

AUGUST 2020—ISSUE 220

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO THE NYC JAZZ SCENE

NYCJAZZRECORD.COM



# THE NEW YORK JAZZ RECORD

**ARCHIE  
SHEPP**  
*STILL SEEKING  
THE WAY AHEAD*

**DIGITAL  
ONLY  
EDITION**

**SHABAKA  
HUTCHINGS**

**HILLIARD  
GREENE**

**ALVIN  
QUEEN**

**FRANK  
LOWE**

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# THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

AUGUST 2020—ISSUE 220

NEW YORK@NIGHT	4	
INTERVIEW : SHABAKA HUTCHINGS	6	BY JOHN SHARPE
ARTIST FEATURE : HILLIARD GREENE	7	BY JOHN PIETARO
ON THE COVER : ARCHIE SHEPP	8	BY KYLE OLEKSIUK
ENCORE : ALVIN QUEEN	10	BY JIM MOTAVALLI
LEST WE FORGET : FRANK LOWE	10	BY ANDERS GRIFFEN
LABEL SPOTLIGHT : MAHAKALA	11	BY GEORGE GRELLA
VOXNEWS	11	BY SUZANNE LORGE
OBITUARIES	12	BY ANDREY HENKIN
ALBUM REVIEWS	14	
MISCELLANY	24	BY ANDREY HENKIN

I got the feeling that's something's goin' wrong  
And I'm worried bout the human soul  
I've got a feeling  
If I could have had the chance to make the decision  
Every man could walk this earth on equal condition  
Every child could do more than just dream of a star  
Bringing voices to a world that's gettin' old...  
Do I worry do I worry yes I worry 'bout the human soul, yeah...  
I hear voices, I see people  
I hear voices, I see people  
I hear voices of many people, sayin'  
Everything ain't everything

Only when nature doesn't take its natural toll, am I worried for the human soul.  
Some people think that they are in their rights and on command to take a black  
man's life. But let me give a rundown on how I feel.  
If it ain't natural, then it ain't real. I wish i were better.

*Almost half a century ago, Henry Hull, Albertine Robinson and Joshie Armstead sang and William Kunstler spoke Beaver Harris' words on Archie Shepp's 1972 Impulse! album Attica Blues. Speaking about the current state of American racial strife, Shepp (On The Cover), who has been thinking about this weighty topic his whole life, is bleak in his assessment: "We were protesting then just as we are now and the amazing thing is that things have changed so little." In this month's cover story, the legendary saxophonist, 83 years old but with no loss of wisdom and fire, provides much needed perspective to a problem that has never seen linear progress. His words are powerful as are those of the myriad others who have spoken on the topic and fought for the cause. But just as powerful and resilient have been their opponents, as is evident in that Shepp's fight and that of his relatives, heirs and fellow human beings is far from over.*

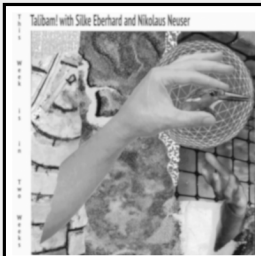
*On The Cover: Archie Shepp (@JohnRogers / johnrogersnyc.com)*

*Corrections: In last month's CD Reviews, the lyrics to "Life of the Party", recorded by the OWL Trio, were written by Joy Dragland.*

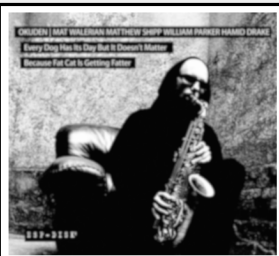
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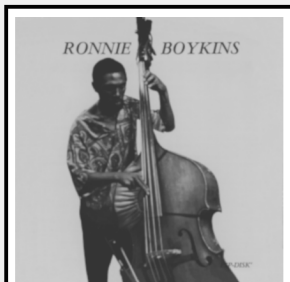


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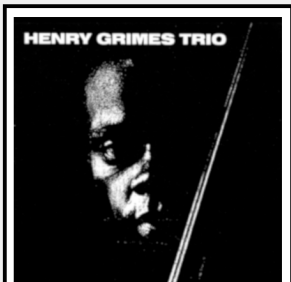


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Saxophone

Release #10 for late 2020 pays homage to music mentors past & present,

singling out Jimmy Heath's "Heritage Hum" & "Angel Man";

Frank Foster's "Simone";

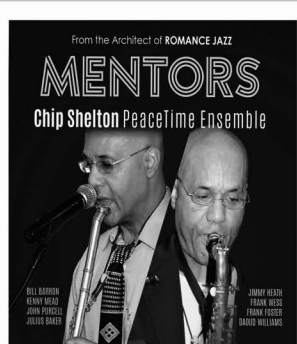
Frank Wess' "Half Moon Street";

plus 5 Shelton originals, and vocal flavorings on Willie Dixon's "I Love the Life I Live", & Richie Cole's "DC Farewell"

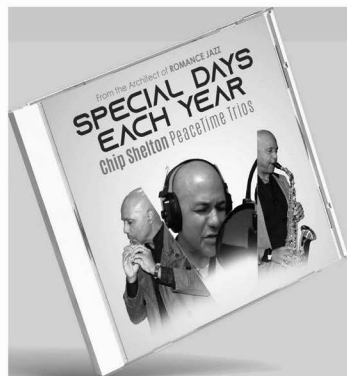
Release #9, now in 2020, spotlights Shelton originals and synchronizes with release of his 1st book,

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**MENTORS**  
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"Spring Break", "Mothers Day Gratitude",

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Fred Staton  
Photo by Richard Corman



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THE LEGENDARY ARCHIE SHEPP!



"The marriage of Raw Poetic's searching, socially conscious rhymes and Shepp's sax — both his keening soprano and grittily majestic tenor — bubbling to the surface in turn."

**RollingStone**

The 66-minute recording is limber and full of chill grooves punctuated by interludes enhanced with references to Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance" and John Coltrane's "Giant Steps." Although very of its moment, the recording is in the spirit of the early '70s, when genres didn't need bridges to overlap and political consciousness was a given.

**JazzTimes**

The hip-hop/jazz crossover is a refreshing take on both classic rap and jazz. Shepp's sax cuts through the rest of the band to provide passionate solos, as Raw Poetic sounds absolutely joyous.

**Newsweek**

Shepp came out of the avant-garde black-music tradition that proudly claimed and anointed John Coltrane.

**Pitchfork**

Unlike many of his peers, Shepp has long embraced poetry and hip-hop as an intuitive part of what he prefers to call African American music.

**The Washington Post**

Ocean Bridges ignores boundaries, links generations by telling a story that reaffirms family ties while blending genres, and featuring a whole lot of inspired Archie Shepp sax solos.

**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

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**Kurt Rosenwinkel**, currently a professor in Berlin, was featured 'live' (several cuts in the video stream revealed the set had been prerecorded) from his living room (Jul. 4th), a night of seemingly interminable fireworks for those sequestered in the five boroughs. The guitarist offered a few fret-board pyrotechnics of his own during an hour-long solo set of originals and standards. The logged-on crowd had grown to about 125 by the time he, after a curt greeting, began with piece that, though it sounded like a standard, turned out to be an improvisation, a tribute to the coherence of his melodic conception. On several (unannounced) numbers he constructed long single-note phrases occasionally punctuated with chords or harmonics, moving to complex passages with odd yet beguiling contrapuntal harmonies and flamenco-tinged chords. "One For Eric" (Clapton) included finger-style arpeggios reminiscent of Heitor Villa-Lobos' compositions; Thelonious Monk's "Ruby, My Dear" was beautifully arranged for guitar. A cover of Billy Joel's "And So It Goes" was the closest Rosenwinkel veered towards an Americana style and his version of Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" hinted at blues, but his take on Mark Turner's "Casa Oscura" showed a more abstract, postmodern approach. Separated by an ocean and a six-hour time difference, it was nonetheless exciting to witness Rosenwinkel's formidable skills up close—so close (it seemed) that you could almost touch the strings. —Tom Greenland



Kurt Rosenwinkel @ Live From Our Living Rooms

Hard to believe, as NYC enters the first phases of COVID-19 recovery, that some jazz musicians haven't played together—with anyone—since March or even February. It was a celebration, then, when guitarist **Mike Moreno's** quartet gathered at Smalls (Jul. 11th) to enjoy one other's musical company, in real time and real space. Adorned in medical masks, the musicians (pianist Taylor Eigsti, bassist Matt Brewer, drummer Obed Calvaire) resembled a gang of bank robbers. Though they played to rows of empty barstools and tables, there was, ironically, an increasing sense of release and even exuberance as the set unfolded. Having toured Asia in the not-so-far-off past, they knew Moreno's music and so, even with no rehearsal, had little trouble revitalizing his compositions, even when he threw a few new ones at them to play down on the spot. Starting with a new (untitled) piece, then "Lotus" (another original) and Wayne Shorter's "This Is for Albert", the quartet became progressively more comfortable and enthused as they followed Moreno's hornlike lead, assertive yet restrained, leaving ample room for group responses. A reading of "My Foolish Heart" was spartan but poignant. By "The Hills of Kykuit" and "Epilogue" the group was in full flower, Calvaire in particular seeming to thrive on the group interplay. After the final tones faded in the (almost) empty room, the men exchanged elbow-bumps (instead of shakes or hugs) and stories, eager for a time when real people would fill the seats. (TG)

Smoke, late to the live-streaming game, showed that waiting was worth the wait, with its inaugural online concerts, a two-night engagement of the **Wayne Escoffery Quartet** (Jul. 17th-18th). The smallest of the major clubs by capacity, the Upper West Side venue known for its intimacy in person was well recreated online, with the best sound this reviewer has (virtually) heard thus far and no less than six camera angles, including a beautiful Sidney Lumet-inspired view of drummer Carl Allen from below the perimeter of his snare drum. Given the club's layout, once seated in real life, there is no moving around so the chance to go from Allen to a closeup of pianist David Kikoski's fingers to straight-on and three-quarters views of the whole band makes seeing music in person superfluous (jk). And if the band didn't know how good they looked, they certainly could feel how good they sounded, almost giddy with the chance to play together after four months of involuntary shedding. The leader stayed on tenor saxophone for the Saturday set, the band completed by Ugonna Okegwo wielding a bass and a huge smile. Ostensibly a release weekend for Escoffery's *The Humble Warrior* (Smoke Sessions), the band only played two tunes from the album, the title track and Benjamin Britten's "Kyrie", filling out the set with saxophone colossi John Coltrane, Benny Golson, Stanley Turrentine and Charlie Rouse (plus trumpeter Donald Byrd). "You've been a wonderful audience... I hope," quipped Escoffery. —Andrey Henkin



Wayne Escoffery @ Smoke

Of all the musicians stuck at home over the past four months, some are with musician partners, others play instruments that work unaccompanied and a few can probe the outer depths solo. But what of a traditional bassist? Imagine he or she slowly going crazy playing the *Peter Gunn* theme over and over and over and over, hoping someday to be able to support others. Just before he presumably snapped like a worn G-string, bassist Ari Folman-Cohen was liberated, holding down the low-end in the **Stephane Wrembel Trio**, live-streamed from Barbès (Jul. 16th, with decent sound and a few camera angles), the band, completed by second guitarist Thor Jensen, performing together for the first time in months. So excited was Folman-Cohen that he could barely sit and when he stood he boogied around the small stage, (unconsciously) did little tap-routines with his feet and nearly lost his protective mask on several occasions. That was just the visuals; while always a strong presence in Wrembel's bands, here he was unleashed, bringing rock and funk energy to French chanson and the Django Reinhardt songbook, of which Wrembel is the undisputed master, though, refreshingly not letting it master him, expanding upon the tradition much like his inspiration. Of the hour-long show, the highlights were the trio taking "Dinah" for a long, exploratory ride but bringing her home before lights out and "Si Tu Savais", Folman-Cohen stealing the show with his lines and Wrembel adding unorthodox effects to great effect. (AH)

# WHAT'S NEWS

The cessation of touring during the pandemic afforded **Ravi Coltrane** the opportunity to reunite with the members of his working quartet for a live-streamed performance from The Jazz Gallery (Jul. 9th). The group, with pianist David Virelles, bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Johnathan Blake, opened with "D.C.G.", an original by the leader reminiscent of the latter-day work of his father's band with Pharoah Sanders. It began with ascendant dark-toned tenor over the trio's ruminative rubato intro, which morphed into a serene melody played over an engaging bassline. Sadly, technical difficulties muted the audio towards the end of the saxophonist's solo and for the next five minutes the trio starred in a silent movie before sound returned as Coltrane closed out the piece. Segueing into Virelles' "Tiempos", the trio got its chance to stretch, with the pianist displaying an impressive command of Cuban and jazz traditions as he melded a habanera rhythm with fluid percussive lines recalling Cecil Taylor, prompting Coltrane's return on potent soprano. Blake's "Rivers and Parks", a lyrical outing with Coltrane back on tenor, swinging in the tradition, followed. Prefacing a spirited reading of McCoy Tyner's "Fly With The Wind", bowed bass and rumbling malleted drums solemnly introduced John Coltrane's "Alabama". An extended Douglas solo then led the band into his beautiful "Forligno", before the set ended with the leader wailing on soprano on mother Alice Coltrane's "Los Caballos". —*Russ Musto*



Ravi Coltrane Quartet @ The Jazz Gallery

"We might not be 'essential workers', but music is absolutely essential to just life in general and I think it's important that musicians continue to create and a situation like this kind of forces it out of you," **Eric Reed** noted from the piano chair at the Village Vanguard (Jul. 9th), where his quartet live-streamed music written while in quarantine for his upcoming album *For Such A Time As This*. The band, with tenor saxophonist Stacy Dillard, bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer McClenty Hunter, kicked things off charging straightahead on "Western Rebellion", a hardbopping tribute to pianist Cedar Walton's Eastern Rebellion quartet and Reed's California homebase. The group followed with "Theloningus", a quirky melody steeped in the blues, which conjured the spirits of the iconic pianist and bassist referred to in its title. That segued into Reed's adaptation of vocalist-drummer Jamison Ross' soulful arrangement of Walton's "Martha's Prize", the rhythm section grooving on the funky vamp from Roy Hargrove's "Strasbourg St. Denis". Dillard laid out for the trio's medley of "Dear Bud", Reed's moving ballad tribute to pianist Powell, and a swinging reading of the Jule Styne-Sammy Cahn standard "It's You Or No One". Dillard returned for a freewheeling take on Monk's "Work" featuring commanding bass, tenor and piano solos and a series of hard-hitting exchanges with Hunter. The set ended with Reed's uplifting gospel-tinged "Una Mujer Elegante", before angularly racing to the finish with his "Ornate". (RM)

A rollicking one-man second line emoted over **Ralph Peterson's** snare drum. Accented rimshots, bass-drum bombs, woodblock and cowbell, too, called the trio to order (Jul. 3rd). This Blue Note at Home concert, happy to report, featured brilliantly crisp sound. The drummer, pianist Zaccai Curtis and his bassist brother Luques Curtis kicked "Bemsha Swing" into the new — leaping the decades since Monk revolutionized jazz. "This song is associated with Thelonious Monk, but it was composed by Denzil Best," Peterson told the home audience, sure to represent for the noted bop drummer whose history includes writing important works. On that note, the trio ripped into the Latin-esque rhythms propelling Peterson's "The Right to Live", a topical work inspired by the righteous street-heat of Black Lives Matter. It, however, called on parts of jazz history long predating the current movement, with crashing harmonies and lengthy melodic lines incorporating leaps, all of which poured from Zaccai's aerial, able hands. Peterson and Luques, throbbing gloriously, exemplified both the fight and victorious intent. This piece easily flowed into a ballad, "The Tears I Cannot Hide"; though composed several years ago, Peterson described it as, "another reflection of today's times of social injustice", commentary on the ongoing nature of struggle. Peterson and company also brought new life to works by late pianists Geri Allen and John Hicks, demonstrating for all the wide swathe of style, school and genre on which they thrive. —*John Pietaro*



Ralph Peterson Trio @ Blue Note At Home

This Arts for Art event (Jul. 8th) was Zoom-broadcast from four different locations with headphones and computer screens as the musicians' only unifiers, but the distance between them was never evident. Led by celebrated baritone saxophonist Dave Sewelson, the outfit was aptly named the **Music for a Free World Quartet**. Avant garde vets all, the band required no prep for the single collectively improvised work offered. Opening with broken triplets across his drumkit, Marvin Bugalu Smith set the shape of the piece, quickly signaling in the entry of bassist William Parker. By the time Sewelson and trombonist Steve Swell had joined, viewers were transported back to a simpler, pre-COVID-19 time. Effortlessly, the horns traded points of taking the lead (if there is such a thing in collective work), constructing intricate lines about one another's improvisations and pulsations. At one point, the two leapt up into registers well above that of such low horns, intoning a gently whirling melisma. Parker added a third voice on what appeared to be cornet, allowing for a gripping three-wind chase wonderfully throttled by free drumming. If there was any downside at all, the fault doesn't lie with the players but the state of remote audio technology. Currently, such broadcasts cause drumkits to sound akin to cardboard and the bass' depth becomes lost in the whole. One can imagine the power, reach and relevance of global feeds like this when technology finally catches up to the arts. (JP)

A tribute to the recently departed pianist **Onaje Allan Gumbs**, where a tree will be planted and a commemorative plaque installed, alongside a performance of the Onaje Allen Gumbs All-Star Band, will take place Aug. 22nd at 120 DeKruif Place Building #7 Section One Co-op City. For more information, contact Rose Petal Entertainment Media at 347-213-5776 or rosecedic2@gmail.com.

As part of the **Charlie Parker Centennial Celebration**, *Charlie Parker: The Clef 10" Albums Collection* will be available on Aug. 28th, a five-LP boxed set featuring "newly remastered audio from the original analog tapes and will include faithful reproductions of the classic artwork and packaging. The albums will be pressed on 180-gram black 10" vinyl and will be housed in an attractive slipcase." For more information, visit [shop.udiscovermusic.com](http://shop.udiscovermusic.com).

Trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis will celebrate the founding of his non-profit **Keep NOLA Music Alive** with a virtual concert Aug. 2nd at 7 pm on [facebook.com/Delfeayo Marsalis](https://facebook.com/DelfeayoMarsalis). For more information, visit [knoma.org](http://knoma.org).

Jen Shyu and Sara Serpa have launched **M<sup>3</sup>—Mutual Mentorship for Musicians**, an "initiative that empowers and elevates womxn musicians around the world (including BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ across generations) in a new model of mentorship comprising four sessions per year with each session culminating in a performance of new collaborative commissions." The initial participants are Romama Campbell, Caroline Davis, Eden Girma, Val Jeanty, Maya Keren, Erica Lindsay, Lesley Mok, Tomeka Reid, Anjna Swaminathan and Sumi Tonooka. For more information, visit [mutualmentorshipformusicians.org](http://mutualmentorshipformusicians.org).

Entries are now being accepted for the **Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition**. The deadline is Sep. 8th. For more information, visit [njpac.org/sarah-vaughan-international-jazz-vocal-competition](http://njpac.org/sarah-vaughan-international-jazz-vocal-competition).

Guitarist **Pat Metheny's** ECM catalogue, 11 albums made between 1976-2015, has been made available as high-resolution masters for download and/or streaming at platforms Qobuz, HDtracks, Acoustic Sounds, Prostudiomaster, Tidal, Apple and Amazon. For more information, visit [ecm.lnk.to/PatMethenyHD](http://ecm.lnk.to/PatMethenyHD).

Vocalist **Gregory Porter** sang "America The Beautiful" at the launch of NASA's Mars 2020 Perseverance Rover Mission last month, the first recording artist ever to be invited by NASA to perform at such an event.

Bryant Park's annual **Piano in the Park** series will take place through Oct. 2nd. Scheduled performers, appearing Monday-Friday at 12:30 pm at the base of the William Cullen Bryant Statue include Victor Lin, Danny Mixon, Dan Manjovi, Frank Owens, Terry Waldo, Luiz Simas, Russ Kasso, Ayako Shirasaki, Charlie Judkins, Yuka Aikawa and Sue Maskaleris. For more information, visit [bryantpark.org](http://bryantpark.org).

The **4th Annual Seifert Competition**, with a jury of Ernst Reijseger, Michał Urbaniak and Miroslav Vitouš, awarded two joint second prizes of €5,000 to Austrian violinist Johannes Dickbauer and French violinist Youenn Rohaut and two joint prizes of €2,000 to Israeli violinist Omer Ashano and French violinist Clément Janinet. The first prize was not awarded.

The **International Songwriting Competition** is now accepting submissions in various categories, including jazz, with or without lyrics. For more information and to apply, visit [songwritingcompetition.com](http://songwritingcompetition.com).

The **Jazz Loft** in Stony Brook was awarded a \$40,000 grant towards archiving more than 10,000 historical jazz artifacts in the possession of the museum by The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, Inc. For more information, visit [thejazzloft.org](http://thejazzloft.org).

The **Creative Music Workshop** has begun an online educational initiative drawing on CMS' nearly-50-year history. Resources are free and available at [creativemusicworkshop.com](http://creativemusicworkshop.com).

The board of the European Jazz Network has announced that the **EJN Conference 2020**, scheduled for Sep. 10th-13th in Sofia, Bulgaria, has been cancelled. For more information, visit [europejazz.net](http://europejazz.net).

Submit news to [info@nycjazzrecord.com](mailto:info@nycjazzrecord.com)

ADRIEN H. TILLMANN - WWW.AHT1985.COM



# SHABAKA HUTCHINGS

BY JOHN SHARPE

*As the first UK signing to Impulse!, British-Barbadian saxophonist and bandleader Shabaka Hutchings has become a figurehead for the breakout London scene. His activity is as relentless as his music is visceral. Sons of Kemet rides a torrent of African-Caribbean-influenced rhythm, The Comet Is Coming fuses trance, AfroBeat and electronica and latest vehicle Shabaka And The Ancestors, with a young South African crew, wades deep into spiritual jazz with diversions into Township grooves. But a broad hinterland also taking in free improvisation and guest spots with the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Sun Ra Arkestra ensures that Hutchings brings nuance to festival stages worldwide.*

**The New York City Jazz Record:** What was it about jazz that appealed to you so much?

**Shabaka Hutchings:** Different elements have appealed to me at different stages in my life. At the beginning not a lot appealed to me. I got in through the more commercial elements. So when I started it was more people like Grover Washington, Jr., Maceo Parker, the Caribbean Jazz Project of Paquito D’Rivera, Greg Osby’s *Man-Talk For Moderns Vol. X* and the hip-hop fusions that they were doing in the early ‘90s. But I think the initial thing that got me was the interaction between people. For instance, one of the first memories I have of a real eureka moment with jazz is with Miles Davis’ *My Funny Valentine*. And I think it is a Herbie Hancock solo, there’s two moments in the solo, I remember being 16 or 17 and listening to them and thinking that the whole band is really together in the climax. And it’s those magical moments where any particular group comes together and achieves something as a unit that I really appreciate.

