

NOVEMBER 2020—ISSUE 223

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO THE NYC JAZZ SCENE

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THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

DIGITAL
ONLY
EDITION



**DANIEL
HUMAIR**
DRUM ARTIST

DRUMS
ISSUE

JOE
FARNSWORTH

JEFF
WILLIAMS

AVREEAYL
RA

BABY
DODDS

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BY ANDREY HENKIN

Jazz fans are many things but passive is not one of them. Anyone who takes the time to delve deeply into this art form spends quite a bit of time thinking about it, learning history, forming opinions, making connections. Jazz is about discovery, whether it be a new artist or a note in a favorite solo, unheard despite repeated plays. And jazz fans are not passive because this is a genre consigned to the dustbin of history more times than can be counted in lieu of the next new thing, yet, jazz is still here, stronger than ever, even if these days it is to be found most often on the other side of a computer screen.

In our home city of New York, we recently voted early. To see hundreds upon hundreds of people lined up for hours on cold fall mornings waiting patiently – even excitedly – to cast a ballot in a presidential contest where the results, at least in NYC, are most likely not in question was an amazing sight. These were people of all ages, ethnicities, professions, cultural backgrounds, economic classes and faiths who shared one thing: activity versus passivity. In a time when isolation is the theme, whether via social distancing and quarantine or the walls thrown up by “social” media, here was true community, one that can only be achieved in person and with true purpose.

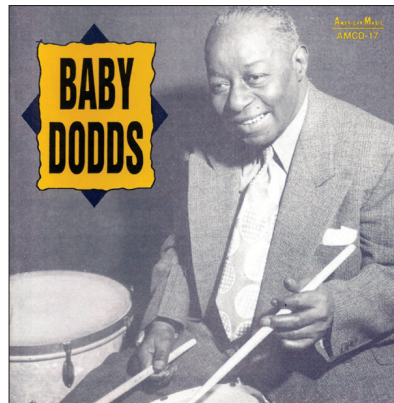
By the time this issue comes out, the election cycle will almost be over but you will still have a few days to make your voice heard. And while sometimes it can seem small and inaudible remember that you are part of a democratic big band, your trumpet joining with millions of others to create a sound so loud no amount of fingers in ears can block it. But it only works if passivity is set aside, if agency is embraced. Go vote...and then listen to your favorite or most-recently bought jazz record, happy with a job well done.

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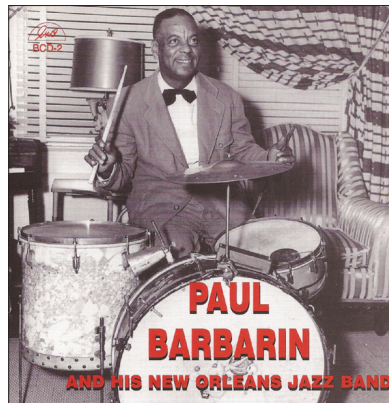
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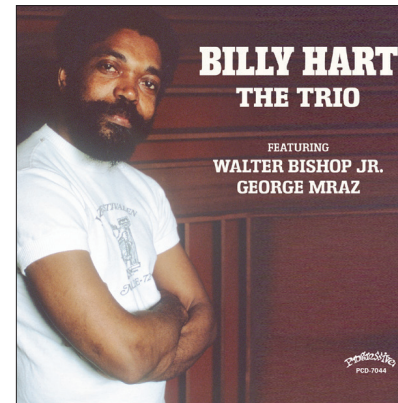
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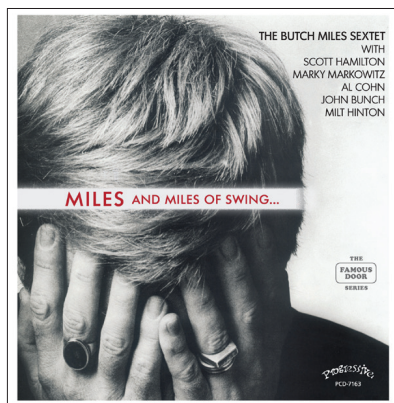
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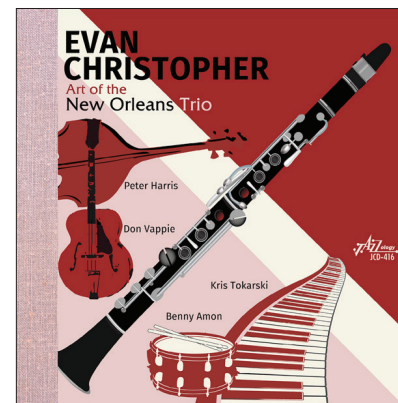
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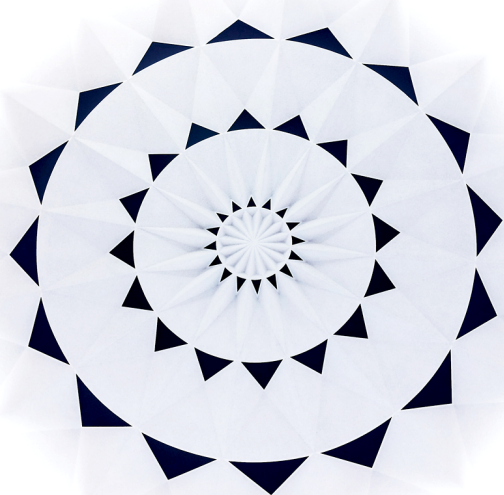


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Seeing **Bill Charlap** performing alone on live-stream from Dizzy's Club (Oct. 8th) to a roomful of "empty chairs at empty tables", red candlelight aglow at each table as if offered in prayer for the absentees, dimly lit Columbus Circle skyscrapers visible in the giant picture windows back of the stage, was like watching a scene from *Les Misérables*. But this didn't keep the pianist from expressing his deep and abiding love for the Great American Songbook. More than delightful melodies married to equally delightful harmonies, these songs become miniatures of emotion in Charlap's capable hands, the unheard lyrics implicit in his eloquent interpretations. Thanks to excellent camera work and mic'ing, the concert provided the audience with an up-close-and-personal experience. Charlap adds bits of everything—stride, locked-hand chords, quicksilver runs, fluid counter-lines, tastefully dramatic codas—to his spontaneous arrangements, but there is never a sense of compulsion or crowding. Rather his playing always leaves just enough breathing room to suggest the spaces between ideas, ideas that flow like mountain snowmelt runoff in the spring. Uniformly excellent, standout renditions from the 20-plus-song set included an introspective "In Your Own Sweet Way", leisurely "Embraceable You", hard-driving "How About You", strong but sensitive "Polka Dots and Moonbeams", imaginatively harmonized "It Could Happen to You" and two barnburners: "By Myself" and "After You've Gone". —Tom Greenland



Bill Charlap @ Dizzy's Club

The Vision Festival is all about adaptability. It has happened in so many venues in its 25-year history that it is independent of place. Its homespun quality means that as long as Roberta and Richard Berger are taking tickets, there are pots of steaming food in the back and organizer Patricia Nicholson-Parker is announcing the artists while pleading for social justice, it is the Vision Festival. This year's show had to go on and it did...in the parking lot of Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center and live-streaming (Oct. 8th-12th). A small number of in-person listeners spread themselves across the asphalt for music and poetry, happy for the community and the still-warm weather. Oct. 11th was a drummer's affair: last year's Lifetime Achievement Awardee **Andrew Cyrille** leading a quartet of Bill Frisell (guitar), David Virelles (keyboards) and Ben Street (drums) and **Gerald Cleaver** presenting his Black Host with Darius Jones (alto saxophone), Brandon Seabrook (guitar), Cooper-Moore (piano) and Brandon Lopez (bass) [two Brandons in the same band? What is this, *Jazz 90210*?], the sets bookending the compelling verse of Tyehimba Jess. While it would seem that Cyrille should have gotten closing honors, the ethereal, wispy, spacy ECM grooves of band originals was ideal for the gloaming. Cleaver's group too was designed for darkness, as surf-rock met Deodato-style fusion, liberally frosted with cosmic free jazz. Jones stood in the middle of it all, bleating like mad, all eyes (including in the apartments above) on him. —Andrey Henkin



Gerald Cleaver @ Vision Festival

"I just imagine I'm playing in Japan," quipped pianist **Aaron Diehl** during a Q&A session following his slowly but steadily rousing concert in the lavishly appointed (but almost empty) Rosen House Music Room at Caramoor (Oct. 16th). He was referring to the reticence of Japanese jazz audiences during shows (the thunderous applause comes only at the end) when compared to their vociferous Western counterparts, only now the gaping silence wasn't culturally induced, it was a result of quarantine. The trio, with bassist Paul Sikivie and drummer Aaron Kimmel, all Juilliard alumni, hadn't played together since March, so to say that their musical social skills were rusty is an understatement. What fascinated about the set, however, was the gradual syncing up that occurred, a limbering of reflexes, an increased ability to react and respond to each other in real time (and space). It started as a rhythm section in support of its leader, the mood restrained, like a chamber ensemble or the Modern Jazz Quartet (sans Milt Jackson), but about halfway through the set, during a cover of Cedar Walton's "Clockwise", something began to click. Sikivie's inventive solo brought a chuckle to Diehl's up-until-then-somber demeanor, inspiring a rhapsodic cadenza. There was more trading and playing with the pulse on Freddie Hubbard's "Happy Times", delicate intensity on the laid-back but swinging "Autumn in New York" and some of the best moments of all during the last piece, Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation". (TG)

Live music indoors is LOUD. One can be forgiven for forgetting this as it has been months—or, more precisely, 229 days—since this reviewer saw a concert not constrained to a computer screen or competing with outdoor noise. The event was the album release concert by trumpeter **Aquiles Navarro** and drummer **Tcheser Holmes** for *Heritage Of The Invisible II* (International Anthem) and venue Greenpoint Art Gallery IRL—shout-out to nearby Polish restaurant Karczma and its white borscht in a bread-bowl—a converted office with the vibe of an L.A. mountaintop mansion. Attendance was good and, refreshingly, skewed young and of color, masks glowing in the neon of the dark room. Navarro and Holmes are best known as 40 percent of Irreversible Entanglements yet the album has little to do with that group's highly-political take on spirit jazz, instead being a series of pastiches heavy on groove and rhythm, both subverted and conjugated in electr(oni)c fashion. The evening's first set did not try to recreate the album's contents but was, instead, a 40-minute piece that took elements from its tunes and wove them together, Navarro supplementing his horn with two keyboards, including a MOOG synthesizer that provided an apocalyptic drone throughout. The juxtaposition with Holmes' purely acoustic instrument was striking. Navarro's use of effects on his horn drew a direct line from Miles Davis to Bill Dixon to Peter Evans, creating a new genre: free electronica or maybe *Sketches of Spain's Factories*. (AH)

Fresh off of closing out the Walk With The Wind weekend concert series in Central Park, saxophonist **Chris Potter's** Trio with bassist Joe Martin and drummer Nasheet Waits made their way to Brooklyn for the first weekly Wednesday night live-streams from Bar Bayeux (Oct. 14th). Potter got things started with a short unaccompanied tenor solo, before launching into a hard-swinging rendition of standard "My Shining Hour", on which the strong influence of Sonny Rollins, who popularized the piano-less trio format, was clearly evident. Martin followed Potter's bebop-and-beyond outing with a lyrical solo of his own before the leader returned trading four-bar exchanges with Waits. That segued into a motivic tenor improvisation, leading into Eastern-tinged original "Okinawa". After taking time out to present the trio, thanking the unseen audience "for not coming, staying home and checking us out", Potter introduced Ed Blackwell's "Togo". The folkish melody hearkening to West Africa, first recorded by Old And New Dreams, had soulful drumming on top of which Potter stretched out over the range of his horn, blowing muezzin-like lines punctuated by anguished altissimo cries. Calming the mood the band eased into Potter's stirring "The Dreamer Is The Dream", then took off to the races with a fiery version of his "Amsterdam Blues" which combined intense modal and boppish lines over propulsive rhythm. The set ended with "Body and Soul" before bebopping out with Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee". —*Russ Musto*



Chris Potter Trio @ Bar Bayeux

A class act is how one could best describe **Lafayette Harris, Jr.**: the kind of artist who shows up as elegantly attired for his sans-audience live-streamed gig at Brooklyn's Soapbox Gallery (Oct. 21st) as he would for an engagement in any of the world's toniest venues he has performed in during an illustrious career. Joined by longtime partner, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, the pianist opened up his set noting, "Let's start off with a standard that everybody knows", to preface his swinging delivery of "It's Almost Like Being In Love"; he quickly established his bebop credentials, quoting from Charlie Parker's "Now's The Time". He further confirmed the tradition of which he is one of today's finest proponents dedicating a take of "Autumn In New York" to "the great Bud Powell", kicking it off with a faithful rendering of Powell's own harmonically dazzling improvised intro, before putting his own stamp on the piece. He continued with Sonny Rollins' "Valse Hot" on which he demonstrated estimable capacity to lend singing lyricism to a composition without words, an ability further evinced on his own "Achern", the flowing melodicism of which cries out for a lyric of its own. Turning to the Gershwin songbook he played "Who's Got The Last Laugh Now" with Ellington-ian flourishes, following it with Powell's challenging "Cecilia". His soulful side came to the fore on Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" and was equally evident on the Clare Fischer bossa "Pensativa" and set closer "The Juicy Blues". (RM)

Central Park, Frederick Law Olmsted's dizzying labyrinth that confounds even we natives, was unforgiving that day (Oct. 4th) as this reviewer sought out a particular concert site. Unable to locate that stage, however, I wandered into the **Befo' Quotet's** irresistible post-Bop and R&B. A veritable flute flight soared above sizzling lead guitar and a rhythm section of poignant subtlety and grace. Drenched in jazz, Motown, djembe funk and, at points, Harmolodics, the foursome also incorporated vocals, conjuring memories of back when. Passersby grooved to a stop, but just as the crowd got comfortable, the music playfully morphed into traditional rhythms under "That's All", "Get on Up" and "Mona Lisa". Atiba Kwabena-Wilson, flutist, vocalist, poet and percussionist, has been performing in Harlem for decades. A teaching artist, he's lectured on African culture widely, was a voice on WBAI-FM and led ensembles in haunts like the St. Nick's Pub and Paris Blues, both of which featured the Befo' Quotet in lengthy residencies. "This band grew out of my African cultural ensemble, Songhai Djeli, but has its own identity." Guitarist James Rohlehr's solo on "St. Thomas", interspersed with biting dyad attacks, led to an uptempo "Killer Joe". Drummer Sean Brock dropped wonderfully disjointed tom accents against bassist "Dr." William Dotts' throbbing line as Kwabena-Wilson's nimble flute alternated with djembe, bearing an atmosphere at once timeless and current. —*John Pietaro*



Befo' Quotet @ Central Park

Experimental series **Brackish Brooklyn**, organized by Angela Morris and based in Gowanus since its 2016 inception, has lately extended its reach with outdoor live performance. Following Red Hook and Park Slope shows, Brackish took to the steps of the Park Church Co-Op in Greenpoint (Oct. 8th). Morris, a saxophonist, founded the series with trumpet player Jaimie Branch and performance artist Stevie May. Brackish (a fresh/saltwater mix found most distinctly in the Gowanus Canal) is one of several indies heartedly shredding creative/industry boundaries. For this, alas, final outdoor edition, improvisational music met sound art, poetry and dance. Headliner Multi Culti (a name terribly reminiscent of Don Cherry's latter-day band) united drummer Gerald Cleaver, vocalist Jean Carla Rodea, bassist Brandon Lopez and synthesizer player Cecilia Lopez. During a lengthy work led by Rodea's electronics-affected voice, the quartet cast an ever-changing soundscape. Rodea, seated behind the rest, was largely focused on her laptop, face turned away from all and her extended vocal techniques were hard to detect within the octave-dividing wash. Throughout, Cleaver played understatedly, static, but bass was perpetual motion and the actual melodic force. Earlier, the duet of Lindsey Weaving and Max Jaffe presented a pensive piece of movement and percussion (with drums-triggering laptop) while alternating poets, Ariel Yelen and Evan Gill-Smith, added literary musings to the clear autumn night. (JP)

WHAT'S NEWS

An update from an item from last month: the Copenhagen Municipality has promised three years of support for the **Jazzhus Montmartre**, staving off its closure.

The National Endowment for the Arts has announced the 2021 class of **Jazz Masters**, who will be celebrated in April 2021: drummers Terri Lyne Carrington and Albert "Tootie" Heath, saxophonist/flutist Henry Threadgill and scholar/radio host Phil Schaap. For more information, visit arts.gov/honors/jazz.

Recipients of the **2020 Doris Duke Artist Awards** have been named and include drummer Andrew Cyrille and vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, both receiving \$250,000. For more information, visit ddcf.org. Additionally, Salvant was named one of the **2020 MacArthur Fellows**, receiving \$625,000.

On Nov. 3rd, US Election Day, **Deep Tones for Change**, an initiative of Deep Tones for Peace, will broadcast 4 performances hourly for the entire 17 hours polls are open nationwide, totalling 68 individual performances. For more information, visit facebook.com/groups/DeepTonesForPeace2020.

The **50th Annual Pitt Jazz Seminar and Concert**—Celebrating Dr. Nathan Davis and Geri Allen, featuring panel discussions, symposia and performances, will take place online Nov. 2nd-7th at youtube.com/channel/UCzhaYWy3kDp19c8mskKBMIg/videos.

Our own Phil Freeman, who has run the arts and culture zine/website **Burning Ambulance** since 2010, has announced the founding of a related label, **Burning Ambulance Music**, to be inaugurated in 2021. For more information, visit burningambulance.com.

Tenor/alto saxophonist **Maciej Obara** was the recipient of two Fryderyk Awards, as presented by the Phonographic Academy of Poland: Jazz Artist of the Year and Jazz Album of the Year for his 2019 ECM release *Three Crowns*.

New England Conservatory has launched a "low-latency music-making initiative", which allows musicians to collaborate across long distances with "virtually lagless audio-visual elements to enhance digital music making with a setup anyone can assemble at home." For more information, visit ianhowellcountertenor.com/soundjack-real-time-online-music.

Brooklyn Raga Massive has announced its **2020 Ragas Live Festival**. The 24-hour event will live-stream for free starting Nov. 21st at 7 pm and will include over 90 artists participating from 15 cities. For more information, visit ragaslive.org.

Blue Note Records has announced the Classic Vinyl Reissue Series, a continuation of its Blue Note 80 Vinyl Reissue Series launched in conjunction with the label's 80th anniversary in 2019. The series, which drops Dec. 4th, is available for pre-order now and will begin with pianist McCoy Tyner's *The Real McCoy* and trumpeter Lee Morgan's *The Sidewinder*. For more information, visit bluenote.com/classic-vinyl-reissue-series.

Submit news to info@nycjazzrecord.com



JOE FARNSWORTH

BY ALEX HENDERSON

Although Joe Farnsworth has only recorded sporadically as a leader, his list of sideman credits reads like a Who's Who of jazz. The veteran drummer, now 52, has backed heavyweights including tenor saxophonists Benny Golson, Pharoah Sanders, Junior Cook and Eric Alexander, baritone saxophonist Cecil Payne and pianists Harold Mabern and Cedar Walton. Farnsworth, originally from Massachusetts, has spent much of his adult life in New York City and has a long association with the Upper West Side club Smoke. His new album as a leader, *Time to Swing*, has been released on its in-house Smoke Sessions label, Farnsworth leading a band of trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, pianist Kenny Barron and bassist Peter Washington. During a recent interview, Farnsworth discussed *Time to Swing* and some of the many jazz icons he has worked with over the years.

The New York City Jazz Record: *Time to Swing* isn't your first album, but is your first for Smoke Sessions. How did your association with Smoke come about?

Joe Farnsworth: In 1993, I took over playing every night at a place called Augie's, which is Smoke now. I was there playing every Friday and Saturday. It was a godsend to me. I brought in everybody: Junior Cook, John Ore, Cecil Payne, Big John Patton, Dizzy Reece. So many guys—Julian Priester, Harold Mabern. [Guitarist] Paul Stache was working there and then Paul and his friend [Frank Christopher] took over and started Smoke. And so, when Smoke opened up in 1999, I played the very first weekend, the grand opening. And I convinced Paul to get George Coleman and Harold Mabern. I said, "When you get someone like George Coleman, then that makes the club much better. It raises everybody's game." And then [in 2013] Paul started his record label, Smoke Sessions. That club is family to me, it's a home away from home.

TNYCJR: The late Harold Mabern featured you on some of his albums for Smoke Sessions.

JF: I brought Harold to Smoke. We got a Rhodes for him. Harold played there when it was Augie's, in fact. It wasn't even Smoke then. And Harold was hesitant to go up there to Augie's and play a Rhodes, but he did and he loved it. I was the first one to bring him up there.

TNYCJR: Jazz clubs certainly come and go. Many New Yorkers who know Smoke never saw it as Augie's.

JF: Augie's was a dump. It was kind of a college hangout. They didn't charge a cover and they used to pass the hat. Augie's was very vibrant, but it was a little too low-brow for some of the really big-name guys. When Paul took over and it became Smoke, he changed everything. They went from zero cover charge to \$30, 40. They made it into a real club.

TNYCJR: You have played with so many jazz icons who are no longer living.

JF: When Harold Mabern died, one of the things I missed was that Harold could bring you back to 1950. I mean, he used to talk about picking cotton in Memphis as a kid—and he would make you feel like you were right there. Harold had so many stories. There are so many stories in jazz.

TNYCJR: You've played with Eric Alexander a great deal. He was one of the Young Lions in the late '80s-early '90s; now he is 52 and helping the young musicians out.

JF: I met Eric at William Paterson [University] in 1987.

TNYCJR: So, you knew Eric about half a decade before his first album as a leader, *Straight Up* (Delmark, 1992)?

JF: Yeah, *Straight Up* with Harold Mabern, George Fludas. I went to William Paterson and met Harold in 1986 and Eric came there in '87. So Eric, Harold and myself basically started that relationship in '87. And then, once I graduated in 1990, we started hiring Harold for gigs. We would get gigs and give him all the money just to have Harold Mabern there.

TNYCJR: Eric and Harold had such a close relationship. Eric played as a sideman on Harold's albums and Harold played as a sideman on Eric's albums. And you were on many of those albums, whether it was Eric leading or Harold leading.

JF: Yes. Ever since I met Eric in 1987, we learned together. We did sessions together every night in college for three years and we went to New York City together. We both wanted the same things. There were two main groups for us: the George Coleman Quartet was a big school for us and the other one was Cedar Walton. Those were the two camps that we loved. Me and Eric both wanted to be in those two camps and it was almost the same journey. Through Eric and Harold, I got to play with George Coleman and to this day, I still play with George a lot. I was fortunate to play with a lot of great tenor players, man: Junior Cook, Johnny Griffin, Pharoah Sanders, George Coleman, Benny Golson, Eric Alexander. George recommended me to Pharoah Sanders. I was with Pharoah Sanders for 16 years. I was with Pharoah from like 2000-2016, and that was all because of George Coleman.

TNYCJR: You played with Wynton Marsalis in the past.

JF: I had made a record with Wynton before called *Live At The House of Tribes*—a live record for Blue Note—and I always wanted to do another record date with him. For many, many years, I just waited and waited to make another record with Wynton. And we did this movie recently called *Motherless Brooklyn* so we reconnected and we did some movie release parties. I just knew now was the time. I asked Wynton and he said yes. So, I automatically went to Smoke Sessions.

TNYCJR: You use different combinations: quartet performances, trios and a solo drums feature.

JF: Wynton is a busy guy. So, I was just glad he could do it and I certainly wasn't going to be greedy and ask him to do a whole date. I asked him just to do four tunes. The way I planned it was almost like an old record date, a vinyl date, a Side A and Side B. Side A, we go in there and play trio with Kenny Barron and Peter Washington. And then, you flip over to Side B and Wynton Marsalis joins us.

TNYCJR: How long have you known Kenny Barron?

JF: I used to sit there in awe for 25 years at Bradley's, watching Kenny with Ray Drummond and Ben Riley. And of course, I saw Kenny in the group Sphere, I used to love that group with Charlie Rouse. Bradley's was where I really saw Kenny Barron a lot. When Kenny did this record I asked him what he wanted to play. I wanted to play tunes that he wanted to play because he certainly has a wider variety of experiences than me. I learned that with Junior Cook a long time ago: instead of telling these people what to play, I love asking them what they want to play.

TNYCJR: You play Duke Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss" as a bossa nova.

JF: That's what happens when you get Kenny Barron: you're free to do anything. I knew we were going to play Kenny's tune "Lemuria" and I knew we were going to play "Monk's Dream" by Thelonious Monk.

TNYCJR: Kenny has always had a broad repertoire.

JF: Some guys just don't know many tunes. But guys like Kenny Barron, they know tunes. Harold Mabern knew tunes. Barry Harris knows tunes. And Kenny Barron knows tunes. When I was planning the record, I thought, "I have Wynton Marsalis, I have Peter Washington, if Kenny Barron would just say yes, that would bring everything to the date: maturity, knowledge, swing, blues, history, everything." And Kenny couldn't have been any nicer.

