

MARCH 2021—ISSUE 227

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO THE NYC JAZZ SCENE

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THE NEW YORK JAZZ RECORD

DIGITAL
ONLY
EDITION

**MELISSA
ALDANA
VISIONS**

WOMEN'S
HISTORY
MONTH
ISSUE

**SUSAN
ALCORN**

**PATRICIA
BRENNAN**

**MARILYN
MAZUR**

**DOROTHY
DONEGAN**

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THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

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ON THE COVER : MELISSA ALDANA	3	BY JIM MOTAVALLI
NEW YORK@NIGHT	4	
INTERVIEW : SUSAN ALCORN	6	BY TYRAN GRILLO
ARTIST FEATURE : PATRICIA BRENNAN	7	BY JOHN SHARPE
ENCORE : MARILYN MAZUR	8	BY ANDERS GRIFFEN
LEST WE FORGET : DOROTHY DONEGAN	8	BY ALEX HENDERSON
LABEL SPOTLIGHT : CARRIER	9	BY KURT GOTTSCHALK
VOXNEWS	9	BY SUZANNE LORGE
OBITUARIES	10	BY ANDREY HENKIN
ALBUM REVIEWS	12	
MISCELLANY	30	

On Mar. 12th, 1987, Congress officially designated March as “Women’s History Month”. Since that time, 124 women in 84 countries have been Heads of State but, ironically, not in the U.S. But, in 2021, we celebrate this Women’s History Month having come the closest with recently elected Vice President Kamala Harris. Of course, American history is often two steps back for every step forward so this may not signal a substantive, longterm change. Still, any progress these days feels monumental.

Jazz has been somewhat ahead of the curve, with substantial, longterm contributions from women throughout its history and continuing even more verdantly in the present day. We dedicate this March 2021 issue to a wide range of female practitioners: tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana (On The Cover), who was the first woman to win the Thelonious Monk competition; pedal steel guitarist Susan Alcorn (Interview); vibraphonist Patricia Brennan (Artist Feature); percussionist Marilyn Mazur (Encore); and pianist Dorothy Donegan (Lest We Forget); plus a special section of CD Reviews (pgs. 12-20), focusing on an international and multigenerational cast of women in jazz.

There is an old couplet: “Man may work from sun to sun / But woman’s work is never done.” At the time of its writing this referred to menial housework. Now it can be appropriated to mean that there is much to be done and many milestones to reach with plenty of obstacles still littering the path. While Congress was well-intentioned, every month should celebrate the contributions of women in all fields.

On The Cover: Melissa Aldana (© Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos)

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MELISSA ALDANA

VISIONS

BY JIM MOTAVALLI

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Imagine Chile-born tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana as a racecar driver, hitting her stride on the Mulsanne Straight at the 24 hours of Le Mans, ahead of all the competition, when all of a sudden the red flag comes out. The race is stopped! Something similar to that happened to Aldana when COVID restrictions were imposed.

The Berklee graduate and Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition winner (in 2013, when she was 24) was teaching (at the New School), recording (five albums so far) and touring prolifically until last spring. “The year 2020 was hard,” she said, with a divorce part of the mix. But Aldana, who is both very disciplined and inherently optimistic, chooses to see things in a more upbeat light.

“From a personal perspective, it was the most beautiful year,” Aldana said. “I had time to get to know myself better. I did a lot of soul searching, got closer to my friends, worked through some drama with my family. I have to say that a lot of positive things happened that wouldn’t have otherwise, because I was always busy with something else.”

Aldana, who lives in Flatbush, Brooklyn, also has been able to spend a lot of time with her working band who, with the exception of guitarist Lage Lund in Norway, all live locally. That’s harder now, too, but the group is a COVID bubble of sorts. Lots of in-person time is necessary, because for the most part Aldana writes her own through-composed music and it’s not only gorgeous, but also highly complex, not meant for sight-reading on the bandstand.

The group includes fellow Chilean Pablo Menares on bass and Kush Abadey on drums. For Aldana’s most recent album *Visions*, released on Motéma Music in 2019, she added pianist Sam Harris and vibraphonist Joel Ross (Tommy Crane on drums). The latter’s presence has drawn comparisons with Eric Dolphy’s *Out to Lunch*, featuring Bobby Hutcherson. The music (inspired by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo) is similarly spiky, hovering in that enchanted space between bebop and the avant garde, but Aldana sounds nothing like Dolphy. She’s got a big, broad tone, with maybe Joe Henderson a better comparison.

Nobody gets on that plane effortlessly and for Aldana it’s been a lifetime of study. It helps that dad and granddad were saxophone players. Dad Marcos was himself a Monk semi-finalist in 1991. But that doesn’t mean that jazz was around when she was growing up.

Much of what the young musician learned was from records and being the diligent student she is, transcribing solos was a big part of her education. Aldana began playing when she was all of six, under the careful tutelage of her dad. She began on alto via allegiance to Charlie Parker and Cannonball Adderley, but then switched to tenor after being introduced to Sonny Rollins. Her first tenor, a Selmer Mark VI, belonged to her grandfather. When other kids were out playing, she was listening. During a recent “Before and After” session, Aldana was played a Joe Henderson piece, “Y Ya La Quiero” from *The State of the Tenor: Live at the Village Vanguard, Vol. 2*. She got it instantly.

“I love this recording,” she said. “This was one of the first things my dad made me hear when I was growing up. He’s a big Joe Henderson fan and I did a few transcriptions many years ago from this album with Ron Carter and Al Foster.”

When asked about the “Santiago jazz scene” back then, there was a pregnant pause. “There was nothing,” she said. “There’s more now.”

But American musicians did make it down there occasionally and she heard shows by Chris Potter (she was 13), Wayne Shorter with his quartet (she was 15) and Mike Stern in a big Santiago theater. She was dazed. “Wow, these people are real,” she said, not just album covers. Potter became a big influence on Aldana’s playing, as did Michael Brecker and Mark Turner. “I heard Mark and that was it,” she said. “I fell in love with his playing.”

Danilo Pérez was Shorter’s pianist on that gig in Chile and he suggested that Aldana continue her studies at Berklee in Boston. Perez, who is Panamanian, is the founder and Artistic Director of Berklee’s Global Jazz Institute. “I’d heard about Berklee and knew it had a certain image,” she said. “Growing up, I didn’t get a chance to hear many musicians who played on a higher level, especially women. Coming from South America, it’s hard to make that happen. But Berklee exposed me to that kind of player.”

Aldana worked closely with tenor player George Garzone and graduated in 2009 and within a few days was in New York, where she continued her studies with George Coleman. A year later she’d made her first album, *Free Fall*, on Greg Osby’s Inner Circle Music label with pianist Michael Palma, bassist Lyles West and drummer Ralph Peterson. In 2012, she recorded *Second Cycle* for the same label, trumpeter Gordon Au joining her in the frontline. She was working fast. The next year she won the Monk competition, the first woman and the first South American to do so.

If Aldana had a hard time establishing herself in the city that jazz built, she doesn’t say so. But that’s part of her character, too. Sexism? She didn’t let it bother her. “I have to say, maybe because of how and where I grew up, some kinds of things were just normalized and I didn’t let them bother me,” she said. “I feel I haven’t suffered. Some people said I won the Monk competition because I’m a woman, but that kind of thing doesn’t get to me. Later, when I was playing in the [all-female band] Artemis, I realized that other women had paved the way to making it, so I didn’t have those issues as much.”

Aldana played in Artemis with Renee Rosnes (piano), Ingrid Jensen (trumpet), Anat Cohen (clarinet), Noriko Ueda (bass), Allison Miller (drums) and Cécile McLorin Salvant (vocals). Each one is a standout player and Cohen and Salvant have remained close to Aldana after she left the band.

“She puts a lot of effort into everything she does,” Cohen said. “She’s very dedicated, very serious. At a young age, she decided to conduct a disciplined search for her own voice through a real study of her idols and that meant a lot of transcriptions and studying as she

developed her style. I used to play tenor and I love the way she approaches the instrument. She takes no prisoners. It’s inspiring to be standing next to her and playing.”

Salvant agrees. “Melissa has deeply influenced my work ethic,” she said. “It was crazy to be on the road with her. She never stops—always working on her sound, her tone and constantly writing. She has an extremely curious mind and she’s relentless and unstoppable in pursuit of more knowledge. If we have a lobby call at 7 a.m., she’d be up at 5:30 working on her music.”

Salvant said that Aldana “loves to get her ass kicked”. She puts herself in tricky situations with musicians who challenge her. And the more she learns, the more sophisticated her music gets. “It’s the little turns and surprises in her music that make it unique, special and entertaining,” Salvant said. She last worked with Aldana on a jazz cruise about a year ago. “Sitting in an airport; that’s the last time I saw her,” she said. Aldana makes a guest appearance on Salvant’s *The Window* album, a duet with pianist Sullivan Fortner, released in 2018. “It wasn’t a planned thing,” Salvant said. “She sat in on a couple of tracks recorded on a crazy night at the Village Vanguard. That’s her on ‘The Peacocks’, a piece we both had in our repertoires.” “The Peacocks”, written by Jimmy Rowles, starts off very quietly, and that’s the way Aldana enters, playing breathily in a way that recalls Stan Getz—or maybe Archie Shepp in a more meditative mood. There’s an amazing moment where Salvant is singing and Aldana is tracking her so closely she’s almost vocalizing the lyrics through her horn. The saxophonist concludes the piece with a note so low you’d swear she was playing a baritone instead of a tenor.

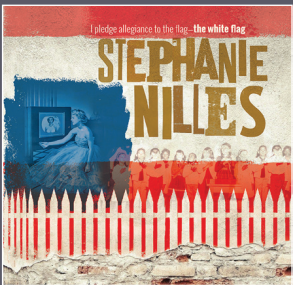
Aldana knows the way to Carnegie Hall—practice and you’ll get there. One of her favorite quotes is from the late tenor player Jimmy Heath, who said, “Her tone is as beautiful as her personality... I am sure you will agree.”

Why Frida Kahlo? Aldana says the Mexican painter “was just herself, very honest. I respect that.” Being herself is critical for Aldana. She recently left Artemis because she wants to explore her own music further. And she is about to sign to a new label, so there’s some extraordinary music ahead. ❖

For more information, visit melissaaldana.net. Aldana live-streams at barbayeux.com Mar. 3rd and smokejazz.com Mar. 12th-13th.

Recommended Listening:

- Melissa Aldana — *Free Fall* (Inner Circle Music, 2010)
- Melissa Aldana — *Second Cycle* (Inner Circle Music, 2012)
- Melissa Aldana — *Melissa Aldana & Crash Trio* (Concord, 2013)
- Melissa Aldana — *Back Home* (Word Of Mouth Music, 2015)
- Melissa Aldana — *Visions* (Motéma Music, 2018)
- Artemis — *Eponymous* (Blue Note, 2019)



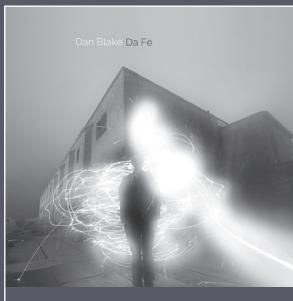
STEPHANIE NILLES
I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG
THE WHITE FLAG

SSC 1606

AVAILABLE 3/05/21

—“Stephanie Nilles is possibly the most compelling jazz piano/lounge punk singer since Tom Waits started chain smoking and singing about sailors.” *AudioSuede*

Stephani Nilles knows that the fight against racism is a universal cause and that the power of Mingus’s work artistically assists that cause, thus the creation of her moving new recording,



DAN BLAKE
DA FÉ

SSC 1616

AVAILABLE 2/12/21

—Saxophonist/Composer Dan Blake finds hope for a better future through compassionate action on his inspiring new album.

—Da Fé is an outgrowth of Blake’s activism.

DAN BLAKE soprano and tenor saxophones
CARMEN STAAF piano, fender Rhodes
LEO GENOVESE moog, keyboards, piano*
DMITRY ISHENKO acoustic and electric bass
JEFF WILLIAMS drums

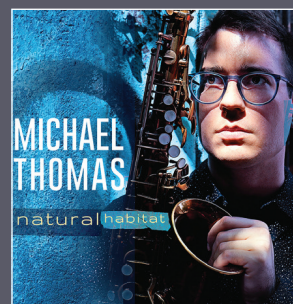


MICHAEL WOLFF
LIVE AT VITELLOS

SSC 1615

AVAILABLE 3/19/21

MICHAEL WOLFF piano
MARK ISHAM trumpet & flugelhorn
MIKE CLARK drums
JOHN B. WILLIAMS bass



MICHAEL THOMAS
NATURAL HABITAT

SSC 1611

AVAILABLE 2/26/21

—Michael Thomas is a Grammy-winning saxophonist, composer, and arranger

—The New York Times: Michael writes “energetic, tuneful music for both combos and large ensembles”

MICHAEL THOMAS alto sax, bass clarinet
JULIAN SHORE piano, keyboards
HANS GLAWISCHNIG bass
JOHNATHAN BLAKE drums



Sunnyside

www.sunnysiderecords.com

Under the aegis of the Queens Jazz OverGround, a local artists’ collective founded on similar principles to those of its southern neighbors the Brooklyn Jazz Underground, Korean-American pianist **Eugenia Choe** kicked off the second of three events of the organization’s Winter Jazzfest with a short but rousing set at Culture Lab LIC in Hunters Point (Feb. 17th). The live-streamed concert captured some of the ambiance of a club performance through the presence of a small but lively (beer was served) crew and studio audience. Traveling cameras and a glitzy lighting scheme added to the pageantry, but the robust set, buoyed by Choe’s go-to rhythm team of bassist Danny Weller and drummer Alex Wyatt, generated its own excitement. The original repertoire revealed her painterly approach to composition, favoring soft textures over hard edges, broad strokes over sharp lines. Like Bill Evans, she encourages vigorous participation by her compadres, allowing Weller in particular ample room to stretch his creative legs. The opening numbers, “Verdant Dream” and “Breathless”, served as warmups for the harder-hitting “Koquirri” (Korean for elephant). “Odd Birds” led from a pensive solo piano rumination to a vamping theme, followed by a free-blowing middle section before the final vamp. The last piece, “Sunday Fatigue”, contained interesting rhythmic shifts and some of the strongest solos and closest interaction of the set, leaving the crowd pleasantly dissatisfied that there was no time for an encore. —Tom Greenland



Eugenia Choe @ Culture Lab LIC

“I love a piano,” wrote Irving Berlin, “a grand piano, it simply carries me away.” Roger that sentiment; the live-streamed **Eight x 88** (Feb. 4th) was a deep dive into the thrills of piano love. Filmed at Steinway Hall and benefitting the Jazz Foundation of America, Kris Davis, Aaron Diehl, Orrin Evans, Sullivan Fortner, Aaron Goldberg, Kevin Hays, Fred Hersch and Christian Sands played a dazzling assortment of pieces from hymns to bebop. The program was conceived by Goldberg and Hays and furthered by Hersch, offering a terrific embarrassment of piano riches in its 90 minutes. Goldberg led off with a jaunty Haitian folk song, “YoYo”, painting a vivid musical picture of the eponymous marketplace seller. In contrast was an immersion into the contemplative with Diehl’s masterful rendition of Duke Ellington’s “Reflections in D”. He was matched in a meditative mood by Evans’ own “Clean House”, which flowed seamlessly from Follitt Pierpoint’s 1864 hymn “For the Beauty of the Earth”. Hersch also reached into the way-back, playing a huge hit from 1918, Turner Layton’s “After You’ve Gone”, proving that a standard is just that and the arrangement is everything. Davis’ original, “Pandemic Mood” was a derivative miss, but she excelled in technique in a duo with Hersch of Monk’s “Misterioso”. Also making much of Monk were Hays and Sands with “Bye-Ya”. Eight x 88 ended on a joyful note, Diehl and Evans out on a lighthearted, swinging “I Want to Be Happy” (Vincent Youmans). —Marilyn Lester



Kris Davis @ Steinway Hall

One positive way to view the extended quarantine is that it gives musicians plenty of time to woodshed. Remember how Sonny Rollins sounded after two years practicing alone on the Williamsburg Bridge? Guitarist **Gilad Hekselman** showed a similar flowering of his compositional and improvisatory skills when he led a quartet with keyboard player Aaron Parks, bassist Burniss Travis and drummer Marcus Gilmore at The Jazz Gallery (Feb. 4th). He must have been putting his downtime to good use because he had a slew of new tunes and chops honed to a diamond edge. Combine that with the fact that his group was jonesing to play ‘live’ and you’ve got two sterling sets of jazz, the second even more resplendent than the first. On his tunes “Rebirth” and “Long Way from Home” (which opened both sets), “Urban Myth” and “Scoville” one could discern influences of Pat Metheny and John Scofield, but Hekselman’s unique facility with chord melodies came into its own on pieces like the moody “Na Vanad” (which also featured fine work by Parks), “Magic Chord” and “Cycles”, during which his long fingers stretched delicately along the neck, like a climber scaling a sheer rock face, moving from stable three-point holds into exciting “dynos”. His final solo, on the second set version of “Magic Chord”, was his most inspired. For those of us watching at home, the Gallery experimented with a few new camera angles, one pointed just over Gilmore’s left shoulder, creating the sense that we were sitting in with the band. (TG)

Guitarist/vocalist **Glenn Crytzer** has for many pandemic months been live-streaming his quartet, featuring American Songbook standards by the year. This latest (Feb. 21st) covered 1934, well suited to Crytzer’s signature style of hot-jazz-influenced swing. For aficionados of the genre, Crytzer produces a very satisfying sound, with a collection of tunes anchored in melody. They were not only written for vocalists and for dancing, but also came from Broadway and film. And because of recording constraints of the day, the numbers are relatively brief, allowing Crytzer to pack a bunch of goodies into one short hour. Highlights were some lesser-known numbers, such as “Midnight, the Stars and You” (Harry M. Woods-Jimmy Campbell-Reg Connelly) with its silky slow fox-trot rhythm, repeated in “Two Cigarettes in the Dark” (Lew Pollack) and an obscure Harold Arlen tune, the swinging “As Long as I Live”. Trumpeter Mike Davis and clarinetist Ricky Alexander claimed a bright spot with call-and-response and splendid harmonies on Richard Rodgers’ “Blue Moon”. As per the standard of the era, bassist Andrew Hall provided pre-Jimmie Blanton, steady one-two timekeeping. Crytzer’s solos often took him into the gypsy-jazz realm, most evident on “Stompin’ at the Savoy” (Edgar Sampson), arranged to the 1934 Chick Webb version, rather than Benny Goodman’s 1936 iteration. His virtuosity was on display with playout number “What a Little Moonlight Can Do” (Harry M. Woods) at a super-charged tempo. (ML)

Valentine's Day came a little early this year at Dizzy's Club with **Brianna Thomas** celebrating with a set of songs of love and romance. Taking the stage (Feb. 11th) for the second of the month's regular Thursday night live-streamed shows, Thomas, a red rose pinned to her hair and a dozen more on a stand beside her, got things started promising the virtual audience, "we're going to pour our hearts out for you." Bassist Ryan Berg walked the band into the singer's soulful take on "You Leave Me Breathless", which featured swinging solos by guitarist Marvin Sewell and pianist Conun Pappas on top of the steady groove of Darrian Douglas' drums and Fernando Saci's percussion. Citing the inspiration of Ella Fitzgerald and Ellis Larkins' album of duets, the singer delivered a heartfelt reading of the Gershwin's "I've Got A Crush On You" she began with a recitation of the song's verse. Delving into their new CD *Everybody Knows* (Breathline), the band kicked up the energy level with a percussion-driven arrangement of "Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying" and Thomas' gospel-tinged "How Much Forgiveness". They returned to Ella/Ellis repertoire with Berg's Caribbean-flavored arrangement of the Gershwin's "Maybe", buttressed by vibrant electric bass. Thomas paired stirring readings of "If I Should Lose You" and her own "I Belong To You", singing both with palpable emotion. She dedicated the Freddie Mercury/Queen anthem "We Are The Champions" to her fellow artists, then closed with her "Lovin' Attitude". —*Russ Musto*



Brianna Thomas @ Dizzy's Club

Streaming live before a limited-capacity audience at Smalls (Feb. 6th), the latest edition of the band **Palladium**, featuring tenor saxophonist Nicole Glover and vibraphonist Sasha Berliner with pianist Sean Mason, bassist Russell Hall and drummer Victor Lewis, continued its mission to explore the music of Wayne Shorter. Two sets interpreted the many compositions of the legendary tenor/soprano saxophonist, ranging from his early days with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers on through his years with Miles Davis to Weather Report and his other intrepid groups. The quintet eased into its second set with an arrangement of "El Gaucho", Lewis tapping his snare rim to set up the loping tempo of the rhythm section's original prelude to the piece, which preceded Glover stretching out over a bossa nova rhythm in a dark sinewy tone. Berliner took her turn next, lightening the mood with a bright sound, and then Mason, digging in deep with Hall and Lewis, guiding the band to a soaring finish. Glover introduced an atmospheric rendition of "Nefertiti" unaccompanied, which was followed by an episodic reading of "Ana Maria" featuring downhome Capetown-tinged piano, a powerful bass solo and an extended drum outing. A medley of "Sanctuary" and "Pandora Awakened" had Glover exploring her horn's tonal range and Mason demonstrating alternating earthy and ethereal melodicism. The set ended with the band getting down on Lewis' "Seventh Avenue South". (RM)

Lee Konitz, a founder of jazz' "cool school", was an icon. The saxophonist's COVID-related death in April, the height of lockdown, didn't allow for honors to be properly set, thus Soapbox Gallery's live-streamed **Tribute to Lee Konitz** (Feb. 3rd) carried a certain significance. Pianist Sebastien Ammann, saxophonist Lena Bloch, bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Michael Sarin, all connected to Konitz, presented both his compositions and those in his wake. "He touched us with his music and his legacy lives on," Ammann stated. "So, we pay tribute to Lee and his art." Opener "Subconscious-Lee", a classic of the genre, bop-fueled, medium tempo, featured each quartet member, though none seemed to enjoy the moment more than Brown, glowing as he played, leaning over his instrument as the pulsations locked solidly with Sarin's ride cymbal. Bloch's tenor in its mid-to-high register tempered the big horn over the terrain of Konitz' fleet alto with no loss of tone. On several selections while doubling on soprano, Bloch prevailed only further out west. Her improvisations wrapped about Ammann's often Tristano-esque piano, fueling his aerial counterpoint patterns as Sarin's sticks danced with a touch so light as almost to float over drums and cymbals. And the tireless Brown, as always, stood as the heartbeat, a ceaseless drive that sang of both coasts simultaneously. Bouncing off this soundboard, however, each and every low moan runs cool. The concert would have made Konitz proud. —*John Pietaro*



Lena Bloch @ Soapbox Gallery

Poet, performance artist and filmmaker **No Land** has increasingly been bringing her work into our local improvised scene, often in the company of bassist **Luke Stewart**. While the latter's reputation was grown on upright playing, in partnership with No Land, he favors electric bass guitar, his musicianship effortlessly translating between the two. For this set via Arts for Art's On Line Salon series (Feb. 16th), segments of No Land's film footage and visual artwork were fused into the whole, culminating in a multimedia piece, which carried a minimalist brand of theatrics. Shuffling through mounds of verse, sometimes while seated on the floor, otherwise standing in a lean, hair draped over face, No Land recited as Stewart painted aural backdrops. Prominent use of mic reverb offered a vocal and instrumental blend, but unfortunately challenged the very words central to the performance, bathing her voice in dark acoustics that too often drained. One wonders if the desired result was more about sound itself than actual poetry. As she declaimed, appearing nonplussed, Stewart's effects pedals turned his Fender near-synth, throbbing, pulsating and then alternately clean and driven only by perpetual motion. Most intriguing was the emulsion of visuals onto the live-stream itself, with voice and music heard beneath a variously focused/unfocused lens and found clips of aging 35 mm footage. There may be a degree of Dada in all of this, but while No Land's conceptual vision is obscure, her amalgam of arts remains intriguing. (JP)

WHAT'S NEWS

In another loss to the pandemic, it is being reported that Washington, DC's **Blues Alley**, open since 1965, may be ceasing operations.

On Mar. 26th, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra will present the virtual concert "**Voice of Freedom**", featuring the music of Betty Carter, Billie Holiday, Abbey Lincoln and Nina Simone with guests Melanie Charles, Shenel Johns, and Ashley Pezzotti. For more information, visit jazzatlincolncenter.squarespace.com/virtual-season.

United States Artists has announced its 2021 class of Fellows, each receiving \$50,000 in unrestricted funds. This year's Music Fellows are Martha Gonzalez, Edward "Kidd" Jordan, Tomeka Reid, Wadada Leo Smith and Mazz Swift. For more information, visit unitedstatesartists.org.

The **Alternative Guitar Summit** will take place online Mar. 20th at 8 pm (Honoring Pat Martino with Adam Rogers/Peter Bernstein, Dave Stryker/Paul Bollenback, Rez Abbasi/Jeff Miles, Oz Noy/Nir Felder, Sheryl Bailey, Ed Cherry and Joel Harrison and Kurt Rosenwinkel solo) and Mar. 21st at 2 pm (solo performances by Nguyễn Lê, Nels Cline, Michael Gregory Jackson, Wolfgang Muthspiel, Mary Halvorson, Henry Kaiser and Anthony Pirog. Additionally, the AGS online camp takes place Mar. 6th-7th with Bill Frisell, Mike Stern, Adam Levy, Ben Monder, Cline, Rogers, Bailey and more. For more information, visit alternativeguitarsummit.com/concerts.

The first-ever **East Coast Jazz Festival** will take place online Mar. 20th with participating venues Scullers Jazz Club in Boston, Smalls and Birdland in New York, Chris' Jazz Café in Philadelphia, Keystone Korner in Baltimore and Blues Alley in Washington, DC. For more information, visit page.inplayer.com/eastcoastjazzfestival.

The **Jazz Loft**, music venue and museum, located in Stony Brook, has completed a renovation project of its basement, now known as the "Coal Bin", via funding from a \$40,000 grant from The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, Inc. and a matching gift from Jazz Loft patron Dan Oliveri, as a multi-use work space for Stony Brook University student interns in an archiving, inventory project and digitalizing project of the more than 10,000 historical jazz artifacts in the possession of the museum.

Disney Parks' Epcot Center has announced **The Soul of Jazz: An American Adventure**, based on the recent Pixar film *Soul*, as a special exhibition, celebrating "the distinctly American musical art form, originated by African Americans and fusing the influences of many different cultures." For more information, visit disneyparks.disney.go.com.

The Monterey Jazz Festival has announced the debut of **Evolution of a Groove: the Monterey Commissions**, a series of commissioned performances from the Monterey Jazz Festival archives. For more information, visit montereyjazzfestival.org/evolution-of-a-groove.

The Apollo, as part of its fifth bi-annual Women of the World Festival, will feature a conversation, "**Hazel Scott: The Darling of Café Society**", led by Karen Chilton, author of *Hazel Scott: The Pioneering Journey of a Jazz Pianist* with guests Damien Sneed and Camille Thurman. For more information, visit apollotheater.org/spring2021/#WOW.

