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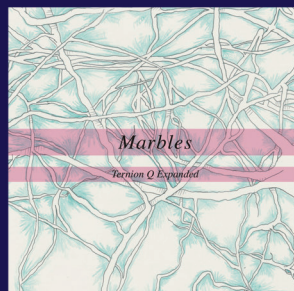
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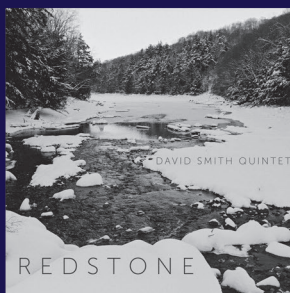


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MAY 2026

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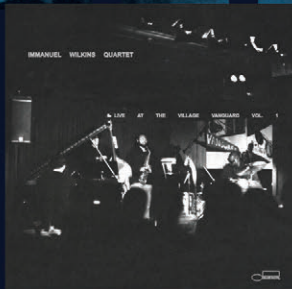


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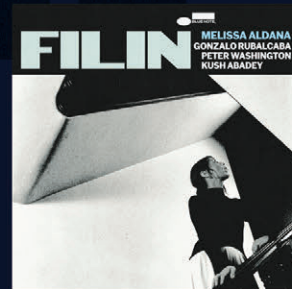
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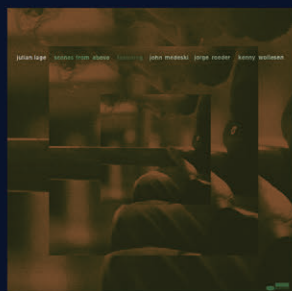
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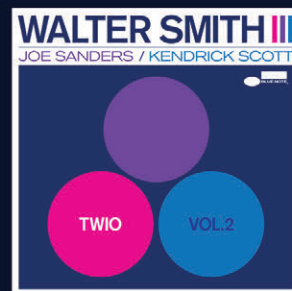
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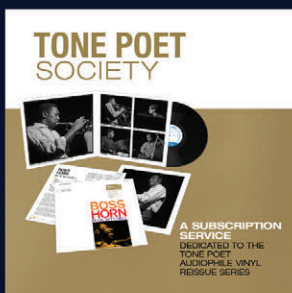
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# Inside

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BY ASHLEY KAHN

To celebrate the great trumpeter's centennial, writer Ashley Kahn sat down with bassist/producer Marcus Miller, trumpeter/composer Terence Blanchard, drummer/nephew Vince Wilburn Jr., journalist/historian Lauren du Graf and New Yorker critic Richard Brody at Jazz Congress in January to share thoughts, stories and insights on Davis' impact on music.



"I still feel like I'm 6 years old, trying to learn this Michael Brecker solo and just trying to get through it," says Melissa Aldana. "And I'm always going to feel like that, it doesn't matter how old I am."

Cover photo by Tom Copi

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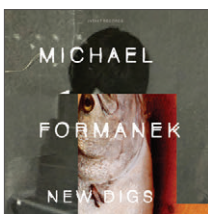
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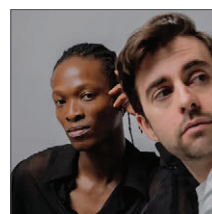
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Anthony Wilson



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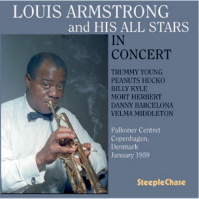
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NAXOS

## First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



With live tributes and new recordings, the Miles Davis Centennial is in full swing.

# Miles & Miles of Miles

THE CENTENNIAL OF ONE OF THE MOST important artists in jazz history is truly something to be celebrated. Such is the case with Miles Davis. Our feature, beginning on page 20, certainly offers a slice of perspective on the trumpeter's popularity — even after 100 years.

But the centennial aims to bring entirely new audiences into this music with a slew of tours, discussions and musical projects sweeping the jazzosphere. Here are a few things to look forward to for Miles fans new and old.

### Tours and Tributes

For those in the mood for live tributes, there are plenty of opportunities. There's M.E.B. (the Miles Electric Band) touring. The group includes Miles alum (and Davis nephew) Vince Wilburn Jr., Darryl Jones, Robert Irving III, Marc Cary, Jean Paul Bourelly, Munyungo Jackson and Antoine Roney, with Keyon Harrold on trumpet and special guest DJ Logic.

There's also former Miles Davis bassist Marcus Miller hitting the road with the We Want Miles tour. Miller, a longtime Miles associate, brings a powerful lineup that includes guitarist Mike Stern, saxophonist Bill Evans, percussionist Mino Cinelu, trumpeter Russell Gunn, keyboardist Brett Williams and drummer Anwar Marshall.

Pianist Emmet Cohen will be offering his own tribute to both Davis and John Coltrane (whose centennial is in September) with Miles & Coltrane at 100 in a quintet that includes trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, saxophonist Tivon Pennicott, bassists Yasushi Nakamura and Reuben Rogers and drummer Joe Farnsworth.

The Brussels Jazz Orchestra will be doing a

European tour of "(...) What's Not There," a "creative dialog" with Davis' legacy, with special guest Ambrose Akinmusire.

In addition to tours, there are plenty of one-off events that could stir the soul. For example, Bobby Previte's Pocket Orchestra will be offering his long-time *Bitches Brew* project at the Ottawa Jazz Festival.

### Recordings Galore, Too

Along with the live material there is a treasure trove of Miles-related reissues and tributes.

Blue Note Records will be releasing the Tone Poet Vinyl Edition of Davis' *Birth Of The Cool* (Capitol, 1949-'50).

Columbia/Legacy Recordings has released *Miles Davis—The Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel 1965* for the first time in 30 years as a 10-LP or eight-CD set.

Over at Prestige, they've released another beautiful box, *Miles Davis 56, The Prestige Recordings*, a 4-LP, 3-CD set.

As for new music, drummer Gregory Hutchinson has released *Kind Of Now: The Pulse Of Miles Davis*, with an all-star cast of trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, saxophonist Ron Blake, guitarists Jakob Bro and Emmanuel Michael, pianist Gerald Clayton and bassist Joe Sanders.

Also, former Davis keyboardist Jason Miles has released *100 Miles For Miles Davis*, a tribute consisting of eight original compositions all inspired by his time playing with Davis.

### More Miles

Still need more? One Jazz radio (online at [onejazz.net](http://onejazz.net)) will be hosting "Miles Runs the Weekend Down" with 48 hours of music, interviews and commentary on May 23 and 24. **DB**



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Miles Davis

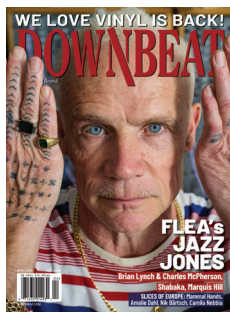
Three Days in Malibu

Photographs by Ralph Quinke

Photographs by Ralph Quinke  
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### Flea Fanfare

Years ago, one of my sons introduced me to the Red Hot Chili Peppers. And I've come to appreciate much of their material. Hearing at least a couple of tunes with some really sweet trumpet work, I have long wondered where that came from — and now I know! As I write this I've just started browsing the April issue, but look forward to reading about Flea's latest — it has already been preserved on my music streaming service. Once again, *DownBeat*, nice work on covering the "Beyond" artists and their forays into the jazz world — and yes, I suspect "there will be letters on this one!"



JOE FRANK  
 KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE

### Over 'Beyond'

You're doing cover stories with Flea now? You're a jazz magazine and you're doing far too many stories on non-jazz artists. Your core subscribers want to read about those jazz artists. Over the last six months I've really contemplated my renewal, which is sad because I LOVE jazz and your magazine. Hope you correct course.

KEVIN MCINTOSH  
 STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN

**Editor's Note:** Thanks for your note, Kevin. We tend to hit to all fields, especially when a major artist outside of the improvised music world dips their toes into our crystal clear water — Joni Mitchell, James Brown, Frank Zappa, Jimi Hendrix and Sting immediately come to mind. Hopefully, this issue will be more to your liking.

### Crowing About Maria Schneider

Once again *DownBeat* is responsible for convincing me to purchase another record. After reading Allen Morrison's excellent article/interview with Maria Schneider in the March issue, I ordered the *American Crow* CD. In hockey terminology, I credit Maria with the goal for her eloquent description of the two versions of the title track and the new version of "A World Lost" from *Data Lords*. Frank Alkyer gets an assist for his great review [online] of the record. After listening to the recording, I totally agreed with his review, especially his comment "even chaos sounds beautiful in Schneider's hands." Same with "The Maria Schneider Orchestra is one of the greatest joys in jazz today, *American Crow* is proof."

I've seen the MSO live five times (twice in 2023), and each time their shows made it to my top 10 best jazz shows for the year. They have been my favorite big band — and Maria my favorite composer — since 2013.

MARC NEBOZENKO  
 EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

### Give Rudy Some Love!

As a subscriber to the fine magazine, I cannot believe drummer Rudy Royston was not on the top drummers list [last] year! Rudy is easily one of the best out there! The voters must be from another planet! Keep up the good work.

JOSEPH KUBOVCIK CLAYTON  
 VIA EMAIL

**Editor's Note:** Joseph, we hope your reminder will bring more Rudy voters to this year's critics and readers polls!

### Praise for Jazz Education

I came to the United States from Jeju Island, South Korea, in 2003 to search for jazz, its language, its community and the life it makes possible. I'm writing to share a short story of gratitude that also speaks to something I believe *DownBeat* understands deeply — in many places, U.S. public-school jazz is not a "school activity." It is a living public infrastructure for music and for the young people and families who find their way into it.

The most important part of this story is my son. His name is Russell. He is 14 years old, a 9th grader, and currently plays trumpet in the Newton South High School Honors Jazz Ensemble (directed by Lisa Linde) and the Honors Jazz Combo (directed by Joel Yennior). I first discovered these programs after reading *DownBeat's* coverage introducing Lisa Linde as an award-winning director. That single piece of information changed our family's trajectory in a very concrete way: I took my son to audition, he earned his place and we eventually moved so he could attend Newton South High School and grow inside that community.

As a parent and as someone who has spent decades trying to keep jazz alive through publishing, teaching and community work, I want to say this plainly: I am profoundly grateful for U.S. public-school jazz education and for educators like Lisa Linde and Joel Yennior.

I often say that my son has been hearing jazz since he was in my body, and now we share the "jazz spirit" in real time — on the way to rehearsals, in the way he practices, in the way he talks about the music. Jazz became our common language across generations and across immigration.

SUYEON YANG  
 VIA EMAIL

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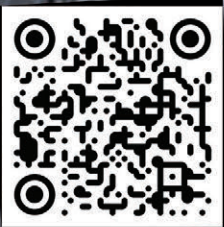
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"You cannot quit," drummer Adonis Rose, right, told vocalist Phillip Manuel. "There's no way in hell you can stop being a performer, as great as you are."

## A Taste of New Orleans with Adonis Rose & Phillip Manuel

As if Grammy-winning drummer, composer, producer and educator Adonis Rose didn't already have his plate full as artistic director of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, a position he's held since 2017, he's now joined forces with another New Orleans native, acclaimed singer-lyricist Phillip Manuel, on *Unusual Suspects*. Backing the two principals on this recording for the Moocha Music label are a crew of Crescent City rising stars in bassist Max Moran, saxophonist Ricardo Pascal, trumpeter Stephen Lands and pianist Seth Finch, along with veteran guitarist Steve Masakowski. Pianist Michael Peller, Manuel's longtime songwriting partner, served as musical director and arranger on this potent project.

Rose, who comes from a prominent musi-

cal family in New Orleans (his father, Vernon Severin, and grandfather Wilfred "Crip" Severin Jr. were both first-call drummers in the Crescent City, while his uncle is the renowned and prolifically recorded bassist Chris Severin), calls Manuel a local treasure. "I met Phillip through my uncle because he played gigs around town with Phillip all the time. So I've been knowing Phillip pretty much all my life. And then when I got old enough to be able to play professional gigs, Phillip would hire me. So I worked a lot of gigs around New Orleans with him and I played on one of his early recordings on Max Jazz (2000's *Love Happened To Me*). We kept in touch and maintained a great relationship over the years, and then I reached out to Phillip a couple of years ago to see how he was doing and if he

was still singing. He was like, 'Man, I'm doing real estate, I'm not really doing gigs. I'm thinking about quitting.' And I was like, 'No! You cannot quit. There's no way in hell you can stop being a performer, as great as you are. You are a New Orleans legend. You're one of the best male singers that I've worked with. There's no way you can stop. We need to do a project, we need to put it out and we need go on a road and tour before you feel like you can't do this anymore.' And that's how we came up with *Unusual Suspects*."

Manuel not only brings his gift for scatting and Jon Hendricks-inspired vocalese to the project, particularly on two instrumentals that he penned lyrics for — Lee Morgan's "Party Time" and Keith Jarrett's "Bop Be" — he also imbues ballads like Peller's "Is This Love" and "Coincidence," along with Joe Sample's "I'll Love You" and "The Road Less Traveled" and a bossa treatment of Bill Withers' "Hello Again" with a warm baritone voice reminiscent of Johnny Hartman. And his original lyrics on those tunes are both thoughtful and poetic. "I love writing lyrics and I love figuring out how to tell a story in as few words as possible," he said. "Next to singing, writing is my great love. I've got a book of poetry and essays that I want to publish, and I've written my memoir as well."

The blues-infused title track, written by pianist Peter Martin, who spent a significant amount of time in New Orleans before returning to his hometown of St. Louis, is an uptempo swinger that finds Manuel channeling Al Jarreau, while the infectious closer, "Sixth Ward Strut," is a showcase for some serious second line grooving (with the singer writing new lyrics to Masakowski's instrumental "Sidewalk Strut" from Astral Project's self-titled 1997 debut album).

A big surprise on *Unusual Suspects* is the rendition of Michael Jackson's mega-hit "Thriller." Opening with Manuel's wordless vocal bass line (vaguely reminiscent of Curtis Mayfield's "Freddie's Dead" riff), the piece gently glides into a soulful, medium-tempo swing vibe with walking bass by Moran, loosely syncopated drumming by Rose and lush horn fills from Pascal and Lands. Manuel said the unique arrangement came about at a Halloween gig he was playing at Snug Harbor in New Orleans with songwriting partner Peller.

For Rose, who deftly moves from ballads to bossa to burn and a bit of second line, alter-

nating between brushes and sticks from song to song, it was all familiar territory. “Even from my first Criss Cross record (1998’s *Song For Donise*), the thing that I’ve always wanted to project as a musician and as a drummer is versatility, because that’s what we do in New Orleans,” he said. “When you think of a Herlin Riley, he can play anything. He played with Dr. John, he played with Wynton Marsalis and George Benson and Ahmad Jamal. So I always try to mix it up. When we put the set list together for this record, I wanted to make sure we touched on everything, because I get

bored. I don’t want to just do a record full of swing tunes. I need to be able to play rhythmically, I need to be touching different styles and making sure that that’s represented in the music.”

With seven albums as a leader to his credit, the latest being 2023’s *For All We Know* on Storyville Records, Rose remains fully engaged with the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, whose most recent recording was 2021’s *Petite Fleur* featuring singer Cyrille Aimée. “We’ve been actively working with festivals during my tenure with the NOJO,” he explained. “I’ve

been involved with JazzAscona in Switzerland for six years now. Every year the orchestra goes there and performs a two-week residency. And this year we’re starting a new festival in Tuscany in a town called Peccioli, which happens for a week right after JazzAscona. And we’ll be also be playing the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival with Andromeda Turre as our special guest, which we’re planning to record. Then later in the year we have had some other residencies that we were working on in Benin, West Africa and then Lagos, Nigeria. So there’s a lot going on.”

An inaugural member of Betty Carter’s Jazz Ahead program back in 1993 (along with Roy Hargrove, Nicholas Payton, Greg Hutchinson, Cyrus Chestnut, David Sánchez and Joshua Redman), Rose was also a member of Wynton Marsalis’ Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra before it had found a permanent home in the Time-Warner Building on Columbus Circle in October 2004. And now as artistic director of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, he still regards Marsalis as an important mentor.

“He’s the reason why I was so invested into making sure that the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra was successful,” said Rose. “I was literally on the phone every week with Wynton when I first took the job to help me figure things out. And through those calls he helped me understand the basic fundamentals about non-profit governance and certain skill sets that I needed to improve on, like being able to understand how businesses work, how to be able to read budgets, how to work with accountants and get to audits, how to manage a board, how to manage a staff, how to manage musicians in the orchestra, how to fundraise. So all of those things I learned from him really helped me established a solid foundation. Everything else comes by trial and error, but it’s great when you have a person of Wynton’s stature that can walk you through things.”

Balancing his responsibilities as an administration with the NOJO with his joy of playing, Rose now looks forward to going out on tour with Manuel this summer. “This project means a lot to me, and it’s really more about Phillip than it is about me,” he said. “I feel like this is the second opportunity for him to get out here and show people how talented he is and the quality of the work that he does. So this is more like a second chance collaboration, as far as the way I look at it.”

Added the 72-year-old Manuel, “It’s hard to maintain your voice as you get older. That’s something singers have to deal with. It is a perishable skill and we have to do our best to hold on to as much of it for as long as we can.”

Judging by his stellar performance on *Unusual Suspects*, Manuel’s still got plenty left in the tank.

—Bill Milkowski

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"The elders are very serious about making sure that the tradition of the music stays alive," says pianist Jordan Williams.



# Pushing Tradition with Jordan Williams

For pianist Jordan Williams, the title of his debut album *Playing By Ear* (Red Records) isn't metaphorical. It's autobiographical. Williams started playing as early as age 6, absorbing the jazz albums in his father's collection in their family home in Philadelphia. His father was an avid jazz enthusiast and a respected hometown jazz drummer. Before Williams learned to read music and took formal lessons, he used to sit at a small keyboard attempting to emulate the licks and solos he heard from John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Art Blakey and '90s gospel music. When Williams started organizing music for his debut, his father had already come up with the title of the album years ago.

"My dad was like, 'That would be a cool title,'" Williams recalls. "And at first, I guess I didn't like it, I wasn't in agreement. And then eventually I was like, wait, no, that is a great idea. Because that's how I started really from my parents. I don't want to say I didn't have a choice, but it just kind of happened naturally. I just flowed into things."

Music wasn't something he discovered. It was something he inherited. *Playing By Ear* goes back to the very way Williams learned to make music, along with the influences that captivated him early on. Consisting mostly of standards, this recording leans into the straight-ahead and hard-bop era of the '50s. Williams' sure-fire swinging on the keys and smooth, lyrical touch are akin to Kenny Kirkland, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock. Thematically, he chose to pay homage to those musicians with a powerhouse rhythm section consisting of bassist Nat Reeves and drum-

mer Jeff "Tain" Watts, and special guest trumpeter Wallace Roney Jr. (a former classmate of Williams at the Berklee City Music program).

Williams, Reeves, Watts and Roney bring much of that Philadelphia fire to the bandstand. The repertoire itself underscores the bandmates' lineage. Williams visits Kirkland's "Steeptian Faith," and compositions connected to the Kirkland/Reeves/Watts era, and much of the swinging they did with Kenny Garrett.

"I wanted to add in some of the things that they (Watts/Reeves/Kirkland) did with Kenny Garrett, so we recorded 'Miss Baja.' That's one of my favorite songs from his *Songbook* album that Garrett did in the late '90s. It's just a very beautiful piece, so I thought why not recreate that with the ones who did it," recalls Williams.

Reeves contributed compositions, including the bluesy "Blue Ridge" and the somber "Waltz For Ellis," a poignant tribute to Ellis Ruley, an African American folk artist who died tragically. Williams also included the blazing "One Finger Snap," a playful nod to Hancock. Roney's solo on the tune honors Freddie Hubbard, who played on the original.

Hancock remains a central inspiration for Williams musically and intellectually. Like Hancock, he studied engineering in college (at George Washington University) and was drawn to the parallels of math, structure and improvisation. He was even a semifinalist in the Herbie Hancock Competition.

As hard as Williams swings on the keys, the piano wasn't his first instrument. He began on drums as a kid, playing along with Elvin Jones albums. At age 6, his father moved

him to piano, insisting he learn harmony and melody. Williams studied simultaneously at Philadelphia's Settlement Music School, where he was introduced to the music of Mozart and Haydn, and at the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts, where he absorbed blues and jazz standards. Mondays were devoted to classical recitals, and Saturdays were all about jazz ensembles. The dual training built his technical facility.

Also, growing up in Philadelphia, Williams immersed himself in the music of Philly greats like Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons, Reggie Workman and Kenny Barron.

Williams is from a family of serious jazz enthusiasts. His grandparents were devotees of Sarah Vaughan and were particularly fond of the Blue Note recordings. His uncle played piano by ear, and Williams' grandfather skipped college classes to travel to New York to hear Miles Davis and John Coltrane live. Drummer Eric Gravatt, who performed often with Tyner, is Williams' cousin.

In an era when many young pianists lean quickly toward fusion or genre hybrids, Williams has chosen to steep himself in straight-ahead language and the music he grew up listening to. That decision is reinforced by his mentors.

Over the years, he has worked with Bobby Watson, Curtis Lundy and Branford Marsalis. Recently, he performed with trumpeter Charles Tolliver at Dizzy's Club, studying the composer's detailed voicings firsthand.

"They're really golden experiences because I feel like that's how you learn. Especially like our generation, we grew up on hip-hop, but these guys, they were there, they grew up in the tradition," says Williams.

With *Playing By Ear* available nationwide, Williams is working on a follow-up record featuring mostly original compositions, also featuring solo piano tracks, a stride homage to James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout," quintet material and vocal collaborations. Where the debut plants him firmly in tradition, the next release will be primarily focused on an articulation of compositional prowess.

To keep his chops strong and to broaden his fan base, Williams plans to continue touring with Camille Thurman, Darrell Green and Watson. His long-term goal is to continue building on what he's learned from his elders and writing new music that pushes the genre further.

"The knowledge is endless, there's always something to learn on the bandstand and off the bandstand, and I treasure those experiences and wish to carry them forward. The elders are very serious about making sure that the tradition of the music stays alive."

—Veronica Johnson



## John Stites & the Spirit of Love in Jazz

Jazz awards are sprouting up all over Southwest Michigan these days. They come with hefty dollar amounts, not to mention notoriety. Part of this good-news story is that there's more than one group responsible for the generosity and love being shown to jazz musicians near and far.

One group leading the charge is the John Stites Jazz Awards program. Readers of DownBeat most recently may have heard of the organization thanks to its support of "A Trumpet Summit in Honor of Roy Hargrove." The daylong event was held last October at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, home to both the Larry J. Bell Jazz Artist and Young Jazz Artists awards as well as the Stites awards program.

WMU is also the site of the John Stites Jazz Festival, which held its annual spring gala in early March with pianist Geoffrey Keezer headlining. This 44-year-old high school jazz festival, open to the public, was recently renamed in Stites' honor to recognize his contribution to the careers of the many professional jazz musicians who happen to be WMU alumni.

Keith Hall, now associate professor of Jazz Drums at WMU, has very fond memories of Stites. "The first time I met John Stites," Hall recalls, "in 1992, as a student at Western Michigan University, I recorded at his Arcadia Recording studio. Our group The Groov'tet, which also included saxophonist John Wojciechowski, pianist Xavier Davis, and bassist Matt Hughes, was recording demos to submit for competitions and performance opportunities. It was such a gift to have John guide us through the process of those early sessions, and, in 1997, we recorded our full-length album with him."

Hall remembers Stites' uncanny personal touch. "He was a meticulous sound engineer who could hear everything," he recalls. "John also truly paid attention to people, and I'll never forget after a few sessions he took notice of what I liked. ... It was clearly important to him that the musicians were comfortable in his space."

"I am eternally grateful to John Stites for his impact on my life," Hall adds, "and through the John Stites Jazz Awards, he continues to make a huge difference in our community."

With a commitment to greater public awareness and appreciation of jazz, the John Stites Jazz Awards honor the memory of Stites, who died in 2019. He made more than 3,000 recordings with students as well

as professional musicians, the latter including Fred Hersch, Sir Roland Hanna, Billy Hart, Jimmy Cobb, Jamey Haddad and Rodney Whitaker. In a statement following his death, Dan Gustin, the former director of the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, remembered Stites as "the ideal recording engineer — a profession into which he poured all his considerable talents and artistry."

In 2021, the John Stites Jazz Artist Organization (created by Stites before his death) chose The Gilmore as its first partner to execute his legacy. This partnership provided awards ranging from \$10,000 to \$150,000. The Gilmore has used the funds to cover artist fees for jazz icons performing at the Gilmore International Piano Festival as well as for young jazz musicians participating in the Gilmore Rising Stars series. "The John Stites Jazz Artist Organization has had a truly transformational impact for The Gilmore," says Pierre van der Westhuizen, executive and artistic director of the Irving S. Gilmore International Piano Festival. "Almost overnight, this partnership has allowed us to expand our jazz programming beyond our wildest expectations, making sustained growth in artistry and audience impact. ... I will be forever grateful."

The Stites Jazz artist performing at this year's festival is the legendary Chucho Valdés with his Royal Quartet.

In addition to the Gilmore partnership, the John Stites Jazz Artist Organization launched its own award program in the Fall of 2021 through its website, johnstitesjazzawards.org. These awards range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 and can be won by both individuals and organizations for the purpose of artistic development and/or sharing jazz music with the Southwest Michigan community. The awards focus on the mission closest to Stites' heart: advancing the careers of innovative, established and emerging jazz musicians who need funding to enhance their musicianship and broaden their career opportunities. Nearly \$500,000 has been awarded since 2021.

—John Ephland

## March 2026: The Paul Keller Orchestra

**Thank You Notes** is the vibrant result of a five-year creative partnership between bassist, bandleader, and arranger Paul Keller and composer Gregg Hill.



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# Kabir Sehgal's Community of Curiosity

On Feb. 1, Kabir Sehgal received his 14th Grammy Award as producer of the audio book *Meditations: The Reflections Of His Holiness The Dalai Lama*, for which he culled 10 tracks from the Dalai Lama's plainspoken ruminations linking Buddhist precepts to universal concerns during his periodic visits to Atlanta to fulfill his obligations as Presidential Distinguished Professor at Emory University.

On a late-February Zoom call from his Atlanta home, Sehgal related that, as he listened, edited, crossfaded and tweaked the calming sonic backdrop with precisely calibrated dabs of reverb, he thought about "how to bring His Holiness' message to new audiences" and decided to invite musicians — jazzfolk Ted Nash on flute and Joe Alterman on piano; singer-songwriters Rufus Wainwright and Maggie Rogers, soul singer Andra Day — to enfold themselves with the flow.

Introducing and inviting new audiences to meditation and "telling the stories of some great leaders who represented the better angels of our time" had been on Sehgal's mind as he edited the Sunday School homilies of his father's old friend, President Jimmy Carter, for the 2025 Grammy-winning audio-book *Last Sundays in Plains: A Centennial Celebration*, creating a complementary soundtrack of spirituals and hymns performed by Jonathan Batiste, Keb' Mo', LeeAnn Rimes, Darius Rucker and Nicole Zuraitis. The same impulse shaped his collaboration with famously raucous Atlanta emcee Lil Jon, who applied his soothing baritone to 11 Sehgal-authored texts on detachment and

revisited remixed hits from the past — with Sehgal accompanying on guitar and weaving in jazz reedists Oran Etkin, Roxy Coss and Alexa Tarantino.

The discussion turned to Sehgal's latest release, *stars and static*. The 10-track, 30-minute lo-fi digital meditation on "what we're going through as a country" melds his field recordings of locales "emblematic of our country and important to me" with iconic American songs. The sounds of Naples, Italy, where Sehgal served as a Naval Reserve officer, signify on "Anchors Aweigh." In Selma, Alabama, Congressman John Lewis, whose memoir Sehgal co-authored in 2017, reads President Barack Obama's speech on the 50th anniversary of the brutal encounter between police and civil rights marchers by Selma's Edmund Pettus bridge, cosigned by the ascendant strains of "We Shall Overcome."

The tranquil ambiance of Sehgal's recent albums is light-years removed from his first Grammy winner, Arturo O'Farrill's 2014 *The Offense Of The Drum*: a kinetic, pan-American-oriented program with guests Edmar Castaneda, Donald Harrison and Vijay Iyer.

Sehgal was then a 30-something vice president of emerging markets at J.P. Morgan. In 2015, he helped global payments technology giant First Data Corp. execute that year's biggest U.S. IPO; published his fourth book, *Coined*, a quirkily structured, layman-oriented exploration of the origin, form and function of money; and produced O'Farrill's provocative *Cuba: The Conversation Continued*.

Having accrued life-altering wealth, Sehgal doubled down. By 2020, he'd gener-

ated 30 albums, including Grammy winners by O'Farrill, Ted Nash, Brian Lynch, John Daversa and Gustavo Casenave. Each articulated, directly or indirectly, Albert Murray's manifesto in *The Omni-Americans*: "Ethnic differences are the very essence of cultural diversity and national creativity."

Sehgal's interest in Murray's precepts developed through "ongoing conversations" with Wynton Marsalis after 2001, when Sehgal's high school band finished third in Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington competition. Marsalis was impressed by the tall teenager's lucid remarks about "not only music, but things like markets and the economy," and stayed in touch, intensifying the conversation in summer 2004 by inviting Sehgal — now a Dartmouth undergrad also writing speeches for John Kerry's Presidential campaign — to tour with his band. Moving back and forth between the politics and the tour, he recalls, "I decided there was some commonality, and I coined the term 'jazz is democracy in sound.'"

"Kabir loves helping people create projects," said Nash, who worked closely with Sehgal on *Presidential Suite: Eight Variations On Freedom*, which won the Best Large Ensemble Grammy in 2016. Nash transcribed and notated the pitches and cadences of Presidents Roosevelt, Kennedy, Johnson and Reagan — as well as Churchill, Nehru and Mandela — as they delivered speeches connected with freedom. Sehgal contributed substantially to a fundraising campaign and recruited Andrew Young, Deepak Chopra and British statesman David Miliband, among others, to read excerpts from the speeches. "He gets behind projects he really believes in," Nash said. "I've never met anybody quite like him."

"Kabir has supported every chance I've taken," said O'Farrill. "He's a true patron of the arts. He really believes that conscience-led art-making is real art-making."

Now Sehgal intends to continue "moving from catalyst and producer to more like the creator."

"I'm fatigued after the last few years," he said. "I'm wired to relax by thinking how to create things. It's a productive form of leisure. I've been an Indian guy making Latin jazz music. But I feel calmest when I'm listening to Hindustani classical music. So I decided to start making meditative music. There are microtones, different rhythms, a different thought process." The lo-fi approach, he added, "is me at the computer, playing the nylon string guitar, bass and drums, experimenting with sounds. The sounds are human-made, not spliced in."

"I do what I'm curious about. One project leads to the other. Every project takes 18 months to two years of your life. You're not allowed that many more of them." —Ted Panken

# Maximize Every Guest

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## LOVE FOR A COMPLICATED GENIUS

By Ashley Kahn      Photo by Jack Vartoogian

**Still Kind of Blue** was the name of a spirited, fast-paced roundtable discussion at this year's Jazz Congress conference, which took place at Jazz at Lincoln Center in January.





Bassist/producer Marcus Miller, trumpeter/composer Terence Blanchard, drummer/nephew Vince Wilburn Jr., journalist/historian Lauren du Graf and New Yorker critic Richard Brody shared personal experiences and insights; this journalist had the honor to moderate. How best to mark the legendary trumpeter's centennial? By allowing the stories to flow, and cross-discussions to happen. And they did. It took just one question, and off they went: How does Miles Davis' legend differ from other historic figures in jazz? The following discussion has been edited for space.

**Vince Wilburn Jr.:** I was privy to see a side that a lot of people couldn't witness. This man was the first to wake up in the morning and the last to go to sleep at night, and during the course of the day he would change clothes five or six times. I was like, "Chief, what are you doing?" He said, "I'm rehearsing my shit."

He never liked to play any of the music he recorded in his career. He didn't even have it in the house. He wouldn't listen to *Kind Of Blue* or *Sketches* or any of those iconic albums. He always wanted to evolve and push the needle forward and he was always into sounds.

Back in the '80s there was MTV, and I remember that it would be on in the house and the sound was turned down, but if there was something that caught his eye then he would turn the sound up. Like Scritti Politti, we did "Perfect Way" because he dug that video. Same with "Human Nature," Michael Jackson. Cyndi Lauper, "Time After Time." He would call the record label and have them send the records over to him. And he was into a [Guadeloupean gwoka] group called Kassav'. There was so much music that he was checking out.

**Terence Blanchard:** Two stories from when I was playing with Art Blakey in Perugia [at the Umbria Jazz Festival in 1983 and '85]. I'm with Dizzy Gillespie in his dressing room and he started to play and I'm just tripping because, hey, I'm hanging with Dizzy. He stopped playing and out of nowhere he said, "Miles Davis could always play the prettiest notes." That was a powerful statement for me to hear because in that one phrase it eliminated the whole notion of competition. It was truly about admiration for what Miles brought to the table, and I knew Miles was comfortable with what Dizzy himself had brought. For me, it's all about celebrating our differences and not using them to keep us apart.

The other story: I'm back in Perugia and after we had played, I'm coming out of the hotel and these journalists walk up and say, "What do you think about what Miles Davis said?" "Well ... first of all, what did he say?" He had said something that was very favorable about me. So we went to his show that night in Terni,

right outside Perugia, and when he came off the stage Al Foster could see me looking at Miles with admiration. Al said, "Have you ever met Miles?" and I said, "No." "Come on in, man, let me introduce you." When I walked in the door, Miles just looked at me and called my name.

blah, blah, blah, blah. Art pulled me aside and said, "You ain't Miles. Find your own shit to do."

**Miller:** Find your own shit.

**Blanchard:** When I met Miles that night with Al

# 'YOU AIN'T MILES. FIND YOUR OWN SHIT TO DO.' —ART BLAKEY

That blew me away, that he was that aware of all of the young musicians who were on the scene. I remember he said, "Keep doing what you're doing." Keep doing what you're doing, motherfucker.

**Marcus Miller:** I mean, we celebrate these people, use the word "legend" and you start to forget that they were human beings. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X. I remember [in 1981] he had been in retirement for five years, self-imposed, and we didn't know whether he was coming back. All of a sudden I'm getting a call from him and he said, "Can you make this session in two hours?" That was probably for the best because if I had two weeks I would have freaked out all that time. I got my instrument on my back and I went to the legendary Columbia Studio B. He walked in the door, and I didn't see him at first because I was looking up here [points to being 6-plus feet in height] and he was down here. By the time I got into Miles' band he was already — "MILES DAVIS" — with quotes around the name. He was 5 foot 6. I'm asking myself, "Wow, he's a human being?"

I'd been hearing stories about Miles my whole life: all the stories from my family, from musicians, the whole community. My dad played classical piano, and he had a cousin who played jazz piano — Wynton Kelly. So when I got the call I was 21, but my family wasn't even impressed. I said, "Man, I'm playing with Miles Davis." "Oh, yeah, like Cousin Wynton? Listen, what you want for dinner?"

**Blanchard:** What trumpet player do you know right now who really wants to play with a Harmon mute? Almost nobody, because he put such a stamp on that. When I was with Art Blakey I used to play "My Funny Valentine" as my feature because I loved Miles so much. So I wouldn't play much of the melody and blah,

Foster, everything changed because I realized by just being in a room with him, I'm never going to be that. So there's no need for me to chase that.

**Miller:** Because you met him, and he's just a human being, and he's being him. Miles learned that, too. He was like, "OK, I've been doing this bebop thing trying to sound like Dizzy and Fats Navarro ..." He was busting his ass trying to play like those guys would play: high, fast. It was incredible, the level of musicianship.

**Wilburn:** He said he used to play so fast it made his lips bleed.

**Miller:** This is what you had to do to play on that level. He went away for a while to stop abusing certain substances, came back and said, "I'm going to be courageous enough to play what I feel." He was hip, but he also had every man's ear. That's what allowed him to play only the beautiful notes. He left space. You know how much courage it takes to leave space when you're playing an improvisation?

**Blanchard:** At a time when nobody was doing that.

**Miller:** He'd leave out a whole two bars before he'd play the next thing. I remember hanging out with my Uncle Big Willy in his music room. He'd have a bourbon, his chair and *Kind Of Blue* on. Miles would play four notes and then leave two bars of space, which gave Uncle Big Willy, who's on his third round of bourbon, time to reply, "Come on Miles, talk to me! Aw shucks, now, come on!" That takes courage. It also requires you to have some badass background musicians so that when you're waiting for that space that music is still cooking.

"I've always said, what other musician played with both Charlie Parker and Prince? There was only one musician," says Vince Wilburn Jr. about his uncle, Miles Davis.



DON HUNSTEIN/SONY MUSIC ARCHIVES

**Blanchard:** What about [starts singing "The Theme"] ... ?

**Miller:** [sings along, all laugh] What he did do was he brought his humanity to music. He was always interested in the hip thing. Now "hip" has a kind of negative connotation these days because it means "shallow" to a lot of people. But back in the 1940s, hip was hip. Hip was harmonically sophisticated, rhythmically sophisticated and operating on a high level and still cool.

So, OK, in the '50s, he becomes the hippest guy in jazz along with Art Blakey and Clifford Brown and those guys. Then he got tired of that. Who quits a style when they're on the top? Who says I'm going to change up the whole thing? But when people say, "Man, Miles kept changing and I'm not with all the changes," I always tell them he never changed because all he was doing his entire life was searching for that hipness.

I have a buddy who is a big fan of the music from the '70s or the early '80s, and whenever the artist he loves shows up with something different, something new, he's insulted. He's like, "MF, I bought each of the records that you made for the last 10 years twice because CDs came out and I rebought them. MF, you owe me." And this is what a lot of listeners feel about artists who decide to change.

**Richard Brody:** We're talking about legend. There's a line in [Jean Luc] Godard's *Alphaville*: "You

will suffer a fate worse than death. You will become a legend." It's a funny thing to say. The name of this panel is Still Kind of Blue — Miles did *Kind Of Blue* at the age of 33. He still had another 30 years ahead of him. Just the same way that people kept on telling Godard, "Why don't you remake *Breathless*?" and he finally said, "I hate that film, I wish I had never made it."

