

DECEMBER 2020—ISSUE 224

YOUR FREE GUIDE TO THE NYC JAZZ SCENE

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THE NEW YORK JAZZ RECORD

**CHARLES
McPHERSON**
NO EXPIRATION DATE

HOLIDAY
GIFT
GUIDE

**GRAHAM
HAYNES**

**ALEXA
TARANTINO**

**KAREN
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**BILL
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2020 cannot be over fast enough. What started out as a promising year lurched to a bizarre, tragic and disgusting stop with the pandemic, police violence and the presidential election. Musicians found themselves gigless and tourless, forced to navigate the new reality of music through a screen or on a street corner. Even here at the gazette we transitioned to digital editions (who would have thought we could miss newsprint-stained fingers) in an uphill battle for survival. And even though the calendar may change, the problems and fear will remain in 2021. But, with the hopefulness of a New Year's Resolution or shiny new gym membership, there is cause for some optimism, as long as the painful lessons of the past year are not forgotten and those who believe in the beauty of art, the sanctity of citizenship and the need for community continue to act as agents of change.

We present this final edition of 2020 with our usual eclectic range of coverage: legendary alto saxophonist Charles McPherson (On The Cover); longtime cornet explorer Graham Haynes (Interview); up-and-coming alto saxophonist Alexa Tarantino (Artist Feature); two sides of the jazz coin in bassoonist Karen Borca (Encore) and trumpeter Bill Hardman (Lest We Forget); and historically-minded French imprint Frémeaux & Associés. And even if you cannot (or, rather, should not) gather with your loved ones this holiday season, you can still show you care by sending them something from our Holiday Gift Guide (mail it early as we all know what the post office is like these days).

We close by thanking musicians for persevering, clubs for reinventing, listeners for supporting and you, dear readers, for sticking with us. Best Wishes for 2021.

On The Cover: Charles McPherson (photo by Tariq Johnson / courtesy of the artist)

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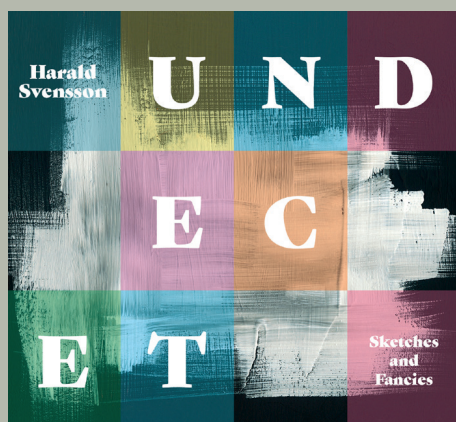
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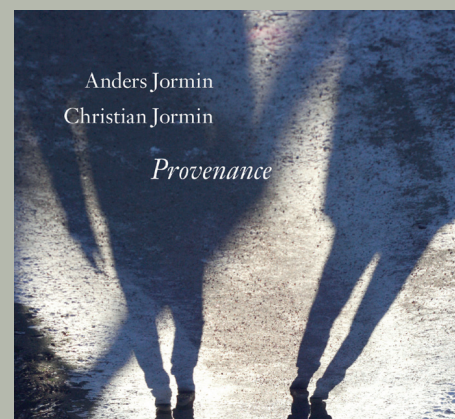
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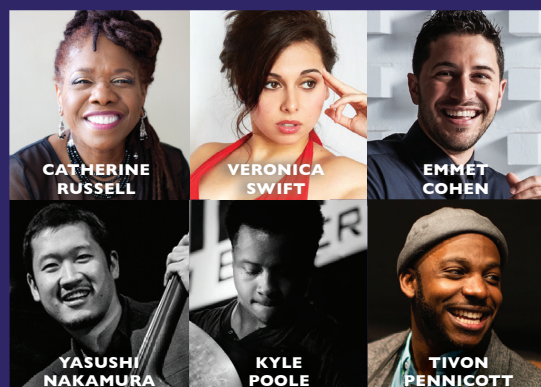


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It had been months—too many—since your intrepid correspondent had braved his life in the close caverns of jazz concertizing but he finally broke the long fast by trekking out to Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning to see, hear and actually be in the same room with tenor saxophonist **Melissa Aldana**'s trio with guitarist Charles Altura and bassist Pablo Menares (Nov. 12th). In fact, he was the only one there (not counting a soundman in the booth and a live-stream videographer in the rear), so there were only two hands to clap for each solo or song. Nevertheless, an emotional feedback loop was established, as close listening always creates room for the music to bloom. Sans a drummer, the trio's sound was spartan and chamber-like, a wide-open vista to stretch out in, so Aldana took the opportunity to explore some of her newest material, including "Elsewhere" (from *Visions*, her recent tribute to Frida Kahlo), "The Bluest Eye", "Emilia", "The Eyes of Chile", "The Hermit" and two standards: Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now" and Jerome Kern's "Nobody Else But Me". It took a tune to limber up, but midway through "The Bluest Eye" the musicians had reached a liminal zone to which they would return again and again throughout the set: on "Emilia", when Aldana ripped through some fast, fluttery arpeggios; on the Monk cover during Altura's long, peregrine solo; on "Hermit", when all three pushed and pulled against the pulse; and on the Kern cover, when Menares delivered an insightful soliloquy. —Tom Greenland



Melissa Aldana @ Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning

Despite a pernicious second wave of COVID-19, clubs like Smalls have opened their doors to limited crowds, affording fans the immediacy of live jazz. When **Hélio Alves** brought his quartet there (Nov. 11th), the connection between the pianist, saxophonist/flutist Steve Wilson, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Duduka Da Fonseca was instant and kinetic, even over the internet, whence your prophylactic correspondent watched. Sure, it's disconcerting to see the drummer strike the crash cymbal and hear it a few microseconds later—like close thunder after lightning—but if you allow your eyes to defocus and concentrate solely on sound, the immediacy of the music-making can still transport you. Over the course of two delightful sets Alves & Co. consistently transported listeners through a cycle of Brazilian soundscapes, culling songs from his new album *At Play*—João Bosco's "Bala com Bala", Caetano Veloso's "Trilhos Urbanos", Dori Caymmi's "Amazon River", plus two originals, "Bebe" and "It's Clear"—as well as favorite numbers like Rique Pantoja's "Melancia", Dom Salvador's "Gafeira", Raul Mascarinas' "Sabor Carioca", Egberto Gismonti's "Loro", Tom Jobim's "O Grande Amor" and Milton Nascimento's "Vera Cruz". Da Fonseca, in spite of his impassive mien, played as animatedly as Alves did, a stream of rhythmic variations in constant circulation between them, with notable highpoints during "Bala com Bala", "Gafeira" and "Amazon River" in the first set and during "Vera Cruz" in the second. (TG)