Applications for the **2021 DCJazzPrix** are now being accepted. The deadline is Apr. 27th and the prize \$15,000 and a year-long association with the DC Jazz Festival. For guidelines and to apply, visit dcjazzfest.org/dcjazzprix.

The archives of **Mister Kelly's**, the Chicago nightclub founded by George and Oscar Marienthal active from 1953-75, will be preserved at Chicago's Newberry Library. For more information, visit newberry.org.

Jazz WaHi has announced the winner of its 2021 Composition Competition, Robert Fernandez, who will compose a work to be premiered at the fourth annual Washington Heights Jazz Festival in November 2021.

Submit news to ahenkin@nycjazzrecord.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



SUSAN ALCORN

BY TYRAN GRILLO

Throughout a career spanning more than four decades, Susan Alcorn has upended expectations of what the pedal steel guitar can do. After getting into slide guitar by inspiration of Robert Johnson, Son House, Blind Willie McTell and others, she encountered the pedal steel in 1975 and never looked back. She cut her teeth in Houston, TX, where she schooled herself both on stage and through formal instruction in jazz improvisation. Over time, she felt a longing to do something more than was stereotypically expected of the instrument. This set her on a path of deep self-examination and rethinking of musical paradigms, eventually leading to solo performances in which boundaries were a thing of the past. Equally informed by classical, jazz, country, South American protest songs and folk music, Alcorn feeds on the nutrients of the creative spirit to cultivate her own across a woefully misunderstood fretboard. Through it all, her sense of heartfelt appreciation comes through. Whether playing by her lonesome on 2015's *Soledad* or, most recently, with a quintet on 2020's *Pederal*, her spirit is uniquely alive in every note. Her upcoming album, *Bird Meets Wire*, which finds her in the company of saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock and cellist Leila Bordreuil, is scheduled to be released in May.

The New York City Jazz Record: The pedal steel guitar is rarely associated with jazz. Does the instrument have any sort of improvisational history?

Susan Alcorn: Not a long history. There's improvisation in country music, of course, but it's usually very short—maybe 16 bars at most. I tend to improvise a lot when I'm practicing and get ideas from that. But the country steel players, especially the Nashville ones, come up with a repertoire of intelligent licks, which they then string together when playing solos. The problem with that is you tend to run out of licks, as opposed to playing bebop, where you have to invent and tell a story—you don't know where it's going next. On the other end, [master pedal steel guitarist] Buddy Emmons put out an album [in 1963] called *Steel Guitar Jazz*. But as far as free jazz is concerned, there's very little history with the instrument.

TNYCJR: Is the pedal steel typecast?

SA: A lot of people automatically think of country music when they hear the pedal steel. Some reviewers of pedal steel music still like to talk about it as having an "Americana" sound, so yes, it's certainly been typecast.

TNYCJR: Stereotypes aside, how do you define your approach to the instrument?

SA: What I try to do is find the aspects of the instrument that will go farther abroad and, at the same time, maybe a little bit deeper. Over the years, I've developed techniques to evoke a Ligeti choral work or the microtonalism of Xenakis.

TNYCJR: On that latter note, there's clearly a classical

thread running throughout your work, not least of all in your 2007 album *And I Await the Resurrection of the Pedal Steel Guitar*, which grew out of your love for Olivier Messiaen's *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*. In that respect, where do the techniques of Ligeti and Xenakis fit into free jazz?

SA: There's a tendency to throw around the term "free jazz", but what does that mean? It's a label that can be construed in several ways and misconstrued in even more. If you look at the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Sun Ra, for example, you'll find more of an openness to 20th Century classical music than among bebop musicians. Classical structures and harmonies have been with me for as long as I can remember. My mom sang in a choir with the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra under George Szell. She also played piano—church tunes, mostly—and sang. I would sit under the piano and listen. My father was known for mimicking big band singers, which was a thing back then. People would put on a record and basically mime the entire performance. I never got to see any of that, but I hear he could be quite the life of the party. My parents had a lot of classical and jazz records when I was growing up. One day it might be Mussorgsky or Ravel and the next it might be Duke Ellington, Count Basie or Ella Fitzgerald. I think I've always had an ear for something different. While all my friends were listening to The Beatles, I liked The Dave Clark Five. I was also into the music of Edgard Varèse in junior high school.

TNYCJR: When and where did you experience your eureka moment with the pedal steel?

SA: Before pedal steel, I used to play blues slide guitar. I really got into the blues in middle school and it stuck. Seeing Muddy Waters was what made me want to do slide. It was the notes between the notes, all at the same time, that grabbed me. With a regular guitar, you put your finger on the fret and that's it, but there's so much power in even the slightest movement of the slide. And then one night, when I'd just turned 21, I was at a bar in DeKalb, Illinois, listening to a country rock band with a pedal steel player. From where I was in the back, I could see the instrument just barely; it looked like the bar was floating. I decided that's what I wanted to do. I bought a pedal steel guitar two days later and went looking for a teacher. I had played a bunch of instruments before that, but from then on I concentrated pretty much exclusively on the pedal steel guitar.

TNYCJR: Was instruction easy to come by?

SA: At the time, I couldn't find anyone who was willing to teach me. These were men in their 30s-40s, which seemed really old to me at the time, and none of them wanted to share their bag of tricks.

TNYCJR: Was this due to any stigma against women?

SA: You don't always know if people are acting a certain way due to sexism, but at times you wonder. With country music, I think if you can play well, you're an asset to the band and it helps if you're considered eye candy. You could be in the most conservative, racist and sexist band imaginable, but they'll respect you as a musician, though you're not privy to their 'boys club' world. But there have been a few times when people made it more obvious. One time I was sharing the stage with a highly-regarded local steel player. I was no virtuoso but I knew my way around the instrument. He would kind of butt in whenever I'd take a solo. So, when he took a solo, I started playing harmony with

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 31)

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PATRICIA BRENNAN

BY JOHN SHARPE

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



Before everything ground to a halt as the pandemic hit, the presence of vibraphonist Patricia Brennan on the bandstand was a sure indicator of both adventure and quality. She graced outfits as diverse as John Hollenbeck's Large Ensemble, the Anna Webber/Angela Morris Big Band and Michael Formanek's Ensemble Kolossus as well as at the more intimate end of the spectrum with Matt Mitchell's Phalanx Ambassadors and Tomas Fujiwara's Seven Poets Trio. But she's not been idle since, juggling a busy but fulfilling teaching schedule at NYU, The New School and Brooklyn Academy of Music with the release of her leadership debut album *Maquishti*.

Brennan was born in the melting pot of Port of Veracruz, Mexico in August 1984. Music was ever present during her childhood, thanks to the Latin percussion of her father and a grandmother who was a concert pianist. She studied classical percussion and piano from an early age, eventually moving to the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia for her undergrad, by which time the vibraphone and marimba were her prime instruments.

Brennan explains the allure: "One of the traditional instruments back home is Mexican marimba. That was one of the earliest memories and I even had a little instrument when I was very little. As a percussionist I was just drawn to it as it had that harmonic and melodic element and as I was a pianist it was a good way to combine all the instruments. I was even able to play some of the piano repertoire on marimba at the time and also keep that physical and raw feel that you have with drums and percussion. But then later on during college when I had to start playing in chamber music situations, I was playing more vibraphone. One of the things that attracted me the most to that instrument was the ability to sustain the sound and the tone quality of the instrument. There's just nothing like it."

Although to this point her repertoire was largely contemporary, composers like Iannis Xenakis or John Cage, she took a sharp left turn by deciding to do her Masters in jazz and composition. "I was just always drawn to improvisation. All that music back home had improvisation in it. Even as a percussionist a lot of the repertoire, even if it's not jazz type of improvisation, there's a lot of aleatory moments in the music where you have to improvise with the textures that you have. The jazz program was the closest thing I could find that would help me develop my mind as an improviser. It wasn't necessarily just the style of jazz, but it was overall the idea of improvising and composing that I looked for."

Among her inspirations were jazz players like Gary Burton and Bobby Hutcherson, as well as contemporary marimba players and composers like Keiko Abe and Toru Takemitsu, but once she hit New York City, percussionist and composer Hollenbeck had an enormous impact. "He's a huge person in my life because he was one of my first mentors and employer. One of the things that I connected with him was that he

studied classical percussion like I did. I connected with his music because you can clearly hear those influences." Further work followed with the likes of Vijay Iyer, Formanek and Mitchell. "I wanted to be an improviser in the more open end of the spectrum. Those kind of musicians, I connect with their music. It tends to be more open and you can cross styles. They wanted to explore beyond the jazz language and use texture, use color, use compositional structures. That's where I feel comfortable."

All of those ingredients occur in abundance on Brennan's wonderful *Maquishti* on Valley of Search. Why such a bold move? "As a classical musician a lot of the first records that people release is a solo album. But also the work I was doing at the time happened to be solo work. So it was a culmination of those two elements." The pieces, while overwhelmingly airy and meditative, also suggest a rigorous compositional outlook, even on the improvs. One track, "Magic Square", unites the abstract and rhythmic at the same time. "One of the influences is definitely the cerebral part where I use a preexisting mathematical formula to write something. Also the influence for that song was my musical memories from my early childhood, like Cuban *son* and one of the patterns in that piece is a piano *montuno*, that I adapted. That's a reflection of the mix of my entire musical journey from Cuban African rhythms, that have been part of my life since I was a very young child, to a more academic approach. Then in a lot of the other pieces I explore space, using rests in music as part of the momentum of the composition. Sometimes there's a misconception that a rest is literally a time to rest and the music stops, when actually that space is sometimes the most powerful part of music. A lot of that mindset was influenced by composers like Cage or Morton Feldman, who are two of my favorites. I really love that idea of how they explore silence as part of the music. Also the idea of exploring different textures and using texture as a language, as a compositional element and not just as a shimmering color on top, which push me to use guitar pedals as part of some of the tracks, but also using bows, using bending pitches. There's a piece that I even use binder clips to play the keys so it sounds like a kalimba type of effect."

Once some degree of normality returns, Brennan plans to promote her project MOCH, based around an electro-acoustic duo with her husband, electronic percussionist Noel Brennan. As part of John Zorn's Commissioning Series at National Sawdust, in December 2019 they premiered an eight-part audiovisual suite, *Raíces Jarochoas (Roots from Veracruz)*, inspired by sounds and memories from Brennan's homeland, with Formanek and AfroCuban percussionist Mauricio Herrera as guests. "We've been working on this duo and my role was to eventually develop something with that project, potentially a recording." If progress so far is any guide, it's likely to prove worth the wait. ❖

For more information, visit patriciabrennanvibes.com

Recommended Listening:

- Michael Formanek Ensemble Kolossus – *The Distance* (ECM, 2014)
- John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble – *All Can Work* (New Amsterdam, 2017)
- Tomas Fujiwara – *7 Poets Trio* (RogueArt, 2018)
- Matt Mitchell – *Phalanx Ambassadors* (Pi, 2018)
- Anna Webber/Angela Morris Big Band – *Both Are True* (Greenleaf Music, 2018)
- Patricia Brennan – *Maquishti* (Valley of Search, 2018)

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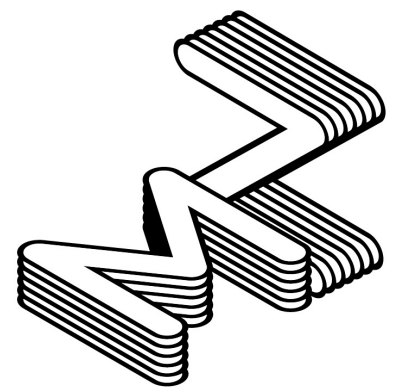
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MARILYN MAZUR

BY ANDERS GRIFFEN

Marilyn Mazur is a unique artist: percussionist, composer, vocalist, dancer and multi-instrumentalist who has pioneered her own path. In a fantastic career spanning almost 50 years, over 200 album credits and numerous awards, she has worked with a variety of artists, including Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Gil Evans, John Tchicai, Jeanne Lee, Irène Schweizer, Lindsay Cooper, Jan Garbarek, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Eberhard Weber, Dino Saluzzi and Pierre Dørge's New Jungle Orchestra, among many others.

Born in New York City, Mazur and her family relocated to Copenhagen when she was six. In Denmark she started violin lessons at seven. She didn't take to that instrument but began dreaming and made a connection between music and magic. "I established my 'secret world', where my fantasy dance teacher [Mrs. Mysticulum] would teach me the steps of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, my absolute favorite music, which has been rooted deeply inside me my entire life. I would draw the curtains in our living room, so I was alone on our red carpet, put the record on and dance."

At nine she began piano and ballet lessons, which were much more to her liking. She was serious but maintained her secret world where both dance and music were magic and creative ways of living. As a teenager, she was inspired by records. She enjoyed Cream and Frank Zappa, but when a friend sat her in a dark room with headphones to listen to *Bitches Brew* it made a huge impression. It was also as a teenager that she started experiencing more live music. "I started to listen to live music and would always dance, rather wildly, at live concerts with my favorite groups: [Alex] Riel/[Palle] Mikkilborg V8, led by two Danish jazz icons, who I later got to work with extensively, and

Kenneth Knudsen's Coronarias Dans."

Around 16 she left school and joined The Creative Dance Theatre and toured with them for about three years. Sometimes they worked live with musicians such as Dollar Brand, Karl Berger and the Swiss group OM. Her piano teacher wanted her to attend the Royal Music Conservatory to receive an advanced musical education. At that time, in Denmark and the States alike, music studies were strictly classical and Mazur had no aspirations of becoming a classical pianist, so she pursued the music education track and began to focus on percussion, among other things.

"I joined the new education [called AM] at the Conservatory, which was meant to train music teachers and included conducting, arrangement, choir and more. This gave me a broader perspective while I was developing as a jazz musician. Being into body movement and rhythm, it felt very natural to get my first drumset and study classical percussion as my main instrument and this really took hold of me."

As a pianist, she formed her first group as a leader, Zirenes, which included two Swedish women she met at the Vallekilde Jazz Summer course and augmented by drummer Riel and saxophonist Uffe Markussen. "Going to Vallekilde in the early '70s made it clear that the others were practically all men and that they had different 'rules' than me. So, it was tempting to bond with the few other women and find our own musical path."

Although she has had many inspirations, different sounds and her imagination, rather than a particular tradition, have always led the way. Her approach results in a personal sound with a homemade touch. In the beginning she collaborated with free jazz musicians, avoiding the established route into jazz. "As a drummer, I found that I could communicate easily by ear and feeling, so I didn't worry much about tradition and [i.e.] bebop. This doesn't necessarily mean that I am breaking rules—which I am not applying in the first place—because I use lots of energy on fitting into and enlarging the actual musical expressions, whichever these are."

By the late '70s Mazur had established herself as a percussionist through numerous collaborations, including those with Tchicai, Mikkilborg and The

Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra. She created the all-women music/theater ensemble, Primi Band, "to further explore the female qualities" and to focus on dance, rhythm, voice and experimental performance.

Since Denmark is a small country, especially when performing music that is not mainstream, touring was always the norm. She could maintain her groups and various collaborations while traveling Europe to perform with various musicians in other countries. However, that changed in the '80s when she became a world traveler. In 1985, Mazur was part of Mikkilborg's recording of his suite of compositions in tribute to Miles Davis, who was the soloist on the session, which became the album *Aura*. Soon after, Davis invited Mazur to join his band.

"It was a fantastic adventure to meet and play and tour with Miles and I really learned a lot about grooving and musical presence through those years. Miles gave me a lot of freedom, but his music at that time was pretty concrete, which demanded a certain 'masculine' energy from me, although Miles probably wanted me to bring more air and poetry into the band. Yes, I was the only woman in Miles' bands, but that was only one of the ways I was different from the rest and I was used to being an 'outsider'. It felt strange in the beginning [1985], the second Miles band I was in [1988] was more social, but, wow, what an experience with Miles' leading power and inspiration—to tour the whole world under those grand circumstances and have the chance to give whatever possible to Miles' music!"

That experience was followed by touring and recordings with the Gil Evans/Laurent Cugny Big Band Lumiere in 1986 and a world tour with Shorter in 1987 and then back with Davis in 1988. In 1989 Mazur formed her own dream band, Future Song, and from 1991 to 2005 she had a fruitful collaboration with Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek.

After all of these amazing experiences, she fondly remembered the Primi Band like family. So, when the Copenhagen Jazz Festival asked her to revive the group in 2015, she was thrilled. Putting the original group back together was not possible at this point, but a sort of new version was assembled called Shamania.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 31)

LEST WE FORGET



DOROTHY DONEGAN

BY ALEX HENDERSON

Dorothy Donegan was never easy to categorize. During her long career, the native Chicagoan pianist performed everything from boogie woogie, swing, blues, bop and stride to European classical music. But whatever she played, Donegan was a virtuoso.

Born on Apr. 6th, 1922, Donegan was six when she began studying piano. Her early influences included Art Tatum, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Fats Waller, Count Basie and Duke Ellington as well as classical piano and at 12 she performed with the Chicago Symphony. Donegan, who was first recorded in 1942, later absorbed the influence of Bud Powell, Oscar Peterson and other bop pianists. Although she didn't record as often as her admirers would have liked—and no studio albums at all from 1964-74, Donegan built an impressive catalog, which included dates for mostly independent labels.

In her discography were many live albums. She was famous for her shows, which were as fun as they were unpredictable. Because she was so spontaneous,

Donegan could be difficult for bassists and drummers to keep up with. Danish bassist Mads Vinding, who played with Donegan during the '80s, recalls, "Dorothy could play different melodies in either hand at the same time. We had no setlists and she never gave a clue as to which melody she was playing. Sometimes, she changed melody or key in the middle of a solo. Quite difficult to follow sometimes, but it was a good exercise for the ears." Another bassist, Jon Burr, played in Donegan's trio extensively during the '90s and remembers her as someone who wanted to make sure that the audience had a good time. "Dorothy was unique," he explains. "I heard it said about her that Dorothy maybe wasn't the greatest jazz pianist, but she was certainly the greatest pianist in jazz. She was recognized as such by other pianists and she was an entertainer; that was the focus of her show. Dorothy had a comedic aspect to her showmanship. She would walk out on stage wearing flats, carrying high heels. Then she would sit down on the piano bench and the first thing she would do is change the shoes. And she would do stuff like play the last note with her foot... It was said that nobody wanted to follow her because she was such a dynamic entertainer. She would often get a standing ovation very early in the set and by the end of her set, people would be roaring."

Burr describes playing with her as an adventure in which the surprises were constant: "There was never any rehearsal. There was never any indication of what was coming. Dorothy would do stuff like, she could be

playing 'Cherokee' in A to begin with and then, new key. She wouldn't call out, 'Go into B flat' or whatever. She wouldn't call it out, she would just go there. And after a while, I started to get the hang of it."

Donegan died of colon cancer on May 19th, 1998 at 76. According to Burr, the living musician who has the most in common with her musically is pianist/singer Johnny O'Neal. "Johnny has the incredible spontaneity that Dorothy had." Burr continues, "Dorothy would get faster, she would get slower and the effect of it was really emotional. I haven't heard anyone else do that... You would be playing something fast and the next thing you know, you're suddenly playing a ballad. But it would be a different tune. With Dorothy, anything was liable to happen at any time." ❖

Recommended Listening:

- Dorothy Donegan—*Donnybrook with Dorothy* (Capitol, 1959)
- Dorothy Donegan—*It Happened One Night* (Roulette, 1960)
- Dorothy Donegan—*The Many Faces of Dorothy Donegan* (Mahogany-Storyville, 1975)
- Dorothy Donegan—*Makin' Whoopie (The Definitive Black & Blue Sessions)* (Black and Blue, 1979)
- Dorothy Donegan—*The Explosive Dorothy Donegan* (Progressive-Audiophile, 1980)
- Dorothy Donegan—*The Incredible Dorothy Donegan Trio (Special Guest Dizzy Gillespie)* (Chiaroscuro, 1991)

CARRIER

BY KURT GOTTSCHALK

Categorizing the unclassifiable is a fool’s errand, to be sure, one upon which the channels of music production and distribution—marketers and distributors to broadcasters and journalists to merchants and streaming algorithms—largely rely. It’s a model that rarely reflects consumer preference and which forces the avoidance of genre to be considered a niche.

There are, of course, enterprises resisting the confines of race, region and definition of style. Carrier is one such endeavor. Launched in New York City in 2009 by composer/performers Sam Pluta and Jeff Snyder, the label has grown to have partners in four cities and a catalogue attracting the attention of such uncategorizable artists as Fred Frith and George Lewis.

“The goal of the label was to make a place for all these different musical worlds we find ourselves in that seem to be separate,” said Pluta, speaking from Paris where his wife, composer Sky Macklay, has a fellowship. (He is fulfilling his obligations at the University of Chicago, where he is an assistant professor in the Department of Music, online.) The label, he explained, began as a way to put out music by Snyder, himself and their friends, setting an eclectic agenda from the outset. The first two releases were by the composer/performer collective Wet Ink Ensemble and a sort of electro-chamber drone project called Glissando Bin Laden. Pluta is a member of both groups.

Label management has since expanded with the

addition of composers Katie Young in Atlanta and David Brynjar Franzson in Los Angeles, with each bringing projects to the table to be voted on and then seen through production by one of the four. “We each have really different tastes, so hopefully there’s a breadth of different musical ideas,” Pluta said.

Some recent releases leaning toward the improv sector of the Carrier umbrella were brought in by Pluta: *Lock Me Up, Lock Me Down*, a trio by Fred Frith with electronics improviser Cenk Ergün and Sudhu Tewari, who works with “recuperated junk”; *Rainbow Family*, an archival recording by George Lewis with Derek Bailey, Douglas Ewart, Steve Lacy and Joëlle Léandre; and *The Cat of Sadness*, a soprano saxophone trio by Dan Blake, Jon Irabagon and Ingrid Laubrock.

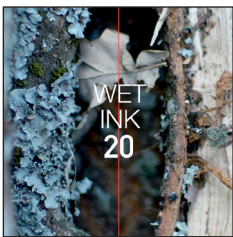
Rainbow Family came about after Lewis emailed Pluta saying he’d come across a 1984 Betamax recording of some early electro-acoustic experiments recorded at Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique in Paris. “George is very well known for the Voyager project but I didn’t even know about this Rainbow Family project,” Pluta said of his former instructor at Columbia University. “What he was doing in 1983-84 with electronic instruments and improvisation is what I try to do in my work. To be able to put out this heavyweight, major document in the field was really important.” Releasing *Rainbow Family* and Ted Moore’s *bruit*, a set of contemporary acoustic/electronic improvisations, outlined a four-decade continuum of what the label sets out to document. “This is so central to the core of what we do,” Pluta said. “For us to be able to release this and then the Ted Moore album and to show those things next to each other and lay out a tradition, that is important.”

Carrier has gone to DL-only for some releases, such as the new Frith trio. Others have only a limited physical run. “To make a CD is very expensive, to make an LP is absurdly expensive,” Pluta said. “Even the best-selling CDs don’t make the money back for us.”

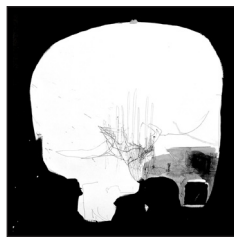
With the label founders working in audio production and engineering, the sound quality is, across the board, to a high standard. Most releases are recorded specifically for release, often by Pluta or Snyder. When they’re brought a recording, they often still are involved in mixing and production. In the case of the Blake/Irabagon/Laubrock trio, they were brought a live recording but then invited to record at the Princeton University Electronic Music Studio, which Snyder directs. Snyder engineered the recording and Pluta mastered it for release. “The music, we thought, was just incredible, but the recording was a little unpolished,” Pluta said. “Jeff and I are both recording engineers, we record or mix or produce half the records.” Pluta and Snyder have from the beginning set out to realize a fuller, more contemporary production than many recordings of experimental music and contemporary composition—closer to the studio sound of current pop bands than the traditional concert hall document. For a recent recording with Wet Ink singer Kate Soper, for example, Pluta combined recordings of her made in multiple locations, far from the audio verité that many labels strive for.

But as it was 12 years ago, the main intention is just to get music into the hands and ears of people who might not otherwise hear it. “Our goal is that someone will come to our Bandcamp page looking for George Lewis and realize that Dana Jessen is totally awesome.” ❖

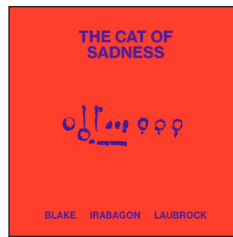
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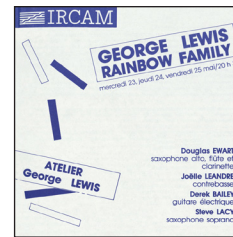
Wet Ink: 20
Wet Ink Ensemble



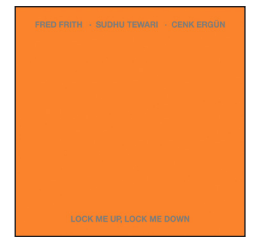
Two Live Sets
Peter Evans/Sam Pluta



The Cat of Sadness
Blake/Irabagon/Laubrock



Rainbow Family
George Lewis



Lock Me Up, Lock Me Down
Fred Frith/Sudhu Tewari/Cenk Ergün

VOXNEWS

VOCAL MUSICIANS

BY SUZANNE LORGE

In November 2000, Lara Pellegrinelli published an article in *The Village Voice* that took Wynton Marsalis to task for the dearth of female instrumentalists in the famed Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO). The historic piece, thorough and thoughtful, still stands as a clarion call for gender equality, even as several of the players mentioned—pianist Renee Rosnes, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington—have set strong precedents for women in jazz. Further, in the years since the article was published, Marsalis has opened up the JLCO to female instrumentalists and in 2018 he gave a permanent chair in the ensemble to a woman for the first time. That player—saxophonist **Camille Thurman**—is also a kickass jazz vocalist. Thurman is not the only jazz singer who excels at an instrument typically championed by virtuosic male players, the elite against whom all others are measured. The contributions of singer-instrumentalists like Esperanza Spalding (bass), Bria Skonberg (trumpet) and Nicki Parrott (bass), to name three out of scores, have long challenged the tired tropes that women players are not good musicians and that singers are perhaps not musicians at all.

Curiously, around the time that Pellegrinelli was

calling attention to the jazz world’s sins of omission, some of today’s most promising newcomers were first picking up their instruments—and the mic. Though just 25, singer/trombonist **Hailey Brinnel** has already played prominent stages like Dizzy’s Club and The Kennedy Center, often alongside groundbreaking musicians like Sherrie Maricle’s DIVA Jazz Orchestra. Her debut as a leader, *I’m Forever Blowing Bubbles* (Outside In Music), reveals why Brinnel was tapped for these early honors: her mastery of these two instruments defies expectations for one so young. Or, perhaps, sets new expectations. Opener “Orange-Colored Sky” introduces the listener to Brinnel’s judicious use of back-phrasing and relaxed approach to a lyric and the ballad “You Go To My Head” or the blues “What’s The Use In Getting Sober” shows off how expressively she wields her delightful voice. But it’s when she scats on “Give Me The Simple Life”, a bass-voice duet, that the sophisticated understanding of jazz is fully unveiled, with her precise enunciation, clever allusions and intricate vocal improvisations. Brinnel will release the new album via Facebook and Instagram Live (Mar. 13th).