I can only imagine what a musician, who has achieved the very pinnacle of success and acclaim in one style of music, experiences when he does something drastically different and a lot of the people who loved what he did before now were insulting him publicly.

I was a 16-year-old out of Long Island and came into the city, and what I saw was a concert at Carnegie Hall [on March 30, 1974] that is now commemorated on the *Dark Magus* album. Woohoo! I knew that he played with electric instruments but nothing prepared me for the immensity, the density, the strength of the sound in person. It filled Carnegie Hall like a gigantic sculpture.

The *Dark Magus* concert was not reviewed in the *New York Times*, and apparently it wasn't reviewed in *DownBeat*. I couldn't find anything. But when Miles did a concert later the same year, John Wilson wrote in the *New York Times*: "Given the sounds that Bubber Miley was able to get from his trumpet, I'm not sure that the wah-wah pedal actually adds anything to the instrument's history."

I started listening to jazz because of the modernists, Eric Dolphy and Ornette Coleman

and John Coltrane in the later period, and I loved Miles' music. When I attended that concert I realized, "This is as out there as Albert Ayler, as out there as Cecil Taylor. This is some of the most radical music ever made." Not that his early music wasn't profound and intensely moving. I still listen to that all the time. But Miles had broken through in a certain way that very few musicians ever had.

**Wilburn:** [Multi-instrumentalist James] Mtume said they were in Europe in '73, and at one concert no one dug it. They wanted the old Miles and they were, like, throwing things at the stage. But the next night they played another city they got five standing ovations. Uncle Miles wasn't concerned about what people dug. It was about what he and the band wanted to express.

**Blanchard:** Art Blakey used to say, never get a hit because it will haunt you the rest of your life.

**Miller:** Exactly. With Miles he was lucky enough, like you're saying, Richard — he created brand new audiences every time he changed, and I think that made a big difference.

**Wilburn:** Everybody has a favorite period of Chief's career. I grew up in Chicago, and my parents would have these parties and some of my dad's friends would start drinking and argue, "Vince, you gotta turn that old acoustic shit out." They wanted to hear the electric stuff. And my dad was like, "This is my house, I'll



The Miles Davis panelists at Jazz Congress: from left, Ashley Kahn (moderator), Marcus Miller, Terence Blanchard, Lauren du Graf, Vince Wilburn Jr. and Richard Brody.

play whatever I want to.” This was going on in the basement, and I could hear it upstairs.

**Blanchard:** There are different factions of Miles fans, fans of certain periods — which I find incredible because his legacy was one of never being in the same place.

**Wilburn:** They said, “Why does Miles have his back to the audience?” No, no, no, no, no. He was digging what was happening on stage and that’s why he would walk up to Marcus, to Darryl Jones, lean next to Bob Berg, to any of the band members to feel the vibe and get close to them. It was amazing.

**Brody:** When I saw him on stage, I could see exactly what you described. He was conducting, he was creating with the band.

It was very odd to be following the career through records if you weren’t seeing him in concert. I saw *Dark Magus*, and the records that came out next, which were *Big Fun* and *Get Up With It*, great though they are, it wasn’t *Dark Magus*. There was a disjunction between what was happening live and what was happening in his recording business.

I think that’s why he’s not given enough credit not as an orchestrator, an arranger and a creator of what is essentially jazz orchestral music. Every one of those quintets, it wasn’t just five great soloists. Each one of those bands has a unique sound world of its own. Obviously he spent a lot of time with Gil Evans back in the ‘40s and ‘50s, and nothing against Gil, but I consider the sound world that Miles Davis created for small and large groups to be more original and distinctive, a more comprehensive sound world. The Miles Davis sound is the sound of everybody together.

**Lauren du Graf:** The origin of the term “legend” in medieval times was a saint or a martyr whose story would be told every year on a holiday, and the reason these stories stick around is because

they tell us something about who we are, who we want to be, and maybe who we don’t want to be. And we talk about the courage to change, that’s huge. How many of us have been personally inspired by some dimension of who Miles Davis was in our own life? Maybe we didn’t change our whole style of dressing. Maybe we did.

But I think about his defiance — like his defiance of a police officer while standing in front of a club just down the street from here [at Birdland in 1959] who wanted him to move along, when his name was on the marquee! He stood up to that and insisted time and again on being himself in a world that didn’t always want him to be who he was.

I think we also have to acknowledge the shadow side of the legend, too, the things we don’t necessarily want to repeat. We could talk about his relationships with women. He was a human being, one with many flaws and imperfections and in order to love him truly we cannot tuck those underneath the carpet. So I would say his legend lives on for me in a deeply inspiring way and a complicated way as well.

**Miller:** Miles Davis was a human being, and in my life I’ve had a lot of people who I’ve idolized, who were my mentors and who had some serious personality flaws. And this is not a question that I have the answer for. Now I’m confronted years later by some of my heroes who treated women in ways that none of us could ever condone and asking myself, “How do I reconcile the two sides?” And I don’t know if I can.

**du Graf:** I just finished reading Cicely Tyson’s memoir and watching the Betty Davis documentary and all the interviews with [Miles’ first wife] Frances [Davis] and with [his first partner] Irene, and reading [his last girlfriend] Jo Gelbard’s book as well. These are stories I cannot forget and I can’t move past in many ways. Miles wasn’t my mentor but he is my favorite musician. But I can’t hear the music in the same way because for those of us who have

lived through domestic violence, we know the intense terror that imposes on a person, and that’s really hard.

At the same time I’ve written extensively about Shirley Horn, and her whole career trajectory owes everything to Miles. She was locally known in Washington, D.C., and he called her up — I’m not going to try to do his voice — “Come to New York.” He insisted that she open for him at the Village Vanguard when nobody knew her, and because of that Quincy Jones signed her to Mercury. We would not know Shirley if it weren’t for Miles.

His wives, too, have stories like this, and his ex-girlfriends. Betty Davis said that she was inspired to produce her own music because of his encouragement and his example. His genius definitely gave, and it took.

**Miller:** So, how do you reconcile?

**du Graf:** I don’t. I don’t.

**Miller:** OK, good. I’m in the same place.

**Blanchard:** I think a lot of us are.

**Miller:** He was complicated.

**Brody:** I’ve been asked that question, “How can you listen to this guy’s music?” We want to make these people perfect. One of the things I think we have to remember is back then in our community, therapy was not something we dealt with. I look at it now as being a godsend for a lot of us to help us push through a lot of these issues. We talk about it. We have words for it. When I listen to Lauren talk about him supporting women it lets us know how complex a person he was.

**Wilburn:** Gemini, double Gemini. ... Don’t you feel we all learned to change from being around him? Don’t you feel we’ve all learned to change?

**Miller:** Yeah, we’ve all learned to try to summon as much courage as we can. That’s what makes his music everlasting. He wasn’t trying to be a genius. He was just being him: curious, courageous.

**Blanchard:** Wayne Shorter said, “Jazz means, ‘I dare you.’” If that doesn’t define Miles’ career more than anything, I don’t know what else does, because that dude was fearless. That’s the thing that Vince is talking about. The thing about Miles that I’ve always admired was the fact that he stayed curious. That’s the most important thing. When you think about it, Miles Davis set the tone for a lot of us.

**Wilburn:** I’ve always said, what other musician played with both Charlie Parker and Prince? There was only one musician. **DB**

# MILES DAVIS

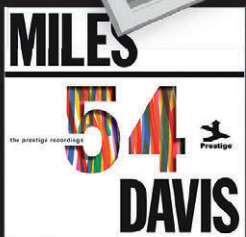
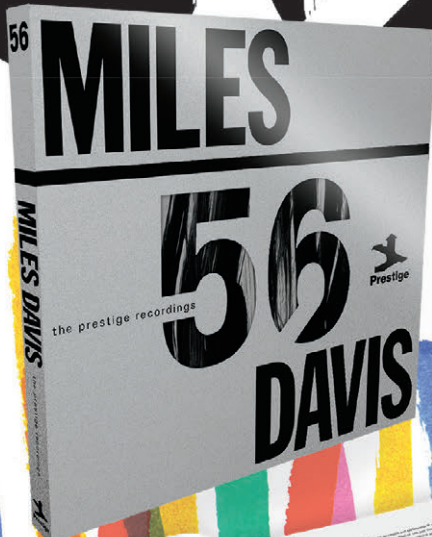
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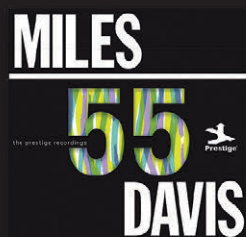
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# MELISSA ALDANA, GONZALO RUBALCABA & THE LANGUAGE OF FILIN

By Stephanie Jones    Photos by Travis Bailey

Melissa Aldana is an investigator. She's not comfortable resting on what she knows, instead seeking to learn more and explore further. At 37, the saxophonist and composer has released eight leader albums to international acclaim and collaborated on countless others.

**W**ith each project, she excavates more layers of herself and, in doing so, fosters a deeper, more nuanced connection to the nature of sound.

"I always wonder: What is my identity?" says the New York-based artist from Santiago, Chile. On past releases, including *12 Stars* (Blue Note, 2022) and *Visions* (Motéma Music, 2019), Aldana has interrogated her relationship with archetypes, inheritance and modalities of consciousness. She doesn't hide from

herself and walks toward whatever frightens or confuses her. Being vulnerable has become part of her practice. And in recent years, she began considering a ballads record in the tradition of her musical heroes and their seminal releases, including John Coltrane's *Ballads* from 1963. "Having to play a ballads album," says Aldana, "which is something very revealing for a saxophone player, would help me to question some new aspects of how to go deeper into sound."

Before launching her investigation ahead of the recording, Aldana sought guidance. She consulted one of her living heroes, four-time Grammy-winning artist Gonzalo Rubalcaba, with whom she'd been eager to collaborate for many years. After hearing her intentions, he suggested she center the album on *filin*, a music tradition developed in his native Cuba between the late 1940s and early 1960s that, according to the legendary pianist and composer, "created a dialogue between traditional Cuban *trova*, the *bolero* and jazz, redefining Cuban musical identity."

Aldana was new to *filin*. She'd certainly never explored the standard repertoire. Another saxophone player pursuing a ballads record might have been daunted, opting instead to curate an album of tunes they'd been playing for years. Not Aldana. She jumped at the chance to get inside a tradition of music entirely unknown to her — and she's grateful for the meaningful discoveries *filin* has helped her make about her own identity.

Once she began exploring the repertoire, the project, titled *Filin*, "became something much deeper" for Aldana. The concept itself was a revelation. She began transcribing songs directly from the singers who interpreted them. "It was the first time I could relate to the music as a person that speaks Spanish, find my identity within that sound, within that music," she says. "Even though I'm not from Cuba, the mother language is the same. So it helped me to go deeper in ways that I wasn't even expecting."

Having performed so many standards in so many contexts throughout her career, attempting to memorize and internalize the English lyrics, Aldana felt a sense of liberation in *filin*. Each singer's meticulous approach to the material left her awestruck, but also grounded her in a profound connection to the work. "Understanding the lyrics in Spanish took it to the next level of how deep you can go into the music," she says. And working with Rubalcaba for the first time was a meditative experience for her. An artist whose devotion to detail drives her expression, she found his approach to minutiae almost otherworldly. "It's in another galaxy," she says. "Just to play in the same room [with him] was a master class. ... When you experience that right next to you, that is a lesson."

Throughout the creation of the record, the music became her other mentor. Alongside fellow artists Peter Washington, Kush Abadey and Cécile McLorin Salvant (who appears on two songs), Aldana studied every small moment from every *filin* singer. "I wanted to get into the real feeling," she says. Immediately she noticed the level of extreme care each singer would give just to the movement from one note into the next. "The lyrics have a lot to do



"It's impossible not to mention, when we talk about *filin*, how much it [was] affected [by] the political scenario in Cuba in the '50s, in the '60s in the '70s," says Rubalcaba.

[with it] but also the sound, how the intonation moves, how every note lasts in relation to the harmony — how the band is playing. That is something I wanted to capture, as the person that's going to be playing those melodies."

On the album, the artists honor repertoire from composer and singer Marta Valdés, *filin* architect Cesar Portillo de la Luz, Frank Domínguez and other celebrated songwriters. The songs are emotional. Derived from "feeling," the term serves the romantic, at times lamenting sophistication of the music. Arcs develop through layers of harmony. Lyrics advance the form. The songs' aching humanness invites personal connection, but Aldana takes a discerning approach to their interpreting. Before heading into the studio, she spent months internalizing the vocal melodies she transcribed. "It's not about bringing my own voice," she says. "It's about completely serving what the music needs: How can I transcribe Marta Valdés in a way that I can absorb every single detail of what I'm listening to?"

For many years, Aldana has held the perspective that voice is illusory — that the sound's the thing. Transcribing masterwork solos from Freddie Hubbard, Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock early in her career, she made a singular discovery that would inform her approach to playing music for the rest of her life. "Through those transcriptions, I realized the instrument is just a vessel but the sound is a frequency," she says. "So, how can I find the frequency that Herbie's playing, that is different from when Gonzalo plays? What is that frequency? I can't play piano, but there is something about that frequency that is part of the sound of that person."

On *Filin*, each arrangement receives detailed consideration in service of the music. Portillo de la Luz's "Dime Si Eres Tú" features a brief and tender moment when Rubalcaba interludes in octaves, between fluid solo gestures from Aldana, and concludes on a fade of brushwork from Abadey. In fact, the drum parts across *Filin* are deliberate and exacting.

"If I feel that brushes are the sounds we need for this piece, it's not casual," says Rubalcaba. "It's something that I've been thinking of and imagining and working around for a while — or sticks, or mallets, or specific rides or cymbals that I want to use for this part of the tune. Details. And I think that makes a difference sometimes." He arranges with plenty of room for spontaneity and enrichment of what's printed on the page, but, at times, he admits wanting the drummer to reproduce exactly what he's written: "That's the reason some of the drummers hate me [laughs]."

Though Aldana had committed herself open-heartedly to learning repertoire that was brand new to her, as the album came together she had moments of apprehension and self-doubt. Shortly before the studio date, she called Rubalcaba to ask if they could change keys on some of the songs. "I think I had four or five tunes already done in terms of arrangement and reharmonization, so it was really difficult to redo everything with the time we had [left]," he says. "But on the other hand, it was not about time. I was totally convinced that those keys would work with her tone, with her instrument. And the key would help to build the spirit, the sound, the mood of each piece." Fortunately, Aldana's determination — and trust in her mentor — prevailed,

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"Just to play in the same room [with him] was a master class," Aldana says of working with Rubalcaba.



and they moved ahead with the established arrangements. "Every key produces frequencies and tones and connections that are totally different," says Rubalcaba. "So I was lucky that Melissa didn't insist."

The voicings, too, prompted Aldana to confront her nerves. On "Little Church" in particular, every square inch of harmony was measured out on the page. "That was one of the hardest songs to record," she says. "It's a lot of information and I felt like, 'I don't even know how to approach this.'" Ultimately, she got out of her head and played. Once she did, the music and the moment overtook the trepidation.

Incidentally, that song would become emblematic of another theme present on *Filin*; as the artists worked through the repertoire together, the project's cross-cultural identity became undeniable. In addition to six songs from Cuban composers, "Little Church" and "Las Rosas No Hablan" ("As Rosas Não Falam") flex a Brazilian influence from composers Hermeto Pascoal and Cartola, respectively, compelling a translation from Portuguese lyrics to Spanish. As they constructed the album, both artists felt these songs had an uncanny connection to *filin*. "I don't know if Cartola was aware of this movement in Cuba, of *filin*," says Rubalcaba, "but there's a huge connection between his song and the rest of the pieces we chose."

Globally, the tradition itself is cross-cultural. According to Rubalcaba, during the years of social and political repression in Cuba, many artists, including *filin* founders like José Antonio Méndez, would leave the country for Mexico. There, they found the freedom they sought to advance their artistry, often releasing new music on Mexican record labels. "It's impossible not to mention, when we talk about *filin*, how much it [was] affected [by] the political scenario in Cuba in the '50s, in the '60s

# 'I always wonder: What is my identity?'

—Aldana

in the '70s," says Rubalcaba. "Almost every recording we got as a reference of those songs we selected for the album were recorded in Mexico. Three or four of the composers on this album used to live [there]. Some of them never came back to Cuba. They found that Mexico gave them the right place at the right moment, and the freedom to develop that way, musically."

After months of research, discussion and Aldana's own private investigating, the album came alive in the studio. With Don Was in the producer's chair and Aldana's longtime friend James Farber engineering, she felt uniquely supported to experiment with each song and explore a tradition of music that, even now, feels new to her. "Having Don being there — just supporting, bringing the best out of everyone, being part of that energy, that momentum — was meaningful to me," she says. "And there was no one more perfect [than James] that could capture the sound of what we wanted to create together with this music."

McLorin Salvant's vocal on "Las Rosas" proffers yet another perspective for the project's pluralistic identity. A multi-lingual artist herself, McLorin Salvant approached the Spanish translation of Portuguese lyrics ahead of the studio date with care, respect and her signature devout research. Almost conversa-

tional, yet doleful and self-reflective, her lyric rises in intensity as the story unfolds in the music. "She went so deep into these songs," says Aldana.

To "No Te Empeñes Más," whose original lyric is in Spanish, she brings an introspection at once wistful and matter of fact. "I was impressed with her Spanish pronunciation," says Rubalcaba. "It's not about how clear every word is in Spanish. It's the intention. And the intention is the right one in every sentence, every word. ... Cécile, I think she understood everything from the beginning. We didn't have to talk. Actually, we didn't talk [laughs]. She was very quiet. She was observing every detail, and I think she got the picture. And the next day, magic."

With a catalog of acclaimed albums in her discography, Aldana continues to seek new perspectives and elevated understandings. *Filin* is only an example of how she integrates ideas into her expression and her investigation of sound: "I still feel like I'm 6 years old, trying to learn this Michael Brecker solo and just trying to get through it. And I'm always going to feel like that, it doesn't matter how old I am. ... I'm grateful to [Gonzalo] for allowing me to get to know more about myself though the *filin*, and to understand more of my heritage as a jazz musician, as a Latin person."

DB

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# The End

# OF THE BAD PLUS

BY JIM MACNIE PHOTO BY EVELYN FREJA

The scene still sticks with me. I had heard the oddball name of this new group being dropped around town, and recognized a couple of its members. They were addressing a somewhat meager audience at the Knitting Factory's Old Office (a smaller downstairs stage for up-and-comers).

**T**he trio started rumbling and crackling, adept at waxing amorphous and blowing specific. Someone had mentioned their heady originals were balanced by a smattering of pop tunes. Cool, whatever. In the middle of a delicate passage it became clear the piece they were updating was Neil Young's "Heart Of Gold." Shards of melody were being chipped off in tiny bits — you had to focus to hear it coalesce.

Intrepid improvisers all, drummer Dave King, bassist Reid Anderson and pianist Ethan Iverson seemed to be using the lyrics as a metaphor for the seminal jazz task of unearthing new sounds while personalizing the past. Iverson raised eyebrows by repeating the "keeps me

searching" phrase like it was a mantra, underscoring the trio's esthetic goals: Press on until a new way of shaping the music arises.

Plunking keys with his right hand, the pianist was bent over, investigating the instrument's innards and floor pedals — as if acting out the hunt for some ineffable essence with a bit of wry theatrics. Then this group of non-vocalists began singing the lyrics like a hymn before providing a ghostly conclusion. There was only one possible takeaway: The Bad Plus was going to be a very fun band.

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**The Bad Plus Joshua Redman** was a 2015 album on Nonesuch Records from the original group: from left, Dave King, Ethan Iverson, Reid Anderson and Redman, who collaborated on the project.



impact on the modern jazz landscape — the group that named their 2010 album *Never Stop* is calling it quits.

It's a bittersweet turn in a storied run, but Minnesota natives Anderson and King remain chipper, if a tad world-weary. They delivered the news via an Instagram clip shot on the snowy Minneapolis street where *The Mary Tyler Moore Show's* hat-in-the-air opening sequence was filmed, peppering it by mentioning tongue-in-cheek future plans such as starting an alpaca farm and opening a string of tanning salons. Hey, even their farewells are fun.

Dedicated DownBeat readers probably know The Bad Plus' genesis: Midwestern pals uniting in the pre-aughts around shared interests who forged an individual voice by blending enticingly askew original pieces with interpretations of rock nuggets both contemporary and classic. Punk rock band name. Posthaste critical acclaim. Media interest way outside the jazz biosphere. Busy touring schedule. Major label signing. Dope album graphics. Tchad Blake production. Savvy brand development. It all added up to a version of jazz stardom for artists coloring outside the lines in numerous ways.

"The audience response was over the top," Iverson once said about the early days. "People loved it from the first gig."

Yves Beauvais was one of those duly impressed. In 2002, he was the VP of A&R who brought them to Columbia after catching a blistering set at the Village Vanguard.

"I'd seen them at a very empty Roulette show and the sound was boomy. I didn't understand the music. It was Ben Ratliff who said, 'You've got to see them again.' So I went to the Vanguard and had an epiphany. It wasn't just the covers. It was three really strong people playing as if one mind. I walked into my bosses at Columbia and said, 'We have to sign these guys immediately.'"

In recent chat, Anderson and King looked over their shoulders at the work they've done, unearthing insights into why the chemistry was cool, the accomplishments many and the longevity so fruitful.

One topic was singularity. In an art form teeming with hired hands following a lone leader's vision, The Bad Plus was an anomaly. One of the things the guys are proudest of is their commitment to the ensemble ethic. "No subs ever" is a motto that bolstered their fraternal bonds and musical eloquence.

"The reason there weren't many true bands at the time we started is because everybody's got to make a living," says King. "We would have a gig planned four months down the line and a job would come up, and there'd be a big temptation to say, 'Oh, well, guys, I just need to do this because I've got to make some money. We can reschedule our stuff.' But, no. We would turn down the outside work because we believed in what we were doing together."

Anderson: "We knew we had something

special and we were going to see it through.”  
 Trusting in musical equality was also key to shaping their sound: Shared responsibility was paramount. “I’ve always been adamant about calling what we did a piano-bass-drums trio,” the bassist assures.

dynamic range” of a traditional piano trio — recently received a copy of the group’s very first show from a taper who clocked their May 2000 gig at the Artists’ Quarter in St. Paul. It was so early in their run they’d yet to choose a name. He says the

way where we didn’t have to talk about it much.”

One of their initial achievements was realigning tunes decidedly outside the typical jazz canon. From ABBA to Blondie to Nirvana to Pixies, pop and rock nuggets stacked up almost as quickly as the band’s offbeat originals. In an early incarnation, TBP had tried its hand at jazz standards such as “Moose The Mooche,” “Body And Soul” and “Blue Moon.” But as the band’s footing became more assured, it was goodbye Rodgers & Hart, hello Osbourne & Iommi.

The idea for pop interpretations had actually been in the convo way early. As young fans, the drummer and bassist would return from The Dakota jazz club in St. Paul and riff about how great it would be if “a band just came out on stage and played something by the Police,” says Anderson, “something we were into that was more a part of our life experience.”

Dipping a toe in the pop world could have been considered a novelty gambit of sorts, and a few critics gave them heat for it, but the rigor fueling these experiments was substantial enough to broker an unmistakably resolute vibe. From “Knowing Me,

***‘It’s hard to say how that final show is actually going to feel emotionally.’*** —Reid Anderson

“It’s an important distinction, because Dave and I certainly weren’t the polite sidemen backing up a leader. Our mission statements were ‘We’re going to be a democratic organization, we’re going to develop our sound, we’re gonna play group music.’”

King — who has told Insta followers that one of TBP’s goals was to “stretch the

chemistry was palpable even back then, and the combination of personalities “liberated” him.

“We supported each other’s individuality, and it felt like the music-making roles were mixed up in a cool way. Everyone was thinking elastically. It was almost like we were able to fit these pieces together in a



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The post-Orrin Evans edition, from left, Chris Speed, Anderson, King and Ben Monder.

Knowing You” to “Heart Of Glass,” their audacious dynamics overflowed with performance passion and design smarts. And they weren’t totally alone in their curation. Just prior, Brad Mehldau had gotten romantic with a Radiohead tune, and a

decade earlier Bill Frisell had his way with “Chain Of Fools.” King says they realized their move had “a built-in ironic moment here and there,” but the group could be fully earnest while “messing with forms and feeling good about the music.” It was the turn of the century, and new songbook territory was slowly emerging. The Bad Plus accelerated the process.

“It was an idea whose time had come,” Anderson says. “There was something invigorating about having a more complete dialogue with contemporary culture. Once we tapped into it, there was obviously an energy. We weren’t the only ones who appreciated it. It was a way for us to connect with an audience, but at the same time go in some avant-garde directions and explore our sound.”

Recalibrating pop tunes may be one of the trio’s calling cards, but the true forging of the Plus persona came from the creation of the intricate originals that have outnumbered and perhaps outvalued the covers — the core of their book since the start. From the gleeful pounding of King’s “1972 Bronze Medalist” to the waterfall melody of Iverson’s “Self Serve” to the roiling taffy pulls of Anderson’s recent “French Horns,” the pieces they’ve penned stump for idiosyncrasy while offering plenty of invitations to those with open ears.

“It was a thrill to say to each other, ‘We need new music,’ and have everybody bring in something,” says King. “Not one of us was writing things that sounded like a garden variety jazz tune. We were always excited to peek at what the other guy was up to. And we have such distinct styles that it was always like, ‘What can we do to make this a group music?’ It was never like on Reid’s song we’re just going to do Reid’s bidding. It was always a balance.”

After almost two decades in this creative stew, the group announced that the start of 2018 would see hard-swinging Orrin Evans taking over the piano chair for Iverson — a risky amendment to the band’s existing persona. The deeply experienced improviser was a longtime pal of Anderson. Transitions aren’t easy. The nature of the music shifted a bit, but TBP vibe sustained itself.

“You had to come in and adjust to what Dave and Reid were thinking The Bad Plus was,” says Evans. “Then individually you had to figure out, ‘Does my voice fit in this ensemble?’ I didn’t realize how curated the music was until I was a part of it, and that’s not a negative thing. The [performance] surprises were based on how we did what

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we knew we were already going to do. It was more about the song, which was actually exciting for me.”

The originals-only *Never Stop II* (2018) was one of the group’s most fascinating efforts, and their gigs around it centered on precision and eruption. Evans’ playful “Boffadem” fit in nicely with Anderson’s piercing “Safe Passage.”

“I was always encouraged to bring material. But you join a band after they’ve been at it for 20 years and you got a lot of homework to do. I wasn’t running to add my tunes because I was trying to deal with their stuff.”

In the late summer of 2021, mid-pandemic, we learned that TBP was saying goodbye to Evans and morphing into a quartet with the arrival of guitarist Ben Monder and saxophonist Chris Speed. The lack of piano threatened to upend the ensemble’s character, but somehow the following year’s *The Bad Plus* and 2024’s *Complex Emotions* provided vivid new textures while maintaining the poised aggression that long captivated diehard fans. Once again, the group was pliable enough to shift gears while remaining true to its initial approach.

“The beauty of what The Bad Plus did was the fact that there was no ‘That’s what they do,’” declares Evans. “Whether dealing with classical, Nirvana or whatever, they covered music, you know? They covered music.”

**E**motions should run high during these final months of play. The quartet kicked off 2026 in Midwestern clubs and will move on to Canadian concert halls among many other venues. Between hushed murmurs and tactical explosions, their spectrum of sound, amplified by the Speed/Monder sonic axis on a pieces such as “Deep Water Sharks,” makes sense in all kinds of rooms. They intend to work through the last days of December.

“It’s tough to say how that final show is actually going to feel emotionally,” offers Anderson, “but I know it’s going to hit hard. I know it. And that’s how it should be.”

“It’s already hitting hard,” says King. “We just experienced that feeling at a five-night stand at Jazz St. Louis, a gig we’ve been doing for 18 or 19 years. We’re not going back to St. Louis again, and that last night, you really felt it.”

The work continues, of course. For a sizable chunk of the spring, these lifelong pals have been investigating the work of key forebears, uniting with Craig Taborn and Chris Potter to address the splen-

dor of Keith Jarrett’s American Quartet. Numerous March and April dates found them turning to a set list containing jewels such as “Byablue,” “(If The) Misfits (Wear It)” and “Southern Smiles.”

“That’s another group that had multiple composers,” reminds King. “Charlie tunes, Dewey tunes, Motian tunes. It’s really fun to dig into it.”

So the curtain is closing. But a question arises: Would they work together again if a colleague who wanted a Plusian vibe hits

’em up?

“Ahhh, we don’t do someone’s rhythm section, Jim,” smiles Anderson with faux indignation. But his rejoinder takes just a second or two to emerge: “Of course, if Robert Plant calls, we’ll do the gig.”

“Life is long,” King muses. “With the right combination, we might hook somebody up for sure. Add two zeros and we’re in.”

Two zeros. That’ll keep ’em away from those tanning salons. DB

# JOHN STITES

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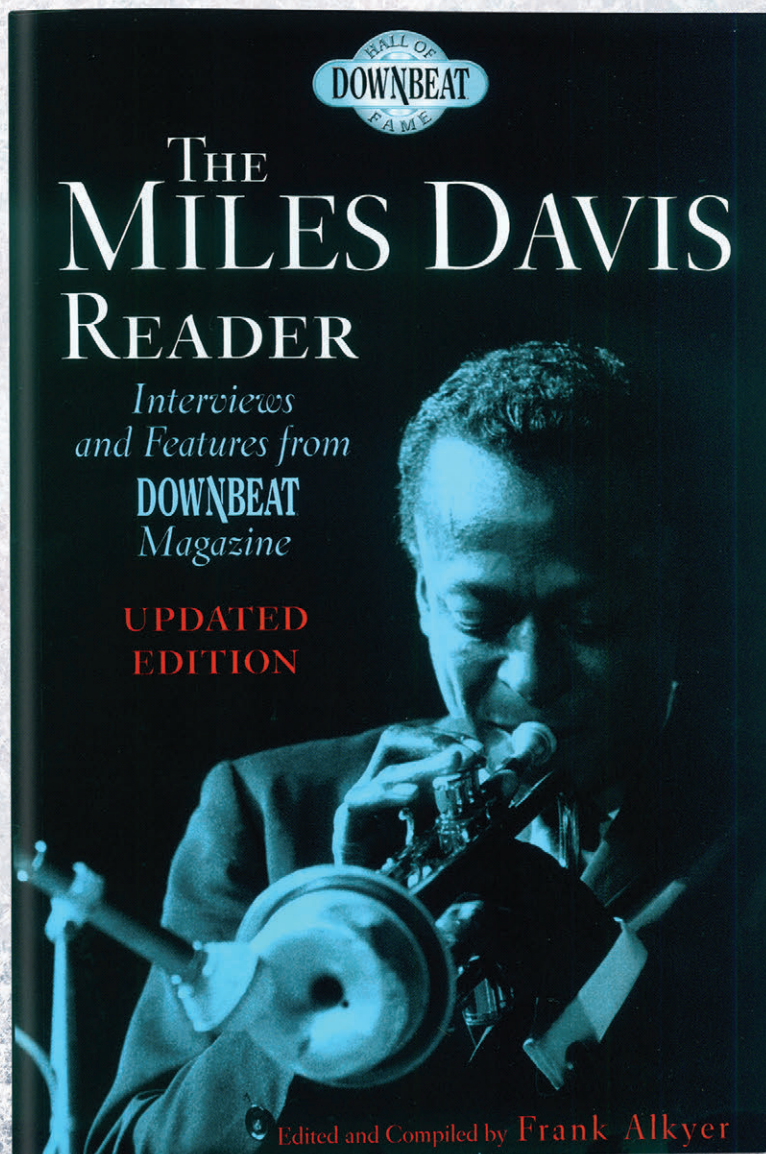
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# Reviews

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



EVA KAPANADZE



*Our Community Will Not Be Erased* makes a statement on where Jeremy Pelt is now as an artist and collaborator.

## Jeremy Pelt *Our Community Will Not Be Erased*

HIGHNOTE

★★★★★

Every year for the last 16 years, Jeremy Pelt has released an album on HighNote Records, each with a different approach to the music he makes, each dynamic and fascinating for the vein of the jazz genre Pelt is exploring that time around. This year's dispatch, *Our Community Will Not Be Erased*, swings the pendulum wildly from a cool, contemporary R&B-tinged sound to modern post-bop with expectedly great aplomb at both sides of the continu-

um — even if the overall statement isn't exactly a cohesive one this time around, but more a collection of vignettes.

On the lead single "Fathers And Sons," acoustic instrumentation glides over Lasse Corson's keyboard. The sudden swing to the buckling "Manifesto" is like the textural difference in riding a tramway immediately onto a wooden rollercoaster. "Brothas On The Corner" is a rollicking delight, the kind of display of talent for Lenny White's boisterous drumming that is a highlight (and arguably the centerpiece) of the album overall. White and Buster Williams on the bass haven't lost a step in all this time, and it's a marvel for them to play such rich material in such an invigo-

rating configuration.

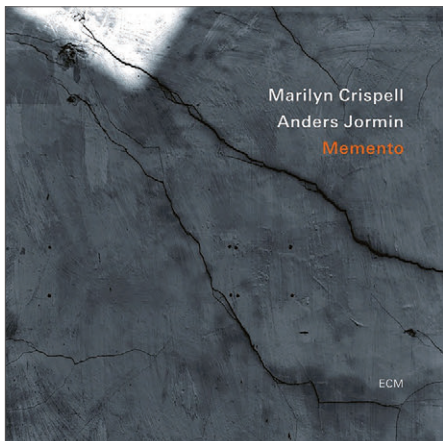
This is the thing about Pelt's albums over the years: The man is a hell of a bandleader, able to provide such fertile ground for musicians of all sorts to play at such enrichingly high levels. This new release of Pelt's is as engrossing as every other one, a statement on where he is now as an artist and collaborator, just a marking of this step on the journey to his next idea.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

***Our Community Will Not Be Erased***: An Angel—Dedicated To My Sister; Fathers And Sons; Manifesto; The March Into Resilience; Brothas On The Corner; Our Mother's Nature; Fathers And Daughters; Sandman; For The Culture. (41:53)

**Personnel**: Jeremy Pelt, trumpet, piano (1); Orrin Evans, piano (2–9); Buster Williams, bass; Lenny White, drums; Lasse Corson, keyboards (2, 5–6).

**Ordering info**: [jazzdepot.com](http://jazzdepot.com)



## Marilyn Crispell/ Anders Jormin *Memento*

ECM

★★★★½

I considered starting this review by referencing artists playing against type, but realized that, as far as Marilyn Crispell's extensive career goes, the genteel touch and regard for silence marking *Memento's* ruminations aren't exactly a night-and-day switcheroo. Melodic grace has become increasingly central to the gifted pianist's work, and the demeanor of this reflective duet with the esteemed Swedish bassist Anders

Jormin feels like an apex of sorts.

The music's emotional message — which is triggered by time passing, lives lost and memories nurtured — is a reminder to prioritize contemplation. From the four instantly composed pieces that open the album to the stark musings that dot its landscape, every move in this clutch of ballads celebrates awareness. Jormin is a choice partner for such a landscape. In this duo, setting the rich wooden tones and upper-register arco of his well-recorded instrument speak volumes when it comes to portraying melancholy.

The pair prove their simpatico in several spots, but the airy exchange of phrases on "Embracing The Otherness" is breathtaking, as are the ethereal maneuvers comprising "Song." With no track longer than 6 minutes and two tracks under 2, these somber meditations also have pith on their side: Even the sketchiest motif waxes sturdy. Jormin says the bittersweet aura of "The Light Dark" implies *vemod*, Swedish vernacular for simultaneously sensing sorrow and delight. But by the time Crispell's "Dragonfly" closes the program, it's clear her poignant farewell to confrere Gary Peacock connotes appreciation that transcends language. —*Jim Macnie*

**Memento:** For The Children; Dialogue; Embracing The Otherness; Contemplation In D; Three Shades Of A House—Morning; Three Shades Of A House—Evening; Song; Memento; The Beach At Newquay; The Dark Light; Dragonfly. (38:17)

**Personnel:** Marilyn Crispell, piano; Anders Jormin, bass.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

## Michael Formanek *New Digs*

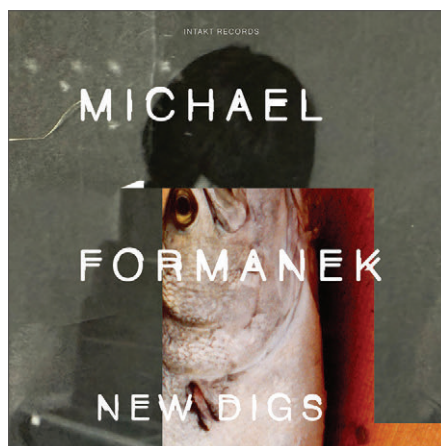
INTAKT

★★★★½

*New Digs* is built around a seed of an idea: What happens when you center an ensemble on the organ? The answer, as it turns out, is a rich, multi-layered record, one that leverages Alexander Hawkins' majestic, jewel-toned pipes alongside a muscular horn section, with Michael Formanek and his partners in the trio Thumbscrew — guitarist Mary Halvorson and drummer Tomas Fujiwara — holding the rhythm.

As a bassist, Formanek is versatile: locking the rhythmic line with Fujiwara, tracing melodic evolution alongside Halvorson and Hawkins, anchoring the capacious horns. As bandleader and composer, he explores themes and textures in a way that feels hypertextual: bouncing between abstract motifs and noir tones, continuously returning to concepts, turning them anew.

In the opening "New Old World," the horn section comes out in full swing, a round-robin of big ideas in organized chaos. In "For My Consideration," Hawkins' organ evokes Sun Ra, its astral-jazz tone riding a driving blues rhythm, the horns commanding rather than cluttering. Jump ahead to the seventh track, "Braxes," and we hear the same multilayered sheets of sound that the



horns laid out on "New Old World" and "For My Consideration." The soul-jazz warmth of the organ comes to the fore on the blues "AKA The Stinger."

