

WE LOVE VINYL IS BACK!

DOWNBEAT

Beyond

FLEA'S JAZZ JONES

Brian Lynch & Charles McPherson,

Shabaka, Marquis Hill

**SLICES OF EUROPE: Mammal Hands,
Amalie Dahl, Nik Bärtsch, Camila Nebbia**

APRIL 2026

U.K. £6.99

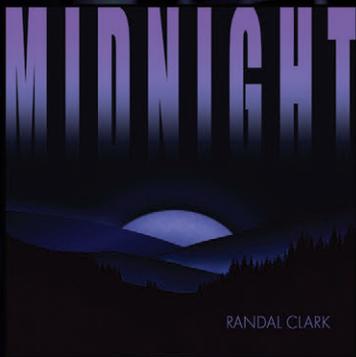
\$8.99US \$10.99CAN

04>



DOWNBEAT.COM

RANDAL CLARK



FEATURING:

JEFF LORBER
JIMMY HASLIP
GARY NOVAK
MICHAEL THOMPSON
SCOTT KINSEY
MARK LETTIERI
JOE VANNELLI
KRIS JOHNSON

AVAILABLE NOW ON:

SPOTIFY, APPLE MUSIC,
AMAZON MUSIC, PANDORA AND ALL
STREAMING SERVICES

WWW.RANDALCLARKMUSIC.COM

 [RANDALCLARKMUSIC](https://www.facebook.com/RANDALCLARKMUSIC)

 [@RANDALCLARKMUSIC](https://www.instagram.com/RANDALCLARKMUSIC)

CANNONBALL INSTRUMENTS

www.cannonballmusic.com



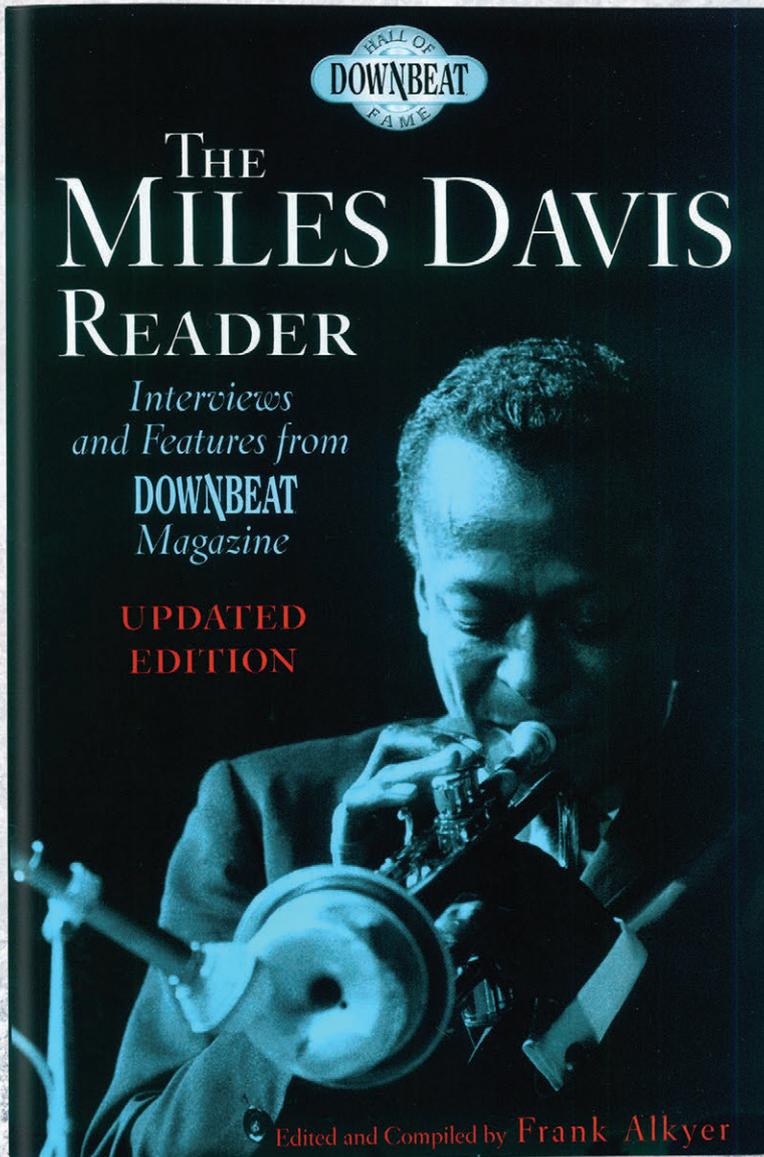
THE CROWD IS YOURS
MEET THE MOMENT

Vandoren[®]
PARIS



More MILES!

DownBeat's Miles Davis Reader is now available in paperback with more photos, more articles and more reviews. It has 50-plus years of Miles coverage as it happened—ripped from the pages of DownBeat magazine.



DOWNBEAT

APRIL 2026

VOLUME 93 / NUMBER 4

President Kevin Maher
Editor & Publisher Frank Alkyer
Contributing Editor Ed Enright
Reviews Editor Michael J. West
Creative Director Žaneta Čuntová
Assistant to the Publisher Sue Mahal
Bookkeeper Evelyn Hawkins

ADVERTISING SALES

Record Companies & Schools
Jennifer Ruban-Gentile
Associate Publisher
630-359-9345
jenr@downbeat.com

Musical Instruments & East Coast Schools
Ritche Deraney
Vice President of Sales
201-445-6260
ritched@downbeat.com

Record Companies & Schools
Cameron Henry
Advertising Sales Associate
630-359-9338
cameron@downbeat.com

OFFICES

188 W. Industrial Dr., Ste. 310, Elmhurst, IL 60126
630-941-2030
<http://downbeat.com>
editor@downbeat.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

877-904-5299 / service@downbeat.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Senior Contributors:

Aaron Cohen, Howard Mandel, John McDonough

Atlanta: Jon Ross; **Boston:** Frank-John Hadley, Allen Morrison; **Chicago:** Alain Drouot, Michael Jackson, Jeff Johnson, Bill Meyer, Paul Natkin, Howard Reich; Ayana Contreras; **Indiana:** Mark Sheldon; **Los Angeles:** Gary Fukushima, Josef Woodard, Scott Yanow; **Michigan:** John Ephland; **Minneapolis:** Andrea Canter; **Montana:** Philip Freeman; **Nashville:** Bob Doerschuk; **New Orleans:** Cree McCree; **New York:** Herb Boyd, Bill Douthart, Kira Grunenberg, Stephanie Jones, Ashley Kahn, Matthew Kassel, Jimmy Katz, Suzanne Lorge, Phillip Lutz, Jim Macnie, Ken Micallef, Bill Milkowski, Ivana Ng, Dan Ouellette, Ted Panken, Tom Staudter, Jack Vartoogian; **Philadelphia:** Shaun Brady; **Portland:** Alexa Peters; **San Francisco:** Mars Breslow, Yoshi Kato; **Seattle:** Paul de Barros; **Washington, D.C.:** Willard Jenkins, John Murph, Michael Wilderman; **Canada:** J.D. Considine, James Hale; **France:** Jean Szymowicz; **Germany:** Peter Margasak, Hyou Vielz; **Great Britain:** Ammar Kalia, Tina Edwards; **Portugal:** José Duarte; **Romania:** Virgil Mihailu; **Russia:** Cyril Moshkow. **Contributor Emeritus:** Fred Bouchard.

Jack Maher, President 1970-2003
John Maher, President 1950-1969

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Send orders and address changes to: DOWNBEAT, P.O. Box 11698, St. Paul, MN 55111-0698. Inquiries: U.S.A. and Canada (877) 904-5299; Foreign (651) 251-0682. **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please allow six weeks for your change to become effective. When notifying us of your new address, include current DOWNBEAT label showing old address.

DOWNBEAT (ISSN 0012-5768) is published monthly by Maher Publications, 188 W. Industrial Dr., Ste. 310, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Copyright 2026 Maher Publications. All rights reserved. Trademark registered U.S. Patent Office. Great Britain registered trademark No. 719.407. Periodicals postage paid at Elmhurst, IL and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: \$34.95 for one year, \$59.95 for two years. Foreign subscriptions rates: \$56.95 for one year, \$103.95 for two years.

Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, photos, or artwork. Nothing may be reprinted in whole or in part without written permission from publisher. MAHER PUBLICATIONS: DOWNBEAT magazine, MUSIC INC. magazine, UpBeat Daily.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: DownBeat, P.O. Box 11698, St. Paul, MN 55111-0688. **CABLE ADDRESS:** DownBeat (on sale March 31, 2026) Magazine Publishers Association.



The perfect gift for
a loved one...or for you!

Just scan the QR code or
go to downbeat.com/Miles

MPA

PRINTED
IN
U.S.A.

BLUE NOTE®



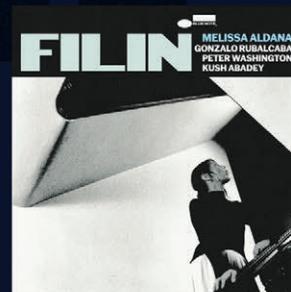
**IMMANUEL WILKINS
LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD**

Saxophonist's first-ever live album is an expansive 3-volume document of his acclaimed quartet with Micah Thomas, Ryoma Takenaga & Kweku Sumbry at the NYC jazz shrine.



**GABRIELLE CAVASSA
DIAVOLA**

Award-winning vocalist makes her Blue Note debut with album of originals & covers featuring Joshua Redman, Jeff Parker, Paul Cornish, Larry Grenadier & Brian Blade.



**MELISSA ALDANA
FILIN**

Saxophonist's ballads album of Cuban Filin songs features Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Peter Washington & Kush Abadey plus special guest vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant.



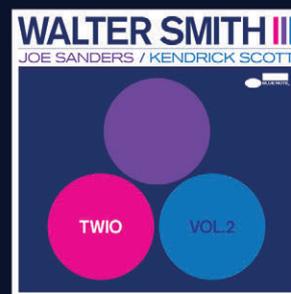
**BILL FRISELL
IN MY DREAMS**

Guitarist traverses wide expanses of American music with a new band of old friends featuring Jenny Scheinman, Eyvind Kang, Hank Roberts, Thomas Morgan & Rudy Royston.



**JULIAN LAGE
SCENES FROM ABOVE**

Guitarist joins forces with producer Joe Henry once again for an inviting set of originals featuring a striking new band with John Medeski, Jorge Roeder & Kenny Wollesen.



**WALTER SMITH III
TWIO, VOL. 2**

Saxophonist presents classic jazz songs with a playful sense of freedom in a trio with Joe Sanders & Kendrick Scott plus guests Ron Carter & Branford Marsalis.



**TONE POET SOCIETY
SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE**

Audiophile vinyl series subscription offers 4 tiers with increasing savings & benefits including exclusive releases, behind-the-scenes content, free early shipping & more.



**TONE POET AUDIOPHILE
VINYL REISSUE SERIES**

Definitive all-analog 180g vinyl reissues produced by Joe Harley, mastered by Kevin Gray from original master tapes, pressed at RTI & packaged in deluxe tip-on jackets.



**BLUE NOTE CLASSIC
VINYL REISSUE SERIES**

All-analog 180g vinyl reissues of classics spanning all eras & styles of Blue Note mastered by Kevin Gray from original master tapes & pressed at Optimal.

GET OFFICIAL BLUE NOTE MERCHANDISE AND EXCLUSIVE RELEASES AT [STORE.BLUENOTE.COM](https://store.bluenote.com)

BlueNote.com
© Blue Note Records

APRIL 2026

Inside

ON THE COVER

20 Flea

BY JOSEF WOODARD

The famed bassist of the Red Hot Chili Peppers joins the small pantheon of certifiable rock stars who have ventured into jazz with his first full solo album, *Honora*. It's a mostly instrumental and variously jazz-colored project showcasing Flea on his original instrument, the trumpet.

FEATURES

26 Brian Lynch & Charles McPherson

BY TED PANKEN

30 Euro Jazz

Mammal Hands, BY AMMAR KALIA

Amalie Dahl, BY PETER MARGASAK

Nik Bärtsch, BY DAN OUELLETTE

Camila Nebbia, BY MARTIN LONGLEY

36 We Love Vinyl!

COMPILED BY FRANK ALKYER

64 Indie Life

64 Jerome Sabbagh

68 Eugenie Jones

70 Sugar Bomb



TANIA BIANCO

Mammal Hands leads off our dive into the European improvised music scene.



46 Javon Jackson



47 Jack West



50 Ron Carter & Ricky Dillard



51 Ingrid Jensen

WOODSHED/NAMM REVIEW

54 Master Class: Scales from the Far Side

BY BRIAN CHARETTE

56 Transcription: Patricia Brennan's Vibes Solo on 'Los Otros Yo'

BY JIMI DURSO

58 Toolshed Special:

Best of the 2026 NAMM Show
BY ED ENRIGHT AND KATIE KAILUS

DEPARTMENTS

8 First Take

10 Chords & Discords

13 The Beat

13 Shabaka

16 Marquis Hill

17 The Masakowski Family

18 Verve at 70

19 International Jazz Month at 25

43 Reviews

74 Blindfold Test

Janis Siegel



Janis Siegel and Ted Panken

“People forget that the trombone is so glorious. It can be like going to church, or getting ready for battle. It can be a lot of things.”

JENNIFER WHARTON

XO Artist Since 2013



PERFORMING ON THE **XO 1240RL-T**, JENNIFER IS A NEW YORK-BASED, CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED BASS TROMBONIST. SHE IS BANDLEADER OF BONEGASM AND A BROADWAY REGULAR REDEFINING LOW BRASS ARTISTRY.

XO

DESIGNED FOR EXCELLENCE

YstadSweden JazzFestival

July 29–August 2, 2026

Ivan Lins
Nils-Petter Molvaer
Kurt Rosenwinkel
Randy Brecker
Veronica Swift
Seamus Blake
Jan Lundgren
DR Big Band
Rosario Guiliani
Janis Siegel
Roberto Gatto
Camille Bertault
Francesca Tandoi
Hans Backenroth
Bobo Stenson
Ytting Jazz
Mathias Heise
Helge Albin
Anna Pauline
Hannah Svensson
Klas Lindqvist
Fredrik Kronqvist
Magnus Carlson
Moon Ray Quintet
Jill Johnson
Anders Berglund
Emmalisa Hallander
Monday Night Big
Band
Spicy Advice Ragtime
Band
Aaron Mandelmann
Next Jazz Generation
and more

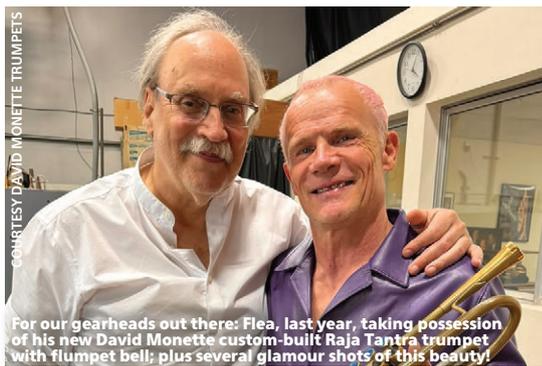
Tickets: ystadjazz.se



JAZZ

MUSIK I SYD
SKÅNE • KRONBERG

First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



For our gearheads out there: Flea, last year, taking possession of his new David Monette custom-built Raja Tantra trumpet with flumpet bell; plus several glamour shots of this beauty!



Flea's Jazz Plea

FLEA, THE HEART-POUNGING BASSIST OF the Red Hot Chili Peppers, on the cover of *DownBeat*? When the pitch came in that Flea was making a jazz record and he's playing trumpet, it came with a question: "Would you like to hear it?"

Of course!

After several listens, it was clear: Flea has something to say. But writer Joe Woodard and the editorial staff here had no idea how much. We know there will be letters on this one, and that's fine.

But check out the heartfelt, honest and downright humble words he offers beginning on page 20. He's a thoughtful, insightful student of this music, with a true passion for the trumpet.

Then go listen to the album, *Honora*. Is it *Kind Of Blue*? No. But few, if any, albums are. On the other hand, he absolutely presents his own personal voice. And it's good, really good.

Flea is not a newcomer to jazz or to the trumpet. As you'll read, it was his first instrument. He has played trumpet on several Chili Pepper tunes, as well as in concert. There's a good example on YouTube of Flea and Peppers drummer Chad Smith doing a quick jam at the Slane Castle in Ireland from August of 2003 — 97 seconds of fun.

There's also a great scene in *Let's Get Lost*, Bruce Weber's amazing 1988 documentary on the last days of trumpeter Chet Baker. A group of beach punks float along the oceanfront and one starts talking about his love for Dizzy Gillespie. Then it cuts to Baker drinking with them in a bar. That same "kid" starts peppering Baker, who's well into his cups, about people saying he played like Miles and his thoughts on Lee Morgan and

Clifford Brown. Baker starts scatting Brown's "Joy Spring." And the kid, not missing a beat, picks up and joins in. It was a 24-year-old Flea.

In stating that Flea has a lot to say, Woodard's well-crafted article came in twice as long as the feature you see in this issue. The constrictions of the printed page frustratingly limit us from offering more.

But, what a great time to be alive. On March 31, we will offer the full "Writer's Cut" of the article on downbeat.com. It will also be in a future issue of our weekly newsletter. If you're not subscribed, go to the website and sign up. It's free.

As a sample for the gear geeks out there, Flea discusses his attempt, and initial failure, to get a David Monette trumpet, instruments that are hand-crafted for each player. But as the photos above (courtesy of Monette's FaceBook page) prove, he eventually persevered.

Eden, Rest in Peace

As we were putting this issue together, we learned that Eden, the 19-month-old son of guitarist Rotem Sivan, had passed away. As detailed in our December 2025 issue, Eden was diagnosed with ATRT, a rare and aggressive form of brain cancer, shortly after his birth.

"I would like to thank you for the love and support during this extremely hard year," Rotem wrote. "Eden fought a hard fight, and we did all we could to save him. We wish to celebrate life and remember the smiles, the hugs and the good times we had together. I hope you can take a moment and cherish your loved ones."

Hugs and love go out to Rotem and his wife, Lore, and Eden's twin sister, Gigi.

DB



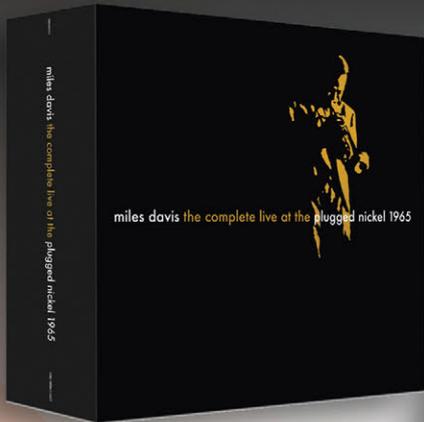
The Second Great Quintet
Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock,
Ron Carter, and Tony Williams

Recorded live in Chicago
December 22-23, 1965

miles davis **the complete live at the plugged nickel** 1965

Over seven hours of music
across 10LPs or 8CDs

AVAILABLE NOW



Chords & Discords



JAZZ ARTS COLLECTIVE

June 22 - July 25, 2026
Fordham College at Lincoln Center
New York City

Fordham Jazz Workshop

- 5 Weekly Sessions -
All Instrumentalists & Vocalists
Non-Audition

Registration:
www.jazzartsny.org



An Aldana Classic

We all brightly anticipate the back page of DownBeat, the Blindfold Test. And it's so cool when it's a "good one," when the test tunes show a great range, stylistically and datewise, and when the featured musician does a good job. Melissa Aldana (January's Blindfold Test) was beautiful in all respects, demonstrating her wide knowledge of jazz and players from 1953 to 2025, and her love of the music.

I know you can't do multiple Blindfold Tests and choose a winner each month, but if you had, Melissa would have won!

PAUL WEIDEMAN
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

Editor's Note: We're excited to announce that we'll have a conversation between Ms. Aldana and Gonzalo Rubalcaba in the May issue discussing the Cuban jazz connection and Aldana's new album, *Filin*, on which Mr. Rubalcaba plays an important role.



Blindfold Test

Melissa Aldana

Billy Hart Quartet

Ben Wallster

Miguel Zenón & Luis Perdomo

McGee Young-Johnson

Nicole Cleary

Michael Block

Samuel Loyd Fuller Sextet

Pat Avicola

Sanford Marullo Quartet

presents nine Sunday afternoon performances a year at the Madison Community Arts Center. Recent artists have included alto saxophonist Julius Tolentino, guitarist Frank Vignola, vibraphonist/drummer Chuck Redd, vocalist/pianist Champion Fulton and trumpeter Summer Camargo.

SANFORD JOSEPHSON
EDITOR, JERSEY JAZZ MAGAZINE
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY

Austin, We Have a Problem

Austin has four dedicated jazz clubs missing in action in your recent venue guide. The Elephant Room has anchored the scene since 1991. Parker Jazz Club and Monks Jazz have also established their presence in the scene for the past 8 and 9 years respectively. And Nica on 4th Avenue just opened in fall, next door to Parker.

Four visits in recent years include the late Joey DeFrancesco, Doug Lawrence, Jerry Weldon, Jon Cowherd's Mercy Project, Jazzmeia Horn, Benny Benack III, Michael Dease, the Count Basie Orchestra, Scott Robinson, Ari Hoenig, Helen Sung, Conrad Herwig and Jeff Hamilton, to name a few.

Epistrophy Arts, a roving improvisational arts series (25 years running), has showcased artists/groups such as William Parker, Billy Harper/Andrew Cyrille, Tim Berne/Nasheet Waits, Orrin Evans' Tarbaby, Marc Ribot, Wadada Leo Smith, David Murray/Kahil El'Zabar, the late Sam Rivers, the late Peter Brotzmann and beyond.

And this barely scratches the surface of what's happening in Austin.

JON CRONIN,
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Odes to the Venue Guide

Each time we publish our annual Great Venues Guide (February issue), we receive a fair amount of letters about clubs and concert halls we've missed. Keep 'em coming. We love learning about hot spots — new, old and under the radar.

Regatta Bar Rules

I hope you recognize Regattabar in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for your 2027 Great Jazz Venues Guide. They consistently book great artists. The ambience in the venue isn't amazing, but it has good spirit. I usually see a good mix of people trying something new, long-time listeners and younger music students. I depend on this venue for seeing great shows and want to make sure they stick around in the area for a long time.

MICHAEL ESBER
VIA EMAIL

Budapest Bungle

I regret to see that Budapest is missing from your [venue] guide again.

SÁNDOR FAZEKAS
TATABÁNYA, HUNGARY

Andrew Cyrille, the Writer's Cut!

You mentioned in the issue featuring Andrew Cyrille that you would be posting more of the interview online. Will that still take place?

DAVID BROOKS
OREGON

Editor's Note: Yes, the Writer's Cut of the full Andrew Cyrille article is now online. It was posted Feb. 3 on downbeat.com. Enjoy!

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



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOEL ROSS

DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

2026 JAZZ CAMP GUIDE

MARIA SCHNEIDER
IN SEARCH OF UNITY

LATIN JAZZ EXPLOSION!
Edward Simon
Antonio Adolfo
Roberto Fonseca & Vincent Segal
Michael League
Francisco Múgica
& Vito Pantoja
Gina Sosa
Tina Turner

Stefano Bollani
Live Blindfold Test

SUBSCRIBE
877-904-JAZZ



THE RETURN OF SOULIVE!
DOWNBEAT
SNARKY PUPPY'S GRAND DREAMS

BEST ALBUMS OF 2025
DOWNBEAT
ANDREW CYRILLE'S BIG, BEAUTIFUL WORLD

Harry
Skoler

Echoes



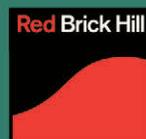
Bill
Frisell
Dezron
Douglas
Johnathan
Blake

RBH 2131

Harry Skoler – Clarinet | Bill Frisell – Guitar
Dezron Douglas – Bass | Johnathan Blake – Drums

Echoes, the new album from clarinetist Harry Skoler, is based on interactions and experiences with jazz icons he encountered throughout his decades-long career. Vignettes of Marian McPartland, Bill Evans, James Williams, Lionel Hampton, Benny Goodman, Jimmy Giuffre, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Teddy Wilson and Miles Davis are brought to life by Skoler, Bill Frisell, Johnathan Blake and Dezron Douglas, and produced by Walter Smith III.

AVAILABLE
MAY 1, 2026



Harry Skoler plays Vandoren Reeds,
Mouthpieces and Accessories, and
Buffet Crampon Clarinets exclusively.



harryskoler.com



SYMPHONY CENTER PRESENTS

JAZZ

STILL TO COME THIS SEASON ...



MILES DAVIS AT 100:
GONZALO RUBALCABA / UNLIMITED MILES
MAR 27



NUBYA GARCIA / SOMI
MAR 13



JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA
WITH WYNTON MARSALIS
JUNE 2



MIKE REED'S CHICAGO INSPIRATIONS
MAY 1

GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY



CSO.ORG/JAZZ | 312-294-3000
SYMPHONY CENTER | 220 S. MICHIGAN AVE.

Media
Partners

CHICAGOJAZZ.COM
@CHICAGOJAZZMAGAZINE.COM

DOWNBEAT



Illinois
ARTS
Council



“If you’re creative, then it means that you can approach anything with a creative spirit and just do your best at it,” says Shabaka of trying new instruments, and even rapping, on his new album.

Shabaka’s Earthly Journeys

In the fall of 2023, this writer first witnessed a saxophonist from the U.K. on stage at the Hollywood Bowl, surrounded by a string orchestra and a myriad of electronic and acoustic keyboardists. It was the one and only live performance of *Promises*, a landmark album by the minimalist artist Floating Points, who had invited Pharoah Sanders to be the centerpiece and beating heart of his nine-part, 46-minute-long composition. Sanders was scheduled to perform at the Bowl but had tragically passed away mere months prior, making the concert a tribute to the legendary figure. And so, Floating Points turned to his friend, Shabaka Hutchings, with whom he shared a love and personal connection to Sanders.

Shabaka channeled Sanders’ aura while imbuing the performance with his own reflections. Yet as he played his tenor that night, he knew it would perhaps be one of the last times he

ever played that instrument. The ensuing years of transferring his artistry into other modes of expression beyond the saxophone are encapsulated in *Of The Earth*, a self-produced solo album that is Shabaka’s most personal artistic statement to date.

While he may not be a household name in the U.S. yet, Shabaka is of a steadily cresting wave of creative jazz artists from the U.K., since 2013 when his co-led band Sons of Kemet burst onto the London scene with a celebratory blend of jazz with rock, Afrobeat and Caribbean dance rhythms. Shabaka continued to push the envelope with the Afro-funk band Melt Yourself Down, the electro-psychedelic trio The Comet Is Coming, and Shabaka and the Ancestors, a group he formed in Johannesburg during one of his many sojourns to South Africa. The infusing of jazz with a categorically global rock and funk groove element has produced a signature sound

that is distinctly London.

“To understand where we’re at in terms of the creative music scene, you’ve got to step away from what’s at the forefront right now, because there’s a whole bunch of musicians that were the building blocks of what we’re seeing today,” Shabaka explained, citing artists like multi-instrumentalist and producer Kaidi Tatham, and drummer Seb Rochford and guitarist Pete Wareham from the bands Polar Bear and Acoustic Ladyland.

He has flourished, in large part, due to his collaborations with musicians like these, both in London and abroad. But at the same time, Shabaka has been working on music that is all his own, recording snippets of audio during his travels. “Just making music on buses and in airport lounges and in bedrooms for a few years now,” he said. He’s invested in some portable audio gear, but nothing too elaborate. “It feels like in a lot of the jazz world, the driving force in the production is to make things sound cleaner and more expensive,” he said, preferring a more “left-leaning hip-hop” aesthetic like the work of Armand Hammer and Billy Woods. “It’s not about the production getting shiny and glittery. It’s about making it reflect the story of the music.”

That story has been shaped by his fascination with the flute. During the pandemic, Shabaka began practicing various bamboo flutes, including the Japanese shakuhachi and the Brazilian pifano, realizing he wanted that sound in his music. “There was a point when I just wanted to practice the flute all the time, not because I was great at the flute, but because I could feel like there was something in the character ... how my body responded to playing [it].”

Which led Shabaka to the drastic decision to step away from the saxophone. “If the sax is always at my disposal,” he explained, “whenever I come to a musical point where the sax is the most likely option, then I’ll take that. Whereas for like a year and a half, I only played the flute. I had to figure out how to use the instrument in all these different capacities, and how to articulate myself with this new voice. So, it was mainly a matter of bringing the private practice into the public and not having a split way — in public playing mainly saxophone, but in private trying to get better at flute.”

A year prior to his performance at the Bowl, Shabaka was already a visitor to Los Angeles when percussionist and producer Carlos Niño

invited him to a recording session by hip-hop musician-turned flutist Andre 3000. Shabaka ended up recording on one of the tracks on *New Blue Sun*, the album announcing Andre 3000's stunning transfiguration from rapper to instrumental jazz artist. In return, the former Outkast member recorded on Shabaka's projects — first on his EP *Progression*, and then on his most recent LP, *Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace*.

"Andre is a really open musician. He's more open than many musicians that I know," said Shabaka of his flute colleague. "He's a searcher, searching for experiences in sound. I respect that he's able to keep that curiosity and actually have the courage to go on stage with no net and reflect that curiosity in public.

"The industry as a body wants to be able to define what we are," he continued. "And I think the more that we can subvert these definitions and bring questions into the equation, the better everyone will be for it." In an ironic inverse parallel, just as the rapper Andre 3000 became a flautist, Shabaka the flutist has also become for the first time a rapper, writing and giving voice to lyrics on a number of tracks on his new album.

"I really am not a rapper," he admitted, noting his spoken word experience was limited to participating in poetry slam events years ago.

"It was just something where I decided I would like to rap on the album. ... If you're creative, then it means that you can approach anything with a creative spirit and just do your best at it." Shabaka researched a lot of hip-hop music, noting in particular how rappers ended their phrases, yet taking care to develop his own personal rapping style.

"I didn't want to try to sound like anyone because it's my voice. It's like putting on an accent, like you're an actor. It was a little bit more difficult to figure out what my actual tone of voice was and what my level of intensity naturally is when I use my voice. It took a long time of listening to myself and reflecting on it. But I think I got there in the end."

And in the end, Shabaka was able to turn his newfound curiosities and impromptu recordings into a cohesive, compelling declaration of an artistry grounded in new things. *Of The Earth* is an eclectic mix of beats, percussion, lots of flute, some rapping and ... saxophone. "At the time, I could have walked away [from the saxophone] forever," Shabaka admitted. But he decided to pick it up last June at a memorial concert for Louis Moholo, a South African jazz drummer whom Shabaka had played with for many years. And once he started playing, he realized he still loved the saxophone. He con-

fessed, "Once the hiatus was up, it was up. But the interesting thing was that I started to consider the sax as just one of my many instruments as opposed to the sax being my primary instrument. And I think that's the ultimate lesson: What I've come away with from that period is the saxophone being democratized. Not being representative of who I am. It's [now] one of many instruments in my palette."

The journey away from and back to the saxophone has helped Shabaka to discover a larger sense of his artistic identity. "The main turning point with the album for me was when I started to consider myself as a producer. I've done a lot of production of albums, all the albums on Native Records [his own label]. But it was a different type of producer ... not a producer in terms of actually creating the music. And I think that's maybe the difference between the producer and performer, in that the performer is engaged in what's happening in the moment, whereas the producer is the person who sees that moment in relation to the wider scheme of an album, and then actually sees the album in relation to the wider scheme of where it sits in the world of music." Certainly, Shabaka now has multiple vantage points in that world — greater perspective from 10,000 feet, while his feet are still firmly planted in the soil. —Gary Fukushima

Tri-C® JazzFest Academy

Summer Camp

June 15-27, 2026

Gill and Tommy LiPuma
Center for the Creative Arts

Tri-C Metropolitan Campus
Cleveland, OH
\$400



This two-week summer day camp for ages 12 to 18, led by internationally acclaimed musician and educator Dominick Farinacci, offers big band, small groups, master classes and jam sessions, culminating in student performances at Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland, presented by KeyBank.

Students also receive complimentary tickets to all Tri-C JazzFest performances, providing an immersive in-class and on-the-bandstand jazz experience.



Visit tri-c.edu/jazzfestacademy
or email jazzfestacademy@tri-c.edu to register.



TURNTABLE™

Maximize Every Show

Visit turntabletickets.com/perform to learn more.

Photo: @matthewcasby



"The secret is to surrender to the music and let it take you where it wants to go," says trumpeter Marquis Hill. "Understanding and vulnerability are key. It's bigger than just you."

Marquis Hill's Surrender

SHORTLY AFTER HIS MAJOR LABEL CONNECTION with Concord Records (contingent with winning the über prestigious Thelonious Monk Trumpet Competition in 2014), Marquis Hill decided to go it alone. "[Concord] wanted to wait on the next record, and I was impatient to put out more music," recalls the Chicago-born trumpeter, who'd already self-released two albums on Skip Tone, an independent label started with a friend years before his Monk competition moment.

Post Concord, his own Black Unlimited Music has dropped some 14 albums, including *The Poet*, *Meditation Tape*, *Modern Flows*, *Love Tape*, *Soul Sign* and 2024's ambitious *Composers Collective (Beyond The Jukebox)*, plus he's in hot demand, contributing to at least 15 side projects.

Notwithstanding his self-designated career drive, when you witness Hill perform, though he can blow at length and virtuosically, there's never the sense he's elbowing anyone aside. Despite an imposing 6-foot 1-inch frame, and choice chops, he is, as the title of his new EP implies, first and foremost, eager to "surrender" to the music.

Sweet Surrender is quite the unimposing manifesto. Hill's music is sensual and, at first take, the title phrase might seem like an R&B-infused "get down" reference, but Hill adds the parenthetical "Beautifulism (Aria)," which expands to generalized, wonder-filled optimism.

"What is the last thing you'll surrender to?" he inquires of friends and associates. "At what point will you cease the struggle and let go?" In

a vintage cover image to the project, Hill's father is depicted being baptized. He assumes his father was seeking rebirth, a fresh start, absolution.

Hill does not claim to be a Christian, though he grew up around Chatham Presbyterian and Baptist churches on Chicago's South Side. "My mother eventually gave her blessing to seek a congregation of my choice, after raising me in a church of old-school worshippers," he remembers. "But I interpret the Bible my own way, not necessarily as instructed by a preacher. There are great stories, lessons, analogies and parables there that you can apply to life."