**TNYCJR:** Who were your inspirations on saxophone?

**SH:** As I learned more and started to practice the music more and play with other people in a live scenario, then it became the greats like John Coltrane, Sam Rivers, Wayne Shorter, all the people you would consider to be the torch-bearers of the music. And there are people that I really loved throughout the years that you probably won’t hear a direct influence from, people like Warne Marsh, Hank Mobley, Anthony Braxton. But obviously I started my jazz journey in Britain, so the players I had direct contact with influenced me a lot in terms of how they related to the American tradition as well. So people like Steve Williamson, Evan Parker, Courtney Pine obviously.

**TNYCJR:** How has signing to Impulse! changed things for you?

**SH:** It’s been really fundamental in terms of the exposure it’s given me in the United States, because there’s always been that blockage in terms of U.K. musicians going over to the U.S., in that you’ve really got to struggle to make the case for having something

to contribute to a legacy that’s already so established. Signing to a label like Impulse! means that people will at least give you the time of day and listen to the music on its own terms. Also having a structure that’s really supportive musically behind me has been really great for just giving me the freedom to make what I want to make. Everyone I’m involved with within the company is really passionate about music and determined to just let me do my thing. It’s a great working relationship.

**TNYCJR:** And of course the label has a fantastic history, so there must be some resonance for you there as well.

**SH:** Exactly. It’s one of those things where for me my signing with Impulse! isn’t just about my personal interaction with it, it’s connecting the history of British jazz music with the history of American jazz music. So my signing with Impulse! is a result of all the efforts of say Courtney and Steve Williamson and Django Bates and John Surman creating a situation where at this stage someone from England has joined the big historical legacy that has built up Impulse!.

**TNYCJR:** Shabaka And The Ancestors, whose sophomore album *We Are Sent Here By History* was released this year, grew out of playing with local musicians on your visits to South Africa. How has that concept developed since recording and touring?

**SH:** They all develop naturally. When I first started playing with the individual members it was with their own music and I would guest in their bands and play with them at jam sessions. For the first album, I wrote music and brought it to them, we rehearsed it and then we played it. And from that point when we started touring the music started to realize itself. The sound and attitude of the band was more apparent after we recorded the first album. Now from touring and playing and hanging out together we have an idea of what we want to express, or I’ve got an idea of what can be expressed in this formation.

**TNYCJR:** Your titles are often a call to action and that carries through into lyrics and words from guest rappers, vocalists and poets as well. Do you have the message in mind when you compose the music?

**SH:** No. When I compose the music I consciously make an effort not to have anything in mind apart from making the best or the most fitting music that I can at the time. Then after the actual notes and the music is written or recorded or rehearsed, I have a process of trying to go back and try to analyze what was on my mind or what was in the air at the time of recording. That can come from conversations we were having around the time of recording, it might come from what I was talking about with friends. But it’s really a process of trying to write the music with the most integrity.

**TNYCJR:** Another Impulse! CD, *My Queen Is A Reptile* by Sons Of Kemet, has an unusual instrumentation with tuba and twin drums. How did it come about?

**SH:** Before I started the group I was mainly into the free improvising scene in London. So I was a member of the London Improvisers Orchestra, which had members like Lol Coxhill, Evan Parker, Steve Beresford, Mark Sanders, John Edwards, John Butcher and people like that. The main emphasis on that group and the small groups that would play concerts outside of it, was unusual instrumentation because it wasn’t trying to have the orthodox jazz formations, like the quartet with rhythm section and horn soloist. So you might have lots of these different variations on musicians, you might get a viola, snare drum and bassoon combination if they were free improvising. It becomes more about how the personalities of the musicians interact together. So that was my thinking. Who do I think would make the best combination of personalities? At the time it was the members that would be Sons Of Kemet: [drummer] Tom Skinner, [drummer] Seb Rochford [now Eddie Hick] and [tuba player] Oren Marshall [now Theon Cross]. That was the reasoning in my head when I formed the group, but looking back in retrospect I can see that there might have been various different elements running subconsciously that made me attracted to that combination, like the link to New Orleans formations, fife and drums and how that actually relates to the tradition of Barbadian tuk music. It’s the same formation of a bunch of drums and flutes basically and sometimes a bass instrument.

**TNYCJR:** You often sit in with Sun Ra Arkestra when it visits the U.K. What are you getting from that experience?

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

**ALVIN QUEEN**

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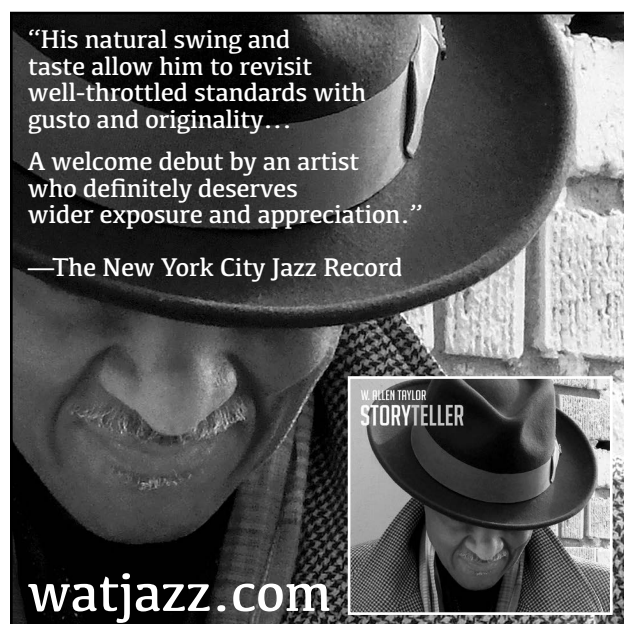


# HILLIARD GREENE

BY JOHN PIETARO

From the opening strains of *Spirituals* (Unseen Rain), the latest release by Hilliard Greene, the listener is compelled by something very new, but also eternally old. And in any case, utterly vital. The bassist's second venture into solo bass recordings couldn't have come at a better time. "It was important for me to record these pieces, largely a set of Negro Spirituals, in light of the Black Lives Matter movement," Greene explained. "I haven't always taken part in the protests, so I needed for my voice to be heard. I was born in the late '50s and got a healthy dose of what segregation was like for my parents." Greene, who was raised in Iowa (his father was a Sociology professor at the University of Northern Iowa), had a thorough awareness of the racial structure in rural America. "I recall being a five-year-old entering grade school. I felt that I needed to present a certain way as I was the only Black person these people would ever know." Profoundly, Greene came to this conclusion through an independent view. "I never told my parents this, but I'll never forget that feeling."

During this past year, Greene had been traveling nationally in solo presentations of coded spirituals—message songs used by slaves as a guide in escaping the brutality of their bondage—entitled "Milestone Negro Spirituals Until the Civil War; when folksongs bring freedom". "This body of song has long been in the repertoire of choirs, but often without an understanding of the meaning behind the lyrics. 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' includes directions and inspiration for slaves seeking liberation. When I present these coded spirituals it's within a performance and a discussion" to educate the audience of this historic, revolutionary reality. "I've done a mini-tour of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Iowa and other places, but I'm trying to bring this to as many parts of the country as possible. The time for this is now."



"His natural swing and taste allow him to revisit well-throttled standards with gusto and originality..."

A welcome debut by an artist who definitely deserves wider exposure and appreciation."

—The New York City Jazz Record

watjazz.com

The bassist's musical immersion during his formative years laid a cultural foundation, particularly when he was introduced to the music of Miles Davis. "I had been listening to rock and then to recordings of Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon and 'the three Kings': Freddie, B.B. and Albert" but when his high school music teacher played *Kind of Blue* for the class, he was drawn in. Greene studied both contrabass and electric bass guitar and played in the school orchestra as well as local bands. After attending college in Iowa where he studied music, Greene sought still higher education at Berklee. "I recognized that in this music, jazz, there was something I could feel a strong connection to, an art form of Black Americans." Pouring himself into practice sessions of eight-plus hours per day, the bassist developed rapidly and began performing in the Boston area with multiple ensembles including the band of R&B vocalist Bobby Hebb, whose hit "Sunny" continued to propel club dates more than a decade after its release.

Following graduation, Greene settled in New York during the creatively fervent '80s. "After my first two weeks in this city, I felt more comfortable here than I'd ever felt at any other time in my life." Residing in a rented Flatbush house with other musicians just as the Brooklyn scene was undergoing stunning renewal and the Downtown sound continued thriving, Greene was exposed to the music at every turn. "I was going to the Tin Palace and the Knitting Factory, but one day when I was in Grand Central Station I heard this music, incredible stuff. I ran around to find out who it was and saw this guy playing a silver alto for spare change. It was Charles Gayle. He was homeless then but invited me to hear him play a couple of days later at First on First so, of course, I went to that club and we spoke right after." Greene soon became a regular bassist with Gayle. "Charles was a real formative part of my education. The music took on a life of its own. We played at one place in the East Village with no heat and we wore our coats at first, but by the time the set ended, I was heavily perspiring [and] realized I could never play this way in Iowa."

Around the same time, Greene also began playing with drummer Rashied Ali. "We rehearsed at his loft and that was an occasion onto itself. Incredible. I was just doin' it," he recalled. "I just wish I was more developed as a player by then. There was so much music when we played, Rashied had so much history. And he also told these great stories," he added with a laugh, unfortunately refraining from any juicy bits of this lost history.

By the early '90s, the bassist's association with pianist Cecil Taylor began. He was soon elevated to the director of Taylor's big band, which also included Steve Swell, Jackson Krall and many other notables. "Being that close to an artist like Cecil, someone of that magnitude, you learn so much." Furthering the strength of such an experiential opportunity, Greene also played in a Taylor trio with Krall, which held

court at the (old) Knitting Factory. "We did several of his compositions but there was no setlist, so I would just latch onto the key and Cecil's momentum. His energy wave would build to a certain point and then peak. Then the next energy wave came in and we rode it together, but each time it was more powerful than before. Between tunes I would noodle a while and then we'd go again, building intensity more and more and it kept going like that. And just when I'd thought we were at the very edge, that place where we could go no further, he'd elbow accented chord clusters and bring us to a new max!"

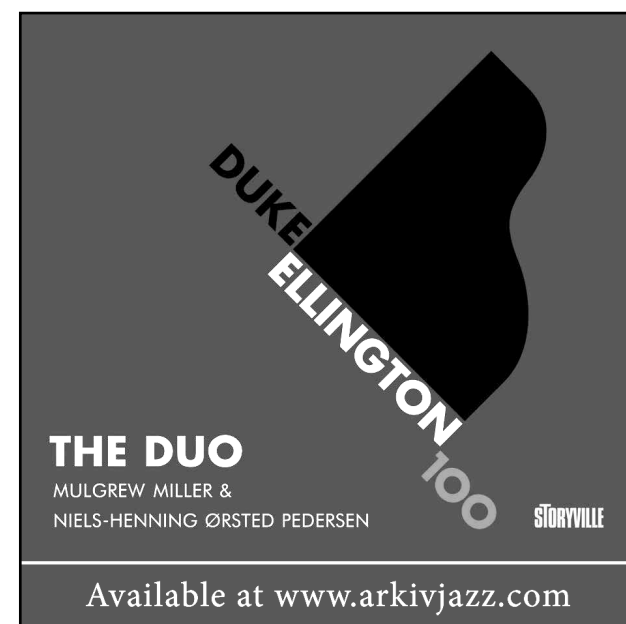
In the years that followed, Greene's resumé took on quite mythic proportions. In addition to serving as house bassist at Minton's Playhouse, some of his collaborators have included Billy Bang, Barry Altschul, Leroy Jenkins, Karl Berger, Grady Tate, Vijay Iyer, Joanne Brackeen, Bern Nix, Greg Osby, Cindy Blackman, Frank Lacy, Don Pullen, Jason Kao Hwang and Kenny Barron. He also developed a penchant for working with vocalists such as Jon Hendricks, The Ink Spots, Marlene VerPlanck and, primarily, Jimmy Scott, with whom he had a 25-year association including global travel. "There are not enough words to describe the impact of that experience. He was like a second father. When I began working with Jimmy, his audience was over 50 and Black and I was in my late 20s. He did a record for Warner Bros. called *All the Way* (1992), which was nominated for a Grammy. That had such an impact to shift his audience to under 50 and white (laughs). That is the power of a recording."

Greene is hopeful that the power of his latest recording, too, will carry some weight as well as his current focus of solo performances. He was recently honored by the Bronx Council on the Arts for his work with coded spirituals; he is planning on establishing concerts with the Council following the coronavirus restrictions on public gatherings. "There is a major place in this renewed struggle for Black lives and an equitable society wherein the music itself becomes cultural education." ❖

For more information, visit [hilliardgreene.com](http://hilliardgreene.com). Greene is scheduled to play solo at 440Gallery Aug. 22nd. For more information, visit [440gallery.com](http://440gallery.com).

#### Recommended Listening:

- Jimmy Scott—*Heaven* (Warner Bros., 1996)
- Gebhard Ullmann/Steve Swell 4—*News? No News* (Jazzwerkstatt, 2008)
- Billy Bang—*Da Bang* (TUM, 2011)
- Salim Washington—*Dogon Revisited* (Passin Thru, 2012)
- Jemeel Moondoc/Hilliard Greene—*Cosmic Nickelodeon* (Relative Pitch, 2015)
- Hilliard Greene—*Spirituals* (Unseen Rain, 2017-18)



# ARCHIE SHEPP

## STILL SEEKING THE WAY AHEAD

BY KYLE OLEKSIUK



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Archie Shepp: saxophonist, professor, uncle. The 83-year-old wears all three hats in his most recent album *Ocean Bridges* (Redefinition), a collaboration with his nephew, rapper Raw Poetic, and the producer/DJ Damu The Fudgemunk. As saxophonist, he accompanies his nephew's raps and occasionally leads the band. As professor (which he was for 30 years at UMass-Amherst), he lectures about the importance of education on a track titled "Professor Shepp's Agenda 1". And as uncle, he exudes an avuncular warmth that flows across the album, which was spontaneously recorded and incorporates a great deal of uncle-nephew conversation caught on tape in the recording studio.

Although *Ocean Bridges* represents his first performance on a hip-hop album, Shepp is no stranger to rap. "I feel like one of the godfathers of rap," Shepp says, "because I started to do this kind of thing back in the '60s, along with groups like The Last Poets. I infused my work with poems and statements, which were primarily at that time political... When I first started recording music, I was very accessible to the spoken word as an important adjunct to music." In the decades since, his convictions on the relationship between music and language, particularly African American language, have only increased.

Shepp explains, "African American language lends itself very readily to musical expression" and specifically to the spontaneity of improvisation. "It comes from the heart, [and] by nature it has an iambic quality, going back to poets like Paul Laurence Dunbar. Black language often also has a quality of spontaneity... It springs out of the Black experience, which is frequently a response to what's going on at the time—we frequently find ourselves in situations we never expected. Racism is like that. Frequently we are the victims of situations, which we have to respond to in an improvised manner. So improvisation is a fundamental aspect of the Black experience."

Shepp has spent much of his musical career exploring and communicating this "fundamental aspect of the Black experience" via political recordings that take a strong stance on the issue of race and racism in America. One of the most beloved is *Attica Blues*, a 1972 album made in response to the Attica prison riots. On that album, as on many others he has made, Shepp directly confronts the political reality of his moment. Doing so is particularly important because he cares deeply about the interwoven relationship between Black music and the history of Black life in America.

He speaks of the relationship between the two with such insight that it deserves to be quoted at length: "I've always looked at music not so much as an academic experience, but as a life experience, as a living thing. Especially Black music, which, if one pursues it simply as chord changes, as an academic phenomenon, you miss out the real essential meaning of that music. It has a verbal basis, as well as an academic existence in notes. And over the years, I've begun to incorporate the verbal, linguistic, human element of that music into the notes themselves...by feeling and understanding that

the music is more than notes. That some of the terrible experiences that we have had to go through, slavery and discrimination, Jim Crow, all these things, have helped to form a whole cultural outlook. One which tells a story, a story that should be told and understood by more people than it is.

"Survival, identity: these are qualities that have grown out of a horrifying social experience in which people were stolen from their homes, their homeland and put on ships and sent thousands of miles away, exposed naked to an entirely different community and...survived this naked exposure. And we sang our song in a strange land, to such an extent that that song has been imitated by the strangers—and, at times, been put to very negative uses. I was looking at a program the other night, in which a Neo-Nazi was saying how he was going to a rock concert in Germany. And I was wondering, 'gee...rock music is actually Black music, transformed by white people and exploited. And so all these skinheads are being nourished by a Black experience.' There's something ironic about that and it tells us that the world wouldn't be anything without us. It's we who provide the songs, the sound, the energy, the creativity that inspires even the world of Neo-Nazis. They would be nothing without us."

Shepp's lifelong engagement with Black music and politics has been almost literally life-long—at a very early age, he was introduced to both subjects by his father. "My father was a banjo player," Shepp says, "and through him I became interested in music... I asked him [to teach me] so much that he finally taught me the first few chords to James P. Johnson's 'The Charleston.'" At the same time, his father introduced him to discussions of politics and race and made him precociously aware of their importance. "When I was in the third grade," Shepp recalls, "my teacher asked us to write about something important to us and I wrote about the situation of race. It wasn't a very extensive academic paper, but she was really impressed that I had these things on my mind. And she said, where did you learn about this? And I said, well, from my father and the man upstairs. Every Saturday they discuss political issues." Thinking forward to the effect those discussions would have on his life, Shepp supposes that he "grew up in a world where I was ordained to discuss these things and eventually to confront them. When I went to college, my initial idea was to become a lawyer. I graduated with a degree in theater, but I always had this idea that somehow whatever I did would be to help, to change the condition of my people."

Meaningless as it is to estimate one person's worth within a movement of millions, Shepp has indeed made great strides of progress in the worlds of music and academia. As a professor at the UMass-Amherst, he introduced three decades of students to a historical consciousness of Black music. As Shepp told the UMass student paper, *The Daily Collegian*, in 2007: "There is a continuity in Black Music, which begins in Africa and is still important today when we hear a performer like Branford [Marsalis]. Or Aretha Franklin. All related by

a set of circumstances." In his years as a professor, one of his proudest memories is his experience teaching Dr. Cuthbert Simpkins, who wrote one of the first biographies of John Coltrane, Shepp's contemporary and frequent collaborator. Shepp remembers with particular pride that Simpkins "caught onto some of John's theoretical ideas, like the Squared Circle [a.k.a. the "Circle of Fourths"] and 'Giant Steps' [chord progression], which had a real theoretical basis... [and that Simpkins] took an African American artist, one of his own people, seriously enough to write about him and to explore the meaning of the man."

As a musician, Shepp has spent decades making political statements and incorporating diverse strands of Black musical and cultural traditions into the art form known as jazz. "I don't use the term jazz," says Shepp, "because I find it tends to be very limited in terms of what we expect from [a jazz] performance." It is certainly limiting in terms of what we expect from a Shepp performance. Since the early '60s, Shepp has composed and performed profound, politicized music, which includes elements of the blues, spirituals, continental African percussion, R&B and now rap.

Still, after decades of labor, the saxophonist and professor says that things are not going the way he'd hoped when he was first agitating for change in the '60s. "We were protesting then just as we are now," Shepp says, "and the amazing thing is that things have changed so little. We thought we had resolved the problem in the '60s with Martin Luther King and Malcolm and the rent strikes and all the protests—and many of them spontaneously resulted in some dramatic change in the United States. But then apparently that was all a myth, because nowadays more Black kids are being killed in the streets than during the time when I was a young man... In fact, the discourse is going back to a kind of a James Baldwin theme. We find ourselves questioning what it is to be an African American, to be Black in a white world."

Despite this dispiriting lack of progress, Shepp does not feel that his work has been for nothing. He has regrets like anyone, but "I hope," he says, that "as in the case of my nephew, that these things have been inspiring to people who came after me...that they will take courage and refuge in the idea that things have got to change... and that our young people should not be easily bought out, or sell out, for money or fame or success. And realize that the ultimate goal is to liberate ourselves." ❖

For more information, visit [facebook.com/ArchieShepp.official](https://facebook.com/ArchieShepp.official)

### Recommended Listening:

- Archie Shepp — *Four for Trane* (Impulse!, 1964)
- Archie Shepp — *The Way Ahead* (Impulse!, 1968)
- Archie Shepp — *The Tradition* (Horo, 1977)
- Archie Shepp/Horace Parlan — *Trouble in Mind* (SteepleChase, 1980)
- Archie Shepp Meets Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio — *Conversations* (Delmark, 1999)
- Archie Shepp/Raw Poetic/Damu The Fudgemunk — *Ocean Bridges* (Redefinition, 2019)



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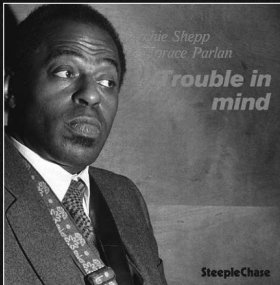
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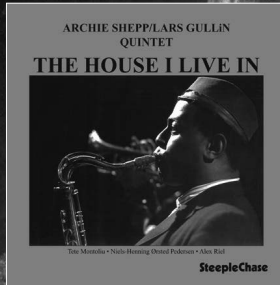
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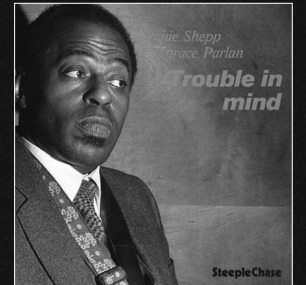
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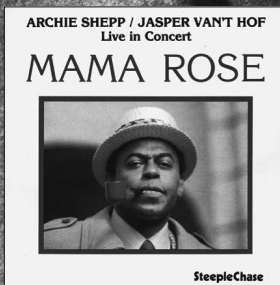
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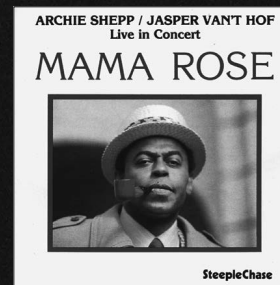
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# ALVIN QUEEN

BY JIM MOTAVALLI

Drummer Alvin Queen, born in the Bronx 70 years ago this month, is a great storyteller and so what if many of his compelling stories are from before he settled permanently in Europe circa 1979? As he enjoys his Swiss government pension and takes long walks in the Alps, he has no regrets about leaving the American cauldron behind.