TNYCJR: Ellington-Strayhorn's "The Star-Crossed Lovers" is done as a trio with Kenny.

JF: We did "Lemuria" in one take and we did "The Star-Crossed Lovers" in one take. Kenny nailed it, man, nailed it. It was right there on his fingertips. Kenny has a hell of a presence on the piano. That's why you get Kenny Barron. I think all the takes were one take.

TNYCJR: "One for Jimmy Cobb" is your solo feature.

JF: Yeah. It came to me: I should do something for Jimmy Cobb. I was just thinking about [late drummer] Jimmy Cobb and how soulful he was, how great he was as a human being. Just solid. So, I tried to base it on his personality more than anything.

TNYCJR: One of the most soulful things you do on *Time to Swing* is the spiritual "Down by the Riverside". Wynton is really digging into his New Orleans heritage.

JF: I asked Wynton what all he wanted to play, what ballad he wanted to play, what up tune he wanted to play. For an up tune, he suggested "Hesitation", which I hadn't heard him play since his debut record with Ron Carter and Tony Williams. And I said to Wynton, "Let's play something like gospel." He wanted to do "Down by the Riverside". I used to think it was an Irish song. "Down by the Riverside" is a tune that my best friend's father used to sing. I didn't realize it was a spiritual. And the way Wynton described it was

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 30)



JEFF WILLIAMS

BY KYLE OLEKSIUK

This month, drummer Jeff Williams is releasing *Road Tales*, a live album in celebration of live music at a time when there are no live performances. Williams says that he prefers to release live music to studio-recorded music, “because you have more energy and less self-consciousness than when you’re recording in a studio.”

Road Tales, which was recorded at the London Jazz Festival in 2018, confirms that there is something to that idea: performances by alto saxophonist John O’Gallagher, tenor saxophonist Josh Arcoleo and bassist Sam Lasserson, in addition to Williams himself, all stand out. O’Gallagher, Arcoleo and Lasserson have been playing together with Williams for many years and he says that their work on *Road Tales* “really represents what happens when you’re able to keep a band together for a few years and the material evolves over that time.”

Williams first began ‘assembling’ the *Road Tales* quartet in 2004 when he moved from New York to a second home in the UK with his wife, the novelist Lionel Shriver. “I didn’t really like London right away, but that changed as opportunities came my way,” he says. “I began teaching at the Royal Academy of Music, where I had a saxophone student [Arcoleo]... He took maybe four lessons with me and I was really impressed with him. I remember saying at the time, ‘I’m going to put you in my band’, but I really didn’t have one in the UK at that point. So he was the impetus.” Williams assembled the band over several years, with a number of other musicians he knew and played with—including ones from his old group from New York. “I had two bands, one here and one there,” Williams says, “and occasionally I was able to mix and match. John O’Gallagher, who I’d been playing with off and on since the ‘90s, was in my New York band. And then he decided to get his doctorate at Birmingham Conservatoire, so suddenly he’s in the UK, whereas the guitar player in my UK band, Phil Robson, moved to New York. So they sort of changed places.”

This kind of in-person, gig-based process was how Williams got his start in music. His early career was shaped in large part by traveling to New York, where he was able to watch and learn from live performances. “I had an unusual upbringing,” he says. “My mother separated from my father when I was nine and went to New York to become a professional jazz vocalist... I would go to New York for the summer or Christmas vacation. [My mother] got to know pretty much everyone and they liked her, so I was able to meet people like [drummers] Papa Jo Jones, Elvin Jones, Oliver Jackson... We didn’t sit down and have drum lessons, but because it’s quite a visual instrument, you can actually see what’s being done. That’s how I learned, along with listening to and playing along with recordings.”

After a brief stint attending the Berklee College of Music in Boston and studying under Alan Dawson, Williams moved to New York in 1971, where he joined

the burgeoning loft movement. That scene, which existed for much of the ‘70s, was made up of “not just performance lofts, like Sam Rivers’ Studio Rivbea,” Williams explains, “but lofts that musicians lived in and could have sessions in. They were industrial spaces that weren’t meant for you to live in, but you could get around that. Typically the loft would have a sink and a toilet, but you’d have to put in a shower, a stove, a heater of some sort... And when you moved in you would have to pay what was known as ‘key money’ for the improvements that the previous tenant had made, the landlord sort of turning a blind eye... It was a desirable thing to do. It was cheap and you could play anytime you wanted.”

The unconventional nature of the loft spaces led to a number of strange living situations. “Funny story,” Williams relates, “at [pianist] Marc Copland’s loft, when I first started going there to play, he had a roommate who was working on Wall Street and his bed was right in the middle of the room. He would come home after work with his suit and tie on and go to bed, because he had to get up really early. We would start playing around nine o’clock at night and he would somehow sleep through it even though he was less than four feet from my drums, it was remarkable.” For a time, Williams himself slept under a piano in a small loft he shared with a friend, before moving into Copland’s loft.

Loft-living over the following year helped Williams get to know the performers who were in New York at that time. He soon got into contact with Free Life Communication, a co-op run by saxophonist Dave Liebman, who began taking the drummer seriously when he was hired to play with Stan Getz in 1972. After two years with Getz, Williams joined pianist Richie Beirach and bassist Frank Tusa to form Liebman’s band Lookout Farm. With Lookout Farm, Williams “recorded for ECM and toured the world: Japan and India, all over Europe, the East Coast, the West Coast, for about three years.” It was everything he had been looking for when he first came to New York and led him into a life of teaching, performing and recording.

Now 70 years old and cooped up indoors, Williams worries that younger musicians might not get the opportunities to play live that were so instrumental in making him a musician. “It’s been a time for reflection,” Williams says. “I feel so fortunate to have had all these wonderful experiences playing music and I’m concerned for the next generations, what’s going to be left, how long it will take for people to feel safe to go hear a live performance without social distancing, so that it’s feasible financially for venues to even exist. I’m worried about how the younger musicians I play with in the UK are going to pay their rent, how they’re going to survive, if they’ll be able to play music... [but at the same time] I’m heartened to see so many musicians continuing to produce their work in spite of these challenges. We will persevere.” ❖

For more information, visit willfulmusic.com

Recommended Listening:

- Dave Liebman — *Lookout Farm* (ECM, 1973)
- Richard Beirach — *Methuselah* (Trio, 1975)
- Frank Kimbrough Trio — *Lonely Woman* (Mapleshade, 1988)
- Paul Bley — *Paul Bley Plays Carla Bley* (SteepleChase, 1991)
- John O’Gallagher Trio — *Dirty Hands* (Clean Feed, 2007)
- Jeff Williams — *Road Tales (Live at London Jazz Festival)* (Whirlwind, 2018)



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DANIEL HUMAIR

DRUM ARTIST

BY MICHAEL COBB

Daniel Humair is a drummer, composer and a painter originally from Geneva, Switzerland, now living in rural France. With the exception of Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins, the 82-year-old Humair has played with the most legendary musicians in jazz since the late '50s. As a sideman he has supported some of the biggest jazz acts of all time and has appeared on such classic albums as Chet Baker's *Chet Is Back!*, Art Farmer's *What Happens?* and Lucky Thompson Trio's *Memorial Oscar Pettiford*.

At 14, Humair fell in love with New Orleans jazz. He remembers how he first discovered jazz from a friend who had records. "As soon as I heard Louis Armstrong I said, 'that's what I want to do!'" Soon after, Humair joined several amateur groups, won first prize at the Zürich Amateur Festival in 1955 and became a professional working musician. In 1958, he went to Paris to play with Don Byas, Kenny Dorham, Bud Powell, Eric Dolphy, Pettiford, Baker and Thompson. Humair's work with such illustrious legends of jazz allowed him to witness the evolution of the genre. He notes, "Bebop was the main revolution because jazz stopped being for dancing and became music for listeners." About playing with such luminaries, Humair says, "When I played with Gerry Mulligan it was different than with Joe Henderson or Stéphane Grappelli or Phil Woods or Oscar Peterson. You have to have a different attitude with each of them. I only played with people who let me be free. I always tried to understand what would be the best mix. I worked so much because I have absolutely no ego as a drummer. I adapt to the situation and if it doesn't suit me, I don't go. I just go where I'm gonna have fun. And when I have fun, I do my best."

While in Paris in the late '50s, Humair began a long collaboration with pianist Martial Solal and played frequently with violinist Grappelli, well known for his work with Django Reinhardt. Humair fondly recalls other career highlights with jazz giants, "Once I had the chance to play at the Philharmonic in Nice with Cannonball Adderley, Milt Jackson, Dizzy Gillespie and Oscar Peterson. I was in heaven!" During the '60s, Humair had fruitful collaborations with European musicians. He formed a trio with violinist Jean-Luc Ponty and organ player Eddy Louiss. Together, they recorded two albums at the Paris club Caméléon, which have since been reissued.

When asked if Europeans approach jazz differently than Americans, Humair says, "No. Being American, black or white doesn't mean anything. Jazz is a totally international language. Anybody can play it if you know what it is. It's not because you're a good musician or an American that you're gonna play better; that's not good enough. You have to know the past, the folklore, that's the main thing. If you don't know Louis Armstrong, you cannot start at John Coltrane. You also need culture. If you're not interested in art, architecture, design, food, theater, you're losing a lot, you know? The best players are original, have a concept and a personality. For me, the genius of the century is Sonny Rollins. He could do anything, be creative and improvise with it. He is a situationist who plays with what he has

around him. To me that's jazz; he's a jazz creator."

In the late '60s-early '70s Humair continued to support touring American musicians and participated in Woods' famous project The European Rhythm Machine. For his work he was named "Drummer Deserving Wider Recognition" by the *DownBeat* International Critics Poll in 1970. Throughout the '70s, Humair was a sideman for Jim Hall, Lee Konitz, Johnny Griffin, Herbie Mann, Anthony Braxton and Hampton Hawes. He formed trios with François Jeanneau and Henri Texier and with Joachim Kühn and Jean-François Jenny-Clark and worked with Michel Portal, Richard Galliano, Jerry Bergonzi and David Liebman. These experiences allowed him to develop as a composer and break new ground as a drummer. Regarding the evolution of his style, Humair states, "You try to find a solution that is not too evident. You have tradition, but if you go a little bit further, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Creation is an accident. You have to take risks."

In terms of band leadership, Humair eschews typical hierarchy and prefers a collaborative process. He doesn't like leaders and believes there is too much emphasis on them today. "That's part of the problem with American jazz today; you sell people. When you go to a club and see the name of a leader and not the sidemen, I think it's abnormal because jazz is a conversation. It's like the conversation we have now, you ask me a question and I try to answer it, but I say what I want. That's jazz to me," he says. Live, he thrives on improvisation. "When I go onstage, I don't wanna know what tune we're gonna play, who's gonna take the first chorus or the tempo. We just go onstage and play. One note from the guy in front makes you respond and play. As I said, it's a conversation. If you have a role to play that's preconceived, then you're not improvising and you're not creative."

Humair has performed at major jazz festivals in America and Europe including Newport, Monterey, Paris, Berlin, Montreux, Chicago, Barcelona, Nice and Antibes. However, he finds European and American audience reactions to jazz very different and says, "I think jazz is more respected as an art form here than it is in America. In Europe when you play somewhere, nobody speaks. In America, I was very shocked to hear more noise from the bar than from the bass player. When somebody in the audience speaks too loud, I just stop and say, 'Why don't you go to the next bar if you're not interested in our work because you're disturbing other people.' The rules are different. It's a culture of respect for arts in general." And Humair is vocal about his displeasure with how the difficulties obtaining working permits prohibits the recognition of European jazz musicians. "The whole American scene can come to Europe, but you [Europeans musicians] cannot enter America without a visa. It takes 15 days to get papers to come to New York. It's totally ridiculous. That's why I don't come and European musicians are not known. I can tell you that there are monster players in Europe. I'm sorry that it cannot exist the way it should," he says.

While most of the jazz legends have passed on, Humair thinks much can be learned from their

recordings: "All the big masters are people that went beyond technique. The chops shouldn't be evident; the music should be in front. That's why I like Elvin Jones, Philly Joe Jones or Mel Lewis. They were really playing the right thing to hear at the right place. Their style lets you know who they are."

Humair believes jazz can continue and should be as elevated and respected as classical. "I think jazz should be in the same position as classical music today as a concept of listening. I think it can keep going on in festivals. Hopefully one day people can know Coltrane as well as Mahler. That would be paradise, you know?"

Dedicating his life to modern jazz in Europe has earned him the official recognition of Chevalier and Officer of Arts and Letters by the French government. Reflecting on his long and distinguished career he laughs and says, "I've had good moments and very few bad. I don't keep bad company. I don't drink, except wine, I don't do drugs and I have a Swiss watch. What can I say? I'm a serious guy!"

In addition to all the accolades for his music, Humair is just as highly regarded for his art. When asked how drumming and painting compare, he says, "When you play music you have a way of timing and phrasing so that the space is controlled. It's the same thing in painting, also an awareness of the front and the background. And I have the same attitude of improvisation. The big difference is that if you play a concert with musicians in front of people and make a mistake, you cannot correct it. Painting you do alone and you're the only one responsible for your work. If you don't like it, you don't have to show it. I can paint in a more comfortable situation, but drums allow me to be a little more adventurous."

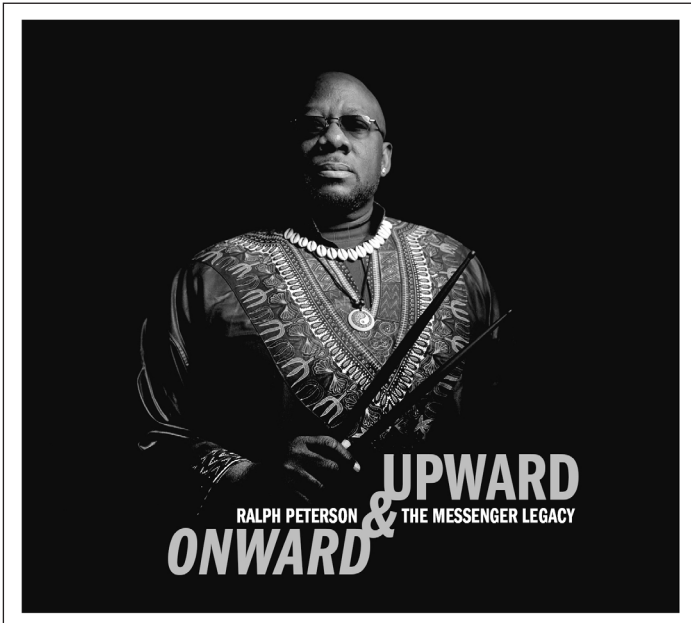
With gigs cancelled due to COVID-19 and the global music scene essentially shut down, these days Humair spends more time painting than playing. He says, "I think I'm more of a professional painter today than a professional drummer because I spend much more time doing that. I've done over 5,000 paintings. I can paint for most of the day whereas as a musician, I only play for a few hours. Today, I prefer to watch the birds from my country house. I can afford to be selective." ❖

For more information, visit danielhumair.com

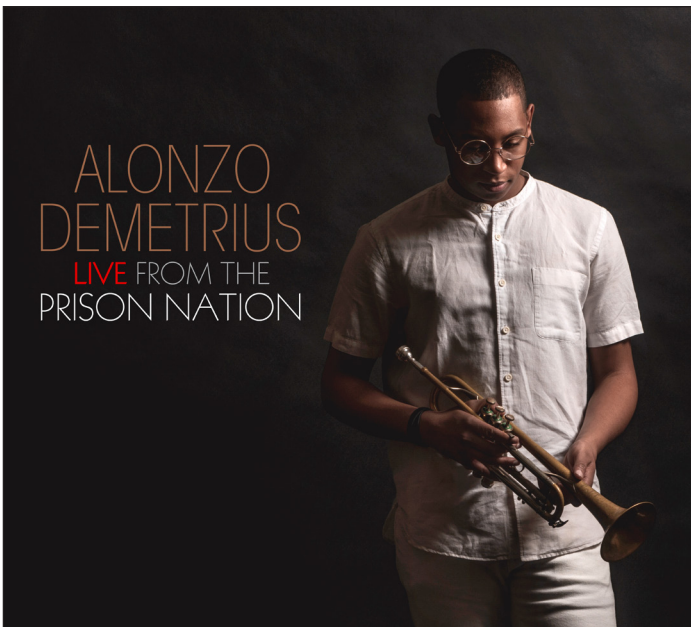
Recommended Listening:

- Daniel Humair/Pierre Michelot/Rene Urtreger – *Hum !* (Vega-Fresh Sound, 1960)
- Lee Konitz/Martial Solal – *European Episode/Impressive Rome* (Campi-CAM Jazz, 1968)
- Daniel Humair – *Drumo Vocolo: Drums for Screen no.1 (Percussioni ed effetti)* (International Music Label/Flower, 1970)
- Joachim Kühn/Daniel Humair/Jean-François Jenny-Clarke Trio – *Joachim Kühn Birthday Edition* (ACT Music, 1987/1995)
- Steve Lacy/Daniel Humair/Anthony Cox – *Work* (Sketch, 2002)
- Daniel Humair/Samuel Blaser/Heiri Känzig – *1291* (OutNote, 2020)

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AVREEAYL

RA

BY KURT GOTTSCHALK

“My first mentor wasn’t a musician.” It’s an unexpected statement coming from someone who from all indications lives and breathes music, but when asked about the lessons learned over a lifetime of playing, drummer Avreeayl Ra’s immediate response is about healing. “Henry Rucker,” he said definitively, speaking from the apartment that by all indications he’s soon to lose on Chicago’s South Side. “He taught me to believe in and manifest impossible things.”

Ra became involved with Rucker’s Psychic Research Foundation in the late ‘60s, the same time he began working with trumpeter Phil Cohran, one of the great, unheralded figures of the explosion of African American artistic ingenuity. He has stayed the parallel paths of natural healing and musical improvisation to this day. “The lesson that I got from Phil was the lesson of intention,” he said. “Now I’m trying to fuse the two together, the music and the healing.” Cohran and Ra were both a part of the Sun Ra Arkestra during the band’s fertile, formative Chicago years and, unsurprisingly, the composer, philosopher and teacher also had an influence on the drummer. “He told me to play round and he gave me an image with his fingers because I was playing angular,” according to the younger Ra. “This is something I’ve been working on ever since, playing circular. That circular motion sets up a vortex that doesn’t happen when you’re playing angularly. It really affects the third eye, that circular energy.”

“My main lessons were given to me by gestures,” he continued. “They weren’t explained with words. Professor Longhair told me a certain way to swing—there again, it was with a hand motion. He said ‘you give people something to think about but I want you to

get this.’ He was a tap dancer too so he knew rhythm.”

Conversation with Ra easily revolves around influences, likely because he’s so open to them. “He’s a very creative person but also very committed to healing, very grounded,” according to flutist Nicole Mitchell. “He maintains this childlike curiosity in always wanting to learn more and grow more.” That curiosity keeps him open to new ideas, new experiences and to playing with new people. His openness to working with up and coming players has made him a staple among younger generations of Chicago musicians.

“He definitely loves to share his enthusiasm to young people and is very encouraging,” Mitchell said. “He’s one of our most encouraging mentors. He took me seriously. He believed in me. When you’re starting out, it’s really important to play with older musicians who can bring that experience into what you’re doing.”

Mitchell recalled inviting Ra to early rehearsals in walk-up apartments. “He would never bring a drumset,” she said. “He would just pick up pots and pans and you would never know that you’re missing anything.” His contemporary, reedplayer Mwata Bowden, another frequent collaborator, also noted such of-the-moment innovation. “He never went to a store and bought himself a five-piece drum set and said, ‘OK, I got what I need,’” Bowden explained. “His stuff was always a hodgepodge. He made his own sound. Extremely rhythmically complex but he is always there where you need him.”

Ra was born in Chicago in 1947 and named after his father, saxophonist Arthur “Swinglee” O’Neil, a mentor to John Gilmore who was friendly with Henry Threadgill, Ed Wilkerson and other musicians of Ra’s generation. With a brief stay in New Orleans in the early ‘70s, Chicago has remained his home. And now it’s he who’s doing the mentoring, working regularly with Joshua Abrams, Christopher Dammann, Dave Rempis and other newer names on the city’s scene.

“Chicago’s a magnet and a lot of the younger players now are not necessarily from Chicago,” he said. “I embrace them. My father was a great mentor. When I started playing, people didn’t know I was my father’s son because I changed my name, but most of

my friends were friends of my father’s.” The city “has a very innovative atmosphere that I don’t find in many places,” he added. “It’s a certain earthiness and it’s like a southern town, you get eye contact, people talk to you.” In recent years, however, the city hasn’t been easy on Ra. In 2016, he was jumped by a group of white men outside the jazz club The Green Mill. “This was at the beginning of all the turmoil with Trump and I really think it was related,” he said.

More recently, he’s been facing the threat of eviction. With no gigs happening under the pandemic lockdown and no other means of income, Ra fell behind in his rent enough to get a warning from the landlord. Longtime friends in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians set up a crowdsourcing campaign to raise funds and he was able to make up the back rent.

But things aren’t likely to pick up soon, he said, and he’s looking to put his possessions in storage and find a single room to wait it out. “I’ve got only a couple months before I’m in the same situation, I see that coming already,” he said with a disarming laugh. “It really was touching that somebody was thinking about me. Things that you can’t control, you’ve got to see how to work with,” he added. “Every experience you have is a part of who you are, it becomes a part of how you make sense of life.” ♦

For more information, visit charity.gofundme.com/en/campaign/avreeayl-ra-fundraiser

Recommended Listening:

- Ernest Dawkins New Horizons Ensemble—*South Side Street Songs* (Silkheart, 1993)
- Ari Brown—*Venus* (Delmark, 1998)
- Edward Wilkerson, Nicole Mitchell, Harrison Bankhead, Avreeayl Ra—*Frequency* (Thrill Jockey, 2006)
- Fred Anderson Quartet—*Live Volume IV* (Asian Improv, 2010)
- Dave Rempis/Joshua Abrams/Avreeayl Ra + Jim Baker—*Perihelion* (Aerophonics, 2015-16)
- Mwata Bowden—*1 Foot In 1 Foot Out* (Asian Improv, 2019)

LEST WE FORGET



BABY DODDS

BY STUART BROOMER

Warren “Baby” Dodds was the first great New Orleans jazz drummer to record, playing in the 1920s with cornet player King Oliver, trumpeter Louis Armstrong and pianist Jelly Roll Morton. His advanced technique and fluid accents influenced drummers like Dave Tough and Gene Krupa and in the ‘40s he became an important figure in the revival of traditional jazz. His autobiography and solo recordings are significant documents of early jazz history.

Born on Dec. 24th, 1894 (according to his own *The Baby Dodds Story*), 1897 or 1898 (numerous sources) in Waveland, Mississippi, Dodds relocated to New Orleans at 16. A serious student of the drums, he learned to read music and practiced multiple musical styles, soon playing in trumpeter Bunk Johnson’s parade band, the legendary trombonist Frankie Duson’s Eagle Band and pianist Fate Marable’s steamship band. In 1921, he left to join Oliver in California and went with him to Chicago.

Early accounts of jazz celebrated drummers above everyone else, raving about stick-juggling acrobatics; in contrast, early jazz recordings usually omitted them altogether, their instruments too loud for sensitive acoustic recording. Dodds suffered on both counts: he was an intensely disciplined, musical drummer, not a vaudevillian; though he thought the drum was the key to the orchestra, when he first showed up on the classic Creole Jazz Band recordings, he was restricted to a woodblock, a washboard or a cymbal. On “Riverside Blues” by the Oliver band, his perfect timing and shifting accents are restricted to a woodblock.

When the Oliver band broke up in 1924, Dodds stayed in Chicago playing in his alto saxophonist/clarinetist brother Johnny Dodds’ Black Bottom Stompers, among others, and recording with Armstrong’s Hot Seven on masterpieces like “Potato Head Blues”. He and Johnny also recorded as a trio with Morton, including “Wolverine Blues”. On Johnny Dodds’ recording of “After You’ve Gone”, Baby takes an electrifying drum break during a rather lugubrious Gerald Reeves trombone solo.

Like many musicians of his generation, Dodds turned to other work to survive the Great Depression, but the ‘40s brought a new regard for jazz as an authentic art form, providing Dodds with fresh opportunities and definitely better quality recordings. Alfred Lion of Blue Note gave him an opportunity to record as a bandleader and Dodds assembled his Jazz

Four with the great New Orleans clarinetist Albert Nicholas. Dodds shone in such small groups and there’s a trio session under his name available, *Jazz à la Creole* from 1946, with Nicholas and a newcomer, pianist Don Ewell. He recorded with clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow and soprano saxophonist/clarinetist Sidney Bechet and also toured France with them. A 1947 New York City concert recording includes performances with Bechet and trombonist Jack Teagarden. In a more unusual collaboration, Dodds was engaged by dancer/choreographer Merce Cunningham for a drummer/dancer duet.