"Bible Study," gently ascending like a hot air balloon of glory, is a salient cut on the EP (which runs a fraction under half an hour, but doesn't shortchange). Kicked off with an "exhale" from Junius Paul's bass, the chill click of Marcus Gilmore's sticks and Makaya McCraven's brushes on snare, with Mike King on organ/piano, "Bible Study" could warm every holy house in the land, perchance convert the godless. Vocalist Manessah, with about 20 overdubs, convincingly and powerfully creates an entire choir, as Hill's flugel-like warmth inflates the airship.

"While rhythm moves the body, pretty melody and harmony pulls the heartstrings," Hill says. "I conceived 'Bible Study' as an almost meditative, never-ending round."

Despite the seductive, mellow message of Hill's horn, he has a fiery side, and his taste for complex hip-hop beats at base (courtesy of

Gilmore) act as counterweight to floaty lyricism. He began as a drummer in 4th grade, schooled in the hard swing of Basie and Ellington under Diane Ellis at Dixon Elementary. "I started out in the realm of straighthead jazz but learned that jazz, blues and gospel all come from the same root of swing and groove."

At the root of *Sweet Surrender* are sessions recorded by Steve Marek at Reelsounds in Skokie, Illinois, with a core trio of Paul, Gilmore and additional drummer Justin Brown. Then Hill cast his net to associates from Chicago (Amya Love, Matt Gold, Manessah), Los Angeles (SML's Jeremiah Chiu) and vocalist Zacchaeus Paul (originally from Atlanta), plus Brooklyn-based MCs Kumbayaa and Cisco Swank. The latter features on the edgy "Free #1B," which is propelled by Chiu's futuristic, gamelan-like modular synth rhythms, Gilmore's cooking beats and Paul's humming underbelly, putting in mind the compressed, urban intensity of Meshell Ndegeocello's conceptions. Hill seeks out eclectic MCs who've "taken the time to cultivate themselves" and recognized Kumbayaa ("Free #1A") possessed an unique style that was "unapologetically herself."

Though Hill can paint post-bop and smooth, he also allows himself the wah-wah infused scree of electric Miles and isn't loath to stomp on a hard-rock power riff, as on "Blues," which features Gold. "Matt and I traveled the world together with Makaya's group, and he's versed in all classic guitar sounds, any genre or time period."

Longtime collaborator and another Chicago musician, Juan Pastor, adds percussion on two of three recastings of the title track. "Juan is one of my colleagues from NIU; he's from Lima and a master of Peruvian rhythms, which added just what I was looking for for 'Sweet Surrender,'" says Hill.

Another guest star who makes a splash is alto saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins, who corkscrews audaciously through Hill's harmonized curtaining and Love's tidal sighs on "Water."

"The scriptures talk about water," says Hill. "Water connects with feelings and emotions in the spiritual realm, where fire represents passions and desires. Emmanuel is so fluid, he's one of the young monsters on the scene; he added his contribution at the Honey Jar studio in New York and knew exactly what to do."

A key word for Hill is "trust" and the way he organically brings his projects together relies on tried and trusted ingredients, a wealth of spice from fertile creative communities, principally those of Chicago and New York, where he abides in Harlem. With a stunning, instantly recognizable flow on his instrument, uncommonly classy, it's the full picture that Hill envisions. He came up steeped in the jazz jam. "Onstage in a musical situation there might be a stubborn character that kills the vibe and moment. The secret is to surrender to the music and let it take you where it wants to go. Understanding and vulnerability are key. It's bigger than just you." —Michael Jackson



A Masakowski Family Affair

GUITARIST-COMPOSER-EDUCATOR STEVE

Masakowski has racked up an impressive list of credentials in his storied career. A Blue Note recording artist during the mid-'90s (releasing *What It Was* in 1994 and *Direct AXEcess* in 1995), he's been a member of the postmodern New Orleans juggernaut Astral Project since 1987 (the band just recorded its eighth album, *Secret Sky*, scheduled for a summer release). In 1991, he was hired as a full-time faculty member at the University of New Orleans by his mentor and former musical partner Ellis Marsalis and went on to replace the Marsalis patriarch as chair of jazz studies at UNO in 2004, a position he held until his retirement in 2022. He subsequently received the Lifetime Achievement Award in Music Education by OffBeat Magazine, a publication dedicated to New Orleans music and culture.

All those accolades aside, Masakowski is perhaps most proud of his collaboration with his wife, German concert pianist and visual artist Ulrike Antonie Sprenger, and their two offspring, Sasha and Martin, both UNO grads and one-time students of dear ol' Dad. Sasha, an accomplished singer, sonic explorer and charismatic performer with a gifted ear for layering harmonic vocals, has toured and recorded with trumpeter Nicholas Payton and has five recordings as a leader, including 2018's adventurous *Art Market* on Ropeadope Records and 2021's experimental electronic EP *Exist* by Tra\$h Magnolia, which she calls her "alter ego project."

Sasha's younger brother Martin, who remains in hometown New Orleans, is currently a first-call double bassist on the fertile Crescent City scene while also developing a reputation as a local luthier.

The Masakowskis have been a working fami-

ly band for a while now, with three recordings under their belt. Now comes *Two Worlds*, under the billing of Steve Masakowski Family & Friends. Produced by Sasha and featuring Honduran-born, New Orleans-based pianist Oscar Rossignoli, New Orleans-based saxophonist Rex Gregory and drummer extraordinaire Brian Blade, it's truly a family affair, with Ulrike pitching in the strikingly impressionist artwork for the album cover.

"I'm very happy with the record," said the Masakowski patriarch. "Sasha and Martin were really instrumental in helping push things along, because as I get lazier in my old age, I'm a bit lax about getting everything done. And it was also great to have our friends on it, especially Brian, who was a student of mine back when I was teaching at Loyola. And of course, he sounds amazing on this album."

Sasha heartily concurred: "What a magician Brian is! He's like a painter. It's like working with Picasso. He's just really special."

Sasha, whose gossamer voice often doubles her dad's fluid warm-toned guitar lines throughout *Two Worlds*, added, "Everyone thinks of my dad as being this like masterful technical guitar player. But to my mind, not only is he a great guitarist but he is a deep, deep songwriter. He has such an incredible way of composing tunes that I feel will become *Real Book* songs in the future, like his songs 'Sidewalk Strut' and 'Stepping Out.' They play those all the time at the Bayou Bar [located in the Pontchartrain Hotel in the Garden District], and I'm always seeing these Instagram videos of young musicians playing other Steve Masakowski songs."

Masakowski showcases his lyrical side on two lovely waltz-time originals, the hauntingly beau-

tiful title track and his evocative "Sweet Dreams," a tune he previously recorded on his 1991 album *Friends* with pianist Ellis Marsalis, bassist Bill Huntington, tenor saxophonist Rick Margitza and drummer Herlin Riley. Sasha's lyrics and ethereal vocals breathe new life into this old tune.

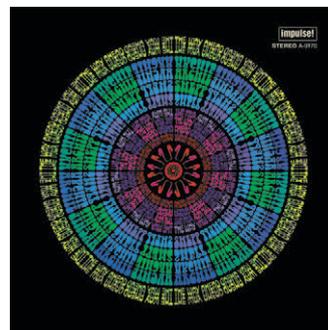
Elsewhere on *Two Worlds*, the seven-string-guitar ace breaks out his bop-fueled chops on the burning "Ya Know They Know," which has Blade flowing over the bar line in Elvin-esque fashion while also featuring potent solos from Gregory and Rossignoli. Sasha's flawlessly executed wordless vocals on this uptempo romp blend brilliant with Steve's guitar lines on the challenging head to this aggressively swinging piece.

Sasha's dreamy ballad "Origin Of Sin" includes an overdubbed choir of diaphanous vocals, while her catchy "Shine" showcases her sophisticated pop songwriting instincts, highlighted by an elegant guitar solo from Masakowski and a glistening piano solo from Rossignoli. Martin's Latin-tinged "Las Sonrisas del Mar" is buoyed by Sasha's stirring wordless vocals on the engaging melody and her uplifting overdubbed choir on the dynamic bridge. Sasha, who had penned lyrics for Kenny Wheeler's "Gentle Piece" on her 2007 debut, *Musical Playground*, also wrote new lyrics to James Black's "A Love Song," a luxurious ballad penned by the late, legendary New Orleans drummer who also appeared Masakowski's adventurous 1983 debut, *Mars*.

From their childhood days of sitting on the piano bench at home next to Daddy, learning to pick out notes of a scale and other invaluable ear training exercises, which he invariably disguised as games, the Masakowski siblings have inherited a great connection to music from both their gifted parents. As Masakowski recalled, "I would play chords and say, 'What's the ninth of this chord?' and sort of test them on certain things. You have to make it a game because I didn't want to make it like, 'Hey, I'm trying to teach you something.'"

The Masakowski siblings ended up taking their father's class when he was teaching at UNO. "I used to get annoyed because they'd always call me 'Dad' in front of all the other students. But I feel like the tables have turned now that they've gotten older, and I've got older, too. Now they're teaching me all this stuff, especially about the way people consume music these days and the way you have to do social media and all that kind of stuff. So I definitely have to get with it."

Meanwhile, Steve Masakowski Family & Friends (with special guest Blade) and Tra\$h Magnolia are both looking forward to a performance at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival on April 30. "It's nice to travel as a family," said the patriarch. "When we go on the road, if we travel to Europe or if we go play gigs around the States, I call it a 'playcation.' It's like a vacation, but we're playing, too." —Bill Milkowski



In honor of its 70th, Verve is releasing music by the legends, including Archie Shepp, Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald. The Shepp and Gillespie albums are exclusively available through the Verve Record Club.

Verve Celebrates at 70

WITH A CATALOG THAT BOASTS RECORDINGS by everyone from Dizzy Gillespie and Stan Getz to Diana Krall and Jon Batiste, Verve Records is celebrating its 70th anniversary by taking a year-long victory lap. Whether it's special album releases, a Nina Simone remix project or a very special one-time performance in New York's Central Park, the venerated label founded by jazz impresario Norman Granz is celebrating in style.

"I think some people might say, 'Oh, it's not like it's your 50th. And it's not your 100th,'" said Jamie Krents, president and CEO of Verve Label Group. "But it's a really good opportunity to dig into the legacy of the label.

"And that's especially true with the way of the world and with social media," he added during an interview conducted in late December. "In many ways, the value of a record label is to be a storyteller for our artists and for our catalog.

"And I think part of it is we have an obligation to remind people it's the biggest jazz catalog. It's also one of the oldest, and it's one of the oldest American record labels that's still functioning and thriving and making new records. So we wanted to use the 70th as a moment to take stock of that, and we've been very deliberate about what we'll do."

Cautioning that he didn't want to sound like an infomercial, Krents highlighted the continued success of the label's vinyl series. There's Acoustic Sounds ("our audiophile quality series that we launched in 2020"), Verve Vault (which started last year as a mid-priced vinyl series) and the Verve Record Club, which also began last

year and offers monthly limited edition releases to subscribers.

The anniversary offers an opportunity to open the vault with special releases such as a 1960 recording of the Oscar Peterson Trio (with Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen) at Detroit's Baker's Keyboard Lounge. "That was supposed to be a live record for Verve that never came out," Krents revealed. "And now we have the chance to do it right. Dr Peterson's wife and his daughter, who are still living in Canada, are very onboard."

There's also a recording from a March 1957 Louis Armstrong concert at a high school auditorium in Illinois that will see the light of day sometime during the second half of this year. Captured at the start of the Civil Rights Movement, it features Pops at a time when he spoke out against Federal policies, Krents pointed out.

"We're also going to do the Ella [Fitzgerald] Cole Porter songbook. It's the first Ella recording for Verve, and it makes total sense: It's an acknowledgement that this is Ella's house," he added. "Verve was founded as a label for the great Ella Fitzgerald. She couldn't get a record deal that was fair or that she wanted. So Norm Granz, her manager, started it as an independent label. In fact, we still have the plaque from when she and Norman first opened Verve in 1956 sitting in our lobby. And it's a continuum. An artist like Samara Joy is a very worthy new chapter to that level of jazz vocal greatness."

"I'm immensely grateful to have the backing of such a historic label, known for the release of great music by even greater artists," wrote Joy, in

an email. "Some of the first Verve recordings I listened to were *Pres And Teddy*, featuring Lester Young and Teddy Wilson; *The Genius Of Bud Powell*; *April In Paris* by Count Basie and His Orchestra; and Ella Fitzgerald's *Mack The Knife*."

Though the lineup hasn't been officially rolled out, Joy may be part of the Sept. 2 Verve SummerStage concert in Central Park. "We're not allowed to announce it right now," Krents said. "But it's going to be a lot of the linchpin artists of the current roster with some special guests."

The 70th anniversary will also see the return of the Verve Remixed series, which initially ran from 2002 to 2013. With tracks that eventually found heavy rotation in hotel lobbies and as public radio interstitial music, the compilations were co-produced by Dahlia Ambach Caplin, current senior vice president and head of A&R for the Verve Label Group.

Verve's influence unexpectedly showed up in early January at the SFJAZZ Center during a concert by Chris Botti, who released three albums on its Verve Forecast sibling label at the start of his career. The trumpeter referenced five of the greatest tenor saxophonists in jazz history, and three — Wayne Shorter, Michael Brecker and Joe Henderson — had recorded for the label. And joining Botti on the front line were two other Verve alumni, tenor saxophonist/multi-reedist Chris Potter and guitarist Mark Whitfield.

"We're just trying to put out and celebrate timeless music here, whether it was recorded in the '50s or it's being made now," Krents concluded.

—Yoshi Kato

Jazz Appreciation Month at 25

EVERY APRIL FOR THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY, something remarkable has happened across the United States and far beyond. Classrooms have swung, libraries have hummed, concert halls have pulsed and communities have gathered to celebrate an art form that has shaped — and continues to shape — our cultural DNA. Jazz Appreciation Month, or JAM, turns 25 this year. That milestone offers an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the music we love and to the people who make it.

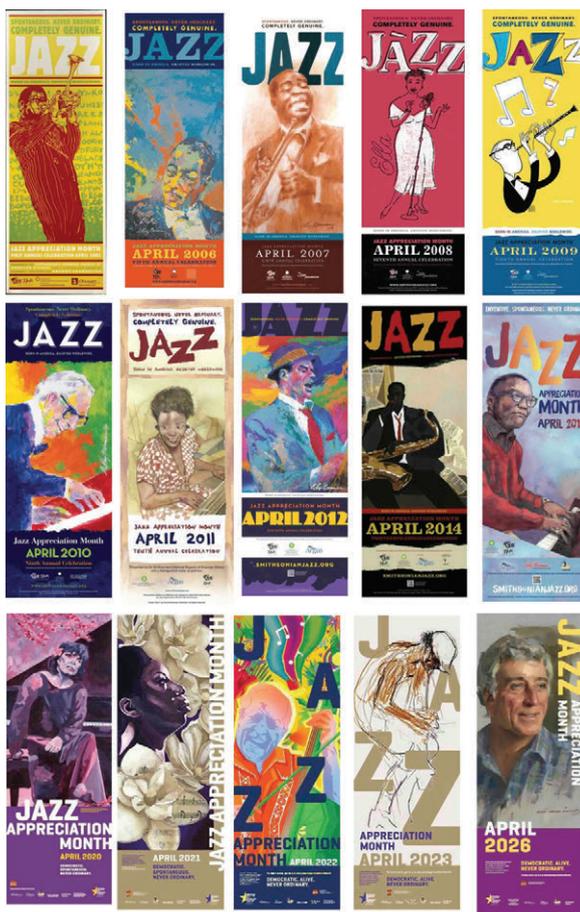
When JAM began, the idea was disarmingly simple: Dedicate one month each year to shining a national spotlight on jazz — its history, its living practitioners and its power to inspire. I first conceived the idea while serving as curator, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History brought it to life in 2002. We had the help of a coalition of educators, musicians, broadcasters, foundations and federal agencies. Quincy Jones helped announce it to the world. Soon after, Congress endorsed it. And before long, JAM was being celebrated in all 50 states and dozens of countries.

I saw JAM as a platform, a hook and a shared moment when the entire ecosystem of jazz could come together. The idea has taken on a life of its own — like a melody passed from player to player, transformed by each musician who takes it up. I often hear people mention “Jazz Month” as a given, unaware of who started it or when. And frankly, that is the greatest reward. The idea is out there, alive, accepted and expected.

From a curator's desk at the Smithsonian to far-flung corners of the globe, JAM grew because thousands of musicians, educators, presenters and fans decided to make it their own. The international embrace underscores a truth jazz musicians have always known: This music travels. It connects. It bridges. It invites.

April wasn't chosen at random. It sits in the sweet spot of the school year, when bands are ready to play at their best and teachers can build toward a culminating celebration. It also happens to be the birth month of Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Charles Mingus, Lionel Hampton, Tito Puente, Mongo Santamaria, Herbie Hancock and other giants — all offering hooks for programming. And because April is also National Poetry Month, it opens natural doors to jazz-and-poetry collaborations.

JAM has helped normalize the idea that jazz is worth a month-long spotlight, classroom time, civic proclamations and vivid posters on embassy walls. During one April, a New Jersey teacher led 250 elementary students in scat-singing ses-



sions and invited the mayor to hear the school jazz ensemble. A library in Wisconsin mounted a jazz-themed art exhibit. A jazz society in Lithuania organized folk-jazz concerts. A high school band in Washington, D.C., performed Ellington charts for a packed auditorium.

Twenty-five years in, JAM has become part of the cultural landscape — mentioned on *Saturday Night Live*, recognized by the Bush White House, embraced by cities like Dallas and Philadelphia, woven into the rhythms of schools, libraries and arts organizations nationwide. More than four million JAM posters have been distributed. Tens of millions of people have encountered JAM through radio, print and online media. Countless students have had their first meaningful encounter with jazz because someone chose to participate. International Jazz Day, declared in 2011, adds an April 30 capstone.

Yet the work is far from finished. Jazz still needs advocates. It still needs listeners. It still needs champions who will carry its values — creativity, diversity, freedom, empathy — into the public sphere.

Looking ahead, the question is whether we can deepen that norm into habit — whether we can turn awareness into action. Will April be the month when your city expects to hear more jazz in public places? When your school anticipates a

special project? When your club books an extra educational event or cross-generational gig? When you, personally, decide to introduce one new person to the music?

Jazz has always thrived on the tension between structure and spontaneity. Jazz Appreciation Month is the structure: a recurring form, 30 days long. What we pour into it — gigs, lessons, playlists, conversations, proclamations, late-night sessions — that's the improvisation.

Here's the invitation I put in every DownBeat reader's hands at JAM 25:

- Discover. Pick a musician or style you've avoided and give it honest listening time. (Not background music — attention music.)
- Support. Buy a ticket, tip the band, subscribe, teach, mentor, share a record with a younger listener. Donate an instrument to a school. Support your local radio station that plays jazz.
- Connect. Host a listening session, start a small campus jam club, program a library display or simply bring a friend to their first live jazz night. If you're a musician, donate a performance to a local school, or request funding for a concert from the Music Performance Trust Fund.
- Celebrate. Use the “April hook” to

pitch a story to your local newspaper or TV station. They are always looking for content, and Jazz Appreciation Month gives them a reason to cover you now.

For its part, the National Museum of American History, under curator Ashley Mayor, is presenting a rich array of programs. The 2026 JAM poster features Tony Bennett in his centennial year.

JAM's first 25 years have shown what's possible when a community comes together around a shared love. The next 25 years will depend on what each of us chooses to do with that love.

JAM's premise is that jazz grows one conversion at a time. Most people don't hate the music; they just don't know it. JAM exists to close that gap with joy — to turn strangers into listeners, listeners into advocates. At 25, JAM doesn't need applause; it needs participants. If you love this music, April is your invitation to step up, swing a little harder, and help someone not say, “I don't know jazz,” but instead, “I didn't know what I was missing!”

—John Edward Hasse

John Edward Hasse is curator emeritus for the Smithsonian and the creator of Jazz Appreciation Month. For more information and ideas about how to celebrate JAM25, visit shorturl.at/OLjVJ or write mayora@si.edu.





FLEA FINDS HIS JAZZ THING

BY JOSEF WOODARD

PHOTOS BY GUS VAN SANT

In the relatively small pantheon of certifiable rock stars venturing into the intersection of pop music and jazz, the population grows by one this season with the arrival of the artist known as Flea.

The famed bassist and co-founder of the funkified, hard-rocking band Red Hot Chili Peppers is releasing a passion project and his first full solo album, *Honora*, a mostly instrumental and variously jazz-colored project showcasing work on his original instrument, the trumpet.

Other celebrity musicians have tilled the rock-jazz soil before Flea, including the international pop star Sting, whose first band as a solo artist included saxo-

phonist Branford Marsalis, keyboardist Kenny Kirkland, drummer Omar Hakim, bassist Darryl Jones and others. British avant-garde rocker David Bowie's revelatory final album *Blackstar* featured saxophonist/flutist Donny McCaslin, drummer Mark Guiliana, guitarist Ben Monder, bassist Tim Lefebyre and keyboardist Jason Lindner. Jazz — and jazz attitude — has long been a key ingredient in Steely Dan's ethos, and Wilco guitarist Nels Cline comes to the gig steeped in jazz culture.

"Cerebral and academic thought is a different way to approach music," Flea says of his continuing dive into jazz. "I've always relied on emotion and intuition and physicality."



In the case of Flea, born Michael Peter Balzary in Australia in 1962 but rooted in Los Angeles since his teen years, *Honora* is at least in part a homecoming journey. The driving concept was not to adorn his existing persona with jazz attributes and atmospheres, but to create a new entity, to expand his creative universe while also harkening directly back to the source of his half-century-long musical adventure.

The album's distinctive, diversified song set includes a cameo from Radiohead's Thom Yorke on "Traffic Lights" and a touching vocal by Nick Cave on a fresh take on Jimmy Webb's masterpiece "Wichita Lineman." Flea's trumpet work comes in different shades

and effects, on the ambient "Fraild," the Ornette Coleman-esque "Morning Cry" and a sly electrified spin on "Willow Weep For Me."

Among his allies are producer/saxophonist Josh Johnson, drummer Deantoni Parks, guitarist Jeff Parker and bassist Anna Butters. Veteran Los Angeles saxophonist Ricky Washington — father of Kamasi Washington, and a mentor for Flea's late-life dive into jazz studies — appears as flutist on "A Plea." The album-closing "Free As I Want To Be" is a mantra-adorned jazz-swamp jam space featuring spicy solo bits from Parker and Flea's FX-treated trumpet, with psychedelia and a melodic detour in the mix.

Interestingly, Flea's boutique specialty "jazz" album follows a more typically high-profile outing. *Honora* has its roots in the reflective aftermath of a two-year tour by the Chili Peppers traveling the world and playing arenas and other massive venues following the release of their two latest albums, *Unlimited Love* and *Return Of The Dream Canteen*, both dropping in 2022. As an indication of the band's continuing global reach, beyond the enduring power of such '90s hits as "Californication," "Give It Away," "Otherside" and "Under The Bridge," the hit "Black Summer" had logged 158 million hits on Spotify at press time.

The hit count will most likely be vastly humbler for *Honora*, but the emotional and artistic stakes run deep. As Flea explained in an interview with *DownBeat*, "I wanted to be a jazz trumpet player when I was a kid. When I got into high school and started playing bass in a rock band, that was that. [This album] was an opportunity for me to really be myself, trust my intuition and leave a lot up to chance — which is the thing with jazz, to follow improvisational messages.

"I didn't really know what was gonna happen, which was really exciting. I just got together with everybody and we were just playing. I had these pretty loose structures. Some were more arranged than others. But we left things pretty open and loose and got together with a group of musicians to whom I could say, 'Hey, be yourself. Do your thing. Go for it.' They were all supportive and sensitive, and wanted to help me realize my vision. It just felt so good, emotionally, for me to surrender to the process and get up every day and be diligent about it. I'm so happy I got to do it."

DownBeat checked in for a Zoom interview from Australia, Flea's country of origin. He was in Sydney for a poignantly personal reason: scattering his recently deceased father's ashes in a favorite fishing spot. He appeared, shirtless and brandishing tattoos, with his famous gap-toothed smile matched by a strategic gap in his moustache, chomping on watermelon and speaking with openness and sincerity about the latest chapter in a storied musical life.

He was at home, in an intimate sense. Similarly, his new album finds him in a duality: retracing steps to a musical "home" while exploring new vistas.

Josef Woodard: *One of the reasons I like this album is because I don't know what to call it, or how to categorize it. It's not a jazz record, per se, and yet it is. Is that ambiguity a sign of success, in your mind?*

Flea: Yeah. I originally set out to make a trumpet record, and I was working at home in the beginning. I was playing bass, and I'd have a drum machine and then blow trumpet on it. I

was happy to just do it like that. That was my trumpet album plan. One frustrating thing is that I've gotten so much better since then as I continue to practice and study. I'm relentless. I might drive my wife crazy [laughs] for hours.

But then I got together with Josh Johnson, who I knew as a saxophone player because he had played on a Chili Pepper record. I was listening to some other records that he was on,

to play till the last day of mastering the mixed record. It awakened a part of me, in a way. I didn't know what it would be, or if it would be, if it would be something of substance and quality or just me having fun or tripping out and going to make something. But I feel very happy with the result and feel like I can touch people's hearts with music. That's all I care about. Especially as I get older, what else is there?

'To remain a student helps you keep things in perspective.'

in particular this Meshell Ndegeocello record *The Omnichord Real Book*, which I really loved. I'd just been listening to that record without even realizing that he had produced it. When I got together with him, he was saying, "With the music that you're writing and what you're doing, it's not just a trumpet record. I feel what you're doing is open to lots of other feelings." It was really good advice.

It's only recently that I've really been studying that stuff in earnest, and it's difficult for me. Cerebral and academic thought is a different way to approach music. I've always relied on emotion and intuition and physicality. For instance, the way I dance makes me play the way that I play. I've spent a lot of time just chilling with my buddy, you know, hanging out and smoking weed and pounding on the bass.

So making the record was, first off, just an opportunity for me to really express myself. And when I listen to the record, it might be difficult to categorize in terms of the terms we use: jazz, rock, fusion, all these things. It's just me. We all have this infinite source of feeling and emotion and longing to connect with the divine and what we find beautiful and what makes us happy. It's a lifetime mission.

Doing this record opened that up for me. I was cool with this record sucking. I didn't even know what I would do with it. I just wanted to go make it. I didn't know if I would fail or what it would be, but when I was in the studio, it just felt so great. It was great playing with Anna Butterss, the bass player, and the drummer Deantoni Parks — just rocking with everybody, with all of us in the room playing.

It felt like I was released into another world of expression. Being able to do that was very meaningful for me, all the way through, from the first second of sitting down and starting

I'm just doing my best, man, and I wanna continue to do the work inside myself, as a human being, with a diligent focus every day. I could tell you how hard I'm just working on things, like "OK, let's do these Coltrane alt chord riffs in every key." [laughs] It challenges my brain.

Woodard: "Giant Steps" changes?

Flea: Yes. I will go hard and little synapses will be firing, and then I have to sit down and take a breather. I meet these young jazz kids who learned all that when they were kids and went to music school. I was talking to one musician who I really admire. Her name is Mei Semones. She's a young girl, and she's beautiful. She made this fine EP called *The Kabutomushi*, and she just put out a new record called *Animaru*. She's a guitar player and a singer, and a songwriter and a jazz kid.

I did a thing in New York where I played my record for a bunch of people, and she came. She said, "Your record sounds great." And I said, "Thank you. I'm working really hard on my theory and, you know, learning all this jazz." She knows it inside out. She said, "You are taking the journey from coming from a place of all feeling into the academic part of music, but for someone like me, I'm taking a journey from all the academic stuff into a place of emotion and intuition, and that's really hard."

I had never thought about that. As humans, we all suffer. We are emotional people. We're human. We're lonely, we're scared, we're angry, we're frustrated. We make mistakes. We pay for 'em. All of it. Something I really thought about when making this record was my yearning to get better and growing up.

Woodard: Where did jazz enter your life?

Flea: I had a stepdad who was a jazz musician, and I always felt that when I was playing rock music, he looked down on it. It was kind of this old-school jazz thing. He grew up learning all bop in the '40s, and he was a serious bop guy. He really frowned upon rock music. It was like, "What are you doing with your haircuts and bell bottoms?" [laughs] I've always been sort of insecure about it, feeling like I'm tricking people. I can't play "Donna Lee." But it felt great making this record and working with everyone else playing on the record, all very accomplished jazz musicians who studied as well.

I think it was Jeff Parker who said it's like we're all climbing this mountain of music. It doesn't matter where you are, what side of the mountain. It's as beautiful at the bottom as it is at the top. It's this journey that we take, and it's a lifelong journey. That's a beautiful way to look at it — it's all relative.

I just love music so much, man. I love the work. I love connecting. I love playing with other musicians. I love sitting by myself in a room. Now, I play trumpet and bass and practice every day. Every day, I look forward to it. I see the instrument sitting there and just wanna get to work. We're so lucky to have that.

Woodard: This album serves as a kind of portal into a new realm for you, but it also reaches back to your very musical beginnings as a trumpeter. Do you have a sense of, after so many years, picking up where you left off?

Flea: Yeah, it does. It's something that's always been with me in terms of playing the trumpet. I picked it up once in a while and remembered that the trumpet is so demanding. I go on a holiday, and don't play bass for a week. I'll pick it up, and it'll feel a little dorky or whatever, but for an hour or two, and I'm back on there banging away. If you don't play trumpet for a week, you're sunk. You've gotta play every day. You can take a day off once in a blue moon, maybe every couple of weeks, and it actually might be good to rest the chops a little. But it's so demanding.

So I would pick it up and play it a little bit, kind of get it going and play the same stuff I played in junior high, "Billy's Bounce," whatever. And then I wouldn't play it for maybe a year, two years, three years. When I decided I was really gonna do it, it was only three years ago. I'd always wanted to make a record like this, just become more adept on my horn. No, I'll never be as good as Clifford Brown or Lee Morgan, but I'm gonna really give it my best shot to be a good trumpet player and to find my own voice. I feel that I found my own voice as a bass player, a way of doing it that was specifically me. I just wanted to find a voice [on trumpet], and I'm still working on that — something that feels like my nervous system and my relationship to the world.



"Life is short, music is big, and there are just not enough days in a lifetime to do everything you wanna do," Flea says. "So I'm at it, man."

So it is something that's always been with me and is coming back, you know, full circle to doing it and realizing a childhood dream. It has become an integral part of my life that I intend on doing every day till I die. It makes me happy.

Woodard: *The first single from the album was "A Plea," which in a way, pulls together so many strands of what you're talking about. Jazz elements meet punk and funk energies and social commentary. Also, it features Rickey Washington on alto flute. He was an important link to your jazz studies, wasn't he?*

Flea: Yeah, he was. I'm 63 and pretty much all of my life, I've been playing music and surfing. I was playing trumpet in seventh grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, when I switched over to bass. I've never really had a teacher. I always just played with my friends. In school, I played in the school band, and I had one trumpet teacher for a little while in like 10th grade. I won

an award to get free trumpet lessons. My parents couldn't afford to do that, but I did it for a few months, you know, and I really liked the teacher, but I was too wild, man. I was out in the street running around, doing drugs, getting in trouble.

But with Rickey, it was like the first time I had a serious teacher. He wouldn't take any money. I'd go over his house and sit in his room and he would say, "OK, this is a ii-V progression. There are ways that you can articulate this." I was always so intimidated when I would look at chords on a paper and a bebop song. I know it sounds like the simplest thing, ii-V, but I didn't know about it. I kind of intuitively knew it. We obviously play chords in the Chili Peppers, but we just play what feels good.

I studied with Rickey when I'd have breaks on tour. I'd go over to his house and sit with him and it was really helpful. Lately, I've been studying with another guy, a sax-

ophone player named Ben Clatworthy. Ben's great and has been teaching me some stuff. I'm getting better at it, day by day. Some days I get frustrated, and then one day I'll be playing something and think, "OK, I'm a little bit better than yesterday." Or I'll be incorporating that thing that seemed like the most complicated math in the world, and now I'm incorporating it into trying to play something beautiful. It's becoming a part of me and how I speak as a musician.

The humility of being a student is crucial to being a good musician, to being a good human being. When we stop being a student, we become an old fart.

Woodard: *For a high-profile musician in your position, it could be easy to coast at this point and just rest on your laurels. You have such a huge songbook and a strong reputation. But is it important for you to keep venturing into new terrain, and challenging yourself, as you have on Honora?*

Flea: Well, in different ways, I've always been a student, but this is a more advanced particular study that I'm focused on. But I always tried to stay a student. The Chili Peppers are obviously a really popular rock band. We play stadiums and arenas all over the world. People get really happy when we play songs and entertain people. There's a lot of adulation and all that. It can play a trick on you. And it's not like the music isn't always an earnest expression. I've played "Under The Bridge" 10 million times, but if I play it, I wanna honor it. I wanna play it as beautiful as I can and find the beauty in the subtle interpretation of the music. It means a lot to me.

But [fame] can trick you. To remain a student helps you keep things in perspective. I honor and treasure every part of my development as a musician and for everything that we're able to do in the Chili Peppers. But I also want to grow in this other way as well. One thing informs the next, like all my years of being on the road, like laying down some dirty grooves really inform my approach to being a jazz trumpet player, just a trumpet player. The stuff that I'm studying as a jazz trumpet player really goes to my bass playing and is giving me a wider, bigger picture as a bass player.

The Chili Peppers have been composing songs lately, and as I sit down at the piano or the bass to write stuff for the Chili Peppers, the jazz studies that I'm involved in really inform that and help me get a bigger picture of music and how it works. Music's infinite. Life is short, music is big, and there are just not enough days in a lifetime to do everything you wanna do. So I'm at it, man.

Woodard: *Will there be sequels to this album?*

Flea: Yeah. I don't know if I'm supposed to say it or not, but ... [laughs].

