


DECEMBER 2023—ISSUE 260

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO THE NYC JAZZ SCENE

NYCJAZZRECORD.COM



# THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

## The Many Hats of



HOLIDAY  
GIFT GUIDE

## MARTY EHRLICH

SPECIAL FEATURE:  
CARLA BLEY  
IN MEMORIAM



GREGORY  
HUTCHINSON

JEFF  
LEDERER

STEPHANIE  
NAKASIAN

EARTHA  
KITT

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## Letter from the Editor

At *TNYCJR* we consider each issue, in essence, a gift from us to you, dear readers. And with our *Holiday Issue*, that's especially the case. (Full disclosure: A copy of *TNYCJR* makes a great stocking stuffer, or first night's Hanukkah gift.) We take great pride and joy in sharing the gift of music, the gift that keeps giving, with time-relevant features and recent album and concert reviews, as well as live concert listings, all to help you help those who make this music possible. To spice up that hypothetical eggnog, enjoy this issue's Holiday Gift Guide, which is full of gift suggestions for the jazz lover in your life. And if you can't find that perfect gift, or time is running out, venues all around the city seem to be more in the holiday spirit than ever before, so check the Event Calendar for nightly suggestions for you and your loved ones!

It goes without saying, the world would be a much lesser place without the music we rely on and the musicians, record labels, publicists, venues, presenters, et al. who bring those sounds to our ears for comfort, inspiration and/or distraction from the turmoil we may be experiencing personally—and especially from what is happening around the world, including two tragic wars cross seas. So, indulge and allow us to suggest taking a step back to acknowledge the true meaning of this time of year, a common ideal shared by many around the world. To paraphrase Leon Thomas who famously chanted so memorably and timelessly with Pharoah Sanders: *The creator makes but one demand, happiness through all the land ... The creator has a master plan. Peace and happiness for... everyone.*

We could all use such holiday spirit. Peace and love. And happy holidays.

On The Cover: Marty Ehrlich (photos by Caroline Conejero)

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# Live at Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture

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Ted Nash | Kristen Lee Sergeant



**TED NASH**  
**KRISTEN LEE SERGEANT**  
**HOLIDAYS**

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Grammy Award winning multi-instrumentalist, arranger, and composer Ted Nash and singular singer/songwriter Kristen Lee Sergeant have brought something of this high caliber to the party in **Holidays**: a markedly distinctive record for the season.

Ted Nash is well known as a bandleader and as a member and arranger for the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. He is paired with Kristen Lee Sergeant, a vocalist and songwriter who has been singled out for her intelligent lyrics and dramatic styling of song.

**H**olidays capitalizes on the best of what a coupling like this can bring. Nash's memories of holidays spent making music with his family of legendary Hollywood studio musicians infuse many arrangements with a gravitas and depth which Sergeant treats with an actor's grace; and as Nash's more adventurous arrangements buck at conventionality, Sergeant clearly relishes the opportunity, and occasionally supplies original lyrics that add bracing clarity.



Sunnyside

www.sunnysiderecords.com

During their summer tour with Dave Holland's New Quartet, saxophonist **Jaleel Shaw** and pianist **Kris Davis** developed a close artistic kinship that was readily apparent at their duo shows at The Jazz Gallery (Nov. 10-11). After Friday's rigorous gig, they wanted to loosen up and stretch out Saturday, opening the first set with a free but structured improvisation. Davis established a pensive mood with sparse textures, Shaw adding slow, crab-walking lines on soprano, concluding each phrase with wide vibrato. Davis segued into Shaw's "Conclusions", fleshing out the protracted bassline with high-register filigree before Shaw's alto brought it to gentle closure. Creative juices were in full flow for Davis' "Scissorsail", a whimsical, winding theme with doublet and triplet accents. Her unremitting high clusters goaded the saxophonist's register-spanning, languorously swinging alto lines. On the following section she used refrigerator magnets, erasers and gaffer tape to create gong effects, akin to an Indonesian gamelan ensemble. He in turn balanced these ethereal chimes with warm, earthy tones, some bent or shaded with micro-pitches. On his "Solidarity", based on an Arabic mode (Phrygian major), he dug deep, using a single repeated pitch to usher in a poignant mood-swing that affected everyone listening. Davis' solo sustained this ambiance, gradually tapering off. It was a fitting, if implicit, reflection on current events in Palestine. Shaw's "Contemplations", a galloping samba with gnarly changes, served as a coda to and respite from the previous gravitas.

— Tom Greenland



Kris Davis, Jaleel Shaw @The Jazz Gallery

Fresh from a month's curatorship at Blue Note, keyboardist **Robert Glasper** donated his talents to a fundraiser at/for Brooklyn Music School (Nov. 4), his way (in the emcee's words) of "paying [it] forward" to an up-and-coming generation of young music students, many of whom sat watching in the auditorium. Glasper sparked things off with a rapid flurry of percussive chords, soon cuing Derrick Hodge (bass) and Marcus Gilmore (drums) to join in on an up-tempo version of Chuck Wayne's "Solar". To give his solo coherence, Glasper inverted, diverted and otherwise maneuvered short fragments of the theme, linking them in twisting, turning chains. The tune ended with an unusual outro vamp, part mariachi, part lopsided polka. He started the second piece (which turned out to be Victor Young's "Stella by Starlight") alone again, following then diverging from the melody with idiosyncratic reharmonizations, some provoking an audible crowd response. For improvised sections he used a move that might have been gleaned from hip-hop production: 'sampling' then looping four measures of the song's original chord changes. The third and final number of the set was a 12-bar blues featuring guest trumpeter Kenyatta Beasley, who brought a hefty dollop of hard bop to the proceedings. After the concert, the trio came out front to answer questions about music and life. One young girl with a booming voice asked Glasper what one thing he'd bring to a desert island. "Food?" he mused after a short reflection, explaining, "I don't know how to fish."

(TG)

When guitarist John Paul "Bucky" Pizzarelli died on April 1, 2020 at age 94, he left behind a tremendous legacy. In over seven decades he'd played with a galaxy of artists in performance and on recordings. In **A Tribute to Bucky Pizzarelli** at 54 Below (Nov. 7), bassist son Martin Pizzarelli (younger brother to guitarist/vocalist John Pizzarelli) and vocalist David Rose—a German-Romani crooner who worked with Bucky on one of his last recording sessions—selected some of the elder Pizzarelli's favorite tunes and arrangements. Steeped in the American Songbook, Rose offered his own ballad, "You Tell Yourself", as well as standards that included a relaxed "Coquette" (J. Green, C. Lombardo, G. Kahn), a lilting "Haven't We Met" (K. Rankin, R. Batchelor) and a lightly swinging "Manhattan" (R. Rodgers, L. Hart). Bookending the vocals, Martin Pizzarelli offered a short set of instrumentals in the company of the extraordinarily talented pianist Hyuna Park and versatile reed man Linus Wyrsh. Duke Ellington's "Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me" featured bass in the spotlight long enough to reveal that in a family of guitarists, Martin had absorbed the guitar ethos into his own bass technique. During "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" (J. McHugh, D. Fields), a reed feature saw Wyrsh "do a Carling" by alternating quickly and seamlessly between tenor and clarinet. A rousing play-out reprise of "Stompin' at the Savoy" (E. Sampson) had the audience spontaneously clapping along.

— Marilyn Lester



Martin Pizzarelli, Linus Wyrsh @54 Below

The performance by the **Tyshawn Sorey Trio** at the Village Vanguard (Nov. 1), on the second night of their week-long residency, saw the drummer somewhat take a back seat, offering mostly solid assertive support to Aaron Diehl (piano) and Harish Raghavan (bass). What became immediately clear was the synergy among the players. Cerebral, yet inspired, each was confident in his own ability to flow in and out of dynamic personal improvisations while maintaining a pleasing unity of sound. "Autumn Leaves" (Joseph Kosma) began the set with Diehl playing a slow piano meditation before opening up with multiple glissandi and an outpouring of creative ideas, such as riffs suggesting leaves falling from tree to earth. Raghavan's inspired time-keeping shifted forward and back, creating dynamic changes in mood with harmonic articulation. The tune's well-known melody line was largely obscured throughout, with hints briefly emerging—but amazingly, there was no doubt about the song's identity. On Wayne Shorter's "Remote Control" (originally from *Phantom Navigator*, 1987), Sorey started with a soundscape of slaps, thuds, sticks, rolls and other aural devices, as Diehl and Raghavan added depth from their respective toolkits, building to a unified conclusion as the piece reached its final note. The set closed with Ahmad Jamal's "Seleritus", where repetitive phrasing and tempo changes built up to a climax of wailing cymbals before reaching a satisfyingly mellow conclusion, capping a set of outstanding improvisational artistry.

(ML)

Arts for Art kicked off its annual three-day interdisciplinary “Piano and Poets” series at Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural Center (Nov. 9) with pianists **Angelica Sanchez** and **Cooper-Moore**, and the dance-violin-poetry trio of **Miriam Parker**, **Joanna Mattrey** and **NoLand**. In line with its identity as an organization for free jazz, the pianists came in with no sheet music or set lists. Sanchez played solo for nearly an hour, sometimes standing up to tap the piano strings with various mallets. Her set was replete with movements, like a score, creating a shape and ushering us on a journey. Cooper-Moore displayed his characteristic exuberance, oscillating between moments of blues and piano-pounding rancor. He dedicated his performance to the Mississippi blues guitarist and singer R. L. Boyce, whose death was announced earlier that day. The aforementioned trio dreamed up an intriguing set. Mattrey at various points treated her viola like a cello, held upside down in her lap, then like a drum, slapping the bow across the strings. Parker, a dancer and performance artist, was focused on movement, embracing a large bundle of “something” as she moved across the floor, but also on sound: the object was mic’d, picking up every breath and brush of her hands against it. At one point, she poured a bag of small, powdery beads onto the floor, adding another sonic texture. Each artist across the evening seemed at home in experimentation, in a space of genuine creation. It was a welcoming environment for an audience, no matter their place on the avant garde spectrum. — *Kyla Marshall*

PHOTO BY MAX BLEASE



Angelica Sanchez @Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural Center

He may be better known as the son to Nat and nephew to Cannonball – in fact, that’s how he was introduced – but pianist and arranger **Nat Adderley, Jr.** is an impressive musician in his own right. His quartet set at Sistas’ Place (Nov. 4) was a real demonstration of his range and legacy, not just in terms of his family, but as the composer and arranger of some of soul and R&B singer Luther Vandross’ best and most affecting work. He showed us this range by opening with Wayne Shorter’s “Yes or No”, then segueing into his take on the title track from Cannonball’s *Fiddler on the Roof*. Another standout: his arrangement of “People Make the World Go Round” (Thom Bell, Linda Creed), which alternated between swing and a kind of hip-hop vamp, with extended flute breaks by Mike Lee (who also played tenor). Knowing the audience would be expecting it, Adderley promised he would, “Play some Luther,” and that he did, with “Superstar” (Bonnie Bramlett and Leon Russell), which he called his “first big arrangement” for Vandross. But instead of trying to “do Luther,” Adderley had a whole new angle on the tune: a lyrical piano intro, followed by an up-tempo bossa nova, a reversal of his original move, when he turned The Carpenters’ famous version into a ballad. It was familiar yet inventive: great traits to employ as an arranger. Nat Adderley, Jr. is the producer and product of a multitude of legendary music-makers, and he wore that badge, earned over five decades of musicianship, with pride. (KM)

Family, friends, fellow musicians and music industry associates filled Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Appel Room to honor the life and legacy of **Ahmad Jamal**, the iconic National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master pianist-composer who passed away on Apr. 16 of this year. The Saturday afternoon (Nov. 4) event, which stretched over four hours, featured guest speakers who traced in detail Jamal’s storied life, from his upbringing as a child prodigy growing up in Pittsburgh, to his move to Chicago. It was there he recorded *Live at the Pershing* featuring the classic rendition of “Poinciana” that launched him into international stardom. All while photographs and videos of Jamal were projected on a big screen above the stage overlooking Central Park South, the imam of the mosque Jamal attended spoke of his devotion to the Islamic faith, and impresario Todd Barkan, record producer Zev Feldman and agent Maurice Montoya each told of their fruitful business and personal relationships with the pianist. The musical portion of the program began with Yoko Miwa (piano), Calvin Keys (guitar) and Peter Washington (bass) playing Jamal’s Three Strings group arrangement of “Love for Sale”. The two-tenor quintet of George Coleman and Ned Otter with Michael Weiss (piano), James Cammack (bass) and Aaron Seeber (drums) played a stirring “My Foolish Heart” and swung on “But Not for Me”. Pianist Monty Alexander, with Cammack and Herlin Riley (drums), closed the event with his original “You Can See” (recorded by Jamal on *In Search of Momentum* two decades ago). — *Russ Musto*

PHOTO BY CAROLINE CONFJEIRO



Calvin Keys, Peter Washington, Yoko Miwa @Appel Room

Fêting Tito Puente in this year of his centennial, the **Mambo Legends Orchestra** brought a host of guests into Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture (Nov. 11) to play music by the legendary timbalero-vibraphonist. The concert got started when the orchestra, led by Puente band alumni José Madera (timbales), Johnny “Dandy” Rodriguez (bongo) and Mitch Frohman (saxophone and flute), was joined by vibraphonist Ronnie Puente to play “Mambo Diablo”; baritone saxophonist Pete Miranda blew a roaring solo. Next, guest sonero Jeremy Bosch came out to sing the beautiful bolero “La Gloria Eres Tú”. Guest Louis Bauzo played conga with George Delgado on the percussion-fueled tour de force “Elegua Chango”. Bosch returned on flute to trade choruses with Frohman on the easy grooving cha-cha “Que Será Mi China”, then sang lead out front of the orchestra on a fiery “New Guaguanco” and spry “Caimitillo y Marañón”. Singer Yolanda Duke closed out the show’s first half, recalling the exciting sound of La Lupe with a fervent “Que Te Pedí” and a wildly swinging “Oriente”. Second half highlights included Bosch on “Rumba En El Patio”, Carlos Henriquez’ solo on “More Bass” and guest vocalist Lucretia’s medley of songs originally sung by Celia Cruz with Puente. The obligatory rendering of “Oye Como Va” got the crowd fired up, dancing and singing; they were further energized by Tito Puente Jr.’s exciting timbale exchanges with guest Jimmy Delgado on “Ran Kan Kan”. All participants returned for the encore, “Abaniquito”. (RM)

## WHAT’S NEWS

The **GRAMMY** nominations were recently announced for the awards ceremony taking place next year (Feb. 4). One of three new music categories debuting for the upcoming GRAMMYs includes “Best Alternative Jazz Album”, for which the nominees are: Love in Exile (Arooj Aftab/Vijay Iyer/Shahzad Ismaily), Louis Cole, Kurt Elling/Charlie Hunter SuperBlue, Cory Henry, Meshell Ndegeocello. Jon Batiste appears in five categories: “Record Of The Year”, “Album of The Year”, “Song Of The Year”, “Best American Roots Performance” and “Best Jazz Performance”. Others for “Best Jazz Performance”: Lakecia Benjamin, Adam Blackstone featuring The Baylor Project and Russell Feranté, Fred Hersch & Esperanza Spalding, Samara Joy. For “Best Jazz Vocal Album”: Patti Austin featuring Gordon Goodwin’s Big Phat Band, Fred Hersch & Esperanza Spalding, Gretchen Parlato & Lionel Loueke, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Nicole Zuraitis. “Best Jazz Instrumental Album”: Kenny Barron, Lakecia Benjamin, Adam Blackstone, Billy Childs, Pat Metheny. “Best Large Ensemble Record”: ADDA Simfônica/José Vicent/Emilio Solla, Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society, Count Basie Orchestra, Vince Mendoza & Metropole Orkest, Mingus Big Band. “Best Latin Jazz Album”: Eliane Elias, Ivan Lins with the Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, Bobby Sanabria Multiverse Big Band, Luciana Souza & Trio Corrente, Miguel Zenón & Luis Perdomo. “Best Contemporary Instrumental Album”: Béla Fleck/Zakir Hussain/Edgar Meyer, Bob James, Julian Lage, Ben Wendel. “Best R&B Performance”: Robert Glasper. “Best Global Music Performance”: Love in Exile (Arooj Aftab/Vijay Iyer/Shahzad Ismaily), Béla Fleck/Edgar Meyer/Zakir Hussain, Ibrahim Maalouf featuring Cimafunk & Tank and The Bangas. “Best Global Music Album”: Shakti. “Best Album Notes”: Ashley Kahn (for *Evenings at the Village Gate* by John Coltrane with Eric Dolphy). “Best Historical Album”: *The Moaninest Moan of Them All—The Jazz Saxophone of Loren McMurray, 1920-1922*. “Best Instrumental Composition”: Lakecia Benjamin, Gordon Goodwin & Raymond Scott, Edgar Meyer. “Best Arrangement”: Hilario Duran. “Best Arrangement, Instrument and Vocals”: Gordon Goodwin with Patti Austin, John Beasley with Maria Mendes, Godwin Louis with Cécile McLorin Salvant, sàje featuring Jacob Collier, Kendrick McCallister with Samara Joy. “Best Classical Compendium”: Aaron Diehl Trio & The Knights. For more info visit [grammy.com](http://grammy.com).

**Jazz Congress 2024** registration is open. Hosted by Jazz at Lincoln Center (Jan. 11), the annual Jazz Congress conference (which took a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic) will bring together the jazz community of media professionals, industry leaders, musicians and others. On the schedule: panels on jazz, gender and justice and AI. A Celebration of Wayne Shorter keynote address hosted by Shorter biographer Michelle Mercer also includes many Shorter collaborators and colleagues. Vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater will receive the Bruce Lundvall Visionary Award. For more info visit [jazzcongress.org](http://jazzcongress.org).

The **APAP|NYC** Global Performing Arts Conference (Jan. 12-16) registration deadline is Jan. 5. APAP (Association of Performing Arts Professionals) is the world’s premier gathering of the performing arts presenting, booking and touring industry and will take place at the New York Hilton Midtown, and will also feature concerts and presentations throughout the city. Take advantage of professional development, networking opportunities, artist discovery sessions and live showcases, etc. For more info visit [apap365.org/conference](http://apap365.org/conference).

Well-known Canadian rapper Drake sampled U.K. jazz vocalist **Norma Winstone** for his “IDGAF”, which has reportedly already accrued 120 million+ Spotify streams. Winstone’s “The Tunnel”, which opens the Drake track, originally appeared on the eponymously-titled album by the trio Azimuth (ECM, 1977), with Kenny Wheeler (trumpet), Winstone’s then-husband John Taylor (piano) and the now-octogenarian singer herself. For more info visit [normawinstone.com](http://normawinstone.com).

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTIST



# GREGORY HUTCHINSON

## KNOW YOUR WORTH

BY RUSS MUSTO

*In a career spanning five decades, versatile NYC native, drummer Gregory Hutchinson, has made an impressive name for himself touring the world with many of the music's greatest artists, including Betty Carter, Joe Henderson, Ray Brown and Roy Hargrove. Possessing a distinctive sense of swing that sets him apart from many other players of his generation, he can hit as hard as anyone on the scene yesterday or today, but it is the tastefulness of his rhythms and sophisticated sense of space that has garnered him a reputation as the quintessential sideman. Speaking from his current home in Italy, he shared some of the lessons culled from his wealth of experience.*

**The New York City Jazz Record:** You are Brooklyn-born.

**Gregory Hutchinson:** Yes. Born in Brooklyn, New York, June 16, 1970. My mom and dad are from Trinidad. I went to high school at Erasmus Hall High in Brooklyn and started playing drums really at the age of three. But professionally, I'd say probably 16 or 17.

**TNYCJR:** What were some of your early gigs? The first time I saw you, you were playing a Jazzmobile concert with saxophonist Bill Saxton. I remember before the music started, Bill told me, "You gotta hear this young drummer I got with me!"

**Hutchinson:** Yeah. That was one of the first ones, with Bill, Enos Payne and Paul West. I came up playing jam sessions with the great (alto saxophonist) Clarence "C" Sharpe at University of the Streets.

**TNYCJR:** Are you self-taught? Or who were your teachers?

**Hutchinson:** My first teacher at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music was Wade Barnes, rest in peace. And then my next teacher was next-door neighbor Marvin "Smitty" Smith. And then Kenny Washington. But then also, you know, just being in New York, hanging out at Bradley's.

**TNYCJR:** That was when you were young, when you were a teenager, or after you were playing professionally?

**Hutchinson:** When I was young, a teenager. Kenny and "Smitty" were my teachers right through high school, as well as Justin DiCioccio, who was really influential in my career and helped me out with many things. Louis Hayes, "Tain" Watts, all the guys in New York: Blakey, A.T. [Art Taylor], Al Harewood, Vernel Fournier... you know, everybody that was there, Elvin [Jones], Tony [Williams] when they came through. I hope I'm not leaving anyone out. That was "camp". Whenever people came to town, I'd be sitting right there in the Village Vanguard,

right in the drummers' row, what we call right by the drums!

**TNYCJR:** Was your first internationally-renowned gig with Betty Carter?

**Hutchinson:** No. Before that I was with [trumpeter] Red Rodney.

**TNYCJR:** Oh, right. Who was in the band when you were with Red?

**Hutchinson:** It was pianist Gary Dial, bassist Jay Anderson, saxophonist Dick Oatts and Red, of course.

**TNYCJR:** And that was deeply in the bebop tradition.

**Hutchinson:** Oh yeah. Though sometimes we would play some snake-charming music, as Red would call it. I did that for about a year and a half, almost two years... I got that gig through going to the Manhattan School of Music. I was in a big band with Dial and Oatts. The cats knew me from playing sessions in New York and Gary recommended me, and that's all it took.

**TNYCJR:** And then along came Betty (Carter)... Talk about what you learned playing with her. She was quite the taskmaster.

**Hutchinson:** Yes, after that I went with Betty. Betty was exactly that, some taskmaster but also a perfectionist. She taught me how to be consistent on the road. Nothing matters, [whatever] happens the whole day, the only thing that matters is when you get to the stage and how you perform. Because people pay to see and hear you; they don't care about any of your problems... She was about consistency, about being new. She didn't want anything old. She told me as much on the first day of rehearsals. I was playing my Max [Roach] and my Philly [Joe Jones] stuff and Blakey, and she basically said, I don't want to hear that shit, that's old. "I played with those guys already. I don't want to hear that. Who are you?" And that was the first time I ever I started to just think, like, who am I going to be in this music? So I owe her a lot of credit for that. Thank you, Betty.

**TNYCJR:** You were there for 2-3 years? Who was in the band with you?

**Hutchinson:** In the band when I joined, it was Marc Cary (piano) and Tarus Mateen (bass). Then when Tarus left, Dwayne Burno came in. After Marc left, Peter Martin came in, though Marc came back for a little bit, and then Cyrus Chestnut came, but I was gone by the time Cyrus really came into the band.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 38)

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PHOTO BY ROB LOWELL



# JEFF LEDERER

## A WINDOW INTO IMPROVISATION

BY TRISTAN GEARY

What is it about the wintertime and jazz that pair so effortlessly well? New Yorkers, emerging from various underground establishments, scurry from club to club, coats pulled tightly over, hats drawn down, seeking respite from the biting cold, warmed by the music and spirits.

This quintessential New York scene, deeply felt by all music-hungry nocturnals, is the backdrop for reed player Jeff Lederer's twelve-year-long holiday concert series with Matt Wilson's Christmas Tree-O. Formerly held at The Jazz Standard (which closed in 2020), it now tours across the country each December, making its NYC appearance at Dizzy's Club this month. Far from Christmas commercialism, the Tree-O, rounded out by bassist Paul Sikivie, swings the lexicon of holiday carols and spirituals with Yuletide merriment, without sacrificing the sacred sensation that permeates a song like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel". Even when adorned in Christmas sweaters and reindeer ears, gesticulating on a stage decked out in artificial Christmas trees, they leave the audience feeling positively holy.

This is just one of the many projects and ensembles in which Lederer is involved. He's a musician with an insatiable musical appetite, which allows him to straddle a huge spectrum of jazz. Equally at home in the free tradition of Albert Ayler, or the minimalism of Morton Feldman, or as an adept player of Latin music, Lederer's abilities on reeds and as a composer cannot be neatly categorized.

It's not all sleigh rides and snowmen this time of year for Lederer, who released two mind-bending albums in October. "If I have one redeeming quality," Lederer wrote in a 2020 essay, "it is that I will follow the thread of curiosity doggedly." The proof is in these two albums. The first, *Schoenberg on the Beach*, is a jazz song cycle reimagining works of Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern for an ensemble of cello, vibraphone, bass, reeds, electronics and vocals. Each is set to the anguished writings of Rilke, Goethe and Nietzsche. Vocalist Mary LaRose matches the intensity of the sweeping words above the ensemble's hard-driving, spiraling sound. Haunting soundscapes created by turntablist ArturEyE introduce the pieces with found seaside sounds from Coney Island, a particularly sentimental part of NYC for Lederer. In *Schoenberg on the Beach*, the Viennese art song has moved from the parlors of the storied capital to the fairgrounds of Coney Island.

But if that all sounds too heady, and the thrashing existentialism of tortured poets and philosophers just isn't what you're looking for on a Friday night, Lederer also has an ensemble called *Swing n' Dix* that provides a raucous jamboree of danceable swing tunes. It's another collaboration with drummer Matt Wilson, and the ensemble features Kirk Knuffke (cornet) and veteran Bob Stewart (tuba). Even *Swing n' Dix*, though, is sincere in its silliness. Each of the saxophonist's projects demonstrates a unique part of his voice: intellectual, improvisatory, even comedic. "He is able to insert his very singular personality into any kind of musical setting," noted trombonist Joe Fiedler, a close collaborator. "Even gifted improvisers have their bag that they do, and they either put it in low

gear or high gear, but Jeff is thinking on another plane. He's thinking about the entire shape of a musical piece in real time."

Lederer's own comments confirm this observation. "I'm always looking for a window into improvisation," he said, and his recent appearance on Jeff Cosgrove's *Welcome Home* spotlights his fearless improvising on tenor saxophone. The track "No Booze Blues" sees him confident in spacious simplicity, taking his improvisations into curiouser and curiouser realms, pushing the tenor into ultra altissimo, finally returning faithfully back to the blues.

If *Schoenberg on the Beach* is a maximalist explosion of words and improvisation, Lederer's other recent album, *Balls of Simplicity*, achieves its intensity through restraint—an airiness that conveys a soaring freedom. It's astonishing to think that both albums, one an ode to the "youthful romanticism" of Schoenberg injected with improvisation, the other a breathy, through-composed musing inspired by Shakerism (more on that later), were created by the same artist.

"I was making a point in releasing these both on the same day. The musical language couldn't be more different," noted Lederer. *Balls of Simplicity* is a summation of 35 years of his notated music previously kept behind closed doors, finally realized by the Morningside Tone Collective. "If [people] have any impression of me, it's as a noisy jazz tenor player. But to me, *Balls of Simplicity* sounds as much my voice as when I'm playing more edgy improvised music."

It's clear that Lederer's array of extramusical interests inspire his creations. In *Schoenberg on the Beach*, he is a bedfellow of a range of deep thinkers. In *Balls of Simplicity* his inspiration comes from his fascination with religion, specifically a sect of Christianity called the Shakers. Now all but extinct, the Shakers were lauded for their simple living, egalitarianism and ecstatic worship. "The shiny balls of simplicity will set you free" goes a Shaker saying, and thus the name and ethos of the album were born. The music on it, like the Shaker way of life, is simple but rich, airy yet expansive and, most importantly, endows pure sound with spiritual significance. Lederer's label itself is called Little (i) Music, another point of Shaker inspiration. "It's a phrase of humility that comes from a [Shaker] song lyric," he explained, a statement of the Shaker belief in the abandonment of ego, of surrendering power. In that vein, both album covers feature images with personnel turned away, underscoring their gravitas and yielding to the wisdom of the world.

From Goethe to Shakerism to Winter Wonderland, Lederer's albums and ensembles are propelled into existence based on the pursuit of spiritual depth, ecstatic improvisation and freewheeling raucousness with equal earnestness. If you catch him with the Christmas Tree-O this month at Dizzy's Club, while overlooking that hallowed New York vista, you will hear music that flows effortlessly from foot-stomping to belly laughs to something sanctified and holy. That's the highlight for Lederer, too: "Sacred song[s] come seamlessly out of some

of the more silly things we do, and those are the moments that I really love."

For more info visit [littleimusic.com](http://littleimusic.com). Lederer is at Dizzy's Club with Matt Wilson's Christmas Tree-O Dec. 12. See Calendar.

