signs LIVE!* (Smoke Sessions)

While most boxed sets focus on a more distant past, Smoke Sessions, the New York jazz club and record label, delves into archival moments a little closer to the present. If you haven't caught Peter Bernstein live ... do it. He's one of the best guitarists working today in the Big Apple or on planet Earth. Here, Bernstein reconvenes an all-star cast that recorded his second album, *Signs Of Life*, back in 1994, featuring pianist Brad Mehldau, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Greg Hutchinson. A two-CD set came out back in July, but Smoke Sessions

THE SOUND OF SMOKE

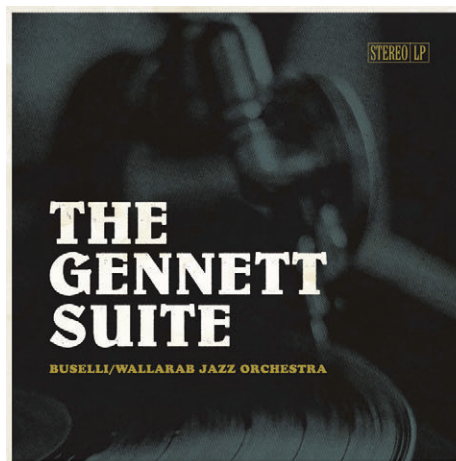
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Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra



is releasing a five-LP vinyl set in late November, just in time for the holidays, that also includes two bonus tracks. (smokesessionsrecords.com)

VINNY GOLIA
Even To This Day...
Movement Two: Syncretism: for the draw...
Music For Orchestra And Soloists
(Ninewinds)

Experimental composer and instrumentalist Vinny Golia has released a magnum opus of adventurous art with this 110-track second movement to *Even To This Day...*. Originally conceived as part of Golia's 75th birthday celebration, one that included performances by 75 musicians, but this expanded well beyond that original notion. On volume two, recorded by Golia and engineer Wayne Peet, Golia plays more than 30 instruments on this sprawling set with a slew of special guests including Nels Cline, Susan Alcorn, Chas Smith and more. (vinnygoliamic.bandcamp.com)

BUSELLI-WALLARAB JAZZ ORCHESTRA
The Gennett Suite
(Patois)

This tasty big band out of Indianapolis released *The Gennett Suite*, it's most ambitious album to date, earlier this year. Now comes a five-LP vinyl version of the music available in early November. The album tips its hat to Richmond, Indiana, where 100 years ago jazz legends flocked to record music in a converted piano factory. Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, Jelly Roll Morton and so many others traveled to Richmond to record at Gennett Studios for the Gennett label, one of the earliest to have success in jazz. Brent Wallarab has admired the era and the label throughout his musical career and employs themes from some of Gennett's biggest hits — such as “Dippermouth Blues,” “Wolverine Blues” and “Star Dust” — to bring that sense of inspiration and awe into the present. **DB** (patoisrecords.net)



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VARIOUS ARTISTS

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SONNY ROLLINS

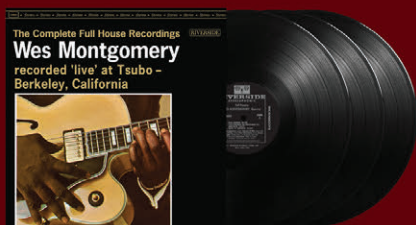
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- New interview by GRAMMY® Award-winning music historian Ashley Kahn

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Hot House: The Complete Jazz at Massey Hall Recordings

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- The complete legendary 1953 concert with two insightful essays
- Mastering and audio restoration by Paul Blakemore, lacquers cut by Kevin Gray and author Irwin Chusid



WES MONTGOMERY

The Complete Full House Recordings

- 180-gram 3-LP collection celebrating Wes Montgomery's centennial
- Expanded edition featuring two previously unreleased performances and new liner notes by Bill Milkowski
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VARIOUS ARTISTS

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Between Record Store Day's Black Friday releases and a bevy of reissues and new vinyl releases, there is a wealth of great sounds swinging your way.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The 313 Partnership (Third Man/Blue Note)

In a new partnership announced over the summer, Blue Note Records and Third Man Records announced a showcase reissuing five classic Blue Note releases by artists from Detroit. The 313 Partnership appeals to any music fan of classic Detroit sounds by some of the greatest artists to ever grace the jazz planet. The releases were personally chosen by Blue Note President Don Was, himself a Detroit native, as a tribute to that city's rich musical heritage.

Included in the set are Thad Jones' *Detroit-New York Junction* (1956), Donald Byrd's *Electric Byrd* (1970), Elvin Jones' *Genesis* (1971), the first vinyl reissue of *Multidirection* (1969) by Kenny Cox and The Contemporary Jazz Quintet and the first-ever vinyl release of Grant Green's *Live At Club Mozambique* (1971). The series features 180-gram vinyl remastered from the original tapes at Third

Man's Detroit mastering and pressing facility. Sound and mastering engineer Warren Defever and the Third Man team oversaw the project, which includes limited-edition color variants.

thirdmanrecords.com
bluenote.com

COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA

Swings The Blues (Alligator)

The Count Basie Orchestra has been in a truly creative mode of late, bringing its big band brand of swing to new audiences. On *Swings The Blues*, bandleader Scott Earnhardt pulls in some of the greatest living blues, jazz and r&b artists to join in on the fun. Bobby Rush sings "Boogie In The Dark." Buddy Guy, Shemekia Copeland and Charlie Musselwhite join in on "I'm A Woman." Ledesi swings "Evil Gal Blues," and George Benson rocks "Rock Candy," just to name a few. It's a swinging good time for all.

alligatorrecords.com

FRANK SINATRA

Platinum (Universal)

To celebrate the 70th anniversary of Ol' Blue Eyes signing a recording contract with Capitol Records, Universal has beautifully remastered some of his most beloved tracks and included rare, previously unreleased music, too. Available in a four-LP vinyl or two-CD set, this 44-song collection serves as a travelogue through one of the greatest recording careers in history.

sinatra.com

KEITH JARRETT

Solo-Concerts: Bremen-Lausanne (ECM)

Released as part of ECM's Luminessence series, this triple album of Jarrett alone at the piano focuses on the maestro at the height of his art in July of 1973. The music catches Jarrett at the beginning of his solo artistry. The original release garnered praise from around the world and became must-hear studies



for generations of pianists and fans alike.
ecm.com/shop

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

Hollywood Bowl August 18, 1967 (Sony Legacy)

The latest in a series of releases of Hendrix's live performances, this Hollywood Bowl experience offers a touch of Hendrix that has never been released officially or on bootleg. The release captures the guitarist and band before they exploded on the music scene. Two tunes being touted from the collection are Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor" and The Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." But, never fear, there are plenty of Hendrix hits, too.

jimihendrix.com

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Great Women of Song Series (Verve)

Verve continues its *Great Women of Song Series* with new releases by Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington and Astrid Gilberto. Just as the series has culled the best of Verve's catalog for other legendary chanteuses like Nina Simone, the new releases offer the best of the Verve archives from some of the leading vocalists in jazz history.

umusic.com

CLAUDIA ACUÑA

Duo (Ropeadope)

Now available on vinyl, the famed Latin singer performs classics with a killer backing band that includes Kenny Barron, Christian McBride, Carolina Calvache, Fred Hersch, Regina Carter, Arturo

HEAPS OF CRAFT

Craft Recordings keeps swinging out the hits with a slew of reissues. Here's a sampling!