DB

DIMENSION SHIFTER

YVETTE YOUNG

PHOTO BY ELI CHAVEZ
@ELIASPHOTOGRAPHYCO

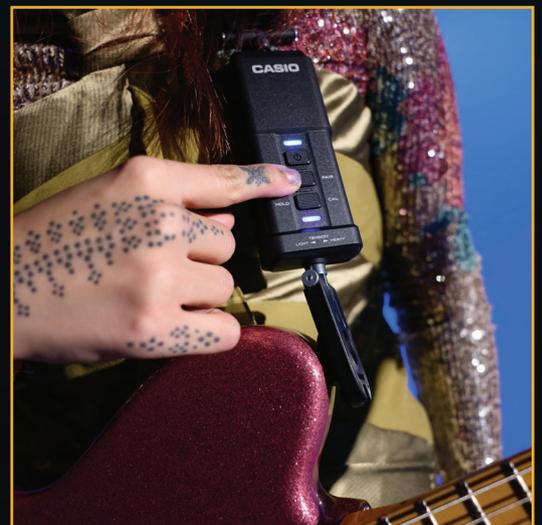


STRAP IN TO A NEW DIMENSION OF EXPRESSIVE CONTROL.

DIMENSION SHIFTER is an expression controller that easily attaches to your guitar strap, using your natural motion to wirelessly control your favorite effects. It breathes new life into your playing with intuitive, precise control.

Pull the neck downwards to control volume swells, delay depth, wah sweeps, or anything else you can imagine. You can even use DIMENSION SHIFTER as a switch, changing presets or toggling effects on and off with no stomping required.

- Lightweight strap-mounted transmitter runs for 20 hours on 2xAAA batteries
- Compact receiver pedal connects to any effect's EXP input
- Instant, automatic Bluetooth pairing with ~30 feet of wireless range
- HOLD button & footswitch for quick deactivation, or for freezing a sweet spot
- Adjustable tension to suit your playing style and guitar weight



CASIO

Brian Lynch & Charles McPherson

COMPOSING, SAMARA & THE BARRY HARRIS CONNECTION

By Ted Panken Photos by Leiko Napoli

Editor's Note: In the fall of 2024, trumpeter Brian Lynch hired writer Ted Panken to draft the booklet, vinyl notes and PR materials for his first-ever collaboration with alto saxophonist Charles McPherson — that after 44 years of friendship between the two musicians. The album, *Torch Bearers*, dropped on Lynch's *Hollistic MusicWorks* imprint. Panken delivers an insider's look into the project.

At 6 p.m. on Nov. 20, after embedding at an efficient Midtown Manhattan rehearsal space, two morning commutes from Lynch's downtown loft to Van Gelder Studio in New Jersey, and a just-concluded two-day, 17-hour recording session that generated nine tracks, including three new tunes by Lynch and McPherson, I was interviewing them in the VGS control room for video vignettes that now constitute the pre-release ballyhoo. Substituting for McPherson 20 minutes later was Samara Joy, who'd spent the afternoon singing her orig-

inal lyrics for a bespoke tune each by the co-leaders. A few months earlier, on the same premises, Lynch had served as Joy's co-producer on *Portrait*, her 2026 Grammy-winning album, for which she conjured narratives in response to Charles Mingus' "Reincarnation Of A Lovebird" (McPherson played on the original 1960 recording), which opens with her breathtakingly vertiginous a cappella vocalese prelude and Barry Harris' ruminative ballad "Now And Then" from Harris' obscure 1972 trio album, *Variations*.

"I love compositions by jazz musicians," Joy





"I love compositions by jazz musicians," says vocalist Samara Joy. "There's a different touch, a different foundation." She put lyrics to a song each from Brian Lynch (right) and Charles McPherson for *Torch Bearers*.



said. "There's a different touch, a different foundation." McPherson's ballad "Joy Of Love," which evokes Mingusian and Ellington-Strayhorn vibrations, "sounded sad and reflective, so I went in the opposite direction of the title, thinking how it feels to lose the love of your life." For Lynch's "Pursuit Of A Dream," with "a vastly different harmonic structure, form and feel," she "thought about a dream of sharing love with someone I haven't met yet in a way that's so close, it feels almost real. The melody was challenging, to say the least, but so melodic and beautiful, and the harmony ..." She paused. "Not all songs written for vocalists sound like that. It's beautiful to be able to write a new story on songs like these."

A flight delay at the end of a European tour had kept Joy from the rehearsal, so neither elder saw the lyrics until she walked into the studio at noon. In an email 16 months later, she recalled initially "overthinking, trying to find the perfect words to fit the story of the melody," and felt satisfied that "the lyrics meshed and complemented the songs" only after "spending time away from multiple rough drafts."

Both veterans expressed their delight with the end result. "Samara sings with tremendous conviction," McPherson said. "You hear her understanding of the language of the singers she's checked out, like Sarah Vaughan, and her gospel background. At the same time, you hear

Barry Harris' bebop influence. She's mixing all these languages the way Brian and I might do it. Everything is put in the pot and every nuance is manifest. She's a beautiful soul."

Joy wrote that interacting with Lynch — who self-produced his own Grammy-winning *Simpatico* (2006) and *The Omni-American Book Club* (2019) on Hollistic — "was a reminder that the process of making music requires full preparation as well as surrender to your creative instincts. 'Joy Of Love' had a clear roadmap, so we could have just 'read down' the tune. But while we were recording the song, Brian took a moment to express a spontaneous idea for how to end it. Several times during my album, he came up with a single phrase that completely changed everyone's perspective."

Her pathway to Lynch came from trumpeter Jason Charos, his former student and teaching assistant at Frost Conservatory of Music, "when I was looking for the perfect co-pilot, who could help steer the ship while still allowing us to be free in our interpretation and style." After a phone call and a coffee date, they started rehearsals. "We got right into it as if we'd worked together for years."

Like McPherson (born in 1939) and Lynch (born in 1956), Joy (born in 1999) had spent extensive time absorbing Barry Harris' charismatic pedagogy. "I spent six hours with him every Tuesday for a year-and-a-half, for \$15,"

she wrote. "Having the opportunity to see the individuality of his style, his unique approach to the piano, to be on a first-name basis with him and to put lyrics to compositions he wrote way before I was born was a beautiful experience. Singing his songs shows that his music is alive."

"I was one of Barry's first students, while Samara was among the last," McPherson observed, suggesting that the common through line engendered creative sparks. He was a 14-year-old Charlie Parker acolyte already doing small gigs in his West Detroit neighborhood with trumpeter Lonnie Hillyer in 1953 when he met Harris at the Bluebird Lounge, a corner bar with a major league music policy down the block from his house that featured Harris and Elvin Jones in the house rhythm section, fueling Motor City luminaries like Yusef Lateef, Thad Jones, Pepper Adams and Kenny Burrell.

"We'd stand outside to listen, but the owner let us sit in if we brought our parents," McPherson recalled on a January video call with Lynch. "Barry heard me and said, 'You need to learn your scales.'" He and Hillyer began to beeline to Harris' house after school "for lessons in harmony and theory that helped me understand what Bird was doing, so I could find my own notes and not copy his solos. Barry also imparted values of taste and

discretion — always try to be musically honest; use emotions along with analysis; technique is a means to facilitate your conception, not the end-all and be-all.”

Toward the end of 1959, after five years of immersive lessons, McPherson and Hillyer moved to New York. Not long thereafter, via Yusef Lateef’s introduction, Charles Mingus hired them to replace Eric Dolphy and Ted Curson. McPherson remained until 1972, developing his signature voice-like tone as he addressed Mingus’ demanding, novelis-

To be specific, Lynch was referencing his respective tenures with Silver (1982–’85) and the Jazz Messengers (1988–’90), when he began to claim his niche in the trumpet pantheon of hardcore jazz, while also assimilating the codes of clave on gigs with salsa icon Hector Lavoe and sui generis maestro Eddie Palmieri, who regarded Lynch as more a colleague than a sideman during their two-decade association.

“I immediately recognized Brian’s talent and how he might grow,” McPherson recalled. “Good ears, very musical, played the horn well,

forestalling” his efforts “to find an opportunity for us to do something together,” the stars had aligned to facilitate a document of their ongoing conversation. “Being around Samara and the younger people in her band who are in sync with searching for the meaningfulness in music that Charles represents — and Samara’s connection with Barry — made me think there might be an opportunity.”

“It’s a well-thought-out, well-rounded record, with a beautiful singer,” McPherson said. “People who like bebop or something more stretched out harmonically and rhythmically would like it.” He referred to Lynch’s “Luck Of The Draw,” which toggles between dark Eddie Palmieri-esque chords phrased in clave to an affirmatively swinging, Silver-esque refrain, and “Kyle’s Dilemma,” a simmering swinger booby-trapped with below-the-surface gnarly chords, key changes, sly melodies, insinuating hooks, slick turnarounds and harmonic curveballs. “Brian’s a great writer,” he said. “His tunes are challenging, but it all makes sense.”

“Thinking of my own influences as a jazz tune writer, it depends on the style, of course, but I’ve got to give it to Tadd Dameron, Kenny Dorham, Benny Golson and Charles,” Lynch riposted. “His pieces contain lots of drama and feeling, they tell a story, and they’re always fun. They’re challenging, yet not abstruse.” That remark nails “The Juggler,” a medium-up 12-bar blues with Monkish octave leaps that catapult McPherson into a turbulent, compact solo that profoundly refracts Bird’s essence, provoking Lynch to signify upon the Jazz Messengers trumpet lineage with the precision and ferocity that makes his voice stand out among contemporary trumpet practitioners.

Lynch and McPherson played with equivalent focus, fire and invention throughout multiple takes of each instrumental piece. “I’m happy with how the music sounds,” Lynch said. “I’m even happy with myself! It was inspiring to hear Charles play so freely.”

McPherson summed up with a declamation on the “elusive art of writing.” “Good writing has to have some dissonance, melodicism and venturesomeness. It needs something novel and still cover all the musical bases, and also cohesive melodic content that somebody would actually remember after they left the date. You need a balance. Therein lies the four-dimensional chess.”

“I’ve had the opportunity to play a lot of your music over the years,” Lynch said. “‘Horizons’ can still kick my ass.”

“Me, too,” McPherson replied. “It definitely has some challenges. Good writing has no date on it.”

“Like Jimmy Heath said, what was good, is good,” Lynch cosigned.

“That’s right,” McPherson responded, ending the discussion — at least for the moment. **DB**

‘We’ve always had a spiritual symbiosis.’ —McPherson on Lynch

tic corpus. His 14 leader albums between 1964 and 1978 (seven with Harris) for Prestige, Mainstream and Xanadu, almost all high quality, trace his evolution to grandmaster status. Then McPherson relocated to La Jolla, California, to keep an eye on his aging mother.

Two years later, Lynch, who’d just graduated from Milwaukee’s Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, decided to preface his New York transition with a sojourn to San Diego, where his parents had moved in 1975. He’d heard McPherson’s albums with Harris as he learned bebop nuances on engagements with local eminences like Buddy Montgomery and guitarist Manty Ellis and “came under Barry’s spell” on visits to his workshops during several preparatory New York fieldwork expeditions.

“Learning the principles of the things you’re already playing was a revelation,” Lynch said. “You can systematically practice in a way that lets you correct your aim mid-flight, because you aren’t playing anyone’s licks.”

On Lynch’s first Sunday in San Diego, he visited several local jam sessions and immediately encountered McPherson and pianist Rob Schneiderman (who shares the piano chair with Orrin Evans on *Torch Bearers*). In short order, he was hanging out at McPherson’s house, playing tunes, and listening to and discussing his choicest cuts — Sonny Stitt and Bud Powell playing “All God’s Children” in 1949; Stitt and Sonny Rollins tenor-battling on “The Eternal Triangle” in 1957. “Charles started using me on gigs along with Rob three nights a week,” Lynch said. “Playing with him that often on the bandstand — and all the discussions — was as significant an apprenticeship as I had later with Horace Silver or Art Blakey.”

and you could hear his connection to the past. Brian continually added contemporary harmonic and rhythmic information to bebop language, mixed it up, and grew into the master he is today. Bebop is a jumping-off point. Everyone Brian was listening to then — McCoy Tyner, Coltrane, Woody Shaw — developed whatever they developed because they knew the bebop language so thoroughly.”

He added: “We’ve always had a spiritual symbiosis, too. Through the years, I played gigs where Brian’s mom was singing. I knew his dad. When he started dealing with their aging, we’d talk about it, because I’d been through it with my mom. We like to talk about quantum mechanics, because we know it’s frozen music. We know that everything is connected, that music is a metaphor for life, that music is the Esperanto, the nonverbal language of the soul.”

As if to prove the point, the old friends covered what Lynch called “the *real* fine points of music” — overcoming the stress element of a record date; the psychology of consciousness in relation to entering the alpha state when improvising; the contrasting rhythmic and phrasing templates of Charlie Parker and Sonny Stitt; the nuances of playing bass quarter notes “like a heartbeat” in 4/4 meter; the blues elements and different surprising root movements that can be deployed when playing “I Got Rhythm”; the artistry of Lonnie Hillyer; and “the many styles that can be satisfied under the umbrella we call bebop.”

“In 1980, I’d never heard anyone speak that way,” Lynch said. “We can talk about this stuff for years.” He expressed delight that, after years of “one thing or another always



The latest incarnation of Mammal Hands features, from left, Jordan Smart, Nick Smart and Rob Turner.

NEW DIRECTIONS WITH MAMMAL HANDS

BY AMMAR KALIA PHOTO BY TANIA BLANCO

After a decade of touring and five albums into their career, British trio Mammal Hands reached a recent crossroads. Developing a loyal European fanbase for their hypnotic drum, saxophone and piano improvisations, brothers Nick and Jordan Smart and Jesse Barrett became part of a fusion-led and electronic-influenced British jazz scene alongside the likes of Portico Quartet and GoGo Penguin.

Yet, in spring 2024, drummer Jesse abruptly decided to leave the group, throwing their future into disarray.

“We were in shock for a few days,” saxophonist Jordan Smart says. “We had to cancel some shows but then had another run a few months later that we didn’t want to let audiences down for. Once I got my head around it, we thought of who might work to sit in and Rob Turner was the obvious, immediate choice. I couldn’t think of a better person to ask.”

Turner had been a founding member of Manchester-based group GoGo Penguin and a friend of the band since they first started out in 2013. The two groups were signed to the same label, trumpeter Matthew Halsall’s Gondwana Records, and spent the early years cutting their teeth on the road across the U.K. “We’ve known Rob since the beginning and first met him at one of our earliest live shows at Mostly Jazz Festival in 2013 when we were all on the same bill,” pianist Nick Smart says. “There was a mutual recognition that both our groups were exploring similar territory from different angles, and then we began touring together.”

Following Turner’s departure from GoGo Penguin in 2021, he delved deeper into his elec-

tronic influences with the synth and sample-based duo Elf Traps, but he was looking for a new outlet to express his jazz training and improvisatory background. “I had a lot of music queued up, and when I heard from Nick and Jordan, it was like opening a big suitcase that had been under the bed for a year,” he laughs. “Towards the end, GoGo Penguin had become more pop-oriented but the openness and free exploration of Mammal Hands is exactly what I was looking for.”

The brothers initially approached Turner with an offer to join the group for the remaining shows on their tour but after meeting to rehearse, their relationship soon became permanent. “I remember telling Rob he should probably say no to the gig because it was crazy to learn all our material within a month before playing these shows,” Jordan says. “But he said yes, thankfully, and as soon as we started playing together, it was so natural and easy. When Jesse left it forced a self-reflection on what the core of this band was. We had to rediscover the soul of our music and Rob has transformed it into something that continues our legacy as well as pushes it forward.”

The result of this journeying process is the group’s sixth album, *Circadia*. Named after the cyclical bodily rhythm, the nine-track

record isn’t just a new beginning, but also a sonic manifestation of that cycle: a series of patterns being repeated and renewed to form a fresh sound that harkens back as well as edging them forward.

Among the album’s highlights are the breakbeat freneticism and trance-inducing piano melodies of opener “Window To Your World,” which references the classic earworming rhythmic and harmonic intricacies of fan-favorite tracks like 2014’s “Kandaiki,” while ensuing tracks like “Paper Boats” push this inherent complexity to new levels, playing through a polyrhythmic groove that skitters along Nick’s muscular piano phrasing. “Submerge” hints at fresh territory with Jordan’s Colin Stetson-style sussurating saxophone lines and Nick’s heavy addition of a synth bass layering a sense of menacing doom, while “Alia’s Abandon” takes listeners on a three-part journey through interweaving piano-and-saxophone melody to a full-throated, free-jazz-influenced cacophony of soaring soloing from Jordan before ending on the cyclical piano phrasing and cymbal swells of its closing movement.

“During that initial tour with Rob, we spent a lot of time on the road just connecting and

having conversations about music and the things that are important to us,” Nick says. “It helped us build our relationship and once we had finished the tour, we decided to concentrate on making this new record together.”

Spending seven-hour days shedding at East London’s Briggs Building to hone their new ideas, the trio began coming up with a central concept that would inform *Circadia*, as well as their other music. “We got really interested in small pockets of ideas that each of us would bring in and we would see how far we could go with just zooming into tiny details that we could repeat over and over again,” Jordan says. “It was an exercise in exploring an idea beyond the point of comfort, until a new essence becomes clear.”

Both Nick and Jordan honed their sense of musical telepathy while growing up with music enthusiast parents in the town of Norwich. Initially learning electric guitar and drum kit, the brothers began busking from the age of 14, with Jordan moving onto saxophone and Nick playing classical guitar.

“There were no rules when we busked and that open format is how we first learned to react to each other and perform,” Nick says. “One weekend we saw Jesse busk with a group of his friends nearby. We had a proper gig booked but no drummer, so we invited him to play with us and as soon as we did that show, I realized I should move to piano to open up more of a soundworld. That was how Mammal Hands began.”

Choosing to tour and record rather than attend a jazz conservatory, the group learned on the road. It’s an instinctive sensibility, they believe, that continues to shape their creativity today. “A lot of our scene came up busking, like Portico Quartet did in London, and that means our music can sound a bit more disparate and weird, like an accident waiting to happen,” Jordan laughs. “It also means we have no hierarchy in what we play: We’re happy to play simple or complicated things, since it’s all about what makes us feel something and what is interesting. We don’t want to be boxed into the confines of a single genre.”

That open-ended approach is currently being pushed as the renewed trio is hard at work writing another album to record later in the year. “So much of our process as a band is about listening, which means we’re always absorbing new influences,” Turner says. “The next record is going to be informed by reactions to our current live show and things like how Jordan is using a modular system to process the piano with delay and granular textural sound effects. That’s opening up an interesting area, while we also want to push our electronic influences further. We want to have more time in the studio and less finished material so we can have the space to just play.” **DB**

Amalie Dahl’s Dafnie EXTENDED

BY PETER MARGASAK PHOTO BY CRISTINA MARX

Live At Moldejazz (Sonic Transmissions), the impressive, assured and heady debut album from Danish reedist and composer Amalie Dahl’s 12-member Dafnie EXTENDED, conveys a maturity one might not expect from a 30-year old.

It’s even more difficult to square that her passion for jazz and improvised music didn’t fully take root until she was already in her early 20s.

She grew up surrounded by music: Her parents were members of their local chamber choir and often hosted rehearsals in their home in a tiny village not far from Ringsted. Dahl began to play the saxophone when she was just 7. As a youth she was part of an informal band with older siblings, playing Danish psalms, local folk tunes and the stray jazz standard, but it would take years before she developed an artistic sensibility of her own.

In fact, it wasn’t until she enrolled in Norway’s prestigious Trondheim Conservatory in 2018 that she truly found her path with jazz and improvised music. Dahl has rapidly emerged as one of the most creative and prolific forces in jazz over the last four years, leading multiple bands, prodigiously working as a side-person, and revealing a broad aesthetic range.

“I always had the feeling that I wanted to do something creative,” she says of her childhood. “I thought about theater or being a writer, but I never thought about music when I was a kid, even though I played the saxophone.”

Dahl never stopped playing music all through school, and she began to form a connection to vintage mainstream jazz like Charlie Parker, Sonny Stitt and Cannonball Adderley in her pre-conservatory years in Denmark. In 2015, she enrolled at the Fridhems folkhögskola in Sweden, where music began to overtake her pursuit of biotechnology. But she says things were blown wide open once she arrived in Trondheim.

“Trondheim was the first proper city I lived in,” she says. “The music there has a certain sound, or quality, usually manifested by the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra. My interest in free-jazz had just started, so I just went to a lot of concerts, almost every day.” But perhaps the most impactful experience in Trondheim were daily improv sessions she participated in with drummer Emma Lönnestål, whom she met at the Fridhems folkhögskola. “She had played



“Music is something to share and I have always felt that you cannot sit and wait for things to happen,” says Amalie Dahl of the frenetic pace she has maintained in recent years.

a lot more free improvisation than me, so I was asking, ‘Can we do this? Can you show me how? How is this working?’ It was really a safe space for me, just playing with her inside this tiny, tiny rehearsal room.”

By now the saxophonist was on a tear, immersing herself in the local scene and conducting feverish research. One of her Trondheim teachers was fellow Danish saxophonist Mette Rasmussen, who introduced her to the music of Anthony Braxton and Marion Brown. While the COVID pandemic was a challenge for students, Dahl took her sudden downtime as an opportunity to lead her first band, a quintet she named Dafnie. The group’s eponymous 2022 album captured a much more aggressive attack from Dahl, but even then the quintet was couching its most adventurous improvisations within cogent, multipartite compositions, carefully calibrating each solo to emanate naturally from her writing.

By the time Dafnie recorded its stunning second album *Står op Med Solen* in 2023, the band had plenty of gigs under its belt and Dahl had a much deeper point of view. All of

it was situated within a post-bop landscape more concerned with mood, melody and feeling than jazz orthodoxy. She also released *Memories*, her first solo saxophone album that deftly captured her rigor and structural savvy as a free improviser.

That practice has evolved through several projects, including a trio with bassist Henrik Sandstad Dalen and drummer Jomar Jeppsson Søvik, and the quartet Building/Breaking Habits, which navigates the line between spontaneity and written material on its searing 2025 eponymous debut album. Yet another side of her work surfaces in Treen, an improvising trio with a razor-sharp focus on timbre and texture through drone-like excursions.

Still, Dahl's innate curiosity and drive keeps opening up new vistas, including a growing connection with the veteran Swedish pianist Lisa Ullén, who has been playing a new set of music with Dafnie, resulting in a dazzling live album coming in the fall on the Trost label.

Ullén is also part of Dafnie EXTENDED, an endeavor proposed by the Belgian concert presenter Koen Vandenhoudt after the saxophonist had inquired about playing a Dafnie concert with Ullén at the Summer Bummer festival in Antwerp. She enlisted some of her favorite players, including veteran bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and drummer Paal Nilssen-Love. Additionally, Dahl brought in some players she didn't know, including accordionist Ida Løvli Hidle and the Berlin-based Argentine baritone saxophonist Sofia Salvo.

From the beginning, she took the name of the project literally.

"I mapped out the different qualities or core elements in Dafnie, and added players who could extend those qualities: textures, free-jazz, groove, electronics, chamber jazz. Then I mapped out what kind of parts I wanted in the concert and wrote each part."

While the music certainly relates to diversity of the quintet, Dahl introduced a new raft of possibilities, whether small percussive details, expanded electronic sallies courtesy of synthesizer player Anna Ueland, or the elastic squeezebox sounds of Hidle. The music seethes with energy and intent, revealing a quiet confidence that has guided Dahl from the beginning.

After a hectic year of touring in 2025, Dahl has been using the early months of 2026 conceiving how she can work more efficiently in the future, but she doesn't imagine sitting still.

"Music is something to share and I have always felt that you cannot sit and wait for things to happen," she says. "You have to do something actively if you want to play." **DB**



Nik Bärtsch's Ronin, from left, Jeremias Keller, Kasper Rast, Bärtsch and Sha.

NIK BÄRTSCH: THE COMMUNITY GROOVE

BY DAN OUELLETTE PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN SENTI

Nik Bärtsch cuts an imposing figure on stage. He's unmistakable with his soul patch, shaved head and black attire. The Zurich-based pianist and composer's distinctive look matches his free-spirited music.

In October at the Enjoy Jazz Festival in Heidelberg, Germany, Bärtsch and his Ronin quartet delivered a triumphant concert that defied expectations. Genres blended, tempos shifted. Gentle single-note piano rhythms led to extemporized passages, skyrocketing the energy then plunging into rock-powered explosions. That's the fuel of the leader's work of controlled intensity. He said after the show, "It's interesting that music is not necessarily only a linear narrative phenomenon. We perceive it almost like a remembrance architecture."

At Enjoy, on one piece the pianist dreamed lightly on the keys, played inside the box with a flutter of strings while being joined by his master sidekicks: Sha on alto saxophone and bass clarinet, Jeremias Keller on electric bass and Kasper Rast on drums and percussion. What's remarkable is how all four members contributed to the rhythm-driven music. Bärtsch set up a piano motif that each member played off of. Even Sha on the horns patterned a twist.

Most of the concert's music came from *Spin*: Ronin's ninth electro-acoustic album of stimulating, shapeshifting jazz that conjures up a mystical, mercurial freedom. The tunes are based on linear counterpoint cycles, distilled metric weaves and reinventions of written beats improvised on to create a surprising

creative cycle. As Bärtsch wrote in his 2021 book *Listening Music Movement Mind* (Lars Müller Publishers), "Jazz is more like a practice and attitude than a style with commandments and prohibitions."

In other words, expect the unorthodox. Bärtsch's explorations in his multifaceted world include his performance space for modular music in his Zurich home, his personal experience of the Japanese tradition of crafted art, his 2022 Europe tour collaboration with Laurie Anderson and his residency at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology studying the influence of movement on making music.

At the festival's headquarters the day after the Ronin show, Bärtsch reflected on this year's "knowing" theme.

"I find it related to knowing experience, collecting knowledge through doing, and to working together in a community," he said. "It is an interesting motto, especially for this festival that tries to bring together different musical genres, but mainly with the spirit of jazz. That responsibility and dedication is, for me, an important heritage. One newspaper in Switzerland once wrote about me that I was a scientist of groove because I'm dedicated to groove, to patterns, to things like a scientist studying it: not in this cold idea of a scientist, but in this warm, curious dedication to

finding new solutions and new perspectives on groove music.”

When Bärtsch was growing up in Switzerland in the mid-’70s, he wasn’t allowed to study the drums in school. He was told he had to learn violin or piano. But he was so determined that his mother looked for a drum teacher.

“She found an American drum teacher Sal Celi,” he said. “He was an amazing guy. He was a very good central teacher. We just played. When I was 9, I discovered the piano. I saw a piano player playing boogie-woogie. I ran home to my mother and said, ‘I want to learn this. This music is what I feel.’”

While most piano teachers in Switzerland were classically trained, once again his mother found the perfect teacher, Hanspeter Reiman, who worked with Bärtsch for eight years. “That’s how it started. So with my good friend drummer Kaspar Rast, we formed a band working with odd-meter groove music. We were inspired by fusion, funk and Brazilian music.”

Bärtsch and Rast attended the jam sessions at Bazillus Club, an underground space that was founded in 1969 by Beat Kennel.

“We had jam sessions when we were very young, and there were all sorts of people playing,” he said. “We could learn from these older, amazing players.”

That led Bärtsch to different combinations of styles. He was informed by Steve Reich’s

minimal music as well as any kind of music that had rhythmic energy.

“When I was a teenager in the ’80s, Prince was an essential figure for us also in terms of band play,” he said. “He always had good bands, and he was influenced by all the great groove musicians. He had his own place, and he always did these jams after the sessions. So I have dozens of old bootlegged videos from that time.”

Founded in 2001, Ronin has been Bärtsch’s working band for several years after leadership of his more expansive acoustic group Mobile. He stripped the band down to a zen-funk quartet that attracted ECM Records’ Manfred Eicher, who released several of the group’s albums.

Spin is Ronin in evolution. “We work constantly on the pieces, even the pieces we already recorded,” he said. “We do new arrangements. I listen to them again and again, composing new pieces and finding new interesting interpretations of cycles, rhythms, overlapping patterns. ‘Modul 35’ is a key tune from our history. It was on our first album for ECM in 2006 with a new interpretation for our live record in 2012. This version is totally new.” While Bärtsch has a commitment from ECM for another record, he decided to set *Spin* into delivery first on his own label.

Much of Ronin’s module growth comes from the Exil club he co-founded 20 years ago. It was formed out of artistic necessity soon

after his inspiring 2003 visit to Japan.

“I was connected to a Swiss musicologist who was teaching in Osaka at the music faculty university. He showed me a lot of musical history, musical performances from Japan, from the different fields. It influenced me a lot in terms of the tradition of crafted art — the dedication, patience and long development. I learned that mastery happens out of training and dedication. That speaks very close to me.”

On his return, Bartsch set Exil into motion. It’s been a massive investment, designing the club and installing a high-class P.A. and lighting system.

“This gave us the possibility to really focus on the band development,” he said. “We have a regular gig, we have a working band, we have a continuity, we have perspective.”

In all of his adventures over the years, a key takeaway was how limited he found the piano to be and how he can free it.

“One of the challenges is that the piano cannot bend the note,” Bärtsch said. “But in the way I play piano and put objects inside, I can do it. I’m prepared, and I start with doing it for the instrument in a good way to explore these fields and also in blending, of course, with the other instruments.

“That’s what I bring to Ronin to refresh old moduls and to create new ones. It makes our weekly Exil sessions exciting.”

DB

04/03/26

dolby atmos
cd // double-vinyl

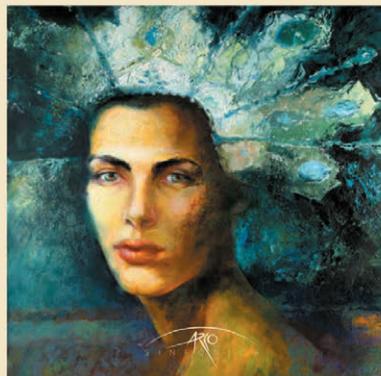
„With an aura exquisite unsurpassability.“
Concerto Austria No 6, 2025

„A kind of world music suite in 3D.
Or perhaps even a completely new genre.“
Rondo Classic & Jazz 6/2025

„Stunning cinematic experience for the mind.
A true blockbuster.“ Culturnews Germany, 12/2025

music composed by J. H. M. Diederich, Ch. König, H. Gottberg, M. Anton

Movie Sinfónica



performed by Arco Sinfónica feat. German Pope Orchestra / Kristjan Randaku, piano / Wim de Vries, drums
members of State Opera Choir Stuttgart & SWR Vocalensemble
conducted by Bernd Ruf



NEU KLANG



"I do like having a balance of both worlds, and connecting them," Camila Nebbia says of the intersection of composition and improvisation.

Camila Nebbia's Berlin Adventures

BY MARTIN LONGLEY PHOTO BY LISE MARGRETHE NILSEN/KONGSBERG JAZZ FESTIVAL

The Berlin tenor saxophonist Camila Nebbia has been rising to eminence on the adventuring jazz and improvisation scenes.

Now favored for her articulate and expressive playing, she also possesses other advantages: a vivid conceptual sense, gliding from full freedom to thoughtful composition and an enthusiastic embracing of fresh playing situations, as she moves around the roiling creative scene of the venue-filled Berlin.

Nebbia's awareness of international improvising connections has led to a prolific recorded output, balancing regular band situations with one-off meetings. This is also the case on the live touring front, as Nebbia is now a frequent presence around the European festival run. Her primary label relationship is with Relative Pitch, the New York outfit that devotedly maintains a release schedule of four albums each month. Here, Nebbia has released a trio disc with pianist Marilyn Crispell and drummer Lesley Mok (*A Reflection Distorts Over Water*), as well as a pair of solo sessions. In early 2026, Nebbia will also

have records on the way with drummer Chris Corsano (*Six Or Seven Ways Towards Becoming Undone*) and *The Hanged One* (Nebbia's Berlin sextet). She clearly has a fixation on the trio form, with *Exhaust* (Kit Downes, Andrew Lisle) on the Swiss label Intakt, set to release the band's second album, and the recent *Presencia*.

"I started playing alto and soprano saxophones. Then several years later, when I got more into jazz, tenor was always my favorite, so then I stopped playing alto," she says. "I just felt that the tenor was my voice, it made sense with me ... the essence was the range. I felt connected to it.

"When I was studying, I was learning classical saxophone, so slowly I started getting into jazz, as it's connected so much to the instrument, and I started discovering and loving it, then I switched to the jazz conservatory in Buenos Aires, so that deepened my research. My love for more freely improvised music came

from Ornette Coleman. He has this beautiful album, *Ornette On Tenor*, that I totally love. It's fantastic. I also heard his *Crisis* album, with his son, Denardo. "Broken Shadows" blew my mind! I was asking, "What is this? What is happening?" It was so intriguing and haunting."

Known for her free improvisation work, Nebbia has also become active as a composer; "I do like having a balance of both worlds, and connecting them," she says. "Sometimes in the same piece of music. But I also love having projects where it's my own compositions, and there's also a place for improvised sections. In my life I need both, because they give me different outcomes and different inputs."

In Berlin, Nebbia became immersed in improvisation, since she moved there from Stockholm. She says that it felt just right when she relocated, despite appreciating the beauty of that Swedish capital. "The Berlin community is so open, people want to get together, want to create things, so it was very accessible."

Nebbia soon met the English bassist James Banner (who himself had one foot in the modern classical scene), and he brought in drummer Max Andrzejewski to form the *Presencia* trio. "It was a beautiful process, because we all composed music for the album, and we worked really well together. It felt very natural, as we all had similar approaches to both composition and improvisation, so it was a really nice match."

Presencia gave one of the best performances at the recent Jazztopad festival in Poland. Spontaneity was welcome, but the pieces usually held a poised formation, as reeds, bass and drums sensitively negotiated planned harmonies and structures, sonically arrayed in a very visual manner.

Nebbia didn't know so many folks upon arriving in Berlin, but connections have accumulated quickly. "People come and go here, a lot, that's also inspiring, to always be in contact with new people. In more improvised situations I love the people I'm playing with, not only musically, but as humans. That, for me, is important. Sometimes I just meet people from one gig, because festivals put together a band, or someone invites you to a one-time event. It's challenging to play with somebody for the first time, to connect, so I love that situation. Then, when I do more composed music, I think about what the ensemble requires."

Nebbia is also well-versed in the visual sphere, having provided cover artwork for many of her releases.