### Recommended Listening:


- Matt Wilson Quartet – *Humidity* (Palmetto, 2002)
- Matt Wilson's Christmas Tree-O – *s/t* (Palmetto, 2010)
- Jeff Lederer – *Swing n' Dix* (Little (i) Music, 2012)
- Honey Ear Trio – *Swivel* (Little (i) Music, 2014)
- Jeff Cosgrove/John Medeski/Jeff Lederer – *History Gets Ahead of the Story* (Grizzley Music, 2018)
- Jeff Lederer Sun Watcher – *Eightfold Path* (Little (i) Music, 2020)

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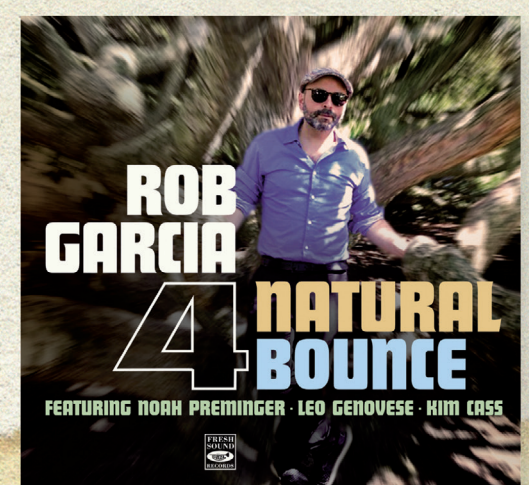
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# The Many Hats of Marty Ehrlich

BY JOHN SHARPE



One of the pivotal events in reedman Marty Ehrlich's life occurred when he was still a teenager. He was already playing clarinet in the St. Louis Youth Orchestra when a weekend arts program turned his head completely. Though he was there for the poetry, the poets discovered that he also played saxophone and flute, and encouraged him to improvise accompaniments to their readings. This chance encounter led to meeting Jim Marshall, founding member of the Human Arts Ensemble, and through him members of the seminal Black Artists Group, including drummer Charles Bobo Shaw and theater director Malinké Elliott. Ehrlich recalls: "When I make the jump, I jump all the way. Not to jazz in general. It was the new jazz that grabbed me, hearing Coltrane, hearing Dolphy on bass clarinet, hearing Ornette, hearing the Art Ensemble [of Chicago], hearing Anthony Braxton's solo alto record, hearing *Dogon A.D.* on the radio. And I jump[ed] a hundred percent into playing with Jim Marshall." At age 17, that led to an appearance and co-arranger credits on the HAE's *Under the Sun* album, alongside Oliver Lake, Lester Bowie, J.D. Parran (a lifelong friend and collaborator since) and others.

Having made the transition to jazz, Ehrlich enrolled at the New England Conservatory, where his teachers included George Russell, Jaki Byard and Ran Blake. Although he was familiar with the wider tradition of jazz and African American music, it was not what drove him. "Without question, the innovations of the AACM and Black Artists Group [BAG] shaped my creative focus and my artistic goals. It was people like Malinké and Julius [Hemphill] who said to me, listen, you've got a good feel for this, but to play this music, you have to know the history. Then Malinké would say, don't throw classical music out the window. You've played classical music, and you're Jewish. What is your Jewish musical background? They were inclusive." Ehrlich took those words to heart, and his music has subsequently privileged the lyrical as much as the experimental.

Moving to New York City after graduation, he joined Russell's Living Time Orchestra, appearing at the Village Vanguard, and then reconnected with Shaw and trombonist Joe Bowie from BAG, who were living in LaMama Studio on the Lower East Side at the time. It was there that he got another big break, being invited to join Anthony Braxton's Creative Music Orchestra for a European tour. "It's where I begin to meet the AACM people. I meet Wadada [Leo Smith], who recommends me to Leroy Jenkins, who recommends me to Muhal Richard Abrams. After that Braxton tour, I begin to work in New York City with the Chicago musicians, all of whom are doing big bands or octets." Ehrlich also worked in small groups with Jenkins, Hemphill, Jack DeJohnette and others, while taking his own first steps as a leader.

One of his earliest groups was what became his Traveler's Tales quartet. College buddy Stan Strickland (and later Tony Malaby) shared the front line, and there has been a changing roster of bassists and drummers. It was here that Ehrlich began to develop his compositional voice. "I'm beginning to do my sort of pan-stylistic looking, using traditional forms, using open forms, in a sense following the Jaki Byard/George Russell/Julius

Hemphill playbook. Find what you need to express, use the materials, don't censor them as, 'oh, that's too traditional, that's too avant garde, that doesn't have enough improv,' whatever. And I'm getting an audience for it." Having largely put his clarinet to one side after his teen years, he began to incorporate it back into his music again, with a clarinet/cello/bass trio he named the Dark Woods Ensemble. Ehrlich explains: "The title's taken from [Spanish poet Federico García] Lorca, where he says that everything that has *duende* (elfin or goblin-like) dark sounds. So it is an ensemble that I begin to write for to really get into this sound. You could call it the wood sound."

While these two units provided the main outlets for his writing for many years, the reedman also explored other avenues, including duets with pianists Myra Melford, Mike Nock and Muhal. At the other extreme, he became involved with Wayne Horvitz, Robin Holcomb and Bobby Previte in the New York Composers Orchestra, and recorded two large ensemble albums, *The Long View* and *A Trumpet in the Morning*. But whatever the scale, improvisation has always loomed large for Ehrlich. "The overwhelming majority of my composing is creating compositional contexts that always involve some amount of improvisation in their realization, using any number of strategies, even just small amounts. My passion is to write for this wonderful community of improvisers." Trombonist Ray Anderson, a colleague since the Braxton Orchestra days, offers his own appreciation: "Marty Ehrlich is the whole package—encyclopedic knowledge of the African-American musical culture that jazz is based on, as well as the European music that is interwoven with it. He has his own creative voice, can play all the saxophones, clarinets and flutes superbly and is a powerful composer of works for large and small ensembles."

Ehrlich also took on a production role for New World Records, appearing on, leading or producing some 15 albums in the CounterCurrents series in the early '90s. New connections ensued and he became part of the John Carter Octet and Andrew Hill Sextet. Indeed, Ehrlich was the first person Hemphill rang when he formed his all-reed Julius Hemphill Sextet after he left the World Saxophone Quartet. One of the most significant figures in Ehrlich's career, Hemphill became a close friend as well as an employer. Later, Ehrlich stepped in at various points when illness meant Hemphill was unable to perform, and he led the Sextet after the reedman's death in 1995.

That history made him the ideal person to establish the Hemphill Archive at NYU, a role he took on in 2018 in conjunction with Hemphill's Artistic Executor, pianist Ursula Oppens. Over three years he catalogued 250 compositions and 180 archival documents and recordings, as well as personal papers, all of which are available online in an archive which is now seen as the gold standard. Ehrlich found the experience tremendously rewarding: "It's a love thing and it's also because I happen to think this music is really worth it. There's amazing discoveries. And I start talking. And I'm just met by such warmth. His community was my community." Just after he had finished his 280-page book documenting the archive, New World Records

got in touch saying they had a grant for a project which had fallen through and were looking for a proposal. The upshot was that Ehrlich spent the next year curating *The Boyé Multi-National Crusade for Harmony*, a stupendous seven-CD boxed set of unissued material that revealed the enormous breadth of Hemphill's work.

Since completing the Archive and since COVID-19, he has turned his attention back to his own work. A new six-piece group will debut at Roulette this month. Ehrlich explains, "I've called the concert Dark Woods/Bright Sparks. Both titles and words I've used in the past, but this is not a retrospective concert. I've put together an ensemble that affords me a really large range of directions. I'm looking to make a soundscape that incorporates all these players, [bassoonist] Sara Schoenbeck, [trumpeter] Ron Horton, [bassist] Matt Pavolka, [cellist] Erik Friedlander, [percussionist] Satoshi Takeishi, and poet Erica Hunt. All will have an improvisational role—solo, duo, collective. I've always heard this moving through time, with a slow beat underneath whatever happens on top. What's on top might be extremely vigorous and extroverted, but there's still this sort of heartbeat underneath it. And I invite people in. To me the excitement of collective improvised music is the dialectic with the audience. You don't go to it to hear the finished, perfect piece. You are there to be part [of it]. You play a role in listening, in the realization on this evening of the complete expression."

It's been a busy and rewarding Fall for Ehrlich. He is resuming his role in pianist Anthony Davis' Episteme group, which will be playing in the Metropolitan Opera's remounting of *X*, Davis' opera based on the life of Malcolm X. "I play a certain amount of composed parts, some lead melodies, some within sections. I have maybe seven short improvisational moments that often serve the action on stage in different ways." He is also taking on the role of Interim Director of Jazz Studies at Stony Brook University following Anderson's retirement. And then there are more plans as yet unfinalized for other groups. But it is all part of a continuum for Ehrlich: "My roots and my passions are in this place where improvisation and notation combust, and in the powers of collective improvisation. It's what I started doing with the Human Arts Ensemble when I was 16, and I'm still doing it. To me, it is the revolutionary force."

For more info visit [martyehlich.com](http://martyehlich.com). Ehrlich's *Dark Woods/Bright Sparks* is at Roulette Dec. 10. Ehrlich also plays at *The Stone* with Wayne Horvitz' *New Music for Electronics and Mixed Ensemble* Dec. 1 and with Michael Bates' *Acrobat* at *Owl Music Parlor* Dec. 22. See Calendar.

#### Recommended Listening:

- Marty Ehrlich—*The Welcome* (Sound Aspects, 1984)
- Julius Hemphill Sextet—*Fat Man and The Hard Blues* (Black Saint, 1991)
- Marty Ehrlich's Dark Woods Ensemble—*Just Before The Dawn* (New World, 1995)
- Andrew Hill—*Dusk* (Palmetto, 1999)
- Marty Ehrlich—*Fables* (Tzadik, 2010)
- Marty Ehrlich—*Trio Exaltation* (Clean Feed, 2017)





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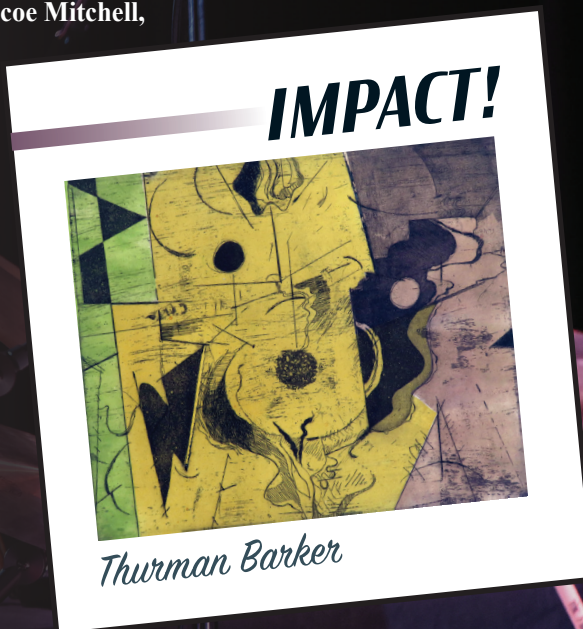
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— *Thurman Barker*



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## ENCORE

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# STEPHANIE NAKASIAN

FROM WALL STREET TO SWING STREET

BY KEN DRYDEN

Stephanie Nakasian has been singing jazz for decades, but she didn't plan it as a career despite showing an early interest in music. The vocalist's mother sang in a Washington night club in the '40s and in the USO during the war. "I started tinkling at the piano at four years old and my parents thought they should give me lessons," Nakasian says. Her parents sent her to Juilliard to study with a professor at eight and, by age fourteen, the professor invited her to tour with him. Her father was a businessman, and she worked at banks starting in high school. She went to Northwestern to study economics and business and earned her BA and MBA in a combined five-year program. Though Nakasian admits to loving economics, working as an investment banker on Wall Street just wasn't fulfilling.

It was an introduction to her future husband's family that ultimately changed her focus. "Hod O'Brien's sister and family lived in Charlottesville, VA, where my parents retired to from Westchester. His sister's children knew my youngest sister. I met them and one said, 'My uncle's a jazz piano player,' which I thought was cool." O'Brien (whose early records were with trumpeters Art Farmer and Donald Byrd in the late '50s) was playing at Gregory's (in New York's Upper East Side) five nights a week for five years with guitarist Joe Puma and various bassists. As Nakasian lived nearby, she went to see him with frequency and, as she says, "hit it off!" The pianist heard her sing and was very impressed with her voice. She then decided to take five years off to try being a jazz singer and she hasn't looked back since.

Her knowledge of jazz prior to meeting O'Brien (who died in 2016) was admittedly minimal. "I had sung in choirs, but had no formal voice training. I started singing and knew a lot of songs and had a certain sound that Hod liked and a natural sense of rhythm." The pianist thought she sounded like Ella Fitzgerald, as she especially enjoyed swinging and improvising. Says Nakasian, "Being with Hod was the education: Hod was really laid back, he got me to

where I wasn't pushing it, that I wasn't too rock 'n roll or too Streisand. It was pretty easy to just sing."

The vocalist admits to not being very academic about choosing songs to perform or record. She and the pianist were at the Deer Head Inn in the Delaware Water Gap when drummer Bill Goodwin suggested she record. She recalls him insisting, "You should record now [and] Phil Woods would like to be on your recording." The result was her auspicious debut recording (*Comin' Alive*, 1988). Two years later, when she was singing frequently in the Poconos with French horn player Bobby Rutch, she would then record her follow-up *French Cookin'* with Rutch, Nakasian emulating the sound of a French horn. Later when she was doing courses on the Great American Songbook and shows about great ladies of jazz, Nakasian put together her album *Thrush Hour*, on which she goes from Bessie Smith to Blossom Dearie, revealing how she approaches the music differently. But Nakasian's repertoire has changed over the years. She says, "I try to do bebop, but it's not in America's conscious. I've been singing '60s and '70s pop music with a swinging, improvised feeling to it... making it fresh. That's my childhood music."

Vocalist Veronica Swift, who has successfully made quite the name for herself in recent years, is Nakasian and O'Brien's daughter. It may seem destiny, but Nakasian admits, "The last thing any musician would want is for their child to live the life of a musician." Swift originally liked architecture and was good in school, but she had a wild drive and was, as Swift once said in an interview, hooked on music before she was born. She would write a song at three (which Nakasian and O'Brien recorded), and when she was nine, she was already included in several of the couple's recordings. Swift's debut recording under her own name was at 10, with accompaniment by her parents (and alto saxophonist Richie Cole). Says mom, "It's been constantly surprising and delightful to watch her creative process. It's a lot more uninhibited than mine, because I had blinders on to be a successful businesswoman and didn't understand my artistic side at all. She got it from the beginning. To this day, she does the music she wants to do. She's made a lot of turns that have shocked people, but when you watch her, she's totally self-expressed. I learn from her in that way."

Musicians who have worked with Nakasian have only strong praise for her. Trumpeter Randy Sandke is all compliments: "Stephanie is a total professional and

a joy to work with. She also has one of the broadest repertoires of any singer I can think of. Whatever genre she is doing, it always sounds great." And drummer Joe LaBarbera: "Stephanie is an outstanding singer who knows her craft well. I recall the first time I played with her and Hod and how impressed I was by her singing. It's clear where her daughter gets her talent, with two incredible artists as parents." Nakasian occasionally special guests at her daughter's concerts and vice versa, so who knows what will happen on her Holiday Tour this month, including a stop in NYC.

For more info visit [stephanienakasian.com](http://stephanienakasian.com). Nakasian is at Chelsea Table + Stage Dec. 20. See Calendar.

### Recommended Listening:

- Stephanie Nakasian—*Comin' Alive* (with Phil Woods) (V.S.O.P., 1988)
- Stephanie Nakasian—*French Cookin'* (V.S.O.P., 1990)
- Stephanie Nakasian—*Invitation To An Escapade* (Chase Music Group, 1998)
- Stephanie Nakasian—*Lullabye in Rhythm* (A Tribute To June Christy) (V.S.O.P., 2001)
- Stephanie Nakasian—*If I Ruled The World* (Inner City, 2010)
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## LEST WE FORGET

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# EARTHA KITT

THAT BAD EARTHA

BY MONIQUE NGOZI NRI

It has been almost 15 years since Eartha Kitt's passing on Christmas Day 2008, just short of 82. A star of stage, screen and song, she embodied the sultry sex kitten persona; yet offstage, she grappled with the scars of her upbringing, as an abused and rejected sharecropper's daughter. These two personas, Eartha Kitt and Eartha Mae, coexisted within her, shaping a narrative of complexity and resilience.

Eartha Kitt was born Jan. 17, 1927, in the town of North, in South Carolina. Her mother abandoned her at the age of eight, and later died under suspicious circumstances; her father's identity remained obscured on her birth certificate. Kitt was subsequently raised

by abusive relatives and finally by an aunt in Harlem. There, she attended the High School for Performing Arts and earned a scholarship with the Katherine Dunham Dance Company during her teenage years. Touring with the company ignited a passion for travel and languages, which would later become major features of her cabaret act, first showcased in Paris. Cast by Orson Welles in *Dr. Faustus*, she garnered his praise as the "most exciting woman in the world," a moniker she embraced fully. Settling in New York, she graced the stages of iconic Greenwich Village clubs such as the Village Vanguard and the Bon Soir, becoming part of the vibrant community of nightclub misfits that included Phyllis Diller, Woody Allen and Barbra Streisand.

In 1952, Kitt's allure reached a new height with her role in the Broadway musical revue *New Faces of 1952*. The persona presented with the song "Monotonous" was that of a temptress yearning for luxury, accompanied by numerous suitors capable of providing champagne, caviar and a life of opulence. Her recordings from the Broadway show, including "C'est Si Bon", the perennial favorite "Santa Baby" and "I Want to Be Evil" catapulted her to stardom. Notable

among her early albums is "*That Bad Eartha*" (1956), wherein she showcased her multilingual prowess by singing in Turkish, French, Spanish and more. By the end of her career, she spoke four languages and sang in eleven.

Eartha Kitt achieved rapid stardom, earning a Hollywood star in 1960 while still in her thirties. Recognized for her multifaceted talents as a singer, actress and dancer, she also left an indelible mark as Catwoman in the *Batman* television series (despite appearing in only three episodes). Her unique ability to mock herself and have fun, evidenced in an interview where she playfully climbed into the interviewer's lap, set her apart. Yet, few can claim to have irked a president, as Kitt did with Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968, allegedly making comments to Lady Bird about the Vietnam War that led to FBI surveillance and blacklisting in the U.S. After semi-exile, residing in Europe, she returned to the U.S., being celebrated at the White House under President Jimmy Carter and performing at Ronald Reagan's inaugural ball. She went on to star in the Broadway musical *The Wild*

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 38)

# GOTTA LET IT OUT

ENTER THE WORLD OF WEIRD  
BY FRANZ MATZNER

Founded in 2016 by Tomo Jacobson, Gotta Let It Out (GLIO) is hard to pin down with its genre-free catalogue—unless there is a genre of *weird*. Not in the common usage of strange, odd or off-kilter but, rather, we’re talking about disconcerting, preternatural, uncanny. Rooted in Copenhagen’s thriving international music scene, the label features a wide range of experimentation and musical improvisation that falls somewhere between jazz, electronica and the untamed.

Asked about his central motivation for establishing the label, Jacobson explained that it reflects his love of discovering “something that I never even imagined.” He emphasized that this “doesn’t mean it’s something I’d want to listen to all the time,” but ultimately its purpose is to be “an expander of human perception.” From this perspective, GLIO hits the mark. *What Is Jazz* sounds like Einstürzende Neubauten colliding with a cement truck. Tisziji Muñoz’ sizzling guitar on *Spiritual Drum Kingship* explodes into freneticism akin to Jerry Garcia playing backwards. And the unnerving noisescapes produced by trumpet innovator Timothée Quost on *Before Zero Crossing* unfold as if he has tapped into sound’s primordia.

The label originated with Jacobson’s desire to “strip the music-making process of everything that gets in the way of doing it. So, we’d do everything ourselves... just make music and cast it into an object.”

Speaking to label artists, there is a clear consensus that GLIO is a rare forum for unrestricted creativity where ideas and explorations can be pursued both individually and via exchange within a circle of collaboration and community. In the words of drummer Szymon Gąsiorek, “what makes it a special label is acknowledging and supporting the spontaneous creative gesture of artists—a necessity to share with the world.” Violist Mat Maneri, who features on two particularly inventive releases, concurs: “I yearned to be in different areas of the structure... I found [that] the viola could navigate the rhythms and harmonies of the music I was playing... [GLIO opened the door to] unfettered ideas, [which] is so needed in today’s world.”

Another hallmark of the label is the array of unusual techniques utilized on its albums. A prime example is *Lake of Light: Compositions for AquaSonics* featuring veteran New York bassist William Parker and his quartet. The AquaSonic is a more portable version of the waterphone invented in the ‘60s and is renowned for its ability to create and manipulate a wide range of sound. On *Lake of Light*, all four quartet members play the instrument. The result is an unending stream of sonic variations, from wails to gongs to droplets of water falling on a taut drum, to whale song, deep rumbles and dissonant screams. Parker explained that the draw of working with GLIO is “they are homegrown with the musician’s interest at heart... there is no contract: the music is the contract. The vibe is beautiful... a beacon that attracts light.”

Another example of the label’s adventurousness is *Underwater Disco* by Lo Arsare and Albert Karch, the duo behind NENNE. Solely comprising Ersare’s vocals

and Karch’s music production, the album manipulates the human voice’s range, shaping it into a variety of layers, floating and swerving with ethereal lightness. *Oneness and the Transcendent Truth*, a solo album by the Latvian saxophonist Kārlis Auziņš, plumbs the many techniques applied to the saxophone, including an array of novel methods that produce everything from bird calls to minimalist, prolonged murmurs to distorted sibilation. Striking a common theme, Auziņš again expressed admiration and gratitude to Jacobson, stating, “I have released two conceptually rather different solo albums on this label... (and) I wouldn’t have done this without Tomo’s encouragement.”

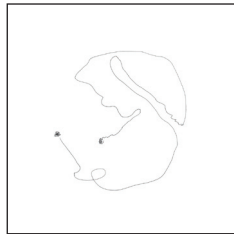
In addition to managing the label, Jacobson also appears on several releases, primarily playing bass, but experimenting with more unusual elements like the midi-ribbon. Most notable is his ability to adapt to the significantly divergent musical structures from one album to the next. For example, the (mostly) minimalist, spectral *Egin* is an entirely different beast from *Warmbladder*, which dives into layered percussive dissonance created by Jonathan Leland (electric drums, percussion), Ignacio Nacho Cordoba (electronics) and Jacobson (midi-ribbon). The music throbs with energy and erratic effects.

GLIO’s album sounds are also consistently matched with gorgeous and unique album art, including paintings, photographs and drawings. Select releases are additionally put out on lovely, well-produced vinyl. In short, not only has the label facilitated a space for free expression, it also has established a close community of support and mutual respect. It is evident

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 39)



*Spiritual Drum Kingship*  
Bob Moses/Tisziji Muñoz/Kresten Osgood



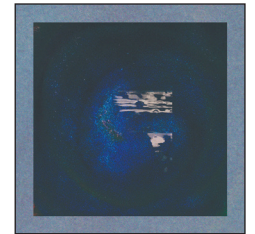
*SPIRIT SPIRIT*  
Torben Snekkestad/Søren Kjærgaard/Tomo Jacobson



*nullbuss*  
Kristian Tangvik



*Farm Fresh*  
Maria Faust/Tim Dahl/Weasel Walter



*Lake of Light: Compositions for AquaSonics*  
William Parker

## VOXNEWS

# RICHES

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Pent-up demand? Rampant escapism? A sudden groundswell of goodwill? For some reason, an unprecedented number of thematic vocal jazz performances and releases come to New York this holiday season. Given the geo-cultural-political-climactic-financial upheavals that attended 2023, perhaps we might just accept this downpour as a gift—whatever its provenance.

Most of the songs on **Gregory Porter’s** first-ever holiday album, *Christmas Wish* (Blue Note), speak of peace, hope, love—yardsticks by which we measure the year at its closing. The record covers many winter classics but the crossover composer has his own songs—and point of view—to add to the holiday lexicon; his three originals (“Christmas Wish”, “Heart for Christmas”, “Everything’s Not Lost”) remind us of our responsibilities toward others in our world, the message wrapped in that generous, comforting baritone.

Porter invited 2023’s breakout jazz star **Samara Joy** to join him on “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve?”, and Joy has her own seasonal debut, *A Joyful Holiday* (Verve). Both Porter and Joy developed their powerhouse voices in the church, and gospel is never a

far remove from their work as jazz singers. Hear Porter’s rousing exultations on the title cut or Joy’s choir-backed praise on “O Holy Night”. The gospel singers on the latter are Joy’s family—she’ll be touring the record with them, with a stop at the Apollo (Dec. 14-15).

*Family Guy* creator **Seth MacFarlane** and singer/actor **Liz Gillies** recall the flirty duets of Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney on *We Wish You the Merriest*. No surprise, perhaps, that several of the album’s tunes are best known from animated Christmas specials (“Frosty the Snowman”, “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”, “Holly Jolly Christmas”) or beloved seasonal movies (“Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas”, “Happy Holiday”, “Here Comes Santa Claus”). Notably, these popular films and TV shows were created in the mid-20th century, when jazz was the lingua franca of orchestrators and soundtracks. Arranger Andrew Cottee artfully captures this retro vibe on each of the 13 songs, framing MacFarlane’s happy crooning and Gillies’ charming delivery with festive orchestrations.

With a categorically different take on holiday classics, pianist/composer George Burton puts forth *The Yule Log* (Porge)—nine stunning modern jazz treatments of both well- and lesser-known melodies. Vocalists **Nancy Harms** and **Aryssa Leigh Burrs** shine all the brighter for the chamber setting, but don’t be misled: the groove and the bite are the main takeaways here. Burton celebrates the album release at Dizzy’s Club (Dec. 5).

Not every event this month relates to sleigh bells and mistletoe. London-based American singer **Stacey Kent** will introduce *Summer Me, Winter Me* (Naïve) at Birdland (Dec. 13-16); this multi-lingual collection highlights tunes from some of our most romantic musical storytellers—Michel Legrand, Jacques Brel and Antonio Carlos Jobim among them. As a follow-on to their 2019 duo debut, *LP1*, this month vocalist **Theo Bleckmann** and electronic musician Joseph Branciforte self-release *LP2*, a marvel of improvisation/composition, live performance/studio recording and human/machine sounds. And **Nicole Zuraitis**, a 2024 Grammy nominee for *How Love Begins* (Outside In Music), releases a bundle of bonus tracks from those sessions with *Caffeine and Affirmations* (La Reserve) at Drom (Dec. 2).

Check this list twice: After **Champion Fulton** plays Django (Dec. 12), she’ll present *Christmas with Champion* at Birdland (Dec. 21-25). **Kat Edmonson**, too, visits Birdland with *Holiday Swingin’!* (Dec. 14). At Blue Note is **Lauren Henderson’s** *Holiday Favorites and More* (Dec. 17). **Stephanie Nakasian’s** holiday tour takes her to Chelsea Table + Stage (Dec. 20). At JALC, **Ashley Pezzotti** fronts Wynton Marsalis’ JLCO in *Big Band Holidays* (Dec. 13-17) and **Tammy McCann** headlines in *Merry Christmas Baby* (Dec. 20). **The Hot Sardines** offer *Holiday Stomp & Midnight in Paris* at Joe’s Pub (Dec. 31). And singer/composer **Anne Phillips’** perennial favorite, *Bending Towards the Light: A Jazz Nativity* is at St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church (Dec. 18).

# JAZZFEST BERLIN

BY JOHN SHARPE



Henry Threadgill, Silke Eberhard @JazzFest Berlin

Now in its 60th edition, JazzFest Berlin (Nov. 2-5) remains one of the premier events in the European calendar. But rather than rest on its laurels, it combines an adventurous outlook with an enviable breadth that encompasses practitioners from across the globe, bringing together up-and-coming talent and venerable performers in varied and stimulating bills. Given that 36 shows were packed into the festival's four days—most in the splendidly appointed Haus der Berlin Festspiele, but some offsite in smaller clubs and other venues—it was impossible to hear everything, necessitating some fiendish choices.

However, one unmissable concert was the keenly anticipated collaboration between **Henry Threadgill's Zooid** and German saxophonist **Silke Eberhard's Potsa Lotsa XL**. The project had its genesis when Threadgill viewed a livestream of Potsa Lotsa performing his compositions in the 2020 lockdown edition of the festival. Five days of rehearsals resulted in the premiere of "Simply Extreme Surfaces", written by Threadgill for the 15 members of the two bands. Like Zooid writ large, the plethora of crisscrossing lines created a web of interaction, full of conflicting impulses, often emotionally ambivalent, but also possessing an inexorable rhythmic pulsation. Much of the hour-long piece showcased subsets of the participants and afforded diverse backdrops for individual statements. Grabbing the ears were a passionate and tender tenor sax excursion by Patrick Braun, a sanctified incantation from Threadgill on alto, and a showstopping clarinet outburst from Jürgen Kupke—just some of the highlights from a richly woven tapestry.

Similarly expansive, French pianist **Eve Risser's** dozen strong Red Desert Orchestra was another standout. Risser conducted her multidimensional band from the piano, often as much with her body as her hands, in a wildly exciting brew that incorporated abrupt gear switches between Arabic-sounding themes, driving rhythms, horn chorales, scratchy improv and more. Two balafons and a djembe drum alongside the regular trapset gave the orchestra a West African feel, while Risser's preparations in her piano accentuated her naturally percussive style. Even among the fine individual moments intricately embedded into the charts, special guest Susana Santos Silva's trumpet solo dazzled until subsumed by the glorious anthemic noise.

**Susana Santos Silva** also featured alongside guitarist **Fred Frith** in the duo project that previously

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 39)

# BRIC JAZZFEST

BY KYLA MARSHALL



Melanie Charles @BRIC JazzFest

Now in its ninth year, Brooklyn's BRIC JazzFest at BRIC House presented a dynamic three-night, two-stage event that also managed to feel like a giant party (Oct. 19-21). In honor of hip-hop's 50th anniversary, this year's festival aimed to highlight artists working across both genres. As with many jazz festivals today, the music encompassed under the term "jazz" was wide-ranging, but, in this case, the term also felt expansive and inclusive, a prism turned to reveal all its many facets and colors.

