



# THE NEW YORK JAZZ RECORD



**JAY  
CLAYTON**  
LISTENING IS  
NOT OPTIONAL

**ARTURO  
SANDOVAL**

**MARQUIS  
HILL**

**ED  
NEUMEISTER**

**ELTON  
DEAN**

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# THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

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*One of the most exciting facets of jazz – if not the most – is its unpredictability. The magic of improvisation or real-time creation leads to real music of the moment. These un-recreatable moments are precious and why live performance is especially integral to the appreciation of jazz. However, unpredictability in life is not so fun. Some two years into the pandemic, it is hard to know where one and the world at large stands. Previous periods of desperation gave way to hope, only to be pushed back down. As of this issue's publication, New York is in flux as hospitalizations rise and a new wave of emotional weariness has set in. One victim of this is the cultural landscape, as concerts are being cancelled out of an abundance of caution and musicians, venues and audience members are again wondering if and when things will return to normalcy.*

*It is then another facet of jazz that we must look to in getting through this period. Jazz is a music of collective action, wherein the contributions of each player cannot be removed from the whole, lest the entire structure fall apart. So too in our society does the action of the individual have an outsized impact. It is up to everyone to do their part – even if it means inconvenience or an impinging on some sort of imagined freedom – in order that recovery and renewal can be in our personal and public future.*

*On The Cover:* Jay Clayton (photo by Steven Goldberg / courtesy of the artist)

**Corrections:** In last month's Label Spotlight, the correct name is Asian Improv Arts. In last month's CD Reviews, Joe Farnsworth's album was recorded live at Smoke and the bassist in *Resilient Vessels* is Josh Werner.

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# JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

FEB 11-12

## DIANNE REEVES: LET'S FALL IN LOVE

ERTEGUN JAZZ SERIES

Continuing a hugely popular tradition now in its 10th year, vocalist Dianne Reeves sets the mood for Valentine's Day weekend with a mesmerizing concert in Rose Theater.



FEB 25-26

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*This program is presented through the generosity of Jody and John Arnhold.*

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Presented with Chelsea Table + Stage and Korean Cultural Center NY



photo Nah Seung Yull

"Towering, Hypnotic, Psychedelic Korean Post Rock Majesty"  
- New York Music Daily

CHELSEA TABLE + STAGE

152 W 26th St., Manhattan  
9:30PM | Doors 8:45PM

SIMON SHAHEEN - FRI, 2/25

with the Near Eastern Music Ensemble

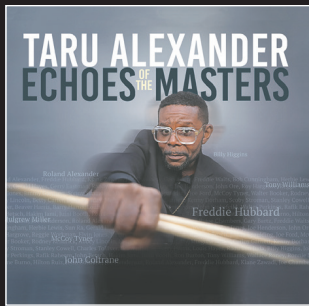


GlobalFest 2022 Artist Award Winner!

KAUFMAN MUSIC CENTER

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AVAILABLE NOW

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**JOHN HÉBERT**  
**SOUNDS OF LOVE**

SSC 1646

AVAILABLE NOW

—John Hébert assembled an incredible band to play with the spirit of Mingus.

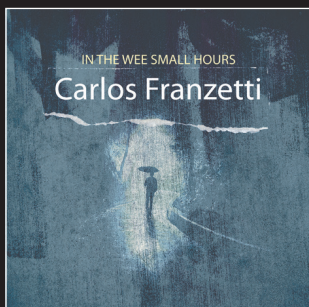


**GUI DUVIGNAU**  
**BADEN**

SSC 1655

AVAILABLE NOW

—To pay tribute to Baden Powell Duvignau invited mentor Ron Carter to participate and recruited the great guitarist Bill Frisell to add his brilliant tones to a number of the pieces.

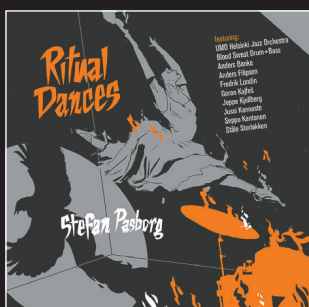


**CARLOS FRANZETTI**  
**IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS**

SSC 1647

AVAILABLE NOW

—Carlos Franzetti has turned to the optimistic torch songs of the 1940s and 1950s to bring listeners out of their pandemic induced gloom on his new recording, *In The Wee Small Hours*.



**STEFAN PASBORG**  
**RITUAL DANCES**

SSC 4118

AVAILABLE 2/11/22

—Stefan Pasborg's reinvention of Igor Stravinsky's iconic works are as brilliant as they are invigorating. *Ritual Dances* doesn't rewrite Stravinsky so much as bring his work into the 21st century in bombastic style.



www.sunnysiderecords.com

On a stormy Sunday night (Jan. 16th), rain-melted snow making sidewalks dangerously slippery, where snuggler to shelter than North Williamsburg's Union Pool? A high-calorie duet by tenor saxophonist **Zoh Amba** and drummer **Marc Edwards** was second of three acts: before a solo electronic set by Mike Bernstein, after a turbulent trio of tenor saxophonist James Brandon Lewis, bassist Meshell Ndegeocello and drummer Ryan Sawyer. Though a recent (September) arrival to the city, Amba has already connected with veteran downtown artists like Edwards, a tribute to her potent playing, which ranges from high-pitched edgy skronk à la John Zorn to tremulous tender balladry. The former quality manifested from the very start of Edwards' "Red Sprites and Blue Jets", the latter emerging in its poignant closing notes, heavy trebly blasts subsiding to romantic vibratos. "Morning Dew" (also by Edwards) traced just the opposite dynamic curve. "[Jupiter] Theme" (borrowed from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*) reached amazing intensity levels before its quiet finish, the crowd growing from three to four dozen, pressing closer as the set unfurled. A free improv built around nursery rhyme-like themes was followed by Amba's ballad "Hymn to the Divine Mother" featuring her lonely upper-register wailing. A final free improv, also based on short, folksy motifs, opened with romping drums, Edwards' strokes falling like avalanche stones, ending the jam alone again, now in a Township jazz vibe.

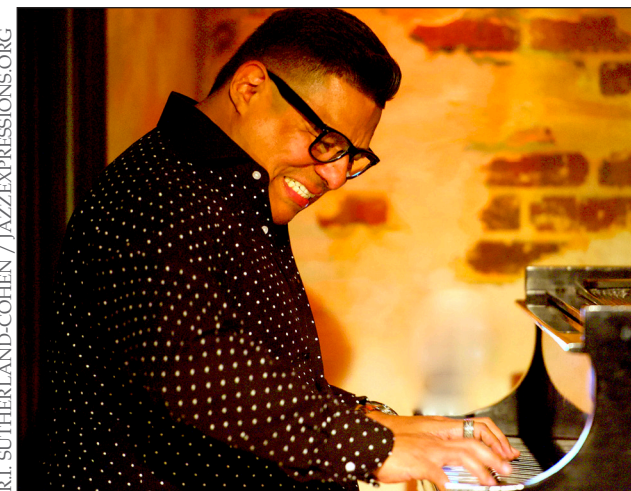
—Tom Greenland

For lovers of hard-driving, percussive piano with repetitive rhythms and tonalities, **Benito Gonzalez** is your man—one who even plays with the innards mic'd to emphasize the hammering of strings. At The Django (Jan. 18th), Gonzalez dove into a set of long-form pieces with surges of reiterated, modally-based notes dominating. This devotion to bold, forceful statements, with AfroLatin patterns, is traceable to the drum as a first musical experience in his Venezuelan childhood; the path eventually led him to a profound love of McCoy Tyner. It was Tyner's "Fly With The Wind" that stood out in the set, partly because of the innate superiority of the work, which allowed bassist Will Slater more room for creative ideas, such as a solo in which the flapping of bird wings could easily be interpreted. Likewise, drummer Curtis McPhatter, Jr. was freed to exercise subtlety, particularly with sticks and cymbals, to widen the options generally required of Gonzalez' concentrated style. For pure Gonzalez, opener "Visionary" was a tutorial in his hammering ethos. "Safari", with a discernible melodic thread, included a very short riff of standard "Bye Bye Blackbird" (Ray Henderson-Mort Dixon), part of Tyner's repertoire with John Coltrane. This musical insertion added some levity to the tune, although it was clear throughout that the intensely focused Gonzalez was having quite a lot of fun with himself—and sometimes with Slater, with whom he would exchange meaningful glances.

—Marilyn Lester



Zoh Amba @ Union Pool



Benito Gonzalez @ The Django

Though in the '90s it was easy to catch innovative Argentine pianist **Guillermo Klein** at weekly Gauchos gigs his relocation to Spain has curtailed local appearances. A treat then to hear him at Bar Bayeux (Jan. 12th), a long, narrow venue crammed with vociferous fans in Brooklyn's Prospect Lefferts Gardens. The trim sound of Klein on acoustic piano, fellow Argentine Leo Genovese on electric piano and synthesizer, Matt Pavolka on bass and Allan Mednard on drumset foregrounded Klein's idiosyncratic yet highly accessible compositions. All songs were distillations of earlier big(ger) band versions, including "Push Me Not/Volante" from 2008's *Filtros*, "ArteSano" and "Que Carrera?" from 2012's *Carrera*, "Camello 2022" and "Platense" from 2015's *Infinite Winds* and "Upstate" from 2019's *Cristal*. Each rendition stood on its own, without need for extended blowing, though Genovese's mercurial solos, laced with lightning-quick, keyboard-spanning runs, upped the excitement factor, eliciting appreciative cries from the cognoscenti, audible even from the opposite end of the room. Mednard generated additional excitement with adroit percussive punctuation, kicking those tricky rhythmic/melodic patterns in just the right places so that Klein's unique compositions came to life. Like a well-rehearsed drill team the quartet performed the intricate pieces with joyous precision, showing that even the hardest moves become effortless once one's artistic impulses have been amply inspired.

(TG)

Acting experience and radio hosting continues to inform **Lezlie Harrison's** interpretive abilities as a major jazz vocalist. Her outing at the Soapbox Gallery (Jan. 14th) offered variety from a mellow, sultry, compelling "The Nearness of You" (Hoagy Carmichael-Ned Washington) to good advice in Abbey Lincoln's "Throw It Away", plus a measure of social awareness with "What's Going On" (Renaldo Benson-Al Cleveland-Marvin Gaye). Harrison exudes quiet elegance with masterful phrasing, immediately notable in her opener of "I Wish I Knew" (Harry Warren-Mack Gordon). Strong on standards and ballads, Harrison also swung, such as with "September In the Rain" (Warren-Al Dubin), dedicated to late trumpeter Roy Hargrove, with whom she had big-band experience. Effective backup was provided by pianist Ben Paterson and bassist Yoshi Waki. The latter is an artist of terrific agility, playing a resonant instrument, equally adept close to the melody and in supplying creative ideas. Paterson provided strong, supportive accompaniment throughout, revealing inventive chops on Bill Withers' blues ballad "Ain't No Sunshine". With Harrison delivering a driving lyrical narrative, Paterson at one point continued on the keys with his right hand while his left reached for direct contact with the strings for percussive, guitar-like augmentation. The rousing, swinging "Bye Bye Blackbird" (Ray Henderson-Mort Dixon) closed out a rich smorgasbord of deeply satisfying jazz.

(ML)

## WHAT'S NEWS

In a career spanning more than half a century **Dee Dee Bridgewater** has been heard in a multitude of contexts, but seldom in the intimate setting of piano/voice duet as in her engagement with **Bill Charlap** at Birdland. The pair eased into their first set (Jan. 6th) with a delicately evinced rendition of "Here's That Rainy Day". The singer demonstrated her clarion-toned upper register and the pianist his notable facility as a sensitive accompanist. Charlap then ramped things up, laying down a potent dark vamp to set up a wildly swinging version of "Caravan", Bridgewater delivering a dramatic reading of the lyric before taking off with a high-flying scat chorus Charlap matched with a starkly original solo mixing old timey and avant garde phrases, inspiring some riotously playful exchanges. The mood calmed with a hushed rendering of "My Funny Valentine", which flowed into a rhythmically charged "In The Heat Of The Night". A hilarious takeoff on "Honeysuckle Rose", Bridgewater singing faux opera and Charlap quoting the *Charlie Brown* theme, was followed by a sultry "Just One Of Those Things" and a "Mood Indigo" oozing with sensuality. Bridgewater began "'S Wonderful" slowly intoning the lyric before going into swing mode, ending with a comical tag. She invoked a raspy Louis Armstrong on "What Is Thing Called Love?", then let loose with some formidable scatting on "Cotton Tail", which had the crowd begging for more and which they got with the exquisitely sung encore of "Angel Eyes".

—Russ Musto

Leaping into their online session moments before expected, this trio of veteran improvisers soared into the cyberspace arena of Arts for Art's Online Salon (Jan. 20th). **Steve Swell**, the acclaimed voice of the old-school New Thing on trombone and baritone saxophonist **Dave Sewelson**, an acknowledged master of his chosen horn, matched wits and liberties with drummer **Michael Vatcher**, a resident of Amsterdam's experimental circuit since the '80s. It may be his acclamation to Euro free improv that guided this set's opening, Vatcher stroking and coaxing his kit, depressing drumheads with an elbow or drumstick, as Swell and Sewelson whispered and shushed when they may have otherwise let loose the howl. The effect was hypnotic, but the saxophonist soon braved the elements with rapid key-snapping runs, drawing Swell into a moderato, tightly threaded call-and-response. A second piece opened with Vatcher solo, demonstrating uniquely wide, perhaps exaggerated motions, more akin to a Japanese calligrapher than a jazz drummer. Hands flailed and swirled over and under cymbals, toms and the bass drum's shell leading to Swell and Sewelson casting fiery swaths over the bare structure. Each sound was draped in the fabric of the whole even while shining individualistically. Slowly dream-like, Sewelson's slurred melodic descent recalled wonderful inebriations on darkest nights, with Swell's looped canonic figures and resounding drones exhibiting the breadth of invention.

—John Pietaro



Bill Charlap @ & Dee Dee Bridgewater @ Birdland



Dave Sewelson, Michael Vatcher, Steve Swell

The final evening of a four-night stand at Dizzy's Club by the **Emmet Cohen** Trio, during which the pianist invited various guest horns to play with his working band of bassist Russell Hall and drummer Kyle Poole, had longtime colleagues trumpeter Benny Benack III and saxophonist Ruben Fox featured with the group. The Sunday night (Jan. 9th) early set got off to a mellow start with the trio playing a pretty rendition of Burt Bacharach's "This Guy's In Love With You", recalling the elegant bluesy stylings of Ahmad Jamal's units. Benack and Fox joined for Ellington's "It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)", living up to the title with steeped-in-tradition solos, along with Cohen, who took a boppish pass awash with Monk-ish fills, after which Poole and Hall had their turns. The quintet took off with a high-speed rendition of Cole Porter's "It's All Right With Me", before Fox mellowed the mood with a stirring reading of "Danny Boy". Benack stepped into the spotlight, singing the Gershwin's "They Can't Take That Away From Me" with palpable swagger. The version also featured a Prez-ish Fox solo before the singer ended engaging the audience in some call-and-response participation. The band slipped into a Latin-tinged mode for Burton Lane's "That Old Devil Moon" on which Cohen pulled out all the stops with a blazing solo. He then calmed the wowed crowd with a tender intro to a lively arrangement of "Round Midnight". The set concluded hardbop style with "The Theme".

(RM)

Flutist **Cheryl Pyle** has been leading various iterations of the Beyond Group over the years, the first of which included the late Bern Nix as a full partner in sound. The band, realized with multi-winds and more, even well after the guitarist's passing, has thrived on the improvisational boldness of its rotating membership, crafting complex works with nary a score in sight. A favorite tool has been the round robin, one member taking lead and trading statements with each of the others, calling on the full range of emotion, tradition and technical mastery to command the moment. Since the first COVID wave felled performances, Pyle's organization has presented its art remotely. This concert (Jan. 16th) featured not only the leader on alto and standard C flutes, but Haruna Fukazawa on the C and Gene Coleman on bass flute along with Beyond regulars vocalist Judi Silvano, soprano saxophonist Michael Eaton and bassoonist Claire de Brunner. The members' listening skills were as ignited as were their chops as they crafted visions and concepts across town. Pyle poured out themes at once near Eastern and psychically faraway as Silvano shaped vocalized neologisms into tomorrow's melodies and stinging riffs. Eaton's fire raptured and Fukazawa shimmered, piercing the dusk with a hybrid western classical, traditional Japanese and 20th Century evocations. De Brunner's alternating winged and substratum forays severed boundaries, as did Coleman's bass flute in contrast with dazzlingly blue piccolo solos.

(JP)

**Carnegie Hall's Afrofuturism Festival**, exploring literature, music, film and visual art, will take place in person and online in February and March, both at Carnegie Hall and at over 70 partnering venues. For the complete schedule, visit [carnegiehall.org/events/highlights/afrofuturism](http://carnegiehall.org/events/highlights/afrofuturism).

It has been announced that British bassist **Roy Babbington**, veteran of hundreds of recordings since the late '60s and most part of the current iteration of Soft Machine, has retired from performance due to hand issues.

Nominees for the **NAACP Image Award**, taking place Feb. 26th at 8 pm on BET, have been announced. Relevant categories include Outstanding Soundtrack/Compilation Album: *The United States vs. Billie Holiday (Music from the Motion Picture)*; Outstanding Jazz Album - Instrumental: *Forever...Jaz*—Jazmin Ghent (s/r); *Love Languages*—Nathan Mitchell (ENM Music Group); *Somewhere Different*—Brandee Younger (Impulse!); *Sounds from the Ancestors*—Kenny Garrett (Mack Avenue); *The Magic of Now*—Orrin Evans (Smoke Sessions); and Outstanding Jazz Album - Vocal: *Dear Love*—Jazzmeia Horn and Her Noble Force (Empress Legacy); *Generations*—The Baylor Project (Be A Light); *Ledisi Sings Nina*—Ledisi (Listen Back Entertainment / BMG); *Let There Be Love*—Freda Payne (Alain Franke Records); *SALSWING!*—Rubén Blades y Roberto Delgado & Orquesta (Rubén Blades Productions). For more information, visit [naacpimageawards.net](http://naacpimageawards.net).

**Arts for Art** will present the following live-stream performances in February at [artsforart.org/onlinesalon](http://artsforart.org/onlinesalon) Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7 pm: Mara Rosenbloom (Feb. 1st); Ava Mendoza/James Brandon Lewis/Devin Hoff (Feb. 3rd); Karen Borca (Feb. 8th); Ingrid Laubrock/Jose Davila/Tom Rainey (Feb. 10th); Andrea Wolper/Virg Dzurinko/Judith Insell (Feb. 15th); Yoni Kretzmer (Feb. 17th); Darius Jones (Feb. 22nd); and Jaimie Branch (Feb. 24th).

**Jazz Power Initiative's Open Studio**, a free class in voice, dance and theater arts led by pianist Eli Yamin, vocalist Antoinette Montague and theater director and choreographer Mickey Davidson, is now open for children ages 10-17 and will take place Feb. 17th and Mar. 10th, from 4:30-7 pm at United Palace, Broadway and 175th Street in Washington Heights. For more information, visit [jazzpower.org/youth](http://jazzpower.org/youth).

Applications are now being accepted for the DC Jazz Festival's **DCJazzPrix**. Winners will receive a \$15,000 cash prize along with a year-long association with the DC Jazz Festival organization that includes extensive public exposure, technical assistance, personalized career development services and a paid engagement to perform on the main stage at the 2023 DC JazzFest. To apply by Mar. 31st, visit [dcjazzfest.org/dcjazzprix](http://dcjazzfest.org/dcjazzprix).

The **Louis Armstrong House Museum (LAHM)** has launched a new digital guide on the free cultural app Bloomberg Connects app, making LAHM accessible for either on-site or offsite visits through photo, audio, and video features offering insights into the offstage life of Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong.

Andreas Brandis, who has had operational responsibility for the business side of **ACT Music** and led the company's live management division Tambour Management as its managing director since 2015 has now been appointed as a full partner/shareholder in ACT Music by the company's founder, producer Siggie Loch.

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

STEVE PARENT / COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



# ARTURO SANDOVAL

BY MIKE COBB

*Legendary trumpeter Arturo Sandoval was born and raised in Artemisa, Cuba. He grew up in the countryside in a poor family where there was little interest in the arts. A journalist turned him on to jazz and he became deeply inspired by Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown and Dizzy Gillespie. By age 12, he was playing trumpet with street musicians. His life changed when he met Dizzy Gillespie in Cuba who was touring the Caribbean. Sandoval emigrated to the USA under political asylum from Fidel Castro's regime. Since then, he has established himself as one of the most highly regarded trumpeters in the world.*

*Sandoval has performed and recorded with Gillespie, Paquito D'Rivera, Tito Puente, Chico O'Farrill, Irakere, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Rod Stewart, Dr. John, Gloria Estefan, Ricky Martin, Alicia Keys and many others. He performed with Stevie Wonder at the White House, where he was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by President Barack Obama. Sandoval scores for film and TV and has composed for The Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Pittsburgh Symphony and the London Symphony Orchestra. He is also a revered educator and has taught at Florida International University, Whitworth University, led workshops at Dartmouth College and elsewhere. We spoke with Señor Sandoval via Facetime from his home studio in Los Angeles, California. Lighting a "tabaco" (the Cuban word for cigar), he was kind enough to answer our questions for this interview.*

**TNYCJR:** How are you staying safe during this time of Omicron?

**AS:** You know, you have to take care. I wear my mask and I've got the three vaccines. So far I've survived. I know many people who've been infected. I try to stay home as much as I can.

**The New York City Jazz Record:** I hope you've been well and keeping busy during the pandemic.

**Arturo Sandoval:** To be honest, I've been composing every single day and have posted more than 500 videos of new pieces. Unfortunately, all my gigs have been canceled. But I keep practicing five hours a day because I can't let this pandemic burn my groove. It's important for me to keep learning and trying new things.

**TNYCJR:** Can you tell me about your upcoming show at Carnegie Hall with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra?

**AS:** It's still scheduled, so I hope it happens! It's going to be challenging because I have to play two trumpet concertos and another four pieces. It's going to be a very interesting program. I think we're going to open with the "Cuban Overture" by George Gershwin, then I'll do a piece and then we'll do "Andalucia Suite" by Ernesto Lecuona, then "A Time For Love" by Johnny Mandel, then my own tune "Everyday I Think of You", which I wrote and dedicated to my mentor and hero Dizzy Gillespie.

**TNYCJR:** Have you played Carnegie Hall before?

**AS:** Yes, a few times. I've been lucky. I played there with Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, The New York Philharmonic and my own band a few times. Recently, I played with Alejandro Sanz at Radio City Music Hall. He's a very close, dear friend of mine.

**TNYCJR:** What are some of the challenges working with an orchestra versus a jazz band?

**AS:** With classical music, you don't have as much freedom as you do with jazz. You have to be very consistent with the score. But for me, music is all one. I don't care who wrote it, when, how or where. If it sounds good, I'm going to enjoy doing it.

**TNYCJR:** What other projects are you working on?

**AS:** I've got a new album coming out. The executive producer is very involved with cryptocurrency and NFTs [Non Fungible Tokens]. He started releasing individual songs mainly for people who are involved in cryptocurrency. In April we're going to do a full release. It's been a smart move because I see nice results. He knows what he's doing.

**TNYCJR:** It must be interesting to see how the music business has changed this way.

**AS:** It's a little complicated for an old man, but when you see good results I say "Hey, this is good!" It's completely new, but you have to go with the flow and learn new technologies.