Queen was a child prodigy on drums. He recorded his first album (still unreleased!) when he was only 11 or 12 years old. Lest you think it was a kid's record, consider the personnel: Zoot Sims played saxophone, Art Davis was on bass and Harold Mabern on piano, with Joe Newman acting as music director and playing trumpet. "I remember that Clifford Brown's 'Daahoud' was on it," Queen said. "We recorded it at Nola Rehearsal Studios in Manhattan. Joe Newman was on my back all the time. I'd love to hear it again—I think it would sound beautiful."

Queen's grandmother was music director at the Bronx church whose parishioners included Denzel Washington. His brother was a percussionist in school parades and young Queen used to steal his drumsticks and bang on the concrete. He joined the marching band himself at around age eight and remembers the orange and black uniforms. One Christmas, Queen's mother took him shopping and he saw a kid playing drums in a store window. He wanted that for himself and was soon taking lessons with that kid's teacher. An immersion in jazz happened when his father, a bar manager, took him to the Apollo Theater. "We heard Art Blakey with Olatunji there, Nancy Wilson with Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane playing 'My Favorite Things'. And we also saw Big Maybelle, The Jackson Five, Stevie Wonder, Moms Mabley, everybody."

Young Queen used to take his radio to bed, listening to Symphony Sid with the volume turned low. "You had to really love jazz to do that," he said. By this point, Queen's family had moved to Mount Vernon, NY. When he was 10 or 11, the band at a bar his father was managing lost its drummer and the musicians wanted to know if they could "use the kid". A delegation was sent to Queen's house and the little prodigy was brought out. "What kind of music do you play?" was the only question he asked. When he learned it was jazz everything was fine and he went and got his best suit for the evening's session. The drum pedals had to be adjusted.

Queen, still very young, would take the subway down to Grand Central Station, get off and go over to Frank Wolf's drum shop on 48th Street, where people like Gene Krupa, Cozy Cole and Buddy Rich would hang out. Anything to be close to the music. He remembers the cheap food and drink that maintained many a musician at the original Beefsteak Charlie's.

The gigs started coming. The names Queen mentions are too numerous to list. When he was just 16 he played with Wild Bill Davis' Trio and the pianist Don Pullen (not yet famous for his Mingus stint) and backed singer Ruth Brown in Atlantic City. In 1969, still a teenager, he played with trombonist Benny Green and guitarist Tiny Grimes, then replaced Billy Cobham in Horace Silver's group.

Queen's musical associations are myriad. He rehearsed with a quartet led by Coltrane bassist Jimmy Garrison that also included pianist Ronnie Mathews but then in 1976 Garrison died. He played with Oscar Peterson for years between 2004 until the pianist's death in 2007—after first saying no because "I'd heard that Oscar could be a hard one."

Queen first went to Europe in 1971 with trumpet player Charles Tolliver, a collaboration documented on the *Live at the Loosdrecht Jazz Festival* and *Impact* albums. Queen wasn't quite ready to move to Europe yet, but he had the wanderlust, spending part of the '70s in Montréal, Canada, playing jazz and R&B with musicians like American expatriate pianist Sadik Hakim (born Forrest Argonne Thornton). He also played with nearly every organ player, since the sound

was big then—especially in Harlem. "All the clubs in Harlem had Hammond organs," Queen recalls.

Queen was a confirmed bebopper, but when he began playing in Europe he had to acquaint himself with some earlier styles. "A lot of the older musicians, some of them ex-Duke Ellington, had come to Europe as individual players and I had to fit in with what they were doing," he said. He name-checks Jimmy Woode, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, Red Holloway, Buddy Tate, Benny Bailey and Clark Terry. "I started playing all over Europe, so I asked myself, 'Why should I go back to New York?'," Queen said. He became the house drummer at the Antibes Jazz Festival and also recalls friendly relations with some of the avant garde musicians in Europe at that time—Sunny Murray, Alan Silva. But he wasn't going to play in their style. "They'd tell me I had to play more free, but I'd say that before I bake a cake, I want to know what all the ingredients are," Queen said.

From his Swiss base, Queen traveled all over, including a fractious stint with Nina Simone and several State Department tours with Tolliver, Silver and others, including eight weeks in Africa. And he started recording music himself, on his Nilva (Alvin spelled backwards) label. "I made so much money playing I was able to open up the label," he said. "We have 19 titles." To know what Queen sounded like back then, check out the 1980 LP *In Europe*.

Married to a Swiss woman and permanently settled in Geneva at the end of the '70s, Queen found he could put youthful bad habits behind him. "I was in a better position over here," he said. "I could cool out better, meet some new people." Eventually, Queen gave up his American citizenship because of tax problems, but that complicates his situation now.

Back in 1969, a car Queen was riding in got stopped and the police found a gun in the trunk. It wasn't Queen's gun, but he spent three weeks on Rikers Island. Grant Green's lawyer got him out. That was that, but when Queen attempted to come back for a Washington, D.C. event honoring the World War I-era Harlem Hellfighters in 2017, he was denied a visa. Authorities brought up that arrest and a drug charge

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

## LEST WE FORGET



# FRANK LOWE

BY ANDERS GRIFFEN

Frank Lowe was a tenor saxophonist known for his fiery sound and fierce conviction in the post-John Coltrane wave of free jazz improvisers. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, he was obsessed with music by the time he was a teenager and did all he could just to be near it. He started playing saxophone around the age of 12 and toward the end of high school, he got a job as a clerk and gofer at Stax Records. He befriended Packy Axton, a saxophonist just a couple years older, who played in the studio's house band (The Royal Spades, then The Mar-Keys) and taught him R&B licks. After high school, Lowe attempted a responsible path forward enrolling at the University of Kansas, Lawrence as a social science major. Listening to music fanatically, especially Coltrane, he did not complete his degree.

Lowe spent 1965 in Vietnam. He had been arrested and had to make the choice between jail or the war. In Vietnam he was a military police officer stationed in

Saigon. He had the good fortune of listening to a collection of jazz records, but the escalating conflict was frightening and Black soldiers were the first to go. Luckily his service was short, but the effect never went away. Moving to San Francisco he was on the Haight-Ashbury scene. He worked at a record shop with Jerry Garcia and became a trolley operator. He continuously pursued music and studied saxophone with Bert Wilson, who was part of a free jazz scene that included Sonny Simmons and Donald Rafael Garrett. Lowe gravitated toward the latter because he had worked with Coltrane and Lowe credits Garrett for teaching him breathing techniques for relaxation. Drummer Michael Carvin recalls meeting him when he first moved to San Francisco and checking him out because he had that "I am somebody" vibe. Shortly after they met, Lowe went to see Ornette Coleman perform at the Both/And Club. After the show Lowe went and played for him and Ornette said he should move to New York. He and his wife Carmen packed up and were soon in the big city.

Alice Coltrane hired Lowe on Coleman's recommendation and he made his album debut on her *World Galaxy* (Impulse!, 1971). "I listened to John Coltrane so hard," Lowe said, "until I listened my way right into his band!" Of course John had been gone four years by then. His association with the Alice Coltrane band gave him instant legitimacy and soon he was performing with trumpeter Don Cherry, drummer

Milford Graves and everybody on the nascent loft scene, including drummer Rashied Ali. Together, Ali and Lowe recorded *Duo Exchange* for their own label, Survival Records. The label produced a beautiful reissue earlier this year mastered from original tapes and expanded with never-before-heard music. Lowe's partnership in the label was short-lived, but he and Ali worked together periodically into the 2000s.

In 1973, Lowe led his first record date, *Black Beings* (ESP-Disk', also bassist William Parker's first record). In 2012, additional music from that initial date was released as *The Loweski*; and in 2014, a double LP entitled *Out Loud* was released, which was conceived as his second release but never issued. It was important to the artist to have something to show for the work he was doing and from 1975 onward, Lowe regularly produced records with a supporting cast that included, among others, Lester (trumpet) and Joseph (trombone) Bowie, trumpeters Wadada Leo Smith, Butch Morris and Olu Dara, bassists Alex Blake, Fred Williams and Didier Levallet and drummers Charles Bobo Shaw, Steve Reid and Phillip Wilson.

He also formed a fruitful relationship with Cherry and appeared on *Relativity Suite* (1973) and *Brown Rice* (1975). Later in the '70s he started a lasting relationship with violinist Billy Bang, realizing several projects together including *The Jazz Doctors* (with Garrett and drummer Denis Charles) and in the 2000s, a project

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

# MAHAKALA

BY GEORGE GRELLA

The outskirts of Hot Spring, Arkansas are not usually associated with jazz, much less free jazz. But that is the home of saxophonist Chad Fowler, who is also the founder of Mahakala Music, a record label that debuted last year and focuses on the free end of the contemporary scene.

"I'm certainly not surrounded by like-minded individuals," he says on the phone from his home. He delivers a brief history of how he got where he is: "I grew up in Arkansas, went to school at the University of Memphis, played on Beale Street...I used to organize jazz shows at the University." Like so many musicians, Fowler eventually needed a day job. He got into tech and ended up in Berlin, working for 6 Wunderkinder GmbH, the firm that made the popular task-organizing app Wunderlist. When Microsoft bought up the software, Fowler decided to take his leave of the tech business. So he went home.

"Being in the tech world, location-based things annoy me. It's stupid with the internet and I do all my work on the internet." Still, Mahakala has something of a local angle, in that Fowler wanted, as he says, "to bring the greats of free jazz together with local musicians." He wants the label to be "international and local at the same time, I want to bring in Berlin musicians I met" when he lived in that city.

Along with the collapsing of Southern and international geography, the other guiding principle of

the label comes from the title. Mahakala, Fowler explains, is the "Tibetan god of compassion, a wrathful emanation of something that should be beautiful and gentle." Fitting Fowler's expansive view, the deity is common to Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism and is one of the guises of Shiva, an embodiment of destructive and creative power.

That concept is clear on the label's first release, *Garden City*, credited to the ensemble Dopolarians and recorded in New Orleans. The group features bassist William Parker but other than him is, as the liner notes point out, "a decidedly Southern affair" — with Fowler, tenor saxophonist Kidd Jordan, vocalist Kelley Hurt, pianist Chris Parker and percussionist Alvin Fielder. The album was recorded in 2018, Fielder passed away in early 2019 and is honored on a recent Mahakala release, *A Tribute to Alvin Fielder – Live at Vision Festival XXIV*.

*Garden City* is a prototype of the Mahakala sound. The free playing has strong roots in the down-home blues style of Ornette Coleman and the improvisational interplay is seasoned with shout music and boogie-woogie. The qualities are subtle yet strong, so deep in the musicians' DNA that they themselves may not be conscious of them.

That may imply a mastermind at work, but not all the label's releases are direct products of Fowler's thinking. What's on the imprint is "a combination of my producing for the label and musicians bringing me things." As for the producing, Fowler is "really interested in putting different humans together and seeing what happens."

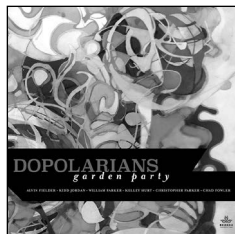
Case in point: another 2020 release, *More Music for a Free World* was put in the can by saxophonist Dave

Sewelson, trombonist Steve Swell, Parker and drummer Marvin Bugalu Smith in 2018. Fowler read about it in a conversation with Sewelson that Parker published in his *Conversations III* book and Fowler knew he had to have it. And despite demurring that he has any particular aesthetic vision, the balance of free playing, muscular pulse and sheer soulfulness across all the label's nascent releases show that he has a practiced ear for both the abstract and the grounded. "My desire is to do stuff that expands the common free language," he reveals, "and strives to be beautiful."

This past spring, the label also released an album capturing the ongoing series of duets between saxophonist Ivo Perelman and pianist Matthew Shipp, *Amalgam*. July saw the release of *Lacrimosa*, a duo album with Fowler and drummer/percussionist W.C. "Chad" Anderson. This month Mahakala is putting out an album of music from free jazz hero Frank Lowe, *Nothing But Love*, with contributions from Fowler, Hurt, Parker, bassist Bernard Santacruz, drummer Anders Griffen and a special appearance from saxophonist and fellow Memphian Bobby Lavell. Fowler has also put the label on all the streaming services, explaining via email that "I'm not really trying to make money — or even worried about making my money back — on this stuff. It's all about getting the music out there."

Thinking about what the post-coronavirus landscape might look like, Fowler offers, "When things get back to normal, I'm really going to wrap up production" on his current studio album, "and maybe do some live things." Like everyone else, he longs for the live music scene. ❖

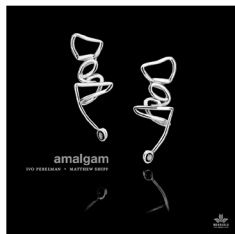
For more information, visit [mahakalamusic.com](http://mahakalamusic.com)



Garden Party  
Dopolarians



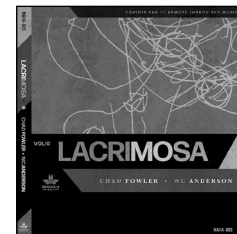
More Music for a Free World  
Dave Sewelson



Amalgam  
Ivo Perelman/Matthew Shipp



A Tribute to Alvin Fielder  
Jordan/Futterman/Parker/Drake



Lacrimosa  
Chad Fowler/WC Anderson

## VOXNEWS

# SOME SWEET WORDS

BY SUZANNE LORGE

In April 2009, bassist Gregg August premiered *Dialogues On Race*, a suite based on race-themed poetry and commissioned by The Jerome Foundation and The Jazz Gallery. After this debut—then a comment on race relations within the U.S. following Barack Obama's ascent to the presidency—August more or less forgot about the project until 2019, when he went into the studio to record it with a 12-piece jazz ensemble. This month, he releases *Dialogues On Race, Volume I* (Iacuesa), a work that has only grown in significance in the years since its inception. The instrumentals on this two-disc, 12-track recording take inspiration from gripping poetry by the likes of Maya Angelou ("The Bird Leaps"), Langston Hughes ("Sweet Words on Race") and Cornelius Eady ("Sherbet"). Without words, August's evocative modern jazz compositions convey all the complexity and depth of their difficult theme. But the tracks with vocals pack the greatest emotional punch—it's hard to hide from the messages they impart, even if one were so inclined. On "I Sang In The Sun", a poem by Carolyn Kizer, singer Forest VanDyke adopts the remorseful stance of witnesses to racial injustice and on the tripartite "Your Only Child", singers Frank Lacy and

Shelley Washington capture the elegiac solemnity of Marilyn Nelson's text, excerpted from her narrative poem, "A Wreath for Emmett Till". But what slays is the overdubbed voice of Till's mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, describing her son's murdered body as the ensemble stirs ominously underneath on "Mother Mamie's Reflections". Be forewarned. This one hurts.

Pioneering jazz singer **Peggy Lee** would have turned 100 this past May. Not many have taken on her songbook as an oeuvre worth exploring musically—and none have approached the trailblazing figure as a subject of academic inquiry. Singer/author **Tish Oney** addresses this omission with her book, *Peggy Lee: A Century of Song* (Rowman & Littlefield). Carefully researched and lovingly written, the biography digs into the backstories of Lee's career, documenting challenges faced and triumphs claimed during six decades of performing. Oney's backstory deserves attention: a PhD candidate at USC's Thornton School of Music, she chose Lee's long-ignored original work as the topic of her dissertation and went on to develop a related stage show, The Peggy Lee Project, under the tutelage of singer/jazz educator Tierney Sutton.

Two other summer reads for jazz singers: *This is Bop: Jon Hendricks and the Art of Vocal Jazz* (Equinox) by singer and journalist **Peter Jones**, who explores how vocalese maverick **Jon Hendricks'** contributions to vocal jazz, mind-boggling in their scope, set new standards for jazz singers everywhere. And *Embodied VoiceWork: Beyond Singing* (Barcelona Publishers), by singer/composer **Lisa**

**Sokolov**, a primer that helps singers understand the art of vocal improvisation. As an intro, hear Sokolov discuss her self-styled approach to vocal artistry on Lisa Peers' podcast for singers, *The Voice Work*.

For singers who want to learn in a classroom, albeit a virtual one, this month singer **Ayelet Rose Gottlieb** sends up Orchard of Pomegranates ([ayeletrose.com](http://ayeletrose.com)), an online intensive designed to delve into "the playful, spiritual and technical aspects of singing," she writes. "With eight cutting edge artist-teachers, we will explore our vocal expression through body-voice work, deep listening, experimental improvisation, VoiceNoise and a bit of jazz." To help in this effort, Gottlieb has lined up a star-studded online faculty: Theo Bleckmann, DB Boyko, Christine Duncan, Anat Fort, Susanna Hood, Sofia Rei, Pyeng Threadgill and Fay Victor.

While the pandemic rages on, three new standards releases offer some happy diversion: Vermont-based vocalist **Bidi Dworkin** recently launched her debut, *Beautiful Souvenirs* (Twenty Two Productions), a showcase for her sparkling voice at its finest, with arrangements by jazz legend **Jay Clayton**; singer **Noa Levy** joins bassist Shimpei Ogawa on *You, Me and Cole* (Belle Records), 10 expertly rendered selections by musical mastermind Cole Porter; and Italian singer **Mafalda Minnozzi**, a leading interpreter of Brazilian jazz, just released *Sensorial: Portraits in Bossa & Jazz* (Mama Produções Artísticas), a collection of seductive airs by beloved Brazilian composers. ❖

# KEITH TIPPETT

BY ANDREY HENKIN

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



British pianist Keith Tippett, a key figure bridging the various jazz and art-rock scenes of late '60s-early '70s Britain and whose albums ranged from solo outings to massive ensembles Centipede and Ark, died Jun. 14th at 72 from a heart attack after chronic health problems.

Tippett was born Aug. 25th, 1947 in the southwestern city of Bristol. In his youth he played both traditional jazz and church organ, foreshadowing a career of eclecticism. His earliest recordings demonstrated this further: sideman appearances with Jamaica-born, London-based saxophonist Harold McNair and progressive rock group King Crimson to go along with his debut *You Are Here... I Am There* (Polydor, 1970), which included a cross-section of his countrymen: Elton Dean, Nick Evans, Marc Charig, Jeff Clyne and Alan Jackson.

One of his most significant early statements came a year later with Centipede, a 50+ ensemble that included erstwhile members of Soft Machine, The Blue Notes, Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Nucleus, Brotherhood of Breath and the Mike Westbrook Orchestra and released a double LP, *September Energy*, for RCA Neon, as close to a British version of A Great Day in Harlem as can be imagined. Seven years later came a smaller but no less ambitious band, Ark, with some of the same players but key additions in Stan Tracey, Trevor Watts, Louis Moholo and Peter Kowald and another double-LP release, *Frames (Music for an imaginary film)*, on Ogun.

Over the decades Tippett released dozens of albums on Vertigo, RCA Victor, Vinyl, Ogun, FMP, Editions EG, Victo, FMR, Discus and other imprints. He had longterm partnerships with countrymen pianists Tracey (duet albums in 1976 and 2008) and Howard Riley (several collaborative dates between 1980-2002) and, most notably, his vocalist/wife Julie Tippett (née Driscoll, she took his legal name), the pair working together on Tippett's albums, in collaborative projects and as a duo under the moniker Couple In Spirit (Tippett survives her husband). Another longterm project was Mujician, originally the name used for three '80s solo albums for FMP but in 1990 applied to a quartet with saxophonist Paul Dunmall, bassist Paul Rogers and drummer Tony Levin, which made six albums for Cuneiform between 1990-2005.

Apart from all this were dozens of credits as a sideman with Dean, Charig, Dudu Pukwana, Harry Miller, Moholo, Dennis Gonzalez, Harry Beckett, Dunmall and many others, participation as a player and arranger for the early '90s Blue Notes tribute project Dedication Orchestra as well as credits as a composer for various ensembles. Tippett was active up until his death, reviving his solo Mujician project, recording with his octet, working with Tippett and continuing to play alongside a wide array of partners.



**JERRY BRUNO** (1920 - Jun. 22nd, 2020) The bassist was active since the '50s, recording and performing with Dick Garcia, Al Caiola, Bucky and John Pizzarelli, Red Norvo, Dave Bennett, John Cutrone and others. Bruno died Jun. 29th at 100.



**FREDDY COLE** (Oct. 15th, 1931 - Jun. 27th, 2020) The pianist and vocalist (and member of a musical family with brothers Nat, Ike and Eddie and niece Natalie and nephew Lionel all professional musicians) began leading dates in the mid '60s for a variety of labels, then gained a higher profile with runs of albums for Fantasy (1994-99), Telarc (2000-2003) and, most prolifically, HighNote starting in 2005, the latter resulting in nearly a dozen albums, most recently 2018's *My Mood Is You*. Cole died Jun. 27th at 88.



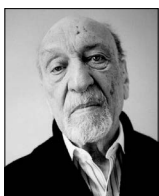
**JACQUES COURSIL** (Mar. 31st, 1938 - Jun. 25th, 2020) The French-Martiniquan trumpeter was active in The New Thing in mid '60s New York with credits under Sunny Murray and Frank Wright (plus an unissued ESP-Disk' session) and back in his hometown of Paris at the end of the decade with Burton Greene and two leader releases for BYG-Actuel, then left a music career for decades to concentrate on teaching linguistic theory, returning in the new millennium with albums on Tzadik, Universal Music France, Sunnyside, RogueArt and, posthumously, SAVVY. Coursil died Jun. 25th at 82.



**SIMON H. FELL** (Jan. 13th, 1959 - Jun. 28th, 2020) The British bassist made dozens of improvised music albums for his own Bruce's Fingers imprint since the mid '80s as well as dates released by Leo Lab, Discus, Red Toucan, Victo, Bo'Weavil and Confront to go along with credits with Alan Wilkinson, Paul Hession, Martin Archer, London Improvisers Orchestra, Company, Alex Ward, Milo Fine, Peter Brötzmann, Joe Morris, Phil Minton as well as the collaborative groups IST, Badland, VHF and Amere3. Fell died Jun. 28th at 61.



**HUGH FRASER** (Oct. 26th, 1958 - Jun. 17th, 2020) The Canadian trombonist has albums on CBC, Jazz Focus and Boathouse, membership in the Vancouver Ensemble of Jazz Improvisation and credits under Kenny Wheeler, Graham Collier and Hard Rubber Orchestra. Fraser died Jun. 17th at 62.



**MILTON GLASER** (Jun. 26th, 1929 - Jun. 26th, 2020) The graphic designer's amorous feelings for The Big Apple were clear with his iconic I ♥ NY logo and founding of *New York* magazine but his early work had him creating album and poster art, which in the jazz world included '50s-60s designs for Tony Scott, Dave Brubeck, Charlie Byrd and Barry Miles. Glaser died Jun. 26th at 91.



**ARTHUR HOYLE** (Sep. 9th, 1929 - Jun. 4th, 2020) The trumpeter had credits in the '50s-60s big bands of Lionel Hampton and Oliver Nelson, sideman work during the same period with Sonny Cox and Bunky Green, membership in the mid '50s iteration of the Sun Ra Arkestra and a guest appearance on Mike Reed's *People, Places & Things Stories and Negotiations* (428 Music, 2010). Hoyle died Jun. 4th at 90.