Taken together, the tracks on *New Digs* form a mesh: cross-referencing, layering, looping back. Horn trills echo forward; the organ's deep, resonant tone bleeds between tracks; and Formanek's compositional web expands. This is a record that rewards close listening. —*Ivana Ng*

**New Digs:** New Old World; Prequel; It Was; For My Consideration; AKA The Stinger; Gone Home/Interlude For Susan Alcorn; Braxes; Quinze; Nigh Total. (65:55)

**Personnel:** John O'Gallagher, alto saxophone; Chet Doxas, tenor saxophone, clarinet; João Almeida, trumpet; Mary Halvorson, guitar; Alexander Hawkins, Hammond B-3 organ; Michael Formanek, bass; Tomas Fujiwara, drums.

**Ordering info:** [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch)



## Irreversible Entanglements *Future Present Past*

IMPULSE!

★★★★

Billed as a free-jazz collective and celebrated for progressive politics and spontaneous onstage compositions, Irreversible Entanglements seems to hark back to the glory days of Coltrane, Ayler and Sanders. Back then, the cutting edge not only represented the angry, aware end of jazz's avant-garde, but, like IR today, much of it was recorded for Impulse! at Van Gelder Studios.

Sadly, the resemblance ends with that last bit. It isn't just that Irreversible Entanglements lacks a volcanic and charismatic soloist; the sonic focus for much of their work is poet Camae Ayewa (a.k.a. Moor Mother), whose incanted wisdom is so front-and-center that most of the horn work, by trumpeter Aquiles Navarro and saxophonist Keir Neuringer, comes off as supporting commentary.

Moreover, there just isn't that much free blowing on *Future Present Past*. Most of the tunes are built around simple, catchy, one- or two-bar vamps, anchored by bassist Luke Stewart and kept interesting by the churning, groove-oriented pulse of drummer Tcheser Holmes. Atmospheric electronics, soulful vocalizing and exotic instruments are added where appropriate. It's catchy and engaging, but for the most part no more daring than the average socially conscious jam band.

But maybe that's the point. Depth and complexity aren't exactly hot commodities in an attention-based economy. If what you do sounds fully improvised and touches on important social issues, does it have to be *A Love Supreme*? Can't it just be *A Love Above Average*? —*J.D. Considine*

**Future Present Past:** Juntos Vencemos; Don't Lose Your Head; Vibrate Higher; Panamanian Fight Song; We Know; Hold On; Keep Going; The Messenger; The Spirit Moves; We Overcome. (42:04)

**Personnel:** Camae Ayewa, vocals (1–9); percussion (1, 6, 10); Aquiles Navarro, trumpet (2–5, 8); Watusi cattle horn and Indonesian water buffalo horn (1, 10), conch shell (7, 9); percussion (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10), vocals (4, 6), imagination (3); Keir Neuringer, soprano saxophone (2, 7–9), alto saxophone (3–5, 7, 8), Fender Rhodes (7), synthesizer (3); percussion (1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10), vocals (6); Luke Stewart, upright bass (2–9), mbira (9), whistle (7); percussion (1, 6, 10); Tcheser Holmes, drums (2–9); percussion (1, 4, 9, 10), vocals (6); Helado Negro, vocals (1, 10); MOTHERBOARD, vocals (2, 3, 5–7).

**Ordering info:** [vervecords.com](http://vervecords.com)

# The Hot Box

Critics	Anthony Dean-Harris	Jim Macnie	Ivana Ng	J.D. Considine
<b>Jeremy Pelt</b> <i>Our Community Will Not Be Erased</i>	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★
<b>Marilyn Crispell/Anders Jormin</b> <i>Memento</i>	★★★½	★★★½	★★★½	★★★½
<b>Michael Formanek</b> <i>New Digs</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★½	★★★★½
<b>Irreversible Entanglements</b> <i>Future Present Past</i>	★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★

## Critics' Comments

### Jeremy Pelt, *Our Community Will Not Be Erased*

There's a tad too much "been there, done that" in this set of feisty and fluid pieces. But well-trodden turf or not, its spark is obvious, its craft is impressive and its statement is vital. —*Jim Macnie*

Warm, buoyant and dripping with swag, this neo-bop record wears its lineage of jazz, blues and soul proudly and joyfully. —*Ivana Ng*

Stepping away from the sonic circuitry that adorned 2024's *Tomorrow's Another Day*, Pelt goes after a sound more akin to *Nefertiti*-period Miles. But because he does so with such a brilliant rhythm section, this is less a throwback than a continuation. —*J.D. Considine*

### Marilyn Crispell/Anders Jormin, *Memento*

As much a meditation as it is a conversation, Crispell's piano and Jormin's bass have no need to proclaim all they're saying to each other. Their hushed tones say enough. —*Anthony Dean-Harris*

Dark and sinewy, Crispell's headstrong piano finds its perfect counterweight in Jormin's muscular bass. The duo turns silence and breath into architecture, tracing memory, loss and connection. It's a master class in restraint. —*Ivana Ng*

Jormin's command of the bow keeps this piano-bass duet from falling into the usual tropes, bringing a mournful lyricism to the music that nicely pairs with the muted melancholy of Crispell's lean harmony. Elegiac quietude is seldom so compelling. —*J.D. Considine*

### Michael Formanek, *New Digs*

Formanek's swirling, pointed grooves, especially with the raucous beat maintained by the very adept Tomas Fujiwara, sneakily grab the ears and pull them rhythmically into unavoidable head nods. A marvel of an album. —*Anthony Dean-Harris*

One of the bassist's most captivating discs, no question. This septet is agile enough to have him wax grand or demure composition-wise, and the organ inclusion is a smart-move binder that unifies the horns with the rhythm section like Gorilla Glue. —*Jim Macnie*

If the key to great jazz composition is understanding how to write material that brings the best out of your bandmates, Formanek is absolutely top-tier. Moreover, this band is one of his best, with organist Alexander Hawkins being the most welcome surprise. —*J.D. Considine*

### Irreversible Entanglements, *Future Present Past*

Every Irreversible Entanglements album is a journey — across time, ideas, rhythms and emotions — particularly for those willing to make the musical excursion along with them, and that journey means just as much if not more than whatever that destination may be. —*Anthony Dean-Harris*

The most potent they've ever sounded on record, the immediacy of the ensemble's groove power equals the imperatives of its squalls. Moor Mother is at her most convincing, though I'd adore a bit more dynamics in her vocal cadences. —*Jim Macnie*

The quintet finds new ways yet to evoke ancestral wisdom and grapple with the present moment. Rhythm as healing, poetry as prophecy: This is liberation music at its most dynamic and alive. —*Ivana Ng*

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## Carlos Niño and Friends *Bubble Bath For Giants*

NORTHERN SPY

★★★★½

You could call L.A.-based Carlos Niño a percussionist, but that's vastly understating the matter. On his latest album, Niño spans the spectrum from drums, gongs and keyboards to rattles and plant bundles. More accurately, Niño is a sonic curator, creating music that ranges from jazz adjacent to far into new age and ambient territory without losing the sensibility that a saxophone solo might break out at any moment.

But what does *Bubble Bath For Giants* sound

## Fuller Sound *Dynasty*

CELLAR MUSIC

★★★★

Sisters Tia Fuller and Shamie Fuller-Royston share a musical heart-to-heart in this recital dedicated to the memory of the working band called "Fuller Sound" their parents led in their childhood. A sense of fond memories imbues *Dynasty*, along with inimitable sibling intimacy that allows for balance, give and take. A minute of talk overlays the piano intro to "Windsoar," arguably a self-indulgence, but understandable considering the sentiment involved.

Once the alto saxophonist begins blowing, her swoops and cries arc fittingly with the pianist's fluid accompaniment. The aspirational "Windsoar" gives way to the boppish blues "Dooty Baby" (referring to a younger brother: both his sisters teasing him); Shamie's syncopation of Bach, to which Tia adds a Latin tinge; then Fuller debuts as a singer, recalling her mother's vocalizing and her wisdom. Tia's heart is in the right place; switching from singing to sax and back probably has an impact in performance. But her talents are best revealed in her graceful rendition of Sam Rivers' "Beatrice," on which Shamie also dazzles, and in other instrumental passages where she expands on ideas, and beckons surprises.

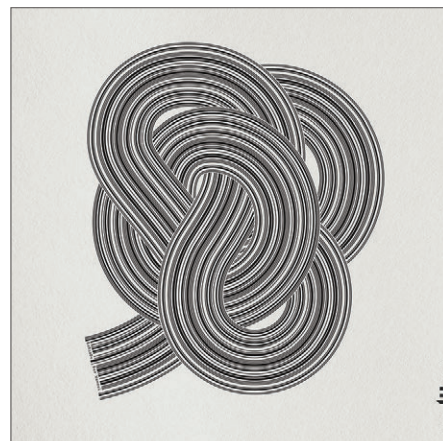
like? Well, track titles like "High Energy Cloth," "VibrationsoftheDay" and "DancinginthePlanetarium" are revealing: It's music with its own syntax and direction. "High Energy Cloth" rides a sumptuous bed of small percussion with synthesizers and Andre 3000's flutes lurking in the background, adding depth to what might be a quiet beach until Allen wanders in, grounding the affair in the jazz avant-garde of the '60s and '70s. "DancinginthePlanetarium" takes a different approach, beginning with Jones' trembling sounds before solidifying into a dark haunting wisp of minimalism. Many tracks were recorded then spliced into something with stronger narrative and cinematic value.

It's unique and enjoyable music, but it's hard to go back and see a progression to *Bubble Bath* from the several other Niño and Friends recordings. I suspect Niño would accuse me of overthinking; his music is better appreciated on its own terms than analyzed. —Martin Johnson

**Bubble Bath For Giants:** Ixoneztli, Xolotl, Niño, Orangeharvest; DancinginthePlanetarium; Visions By The Fire, shells; VibrationsoftheDay; High Energy Cloth; Deep Bow; StrikettheChord; Enter The Portal. (45:31)

**Personnel:** Carlos Niño, drums, percussion, keyboards, vocals, plant leaf bundles and fronds, whistles; Luis Pérez Ixoneztli, ceramic statue flute, shakers, vocals (1); Bernard Xolotl, computer, synthesizers (1); Surya Botofasina, keyboards, synthesizers (2, 4-6); Aaron Shaw, tenor saxophone (2); Laraaji, iPad synthesizer, vocals (3); Darius Jones (3), Sam Gendel (7), alto saxophone; Sheila Govindarajan, vocals (3); Nate Mercereau, Kawai K4 Keyboard (4), guitar (5, 6), guitar synth (6); André 3000, EWI (6), flutes, vocals (6, 7); Deantoni Parks, drums (6); Marshall Allen, alto saxophone, EWI (6).

**Ordering info:** [carlosnino.bandcamp.com](http://carlosnino.bandcamp.com)



## Ben Wendel *BaRcoDe*

EDITION

★★★★★

Whether tackling the music of Charles Ives, indulging in chamber jazz or electronic experimentation or blowing with a quartet at the Village Vanguard, the visionary saxophonist-composer never fails to swing for the fences on his ambitious recording projects. This one is a grand slam. By placing his authoritative tenor in the unusual setting of four vibraphonists/marimbists (Joel Ross, Simon Moullier, Patricia Brennan and Venezuelan-born Juan Diego Villalobos) sans rhythm section, the Canadian-born cofounder of the shape-shifting group Kneebody takes a proudly unorthodox stance on *BaRcoDe*.

On the minimalist opener, "Clouds," reminiscent of Steve Reich's early '70s classic *Drumming*, Wendel's bold tenor playing alludes to South Indian scales (like a Carnatic Michael Brecker) against the dizzying repetitive undercurrent supplied by the four mallet instruments. Ross also supplies an exhilarating breakneck vibraphone solo here. The African influence is unmistakable on "Mimo," as it cleverly morphs from a 6/8 groove into a 4/4 blues form beneath some spirited trading on Ross' marimba and Moullier's balafon.

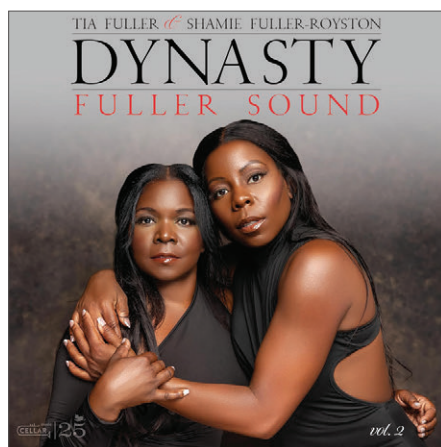
The moody and mesmerizing Jobim classic, "Ohla Maria," finds Wendel taking a sparser approach and playing tenderly; more Getzian than Breckerian. The ensemble creates a kind of Morse code effect on Kneebody's pointillistic "Repeat After Me," then collectively pushes the envelope on the whirlwind "Birds Ascend," highlighted by a virtuosic vibes solo from Brennan. Wendel closes with the mournful, evocative ballad "Lonely One," unveiling some echo-laden whistling alongside his potent horn work. Ingenious concept and immaculate execution on exceedingly difficult material.

—Bill Milkowski

**BaRcoDe:** Clouds; Mimo; Ohla Maria; Repeat After Me; Birds Ascend; Lonely One. (41:42)

**Personnel:** Ben Wendel, tenor saxophone, EFX; Joel Ross, vibraphone, marimba; Simon Moullier, vibraphone, chromatic balafon, EFX; Patricia Brennan, vibraphone, EFX; Juan Diego Villalobos, vibraphone, mallet station, percussion, EFX.

**Ordering info:** [editionrecords.com](http://editionrecords.com)



Shamie brings misterioso vibes to her lead-in to "Black Viking," Tia's tune with Bach-like counterpoint. Horace Silver's waltz "Central Park" was a favorite of the women's bassist father, and they lend it a warm lilt.

*Dynasty* ends with what seems like an impromptu, open-ended fade out. The sisters aren't seeking closure; they're embracing their past as present, hoping it conveys meaning for you, too. —Howard Mandel

**Dynasty:** Windsoar; Dooty Baby; Ode To Bach; Momma Said; Beatrice; In This Quiet Place; Dear John; Black Viking; Summer In Central Park; Descend To Barbados (postlude). (43:37)

**Personnel:** Tia Fuller, alto saxophone, vocal (4, 6); Shamie Fuller-Royston, piano.

**Ordering info:** [cellarlive.com](http://cellarlive.com)



## Jon Irabagon *Saturday's Child*

IRABBAGAST

★★★½

### *Focus Out*

IRABBAGAST

★★★★★

Over the course of his extensive discography, multi-saxophonist Irabagon has developed some identifiable traits in presenting his music. One is to release two albums of drastically differing types under his name at the same time, in part to purposely confound reviewers.

Another is a trend toward absurdism, evidenced here in *Saturday's Child*, documenting



a live improvised set at the Instigation Festival in Irabagon's hometown of Chicago, where Dan Oestreicher joins him for an hour-plus on dueling bass saxophones. Irabagon is no stranger to strange sounds on strange instruments: Other albums featured him on soprano and soprallo saxophones. Here, the two reedmen maniacally commit sonically grotesque and exotic atrocities, especially an excruciating 17-minute medley beginning with "Molasses Candyland." Like a good slasher film, one wants to turn away but is somehow fascinatingly compelled to see it through to the gory, expulsive end.

On the second album, *Focus Out*, Irabagon returns his alto saxophone and his longstand-

ing group with pianist Matt Mitchell, bassist Chris Lightcap and drummer Dan Weiss. The band blazes through the line of "Morning Star," Irabagon launching like a laser beam into an incandescent solo. The title track displays Mitchell's deftly unpredictable skills on Fender Rhodes. Guests trumpeter Dave Ballou and guitarist Miles Okazaki add some collective-improvisation textures on "Paper Planes" and "Evening Star," the latter also including tenor saxophonists Donny McCaslin and Mark Shim on some scintillating, chaotic riposte. But the X factor is vocalist KOKAYI, who lends his unique talents to two tracks with his free-stylized lyrics and jazz-savvy melodicism, moving the music into another abstracted realm of possibility on "Indigo Stains."

Irabagon has done it again: two radically different albums, revealing myriad facets of a radically inventive artist who continues to shock and delight those with the right amount of intestinal fortitude. —Gary Fukushima

**Saturday's Child:** Mood Swings; Daycare Infantry; Medley: Molasses Candyland/Tag/Gripe; Waking Dreams; Sugar Rush; Sugar Rush (Radio Edit). (52:46)

**Personnel:** Jon Irabagon, Dan Oestreicher, bass saxophone.

**Focus Out:** Morning Star; Focus Out; Paper Planes; Evening Star; Indigo Stains; Prayer (for Reomi); Center Post (Bonus Track). (46:28)

**Personnel:** Jon Irabagon, alto saxophone; Matt Mitchell, piano and Fender Rhodes; Chris Lightcap, bass; Dan Weiss, drums; KOKAYI, vocals (3, 5); Dave Ballou, trumpet (3, 4); Miles Okazaki, guitar (3, 4); Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone (4); Mark Shim, tenor saxophone (4).

**Ordering info:** [jonirabagon.com](http://jonirabagon.com)

## Vuyo Sotashe & Chris Pattishall *Invocation*

INDEPENDENT RELEASE

★★★★½

An invocation is an incantation to summon a higher power. In the case of this 20-minute opus, the invocation is a summoning that manifests as a whisper in a lost lover's ear, evoking a profane ghost of a feeling.

*Invocation* opens with an interpretation of "I'll Look Around" that unfurls like "the flower" that the tune's narrator was given to wear by the song's lost subject. "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)" further punctuates a universal feeling of longing that permeates the project.

There's also a slightly psychedelic tinge to all of these tracks, which were produced by post-rock guitarist Rafiq Bhatia and Eric Oberstein, with sound design by pianist Pattishall.

On "I Think It's Gonna Rain Today," Sotashe and Pattishall achieve a level of spiritual flow akin to Aretha Franklin (on vocals) and Donny Hathaway (on keys) recording Franklin's composition "Daydreaming."

"Sylvia," which closes out this set, is a reimagining of a traditional South African choral composition that aptly rings out, "Kambe sitsho sithi ndlela ntle," translated loosely as "Perhaps we say farewell," furthering the theme of separation and longing that permeates this wistful *Invocation*.

—Ayana Contreras



**Invocation:** I'll Look Around; I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good); I Think It's Gonna Rain Today; Sylvia. (20:34)

**Personnel:** Vuyo Sotashe, vocal; Chris Pattishall, piano, synths.

**Ordering info:** [chrispattishall.bandcamp.com](http://chrispattishall.bandcamp.com)

## Erica von Kleist *Picc Pocket*

INDEPENDENT RELEASE

★★★

*Picc Pocket* is six numbers of straight-ahead jazz written by leader/piccoloist Erica von Kleist. From track to track, what stands out most clearly is the ongoing interaction between von Kleist and pianist Yago Vazquez, the album's central nervous system. In fact, given von Kleist's meek sonic voice, it's Vazquez's instrument that ends up serving as *Picc Pocket*'s strongest.

The band's cohesion and rhythmic drive can be heard to good effect on the medium-tempo swinging waltz "Picc And Choose," where the level of close give-and-take, sensitive expression can be heard between the pianist's supple play and bassist Noriko Ueda's deft pulse. Von Kleist's presence sneaks up on you, her instrument often sounding like a chirping bird that just flew in your window, as on the uptempo swinging "Picc Up Lines," also featuring a cool and smooth John Ellis on tenor sax.

The album's clever, sometimes cute song titles suggest that this multi-instrumentalist can make good use of a title as with the swinger "Bone 2 Picc": The piccolo playing against the equally chirpy sound of Jennifer Krupa's trombone, it's playful in the spirit of a cartoon soundtrack. The closing "Picc A Peck" serves as the album's blues anchor, this slow number allowing all members to sing. —John Ephland

**Picc Pocket:** We Know How To Picc 'Em; Let Me Picc Your Brain; Bone 2 Picc; Picc And Choose; Picc Up Lines; Picc A Peck. (33:51)

**Personnel:** Erica von Kleist, piccolo; Yago Vazquez, piano; Noriko Ueda, bass; Anton Kot, drums; Jennifer Krupa, trombone (3); John Ellis, tenor saxophone (5).

**Ordering info:** [ericavonkleist.com](http://ericavonkleist.com)



## The Season's Winner's Circle

**Mike Mattison & Trash Magic: *Turn A Midnight Corner* (Landslide; ★★★★★ 42:05)** Mike Mattison, a Georgia-based roots-music ally of Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi, has built an impressive solo career. His latest is a conceptual affair recounting in original tunes the not-easy-to-follow tale of a Depression-era blues duo that has mixed feelings about their "rediscovery" many years later. Mattison stands tall thanks to his unmistakable voice as his reliable supporting team offers catchy and homespun bluesy sounds. Brilliant opening track: "Going Down The Alley."

Ordering info: [mikemattison.com](http://mikemattison.com)

**Ed Alstrom: *This Idea Of Humanity ...* (Haywire; ★★★½ 53:41)** Ed Alstrom isn't your garden-variety bluesman: He plays organ at weekend home Yankees games and for New Jersey houses of worship. The 14 originals on his sophomore album aren't ordinary, either, marking a purposeful free spirit who creatively uses elements of gospel and jazz to realize his own species of modern blues. Alstrom's perusal of Hammond, piano, melodica and several other instruments can be counted on for colorful, right-on assertions. Moreover, he sings decently and pens thoughtful lyrics that address the human condition à la Mose Allison.

Ordering info: [edalstrom.com](http://edalstrom.com)

**Alexis P. Suter Band Featuring Garth Hudson: *Just Stay Live* (Nola Blue; ★★★★★ 57:43)** Alexis P. Suter breathes the air in the upper reaches of roots music's Mount Olympus. Her performance at New York State's Falcon Club in 2013 saw the Brooklynite raising the roof with her large, Big Mama Thornton-like voice. In the process, Suter gave the lyrics of, say, Bob Dylan's "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" and traditional gospel-blues "John The Revelator" the crystalline ring of truth. The Band's Garth Hudson, providing quirky, jazzy piano, has modest presence.

Ordering info: [nola-blue.com](http://nola-blue.com)

**Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials: *Slideways* (Alligator; ★★★½ 49:31)** The Blues Imperials' modus operandi is regenerating rough-hewn 1950s Chicago blues through an uncanny four-person symbiosis resulting from 38 years of working together. Tenth release *Slideways*, an assortment of above-average boogies, shuffles and slow blues, asserts that Lil' Ed, 70, still has the remarkable slide guitar sound of Elmore James and uncle J.B. Hutto securely lodged in his being.

Ordering info: [alligator.com](http://alligator.com)

**Terry Robb: *Howlin' Waters* (New Folk; ★★★½ 31:07)** Portland folk-blues fixture Terry Robb has had a long while to refine a warm and homey fingerstyle guitar style inspired by Delta and Piedmont forefathers, as



Mike Mattison goes conceptual on *Turn A Midnight Corner*.

BRADLEY STRICKLAND

well as his late friend John Fahey.

Ordering info: [terryrobb.com](http://terryrobb.com)

**Betty Bryant: *Nothin' Better To Do ...* (Bry-Mar; ★★★½ 45:50)** Ninety-six-year-old Betty Bryant stays on track as a long-serving, highly regarded jazz-and-blues chanteuse in Los Angeles with this swinging, enjoyable recording. Her voice is the essence of hushed power; it has a relaxed, ironic weightiness revealed in politely risqué self-composed blues and classics from Carmen McRae or Nat Cole.

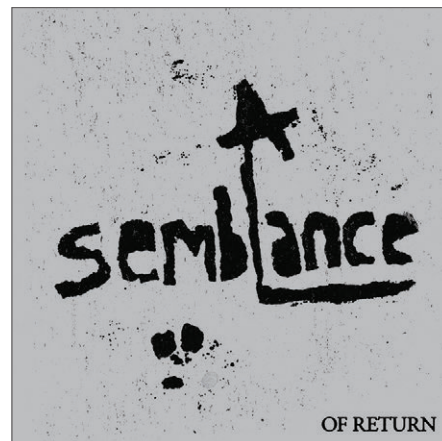
Ordering info: [bettybryant.com](http://bettybryant.com)

**Stew Cutler & Friends: *Undercover (Mostly)* (Independent Release; ★★★★★ 43:37)** Underappreciated guitarist Stew Cutler, who for decades has operated at a high level of facility on the New York blues scene, takes an exploratory approach to a program here of "mostly" instrumentals. Restlessly intelligent, he takes blues guitar vocabulary and spirit to his transmutions of pop or jazz songs: Wayne Shorter's "Fe Fi Fo Fum" becomes a Texas blues, and items by, among others, Seals & Crofts and Michael Jackson take on an entirely new shine.

Ordering info: [stewcutler.com](http://stewcutler.com)

**Corey Harris/Alvin Youngblood Hart/Guy Davis: *Fight On! True Blues, Vol. 2* (Yellow Dog; ★★★★★ 27:37)** In 2013 there was an album from a trio of up-and-coming acoustic blues artists who displayed their sizable talents and emotional suppleness when updating old country blues. At long last, Corey Harris, Alvin Youngblood Hart and Guy Davis — each singer-guitarist recording alone in separate studios, each contributing three songs — pick up where they left off. Whether digging deep into old-school-type originals or interpreting ageless gems associated with the likes of Mississippi Fred McDowell, these three masters conjure striking moods of melancholy, resolve and humor from a modern remove. **DB**

Ordering info: [yellowdogrecords.com](http://yellowdogrecords.com)



OF RETURN

### Asher Gamedze & A Semblance Of Return

NORTHERN SPY

★★★

South African drummer, bandleader, composer and theorist Asher Gamedze has demonstrated a broad embrace of Black music, with a clear emphasis on jazz-rooted improvisation both from his homeland and other Afro-Diasporic traditions. Over the last six years he's released a variety of shape-shifting jazz albums, nonchalantly eschewing any particular stylistic thrust. *Of Return* offers yet another direction, capturing a kind of social practice with his bandmates in A Semblance: a quintet that blurs the lines between reading group, jam session, and sociopolitical activism. Gamedze wrote all of the music here, mixing his own texts with those of the prominent anti-Apartheid activist Steve Biko.

The recording feels like a document of a ritual performance, interlacing texts of resistance with wide-open grooves concerned primarily with vibe and subtlety. "Progressive" feels like a benediction, as the murmur of conversation yields to a tight bass pattern and chill polyrhythmic groove, trumpeter Keegan Steenkamp building on that infrastructure with a pair of alternating, metronomic one-note lines. It's followed by the episodic "Air (Of Involvedness)," where lean, percussive hypnosis is generated before suddenly pivoting to a snaking funk groove and then a plangent toe-tapping melody, all complemented by concise horn and keyboard solos perfectly wed to the music's cool aura.

There are other indelible melodies here and there, but this record is really about projecting a deep sense of communal music-making as a practice rather than a showcase. —Peter Margasak

**Of Return:** Stranger No Death; Progressive; Air (Of Involvedness); Following Up; Of The Fire; War (Of Maneuver); Lowland; Extension; State (Of The Internation); Turnin'. (44:27)

**Personnel:** Asher Gamedze, drums, reading group, group vocals, keyboards, percussion; Ru Sayen, percussion, reading group, group vocals; Nobuhle Ashanti, keyboards, reading group, group vocals; Zwide Ndwandwe, bass, reading group, group vocals; Keegan Steenkamp, trumpet, reading group, group vocals, trombone.

Ordering info: [northernspyrccs.com](http://northernspyrccs.com)

## Audrey Ochoa

### *The Sorceress*

CHRONOGRAPH

★★★

On her fifth record, Canadian trombonist and vocalist Audrey Ochoa celebrates her artistic authenticity, delivering a collection of compositions that move comfortably between swinging jazz, cinematic textures and electronic influences with a Latin tinge.

The album's title carries a bit of humor — Ochoa was previously dubbed a “trombone sorceress” on her last record — and the music reflects that sense of mischief. Tracks like “Maintenance Phase” and “Let’s Give Up” lean into catchy melodic figures and buoyant grooves.

Her bandmates give the music its flexibility. Pianist/keyboardist Chris Andrew, tenor saxophonist Jeremiah McDade, bassist Mike Lent and drummer Jon May form the core of the group, navigating shifts between chamber-like passages and groove-heavy sections with ease. Their interplay allows Ochoa’s compositions to breathe, particularly in moments when the arrangements open into collective improvisation.

Ochoa also steps forward as a vocalist on several tracks, adding an intimate dimension. While her voice brings welcome variety, the album would have been just fine without any vocals added. —*Veronica Johnson*

**The Sorceress:** Maintenance Phase; Lamplight; Another One; The Green Place; My Reward; Petra And Schoobie; Button People; Let’s Give Up; Left Foot Right; Commodore ’25; Grateful Woman; Everything You Wanted; I Have You; Swan Song. (64:26)

**Personnel:** Audrey Ochoa, trombone, vocals; Chris Andrew, piano, keyboards; Jeremiah McDade, tenor saxophone; Mo Lefever, guitar; Jon May, drums; Mike Lent, bass; Nathan Ouellette, percussion; Jen Bustin, violin; Joanne Yu, cello.

Ordering info: [chronographrecords.com](http://chronographrecords.com)



## Peter Somuah

### *Walking Distance*

ACT

★★½

Trumpeter Peter Somuah was born in Accra, Ghana. Inspired early on by Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard and Hugh Masekela, he settled in Rotterdam, with *Walking Distance* being his third album for ACT. Somuah has a warm and melancholy tone. During the few moments when he stretches himself, he shows that he can play creatively. While he’s often in the lead, the colorful electronics of keyboardist Anton de Bruin and fresh, Ghanaian-influenced rhythms of Jens Meijer consistently grab one’s attention.

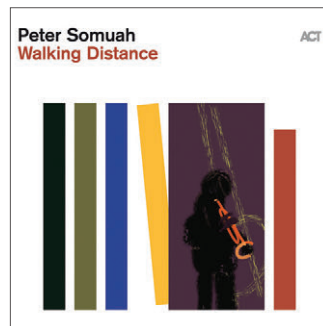
None of Somuah’s melodies stick in one’s mind afterwards. Often, a song’s theme is just a repetitive phrase (“Roundabout,” “A Turn”) that occurs throughout the performance. Somuah, unaccompanied for much of the brooding ballad “Right Lane” before Meijer joins on quiet percussion, hints at more than he actually plays and consistently sounds as if he’s holding back.

Unlike in the era of three-minute 78s, when on the best recordings musicians and arrangers made every moment count, the brevity of the renditions on *Walking Distance* works against itself. Ironically, its 11 pieces all have titles having to do with taking a trip — but the performances never seem to go anywhere. —*Scott Yanow*

**Walking Distance:** Crossroad; 300 Meters; Around The Corner; Intersection; Roundabout; Junction; A Turn; Chef Groove; Nearby; Right Lane; Voyage. (42:56)

**Personnel:** Peter Somuah, trumpet, flugelhorn; Anton de Bruin, keyboards, organ; Marjin van de Ven, bass; Jens Meijer, drums; Danny Rombout, percussion; Heleen Vellekoop, flute (2); Nia Ralinova, cello (2, 3).

Ordering info: [actmusic.com](http://actmusic.com)



## John Hart

### *New Mantra*

STEEPLECHASE

★★★½

Veteran guitarist John Hart deserves wider recognition for his work as a leader. He comes out boldly swinging on *New Mantra* with bassist Bill Noring and drummer Tim Horner.

Hart doesn’t particularly break new ground here, nor does he try to.

The mission at hand is just to keep alive the torch of mainstream, clean tone, fat body jazz guitar trio culture, which he does beautifully.

Mainstreaming leanings notwithstanding, Hart pivots smoothly between multiple feels and moods over the course of his mostly original mix. Shades of Thelonious Monk come through on his own playfully angular opener “Think” and his radiant take on Monk’s “Reflection.” Snaky fast lines slither through the melodic forms and nimble solo outings on “The Blues Left” and “Combabulation,” and “Abyss” alters the harmonic language.

From the evergreen standards corner, Hart makes all the right moves in a gorgeous reading of Leonard Bernstein’s “Some Other Time” and tastefully kicks up the tempo with a waltz version of “Stella By Starlight.” He settles into the something more comfortable of a medium swing groove on the closer “This Masquerade Is Over,” but gets some twisted and burning licks in along the silken path. He goes down the middle, with subtle detours on the agenda. —*Josef Woodard*

**New Mantra:** Think; New Mantra; Abyss; The Blues Left; Some Other Time; Stella By Starlight; Combabulation; Reflections; Turmoil; The Masquerade Is Over. (66:25)

**Personnel:** John Hart, guitar; Bill Noring, bass; Tim Horner, drums.

Ordering info: [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)



## The BLCK Madonna

### *Between The Lines*

NOIR COLLECTIVE/DOWNTOWN

★★★

Ana Hoffman chose to record under the name BLCK Madonna to reflect her feminine spirituality. The daughter of an American father and Ghanaian mother, she was raised respecting the cultural duality of her family. She dips into the varied aspects of her background as she performs the standards she chose for her debut.

She opens with “Afro Blue,” played slowly, with the band’s restrained backing allowing her the room to slide up and down the scale, emphasizing the lyrics. She hums an improvised introduction to “Body And Soul,” as Sam Towse’s piano and Rafael Enciso’s bass lay down a minimal melodic line. She sighs the lyric, emphasizing the message of surrendering to love.

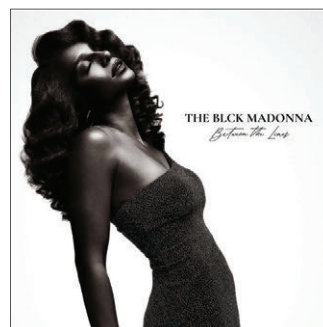
The saxophone of Santosh Sharma leads off “Night And Day,” with Madonna’s vocalese phrasing and Miguel Russell’s tapping percussion complementing the melody. She sings louder and more urgently, as the song progresses, with a long closing note breaking into laughter.

For the most part, The BLCK Madonna sings simply, avoiding any flourishes that would distract from the heartfelt lyrics. The backing musicians contribute subtle changes in rhythm, volume and phrasing, always complimenting her lively vocals. —*j. poet*

**Between The Lines:** Afro Blue; Round Midnight; Body And Soul; Night And Day; Pick Yourself Up; My Funny Valentine; Between The Lines; Love Is Here To Stay. (40:40)

**Personnel:** The BLCK Madonna/Ana Hoffman, vocals; Rafael Enciso, upright and electric bass; Sam Towse, piano; Santosh Sharma, saxophone; Miguel Russell, drums.

Ordering info: [noircollectiveavl.com](http://noircollectiveavl.com)



# Listening in the Past Tense

The most striking, unexpected music on these archival releases is from **Charles Tyler: *Voyage From Jericho*** (Frederiksberg; ★★★★★ 44:26). Tyler (1941–'92) was brought up in Indianapolis, the contemporary of another great alto player, James Spaulding. He moved in 1960 to Cleveland, where he worked with Albert Ayler, then New York, where he was the most constant member of the tenorist's groups, 1963–'66. He recorded as leader for ESP in 1966 and 1967. *Jericho*, from 1974, is his magnum opus, his first recording on baritone saxophone as well as alto. It features trumpeter Earl Cross, bassist Ronnie Boykins — both Sun Ra alumni — and drummer Steve Reid. Alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe appears on two tracks.

The title piece has a march-like opening and sets up a blistering pace. On only his third recording, Blythe's vibrato is more obvious, while Tyler's big tone and more deliberate sound, not heard on alto till the second track, "Return To The East," can appear delicate. The latter track has a plangent but lugubrious theme, then shifts to a loose Latin feel. The furious "Just For Two," the sole composition by Cross, is the emotional apex. "Children's Music March" is stern and bellicose. Tyler is a contemporary of the better-known Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill and their equal as instrumentalist and composer. His work here is close to Ornette Coleman free-bop, but while Ornette has lightness, wit and lyricism, Tyler is darker, martial, sometimes stentorian.

Ordering info: [frederiksbergrecords.bandcamp.com](http://frederiksbergrecords.bandcamp.com)

**Red Norvo: *The Secret Session*** (Dot Time; ★★★★★ 45:25) was made in 1942, when the AFM strike closed the studios. Norvo persuaded an engineer to let his band in. The results are finally available thanks to trombonist Eddie Bert, who provided the tapes. Norvo (1908–'99) joined Paul Whiteman in the '20s and Benny Goodman's sextet in 1944, shifting from marimba to vibraphone. He worked with Woody Herman (1946) then led trios with guitar and bass, notably with Tal Farlow and Charles Mingus (1950–'51). As here, he was very successful in making the transition from swing to bop, epitomized here by "One Note Jive," with Aaron Sachs on hypodermic clarinet. Norvo is on xylophone, with Shorty Rogers (trumpet), Eddie Bert (trombone), Aaron Sachs (reeds) and rhythm. The highlight for me is a joyous "Liza," with taut, lucid soloing from the leader and an exciting conclusion. Norvo usually played vibraphone without vibrato, almost like a xylophone, and his improvising is influenced by Teddy Wilson's piano style.

Ordering info: [dottimerecords.com](http://dottimerecords.com)



Charles Tyler in New York, 1974.

DAVID GLAUBINGER / FREDERIKSBERG RECORDS

**Paul McCandless** plays oboe, English horn, bass clarinet and soprano saxophone. In 1970, with Messrs Towner, Moore and Walcott, he formed Oregon. *Hearsay* (1988) and *Premonition* (1992) appeared on Windham Hill, the latter produced by bassist Steve Rodby and featuring Lyle Mays (piano), Fred Simon (keyboards) and Mark Walker (drums). That's the group on this 1992 live date, ***Live At Kimball's East*** (Moosicus ★★ 73:00), captured in the Bay Area on a DAT cassette then forgotten. It's fusion, not jazz-rock, and mention of Windham Hill raises immediate suspicions. The album is bland, tedious, pointlessly virtuosic and sometimes unintentionally comic: I struggled to reach the end.