It was hard to say what was more surreal: sitting in Mezzrow (Nov. 14th), sipping a cocktail and eating olives like it was 2019, or watching two ultra-modernists like pianist **Ethan Iverson** (late of The Bad Plus) and bassist **Thomas Morgan** (a house bassist for ECM) work out on a set of music by Duke Ellington and Count Basie. Iverson himself said that the project was born out of the pandemic yet also emphasized that he picked the repertoire specifically for Morgan. It was an inspired choice as the bassist is, ultimately, a melodicist and, as such, well suited both to the music and format. In an hour, the pair played eight pieces, yielding an average length of seven-and-a-half minutes per tune, maybe not 10" shellac duration but refreshingly brisk compared to some of today's overly expansive workouts. If the material was more than familiar—Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone", "Satin Doll" or "Mood Indigo", Basie's "Swingin' The Blues", "One O'Clock Jump" or "Moten Swing" (the latter written by Bennie Moten for his Kansas City Orchestra with a young Basie at the piano)—the interpretations were both reverent and probing, Morgan as laconic as ever, Iverson displaying the restraint and command of a player deeply steeped in the history of his instrument, the tempos relaxed and intimate. One was necessarily reminded of the Ellington/Jimmie Blanton duets recorded 80 years, 11 months and 24 days earlier, groundbreaking at the time and made during another difficult period in world history. —Andrey Henkin



Ethan Iverson & Thomas Morgan @ Mezzrow

The cavernous industrial space-turned-performance venue that is Brooklyn's ShapeShifter lab is ideal for concerts in the era of social distancing. A band can give one another plenty of space and audience members have plenty of options for safe viewing (live-streaming from the comfort of your home is, of course, also available and recommended as the club management are old hands at it—with excellent audio and crisp multi-camera action—since long before pandemic times). As part of an ongoing partnership between ShapeShifter Lab and MoonJune Records, guitarist **Tim Motzer**, drummer **Gintas Janusonis** and Friends played two sets (Nov. 21st), likely extemporaneous but not lacking in form and compelling narrative. It certainly helps when you have "friends" like guitarist **Vernon Reid**, 'keyboard' player **Leon Gruenbaum** and bassist **Josh Werner** on hand. This was an unusual thing: free fusion, a genre not often heard because it seems to be an oxymoron; yet, firm rhythms and bass grooves provided nice foundation for Reid's jazz-rock virtuosity and the spacy sounds emanating from Gruenbaum's MIDI controller, the Samchillian Tip Tip Tip Cheeepieee (say that five times fast), which its inventor has played on Reid albums since the '90s. In fact, the improvised nature of the evening tempered what is often the bane of fusion, overt emphasis on the technical over the musical, soloist over ensemble. And, frankly, Reid could play the phone book and it would be something worth hearing. (AH)

In jazz lore perhaps only the Village Vanguard holds as esteemed a rank as the legendary Englewood Cliffs recording studio of Rudy Van Gelder, so the first ever Live From Van Gelder Studio live-stream concert (Nov. 14th) was an historic event. The Soul Station Quartet—bassist **Ron Carter**, tenor saxophonist **Joe Lovano**, pianist **Isaiah J. Thompson** and drummer **Kenny Washington**—paid tribute to the legacy of Hank Mobley and got off to an upbeat start with “This I Dig Of You”, one of the most popular pieces out of the late tenor saxophonist’s songbook. Lovano, whose smooth airy tone at times recalled the sound of Mobley—which once earned him the title of “the middleweight champ of the tenor sax”—stretched out on the classic melody over vamping piano and pulsing bass, after which the pair each had their own turns followed by a crackling drum solo leading back home. The trio opened up minor blues “Dig This”, before Lovano dug in on the laidback melody, soloing with harmonic dexterity, followed by spirited Carter and Thompson outings. The band sounded soulful on “Split Feelin’s” and was downright funky on “Soul Station”. Trumpeter Don Sickler (now co-running the studio with wife/Van Gelder protégée Maureen) joined for a rousing “Roll Call”, hearkening to the classic hardbop of the Jazz Messengers, and stayed for “Bossa For Baby”, on which Carter displayed his hipness, quoting “Yes Sir That’s My Baby”. The quartet ended with “Workout”, a fiery Washington feature. —**Russ Musto**



Soul Station Quartet & Don Sickler @ Van Gelder Studio

The Jazz Gallery’s series of Thursday night live-streamed concerts forged on, for the first time with a limited capacity, socially-distanced audience on hand, who witnessed a potent (Nov. 5th) set by the **Yosvany Terry Quintet** with pianist Manuel Valera, bassist Matt Brewer, drummer Obed Calvaire and percussionist Mauricio Herrera. The Cuban-born saxophonist kicked things off with his “Looking In Retrospect”, an episodic excursion beginning with an extended solo alto introduction before the rhythm section joined in, Calvaire and Herrera providing a driving polyrhythmic underpinning to bright melodic piano phrasing over dark bass ostinato. This propelled Terry’s kaleidoscopic dialogue with Valera, which reached climactic heights with Calvaire’s bell- and shells-augmented drumkit solo over the pair’s deliberate vamp. After introducing the players, noting that they had hoped to be celebrating the as yet undecided presidential election, Terry spoke of the music being a much-needed healing force, before the band launched into his “New Throned King”, a work hearkening to the AfroCuban Santería folk music tradition and with the leader also playing chekeré and African bell and chanting over McCoy Tyner-ish pianisms. Herrera laid out on “The Idea Of Harlem”, which opened with solo drums, before the band jumped in for an incendiary bebopping race. The set closed with the ominously Eastern-tinged “Another Vision Of Oji”. (RM)

Composers Concordance has existed some 36 years, a veritable New York new music institution of concerts, album production and multiple ensembles under a sweeping, tenacious brand, thriving on the emulsion of contemporary classical, free improv, jazz and rock, overt humor and fearless political statements, all very much in evidence during “We, the Whole People” (Nov. 14th). The show, live to a few at Michiko Studios but widely via the internet, opened with Jay Elfenbein’s “We the People”, which featured his electric viola da gamba and mezzo-soprano Jessica Bowers. Making grand use of a Susan B. Anthony speech opposing her arrest for voting, this gripping chamber work included improvisation astride the seeming influence of Hanns Eisler and Charles Mingus. The ensemble of Bowers, Elfenbein, Wayne du Maine (trumpet), Gene Pritsker (electric guitar charged with Robert Fripp-ian burn), Geoffrey Burleson (piano), Damien Bassman (drums, cajón), conductor Charles Coleman and later pianist Seth Boustead and alto flutist Dan Cooper, was masterful throughout. Highlights included Pritsker’s “We”, which danced over odd-time signatures and called on memories of Blood, Sweat & Tears; Burleson’s solo work fusing Charles Ives and “We Shall Overcome” with free improv; Cooper’s “Ballade and Vocalese” where Joe Zawinul’s “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy” taunted happily; and David Rozenblatt’s “America, Too”, which roamed from Weimar-esque cabaret through lively, whooping solo segments. —**John Pietaro**