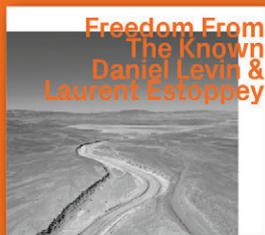
"I studied film at the same time as I was attending the music conservatory, going in the evening. It was stressful, but I loved it. It gives you a lot of other inputs and knowledge about art, and maybe the music conservatory doesn't go to those places, those subjects. My images are based on frames of Super 8 that I paint. Film takes a lot of time."

DB

We Have An Ear For The Future Now
And The Past

hathut.com

HUT
RECORDS
ESTABLISHED 1975



ezz-thetics 1063



ezz-thetics 115



ezz-thetics 1070

OUT MARCH 27 ON NONESUCH RECORDS

FLEA'S
DEBUT
SOLO
ALBUM

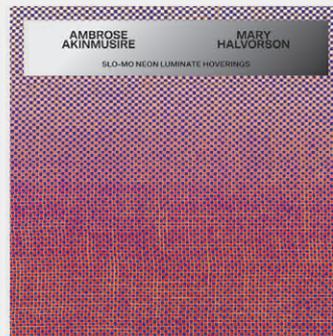


WITH:
ANNA BUTTERS
NICK CAVE
JOSH JOHNSON
JEFF PARKER
DEANTONI PARKS
THOM YORKE

COMING SOON

MAY 15

JEFF PARKER
ETA IVTET
Happy Today



MAY 22

AMBROSE
AKINMUSIRE
MARY
HALVORSON
*Slo-Mo Neon
Luminare Hoverings*

nonesuch

www.nonesuch.com



@NonesuchRecords



WE LOVE VINYL!

Just in time for Record Store Day on April 18, we present a curated list of exciting new releases and noteworthy re-releases coming to a vinyl retailer near you. From the old to the new, the tried to the true, the mainstream to the avant garde, this year's RSD has it all in the jazz and blues worlds. For a complete list, go to recordstoreday.com. Happy shopping! *Compiled by Frank Alkyer*

ROY AYERS

Daddy Bug
Nature Sounds

Daddy Bug was Roy Ayers' final album for Atlantic Records. Released in 1969 and produced by Herbie Mann, the album delivers vibraphone-heavy instrumental jazz created by a lineup of legends: Herbie Hancock, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Hubert Laws, flute; Sonny Sharrock, guitar; and Bruno Carr and Freddie Waits on drums. This formerly out-of-print set is an RSD Exclusive with a limited run of 1,500 albums in yellow vinyl.

CHET BAKER

Live In Japan 1987 (Fukui, Vol. 1)
SOLID/Spin This Now!

In 1986, Chet Baker made his debut in Japan, promising fans, "Let's meet again soon." *Live In Japan 1987* fulfills that promise, documenting his second trip to the island nation. Subtitled *Fukui, Vol. 1*, it captures the first set of his June 6 live show with Baker's trademark intimacy and lyrical brilliance. This is a Japanese import title that will be released on a limited run of 1,000 units on deep-blue vinyl.

CHET BAKER

Live In Japan 1987 (Fukui, Vol. 2)
SOLID/Spin This Now!

And if you're going to dig the first set, why not

the second from that exquisite June 6, 1987, concert? Baker leads Harold Danko on piano with his trio. Again, this one is limited to 1,000 units on deep-blue vinyl.

TONY BENNETT

MTV Unplugged
Legacy Recordings

Perhaps no album has ever done more to resurrect an artist's career than Tony Bennett's Grammy-winning *MTV Unplugged* session. Recorded live in New York in April 1994, this landmark brought the glory of Mr. Bennett to an entirely new generation. Released on vinyl for the very first time, *MTV Unplugged* showcases Bennett's interpretations of the Great American Songbook, backed by the Ralph Sharon Trio. This two-LP set, limited to 2,200 copies, serves as an RSD Exclusive release.

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART & THE MAGIC BAND

Lick My Decals Off, Baby (Deluxe Edition)
Rhino

And for something completely different, try the deluxe edition of this 1970 classic by Captain Beefheart and The Magic Band. The two-LP set, limited to 3,000 copies, features the original album, recut from the original masters, plus an additional album of previously unreleased instrumental versions and alternate takes.

JAMES CARTER, CYRUS CHESTNUT, ALI JACKSON & REGINALD VEAL

Gold Soundz: A Jazz Tribute to Pavement
Modern Harmonic

In a "what the heck" moment, four of the biggest names in jazz take on the musical contributions of Pavement, a trail-blazing alternative rock band. This 20-year-old tribute is a double LP of rumble and joy getting it's first vinyl treatment ever and includes plenty of bonus material. Gold vinyl, liners by Jim Allen, new cover art and dramatically expanded with bonus material, it's an RSD First release, limited to 1,000 albums.

RAY CHARLES

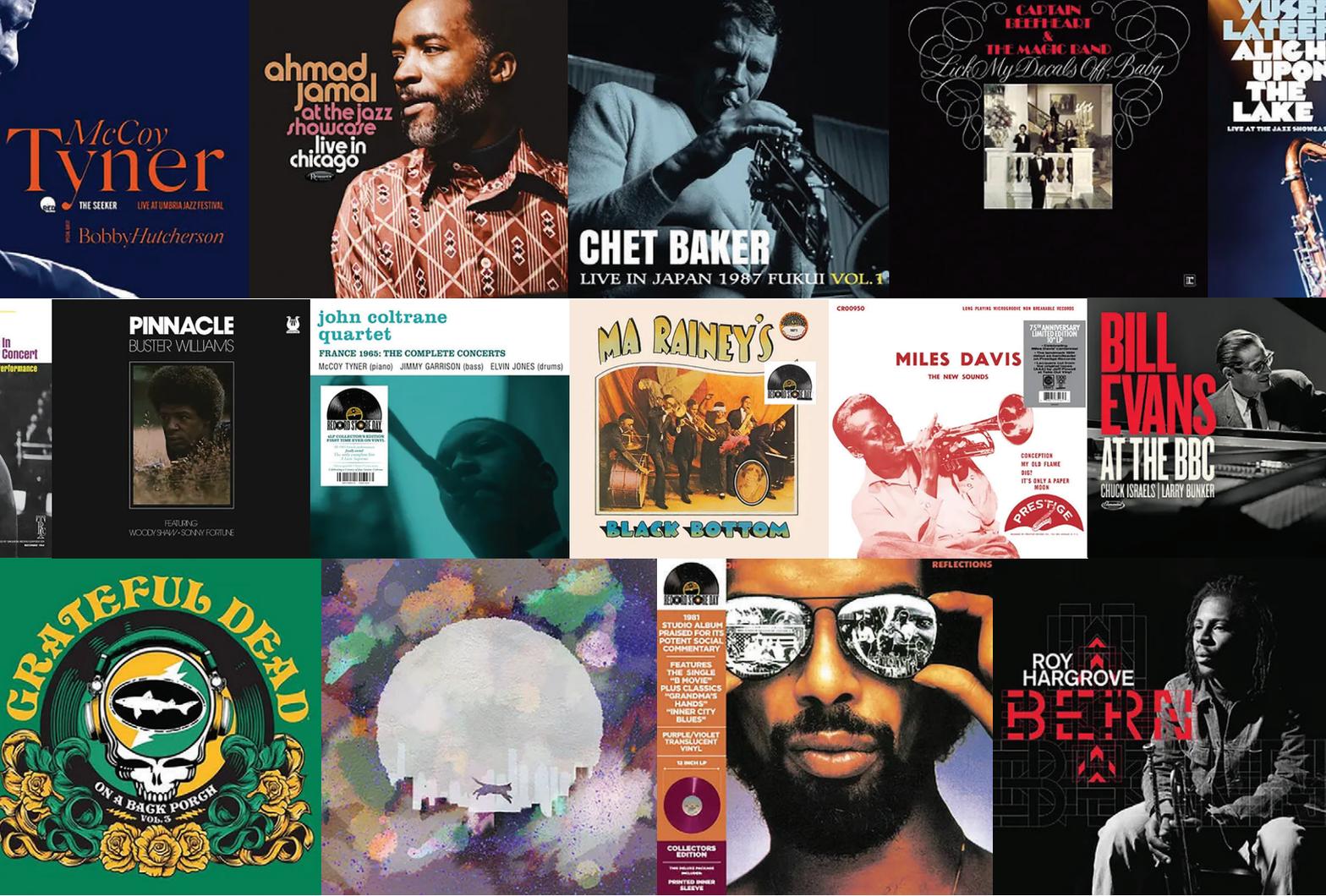
Ray Charles Live
Tangerine

Nothing better than live Ray Charles, and this two-LP set doesn't disappoint. Limited to 900 units, *Ray Charles Live* celebrates the 50th anniversary of this killer concert. Remastered by Grammy-winning engineer Michael Graves with vinyl mastering by Jeff Powell, the LP will be pressed on two 180-gram LPs with expanded art and liner notes.

DON CHERRY

Blue Lake
Charly Records

Charly Records and BYG Records offer up the first-ever reissue of *Blue Lake*. This long-



out-of-print live set, originally released in Japan in 1974, has been restored and remastered from the original master tapes. *Blue Lake* follows last year's RSD release of *Orient*, a companion volume from that concert, now completing the picture of Cherry's vision. The original concert was recorded live in Paris on April 22, 1971, with Cherry alongside South African bassist Johnny Dyani and Turkish percussionist Okay Temiz. This offering has a limited run of 1,000 units.

JOHN COLTRANE QUARTET
France 1965: The Complete Concerts
 Charly Records

This complete set serves as an homage to Coltrane fans during the saxophone genius' centennial. Charly Records offers up a four-LP set packed with photographs, a concert poster and new liner notes. It's the first time this historic concert has been bundled in a single package. Here we have the classic Coltrane quartet with McCoy Tyner on piano, Jimmy Garrison on bass and Elvin Jones on drums. It was their final European tour together. This Record Store Day exclusive is limited to 2,500 albums.

JOHN COLTRANE
The Tiberi Tapes: A Preview Of The Mythic Recordings
 Verve/Impulse

Long rumored and mythologized, the tapes made by musician Frank Tiberi are real and avail-

able. These are private recordings of Coltrane's group made by Tiberi in the early 1960s. Tiberi followed Coltrane into clubs in New York and Philadelphia, capturing the music being created nightly on his portable tape recorder. This is the first time these tapes are available to the public in honor of the great saxophonist's centennial later this year. This is a one-LP "preview" of the recordings. Hopefully the first of many to come. It's an RSD Exclusive of 6,000 albums.

MILES DAVIS
The New Sounds (Mono 10")
 Craft Recordings

It's impossible to mention Coltrane's centennial without mentioning the equally important centennial of Miles Davis. Here to celebrate is a mono 10-inch version of *The New Sounds*, originally released on Prestige 75 years ago. It was Davis' first album as a leader. Cut (AAA) from the original mono tapes by Jeff Powell at Take Out Vinyl, this limited-edition 10-inch vinyl release comes housed in a tip-on jacket. It's an RSD Exclusive with a run of 2,000 albums.

BILL EVANS
At The BBC: The Complete 1965 London Sets
 Elemental Music Records

With bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Larry Bunker, this Evans set is the first release out of the TV show *Jazz 625 at BBC Television Theatre*.

The 1965 recording has been transferred from the original tape reels at the BBC and restored and mastered by Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab. The two-LP set on 180-gram vinyl is an RSD Exclusive limited to 3,500 units.

FLYING LOTUS
 1983
 Brainfeeder

Flying Lotus' 2006 debut, *1983*, brought his art to wider audiences before he launched into another stratosphere with albums like *Los Angeles*, *Cosmogramma* and *You're Dead!*, featuring Kendrick Lamar, Thundercat and Herbie Hancock. For RSD, *1983* is a 2,000-unit run.

JERRY GARCIA
Reflections (50th Anniversary)
 Round Records/ATO Records

This 50th anniversary edition features an expanded three-LP set consisting of the remastered original studio album plus two bonus LPs of outtakes, jams and four previously unreleased live recordings. The collection is housed in a tri-fold mirror board jacket and pressed in a limited edition of 5,000.

GHOST FUNK ORCHESTRA
Live In Europe
 Karma Chief

In March 2025, Ghost Funk Orchestra finally



WE LOVE VINYL!



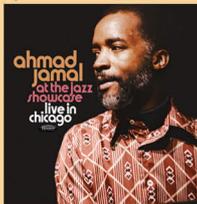
WWW.RESONANCERECORDS.ORG

FOUR UNISSUED RECORDINGS FROM THE JOE SEGAL ARCHIVES CAPTURED LIVE AT THE LEGENDARY JAZZ SHOWCASE IN CHICAGO



JOE HENDERSON CONSONANCE: LIVE AT THE JAZZ SHOWCASE

Tenor saxophone titan Joe Henderson featuring Joanne Brackeen, Steve Rodby and Danny Spencer captured live in February 1978. Limited edition 180g 3-LP and 2-CD with liner notes by producer John Koenig; rare photos by Raymond Ross, Veryl Oakland and Tom Copi; plus interviews with Brackeen, Rodby, Spencer and more.



AHMAD JAMAL AT THE JAZZ SHOWCASE

Piano legend Ahmad Jamal with bassist John Heard and drummer Frank Gant captured live March 20-21, 1976. Limited-edition 180-gram 2-LP and 2-CD with liner notes by Jamal scholar Eugene Holley, Jr.; rare photos by Tom Copi, Christian Rose and K. Abe; plus statements by piano greats Fred Hersch, Joe Alterman and more.



MAL WALDRON STARDUST & STARLIGHT: AT THE JAZZ SHOWCASE

Piano great Mal Waldron live in August 1979 with Steve Rodby, Wilbur Campbell and special guest saxophonist Sonny Stitt. Limited-edition 180-gram 2-LP and deluxe CD with liner notes by acclaimed journalist Howard Mandel; rare photos by K. Abe & Christian Rose; interviews with pianist Lafayette Gilchrist, Steve Rodby and more.



YUSEF LATEEF ALIGHT UPON THE LAKE: LIVE AT THE JAZZ SHOWCASE

Woodwind master Yusef Lateef with Kenny Barron, Bob Cunningham and Albert "Tootie" Heath captured live June 1975. Limited-edition 180-gram 3-LP and 3-CD with liner notes by Lateef biographer Herb Boyd; rare photos by Veryl Oakland, Tom Copi, K. Abe and Raymond Ross; plus interviews with Lateef mentee, Bennie Maupin & more.

- Sound restoration from the original tapes by George Klabin, Matthew Lutthans & Joe Lizzi; lacquers cut by Matthew Lutthans, The Mastering Lab
- Pressed at Quebec's boutique audiophile pressing plant, Le Vinylist



VINYL AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY AT PARTICIPATING RECORD STORE DAY RETAILERS FOR RSD ON APRIL 18



made its first voyage to tour Europe and the U.K. *Live In Europe* documents the eight-piece band at its live best from two consecutive sold-out shows: at Jassmine in Warsaw and Paradiso in Amsterdam. Both shows were professionally recorded with Amsterdam's recording being handled by the Abbey Road Institute. This RSD Exclusive is a single-LP set limited to 2,000 units.

GHOST-NOTE

Swagism
Mixto Records

The funk has been resurrected with this long-out-of-print sophomore album. Led by Snarky Puppy's Robert "Sput" Searight and Nate Werth, *Swagism* returns to wax. Featuring an all-star lineup including MonoNeon, Cory Henry and Nigel Hall, it's a 17-track, double LP on 180-gram vinyl housed in a deluxe gatefold sleeve with new liner notes, limited to 1,500 copies.

GRATEFUL DEAD

On A Back Porch, Vol. 3
Rhino

Dogfish Head Brewery and the Grateful Dead deliver another round of good times with *On A Back Porch, Vol. 3*. It's limited to 5,500 copies on 180-gram vinyl.

ROY HARGROVE

Bern
Time Traveler Recordings

For the first time ever, Roy Hargrove's legendary 2000 performance at the Bern Jazz Festival is officially released — restored from the original tapes and remastered for audiophile fidelity. This is Hargrove in his glory, fronting a stellar quintet of Larry Willis, Sherman Irby, Gerald Cannon and Willie Jones. Transferred from the original tapes and restored and mastered by Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab, the limited-edition, 180-gram package includes an extensive booklet with rare photographs, extensive liner notes and testimonials from band members as well as those influenced by his work. It's an RSD Exclusive with a limited run of 2,200 units.

JOE HENDERSON

Consonance: Live At The Jazz Showcase
Resonance

This is the first-ever release of saxophone titan

Henderson and his quartet — featuring pianist Joanne Brackeen, bassist Steve Rodby and drummer Danny Spencer — captured live at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase in Chicago in 1978. The limited-edition, 180-gram, three-LP set was mastered from the original tapes by George Klabin and John Koenig, with lacquers cut by Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab. It was pressed at Quebec's audiophile pressing plant Le Vinylist. This is part of Resonance's launch of releases from Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase archives. It's an RSD Exclusive limited to 2,000 units.

AHMAD JAMAL

At The Jazz Showcase: Live In Chicago
Resonance Records

Another release from the Jazz Showcase featuring Jamal on piano, bassist John Heard and longtime drummer Frank Gant, captured live in 1976. The limited-edition, 180-gram, two-LP set was mastered from the original tapes by engineer Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab and pressed at Le Vinylist. It's an RSD Exclusive limited to 2,000 copies.

KHRUANGBIN

White Gloves ii/M. Blanc
Dead Oceans

Here we have the first track from *The Universe Smiles Upon You ii*, a rerecorded, reimagined two-LP version of the band's 2015 debut album. *M. Blanc*, the B side, is a reimagined version of "Mr. White" — another track on the original album. An RSD Exclusive limited to 2,500 units.

FREDDIE KING

Feelin' Alright: The Complete 1975 Nancy Pulsations Concert
Elemental Music Records

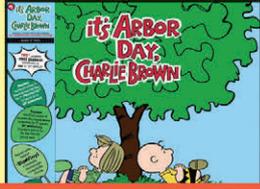
Enjoy the power of Freddie King's 1975 performance at the Jazz Pulsations Festival in Nancy, France — a never-before-released live set that captures the Texas blues legend at his best. Limited to 2,050 albums, the set includes previously unpublished photographs from the festival and new liner notes. It's an RSD First.

YUSEF LATEEF

Alight Upon The Lake: Live At The Jazz Showcase
Resonance Records

Here's another previously unissued recording of

NEW TITLES FROM MVD



FIRST TIME ON CD, VINYL & DIGITAL

VINCE GUARALDI

It's Arbor Day, Charlie Brown/Charlie Brown's All Stars!

Music from the classic Peanuts specials: "It's Arbor Day, Charlie Brown" and "Charlie Brown's All Stars!"
LMFP



IN STORES MARCH 6, 2026

BJØRN ALTERHAUG QUARTET

Blame It On My Age

Legendary Norwegian bassist at 80 makes a sensational comeback after a stroke in 2017.
LOSEN RECORDS

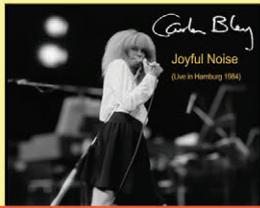


IN STORES MARCH 27, 2026

DR. JOHN

Live at Rockpalast 1999

Fantastic Rockpalast performance from July 9, 1999 at Lorelei Open Air Festival (Germany) by six-time Grammy Award winner Dr. John!
MADE IN GERMANY

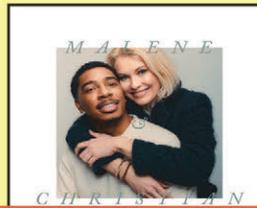


IN STORES APRIL 24, 2026

CARLA BLEY

Joyful Noise (Live In Hamburg 1984)

Considered the genius female, Jazz-oriented counterpart to Frank Zappa. Great live recordings from a concert on 3/14/1984.
MADE IN GERMANY

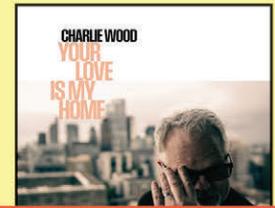


ON CD & BLACK VINYL

MALENE MORTENSEN & CHRISTIAN SANDS

Malene & Christian

A tender, jazz-driven exploration of love, loss, longing, and quiet hope. First collaboration since 2015.
STUNT RECORDS



ON CD & BLACK VINYL

CHARLIE WOOD

Your Love Is My Home

A deeply personal album that blends jazz, soul, blues, pop, and Americana into a warm, cohesive musical statement.
STUNT RECORDS



ON CD & BLACK VINYL

JAN HARBECK QUARTET

Conversation

A lyrical jazz album of ballads and meditative moods from one of Denmark's most soulful saxophonists.
STUNT RECORDS



ON CD & BLACK VINYL

SMAG PÅ DIG SELV

This Is Why We Lost

The Danish trio's second album blends punk, jazz, techno, and activism with bold maturity. Experimental, emotional, and fiercely alive.
STUNT RECORDS



LP, CD, DIGITAL ON 4/3/2026

PETER ERSKINE, ALAN PASQUA, SCOTT COLLEY

Peregrine

Peregrine was recorded in 2025 by Grammy winner Peter Erskine with nominees Alan Pasqua and Scott Colley, celebrating standards and originals.
HARD WAG RECORDS



IN STORES APRIL 3, 2026

JIM ROBITAILLE TRIO

Sonic

A sharp, modern jazz guitar trio album driven by Jim Robitaille's bold melodies, deep groove, and fearless interplay.
WHALING CITY SOUND



IN STORES MAY 8, 2026

JOHANNES ENDERS

Standard Questions

Shaping selected standards into a statement of balanced beauty performed by an international acoustic quartet!
ENJA RECORDS



ON CD & BLACK VINYL

EDGAR KNECHT

Colours Of Europe

Reimagining European folk through Jazz. A soulful, virtuosic dialogue across borders and a passionate plea for unity and diversity.
FINE MUSIC

MVD congratulates jazzahed! on 20 Great Years!

MVDaudio
A DIVISION OF MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP





Chris Cheek
**Keepers Of
 The Eastern Door**
 Bill Frisell
 Tony Scherr
 Rudy Royston

Chris Cheek
Keepers Of The Eastern Door
 w/ Bill Frisell, Tony Scherr, Rudy Royston



Jerome Sabbagh
Stand Up!
 Ben Monder
 Joe Martin
 Nasheet Waits

Jerome Sabbagh
Stand Up!
 w/ Ben Monder, Joe Martin, Nasheet Waits

Available on 180g AAA vinyl (1-step pressing and standard pressing), 1/4 inch 15 IPS tape, CD, DSD 256!

Recorded by James Farber
 Mastered by Bernie Grundman

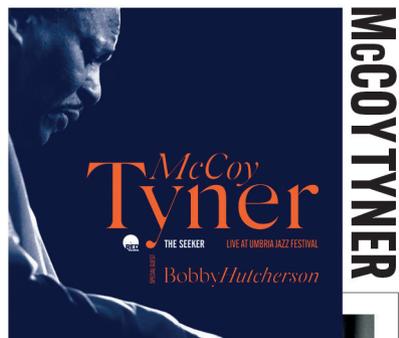
Upcoming Releases: Billy Hart, Andrew Cyrille, Bill Stewart, Nasheet Waits, Mark Turner etc.

Join our mailing list for pre-sales!

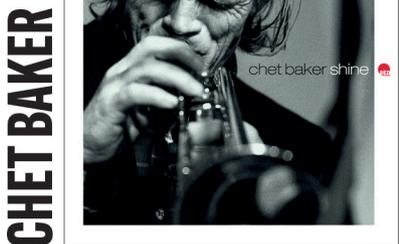


analogtonefactory.com

UNPUBLISHED DOUBLE VINYLs AND CDS



MCCOY TYNER



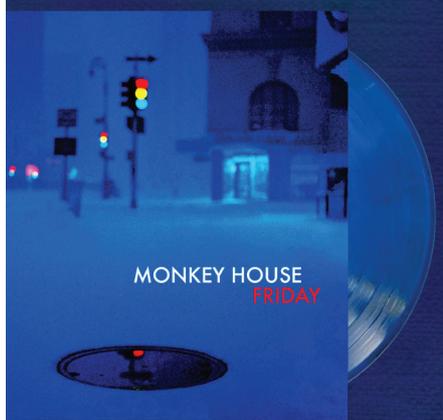
CHET BAKER



www.redrecords.it

MVD entertainment group
 Serving Artists & Audiences

MONKEY HOUSE
 SPECIAL LIMITED COLLECTOR'S EDITIONS



MONKEY HOUSE
FRIDAY

RECORDED + MIXED IN 24-BIT/192kHz RESOLUTION • 2-DISC SET • 45 RPM DIRECT METAL MASTERING • 180G AUDIOPHILE VIRGIN BLUE VINYL

The second release in ALMA's Special Limited Collector's Edition vinyl series is the Juno-nominated *Friday* (#11 Billboard Contemporary Jazz Albums, #1 iTunes Jazz). Out March 20!

Also Available:
 MONKEY HOUSE / CRASHBOX
 180g turquoise virgin double vinyl

SHOPALMARECORDS.COM
 AND WHEREVER VINYL IS SOLD









WE LOVE VINYL!

multi-instrumentalist Yusef Lateef from the Jazz Showcase featuring pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Bob Cunningham and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath. The limited-edition, 180-gram, three-LP set was mastered from the original tapes by engineer Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab and pressed at Le Vinylist. With deep liner notes and interviews, it's an RSD Exclusive limited to 1,800 units.

JAMES BRANDON LEWIS & LUTOSLAWSKI QUARTET

These Are Soulful Days
 Tao Forms

This special outing by one of the brightest saxophonists in jazz and one of Poland's leading string quartets is a very limited run of 500 LPs.

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

Music From Abandoned Heights
 Impex Records

This 2025 film score by guitar great John McLaughlin serves as a blend of ballads and fusion with a variety of collaborators including Gary Husband on drums and keyboards as well as Julian Siegel on saxophone. It's a limited run of 450 albums.

JONI MITCHELL

For The Roses
 Rhino

This was Mitchell's first recording for David Geffen's Asylum Records. This RSD Exclusive is limited to 3,500 albums and restores Joni's original — and controversial — vision for the cover artwork for the first time. Of course, it's pressed on rose-colored vinyl.

MA RAINEY

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom
 Shanachie Entertainment

Ma Rainey was extremely popular in the early 1920s both in live performances and record sales. Presented here are her finest and most popular performances. One hundred years later she is still recognized as one of the great figures in blues history. This RSD exclusive is limited to 1,500 units.

GIL SCOTT-HERON

Reflections
 Culture Factory

This 1981 studio album is widely considered one of Scott-Heron's best, combining social commentary, spoken word and a jazz-infused sound. Backed by the Midnight Band, the album features the hit "b movie," a wicked takedown of the political system. An RSD Exclusive limited to 1,700 copies.

SNARKY PUPPY

Live At GroundUP Music Festival
 GroundUP Music

Snarky Puppy's music is great. Live, it's amazing. Here we catch the band at its own GroundUP Music Festival in Miami — with an energy all

their own. This Record Store Day Exclusive celebrates the improvisational spirit of the band and its fans.

SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS

Roasted Right: Expanded Edition
Modern Harmonic

Here's one from the recently recovered Squirrel Nut Zippers' archive, the band's 1994 EP with bonus tracks. Newly mixed from the original multitracks, it includes unheard original session material combined with a B side full of rehearsal sessions. This 12-inch EP is an RSD First limited to 1,500 copies.

CECIL TAYLOR UNIT

Fragments: The Complete 1969 Salle Pleyel Concerts
Elemental Music Records

The Cecil Taylor Unit's performance at Salle Pleyel in Paris in 1969 was a notable moment in avant-garde jazz. The recording features Cecil Taylor on piano, Jimmy Lyons on alto saxophone, Sam Rivers on tenor/soprano saxophones and flute and Andrew Cyrille on drums. Transferred from the original tape reels at INA and restored and mastered by Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab, the limited-edition, 180-gram, three-LP set includes an extensive insert with rare photographs from the show and liner notes by jazz critic Phil Freeman.

CHARLES TOLLIVER ALL STARS

Right Now ... And Then
Strata-East Records

This is the debut album from trumpeter and Strata-East co-founder Charles Tolliver. He assembles an all-star cast for the proceedings — Gary Bartz, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Joe Chambers — backing the 26-year-old composer and showcasing his creativity and control. Remixed by Tolliver to enhance the original intent of the recording, this edition features audio cut directly from the original analog tapes, mastered by Kevin Gray and pressed on 180-gram vinyl at RTI. It's housed in a deluxe tip-on jacket package with never-before-seen photos and newly commissioned liner notes. It's an RSD Exclusive with a limited run of 1,250 albums.

MCCOY TYNER

The Seeker
Red Records

This previously unreleased, hand-numbered limited edition features the piano great accompanied by Avery Sharpe on bass and Aaron Scott on drums with Bobby Hutcherson sitting in on vibraphone. It's a double LP pressed on black, 180-gram vinyl. It's an RSD First with a limited run of 1,200 copies.

MAL WALDRON

Stardust & Starlight: Live At The Jazz Showcase
Resonance Records

Another rare gem from Chicago's Jazz Showcase, this time highlighting pianist Mal Waldron in 1979 with bassist Steve Rodby, drummer Wilbur Campbell and guest saxophonist Sonny Stitt on two songs. The limited-edition, 180-gram, two-LP set was mastered from the original tapes by engineer Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab and pressed Le Vinylist. It's an RSD Exclusive with a limited run of 1,800 units.

BUSTER WILLIAMS

Pinnacle
Time Traveler

Buster Williams' *Pinnacle* serves up a blend of spiritual jazz, postbop and early fusion, showcasing the bassist's vision as a composer and bandleader. The album was recorded at Blue Rock Studios with a lineup that included Woody Shaw, Sonny Fortune, Onaje Allan Gumbs and Billy Hart. Remastered and cut AAA directly from the original analog tapes by Matthew Lutthans at The Mastering Lab, the album is pressed on 180-gram vinyl at Optimal Media and housed in Stoughton Old Style Tip-On Jackets. It's an RSD Exclusive with a limited run of 1,500.

DB

Three Exclusive vinyl releases on April 18th for Record Store Day, presented by Elemental Music



3 LP SET

CECIL TAYLOR FRAGMENTS

The Complete 1969 Salle Pleyel Concert

A monumental document of the **Cecil Taylor Unit** live in Paris, November 3, 1969. Fierce, visionary, and uncompromising, this historic performance stands as one of the most powerful statements of creative freedom in free jazz history.

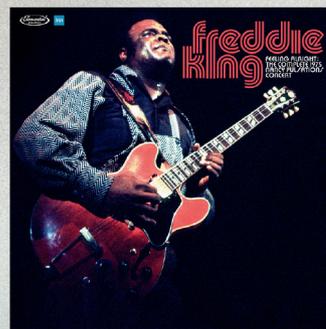


2 LP SET

BILL EVANS AT THE BBC

The Complete Concerts

A rare and intimate glimpse at a pivotal moment in 1965. Recorded at the BBC studios in London with **Chuck Israels** and **Larry Bunker**, this previously unreleased session captures Evans' lyrical precision, quiet intensity, and deep emotional resonance in stunning clarity.



3 LP SET

FREDDIE KING FEELING ALRIGHT

The Complete 1975 Nancy Pulsations Concert

The first official release of **Freddie King's** full 1975 **Nancy Jazz Pulsations** concert. A powerhouse performance blending slow-burning blues with explosive electric energy, capturing the guitar legend at the height of his commanding late-career form.

MORE ELEMENTAL UPCOMING RELEASES

Available April 24th



MICHEL PETRUCCIANI KUUMBWA

Live at Kumba Jazz Center, May 11th 1987

A previously unreleased electrifying live recording from **Kuumbwa Jazz Center, May 11, 1987**. Joined by **Dave Holland** and **Eliot Zigmund**, Petrucciani delivers a joyful, virtuosic performance bursting with lyricism, youthful fire, and extraordinary trio interplay.

Also Available on CD

2 LP SET

ALL ALBUMS AVAILABLE ON CD APRIL 24th

Celebrate Vinyl Culture &
Support Your Local Record Stores

RECORD STORE DAY
APRIL 18, 2026

VISIT US AT:



@elemental_music_records



@ElementalMusicRecords



www.elemental-music.com

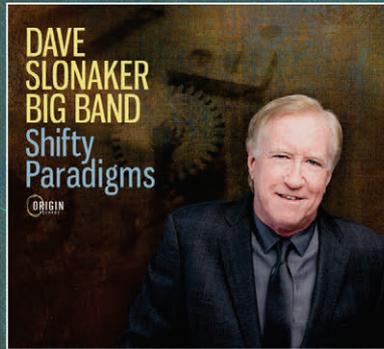


ORIGIN RECORDS



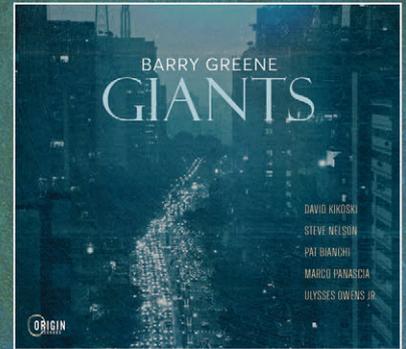
JARED HALL Hometown

Troy Roberts / Ben Markley
Michael Glynn / Kyle Swan



DAVE SLONAKER BIG BAND Shifty Paradigms

GRAMMY® Nominated Big Band



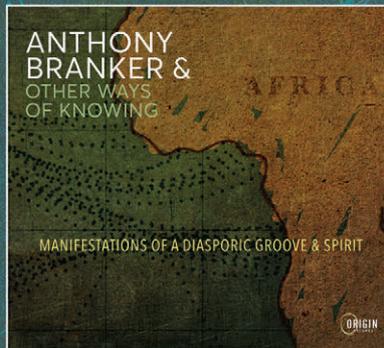
BARRY GREENE Giants

Dave Kikoski / Steve Nelson / Pat Bianchi
Marco Panascia / Ulysses Owens Jr.