**TNYCJR:** What are some career highlights?

**AS:** One of the most important things that happened to me was in May 1977 when Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz, Earl "Fatha" Hines and a bunch of other musicians went to Cuba on a jazz cruise and stopped in Havana for a few days. That was crucial for me. Meeting my hero Dizzy and becoming close friends changed my life completely. He gave me so many opportunities by taking me under his wing, which helped me a lot. He even helped me with the process of political asylum. There's an HBO movie about it called *For Love or Country: The Arturo Sandoval Story*. It's a good movie, well produced with good acting. And it's a true story.

**TNYCJR:** It must be very interesting to see your life told through a movie.

**AS:** Everybody has their own story to tell, so it was an honor and a privilege that they told my story. It will serve as a testimony and help my grandchildren know about my life and my struggle getting to this country.

**TNYCJR:** What do you keep from Cuba?

**AS:** You know, I'm Cuban and I'm going to die Cuban. I cannot change that. In Cuba, music is in the atmosphere. There are a lot of very talented musicians. People are very musical there in general. It's something you have had in your blood since you were born. I hope I never lose that. But since the revolution in '59, the Cuban people have been suffering for 63 years of a horrible, stupid, horrendous dictatorship. Everything changed drastically. To be honest, I never wanted to leave. It's a horrible feeling to have to escape from your home. But I didn't have a choice. Otherwise, my life would have been miserable. I grew up extremely poor in the countryside where nobody was interested in the arts. I was kind of a hopeless kid. After I moved to the USA, my life changed completely. I'm so grateful and give thanks to God everyday. Not just for me but for my family as well. My son is a successful artist; he does animation, painting, sculpture and many kinds of things. My wife works in real estate. Over the years I've had the opportunity to work with so many artists I love and respect. I couldn't have dreamed it. ❖

*For more information, visit [arturosandoval.com](http://arturosandoval.com). Sandoval is at Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra Feb. 19th. See Calendar.*

**Recommended Listening:**

- Irakere-Eponymous (Areito-CBS Columbia, 1978)
- Dizzy Gillespie/Arturo Sandoval-To A Finland Station (Pablo, 1982)
- Paquito D'Rivera (with Arturo Sandoval)-Reunion (Messidor, 1990)
- Arturo Sandoval-Swingin' (GRP, 1996)
- Arturo Sandoval-Rumba Palace (Telarc, 2007)
- Arturo Sandoval-Dear Diz (Every Day I Think Of You) (Concord, 2011)

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# MARQUIS HILL

BY JASON GROSS

Can an artist be bold and groundbreaking while also revisiting his past? Trumpeter Marquis Hill is proving that this just may be possible as he is now operating in a circular fashion with his career on *New Gospel Revisited*, a reimagining of his first album, which came out 10 years ago.

Born in Chicago in the late '80s, Hill grew up on a steady diet of '70s soul, which would later manifest itself in his own music. As he explains, "even to this day, I feel like that music resonates with me pretty heavily...there's a certain sparkle to it. It's almost spiritual." At the start of the new millennium, Hill was a high schooler already deeply imbued with jazz. By college, he was in the sphere of legendary bassist Ron Carter and would soon further his lifelong passions of music and education at DePaul University, earning a Master's degree in Jazz Education.

By 2011, he was ready to bring his music into the world. "I just told myself, 'I'm gonna challenge myself to write a set of music, put out a project and once that light-switch clicked in my mind, I just got it done. So I sat down, I remember sitting at the piano, and just going through tune by tune by tune. 'New Gospel', obviously, it's the title track. I heard the melody, I heard the groove and I put it together. And that was pretty much the process: sitting down at a piano and just really sussing out and working out each one of these tunes." Using a small budget, he assembled a group of players/friends from the Chi-town area and recorded in a friend's studio (housed inside a factory building) in one day, giving it a certain rawness. Hill decided to go the DIY route and put out *New Gospel* as a self-released project in an edition of 500 copies. "I remember being really, really determined to get my music out, get my voice out and I had so many different ideas." The results spoke for themselves as Hill showed himself to be an auspicious new player on the scene, taking the calmness and control of bop and melding it with elements of soul, making the new sound his own.

That first album also helped him to lay a foundation for his musical journey. As he explains, "to this day, I'm grateful for that project, it shaped my sound and my compositional approach. You listen to all of my projects after *New Gospel* and it still has that similar sound."

The album provided a springboard for Hill's rapidly growing and evolving career over the next few years as he garnered prestigious awards, including first place in the 2014 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Trumpet Competition, and put out impressive followups: 2012's *Sounds of the City* and 2013's *The Poet* on the Chicago indie Skiptone label. Soon after, he moved to New York and recorded for the Concord Music Group (2016's *The Way We Play*, part of the prize for the Monk competition).

For the next several years, Hill put out pairs of expansive, complex albums with shades of R&B, hip-hop and ambient music mostly on his own Black Unlimited Music Group label and in mainly

instrumental and then vocal/rap versions, including 2014's *Modern Flows*, 2017's *Meditation Tape*, 2019's *Love Tape* and culminating with 2020's masterful, Zodiac-themed *Soul Sign*. By then, he was on a trajectory that could have taken him anywhere musically.

After an extensive musical journey, how did this restless soul find himself coming back to his musical beginnings, to rerecord his debut as a live album? Hill sees a dual purpose. "To this day, this first set of music I composed is one of my favorite sets of music. We sound young, but we were hungry and we were interested in trying to connect. But then if I'm being honest, I'd say that you can hear how green, how young we were. A part of me cringes a little bit when I listen to the original recording. So we get to rejuvenate that music and bring that set of music not back to life, but breathe new life into the music. I'm not replacing the original *New Gospel*, but a part of me feels like it's almost like I get to redeem myself a little bit by putting out this new set of music revisited from 10 years ago."

For what is his first album for Edition Records, Hill corralled an impressive group of Joel Ross (vibraphone), James Francies (piano), Walter Smith III (tenor saxophone), Harish Raghavan (bass) and Kendrick Scott (drums), with all except Ross being new collaborators and all, as Hill puts it, "innovative voices of their generations." The results speak for themselves as the recording literally and figuratively took Hill back home, for a show recorded in Chicago in December 2019, just weeks before COVID hit the States. On the album, Hill and the band luxuriate in the improved sound quality with a tighter dynamic and more in-your-face feel. While the debut showed the world a promising voice, now we hear him as the confident, seasoned veteran he has become.

After a brief, orchestral intro, opener "Law and Order" is stretched from its original five minutes to a quarter-hour with fiery solos by Hill and Smith, followed by a calming, extended meditative solo from Ross. "The Believer" now sports a simmering sexy lightness at which the original only hinted. The title track has a breezier quality to it, which leads to a flighty solo from Hill and a skipping, fluid Raghavan solo. The light bounce of "Autumn" is now meditative and more reflects the changing calm of that time of year. Where "A Portrait of Fola" once featured a swinging bounce, it now has a lighter, airier atmosphere thanks mostly to vibraphone. Interspersed are a few brief new tunes added in as standalones for the bandmembers, including a lovely piece featuring tenor ("Walter Speaks"), a masterful, controlled drum spot ("Oracle"), graceful, chime-like vibraphone ("Lullaby") and trumpet sounding alternatively sweet and mournful ("New Paths").

And what does this closing of the circle of his debut mean for Hill's future? "I can check it off my list and continue on the path that I'm on, with the direction that I am going." ❖

For more information, visit [marquishill.com](http://marquishill.com). Hill is at Le Poisson Rouge Feb. 11th. See Calendar.

#### Recommended Listening:

- Marquis Hill—*Sounds of the City* (s/r, 2012)
- Matt Ulery's Loom—*Wake An Echo* (Greenleaf Music, 2013)
- Marquis Hill, Jeff Parker, Joachim Florent, Denis Fournier—*Escape Lane* (The Bridge Sessions, 2014)
- Marquis Hill—*The Way We Play* (Concord, 2016)
- Marquis Hill—*Modern Flows Vol. 2* (Black Unlimited Music Group, 2018)
- Marquis Hill—*Soul Sign Instrumental* (s/r, 2020)



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# JAY CLAYTON

LISTENING IS NOT OPTIONAL

BY ORI DAGAN



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Living legend Jay Clayton recently celebrated her 80th birthday in style, gigging at The Jazz Gallery with Ed Neumeister, Gary Versace, Jay Anderson and Billy Drummond. As a performer, in-demand educator and busy collaborator, Clayton juggles it all herself and has never been in it for the money, prioritizing her heart ahead of her bank account for many years. “That’s just the way it goes with the music I chose, or I guess you might say, the music that chose me,” she says via Zoom from her Chelsea apartment. “I never wanted to be famous, but once I became hooked on this music, I very much wanted to sing. I had to. And when I couldn’t get a gig, I made one up! And that is something I still do to this day and tell all my students to do it too. Find a place, make it happen.”

Born Judith Colantone in Youngstown, Ohio, on Oct. 28th, 1941, she first heard the Great American Songbook from her mother, whose dreams of being a big band singer were never realized. “My mother sang as a teen but after she got married, that was that,” Clayton recalls. “She didn’t know who Billie Holiday was even though she kind of sounded like her. She didn’t know what jazz was, because in those days those were just the pop songs. So I kind of learned some of those standards without even trying. My actual intro to jazz proper happened when my cousin gave me three records when I was 17. I remember it crystal clear: Miles Davis, Ramsey Lewis and Dave Brubeck. I had no idea who they were or what jazz was but I absolutely loved it! Then I joined the Columbia Records Club and in those days they would send you about five or six records for a penny and you had to check a category: pop or classical, etc. And, of course, I checked jazz and that is when I started to listen. I mention this because LISTENING, like I tell my students, really is the key to all of it. I like to say: ‘Listening is not optional!’ (laughs). There are no shortcuts to it. So anyway when I put those records on, I was smitten. I didn’t know I was going to sing it yet, but it had already captured my soul.” About a year later, her first time on the mic was in 1959 sitting in with a band at a local dance in Youngstown, finding the courage to sing “Moonlight in Vermont” despite her nerves.

To this day Clayton performs and records material from the Great American Songbook, often shedding new light on obscure tunes or unearthing novel approaches to the familiar. Scintillating diction, consistent connection and an understated delivery make her a skillful interpreter, but Clayton is more widely known as a pioneer in the free jazz movement, moving beyond Tin Pan Alley into uncharted sonic territory. When singing ‘free’, Clayton’s courageous scat style explores texture, timbre, rhythm, range, space and intensity; it clearly reveals her primary influences of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk and Eric Dolphy. Furthermore, in exploring the possibilities of the voice beyond scat, she is known as one of the first vocalists to incorporate poetry and later the use of electronics, both live and in recordings.

“When it came to the poetry, I was first inspired by Jeanne Lee and even though I loved the standards and

still do, I think part of it was that I wanted to go deeper with the messages, I wanted it to be more than just about love. So I was very drawn and still am drawn to the work of poets like e. e. cummings and Emily Dickinson. But back then I was very shy to do it because it can sound very contrived; it isn’t easy to make it sound natural, speaking somebody else’s words.”

A live set by Clayton will often combine jazz standards, poetry and singing free. Besides her precise pitch and percussive vocal delivery, what ties it all together is honesty and connection with the source material, her fellow musicians and, in the lucky case of live performance, the audience.

While Clayton has been performing for over 60 years, it wasn’t until 1980 that she stepped into the studio as a leader with her debut recording *All-Out*, which had Jane Ira Bloom (soprano saxophone), Larry Karush (piano), Harvie S (bass) and her former husband Frank Clayton on drums. “I really see recordings as documentation. You do it, you record it, you move on. By the time I started recording under my own name, I had already guested on recordings and it actually took me years to really be able to enjoy that process. For a long time I struggled without an audience in the studio, but after a while, I figured it out.”

Career highlights include guest appearances with prolific minimalist Steve Reich, which proved a rare situation of minimal improvisation and a large touring band; credits on three albums with avant garde composer John Cage (*John Cage*, 1977, *Four Walls*, 1979 and *Three Constructions*, 1989); two outings of astounding a cappella with “Vocal Summit” alongside Bobby McFerrin, Jeanne Lee, Urszula Dudziak, Lauren Newton, (*Sorrow Is Not Forever – Love Is*, 1982) and Norma Winstone and Michèle Hendricks (*Conference of the Birds*, 1990); and *Outskirts*, a collaboration of nearly 30 years with Bloom and recently departed drummer Jerry Granelli, a musical soulmate with whom she worked for decades including a fine album in 2014, *Alone Together*.

Her first of seven releases for the Sunnyside label was *Beautiful Love*, a gorgeous straightahead duologue of well-known standards with pianist Fred Hersch (1994). A must-hear (especially with headphones) is Clayton’s triumphant recording of solo voice and electronics called *The Peace of Wild Things* (2007). A good discography exists on her website, with a handful of titles available for sale on Bandcamp including *Circle Dancing* (1996), *Harry Who?* (2013), in honor of Harry Warren, and *Unraveling Emily* (2017), an artful collaboration with Kirk Nurock with text from Dickinson.

In addition to her achievements as a recording artist and performer, as an educator Clayton has nourished literally thousands of vocalists since she began teaching in the ‘70s. Mostly freelancing now, she has taught for years at the Vermont Jazz Center alongside Sheila Jordan, a close friend and frequent collaborator. As a passionate musician and an honest communicator, Clayton was a natural to move into teaching: “Back in the day, people asked me if I teach and initially I said you can’t teach this music, you just have to go out and listen to it. But then I formed

workshops in my loft and I never stopped. The hardest part about teaching is knowing what they should do next. You can’t put the cart before the horse. You can’t scat over a tune you have never heard or studied. So it is my job to figure out what they should do next and of course then to hold them to it. I’m still learning and I’m still getting better. I really love the workshops because then they learn from each other, too. What I say to one person is often true for all of us.”

In 1982, Clayton accepted a teaching job at the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. It was hard to leave New York but with her husband and two young kids, she became a West-Coaster for the next 20 years until 2002. This job allowed her financial stability as well as additional touring opportunities with others who taught at the college, including Granelli, Gary Peacock, Julian Priester, Jim Knapp and Art Lande.

“When I first started out, I used to say, I will teach until I can afford not to, that is, until I could afford to make a living from performing. Many years ago I realized that would not be the case. I will never stop teaching, I will never replace it with performance. However, the performance is where I learn. I formed the Scat Lab originally because I found that singers don’t know how to work on it. Back in the day, sitting in is how I learned and it wasn’t easy back in those days when I was starting out to sit in as a singer. It was hard to be taken seriously as a musician and I got hit on a lot, but I was driven, no matter how nervous I felt, to sing and to grow. I always waited all the way until the end of the gig and then after I sat in, if I got asked to sing a second tune, I knew it went okay. But now, there aren’t really a lot of sessions anymore. There are open mics now, but not so many sessions where you can just jump in. As teachers it is important that we make an environment for learning. In my workshop I introduce singers to free music and a lot of them are surprised by how much they enjoy it. When you’re singing free you really have to connect to the music and to the moment that we all share together.”

Reflecting on her 80 years on this planet, Clayton counts herself lucky to have had so many rewarding musical experiences. “One thing happens after the next. We look back and we call it coincidence, but it is not. Wisdom is knowing what to do next.” ❖

For more information, visit [jayclayton.com](http://jayclayton.com). Clayton is at Roulette Feb. 20th. See Calendar.

#### Recommended Listening:

- Marc Levin Ensemble—*Songs Dances and Prayers* (Sweet Dragon-Centrifuga, 1972)
- Jay Clayton—*All-Out* (Anima Productions, 1980)
- Jay Clayton, Julian Priester, Jerry Granelli, Gary Peacock—*Quartett: No Secrets* (New Albion, 1988)
- Fred Hersch/Jay Clayton—*Beautiful Love* (Sunnyside, 1994)
- Jay Clayton/Fritz Pauer/Ed Neumeister—*3 For The Road* (MeisteroMusic, 2001-2)
- Jay Clayton/Jerry Granelli—*Alone Together* (Sunnyside, 2014)





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# ED NEUMEISTER

BY STEVEN LOEWY

Ed Neumeister may just be the best jazz trombonist you never heard. The softspoken Neumeister, with his stylish white goatee and almost shoulder-length mane, presents a striking image. With technique that takes the trombone to new heights and a flair for playing a wide range of styles, Neumeister has built a career as a top-flight composer, arranger, improviser and teacher.

Raised in San Francisco, he settled in New York in 1980 and relocated to Austria in 2000 after accepting a full professorship at the University of the Performing Arts in Graz, a position from which he retired in 2017. He returned to New York permanently in 2017 to recharge his career in the States, where he also currently teaches classes at New York University, The New School for Social Research and William Paterson University.

Over the course of a long career, Neumeister has distinguished himself as a total musician, one who has mastered the trombone and the tools of composition. He learned early on to play a wide variety of styles and is respected by the best jazz, commercial and classical players. When asked how he maintains almost perfect technique for the diversity he embraces, Neumeister said that “nobody told me it was difficult to do that. My formal background is classical, but I have been doing everything, which seemed like the natural thing.”

Contrasting Neumeister’s relative anonymity with the splash trumpeter Wynton Marsalis made when he burst on the scene with an ability to play both jazz and classical music at high levels, Neumeister recognizes that it is not easy getting publicity as a trombonist: “Unlike the trumpet and saxophone, the trombone does not have as high a profile.” While living in Austria was wonderful for him personally and artistically, it dampened his visibility in the United

States. Producer Michael Cuscuna presciently told him after his move, “...moving to Europe would not enhance his career.” He also told Neumeister that his writing would give Third Stream music “a good name”.

Neumeister maintains a vigorously disciplined schedule: “I try to write almost every day. Generally, I’m up between 5 and 6 am, when I compose, with a breakfast break around 9.” He then practices his trombone for one or two hours, exercises and tries to squeeze in more composing. Neumeister has gradually shifted his focus during the last two decades toward greater composing and arranging, something reflected in his recordings. “I improvise as a composer whose instrument is the trombone and not as a trombonist improviser. The result is that the focus is on pure music as opposed to ‘trombone music’.”

Neumeister has had a number of notable recent albums. *What Have I Done?*, with longstanding quartet of Gary Versace (piano), Drew Gress (bass) and Tom Rainey (drums), combines quirky melodic lines, odd meters, adventurous solos and intricate arrangements in a surprisingly accessible setting. “These are all colleagues who I have played with for many years. Not that many musicians can navigate complex notated music and also swing and improvise freely at the same time the way these guys do.” *3 for the Road*, a deeply emotional, often thrilling album with vocalist Jay Clayton and pianist Fritz Pauer, was recorded in Austria in 2000-2001 but not released until 2020. It is lovely, combining an eclectic selection of tunes and tight playing. *Alone Together*, released in 2021, is a duo with talented Austrian guitarist Karl Ratzer, in which the two navigate mostly standards. Neumeister’s lengthy solo on “Body and Soul”, with electrifying use of mutes, sets a new standard for the piece. *One and Only* offers an incredible display of range, compositional skills and techniques that sets the bar for solo trombone albums, as Neumeister leads the listener in an exquisite display of talent in a mostly live performance that was named a Concert of the Year in this gazette in 2017.

Speaking to the divisions of our time and how the jazz community can help to heal us as a nation, Neumeister formed “a diverse and inclusive orchestra” he calls *Assemblage*. He explains that “in these days,

more than ever, we need to come together as a humanity. Music can be the metaphor for life when people from different backgrounds and sensibilities act as one voice with each of the individual voices contributing their own musical personality into the common goal of the music of the moment, whether in an improvisatory or notated context.” He describes the music he is preparing for the orchestra as “wide-scope: Schoenberg meets Monk meets Sun Ra, with a little Lutoslawski and James Brown thrown in for spice.” By focusing on racial, ethnic and gender diversity, Neumeister hopes his orchestra will contribute to the healing so many desire. The orchestra started rehearsing in the summer of 2019, with one rehearsal in spring 2020 before the pandemic halted its plans. The world debut of *Assemblage* is scheduled for April 2022 at Birdland. Neumeister is now busier than ever, always broadening his abilities: “Lately, I have been focusing on extended techniques, mostly multiphonics, and expanding sonic horizons, while exploring new colors. I just finished a piece for symphony orchestra, with a jazzy feel. I’ve actually written more than one hundred compositions and arrangements for jazz orchestra.”

With years of experience, boundless energy and discipline and a passionate intensity, this may be the breakout year for Neumeister, a man with a mission, with high hopes for a major comeback in New York as he prepares his next course of action. ❖

For more information, visit [edneumeister.com](http://edneumeister.com). Neumeister is at Roulette Feb. 20th with Jay Clayton. See Calendar.

#### Recommended Listening:

- Noel Jewkes And The Dr. Legato Express—*Just Passin’ Thru* (Revelation, 1977-78)
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra—*Lickety Split* (*Music of Jim McNeely*) (New World, 1997)
- Jim McNeely Tentet—*Group Therapy* (OmniTone, 2000)
- Ed Neumeister—*Suite Ellington* (PAO, 2010/2015)
- Ed Neumeister—*One and Only* (*Trombone Solos*) (MeisteroMusic, 2015-16)
- Ed Neumeister Quartet—*What Have I Done?* (MeisteroMusic, 2021)

## LEST WE FORGET



# ELTON DEAN

BY MARCO CANGIANO

16 years after his untimely passing, British saxophonist Elton Dean (Oct. 25th, 1945-Feb. 8th, 2006) remains a much-underrated artist. Very little has been written about him in spite of a prolific career bridging traditional jazz with improvised music and what was loosely defined as the Canterbury scene, a unique mix of progressive pop, early new age and jazz rock. He made more than 100 recordings, two-thirds of which he either led or co-led or which are attributed to ensembles of which he was a leading figure. He was an original whose tone and phrasing are immediately recognizable and could sound concurrently lyrical and emotional as well as explosive. As put by French pianist Sophia Domancich, one of Dean’s main musical partners in the latter part of his career, “there was always a moment when you wanted to stop playing and listen to him.”

After studying piano and violin at a very early age, Dean switched to the alto saxophone in his late teens and became interested in jazz. In the mid ‘60s,

he played with trumpeter Mark Charig in Long John Baldry’s band Bluesology, whose piano player borrowed Dean and Baldry’s first names to start a career as pop singer under the name of Elton John. Later in the ‘60s Dean, Charig and trombonist Nick Evans first joined Keith Tippett’s sextet and later Soft Machine. Around this time, Dean picked up the saxello, a 1920s straight soprano with a slightly curved neck and tipped bell that Roland Kirk made famous, making his sound even more recognizable.

Soon after Charig and Evans left, Dean was part of Soft Machine’s iconic lineup alongside drummer Robert Wyatt, bassist Hugh Hopper and keyboard player Mike Ratledge, recording the pathbreaking *Third* and *Fourth* (1970) and *Fifth* (1971-72) albums as well as many radio sessions and tours yielding later archival albums. Dean’s voracious appetite for broadening his musical horizons was “instrumental in the evolution of the group towards more improvised forms,” Domancich recalls, pushing from a pop song-inclined band to a more typically experimental Canterbury ensemble. In this context, Dean’s contributions on the Fender Rhodes inspired by a certain minimalism should not be overlooked.

While with Soft Machine, Dean formed his first jazz group with bassist Neville Whitehead and drummer Phil Howard, recording his eponymous debut for CBS in 1971. During the same period, he also played with Barry Guy’s London Jazz Composers’

Orchestra and Keith Tippett’s 50-piece Centipede. After leaving Soft Machine in 1972, Dean embraced the London-based South African musical diaspora, playing with bassist Harry Miller and drummer Louis Moholo and joining pianist Chris McGregor’s Brotherhood of Breath, with which he toured Europe for two years. In January 1975, he launched his large ensemble Ninesense, which included many of the British jazz scene’s most talented musicians, including old pals like Tippett, Charig, Evans, Miller and Moholo. He also formed his own quartet, EDQ, with Tippett, Moholo and bassist Chris Laurence, recording *They All Be On This Old Road* live in 1976, which has been recently reissued in an expanded version and is reviewed in this month’s issue [see pg. 29]. This is a striking recording, since it sums up Dean’s main influences and experiences to date as well as the empathy within the quartet. It also provides a rather rare opportunity of hearing Dean interpreting jazz standards such as Jimmy Van Heusen’s “Here’s That Rainy Day” and John Coltrane’s “Naima,” showcasing his often overlooked lyrical side.