Composers Concordance @ Michiko Studios

During an evening of sound art via Ohio’s Fuse Factory (Nov. 6th), **Sarah Bernstein** shattered the remote space to celebrate her new solo album, *Exolinger*, completed during what was then the height of East Coast COVID life. Standing amid the dramatic glow of purple lighting, the violinist established an atmosphere both spacious and raucous with veritable body-blows of free improvisation. Her instrument, fed through digital delay and effects, bled a wealth of sound, painting multi-hued streams across the internet’s divide, augmented by droning vocals and expansive techniques. But just as the intensity reached climax’ edge, Bernstein ceased movement in a deafening tacit before recapturing our ears with a haunting acoustic cadenza. The effect was breathtaking. Bernstein has the ability to play anything; still, her penchant for timbres elongated, thickened beyond the realm of standard bowing, places her within a unique category. As this segment of the performance developed, her poetry and pizzicato wrapped in a subtle b-modal, led into rapid-fire strumming torn by distortion. Clearly, one’s love of punk rock can’t be drowned out by mere formal education. Over darkly enhanced reverb and mournful voice, she bowed a series of caustic accents of...wait; yes: classic power chords erupting into runs, careening sound and determined, repetitive vocals, equally ecstasy and lamentation. While the election outcome was then still unclear, Bernstein presciently sang visions of a glorious new day. (JP)

WHAT'S NEWS

Winners of the **2020 Latin Grammy Awards** have been announced. In the relevant categories were Best Latin Jazz/Jazz Album: *Puertos: Music From International Waters*—Emilio Solla Tango Jazz Orchestra (Avantango); Best Arrangement: “La Flor De La Canela”, Lorenzo Ferrero, *Tradiciones* (MVM Music); and Best Samba/Pagode Album: *Samba Jazz de Raiz*, *Cláudio Jorge 70*—Cláudio Jorge (Mills Records). For more information, visit latingrammy.com.

Nominees for the **2020 Grammy Awards** have been announced. In the relevant categories are Best Contemporary Instrumental Album: Christian Scott Atunde Adjuah, Jon Batiste, Black Violin, Grégoire Maret/Romain Collin/Bill Frisell, Snarky Puppy; Best Traditional R&B Performance: The Baylor Project Featuring Jean Baylor & Marcus Baylor; Best Improvised Jazz Solo: Christian Scott Atunde Adjuah, Regina Carter, Gerald Clayton, Chick Corea, Joshua Redman; Best Jazz Vocal Album: Thana Alexa, Kurt Elling, Carmen Lundy, Somi, Kenny Washington; Best Jazz Instrumental Album: Ambrose Akinmusire, Terri Lyne Carrington, Gerald Clayton, Chick Corea/Christian McBride/Brian Blade, Joshua Redman/Brad Mehldau/Christian McBride/Brian Blade; Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album: Gregg August, John Beasley, John Hollenbeck, Maria Schneider; Best Latin Jazz Album: Afro-Peruvian Jazz Orchestra, Arturo O’Farrill & The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, Chico Pinheiro, Gonzalo Rubalcaba & Aymée Nuviola, Poncho Sanchez; Best Instrumental Composition: Arturo O’Farrill, Jr., Christian Sands, Alexandre Desplat, Maria Schneider, Remy Le Boeuf; Best Arrangement, Instrumental or A Cappella: John Beasley, Remy Le Boeuf, Jeremy Levy; Best Arrangement, Instruments and Vocals: John Beasley & Maria Mendes, Alan Broadbent & Pat Metheny, Jacob Collier; Best Historical Album: Nat King Cole—*Hittin’ The Ramp: The Early Years (1936 - 1943)* (Resonance). For more information, visit grammy.com.

Billie, the James Erskine-directed documentary on Billie Holiday drawn from interviews taped but never used by Linda Lipnak Kuehl, premieres at select theaters and TVOD Nationwide on Dec. 4th. For more information, visit billieholidaymovie.com.

The **Jazz Foundation of America** will present a live-streaming fundraiser to benefit its COVID-19 Musicians’ Emergency Fund, “Bird Calls”, celebrating the centennial of Charlie Parker with Alex Al, Kenny Barron, Gary Bartz, George Cables, Kim Clarke, Chris Colangelo, The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, James Genus, Keyon Harrold, Antonio Hart, Billy Hart, Vincent Herring, Sheila Jordan, Steve Jordan, Dave Kikoski, Kiyoshi Kitagawa, Russell Malone, Roy McCurdy, Gary Novak, Bill O’Connell, Jimmy Owens, Patrice Rushen, Tom Ranier, Tom Scott, Jaleel Shaw, Erena Terakubo, Nasheet Waits, Buster Williams, David Wong and Nioka Workman’s Fire String Sistas. For more information, visit fans.live/livestream/20201210-bird-calls.

The **92nd Street Y** will have the following virtual programs in December: Artemis (Renee Rosnes, Anat Cohen, Melissa Aldana, Ingrid Jensen, Noriko Ueda, Allison Miller and Cécile McLorin Salvant) in conversation with WBGO’s Nate Chinen (Dec. 1st at 7 pm); Billie Holiday Listening Party hosted by Rhonda Hamilton of WBGO (Dec. 5th at 2 pm); and “Billie Holiday—Reaching for the Moon”, a live-streamed concert with Catherine Russell, Veronica Swift, Emmet Cohen Trio and guest Tivon Pennicott (Dec. 6th at 3 pm). For more information, visit 92y.org.

Marcus Roberts and The Modern Jazz Generation and American Symphony Orchestra will premiere the short film *United We Play* Dec. 9th. For more information, visit americansymphony.org/online.

International Contemporary Ensemble and Civic Orchestra of Chicago Present will live-stream the world premiere of **Nicole Mitchell’s** *Inescapable Spiral Remote* on Dec. 15th. For more information, visit eventbrite.com/elinescapable-spiral-remote-tickets-129775539131.

Louis Armstrong House will present the following programs in December: the Armstrong Now! film series with “Between His House and His Home” (Dec. 3rd), “Welcome Home Louis” (Dec. 5th); “Inside the Laughing Barrel” (Dec. 10th) and “Letters” (Dec. 17th) and the Louis Armstrong Holiday Experience with Champion Fulton, Ethan Iverson and Catherine Russell (Dec. 18th). For more information, visit louisarmstronghouse.org.