Brinnel’s clear talent has landed her a spot in the finalists’ circle for the 9th Annual Sarah Vaughan International Vocal Competition, one of five selected from dozens of submissions. These finalists usually square off in November, but that didn’t happen in 2020, when performance venues throughout the New York metro area remained closed owing to the pandemic. The

competition was slated instead for this month, but then was bumped again to Jun. 6th. This June Brinnel won’t be the only horn player on the ticket: New York-based trumpeter **Benny Benack III**, a finalist in the 2014 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Trumpet Competition, will also compete—the third male singer ever to do so. The shifting composition of winners in these high-profile competitions indicates that pretty soon we’re going to have to stop noting when musicians demonstrate excellence across genders and instruments and genres. Consider that Thurman placed as a finalist in the Sarah Vaughan competition in 2013, its second year, and that other singer-horn players have followed.

Three Grammy-nominated singers offer online concerts this month: **Jazzmeia Horn** performs in the Live From Dizzy’s Club series, a pay-what-you-wish event (Mar. 4th). **Thana Alexa**, whose *Ona* is up for two Grammy awards this year, reprises the album via live-stream from ShapeShifter Lab (Mar. 7th), a week before the Grammy broadcast. And **Jane Monheit** launches *Come What May* (Club 44), a celebration of her 20-year career, with a concert at Feinstein’s at Vitello’s (Mar. 12th).

In honor of Women’s History Month, free improviser **Judi Silvano** joins Cheryl Pyle’s Musique Libre Femmes ensemble as part of the 19th annual Lady Got Chops Festival (Mar. 7th). This gig follows on the heels of the release of *Unity* (Muse-Eek), an explosion of vibrant ambient sound by Sonic Twist, Silvano’s masterfully eclectic duo with guitarist Bruce Arnold. ❖

HOWARD JOHNSON

BY ANDREY HENKIN



Howard Johnson, brass and reed player known mostly for playing tuba, baritone saxophone and bass clarinet but also clarinet, flugelhorn, cornet and pennywhistle on hundreds of records since the mid '60s, died Jan. 11th at 79 after a long period of poor health.

Johnson was born Aug. 7th, 1941 in Montgomery, Alabama and raised in Ohio. He was self-taught on baritone and joined his middle school band, where he would also pick up the tuba, getting, as he told our own John Pietaro in a 2019 interview, "all of the fingerings down just by watching the tuba players." After a stint in the Navy he moved to Chicago and then New York. Soon after he came into the circle of bassist Charles Mingus. As he related to Pietaro, "I wandered into The Five Spot and someone pointed out to Mingus that there was a tuba player in the house... He called the band a Jazz Workshop so he could do anything, including audition tuba players onstage." Though he had already recorded with Bill Dixon, his time with Mingus' large ensembles of 1964-66 got him noticed.

From there he would never stop working, appearing on albums by Hank Crawford, Gerald Wilson, Archie Shepp, Hank Mobley, Big Black, Freddie Hubbard, Gary Burton, McCoy Tyner, Leon Thomas, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Jimmy Owens, Charlie Haden, Charles Tolliver, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, Gil Evans, Michel Portal, Bob Northern, George Russell, Warren Smith, Roswell Rudd, Pharoah Sanders, Andrew Hill, Carla Bley, David Sanborn, Beaver Harris, Gato Barbieri, Bob Moses, George Benson, Jaco Pastorius, Buddy Rich, Frank Strozier, Dexter Gordon, Clifford Jordan, The Heath Brothers, Bob James, Chet Baker, Quincy Jones, George Gruntz, Jon Faddis, Ralph MacDonald, Terumasa Hino, Edward Vesala, Manu Dibango, Muhal Richard Abrams, Franco Ambrosetti, Arthur Prysock, Abdullah Ibrahim, Ray Anderson, John Scofield, TS Monk, John Clark, Mike Gibbs, Janis Siegel, Tom Harrell, Marty Ehrlich, Catherine Russell, Salim Washington, Joseph Daley and many others.

These were just his jazz credits; he also had myriad pop and rock gigs with everyone from Melvin Van Peebles and Angela Bofill and Lou Rawls to Taj Mahal and Levon Helm and John Lennon and was also part of the *Saturday Night Live* band. Despite all this activity, somehow he found time to release his own albums on Verve, mostly with his multi-tuba ensemble Gravity, which played the 1996 Monterey Jazz Festival.

Unfortunately declining health meant that Johnson was far from his typically active self since 2018. A tribute to Johnson was held at Merkin Hall in 2019 with Gravity, Paul Shaffer and The Levon Helm Horns, all to benefit InterSchool Orchestras of New York, a cause close to Johnson's heart and a fitting bookend to a career that had started so propitiously all those decades before in a junior high band room.



PAVEL BLATNÝ (Sep. 14th, 1931 - Jan. 20th, 2021) The Czech Third Stream composer had his works performed by SHQ and orchestras (often led by Gustav Brom) with soloists Karel Krautgartner, Jaromír Honzák and Jaromír Hnilička. Blatný died Jan. 20th at 89.



DAVID DARLING (Mar. 4th, 1941 - Jan. 8th, 2021) The cellist got his start in the Paul Winter Consort then entered the world of ECM via Ralph Towner, going on to debut as a leader for the label in 1980 and release another eight discs for it, either as a leader or in partnership with the likes of Terje Rypdal and Ketil Bjørnstad, plus more dates under John Clark, Sidsel Endresen and Pierre Favre, all this to go with sideman credits with Spyro Gyra, Michael Bocian, JD Parran and various New Age artists. Darling died Jan. 8th at 79.



BOBBY FEW (Oct. 21st, 1935 - Jan. 6th, 2021) The pianist was part of one of the most important avant garde groups of the '70s alongside Frank Wright and Alan Silva (releasing a handful of records on the French Center Of The World label) after earlier credits under Booker Ervin, Marzette Watts, Noah Howard, Alan Silva, Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler and Hans Dulfer, staying in Europe and waxing his own dates for Sun, Free Lance, Vogue, Black Lion, Disques Adès, Miss You Jazz, Bleu Regard, CIMP and Boxholder alongside collaborations with Sunny Murray, Steve Lacy, Talib Kibwe, Eve Packer, Avram Fefer, Kali Z. Fasteau, Jacques Coursil and others. Few died Jan. 6th at 85.



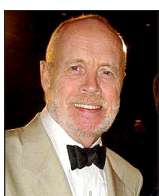
CAROL FREDETTE (Apr. 15th, 1945 - Jan. 24th, 2021) The vocalist got her start with Sal Salvador and Neal Hefti, worked with Mike Abene, Steve Kuhn and Dave Frishberg and had albums on Devil Moon, Electric Bird, Owl, Brownstone and Soundbrush. Fredette died Jan. 24th at 75.



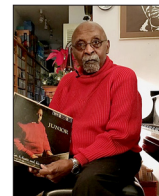
MALCOLM GRIFFITHS (Sep. 29th, 1941 - Jan. 19th, 2021) The British trombonist was a crucial figure in his country's early avant garde scenes, getting his start—as many did—in Mike Westbrook's big bands, then going on to work with John Surman, Alan Skidmore, Peter Brötzmann, Chris McGregor, Michael Gibbs, Norma Winstone, Kenny Wheeler, Paul Rutherford, Hugh Hopper, Graham Collier, Stan Tracey, John Warren, Ray Russell, Harry Miller, Tony Coe, Gil Evans, Louis Moholo, Paul Dunmall, Keith Tippett and more. Griffiths died Jan. 19th at 79.



JANET LAWSON (Nov. 13th, 1940 - Jan. 22nd, 2021) The 1982 Grammy-nominated vocalist had a handful of albums on Inner City, Omnisound and Cambria plus sideman work with Eddie Jefferson and David Lahm and a long career as an educator at New York University and the New School. Lawson died Jan. 22nd at 80.



JEREMY LUBBOCK (Jun. 4th, 1931 - Jan. 29th, 2021) The British pianist's albums were primarily classical but he did record with Herb Alpert, Al Jarreau and Michael Bublé and had songs recorded by The Manhattan Transfer, Lee Ritenour, Ramsey Lewis/Nancy Wilson, Ernie Watts, Diane Schuur, Pat Metheny, Helen Merrill, Milt Jackson, Nina Simone, Janis Siegel/Fred Hersch, Quincy Jones and others. Lubbock died Jan. 29th at 89.



JUNIOR MANCE (Oct. 10th, 1928 - Jan. 17th, 2021) The pianist's credits stretch all the way back to the mid '40s, comprising a Who's Who of jazz in Leo Parker, Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, Lester Young, Dinah Washington, Joe Gordon, Cannonball and Nat Adderley, Wilbur Ware, Art Blakey, James Moody, Johnny Griffin, Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Green, Clark Terry, Eddie Jefferson, Etta Jones, Ben Webster, Howard McGhee, Jimmy Scott, Dexter Gordon and more, later credits being with Ken Peplowski, Frank Vignola, Al Grey, Takashi Ohi, Tony Falanga, José James and Richard Davis, all this plus dozens of leader dates since the mid '50s on Verve, Jazzland, Karusell, Riverside, Capitol, Atlantic, Milestone, East Wind, Sackville, Nilva, Bee Hive, All Art, Lob, Chiaroscuro, Enja, Trio, M&I Jazz and, in the new millennium, his own Jun Glo. Mance died Jan. 17th at 92.



GINO MORATTI (Jan. 15th, 1937 - Jan. 18th, 2021) The longtime private investigator and amateur musician channeled his passion as the latter towards his role as Artistic Director of Jazz at Kitano from 2006-20, making it one of New York's finest jazz rooms and a home for such pianists as Don Friedman and Frank Kimbrough. Moratti died Jan. 18th at 84.



SAMMY NESTICO (Feb. 6th, 1924 - Jan. 17th, 2021) The legendary composer/arranger released over a dozen albums since the '80s, many in the new millennium in collaboration with Germany's SWR Big Band, in a career going back to the mid '50s and work for Charlie Barnet, Glenn Miller and, most notably, Count Basie, many of his charts performed and recorded by big bands from all over the world, ranging from high school and college to military, plus movie music credits for *Million Dollar Infield*, *The Color Purple* and *Little Children*. Nestico died Jan. 17th at 96.



KEITH NICHOLS (Feb. 13th, 1945 - Jan. 20th, 2021) The British pianist and ragtime specialist had albums on One-Up, Stomp Off, G.H.B. and other labels and work with the New Paul Whiteman Orchestra, Cotton Club Orchestra, Harry Gold, Red Roseland, "Pam" Pameijer and Benny Waters. Nichols died Jan. 20th at 75 of complications from COVID-19.



JOHN RUSSELL (Dec. 19th, 1954 - Jan. 18th, 2021) The British guitarist was part of his country's second generation of free improvisers, recording since the mid '70s for Incus, Caw, Acta, Emanem, FMP, Nur/Nicht/Nur, Another Timbre, psi, dEN, Extraplatte, Bocian, Va Fongool, Weekertoft, FMR and other labels in collaboration with Toshinori Kondo, Maggie Nicols, Steve Beresford, John Butcher, Paul Lovens, Radu Malfatti, Roger Turner, Evan Parker, Maarten Altena, Sabu Toyozumi, Michel Doneda, Mats Gustafsson, Raymond Strid, Eddie Prevost, Thurston Moore and others. Russell died Jan. 18th at 66.



BURT WILSON (Jan. 24th, 1933 - Jan. 6th, 2021) The trombonist founded the Sacramento-based Silver Dollar Jazz Band, was a participant in numerous Sacramento Dixieland Jazz Jubilees, authored *A history of Sacramento jazz, 1948-1966* and produced the documentary *The Roots of Sacramento Jazz*. Wilson died Jan. 6th at 87 of complications from COVID-19. ❖

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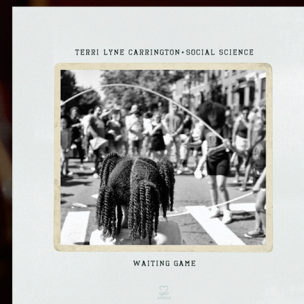
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Dromedaries II
Keir Neuringer/Shayna Dulberger/Julius Masri
(Relative Pitch)
The Coalescence
Owl Xounds Exploding Galaxy (ESP-Disk')
by John Sharpe

Bassist Shayna Dulberger has covered a lot of territory, not only jazz with her own groups, which have featured saxophonists Darius Jones and Yoni Kretzmer, but also noise and electronics with Hot Date with guitarist Chris Welcome and avant rock via the quartet Chaser with Ava Mendoza. Her rich sure-footed sound and adventurousness has also led to frequent sideperson stints, notably William Parker's *Sunrise In The Tone World* (AUM Fidelity), recorded at the 2008 Vision Festival.

Dulberger is one point of the equilateral triangle Dromedaries alongside saxophonist Keir Neuringer and drummer Julius Masri. The followup to an eponymous debut in 2015 continues the egalitarian ethos with four slices of spontaneity captured at Seizures Palace in 2018. Dulberger cycles through repeated patterns, which mutate to create a sturdy sense of movement and non-metric swing. While often the least obtrusive member, she is maybe the most important in keeping things afloat. Neuringer, whose profile has risen thanks to his role in Irreversible Entanglements, thrives at the edge, either in streams of distorted emotionally freighted invective or slurred phrases interrupted by scalar runs, both often extended into unbroken ululations by circular breathing. Masri favors a tappy clatter, on the rims as much as the heads, which can cohere into a staggered beat, especially when Dulberger sets up the sort of groove of which Parker would be proud, as on "Thereafter (Those Steppes Again)". But she's also comfortable as part of a prickly free-ranging discourse, as evidenced by "Ether (Commie Beast)", one of the highlights, where bow in hand, she moves in tandem with Masri from stop-start dialogue through to a roiling finale, where Neuringer splutters and wails. It forcefully illustrates a key trait: the ability to add an aura of structure to free expression, without either becoming predictable or constraining invention.

Dulberger is also part of another exotically-named collective, Owl Xounds Exploding Galaxy, whose 29-minute *The Coalescence* dates from the same 2007 session that resulted in the *Splintered Visions* LP on Blackest Rainbow. Dulberger shares bass duties with Gene Janas, stalwart of the NYC experimental arena. Completing the eclectic crew is drummer Adam Kriney, who hails from a psychedelic rock background, and Austrian saxophonist Mario Rechtern, best known for his connection with vocalist Linda Sharrock. A punkish raw energy pervades the three tracks, emanating in particular from Kriney's take-no-prisoners attitude to his kit and Rechtern's adherence to the school of ecstatic skronk. Reflective moments pop up amid the mayhem, which Kriney does his best to ignite, usually succeeding. Giving credit for bass outcomes is fraught with uncertainty, though Dulberger is likely responsible for the wiry pulse which anchors the episodic free-form while Janas may be behind the wilder arco scribbles. Regardless, they periodically respect the time-honored trope of contrasting bowed and plucked tonalities and together provide an almost subliminal throbbing undercurrent to give depth to both the high-octane exchanges and more drifting textural interludes.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com and espdisk.bandcamp.com. Dulberger live-streams Mar. 4th with Elliott Sharp at roulette.org.



End of Softness
Amirtha Kidambi/Lea Bertucci (Astral Spirits)
by Jordannah Elizabeth

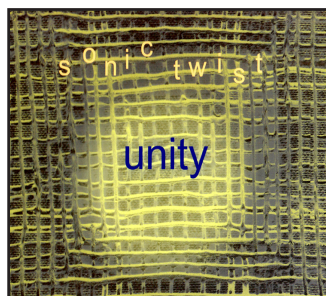
The surreal, apocalyptic musical offering *End of Softness* is the second collaboration between vocalist Amirtha Kidambi and sound artist Lea Bertucci. The album is comprised of carefully woven musical shards from their debut album *Phase Eclipse* and a live performance the duo reworked and retexturized in order to create this new collection of darkly-themed songs.

End of Softness is an artistic illustration of the end of days and patriarchal-induced confusion and decimation erected and produced during Kidambi and Bertucci's personal isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be assumed that the stark collaborative readjustment was a deeply embedded source of inspiration as the tracks are heavily coated with sounds of empowered desperation, resulting in a kind of freedom that can only be earned through perseverance and ingenuity during this time of global loss.

The album opens with "Siren Call", reimagining the powers of the mythological water beings who entranced unassuming sailors with their eerie feminine singing, causing them to shipwreck on the three islands of Sirenum scopuli. Kidambi's voice is layered and looped by Bertucci into transcendental sounds of beauty and chaos. "False Profits" is a darkly fanciful sonic collection of breathy vocals and speaking voices mixed and rearranged into a swirling, fast-paced and high-pitched piece of sound art purposely created to overwhelm and disorient the listener. "Alter of Time", "Must I Burn?" and the title track continue to drive the listener through a journey of death, pain and rebirth as the duo creatively orients songs into stealthily, yet heavily produced vocal tracks that twist further and further into bleak historical themes of mysticism and the terrorization and assault on feminine power. "Hysteric Arch", "Destroying Angel" and "Epilogue" (only on the digital release) end the album with Bertucci manipulating, molding and encapsulating every morsel of Kidambi's voice into electronically disorienting illustrations, seamlessly closing the black hole of sound and despair.

This album is not for the faint-hearted. It can be considered an art piece of intentional doom that does not pacify the listener by placing a flowery incantation of softness and healing. It is the *End of Softness* and offers the sharp edges of reality and uncomfortable themes explored by these two brave experimenters.

For more information, visit astralspiritsrecords.com. Bertucci live-streams Mar. 4th with Elliott Sharp at roulette.org.



Unity
Sonic Twist (Muse-Eek)
by Alex Henderson

Sonic Twist is a duo of Judi Silvano on vocals and Bruce Arnold on guitar; both of them contribute

various electronics to this 45-minute CD, which was produced by Silvano and engineered by Arnold. The vocalists who have inspired Silvano in the past continue to influence her on *Unity*, like Sheila Jordan, Betty Carter and Jeanne Lee. All of them became masters at interpreting familiar lyrics and so did Silvano. But on *Unity*, while some of the selections contain lyrics, including "That's What That Is" and "I Saw That", Silvano mostly expresses herself with wordless scat improvisation.

Silvano and Arnold enjoy a strong rapport throughout this album and one of the things that makes them compatible is Arnold's use of space. He favors an airy, floating sound along the lines of Pat Metheny and the late Jim Hall. But what Arnold does on *Unity* is much more left-of-center.

None of these selections rely on traditional song structures or a head/solos/head format. Silvano and Arnold's improvisations are quite free form, but never in a combative way. This is the type of avant garde expression that values subtlety and understatement rather than going out of its way to clobber the listener. Inside/outside offerings like "Bruce's Boogie", "Hovercraft", "Confabulation" and "Shimmer Down" – all improvised – are never abrasive. *Unity* doesn't confront; it floats and reflects.

2021 marks the 30th anniversary of Silvano's first recording as a leader, *Dancing Voices*. Silvano has recorded a lot more albums since then, making her mark with a wide range of projects and collaborators. This CD makes maximum use of her avant garde talents and Arnold is a consistently intuitive collaborator for the veteran singer.

For more information, visit judisilvano.com/recordings/unity. Silvano live-streams Mar. 7th with Cheryl Pyle at judisilvano.com.

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I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles
Hailey Brinnel (Outside In Music)
by Elliott Simon

The title track on this debut from vocalist/trombonist Hailey Brinnel was written over a century ago by John Kelleter. It fits Brinnel's youthfully expressive vocals perfectly due to its naiveté, which fronts for a mix of heartache and amusement. Her arrangements of this and seven other songs from her grandfather's generation are largely spot-on and work to feature her vocal chops and trombone prowess. Brinnel's voice sparkles during the changes and she deftly moves through pensive waltz, swing, Dixieland and back again. Pianist Silas Irvine, bassist Joe Plowman and drummer Dan Monaghan are a fine rhythm section dexterously navigating these vagaries. Brinnel is one of many women associated with drummer Sherrie Maricle, with half of these compositions recorded at Drummers, Maricle's Philadelphia based in-home studio/concert space.

The program opens with a stellar version of Milton Delugg-Willie Stein's "Orange Colored Sky", which includes lovely arco work from Plowman, who is very much at home in these environs and integral to the session. Cole Porter's usually sedate "Easy to Love" swings harder than it ever has with a clipped trumpet solo from Andrew Carson that does battle with Brinnel's potent scat.

Brinnel's trombone/vocal combination is at its best in the bigger band contexts and when clarinetist Sam Bishoff joins with Carson on a couple of cuts things really swing. However, a duet with guitarist Dariel Peniazek on J. Fred Coots-Haven Gillespie's "You Go to My Head" and with Plowman on Rube Bloom-Harry Ruby's "Give Me the Simple Life" showcase a sultry innocence. Busby Meyer's "What's the Use of Getting Sober" and Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust" do not fare as well vocally but on the whole Brinnel can blow the hell out of her trombone and *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles* is a wonderful blend of leadership and Swing Era sensuality.

For more information, visit outsideinmusic.com. Brinnel live-streams Mar. 13th at [facebook.com/haileybrinnelmusic](https://www.facebook.com/haileybrinnelmusic).



Artlessly Falling
Mary Halvorson's Code Girl (Firehouse 12)
by Marc Medwin

"You arrive with daggered hands," begins and ends "Walls and Roses", but, as with the music sliding in and out of focus and cognition on Code Girl's second album, are they really the same in the end? Lorraine Hansberry once spoke of the universal needing to be understood in its details, a lesson guitarist Mary Halvorson has learned well. In this revamped version of Code Girl, she has found the perfect vehicle for a vision shuttled between minutia and grandiosity, where each element arrives with the twin daggers of

intuition and cognition at the ready.

The first Code Girl album, Halvorson along with vocalist Amirtha Kidambi, bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara, was a statement in and of itself, no mean compositional feat for artists whose multivalent careers have been rife with them. It was very good, but this one is a triumph due in no small part to the addition of saxophonist and vocalist Maria Grand and trumpeter Adam O'Farrill. The group has now taken on the intimacy, precision and unassuming grandeur of a chamber music ensemble, but one skilled in negotiating the spaces, somewhere between subtlety and sucker punch, that have always opened up in Halvorson's genre-bending compositions.

For the latter—and its title gives the heads-up—"Walls and Roses" alternately blasts and cajoles its distorted and crystalline way through the repetitions modified by perception and context, those destroyers of all cyclical and categorical tidiness. A similar but smaller series of disconnects opens the title track, whose deliciously accessible guitar harmonies jitter in dizzying blanket formations, dissolving the saltiness of old patterns, as Halvorson's lyrics suggest in Kidambi's gorgeous delivery. A middle ground is furrowed in "Bigger Flames", where Halvorson's ubiquitous pedal warpings never quite derail the liquid harmonies bolstering the exquisite horn interplay and succulent sustain, all melding perfectly with Robert Wyatt's beguiling intonations.

Unexpectedly, the thankfully irrepressible Wyatt lends his magical vocal arts to three of the album's tracks. What a joy it is to hear him in contexts so expertly shaped for him by someone who knows so intimately the nature of his instrument! The expertly timed overdubs, on strategic lines of the wistful "Lemon Trees" just to cite one example, evoke his solo work while placing a new frame around that instantly recognizable vocabulary. His vocal transparency, underpinned by the deepest humanity, remains the hallmark of his art. Is it Kidambi or Grand, a kind of vocal soulmate for Wyatt's ethereality, singing the stunningly understated background as Halvorson, Formanek and Fujiwara anchor each chordal plateau to O'Farrill's filigree? Even that brief pastorality is rendered moot as the track builds, slowly but inexorably, toward Fujiwara's solo, a model of color and raw energy.

To speak of band interplay in such a Protean environment would be akin to the parabled blind man describing the elephant, no job for one writer. The process by which angst-ridden pointillistic group improv—with Formanek in particularly fine form—merges with the tendrils of sonority and Kidambi-sneered-and-supplanted vocal lines in "Last-Minute Smears" is just one point of the music's fluid definition; there are many. Here again, like the elevated points of distorted precision of "Walls and Roses", the music moves gracefully but only toward what it is while continually discarding what it was, just as Halvorson's solos on that track dive headlong into a blues feeling while completely eschewing its syntax.

The parts are surpassed only by the whole. Like Carla Bley, Halvorson's forms depend on their structures to solidify and obliterate them and like Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, the poetic forms she explores are operators behind the scenes, foregrounding various shades of reference. What Paul Haines devotee wouldn't get a kick out of the seriocomic malevolence of hiccupping cops?

Artlessly Falling is Code Girl's coming of age. That it arrived to mark the end of Halvorson's 40th year surely demonstrates a similar trajectory for the composer. Her music was always very good, but now it's great and she has become a forceful poetic and musical voice with which to be reckoned.

For more information, visit firehouse12records.com. Halvorson live-streams Mar. 21st at [alternativeguitarsummit.com](https://www.alternativeguitarsummit.com).

GLOBE UNITY



Dream Disobedience
Elisabeth Harnik/Michael Zerang (Not Two)
Beyond
Futari (Satoko Fujii/Taiko Saito) (Libra)
Kleine Trompetenmusik
Birgit Ulher/Franz Hautzinger (Relative Pitch)
by Tom Greenland

Conversation is an art form, reliant on an ability to 'speak' clearly and, most importantly, listen closely. Three duo outings reveal how different and yet how equally enlightening such conversations can be.

Austrian pianist Elisabeth Harnik seems to thrive in duo settings. Michael Zerang, a Chicago-based drummer, is with her on *Dream Disobedience*, a live recording made at Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2019. The conversation, unabated for 35 minutes, is rather subdued, Harnik usually initiating each new topic, alternating traditional approaches with more unusual in-the-box techniques while Zerang eschews straight timekeeping for a more reactive role, adding the musical equivalents of 'Hmm!' or 'Uh huh!' and other encouragements to keep things flowing. The episodic narrative progresses through short lulls followed by bursts of energy, as if small squalls were blowing through, a grand tempest arriving near the end, one final cloudburst before irenic frog croaks and bird songs return, the pond at peace.

Futari (Japanese for "two people") is pianist Satoko Fujii, well known for her prolific output and international collaborations, and vibraphonist Taiko Saito (also Japanese, but based in Germany), who, though a generation younger, shares many of Fujii's aesthetic sensibilities. Their 15-year friendship finally blossomed into *Beyond*, recorded in Japan after the third gig of their first tour. As such it has a quality of fresh discovery—people figuring out how to play together. Although Fujii can be extremely assertive, here even in her most ecstatic moments—as when she crowds the bass register with dense twining lines and chords—she never overpowers Saito, whose light shimmering tones in the upper register maintain a strong presence. The pieces, mostly Fujii's, include honed melodies ("Ame No Ato", "Mobius Strip"), short motives with improvised elaboration, through-composed pieces and textural sketches, a nice balance of freedom and control.