Around the same time he co-led El Skid with fellow saxophonist Alan Skidmore—the two of them had met in the late ‘60s at the Little Theatre Club run by John Stevens. Skidmore, who was also part of Ninesense, Centipede and Brotherhood of Breath, fondly remembers Dean’s speaking of his early

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

# WE INSIST!

BY JIM MOTAVALLI

The Italian independent jazz label We Insist! was named for Max Roach's landmark Candid recording, subtitled *Freedom Now Suite*, but don't expect recordings of American expatriates in Europe. It is home for homegrown Italian talent. Since the launch in 2018, the label has issued 16 albums.

According to Anna Harwell Celenza's *Jazz Italian Style*, "When jazz arrived in Italy at the conclusion of World War I, it quickly became part of the local music culture. In Italy, thanks to the gramophone and radio, many Italian listeners paid little attention to a performer's national and ethnic identity." That meant Louis Armstrong had equal footing in Italy with homegrown stars like Gorni Kramer. Today, Italian jazz stars such as trumpeter Enrico Rava, vocalist Roberta Gambarini and saxophonist Stefano di Battista are well known, but up-and-comers like Francesco Diodati (guitar), Marco Colonna (clarinet and sax), Paolo Botti (viola and banjo) and Matteo Bortone (bass) haven't been on the radar as much in North America.

We Insist! is out to change that. It is a musicians' label, formed by a group of multi-talented friends: flutist Maria Borghi is the graphic artist and illustrator; veteran clarinetist Giancarlo "Nino" Locatelli is the label's artistic director; guitarist Gianmaria Aprile acts as sound engineer and record producer; and clarinetist Pietro Bologna is the photographer. The varied backgrounds "stimulate us to conceive and realize

projects of wide scope, within which we can create new partnerships," the collective says.

The music is quite varied. Locatelli is heard in duo format on *From Here, From There* (with Alberto Braidà on piano) and the influence of soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, who spent time in the mid '60s in Italy, is prominent (two albums on the label, Locatelli's *Situations* and Pipeline 8's *Prayer*, feature his music). But Eric Dolphy is definitely in there, too, as well as Jimmy Giuffrè. *From Here, From There* is challenging and progressive, but highly melodic. If you liked Dolphy's playing on Mal Waldron's *The Quest*, you will love this.

Braidà is heard in trio format on *Cats in the Kitchen* (with bassist Silvia Bolognesi and drummer Cristiano Calcagnile) and it swings with a gentle, Monk-ish touch. On the other hand, clarinetist and soundscape artist Paolo Gaiba Riva's Expeditions—recorded all over the world with different collaborators—uses a lot of found sounds and is bracingly avant garde. Italian jazz is varied, and so is the label.

But it is all committed music. Writing in the July 2021 issue of this gazette, Tom Greenland said the players on Pascal Contet and Joëlle Léandre's fourth duo album, *Area Sismica*, "spiral over and under each other like a musical double helix."

Locatelli says he started talking about We Insist! with Borghi in 2012. "It took a few years to clarify the path we wanted to take," he said. "It was born from Maria's strong determination to support and spread my music and the music of musicians who, like me, for various reasons are on the sidelines or risk ending up there." The label's philosophy, he added, "is to try and do things in the time they need, taking care of all the details. But above all to live each project as a collective

work." The collective identifies with Roach's work in part because it was issued by a label, Candid, unafraid to release challenging, politically conscious work. Both Roach and Charles Mingus, who also recorded for Candid, had been part of the Newport Rebels group that organized an alternative to the mainstream Newport Jazz Festival in 1960. Locatelli described the founding of an independent label as "a militant, political act, an act of resistance against the mercantile music industry." Incidentally, the Candid records—many of them classics—will also be rereleased as the label relaunches. Expect a profile here later in the year.

As to what is on the label, Locatelli says he doesn't like the term avant garde "because it assumes there's a rear-guard." He prefers Monk's quote, "You've got to dig it to dig it, you dig?" To which he adds, "I like diggers, even if they dig in places I personally would never go... What matters is where you arrive, not where you start from."

Given the photographer and illustrator involved, it is not surprising that the album covers are visually striking, but also quite varied. ECM packages may have a recognizable look, but We Insist! has a variety of arresting approaches to visualizing the music. Speaking of diggers, maybe the crate variety will see the colorful covers and decide to investigate the music within. Six releases are planned for 2022, ranging from projects with 10 musicians to a solo work by trombonist Sebi Tramontana. *7 Rocks* is a duet with Locatelli and bassist Enrico Fazio and another release features trumpeter Gabriele Mitelli's trio with the British rhythm section of John Edwards and Mark Sanders.

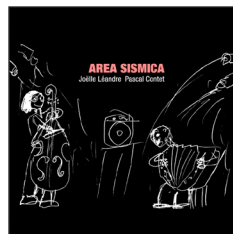
For more information, visit [weinsistrecords.com](http://weinsistrecords.com)



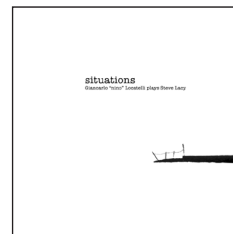
*From Here From There*  
Giancarlo Nino Locatelli/Alberto Braidà



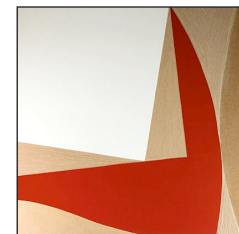
*Cats in the Kitchen*  
Braidà/Bolognesi/Calcagnile



*Area Sismica*  
Joëlle Léandre



*Situations*  
Giancarlo Nino Locatelli



*Prayer*  
Pipeline 8

## VOXNEWS

# LOVE LINES

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Singer **Maria Hawkins**—who sang under the name Maria Ellington—fronted many notable swing bands in the '40s. Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington all courted her talent. She was opening for The Mills Brothers as a solo act at Club Zanzibar in Manhattan in 1946 when she met Nat King Cole, who had been called in to sub for the popular quartet. Two years later, the two were married by Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. at Harlem's famed Abyssinian Baptist Church. The couple's daughter, **Natalie Cole**, born 72 years ago this month, deserves enormous credit for the revival of the Great American Songbook in the '90s. Her 1991 album *Unforgettable...With Love* (Elektra) featured well over 150 studio musicians on 22 standards popularized by her father decades earlier, going on to take top honors in a brand new Grammy category in 1992: Best Traditional Pop Vocal Performance. The chart-peaking hit from that record—Natalie's duet with her late father on a digital version of his 1952 single "Unforgettable"—would endure not only as one of the decade's most popular songs, but as a technological game-changer. This month, to mark the 30th anniversary of this multi-platinum phenomenon, Craft Editions is re-releasing

*Unforgettable...With Love* in multiple formats—including a two-LP vinyl set in '90s purple. After *Unforgettable...With Love*, Cole would turn out many more studio albums affirming her appreciation of all things Songbook, without ever fully returning to the R&B pop tracks that had earned her fame in the '70s-80s. In 2008, she recorded *Still Unforgettable* (DMI/Atco), featuring "Walkin' My Baby Back Home", another virtual duet with her father. Natalie, who passed away in 2015, would earn her final Grammy for this record, her second in the Best Traditional Pop Vocal Performance category.

Singer **Catherine Russell**, too, descends from two consequential jazz figures: Her father, pianist Luis Russell, worked as Louis Armstrong's musical director for years and her mother, Carline Ray, made history as a vocalist and instrumentalist with the revolutionary band, International Sweethearts of Rhythm. Russell is an undeniable talent in her own standing, too, with credits that extend from backup vocalist for scores of big pop acts to her own acclaimed solo releases and a Grammy for her work on the soundtrack album for the HBO-TV series, *Boardwalk Empire*. Russell's latest album, *Send For Me* (Dot Time), takes as its title cut a hefty blues track that Nat King Cole recorded in 1957. In a filmed performance from that time, Cole describes it as his "first contribution to the rock-and-roll repertoire", before citing sales of half a million in one week. Russell approaches the tune differently, with more drag and an intuitive leaning toward traditional blues. Her deep

voice, both familiar and reserved, wraps each syllable in a subtle warmth—it is a refreshing take on this classic. This month at Birdland, Russell will celebrate Valentine's Day, Mardi Gras and the album's impending launch, slated for April. She plays with her septet on Feb. 14th (Valentine's Day for Lovers) and Feb. 15th (New Orleans Carnival); in trio formation with **Carolyn Leonhart** and **LaTanya Hall**, her fellow vocalists from Steely Dan, on Feb. 16th (The Danettes Valentine); goes solo with the quartet on Feb. 17th (An Intimate Valentine); and presents the album release concert on Feb. 18th-19th. On Feb. 28th, she appears at The Atlantic BKLN with Steven Bernstein's Millennial Territory Orchestra, recreating her dynamic performances from the group's January release, *Good Time Music (Community Music, Vol. 2)*.

**Gregory Porter** will present his annual Valentine's Day concert at the Kings Theatre (Feb. 12th), with guests **Kurt Elling** and **Samara Joy**. **Dianne Reeves** takes to Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theater with "Let's Fall In Love" (Feb. 11th-12th). **Svetlana's** Big Band offers a Special Valentine's Day Eve Show at Birdland (Feb. 13th). And **Samara Joy** sings standards on the day of love itself at Dizzy's Club.

**Sachal Vasandani** claims several gigs this month—at The Django (Feb. 16th), Mezzrow (Feb. 27th) and Dizzy's Club (Feb. 28th). His Edition label mate **Gretchen Parlato** headlines Blue Note (Feb. 21st-23rd). And the extraordinary **Meshell Ndegeocello** kicks off her Symphony Space residency on Feb. 24th. ❖

# BARRY HARRIS

BY ANDREY HENKIN



Barry Harris, pianist, educator and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Jazz Master, died Dec. 8th, 2021 of complications from COVID-19 at 91. He had given his last public performance on Nov. 12th, 2021 at Flushing Town Hall as part of the venue's annual NEA Jazz Masters celebration alongside Jimmy Owens, Kenny Barron, Sheila Jordan, Billy Hart and Donald Harrison.

Harris was born Dec. 15th, 1929 in Detroit. He began playing piano at age four and credited the city's school system for its emphasis on music. Among his friends and colleagues were future fellow legends Kenny Burrell, Tommy Flanagan and Hank, Thad and Elvin Jones. His formative influences were Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk. Speaking to this gazette in 2006, of the former he said, "He was the best one of all of them as far as this music was concerned." Of the latter, he remarked, "Monk was an individual...his solos weren't like anybody else and his songs weren't like anybody else." Harris began his professional career in his hometown but, like most, eventually moved to New York. In 1956, he undertook a tour with Max Roach, subbing for Powell's younger brother Richie who had died in a car accident.

During his eight decades of playing Harris made over two dozen albums for Argo, Riverside, Prestige, MPS, Xanadu, Uptown, Concord, Candid, Enja, Alfa Jazz, Reservoir and other labels and was a valued sideman with Cannonball Adderley, Joshua Breakstone, Charlie Byrd, Donald Byrd, Al Cohn, Sonny Criss, Art Farmer, Terry Gibbs, Benny Golson, Dexter Gordon, Johnny Griffin, Coleman Hawkins, Louis Hayes, Jimmy Heath, Buck Hill, Illinois Jacquet, Eddie Jefferson, Carmell Jones, Thad Jones, Sam Jones, Clifford Jordan, Lee Konitz, Harold Land, Yusef Lateef, Warne Marsh, Earl May, Charles McPherson, Billy Mitchell, Hank Mobley, James Moody, Frank Morgan, Lee Morgan, Sal Nistico, Dave Pike, Sonny Red, Red Rodney, Jack Sheldon, Sonny Stitt, Don Wilkerson and others.

From the '80s onwards, Harris became known as an educator through his weekly workshop in which he mentored many generations of future players. As to what he taught, Harris said, "How to improvise. That's the biggest challenge. I want [students] to be proficient on their instruments. ...You have to find a way to teach all this kind of stuff. It's hard. ...They have to have the means and the means is the technique. You have to have that. [I'm not] really teaching bebop or something like that. I'm just trying to teach how to improvise."

Harris was named an NEA Jazz Master in 1989. He received the Presidential Award from the International Association of Jazz Educators in 1995, received a Congratulatory Letter from the White House for his work in 1998 and was inducted into the American Jazz Hall of Fame in 2000.



**HARRY COLOMBY** (Aug. 20th, 1929 - Dec. 25th, 2021) Though working in cinema later in his career, the then-high-school-aged jazz fan (younger brother to Signal Records founder Jules Colomby) became Thelonious Monk's manager at the pianist's request from 1955-69. Colomby died Dec. 25th at 92.



**PEDRO GONÇALVES** (??? - Dec. 4, 2021) The Portuguese bassist worked with Paulo Curado, Lisbon Improvisation Players and Mikado Lab, co-founded Dead Combo and had credits as a recording engineer for Creative Sources. Gonçalves died Dec. 4th at 51.



**JOHN HEARD** (Jul. 3rd, 1938 - Dec. 10th, 2021) The bassist was active since the '60s, working with George Duke, Cal Tjader, Azar Lawrence, Luis Gasca, Joe Henderson, Moacir Santos, Airto Moreira, Ahmad Jamal, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Count Basie, Lew Tabackin, Kenny Burrell, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Oscar Peterson, Shelly Manne, Nick Brignola, Bill Watrous, Ira Sullivan, Zoot Sims, Tete Montoliu, Clark Terry, Harold Land, Gene Harris, Lou Levy, Pharoah Sanders, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Claude Williamson, Joe Williams, George Cables, Calvin Keys, Bud Shank, Bobby Hutcherson, Louie Bellson, Gary Foster, Mike Campbell, Benny Carter, Frank Strazzeri and many others along with albums as a leader or co-leader for ITI and Straight Ahead. Heard died Dec. 10th at 83.



**SANDRA JAFFE** (Mar. 10th, 1938 - Dec. 27th, 2021) The jazz champion co-founded New Orleans Preservation Hall in 1961 with her husband, which has been a crucial venue for presenting traditional jazz and the site of recordings by Jim Robinson, Percy Humphrey, Chris Barber and the club's own Preservation Hall Jazz Band, currently run by Jaffe's son Ben. Jaffe died Dec. 27th at 83.



**HAKIM JAMI** (??? - Dec. 19th, 2021) The Detroit bassist and tuba player had three new millennium recordings for hometown label Reparation after work in the '70s-80s with Ted Daniel, Archie Shepp, Don Cherry, Hilton Ruiz, Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre, Sun Ra and Roland Alexander, as well as more recent credits with Salim Washington and Anthony Braxton. Jami died Dec. 19th at ~80.



**ANDY KAUFMAN** (Oct. 5th, 1945 - Dec. 14th, 2021) The music industry professional was the booker for both Blue Note (1989-95) and Birdland (1995-2005) clubs, managed Kevin Mahogany and produced Cachao and Grupo Folklorico Y Experimental Nuevayorquino albums for Salsoul. Kaufman died Dec. 14th at 76.



**WALTER LANG** (1961 - Dec. 16th, 2021) The German pianist worked with Rick Hollander, Beate Kittsteiner, Harald Rüschenbaum, Johannes Herrlich, Jason Seizer, Adrian Mears, Jenny Evans, Thomas Faist, Lisa Wahlandt, Wolfgang Lackerschmidt, Duško Gojković, Don Menza and others, was a member of Full Moon Trio and Trio Elf and had albums under his own name for Double Moon, Chitei, Nagel Heyer, Stomp, Pirouet, Jawo, M&I, Atelier Sawano, Enja and ACT, including two co-led with Lee Konitz. Lang died Dec. 16th at 60.



**ROHN LAWRENCE** (1961 - Dec. 30th, 2021) The guitarist had credits under Najee, Norman Connors, Lonnie Liston Smith, Will Downing, Boney James, Nestor Torres, André Ward, Bob Baldwin, Art Sherrod, Jr., Marion Meadows and Rick Braun and mid '90s albums on Atlantic and Jazzateria. Lawrence died Dec. 30th at 60.



**DON PALMER** (Apr. 9th, 1939 - Dec. 17, 2021) The Canadian saxophonist had credits under Tito Puente and Lee Konitz in the '70s and then Paul Cram in the new millennium to go along with membership in Alive and Well and the Benghazi Saxophone Quartet in the '90s, plus a co-led release with Tim Cohoon, Joe Sealy and Skip Beckwith in 1976. Palmer died Dec. 17th at 82.



**IDANG RASJIDI** (Apr. 26th, 1958 - Dec. 4th, 2021) The Indonesian pianist worked with Ireng Maulana, Benny Mustapha and Benny Likumahuwa, co-led a group with Indra Lesmana and co-founded the Jakarta All Stars and Trigonía. Rasjidi died Dec. 4th at 63.



**OSCAR LÓPEZ RUIZ** (Mar. 21st, 1938 - Dec. 24th, 2021) The Argentine guitarist and composer (and brother to bassist Jorge López Ruiz) was in Astor Piazzolla's group from 1961-86 and also worked with Sergio Mihanovich, Lalo Schifrin, Dino Saluzzi, Gato Barbieri and others and would go on to compose for numerous films. López Ruiz died Dec. 24th at 83.



**MASAHISA SEGAWA** (1924 - Dec. 29th, 2021) The Japanese critic produced releases by Toshiko Akiyoshi, Sadao Watanabe, Nobuo Hara, Toshiyuki Miyama and others and wrote liner notes for Columbia, Takt, Express, Denon, East Wind, Yupiteru, Electric Bird, Three Blind Mice, Sony, Eighty-Eight's and many other labels. Segawa died Dec. 29th at 97.



**ROBBIE SHAKESPEARE** (Sep. 27th, 1953 - Dec. 8th, 2021) The Jamaican bassist was best known as half of the reggae duo Sly & Robbie, who collaborated with Monty Alexander, Nils Petter Molvær, Meshell Ndegeocello, Manu Dibango, Kazumi Watanabe, Barry Adamson, Michael Colina, Bernie Worrell and others. Shakespeare died Dec. 8th at 68.



**LEIF STRAND** (Jun. 7th, 1942 - Dec. 1st, 2021) The Swedish composer, conductor and saxophonist incorporated compatriot jazz musicians, such as Arne Domnérus, Bengt Hallberg, Rune Gustafsson, Georg Riedel, Egil Johansen, Putte Wickman, Lars Danielsson and others plus vocal choirs into his works, recorded for His Master's Voice, Interdisc, Proprius, Europa Film, Air and Earmeal. Strand died Dec. 1st at 78.



**GREG TATE** (Oct. 14th, 1957 - Dec. 7th, 2021) The journalist and guitarist published cultural criticism essays on music and Black culture, wrote for the *Village Voice* and other publications, co-founded the Black Rock Coalition, led the Burnt Sugar band and wrote liner notes for albums by Charles Tolliver, Meshell Ndegeocello, David Gilmore, Josh Roseman, William Parker and others. Tate died Dec. 7th at 64. ❖

(LEST WE FORGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

musical influences such as Charlie Parker and Eric Dolphy and his knack for writing interesting and quite demanding compositions. He also remembers the collegial atmosphere of that period in London with most musicians playing in the same groups, recording in local studios during the day and flying to the continent for evening concerts. That camaraderie was evident in the early '90s when Dean joined the Dedication Orchestra, an ensemble formed in tribute to the exiled South African musicians who were at the core of the original Blue Notes and Brotherhood of Breath.

In the '80s, Dean's pace slowed down, largely due to health issues; both Skidmore and saxophonist/bagpiper Paul Dunmall, who was one of his closer musical partners and friends, recall how "few could keep up with Elton's drinking." Toward the end of the decade, Dean reconnected with the Canterbury circle and joined Phil Miller's In Cahoots and later Pip Pyle's L'Equip'Out, staying in both for more than a decade. In addition to his Unlimited Saxophone Company, he also reformed the EDQ, recording *Silent Knowledge* in 1995 with Domancich, Dunmall, bassist Paul Rogers and drummer Tony Levin, and established a new large jazz ensemble, Newsense. In keeping with his musical appetite, Dean also became a much sought-after player and composer on the international scene, participating in groups such as the Anglo-Italian Quartet and trumpeter Dennis Gonzalez' Dallas-London sextet. Most of these collaborations, including the ones with trombonist Roswell Rudd and Hopper, were maintained on an on-and-off basis as his health allowed.

Starting in the late '90s, Dean eventually embraced his Soft Machine legacy through a number of groups—Soft Machine Legacy, Soft Works, Soft Bounds, Soft Mountain, Soft Heap—many of which featured former members such as Hopper, guitarist John Etheridge and drummer John Marshall, along with his old friend Tippett. Of note are Soft Works, which recorded *Abracadabra* in 2003, and Soft Bounds—Dean, Hopper, Domancich and drummer Simon Goubert—recording live at the Parisian club Le Triton in 2004. These were not, however, cover bands revisiting Soft Machine's original material but rather attempts at picking up the musical evolution where *Fourth* and *Fifth* had left off. As Domancich recalls, "he never had nostalgia for the Soft Machine period."

As his albums continue to be reissued and live recordings discovered, Dean will hopefully graduate from the 'unsung hero' category. As eloquently put in John Fordham's obituary from *The Guardian*: "Dean's playing sounded fresh and familiar at the same time. He could move easily between a muscular, song-based orthodoxy and unpremeditated improvisation and his bitter-sweet sound and twisting, eager melody lines broadened the emotions of every band he played in." Dean lived his music intensely to the point of overlooking any commercial aspects. In one of his rare interviews, he stated that "the best way to experience jazz is in a live situation; to me it just doesn't work as studio music." Dunmall sums it up rather well: "Elton at heart was an improviser but had his ears open to all music...he always had his own sound and voice in whatever style of music, be it free improvised jazz or jazz rock you could always tell it was Elton." ❖

**Recommended Listening:**

- Soft Machine—*Third* (CBS-Columbia, 1970)
- Elton Dean Quartet—*They All Be On This Old Road (The Seven Dials Concert)* (Ogun, 1976)
- Soft Heap—*Eponymous* (Charly, 1978)
- Dennis Gonzalez Dallas-London Sextet—*Catechism (The Names We Are Known By)* (DAAGNIM, 1987)
- Elton Dean, Paul Dunmall, Tony Levin, Paul Rogers, Roswell Rudd, Keith Tippett—*Bladik* (Cuneiform, 1996)
- Soft Works—*Abracadabra In Osaka* (MoonJune, 2003)

# SOAPBOX GALLERY PRESENTS

**PIANO MONDAYS @ 8.00 PM**

**FEB 7 Arkadiy Figlin**  
**FEB 14 Dave Kikoski**  
**FEB 21 Misha Piatigorsky**  
**FEB 28 John Di Martino**



**FEB 5 8:00 PM Julian Shore Trio**  
**FEB 6 8:00 PM Shai Maestro & Michael Mayo**  
**FEB 8 8:00 PM Paul Jost Quartet**  
**FEB 9 8:00 PM Misha Piatigorsky & Barbara Mendes**



**FEB 10 8:00 PM Michael O'Brien**



**ARI HOENIG  
DAN WEISS  
DUO**

**TWO NIGHTS  
FEB 11-12  
8.00 PM**

**FEB 13 4:00 PM Counter)Induction presents Caleb Van Der Swaagh**

**FEB 16 8:00 PM John Lowery**

**FEB 17 8:00 PM Andrew Boudreau 'Neon'**



**FEB 18 8:00 PM Hayes Greenfield & Dean Johnson**



**FEB 19 8:00 PM Max Light**

**FEB 20 4:00 PM Counter)Induction presents Ars Poetica**

**FEB 22 8:00 PM Steve Sandberg & Tobias Meinert**

**FEB 23 8:00 PM Alon Yavnai Trio**

**FEB 24 8:00 PM Aimée Allen**

**FEB 25 8:00 PM James Carney**

**FEB 26 8:00 PM Marianne Solivan**

**Check our website calendar for additions and updates to the performance schedule**



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# ALBUM REVIEWS



**Koi** (Scoring & Performing The Music of Tim Berne)  
**Gregg Belisle-Chi** (Relative Pitch)  
*Mars*  
**Tim Berne/Gregg Belisle-Chi** (Intakt)  
 by George Grella

Tim Berne is, for most jazz fans, primarily thought of as a saxophonist, improviser and bandleader and only secondarily as a tunesmith or composer. But the quality of his groups and records comes directly out of his composing and though that may be subsumed for a lot of listeners, musicians hear it. In 2017, Matt Mitchell released *FORAGE*, piano interpretations of Berne's pieces, and now comes Gregg Belisle-Chi with the beautiful *Koi*, Berne played on solo guitar.