The burgeoning interest in the roots of jazz led to special opportunities for Dodds to document his life and music. There’s a 1946 Folkways recording *Talking and Drum Solos* and a 1953 film of Dodds demonstrating drum techniques. That same year Larry Gara conducted the extensive interviews that would become *The Baby Dodds Story* (Contemporary Press), an engaging memoir. Sadly, it was published shortly after Dodds’ death in 1959.

While critics and publicists of the ‘40s era created largely imaginary jazz wars between generations, Dodds was held in high regard by the great drummers of modern jazz. When Max Roach talked about the celebration of horn players at the expense of drummers, he cited Armstrong and Dodds, and some can hear Dodds’ phrases in Art Blakey’s fills. In a 1960

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

DOT TIME

BY MARILYN LESTER

Back in 2012, friends Johanan “Jo” Bickhardt and Andrew Read, both with expertise in the record business from managing and distribution to performing, had a vision: to start their own label. But one that would place the creativity of the artist first, rather than focus on business and sales, which they viewed as the negative default position of other record labels. Read, a native of Australia, a musician also schooled in business, had settled in the Netherlands in the early ‘90s. Bickhardt, a vocalist, had been working for the distributor who handled Read’s label. And so it was that Dot Time was incorporated, with offices in the Netherlands and the US, where Bickhardt resided. In the first year of its existence, the company prolifically released a number of albums, including Matt Baker’s *Underground*, Lucette van den Berg’s *Benkschaft*, Mark Zandveld’s *Zandscape* and Paula Atherton’s *Enjoy the Ride*.

Three years later, in 2015, a significant change occurred at Dot Time with the arrival of Jerry Roche, a producer and historian. In 2004 Roche established the reissue label Mighty Quinn “to save great music of the 1950s and 60s.” “I used to work at Mosaic Records,” he adds, “and Mighty Quinn, actually named after my daughter, was an outgrowth of that experience.” For Mosaic, noted for producing exclusive boxed set jazz reissues, Roche participated in research, production and packaging, including the Grammy-nominated Bix Beiderbecke set and the Joe Venuti/Eddie Lang and

Louis Prima/Wingy Manone sets.

Within a few years of its birth, Mighty Quinn had already brought back recordings by Harold Land, Pepper Adams, Ray Nance, Eddie Condon and more. It so happened that Mighty Quinn was distributed by Bickhardt. “Jo recognized the quality of what I’d been producing at Mighty Quinn,” says Roche. “He thought it would be a good idea to have a Legends Series for Dot Time.” So, with his experience of sourcing and releasing the Mighty Quinn albums, each restored and remastered to keep the original feeling of the record intact, Roche was brought on board, launching Legends as a collaborative effort with Bickhardt. Those first Legends releases included albums by Ella Fitzgerald (*Live At Chautauqua Vol. 1*), Gerry Mulligan (*Live At The New School*) and the Joe Bushkin Quartet (*Live At The Embers 1952*).

Also, around this time, Bickhardt’s partnership with Read was dissolving, creating an open door for Roche to come in and assume a leadership role at Dot Time. Roche became Bickhardt’s new partner. The European office was relocated to Bremen, Germany, where administrative functions are handled. “We chose Bremen,” Roche explains, “because it’s a fun, great city for jazz and home to the Jazzahead festival and conference.” The original mission of the company remained, stated on the label’s website: “Our label will be successful only when our artists are successful. Our mission is therefore to work together with our artists to help them succeed in reaching their goals.”

In the transition of partners, reevaluation of the label and its future inevitably had to take place. Dot Time is essentially a three-person shop: the partners and their administrator in Europe. “Jo and I focused on

growing the label. We knew for that to happen we needed greater visibility, which would lead to greater opportunity.” In 2016, walking the talk, the Grammy-nominated vocalist/pianist/composer and arranger, Nicole Zuraitis, was signed, which met her “bucket list” desire to have a label that would support her as an artist. “The team at Dot Time is top of the line and very invested in the success of their artists,” she enthuses. “They were not afraid to take a chance on my jazz-adjacent pop album *All Wandering Hearts*. They were willing to expand their boundaries of traditional jazz for the sake of good music.”

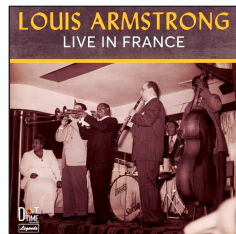
The Legends Series’ growth has also expanded the label’s visibility. Four previously unreleased Louis Armstrong recordings were discovered among the archives of Queens College and a licensing agreement was achieved with the Louis Armstrong Foundation Inc. “This was a major windfall for us,” Roche reports. “It really got us noticed.” The collection is available in CD, digital and vinyl formats, with extensive liner notes and images created for the physical product. A synergistic phenomenon for Dot Time, Roche notes, is the resurrection and popularity of vinyl, which has not only breathed new life into the record industry as a whole, but has especially invigorated the jazz sector, which is particularly fond of the collateral material that is part of each release.

The Legends Series also has the benefit, through its success, to allow Dot Time to keep a focus on the quality of their artists, avoiding the risk of over-extending. Hence, another key artist signing with Dot Time arrived in Grammy-winning jazz royalty: vocalist Catherine Russell. She was introduced to the label

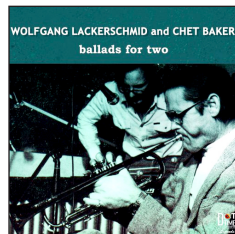
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)



Alone Together
Catherine Russell



Live in France
Louis Armstrong



Ballads for Two
Wolfgang Lackerschmid/Chet Baker



All Wandering Hearts
Nicole Zuraitis



Dancing On The Edge
The Kaleidoscope Quintet

VOXNEWS

LATINX VOICES

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Heroes honor heroes. So writes music journalist Michael Ambrosino in the liner notes for *The Art of Descarga* (Smithsonian Folkways). Here he’s talking about percussionist John Santos’ furthering of the legacy of Cuban bongocero Francisco “Chino” Pozo, whose irresistible rhythms found their way into the masterworks of American jazz bandleaders like Dizzy Gillespie and Tito Puente. The new release digs deep into AfroCaribbean and AfroLatin beat traditions, centering on the music of *descargas*: Cuban jam sessions full of exhilarating rhythmic possibilities. In *descargas*, singers like Orlando Torriente sing backup (coro) and will solo at times, though the focus of the improvisation is always the motion of the groove. On *The Art of Descarga*, Torriente—who’s been singing with the Bay Area-based Santos for more than 15 years—contributes lead vocals to two tracks, sultry mambo “Bernal Heights” and spinning bomba “Lo Tuyo No Va”. Placed right at the upper edge of his range, Torriente’s spontaneous vocal lines ring with barely restrained fervor—they’re an invitation to join in the excitement.

Los Angeles disc jockey Jose Rizo leads his nonet Mongorama on *Mariposas Cantan* (Saungú), a 12-track

collection featuring the esteemed timbale player Ramon Banda on what would be his final recording. The group’s regular lead singer James Zavaleta displays striking rhythmic acuity on tunes like playful “Quindimbia” and “Descarga Ramon Banda”, the ensemble’s lengthy ode to the late percussionist, only to wax disarmingly romantic on the title cut (translated, “Butterflies Sing”). Guest vocal soloists also share in the album’s success: Darynn Dean’s jazz-textured solo work grounds “Helen of Jazz”, a flute showcase in honor of late disc jockey Helen Borgers, and lends a bluesy-funk vibe to the group’s Latin run-down of Herbie Hancock’s “Watermelon Man”. Alfredo Ortiz, who plays percussion provides an irrepressibly upbeat vocal line on “Fiesta de Charangueros” and Yoshigei Rizo, the bandleader’s daughter-in-law, stands out for her heated performance of Ernesto Duarte Brito’s popular bolero “Como Fue”.

The notion behind the *Jazz Is Dead* series—brainchild of hip-hop composer Adrian Younge and A Tribe Called Quest DJ-producer Ali Shaheed Muhammad—is to re-contextualize celebrated jazz artists within a contemporary framework, using electric guitars and keyboards, recorded in an analog environment. Their third such collaboration highlights prolific Brazilian singer-songwriter Marcos Valle’s silken bossa voice, sometimes in duo with wife/singer Patricia Alvi or gospel singer Loren Oden. This eponymous album comes as a surprise, not just because it’s the Brazilian icon’s first stateside recording in 50

years, but also because he manages to condense these five decades of excellence into a mere eight tunes: check out his unhurried vocalese against the smoldering pulse on “Queira Bem”; tight repartee in Portuguese with Alvi on whirling bossa nova “Viajando Por Ai (Traveling Around)”; R&B-tinged wordless duet with Oden on “Gotta Love Again”; and intuitive phrasing against raucous synth lines on “A Gente Volta Amanhã (The People Return Tomorrow)”. Ageless.

Singer/composer Eva Cortés fronts an impressive roster on *Todas Las Voces* (TRRC), her second album with producer Doug Beavers. Besides the latter on trombone, the flamenco-suffused tunes feature bassists Christian McBride and Luques Curtis, pianist Elio Villafranca, drummer Eric Harland, saxophonist Román Filiú and percussionist Luisito Quintero. Most of these expertly crafted songs are originals: plaintive modern jazz anthem “Canción con Todos”; coolly sophisticated “Hills of Silver”; and smart, laid-back “Out Of Words”, co-written with Villafranca, for example. But she also includes a smooth jazz version of the popular Latin tune “Gracias a la Vida” by influential Chilean composer Violeta Parra and an alluring rendition of Horace Silver’s beseeching ballad, “Peace” with words by Bobby McFerrin. And with the album’s title she offers a clue to her humanistic motivations as a singer-songwriter; translated as All Voices, it can allude not only to her skills behind the microphone but also to her wish for the world. ❖

GARY PEACOCK

BY ANDREY HENKIN

ELIOTT PEACOCK / COURTESY OF ECM RECORDS



Gary Peacock, a legendary bassist whose resumé since the mid '50s reads like a history of jazz and who also enjoyed a fruitful career as a bandleader, most notably for ECM, died Sep. 4th at 85.

Peacock was born May 12th, 1935 in Burley, Idaho, and grew up in Yakima, Washington. His early experience with music was as a pianist and he attended Westlake College of Music in Los Angeles. It was during his time in the army that serendipity came: his unit's bassist quit and Peacock slid over from the piano bench to take over. While stationed overseas, Peacock made his first recordings as part of the 1957 Jazz Salon Dortmund 1957 (released as EPs on Metronome). Back on the West Coast, he began his jazz career in earnest, working with Bud Shank, Carmell Jones, the Candoli brothers, Don Ellis, Clare Fischer, Barney Kessel and Prince Lasha. That early work presaged Peacock's entire career, one that found him working alongside musicians from every subset of jazz. Later credits in the '60s, when Peacock was based in New York, included Gil Evans, Bill Evans, Lowell Davidson, Albert Ayler, Tony Williams, Paul Bley and even a stint with Miles Davis. Speaking to Florence Wetzel for a 2007 interview for this gazette, Peacock recalled that when playing with Davis, "listening became part of my body. Sometimes Miles would be playing and he'd stop in the middle of a song and turn around and look at me. The first couple times I thought, 'Jeez, I must have fucked up.' After a while I realized that he was listening to everyone around him."

After taking some time away from music, spending time in Japan to study Eastern medicine, Peacock reconnected with Bley, recording with him in various groups throughout the first half of the '70s, and made his first albums as a leader for CBS/Sony, featuring some of Japan's first generation of avant garde players. In 1977, Peacock recorded *Tales Of Another* for ECM, the first document of what would become the noted trio of himself, pianist Keith Jarrett and drummer Jack DeJohnette, active through 2014. Speaking of that trio to Wetzel, Peacock said, "If three people share a common history in a particular area of music and they all found something in that music that freed them, when they get together to play a piece everyone is 100% in that composition... So although there's a distance in age, we share the same inspiration from so many people and compositions that we're already in quite a magical setting."

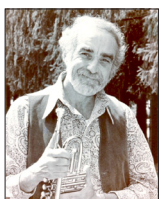
Peacock continued to work with a starry array of players and release further albums for ECM (his final release was 2016's *Tangents*), Postcards and Pirouet. When asked by Wetzel about his listening habits, his answer reflected his years of practicing *zazen* or sitting meditation: "Precious little. Where I live is very silent... So mostly I spend a lot of time in silence."



STANLEY CROUCH (Dec. 14th, 1945 – Sep. 16th, 2020) The controversial jazz critic, scholar, NEA Jazz Master and MacArthur Genius (known as "Stanley The Crouch") came up as a drummer in the Loft Jazz scene of '70s New York, recording with David Murray and Leo Smith, wrote liner notes for albums by the likes of Murray, Bobby Bradford, Rashied Ali, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Max Roach and Wynton Marsalis as well as critical books on jazz history (including a tome on Charlie Parker) and race issues in the US. Crouch died Sep. 16th at 74.



REGGIE JOHNSON (Dec. 13th, 1940 – Sep. 11th, 2020) The bassist, long based in Europe, was a key figure in The New Thing in '60s New York, recording with Archie Shepp, Marion Brown, Giuseppe Logan, Valdo Williams, Alan Shorter and Jazz Composer's Orchestra, plus, later, more straightahead credits with Booker Ervin, Bobby Hutcherson, Harold Land, Kenny Burrell, Sonny Stitt, Walter Bishop, Jr., Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Johnny Coles, Frank Wess, Mingus Dynasty, Tom Harrell, Robin Kenyatta, Steve Grossman and others. Johnson died Sep. 11th at 79.



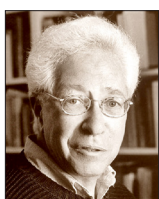
HAROLD LIEBERMAN (1931 – Sep. 16th, 2020) The trumpeter had a pair of '60s recordings featuring himself overdubbed in duets or octets and was also a member of the Music Minus One Orchestra, the titular ensemble of the label, which made play-along records. Lieberman died Sep. 16th at 89.



BILL PURSELL (Jun. 9th, 1926 – Sep. 3rd, 2020) The pianist was better known for his later work in country music but had early jazz albums for Columbia and a 1960 sideman credit under Hank Garland (alongside a 17-year-old Gary Burton). Purcell died Sep. 3rd at 94 from complications of COVID-19.



HANS SALOMON (Sep. 10th, 1933 – Sep. 24th, 2020) The Austrian saxophonist was part of the 1958 Newport International Youth Band and went on to work with Friedrich Gulda, Erich Kleinschuster, Art Farmer, ORF-Big Band, Aladár Pege and others. Salomon died Sep. 24th at 87.



MAYNARD SOLOMON (Jan. 5th, 1930 – Sep. 28th, 2020) The producer and co-founder of Vanguard Records with his brother was known for his classical releases and books on composers but his label did release albums in the '60s-'70s by Buck Clayton, Bunky Green, Clark Terry, Larry Coryell, Elvin Jones, James Moody and Oregon. Solomon died Sep. 28th at 90.



IRA SULLIVAN (May 1st, 1931 – Sep. 21st, 2020) The multi-instrumentalist (trumpet, flugelhorn, alto, soprano, tenor saxophones) and stalwart in his adopted home of Chicago of the '50s-'70s was active since the mid '50s well into the new millennium, working with Red Rodney, Art Blakey, J.R. Monterose, Roland Kirk, Eddie Harris, Philly Joe Jones, Red Garland, Frank Catalano, Silvano Monasterios, Brad Goode, Bob Albanese, Mike Reed and others while releasing his own dates for ABC-Paramount, Delmark, Vee Jay, Horizon, Galaxy, Stash, Muse, Go Jazz and Origin. Sullivan died Sep. 21st at 89. ❖

(LEST WE FORGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

DownBeat interview, Philly Joe Jones described once taking a break during a gig and discovering Dodds playing across the street: "He was swinging so much I was late an entire set!...I couldn't leave, I sat down and just stayed." In a 2011 *JazzTimes* interview, Roy Haynes remarked of *Talking and Drum Solos*, "I'd listen to it over and over again, like I'd never heard it before." ❖

For more information, visit pas.org/about/hall-of-fame/warren-baby-dodds

Recommended Listening:

- King Oliver – *The Complete 1923 Jazz Band Recordings* (Off The Record-Archeophone, 1923)
- Johnny Dodds – *Great Original Performances 1923-1929* (BBC, 1923-29)
- Louis Armstrong – *The Complete Hot Five & Hot Seven Recordings* (Columbia-Legacy, 1926-27)
- Bunk Johnson – *Rare and Unissued Masters, Volume Two (1943-1946)* (American Music, 1943-46)
- Baby Dodds – *Talking and Drum Solos* (Smithsonian Folkways-Atavistic, 1946/1954)
- Baby Dodds Trio – *Jazz à La Creole* (G.H.B.-ORG Music, 1946-47)

(LABEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

through Director of Research Collections for the Louis Armstrong House Museum, Ricky Riccardi, during the reissues of the Armstrong live performances. "Jerry and I hit it off right away because of our similar taste in—and his vast knowledge of—all different genres of music," she says. Roche shares that mutual appreciation and characterizes Russell as "a consummate professional who owns any room she sings in." Her album *Alone Together* for Dot Time received a 2019 Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album.

With the COVID-19 pandemic creating havoc in live performance and greatly affecting creative artists across all genres, it's the record industry that's least unscathed. Dot Time has "great plans" for the future, which Roche acknowledges with enthusiasm. That's a feeling shared by Russell. "I love working with Dot Time Records! They give me creative freedom to record what I choose," she says, "and they attend my gigs whenever possible. I'm very fortunate to have found them." The label's philosophy of win-win has been a constant since its inception and now, with Roche solidly in place and the business activities of the label settled, the path ahead seems paved with the ingredients for further success, a notion that Zuraitis endorses. "I feel Dot Time has become one of the most successful and accredited labels in the jazz world today," she says.

Just released is another in the Legends Series, Wolfgang Lackerschmid (vibraphone) and Chet Baker (trumpet, vocal) and their *Quintet Sessions 1979* with Larry Coryell (guitar), Buster Williams (bass) and Tony Williams (drums) on all platforms as well as Kaleidoscope Quintet's *Dancing On The Edge* (recorded in 2003) with Dave Liebman (tenor and soprano sax, wood flute), Joe Lovano (tenor and flute), Tony Marino (bass) and Michael Stephens (drums), with vocals by Judi Silvano on CD and digital. An unnamed project for early 2021 release will showcase leader Roni Ben-Hur (guitar) with George Cables (piano), Harvie S (bass), Victor Lewis (drums) and Ingrid Jensen (trumpet). Also coming, in 2021, is Evan Arntzen, the Canadian-born saxophonist, clarinetist and vocalist, with *Counter melody*, featuring guest Russell. It would seem that within the ever-changing landscape of the record industry, Dot Time has solidly settled into a groove with happy-making purpose for all. ❖

For more information, visit dottimerecords.com. Russell live-streams Nov. 22nd at 92Y.org/billieholiday.

FRED HERSCH

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-London Jazz News

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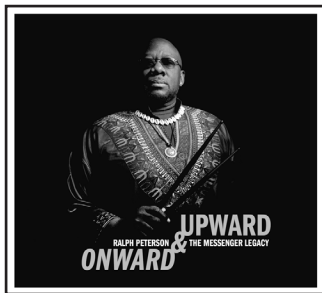
America The Beautiful
Kahil El'Zabar (Spiritmuse)
by Scott Yanow

Percussionist Kahil El'Zabar (who turns 67 this month) believes that it is not too late to save the United States from its current direction. While a realist, he is also optimistic about its chances. He sees playing what he calls "spiritual jazz" as his best way to make a contribution to one's spirits. On *America The Beautiful*, which begins and ends with very different versions of the anthem, El'Zabar otherwise plays his own compositions with a colorful group of skilled instrumentalists. The originals, many of which are one-chord vamps, often utilize repetition in the accompaniment and in its riffs while either the ensemble or a particular solo voice is in the forefront.

The first version contains rich and unusual harmonies. The often-jubilant "Jump And Shout" has Corey Wilkes' expressive trumpet in the lead over the dense and colorful rhythmic ensemble. Dennis Winslett takes honors on the simple but effective "Express Yourself" with his boppish alto saxophone flying over the riffing strings. The late great baritone saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett is showcased on "Freedom March", playing freely over a three-note pattern that loops behind him for the entire eight-minute performance. It is good to hear Bluiett again in fine form (no one else could play in the extreme register of the baritone quite like him) but he deserved a more challenging vehicle than this very repetitious piece. "Sketches Of An AfroBlue" is mostly an ensemble piece with prominent trumpet and strings, hinting at "Afro Blue" near its conclusion. Muted trumpet is in the lead on the ballad "How Can We Mend A Broken Heart" and emulates *Sketches of Spain*-era Miles Davis on "That We Ask Of Our Creator". El'Zabar, who mostly plays in the ensemble, is heard a bit on flute during "Prayers For The Unwarranted Sufferings" and sings a bit on the funky second version of the title track.

The compositions could be stronger but the sincere intentions and high musicianship make this a worthwhile acquisition.

For more information, visit spiritmuserecords.com



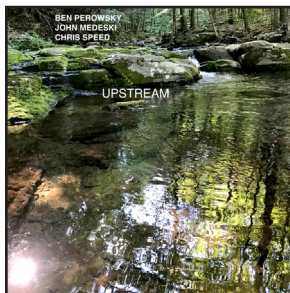
Onward & Upward
Ralph Peterson & The Messenger Legacy (Onyx)
by Ken Dryden

Art Blakey groomed numerous musicians into leaders by encouraging them to compose for his Jazz Messengers. Drummer Ralph Peterson, the last musician Blakey hired, formed the Messenger Legacy to build on the foundation of this landmark band. Its second release includes both Blakey alumni and musicians who never worked with him in various combinations. Instead of exploring staples from the Jazz Messengers repertoire, they performed inspired originals by Peterson and his bandmates.

Peterson's value as a composer and arranger has been well established during over three decades of recording. Each of his three originals has a slightly different frontline, with the only constant trumpeter Philip Harper. The nicest surprise is the extended feature for bassist Melissa Slocum in the Latin-flavored "Sonora". Pianist Joanne Brackeen had a brief tenure with Blakey and while one doesn't typically think of her as a hardbop stylist, her challenging "Tricks Of The Trade" reveals she still has chops to burn in this atypical setting. Brian Lynch's lively "El Grito" is a tantalizing AfroCuban vehicle for his sparkling trumpet while trombonist Robin Eubanks and rising star pianist Zaccai Curtis also shine. The compositions of Eubanks, Curtis, Jean Toussaint, Steve Davis and Lonnie Plaxico also merit high praise.

The premiere webcast from The Side Door in Old Lyme, CT was videotaped a few days earlier, which allowed Peterson to Zoom chat live with viewers. For a venue new to this format, the audio and mix of six camera angles were excellent while Peterson added commentary between songs. The first set had Harper, Curtis, tenor saxophonist Bill Pierce, alto saxophonist Craig Handy and bassist Essiet Essiet. Highlights included Peterson's Monk-flavored "Forth And Back", featuring the horns to good effect; "Tribute To Lord Willis", a lush ballad honoring Larry Willis, showcasing Curtis' formidable gifts; and the pianist's lively "Un Poco Haina", saluting Max Roach and Blakey and featuring the leader. Eubanks and trumpeter Sean Jones replaced Handy and Harper for set two. The latter's hip "Red Black And Green Blues" packed a punch with strong solos by the leader, Jones and Essiet. Pierce's toe-tapping "Sudan Blue" and Peterson's heartfelt ballad "I Remember Bu" also stand out. The Side Door has made a major statement with its initial webcast.

For more information, visit ralphpetersonmusic.com/onyx.html



Upstream
Ben Perowsky/John Medeski/Chris Speed (Upstream)
by Brian Charette

This allstar trio had its first gigs at The Stone around 2000 but recorded this album in upstate New York in 2014. All three, drummer Ben Perowsky, organ player John Medeski and tenor saxophonist/clarinetist Chris Speed, are well known leaders and sidemen.

The disc opens with an obscure Jaco Pastorius tune, "Dania", short, twisty tenor lines and organ bass grunts, Perowsky's swing pushing the time with a delightfully trashy ride. Speed has a strong tone that sits comfortably between the whirring rhythm section and his clipped phrases gradually expand into interesting intervallic leaps. "Kanape" is a loose Perowsky funk tune named for an upstate stream. The simple tenor melody is supported by spry organ. Speed solos first with cool chromatic lines broken up by just the right amount of idiomatic squeals, Medeski supportive with repetitive sixteenth notes in the bass and cleverly placed counter melodies. There's a great drum solo over the memorable riff at the end, Perowsky rocking out with big tom hits and sizzling snare work.