THELONIOUS MONK

Brilliant Corners

As part of the Craft Recordings Small Batch series, the label has released an audiophile pressing of this classic, which introduced a number of Monk classics and a stellar lineup featuring Sonny Rollins, Max Roach and Paul Chambers. Limited to 4,000 copies, the reissue features lacquers cut from original tapes by Bernie Grundman. Pressed on 180-gram vinyl at RTI using Neotech's VR900 compound, the one-step lacquer process allows for heightened musical detail and clarity. Liners come from author Ashley Kahn.



BEN HARPER WITH CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

Get Up

This Grammy-winning instant classic from 2013 gets a 10th anniversary treatment as a vinyl reissue. Coming from two generations and very different corners of the musical world, singer/songwriter Harper and blues harmonica legend Musselwhite create magic.



VARIOUS

Hit The Bongo! The Latin Soul of Tito Records

Here's a collection of 26 Latin rarities guaranteed to get the booty shakin' featuring Ray Barretto, Willie Bobo, The Joe Cuba Sextet, Eddie Palmieri and Cal Tjader, Tito Puente and more. The collection, being released on vinyl and digitally, culls the archives of Tico from 1962-1972 with lacquers cut by Phillip S. Rodriguez at Elysian Masters.



TITO PUENTE

El Rey Bravo

Craft has lovingly remastered this 1962 classic that features "Oye Cómo Va," one of the biggest hits of Tito Puente's illustrious career. Cut from the original masters by Kevin Gray at Cohearent Audio and pressed on 180-gram vinyl, there is also a limited-edition Canary Yellow option (limited to 500 copies) as well as a hi-res audio version being released on streaming platforms.

WES MONTGOMERY

The Complete Full House Recordings

The centennial of the groundbreaking guitarist's birth has produced a treasure trove of new material, including this collection, an expanded version of his 1962 classic album Full House. The recording serves as Montgomery's only live recording for Riverside Records. The complete concert is delivered in a three-LP set, pressed on 180-gram vinyl at Optimal Media with new liner notes by Bill Milkowski.



CHARLIE PARKER, DIZZY GILLESPIE, BUD POWELL, CHARLES MINGUS, MAX ROACH

Hot House: The Complete Jazz at Massey Hall Recordings

This recording celebrates one of the most storied concerts of jazz history. Hot House presents the complete concert in honor of the 70th anniversary of the show and in celebration of the centennial of both Max Roach and Bud Powell. It's a deluxe three-LP set that's also available in CD and digital formats.

craftrecordings.com

SMOKE ON VINYL!

Smoke Sessions Records has expanded its growing list of vinyl offerings. In addition to the mammoth five-LP box of guitarist Steven Bernstein (see page 78), the label has recently released three other vinyl gems.

STEVE DAVIS

Steve Davis Meets Hank Jones, Volume 1

When trombonist Steve Davis met pianist Hank Jones with bassist Peter Washington in June of 2008, the recording was never released. Well, here it is now on vinyl, an intimate trio date where the elder statesman and the younger generation beautifully glide through the American Songbook.



EDDIE HENDERSON

Witness to History

The trumpet icon celebrates the 50th anniversary of his debut recording with a new set that features pianist George Cables, saxophonist Donald Harrison, bassist Gerald Cannon and drummers Lenny White and Mike Clark. Kevin Hayes, Ben Street & Billy Hart. At the age of 83, Henderson uses the opportunity to look back at his prodigious career, and tip his hat to a documentary about his life that's coming out in 2024. This is being offered as a limited pressing of 500 pieces, so get 'em while they're hot!



HAYES STREET HART

Bridges

This trio of Kevin Hays on piano, Ben Street on bass and Billy Hart on drums came together in December of 2020 as a performance in honor of drummer Hart's 80th birthday — The venue, New York's Smoke Jazz & Supper Club; The time, smack dab in the middle of the pandemic. So, it was streamed with no audience, but became the trio's 2021 debut, All Things Are. Spin ahead two years and the group, well, regrouped for a second and that recording is now available on vinyl. The trio melds styles, generations and times to deliver music for now.

smokesessionrecords.com



O'Farrill and Russell Malone. But it is Acuña's voice, strong and rich, that is front and center.

ropeadope.com

MARVIN GAYE

Let's Get It On: Deluxe Edition (Motown/UMe)

For some out there, it's hard to believe that this classic album is now celebrating its 50th anniversary. For those who may be new to the music of Marvin Gaye, the shock will be how fresh the music still sounds. This deluxe edition features 33 bonus tracks, 18 never before released, culled from the six months of recording sessions that went into its making.

motownrecords.com

STEELY DAN

Aja (Geffen/UMe)

No band has ever straddled the line between pop and jazz better than Steely Dan. Proof stands front and center with the band's 1977 classic *Aja*, which has returned to vinyl for the first time in more than 40 years. The album has been remastered by Bernie Grundman and pressed on 180-gram black vinyl. The reissue can also be owned as a limited-edition premium 45 RPM version on Ultra High-Quality Vinyl from Analogue Productions.

steelydan.com

VAN MORRISON

His Band And The Street Choir (Rhino)

The latest release in the Rhino High Fidelity series is Morrison's classic 1970 album, which launched his career with the album's opening tune, "Domino." Like all Rhino Hi-Fi releases, *His Band And The Street Choir* is limited to 5,000 individually numbered copies.

rhino.com

JACO PASTORIUS

Word Of Mouth (Rhino)

This, too, is part of the Rhino Hi-Fi series featuring the famed bassist's 1981 release, his first after leaving Weather Report. Both of these releases were cut by Kevin Gray with Optimal pressing the albums on 180-gram vinyl. *Word Of Mouth* has additional liner notes by legendary record executive Ricky Schultz, who signed Pastorius to Warner Bros.

rhino.com

LAFAYETTE GILCHRIST

Undaunted (Morphius)

The gifted pianist launched his newest recording of groove-oriented, driving jazz with a killer sextet featuring drummer Eric Kennedy, bassist Herman Burney, tenor saxophonist Brian Settles, trombonist Christian Hizon and percussionist Kevin Pinder. The album is being released on CD and streaming platforms as well as a limited-edition run on vinyl.

morphius.com

YO-YO MA

J.S. Bach: 6 Suites For Unaccompanied Cello, The 1983 Sessions (Sony Classical)

For lovers of classical music, Sony has released this three-LP collector's edition in honor of the recording's 40th anniversary. It represents Yo-Yo Ma's very close connection to Bach's *Suites For Unaccompanied Cello*. The famed cellist first played Suite No. 1 at the age of 4.