Kleine Trompetenmusik, by German trumpeters Birgit Ulher and Franz Hautzinger, was recorded in the former's flat in May 2018, but sounds as if could have been made this winter by two people cooped up inside by COVID-19 quarantine. Foregoing traditional trumpet tones, the pair instead explores various extended techniques producing all manner of pops, knocks, clicks, creaks, rattles, buzzes, rubs, slaps, growls and a host of aspirated attacks aping boiling teakettles, pressure cookers, hissing radiators and droning motors. One technique (heard on "Griesel") sounds just like the saliva suction tube that dentists use. The five tracks are of a piece, each an interlocking conversation in which one states an idea in the form of an unusual tone or timbre, maintaining it as the other (mixed in the opposite channel) overlays the first idea with a second, creating a new context for the original idea, until this second idea is itself overlain with a third and so on.

For more information, visit nottwo.com, librarecords.com and relativepitchrecords.com. Harnik live-streams Mar. 19th at youtu.be/bhdgluixdwM.



Listen Here
Roseanna Vitro (Skyline)
 by Dan Bilawsky

Vocalist Roseanna Vitro is looking both ways as she joined the septuagenarian club on Feb. 28th. Eyeing the future, she's readying two new albums—a guest-enhanced celebration of Charlie Parker's music and a meeting with pianist/longtime collaborator Kenny Werner. And digging into the past, she's working with her husband—producer/engineer Paul Wickliffe—to digitize and rerelease early recordings. As logic would dictate, that project begins with Vitro's dazzling debut.

Originally released on vinyl in 1984, the album is now available on CD and streaming platforms for the first time. And, boy, is it long overdue. Enlisting pianist Kenny Barron's trio with bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley for primary support, tapping Fred Hersch to write arrangements, spicing up a pair of tracks with percussionist Duduka Da Fonseca and calling on some bandmates from her Houston days—pianist Bliss Rodriguez, saxophonist Arnett Cobb and guitarist (and then-future bassist) Scott Hardy—Vitro positioned herself for victory before she ever uttered a note. But the singing—the real draw, of course—is sensational, carrying the program to tremendous heights. With a signature blend of power and poise,

serious flexibility and range and pitch-perfect clarity, Vitro grabs the ears from the get-go.

After opening in samba territory with “No More Blues”, Vitro quickly shifts gears again and again. There's a coolly swinging 5/4 take on “You Go to My Head”, the slow-and-bluesy “Centerpiece” (Rodriguez and Cobb soulful and true), an appropriately chipper “Love You Madly” and the balladic beauty of “A Time for Love”. And that's just for starters. Vitro rides the beautiful flow of a bossa nova foundation during “This Happy Madness”, delivers a hip “It Could Happen to You” (that gives Cobb and Riley a chance to trade), stylishly strolls down “Easy Street” and drops into a few other welcoming jazz haunts. Sounding fresh and smart decades after its release, there's no dust to be found on *Listen Here*.

For more information, visit roseannavitrojazz.squarespace.com



An Evening in Houston
Patty Waters (Clean Feed)
 by Mark Keresman

Few singers have a history rich with mystery and legendhood as Patty Waters, who turns 75 this month. After being relatively quiet for much of the '70s-80s, Waters returned to performing and recording in the

'90s. Her voice is slightly deeper and a touch raspier and she is more of a conventional singer, but still treats words and syllables in the manner in which an instrumentalist interprets sighs, coos and shrieks. Pianist Burton Greene was her accompanist in the '60s and returns on this April 2018 recording with bassist Mario Pavone and drummer Barry Altschul. What separates this from her classic '60s sets is that her approach is somewhat more straightforward. Waters treats oft-heard standards with respectful warmth yet recasts them as only she can.

“Hush Little Baby” is stripped down to Waters taking the chorus and repeating it, fracturing it and breathlessly chanting it over the trio's thorny improvisations. Via Waters the word “hush” becomes a fantasia, a slice of wishful thinking, an anguished plea, an insistent ritualistic chant, until it dissolves in the ether. Country classic “I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry” is transmuted into a near-gothic lament—almost every syllable rings as if from a cathedral. On “Nature Boy”, the phrase “just to love” evolves into a mantra, the repeated word “love” embodying both aching yearning and affirmation—what was once a song becomes ritual.

Thelonious Monk's “Off Minor” gets a rollicking, brittle and completely instrumental rendition wherein Altschul gets to shine in a crackling, roiling solo spot—a joy to behold, as he is otherwise restrained and sublimely supportive. “Lonely Woman” is a number where the whole ensemble goes into explorational mode while avoiding meandering self-indulgence—there's a hushed urgency, adding to the drama.

With both humble delight and an occasionally harrowing mindset Waters truly reinvents these familiar tunes with subdued passion.

For more information, visit cleanfeed-records.com

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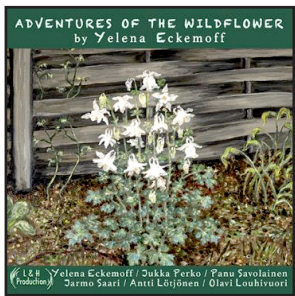


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Adventures of the Wildflower
Yelena Eckemoff (L&H Productions)
by Dan Bilawsky

Beyond her obvious skills—sophisticated pianist, composer, writer and painter—Yelena Eckemoff's greatest strength may be an ability to draw on life's surroundings to guide and enrich the aural experience. This prolific artist's work is constantly nurtured by environment—hers and ours, collectively—and she's always uncovering narratives hidden within. One need only look at Eckemoff's discography to glean that information. She captured the temperature of a persistent winter in a trio with bassist Mads Vinding and drummer Peter Erskine on 2010's *Cold Sun*; harnessed the light in emotion with help from tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, vibraphonist Joe Locke, bassist George Mraz and drummer Billy Hart during 2014's *A Touch of Radiancy*; explored the divine beauty of shores and tides in the company of saxophonist Tore Brunborg, bassist Arild Andersen and drummer Jon Christensen on 2015's *Everblue*; and defined life in varied shades with drummer Manu Katché through 2019's *Colors*. That list barely scratches the surface considering that Eckemoff delivered 15 releases between 2010 and 2020, but it clearly makes the point. So too does this evocative and absorbing double-album.

Reuniting with vibraphonist Panu Savolainen, bassist Antti Lötjönen and drummer Olavi Louhivuori, who assisted the pianist in making musical sense of scents on 2017's *Blooming Tall Phlox*, and adding two more notable Finns—saxophonist Jukka Perko and guitarist/multi-instrumentalist Jarmo Saari—Eckemoff sets off to tell the tale of a wildflower's life and times. The perennial, given the fitting name Columbine, starts out as a seed seeking full life. Eckemoff and company conjure the warm glow of its growth in moving from mellow and curious environs to brighter atmospheres on the "In the Ground" opener. At the other end of the program, with seedlings at the aged protagonist's side, the music dances to the pulse of life in "Baby Columbines". Between those points, there's much to admire in exchanges, improvisations and composed expressions. "Germination" peaks out in different directions, with sprigs represented in jangles and angles. "Rain" falls gently, early, in simple motivic play and development. "Drought" sounds to arid climates and, later, reflection. And "Buds and Flowers" presents as a fantastical gardenscape. This music, rich in representation, is magical and Eckemoff and company blossom right along with it.

For more information, visit landhproduction.com



ekhidna
Hedvig Mollestad (Rune Grammofon)
by Franz Matzner

There simply isn't a particularly convincing way to catalog *ekhidna* by Norwegian guitarist Hedvig

Mollestad. Certainly, jazz history is replete with genre evolution and merging; it may be an essential distinguishing feature. Further, contemporary jazz provides plentiful examples of stylistic bouillabaisse. Yet little can prepare the ears for *ekhidna's* torrents of bristling force, which lurk as much in its still corners as its pounding rhythms, erudite soloing, slashing guitar and psychedelic layering. This is not fusion as usually understood. It's a binding of melted shrapnel leaving a sonic sculpture of jagged edges.

Supported by a concussive set of compatriots, Mollestad is able to switch seamlessly from power chords to intricate figures to sonic squalls. Tunes like "antilone" detonate as if by chemical reaction, sounding like what a gene-splice between Herbie Hancock, Rancid, Metallica and King Crimson might birth. At the other extremity, the minimalist forays hover with barely restrained, scorching heat, as on the opening "no friends but the mountains", which plunges the mind into darker interiors, as if gazing into a black mirror searching for flickers of self. Then, after more incendiary aural collisions, *ekhidna* closes by suturing its polar points with "one leaf left". The song unfolds like a Noh play's prolonged scream before erupting into a sudden, final shockwave.

Mollestad accomplishes so much with her guitar that it may be easy to understate the contributions of her bandmates. This would be a mistake. The sound depends equally on the clear, searching flights of Susana Santos Silva's trumpet, the textural layering provided by Marte Ebersson and Erland Slettevoll on Rhodes, moog and electric piano, which alternately add a tapestry of competing discord and reinforce textural depth, especially during tunes' densest frisson. Finally, *ekhidna's* hurtling intensity and rich dynamics are propelled by percussionist Ole Mufjell and drummer Torstein Lofthus' thundering beats and daedal rhythms.

ekhidna may appeal most to musical omnivores, but anyone willing to plunge into its depths will undoubtedly discover music both potent and inimitable.

For more information, visit runegrammofon.com



Rah! Rah!
The Claire Daly Band (Ride Symbol)
by Ken Dryden

Claire Daly, perennial favorite in annual polls for best baritone saxophonist, first issued this music privately in 2008 and it didn't get the wide distribution it merited. Enter jazz industry veteran Donald Elfman, who offered to reissue it on his Ride Symbol label; now a greater audience can appreciate her heartfelt tribute to Rahsaan Roland Kirk, a pioneer known for playing multiple instruments simultaneously and skilled use of circular breathing, in addition to blending brilliant songwriting, improvisations, lyricism, protest and a take-no-prisoners attitude.

Daly remains true to herself and doesn't try to play like Kirk in any way, other than performing at the top of her game. Joined by bassist Dave Hofstra (with whom she has worked in various bands led by Joel Forrester), pianist Eli Yamin and drummer Peter Grant, Daly puts Kirk's works in settings that capture his spirit, yet the music is transformed by gift for melody and her big tone. She also composed two songs that are contrafacts of Kirk originals: "Blue Lady" was inspired by his "Lady's Blues", a loping, spacious opener with a

bluesy groove, while "Momentus Brighticus" is a flute feature derived from "Bright Moments", which evolves from a jazz waltz into a breezy bop vehicle.

Daly also takes the initiative to segue from a gritty, insistent rendition of Kirk's "Volunteered Slavery" into Sly Stone's 1969 R&B hit "Everyday People", adding a sincere vocal in the latter. Her robust renditions of Frank Foster's "Simone" and Charlie Parker's "Blues For Alice" invite comparison to Kirk's recordings of the pieces. This outstanding salute to Rahsaan Roland Kirk's music makes one wonder what other gems await discovery by today's jazz musicians.

For more information, visit ridesymbol.com

UNEARTHED GEM



Early Blue: 1958-1968 (Treasures of Dutch Jazz)
Ann Burton (Nederlands Jazz Archief)
by Scott Yanow

The Netherlands' Ann Burton (née Johanna Rafalowicz 1933-89) survived a difficult childhood (which included a few years hiding from the Nazis) before she began to work towards becoming a jazz singer. So grateful was she when the Americans liberated her country she spent her career exclusively singing in English, never displaying an accent.

In 2020, the Nederlands Jazz Archief acquired her archives, including unreleased acetates. Along with some other holdings, they serve as the foundation of *Early Blue*. Other than four songs from 1965 previously released as an EP by Dutch Decca, the performances have mostly never been out before or were released on tiny European labels. Burton just made one LP (1967's *Blue Burton* for the Dutch Artone label) during the period of time covered by this release. *Early Blue* gives listeners an opportunity to hear Burton before she became well known and regularly called her country's top jazz singer.

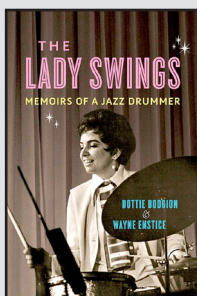
A very subtle vocalist who dug deep into lyrics, Burton had a quiet and fetching voice with her improvising being fairly minimal. She often simply stated the melody but made the songs her own through sincerity and relaxed phrasing. She loved the recordings of Billie Holiday and, although her tone is very different, sometimes she hints at Lady Day on the ballads as on this version of "I've Got A Right To Sing The Blues".

Early Blue contains 24 concise selections (only four are slightly longer than four minutes), Burton accompanied by a variety of different groups, ranging from trios to a string quartet, the Metropole Orchestra and (for three songs) a trad septet (the Down Home Jazz Band). No matter what the setting or the year, Burton consistently uplifts the material during these mostly well-recorded performances. Highlights include "Kansas City", a swinging "Exactly Like You", "They Didn't Believe Me", "Let There Be Love" and a version of "I Could Have Told You" that makes one think of Shirley Horn.

Burton, who only recorded one album in America (1979's *New York State Of Mind*), never became famous in the U.S. but, on evidence of this excellent release, deserves to be remembered.

For more information, visit jazzarchieff.nl

IN PRINT



The Lady Swings: Memoirs of a Jazz Drummer
Dottie Dodgion and Wayne Enstice
(University of Illinois Press)
by Kevin Canfield

Dottie Dodgion was a professional jazz singer as a teen, but she would make her name plying a different set of skills. In a career that began in the '40s and continued for seven-plus decades, the 91-year-old author of this often-engaging memoir drummed with legendary musicians and played storied venues, distinguishing herself in a male-centric milieu. "The guys were not going to give it up—the drummer was the balls of the band—and I really had to prove it," she writes. Dodgion and co-author Wayne Enstice acknowledge that she has long "languished in obscurity" and they understand that some readers might be more familiar with Jerry Dodgion, an accomplished saxophonist she married in the '50s (they later separated). *The Lady Swings* is "an eleventh-hour rescue" mission meant to bolster her status as a pioneer who paved a route followed by Terri Lyne Carrington and other prominent women drummers.

Her youth in California was shaped by music and by several deeply painful incidents. When she was five, Dodgion says, her father, a jazz drummer who had split with her mother, "kidnapped" her and took her along as he played West Coast "roadhouses and strip joints"; one night, an intruder broke into her father's room and locked her in a closet. Her first stepfather raped her; her second died in World War II. At 16, she was the singer in a touring band led by Bay Area jazz guitarist Nick Esposito.

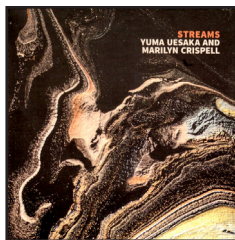
Her father didn't teach her to drum, but she was nonetheless drawn to the instrument. Though she worked numerous "humdrum gigs", Dodgion briefly served as the drummer in bands led by Benny Goodman and Dave Brubeck. She took the stage at the Village Vanguard and the Half Note. And when she toured Europe with Melba Liston's band, celebrated jazz writer Leonard Feather praised her in print. A Manhattanite in the '60s, she was always ready to work: "If a drummer took sick, was late, had habits, or lived in New Jersey and couldn't get across the bridge, I was there." As of the winter of 2020-21, Dodgion was still playing shows at a California hotel.

Dodgion is good on craft. Her description of learning how to keep "a standard swing rhythm"—she'd silently repeat "apple pie", then "duplicate that sound on the stand-up tom"—is vivid and memorable. But if her recollections of overcoming sexist agents and musicians are inspiring, this book, like many memoirs, contains questionable quotations and scenes that read like embellished depictions of reality. Dodgion quotes from conversations she neither witnessed nor took part in and virtually everyone she encounters simply adores her. This is an interesting book about an eventful life in music, but you wouldn't necessarily call it an authoritative version of events.

For more information, visit press.uillinois.edu



ConcertOTO
Marilyn Crispell/Eddie Prévost/Harrison Smith
(Matchless)
Streams
Yuma Uesaka/Marilyn Crispell (Not Two)
by Tyran Grillo



To say that pianist Marilyn Crispell, who turns 74 this month, has charted new territory would be an understatement. It would be just as accurate to say she has redrawn maps of old territory. At her hands, the keyboard leaps like a compass gleeful over its sentience, directing notes with the same force of intention that a seafarer would a ship carrying precious cargo. Whether solo or, as in the two discs presented here, in combination with others, she brings a reverent sense of space honed over decades.

For *ConcertOTO*, she planetarily aligns with Eddie Prévost (drums) and Harrison Smith (bass clarinet, saxophones) for a traversal of freely rendered terrain. Recorded live in November of 2012 at London's Café OTO, the album documents most of what went down on that stage. On the one hand, it's a study in contrasts. "An Exploratory Introduction" opens with just that, reacting to space as much as defining it. The "Finale" balances it with forthright exposition. At many points between them, however, something powerful happens—a magical kind of coalescence that only musicians who truly listen to one another can achieve. And so, whereas "A Meditative Interlude" is a dreamy combination of pianistic icicles, moonlit bass clarinet and hand-swept drums, its quiet moments are no match for the main concert portions flanking it. In those, one will find a veritable catalog of touchpoints linking chains around the ears. In this respect, Crispell is a master collage artist. Because nothing is planned, passages of exhale make the inhalations that much tenser and wilder with possibility. Prévost is a fabulous player, never losing track of the inner thread even when he severs it while Smith treats time as a physical dimension. Their occasional exchanges in absence of piano are just as visceral. An interesting coincidence that the club's name is homophonous with the Japanese word for "sound", as this is a gift articulated in that very medium.

Streams pairs Crispell with Yuma Uesaka (saxophones, clarinets), whose compositions constitute the set in its entirety. If *ConcertOTO* was about being in the moment, then this meeting of minds is about connecting moments as one would a constellation: each piece is minimally indicative of its title and, over time, seems to take on those characteristics as if by default. If anything connects the two projects, it's willingness to move wherever the winds of inspiration blow—this, despite the through-written nature of every melody Uesaka offers on the altar of improvisation. Hence the beautifully contradictory atmosphere at play. The title track and "Torrent" are exactly as they should be. The former feels like water that pools and eddies when blocked by fallen branches; the latter like a cannonball dive. Further dichotomies of description abound in the prophetic tinge of "Meditation", in which a bass clarinet courts the piano's deepest growls. Elsewhere, dialogues are pushed to extremes, each infused with equal parts catch and release, before funneling into "Ma / Space", for which the duo welcomes Chatori Shimizu on the shō (Japanese mouth organ) for an added touch of sunlight through branches.

For more information, visit matchlessrecordings.com and nottwo.com



Glimmer Glammer (Solo Trumpet)
Lina Allemano (Lumo)
The Same Is Always Different
Susana Santos Silva (s/r)
by Steven Loewy



Solo improv albums are difficult ventures: when they succeed they inspire but at their worst descend to solipsism. The two entries here, by Canadian Lina Allemano and Portuguese Susana Santos Silva, offer dramatically different perspectives on solo trumpet.

Allemano's *Glimmer Glammer* is a highly listenable and enjoyable venture filled with a plethora of ideas. Her roots are in the hardbop tradition, as is clear on three of the pieces: "Butchfink", highlighting muted trumpet with bucket-like runs, rapidly repeated phrases and an attractive tone; opening of "Portrait of Sticks", with its simple melodic head and confident spiraling and sometimes dazzling strings of notes and occasional distorted tones and trills; and closing "One Man Down", which ends with simple whistling, following an accessible series of more traditional open jazz phrasing, interspersed with whooshes and muted trumpet. "Clamour" takes a different tack, built on circular breathing: a single growling tone, unchanging unless you listen closely and notice the variations—an approach that Silva takes to another level on her date. What is most fascinating, though, is the variety of approaches and strategies pursued by Allemano. The title track, the most compelling piece, opens with percussion-like 'materials' and morphs to all sorts of advanced techniques, from rapid-fire notes to swooshes, muted tones, sucking and popping sounds and more. Although less than 40 minutes in length, this important album is a worthy part of Allemano's repertoire and further evidence of her growing skills.

Recorded at her home in Porto, Portugal, *The Same Is Always Different* is Silva's exploration of the extremes of silence and pure sound, a conceptual recording applying an austere mindfulness to solo trumpet. Silva has a distinguished career and has explored a variety of genres, including important albums such as *This Love*, with pianist Kaja Draksler and with a more jazz-oriented quintet on *Impermanence*, an album that, as with *The Same Is Always Different*, addresses the way we view changing phenomena. On lengthy opener "The", she drones for more than 20 minutes, adding only a metal cookie box as a mute, causing a buzzing sound. If you listen very closely, the single note changes slightly in its timbre, focus and vibration, though not much in its middling volume; it is slow and mysterious and may be perceived as spiritual by those in an open frame of mind. "Same" is overdubbed, lasting only a couple of minutes, but with a bit more movement. "Is" amplifies dramatically a swooshing sound, which, at first blush, seems static, but crackles and changes over time. "Always" features overdubbed sounds, producing a long drone, which, as with "The", evolves slowly over its 12 minutes but may be a tad more accessible due to manipulated sounds. The closing "Different" is probably the most welcoming, with a scratchy, louder vibration that moves slowly and with a single tonality, but clearly transforms slightly throughout. Silva has produced something, a document of our times, when many people are forced to stay in their homes, facing potential sameness and consequential boredom, a special album with a lot to say about life, but one that is difficult listening.

For more information, visit linaallemano.com and susanasantossilva.com

ALBUM NOTES



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SINAN ALIMANOVIĆ INTERNATIONAL BAND

I am an artist on the new album by Sinan Alimanović International Band – “Lejla” (2020). Since the album was named after my father’s composition, dedicated to me, I have an urge to say a few words about the project and to modestly convey our shared experience about the very process of making this album. My inspiration came from reading the album notes for the legendary album “Kind of Blue” – Miles Davis, that were also written by the great pianist on the record Bill Evans.

One of the finest spaces of facts of consciousness in human experience is the space of music. In a creative process based on both the Black American Music, as well as the European musical heritage, the art of improvisation is unavoidable as it all happens in real time. The album “Lejla” combines, in *duration*, different cultural backgrounds that merge into one, unique flow. Thus the Bosnian traditional song – *sevdalinka* (Track 1: “Sejdefa”), in musical preparation by Sinan Alimanović, performed as a trio starts to breathe as the rhythm changes form, while my minor blues “In Search for Freedom” (Track 2) arose from an experience ingrained in *sevdah* (the word *sevdah* derives from the Arabic word *sawda*, meaning *black bile*). In *duration*, in the Bergsonian sense, even intuitively, we can recognize a common field between spatially distant but essentially and even etymologically related concepts and practices grounded in human experience. By listening, but also by deciding to follow the experience of the term blues, we will feel that *sevdah* becomes *kind of blue(s)*, and that *blue* paints *kind of melancholy*. Only life and art are so naturally able to imprint traces in each other, to paint the outlines of the rich web in which the textures of experience are woven, no matter where we collect them. And music is, of all the arts, the most immediate in conveying these significant, humanistic messages, or rather, music is the most direct in articulating an authentic, sensory experience derived from that *new wholeness*. Music has the power to open, most naturally, the portal to that universal, timeless zone, on which Marcel Proust wrote that is “torn away of time”, and that zone is again in the very core and nature of the human understanding of time, in *duration* itself. In the third composition, the bandleader turns the course of this musical sailing towards the tradition of American Improvising Music and his own understanding of the composition “Body and Soul” (Track 3), shown in piano trio format. Already, at the next Sinan Alimanović’s straight-ahead composition “Sarajevo Remake” (Track 4), he pays tribute to the rich musical heritage left by the grand masters from the past, while simultaneously impressing his own author’s stamp and understanding of the sound of contemporary art music. In the next two compositions, the course again is oriented on lyrical conversations between piano, double bass and drums. A soulful, vital ballad “Falling” (Track 5) by Harvie S, allows us to sneak into the abundance of music that this author carries within himself, and which he elegantly shows through his solo on double bass. In “My Funny Valentine” (Track 6), as in “Body and Soul”, the trio again preserves the essential musicality of the composition while simultaneously reharmonizing it in a contemporary context.

The album begins with the composition “Sejdefa”, Alimanović’s adaptation of the traditional Bosnian song *sevdalinka*. Here, in the skillful overlap of drums, piano and double bass, you can feel the profusion of swing. The last composition on the album is an original song by Sinan Alimanović and was composed during the Siege of Sarajevo. The piece “Lejla” (Track 7) had its premiere more than fifteen years later, performed by the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra and soloists Ladislav Fidri and Adam Klemm. At the Made in New York Jazz Competition (2013) the composition “Lejla” was selected in the Top Five, by jury members Randy Brecker, Joe Lovano and Lenny White. The long journey of this tune is one of the reasons my dad decided to prepare it in a small formation. Here, the trio is joined by Adam Klemm (soprano saxophone). The composition “Lejla” completes the unique story in the universal language of music that grows into a bridge between Sarajevo and New York, and which was, again fatefully formed in 2015 as a result of unusual coincidences, or rather, synchronicities.

Namely, Sinan Alimanović and I met Harvie S at the Blue Note Jazz Club, in New York City, the day after my father’s performance at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center at the 2nd Annual Jazz Gala in 2015. Without a word exchanged before, Sinan and Harvie spontaneously connected by performing in duo “Confirmation” by Charlie Parker (Bird). From that moment on, Harvie S became part of our family in a musical, but also in a human sense. The composition “Confirmation” by Bird is significant also in the context of this album, because the overall sensibility of this release is conceived on the disseminated seeds of bebop. After the “fateful duet”, a strong foundation of the bridge between Sarajevo and New York was laid, and continued to be built with concert tours in Beijing (2017, 2019), a concert in Sarajevo (2017) and, finally, with the recording of this album (2018).

On the wall, in the studio where we recorded, owned by engineer Chris Sulit, hangs the work by Wassily Kandinsky, the painter who, with the synaesthetic approach showed that nuances, in visual arts, resonate with each other and produce, as Gerard McBurney wrote, “visual chords”. Harvie S, a unique prolific artist and educator who, by eternal dedication, earned his place in the family tree of jazz is a very important instrumentalist and composer on this release, but also a producer who gathered these fantastic musicians together.

During the breaks in the studio, I would go out and smoke a cigarette on the porch with Victor Lewis, whom I consider to be a renaissance artist. This led to many inspiring conversations which stream varied in constant, but akin transformations – from Victor’s reminiscences to collaborations with the artists such as Chet Baker, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Kenny Barron and Stan Getz to the common conclusions that water has memory and that we are all one. In the studio, on the other hand, without conventional words, we all experienced the intimacy of music, while photographer Christopher Drukker, sophisticatedly caught all the moments.

Music does not require the knowledge of languages other than music, and comprehension is achieved in frequencies, resonances and vibrations, in moving towards a common goal. This universal fluidity that Kandinsky aspired to through the sounding of colors, or Arthur Rimbaud through giving the colors to vowels, we also found by transforming two, geographically, distant worlds and merging them into one joint confluence, in real time. Now, that movement is coming towards you, dear audience.