Ordering info: [moosicus.com](http://moosicus.com)

The restored, remastered **Duke Ellington Orchestra: *Copenhagen 1964*** (Storyville ★★★★★ 69:15) mixes classics and compositions from Duke's recent Far East tour in an excellent live recording. The Orchestra is at the height of its powers, with soloists including Cootie Williams (trumpet), Lawrence Brown (trombone) and Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves and Harry Carney (saxophones). There's an atmospheric medley of "Black And Tan Fantasy," "Creole Love Call" and "The Mooche," driven by Ellington's modernist piano stylings. A highlight is the ballad "Happy Reunion." Apart from a short piano introduction, it's Paul Gonsalves throughout, with a long, breathy, seductive tenor-saxophone solo: a signature stylist.

An eventful Harlem suite features Cootie Williams. There's a selection from probably Ellington's finest late work, *The Far East Suite*, including the avantgarde modal "Amad," built on a long pedal-point. There are also selections from *Timon of Athens*, as well as, finally, "Kinda Dukish," "Rockin' In Rhythm" and "Jones."

Ordering info: [storyvillerecords.com](http://storyvillerecords.com)

DB



## Nils Wülker *Zuversicht*

WARNER MUSIC CENTRAL EUROPE

★★★★

Popular in Europe for two decades for his pop-oriented jazz, German trumpeter/flugelhornist Nils Wülker takes a deep dive into acoustic jazz quartet work on his warm new album, *Zuversicht*, a word that lands in English somewhere between "trust" and "hope." Working for the first time with exclusively American players, Wülker and his mates occasionally propel his disarmingly deliberate simplicity into free and open territory reminiscent of the classic trio EST. When they don't, the music is somewhat jejune.

Wülker has a gift for melody (he wrote the tunes) and draws beautiful, warm sounds from both trumpet and flugelhorn. The quartet is at its best on "Second Nature," where a couple of hanging melody notes evoke the fragile sweetness of Miles Davis' version of "Time After Time," and Wülker's flügel and Linda May Han Oh's bass create an organic weave, a gambit they reprise on "It's Okay." The opening cut, "All Hands On Deck," followed by "As Young As Your Faith," create a mood of quiet secrecy that accelerates with the tricky time of "This Moment's Rhythm." Pianist Aaron Parks plays with crystalline delicacy here and throws in some country-ish grace-notes on "Alpenglow."

Drummer Greg Hutchinson smacks a snappy funk backbeat behind "Forces At Work," but Wülker's solo lacks surprise. He's more inventive on "FOMO Fighter," but overall, the track feels tepid, as does "Time Will Tell"; "Continuum" borders on hot tub music. The comforting closer, "It's Alright," shows Wülker's real strength — strong, comforting pop melody — but *Zuversicht* is a strong first stab at more fluid jazz quartet work.

—Paul de Barros

**Zuversicht:** All Hands On Deck; As Young As Your Faith; This Moment's Rhythm; Alpenglow; FOMO Fighter; Time Will Tell; Second Nature; Forces At Work; Continuum; It's Okay; It's Alright. ( 48:46)

**Personnel:** Nils Wülker, trumpet, flugelhorn; Aaron Parks, piano; Linda May Han Oh, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums.

Ordering info: [nilswuelker.com](http://nilswuelker.com)



## Min Xiao-Fen & Julian Kytasty *Boundless*

ANDERSON AUDIO

★★★★★

Both Min Xiao-Fen and Julian Kytasty play instruments steeped in history and cultural significance. Min plays the pipa, a four-stringed upright lute that has figured in Chinese art music for 2,000 years. She went through classical training and performed as a soloist in a traditional music orchestra before moving to the U.S., where she plays in jazz, classical and experimental settings. Detroit-born Kytasty plays bandura,

a 1,000-year-old, 55-string lute that's a symbol of Ukrainian culture.

These musicians are not only cultural ambassadors but adventurers, world travelers and life-long devotees of stringed instruments. While each musician honors their culture of origin and acknowledges their cultures' exiles on *Boundless*, their duets contain exchanges of gestures that could be persuasively played on guitars, banjos or zithers from other lands. The opening track memorializes the Chinese merchants who settled in the Deep South of the United States by bridging the continent, as the lutes trade blues licks while Min's growling, effects-laden delivery puts a 21st-century gloss on Chinese operatic singing. While "Under One Sky" is a travelogue that recalls Min's first trip to the Ukraine in 1988, it is rooted by a swinging cadence that sounds like a guitar duo memorializing Charles Mingus. And the spiky exchanges and aggressive dissonances on "Sonic Tonic" and "Alterknot" dip into an improvisational language that Kytasty and Min explored during their respective experiences with Derek Bailey. Come for the multikulti intrigue, stick around for the engaged musicianship.

—Bill Meyer

**Boundless:** Xi Xi, Cuo Cuo (Wash & Rub); Travel Music; Crimson Horizon; Soluna; Heliopause; Ballad alla Turca; Wild Geese; Alterknot; Under One Sky; Sonic Tonic—Dedicated to Derek Bailey; Wild Geese—White Jasmine. (46:42)

**Personnel:** Min Xiao-Fen, pipa, sanxian, ruan, sound effects, vocal; Julian Kytasty, bandura, vocal.

**Ordering info:** [minbluepipa.com](http://minbluepipa.com)

## Reverso *Between Two Silences*

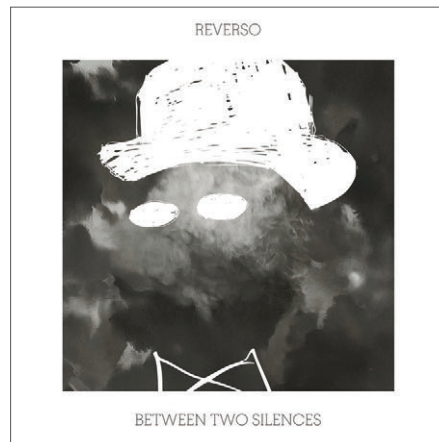
ALTERNATE SIDE

★★★★½

Hard to decide whether Erik Satie was a genius or simply irritating. His gadfly quality, relentless playfulness and, as the artists here suggest, "refusal of excess" all offer deep appeal to present-day sensibilities, while the openness of the work is catnip to improvisers.

As *Reverso*, Ryan Keberle, Frank Woeste and Vincent Courtois have significant form in exploring the art music of early 20th century France, with previous projects on Maurice Ravel and Les Six; now, they've gone back to the original lode, the self-dramatising, self-debunking little figure whose influence on 20th-century music from minimalism to ambient is powerful, but often unacknowledged. A unique instrumentation provides whatever additional alienation effect is required to make Satie come per-versely alive again.

Perhaps the most important artistic movement of the 20th century, surrealism's signature device was a combination of mystery and absolute clarity. That's what comes through most strongly in this music, which is not by Satie, but original music created in the spirit of a great original. The combination of voices leads into places too deep for mere whimsy and with-



out the adolescent urge to *épater les bourgeois*, which is easy, cheap and unrepeatable. Satie invites us to think deeply about what music is, what it does and how it shapes and fits into our social being. *Reverso*, however high-flown it may sound, does precisely that. Listen to this album and then listen to one of your favorite LPs. It will sound different to the last time you heard it.

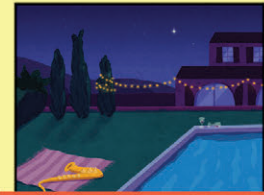
—Brian Morton

**Between Two Silences:** Le chat qui mangeait des nuages; Danse des orloges sans aiguilles; Désespoir agréable; Origins Of The Unseen; Café des fantômes mélancoliques; Espanana; Valse des chapeaux sans têtes; Gyrostride; After Last, Choral Hypocrite; Le Tango des ombres oubliées. (48:39)

**Personnel:** Ryan Keberle, trombone; Frank Woeste, piano; Vincent Courtois, cello.

**Ordering info:** [ryankeberle.bandcamp.com](http://ryankeberle.bandcamp.com)

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## String Mastery in Triplicate

With these concurrent late March releases — all three of them on ATTABOYGIRL, **Gordon Grdina's** five-year-old label — the protean Vancouver-based oudist and acoustic and electric guitarist's leader discography now numbers 32.

**ASH (49:36; ★★★★★)** is the third album by his Nomad Trio, with no-limits pianist Matt Mitchell and disjunctive groove generator Jim Black. In the publicity materials Grdina states that his partners' rarefied skill sets — Mitchell's preternatural ability to conjure lucid pathways through dense complexities; Black's penchant for generating a metrically modulating, off-kilter beat flow — grant him more latitude to coalesce and "move freely across stylistic lines" than when writing for his many other ensembles.

Throughout the 50-minute recital, Grdina places his lustrous-yet-piercing tone, harmonic acumen, well-delineated shapes and cogent lines at the service of three-way explorations of six pieces that contain well-executed power trio skronk, intricate acoustic explorations on oud, tabula rasa improvising and ebullient new-wine/old-bottles works based on Arabic and Persian classical structures. The most expansive moments on **ASH** occur in the first half-hour: the ebb and flow of Mitchell's bass patterns and Black's timbral command on the self-descriptively titled opener "Polysemic"; the elegant dynamic arc of the highly composed 14-minute "Simultanism"; the various extended techniques deployed to generate melodic flow from microtonal raw materials during the 11 minutes of "Huzam." Though the remainder is well-played, the collective mojo tails off: "Succinct Coalescence" and "Ekdeha" showcase different aspects of Grdina's impressive oud chops, with scant ensemble interplay.

Grdina's New York-centric Quartet, with fluent pianist Russ Lossing, saxophonist-clarinetist Oscar Noriega and drummer Satoshi Takeishi, is the antecedent of **Turnpike (52:44; ★★★★★)**, documenting a resourceful Grdina-Lossing oud-piano duo. After a conversational prologue on mutual hero Paul Motian's rubato "Etude," which gradually ascends from pastoral murmurs to volcanic bellows, it's fireworks all the way on Lossing's "Uh Huh," an extended call-and-response between the pianist's angular questions and Grdina's instantly conjured answers, often elicited from the oud's lower regions. The conversation moves to contrapuntal, 12-tonish territory on Grdina's "#4," moving the conversation into Lossing's verbosity counterstated by Grdina's crispy articulated ripostes.



Gordon Grdina plays both oud and guitar on his three new albums.

Three by Lossing follow. "Luglio" is a tour de force for Grdina, who constructs a hurtling solo within oud's higher register in the opening half and concludes with an extended, compellingly melodic declamation. "Twist" opens with a brisk "odd-metered" unison, before the protagonists enter a cycle of splintering-off and reconnection that lasts until the unison conclusion. They again dominate their instruments on "Drench," Grdina's spiky, percussive thrusts complemented by Lossing's whirling bass lines.

**Reza (53:31; ★★½)** is the debut release of Vancouver's Qalandar quintet, an entity since 2016, in which he and drummer Kenton Loewen have performed contemporary refractions of Persian classical music with tar and sitar stylist Ali Razmi, his frequent bandmate Hamin Honari on dombak and tar, and Honari's father, Reza Honari, an internationally prominent master practitioner of the rebab-like kemancheh, the Persian spike fiddle who died shortly after the 2023 Qalandar concert contained herein. The musicians are virtuoso and the music is strong. After an open-ended jam on "Nava" (named for a common mode in Persian classical music) by iconic santur and setar practitioner Parviz Meshkatian, Grdina launches a long, unaccompanied oud variation before the ensemble states the melody of his "Morning Moon," and then accompanies Grdina for another four minutes before Reza Honari's kemancheh comes to the forefront. "Rahgs Parvaneha," by Vancouver-born tablaist Neelamjit Dhillon, again features Reza Honari in an extended duo with his son. The program ends with "Asrar Azal (Secrets of Eternity)," another contemporary refraction of a Persian classical structure, on which composer Ali Razmi sings and plays sitar. An impressive trilogy by an advanced musician who knows himself well.

Ordering info: [gordongrdina.bandcamp.com](http://gordongrdina.bandcamp.com)

GENEVIEVE MONRO



## Sylvie Courvoisier Trio *Eclats—Live In Europe*

INTAKT

★★★★★

Pianist Sylvie Courvoisier has been leading a trio with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Kenny Wollesen for about a decade now. They debuted on 2018's *D'Agala*, returned on 2020's *Free Hoops* and expanded to a sextet on 2023's *Chimaera*, adding trumpeters Wadada Leo Smith and Nate Wooley and guitarist/electronic musician Christian Fennesz to the ensemble.

This live album, which pulls from three February 2025 performances in France and Germany, is the sound of a deeply connected set of players who know each other very well and can create music of extraordinary power without ever relying on clichés or rote routines to get through a rough patch.

The set list includes four tracks from *D'Agala*, three from *Free Hoops* and "Downward Dog" from Courvoisier's 2014 album *Birdies For Lulu*, plus one new piece, "Big Steps Towards Silence."

What makes this trio so exciting is the seamless way they flow from hard swing, verging on boogie-woogie at times, to eerie, stark chamber music abstraction, including percussive effects from Gress and Wollesen that sound more like a haunted house than a jazz rhythm section.

Courvoisier, meanwhile, can lay down rich, full piano melodies that explode across the listener's mind like time-lapse footage of flowers blooming, then sound like a chisel tapping marble, or pick at the piano's strings, the next. But at every moment, the feeling that comes through most powerfully is joy. Everyone here is having a blast, thrilled by what the other two are adding to the music moment by moment.

—Phil Freeman

**Eclats—Live In Europe:** For Ornette; Just Twisted; Requiem d'un Songe; Imprint Double; South Side Rules; Big Steps Towards Silence; Free Hoops; Lulu's Dance; Downward Dog. (69:46)

**Personnel:** Sylvie Courvoisier, piano; Drew Gress, bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums.

Ordering info: [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch)

## Catherine Russell

### Live @ Jazz At Lincoln Center

DOT TIME

★★★★½

As centennial celebrations go, revisiting the early years of jazz offers numerous opportunities to shine a light on those who have lived in the shadows of Armstrong, Ellington and Earl Hines. Using horn arrangements by Mark Lopeman, Catherine Russell chose to feature material originally recorded by lesser-known artists like Tiny Grimes, Helen Humes and Eddie Barefield, with tap dancer Michela Marino Lerman on four tracks.

What Russell brings to her concerts is a deep appreciation for well-crafted songs with forthright, upbeat messages, exemplified by pieces like Grimes's "Never Too Old To Swing" and Humes's "I Just Refuse To Sing The Blues." She has little time to dwell in the dark; even "Old Man River" is given a double-time treatment.

You don't expect intimacy at a venue like this, and Russell pours enormous energy into giving her audience a memorable performance. It may not completely translate to listeners, although the mood in the venue is palpable.

—James Hale

**Live @ Jazz At Lincoln Center:** Now You're Talkin' My Language; Never Too Old To Swing; I Just Refuse To Sing The Blues; I Like Pie, I Like Cake; You Ain't Livin' Right; Long About Midnight; Keep Your Mind On Me; Old Man River; If It Ain't One Thing It's Another; You Can't Pull The Wool Over My Eyes; Everybody Loves My Baby. (41:37)

**Personnel:** Catherine Russell, vocals; Jon-Erik Kellso, trumpet; John Allred, trombone; Evan Arntzen, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Matt Munisteri, guitar; Ben Paterson, piano; Russell Hall, bass; Domo Branch, drums; Michela Marino Lerman, tap dance (2, 4, 9, 11).

**Ordering info:** [dottimerecords.com](http://dottimerecords.com)



## Orlando le Fleming

### Misterioso

WHIRLWIND

★★★★

The leader is the odd one out on this vinyl-only release. His partners are significantly more famous, and also Americans, whereas bassist Orlando le Fleming is British (although he's been a long-term New York resident). He borders on ubiquitous around the scene, a testament to his desirable facility on the instrument. Tenor saxophonist Mark Turner and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts represent an older generation, and the music on this platter (originally recorded in 2022) is suitably mainline in its classic sound.

The repertoire for this subsequent recording is classic fare, opening with the Thelonious Monk title cut. Tentative pacing shows the way to come: sensitively savoring the melody, relishing the agreed space, the leader stepping right in with a bass solo, articulating with unhurried decisiveness. Turner's rounded tone has a measured unfolding, while Tain is constantly moving. John Coltrane's "Lazy Bird" is anything but sluggish, a brisk speedster in gentle overdrive. Despite its pace, this reading isn't aggressive or angular, but rather like a steam-stream of frothing milk. The trio remains exposed throughout this LP, le Fleming's string-action limned upfront, Turner enunciating carefully and Tain the softly rogue element. Although under the bassist's name, this trio almost sounds leaderless.

—Martin Longley

**Misterioso:** Misterioso; Yesterdays; Lazy Bird; Sunday; Countdown; Reflections; Oraeze Nri; Dingle Dangle. (42:45)

**Personnel:** Orlando le Fleming, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone.

**Ordering info:** [orlandolefleming-whirlwind.bandcamp.com](http://orlandolefleming-whirlwind.bandcamp.com)



## Alan Braufman

### Anthem For Peace

VALLEY OF SEARCH

★★★★½

Memories of the loft music that resonated with such vibrancy on New York's Lower East Side in the '70s are revived by Alan Braufman and his quartet on *Anthem For Peace*. That comes as no surprise for one who found comfort in that often-furious zone of sound.

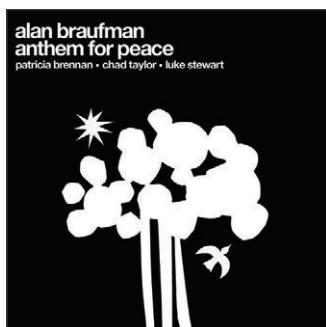
"Angels," the opening track, exemplifies this creative period, and Braufman's alto saxophone, at times stylishly like Ornette Coleman's, is the exquisite tonal center, setting the stage for Patricia Brennan's lush vibraphone. On the title track, Braufman's extended notes on the flute remind one of Yusef Lateef. When the group kicks up the pace on "In Motion," Brennan and Braufman lead them out of the loft to bebop terrain, and bassist Luke Stewart and drummer Chad Taylor are prepared for the shift, particularly Taylor, who adds pellets of beats to the carpet of rhythmic ripples. Here, the intensity and flourishing rush of notes is reminiscent of Braufman's date with pianist Cooper-Moore, and it's a far cry from the album's insinuated peace. But the meditative mood on "Reflections On A Rainy Day" provides them all the space and time they need, and each member, no matter the instrument, finds the necessary vibrato.

—Herb Boyd

**Anthem For Peace:** Angels; The Journey; Anthem For Peace; Snow In Central Park; In Motion; Cosmic Blues; Reflections On A Rainy Day. (34:30)

**Personnel:** Alan Braufman, alto saxophone, flute; Patricia Brennan, vibraphone; Chad Taylor, drums; Luke Stewart, Ken Filiano (4), bass; Michael Wimberly, congas (4).

**Ordering info:** [alanbraufman.bandcamp.com](http://alanbraufman.bandcamp.com)



## Hedvig Mollestad

### Weejuns

Bitches Blues

RUNE GRAMMOFON

★★★★

Naming *Bitches Blues* with a carefree play on Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* hints at Hedvig Mollestad's freewheeling sense of humor, which, together with those of Ståle Storløkken and Ole Mofjell, shapes *Bitches Blues*' six tracks.

Thick-toned electric guitar, booming drums, jagged, buzzy synthesizer and rounded, flute-like organ give this record a deep well of bold sounds from which to draw. The opening title track delivers uncertainty in the first piercing, screeching guitar notes. Clashes emerge as rapid drum rolls compete for space against the grating guitar. A groove eventually materializes but it takes some time to get there.

The rest of the album's first half reins things in, as the guitar and drums keep a steady rhythm to uphold the organ's clear melody line on "Kompet Bli." From there, the music turns the corner to gradual expansion — in arrangement, individual dynamics and overall sonic ambience — peaking again in the appropriately titled "Dynamax" before bringing the chaos down to something of an "inside voice" amount of cacophony on "Recollection Of Sorrow." Here, collaboration starts to come back into focus, and when it's finally over, the first thought is, "Go again?"

—Kira Grunenberg

**Bitches Blues:** Bitches Blues; Kompet Bli; For A Moment I Thought I Could Hear You; Limite; Dynamax; Recollection Of Sorrow. (38:18)

**Personnel:** Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen, guitar; Ståle Storløkken, organ, synthesizer; Ole Mofjell, drums.

**Ordering info:** [runegrammofon.com](http://runegrammofon.com)





Brian Landrus finds that it's effective to focus on one sax, one clarinet and one flute each day.

# Mastering Multiple Woodwind Instruments

The art of mastering multiple woodwind instruments is a journey of focused daily practice through a consistent routine to cover the fundamentals of each instrument. Treating each instrument as a new pathway to an unknown sonic landscape should be a focal point of positivity. Exploring the unique strengths and colors of each instrument is where the inspiration is found.

We must listen to artists who are masters of that specific instrument. The joy in the process is in discovering the gorgeous and unique tone each instrument can produce. One can spend a lifetime on one instrument alone, and never stop learning and growing. Seek out great artists who have pioneered the tone and approach of each instrument.

The journey became easier for me once I heard how gorgeous flute can sound in the

right hands. Listening to classical flutists helped me hone my sound and approach of the instrument. An important element of this process requires finding teachers who are experts on each instrument. On flute I have been extremely fortunate to have taken lessons with Robert Dick, Bart Feller and Lew Tabackin. I sought out these master artists to try and understand the flute from a master's view. For players whose main instrument is saxophone, the most common problem on flute is a poor, airy tone. This needs to be addressed and examined early on.

It's much better to play each instrument for 15 minutes every day than spending a couple hours one day a week. We have to develop the unique muscle memory connected with the rapid changes in embouchure to switch from a flute to a reed. The physical demands are different on each, and we have to become fluid in the exchange of one instrument to the next.

I've found that it's effective to focus on one saxophone, one clarinet and one flute each day. I cycle through the various families through the week, such as: C flute, alto flute and bass flute; B-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, contra alto clarinet; tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone and bass saxophone. I try not to go more than a couple days between each instrument to continue a fluid progression of skill.

An effective daily practice routine can be broken up into three parts for every instrument:

- 1) Long tones through the entire range using either a drone pitch or tuner (15–20 minutes).
- 2) Scales, starting with all major scales (15–30 minutes).
- 3) Etudes and/or improvisation and transcription (30–60 minutes).

## Tone & Tuning

Our tone is one of the most important elements of our sound. And along with the tone quality, we have to perfect our tuning. Effective tuning strategies involve the use of drones and a tuner.

An effective strategy for practicing with drones is through using a drone function on a tuner, or playing the note on the keyboard and matching this pitch. Dynamics also need to be used in conjunction with the drones so that you build the muscles to play the notes softly in tune, as well as playing them with a powerful *fortissimo* volume. Correct tuning is potentially the most

important element about doubling. Even if one doesn't have a fantastic tone, as long as you're in tune it can be passable; if you are unstable in your tuning, tone quality is irrelevant.

I have used a tuner for many years, but I realized long ago that using a visual tuner is helpful — but not as helpful as matching

the next session you move on to a different scale or tempo.

### Etudes, Improv & Composition

The third element of my practice routine is etudes and improvisation. It can be either etudes or improvisation because it may be too time-consuming to do both each

**'Being a multi-reed artist has opened many doors for me, and given me new sounds available only through the use of different winds.'**

the pitch of a drone. We are using our eyes instead of our ears when using a tuner. We rely on the movement of the needle to show us if we're correct. It became obvious to me that the more important element is using our ear to match the correct pitch. Music is for the ears, not the eyes. A tuner can be very helpful, but can become a crutch.

The importance of learning how to instantaneously fix a pitch problem is only developed through matching pitches with practice. Make sure to cover the entire range during every session, and don't neglect the highest and lowest notes.

### Scale Workouts

The second element of the practice routine is playing scales. Begin with the chromatic scale, and then move on to all 12 major scales. Play scales through the entire range of the instrument. We can take any scale and play it from the root up to the highest note on our instrument, descend to the lowest note possible and then return to the root.

After becoming comfortable with this process, we can begin to improvise with the scale in any way imaginable. We can play patterns such as ascending or descending thirds, or just begin to improvise.

I have used a five-minute timer for each scale, so we complete all 12 major scales in one hour. I like to focus on the areas of the scales which give me difficulty and then slow it down and try to build precision. It's a good practice to use a metronome for this practice.

It's effective to choose one scale to focus on for a day. You can use a practice journal to keep track of scales and tempos so that on

day. We should practice instrument-specific etudes to work the problematic areas of the instrument. For saxophone I have used the Universal Method, *Charlie Parker Omnibook*, Ferling etudes and the Bach cello suites. For clarinet I have used the Klose Method and various Mozart pieces and other classical works. For flute I have used the Taffanel, Trevor Wye omnibus and a lot of Bach.

Be methodical and work through only one piece a day. Try to execute the piece perfectly before moving on. For sight reading, and also instrument familiarity, I have randomly chosen melodies in the *Real Books*.

Improvisation on all our instruments is extremely important for any jazz player. On flutes and clarinets, I began by playing the blues in all keys. Don't try to cover every key in every practice session. Choose a key for the day and log the tempo and key on your routine. I started with the common keys of B $\flat$  and F initially, and then began moving through every key chromatically.

After this became natural-feeling, I moved onto "Rhythm" changes in all keys. After this becomes fluid, it's good to move on to jazz standards so that you can play them at jam sessions (or on a gig for a change of timbre). Try to view the instrument as a primary voice instead of a "double."

Transcription of great solos will drastically help connect your ear to the instrument. In the summer of 2006, I transcribed all the Lester Young solos from a compilation album titled *Blue Lester: The Immortal Lester Young* on my bass clarinet. That changed everything for me: I developed a connection between my ear and the instru-

ment, and then was able to improvise and maneuver through the range of the instrument with much more ease, flexibility and musicality.

Composing for each instrument is another great tool to help explore their sounds. When you write a piece for your doubles, you are mandating the need for you to bring your instrument to the gig/session, which encourages growth and regularity in your routine.

This daily practice routine pays dividends, although it can also be taxing on the body. After I had a case of tendonitis and carpal tunnel, I was forced to become aware of the physical demands of practicing six hours a day for 10 years.

Some of the best advice I received was to make sure that for every 25 minutes of practicing I rest for 5 minutes. During this rest time, it's a great idea to ice your hands to stop inflammation from occurring. I used to travel with reusable ice packs in my luggage.

This coincides with becoming aware of tension in your body while playing. You can help the process of fluidity by recording a video of yourself playing to check your posture and playing position. This awareness may point out areas of tension in your posture.

### Doubling Affords Opportunities

Being a multi-reed artist has opened many doors for me, and given me new sounds available only through the use of different winds. The colors of each have been integral to my career and have made it possible for me to work with a large array of composers and artists. It's unusual these days that I am asked to only play one instrument. Having these different timbres available has drastically changed my life.

My good friend and fellow multi-instrumentalist Marty Ehrlich recently said to me: "Being a multi-reed player, engaging with the clarinet, saxophone and flute families has been both practical and spiritual for me. My career in New York City has involved working with so many composers and ensemble leaders, all doing their original music. Having these musical voices has greatly enhanced that work." **DB**

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After 14 albums as a leader, multi-instrumentalist and composer Dr. Brian Landrus has become an internationally recognized low woodwind artist specializing in baritone saxophone, bass saxophone, bass clarinet, contra alto clarinet, alto flute and bass flute. His latest album, *Just When You Think You Know*, with keyboardist Zaccai Curtis, bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Rudy Royston, is available through Palmetto and BlueLand Records. Landrus is an Associate Professor of Jazz Composition at Berklee College of Music. He is an endorsed artist for Selmer Paris saxophones and clarinets, D'Addario reeds, Silverstein ligatures, Marmaduke Straps and Woodwind Design Stands. Visit him online at [brianlandrus.com](http://brianlandrus.com).



In general, jazz saxophonists open the vocal tract more than classical players, according to Dr. Mark Watkins.

## How to Produce the Type of Saxophone Tone You Want

What do players do to achieve a jazz saxophone sound, and how is it different from classical or concert band? Of course, equipment is important, but what the player does is imperative. Tone color is impacted by combined elements including lip-to-reed contact points, chin shape, embouchure pressure, corners, teeth alignment, and the space in and shape of the vocal tract. In addition to these (mostly) observable adjustments, tone production involves subtle micro-movements that are learned through listening and imitation.

A more extensive discussion of this topic appears in my book *From the Inside Out: An In-Depth Resource for the Development of Saxophone Sound* (2018). This article refers to three of the videos that accompany the book. Those videos may be accessed online at <https://content.byui.edu/s/markwatkins>.

Depending on the desired sound, the embouchure can take several forms. One factor influencing this difference is where the bottom lip contacts the reed. Illustration 1 highlights the differences between a classical embouchure and a rolled-out embouchure, sometimes used in jazz.

- Type 1 shows a classical embouchure touching the reed where the lips naturally

come together on the wet-dry line.

- Type 2 shows a rolled-out jazz embouchure positioning the lower lip so the reed contacts the lip on the wet side, near where the teeth press the lip when forming “V” or “F” sounds.

Measurements show slightly less lip-to-reed surface coverage for a rolled-out embouchure. Some jazz saxophonists use an embouchure similar to Type 1. (See the online video for Chapter 2, “Embouchure: External View.”)

A properly formed classical chin shape appears natural, looking essentially the same as it does when the lips are together and relaxed. To maintain this appearance the chin muscles must be firm and engaged. Correctly supported, this formation promotes stability and tonal focus. A rounded or “collapsed” chin indicates insufficient muscular support. In this situation, the chin tissues bunch upward, and dimples appear as the jaw bites down, compressing the lip between the teeth and the reed. The rolled-out lip contact often used in jazz naturally creates a rounder chin shape. The chin muscles remain engaged and supportive, distinguishing it from the collapsed chin as described.

Working in concert with chin shape, embouchure firmness can be further refined

by discussing pressure against the reed and embouchure corners. A project using a force sensor measured pressure against the reed to compare classical and jazz embouchures. Readings showed players using less pressure for jazz. One reason may be that classical saxophonists often use harder reeds, which require more pressure to play. Pressure against the reed can be increased without biting if the embouchure is properly formed and firm.

A classical embouchure is sometimes described as an oval on end, or as a drawstring pulling the corners in toward the mouthpiece. Corner pressure dampens the reed rails and warms the tone. Conversely, a jazz embouchure may be formed with looser corners to reduce lower-lip pressure along the sides of the reed. Joe Allard and others suggest using a left-hand note while inserting right hand fingers between the lips at the corners while pulling down on the lower lip. Reduced corner pressure increases high frequencies and places an edge on the tone.

The vocal tract extends from the vocal folds to the embouchure. The various positions of the tongue, soft palate, and larynx tune the resonant frequencies residing in the vocal tract, working with the reed/mouthpiece and saxophone bore, to adjust intonation and timbre. The fundamental mechanisms are the same for classical and jazz. (See the online video for Chapter 14, “JAZZ: Vocal Tract Comparison.”)

In general, jazz saxophonists open the vocal tract more than classical players. Lowering the jaw increases space in the front of the oral cavity, while lowering the center tongue increases the distance between the tongue and hard palate. Moving the back of the tongue forward and downward increases space between the tongue and soft palate and in the oropharynx. The soft palate can be raised or lowered. The laryngopharynx (the base of the tongue to the vocal folds) can be raised, lowered or expanded. Illustration 2 shows a professional saxophonist with proficiency in both classical and jazz. For jazz the player increases space in all areas. Other players filmed expanded one or more areas but not always the whole vocal tract. Notice that this player uses the rolled-out embouchure.

Low notes, F4 and below, provide a great example of how vocal tract and embouchure work together to create different sounds. As the instrument’s tube lengthens in the lower register its conical nature increases the strength of high frequencies. This necessitates more energy to produce sound, requiring the player to blow harder, making the notes loud-

er and brighter as notes descend. Players may adjust their embouchure alignment and vocal tract to compensate. (See the video for Chapter 14, “Low Notes.”)

- The teeth can be aligned or positioned as an overbite. When the jaw is raised, the top and bottom incisors meet in an aligned embouchure, with the mouthpiece protruding at approximately 90 degrees to the teeth. Overbite refers to a position where the bottom teeth are in from the top teeth, placing the lip more toward the tip of the reed, dampening its vibration and resultant tone.

- The vocal tract can have a narrow or an open channel. Compared to mid-range neutral position, a narrow channel refers to a higher posterior tongue arch and a lower soft palate. The vowel “u” (as in “you”) raises the back of the tongue and reduces the space in the oropharynx and between the soft palate and tongue. This weakens high frequencies and darkens the sound. Compared to neutral position, an open channel occurs when the tongue sits lower, the larynx expands, and the soft palate rises. This openness increases high frequencies and produces a brighter tone.

Illustration 3 shows four combinations of embouchure alignment and vocal tract channels. Frequency spectrums ranging from low to high are included for each example.

1) Aligned embouchure with narrow channel: Both classical and jazz, allows low notes to match middle and upper register timbre.

2) Overbite embouchure with narrow channel: Jazz ballad subtone, darker, softer sound. Overbite places the wet part of the lower lip at the reed tip. Illustration subject attempted overbite embouchure and a narrow channel. However, in practice this subtone sound works better with half-open channel similar to an “o” vowel (as in “go”).

3) Aligned embouchure with open channel: Brighter and louder tone, funk; may have slight overbite.

4) Overbite embouchure with open channel: Common in jazz playing; lower jaw and thicker lower lip around one-eighth inch from reed tip. Similar to Example 1 in high frequency strength, but with slight subtone element in the timbre.

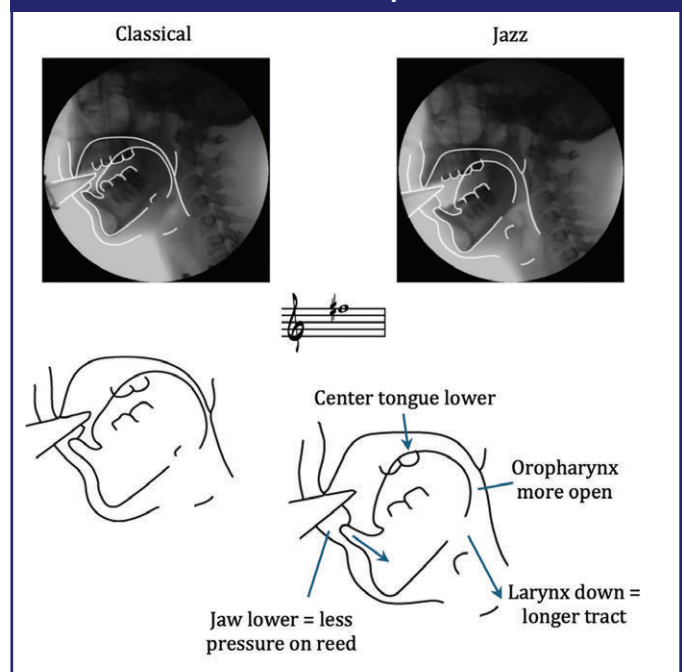
Comparing Examples 1 and 4, the frequencies are similar. Example

2 (subtone) shows the weakest high frequencies. Example 3 clearly shows the strongest high frequencies (found on the skinny, right end of the sideways tornado).

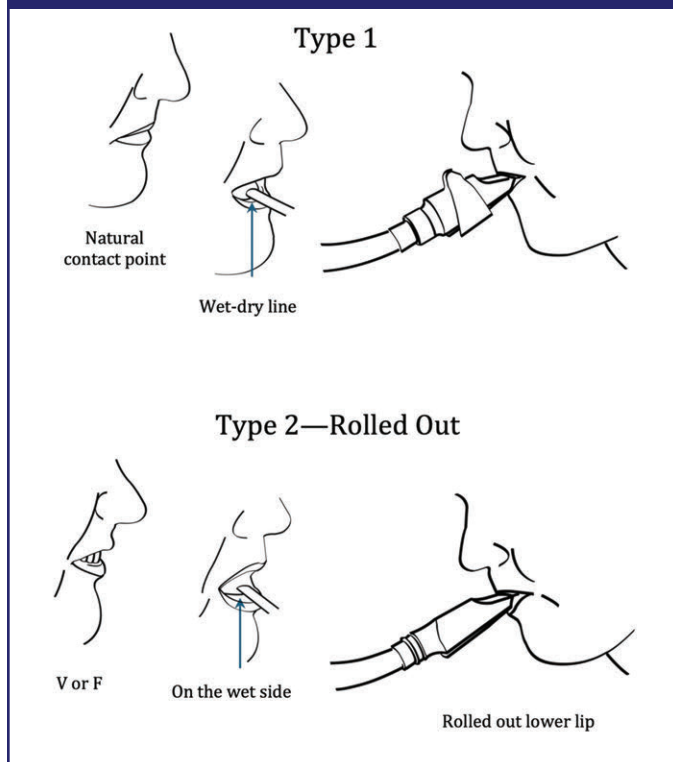
Mechanisms for producing a classical or jazz saxophone sound are many and varied. External adjustments of lips and chin, as well as teeth alignment significantly alter the style and timbre. Internal adjustments of the vocal tract likewise alter the sound. Working together the elements of embouchure and vocal tract can guide tone production for classical and jazz, with the caveat that listening and emulation are necessary to refine saxophone tone. **DB**

Saxophonist, educator and composer Dr. Mark Watkins performs worldwide with his jazz saxophone quartet, *FOUR*. Their latest album, *FOUR + Six*, features Derrick and Vincent Gardner, Kobie Watkins, Corie Christiansen et al. His CDs and compositions are available through Jazz Hang, [ejazzlines.com](http://ejazzlines.com) and [markwatkinssaxophone.com](http://markwatkinssaxophone.com). Watkins’ latest classical endeavor is the premiere and recording of a new tenor saxophone concerto by David deBoor Canfield. He is the author of *From the Inside Out: An In-Depth Resource for the Development of Saxophone Sound*, available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other book sellers, with a downloadable PDF through his website. Watkins served as Director of Jazz Studies for 20-plus years at Brigham Young University–Idaho, where he is currently on faculty as Professor of Saxophone.