sonyclassical.com

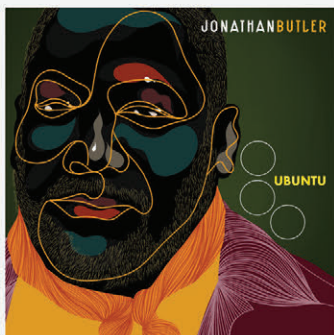


A YEAR IN REVIEW WITH MACK AVENUE MUSIC GROUP



**Christian McBride's
New Jawn**

Prime



Jonathan Butler

Ubuntu



Alfredo Rodriguez

Coral Way



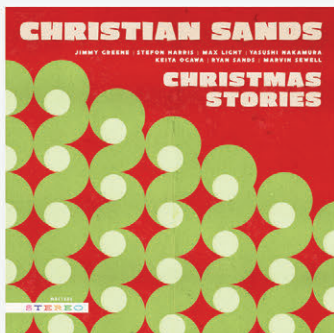
**Aaron Diehl
& The Knights**

Zodiac Suite



Veronica Swift

Veronica Swift



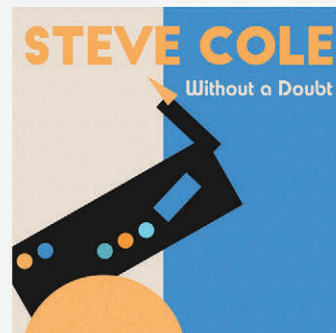
Christian Sands

Christmas Stories



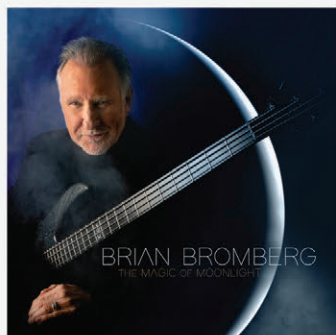
Joey Alexander

Continuance



Steve Cole

Without a Doubt



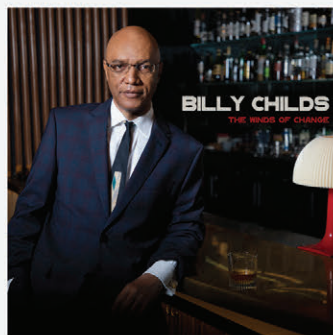
Brian Bromberg

The Magic of Moonlight



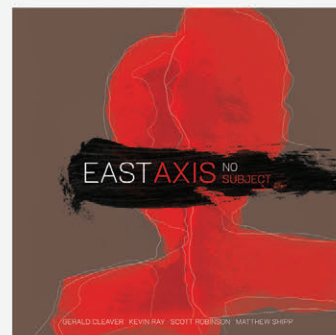
Dan Wilson

Things Eternal



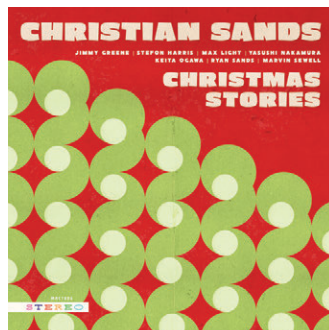
Billy Childs

The Winds of Change



East Axis

No Subject



YULETUNES

BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

'Tis the season. You enjoy Christmas music, but are leery of listening to the same old albums. Bored with, oh, the Vince Guaraldi Trio's A Charlie Brown Christmas? So, for restoration of aural cheer, consider several new releases by jazz, blues and beyond artists who put their own spin on chestnuts and offer crisp originals.

SAMARA JOY

***A Joyful Holiday* (Verve)**

Samara Joy, the Gen Z jazz luminary, has the perfect stage name for someone serious about conjuring pure Christmas spirit on a holiday EP. Six songs reveal that she has a core of joyfulness and benevolence inside. She sings with an uncanny control, a keen intelligence and, for certain, a beautiful voice. Standouts are "Warm In December," a mildly swinging revival of Julie London's 1950s tune, that has Joy at the apogee of her powers, and "O Holy Night," with her joined by singing family members (among them is her father, Antonio McLendon) in an inspired performance fit for a Christmas Eve gospel service. On the EP are several refined accompanists, including guest pianist Sullivan Fortner and Joy's regular guitarist Pasquale Grasso. ververecords.com

CHRISTIAN SANDS

***Christmas Stories* (Mack Avenue)**

The gifted pianist is joined here by his working quartet with guitarist Marvin Sewell,

bassist Yasushi Nakamura and Christian's brother Ryan Sands on drums, plus special guests saxophonist Jimmy Greene, vibraphonist Stefon Harris, percussionist Keita Ogawa and guitarist Max Light. The music is breezy instrumental magic and includes a fine set of holiday chestnuts including a swinging "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" with a Latin twist and an extended jam on "Silent Night." The final tune, "Last Christmas," also features a lovely string arrangement by rising star Steven Pheifke. (by Frank Alkyer) mackavenue.com

GREGORY PORTER

***Christmas Wish* (Blue Note)**

Gregory Porter's first holiday album at once entertains with the minor miracle of his gut-deep baritone and tracks the respect, compassion, altruism and nostalgia that he deems important to Yuletide. Savor his natural gospel-rooted renditions of three thoughtful originals, of Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye

X-mas tunes from the 1960s and of favorites like "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" (with acclaimed young singer Samara Joy). Porter's sincerity doesn't waver. bluenote.com

DAVE BRUBECK

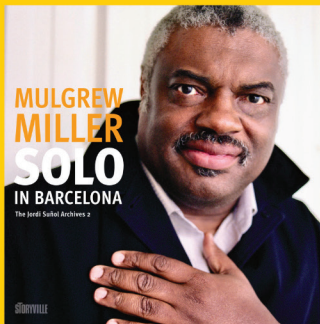
***A Dave Brubeck Christmas* (Craft)**

Dave Brubeck finally made a Christmas record in 1996, when he was 75. This solo piano showcase, a treasure standing with the likes of Geri Allen's *A Child Is Born* and Dave McKenna's *Christmas Ivory*, returns as a two-LP package. Brubeck's religious faith almost certainly deepens meticulous probes of liturgical fare "O Tannenbaum" and "Away In A Manger." His "Run, Run, Run To Bethlehem" and the familiar "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" sparkle like sunlight on freshly fallen snow. craftrecordings.com

RAPHAEL WRESSNIG & ALEX SCHULTZ

***Soulful Christmas—With A Touch Of Funk* (Pepper Cake)**

Seated at the console of his B-3, enthralled



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US: ArkivJazz – www.arkivmusic.com

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"Soul-stirring and soaring with seemingly boundless invention. At turns euphorically joyous as much as it is yearningly introspective, Lewis [and his Red Lily Quintet] feel into the full range of this spiritual music." –DownBeat, Hot Box

"James Brandon Lewis has a way of holding his tenor sax poised at the tipping point between a melody and a holler. That's how Mahalia Jackson sang, too, when shaken by divine inspiration." –The New York Times



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Felipe Salles
Interconnections Ensemble

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featuring:
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Magos Herrera
Chico Noerdhuis
Sofia Rei
Jacques Schwarz-Bart
Yosvany Terry

**Felipe Salles
Interconnections Ensemble**
Home Is Here

'Salles' arrangements are consistently colorful, his orchestra is world class and the guest soloists inspired."