The acquaintance between Sinan, Harvie and myself embraced Victor, Jed and Adam in one *duration* that gives the message of the *new wholeness*, which is always reflected in the other – the strings on Harvie S’s double bass resonates in relation to Sinan Alimanović’s touch on the restored Steinway & Sons piano, while Victor Lewis breathes the pulse of life into the body of this musical story, which is certainly more significant while listening to it, than reading about it. In the audio material and also through Jed Levy’s sound, you will recognize that special color, shade which is reflected in work of great masters like John Coltrane and Joe Henderson.

That June night, after the recording of the album was over, before going to bed, I listened to the recording “Miles Smiles” by the Miles Davis Quintet. It is a completely natural sequence of circumstances that this recording is released on Miles High Records ❖

BY LEJLA ALIMANOVIĆ

SINAN ALIMANOVIĆ piano, bandleader
 HARVIE S double bass, producer
 VICTOR LEWIS drums
 LEJLA ALIMANOVIĆ vocals
 JED LEVY tenor saxophone
 ADAM KLEMM soprano saxophone

“Sinan Alimanović is a world class musician. He is a great composer, pianist and arranger. He has great technical knowledge but he plays from the heart.” – Harvie S



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www.mileshighrecords.com / www.amazon.com
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/sinanalimanovic



Some Kind of Tomorrow
Jane Ira Bloom/Mark Helias (Radioteles Music)
by Jim Motavalli

These duets between longtime collaborators Jane Ira Bloom (soprano saxophone) and Mark Helias (bass) were recorded via the exchange of files in COVID-limited New York during 2020. They capture some of that period's isolation but sound hopeful too. If the overall tone is melancholy, maybe that's just what this particular combination of soprano and bass is going to yield. Bloom definitely has her own sound on the instrument. Helias is all empathy.

These two met back in the '70s in New Haven, which had a lively jazz scene at the time. The manifesto for this recording: "We didn't have to write anything. We didn't have to plan anything. We didn't even have to talk." But they talk plenty on their instruments and spontaneously create some indelible music. The title piece, for instance, is wistful and keeps sounding like it's about to segue into a standard.

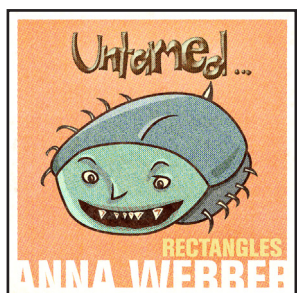
Helias has his bow out for "Star Talk" and Bloom plays short phrases in the horn's upper reaches. It's Earthrise on the Mars, or maybe whales calling to each other across a lonely ocean. "First Canvas" is more open, but at 1:03 it's over before it begins. "Magic Carpet" features playful soprano dancing over deep bass rumble, but also contains several meditative passages that build on closely heard responses.

Helias sets the tone for "Traveling Deep" with a cool three-note figure that inspires Bloom to some almost flute-like runs, then jumps the tempo before retreating back. "Willing" also gets the duo close to swinging before Bloom raises the emotional pitch with sharp cries. "Roughing It" has Helias laying down a walking pace as Bloom weaves around it. When Bloom slows—are they making camp for the night?—Helias is right there with her. This is the longest piece and typically shape-shifting.

"Far Satellites" brings out Helias' bow again. It attains almost a call-and-response feel, but with spare tones from a slow night at the space station bar and grille. "Pros and Cons" has some of Bloom's prettiest playing, contrasting with the more unsettled reality of "Drift"; Helias plays some amazing stuff halfway through the latter, an agitation waltz.

A lot of territory covered, without the players having to leave their socially distanced home bases. More than 40 years of intense collaboration in myriad settings obviates the need for up-close studio intimacy.

For more information, visit markhelias.bandcamp.com



Rectangles
Anna Webber (Out Of Your Head)
by Phil Freeman

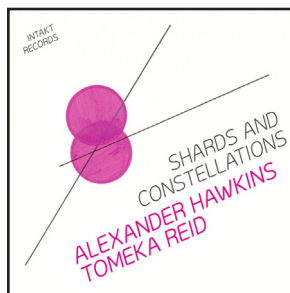
Saxophonist Anna Webber makes spiky, challenging art music that owes as much to modern composition as to the jazz tradition and probably more. On her 2016

album *Binary* (recorded with a bassless trio of pianist Matt Mitchell and drummer John Hollenbeck), she took passages from compositions for percussion by composers like Milton Babbitt, John Cage, Morton Feldman, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Edgard Varèse and Iannis Xenakis and expanded them into pieces for a chamber jazz ensemble. On *Both Are True*, the 2020 debut of a big band she co-leads with fellow saxophonist Angela Morris, the 19-member ensemble played music that was cinematic (bringing to mind Lalo Schifrin, J.G. Thirlwell and even Ennio Morricone's weirder scores) but also highly adventurous and which used the studio as a tool to terrific effect. Webber is someone who thinks before she plays and designs obstacle courses for her bandmates to navigate.

This album is pretty much the opposite of all that. It's a live recording featuring Webber, pianist Marc Hannaford, bassist Adam Hopkins and drummer Mark Ferber. Hannaford and Hopkins are part of the Morris-Webber Big Band; Ferber is making his first appearance in her catalogue. It's a single 35-minute piece, recorded live in Queens in December 2019 on a portable Zoom recorder and later polished in a studio by engineer Nathaniel Morgan, who really deserves credit as a fifth member of the group.

The music is an adaptation of "Reflections 3", which was split into three chunks on *Binary*. On that album, it was little more than a jagged, stuttering melody line, played a few times as interludes between longer compositions. Here, that same melody is disassembled and refracted with a kind of disciplined relentlessness; when Webber is extrapolating phrases, long breath after long breath, seemingly without pause, it's easy to think of Roscoe Mitchell's adventures in repetition and intensity. Hannaford, Hopkins and Ferber lock in behind her, creating a pounding rhythm that oh-so-gradually shifts into fluid swing. Through it all, Webber moves implacably forward, never looking back, making what could have been a forbiddingly intense performance into something raucously alive.

For more information, visit outofyourheadrecords.com



Shards and Constellations
Alexander Hawkins/Tomeka Reid (Intakt)
by Kurt Gottschalk

As is my general practice, I listened to this recording several times before reading any explanatory materials. I'm a fan of both pianist Alexander Hawkins and cellist Tomeka Reid and was excited to hear them together. In keeping with the trite-and-true maxim, I wanted to let the music speak for itself. Here's a note I made while re-listening, before reading the liner notes:

It's all too easy to pigeonhole intense and dynamic piano playing as "Cecil Taylor-esque". It's a loving tribute to the departed master, but is reductive enough to be nearly meaningless. Not entirely so, but very nearly. What it's meant to suggest is a performance (specifically on piano, but it needn't be so) in which ideas fly by too fast to fully grasp. It isn't just tempo, it's in the intelligence of the playing.

I feel the need to preface that note because in his liner notes the pianist and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Anthony Davis likens one of the album's eight improvised pieces to Taylor's early recordings. So, easy or not, the comparison, it seems, is apt and Davis and I are both right. But not as right as Hawkins and Reid, who are responsible for this exceptional

album. They're not just talented musicians but also smart ones, who don't just suggest a mood but convey a scene, with setting, lighting and time of day. It's really a lovely record.

There are a couple of respites during the hour in the inclusion of compositions by other departed masters, reflecting the voices of the duo. Muhal Richard Abrams' "Peace on You" and Leroy Jenkins' "Albert Ayler (His Life Was Way Too Short)" are palpable and beautiful resting points, almost oases in the intense dialogue. One can almost picture Hawkins and Reid stopping to listen, even while they're playing.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch

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Wabi Sabi
The Tiptons Sax Quartet & Drums (s/r)
I Love To See You Smile
3D Jazz Trio (Diva Jazz)
Eponymous
Artemis (Blue Note)
 by John Pietaro

In 1925 Lil Hardin Armstrong guided husband Louis stage-front and led his Hot Five from the shadows. Since then, women have taken the lead many times over, but the journey was in spite of a male-dominated industry.

Some 60+ years later this reviewer, rushing toward the downtown express at Union Square, became enraptured by the sound of four saxophonists playing magically interwoven lines. The train was missed but it was worth it. “We’re the Billy Tipton Memorial Saxophone Quartet,” Amy Denio announced to the whooping crowd. Tipton, who died in 1989, was a transgender male-identifying musician and bandleader of the ‘30s-70s whose closeted life inspired Denio and baritone saxophonist Babs Helle (now John Otto). The two founded the band in Seattle in 1988, though many others have come through the ranks, particularly after Denio and Jessica Lurie’s 2006 reformation of it as the Tiptons Sax Quartet. With two powerful altos (Lurie and Denio, doubling soprano and vocals, respectively), the current iteration is completed by Sue Orfield (tenor), Tina Richerson (baritone) and drummer Robert Kainar. If the band in its infancy was gripping, today it’s simply outstanding.

Wabi Sabi was inspired by the Japanese aesthetic principle of transience and imperfection and, ironically, produced an album that’s pretty damned perfect. On Richerson’s opener “December Dance”, the listener experiences tractor-beam transport to the Latin Quarter of long ago. Thriving on Kainar’s stormy presence, shifting mambos beneath *pasodobles* of a sort, the horns’ moves are unstoppable. This energy only strengthens through Denio’s fascinatingly arranged “El Gran Orinador”, flooded with solos. The title cut by Orfield maintains the dancefloor action before moving into a slower theme with soaring vocalized melody out front. Denio’s uniquely mournful voice shines in her “Root Dance” both before and during the start of a beautifully Balkan-inspired 7/8. The piece effortlessly melds this tradition with New Orleans, casting joyful lament. The second half of the album, then, stretches the concept further, a global embrace of culture championed through improvisation. Listen for Brazilian- and West African-inspired sounds, Eastern European modes, even jazz rock. The closer, Orfield’s “Working Song”, is anthemic, grown from a soft pentatonic strain, a call to order, perhaps to arms, as the saxophone choir insistently, symbolically sings and shouts over a steady beat.

I Love To See You Smile from pianist Jackie Warren, bassist Amy Shook and drummer Sherrie Maricle, is a set of (mostly) standards sitting firmly in the ‘40s-50s piano jazz tradition, though in this case, drummer-led. 3D, short for three divas, shines throughout, each with moments but always focusing on the whole. Their version of “Besame Mucho”, with layers of rhythm cascading from the drumkit and featuring crisp, swinging breaks, brings new life to an old gem. Danceability, not so much as a goal but rather a profound byproduct, propels the eight selections. While some of the adaptations are as expected, others are singular in approach (“Moonglow”). And the rich arco bass out front of “Angel Eyes”, accompanied by dark piano chords and only the subtlest of brushes, utterly lures in the ear. By the time bluesy piano— heavy on right-hand ostinato—takes the lead, even the casual listener will recognize the strength this track

would have as a single. The closer, “L.O.V.E.”, a beloved ballad, is heard uptempo with heat turned up during the trading of fours by Maricle and Shook, enlivening the entire set.

Jazz has always had “supergroups”, usually record label manipulations, ill-fitting ensemble members seeking the next bus out of the one-off. Not so Artemis, organized thoughtfully with a vision toward durability. As per musical director/pianist Renee Rosnes, “We came together when a European promoter requested an all-female ensemble, but after the second tour, we chose to make this a regular band.” In addition to Rosnes is clarinetist Anat Cohen, tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, bassist Noriko Ueda, drummer Allison Miller and vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant. The international, multi-generational septet was signed to the coveted Blue Note label to wide fanfare in later 2020.

The sounds on their eponymous debut are as tight, professional, swinging and hip as one would expect. Miller’s opener “Goddess of the Hunt” is a rollicking venture calling on the listener to join said foray with the band’s namesake. Miller offers layers of pulsations, driving the rest with Latin-esque fills ending in crackling accents. Locked in are Rosnes and Ueda, adding sparkle through heavy rhythm under melodic passages recalling Quincy Jones’ moving, throbbing scores. “Frida”, a minor-key work by Aldana with her roving tenor out front of clouded harmonies, carries much of the complexity and emotional distance in the great artist’s paintings. By contrast, Rosnes’ “Big Top” is overt, filled with rapid-fire runs and a sizzling drum solo. The strength of the pianist’s improvisation segment matches that of her comping, but unfortunately, this intensity doesn’t survive the rest of the date. The album embraces ‘inside’ playing, well, to the softer side – surely this isn’t problematic, but in the company of the many mellow sounds that just fit the dreaded “light jazz” genre, this hunt braves a more dangerous path than intended. Artemis’ level of artistry can and should ignite still newer generations of musicians, female and male, toward the untold strength of womanhood. It’s here, impatiently waiting, still struggling to be unleashed.

For more information, visit thetiptonssaxquartet.com, divajazz.com and bluenote.com



More Than Another Day
Lisa Hilton (Ruby Slippers Productions)
 by Mark Keresman

Pianist/composer Lisa Hilton counts both the influence of European-based classical music and jazz as her inspirations. *More Than Another Day* is her latest album and she has got a couple of aces up her sleeve: bassist Luques Curtis, who has a considerable Latin jazz resumé, and drummer Rudy Royston, often heard to good effect with trumpeter Dave Douglas, Bill Frisell and many others.

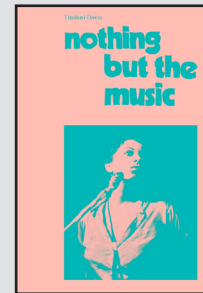
The title track, one of nine Hilton originals, is the opener and sets the pace nicely. It’s beautifully midtempo and has a cheery, sunshine-y feel. Cole Porter’s “I’ve Got You Under My Skin”, the set’s sole standard, is played for muted shadows; it’s still upbeat, but in a slightly guarded manner. Rich, gently rolling chords in the ornate introduction, framed by bass and drums, are faintly dramatic, adding a bit of turbulence. “Karma Chaos” is a nice midtempo cooker, Curtis and

Royston laying down a choppy magnetic rhythmic figure with Hilton jauntily essaying away over-top. One of the dandiest aspects of Hilton’s playing is her tidy, slightly witty sense of restraint. The closer, “Today I Looked At Love”, features lusciously lovely rhapsodic piano and crisp, considerably probing drumming.

More Than Another Day is a batch of easygoing jazz of considerable substance. It doesn’t cut corners nor is it high-handedly “artistic”. Hilton is an inheritor/successor to the mantle of Erroll Garner: classy, intelligent and accessible without bowing to commercial-type compromise.

For more information, visit lisahiltonmusic.com

IN PRINT



Nothing but the Music
Thulani Davis (Blank Forms Editions)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

Thulani Davis is a witness. She’s not just that, of course. She’s a talented poet. She’s a playwright, journalist, librettist, novelist and screenwriter. She’s a scholar and assistant professor of AfroAmerican studies at the University of Wisconsin.

She’s also a fan. Davis knows the musicians she references in *Nothing but the Music* well but remains and writes as a fan, which gives her expert testimony all the more weight.

Her expertise added voice to the Blank Forms reprinting of the late multi-instrumentalist Joseph Jarman’s *Black Case Vol. 1 & II: Return From Exile* in 2019, a poignant and revealing collection of poetry, prose and diary entries originally published in 1974. She wrote an introduction to that edition with the unique insight of having been married to the author.

Her circles through the orbits of Jarman and the Art Ensemble of Chicago (the band through which Jarman became a name in outré jazz households) and their associates of the decade after Albert Ayler and John Coltrane left the playing field inform this slim volume.

The book includes dedications to Cecil Taylor and Henry Threadgill, but also to Thelonious Monk—in a poem written on the day of his death in 1982—and choreographer Dianne McIntyre and an unknown street musician. They’re not always poems about those figures, but they’re inspired by encounters with their art. They’re verses about bearing witness.

Writing at, or soon after, or about a gig by Taylor, Andrew Cyrille and Jimmy Lyons, in a poem titled “C.T. at the Five Spot”, for example, Davis seems to reflect both internal and external states of being there: “commandin’ a state / of the meanness / of the sweetness / of the time it takes / of the space it needs / of the weight of old air / it breathes / & sees like knives thru the thickness of flesh / & the blindness of our very selves / I have heard this music / ever since I can remember / I have heard this music.” Davis’ vivid poems document moments from those fabled days not with setlists but with snapshots of her mind and soul.

For more information, visit blankforms.org/publication/thulani-davis-nothing-but-the-music



Daring Mind
Jihye Lee Orchestra (Motéma Music)
Vanishing Points (Plays The Music of Dirk Strakhof)
The Composers' Orchestra Berlin/Hazel Leach
(Jazzhaus Musik)
Pannonica
Gina Schwarz (Cracked An Egg)
 by George Kanzler

Adventurous ensemble writing, as well as surprising variety, can be found on these three albums, featuring differently sized and configured ensembles, all incidentally led by women. Jihye Lee's Orchestra is configured in the classic big band mold—brass, reeds and rhythm—but she eschews the usual swing tropes, suggesting comparisons to Maria Schneider or Darcy James Argue (who produced *Daring Mind*). The Composers' Orchestra Berlin [COB] mixes three reeds, two trumpets and a tuba, with a four or five-piece string section, plus piano, guitar, bass and drums. Bassist Gina Schwarz' *Pannonica* ensemble is a nonet with trumpet/flugelhorn, trombone, soprano saxophone/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, guitar and drums.

Daring Mind is a consistently fascinating aural adventure. Lee creates distinct sonic landscapes in her arrangements, often beginning, as on "Suji", all in major chords, from a small kernel from one instrument that builds across and up sectionally to a climactic unfurling of solos (piano, clarinet). Lee often employs rhythms not normally associated with big band jazz, from martial 2/4 and 4/4 to floating, semi-rubato waves. Her take on a flagwaver, "I Dare You", is full of whirling reeds and clashing riffs, Quinsin Nachoff's tenor wailing over jangling riffs before spirited massed ensemble shouts take it out. A metronome-like time centers "Relentless Mind", featuring guest trumpeter Sean Jones, who also appears on the power ballad "Struggle Gives You Strength". "Dissatisfied Mind" mixes instruments in a cubistic dissonance, individual voices emerging and submerging into the swirling ensemble before a baritone coda. The closer, "GB", builds from trumpet and piano up to a big brassy, cinematic climax (Lee hopes to write music for films in the future).

Conducted by C.O.B. founder Hazel Leach, *Vanishing Points* features the compositions of bassist Dirk Strakhof, whose interests run all the way from '60s horror TV shows and hurricanes to paintings, J.S. Bach and Egyptian music. The latter gives us the CD's two best tracks: "Tahir Square" begins with a round from the strings, answered by tuba-led horns morphing into a bright, bouncy theme before cleverly mixing strings, trumpet and saxophone in a Middle-Eastern version of New Orleans polyphony, while "Dos Danzas", "inspired by the Egyptian music of Mohamed Abdelwahab", features guitar over rhythms led by the Egyptian dharbouka drum, violin, trumpet and cello soloing over the contagious rhythms. Strakhof's command of strings is impressive throughout, as he blends them with horns fluently as on his Bach tribute, "Passacaglia", and his blend of strings and trumpets on "Belphegor", his reminiscence of a '60s TV show. He also incorporates electric piano and guitar into a heady sonic mix of "Four Steps Into The Dark".

Pannonica consists of two CDs, the first, with 11 tracks, an hour long; the second, with 12 tracks, about half that. Three short tracks on Disc One are bass solos; six short tracks on Disc Two are ensemble mashups. Schwarz' compositions on Disc One range from inside to outside, in and out of tempos, foot-tapping to anarchic. The full ensemble, with strings, is employed for various effects on most of the long tracks, the best, like "Dark Glasses", "Four Steps" and "Lily of the Nile", building momentum through enticing solos and

solid ensembles. Disc Two doesn't make much use of the strings and tracks rarely coalesce beyond dissonance and unfulfilled aspirations. Exceptions are the Middle-Eastern themed "Baharat" and "Road Trip A22", with a Philipp Nykrin piano solo right out of Cecil Taylor or Don Pullen.

For more information, visit motema.com, jazzhausmusik.de and crackedanegg.com



Exolinger
Sarah Bernstein (577 Records)
Solo Songs For Instruments
Ig Henneman (Wig)
MYASMO
Mia Zabelka (Setola di Maiale)
 by John Pietaro

On *Exolinger*, Sarah Bernstein delves into the fathoms of mystical terrain she's carved out for some years, albeit this time alongside only her violin- and voice-generated effects. Bernstein's strengths as instrumentalist and composer have been matched in recent performances and recordings by her mastery of digital sound. Cavernous reverb, echo at multi-speeds, orchestral hits and caustic percussives triggered live accompany her prodigious playing, high-lonesome vocalizations and spoken word. The overall effect is riveting, tapping into the territory of Laurie Anderson but with a naked embrace of not only post-punk aesthetics but also its inbred nihilism. To call this music "hardcore" would be unfair, yet *Exolinger* could be the underground soundtrack bridging no wave and steampunk. In this sense, the industrial electronics of "Ghosts Become Crowds", its layers of oppressive sound beneath relatively pure vocalization, act as a latter-day Lydia Lunch. However, on "The Plot" the poetry is set plainly against effects of "music, sound and language", at points is reminiscent of Adrian Belew/King Crimson's "Elephant Talk": "word/sounded language/stated listening/of dancers/subliminal language/ chaos of carelessness... unfamiliar music shared in an unknown tongue". Her inclusion of the accelerando riff from "21st Century Schizoid Man" wasn't missed and on this cut it evolves into the darkest of soundscapes. The density maintains into the following selections. Bernstein surmises in "We Coast": "How strong is your will/ It lasts a few hours/ And then we coast". With *Exolinger*, taken as an entity, the will is abiding.

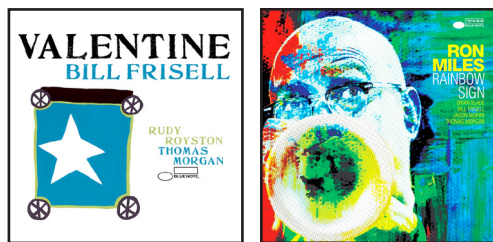
For *Solo Songs For Instruments*, a collection of five pieces, Dutch violinist/composer Ig Henneman forged a new standard in the integration of artform, with each selection viscerally inspired by works of international literature. As Bas van Putten writes in the liner notes, "Ig Henneman analyzed five poems for the musical elements within and behind the words"; however it's clear that each instrumental work, all of which incorporate improvisation, were shaped as much about the performer as writer. Opener "Solo Song for Cello - As If" is an immediate attention-grabber performed by Lidy Blijdorp. Based on Emily Dickinson's "I felt a Cleaving in my Mind", the piece showcases 20th Century music's unleashing and well captures the conflicted and bipolar struggles of the author. Blijdorp's attack, her adaptation of the composed piece as well as free playing, all speak of Dickinson's tortured words as does the poem's frail recitation. This leads effectively into "Solo Song for Violin - In the Storm of Roses" performed by Diamanda La Berge Dramm most icily, with only the slightest evidence of bowing vibrato. The associated poetry is by Ingeborg Bachmann, the post-war Austrian poet and librettist whose works explored Fascism's latter-day effects on

women. The piece bears great melodic leaps and the use of false harmonics and double-stops only solidifies the emotional impact of the poem, sang hauntingly. The following three works are "Solo Song for Bass Clarinet/Clarinet - the Motion Caused", inspired by Anna voor de Wind; "Solo Song for Viola - Ten Lines", inspired by Nanao Sakaki's "Soil for Legs", performed by Elisabeth Smalt; and "Solo Song for Bassoon - Hardwood Floorboards", inspired by Sarah Lawson's "Hans and Anneke's Lakeland Terriers", performed by Dana Jessen. It is only with selections three and five, with wind instruments concurrent to spoken word, that the identity of the uncredited speaker comes into question. Henneman may just turn out to be that forlorn, wandering voice.

MYASMO by Austrian violinist Mia Zabelka achieves a uniquely old-world quality as each of the four works, recorded across much of northern Europe in 2018 and 2019, are respectively titled "London", "Le Havre" [France], "Vienna" and "Tønsberg" [Norway]. Though a major voice in European free improvisation and new music, Zabelka holds a special place in the NYC experimental music scene touting collaborations with Pauline Oliveros, Alvin Curran and Lydia Lunch and important dates at The Kitchen and New Music America, among many more. As per usual, Zabelka is working in a purely improvised setting. *MYASMO* opens with dramatic bowing drawing on the instrument's most vocal tendencies: angling the bow during strokes, rapid percussive rebounding attacks and pizzicato accents bring out a mournfulness unachievable without such expansive techniques or such a powerful improviser. While solo recordings are far from uncommon within the avant garde, Zabelka's performances carry gripping melody that taunts and lures in the ear; "London" is an excellent example of this. The quickly moving passages, particularly when blended with her whispery, staccato vocalizations, conjure visuals that can be described as vividly ghostly, yet stunningly beautiful. Perhaps the piece is really for wayward souls of the infamous Tower of London? "Le Havre" makes use of extended techniques and percussive vocalizations as a central aspect, the latter recalling Yoko Ono, and the piece offers a more defined anger, almost a madness. Dizzying presto strokes that are all-encompassing contrast greatly to full-bodied long tones, which build a theme before erupting into harmonic-laced shrieks. "Vienna" begins as an extension of the first, somewhat unifying the set with explorations of dramatic themes that splinter and shred. Listen for the 6'35" point when an undefinable, exhaustive aura of sound leaves your stereo smoking.

For more information, visit 577records.com, stichtingwig.com and setoladimaiale.net

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Valentine
Bill Frisell (Blue Note)
Rainbow Sign
Ron Miles (Blue Note)
 by Thomas Conrad

Defying the pandemic, the Blue Note label has been on a roll. One sure sign: It beat out ECM in the latest *JazzTimes* Critics Poll. Blue Note albums by people like Ambrose Akinmusire, Gerald Clayton, Immanuel Wilkins and Joel Ross were all over the “Best Of” lists for 2020. Here are two more high-level releases from Blue Note, one great (*Valentine*), one very good (*Rainbow Sign*). Both feature the preeminent guitarist of our time, Bill Frisell, the first in his optimal format, the trio, the second in an allstar band. Ron Miles’ other sidemen are no less than Jason Moran, Thomas Morgan (who also appears on *Valentine*) and Brian Blade.

Frisell has played with bassist Morgan and drummer Rudy Royston for years, but they had never recorded as a trio. Frisell intends *Valentine* as “evidence” of this ensemble’s “magic”, which he defines as “everyone trusting each other...you feel safe enough to try anything.” In presenting his evidence, Frisell draws upon his preferred musical genres. There are standards like Billy Strayhorn’s “A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing”. It takes 30 seconds to coalesce from floating guitar figures, but once Frisell has found the song he never truly leaves it, even as he sometimes breaks it off mid-phrase and appends new melodies. There are originals, some new (“Electricity”, a wicked little set of hooks) some old (“Winter Always Turns to Spring”). Frisell has never been sufficiently acknowledged as a composer. He writes tunes so fine they can be played alongside Strayhorn. A representative Frisell album must contain some Americana. “Wagon Wheels” resonates as shared history. There are staples of popular culture like “What the World Needs Now Is Love” that Frisell utterly transfigures in his stinging, glistening, ringing guitar language. There is a traditional, “We Shall Overcome”. It is the final track on *Valentine*. Frisell often closes his concerts with it. He says, “I’m going to keep playing it ‘til there is no need anymore.” He sustains the faith of this song while making it new for our present moment.