**IVAR LINDELL** (May 19th, 1940 - Jun. 3rd, 2020) The Swedish bassist had credits under Gunnar Lindqvist's G.L. Unit, Jan Wallgren's Orkester, Börje Fredriksson, Gunnar Fors, Lasse Werner, Christer Boustedt and Sune Spångberg and a 2004 collaboration with Bobo Stenson and Sven-Åke Johansson. Lindell died Jun. 3rd at 80.



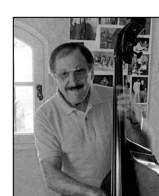
**JOHNNY MANDEL** (Nov. 23rd, 1925 - Jun. 29th, 2020) The composer had early credits as a trombonist with Buddy Rich, Charlie Ventura and Count Basie but is far better known for his tunes, performed by Basie, Chet Baker, Woody Herman, Quincy Jones, Rolf Ericson, Bill Perkins and others, the "Great Jazz Score" from the film *I Want To Live!* (with such players as Shelly Manne, Mel Lewis, Bill Holman, Frank Rosolino and more) and various pieces for movies that would become jazz standards, such as "Emily", "Close Enough for Love" and "The Shadow of Your Smile". Mandel died Jun. 29th at 94.



**GILBERT MATTHEWS** (Sep. 28th, 1943 - Jun. 25th, 2020) The South African drummer made his recording debut in 1969 with Chris Schilder, had mid to late '70s credits with Dollar Brand, Pat Matshikiza, Kippie Moketsi, Basil Coetzee and membership in Spirits Rejoice (not to be confused with fellow South African drummer Louis Moholo's period project of the same name) then, after moving to Sweden in the late '70s, work under Christer Boustedt, Johnny Dyani, Anders Gahnold, Chris McGregor, John Tchicai and Roland Keijser, six albums with the cooperative Brus Trio and one date as a leader, *Hot House* (Flash Music, 1994). Matthews died Jun. 25th at 76.



**TONY ROMANDINI** (Jul. 27th, 1928 - Jun. 3rd, 2020) The Québécois guitarist had albums on EMC and RCA Victor in the '60s and sideman credits with Maynard Ferguson, Herman Apple, Benny Barbara and Emile Normand. Romandini died Jun. 3rd at 91.



**PIERRE SIM** (Mar. 29th, 1929 - Jun. 15th, 2020) The French bassist recorded with Django Reinhardt, Don Byas, The Golden Gate Quartet, Jef Gilson, Buck Clayton, Bill Coleman, Dany Doriz, Robert Viger and others. Sim died Jun. 15th at 91. ❖

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SAXOPHONE EDIT

# Broome

ANDREAS SCHULZ FEAT. PAUL ENGELMANN AN OMP RELEASE

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

**SH:** Oh, it's great. The main impression I get every time I play with them is that there is an internal structure allowing individuals to be themselves. I think the first time I played with them, Marshall Allen came up to me and he said, "you are thinking too much, I can hear you thinking about whether what you are playing is right or wrong." I really took a lot from that. The main thing is he's allowing me to enter into that unit because of who I am, so they don't want me to consider if what I'm doing is right or wrong. They want me to just play and try to express myself as fully as possible. And that is what I feel like within that band, that is a bunch of individuals expressing themselves as fully as possible but with the communal aim of making the best kind of group music as they can. That's something I try to carry through to all the groups in the context of the music that we play.

**TNYCJR:** Do you have further Impulse! releases planned?

**SH:** Yeah. Right now we are just about finishing the mixing of the next Sons Of Kemet album, which should be out hopefully at the beginning of next year. We did the recording before lockdown and now lockdown's relaxed a bit we are just pressing on with the mixing and production, getting some horn parts done. I'm really excited with that and it's going to be a great album.

**TNYCJR:** Excellent! Are there things you want to do that aren't catered for by your current groups?

**SH:** There's a project that I'm probably going to start towards the end of the year, which is a collaboration between myself and a Martiniquan percussionist and electronic music producer called DJ Noss. He mixes traditional Martiniquan bélé music with electronic music in a very interactive way that I like so there's a lot that can be done with that combination. I just get ideas all the time. I've got books full of ideas. But for me the main thing is just time and what I decide to focus on. So at the moment it's just focusing on the Sons Of Kemet album.

**TNYCJR:** How would you describe the resurgence of jazz on the London scene?

**SH:** London has always had a thriving jazz scene but I think the factors around it have changed, in that there's a bigger and younger audience at the moment for it than there was 15 to 20 years ago. Certain musicians are playing a lot bigger spaces, so bigger, more commercial, festivals and just bigger venues. The media interest in it just wasn't there before. When I was in college the whole narrative was that we're not able to get instrumental music recognized by the mainstream press. There was a stigmatization around the music that it's not for regular people. One of the big factors in the resurgence is that there seems to be an acceptance of instrumental music from a jazz background that there wasn't before, which is heartening. I think a lot of the music that's being pushed forward as representative of the London jazz scene is music that takes a lot of elements from the American form but uses the music that we are into in London. And I think that the audiences are appreciating that, they are appreciating the creative element to mixing up the music and finding a way of making a lot of people enjoy it in a way that they thought they couldn't before.

**TNYCJR:** How does reception in NYC compare to London?

**SH:** The reception in New York is great. I've been going there quite a lot in the last couple of years and feel like the audience is growing and growing. They are starting to get an idea of what the music is and what the music is supposed to be achieving. But London for me is my

favorite place to play. It's the place where the music was formed and the audience is just the best audience. They come there to dance, to listen and be emotional with us. Whereas in the States, as far as I have experienced, there is an idea of reverence for the music in that it's taken in a concert for people to stand and listen to the music in a very reverential fashion. In London there's less of that. People dance to the music. They listen to it but they seem to be more engaged with their bodies. Not that all music has to have that, but for our music it does help, because it has a strong pulse to it. ❖

For more information, visit [shabakahutchings.com](http://shabakahutchings.com). Hutchings plays *SummerStage Anywhere* Aug. 8th. For more information, visit [cityparksfoundation.org/events/shabaka-hutchings](http://cityparksfoundation.org/events/shabaka-hutchings).

**Recommended Listening:**

- Zed-U—*Night Time on the Middle Passage* (Babel, 2009)
- Sons Of Kemet—*Burn* (Naim, 2013)
- The Heliocentrics—*13 Degrees Of Reality* (Naim, 2013)
- Sons Of Kemet—*Your Queen Is A Reptile* (Impulse!, 2016-17)
- The Comet Is Coming—*Trust in the Lifeforce of the Deep Mystery* (Impulse!, 2017)
- Shabaka And The Ancestors—*We Are Sent Here By History* (Impulse!, 2018-19)

(ENCORE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

from a stint with George Benson, as well as a DUI. He was told he'd need a waiver from the Department of Homeland Security. It could be seen as tragic, but Queen doesn't even vaguely resemble a tragic figure. He's actually pretty serene. One reason is the success of his latest album, *OP: A Tribute to Oscar Peterson* (Stunt), recorded in Copenhagen in 2018 with Danish musicians Zier Romme Larsen (piano) and Ida Hvid (drums). "I'm a happy guy," he said. "Happier than ever. I've taken up photography and I hike all the way to the top of the Swiss mountains and take pictures up there." ❖

For more information, visit [alvinqueen.com](http://alvinqueen.com)

**Recommended Listening:**

- Music Inc. / Charles Tolliver—*Impact* (Enja, 1972)
- Alvin Queen—*Ashanti* (Nilva, 1981)
- Alvin Queen/Lonnie Smith (feat. Melvin Sparks)—*Lenox and Seventh: The Definitive Black & Blue Sessions* (Black & Blue, 1985)
- Kenny Drew Trio—*At The Brewhouse* (Storyville, 1992)
- Alvin Queen—*I Ain't Looking At You* (Enja, 2005)
- Alvin Queen—*OP: A Tribute to Oscar Peterson* (Stunt, 2018)

(LEST WE FORGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

reflecting on Vietnam with Bang's fellow veterans. In the '90s he formed the Saxemble with James Carter and Michael Marcus, an ensemble consisting of saxophones accompanied by drums. He also formed a relationship with bassist Bernard Santacruz that produced three albums and a number of tours. One of his final bands was formed around pianist Bertha Hope. Lowe died of complications due to lung cancer on Sep. 19th, 2003. ❖

**Recommended Listening:**

- Frank Lowe/Rashied Ali—*Duo Exchange: The Complete Sessions* (Survival, 1972)
- Frank Lowe—*The Flam* (Black Saint, 1975)
- Frank Lowe—*Decision in Paradise* (Soul Note, 1984)
- Frank Lowe—*Bodies and Soul* (CIMP, 1995)
- Frank Lowe/Bernard Santacruz—*Short Tales* (Bleu Regard, 1999)
- Billy Bang Quintet (featuring Frank Lowe)—*Above & Beyond: An Evening in Grand Rapids* (Justin Time, 2003)



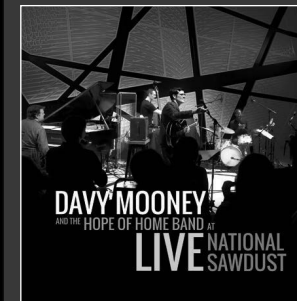
**ADAM NUSSBAUM  
LEAD BELLY  
REIMAGINED**

SSC 1578

AVAILABLE 8/28/20

Two years ago, Sunnyside released drummer Adam Nussbaum's first true recording as a leader, and fantastic tribute to one of his idols, **The Lead Belly Project**. Nussbaum's band of saxophonist Ohad Talmor and dual guitarists, Steve Cardenas and Nate Radley, ably channeled a program of Lead Belly tunes chosen by the leader, mainly culled from the Folkway Recordings 10-inch records Nussbaum grew up listening to. The project allowed Nussbaum to show another side of his musical character that he hadn't previously been able to showcase regularly during his remarkable forty-year career.

In July of 2019, Nussbaum and the ensemble returned to Talmor's home studio, Seeds, in Brooklyn. They recorded with no separation between the musicians and entirely live. The musicians' comfort with the material and each other can be heard in the results, as the pieces have an emotional intimacy that goes beyond their prior efforts. The result of these recordings can be heard on their new album, **Lead Belly Reimagined**.



**DAVY MOONEY  
AND THE HOPE OF HOME BAND**

**LIVE@NATIONAL SAWDUST**

SSC 1591

AVAILABLE 7/17/20

Guitarist/composer Davy Mooney knows just how special these experiences are and wanted to capture the essence of their magic on his new recording, *Live at National Sawdust*. On the recording, Mooney brings together his incredible Hope of Home band, featuring saxophonist John Ellis, pianist Jon Cowherd, bassist Matt Clohesy and drummer Brian Blade, to play old and new material for a receptive group of listeners at Brooklyn's National Sawdust and to conjure a fabulously warm and heartfelt performance that can be revisited over and over.

Mooney and the Hope of Home Band assembled at National Sawdust on January 27, 2020 with engineer Sascha von Oertzen. Of course, live recordings have their challenges. The performers have to consider the audience and can not just start over again. But that is precisely why live recordings can be amazing. The emphasis on being in the moment supercedes the idea of perfection, typically producing compelling performances.



Sunnyside

[www.sunnysiderecords.com](http://www.sunnysiderecords.com)



**The Question**  
Glenn Zaleski (Sunnyside)  
by Dan Bilawsky

Answers, while often prized, are merely end points. Questions, however, are wide-open planes. Ripe for examination and rich in possibility, questions tend to morph and multiply—and offer far more than any single person can fully understand—as life flies by. That’s something that pianist Glenn Zaleski readily acknowledges.

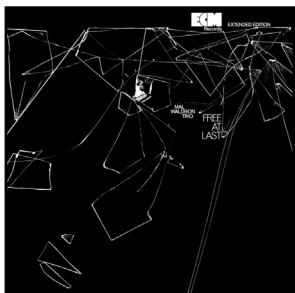
In the summer of 2019, barely into his 30s with a wife who was expecting, new realities quickly surrounded Zaleski. Those developments brought him back to a treasured adage—“the question is more important than the answer”—and pushed him forward into different spaces. Allowing his music to absorb and refract these experiences, Zaleski laid the foundations for this compelling quintet set.

Fronting a group of familiars, Zaleski opens on “The Question” itself. One of several pieces penned during that summer of searching, it initially presents a sense of uncertainty before gelling and offering space to tenor saxophonist Lucas Pino, Zaleski and drummer Allan Mednard. “The Answer”, logically, serves as the conclusion to the album. There Zaleski ruminates alone, chewing on the question(s) and offering a summation in concise fashion.

Six numbers appear between those related poles, offering glimpses into the pianist’s heart, impulses, calculations and friendships. “Backstep”, a waltz that leans on Coltrane changes in reverse, puts Adam O’Farrill’s cheery trumpet in a positive light. “Smoke and Mirrors”, a (mostly) low-key look at framing social media fiction as real life, finds bassist Desmond White playing to the title in his use of a mirrored bassline. Zaleski’s gorgeous take on Dave Brubeck’s “Strange Meadow Lark” honors the dearly departed pianist in the year of his centennial celebration. And James Williams’ swinging “Road Life” appeals to a jazz musician’s very nature.

Two tracks find Zaleski working with an expanded palette—the creatively colorful “Subterfuge” adds Alex LoRe (alto), Andrew Gutauskas (baritone), Nick Finzer (trombone) and Andrew Renfroe (guitar) to the mix while the mellow “BK Bossa Nova” brings guitarist Yotam Silberstein into the picture—but neither one stands in opposition to the overall feel of the record. *The Question* freely offers space to music of many shapes and sizes.

For more information, visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com). Zaleski live-streams at [patreon.com/glennzaleski](http://patreon.com/glennzaleski).



**Free at Last**  
Mal Waldron (ECM)  
by George Grella

The retrospective of 50 years of history for the great modern music label ECM makes it even more surprising

to remember that this was Manfred Eicher’s inaugural release. In a universe built out of Keith Jarrett and the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Dave Holland and Pat Metheny and Arvo Pärt, Mal Waldron, who would have turned 95 this month, seems like a radical outlier.

But is he? If the sonic and aesthetic values of the label emphasize clarity and a sense of purpose and meaningfulness, then Waldron is a perfect mentor and this album an urtext. And this is an excellent ECM album and an excellent jazz album all around. Even with issue number one, the deep, crystalline engineering is there and it flatters Waldron’s sound to maximum effect.

Plangent is a word that describes both the pianist’s art and the label’s vision. Waldron is all about the left hand and while *Free at Last* is a familiar example of his virtues, he and Swiss bassist Isla Eckinger and American drummer Clarence Becton are at their peak in getting the most out of the basslines and vamps.

Waldron and Eckinger play loose around the beat but have a tight, ongoing call and response between each other; Waldron plays a bass riff, Eckinger returns his own version in time, the groove goes on. Becton has a spry motor and the drummer too builds his solo statements off of Waldron’s playing.

This is really one of the strongest statements on record of Waldron’s mature voice. Tracks like the opening “Rat Now” and “Rock My Soul” are soulful, bluesy, funky and hypnotic, one foot in the deep roots of Black music in America, the other in a global view of music as a trance experience. It’s the kind of thing, modern but with clear roots, that may have been just as responsible for guiding Eicher’s vision for the label as was Eicher’s aesthetics in choosing Waldron for his first recording.

As for the roots, in between the 19th Century and 1969, when the album was recorded, there came Billie Holiday and Waldron looks back at his extensive experience with her by playing Ann Ronell’s “Willow Weep for Me” in an arrangement that manages a delicate balance between old school and modernism. The reissue duplicates this track with one of its extra cuts, a longer edit of the master take.

There are also alternate takes of “1-3-234” and “Balladina” and “Boo”. These four extend the original duration to a generous 70 minutes from the original release’s 42. The extra music is all good, but what it really does is reinforce the punchy, succinct stature of the original release.

For more information, visit [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)



**Into the Shadows**  
John Fedchok NY Sextet (Summit)  
by Pierre Giroux

John Fedchok is a savvy and fluid bop-influenced trombonist who, prior to leading his own big band and other smaller groups, did a stellar seven-year stint with the Woody Herman band of the ‘80s, serving as Music Director, featured soloist and one of the band’s prominent arrangers of such numbers as “Blues For Red” and “Come Sunday”.

In this snap, crackle and pop session, Fedchok leads his NY Sextet of Scott Wendholt (trumpet/flugelhorn), Walt Weiskopf (tenor saxophone), Allan Farnham (piano), David Finck (bass) and Eric Halvorson (drums) through five Fedchok originals and three recognized standards, the latter all in

Fedchok arrangements. His signature approach is generally filled with a captivating feeling of approachability, musical interplay that is neither understated nor inflexible.

Opener “RSVP” features an initial section of dissonance before leading into Fedchok’s opening solo. The frame is a Latin vibe pushed along by Halvorson. All the players are given a chance to strut their stuff, forecasting what lies ahead.

In 1961, Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers recorded their first sextet album entitled *Art Blakey!!!! Jazz Messengers!!!!*, which featured a trumpet, trombone and tenor saxophone frontline. Fedchok tips his cap to that iteration of the group with another original entitled “Alpha Dog”. Following an intro of unison harmony by the frontline, Fedchok jumps into his solo, showing he is a player of perspective and assurance, neither of which should come as a surprise. Weiskopf follows with an intrepid solo reminiscent of Wayne Shorter, the saxophonist on the aforementioned Blakey album. The band demonstrates that they are measured and thoughtful improvisers.

The three familiar standards are Axel Stordahl-Paul Weston-Sammy Cahn’s “I Should Care”, Eden Ahbez’ “Nature Boy” and Gene de Paul-Don Raye’s “Star Eyes”, all given updated readings covering a range of styles, tempo and harmonization thereby putting “new wine into old bottles”.

The closer is a blues-infused flag waver “On The Edge”. The theme is set by Farnham as he lays down an intro filled with speed and complexity. Fedchok’s solo is full of improvisational tangents and as each soloist picks up their piece of the composition their offerings are bright and harmonically layered.

For more information, visit [summitrecords.com](http://summitrecords.com)

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Mulatu Astatke & The Black Jesus Experience – *To Know Without Knowing* (Agogo)
- Conny Bauer/Matthias Bauer/Dag Magnus – *The Gift* (NoBusiness)
- Daniel Carter, Matthew Shipp, William Parker, Gerald Cleaver – *Welcome Adventure! Vol. 1* (577 Records)
- Luigi Ceccarelli/Hamid Drake/Gianni Trovalusci/Ken Vandermark – *Open Border* (Catalytic Sound)
- Paul Desmond – *The Complete 1975 Toronto Recordings* (Mosaic)
- Billy Martin – *Guilty* (Amulet)
- Orchestra Entropy – *Rituals* (Discus-Music)
- Barre Phillips – *Thirty years in between* (Victo)
- Adam Shulman Septet – *West Meets East* (Cellar Music)
- Alister Spence – *Whirlpool* (Solo Piano) (Alister Spence Music)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

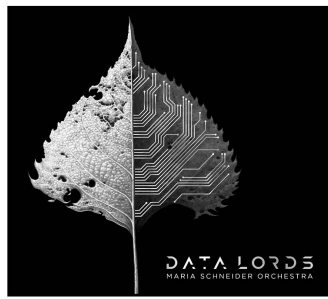
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- Full Blast – *Farewell Tonic* (Trost)
- Jacob Garchik – *Clear Line* (Yestereve)
- Mark Helias – *Roof Rights* (Radio Legs Music)
- Krakow Improvisers Orchestra – *KJO at Cricoteka* (Not Two)
- Joachim Kühn & Trummerschlung – *Playing Probabilities* (ACT Music)
- Michael Musillami/Peter Madsen – *Pictures* (Playscape)
- Sam Newsome Trio – *Free Wyoming* (*Live at the Metro Coffee Co.*) (s/t)
- Ana Ruiz – *And The World Exploded Into Love* (s/t)
- Øyvind Skarbø/Fredrik Ljungkvist/Kris Davis/Ole Morten Vågan – *Inland Empire* (Clean Feed)
- Masayuki Takayanagi New Direction Unit – *Axis/Another Revolvable Thing* (*In Concert*) (Blank Forms)

Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director



**Fellini 100 - I Compagni 35**  
I Compagni (ICDISC)  
by Stuart Broomer



**Data Lords**  
Maria Schneider Orchestra (ArtistShare)  
by George Kanzler

*Fellini 100 - I Compagni 35* commemorates a pair of 2020 anniversaries: the centennial of filmmaker Federico Fellini's birth and the 35th anniversary of I Compagni, the Dutch orchestra led by saxophonist/composer/arranger Bo van de Graaf. There's an essential connection between the two. I Compagni began as a kind of tribute band, devoted to the soundtracks of Fellini's films, celebrating particularly the director's long-standing relationship with composer Nino Rota. During its history, I Compagni has increasingly integrated original music, including compositions by its leader and others, but the Fellini-Rota connection remains a key part of its identity.

The other essential component is a special trajectory of "New Dutch Swing", the witty orchestral curve that includes some of Misha Mengelberg's compositions and arrangements for the Instant Composers Pool (ICP) and the radicalized village-band character of the Willem Breuker Kollektief, joined here with the influences of Charles Mingus and Carla Bley. This commemorative program, recorded live in Nijmegen on Jan. 19th, 2020, touches on all these elements and does so with a special animation, lively inventive orchestrations bursting with vital improvisation. I Compagni is constructed for orchestral color and texture, with three saxophonists (van de Graaf, Frank Nielander, Inga Rothammel), electric and acoustic bassists (Carel van Rijn and Arjen Gorter), three pianists/keyboardists (Kees Molhoek, Guus Janssen and Leo Bouwmeester), three strings (Aili Deiwiks, Friedmar Hitzer and Saskia Meijs), two singers (Peter Freijssen and Serena Jansen), two drummers (Thomas Jaspers and Rob Verdurmen) and an individual trumpeter (Paul Vlieks), trombonist (Arjen Reeser) and accordion player (Gert Wantenaar).

Rota's art is initially celebrated with "Milano e Nadio", a theme from Luchino Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers*, arranged by Vlieks. It immediately establishes the band's élan, a combination of polished, rapidly shifting voices and rhythms conjoined with fierce swing, including foregrounded passages by Gorter and van Rijn. The Fellini-Rota connection is mined repeatedly, including a brilliant minute of "Charleston di Giulietta" and the suite "Ocho e Mezzo" ("8 1/2"), a van de Graaf adaptation of Bley's arrangement for the recently departed Hal Willner's Fellini project.