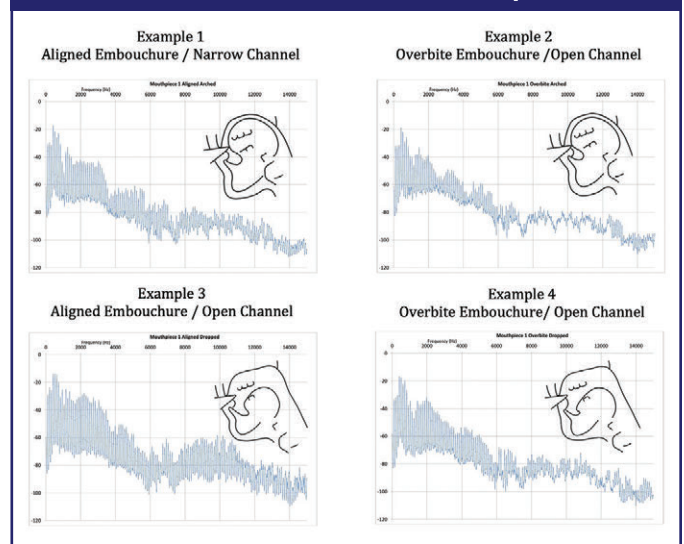
### Illustration 2: Narrow-Channel & Open-Channel Vocal Tracts



### Illustration 1: Embouchure Types 1 & 2



### Illustration 3: Low-Note Combinations / Tone Spectrums





Wilkins' solo break leaves an indelible mark on the mood of the tune.

## Immanuel Wilkins' Alto Sax Solo on 'Dark Eyes Smile'

Immanuel Wilkins' 2024 album *Blues Blood* (Blue Note) doesn't just feature his alto saxophone playing, but also his composition, arranging and bandleader skills. The song "Dark Eyes Smile," which he co-authored with Alyssa McDoom, doesn't even have him playing the melody (that goes to vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant), but his solo break (presented here in concert key) leaves an indelible mark on the mood of the tune.

There are two things to notice about the composition. The chords tend to be triadic, which isn't very jazz-like, and they don't really create much of a key center (which makes for some issues in note-spelling decisions). In fact, it's rare to go more than three measures without having something akin to a tonal shift. This makes it fairly

difficult to solo over, but Wilkins appears to be doing the opposite of struggling.

Notice that he's often playing scales that fit with those chord tones, and/or landing on chord tones. I say "often" because there are places where he seems to deviate from strictly adhering to this. One example is the C# at the end of bar 6. It doesn't really fit a Dm too cleanly, especially since he doesn't resolve it to the tonic. But the last three notes of this bar do spell an A+, the V chord in D minor. This would resolve to the tonic, but it also foreshadows the A chord in the subsequent measure.

This foreshadowing is used again in bar 34. There are two beats of B $\flat$  dorian, followed by some notes that don't go with B $\flat$ m very well at all (E, G, B, D). But these four notes not only exist within the scale

of the next chord (Am) but also form an Em7 arpeggio, the V (kind of) of Am. Not as strong a resolution as if it had been E7, but close.

There was also the G# on the D major back in bar 4. This makes it sound a bit lydian (OK, totally lydian), but why pick lydian? I'd suggest that since the previous chord was E, and G# is the third of E, this makes the chords sound more connected, whereas a G natural might have come across as more "inside" over the D chord, but would've also made it sound more like a key change from the E.

So those are some ways of incorporating tones that are outside the chord. Another one happens in bar 15. A G natural on an E major chord, leading to a B minor (on which another G natural is played), especially curious since there are G#'s in the next two bars. If you examine the notes around the G naturals you'll see it sits within E minor pentatonic lines. Playing minor pentatonic against a major chord is a fairly typical blues and rock sound. Keeping the sound going against the Bm creates the sense that we're heading back to the E, but instead the chords move further from there. Yet Wilkins moves from G# to A and back, kind of implying a fourth to third resolution as if this were an E chord, even though the harmony has moved to F#.

We sort of hear this again in bar 27, which Wilkins opens up with an E and G (from the E minor triad) on a B chord, similar to what happened back in measure 15. Besides this being a major rather than minor chord, another difference is that Wilkins precedes the E and G with a C#, making this a diminished triad.

If he had continued and made it a diminished seventh chord, he would have added an A# (B $\flat$ ). Since a diminished seventh is a symmetrical chord, any note could be the root, and since these chords have a strong pull to resolve a half-step up, A#dim7 is a great way to set up a B chord. But without that A# it also could sound like an Em6 (especially since we were just on an Em chord). We do get the A# at the end of bar 28, but at this point it connects us to the next measure, since it's the fifth of E $\flat$ . Cleverly connecting the two sounds. (This is also one of the spelling issues: Should I have written it as a B $\flat$ ? Would that have made any of this clearer? Or more obscure?)

There are subtler uses of these concepts. Take bar 30. A# and C# (two emphasized

notes) aren't outside the key of G# minor, but they aren't chord tones. Respelled, they are B $\flat$  and D $\flat$ , which are the third and fifth of G $\flat$ , the chord in the next measure. A similar thing occurs in 36. Playing the E natural on the F triad isn't terribly "out"; it's a major seventh. But it also gets our ears ready for the E chord coming up.

It's like shading: The chord tones are the most at rest, the scale tones more tense, and the chromatic notes the most "outside" (and so giving the strongest resolutions). But it isn't about better or worse, all of these hues are needed to paint a picture.

In light of all this, Wilkins' ending is notable. These moments of playing outside the chord have been somewhat rare, so to

finish on one sort of stands out, and provides the solo with a bit of a cliffhanger feeling, creating a need for the final verse. But at the same time it's not as "out" as some of the others we've discussed. For one thing, the C# is the major seventh of the D, so it's kind of a chord tone, even if the piano isn't playing it. Also, with the bass playing an A underneath, it can give that C# a bit of a third vibe, putting it a bit more inside. But all that ambiguity also adds to the incompleteness of the ending, making another verse inevitable. **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](https://www.jimidurso.bandcamp.com).



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7 A/E Am Em B(sus4)/C D $\flat$  B

14 G#m F#m E Bm F#/A# A $\flat$

19 D $\flat$ /G $\flat$  D $\flat$ /F E $\flat$ m E $\flat$ m/D $\flat$  B $\flat$ m B $\flat$ m/A $\flat$

25 G $\flat$ maj7 Fm Em B/D# E $\flat$ /G

30 G#m G $\flat$  D $\flat$ /F D $\flat$  $^6$

34 B $\flat$ m Am F E D $^7$

39 Cm G/B G

43 F#m E C#m/D A

48 G F#m E D C#

52 F#m Bm D/A

straight

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## Boston Sax Shop Custom Reeds

### *New Red Label Cuts Deliver Edge & Punchy Core*

Saxophonists looking for a reed that delivers loads of edge would be well advised to check out the new Red Label reeds from Boston Sax Shop. As the newest design in the company's increasingly popular Custom Reeds line, Red Label reeds have a thinner tip than Boston Sax Shop's Black Label, Silver Label and Blue Label reeds. Made by premium reed manufacturer Rigotti in France with EU Certified Organic Cane, Red Label reeds offer quick attack and easy projection with plenty of control and evenness of sound. They feature a medium heart profile and are the most responsive reed in the Custom Reeds line, giving access to higher ceilings of volume with a brighter tonal palette and a punchier core.

"Designing the Boston Sax Shop reed line stemmed from the frustration that many of us as players have experienced while searching for that 'perfect' reed," said Jack Tyler, owner and product designer. For Tyler, most "jazz cut" reeds seemed to play too bright and buzzy but offered the projection he needed, while "classical cut" reeds had the depth and evenness he sought but simply could not cut across a band. "So, with the help of the finest French cane manufacturer in the world, I designed a hybrid jazz reed that had qualities

of both jazz and classical cuts," he said. "They provide a warm and dark tone while still being able to be pushed."

Silver Label are a more brilliant counterpart to Boston Sax Shop's original Black Label reeds. Using a distinctive thicker tip profile, Silver Label reeds evoke a more modern, radiant tone. They're suitable for players looking for additional projection and a little edge without sacrificing evenness, consistency and resilience.

For players who like the original Black Label cut but want even more core and warmth, then the company's Blue Label Reeds are worth considering. Featuring a thinner tip, a thick heart profile and a filed cut, Blue Label reeds offer consistency, quick response and full body that's perfect for classical settings or players seeking a supremely dark, lush tone.

Boston Sax Shop's Black Label and Silver Label reeds come in ½ strengths for soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophone. Blue Label reeds are available for soprano, alto, tenor and baritone sax as well as clarinet and

bass clarinet. Players can get the new Red Label reeds for alto and tenor sax, with soprano and baritone cuts expected later this year. —Ed Enright

[bostonsaxshop.com](http://bostonsaxshop.com)



## JodyJazz QUASAR Alto Sax Mouthpiece

### *Ultra-Bright Sound & Powerful Projection with a Hearty Tonal Center*

Alto players, get ready to dial up the brightness. The QUASAR Mouthpiece from JodyJazz is the most powerful and cutting alto saxophone mouthpiece the company has ever designed. Harnessing advanced physics, precision aerodynamics and quality German hard rubber, the QUASAR delivers badass projection, effortless response and a sound that's brilliant and full.

The QUASAR isn't about brightness for brightness' sake alone. The mouthpiece has plenty of power and lots of depth, too. Its bullet chamber design adds body, warmth and harmonic fatness beneath the brilliance, so mids and bottom tones aren't compromised. The result is a huge alto sound that makes itself clearly heard and soars in the upper register — yet remains full and warm, controlled and musical, even in high-volume playing conditions.

At the heart of the QUASAR is JodyJazz's Patent Pending Vibra Table, which increases reed vibration and efficiency. It allows the reed to respond faster, with more dynamic range and increased power with less effort. I found it to be a high-performing mouthpiece with explosive dynamics, perfect for commercial jazz wailing and dramatic, Johnny Hodges-inspired scoops, smears and swells.

The hand-finished QUASAR also features the shortest facing curve JodyJazz has ever offered, making altissimo tones speak instant-

ly. It's extremely free-blowing and feels completely unrestricted, with a massive dynamic range that brings sweet, resonant tones at low volumes and ferocious sizzle when pushed.

Because of its high baffle and short facing curve, most players will play more comfortably on a QUASAR that has a tip opening one size larger than usual, with softer reeds than they typically use, according to company president Jody Espina. That's why the QUASAR line begins at a size 6 tip opening and tops out at 9\* (.105").

"We've never had anything on that really bright end of the tonal spectrum before," explained Espina. "So I gathered all the mouthpieces in that category I could find and studied them and played them. I kept going with the design until I thought I had come up with something significant.

"The QUASAR gives you all the power that you'll ever need, with body and with altissimo," he said. "And trying to make that free-blowing was a real challenge. I came up with a new idea which we're calling the Vibra Table, taking mass out of the table where the reed sits and thereby increasing reed vibration. It was a whole balancing act to get the reed to vibrate freely, but not too free. I think a lot of people are going to like it." At \$350, there's nothing *not* to like about the QUASAR... unless ultra-bright alto sax tone just isn't your thing. —Ed Enright

[jodyjazz.com](http://jodyjazz.com)



## WOODWINDS Toolshed > GEAR BOX

### 1. Clear & Consistent

Samson's AirLine XR Wind Instrument System is a digital wireless microphone solution designed to provide high-quality sound and freedom of movement for live woodwind and brass performers. The compact and lightweight transmitter acts as an extension of the instrument to capture a clear and consistent performance, while the receiver offers a battery-powered, plug-and-play design for easy setup. The AirLine XR operates in the 2.4GHz frequency range.

More info: [samsontech.com](http://samsontech.com)

### 2. Responsiveness & Nuance

Crafted for aspiring alto saxophonists, the Jupiter JAS1150 is designed to elevate your playing experience with tonal flexibility and exceptional control. Whether performing in an ensemble or as a soloist, the JAS1150 delivers responsiveness and nuance, making it a natural first choice for players ready to advance. Semi-ribbed construction reinforces key stability and contributes to clearer articulation, and the redesigned bell brace enhances tonal focus and projection.

More info: [khsmusic.com](http://khsmusic.com)

### 3. Artist Level

The P. Mauriat PCL821 B $\flat$  clarinet embodies all aspects of an artist-level clarinet: a left-hand A $\flat$ /E $\flat$  key, ringless bell for a wide tonal palette and dynamic contrast, and grenadilla construction for traditional response and sound. The instrument has a free-blowing feel, evenness of register, solid key mechanism touch and accurate pitch. With interchangeable 65/66mm barrels, a ringless bell and silver- or rose gold-plated keys, this 18-key clarinet comes in a PM Traveler II Case.

More info: [pmauriatmusic.com](http://pmauriatmusic.com)

### 4. New-Era Conn

Conn has entered a new era of saxophone manufacturing. Among its initial offerings, the Conn CAS411 alto saxophone for advancing players embodies the responsive, free-blowing, powerful sound of vintage American instruments with superb intonation and modern ergonomics. Cold-forged brass keys are secured with post-to-body construction, finely balanced by blue steel springs and carefully fitted with premium Pisoni pads. It has a large bell that's hand-engraved in the classic Conn saxophone style. Vintage-style wire key guards offer a strong yet lightweight design.

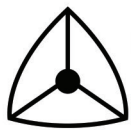
More info: [connselmer.com](http://connselmer.com)

### 5. French Essence

The Essence clarinet from Backun is a new series that's light in the hands but bold in sound. With handcrafted key work in the style of Backun's Custom Clarinets and an enhanced left-hand mechanism, the Essence is a modern French-style clarinet available in B $\flat$  and A models. Launched in celebration of Backun's 25th anniversary, it features silver key finishes and an unstained hardwood body in grenadilla or cocobolo. The optional Low F Vent mechanism ensures spot-on tuning across every register.

More info: [backunmusical.com](http://backunmusical.com)





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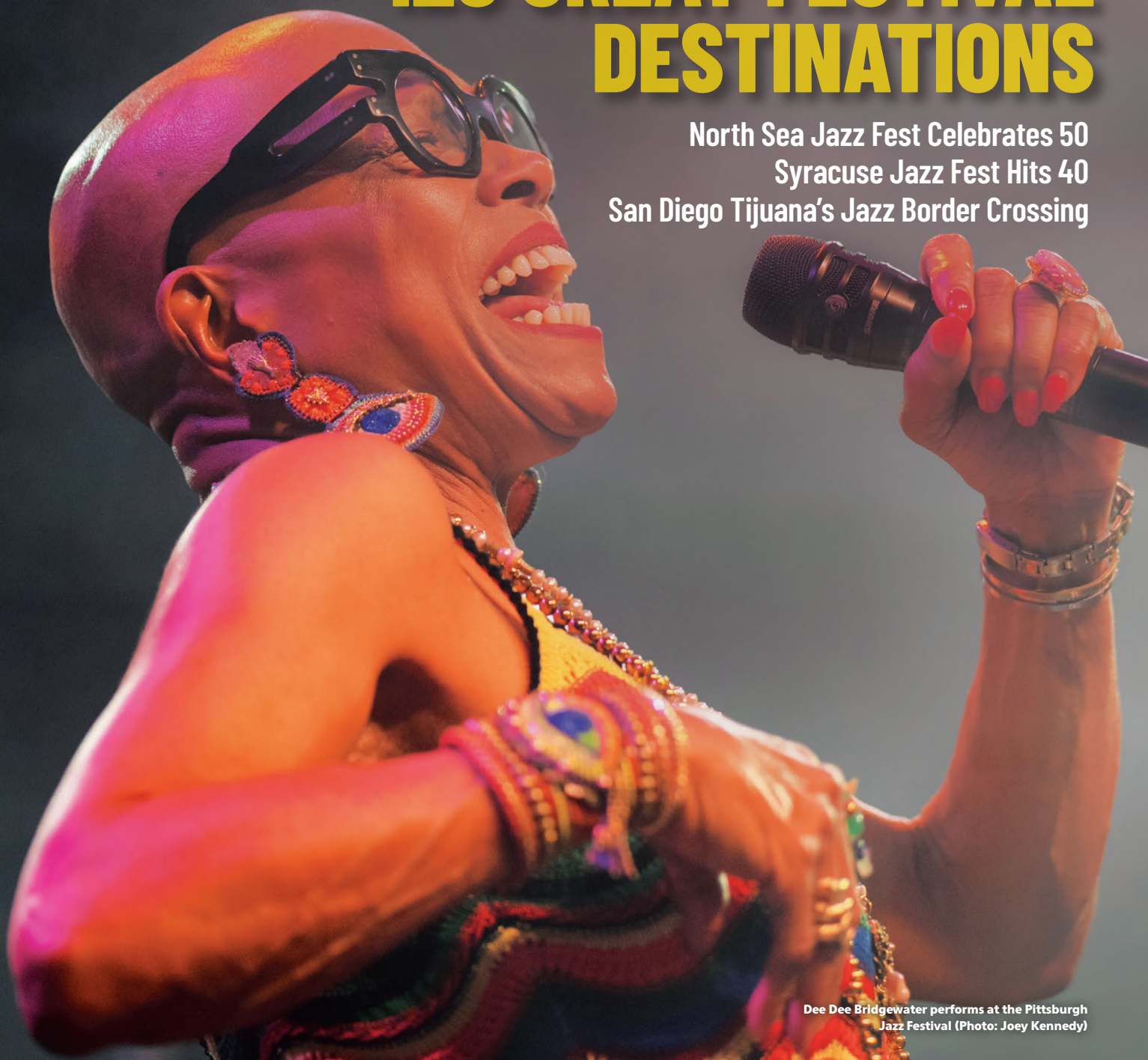
DOWNBEAT 2026 INTERNATIONAL JAZZ

# FESTIVAL GUIDE

YES! WE'RE READY!

126 GREAT FESTIVAL  
DESTINATIONS

North Sea Jazz Fest Celebrates 50  
Syracuse Jazz Fest Hits 40  
San Diego Tijuana's Jazz Border Crossing



Dee Dee Bridgewater performs at the Pittsburgh Jazz Festival (Photo: Joey Kennedy)



Packin' 'em in at Montreux!

# READY. SET. LET'S GO!

It's a crazy world we're living in, so right now we need to be enjoying the things that are not just good, but great about this beautiful planet we live on. The editors of DownBeat suggest treating yourself to one of the amazing, jazz, blues or seriously improvised music festivals happening here on Earth.

Remote, romantic places or a good day-drive away, there's something fantastic for everyone in the following pages. Of special note are the three festivals highlighted with articles in this guide. The NN North Sea Jazz Festival celebrates its 50th anniversary this summer and it will be the jazz party to end all jazz parties over in Rotterdam. The Syracuse Jazz Festival celebrates its 40th anniversary with beautiful new digs tucked into the hills of Upstate New York. And here's a border crossing we can all endorse: The San Diego Tijuana Jazz Festival presents its third annual event crossing not only borders, but tearing down cultural barriers with the most powerful force on Earth — jazz!

If you're jonesing for a bit of classic nostal-

gia, tributes to Miles Davis and John Coltrane will be abundant on tour this summer in celebration of the 100th birthdays of both of those legendary figures.

Marcus Miller leads a We Want Miles! Tour. MEB (formerly Miles Electric Band) kicks it out with a cast of Miles Davis alumni and special guests. Saxophonist Isaiah Collier is touring a tribute to John Coltrane that slayed the audience at Big Ears in March. Ravi Coltrane, the son of John and Alice, will celebrate his father's music with the help of Terence Blanchard. And Bobby Previte's Pocket Orchestra will be channeling *Bitches Brew* on the circuit this summer. That's just to name a few. There will be many more.

If you're a fan of the avant garde, try Edgefest in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Vision Fest in New York City or the Guelph Jazz Festival in Canada. Need something kid-friendly? Try the Mitrovica International Jazz Days in Kosovo, Tallinn International Festival Jazzkaar in Estonia, Port Hope Jazz Festival in Canada or the Springfield Jazz & Roots

Festival in Massachusetts.

But "in" or "out," young or old, you'll find something to love in these pages, and we hope you find yourself on a good road trip.

It's festival season, y'all. Let's drink it in and dance it out!

—Frank Alkyer

## INSIDE

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98	International Listings



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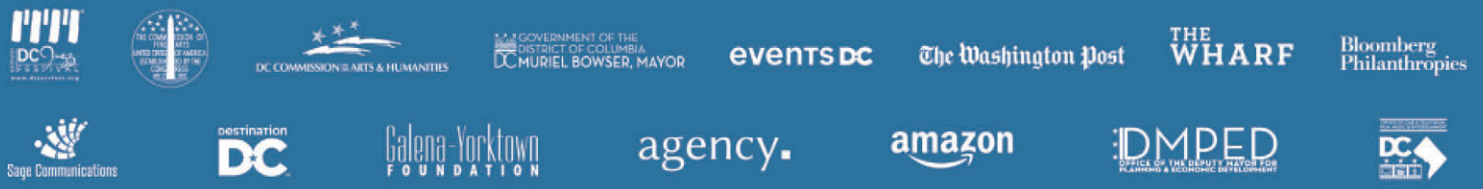
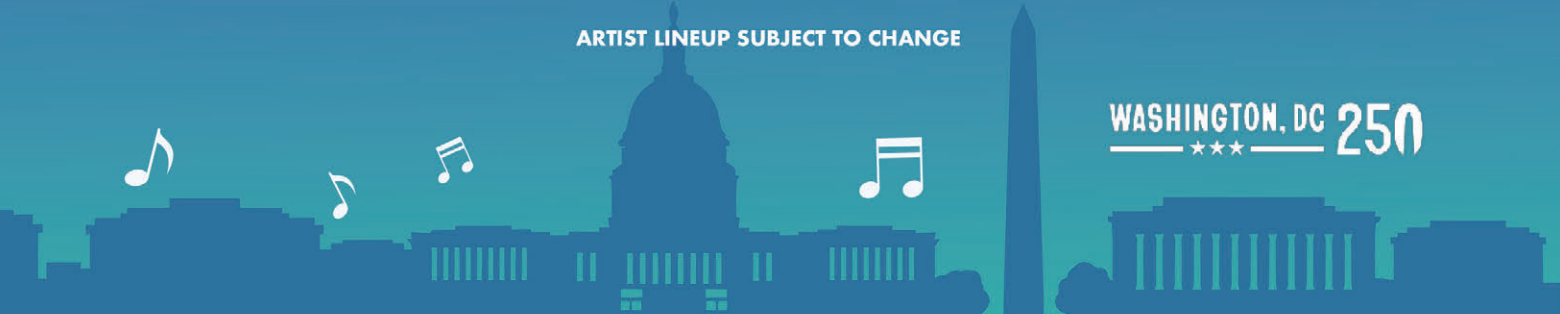
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ARTIST LINEUP SUBJECT TO CHANGE

WASHINGTON, DC 250  
\*\*\*



# EAST

 This trumpet denotes a corresponding ad in this guide.



RICHARD TERMINE

From left: Yasushi Nakamura, Melissa Aldana and Kush Abadey



SEAN JAMAR

April May-Webb and S.O.A.R. (from left: Randall Haywood, Jacob Webb and Dr. Nathan Webb) perform at the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in New York.



BRYAN LASKY

An overflow house at the Saratoga Jazz Festival.



DICK BENNETT

Trombone Shorty thrills the crowds at the Rochester Jazz Festival.

## Pittsfield CityJazz Festival

Pittsfield, Massachusetts

April 17-26

The Pittsfield CityJazz Festival is the longest-running jazz festival in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. This year's 20th festival features a jazz crawl, a jam session and a Jazz Prodigy concert that introduces a promising young musician (it's often their first gig). The two ticketed concerts feature women leaders and soloists.

**LINEUP:** Fast-rising vocalist Georgia Heers, who portrayed Ella Fitzgerald in George Clooney's 2025 Broadway remake of *Good Night and Good Luck*; a double feature with vocalist Veronica Swift and alto saxophonist Grace Kelly, backed by the UConn Jazz Ensemble, directed by John Mastroianni. Jazz prodigy and jazz crawl venues/performers to be announced.  
[berkshiresjazz.org](http://berkshiresjazz.org)

## Downtown NYC JazzFest

New York, NY

April 22-26

An inaugural event, GrandLife Hotels will be presenting the first Downtown NYC JazzFest at The Django, Roxy Bar and Club Room at the Soho Grand.

**LINEUP:** Jeff "Tain" Watts Quartet, Shayna Steele "The Wilshire Project," Mark G. Meadows "A Night of Wonder," Brian Newman and more.  
[downtownnycjazzfest.com](http://downtownnycjazzfest.com)

## Delaney Chevrolet Westsylvanias Jazz and Blues Festival

Indiana, Pennsylvania

May 22-23

The Delaney Chevrolet Westsylvanias Jazz and Blues Festival will be held on May 22-23 2026 in downtown Indiana, PA, the boyhood home of Jimmy Stewart. We also have a visual arts component to the festival and music begins on Friday evening at galleries in town. Live jazz and blues on the May 23 is from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. downtown and afterwards in local establishments.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past headliners have included: Roger Humphries, Dwayne

Dolphin, Sean Jones and Joe Saylor.

[westsylvanijazzandblues.org](http://westsylvanijazzandblues.org)

## Jazz in June

Camden, Maine

June 12-14

Jazz in June is a three-day festival with free daytime concerts, evening receptions in town, and headline shows at the Camden Opera House. This annual jazz festival features world-class acts in coastal Camden, Maine.

**LINEUP:** John Schofield Trio, Savani Latin Jazz Quartet and more to be announced.

[jazzinjunecamdenme.com](http://jazzinjunecamdenme.com)

## Rochester International Jazz Festival

Rochester, New York

June 19-27

The 23rd edition Rochester International Jazz Festival is one of the world's leading jazz festivals. The nine-day event draws 210,000-plus fans to see more than 1,750 legendary artists and rising stars from around the world in 300-plus ticketed and free shows,

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USAF Airmen of Note  
& *Introducing* the UK's "Hejira" and their  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Jazz of Joni Mitchell**

July  
9-12

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### FESTIVALS 2026

- 05/07 IFM Nouakchott, Mauritania
- 05/15 St Louis Jazz Festival, Senegal
- 06/12 1<sup>re</sup> rencontre piano, Guadeloupe
- 06/28 Jazz Ô Moulin, Normandy
- 07/11 Marseille Jazz des 5 continents
- 09/18 NEW MORNING, Paris
- 10/02 Angra jazz, Portugal

*Le Monde: "Leïla Olivesi ranks alongside the great female bandleaders Mary Lou Williams, Carla Bley, Maria Schneider..."*

FEATURING QUENTIN GHOMARI tpt. BAPTISTE HERBIN, ADRIEN SANCHEZ & JEAN-CHARLES RICHARD saxes. MANU CODJIA guitar. YONI ZELNIK bass. DONALD KONTOMANOU drums  
GUESTS Camille Bertault & the Poetic Birds

Avec le soutien de



Production [Attention Fragile] EFC

Distribution [autre]



The Joshua Redman Quartet digs in at Annapolis Jazz & Roots.

nightly jam sessions and jazz workshops. All 19 venues are within walking distance.

**LINEUP:** Gladys Knight, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Chris Botti, Robert Cray Band, Count Basie Orchestra, Galactic, Celebrating John Coltrane (with Loe Lovano & Friends), Hiromi's Sonicwonder, The Kings of Latin Jazz (Tito Puente Jr. & Nestor Torres), Bill Frisell Quartet featuring Greg Tardy, Harvey Mason's Chameleon, Cécil McLorin Salvant, Bob James Trio, Arturo Sandoval, Ana Popvic, Brandon Woody's Upendo, Headhunters, The Soul Rebels, Catherine Russell and more.

[rochesterjazz.com](http://rochesterjazz.com)

### Montclair Jazz Festival

Montclair, New Jersey  
June 16, 30; July 16, 30; August 4, 15

The largest outdoor summer jazz festival in the New York City tri-state region attracting more than 30,000 people each summer. New Jersey's beloved free jazz festival directed by 11-time Grammy winner Christian McBride and featuring world-renowned artists alongside rising stars in the heart of the award-winning downtown Montclair, just 12 miles west of NYC.

**LINEUP:** Bobby Watson, Count Basie Orchestra, Michele Rosewoman, Joel Ross, Orrin Evans, Rebirth Brass Band, Christian McBride Big Band, Patrice Rushen, Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Cyril Neville and the Take Me to the River All Stars.

[montclairjazzfestival.org](http://montclairjazzfestival.org)

### Vision Festival presented by Arts for Art

New York, New York

June 23-28

Arts for Art celebrates 30 years of Vision Festival. One of the premier festivals of avant jazz takes place at Abrons Art Center. Joe Morris composer, guitarist, bassist and author will be honored for his lifetime of achievement. Vision will also feature

commissions by Jen Shyu and DoYeon Kim.

**LINEUP:** Amina Claudine Myers, Alan Braufman, Cooper-Moore, Craig Taborn, Daniel Carter, Do Yeon Kim, Hamid Drake, Ingrid Laubrock, James Brandon Lewis, Luke Stewart, Matthew Shipp, Ned Rothenburg, Nicole Mitchell, Patricia Brennan, Sylvie Courvoisier, Tomeka Reid, Jen Shyu, William Parker and more.

[artsforart.org/vision-30](http://artsforart.org/vision-30)

### Saratoga Jazz Festival presented by GE Vernova

Saratoga Springs, New York  
June 27-28

Saratoga Jazz Festival offers two days of music with two stages and 22 artists. From jazz to roots, funk, blues, rock, indie and beyond, Saratoga Jazz Festival continues its tradition of presenting world-class artists and ensembles.

**LINEUP:** Patti LaBelle, Miles Electric Band: Celebrating Miles Davis' Centennial, Cécile McLorin Salvant, The Dip, Gonzalo Rubalcaba First Meeting Quartet (with Chris Potter, Larry Grenadier & Eric Harland), Terri Lyne Carrington + Social Science, Bill Frisell Trio (featuring Thomas Morgan & Rudy Royston with special guest Gregory Tardy), Orrin Evans Trio (featuring Luques Curtis & Mark Whitfield Jr.), Tyreek McDole, Ana Popovic, Avishai Cohen Big Vicious, Brass Queens, The Revivalists, Dianne Reeves, Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Cimafunk, Lakecia Benjamin, Alexa Tarantino Quartet, Kyle Rousel, Sasha Dobson, Skidmore Jazz Institute Faculty All-Stars Celebrate John Coltrane's Centennial.

[spac.org/saratoga-performing-arts-center/saratoga-jazz-festival](http://spac.org/saratoga-performing-arts-center/saratoga-jazz-festival)

### Hamptons JazzFest

Hamptons, New York

July-September/10 weeks of music

Hamptons JazzFest is an annual summer jazz festival presenting ten weeks of live performances across the East End of

# ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

## 23<sup>RD</sup> EDITION | JUNE 19-27, 2026

9 DAYS | 1750+ ARTISTS | 300+ SHOWS | 19 VENUES | 100+ FREE SHOWS  
 SEE FULL LINEUP AT ROCHESTERJAZZ.COM

### HEADLINERS



THURSDAY, JUNE 25



FRIDAY, JUNE 26



SATURDAY, JUNE 27

**CLUB PASS SERIES HIGHLIGHTS - 174 SHOWS AT 10 VENUES**  
 ENTER WITH A CLUB PASS OR \$30/\$35/\$40 AT THE DOOR, GENERAL ADMISSION SEATING

<p><b>DANILO PEREZ TRIO</b> 7PM CELEBRATING JOHN COLTRANE</p>	<p><b>BOB JAMES TRIO</b> 7:00PM</p>	<p><b>ARTURO SANDOVAL</b> 7:00 &amp; 9:30PM PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM AND 10 TIME GRAMMY AWARD WINNER</p>	<p><b>HEADHUNTERS</b> 7:00PM</p>	<p><b>HIROMI'S SONICWONDER</b> 7:00 &amp; 9:30PM</p>	<p><b>CECILE MCLORIN SALVANT</b> 7:00PM</p>
<p><b>JOE LOVANO AND FRIENDS</b> 9:30PM</p>	<p><b>HARVEY MASON'S CHAMELEON</b> 9:30PM</p>	<p><b>THE SOUL REBELS</b> 9:30PM</p>	<p><b>BILL FRISELL QUARTET</b> 9:30PM FEATURING GREG TARDY</p>		
<p><b>CATHERINE RUSSELL</b></p>	<p><b>ALEXA TARANTINO QUARTET</b></p>	<p><b>TOMMY SMITH &amp; MAKOTO OZONE</b></p>	<p><b>RAUL MIDON</b></p>	<p><b>KYLE ROUSSEL QUINTET</b></p>	<p><b>HOLLY COLE</b></p>
<p><b>THE RODRIGUEZ BROS.</b> CELEBRATE MILES 100</p>	<p><b>ORRIN EVANS TRIO</b></p>	<p><b>DOREEN KETCHENS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ QUARTET</b></p>	<p><b>NYC JAZZ ALL STARS FEAT. ERIC ALEXANDER &amp; JEREMY PELT</b></p>	<p><b>THE BAD PLUS</b></p>	<p><b>WILL CALHOUN QUARTET FROM LIVING COLOUR</b></p>
<p><b>ISAIAH J. THOMPSON</b></p>	<p><b>VICKI KRISTINA BARCELONA</b></p>	<p><b>AVISHAI COHEN BIG VICIOUS</b></p>	<p><b>TESSA SOUTER</b></p>	<p><b>BRANDON WOODY'S UPENDO</b></p>	<p><b>DAVINA &amp; THE VAGABONDS</b></p>
		<p><b>WILLIE JONES III + ERIC SCOTT REED</b></p>			

**BUY TICKETS / CLUB PASSES & SEE FULL LINEUP AT ROCHESTERJAZZ.COM**



Lakecia Benjamin takes to the streets at JazzFest White Plains.

Long Island. The festival brings jazz legends and rising stars to historic venues, cultural institutions and outdoor settings, offering high caliber concerts for both local audiences and seasonal visitors.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past lineups have included Harlem Gospel Choir, Masters of Jazz (featuring Lenny White, Buster Williams, Benito Gonzalez and Emilio Modeste), Elio Villafranca Quintet, Ada Rovatti Organ Trio (featuring Randy Brecker), Nilson Matta's Brazilian Voyage Quartet.

[hamptonsjazzfest.org](http://hamptonsjazzfest.org)

### Jazzmobile's Summerfest

*City Parks in New York's Five Boroughs  
New York, New York*

**July 8-September 23**

New Yorkers know it's summer when the city's parks and outdoor spaces come alive with Jazzmobile's Summerfest, which premieres on stages throughout the five boroughs featuring jazz stars and emerging talent that reflect the city's diversity, from straightahead, Latin, post-bop, blues, swing stylings and beyond.

**LINEUP:** Antonio Hart, Camille Thurman and Darrell Green, Steven Oquendo and centenni-

al celebrations of Jimmy Heath, Lou Donaldson, Miles Davis, Melba Liston, Randy Weston, John Coltrane and The Savoy Ballroom.

[jazzmobile.org](http://jazzmobile.org)

### Syracuse International Jazz Fest Special Occasion: 40th Anniversary Edition

*Syracuse, New York*

**July 9-12**

Celebrating its 40th year, this free-admission, non-ticketed, four-day, outdoor and indoor jazz and music festival has been dubbed "the largest free-admission jazz festival in the Northeast." Located in the heart of central New York, this award-winning international music festival is open and accessible to all. Past Jazz Fest headliners include Aretha Franklin, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Dave Brubeck, B.B. King, Ray Charles, Kenny G, Herbie Hancock, Gladys Knight and Todd Rundgren.

**LINEUP:** Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Tower of Power, The USAF Airmen of Note, Nathan Williams Sr. & the Zydeco Cha Cha's 40th Anniversary Tour, Sweden's Queen of Swing Gunhild Carling & The Carling Family Band's Tribute to Louis Armstrong, Preservation Hall Jazz Band and — direct from London making their North American debut — Hejira, A 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Jazz of Joni Mitchell,

Wilmington Celebrates  
**DE250**  
1776 - 2026



 **cityfest**

# CLIFFORD BROWN

## Jazz Festival 2026

**AUGUST 2<sup>ND</sup> THROUGH AUGUST 8<sup>TH</sup>**

**LIVE ART ★ FOOD ★ COMMUNITY ★ HISTORY**

The 2026 **CLIFFORD BROWN JAZZ FESTIVAL** is the largest free jazz festival on the east coast. The main stage opens on Sunday with star studded line-ups performing through Saturday. There will be **LIVE PAINTING, FOOD** and **COMMUNITY** to celebrate the 39<sup>th</sup> year of the festival and the American legacy of jazz.

Each night following the main stage performances, **LATE NIGHT JAM SESSIONS** are showcased throughout **DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON** hosted in local establishments.

### **PAST PERFORMERS**

Diane Reeves, Kenny Barron, Roy Haynes, Kirk Whalum, Jazzmeia Horn, Chief Adjuah, Terri Lynn Carrington, ESPERANZA SPALDING, Victor Wooten and the Wooten Brothers and more.

For a Full List of Past Performers:  
[wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifford\\_Brown\\_Jazz\\_Festival](https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifford_Brown_Jazz_Festival)

**For Updates and News, Visit:**

[cliffordbrownjazzfest.org](https://cliffordbrownjazzfest.org)

**RODNEY SQUARE, WILMINGTON, DELAWARE**

**Scranton JAZZ FESTIVAL**

**AUG 7-8-9**  
**2026**

**3 DAYS**  
**20+ VENUES**  
**80+ MUSICIANS**

**SCRANTONJAZZFESTIVAL.ORG**



The Christian McBride Big Band thrills at the James Moody Jazz Festival.

as well as Orange Juice Jazz Ensemble from Syracuse University. [syracusejazzfest.com](http://syracusejazzfest.com)

### Springfield Jazz & Roots Festival

Springfield, Massachusetts  
July 10-11

The 13th Annual Springfield Jazz & Roots Festival returns with music, culture and community. This free, two-day event celebrates the music of the African diaspora, featuring national and local artists, youth performances, arts activities, cultural education, nonprofit and artisan booths and global cuisine.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers include Taj Mahal, Sweet Honey in the Rock and Pedrito Martinez. [springfieldjazzfest.com](http://springfieldjazzfest.com)

Capital One CityParks FOUNDATION  
**SUMMERSTAGE 40**

**FREE**

**CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL**

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**AUGUST 28-30, 2026**

Marcus Garvey Park, Harlem, NYC  
Tompkins Square Park, East Village, NYC

**SUMMERSTAGE.ORG**

SUMMERSTAGENYC SUMMERSTAGE NYC/SUMMERSTAGE  
#SUMMERSTAGE #CHARLIEPARKERJAZZFESTIVAL

Capital One SUBARU Bloomberg Philanthropies Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

### Jazz in July

New York, New York  
July 14-25

One of New York's premier summer jazz festival returns with two weeks of one-night-only concerts crafted by Aaron Diehl, artistic director. Legends, new voices, the artists moving jazz forward — hear it all in two perfect halls at 92NY's Jazz in July.