It is unusual for a major leader to work in other people’s bands, but Frisell, who possesses uncommon energy, curiosity and generosity, has been popping up as a sideman for years. His contributions to *Rainbow Sign* are always vivid and surprising. Overall, it is hard to imagine that Miles could have found four more articulate voices to join him in fleshing out his original pieces. Most were composed in the summer of 2018 while his father was dying. But *Rainbow Sign* never sounds mournful. Its pulsing momentums sound like life. Miles says that he wrote these songs while serving as a caregiver to his father in his last days, during which time the two reached a new level of closeness. Press notes call this album a “spiritual document”.

While Miles’ compositions are stronger in the aggregate than individually, they create, cumulatively, an uplifting sense of affirmation, a glow of tenderness and reconciliation. Miles is the only soloist who stretches out. He plays cornet instead of trumpet, in a warm, open tone and his journeys are always fulfilling, even when, or especially when, they wander off course, like on “Binder”. The other players all practice concentration and concision but they maximize their moments, including drum maestro Blade. Frisell and Moran are both capable of stopping the show. Frisell’s statements are burned into the air of this humane album and the piano interludes have just

enough density and dissonance to remind you that they come from Moran. But it is fitting that *Rainbow Sign* is less about private brilliance and more about communal creativity. Most often the solos are collective ventures, like on “This Old Man”, where everyone including Morgan weaves in and out of Miles’ muted lines. It feels wrong to call *Rainbow Sign* a concept album. It is more like an offering.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. Frisell live-streams Mar. 6th at alternativeguitarsummitcamp.com



Without Dimensions (featuring Ben Monder)
Júlia Karosi (Doublemoon-Challenge)
Slip Sliding (with Ben Grayson)
Rob Burke/Ben Monder/Tom Rainey (FMR)
Live at the 55 Bar
Ben Monder/Tony Malaby/Tom Rainey (Sunnyside)
 by George Grella

Modesty is generally considered a virtue, but too much can be a vice. That may be too strong for music, especially jazz, but it’s a useful metaphor for looking at how guitarist Ben Monder fits into different groups and musical situations. Because fit in he does—a musician’s musician and ensemble player *par excellence*, he often sits in the ambiguous position of being both complementary and the best part of the overall proceedings.

That’s the general case with these three albums. On one, Júlia Karosi’s *Without Dimensions*, his presence makes up a fraction of the music, but he looms large over the whole, to the relative detriment of the leader. On the two albums credited to groups of musicians, he’s often the strongest and most interesting voice and though everyone is trying to play together, the success of the music hangs on how well the other musicians integrate with Monder. The oddity of each situation is that Monder for the most part is playing modestly, following the concepts and values of others.

Without Dimensions sits a bit apart from the other two albums. Karosi is a vocalist, to begin with, and it’s a vocal album though one with little in the way of text. The other feature is that the music is centered around Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, with more than half the tracks being jazz arrangements of themes from the two Hungarian composers. The original material is from Karosi and it is very much flavored by her two Hungarian musical forebears: minor key; lightly dissonant, folk-like melodies; uneven meters. Monder is the featured artist and he’s quoted in the booklet expressing his pleasure to be part of the project and saying, “Bartók has probably been the single most important composer to me.” And he does shine, his fuzzy, distorted tone deliciously doubling the singer’s silvery, pure voice, his solo turns full of energy and commitment and the crunchy wash of his sound in the background on many tracks one of the best things about the album. He’s the most interesting element and in this context brings some slight, but meaningful, disappointment with the record. The melodic and rhythmic contours of Bartók seem to be the only things the leader hears in his music; there’s no exploration of colors (Bartók was an outstanding orchestrator) and nothing that touches on the sexuality and violence that is important in his music, this even with quoting from the Prologue to *Bluebeard’s Castle*. Not a bad record, but a promise hinted at and unfulfilled.

Drummer Tom Rainey is the other common link through the other two albums, both credited collaboratively, though *Slip Sliding* is under the leadership of saxophonist Rob Burke. It’s also the most focused of the two. The last four tracks are a group improvisation, but the rest is organized around Burke’s composed material and there’s further post-production

integration from Ben Grayson, credited with “Electronics and Editing”. Monder and Rainey are a tight rhythm section, the former skillfully defining the tempos and meters of the music, setting the downbeats into which Burke steps and Rainey colors. The various grooves and tune-based music works and Burke is a strong and interesting lead voice with Monder behind him. It’s the improvisations, “Discordat 1-4”, which are hit or miss and where the sheer power and attraction of Monder’s playing overpowers everything else. His colleagues are no slouches, but this feels very much like sandlot ballplayers and Mike Trout.

The *Live at the 55 Bar* trio has the same issues, though the setting makes them less pronounced, and the heights, when reached, are considerable. There are three tracks, “Suite 3320” in three parts, each following the same shape of a quiet, yet dramatic opening, rising in an arc as the musicians improvise. Monder’s playing is mostly about timbre, a multidimensional sound-world into which saxophonist Tony Malaby and Rainey fit. There is time spent in each part as the musicians suggest ideas and circle around each other, then a point where everything gels and the music is magnificent, slabs of involving, expressive sound. It can take some time to get there, though; “Part II” is 29 minutes and it’s only around the last seven where everything comes together. Throughout the album, it sounds like Monder is content to create possibilities for Malaby and Rainey, neither of whom sound quite connected to each other, but when the guitarist takes a more active role, everyone catches fire. If only he was less modest!

For more information, visit doublemoon.de, fmr-records.com and sunnysiderecords.com. Monder live-streams Mar. 6th at alternativeguitarsummitcamp.com and Mar. 10th with Jerome Sabbagh at smallslive.com.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Ab Baars, George Dumitriu, Ig Henneman, Paul Sola Masafrets – *Aforismen Aforisme Aforismes* (Evil Rabbit)
- Yelena Eckemoff – *Adventures of the Wildflower* (L&H Prod.)
- Futari – *Beyond* (Libra)
- Elisabeth Harnik/Paal Nilssen-Love – *Tangram* (Catalytic Sound)
- Claron McFadden, Kristina Fuchs, Oguz Büyükberber, Tobias Klein – *37FERN* (Trytone)
- Stephanie Nilles – *I pledge allegiance to the flag – the white flag* (Sunnyside)
- Tomeka Reid/Joe Morris – *Combinations* (RogueArt)
- Veronica Swift – *The Bitter Earth* (Mack Avenue)
- Aki Takase/Christian Weber/Michael Griener – *Auge* (Intakt)
- Yuma Uesaka/Cat Toren/Colin Hinton – *Ocelot* (577 Records)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

- Hasaan Ibn Ali – *Metaphysics: The Lost Atlantic Album* (Omnivore)
- Don Cherry – *The Summer House Sessions* (Blank Forms)
- Jeremiah Cyerman/Charlie Looker – *A Horizon Made of Canvas* (Astral Spirits)
- Futari – *Beyond* (Libra)
- Alexander Hawkins – *Togetherness Music* (For Sixteen Musicians Featuring Evan Parker + Riot Ensemble) (Intakt)
- Julius Hemphill – *The Boyé Multi-National Crusade For Harmony* (mbari Production Company)
- Kari Ikonen – *Impressions, Improvisations and Compositions* (Ozella)
- Calvin Keys – *Shawn-Neeq* (Black Jazz-Real Gone)
- Zeena Parkins/Mette Rasmussen/Ryan Sawyer – *Glass Triangle* (Relative Pitch)
- Yuma Uesaka/Marilyn Crispell – *Streams* (Not Two)

Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director



Talking Drums
Bobby Wiens (Cellar Music)
 by Marco Cangiano

As this is Bobby Wiens' debut CD, a few bio notes are warranted. Born and raised in Calgary, Canada, the drummer received a Bachelors degree in Jazz Studies at Vancouver's Capilano University. He eventually completed a Masters of Music degree from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, where he currently resides and recorded this CD last July wearing masks and respecting social distancing as a testament that life and music won't stop.

A funky piano-drums duo opens "Speaks Volume" and sets the scene for a most pleasant and swinging affair. Pianist Spencer Zweifel relies on a very rhythmic use of his left hand, a reminder of how underrated Horace Silver's influence remains. Austin Cebulski's playful tenor saxophone states the theme jointly with David Baker's walking bass. At the center of it all Wiens drives and pushes his partners. The CD's title may thus be slightly misleading as his approach is very far from being the typical bombastic one showcased by many drummer-led groups; he drums almost *sotto voce*, as on Bud Powell's "So Sorry Please", a trio featuring guitarist Jack Roben's warm sound, with a seamless switch from brushes to sticks and almost subdued

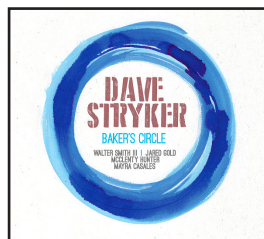
exchanges. The same trio shines in Thad Jones' "Little Rascal on a Rock". Wiens gives the impression of thinking through every accent, never relying on patterns or falling into the temptation of showing off technique. He is also not loathe to pause here and there, adding to the dynamics in a subtle yet most effective way.

The choice of the material, originals with mostly lesser known standards, provides for a varied menu within which each player sounds extremely comfortable stretching their boundaries. This is the case with Cebulski's "A la Georgie", featuring another Silver-ish intervention by Zweifel. Roben sounds particularly at ease, taking his time at picking the right notes and delivering fluidly. "Doll of the Bride" is the longest and most complex piece, offering Wiens and his partners the opportunity to explore the traditional tune though a long Middle Eastern introduction featuring unhurried drums leading halfway through to the bouncing theme. Wiens' "Bill" is a languid ballad well interpreted by restrained tenor and featuring a tuneful bass solo. Harold Mabern's "Beehive" concludes the proceedings on a high—and fast—note with all hands on deck. A brilliant debut.

For more information, visit cellarlive.com. This project live-streams Mar. 6th at museperformancespace.com.



Blue Soul (with Bob Mintzer and the WDR Big Band)
Baker's Circle
Dave Stryker (Strikezone)
 by Ken Dryden



Most of guitarist Dave Stryker's dates as a leader or co-leader have been in small groups, so the invitation to record with the North German state-funded WDR Big Band was a rare opportunity too good to miss. His friend Bob Mintzer wrote the orchestrations and most of the arrangements and Stryker sounds very inspired.

The soul-infused opener, Marvin Gaye's "Trouble Man", in a chart penned by Stryker with his regular organ player Jared Gold, has creative background riffs backing his hip solo. Gaye's biggest hit, "What's Going On", is all too often given a pedestrian setting but the Stryker-Gold arrangement avoids that pitfall with a brisker tempo and effective use of horns and reeds, adding Karolina Strassmayer's passionate alto saxophone and Billy Test's hip organ to complement soulful guitar. Stryker's blistering scoring of Prince's "When Doves Cry" is almost unrecognizable compared to the tedious original. Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman" will forever be associated with the late Glenn Campbell, but jazz musicians like Stryker have found much to like about this '60s song. Mintzer's faster tempo and richly textured background writing, along with the superb rhythm section, buoy the features for trombonist Andy Hunter and the leader.

Baker's Circle is from Dave Stryker's quartet with Gold and drummer McClenty Hunter, both of whom are frequent collaborators. Tenor saxophonist Walter Smith III is a new addition, though he is also a veteran player with chops to spare. This studio session has the feeling of a live gig with its high energy level, an audience all that's missing. The playlist runs from catchy originals to R&B, Brazilian music and standards. The leader's "Tough" is brisk postbop with plenty of sparks from each of the soloists. Cole Porter's "Everything I Love" enables Stryker, Smith and Gold to offer a virtual master class soloing in a ballad setting. Stryker's longtime interest in R&B and soul is reflected in his inventive arrangements of Gaye's "Inner City Blues" and Lloyd Price's "Trouble (No. 2)". The latter

has a funky urban swagger punctuated by vocal-like tenor and the solid groove of Hunter and guest percussionist Mayra Casales. Leon Russell's "Superstar" is best known from The Carpenters' 1971 gold record, though it has been recorded by other vocalists. Stryker strips it down to basics, with his guitar replacing the vocal, as Gold and Hunter (the latter on brushes) provide a perfect backdrop in this miniature.

Both CDs are valuable additions to the already sizable Stryker discography and reinforce his status as one of the top guitarists of his generation.

For more information, visit davestryker.com. Stryker live-streams Mar. 20th at alternativeguitarsummit.com.

DROP THE NEEDLE



I'm Funky Now
Melvin Sparks
 (Westbound-Tidal Waves Music)
 by Anna Steegmann

Melvin Sparks (1946-2011), a Texas native, started to play guitar at 11. At 13, he worked with B.B. King; in high school, he joined The Upsetters started by Little Richard, a band that backed Curtis Mayfield, Sam Cooke and Marvin Gaye. An excellent guitar player full of exuberance, he mastered soul jazz, hardbop, blues and funk equally well and in his own words played "jazz over a funky beat." He was much in demand during the '60-70s as a session musician and released 11 albums as a leader. The anniversaries of his birth (Mar. 22nd) and death (Mar. 15th) are coming up, so Tidal Waves' release of a deluxe vinyl edition of *I'm Funky Now* will surely be welcomed by his fans.

The album was recorded in Detroit in 1976 for Westbound. Disco had become more popular than soul, jazz and blues. Clubs had replaced live bands with DJs. We don't know much about the musicians who backed Sparks. Most likely, they were part of Funkadelic and Parliament. The seven tracks on the album feature disco, soul-jazz and funk as well as slow jazz tunes. It's a great album. Unfortunately, Westbound (now Ace Records) decided not to release it until 2017.

The opening title instrumental is an impressive funky dance tune with a great groove that will make listeners get up and move to the beat. Next is "Disco Booty", a Sparks composition mixing disco and funk. The rest of the tracks are by Sam Kennedy, Lulu Laurent and Cole Simon.

His career at stake, Sparks jumped on the disco bandwagon and blended it with funk. The lively, joyous "Make It Good" features him scatting and sparring with the horns. The rhythm section keeps it funky. The tempo slows down in "Love Tones", "The Truth Hurts" and "You're Gonna Make It." These tracks—dreamy, jazzy, and laid-back—should appeal to his old fans less captivated by disco. "I'm Gonna Funk You Up" revisits the funky dancefloor music of the opening track and presents not only his electrifying guitar playing but also his vocals.

This album is an important addition to any record collection.

For more information, visit tidalwavesmusic.com

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In The Arctic Dreamtime
Ivar Grydeland/Henry Kaiser (Rune Grammofon)
The Secret Handshake With Danger, Vol. One
**Olie Brice, Binker Golding, Henry Kaiser,
 N.O. Moore, Eddie Prévost (577 Records)**
A Love Supreme Electric (A Salvo Inspired by John Coltrane)
**Vinny Golia, John Hanrahan, Henry Kaiser,
 Wayne Peet, Mike Watt (Cuneiform)**
 by Stuart Broomer

Long involved in various forms of improvised music, California-based guitarist Henry Kaiser has ranged from rock-informed music to Yo Miles!, his long-standing exploration of Miles Davis' electric years. He has also created soundtracks, through it all emerging as one of the guitar's most specific virtuosos, a master of altered sounds and dimensions uncanny in their complexity and freedom from the instrument's traditions.

A special dimension of Kaiser's career is his relationship to cold water. A scientific diver in the American Antarctic program, he has both experienced that world and created film soundtracks in the environment. *In The Arctic Dreamtime* is a series of improvised duets with Norwegian fellow guitarist Ivar Grydeland, a new soundtrack for explorer Roald Amundsen's classic documentary *Ellsworths flyveekspedition 1925*, charting his attempt to reach the North Pole. The guitarists' mastery of reverberation is hardly a technical exercise: echo and delay transform sustained guitar sounds into hauntings, phantom voices emerging through the resonance, suggesting spectres in a frozen world and strange summonings,

lost spirits calling out to entranced seamen. In "To the North," droplets of cold, bright sound crystallize into glassy, light-filled spheres, eventually drifting into clouds of fuzzed sound suggesting the wakes of sea creatures. It's a sonic world in which stillness seems to reveal motion and movement leads toward a still, pristine world. There is great beauty, sometimes lightly mobile, as in the dance-like patterns emerging in "Spitsbergen", sometimes ominous, as in the irregular and dissonant patterns of "N25". The music aims to represent the Arctic experience of "time out of time" or "everywhen" and seems to succeed, even in the cascading, echoing runs of the concluding title track.

Secret Handshake With Danger, Vol. One is Kaiser in a quintet with English musicians exploring terrain similar to that of Yo Miles! but taken further: drummer Eddie Prévost has a 55-year history with free improvisation in AMM and other groups, while bassist Olie Brice and tenor saxophonist Binker Golding are driving forces, bringing jazz fundamentals and funk elements to the fore. Guitarist N.O. Moore, a frequent Prévost collaborator, plays guitar with a radical aplomb as electronic as Kaiser's own. The music is genuinely free, with two extended forays embracing different voices and rhythms, moving together plurally. Tenor swirls as basslines drive forward. Meanwhile, patriarch Prévost knits everything together, including the mad tapestry of blips, whizzes and blasts that Kaiser and Moore generate, part of a collective dance willing with the others to sacrifice conventional order for sonic ecstasy. It's a deal worth making, since there's coherence almost everywhere, and sonic ecstasy is definitely at a premium.

A Love Supreme Electric may be the most ambitious. This two-CD quintet session seeks its own relationship with the past, linking two interrelated suites recorded

in the mid '60s: John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* and *Meditations*. It's definitely electric. Kaiser's guitar ensures that, but the band also includes Mike Watt on electric bass and Wayne Peet on Hammond and Yamaha organs. Vinny Golia is on saxophones and John Hanrahan drums. Those suites represent both Coltrane's acknowledged masterpiece and a key work in his final tumultuous period, in large part owing to Pharoah Sanders' presence on the first released version of *Meditations*. This 66-minute suite seeks its own ground amid Coltrane's most intense work, but it also hews to a complex sequence of distinct thematic structures. There are infernal and celestial energies set loose and the band never makes the common mistake of trying to tame Coltrane's music. It's the combination of Golia and Kaiser that makes this so powerful. The former approaches this music with his own sound and an approach that owes at least as much to Sanders as Coltrane. Interestingly, so does Kaiser. When the two reach "Joy" (included on the earlier quartet recording but not the first released sextet one), Kaiser finds an extraordinary guitar sound, his wavering sustained tones resembling a shakuhachi, which then breaks to an overdriven electric guitar sound. He often adds the kind of sonic mayhem Sanders provided, combining with Golia to create the illusion of two saxophones as they pass through and over the sheer heft and complexity of drums, organ and bass. The presence of electronics adds another distinctive quality: brighter and funkier than Coltrane (that Hammond a soul jazz signature), adding a different social dimension while pressing toward the music's exalted and elegiac power.

For more information, visit runegrammofon.com, 577records.com and cuneiformrecords.com. Kaiser live-streams Mar. 21st at alternatieoguitarsummit.com.



ESP-DISK' MARCH RELEASES

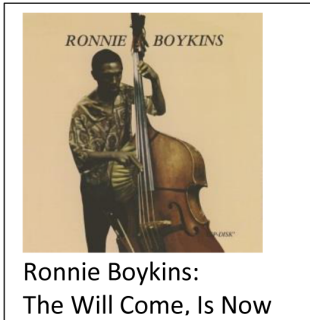
"The Flow Trio do that. Flow. They flow in a free manner. They flow because each player sets up the other players with what he does, allowing them to invent fertile extended collective improvisations."
 — *All About Jazz*

"Joe McPhee's magical take on avant-garde sax remains one of the wonders of the scene. He still has one of the most beautiful tones on the planet, even when he's reaching for jazz's outer limits." — *Time Out New York*

VINYL REISSUES



Henry Grimes: *The Call*



Ronnie Boykins:
The Will Come, Is Now

espdisk.bandcamp.com

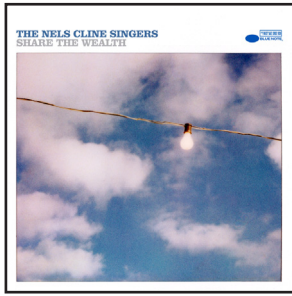


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Share the Wealth
The Nels Cline Singers (Blue Note)
 by Robert Bush

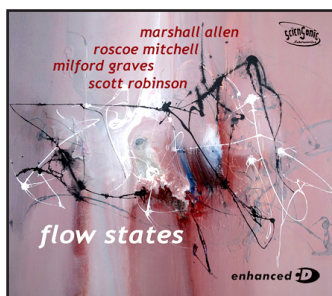
Guitarist Nels Cline is one of the few who can push the envelope yet remain accessible to a large audience. For the last 20 years, one of Cline's most arresting ensembles has been The Nels Cline Singers, a trio with Trevor Dunn (bass) and Scott Amendola (drums), who began making records with *Instrumentals* (Cryptogramophone, 2002). Cline has doubled the group, adding Skerik (saxophone), Cyro Baptista (percussion) and Brian Marsella (keyboards) for this latest document. *Share the Wealth* functions as a potent love letter to the jazz-fusion era of the '70s, especially Herbie Hancock, Weather Report and Miles Davis.

The disc opens with "Segunda", the lone cover (written by Gal Costa.) Droning guitar sets up a hypnotic vamp for saxophone to shriek in the manner of mid '60s Pharoah Sanders or early Gato Barbieri. On "Beam/Spiral", the band makes effective use of space and the additional instrumentation. Especially striking is the rubato ballad "Nightstand", which features Skerik and Cline having a conversation recalling the Joe Zawinul/Wayne Shorter duet on "Blackthorn Rose" from the Weather Report album *Mysterious Traveler*.

Of course, it wouldn't be a real Cline album without some wicked, over-the-top distortion, delivered up on "Princess Phone", a jam straight out of Davis' *Big Fun*. This one serves as an effective calling card for Marsella's Fender Rhodes and the leader's fuzz-tone, wah-wah explorations. Dunn gets the spotlight on "The Pleather Patrol", laying down a super funky Bootsy Collins vamp over the slamming beat of Amendola. Cline and Marsella unveil an enticing duet between Dobro and toy piano on "Ashcan Treasure", one of the most concise moments on the album.

There are two epic jams that characterize the expanded lineup. The first, "Stump the Panel", is a prolific free-jazz-rock groove that encourages ball-out contributions from the entire band. One can easily hear strains of Davis' *Live/Evil* or Hancock's *Crossing*, with perhaps a dash of Sun Ra tossed in for good measure. The other epic jam, "A Place On The Moon", veers off into a Weather Report-inspired exploration that wouldn't sound out of place on *I Sing the Body Electric* or other monumental records of that era.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. Cline live-streams Mar. 21st at alternativeguitarsummit.com.



Flow States
Marshall Allen, Roscoe Mitchell, Milford Graves,
Scott Robinson (ScienSonic)
 by Kyle Oleksiuk

Flow States is an answer to the question: what would a free jazz arcade game sound like? The album, by reedplayers Roscoe Mitchell, Marshall Allen, Scott Robinson and the recently-deceased drummer Milford

Graves, includes long stretches in which the only sounds to be heard are electronic chirps backed by light drums and saxophone. This is by no means the majority—it takes up probably 15 of 70 minutes—but it is by far the most striking thing about it. The purpose of these 15 minutes seems to be to convince the listener that the cutting edge of jazz is in fact the *Super Mario Bros.* soundtrack. This is said just to tease the album, not demean it. It is a strong album that can withstand teasing and is an adventurous album that invites it.

The adventurous approach taken likely has something to do with the unique recording location: ScienSonic Laboratories, a New Jersey recording studio/record label/dispensary of "creative and far-reaching musical experiences", run by Robinson, who describes its recordings as including "a miniature symphony for contrabass sax and 7-ft. banjo... a solo multi-instrumental performance based on doctoral work in chaos theory... [and] the giant bells of Space Farms." Among this milieu, the 15 electronic minutes of *Flow States* are well within the bounds of normalcy.

The remaining 55 minutes are a high-energy free jazz atmospheric fugue (in the "fugue state" sense), worthy of addition to the browsing music of any adventurous record store. This section is relatively standard; it is the kind of thing that most free jazz fans will feel they've heard a thousand times before but, like the blues, one never gets tired of hearing it.

For more information, visit sciensonic.net. Robinson live-streams Mar. 26th at kerrytownconcerthouse.com/edgifest.



Future Stride
Emmet Cohen (Mack Avenue)
 by Scott Yanow

Emmet Cohen is a brilliant pianist who has a wide-ranging and flexible style. In fact, as he shows on this CD, he has several. Cohen has featured such greats as Benny Golson, George Coleman, Ron Carter, Jimmy Cobb and Albert "Tootie" Heath on his albums and works regularly with Christian McBride, Herlin Riley and Veronica Swift.

Naming one's CD *Future Stride* could lead listeners to believe that the set features futuristic stride piano as it could have been played by Ran Blake or Jason Moran. Actually the title of Cohen's Mack Avenue debut should not be taken too seriously for it is simply the name of an original, not the concept behind the set.

The enjoyable trio project, with Cohen's longtime rhythm section of bassist Russell Hall and drummer Kyle Poole, begins with the most exciting performance, a wonderful revival of the obscure "Symphonic Raps", a piece rarely played since the 1928 recording of Carroll Dickerson's *Savoyagers* featuring Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines. Cohen's playing (particularly his two unaccompanied choruses) makes the case that he can hold his own with any stride pianist around today. He also plays stride piano briefly on other selections but mostly is heard in a modern bop style.

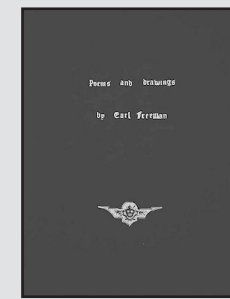
Three selections add both tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana and trumpeter Marquis Hill while the closing ballad "Little Angel" has Hill overdubbing himself on a second trumpet. The horns add to the melancholy mood of the atmospheric "Reflections at Dusk", Aldana is particularly adventurous on "Toast To Lo" (which could have been subtitled "Future Hard Bop") and they get to take heated but concise solos to the uptempo romp "You Already Know".

The trio pieces include a slow and quietly emotional "Second Time Around", a witty and surprising "Dardanella" and a relatively straight-ahead "My Heart Stood Still" with Poole sitting out on Duke Ellington's "Pitter Panther Patter", which has fine interplay between Cohen and Hall. As for the title track, while Cohen plays some hot stride in a humorous way during the opening and brief closing melody, it is otherwise a boppish minor-toned blues.

Perhaps Cohen can be persuaded to record a full-length album of stride. That would be a joy to hear.

For more information, visit mackavenue.com. Cohen live-streams Mondays at emmetcohen.com/live-from-emmets-place.