Music that springs from other sources complements the film music. Van de Graaf's extended four-part suite "Maar Nooit Vergeten (Don't Forget)" is rich in shifting moods and materials while Janssen's "Jojo Jive" crushes 1920s dance music, sentimental balladry and atonal strings into a compact form. Mengelberg's "De Sprong o Romantiek der Hazen (the Romantic Jump of Hares)" can sound like a Mingus parody when played by the ICP, but here it sounds more like a tribute, thanks to baritone saxophonist Rothammel, who sounds like she's channeling Hamiet Bluiett. Giuseppe Verdi's "Pieta ti prenda del mio dolor", an aria from *Aida*, is similarly graced by Nielander's soaring tenor saxophone.

I Compagni is as compelling as it is quirky. Hopefully its perfect balance of romance and irony will sustain it for years to come.

For more information, visit [icompani.nl](http://icompani.nl)

Maria Schneider's *Data Lords* orchestral album consists of two contrasting suites—each its own CD—made up of pieces that are more tone poems than songs or blues. The first five-piece suite is "The Digital World", its emphatic, signature sound dominated by Ben Monder's electric guitar. The six pieces comprising "Our Natural World" are distinguished by the accordion of Gary Versace. Throughout, Schneider employs dynamics, contrast, time-tempo changes and tonal-timbral variations to build her pieces rather than more conventional forms. And she unleashes soloists against or within those forms on all 11 tracks.

"The Digital World" begins with "A World Lost", a wistful piano-chords-led introduction giving way to skeining electric guitar over rising horns, a tenor saxophone (Rich Perry) eventually engulfed by the ensemble before deceleration to a guitar and rhythm section finale. The suite ends with "Data Lords", a sometimes frenzied, high-energy evocation of pessimism about the eventual takeover of life by artificial intelligence (AI) as predicted by Stephen Hawking, AI represented by Mike Rodriguez' electronically enhanced trumpet and the brutal drums and brass riffs swamping Dave Pietro's alto saxophone solo.

In between those two are three pieces devoted to questionable aspects of the digital world as Schneider sees it. The "Don't Be Evil" motto "mocks Google as the cartoonish overlord that it is," according to the composer. It is her most blatantly satiric work, burlesquing elements of martial and patriotic music. "CQ CQ, Is Anybody There?" has rhythms and passages built on ham radio Morse Code (her father was a ham radio operator), with Donny McCaslin's tenor saxophone representing the human and Greg Gisbert's electrified trumpet AI. Today's world of commercial and military satellites orbiting the globe is evoked by the ensemble, with Scott Robinson's baritone saxophone embodying "Sputnik".

"Our Natural World" takes inspiration from nature (a garden, a bird, the sky), pottery and poetry. The suite's music is more lyrical and melodic than "The Digital World", with some slower tempos and, in "Look Up", the only conventional swing rhythm on the album as well as a formidable feature for trombonist Marshall Gilkes. "Sanzenin", evoking a Buddhist garden, features accordion over a brass choir; "Stone Song" bounces syncopations deftly among Steve Wilson's soprano saxophone, accordion, piano (Frank Kimbrough), bass (Jay Anderson) and drums (Johnathan Blake); "Braided Together" weaves ensemble textures and dynamics around Pietro's alto. Wilson's alto dominates "Bluebird" in interactions with the ensemble and rhythm section. And McCaslin's tenor hails "The Sun Waited for Me", a setting for a Ted Kooser poem in the tradition of Duke Ellington's "I Like the Sunrise".

*Data Lords* is available as a download, but the CD version includes a lavishly illustrated 36-page booklet with Schneider's comments on all the pieces, numerous photographs of musicians and the Kooser poems that inspired "Braided Together" and "The Sun Waited for Me".

For more information, visit [artistshare.com](http://artistshare.com)

## UNEARTHED GEM



**The Duo: Duke Ellington 100**  
Mulgrew Miller & Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen  
(Storyville)  
by Marilyn Lester

Storyville Record's release of *The Duo*, 21 years after its recording, begs the question, "what took so long?" The CD, with pianist Mulgrew Miller (who would have turned 65 this month) and Danish bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (NHØP), is a magnificent homage to Duke Ellington's work with his revolutionary young bassist Jimmie Blanton. This 1999 effort (Ellington's centenary year) never copies, but splendidly invokes the spirit of the masters they honor.

Blanton was a wunderkind, discovered by Ellington in St. Louis in late October 1939 and hired immediately to play with the Orchestra. Blanton, initially trained on violin, applied those principles to the upright, adding pizzicato and arco techniques to the walking 4/4 time-keeping meter, sparking a major transformation in the way jazz bassists approached their craft. NHØP is possibly what Blanton could have become creatively had he lived beyond his mere 23 years. Not only does NHØP have an amazing range of technique but is also a remarkably intuitive player. Both he and Miller are wonderfully attuned to each other but, beyond that, NHØP is channeling something extra from the ethers, so much so that he often achieves a Zen oneness with the instrument. Like Blanton, there are times when NHØP emulates violin or guitar and even brass. His work on "Come Sunday" features fingering that a saxophonist would employ running up and down the keys. Miller's style is akin to that of Oscar Peterson: lyrical and sometimes florid, but with a certain elegant restraint. Both have an impeccable sense of harmony and timing, often weaving in and out of each other's output with remarkable finesse. This feat is especially evident on the 12-bar-based "C Jam Blues", elevating the number to something beyond its relative simplicity.

In Blanton Ellington knew the prize he'd captured, quick to feature him out front on the bandstand. He also recorded duets with Blanton beginning in November 1939; "Blues" and "Pitter Patter Panther" are two that Miller and NHØP include here. The pair captures the fun of the latter piece in this joyous homage, Miller's take on Ellington's Harlem Stride style full of respect, the pianist delivering his own innovative and supportive performance on the keys. This musical deference is seen in NHØP's "O.D. Blues", which parallels Ellington backing Blanton out front. Another original composition is by Miller: the easy-listening "Blues in the PM's". Several tunes allow Miller to come forward for the bulk of play, including a swinging, exotic "Caravan" and "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)", although taken as a whole, *The Duo* is NHØP's. The magic created by Miller and NHØP led the pair to continue to work together until the latter's untimely death in 2005, the former following in 2013 with his own premature demise, all the more reason that *The Duo* is a CD to treasure.

For more information, visit [storyvillerecords.com](http://storyvillerecords.com)

## GLOBE UNITY



**Pu:**  
**Ville Herrala (We Jazz)**  
*El Suelo Mío*  
**Jorge Roeder (s/r)**  
*The Balloon Catcher*  
**Jošt Drašler (Sploh)**  
 by Tom Greenland

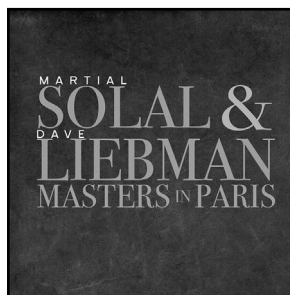
Physically difficult to play, sonically marginalized at the low end of the pitch range and often relegated to a supportive role in improvising ensembles, the acoustic bass is nevertheless a marvelously versatile instrument, fully capable (when handled by an adept) of sustaining a listener's interest all on its lonesome, as proven by three recent solo projects.

**Pu:**, Finnish bassist Ville Herrala's debut, contains 14 terse vignettes that alternately highlight pizzicato and arco techniques. The former is employed over rolling riffs ("Pu:1", "Pu:10"), minimalistic motifs ("Pu:3"), chromatic walking lines ("Pu:14") and long, slowly but relentlessly developed ideas ("Pu:7"). On "Pu:5" he uses a two-handed batting technique to churn out pentatonic lines. He uses a bow to extract colorful arrays of upper frequencies, which can whirr like a throat-singer ("Pu:2"), crackle like a campfire log ("Pu:11"), mewl like a peevish tot ("Pu:4"), groan like a mudslide ("Pu:6") or sputter like an overworked machine ("Pu:8"). On "Pu:9" he bats the bow to conjure up a forest full of crickets; on "Pu:12" he pounds the bass body itself. "Pu:13", his most varied piece, sounds something like an atonal cello suite.

Though Peruvian bassist Jorge Roeder has worked with top-shelf artists in New York for over a decade, *El Suelo Mío* is his first album. The 13 tracks combine originals and covers, all but one featuring his powerful yet graceful plucked attack, his robust ringing tone to the fore, several pieces anchored by low D and C pedal tones made possible by a string extender. On "Solo Juntos", "Bounce" and "Thing Thing" his ornamented melodic sequences, spurred by a powerful pizzicato, recall an oud player's *taksim* (improvisation). On the title track, "Chabuca Limeña", "El Plebeyo", "I'll Remember April" and "Silencio de um Minuto" he shows an orchestral command of the bass, balancing melody, counterpoint, harmony and percussion with the agility of a solo pianist or guitarist. His most expressive work is on "Patrona", "Rambler" and a cover of Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman".

Slovenian bassist Jošt Drašler's solo debut *The Balloon Catcher* is a suite of impromptu miniatures realized through diverse preparations, implements and extended techniques. "Blue Balloon" reveals—in fits and starts—a plethora of sounds: lions fighting in the night, an elephant's trumpet, a drum roll, a pinched growl, a model airplane motor. "Red Balloon" is more tentative, evoking the rappings of a haunted house, the drips of a leaky faucet, bumps in the night. Drašler is not afraid to let silences speak for him, as on "Water Balloon", "Green Balloon" or "Grandma Balloon", where the gaps and lulls invite a response. Not a melodic player in the traditional sense, he is, like Roeder, a master orchestrator, melding sounds and textures into dense, polychromatic soundscapes, best exemplified by the organized anarchy of "Yellow Balloon" and mellifluous cacophony of "Flying Balloon".

For more information, visit [wejazz.fi](http://wejazz.fi), [jorgeroeder.com](http://jorgeroeder.com) and [sploh.si](http://sploh.si)



**Masters in Paris**  
**Martial Solal/Dave Liebman (Sunnyside)**  
 by Ken Dryden

Given the wide range of stylistic interests that French pianist Martial Solal (who turns 93 this month) and American saxophonist Dave Liebman have demonstrated during their respective decades-long careers, finding middle ground was not an issue during their duo performances together in 2016. An earlier CD from an August 2016 French concert, *Masters In Bordeaux*, was issued in 2017 to critical acclaim. This new CD is a Parisian concert recorded a few months later and eclipses the previous release. While they perform familiar standards and jazz favorites, including two songs that they tackled on the previous album, there is nothing predictable about their approaches to any of these songs, with their originals being an added bonus.

Spontaneity is the key element in each song. An off-center piano vamp and bristling, gutsy tenor saxophone quickly detour from the theme of "A Night In Tunisia" while creative use of space should be required listening for young virtuosi who haven't yet learned to let their music breathe. Solal's dissonant, inventive chords introduce the theme of "Stella By Starlight", conveying a sense of playfulness, then Liebman makes his entrance on soprano to bring in a wistful air to contrast with the pianist's humorous line.

Solal previously recorded his "In and Out" with Johnny Griffin; this version with Liebman on tenor proves to be even more striking, as his improvisational flights soar above the mysterious melody. Solal's whimsical side is on full display in the rambunctious interpretation of "Night and Day", as he hints at Bud Powell with a "Parisian Thoroughfare"-like run and myriad salutes to other bop greats without making them overly obvious. Liebman (on tenor) is up to the challenge and he revels in providing an inventive contrasting line while also adding his own amusing licks. Liebman's easygoing waltz "Small One" is a terrific showcase for his soprano, with Solal's unconventional supporting lines stimulating the composer to greater heights. One can only hope that other concerts featuring these two jazz masters are waiting to be prepared for release.

For more information, visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)



**Imaginary Archipelago**  
**Adam Rudolph/Ralph M. Jones/Hamid Drake (Meta)**  
**Balancing Tear**  
**Mako Sica/Hamid Drake (Astral Spirits)**  
**A Tribute to Alvin Fielder (Live at Vision Festival XXIV)**  
**Kidd Jordan/Joel Futterman/**  
**William Parker/Hamid Drake (Mahakala)**  
 by Robert Iannapolo

Hamid Drake, who turns 65 this month, became familiar to creative music listeners with his recording debut on the Mandingo Griot Society album from 1978. Over 40 years later he's still going strong, one of the foremost drummers in creative improvised music.

One of his bandmates on that first release was percussionist Adam Rudolph. Since that auspicious debut, their musical partnership has been particularly

strong. Throughout the years, they've cropped up on each other's albums and albums by Yusef Lateef, Fred Anderson, Pharoah Sanders and others.

In 2017, they formed Karuna Trio with reed/flute player Ralph M. Jones and released a self-titled album to great reviews. *Imaginary Archipelago* is the followup. This volume is dedicated to Lateef and Karuna's music shares elements with his ventures into "non-idiomatic" improvisatory music. But all three players are strong individualists with their own ideas of how to approach this idiom.

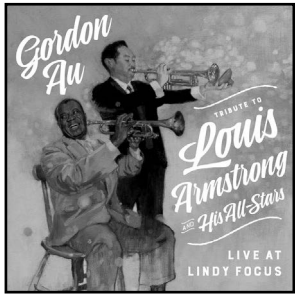
*Imaginary Archipelago* consists of 11 tracks stemming from improvisations then refashioned by Rudolph through editing, electronic processing and sequencing. Rudolph is a master at this as he's shown on his own recordings. Dividing the music into sequences from 4 to 11 minutes, he doesn't overload it with effects or flashy editing. Each member details his corner of the triangle and the results are then enhanced by Rudolph's post-production. He crafts a suite that flows from beginning to end as it fades into the ether. "Alima" starts with a phrase from bass clarinet that is then looped and becomes the base for the track. Electronics are added as the piece develops, featuring subtle percussive elements. The floating group stasis of "Chandirasa" is succeeded by the vibrant percussion/saxophone-heavy "Suwakaba" but the sequencing sounds natural. (Incidentally, although there is post-processing involved, they do this sort of thing live as well.) The first Karuna album was good but *Imaginary Archipelago* ups the ante by presenting it as a more coherent whole. This is clearly the music of a unit.

Mako Sica is a band from Chicago that has been making music on the rock side of the spectrum for over a decade, with Przemyslaw Krysz Drazek (trumpet, guitar), Brent Fuscaldo (vocals, electric bass, classical guitar, harmonica, Tibetan prayer beads, lightbulb) and Chaetan Newell (piano, cello, drums, electric piano, sound effects, synthesizer, tambourine, ukelele, acoustic bass, viola). But boundaries seem immaterial to the makeup of this group. The influence of the recently departed Ennio Morricone's Western soundtracks informs the opener "Trapeze" with its lonely trumpet, twangy guitar and slowly developing pace. One can also hear the influence of Middle Eastern modes in their playing, especially on "Enchanted City". Drake has recorded and played with Mako Sica before, giving them a firm rhythmic foundation without ever overpowering the band's unique sound and approach. He knows when to give the music a groove, textural color and when not to play. All in all, a meeting between two Chicago forces bearing fruit.

The third disc featuring Drake in the drum seat is *A Tribute to Alvin Fielder*, recorded at the 24th Vision Festival in 2019. Fielder (who died in January of that year) was an original member of the AACM in '60s Chicago. By the time Drake began associating with AACM in the '70s, Fielder had moved to New Orleans where he, along with saxophonist Kidd Jordan, nurtured a nascent free jazz scene. Fielder was a revered drummer in AACM circles and Drake is the perfect drummer for this celebration. This disc presents the full festival set, the quartet completed by Jordan, pianist Joel Futterman and bassist William Parker. It's a bracing, invigorating 45 minutes, weaving in and out of various moods and rhythmic sequences. Songs are referenced including "Nature Boy" (twice) and "Motherless Child", with a digression that switches things to a swinging tempo for a few minutes. During Futterman's solo he quotes Monk's "Crepuscule with Nellie". But basically this is free blowing of the highest order from four current masters paying tribute to a former musical comrade (Jordan and Futterman) and a musical elder (Parker and Drake).

For more information, visit [metarecords.com](http://metarecords.com), [astralspiritsrecords.com](http://astralspiritsrecords.com) and [mahakalamusic.com](http://mahakalamusic.com)





**Tribute to Louis Armstrong & His All-Stars**  
**Gordon Au (s/r)**  
 by Scott Yanow

During 1947-71, Louis Armstrong toured the world with his All-Stars, a versatile sextet with whom the great trumpeter-singer entertained millions of listeners. He put on a colorful if sometimes predictable show filled with swing standards, his hits, pop tunes, New Orleans jazz and humorous novelties. There are good and bad points to trumpeter Gordon Au's live tribute to the Armstrong All-Stars of the '50s, available in time for what would have been the trumpeter's 119th birthday this month. Au's trumpet playing comes close to sounding like Armstrong much of the time, although without the high notes, and the joy in his playing along with the way that he improvises off the melody are similar.

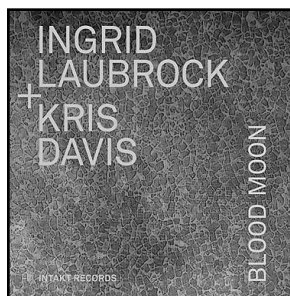
It is nice to hear revivals of some tunes that Armstrong recorded but rarely played live including "Unless", "Lovely Weather We're Having" and "Don't Fence Me In". The sidemen sound comfortable in this setting with clarinetist Jacob Zimmerman occasionally hinting at Barney Bigard and trombonist Lucian Cobb adding sparks (the band is completed by soprano saxophonist/clarinetist Keenan McKenzie, guitarist Jonathan Stout, pianist Chris Dawson, bassist Jen Hodge and drummer Josh Collazo). And, fortunately, no one tries to imitate Armstrong's singing.

On the minus side, nearly every song is taken at a slow-medium tempo, one that may be preferred by

some dancers but which gives this set a sameness throughout. Armstrong always varied his tempos, ranging from heated romps to dramatic ballads, never letting his show drag, like during this routine version of "Beale Street Blues". All but 5 of the 18 songs have vocals, either from the pleasant if bland Laura Windley or Jim Ziegler and none of the soloists get to stretch out much. Many of the ensemble passages are arranged rather than jammed, which takes away from the potential excitement and spontaneity. And, with a few exceptions, Armstrong's trademark songs are missing.

Of course, one should neither expect a group today to sound exactly like Armstrong's bands, nor should they be expected to copy his versions of songs. But this well-meaning tribute, at its best on a mostly stirring rendition of "C'est Si Bon" and the closing ensembles of "St. Louis Blues", could have used an infusion of excitement, humor and color. Instead of being hot, it is mostly just cool.

For more information, visit [gordonaumusic.com](http://gordonaumusic.com)



**Blood Moon**  
**Ingrid Laubrock/Kris Davis (Intakt)**  
 by John Pietaro

"This new release is part of my series of duo albums with pianists," saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock explained. But clearly, here's a pairing that comes complete with might in its history. "Kris was one of the first connections I made in the U.S. when I was still

commuting from London," she says so the final product is akin to breathing in tandem. The two have enjoyed numerous performances together over a dozen or so years, whether in cooperative projects like Paradoxical Frog or the LARK Quartet, Laubrock's Anti-House and Contemporary Chaos Practices or Davis' Capricorn Climber. This intimate set may well be the apex.

The album opens with a work by Davis, "Snakes and Lattice", which, filled with noir-esque phrases, immediately draws the listener in. Dominated by fast melodic runs in unison, it's reminiscent of some of those late '50s works that refused to be cited as Third Stream but nonetheless contain all of the ingredients of modern classical fused with jazz. Swinging even without a rhythm section, per se, it bumps and careens deliciously as expansive harmonies take us along this roller-coaster ride through the dark.

And yet, it contrasts markedly with Laubrock's first piece on the album, the title cut, which speaks to the haunting sound of Erik Satie and the band of French modernists in his wake, Les Six. Davis lays the groundwork for this deep foray, with soprano saxophone emoting out front, equal parts vibrant and sinewy, foregoing the expected range of the horn. So tangible, so evocative is this sound, it conjures the score of a dramatic tragedy.

Later, the pair also indulge in casting soundscapes, taunting the very harmonics (is that Laubrock playing into the open piano, allowing the strings to vibrate sympathetically and intone on "Flying Embers"?) and patiently color the air about one's stereo speakers. Though both Davis and Laubrock are busy composers in their own right, they are first vital improvisers and several selections appear to be freely devised, credited jointly ("Gunweep" and "Elephant in the Room"). Within the whole, such works easily reflect where free jazz took on new music with a vengeance.

For more information, visit [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch). Laubrock live-streams at [facebook.com/laubrock](https://www.facebook.com/laubrock).

**ON SCREEN**



**Kansas City - a film by Robert Altman**  
 (Arrow Films)  
 by George Kanzler

Never has a mainstream movie not about jazz been so infused with the music as Robert Altman's 1995 film noir, *Kansas City*. Other movies—also roughly categorized as film noir—such as *Anatomy of a Murder* (Duke Ellington) and *Elevator to the Gallows* (Miles Davis) are suffused with jazz in their scores, but the music is mostly off-screen background. The musicians in *Kansas City* are seen, frequently, on screen. Jazz serves not only as the background music but also as an on-screen leitmotif. Every scene in one strand of the intermeshed plot, involving a Black gangster, Seldom Seen (Harry Belafonte), is introduced with a closeup of a jazz musician soloing in Seen's nightclub, The Hey Hey Club. And at the very center of the film is an extended cutting/jam session (advertised on posters) between tenor saxophonists Lester Young (Joshua Redman) and Coleman Hawkins (Craig Handy).

The noir-ish plot of *Kansas City* concerns a

kidnapping perpetrated by a young woman and self-styled "moll" Blondie (Jennifer Jason Leigh) of a laudanum-addled politician's wife, Red (Miranda Richardson) in order to influence the KC political machine to convince Seen to release her husband/boyfriend Johnny O'Hara (Dermot Mulroney), who was caught after robbing a customer of Seen's gambling operation while wearing blackface. The film's opening half-hour recounts the initial kidnapping and robbery in cross-cut scenes and chronology that eventually elide together.

But *Kansas City* is much more than a noir plot, even much more than an evocation of the city's vibrant jazz scene in 1934. It is Altman's memories of the city he grew up in, as experienced and as told to him as a child. Filming in Kansas City, his production refurbished parts of the old Union Station railroad terminal as well as the downtown street that once hosted The Hey Hey and other jazz nightclubs. The film becomes a rich tapestry infused with all the real and fantastic memories of Kansas City percolating in Altman's head. Blondie worships Jean Harlow, the film star who actually hailed from Kansas City, and takes her moll characters as portrayed not only in movies but also in screen magazines as her inspiration; she even takes Red to see a Clark Gable-Jean Harlow movie. When seen as reflecting those influences, Leigh's performance is not as cartoonish as it seems. Altman also emphasizes the contrast between Blondie and her Harlow ideal by showing her throughout most of the film with ratty hair and ugly, prosthetic teeth.

The peregrinations of Blondie and Red around the city, from Union Station to a gas station (where a gangster chase and shootout happen almost

irrelevantly), Charlie Parker's mother's home to a maternity home to Blondie's brother-in-law's bar, where men are brought to be taken out to vote multiple times in the election taking place, allow Altman to show us an expansive view of his remembered Kansas City. Just as the alternating scenes at The Hey Hey Club let him bring the jazz background into the foreground.