One thing that makes BRIC JazzFest special is the inclusion of an Artist Curator, this year's being singer and flutist **Melanie Charles**. Her signature was evident on every night of the three-day showcase—her varied tastes and talent for mixing and matching artists, all without being overbearing. In an Artist Feature in the October issue of this publication, she talked about how having artists curate festivals influences a lineup by including performers otherwise not on the radar of traditional presenters. "Sometimes cats that are really doing killing things may not catch the attention of people that are creating certain festivals. I guess sometimes it's hard to be tapped in."

Charles opened the festival in duo with pianist **Orrin Evans**. Instead of simply stripping down the tracks from Charles' last record, *Y'all Don't (Really) Care about Black Women*, or doing vocal versions of his mostly instrumental music, she and Evans met somewhere in the middle. One such highlight was a medley of the standard "There Is No Greater Love" (Isham Jones, Marty Symes) and a mesmerizing version of "Amazing Grace". The room fell completely silent with an energy that felt deeper than politeness and more like a state of transfixion.

**Endea Owens & The Cookout** was another opening night delight. The bassist recently released her debut album *Feel Good Music* and the intention behind the title was evident throughout her set. Backed by power vocalists Shenel Johns and J. Hoard, Owens walked out to Stevie Wonder's "Living for the City", setting the tone for the type of soulful energy she wanted to create. Her own compositions were melodic in a way that suggested lyrics—hummable, danceable and memorable. The band also performed "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing"; Quincy Jones' "Miss Celie's Blues" (from *The Color Purple*) was a duet between Owens and Johns, full of radiant kinship.

Even to the untrained ear, the new, young ensemble **Panikkar Rosner & Leigh** is a clear nod to Lambert,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 39)

# JAREK ŚMIETANA JAZZ GUITAR COMPETITION

BY THOMAS CONRAD



Marek Napiórkowski @Jarek Śmietana Jazz Guitar Competition

The main square of Kraków, Poland, is the largest medieval town square in Europe, and one of the most beautiful. The Fifth International Jarek Śmietana Jazz Guitar Competition (Oct. 19-22) took place just off the square in the Kraków Philharmonic, the city's primary concert hall.

Śmietana is not a household name outside Poland, but he is a revered figure in that country. When he died in 2013, the guitarist left behind a large discography, including over 30 albums as a leader. In 2015, Witold Wnuk, a prominent music impresario in Poland, created a guitar competition in honor of Śmietana. It is held every other year and attracts contestants from Europe, the U.S. and Asia. By the time the four-day competition began in Kraków this year, a committee had narrowed the field to 11 semifinalists who had auditioned for a jury including Wnuk, professor Karol Ferdecki from the Academy of Music in Katowice, your correspondent and three world-class jazz guitarists: Peter Bernstein, Romain Pilon and Marek Napiórkowski. After two days of auditions, the jury narrowed the field to seven finalists. After another day of auditions, the final placement was determined: **Ohad Niceberg** of Israel (1st); **Mateus Saldanha** of Portugal (2nd); **Ben Turner** of the U.S. (3rd). A separate special prize was also presented to Raphael Silverman of the U.S. by Anna and Alicja Śmietana (Jarek's widow and daughter).

If the above summary makes the competition sound staid and business-like, it was not. The spirit of the occasion was more about camaraderie than rivalry. The entire event was a joyful communal electric guitar celebration. There were hours of audition performances each day by the contestants, and the three guitarists on the jury played each night in clubs on the main square. Their sets were followed by jam sessions (in which guitarists predominated). If you were a fan of jazz guitar, for these four days in October, there was no better place to be than Kraków, Poland.

The field was so strong this year that the jury's job was difficult. There was, however, consensus on the overall winner. Niceberg blew everyone away in the auditions. The contestants all played in a trio with the "house" rhythm section of Adam Kowalewski (bass) and Grzegorz Palka (drums). But Niceberg chose to play two of his pieces solo. On "Almost Like Being in Love" and "All or Nothing at All", he was not only astounding in his sheer speed, but exhilarating in his melodicism. Each of his solo performances was a tour de force of theme-and-variation, and each was crafted into a finished

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# CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY'S WITH NICOLE HENRY IN CONCERT

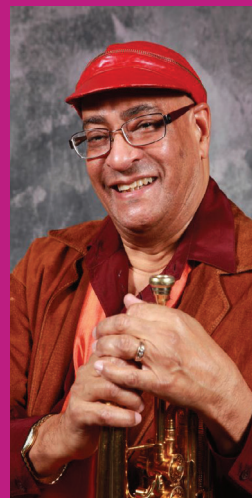
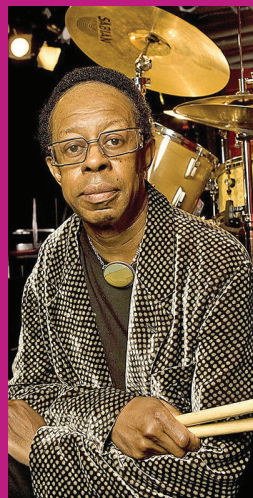
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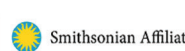
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This engagement of NEA Jazz Masters is made possible in part through the Jazz Touring Network program of Mid Atlantic Arts with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Carla was and still remains one of the most original composers of instantly recognizable and beautiful music, not only in jazz but in the entire music world, as well as an extremely gifted musician with an exceptional and all-encompassing musicality. One can only hope that, despite today's pathetic "music" business, her music lives on and is introduced to new audiences who may not have known her during her lifetime. For me, she was the first influence that led me down a musical path that might otherwise have been completely different. During our shared personal and musical journey of around 25 years (and even afterwards), she was always (although often perhaps only in my thoughts) my musical "third ear", my point of reference for the music I was working on, whereby I often had to ask the question: "What would Carla think of this?"

—MICHAEL MANTLER (trumpet/composer)

This is a huge loss for music, and for me personally. I spent the better part of the early '80s in her band as well as Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra and other related projects, films, recordings, etc. She was a true composer right down to the discipline and drive of getting up every morning, going to the piano with pencil and paper and working on it every day! We traveled all over the world when travel was easier and the world wasn't quite the mess it is now. Orchestration was the key talent I learned from her, which she was a master of, as well as her positive and fun outlook on life and people. I met Ornette Coleman and Gil Evans through her, not to mention playing nightly with her bassist supreme, Steve Swallow. Here's to us all living such long and unique lives... Carla Bley was one of a kind.

—STEVE SLAGLE (alto sax, flute)

I remember recording *Kew. Rhône.* (Virgin, 1977) at Carla's Woodstock in-home studio with John Greaves, the progressive Welsh rock and experimental jazz pianist/bass guitarist/composer (and member of Henry Cow and Soft Heap). And who happens to unexpectedly walk in the door to say hello to Carla—Charles Mingus! That's the way it went when you were with Carla. Always surprises. Among the number of other musical relations I had with Carla, the one I remember the most was the European tour in 1977 with the ensuing recording *European Tour 1977* by The Carla Bley Band: Carla (conductor), Terry Adams (piano), Hugh Hopper (electric bass), Bob Stewart (tuba), Roswell Rudd (trombone), Gary Windo (tenor sax), Elton Dean (alto sax), John Clark (French horn), Michael Mantler (trumpet) and myself. One time, when we were in France, the band played Carla's "Spangle Banner Manner", a song that had excerpts of national anthems from several countries, and some people in the audience started to throw things at the band. As a result, we started throwing their garbage back at them. HA, HA, HA!

—ANDREW CYRILLE (drums)

Touring with Carla in '77 and '78 was unforgettable; her unconventional and powerful music inspired the players, and audiences either loved or hated our work. Gigs in Italy, Norway and France were particularly memorable. Even though Carla's music was not always immediately embraced, she persevered. One time, in Perugia, Italy, we went on after McCoy Tyner, and the audience booed and threw bottles and rocks, causing us to flee the stage and head for the bus. Next, the so-called fans tried to overturn the bus! Carla remained unfazed. Her legendary irreverence was on full display one time in Norway: Carla didn't bat an eye when Gary Windo's tenor solo consisted of him chewing the contents of a bag of potato chips into the mic rather than playing his horn. The audience was confused, but fortunately didn't throw anything. Carla's unique and uncompromising sensibilities attracted singular personalities. She celebrated each player's individuality as she explored her own.

—JOHN CLARK (French horn)

I love Carla Bley! I started working with Carla in 1979 and was with her until 2009. I was with her for basically my whole development as a jazz trombone player. Carla wrote for me. Beautiful melodies and incredible solo space. One thing was for sure, she always let me be me. In 1979, I got a call one night from my friend D. Sharpe, Carla's drummer at the time. He asked if I could make the rehearsal the next day with Carla's band. So I showed up the next day with my trombone and my 3-year-old son Free in tow. We walked into the lobby and I pushed the elevator button. While waiting for the elevator, who walks up behind me? Carla and Mike Mantler! We walk into the elevator, push the floor button and Carla says, "Well, I hope I finally found a trombone player who can play my music!" I said, "You just have!" And I played her music for 30 years. And I am proud, humble and grateful to have done so. One thing I loved about Carla is that she wrote new music for every tour. Incredible! Carla Bley was a GENIUS! I love you, Carla. You make the planet a better place. All love and music.

—GARY VALENTE (trombone)

I first met Carla Bley in 1971 while she was in rehearsal for *Escalator Over the Hill*. After attending two rehearsals, Carla invited me to join the ensemble, although it was not on tuba: given it was an opera, I became part of the chorus (at the time Howard Johnson and Jack Jeffers were in the instrumental ensemble). By the mid-late '70s Carla asked me to join her nine-piece band for multiple tours of Europe. She introduced me to a much more musically integrated approach to writing for the tuba. As in many traditional big bands, the tuba parts were quite often written parallel or in unison with the bass or baritone sax. Carla, however, would create melody lines for the tuba, or the tuba would be in close harmony, with the five other horns (tenor, trumpet, French horn, trombone and alto). Immediately I would be an octave to a 10th higher than the more traditional big band parts, introducing me to a plethora of colors, textures and musical emotions. Thank you Carla! The experience serves me well still.

—BOB STEWART (tuba)

I had the honor of playing in Carla's big band in Europe and Japan, and working with her in Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. We will all miss Carla. A unique, wondrously direct and focused composer and arranger, she never wasted a note. Like Duke, all parts were essential. Her big-hearted music had both passion and humor, thirst for justice and whimsy.

—RAY ANDERSON (trombone)

A unique woman who wrote unique music and knew what she wanted and how to get it from the musicians she worked with. Her music was challenging, interesting and fun to play. Carla will be missed.

—BARRY ALTSCHUL (drums)

I am grateful for the presence of many courageous, imaginative and determined women in my life. My friend and mentor Carla Bley was one such figure. She was a beacon for welcoming possibilities and she created music that was honest and without compromise. For Carla, the answer was always "yes." I loved playing, traveling and visiting with Carla. We shared a Swedish-American heritage and penchant for the unusual and humorous. Conversations with Carla were always thoughtful, provoking and hilarious. Her words and pursuits always were inspiring. I loved her dearly. I am especially grateful for the years of sharing sounds and words with her. Carla Bley was, without a doubt, a true original whose imaginative and unique compositions have contributed greatly to the legacy of improvised music. "Well-behaved women rarely make history." —Eleanor Roosevelt. Tack så mycket, Carla Bley.

—MATT WILSON (drums)

I discovered Carla Bley's music when I started my first band in 1967, thanks to Steve Swallow. For the next two decades, we played Carla's music at every performance and, over time, collaborated on two of my most important recordings solely dedicated to her compositions (*A Genuine Tong Funeral* and *Dreams So Real*). She was certainly one of the most important composers I had the pleasure of collaborating with. What an impressive legacy she leaves for the jazz world.

—GARY BURTON (vibraphone)

For me Carla Bley has been like a shadow whose contours have crystallized over the years. She was so versatile and talented. In 2016, the year Carla turned 80, the fabulous saxophonist Fredrik Ljungkvist and myself made a tribute album *And Now the Queen* (Lilalo), featuring only Carla's compositions. When I prepared for the session, I forced myself not to listen to Paul Bley and his amazing recordings of Carla's tunes. It was very tempting to try to play like him but he was such a master. Instead, I tried to develop a spontaneous and exploring attitude more in the spirit of Carla on various instruments, including a Mellotron, Moog Taurus bass pedals and a small ARP synth together with the grand piano, to get a feeling of getting out on virgin snow. We recorded before lunch the first day in the studio and that was it. Once the album was released, we sent the record right off to Carla, but I remember it took a couple of years before we got any response from her. Finally we received a beautiful letter from her and Steve Swallow and I'm happy to say that they both loved the record! I think I will keep that mail in a security box for the rest of my life.

—MATTIAS RISBERG (piano)

I have been blessed to have worked with the great Carla Bley, first with her band and then with Charlie Haden and the Liberation Music Orchestra. She was a gifted composer/orchestrator, who was innovative, meticulous, sensitive, politically astute, prepared and quite knowledgeable about the leading theoretical concepts of the day.

—JOSEPH DALEY (tuba)

I cherish the time I spent making music with Carla, both in the Lost Chords and in her Big Band. I went to Europe with her on several tours and did four albums. I learned so much. It helped me grow as a musician to play someone's music that was so unique, as I had to come up with a way of playing and interpreting that was very challenging but also very rewarding. Those experiences for a musician are so very important. She did things her way and had done that her whole career, which in itself is quite remarkable. It's an incredible body of work that she gave the world and we're fortunate to have it now to enjoy and study. I'll certainly miss her, and I thank her for giving me the opportunity to help her bring her music to fruition. My last recording's title track, "Valse Sinistre", was composed by Carla; I'm so happy and honored that she was able to hear it and approved of the performance.

—BILLY DRUMMOND (drums)

I first heard from Carla Bley by phone in 1978. She had a 10-piece band that toured Europe in 1977 and she wanted to make some changes in that band. She called me, and her first question was what was my real name. I told her, "you just said my full name." She said, "Oh, I thought Chancey was your stage name!" That was the beginning of an incredible six-year stint with the Carla Bley Band: we toured Europe two or three times a year and all over the U.S. Then around 2005 I got a call from Charlie Haden saying that Carla had recommended me to play in the Liberation Music Orchestra, which I would play with for about 15 years. Carla was a person and a band leader like none other. Her wit and personality were all over everything she ever did. She was an original, plus a very thoughtful horn arranger.

—VINCENT CHANCEY (French horn)

One of my fondest memories, of the many playing with Carla Bley, is when she would downplay her own improvising skills, afterwards saying that she wasn't a "real" jazz soloist. Truth of the matter, I always wished I could play like her. There's something in the way great composers improvise. Their natural tendencies are to improvise compositional ideas, take you on a journey of shapes and colors... Duke Ellington comes to mind. Carla comes to mind, too. A deeply dedicated soul to her music and to sharing it with us all.  
—STEVE CARDENAS (guitar)

Whenever I am asked who is my "favorite living composer", I always answer "Carla Bley." Now, with her passing, I can no longer say that, though no-one takes her place. We last saw each other at Big Ears in 2017 when, to her open-mouthed amazement, I sang the whole of "The Tennessee Waltz" to her outside the Tennessee Hotel as a "goodnight." More recently she was delighted that I arranged "End of Vienna" for an orchestra concert I conducted in Tasmania, though by then she was no longer able to listen to recordings. But she saw the score, and Steve (Swallow) kept her in touch with the whole process. Now her sufferings are over, and I am currently writing a quintet for harpsichord and string quartet which is dedicated to her memory. Rest in Peace Carla.  
—GAVIN BRYARS (bass/composer)

I met Carla Bley at Creative Music Studio in 1977 when I was 15... a little over ten years later I was playing in Karen Mantler's band (Carla's daughter). So my relationship with Carla was as much familial as it was musical. I will say three things from my musical perspective: 1. *Escalator Over the Hill* opened the door...for everything. 2. *Dinner Music* changed my life. 3. "8 1/2" (from Hal Willner's *Amarcord Nino Rota*) is one of the greatest arrangements ever written. Thank you, Carla.  
—STEVEN BERNSTEIN (trumpet)



CARLA BLEY  
1936-2023

PHOTO BY ALAN NAHIGIAN



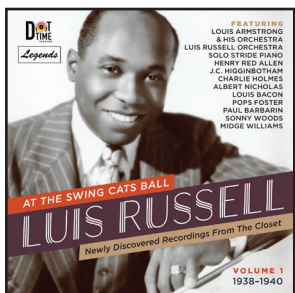
**Torrent (Piano Solo)**  
**Satoko Fujii (Libra)**  
by Andrew Hamlin

I'd resisted Satoko Fujii's solo piano albums—even as I found her one of the mightiest, most beguiling talents on the jazz scene today. I liked her best, so I thought, with at least one partner—often her husband, trumpeter Natsuki Tamura, but just as often with other collaborators from around the globe, sharing a secret sauce to grease the gears of collaboration. But *Torrent*, her latest of many solo piano records, suggests I've misheard her this whole time.

Fujii functions as her own foil, laying out comparisons and contrasts lightning-fast, but shaping individual tracks into a unified work. Eerie strummings of the piano's inner strings—in passing in the second cut, "Voyage"; wider and deeper for "Cut the Painter" two tracks later—resound like some beast, a little too sinister to be called an angel, rising up and out in flight. For "Horizon" she starts slowly, offsetting all the wild runs from the first four selections, laying out a framework, letting each sonic girder stick in place under the sustain pedal; when the sparkly runs and low-end concussions return, they fill in the grid. During the last minute she grabs another intuitive progression, linking it to what came before, letting its independence bloom...then die down, slowly, from a sustain cloud to one-note Morse code.

"Wave Crest", the album closer, moves from heavy lumberings offset by surprising higher notes, through repeated runs (parts put in, left out, rotated and then sent on their way) and back again to not quite where we as the listener came in. A volley of high notes, a final rumble, then out. It's not clear whether she's composing in the moment, though it certainly sounds like it. In any case, her logic holds. Through structure, through evolving logic, through evocations of evolution and transience, Fujii constructs her case. At the bottom end of "Wave Crest", we have completed a cycle, and we've run through a life. No other soul required.

For more info visit [librarecords.com](http://librarecords.com). Fujii is at *The Stone with Ikue Mori* Dec. 15 and 17. See Calendar.



**At the Swing Cats Ball, Volume 1 (1938-1940)**  
**Luis Russell (Dot Time)**  
by Jim Motavalli

Panama-born Luis Carl Russell (who died 60 years ago this month) was jazz royalty, married to the fine singer, bassist and guitarist Carline Ray and the father of the incomparable jazz vocalist (and musical historian) Catherine Russell. (A 2019 article on the Russells by Scott Yanow in the *Syncopated Times* includes a great photo of toddler Catherine sitting on daddy's lap at the piano.)

Russell was a pianist, but not much known for soloing—his strength was as a bandleader. He came to the U.S. in 1919, and became steeped in the music of New Orleans before moving to Chicago in 1925 and working

with the likes of King Oliver. His own group, with soloists such as Henry "Red" Allen, Albert Nicholas and J.C. Higginbotham, was formed in 1929 and taken over by Louis Armstrong in 1935. Russell's recording career under his own name was sporadic, but "New Call of the Freaks" was a big number for him. From 1935-1943 he was Armstrong's musical director, and then he led a band until 1948, after which he opened a notions store in New York and played irregularly.

What's captured on this issue are live disc recordings of radio broadcasts, found in a closet. Russell kept these cuts so he could know how his bands sounded. The music was transferred by sound engineer Doug Pomeroy from heavily worn masters (Russell listened to them a lot). "The source materials were among the roughest Pomeroy had ever encountered," the liner notes reveal.

The sound quality consequently is a mixed bag, though the overall clarity is actually quite good. But there are horrendous drop-offs, distortion and glitches here and there. No matter, the music comes through, all the better because it's got that live energy. Listen to the Tauber/Pinkard/Tracey "Them There Eyes" and you'll say, "Wow, that vocalist sure sounds like Louis Armstrong." Well, that's because it is him, with a totally energized extended trumpet solo too: it's Satchmo and his orchestra from 1938, recorded at the Grand Terrace Ballroom in Chicago.

There are nine tracks from that session, and it's all worthwhile, Russell keeping the band tight and hot. Check out the two-part "Riffs (Dunkin' a Donut)" from the pen of Mary Lou Williams. Armstrong calls for "Brother Red" (Allen) to take a solo and he does, followed by trombonist Higginbotham. The seldom-heard "Mr. Ghost Comes to Town" with Armstrong's vocal is fragmented, but a worthy response to the announcer's call for some "real hot stuff."

Sam Coslow's "Jammin'" comes across very well, with Armstrong again heard to good advantage. And on "I've Got a Heart Full of Rhythm", Armstrong's own tune, the trumpeter provides both a memorable vocal and a swinging solo full of high notes. Chappie Willet's "Blue Rhythm Fantasy" has drummer Paul Barbarin sounding Gene Krupa-like in one of his movie appearances. It's *sans* Louis (except for some vocal exhortations), and a bit sweet.

Russell is also heard playing solo stride piano in 1940 recordings. He sounds totally assured in this mode, and his own man stylistically. "Rippling Waters" and "Moonlight Cocktail" (by Luckey Roberts) are memorable, though all the pieces are short and snapshot-like. I'll bet Willie "The Lion" Smith would have liked Russell's fast and accurate interpretations of "Echoes of Spring" and "Fussin'".

Five tracks are from Russell's own orchestra, recorded live but without dates or location. Russell's featured vocalist was then Percy "Sonny" Woods, a bit overblown and dated on "Ol' Man River". The soloists blow the roof off the song, though. Woods features well on "Melancholy Lullaby/Lilacs in the Rain", too.

A standout among these numbers is a very rocking "Hot Bricks", Russell's own tune. And who can deny another Russell original, "At the Swing Cats Ball"? Russell never recorded a studio version of this great slap-happy song (which probably dates back to 1938), though Louis Jordan did, and it was also deliciously waxed last year by daughter Catherine.

Russell also worked with female vocalists, and Bobbie Caston (who worked with Ellington and Jimmie Lunceford's bands) comes off very well on Boyd Atkins' "Heebie Jeebies". For some reason, vocalist Woods is again featured on two tracks from an Armstrong WABC broadcast from late 1939 and early 1940. Russell must have liked him a lot. Woods is a very unconvincing cowboy on "Leanin' on the Ole Top Rail". Bob Crosby had a hit with "Top Rail" in 1940. It's schmaltzy.

It's great these battered discs came out of the closet. Luis Russell's recorded legacy—and Carline Ray's too, for that matter—are thinner than they should be.

For more info visit [dottimerecords.com](http://dottimerecords.com)



**a grain of Earth**  
**Marta Warelis (Relative Pitch)**  
**O Hushed October**  
**Ab Baars/Ig Henneman/Marta Warelis**  
**(Catalytic Sound)**  
by Kurt Gottschalk

Depending on your source, the prepared piano is either 73 or 75 years old. The notion of inserting objects on or between the piano strings to alter the sound is generally dated to John Cage's *Bacchanale*, which he apparently began in 1938 and finished in 1940. I sincerely doubt, however, that he was the first to explore extended technique on the instrument; you'd be hard-pressed to convince me that Beethoven never got drunk and banged around inside the case.

In certain musical circles, nontraditional playing has become so standard that the outlier has become the norm, which is all well and good, all sounds being equal and all. But the sliding distinction becomes relevant with the remarkable pianism of Marta Warelis. The Polish-born Amsterdam resident works both inside and outside the case, and turns anti-tradition on its ear. While ordinarily I'm happy enough to hear the pleasant plings and plops of muted strings, to engage with the resonant sighs and moans that come with prodding the instrument as if it were a felled harp, Warelis' keyboard technique is so extraordinarily on point that when I hear her play "experimentally," I find myself waiting for the extensions

## RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- **omawi (Marta Warelis/Onno Govaert/Wilbert de Joode)–Waive (Relative Pitch)**
- **Lina Allemano–Canons (Lumo)**
- **Rodrigo Amado–The Bridge (Trost)**
- **Emad Armoush's Duos–Electritradition (Drip Audio)**
- **Derek Bailey/Paul Motian–Duo in Concert (Frozen Reeds)**
- **Ernst Bier/Gunnar Geisse/Ignaz Schick–Hawking Extended (Zarek)**
- **Rob Brown Quartet–Oblongata (RogueArt)**
- **Dave Brubeck Quartet–Live from the Northwest, 1959 (Brubeck Editions)**
- **Paul Dunmall–Bright Light A Joyous Celebration (Discus Music)**
- **Peter Ehwald/Stefan Schultze–Stamp (Jazzwerkstatt)**
- **Fly or Die–Fly or Die Fly or Die Fly or Die ((world war)) (International Anthem)**
- **Sullivan Fortner–Don't You Worry About A Thing (Artwork)**
- **Mendoza Hoff Revels–Echolocation (AUM Fidelity)**
- **NoSax NoClar–No Dâhiss (YOLK Music)**
- **Peter Manning Robinson–Disturbances (Owl Walk)**
- **Jason Roebke–Four Spheres (Corbett vs. Dempsey)**
- **Loren Stillman–Time and Again (Sunnyside)**
- **Anna Webber–Shimmer Wince (Intakt)**
- **Nils Wogram–The Pristine Sound of Root 70 (Nwog)**
- **Miguel Zenón/Dan Tepfer–Internal Melodies (Main Door Music)**



to end so she can get back to circumnavigating the blacks and whites.

The two approaches up her sleeves are neatly segregated on *a grain of Earth*, an all-too-short solo session recorded in Amsterdam in 2021. Over the course of nine pop song-length tracks, she alternates between inside and out—of convention, of the case—and while true enough her direct-to-string technique can be appealingly inscrutable, again and again it's the hyper-workings of her keyboarding that astound. "In Waves", falling at the end of Act II, merges the two realms quite nicely, and is my takeaway track. (But you be the judge. The whole of the album is streaming on various platforms.)

*O Hushed October* finds the pianist in the presence of the power couple of serious Dutch free improvisation, violist Ig Henneman and reed player Ab Baars (heard here on clarinet, tenor saxophone and two Japanese flutes: shakuhachi, and nohkan), the former who celebrates her 78th birthday this month and the latter who just turned 67. It's a mysterious and elusively beautiful album, recorded in Amsterdam during lockdown. I mean it as no back-handed compliment that as many times as I've played the record, I keep forgetting to listen. Somewhere in the course of the first, 10-minute track, I'm set adrift, and time and again I float through the next 20 minutes or so. Each time, it's with the final "Days Run Off Like Water" (another roughly 10-minute cut, the second bookend to four shorter ones in-between) that I'm called back by what seem to be more pronounced instrumental voices in concurrent and incongruous solos. It's an unusual phenomenon to happen repeatedly, brought about by a quietly beautiful recording.

I do not say lightly that I don't know if I've heard another pianist approach the technique of the great Cecil Taylor more closely than does Warelis, not in the deluge but in the multi-linearity. She can, and does, let loose tempests, but can also represent the unrelated trajectories of raindrops.

For more info visit [relativepitchrecords.com](http://relativepitchrecords.com) and [catalyticsound.com](http://catalyticsound.com)



*Cape Verdean Blues*  
Kavita Shah (Folkalist)  
by Anna Steegmann

Raised in Manhattan in a family of Gujarati origin, vocalist Kavita Shah first trained as a classical pianist and then sang with the Young People's Chorus of New York City, where she was exposed to a range of music styles and cultural traditions. Her neighbor, the saxophonist Patience Higgins, sparked her love for jazz and, later, she would join his band. For the past seven years, she has immersed herself in the music and culture of the Cape Verde Islands. The stunning result, this album, is her interpretation of traditional Cape Verdean *mornas*, songs that express longing and love, homesickness and nostalgia. The 12 tracks are a deeply felt tribute to the late Cape Verdean (and arguably its most famous) singer Cesária Évora, who introduced this music to a worldwide audience. Shah's main collaborators, as a matter of fact, are Évora's former musical director Bau (guitars, cavaquinho, ukulele) and percussionist Miroca Paris, who also played with Évora.

Shah's voice is pristine and expressive, whether she's singing, scatting or supplying vocal percussion. The ballads captivate the listener with their melancholy mood and minimal instrumentation. Her take on Horace

Silver's "Cape Verdean Blues" is especially original: there is no guitar or other instruments, no lyrics, just hypnotic vocal percussion by Shah and Paris. "Angola" (Ramiro Mendez) shows remarkable chemistry between the leader's soaring vocal, Bau (on guitar) and Paris. "Um abraço di morabeza" (Morgadinho/Shah) features closely harmonized singing by Shah and Fantcha (a protégé of Évora). A mood change arrives with "Chaki Ben", a cheerful Gujarati folksong on which Maalem Hassan Benjaafar plays guembri and qraqeb. "Flor di nha esperança", like many of the rest of the tracks, is slow, sad and sensual, but invigorated by Bau's excellent guitar solo.

This album is a winning take on Cape Verdean music.

For more info visit [kavitashahmusic.com](http://kavitashahmusic.com). Shah is at Mezzrow Dec. 10. See Calendar.



*Live from the Northwest, 1959*  
Dave Brubeck Quartet (Brubeck Editions)  
by Ken Dryden

The classic edition of the Dave Brubeck Quartet, featuring alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, bassist Eugene Wright (who died two years ago this month) and drummer Joe Morello, existed for just over a decade. The unique chemistry between Brubeck, whose birthday and death anniversary are this month (b. Dec. 6, 1920 – d. Dec. 5, 2012), and Desmond came from their ability to anticipate where each other was headed in their improvised lines. The previously unissued *Live from the Northwest, 1959* consists of excerpts from two concerts recorded in the Portland, OR area (at the Multnomah Hotel and nearby Clark College) on back-to-back days in April, both early remote recordings by the legendary Wally Heider.