**LINEUP:** Ron Carter, Renee Rosnes, Aaron Diehl, Ethan Iverson, Jimmy Greene, Terence Blanchard, Kate Kortum, Gregory Hutchinson and more. [92NY.org/jazz](http://92NY.org/jazz)

### Litchfield Jazz Festival

Washington, Connecticut  
July 24-26

Set in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains, the Litchfield Jazz Festival has been presenting the titans of jazz since 1996. Enjoy top-notch music, art, an opening night Gala and a fabulous Sunday jazz brunch that has been sold out four years in a row.

**LINEUP:** Litchfield Jazz Camp Stars, Don Braden & The Litchfield Jazz Fest Dectet, Jimmy Greene Quintet, Steve Davis All-Star Quintet, Paul Bollenback Quintet, Curtis Brothers Trio and Sunday Brunch featuring the Steve Kortyka Sextet. [litchfieldjazzfest.com](http://litchfieldjazzfest.com)

### Clifford Brown Festival

Wilmington, Delaware  
August 2-8

Said to be the largest free jazz festival on the east coast, the the 39th annual Clifford Brown Festival offers the main stage star-studded lineups performing through Saturday. Each night following the main stage performances, late-night jam sessions are showcased throughout downtown Wilmington hosted in local establishments.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers include Diane Reeves, Kenny Barron, Roy Haynes, Kirk Whalum, Jazzmeia Horn, Chief Adjua, Terri Lynn Carrington, Chucho Valdes, Chien Chien Lu and more. [cliffordbrownjazzfest.org](http://cliffordbrownjazzfest.org)

### Provincetown Jazz Festival

*Cape Cod, Massachusetts*

August 3, 11

Since 2005, the Provincetown Jazz Festival has been held in the oldest continuous art colony in the United States. The festival is a non-profit organization donating a portion of the proceeds to jazz in the schools on Cape Cod. Musicians from the United States, Canada, Cuba, Brazil, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan have appeared at concerts on Cape Cod.

**LINEUP:** Jamile, Cassandre McKinley, Myanna, Steve Ahern, Fred Boyle, Ron Ormsby and Bart Weisman.

[provincetownjazzfestival.org](http://provincetownjazzfestival.org)

### The Scranton Jazz Festival

*Scranton, Pennsylvania*

August 7-9

Celebrating 21 years of jazz, the Scranton Jazz Festival takes place downtown presenting award-winning jazz, blues and world beat artists featured on a main stage, clubs, restaurants, bars and coffee houses. The city resembles a mini New Orleans for three days.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers include Tower of Power, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, Take 6, Spyro Gyra, Manhattan Transfer, Joe Lovano, Average White Band, Dave Liebman, Stanley Clarke, Chuck Mangione, Shemekia Copeland, The Emmy nominated Scranton Jazz Festival Big Band and more.

[scrantonjazzfestival.org](http://scrantonjazzfestival.org)

### Bousquet Jazz and Blues Fest

*Bousquet Mountain Ski Area, Pittsfield, Massachusetts*

August 8

The stunning views and natural acoustics of Pittsfield's historic ski hill provide the setting for the annual Bousquet Jazz and Blues Fest. Food and beverages available on-site; BYO blanket or chair. Rain or shine (the ski lodge serves as an alternate indoor venue).

**LINEUP:** Misty Blues Band, The Django Festival All Stars and others to be announced.

[berkshiresjazz.org](http://berkshiresjazz.org)

### Jazz in the Valley

*Poughkeepsie, New York*

August 16

Located just 90 minutes north of New York City in Poughkeepsie's Waryas Park, Jazz in the Valley, one of upstate New York's premiere festivals, celebrates its 26th anniversary.

**LINEUP:** Jackson Plays Dylan (featuring Javon Jackson), Lisa Fischer, Salsa Lives with The

Luques Brothers and more to be announced. Past artists have included Ron Carter, Nnenna Freelon, Charles McPherson, Brandee Younger as well as fallen giants Randy Weston, Ahmad Jamal, Eddie Palmieri, Mulgrew Miller, Cedar Walton, Hugh Masekela, Jimmy and Percy Heath, Roy Ayers and Roy Hargrove.

[jazzinthevalleyny.org](http://jazzinthevalleyny.org)

### Charlie Parker Jazz Festival

*New York, New York*

August 28-30

The Charlie Parker Jazz Festival is New York City's annual salute to the legendary saxophonist in the Harlem and East Village neighborhoods where he lived and worked. This vibrant and free celebration of jazz in New York brings together stories, veteran players and the next generation of jazz artists.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past artists have included Ron Carter's Great Big Band, Branford Marsalis Quartet, Bertha Hope Quintet, Georgia Heers, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Bill Charlap.

[cityparksfoundation.org/charlieparker](http://cityparksfoundation.org/charlieparker)

### DC Jazz Festival

*Washington, District of Columbia*

September 2-6

DC JazzFest offers five days of great music in the nation's capital over Labor Day Weekend.



**SOUNDHECK SERIES** • 6-10PM **JUNE 16 | JULY 1, 14, 28 | AUGUST 4** BOBBY WATSON | COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA | MICHELE ROSEWOMAN | JOEL ROSS | ORRIN EVANS | REBIRTH BRASS BAND | **DOWNTOWN JAMBOREE** • 11AM-8PM **AUGUST 15** CHRISTIAN McBRIDE BIG BAND | PATRICE RUSHEN SPANISH HARLEM ORCHESTRA | CYRIL NEVILLE AND THE TAKE ME TO THE RIVER ALL STARS | DJ PRINCE HAKIM





Carolyn Wonderland brings the blues to West Virginia.

**LINEUP:** Joshua Redman, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Nate Smith, Bill Frisell, Kurt Elling, Michele Rosewoman, Emmet Cohen, Cory Henry & the Funk Apostles, Danilo Pérez, Etienne Charles, Ben Williams, African Rhythms Alumni Quintet, Isaiah Collier, Brandon Woody, Ekep Nkwelle, JazzDC All-Stars, Janelle Gill, Chuck Brown Band, José Luiz Martins, DC JAZZPRIX Finals and more. Celebrate America250. [dcjazzfest.org](http://dcjazzfest.org)

**Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival**  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
September 17-20

Celebrate America250 and how music can affect change at the 16th Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival. Come aboard The Jazz Train, hosted by Orrin Evans, with stops in New York, Newark and Philadelphia. Enjoy music across the city on Thursday, plus a

Friday night concert and Taste of Jazz Party featuring food tastings, non-stop music and late-night dancing. The festival takes the music to the streets in front of the August Wilson African American Cultural Center with free concerts on Saturday and Sunday.

**LINEUP:** Nate Smith, Lady Black Bird, Eric Roberson, Annie & The Caldwells, Herlin Riley's New Orleans Groove, Orrin Evans and more. [pittsburghjazzfest.org](http://pittsburghjazzfest.org)

**JazzFest White Plains**  
White Plains, New York  
September 23-27

This fall, JazzFest White Plains returns for its 15th year with more energy and excitement than ever. The five-day festival presents 18 live performances taking place across downtown White Plains, New York — from emerging talent to world-renowned artists, including Grammy winners and nominees.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers have included John Scofield, Kurt Elling, Steve Turre, Samara Joy, Immanuel Wilkins, Ekep Nkwelle and more. [artsw.org/jazzfest](http://artsw.org/jazzfest)

**Northampton Jazz Festival**  
Northampton, Massachusetts  
September 25-26

The Northampton Jazz Festival takes place in a small city with a big jazz heart,

16<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

**PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL**



FOR INFORMATION AND TICKETS

[PITTSBURGHJAZZFEST.ORG](http://PITTSBURGHJAZZFEST.ORG)

**SEPTEMBER 17-20, 2026**



**FREE STREET FESTIVAL SATURDAY & SUNDAY**



**TAKE THE JAZZ TRAIN TO PITTSBURGH VIA AMTRAK FROM NEW YORK • NEW JERSEY • PHILADELPHIA**



ECHOES OF MILES

# Jazz in July



Fresh air and great vibes at the Clifford Brown Jazz Festival.

to reference Terry Perkins' article about the festival in last year's DownBeat International Festival Guide. The festival, celebrating its 15th year, takes place over two days in beautiful downtown Northampton: an eclectic, walkable city famous for its music, art and dance since the '80s. The festival features the Jazz Strut on Friday, offering regional and local musicians performing in eight breweries, bars and restaurants downtown from 4:30 p.m. to 12 midnight. Saturday, Jazz Fest Day features world-touring jazz musicians who all perform free of charge from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. at seven venues throughout downtown Northampton, including the venerable Iron Horse, recently renovated and reopened. All shows are free admission except the headliner concert at the Academy of Music, which will feature Lakecia Benjamin in a John Coltrane Centennial Celebration.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past musicians have included Ron Carter Foursight Quartet; Anat Cohen Quartet; Zaccai Curtis Cubop Lives; Ekep Nkwelle Quartet; Kurt Elling; Paquito D'Rivera; Houston Person and more.

[northamptonjazzfest.org](http://northamptonjazzfest.org)

## Annapolis Jazz & Roots Festival

Annapolis, Maryland

November 6-8/November 13-15

In its fifth year, the Annapolis Jazz & Roots Festival returns to Maryland's historic and scenic city on the Chesapeake Bay. Free and ticketed concerts and jazz talks are presented at multiple sites in Eastport and nearby neighborhoods. Aided by a remarkable team of venue partners and volunteers, producers Paulina Phillips and Theresa Sise invite music lovers to visit Annapolis for two weekends of world music and jazz.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's highlights included the Joshua Redman Quartet, J.C. Jefferson Quartet's salute to Quincy Jones and a tribute to Eva Cassidy from Alexis Tantau and Rusty Sal. The 2026 Annapolis Jazz & Roots Festival theme will be "Centuries of Sound: the Changing Color of Music."

[annapolisjazzandrootsfestival.com](http://annapolisjazzandrootsfestival.com)

## TD James Moody Jazz Festival

Newark, New Jersey

November 6-22

The largest jazz festival in New Jersey returns. Experience jazz legends live or discover the next rising star at the annual Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers at the TD James Moody Jazz Festival have included Christian McBride, Dianne Reeves, Dee Dee Bridgewater and more.

[njpac.org/moody](http://njpac.org/moody)



Aaron Diehl, Artistic Director

## JULY 14-25

Six nights celebrating the epic influence of Miles Davis from the artists moving jazz forward now.

GET TICKETS

[92NY.org/JazzInJuly](http://92NY.org/JazzInJuly)

212.415.5500



Frank Malfitano, right, with B.B. King in 2014.

# SYRACUSE JAZZ FESTIVAL: ELITE AT 40

**WITH FRANK MALFITANO, FOUNDER OF** the Syracuse Jazz Festival, conversations don't go in straight lines. They twist and turn, head down unexpected paths and roads less traveled, much like the music he has been presenting to his hometown for the past 40 years.

Energetic and thoughtful, Malfitano defies his 80 years on this planet, showing the ambition of a man half his age who has at the same time earned every ounce of the wisdom of his years. After adding to the festival's executive team this year and adjusting his own role as well as a succession plan, Malfitano has been laser focused on making this anniversary edition special.

All of that culminates in this summer's 40th anniversary of the Syracuse Jazz Festival, complete with new digs at the Beak & Skiff Apple Hill Campus, an apple orchard and performance venue that presents a variety of indoor and outdoor concerts in the hills of Lafayette, New York, just 10 miles south of Syracuse.

Malfitano sat down for a sprawling Zoom call with Frank Alkyer, DownBeat's editor and publisher, about the fest's history and future. The following is just a taste of two Franks in conversation.

**Frank Alkyer:** How did you start this thing?

**Frank Malfitano:** I used to go to Newport. I went to the Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festival. I went to a festival out on an island in Toronto. And about 1974 the light bulb went off. I looked and I said,

"Well, there are bands, there's a stage, there's a sound system. I can do this." What did I know? I knew nothing.

And one day, a bunch of local musicians came to me, and they said, "Frank, we want to do a jazz festival. Can you help us? Because we know you love jazz. You come to see our bands, and we know you know how to market and advertise. Can you help us put something together?" I said, "Well, what do you want?" And they said, "Well, we want a nice club. We want a packed house, and we want good advertising." I said, "Fine," and that's how it happened.

That was the catalyst. We did it in a club — on a Sunday — that a friend of mine owned. It was a disco. It was a big, huge dance club. OK, 1,500 people came, and the fire department shut us down, and I said, "We might be on to something. So we did a bunch of indoor versions. And then finally, the next year, we said we got to take this outside, and that's how the outdoor festival was born.

**Alkyer:** Where was the first site?

**Malfitano:** Song Mountain ski resort. Man, it looked like Europe. We were on the side of a mountain, looking down at the ski lodge with the stage in front. It was spectacular. It was beautiful, but didn't work as a festival site. It worked in the sense that 1,000 people, 1,500 people, maybe, came. The same amount of people we had in the club, but it was a little too far

away, and people weren't ready to travel to a site they hadn't used before.

We went to a park that was an established site. They had The Byrds, Joe Cocker, a bunch of people. And I was the first jazz event, and it did well. We were there for five or six years, and then I said, I want to move the festival downtown and make it free. So I went to the mayor, I knocked on his door. I said, "Listen, I want to move the festival downtown to Clinton Square," an urban square in the center of town. He said, "What do you need?" I said, "Money."

And then it just exploded, 10 years later, we outgrew it because we had Ray Charles, Pete Fountain, Diana Krall, David Sanborn and Dave Brubeck — you know, just a few names for you.

The square probably held, I don't know, between 5,000 and 10,000 people. We had 35,000. So we had to leave.

**Alkyer:** When you think of Newport, when you think of Monterey, when you think of the festivals that have been around a long time, they don't generally switch sites so often.

**Malfitano:** We have moved, and we have relocated on a number of occasions. Part of that is me. Part of that feels like there's a shelf life for venues in this market, and you have to change it up, because otherwise it becomes like the New York State Fair, and everybody goes, "No, I'm not going to go this year. It's the same old thing." You know what I mean? So there's a constant need for re-invention, reimagining, envisioning. And another part is sometimes I get ticked off at the venue operators, and I've had enough of them, and sometimes they've had enough of me.

**Alkyer:** Here's something I want to get into with you. [The music on your phone] can be as broad as everything under the sun. And that's truly what you do as a festival, because it isn't always a jazz festival.

**Malfitano:** All music appeals to me, and I see a connection between all of the styles and disciplines of music. And I see the primary connection is that this is American music. We did this. We gifted this to the world. This is the best thing, arguably, we ever did. And so I think people have broad tastes. I love everything. I love soul. I love jazz. I love funk. I love blues. I love folk. I love rock. I don't differentiate.

If you put one kind of thing up there all day for three days, some people are going to tune out. It's going to bore them. I want to entertain them. **DB**

**Editor's Note:** This interview took place before the Syracuse lineup was announced. Malfitano and his team will be entertaining audiences for the 40th anniversary with the likes of Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Tower of Power, Gunhild Carling, Nathan & the Zydeco Cha Chas, Dumpstaphunk Plays Sly, The USAF Airmen of Note, Orange Juice and Hejira.

## SOUTH

 This trumpet denotes a corresponding ad in this guide.



Snarky Puppy plays the John Coltrane Festival.



The Soul Rebels and Big Freedia tear it up at the French Quarter Festival.

### French Quarter Festival

*New Orleans, Louisiana*

**April 16-19**

The French Quarter Festival 2026 brings more music, flavor and experiences than ever, with PJ Morton headlining. New additions include a riverfront site at Goldring Woldenberg Park, expanded stages, DJs, brass bands, a Thursday FQF After Dark show at House of Blues and the inaugural FQF 5K — celebrating music, food and community.

**LINEUP:** The Soul Rebels, Bag of Donuts, Bobby Rush, Johnny Sketch and the Dirty Notes, New Orleans Nightcrawlers, Raj Smoove, Rebirth Brass Band, PJ Morton, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Brass-A-Holics, Cha Wa, Sporty's Brass Band, Big Freedia, John "Papa" Gross and more.

[frenchquarterfest.org](http://frenchquarterfest.org)

### Charleston Jazz Festival

*Charleston, South Carolina*

**April 13-21**

The festival unites world-class artists with venues around the city.

**LINEUP:** Alfredo Rodriguez Trio, Jazz Messengers—A Tribute to Art Blakey, Al Di Meola, Danilo Pérez + the Charleston Jazz Orchestra, Herlin Riley Quartet + Gullah Collective and more.

[charlestonjazz.com](http://charlestonjazz.com)

### Jacksonville Jazz Festival

*Jacksonville, Florida*

**May 21-24**

For more than 40 years, the Jacksonville Jazz Festival has brought music lovers together for a weekend of great food, drinks and performances. Kick off with

AmeliaIslandJazzFestival.com

Oct. 4 thru 11, 2026

Exciting Concerts,  
Jam Sessions, Brunch & more!



**2026 Headliners**



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the Jacksonville Jazz Piano Competition presented by Yamaha on Thursday, then enjoy three days of free, live music in Jacksonville's Sports & Entertainment District.

**LINEUP:** Nile Rodgers & CHIC, Andra Day, Parliament Funkadelic featuring George Clinton, Kamasi Washington, esperanza spalding, Ghost-Note, Sheila E. & The E-Train, Galactic featuring Jelly Joseph, Moonchild, Butcher Brown, Eliane Elias The Art of Bossa Nova, Kim Scott and John Lumpkin II.  
[jacksonvillejazzfest.com](http://jacksonvillejazzfest.com)

**Atlanta Jazz Festival**  
*Atlanta, Georgia*  
May 23-25

One of the nation's largest free jazz festivals, the 49th Annual Atlanta Jazz Festival returns to Piedmont Park, celebrating culture, community and the art of jazz. Presented by Design Essentials and powered by Bank of America, this year's festival features national and local artists performing traditional, smooth, contemporary, hip-hop, R&B, soul, funk and modern jazz. The festival welcomes the Atlanta community as well as visitors from around the world.

**LINEUP:** Buddy Red, aja monet, Nate Smith, Christian McBride & Ursa Major, Kamasi Washington, Cleveland P. Jones, Myron McKinley Trio, Donnie—The Colored Section, esperanza spalding, The Roots, Cody Matlock, Nicole Zuraitis, Destin Conrad, Butcher Brown and PJ Morton.  
[atljazzfest.com](http://atljazzfest.com)

**John Coltrane International Jazz and Blues Festival**  
*High Point, North Carolina*

**September 5-6**

The 15th anniversary of the John Coltrane International Jazz and Blues Festival returns to High Point, North Carolina — the city where John Coltrane's musical journey began. This milestone celebration honors Coltrane's enduring legacy with world-class performances in a lush lakeside setting. Join us for an unforgettable weekend where history, music and nature harmonize.

**LINEUP:** To be announced.  
[coltranejazzfest.com](http://coltranejazzfest.com)

**Savannah Jazz Festival**  
*Savannah, Georgia*  
September 18-20

Said to be the largest free admission jazz festival in the Southeast, this 45th edition of the Savannah Jazz Festival will feature a full-blown big band extravaganza and much more.

**LINEUP:** Lineup will be announced in May. Past performers have included Kirk Whalum, Spyro Gyra, Doreen Ketchens, Nicole Zuraitis, Ray Charles, Chuck Leavell.  
[savannahjazz.org](http://savannahjazz.org)

**Lake Anna Jazz Fest**  
*Mineral, Virginia*  
September 19-20

It's the fifth year for Central Virginia's premier jazz festival, and the theme will be a celebration of artists originating in Virginia or who have made it their home.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past lineups have included New York Voices, Vanessa Rubin, Janis Siegel, Trist Curless, Veronica Swift, Bria Skonberg, Stephanie Nakasian, Chuck



Picnics and parties at the Atlanta Jazz Festival.

Redd, Tina Hashemi, Joe Baione, Elle Jay, John D'earth, Uptown Vocal Jazz Quartet and Michael Hawkins & The Brotherhood.

[lakeannajazz.org](http://lakeannajazz.org)

### This Is Jazz: Festival

Martinsburg, West Virginia

October 3

This Is Jazz: Festival presents authentic jazz to the Northern West Virginia and Western Maryland. Featuring instrumental, vocal and big band performances, this inaugural festival honors jazz's history while spotlighting today's artists and rising voices.

**LINEUP:** Quentin Walston Trio, VA National Guard Big Band and Shenandoah Conservatory Jazz. More to be announced.

[thisisjazz.com/festival](http://thisisjazz.com/festival)

### Amelia Island Jazz Festival

Fernandina Beach, Florida

October 4-11

Situated on the Atlantic Coast, just 30 minutes from Jacksonville, Florida, the Amelia Island Jazz Festival presents many styles of jazz, including swing, bebop, Dixieland, big band, Latin and contemporary. Music is performed by jazz greats as well as fresh, up-and-coming young talent. Performances are staged in several venues around Amelia Island, including the historic seaport village of Fernandina Beach.

**LINEUP:** Gunhild Carling, The Four Freshmen, The Dynamic Les DeMerle Band with Bonnie Eisele, UNF Jazz Ensemble 2 (directed by Dennis Marks), Dr. Bill Prince, Longineu Parsons and more.

[ameliaislandjazzfestival.com](http://ameliaislandjazzfestival.com)

### Clearwater Jazz Holiday Powered by Duke Energy

Clearwater, Florida

October 15-18

Entering its 47th edition in beautiful Coachman Park, this collaboration between the Clearwater Jazz Holiday Foundation, City of Clearwater and Visit St. Pete/Clearwater sets the stage for this year's celebration. Crowds relish in this popular festival's color-

ful musical lineup, from jazz to jam, funk, fusion and more.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Previous artists have included Chicago, Bonnie Raitt, The Avett Brothers, Brandi Carlile, Alison Krauss, Sheryl Crow, The Doobie Brothers, Earth, Wind & Fire and more.

[clearwaterjazz.com](http://clearwaterjazz.com)

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**SHEILA E. & THE E-TRAIN**  
**ELIANE ELIAS THE ART OF BOSSA NOVA**  
**KIM SCOTT**

**SUNDAY, MAY 24**  
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## MIDWEST

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Jay Pritzker Pavillion, home of the Chicago Jazz Festival

### Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival

*Sedalia, Missouri*  
May 27-30

The Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival celebrates America's original music in Sedalia, Missouri, honoring composer Scott Joplin through world-class performances, lectures and historic venues. Each spring, musicians and fans gather to experience authentic ragtime, explore Joplin's legacy and enjoy the culture, history and hospitality of the cradle of ragtime heritage.

**LINEUP:** Christina Austin, Jeff & Anne Barnhart, Clinton Davis, Richard Dowling, Josh Duffee, Eve Elliot, Colin Hancock, Frederick Hodges, Brian Holland, Vincent Johnson, Ethan Leinwand & Miss Jubilee, Sonny Leyland, Dave Majchrzak, Royce Martin, William McNally, TJ Müller, Andrew Oliver, David Thomas Roberts, Andy Schumm, Hal Smith, Martin Spitznagel, Virginia Tichenor, Matt Tolentino, John Reed Torres, Bryan Wright, and more.  
[scottjoplin.org](http://scottjoplin.org)

### Ravinia Festival

*Highland Park, Illinois*  
June 3-17

Experience Jazz in June at Ravinia. From the legendary vocals of Kurt Elling to the fresh talent of the Steans Institute, it's the perfect warm-up to a historic summer season.

**LINEUP:** Kurt Elling, Stella Cole, Terence Blanchard, Ravi Coltrane, Steans Institute Jazz Fellows, winners of the Bridges Composition Competition.

[ravinia.org](http://ravinia.org)

### Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art FunkFest

*Lansing, Michigan*  
June 12-13

Lansing brings the funk in June with high-energy performances, great food and lotsa fun.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's fest featured Grady Hall & the Disciples of Funk, Duke Charelle, DJs, Tony Thompson and more.

[micharts.org](http://micharts.org)

### 2026 Twin Cities Jazz Festival

*Saint Paul, Minnesota*  
June 19-20

Celebrating its 28th year, Twin Cities Jazz Festival is a two-day festival with headline acts on multiple public stages in and around Lowertown Saint Paul. Recognized as one of the region's premier music festivals, TCJF features world-class musicians along with youth education and performance opportunities. Free admission.

**LINEUP:** Yellowjackets, JazzMN Orchestra with Michael Mayo, Yogev Shetrit Trio, Sullivan Fortner Trio and more.

[twincitiesjazzfestival.com](http://twincitiesjazzfestival.com)

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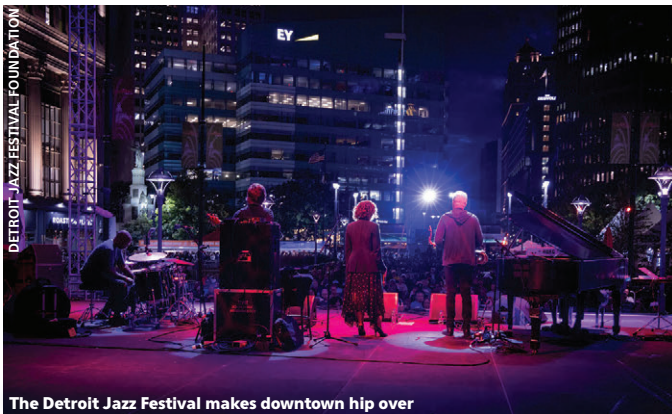
FREE ADMISSION

[ChicagoJazzFestival.us](http://ChicagoJazzFestival.us)



The Chicago Jazz Festival is produced by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and programmed by the Jazz Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Jazz Festival Committee.





The Detroit Jazz Festival makes downtown hip over



From left, Matthew Shipp, Kevin Ray and Scott

**Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland**  
presented by KeyBank  
Cleveland, Ohio

June 25-27

Immerse yourself in the ambitious Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland, presented by KeyBank: a genre-bending takeover of indoor and outdoor stages at Playhouse Square. Ranging from hometown heroes to global visionaries such as Durand Bernarr, Ohio Players, Sheila E., Nicholas Payton and Ron Carter, this year honors jazz's roots while shaping its future.

**LINEUP:** Sheila E., Spyro Gyra, Wildflowers: Kurt Elling & Fred Hersch, Chris Dave & The Drumhedz (featuring Stokley), Nicholas Payton Trio (featuring John Patitucci & Brian Blade), Ron Carter's Foursight Quartet, Ohio Players, Dominick Farinacci & Jon Thomas, Durand Bernarr, Long Live Levert, Laurin Talese and more.

[tri-cjazzfest.com](http://tri-cjazzfest.com)

**Iowa City Jazz Festival**  
Iowa City, Iowa  
July 3-5

A weekend jazz extravaganza, this free festival showcases a variety of well-known musicians and up-and-coming talent. Fireworks on July 4 after the headliner. We want to create a jazz audience of all ages and encourage everyone to attend.

**LINEUP:** Artemis, Jonathan Scales, Brass Queens and more.  
[summerofthearts.org/sota-events/iowa-city-jazz-festival](http://summerofthearts.org/sota-events/iowa-city-jazz-festival)

**Prairie Dog Blues Festival**  
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin  
July 23-25

Held on St. Feriole Island on the Mississippi River, this fest offers one of the most beautiful venues anywhere.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's lineup included Travis Ried Band, Mike Zito, Parker Barrow, Indigenous, Madtown Mannish Boys, Rush Cleveland Trio, Julian Primeaux, Sugaray Rayford, Josh Hoyer & Soul Colossal, McKinley James.  
[prairiedogblues.com](http://prairiedogblues.com)

**Door County Jazz Festival**  
Door County, Wisconsin  
August 3-8

The second edition of this startup festival features stars under the Sturgeon moon of one of the quaintest locations in the Midwest.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's festival featured tributes to Oscar Peterson, June Christy and Cal Trader as well as some of the best artists from the Midwest and beyond.  
[doorcountyjazzfestival.com](http://doorcountyjazzfestival.com)

**Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art JazzFest**  
Lansing, Michigan  
August 5-8

Produced since 1995, JazzFest has shined a light on the city's Old Town neighborhood with a variety of jazz from around the midwest and the nation.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's fest featured Ann Bell, Walter Blanding, The Pickle Mafia, 496 West Walter Kittle with AWD Jazz Band, Jeff Haas Quintet and more.  
[micharts.org](http://micharts.org)

**Chicago Jazz Festival**  
Chicago, Illinois  
September 3-6

Chicago Jazz Festival is a legendary four-day music festival, which

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*Fannie Lou Hamer No One Could Tame Her* ♦ Julius Tucker  
Greg Murphy and others. Artists are subject to change.

**September 16-19**  
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For more information, visit [www.engagewoodjazzfest.org](http://www.engagewoodjazzfest.org),  
or call us at (773) 789-4227.

Live the Spirit Residency  
The Englewood Jazz Festival

A portrait of Joe Lovano, a man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a straw hat and sunglasses. He is holding a saxophone. The background is dark and out of focus.

# JOE LOVANO

2026 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

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BOB JAMES  
RAVI COLTRANE  
ARTEMIS  
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YouTube



Live





Alex Massa's Water Music performs at the CU Jazz Festival.

Lamarr Organ Trio, Vijay Iyer Trio (with Adam O'Farrill), Take 6, Catherine Russell and more. [detroitjazzfest.org](http://detroitjazzfest.org)

### Englewood Jazz Festival

Chicago, Illinois  
September 16-19

The Englewood Jazz Festival, now in its 27th year, reflects the rich cultural heritage of Chicago's Englewood community. The mission is to increase the musical resources of the community and connect the past to the present through programs and partnerships with artists and arts organizations committed to music, mentoring and inter-generational exchange. This year, festival organizers focus on bringing a spotlight to up-and-coming jazz musicians, celebrating Miles Davis and John Coltrane and Oscar Brown Junior's centennials and the 250th anniversary of the United States.

**LINEUP:** Marquis Hill, Maggie Brown, special commission composed by Ernest Dawkins (featuring Live the Spirit Residency band performing "Fanny Lou Hamer no one could tame her"), Greg Murphy, Ju Ju Exchange, Micah Collier, Kevin King, Dakarai Barclay and Jeremiah Hunt. [englewoodjazzfestival.org](http://englewoodjazzfestival.org)

takes place over Labor Day weekend, spotlighting the diverse genre's emerging talent to marquee musicians. With concerts and special programming at the Chicago Cultural Center and throughout Millennium Park, Chicago Jazz Festival supports the iconic art form through presentation of world-class concerts, educational sessions and more.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. [chicagojazzfestival.us](http://chicagojazzfestival.us)

### Detroit Jazz Festival

Detroit, Michigan  
Sept. 4-7

In its 47th year, the Detroit Jazz Festival is the largest free admission jazz festival in the world.

The 2026 Artist-in-Residence is Grammy-winning saxophonist, composer and producer Joe Lovano. Past Artist-In-Residences have included Jason Moran, Joshua Redman, Terence Blanchard, Regina Carter, Stanley Clarke, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Chick Corea, Pat Metheny, Chucho Valdés, Karriem Riggins and Brian Blade among numerous other jazz legends.

**LINEUP:** Coltrane 100 (with Lovano, Melissa Aldana, Nduduzo Makhathini, Linda May Han Oh, Jeff "Tain" Watts), Miles Electric, Tia Fuller (featuring Shamie Fuller-Royston), Kurt Elling & Yellowjackets Celebrate Weather Report, Artemis, Bob James, Ravi Coltrane Quartet: Centennial Celebration, Skylar Tang, Gabrielle Cavasa, Cyrille Aimée Quartet, Delvon

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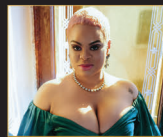
Kurt Elling &  
Fred Hersch



Nicholas Payton Trio ft.  
John Patitucci & Brian Blade



Chris Dave & The  
Drumhedz ft. Stokley



Laurin Talese



Ohio Players



For full performer bios, the most up-to-date information and previews of all the fun, scan the QR code or visit [tri-jazzfest.com](http://tri-jazzfest.com).



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## Michigan Institute for Contemporary ArtBluesFest

Lansing, Michigan  
September 16-19

Get the blues in Lansing's Old Town, a community favorite.

**LINEUP:** To be announced.  
[micharts.org](http://micharts.org)

## Indy Jazz Fest

Indianapolis, Indiana  
September 23-26

A four-day, city-wide celebration of performance and community. The fest features world-class talent with a blend of Indy's best. High-energy live shows and collaborative events blend a modern musical vision with a deep respect for the city's storied jazz identity.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers include Terence Blanchard, Sheila E., Pat Metheny, Marcus Miller, Lakesha Benjamin and more.  
[indyjazzfest.net](http://indyjazzfest.net)

## Hyde Park Jazz Festival

Chicago, Illinois  
September 26-27

The 20th Annual Hyde Park Jazz Festival is a free community celebration of jazz on the South Side of Chicago, featuring 35-plus performances including the best of Chicago, national and international artists performing in 13 unique venues across the neighborhood.

**LINEUP:** To be announced.  
[hydeparkjazzfestival.org](http://hydeparkjazzfestival.org)

## EDGEFEST

Ann Arbor, Michigan  
October 7-10

Kerrytown Concert House presents Edgefest: the 30th annual avant-garde jazz and creative new music festival. A four-day exploration of new music and improvisation created and composed by some of country's most distinguished composers and performers as well as new and emerging artists; this year celebrating the 250th birthday of our country's democracy with compositions and freely improvised tributes to liberty and freedom. Edgefest draws on artists from the Ann Arbor/Detroit area, cities from coast to coast and around the world. Events will take place at the intimate Kerrytown Concert House as well as other downtown venues. Edgefest draws audience from the upper Midwest with an increasing number from Eastern U.S. and other states in the union and several attend from Europe and even Japan. Educational activities and a Saturday parade downtown is tradition.

**LINEUP:** Roscoe Mitchell (with Jaribu Shahid, Anthony Holland, Spencer Barefield), Amir Elsaaffar Quartet (with Ole Mathisen, Tania

Giannouli, Tomas Fujiwara), Fay Victor's SUNG (with Michael Attias, Anthony Coleman, Ratz Harris, Tom Rainey), Vinny Golia 80th birthday (with Ken Filiano, TA Thompson), Jason Stein/Damon Smith/Adam Shead, Oluyemi Thomas (with Jaribu Shahid and Kenn Thomas), William Hooker Quartet (with Mara Rosenbloom, Charles Burnham, Jair-Rohm Parker Wells) and more.

[kerrytownconcerthouse.com/edgefest](http://kerrytownconcerthouse.com/edgefest)

## CU Jazz Festival

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois  
October 15-18

CU Jazz Festival presents the 12th annual event, with jam sessions, daily featured performers and the fan favorite Sunday jazz brunch. Highlighting local talent alongside national stars performing in intimate venues, it promises an exceptional experience for live music enthusiasts.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers include Myra Melfort, Matt Wilson, Mai Sugimoto, Kalia Vandever, Jocelyn Gould, John Moulder and Emily Kuhn.  
[cujazzfest.org](http://cujazzfest.org)

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Daniel Atkinson, left, founder of the San Diego Tijuana International Jazz Festival, and Julián Plascencia, his fest partner in Tijuana.

## BEAUTIFUL BORDER CROSSINGS AT SDTJ JAZZ

WHEN “INTERNATIONAL” IS USED IN THE name of a jazz festival, it’s typically to indicate the geographic origins of the talent being presented. But in the case of the three-city San Diego Tijuana International Jazz Festival (SDTJ Jazz), it’s also indicative of geography.

“I think that being on the border is probably the most interesting thing about San Diego,” declared Daniel Atkinson, SDTJ Jazz founder and executive director. “There are other interesting things, but I think that positions us in a very different way even from a place like Los Angeles.”

Launched in 2024, the annual SDTJ Jazz is held the first full weekend in October with one day in downtown San Diego; another day in Tijuana, Mexico; and a third one in Escondido. The San Diego and Tijuana concerts are outdoors and free, while the performances in Escondido are a mix of free outdoor shows and ticketed indoor performances. Artists can be booked for single or multiple days.

“Escondido is 40 miles north of the border, and downtown San Diego is about 15 miles north of it. So we’re using the geography to serve different audience bases,” Atkinson explained. “We’re taking advantage of the impassibility of the border because 95% of the people who attend the Tijuana show are from Tijuana. But it’s not as though we’re saying to the U.S. audience, ‘People, don’t come.’ We’re just saying, ‘Come to where you’re comfortable.’

“The hall in Escondido is actually, in many ways, the nicest in the region for its size,” he added. “It has great acoustics, it’s comfortable,

and it’s a classic hall design that has four tiers with an orchestra section and three different balcony levels. Plus, they’ve just got everything there. They have huge green room facilities and rehearsal spaces. And there’s a whole set of outdoor spaces that we can use this year.”

When talking about the Quartyard, a space in downtown San Diego, Atkinson described its inviting atmosphere and appeal to younger audiences.

Scheduled for Oct. 1–4, the 2026 SDTJ Jazz lineup was still being finalized at press time. But Atkinson, a veteran producer of concerts and albums and a longtime educator, was happy to discuss its first two iterations as well as new offerings for the third.

We certainly made huge strides with the second year,” he said. “I really feel like last year was tight, and it had a kind of a diversity that I’m proud of having put together.

“But you set a bar, and then you have to rise to that bar.”

Two of last year’s triumphant bookings were vocalists Gabrielle Cavassa, who was still best known for her work in saxophonist Joshua Redman’s band, and Lucía, who was headlining her first West Coast dates. “That was utterly fluky,” he admitted. Yet each was wholly fitting.

“The same agent, Chris Mees, represents both of them. And he told me that Gabrielle is from Escondido,” Atkinson said. “That was very fun, because friends and family galore came out for her. And I think they really hadn’t had a chance to hear her since high school.”