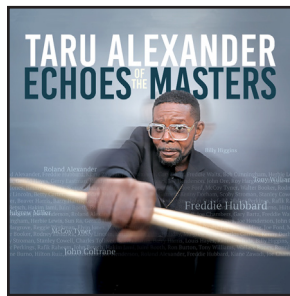
Stripped down and especially with the limited sustain of the guitar, it is easy to hear all the facets and sophistication in the pieces. Berne doesn't produce song-like melodies as he crafts pithy, but meaty phrases and sets them into chord changes and harmonic rhythms that outline both clear form and keep a strong tonal center. They are also full of details and quirks that set them apart from both standard song form and also the kind of liminal forms that often stand in for a highly improvisational concept of composition. Berne was an acolyte of Julius Hemphill, but his composing also reminds one of Wayne Shorter; not that Berne's material follows Shorter, but in taking his own oblique pared-down path to making pieces that improvisers will play. "Reception", for example, sounds at first like a response to two different Thelonious Monk tunes, then turns both inward structurally and outward harmonically. Berne's music is like Doctor Who's TARDIS, bigger on the inside.

To say that Belisle-Chi plays this stuff well is an understatement. His technique is excellent and it sounds like he is caressing the music. The recording quality is superb and meaningful in that the guitarist is solo but doesn't sound alone, the space and reverb around his instrument sounds like an accompaniment. Hearing Berne so stark yet glowing is frequently a moving experience.

Belisle-Chi has a concentrated gentleness that pairs superbly with Berne on *Mars*. They are an oil and vinegar mix and the guitarist brings out the depth of beauty and feeling in Berne's more questing, agitated approach. He also does something strange to the tune names. Berne favors acerbic titles like "Rose Bowl Charade" and "Middle Seat Blues"; reading this primes the mind for one thing, but the searching emotional exploration in the playing delivers something else altogether, like the titles are a loss-leader for a substantial payoff. Berne sounds as velvety as he has ever been and that contrast with the picked guitar strings is ideal.

"Middle Seat Blues" and "Giant Squids" are heard across both albums. On *Mars*, the guitarist lays back for some relaxed, Ornette Coleman-ish blues from Berne while solo Belisle-Chi gives the music a Delta blues sound with some nice slide work. "Giant Squids" is far more skeletal and angular heard solo while as a duo it has the fascinating sound of musicians near to constructing the thing on the spot, negotiating what comes next and when. As the last track on *Mars*, they play the head then it all comes to an end. A nice encore to two sides of the same unique, impressive coin.

For more information, visit [relativepitchrecords.com](http://relativepitchrecords.com) and [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch). Berne is at Downtown Music Gallery Feb. 1st. Belisle-Chi is at The Owl Music Parlor Feb. 4th. See Calendar.



**Echoes of the Masters**  
**Taru Alexander** (Sunnyside)  
 by Monique Ngozi Nri

Saxophonist Roland Alexander once confided on a road trip to the Detroit Jazz Festival that the critical thing for him in several decades of playing this music was "You've got to have a concept." It has become a catchphrase in this reviewer's household and one of the gems he passed down to his drummer son Taru. On the younger Alexander's new album *Echoes of the Masters*, the mission is straightforward: a tribute both to his father and to other jazz greats, some with whom Taru has played. The cover and liner notes highlight many of them: Billy Higgins, Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, John Coltrane and Tony Williams.

Alexander's choice of bandmates is critical. James Hurt, originally from Memphis and who upon his move to New York played with the elder Alexander, sparkles on piano while giving the leader more than enough room to showcase his excellent skills. The rhythmic exchanges between Hurt (who trained as a drummer himself) and Alexander are exhilarating. Antoine Roney, brother to the late Wallace Roney, is on tenor saxophone, and Rashaan Carter, son of a saxophonist and a jazz radio programmer, is on bass. It is fitting that these particular musicians should be gathered to pay tribute to masters of this music.

The opening tracks, "Change Up" and "Kojo Time", were composed by Taru's father, the latter composed on Taru's birthday. Hanke G.'s vocal interlude on "I Mean You" shows another side to Alexander, since his resumé includes work with Aminata Moseka (née Abbey Lincoln). "Deception", composed by bassist Buster Williams, is a fiery exchange between the players. McCoy Tyner's "Peresina" eases things down via a luscious saxophone melody, pleasing bass, gentle piano and supportive drums. The final track, Wayne Shorter's "Pinocchio", takes us full circle to the spirits of this music who came before us.

For more information, visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com). Alexander is at Smalls Feb. 1st. See Calendar.



**In Our Time**  
**Victor Gould** (Blue Room Music)  
 by Phil Freeman

Pianist Victor Gould's fourth album as a leader marks the debut of a trio with bassist Tamir Shmerling and drummer Anwar Marshall. A few guests appear – tenor saxophonist Dayna Stephens is heard on versions of Gigi Gryce's "Minority" and Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes" and on the album's final track, "In Memoriam", a string quartet appears – but for the most part it is an intimate, stripped-down release, showcasing Gould's melodic ear rather than the orchestrations that marked his albums *Clockwork* and *Thoughts Become Things*.

Most of the compositions are new, but "Ascension"

was also recorded by the Black Art Jazz Collective, co-led by saxophonist Wayne Escoffery and trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, as the title track on their 2020 album. (Gould was part of a revamping of the Collective's rhythm section, replacing Xavier Davis.) This version has the same bouncing energy as that sextet recording, but Marshall drives the beat harder than the Collective's drummer, Mark Whitfield Jr., did.

*In Our Time* pays tribute to two of Gould's early mentors, trumpeter Wallace Roney and drummer Ralph Peterson, Jr., both of whom died in recent years (Roney in 2020 and Peterson in 2021), on "Lord Wallace" and "Dear Ralph", respectively. It is difficult to eulogize a drummer, particularly one with a presence as outsized as Peterson, without feeling the urge to step into his shoes, but it is not until the next track, "Resilience", that Marshall seizes some solo space, playing with a taut precision, rattling across the snare to land on the toms with a resonant thump.

The album pauses in the middle for two soft pieces: "Showtime" is a romantic ballad, on which Shmerling and Marshall's playing is so delicate and restrained it may as well be a solo piano piece, while "Queen Alma" (a dedication to Gould's late grandmother and his youngest daughter) actually is a solo performance, but it has more whomp; the way Gould seems to wander off track, lingering in the keyboard's lower regions, may remind some listeners of Thelonious Monk or Matthew Shipp. When Stephens arrives, the listener is so accustomed to the sound of the trio at work that his passionate exhortations may feel like too much, but, by his second track, his presence makes sense.

For more information, visit [victorgouldmusic.com](http://victorgouldmusic.com). Gould is at Dizzy's Club Feb. 3rd with Black Art Jazz Collective and The Django Feb. 16th with Sachal Vasandani. See Calendar.

## RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Andrew Cyrille/William Parker/ Enrico Rava-2 *Blues for Cecil* (TUM)
- Finnerud Trio-*Thoughts* (Prisma-Rune Grammofon)
- Guillaume Gargaud and Patrice Grente-*Intuition's Day* (Open Systems)
- Giacomo Gates-*You* (Savant)
- Abdullah Ibrahim-*Solitude* (Gearbox)
- Ilmilieki Quartet-*Eponymous* (We Jazz)
- Lady Blackbird-*Black Acid Soul* (Foundation Music Productions/BMG)
- Harold Mabern-*Mabern Plays Coltrane* (Smoke Sessions)
- Stefan Pasborg-*Ritual Dance* (Sunnyside)
- Scott Tinkler-*Goose to Goose* (s/t)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

- Alan Braufman-*Live in New York City* (Valley of Search)
- Nathan Davis (with the George Arvanitas Trio)-*Live in Paris: The Orloff Recordings 1966-67* (Sam)
- Linda Fredriksson-*Juniper* (We Jazz)
- Lady Blackbird-*Black Acid Soul* (Foundation Music Productions/BMG)
- Okkyung Lee-*나를* (Na-Reul) (Corbett vs. Dempsey)
- Joe McPhee, Michael Bisio, Fred Lonberg-Holm, Juma Sultan-*The Sweet Spot* (RogueArt)
- Hedvig Mollestad-*Tempest Revisited* (Rune Grammofon)
- Miles Okazaki/Trevor Dunn/Dan Weiss-*Hive Mind* (Tzadik)
- Wadada Leo Smith's Great Lakes Quartet-*The Chicago Symphonies* (TUM)
- Gunter "Baby" Sommer/Fabrizio Puglisi-*Elements* (AUT)

Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director



**Ballads: Into the Heart of It**  
Steve Slagle (Panorama)  
by Jim Motavalli

If you haven't heard John Coltrane's *Ballads*, you haven't taken the man's full measure. Let's throw the record with Johnny Hartman in there too. Alto/soprano saxophonist Steve Slagle gets to the heart of these ballads. Ugonna Okegwo's bass seems a little down in the mix but what one can hear sounds great and Jason Tiemann is a nicely understated drummer for the project.

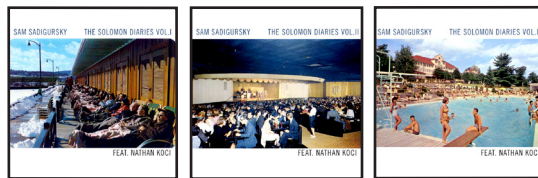
A big plus is trumpeter Randy Brecker on three tracks. He is one of the most consistently satisfying soloists in jazz and even if he just dropped into the session for the day, he doubles the themes on his tracks as if he has been playing them for years. His solos on Thelonious Monk's "Reflections" and Slagle's "Big Mac" alone will keep you coming back to this album.

But it is Slagle's date and his playing makes one ask why—despite an extensive resumé—he isn't on more listeners' radar. On Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now", he teaches a master class in expressive, heart-on-sleeve alto playing. Pianist Bruce Barth's solo on this track is also outstanding.

On three tracks, Richard Sussman provides synth and drum programming and although Slagle is good with strings, even when they are artificial, the electronics fail to substitute effectively for an actual orchestra. The least-successful track is "My One and Only Love", given a kind of almost jaunty hip-hop flavor. Hartman and Coltrane rung every ounce of pathos from it and that would have been a good model. The programming on Miles Davis/Bill Evans' "Blue in Green" works better.

But this is a minor quibble. There's so much to savor. Duke Ellington's "Le Sucrier Velours (The Queen's Suite)" isn't heard enough and Slagle is surpassingly lovely in an extended solo. On the stately title track, Slagle and Brecker lock together, then the former on alto offers a lilting and optimistic improvisation before the latter enters, modest and open hearted, trilling on the outro to introduce a bouncy Barth. The album also showcases four of Slagle's compositions and while they are all good "Si, See", with the auteur on superlative soprano, has a lovely, lilting melody and could become a standard.

For more information, visit [steveslaglemusic.com](http://steveslaglemusic.com). Slagle is at *Smalls* Feb. 4th-5th. See Calendar.



**The Solomon Diaries Vol. I, II, III**  
(Feat. Nathan Koci)  
Sam Sadigursky (Adhyaropa)  
by Elliott Simon

In the late 19th and early 20th Century, assimilation into an idealized America was the intention of many Eastern European Jewish immigrants. However, tension between culture and religion in the context of overt anti-Semitism fostered complex Jewish-American identities that continue to develop. The Borscht Belt, centered in Sullivan County, NY, was one significant cultural waystation on this journey. Jokingly referred to as "Solomon County", it included humble "kuchaleins" (cook alones) and massive resorts like Grossinger's, the Commodore and the Concord. The Borscht Belt was ultimately destroyed by its own success as niche entertainers became conventional and succeeding generations favored other recreational pursuits. Iconic architectural markers were slowly demolished by neglect and their remains, along with the time period's ethos, motivate clarinetist Sam Sadigursky's *The Solomon Diaries*.

Sadigursky's father is a klezmer clarinetist but the muse for this release is the region's rubble as captured in photos by Marisa Scheinfeld for the book *The Borscht Belt: Revisiting the Remains of America's Jewish Vacationland*. Like Jamie Saft's *Borscht Belt Studies* (Tzadik, 2010), Sadigursky and accordion player Nathan Koci do not try to mimic the music that these resorts featured. Their graceful playing harkens back more to an earlier Eastern European Jewish music than it does to the jazz-infused klezmer that the Borscht Belt nurtured. The zeitgeist brilliantly comes together though when listened to in combination with Scheinfeld's photos. Song titles name check noteworthy places and people and the compositions integrate recorded voices from the past across three CDs.

Large resorts are wistfully portrayed as pathos fills "Flight of the Commodore" and "Nevele", formerly located in Ellenville, NY, starts with an excerpt from Yiddish Singer Ruth Rubin's uptempo "Hot zikh mir di zip tsezipt". Her refrain captures the joy of dancing during a traditional Jewish wedding but the song then devolves into a thoughtful duet that maintains the dance but places it in a gloomy setting. Rubin also appears on a bluegrass-tinged yet poignant "Pines Hora", which features Koci on banjo as well as accordion. "Minette" (previously the Delmar Hotel in Liberty, NY) is a somewhat livelier folk dance while "Callicoon", referring to the Callicoon Hills Resort that is still operating, features fierce and whirling instrumental interplay. "Hi-Li" pays homage to an area boys camp and like many other pieces starts out with a meeting of clarinet and accordion building to a climactic ending whereas "Rose's Hard Candy" impresses with its interesting rhythms and harmonics. "Little Narrow Circles" is the session centerpiece and includes sections from Reuben Wallenrod's *Dusk in the Catskills* (1957) read by Katrina Lenk. Spoken word and her impassioned vocals whirl with the instrumentation and push Koci and Sadigursky to create an intensely emotional experience that intertwines previous splendor with present despair.

Koci is outstanding throughout but his forays into the upper register and harmonizing above the melody occasionally relegate the clarinet to a duplicative sounding middle voice; Sadigursky's register switching is superb but his horn is at times lost. That said, such is not the case on "Kuchalein", a tune whose climax allows Sadigursky to show off his powerful playing, or on the cleverly-put-together journey from NYC to the Catskills taken on "87 North". "Goodbye Sullivan"

and "Fannie's Waltz" close out the final CD with the former a flowingly touching ballad showcasing Sadigursky's lovely tone on bass clarinet and the latter is an ethereal piano/accordion twirl. Sadigursky's excellent three-volume *Words* project (New Amsterdam) used poetry for musical inspiration and with *The Solomon Diaries* he performs similar magic with striking visual images.

For more information, visit [adhyaroparecords.com](http://adhyaroparecords.com). This project is at *Barbès* Feb. 6th. See Calendar.



**Bird Lives**  
SWR Big Band/Magnus Lindgren/John Beasley  
(ACT Music)  
by George Kanzler

Originally conceived to coincide with Charlie Parker's centennial and to be performed live in 2020 by John Beasley's Monk'estra, this project was delayed by the COVID pandemic and reinstated last year for the SWR Big Band of Stuttgart, Germany, led by Swedish flutist/saxophonist Magnus Lindgren, who co-arranged five and arranged one (a medley-overture), of the eight tracks. Of the other seven, four feature Parker originals and three ballad standards, a nod to the *Charlie Parker with Strings* period also alluded to by the inclusion of a 10-piece string section with the SWR Big Band.

The tracks with Parker tunes are the meat of the recital, kicking off in grand fashion with the flag-waving opener, co-arranged by Lindgren and Beasley, and the standout track, "Cherokee/Koko". Parker's contrafact of Ray Noble's "Cherokee", "Koko", leads off, the Bird theme tossed around between sections of the big band before French singer Camille Bertault scats Parker's recorded solo. Guest tenor saxophonist Chris Potter then steps up, roaring through a long solo backed by band shouts and riffs introducing "Cherokee" phrases. A drum break dissolves into rubato strings as preface to Beasley's piano solo followed by a saxophone section soli of more of Bird's solo, leading into a reprise of "Cherokee" and "Koko" with Potter.

Beasley's mashup arrangement of "Scrapple from the Apple/Ah Leu Cha" features AfroLatin percussion from guests Pedrito Martinez and Munyungo Jackson, semi-rubato string interludes and solos from trumpeter Martin Auer and Lindgren on tenor. "Confirmation", one of the five co-arrangements, aims toward a funky-contemporary vibe, enlivened by Beasley's Fender Rhodes and Marc Godfroid's trombone solos. The percussion guests return for an AfroLatin "Donna Lee", propelled by bongos and congas, guest Miguel Zenón's alto saxophone soaring on top.

Of the three ballads, Beasley's chart on "I'll Remember April" is the one that conjures up *Charlie Parker with Strings* memories. A showcase for guest Joe Lovano's tenor saxophone, it succeeds as both feature and tribute. "Laura", a co-arrangement heavily influenced by cinematic music (the song was a movie theme originally), is atmospheric with drama, lessening the impact of guest Charles McPherson's alto saxophone lead and solo. "Summertime", another co-arrangement, is a disappointment, stuck somewhere between pop-jazz and smooth jazz.

For more information, visit [actmusic.com](http://actmusic.com). Beasley conducts the *Manhattan School of Music Jazz Orchestra* at *Dizzy's Club* Feb. 7th. See Calendar.



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## GLOBE UNITY



*Escape The Flames*  
Binker and Moses (Gearbox)  
*Oostum Wind*  
Wu Wei/Klaas Hekman (Strotbock)  
*Live Recordings 2019-2020*  
Timo Lassy/Teppo Mäkynen (We Jazz)  
by Tom Greenland

Although some have suggested three is the magic number for spontaneous musical interactions, paring down to two improvisers raises the stakes, calling for more robust contributions from each. When said duos unfold in real time, without safety netting, the stage is primed for creativity unlimited.

Tenor saxophonist Binker Golding and drummer Moses Boyd are pivotal figures in the burgeoning London scene that delivers jazz with the intensity and immediacy of club music. *Escape The Flames* captures the duo's launch party for its sophomore disc *Journey To The Mountain Of Forever* at London's Total Refreshment Center, reprising all the studio tracks in extended versions, fed by the energy of an encircling crowd. Akin to Cream or the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the pair come on like a 'power duo', with recognizable roots in the iconic John Coltrane/Elvin Jones exchanges, but also adding John Bonham-esque power drumming, R&B/hip-hop beats and speed-metal onslaught of a two-hand-tapping guitarist. The style is more formulaic than European free improv, yet these visceral workouts contain abundant variety, subtlety, sensitivity and edge, well suited for both club and concert crowds.

Chinese sheng maestro Wu Wei (based in Berlin) and Rotterdam bass saxophonist Klaas Hekman are an unusual pairing, wedding the 3,000-year-old "bamboo organ" (as Wei terms it in the liner notes) and the low brass saxophone (which sounds an octave under the tenor). Recorded over three days in the Netherlands, *Oostum Wind* shows that even the oddest couplings can work well. Wei 'leads' most of the 11 atmospheric pieces, playing cascades of double pitches, which bend, slide, whirl and stutter like train whistles or bird calls, his alternating inhaled and exhaled attacks separated in the mix to effect a kind of counterpoint, as if two were playing. At times he sounds like a Baroque organ, at others like an unruly bassoon. Hekman adds figured basslines, low-end 'yodels', atmospheric valve taps, clicks, claps and sighs, rooting pig grunts and vibrant didgeridoo-like drones suffused with overtone melodies.

On *Live Recordings 2019-2020*, the fourth album by tenor saxophonist Timo Lassy and drummer Teppo Mäkynen, the Finns develop an approach somewhere between the records reviewed above: like the former containing an ample measure of fat-toned, R&B-laced blues phraseology; like the latter making ample use of timbre, space and atmosphere. Recorded at the We and Porvoo jazz festivals and Helsinki's G Livelab club, the cuts showcase Lassy's ability to finesse a motive, shading his sound with expressive vibrato, working concise fragments into broad gestures through meticulous attention to detail, making his strongest declamations with inborn magnetism. He and Mäkynen strike a balance of initiative and restraint, whether in seesawing interchanges or toggling solo episodes. The longest cut, "Liberty", is impressive for its slowly ramping, sustained climax.

For more information, visit [gearboxrecords.com](http://gearboxrecords.com), [klaashekman.nl](http://klaashekman.nl) and [wejazz.fi](http://wejazz.fi)



*I'm In Love Again*  
Sweet Megg & Ricky Alexander (Turtle Bay)  
by Alex Henderson

The late producer Orrin Keepnews once argued that, when all is said and done, there are two types of jazz: before and after Charlie Parker. Vocalist Meaghan Farrell, aka Sweet Megg, and saxophonist/clarinetist Ricky Alexander stick to the pre-Parker variety on *I'm In Love Again*. An expressive artist who brings a sense of fun and playfulness to her performances, Megg draws on influences that include Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee, Ivie Anderson and classic blues singers like Victoria Spivey and Bessie Smith. All of the musicians who join Megg and Alexander sound well-versed in jazz' pre-Parker era: trumpeter Mike Davis, trombonist Rob Edwards, banjo/guitar player Jerron Paxton, pianist Dalton Ridenhour, bassist Rob Adkins and drummer Kevin Dorn. The arrangements that Davis brings to pianist Fats Waller's "Squeeze Me", Joseph Meyer's "My Honey's Lovin' Arms" and Harry Warren's "I'd Love to Take Orders From You" are reminiscent of the late '20s-early '30s.

This album swings with a strong New Orleans flavor, often recalling the early bands of clarinetist Sidney Bechet and trumpeter Louis Armstrong. Arrangements of Frank Signorelli's "A Blues Serenade" or Cole Porter's "I'm in Love Again" aren't Dixieland in the strict sense, but the Crescent City influence is definitely there. Megg and Alexander manage to offer their share of surprises and don't insist on sticking to the most overdone standards. Duke Ellington's "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good" has been recorded by myriad artists, but Jack Lawrence-Peter Tinturin's melancholy "Foolin' Myself" is an underexposed gem recorded by Holiday in 1937. Megg's charismatic performance shows how well the song holds up in the early 2020s. The traditional "Ragged But Right" is closely identified with country music but the version here is more akin to classic blues singers like Smith and Ma Rainey and a lot of fun in the process.

Traditionalism certainly has its place in jazz and *I'm In Love Again* is an appealing celebration of jazz' pre-bebop era.

For more information, visit [turtlebayrecords.com](http://turtlebayrecords.com). Sweet Megg is at Chelsea Table & Stage Feb. 11th. See Calendar.