HARVIE S Bright Dawn

Peter Bernstein / Miki Hayama / Matt Wilson



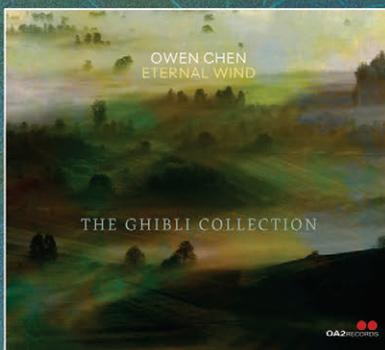
ANTHONY BRANKER & OTHER WAYS OF KNOWING Manifestations of a Diasporic Groove & Spirit

Steve Wilson / Pete McCann
Simona Premazzi / John Hebert / Rudy Royston



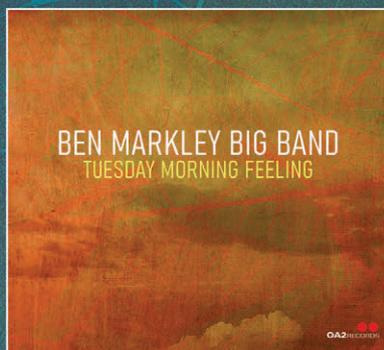
ABATE BERIHUN & THE ADDIS KEN PROJECT

Addis Ken Roy Mor / David Michaeli
Nitzan Birnbaum / Rudi Bainesay



OWEN CHEN ETERNAL WIND The Ghibli Collection

Andrew Cheng
Cy Leo / Cole Palensky
Carlin Lee
Sean Hannon
Anton Kot



BEN MARKLEY BIG BAND Tuesday Morning Feeling

ft. Terell Stafford / Steve Nelson / David Wong
Bijon Watson / Steve Davis / Kyle Swan



CHENXI PAN This Very Moment

Nathan Nakadegawa-Lee / Nicolas Bond
George Grydkovets / Shaonan 'Trigger' Su
Anders Julsgaard / Peyton Cook / Julie Kim



WWW.ORIGINARTS.COM

AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE

Reviews

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



The second summit of Lewis and the Messthetics is searingly of the moment.

The Messthetics and James Brandon Lewis *Deface The Currency*

IMPULSE!

★★★

With song titles that reference defacement, security and snakes, it's no surprise that the second album from sax superhero James Brandon Lewis and veteran shredders Anthony Pirog, Joe Lally and Brendan Canty sounds like an angry rant. The times seem to demand it.

From the blistering drive of the opening title piece it's evident that the extensive road time the band invested in following the release of its Impulse! debut in 2024

has paid dividends. Contrast is a vital element: the funk that churns beneath the guitar/sax skronk on "Rule Of The Game"; rising discord over the relatively airy rhythm of "Universal Security"; and the calm of "30 Years Of Knowing," an island amid the roiling water. This music seems to reflect our societal turmoil as sharply as 1960s-era activist art by John Coltrane or Max Roach.

Musically, there's a highly effective balance between the bedrock of Lally and Canty, Lewis' clarion tenor and Pirog's kaleidoscopic range. When the latter half come together — as they do throughout "Clutch" — it's a dark, dirty yet undeniably empowering sound. Listeners' reference points may vary, but I flash back to the singular rock trio

Morphine, particularly on "Serpent Tongue (Slight Return)," where Pirog counters Lewis with an array of rapid-picked arpeggios and sprays of noise. Ultimately, it's the band's ability to balance chaos and calm that gives *Deface The Currency* its power.

If there's an obvious weakness, it lies in the engineering. A listener might expect the recording to hit as hard as similarly aggressive contemporary recordings — if not as manifestly as their own live shows — but the mix favors Pirog at the expense of the rhythm section. —James Hale

Deface The Currency: Deface The Currency; Gestations; 30 Years Of Knowing; Rules Of The Game; Universal Security; Clutch; Serpent Tongue (Slight Return). (36:17)

Personnel: James Brandon Lewis, tenor saxophone; Anthony Pirog, guitar; Joe Lally, bass; Brendan Canty, drums.

Ordering info: impulserrecords.com



Brandon Seabrook *Hellbent Daydream*

PYROCLASTIC

★★★

Guitarist and banjo player Brandon Seabrook is no stranger to the avant-garde. The New York-based stringsman's signature intricate pizzicato plucking, electrically distorted scrapes and squeals and bursts of melodic clarity resist all instincts towards simple song structure and melody. On *Hellbent Daydream*, Seabrook recruits a new quartet with an unusual combination of guitar, bass, violin and keys to produce seven tracks of his typical experimentalism.

Harriet Tubman & Georgia Anne Muldrow *Electrical Field Of Love*

PI

★★★½

The pairing of Harriet Tubman, a genre-slashing jazz-rock combo, and Georgia Anne Muldrow, a singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist of boundless creativity, is a marriage made in sonic electromagnetic heaven. But despite the album's title, there's hardly anything on it that's conventionally "lovely." This album snarls.

Through Brandon Ross' howling guitar passages, Melvin Gibbs' burbling bass lines and JT Lewis' pulverizing drumming, the music on *Electrical Fields Of Love* projects a bleak postapocalyptic sensibility, as if only a handful of people are left after some insurmountable catastrophe had taken place. Amid the cacophony come Muldrow's enchanting vocals. She's always imbued her emotive singing with an old soul that belies her age. Here, though, she opts for an incantatory delivery with more sonic heft. She sounds like a wounded celestial being seeking solace, revenge or both.

The murky textures will surely overwhelm an impatient listener, hoping that the music will cut loose into something less dirge-like. That moment happens briefly on the compara-

"Name Dropping is the Lowest Form of Conversation (Waltz)" sets the uncompromising tone, layering softly lilting guitar melody over percussive plucked violin that lulls the listener into its waltz rhythm. Yet, before we become too comfortable, Elias Stemeseder's bright synth phrases enter as a new foundation for Seabrook's soaring, distorted soloing. It's a confounding blend that feels constantly on the precipice of collapse and only coheres thanks to its sheer momentum.

That sense of unpredictability and sonic overload continues throughout the album. A sprightly banjo jig interweaves with muscular synth and rollicking bass on "Bespattered Bygones," while "Autopsied Cloudburst" veers from frenetic picking and contrapuntal bowing to quiet, atonal shards of melody.

Nothing about *Hellbent Daydream* is straightforward. Seabrook revels in cacophony and confusion. It perhaps too often strays into chaos, yet brief moments of quietude like a tender bass solo on "The Arkansas Tattler" are all the more affecting for the ferocity that has come before.

—Ammar Kalia

Hellbent Daydream: Name Dropping is the Lowest Form of Conversation (Waltz); Bespattered Bygones; Hellbent Daydream; I'm a Nightmare and You Know It; Existential Banger Infinite Ceiling; The Arkansas Tattler; Autopsied Cloudburst. (43:23)

Personnel: Brandon Seabrook, guitar, banjo; Henry Fraser, bass; Erica Dicker, violin; Elias Stemeseder, piano and synthesizers.

Ordering info: brandonseabrook.bandcamp.com



tively spry "Isom Dart Was" and the transfixing "Insisting," the latter on which Ross delivers on the album's most emotionally poignant, albeit slashing, guitar solos.

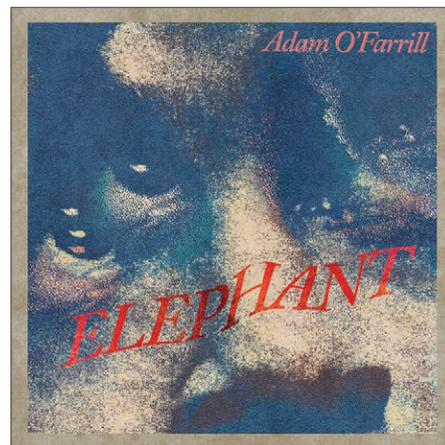
At first spins, *Electrical Field Of Love* is mostly a heady, experimental affair. Eventually, the music starts unexpectedly seeping into your soul, creating a new-fangled cosmic slop that's undeniably transportive and intermittingly transcendental.

—John Murph

Electrical Field Of Love: Flowers; Anatomical Fable of the Elements; Isom Dart Was; Insisting; When You Rise; Is No Match For You; A Black Song; Assata; Up From the Gum; Birth Order (Sof9); Don't Stand A Chance; After the Boom, Hands. (33:39)

Personnel: Brandon Ross, electric guitar, banjo and soprano guitar; Melvin Gibbs, electric bass; JT Lewis, drums; Georgia Anne Muldrow, vocals and keyboards.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



Adam O'Farrill *Elephant*

OUT OF YOUR HEAD

★★★

Unwilling to be a chip off the old ancestral block, 31-year-old trumpet maestro Adam O'Farrill, whose father and grandfather built lofty reputations in the post-war Afro-Cuban jazz scene, borrows from a bizarre array of more contemporary muses, from Radiohead to the late Ryuichi Sakamoto, to the philosophy of Iris Merdoch and even David Lynch. If you feel this is beyond the shooting range of your cultural literacy, don't worry. Backgrounding music in a maze of ideas and reference points is not the job of the listener (unless he makes it so). The real meat is whether it sounds good.

In this case, yes and no. O'Farrill is fluent in the trumpet's many expressive corners, but this is not his grandpa's Afro-Cu-bop. The material conveys a seriousness that invites more respect than enjoyment. "Curves and Convolutions" begins in a minimalist marathon, which O'Farrill punctuates and then picks up on. A player of powerful precision and range, he manages some long lines without the luxury of breathing, which is impressive. But he also meanders without finding a pulse. A different sort of minimalism pervades "Eleanor Dance," whose tempo moves with the tedium of an endless scale.

"Sea Triptych" is a single piece carved arbitrarily into three slices. On the second, pianist Yvonne Rogers dwells hypnotically in one-finger keyboard mode. Depending on your mood, it's either mesmerizing or exhausting. The third part achieves an energizing momentum and coherence, and a well-produced video takes you inside the music. "The Return" cruises smoothly through several unmarked transitions, showcasing the group's rapport and O'Farrill's capacities for brashness and lyricism. —John McDonough

Elephant: Curves and Convolutions; Sea Triptych, Pt 1: Along the Malecon; Sea Triptych, Pt 2: The Three of Us, Floating; Sea Triptych, Pt 3: Iris Murdoch; Eleanor's Dance; Herkimer Diamond; The Return; Thank You Song; Bibo No Azora (Bonus Track). (50:38)

Personnel: Adam O'Farrill, trumpet; Yvonne Rogers, piano; Walter Stinson, bass; Russell Holzman, drums.

Ordering info: outofyourheadrecords.com

The Hot Box

Critics	James Hale	Ammar Kalia	John Murph	John McDonough
Messthetics/James Brandon Lewis <i>Deface The Currency</i>	★★★	★★★★	★★½	★★½
Brandon Seabrook <i>Hellbent Daydream</i>	★★★½	★★★	★★★½	★★★★
Harriet Tubman/G. Anne Muldrow <i>Electrical Field Of Love</i>	★★½	★★★½	★★★½	★★★
Adam O’Farrill <i>Elephant</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★½	★★★

Critics' Comments

Messthetics and James Brandon Lewis, *Deface The Currency*

A thunderous sophomore effort from the post-rock and jazz fusion group. Fugazi members Brendan Canty and Joe Lally provide a dynamic and driving backing for Anthony Pirog's searing guitar tone and James Brandon Lewis' signature, full-throated saxophone lines. Unapologetically loud and virtuosic. —Ammar Kalia

Sinewy, shrilled and screechy, this high-wired guitar- and saxophone-led outing evokes all the head-banging mayhem of the Knitting Factory's glory years. —John Murph

To call this "raw" and "discordant" would be true. But would it be a rave or a warning? Despite Lewis' many accolades, this cocktail of jazz and punk seems to have been mixed by throwing everything into the blender and pressing "high." —John McDonough

Brandon Seabrook, *Hellbent Daydream*

Seabrook can jump from Appalachian twang to Brooklyn caterwaul in a blink. Unexpected turns abound, and some of the drama seems overwrought, but it amounts to a singular journey through an original compositional mind. —James Hale

As whimsical as it's heartfelt as it's audacious, Seabrook plunges 21st century Americana down a cornucopia of funhouse mirrors. —John Murph

Most of this music will evaporate quickly, its fabricated logic unable to live outside its Daliesque bubble. But inside, Seabrook governs with a Third Stream discipline of order, structure and intelligence that sustains both forbearance and attention. —John McDonough

Harriet Tubman & Georgia Anne Muldrow, *Electrical Field Of Love*

Dark, aggressive and lo-fi, this sounds like music for the times. As reactive art, high marks; as a listening experience, it's about as welcoming as the nightly news. —James Hale

The ethereal, soulful vocal tone of Georgia Anne Muldrow is a perfect match for the shuddering cacophony of the Harriet Tubman trio in this debut collaboration. Ululations punctuate the muddy groove of "Flowers," while Muldrow's plaintive melody is moving on the minimal "Is No Match For You." —Ammar Kalia

The Tubmans crowd Muldrow a bit on several morose originals that miss her higher powers. But she shoots some starting vocal fireworks on "A Black Song." —John McDonough

Adam O’Farrill, *Elephant*

Smart, engaging music for mind and body. Reminiscent of Graham Haynes' '90s bands in O’Farrill's ability to blend a broad assemblage of ideas and compelling rhythm. —James Hale

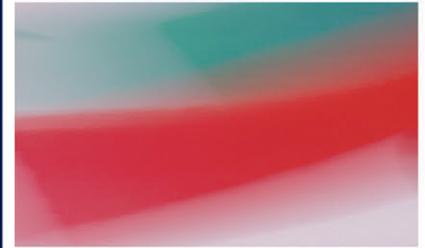
O’Farrill's latest is a beguiling blend of minimalist repetition, lively soloing and rooted groove. Fronting his first quartet as its lone horn player, O’Farrill is confident and energetic, producing moving lead melody as well as allowing the energy of his band to swell and come to the fore. A deeply engaging interplay. —Ammar Kalia

The sense of fresh discovery, the range of emotional temperament and the precision of execution all make this an adventure, brimming with memorable thrills. —John Murph

ACT time to listen.

Nils Landgren
Love of My Life
Vince Mendoza
Ida Sand
Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra

ACT



One of the most expressive and forceful players on the international scene. (WBGO)

Emma Rawicz
Inkyra

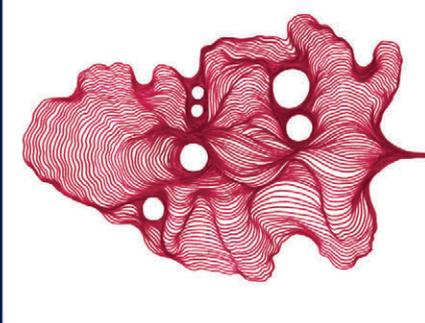


ACT

An artist with a great vision and voice that uplifts the spirit and taps the soul. (Downbeat)

Mammal Hands
Circadia

ACT



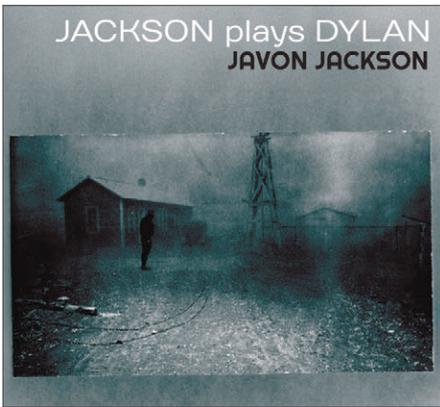
Captivating, ethereal and majestic. (All About Jazz)

Distributed in the US by:

MVDaudio

A DIVISION OF MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

www.actmusic.com



Javon Jackson
Jackson Plays Dylan

SOLID JACKSON

★★★★½

When you are a world-class musician like saxophonist Javon Jackson, whose eclecticism ranges from Frank Zappa to Al Green, interpreting the works of the legendary Bob Dylan comes as no surprise. He opens the venture with one of his own compositions, “One for Bob Dylan,” and includes many of the icon’s most revered songs.

Jackson explores each with profound sensitivity and understanding, particularly “Lay, Lady, Lay,” where his sound is as commanding as the lyrics. There’s an even richer expo-

sition on “Tombstone Blues,” allowing Jackson to mix a few hard-bop phrases with modal expressions, but the dominant theme here, as it is throughout the album, is the blues. The quartet’s version of “Hurricane,” which comes rightfully behind “Blowin’ in the Wind,” is a showcase for pianist Jeremy Manasia and bassist Isaac Levien, and their exchanges replicate the punches thrown by the late boxer Rubin Carter, whom the tune immortalizes through his nickname. The gunshot-like pops from Ryan Sands’ drums recreate the shooting incident for which Carter was convicted and unfairly imprisoned, Dylan believed. No evocations are necessary for vocalists Lisa Fischer and Nicole Zuraitis, and while the former’s rendition of “Gotta Serve Somebody” is exuded alternately with angelic and juke joint intensity, the latter’s voicings on “Forever Young” rise to operatic realms.

In Volume One of his *Chronicles*, Dylan writes that he was often awakened in the past by Charlie Parker’s music. If he seeks a fresh way get out of bed, then Jackson and crew have a perfect alarm.

—Herb Boyd

Jackson Plays Dylan: One for Bob Dylan; Blowin’ in the Wind; Hurricane; Gotta Serve Somebody; Lay, Lady, Lay; The Times They Are A-Changin’; Forever Young; Tombstone Blues; Like A Rolling Stone; Mr. Tambourine Man; Make You Feel My Love. (60:25)

Personnel: Javon Jackson, tenor saxophone; Jeremy Manasia, piano, Fender Rhodes; Isaac Levien, bass; Ryan Sands, drums; Lisa Fischer, Nicole Zuraitis, vocals.

Ordering info: javnjackson.com



Tigran Hamasyan
Manifeste

NAÏVE

★★★★½

Drawing on the traditional music from his Armenian heritage, the epic intensity of progressive metal and the lushness of jazz harmony, pianist and composer Tigran Hamasyan’s *Manifeste* is a triumph of originality and authenticity.

According to Hamasyan, *Manifeste* is the sonic encapsulation of a deeply personal moment in his life, leading to a spiritual awakening. As a result, *Manifeste* pulses with Hamasyan’s consideration of a central philosophy: how we “crystallize through suffering” and how the artist allows the audience to experience catharsis.

This philosophy saturates the 14-song record, which is delivered with earnestness and passionate intention. This is particularly the case on tracks like “Prelude for All Seekers,” the hard-driving opening track, the intricate, synth-soaked “Manifeste” and the brooding, intimate “One Body, One Blood.”

Moody, intense and cinematic, *Manifeste* demands the listener’s full attention as it grounds them in Hamasyan’s hybrid musical perspective. The record involves the harmonic depth and solo flights indicative of European-influenced jazz fusion groups like Pat Metheny Group, the energetic jazz-funk-electronic fusion of Swedish band Dirty Loops and the powerhouse precision of prog metal bands like Mastodon and Dream Theater.

While perhaps too intense for an everyday listen, a back-to-front listen of *Manifeste* guarantees emotion and immersion.

—Alexa Peters

Manifeste: Prelude for All Seekers; Yerevan Sunrise; Manifeste; One Body, One Blood; Seven Sorrows; Years Passing (For Akram); Dardahan; War Time Poem; The Fire Child (Vahagn is Born); Ultra-dance; Per Mané; Window from One Heart to Another (For Rumi); A Eye (The Digital Leviathan); National Repentance Anthem. (73:02)

Personnel: Tigran Hamasyan, piano, synth, vocals, whistling, drum programming; Marc Karapetian, bass (1, 3, 8, 10, 13); Matt Garstka (1, 8, 13); Arman Mnatsakanyan (3, 5, 11); Nat Wood (10), drums; Arthur Hnatek, drums, electronics, drum programming (2, 4, 7); Daniel Melkonyan, trumpet (2, 6); Nick Lierandi, guitar (8, 13); Artyom Manukyan, cello (5); Hamin Honari, daf (12); Yessai Karapetian, blul (12); Asta Mamikonyan (11), Yerevan State Chamber Choir (4, 14), vocals.

Ordering info: naiverecords.com

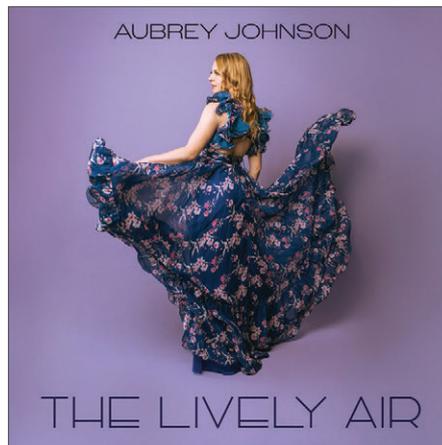
Aubrey Johnson
The Lively Air

GREENLEAF

★★★★

After struggling with writer’s block for several years, Aubrey Johnson returns with a new album, divided between original material and carefully chosen covers. She honors her family legacy with several compositions by her late uncle, pianist Lyle Mays, and a collaboration with her brother Gentry.

Johnson’s impressive vocal range and improvisational prowess are on full display as she frolics around melodies sprinkling melismas, scats and vocalese phrasing into the arrangements. This technique is notable on “The Words I Cannot Say.” Over a slow vamp, supplied by Chris McCarthy’s piano and Matt Aronoff’s bass, she expresses the conflicting feelings at the end of a relationship. With quivering melismas and wordless sighs, she slowly descends into silence after the closing line, “Love will just break your heart.” She offers words of encouragement on “Don’t Be Afraid.” Opening quietly with soft piano and bass supporting her description of a walk in the woods, her vocals mirror the whispers of the trees, telling her she has everything she needs. She steps back to let the musicians take extended solos, ending by quietly singing, “Don’t be afraid.”



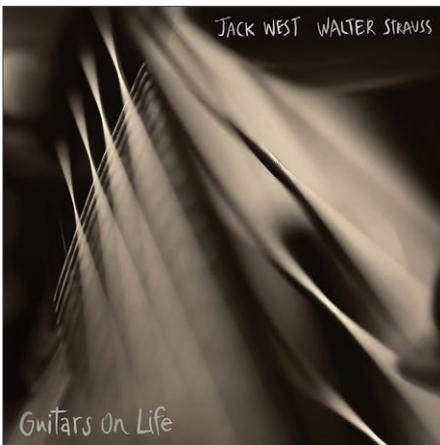
Johnson shows of her skill for melodic scating on “Chorino,” a Mays tune, played as a bossa nova. Her vocals weave around the melody, trading phrases with Tomoko Omura’s violin while McCarthy, Aronoff and drummer Jay Sawyer lay down a mellow backbeat. Her cover of Joni Mitchell’s “Help Me” expands on the original, closing with her trading scattered improvisations with Alex LoRe’s ad-libs on clarinet.

—j. poet

The Lively Air: Hope; The Words I Cannot Say; Help Me; Don’t Be Afraid; Chorino; The Waking; I’ll Never Need To Know; For Luna; The Miracle In Us; Quem É Você. (59:59)

Personnel: Aubrey Johnson, vocals; Alex LoRe, bass clarinet; Tomoko Omura, violin; Steve Rodby, Matt Aronoff, bass; Jay Sawyer, drums; Chris McCarthy, piano.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com



Jack West/ Walter Strauss *Guitars On Life*

OTÁ
★★★★

Jack West *Essential Curvature*

OTÁ
★★★★½

An accomplished acoustic guitarist-composer and successful inventor (with over 100 patents), Northern California-based Jack West has amassed a strong Bay Area following through a singular percussive-slap approach to his instrument. These two vinyl releases showcase his uncanny penchant for groove on an instrument generally associated with folkish strumming.

Guitars On Life is a series of captivating duets with fellow steel-string acoustic guitarist Walter Strauss. On tunes like the upbeat “More Guitar,” West underscores the proceedings with his signature percussion-and-bass groove while Strauss adds melodic filigrees, impeccably picked arpeggios and dazzling harmonics on top. On their version of Stevie Wonder’s “I Wish,” West captures the driving bass line and insistent backbeat while Strauss handles the familiar melody with aplomb, adding virtuosic fills along the way.

On the rockish “Youth,” West whacks the wooden body of his axe like a snare drum as Strauss layers on streams of bluegrass-inspired arpeggios, then on “Double Bounce” he uses a special thumb pick of his own invention to get the bass lines to really pop, before pulling out his trusty slide for a distinctly Delta-flavored effect. West showcases more deft slide work on the bubbling 5/4 “Moon With a View” and “Across the Bardo,” then engages in some intricate fingerstyle exchanges with Strauss on “New Way Up,” sounding like Adrian Legg and John Fahey jamming together.

The jaunty “OO” recalls some of the goofiness that Richard Leo Johnson and Gregg Bendian explored on *Who Knew Charlie Shoe?* while the spacious “Follow the Water Down” is more along the lines of Leo Kottke’s solemn “The Last of the Arkansas Greyhounds” from his groundbreaking 1969 album *6- and 12-String Guitars*. All the references are there, but West and Strauss travel their own trail on this jaw-dropping joyride.

West’s innovative approach is showcased in a jazzier setting on the double-vinyl *Essential Curvature*, a compilation of songs he composed and previously recorded with his group Curvature between 1996 and 2003. The sound of Joel Davel’s marimba adds an interesting color to the proceedings while Calder Spanier’s contributions on soprano sax, particularly his freewheeling improvisations on “Oil Vein” and “Not Touching,” rival some of Dave Liebman’s adventurous excursions on that instrument. On “Big Ideas,” underscored by Scott Amendola’s swing factor on the kit, and the equally jazzy “Interaction Shift,” cellist Mark Summer lays down some solid bass lines. “Slinky” finds West playing slide guitar over a droning back-drop, courtesy of Jim Santi Owen’s morsing (Indian jaw harp), then he offers more outstanding slide work on the minimalist “Quarter Past Stockton.” West’s percussive-slap approach provides a deep groove beneath David Phillips’ eerie pedal steel licks on “Backwards Over Bend.”

There’s plenty of inventive and compelling playing for connoisseurs to savor on both of these eccentric offerings. —Bill Milkowski

Guitars On Life: More Guitar; I Wish; Youth; Double Bounce; Across the Bardo; New Way Up; OO; Follow the Water Down. (42:38)

Personnel: Jack West, six-string acoustic guitar, slide guitar; Walter Strauss, six-string acoustic guitar.

Essential Curvature: Big Ideas; Slinky; Interaction Shift; Not Touching; This Life May Be Monitored (for Quality Assurance); Moon with a View; Something About the Dream; Quarter Past Stockton; Nigel’s Dream; Oil Vein; Colored Shells; Closer to the Sky; Helicopter; Backwards Over Bend; True South; Christina’s Song. (87:42)

Personnel: Jack West, six-string acoustic guitar (2, 4, 6, 10–13, 15), eight-string acoustic guitar (1, 3, 5, 7–9, 14, 16), slide guitar (2, 6, 8); Dean Magraw (3, 8, 9), Brian Hill (6), six-string acoustic guitar; Calder Spanier, soprano saxophone (4, 10, 12, 13, 15); Joel Davel, marimba (1, 3, 5–9, 12, 13), electric Marimba Lumina (14); Mark Summer, cello (1, 3, 5, 7); Jim Santi Owen, morsing (2); Mike Marshall, mandolin (15); Peter Valsamis (3, 8, 9), Scott Amendola (1, 5, 7), Darian Gray (14), drums; David Phillips, pedal steel (14); R Scott Proffitt (2, 4, 11, 15), Ricky Carter (6, 10, 12, 13), Steve Robertson (15), percussion.

Ordering info: jackwestguitar.com



Angelika Niescier *Chicago Tapes*

INTAKT
★★★★½

Alto saxophonist Angelika Niescier, who is from Germany, seems particularly drawn to collaborations with Americans. For several years she had a “New York Trio” with bassist Christopher Tordini and drummer Tyshawn Sorey (and later Gerald Cleaver). Now, she’s collaborating with a group of Chicago’s most prominent and forward-looking musicians: tenor saxophonist Dave Rempis, flutist Nicole Mitchell, vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz and drummer Mike Reed (New York/DC bassist Luke Stewart is the exception).

This is a multifaceted, startling and often beautiful record. The nine compositions leap and bounce with fury and vigor; even the quiet passages simmer ominously. A lot of this energy is due to Reed, whose drumming is martial and aggressive from the opening “Rejoice, Disrupt, Resist” onward. His machine-gun snare, stomping kick drum and hissing cymbals feel almost hostile. Stewart’s bass playing is as powerful as it’s ever been, setting out hard-driving grooves occasionally balanced by passages of heavy strumming. Adasiewicz’s vibes seem to be there as a counterpoint to Reed, ringing out like bells, and when he’s not present, the music becomes even more intense, particularly when Mitchell’s flute is fed through electronics in the disc’s second half.

For her part, Niescier is a fierce, focused saxophonist whose lines burn their way out of the speakers, and Rempis matches her hot breath for hot breath. But on cooler pieces like “Ext. 17” or “Great Horned Owl,” they slip into a more meditative zone, speaking a shared language somewhere between bebop and the AACM.

—Phil Freeman

Chicago Tapes: Rejoice, Disrupt, Resist; Poranek; SAMO (bsqt); Ext. 17; Great Horned Owl; Fluxed; Bouncin’ the Ledge; Perigo; E Randolph St. (58:17)

Personnel: Angelika Niescier, alto saxophone; Dave Rempis, tenor saxophone; Nicole Mitchell, flute; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Luke Stewart, bass; Mike Reed, drums.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

First Times Ever We Heard Her Voice

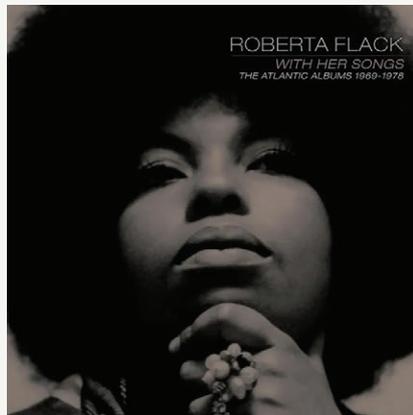
The ground shifted in 1971 when **Roberta Flack** topped long-running female vocal champion Ella Fitzgerald in the DownBeat Readers Poll. Flack's win reflected how her multifaceted artistry — as much as her spell-binding voice — won over a younger generation of jazz fans. This victory also signaled a future when Flack would become as influential as her legendary predecessors.

That impact can be felt throughout Flack's essential recordings, which are packaged together for the eight-disc *With Her Songs: The Atlantic Albums 1969–1978* (Rhino; ★★★★★ 340:00). Flack's mezzo-soprano personalized a world of R&B, folk, jazz and pop while her virtuoso technique informed her other roles on piano, as well as in production and arranging. Essentially, Flack presented as an artist in total control of herself.

Flack's subtle delivery shaped her 1969 debut, *First Take*, which she recorded after spending years teaching in schools and performing in Washington, D.C., jazz clubs. Leading off with Gene McDaniels' protest anthem "Compared To What," she eased into its message while also creating a flowing dialogue with bassist Ron Carter. She was no shouter. That approach, along with Carter's and guitarist John Pizzarelli's intuitive empathy, turned the folk ballad "The First Time I Ever Saw Your Face" into Flack's early 1970s breakthrough single.

Donny Hathaway co-wrote two songs on *First Take* and became one of Flack's key collaborators. They were kindred spirits: Howard University alums who were steeped in the gospel tradition and had been classical prodigies. He joined her in the studio as an arranger and pianist for her *Chapter Two* the following year. Flack continued performing with her identifiable restraint while extending lines at the right moments, particularly alongside the string and horn sections on "Gone Away." Flack's tone ranged from quiet sarcasm on "Business As Usual" to deep vulnerability on her brilliant gender flip of Bob Dylan's "Just Like A Woman."

Half of *Quiet Fire* from 1971 includes the dynamic bassist Chuck Rainey and drummer Bernard Purdie. This was at the time that Rainey and Purdie provided the backbone for Aretha Franklin, and they bring a similar funk to Flack on her "Go Up Moses." She also used sharp hesitations as a singer on pianist on "To Love Somebody." Rainey and Purdie returned for most of *Roberta Flack & Donny Hathaway* the following year, which highlights the singers' sublime blended voices and arrangements. They travel back to their gospel roots on "Come Ye Desolate" and define the era's consciousness on "Be Real Black



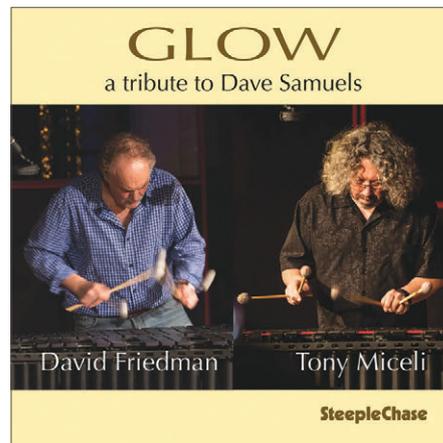
For Me." Flack and Hathaway delved into fusion through "Mood," an acoustic/electric piano duet that she composed.

These explorations continued to run alongside Flack's hits, especially on her 1975 *Killing Me Softly*. Her expressiveness, the understated strong beats, inventive chord changes and rich arrangements have made that album's massive "Killing Me Softly With His Song" so widely beloved. She also turned Leonard Cohen's "Suzanne" into a 10-minute epic while never letting go of its emotional intensity. That combination of intimacy and exploration define her subsequent albums. *Feel Like Makin' Love*, from 1975, is also best known for its title track, but Flack (producing as Rubina Flake) also brought in challenging ideas, primarily the complex orchestrations in her version of Stevie Wonder's "I Can See The Sun In Late September." Similarly, *Blue Lights In The Basement* two years later focuses on spacious, sultry, grooves ("The Closer I Get To You") while she also conveys her characteristic hushed tones on ballads ("25th Of Last December").

On Flack's self-titled 1978 album, her voice remained luminous but occasionally seemed detached from the layers of electronics. Perhaps this reflected her saying goodbye to the decade of her ascent at Atlantic. Still, her years with the company did continue. *With Her Songs* does not include her 1980 LP, *Roberta Flack Featuring Donny Hathaway*, which was released after Hathaway's death and contains some beautiful, though heartbreaking, duets.

Flack's manager Suzanne Koga provides a short essay as part of the package but additional, more analytical, liner notes would have been welcome, along with archival material, such as *Lost Takes*, her 1968 small-group recordings that came out on vinyl in 2023. Still, the brightly remastered CDs that constitute this set speak with the same quiet force that Flack brought to her music. **DB**

Ordering info: rhino.com



David Friedman/ Tony Miceli *Glow*

STEEPLECHASE

★★★★★

Glow is a tribute to the late vibraphone master Dave Samuels by two of his leading mallet confrères. Artists have previously paired vibes with marimba but, the label says, this is the first jazz album composed entirely of vibraphone duets. A striking soundworld results from this unusual pairing, and from the skill with which the partners negotiate it.