The **One Brooklyn Jazz Festival**, organized by the Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium, will take place Dec. 4th-13th in a blend of in-person, live-stream, and pre-recorded performance at venues in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Clinton Hill, Crown Heights, East New York, Gowanus and Lefferts Gardens. For more information, visit cbjazz.org.

Manhattan School of Music (MSM), ELMA Music Foundation and Hugh Masekela Heritage Foundation have announced the 2020–21 Recipients of the **Hugh Masekela Heritage Scholarship**, which provides South African students with full scholarships to pursue Bachelor of Music degrees at MSM: Zoe Molelekwa (piano) and Kabelo Mokhatla (drums). In related news, MSM has announced its inaugural roster of Artist Scholars, who will take part in forums, including panels, seminars, discussion groups, special performances, musical collaborations and mentorship. Among the participants are Gary Bartz, Terri Lyne Carrington, Anthony Davis and Tia Fuller. For more information, visit msmny.edu.

The 12th Annual **Jazz Education Network Conference** in Louisville, KY will be available online Jan. 6th-9th, 2021, including various master classes, clinics and panel discussions, as well as performances by Christian McBride, 2021 Sisters in Jazz directed by Ingrid Jensen, Jeff Coffin, Dave Liebman Big Band, Berklee Global Jazz & Gender Justice Institute Ensemble with Terri Lyne Carrington & John Patitucci, Chuck Owen & Resurgence, Rodger Fox Big Band, Shawn Purcell Group Tribute to David Baker: Indiana University Jacobs School of Music Jazz Ensemble, Jamey Aebersold Quartet and others. For more information and to register, visit members.jazzednet.org/jen-conference.

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GRAHAM HAYNES

BY ANDERS GRIFFEN

Graham Haynes is a cornet player and composer who, for over 40 years, has been exploring and fusing together disparate musical influences including classical and electronic music, African, Arabian and South Asian music, drum 'n' bass, hip-hop and jazz. His father, Roy Haynes, is one of the greatest jazz drummers of all time. As a performer Haynes has worked with Jaki Byard, Ed Blackwell, Butch Morris, David Murray, Vernon Reid, Bill Laswell, Steve Coleman, Cassandra Wilson, Meshell Ndegeocello and The Roots, among many others. He has nearly 200 album credits as a leader and sideman. While also working as an educator and lecturer, since 2000 his work has focused on chamber group composition and multimedia projects. He left his study of classical composition at Queens College in the late '70s to become a player and now he has come full circle as his lifelong study has led him to compose for the orchestra.

The New York City Jazz Record: I read that you are from Brooklyn, but when did you move to Hollis, Queens?

Graham Haynes: My parents were living in Queens. It just so happened that my mother, who was from Brooklyn, had to go there to deliver. I was born, technically, in Brooklyn, but I'm from Hollis. You know, if I say I'm from Hollis, Queens, most people don't know where that is.

TNYCJR: I understand that among your neighbors were Roy Eldridge, Jaki Byard and Milt Jackson, but my first association with Hollis, Queens is Run-DMC.

GH: Right, all the hip-hop people know, but what people don't know is that between Hollis and other surrounding neighborhoods—Hollis, St. Albans, Jamaica, South Jamaica—I think probably 90% of the jazz musicians, particularly the Black jazz musicians lived there. At one point we had Roy Eldridge, like I said, my house was right in back of Roy Eldridge's house. If I went into my yard and Roy came into his yard, then I'd see him and we'd talk, you know. Jaki Byard lived up the street. Coltrane lived [in St. Albans] for a minute in the '60s. That area also had Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie and guys from Duke Ellington's band. Fats Waller had lived there in the '40s. He went out there because James P. Johnson went out there. All these jazz musicians started coming out there because there were not that many places that would sell property to Black people. They sold James P. Johnson a house and then they sold Fats Waller a house and then Count Basie. James Brown lived around the corner from Count Basie [nods and smiles]. Back in those days there were a lot of clubs. The reason that the hip-hop and the bands were there—they had dance bands, funk bands—was because people had houses and you could rehearse your band in the basement or in the garage and people wouldn't really mess with you.

TNYCJR: So, when did you start, when did you pick up a horn, when did you start playing...trumpet, I guess?

GH: Yeah, I started with trumpet when I was about 13. In junior high school they had an orchestra, they had a band, so, that's where I started playing.

TNYCJR: How did you switch to cornet?

GH: Everybody told me, "you gotta play trumpet." It was actually Olu Dara who said, "fuck that, if you wanna play cornet, play cornet." Then I got a cornet that was the same make that his was. He told me which one to buy. And I bought that model.

TNYCJR: What is that?

GH: It's an Olds Ambassador. It's an Olds A3. I still play it. I switched to cornet because I got tired of playing in sections and in big bands. In those days there were a lot of bands. There were a lot of large groups, there were a lot of dance bands. I was playing in calypso bands and salsa bands and doing all that stuff. I did a tour with Toots & the Maytals—you know Toots just died a month ago—I was on the road with him for three months. I loved playing with him, it was great playing with him, but I just got tired of playing the same thing night after night, you know? After that is when I switched to cornet. I wanted to be a soloist.

TNYCJR: So, on those Steve Coleman records were you playing the trumpet?

GH: I was playing trumpet. I switched to cornet shortly after.

TNYCJR: When I first heard those records, I was listening with some friends and we were just grooving until somebody said, "what meter is this in?" It really blew my mind because you don't think about meter when you're grooving like that.

GH: Right, you don't notice. That's the space we want the listener to be in. It's not until you start analyzing that you notice the time signature. That's one of the differences between Steve and [folks] now who are doing a lot of time signature stuff. They make it obvious [laughs]. The feel is more important than the time signature. At the same time, for folks who want to analyze it, there's enough meat in there.

TNYCJR: Is Coleman's M-Base concept an ongoing aspect of your approach?

GH: Since the time it was conceived up until now, people have always asked, "What is M-Base? What does it mean?" and I always say, "ask Steve, he came up with the name." [laughs] But, for me, it's a means of learning and gathering all the elements of, not only music, but also science, physics and nature, to make music. That's pretty much what Steve has always done and I'm always interested in new experiences and

learning about nature and about the world, about science and mysticism. All of that, whether it's deliberate or not, goes into the music.

TNYCJR: Why did you move to Paris?