"Paul" has shades of The Beatles' "I am the Walrus" with a slow spacey descending bass, Medeski giving the tune shape by pulling and pushing organ drawbars while his Leslie spins fast then slow then fast again. "Worms" features Speed's great control over his

clarinet, his lines flying as Medeski playfully interjects and Perowsky drives the bus with surprising tempo changes. "Side Car" starts with drum sticks and grooving organ, showing Medeski's deep knowledge of Larry Young's quartal harmony, which he mixes with blues wails. "Love and the Apocalypse" enters with a spooky start with low dissonant organ, Speed with a lovely melody in contrast and Medeski changes the direction again with some angular melodies.

This eclectic Hammond trio recording steps gently into the avant garde while keeping the groove and grit of all your favorite organ grinder sides.

For more information, visit perowsky.com

JHM 277
Daniel Weber
Dramatis Personæ
Daniel Weber – drums

Daniel Weber (Saarbrücken/Germany) presents on his debut solo album „Dramatis Personæ“ an astounding richness of facets of his playing skills. He transfers aspects of composing for ensemble play to the solo area widening the drumming sound repertoire by sharpening thematic and melodic parameters on a virtuoso rhythmical basis. Daniel Weber has developed all compositions in a direct improvising process on the instruments. Surprising turns and the exciting mesh of different sound and rhythm levels form a thrilling counterpoint to the emotional content of his melodic structures and their friction with the musical motion. Improvising musician Daniel Weber melts aspects of stimuli of the Neue Musik concerning composition and sound with elements of jazz interpreting his instrument in the process in an astounding, sometimes breath-taking way, not only metrically, agogically or dynamically but melodically and gesticulatory.

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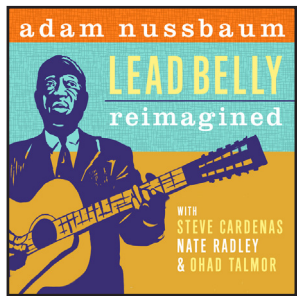
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—LOS ANGELES TIMES

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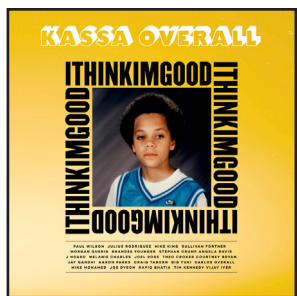
Lead Belly Reimagined
Adam Nussbaum (Sunnyside)
by Joel Roberts

After a 40-year career performing with the likes of Michael Brecker, John Scofield, John Abercrombie and Dave Liebman, among many others, drummer Adam Nussbaum's long overdue debut as a leader was a bit of a surprise. Released in 2018, *The Lead Belly Project* was a tribute to the legendary folk-blues singer, guitarist and songwriter Huddie William Ledbetter. Two years later, Nussbaum, who turns 64 this month) has reunited the same group with tenor saxophonist Ohad Talmor and dual electric guitars of Steve Cardenas and Nate Radley (and, notably, no bass player) for another deep dive into Lead Belly's music. Focusing this time mostly on lesser-known material, the quartet takes Lead Belly's simple, yet powerful tunes, some more than a century old, in unexpected directions while always maintaining respect for their history and origin.

From the first beats of the drum intro to the loping blues "Relax Your Mind", there's an enviably relaxed, spacious feel that recalls some of Bill Frisell's folk-jazz projects and fellow drummer Brian Blade's eclectic recordings with his Fellowship band. A lot of stylistic ground is covered, reflecting Lead Belly's disparate influences, from the bouncy Celtic dance grooves of "Laura" to the New Orleans shuffle of "Shorty George", highlighted by Nussbaum's second-line snare and energetic guitar interplay. The most well-known song, "Rock Island Line", is given a thorough makeover, with the familiar melody only hinted at by saxophone. "Governor Pat Neff", named for the man who pardoned Lead Belly in 1925, facilitating his release from a Texas prison where he was being held for murder, closes the album on a bawdy, high-spirited note.

Nussbaum has called Lead Belly a transformative influence during his formative years and his affection for the music is evident throughout this highly enjoyable album.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com



I Think I'm Good
Kassa Overall (Brownswood Recordings)
by Russ Musto

Steeped in both modernism and tradition through his work with Geri Allen and Terri Lyne Carrington, drummer-DJ-MC Kassa Overall stands at the forefront of a socially-conscious hybrid music fusing jazz and hip-hop, one capable of appealing to fans of both Herbie Hancock and Kendrick Lamar. On this, his sophomore release as a leader, the follow-up to his pioneering 2018 self-released album *Go Get Ice Cream and Listen to Jazz*, Overall is joined by a cast of similarly minded innovative players, who ably assist in bringing his uniquely personal artistic vision to light.

The suite-like date opens gently with "Visible

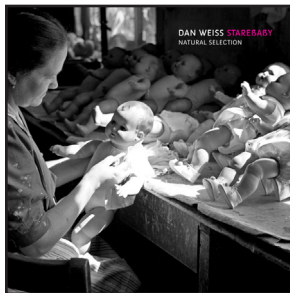
Walls", a solemn entreaty that has Overall pleadingly intoning "I hope they let me go tonight" over Mike King's droning synthesizers, buoyed by Brandee Younger's harp, Jay Gandhi's bansuri flute and Morgan Guerin's bass clarinet. Overall's drumbeats underpin his vocals on the darker "Please Don't Kill Me", on which pianist Sullivan Fortner, bassist Stephan Crump, vibraphonist Joel Ross and flugelhorn player Theo Croker join the fray.

J Hoard teams up with Overall on vocals on "Find Me", a genre-leaping collage of moods with Aaron Parks' sampled piano and Guerin's EWI creating a dreamy sci-fi-ish atmosphere. Melanie Charles comes aboard, partnering with J Hoard on vocals for "I Know You See Me", which finds Overall in a more conventional rapper role. Gandhi returns for "Sleeping On The Train", soaring melodically over Courtney Bryan's piano and Overall's drums.

Arguably the most compelling piece, "Show Me A Prison", with Hoard singing "Show me a prison / Show me a jail / Show me a prisoner / Whose face has gone pale / I'll show you a young man / With so many reasons why / Let go of the fortune / Let go you and I" over a wash of keyboards, is tagged by Angela Davis' voicemail that ends "Stay strong my brother". Autobiographical tracks "Halfway House" and "Landline", the former with Fortner, King and Crump, the latter a duet with saxophonist brother Carlos, offer further insights into the life journey of the leader, who sings with palpable honesty on "Darkness Of Mind", backed by Fortner's Chopin-esque piano recalling Jobim's "How Insensitive".

Optimism abounds on "The Best Of Life" and "Got Me A Plan" before the date ends with "Was She Happy (for Geri Allen)", a Fender Rhodes-drums duet with Vijay Iyer, Overall ardently answering the title query, "She was on a quest".

For more information, visit brownswoodrecordings.com



Natural Selection
Dan Weiss Starebaby (Pi)
by George Grella

The metadata on the digital copy of the new album from drummer Dan Weiss' Starebaby band declares the genre as "Avant Jazz". But critics should ever remember Marcus Aurelius' question, "This thing, what is it in itself, in its own constitution?" Because this band is metal, man.

Avant, certainly, and stylistically inventive. John Zorn showed that people known as jazz players could make (in)credible metal and he opened up the ears of jazz listeners as to the vast range of ideas possible in metal. Starebaby makes theirs with plenty of prog/math patterns, washes of ambient sound and room for substantial improvisation. That last may be the "jazz" element, but this doesn't swing (well, it does in moments), it pounds and thrashes (not bad things) and the composed and improvised music mesh in a seamless, dense texture.


That texture can be slippery, or maybe just a matter of taste. Weiss is the leader and the talent here is phenomenal—guitarist Ben Monder, keyboard players Craig Taborn and Matt Mitchell and bassist Trevor Dunn—and there's a sense of collective purpose, but also a purposeful feeling of demonstrating that the thing can be done. As the thing has now decades-old roots in Last Exit, Naked City, Painkiller and other

projects, the time seems to be past for proof-of-concept stage, the field awaits maturity.

On this record and the band's 2018 eponymous debut, one whipsaws between the ensemble crushing out some riffs and drums full-throttle behind blistering guitar and bass solos and wondering just how many more changes in section and meter and angular line will have to pass before the playing and forward momentum pick up again. The 13-minute opening track, "Episode 18", has three or four distinct changes in the first two minutes and many smaller episodes. On an almost 80-minute album, the ears flag.

For more information, visit pirecordings.com

UNEARTHED GEM



The Skies of Copenhagen
(2020 Reissue)
Ra Kalam Bob Moses

The Skies of Copenhagen

Ra Kalam Bob Moses (Ra-kalam)

by Mark Keresman

At risk of angering the Hyperbole Gods, Bob Moses is one of the most underrated American drummers on the jazz scene. He's been active since the '60s, playing with Larry Coryell, Gary Burton, the Steve Kuhn/Sheila Jordan group and Pat Metheny. He's also an ace composer but, alas, many of his ambitious large-group albums on the Gramavision label (circa 1982-1994) are out of print.

Yet he's not slowing down—*The Skies of Copenhagen* (perhaps a nod to Ornette Coleman's orchestral *Skies of America*?) is a two-CD set recorded in 2012, which features Moses as composer and drummer leading a group of (mostly younger) Danish compatriots: Anders Banke, Sture Ericson and Jesper Zeuthen (reeds), Martin Nilsson (guitar), Søren Kjærgaard (piano), Richard Andersson (bass), Nils Davidsen (bass) and Michala Østergaard-Nielsen (drums, percussion, glockenspiel). Some of the music is group improvisations, others composed by Moses, plus a pair by group members and one by the late legendary saxophonist John Tchicai.

Opening track "Force of Nature" sets the stage for what's to follow. There's extended turbulent passages and, at times, with its stately, somber rhythm, vague resemblance to the first movement of a symphony. The title track consists of contrasts—the underlying rhythm is restless and forward-moving, over which the saxophonists agitatedly wail in a free-ish manner with an eerie calm at the eye of this storm. "A Chaos With a Little Bit of Order" by Tchicai is a steely dirge reminiscent slightly of Albert Ayler's more funereal pieces: lots of harrowing vibrato in the leading horns, yet with a buoyant, ringing motif three-quarters of the way through, a bit of a light at the end of the tunnel.

This is a collection of cerebral and thoughtful music, albeit presented in a vibrant and direct manner. Favorable comparisons could be made—shades of Don Cherry, Gil Evans and George Russell can be discerned—and some of this recalls Moses' aforementioned large ensemble efforts. For those looking for an album to luxuriate in, with lots of fine and subtle musicianship throughout, partake.

For more information, visit nativepulse.com/ra-kalam-bob-moses-records

GLOBE UNITY



Schlingerland/Dynamische Schwingungen
Sven-Åke Johansson (FMP - SAJ-Cien Fuegos)
Provinces
Christopher Icasiano (Origin)
The Meini Session
Christian Lillinger (Plait)
by Tom Greenland

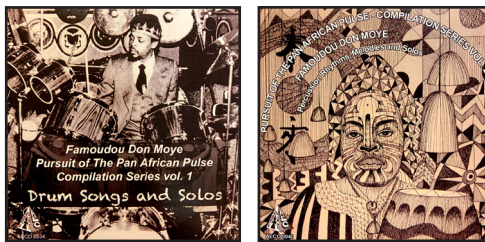
Solo drums is a perplexity. Capable drummers generate dense polyrhythmic textures by employing all limbs at once, but the expression of melodic and harmonic ideas poses a challenge. In the hands (and feet) of the artists reviewed here, any limitations are only opportunities to turn taps into tunes and sounds into songs.

Leading the charge is the remastered release of Swedish-born, Berlin-based drummer Sven-Åke Johansson's *Schlingerland/Dynamische Schwingungen*, recorded in 1972 in Stockholm. The two epic tracks, "Nahbild" ("close-up") and "Etwas Entfernt Vom Mikrofon" ("a little away from the mic"), weigh in at 18 and 21 minutes, respectively, artfully constructed to lead up one side of a musical mountain ridge, pausing midway at plateaus, descending the far side, only to regroup at the bottom and rise again for two more consecutive peaks. The slow gradual accelerandos and crescendos, countered by ritardandos and diminuendos, are executed with the impeccable finesse of Buddy Rich and loose swing of Louie Bellson, both endorsers of Slingerland drums. The work is measured yet rampant, as deliberate as it is spontaneous, a masterstroke of extended narrative form realized through minimal means.

Seattle-based Filipino-American Christopher Icasiano's solo debut *Provinces* is another example of a highly disciplined yet exploratory approach. In addition to a basic drumkit, he uses foot-controlled synthesizer samples to make loops or drones. As on *Schlingerland* there are two extended pieces, but Icasiano's music, unlike Johansson's organically unfolding arcs, forges ahead with an incessant, robotic consistency, the pulse wavering only slightly in places to reveal that it's a man, not a machine, making the music. The six parts of the title suite are performed without pause until a sudden break at the beginning of "IV" gives way to quietly rumbling electronics and wind sounds, then more atmospheric and a polyrhythmic finish. "Taho", named for the Filipino snack food, shows similarly supple manipulations of the pulse and further integration of drumkit, synths and sampled sounds.

German Christian Lillinger's *The Meini Session* is the most concise, an EP of alternating solo and group tracks. The trio numbers, featuring tenor saxophonist Otis Sandsjö, interesting in their own right, provide contrast to the eight solo drum numbers. Lillinger's approach, like Icasiano's, is more episodic than teleological and his rhythmic mantras are relatively brief. Like Johansson he plays a bare-bones kit, favoring a tight, dry snare sound and using only a few extended techniques. Many of the beats seem to derive from the kick drum, snare chattering in counterpoint, cymbals busy everywhere else, sometimes whooping like Chinese gongs or pressed for their overtones. Given their brevity, the solo tracks serve more as vignettes than adventures, yet contain enough interest to suggest rich possibilities should Lillinger undertake an album-length project.

For more information, visit cienfuegosrecords.com, originarts.com and plait-music.com



Pursuit of The Pan African Pulse Compilation Series
Vol. 1: *Drum Songs*
Vol. 2: *Percussion Rhythms, Melodies and Solos*
Famoudou Don Moye (AECO)
by Marc Medwin

The most unfortunate aspect of these two excellent compilations of Famoudou Don Moye's music is no recording info is provided. We are given a list of pieces and that's all. The tracks are drawn from throughout the drummer's illustrious journey as musician and philosopher, from his extensive career with the Art Ensemble of Chicago (AEC) and other groups he has led or co-led. Taken as a whole, Moye's music is that of an explorer, a traveler and a consummate melodist with a gift for rhythmic complexity to match.

Like Eddie Prévost, Moye is both a drummer and a percussionist and the two are separated to a degree. Both aspects of his musical career are represented on these compilations, which present a third aspect of Moye's skill set, that of business representative. It was he who started the AECO label when Atlantic refused to release the AEC's 1974 Montreux recordings and it has been home to exemplary material ever since, both from the AEC and from Moye's solo ventures. From the early days, it was important to the AEC to structure in time away from the group to pursue solo projects and they have a home on AECO. From the album *African Song*, a 1996 disc featuring Moye and fellow percussionist Enoch Williamson, we hear Moye the percussionist in the slowly and inexorably building "Welcome/Diaspora Express", its propulsive rhythms and shouts churning toward breaking point against a subtly morphing backdrop of what sounds like the purr and rumble of gongs. Related, we hear the effervescent "Folo Folo", twice in fact, once on each volume, originally from the 2004 album *Folk Bass Spirit Suite*. Along with percussionists Baba Sissoko and Maurizio Capone, Moye engages in a joyfully contrapuntal dialogue, complete with intoned modal vocals. It is a marvel to watch the lines circle and merge and even the occasional punctuations of gong and cymbal do not break the exhilarated calm amid the storm of interwoven percussion, modal vamp and delicate upper-register piano that is more than filigree. The shouts of exultation ending the track are more than warranted.

As drummer, Moye is both in the tradition and somehow delightfully at odds with it. That's what could be expected from the young drummer blazing his way into the AEC on the rock-and-soul-tinged 1970 soundtrack to *Les Stances a Sophie*. From the AACM flagship group, we hear the breathtaking version of "Dancer", taken from the 2003-released concert disc *Urban Magic*. Moye glides in on gently rolled snare, but it is only a preamble to the rhythmically multidirectional pyrotechnics to come. Just listening to his snare conjures shades of Max Roach's resonant solo on the 1945 recording of "Ko-Ko" mixed with the snappy sizzle of Roy Haynes' approach to that versatile instrument. Add in the other drums and cymbals and Moye the melodist emerges, motives easily and expertly executed on skin and metal mirroring a percussion ensemble in terms of complexity and intrigue. Best of all is a section of cymbals exclusively, each strike a resonance and each resonance a melody in itself, all ornamented by what sounds like a penny whistle in the background. The AEC offers a sonic extravaganza, no matter what its size, and this track is no exception. For more of Moye's longest-lasting musical association, go to the second volume for the powerful "Sangaredi" from *Tribute to Lester* and a mix of Moye the drummer and

percussionist as something near swing is complemented by polyrhythms and, eventually, a low-register dirge, perhaps from bass saxophone, in tribute to the band's late trumpeter. For Moye and Lester Bowie's trumpeting outside the AECO orbit, the first volume contains "Miss Nancy" by The Leaders, a band containing Moye, Bowie, Chico Freeman, Arthur Blythe, Cecil McBee and Kirk Lightsey.

In truth, any boundaries between drummer and percussionist are tenuous at best when the work of such a complete musician is assessed. The fact that Moye can adapt to such diverse and deliciously volatile musical situations speaks to the more than a half-century invested in the study of music, its attendant practices and transcultural philosophies. These are compilations befitting and confirming Moye's master status.

For more information, visit donmoye.com



Plays Vince Guaraldi & Mose Allison
Jerry Granelli Trio (RareNoise)
by Marco Cangiano

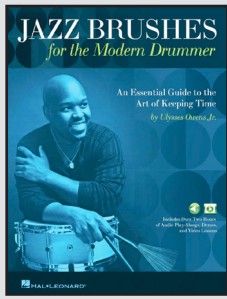
Drummer Jerry Granelli is a treasure yet to be fully discovered. After many years, he has become a sort of an all-around inspirational guru and his biography is so dense and varied it can hardly be summarized in a few sentences – the reader is strongly recommended to check out Colin MacKenzie's 2002 documentary *In Moment* available on Youtube. It is thus very fitting for such a creative musician to revisit for the first time in many decades the music of Vince Guaraldi and Mose Allison, with whom he collaborated at the start of his career in the early '60s and throughout the '70s-80s, respectively. This is no repertoire trio though, as a comparison with original versions clearly illustrates.

Granelli's trio of pianist Jamie Saft and bassist Bradley Jones approaches the material with respect but without intimidation. The result is a fresh take at three of Guaraldi's most successful tunes, ranging from the classic "Cast Your Fate" and bossa-nova-inspired "Star Song" to melancholy ballad "Christmas Time". The treatment these immortal tunes receive summarizes how jazz has evolved and, in particular, the trio format. Although more of a contemporary player, Saft has totally absorbed and is able to distill the jazz piano tradition. Granelli's palette of colors and accents, delivered with subtleties hard to appreciate fully at the first listen, is unparalleled. Jones follows the steps initiated by Scott LaFaro and Charlie Haden, the latter once partnering with Granelli in the Denny Zeitlin Trio.

The approach to Allison's material is similar, but absent the vocal element, Granelli's trio takes more liberties, almost masking the blues format, yet keeping its spirit. "Parchman Farm" is a case in point, Saft twisting Allison's blues into an abstract funk culminating in a solo cadenza exploring piano jazz history à la Jaki Byard. "Young Man Blues" verges on the ironic, Jones sustaining the main theme on his bow while Granelli and Saft stretch the blues as if they were playing with a rubber band. The CD also offers two close conversations between Granelli and Jones, master classes in brushwork alongside tuneful phrasing. Much like Saft, Jones has deep knowledge of the jazz tradition and although his resumé reveals a preference for avant garde music, his contributions to revisiting more traditional material is nothing short of outstanding.

For more information, visit rarenoiserecords.com

IN PRINT



Jazz Brushes for the Modern Drummer
Ulysses Owens, Jr. (Hal Leonard)
by John Pietaro

Within the vast bibliography of drumming instruction books, the art of playing brushes has been woefully underrepresented. In this writer's long-ago experiences as a drumset student, recordings of giants like Jo Jones, Ed Thigpen, Connie Kay or Shelly Manne wielding wire brushes fell into the realm of the mystical. Most teachers, mine included, tended to adapt sticking exercises to brushes after some basic coaching, because little had been put to paper. Thigpen's legendary book on brushes wasn't published until 1981, closely followed by Louie Bellson's, which included sections on Latin music.

Since that time other volumes have sought to shed light on differing usages. Clayton Cameron, celebrated for his advanced brush techniques, has had a noted book out since 2003. Over the years, drummers have placed much emphasis on brush fills, solos and unique approaches to the swishes,

sweeps and taps, but the initial concept of playing time with a warm, gentler sound with fluid attack has too often been lost. Enter Ulysses Owens, Jr. (Christian McBride, Gregory Porter, et al.) who, in his new book, advises the reader that, "we must cherish timekeeping because it is at the heart of our purpose in the music."

Owens uses his 80 pages extremely well, moving through the history of recorded brush use from the 1920s through to the present before addressing specific techniques, from standard jazz time to a detailed view into brushes used in piano trios, with a vocalist and during a bass solo.

Well-illustrated renditions of hands holding brushes as well as the circular sweeping patterns they produce are realistically presented and the application to timekeeping is consistent during most of this book. There are also sections on the different types of brushes, grips, angle, position and height of the snare drum, posture, arm movements ("Like a ballet dancer"), articulation and drumhead materials as well as the different areas of the head and how these effect sound, feel and time.

Uniquely, Owens writes about playing time with and then without the hi-hat. An entire chapter is dedicated to the use of embellishments and fills within time-keeping, citing historic recordings, which leads into Application and Performance Scenarios. In the latter, Owens emphasizes the need for fullness of sound for the maintenance of presence on the bandstand. While most drummers are familiar with playing brushes in trios and other low-volume gigs, it's a fact that playing in a big band is a much greater challenge in maintaining presence. Owens writes of playing brushes nearer the center of the

snare drum for a deeper, fuller sound while feathering the bass drum pulse, but clarifies that the drummer's inner confidence is just as responsible for presence.

Important aspects of instructional books are recorded examples, but instead of including a CD within, Owens offers a link unique to each copy for access to downloadable recordings. These include Owens playing within a trio (instrumental or inclusive of a vocalist) and then in the old Music Minus One tradition, the same recordings sans drums: "You'll hear me do it and then it will be your turn," he writes. "Be mindful of your body and breath. Don't just play at the recordings but with them, as if you are a member of the ensemble."

The reader also has access to videos, which make techniques come to life when applied to uptempo, ballads, waltz time, special effects, "Swinging with Rudiments" and solo trading fours, twos and eights. Stressing the importance of time and feel, Owens only offers a section on solos in the closing chapter; however it begins with the importance of melody, asking the drummer to sing out same as a means to "tell a story" while building techniques for soloing over it.

Jazz Brushes for the Modern Drummer is an important piece in this still shrouded aspect of drumming and it does much to cut through the mystery. More so, it embodies the mastery. This book can be taken as a complete instructional document or as one specifically time-focused within the lean pantheon of published wire brush wisdom.

For more information, visit halleonard.com/product/298188/jazz-brushes-for-the-modern-drummer. Owens live-streams Nov. 12th at jazzatlincolncenter.squarespace.com.

Motian In Motion

OFFICIAL SELECTION
DOC'N ROLL
FILM
FESTIVAL
2020

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Tupelo Film
Festival
2020

A Film About Paul Motian

Featuring

Joe Lovano Bill Frisell Chick Corea
Carla Bley Arlo Guthrie Gary Peacock
Steve Kuhn Larry Grenadier Manfred Eicher
Chris Potter Masabumi Kikuchi Steve Swallow
Tony Malaby Steve Cardenas Anat Fort

"A beautiful expression of love, and a marvelous insight into a master drummer living his life inside the magical world of music."
-VICTOR DELORENZO
Drummer, Violent Femmes

"An alternate history of modern/contemporary jazz through the lens of one of its great enigmatic originals. Really something special."
-HANK SHTEAMER
Senior Music Editor, Rolling Stone

"Great historic footage and engaging interviews with some of the creative residents of Paul Motian's world add up to an affectionate portrait of the dapper, creative, funny and vividly alive drummer/composer/bandleader."
-HOWARD MANDEL
Author of *Miles, Ornette, Cecil: Jazz Beyond Jazz*

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ON SCREEN



Motian in Motion
Michael Patrick Kelly (Aquapio Films)
by John Pietaro

Jazz is a performance thriving in reach of its audience. Emotional outpouring and paths of creativity bear a reciprocal effect, infusing live spectators with a vibrancy far beyond recordings. Filmed concert footage, let alone brief performance clips, have rarely captured the music's core. Rarer still are the films that accurately depict the lifestyle of the musician along with the music. With *Motian in Motion*, filmmaker Michael Patrick Kelly counters all odds and delivers just that.