The duo overcomes the challenge of sameness through "instant arranging": the spontaneous and dynamic negotiation of register and role. They take it in turns to play melody and lower-range anchor. As the notes comment, the result is a rich, layered sound that feels orchestral despite the duo format. It's a subtle, sophisticated approach to a partnership.

"Samuels" is a piquant, bluesy tribute set to a Latin groove. There's a long and haunting reinterpretation of "Nature Boy"; the theme gradually emerges from a gently throbbing introduction, and the improvisation is in ad lib tempo, with much tremolo to compensate for the vibraphone's limited sonic decay. "When You Wish Upon A Star" gets an evocative and novel treatment, and there's a clever arrangement of the tricky "Carousel." The highlight, however, is Steve Swallow's magisterial composition "Falling Grace." The piece is a masterpiece and repays much study — which this pair has clearly given it.

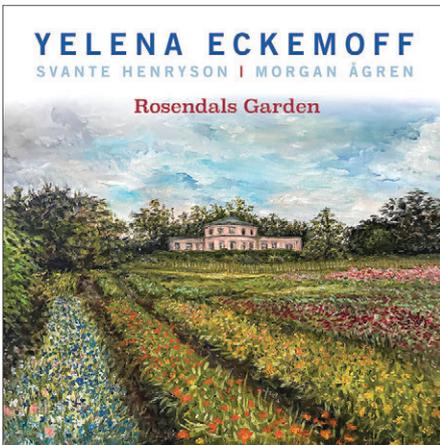
Throughout the album, they offer patient, careful playing that's most notable for its wonderfully tremulous quality. It remains the sound of surprise, because that artistic care includes the aim of spontaneity. The result is a delightful and highly recommended release.

—Andy Hamilton

Glow: Sunset Glow; Samuels; Nature Boy; Traffic; Carousel; When You Wish Upon A Star; Falling Grace; I Am Lost; Noisy Blues; Dolphin Dance. (58:00)

Personnel: David Friedman, Tony Miceli, vibraphone.

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



Yelena Eckemoff *Rosendals Garden*

L&H PRODUCTION

★★★★

Ofentimes musicians find inspiration in their travels and use their talent to bring those experiences to life. This has been a steady trend with Russian-born pianist Yelena Eckemoff, whose works have revolved around themes of nature, history and humanistic emotions. *Rosendals Garden*, an 11-track suite that pays homage to the landscapes and rich culture of Sweden, blends contemporary jazz, chamber patterns, classical and free improvisation into a seamless

sonic tapestry. To bring an even more authentic spin, Eckemoff enlisted the help of Swedish musicians Svante Henryson on cello and basses and Morgan Ågren on drums and percussion.

Eckemoff opens the record with “ABBA Museum,” a playful nod to the Swedish pop group that spotlights Henryson’s creative interplay on cello and Ågren on percussion. There’s a similar bouncy melody on “Skansen Park,” which leaves room for Eckemoff to shift gears swiftly on the keys. The haunting reverie of “Ruins of Älvsborg” includes a drum marching band pattern and is named after the remnants of a 14th-century fortress. Its tone is similar to the pastoral calming melodies of “Country Orchard Café.” The title track, “Rosendals Garden,” serves as the album’s emotional and structural centerpiece: a nine-minute suite complete with color, shifting moods, and layered textures.

What distinguishes *Rosendals Garden* is its ability to be both accessible and intellectually engaging. Eckemoff is known for bringing a tonal richness and classic improvisational style to all of her compositions set for piano trio, and this record is no exception. —*Veronica Johnson*

Rosendals Garden: ABBA Museum, Rosendals Garden, Gamla Stan, Apple Orchard Café, Öresund Bridge, Skansen Park, Sunrise in Rimbo, Ruins of Älvsborg, Storanden Nature Reserve, Strandvägen Pier, Gripsholm Castle. (87:07)

Personnel: Yelena Eckemoff, piano; Svante Henryson, cello, double and electric basses; Morgan Ågren, drums and percussion.

Ordering info: yelenamusic.com

Brian Krock *No One Can Really See*

TOOF

★★★

Reedist Brian Krock was inspired to compose this suite of tunes after watching the 1980 David Lynch film *Elephant Man*, the story of the grotesquely disfigured Englishman Joseph Merrick who spent most of his life as a sideshow act. Krock wrote a short poem in response, considering what it means to be considered a monster, either physically or behaviorally. Its seven lines provide the respective titles for this album’s seven tunes. He’s joined on the front line by the superb trumpeter Adam O’Farrill, a longtime collaborator, and together they engage in impressively complex counterpoint and fleet interplay over the tricky rhythms sculpted by bassist Chris Lightcap and drummer Rogerio Boccato. It’s a credit to the band than such rhythmic intricacy never draws attention to itself.

Krock’s deft, unfussy arrangements allow the shifting themes to organically flow into one another. Lightcap’s sustained arco is the connective tissue from the brisk, chatty opener “It” into the measured, chamber-like vibe of “slips on” where O’Farrill’s full-bodied trumpet and the leader’s agile bass clarinet form remarkably fluid, shifting melodic contours before a sauntering groove changes the complexion of



the piece. The slow, cantering rhythm of “comfy covering” provides a dynamic canvas for the horn players, articulating a needling minimalist pattern before opening up two of the most exciting solos on the album, constantly prodded and encouraged by the sophisticated movement beneath them. There’s no direct programmatic connection to Merrick in the music, but the depth of Krock’s writing leaves little doubt that the story hit him hard. —*Peter Margasak*

No One Can Really See: It; slips on; ghoulish skin -; provisional; comfy covering; no one can really see; (sea). (39:57)

Personnel: Brian Krock, alto saxophone, bass clarinet; Adam O’Farrill, trumpet; Chris Lightcap, double bass, electric bass; Rogerio Boccato, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: briankrock.bandcamp.com



Nicole McCabe *Color Theory*

BIRDWATCHER

★★★★

On her latest album, *Color Theory*, alto saxophonist/composer Nicole McCabe continues on her innately adventurous path, moving between idioms and sub-idioms of jazz with an open-eared attitude and fluidly expressive aptitude. Producer Jason Moran, another open-minded and curious spirit, undoubtedly aided in the success of her latest research project.

After establishing her impressive credit as in composer mode on the opening “Air Sign” and the lyrical-turned-feisty “Hues,” McCabe takes a left turn into free improv on the third track, “Twister” (featuring trumpeter Adam O’Farrill, a kindred style-twister). McCabe fares boldly and persuasively in that uncharted territory, along with pianist Yvonne Rogers, bassist Kanoa Mendenhall and drummer Eliza Salem, before steering back to structured terrain.

She musters up a refreshingly oblique groove vibe on “Cent Cinq” and channels “When You Wish Upon a Star” on her lyrical ballad “To You.” A tasteful wordless vocal by Christie Dashiell folds into the recipe of “Sifting, Sifting,” while “Loop” features a simmering etude of layered saxophone parts, touching on her past work with electro-acoustic concoctions. Adrenaline and jigsaw horn parts pave the way on “Hype Meter” (also with O’Farrill), and she goes out on an “out” note, with the brief free outlet of “Altadena.” Its fiery rage implicitly memorializes the tragic January 2025 fire which claimed the houses of many fellow Los Angeles-based jazz musicians in the city of Altadena.

As an eclectic yet somehow cohesive package, *Color Theory* states its case with taste and bravado, and an admirable musicality as the guiding light. —*Josef Woodard*

Color Theory: Air Sign; Hues; Twister; Cent Cinq; To You; Sifting; Sifting; Pause; Hope; Hype Meter; Assumption; Altadena. (57:32)

Personnel: Nicole McCabe, alto saxophone; Yvonne Rogers, piano and synthesizer; Eliza Salem, drums; Kanoa Mendenhall, bass; Adam O’Farrill, trumpet (1, 3, 8, 9); Maya Paredes, cello (8); Christie Dashiell, vocals (6); Justin Brown, drums (10).

Ordering info: nicolemcabe.bandcamp.com

4 Albums to Meditate To

Jazz and gospel are close blood relations. And fortunately, those Saturday night and Sunday morning worlds sometimes intertwine. Such is the backbone of *Sweet, Sweet Spirit* (Blue Note; ★★★★★ 53:42), the latest by the fabulous Ron Carter, this time in collaboration with Chicago-based gospel singer/songwriter and choir director Dr. Ricky Dillard (supported by his New Generation Chorale).

The album aptly opens with "Open My Eyes," not to be confused with "Open Our Eyes," which was popularized by the Gospel Clefs in the 1960s and notably covered by Earth, Wind & Fire for their 1974 album of the same name. This opener is a pew-rocking version of the late-19th century hymn. The album draws deeply from the roots of modern gospel music history, as evidenced by tracks like "In The Garden" and a lovely version of the gospel standard "Just A Closer Walk With Thee" featuring Avery Sunshine. According to Carter's website, when his mother, Willie O. Carter, "was on bed rest toward the end of her life she asked her son to sit with her and sing the hymns of his childhood to keep her spirits elevated." He obliged, working out bass lines to classic devotionals to comfort her. Now, three decades later, *Sweet, Sweet Spirit* is here to soothe still more weary souls.

For Bill Frisell's album *In My Dreams* (Blue Note; ★★★★★ 62:23), his longtime trio consisting of Thomas Morgan on bass and Rudy Royston on drums is accompanied by Jenny Scheinman on violin, Eyvind Kang on viola and Hank Roberts on cello, frequent Frisell collaborators all joined together in a unique, new configuration: a dream team, if you will.

Produced by Lee Townsend, the album combines studio work with live performances (primarily recorded at the Denver Jazz Fest, but also recorded in New Haven and Brooklyn). The throughline is a twangy expansive Western feel that Frisell fans know and love, augmented by always-tasteful distortion and electronics.

This is especially true on cuts like the habanero-tinged wonder "When We Go." "Isfahan," an interpretation of a composition by Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington, is a windswept West Coast jazz standout. "Curtis" features a solo by Kang that is chockful of a classical Near Eastern sensibility. Very naturally, the whole shebang closes with a rousing version of "Home On The Range" imbued with a sense of longing that lingers long after the album ends.

Perhaps coincidentally, saxophonist Walter Smith III also tackles "Isfahan" for his latest, *Twio, Vol. 2* (Blue Note; ★★★★★ 46:56). The album features Smith, bassist Joe Sanders and drummer Kendrick Scott as the core trio. The maestro Ron Carter (uncoincidentally) sits in for Sanders on half of the album's 10 tracks, includ-



Ron Carter and Ricky Dillard stand at jazz and gospel's confluence on *Sweet, Sweet Spirit*.

ing the slinky interpretation of "Isfahan." Smith shared that while recording, the maestro suggested to the saxophonist (who is roughly half Carter's age), "Don't just play what you want. Listen to what I'm doing. I have some ideas that may take you in different directions."

Saxophonist Branford Marsalis also appears on two cuts: the energetic, conversational "Swingin' At The Haven" (composed by Ellis Marsalis) and the bopping "Casual-Lee" (a Walter Smith III original). Much of the material is drawn from the 1950s and 1960s (from Monk's "Light Blue" to Kenny Dorham's "Escapade" to Wayne Shorter's "Fall"); consequently, the work as a whole evokes an appealing sense of modern jazz (and ample ideas) stripped down to their bare meditative essence.

Lastly, consisting of four songs on four sides ("Warriors," "Composition II," "Charanam" and "Eternal"), *Live At The Village Vanguard, Vol. 1* by the Immanuel Wilkins Quartet (Blue Note; ★★★★★ 62:06) is an epic convening. Saxophonist Wilkins (on alto) is joined by Micah Thomas on piano, Ryoma Takenaga on bass and Kweku Sumbry on drums; from the opening track, "Warriors," they commence in channeling the spirits present at the venerable Village Vanguard. While "Warriors" is made of unabashed fire, "Composition II" is nothing short of a meditation. Thomas' piano has an almost aquatic quality, like a clear stream flowing over the song in its totality.

"Charanam" is an Alice Coltrane original which here is reincarnated from her Kirtan (or participatory musical meditation practice). It takes form as a groovy, rollicking hymn more aligned with a late-1960s psychedelic Galt MacDermot soundtrack.

"Eternal" is a somewhat modal, hypnotic ending to the work inviting the listener to meditate on the journey explored on all four sides.

PAUL C. RIVERA



Momoko Gill

Momoko

STRUT

★★★★

From the musical world of "beyond" comes Momoko Gill's debut as a leader. The London-based singer-drummer-keyboardist creates colorful soundscapes with electronics and overdubbing.

Gill, whose music on *Momoko* is inspired by jazz without actually containing much spontaneity, has a pleasing, light voice that would sound quite at home performing Brazilian music. Other than on "When Palestine Is Free," she is the entire show throughout the intriguing program. It begins with layers of electronic sounds on "Satellite," which give the piece an eerie outer-space feel. "No Others" features her voice with keyboards, percussive sounds in 6/4 and ensembles that become increasingly crowded as the performance progresses. A flute is used in the medium-tempo strut "Heavy." "Rewind/Remind" is a pop-oriented song with loads of overdubbing. The fairly brief "Shadowboxing" has call-and-response by Gill's solo voice and a self-made choir while "Test A Small Area" emphasizes electronic sounds.

On "2close2farr," Gill sounds like a folk-singer-songwriter as she performs over a quiet background pattern. She switches to spoken word on "Anyway, I'm Drowning," engages in rhythmic singing on "River" (with her keyboard emulating a soprano saxophone) and is thoughtful on the almost conventional ballad "Ineffably." Perhaps the most "radical" performance is on "When Palestine Is Free," where she uses an actual band. Shabaka Hutchings has a solo on baritone, there is repetitive playing by a horn section and a 50-voice choir pops up here and there. It makes one wonder what musical directions Momoko Gill will explore in the future.

—Scott Yanow

Momoko: Satellite; No Others; Heavy; Rewind/Remind; Shadowboxing; Test A Small Area; 2close2farr; Anyway, I'm Drowning; When Palestine Is Free; River; Ineffably. (39:52)

Personnel: Momoko Gill, vocals, electronics, misc. instruments; Alabaster DePlume, Shabaka Hutchings, Soweto Kinch, Tamar Osborn, reeds (9); Christos Stylianides, trumpet (9); 50-voice choir, vocals (9).

Ordering info: strut-records.co.uk

Ordering info: bluenote.com

DB

Corcoran Holt *Freedom Of Art*

HOT HOUSE

★★★★★

Bassist Corcoran Holt's second album is an impressive continuation of the direction he set with the same core collaborators on 2018's *Mecca*. Resolutely and resonantly out front, he leads an expansive yet connected quintet through sleek lines, minor modes and bluesy vamps that let everyone shine and work idiomatically together.

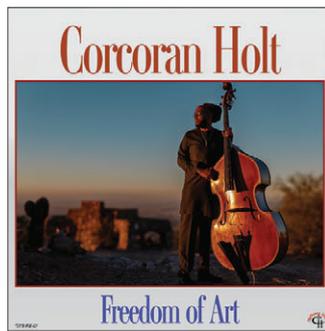
Freedom is a long program: the project of a man claiming his place in the profession's top rank. Check out his amazing solo on "Transition" and the unaccompanied outing "Kaz" for confirmation of his virtuosity. More tellingly, his fellow musicians support, validate and add to his effort. Gonzalez unfurls a Messiaen-like tonal array on what sounds like a Fender Rhodes on "Breathe." Dillard is a far-flying reedist, thrilling on uncredited soprano saxophone on "Kiss" and also "Free," where Evans plays simultaneously. Sumbry's always cooking.

When Nash joins Holt and Gonzalez, using brushes, on "Rae Ray," the three enjoy a light, elegant dance. Holt and Sumbry lock in with tension and drive like the great keystone duos: Mingus-Richmond, Garrison-Jones, Carter-Williams, Haden-Blackwell. Spotlight earned. —Howard Mandel

Freedom Of Art: Theme for Ma; Breathe in Peace (Khayiallah); Transition Blues; Golson Calling; Hello; Rae Ray; Kiss to the Skies; Affirmations; Kaz; Flatbush; Free at 3; I bou & Art; Raven's Call; Free; To My Dear Ones. (68:40)

Personnel: Corcoran Holt, bass, keyboards, vocals; Stacy Dillard, saxophones; Josh Evans, trumpet; Benito Gonzalez, piano; Kweku Sumbry, drums (2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14); Lewis Nash, drums (6); Seth Finch, keyboards (13); Thomas Glass, drums (13); Benny Golson, Kathy English Holt, Raven G. Holt, Art Mekhi Holt, Sharp Radway, spoken words.

Ordering info: corcoranholt.com



Simon Hanes *Gargantua*

PYROCLASTIC

★★★

Gargantua is indeed quite the gargantuan compositional work. Large in dynamic range, tonal variety, thematic depth and sheer length, Hanes drew from a wide and complex assortment of sources. The album's liner notes overflow with references to literary work — specifically the 16th-century pentalogy *Gargantua and Pantagruel* — Hanes' personal experiences, and an ongoing fascination with the raw power and unpredictability of volcanoes. These elements influenced the intensity and cohesion (or lack thereof) heard throughout the album. Hanes is to be commended for his commitment to writing such an ambitious work. The large orchestral ensemble is noteworthy as well.

However, *Gargantua* struggles to find its place. The music also struggles to serve well in support of most emotional needs for which people often turn to music as a solution or refuge. Academics and dedicated contemporary composers may find a treasure trove of interconnected details to sink their teeth into, but the bar for enjoyment or sustained listening is unusually high all around. —Kira Grunenberg

Gargantua: A Series Of Waves Tremble In A Sea of Blood, Gigantes, Knockandrow, Lacerated By A Flying Shard, The Number Of The Beast Is 666, Submit To The Fabulosity, Moirai, Lucifer / Aurem Chaos, I Am, Hekla 1970. (58:24)

Personnel: Simon Hanes, composer/conductor; Priya Carlberg, Isabel Crespo-Pardo, Jolee Gordon, vocals; Colin Babcock, Jen Baker, Jacob Garchik, trombone; Noah Fotis, Blair Hamrick, Kevin Newton, French horn; Anna Abondolo, Trevor Dunn, Jesse Heasley, electric bass; Matt Bent, Kevin Murray, Jonathan Starks, drums.

Ordering info: pyroclasticrecords.com



Ingrid Jensen *Landings*

NEWELLE

★★★★★

Although *Landings* is Ingrid Jensen's first leader album since 2007 without a coleader, it is a collective endeavor at its core. The 41-minute program opens with an ebullient treatment of George Coleman's 1970s tune "Amsterdam After Dark," on which Jensen — in superb form throughout — stirs the competitive juices of the 89-year-old tenor giant, whose self-knowledge and brilliance is palpable on a soulful, pointillistic solo woven together from short phrases that build to an explosive conclusion.

The track is a kind of misdirectional overture for the remaining 34 minutes, comprising three tunes by Jensen, one apiece by old friend Gary Versace and new colleague Marvin Sewell, Carla Bley's iconic "Ida Lupino" and Jim Knapp's "Home," all propelled by Jon Wikan's authoritative lexicon of dynamically varied straight-eighth grooves and rubato textures. If Newelle's PR sheet reflects Jensen's intentions, she's accomplished her goal of presenting "a band that transforms composed material into something fluid, surprising, and deeply alive," with "openness and generosity in the way [they play] together." This fan of the 60-year-old grandmaster hopes she'll find time to organize a fully unmediated document of her musical vision in the not-too-distant future. —Ted Panken

Landings: Amsterdam After Dark; New Body; Ida Lupino; Handmaidens Tale; Landings; The Workers Dance; Many Homes, Many Places; Home. (41:03)

Personnel: Ingrid Jensen, trumpet; Gary Versace, organ; Marvin Sewell, guitars; Jon Wikan, drums; George Coleman, tenor saxophone (1).

Ordering info: newelle-records.com



Work Money Death *A Portal To Here*

ATA

★★★★½

Musical transplants are always fascinating. Who would have expected the spiritual jazz of John and Alice Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders to sprout in the post-industrial north of England? Local Yorkshire legends Work Money Death's latest is tinged with sorrow and thoughts of mortality following the loss of guitarist Chris "Earl" Dawkins (remembered on "Brother Earl"), inviting the band to dip into long-form improvisation that is both inherently mournful and strongly tinged with resilience, recovery and even transcendence.

WMD have taken back those initials from lying politicians and put them to work in a restless, confrontational form of free-jazz that shows no desire to disguise, let alone deny, its antecedents. They've even drafted a harpist called Alice. All that said, WMD have an instantly recognizable sound of their own.

The north of England is not all Lowry townscape, whippets and *Coronation Street*. It is also the land of Holst and Delius, the frantic jazz busking/activism of the late Xero Slingsby and a strain of visual art that looks through the rain and the rock to deeper realities that lie below. The band name shouldn't fool you; for this lot, money isn't everything and death isn't the end, but ultimately it's the work that counts. —Brian Morton

A Portal To Here: Pain Becomes Prayer And The Prayer Becomes A Song; A Dance For The Spirits; Brother Earl; Sometimes It's Death. (52:07)

Personnel: Tony Burkill, tenor saxophone, flute; Ben Powling, baritone saxophone; Kev Holbrough, trombone; Richard Ormrod, alto saxophone, bamboo flute (4); Steve Parry, French horn, tuba (3); Johnny Richards, keyboards; Alice Roberts, harp (1); Neil Innes, bass; Sam Hobbs, drums.

Ordering info: atarecords.co.uk



Jazz at the Top of the World

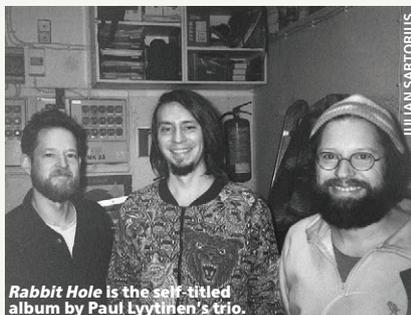
Swedish bassist **Bjørn Meyer** releases his second solo LP, *Convergence* (ECM; ★★★ 37:58), certainly not sounding alone with his deep drapery of effects. Minute details of Meyer's six-string electric axe fingerings promenade across the sonic stage, hanging decay contrails forming a deep tonal backdrop. He improvises in the studio, with an ear for instant composition, his bass often hiking up to a guitar range from graceful picking to forceful strums. Atmosphere has primacy. An interesting, nay frightening, strike opens "Drift," incongruously returning coated in far-distant reverb and echo to punctuate this floater. He makes a manifestation of systems music when he introduces rhythmic repetitions, as on "Motion," reminiscent of the style adopted by Andy Summers and Robert Fripp in 1982. "On Hope" features a slow tumble of notes and phrases, then "Rewired" shunts to a massive soundstage. Perhaps this album should have been longer than 38 minutes to accommodate these epic spreads?

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Hopping across to Finland, *Rabbit Hole* (Eclipse; ★★★½ 41:00) finds Helsinki tenor saxophonist **Pauli Lyytinen** working in a similarly landscaped zone. Rabbit Hole is also the name of Lyytinen's trio with Andreas Løwe (keyboards) and Julian Sartorius (drums). Roles are smeared, as Lyytinen and Løwe also employ electronic tweaks and coatings of unlikely tones and textures. Spontaneous spatial positioning also succeeds in painting this almost mystical geography. Sounds akin to koto and gamelans are sprinkled, alongside a general bleep-scattering, as the focus zooms in on the tenor's interior bowels. "Snirkel" has soft repeats, while "Mooncat" has a new-agey synth-warble and some imaginative percussion. Lyytinen takes a tenor solo on "Barrelling," his reed vibrating alongside piano progressions and slowclap percussion. All is softness, and ECM ought to welcome Lyytinen into its folds, so he could spread his highly evocative mysteries further.

Ordering info: eclipsemusicrecordlabel.bandcamp.com

Denmark is also offering quality deceleration (and thoughtful minimalism) with a piano trio album from **Ginman Blachman Dahl**, *Plays Ballads* (Storyville; ★★★½ 61:18), taking a standards selection down real slow. Each of them have a long history together (from 1992), but this is their first foray into radical ballad conversion. There's a moderate opening glide, but the genuine enchantment begins on the fourth track, as the Duke Ellington focus becomes apparent, followed by slow gems from Theloni-



Rabbit Hole is the self-titled album by Pauli Lyytinen's trio.

ous Monk ("Blue Monk") and Nat Adderley ("Work Song", the fastest, most emphatic interpretation here). There is a soft form of subversion to experience these tunes at an exceedingly careful pace, slinking and shimmering with spacious restraint. Thomas Blachman's brushes are out, softly rustling, while Carsten Dahl's piano notes are diligently in place. "C-Jam Blues" roams up a different avenue, and the album concludes with a Duke threesome (also with Billy and Mercer), "Satin Doll" reclining in the lounge, "Come Sunday" and "Things Ain't What They Used To Be" sealing this dreamy triumph.

Ordering info: storyvillerecords.com

The fourth Nordic album on show is the most mainline in terms of pace and push, but it's also, paradoxically, the least exciting. From Norway, bassman **Bjørn Alterhaug** leads his quartet, recorded high up in Trondheim. *Blame It On My Age* (Losen; ★★ 53:33) has tenor saxophone, piano and drums making up a classic lineup, but also a very conventional one, especially when viewed in the glowing context of this column's preceding releases. Alterhaug contributes four originals, with "Drum Bird" being the best, the others somewhat lacking, bland and prettified. Erlend Vangen Kongtorp has a pleasing tenor tone, but there are few untoward moves, the pieces being pleasantly played but unremarkable. Track 6 is where the LP lifts up, with "Oleo," a spirited reading with push and pull inside the quartet. Then there's a ballad with more heartfelt meaning, "Easy Living" adding velvet quality. Alterhaug is now 80, recently surmounting the effects of a 2017 stroke, although the lack is not with his playing but with some of the tunes and with the band relationship itself. Fortunately, some tension returns for Horace Silver's "Peace," with its tenor-drums tussle, followed by a second section that allows for meditation, and then a closing second romp through "Oleo," well justified: spirited, speedy and assured. **DB**

Ordering info: losenrecords.no



Tyrone Allen II UPWARD

DREAMS AND FEARS

★★★★

Sometimes a debut recording by a new artist can capture the zeitgeist as acutely as a veteran virtuoso working on their tenth commission. That's the case with *UPWARD* (yes, all caps), the inaugural album from bassist Tyrone Allen. It feels very of the moment, and the songs track from the COVID-era lockdowns to now.

For instance, the tone is intimate occasionally broken by recorded snippets of sound that sound like ambient recordings of gatherings, something that many of us longed for during the enforced isolation of the pandemic. "Cassia" is a dedication to his therapist, a clear indicator that he understands that acknowledging vulnerability is a strength not weakness.

Many of the songs are short; six of the 14 tracks check in at under two minutes, which means that most of the sideman/sidewoman work is toward the layering delicate ensemble textures and contributing the intense interiority of the music. The exceptions are tracks dedicated to solo harp from Samantha Feliciano, and on "alt.stuck" keyboardist Lex Kortzen and drummer Kayvon Gordon recall the warm intensity of Stanley Clarke's *Journey To Love*.

Allen, who grew up in Temple Hills, Maryland, is the son of an amateur electric bassist and began to follow the family tradition in high school. After studies with local DMV legend Paul Carr, Allen attended Eastman and Berklee before hitting the New York scene. Some musicians make debuts that could be soundtracks for Quentin Tarantino movies; Allen made one for Ingmar Bergman or Chantal Akerman. It's easy to admire his ambition.

—Martin Johnson

UPWARD: early 2020s, Smp Sng, Cassia, UPWARD, art day, The A-Side (Dedicated to R.P.), 2020s intro, Stuck, harp solo, Mood 1a-1b, Mood 1c, Alt.stuck, when was it ever smp/smp 4 me, Bass UNLIMITED. (40:18)

Personnel: Tyrone Allen II, basses, electronics; Aidan Lombard, trumpet; Neta Raanan, tenor saxophone; Lex Kortzen, keyboards; Samantha Feliciano, harp; Kayvon Godrdon, drums; Abe Nouri, live effects (2, 13).

Ordering info: tyroneallen.bandcamp.com

Whatever Happens Don't Be Yourself Tales Of No Consequences

IS IT JAZZ?

★★★★½

It's a contrarian album title for an ironically named band, but don't let that deter you this nonet assembled by Norwegian drummer Nils Are Drønen. WHDBY seems to have found an identity all their own, though figuring that out might be a challenge at first listen.

On the first two tracks, "Opus X" and "What's My Chances," we experience a building cacophony of drums and strident anthemic horns, followed by a defiant, one-riff punk shuffle on top and Nelly Moar's sultry vocals beneath. But the third track, "Stormy Nights," is a tender ballad, a lovely melody winding effortlessly through modal harmonies and meter changes. It's a stark juxtaposition, compounded by the mysterious titular track, a bowed bass-driven vignette layered with ambient guitar, piano and percussion.

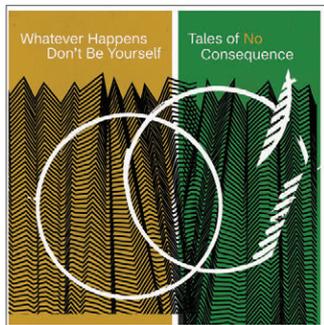
The remaining selections are more conventional jazz compositions, albeit with more leftward leanings. It's a somewhat scattered grouping of musical styles, bound together by the band's free-jazz aesthetic and Drønen's energized drumming throughout, discovering who they are via the stress test between order and chaos.

—Gary Fukushima

Tales Of No Consequences: Opus X, What's My Chances?, Stormy Nights, Where the Sky is Highest, Seventy-Two, Green Candela Blues, Tales of No Consequence, School Bus. (30:29)

Personnel: Nils Are Drønen, drums; Snorre Bjerck, percussion; Isach Skeidsvoll, piano; Aksel Røed, various saxophones; Rasmus Vik Lagerberg, vibraphone; Torkil Hjelte, bass; Mads Berven, guitar; Audun Waage, trumpet; Nelly Moar, vocals.

Ordering info: isitjazzrecords.no



John Pizzarelli Dear Mr. Bennett

GREEN HILL

★★★★

The accomplished guitarist and vocalist John Pizzarelli leads a classy trio on *Dear Mr. Bennett*, his heartfelt tribute to the extraordinary singer Tony Bennett. This expertly paced album starts with a swinging "Watch What Happens" and ends with "Shakin' the Blues Away": a snappy number only a tad less racy than "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," the recording's most energetic track. Bassist Mike Karn earns his solo for launching this exercise in speed and rhythm, which Pizzarelli makes even more manic with his nutty-fast guitar and scatting.

Pizzarelli's voice is smaller than Bennett's, but it's quite as expressive, and his guitar is a force unto itself. How well he deploys both is clear on "It Amazes Me." Pizzarelli's reverential vocal and patient guitar, along with the swelling lines of pianist Isaiah Thompson, contribute to the drama. Other highlights of this comfortable album are "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," "Young and Foolish" and Bennett's signature tune, "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." Pizzarelli's dry vocal and Thompson's florid piano color the knowing interpretation of "Boulevard," a stroll among the ruins of romance. This well-tailored album is a delight. It's nostalgia at its freshest.

—Carlo Wolff

Dear Mr. Bennett: Watch What Happens; The Best Is Yet To Come; It Amazes Me; Firefly; Boulevard of Broken Dreams; Because of You; It Don't Mean Waltz For Debby; Young and Foolish; When in Rome; I Left My Heart in San Francisco; It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing); Shakin' the Blues Away. (40:31)

Personnel: John Pizzarelli, guitar, vocals; Mike Karn, bass; Isaiah J. Thompson, piano.

Ordering info: greenhillmusic.com



Dave Slonaker Big Band Shifty Paradigms

ORIGIN

★★★★½

This is big-band jazz, L.A.-style. Orchestrator, arranger and composer Dave Slonaker has now held this Grammy-nominated aggregate together for over 15 years. And it shows. *Shifty Paradigms* is his third for the label and a fun listen.

"Dash Can" and "Bye Bye Blues" kick things off with forward-charging charts and solos and include standard big band section work, some swing and not a little backbeat. "Blue Windows" cools things off with a relaxed pace that almost stops midway until bassist Edwin Livingston gradually emerges on his own en route to more gentle charts and soprano. A quiet pause, its bluesy feel almost seems to waltz.

The title piece perks things up a bit, alluding to shifts that Slonaker apparently is making with his writing and aesthetic. It's a more subdued but tense kind of writing, the trombone solo reserved yet active as the moorish medium-tempo swing hovers like a warm blanket. A soprano solo is coaxed along by what is revealed as a signature sound: brassy intonation and intersectional riffing. A bit of Latin percussion adds some spice.

—John Ephland

Shifty Paradigms: Dash Can; Bye Bye Blues; Comin' Home; Blue Windows; Shifty Paradigms; 3rd and Four; Cathedrals; Roundabout. (62:19)

Personnel: Bob Sheppard, Brian Scanlon, Rob Lockart, Tom Luer, Adam Schroeder, reeds; Alex Iles, Charlie Morillas, Ido Meshulam, trombones; Wayne Bergeron, Dan Fornero, Clay Jenkins, Ron Stout, trumpet, flugelhorn; Bill Reichenbach, bass trombone, bass trumpet; Ed Czach, piano; Andy Waddell, guitar; Edwin Livingston, basses; Peter Erskine, drums; Brian Kilgore, percussion.

Ordering info: originarts.com



Max Ridley, Eleanor Elektra and Nat Mugavero Playing, Praying

577

★★★★

This session's quiet instrumentals and telegraphically sparse songs, recorded in the close quarters of Cambridge, Massachusetts' Lilypad, proceed without haste. There are points where it feels like the musicians aren't so much playing as witnessing the material's emergence at the same time as the listener.

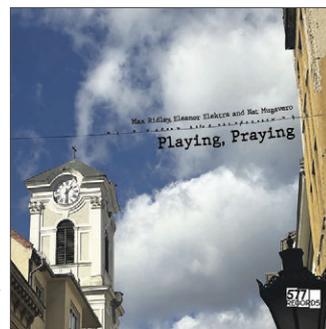
Bassist Max Ridley defines the music's foundation, plucking out the harmonic territory like a patient cartographer. On "When You Think Of Me" and "How Can I Explain," Eleanor Elektra takes her time before pushing thin lyrical thread through his open spaces. Elsewhere her warm-toned guitar is marginally more loquacious, but still uncluttered and logical as she sketches lightly shaded melodic contours. Drummer Nat Mugavero, probably older than the other two put together, is similarly enamored of sparseness. His kit sits unaccountably high in the mix, but he never hogs the soundstage.