*Songs of Joy*  
Yoko Miwa Trio (Ubuntu)  
by Marco Cangiano

As an exercise in sanity, in the thick of the pandemic lockdown pianist Yoko Miwa forced herself to "write something every day". The results appear in a well-balanced selection of original compositions, handful of standards, and, as in some of her previous recordings, the (re)discovery of iconic pop tunes well adapted to her modern jazz esthetics. Born in Kobe, Japan, Miwa was a classically-trained pianist who won a scholarship in

1997 to attend Berklee College of Music and has been playing with her trio around the Boston area ever since. Thanks to her impeccable technique, Miwa's approach may come across as somewhat eclectic although it has become increasingly personal compared with her early recordings. She has an uncanny gift of making even the most intricate tune sound simple, the result that each becomes entirely her own; see, for instance, her reading of Thelonious Monk's "Think of One". Bassist Will Slater and drummer Scott Goulding have been Miwa's very congenial partners for quite some time.

While not all of her originals may be memorable they are very pleasant to the ear. "Largo Desolato" has an underlying bossa nova feeling, much as "The Rainbirds", in describing New York's empty streets. "The Lonely Hours", dedicated to Miwa's father, who passed away last year, is an affectionate elegy featuring a thoughtful bass solo. "Inside a Dream" carries echoes of the Bill Evans Trio featuring Chuck Israels, who is recalled in Slater's wonderful solo. Miwa's "Small Talk" and Duke Jordan's "No Problem" are the most straightforward tunes and reminiscent of Art Blakey's Messengers.

Billy Preston's "Song of Joy" is a fascinating ballad highlighting Miwa's block chord approach combined with hints of Keith Jarrett's gospel romanticism. Richie Havens' "Freedom", the iconic opening of the *Woodstock* movie, gets a muscular treatment, with echoes of McCoy Tyner, while Anne Bredon's "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You", immortalized by Led Zeppelin, is enriched by bassist Brad Barrett's arco carrying the main theme while providing an unusual depth to the piece's sorrow. A hopeful recording that rewards with each listen.

For more information, visit [www.weareubuntumusic.com](http://www.weareubuntumusic.com). Miwa is at Iridium Feb. 11th. See Calendar.

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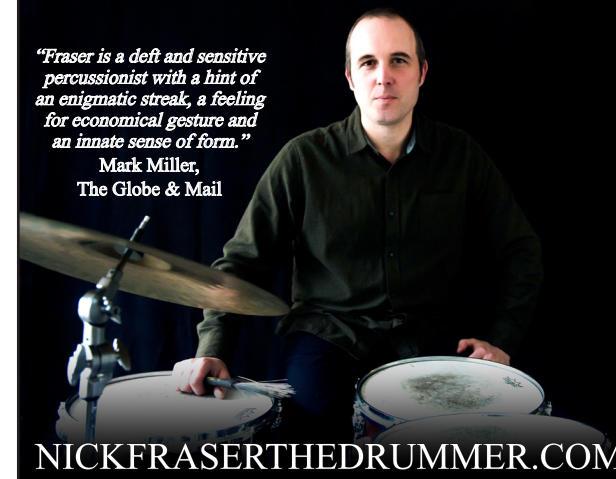
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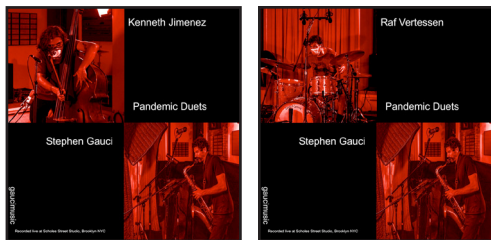
"Fraser is a deft and sensitive  
percussionist with a hint of  
an enigmatic streak, a feeling  
for economical gesture and  
an innate sense of form."

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The Globe & Mail



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*Pandemic Duets*  
Kenneth Jimenez/Stephen Gauci (Gaucimusic)  
*Pandemic Duets*  
Raf Vertessen/Stephen Gauci (Gaucimusic)  
by John Sharpe

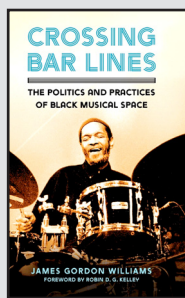
Over July and September 2020, tenor saxophonist Stephen Gauci embarked on 19 encounters under the title *Pandemic Duets* where he paired his utterly personal mix of juddering overtones, sinuous upper register screeches and crusty overblowing with a wide range of partners, some already well-established, others more up-and-coming. The two download-only releases considered here fall under the latter banner.

Gauci's duet with bassist Kenneth Jimenez, originally from Costa Rica, is the fifth in the series with a bassist, following hookups with Michael Bisio, Adam Lane, Ken Filiano and Lisa Hoppe. Often in nimble counterpoint, Jimenez' clearly articulated pizzicato clearly relates to the jazz tradition, albeit through an abstract lens, and as such he also seems to bring Gauci closer to convention in terms of syntax, if not language. That is audibly the case on "#7", which comes on like a deconstructed standard, with Gauci approaching the suburbs of lyricism, although never heading downtown. On this set Gauci often tempers his amalgam of angular altissimo phrases, briefly stuttered motifs and guttural bellows by residing in the midrange. At other times he toggles an almost boppishly zigzagged line with a yelping falsetto where he reverts to some of his most favored intervals. By contrast Jimenez rarely employs extended techniques, but when he does it is in the form of a squealing arco or glacial harmonics and abrasive scrapes. Overt responsiveness manifests most obviously when Jimenez wields his bow to fashion slippery wavering cries, which Gauci answers with keening ululations. Throughout the dialogue features recurring pauses, as if both are taking stock, with Jimenez paying great attention to sound placement, over the course of ten unfettered tracks.

A brief glance at the catalogue shows that Gauci also has a thing for drummers. His date with Brooklyn-based Belgian Raf Vertessen stands in a lineage, which also includes Gerald Cleaver, Vijay Anderson, Jeff Davis, Kevin Shea and Colin Hinton. Vertessen supplies loose-limbed pulsation, assembled without recourse beyond the standard kit. In one mode Vertessen weaves a continuous rhythmic carpet bearing up Gauci's idiosyncratic outpourings. While the opener is the sort of conversational interaction you would anticipate from two free jazz spirits, as Vertessen punctuates his affable rumble with mini-avalanches when Gauci veers into the stratosphere, elsewhere he avoids generating momentum. Then the discourse seems much more between instrumental equals rather than fulfilling preset roles. As an example, on "#3" Gauci's teetering howl breaks on percussive waves, before edging into frayed distortion in a jagged stop-start exchange. Such judicious suspensions promote something akin to call and response, although the distinction is never quite so clear-cut as the rejoinders ultimately blur together. On "#2" Gauci intersperses his gruff honks with silence in an unaccompanied introduction before Vertessen adds his tappy two cents' worth in a reined-in outing, which is the opposite of what may be imagined from a drum/saxophone duet, indicative of how the album both confirms and upends expectation.

For more information, visit [gaucimusic.bandcamp.com](http://gaucimusic.bandcamp.com). Gauci, Jimenez and Vertessen are at Downtown Music Gallery Feb. 12th. See Calendar.

## IN PRINT



*Crossing Bar Lines: The Politics and Practices of Black Musical Space*  
James Gordon Williams  
(University Press of Mississippi)  
by Monique Ngozi Nri

Billy Higgins, in what photographer Chester Higgins would call a soul moment, graces the cover of James Gordon Williams' *Crossing Bar Lines: The Politics and Practices of Black Musical Space*. The title itself packs a punch, suggesting bars on the musical page; physical spaces for presenting this music; and the many barriers Black musicians have had to face in carrying themselves with dignity.

Williams explores these themes of transcendence and resistance as he examines the lives and music of drummers Higgins and Terri Lyne Carrington and trumpeters Terence Blanchard and Ambrose Akinmusire. As historian, academic and author of *Theonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* Robin D.G. Kelley states in his brilliant foreword, "Williams discovered in Black musical space a powerful force against catastrophe."

Williams straddles several spaces himself as a professor in African American Studies and pianist/composer working in many interdisciplinary collaborations with various artists. Despite a clear academic focus, Williams is at pains to point out that "readers will be able to gain insight on these improvisers' cultural work."

The introduction is a tour de force, Williams setting out his terrain and carefully examining the concepts he wishes to explore: Black music spatiality and respatialization; improvisation; the revamped hermeneutic of crossing the bar line; twin axes of social life and death; and inclusivity. There is much to unpack, question and ponder. Williams' epigraph is three quotes about Black music and space, including one by the recently deceased Bell Hooks: "Space can be real or imagined. Spaces can tell stories and untold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, transformed through artistic and literary practice."

Among the questions Williams seeks to answer is "How do these five African American Improvisers use their improvisation to do the cultural work of addressing social inequalities while affirming their humanity." His reason for choosing them is "that their musical work demonstrates complex relationships within notions of Blackness, gender and a Black sense of place." Thankfully—for this is a dense book to be digested slowly and thoughtfully—Williams provides us with an excellent summary of the work that he will do in subsequent chapters to close the introduction.

While the arguments made for the existence in the music selected for this study of transcending spaces that are at once resistant to white supremacy and celebratory of "quotidian black life" are not entirely convincing, readers will certainly be drawn to listen again to the music that Williams selects and to learn more of the overt, inverted and more complex political work of these musicians.

For more information, visit [upress.state.ms.us](http://upress.state.ms.us)

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**Eponymous**  
**Samara Joy (Whirlwind)**  
 by Scott Yanow

When a talented young jazz singer begins her very first CD with “Stardust”, it is certainly a good sign for the music. Just 21, Samara Joy gained attention when she won the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition in 2019. Her debut recording will certainly result in her becoming much better known.

Joy has a beautiful voice with a wide range, displays the influence of Vaughan (particularly on “Lover Man” and “Jim”) without directly copying her inspiration and sounds remarkably relaxed and comfortable, even on uptempo material. Unusual for her age is that she takes her time in getting her message across rather than letting everything out in the first chorus.

For this intimate set, the singer is joined by the superb guitarist Pasquale Grasso, bassist Ari Roland and drummer Kenny Washington. “Stardust” is given a memorable treatment with Joy opening with its verse while accompanied solely by Grasso. The guitarist weaves inventive lines around the singer throughout the concise one-verse, one-chorus version. Another particularly special performance is the closer, “But Beautiful”, taken as a five minute voice-guitar duet. The use of space, with every note counting, coupled with the richness of Joy’s voice, make this a highpoint.

But all dozen selections receive favorable treatments: “Everything Happens To Me” is ironically taken uptempo (showing that the singer does not take her problems overly seriously); “Let’s Dream In The Moonlight” features her sounding perfectly fine at a racehorse tempo; there is plenty of warmth in “It Only Happens Once”; and “Moonglow” is happily boppish. “Jim” (which is about a good-for-nothing boyfriend) is a little too upbeat but the revival of “The Trouble With Me Is You” easily compensates.

While there are many fine jazz singers on the scene right now, on the evidence of this recording, Joy already ranks near the top and this is just the start.

For more information, visit [whirlwindrecordings.com](http://whirlwindrecordings.com). Joy is at Kings Theatre Feb. 12th and Dizzy’s Club Feb. 14th. See Calendar.



**Send For Me**  
**Catherine Russell (Dot Time)**  
 by Marilyn Lester

*Send For Me*, Catherine Russell’s eighth album as a leader (and surprisingly only 16 years into a solo career), is a testament to a life immersed in music. The Grammy-nominated vocalist, daughter of musicians Luis Russell and Carline Ray, has been performing since childhood and the experience adds up to an unflinching, supreme confidence in her craft.

The 13 tracks reflect her preference for romance that swings, combined with her mission of finding songs that deserve attention. In all of them she is firmly

anchored, committed to her choices and delivers them with conviction. “In The Night” (Norman Mapp) takes a deep dive into blues, with Sean Mason’s piano keenly supporting Russell’s intense interpretation as she builds a powerful interpretive arc. A fast bluesy “You Can Fly High” (Earl King-John Vincent) has a zydeco feel while “If I Could Be With You” (James P. Johnson-Henry Creamer) easily evokes a New Orleans honky-tonk.

Russell is delightfully generous to her musicians. “At The Swing Cats Ball” (Luis Russell-William Campbell) features prime wizardry by trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso and trombonist John Allred. A terrific, fun arrangement of “Going Back To New Orleans” (Joe Liggins) benefits from drummer Mark McLean’s tambourine and the heady tuba of Phillip Norris while Matt Munisteri on both guitar and banjo adds more color, as Russell vocalizes with a bright, zippy swing.

While most of the tunes are not traditionally mainstream, a pair of well-known American Songbook numbers are welcome in the mix. “East of The Sun (and West of the Moon)” (Brooks Bowman), Russell adding the verse, also features creative support by Mason and is a showcase of Russell’s mastery of phrasing, more traditionally presented here, as opposed to her jazz persona. “You Stepped Out of A Dream” (Nacio Herb Brown-Gus Kahn) leans heavily on a traditional rhythm section backup, played in a pleasing, light swing tempo.

For more information, visit [dottimerecords.com](http://dottimerecords.com). Russell is at Birdland Feb. 14th-19th and The Atlantic BKLN Feb. 28th with Steven Bernstein. See Calendar.



**Open Question, Vol. 1**  
**Daniel Carter, Ayumi Ishito, Eric Plaks, Zach Swanson, Jon Panikkar (577 Records)**  
**Pause & Effect**  
**Attitude! (ESP-Disk')**  
 by John Pietaro

Tenor saxophonist Ayumi Ishito first came to the attention of this writer several years ago at the debut performance of Attitude!, prior to that band actually having a proper name, but the Japanese-born Berklee grad has been residing in New York for nearly a dozen years. Tutelage with George Garzone and mentorship from Daniel Carter has seen her working with a wide range of like-minded spirits and leading her own ensembles, remaining vital and garnering due attention.

*Open Question* is one of those projects Carter has thrived in to these many years: equal parts young and old(er), east and west, blue, cool, hip and caustic. His multiple woodwinds and brass along with Ishito’s tenor soars through four works recorded in a Brooklyn studio late in 2020. The band demonstrates a damned amazing ability to play utterly free over varying arrangements and dynamics as if reading charts of through-composed music. Things start with “Blues”, in which the frontline wraps itself around a wildly expanded blues form. “Dimly-lit Platform” is flute-driven, reeking of misterioso and noir, not simply film noir but the still earlier novels—think Dashiell Hammett and Cornell Woolrich. Ishito’s tradition-haunted tenor, reedy and dark, bores new tonalities through Carter’s floating melody. “Confidential BBQ”, the next cut, seems more like a second movement of the former title as it retains the shadowy vibe, albeit over double-time groove. Tenor is again matched by flute and muted trumpet while bassist Zach Swanson and drummer Jon Panikkar glide, smoke and burn at mezzo-piano. Midway through, this moves into electric Miles Davis, Eric Plaks’ pointed Wurlitzer commanding the swarming thicket

like a latter-day Joe Zawinul, particularly against muted trumpet. This is brilliant, lasting music.

Another side of Ishito is found on Attitude!’s *Pause and Effect*, based around the revolutionary spoken word of poet Rose Tang who doubles on electric guitar, piano and percussion. Her trio with Ishito and drummer Wen-Ting Wu stands out not only as—by intent—all-female, but all-Asian and from varying parts of the East. Tang, the Brooklyn-based journalist and survivor of 1989’s Tiananmen Square uprising, has been experimenting with improvisational music over several years and brought this band together as part of her statements against sexism and anti-Asian hate and the struggle of Hong Kong against mainland China’s military rule. “I’m not a China doll, I’m not your geisha...I’m not Yoko Ono...I AM ME,” Tang exclaims in righteous anger over burning, far-reaching free music. “Gimme a Mic” and “Who Flung Dung” are radical calls to order, shouted, demanded and specified as poetic free jazz. But listen, too, for the gravity of “Flames with No Names” and Ishito’s spiritual horn claiming John Coltrane’s “Alabama” for the cause as Tang meditates on the rapes, the pillages, the theft of women. “You can never beat us. You can kill us, but you can never kill all of us,” she states. “This is your last hurrah...”. Wu’s fluid, rapid-fire mallets on toms conjure the imagery of Asian folk music as easily as Ed Blackwell. And the fiery propulsion of “8 Steps/7 O’Clock”, with Ishito’s sinewy, ‘80s-inspired head, let alone the “Conversation” (nearly 25 minutes in length), are so steeped in the Fire Music tradition listeners may assume these to be lost cuts by John Zorn or Alice Coltrane, respectively. Not bad company.

For more information, visit [577records.com](http://577records.com) and [espdisk.com](http://espdisk.com). This project is at Nublu 151 Feb. 17th. See Calendar.

**Gordon Grdina's Square Peg Klotski**

Gordon Grdina: Guitar, Oud  
 Mat Maneri: Viola  
 Shazad Ismaily: Bass, Moog  
 Christian Lillinger: Drums

**Gordon Grdina Pendulum**

Gordon Grdina: Classical Guitar, Oud

**Gordon Grdina's Haram with Marc Ribot Night's Quietest Hour**

Marc Ribot: Guitar  
 Gordon Grdina: Oud  
 Jesse Zubot: Violin  
 Josh Zubot: Violin  
 JP Carter: Trumpet  
 Chris Kelly: Sax  
 François Houle: Clarinet  
 Kenton Loewen: Drums  
 Tommy Babin: Bass  
 Tim Gerwing: Darbuka  
 Liam MacDonald: Riq  
 Emad Amoush: Vocals, Ney

**Gordon Grdina: The Music of Tim Berne Oddly Enough**

Gordon Grdina: Electric Guitar, Midi Interface, Classical Guitar, Dobro, Oud

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**My Astorian Queen**  
Martin Wind (Laika)  
by Ken Dryden

German Martin Wind was a busy bassist as a young man, but his first visit to New York convinced him that he would soon call it home. To celebrate his 25th anniversary of moving, he recruited pianist Bill Mays, multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson and drummer Matt Wilson, all of whom have worked with him over the years. The sessions were recorded at Maggie's Farm after a gig at the nearby Deer Head Inn in Pennsylvania.

One of the things apparent about Wind is his lack of ego. He may only take a single chorus as a soloist, so focused is he on what the song needs, it may surprise some listeners that this is the bassist's album. Since Mays, Wind and Wilson work often as a trio, their abilities seem almost telepathic as they anticipate which direction things are heading.

Each song has a special significance, beginning with Thad Jones' "Mean What You Say"; Wind played Jones' music when he has guested with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. This strong opener features Robinson on both muted trumpet and tenor saxophone. "Solitude" is not the Ellington ballad but a moody original the bassist wrote in the midst of the COVID lockdown. This gem comes to life through melancholy

clarinet and shimmering piano. Mays' warm ballad "Peace Waltz" is a duet with Wind, introduced by his matchless arco. Wind's lush title waltz is a tribute to his wife and her former apartment in Queens. The loping, lyrical tune has a spacious, relaxed arrangement, with a quirky tag by Robinson that fits his eclectic personality. It is clear how much fun these musicians have every time they get together and Wilson's sensitive percussion backing Wind's virtuoso solo treatment of the old warhorse "New York, New York" ends the session with humor.

For more information, visit [laika-records.com](http://laika-records.com). Wind is at Dizzy's Club Feb. 17th-20th with Ann Hampton Callaway and Birdland Feb. 24th-26th with Dena DeRose. See Calendar.



**An Elegant Ritual**  
Mehmet Ali Sanlikol (DÜNYA)  
by Dan Bilawsky

Pianist Mehmet Ali Sanlikol makes fine art through the integration of traditional Turkish music and jazz. On his previous release—2019-20's *The Rise Up*—he did so with a grand-scale gathering, painting engrossing scenes featuring a large ensemble that surrounded and supported guest soloist Dave Liebman's soprano saxophone. Now he achieves something equally remarkable by scaling things back to a coterie of three.

Recalibrating the piano trio format, Sanlikol assembles his work around an imagined systemic binary of the Mevlevi Ayin—the Sufi whirling dervish ritual—and John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. In designing original music that eyes those models, he creates something at once respectful and revolutionary. *An Elegant Ritual* remains cognizant of the distinctive aspects of its guiding forces—the *usul* (rhythmic cycles) and *maqam* (mode) with regard to Turkish music, improvisation in the case of jazz—and expands the trio matrix by incorporating the leader's hypnotic vocals and ney (end-blown flute) and drummer George Lennis' gongs and bendir (frame drum).

There are points where this outfit hews to more typical trio aesthetics—lone standard "Invitation", at journey's end, being the clearest—but those occurrences are rare. By and large, this album is a mystical brew that moves well beyond established borderlines. Just look at the title track, introduced with a blend of ney and bassist James Heazlewood-Dale's natural harmonics. Enhanced by the metallic resonance of Lennis' Javanese gamelan-influenced gongs, evolving into something more spiritual with added percussive weight and nearing a state of transcendence with pianistic profundities that give way to the gentler sight of return, the piece leaves no doubt as to Sanlikol's abilities to harness the power of the infinite reaches.

Surrounding most of his larger pieces with miniatures—a prelude, three interludes and a postlude spread across the set—Sanlikol nods to certain structural realities connected to his inspiration while demonstrating real smarts in the programming and pacing departments. And with everything captured live he impresses both in terms of musical multi-tasking and honorable intention(s). Whether leading a cast of dozens or teaming up with two other serious talents, Sanlikol manages to leverage customs and conventions to create something magical that is all its own.

For more information, visit [dunyainc.org](http://dunyainc.org). This project is at Joe's Pub Feb. 18th. See Calendar.

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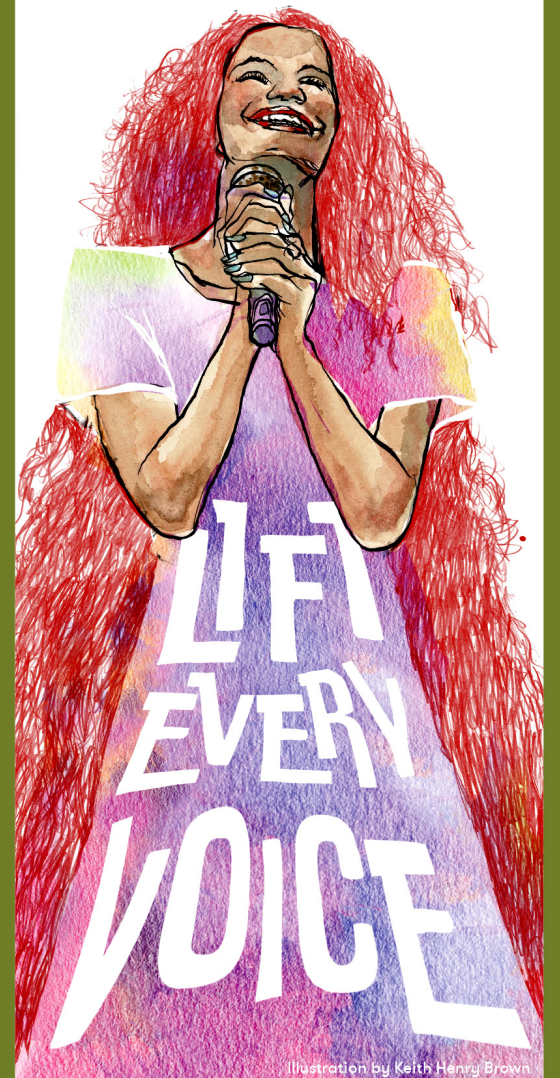


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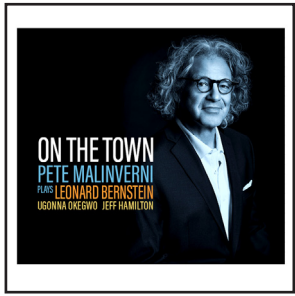
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**On The Town (Malinverni Plays Leonard Bernstein)**  
**Pete Malinverni (Planet Arts)**  
 by Thomas Conrad

Pianist Pete Malinverni does so many things well that it is hard to get a fix on him. Perhaps that is why he is not more famous. His body of work includes solo projects, trios, small groups, big bands and gospel choirs. He has played tangos in a duo with a classical violinist and has accompanied singers.