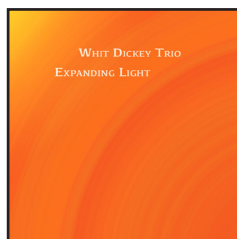
Kelly's film picks up during the drummer's final decade until his 2011 passing, capturing interviews, performances, sessions, subway and cab rides, jogs through Central Park and quiet moments in his Upper West Side apartment. Interview segments with associates as well as older performance footage allow for a historical vision of Motian's time and place, bringing the viewer well into the story through carefully spun character development. Motian's inimitable laughter was a feature as was his rapid-fire New York speech patterns. Ben Ratliff states, "Paul's bravery was in doing things musically, not fast and loud" while Gary Peacock calls him a "Master craftsman...even in 1962 he was so far ahead." Other compelling testimony comes from Carla Bley, Chick Corea, Steve Kuhn, Jerome Harris, Steve Swallow, Bill Frisell, Greg Osby, Joe Lovano, Marilyn Crispell, Mark Helias and others.

It was with the Bill Evans Trio that he achieved international acclaim. "I started to hear differently... like an orchestra," Motian explained. This trio, appropriately, is given ample time among the concert footage, almost alarmingly vibrant, and Motian is also seen within ensembles of Paul Bley and Keith Jarrett. The drummer, in 1969, began touring with Arlo Guthrie and was with the singer-songwriter for the Woodstock Festival; "It was just another gig," Motian added ironically, "but we had to get there by helicopter." Later, he was seen only in the most advanced jazz units including the renowned Liberation Music Orchestra and Carla Bley's ensemble for *Escalator Over the Hill*. Following this, Motian focused on the role of bandleader, committing to this almost entirely by 1976.

Archival footage of the '80s Motian trios and quartets with Bill Frisell, Joe Lovano and Charlie Haden carries something three-dimensional, the music reaching beyond the screen. By the time Motian decided to cease touring ("I won't get on a plane for a billion dollars."), his compositions developed vastly and the ensembles grew in scope. The smaller groups as well as the Electric Bebop Band are seen performing in venues such as Birdland, Blue Note and the Village Vanguard, where the leader held court for a decade.

He appeared tireless, eternal, so Motian's death was deeply trying. Frisell: "It was terrifying to find that he wasn't there." *Motian in Motion* encompasses the many aspects of this man of rich, quiet acclaim.

For more information, visit motianjazzdoc.com



Expanding Light
Whit Dickey Trio (TAO Forms)
Morph
Whit Dickey (ESP-Disk')
by Steven Loewy



Drummer Whit Dickey has proven himself through the years to be a compelling performer. Acclaimed for his role in the David S. Ware Quartet of the '90s, he also worked in groups led by pianist/partner in the Ware Quartet Matthew Shipp and saxophonist Ivo Perelman, among others. As an occasional leader, he has performed some of his best work with Shipp, alto saxophonist Rob Brown and the late trumpeter Roy Campbell. The albums reviewed here were released in 2020 (though recorded in 2019), the first time Dickey has two recordings as a leader in a calendar year.

Expanding Light is a blistering collection performed by a power trio of Dickey, Brown and bassist Brandon Lopez. Aside from his impressive drumming, Dickey is excellent in his choice of players and disciplined approach he brings to his groups. While he performs some exciting solos, as on "The Outer Edge", his real talent is the way he cajoles and pushes. Brown demonstrates an amazing ability to spurt forth endless lengthy lines of astonishing intensity, with a searing tone, trills, altissimo shrieks, split notes and lengthy complex phrases and his longstanding relationship with the leader shines through, as the two interact and anticipate each other's moves. On the best and closing track, "The Opener", Brown's rambunctious, elastic notes ride hard above deep pounding drums and the hardboiled bass emanations. Dickey, by the way, is generous as a leader, giving his sidemen ample space throughout. The results are not to be missed.

Double CD *Morph* offers a different view, as Dickey leads distinct free-style groups through a series of shorter, yet also captivating, pieces. The first CD, *Reckoning*, consisting of eight tracks, is a duo between Dickey and Shipp. Perhaps because of the freedom the drummer gives him, the pianist offers a somewhat kaleidoscopic display of his skills, ranging from dark, even morose block chords on the title track, with its changing tempos (a Shipp trope), to the heavy, slow, forceful pronouncements on aptly-titled "Thick", with its focus on the percussive lower register and Dickey, who never dallies, providing solid support. Shipp is in excellent form and his ability to change on a dime or offer complex, brooding and cubist lines permeates the pieces, although he also offers quiet, glorious, lyrical pronouncements, as on "Helix" and "Firmament". The second CD, *Pacific Noir*, with another eight pieces, adds trumpeter Nate Wooley to the duo. The pianist is again in near-perfect form, as is Dickey, who sports sparkling, sometimes dazzling support and the occasional solo. Wooley offers variety, too, as his clipped phrases, modest structures and muted tones are devastatingly persuasive on "Take the Wild", particularly when juxtaposed against Shipp's quirky boppish passages, simple outlines and pounding chords and Dickey's forward-looking thrusts. There is a bit of an avant garde ragtime swinging feel toward the end and even a strong melodic element that makes the piece compellingly accessible. Coupled with the outlandish and variegated "Epiphany", the best piece of the set, with jagged clumps of pianisms, oddball syncopation and far-reaching trumpet, the trio displays another side of the multi-talented Whit Dickey.

For more information, visit taoforms.bandcamp.com and espdisk.com



The Aiki
Masahiko Satoh/Sabu Toyozumi (NoBusiness)
Future of Change
Sabu Toyozumi (Chap Chap)
ReAbstraction
Sabu Toyozumi (FMR)
by Andrey Henkin

Drummer Yoshisaburoh "Sabu" Toyozumi is Japanese free jazz royalty, a lifer in a range of situations since the late '60s, when he was in his early 20s, through to the current day and elder status, both with countrymen like Mototeru Takagi, Masayuki Takayanagi, Kaoru Abe, Toshinori Kondo, Masahiko Togashi, Tetsu Saitoh and Masahiko Satoh and international improvisers such as Bob Reid, Peter Kowald, Wadada Leo Smith, Peter Brötzmann, Paul Rutherford, Kenny Millions, Arthur Doyle, Barre Phillips and more.

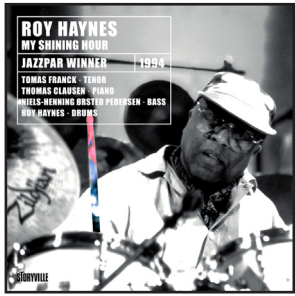
The Aiki is another entry in Lithuania's NoBusiness' partnership with Japan's Chap Chap, co-produced by the former's Danas Mikailonis and the latter's Takeo Suetomo, from whose archive of concert recordings the series derives. Toyozumi is found in duo with pianist Satoh—a couple of years older and as seminal in their country's avant garde world—in Yamaguchi City in 1997 for two improvisations, just over 30 minutes and a hair under 20, respectively. In this equal partnership, the roles of each player are pliable, Satoh at points emphasizing the piano's foundation as a percussion instrument and Toyozumi light and airy around his kit, creating whirls of melody and texture. The titles, "The Move for The Quiet" and "The Quiet for The Move", are descriptive as the first is expansive and stays at a reasonable volume while the second is much more explosive.

Drummers, perhaps more than any other instrumentalist, can shape free improvised encounters to their liking. While every player is capable of dynamics and density, those behind the kit can prod their partners into shambolic overdrive or egg them on into near-silence. Collaborators of more recent vintage for Toyozumi are alto saxophonist Rick Countryman (14 years younger), expatriate in Manila, Malaysian tenor saxophonist Yong Yandsen (33 years younger) and Filipino bassist Simon Tan (27 years younger), the four men working in various combinations since 2016. Two concert recordings from the Philippines made three days apart in early 2020, one as a trio sans Tan, the other as a full quartet, show how much free improvisation is of the moment, sounding completely different even with the same principals.

Future of Change comes first and, although being a trio date, feels more like a duo, as the dueling saxophones of Countryman and Yandsen become a wall of sorts against which Toyozumi can volley his rolls, cracks and crashes. The three pieces are of descending length, 35:53, 24:34 and 12:46, respectively, and maintain a certain energetic focus typical of such performances. Despite disparities in their age and origin, Countryman and Yandsen come at the music similarly, even often occupying one another's range. Toyozumi doesn't prod so much as he corrals.

Surprisingly, the addition of Tan for *ReAbstraction*, rather than making the proceedings more dense, opens up the five pieces, creating a more balanced ensemble and one that takes increased chances by varying the volume and layering. That the improvisations are shorter also displays more attention to detail, knowing when to finish up rather than missing cues as to good conclusions. Also of note is a long stretch of Toyozumi playing erhu (Chinese spike fiddle), sawing away with the fury of Nero waiting for the fire department.

For more information, visit nobusinessrecords.com, chapchap-music.com and fmr-records.com



My Shining Hour
Roy Haynes (Storyville)
by Scott Yanow

Drummer Roy Haynes is possibly the only jazz artist who recorded in the '40s who is still active. He is certainly the only musician to work with Luis Russell (1945-46), Lester Young, Bud Powell, Charlie Parker, Stan Getz, Sarah Vaughan, Sonny Rollins, Thelonious Monk, Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane (often subbing for Elvin Jones), Gary Burton and Chick Corea in addition to leading his own groups. It seems strange that he was underrated and overlooked for so long, overshadowed by Max Roach, Art Blakey and others, but he is finally rated on their level.

The Europeans were ahead of the Americans in giving Haynes the recognition he deserved. In 1994 he was awarded the Danish Jazzpar Prize, which, in addition to a large cash award, always resulted in a recording session with top local musicians. On this reissue CD from Storyville, Haynes performs eight numbers with Swedish tenor saxophonist Tomas Franck and two Danes, pianist Thomas Clausen and late bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, taken from three performances in Denmark in March 1994.

While Haynes begins the proceedings with a brief solo on "My Shining Hour" and has a few short spots during the set, he does not dominate. In fact, Franck is often the main soloist, taking several impressive forays. His individual sound is somewhere between that of Rollins and Coltrane and while he can be pretty adventurous (as he shows on "My Shining Hour" and "All Blues"), he also caresses the melody of "I Fall In Love Too Easily" with warmth. Clausen has recorded with everyone from Dexter Gordon to Tim Berne, was long in demand by American artists touring Europe and is a solid and quietly swinging player. As for Pedersen, he deserves his reputation as one of the all-time greats.

On a program that includes standards, blues and Franck's "Bright", Haynes is both subtle and assertive in his creative accompaniment of Franck and Clausen, really pushing the former during "All Blues". The drummer concludes this fine album by thanking his hosts, but it is he who deserves our thanks for his many decades of rewarding music.

For more information, visit storyvillerecords.com



Transparency
Dafnis Prieto Sextet (Dafnison Music)
by Russ Musto

The latest release from Dafnis Prieto, debuting the newest edition of his sextet with Alex Norris (trumpet), Román Filiú (alto and soprano saxophones), Peter Apfelbaum (tenor saxophone, melodica and percussion), Alex Brown (piano) and Johannes Weidenmueller (basses), once again underscores the Cuban-born drummer's considerable talents as a

composer/arranger with eight new pieces traversing a wide variety of moods and modes, plus one strikingly original arrangement of a jazz classic.

Opener "Amanecer Contigo" is an episodic outing that begins with horns blowing a festive carnival-esque melody over a churning rhythm section. It then turns straightahead with Brown's fluid solo before Filiú on alto comes in, adding a romantic tone, after which Prieto takes charge with a climactic solo over riffing horns. Melodica is featured on "No Es Facil", a melancholy tango-flavored piece, which also includes emotive piano, bass and trumpet statements. Prieto's ringing cowbell-augmented drumkit introduces urgently swinging "Uncertradition", Brown pounding out a powerful 1-2, 1-2-3 clave beat on top of which tenor, trumpet and soprano solo over a foundation modulating between AfroCuban pulse and hardbopping shuffle rhythm.

Prieto's arrangement of Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" opens with relaxed malleted toms and a distinctly original melodic prelude, before stating the iconic melody at a much slower than usual tempo, accentuating the song's inherent beauty, further highlighted in Apfelbaum's lush tenor solo. "Cry With Me" begins with Prieto energetically soloing over a slightly dissonant unison horn line that serves as an underpinning for hard-swinging solos all around. Spanish and classical traces are in evidence in the second section of "On the Way", a bifurcated piece beginning with a mournful soprano and tenor stated dirge, then transitioning into an uptempo tour de force. "Feed The Lions" is an exhilarating Middle Eastern-tinged outing with Apfelbaum's bells and shakers augmenting Prieto's polyrhythmic drumming to enhance the exotic flavor. Electric bass introduces "Nothing or Everything", which soulfully references "A Night In Tunisia" and "Monk's Mood". The date ends on a funky note with "Lazy Blues", a showcase for the leader's loping solo.

For more information, visit dafnisonmusic.com



The Daily Biological
Chad Taylor Trio (Cuneiform)
by George Grella

The press materials for this release describe drummer Taylor as "protean and prolific" and that's a unique case where the promotion is accurate and meaningful. Taylor has been popping up on numerous recordings over the past several years, as a leader, collaborator or sideman. And the situations are constantly shifting: duos with saxophonist James Brandon Lewis; pianist Aruán Ortiz' trio; the solo drum album *Myths and Morals*.

Protean is a fitting one-word description of this album, made with tenor saxophonist Brian Settles and pianist Neil Podgurski. The musicians each contributed material to the session and the three sensibilities push and pull at each other across the album as a whole and sometimes within the confines of a single track. Though that means there are a few places where things either don't mesh, or where the group seems to be at odds with its own strengths, this is a strong record with an up-to-date sensibility and a compelling drive toward discovery.

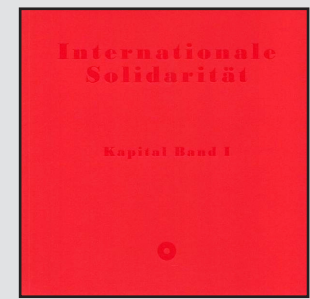
The fit between the three voices and the group playing is terrific. Settles is full of energy and intelligence and the recording captures his brawny, soulful, sometimes velvety sound. Taylor sounds here much as he did on the early Chicago Underground records, with

a relatively light touch that still pushes an edge of intensity, and Podgurski comes at everything from a new angle, his playing maybe the most inventive herein.

The trio can balance groove and structural complexity, as on "Swamp", and when that happens (frequently) this is one of the best releases of the year. But there's also gestures that have become common clichés in showing how 'modern' the music is, like the fussy head and awkward cadence of "Prism" and bits of "Birds, Leaves, Wind, Trees". The music is simply not fluid here and that's the foundation of the rest of the album. Fortunately these interruptions to the flow are few.

For more information, visit cuneiformrecords.com

DROP THE NEEDLE



Internationale Solidarität
Kapital Band 1 (Ni-Vu-Ni-Connu)
by John Pietaro

Coming at you on shining, clear vinyl, this record by Martin Brandlmayr and Nicholas Bussmann is a study in cooperative imagination, patience and vision. On their third release since 2004, the pair embody the concept of solidarity from the time-honored perspective of "L'Internationale": not the socialist anthem itself so much as its call (to arms; to instruments). Though Brandlmayr plays his primary instrument, drumkit, noted cellist Bussmann is heard on "robot-controlled grand piano", a design of Winfried Ritsch, a media artist, engineer and professor of electronic music who first premiered his automated piano nine years ago.

Kapital Band 1 has been integrated into art installations in Berlin and impactful within experimental music, but here the duo engages in something altogether new. Electronically, Bussmann plots the piano course and, robotically, it proceeds. Throughout the duet carve out a unique, often intriguing course. The first side opens with atmospheric leanings and simplistic repetition, a generous opening as the work builds. The piano sounds move from a realistic grand to toy piano and into the marimba-like, but in each case, Brandlmayr grows any and every musical germ heard from Bussmann's machinations. Mallets on cymbals, accents on toms in response to the high-end piano piercing the room, the thread is realized as tight and consistent.

Whereas the first side, a continuous piece focused on the sonic network, is atmospherically thick (including call and response), the second feels more spacious. It opens with piano in double time to the drumset rhythm, offset by an electronic alarm bell, which develops into a drone, allowing for Brandlmayr to roam freely. Switching to brushes, he allows the atmosphere itself to direct his actions, carrying the pulse equally with the robotic piano's soundscape. One-third of the way, the music recalls a film score ideal for thrillers, what with the repetitive piano against its own darkening chords and free drumming. One segment opens with distorted drum sounds, Brandlmayr released over his toms, slowly extending to the entire kit. The music is all the more engaging as wider piano harmonies are heard, summoning free drumming that almost pulls the piano along, marching stridently, as stinging repetition spills into dire urgency.

For more information, visit ni-vu-ni-connu.net



CHARLES MINGUS AT BREMEN 1964 & 1975

SSC 1570 - 4 DISCS DIGIPAK & BOOKLET
STREET DATE 11/13/20

The great bassist and composer Charles Mingus had his diehard supporters and detractors. His explosive intermingling of devil may care attitude, imposing character and aggressive music was sure to rub some listeners the wrong way and was just as likely to attract adventurous fans. But his genius could not be denied; it just may have taken some time to break down barriers.

A good way to examine this change in listener attitudes is to investigate the differences in critical appraisals from two performances in the port city of Bremen, Germany, a decade apart. The initial performance in 1964 introduced Mingus's firebrand ways to an unsuspecting audience while his 1975 appearance was met with the expectancy of jazz royalty. The performances appear in their **first official release remastered from the original source tapes** on *Charles Mingus @ Bremen 1964 & 1975*.



JOE CASTRO PASSION FLOWER - FOR DORIS DUKE

SSC 1393 - 6 ALBUMS & BOOKLET BOXED SET
STREET DATE 11/20/20

The initial Joe Castro boxed set, *Lush Life - A Musical Journey* (Sunnyside, 2015), provided an insight into the world of the pianist's early meetings with the greats of jazz at home recorded sessions. These recordings included Buddy Collette, Chico Hamilton, Teddy Wilson, Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Lucky Thompson, a Castro Big Band and the Teddy Edwards Tentet.

The second boxed set of recordings from Joe Castro's collection, *Passion Flower - For Doris Duke*, highlights his collaborations with a vast array of great musicians (Paul Bley, Paul Motian, Leroy Vinnegar, Paul Chambers, Philly Joe Jones, Cannonball Adderley). There are fine home recordings of jam sessions, studio recordings of Castro's Atlantic Records releases, recordings of projects of friends and productions that were done under the aegis of Clover Records, the label that Duke and Castro founded and briefly ran.



KRISTIANA ROEMER HOUSE OF MIRRORS

SSC 1597 - STREET DATE 11/27/20

Bassist Alex Claffy's enthusiasm for collaboration motivated Roemer to push through the production of *House of Mirrors*. Roemer set up recording dates and they brought on pianist Addison Frei and drummer Adam Arruda. Roemer also benefited from great contributions

by guitarists Ben Monder and Gilad Hekselman, saxophonist Dayna Stephens, and percussionist Rogerio Boccato.

The music of Kristiana Roemer comes from an honest place, a place of appraisals of actions and embracing all potential paths, whether taken or not. Her *House of Mirrors* is a diverse and brilliantly devised program of music that illustrates where Roemer has been and where she will go in her bright future.



www.sunnysiderecords.com



Songs From Home Fred Hersch (Palmetto) by Dan Bilawsky

Positivity was in short supply when COVID-19 forced all into isolation back in March, but Fred Hersch still managed to inject a little beauty into each afternoon. Hunkered down in his home in rural Pennsylvania, the celebrated pianist offered serious solace with nearly two months of "Tune of the Day" performances on Facebook. At some point those benefactions began to sew themselves into the fabric of our times, so it's only fitting that that daily experience would blossom into the creation of an album for the present and posterity.

Songs From Home serves as a respite from the madness of the moment. There are places where markers of his tremendous technical abilities are apparent, but the overall effort is one connected to the concept of balmy beauty. Essentially without peer when it comes to enrapturing ears with reflective grace, Hersch uses 88 keys to engender innumerable emotions tethered to a single reality. On a plaintive rendering of Frederick Loewe-Alan Jay Lerner's "Wouldn't It Be Lovely" he envisions a moment when we can gather again and gain comfort in company. With an expansive yet loyal trip through Joni Mitchell's "All I Want" his hands speak true to *Blue*. And in Duke Ellington's "Solitude" he taps into the essence of the composer's vision with an empathetic nod.

While Hersch acknowledges some minor deficiencies with his 50-year-old, seven-foot Steinway Model B, the communion between the two, reflecting lives lived together in service to music, is as much the story of this album as anything else. Hersch shows a true familiarity with the landscape, which adds another layer of meaning to what he creates. Whether flowing and growing through his "Sarabande", blending the familial and the folk in a marriage of the maternally-moored "West Virginia Rose" with "The Water Is Wide" or proving suave on a stride ride through Turner Layton's timeless "After You've Gone", he shows a degree of commitment and understanding that speaks volumes about the setting and current state of affairs.

For more information, visit palmetto-records.com. Hersch live-streams Nov. 6th-7th at villagevanguard.com.



Rock Chalk Suite Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis (Blue Engine) by Phil Freeman

The *Rock Chalk Suite* was commissioned in 2018 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Lied Center, a performing arts space on the campus of the University of Kansas. The suite honors the school's basketball team, the Jayhawks, with each of its 15 pieces paying tribute to a different legendary player. Basketball is one of the sports most commonly compared to jazz; boxing is another and of course avant garde jazz has

been described as "like playing tennis without a net". Wynton Marsalis writes that both the game and the music "reward improvisation and split-second decision making against the pressure of time and the restriction of a clearly defined geometric form."

The various dedicatees on this album include James Naismith, the inventor of basketball as we know it today; Lynette Woodard, one of the greatest female basketball players; and Wilt Chamberlain. Each piece was written by a different member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and some are more adventurous than others, but the ensemble's collective identity shines through them all. "Phog Allen" is quite playful; it begins with the horns imitating the squeak of sneakers on the floor, as the bass drum mimics a ball being dribbled. Then a shrill whistle blows and the tune proper begins. The drum break leading into Marsalis's stagger-stepping trumpet solo on "D(efense)-Up: The Untold Story of Darnell Valentine" delivers a particularly potent bolt of energy. That piece is followed by "The Truth (for Paul Pierce)", a strolling blues written by alto saxophonist Sherman Irby that lets the baritone saxophone rumble like the bass singer in a doo-wop group as Chris Crenshaw delivers a passionate lyric about the player in question.

The orchestrations are rich and full throughout; they've got a forceful, deeply bluesy swing that recalls Duke Pearson as much as Duke Ellington. It should be noted, as well, that despite this existing as a form of "program music", intended to conjure images of events - some as specific as a single shot from a game - it is absolutely enjoyable even for a listener with zero knowledge of or interest in basketball.