-Scott Yanow, DownBeat, August 2023 ★★★★★½

TAPESTRY
www.caprirecords.com
www.sallasjazz.com



by 1960s Jimmy McGriff Xmas records, Raphael Wressnig has a great time slathering Hammond grease all over nine seasonal tunes. In the process, the Vienna-based virtuoso realizes an artistic triumph, a singular merger of jazz, blues, Memphis soul and New Orleans funk. Not confined to a back seat in Santa Wressnig's sleigh, Alex Schultz demonstrates again and again why he's one of America's best blues-and-more guitarists. A protean talent in her own right, guest singer Gisele Jackson enriches "This Christmas." raphaelwressnig.com

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Santa Swings ... The Windup (Bear Family)

The German archival label presents in its ongoing holiday music series this collection of X-mas treats from the swing era. The roster is packed with all-star orchestra leaders: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie (with Helen Humes), Chick Webb (with Ella Fitzgerald), Don Redman, Glenn Miller, Charlie Barnett, Louis Prima, Teddy Wilson, others. There's a jaunty confidence to the music even when Santa-hatted forgotten souls like Putney Dandridge, Bob Chester and Monette Moore take charge. Reefer madness: Johnny Guarnieri's "Santa's Secret." Excellent production, liner notes, CD and LP mastering. bear-family.com

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Alligator Records Christmas Collection (Alligator)

The premier blues label celebrates the season by excavating a 1992 album from their bottomless catalog. More than half of the 14 featured musicians — start with Charles

Brown, Koko Taylor, Son Seals — are certifiable eminences. They excel at recounting Santa's romantic hijinks, confronting loneliness on Christmas and expressing bayou or boogie-woogie roadhouse fun. Up-and-comers such as Lil' Charlie Baty and Rick Estrin and Lil' Ed Williams act out their own Yule doings with enthusiasm. LP (red vinyl) and digital only. alligator.com

LISA BIALES

At Christmas (Big Song Music)

A top-level blues-roots singer with a tenderly strong voice, Lisa Biales invests nine solid originals and a Louis Prima cover with warm spirit on her debut Yule album. She's a bit of a sentimentalist but, glad to say, doesn't get bogged down in idyllic, sugar-plum-sweet, idyllic visions of the past. "When The Snowflakes Fell" even concerns hard times. The Osloian was smart to travel to Los Angeles and record with illustrious folks like producer-drummer Tony Braunagel and guitarist Johnny Lee Schell. lisabiales.com

DAVID IAN

Vintage Christmas Trio Melody (Prescott)

Since 2011, talented Toronto jazz pianist David Ian has released five albums that communicate the easygoing, endearing glow of spending Christmas Eve with family and friends. This time around, joined by a coolly swinging string bassist and a drummer, he dotes on the melodies of 10 classic noels, among them "We Three Kings" and "Silent Night." His adoration is generally healthy and productive, not overbearing or mawkish. iantunes.com

GEORGE GEE SWING ORCHESTRA

Winter Wonderland (self-released)

For jitterbugging fans of 1940s X-mas jazz, the George Gee Swing Orchestra's December performance at New York's Birdland is a big deal, as his nonet swings it way through "Jingle Bells" and other tunes appropriate to Noel. Modern-minded soloists, respectful of but not hide-bound to tradition, include baritone saxophonist Patience Higgins and pianist Steve Einerson. Singer John Dokes, his low tones suggestive of Joe Williams and Nat Cole, brings out the heart of five famous tunes with a sober, measured delivery. georgegee.com

NILS LANDGREN

Christmas With My Friends Vol. VIII (ACT)

Nils Landgren is a Swedish holiday music institution unto himself, a jazz trombonist who every other year since the early '00s gets colleagues together for an album and tour. He favors the low-key jazz gaiety of the season, drawn to precious European carols and a couple songs that bask in the traditional jazz of New Orleans. An unexceptional singer, Landgren relies on Swedish vocalists of authority and style, including jazz chanteuses Ida Sand and Sharon Dyal and operatic singer Jeanette Köhn. actmusic.com

SUKEY MOLLOY

Snow Is Falling! (PlayMusic&Sing Inc.)

Charismatic singer, storyteller and teacher Sukey Molloy, in New York, reaches out to families with young children with a peppy assortment of well-known "Songs For Christmas, Hanukkah & Kwanzaa." sukeymolloy.com **DB**



Mike Jones - piano
Penn Jillette - bassist
Jeff Hamilton - drums

Jones and his cohorts bring their considerable talents to an eleven-track collection of popular and jazz standards that bubble along with energy and fluency.

-Pierre Giroux, *All About Jazz* ★★★★★

CAPRI Records Ltd.

www.caprirecords.com



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Featuring
The Mads Men
 & Sonny Fredie-Pedersen

Old and New World traditions meld in *Cool Yule*, an album by two-time Grammy Award-Winning Violinist Mads Tolling. Mads shares the Christmas celebrations of his youth in Denmark, blending the authentic customs and sounds of the Nordic countries with the joy and spirit of American jazz.

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 Sascha Feinstein, Editor, *Brilliant Corners*

New album out

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 Jeff Parker
 Ingebrigt Håker Flaten
 Øyvind Skarbø



Superless – *Superless*

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 Jeff Parker: guitar
 Ingebrigt Håker Flaten: bass
 Øyvind Skarbø: drums

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Enhance Your Kit

The NIO Electronic Percussion Pad from ddrum has the capabilities of a fully functioning electronic drum kit. With a broad surface of responsive pads, endless percussive options and ample connectivity, the NIO is the ultimate addition to your acoustic or electronic kits. Use it for at-home practice, live performances and even studio sessions. The NIO is designed with nine isolated rubber pads and comes pre-loaded with 30 kits (including five ddrum series kits), 20 user kits and hundreds of other built-in sounds. ddrum.com

Versatile Ligature

Whether the woodwind player on your shopping list is a high schooler in concert band, jazz band and marching band, or a seasoned pro with an expansive repertoire, the Versa-X from Rovner meets those multiple needs. With a metal cradle and re-positionable inner flaps, the Versa-X improves intonation, provides presence and dynamic response and lets the player switch between two tonal modes. It's available in 10 sizes for saxophone and clarinet. rovnerproducts.com