Parker is a young boy scout, carrying but never playing an alto saxophone as he watches the action from The Hey Hey Club balcony. Those he sees include Count Basie (Cyrus Chestnut), Mary Lou Williams (Geri Allen) and Joe Turner (Kevin Mahogany). We also briefly see the famously corrupt Democratic boss of KC, Tom Pendergast and his minions in smoke-filled backrooms, looking and acting remarkably like the gangsters.

The absurdist strain that runs through the Blondie-Red part of the plot comes to a deadly conclusion as the film ends, but don't miss the end credits, over a rendition of Duke Ellington's "In My Solitude" featuring bassists Ron Carter and Christian McBride. If you want to hear more of the music from the film, seek out *Jazz '34*, a companion film of just the musicians in *Kansas City* performing complete versions of all the tunes heard in snippets in the movie. Unfortunately this newly released Blu-ray disc doesn't include *Jazz '34*, although it has many other additions, including Altman's running commentary over the (repeated) full film; commentaries by two critics and interviews with cast members and Joshua Redman.

For more information, visit [arrowfilms.com/product-detail/kansas-city-blu-ray/FCD1983](http://arrowfilms.com/product-detail/kansas-city-blu-ray/FCD1983)

## IN PRINT



*The Voice in the Headphones*  
David Grubbs  
(Duke University Press)  
by George Grella

This is a book about recording music in a professional studio that will in no way instruct anyone in how to have a successful recording session. Nor is it about making music, or any kind of creative process, though paradoxically it is a sort of blow-by-blow chronicle of how some music got made and was recorded.

Guitarist David Grubbs has instead written a slice of a day in the life of a musician, a novella-length prose poem, which is at its core a personal journal—impressionistic, mercurial, nicely bemused at himself and the situation he finds himself in, which is specifically in Skylight Recording, on a “Tuesday or Wednesday”.

In *The Voice in the Headphones*, Grubbs (who has written *Records Ruin the Landscape: John Cage, the Sixties and Sound Recording* and the more recent *Now that the audience is assembled*, which more closely resembles this new book) is in the studio to record soundtrack music for a film. It is an experience encapsulated in the space-time of the recording process of isolation booths, mixing boards, the room that not only floats acoustically but also is free from the flow of real time in the outside world.

The first line: “The voice in the headphones says, ‘You’re rolling’” and the book then spools out like the tape on the multi-track machine. Yes, tape—Grubbs has nostalgia for the gone-away world of analog recordings. He’s not sentimental, he’s sensual: “to savor the full stop of the tape transport as it slams like a circuit breaker. Relish the precursor, pre-flashing cursor, antecedent to digital media’s attendant cursor... I engage the high-speed rewind, gun it in the straightaway and steel yourself as the end of the reel flaps insanely.”

As conversational and relaxed as is that tone and as peripatetic as the journey through one man’s synaptic memories can be, the writing is focused and precise. Along with the quasi-buried rhythms and rhyme schemes of the above excerpt, Grubbs is always moving forward, like the tape reel. With breaks for playback, friends’ visits, even lunch, he gets to the end of the session—the mix.

Along the way, Grubbs detours into the story of Familiar Faces, apparently a band he was in as a kid with his sister and cousin, the mystery of a cassette of scratch song recordings somehow overwritten by the room tone of a car’s trunk rolling down the highway and an observation on what it means to squander one’s talent and if that’s even possible. “The auditioning of individual tracks,” he observes of the mix, “is the dumbest and most satisfying of remixes, the examination of one strand at a time.”

This is an insider’s inside book about an inside experience, but Grubbs’ warmth will appeal to anyone who’s wondered just what goes on in those sequestered rooms.

For more information, visit [dukeupress.edu/the-voice-in-the-headphones](http://dukeupress.edu/the-voice-in-the-headphones)



*Dialogues On Race, Volume One*  
Gregg August (Iacussa)  
by Marco Cangiano

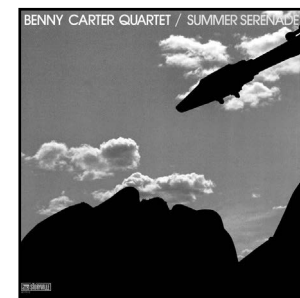
Race relations in the United States have never been tenser than in the last few months and this work provides a much-needed pause for reflection. Gregg August is an accomplished bass player and composer equally at ease with the classical, avant garde, jazz and Latin jazz circles. Among his many accomplishments is membership in the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, JD Allen Trio (nine albums) and Arturo O’Farrill’s AfroLatin Jazz Orchestra.

In 2003 he founded his own record label, Iacussa, for which he has recorded three critically acclaimed albums. *Dialogues On Race, Volume One* is the result of a commission from The Jazz Gallery and The Jerome Foundation to raise the awareness on race. In essence, it is an extended suite for a 12-piece jazz ensemble, plus 3 vocalists, strings and a narrator. August, much like fellow bassist Charles Mingus, seems to use the full ensemble as an extension of his considerable musical and technical skills as player. Tenor saxophonist Allen is the leading soloist but each of the musicians involved participate and contribute to the music with passion and brilliant leads.

The fulcrum of two CDs is the 1955 infamous lynching of a 14-year-old boy, Emmett Till, in Mississippi, which inspires three versions of “Your Only Child”, based on Marilyn Nelson’s poem comparing the suffering of Till’s mother with Mary mother of Christ. The first two versions feature Frank Lacy’s harsh singing and a pizzicato solo by August. But it is the third version that strikes a chord with this listener as Allen’s tenor dialogue with Shelley Washington’s voice builds an almost tangible tension, then leaves strings and arco bass to describe a sentiment of hopelessness. In between August places a chilling rendition of “Mother Mamie’s Reflections”, where the voice of Emmett’s own mother describes the uncovering of the coffin so that the whole world could see the sheer brutality of which her son was the innocent victim. A dramatic use of phases à la Steve Reich combined with Allen’s declamatory tenor add tension to the drama delivering a performance that is hard to forget.

The remainder of the music is sumptuous yet somewhat somber, taking inspiration from poems by Maya Angelou (“The Bird Leaps” and “I Rise”), Francisco Alarcón (“Letter to America”) and Langston Hughes (“Sweet Words on Race”), among others. Most of the pieces are structured along instrumental opening conversations—“I Rise” is a wonderful example—followed by either singing or recitatives and/or full ensemble performances. Although Mingus comes to mind, particularly in the shifting “Sky” and “The Bird Leaps”, August’s music is more structured and programmatic, lacking orgiastic explosions and sudden changes of pace and mood. The soloists are all superb, with particular mention to Ken Thomson on bass clarinet, Marcus Rojas on tuba in “Letter to America” and Rafi Malkiel on trombone and euphonium. This is music that should be widely disseminated and carefully listened to while put in the broader context we have been living for the last few decades. It is a project like this that gives hope for progress at last. Looking forward to Volume Two.

For more information, visit [greggaugust.com](http://greggaugust.com)



*Summer Serenade*  
Benny Carter Quartet (Storyville)  
by Pierre Giroux

Benny Carter was a major force of the Swing Era although he may not have obtained the full recognition he deserved. As an alto saxophonist, he gave the instrument credibility as a jazz voice together with Johnny Hodges. And as a composer, he enjoyed success, many of his compositions becoming jazz and popular standards, four of which are included in this session.

This album for the Danish Storyville label was recorded 40 years ago this month in Copenhagen with two longtime expatriates, pianist Kenny Drew and drummer Ed Thigpen, plus local bassist Jesper Lundgaard. In this mainstream session, Carter and his cohorts sashay through the compositions in their understated way.

Side A opens with an uptempo romp of “Indiana” with swinging alto providing a bopping pulse through the initial introduction of the melody. Always inventive, Carter decorates the composition with his fertile improvisations. Drew, who was the pianist on John Coltrane’s influential album *Blue Train*, has a fondness for long right-hand lines and shows that disposition in his solo. After an exchange of eighths between Lundgaard and Thigpen, Carter takes the tune out with his characteristic flourishes.

The title track, a Carter original, is a softly offered bossa nova with an elegant alto tone and wondrous vibrato leading the way. Drew is thoughtfully inventive, his strong single-note playing complementary to Carter’s efforts. The side closes with another Carter number “All That Jazz”. It is offered as a vocal by Richard Boone the actor, who may best be remembered as Paladin, the errant knight gunslinger in the 1957-1963 TV series *Have Gun Will Travel*. He delivers the number with conviction and in tune, but there was never any chance that he would have had a career as a singer.

Side B is dominated by two classic Carter compositions, “Blue Star” and “When Lights Are Low”. The former was a hallmark track on Carter’s 1961 album *Further Definitions*, which in addition to Carter, featured tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins out in front of a mini-big band. In this version of the composition, Carter lays down the melody in a slow tempo, on which he provides a solo filled with arpeggios, double-time figures and extensions on the frame of the composition. Drew picks up the progression of the melody and manipulates the number in inventive ways. Carter’s out chorus repeats the melody. “When Lights Are Low” is one of Carter’s best-known compositions and has been covered by numerous jazz and popular musicians including Chet Baker, Tony Bennett and John Pizzarelli. His own interpretation is a bright tempo swinger, which offers each of the players a chance to explore the notes, chords and rhythm patterns of the piece to imbue it with freshness.

This release is a limited-edition run and pressed on 180-gram virgin vinyl, remastered for the best sound to complement the pressing. It also contains the original cover art and liner notes. There is also a tie in to Carter’s birthday on Aug. 8th, when he would have turned 113 years old.

For more information, visit [storyvillerecords.com](http://storyvillerecords.com)



**Whirlpool (Solo Piano)**  
**Alister Spence (Alister Spence Music)**  
 by Thomas Conrad

Alister Spence will be a new name to most Americans but he is established on the Australian avant garde scene. *Whirlpool* is his first solo piano recording in over 30 years. It is a two-CD set with 104 minutes of entirely improvised music.

Spence, who turns 65 this month, knows his way around a keyboard. Press notes state that he recorded this session "with no preparation aside from practicing particular techniques." Some of the techniques are formidable. He can execute high-speed complexity in compound clusters like "(over)taken". He is capable of arcane dissonance like "(re)new" and erudite harmony like "(well)spring" and powerful jolting tremolos like "(under)standing". He derives an impressive variety of sonorities from a piano, not only with his many levels of percussiveness but also with scraping or howling or nasal twanging from a prepared piano.

For most of the first CD, Spence keeps you, if not enthralled, then curious. You wonder what he will come up with next. But extended exposure to Spence becomes an experience more intellectual and technical than aesthetic. The 23 dark, dense, turgid, crabbed pieces sound like scientific exercises in pianistic problem-solving. Spence is entitled to his own personal concept of beauty. The prediction here is that his concept will leave many listeners out in the cold.

Perhaps one issue with this album, apart from the content, is the vibe. The musician who wrote the book on fully improvised solo piano works is, of course, Keith Jarrett. But Jarrett's "solo concerts" are recorded live, in settings where you can hear and feel the audience responding to the creative swells and even the lulls in Jarrett's impulsive spontaneous moment-to-moment discoveries. *Whirlpool* was done at a studio in Sydney. It feels cloistral, closed in on itself. It lacks the electricity of shared energy. Perhaps improvised solo piano performances need to take place in public, in the open air.

For more information, visit [alisterspence.com](http://alisterspence.com)



**Silk Songs For Space Dogs**  
**Potsa Lotsa XL (Leo)**  
**This Week is in Two Weeks**  
**Talibam! with Silke Eberhard and Nikolaus Neuser**  
**(ESP-Disk')**  
 by Kurt Gottschalk

Silke Eberhard's fine work as instrumentalist and composer has won her the 2020 Jazzpreis Berlin this month, but it's her talent as an arranger that makes her stand out against a globe full of talented musicians in the jazz tradition. Some well-placed and more-than-worthy projects have helped her to gain much deserved attention; a couple of albums of Charles Mingus tunes arranged for the unusual formation of trumpet, drums and her own saxophone and the completion and recording of an unfinished Eric Dolphy suite haven't

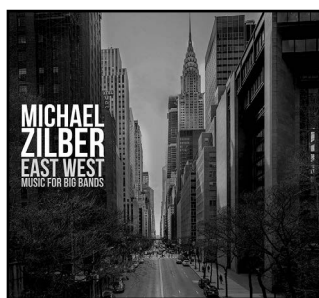
hurt her in the eyes of the jazz press.

Eberhard explored Dolphy's music in her Potsa Lotsa, with a name borrowed from a Dolphy working title. The quartet grew to a septet and is now a tenet playing her own compositions. She says Dolphy's ghost runs through the music on her new *Silk Songs For Space Dogs* but if he's in there, his old boss Mingus is still calling the shots. The tight themes, full of sharp turns and orchestrated variation, call his Atlantic albums very much to mind. It's a smart set from start to finish: enjoyably upbeat tunes that neither lean on nor tear down the orthodoxy. "Skeletons and Silhouettes" shines with unison piano/vibraphone lines and bright horn counterpoint that tickle the inner ear and ripple up to the imagination.

One of those bright horns is trumpeter Nikolaus Neuser, a steady force in both the Dolphy and Mingus projects. He's also a part of a rather unlikely foursome with Eberhard and manic New York duo Talibam!. The two pairs toured Europe together last year and at some point pit their unscripted, double duologues direct to lathe cutter. The result is the LP/download *This Week is in Two Weeks*, a surprising expedition with a collage by the late poet Steve Dalachinsky on the cover.

The surprise here comes from the New York side of the equation. Talibam! generally thrives on chaos, often combining disparate forms and ideas into a single, sometimes messy, endeavor, with drummer Kevin Shea seemingly capable of playing anything and keyboard player Matt Mottel willing to do anything. The surprise here is that Mottel's ordinarily unbridled keyboards become the paste that holds them together. His Sun Ra-inspired synthesizer is present as ever, but he displays an unexpected proficiency for rhythmic piano patterns that bridge the extemporaneous outbursts of the other three. It's sort of a free jazz version of the 1972 pile-up *Jamming with Edward*, in which Ry Cooder and 60% of The Rolling Stones flip, flop and fly while pianist Nicky Hopkins keeps them in something of a formation. *This Week is in Two Weeks* may not be any better remembered than that earlier album, but it similarly captures an oddly unexpurgated moment in time.

For more information, visit [leorecords.com](http://leorecords.com) and [espdisk.com](http://espdisk.com)



**East West: Music for Big Bands**  
**Michael Zilber (Origin)**  
 by Marco Cangiano

Michael Zilber's resumé is rich and varied, deserving much wider recognition. Originally from Canada, he spent the first part of his career in New York then moved across the country to San Francisco, where he now resides. This is by far his most ambitious project and first recording with big bands, following the very successful *Originals for the Originals* and the quartets he shared with guitar great John Stowell.

Zilber's writing reflects a deep knowledge and appreciation of the jazz tradition, as many of his original compositions paraphrase and borrow from familiar chord sequences—"Fantasia on Trane Changes" and "Repressions" being clear examples of this approach. Overall, Zilber seems to prefer a middle-of-the-road aesthetic compared with Maria Schneider's more imaginative writing and Darcy James Argue and Michael Leonhart's iconoclastic takes on the genre.

The juxtaposition between east and west is reflected by the choice of material, which aims at

leveraging, to borrow from Zilber's own words, "more of a sense of urgency with the New York band and more of a feeling of contemplation and space with the Bay Area band." The results are captivating, with a more hard-swinging approach prevailing with the former and a more lyrical one with the latter. Each ensemble is of the highest quality, both in interpreting Zilber's arrangements and in the solo department, unfortunately not identified in the scanty liner notes.

Turning to the material, many are the highlights. From the New York band it is worth mentioning opening burner "Hen House", reminiscent of Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge", particularly in Zilber's effective solo; the arrangement and solos of a complex and introspective reading of Wayne Shorter's "Fall"; Miles Davis' "Joshua", based on a funky bassline by John Benitez and featuring the Rhodes piano of Mike Holober (of Gotham Jazz Orchestra); and the ingenious "The Breckerfast Club" dedicated to and based on some of the late Michael Brecker's patterns and featuring an exciting saxophone chase.

The Bay Area band's highlights are the heartfelt dedication "Shiva" to bassist John Shifflett, featuring Dan Feiszli's warm bass; "Another Prayer", a John Coltrane-inspired composition and arrangement; and "Weather Shorter", a dedication to Shorter's Weather Report period featuring Zilber's soprano. Speaking of which, it is only fair to emphasize the leader's contributions on both tenor and soprano, besides his composing, arranging and conducting. Less convincing are the readings of "Skylark" and "Over The Rainbow", with a rather conventional vocal contribution by Joe Bagale. Overall a fine album deserving a rapid follow-up.

For more information, visit [originrecords.com](http://originrecords.com)

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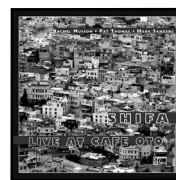
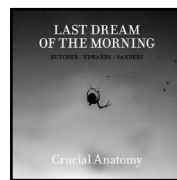
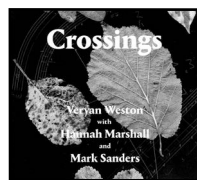
*Chasin' The Bird (Charlie Parker in California)*  
Dave Chisholm with Peter Markowski (Z2 Comics)  
by Elliott Simon

With a two-month residency at Billy Berg's L.A. Jazz Club, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie brought bebop to the West Coast. *Chasin' the Bird* is a graphic novel that examines a portion of Bird's time there. The events that led up to Bird's stay at Camarillo State Hospital, subsequent release and famous resurgent performance at Jack's Basket Room provide fertile material for author/artist Dave Chisholm and colorist Peter Markowski to chronicle Parker's highs and lows and add to his legend. The 2020 release coincides with the centennial of Parker's birth and is set to include recordings from this time period.

Chisholm is a trumpet player and educator with a deep understanding of Parker's revolutionary contributions to modern jazz but the story he tells is contemporary. Frank discussion of racial inequality and police brutality coupled with the "Breath" that comes out of Bird's saxophone when he plays are chilling in their immediacy while Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's foreword candidly places the past into the present. Chisholm also plays with the vagaries of memory and the astute reader can discover out-of-place elements as six distinct narrators describe Parker's disappearances, public nudity, drug addiction and hedonism. More interesting though are their memories of Bird's thirst for knowledge and quest for universal truth as they relate to his music and being Black in America. Markowski's exceptional coloring is the soundtrack to Chisholm's narrative and as Parker's life spirals downward the music turns monochromatic.

Save for Gillespie, who is clearly Parker's brother-in arms but exits early, the narrators all end up at Jack's Basket Room after giving singular insights into Bird along the way. Jirayr Zorthian is the "fellow artist", whose ranch was a Bohemian paradise and the setting for a Parker performance that literally turned orgiastic. He and Parker debate the universality of art in the context of the origins of the universe. The "fan" is photographer William Claxton, who lives with his parents in suburbia. His interactions with Bird are among the most interesting and with Claxton's parents away Bird crashes at their house, turns young white suburban kids on to Bach and tells them to remember everything that they practice and then forget it all when you start to play. He and Claxton discuss race in America with Parker opining, "Racism isn't always loud...it's the quiet kind that makes it impossible to relax." Sculptor Julie MacDonald is the "lover" who exposes Parker to her world before the inevitable breakup while John Coltrane, after a heated argument over Parker's admiration for "old white European musicians", sees the future of Black American music after hearing Parker play. Ross Russell, the founder of Dial Records who recorded Parker's most iconic sides, is the "record executive" who takes the reader through Parker's crash and burn and subsequent rebirth. Parker's legend is ever expanding and *Chasin' the Bird* is a unique addition to canon.

For more information, visit [z2comics.com](http://z2comics.com)



*Crossings*  
Vevyan Weston (Hi4Head)  
*Crucial Anatomy*  
Last Dream of the Morning (Trost)  
*Shifa: Live at Cafe Oto*  
Rachel Musson/Pat Thomas/Mark Sanders (577 Records)  
by Marc Medwin

It is easy for the reviewer, confronted by music difficult to understand, let alone elucidate, to fling adjectives concerning diversity and versatility at the page and hope they stick. Mark Sanders removes all guilt from that verbal association, because it would be difficult to imagine a more multivalent presence in the drum chair. He can make a "New Thing" blowing session swing and a delicately free improvisation shimmer, but he also interjects powerhouse time drumming with just the right balance of groove and freedom to keep a rock-solid sense of swing fresh. This entire continuum of possibility is reflected on these discs, revealing a cross-section of his talent as we celebrate his 60th birthday.

While his wonderful trio with bassist John Edwards and pianist Vevyan Weston is not represented, per se, two of the albums do allow audition of his work in that illustrious company, though the ever-adventurous Weston is at a keystone on *Crossings*. The nine pieces offer up a bewildering but sometimes whimsical array of influence, none more so than on "Extinction". Dig that opening bass groove Weston is laying down, redolent of nothing so much as Stevie Wonder's "Superstition", with Sanders only too willing to join in the fun. The funky groove just begins to sizzle when cellist Hannah Marshall intones the words of William Butler Yeats: "Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths..." Her cello-doubled melody inhabits a space outside but conjoined to everything else, a modal area of "light and half-light" placing Sanders and Weston's sure-fire brick-and-mortar foundation in stark relief. It is a stunningly effective study in time and contrast, mirrored in an even subtler fashion on the aptly titled "Kalimba Setting". Who's got the melody anyway, Weston's "kalimba" or Marshall's wonderful pizzicato? Maybe, it's actually given to Sanders' hi-hat, which we hear transforming, almost without awareness, from exquisite echo and foil to rhythmic pillar.

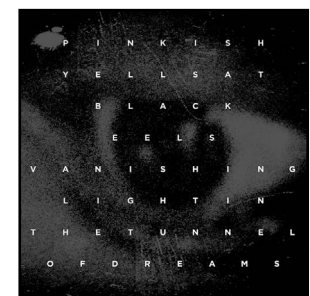
A similar subtlety defines *Crucial Anatomy*, the second album by the trio of Sanders, saxophonist John Butcher and bassist John Edwards. Amid the transparent clarity of malleted toms and blocks, that nasty groove Sanders can set up at any moment just peeks around the corner on "Free from Ghosts" before disappearing again to return in various transformations. Edwards and Sanders are as tight as ever, as their loose but womb-secure interplay opening the microtonally droning "Curling Vine" attests and Butcher may as well be an orchestra unto himself. The composer and improviser Keith Rowe telescopes time by amplifying the clicks made by movements of a steel ruler; Butcher does something similar via staggeringly fast articulation, flutter-tonguing his way toward rapture as the trio intensity slowly builds from atomism toward laminarity. Beyond all of this is the iridescent opening of "Spike Oil", where the obvious percussion comes from Edwards! Butcher and Sanders are in territory initially charted by AMM or Group Ongaku. While Butcher's nearly inaudible rustlings liquify the air, Sanders resonates and brushes parts of his kit in solidarity, several minutes of permeable bliss before the piece takes on something close to an idiom.