For more information, visit blueenginerecords.org. Marsalis live-streams Nov. 5th at jazzatlincolncenter.squarespace.com.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Orhan Demir - *Freedom in Jazz, Vol. 2 (Solo Guitar)* (Hittite)
- Dave Douglas - *Marching Music* (Greenleaf Music)
- Ella Fitzgerald - *The Lost Berlin Tapes* (Verve)
- Kirk Knuffke - *Tight Like This* (SteepleChase)
- James Brandon Lewis Quartet - *Molecular* (Intakt)
- Miklós Lukács Cimbiosis Trio - *Music From the Solitude of Timeless Minutes* (BMC Records)
- Baldo Martínez/Juan Saiz/Lucía Martínez - *Frágil Gigante* (Leo)
- Thelonious Monk - *Palo Alto* (Impulse!)
- Wassim Mukdad/David Rothenberg/Volker Lankow - *In The Wake of Memories* (Clermont Music)
- Angelica Sanchez/Marilyn Crispell - *How To Turn The Moon* (Pyroclastic)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

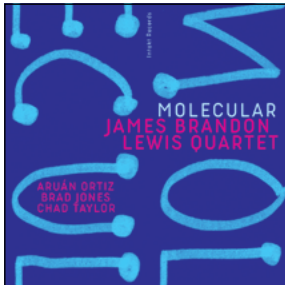
- duotrio - *In the Bright and Deep* (Blujazz)
- Nels Cline Singers - *Share the Wealth* (Blue Note)
- Dave Douglas - *Marching Music* (Greenleaf Music)
- Kirk Knuffke - *Tight Like This* (SteepleChase)
- Travis Laplante & Yarn/Wire - *Inner Garden* (New Amsterdam)
- Steph Richards - *Supersense* (Northern Spy)
- Sylvain Rifflet, Jon Irabagon, Sébastien Boisseau, Jim Black - *Rebellion* (BMC Records)
- Terje Rypdal - *Conspiracy* (ECM)
- Sabu Toyozumi, Simon Tan, Yong Yandsen, Rick Countryman - *ReAbstraction* (FMR)
- WHO Trio - *Strell: The Music of Billy Strayhorn & Duke Ellington* (Clean Feed)

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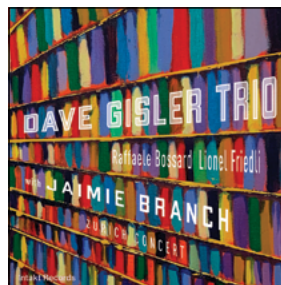
Tim Berne: Alto Saxophone | Matt Mitchell: Piano
Oscar Noriega: Clarinets | Ches Smith: Drums



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ALEXANDER VON SCHLIPPENBACH SLOW PIECES FOR AKI PIANO SOLO

Alexander von Schlippenbach: Piano



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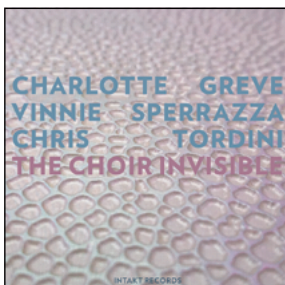
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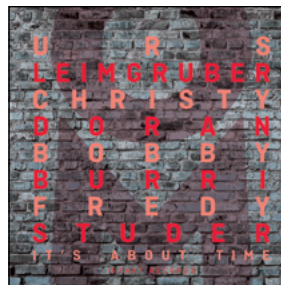
Sylvie Courvoisier: Piano
Drew Gress: Bass
Kenny Wollesen: Drums, Wollesonics



Intakt CD 347

THE CHOIR INVISIBLE GREVE - SPERRAZZA - TORDINI

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Vinnie Sperrazza: Drums
Chris Tordini: Bass



Intakt CD 348

OM IT'S ABOUT TIME

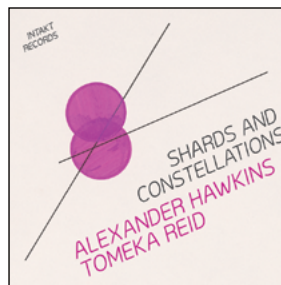
Urs Leimgruber: Saxophone | Christy Doran: Guitar
Bobby Burri: Bass | Fredy Studer: Drums,
Percussion, Bowed Metal



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CHRISTOPH IRNIGER TRIO WITH LOREN STILLMAN, GUEST NILS WOGRAM OPEN CITY

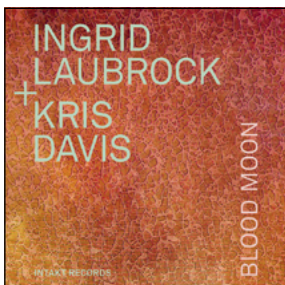
Christoph Irniger: Tenor Sax
Raffaele Bossard: Bass | Ziv Ravitz: Drums
Loren Stillman: Alto Sax | Nils Wogram: Trombone



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ALEXANDER HAWKINS – TOMEKA REID SHARDS AND CONSTELLATIONS

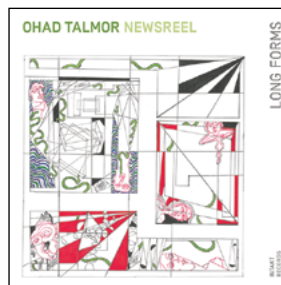
Tomeka Reid: Cello
Alexander Hawkins: Piano



Intakt CD 345

INGRID LAUBROCK – KRIS DAVIS BLOOD MOON

Ingrid Laubrock: Saxophone
Kris Davis: Piano



Intakt CD 341

OHAD TALMOR NEWSREEL SEXTET LONG FORMS

Ohad Talmor: Saxophone
Shane Endsley: Trumpet | Miles Okazaki: Guitar
Jacob Sacks: Piano | Matt Pavolka: Bass
Dan Weiss: Drums



Scarab (Beatles Piano)

Wayne Alpern (s/r)

Play Sgt. Pepper

Michael Wolff/Mike Clark/Leon Lee Dorsey

(Jazzavenue1)

by Elliott Simon

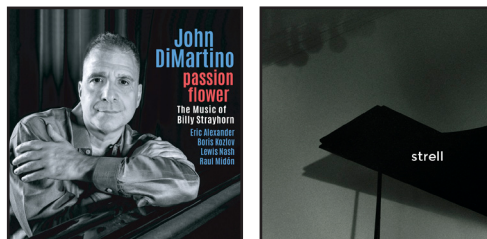
The Beatles' official breakup was 50 years ago and these releases continue the tradition, begun in 1964 by Ella Fitzgerald ("Can't Buy Me Love", Verve), of jazzing up their music. On *Scarab*, arranger Wayne Alpern and pianist Billy Test rework ten Beatles tunes while *Play Sgt. Pepper* features pianist Michael Wolff and a stellar rhythm section of bassist Leon Lee Dorsey and drummer Mike Clark. The only title in common is "When I'm Sixty Four" and Alpern's arrangement begins with a pensive melodic statement that morphs into a ragtime/barrelhouse piece. Putting the second recitation of the melody in the left hand briefly adds depth to the original whereas the trio, led by Clark's expressive touch, exposes its contemporary pathos.

Scarab is heavy on Paul McCartney melodies, with only three from John Lennon and none from George Harrison or Ringo Starr and its song selection is narrow with "Eleanor Rigby" and "When I'm 64" the sole representatives from *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *Revolver*. Alpern's stated goals are to "musically transform the ubiquitous into the unique, the commonplace into the extraordinary, the beetle

into the scarab..." But what he doesn't acknowledge is that The Beatles are "commonplace" because they were extraordinary and "ubiquitous" because they remain unique. Reconciling the original melody and bassline on "Norwegian Wood" into a beautifully pure waltz, a clever new bass part for "Lady Madonna" and Test's clean open arpeggios on "Let It Be" are some instances where Alpern's objectives are met. However, the exceptional loneliness of "Eleanor Rigby" is not fully captured, "Penny Lane" is enjoyable yet hollow, "Hide Your Love Away" is too grandiose with jarring dynamic contrasts, "Yesterday" is unrecognizable and "Blackbird" would have been better left alone.

Conversely, *Pepper's* wide sonic palette is fertile territory for Wolff, Clark and Dorsey's group approach. They treat each song with respect and use the melodies as jumping off points for thoughtful interpretations. Previously Clark and Dorsey enlisted guitarist Greg Skaff to channel Monk (*Monk Time*, Jazzavenue1, 2019) and here they similarly enhance the core of *Pepper*. "With A Little Help From My Friends" and "Lovely Rita" are swinging send-ups retaining the originals' frivolity and adding depth through group interplay. "A Day In The Life" is a gorgeous ballad although "She's Leaving Home" doesn't quite succeed at escaping its inherent mawkishness. "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" is a multi-faceted piano portrait and the title cut retains its rocker excitement in the context of a jazz arrangement. Harrison's rarely covered devotional "Within You, Without You" works surprisingly well as a meditative spiritual jazz piece and is a session highlight.

For more information, visit waynealpern.com and leonleedorsey.com



Passion Flower (The Music of Billy Strayhorn)
John DiMartino (Sunnyside)

Strell: The Music of Billy Strayhorn & Duke Ellington
WHO Trio (Clean Feed)
by George Kanzler

For many years subsequent to their deaths, the music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn (who would have turned 105 this month) was considered inseparable as Ellingtonia. More research has been able to distinguish the contributions of Strayhorn, giving him a more prominent place in the composition of many pieces, although Ellington's imprimatur on collaborations—like the many suites they wrote—suggests he may have helped shape even the sections attributed to Strayhorn. Of these two albums of Ellingtonia, pianist John DiMartino's *Passion Flower* consists entirely of Ellingtonia attributed to Strayhorn, as well as some indubitably his alone, such as "Lush Life" and "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing", both with lyrics also by Strayhorn. (It's a shame his lyrics to "Satin Doll" have been lost). The WHO Trio's sometimes avant explorations on *Strell* mix tunes credited to Strayhorn with early Ellington pieces written before the pair's collaboration started.

One of the great strengths and reasons for the staying power of Ellingtonia is that both Ellington and Strayhorn had a strong melodic sense, i.e., they wrote memorable, often hummable, melodies. That their writing was also harmonically sophisticated makes it as admired by musicians as it is by listeners. Of these two albums, one adheres close to the melodies and harmonies while the other ventures beyond the tunes' usual parameters.

On *Passion Flower*, DiMartino employs a quartet of tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, bassist Boris Kozlov

and drummer Lewis Nash. Except for a "Take the 'A' Train" that only outright presents the melody for the last eight bars of the track, the tunes here are all presented fully, although rhythms and tempos can be adventurous: "Daydream" done as a waltz; "Chelsea Bridge" in a bolero rhythm; "The Star-Crossed Lovers" rendered as a bossa. Alexander channels some of the glissandos and slides Johnny Hodges brought to the ballads, eschewing his usual tenor muscularity. DiMartino is admirably spare, in a Duke-ish way, in his soloing especially on the tenor-piano duet "Blood Count" and moving solo finale "Lotus Blossom".

Strell features The WHO Trio: pianist Michel Wintsch, drummer Gerry Hemingway and bassist Bänz Oester. The opening and longest, track, "The Mooche", is more an atmospheric meditation on the early Ellington piece than a rendition. Hemingway chants wordlessly into a lampshade over his snare, suggesting the muted, wah-wah brass of early Ellington. But Wintsch's lugubrious solo never summons the melody. Contrastingly, "In A Sentimental Mood" highlights the melody on piano while Oester plucks the melody of "Fleurette Africaine". "Black and Tan Fantasy" too leads with bass, but also incorporates random percussive taps and scrapes, as well as Tom Waits-like growling and groaning from Hemingway. More squeaks and scrapes, anything but mellow, infest "In A Mellow Tone". "Angelica" retains Ellington's original calypso rhythms and feel.

Both sets include emotionally effective renditions of Strayhorn lyrics: Raul Midón limns a heartfelt "Lush Life" on *Passion Flower*; Hemingway delivers a fragile "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing" on *Strell*.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com and cleanfeed-records.com



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Ultimate Soul & Jazz Revue

Benjamin Koppel (Unit)

Live and Unreleased

Brecker Brothers (Piloo)

QUINT5T

David Liebman, Randy Brecker, Marc Copland,

Drew Gress, Joey Baron (Innervoice Jazz)

by Jim Motavalli

Three records, with Randy Brecker as the connective tissue. Judging solely by the volume of releases featuring his golden trumpet, it's fair to say the man is having a career renaissance. But then, he never went away.

The very first concert this reviewer ever went to featured Buddy Miles around the time of the *Them Changes* album. One of my classmates—all of 15 years old—jammed with Miles on stage that night and subsequently went on the road with him. The title track/big hit of that Miles record leads off Benjamin Koppel's two-disc *Ultimate Soul & Jazz Revue*. Koppel is a prolific Danish saxophonist who has recorded with some of these American musicians before. This one's an allstar lineup, with Brecker, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie joining Koppel and countryman keyboard player Jacob Christoffersen live in Copenhagen. Brecker must have felt right at home, because this is funky music in the Brecker Brothers wheelhouse. It's good to see Purdie working and he really kicks the band into life. This is hardly the first time he and Randy Brecker have worked together. Purdie was on his first solo album *Score* in 1969, also featuring 19-year-old tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker on his first record date.

The material is mostly soul classics from Curtis Mayfield, Stevie Wonder, Sly Stone and King Floyd, with some Dizzy Gillespie and Burt Bacharach thrown in. Brecker sounds great on these discs, but what about the leader? Koppel is on alto and if his style has perhaps a little too much Scandinavian cool for the material, he's still a strong mainstream player who holds his own and sounds tight on the ensembles. Good writer too, as shown on "Feel the Bern", which also includes his strongest extended solo. When Brecker was asked for recollections of this evening, he said, "I had just come straight from a week 'special guesting' with Billy Cobham, also in Europe, but in Copenhagen we just had a rehearsal right before the concert and then 'hit it and quit it' and I was onto the next thing. Benjamin is great and his family is like the first family of music in Denmark. Everyone plays, sings or composes." Anyone who's ever heard Joey DeFrancesco will want a Hammond organ on the scene and Dan Hemmer is on board to play it here, complemented by Christoffersen on Fender Rhodes, Wurlitzer and synthesizers. Neither one is out front all that much, but they add some seasoning and keep things bubbling.

Koppel's album doesn't go down any roads that weren't thoroughly explored 30 years ago, but it's tasty music and a nice artifact from the road warriors of 2019. It makes a nice contrast to the Breckers' two-disc *Live and Unreleased*, recorded on tour in Germany in 1980. That was 40 years ago, but Brecker sounds the same, though the music is funkier, driven by Barry Finnerty's boiling wah-wah guitar and keyboards from the late Mark Gray, who loved his Prophet V and Mini-Moog and shows what he could do with the latter on Brecker's Benny Golson-influenced "Inside Out".

The Brecker Brothers studio records always sounded kind of cold, overly arranged and aggressive. They were way more fun live, as this music attests. The late Michael was simply astounding on stage. He rips into a solo during his own "Funky Sea, Funky Dew" that almost outdoes Gray on the electronic effects. Michael's "Strap

Hangin'" is a highlight, super catchy and likely inspired by Albert Ayler's "Ghosts"; dig Randy on the wah-wah trumpet and Michael's work is reminiscent of latter-day Sonny Rollins. The tunes are pure funk, but the horns never forget they're attached to jazz guys. They could have left the novelty number "Don't Get Funny With My Money", featuring Randy's vocal, on the cutting-room floor, but there's some good blowing on it. This kind of music isn't heard much these days—jazz fusion has seen better days. Sure, it sounds a bit dated, but in this live period context, the overwhelming talent in the band, which was "killing every night" on this tour, Randy says, shines through. 1980 was the year Herbie Hancock released *Mr. Hands*, Weather Report put out *Night Passage* and Chick Corea issued *The Best of Return to Forever*. Funk was in the air and this album captures that. In closing to wild applause, someone in the band says, "I hope we didn't make you deaf."

QUINT5T, recorded in New York this year just before COVID descended, won't make you deaf. It's ruminative allstar postbop, with leaders Dave Liebman (tenor and soprano saxophones), Brecker (trumpet), Marc Copland (piano), Drew Gress (bass) and Joey Baron (drums). One may expect fireworks from this lineup, but instead three tunes in a row—Duke Ellington's "Mystery Song", Liebman's "Off a Bird" (a tribute to Charlie Parker) and Drew Gress' "Figment"—are all pretty subdued. Compelling, with a cool finish.

Brecker leads off Baron's "Broken Time" with an extended solo that builds in intensity. Now we're cookin', the trumpeter getting great support from the rhythm section. Liebman takes the same approach and soon he's his usual volcanic self. Gress could be a little higher in the mix, so turn the volume up listening to this; he's still improvising madly as the tune ends. Brecker's "Moontide" appeared way back on the 1993 *In the Idiom* album. The two horns weave around each other on the attractive head. Liebman's tenor is searching, full of sharp but controlled cries. The composer follows suit with more tamped-down fury. Liebman is always fabulous on soprano and that's what he plays on his own lovely and entrancing "Child at Play". Great interplay between the horns on this one, Copland is lyrical and Baron is spotlighted near the end. Brecker's "There's a Mingus Amonk Us" is just what the title suggests, Mingus meets Monk, in a way that suggests vast appreciation for both of those geniuses. Listeners may wish they'd carried the concept all the way through the tune—with Copland echoing Monk's spare style and the horns ragged and right—but the head and outro make the case plainly enough.

The album closes with Baron's ballad "Pocketful of Change", a fine showcase for Brecker's tender side. Liebman is so breathy he sounds like Ben Webster. The album is music for a rainy day, played by five masters.

For more information, visit unitrecords.com, randybrecker.com and marccopland.com



Ayer's Children (Albert Ayler with Strings)
Eugene Chadbourne (House of Chadula)



Combat Joy
Ayler's Mood (AUT)
by Kurt Gottschalk

"Trane was the father. Pharoah was the son. I was the holy ghost." So goes an often-repeated quote with no undue humility from tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler, one of the most vital voices of the '60s "New Thing", who died 50 years ago this month. The rest of the story

is that the son is still going strong at close to double the age the celebrated father was when he left this plane and the quote is actually only often repeated by those in the know. The holy ghost was here in human form for a mere 34 years, releasing about a dozen albums during his time. It's perhaps not a surprise he isn't among the championed figures of the free jazz explosion. His music was brilliantly maddening, a sing-song squall, nurse rhymes ready to abrupt at any time. His records were, and are, fantastic, exciting and far from for everyone. But to those in the know, those who repeat the quote above, those who maybe swear by it, Ayler is vital. And fortunately, his work remains available and is kept alive by musicians continuing to explore the trails he blazed and the byways implied.

Eugene Chadbourne has been one of the great champions of Ayler's music. He's not the only artist to translate the saxophonist's slippery lines to guitar, but he's chased the Ayler train more than most anyone and is perhaps the only player to take it on on banjo. His sextet session *Ayler's Children* is, perhaps, an imagining of a *Charlie Parker With Strings* type session for the Holy Ghost, but the lead horn is oboist Carrie Shull, who was a part of another inspired Chadbourne jazz tribute, the band Hellington Country. Rounded out by viola, cello, bass and drums, the group finds plenty besides the jazziness in Ayler music on which to focus. It's more about the marches, drones, chaos and the obsessive repetitions. The 20 minutes of "Bells" is an invocation that borders on séance with instrumental and vocal moans creaking like floorboards under the group variations. Two takes on "New Generation", from Ayler's radical and maligned *New Grass*, become the rockers Ayler wanted it to be. The rest of the eight-song set is as lovingly unpredictable, with all the fidelity and room sounds of Ayler's own live albums.

Ayler's Mood's *Combat Joy* sticks closer to form, a trio vamping its way through a 54-minute improvisation recorded live in Rome. Pasquale Innarella has a wonderful tone on tenor, evoking the Holy Ghost's sound quite convincingly. (He has also recorded tributes to Dexter Gordon and Thelonious Monk). He's joined by bassist Danilo Gallo and drummer Ermanno Baron for the compelling and warmly recorded set. No titles are given to the long jam, divided into six sections and as the liner notes state "the inspiration comes directly from the spirit of Albert Ayler. But we are not talking about covers here." The blatant incorporation of Ayler themes undermines that claim, however, despite the composition credits given solely to the trio. While Chadbourne's group stakes the claim to being Ayler's children, Ayler's Moods seem to consider themselves his heirs. Unfortunately, passion and dedication don't equate ownership.

For more information, visit eugenechadbourne-documentation.squarespace.com and autrecords.com

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Art of the Descarga
John Santos Sextet (Smithsonian Folkways)
by Tom Greenland

Did you know there are some 30 different rhythmic ‘dialects’ of Puerto Rican *bomba* music? And as only one of the island’s regional styles to influence Latin jazz musicians—others are *danzón*, *guaracha*, *jíbaro* and *plena* while Cuba and Brazil provide many more—“Latin jazz” can be as diverse and nuanced as the wide world. Which brings us to the new release by the sextet of John Santos (who turns 65 this month), *Art of the Descarga*. The San Francisco Bay Area percussionist’s project serves as an anthology of Latin jazz dialects. Based around his working quintet of flutist John Calloway, tenor saxophonist Melecio Magdaluyo, pianist/trumpeter Marco Díaz, bassist Saúl Sierra and trap drummer David Flores (with cameos by late trumpeter Jerry González, percussionist Tito Matos, vocalist Orlando Torriente, flutist Orlando Valle and timbalero Orestes Vilató, among others), the all-original set reflects the collective spirit of men who have played together locally for many years.

Flores’ kit, augmented by a timbale drum, along with Santos’ layered-in congas, bongó, shakers, scrapers, claves, cowbells and other hand percussion, together create an undulating sea of rhythm. Calloway, Magdaluyo and Díaz are supple soloists prone to terse but creatively impactful statements. The album, buoyant throughout, makes its biggest waves in the second half, when *descarga* numbers that highlight spontaneous interplay between parts become more prominent. “Descargarará” (based on AfroCuban *Arará*) pits piano against bass; the rumba “Madera Avenue” tenor saxophone against percussion; “Descarga con Changüí” features flute, then tenor, then piano; “Descarga Jarocha”, another rumba, features three-way horn trading and a trap-set/congas duel. Finally, “Tichín”, a *descarga* based on a *son montuno*, showcases the leader’s fine conga work and Flores’ versatile drumming. Besides the many AfroCuban, AfroCaribbean and Latin jazz dialects audible in this encyclopedic recording, listeners may even hear traces of a West Coast accent.

For more information, visit folkways.si.edu



Transformación del Arcoiris
David Virelles (Pi)
by Tyran Grillo

Despite, if not because of, the fact that David Virelles’ *Transformación del Arcoiris* was born in a time of social distancing, it feels close enough to smell the creativity in its breath. With a borderless aesthetic that pushes two hands outward for every foot planted inward, it treats the canvas of an album not as blank but as a living surface whose own imperfections must be articulated in the spirit of truth. As much an ambient sound collage as a musical object, it grinds expectation

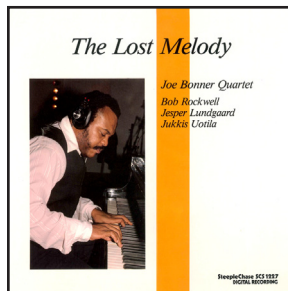
in the respective mortar and pestle of future and past until a *mélange* of the present reveals its fragrant spice.

Playing a Roland Juno-6 synthesizer, piano and sampler and accompanied by Los Seres, a virtual percussion ensemble programmed by himself, Virelles, who turns 37 this month, begins the circle with “Cause and Effect”, in which the sounds of chickens activate a schism between history and its erasure. As in other tracks that follow, but especially the concluding “Fin del Cuento”, a found-sound aesthetic prevails. While there are moments of transcendence, including the sun-drenched blush of “Holy City”, there’s a sense that shadows are always lying in wait for the chance to sink their teeth into progress. It’s as if our pre-pandemic state was digital and the new normal was analog.

Sensations of flesh and flora meet in “Babá la Paloma”, the tropical climate of which yields two distinct seasons. In the dry we encounter the goodness of “Tiempos” (made all the dreamier by guest Marcus Gilmore on MPC drumkit) while in the wet we inhale the spores of “De Cómo el Árbol Cantó y Bailó” as if they were life itself. Each of these requires the microscope of an ear and nowhere so magnified as in the cinematic wonder of “Babujal”. Here the piano feels like a relic in a sea of orchestral trembling.

Virelles is always exploring, examining and analyzing genealogies that have lodged themselves within. This is music that does more than stand at a crossroads; rather, it ties those roads into a bow until their beginnings and endings are one and the same.

For more information, visit pirecordings.com



The Lost Melody
Joe Bonner Quartet (SteepleChase)
by Pierre Giroux

Joe Bonner, who died six years ago this month at 66, is not a name that readily comes to mind when discussing the postbop era. Nevertheless he was a pianist with a vigorous and decisive style as well as a skilled performer.

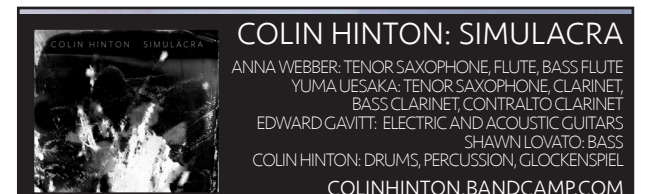
The Lost Melody was originally recorded for SteepleChase in 1987, one of several albums Bonner recorded for them during the period he lived in Denmark. Now with the reemergence of vinyl as a desirable and saleable format, the same label has reissued the session. Supporting Bonner is another US expatriate, formidable tenor saxophonist Bob Rockwell, along with one of Denmark’s leading bassists in Jesper Lundgaard and the understated yet consequential Finnish drummer Jukkis Uotila.

This six-track release is composed equally of Bonner originals and standards from the Great American Songbook. Side A starts with Cole Porter’s “You And The Night And The Music”. Stepping out at a blistering pace, Rockwell shows unbounded curiosity as he probes the limits of his horn without repeating himself. Bonner picks up the number in his strong note-striking style, showing the influence of McCoy Tyner, as he covers the keyboard with pulsating energy. The first of the Bonner original tunes is “Vibeke”, Danish for “female warrior”. It is dynamic composition with propulsive rhythmic sensibility and empathetic interplay between Bonner and Rockwell, plus some John Coltrane-style riffs alluding to “A Love Supreme” towards the close of the composition.