Festive Djembes

Toca Percussion's Freestyle Colorsound Djembes are available in seven eye-catching metallic colors. The djembes are 12½ inches high with a durable 7-inch synthetic head. Each djembe is made from a seamless lightweight, synthetic shell material, making them ideal for music educators and drum circle enthusiasts. They are available individually or in sets of seven. Durable and moisture-resistant, they are great for a classroom of students or any gathering. Freestyle Colorsound Djembes are available in metallic blue, green, red, orange, yellow, indigo and violet. tocapercussion.com

1 Mic Does it All

Start producing professional-quality audio with Samson's Q9x Dynamic Broadcast Microphone. Equipped with an analog XLR output, the Q9x integrates into any professional broadcast or home studio setup. Simply connect the Q9x to your mixer or audio interface and start recording or streaming broadcast-quality audio. Equally suitable for a podcast studio, broadcast booth or recording rig, the microphone with its standard XLR output easily connects to almost any standard preamp, mixer or audio interface. samsontech.com



Goin' Mobile

The EXM Mobile8 from Yorkville Sound is a three-way battery-powered speaker for musicians on the go. With 5½ hours of performance, the EXM Mobile8 battery-advantage lets you take your sound anywhere. Featuring an 8-inch woofer and a coaxial mid-range driver/tweeter, the EXM Mobile8 is a true three-way speaker. The three-way design provides maximum bass and enhances intelligibility, while the speaker's multi-angle geometry offers the flexibility to fit any indoor or outdoor performance environment. yorkville.com





Distinctive Sounds, Catchy Colors

Yamaha's Stage Custom Birch line of drums has expanded to include three new colors, including Classic White, a stunning Deep Blue Sunburst and the eye-catching Matte Surf Green. The shells are 100% birch, which has been responsible for the distinctive sound of Yamaha drums for many years, and offer short decay, quick attack and tight sound with good separation. The coating specifications of the finishes achieve the kind of beauty found in high-end drum kits. usa.yamaha.com

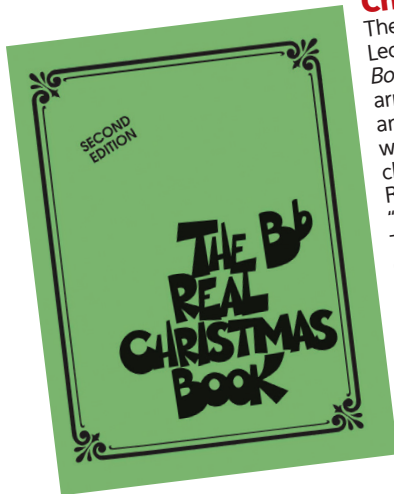
Bookplate Stands

Gator Frameworks has added two models to its line of sheet music stands, both equipped with large wooden bookplates. The GFW-MUS-4000 and the GFW-MUS-5000 feature a superior red wood finish to maintain a professional look, while meeting conductors' or soloists' demands for functionality. The GFW-MUS-4000 (pictured) features a collapsible tripod base, ensuring easy transport and storage. The GFW-MUS-5000 has a brushed metal design and an easy-lift mechanism, enabling one-handed height adjustments. gatorframeworks.com



Christmas Jazz

The second edition of Hal Leonard's *The Real Christmas Book* features 150 custom arrangements with lyrics of carols and contemporary holiday songs with sophisticated jazz chord changes in the user-friendly Real Book format. Songs include "All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth," "Baby, It's Cold Outside," "Blue Christmas," "Christmas Time Is Here," "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "Jingle Bells," "Last Christmas," "Sleigh Ride," "White Christmas" and more. Editions are available in C, B-flat, E-flat and Bass Clef versions. halleonard.com



Unwrap Your Bass Tone

The B2 Four Amp and Effects Emulator, powered with Zoom's Multi-Layer IR technology and six iconic DI models, gives bassists the ability to craft the perfect low-end tone. Build patches from 104 effects, including models of famous boutique effects and preamps. Mix and match up to five effects and amps simultaneously to build your own custom patches. If you want to plug directly into the house PA, the B2 Four has you covered. It features three tube and three solid state DI models that recreate the tone of world-class direct boxes. zoomcorp.com



In Tune & In Time

The Peterson StrobePLUS HDC delivers the ultimate strobe tuner/metronome combo. Its 0.1 cent tuning accuracy will tune any instrument with the utmost precision. Featuring a high-definition, multi-color display with variable color LED backlight, the StrobePLUS HDC can be seen clearly across the stage or studio. More than 200 exclusive Sweetened Tunings and Guided Tunings accommodate a variety of instruments, temperaments and musical genres. The configurable metronome features precise 0.1 BPM adjustability in eighth notes, quarter notes, dotted quarter notes and half notes, a tempo range of 10–280 BPM and more than 100 subdivisions, accent patterns and polyrhythms. petersontuners.com



Ultimate Guitar Connection

IK Multimedia's iRig HD X is the new flagship of the company's iRig guitar interface line, offering improved sound quality and more advanced features than its predecessors. Lightweight and compact enough to store in any pocket, the iRig HD X gives players the ability to connect virtually anywhere, at any time. It sports a redesigned enclosure and a new user interface with an ergonomic multi-function knob that lets guitarists quickly adjust headphone levels, loopback functions, direct monitoring and the built-in tuner. The iRig HD X's LED ring input level indicator also doubles as a precise tuner for the connected instrument. ikmultimedia.com

COURTESY OF ALEX WEISS



Alex Weiss worked in a soup kitchen run by the Church of John Coltrane for two years.

How the Church of John Coltrane Led To My Discovery of Music Therapy

Diane is a 57-year-old woman with Down syndrome. Our time together once a week at her home in Bergen Beach is usually spent singing gospel songs together. The familiar music from her church-going days still linger in her memory. We're able

to share time together by visiting these songs she has sung her whole life. But she does not speak any more. When I begin with her by strumming through the chords of "Amazing Grace" in a slow and rubato way, it serves as a cue for her and her ability to vocalize through the song

comes to life. Diane has been unable to speak for a few years now. But she can still sing.

My journey into music therapy started with John Coltrane. Or more specifically, the John Coltrane Church of San Francisco, founded by Archbishop Franjo King and his wife, Mother Marina King, who were so moved by Coltrane's 1965 album, *A Love Supreme*, that they formed an entire church around it and sought to canonize him. The two years that I spent with this church, from 1994 to 1996, were pivotal ones that seared into me that music can be a form of ministry and service to others, not just entertainment or art.

I was in my early 20s, a saxophonist living in San Francisco. Two hundred thirty miles south of me, down in San Luis Obispo, my father was battling terminal cancer. Though he insisted on not disrupting my life or my sister's as much as possible, I went back and forth as often as I could. A friend of mine told me about the church: "a place that celebrates Coltrane as he's the patron saint of the church, and the services are amazing as they're filled with his music." After my first Sunday service, I was hooked. I wanted to go every week. And I did.

Supposedly referencing his years of recovery from heroin addiction, in the liner notes to *A Love Supreme* Coltrane wrote, "I experienced, by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening. ... At that time, in gratitude, I humbly asked to be given the means and privilege to make others happy through music." These words became the foundational backbone of the church, which used the album itself as religious musical text to form their worship. Although I had been raised to look askance at organized religion, this type of worship — through music — felt different.