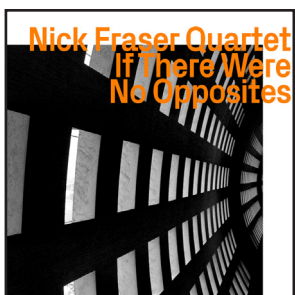
But he has never before made a record dedicated to the work of a single composer. It is one more thing he does well. His intent on his new album is to create fresh encounters with Leonard Bernstein songs while still celebrating the composer's achievement. He succeeds because, even with all the new content in his jazz interpretations—harmonies, rhythms, connecting notes, countermelodies, digressions, modulations, reshaped phrasing—Bernstein's tunes are always instantly recognizable and Malinverni makes you delighted to hear them again.

The dominant vibe here is joy. Joy is already inherent in many Bernstein songs. Malinverni intensifies it. "New York New York" is a passionate announcement that sweeps you up in its euphoria. "I Feel Pretty" is a jubilant jazz waltz on steroids. "Lucky to Be Me" starts formally but soon accelerates. A signature feature of Bernstein music is a sudden leap between intervals. Malinverni uses the leaps to launch headlong momentum. His trio swings like crazy. (The other members are bassist Ugonna Okegwo, a longterm Malinverni colleague, and drummer Jeff Hamilton, a new associate.)

"Somewhere" is one of Bernstein's tenderest songs. When Keith Jarrett played it, it was a revelation of yearning. Malinverni is not in a yearning mood. His portrayal of the melody (with its minor seventh leap) is hard and blocky and the whole performance (with Okegwo its beating heart) throbs. "Some Other Time" may be Bernstein's most wistful song. But again, Malinverni is not feeling wistful. The composition contains blues inflections but Malinverni makes the blues explicit, gives it a new vamp and time signature and turns this dreamy song funky.

One reason this album is so much fun is the sound. It was recorded by Maureen Sickler in Van Gelder Studios. She vividly renders three instruments and puts their collective energy directly into your listening room.

For more information, visit [planetarts.org](http://planetarts.org). This project is at The Django Feb. 8th. See Calendar.



**If There Were No Opposites**  
**Nick Fraser Quartet (hatHUT/Ezz-thetics)**  
 by Marc Medwin

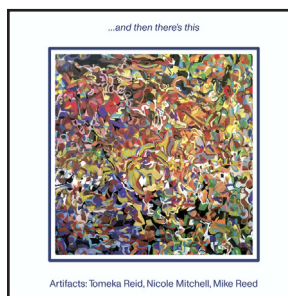
In his typically perceptive liner notes, Bill Meyer refers to the improvisation/composition duality at the heart of jazz discourse as being, "what flint and steel are to campfires". Indeed, the fourth album from drummer

Nick Fraser's superb quartet demonstrates and dispels similar dualities on multiple levels, nowhere more convincingly than when dissolving the false boundaries separating jazz from chamber music. As much sonic as compositional, those constructs govern the trajectories of both composed and improvised passages even as differences dissolve in the service of music that is both rawly immediate and charmingly inaccessible.

Dig into the opening bars of "Sketch #50" to catch an elastic aural glimpse of the band at work dissolving those wavy lines even as they are drawn. The Ornette Coleman-esque head writhes and dips under the more than capable guidance of cellist Andrew Downing and saxophonist Tony Malaby before Fraser and bassist Rob Clutton's arco turn a rhythmic trick or two. Both string players bow with the incisive brilliance of those steeped in the elastically conjoined worlds Meyer cites while Malaby's affinity with Albert Ayler is blazingly obvious. As head and solo converge, the intrigue of Fraser's delicate but penetrating repetitions serve as bond and liberator. While the piece morphs in timbral rather than dynamic terms, "The Fashion Show" elucidates another side of the band's complex historical grappling. Initially cut from similar New Thing cloth, Fraser's polyrhythms guide volume gently downward, brushed toms and cymbals opening the gate for an exquisite melody shockingly reminiscent of those early '50s Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan sides. Again, the strings swing in gorgeous symbiosis, but it is Fraser's constantly shifting groove that keeps the music moving along its relatively gentle course. Despite this cohesion, there is always room for the puckish pointillism in which the strings and saxophones regularly engage, drums eventually joining in the fun.

As scintillating as the group interplay can be, it relies on solo contributions, all of which are stellar. They shine most brightly in the two improvisations, initially connected, that bookend the disc. Those two halves could not be more different, perhaps the most fascinating duality on display. The drone governing much of the first is rife with overtone and peacefully dark, a power nexus in full effect as surrounding events coagulate in its orbit. The second finds the group in a different sort of research-and-development mode as various combinations are foregrounded. Most beautiful is the way string and reed ultimately ebb, a perfect end to an album replete with the discoveries that render boundary considerations obsolete even as new ones are erected. The recording is just dry enough, just vivid enough, to be startlingly natural. The room becomes both instrument and witness to the events on ever-evolving display.

For more information, visit [hathut.com](http://hathut.com). Fraser is at Bushwick Public House Feb. 21st, Downtown Music Gallery Feb. 22nd and Ibeam Brooklyn Feb. 26th. See Calendar.



**... and then there's this**  
**Artifacts (Astral Spirits)**  
 by Robert Bush

The concept of the 'supergroup' is often fraught with peril. Assembling a band loaded with ringers is certainly no guarantee of success. This album, however, lives up to and even beyond the promise inherent in a trio of Nicole Mitchell (flute and electronics), Tomeka Reid (cello) and Mike Reed (drums). This is their second document, following the self-titled debut released on 482 Music in 2015.

That disc featured many compositions from storied AACM figures like Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, Fred Anderson and Muhal Richard Abrams. The new effort combines that idea with original material from each member of the trio.

Reed's "Pleasure Palace" opens the proceedings. Right off the bat, Mitchell shoots for the stratosphere and in no time at all the proposition that she could well be the finest flute player of her generation doesn't leave much room for argument. Reed is no stranger to the kind of rhythmic ecstasy generated by fellow Chicago drum masters like Jack DeJohnette and Thurman Barker and his playing is consistently rewarding throughout this session. Speaking of Chicago drum masters, the trio dedicates "A.F.", a group improvisation, to the memory of the late Alvin Fielder.

Which brings us to Tomeka Reid, who has been blazing her own trail in creative music for at least the last decade. One of her compositions, "In Response To", conjures Charles Mingus by way of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, plucking a vamp that locks in with the drums and propels Mitchell into a growling, sputtering expository.

She also shines on "Song For Helena", with a simply gorgeous arco line that engages Mitchell into a soaring unison. Suddenly, she shifts into a deft pizzicato to dance alongside Reed's feathery brushstrokes. Her sense of groove is impeccable.

The album is gloriously well-paced. Each selection seems to end too soon and leaves the listener anxious to embrace the next. Oftentimes, the big names of an allstar cast fail to deliver. This is not one of those times.

For more information, visit [astralspiritsrecords.com](http://astralspiritsrecords.com). Nicole Mitchell is at Zankel Hall Feb. 24th. See Calendar.



**Standards and My Songs**  
**Ron Jackson (Roni Music)**  
 by Anna Steegmann

Guitarist Ron Jackson, born in 1964, began playing at 9 and first performed at 15. At first, his idols were rock guitarists, but once he fell under the spell of Wes Montgomery, George Benson and Pat Metheny, he never turned back. Jackson has made a name as a player, composer, producer, arranger and instructor.

*Standards and My Songs*, his ninth album as a leader, is a sequel to 2019's *Standards and Other Songs*. He adapts standards, pop, soft rock and R&B tunes to jazz and is joined by Ben Wolfe (bass), Willie Jones III (drums) and for two tracks by Brian Ho (organ) and one by Clark Gayton (trombone). The cover shows him, a big smile on his face, and boldly states, "7 STRING JAZZ GUITAR". He demonstrates why he has become one of the instrument's major champions.

The album opens with an upbeat, joyous, jazzy take on the 1972 Looking Glass hit "Brandy (You're a Fine Girl)", striking for its gorgeous tone and great group interplay, followed by "Walk Fast", full of postbop liveliness. Jackson calls "From Dust to Dawn", at seven minutes the longest track on the recording, "Freddie Hubbard-inspired". He thinks highly of Bucky Pizzarelli, who encouraged him to take up the 7-string, and Pat Martino. Both passed away in recent years and Jackson pays tribute: "This Nearly Was Mine" in homage to Pizzarelli while luminous "For Pat" is freely modeled after Martino's ballad "Country Road". A hip-hop groove livens up a dynamic interpretation of Charlie Parker's "Moose the Mooche" while Quincy Jones' "The Secret Garden (Sweet Seduction Suite)" is slow and sultry, as is a solo guitar version of "Time After Time". "She Is Love", co-written with his wife, Michelle Etwaroo, shows his soulful side. Gayton invigorates the calypso "Roundabout" with his gorgeous playing.

For more information, visit [ronjacksonmusic.com](http://ronjacksonmusic.com). This project is at The Django Feb. 25th. See Calendar.



**Tribute to Juan Formell & Los VAN VAN**  
**Dayramir González (Unicornio)**  
 by Russ Musto

The latest effort from Cuban-born pianist Dayramir González is an ambitious project. It celebrates the 50th anniversary of his native country's most popular band with new arrangements of compositions penned by the group's bassist-bandleader, the late Juan Formell, performed by a 15-piece ensemble augmented by the chamber orchestra La Camerata Romeu led by Zenaida Castro and a host of invited lead singers and accompanying backing vocalists.

The songs here mirror Los Van Van's expansive genre fusing of traditional Cuban forms with jazz, rock, funk and European classical flourishes. Things begin with "Tu Decisión, Cuál Es", vamping

acoustic and electric pianos piloting strings and the titular vocal coro, which give way to high-flying flute, alto saxophone and trap drum solos. Soñero Alain Perez, best known for his tenure with Jerry Gonzalez y Los Piratas Del Flamenco, is out front on "Mis Dudas", delivering a powerful lead vocal in a call-and-response pattern with the two male-two female coro, culminating with riffing charanga-styled violins. Piano elegiacally introduces "Este Amor Que Se Muere", a feature for the stirringly commanding vocal of Luna Manzaneres on a bifurcated outing: it begins as a plaintive bolero then segues into a dancing mambo. "Anda Ven Y Muevete" has David Blanco and Michel Herrera in the spotlight, exhorting listeners to "come on and move". String quartet and Bárbarito Torres' lute beautifully open "Todo Se Acabo" with Teresa Yanet's vocal paying a personal tribute to Formell.

A carnival-esque atmosphere prevails on "Deja La Boberia", with Mandy Cantero's commanding vocal conveying an energetic invitation to forget foolishness and join in the festivities. Los Van Van's longtime soñero Mayito Rivera duets passionately with Arlenys Rodriguez on "Si No Quieres Tú" and shares duties with Cubana rapper Telmary Díaz on the rollicking "Marilú". Los Van Van's Mandy Cantero and Azúcar Negra's Haila Mompié mix vocals and González stretches out "El Guárarey De Pastora" while The Buena Vista Social Club theme "Chan Chan" is given an epic treatment with Los Van Van vocalist Abdel Raslaps (Lele) joining forces with Rivera, Díaz, González and percussion ensemble Rumba Pelladito. The date closes solemnly with "Orun A Formell", Brenda Navarrete intoning a Spanish language prayer and Yoruban chant celebrating Formell.

For more information, visit [dayramirgonzalez.com](http://dayramirgonzalez.com). González is at Chelsea Table & Stage Feb. 25th. See Calendar.



**Evidence Based**  
**Claudia Quintet (Flexatonic)**  
 by Brian Charette

In the album notes for the new Claudia Quintet album from enigmatic interviewer and poet Jason Crane, we learn that the album addresses the interaction of arts and politics. The track titles come from words the Centers for Disease Control discouraged from use in 2017. Poet Eileen Myles adds spoken word to the spooky tracks. The recording has a very live feel, which provides an interesting foil to the unprocessed vocals.

The album opens with the title track, an unusual muted snare from drummer John Hollenbeck popping against the angular accordion of Red Wierenga. Offbeat hits continue under the lyrical melodies of vibraphonist Matt Moran, with tenor saxophonist Chris Speed falling in and picking up the riff. "Transgender" fades in with cymbal washes and a Speed clarinet ostinato alternating two notes, which gently morph to make the changes. The accordion melody has long tones that float airily over the churning band punctuated by sticky cymbal strikes. "Fetus" has creepy electronic stirrings under meandering vibraphone and bass (Drew Gress) in unison, accordion holding low drones in a Hindustani vein; the surprise entrance of the poem at the golden ratio point quickly dissolves into scant electronics. "Science Based" has a melody that surrounds Myles' poem with a gorgeous near-waltz. Hollenbeck is spot-on and understated as he builds intensity with Speed's long tones and Moran's repeated

figure. Wierenga takes a lovely solo for just a few bars then hands it off to Speed with cross-rhythm drums underneath. "What is the name of this Piece" has a comedic lilt with big intervals in the melody. Gress picks his spots with minimal lines, coming in at just the right place to anchor the group. The track coalesces in a unison melody that Hollenbeck gets to work out on before a terrific bass solo over dissonant chords that fade in and out. A repeated figure gives Hollenbeck great support for his most active solo on the date.

For more information, visit [johnhollenbeck.bandcamp.com](http://johnhollenbeck.bandcamp.com). John Hollenbeck is at The Owl Music Parlor Feb. 24th and National Sawdust Feb. 27th. See Calendar.

UNEARTHED GEM



**British Conversations**  
**Graham Collier (My Only Desire)**  
 by Andrey Henkin

This is a companion to My Only Desire's 2020 release *Love and Understanding* by Mike Westbrook but even more interesting: both live recordings from the mid '70s of commissioned pieces by Swedish Radio from accomplished British composers with compatriot soloists out front of the Swedish Radio Jazz Group. But while Westbrook's suite was previously available as a later studio recording, this music from the late Graham Collier, who was born 85 years ago this month, is heard for the first time.

The Swedish Radio Jazz Group, 15 strong in this incarnation, includes such notable figures as Arne Domnérus (alto saxophone, clarinet), Lennart Åberg (tenor and soprano saxophone, flute), Rune Gustafsson (guitar), Bengt Hallberg (piano), Georg Riedel (bass) and Egil Johansen (drums). Collier, by the time of this Feb. 27th, 1975 concert, was already over a decade into a career as a composer/bandleader and brings along two veterans of his groups: Barbadian trumpeter Harry Beckett, one of Britain's most versatile players, and guitarist Ed Speight, who would work with Collier until the composer's death in 2011. Adding the noteworthiness of the release is that this becomes the first instance of Collier applying his composing to a large ensemble.

The 50-minute title suite is in five parts: "Red Sky In The Morning", "Clear Moon", "Halo Round The Sun", "Red Sky At Night" and "Mackerel Sky", all colorful expressions for meteorological phenomena. The first part is a light fusion of rock rhythms and soaring horn lines, mellowing out for solos from Beckett and Speight. "Clear Moon" is quietly atmospheric, acting as connective tissue for the next movement, which brings back the feel of the opening section but at a busier pace. The closing two movements are quite a contrast: "Red Sky At Night" is slow, sparse and highly abstract, segueing into "Mackerel Sky" via a bass duet of Riedel (acoustic) and Stefan Brolund (electric). Speight takes an epic solo over chunky rhythms, which leads to a drum solo quieting almost to silence before introducing a tight swing feel. The whole band reenters with what sounds like a different song, a perky foundation for Beckett to fly over the changes.

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



**Field of Action / contraposition**  
Eric Wubbels (Out Of Your Head)  
by Kurt Gottschalk

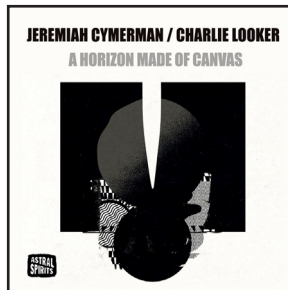
For a composer as endlessly fascinating as he is, Eric Wubbels is woefully under-recorded. *Field of Action / contraposition* continues Wubbels' series of piano duos though the term "duet" seems a bit off the mark; the amount of voices (human and instrumental) and sonic manipulation suggest things more encompassing than two people with tools.

The album begins with a 5 1/2 minute blast well designed to weed out the weak, the first of the six parts that comprise "Field of Action", a variegated suite performed with vocalist/electronicist Charmaine Lee. The pair discover a surprising breadth of sonic possibilities, some disarmingly delicate. It is not an easy listen (Lee's work rarely is) but with her use of multiple microphones to capture her voice and breath—both projected and from within her throat—and Wubbels employing both piano and synthesizer, the music is fascinatingly nuanced and textured.

"contraposition" was also created in conjunction with its co-performer, trombonist Weston Olencki. It gives the impression of a more notated piece, but such speculation does little to aid in absorbing the four dense sections. It also includes more of Wubbels'

stunning piano technique, from careful application of string preparations to artful tears executed with Conlon Nancarrow-like precision. But those passages seem somehow like halls in a museum, getting us to the next discovery, the next gallery of trombone overtones and foundation-threatening piano resonance. The final section of "Ccontraposition", "NEGATIVE", builds to some shockingly loud multiphonics from Olencki, reverberating (it seems) from within the piano case. *Field of Action / contraposition* doesn't just reward multiple listens, it demands them.

For more information, visit [outofyourheadrecords.com](http://outofyourheadrecords.com). These projects are at Roulette Feb. 28th. See Calendar



**A Horizon Made of Canvas**  
Jeremiah Cymerman/Charlie Looker (Astral Spirits)  
by George Grella

If Morton Feldman were a heavy metal musician, his stuff may have sounded like the projects that come out of the imagination of clarinetist Jeremiah Cymerman. This album is a close relation to the music of Blood Mist, the collective doom music ensemble of which Cymerman is part. While Blood Mist makes music that is threatening precisely because it is quiet and spacious, this album with guitarist/pianist Charlie Looker veils

provocations behind more specific forms.

Still though, this is ambient sonics as doom music and for those attracted to that kind of thing, it is great, great stuff. Rather than a wall of sound, Cymerman and Looker work with what at times seems like endless space, taking great care with when and how often they place musical events. Working with chordal instruments, Looker sets out tiny sequences and stacks of notes that define fundamental structures. Meanwhile Cymerman plays keening, yearning notes over and rumbling tones under, shifting to extended techniques and back. There aren't any melodies or even lines, just statements, events, actions.

The most pointed track is "I'll Show You What You Are", with guitar sounding like Howard Shore's tremendous theme for *Crash* while clarinet cuts through with split-tones and multiphonics and there is a grumbling sine wave tone that rolls in and out. The production—or Cymerman's pedals—engenders a rich and deep sound. Looker's playing often seems to be a pond into which Cymerman heaves himself, aesthetic gestures as tones that ripple across the listening field and deep into the music.

If this all sounds threatening, well, it very much is. This is dark music, dark precisely because it originates in and is controlled by human bodies. There is signal processing but the sounds, and darkness come out of not electronics but the players themselves. But it is also beautiful music, not cathartic so much as enriching in how it lets the listener stare into the darkness, go inside and beyond it. Jazz, not in any way. Improvised, yes. Doom, absofuckinglutely.

For more information, visit [astralspiritsrecords.com](http://astralspiritsrecords.com). Cymerman is at Freddy's Backroom Feb. 1st and IRL Feb. 28th. See Calendar.

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*Trio*  
**Gene Pritsker (Composers Concordance)**  
 by Elliott Simon

Grand sweeping musical vistas and elegantly focused nuance are no problem for guitarist Gene Pritsker. He is a film soundtrack orchestrator and composer and his credits include the recently released *The Matrix Resurrections* (WaterTower Music). At the crossroads of symphonic jazz, world music and Leonard Bernstein he and conductor Kristjan Järvi founded the classically informed Absolute Ensemble and his Sound Liberation project is an urban adventure where all genres are welcome. On top of all this, Pritsker is a prodigious guitarist and on *Trio* he unapologetically shows off his chops in the context of his other abilities.

The music is primarily guitar driven fusion and on opener "Elements" a thoughtful arrangement and quick changing tempos highlight Pritsker's style. Joining the Vienna-based session are electric bassist Clemens Rofner and drummer Simon Springer. Like Pritsker, both are multifaceted players and Rofner's melodicism with Springer's crisp cymbal work shine on this very accurately detailed recording. Pritsker puts the three instruments together like puzzle pieces seamlessly fitting in myriad ways. The result is a voice that is much bigger than one would expect from a trio.

On both "Born Free" and angular "Encomium" Pritsker kills it with searing yet melodic playing before he turns it over to Rofner and Springer, who carry the song in new directions. "Bach's Blues" is a reimagining of the composer in a scorching bluesy setting while "Granite" is a funky rhythmic triumph, Pritsker effortlessly moving from soloing to comping. "Difficult to Imagine Nothingness" features Dave Taylor's bass trombone in a beautifully flowing milieu and closer "Cold as I Am" is a wonderfully misterioso vehicle for vocalist Stefanie Egger, who artfully straddles jazz and pop until Pritsker comes in with a surprisingly intense rap to steer the tune to an anthemic ending.

For more information, visit [genepritsker.com](http://genepritsker.com). Pritsker is at Chelsea Table & Stage Feb. 11th and 27th. See Calendar.



*Every Note Is True*  
**Ethan Iverson (Blue Note)**  
 by George Kanzler

In the five years since he left the trio he founded over two decades ago, The Bad Plus, pianist Ethan Iverson has pursued a variety of projects, from symphonic music and scores for ballet to working in the quartet of drummer Billy Hart and with a quartet of his own with trumpeter Tom Harrell. He has also recorded a tribute

to Bud Powell. This is his first return to the trio format, featuring his own pieces, save one. His trio mates are bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jack DeJohnette.

The title phrase appears at the conclusion of the opening track, piano accompanying a 44-voice choir, all recorded remotely over telephones, with the refrain "The more it changes, the more it seems the same." That short track is followed by eight trio and one solo piano track. Iverson's command is extraordinary; he has mastered the art of never playing too much while fully realizing a complete musical world. Every note and chord he plays resonates fully, illuminating the pieces. It is at once an extension of, and much more than, the pop/rock hooks approach of The Bad Plus.

Instead of the young rhythm colleagues on that earlier band, Iverson has veterans Grenadier and DeJohnette, more nuanced and attuned to creative spontaneity. Their participation fully complements the pianist's concepts and playing, whether processional time on the hymn-like "The Eternal Verities", martial beats of "She Won't Forget Me" or snappy swing of the Fats Waller-inspired "Goodness Knows". After a slow, ruminative and through-composed piano solo, "Had I But Known", the band climaxes the album with a trio of swinging tracks. "Merely Improbable" is an "I Got Rhythm" changes piece at a loping swing tempo, Iverson's solo highlighting contrasting right- and left-hand phrases. "Praise Will Travel" is built on a repeated four-followed-by-five note riff, explored in Iverson's solo as the rhythm ranges increasingly freely. The trio takes it out with a long (nine-plus minutes), penetrating blues, "At the Bells and Motley" (an Agatha Christie story title) with a deep, funky vibe.

For more information, visit [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com). This project is at Roulette Feb. 11th. See Calendar.

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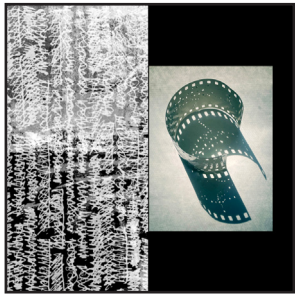
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*Reels*

Matthew Shipp/Whit Dickey (Burning Ambulance Music)  
by John Sharpe

Although collaborators for a long time, *Reels* is the first duet between pianist Matthew Shipp and drummer Whit Dickey. And in spite of Shipp's copious output, it is only his third duet with a drummer following encounters with Guillermo E. Brown in 2008 and Bobby Kapp in 2016. Still, he has capped the sequence with a corker. On a studio session comprising ten improvisations, the pair demonstrate the benefits of a shared backstory, which takes in Dickey's extended sojourn in the pianist's trio as well as both men's tenure in esteemed saxophonist David S. Ware's classic quartet from 1992-96.