Given that a studio recording (*Gone with the Wind*) was scheduled later the same month, it isn't surprising to find five of the songs that ended up on that album present in these concerts. As such, while Brubeck was already a prolific composer at this point, most of the music focuses on older standards and favorites. The album opens with a rousing, refreshing arrangement of "When the Saints Go Marching In", proving that the song stands on its own outside of Dixieland. Likewise, the quartet's cool approach to "Basin Street Blues" finds Desmond in his prime as an improviser, with Brubeck's vocal encouragement. In "These Foolish Things", the pianist's spacious playing behind Desmond allows him to take flight, while the leader's inventive, strident two-handed chords bring the piece to a crescendo, though his touch lightens a bit as his solo progresses. Morello's brushwork and Wright's nimble bass playing serve as the perfect backdrop. The breezy take of "Gone with the Wind" finds Desmond in creative form, delivering an endless stream of ideas; Brubeck's choruses are equally inventive, and he audibly sings softly to himself in spots.

The improvised "Multnomah Blues" sounds like a set-closer: everything seems to fall into place effortlessly as the band develops the pianist's opening riff into an extended workout. The quartet's lengthy exploration of Brubeck's "Two-Part Contention", introduced at Newport in 1956, features an intricate duo conversation between Desmond and Brubeck. "The Lonesome Road" finds the quartet shifting from ballad to brisk romp; the musicians trade fours and then wrap things up with a soft polytonal coda.

For more info visit [brubeckeditions.com](http://brubeckeditions.com)



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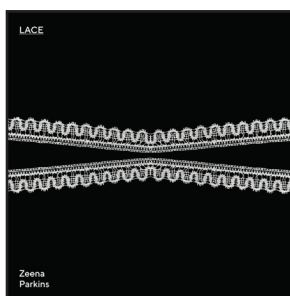
*Live at the Village Vanguard*  
Mark Turner Quartet (Giant Step Arts)  
by Franz Matzner

*Live at the Village Vanguard* is a double album that captures tenor saxophonist Mark Turner's distinctive approach to improvisation. His lightness of touch, adroitness and looseness convey a certain ebullience, at times overtly and at others within the music's substrate. Despite his lengthy career, this marks his first live album as leader. Here, on the stage of the iconic club, we get Turner fully on his own terms, with his working unit featuring Jason Palmer (trumpet), Joe Martin (bass) and Jonathan Pinter (drums). The music is dominantly straight-ahead in idiom: this is the ecosystem of Turner's artistry.

The opener (and title track to the quartet's prior released ECM album) "Return from the Stars" rests on tap dance snares and a swing rhythm, as the tenor saxophonist dances with laid-back ease. "Nigeria 2" swings briskly, Martin supplying a rapid, bouncing walking bass and Pinter delivering a dynamic, tom-heavy solo. "Brother Sister" emphasizes Turner's solo skills in an extended opening, followed by a slow exchange between the two horns that's full of bends and slides. "Lennie Groove" stands as a good example of the quartet's ability to operate as a unit, synchronizing lines while trading off playfully. The album's tunes are consistently inviting frameworks, but the fine details are equally rewarding: on "Terminus" the leader delivers a brief, fluttering tumble before ascending quickly into the altissimo register, one of his stylistic hallmarks.

Not every live album conveys the excitement of audience energy and interaction, but *Live at the Village Vanguard* audibly accomplishes this goal. Turner plays with joy, letting the crowd's appreciation and the history of the room soak into his music without weighing it down. As a lovely bonus, the liners feature photos of the venue by photographer/engineer Jimmy Katz, who records every Giant Step Arts album and whose images also grace each of the label's releases.

For more info visit [giantsteparts.org](http://giantsteparts.org). Turner's album release concerts are at Village Vanguard through Dec. 3; Turner is also at *Smoke with Billy Hart Quartet* Dec. 7-10. See Calendar.



*LACE*  
Zeena Parkins (Chaikin)  
by George Grella

Zeena Parkins is an important avant garde/new music harpist, but she doesn't play a note on this album. The music is two of her graphic- and text-based compositions, and comes in a boxed set containing an LP and a booklet that includes the scores and a Steve Dalachinsky poem. *LACE 1* is played by the TILT Brass Sextet, Maggie Parkins (cello) and James Fei (electronics), with Parkins conducting; *LACE 2* is a solo percussion piece performed by William Winant.

The underlying concept behind these pieces is exploring the patterns in lace stitching, and how they can

translate to the pattern-based art of music. The answer on this album is: inconsistently. *LACE 1* comes off as fully realized, while *LACE 2* is both compelling but frustrating. The latter piece is laid out on a series of 23 index cards, each with a pattern, meant to be played in short bursts. Winant does just that. His responses feel creative with unexpected moments like the rhythmic phrase suggesting Harry Partch in "Necklace-Swell-X" plus some gamelan elements. Each burst is fine, but the shortness is close to Naked City-style jump-cutting, which undermines pattern-building. It's like hearing a series of individual stitches that never accumulates enough repetitions to make lace.

The score for *LACE 1*, in contrast, lays out the graphics horizontally and there are detailed text instructions. There are also fewer patterns to play, though (only five), and with multiple instrumental voices at work the simplicity builds into a more coherent complexity. There's a strong forward flow and musical interweaving, the counterpoint within the brass yielding a sonic cognate of the score. There's as much tiny detail as in *LACE 2*, but also an identifiable larger form. It's rewarding to hear this result of Parkins' creative thinking.

For more info visit [chaikinrecords.com](http://chaikinrecords.com). Parkins is at *The Stone with Ikue Mori* and at *Catalytic Sound Festival at Public Records*, both on Dec. 10. See Calendar.



*Con Alma*  
Jason Palmer (SteepleChase)  
by George Kanzler

Trumpeter Jason Palmer has been based in Boston for over two decades, where he teaches at Berklee College of Music. He's also played with a host of jazz greats, including Roy Haynes, Herbie Hancock, Phil Woods and fellow trumpeters Wynton Marsalis and Roy Hargrove. Additionally, he's a longtime front-line partner in tenor saxophonist Mark Turner's quartet.

His new release fleshes out an album Palmer recorded with a quartet in 2017, plus three additional tracks. He's joined by Leo Genovese (piano, Fender Rhodes), Joe Martin (bass) and Kendrick Scott (drums). In his notes, the trumpeter describes the album as a "reimagining of some of my favorite ballads...mixed in with a few of my originals". It's a misleading description, as the first real ballad is actually the fifth track (and a ballad well-worth more exposure): a ruminative take on Duke Pearson's "You Know I Care". That piece, and two short takes of Palmer originals, are the only conventionally tempo-ed ballads.

Palmer's "reimagining" includes three familiar ballad standards, each radically transformed. Jimmy Van Heusen's "Moonlight Becomes You" is recast in 5/4 that fans of "Take Five" might not get, as Scott's drumming is more coloristic and flexible than Brubeck's Joe Morello. Willard Robinson's "Old Folks" is sparked with Afro-Latin rhythms; Ralph Rainger's "Easy Living" is performed in triple meter.

Palmer, who has a forthright tone and complete technical command of his horn, eschews mutes here, playing open horn throughout. Genovese complements the leader's solos with cogent contributions on piano and atmospheric ones on Fender Rhodes, especially on "Con Alma", which Palmer transforms into a 5/4 romp, Martin holding down the rhythm as Scott applies a broad brush of cymbal colors. Another highlight is an incandescent version of Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti", featuring the leader's most wide-ranging and adventurous solo.

For more info visit [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk). Palmer is at *Village Vanguard with Mark Turner* thru Dec. 3. See Calendar.

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## UNEARTHED GEM



*Maximum Swing: The Unissued 1965 Half Note Recordings*  
Wes Montgomery/Wynton Kelly Trio (Resonance)  
by Pierre Giroux

Produced by Zev Feldman and Richard Seidel—and including a 51-page booklet with a comprehensive essay by Bill Milkowski about Wes Montgomery and Wynton Kelly’s highly-acclaimed Half Note collaborations—*Maximum Swing: The Unissued 1965 Half Note Recordings* showcases the exceptional musicianship of the guitarist with the pianist’s trio in what is the first official release of the complete previously unissued performances from the final months of 1965.

Kelly’s working trio (Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums) has antecedents dating back to the historic 1959 dates for Miles Davis’ *Kind of Blue*, while Larry Ridley (8 tracks), Ron Carter (3 tracks), and Herman Wright (3 tracks) take the place of Chambers (3 tracks) for the balance of the sessions

over the course of two CDs.

On Disc 1, “Laura”, “Cariba”, and “Blues” (featuring the classic Kelly/Chambers/Cobb trio) are dazzling; the musical chemistry between Montgomery and this rhythm section in particular creates an absolutely electrifying atmosphere. The set with Carter charges out of the gate with a stunning performance of Coltrane’s “Impressions”. The guitarist showcases his unique thumb-picking technique, inventive phrasing and sense of swing alongside the trio. “No Blues” audibly honors Kelly’s time with Miles, and includes a blues-drenched solo by the pianist. Montgomery’s ad-libbing is remarkable, filled with octaves and melodic chords, while Cobb’s inventive drumming keeps the whole performance together.

Disc 2 (split between Wright and Ridley on bass) includes several lengthy numbers that benefit from extra flow and freedom. Whether it is the rapid trading of eights on the energized “Cherokee”, Kelly’s extended solo on the up-tempo “The Song Is You” or Montgomery’s smooth octaves and chordal cadenza on the lovely “Star Eyes”, there are numerous delights and surprises on these tracks.

This proves to be not only a testament to the individual brilliance of each of the musicians, but also to their remarkable and legendary collaboration.

For more info visit [resonancerecords.org](http://resonancerecords.org). Wes Montgomery tributes are at *Dizzy’s Club with Mimi Fox Dec. 1-3* and *Pangea with John Zweig Dec. 13*. See Calendar.



*Crying in Space*  
Mette Rasmussen/Paul Flaherty/Zach Rowden/  
Chris Corsano (Relative Pitch)  
*Belladonna Garnish*  
Chris Corsano/Andrew Scott Young/Ryley Walker  
(Husky Pants)  
by Mike Shanley

There are times when Chris Corsano’s arms are flying around his trap kit and he’s sounding like the freest of free jazz drummers, and yet an underlying structure or thought process can still be detected. The drummer might approach a certain snare attack or tom-based thunder the same way a saxophonist might expound on a cluster of notes. Whatever he plays always helps to elevate the sound of those around him, either adding greater clarity or bringing gravity to the wildest of situations.

*Crying in Space* captures him in the company of Mette Rasmussen (alto), Paul Flaherty (alto, tenor) and Zach Rowden (bass). Two lengthy tracks and a brief one all offer an uninhibited musical ride, as the quartet moves through numerous shades and musical terrains without running short on inspiration. The whole set feels spontaneous, yet “The Hesitant Nature of Doubt (Shadow Chase)” begins with the quartet sounding as if they’re reading an Albert Ayler-esque theme. Flaherty and Rasmussen go heavy on the vibrato while Rowden bows in the upper register, sounding like a violin. From there, things proceed naturally and wildly, with the saxophonists often providing

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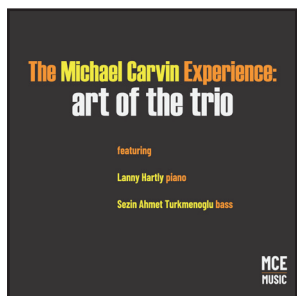
This program is made possible with support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the Bronx Delegation of the City Council, the NYS Council on the Arts with support from Gov. Kathy Hochul and the NYS Legislature and private donors.

thoughtful counterpoint to the other's jousting. Rowden's deep, resonant bowing brings things to a heavy conclusion, as Flaherty colors the background with his mouthpiece detached from his horn. "What to Expect from Faking Your Own Death" keeps the flow going, beginning with several minutes of Rasmussen slap-tonguing some intervallic leaps and unleashing overtones that sound as barbed as they are beautiful. In the final track, Corsano sounds like several drummers going whole-hog on a couple of trap kits, but again, even this type of freedom has foundation.

For *Belladonna Garnish*, the drummer teams up with Andrew Scott Young (bass) and Ryley Walker (guitar), the latter who has another life as a strong singer-songwriter. During a tour playing Walker's music, the trio went into the studio on an off-day and improvised freely. The results avoid anything resembling traditional technique. The album begins with metallic crashing and bass scratching; the guitarist elicits noises from his fretboard that evoke flute or saxophone pads being struck rapidly. Right as things begin to cohere, and Corsano brings this meeting to order, the track ends, foreshadowing things to come.

Walker evokes the sound of a melting guitar at the start of "Unlike an Empty Box", making it howl like some of Black Flag's excursions into free jazz, where enthusiasm didn't always find a good direction. The track's concluding rhythmic amp static stops being amusing pretty quickly, yet continues for an additional and unnecessary 30 rather annoying seconds. When the trio stretches out for 13 minutes ("Counterfeit Egg"), it brings up the album's main issue: the musicians sound less like an improvising trio than three people playing concurrently. Corsano's presence might help, but he's unfortunately buried in the mix, behind incessant bass tapping and harmonics. Extended technique can be fun, but this set feels like the preparation before the group interaction actually starts.

For more info visit [relativepitchrecords.com](http://relativepitchrecords.com) and [huskypantsrecords.bandcamp.com](http://huskypantsrecords.bandcamp.com). Chris Corsano is at Nublu Dec. 6. See Calendar.



**Art of the Trio**  
**The Michael Carvin Experience (MCE Music)**  
by Marco Cangiano

With his illustrious resumé, Michael Carvin rightly belongs in the distinguished club of musician's musician. In addition to leading his own groups and being one of jazz' most respected drum teachers, he has collaborated with a who's-who from the post-hard bop arena, amassing a discography of 250+ recording credits. This month, he turns 79, continuing to be robust, as evidenced by his latest recording.

On this album by his Experience trio (Lanny Hartly, piano; Sezin Ahmet Turkmenoglu, bass) he has chosen to revisit eight familiar standards. Although relatively unknown to the wider public, Hartly and Turkmenoglu are solid throughout. The former has worked as a conductor for shows such as *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *The Late Great Ladies of Blues and Jazz*. A touching solo-piano version of "Who Can I Turn To", made immortal by Bill Evans, exposes Hartly's most intimate side. The latter is a University of Southern California graduate who has performed with Stanley Jordan, Bob Mintzer and Peter Erskine. Turkmenoglu's big round bass sound is well showcased throughout, but particularly on the trio's rendition of "Round Midnight".

It is, of course, Carvin's tasteful and imaginative drumming that holds the proceedings all together. Carvin may be more at ease on up-tempos, where his approach

resembles Philly Joe Jones, but his impeccable taste underscores pieces such as "The Way You Look Tonight" and "These Foolish Things", where he provides a clinic on brushes. Surprisingly, Carvin reserves very little solo space for himself despite being one of the most exciting drummers for decades, as the exchanges in "This Will Be the Start" and "Paper Moon" demonstrate. While the program may come across as relatively conventional, it's deceptive: "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" receives an astonishingly ethereal treatment, in which the main theme emerges slowly, but only toward the end after an intense three-way conversation by this empathetic trio.

For more info visit [michaelcarvin.com](http://michaelcarvin.com)



**Good Company**  
**Simón Willson (Fresh Sound New Talent)**  
by Jason Gross

With an impressive career already firmly established, bassist/composer Simón Willson was overdue to make his debut album as a leader. Born in Chile, and now a New York resident, Willson has worked over the last several years with everyone from Dave Douglas to Ethan Iverson. Here he has assembled an arresting quartet, with Jacob Shulman (tenor), Isaac Wilson (piano) and Jonas Esser (drums).

The first half of the album is almost a playground for tenor saxophonist Shulman, who's free and wild on the opener "Being on Free Time", playful on the sweet, lively swing of "Business Card", languid on "No More X" (also a feature for the pianist's block chords), breezy on "Snacks" and melancholy on "Calma", which also features a nice languid bass solo by the leader.

The second half of the album is where Willson shows off his songwriting skills. Pianist Wilson's slow careful playing leads off the delicate ballad "Gracious" before revving up into a bouncy groove and then alternating between tempos; there are sections where he's mostly on his own, passages playing off Shulman and a bouncy bass solo at the end. "Not Necessary" also alternates between a delicate ballad and galloping pace; the pianist here applies a light touch à la Vince Guaraldi and Esser gets frisky in the middle, before Wilson and Willson play off each other. "Viridiana" (a sax-less piano trio) has a nice light strolling feel and elegant Ellington-like theme.

All of this leads up to two extraordinary pieces that culminate the album. "My Respects" (dedicated to "victims of injustice") starts with a considered piano solo. Shulman enters mournfully, backed by Esser's subtle cymbal shadings. The fascinatingly complex "Loops" is built from bubbly bass lines, quiet cymbal rolls and quizzical piano. The sound of Shulman's tenor saxophone floats lithely over the ensemble, repeating a light-hearted theme at first, then hitting a fast, more intense tone. Drummer Esser then gets more insistent as Willson subtly solos in the background; there's a quiet, intense dialog between the pianist and drummer before Shulman comes back with a return of his theme. The leader then follows with a concise feature before a display of screaming saxophone. It's a dazzling ending and the start of a promising career for this bassist/bandleader.

For more info visit [freshsoundrecords.com](http://freshsoundrecords.com). Willson's Trio is at *Down & Out* Dec. 17. Willson is also at *Bar Bayeux* Dec. 1 & 9, at *Ornithology* Dec. 8 and *Owl Music Parlor* Dec. 9, all with *Peter Watrous Quintet*; at *Ornithology* Dec. 8 and *Smalls* Dec. 10, both with *Mike Troy Quartet*; and *Lowlands* with *Kevin Sun* Dec. 19. See Calendar.

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# CHRIS BOTTI

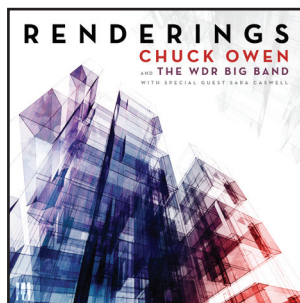
## HOLIDAY RESIDENCY

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*Renderings*  
Chuck Owen and the WDR Big Band  
(with guest Sara Caswell) (MAMA)  
by Jim Motavalli

Chuck Owen is a masterful big band leader and arranger, and the band doesn't have to be his own. That's the takeaway from this album with the 18-piece WDR Big Band from Cologne, Germany. Owen, who conducted his own charts, showcases writing from within the band, often featuring the composer as soloist. And he knows how to keep a big band light on its feet—the music never blares, and the WDR band both hits the pocket pretty hard and demonstrates an admirable lightness of touch.

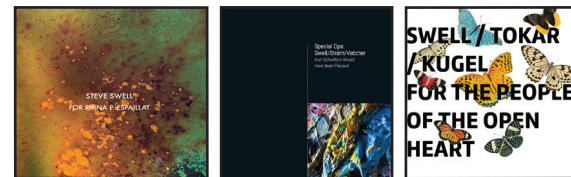
Owen's arrangements tend to gather momentum as they go along, with the full band taking wing only in the second half. All the pieces are relatively long, giving plenty of solo space. Three of the selections are by Owen but only one, "Knife's Edge", is new—inspired by an intimidating trail at Maine's Mount Katahdin. It's a bright, upbeat piece, with Paul Heller jumping out of the box on tenor before Andy Haderer's trumpet, sounding like a mid '60s Freddie Hubbard. The two horns spar and weave to thrilling effect before another written section and some high-note blowing by the soloists. Hans Dekker, in particular, sounds great on drums.

Mattis Cederberg's tuba is featured on the intro to "...And Your Point Is?". The tune is Owen's and was written for his sextet. Andy Hunter takes an extroverted but subtle trombone solo, followed by Gabor Bolla's fluid tenor solo. The horns weave, as they do on "Knife's Edge", but what's this? It's a funky soul-jazz organ solo via PA-born Billy Test, who holds the WDR piano chair. Special mention should also be made of "Of Mystery and Beauty" by Karolina Strassmayer. It's one of two tracks to feature violinist Sara Caswell. Strassmayer herself is on alto, sounding relaxed and taking an extended solo cushioned by the band. There's a *Charlie Parker with Strings* feel. Then it's Caswell's turn to be lofted up by the band, and she turns in some soaring, searching playing in the upper register. Strassmayer's horn is also featured on "Fall Calls" (written by John Goldsby). It's a tender ballad with guitarist Phillipp Brämsswig, with the alto saxophonist providing counterpoint. The sound of her soaring over the band is alone worth the price of admission.

"This Love of Mine" (by Sol Parker, Hank Sanicola), with lyrics by Sinatra himself, was first performed by Tommy Dorsey and the "Chairman of the Board" in 1941. The band offers subtle shading in a relatively conventional arrangement, with Billy Test on piano. Brämsswig doesn't sound like the same guitarist on Chick Corea's "Arabian Nights" (from Corea's *Ultimate Adventure*); Corea actually played the tune in-person with Owen's Jazz Surge group. The guitarist serves up a long, slowly-building rock solo out of Mike Stern and Jimi Hendrix, and even a faint Al Di Meola influence can be detected.

"A Ridge Away", from Owen's *River Runs* concerto, has a late-night Chet Baker feel, with trumpeter Breuls and Test again on piano. The album ends with "Canoe" by Johan Hörlén, and features the composer on alto saxophone plus Ludwig Nuss' trombone. Its finger-snapping melody provides a great, swinging way to go out for this must-have big band album.

For more info visit [summitrecords.com](http://summitrecords.com). Sara Caswell is at Birdland Theater with Frank Vignola Dec. 20. See Calendar.



*For Rhina P. Espailat*  
Steve Swell (Relative Pitch)  
*Kurt Schwitters Would Have Been Pleased*  
Special Ops (Idyllic Noise)  
*For the People of the Open Heart*  
Swell/Tokar/Kugel (Fundacja Słuchaj)  
by Elijah Shiffer

The trombone is an instrument particularly well-suited to free improvisation. Its capacity for a full range of pitches beyond tempered scales, and seemingly unlimited possibilities for quirky extended techniques, have drawn many trombonists into the avant garde. Steve Swell has explored the instrument's potential in this setting as much as anyone. On three recent releases, he gives a taste of just how far one can explore on the trombone, while also displaying a highly individual voice as an improviser.

Rather surprisingly, *For Rhina P. Espailat* is Swell's first entirely solo album; its title references a poet whose works often concern artistic longevity. Here he places the focus squarely on noise and abstraction in a collection of esoteric soundscapes. One of the few aural handles to grasp is his bluesy riffing toward the end of the 18-minute opener "Hope". The other seven tracks are short sketches, each staying within a single texture. These condensed blocks of improvisation feel like field recordings documenting traditional music of some distant dimension in the multiverse.

Swell presents a slightly more accessible style in trio settings with bass and drums. *Kurt Schwitters Would Have Been Pleased*, recorded in 2012, features the Special Ops trio in which the trombonist is joined by Jon Rune Strøm (bass) and Michael Vatcher (drums). This album is also named for a poet, of sorts: the Dada polymath Schwitters is revered among avant garde musicians as the author of *Ursonate*, an epic of non-linguistic sound poetry. The collective sound here is both very free and very tight, full of spontaneous yet coordinated shifts of dynamics, and transitions in and out of tempo. This applies to both the extended opener "There Are Many Memories" and the shorter tracks that follow. The last and longest of the six tracks, "Jimmy Knepper Knew", is more tonal and steadily rhythmic than the others, in a suitably Mingus-esque blues mood. Though there is plenty of raw instrumental power, this is not an overly loud album. Vatcher brings a distinctive, subtle layer of intricacy to the quieter moments with his vocabulary of clicking and rattling licks. The slipperiness of the trombone and bass make this a visceral music, felt much more strongly in the body than the head.

*For the People of the Open Heart* finds Swell in another trio, this time with Mark Tokar (bass) and Klaus Kugel (drums). This is another closely interconnected ensemble, despite the lack of steady tempo throughout almost all nine tracks. The convergence of trombone and bass phrases near the end of "Found Poetry" almost sounds composed. Tokar and Kugel sound like they are improvising against each other in the album opener "Let It Grow", but in "The Ongoing" they play a fascinating stop-and-start game together behind Swell. On one track in both trio albums, Swell doubles on a high-pitched recorder or pennywhistle and his wailing on "Other Worlds" is an unhinged high point of the album. There are moments of introspective noise here, but with Kugel's blasting power and the trombonist using fewer mutes than on *Kurt Schwitters Would Have Been Pleased*, the overall sonic environment is more bombastic than the earlier recording.

For more info visit [relativepitchrecords.com](http://relativepitchrecords.com), [idyllicnoise.com](http://idyllicnoise.com) and [sluchaj.bandcamp.com](http://sluchaj.bandcamp.com). Swell is at The Delancey with Gene Pritsker Brass Quartet Dec. 1 and at Saint Peter's Dec. 6 as part of the Dom Minasi Memorial Concert. See Calendar.

(ALBUM REVIEWS CONT'D. PG. 26)

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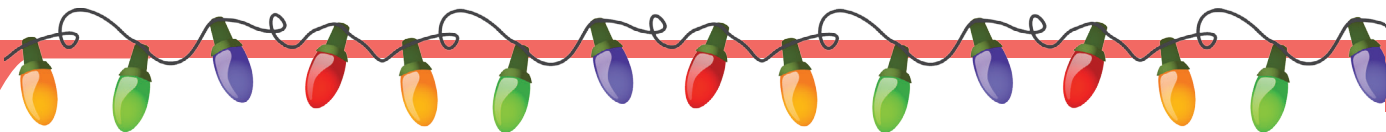
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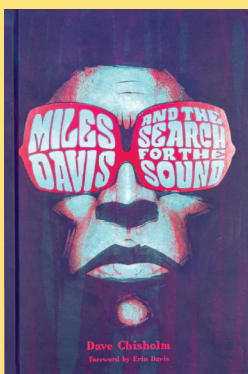


## GRAPHIC NOVELS: QUESTING WITH MILES AND DAI

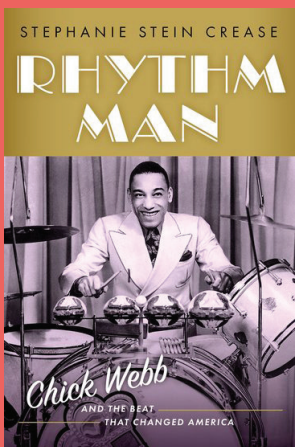
*Miles Davis and the Search for the Sound* follows the many lives of Miles Davis, through four decades of musical innovation, following his quest to find a mysterious sound he heard on a moonlit country road as a child. The narration is adapted from Davis' own words and the visual style shifts to reflect Davis' constant musical changes. In another time and place, *Blue Giant 1-2* (winner of The Shogakukan Manga Award and Japan Media Arts Festival Grand Prize for Manga) follows Dai, who initially seems a typical high schooler in Sendai City. But Dai knows something is missing from his life and that something is jazz music. Soon he vows to "be the best jazz player in the world". Follow Dai as he overcomes a series of setbacks. Eventually, everyone in his life comes to support his unusual dream.

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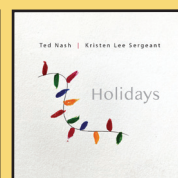
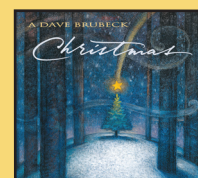


## RHYTHM MAN: CHICK WEBB AND THE BEAT THAT CHANGED AMERICA

by Stephanie Stein Crease (Oxford University Press)

Get into the literary swing with the little-remembered titan of the '30s—Chick Webb, one of the first jazz drum virtuosos. This nationally famous Harlem bandleader held sway at the Savoy Ballroom and helped launch Ella Fitzgerald and the Swing era. And he packed a lot of living into the 34 years of his short life! Author Stephanie Crease has penned his first full biography with previously unpublished material that sheds new light on the early jazz and dance scene in Baltimore (his birthplace) and NYC.

[GLOBAL.OUP.COM/ACADEMIC/PRODUCT](http://GLOBAL.OUP.COM/ACADEMIC/PRODUCT) \$34.95



*A Dave Brubeck Christmas*  
Dave Brubeck (Telarc-Craft)

*A Joyful Holiday*  
Samara Joy (Verve)

*Holidays*  
Ted Nash/Kristen Lee Sergeant (Sunnyside)  
by Marilyn Lester

Originally released in 1996, the solo piano album *A Dave Brubeck Christmas* is simply a must-have holiday classic for every lover of jazz and exceptional music. Fourteen tracks are given the Brubeck stamp with an abundance of creative ideas and those trademark thick chords. If, as the poet William Blake wrote, the world can be intuited in a grain of sand, opener "Homecoming" Jingle Bells" is the key to the sum total of Brubeck. A playful intro sounds like a child's Christmas, with repetitive notes and a bare-bones melody. But then the master stretches out and miraculously, through exquisite phrasing, the power of genius prevails—a contrast of simplicity and complexity side by side. In another rendition, "Farewell to Jingle Bells", he deconstructs the song into contemplation. Two originals are sprinkled among the familiar seasonal fare: "To US is Given" and "Run, Run, Run to Bethlehem!", the former a reverent meditation on a theme, the latter a journey from a slow waltz to a skipping joy, delivering an authoritative statement of arrival. Most church-based celebrations of Christmas place "Silent Night" high on the altar. Brubeck honors that tradition, combining classical technique with intuitive jazz phrasing. For fun, "Winter Wonderland" is an upbeat number full of the master's fine-tuned glissandi, flourishes, tinkles and turns. The jazziest cut is "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" with hints of ragtime and blues. A largely respectful presentation of holiday tradition, the wonder of this cool and magical album is the soul that Brubeck infuses into the music of the season as we additionally celebrate his birth and death anniversary this month with this new vinyl reissue.