Back in San Luis Obispo, chemo and radiation had taken a toll on my father. After one visit in particular, I couldn't shake the memory of my father's frail body. The next day when I went to church, I was asked to come up and lead the congregation in "Acknowledgement," the first movement of *A Love Supreme*. Some of the most accomplished musicians in the city stepped aside to let me lead that first movement. As I played the signature arpeggio phrase, surrounded by people who showed their caring through the music, I felt the darkness inside me lift.

The original church building on Divisadero Street was a modest storefront of a place. But inside, it was outfitted with a beautiful altar, pews, and iconography made by a painter named Mark Dox. He had painted masterful portraits of both Coltrane and Jesus (who was portrayed as Black and wearing dreadlocks) in the style of Russian orthodox icons. A drum set, piano and upright bass sat patiently in the front

by the altar. Despite its modest exterior, the place felt like a sanctuary.

Sunday service began with fervent preaching from Archbishop King, whose sermons weren't liturgical but spoke piercingly of political injustice and social issues. Then the service would seamlessly transition into the music of *A Love Supreme*, and passing through all its four movements were the antiphonal prayers formed by Archbishop King's words.

later when I became a father, I gave my son the middle name Roberto.

The church also ran a soup kitchen after service, twice a week, Wednesdays and Sundays. All kinds of people came — people who had attended service, homeless people and people who lived in the neighborhood. For two years, working in that soup kitchen on those two days felt like learning how to make the spirit of Coltrane's music concrete, learning the practice

Occasionally, he would abruptly stop playing in the middle of a song, pause for a bit and then turn around to me to recall a specific moment in time that had to do with making music, and sometimes to recall a time with a loved one. I would put my horn down and listen to his story. Then I'd ask him questions to further explore the memory, if it felt like the right thing to do. My goal was to get him to reflect on the positive aspects of the memory, to spotlight the joyous times within his story. And sometimes the story was one of loss. His wife passed away years ago, and letting him tell the story of her passing with an empathic ear was all that he needed.

When I started working as a music therapist, it highlighted for me one of the most beautiful things about music: the myriad different ways it can be made. Sometimes, just two simple chords played on a guitar, toggled back and forth slowly, can be precisely the music needed to help.

When I interned as a music therapist at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Beth Israel, my job was to use a guitar to calm distressed infants, as it was critical for them to conserve energy. An alternating arpeggiation of two chords (e.g., C and F) played very slowly, quietly, and close to the incubator glass, would almost always calm down the baby. The monitors showed the distressed spike in the baby's vital signs drop. My being able to calm the baby down this way meant a further intervention by a nurse or a doctor was not needed. And watching those impossibly tiny wrinkled hands and feet stop their flailing, just because I played those chords, filled me with wonder. They instinctively responded to music even before they'd had the chance to be properly in the world. The music calmed them down because on some level, they could sense the presence of another, just as their mothers' heartbeats had been their constant, reassuring companion through their whole gestations.

In music therapy, what's important is not the skill or artistry of the music, but that it gives us a way to be in communion with each other. And healing resides in that human connection. That was the spirit of what Coltrane wrote in those liner notes to *A Love Supreme*, the album that inspired the formation of the church that started me on this journey.

Coltrane thought music was a shared experience and that it could be a gift we could give each other. And each time I listen to Coltrane's version of "I Wish I Knew," or see a baby calm its restless roiling because two chords are played, I feel that, too: the beauty of the sharedness of music, and how it can help heal. **DB**

In music therapy, what's important is not skill or artistry, but that it gives us a way to be in communion with each other.

There were three saxophonists in the church's core sextet: Archbishop King, his son Franzo Jr. and the Bishop Roberto De Haven. The pianist was Fred Harris; the bassist, Juanika King; and the drummer, Archbishop King's other son, John. The Sisters of Compassion choir sang lyrical accompaniments while they played *A Love Supreme*. Together, the music they made was powerful. And when the sextet played, they sounded like the greatest Coltrane band in the world. The spirituality of *A Love Supreme* is the most important element of Coltrane's album, but one that is often lost in interpretation. But the sextet played it with the full gravity, devotion and beauty it deserved.

The great Roberto De Haven, a known jazz player and saxophonist in and around the Bay Area, was also my mentor. He had a gentle demeanor and spoke in a rich, low baritone. Once a week, down in the church basement, Bishop De Haven and I would read through the *Charlie Parker Omnibook*, and then improvise freely with two saxophones. Sometimes, Roberto would play the drums. We'd listen to all kinds of music — from Parker to Johnny Hodges to Ornette Coleman to Coltrane, and much more.

We'd only stop when we truly felt the time was over. He told me to pay him what I could, and he would give 10 percent to the church. I remember his complete and genuine dedication. The music was a specific kind of gift and like nothing I had ever received before. He showed me how important and affirming music can be for myself. How the discipline of music, listening to it, and cultivating it with assiduity and commitment is a worthy practice in itself. Years

of being of service to others.

In 1998 my father passed, and some years later, I eventually moved to New York City, where I was a gigging musician with a day job. Then, when that job started looking uncertain, I discovered music therapy. Alan, a pianist friend of mine, was working as a music therapist after completing a graduate degree. We met up and talked about his experiences during the program and his work as a therapist. What struck me was the remarkable range of those that could be helped, from neonatal babies to the geriatric population, to soldiers with PTSD.

I worked with a man whom we'll call "Jack" for about six months in 2010. We would meet in a music room of sorts the music therapy department had in one of the buildings owned by Beth Israel hospital in Manhattan. It was outfitted with all kinds of percussion, mallet instruments and Jack's instrument, a piano. Jack had been in and out of Section 8 housing and homeless shelters for years. So, these once-a-week meetings we had served a bit as a refuge for him. It was a place for him to travel to, and go with the knowledge that he'd have access to a piano and be able to play his music.

Jack was an Afro-Cuban piano player for many years, and his dexterity and overall ability on the instrument was wonderful. To these sessions I'd bring my tenor saxophone. We would run through all kinds of standards like "Mambo Inn," "Caravan," "Manteca" and "Perdido." These sessions gave Jack the opportunity to relive his musical days and remember the good times he had when he was young in an environment that was safe and if needed, a place where he could be vulnerable to feel nostalgic.

Brooklyn-based saxophonist and composer Alex Weiss is preparing a recording of jazz standards with Santiago Leibson on piano, Dmitry Ishenko on acoustic bass and Vijay Anderson on drums. Check him out online at alexweissmusic.com or via his Instagram and Facebook pages. Weiss' recordings are available through bandcamp.com as well as all streaming services and the label Ears&Eyes Music.