Side B opens with Bonner’s title track, a lovely ballad with an interesting harmonic presentation. Rockwell starts off with a repeated phrase in a minor

key both thoughtful and introspective. Bonner’s solo is developed in long single-note lines and sly runs, which mature into a series of block chord choices. Lundgaard is a steady presence with pulsing brawny notes while Uotila dances over his cymbals. The final track is another Bonner original entitled “Manuella”. Rockwell is a revelation. With a bold sonorous tone, he attacks the music with impressive technique and self-assurance. Bonner continues to sparkle as his playing is filled with polished concepts and a clear sense of expression. This session is a wonderful example of an enthusiastically committed group relationship.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk

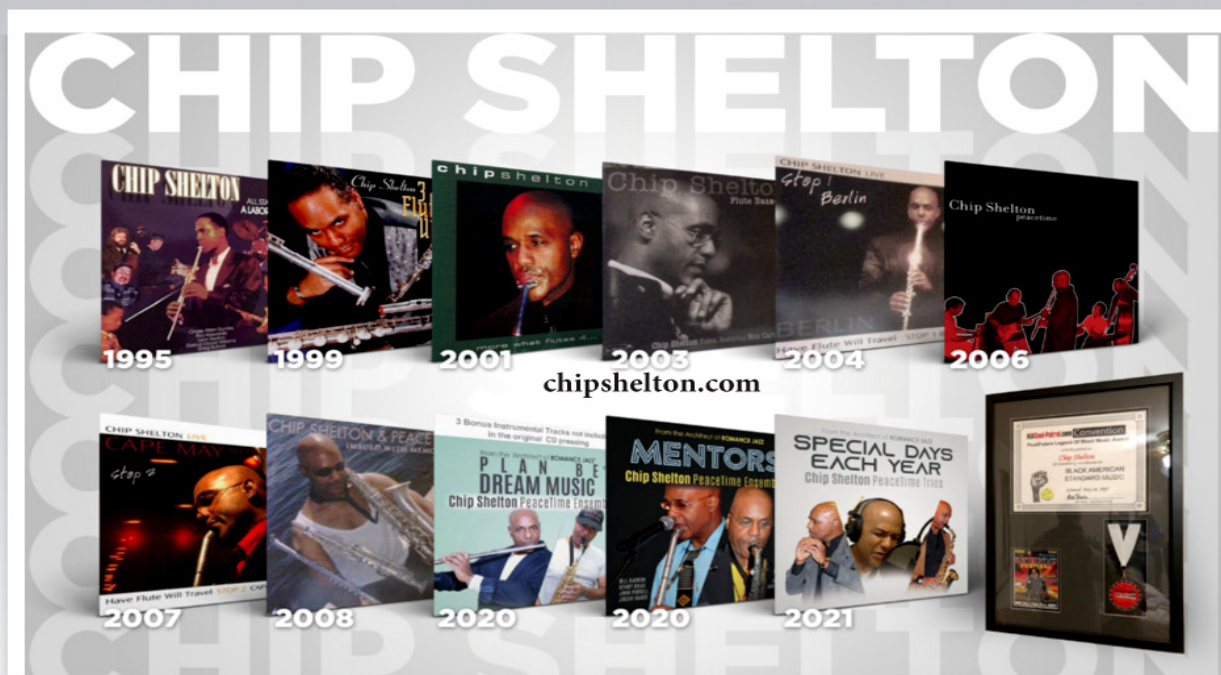




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Arctic Riff
Marcin Wasilewski Trio/Joe Lovano (ECM)
 by Phil Freeman

Polish pianist Marcin Wasilewski, who turns 45 this month, has been leading a trio with bassist Sławomir Kurkiewicz and drummer Michał Miśkiewicz for over 25 years, first as the Simple Acoustic Trio and since 2005 under his own name. Their debut album featured interpretations of one of Poland's most important composers, Krzysztof Komeda; it was released in 1995. After that, they became the late trumpeter Tomasz Stańko's backing band for several years, before resuming activities on their own. In the subsequent decades, they've worked with other horn players, including Swedish saxophonist Joakim Milder on their last studio album, 2014's *Spark Of Life*, and Norwegian saxophonist Trygve Seim on *Forever Young*, an album led by guitarist Jacob Young, also released in 2014.

The partnership with tenor/soprano saxophonist Joe Lovano is a fruitful one. He doesn't sound like a guest; he sounds like he's been with the band since the beginning. He feels his way into the music with respect. His voice on the horn is mellow and pensive, somewhat in the mode of Joe Henderson's late recordings. There's more than a tinge of the blues in his phrases, particularly when he lets a line end with a squeal or a low bark. In the final moments of the second track, Carla Bley's "Vashkar", his phrasing brings David S. Ware to mind, if only for an instant (but, of course, Henderson's "El Barrio", from 1964, prefigured much of what Ware would do years later). "Fading Sorrow" is a romantic ballad that could have been recorded in 1975 as a TV show theme; the rhythm ticks along gently as the piano strolls down Bob James-ian streets. "L'Amour Fou", meanwhile, is a bouncing, joyful postbop dance. Kurkiewicz and Miśkiewicz are mellow but unfettered throughout the album, in the way two men who've been playing together for a quarter of a century can be; their exchanges are like two old friends on a park bench who can talk to each other about anything. Wasilewski is a romantic, verging on sentimental; his playing is sometimes like an Eastern European Keith Jarrett, though at least some of the murmuring and singing picked up by Manfred Eicher's microphones likely belongs to Kurkiewicz.

For more information, visit ecmrecords.com



El Duelo
Diego Urcola Quartet (featuring Paquito D'Rivera)
 (Sunnyside)
 by George Kanzler

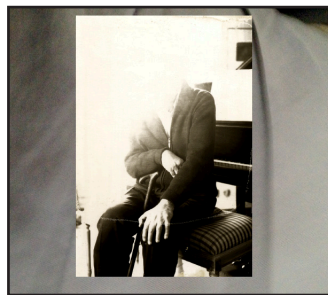
A smart combination of tangos, jazz standards and repertoire gleaned from the ensemble format mirrored on this album makes for a scintillating, constantly invigorating program of 15 tracks brimming with highlights. Trumpeter/flugelhorn player Diego Urcola, who turns 55 this month, has been a member of Paquito

D'Rivera's ensembles for decades and he enlists the alto saxophonist/clarinetist in a pared-down, piano-less quartet in the tradition of Gerry Mulligan and Ornette Coleman. The harmonic and sonic openness of the ensemble—enhanced by the free-flowing, adventurous rhythmic takes of bassist Hamishi Smith and drummer Eric Doob—spur D'Rivera to some of his most ebullient, buoyant soloing on both of his instruments. And the concise nature of the short but musically potent dozen-plus tracks give the listener a constant roller coaster of musical thrills.

Urcola delves specifically into the piano-less quartet tradition on three tracks. "Una Muy Bonita" is one of Coleman's early quartet numbers, the horns interacting over percolating rhythms, D'Rivera in a Coleman-like mode. Mulligan's "I Know, Don't Know How" recreates the smooth swing feel propelled by brushes of Mulligan's quartets, with clarinet and flugelhorn weaving the theme. The late trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, who also featured piano-less quartets, wrote "Foxy Trot", a quick-tempoed, rocking track.

A native of Argentina, Urcola embraces the country's tango music on four tracks, including Ethan Iverson's delightful mashup of the tango "La Yumba" with Juan Tizol's "Caravan". His "Buenos Aires" features swirling clarinet while Astor Piazzolla's "Libertango" pairs muted trumpet with alto. Urcola also explores Wayne Shorter's "Sacajawea (Theme)", incorporating aspects of Shorter's pianist Danilo Pérez' solo into his arrangement. And the quartet ends with takes on three jazz standards: Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" as a reduction of Slide Hampton's Big Band chart; a rumba take on Benny Golson's "Stablemates"; and Jerry Gonzalez' AfroLatin version of Thelonious Monk's "Bye-Ya".

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com



Blasphemious Fragments
Phil Minton/John Butcher/Gino Robair (Rastascaan)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

The opening smudges of detuned radio set a path quite nicely for *Blasphemious Fragments*, a trio session recorded in 2017 with saxophonist John Butcher and vocalist Phil Minton (who turns 80 this month) joined by percussionist Gino Robair. It's not an entirely unusual sonic setting, but it creates an of-this-world-but-not-in-it feel that persists through much of the coming hour.

That brief track, turns out to be a duo, or very nearly one, with Butcher imparting signal waves on saxophone against the electronic static and hum. The next track, a bit longer, finds Robair on muted percussion (soft mallets on drums) with Minton crying and rumbling, Butcher hanging at back before offering some deep, hollow, tenor tones. There's a lot of invention going on here, a lot of reshaping. There are moments of dialogue, some may even induce a smile, but much of the time the three are suggesting a broad field, a sonic event horizon just this side of the familiar.

Minton is an enormously likeable vocalist. He can be a bit like an adult cartoon. (Let's not read that as meaning "pornographic", though. While the suggestion is apparent, it's not what's being said—somewhat akin to the album's title, which isn't "blasphemous" at all but seems to be some arcane mathematical term.) His performances are rarely (but not never) funny, but there's so much character in them that they might be

called "animated" nevertheless.

He and Butcher have a history going back to the '80s in duo, a trio with guitarist Erhard Hirt and in the quartet responsible for Minton's excellent *Mouthfull of Ecstasy* using text from James Joyce's writings. The appeal Joyce must hold for Minton seems apparent; they share a talent for abstract expression of very direct expression of emotion. Joy and anguish flip and slide about like little salamanders, imparting meaning by extension to the variety of blurs crafted by Butcher and Robair.

Freeform improvisation can suggest many things—anxiety, bliss, chaos, isolation, serenity—but rarely does it work quite this well as a series of distinct sensations, like an ice cube tray of Jell-O cubes, each one wobbling away but retaining its own unique form.

For more information, visit rastascaan.com



The Latin Side of Horace Silver
Conrad Herwig (Savant)
 by George Kanzler

Trumpetist Conrad Herwig, who turns 62 this month, has been recording editions of his "Latin Side" project for 25 years. This is the eighth and most successful in pairing AfroLatin rhythmic settings with a jazz composer. Not only are Horace Silver's tunes eminently suitable to the concept, they are also distinctive in any milieu. Silver is the quintessential hardbop composer. While others from the era were admired by, and wrote for, musicians, they are played today often because of the harmonic challenges they provide. Silver aimed at pleasing the audience, a tunesmith who could create catchy hooks and memorable melodies. Of his contemporaries, Silver was much closer in spirit to Ray Charles than to Wayne Shorter.

Herwig gets the populist nature of Silver's work and keeps the catchy tunes squarely in the frame. From the jaunty, bop-meets-rock "Nica's Dream" to kicker-hook of "Filthy McNasty", he emphasizes the shape and contour of Silver's compositions. He and fellow arrangers Bill O'Connell (one of the two pianists here) and Marc Stasio also use Silver's contrasting, two-part horn arrangements as a template for expansion. Herwig and tenor saxophonist Igor Butman emulate the tenor parts in Silver's quintet charts while alto saxophonist Craig Handy and trumpeter Alex Sipiagin echo the trumpet lines.

The approach to solos, track to track, is varied. "Cape Verdean Blues", a natural for the dancing AfroLatin rhythms, hosts pairs of diminishing four-bar to two-bar trades and tandem soloing from Herwig and Sipiagin, then Handy and Butman, followed by an O'Connell solo over a montuno rhythm. On the two ballads, "Peace" and "Silver's Serenade", Handy plays flute and Sipiagin flugelhorn. The AfroLatin jazz spirit becomes stratospheric on three tracks featuring guest pianist Michel Camilo. His two-handed fervor and comping sets the bar high on "Song for My Father" for subsequent solos from Butman and Herwig. "The Gods of the Yoruba", a lesser-known Silver tune, showcases Camilo in settings from horn riffs and montunos to interactions with Robby Ameen's drumkit and Richie Flores' congas. And "Nutville", the uptempo closer, builds incendiary momentum through a series of horn solos ushering in rousing Camilo piano.

For more information, visit jazzdepot.com



Breath & Hammer
David Krakauer/Kathleen Tagg (Table Pounding)
by Alex Henderson

Clarinetist/native New Yorker David Krakauer has been a leader of the neo-klezmer movement, combining traditional Jewish music with jazz, funk, rock, hip-hop and other influences. On *Breath & Hammer*, he forms a duo with South African pianist Kathleen Tagg, who now lives in New York City. The latter also provides electronics, or as Krakauer describes them, “piano orchestra”. The end result is an acoustic/electronic sound that doesn’t pretend to be traditional klezmer but, rather, gives the genre a modern spin. During the course of the album, Krakauer and Tagg draw on everything from jazz to funk to classical.

Breath & Hammer gets off to a festive start with exuberant opener “The Geyser”, a Krakauer-Tagg original, but takes a much moodier turn on percussionist Roberto Juan Rodriguez’ “Shron” and Syrian clarinetist Kinan Azmeh’s “November 22” as well as two pieces by John Zorn: “Ebhuel” and “Parzial”. If Cecil Taylor and Albert Ayler had been klezmer musicians, the results might have sounded something like what Krakauer and Tagg come up with on “Ebhuel”.

Krakauer, on both clarinet and bass clarinet, and Tagg look all over the jazz spectrum for inspiration. While Krakauer’s improvisations suggest postbop on the aforementioned “November 22”, Krakauer’s funky “Rattlin’ Down the Road” and accordion player Emil Kroitor’s “Moldavian Journey”, the influence of fusion asserts itself on Tagg’s “Berimbau” and accordion player Rob Curto’s “Demon Chopper”. The former favors an unlikely combination of fusion, Brazilian jazz and klezmer while the latter manages to bridge the gap between klezmer and fusion bands like Weather Report and Spyro Gyra.

Krakauer’s risk-taking music has gone way beyond combining klezmer and different types of jazz and Tagg has no problem keeping up with him on the unpredictable *Breath & Hammer*.

For more information, visit krakauertaggduo.com. This duo live-streams Nov. 14th at brandeis.edu.



49th Parallel
Neil Swainson Quintet (Concord-Reel to Real)
by Dan Bilawsky

Bassist Neil Swainson’s only leader date—recorded in 1987, initially released by Concord Records and receiving this proper reissue treatment from Reel to Real—is an absolute doozy. The album’s two-horn frontline consists of trumpeter Woody Shaw, making one of his last known studio recordings before his untimely passing in 1989, and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson, just a few years shy of the late-career renaissance that would seriously elevate his status. The all-Canadian rhythm section matches Swainson with two fellow Toronto scene-makers: pianist Gary

Williamson and drummer Jerry Fuller. And the playlist, focusing almost exclusively on the bassist’s originals, is full of first-rate material.

The reason this album has become something of a cult classic is pretty easy to understand: It’s all about that lineup, the stories, and, of course, the sounds. The full membership of the quintet had never played together as a solid outfit prior to gathering in the studio. Shaw, essentially blind as a result of the degenerative disorder retinitis pigmentosa, had to learn Swainson’s compositions by rote leading up to the sessions. And Henderson, who was known to have the occasional scheduling snafu, missed the first of two days allotted to make the album. Taken together those facts might have pointed to a shambolic outcome. But the end result couldn’t be further from that possibility. Everybody was in the zone, as the music bears out.

Opening with the title track, which vacillates between different feels while dealing with latitude on multiple levels, the band gives off sparks that light the way for all that follows. “Port of Spain”, slotted second, flows with a samba-esque stride. “Southern Exposure” and “On the Lam” traverse solidly swinging courses in style. “Don’t Hurt Yourself” speaks to Henderson’s interpretive brilliance with a ballad. And “Labyrinth” lives up to its name with sinuous movements. Then it all comes to an energetic close with Henderson’s blues-based “Homestretch”.

The world will never know what could’ve been if this band had room to grow beyond one single point in time. But that moment and the arresting music it produced—now highlighted and preserved for a wider audience—is, thankfully, here to treasure.

For more information, visit cellarlive.com



SOURCE
Nubya Garcia (Concord)
by Jordannah Elizabeth

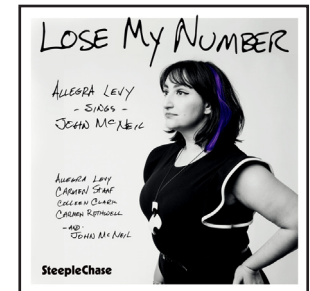
British tenor saxophonist Nubya Garcia continues to emerge as a significant voice with her leader debut *SOURCE*. This sensuous collection is admirably played by Joe Armon-Jones (piano), Daniel Casimir (bass) and Sam Jones (drums), produced by Garcia and Kwes, the latter working with notable artists like Solange and Bobby Womack. This combination of musicians and producers is sonically compatible and gels well on an intuitive level as well as technically. Garcia is an imaginative storyteller, *SOURCE* a reflection of her swirling inner world of familial history, highs and lows of attaining well-earned prestige and personal struggles of grief while experiencing the world through an Afrodiasporic lineage and lens.

Opening “Pace” begins with deep bass ornamentation and ethereal piano and drums, over which Garcia plays fluidly and confidently. Her notes are strong, steady and clear, giving her sonic command throughout the album as she lays out her story. The title track features a fusion of reggae and vocal accompaniment layered with an echoey hall reverb, making the track sound like it is submerged in a primordial reality, continuing to showcase the album’s otherworldly sound and expands on its international appeal. The album ends with “Boundless Beings”, featuring guest vocalist Akenya. She and Garcia double the melody, offering a postmodern romantic ballad.

This album has its own distinct sound, Garcia merging undertones of Guyanese folk songs along

with carnival culture of London and the Caribbean. While there are moments of sadness and stealthy overtures of a world and perspective only she can understand, this album has a connective force that draws the listener in. Her rich and eclectic background, ear for natural melody, and emotional arrangements make *SOURCE* a resoundingly pleasurable album.

For more information, visit concordmusicgroup.com



Lose My Number
Allegra Levy (SteepleChase)
by Jim Motavalli

Whenever this reviewer has seen vocalist Allegra Levy live, she was either performing with trumpeter John McNeil or playing his songs. On her new album she doubles down on McNeil’s music—writing lyrics for and performing nine McNeil compositions and featuring his horn on three of them. The music is challenging, especially for a singer. From Neil Tesser’s notes: “[McNeil’s] tunes cover a lot of range. They often have huge intervallic jumps, with adjacent notes leaping tall buildings in a single bound.” The result, it must be said, is not instantly satisfying in the same way as a swinging Ella Fitzgerald record with a program of familiar Tin Pan Alley standards. But give it a chance and it will sink in.

Levy’s lyrics are frequently really downbeat, but the music is happier. Opener “Samba de Beach” is full-on deep regret. She laments taking a difficult career path made harder by COVID-19 and rejecting a lover because of pride. But it’s kind of a bouncy tune and it benefits from the work—top-notch throughout—of the all-female band (pianist Carmen Staaf, bassist Carmen Rothwell, drummer Colleen Clark). Staaf’s solo on this track sparkles.

“Livin’ Small”, with lyrics from a decade ago, dates to a more optimistic time, the beginning of the affair, as it were. Levy imagines a cozy nook with her partner, living on love (“A walk-up’s fine / As long as you’ll still be mine”). “Tiffany” is a “Girl from Ipanema” for our times. The setting is Fifth Avenue instead of a beach in Brazil, but the lady is just as unattainable. The ultra-slow tempo, with lots of atmospheric pauses, makes room for moody solos from Rothwell and Staaf.

Levy is better on faster material like “Strictly Ballroom”, a kiss-off to a dance partner that features McNeil. Clark really pushes the track forward; she’s someone to watch. “C.J.” is a favorite, a straightforward swinger with the dark-voiced Levy scattling and channeling Annie Ross. McNeil gets some good licks in and doubles Levy’s vocal at the close.

Some of these tunes accommodate lyrics better than others. “Ukulele Tune” is quite simple and lovely, with words that fit like a Brooks Brothers suit. Let’s call it a new standard for our time. “Zephyr” floats by and the album closes with the title track, so tricky and shapeshifting it almost defies Levy’s brave attempt at vocalizing. She wants this would-be paramour to do more than lose her number: “Boy, do you suck / Just my luck / I’d rather go and get hit by a truck”. “Dover Beach” also doesn’t quite gel for the same reasons.

The album celebrates two talents who should be better known, Levy and McNeil. And the music is played by a truly exceptional band Levy should take on the road...when that’s possible again.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk



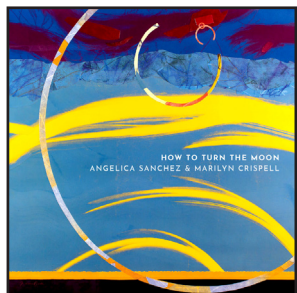
Live in Graz
Joe Fiedler's Big Sackbut (Multiphonics Music)
 by Ken Dryden

Joe Fiedler's Big Sackbut has a touch of humor before one even hears a note, given that sackbut was the trombone's original name when it was first conceived centuries ago to double the voices of a choir. Although Fiedler is not the first jazz composer and arranger to write for multiple trombones, the unusual makeup of his quartet includes fellow trombonists Luis Bonilla and Ryan Keberle, the rhythm duties capably handled by tuba player Jon Sass (who steps in for original member Marcus Rojas), giving the band a rather unique sound. These 2019 concert performances from Graz, Austria—made during Fiedler's residency at that city's University of Music and Performing Arts—feature his superb arrangements, though there is freedom for exploration within them.

The lack of a piano, guitar or other chordal instrument is never missed, due to the virtuoso skills of each player as they wend their way through each challenging chart, without a net, Sass providing a solid rhythmic foundation. Opener "Peekskill" begins with an unaccompanied tuba solo, then Fiedler and Co. taking a wild musical journey with blistering solos and superb ensemble work. Charles Mingus' "Devil Woman" takes on a new dimension with Keberle's whimsical, conversational, muted introduction and the multiphonics in his growling solo. The quartet is infused with the composer's playfulness as they make it their own with a spirited interpretation.

Bonilla's boisterous introduction to Fiedler's "I'm In" suggests "A Night In Tunisia" as its inspiration, though it quickly alters its character with jagged, often rapid-fire horn lines, Sass darting out of his steady rhythm to join in the interplay. The leader's "Ways" is another strong feature for him. Roswell Rudd was among the most acclaimed modern trombonists and several of his compositions are explored: "Bethesda Fountain" is a raucous affair, Sass serving as the bridge between Keberle and Bonilla's featured solos; bluesy "Yankee No-How" is full of twists; and "Su Blah Blah Buh Sibi" combines a menacing theme with brilliant interplay and lively solos with a comic tinge. This delightful recording reveals new facets with each listen.

For more information, visit joefiedler.com



How To Turn The Moon
Angelica Sanchez/Marilyn Crispell (Pyroclastic)
 by Mark Keresman

It is still relatively rare that pianists team up for a duo session—Mary Lou Williams and Cecil Taylor have teamed-up in tandem, so have Tommy Flanagan and Hank Jones and, more recently Vijay Iyer and Craig Taborn. Add to that list Angelica Sanchez and Marilyn Crispell. Aside from a formidable pile of platters under her own leadership (both with ensembles and solo),

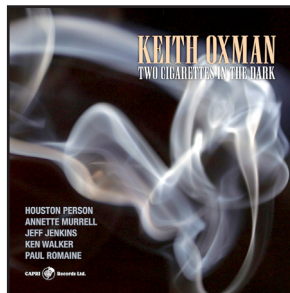
Crispell was a longtime member of the Anthony Braxton Quartet. Sanchez has been a mainstay on the NYC cutting-edge jazz scene since 1995, playing with Tim Berne, Mark Dresser and Tony Malaby. Both have very free styles, each with their own approach to expression, but all firmly part of the jazz tradition.

With a program of originals mostly composed by Sanchez and three co-written tracks, the pair weave a mostly introspective tapestry that has its earth-shaking, bracing moments. Crispell especially has a somewhat percussive, volatile approach, yet she and Sanchez play off each other's ideas with melodiousness and understated warmth.

Opener "Lobe of the Fly" has a midtempo, gradually surging drive, both pianists engaging in energetic runs, each with a spiky approach tempered by a measured, questing quality. The overall effect seems off-kilter yet has an energizing upshot. Sanchez-Crispell's "Space Junk" sounds as if it could fit nicely into a movie about space exploration and the hazards it entails; seemingly random yet carefully generated creaks and rattles paint an eerie aural scenario.

"Ceiba Portal" is a mini-epic, flowery, ornate and loaded with subtle tension, spiky notes and raining cascades adding drama and dread in a roundabout manner, building a carefully ominous and palpable tension while sidestepping melodrama until an oddly sweet resolution. "Fires in Space" features suitably surging, urgent, authoritative chords and tense melodic lines—copacetic collision—maintaining and exchanging a conscious flow of ideas in a thoughtful yet authoritative manner.

For more information, visit pyroclasticrecords.com



Two Cigarettes In The Dark
Keith Oxman (Capri)
 by Pierre Giroux

Two Cigarettes In The Dark is tenor saxophonist Keith Oxman's 11th release for Capri and places him in the company of one of jazz' most revered tenor saxophonists, Houston Person. At the time of this 2018 session, Person was 84 and was still playing with an air of easiness on the six tracks on which he appears. The track list is a mixture of standards, originals and a couple of tunes from bop masters Hank Mobley ("Bossa For Baby", from 1967's *Far Away Lands*) and Johnny Griffin ("Sweet Sucker", from Bennie Green's 1961 album *Glidin' Along*), all of which allow Oxman and Person lots of interior room in the song structures for improvisation.