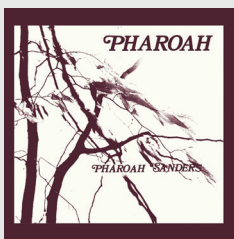
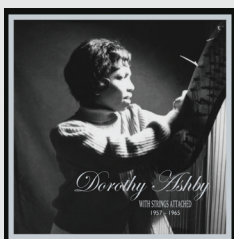
For those who lament that Ella or Sarah will never release a new holiday album again, there's solace in Samara Joy, the 24-year-old *wunderkind* who's taken the vocal jazz world by storm and earned a Grammy in the process. Given her ability to match those two aforementioned *grand dames* of jazz, the six tracks on *A Joyful Holiday* will leave you excited to follow a career with such promise. Performing one of the most iconic holiday songs, "The Christmas Song", she immediately proves her mettle. Singing a slow ballad is a true test of ability; there's no place to hide vocal deficiencies. Her rendition checks off the boxes: phrasing, tone, dynamism, rubato and range. A second, live version of the song with Antonio McLendon, infuses the lyric with a blues twist. "Warm in December" is jowly innocent, rather than having the sensual undertone of Julie London's well-known rendition—it's a choice that defines the essential sweetness that permeates Joy. Of the top-class musicians in support, most prominent is pianist Sullivan Fortner, featured on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Me", a wishful ballad of Christmas longing. The downside of the album: it's too short—barely 24 minutes long. The six tracks go by quickly, leaving the listener wanting much more.

A lynchpin of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Ted Nash (conductor, tenor, soprano, flute) has enlisted his bandmates to play on *Holidays*, a swinging take on the music of the season. A classic "big band plus singer", it's a festive nine tracks of the sacred and secular with vocalist Kristen Lee Sergeant. Nearly all of the arrangements are by Nash, the exception "A Child Is Born", arranged by alto saxophonist Sherman Irby. His is a decidedly different take on the music (by Thad Jones with lyrics by Alec Wilder), incorporating Middle Eastern themes and vocals that hint at Byzantine chants. It's in sharp contrast to the super-swinging "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm", a joyful toe-tapper with solos by Paul Nedzela (baritone) and Marcus Printup (trumpet). "Sleigh Ride", by the master of the two-minute instrumental, Leroy Anderson, is expanded to a thrilling five minutes, with solos by pianist Adam Birnbaum and Nash propelling the sled at high speed. The not-so-joyous side of Christmas is presented in the vocalese "Blue Xmas (To Whom It May Concern)". This is the kind of tune that only Bob Dorough could write, with additional lyrics by Sergeant. The song is ironic enough to take the edge off any potential negativity. And did a memo go out that every holiday album must contain "The Christmas Song"? This version, featuring a Nash solo, is reminiscent of the Swing era. It's mellow and just may encourage kids from 1 to 92 to get warm and cozy by that open fire. *Holidays* harks back to a simpler, traditional time but in a decidedly fresh and up-to-date way, bringing the best of both worlds to happy holiday-making.

For more info visit [craftrecordings.com](http://craftrecordings.com), [ververecords.com](http://ververecords.com) and [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com). Joy is at The Apollo Dec. 14-15. The Nash/Sergeant album release concert is at Gotham Restaurant Dec. 17. See Calendar.

## BOX IT UP...

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[NEWLAND.OCHRE.STORE](http://NEWLAND.OCHRE.STORE) \$249.99

[LUAKABOP.COM](http://LUAKABOP.COM) \$29.99 (CDS) / \$54.99 (LPs)

## IN THE KEY OF CHIAROSCURO: HOLIDAY JAZZ MIX (JFA/32BAR BLUES/CHIAROSCURO)

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[LEGO.COM/EN-US/PRODUCT/JAZZ-QUARTET-21334](http://LEGO.COM/EN-US/PRODUCT/JAZZ-QUARTET-21334)

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(ALBUM REVIEWS CONT'D. FROM PG. 22)



**Grand Company**  
**Ray Gallon (Cellar Music)**  
by Ken Dryden

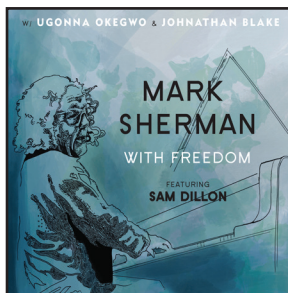
Pianist Ray Gallon may be one of New York City's best kept secrets. A veteran sideman with a career spanning over four decades, Gallon was mentored by greats including John Lewis, Jaki Byard, Jimmy Rowles and Steve Kuhn. He has worked with Lionel Hampton, Ron Carter and Lew Tabackin, and had a long career as a jazz educator. Yet he didn't make his debut recording as a leader until 2021, with the excellent *Make Your Move*. This follow-up is even more formidable, with both Carter and drummer Lewis Nash joining. Their chemistry is immediately apparent.

On the leader's jaunty take of Duke Ellington's "Drop Me Off in Harlem", his offbeat chords suggest Thelonious Monk, while his melodic improvisations favor Bud Powell. Because the late Bill Evans recorded Miles Davis' "Nardis" so many times, every pianist's interpretation is inevitably compared. Gallon is more laid-back than Evans, and the trio infuses the piece with a gentle Latin groove. The program also features a pair of chestnuts from the '30s—a hip, playful interpretation of "If I Had You" and a beautiful reharmonization of "Old Folks", a favorite of Ron Carter's decades ago when Gallon first became his sideman.

The pianist also excels as a composer. His mysterious ballad "Zombette" has a sense of foreboding, the haunting yet infectious theme delivered with ominous chords and a bit of whimsy, as Carter's soft bass playing and Nash's brushwork round out the piece. The lively "Pins and Needles" brings to mind Bud Powell at the height of his career; Carter's constantly shifting bass line and Nash's strong pulse receive vocal encouragement in the background, presumably from the pianist. The plucky rhythms and upbeat melody of "Monkey Bars" (on which Nash contributes a strong solo) suggest children at play.

Ray Gallon proves himself an inventive pianist and inspired composer here with two masters.

For more info visit [cellarlive.com](https://cellarlive.com). Gallon is at Mezzrow Dec. 7 and at Cellar Dog Dec. 10. See Calendar.

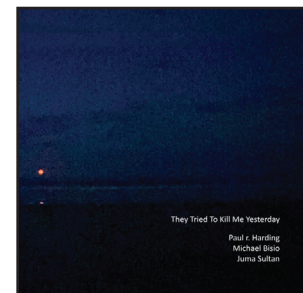


**With Freedom (featuring Sam Dillon)**  
**Mark Sherman (Miles High)**  
by Marco Cangiano

This is pianist/vibraphonist Mark Sherman's twentieth album under his own name, and it is a compelling statement of jazz' good health. The quartet Sherman has assembled here includes Sam Dillon (tenor) and the impressive rhythmic duo of Ugonna Okegwo (bass) and Johnathan Blake (drums). Their music falls squarely into a post-bop/Coltrane vein (the program is mostly originals with a few less-played standards associated with Coltrane), though Sherman's juxtaposition of piano and vibraphone, in particular, helps give the music its distinctive character.

"I'll Wait and Pray" is executed as a duo with Dillon, who shines throughout: over the course of the album, he offers a clinic on modern tenor sax playing within the tradition. His sound can be raucous on ballads and medium-tempo tunes such as "Fanny O"; meanwhile, Dillon is muscular or even explosive on "Third Eye Vision", "Transcendence" (in which the quartet comes ever-so close to the classic Coltrane quartet sound) and "Love Thy Neighbor" (the late Joe Farrell comes to mind). Okegwo and Blake have regrettably little solo space, other than a brief exchange in "Love Thy Neighbor", but the two sound supple yet sturdy, like a reincarnation of Wilbur Ware and Philly Joe Jones. Blake is particularly effective at distributing unexpected accents with precision, lightness and taste. Last but not least, Sherman's contributions should not be overlooked: his capable shifting between piano and vibes is well showcased in "Fanny O", and as pianist his deep appreciation, not imitation, of McCoy Tyner is evident on "Transcendence".

For more info visit [mileshighrecords.com](https://mileshighrecords.com). Sherman is at Smalls Dec. 28. See Calendar.



**They Tried to Kill Me Yesterday**  
**Paul r. Harding/Michael Bisio/Juma Sultan**  
(ESP-Disk)  
by John Pietaro

The inclusion of spoken word artistry within the ranks of free jazz has a long history that goes back to the Beat generation and has been part of jazz' most revolutionary epochs. Paul r. Harding, who hails from the Boston area, is a much-lauded writer who has been the recipient of a 2010 Pulitzer, an international PEN award and a National Book Award. That said, his spoken word performance on *They Tried to Kill Me Yesterday* is radical, grassroots stuff, informed by the full blues-drenched Black Arts repertoire of jazz poetry. In 2022, Harding wrote: "the Blues has its sharpest patterns, straight pins but fingers on a 'National' guitar. The Strings—merely Juxtaposing needlepoints." All of this becomes evident on this latest release.

Harding, in collaboration with bassist Michael Bisio and (on several cuts) the legendary Juma Sultan (percussion), carves out new territory while celebrating past history. The poet (a drummer in his earlier days) wraps his words about the underground melodies emitted by Bisio's upright. The opening cut, "Forgive, Forgive, Forgive", with its sung refrain, drips with profound irony. Once Sultan enters ("New World Gypsy Dawn"), the rhythm threaded through the poetry turns profound, supported by Bisio's harmolodic journeying and Sultan's throbbing hand drums. However, it's the title piece (enlivened perhaps by Terrance Hayes' stirring "American Sonnet for My Once and Future Assassin") that finds Harding's syllabic bending, repetitive patterning and poetic streams flooding the listener's consciousness. And then there's the brief, vital "Hard to Watch": "Hard to watch / not hard to look at / On the contrary / ...like feudal wading of time / sung in a woman's blues song... / Hard to ignore / like Billie's bounce."

With memories of jazz past as well as Brooklyn gone, *They Tried to Kill Me Yesterday*, created by a native of Massachusetts and recorded in Kingston, NY, captures a shadowy vision of NYC that we possibly haven't heard since the closing foray of Amiri Baraka's Blue Ark.

For more info visit [espdisk.com](https://espdisk.com). Harding is at Downtown Music Gallery Dec. 26. See Calendar.

## BOXED SET



**Hot House: The Complete Jazz at Massey Hall Recordings**  
**Charlie Parker/Dizzy Gillespie/Bud Powell/Charles Mingus/Max Roach**  
 (Craft Recordings)  
 by Tom Greenland

Listening again to this iconic May 15, 1953 concert by Charlie Parker (alto), Dizzy Gillespie (trumpet), Bud Powell (piano), Charles Mingus (bass) and Max Roach (drums) is a bit like poring over an old family photo album: the images might be murky and faded but there's a clear sense of who those people were and how much they mean to you. This reissue is the first to include both the original recordings (six quintet numbers, a drum solo, six piano trio numbers) plus the same six quintet numbers with Mingus' overdubs. Since the original tape, made by an inebriated soundman

using the hall's public address system, lost much of the bass parts, Mingus later tried to fix this in the mix, doing an incredible job of emulating live energy in the studio. Many jazz fans will have heard these overdubbed versions, and some may be familiar with the 2002 Jazz Factory release of the undubbed originals. This new release allows comparison between the two.

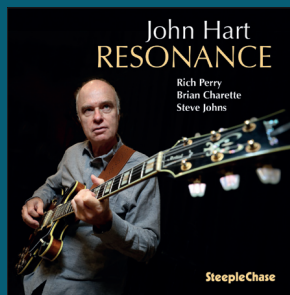
Without the overdubs, it can be difficult to follow the song forms, as many tunes are taken at rapid tempos and Parker, Gillespie and Powell were all masters of over-the-bar phrasing that resisted Mingus and Roach's anchoring pulse in artful ways. While you can certainly feel the bassist's rhythmic presence on the originals, it's very difficult to distinguish his actual note choices and any triplets, syncopations and other subtleties are gone. Mingus 'improved' the original tracks by adding, in addition to walking basslines, a brazen bass cadenza at the end of "Perdido", an ostentatious flourish behind Gillespie's cadenza on "A Night in Tunisia", and a brand-new bass solo on "All the Things You Are". Interestingly, his original solo on "Hot House", now more prominent in the mix (thanks to current remastering technology) was left as is. If you're not a purist, you'll probably prefer the overdubbed versions, particularly if you want to hear how the soloists' rhythmic trickery comes into high relief against Mingus' bedrock bass. Other aspects of the

sound have been improved as well, particularly the separation of parts on the drumkit, but much of the charm of this near-perfect record remains in its imperfections.

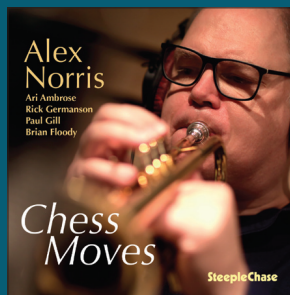
Various problems accompanied the show. There was low audience turn-out and a number of personal issues: Gillespie was distracted by a radio broadcast of a championship boxing match occurring simultaneously, Powell had to be led to the piano by a court-appointed guardian and Parker walked onstage (according to eyewitness Don Brown) "looking like an unmade bed," wielding a white plastic saxophone because his Selmer was in hock. Despite such setbacks, the show still stands as a classic in the history of jazz, and with good reason. These men were tops at their art and craft, and they brought out their best in the heat of this concert. Almost every solo could be a treatise on how to play jazz. Even more amazing is their teamwork, how these strong, disparate individuals work together as one. You hear this convergence reflected in the musicians' and audience's responses, how closely everyone in that hall is attuned to each telling detail, each nuance, how deeply they appreciate the collective experience.

For more info visit [craftrecordings.com](http://craftrecordings.com). The Mingus Orchestra is at Birdland Theater Dec. 15-17; Mingus Big Band is at Drom Dec. 4, 11, 18. See Calendar.

## 50 years of jazz recordings **SteepleChase** new CD releases Complete catalog: [www.steeplechase.dk](http://www.steeplechase.dk) CD - download - streaming fall 2023



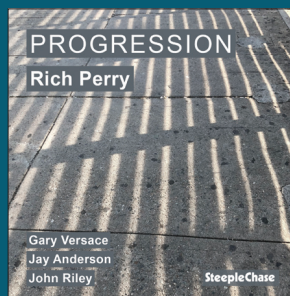
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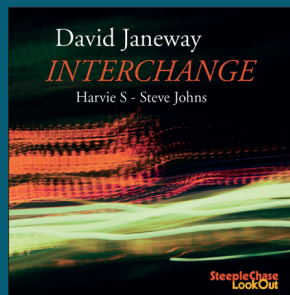
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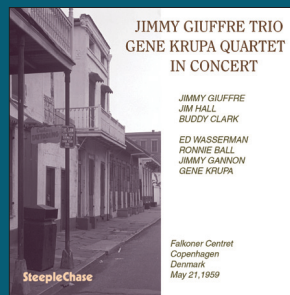
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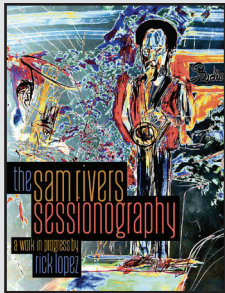
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## IN PRINT



*The Sam Rivers Sessionography: A Work In Progress*  
Rick Lopez (The Vortex)  
by John Sharpe

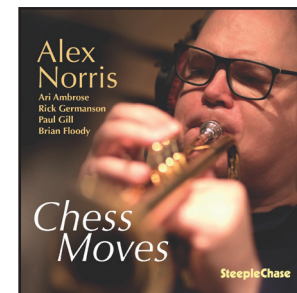
Having already published a *William Parker Sessionography* in 2014, Rick Lopez has done another stunning job pulling together this mammoth 768-page tome on the work of the great Sam Rivers (1923-2011). It had to be this big, because Rivers (who we commemorate, as the day after Christmas this month represents the 12-year death anniversary) was a larger-than-life presence on the scene. His credits include performances with figures from across the jazz spectrum, including Billie Holiday, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and Cecil Taylor. Not only that, but he personified the self-reliant ethos of his times, whether through running the legendary Studio Rivbea in the heart of the New York loft scene, or holding together a regularly performing big band for the last two decades of his life after he decamped to Florida. While associated largely with the avant garde, Rivers

composed some 500 works, cultivating an exploratory pan-stylistic approach which nonetheless mined the jazz tradition.

The book itemizes not only 121 official leader and sideman dates, but also thousands of unofficial tapes and concert listings. Infinitely more than a dry list of recording sessions and gigs, the book includes 500+ photographs and flyers for shows as well as extracts from interviews with Rivers, his family and his collaborators from across his career. Some come from published sources, or from transcriptions of radio broadcasts; others were conducted by the author and writer Ed Hazell in person. Altogether, they offer as comprehensive a portrait of Rivers as you could possibly imagine, one enlivened by Lopez' wry observations and his painstaking attention to detail. Lopez calculates he spent 15 weeks (!) perusing back copies of *The Village Voice* for listings. Even with such a meticulous approach, some mysteries still remain. Did Rivers actually punch Stanley Crouch to the ground in a bust-up about conflicting bookings in summer 1977? Well, Lopez quotes eye witnesses who come down on both sides. "Embrace the mythology," as he says. While not a cover-to-cover read, the book provides a treasure trove of information, and endless inviting rabbit holes in which to get lost.

This is the perfect book for the avid Sam Rivers fan in your life, and in a perfect world that would really mean just about everybody.

For more info visit [bb10k.com](http://bb10k.com)



*Chess Moves*  
Alex Norris (SteepleChase)  
by Ken Dryden

Trumpeter Alex Norris began his career in New York City in 1992, when many artists his age sought to record as leaders. But he chose to focus on contributing as a sideman to numerous bands, in addition to pursuing a long career as a jazz educator. His second SteepleChase album as leader features his working band of the last 15 years, with Ari Ambrose (tenor), Paul Gill (bass) and Brian Floody (drums) and with old friend Rick Germanson taking over piano duties from Jeremy Manasia.

Norris' originals aren't overly flashy or complex, just catchy themes that invite creative improvising. The quintet is quickly afire with his bright album title original, a straight ahead post-bop gem featuring brief but effective solos by both horn players, Germanson and Gill (on arco bass). The colorful "Short Waltz" reveals Norris' lyrical side as both a writer and player; his solo is clearly articulated and notably lacking in filler. The swaggering, upbeat "Too Many Trips" has a bluesy hard bop flavor, with Ambrose's soulful tenor playing as its centerpiece. "No News" is built from a bluesy opening riff that quickly sets an infectious groove, each solo building to a series of exchanges with the drummer, by Germanson, Ambrose and then Norris.

### **Ahmed Abdullah's Diaspora + Isaiah Collier and the Chosen Few**

**\*Thursday, Dec. 14th (7:30 pm)**

at Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew (520 Clinton Ave., Brooklyn)

\*with saxophonists Salim Washington and Alex Harding (saxophones),

Monique Ngozi Nri (poetry/vocals), Alexis Marcello (piano),

Obasi Akoto (bass), Brandon Lewis (percussion)

Tickets: [blankforms.org](http://blankforms.org)

### **Ahmed Abdullah's Diaspora**

**\*Friday, Dec. 15th (7 pm)**

at The Brooklyn Circus (SoHo Location: 361 Canal St., Manhattan)

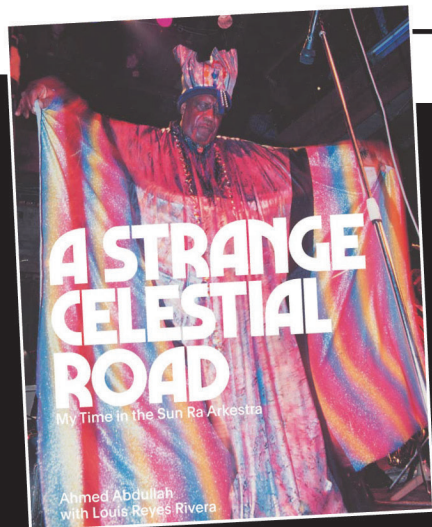
\*with Salim Washington and Alex Harding (saxophones),

Monique Ngozi Nri (poetry/vocals), D.D. Jackson (piano),

Obasi Akoto (bass), Brandon Lewis (percussion)



Ahmed Abdullah at Pioneer Works, 2023. Photo by Ellen Obertplaya



## AHMEDIAN.COM

AHMED ABDULLAH'S DIASPORA has been the primary ensemble of its namesake since the '90s, fusing a stellar repertoire of Sun Ra songs with the music of the South African diaspora, standards and much more! Mr. Abdullah is a crucial figure in the New York loft jazz movement, forming the group Abdullah in 1972 and going on to found the Melodic Art-Tet (with Charles Brackeen, Ronnie Boykins and Roger Blank) in the early '70s and The Group (with Marion Brown, Billy Bang, Sirone, Fred Hopkins and Andrew Cyrille) in 1986. He was a member of the Sun Ra Arkestra as a trumpeter for more than two decades, beginning in 1975, a journey that is the subject of his memoir *A Strange Celestial Road: My Time in the Sun Ra Arkestra* (Blank Forms Editions, 2023).

The sole standard, “My Ideal”, is a lush duet between the pianist and Norris on muted trumpet. It’s a masterful performance that would quickly quiet a noisy club. “Bossa Tranquillo” isn’t a typical bossa nova due to its detours into secondary lines, but it holds listener interest with superb solos and Floody’s strong pulse driving the band. Norris’ “There It Went” is a creative contrafact of the warhorse “Gone with the Wind”, carried by the leader’s effusive trumpet playing and Ambrose’s gritty tenor. “Lights Out” is harmonically rich, set at a relaxed but swinging tempo, with Germanson’s diverse background colors providing ample support for the horn frontline. “For a Change” is a barely disguised contrafact of “East of the Sun”, but the new melodic line over the familiar changes fuels some of the best playing of this enjoyable session.

For more info visit [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk). Norris is at *The Django* with Conrad Herwig’s *Latin Side All-Stars* every Tuesday. See *Calendar*.



*Canto*  
Susan Alcorn Septeto del Sur (Relative Pitch)  
*Manifesto*  
Susan Alcorn/José Lencastre/Hernâni Faustino  
(Clean Feed)  
by Elliott Simon

*Canto* teams pedal steel guitarist Susan Alcorn with six Chilean musicians for a large-scale suite in praise of Nueva Canción, the musical and political movement that arose in the ‘60s to promote equality and justice. In contrast, *Manifesto* is a stripped-down improvisational expedition in partnership with Portuguese instrumentalists José Lencastre (saxophone) and Hernâni Faustino (bass). Together, these albums demonstrate Alcorn’s versatility, technical expertise and dedication to both artistic and social liberation.

The absence of drums and percussion on *Manifesto* fosters a distinctive conversational idiom. Lencastre and Faustino knew each other well before the session, but neither had met Alcorn before. However, all share a passion for unrestricted exploration. Angular passages, spontaneous creation and moments of abstraction push sonic and compositional boundaries. The bassist often plays a supportive role, elegantly buttressing Alcorn’s statements. Lencastre, reticent on lengthy opener “The Poet”, is anything but on “Two Distant Realities” in which he attempts to cajole and redirect the pedal steel guitarist’s contributions. On “Sombra”, Alcorn’s lap steel guitar engages with Lencastre with countrified, albeit silky licks. In this unhampered environment, subtlety and intuition take precedence over convention, resulting in compelling soundscapes.

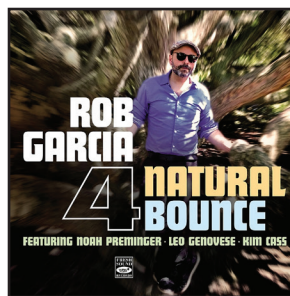
*Canto* presents Alcorn in relatively unfamiliar international company but in a more structured setting. The group was assembled expressly for this endeavor by jazz guitarist Luis “Toto” Alvarez with bassist Amanda Irarrazabal, to represent Chile’s folkloric and Nueva Canción tradition; the band also includes Claudio Araya (drums, cuatro), Francisco Araya (charango, quena), Rodrigo Bobadilla (flute, guitar) and Danka Villanueva (violin). Mercedes Sosa and Victor Jara, hailed as folk legends and powerful change agents, deeply influence the session’s style and approach. Alcorn seamlessly blends into the ensemble, where contemporary compositions rooted in folk protest traditions merge with modern improvisatory jazz elements.

Villanueva’s mournful violin is at the heart of the hauntingly beautiful “Suite Para Todos” that precedes *Canto*’s three-part titular suite which includes “¿Dónde

Están?” and “Presente”—slogans chanted in response to the disappearance of individuals due to their beliefs. Alcorn masterfully weaves this narrative, intertwining with the traditional instruments to gracefully bridge past and present. The suite concludes with an homage to the Chilean musician/activist Lukax Santana, symbolizing the struggles faced by the Chilean people during the dictatorial Pinochet regime (1973-1990). Following a sincere tribute to Sosa, Irarrazabal sings an anthemic rendition of Jara’s “El Derecho de Vivir en Paz”.

On both releases, Alcorn crafts sophisticated stories that resonate across disparate contexts. Her long-term commitment to freeing the pedal steel guitar from stereotypical constraints expands to encompass a broader concept of freedom in general.

For more info visit [relativepitchrecords.com](http://relativepitchrecords.com) and [cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com). Alcorn is at *Saint Peter’s* as part of the *Dom Minasi Memorial Concert* Dec. 13. See *Calendar*.



*Natural Bounce*  
Rob Garcia 4 (Fresh Sound New Talent)  
by Andrew Hamlin

Pelham’s own Rob Garcia fashioned his own three *Natural Bounce* short tracks, each incorporating, as the drummer notes, the “natural rhythm of a dropped stick bouncing.” “#1” leaps between toms and a not-too-dry snare, the runs running faster, more complex, like turning your faucet on, little by little. “#2” uses the bass drum for punctuation early on, so you’ll be listening for its rare intrusions again, and for the skins in harmony (I got into a pitched battle with a music head once, on whether drums can give us melody, much less harmony—no prizes for guessing which side I picked.) “#3” elicits drama from what sounds like pencils rattling in a cup, before moving to cymbals, then around the rest of the kit.

The bold “let it ring” dynamic on “#2” proves useful for the segue to “Mr. KC”, where bassist Kim Cass takes off on a melody line built entirely from harmonics. Cass never quits probing, questioning, at the center of the tune, not even when he drops down to just-the-roots plucks. “A Flower for Diana Pt. 2” (you’ll have to venture somewhere else in this world for any “Pt. 1”) finds Garcia ringing cymbal bells to hurry time along, while tenor saxophonist Noah Preminger sluices across Leo Genovese’s piano contributions in a fetching rough-and-sweet combo.

“Gary Song”, inspired by both Cameroonian Bikutsi tradition and a new friend made while on the road, features Genovese funky, Preminger funkier, Cass trying every medical/spiritual variation he can wring out of one lub-dub heartbeat. The leader demonstrates, more than usual, his thing for the kit as a concatenation of conversation—here a cymbal nobly nodding assent to something, there toms a-murmur about something that’s gone on too long, down low the bass drum in the basement, hearing assent, murmur, mumbling, maybe even a hint of menace, but content to occasionally pound a sign of life on the ceiling below so many floors. Consensus, we must keep in mind, comes most easily when a band is a well-oiled machine. Garcia’s mastered the art of preserving the individual tensions of the parts, until this machine stands and walks, then beckons to his bandmates down the block.

For more info visit [freshsoundrecords.com](http://freshsoundrecords.com). Garcia’s album release concert is at *Ibeam Brooklyn* Dec. 2. See *Calendar*.

## JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER



### DEC 13-17 ROSE THEATER BIG BAND HOLIDAYS

Spotlighting soulful big band versions of classic holiday tunes, this perennial favorite features the *Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra* with Wynton Marsalis and emerging star singer Ashley Pezzotti with music direction by Marcus Printup.

### JAN 12-13 UNITY FESTIVAL

One weekend—two evenings—more than 15 bands performing live throughout *The House of Swing*. Experience Jazz at Lincoln Center’s inaugural Unity Festival, featuring *Scatter the Atoms That Remain*, Chief Adjuah, Linda May Han Oh, Endea Owens, Summer Camargo, and more incredible artists leading acoustic ensembles and electric projects.

### JAN 19-20 ROSE THEATER MAX ROACH CENTENNIAL: THE JLCO WITH WYNTON MARSALIS

Celebrate the centennial of the great drummer, bandleader, and activist Max Roach (1924–2007), a leader in the civil rights and social justice movements whose no-limits virtuosity and endless musicality made him a legend of modern jazz drumming.

### JAN 26-27 ROSE THEATER THE BLUES WITH BOBBY RUSH AND SHEMEKIA COPELAND

Two-time Grammy Award winner and Blues Hall of Famer Bobby Rush is, at 90, one of the last living master blues practitioners of his generation. A singer, harmonicist, and guitarist, he brings his soulful storytelling, gritty vocals, and finger-picking guitar sound—rooted in the down-home blues—to *The Appel Room*. Multi-Grammy nominated vocalist Shemekia Copeland will join Rush on stage after she opens the show.