Benjamin's use of thematic development produces cohesion in her solo

Lakecia Benjamin's Alto Sax Solo on the 5-Bar Phrases of 'New Morning'

The solo section for alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin's song "New Morning" (from *Phoenix*, released this year on Whirlwind Records) may come off as just some diatonic chords in E \flat minor, but here's the rub: The form consists of five-measure phras-

es. Benjamin shows great skill in dealing with this. For one thing, she starts a bar early and ends on the downbeat (sort of) of the final bar, rather than playing through into the next section. To my ear, this helps bookend her statement, making it separate from the preceding

and following material.

Benjamin is also quite aware of the asymmetrical form. Notice that out of the six times she plays through the progression, more than half of these have her landing squarely on the tonic on the downbeat of the first bar (measures

5, 10, 20 and 25). To add to that, in bars 10 and 20 she plays a series of quarter notes on this pitch. This creates the seed of a motif which, when stretched out for the second iteration, we hear it as a developing idea.

In bar 25, Benjamin starts a repetitive idea on that downbeat — also creating a motif but one that she develops during that round rather than bringing it back later, in this case altering the phrasing the third time (the slur goes away) and dropping the first note an octave on the fourth iteration. Both are great means of delineating the odd form as well as producing a sense of continuity through this improvisation.

Other motifs emerge in Benjamin's playing, and not necessarily on the first bar of the form. In measure 2 we hear an F \flat used to ornament the tonic, but with the D \flat inserted it can almost give the impression of a B \flat blues lick. That this is done on chords sitting on top of a B \flat in the bass I would argue is no accident. Benjamin is in a way tonicizing the B \flat , implying a modulation in this modal environment.

This lick returns in bars 16–17, and like the previous motif she extends it, giving our ears more of a chance to digest what we've heard before. Although it wasn't in this exact form, Benjamin did use this bluesy F \flat in bar 7, on the same harmony. It also appears in measure 31, leading up to this chord. Subtle variations on a theme. All of these appear at the same point in the form (the final appearance in bar 31 does show up two beats early, leading to this bar). All of these variations provide further evidence evidence as to Benjamin's ability to navigate the song's five-bar phrases.

Measure 12 has another interesting motif, which reappears in bars 18 and 22. It's a B \flat minor arpeggio, but with the G \flat leading off it gives a feeling of D \flat 6, as if it's D \flat sus resolving. Twice this is played over the E \flat m/B \flat , again obscuring the sound of the underlying chord and key (in measure 18, being played on the B \flat m/A \flat creates even more of a sense of D \flat 6 now that the fifth of the D \flat is in the bass). Not only does this happen at the same point in the form, but Benjamin has chosen to use this motif on the same section she had applied the previous one to. So she's not stuck with certain licks on certain harmonies, and it also makes it more intriguing for us listeners: We may hear development of the first motif, or of the second, or a new idea. The development doesn't happen in a predictable way.

Another motif we hear is the combination of E \flat -G \flat -A \flat -B \flat -A/B \flat -B \flat . This addition of the b5/#4 isn't so much a motif; it's a time-honored blues lick. And it does serve to add a bluesiness to Benjamin's improvisation. Notice the variations on it in measures 3–4, 8, 14–15, 23–24, 27–28, 29–30 and 32–33. Also notice how frequently this idea crosses the bar line. So even though it's not a motif per se, Benjamin uses it in such a way as to create continuity through her solo. More

subtle variations.

It's also worth noting that the B \flat /A natural licks and the F \flat licks pointed out earlier are the same idea in different keys. So, even subtler is Benjamin's use of the same material, but playing on the V chord in addition to the tonic. So it's bluesy, but in a manner that one might not expect to find in a lot of blues. It's particularly sweet that Benjamin's final two licks are both of these. We hear the B \flat blues in measures 31–32 and the E \flat blues in the final two bars. In fact, though rhythmically different, these closing phrases are identical: 4-b5-4-b3-b7-R in B \flat and then in E \flat . How's that for subtle variations? (Also, how about Benjamin placing the B \flat lick to lead into the E \flat m bar and the E \flat lick to lead into the B \flat m bar?)

In fact, though not actually a motif, Benjamin's use of minor pentatonic and blues scales juxtaposed against modal lines is another means of creating non-predictable direction (if you'll excuse the oxymoron). The first five bars are combinations of blues scale (though in two keys) and minor pentatonic, but then in measure 6 a C \flat major scale appears, and right on the C \flat maj7 chord. Benjamin returns to blues vari-

ations for the next six bars (excluding the oddball lick in measure 11. Major third in a minor key?) and then returns to the C \flat major scale for the second half of measure 13. But this isn't the C \flat maj7 chord!

Let's assume that Benjamin isn't lost, as based on what we've heard, she totally knows this landscape. Also notice that she seamlessly turns this descending major scale into the blues as she crosses the barline. We have more of this sound until bar 19 where that oddball lick returns verbatim. But again, it's on a different chord (G \flat maj7 as opposed to C \flat maj7). So Benjamin is presenting some of these sounds on varying harmonies, adding to the non-predictable direction (or subtle variations, if you prefer).

Benjamin's development of these themes is not just clever; it also produces a cohesion in her solo. And her demonstrated ability to place them at the right points shows her comfort playing on the five-bar form. **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.



Nord Stage 4 Keyboard

Upgrades Enhance the Live Playing Experience, Allow More Complex Sound Design

The Nord Stage series has long been a ubiquitous presence in the keyboard market, and this year the company released the Stage 4, a major redesign that's available in three versions: 88-note fully weighted, 73-note fully weighted and 73-note semi-weighted. While the familiar red chassis and form factor may look the same at first glance, there are a ton of changes and improvements on the Stage 4, both on the front panel and under the hood.

The familiar three-section architecture remains, with Organ, Piano and Synth engines, but all have been upgraded to Nord's latest technologies. Gone is the "two panel" architecture in favor of volume sliders for each section that allow for multiple instances of each engine to be used simultaneously and adjusted separately — two each for the Organ and Pianos, and three for the Synth section. This allows for more complex sound design, and also improves usability for live playing to a huge degree.

The Organ section now features physical drawbars on all the models, including the 88-key, alongside the LED bars that show you where a given preset is. The B-3, Vox, Farfisa and two Pipe Organs are all here and upgraded, as well as a new B3 Bass mode, making easy splits with dedicated bass drawbars for the left hand or pedals. The Leslie simulation has also been upgraded to the same one as the Nord C2D, and sounds great.

The Piano section features a wide array of acoustic and electric pianos, clav, harpsichords and an assortment of other keyboard sounds, and many additional types are downloadable for free from the Nord website. New levels of control over the sound have been added here, including multiple EQ profiles for the pianos and clav, string resonance and half-pedaling. When you add the new triple pedal you get full control over sostenuto and una corda options as well. The Unison mode allows for piano doubling and tripling with no loss of polyphony. This section now has two completely independent layers that are separately adjustable on the fly, which makes dynamic layers and splits simple. The new triple sensor keyed on the 88-key version feels amazing, too.