Not that the word idiom is meant as a pejorative, as illustrated by the live recordings comprising *Shifa* under the brilliant direction of saxophonist Rachel Musson. She, Sanders and pianist Pat Thomas engage in what could be the most easily categorized of these three

albums, though Thomas' counterpoint on "Improvisation 2" already casts doubt on that statement, prefiguring the complexities of exchanges to come. Shades of those immensely satisfying early European free improv dates are conjured as the trio interacts with all of the rapid-fire communication desired. This is music that also hearkens back to Stockhausen's moment form. Listen starting at 1:29 for one of these pithy moments, explored and then discarded for further adventures. Soprano and snare hit in perfect synchronicity, Musson then revisiting a ripe tone while Sanders crescendos with rolls on metal and skin, Thomas interjecting something miraculously merging block chord and arpeggio. If Sanders spends considerable portions in his non-repetitive and timbrally diverse Tony Oxley bag, he is continually reaching beyond it, as with the multiple traditions he evokes in the first improvisation after Thomas and Musson's rich dialogue. He virtually whispers, cymbal and snare barely breathing past chords and tenor. Of course, the repose doesn't last long in such a dynamic setting.

It is largely down to Sanders' comfort in whatever situation he finds himself, his obvious love of collaboration, that these albums work as well as they do, but every musician in these trio sessions works along similarly symbiotic lines. They create music whose originality may just as often reject or reference the myriad traditions spawning it.

For more information, visit [hi4headrecords.com](http://hi4headrecords.com), [trost.at](http://trost.at) and [577records.com](http://577records.com)



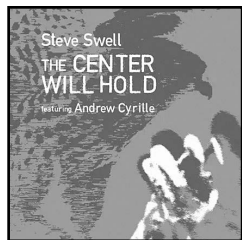
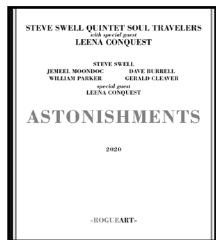
*Vanishing Light in the Tunnel of Dreams*  
Pinkish Black/Yells at Eels (Ayler)  
by Alex Henderson

*Vanishing Light in the Tunnel of Dreams* brings together two very different groups: experimental rock duo Pinkish Black (Daron Beck, keyboards, synthesizer; Jon Teague, drums, synthesizer) and avant garde jazz trio Yells at Eels (Dennis González, trumpet, percussion, who turns 66 this month; and sons Aaron, electric bass, acoustic bass, vocals and Stefan, drums, percussion, marimba). This recording mixes electric avant garde jazz with elements of progressive rock, space rock and funk, the eclecticism partially from the variety of instruments in use. Some of the synthesizers emulate the sound of a crunching rock guitar and, as such, moody offerings such as "The Sorrow of Guernica", "Slow Cascade of Tears" and Middle Eastern-flavored "Heatstroke Mirage" have a great deal of rock energy to go with their electric avant garde jazz improvisation.

The word "moody" definitely applies throughout this CD. "Meditation", the title track and other selections favor the more contemplative and restrained side of avant garde jazz. Darker emotions are often expressed and some of the harmonies recall classic Pink Floyd albums of the '70s such as *Dark Side of the Moon*, *Animals* and *Wish You Were Here* while the influence of Miles Davis' fusion dates of the '70s-80s is impossible to miss during González' spare, introspective trumpet improvisations on "The Sorrow of Guernica", "Meditation" and other selections.

The members of Pinkish Black and Yells at Eels aren't afraid to incorporate many different types of music and the result is an appealing, unexpected departure from the groups' own releases.

For more information, visit [ayler.com](http://ayler.com)



*Astonishments*  
Steve Swell Quintet Soul Travelers (RogueArt)  
*The Center Will Hold* (featuring Andrew Cyrille)  
Steve Swell (Not Two)  
by Mark Keresman

Not to burden trombonist Steve Swell with titanic comparisons, but it is safe to say that he is a logical heir to the worldly, cutting-edge personship of Roswell Rudd. Swell studied under Rudd and also with masters Jimmy Knepper and Grachan Moncur III (like Rudd, an associate of Archie Shepp in the '60s). Swell possesses a hearty, rippling, vibrant, somewhat vocalized tone, one of the most distinctive around, and like Rudd, is strongly rooted in the past with an eye on the outermost limits.

*Astonishments* is one of those relatively rare items, a jazz album featuring spoken word, in this case by Leena Conquest. The kickoff title track features her dryly sing-song narration amid the dandy din. Bassist William Parker and drummer Gerald Cleaver maintain a viable feeling of forward motion as Conquest pays homage to free jazz masters past and present and the muse(s) that drove them, Swell sounding out bristling trombone in punctuation.

"Sketch 7" finds the leader front and center, leading a twisty bit of freebop, driving and punchy, pianist Dave Burrell opaquely banging out percussive chords, alto saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc delivering obliquely Charlie Parker-flavored swing, robust and lithe. Parker buzzes a brief solo and Cleaver is, well, Cleaver—clean, sharp and churning without overly drawing attention to himself, a true team player. Full of vibrancy and free of self-absorption, *Astonishments* is a consistently bracing and fascinating listen.

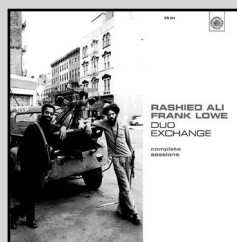
*The Center Will Not Hold* is a slightly more conventional Swell effort. The instrumentation, however, veers off the beaten path—this is perhaps one of the rarest of birds, as this session features harmonica not employed in any sort of bluesy or rootsy manner. Ariel Bart plays in a way that texturally enriches the ensemble playing, the "saxophone" (this writer has heard the harmonica referred to as the "Mississippi saxophone") to Swell's trombone.

Béla Bartók's "Mikrokosmos II" features a mini-free-for-all until Swell's torrid soloing shows one way through the piece with crystalline, shimmering piano from Robert Boston, drummer Andrew Cyrille crackling through the stratosphere and strings (violinist/violist Jason Kao Hwang and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm) searing their way across the skies. "Laugh So You Don't Cry" has a droll, zigzagging, vaguely Thelonious Monk-like theme, a launching pad for invigorating soloing from Hwang and Bart, the latter who aims for steely, brass-like wails and gets them too. Swell makes with jolly burlesques and Boston goes to town with his inner Cecil Taylor but veers into rollicking, barrelhouse-ing Jaki Byard territory as well. The midtempo, undulating "Robo Call" has a nifty Monk-meets-Steve Reich intro, then trombone, harmonica and strings paint a yearning panorama. Swell roars like Rudd reborn here amid a tensely, tersely clattering background, Bart blowing soulfully or frenetically, the strings evoking the wah-wah effect on Miles Davis' horn heard in his early '70s records.

In an era where far too many jazz albums can be summarized in seven words or less, Swell delivers two gems that lay down good times while keeping you guessing—fun, substantial and substantially fun.

For more information, visit [roguart.com](http://roguart.com) and [nottwo.com](http://nottwo.com)

## DROP THE NEEDLE



*First Time Out* (Live at Slugs 1967)  
Rashied Ali Quintet (Survival)  
*Duo Exchange*  
Rashied Ali/Frank Lowe (Survival)  
by Duck Baker

Given how things played out, it's amusing to remember that Rashied Ali did not make John Coltrane's *Ascension* date in June 1965 because HE didn't like the idea of playing with another drummer in the band. Instead Ali's recording debut came with Archie Shepp the following month (for *On This Night*). But Coltrane was determined to pursue the idea of a two-drummer lineup and Ali joined the band a few months later, appearing on *Meditations* in November. This led to McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones leaving the group, both saying that they couldn't hear what was going on. And ironically, Coltrane never again recorded with two trap drummers, though other percussionists were often added (as had happened on some dates with Jones).

In retrospect, Coltrane's desire for having two drummers seems less relevant than his admiration for Ali's ability to play "multi-directional rhythms", which allowed the leader to go take any rhythmic path at any time. This seems key, not only in contrast to Jones, who always implied a given time and usually stated it, but also to the continuous flow of a Sunny Murray or the total abstraction of the young Milford Graves. And we certainly heard how Coltrane thrived in Ali's rhythmic universe on the late quintet recordings and especially the duos on *Interstellar Space* (recorded in early 1967 but not released until 1974). He hadn't intended simply to replace Jones with Ali, but in retrospect each drummer was perfect for Coltrane's purposes when they were in the band.

Just as Coltrane was making his last live appearances, Ali began leading his own dates in clubs around New York and we now have a live recording of the first of these, recorded at Slugs' Saloon in May of 1967. The historical value of this release is enormous, for several reasons. Not least of these is the chance to hear more of trumpeter Dewey Johnson, who made such a strong impression on *Ascension*, as well as the young Stanley Cowell on piano and little-known tenor saxophonist Ramon Morris (who had a brief tenure in Art Blakey's early '70s Jazz Messengers). Of these three Cowell plays the most consistently interesting solos, though honestly bassist Reggie Johnson threatens to smoke everyone when his turns come around. If Dewey Johnson's *Ascension* cameos left us wanting more, his longest solos here risk having the opposite effect, not so much because he lacks imagination as because he doesn't seem concerned with pacing the development of his ideas, which often come at us as a series of brief, abstract statements that are all but disconnected. When he does find the magic to make this demanding approach build, the results are arresting (his Side D solo is the best example).

Morris at this stage was a late-period Coltrane disciple with a strong sound and impressive technical command, but even though he seems to do everything right, the listener may again find attention wandering after four or five minutes. Both horns do alter their approaches for "Ballade" to good effect. Morris' solo on this is not only engaging but, in places, downright

moving. Here again, though, Reggie Johnson seems to be operating on a different level from the preceding soloists. The horn players benefit greatly from Ali's support throughout, but it's hard to hear much of the piano and bass accompaniment except on this quiet track because the recorded balance favors the drums. Caveats aside, *First Time Out* is easy to recommend to serious free jazz fans, especially those who are focused on Ali or the two Johnsons.

While this previously-unissued record will be welcomed by devotees of the genre, *Duo Exchange* with Frank Lowe is a masterpiece and having it expanded to two-LP length qualifies as an event, particularly since the 1999 CD reissue was, for some unknown reason, shorter than the original LP by ten minutes. People seem to have been confused by the fact that, while the LP listed Side A as "Exchange Part 1" and Side B as "Exchange Part 2", each side had two tracks, so simply looking at the track listings for the rerelease doesn't warn listeners that two shorter pieces were excluded. These provided a change of pace from the fury of the longer tracks, one featuring Lowe on Japanese flute ("Movement IV" here), and the other (now "Movement II") on tenor, evoking the growls of Ben Webster.

This was the first release on Survival Records, which was intended to be a joint enterprise for Ali and Lowe. After this initial release, however, the saxophonist left the label to the drummer (though it's possible that a 1974 session of Lowe's that was issued on Triple Point in 2014 was originally intended for release on Survival). *Duo Exchange* was recorded in 1972, released the following year, and enthusiastically received by free jazz listeners, but before the dust had settled, *Interstellar Space* was out and Ali and Lowe were no longer looking to build on what they had done together. All of this helped keep *Duo Exchange* from getting the attention it deserved.

Since comparisons to *Interstellar Space* are probably inevitable, the first thing we should observe about this exercise is that Lowe does not suffer from the juxtaposition. For one thing, he comes as much out of John Gilmore, Albert Ayler, and Pharoah Sanders as he does out of Coltrane and, for another, Ali mixes in other approaches here besides the multi-directional rhythms we hear on *Interstellar Space* (even including straight timekeeping), so the comparison is not as direct as it would seem.

But the main point is that Lowe was a giant in his own right, someone whose own voice was already strong and would become more defined with the passage of time. Of course, it really would be unfair to compare this or almost any other record to one of the greatest statements left by one of our greatest artists, but the Lowe-Ali duo isn't about carefully crafted artistic statements so much as a volcanic outburst of raw feeling, guided by fearless musical instinct and intelligence. Not a summing-up, but a declaration of intent. The feeling does include reflective moments, like both takes of the previously unreleased ballad that is called "Movement V", but the lasting impression is of full-on wailing and this is enhanced by the recording itself, which was pushed to the brink of distortion by engineer Marzette Watts. Some think that this was done deliberately, to underline the galvanic nature of the music, but it's also possible that Watts was simply not as accomplished behind the board as he was with a saxophone. The added material really enhances our appreciation of the record. The alternate takes, fragments and breakdowns help us see what was planned and what was improvised and basically double the amount of great music we have.

Both sets are beautifully produced and packaged, with immaculate mixing, mastering, informative liners and superior vinyl pressings.

For more information, visit [rashiedali.org](http://rashiedali.org)

## ON SCREEN



*Live at the Apollo Theater*  
**Kamasi Washington (Amazon Prime)**  
 by Eric Wendell

"It's just fun creating with people that can create... that can create themselves." So says bandleader Kamasi Washington 22 minutes into the concert film/documentary *Live at the Apollo Theater*. The quote is a fitting description of not only the film but the generosity and respect that Washington has for his band and for the creative spirit of jazz.

When Washington released his debut album *The Epic* in 2015 he wasn't kidding: the sheer spectrum of sound that he created included jazz, psychedelic rock and contemporary concert music. With the film, director Michael Garber brilliantly shows said spectrum of sound along with a visionary flair that beautifully showcases Washington and Co.'s talents.

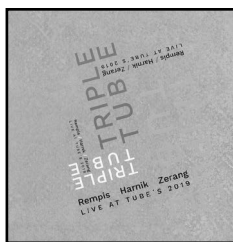
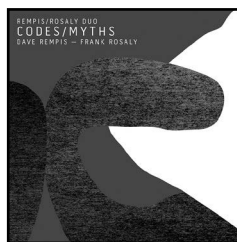
Filmed on Feb. 23rd, 2019, the concert footage is intercut with Washington exploring Harlem, where he speaks about the importance of the neighborhood and its cultural heritage. While the documentary portion of the film shows Washington as the human, as the proponent of jazz as an art form, the precious time away from the concert portion of the film is felt at every moment.

Washington begins the film with "Show Me The Way" from his latest release *Heaven and Earth*. The future-bop feel excellently showcases Washington's solo style: a swashbuckling blend of classic bebop phrasing with next-level funk flavors. On the subsequent "Connections", Washington's slow burn of gentle neo-soul to midtempo R&B shows how adept he is at allowing the music to breathe, to let the sonority of the players bring it all to life.

What is most striking is how warm and generous Washington is to his bandmates, giving several of them their time in the spotlight to shine. Most notable is his father, flutist/soprano saxophonist Rickey Washington, who takes an extended solo during the dub-influenced song "Askim". As Washington states, "My dad made a lot of sacrifices to really take care of myself and my brothers and sisters. I remember being a kid and wishing that my dad would go out and play more." The sentiment could not be truer as the elder Washington's beautiful tone and Washington's sincere comments about his father are lovingly sentimental to say the least.

While the documentary portion does not provide much to the overall film itself as the concert footage is so captivating, it does show that Washington's heart and soul is as forward-thinking as his music. In his words, "I am trying to pull up things deep inside myself more so than discover them. I don't look at it as a journey that I am trying to complete. I don't look at it as a journey that I am trying to enjoy. Whatever I am doing for whatever it is worth, it's important to create something that can be passed on, that can be left. To leave something behind of value on this Earth with the people of the future."

For more information, visit [amazon.com/Kamasi-Washington-Live-Apollo-Theater/dp/B083ZLQNF2](https://amazon.com/Kamasi-Washington-Live-Apollo-Theater/dp/B083ZLQNF2)



*Codes/Myths*  
**Dave Rempis/Frank Rosaly (Aerophonic)**  
*Triple Tube (Live at Tube's 2019)*  
**Dave Rempis/Elisabeth Harnik/Michael Zerang**  
 (Not Two)  
 by John Sharpe

The work of Chicago reedplayer Dave Rempis enjoys a regular place in these pages. He allies a prodigious talent to a fervent work ethic, manifest in extensive curatorial activity, a normally hectic touring schedule, exponentially multiplying collaborations and a consequent plethora of documentation. For the last, he reaps the benefits of running his own Aerophonic Records, giving him flexibility and creative control over what makes it into the public domain. But whether partnerships come long established or freshly minted, his improvised encounters are always worth hearing.

It's almost 20 years since Rempis first met drummer Frank Rosaly. In spite of multiple hookups, *Codes/Myths* represents only the duo's second recording in that period. It's a 2018 live date from Chicago's Elastic Arts, captured during Rosaly's brief return to The Windy City after relocating to Amsterdam in 2016. The double-album contains two sets, each disc comprising one lengthy excursion, around the half-hour mark, and one shorter, around ten minutes. Rempis displays all the tools in the avant reed player's armory, but uses them as means to an end, making music with tension and release, light and shade, overblown excitement and freewheeling narrative drawing on the tradition. Rosaly attends to detail and variety of resonance, pitch and surface but alchemically creates a waxing and waning pulse from sometimes unlikely components. Rosaly has been part of Rempis' Percussion Quartet since its inception so their simpatico approach comes as no surprise. They develop the pieces organically. "Pattern In Distance" begins in a delicious elongated call and response between Rempis' chuntering baritone and Rosaly's sudden rejoinders, which speaks volumes about their masterful pacing on these long forms. Throughout the pair alternate between the expected drum/saxophone duties and timbral explorations as much a meeting of personalities as about instrumental roles. In fact it's the latter that dominates on this set. That's especially the case on the second disc on which "Air In Between" is stretched out until almost translucent while "Aletheia" incorporates passages of mournful lyricism and only works up to something of a crescendo at the very end of its 32-minute span.

On *Triple Tube (Live at Tube's 2019)*, recorded at the titular club in Graz, Austria, Rempis reunites with a hometown familiar, drummer Michael Zerang, Austrian pianist Elisabeth Harnik completing the trio. She has made a name for herself with her appearances alongside Rempis' erstwhile employer Ken Vandermark in the DEK Trio, as well as in duo with bassist Joëlle Léandre. Each performer possesses an individual sound, which they deploy with sensitivity and flair. Zerang imparts non-linear momentum with his patented patter, rumbles and scrapes while Rempis is fluent and exciting, his whickering cries laden with emotion. Harnik and Zerang in particular combine in percussive textures and episodes of synchronized pounding. Harnik proves notably adept at jagged Cecil Taylor-inspired hammered lines that forge knotty substructures and ratchet up the intensity. She often takes responsibility for moving on from the tonal interplay that opens three of the four improvisations into meatier territory. "Triple Tube II" starts with metallic shimmers on the piano strings, staccato

plosives and yelps and indeterminate clatter. Development, when it arrives, is unforced, quick changing and unpredictable, with cues taken or deflected in a constant recalibration. While there are flareups, there are no conflagrations. Between times, periods of saxophone investigations, ambivalent rattling and left-field pianistics serve to refuel scurrying exchanges in a series of peaks and troughs. They rarely go for full-out assault and even when they do, as in the final installment of "Triple Tube III", it can be short-lived, sparking another unexpected turn.

For more information, visit [aerophonicrecords.com](https://aerophonicrecords.com) and [nottwo.com](https://nottwo.com). Rempis livestreams Wednesdays at [daverempis.com](https://daverempis.com).



*Radio Inderberg*  
**Jon Pål Inderberg Trio (AMP Music)**  
 by Donald Elfman

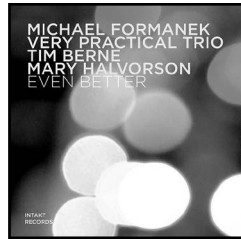
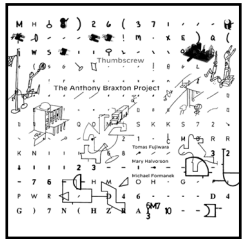
Baritone saxophonist Jon Pål Inderberg, who turns 70 this month, is a veteran of the Norwegian jazz scene and this album documents his most recent trio, a sterling group that made its recording debut in 2016. They expand the frame with a collection of sounds that celebrate both the jazz and Nordic traditions, all with a sense of adventure. Thus, despite the fact that there is traditional music of several stripes—from the jazz world there is music by the recently departed alto saxophonist Lee Konitz (with whom Inderberg worked and released a live album from the 2005 Oslo Jazz Festival), late Swedish baritone saxophonist Lars Gullin and pianist Thelonious Monk—it sounds fresh and different.

The two tunes from Konitz are 'typical' takes of contrafacts, the kind that the late saxophonist did on the changes of standards. "No Splice" is derived from "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home to", opening with a richly pulsing solo from bassist Trygve Waldemar Fiske and moving out into a dancing, boppish play on the Cole Porter standard. Drummer Håkon Mjåset Johansen enters in a flurry and the tune is pushed into spirited improvisation, with a dazzling solo by Inderberg that leads all the way to the close. A similar kind of play happens in "It's You" (on "It's You or No One") with bass leading the way again and all three capering over the Jule Styne-Sammy Cahn classic. Monk's light, swinging "Pannonica" is a breezy affair with a pointed bass solo and more inspired work all over the baritone while Gullin's delicate ballad "Merlin" emerges from Inderberg's dark and rich playing on the traditional Norwegian tune "Sorglat".

And there's more rich variety from the Norwegian folk tradition: the opening "Den Lyse Dag Forgangen Er" throbs with energy as Inderberg sails over drums with a plaintive air; two "Bykle" tunes pay tribute to a village in the country and "Draumvkvedtonar Del 1" and "Draumvkvedtonar Del 2" are related to a medieval Norwegian poem and suggest the mystical with delicately pounded toms and Inderberg's visionary improvisation, ranging from the full-throated to the whispering.

The album ends with a gloriously playful duo composition by Inderberg and Johansen, "Presentasjon", in which the leader is all over his baritone combined with some truly wacky vocalizing. It's a dazzlingly animated close to this beautifully concise undertaking.