ASHLEY PEZZOTTI  
Photo by Lawrence Sumulong

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## GLOBE UNITY



*Retratos*  
Duo Kvaratskhelia (Acoustic Music)  
*Mosaic*  
Julian & Roman Wasserfuhr (ACT Music)  
*Live in Europe 2022*  
Akira Sakata & Entasis (Trost)  
by Daniel A. Brown

Family roots are often as important in jazz as swing. Siblings have helped create, develop and guide the music. The Heath Brothers (Albert, Jimmy and Percy); the Jones Brothers (Elvin, Hank, and Thad); the Marsalises (Branford, Delfeayo, Jason and Wynton); Wayne and Alan Shorter; Rashied and Muhammad Ali and Europeans Rolf and Joachim Kühn; Albert and Emil Mangelsdorff; François and Louis Moutin, are all siblings that have collectively and respectively made jazz a family affair. This month we explore three brotherly and global releases—representing Latin American, urban contemporary and international improvised music—that all seem to ask the question: “Am I my brother’s timekeeper?”

The latest from Duo Kvaratskhelia, *Retratos* is an eight-song release that concentrates on the work of three South American composers: Radamès Gnattali,

Astor Piazzolla and Guido Santórsola. It hardly matters whether the tasteful interplay between nylon-string guitarist-brothers David and Nick Kvaratskhelia benefits from a genetic edge, or is simply the result of the sensitivities and technical prowess of two top-tier musicians. In their hands, the dynamic and fluctuating tempos, typical of Latin American music, takes full flight on their performance of Gnattali’s “Chiquinha Gonzaga”: the dialogue between the brothers is rich with syncopated guitar flourishes, blurring the roles of soloist and accompanist, never losing the focus of Gnattali’s poignant composition. With guitar taps and daredevil octave leaps, Duo Kvaratskhelia tackle Piazzolla’s later composition, “Allegro” (from 1984’s *Tango Suite*), with glee, culminating in a duel of percussive hits and rapid-fire arpeggios.

Utilizing a big-band setting, the aptly named *Mosaic* from trumpeter Julian Wasserfuhr and pianist Roman Wasserfuhr is an elegiac and rapturous 11-song collection. “Rêveries” features Roman tentatively picking through a melody that is equal parts Satie and Keith Jarrett, atop a bed of string instruments; Julian joins in with a muted solo that complements and expands upon Roman’s slow-stroll piano. “Dakira” is sheer jazz romanticism, bassist Markus Schieferdecker and drummer Oliver Rehmann in gentle communion as Roman and Julian trade solos. On the other end of the spectrum, “Never Hold Back” is restrained electric funk meeting a freestyle rap from Harry Mack. *Mosaic* never breaks new ground but also keeps its footing in a variety of contemporary jazz styles and group-and-

solo playing.

*Live in Europe 2022* from Akira Sakata & Entasis is a deep dive into improvised music, a transmission from some nebula that contains elements of the past half-century of liberated jazz. Japanese reeds man Sakata offers plenty of breathing room for the assembled players to animate these six long-form performances, which are compiled from three different concerts with overlapping personnel. Giotis Damianidis (guitar) is present on all three, and his brother Petros Damianidis (bass) joins in on “Live in Thessaloniki Pt. 1” and “Live in Thessaloniki Pt. 2”, which are especially demanding and rewarding listens. Over the bedrock of pianist Giovanni de Domenico’s flurry of shard-like arpeggios and clusters, Giotis reveals himself to be a generator of truly out electric guitar, evoking kindred players such as Sonny Sharrock and Nels Cline and the twin-flame guitar freakouts of Sonic Youth’s Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo—musicians who gleefully obliterated the barrier between jazz and rock. Throughout the combined 40-minute swirl of “Thessaloniki”, Petros seems to coax and crush ideas discovered by the band, primarily through muscular pizzicato lines. At age 78, Sakata remains a formidable player and his decision to foster younger, fearless players is commendable.

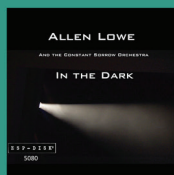
All three of these releases are worthy offerings that are highly varied in style and character—not unlike family itself.

For more info visit [acoustic-music.de](http://acoustic-music.de), [actmusic.com](http://actmusic.com) and [trost.at](http://trost.at)

## ESP-Disk' 2024 Highlights



Alon Nechushtan  
*For Those Who Cross the Seas*



Allen Lowe  
*In The Dark*



Allen Lowe  
*America: The Rough Cut*



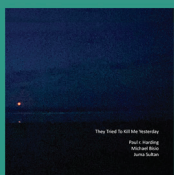
John Blum  
*Nine Rivers*



Mark Reboul/Roberta Piket/Billy Mintz  
*Seven pieces / about an hour / saxophone, piano, drums*



Guillermo Gregorio  
*Two Trios*



Paul r. Harding/Michael Bisio/Juma Sultan  
*They Tried to Kill Me Yesterday*



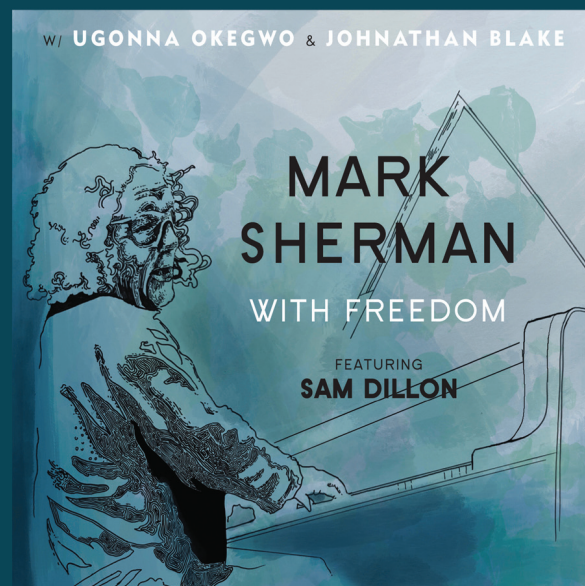
Matthew Shipp  
*Circular Temple*

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**Summer Me, Winter Me**  
Stacey Kent (Naïve)  
by Scott Yanow

Stacey Kent has a fetching voice and quietly expressive style, swings even at the slowest tempo and has flawless elocution (one can always understand the lyrics that she interprets). Her recordings have been consistently rewarding throughout her career, *Summer Me, Winter Me* being no exception.

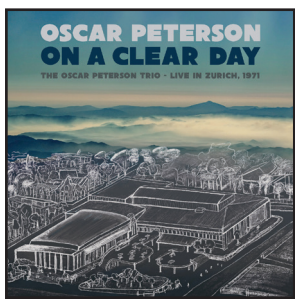
For this project, Stacey Kent and her husband, the tenor saxophonist, flutist, arranger Jim Tomlinson, mostly perform popular numbers requested by her fans and songs that they had not previously recorded. On most selections, they are joined by Art Hirahara (piano), Tom Hubbard (bass) and Anthony Pinciotti (drums); three (of eleven) tracks utilize a different rhythm section, and a string quartet is added to the first rendition of "If You Go Away".

The opening five numbers, "Under Paris Skies", "If You Go Away", Tomlinson's "Thinking About the Rain" (a wistfully romantic tale about a temporary relationship) and two Michel Legrand songs (including the title cut), find the vocalist sounding quite at home on the French-oriented material. And her melancholy interpretation of "If You Go Away" is an album highlight. Tomlinson's tenor and flute playing are major assets, accentuating the moods set by his arrangements and her singing.

The style changes with the joyful bossa treatment of "Happy Talk" (which has some Getz-ian tenor) and "Show Me". Tomlinson's "Postcard Lovers" is about the hints of life's adventures that are written about on postcards, while Jobim's "Corcovado" is reharmonized and darker than usual. After Tomlinson's "A Song That Isn't Finished Yet" (a clever love story about an affair with an as-yet undetermined future), the enjoyable program concludes with a second version of "If You Go Away", this time sung in the original French ("Ne me quitte pas").

Stacey Kent fans and those who enjoy hearing high-quality jazz singing will certainly want this one.

For more info visit [naiverecords.com](http://naiverecords.com). Kent is at Birdland Dec. 13-16. See Calendar.



**On a Clear Day: Live in Zurich, 1971**  
Oscar Peterson Trio (Mack Avenue/Two Lions)  
by Pierre Giroux

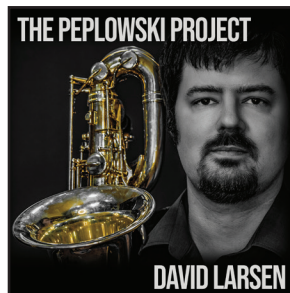
This previously unreleased live recording is a testament to the remarkable talent of the legendary pianist Oscar Peterson (who died 16 years ago this month), featuring a new iteration of his trio with Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (bass) and the incomparable Louis Hayes (drums). Together they demonstrate enormous chemistry.

The set opens with a blistering version of "The Lamp is Low", where Peterson's brilliance is fully displayed with lightning-fast runs and cascading arpeggios. Although NHØP was new to the trio, his bass lines are exemplary and Hayes' drumming cuts like a knife through butter. The following track, "Younger than Springtime", comes from

the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical *South Pacific*. On this uptempo reading, Peterson demonstrates his usual high standard of artistry with a block-chord-heavy solo; the bassist and drummer are self-assured, commanding forces. "On a Clear Day", from the Lane/Lerner musical *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, is similarly brightly paced. For a change of mood, the trio then turns to a restrained "Soft Winds". NHØP is at the forefront, demonstrating both his virtuosity and depth of tone. "Mack the Knife" starts with a bit of a head fake by the pianist as he embarks on a lengthy solo excursion covering the full scope of the keyboard with effortless grandeur and dynamic swells. NHØP and Hayes join midway through and are off at full gallop; Peterson's technique leaves the audience gasping.

Ferde Grofé's "On the Trail" (from the *Grand Canyon Suite*), closes things out on a swinging note. Again, the trio demonstrates their versatility and ability to reinterpret familiar tunes with a fresh and innovative approach. This live recording exquisitely captures Peterson's unique artistry and is a testament to his legacy as one of jazz' most influential figures.

For more info visit [mackavenue.com](http://mackavenue.com)



**The Peplowski Project**  
David Larsen (s/r)  
by Ken Dryden

Multi-reed player David Larsen has long been a fan of Ken Peplowski, one of the primary baby boomer mainstream players who came to prominence with a brilliant series of albums made for Concord Jazz in the '80s and '90s. Larsen planned this recording with Peplowski, who brought a number of Al Cohn arrangements as a salute in part to the Al Cohn/Zoot Sims duo tenor partnership. However, with Larsen switching between alto, tenor and baritone saxophones plus clarinet, and Peplowski between tenor and clarinet, this pairing creates a rich sound of its own, backed by the accomplished rhythm section of Jake Svendsen (piano), Josh Skinner (bass) and Brendan McMurphy (drums). The two reed players meld together as if their's was a long-standing partnership.

They bring life to Johnny Mandel's hip "Black Nightgown" (written for the soundtrack to *I Want to Live*). Larsen's potent, melodic baritone invites comparison to Gerry Mulligan's recordings of the song, while Peplowski's wry clarinet has a whimsical air. "Doodle Oodle" (based on the chord changes to "Sweet Georgia Brown") is a two tenor affair, not a battle but rather a fruitful exchange where both men come out on top. The acid test for jazz musicians is playing a ballad, and their lush setting of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" is gorgeous, opening with Larsen's sonorous baritone against Peplowski's inventive counter line; their individual solos are masterful. "Love Me or Leave Me" is an old warhorse that seems rarely played these days, but Peplowski's twisting clarinet, Svendsen's engaging piano and the leader's nimble baritone revive it with a flourish. Larsen also contributes several originals, including his hip baritone feature "He Who Getz the Last Laugh", buoyed by Skinner's walking bass and Svendsen's bluesy piano. The rousing two-tenor feature "Tenor for Dinner" best captures the flavor of the aforementioned Al Cohn-Zoot Sims partnership.

This rewarding session merits a follow-up recording to further explore Cohn's charts.

For more info visit [larsenjazz.com](http://larsenjazz.com). Ken Peplowski is at Birdland Theater with Frank Vignola Dec. 7. See Calendar.



**RING IN THE NEW YEAR**  
★ **AT THE DJANGO** ★  
with vocalist **Stella Katherin Cole**  
Seatings at 7PM and 10PM

FRI 12/1	Jason Tiemann Quartet Ben Stivers Quartet	7:30pm 10:30pm
SAT 12/2	Ed Cherry Quartet Craig Handy And 2nd Line Smith	7:30pm 10:30pm
SUN 12/3	Caelan Cardello Quartet Steve Ash Trio	6:30pm 9:30pm
MON 12/4	Wilfie Williams Quartet Ricardo Grilli Quartet	7:30pm 10:30pm
WED 12/6	Joe Farnsworth Quartet Joe Strasser Quartet	7:30pm 10:30pm
THR 12/7	Itai Kriss Quartet Mark Whitfield	7:30pm 10:30pm
SAT 12/9	Ron Jackson Trio Nick Hempton Band	7:30pm 10:30pm
SUN 12/10	Craig Handy Quartet Antonio Ciacca Trio	6:30pm 9:30pm
MON 12/11	Adam Moezinia And Folk Element Trio Marty Scott Quintet	7:30pm 10:30pm
WED 12/13	Spike Wilner Trio Greg Skaff Trio	7:30pm 10:30pm
FRI 12/15	Eric Jacobson Quartet JC Hopkins Biggish Band	7:30pm 10:30pm
SAT 12/16	Jonny King Trio The Richard Cortez Band	7:30pm 10:30pm
SUN 12/17	Jed Levy Quartet Michael Kanan Trio	6:30pm 9:30pm
MON 12/18	Eitan Kenner Quartet Altin Sencalar Quartet	7:30pm 10:30pm

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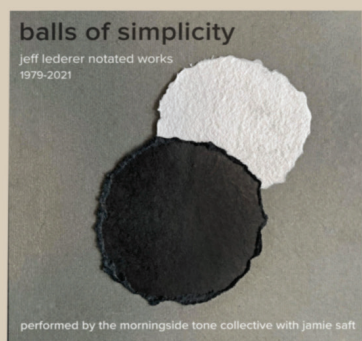
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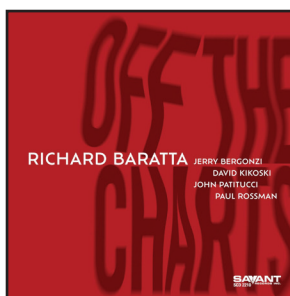
Swing Low  
Michael Dease (Posi-Tone)  
by George Kanzler

This is the debut recording of Michael Dease as a baritone saxophonist, though he's had a lengthy career as a top jazz trombonist. Like his many albums as a trombonist-leader, *Swing Low* is intelligently programmed and arranged. Dease embraces the depths of his new instrument, exploiting the deep croak and rumble at the bottom of its range. In the baritone pantheon, he favors giants who exploited the instrument's deep reservoirs of sound, such as Harry Carney and Joe Temperley, rather than the light-toned modernists following Gerry Mulligan.

The album begins and ends with examples of close musical dialogue. Dease's rendition of "Dancing in the Dark" (Dietz, Schwarz) is inspired by the duo piano recording of Bill Charlap and Renee Rosnes; here, the baritone saxophonist duets with trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, his frontline partner through most of the album. The two share the melody and trade solos of decreasing length, eventually soloing in tandem. The album closer, Gershwin's "Embraceable You", is a gorgeous low-end dialogue between Dease and bassist Boris Kozlov. The rest of the album features the full quartet (with drummer Rudy Royston) and several guest appearances by trombonist Altin Sencalar.

Of the eleven tracks, three are Dease originals plus the two aforementioned standards and six intriguing tunes by jazz composers, including Rosnes, Bill Cunliffe and Virginia MacDonald. A reading of the late trombonist-arranger Melba Liston's gorgeous ballad "Just Waiting" is notable in the way Dease and Jensen tag-team the melody. Rosnes' "Galapagos" has a distinctive stop-start hard bop theme, and Cunliffe's "Melancholia" makes perfect use of Jensen's Harmon-muted trumpet. The leader's originals include the hard-charging "Phibes' Revenge", inspired by the 1971 Vincent Price "comedy-horror cinematic gem", *The Abominable Dr. Phibes*, and "New Blues", a 20-year-old piece that explores polytonality, pedal points and graduated dissonances.

For more info visit [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com). Dease is at Dizzy's Club with the Ulysses Owens, Jr. Big Band Dec. 6-10. See Calendar.



Off the Charts  
Richard Baratta (Savant)  
by Keith Hoffman

Richard Baratta was staring down the barrel of the rest of his life; he was settling into his seat at the prep course for law school entrance exams, unenthused. On the other hand, there was Coltrane. He stood up and walked out, determined to dedicate himself to the thing he really loved: music. In a fantasy of the movie version, he sits down at his drums, works his hands bloody and claws his way up the ladder. In the final scene, he and

Miles exchange fours at the Village Vanguard. Cut to his wife and young son beaming at the front table. Fade to black. Roll credits.

But this wasn't the movies. This was the crashing New York scene of the late '60s and '70s. He got good work, but not enough of it, and he wanted to start a family. A couple of lucky breaks and a lot of hard work later, and Baratta secured himself a more than respectable three-decade career in movie production, crowning it with executive producer credits for *The Irishman* and *Joker*. But he always kept up with the scene, and of course cast himself as the drummer whenever he could. And then *The Epilogue*. At 69, he returned to his first love in earnest, releasing two movie-themed albums with first-call musicians.

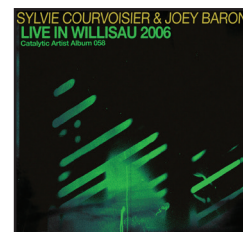
For his third leader effort, *Off the Charts*, he revisits under-appreciated tunes loved by that kid who walked out on a law career. To help him, he brought in some serious musical heavyweights: Jerry Bergonzi (tenor), David Kikoski (piano), John Patitucci (bass) and Paul Rossman (percussion). On McCoy Tyner's "Peresina" (originally from the pianist's *Expansions*, 1970), Kikoski shines, honoring Tyner's sound without mimicking it, while Rossman tastefully contributes as well. Joe Henderson's "Afro-Centric" (recorded by the tenor saxophonist on his *Power to the People*, 1969) is, however, the scintillating heart of the record. Bergonzi's outstanding lower register is almost baritone-like, and Patitucci's gut-crunching electric bass grounds everything deep in the Earth.

This is no mere vanity project. Baratta is a damn good drummer and arranger, and this album swings hard from beginning to end. Reflecting on his life coming full circle, Baratta told me, "I'm like a kid in a candy store." So it is a Hollywood ending, after all.

For more info visit [richardbaratta.com](http://richardbaratta.com). Baratta is at Zinc Bar Dec. 5. See Calendar.



The Rite of Spring - Spectre d'un songe  
Sylvie Courvoisier/Cory Smythe (Pyroclastic)  
Live in Willisau  
Sylvie Courvoisier/Joey Baron (Catalytic Artist)  
by Mike Shanley



Sylvie Courvoisier might be best known as a prolific jazz improviser who has worked in a variety of freewheeling situations as both leader and collaborator. But the Swiss-born pianist also lays claim to a long career interpreting chamber music, which has involved an emphasis on her technique rather than spontaneity. Her two recent releases put both sides of the pianist on display, blurring the line between the composer and improvising artist in the process.

A tour as an accompanist for a flamenco dancer inspired Courvoisier to work on a solo recital of Igor Stravinsky's ballet score *The Rite of Spring*, taking some liberties with the music. Upon hearing about it, the Stravinsky family informed her that the only piano performance of *Rite* must be the one the maestro wrote for two sets of 88s. Inspired by this decree, she immersed herself in the original score, while also composing her own duet to be played in tandem with it. She also found a kindred spirit in fellow pianist Cory Smythe to bring it to life.

Smythe, who also has one foot in classical music, brings a deep understanding to the project. Together they pound viscerally on the riot-inducing chords of "The Adoration of the Earth", the first of two parts of the recital. Later they virtually recreate the swirl of an orchestra in terms of timbre and harmonies. "Spectre d'un songe", Courvoisier's new work, offers 29 minutes

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that stand respectfully in the presence of the Stravinsky work. Beginning with haunted sounds that rise from the low end of the pianos, it glides into cascades of upper register notes that rain down on each other, expanding the whole idea of what two pianists can create together. Hammered chords, which evoke both Stravinsky and Cecil Taylor, are balanced by moments of open space, all the while maintaining a sense of focus.

Suspense and understatement factor into Courvoisier's previously unreleased set with drummer Joey Baron on *Live in Willisau* from the 2006 edition of the festival. In their first ever duo performance, they head into free territory and it's Courvoisier who most often sets the scene. Throughout the hour-long set, she prepares the piano strings to create metallic low-end thunder, throws angular chords at Baron, and incorporates the frame of her instrument, making it sound as if it's cracking at the seams. Baron often begins with subtle punctuation, bursting into thunder only after several minutes go by. Some tracks flow into each other, while a few come off as independent works, with applause breaks as emphasis. At times the set has considerable tension without immediate release. Yet when they blow the lids off towards the end, the climax makes the whole set work like an extended, continuous piece.

For more info visit [pyroclasticrecords.com](http://pyroclasticrecords.com) and [catalyticsound.com](http://catalyticsound.com). *Courvoisier* is at *Roulette* with *Patricia Brennan* Dec. 6, at *The Jazz Gallery* with *Mary Halvorson* Dec. 9, at *Public Records* as part of *Catalytic Sound Festival* Dec. 10, and at *The Stone* with *Ikue Mori* Dec. 13 and 17. See Calendar.



*Bridges*

Kevin Hays/Ben Street/Billy Hart (Smoke Sessions)  
by Marco Cangiano

Kevin Hays has an impeccable and varied resume. Besides being a gifted pianist and composer, who has a sharp appreciation for pop and rock music in addition to jazz, he has recorded with the likes of Chris Potter, Bill Stewart, Joshua Redman, Jeff Ballard, Nicholas Payton and Al Foster. This is the second album by the trio of Hays, Ben Street (bass) and Billy Hart (drums), and they sound very tight here, possibly the result of the one-week European tour that preceded the recording.

This album represents a sort of state of the art for what could be labeled the modern mainstream piano trio. Right from the get-go, with the exquisite, Jarrett-inspired original "Butterfly", the trio showcases its propensity for a carefully paced melodic approach. Street's deep sound is the perfect fit for Hays, and Hart seems to have hit on the magic formula for eternal youth and taste. Wayne Shorter's "Capricorn" follows, hesitantly at first but building to a fiery interpretation, with Street establishing supple support and Hart coloring the tune. But what captures the ears is Hays' careful choice of notes and avoidance of predictable patterns.

The timely "Song for Peace" is a luscious yet somber ballad embellished by Hart's understated brushwork. Once again, the music unfolds suspensefully, with pauses as significant as the notes played. There is no showboating here, only pure pleasure and empathy. They bring a certain levity to Lennon-McCartney's immortal "With a Little Help from My Friends" — an original and effective treatment. Frisell's reflective "Throughout" finds Hays in a rhapsodic mood, building on a repetitive left-hand figure, beautifully sustained by Street's long notes and Hart's sighing brushes. The

drummer's bouncy "Irah" finds the pianist at his most playful, and the sense of swing is exhilarating, while "Bridges" is a musical tribute to Milton Nascimento that metaphorically brings together different cultures, different traditions, and different generations.

This is an album to play with close attention, pausing and repeating, as this trio's music grows with each listen.

For more info visit [smokesessionsrecords.com](http://smokesessionsrecords.com). Hays is at *Saint Peter's* with *Chase Elodia* Dec. 3. See Calendar.



*Arctic Riff*

Marcin Wasilewski Trio/Joe Lovano (ECM)  
by Marilyn Lester

Tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano was baptized in music and raised in it, resulting in an astounding versatility as a player. In the company of Poland's Marcin Wasilewski Trio (Wasilewski, piano; Sławomir Kurkiewicz, bass; Michał Miśkiewicz, drums), the master easily finds his place in this album of group improvisations, originals and one standard: Carla Bley's "Vashkar". That tune has two iterations on *Arctic Riff*. On the album version, Lovano leads into the theme lyrically, and then, supported by the trio, opens things up to a free jazz fiesta of improvisation over the full range of the tenor; yet he never loses the smoothness of the track's opening, despite a retinue of rhythmic displacements, bleeps, blips and flutters. The second cut is virtually all Lovano's, the trio only entering for a few bars at the close. "Vashkar" was also played by the trio and Lovano recently at the Village Vanguard (Nov. 14), with Miśkiewicz's drumming more forward in accenting and comping. Several more numbers from *Arctic Riff* were offered at the belated NYC release concert (the album came out during the pandemic lockdown). "Old Hat" in the album version is a melodic feature for Lovano, with a brief piano interlude in the center. The live performance leaned toward stronger statements, with Lovano leaning into bop tropes and the pianist making the most of his feature in terms of speed and complexity. On both the recording and live, Wasilewski's "Glimmer of Hope" was balladic to the core, a kind of jazz chamber piece that invokes a mood of hope.

A number of album selections are collective improvisations. For anyone who's ever been a companion to a cat, or observed a cat, domesticated or stray, the fanciful improvisation "Stray Cat Walk" captures that strut to the proverbial "t." Lovano's opening lines are soon joined by a strutting bass that evokes the cadence of feline movement. Miśkiewicz' drums then enter, mirroring the bass line. (For this track, Wasilewski was content to sit out.) The saxophonist comes forward again, completing the evocation of a feline journey, which ends with one, very satisfied note from a single cymbal. Lovano's "On the Other Side" (also performed live at the Vanguard) is again highly evocative. Beginning with a call and response between the saxophonist and pianist, Lovano and the trio are quizzical, jangling, startling — together, they propel the listener into a space of harmonic imbalance. The music offers one way to grapple with the concept of the afterlife. The brilliance of the piece is that it ends with a simple musical question mark.

*Arctic Riff* is full of creativity and thoughtfulness. Is it as cool as the Arctic? Not so much; rather, the album is lyrical and warm, allowing Lovano to balance his melodic and rhythmic improvising in an especially pleasing way.

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



# DECEMBER

## MONDAYS



SOUL SESSIONS LIVE WITH  
**AHMAYA KNOELLE**  
& FRIENDS

6:30PM - 9PM

## TUESDAYS



THE  
**DEBORAH NEWALLO**  
EXPERIENCE

6:30PM - 9PM

## WEDNESDAYS



**RODRIGO BONELLI TRIO**

6PM - 8:30PM

## THURSDAYS



HARLEM LATE NIGHT JAZZ PRESENTS  
**L'ARTISTE**  
**LYNETTE WASHINGTON**

6:30PM - 8PM

## SUNDAYS



JAZZY SUNDAY WITH  
**NATE LUCAS ALL STARS**

12PM - 9PM



GOSPEL BRUNCH WITH  
**SING HARLEM**

11AM  
&  
1:30PM  
**GINNY'S**  
SUPPER CLUB

RESERVATIONS ACCEPTED:  
10AM-10:30AM (SHOWTIME 11AM)  
12:30PM-1PM (SHOWTIME 1:30PM)

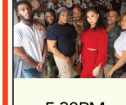
## HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

### XMAS EVE



CHRISTMAS EVE WITH  
**NATE LUCAS ALL STARS**

12PM - 9PM



CHRISTMAS EVE SPECIAL  
SOUL SESSIONS LIVE WITH  
**AHMAYA KNOELLE**  
& FRIENDS

5:30PM  
&  
8:30PM  
**GINNY'S**  
SUPPER CLUB

RESERVATIONS ACCEPTED:  
4PM-5AM (SHOWTIME 5:30PM)  
7PM-8PM (SHOWTIME 8:30PM)

### XMAS DAY



**DJ MARK LARUSH**

12PM - 5PM



CHRISTMAS DAY SPECIAL  
**RODRIGO BONELLI TRIO**

6PM - 9PM

### NEW YEAR'S EVE



**DJ LEX**

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SUBJECT TO CHANGE | \*EVENT IN GINNY'S SUPPER CLUB



**Liberated Gesture**  
Yuhan Su (Sunnyside)  
by Ken Waxman

Energized after a six-month residency in Paris and a pandemic-era sojourn in her native Taiwan, vibraphonist Yuhan Su organized this New York-based quintet to perform the new music she composed during that period. The pieces include a three-part suite, tributes to particular artistic inspirations, and a setting of her own poem (here voiced by alto saxophonist Caroline Davis).

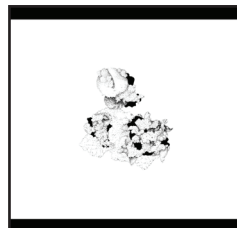
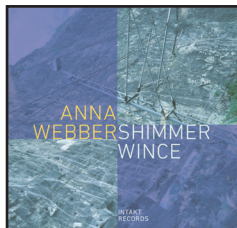
Davis, one of the young veterans in the group, contributes straight-ahead story-telling, twittering affirmations and sliding reed variations. Pianist Matt Mitchell switches easily from measured formalism to expressive patterning. Bassist Marty Kenney punctuates the rhythmic flow, and adds a slinky electric bass line to drummer Dan Weiss' backbeat on "Hassan's Fashion Magazine". As for Su, she favors a bright, minimalist style with touches of Milt Jackson-like swing.

Weiss' rhythms are more deliberate on other tracks, a series of press rolls and power pops that carefully push the program forward. He's particularly effective on "Siren Days", providing ballast for Su's affirmative metal echoes and Davis' widening reed slurs and trills. Such close pairings are present on most of the disc, as the vibraphonist's

sparkling emphasis is either replicated by Mitchell's graceful comping or melded with the saxophone's swells and slithers. Su's three-part title track introduces more balladic and measured impressionism to the program.