Shipp remains one of the most distinctive players active today. Paradoxically he slants more consistently rhythmic with Dickey than he does when solo for instance, as if spurred to give vent to something primal by the drummer's presence. That offers Dickey the choice of whether to stick or twist. As it happens, he does both. He implies momentum indirectly by weaving a multi-directional spell around Shipp's lines, whether the stomping pummeled motifs of "Cosmic Train", where they join in lurching syncopation, or hypnotic near grooves of "Hold Tight" where Shipp

enters the arena in which Craig Taborn also excels.

At other times Dickey tackles the beat head on, furnishing a forceful processional feel to Shipp's sustained bass rumble on "Vector", but also setting the pace himself as on the title cut when he launches into a martial boogaloo, which finds Shipp falling into step alongside. Then there are places like the gentle introductory opener "Lattice", Shipp's lyrical rippling variations establishing the foundations, over which Dickey explores increasingly complex yet transparent patterns, or the final "Icing", where they work in tandem to maintain a spacey somber mood. It is a fine addition to both men's discographies, showing that in the most productive exchanges, each tempers their expression to what the other is doing in pursuit of the greater good.

For more information, visit [burningambulancemusic.bandcamp.com](http://burningambulancemusic.bandcamp.com). Dickey is at Scholes Street Studio Feb. 19th. See Calendar.



Live at No Black Tie - Kuala Lumpur  
Jeremy Monteiro/Jay Anderson/Lewis Nash (JazzNote)  
by Scott Yanow

It has long been true that high-quality jazz performers exist all over the globe. Jeremy Monteiro, a pianist from Singapore, has a swinging modern mainstream style that is in the tradition of Oscar Peterson and

Monty Alexander while not being a copy of either. In his career he has led over 40 albums, recording not only in Singapore but also in Thailand, Switzerland, Florida and Los Angeles and he has been a sideman on dates by Ernie Watts, Eden Atwood and Ernest Ranglin.

Most often, Monteiro has been featured with trios. On his most recent CD (No Black Tie is the name of a popular venue in Singapore), which was recorded in 2018, he teams up with two Americans: bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Lewis Nash. The set is four standards and five originals, including tributes to James Moody and the team of Eldee Young and Redd Holt.

Monteiro's solid sense of swing, occasional bits of wit and ability to make familiar songs sound fresh are very much in evidence on Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way", a hard-swinging "Just In Time" and a tender "Prelude To A Kiss". Although his "Mode For Love" does not necessarily sound like a James Moody tune, one could imagine Moody having a good time with it. Of the pianist's other originals, the thoughtful ballad "Josefina" is a contrast to the soulful midtempo "Mount Olive". The latter recalls Monteiro's earlier recordings with bassist Young and drummer Holt, former members of the Ramsey Lewis Trio. After his introspective ballad "Life Goes On", the set concludes with the modal piece "Monk In The Mountain" (Monteiro hinting at McCoy Tyner) and an infectious rendition of "Watermelon Man".

Anderson and Lewis both get opportunities to take solos along the way but the main focus is on the pianist. Monteiro shows throughout this CD that he deserves much greater recognition and that he can hold his own with his American counterparts.

For more information, visit [jeremymonteiro.onuniverse.com](http://jeremymonteiro.onuniverse.com). Jay Anderson is at Roulette Feb. 20th with Jay Clayton. See Calendar.

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*It was 1959. At some point, I was taken in by something magical that came through that car radio: it was the song "A Felicidade", by Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes, which had been composed for the film Black Orpheus. It gave me a feeling I had never experienced before, a true and profound "love at first sight". From then on, still at the age of 12, I started to pursue that sound passionately. I found out that behind that magical sound there were other factors. There was a whole generation, which included João Gilberto, Roberto Menescal, Carlos Lyra and that entire group of musicians who created a style that came to be known as Bossa Nova. That was the world I wanted to be part of. – Antonio Adolfo*

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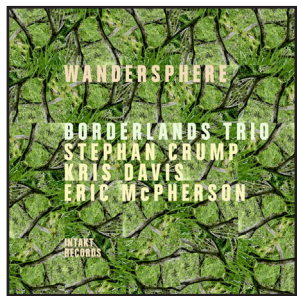
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*Wandersphere*  
Borderlands Trio (Intakt)  
by George Grella

Jazz is a unique combination of modernist and popular music, but the history of it has been lopsided, with a far more extensive incorporation—and subsequent elevation—of popular music than of the developments of Western art music. The latter has been almost predominantly confined to pulling in ideas from the early 20th century Western art music modernism of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Bartók and Debussy.

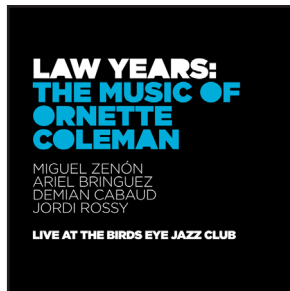
But there is another modernist path that runs through Varèse, Xenakis, Cage, Feldman and the like, full of ideas that seem worthwhile for jazz. Borderlands Trio—pianist Kris Davis, bassist Stephan Crump and drummer Eric McPherson—work with some of these ideas in a jazz context. That makes them important and the quality of their second album, *Wandersphere*, makes them musically fantastic.

The trio plays around with timbre and space within a recognizable jazz idiom. Significantly, Davis plays a great deal of prepared piano. The sound alone opens up the imagination to the world of Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes* to Pärt's *Tabula Rasa* and beyond. The music is improvised and these players are masters of finding their way to repeatable rhythmic and

harmonic patterns balancing form against freedom. An essential part of that, the listener feels, is the musicians give space for the altered timbres of the piano to sound, listening and working precisely in clearly circumscribed niches and moments. As with Varèse, timbre becomes a structural and formal element and it is profoundly exciting to hear jazz musicians wield this concept as an organizational means.

The listening is almost palpable, each empty space grips the ear as it waits for someone to outline a small part of it with a sound. The concentration means that there are moments that are breathtaking, like the transition from timbres to grooves in "Super-Organism" or locked-in rhythm the trio create together, on the spot, in "Possible Futures". This is some of the finest improvising across all genres one will hear and one of the more important jazz releases of the 21st Century.

For more information, visit [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch). This project is at The Jazz Gallery Feb. 4th-5th. See Calendar.



*Law Years: The Music of Ornette Coleman*  
(Live at the Birds Eye Jazz Club)  
Miguel Zenón (Miel Music)  
by George Kanzler

We had never heard anything like it when Ornette Coleman brought his white plastic alto saxophone and quartet with Don Cherry playing what looked like a toy trumpet to The Five Spot back in 1959. It was Coleman's album, *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, come to life. The two horns played over churning, pulsating rhythms from bass and drums, with no anchoring chords from a silent, playerless piano, quirky fast lines with catchy melodic hooks, or slow, mournful ones like choral dirges. Their solos, unmoored from chord changes, resembled bebop runs and yet did not. It was mysterious yet captivating music, impossible not to hear as something new and unique.

The extended dozen years dating from that Five Spot engagement continue to fascinate musicians. The music from that time was explored by many, including Old and New Dreams, a two horns-bass-and-drums quartet featuring alumni of Coleman's early bands. And now alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón has released his own take on Coleman's music from that period.

The date was recorded live at the Bird's Eye Jazz Club in Basel, Switzerland in May 2019. The band, which had never played together before (although individually with Zenón), was internationally Hispanic. Zenón is Puerto Rican, tenor saxophonist Ariel Bringuéz is Cuban, bassist Demian Cabaud is Argentine and drummer Jordi Rosy is a Catalan from Spain. Except for "Free", a track based on one of the fanfares from the double-quartet album *Free Jazz* (1960), the music consists of tunes from Coleman's early acoustic bands, from trio and quartet to sextet.

The four delve into the tunes with alacrity and verve, parsing the distinctive melodies and improvising with élan and spirit. Those tunes remain inimitable and distinctive after half a century, from the jingle-like "Dee Dee" and brightly singing title track to the kinky "Giggin'" and hauntingly mournful "Broken Shadows". This album shows how much Coleman's musical ideas have been assimilated into what is now a truly international jazz community.

For more information, visit [miguelzenon.com](http://miguelzenon.com). Zenón is at Miller Theatre Feb. 12th. See Calendar.

## DROP THE NEEDLE



*Byrd in Paris*  
*Parisian Thoroughfare* (Byrd in Paris, Volume 2)  
Donald Byrd Quintet (feat. Bobby Jaspar)  
(Brunswick-Sam)  
by Duck Baker

In early July of 1958, trumpeter Donald Byrd traveled to Europe with an allstar caliber quintet of young hardboppers. The 25-year-old Byrd was already a seasoned veteran in jazz terms, having appeared on some 70 record sessions over the past 3 years, including dozens of real classics.

The group hit the ground running, performing from the Black Forest in Germany to the north of Belgium to the French Riviera during their first week and seems to have kept busy all the way until the end of October while Byrd studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. It is surprising that their concert at the Olympia on Oct. 22nd seems to have been their first performance in the City of Light, but that is how the event is described in the enjoyably breathless liner notes on these beautifully produced LP reissues.

Certainly the band was in perfect sync by this time (and we will soon be able to compare how they sounded at the beginning of this sojourn, as Sam Records is set to release a previously unheard recording of the quintet's concert at Cannes on Jul. 11th). The liners note that only Bobby Jaspar (Feb. 20th, 1926 - Feb. 28th, 1963) was known to the Parisians, since the Belgian tenor saxophonist/flutist had lived in the city from 1950-56. That Jaspar was a world-class player had already been demonstrated and his soloing on both axes here is consistently rewarding. On tenor he can evoke Sonny Rollins one minute or Zoot Sims the next, but he was always his own man.

Byrd, on the other hand was always a Clifford Brown disciple, though not a mere mimic; he found a way to tell his own stories using the master's language, much as Barry Harris did with Bud Powell. One could argue that pianist Walter Davis, Jr. had the most original solo voice here and his contributions as an accompanist are invaluable (he does get repetitive on some of his longer solos, a tendency he would leave far behind in his later years). Of bassist Doug Watkins and drummer Art Taylor little need be said, except that they play up to their usual high standards.

Byrd seems to have tailored the program to suit the European audiences, focusing on intelligent arrangements of modern jazz standards fans would recognize like "52nd Street Theme", "The Blues Walk", "Two Bass Hit", "Salt Peanuts" and inevitably "Parisian Thoroughfare", which gets an elaborate, humorous treatment. The trumpeter also programmed three originals: Jaspar's autodescriptive "Flute Blues", his own minor-key burner "At This Time" and "Formidable", Davis' tasty contrafact on "There Will Never Be Another You". One can certainly see how exciting this music was at the time and it all holds up very well, though given Byrd's extensive discography we can't really call it essential. Vinyl buffs will definitely want these anyway; they look and sound great.

For more information, visit [samrecords.fr](http://samrecords.fr)

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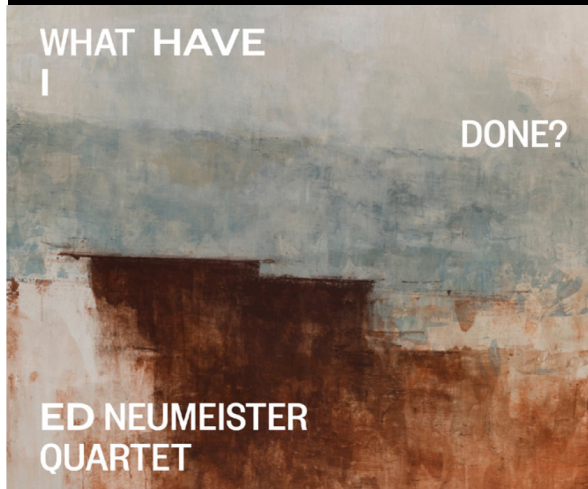
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*Chicago Standard Time (featuring Jodie Christian)*  
Diane Delin (Blujazz)  
by Alex Henderson

A decade this month has passed since the death of pianist Jodie Christian at 80. A fixture on the Chicago jazz scene for many years, Christian, a founding member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, had no problem playing avant garde jazz but focused heavily on hardbop and postbop. This previously unreleased CD, recorded in 1991, finds him in a quartet led by Chicago-based violinist Diane Delin; rounding out the lineup are bassist Kelly Sill and drummer Steve Davis.

The only track that isn't a standard is the opener "For the Moment", a vibrant Delin original with a strong Brazilian flavor. The four selections that follow are Don Redman's "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You", Frank Foster's "Simone", Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child" and George Gershwin's "They Can't Take That Away From Me". It is an interesting combination of songs, a mix of standards from the pre-bebop era to the early '70s modal gem "Simone".

Delin and Christian are highly compatible, swinging yet highly lyrical on "Simone". The combination of acoustic piano and violin puts a fresh spin on the familiar "God Bless the Child". And while it wouldn't have been surprising if Delin had emulated Stuff Smith or Stéphane Grappelli on the Redman or Gershwin tunes she takes the songs into postbop.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Delin was going through some old tapes when she came across this recording and decided that it needed to be released; Blujazz, thankfully, was interested. It is great to have this music available after so many years.

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



*I Will Never Stop Loving You*  
Kirk Lightsey (JoJo)  
by Joel Roberts

Back in the day, Kirk Lightsey was one of the busiest and most in-demand pianists on the scene, playing with a who's who of jazz royalty including Chet Baker, Woody Shaw, Kenny Burrell, Pharoah Sanders and Dexter Gordon and releasing a number of well-received albums. But for the past 30 years or so, he has maintained a lower profile, at least in the U.S., while living in Paris. All of which makes Lightsey's latest release, an intimate solo recital, somewhat of a revelation, or at the very least a reminder of what a wonderful musician he is. The inside cover includes the quote, "My whole life seems to be about the lesson of patience." It is a lesson the Detroit native, who turns 85 this month, has certainly learned well. The album is on the brief side, at just 37 minutes, but there is not a wasted note or thoughtless chord to be heard on the well-curated set of seven tunes, all of which he has recorded in the past and knows inside and out.

Lightsey has a warm, light touch and frequently takes off in unexpected directions, from his decidedly Monk-ish turn on Wayne Shorter's "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum" (one of three Shorter tunes covered) to the unusually subdued, halting pace with which he tackles the John Coltrane classic "Giant Steps". And for sheer unvarnished beauty, it is hard to beat his readings of the title track (an obscure Nicholas Brodsky-Sammy Cahn tune Doris Day sang in the 1955 movie *Love Me or Leave Me*) or Phil Woods' poignant tribute to Bill Evans, "Goodbye Mr. Evans". There is a passion and genuineness to everything Lightsey plays here on a magnificent Fazioli piano. The only complaint is that it is over too soon.

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



*Poof*  
Henry Threadgill Zooid (Pi)  
by Stuart Broomer

Together for 20 years, Zooid is among the longest-lived bands in current jazz, a stellar chamber group that matches Henry Threadgill (alto saxophone, flute and bass flute) with Liberty Ellman (acoustic guitar), Jose Davila (tuba and trombone), Christopher Hoffman (cello) and Elliott Humberto Kavee (drums). Its last album, *In for a Penny, In for a Pound*, had the extraordinary distinction of winning the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in music, placing Threadgill (who turns 78 this month), and Zooid, both as concept and ensemble, in very rare air for any improvising ensemble. *Poof* is its equal in matters of refinement, complexity and soul, yes, soul, for as much as Threadgill has created a kind of ideal amalgam of chamber music textures with a brilliant integration of composition and improvisation, his alto sound is a raw emissary from the worlds of Ornette Coleman and the blues, recalling Threadgill's longstanding rank as master of a kind of hyperkinetic free funk.

Opener "Come and Go" begins with a scattering of lines, immediately introducing the unlikely timbral combination of tuba, cello and acoustic guitar in music at once tightly coordinated and seemingly random, an anti-pattern sustained even with the entry of alto as an intense central focus. The mixture of composed and improvised elements used to achieve that effect is a constant here, arising as well in "Poof on Street Called Straight", a brooding dirge centered on a poignant alto wail, with empathetic lowest-register blasts from tuba and a keening solo contribution from cello.

Davila on trombone is the central voice on "Beneath the Bottom" as it moves through plunger-muted complaint to gently exuberant open play, accompanied by the closely related sounds of guitar and plucked cello. "Happenstance" emphasizes the light piquancy of flute and a quiet interlude of metallic percussion, which gradually becomes a drum solo of remarkable subtlety, in turn complemented by dancing guitar lines. Closer "Now and then" emphasizes tuba and guitar, each developing a kind of delicate, round sound.

Part of what is remarkable about the ensemble is the effect of a band that has sustained itself for decades with such unusual instrumentation. Each is a distinct voice and as likely to be lead as accompanist. The almost indistinguishable mix of composed and improvised elements combines with evanescent structures and unusual timbres to create dream-like textures that continue to dance in memory.

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



**The Montreux Years  
Nina Simone (BMG)  
Ledisi Sings Nina  
Ledisi (Listen Back Entertainment)  
by George Kanzler**

Thanks to being rejected by the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia—to become, in her words, “the first great black classical pianist”—Nina Simone, who was born 89 years ago this month, became one of the most important non-classical musicians of the mid 20th Century.

Coming up as a jazz pianist-singer in the late '50s, first in Atlantic City and Philadelphia, Simone had, by the early '60s, become highly eclectic, incorporating current pop music, rather than just the American Songbook standards, into her programs.

That eclecticism reached a peak around the same timeframe as the Summer of Love (1967) and summer of Woodstock (1969), when she performed at the Harlem Cultural Festival recently celebrated in the Questlove documentary *Summer of Soul*.

The second CD of *The Montreux Years* is a complete set by Simone's then-quartet of guitarist Henry Young, bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Buck Clarke, recorded in June 1968 and it reflects her unabashed eclecticism and embrace of the rock zeitgeist of the times. Not only does she revisit two tunes made popular during the decade by The Animals (she had recorded both years before): “Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood” and “The House of the Rising Sun”, she also sings two Bee Gees songs, “Please Read Me” and “To Love Somebody”, even having her brother, Sam Waymon, sing harmony with her on the chorus of the latter. She also follows the former with a song from the then-current hit Galt MacDermot-Gerome Ragni-James Rado Broadway musical, *Hair*: “Ain't Got No, I Got Life”.

Simone was at the height of her vocal artistry in 1968, able to bend and shape her voice from mellifluous pop to guttural blues. Her rendition of the one American standard at the concert is unforgettable. She masterfully renders Jule Styne-Betty Comden-Adolph Green's “Just In Time” initially at a deliberate midtempo, returning after her piano solo, her voice on a different, more ethereal plane embodying the lyric “change me”. She also indulges in some mysteriously ecstatic “speaking in tongues” scatting on the dour folk song, “When I Was A Young Girl”. The set lacks any of her own Civil Rights songs like “Mississippi Goddam”, but includes a blistering “Backlash Blues” from the pen of Langston Hughes, and her rousing version of Billy Taylor's “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free”.

The first CD begins with a nod to Simone's obsession with classical music, a piano instrumental of the Gershwins' “Someone to Watch Over Me” more Bach than Richard Rodgers. The CD mixes tracks from her other four appearances at Montreux (1976, 1981, 1987, 1990). It jumps between years, the curating making thematic connections, as when she ends Janis Ian's “Stars” ad libbing about how “Billie Holiday told it better”, followed by Simone's rendition of the Holiday-associated Harry M. Woods tune “What A Little Moonlight Can Do”.

Simone does Jacques Brel's “Ne Me Quitte Pas” on both CDs and Ledisi expands it to include Rod McKuen's English lyrics too on *Ledisi Sings Nina*, the latest in a number of Simone tributes the R&B singer has done in the last decade plus. Ledisi also enlists three other singers—Lizz Wright, Alice Smith and Lisa

Fischer—one for each section of Simone's “Four Women”, also in a 1990 version on Montreux. Ledisi's voice is conventionally richer than Simone, but her celebration of the iconic singer would best serve as an introduction and gateway leading listeners to explore Simone's incredibly indelible discography.

For more information, visit [bmg.com](http://bmg.com) and [ledisi.com](http://ledisi.com)



**Tempest Revisited | Ding Dong, You're Dead.  
Hedvig Mollestad (Rune Grammofon)  
by Franz Matzner**

There are no convincing antecedents to Norwegian guitarist Hedvig Mollestad's work. The cocktail is so unique and ingredients drawn from such a diversity of sources, any attempt to map a genealogy would look less like a family tree and more like an astronomical chart. Constellations of power chords, thrashing metal and progressive rock intersect the orbits of effects-drenched jazz improvisation; minimalist soundscapes arise and dissipate like elemental vapor; shattering bursts of dense, chaotic guitar shredding flare over hard grooves. Whole galaxies of rich sonic texture swirl. And it is all drawn together by the gravitational pull of Mollestad, who turns 40 this month.

*Tempest Revisited* presents the more overt kinship to jazz structures, though only nominally and dominantly because of the large ensemble comprising instruments often associated with the genre such as saxophones, piano and vibraphone. Examples include tunes like the “kittiwakes in gusts” and “winds approaching”, the latter diving into a funky feel with blues-inflected saxophone and an amalgam of groove and swing beats providing fertile ground for solos and trading. *Tempest Revisited*, however, does not fundamentally depart from Mollestad's signature experimentation, evidenced by the opening “sun on a dark sky”, which begins with a rumble of drums and haunting vocals like mutated Gregorian chants followed by additional instruments entering the fray in fractured layers before plunging together into a final propulsive unity.

*Ding Dong, You're Dead*, finds Mollestad in a trio format with compatriots Ellen Brekken (bass) and Ivar Loe Bjørnstad (drums). The album bristles with a dark energy, at times eruptive, at others contained in frosty, spatially vast musical panoramas. Illustrating this, opener “leo flash return to the underworld” plummets directly into hard rock drums, driving bass and thrusting guitar worthy of the best metal bands, interrupted only by a fever pitched guitar solo. Bookending the album, “four candles” is the mirror opposite, unfolding rather than racing forward. As if plucked from the ether notes float, pendulous in a cavernous chamber of echoing guitar, soft tom rolls, cymbal scrapes and subterranean bass. In between, the fount of surprises continues. “All Flights Canceled” jolts with good ol' fashioned rock 'n' roll beats over which Mollestad again screams a solo at the sky. “Magic Mushroom” hits just as hard but moves in impressive swerves and eddies. The title track evolves patiently with heavily spaced guitar, sinuous bowed bass and a dully throbbing rhythm to its somber, attenuated conclusion.

Mollestad and her colleagues have produced a set of undefinable compositions that exist within their own universe of musicianship, true eclecticism and imagination.

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

## ON SCREEN



**Ronnie's  
Directed by Oliver Murray (Greenwich Entertainment)  
by Kevin Canfield**

In the '50s, British saxophonist Ronnie Scott played in big bands on transatlantic cruise ships. Whenever he arrived stateside, the late musician recalls in this documentary, he would make for midtown Manhattan, where bebop pioneers were reinventing jazz, starting at the Three Deuces on West 52nd Street, then heading a few paces east to Club Downbeat to “hear Dizzy's band”. Inspired by the sounds and the scene, Scott decided his home city needed its own musically adventurous venue. In 1959, he and compatriot Pete King opened Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London, where it continues to operate. As seen in this sometimes terrific film, Gillespie and numerous other stars have graced its bandstand.

Like many retrospective arts documentaries, this one, directed by Oliver Murray, is unfailingly reverent and somewhat flabby; a closing montage, in which members of the club's current management team praise one another's foresight and professionalism, is dull and anticlimactic. But it is hard to imagine the music lover who won't be enthralled by at least some of the goings-on chronicled in *Ronnie's*, which features thrilling performances—some of which have never before been publicly screened—by numerous luminaries. This footage—coupled with commentary from, among others, Sonny Rollins and Quincy Jones—augments Murray's explication of the crucial role that Ronnie Scott's played in postwar British jazz.