IN PRINT

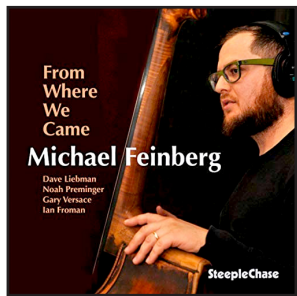


Poems and Drawings
Earl Freeman (50 Miles of Elbow Room/Wry Press)
 by Pierre Crépon and David Grundy

In pictures, the face of upright and electric bassist Earl Freeman, who would have turned 90 this month (he died in 1994) is shielded from the camera by heavy goggles and a pilot cap. Tall and thin, wearing custom military attire on and offstage and sometimes carrying a whip, he stood out among the already distinctive ranks of the '60s jazz avant garde. Although the Korean War draft cost Freeman a lung, leaving him with mobility issues, he was widely traveled. Born in Oakland, Freeman entered jazz history via France, by way of Franco's Spain. Already resident in Paris, in 1969 he appeared on several of the BYG-Actuel and America sessions. Without advance notice to the leader, Freeman can be heard reciting poetry on a Selwyn Lissack date. Returning to America, Freeman later counted among his admirers fellow bassist William Parker and recorded ambitious, if sporadic, projects of his own, for which he drew cover art. Something of a renaissance man, in the course of his travels, he left behind poems and ink drawings. 12 of the former and 4 of the latter have now been collected in this silkscreened box jointly published by 50 Miles of Elbow Room and Wry Press.

Reflecting the peripatetic nature of Freeman's life, the material is presented not as a conventional book, but as unbound, unnumbered facsimile postcards. The drawings combine sketchiness and density. Curlicues and tangled lines depict Black Panther George Jackson, a headless nude and patterns left by wind. Radically departing from clichéd ideas of "jazz poetry", Freeman's poems are gothic and surreal, combining out-of-context anecdotal fragments, non-sequiturs and rule-breaking punctuation—piled-up dashes and equals signs, commas breaking into the middle of words. Shadowy forces appear, from a "narc" to "the Anglo Texan tax man" to villains from popular culture. In one instance, the robot gunfighter from sci-fi western *Westworld* joins Dracula as "A true squire to the economy securing our military superiority / over the heathen". Elsewhere, there are fragmentary portraits of people and places. *Poems and Drawings* is a fascinating contribution to our sense of the multi-disciplinary undercurrents of the jazz avant garde.

For more information, visit 50milesfelbowroom.com



From Where We Came
Michael Feinberg (SteepleChase)
 by Marco Cangiano

From the brief yet authoritative bass intro to “Louisville”, inspired by boxer Muhammad Ali, bassist Michael Feinberg’s new CD delivers a hard-edged Charles Mingus-like attitude. His sound, phrasing, drive and very concept of the group conveys a unique respect for and appreciation of jazz history while pushing the envelope further.

With each tune inspired by the geography related to some of the jazz greats and athlete inspirational figures, this CD continues Feinberg’s earlier dedications to figures such as John Coltrane and Elvin Jones. Eight originals show diversity in tempo and musicality across and within each piece, the group shifting from full ensemble to duos, trios and the leader’s frequent solo features.

The group is as tight as it can be and yet quite relaxed, from the joyful and somewhat aggressive “Cairo” through modal “East St. Louis” and delicate “Tryon” and “Tokyo”. Noah Preminger is one of the most spirited and original tenor saxophonists on today’s scene. Ian Froman’s supple drumming has been associated with Feinberg in a number of projects, most notably the Coltrane tribute *Whatever Possessed Me*. Gary Versace, who concentrates on piano this time, is a most attentive accompanist and brilliant solo player, reasons why he is so sought-after. And finally David Liebman, who certainly does not need any introduction, raises the tension each time his soprano enters the picture. The blending of the saxophonists is very effective, much as their juxtaposition in approaching the material, Preminger developing his solo through slow combustion while Liebman tends to be more explosive, as illustrated by the exchanges in “Pontiac”, a nod to Elvin Jones, and their interaction in “Hamlet”, which is, of course, Coltrane’s birthplace.

While giving the impression of taking a back seat, in reality Feinberg drives the proceedings with firm hand and exceptional taste. With his solo intros, four overall, he communicates the direction and mood but then lets his partners develop the material. “Pontiac” is the perfect example: after stating the theme, the piece takes different turns at each solo, shifting from full ensemble to trios and even duos. An initial trio

sequence with Preminger at his very best and Froman paying his dues to Jones segues into Versace’s almost Lennie Tristano-like single lines, adding tension as they proceed. Then Liebman descends from the stratosphere and engages Froman in an exciting conversation until Feinberg brings everybody home and initiates a series of exchanges among the principals. If one needs to argue jazz is alive and well, this CD is the hard evidence.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk. Feinberg live-streams Mar. 22nd at soapboxgallery.org.



Unsung: Porter Plays Frishberg
Randy Porter Trio (HeavyWood Music)
 by Pierre Giroux

Dave Frishberg is the epitome of the hip, witty, creative pianist, songwriter and lyricist who should have been born in New York but wasn’t. He was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, but he eventually found his way to the city where he created his musical life and built his reputation as a pianist and interpreter of material full of wit and irony. In today’s social media-linked world, it is a style of writing and performing that is unlikely to be either replicated or imitated.

Randy Porter is an Oregon based jazz pianist who plays with style, swing and curiosity. In this outing, he tackles the compositions of Frishberg with his trio. Generally, they are almost always offered in a vocal setting, because the tunes are all about the inventive and often goofy lyrics. Knowing that Frishberg, who turns 88 this month, had chosen to retire near Portland, Porter informed Frishberg of this recording. If there were any misgivings about Porter’s approach, the album would have appeased them.

Porter’s chops are undisputed and are certainly put to the test in dealing with the quirky time signatures and melodic juxtapositions in such numbers as “I’m Hip”, “I Want To Be A Sideman” and “Peel Me A Grape”. Given that each of these tunes has an ear worm character, Porter slides brightly through each with melodic excellence.

In the other tunes not unnecessarily burdened with lyric familiarity, Porter and his cohorts, bassist John Wiitala and drummer Todd Strait, show that they can work together in a thoughtful and compelling flow. On the opening “Snowbound”, they establish a lightly swinging groove filled with clean expression and understated insight. Another jaunty offering is “Dear Departed Past” in which Porter dashes off some darting lines while Wiitala delivers a big-toned, energetic intervention. Perhaps the attention given to this interpretation is due to Frishberg’s autobiography, chronicling his life, career and the stories behind those idiosyncratic songs, which was released in 2017 and was called *My Dear Departed Past*. The closer is “Zanzibar” which has an uncertain layered quality through the opening choruses. Porter then embarks on bubbling single-note runs while Wiitala and Strait support his efforts with percolating rhythmic figures.

In a Francis Davis-penned article for *The Atlantic* in February 1998, Frishberg commented that when he heard other singers performing his songs he thought: “I wish they wouldn’t sing so much.” With this release, he got his wish.

For more information, visit randyporter.com

MARILYN MAZUR



Danish drummer-composer-bandleader and world music pioneer Marilyn Mazur has, over the course of five decades, established herself as a master percussionist and musical visionary.

Marilyn Mazur’s Future Song LIVE REFLECTIONS

The band’s first live release: nine Mazur compositions, including two previously unreleased recordings from 1990 and 2008

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- Nils Petter Molvær (trumpet)
- Hans Ulrik (saxophone)
- Makiko Hirabayashi (keyboards)
- Eivind Aarset (guitar, electronics)
- Klavs Hovman (bass)
- Audun Kleive (drums)
- Tone Aase (voice, electronics)
- Aina Kemanis (voice)
- Elvira Plenar (keyboards)
- Krister Jonsson (guitar)



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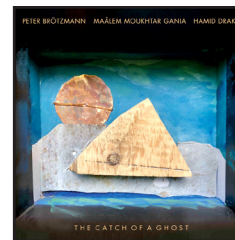
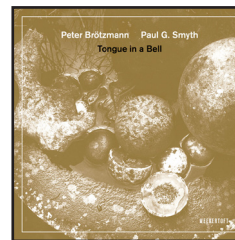
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Canada



Tongue in a Bell

Peter Brötzmann/Paul G. Smyth (Weekertoft)

The Catch of a Ghost

Peter Brötzmann/Maâlem Moukhtar Gania/Hamid Drake
(i dischi di angelica)

by Steven Loewy

These two albums, recorded while Peter Brötzmann was in his mid to late 70s, affirm the great German saxophonist's legacy as one of the most innovative practitioners of free jazz improvisation, still worthy of his status as *enfant terrible*, a disrupter of usual practices. While his take-no-prisoners approach has not diminished, there has been a maturation, which gives some of his playing a slightly less radical feel, though the changes are often subtle. Turning 80 this month, Brötzmann seems ageless and unstoppable.

Tongue in a Bell is a duo with Irish pianist Paul Smyth, who has previously recorded with saxophonists Evan Parker, John Butcher, Lol Coxhill and Charles Gayle and whose strong muscular approach makes him a strong partner. There is lots of red meat here, particularly on the opening title track, which takes up most of the recording, Smyth and Brötzmann wrestling each other with abandon. There is also enough variety to entice the most skeptical listener, as Brötzmann (alternating on tarogato) engages in his patented flair for unmitigated intensity, pounding out notes and soaring to altissimo potency, Smyth dazzling in support. The remaining two pieces, "Falling out of All the Towers of Space" and "Eyes Wide", are more controlled and less dramatic, though each exciting in their own right. The former opens with Brötzmann on clarinet, showing a somewhat different side with a highly controlled presence, an initially gentler approach, which naturally breaks out into something more intense. Smyth focuses on dense chords while Brötzmann, having switched to tenor, flies in the altissimo register over thrashing chords as the velocity increases. Similarly, "Eyes Wide" offers a gentler saxophone and extended techniques on piano.

Brötzmann sounds as good as ever on *The Catch of a Ghost*, in part due to the wonderful interaction of drummer/longtime collaborator Hamid Drake and Maâlem Mokhtar Gania, who is the brother of late Gnawa master Maâlem Mahmoud Gania, whose 1996 concert in Wels, Austria with Brötzmann and Drake, released on Okka Disk, is a seminal document. The opening title track, which takes up almost half of the album, is thoroughly engaging, with Gania's guembri sounding somewhat like an acoustic bass and his melodic chanting a delight. Drake lays down a perfect groove and, after a mesmerizing contribution by the rhythm duo, Brötzmann joins in, enjoying the challenge. While he plays with his usual muscle, including characteristic shrieking and overblowing, it is the variety and the integrated heft of the trio that make this something a bit special. "Almost with the Sun" opens with the saxophonist in a rough-edged mode, but Gania and Drake provide a beautiful underpinning, which allows Brötzmann to stretch. Tarogato on "Sound that Shivers" pounds the pavement over the rhythm section, interjecting small phrases. The Closing "Dip and Dive" opens with a dramatic display by guembri, followed later by deep chanting and Brötzmann delivering short thrusts while Drake and Gania do their magic. This proves to be a totally splendid trio that delivers wonderfully with an accessible groove.

For more information, visit weekertoft.com and aaa-angelica.com



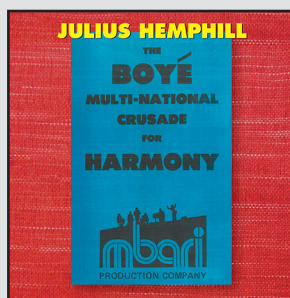
Playing Probabilities
Joachim Kühn & Trummerschlunk (ACT Music)
Touch The Light
Joachim Kühn (ACT Music)
by Jim Motavalli

Playing Probabilities is not specifically a jazz record, though it's overwhelmingly an improvisational one. Pianist Joachim Kühn sat down with electronica experimentalist Klaus Scheuermann (aka "Trummerschlunk") at the former's hideaway on the island of Ibiza to "explore the potential of the unlikely". And they fulfill that mission. There are five pieces on this digital-only release. On some of them, including "Glückszahl 23", Kühn is the dominant partner and the work comes across as probing piano solos with effective coloration. On "High Entropy" the Cecil Taylor-influenced keyboard is so dense it's hard for electronics to find space. The appropriately titled "A New Balance" is more usefully collaborative: Scheuermann creates a roiling sense of menace, which Kühn enhances. The album comes together on two of the longer pieces, "A-R-T-E-N-E" and "The Probe". The latter begins with a repetitive electronic figure, almost like a tolling Big Ben. Kühn enters in high drama, riding on that base with a compelling theme, perhaps pre-imagined, maybe a sudden inspiration. There are computer-generated handclaps as the music builds. The musicians are listening closely to each other and you won't want it to end – but it does, in mildly swirling dissonance. "A-R-T-E-N-E" lets Scheuermann dominate, with a percussive beat, until Kühn makes a memorably skittering entrance halfway in. Again, the pianist finds an earworm theme that repeats with variation. It's the most 'commercial' track, but that hardly matters. This track is the best showcase for the third collaborator, Tom Berkmann on bass. Those are his deep tones moving the music forward.

Touch The Light is a solo ballads project, also recorded (on the artist's Steinway) at home on Ibiza. And here jazz is relevant, though the material draws on a long lifetime of experience. Let's recap. Kühn, whose brother is the clarinetist Rolf, grew up in what was then East Germany and got his start as a concertizing prodigy, but Rolf steered him into jazz, which he's been playing since the very early '60s. The album opens, enchantingly, with Mal Waldron's "Warm Canto". The theme, played so memorably on the original by Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet, is here essayed on the piano and it's insanely gorgeous. The allegretto from Beethoven's Symphony #7 comes across as one of "the best-loved melodies of the classics", a record package once hawked on TV. Joe Zawinul's "A Remark You Made" is a ballad that comes via Weather Report's *Heavy Weather* and it's very poignant here. The pianist's treatment of Milton Nascimento's "Ponta de Areia" is another moment of still beauty, with a haunting melody. The record moves through some disparate material, via Prince, Bill Evans, Hoagy Carmichael, Bob Marley and more, from "Fever" to "Blue Velvet". In each, the pianist finds the living heart of the song and wrings out every drop of emotional heft. The tempos are glacial, full of space. Musicians made whole careers out of playing pretty – and a record label, Windham Hill, was based on it – but this is far from "New Age". The intensity of Kühn's commitment will have you turning the record up, not placing it in the background. When the solo ballads album was first proposed, Kühn, who turns 77 this month, laughed and said, "Maybe when I'm 90." We can be glad he didn't wait that long.

For more information, visit actmusic.com

BOXED SET



The Boyé Multi-National Crusade For Harmony
Julius Hemphill (mbari Production Company)
by Duck Baker

Many discovered Julius Hemphill via two mid '70s records on the Arista Freedom label, *Coon Bidness* and *Dogon AD*, every bit as impressive as classic titles by Anthony Braxton and Oliver Lake the label released around the same time. Hemphill's voice as a saxophonist was as well defined and his musical vision just as clear. But it's fair to say that Hemphill had something else, as exemplified by the title of the long track on the B-Side of *Coon Bidness*, "The Hard Blues" (actually recorded at the earlier sessions which produced *Dogon AD*, though few 1975 listeners knew this). Hemphill's feeling for the blues was not only deeper than that of most jazz musicians of any era, it was deep even by the standards of Lightnin' Hopkins or Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown.

In his excellent notes in the accompanying booklet, producer Marty Ehrlich warns us, though, that Hemphill never saw tradition, or even the blues feeling, as something that should define or confine artists. His records on Freedom were as much about expanding the tradition as referencing it and this became clearer as time went on. His 1977 releases, *Blue Boyé* and *Roi Boyé & The Gotham Minstrels*, relied on overdubbing to get multiple horn voices, a direction he could more fully investigate with the formation of the World Saxophone Quartet (WSQ) that same year. He would also write for saxophone sextet, big band, orchestra, piano and various chamber ensembles, as well as collaborate with poets and dancers.

A lot of this wide-ranging activity is represented on the present collection of archival music, much of which is as strong as anything heard on Hemphill's best recordings. He never had much time for the business side of music, but seems to have approached his rare gigs and tours as unique events and written new music for each one. Consequently most of the pieces here will be unfamiliar to Hemphill fans. Even the names he used for some of the groups are unlikely to ring bells, though they include plenty of musicians we know, from stars like Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette to such frequent collaborators as trumpet master Baikida Carroll and Abdul Wadud, the bluesiest cellist who ever lived.

To give a brief summary, one entire CD is devoted to the Hemphill/Wadud Duo, another to collaborations with spoken word artists and a third to chamber music that would be classified (however clumsily) as Third Stream. Two more discs feature small groups along the general stylistic lines of *Dogon AD* and another leans toward some kind of bent fusion, at least insofar as we see the cello being replaced with electric bass and guitar. The last CD is the concert with Carroll and Hemphill and the power rhythm team of Holland and DeJohnette. Whatever style one prefers, this is all tremendous stuff. Any of the five all-jazz CDs would have placed in many writers' top ten lists if released singly and several could have topped these lists – that's how strong the set is. It didn't all just happen, of course; it is the result of hours of work by Ehrlich, organizing materials at the Julius Hemphill Archive at NYU and

then coordinating with New World Records.

Hemphill grew up in Fort Worth and moved to St. Louis in 1968, where he co-founded the Black Artists Group, a collective that included musicians who would remain important collaborators throughout his career: Carroll, Lake and Hamiet Bluiett. BAG also counted dancers, painters, writers and stage directors among its members, like Malinké Elliott, who made an appearance on Hemphill's first recording, the 1971 collaboration with poet K. Curtis Lyle called *The Collected Poem for Blind Lemon Jefferson*. Lyle and Hemphill never followed up on this forgotten masterpiece, but Disc 4 is mostly drawn from rehearsals of separate performance pieces with Lyle and Elliott. Trading ideas with artists working in other disciplines seems to have influenced Hemphill's vision almost as much as listening to other musicians. His use of theatrical noms de guerre like Roi Boyé reflects this.

The Chamber Music disc features two amazing pieces for wind and brass quintet that utterly defy categorization, as well as the solo piano piece, "Parchment", performed brilliantly by Hemphill's longtime partner Ursula Oppens, and three fascinating arrangements of Mingus tunes brought to life by the Daedalus String Quartet. Ehrlich's comparison of these with Hemphill's arrangements of pieces like "Lush Life" and "What's Going On" for the WSQ is well made; Hemphill seems to enter the spaces created by master musical architects and remodel them from within. Initial hearings may have the listener wondering if Hemphill was inspired by string quartets by this or that composer, but then we realize that what it sounds like is his own writing for horns, dating back to the overdubbed lines heard on his late '70s LPs.

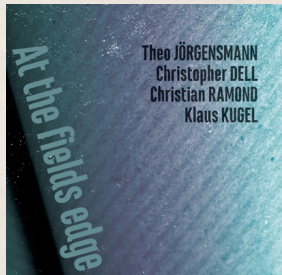
One wonders what Hemphill would have done without Wadud and vice-versa. They give the impression that they could have played together every day of their lives without ever ceasing to find new areas to explore and new approaches to try. Unfortunately the necessity of earning a living meant that their collaborations became rarer as time went on, so we are lucky to have an entire CD of previously unknown duos more tightly organized than the two largely improvisational records already extant and in some ways more satisfying. These pieces were written specifically for this duo, to explore possibilities that even master improvisers like this would never discover by chance. We also hear these musical brothers in several small group contexts scattered throughout the remaining discs, nearly 100 minutes' worth, in fact. Also present on many of these tracks is the musician who had an even longer association with Hemphill, Carroll. Drummers on these sessions include the likes of Philip Wilson, Warren Smith and Michael Carvin. We also hear a good deal of Alex Cline, barely out of his teens on his earliest appearances here, yet holding his own masterfully. There is also a quintet track that unites Hemphill with his teacher from Fort Worth days, John Carter, on clarinet, as well as a series of short but satisfying duos with Jerome Harris on electric bass and a delightful quartet version of "Pigskin" on which guitar virtuoso Jack Wilkins sounds like Tal Farlow on acid.

The concert with Carroll, Holland and DeJohnette was a one-off in Woodstock, where all three men were living, and provides a perfect coda. Listeners wondering what Wilson, Smith, Cline and Carvin have left for any drummer to discover will be laughing at themselves when DeJohnette gets going on the opening "Mirrors" and Holland is at the absolute peak of his powers. It's a pity Carroll and Hemphill didn't get to do several dozen tours with this quartet, but honestly, one wonders whether they ever could have sounded much better than this.

For more information, visit newworldrecords.org

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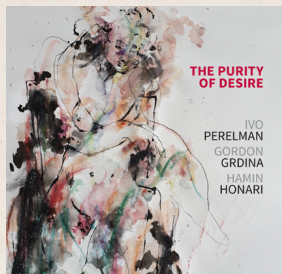
NEW RELEASES



1014
AT THE FIELDS EDGE
Theo Jörgensmann
Christopher Dell
Christian Ramond
Klaus Kugel



1012
LONG TALL SUNSHINE
Barry Altschul's
3DOM FACTOR
featuring
Jon Irabagon
Joe Fonda



1011
THE PURITY OF DESIRE
Ivo Perelman
Gordon Grdina
Hamin Honari



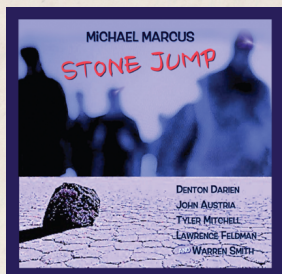
1009
STEP IN VIOLA LA TENDRESSE
Joe Fonda
Carlo Morena
Felix Lecaros Herrera



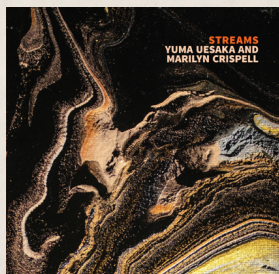
1008
DREAM DISOBEDIENCE
Elisabeth Harnik
Michael Zerang



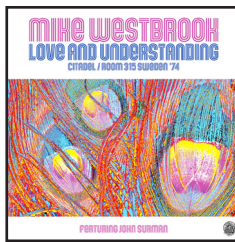
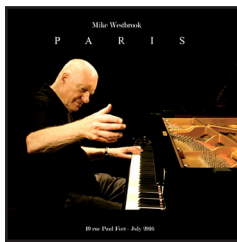
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STONE JUMP
Denton Darien
John Austria
Tyler Mitchell
Warren Smith
Lawrence Feldman



1010
STREAMS
Yuma Uesaka
Marilyn Crispell



Paris
Mike Westbrook (ASC)
Love and Understanding (featuring John Surman)
Mike Westbrook (My Only Desire)
by Andrey Henkin

Just as attendance at Eton College followed by Oxford University gave students a pretty good chance of becoming Britain's Prime Minister, so too did membership in Mike Westbrook's bands prognosticate similar musical ascension. Here is just a sampling of those who were students of this august institution: Roy Babbington, Guy Barker, Chris Biscoe, Gary Boyle, Lindsay Cooper, Mike Gibbs, Brian Godding, Malcolm Griffiths, Alan Jackson, Chris Laurence, Henry Lowther, John Marshall, Harry Miller, Phil Minton, Mike Osborne, Paul Rutherford, Alan Skidmore, John Surman, John Taylor, Trevor Tomkins, Alan Wakeman, Ray Warleigh, John Warren, Kenny Wheeler and Norma Winstone.

The old Don turns 85 this month. Two recent releases show very different, though intertwining aspects of his craft: a 2016 solo piano recital and a 1974 archival recording with the Swedish Radio Jazz Group.

Paris was recorded in concert over two days at the 19 Paul Fort gallery in that city's 14th Arrondissement. Like fellow piano-playing bandleader Duke Ellington, Westbrook prefers the orchestra as his instrument and, as such, *Paris* is his first solo recording since 1978. The album is 20 tracks, mostly in the two-minute range but with a couple of more expansive pieces, split into four sections: The Front Page; Bar-Room Piano; Love Stories; The Blues; plus a short encore. The pieces are from Westbrook's vast oeuvre, alone or with wife/musical partner Kate (some co-credited to D.H. Lawrence, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe or Elizabeth Barrett Browning), John Lennon-Paul McCartney, Billy Strayhorn, Ellington, Thom Bell-Linda Creed ("You Make Me Feel Brand New"), Eric Maschwitz-Manning Sherwin ("A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square") and Bessie Smith ("Good Old Wagon").

While presumably edited together, the effect is highly reminiscent of Abdullah Ibrahim's modern solo recitals. Westbrook puts the varied material—his own works, Philly Soul, British pop, blues, classic jazz—through an austere prism, such that everything flows despite the eclectic pedigree. In general, with only a couple of pieces peppier by a few percentage points, *Paris* is coldly beautiful, understated and gentle, pushed gingerly along by the spaces Westbrook leaves between his notes and phrases, the drops of melting snow at the top of a mountain rather than the turbulent rivers of other solo pianists.

Love and Understanding duplicates the all-Westbrook program found on his 1975 RCA album *Citadel/Room 315* but predates it by almost a year. Whereas the latter was a London studio recording, with a cast including many of the players mentioned above, this newly unearthed release was waxed live in Sweden—the suite commissioned by Swedish Radio—with local musicians, but with Surman still the featured performer. While many of the names may be unfamiliar, some should be known to American listeners, like the reed section of Arne Domnérus, Claes Rosendahl, Lennart Åberg and Erik Nilsson and rhythm team of Rune Gustafsson, Bengt Hallberg, Georg Riedel and Egil Johansen.

Coming after early large-form works like *Marching Song* (1969), *Love Songs* (1970) and *Metropolis* (1971), by this point Westbrook was a highly assured composer and arranger. The nine pieces, plus a short "Overture"

and "Finale", flow from jazz-rock vamp to dreamy fanfare, funky honky-tonk to ballad, electric bebop to fantasia. Surman is the lead soloist on his three horns (baritone and soprano saxophone, bass clarinet) but some of the Swedes also get spotlights, most notably two trumpeters, Jan Allan on the title track and Bertil Lövgren on "Pastorale". Those two pieces are the highlight of the suite, the former for its soul-jazz trappings, the latter for its swelling of volume and density for and under Surman's soprano lead. Also fascinating is the massed horn polyphony on "Bebop de rigueur" and triologue of clarinet (Domnérus) and two bass clarinets (Surman and Nilsson) to open "Sleepwalker Awakening in Sunlight".

What is most compelling about the date, however, is that, with what one assumes to be relatively minimal prep time and a completely new set of players—after having spent a decade getting to know the regulars in his British band—the music is so cohesive and full of character, both that of its composer and group at hand.

For more information, visit westbrookjazz.co.uk and myonlydesirerecords.com



Thank You Mr. Mabern
Leon Lee Dorsey (Jazz Avenue 1)
by Alex Henderson

If Harold Mabern were still alive, he would turn 85 on Mar. 20. The pianist, 83 when he passed away in 2019, was a master of hardbop as well as soul-jazz and embraces both on *Thank You Mr. Mabern*, an intimate trio with bassist Leon Lee Dorsey and veteran drummer Mike Clark recorded only two months before Mabern's death. Although technically a sideman, Mabern is the main attraction and Dorsey and Clark serve him well whether he is drawing on John Coltrane's influence or offering funky, R&B-influenced grooves.