Lucía, on the other hand, was already on

Atkinson’s radar. “One of my colleagues in Tijuana runs a son jarocho festival that takes place right at the border wall,” he said. “And Lucía’s father is an eminent son jarocho musician and a significant improviser. So Jorge, my friend in Tijuana, told me, ‘You’ve got to check out this young woman. Because not only is she a great jazz musician, she comes from this lineage of son jarocho.’” Lucía and Atkinson had spoken via video nearly a half-decade prior to her performing in Tijuana, and he was happy to bring that connection full circle.

Cavassa and Lucía were also consecutive Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Competition winners in 2022 and 2023, respectively. “They could not have been more different in terms of approach to the music,” he noted. “Then again, being a jazz vocalist can mean a lot of different things.

“Something that we tried to do last year that for various reasons didn’t come together is to have a day of film screenings that we will do in coordination with the San Diego Latino Film Festival,” he said. “It will be on the middle day, the Friday, when we don’t really have concerts running. We haven’t worked out the details yet, but we’re hoping to replicate the film screenings in Tijuana at their cultural center, because they have a very nice film program there, too.”

A unique feature of the festival is the Binational Youth Ensemble. Boasting an equal number of high school musicians from each side of the border, the eight- to ten-piece band performs in both Tijuana and San Diego.

“They get together and work up a repertoire and play it together. And it always amazes me,” Atkinson reflected. “There are always kids who speak the other side’s language, so we don’t have to translate for them. There’s a young bass player from here, Collier Keitany, who speaks Spanish beautifully, and he announces to the crowd in Tijuana and vice versa with Eduardo Hernández, a drummer from Ensenada.”

SDTJ Jazz’s early October scheduling is related to the weather (“It’s temperate and dry,” Atkinson pointed out) and surrounding activities: “The state government of Baja California has an arts agency called the Secretaría de Cultura, and every October is performing arts month there. So we are leading off essentially a whole month worth of different types of performing arts activity that takes place all over the state, not just in Tijuana.

“People outside of this area think of San Diego as the beach and the zoo and that we’re kind of the land of the Lotus Eaters. And then Tijuana is extremely poorly understood,” he concluded. “I’ve been presenting jazz in San Diego for almost 40 years now, and this festival upends people’s expectations by providing the opportunity for serious musicians on both sides of the border to play a variety serious music.”

—Yoshi Kato

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# Oregon Coast Jazz Party 2026



**OCTOBER 2-4**

## Salt Air & Sweet Jazz

This year, jazz legend John Clayton presents a lineup celebrating the legacy of Ken Peplowski.

Newport, Oregon



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**The Jazz Cruise**

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[oregoncoastjazzparty.org](http://oregoncoastjazzparty.org)

## WEST

 This trumpet denotes a corresponding ad in this guide.



Jazz gets intimate at Jazz Aspen Snowmass.



Ivan Malespin solos at Jazz Port Townsend.



Christone "Kingfish" Ingram brings it at the Monterey Jazz Festival.

### Reno Jazz Festival

*Reno, Nevada*

**April 23-25**

Reno Jazz Festival is a three-day celebration at the University of Nevada, Reno, that brings together world-class jazz artists and rising student musicians in a non-competitive, immersive setting. Participants perform, learn and grow through expert-led performance reviews, clinics, daytime concerts and evening jam sessions.

**LINEUP:** Kris Davis + Manzanita Quintet, Ben Wendel + Jazz Lab 1.

[unr.edu/jazz-festival](http://unr.edu/jazz-festival)

### Healdsburg Jazz Festival

*Healdsburg, California*

**June 11-21**

Healdsburg Jazz presents the 28th annual Healdsburg Jazz Festival in beautiful and historic venues throughout wine country. The festival features an array of celebrated artists like Branford Marsalis, Cécile McLorin Salvant,

Charles Lloyd, Lisa Fischer, Kurt Elling and more.

**LINEUP:** Branford Marsalis, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Charles Lloyd, Lisa Fischer, Kurt Elling with the Marcus Shelby Orchestra, Sullivan Fortner, Orrin Evans, Etienne Charles, Hamilton de Holanda, George Cables, Rufus Reid, Billy Hart, Bobby Watson, Craig Handy, Benny Green, Willie Jones III, Jeremy Pelt, Howard Alden, Charles Brown Project (featuring Nicolas Bearde), Michela Lerman, Howard Wiley, Lavay Smith, Jazz Mafia, Erik Jekabson, Jackie Ryan, Liberty Ellman, Sundra Manning, Carlitos Medrano, Adam Shulman, Sylvia Cuenca, Tiffany Austin and the Healdsburg Freedom Jazz Choir, the Healdsburg Jazz Collective and more. [healdsburgjazz.org](http://healdsburgjazz.org)

### Blue Note Jazz Festival

*Los Angeles, California*

**June 13-14**

The Blue Note Jazz Festival is back with the sweet sounds of jazz, funk, R&B and more with artists from around the world.

6<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
**Monterey**  
**Jazz** FESTIVAL

THE MUSIC  
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THE STORY

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THE 69TH MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL RETURNS

**SEPTEMBER 25-27**

**3 DAYS. 5 STAGES. 73 SHOWS.**

Herbie Hancock & Ron Carter Duo: *For Miles*  
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis  
Charles Lloyd Quartet: 60th Anniversary of *Forest Flower*  
Ravi Coltrane Quartet: *Centennial Celebration*  
Cécile McLorin Salvant • 2026 Commission Artist: *America 250*  
Christone "Kingfish" Ingram with Shemekia Copeland  
Eddie Palmieri Experience • Reggie Watts • Amy Tan & Joey Alexander  
Ambrose Akinmusire Quartet • Brian Blade & the Fellowship Band  
aja monet • Melissa Aldana Quartet • The Bad Plus  
Linda May Han Oh Trio • and many more!



MONTEREYJAZZ.ORG

**CENTRUM PRESENTS**  
**jazz**  
 PORT TOWNSEND  
 JULY 20-26

**TRADITION MEETS FUTURE**

Rufus Reid *bass*  
 George Cables *piano*  
 Wycliffe Gordon *trombone*  
 Pat Bianchi *organ*  
 Terell Stafford *trumpet*  
 Allison Miller *drums*  
 Matt Wilson *drums*  
 Ben Wendel *tenor sax*  
 Steve Kovalcheck *guitar*  
 Shane Endsley *trumpet*  
 Sara Caswell *violin*  
 Adam Benjamin *piano*  
 Michaela Lynn *bass*  
 Nate Wood *drums*  
 Liany Mateo *bass*  
 Jay Thomas *trumpet*  
 Mark Taylor *alto sax*  
 Trevor Ford *bass*  
 Christine Jensen *sax*  
 Big Band director  
 And more...

Michael Mayo

**Tickets at**  
**centrum.org**




**20TH ANNIVERSARY**

**NEW MEXICO JAZZ FESTIVAL**

**AUG 27-SEPT 30, 2026**

**FEATURING: CHUCHO VALDES; ESPERANZA SPALDING; SPANISH HARLEM ORCHESTRA; THE BAD PLUS; BRIAN BLADE FELLOWSHIP; JUDITH HILL; DJANGO FESTIVAL ALLSTARS; MELISSA ALDANA; & MORE!**

**NEWMEXICOMJAZZFESTIVAL.ORG**



The annual jazz festival is one of the biggest parties anywhere, a non-stop dance-a-thon powered by a rotating stage that keeps the music going at all times.

**LINEUP:** Patti LaBelle, Wyclef Jean, Gregory Porter, Samara Joy and more.  
[hollywoodbowl.com](http://hollywoodbowl.com)

**Stanford Jazz Festival**  
 Stanford, California  
 June 22-July 31

For more than 50 years, the Stanford Jazz Festival has presented iconic performances on the Stanford campus. The 2026 season features 25 artists over six weeks, spanning generations and styles — from Branford Marsalis and Billy Childs to Luciana Souza and Taylor Eigsti — celebrating jazz tradition, innovation and global connections.

**LINEUP:** Indian Jazz Journey (featuring Mahesh Kale & George Brooks), Branford Marsalis Quartet, Billy Childs Quartet, Luciana Souza's New Moon, Nick Rossi's Jazzopatens, Nicolas Bearde Quintet, Marcus Shelby Sextet, Christina Galisatus Quintet, Jimmy Heath Centennial (with Jeb Patton and David Wong), Victor Lin-Gershwin Reimagined, Michael Mayo, Anat Cohen, The Westerlies, Anisha Rush Quartet & Ben Flocks Trio, Miles Centennial (featuring Jeremy Pelt), Ruth Davies' Blues Night, Stefan Harris & Blackout, Yiliana Cañizares, Sasha Berliner, Guitar Night (featuring Camila Meza & Dan Wilson), George Cables Sextet, Aldo López-Gavilán, Taylor Eigsti Group (featuring Gretchen Parlato & Zack Grooves), All-Star Jam.  
[stanfordjazz.org/stanford-jazz-festival](http://stanfordjazz.org/stanford-jazz-festival)

**Jazz Port Townsend**  
 Port Townsend, Washington  
 July 20-26

Set within the natural surroundings of Fort

Worden State Park, Jazz Port Townsend is a weeklong immersive jazz workshop and festival. Musicians ages 14 and up learn, perform and collaborate with world-class faculty while enjoying nightly concerts and jam sessions alongside approximately 160 participants from across the U.S.

**LINEUP:** Rufus Reid, bass; George Cables, piano; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Pat Bianchi, organ; Terell Stafford, trumpet; Allison Miller, drums; Matt Wilson, drums; Ben Wendel, tenor sax; Steve Kovalcheck, guitar; Shane Endsley, trumpet; Sara Caswell, violin; Adam Benjamin, piano; Michaela Lynn, bass; Nate Wood, drums; Liany Mateo, bass; Jay Thomas, trumpet; Mark Taylor, alto sax; Trevor Ford, bass; Christine Jensen, saxophone and big band director.  
[centrum.org/program/jazz](http://centrum.org/program/jazz)

**JAS June Experience**  
 Aspen, Colorado  
 June 25-28

The JAS June Experience is one of the premier jazz festivals showcasing talent across genres including jazz, funk, gospel and world music. One pass gives you the opportunity to build your own nightly schedule with multiple shows at venues throughout downtown Aspen, including the brand-new Paul JAS Center.

**LINEUP:** Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, The Family Stone, Cory Henry & The Funk Apostles, Christian McBride and more.  
[jazzaspensnowmass.org/june-experience](http://jazzaspensnowmass.org/june-experience)

**San Jose Jazz Summer Fest**  
 San Jose, California  
 August 7-9

San Jose Jazz Summer Fest returns with three days and eight stages of international stars, regional favorites and emerging

artists playing jazz, blues, R&B, Latin jazz, soul, New Orleans and more. It's an exciting urban jazz festival with tasty food, wine, microbrews and after-hours events.

**LINEUP:** Patti LaBelle, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Zapp w/ Tuxedo, Joe Bataan, Parlor Greens and more.

[summerfest.sanjosejazz.org](http://summerfest.sanjosejazz.org)

### Telluride Jazz Festival

*Telluride, Colorado*

**August 7-9**

Set in a breathtaking mountain town, the festival is a two-day celebration of jazz, funk, soul and beyond. Held in scenic Town Park each August, the festival brings world-class musicians and music lovers together for performances surrounded by alpine views and vibrant summer energy.

**LINEUP:** The Disco Biscuits, Don Was & the Pan Detroit Ensemble, Endea Owens & the Cookout, DTF (Deitch, Teitel, Fri-bush), Voodoo Orchestra, University of Colorado Thompson Jazz Combo, Lettuce celebrating the 100th birthday of Miles Davis, Robert Randolph, Theo Croker, Adrian Quesada's Trio Asesino and more.

[telluridejazz.org](http://telluridejazz.org)

### New Mexico Jazz Festival

*Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Taos, New Mexico*

**August 27-September 30**

Founded in 2006, The New Mexico Jazz Festival, presented by Outpost Productions Inc., celebrates its 20th anniversary. A destination event that features local and world-renowned artists and jazz masters performing at the Outpost Performance Space, the Albuquerque Museum, the 800-seat Lencic Performing Arts Center in Santa Fe and many other indoor and outdoor venues throughout the state, the festival also features art exhibits, films and more as well as several free events.

**LINEUP:** Chucho Valdes, esperanza spalding, Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Django Festival Allstars, Melissa Aldana Quartet, The Bad Plus, Brian Blade Fellowship and more.

[newmexicojazzfestival.org](http://newmexicojazzfestival.org)

### Montavilla Jazz Festival

*Portland, Oregon*

**September 4-6**

Over Labor Day weekend, Portland's Montavilla Jazz Festival presents three days of world-class performances in a walkable, village-style setting anchored by Mt. Tabor Park and intimate neigh-

borhood venues. Celebrating regional and national artists, the festival features commissioned works, artist residencies and community partnerships that spotlight Portland's vibrant jazz ecosystem.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past featured artists have included Mel Brown, Darrell Grant, George Colligan, Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble, Kerry Politzer, Nicole Glover, Hailey Niswanger, Essiet Essiet and Joe Kye.

[montavillajazz.org](http://montavillajazz.org)

### Vail Jazz Festival

*Vail, Colorado*

**September 4-6**

The perfect grand finale to Colorado's summer, the Vail Jazz Festival transforms Labor Day Weekend into an unforgettable mountain music experience. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Vail Mountain, the festival brings together an extraordinary lineup of headliners and rising stars for performances, late-night jam sessions and powerful tributes.

**LINEUP:** Niki Haris, Jeff Hamilton, Sean Jones, John Clayton, Lewis Nash, Terell Stafford, Tim Green, Bill Cunliffe, Wycliffe



25 Exciting Concerts

[STANFORDJAZZ.ORG](http://STANFORDJAZZ.ORG)

**JUN 26 BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET**  
**DINKELSPIEL AUDITORIUM**

JUN 21	—	JUL 31
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**JUN 27** Billy Childs Quartet

**JUN 28** Luciana Souza's New Moon

**JUL 16** Michael Mayo

**JUL 18** Anat Cohen

**JUL 23** Stefon Harris

**JUL 25** Yillian Cañizares

**JUL 30** Taylor Eigsti



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John Santos Sextet with Yllian Cañizares at the 2025 Stanford Jazz Festival.



Fun in the mountains at Telluride Blues & Brews.

Gordon, Jon Hamar, Tadataka Unno, Bobby Floyd, Steve Kovalcheck, Cyrus Chestnut, Mitch Forman, The Fortitude Ensemble, Joel Frahm, Camille Thurman and more.  
[vailjazz.org/vail-jazz-festival](http://vailjazz.org/vail-jazz-festival)

### Chris Botti at Sea

*Departing from Los Angeles*  
**September 18-25**

Departing from Los Angeles with stops in San Francisco and Victoria, British Columbia, before arriving in Vancouver, British Columbia, this West Coast cruise features a broad range of top-drawer entertainment, all under the direction of trumpeter Chris Botti. While music transcends, Botti also infuses performers and events from other entertainment genres. The cruise reflects the style, stature and stardom of the host.

**LINEUP:** Chris Botti, Elvis Costello, Boz Scaggs, Melody Gardot, Peabo Bryson, Regina Belle, Morgan James, Veronica Swift, Emmet Cohen, Kandace Springs, Candy Dulfer, Wycliffe Gordon, Benny Benack III, Harold Lopez-Nussa, Eric Marienthal and more.  
[bottiatsea.com](http://bottiatsea.com)

### Telluride Blues & Brews Festival

*Telluride, Colorado*  
**September 18-20**

Held each September in scenic Town Park, the Telluride Blues & Brews Festival blends world-class blues, rock and soul performances with a craft-beer-tasting experience. Surrounded by mountain views, the three-day festival delivers unforgettable music, community spirit and one of the most celebrated beer events in the country.

**LINEUP:** Marcus King Band, Taj Mahal & Keb' Mo', Jon Batiste, Daniel Donato's Cosmic Country, The Record Company, Samantha Fish and more.  
[tellurideblues.com](http://tellurideblues.com)

 **Monterey Jazz Festival**  
*Monterey, California*  
**September 25-27**

The Monterey Jazz Festival is the longest continuously running jazz festival in the world. The 69th edition features 72 performances over three days and nights on five stages at the oak-studded Monterey County Fairgrounds.

Meshell Ndegeocello will be the 2026 Commission Artist (America at 250) and Ambrose Akinmusire will be Artist-in-Residence.

**LINEUP:** Herbie Hancock & Ron Carter Duo, Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Charles Lloyd's 60th Anniversary of *Forest Flower*, Ravi Coltrane Celebrates Coltrane, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Amy Tan & Joey Alexander's "Backyard Bird Chronicles," A Tribute to Eddie Palmieri, Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band, Aja Monet, Kris Davis with Bob Hurst and Johnathan Blake, Linda May Han Oh Trio and more.  
[montereyjazz.org](http://montereyjazz.org)

### Angel City Jazz Fest

*Los Angeles, California*  
**October 2026**

The Angel City Jazz Festival was conceived in 2008 as a vehicle to present the best contemporary West Coast jazz and beyond. Since then the festival has grown into an essential multi-day celebration of creative jazz from around the world, at some of the most prestigious venues in L.A.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past performers have included Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Terry Riley, Myra Melford, Wadada Leo Smith, Kris Davis, Anhtony Braxton, Billy Childs, Dianne Reeves and more.  
[angelcityjazz.com](http://angelcityjazz.com)

 **Oregon Coast Jazz Party**  
*Newport, Oregon*  
**October 2-4**

For more than two decades, Oregon Coast Jazz Party has celebrated great live jazz — and the dedicated fans who love it — on the beautiful shores of Nye Beach at the Newport Performing Arts



D'Vonne Lewis photo by Lisa Hagen Glynn

# EARSHOT JAZZ FESTIVAL

A CITYWIDE CELEBRATION OF JAZZ — PAST, PRESENT & BEYOND.

Venues across Seattle  
**Oct. 9-25, 2026**  
[earshot.org](http://earshot.org)

**EARSHOT**  
 JAZZ

STEVE POPE



Niki Harris onstage at last year's Vail Jazz Festival.

Center. Enjoy a lively, music-focused weekend of live jazz in an idyllic coastal location filled with charm, shopping, local brews and fresh seafood.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past lineups have included Randy Brecker, Chuck Redd, The Monty Alexander Trio, Diego Figueiredo, Wycliffe Gordon, Ken Peplowski, Randy Porter, Lucy Yeghiazaryan, Ada Rovatti, Clairdee, Roxy Coss, Terell Stafford, Kenny Washington, Holly Hoffman, Mike Wofford, Dena DeRose, Houston Person, Nick Caldwell and more.

[coastarts.org/jazz](http://coastarts.org/jazz)

### Earshot Jazz Festival

Seattle, Washington  
October 9-25

Now in its 38th year, the Earshot Jazz Festival returns with performances, premieres and workshops at more than a dozen venues across Seattle, showcasing esteemed Pacific Northwest resident artists alongside internationally renowned masters in a celebration of the city's vibrant jazz scene.

**LINEUP:** Branford Marsalis and Dianne Reeves Celebrate Coltrane, Gary Bartz, Helen Sung, Marquis Hill, Sasha Berliner and more.

[earshot.org/festival](http://earshot.org/festival)

### Sun Valley Jazz & Music Festival

Sun Valley, Idaho  
October 15-18

What is it? A beautiful mountain resort setting with live music all weekend long. Relax to great music, dance and enjoy the mountains surrounding Sun Valley.

**LINEUP:** Dave Bennett, Tom Rigney, Steve Pikal, Terry Myers, Mike Sailors, Pat Gullotta, High Street and more.

[sunvalleyjazz.com](http://sunvalleyjazz.com)

# 2026 SAN JOSE JAZZ SUMMER FEST

AUG 7-9



THE SOUL REBELS

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PARLOR GREENS

NEW JAZZ UNDERGROUND

PASATONO ORQUESTA

CYRUS CHESTNUT TRIO

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TAIMANE

MCKINLEY JAMES

NICOLE ZURAITIS QUARTET

MIKE CLARK & HIS POST-BOPTET

IRENE DIAZ

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# CANADA

 This trumpet denotes a corresponding ad in this guide.



**BALTHVS** chills out the scene in Montreal.



**Snarky Puppy** draws a crowd in Ottawa.



**Apollo Suns** jam in Winnipeg.



It's a jazz street party in Toronto.



**Ostara** brings the vibe to Rimouski.

## FIMAV 42

*Victoriaville, Quebec*  
May 14-17

Following a 2025 edition with reduced programming, FIMAV is back for its 42nd edition featuring a full slate of ticketed and free concerts, sound art installations and experimental cinema.

**LINEUP:** [Ahmed], Darius Jones Trio, Amirtha Kidambi's Elder Ones, Sakina Abdou/Toma Gouband/Marta Warelis, Josh Zubot Strings, Queen Mab, Darius Jones, Pat Thomas, Eric Chenux, Rafael Toral, John Oswald, Sarah Pagé & No Hay Banda, Yves Charuest/John Edwards/Mark Sanders, Beast (with Katelyn Clark and Ben Grossman), Friendly Rich, Pablo Jiménez/Adrienne Munden-Dixon, Fanfare Pourpour, plus free informal concerts in the new FIMAV Quartier général. [fimav.qc.ca/en](http://fimav.qc.ca/en)

## TD Winnipeg International Jazz Festival

*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada*  
June 16-21

Known as the kick-off to the summer festival season, the TD Winnipeg International Jazz Festival is the city's largest music event held in downtown's historic Exchange District. Celebrating 35th year of festival presentation.

**LINEUP:** Miles Electric Band, Jason

Margolis and more.  
[jazzwinnipeg.com](http://jazzwinnipeg.com)

## Ottawa Jazz Festival

*Ottawa, Ontario*  
June 18-28

The 46th Ottawa Jazz Festival returns to the heart of downtown Ottawa at Confederation Park and the National Arts Centre. The lineup features St. Vincent with the NAC Orchestra, Jeff Goldblum & The Mildred Snitzer Orchestra, WILLOW and DOMi & JD Beck.

**LINEUP:** St. Vincent (featuring The NAC Orchestra), Jeff Goldblum & The Mildred Snitzer Orchestra, WILLOW, DOMi & JD Beck, Galactic (featuring Jelly Joseph), Ibrahim Maalouf, Hiromi's Sonicwonder, Bob James, Kokoroko, The Dip, The Soul Rebels, Avishai Cohen Big Vicious, Kassa Overall, Larnell Lewis Band (featuring Joy Lapps), SALIN, Myra Melford's Fire & Water Quintet, Joe Farnsworth's Big Room Quartet, Orrin Evans Trio, Bobby Previte's Pocket Orchestra plays *Bitches Brew*, Brandon Woody's UPENDO and more. [ottawajazzfestival.com](http://ottawajazzfestival.com)

## Toronto Jazz Festival

*Toronto, Ontario*  
June 19-28

The Toronto Jazz Festival, now in its 39th year, celebrates the best in jazz and jazz-related music from across Canada and around the

world. We aim to showcase the unique sound of jazz in Toronto, and celebrate the international nature of the city and the art form.

**LINEUP:** Cassandra Wilson, DOMi & JD Beck, Ibrahim Maalouf, Hiromi's Sonicwonder, The Dip, Kokoroko, Mei Semones, Isaiah Collier "Collier Plays Coltrane," Emilie-Claire Barlow, Avishai Cohen Big Vicious, Gentiane MG, Kassa Overall, Sullivan Fortner solo piano and more. [torontojazz.com](http://torontojazz.com)

## TD Victoria International JazzFest

*Victoria, British Columbia, Canada*  
June 19-28

Experience 10 hot days and nights of the coolest music in town at the 42nd anniversary of TD Victoria International JazzFest. The longest-running multi-day professional music festival on Vancouver Island features more than 50 performances of jazz, blues, world music and more on various stages around Greater Victoria.

**LINEUP:** Pink Martini, Béla Fleck, Edmar Castañeda, Antonio Sánchez: BEATrio, Miles Electric Band (M.E.B.), Kokoroko, Etran de L'Air, The Rumble (featuring Big Chief Joseph Boudreaux Jr.), SNACKTIME, SHEBAD, Wesli, GeminiCrab, Isaiah Collier, Mark Lettieri Group, Elysia Biro, Brandon Woody's Upendo, Djabe, Ron Di Lauro



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DE JAZZ  
DE MONTREAL**

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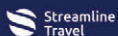
46th EDITION

**10 DAYS OF GREAT MUSIC WITH NEARLY  
350 CONCERTS, MOST OF WHICH ARE FREE !**

**DIANA KRALL • MELODY GARDOT • MARCUS MILLER  
JOSHUA REDMAN GROUP • HIROMI'S SONICWONDER  
HANIA RANI • ISAIAH COLLIER  
CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT • STACEY KENT  
CRAIG TABORN • KEYON HARROLD  
DAVID BINNEY ACTION TRIO • MARCUS GILMORE  
CHIEF ADJUAH • AVISHAI COHEN**

**AND MANY MORE !**

**MONTREALJAZZFEST.COM**



Sextet, Kristin Korb Trio, Jean-Michel Pilc Trio, Robert Lee "Forbidden West," François Bourassa Quartet, Erin Propp and more.  
[jazzvictoria.ca](http://jazzvictoria.ca)

## Festival International de Jazz de Montréal (FIJM)

Montréal, Québec, Canada

June 25-July 4

Montréal is jazz and more for 10 days of music in the heart of downtown. With venues and stages both indoors and outdoors, the festival presents nearly 350 concerts, two-thirds of which are free.

This year also marks the 100th anniversary of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, celebrated throughout the program.

**LINEUP:** Diana Krall, Melody Gardot, Marcus Miller, Joshua Redman Group, Hiromi's Sonicwonder, Hania Rani, Isaiah Collier, A Love Supreme, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Stacey Kent, Craig Taborn, Keyon Harrold, David Binney Action Trio with special guests Pera Krstajic and Louis Cole, Marcus Gilmore, Chief Adjuah, Avishai Cohen, Brandee Younger, Immanuel Wilkins, Dominique Fils-Aimé, Laura Anglade, Kalia Vandever and more.  
[montrealjazzfest.com/en](http://montrealjazzfest.com/en)

## Vancouver International Jazz Festival

Vancouver, British Columbia

June 25-July 5

The 41st Vancouver International Jazz Festival ignites the city with 10 days of fearless, globally inspired live music. Featuring standout Canadian and international artists, the festival delivers free downtown concerts alongside ticketed and sliding-scale performances across Vancouver's most vibrant venues.

**LINEUP:** Keyon Harrold, Voodoo—The Music of D'Angelo, Isaiah Collier plays Coltrane, MA:Q & Sharon Minemoto Quartet, Cellar Live 25th Anniversary Concert, Haleluya Hailu Plays Ethiopia, Stranger Friends Orchestra (featuring Fredrik Ljungkvist) and more.  
[coastaljazz.ca](http://coastaljazz.ca)

## Port Hope Jazz Festival

Port Hope, Ontario, Canada

August 20-23

Celebrating 25 years of Canadian jazz musicians. An impressive lineup will be presented over four days, with shows honoring the centenary of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, as well as performances by new talent on the youth stage, plus two nights of After Hours Jam Sessions.

**LINEUP:** Angela Pincente Big Band, Dánae Olano Quartet, Ale Nuñez Trio, Emilie-Claire Barlow, Jeremy Ledbetter and Eliana Cuevas, JabFung, Duncan Hopkins/Lorne Nehring/Michael Shand, The Dixie Demons, Adrean Farrugia/Marcus Nance/Pat LaBarbera/Jacob Chung, Angélique Francis, Alex Samaras/Allison Au/Todd Pentney; Steve Holt Jazz Impact Quintet and more.  
[porthopejazz.com](http://porthopejazz.com)

## Markham Jazz Festival

Markham, Ontario

August 21-23

The Markham Jazz Festival is a vibrant, multi-day celebration of jazz set on picturesque Main Street Unionville. Showcasing world-class Canadian and international artists across multiple stages, the festival features free outdoor concerts, diverse programming and a commitment to community engagement, drawing thousands each summer through music.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Recent performers include Catherine Russell, Nicole Zuraitis, Hilario Durán, Dominique Fils-Aimé, Matthew Stevens, Laila Biali, Caitly Gyorgy and The Shuffle Demons.  
[markhamjazzfestival.com](http://markhamjazzfestival.com)

## Rimouski International Jazz Fest

Rimouski, Québec, Canada

September 3-6

Since 1986, the Festi Jazz International de Rimouski has presented a vibrant jazz festival rooted in its community and recognized in



**OTTAWA JAZZ FESTIVAL** **OTTAWA JAZZ FEST '26** **June 19-28 2026**

**ST. VINCENT • JEFF GOLDBLUM • WILLOW**  
& THE MILDRED SNITZER ORCHESTRA

**DOMI & JD BECK • IBRAHIM MAALOUF • GALACTIC**  
FT. JELLY JOSEPH

**HIROMI'S SONICWONDER • BOB JAMES**

**KOKOROKO • THE DIP • THE SOUL REBELS • KASSA OVERALL**

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VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL

# JAZZ

FESTIVAL



**JUNE 19–JULY 5, 2026**

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JUNE 19 - 28  
VICTORIA, BC  
CANADA

10 HOT DAYS &  
NIGHTS OF THE  
COOLEST MUSIC  
IN TOWN



**PINK MARTINI**

**KOKOROKO**

**BÉLA FLECK  
EDMAR CASTAÑEDA  
ANTONIO SÁNCHEZ:  
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**MILES ELECTRIC  
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**MARK LETTIERI GROUP BRANDON WOODY'S UPENDO  
ISAIAH COLLIER DJABE RON DI LAURO "KIND OF BLUE"  
ELYSIA BIRO JEAN-MICHEL PILC THE ROBERT LEE GROUP  
FRANÇOIS BOURASSA ERIN PROPP KRISTIN KORB  
and many many more... Including 20+ free performances**

# FUNK in SOUL

IN THE TOWNSHIP  
BULLEN PARK  
ESQUIMALT



JUN. 26



JUN. 27



JUN. 28

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ALL 3 NIGHTS  
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[JAZZVICTORIA.CA/TICKETS](http://JAZZVICTORIA.CA/TICKETS)



Quebec and beyond. Celebrating its 40th edition, the event welcomes renowned and emerging artists in a stunning maritime setting, offering an unforgettable cultural experience in Eastern Québec.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's lineup included Mohini Dey, Betty Bonifassi, TEKE::TEKE, Jordan Officer, Ostara, MISC, Sarah Hanahan, Julien Fillion, Comment Debord, AFØNK, Ariane Racicot, Rémi Cormier and more.  
[festijazzrimouski.com](http://festijazzrimouski.com)

## Guelph Jazz Festival

*Guelph, Ontario, Canada*  
September 11-13

The Guelph Jazz Festival is an internationally recognized celebration of creative music showcasing experimental, improvised, free-jazz and avant-garde music. Over the course of the weekend, attendees experience concerts, workshops, artist talks and a community parade — inviting audiences to discover something new and experience bold, in-the-moment music.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past lineups have included William Parker, Queen Mab, Bellbird, Darius Jones, Cory Smythe, TEKE::TEKE, Susanna Hood Trio, [Ahmed] and more.  
[guelphjazzfestival.com](http://guelphjazzfestival.com)

## The Smooth Jazz Cruise

*Departing from Vancouver, BC, Canada*  
September 11-18

A seven-day music-packed cruise sailing the West Coast, the Smooth Jazz Cruise departs from Vancouver with a final destination of Los Angeles featuring more than 30 noted contemporary jazz artists performing in a variety of concerts, many in never-seen-before collaborations. A legion of loyal fans call this The Greatest Party at Sea.

**LINEUP:** Boney James, Marcus Miller, Brian Culbertson, Candy Dulfer, War, Tower of Power, Jonathan Butler, Rick Braun, Richard Elliot, DW3, Euge Groove, Mindi Abair, Eric Marienthal and more.  
[thesmoothjazzcruise.com](http://thesmoothjazzcruise.com)

## Pentastic Hot Jazz & Music Festival

*Penticton, British Columbia, Canada*  
September 11-13

Pentastic Hot Jazz & Music Festival in Penticton is a lively three-day celebration featuring world-class jazz bands, dancing and a welcoming community vibe. Celebrating its 28th anniversary, the festival brings returning favorites and fresh talent for a high-energy weekend that proudly calls itself "the best Jazz Party in the Northwest."

**LINEUP:** Black Market Trust, Tom Rigney & Flambeau, After Midnight, Dave Bennett & the Memphis Speed Kings and more.  
[pentasticjazz.ca](http://pentasticjazz.ca)



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"The goal was never just scale, but density; to offer a complete, panoramic overview of jazz and related art forms in a single weekend," says Irene Peters, North Sea's director.

# NORTH SEA JAZZ: 50 YEARS OF TIMELESS JOY

**THIS JULY, NORTH SEA JAZZ — OFFICIALLY** known as NN North Sea Jazz Festival — joins the elite club of jazz festivals that have crossed the half century mark. In some sense, it's almost surprising that the fest hasn't already achieved that milestone, having long been considered an anchoring centerpiece of the European summer jazz festival circuit. It has bragging rights as seasoned yet finger-on-the-pulse royalty among jazz fests, hosting a Who's Who — and who is poised to become a who.

North Sea has a strong and ongoing reputation as a gathering place for jazz culture of all stripes, packed under one massive roof for a dense weekend in the town of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. To be precise, the site is the Ahoy, with programming packed into an overlapping grid on 17 stages. Other notable numbers: The festival hosts up to 1,300 artists and draws up to 90,000 people over the big weekend.

Visitors contend with an embarrassment of riches and possibilities — even to the point of option anxiety. Hopping from show to show, or portions thereof, is part of the ritual here.

Current director Irene Peters explains that "reaching 50 years is a powerful affirmation of a concept that was groundbreaking from day one — an indoor, multistage festival presenting the past, present and future of jazz under one roof. That original vision by [founder] Paul Acket — combining artistic depth with broad appeal— is still our foundation today.

"What we offer is timeless: connection, surprise, wonder and the joy of music. It's remarkable to have enjoyed the trust of visitors and artists for so long. Our audience is incredibly loyal, and artists are open to collaborations, making it a shared experience. With this anniversary, we're celebrating what North Sea Jazz stands for and where it's headed. The genre is always evolving, and we're moving with it."

This summer's grand 5-0 affair offers special

points of attention. "This anniversary year, we will welcome game changers from the past 50 years," Peters says, "from Steve Coleman to Robert Glasper, esperanza spalding and many others. Pat Metheny will perform his 1976 album *Bright Size Life* in a new format, featuring the younger Tyn Wybenga and his Brainteaser Orchestra."

Also on the program is the Sun Ra Arkestra, which appeared in the inaugural festival in 1976, a stylistic outlier alongside such artists as Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Stan Getz and Count Basie.

Peters is entering only her second year at the helm as director after being tangentially involved as an intern at age 26, 30 years ago. She is the festival's third director, after founder Acket and Jan Willem Luyken, who presided over the festival for 20 years, helping its upward evolution after a move from the Hague to Rotterdam in 2006.

"From the very first edition in 1976," Peters notes, "Acket designed an indoor festival with multiple venues and a continuous flow of people, where visitors could move freely between the stages and shape their own experience. This concentrated design — now 17 stages under one roof — has always been essential to our identity. The goal was never just scale, but density: to offer a complete, panoramic overview of jazz and related art forms in a single weekend. Artist residencies and composition commissions gave artists the opportunity to develop new work specifically for the festival."

Although the festival taps into selective and compatible pop acts on the bigger stages, balance remains key. "Even in the early years," says Peters, "avant-garde icons graced the program alongside mainstream legends like Ray Charles and James Brown. This conscious balance between art and entertainment still forms the foundation of our programming, which typically consists of 70% to 80% jazz, with the remainder carefully selected crossovers.

"It remains true to the concept of founder Paul Acket, who called it the sandwich formula: a program featuring every conceivable jazz style, with big and small names, emerging talent and established artists, and space for both tradition and innovation."

Returning artists tend to have strong sentiments about the experience and culture of the festival. Guitarist Bill Frisell, who will appear this year with his trio plus Greg Tardy, has an especially personal connection to the festival. Soon after he met his wife Carole D'Inverno while living in Belgium, they drove to the 1978 festival to hear one of Frisell's heroes, Ornette Coleman. "I'd never heard anything like that," Frisell recalls. "Blew my mind." He later bumped into Coleman on the grounds and spoke to him.

Frisell, a superstar whose humility becomes him, says, "If you had told me back then that someday I might actually get to play at this festival, I never would have believed you. So many memories. So much music I've heard there."

A newer arrival on the roster is acclaimed pianist-composer-conceptualist Kris Davis, who has been booked here for 15 years now in various settings, as leader and side person. In 2022, she was granted the festival's prestigious Paul Acket Award for her lavishly received "Diatom Ribbons" project. This year, Davis will appear with her trio, with drummer Johnathan Blake and bassist Robert Hurst.

Davis enthuses, "Whenever I come to North Sea, I feel like I'm standing at the center of the jazz world — hearing music everywhere, running into old friends, meeting rising star artists and sometimes literally walking past and sharing meals with musical heroes. I had a chance to sit with Herbie Hancock and share my admiration of his music the last time I was there.

Yet fresher to the festival's roster of artist is 34-year-old Brazilian pianist Amaro Freitas, whose appearance will be "a tribute to the Amazon and the legends of northern Brazil, a connection to the deepest, most vibrant and pulsating Brazil."

Freitas observes that "North Sea is definitely one of the festivals that offers the largest number of simultaneous shows or shows with short intervals between them. Despite the short time for soundcheck, everything worked perfectly. It's a festival organization of the highest level."

Peters notes that "the festival programs everything from recognizable to experimental styles, therefore artistically occupying the middle ground between the various extremes found in Europe. In addition, we can present big names to the audience. The scale of the event offers unprecedented freedom in programming: Talented artists are given the opportunity to present themselves early and build their own following."

At root, she asserts, "Finding an audience for jazz is a major goal of the festival, as among the young talent are the legends of the future."

—Josef Woodard

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# EUROPE

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Piazza IV Novembre turns into a jazz party during the Umbria Jazz Festival.