Following that old adage about "never getting a second chance to make a first impression", the two tenors come charging out of the gate with the Frank Loesser classic "I've Never Been In Love Before". Both showcase their defining interpretive skills and entertaining harmonic vocabularies, Person in the right channel and Oxman in the left.

In this politically correct, health-conscious age, the title track seems somewhat incongruous. However back in 1934 when Lew Pollack and Paul Francis Webster wrote the tune and Bing Crosby recorded it later in the year, it had some cachet. Taking the number in a moderate swing tempo rather than the original ballad version, Person's smoky tone captures the feeling beautifully while Oxman delivers a spare energetic solo.

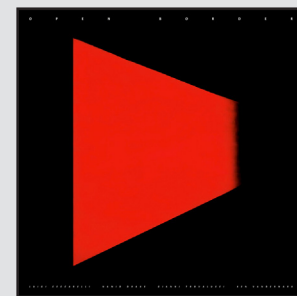
On "Bossa For Baby", pianist Jeff Jenkins, bassist Ken Walker—the latter pair both on Oxman's 2018

album *Glimpses*—and drummer Paul Romaine create a layer of solid bossa rhythm over which both tenors improvise with facility and ingenuity. "Sweet Sucker" opens with some unison blowing, before Person packs his notes with a lot of robustness and feeling. Oxman then picks up the theme with his crisp tone while offering a continuously changing harmonic approach. Great playing by both men.

There are four tracks on which Oxman is the lone horn and two cuts featuring vocalist Annette Murrell. But it is the tracks with Person that stand out and make this a special release.

For more information, visit caprirecords.com

DROP THE NEEDLE



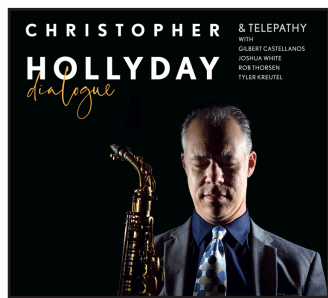
Open Border
**Luigi Ceccarelli/Hamid Drake/Gianni Trovalusci/
 Ken Vandermark (Audiographic)**
 by John Pietaro

This LP is a fascinating union of pairs of musicians, two based in Rome and two in Chicago, at the 2018 Forlì Open Music Festival. Two improvisations, though having little in common, are of almost the exact length (17:51 and 17:52) and of seemingly equal parts electronic and acoustic. The latter is a bit of a stretch, but each member of this quartet led by electronics artist Luigi Ceccarelli indulge in sonorities that can sound anything but organic. Drummer Hamid Drake approaches his collection of instruments like an orchestra while reedplayer Ken Vandermark often revels in coaxing riveting sounds from his saxophones and clarinets. Italian flutist Gianni Trovalusci, even during melodic flights, blends so well with the others that his instrument recalls analog electrical sounds. Throughout the first selection, side-long "Open Border, Part 1", the ensemble operates fully as a collective, with few moments of any singular voice coming to the front.

Trovalusci shines on Side B ("Open Border, Part 2"), bouncing and sputtering off of Drake's softly dictated pulsations, vocalizing through his head joint both with and in opposition to his standardly-played sounds. Vandermark blows with fervor and at least a degree of abandon, carrying the gritty urbane into this European session. Electronics then take the lead with a wall of sound as cymbals sound and simmer, but Trovalusci moves to center again, filling the soundscape live and in response as his instrumental voice is manipulated by Ceccarelli. The result is fascinating and, frankly, could have gone on longer. This piece closes with a pensive, calming repetitive melody shared by electronics, saxophone and flute in varying degrees of rhythmic uncertainty, creating a cascading effect.

While the title indicates a positive meeting of international artists, the turbulence within appears to carry stronger symbolic meaning referencing the political strife around our government's austere vision of border security. Most striking, particularly towards the close of side two, is the image of national boundaries as imagined by the global creative community as opposed to the bearers of arms.

For more information, visit audiographicrecords.com



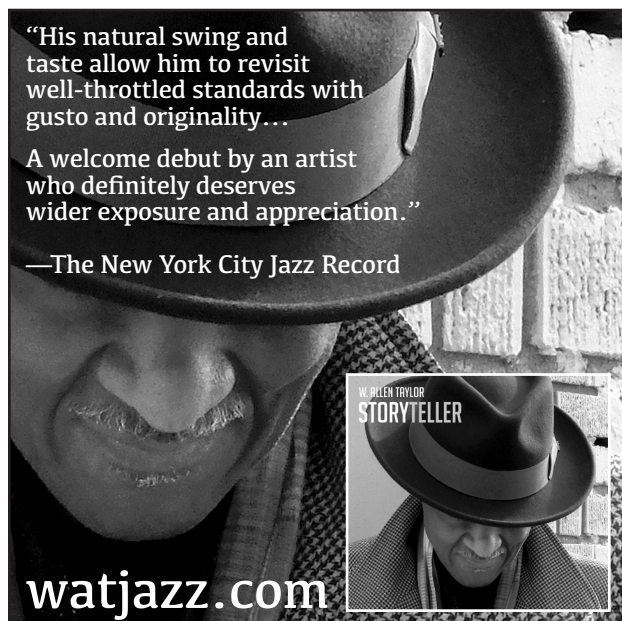
Dialogue

Christopher Hollyday & Telepathy (Jazzbeat Prod.)
by Robert Bush

If the name Christopher Hollyday sounds vaguely familiar, it should, provided you have enough years behind you as a jazz fan. Hollyday made a big splash in the Boston area in the mid '80s when he was being mentioned in the same breath as Wynton Marsalis, Marcus Roberts and Roy Hargrove. After a few initial releases on his own label (Jazzbeat), Hollyday scored a major label record deal with RCA/Novus, releasing his eponymously titled debut in 1989. How much of a big deal was the still teenaged alto saxophonist back then? Well, big enough for the label to invite Wallace Roney, Cedar Walton, David Williams and Billy Higgins as his bandmates. He went on to make four albums for RCA/Novus before abruptly vanishing from the mainstream jazz scene in 1992. After completing studies at the Berklee College of Music, Hollyday moved to San Diego in 1996, teaching high school music for the next 26 years. He returned to the music scene with a cast of West Coast heavyweights in 2018 for the record *Telepathy*. This session reunites the *Telepathy* band of Gilbert Castellanos (trumpet), Joshua White (piano), Rob Thorsen (bass) and Tyler Kreutel (drums) with predictably pyrotechnic results.

The album opens with Hollyday's title track, which morphs from a fanfare into a blistering bebop escapade. The leader courses through the changes with a fat, sassy tone and joyful smears. Castellanos follows with clarity and ideas galore before handing the baton to White and Kreutel for brief commentary. White and the leader begin Josef Myrow-Mack Gordon's "You Make Me Feel So Young" as a simpatico duet before Kreutel's exuberant brushes launch into compelling swing time. The melody gets parsed among the principals before Castellanos delivers a remarkable distillation of Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard. Thorsen slips in a big, woody exposition for good measure.

The disc as a whole embraces the '60s Blue Note aesthetic with an earnest fidelity, particularly noteworthy on the Horace Silver classic "Kiss Me Right", which features the amazing White, who might just be the next big voice on the instrument. Castellanos and the leader come off as soulmates on this one, easily capable of finishing each other's thoughts.



"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

It's often been said that the true test of an improviser is the way they treat a ballad and when Hollyday examines Saul Chaplin-Hy Zaret-Sammy Cahn's "Dedicated To You", he passes that test with flying colors. It even compares (favorably) to the gold-standard established on *John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman*, a claim not made lightly.

For more information, visit christopherhollyday.com



Clear Line

Jacob Garchik (Yestereve)
by Robert Iannapolo

For the past 20 years or so trombonist/composer Jacob Garchik has been busy in various groups, including the large ensembles of John Hollenbeck, Mary Halvorson and Henry Threadgill. Although he's been releasing his own small group recordings since 2003, they've been few and far between (only five since then). But he's been busy scoring films (Guy Maddin's *The Green Fog*, 2017) and working on arrangements for various ensembles including Kronos Quartet. Mention also has to be made of his 2012 solo project *The Heavens: The Atheist Gospel Trombone Album*, where he skillfully overdubbed himself into a multiple brass quartet.

Garchik's most recent release, *Clear Line*, features him as a composer/conductor of a 13-piece wind ensemble and it's a remarkable work. It's in nine movements whose organizational ideas stem from Garchik's interest in the "ligne claire" style of illustration, which was developed by Belgian cartoonist Herge, creator of the *Tintin* comics, due to the tendency of ink to bleed in newspaper illustrations. "Ligne claire" put the characters clearly in the forefront of an illustration rather than blending in the background.

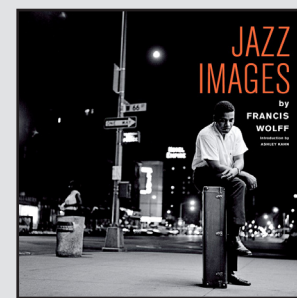
Clear Line is scored solely for horns with no rhythm section but it doesn't need one. The piece is as rhythmically forward as it is linear-based and the musicians carry off both aspects with strength and confidence. Lines in their various manifestations (individually, contrapuntally, massed) are the chief feature. The piece announces itself with a full-force blast, then all 13 instruments extend outwardly in various directions with arpeggiated lines.

Although clearly a group piece, through-composed, Garchik leaves room for soloists. The first to appear is Anna Webber with a bristling tenor solo. "Stacked Volumes", as its title implies, groups together various instruments in harmonies redolent with dissonance. It's a remarkable section. "Sixth" opens with an ostinato played by Carl Maraghi (baritone saxophone) and trumpet. Over that emerges a beautiful solo by trombonist Natalie Cressman before the other horns filter in and around her solo. "Mobius And Mucha" features trumpeters Jonathan Finlayson and Adam O'Farrill soloing over a bed of mostly brass. Oddly, the closing title track concludes with all saxophones soloing to a gauzy, almost indefinite conclusion. Garchik avoids clichés associated with groups this size and compositions of this type, such as the big finish. And this seems to carry over to the soloists' performances as well.

Garchik and all of his players are to be commended. *Clear Line* is an exceptional piece. There's always something happening. There hasn't been an album quite like this in a while.

For more information, visit jacobgarchik.com

IN PRINT



Jazz Images by Francis Wolff
(Elemental Music)
by Russ Musto

It can be considered somewhat ironic that one of the most important collections of photographs depicting many, if not most, of the greatest African-American jazz musicians of the mid 20th Century should be the effort of a German-Jewish immigrant. But that is the case of Francis Wolff (né Jakob Franz Wolff, 1907-71) who fled his homeland in October 1939 to escape the genocidal Anti-Semitism of Adolph Hitler's Nazi regime, emigrating to New York City to join his boyhood friend Alfred Lion, who had arrived in the city several years earlier and had just recently founded Blue Note Records in order to document the music for which the pair shared a passion.

Noted biographer, music historian and jazz critic Ashley Khan's introduction to the 168-page volume of more than 150 black and white photographs, most published here for the first time (plus a 16-track CD sampler from the Francis Wolff Collection), details Wolff's rise from shipping clerk to staff photographer for the label, noting his development over time of a "recognizable visual signature, catching musicians in candid, relaxed moments", during rehearsals (a hallmark of the label) and soundchecks, first in Rudy Van Gelder's parent's Hackensack living room and later in his own Englewood Cliffs studios.

Himself an avid photographer, Van Gelder describes Wolff's style on the book's dust jacket: "The majority of the pictures that Frank took were with the Rolloflex with a hand-held flash held at arm's length. He'd hold the camera in his left hand and hold the flash up with his right hand—Statue of Liberty style—trying to get the light source in the proper position. At Blue Note sessions Art Blakey was the thunder and Frank was the lightning."

Indeed the photograph of drummer Blakey that graces the back of the dust jacket, his tie tucked into the collar of his sweat-soaked white shirt, his sleeves rolled up above the elbows, his head cocked back, a cigarette dangling from his mouth as he strikes his ride cymbal, iconically depicts one facet of Wolff's style.

Other photos within the book reflect another aspect: the capturing of intimate moments captured during recording sessions, like that of drummer Philly Joe Jones leaning over the piano holding a sheet of music as he looks into the eyes of pianist Elmo Hope, pencil in hand.

Some of the book's most striking images are photos from album cover shoots, such as that of the Ornette Coleman Trio in a snowy Stockholm park (*At The "Golden Circle" Stockholm*, 1965) or Herbie Hancock standing in the middle of a New York street (*Inventions And Dimensions*, 1963). The latter's appraisal that "Wolff's images of musicians at work are so relaxed and intimate that they capture the spirit not just of the moment, but the era" says it all.

For more information, visit elemental-music.com/jazz-images-by-francis-wolff



Present Company
Peter Hess Quartet (Diskonife)
by Thomas Conrad

Tenor saxophonist Peter Hess and trombonist Brian Drye have both been active members of New York's creative music scene for over 20 years. Hess has said, "Over the decades I've been involved with so many different artists and made so many recordings, but so few of them uniquely mine." For Hess, and surely for Drye as well, *Present Company* is a leap into this breach. They are all alone together in the frontline, backed by a volatile rhythm section of bassist Adam Hopkins and drummer Tomas Fujiwara.

A two-horn quartet with no chording instrument is a naked format. There is nowhere to hide. Improvisers sink or swim depending on whether they have the goods. Hess and Drye swim. In their solos, ideas tumble over one another in their urgency to get expressed. Drye's maneuvers usually flow into droll melodies. Hess' inspirations come in quick slashes and long careening runs. When they improvise together they sound relentless yet not quite manic. The creative atmosphere is impulsive, but in a context of tonal harmony. Most tunes are like "Sanford Theme" and "Ring Tone": outbreaks of energy that provide soloists with running starts.

The joy that these two take in raising hell together is obvious and exhilarating. But there are some solemn moments. "The Net Menders" unfolds as patiently as a dirge. Hess and Drye only threaten to erupt. "Engines" is an elegy for Paul Motian. It is as paradoxical as Motian, intense but contained. Hess intends it to portray Motian's "profound calmness". Fujiwara, an explosive drummer, just stirs and whispers, on brushes.

For Hess *Present Company* is an impressive DIY project. He wrote all seven tunes, recorded it in his home studio and put it out on his own label, Diskonife (a partnership with vibraphonist Matt Moran). Home studios keep getting better. The sound of this album is intimate, strong and clear. To cite only one example, Hopkins' bass thrives.

For more information, visit diskonife.com



Mentors | Plan Be Dream Music
Chip Shelton (s/r)
by Scott Yanow

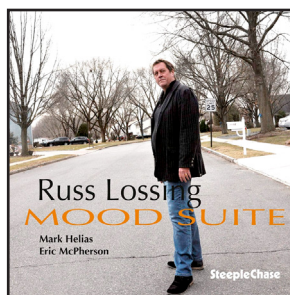
On *Mentors*, Chip Shelton pays tribute to some of the people (mostly musicians) who inspired him, but in his own way. He dedicates the set to Jimmy Heath, Bill Barron, Julius Baker, his manager/producer Kenny Mead, Frank Foster, Frank Wess, John Purcell and percussionist Daoud David Williams. Shelton has generally been best known as a flutist but on this set, in addition to playing the end-blown flute, he performs some numbers on the rare C-tenor and C-soprano saxophones. The program, which was recorded back in 2008 but is being released for the first time, has Shelton performing two Heath songs and one apiece by Foster, Wess, Willie Dixon and Richie Cole along with five of

his own originals, including the bluesy "Obama".

Most of the music is light but creative funky jazz. One could imagine John Coltrane or Pharoah Sanders digging into the opening Heath piece "Heritage Hum", which features Shelton on tenor. He plays pleasing soprano on the groove number "Angel Man", sings a bit on "I Love The Life I Live" and Cole's ballad "DC Farewell" and is heard at his best playing flute on Foster's minor blues "Simone" and tenor on the swinging "Half Moon Street". Pianist Jon Davis (who switches to organ on "Simone") and guitarist Lou Volpe also have fine solos scattered throughout this accessible outing.

Plan Be Dream Music, put out in conjunction with the release of Shelton's first book, *Excel In Two Careers...* *Plan Be Your Dream*, was also recorded some time ago, back in 2015. Shelton really shows his versatility on this set, playing not just tenor, soprano, flute and piccolo but alto, soprano, bass clarinet and alto flute in addition to taking a few vocals. Many of his lyrics are of the self-help variety (tying in with the book) and his vocals are partly spoken and brief. Three of the strongest pieces, "Inspiration", "Dedication" and "Surrender", are heard twice, once with vocals and at the conclusion of the set as instrumentals. All of the numbers are originals by bandmembers (Shelton composed 8 of the 13 songs and co-wrote one), most are attractive and some are quite catchy during what is essentially a straight-ahead jazz session. Highlights include "That Works For Me", "Inspiration" (which has Coltrane-worthy chord changes) and cooking blues "Gino's Groove", which has a hot piccolo solo. Pianist Gino Rosaria and guitarist Jim Klein are strong assets both as soloists and behind Shelton and the rhythm section of bassist Tom Charlap and usually drummer McLester McKee is tight and swinging. While both sets are enjoyable on their own level, *Plan Be Dream Music* gets the edge.

For more information, visit chipshelton.com



Mood Suite
Russ Lossing (SteepleChase)
by Mark Keresman

Pianist Russ Lossing, product of Columbus, Ohio, has a resumé that includes journeys with Paul Motian, Loren Stillman, Samuel Blaser and Lena Bloch. Youthful meetings with composer John Cage had a major impact on Lossing and it's almost easy to see that in *Mood Suite*. "Almost" is key, as the influence of Cage is more evident sound-wise than compositionally. Like Cage, Lossing lets the sounds express themselves and doesn't overly complicate the proceedings with too many notes. His trio seems to be like-minded: ever-steady, ever-reliable Mark Helias (bass) and the crisp, electric-like vibrance of Eric McPherson (drums). This is a true unit, not just an ad hoc collection of players.

"Obsessed" is a darkly-swinging piece that carries echoes of Bud Powell and some of the crystalline lyricism of McCoy Tyner and the rhythm team convey a searing, nearly volcanic urgency. With its clipped, insistent theme, "Furiosa" recalls the looping minimalism of Philip Glass crossed with the wiry urgency of Powell. Lossing's keys crackle with poignant wit and angular stylishness. "Naughty" has some more of that Powell puckishness and drollery, but is most notable for the driving, hot-blooded swing of Lossing and McPherson. "Enchanté" has a haunting

winsome character, with the notes seeming to dangle off Lossing's fingertips. The album concludes with "Postlude", its sparse sounds as if it might have been a group improvisation: Lossing probes in a very deliberate manner yet maintains a potent expressive flow; McPherson storms (almost literally); and Helias throbs with great resolve. The end result feels both chaotic and strangely resigned. Lossing treads water a bit too much here and there ("Sarcastique", for one instance) but mostly the trio plays with great unity, economy and empathy.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk. Lossing live-streams Nov. 23rd at russlossing.com.

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

funny. He said, "You've gotta play it like those church ladies who are trying to swing it on the tambourine, but aren't really swinging." So, it's swinging, but it's not swinging like a Kenny Clarke swing. It's an old church lady tambourine swing.

TNYCJR: Your tune "The Good Shepherd" also has a spiritual mood.

JF: Yes. I was thinking about all the good shepherds in the jazz world. It's such a crabs-in-the-barrel world, where people try to take you down or they don't pay you well. There's so much negativity connected to it. But you have all these good shepherds, who gave me their time after I got to town and they could have easily said no.

Junior Cook could have easily told me no, he didn't want to play up at Augie's for 100 bucks, but he said yes. He gave us lessons and showed us things that he learned from Horace Silver. Another good shepherd was Lou Donaldson, telling us about playing funky and playing for the people. The good shepherds help you. They don't bring you down, they lift you up. Another good shepherd was McCoy Tyner. I played in McCoy's group during the last part of his life.

TNYCJR: Another one of your associations was with Cecil Payne, the great baritone saxophonist.

JF: Before Augie's was Smoke, I started hiring Junior Cook for the club and Junior Cook introduced me to Cecil Payne. Junior hired me for a Jazzmobile concert and this one was in Brooklyn. I got there early and Cecil was the only one there. Oh, man, I was so nervous. This was Cecil Payne, the original bebop baritone player with Dizzy Gillespie. I walked up and said hi to him. I was so nervous that I flubbed my last name and Cecil thought I said "photographer" and Cecil said, "I'm not really wanting to take pictures now." So, we went up there and played and Cecil turned around and said, "Oh, man, you sound really good. You're a really good drummer for a photographer." ❖

For more information, visit joefarnsworthdrums.com. Farnsworth live-streams with George Coleman Nov. 6th-7th, Veronica Swift Nov. 13th-14th and Ron Carter Nov. 27th-28th, all at smokejazz.com.

Recommended Listening:

- Cecil Payne – *Cerupa* (Delmark, 1993)
- One For All – *Upward and Onward* (Criss Cross Jazz, 1999)
- Wynton Marsalis – *Live At The House Of Tribes* (Blue Note, 2002)
- Mike LeDonne – *Night Song* (Savant, 2005)
- Joe Farnsworth Quartet – *My Heroes (Tribute to The Legends)* (Venus, 2014)
- Joe Farnsworth – *Time to Swing* (Smoke Sessions, 2019)

BOXED SET



The Complete Blue Note Sessions 1963-1970
Hank Mobley (Mosaic)
by Scott Yanow

This limited-edition boxed set is an eight-CD package that has all of the sessions led by tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley (1930-86) during the second half of his career. He took up the tenor when he was 16 and was largely self-taught. Within just a few years he was playing with classic hardbop greats. Mobley made his recording debut with drummer Max Roach in 1953, worked and recorded with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie the following year and was an original member of the Jazz Messengers with whom he made his first Blue Note recordings. He was with the Messengers for two stints, served briefly as a member of pianist Horace Silver's quintet and was part of Miles Davis' band during 1961-62 although the trumpeter consistently made it clear that he wished he had Sonny Rollins instead. Otherwise Mobley occasionally led his own short-term groups for New York engagements but is primarily known today for his many recordings.

Mobley first recorded as a leader for Blue Note in 1955 and, although he would lead some dates for Savoy, Prestige and Roulette later in the decade, he became a Blue Note regular. For that label as a sideman, he uplifted sessions led by Silver, Kenny Dorham, Julius Watkins, J.J. Johnson, Lee Morgan, Jimmy Smith, Johnny Griffin (with John Coltrane), Curtis Fuller, Sonny Clark, Dizzy Reece, Donald Byrd, Freddie Hubbard, Kenny Drew, Herbie Hancock, Freddie Roach and Grant Green. As a leader, Mobley made 25 Blue Note albums, coincidentally the same number as Lee Morgan.

Mobley's last 12 Blue Note records (*The Feelin's Good, No Room For Squares, The Turnaround, Dippin', A Caddy For Daddy, A Slice Of The Top, Straight No Filter, Third Season, Far Away Lands, Hi Voltage, Reach Out, The Flip* and *Thinking Of Home*) are reissued in full on this set, including a few tracks that earlier had made their debut in expanded CDs and just one previously unissued performance, the alternate take of "Me 'N You". Six of the albums feature Mobley in a quintet with a trumpeter. The others add a trombone and/or guitarist, two include an alto saxophonist and *Slice Of The Top* is an octet with arrangements by Mobley and Duke Pearson.

While Mobley's life had its ups and downs due to a drug problem and he was frustrated that five of these albums were not released for years due to Alfred Lion selling Blue Note in 1966, the music is quite consistent and his playing is excellent throughout. Mobley was always a hardbop stylist with a sound and style that was flexible enough to display the inspiration of both Rollins and (in later years) Joe Henderson. Counting alternate takes, he wrote 59 of the 75 selections on these sessions and

while none became standards, they inspire strong solos, ranging from boogaloes clearly designed to try to duplicate the success of Morgan's "The Sidewinder" ("A Caddy From Daddy" is very similar) to hardbop romps and modal explorations. Mobley never crossed the line into free jazz although he displays its influence now and then when he distorts his sound a little. In general his approach is unchanged from the late '50s but he was flexible enough to react to his sidemen's more adventurous ideas.

The sidemen form an allstar cast with trumpeter Morgan and pianist McCoy Tyner sometimes stealing the show during their forceful and creative solos. Other key players include trumpeters Woody Shaw (in particularly inspired form), Blue Mitchell, Byrd and Hubbard; pianists Harold Mabern, Cedar Walton, Barry Harris and Hancock; and drummer Billy Higgins although virtually every musician is a major asset. The only weak tracks are on the *Reach Out* album when the sextet (which includes guitarist George Benson) gets commercial on "Up Over And Out" and "Goin' Out Of My Head". However the exuberant "Good Pickin's" makes up for those temporary lapses.

After his final Blue Note album, 1970's *Thinking Of Home*, Mobley would only make two more appearances on records: the fine 1972 Cobblestone album *Breakthrough* (co-led by Walton) and a guest solo on "Autumn Leaves" for a Tete Montolieu album from 1980. Mobley's final 16 years are depressing to think about, but he left behind plenty of glorious music that still sounds timeless more than a half-century later.

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