If criticism could be directed towards the session, it's that except for some very brief dips into romanticism, deeper emotions could have been expressed. Still, *Liberated Gesture* demonstrates Su's consistent gifts for composing and playing, and offers an accomplished example of contemporary small-group jazz.

For more info visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com). Su's album release concert is at The Jazz Gallery Dec. 13. See Calendar.



**Shimmer Wince**  
Anna Webber (Intakt)  
**Capacious Aeration**  
Anna Webber/Matt Mitchell (Tzadik)  
by Mike Shanley

Anna Webber's prior two albums, *Idiom* and *Clockwise*, did a great deal to highlight the tenor saxophonist/flutist's idiosyncratic compositions. The pieces on the former were built on specific extended techniques utilized by woodwind players, while the latter took inspiration from percussion compositions by 20th century composers such as Stockhausen. If anything was lacking in either these strong releases, it was the chance to hear Webber the tenor saxophonist stretch out. Her performances usually placed

her within an ensemble, not at the forefront and even there, her tenor was often put aside in favor of flute or bass flute. Both these newer releases rectify that situation and offer more saxophone moments while additionally emphasizing new approaches to composition.

*Shimmer Wince* was inspired by Webber's studies of just intonation, the ancient tuning system based on the harmonics and resonances of notes. She states in her liner notes that she "wanted the music to feel playful and open, almost like a collection of incredibly bizarre standards." Played by a quintet that includes Adam O'Farrill (trumpet), Mariel Roberts (cello), Elias Stemeseder (synthesizer) and Lesley Mok (drums), the music fits that description, presenting sonic structures in which themes and countermelodies regularly shift between players with little transition. The musicians often repeat simple two-note intervals that are based on just intonation, but the music never gets repetitive. The long tones from the two horn players that open "Swell" might not resemble a standard but they feel accessible enough. Throughout, the two solo in a manner that feels both puzzling and beguiling, in part because they often finish as the music moves into a second phase, and the scene changes. "Periodicity 1" features one of Webber's best moments, with a pleading line that maintains its beauty. Stemeseder adds unique twists that range from fulfilling bass duties to adding sci-fi soundtrack textures that Sun Ra might have played on a broken celeste.

The leader spends more than half of *Capacious Aeration* playing flute, while three of her four contributions focus on tenor. The music that she and pianist Matt Mitchell contribute to this album resides in the gray area where chamber music and free improvisation commingle, with neither quite coming out on top. If the final results seem turbulent and unsettled, that's likely part of the idea. Even when they seem to be moving on different rhythmic tracks, the duo implies a connection between parts. Webber's tenor

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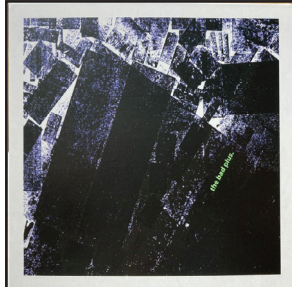
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ranges from throaty and wistful (“Maximum Cadence”) to jagged (“Zooquaria”). The pianist’s work can sound a bit knotted, but in “Most Capacious” (a Webber original), he still makes rapid lines engaging. Mitchell’s 28-minute “Re-Aeration”, his sole composition, takes up half the album. Consisting of multiple movements and pregnant pauses, it begins with piano ostinatos and ends with several murmurs that feels like the duo can’t come to a decisive ending. The trick endings come off feeling a bit unfocused, especially considering what preceded them.

For more info visit [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch) and [tzadik.com](http://tzadik.com). Webber is at Scholes Street Studio Dec. 2 and Ibeam Brooklyn Dec. 18. See Calendar.



s/t  
**The Bad Plus (Edition)**  
by Zachary Weg

This is arguably the most serious album yet by the New York jazz futurists The Bad Plus. It’s an intense listening experience, but also accessible and warm. In a sense, it’s still the band that once doled out unique renditions of David Bowie and Nirvana songs, when Ethan Iverson was playing piano. Yet, with its modern quartet lineup, which includes Ben Monder (guitar), Chris Speed (tenor, clarinet) and founding members Reid Anderson (bass) and Dave King (drums), they’ve become noticeably more introspective.

“Motivations II” opens the record and sets its meditative tone. Starting with a serpentine intro from Anderson, the song begins to simmer as King enters with cymbals that sizzle and swish. By the time Monder steps in and unspools strings of pearls from his five-stringed electric, The Bad Plus show that they’ve lost none of the finesse that they first exhibited upon their arrival on the New York jazz scene over 20 years ago. Tracks such as “Sun Wall,” with its frenetic horn intro and “Not Even Close to Far Off”, under its tumbling drums, show that Anderson and co. are still restlessly innovative. “Sick Fire” has a rambunctious start, then traverses thrilling free jazz territory with rapid drumming and whirling horns. On album closer “The Dandy”, Speed skips along while King taps cymbals, the band inching towards the future with all of the youthful abandon of their previous incarnation. This band may be several albums in, but they’re just getting started.

For more info visit [editionrecords.com](http://editionrecords.com). The Bad Plus is at The Sultan Room Dec. 2-3. See Calendar.



**One for Wes**  
**Mimi Fox Organ Trio (Origin)**  
by Pierre Giroux

The guitarist Mimi Fox has consistently demonstrated a deep appreciation for the artistry of the legendary Wes Montgomery. Now, as a celebration of the guitarist’s centennial, she has released *One for Wes*, which serves as a heartfelt tribute to the iconic musician, showcasing her

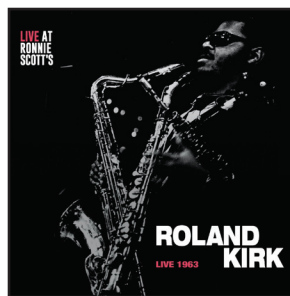
exceptional skill and versatility across various musical styles. Accompanied by Brian Ho (Hammond B3 organ) and Lorca Hart (drums), the album pays homage to Montgomery’s musical style while allowing Fox to express her own creative flair.

The repertoire consists of six original compositions and three covers. Opening track, “Mr. White’s Blues”, rolls merrily along: the leader shows she is a champion of her instrument and, together with Ho, builds the harmonic framework from the ground up. The two work hand in glove with an overall breezy command of the material. Bobby Timmons’ jazz standard “Moanin’” opens with stop-and-start fragments before the organist picks up the groove, while “Blues for Les” has a down-home feel, thanks to Lorca who lays down a strong backbeat. This trio has an audibly solid grounding in the blues, as heard in “Blues for Us” which additionally reveals the close listening evident among all three musicians.

Fox’ original “For Django, Avec Amour” is an homage to the great Romani-French guitarist. Interestingly switching to acoustic guitar, her solo has a more dramatic and athletic expressivity. Ho’s solo is reflective and relaxed and showcases nicely structured choruses. The album closer successfully combines two pop songs: Lennon/McCartney’s classic “In My Life” and Paul Simon’s “Old Friends”.

Through her musicianship and enthusiastic interpretations, Mimi Fox has created a compelling and evocative musical journey with *One For Wes*.

For more info visit [originarts.com](http://originarts.com). Fox’ album release concert featuring Houston Person is at Dizzy’s Club Dec. 1. See Calendar.



**Live at Ronnie Scott's, 1963**  
**Roland Kirk (Gearbox)**  
by Robert Iannopollo

The year 1963 was a good one for (not yet Rahsaan) Roland Kirk. He had a steady stream of releases coming out on the Mercury label and two of his finest albums had appeared in 1962: *Domino* and *We Free Kings*. In 1963, he also released *Reeds & Deeds* and made a stellar guest appearance on Roy Haynes’ quartet album *Out of the Afternoon*. And in the fall of 1963, sixty years ago, he went on a tour of Europe, appearing with local rhythm sections, which sometimes included American players who happened to be in Europe at the time.

Surprisingly, not much has been released from that tour, apart from the Mercury album *Kirk in Copenhagen*. But seemingly out of the blue, a live set recorded on October 15, 1963, at Ronnie Scott’s in London has surfaced as a vinyl-only release from the UK/Tokyo-based Gearbox label. Kirk is accompanied by some of Britain’s finest: Stan Tracey (piano), Malcolm Cecil (bass) and Ronnie Stephenson (drums). None of the tracks here duplicates the Copenhagen sets. They include the only known recording of Kirk playing Duke Ellington’s “Angelica” (aka “Purple Gazelle”), and it’s a tasty, nearly 10-minute version that’s nicely harmonized. The remainder includes the standard “Close Your Eyes” (featuring a manzello solo), the then-current pop song (Kirk always included those) “Days of Wine and Roses”, and Kirk’s own “Three for the Festival”, a piece that remained in his sets well into the ’70s.

Kirk’s brief but humorous introductions are preserved. Though Tracey is a bit under-mic’d, the recording is generally good and a worthwhile addition to the discography of Kirk (who passed away 46 years ago this month). One only wishes more music from this night had been preserved.

For more info visit [gearboxrecords.com](http://gearboxrecords.com)

## ON SCREEN



**Wayne Shorter Zero Gravity**  
**Dorsay Alavi (Amazon Documentary)**  
by Anna Steegmann

Distraught fans of jazz legend Wayne Shorter, who died this March at 89, will find solace in Dorsay Alavi’s cinematic tribute to him. Alavi met Shorter in 1995 when she directed the video for his album *High Life* and three decades of friendship gave her unique insights and access. She was also able to enlist Brad Pitt as the executive producer.

The three-hour mini-series covers three distinct periods of Shorter’s personal and creative life. Alavi sees it as “a story about how a man grew to greatness.” The documentary contains concert footage, film clips, interviews, Shorter’s vivid recollections, reenactments in which Shorter’s brother (the late, great trumpeter Alan Shorter) and parents are played by actors, and animation that uses surreal imagery to give a visual representation of Shorter’s music. Joni Mitchell, Carlos Santana, Herbie Hancock, Sonny Rollins, Renée Fleming, Reggie Workman, Terence Blanchard, Jimmy Heath and many others share memories and their understanding of the saxophonist’s genius that helped define the sounds of distinct periods in jazz history. Shorter’s biographer Michelle Mercer (*Footprints: The Life and Work of Wayne Shorter*) also participates.

Part 1 covers Shorter’s beginnings. As a kid, he loved comic books, sci-fi movies and radio, where he heard bebop for the first time. At the Newark Arts High School, he cut classes to go to the movies and played clarinet and later saxophone. He studied classical composition at NYU and was thrilled to join Horace Silver’s band when he came out of the army. We see him playing with Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers and Miles Davis. He speaks about his first marriage, the birth of his daughter, the death of his father and falling in love with his second wife.

Part 2 covers the time from 1970 to 1999. While Shorter had massive success with Weather Report, he also experienced enormous tragedy: his daughter Iska died of a grand mal seizure at 13; his second wife was killed in the 1996 TWA 800 plane crash; and his mother and brother died in rapid succession. Buddhist practices and beliefs helped him cope and build resiliency.

Part 3 has superb performance footage. We witness Shorter carving out new territory as a bandleader (his quartet with Danilo Pérez, John Patitucci and Brian Blade), becoming a wise elder with a childlike love for superheroes and fairies and finding happiness with his third wife.

*Wayne Shorter Zero Gravity* is a marvelous film, undoubtedly one of the best made about a jazz musician and proof of Dave Holland’s words that “his music will outlast all of us.”

For more info visit...

[amazon.com/Wayne-Shorter-Zero-Gravity/dp/B0BX3YRTDX](https://amazon.com/Wayne-Shorter-Zero-Gravity/dp/B0BX3YRTDX). Shorter tributes are at Blue Note with Dave Pietro Dec. 3 and at Soapbox Gallery with Albert Marques and Ben Sherman Dec. 30. See Calendar.

## DROP THE NEEDLE



Cannes '58  
Paris '58

**Donald Byrd & Bobby Jaspar (Sam/INA)**  
by Fred Bouchard

The post-World War II jazz diaspora was alive and in full bop around Europe in the '50s. Cannes and Paris were hot-spots where the French went all ears for *le dernier cri* from the hip Yanks across the pond. These previously unreleased dates show trumpeter Donald Byrd (born 90 years ago this month) near the top of his bop game at 26, lyrical and thoughtful, long before his later successes in funk and R&B fusion idioms with the Blackbyrds. His bandmates were trusted regulars: Walter Davis, Jr. (piano), Doug Watkins (bass) and Art Taylor (drums). The ringer was 'elder' (at 32), Belgian-born reedman Bobby Jaspar; an emigré to New York in 1956, he'd recorded with Gil Fuller, J. J. Johnson and Miles Davis. These deluxe LPs, in slick packaging with gatefold photos and no liner notes, document both festival and studio performances.

Byrd's quintet kicked off its busy 1958 tour with a flurry of festivals in Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Germany and (on July 11) the first and only jazzfest at Cannes, the Riviera jet-set mecca. From the downbeat, the band takes an exhilarating turn through Cole Porter's "I Get a Kick Out of You": waltz-then-stop-time head, lickety-split solos, ripping fours with Taylor. Jaspar's pretty flute feature, "It Could Happen to You", shows a flourishing wit. Taylor's martial snare paces Jaspar's featherlight "Long to You", as Byrd blows fast and tight and Jaspar flaunts his spurs on tenor as a Stan Getz/Zoot Sims advocate. (His long discography notes that he rarely played flute before moving stateside.) "Flute Bop", based on "I'll Remember April", shows off more flute, Taylor's brushwork, Byrd's cornet and a shining Davis. The trumpeter has a tender ballad feature, and a Basie shuffle leads to "Boogie Woogie", a hip Dizzy-esque blues that brings down the house.

In Paris the band seems more laid-back, following comfy gigs at the jazz club Au Chat Qui Pêche and a concert at Olympia Theater, the prime destination for transatlantic stars. Byrd slated time to study composition with renowned teacher Nadia Boulanger. We hear French Radio's crisp tape of the band for its TV series *Jazz aux Champs-Élysées*. Staunch locals (Jack Diéval, piano; Jacques Hess, bass; Daniel Humair, drums) were recruited to back the horns on "Paul's Pal", an amiable Sonny Rollins tune showing Jaspar's avuncular Al Cohn side; an up-tempo "After You've Gone" that displays Byrd's masterful chops and dazzling drumming from Humair; and a shorter "Flute Bop" marred by mic imbalance. The Yanks blow through two neat, snappy Davis charts and Robin-Rainger's "Easy Living"; I'm betting on Davis again for the floridly romantic arrangement that admirably showcases the horns.

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



**The Extra Something (Live at the Village Vanguard)**  
**Enrico Pieranunzi Quintet (CAM Jazz)**  
by Scott Yanow

The veteran Italian pianist Enrico Pieranunzi (who turns 74 this month) has recorded at least 60 albums as leader since 1975, of which around 40 have been since 2000. Along the way he has worked with numerous Americans (Chet Baker, Johnny Griffin, Art Farmer, Jim Hall, Lee Konitz, Phil Woods, Charlie Haden, et al.), but most often he has recorded at the head of a trio, in duos or as solo pianist. The performances on the previously unreleased *The Extra Something* come from a residency at the Village Vanguard from Jan. 13-14, 2016. And there seems to be no evident musical reason why this material has sat on the shelf for this long.

The pianist teams up here with Diego Urcola (trumpet, trombone), Seamus Blake (tenor), Ben Street (bass) and Adam Cruz (drums) for a set of seven originals. While the pianist has sometimes been compared to Bill Evans, he sounds here somewhat closer to McCoy Tyner actually, but mostly just sounds like himself. The set begins with the uptempo "Blue Afternoon", notable for its heated trumpet solo and hard-driving tenor. "The Extra Something", in 6, is often quite intense: Blake wails and Urcola's trumpet screams recall Freddie Hubbard; the leader Pieranunzi ventures a little outside during his brief solo.

Some of the other pieces find the quintet sounding a bit like some of their predecessors: "Atoms" has the group hinting at Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, while the tenor/trombone frontline on "Entropy" echoes the Jazz Crusaders. Of the other selections, "The Real You" is an adventurous ballad, "Song for Kenny" features a lyrical melody that one could imagine the late trumpeter Kenny Wheeler playing and the rollicking "Five Plus Five" could pass for an Ornette Coleman tune. Pieranunzi is generous in featuring the two horn players throughout the album, so much so that one wishes he took longer solos. However, since the pianist is well featured on countless other albums, it is easy to enjoy this one for what it is: a burning quintet set by some of today's top jazz artists.

For more info visit [camjazz.com](http://camjazz.com)



**Echolocation**  
**Mendoza Hoff Revels (AUM Fidelity)**  
by Marc Medwin

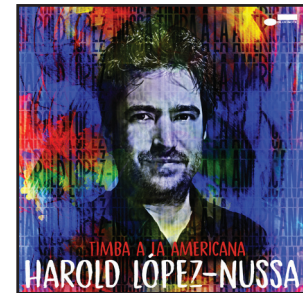
*Mendoza Hoff Revels* is a quartet led by guitarist Ava Mendoza and bassist Devin Hoff (who also compose the band's book), joined by tenor saxophonist James Brandon Lewis and drummer Ches Smith. Each brings sonic diversity to the table, but more important is their ability to blend as part of a thrillingly varied ensemble. Dig deep into the opening salvo of "New Ghosts" to hear saxophone and strings erect a wall of sound miles-

thick but wrought of strong and delicate metal. It's all re-enforced tenfold when Smith enters during a melodic reiteration, his playing metrically free yet restrained and supportive.

That controlled freedom accounts for the disc's multivalent success, especially in creating explorative spaces that blur time and style in the service of gorgeously constructed compositional frameworks. Genre is always asserting itself only to be sublimated. The grungily distorted, resonantly protean bass solo on "Ten Forward" brings the '90s into focus while the saxophone and guitar's serpentine lines conjure the slinky beauty of Ornette Coleman's late '50s compositions. It's all awash in cymbal and guitar haze that would make the indie rock band Low proud, but the concluding loops and obscured articulations bring '70s ambient works into the heady mix.

The album steps, bounces and leaps forward in masterfully herded loose association. Hoff commences "The Stumble" sounding like Hatfield and the North-era Richard Sinclair, but as Mendoza and Lewis lengthen licks into lines against Smith's rapid-fire swing, Henry Cow's first album glides into focus while guitarist Mendoza hammers home allusions to contemporaneous Frank Zappa ventures. Yet, and best of all, no single influence overshadows the rest, and none obscures band interaction. Despite overriding heat and loads of distortion, no one genre becomes determinate. From King Crimson to Albert Ayler and back again, each piece rides history like the rollercoaster it is. These eight teapot tempests are brewed by a quartet equally adept in sonic signifiers and the complex histories birthing them.

For more info visit [aumfidelity.com](http://aumfidelity.com). The album release concert is at Union Hall Dec. 13. See Calendar.



**Timba a la Americana**  
**Harold López-Nussa (Blue Note)**  
by Russ Musto

The latest effort from Harold López-Nussa finds the Cuban-born pianist exploring a new sound in his music — one deeply rooted in the traditions of his homeland, but pushing the sound of Latin jazz into the future. At the suggestion of the date's producer, Snarky Puppy founder Michael League, López-Nussa is heard recording for the first time on Fender Rhodes, in addition to the acoustic piano on which he is an absolute virtuoso. League's various synthesizers further enrich the date, which features the leader's working band: Grégoire Maret (chromatic harmonica), Luques Curtis (bass), brother Ruy Adrián Lopez-Nussa (drums) and guest Bárbaro (Machito) Crespo (percussion).

The album opener "Funky" flawlessly exemplifies the leader's visionary musical perspective. An electrifying episodic adventure, it begins with him charging straight ahead with an unaccompanied acoustic piano intro that is equal parts Bud Powell and Eddie Palmieri, before the band joins in seamlessly blending Afro-Cuban and straight-ahead jazz components that buoy Maret's wailing harmonica solo. "Cake a la Moda" follows in kind, starting off with a chanted mambo that flows into a pretty melody. League's "Rat-a-Tat" is a rocking percussion-fueled tour de force that is followed by "Conga a la Americana", a pulsating Latin jazz excursion rooted in Cuba's dance music tradition.

The pianist pays further tribute to his homeland on "Afro en Toulouse", which begins with bata drums

and a vocal chant that harkens to the island's Santeria rituals. The band lets loose on "Tumba la Timba", a no-holds-barred rumbafied outing. The mood calms on the piano-harmonica duet "Mamá", then ramps back up on "Tierra Mia", a festive clave-driven jaunt. The celebratory atmosphere persists on closer, "Hope", which merges the sound of New Orleans gospel and R&B with the spirit of Cuba.

The album's release concert was marked at the Blue Note (Nov. 6) with a performance by the core quartet. The exhilarating sound of the music remained undiminished despite the absence of synths and congas, as the band members stretched out with extended solos on "Funky", "Conga a la Americana", "Mal du Pays" and "Hope", garnering raucous cheers from the audience. For the encore, fellow Cuban pianist Axel Tosca joined Lopez-Nussa on stage, the pair taking turns switching between piano and Fender Rhodes for "Tierra Mia".

For more info visit [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)



**Live From Brooklyn Bowl**  
**The Headhunters (Ropeadope)**  
Kosen Rufu  
**Mike Clark (Wide Hive)**  
by George Grella

This has been quite a year for drummer Mike Clark, who'd already released three albums in 2023 before this pair appeared. As solid as the previous records were, they seem in retrospect to be mere footnotes to these two, which together paint a clear and deeper picture of the artist. It's all there musically—the post-hard bop swing, the funk, the rock—framed in his personal history. That history has been tied to the Herbie Hancock funk repertoire band The Headhunters and in particular to percussionist Bill Summers. The pair first appeared together on Hancock's 1974 album *Thrust*, and are the constant foundation of The Headhunters (which has been independent of Hancock since their 1977 album *Survival of the Fittest*).

*Live From Brooklyn Bowl*, recorded February of this year, celebrates the band's 50th anniversary (Harvey Mason was the first drummer, back in 1973). The current lineup fronts the great Donald Harrison (alto, vocals on "Hey Pocky A-Way"), Kyle Roussel (keyboards) and Chris Severin (bass). The band's sound is up to date, which was reinforced at their live show this October at Cafe Wha? featuring DJ Logic, who joined the band, adding timbres and underlining the grooves from his turntables. The album and live sets shared about half the material. "Watermelon Man", with Summers' percussion and pipes intro, is an album standout track and was, not surprisingly, also a concert highlight. The curiosity at the show was an arrangement of Wayne Shorter's "E.S.P." that filled out the slender original with more funk and chords—intriguing at first, but also a bit of a pullback from the band's essence, which is funk for both the mind... and the hips.

Clark and Summers fit subdivided rhythmic details together, while Roussel and Severin are a fine duo and judicious with providing space in the music. This isn't dense funk. It's sinewy, which ideally suits Harrison: the saxophonist always proves to have something meaningful to say. Every note has a purpose, and he knows how to build, from a mellow, almost casual start to a raging fire. Harrison also brings out the New Orleans flavor in the funk, something inherent in Clark's and Summer's playing.

*Kosen Rufu* goes further into Clark's history. The lineup—with Eddie Henderson (trumpet), Skerik

(saxophones), Wayne Horvitz (keyboards), and Henry Franklin (bass) plus Summers as a guest on a few tracks—has a strong flavor of Hancock's mid '60s Blue Note era. The grooves are elegant and sophisticated, hip modern jazz. This is in a way a Tony Williams tribute album. Clark has deep roots in Williams' skittering, precise, march-like drumming; it's one of the things that makes him an exceptionally flexible partner. They play Dolphy's "Hat and Beard", in which Clark does an incredible job of recreating Williams' drum part from the original, not copying per se but rather the concept of taking existing material and breathing new life and relevance into it. There's some out-soloing on this selection, too, though the rest of the album is an impeccable straight-ahead modern jazz workout. There's a graceful ballad, "Distance Between Leaves", and the funk track "Signature" has a most personal stamp, revealing the band here is truly speaking in its own voice. A quick return to hard bop proves the album's one flaw: it's too long, going on nearly an additional 15 minutes after the funk has danced you off the floor.

For more info visit [ropeadope.com](http://ropeadope.com) and [widehive.com](http://widehive.com)



**Continuing**  
**Tyshawn Sorey Trio (Pi Recordings)**  
by Terrell K. Holmes

A superficial listen to *Continuing* might suggest it's simply a tribute to three composers who recently left us: Wayne Shorter, Ahmad Jamal and Harold Mabern. But homage is only one element, and not the primary one. This album is best described as a series of four extended, carefully crafted meditations. The shortest of the four tracks clocks in at over ten minutes, and over each piece's duration the band mines every possibility the song offers.

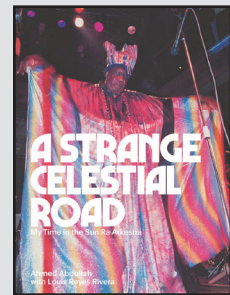
The trio downshifts "Reincarnation Blues", one of Shorter's countless hard bop blueprints, to something slow and seductive. Sorey's drumming drives Jamal's "Seleritus", and gradually he folds in the irresistible rhythm of "Poinciana", Jamal's signature piece. Pianist Aaron Diehl goes off on a swirling, spiraling orchestral run that recalls Franz Liszt. Matt Brewer's plucked bass and Sorey's brushes mark the sad, inexorable march of time in "Angel Eyes" (Dennis, Brent), a heartfelt dirge to lost love. The trio then moves to "In What Direction Are You Headed", a straight-up workout on Mabern's boogaloo/funk anthem.

This trio has been together for some time now, so they understand timing, shading and how to build intensity and tension. Melodies emerge gradually, are delayed and transformed and ultimately revealed. Brewer's playing throughout is articulate, nimble and bluesy. Diehl, a first-call pianist in both the jazz and classical worlds, can play with refinement or barrelhouse-piano robustness. And Sorey's drumming is as masterful as ever, a case study in complexity without pretension.

Each track on *Continuing* shows how jazz can step away from its theme/solos/theme template and ask the listener to, well, listen. Some might complain that the songs are repetitive; they are so in the way that Ravel's "Bolero" is repetitive. Layers are revealed, textures emerge, colors become bolder and the music shifts and intensifies to a rewarding conclusion.

For more info visit [pirecordings.com](http://pirecordings.com). Sorey is at 92NY with JACK Quartet Dec. 16. See Calendar.

## IN PRINT



**A Strange Celestial Road:**  
**My Time in the Sun Ra Arkestra**  
**Ahmed Abdullah with Louis Reyes Rivera**  
(Blank Forms)  
by Kurt Gottschalk

Judging books by their covers is a two-way street; literary consumers are guaranteed to do so, just as they do at the fruit stand, picking red, red apples and nice, yellow bananas. And given that inevitability, books would be well-advised to dress appropriately.

Ahmed Abdullah's *A Strange Celestial Road* comes in a beautiful slipcover with his old boss, the legendary, mythical bandleader Sun Ra, in a rainbow robe with arms outstretched. The pages are nicely appealing as well, laid out with a wide gutter and the text pushed to the edges. It's an attractive volume. The subtitle reinforces the implicit promise: "My Time in the Sun Ra Arkestra."

It's not a short book, over 500 pages, and it could have been cut down considerably had it actually kept to Abdullah's time in the Sun Ra Arkestra. An amended subtitle, "My Time In and Out of the Sun Ra Arkestra," would have been a fairer cop. Abdullah spent considerable chunks of his career outside the mothership, and he gives the same, considerable scrutiny to those years. His own peccadillos and indiscretions, however, the boasting and blaming, don't hold a fraction of the intrigue.

But nobody can make you read those chapters (although a sense of obligation forced this reporter to do so). Between those sections is the first written account to come from within the Arkestra's operations. Ra was a self-proclaimed sage and the devotion of his band members approached cult-like status. Abdullah does an excellent job of portraying the composer/philosopher (who was given to autobiographical reinvention—coming from Saturn no doubt brought some extra followers into his musical fold) as a human, both fallible and inspirational.

Abdullah has valuable insights to offer, such as the failure to build stars with public profiles within the band (as Basie and Ellington did), keeping the musicians dependent on the band for employment, and leaving the band without a plan for surviving its leader. Ra's ultimate decline and the infighting that followed are some of the strongest parts of the book, even if it's also there that the narrator's bitterness comes through. It's an imperfect book. Fortunately, we still have John Szwed's bio *Space Is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*. Taken together, the two books make a more balanced, 1,000+ page profile of the jazz visionary who invited us all to travel the spaceways.

For more info visit [blankforms.org](http://blankforms.org). Abdullah's *Diaspora* is at Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew Dec. 14 and Brooklyn Circus Dec. 15. See Calendar.

(LEST WE FORGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

Party and gained new audiences and an Emmy as the evil Yzma in *The Emperor's New Groove* and its TV spinoff *The Emperor's New School*.

The 1962 album *Bad But Beautiful* (a recent reissue on Verve/UMe) is an excellent example of Kitt's artistry, featuring repertoire that delves into various facets of the mating game, from pursuit to profitable retreat. In that voice that is uniquely hers, Kitt demands an excess of things material and male in "All I Want Is All There Is and Then Some". "Do It Again" and "It's Nice to Have a Man Around the House" continued Kitt's seduction of her listener. As with her cabaret acts, many of the songs are Broadway tunes chosen to highlight her storytelling and acting skills. Her annual engagement at the Café Carlyle, which persisted until she was 80, captured the essence of her dual existence. Live recordings from these sessions, featuring songs "All by Myself", "Here's to Life" and "I'm Still Here", encapsulate the rawness of a life marked by rejection and an unyielding desire to be seen and heard. Dry wit permeates songs such as "An Englishman Needs Time", where she explores a loneliness born from the larger-than-life persona she created, a persona that, in her words, "intimidates men." Yet, she refuses to compromise for love, a poignant irony explored in the 1982 documentary *All by Myself: The Eartha Kitt Story*, which reveals that the singer's most enduring relationship was with her daughter, Kitt Shapiro.