The biggest overhaul comes in the Synth section, which is now based on the Nord Wave 2. This greatly expands the number of sound design options, including Analog, Digital Waves, FM algorithms, Super Waves and Samples. There are now three completely independent synthesizers, so complex layers and splits are possible in a way they were not before. There is also a large LCD screen dedicated to the synths, so editing is a snap. The arpeggiator has gotten a big upgrade, with new functionality and sequence ability, all made easier by the screen. The sound of this engine is really versatile, and I was able to dial in everything from huge analog pads to brilliant digital textures in minutes. The filters are also new, and have a plethora of types and options to choose from.

Another major upgrade has come in the Effects section. On previous Nord Stage models, the effects were global to whatever program you were in, but now all effects are independently available to all synth and piano layers, and to the pair of organ layers. This change was a main driver to making all of these layers independent for all sections, and it allows for a ton of options for your sound. On top of this, Nord greatly expanded the effects options, introducing new reverbs and a new spin effect, and now all the effects options have a variation, which effectively double your options. This level of effects manipulation and independence is some of the best I've seen on any stage keyboard.

Usability was clearly a focus of the redesign, and that is most apparent in the new Program section. Nord has expanded the number of programs available, and these are accessed through eight buttons (up from five on the Stage 3) for each page of programs, including Nord's Live mode.

I have been a Nord Stage user since the Stage 1, and every new model brings significant changes and upgrades. The Stage 4 takes the biggest leap yet. The great new sounds and the flexibility of the Effects section, coupled with all the usability enhancements, will surely expand Nord's dominance in the stage keyboard market.

—Chris Neville

nordkeyboards.com

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Nduduzo Makhathini

Much powerful and resonant music has emanated from South Africa and, in part due to the reprehensible cultural scatter and exile caused by apartheid, only occasionally has the world paid enough attention. The blend of bittersweet serenity, melancholy and inner-mounting-flame in the oeuvres of Abdullah Ibrahim and Bheki Mseleku — back-filtered through the transatlantic diaspora and Ellington, Monk and McCoy Tyner — has been absorbed by Nduduzo Makhathini, who has emerged over the course of 10 leader albums into a perennially questing, paradoxically grounded force. His sophomore album on Blue Note, *In The Spirit Of Ntu*, strives to distill spiritual essence and cleave closer to universal truths. A philosopher wont to deliver articulate thesis statements between bouts at the piano, Makhathini is, onstage and in person, uncommonly warm and receptive. His first Blindfold Test mixed curvballs and shoe-ins at the Detroit Jazz Festival, where he triumphantly culminated a U.S. tour with drummer Francisco Mela and bassist Zwelakhe-Duma Bell le Pere.

Sean Bergin & Ernst Reijseger

"For The Folks Back Home" (*Mistakes, Broken* 1979), Bergin, tenor saxophone; Reijseger, cello.

Nduduzo Makhathini: That's from South Africa, definitely.

Michael Jackson: It was recorded in Cornwall in the '70s, though. The saxophone player is from Durban, and it's not guitar but cello played sideways, by a Dutchman.

Makhathini: Not Dudu Pukwana, right? The flavor was obvious in a second, pointing to us. I never heard him but can tell he's from South Africa and came from the sound of (saxophonist) Kippie Moeketsi.

Bheki Mseleku

"Melancholy In Cologne" (*Star Seeding*, Polygram 1995), Mseleku, piano; Charlie Haden, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

Makhathini: [after only a few notes] "Melancholy In Cologne," Charlie Haden, Billy Higgins! [Bheki Mseleku] was my teacher and would be very disappointed if I didn't guess his sound in the first three seconds. He had a way of thinking about music and philosophy that informed his compositional technique, around his ideas of an afterlife. He always wanted to compose music that he called "endlessness," that produces this energy of continuity, and he played with Pharoah Sanders, Elvin Jones, here with Billy Higgins, and he toured with Joe Henderson. Bheki ended up frustrated. He put out the album *Home At Last* but was having difficulty with the notions of home after exile. When South African musicians, including [Hugh] Masekela and [Miriam] Makeba, returned post-apartheid in 1994, they were well-received due to speaking exclusively about politics and societal ills. Instead, he was talking in a different language about spirituality, didn't get a single gig and returned to London.

Muhai Richard Abrams

"Imagine" (*Song For All*, Black Saint 1997), Abrams, synthesizer.

Makhathini: The arrangement made me think of Anthony Braxton and the AACM movement.

Jackson: It's the éminence grise of the AACM, the mastermind behind the operation.

Makhathini: The one who wrote the book?

Jackson: George Lewis? No, but that's a good guess given Lewis' pioneering work with synthetic sounds and interactive computer music.

Makhathini: [afterwards] Ah, yes, he is featured in the book.



Nduduzo Makhathini, on stage at the 2023 Detroit Jazz Festival.

Don Pullen

"Endangered Species—African American Youth" (*Random Thoughts*, Blue Note 1990), Pullen, piano; Lewis Nash, drums; James Genus, drums.

Makhathini: Hmm, might have been influenced by Don Pullen.

Jackson: I knew you'd get it, as soon as the elbows came into play with the keyboard.

Makhathini: Haha, I heard it from the beginning! An incredible piano player, I didn't know he died at 53. Do you know his "Ode To Life"? One of the most beautiful tracks I know.

Jackson: Tell us something else you like about Pullen.

Makhathini: There's the lexicon, what we think of as the jazz language, it's got such a gravitation that to find anything new as a pianist is difficult, almost everything was done in the '60s already. So I really respect people who could learn this vocabulary and find a way to express it in a way that is so unique. Maybe in one note you can tell it is Don Pullen. I guess you could say the same about Randy Weston, Monk, all these pianists that have not so much transcended the canon as dialogued with it.

Johnny Dyani

"Radebe," (*Witchdoctor's Son*, Steeplechase 1978), Dyani, bass; John Tchicai, Dudu Pukwana, alto saxophone; Alfred do Nascimento, guitar; Luis Carlos de Sequeira, drums; Mohammed al Jabry, percussion.

Makhathini: This song is called "MRA."

Jackson: No, it isn't, smarty pants!

Makhathini: "Radebe!" Definitely Johnny Dyani and Dudu Pukwana.

Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya

"Sotho Blue" (*Sotho Blue*, Sunnyside 2011), Ibrahim, piano; Jason Marshall, baritone saxophone; Keith Loftis, tenor saxophone; Cleave Guyton, alto saxophone/flute; Andrae Murchison, trombone; Belden Bullock, bass; George Gray, drums.

Makhathini: I've definitely heard that before, it's going to come. ... The arrangement is by Abdullah Ibrahim, I just met him recently for the first time. He has some origins there, from the north of the country, the Basotho people who were led by King Moshoeshoe. They have this brilliant music with really unique scales and rhythm. The language they speak, Sesotho, informs the way they articulate the sound. It's really interesting when you meet musicians from different geographies in South Africa.

Jackson: You know what? We've been preoccupied enjoying the music and egregiously failed to allocate any stars! How many stars, out of 5, for this one?

Makhathini: A million 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.

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