GH: There was a point in the late '80s when I was an usher at Symphony Space Theater in New York and they had something called the World Music Institute [WMI] that did a series there. I met Adam Rudolph; he was working with Yusef Lateef doing a show for children, if you can imagine that! [laughs] Then I met Don Cherry, Hassan Hakmoun, Hamza El Din and

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ALEXA TARANTINO

BY RUSS MUSTO

Few decide what their life work will be before their tenth birthday. Even fewer are fortunate enough to have that youthful dream flourish into adulthood. Alexa Tarantino, one of those rare individuals, born on May 30th, 1992 in West Hartford, Connecticut, remembers, "I must have been probably a third grader and my parents took me to the local high school jazz concert and that's where I got the bug." The show was at what would be her future alma mater, Hall High School. She says, "Every March or so they put on a big show called Pops 'n Jazz and I saw Erica von Kleist play there and told my parents 'That's what I want to do.'" The following year she got her first alto. "My first lessons I started on saxophone and piano. My paternal grandmother was a pianist and she provided for her family by playing piano on the radio during the Great Depression. That story always stuck with me, so I wanted to learn the piano, as well." She confesses that she was soon obsessed with the idea of becoming a jazz saxophonist and moved precipitously in that direction. By the time she began at Hall she was well on her way, noting "I was in the second jazz band in my freshman year and then I was in the top jazz band my sophomore, junior and senior years. During those years I worked my way up to playing lead alto. That's where I really fell in love with playing lead alto and that's also where I fell in love with woodwind doubling."

These skills served her well during her years at the Eastman School of Music. Her doubling abilities garnered her a place with Ryan Truesdell's Gil Evans Project there and at the Umbria Jazz Festival. It was also at Eastman that she came to the attention of DIVA Orchestra bandleader, drummer Sherrie Maricle: "She called me and said that they needed a lead alto player for a gig at the Deer Head Inn. It was kind of a big moment for me to drive all that way by myself from Rochester to Pennsylvania. I really felt like maybe I was starting my career. The gig went over well and so Sherrie invited me to be the lead alto in the orchestra. At the time a nine-piece version of DIVA was the backing band for the Maurice Hines show *Tapping Through Life* and Sherrie offered me the alto position. The show spent six weeks at a theater in Delaware and then moved Off Broadway to New York. That was December 2015 and I figured that if there was ever a time to move to New York that was it."

Tarantino was about to start her first year at Juilliard when she saw an ad for open auditions for Arturo O'Farrill's Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. She says, "Of course I knew all about the band. I didn't expect to get the position. I just figured it was the end of the summer and I had the time to commit to the process and I would try my best." The saxophonist got the gig and spent two years with the band. "We went to Mexico and made an incredible documentary [*Fandango At The Wall*] and to Abu Dhabi, which is something that I will never forget, and a lot of other places in between, plus Birdland every Sunday night. That was a really special time." O'Farrill lauds the saxophonist proclaiming,

"Alexa is that rare combination of exceptional musician, truly soulful improviser and a deeply chill human being. You add that to her professionalism and ability to get along with folks on the bandstand and you really begin to see what musical greatness is all about."

Tarantino moved on from the band when she began touring with Cécile McLorin Salvant. She describes her work with the vocalist as a high point in her career. "We worked together on the small group run at the Vanguard and after that we took the 13-piece group with Darcy James Argue and the Ogresse ensemble on the road. We've become really, really close friends. When you're working with Cécile you just feel like you are there because she wants YOU there. She wants your input, she wants your opinion; she expects everyone to be on the top of their game, but she also has a great sense of humor and can laugh at herself. She's just incredible to work with and incredibly inspiring because she is so humble yet so knowledgeable." The admiration is mutual. Salvant notes, "Alexa is one of the most versatile musicians I know, it's been a joy working with her in different settings. She is always in service of the music, extremely creative, fun, tasteful, fluid."

Despite her well-earned reputation Tarantino took her time to step out front as a bandleader: "For a while I just wanted to play with other people because I wanted to gain that experience and I didn't know if I had quite enough repertoire to have my own band or if I had a band sound. Her debut album *Winds Of Change*, with Nick Finzer, Christian Sands, Joe Martin and Rudy Royston, proved that she not only had an appealing personal sound, but also an original compositional voice, having penned eight of the date's ten songs. Last year's *Clarity*, a quartet outing with Steven Feifke taking over the piano chair, further confirmed her abilities as a writer, with four new tunes, and as an interpreter of classics by Horace Silver and Kurt Weill. "I was lucky to have an organization like Jazz at Lincoln Center [JALC] behind me. When I first got involved with them they would offer me gigs in the Atrium or opening for someone. That gave me the encouragement to take it to the next level. I guess my next goal is to do more of that because after making a couple of records for Posi-Tone and playing some of those gigs and getting very positive reactions I just want to do more and play for people and write more music and access more of my creative sound as a bandleader, composer and a saxophonist."

Tarantino was on stage at the Paramount Theater for SFJAZZ with Salvant when the pandemic hit hard. "We were getting ready to do our final run through when the producer came out and said the governor just shut everything down and we have to send you all home." Back in New York she has stayed busy with a JALC-sponsored videocast "The Well Rounded Musician" and other online projects. And she recorded a new album for Posi-Tone, the centerpiece of which is her new suite "A Moment In Time", which not surprising is based on the COVID experience. ❖

For more information, visit alexatarantino.com. Tarantino live-streams Sundays at alexatarantino.com/projects/quarantine-concerts-with-steven-feifke.

Recommended Listening:

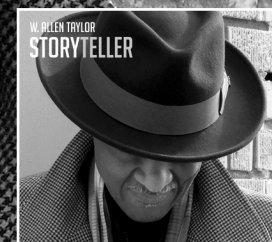
- DIVA Jazz Orchestra — 25th Anniversary Project (ArtistShare, 2017)
- Lauren Sevian — *Bliss* (Posi-Tone, 2017)
- Lioness — *Pride & Joy* (Posi-Tone, 2018)
- Chris Teal Trio — *Analog Dreams* (Outside In Music, 2018)
- Alexa Tarantino — *Winds of Change* (Posi-Tone, 2018)
- Alexa Tarantino — *Clarity* (Posi-Tone, 2019)