Eartha Kitt explored the myth of Black women's hyper-sexuality through her stage persona. In reality, she founded the Kittsville Foundation, a youth charity teaching African dance, and championed Black, youth and LGBTQ rights as a single parent raising her daughter. Her insistence on owning a home with land, where she raised chickens and grew organic food, contradicted the lavish jewels she craved on stage. Remembrances from neighbors and her daughter portray a shy and kind Eartha, a far cry from the commanding presence that could captivate a room with a flutter of her false eyelashes. Her legacy resides in her extraordinary body of work including her memoirs *Thursday's Child, Alone with Me* and *I'm Still Here: Confessions of a Sex Kitten*, along with her self-help book *Rejuvenate (It's Never Too Late)*.

Despite her talent and longevity, Eartha Kitt was rarely awarded the top honors in the industries in which she worked so hard. Twice-nominated, a posthumous Grammy would certainly be fitting.

For more info visit [simplyeartha.com](http://simplyeartha.com)

**Recommended Listening:**

- Eartha Kitt – "That Bad Eartha" (with Henri René and His Orchestra) (RCA Victor, 1953)
- Eartha Kitt (with Shorty Rogers and His Giants) – *St. Louis Blues* (RCA Victor, 1958)
- Eartha Kitt – *Bad But Beautiful* (MGM-Verve, 1962)
- Eartha Kitt – *In Person at The Plaza* (GNP Crescendo, 1965)
- Eartha Kitt – *Live in London* (Ariola, 1989)
- Eartha Kitt – *Live at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival* (Strike Force Entertainment, 2008)

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

Ari Roland (bass) came into the band when I was there, too. And yes, Betty could be hard on cats. But we got along great because I knew the music from the first day. Like I said, I came in ready to go. And I had already been on the road, so I kind of knew what it took to make things happen. I've got to say, she at first may have seemed intimidating, but then she was a softy and she was cool. As long as you did your job, everything was cool. But if you didn't do

your job, then you had shit to worry about! There was that mental aspect of playing in the band, too. If she knew you were weak, she would lay on your ass all the time. She knew that if she had a spot where she could mess with you, she would do that. For me she didn't really have that because I kept to myself and when we talked, I talked about just enough music to let her know what was up, but then not too much so that she could say, "All you do is listen to the music. That's why you sound like you're playing old stuff." I was always listening to different things too.

**TNYCJR:** And after Betty, who was next?

**Hutchinson:** Roy Hargrove, my man!... I think we changed the jazz scene in the '90s, after Wynton came and Branford, but we were younger. The "young lions" thing was applied and Roy, well he was an incredible trumpet player, an incredible person, just a spirit—and he wrote some killer music. There's an album just out now [recorded in 1993] that we did live at Lincoln Center called *The Love Suite: In Mahogany* (Blue Engine). I listened to it the other day and I swear I will put me and Rodney Whitaker up against any bass and drum team ever! I was in the airport listening to it and, I had such a smile on my face, people were looking at me like I'm crazy. I was like, damn, this shit was done in the early '90s and it sounds better than a lot of the shit that is out now.

**TNYCJR:** Yeah, I miss Roy. Who was in that band with you?

**Hutchinson:** At first, Antonio Hart, Roy, Marc Cary, me and Rodney. Then Antonio left and Ron Blake came in. Marc left and Peter Martin came in. I always got him on gigs that I was on because he can play. Marc did come back again and we did this record: Roy, Joshua Redman, Stanley Turrentine, Ron Blake... it was crazy: *Tenors of Our Time* (Verve, 1994).

**TNYCJR:** And you were Joshua's drummer for quite a bit.

**Hutchinson:** Twenty years with me, (Brian) Blade and Eric Harland at different times. Joshua is particular about drums. So we had a nice run. Now he's got a brand new band. I think Blade might be playing some, but he's using some of the younger cats, also. It's super nice that the younger cats get a chance to experience the genius of Joshua. I mean, he's really, truly a genius.

**TNYCJR:** Okay, other than Ray Brown (in addition to a shopping list of others: Harry Connick, Jr., John Scofield, Freddie Hubbard, Cedar Walton, Eric Reed, Common, et al.), there's Joe Henderson. You were on the *Lush Life* record.

**Hutchinson:** That was the record we did of Strayhorn's music, arrangements by Don Sickler. Yeah, it was great, man. That changed my career. Really gave me a chance to get out there to meet more people, and it was healing because it also was a resurgence for Joe, you know. And so to do those recordings definitely was really great for all of us to be part of it. And for Joe, it really helped to help his career, too.

**TNYCJR:** And Ray Brown?

**Hutchinson:** Yeah. The great Ray Brown. He was actually before Joshua. Ray was great because I met Ray on a cruise playing with Roy. And so Ray remembered years later, and then Kenny Washington and Lewis Nash recommended me. So when I got in the band, "Hammer" Jeff Hamilton was just leaving,

and Ray said to me, "You know, I want you to do you, all that stuff you were playing with Roy. That's what I want."

**TNYCJR:** I guess you learned a lot about the music business from Ray, too.

**Hutchinson:** Oh, yeah. The music business was essential. [Pianist] Benny Green was in the band, so super cool. Those are times where you can't really replace them. Like those guys, between Ray and Benny, there was so much knowledge that I was being exposed to, so it was awesome for me to just sit there, listen and learn.

**TNYCJR:** Talk about how Ray told you, "you have to know your worth".

**Hutchinson:** Yeah. And you know, if you don't, people will just kind of walk over you. Then you keep playing for the same money your whole life and that's not gonna work. So you got to really know what's going on out here and pay attention. And so that's what I did. For me, it was really killing to really understand how to negotiate contracts and all that kind of stuff, you know?

**TNYCJR:** And after that you played with Christian (McBride).

**Hutchinson:** Yes, with Christian for a while. We made a great record, *A Family Affair* (Verve, 1998). And we still do a Ray Brown tribute, and that's coming up at the Vanguard this month. So that's always good to pay homage to somebody that we love.

**TNYCJR:** How long have you been doing that?

**Hutchinson:** A couple of years, when everyone's schedule works out and we get it together. It gives us a chance to, like I said, pay homage to the master. And this time we've got a week. We might have to do some other tunes, I mean in the tradition of Ray.

**TNYCJR:** And talk about your new record *DA BANG*.

**Hutchinson:** *DA BANG* is a culmination of my life, music that I grew up listening to, which is popular music, urban hip hop, R&B, everything. But, you know, music is music to me. And every kind of music has a swing to it. So I just wanted to do a record that wasn't a jazz one because everyone knows me for that. I wanted to go with a genre that was going to be a little different. I was signed by Warner Brothers Germany, and we put this record together. I had Karriem Riggins produce it and we got a bunch of people on it. It's been percolating for years and finally we got it done and put it out. It's been out for a little bit doing well and [I'm] just trying to keep the momentum. I'm really trying to get my music out there for the people to hear.

For more info visit [openstudiojazz.com](http://openstudiojazz.com). Hutchinson is at Village Vanguard with Christian McBride's "Remembering Ray Brown" Dec. 5-10. See Calendar.

**Recommended Listening:**

- Joe Henderson – *Lush Life (The Music of Billy Strayhorn)* (Verve, 1991)
- Roy Hargrove – *The Love Suite: In Mahogany* (Jazz Engine, 1993)
- Ray Brown Trio – *Live at Scullers* (Telarc Jazz, 1996)
- Joshua Redman – *Trios Live* (Nonesuch, 2008/2013)
- Ben Wolfe Quintet – *Live at Smalls* (smallsLIVE, 2010)
- Eric Reed – *The Adventurous Monk* (Savant, 2013)

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(BRIC JAZZFEST CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

Hendricks & Ross, and not just in name: straight-ahead swing and whimsical vocalese are their bag. The trio was led by vocalists Sydney Panikkar and Eleanor Leigh; alto saxophonist James D'Ambrogia stood in as a third voice of sorts for Rosner, who was ill. Let's see how this group, clearly skilled as individuals and as a unit, comes to distinguish itself from its predecessor.

A number of artists used the festival to try out new projects, including bassist **Jonathan Michel**. Titled *L'Ouverture*, after the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L'Ouverture and also for its meaning ("The Opening"), Michel presented the most thoughtfully conceived set of the festival, an homage to Haitian women and musicians as names and images of notable Haitian women (from foremothers to contemporary figures) flashed across the screen behind the stage. All of the guest performers, including Charles (playing flute on a melancholic blues), Val Jeanty on electronics and beloved vocalists Riva Précil and Emeline Michel, are Haitian by birth or heritage.

Pianist **Miki Yamanaka** also explored a new angle beyond her regular trio with her eight-piece ensemble, Origami. Performing both her own music and that of keyboardist and arranger Vickie Yang, her group, featuring horn-players Caroline Davis, Nicole Glover, Brandon Lee and Nick Finzer, had a familiar big band sound while also being fresh, with a real textural range across the set. Yamanaka claimed the name Origami didn't have a deeper meaning beyond being an artform from her native Japan, while also acknowledging that colors and shapes are things she's drawn to—abstract concepts that permeated her set.

Vocalist **Sarah Elizabeth Charles** always weaves intention and a grounded presence into her performances, and this set was no different. She offered the notion that this moment, within the room and at a time of global turmoil, "could be healing." With visual art projected behind her, and cuing effects, she guided us through not just the sound, but the feeling of the music, while also expressing genuine reverence for her bandmates.

The Trill Mega Jam was the festival's *pièce de résistance* of sorts. Featuring the members and leaders of New York City jam sessions from the last several years, including Arlene Grocery's The Lesson and Nublu's Producer Mondays, it had at various points three alto players simultaneously sidling up on a vamp and all manner of cowbell and tambourine—a true and beautiful free-for-all. One glowing moment: the Cuban vocalist Xiomara Laugart commanding the room with her rendition of "Bésame Mucho", with her son Axel Tosca on keys.

Throughout the festival and across the many styles, backgrounds and talents of the artists who played, the spirit of forward movement within the music shone through. BRIC JazzFest felt hip and fun, a true something-for-everyone type of space that was a testament to the vibrancy of jazz culture.

For more info visit [bricartsmedia.org/bric-jazzfest](http://bricartsmedia.org/bric-jazzfest)

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(ŚMIETANA JAZZ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

whole. Niceberg is 23. You will hear his name again.

Runner-up Saldanha was a remarkably polished, mature, tasteful player. As was Turner in third place, though he was more funky and bluesy. **Raphael Silverman**, a senior at Columbia University, was one of the youngest entrants. He is another name to watch for. In the semifinals and also at the concert in the main auditorium of the Philharmonic on the fourth and final night of the competition, he offered gorgeous versions of "Manhattan". The depth of Silverman's lyricism is rare in such a young player.

The first night of concerts took place in Piwnica pod Baramani, an atmospheric stone cellar where, during the

communist era, the Polish Beat Generation (and political resistance) hung out. It is now the communists in Poland who are underground, but the Piwnica is still a very cool place to hear jazz. Pilon played in a duo with **Szymon Mika**, who won the first Śmietana competition in 2015, and who is now a presence on the Polish scene. Though based in Paris, Pilon has recorded and toured with notable musicians such as drummer Gerald Cleaver and saxophonist Walter Smith III. Alone together, Pilon and Mika conjured an evening of warm, sonorous stringed-instrument intimacy.

On the second night, **Marek Napiórkowski**, in a trio with Kowaleski and Palka, played the Harris Piano Jazz Bar, next door to the Piwnica. The Harris is also a basement cavern, and it was packed. Probably Poland's foremost living jazz guitarist, Napiórkowski can segue organically between hammering funk and rapt ballads, hitting you right between the eyes and then touching your heart.

On the third night, **Peter Bernstein** played the Harris (packed again) with the adept Kraków-based organist Kajetan Galas. The guitarist is an A-list New York musician who has played with everyone from Lee Konitz to Sonny Rollins. Unlike many guitarists, he does not force himself upon you. He draws you in, with pearl-like notes that always flow and feel relaxed, whether on Horace Silver's ballad "Peace" or a burning rendition of "Speak Low".

The final night's gala concert featured Napiórkowski in a mostly acoustic duo with guitarist Artur Lesicki. Then Bernstein and Pilon teamed up as the front line of a quartet. They took turns, beautifully, on the affirmational arc of melody that is "My Ideal". The competition's four winners also played one tune each.

Everyone involved in this year's event seemed aware that it was taking place during an especially dark moment for the world. The war in Ukraine was raging (close to Poland's borders), and the catastrophe in Israel and the Gaza Strip had exploded only a few days before the competition began. So much darkness and death made the light and life of music more necessary.

For more info visit [smietanacompetition.com](http://smietanacompetition.com)

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(JAZZFEST BERLIN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

made the fabulous *Laying Demons To Rest* (Rogue Art, 2023). Here they were supplemented by Berlin-based Brazilian percussionist Maria Portugal, whose sensitive deployment of texture and clear appreciation of space only enhanced the pair's near extrasensory communion. Silva exploited all the tools in the modern trumpeter's armory while Frith's range seemed limitless as he restlessly modified his sonic signature, abetted by an array of implements and FX. Their set was a quicksilver series of memorable vignettes, constantly posing the question: how on earth did we get from there to here?

Unfettered expression and preternatural communication were also the stock in trade of saxophonist **Ingrid Laubrock**'s trio with Brandon Lopez (bass) and Tom Rainey (drums). Lopez' unconventional techniques—scuffing, swishing and scratching—proved key to the unpredictable and empathetic interplay. Simultaneously poised and experimental, Laubrock always seemed to hold something in reserve, giving her another gear which she utilized to electrifying effect. In fact, all three knew the virtue of holding back, veering into the weeds at will, before uncovering new trails to be pursued, as if following a lucid narrative thread.

Two of the most distinctive and forward-facing voices on the New York scene, **Sylvie Courvoisier** (piano) and **Mary Halvorson** (guitar), launched the proceedings with palpable duo chemistry. Courvoisier's command of high-wire improvisation and new-music-inflected classicism spiced an idiosyncratic take on the jazz vernacular. In that she's matched by the guitarist who defies classification, as happy touching on spidery

scuttling as scrubbed skronk. Their compositions burst at the seams with knotty not-quite harmonies, unexpected volte-faces and sudden unmoorings where everything you knew was upended.

**Joshua Abrams** presented an augmented version of his Natural Information Society for a set which went far beyond their customary brand of trance-inducing gnawa free jazz. The cornet of Ben LaMar Gay and saxophones of Anna Kaluza and Mia Dyberg added an ecstatic, almost oceanic swell to Abrams' guimbri-fueled dusty grooves. But the undoubted star of the show was 79-year-old AACM veteran tenor saxophonist Ari Brown, who issued a majestic stream of hoarse vocalized cries and tart, piercing runs which invigorated everything he touched. German trumpeter Axel Dörner further deepened the discourse, offering not only episodes of free splutter and circular breathed snark, but also provocative commentary on whatever else was happening.

**Zoh Amba**'s records in no way prepared the listener for the visceral impact of the sound emanating from her slight frame. Having taken NYC by storm, the young saxophonist is doing the same on the European touring circuit. Her first-time encounter with Berlin-based Brazilians Vinicius Cajado (bass) and Mauricio Takara (drums) was a high-energy meeting of minds in which cathartic benedictions mingled with searing tumult. But what distinguishes the saxophonist, and indeed the trio, from the norm, was the ability to sustain such gambits into something deeply cohesive and gut-wrenchingly engaging.

Also of note were the combination of trombonist **Connie Bauer** and morphing grooves of the almost telepathic bass/drum tandem of William Parker and Hamid Drake, while the melodic dialogue of saxophonist **Bill McHenry** and drummer **Andrew Cyrille** couldn't have been further from the tropes of *Interstellar Space*. Cellist **Vincent Ceccaldi** was the most sedate presence in his exuberant Bonbon Flame quartet, an anarchic assemblage illuminated by the histrionics of guitarist Luis Lopes and keys of Fulco Ottervanger. **Paal Nilssen-Love**'s Circus was likewise unhinged, rallying behind some ferocious beats, enhanced by the remarkable voice of Juliana Venter. The firebreathing saxophones, gusty brass, propulsive drums and careening strings of **Andreas Røysum**'s Ensemble closed the festival in a raucous good-time extravaganza, which also found space for one of the most beautiful songs heard over the four days, a haunting version of the old English folk air "Hares on the Mountain".

That every concert was sold out provides eloquent testimony to the marvelous work of the team led by Festival Director Nadine Deventer. With its superb programming, appreciative audiences, excellent sound and top-notch venues, JazzFest Berlin demonstrates once again that there's no need to dumb down to succeed.

For more info visit [berlinerfestspiele.de/en/jazzfest-berlin](http://berlinerfestspiele.de/en/jazzfest-berlin)

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(LABEL SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

that the level of freedom it provides has unlocked a unique wellspring of creativity.

Ultimately, Gotta Let It Out lives up to its name and the motivation feels compulsive rather than overtly planned. Its catalogue comprises a wide range of talent, with approaches that are often groundbreaking and certainly unpredictable. Experiencing this label is not necessarily about loving all the music or understanding every piece. However, it is as much about honoring the artists' musical endeavors and the purity of their motivations, while experiencing new auditory sensations.

Prepare to enter the world of the weird and see where it leads.

For more info visit [gottaletitout.com](http://gottaletitout.com)

















**JULIAN BAHULA** (Mar. 13, 1938 – Oct. 1, 2023) The South African drummer and activist, who introduced the traditional malopo drums to his country's jazz scene in the early '60s, died at 85 in Johannesburg from bile duct cancer. Born in one of Pretoria's townships, Bahula first played jazz with the Crotchets before forming the Malombo Jazzmen, which later became the Malombo Jazz Makers in the mid '60s. Around the same time, the drummer began working with the African National Congress and in 1973 moved to London in political exile. In England, Bahula founded the band Jabula, combining it with Dudu Pukwana's band in 1977 to become Jabula Spear. He remained politically active with the Anti-Apartheid Movement and helped organize the "African Sounds" 1983 concert and another, larger concert and march in the UK for Nelson Mandela, leading to his release from prison. Bahula continued to play, record and serve as a sideman, including on Stevie Wonder's *Characters* (1987). In 2012, he was honored with the Order of Ikhamanga, South Africa's highest cultural award.

**JOHN BANY** (Mar. 24, 1941 – Nov. 5, 2023) The bassist/vocalist died at 81 in Skokie, IL. Born and raised in Ohio—he came from a family of bass and tuba players—Bany earned a music degree from Miami University in Oxford, OH. In 1964, he won the U.S. Air Force Worldwide Talent Contest, which led to playing bass and singing in the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra. He recorded two albums, *Our Family* and *John Bany Sings*, with his drummer son Martin Bany, and over the course of his long career recorded and performed with many Chicago jazz notables including pianist Eddie Higgins and tenor saxophonist Bud Freeman. Bany also wrote on jazz for *Bass World* magazine during the '80s.

**ALISON BENTLEY** (Dec. 16, 1957 – Sep. 22, 2023) The vocalist, journalist and educator died at 65 in East Oxford, England, after a long illness. Born in Bolton, outside Manchester, Bentley studied literature before completing her postgraduate studies in jazz at Guildhall School of Music. She released her debut, *Women with Voices* (1993), led her own groups and taught jazz at Oxford Brookes University. Beginning in 2013 Bentley contributed to *London Jazz News*.

**CARLA BLEY** (May 11, 1936 – Oct. 17, 2023) A 2015 NEA Jazz Master, whose work since the '60s as a composer, arranger, band leader and keyboardist helped shape jazz' aesthetic, Bley died at 87 from brain cancer in Willow, NY, where she had resided for many years with partner and collaborator, bassist Steve Swallow. Her landmark 1971 album, *Escalator over the Hill*, with words by poet Paul Haines, was three years in the making and brought together over 35 jazz and rock musicians; it also gave prominence to the Jazz Composer's Orchestra (JCO), a similarly named nonprofit organization and the independent label, JCOA Records, all which Bley co-founded in 1966 with her second husband, Michael Mantler (their child, Karen Mantler, was born in 1966). Born Lovella May Borg in Oakland, CA, she was raised mostly—and musically trained—by her father, a church organist/choir director and piano teacher. A growing love of jazz, especially the big band sounds of Count Basie, led her after high school to New York, landing a job first as a Birdland cigarette girl. She married pianist-composer Paul Bley in 1957 and started writing music for her husband to perform. Soon after, George Russell and Jimmy Giuffrè recorded her compositions. In 1964, she helped organize the Jazz Composers Guild and its house big band, which led to the JCO. A spirit of mindful collaboration guided her career. Her compositions and piano are featured on Gary Burton's *A Genuine Tong Funeral* (1967) and, beginning in 1969, she was associated with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra while also leading the JCO and appearing on albums by Mantler, Jack Bruce, Pink Floyd's Nick Mason and more. Bley released 29 albums as leader—ambitious big band works, duets with Swallow, live recordings, Christmas carols, off-kilter chamber music and her quartet The Lost Chords—mostly on her own label, WATT. Her last three albums (on ECM), a late career coda in a trio with Swallow and saxophonist Andy Sheppard, featured her brilliant compositions and exquisite piano playing.

**MARY ALICE BROWN** (Oct. 28, 1929 – Oct. 4, 2023) The vocalist-pianist and educator known for her stage presence and storytelling style died in Erie, PA, where she was born and raised, at age 93, from cancer. Brown attended the Erie Conservatory of Music after graduating from high school, then established herself locally, and recorded *The Charcoal Pit Presents Mary Alice Brown and Nancy Loper*. Moving to California in 1975, then Hawaii and Japan, she worked steadily as an entertainer in resorts and hotels. In 1992, Brown returned to her hometown, was recognized as Erie's "Queen of Jazz", and for two decades taught music at Erie's JFK Community Center.

**ROBERT BUSH** (Oct. 7, 1958 – Oct. 20, 2023) The veteran journalist, and *TNYCJR* contributor, died at 65 in San Diego, CA, from esophageal cancer. Bush became jazz-entranced after seeing Jean-Luc Ponty perform in 1976; the following year a John McLaughlin Shakti concert was, by his own admission, a tipping point. Bush studied guitar with Peter Sprague and gigged for a while in local ensembles, but focused on journalism instead, publishing widely in local and national publications.

**ARTIE CABRAL** (Feb. 25, 1940 – Sep. 17, 2023) The drummer and educator died at 83 in Bristol, RI. A native of Providence, RI, he started playing drums at 9 and turned professional by 15. He received a degree from Berklee College of Music, and for two decades toured with Stan Kenton, Dakota Staton, Mel Tormé and others. In 1969, he joined Woody Herman's Seventh Herd; his extensive recording credits also include Ben Webster, Carol Sloane and Toshiko Akiyoshi. Cabral taught at Berklee and Rhode Island public schools; he also founded the Rhode Island School of Performing Music. In 2017, he was inducted into the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame.

**ARNI CHEATHAM** (Aug. 14, 1944 – Oct. 22, 2023) The Boston-based saxophonist and educator died at 79 from atherosclerosis. A native of Chicago's South Side, Cheatham started as a photographer, then decided to play saxophone, joining the Chetniks which played R&B, soul and jazz. Moving to Boston in 1969, Cheatham studied at Berklee College of Music with Charlie Mariano and, with classmates, started the jazz fusion band The Thing (not to be confused with saxophonist Mats Gustafsson's band of the same name). He also founded the Boston Jazz Coalition and Jazz Week festival. A longtime member of the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra and Makanda Project, Cheatham also led two small groups, Search and Smoke, while continuing to pursue his interest in nature photography. Cheatham taught countless students in the JazzEd and JazzBoston Riffs & Raps programs developed by Bill Lowe.

**PAT CLOSE** (Oct. 13, 1956 – Oct. 20, 2023) The drummer, a mainstay in the contemporary jazz scene for three-plus decades, died at 67 in Clearwater, FL, from pancreatic cancer. A native of Lorain, OH, he started drum lessons at 5 and the following year conducted the local concert band; by age 12 he was working professionally. Close's career rose when he moved to Florida in 1988, working with guitarist Paul Brown. A long association with keyboardist Allon Sams led to performances at the Clearwater Jazz Festival, accompanying headliners and leading his group, The Groove. In 2017, he released his debut album, *Rhythms of My Soul*.

**MIKE DENNY** (Feb. 1, 1959 – Oct. 7, 2023) A guitarist and educator based in Eugene, OR, Denny died at 64 after a short illness. Born in California, his family moved to Oregon when he was nine; a year later, he began playing guitar and was working professionally by 14. Denny received a bachelor's degree in music at City College of New York. He was on the faculty of the University of Oregon's School of Music and Dance from 1995 to 2021 and released several albums, including *Mike Denny Trio: Live at Laurelwood* (2019).

**PIERRE DUTOUR** (Nov. 10, 1931 – Nov. 1, 2023) The French trumpeter and wide-ranging composer died at 91. Born in

Boulogne-sur-Gesse, a small village in the French section of the Pyrenees, he started on harmonica but switched to cornet after hearing Louis Armstrong. Work in Toulouse's local brass bands and cabarets led him to Paris, where he played in different jazz orchestras, eventually joining pianist Claude Bolling in the Jeunesses Musicales de France in the early '60s. Dutour was also closely associated throughout his career with singer Nino Ferrer while working steadily as a studio musician. His collection *Dance & Mood Music* brought the trumpeter a sizable audience interested in lounge music and his *Top Fiction* (1979), just re-released on vinyl, is a classic of the genre.

**JIMMY LA ROCCA** (Oct. 27, 1939 – Oct. 15, 2023) The New Orleans trumpeter died at 83 in Metairie, LA. His father, Nick La Rocca, the cornetist and co-founder of the Original Dixieland Jass Band, started Jimmy on trumpet lessons when he was 10. After his father passed away in 1961, he led a version of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, releasing four albums.

**NORBERTO MACHLINE** (Sep. 11, 1943 – Sep. 20, 2023) The Argentine pianist-composer died at 80 from heart failure. Lauded as his country's best jazz pianist, he played with Gato Barbieri and other top Argentine musicians and visiting greats. Machline recorded four albums as leader. One of his compositions was included in the first edition of the *Real Book Argentino*.

**JENS ARNE MOLVÆR** (Dec. 16, 1940 – Oct. 10, 2023) The Norwegian saxophonist-clarinetist and educator (and father to trumpeter Nils Petter Molvær) died at 82. Molvær was born and raised in Langevåg, a small town in western Norway known for its many musicians. In the '60s, Molvær performed with traditional jazz groups in Stavanger and Molde before founding the Ytre Suløens Jass-ensemble in 1973. With his son, he recorded an album, *September Song* (1998).

**TOLTON ROSSER** (Jul. 29, 1932 – Oct. 31, 2023) A jazz trumpeter, band leader and educator, Rosser died at 91 of heart failure in Birmingham, AL, where he was a lifelong resident. A Korean War veteran, he later received a doctorate in education from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Rosser was the director of the Birmingham Heritage Jazz Band for 24 years; in 1992, he was inducted into the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame.

**JOHN D. THOMAS** (Feb. 25, 1954 – Oct. 12, 2023) The guitarist, bandleader and associate professor at Berklee College of Music for nearly 30 years, died at 69. A Chicago native, Thomas was playing with Joe Henderson and Jimmy McGriff by 19. Later, he worked with Dizzy Gillespie, Chet Baker and Kenny Drew. Thomas moved to Germany in 1977, led his own bands—Lifeforce, Serious Business and Extremely Serious Business—while touring for the U.S. State Department and National Endowment for the Arts. He worked with drummer Art Taylor from 1978 to 1984 and trumpeter Charles Tolliver for a decade and, after returning to the U.S. in 1991, played with organist Charles Earland for two years. Thomas also played regularly with fellow Berklee instructor and drummer Kenwood Dennard. His book *Voice Leading for Guitar: Moving Through the Changes* was published in 2002.

**OSCAR VALDÉS** (Nov. 12, 1937 – Oct. 19, 2023) The Cuban percussionist and vocalist died at 85 in Havana, Cuba, where he was born and raised in a renowned musical family. Valdés started his percussion studies at 12, learning to play—and build—the batá and abakuá drums and chekeres. In his early 20s, Valdés worked in the Red Army Band and Choir, as well as with the CMQ orchestra, Benny Moré and Cubana de Música Moderna. When his brother Chucho Valdés (their father was the legendary Bebo Valdés) founded the groundbreaking fusion-folkloric jazz band Irakere in 1972, Oscar was brought in as singer and percussionist. Valdés formed another fusion-folkloric band, Diákara, in 2000. His album *Leyenda Viva* won the 2010 Cubadisco Special Prize.



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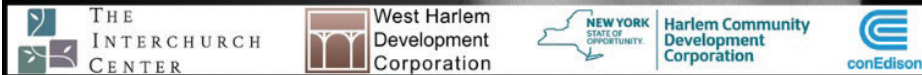
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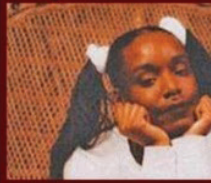


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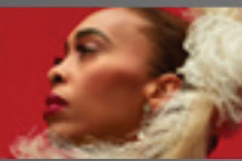
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