## Menorca Jazz Festival

Menorca, Balearic Islands, Spain

February 20-May 26

For a few months each year, Menorca vibrates to the rhythm of jazz. The 28th Menorca Jazz Festival brings together international artists, beach concerts, its own Menorca Lindy Exchange and a wide range of jazz-related activities.

**LINEUP:** Francesca Tandoi, Lucia Rey, Alberto Conde, Melissa Aldana, Pepe Rivero & Javier Colina, Jazz al Cinema, Vermut Jazz, Menorca Lindy Exchange, Manuel Alvarez, K12, Picnic Vega Jazz: Balkan Paradise Orchestra, The Illusions, Edison and Jazz Didactic.

[menorcajazzfestival.com](http://menorcajazzfestival.com)

## Mitjazz

Mérida, Spain

March-June

A festival in Mérida, Spain, where jazz resonates in venues over 2,000 years old. Timeless notes fill immortal stages, and places like the Temple of Diana, the Arch of Trajan and the Roman Theatre host great artists who visit.

**LINEUP:** The Music of Jerry Bergonzi, Antonio Lizana, Rodrigo Parejo, Chico Pérez, Chano Domínguez and Paquito D'Rivera and more.

[mitjazzfestival.com](http://mitjazzfestival.com)

## Crossroads: Jazz e altro in Emilia-Romagna

Emilia-Romagna, Italy

March 3-July 31

It takes 3,000 kilometers to travel from the first to the last venue of Crossroads, with its 70 concerts spread all over the Emilia-Romagna region. With 500 artists and more than 20 towns, Crossroads is a traveling festival.

**LINEUP:** Makaya McCraven, Rachel Z & Omar Hakim, Isaiah Collier, China Moses, Lakecia Benjamin, Enrico Rava and more.

[crossroads-it.org](http://crossroads-it.org)

## Jazzfest Bonn

Bonn, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

April 1-May 9 & June 27

Jazzfest Bonn presents a broad spectrum of jazz and improvised music, pairing international stars with emerging artists in more than 15 double-bill concerts. The festival is held at cultural venues throughout the city, the birthplace of Ludwig van Beethoven. Founded in 2009, Jazzfest Bonn has become an important meeting point for contemporary jazz from Germany, Europe and beyond.

**LINEUP:** Jan Garbarek, esperanza spalding, John Scofield & Gerald Clayton, Silje Nergaard, Billy Cobham, Kurt Elling, Shai Maestro, Wolfgang Muthspiel, UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra (featuring Jazzmeia Horn), Donny McCaslin, Lau Noah, Shake Stew, Günter Baby Sommer, Theresia Philipp, Nicole Zuraitis, Iiro Rantala, Rabi Abou-Khalil, Kadri Voorand, Marius Neset, Yumi Ito, Rob Luft, David Helbock, Hildegunn Øiseth and more.

[jazzfest-bonn.de](http://jazzfest-bonn.de)

## Jazzatelier Ulrichsberg Kaleidophon Festival

Ulrichsberg, Austria

April 24-26

Celebrating its 40th anniversary, the Kaleidophon Festival at Jazzatelier Ulrichsberg presents a dense program of international improvised and experimental music.

**LINEUP:** Joke Lanz/Ute Wassermann, Hémisphère/Hemisfär, Duo Frangenheim-Voccia, Vienna Reed Quintet, Waschtag, Antti J. Virtaranta, The Malmendiers, The Insta Mentals, Jongleurs (Ben Davis & Chris Brown), Han-earl Park/Sara Neidorf/Richard Barrett and the Satoko Fujii Quartet.

[jazzatelier.at](http://jazzatelier.at)

## Tallinn International Festival Jazzkaar

Tallinn, Estonia

April 25-May 2

Tallinn International Festival Jazzkaar is the biggest jazz festival in the Baltic countries, taking place annually in April since 1990.

**LINEUP:** Kadri Voorand, Bianca Rantala, Villu Veski, Erki Pärnoja and Kirke Karja, Moses Yoofee Trio, Robinson Khoury MYA, Kirke Karja, Annabel Soode, Giovanni Iacovella, Teis

Semey, Martin Roth, the UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra and harp virtuoso Valter Soosalu, Bill Frisell, Eyvind Kang, Donny McCaslin, Kneebody, Jordan Rakei, The Kennedy Administration, Mica Millar, Oddisee & Good Company Band, Mingo Rajandi, Kadri Voorand and more.

[jazzkaar.ee](http://jazzkaar.ee)

## Ravenna Jazz

Ravenna, Italy

May 2-10/July 1, 3 & 9

Apart from the usual early May dates, Ravenna Jazz's 53rd edition will have a summertime reprise with international stars featured inside the newly restored Rocca Brancaleone, Ravenna's medieval fortress.

**LINEUP:** Pat Metheny, Nik West, Matteo Mancuso, Bill Laurance and more.

[crossroads-it.org/ravenna-jazz](http://crossroads-it.org/ravenna-jazz)

## Trondheim Jazz Festival

Trondheim, Norway

May 5-9

Jazzfest Trondheim marks its 38th festival with the legendary Norwegians Jan Garbarek and Nils Petter Molvær // KHMER, and three commissioned works. Located in venues across the beautiful old coastal town, Jazzfest hosts acts from around the world with clinics, jam sessions and conservatory bands.

**LINEUP:** Jan Garbarek Group feat. Trilok Gurtu, Nils Petter Molvær // KHMER, Trondheim Jazz Orchestra, Jason Moran, ØKSE, Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio, Gard Nilssen Acoustic Unity, Cosmic Swing Orchestra, Needlepoint, Kim Myhr, Anja Lechner & Sissel Vera Pettersen Duo, Áhparas, Goya Gumbani, Veslemøy Narvesen, Orbits, Bjørn Alterhaug Quartet, DJ Zaereo, Anna Ueland, NTNU Jazz Ensemble, Diket, Hachik, Lilleby Soul Safari, student bands, JOYN-IN, clinics, jam session, film program and more.

[jazzfest.no/en/program](http://jazzfest.no/en/program)

## Moers Festival

Moers, Germany

May 21-25

Founded in 1972, the Moers Festival attracts hundreds of visitors to Moers each year. Originally a jazz festival, it now features a diverse mix of non-mainstream genres. In addition to concerts on multiple stages, visitors can join discussions, participate in workshops and explore a free festival market with food, jewelry and clothing.

**LINEUP:** Yarn/Wire, Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth SWAY, Lakecia Benjamin, Senyawa, The Dwarfs of East Agouza, Gordon Grdina's RU'YA (featuring Ghalia Benali), Nate Wooley, Tara Kozhin, Gellért Szabó's Ideal Orchestra, Helen Anahita Wilson, Miklós Lukács, BONBON FLAMME, Moment's Notice Trio (featuring Kornél Fe-

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[moers-festival.de](http://moers-festival.de)

### Jazz in the Park

*Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania, Romania*  
June 5-7

Jazz in the Park is one of Romania's most distinctive music festivals, redefining how jazz is seen and felt. In Cluj-Napoca, across the Ethnographic Museum, the festival awakens an entire village through sound.

**LINEUP:** Lisa Simone Quartet, Arooj Aftab, Marcos Valle, Nik Bärtsch residency (3 concerts), Bugge Wesseltuft, Rabih Abou-Khalil, Venna, Yilian Canizares, Kraak & Smaak and more.

[jazzinthepark.ro](http://jazzinthepark.ro)

### Summertime 2026

*Casa del Jazz Park, Rome, Italy*  
June 13-August 8

The 21st edition of the summer festival organized by the Musica per Roma Foundation at the Casa del Jazz, a cultural center in Rome dedicated to jazz. Summer activity takes place in a large park with the stunning visual impact of towering majestic pines a covered stage an excellent sound system, and a fantastic restaurant and bar. Many concerts will be held this year in the Cavea of the Auditorium Parco della Musica, another spectacular venue in Rome.

**LINEUP:** Cécile McLorin Salvant, Nate Smith, Fred Hersch, Kris Davis Trio, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Bill Frisell Trio & Greg Tardy, Mononeon, Paolo Fresu/Dino Saluzzi/Gerardo Beytelmann, Cory Henry, Jalen Ngonda, Stefano Bollani, Pat Metheny, Diana Krall, Marcus Miller, Gregory Porter.

[casadeljazz.com](http://casadeljazz.com)

### Jazz à Vienne

*Vienne, France*  
June 25-July 11

The 45th edition of Jazz à Vienne features 157 concerts spread over 16 days with 19 groups performing for the first time on the stage of the Ancient Theater, sometimes for a single date in France, such as Jon Batiste's concert. Alongside the major artists of their generation, the festival features magnificent Gallo-Roman settings.

**LINEUP:** Truffaz Symphonique, Stefano Di Battista, Too Many Zooz, Deluxe (featuring Max Lizana, Twan Tee, Mr. J. Medeiros and Luizga), Kokoroko, Groundation, Living Being, Beirut, Kyoto Jazz Massive, Cerrone Disco Symphonic, Ravi Coltrane/Terence Blanchard, Marcus Miller Presents We Want Miles!, Fatoumata Diawara, Angélique Kidjo, Big Freedia and Choir, Jon Batiste, The Fearless Flyers, Vulfpeck, Ludivine Issambourg and Souleance.

[jazzavienne.com/fr](http://jazzavienne.com/fr)

### JazzAscona

*Ascona, Lake Maggiore, Switzerland*  
June 25-July 4

JazzAscona brings the spirit of New Orleans

to Europe, turning streets, squares and clubs into a living jazz village. The festival features more than 200 free open-air concerts and an inclusive, festive atmosphere.

**LINEUP:** James Andrews, Louisiana State University Brass Band, Sean Ardoin, Sabine McCalla, Ali Affleck and The Traveling Janes, Anthony Hervey Quartet, Antonio Faraò, Emma Nissen, Fred Wesley Generations, Mitch Woods & His Rocket 88's, Swiss Armed Forces Big Band, Syncopation Society Orchestra, The Big Five feat. Nicolle Rochelle, Torsten Goods, Vincen García and more.

[jazzascona.ch](http://jazzascona.ch)

### Aarhus Jazz Festival

*Aarhus, Denmark*  
June 26-July 5

Aarhus Jazz Festival is a popular annual festival presenting all types of jazz, whether you are looking for traditional, swing, experimental, modern or children's jazz with more than 300 concerts planned for this year's festival. Many concerts are free of charge. This year, the festival celebrates 100 years of jazz in Denmark.

**LINEUP:** Michel Camilo, Cecilie Nordby, Kresten Osgood and Maria Faust, Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and others.

[jazzfest.dk](http://jazzfest.dk)

### Istanbul Jazz Festival

*Istanbul, Türkiye*  
June 30-July 13

Since its inception in 1994, the Istanbul Jazz Festival has grown into a dynamic celebration of jazz, bringing together international legends and outstanding local talent. Set against the city's distinctive venues, it nurtures cultural exchange and inspiring artistic collaborations.

**LINEUP:** Robert Plant with Saving Grace and Suzi Dian, Marcus Miller Presents "We Want Miles!", Thee Sacred Souls, Joe Lovano & Antonio Faraò "Explorations" (featuring Ira Coleman and Johnathan Blake), Arooj Aftab, Veronica Swift, Mari Froes, LA LOM, Senem Diyici, Okay Temiz, Ayhan Sicimo lu Harikalar Bandosu, Selen Beytekin (featuring Hermon Mehari & Tony Tixier), Kumpania Algazarra, Jazzbois, L'Eclair, TurkodiRoma, 3pillie, Lhodos Project, Kamucan Yalçın and Friends and Brassist.

[caz.iksv.org/en](http://caz.iksv.org/en)

### Kongsberg Jazzfestival

*Kongsberg, Norway*  
July 1-4

Established in 1964, Kongsberg Jazzfestival is one of the leading jazz festivals in Scandinavia. The festival presents a varied line-up of nearly 50 Norwegian, Nordic and International acts within modern jazz, experimental/free-jazz and more commercial genres. Concerts are held at 15 venues around the city.

**LINEUP:** Samara Joy, Bugge Wesseltuft/Arild Andersen/Gard Nilssen, Annie & the Caldwells, Ghosted: Ambarchi/Bertling/Werliin, ganavya, Silje Nergaard, Bobo Stenson Trio, Nils Petter Molvær-KHMER, Snarky

Puppy, Wibutee, Espen Lind, Krokofant, Petter Wettre-Coltrane 100, Kurt Rosenwinkel "The Remedy," Harald Lassen, Reolò, Maya Vik, Hanna Paulsberg & Oslo Jazzensemble, Emmeluth's Amoeba, Mezzoforte and more.  
[kongsbergjazz.no](http://kongsbergjazz.no)

## Festival Rīgas Ritmi

*Riga, Latvia*  
July 1-4

The 26th international improvisation, jazz and global music festival Rīgas Ritmi will take place at the Riga Congress Hall and on the Riga Jazz Lounge stage at the Radisson Blu Latvija hotel. It will be a familiar tasty mix of original foreign crossovers and local Latvian jazz stars.

**LINEUP:** Herve Samb Trio (Senegal/USA/Guadeloupe), Italian Opera Meets Jazz (featuring Claron McFadden, Mike del Ferro, Sinfonietta Rīga) and more.  
[rigasritmi.lv](http://rigasritmi.lv)

## Gent Jazz

*Ghent, Belgium*  
July 2-18

Embark on a journey through the outer sounds and colors of live music at Belgium's coziest festival. The 25th anniversary edition of Gent Jazz comes to life at the historic Bijloke site in the heart of Ghent.

**LINEUP:** Terence Blanchard & Ravi Coltrane, John Hiatt, Nate Smith, Sun Ra Arkestra, Suzanne Vega, Angus & Julia Stone, Alabama Shakes, Patti Smith Quartet, Van Morrison, Marcus Miller, Charles Lloyd Quartet, Celeste, Tamino, John Legend, Samara Joy, Darkside and Snarky Puppy.  
[gentjazz.com](http://gentjazz.com)

## Canarias Jazz & Más Festival

*Canary Islands, Spain*

July 3-25

The 35th Canarias Jazz & Más International Festival brings together more than 60 concerts every year since 1992 featuring renowned artists, international jazz stars, emerging projects, national and local bands. The performances are held across the eight Canary Islands, in squares, theaters and auditoriums.

**LINEUP:** Jacob Collier & Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria conducted by Suzie Collier, Tigran Hamasyan "Manifeste," José James with Célia Kameni, "Marvin Gaye's I Want You," Yellowjackets, Hamilton de Holanda, Marco Mezquida Trío, Ghost-Note, Eric Alexander, Roberto Fonseca: "La Gran Diversión," Tora Daa, Antonio Forcione & Cenk Erdogan "Storytellers," Xavi Torres Trío + Miguel Zenón, Manou Gallo, Moisés P. Sánchez "Where Light Begins," Cuban Jazz Syndicate, Lucía Rey "Nómadas," Manon Mullener 5tet, Estelle Perrault 5tet, Powafunk and more.  
[canariasjazz.com](http://canariasjazz.com)

## Montreux Jazz Festival

*Montreux, Switzerland*  
July 3-18

In 2026 the Montreux Jazz Festival will celebrate its 60th edition with numerous surprises for the public and the performing artists.

**LINEUP:** Raye, Sting, Nick Cave, Tyla, John Legend, Conan Gray, The Roots, Moby, Jovanotti, Loyle Carner, Vulfpeck, Van Morrison, James Taylor and more.  
[montreuxjazzfestival.com/en](http://montreuxjazzfestival.com/en)

## Umbria Jazz

*Perugia, Italy*

July 3-12

Umbria Jazz returns and the formula stays the same, refined progressively over the last 24 years. The Arena Santa Giuliana is the main evening stage for major events, with "digressions" in the pop/rock genres; afternoon concerts at the Teatro Morlacchi for great jazz; daily concerts at Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria and a nightclub with resident bands and jam sessions. Free outdoor in the traditional stages in Piazza IV Novembre and Giardini Carducci.

**LINEUP:** Jon Batiste, Sting, Charles Lloyd, Terence Blanchard & Ravi Coltrane, Stefano Bollani, Paolo Fresu, Snarky Puppy & Metropole Orkest, Gilberto Gil, Laurie Anderson, Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Bill Frisell, Jason Moran, Peter Bernstein, Hamilton De Holanda, Fred Hersch, Kenny Barron, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Chris Potter, Larry Grenadier, Eric Harland and more.  
[umbriajazz.com](http://umbriajazz.com)

## Jazz à Juan

*Antibes Juan-les-Pins, Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, France*  
July 9-19

The international jazz festival of Antibes Juan-les-Pins is Europe's longest-running jazz festival. Enjoy fabulous concerts in the Gould pine grove with the Mediterranean Sea as a backdrop.

**LINEUP:** The Big Tusk, José James (featuring China Moses), Tom Jones, Who Parked The Car, Via Con Te, Sounds of Shebeen, Dhafer Youssef "Shiraz," Morcheeba, Dock In Absolute, Travel Collective, Melina Tobianna Quintet, Mica Millar, Seal, Cyril Benhamou Trio, Banksia, Laura Anglade, Maë Defays, Baptiste Bailly Trio, Fatoumata Diawara and more.  
[jazzajuan.com](http://jazzajuan.com)

## NN North Sea Jazz Festival

*Rotterdam Ahoy, Rotterdam, The Netherlands*  
July 10-12

NN North Sea Jazz Festival, the world's largest indoor jazz festival, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Known for jazz alongside blues, soul, funk and hip-hop, it brings together top artists and emerging talent. Highlights include an artist-in-residence, educational programs, the Paul Acket Award, art exhibitions, a festival market and more.

**LINEUP:** Alain Perez y la Orquesta, Alex Isley, Amaro Freitas Trio, Bill Frisell Trio & Greg Tardy, Brandon Woody, Camilla Meza, Cassandra

Jan Garbarek Group  
feat. Trilok Gurtu  
Shai Maestro  
The Guesthouse Quartet  
Kurt Elling SuperBlue  
Caris Hermes Group  
Hildegunn Øiseth Quartet  
Rob Luft Trio  
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& Mihkel Mälgand  
Wolfgang Muthspiel  
Chamber Trio  
Markus Segsneider  
MORLEY  
Silje Nergaard Guitar Trio  
Rabih Abou-Khalil Group  
Fuchsthone Orchestra  
feat. Evi Filippou  
UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra  
feat. Jazzmeia Horn  
Anton Mangold Quintett  
Esperanza Spalding

april 17 – may 9  
june 27 [jazzfest-bonn.de](http://jazzfest-bonn.de)

2026  
jazzfest  
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Wilson, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Charles Lloyd, Cheikh Lo, Christian McBride, Diana Krall, esperanza spalding, Flea & The Honora Band, Fred Hersch Trio, Hiromi Sonic Wonder, Jalen Ngonda, James Brandon Lewis, John Legend, Jon Batiste, Joshua Redman, Kenny Barron, Kokoroko, Kris Davis Trio, Marcus Miller, Maria Schneider + BB, Mei Semones, Nate Smith, Nile Rogers & Chic, Pat Metheny, Patricia Brennan, RH Factor, Riley Mulherkar, Robert Glasper, SML, Snarky Puppy & Metropole Orkest, Steve Coleman, Sun Ra Arkestra, Terence Blanchard/Ravi Coltrane Sextet, The Isley Brothers, The Roots & Special Guests Bilal and Jon Batiste, Theon Cross, Tomoki Sanders, Vijay Iyer & Wadada Leo Smith, Xavi Torres Trio feat. Miguel Zenon, Y-Otis and more.  
[northseajazz.com](http://northseajazz.com)

## Moldejazz

*Molde, Norway*  
**July 13-18**

Moldejazz is one of the world's leading jazz festivals, held annually in the coastal city of Molde, Norway, where music meets nature. Each July, the town transforms into a vibrant hub of music, presenting international stars, emerging artists and genre-bending projects across intimate venues and large outdoor stages, all set against spectacular fjord and mountain scenery.

**LINEUP:** esperanza spalding (Artist-in-Residence), John Legend, Brandee Younger, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Nduduzo Makhathini Trio,

Michala Østergaard Trio, Riley Mulherkar, SML, Anatole Muster, Carrtoons, Harry Mack, Espen Berg Trio, Reolø, Solveig Styve Holte, Karl Björä, Tuva Halse og Arne Torvik, Sa\_G, Langendorf United, corto.alto, Jaga Jazzist, Daniel Herskedal, Trondheim Jazz Orchestra with Karoline Wallace, Charlotte Dos Santos, Ytre Suløens Jass-ensemble with Leroy Jones, Blåsemefian, Musti, Giddygang & Vuyo and more.  
[moldejazz.no](http://moldejazz.no)

## Bohemia JazzFest

*Prague, Plzen, Prachatice, Hluboká and Brno in the Czech Republic*  
**July 14-21**

The 21st edition of Bohemia JazzFest begins at the Royal Gardens of Prague Castle and continues throughout Czechia. All concerts are free admission.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past lineups have included John Scofield, Charles Lloyd, Joshua Redman, Bill Frisell, Paolo Fresu, Miroslav Vitouš and more.  
[bohemiajazzfest.com](http://bohemiajazzfest.com)

## Langnau Jazz Nights

*Langnau, Bern, Switzerland*  
**July 21-25**

Langnau Jazz Nights comes alive in the heart of Switzerland. Over the last 33 years it has impressed with an international, highly acclaimed lineup as well as an amazing atmosphere.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's fest featured Remembering Ray Brown (with Christian McBride, Benny Green & Gregory Hutchinson), Kurt Rosenwinkel & Gerald Clayton, Caroline Davis' New Slang, Kris Davis and more.  
[jazz-nights.ch](http://jazz-nights.ch)

## San Sebastian Jazz Festival (61 Jazzaldia)

*San Sebastian, Basque Country, Spain*  
**July 22-26**

The Jazzaldia or San Sebastian Jazz Festival was founded in 1966, and is one of the oldest in Europe. It hosts some 100 concerts on stages across the city, both free and ticketed, open air and indoors.

**LINEUP:** Pat Metheny, Diana Krall, Samara Joy, Marcus Miller, David Murray, Joe Lovano, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Carmen Lundy, Charles Tolliver, Julian Lage, Louis Sclavis, Mike Stern, Bill Evans, Azar Lawrence, Nils Petter Molvaer, Erik Truffaz, Antonio Liza-na, Bruce Barth, Vincente Archer, Vincent Peirani, Emile Parisien, Benjamin Moussay, Benito Gonzalez, Julius Rodriguez, LP, Annie & The Caldwelles, ETS, Marco Mezquida Trio, Nøgen, Quinteto Astor Piazzolla, Lisa Ono, Danielle Nicole, Emma-Jean Thackray, Ibibio Sound Machine, Kokoshka, HOFÉ and more.  
[jazzaldia.eus/en](http://jazzaldia.eus/en)

## Birmingham Jazz & Blues Festival

*Birmingham and the West Midlands, United Kingdom*  
**July 24-August 2**

The annual Birmingham Jazz & Blues Festival, established 1968, programs jazz, blues and related music of the highest calibre in unexpected places across the West Midlands. In 2025, the festival presented 179 performances (161 free), in 101 venues.

**LINEUP:** Tipitina, King Pleasure & the Biscuit Boys, Art Themen, The Dirt Road Band, Alan Barnes, Chickenbone John, Dave Green, Django Chutney, Warren James' Hit Parade Heroes, Jake Leg Jug Band, Jump Jive and Wail, Rich Dickinson's Driving Force, Slide Boy Roy, Florence Joelle, Hannah Brine, Honey-boy Hickling Blues Band, Jamie Thyer & the Worried Men, Just Doin' It, Warren James' Skiffle Group, Sheila Waterfield, Simon Spillet, Suzi Woods, Walter Smitty and the Unviabes, Ben Tourny, Hot Club of Halifax, Swing Café, The Sax Pistols, Back on the Road, Delta Aces, B.D. Lenz, Bruce Adams, Dave Newton, James Oliver Band, John Hemming & the Jazz Lobbyists, Sunjay, Stacy Mitchhart, Rip Roaring Success, The Too Hot Trio, "Out of the Blue" Big Band, Andres Roots (Estonia) and more.  
[birminghamjazzfestival.com](http://birminghamjazzfestival.com)

## Ystad Sweden Jazz Festival

*Ystad, Sweden*  
**July 29-Aug 2**

Ystad Sweden Jazz Festival presents 35 concerts, a jazz parade, jam sessions and more. Historical venues provide an intimate concert experience for both artists and audience. All venues are within walking distance in the medieval town center except for two days in the Carlottenlund Castle Park.

**LINEUP:** 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 Carlsson, Moon Ray Quintet, Jill Johnson, Anders Berglund, Emmalisa Hallander, Monday Night Big Band, Spicy Advice Ragtime Band, Aaron Mandelmann, Next Yazz Generation and more.  
[ystadjazz.se](http://ystadjazz.se)

## Jazz em Agosto

*Lisbon, Portugal*  
**July 31-August 9**

Jazz em Agosto is an annual festival held in Lisbon, Portugal, dedicated to showcasing contemporary, experimental and progressive jazz. Organized by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the festival has been held annually since 1984, taking place in the open-air amphitheater of the Gulbenkian Foundation's gardens.

**LINEUP:** To be announced.  
[gulbenkian.pt/jazzemagosto/en](http://gulbenkian.pt/jazzemagosto/en)

**Reykjavík Jazz Festival**  
*Reykjavík, Iceland*  
**August 25-30**

REYKJAVÍK  
 JAZZ  
 2026

25th-30th  
 AUGUST  
[www.reykjavikjazz.is](http://www.reykjavikjazz.is)

Reykjavík Jazz Festival is one of Iceland's longest-running music festivals, founded in 1990. Each year the festival brings together Icelandic and international jazz artists for concerts across Reykjavík. The program highlights different styles and creative collaborations, offering audiences a dynamic meeting place for innovative music.

**LINEUP:** To be announced.  
[reykjavikjazz.is](http://reykjavikjazz.is)

**Syros Jazz Festival**  
*Apollon Theatre, Syros, Greece*  
**September 10-14**

Since 2013, the festival, held at the neoclassical Apollon Theatre, has been offering a series of concerts and side events (workshops, comics, screenings, gastronomy and more). In its 14th edition, it celebrates the 200th anniversary of the naming of its hometown, Ermoupolis. All events are free and open to the public. Lineup: to be announced. Past lineups have included David Helbock, Ramon Valle, Tania Giannouli, Petros Klampanis and more.

[syrosjazzfestival.gr](http://syrosjazzfestival.gr)

**Mitrovica International Jazz Days**  
*Mitrovica, Kosovo*  
**September 16-18**

Mitrovica International Jazz Days returns for its fourth edition in the divided city of Mitrovica, championing women in jazz and the next generation of musicians.

**LINEUP:** Snarky Puppy, more to be announced.  
[mitrovicajazzdays.com](http://mitrovicajazzdays.com)

**Angrajazz Festival**  
*Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal*  
**October 2-4**

This 27th edition of Angrajazz will present six concerts in three days. It's an excellent opportunity to visit the World Heritage City of Angra do Heroísmo, the Azores Islands and listen to great jazz.

**LINEUP:** Orquestra Angrajazz (festival big band), Leila Olivesi Octet, Tyreek McDole Quartet, Aaron Parks & Walter Smith III Duo, plus two other groups to be announced — one Portuguese and one American.  
[angrajazz.com](http://angrajazz.com)

**Enjoy Jazz-Festival for Jazz and More**  
*Heidelberg, Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, southwest Germany*  
**October 2-November 7**

Enjoy Jazz is the biggest jazz festival in Germany and one of the most prestigious in all of Europe.

**LINEUP:** Sullivan Fortner Trio, Lizz Wright, Melody Gardot, Isaiah Collier and more to be announced.  
[enjoyjazz.de](http://enjoyjazz.de)

**Baloise Session**  
*Basel Fair, Switzerland*  
**October 15-November 5**

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**LINEUP:** To be announced. Last year's fest featured berlioz, Aloe Blacc, Jon Batiste, CA7RIEL & Paco Amoroso.

[baloisession.ch](http://baloisession.ch)

### Aalener Jazz Festival

*Aalen, Baden-Württemberg, Germany*  
November 4-7

The Aalener Jazzfest ranks among the most important jazz events in Germany. It brings together classic jazz with funk, soul, rock and world music, showcasing both renowned artists and emerging talents.

**LINEUP:** Brothers: Till Brönner meets the Frank Chastenier Trio, Dirty Loops, Young Gun Silverfox, St. Paul and the Broken Bones, Wasserfuhr Band, Kat Eaton, Markus Becker, Mark Lettieri meets the WDR Big Band and more.

[aalener-jazzfest.de](http://aalener-jazzfest.de)

## OTHER INTERNATIONAL

### Rio das Ostras Jazz & Blues Festival

*Rio das Ostras, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

June 4-7

The 22nd Rio das Ostras Jazz & Blues Festival

brings together nearly 130,000 people over four days of music. With more than 30 national and international acts, the largest free festival of its kind in Latin America promises to exceed expectations and reaffirm its greatness.

**LINEUP:** Larkin Poe, Mark Lettieri Group, Bill Laurance Trio, Stanley Jordan "Plays Jimi Hendrix," Taj Farrant, Linda May Han Oh, Nubya Garcia, The Brooks, Nyota Parker, Omar Coleman & Igor Prado, Cris Crochemore, Gabriel Grossi, Bixiga 70.

[riodasostasjazzblues.com](http://riodasostasjazzblues.com)

### Devonport Jazz

*Devonport, Tasmania, Australia*

July 23-26

Devonport Jazz is a vibrant four-day festival showcasing Australian artists in scenic venues across Devonport and Tasmania's Northwest. The 25th edition of the festival will celebrate world-class music, gourmet dining experiences, and a host of social events.

**LINEUP:** To be announced.

[devonportjazz.com.au](http://devonportjazz.com.au)

### Curaçao North Sea Jazz

*Willemstad, Curaçao*

September 3-5

Great music in sultry temperatures on a tropical island, what could possibly be better? With 16 acts divided over three stages, Curaçao North Sea Jazz has grown to into a household name on the island and far beyond.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. Past lineups

have included Lionel Richie, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Bruno Mars, Sting, Juan Luis Guerra, Rod Stewart, Enrique Iglesias, Alicia Keys, Herbie Hancock, Christina Aguilera, Earth, Wind & Fire, Lenny Kravitz, Tems, Snoop Dogg, Tom Jones, Prince and more.

[curacaonorthseajazz.com](http://curacaonorthseajazz.com)

### Standard Bank Joy of Jazz

*Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa*

September 25-26

The festival offers a calendar year of events to engage multiple audiences from young to mature audiences alike. A legion of international giants and luminaries, as well as leading lights of South African jazz, descend on Gauteng, Johannesburg, to celebrate.

**LINEUP:** To be announced.

[joyofjazz.co.za](http://joyofjazz.co.za)

### Jazzmandu

*Kathmandu, Nepal*

October 29-November 4

Jazzmandu is an annual gathering of world-class musicians and music-hungry audiences in one of the most unique cities on the planet. Now into its second decade, Jazzmandu has a growing renown as a hidden gem of the international festival scene. Those who are in on the secret are treated to a week of shows in stunning venues, with traditions of jazz and improvised music from all continents crossing paths.

**LINEUP:** To be announced. [jazzmandu.com](http://jazzmandu.com)

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## Anthony Wilson

Anthony Wilson has had an abundantly diverse career since bursting into notoriety in 1997 with his eponymous, Grammy-nominated debut as a guitarist and arranger. In addition to his critically acclaimed nonet albums, Wilson was Diana Krall's longtime guitarist, also becoming a singer starting with his 2016 folk-inspired album *Frogtown* (Goat Hill). He returned to the nonet format in 2025 with the release of *House Of The Singing Blossoms* (Sam First). This is Wilson's second Blindfold Test; the first was in 2007 at the Monterey Jazz Festival alongside his father, trumpeter and bandleader Gerald Wilson.

### Julian Lage

"Ocala" (*Scenes From Above*, Blue Note, 2026) Lage, guitar; John Medeski, organ; Jorge Roeder, bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums.

I think it's Julian. Maybe the new project with Medeski, Kenny Wollesen and ... it might be Jorge. But it's distinctively Julian. Maybe as well as he's ever been recorded — you can hear his touch and his way of making the guitar resonate, which is very distinctive, and I love him; I love the tune, I love the composition. And Kenny is a drummer that just knows how to deliver you something that's on this kind of beautiful silver platter. I just like the restraint and the efficiency and the economy of it.

### Jimmy Smith/Wes Montgomery

"13 (Death March)" (*Jimmy & Wes: The Dynamic Duo*, Verve, 1966) Montgomery, guitar; Smith, organ; Oliver Nelson, arranger and conductor, Richard Davis, bass; Grady Tate, drums.

Well, that's a classic. I forget the name of the tune, but it's Jimmy and Wes with Oliver Nelson. So, so good. I'm trying to think about something to say ... because you can just sort of throw up your hands — in the playing of course, in Wes Montgomery's solos and the way his melodies just carry him through. But then I was thinking about the orchestration ... how beautiful these textures were with the flutes and the brass and how clean they were. Oliver Nelson, we think of "Stolen Moments," you know, those tight, minor chords that have some kind of compactness and density, and that's all in there. It gives Jimmy and Wes such a perfect space to exist in.

### Alan Ferber Nonet

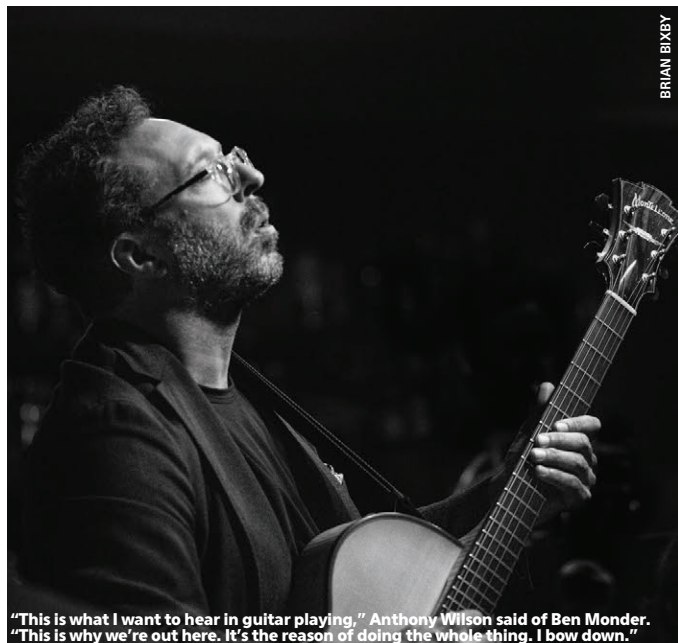
"Luteous Pangolin" (*The Compass*, Fresh Sound New Talent, 2008) Ferber, arranger and conductor, trombone; David Smith, trumpet; Will Vinson, alto saxophone, John Ellis, tenor saxophone; Douglas Yates, bass clarinet; Bruce Saunders, guitar; Bryn Roberts, piano; Alexis Cuadrado, bass; Mark Ferber, drums.

So nice. So good. I think it's Alan Ferber. I mean, what beautiful writing. Alan's purity of sound in the middle of that section — at the highest registers, he's just so controlled. And Mark Ferber on drums, it's just amazing what he does. It's truly amazing. I'm so glad I met them. When I was kind of starting to do my own stuff here in L.A., I was just lucky that our paths crossed. It was not too long before Mark was getting ready to leave and go to New York, but we had a few years where we all would just get together in West L.A. where they were living and play. Bruce [Saunders], that's right. What a beautiful solo, just careening around. There's all this incredible writing bookending this beautiful context for a player to do a solo.

### Miles Okazaki

"Skippy" (*Work — The Complete Recordings Of Thelonious Monk*, Independent Release, 2018) Okazaki, guitar.

I have no context with this player. Nothing, but I loved it. It was absolutely incredible. I didn't feel like it was super old. I felt it was more con-



"This is what I want to hear in guitar playing," Anthony Wilson said of Ben Monder. "This is why we're out here. It's the reason of doing the whole thing. I bow down."

temporaneous. ... Quite a beautiful mastery of the material, moving about in the language that exists in the composition, but I couldn't even begin to take a guess. [afterwards] Miles is a super interesting player. A great thinker, super deep on a lot of levels, thinks a lot about rhythm, harmony, interconnectedness of all of this stuff. I met him when he was in the Monk Competition. These days, people play very smoothly and with a lot of sustain, and they usually use some reverb or delay to kind of enhance that. He was straight through an amp, no effect. And I thought, ooh, that's kind of interesting. He's got an old guitar and he's doing something different, but it's also coming from a modern place.

### Andrew Renfroe

"Big Country" (*Pop Logic*, Independent Release, 2025) Renfroe, guitar; Braxton Cook, alto saxophone; Taber Gable, piano; Joshua Crumbly, bass; Jonathan Pinson, drums.

I would take a shot in the dark and say maybe it's Andrew Renfroe on guitar. Andrew is such a good player. One thing I really love that he does is that he will get into a place where he plays exclusively above the 10th or 11th fret of the instrument. And he's found a way tonally to do it with the effects that he uses, which aren't over the top. Not long before Russell Malone passed, Russell and I talked and he said, "Hey, man, who do you like on guitar these days?" I said, "Well, I really like Andrew Refroe," and he said, "Man, he's a bad motherfucker." And he really is.

### Ben Monder

"Where Or When" (*Planetarium*, Sunnyside, 2024) Monder, guitar.

So fucking good, man. It's really inspiring. I think it's Ben Monder. And probably no one else could do that. I mean, it's sublime guitar playing. And I consider his solo work on standards to be kind of a companion to Ted Green's solo guitar album. You're getting a sense of somebody who's living so deeply in the harmony of the song, that the reharmonization is more like where the song becomes your really close friend rather than this thing outside what you're trying to put something on. [Monder] is living with certain concepts around counterpoint, around finger independence, how he has to distribute the voices on the guitar. There's a lot of machinery going into this. But there's also this beautiful understanding of the harmonic relationships that you can move around with such facility. This is what I want to hear in guitar playing. This is why we're out here. It's the reason of doing the whole thing. I bow down. **DB**

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

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