For more information, visit [ampmusicrecords.com](https://ampmusicrecords.com)



**The Anthony Braxton Project  
Thumbscrew (Cuneiform)  
Even Better**

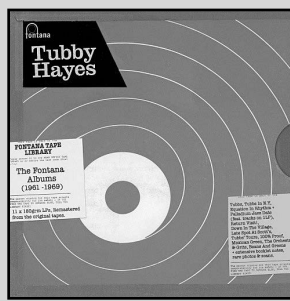
**Michael Formanek Very Practical Trio (Intakt)  
by Tyran Grillo**

Thumbscrew is the collective name of Tomas Fujiwara (drums and vibraphone), Mary Halvorson (guitar) and Michael Formanek (bass). This latest album, dedicated entirely to composer Anthony Braxton, grew out of an artist residency at Pittsburgh's City of Asylum and under its auspices takes on the darkest implications of the trio's moniker, which in these divided times feel more relevant than ever. Implications of history, and all the violence and trauma that go along with it, feel relevantly addressed. Whether by design or accident (or both), such confluences of the actual and its interpretation walk hand-in-hand down roads paved in self-reckoning. Such is the power of Braxton's portals, through which the trio step with one eye open. Between the jaunty edges of "Composition No. 52" and nocturnal swing of "Composition No. 79", there is so much to chew on that you'll want to dry the rest and save it for treks yet to be taken. Throughout, drums and bass create a tactile foundation for guitar's exegeses, which are the veritable nervous system of this nascent organism. Whether setting up the inhale of "Composition No. 68"'s exhale via electronic enhancements or stirring the waters of "Composition No. 61" as if said waters might evaporate and therefore lose their nutritional value if not gulped down, Halvorson absorbs every last drop of inspiration at hand. Despite these explosions of virtuosity, however, the most astonishing moments are to be found in the quieter strains of "Composition No. 61". "Composition No. 14" makes three appearances, thus showing the malleability not only of the pieces themselves, but also of the trio interpreting them. Of these, Fujiwara and Formanek's solo takes are especially moving. Like the diagrammatic titles adorning the digipak, they are conduits of synesthetic reckoning.

Formanek's Very Practical Trio carries the one of Halvorson and adds alto saxophonist Tim Berne. On debut *Even Better*, the band examines challenging yet welcoming soundscapes with bare acoustic means. Hearing this album alongside *The Anthony Braxton Project* is like finding that lone diamond of hope in the rough of hardship that has become our new normal. The same gnarled roots are there, but are watered by the present trio with the comforts of camaraderie, dialogic listening and complementary language. Here the contributions are more triangulated. Berne's lyricism is as Popeye-armed as ever, making snappy work of "The Shifter" and "But Will It Float" while Formanek flexes the bluesy backbone of "Like Statues" and slaps the cheek of "Apple and Snake". Halvorson, for her part, spider-crawls across "Still Here" with intuitive integrity, strums and distorts her joyful way through "Bomb the Cactus" and caresses the wounded heart of "Shattered", the latter written in memory of those who died in the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting, also in Pittsburgh. Whereas "Suckerpunch" sets the tone in the above regard and more with its jagged beauty and free precision, Scott LaFaro's "Jade Visions" closes out with the only tune not composed by Formanek. As an echo chamber of the past, it gives us a glimpse of a time when the only masks worn were by those who wished never to reveal their love for the creative process.

For more information, visit [cuneiformrecords.com](http://cuneiformrecords.com) and [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch)

**BOXED SET**



**The Complete Fontana Albums 1961-69  
Tubby Hayes (Fontana - Decca/Universal)  
by Scott Yanow**

Edward Brian "Tubby" Hayes (1935-73) was arguably the top British jazz musician of 1955-65. During a period when British players had to move to the U.S. in order to be accepted as world-class musicians (most notably George Shearing, Marian McPartland and Victor Feldman) and when its modern jazz scene had a general inferiority complex, Hayes, who made a strong impression during his infrequent visits to the U.S., chose to stay in England and be the biggest fish in a small pond.

A tenor saxophonist who could play as fast as Johnny Griffin and whose ability to articulate individual notes at rapid tempos is a bit reminiscent of Sal Nistico (whom he preceded), Hayes was also a skilled vibraphonist, flutist, soprano saxophonist, big band arranger and composer. A professional musician by the time he was 15, he co-led The Jazz Couriers during 1957-59 with the slightly older Ronnie Scott, who was considered England's top tenor before Hayes' arrival. While his boppish recordings from the '50s have mostly been reissued, Hayes' important work for the Fontana label in the '60s has, with only a few exceptions, been scarce ever since their original release.

*The Complete Fontana Albums 1961-1969* is a compact but attractive 13-CD boxed set with impeccable sound quality and packaging, including a 148-page booklet with very extensive notes by Hayes' biographer Simon Spillett. The artwork for the ten original LPs is reproduced in miniature with alternate takes from the sessions added. The *100% Proof* album with its extra material becomes a two-CD set and the box also includes the twofer *Grits, Beans and Greens*, which was only recently discovered.

*Tubbs* serves as a perfect start for the collection and a sampling for Hayes. With his regular quartet of 1961 (pianist Terry Shannon, bassist Jeff Clyne and drummer Bill Eyden, the rhythm section for the last recorded iteration of The Jazz Couriers), Hayes really rips through the opener ("The Late One"). He also plays vibraphone on two relatively mellow numbers in a group with five woodwinds, writes for a 13-piece brass-dominated orchestra and on tenor caresses the melody of a few standards before launching into heated double-time runs.

*Tubbs In New York* finds Hayes holding his own during his first visit to the U.S. with a top-notch rhythm section (pianist Horace Parlan, bassist George DuVivier and drummer Dave Bailey) and (for three appearances apiece) vibraphonist Eddie Costa and flugelhornist Clark Terry. A roaring version of "Airegin" and Hayes' fearless tradeoffs with Terry are highlights. Nothing about this music would alert listeners that Hayes was not a New Yorker.

Hayes shared two albums with other leaders (American conga player Jack Costanzo and British vocalist Cleo Laine) so his portions are released on CD #3. *Equation In Rhythm* has him showcased with a big band on the two-part "Southern Suite" while *Palladium Jazz Date* has excellent performances by the same quartet as appears on *Tubbs*. As a bonus, Hayes'

quintet is heard on two numbers previously only available as a 45.

*Return Visit* from 1962 is the best known of these albums since it features Hayes back in the U.S. in an allstar set with tenor saxophonist/flutist James Moody (listed as "Jimmy Gloomy", as if that would hide his identity), the always-remarkable reedplayer Rahsaan Roland Kirk (who somehow takes a solo on "Alone Together" with no reed on his tenor!), pianist Walter Bishop, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. The playing is loose (no prior planning took place) and the set falls short of expectations but Hayes sounds fine. If he had chosen to stay in New York, his career and life would have been completely different and perhaps he would be a name (in jazz households) today.

*Down In The Village* and *Late Spot At Scott's* are taken from the same two-night engagement at Ronnie Scott's in London from 1962. Hayes leads a quintet with the excellent Scottish trumpeter Jimmy Deuchar, pianist Gordon Beck, bassist Freddie Logan and drummer Allan Ganley. He plays credible soprano on one number, is featured on vibraphone for three songs and otherwise swings hard on tenor. These sets give one an idea what it must have been like to see Hayes in his prime performing in a small club.

Hayes occasionally led a big band in the '60s filled with many of Great Britain's finest players (Ronnie Ross, Bobby Wellins, Peter King, Ian Hamer, Les Condon, et al.). 1964's *Tubbs' Tours* has nine songs (all originals other than Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare"), each of which pay tribute to a different country, mostly European but also including India and Israel. While that music is pleasing, *100% Proof* from 1966 is the classic. Most of the selections are fresh versions of jazz standards including a blazing "Sonny Moon For Two" (featuring both Hayes and Scott on tenors), "Bluesology" and "Milestones". The lengthy title cut is an exhilarating tour de force for Hayes, one of the recorded highpoints of his career. A second disc of previously unreleased music (with alternate takes, edits and three new pieces) is a welcome addition.

*Mexican Green* from 1967 finds Hayes (like Stan Getz of the era) successfully exploring aspects of free jazz and postbop with a young rhythm section (pianist Mick Pyne, bassist Ron Mathewson and drummer Tony Levin) while still holding on to his hardbop roots and musical identity. He really stretches out on the frequently free 14-minute title cut, one of the gems in the last of the great Hayes Fontana albums. In contrast, *The Orchestra* has his big band playing pop tunes of the era and, although pleasant, their versions of such songs as "Hey Jude", "Up Up And Away" and "These Boots Are Made For Walking" will not excite anyone. This is typical of what record labels were expecting of creative jazz artists by the late '60s, trying hard to jump on the rock bandwagon no matter how instantly dated it sounded.

The rise of rock and avant garde jazz, his drug problems and gradually worsening health due to a weak heart resulted in Hayes losing his recording contract and passing away when he was just 38. The last two CDs in this set, *Grits, Beans and Greens* (also called *The Lost Fontana Studio Sessions 1969* and not released until recently) hint at a future that never was. It features Hayes and his quartet of Pyne, Mathewson and drummer Spike Wells on 18 performances that only comprise five different songs with quite a few alternate takes, mostly holding one's interest throughout. It shows that, if his health had held out, Hayes still had a great deal more to contribute. He deserves to be remembered and this perfectly conceived Fontana set (little publicized in the U.S.) should be on many Top-10 lists.

For more information, visit [decca.com](http://decca.com)

ON THIS DAY

by Andrey Henkin



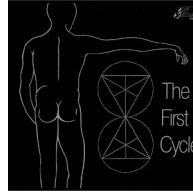
*Hamp and Getz*  
Lionel Hampton/Stan Getz (Norgran)  
August 1st, 1955

While the life/career of vibraphonist Lionel Hampton encased that of tenor saxophonist Stan Getz (the former born nearly 19 years earlier than the latter and dying 11 years later), the pair were active across so many of the same decades it is quite surprising they only recorded together once, this 10" LP for Norman Granz. They are joined by the very West Coast rhythm section of pianist Lou Levy, bassist Leroy Vinnegar and drummer Shelly Manne for a program of jazz classics, including a ballad medley where the principals each get a pair of features.



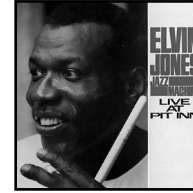
*Tears for Dolphy*  
Ted Curson (Fontana)  
August 1st, 1964

Trumpeter Ted Curson made two albums for Dutch Fontana in the mid '60s, each with a variation of the Marte Röling lithograph for a cover. The first is with Curson's partner of the era, tenor saxophonist Bill Barron, plus the rhythm section of bassist Herb Bushler and drummer Dick Berk that appears on Curson's 1965 Atlantic album *The New Thing & The Blue Thing* (with Barron plus French pianist Georges Arvanitas). The setlist is two pieces by Barron and four by the leader, three of them future staples of his repertoire, including the title track.



*The First Cycle*  
Bill Cole (Music from Dartmouth)  
August 1st, 1975

Bill Cole is notable for his work on a world—literally—of reed and wind instruments. For this Dartmouth College concert, Cole restricts himself to Ghanian flute, Chinese musette, Indian shenai and vocals. His mates are equally flexible: tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers also plays piano while drummer Warren Smith adds kettle drums, marimba and percussion for a panoply of textures across the nearly 43-minute title improv, named after the fact for this 1980 release. Of note: this is the first of only two LPs issued by the college's in-house imprint.



*Live At Pit Inn*  
Elvin Jones (Polydor)  
August 1st, 1985

Elvin Jones' Jazz Machine hardly had the longevity of fellow drummer Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, existing only from 1978-92 on record. But it competes when it comes to members, a total of eight saxophonists and four bassists on eight albums. For this live set from Tokyo's Shinjuku Pit Inn, the lineup is Sonny Fortune (tenor saxophone, flute), band stalwart Pat LaBarbera (tenor/soprano), Fumio Karashima (piano, its first use in the band) and old pal Richard Davis (bass) on a piece by Jones, two by wife Keiko and "My One And Only Love".



*Masada Het*  
John Zorn (DIW)  
August 1st, 1996

When the case on jazz is closed, John Zorn's Masada Quartet should be among the Top 10 seminal groups, not only for its longevity (1994-2018) or over a dozen albums made for DIW and Tzadik, but also for beginning Zorn's massive Masada composing project, 613 pieces across three books. The quartet of Zorn (alto saxophone), Dave Douglas (trumpet), Greg Cohen (bass) and Joey Baron (drums) made 10 CDs in quick succession from 1994-97, named for the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet, of which this is the eighth, comprising 10 Zorn pieces.

BIRTHDAYS

August 1

- †Lucky Roberts 1887-1968
- †Elmer Crumpley 1908-93

August 2

- †Big Nick Nicholas 1922-97
- †Albert Stinson 1944-69
- †Naná Vasconcelos 1944-2016
- David Binney b.1961
- Billy Kilson b.1962
- Zach Brock b.1974

August 3

- †Charlie Shavers 1917-71
- †Eddie Jefferson 1918-79
- †Dom Um Romao 1925-2005
- Tony Bennett b.1926
- †Ray Draper 1940-82
- Roscoe Mitchell b.1940
- Hamid Drake b.1955
- Tom Zlabinger b.1971

August 4

- †Louis Armstrong 1901-71
- †Bill Coleman 1904-81
- †Herb Ellis 1921-2010
- Sonny Simmons b.1933
- Bobo Stenson b.1944
- Terri Lyne Carrington b.1965
- Eric Alexander b.1968
- Michaël Attias b.1968

August 5

- †Terry Pollard 1931-2009
- Sigi Schwab b.1940
- †Lenny Breau 1941-84
- Airto Moreira b.1941
- Phil Wachsmann b.1944
- Jemeel Moondoc b.1951

August 6

- †Norman Granz 1918-2001
- †Buddy Collette 1921-2010
- †Dorothy Ashby 1932-86
- Joe Diorio b.1936
- †Charlie Haden 1937-2014
- †Baden Powell 1937-2000
- †Byard Lancaster 1942-2012
- Joseph Daley b.1949
- Victor Goines b.1961
- Ramón López b.1961
- Ravi Coltrane b.1965
- Andrew Bemkey b.1974

August 7

- †Idrees Sulieman 1923-2002
- †Rahsaan Roland Kirk 1936-77
- Howard Johnson b.1941
- Marcus Roberts b.1963

August 8

- †Lucky Millinder 1900-66
- †Benny Carter 1907-2003
- †Jimmy Witherspoon 1923-97
- †Urbie Green 1926-2018
- †Don Burrows 1928-2020
- †Vinnie Dean 1929-2010

August 9

- Jack DeJohnette b.1942

August 10

- †Arnett Cobb 1918-89
- Chuck Israels b.1936
- Denny Zeitlin b.1938
- Mike Mantler b.1943
- †Fred Ho 1957-2014
- Akiko Pavolka b.1965
- Cyrille Aimée b.1984

August 11

- Peter King b.1940
- Steve Nelson b.1954
- Russ Gershon b.1959
- Donny McCaslin b.1966

August 12

- †Bent Axen 1925-2010
- Dave Lee b.1930
- Pat Metheny b.1954
- Phil Palombi b.1970

August 13

- †Stuff Smith 1909-67
- †George Shearing 1919-2011
- †Benny Bailey 1925-2005
- †Joe Puma 1927-2000
- †Mulgrew Miller 1955-2013

August 14

- †Eddie Costa 1930-62
- Jimmy Wormworth b.1937
- Tony Monaco b.1959
- Walter Blanding b.1971

August 15

- †Oscar Peterson 1925-2007
- Bill Dowdy b.1933
- Stix Hooper b.1938
- Art Lillard b.1950
- Dennis Gonzalez b.1954
- Stefan Zeniuk b.1980

August 16

- †Mal Waldron 1926-2002
- †Bill Evans 1929-80
- Alvin Queen b.1950
- Cecil Brooks III b.1959
- Ellery Eskelin b.1959

August 17

- †Ike Quebec 1918-63
- †George Duvivier 1920-85
- †Derek Smith 1931-2016
- †Duke Pearson 1932-80
- Peter Martin b.1970
- Jeb Patton b.1974

August 18

- †Eddie Durham 1906-87
- †Don Lamond 1920-2003
- †Chuck Connors 1930-94
- Adam Makowicz b.1940
- John Escreet b.1984

August 19

- †Jimmy Rowles 1918-96
- Danny Mixon b.1949
- Tim Hagans b.1954
- Marc Ducret b.1957

August 20

- †Jack Teagarden 1905-64
- †Frank Rosolino 1926-78
- †Jimmy Raney 1927-95
- Enrico Rava b.1939
- Milford Graves b.1941
- Jiggs Whigham b.1943
- Terry Clarke b.1944
- John Clayton b.1952
- Reto Webber b.1953

August 21

- †Count Basie 1904-84
- †Art Farmer 1928-99
- †Malachi Thompson 1949-2006
- Peter Apfelbaum b.1960
- Oscar Perez b.1974
- Chris Dingman b.1980

August 22

- †Malachi Favors 1937-2004
- Warren Daly b.1943
- Vernon Reid b.1958
- Aruán Ortiz b.1973

August 23

- Martial Solal b.1927
- †Gil Coggins 1928-2004
- †Danny Barcelona 1929-2007
- Terje Rypdal b.1947
- Bobby Watson b.1953
- Brad Mehldau b.1970

August 24

- †Al Philburn 1902-72
- †Buster Smith 1904-91
- †Alphonso Trent 1905-59

August 25

- †Bob Crosby 1913-93
- †Leonard Gaskin 1920-2009
- †Rune Gustafsson 1933-2012
- Wayne Shorter b.1933
- †Carrie Smith 1941-2012
- Günter "Baby" Sommer b.1943
- Pat Martino b.1944
- †Keith Tippett 1947-2020
- Michael Marcus b.1952
- Karriem Riggins b.1975
- Michael Dease b.1982

August 26

- †Jimmy Rushing 1903-72
- †Francis Wayne 1924-78
- †Peter Appleyard 1928-2013
- †Clifford Jarvis 1941-99
- Andrew Lamb b.1958
- Branford Marsalis b.1960

August 27

- †Lester Young 1909-59
- †Tony Crombie 1925-99
- †Rudolf Dasek 1933-2013
- †Alice Coltrane 1937-2007
- †Sonny Sharrock 1940-94
- Edward Perez b.1978

August 28

- †Phil Seaman 1926-72
- †Kenny Drew 1928-93
- John Marshall b.1941
- Stephen Gauci b.1966
- Christoph Pepe Auer b.1981
- Robin Verheyen b.1983

August 29

- †Charlie Parker 1920-55
- †Dinah Washington 1924-63
- Jerry Dodgion b.1932
- Bennie Maupin b.1940
- Florian Hoefner b.1982

August 30

- †Kenny Dorham 1924-72
- John Surman b.1944
- Bronislaw Suchanek b.1948
- Anthony Coleman b.1955
- Rodney Jones b.1956

August 31

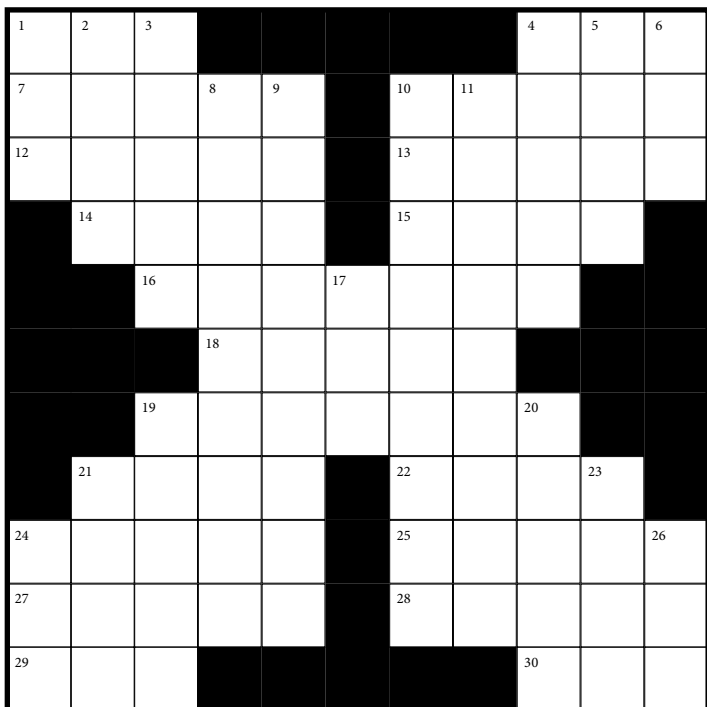
- †Edgar Sampson 1907-73
- †Herman Riley 1933-2007
- Gunter Hampel b.1937
- †Wilton Felder 1940-2015
- Bengt Berger b.1942
- Stefano Battaglia b.1965
- Evan Christopher b.1969
- Tineka Postma b.1978



RAMÓN LÓPEZ  
August 6th, 1961

The Spanish drummer and percussionist, long based in France, has been active since the '80s across a wide swathe of genres, including improvised music with a large cast of international collaborators. He debuted as a leader with a solo drum album, *Eleven Drums Songs*, for Leo Lab in 1997 after work with François Cotinaud and Claude Tchamitchian. He has made more records for Leo, plus dates for Xàbia Jazz, Creative Sources, Maya and Not Two with various groups while working with Hans Koch, Barry Guy, Agustí Fernández, Joachim Kühn, Sylvain Kassap, George Lewis, Joe Fonda, Guillermo Gregorio, Mark Feldman, Satoko Fujii, Jean-Marc Foussat and many others. —AH

CROSSWORD



By Andrey Henkin visit nycjazzrecord.com for answers

ACROSS

- Org. that presents the Vision Festival
- Old Dixieland standard "Let's Sow a Wild \_\_\_\_"
- Pharoah Sanders' song from *Jewels of Thought* "Hum-\_\_\_\_-Hum-\_\_\_\_-Hum-\_\_\_\_"
- Musicians' office?
- Saxophonist Michaël Attias' birthplace
- West Coast vibraphonist/drummer/percussionist Gene
- Earl Grubbs' fellow saxophonist brother
- Like all the participants on Billy Bang's *Vietnam: The Aftermath*
- Saxophonist Boris Midney and bassist Igor Berukshtis
- Like Director and DJH models
- What a musician does for a week at The Stone
- Singers Auer, Bowman and Lader
- Notes of a Fmaj7 chord
- Japanese saxophonist Watanabe
- British saxophonist Dean
- John Zorn has presented projects at her Brooklyn warehouse
- Where Zoot Sims is buried
- New York Eye and \_\_\_\_ Control
- Rune Grammofon and Hubro cntr.

DOWN

- Monogram of this gazette's Editorial Director
- Type of sound file
- Percussionist Don's real name?
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra saxophonist Dick
- 1991 Sonny Sharrock Axion album *Ask The \_\_\_\_*
- 1970 Alan Shorter America album \_\_\_\_ *Esat*
- Style of jazz pioneered by Mario Bauzá and Frank Grillo "Machito"
- She has two of the six thumbs in Thumbscrew
- A double-undectet minus a quintet has how many members?
- Martin Denny and Jon Irabagon both have songs named for this Sleeping Sickness-causing insect
- Miles Davis 1969 Columbia album \_\_\_\_ *Silent Way*
- This pianist can prevent moths from eating your clothes?
- Mundell Lowe wrote the soundtrack for the 1962 film \_\_\_\_ *in High Heels*
- Dutch label of improvised music
- 1980 Irakere JVC album *El \_\_\_\_*
- Jazz at Kitano to Jazz Standard dir.
- n.UR-Kult catalogue prefixes