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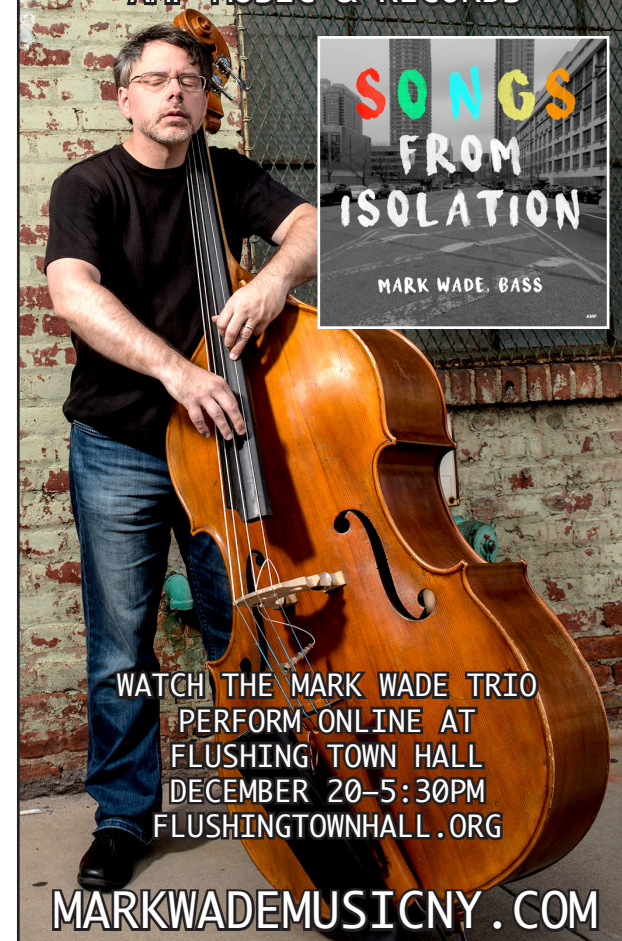
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CHARLES McPHERSON

NO EXPIRATION DATE

BY ROBERT BUSH

ANTONIO PORCAR / COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



2020 looked to be the year of alto saxophone icon Charles McPherson. The music world at large had finally seemed to be leaning toward a greater appreciation for the 81-year-old master. McPherson broke into the national/international scene in 1960, when the Detroit bopper (by way of Joplin, Missouri) joined the group of legendary bassist Charles Mingus, replacing Eric Dolphy. He would spend the better part of the next 12 years with the mercurial bandleader.

Fast-forward to 2019 and McPherson is celebrating his 80th birthday alongside pianist McCoy Tyner with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Last December he assembled a stellar band to cut his 30th album as a leader, *Jazz Dance Suites*, at the Van Gelder Studio. It was the completion of a circle, in a way, since McPherson's first date under his own name *Bebop Revisited!* (Prestige) was cut in the same studio back in 1964.

The new album illustrates McPherson's history as resident composer for the San Diego Ballet, where his daughter Camille is a featured soloist. McPherson had the whole year planned out, with high-profile gigs and tours in support of the new album, which he put out on his own label, Chazz Mack Music. Then the coronavirus exploded and it all fell apart. An April debut with the San Diego Ballet was an early casualty; a European summer tour was next; an album release tour starting at Dizzy's Club in September was scrapped as well as a week-long artist residency at the Berklee College of Music. Not to mention a "Charles McPherson Day" in his hometown of Joplin. "It's been devastating, frankly," says wife Lynn, who also manages his career. "It was going to be a great year and instead [like so many artists] one of the worst ever." But McPherson has been a whirlwind of activity, doing interviews, podcasts and teaching Zoom lessons. His new album is a marvel and he sounds better than ever. He's staying in shape with regular bike rides and daily walks and there are virtual concerts in the works. He even performed a live "drive-in" concert last month for the Mainly Mozart Festival. We conducted this interview outdoors with masks and social distancing at his San Diego residence.

This is McPherson's fifth collaboration with Javier Velasco, Artistic Director for the San Diego Ballet. "My daughter Camille has been with them for nine years and I've been the resident composer for five years," says McPherson. "When you are writing for dance, there's usually a storyline and it tends to be episodic. You're writing for people who are dancing to your music and the dancers are not improvising. I think I've learned how to do this. For one thing, the tempos have to be totally comfortable for the dancers. You can't be too fast or too slow, I've learned to be very consistent. Also the forms are longer, with a wider variety of emotionality."

Jazz Dance Suites is a top-shelf production, with sterling photography and an uber informative liner booklet written by McPherson scholar Dr. Donnie Norton. It could be a major-label production, so it was surprising McPherson chose to self-release. According to the musician, there were several reasons behind that decision. "We did the record and then the pandemic hit. A lot of companies weren't necessarily amenable to

putting something like this out when the country was shutting down. Even before the pandemic, we were thinking about putting it out ourselves, because it's a legacy-type project to leave to Camille. But I couldn't have done it without my wife, Lynn. All I had to do was concentrate on the music. She worked tirelessly on all of the practical issues. She knows about marketing and she's a wonderful musician in her own right. Some of the tunes she co-composed and she had a bunch of great ideas and incredible energy."

One of the most salient aspects of the new record is the gorgeous sound that McPherson coaxes out of his instrument. It's captured in exquisite detail at the Van Gelder Studio. "I probably did a Mingus record there in the early '60s and a Barry Harris record before I did my own album in 1965," says McPherson. "The studio itself is just beautiful and the live sound of the main room is just gorgeous. The composition of the room and the way things are arranged, it's like being inside a great speaker. The natural sound of the room is stunning. Rudy was a genius with what he was doing. And the person who was his apprentice was Maureen Sickler. He passed on all that information to her."

Every detail of McPherson's alto is captured. Surprisingly, he didn't use headphones. "I didn't use them because I could hear myself way better without them. That is one of the best, if not the best sound I've ever gotten. They pretty much captured the way I sound. We had Randy Porter, who plays piano on two tracks, do the mastering and some A&R work."

Jazz Dance Suites has Terrell Stafford (trumpet), Jeb Patton and Porter (piano), Lorraine Theresa (vocals), Yotam Silberstein (guitar), David Wong (bass) and Billy Drummond (drums). Most had worked with the master before and are well known but, outside of San Diego, the vocalist is less of a household name. "The 'Song of Songs' suite is about a young woman in love with King Solomon. I needed a female voice and I actually heard Lorraine in my head while I was writing it. She's got a lovely voice and great timbre and what she lends to the record is wonderful."

Charlie Parker has always been a source of inspiration for McPherson. Director Clint Eastwood understood this when he tapped him to provide a sonic portrait of the icon for his 1988 film *Bird*. Parker died some 65 years ago and several centennial celebrations were due this year pre-pandemic, so his influence remains pervasive. "His contribution was timeless. Whenever a person reaches that level of excellence, they become beyond time—just like Bach is. Bach doesn't become less great because he died almost 300 years ago. It was great then and it's great now. There's no expiration date on excellence. *Bird* was the perfect total musician, all of the elements of music were satisfied. He was the master improviser, a harmonic genius, a melodic genius, a rhythmic genius, a total virtuoso. He was comfortable in all musical settings. He had a beautiful sound, he was clean as a whistle. His technique was pristine yet he was human and soulful. He had intellect, spirit and heart. Most people don't have all of that—they might have one or two things but having it all is really rare. Three

hundred years from now, people will celebrate *Bird* the way they celebrate Mozart."