In part, Scott's decision to open a club was a reaction to England's staid mid-century jazz scene, which was dominated by unchallenging big bands. He wanted to share his love of bebop and he knew that if his club were to thrive, he would have to attract top American talent. He did so, welcoming many greats to his West End venue. The film's gems include a hypnotic clip of Buddy Rich in top soloing form, all four limbs moving at great speed; an exuberant Ella Fitzgerald, who delights the audience by namechecking English cities in a swinging performance; a duet by Van Morrison and Chet Baker, who find a new degree of wistfulness in Stephen Sondheim's “Send in the Clowns”; and black-and-white clips of Roland Kirk blowing into three horns during “Here Comes the Whistlerman”.

Even music agnostics may have heard of Ronnie Scott's: Jimi Hendrix' last public performance took place there in 1970. Murray includes audio of Hendrix' appearance, but the absence of onstage footage prevents him from devoting as much time to the guitarist as some would have liked. Scott, who suffered from severe depression, was 69 when he died from a prescription drug overdose in 1996. Murray handles this chapter of Scott's life—a period during which botched dental work prevented him from playing, hastening his decline—with notable empathy. When necessary, this is a mournful film, but nothing can temper the vitality of its performances, making this a hearty ode to a landmark venue.

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



*Pendulum*  
**Gordon Grdina (Attayboygirl)**  
*Klotski*  
**Gordon Grdina's Square Peg (Attayboygirl)**  
*Night's Quietest Hour*  
**Gordon Grdina's Haram with Marc Ribot (Attayboygirl)**  
 by Tom Greenland

You would think Vancouver-based guitarist/oud player Gordon Grdina, who turns 45 this month, has enough outlets to handle his myriad projects but his three newest appear on his own imprint, Attayboygirl, co-founded with partner/photographer Genevieve Monro.

*Pendulum* is Grdina's third solo album, following in the footprints of 2018's *China Fire* and 2020's *Prior Street*. Though best known as a team player, someone who thrives in the communitarian ethos of the Vancouver scene, Grdina reveals a more personal side on *Pendulum*, exuding restive and relentless energy. "Koen Dori", "Contra", "Benbow Blues" and the title track are all played on nylon-string acoustic using a thumb and fingers technique germane to classical guitarists, only Grdina's approach is more jazz-based. His inventions are highly abstract, his themes not always apparent until near the end of a track when the logical workings of the 'tune' may (or may not) become apparent. Any 'harmonies' are more often implied than stated while his bass notes and inner tones are a marvel of independent motion. On "The Chase" and "Wayward" he switches to oud, his style essentially the same except that the pick doesn't allow him to pluck notes simultaneously so

contrapuntal textures must be effected through deft cross-picking to add bass parts, the hammering strokes creating a significant increase in rhythmic propulsion when compared to the other tracks. The instrument's lack of frets allows him to slide off of certain notes, blurring their tone centers. Although several of the pieces hover about the pitch B, whether as a pedal tone or temporary melodic focal point, Grdina seems to play over and around tonality, the tracks deriving their coherence from mirrored gestures and cohesive shapeshifting. On "Always Been the Song II", the closing track, he adopts a more conventional approach by playing a 4/4 rock ballad in G Major/E minor, but even here he eschews convention by adding nonconformist colors.

*Klotski*, the debut of Square Peg, Grdina with violist Mat Maneri, bassist/Moog synthesizer player Shahzad Ismaily and drummer Christian Lillinger, mostly features him on electric guitar, though he switches to oud for parts of "Bacchic Barge" and "Sulfur City". Recorded as one long suite, the eight tracks link seamlessly like a chain of Legos, delineated not so much by distinctive intros and outros as by emergent moments within, moments that could be initiated by any of the collaborators, growing louder or softer, speeding up or slowing down, moving through climaxes and lulls with a single mindset. Grdina's tone is clean yet raw, his attack incisive yet anarchistic, his improvisatory gestures in lockstep with Maneri's similarly active feats of imagination. Besides mercurial dynamic shifts, accelerating cascades of sequential motives are employed to compress and expand the time feel. Ismaily switches between electric bass and Moog, Lillinger between rolling textures and harder-hitting figures, never overpowering even at his rowdiest. "Sore Spot" contains layered coughs for humorous effect. "Joyride", the closer, is the most tightly structured piece with a 10-beat

rhythmic cycle (the last 2 beats slightly shorter than the first 8) and a prog-rock-style riff to drive it all home.

*Night's Quietest Hour* is by Haram, founded to perform Arabic music with a progressive approach. The album, the second since 2012's *Her Eyes Illuminate*, was recorded between two gigs, with Grdina (on oud), Emad Armoush (vocals, ney), Christopher Kelly (tenor saxophone), JP Carter (trumpet), François Houle (clarinet), Jesse and Josh Zubot (violins), Tommy Babin (electric bass), Tim Gerwing (darbuka), Liam MacDonald (riq), Kenton Loewen (trap drums) and guest Marc Ribot (guitar). Like its predecessor it features classic repertoire from the so-called Golden Age of Arabic music, including "Longa Nahawand" (based on a maqam/mode similar to the Western natural or harmonic minor scale), "Dulab Bayati" (based on maqam similar to the Phrygian mode, but with a half-flat second degree), the much beloved and covered "Lamma Bada Yatathanna" (also based on maqam Nahawand) and two hit 45 rpm singles from '60s/'70s Sudan: Sala Ibn Badiya's "Sala Min Shaaraha" and Ahmad Al Jaber's "Hawj Erreeh". Following the tradition, most of the long-form melodies are played in unison, with slight idiosyncratic variations by each instrument that thicken the sound, with short connecting melodies (tarjamah) played by another set of instruments to fill any gaps, creating an almost constant flow of melody. Advancing the tradition, the customary darbuka (gourd drum) and riq (frame drum) rhythm section are beefed up with electric bass and drumkit and instead of one primary soloist as many as three or four instruments may solo simultaneously. Two key contributors are Syrian Armoush, who sings the lyrics in Arabic (as well as doubling on side-blow flute), and Ribot whose edgy lyricism adds considerable energy to the proceedings.

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



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 – Scott Yanow, September 2021

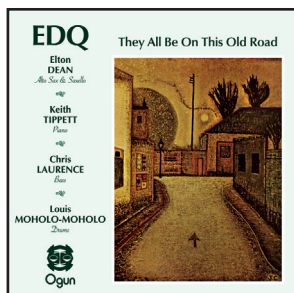
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**They All Be On This Old Road (The Seven Dials Concert)**  
**Elton Dean Quartet (Ogun)**  
 by John Sharpe

British saxophonist Elton Dean, perhaps still best known for his tenure in early Soft Machine, died unexpectedly 16 years ago this month while his longtime comrade pianist Keith Tippett passed away in June 2020. The reissue of *They All Be On This Old Road*, a 1976 live recording by Dean's quartet from London's Seven Dials pub is dedicated to the memory of both men. It is not just a rehash of the LP as new material doubles the length of the album to over 79 minutes, giving yet more evidence of the pair's chemistry, as well as added exposure to the accomplished team of bassist Chris Laurence and drummer Louis Moholo-Moholo.

The program, which encompasses originals as well as standards and a cover, contains ample testimony to the eclectic backgrounds of the group members. Dean's postbop "Edeepub" quickly loosens its moorings when his slippery alto saxophone wail, informed equally by Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman, worries at a corkscrewed phrase over Moholo-Moholo's machine gun rat-a-tat and Tippett's battered keys. Things go even further left field when Tippett moves into the spotlight, his Morse code piano tapping out a cipher in the bottom end, which combines percussive minimalism and ornery improv, though still reassuringly seasoned with the occasional outburst of lush arpeggios. But then after yet more twists and turns, as if to show their widescreen range, they seamlessly slip into a tender rendition of "Here's That Rainy Day".

That is just one of four ballads on the set, each taken fairly straight and that is not counting a heart-on-sleeve 20-minute version of Coltrane's "Naima", which includes a beautifully impassioned solo from the leader, more wayward piano, spiky drum clatter—demonstrating that you don't have to overpower to transport—and richly melodic lines from Laurence stretching beyond counterpoint into free agency. What it means is that no matter where the ear's attention settles, there is something of interest happening. But, however far they stray from the themes, the intermittent references show that they know exactly what they are doing. It is a warm-hearted and generous set, which makes the loss of two of the principals ever more poignant.

For more information, visit [ogunrecording.co.uk](http://ogunrecording.co.uk)



**Introspection**  
**Burak Bedikyan (SteepleChase)**  
 by Ken Dryden

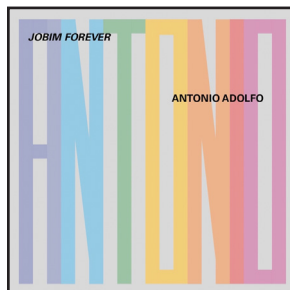
A native of Turkey, Burak Bedikyan (who turns 44 this month) moved from Istanbul to New York in 2017. The pianist built his reputation by playing gigs and teaching, absorbing the music of the jazz capital. The arrival of COVID put a sudden damper on his life, causing Bedikyan to isolate at home with his wife and young

daughter and sell off nearly everything he owned, including all of his musical instruments. After not touching a piano for nearly eight months, he was invited to compose a short piece for a Turkish jazz festival. Renting a digital piano, microphones and sound cards, Bedikyan improvised a composition, then found the inspiration to ruminate at the keyboard over the next few days, producing the music heard on this CD.

Many pianists who have preceded him (Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, Marian McPartland and Kenny Werner, among others) have championed free improvisation as a form of expression, but devoting an entire release to it has been less common among musicians of Bedikyan's generation. Clearly Bedikyan has been inspired by others but has found his own creative path rather than imitate them. There is no indication as to the order in which these performances were recorded, but the resulting ebb and flow of the final playlist is logical in its constant shift of moods.

His explorations don't run overly long while many of them sound like finished compositions rather than on-the-spot creations; one doesn't hear any filler as the pianist is thinking ahead about the direction of his improvisation. The opening track, "Warm At Heart", conjures images of a beautiful spring morning. The lush ballad "Simply For You" stands out and it would be a good candidate for an added lyric. The dramatic "Seven Gates" rapidly transitions from one motif to another, incorporating a vamp in spots to build tension. Due to the strength and variety of these songs, one hopes Burak Bedikyan will undertake similar sessions in the near future.

For more information, visit [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)



**Jobim Forever**  
**Antonio Adolfo (AAM Music)**  
 by Dan Bilawsky

From the moment that he first heard "A Felicidade" on a car radio in 1959, Antonio Adolfo was hooked on the music of Antônio Carlos Jobim. As one of bossa nova's chief architects, Jobim—and his music—would serve as both a foundational and enduring influence on Adolfo, who would develop into one of the most successful pianists and arrangers of his generation. Now, more than six decades after that initial exposure, arriving at his 75th birthday as this issue goes to press, this celebrated artist pays tribute to that lodestar with *Jobim Forever*.

Essentially eschewing vocal performances in favor of expansive yet respectful instrumental treatments of gems from the '60s—the heyday of bossa nova—Adolfo paves his own path through one classic after another. "The Girl from Ipanema", Jobim's greatest hit, which calls to the beach located a mere two blocks from where Adolfo would eventually start a school (and the honoree's children and grandson Daniel studied), sets things in motion with breezy beauty and a purity of sound. "Wave", offering smart and tasteful horn lines and contrasting solos from guitarist Lula Galvão and trombonist Rafael Rocha, follows and captivates with its streamlined flow. "How Insensitive", a light-touch beauty with Jessé Sadoc's flugelhorn and Marcelo Martins' flute adding warmth and paving the way for Adolfo's refined statement, plays against its name. "Favela (O Morro Nao Tem Vez)", given a bluesy facelift and clearing space for Sadoc's hot trumpet and Danilo Sinna's passionate alto saxophone, proves to be

one of the most clever arrangements in a set housing plenty. And "Estrada do Sol", operating with pure class, waltzes the album to its conclusion.

Working with a sizeable cast—more than ten, if guests are included in the tally—Adolfo is able to paint with vivid colors that speak both to his own imagination and the possibilities inherent in Jobim's music. Whether departing from the album's all-instrumental norm and adding the spellbinding vocals of Zé Renato to lone '50s inclusion "A Felicidade", grafting a "Por Toda a Minha Vida" introduction onto a guarania-based "Amparo", adjusting the form of "Agua de Beber" to his liking or adopting a purposefully mellow mindset on "Inutil Paisagem", Antonio Adolfo always has a firm grasp on the finer details and the bigger picture.

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



**The Last Call**  
**Larry Coryell & Philip Catherine (with Jazz at Berlin Philharmonic XI) (ACT Music)**  
 by Marco Cangiano

Larry Coryell and Philippe Catherine had a long and simpatico association since the mid '70s. The guitarists toured with Coryell's Eleventh House and recorded as a duo, producing the highly praised 1976 album *Twin House* followed two years later by *Splendid*, both produced by Siggie Loch for Elektra. In the context of the Art of Duo event curated by Loch at the Philharmonie Berlin, Coryell and Catherine shared the stage for what turned out to be Coryell's last recorded effort as he passed away only a few weeks later five years ago this month. *The Last Call* has the four pieces Coryell and Catherine performed that evening, as well as duos between Catherine and pianist Jan Lundgren and Coryell and bassist Lars Danielsson before everyone joined together to round off the evening with the addition of trumpeter Paolo Fresu.

The concert lacks a bit of the coherence of previous encounters. The contrast between Coryell and Catherine's approach is evident, with the latter, on electric, having a more linear and introspective phrasing grounded in a tradition still reminiscent of Django Reinhardt whereas the former, on acoustic and less exuberant than usual, displays an almost encyclopedic approach, ranging from ragtime to bluegrass and postbop. At the same time, the two blend very well in pieces such as Coryell's bluesy "Jemin-Eye'n" and Catherine's heartfelt yet complex "Homecomings". Their empathy also emerges in "Manha De Carnaval" and the opener "Ms. Julie", which was also featured in the aforementioned *Twin House*.

All the guest players shine, with Danielsson's thick, round, old-school sound bringing out the very best in Coryell on "Bags' Groove", in which the duo seems to have quite a bit of fun in their dialogue, quoting almost everybody, including Stravinsky. Catherine and Lundgren's delightful reading of "Embraceable You" is a pearl. Regrettably, the full group with the addition of Fresu is heard only in the last piece, an ingenious arrangement of "On Green Dolphin Street", which comes across as an impromptu jam session coda. The rousing audience delivers a clear appreciation. An apt conclusion to Coryell's last performance.

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

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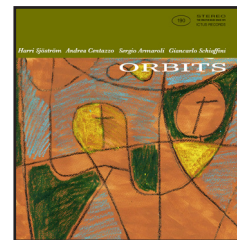
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Photo credit: Charlie Gross

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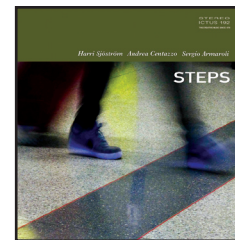
*Orbits*

Harri Sjöström, Andrea Centazzo,  
Sergio Armaroli, Giancarlo Schiaffini (Ictus)

*Steps*

Harri Sjöström/Andrea Centazzo/Sergio Armaroli  
(Ictus)

by Steven Loewy



For more than three decades, percussionist, producer and organizer Andrea Centazzo has done a marvelous job documenting his work with a plethora of outstanding international musicians exploring various free improvisational strategies. His label Ictus Records has studiously catalogued these recordings, which form an impressive collection.

*Steps* is a trio of Centazzo with Finnish soprano saxophonist Harri Sjöström (who turns 70 this month) and vibraphonist Sergio Armaroli, with Centazzo's longtime collaborator, trombonist Giancarlo Schiaffini, added on *Orbits*.

*Orbits* is a largely static, though powerful work. According to Evan Parker's liner notes, one player begins improvising on each track and the others join in "... one by one, until the cycle or 'orbit' is completed." The American-educated Sjöström has performed extensively in Europe and is probably best known as a sideman with Cecil Taylor on live recordings with small groups and larger ensembles. While Sjöström's work with Taylor received mixed reviews, the pianist's embrace enhanced the saxophonist's reputation and brought him to the attention of a wider audience. The participation of Schiaffini on *Orbits* is solid, though disappointingly limited. On the opening "Orbits #1", loosely muted trombone joins gingerly, in an atmospheric setting, in which vibraphone seems to reign supreme. This is followed by a feature for Armaroli, who sports impressive chops on "Orbits #2".

Centazzo is a facilitator throughout, a role he plays well, and his mysterious bells on "Orbits #4" and elsewhere mesh well with the mesmerizing sounds of the soprano, with its slowly trilling lines and whooshes of air, while Schiaffini quietly and sporadically punches through with tastefully subdued runs. Sjöström never really breaks out in any substantial way, though he contributes substantially to the collective sound. Overall, the atmospherics prevail and there is a sense of wandering, gently but relentlessly. On "Orbits #5", the saxophonist opens at length with spunk, later joined by vibraphone in counterpoint. Schiaffini pleases on "Orbits #10" with his opening muted blats, growls and splats, eventually joined by the others in a somewhat more diverse offering, with impressive pointillistic playing from trombone and saxophone. The recording ends with "Orbits #11", which opens with a wonderfully engaging and fast drum solo, later joined by muted trombone and saxophone in a lovely closing.

*Steps* gives a bit more time to the trio. Sjöström seems more emboldened and Armaroli revels in the moment with beautiful lines and tone. Sometimes, as on "Steps #2", there are slower moments, but on "Steps #5", for example, the tempo picks up and Sjöström is more aggressive, sporting shimmering beauty. On "Steps #6", He display some of his best work, his lines snaking all over the horn. The tracks work best when they are liveliest and when all members of the trio are fully engaged, such as on "Steps #7". Centazzo is always solidly in support, pushing forward as an equal member and driving force.

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

## BOXED SET



*The Complete Live at The Lighthouse*  
Lee Morgan (Blue Note)  
by George Grella

In a 2021 packed with extraordinary and important archival jazz releases, this boxed set stands among the very finest. This is trumpeter Lee Morgan's complete run with his quintet at The Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, California, seven-and-a-half hours (more than four hours never before released) across 12 sets and 3 nights in mid July 1970. This 8-CD or 12-LP package includes a booklet with photos of Morgan—many of him at the beach in California—and historical and analytical essays, responses on the music from trumpeters like Nicholas Payton and Charles Tolliver and interviews with and remembrances of the musicians who were on The Lighthouse bandstand

This is a working group, with Bennie Maupin (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, flute), Harold Mabern (piano), Jymie Merritt (bass) and Mickey Roker (drums, with Jack DeJohnette sitting in for the final tune of the last set on opening night). As such,

they play a concentrated core of material repeated throughout the sets—there are seven different versions of “Speedball”, although that tune’s main purpose is as a vamp as Morgan introduces the band as they are about to take a break for “salt tablets and wine” — while mixing in a variety of other tunes, like the atmospheric “Neophilia” and one performance of “The Sidewinder” during the third set of opening night. That single classic track from Morgan’s ‘60s Blue Note period is a salient point from which to hear this tidal wave of music. It cooks as expected and Roker’s playing has some tasty rock ‘n’ roll updates on the original soul-jazz rhythms. It is tremendous fun and the musicians sure have a blast, but it also sounds like they are taking a break from the main proceedings.

The Lighthouse set is a panorama of the great Morgan (who would be murdered onstage 50 years ago this month). In July 1970, he was playing with the same virtuosic thinking as always. A Morgan solo from his teenage years up through this collection is a model for how always to sound like you are playing what you mean; not that there is a specific meaning to each of his improvisations, but Morgan was always incredibly coherent, with a purpose and point behind every note. Never one to just smear or wail a line for effect, even his trills are purposeful, coming as moments of high drama in the middle of a longer line. From set to set, Morgan is brilliant.

He is also modern, in his own way. The music is post hardbop modern jazz, with more rock and more modal playing. “Peyote” would fit onto any of his studio Blue Note sides, but “Absolutions” is a newer sound for Morgan. At times, though not predictably, his playing takes him above the chords, stacking

polytonal harmonic ideas on the changes running past him below. Morgan’s intent is fascinating but not clear—is he stretching his harmonic palette, responding to the moment, testing out something new to see if it will work? The music and recording are so vivid that one responds as if in the club: “What’s he doing? Did you hear that?”

The other ear-opening feature of this set is the prominence of Maupin. It has always been easy to hear him in bits and snatches as part of *Bitches Brew* and a member of Herbie Hancock’s bands. He is a valuable sideman there, but a sideman, enhancing the music with color, commentary and brief solo statements. At The Lighthouse, Morgan almost always gives Maupin the first solo opportunity and regardless he gets the time and space to play whatever he needs to play. And he is fantastic, spinning out rich, exuberant, even brawny solos on all three of his instruments. In duration alone, this is a massive update to his discography and his playing shows that he is a musician of the highest order.

This is a massive amount of music without a dull moment. It is astonishing how the producers of the original, partial release were able to decide that four hours of this were not worth pressing. But extended listening can be overwhelming—the audience was just hearing one or two sets at a time, after all, and for them, a 20-minute excursion on “Neophilia” or “Absolutions” was the capstone of an evening, not just a single track among a few dozen that play for hours. But to be overwhelmed by hours and hours of masterful, thrilling live jazz like this is no criticism whatsoever.

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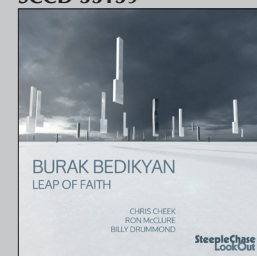
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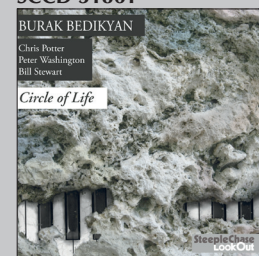
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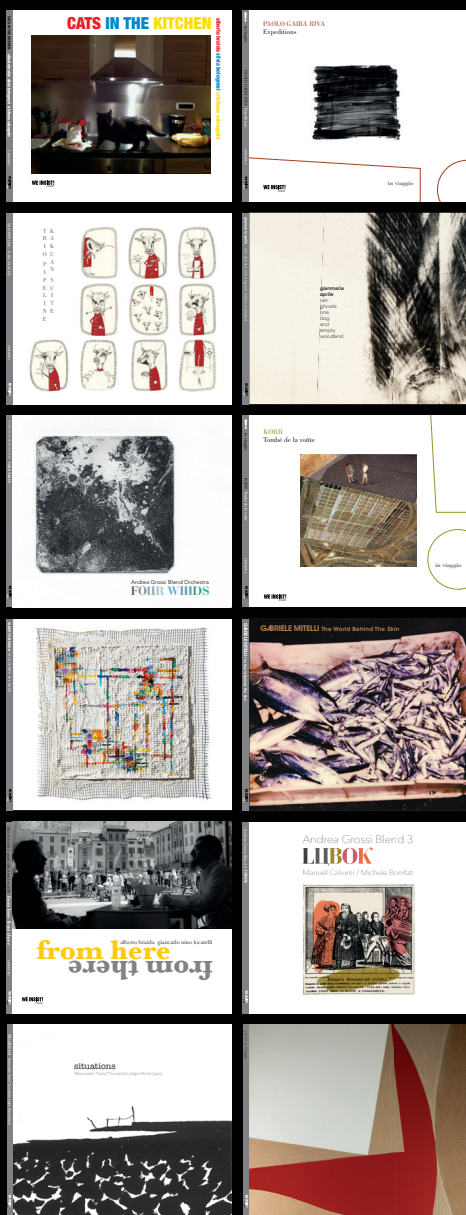


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