The trio signals its reverence a bit too strongly. The album is strewn with moments of silence, which may have been experienced prayerfully in performance, but turn into so much dead space on the album. While *Playing, Praying* has moments of beauty, it could have been stronger if the trio had spent a bit more time both developing and discarding material. —Bill Meyer

Playing, Praying: Opening; Interlude; How Can I Explain?; Where; Horses; Two or Three; Ballad; Gather Together; When You Think Of Me; I Am There; Nat Talks; Time Time; Flower Moon; Trishul. (46:23)

Personnel: Max Ridley, bass, voice; Eleanor Elektra, guitar, voice; Nat Mugavero, drums, voice.

Ordering info: 577records.com





Charette uses scales from musical disciplines beyond the realm of bebop in his jazz improvisations.

Scales from the Far Side

Greetings, DownBeat readers: This month I want to give you a few of the tricks I use to get unusual modern sounds in my improvisations. One of my favorite things to do is to take scales from faraway lands or different musical disciplines and see how they could be used in a jazz context.

I present you with five examples of improvisational devices I use that are outside the category of bebop vocabulary. In the written examples, I've included very simple left-hand accompaniments just so you can hear how the lines work over the harmony.

For instrumentalists and singers who are not pianists, you can just record the left-hand parts into some software and loop the part slowly to practice the lines. Pianists, after you have learned the written left-hand part, feel free to improvise with different rhythms and voicing.

In actual practice I like to go between these devices and lyrical or bebop playing just to make sure my solo is not too mechanical.

3rd Mode of Limited Transposition

Example 1 starts with fairly straightforward bebop lines in bar 1 in the key of B. As mentioned, the left-hand part is made up of simple shell voicings so you can hear the harmony. In the right-hand part, bar 1 has a C#m9 arpeggio that slips into a B triad. As an aside, for many chords, some combination of a II (or ii) triad and a vii (or VII) triad make for great hexatonic arpeggios. We will talk more about this in the last example.

Bar 2 is where the fun begins. The harmony used is from French composer Olivier Messiaen. This particular scale is called the 3rd mode of limited transposition. These scales are symmetrical, meaning they behave like a diminished scale (actually called the 2nd mode of limited transposition by Messiaen) and can be transposed only a set number of times. The scale in C is C-D-Eb-E-F#-G-G#-A#-B-C. As you can see, the scale has both major and minor tetrachords and the pattern repeats every major third. If we transpose this to F#,

which our example is in, the notes would be F#-G#-A-A#-C-C#-D-E-F-F#.

I love to take triads out of these scales and superimpose the arpeggios on top of each other. In bar 2 we have major and minor third in the first two beats showcasing the nebulous nature of the sound. I also mix in a C+ arpeggio. The same idea is used in the last bar. I find this scale substitution works great over dominant harmony because of its angular sound. It does have both qualities of thirds and sevenths so our traditional harmony rules are basically suspended.

Here's an exercise for you to practice in 12 keys. In the key of C, play these triads as overlapping arpeggios and switch between them randomly: C, A \flat m and D+. Transpose into 12 keys for a mind-bender. There are other modes from Messiaen, but most people find Mode 3 the most useful.

Moveable Pentatonics

Example 2 takes a minor pentatonic scale starting a fifth above the chord root (Gm pen-

tonic over Cm) and moves it up a half step on each chord change to get great altered sounds on the F7#9 and an ethereal lydian sounds on Bbmaj7#11. The beauty of this technique is that the pentatonics are just moving up in half steps, so there is very little thinking involved.

Also, experiment with not trying to hear everything: Just try to hit the correct notes and just feel the patterns instead of making your ear muscle through your lines. Notice on the second bar we are playing a G# minor pentatonic over F7#9 and an A minor pentatonic on Bbmaj7#11.

For extra credit, practice this in 12 keys: Over dominant-seven voicing in your left hand, play an arpeggio of the I triad and the b3 minor pentatonic scale. Over maj7#11 shells, play III and VII minor pentatonic scales.

Hungarian Minor & Major

I go to Eastern Europe a lot, and I love the sound of Roma music. Example 3 shows the Hungarian Minor and Major scales in F: F-G-Ab-B-C-D-E and F-Ab-A-B-C-D-Eb, respectively. These scales have a beautiful sound. I like to use them over some kind of witchy ostinato.

The unusual notes in these scales and the space/intervals between them make for great lines. I usually think of the Hungarian Minor as a scale that I play lyrically. The Hungarian Major scale I like to think of as a I6 arpeggio and biii arpeggio, in this key, F6 and Abm.

Insen Scale

In Example 4 we use a Japanese scale called the Insen scale. You hear this scale very frequently in Japanese koto music. Over the Am7b5 in bar 1, we use the D Insen scale: D-Eb-G-A-C. It's actually a kind of altered pentatonic.

I like to respell the scale starting on the root for less thinking. Here, think of a iim7b5 with the addition of the fourth scale degree (A-C-D-Eb-G). You could also think of it as an A blues scale without the fifth scale degree. On the next bar we use an F Insen scale, which in relation to the chord root can be thought of as a C blues scale without the fifth. In the last two bars we have an A Insen scale or E Blues scale with no fifth.

Hexatonic Approach

In Example 5 we use the Hexatonic approach, which I mentioned briefly in the first example. I learned it from music guru Charlie Banacos, who was a Boston legend. In this approach we combine arpeggios of two triads. In bar 1, I combine Em and F triads with the addition of one tonic note for some harmonic grounding. In bar 2, I com-

bine I and VI triads, which gives me b9 and 13 sounds. In the last two bars I combine Am9 and a D triad for a nice #11 sound.

Tasteful Execution

In conclusion, use these devices with taste, especially the Messiaen modes. If everyone else on your gig or session is playing in a very traditional way, it may not be the time or place to use these devices. Try to fit in with every musical situation you are in; music is a team sport.

I like to use these ideas sparingly, and when mixed with lyrical playing, they have a big impact. Also remember to practice in 12 keys. This is the most important thing to do for sounding effortless in an improvisation.

In your physicality, be still, be aware. Is your shoulder going up? Are you tapping your foot? I find it so much easier to play music when my body and mind are relaxed. I advise some kind of meditation or exercise to cultivate stillness. While you are playing, follow your breathing and try to be outwardly focused. For more study, I have many articles and videos about these topics available on my website: mymusicmasterclass.com/artist/artists/brian-charette. **DB**

Brian Charette is a New York- and Los Angeles-based organist, pianist, writer and educator. In addition to being a Hammond endorser, Charette is a Cellar Live and Steeplechase recording artist who regularly appears in the DownBeat Critics and Readers Polls. His most recent recording is Vancouver Jazz Orchestra Meets Brian Charette with the Vancouver Jazz Orchestra. Visit him online at briancharette.com; instagram.com/pinchbrian; or facebook.com/pinchbrian.

Example 1

Example 2

Example 3

Example 4

Example 5



Brennan explores diminished-leaning sounds in her improvisation.

Patricia Brennan's Vibes Solo on 'Los Otros Yo'

This transcription of Patricia Brennan's vibraphone improvisation on "Los Otros Yo (The Other Ones)" from her 2024 album *Breaking Stretch* (Pyroclastic) was somewhat problematic because the solo sections (as well as the melody) don't seem to occur over a traditional chord structure. I would love to hear how Brennan explained improvising on this composition to the members of her septet.

Also, there is a lot of polyrhythmic syncopation in the parts that continues through the improvisation. Listening to the bass makes it sound like it's in 5/4, but I saw a live version and Brennan counts it off in 4 (and at the end of the eight-bar riff it seems to work out.) Because of the above, I've opted to present this transcription in 4/4 and with no key signature or chord symbols.

So, in the absence of a chord progres-

sion, what do we know? For one thing, there are a lot of diminished-sounding intervals and scales, which oftentimes makes spelling an issue (another thing that made this transcription troublesome). For instance, there's a motif where Brennan combines D with F and G \flat (heard in bars 1, 5, 25–28, 33, and snuck into the second beat of 47). I've chosen to write it as G \flat so as to not have to keep putting naturals in front of subsequent F's, but sometimes that can make reading trickier, since it makes the D-to-G \flat drop in bar 1 look like a fifth, when it's really a descending sixth.

This sound on its own is somewhat harmonically vague. Could this be R-#9-3; or 6-R-b9; or b6-7-R; or none of the above? The notes Brennan places around it don't help. Measures 1 and 5, the first appearances of this idea, contain no other pitches (Brennan

appears to want this motif presented in its starkest form before building on it). But in bars 25–27 an E \flat is added. Now we have the start of what sounds like a diminished scale. Bar 28 contributes an A \flat , which further delineates this sound. But in measure 33 we're back to the simple motif, except with the G \flat displaced by an octave (a hip way of bringing it back but not quite).

Brennan explores some other diminished-leaning sounds. Measure 21 starts with an ascending diminished seventh chord, which leads to another spelling issue: Writing A \flat makes the minor third from the F clear, but makes the subsequent interval (to B natural) look like more of a second. If I'd spelled it as G# that would've fixed the second interval but obscured the first. I could've written the high B as C \flat , but first of all, I try to avoid those spellings when I can, and also

it would make the next interval (to G natural) look weird. (There's really no winning with diminished chords.)

Speaking of that G, Brennan moves on to some other diminished leaning stuff, starting with the minor third from that G to B \flat , and then in bar 23 we have minor thirds and half steps. A diminished seventh chord is constructed of stacked minor thirds, and a diminished scale is alternating half and whole steps. Combining minor thirds and half steps creates something that sounds diminished but also not.

Through most of her solo Brennan has been playing single notes, but in measures 37–41 she plays some double stops (these had also been visited in bars 18–20). One thing about this section is that she leaves more space, thickening the texture but making the rhythm sparser. You'll also notice they're all diminished fifths/augmented fourths. Though they're played in half-step motion (for the most part), it still adds to the diminished nature.

Bar 45 is also mostly this interval, but only on one note (though in multiple octaves). The addition of the B natural puts a half step in there, which is within the diminished scale, but also references the earlier half-step motifs.

Another symmetrical scale sound is the whole-tone scale (named such due to it being consecutive whole steps). Brennan plays a descending one in measure 32 (starts at the end of 31), and it's intriguing how after playing one-and-a-half octaves of descending whole steps she switches to a half step to resolve into the next bar, which becomes the D for that motif mentioned earlier. (Also, the whole-tone scale is another tricky element to spell since at some point we have to make one of the intervals look like a third. I picked doing it between the E \flat and C \sharp , not for any particular reason.)

Another issue that came up was in bars 12–15. It sounds to my ear as though Brennan's vibraphone was recorded both acoustically and through an amplifier, the signal to which was run through some processing. There are a few points where it sounds like a pitch shifter is being triggered (from a foot pedal, I'm assuming). We hear the natural pitch unaltered and another signal that starts out as a unison and then slides down. Traditional Western music notation wasn't designed to transmit this sort of information, so we have to create our own symbols. I've put a downward arrow underneath the notes that this effect is used on.

Another aspect of Brennan's playing that I find intriguing is her juxtaposition of small and large intervals. There are spots (such as measures 6–7, 13–15, 30–31, 42 and 45)

that are mostly, sometimes exclusively, large intervals. This is unusual in and of itself, as it's rare to have soloists using consecutive large intervals, mostly because they make lines sound less melodic, less "singable."

There are also bars that are mainly scalar or chromatic motion (2–3, 8, 11–12, 16–17, 23–28, 32 and 37–38). The bar lines aren't borders; some of the examples I've given start or end partway into a measure.

Then there are the ways Brennan combines these. The final two bars are an example: some steps, a couple of jumps, some more steps, another jump, some more steps, jump, step, jump. It doesn't come off as predictable (listening to this solo, I don't think Brennan is going for "predictable").

In books on improvisation (and composition, and music in general) it's often stressed that large intervals are typically compensated for with scalar motion in the opposite direction. But Brennan jumps and keeps moving in the same direction, or puts two jumps in a row, or, if you look through the rest of the transcription, any number of things that go against these conventions. You'll also notice that sometimes she honors them. She's not violating musical norms just for the sake of it; it's in service to her statement.

DB

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. He can often be witnessed performing/rehearsing/teaching/pontificating online at [twitch.tv/CoincidenceMachine](https://www.twitch.tv/CoincidenceMachine). Find out more about Durso's music at jimidurso.bandcamp.com.

The image shows a musical score for a solo, measures 6 through 45. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B \flat) and a tempo of 208. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. A downward arrow is placed under a note in measure 14, indicating a pitch-shifting effect. Trills are marked with a wavy line and the letter 'tr' above them in measures 33 and 37. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above and below the notes in measure 33. The score ends with a double bar line in measure 45.

BEST OF THE 2026 NAMM SHOW

REPORTING BY ED ENRIGHT AND KATIE KAILUS

This year's edition of the music product industry's annual showcase for new instruments and gear was held Jan. 20–25 at the Anaheim Convention Center in Southern California. True to form, the sprawling, business-only event drew an enthusi-

astic cast of retailers, manufacturers, distributors and artists who browsed the exhibit areas and gave new product demonstrations.

In the following pages, DownBeat presents the best of The 2026 NAMM Show.



WALNUT SHELLS

Drum Workshop's Custom Shop has introduced a Collectors Series Kit in pure walnut. The new shells feature DW's vertical low timbre shell technology, helping the drums deliver a full-bodied, musical tone with a decidedly shorter note. Pure walnut serves drummers seeking a sonic personality that's suited for live performance and recording. Each shell is hand-crafted at DW's California factory and is available with DW's drum hardware, including Suspended Tom Mounts, MAG throw-off, five-position butt plate, TrueTone snare wires, True Hoops and True-Pitch tension rods. dwdrums.com



RUGGED CHARACTER

The Eastman FullerTone Offset Solid Body Electric Guitar delivers rugged character and lush, expressive trem work. Its ultra-stable Goldo DGM Tremolo, paired with the Goldo 3-point vario bridge, keeps tuning solid while responding fluidly. The long-tenon, two-bolt neck designed by Otto D'Ambrosio adds tone, sustain and stability. A pair of Tonerider soapbar-style humbuckers with distinctive gold-foil covers provide airy, surf-ready sparkle. Versatile and reliable, the FullerTone Offset — available beginning early 2026 in signature gold and Dakota red — fits into any rig. eastmanguitars.com



WARMTH, POWER & VERSATILITY

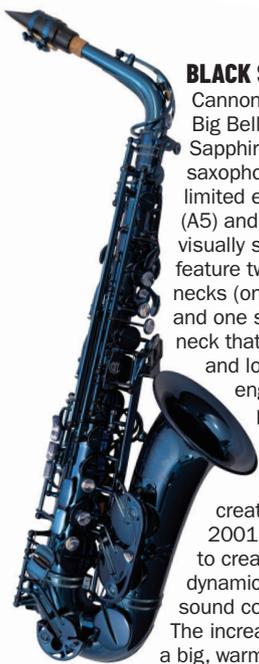
JodyJazz has released a Tenor edition of the DV JC JODY CUSTOM sax mouthpiece. Like the Alto model, it is based on JodyJazz Founder & President Jody Espina's personal, custom-modified DV Tenor mouthpiece. The mouthpiece's design has been refined to offer a balance of warmth, power and versatility. It's available in 6, 7, 7* and 8* tip openings.

jodyjazz.com



GRAND HYBRIDS

Kawai America has expanded its Novus line with the new NV6 and NV12 (pictured) hybrid pianos. Combining the authentic touch of Kawai's renowned Millennium III Hybrid upright and grand piano actions with next-generation digital sound technology, the NV6 and NV12 deliver a superior playing experience for musicians of all levels. The Novus NV6 offers a refined, compact design featuring the precision of an acoustic upright action, while the flagship Novus NV12 elevates performance with a true grand piano action and an immersive PentaDrive soundboard system. kawaius.com



BLACK SAPPHIRE

Cannonball introduced its Big Bell Stone Series Black Sapphire 30th Anniversary saxophone, available in a limited edition of premium alto (A5) and tenor (T5) models. The visually striking instruments feature two hand-customized necks (one original style neck and one specially designed Fat neck that emphasizes mids and lows), intricate hand engraving, 16 semi-precious stones and deep-black Sapphire Lacquer body and keys. The Big Bell, created by Cannonball in 2001, enhances the ability to create a broad range of dynamics for a depth of the sound color and lower partials. The increased size also lends to a big, warm tone. cannonballmusic.com



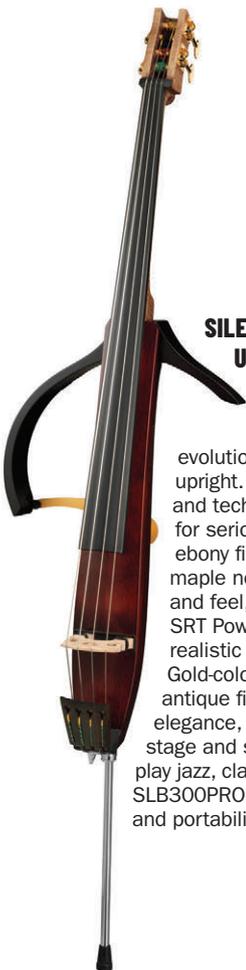
ENHANCED CLARITY, CONFIDENT CONTROL

Jupiter's JTB1160 series trombones include two B \flat /F models engineered for players refining their sound. Trombonists can choose between a traditional or open wrap. Both models feature a .547-inch large bore, 8.5-inch yellow brass bell, reversed tuning slide and redesigned leadpipe for a warm, open sound. The standard wrap model features a compact U-shaped tube that delivers focused resistance, supporting smoother tonal transitions and enhanced control. The spindle-shaped counterweight on the open wrap model stabilizes vibration and centers the sound, delivering enhanced tonal clarity and confident control in every register. jupitermusic.us



ACOUSTIC SYNTH

Korg's phase8 is an eight-voice acoustic synthesizer built on the company's Acoustic Synthesis technology. Using physically vibrating steel resonators paired with electronic systems, phase8 responds to touch, acoustic feedback and real-time interaction. With polymeric sequencing, modulation, parameter automation and swappable resonators, acoustic interaction and electronic synthesis are virtually inseparable. korg.com



SILENT ELECTRIC UPRIGHT

The SLB300PRO SILENT Bass is Yamaha's next evolution of the electric upright. Blending aesthetics and technology, it's crafted for serious musicians. An ebony fingerboard and curly maple neck ensure response and feel, while the dedicated SRT Powered System delivers realistic acoustic resonance. Gold-colored hardware and an antique finish evoke timeless elegance, making it ideal for stage and studio. Whether you play jazz, classical or modern, the SLB300PRO offers tone, playability and portability. usa.yamaha.com



RACING CULTURE DESIGNS

Toca Percussion's redesigned Elite Pro Congas and Bongos feature finished inspired by the golden age of Southern California automobile racing and classic 1970s car modification culture. They are available in two high-luster colors: Blue Impala and Eldorado Green. The Elite Pro Conga set features 28-inch-tall, two-ply Asian oak shells; they are available as a quinto-and-conga set with a double stand or as individual drums. The companion Elite Pro Bongos feature two-ply Asian oak shells with a Crimson Maple finish based, enhanced by the new racing-inspired graphic designs. tocapercussion.com

SNARE COLLECTIVE

With 16 models to choose from and created as an aggressively priced counterpart to Pearl Drums' legendary SensiTone line, the company's new Primal Snare Collective snares offer four vital shell materials in sizes for advancing and gigging drummers. They include Primal Steel (FE-C) snares with bright, high-pitched and sustained lively tones; Primal Aluminum (AL) snares that speak with a crisp, enhanced sonic dryness; Primal Brass (CU-ZN) snares (pictured) with sonically centered power and "wet" overtones; and Primal Copper (CU) snare drums, which have a deep, full, vibrant tone. pearldrums.com



DIMENSIONAL SHIFT



Casio's Dimension Shifter is a performance tool that lets guitarists wirelessly control effects, pedals and other gear through natural movement of their guitar strap. Previewed in 2024 as the Dimension Tripper, the device integrates into a standard guitar strap and using a proprietary control system that harnesses strap tension and spring return force, translates a player's movements into real-time control of effects parameters — whether tilting the neck to swell a delay, raising the body for a filter sweep or leaning back to unleash distortion. Dimension Shifter wirelessly connects to a pedalboard receiver, eliminating the need for extra cables and enhancing mobility. casiomusicgear.com

INSTANT ACCESS

The Ludwig Total Percussion Pad gives you instant access to over 2,000 global sounds, full mallet instruments and your own custom samples — all from a single, powerful surface. Stack layers, link pads and shape performance FX in real time using the Active control dial. With USB import, four external trigger inputs and a full feature, offline desktop app for advanced sound management, the TPP is built for any setup — from studio rigs to live stages. ludwig-drums.com



STROBE IN VIEW



Peterson Tuners has introduced the StrobeVUE, a strobe tuner with pure buffer output. Building on the legacy of Peterson Tuners' StrobeStomp HD, the view-only StrobeVUE delivers strobe tuning accuracy in an always-on pedalboard format. Its angled, high-visibility display and fully top-mounted jacks keep setups clean. With pure buffered output, continuous tuning feedback and no mute switch, StrobeVUE is built for players who demand precision. petersontuners.com

CONN PRO ALTO



Conn Selmer has released the CAS811LTD150 CONNfirmation Limited Edition 150th Anniversary Alto Saxophone. Designed and hand-crafted for a sound that is warm, colorful and robust with maximum flexibility, the legendary Conn sound is now available in a modern horn developed with today's eminent jazz and commercial saxophonists. Throughout the entire scale, the CONNfirmation's timbre is complex and boasts remarkable intonation. It features lightning-fast response, is exceptionally free-blowing and offers massive projection. It includes a generative bell brace, retro-modern wire guards and neck key, oversized bow brace, knurled neck screw and lightweight neck receiver. It's further distinguished with true rolled tone holes, limited-numbered engraving, a bespoke grenadilla end plug and a custom case. connselmer.com



ROY HAYNES' 100TH

Yamaha has introduced the Roy Haynes 100th Anniversary Signature Snare Drum in copper. The snare is made to the exact specs requested by the late jazz drumming icon, and features a carefully hand-hammered copper shell, an internal mute and one-piece SD3 lugs. Crafted by experienced artisans at Yamaha's Hamamatsu, Japan, plant, the Roy Haynes Signature Snare Drum captures the rich warmth and depth of copper combined with the sharp, crackling sound that Haynes was famous for. usa.yamaha.com

ARTISAN HOME PIANOS



Roland's KF-20 and KF-25 (pictured) are the latest models in the company's KIYOLA line of artisan digital pianos. Hand-crafted in Japan, the KIYOLA series represents the longstanding collaboration between Roland and the artisans of Karimoku, expert Japanese wood furniture manufacturers since 1940. Every KIYOLA is a one-of-a-kind instrument with unique grain patterns and natural aging. Driven by Roland's advanced Piano Reality Modeling, the KF-20 and KF-25 produce warm, uniquely voiced tones to reflect their distinctive cabinets. The PHA-50 keyboard is the perfect match, featuring a proprietary Roland design that delivers an authentic feel and deep expressive range inspired by the finest grand pianos. roland.com

JAZZ EDUCATION NETWORK

18th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Power of JAZZ



JANUARY
6-9, 2027

LOUISVILLE, KY
Galt House Hotel

#JEN2027

jazzednet.org

APPLICATIONS TO PERFORM /
PRESENT OPEN APRIL 1



SERIOUS MUSIC PRODUCTION

Universal Audio's Volt 876 USB Recording Studio is a 24-in/28-out rackmount USB audio interface for Mac and Windows with eight Vintage preamps and classic 1176-style compressors on every channel. Delivering next-generation 32-bit/192 kHz audio quality, Volt 876 is designed for serious music producers and bands who want legendary UA analog sound, a curated suite of UAD plug-ins and powerful integration with UA's LUNA Digital Audio Workstation. Volt 876 is a complete recording system with powerful hardware-software integration, including instant session recall, AI-powered tools in UA's LUNA DAW, software remote control and the premium UAD Producer Suite plug-in bundle. uaudio.com



PRO-LEVEL CONTROL

The Zoom LiveTrak L6max is a battery-powered portable digital mixer-recorder built for musicians who need pro-level control in a compact format. With six upgraded preamps, 12-track recording and flexible input options, it delivers clean, detailed audio in any environment. Each channel includes a three-band EQ, compressor and dedicated FX send for quick, intuitive shaping. The L6max also offers two customizable headphone mixes, onboard effects and 12-in/four-out USB audio interface functionality. zoomcorp.com



WIDEBAND ANTENNA MATRIX

Wiscom launched its wideband antenna matrix, MATF, which supports RF and fiber for demanding multi-zone wireless infrastructures. Developed in response to growing complexity in distributed wireless setups, the MATF consolidates multiple rack-based components into a single, flexible unit. The system allows users to combine up to eight RF zones in diversity, delivering either 8:4 or two times 4:2 outputs. The input modules include both pure electrical (BNC) RF inputs, as well as up to six fiber-input modules. On the output side are four coaxial RF output pairs, that provide either four equal diversity outputs or two times two diversity outputs, depending on the chosen configuration. wiscom.com



WARM, COLORFUL SOUND

The new S.E. Shires Vintage LA Small Bore Trombone blends historic influence with contemporary craftsmanship. Inspired by the legendary Los Angeles-built small bores of the mid-20th century, this small bore trombone provides a warm, colorful and instantly familiar sound ideal for jazz and commercial settings. Featuring a two-piece yellow brass medium-weight bell, a lightweight .500 bore slide and vintage-style bracing, the Vintage LA delivers lively clarity, quick response and expressive depth. eastmanmusic.com



ROLLED TONE HOLES

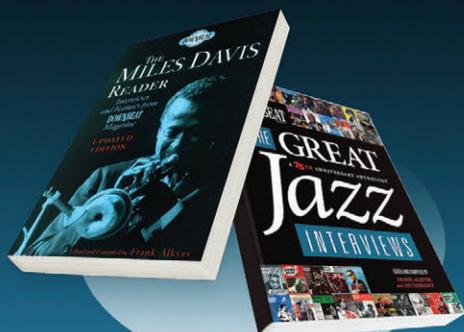
P. Mauriat's 20th anniversary PMXA-67RBX alto saxophone and PMXT-66RBX tenor saxophone (pictured) were originally released as part of a special limited-edition run at the 2023 NAMM Show, and pro players were drawn to the freeblowing playability and huge tonal palette of the rolled-tone-hole instruments, which feature a traditional Germanic bore with a slightly wider body tube flare, a bigger bow and a larger bell than traditional French-bore saxophones. The horns' attractive price points, not to mention their cool-looking black nickel plating and gold-lacquer keywork, added to their uniqueness and appeal. Now, P. Mauriat continues the lineage of those 20th anniversary saxes with slightly updated versions of the PMXA-67RBX and PMXT-66RBX, which come with an upgraded Boston Sax Shop Accessories Kit that includes a box of five Boston Sax Shop-branded reeds and a T-bar style neckstrap. pmauriatmusic.com

VIBRANT TONAL PALETTE

Vandoren's VK synthetic reed line has expanded with the introduction of the VK7 for tenor saxophone, which offers a similar bold, colorful sound and responsive feel that jazz and contemporary players appreciate in the company's alto model. Made from composite material, the tenor VK7 delivers consistent performance and offers a vibrant tonal palette with exceptional projection. Designed for saxophonists seeking durability and rich artistic expression, the VK7 provides a compelling new option for performers seeking the nuance of cane with next-level reliability. Available now in six strengths. dansr.com



The DownBeat Collection



DOWNBEAT.COM





The Jerome Sabbagh Quartet, from left, Nasheet Waits, Joe Martin, Ben Monder and Sabbagh.

JEROME SABBAGH'S ANALOG TONE FACTORY

When tenor saxophonist Jerome Sabbagh wrote “Lone Jack,” which opens his most recent album, *Stand Up (Analog Tone Factory)*, he wasn’t thinking of any of the tenor players he counts as major influences — Stan Getz, Joe Henderson and Sonny Rollins. He was thinking of Ray Charles.

“For that song, I could really hear his voice in my head, specifically *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music*, both volumes,” he said recently in an interview from his Brooklyn home. “I had listened to him some as a kid, but I think I came to appreciate him more over the last 10 to 15 years. Everything he does is just so expressive and connected. The phrasing is off-the-hook good. I’m as influenced by great singers as I am by great saxophone players.”

Sabbagh, a 52-year-old Paris-born expatriate who has lived in New York since 1995, has a lyrical, warm-toned tenor saxophone style; he makes music that is understated, contemplative and deeply swinging. He is nothing if not versatile, however. He’s at home with everything from mainstream blowing to bebop to free jazz. Like Getz, he generally maintains a mellow tone and favors memorable melodies; his compositions are full of them.

Over the years, Sabbagh has played with greats. As one of legendary drummer Paul Motian’s last saxophone players, Sabbagh played a week at the Village Vanguard in 2011 in Motian’s New Trio with guitarist Ben Monder. He has also recorded or performed with Kenny Barron, the late Al Foster, Mark Turner, Bill Stewart and Andrew Cyrille, among others.

His own quartet, formed in 2004, has released four albums; *Stand Up* is the group’s

first new release in over a decade. The quartet features Monder, bassist Joe Martin and the newest member, drummer Nasheet Waits, replacing longtime member Ted Poor. “Ben is a great comper, both supportive and prodding,” Sabbagh said. “He’s very creative, with a super-deep sense of harmony and a wide palette of sound. Even though I come from a traditional bebop thing, I don’t always write that way. If I go into free stuff, he can do that; if I go into rock stuff, he can do that, too.”

He describes Joe Martin as “the perfect bassist for me,” citing his enormous range. “He knows a ton of standards, he’s got a great ear and a great sound, he’s a great soloist. He’s also very humble and serves the music all the time: a great quality in a bass player. He’s like the glue that makes everything work.” As for the newest member, Sabbagh considers Waits “one of the great drummers of today: a link to the masters of this art form, like Billy Hart, Jack DeJohnette, Billy Higgins and his dad [renowned drummer Freddie Waits].”

After recording 10 albums as a leader with other labels, Sabbagh founded his own label, Analog Tone Factory, two years ago with his partner, pianist and recording engineer Pete Rende. As the name suggests, the label is all about analog and audiophile sound: They specialize in recording exclusively to analog tape.

The recordings are released on AAA 180-gram vinyl (the AAA designation means that no digital conversion is involved) and reel-to-reel tape (in addition to digital). Musicians are always recorded performing live in the same room.

The idea for the label began with a suggestion by Doug Sax, the late, revered mastering engineer. Sabbagh had been working with Sax on a quartet album, *The Turn*, for Sunnyside. “He really liked the sound of it, and he was a vinyl specialist. He suggested that I press vinyl for that record. So, I did a Kickstarter and fundraised to see if people liked the idea. I got enough money to do it, about \$6,000. I pressed 500. That record ended up being well reviewed and was really successful in audiophile circles. I sold out, then re-pressed 500.

“I was already paying a lot of attention to sound. This got me thinking that, if I pressed vinyl on a regular basis, then went all the way and made it all-analog, this would also be a way to produce records.” His independent label was still a few years off, but Sabbagh was now becoming a highly regarded producer of audiophile jazz on vinyl.

“For my next record I kept that blueprint. I did two more Kickstarters, one for *No Filter* in 2018, the first one that is all-analog [recorded to tape], then for *Vintage*, with Kenny Bar-

WANEES ZAROUR



“Zarour’s contribution is among those that demand to be kept close, the kind of record that insists on repeat listening... Its seven original compositions unfold like chapters in a novel.”

— Thierry De Clemensat, Paris Move



waneesarour.com

NEW RELEASES



GinmanBlachmanDahl Play Ballads

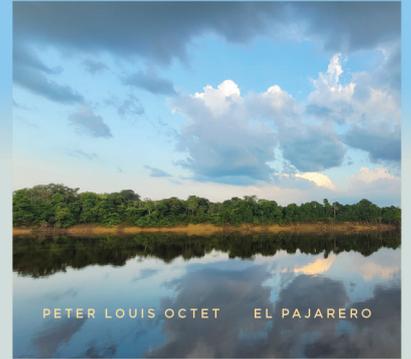


Duke Ellington Copenhagen 1964

STORYVILLE
STORYVILLERECORDS.COM

US: ArkivJazz – www.arkivmusic.com

PETER LOUIS OCTET EL PAJARERO



Peter Hellbronner Guitar + Vocal
Oscar Feldman Alto Sax + Flute
Michael Webster Tenor + Soprano Sax
Fred Maxwell Trumpet
Matt McDonald Trombone
Nanae Atarashi Piano
Art Guevarra Bass
John Marino Drums
Guest Artist:
Roberto Quintero Percussion



peterlouisoctet.com

NEW RELEASE FROM ENVELOPMENTAL MUSIC RECORDS

NEGATIVE PRESS PROJECT + FRICTION QUARTET



CYCLES I

“sumptuously detailed instrumental arrangements. Reverent but unintimidated, their sound is a seamless blend of chamber jazz [...]”

—San Jose Mercury News

DIGITAL, STREAMING, CD & AUDIOPHILE VINYL



www.envelopmentalmusic.com



TOM PETRONE WAITIN' ON THE L TRAIN

A rich sonic journey through time paying homage to the golden era of Jazz.

Featuring the new single “Manifesto”.



Streaming now on all platforms!



www.mpmusichouse.com

A Guide to Jazz in Japan:

40+ jazz clubs
200+ musicians
Jam sessions
Vinyl stores
Jazz kissa
Cultural history

A love letter, a passport, and a masterclass all rolled into one



More at: www.jazzinjapan.com

MEG OKURA
The Pan Asian Chamber Jazz Ensemble

NEW ALBUM

...grandiloquent beauty that transitions easily from grooves to big cascades to buoyant swing.

The New York Times

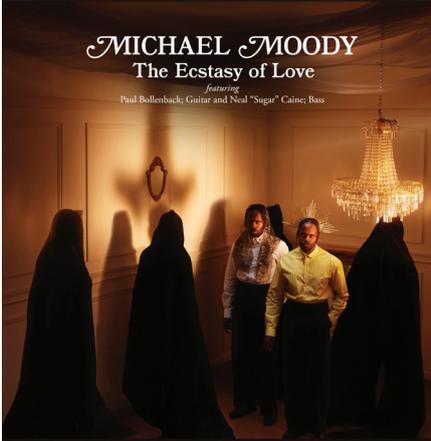


Co-produced by
Remy Le Boeuf
featuring
Randy Brecker

ADRYAROMA RECORDS

MICHAEL MOODY
The Ecstasy of Love

featuring
Paul Bollenback; Guitar and Neal "Sugar" Caine; Bass



Vocalist Michael Moody delivers agility, tonal depth, and emotional clarity on *The Ecstasy of Love*, a jazz statement marked by intentional phrasing and respect for chord changes, cultivating classic standards into deeply personal art.