One of the most profound instrumental and compositional geniuses of the 20th Century is McPherson's old boss Mingus. He is another cat without an expiration date and it wouldn't be much of a discussion without inquiring what McPherson took away from the experience of his long association. "He influenced my writing for sure. Especially writing ballads. All of his compositions were interesting to me, but his ballads really stood out. I think I was probably influenced to a large degree by that. I can hear his influence in certain tunes I write, it's there for sure... I mean, I was with him for 12 years. If you're with someone that long, it's going to rub off and Mingus was a very talented man. He was a prolific writer and a real thinker."

When McPherson lived in New York, he had the good fortune to have Naima Coltrane babysit his children while he worked a day job temporarily. That gave him access to the mind of John Coltrane. "He was an extremely serious musician, very, very serious. I didn't live far from him and I would pick up my kids every day at around 3:30. He would be there everyday practicing and I would talk to him for 15 or 20 minutes before I went home. He was soft-spoken and gentle, very laid back. Very studious. He worked for everything he got musically. He had scruples and he seemed to be conscientious and spiritual too."

The other day on social media, a photograph of the Mingus group surfaced that showed McPherson and Eric Dolphy in the same frame. Was this some sort of photoshop trickery? "No, that was real. I took Eric's place in the group. When I got there, Eric was still in the group for two weeks, because in those days, that's what you did, you gave two weeks notice. So Eric and I were in the band. Ted Curson was leaving and my friend Lonnie Hillyer was also joining the band. So I learned the music from Eric Dolphy."

At this stage of his career, McPherson has few peers. It is particularly satisfying to see him thriving and on a creative high point while maintaining good health and intellectual acuity. Anyone lucky enough to witness him caress a melody like "But Beautiful" then work it up to a hair-raising crescendo during a performance knows there is no expiration date on his artistry either. ♦

For more information, visit charlesmcperson.com. McPherson live-streams Dec. 19th at gmffjazzsummit.com/concerts-online-special-charles-mcperson.

Recommended Listening:

- Barry Harris—*Newer Than New* (Introducing Charles McPherson and Lonnie Hillyer) (Prestige, 1961)
- Charles McPherson—*Bebop Revisited!* (Prestige, 1964)
- Charles Mingus—*In Paris: The Complete America Session* (America-Sunnyside, 1970)
- Charles McPherson—*Free Bop!* (Xanadu, 1978)
- Charles McPherson—*Come Play With Me* (Arabesque, 1995)
- Charles McPherson Quartet (featuring Steve Kuhn)—*But Beautiful* (Venus, 2003)

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KAREN BORCA

BY ALEX HENDERSON

The bassoon has never been a common instrument in jazz and most of the players who drew praise played it as a secondary instrument (Illinois Jacquet, Garvin Bushell, Frank Tiberi). Karen Borca has been making the bassoon her primary instrument for well over half a century, building an impressive résumé in avant garde through associations with pianist Cecil Taylor, alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons, bassist Alan Silva, percussionist Paul Murphy and others.

"It's an instrument that hasn't gotten much exposure EVER," observes Borca, who turned 76 in September. "I don't have a lot of competition on the bassoon, that's for sure. But there are a few other people who have been around. And of course, Illinois Jacquet played the bassoon."

Although Borca has been a part of New York City's avant garde jazz scene for 47 years, she isn't a native New Yorker. Borca's hometown is Green Bay, Wisconsin and she was a student at the University of Wisconsin when she met Taylor in the late '60s. She became one of his students during his years in the Midwest, playing in the Cecil Taylor Unit and various ensembles and big bands the influential pianist led during that period. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin in 1971, Borca joined Taylor in Ohio when he was leading a free jazz outfit at Antioch College in Yellow Springs.

Some of Taylor's admirers have incorrectly described his Antioch band as a "student band", but Borca stresses that the outfit was by no means limited to students. "People came from all over the country to be in that band," Borca recalls. "It wasn't just students. In fact, students were the minority in that band. They were serious musicians. People came from the West Coast to be in that band; people came from Boston to

be in that band. [Trumpeter] Arthur Brooks came from the East Coast to be in that band; I think he was there for one or two semesters. People came from all over to play in that band. And Cecil didn't stop people from joining. If you could play, you could be in the band."

One of the musicians Borca played with in the Cecil Taylor Unit during the '70s was Lyons, who she married. And apart from Taylor's outfit, Borca played in a '70s ensemble Lyons had with Murphy.

Borca moved to NYC in 1973, living in the Bronx with her husband until his death from lung cancer in 1986 during which time she played on his records for hatHUT, Black Saint and, posthumously, Ayler. During her 47 years in NYC, Borca has often played with bassist William Parker, guitarist/bassist and sometime drummer Joe Morris, alto saxophonist Marco Eneidi, trumpeter Bill Dixon, large ensemble Earth People and other exemplars of free jazz. Along the way, Borca played the soprano and alto saxophones as secondary instruments. But these days, she is concentrating on the bassoon exclusively. "I'm not a multi-instrumentalist," Borca explains. "I sold my soprano saxophone and way back when, I sold my alto to buy this bassoon I'm playing right now. And that was way back in antiquity when I did that. I don't even have a saxophone right now. I haven't doubled for a long time. And when I doubled, it was usually in larger groups—or if somebody asked me to do it in their groups. I didn't usually double in my own groups."

In recent years, Borca has led a quartet with Hilliard Greene (bass), Warren Smith (vibraphone) and Jackson Krall (drums). This month Borca will perform a live-streamed concert leading a trio with Greene and drummer Newman Taylor Baker. The concert is being presented as part of Vision Festival's Art for Art (AFA) series of events. Borca points out that AFA founder/dancer/choreographer Patricia Nicholson Parker has been one of her major allies, as well as an ally of many other avant garde jazz improvisers in New York City, and was the one who encouraged her to use a trio for the upcoming performance, "Patricia said, 'Do a trio, do a trio.' And with a trio, I can pay everybody a nice amount. So, I'm going to do a trio."

Looking back on some of the avant garde greats

she has played with over the years, Borca emphasizes that as experimental as Taylor and Lyons were, both of them had a deep reverence for the musicians who came before them. "Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk were Cecil's heroes, especially Monk," Borca remembers. "Cecil went in a whole other direction in the '60s, but he had feelings about the history of this music going all the way back to Africa. These things were very important to him. And as you probably know, he loved to go and hang out and hear these musicians play—the ones who came up before him. That's why he'd go hang out at the Village Vanguard and Bradley's; that was just part of his existence. Part of being a jazz musician was that he loved the music that came before him. And he always went and checked these guys out—all the time. That was just part of Cecil's routine, part of his *modus operandi*."