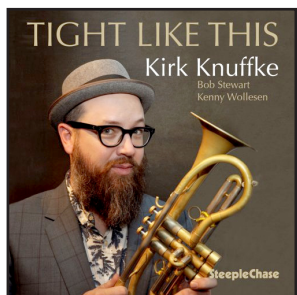
The trio celebrates different periods of Coltrane's career. An exuberant performance of "Moment's Notice" acknowledges the saxophonist's hardbop period of the late '50s, but on Frank Foster's "Simone", Oscar Hammerstein's "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise" and George Gershwin's "Summertime", the mood is much closer to Coltrane's modal work in the early '60s. On the Ray Henderson standard "Bye Bye Blackbird", however, Mabern recalls Red Garland's late '50s/early '60s output for Prestige.

The pianist's more R&B-influenced side prevails on groove-oriented selections like Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man", Fats Domino's "I'm Walkin'" and his own "Rakin' and Scrapin'", an infectious boogaloo he first recorded for Prestige in 1968. While the original version had horns, this version's aesthetic is quite similar: hardbop with a large dose of R&B.

Clark, 74, is perfect for the album. Although jazz is Clark's main focus, the eclectic drummer has done his share of blues and R&B sessions over the years. Clark is the antithesis of a jazz snob and his ability to play Coltrane-minded modal jazz one minute and a New Orleans rock 'n' roll classic like "I'm Walkin'" the next makes him right at home on this trio date. Similarly, Dorsey is a broad-minded musician whose resumé ranges from Frank Sinatra to Anthony Braxton.

Mabern's recording career lasted for about 60 years. *Thank You Mr. Mabern* finds him in solid form during the final months of his life.

For more information, visit leonleedorsey.com



Tight Like This
Kirk Knuffke (SteepleChase)
by Kyle Oleksiuk

The union of two great underused horns, the cornet and the tuba, is the basis of Kirk Knuffke's *Tight Like This*. The collaboration is reminiscent of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (or, for the kids, of *The Lion King 1½*, starring Timon and Pumba): hearing the two of them share the spotlight for the album's hour-long runtime is like an indulgent vision into a bizarre world where the true jazz giants are the players of eclectic instruments like harp, euphonium and chromatic harmonica. But while jazz fans remain on this mortal coil, they will never get to hear anything as bonkers as Louis Armstrong tunes rearranged for the penny whistle and the kazoo; the closest they can get is *Tight Like This*.

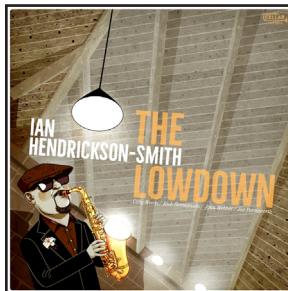
Knuffke leads the trio on cornet. Bob Stewart, a giant of a giant instrument, now 75, has made some of the most significant tuba recordings since the '70s and recorded with a variety of musical greats. He adds a combative punch, which complements and contrasts with the warm, mellow tones of Knuffke.

Drummer Kenny Wollesen keeps largely to the background, holding the trio together with understated but serious competence while the two horns put new

spins on old classics by Armstrong (the title track), Gene Ammons ("Jungle Soul (Ca'Purange)"), Adderleys Nat and Cannonball ("Cyclops" and "Shake A Lady", respectively), Pee Wee Russell ("Pee Wee's Blues"), Teddy Wilson ("Blues in C Sharp minor"), in addition to some six Knuffke originals and one by regular Knuffke employer Matt Wilson ("Wind Spirit").

Like *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Tight Like This* may not be one for the ages, but it's a very weird, very memorable and very entertaining creation.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk



The Lowdown
Ian Hendrickson-Smith (Cellar Music)
by Marco Cangiano

Cory Weeds is one of the most active jazz impresarios these days, besides leading his own recordings and joining forces with some of the most prominent yet relatively under-appreciated artists. This is the case with alto saxophonist Ian Hendrickson-Smith's *The Lowdown*, a thoroughly enjoyable recording doubling as a tribute to Lawrence Leathers, a well-known, NYC-based drummer who was murdered in 2019.

Hendrickson-Smith is the prototypical musicians' musician capable of covering different musical styles —

he has had a six-year stint on *The Tonight Show* starring *Jimmy Fallon* among his many other contributions. The group he has picked up for this outing could not be more congenial. His alto and Weeds' tenor blend beautifully in a program evenly split between originals and fresh takes on standards, recorded at the glorious Rudy Van Gelder studio, the distinctive peaked roof of which figures into the cover art.

The opening title track has a funky groove reminiscent of Horace Silver's late groups over which the leader soars. Weeds takes over with a more muscular sound, building slowly measure after measure. The rhythm section of Rick Germanson (piano), John Webber (bass) and Joe Farnsworth (drums) bounces over the spare melody while keeping the pulse through a series of stops and starts.

Two more originals by Hendrickson-Smith, "Savin' Up" and "10:30", share the relaxed atmosphere, conducive to thoughtful solos by the two saxophones and soulful piano. Farnsworth emphatically introduces "10:30", a brisk hardbop number where the saxophones follow each other in an old-fashioned chase leading to a drum solo.

Turning to the three standards, Jimmy Van Heusen-Phil Silvers' "Nancy" is given a bossa nova dressing while Axel Stordahl-Paul Weston-Sammy Cahn's "I Should Care" is approached at a mid-to-uptempo, unleashing spirited solos, including block chords from Germanson. Finally, Billie Holiday-Arthur Herzog, Jr.'s dramatic "Don't Explain" is underlined by floor tom at first and brushes later. It features Hendrickson-Smith's most inspired solo, which savors the lyrics. Weeds also provides an intense reading, with traces of Don Byas.

For more information, visit cellarlive.com

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ON THIS DAY

by Andrey Henkin



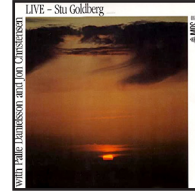
Zurich 1959
Sonny Rollins/Horace Silver (TCB)
March 5th, 1959



Featuring Graham Coyle
Alan Lee (Swaggie)
March 5th, 1961



The 100 Club Concert 1979
Elton Dean ((Reel Recordings)
March 5th, 1979



Live
Stu Goldberg (MPS)
March 5th, 1982



Great Sacrifice
Tisziji Muñoz (Anami)
March 5th, 1999

A quick glance would make this seem like another chance to hear tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins and pianist Horace Silver collaborate outside the groups of the former, Art Farmer or Miles Davis but they play separately at the Kongresshaus. Rollins is with Henry Grimes (bass) and Pete La Roca (one of three at the drumkit for this, Rollins' first European tour) while Silver's band of Junior Cook (tenor), Blue Mitchell (trumpet), Gene Taylor (bass) and Louis Hayes (drums) waxed *Finger Poppin' and Blowin' The Blues Away* on either side of this set.

When the instrument we now recognize as the vibraphone was patented in 1928, it was called the vibraharp due to its similarity to the "harp" stop on a theater organ. That is what Australia's Alan Lee (also a percussionist, active into the new millennium) is credited as playing on this EP released on Swaggie, founded by Aussie legend Graeme Bell. Joining Lee is pianist Graham Coyle, bassist Derek Capewell and drummer Ted Vining on four tunes drawn far from the Melbourne recording location in classics by Jelly Roll Morton.

British alto saxophonist Elton Dean's Ninesense, active in the late '70s-early '80s with two period LPs on Ogun and three posthumous live CDs in the new millennium, of which this is the last, grew out of the earlier bands of pianist Keith Tippett. Joining the pair at London's The 100 Club are regulars Alan Skidmore (tenor), Nick Evans (trombone), Marc Charig (cornet), Harry Miller (bass) and Louis Moholo (drums), plus newer additions Radu Malfatti (trombone) and Harry Beckett (trumpet), on two CDs' worth of Dean (plus one Evans) tunes.

Pianist Stu Goldberg has composed music for media as wildly diverse as *Police Academy 4*, *The Amazing Race* and *Minecraft*. But, before that, he was a fusion generator as a keyboard player with Mahavishnu Orchestra, Alphonse Mouzon, Toto Blanke, L. Subramaniam and Air Pocket. His own few albums were more mellow affairs featuring acoustic piano. This live date from Münster finds him with part of Keith Jarrett's European Quartet, bassist Palle Danielsson and drummer Jon Christensen, for four originals and one by Danielsson.

A childhood wrist injury led to guitarist Tisziji Muñoz being unable to play chords; as such, he has devoted himself to a style of single-note lines evoking muse John Coltrane. After a debut on India Navigation in 1978, the bulk of his output has come on his Anami label, like this live date from the now-defunct Knitting Factory. His band is made up of old friends Paul Shaffer (synthesizer), Bernie Senensky (piano, also on Muñoz' debut album), Don Pate (bass) and Bob Moses (drums) for four originals and four covers, including a pair by Coltrane.

BIRTHDAYS

March 1

†Glenn Miller 1904-44
†Teddy Powell 1906-1993
†Benny Powell 1930-2010
Gene Perla b.1940
Ralph Townner b.1940
Vinny Golia b.1946
Norman Connors b.1947
Elliott Sharp b.1951

March 2

†Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis 1921-86
†Doug Watkins 1934-62
†Buell Neidlinger 1936-2018
Bob Neloms b.1942
Wolfgang Muthspiel b.1965

March 3

†Barney Bigard 1906-80
†Cliff Smalls 1918-2008
†Jimmy Garrison 1934-76
Luis Gasca b.1940

March 4

†Don Rendell 1926-2015
†Cy Touff 1927-2003
†Barney Wilen 1937-96
†David Darling 1941-2021
Jan Garbarek b.1947
Albert Pinton b.1962
Dana Leong b.1980

March 5

†Gene Rodgers 1910-87
†Bill Pemberton 1918-84
†Dave Burns 1924-2009
†Lou Levy 1928-2001
†Wilbur Little 1928-87
†Pee Wee Moore 1928-2009
Nils Winther b.1944
David Fiuczynski b.1964

March 6

†Red Callender 1916-92
†Howard McGhee 1918-87
†Wes Montgomery 1925-68
†Ronnie Boykins 1935-80
Peter Brötzmann b.1941
†Robin Kenyatta 1942-2004
Flora Purim b.1942
Charles Tolliver b.1942
Dom Minasi b.1943
Ayelet Rose Gottlieb b.1979

March 7

Alexander von Schlippenbach b.1938
Herb Bushler b.1939

March 8

†George Mitchell 1899-1972
Dick Hyman b.1927
George Coleman b.1935
†Gabor Szabo 1936-82
†James Williams 1951-2004
Biggi Vinkeloe b.1956
Anat Fort b.1970

March 9

†Ornette Coleman 1930-2015
†Keely Smith 1932-2015
†Kali Z. Fasteau 1947-2020
Zakir Hussain b.1951
†Thomas Chapin 1957-1998
Erica von Kleist b.1982

March 10

†Bix Beiderbecke 1903-31
†Pete Clarke 1911-75
†Don Abney 1923-2000
Louis Moholo-Moholo b.1940
Mino Cinelu b.1957
Bill Gerhardt b.1962
Ofer Assaf b.1976

March 11

†Miff Mole 1898-1961
†Mercer Ellington 1919-96
†Ike Carpenter 1920-98
†Billy Mitchell 1926-2001
†Leroy Jenkins 1932-2007
Vince Giordano b.1952
Judy Niemack b.1954

March 12

†Sir Charles Thompson 1918-2016
†Hugh Lawson 1935-97
Ned Gould b.1959
Peter Knight b.1965

March 13

†Dick Katz 1924-2009
Roy Haynes b.1926
†Blue Mitchell 1930-79
Michael Jeffry Stevens b.1951
Akira Tana b.1952
Terence Blanchard b.1962
Shoko Nagai b.1971

March 14

†Joe Mooney 1911-75
†Les Brown 1912-2001
†Sonny Cohn 1925-2006
†Mark Murphy 1932-2015
†Shirley Scott 1934-2002
Gianluca Petrella b.1975

March 15

†Jimmy McPartland 1907-91
†Spencer Clark 1908-1998
†Harry James 1916-83
†Bob Wilber 1928-2006
Charles Lloyd b.1938
Marty Sheller b.1940
Joachim Kühn b.1944
Anne Mette Iversen b.1972

March 16

†Ruby Braff 1927-2003
†Tommy Flanagan 1930-2001
Keith Rowe b.1940
John Lindberg b.1959
Woody Witt b.1969

March 17

†Paul Horn 1930-2014
†Grover Mitchell 1930-2003
†Karel Velebný 1931-89
Jessica Williams b.1948
Abraham Burton b.1971
Daniel Levin b.1974

March 18

†Al Hall 1915-88
†Sam Donahue 1918-74
Bill Frisell b.1951
Joe Locke b.1959

March 19

†Curley Russell 1917-86
†Lennie Tristano 1919-78
†Bill Henderson 1930-2016
†Mike Longo 1939-2020
David Schmitter b.1948
Chris Brubeck b.1952
Michele Rosewoman b.1953
Eliane Elias b.1960

March 20

†Marian McPartland 1920-2013
†Sonny Russo 1929-2013
†Harold Mabern 1936-2019
†Jon Christensen 1943-2020

March 21

†Hank D'Amico 1915-65
Mike Westbrook b.1936
†Herbert Joos 1940-2019
Amina Claudine Myers b.1942

March 22

†Fred Anderson 1929-2010
John Houston b.1933
†Masahiko Togashi 1940-2007
George Benson b.1943

March 23

†Johnny Guarnieri 1917-85
Dave Frishberg b.1933
†Dave Pike 1938-2015
†Masabumi Kikuchi 1940-2015
Gerry Hemingway b.1950
Stefon Harris b.1973

March 24

†King Pleasure 1922-81
Dave MacKay b.1932
†Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre 1936-2013
Steve Kuhn b.1938
Paul McCandless b.1947
Steve LaSpina b.1954
Renee Rosnes b.1962
Dave Douglas b.1963
Joe Fiedler b.1965

March 25

†Cecil Taylor 1929-2018
†Paul Motian 1931-2011
†Larry Gales 1936-95
†Lonnie Hillyer 1940-85
Makoto Ozone b.1961

March 26

†Abe Bolar 1908-2000
†Flip Phillips 1915-2001
†Andy Hamilton 1918-2012
†Brew Moore 1924-73
†James Moody 1925-2010
Maurice Simon b.1929
Lew Tabackin b.1940
Hiromi b.1979

March 27

†Pee Wee Russell 1906-69
†Ben Webster 1909-73
†Sarah Vaughan 1924-90
†Harold Ashby 1925-2003
†Bill Barron 1927-89
†Burt Collins 1931-2007
Stacey Kent b.1968

March 28

†Paul Whiteman 1890-1967
†Herb Hall 1907-96
†Thad Jones 1923-86
Bill Anthony b.1930
†Tete Montoliu 1933-97
Barry Miles b.1947
Donald Brown b.1954
Orrin Evans b.1975
Jen Shyu b.1978

March 29

†George Chisholm 1915-97
†Pearl Bailey 1918-90
†Allan Botschinsky 1940-2020
†Michael Brecker 1949-2007

March 30

†Ted Heath 1900-69
Lanny Morgan b.1934
Karl Berger b.1935
Marilyn Crispell b.1947
Dave Stryker b.1957
Frank Gratkowski b.1963
Dan Peck b.1983

March 31

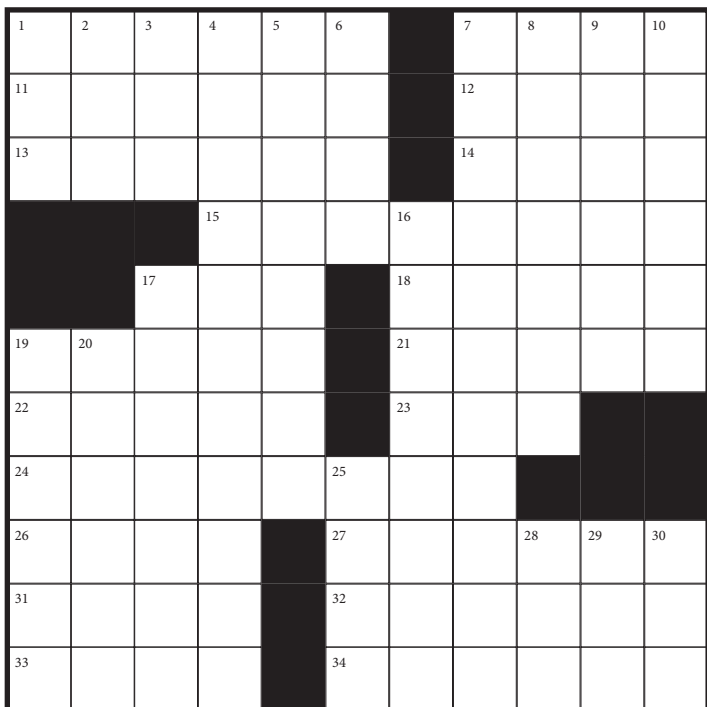
†Santo "Mr. Tailgate" Pecora 1902-84
†Red Norvo 1908-99
†Freddie Green 1911-87
†Jimmy Vass 1937-2006
Christian Scott b.1983



SHOKO NAGAI
March 13th, 1971

As a teenager in her native Japan, Shoko Nagai was trained on the Yamaha Electone and performed pop music. She then came to the States to study at Berklee, eventually landing in New York. She now concentrates on piano and accordion and has worked with John Zorn, Erik Friedlander, Ikue Mori, Marc Ribot, Frank London, Matana Roberts, Satoshi Takeishi, Butch Morris, Elliott Sharp and others and appeared on recordings by Notekillers, Fire of Space, Sanda Weigl, Leslie Pintchik, Friedlander and Roberts. She also composes for film and leads her own groups, recently releasing *Taken Shadows*, a 2014 live date from Roulette with a quintet of Todd Reynolds, Jonathan Goldberg, Stomu Takeishi and Jim Black. (AH)

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. First tune
7. Traditional tune "___ In Gilead" covered by Archie Shepp, Nina Simone, Charles Lloyd and others
11. Zorn Rock Band?
12. Konitz or Morgan
13. Italian drummer Cavallaro
14. Rivers and Newsome
15. AKA Sonny Rollins
17. Banjo player Johnny St.
18. Am I a drummer or am I a mouse?
19. 2011 Floridis/Skopelitis/Temiz Morgenland album *Three Of ___*
21. John McLaughlin's are beyond?
22. A U.K.-based avant garde label may be named for this Italian religious icon?
23. Dolphy Miss?
24. Sam Coslow tune "(You'll Have To Swing It) Mr. ___" sung by Ella Fitzgerald in 1961
26. Notes of an A7sus4 chord
27. Knock a 1957 Clark Terry/Thelonious Monk album out of alignment?
31. Vocalist Rodriguez with album in homage to Graciela
32. 1993 Steve Lacy/Mal Waldron SLAM album *Let's Call This.... ___*
33. Jaco Town?
34. 2013 John Zorn/Thurston Moore album you'll need to email?

DOWN

1. Electric bass pickup mode
2. 1964 Horace Silver Blue Note album *Song For My Father (Cantiga Para Meu ___)*
3. Finnish keyboard player Kotilainen
4. Miles Davis had an infamous exchange with her at the White House
5. He directed the film that led to the burning down of St. Nick's Pub
6. With Wobbly, avant garde jazz label
7. Paul McCandless and Sara Schoenbeck
8. John Damberg and Mark Manners
9. Cellist Khari
10. P.C., Hands, Joy and Gone
16. Joey DeFrancesco or Barbara Dennerlein
17. This Hamilton, NY college was one of many having a student Dixieland band in the late '50s
19. 1990 Floridis/Chancey/Kowald/Moholo Om album *Human ___*
20. Songwriter Sacha who has written for Max Raabe
25. Sole release by Bulgaria's Jazz Quintet, which included drummer Peter Slavov, Sr.
28. Longtime Carmen Lundy producer Elisabeth
29. Member of 30 Down informally
30. Borgmann/Morris/Nicholson trio

By Andrey Henkin

visit nycjazzrecord.com for answers

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

him and copying everything he was doing, only backwards—I felt a little bit like Ginger Rogers.

TNYCJR: Has anyone ever said something to or about you that was especially affirming?

SA: Somebody once said something that always stuck with me. It was back sometime in the early to mid '80s. Back then, I was mostly playing country-western music in big dance halls. This woman who was standing by the stage, holding up her young daughter, said, "Look there, sweetie; that's a woman. A woman steel guitar player." Like the project documented on the new album, *Bird Meets Wire*, it's three women, but it never entered my mind. It's just me, Ingrid and Leila and that's all it needs to be.

TNYCJR: How did that project come about?

SA: Kevin Reilly from Relative Pitch put us together for a couple of gigs before we recorded the album on Easter Sunday in a little studio in Queens. He hit the record button and we started playing. It's as simple as that. We played everything with no discussion beforehand. We simply started playing, each using our ears and sensibilities to guide us along. This was back in 2017. It was wonderful improvising with these two musicians. I'm really glad that this music we made was documented. Huge thanks to Kevin.

TNYCJR: It's poignant to think of how different the world was when you recorded that album compared to the world into which it is soon to be released. What have you been working on since the pandemic hit?

SA: When everything stopped in mid-March 2020, I took it as a great opportunity to write and record some really difficult music that I wouldn't have had time to get into had I been touring. I started working on an album built around Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, particularly the section called "Abîme des oiseaux". It was originally written for clarinet and the score calls for these tiny volume swells, which the clarinetist would normally create with the breath. I spent hours and hours trying to recreate that effect with my volume pedal, until my ankle eventually gave out. There were months during which I could only play for five minutes at a time. In any case, you live and learn. I think, I hope, that maybe I know my instrument a little better than I used to and hopefully myself as well.

TNYCJR: When did you develop an interest in improvisation and who were your greatest teachers?

SA: At a fairly early age. I guess I just started by noodling. I was able to improvise over blues or country music—anything with one key center, but jazz seemed like an entirely different thing. I could play the tunes, but improvising did not come easily. Someone had told me to think of the scales for each chord. But then I met Conrad Johnson, an iconic jazz musician and educator in Houston, who taught me a way to play over chord changes using pentatonics. Then everything slowly began to make sense. Ornette Coleman and Harmolodics have also had a lot to do with how I hear improvisation. Another teacher I had, on pedal steel, was Maurice Anderson in Dallas, Texas. I only had one lesson with him, in the middle of which he stopped and said he wouldn't charge me, but we stayed in touch his whole life. He was a great jazz musician who is little known outside the steel guitar community. Pauline Oliveros and her Deep Listening approach significantly changed how I approached the instrument as well. She showed me a different way of seeing what a note is, what surrounds the note, the space that contains it and sound, including noise as music.

TNYCJR: Who do you admire currently in the pedal steel community?

SA: As far as people doing something different with the instrument, there's a player in New Orleans named Dave Easley who was the first to play steel at the Village Vanguard, where he played with Brian Blade. In France, Lionel Wendling just put out an album called *Steel World*. I admire Hal Merrill out on the West Coast. There's also Bob Hoffnar, based in Austin, who does a lot of microtonal things and who studied with La Monte Young; Chas Smith, who studied composition at Berklee and was close friends with the late Harold Budd. There is a non-pedal steel guitarist Mike Neer whose work I am also quite fond of. Then there are Nashville players, like Paul Franklin and Tommy White, true virtuosos who can play anything. Buddy Emmons was the ultimate pedal steel guitarist. When he was in his prime, his energy was boundless. He was the Paganini of the pedal steel.

TNYCJR: Do you think of yourself differently when playing solo versus in a group?

SA: Playing solo is different with the pedal steel, which can be very orchestral. When played in a certain way, it can fill up a whole sound world so that people don't miss the presence of another instrument. And, of course, if I feel like changing something, I can do that at a moment's notice. With a group, you have to follow what's going on, but there's a certain something about all those combinations of timbres that's really beautiful, as well as the interaction with other instruments and other musical minds. There's a sense of communion I feel with the music and the people with whom I'm sharing this experience. With a band, in many ways, you're playing for each other. Of course, you're playing for the audience too and you hope they like it, but attention is, by necessity, often focused on the other musicians and that one wild and crazy moment—the groove—when, like magic, everything just seems to fall in place. ❖

For more information, visit susanalcorn.net. Alcorn live-streams Mar. 3rd at [youtube.com/channel/UCnKdQfHYKdGCgDQIK_dzihw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnKdQfHYKdGCgDQIK_dzihw).

Recommended Listening:

- Susan Alcorn—*Uma* (Uma Sounds, 1999)
- Susan Alcorn—*And I Await The Resurrection of The Pedal Steel Guitar* (Olde English Spelling Bee, 2007)
- Ellery Eskelin/Susan Alcorn/Michael Formanek—*Mirage* (Clean Feed, 2011)
- Susan Alcorn—*Touch This Moment* (Uma Sounds, 2010)
- Susan Alcorn/Joe McPhee/Ken Vandermark—*Invitation to a Dream* (Astral Spirits, 2017)
- Susan Alcorn—*Pedernal* (Relative Pitch, 2019)

(ENCORE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

Among this group of highly respected musicians from different countries, saxophonist Lotte Anker is the only original Primi member. The name Shamania, Mazur explains, is a female form of Shaman and mania, "symbolizing the act of setting Woman Power free. I believe that music at its best is a kind of magic, uniting humanity, freeing us from physical conformity."

There have always been women musicians of the highest caliber. When asked if there are more today or just more opportunity to hear them, Mazur replied, "Compared to my youth, there are more great female music artists now... The amount isn't so important, but it's great to hear strong female expressions and that it is possible to influence the music and be a part of the scene and development."

Mazur had a good start to 2020 with Shamania and a new version of "Bitches Brew" with the Danish Radio

Big Band before the cancellations started as a result of the pandemic. Live recordings of Future Song from 2015 were released in August as the album, *Live Reflections*. When venues and travel open up again, Mazur will have plenty to do with regular groups along with several loose projects and a number of invitations, her priority being the projects she leads: Shamania, two quartets, a trio and solo performance. She co-leads the 13-piece semi-big band Maluba Orchestra and works regularly with the Makiko Hirabayashi Trio along with her husband, bassist Klavs Hovman. She is excited about a new composition for a chamber music festival this summer, a new trio with Jon Balke and Torben Snekkestad and a festival appearance featuring Norma Winstone. "In these quarantine times, it is clear to me how music can add to the spiritual well-being and keep people company even when isolated. For me, music and other abstract art forms are like openings into the essence of life itself. You can share and transform emotion, moods, experiences into energy, colors. Especially with improvised music we are able to live in the moment and react to each other." ❖

For more information, visit marilynmazur.com

Recommended Listening:

- Pierre Dørge—*& New Jungle Orchestra* (SteepleChase, 1982)
- Lotte Anker/Marilyn Crispell/Marilyn Mazur—*Poetic Justice* (Dacapo, 2000)
- Marilyn Mazur/Jan Garbarek—*Elixir* (ECM, 2005)
- Jean-Michel Pilc/Mads Vinding/Marilyn Mazur—*Composing* (Storyville, 2015)
- Marilyn Mazur—*Shamania* (RareNoise, 2017)
- Marilyn Mazur's Future Song—*Live Reflections* (Stunt, 1990/2008/2015)



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