Featuring Paul Bollenback and Neal Caine

Available March 20th

IRVING FLORES

ARMANDO MI CONGA
Top 10 New Reorderings 2025 – Scott Yanow Cadence Magazine
#6 Most Popular Song 2025 – All About Jazz



THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD BEST OF 2025

“INDISPENSABLE”

IRVING FLORES FEATURING:
Horacio ‘El Negro’ Hernández,
Giovanni Hidalgo,
John Benitez, Brian Lynch,
Norbert Stachel.

CONTACT:
www.irvingflores.com
management@irvingflores.com

THERE'S A YEARNIN'
MUSIC FOR WINDS AND VOICE



JEFF LEDERER / MARY LAROSE
WITH THE WILDBEEST QUINTET

New from Little (i) Music releases May 2026 on vinyl/CD/digital

Music by Ornette Coleman, Oliver Nelson, Jeff Lederer, and the **first-ever recording of a woodwind suite by Eric Dolphy!!!**

See the group at LongPlay Festival NYC (May 3) and on tour fall 2026.

www.littleimusic.com
little **i** music
... sounds with vision

ron. They were on Sunnyside, but I basically licensed the digital to them and did the vinyl myself. At that point, I thought the natural thing to do would be to control everything and just do it all myself. That's why, with my friend Pete, we decided to create Analog Tone Factory."

The new label would be an outlet for Sabbagh's own music but also for that of people they admired. The first album they released was *Heart*, a Sabbagh saxophone trio album with Joe Martin on bass and Al Foster on drums. It was followed by saxophonist Chris Cheek's *Keepers Of The Eastern Door*, featuring Bill Frisell, bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Rudy Royston.

The eight original songs on *Stand Up*, the label's third release, are each dedicated to important people in Sabbagh's life who influenced him either musically or personally, including Motian, Barron, Stevie Wonder and Sam Rivers. Compared to the digital versions, the all-analog recordings "just sound a notch better — like we're playing in the room with you."

Future releases will include an all-drums record with four masters: Andrew Cyrille, Billy Hart, Bill Stewart and Nasheet Waits — "all drummers that I love," he said — and a new Mark Turner record with his new band of guitarist Lage Lund, bassist Vicente Archer and drummer Johnathan Blake.

Being an artist and running a label is tricky, he said, "because it's two different hats. There are only so many hours in the day. It's a struggle to keep working on the music at the level I want to be at, keep composing and practicing and also do all the jobs of the label. It's helpful because you build your own mailing list, and you're not beholden to the powers that be. We're sort of a special case. The audiophile community helps sell the records. We don't make a lot of money on digital: Nobody does and nobody can. It's taken me 10 years to learn how to do it and build up the clientele."

Musically, Sabbagh's goal is to integrate the two sides of his personality. After arriving at Berklee in 1993, he knew what he liked and didn't like, but had a ways to go technically to play what he heard — "and it's still ongoing," he said.

He says he's still trying to reconcile his diverse influences, "the person in me that wants to play free music, and the person who connects with the way Stan Getz plays a melody. Those things to me are not contradictory, they constitute who I am as a player. Like the way I play standards versus the way I play original music. For a long time, I felt I wasn't always exactly the same player when I did one compared to the other.

"Now that I'm a little older, I feel like maybe I've refined myself, that I'm more the same player whether I play standards or original music. It's taken me a long time to develop that, and it's valuable. I come from the school of, 'it's important to have your own voice' — whatever that is."
—Allen Morrison

David White -Trio

Mark Walker
John Lockwood

WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING

The latest release from the boundary-pushing guitarist and his empathic trio, music that "intrinsically defines modern jazz: the ephemeral experience of the here-and-now." (Paul Rauch, AAJ)

21st century modernism at its finest: genre-crossing yet rooted; masterful yet accessible; elastic yet grooving. Freedom in form.

On all streaming platforms or at www.dwhitejazz.com

NEW RELEASES FROM BASSIST MARTIN WIND



★★★★ "...a combination of amazing musicianship and undoubted camaraderie."
- Frank Alkyer, DownBeat



"September" is a dialogue between continents, generations, and musical temperaments ... melodic, grounded, and full of soul

LP "Stars" is available at www.newvelle-records.com.
CD "September" available at www.lajika-records.com
and www.martinwind.com (U.S. only)
Both albums streaming on all platforms.

Eve Cornelious



Eve Again... Naturally

... warm voice and swinging style makes one wonder why she is not a lot more famous.

~ All Music Guide

Anthony Wonsey
piano

Will Lyle
bass, conga

Larry Q. Draughan Jr.
drum set, triangle

Dr. Ira Wiggins
saxophone, horn voicings

Robert Trowers
trombone

Lynn Grissett
trumpet

CONTACT

jazzvox1@gmail.com
www.eve-cornelious.com



©TonEveJa Records
2025

8 octopi - New Jazz Songs

8 octopi *frail boat*



A new, multi-layered jazz song collection by the Swiss quartet **8 octopi**.
- rich yet easily accessible.

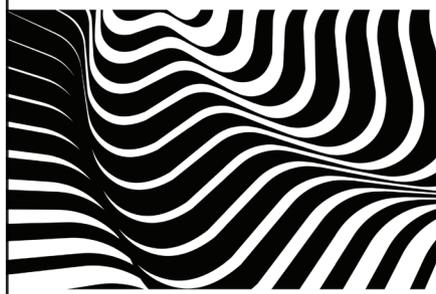


BERTHOLD REC

www.benzahler.ch



ROBERTO MAGRIS
DENIS RAZZ QUARTET *IN ACTION*



With Karlo Ilić and Rajko Ergić

Roberto Magris, who is originally from Italy and has worked often in the United States (particularly in Kansas City, Chicago, Miami and Los Angeles), has been quite prolific since the early 1980s, leading over 40 albums including many for the JMood label. The pianist is a world class jazz player with a modern post-bop style. In contrast, the veteran saxophonist Denis Razz is little-known outside of his native Croatia, but he can hold his own with most Americans. The release of In Action is not only a new milestone in the productive career of Roberto Magris but an opportunity for listeners not living in Croatia to discover the impressive talents of Denis Razz, Karlo Ilić and Rajko Ergić. - Scott Yanow



Available now at www.jmoodrecords.com and
jmoodrecords.bandcamp.com

STEVE KORN

Vocalist Eugenie Jones notes that actively pursuing a Grammy nomination gave her "the means by which I launched my music to a wider world," a win even though the Grammy nod did not come her way.



AN INDEPENDENT'S GRAMMY GAUNTLET OF STRATEGY, STAMINA & SOUL

In 2025, after 12 years in the industry, I released my sixth album, *Eugenie*, on my own Open Mic record label. Despite having an MBA and a career in marketing, this project was a difficult undertaking, more challenging than almost any professional endeavor I have faced.

What set this experience apart was that it was more than an album release; it was a feel-the-fear-and-do-it-anyway vie for a Grammy nomination.

When the cellophane finally wrapped around the packaged storylines and music we had poured our hearts into, I felt a deep sense of pride in what my collaborators and I had achieved. Yet, despite an album that charted for 25 weeks (peaking at No. 4 on JazzWeek), a multimedia release campaign, and a comprehensive For Your Consideration (FYC) campaign, the "golden gramophone" remained out of reach.

But this is not a story of defeat or loss; it is a transparent look at marketing strategy, logistics, actionable hope and the analysis of a resilient spirit, which I hope others will find helpful.

The Marketing Strategy

One tactical marketing consideration was recognizing early on that the logistical gauntlet for a Grammy nomination does not begin when the Recording Academy opens its entry portals. Rather, it's an all-encompassing blan-

ket that touches every consideration, including determining the album's scope and theme, selecting songs and arrangements, securing personnel and even selecting a release date.

For instance, when I chose a release date, I didn't just consider production timetables; I also considered aligning my album's street date with the Grammy submission deadline, which offered a dual advantage. The attention a new release garners — its media, reviews, airplay, charting and its subsequent buzz — would not only promote the release, but it would also reach the ears of voting members close to voting time. While the exact impact is difficult to quantify, its relevance is validated by the sheer volume of music hitting airwaves during this timeframe.

In the end, I decided to buck the odds and launch my project in January. Perhaps because patience is not my strong suit, but also because I believed releasing singles and videos after the major album release would keep my music relevant and extend its longevity into the Grammy season.

My campaign strategy also took some big

marketing swings, such as placing an ad in Billboard magazine. But I also incorporated grassroots, bedrock tactics, such as placing album-release flyers in the goodie bags of jazz convention attendees, with QR codes that gave these audiences early access to my release while providing early indications of which tracks would be most marketable as singles.

Budgets, always a concern for indies, prompted me to learn how to design my own thematic music videos and to create and launch a "backstory" video series, allowing me to speak directly to viewers and share my artistic journey and the meaning of featured songs. Recording Academy guidelines allow pitching to voting members only during certain dates, so these early awareness-building efforts did not directly target them. But some voting members would inevitably have come into contact with the content, as it aimed for "music-interest" demographic profiles.

I also used more traditional tactics, including touring with my album release, hiring a promoter for FYC email blasts, setting up a FYC web page, running social media cam-

paigns, and posting on Grammy-themed website pages. My face-to-face networking was limited to volunteering for the Academy's National Advocacy Committee, but there are many such activities that offer this type of service and relationship-building opportunities to voting members.

Once Recording Academy rules allowed, I shifted to direct peer outreach and spent many hours in one-to-one exchanges with other artists: sharing FYC content, taking the time to listen to their music, offering sincere feedback, and encouraging their endeavors. It was during these peer exchanges that the true spirit of the Grammy process was most apparent. I met several incredible creators, made new friends and business connections, and listened to wonderful music I might not have heard otherwise.

Have the Goods

These efforts highlight only some of the possible promotional considerations, but more important than all of the above is the music. Having "the goods," as they say, is the "heart," while campaign strategy is the "ribcage" that protects this vital organ. I approached *Eugenie* with the emotion of a creator and the discerning eye of a surgeon, willing to remove or redo anything that was not reflective of my best at every step along the way. This level of commitment to excellence was a persistent, uncompromising standard and is also another benefit of being an indie artist: You get to say, "When."

For me, having the goods also meant recording original vocal jazz. To date, I have recorded 32 original songs, earning high praise from some and exclusion by others who view vocal jazz as a challenge to entrenched institutional definitions of the genre. This juxtaposition highlights another advantage of being an independent artist: You get to choose your journey, follow your values and to not allow others define you.

All Told

Comprehensively, this type of campaigning was daunting, requiring long hours, late nights and missed workouts. Yet, fueled by the clarity of a purposeful "why," I kept going, believing in my work, and having the audacity to pursue an acknowledgment that 20,000 other artists were pursuing as well.

And while the journey's end did not result in a nomination, that outcome does not diminish the quality or value of my work or lessen my pride in what we accomplished.

Instead, the opportunity of the Grammy process and its marketing strategy were the means by which I launched my music to a wider world. And that was the win: a win that offered a purposeful calling we as creators are bound to pursue with courage and confidence.

To learn more about my music, please visit eugeniejones.com.
—Eugenie Jones



AUBREY JOHNSON

THE LIVELY AIR

Vocalist Aubrey Johnson's
THE LIVELY AIR
out March 20, 2026
on Greenleaf Records

"This record is competitive with the very best I've heard."
— Al Pryor, Grammy Award-winning producer and broadcast executive

Directed by Dave Douglas
Greenleaf Music

TOM JOHNSON JAZZ ORCHESTRA

TIME TAKES Odd TURNS

TOM JOHNSON
JAZZ ORCHESTRA

DEBUT ALBUM
"TIME TAKES ODD TURNS"

"PHENOMENALLY WELL PLAYED . . . A SPIRIT STIRRING, WILD WHIRLWIND OF JAZZ, POP, AND BIG BAND FUN ON PAR WITH ANY OF THE MORE FAMOUS VETERAN ENSEMBLES WORKING TODAY . . . BRILLIANT ARRANGING AND RECORDING"
(JONATHAN WIDRAN)

"A SUMPTUOUS ORCHESTRAL JAZZ ALBUM . . . TRULY PHENOMENAL ARRANGEMENTS"
(THIERRY DE CLEMENSAT)

SEE THE BAND LIVE AT THE JAZZ KITCHEN, INDIANAPOLIS, IN, MAY 26, 2026.

ALBUM AVAILABLE ON ALL MAJOR STREAMING SERVICES

CD AVAILABLE AT:
TOMJOHNSONJAZZORCHESTRA.BANDCAMP.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO:
TOMTUNESMUSIC.COM



Sugar Bomb is, from left, Eli Kahn, Jacob Bruner and Joe Enright.

A SUGAR BOMB BLAST

In talking with jazz fusion trio Sugar Bomb, it's apparent there is instant chemistry among the band-mates. Keyboardist Jacob Bruner and drummer Joe Enright were chilling at home in Asheville, North Carolina, while bassist Eli Kahn was spending time in Thailand following some recent tour dates.

From their kidding banter and quirky interplay via Zoom, it would seem they were lifelong friends, but the band didn't come together until 2023.

Last year the group released two boundary-pushing jazz EPs: *Sweet* in May and *Explosive* in September. Both records represent contrast as the trio's creative philosophy. *Sweet* showcases Sugar Bomb's more mellow side with melodic atmospheres, whereas *Explosive* illustrates heavy grooves and electronic production that nods as much toward drum-and-bass culture as toward the jazz piano tradition. It was only right they fused both EPs together to create their debut full-length album, *Sweet + Explosive*, late last year, so listeners could get a full grasp of the band's wide-ranging approach to music-making.

"I think the album came from real life experience in a way," said Bruner. "When we first started playing together, we didn't necessarily have a super long outlook and a specific plan of what it was going to be. Musically we were kind of finding our identity. We were playing chill jazz gigs, and then, when we'd be messing around having fun, it would end up being a lot crazier."

When they were trying to come up with a

name for the band and titles for the EPs, the phrases "sweet and explosive" and "sugar bomb" both expressed a sense that "OK, we can play both things," Bruner said. "We don't necessarily have to choose. And being able to do both of those types of gigs, too, scratches different itches for us as musicians."

To put Sugar Bomb into a single musical container would be a futile endeavor, as there are multiple layers to the band's sound, which encompasses jazz, funk, soul, electronica, techno and beyond.

Much of *Sweet + Explosive* emerged organically from the bandstand, where live improvisations grew into compositional material.

The album's opening track, "Rubber," which they call the "first" Sugar Bomb song, began as a spontaneous duo experiment between Bruner and Enright: a tune invented on the spot that has evolved into the trio's warm-up ritual.

The album version is atmospheric, while a bonus live version reveals its harder-grooving edge: evidence of the band's interest in translating performance energy into studio production.

When Sugar Bomb began playing together, the band was still discovering what kind of en-

semble it wanted to be.

The trio's home base of Asheville, which has a little over 100,000 people, leans more into bluegrass and funk-based venues, with a few rooms offering jazz piano trio sets and a limited number of spaces presenting more adventurous jazz. Still, the band sees new opportunities emerging, including the opening of a new jazz club in Asheville.

"There are some of the most amazing musicians I've ever heard in my life here," Bruner says. "But there's no venue infrastructure to reflect how much talent is here."

In this challenging yet increasingly fertile environment, Sugar Bomb's rehearsal sessions evolved into something significantly more volatile. "When we'd be messing around having fun, it would end up being a lot crazier," Enright recalls, describing a sound that moved naturally from laid-back jazz club textures into something closer to electronic fusion.

Rather than choosing one lane, Sugar Bomb chose coexistence. "It's kind of nice to drop in a couple crumbs for people," Kahn says, whether that means bringing intensity into a jazz room or inserting moments of delicacy into a festival set.

The result of the band's contrasting musical

experiences is a debut album that feels more like a statement that the band is still in motion and figuring out where they fit in.

Just as their debut record came about organically, so did the band's name. Before settling upon it, Kahn found himself repeatedly opening his mailbox to discover sweet treats accompanied by swarms of ants.

"One day it was a lollipop, one day it was a Rice Krispies Treat," he laughed. "Someone was intentionally trying to get ants into my stuff." Texting his bandmates that someone had "sugar bombed" his mailbox, the phrase stuck. That sweetness-versus-destruction tension extends beyond the music into the album's visual design, too.

For the "sweet" side, Sugar Bomb constructed cover art from pink candy wrappers (until the company issued a cease-and-desist).

For the "explosive" side, the band used fireworks wrappers. The vinyl edition physically separates the two halves, reinforcing the idea of a split between softness and firepower.

While Sugar Bomb operates within the piano trio format, its reference points stretch well beyond what one would typically think of in terms of jazz. The band cites Flying Lotus, a producer known for his beat-driven experimentalism, alongside jazz-adjacent artists like Austin Peralta and English duo Yussef Kamaal as major influences. Kahn draws heavily from '70s fusion (Return to Forever, Mahavishnu Orchestra) while also emphasizing electronic dance music as central to the trio's vocabulary.

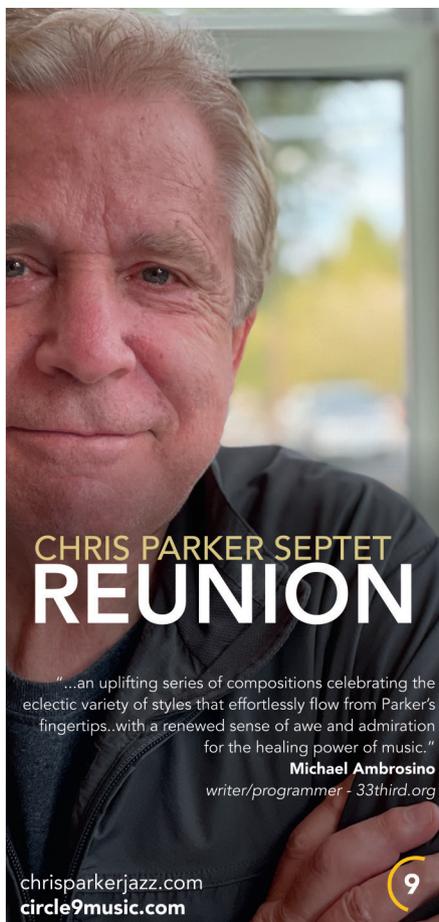
"Techno and drum and bass are a huge influence on the way I play," Kahn said. "We go to meetings once a week for our drum-and-bass addiction."

All three share formal training backgrounds, which they describe as both foundational and constraining. Kahn and Bruner, who studied classical music, recalled being drawn toward jazz for its sense of possibility. "The road you can go down in classical is fairly limited compared to jazz," Bruner says. "Jazz felt unlimited."

That freedom — paired with technical discipline — shapes Sugar Bomb's ability to move fluidly between styles without losing cohesion.

The trio was especially encouraged by the enthusiastic receptions they received during festival appearances in Thailand last December. Those experiences reinforced their belief that audiences are hungry for new forms, even music that's completely foreign to them.

If *Sweet + Explosive* is a debut of contrasts, Sugar Bomb sees deeper definitions in upcoming releases. A live EP, *Live At The Trap*, recorded during an Asheville gig, is due this spring. The trio is also working on beat-tape experiments, hip-hop-oriented projects and even an interactive rhythm-game music video for the song "Eli Special." An indie video game featuring a cartoonized version of the band is also in the works. And later this year, they expect a new album that will reflect a more unified vision. "The first one was like, 'What is our identity? Here's two options: Jekyll and Hyde,'" Kahn says. "The next one will be what we actually sound like now." —Veronica Johnson



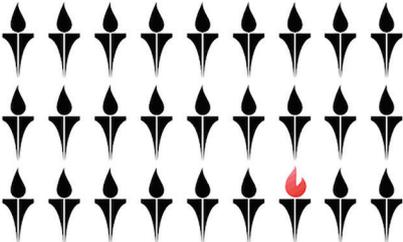
CHRIS PARKER SEPTET
REUNION

"...an uplifting series of compositions celebrating the eclectic variety of styles that effortlessly flow from Parker's fingertips...with a renewed sense of awe and admiration for the healing power of music."
Michael Ambrosino
writer/programmer - 33third.org

chrisparkerjazz.com
circle9music.com

NEW FROM HOLLISTIC MUSICWORKS

BRIAN LYNCH TORCH BEARERS
SAMARA JOY / ORRIN EVANS / ROB SCHNEIDERMAN / BORIS KOZLOV
KYLE SWAN / LUIS PERDOMO / ULYSSES OWENS
and featuring **CHARLES McPHERSON**



"... a manifesto for the expansive creative possibilities attainable in the realm of hardcore jazz-as-such in an era when the milieu in which the music evolved — indeed, its very history — is under threat of erasure."

- TED PANKEN

www.hollisticmusicworks.com

Andrea Calderwood
with John Daversa



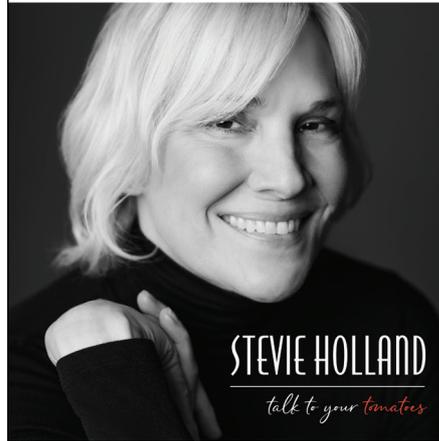
The Future's Calling

Also Featuring:
Genevieve Artadi, Katisse Buckingham, Kyle Crane, Artyom Manukyan, Charlie Morillas, Vardan Ovsepiyan, Andy Waddell, Jerry Watts jr., Leah Zeger, and more.

Featuring eclectic new arrangements for voices, low brass, rhythm section, electric trumpet, flute, sax, cello, violin, theremin, & more.

On itunes, bandcamp, and more.
www.AndreaCalderwood.com

"Listening to Stevie Holland, you understand jazz can be smart and silly at the same time. It's liberating."
— **Michael Filip Reed, Indie Boulevard**



STEVIE HOLLAND
talk to your tomatoes

"Holland exudes warmth, class and confidence with seemingly effortless aplomb and inbred swing..."
— **George Harris, Jazz Weekly**

talk to your tomatoes
Streaming on all Platforms and on CD and Vinyl



DB Music Shop >

For Rates: call (630) 941-2030. All ads are prepaid, no agency commission. Check, money order, and all major credit cards are accepted. **Deadline:** Ad copy and full payment must arrive 2 months prior to DB cover date. **Send your advertisement by MAIL:** DownBeat Classifieds, 188 W. Industrial Drive, Ste. 310, Elmhurst, Illinois, 60126. **EMAIL:** cameron@downbeat.com.

WE BUY OLD RECORDS!
WE MAKE HOUSE CALLS ANYWHERE IN THE USA
CALL US TOLL FREE
888-993-4673



LP's, 45s, 78 & 12"
 No Collection is too Large!

pm woodwind
 Chicago's Best Store for Saxophones
 & all other Woodwinds. Great Selection. Expert Repair.

www.pmwoodwind.com
 847-869-7049

JAMEY AEBERSOLD JAZZ

World famous play-a-longs, books, CDs, and DVDs for every improvising musician from novice to pro.

jazzbooks.com

OVER 2,000 PRACTICE TRACKS
STREAMING.JAZZBOOKS.COM

ONLINE JAZZ LESSONS.

Study all styles & aspects of jazz improvisation and saxophone with **Jeff Harrington, Berklee Professor, MIT Affiliated Artist, Harvard University MLSP Instructor.**

www.jeffharrington.com
 Email: lessons@jeffharrington.com.
 617-332-0176.

SteepleChase

53 years of jazz recordings

Premium International
JAZZ VINYL & CD

Download complete catalogs
www.steeplechase.dk

US Distribution
Naxos of America



Purchase through Naxos of America at [ArkivMusic](http://ArkivMusic.com)
www.arkivmusic.com/collections/SteepleChase

JAZZ DVD'S / VIDEO

Concerts, documentaries, movies, TV, DVDs, Videotapes, Laserdiscs

We take requests at:
service@jazzwestdvd.com

JAZZWEST,
 BOX 842 (DB), Ashland, OR 97520
 (541) 482-5529 www.jazzwestdvd.com

DB Buyers Guide >

150 Music 71	Elemental Music Records 41	MVD Entertainment Group 39, 40
150music.com	elemental-music.com	mvdshop.com
ACT Music45	Eve Cornelious67	Negative Press Project 65
actmusic.com	instagram.com/eve.cornelious_	negativepressproject.com
Alma Records40	Fordham University 10	Nonesuch Records 35
almarecords.com	fordham.edu	nonesuch.com
Analog Tone Factory40	Grappa69	Origin Records42
analogtonefactory.com	grappa.no	originarts.com
Andrea Calderwood 71	Harry Skoler11	P. Mauriat75
andreacalderwood.com	harryskoler.com	pmauriatmusic.com
Aubrey Johnson69	Hat Hut Records34	Peter Louis Octet 65
aubreyjohnsonmusic.com	hathut.com	peterlouisoctet.com
Bauer Studios 33	Irving Flores66	Resonance Records38
bauerstudios.de	irvingflores.com	resonancerecords.org
Ben Zahler67	JEN – Jazz Education Network 61	Sony Music9
benzahler.ch	jazzednet.org	sonymusic.com
Blue Note Records 5	JMood Records 67	Storyville Records65
bluenote.com	jmoodrecords.com	storyvillerecords.com
Brian Lynch 71	JodyJazz 76	Thomas Johnson69
hollisticmusicworks.com	jodyjazz.com	tomtunesmusic.com
Cannonball Music2	Little (i) Music66	Tri-C Jazz 14
cannonballmusic.com	littleimusic.com	tri-cjazzfest.com
Casio25	Martin Wind67	TurnTable Tickets 15
casio.com	martinwind.com	turntabletickets.com
Chicago Symphony Orchestra 12	Meg Okura66	Vandoren3
cso.org/jazz	megokura.bandcamp.com	dansr.com
Circle 9 Music 71	Michael Moody66	Wanees Zarour65
circle9music.com	linktr.ee/michaelmoodymusic	waneesarour.com
David White67	Michael Pronko 65	XO Brass7
dwhitejazz.com	jazzinjapan.com	xobrass.com
DownBeat 4, 10, 63, 73	MP Music House 65	Ystad Sweden Jazz Festival8
downbeat.com	mpmusichouse.com	ystadjazz.se

GETTA HOODIE!



DOWNBEAT.COM

Blindfold Test > BY TED PANKEN

Janis Siegel

Midway through February, Janis Siegel hosted DownBeat for her first-ever Blindfold Test in the living room of her Greenwich Village apartment, filled with CDs, vinyl, scores and numerous photographs, memorabilia and bric-a-brac from various points along the timeline of her singular career — including her 15th leader album, an inspired 10-tune Cy Coleman tribute titled *The Colors Of My Life*, sung in duo with pianist Yaron Gershovskiy.

Dianne Reeves/Christian McBride Big Band

"Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" (*Without Further Ado, Vol. 1*, Mack Avenue, 2025) Christian McBride, arranger; Dianne Reeves, voice; Carole King, Gerry Goffin, composers. [immediately] Dianne Reeves with Christian McBride. It starts off like it might be "Maiden Voyage," but it's not. I think she's recorded this before. Very nice reharmonization. Great arrangement and orchestration. Dianne's voice has an unmistakable depth and authority. She's singing it simply. There's no melisma, no pyrotechnics. It's straight to the heart. But she hears all those inside chords, and plays with the melody using those intervals. She's very rhythmically sophisticated. Where she places the note is masterful. 5 stars.

Jo Lawry

"317 East 32nd Street" (*Acrobats, Whirlwind*, 2023) Lawry, voice; Linda May Han Oh, bass; Allison Miller, drums.

I like to hear sopranos who have a full sound. Is it Jo Lawry? It's with Allison Miller and Linda May Han Oh. I've been a fan for a long time. I love Jo's voice. She has incredible pitch, right in the middle of it, and fluid scatting, not necessarily the bebop language, but in her own more modern syllabic way. 4 stars.

José James

"38th and Chicago" (1978, *Rainbow Blonde*, 2024) James, vocals; Chad Selph, keyboards; David Ginyard, bass; Marcus Machado, guitar; Jharis Yokley, drums; Pedrito Martinez, congas, percussion.

José James. He reminds me of D'Angelo and that neo-soul vibe. He has a beautiful, breathy, sexy voice. He has a beautiful falsetto. He also sings jazz standards beautifully, as on his Billie Holiday record. Snappy dresser, too. Is this new? I liked the arrangement, the Latin funk flavor. I like the harmonies that he adds. 4 stars.

Alicia Hall Moran

"I Like The Sunrise" (*Heavy Blue*, Yes, 2015) Moran, voice, piano; Mary Halvorson, Brandon Ross, Thomas Flippin, guitar; Tony Scherr, bass; Marika Hughes, cello.

Duke Ellington's "I Like The Sunrise." It's a very good piece for classical singers to attempt because of the melody. Duke liked to work with operatic sopranos, like Kay Davis and Alice Babs. Was that Renee Fleming? 3 stars. I didn't feel the beauty of Ellington's music coming through. The lyric implies to me that there's the energy of the dawn, and the sun is coming out. This sounded dark. Not hopeful, like a new day.

Kurt Elling/WDR Big Band

"Speak No Evil" (*In The Brass Palace, Big Shoulders*, 2026) Elling, vocal, lyric; Wayne Shorter, composer; Tim Hagans, arranger; Bob Mintzer, conductor.

Kurt Elling. This is Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil." It's Kurt's lyric. The big band is great. I like how he's holding straight tone on the ends of those phrases. His enunciation is very good. This is awesome. 5 stars. Kurt has pushed vocalese into the future. He has an amazing instrument, with so many colors he plays with, growls and squeaks, all perfectly calibrated. He's a very good writer and a deep thinker. He has a lot going on in his head, and I love that it just comes out. He's also a great entertain-

While writer Ted Panken, right, didn't play Ella Fitzgerald for the Blindfold Test with Janis Siegel, the vocalist passed with flying colors!



er, urbane and witty. If the audience just wants a nice interpretation of a standard, he can do that. His energy seems boundless. He's on top of contemporary male vocalists.

Becca Stevens

"Wild Eyes Open" (*Maple To Paper*, GroundUp, 2025) Stevens, guitar, vocal.

Becca Stevens. She's probably playing guitar, too. She's a storyteller. In her higher register she has the breathy quality you hear in a lot of young women singers these days, especially in the pop world, but she has a lot of substance in her lower register. Is this is from a new album? It's very good. It's a real talent to write simple language that goes straight to the heart without abstract metaphor and poetry. 5 stars.

Aimée Nuviola/Gonzalo Rubalcaba

"Lagrimas Negras" (*Live In Marciac*, 5Passion, 2021) Nuviola, voice; Rubalcaba, piano.

Sounds like a young singer. I love the piano. She's definitely full throated, with a Celia Cruz kind of presence. I don't know her. The pianist is so conversant with those rhythms, it has to be someone born in Cuba who's also a jazz player. Their interplay is so tight and feels so spontaneous. It's fascinating to hear someone improvise within those rhythmic frameworks. To hear this mastery is really stunning. 5 stars. I would listen to that again. She's great.

Kate Kortum

"The Best Is Yet To Come" (*Wild Woman Tells All*, Bandstand Presents, 2026) Kortum, voice; Tyler Henderson, piano; Jared Beckstead-Craan, bass; Max Marsillo, drums.

Kate Kortum. This is good. Her voice has a lot of dimensions and colors she's playing with. Echoes of Ella and Sarah, certainly. Nice young pitch! And the vibrato at the end of the phrase, very nice — but not too much. And personality in her voice. She could straddle the worlds of cabaret and jazz. I think she got a very good education at the Frost School of Music; a lot of great singers came out of that program. 5 stars.

James Brown

"It's Magic" (*Soul On Top*, Verve, 1969/2004) Brown, voice; Oliver Nelson, arranger; Louis Bellson Orchestra.

"It's Magic." I know it, though I don't do it. This is an older Black female vocalist. No? I'll go out on a limb and say I think it's James Brown. Beautiful. You don't often hear James Brown doing this. But man, can he can do it! He's still deeply within his own style of feeling the rhythm and vocal squeaks and squeals and all that stuff. Who's the arranger? Oliver Nelson and James Brown! And Louis Bellson! Amazing. 5 stars. **DB**

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

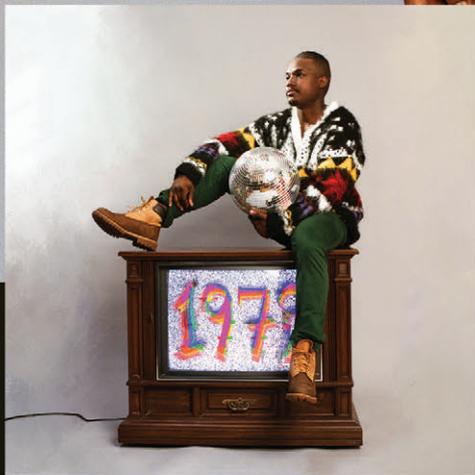
BERNELL JONES II

PLAYS THE SYSTEM-76 TULF

Originally from Memphis, TN, Bernell Jones II is an NYC-based multi-instrumentalist experienced in multiple forms of American Music, including jazz, gospel, blues, and R&B.

P. mauriat
Go for the Sound

Photo Credits: Indie Studios NYC



His latest single, **"1979 feat. Julius Rodriguez"** will be available April 17th wherever you access your music.

A New Force of Nature in Saxophone Mouthpiece Performance

The New JodyJazz QUASAR™ —
The brightest and most powerful
mouthpiece we have ever made.

Celestial Quasar — the brightest object
in the universe, releasing immense
amounts of energy. The JodyJazz QUASAR
Alto represents the next generation of
power, projection, tonal brilliance and
responsiveness in saxophone mouthpieces.



Harnessing the Power of the Universe

Every QUASAR is hand-finished by JodyJazz Artisans
and individually play-tested to ensure peak performance.