In the months ahead, Borca says, one of her goals is to release some of the recordings that have so far remained in her private collection. "I have a lot of recordings on tape," Borca explains. "And William Parker has been telling me I should either put them out myself or find somebody else to put them on their label. There are quite a few tapes, including things I did at the Vision Festivals and things with William Parker and [late drummer] Denis Charles. And they were recorded well, too." ♦

For more information, visit karenborca.com. Borca live-streams Dec. 1st at artsforart.org/onlinesalon.html.

Recommended Listening:

- Jimmy Lyons (featuring Karen Borca)—*Riffs* (hatHUT, 1980)
- Paul Murphy—*Red Snapper: Paul Murphy* at CBS (Cadence Jazz, 1982)
- Cecil Taylor Segments II—*Orchestra of Two Continents: Winged Serpent (Sliding Quadrants)* (Soul Note, 1984)
- Jimmy Lyons Quintet—*Give It Up* (Black Saint, 1985)
- Marco Eneidi Quintet—*Final Disconnect Notice* (Botticelli, 1993)
- Bill Dixon—*17 Musicians In Search Of A Sound: Darfur* (AUM Fidelity, 2007)

LEST WE FORGET



BILL HARDMAN

BY GEORGE KANZLER

Many trumpet players who rose to fame from the mid '50s to the end of the 20th Century attended the famous finishing school known as Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. But only one was a Jazz Messenger in three different decades, with tenures in the '50s, '60s and '70s, all documented on Blakey recordings. That was Bill Hardman, who is somehow overlooked in most rosters of the great hardbop trumpeters of the last half of the 20th Century. He shouldn't be.

If Hardman could only be heard on one album, 1958's *Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk* (Atlantic), his stature as a top jazz trumpeter would be assured. Unfortunately, the album remains under the radar because it came out in the midst of Monk's highly productive residence at Riverside, recorded the same half-decade as the pianist released studio albums with John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Max Roach and Thad Jones. Yet Blakey was probably more attuned to Monk than any other drummer and his Messengers of the

time, with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin, who later was in Monk's Quartet, Hardman and bassist Spanky DeBrest, paired Monk with a hard-swinging, working hardbop band, unlike his ad hoc Riverside sessions.

Hardman was only 24 when the album was recorded in the spring of 1957 but his playing is one of the stellar highlights of the sessions. When he follows Monk solos, as he does on five of the six tracks, he seems to have listened to the pianist so that he is reflecting back in his solos. On the two versions of "Evidence", where Hardman solos first, we are treated not just to alternate tracks, but alternate solo approaches. The released version is all bouncing, darting bebop phrasing at lip-splitting speed. On the alternate, Hardman enters almost hesitantly, like slow-stepping Miles Davis of the period, and even manages to quote "It Could Happen To You". Comparing the other two alternates, "Blue Monk" and "I Mean You", with the original LP tracks also reveal Hardman's constantly creative approach.

Hardman was first featured on record as the titular subject of alto saxophonist Jackie McLean's *Jackie's Pal* (Prestige, 1956). His first album as a leader was 1961's *Saying Something* (Savoy), a quintet date with saxophonist Sonny Red, pianist Ronnie Mathews, drummer Jimmy Cobb and either Doug Watkins or Bob Cunningham on bass and featuring three of his compositions. By the time he recorded as a leader again, in 1978, his tone had grown fuller and he had

added mutes and flugelhorn to his arsenal. His three albums for Muse (1978, 1980, 1981) featured the quintet he co-led with tenor saxophonist Junior Cook, augmented to a sextet on two by trombonist Slide Hampton. Beside his recordings with Blakey, Hardman can be heard with a score of other leaders, ranging from organists Jimmy McGriff and Charles Earland to saxophonists Benny Golson and Houston Person.

Trombonist Steve Turre remembers working with Hardman in the '70s. "I was with Art Blakey when Woody [Shaw] was in the band [around 1972-73] and when we came back from the West Coast Bill replaced Woody in New York and we were Messengers together for a while. First of all, Bill was a sweetheart, a beautiful cat, warm and encouraging and helpful about phrasing and how to play tunes. He was coming out of the Clifford Brown style. He didn't have as big a sound as Clifford, few people do, but he could swing like a mutha***. And his phrasing was so hip, it was classic bebop. He was a master craftsman."

Turre also played with Hardman, the two of them driving over from Brooklyn, in a Tuesday night band, a nonet/tentet led by saxophonist-flutist Joe Thomas at the Four Leaf Deli in Newark around 1975-76. That's where this writer first heard Hardman in person regularly.

Leo Johnson, who played tenor saxophone in that band, remembers Hardman as "a good musician,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

FRÉMEAUX & ASSOCIÉS

BY MARILYN LESTER

Anyone who's ever experienced the vastness of a large department store such as Harrod's in London or Macy's New York will instantly recognize the metaphor when applied to French independent record label Frémeaux & Associés. The catalog offers a stunningly vast collection of reissued sound recordings, from soup to proverbial nuts. The company was founded in 1991 by historian and musical theoretician Patrick Frémeaux and Claude Colombini, based in the Parisian exurb of Vincennes. From the beginning, the company has worked fiercely to preserve as much musical, historical, political, literary and radio heritage as it can, with Frémeaux leading the way. "Part of their market is museums and libraries, not just music but also spoken word: politics, philosophy, literature, radio documentary—the kind of stuff the French are admirably so interested in," says Walter van de Leur, internationally known scholar, author and Professor of Jazz and Improvised Music at the University of Amsterdam. Van de Leur knows the company's product well, although his interest falls, of course, to the jazz sector of the catalog. And from Jean-François Pitet, historian, collector, owner of *The Hi de Ho Blog* and co-author of the TV documentary, *Cab Calloway: Sketches*, "Frémeaux is an incredible company dedicated to be a 'sound library' and producer of so many great anthologies, saving so many forgotten artists from oblivion. I've got dozens of CD sets

they've released."

But while Frémeaux & Associés is fairly well known in Europe among educators and collectors, here in the USA, not so much. For example, such towering figures in jazz such as musician, educator and scholar David Berger; historian and radio host Phil Schaap; and historian and musician-bandleader Vince Giordano, who specializes in jazz from the '20s-30s, have never heard of the label. The venerable Dan Morgenstern, jazz writer, editor, archivist and producer notes the company as "a reissue label, to the best of my recollection, mainly of vintage stuff, mostly not done by other labels and focused on European material." As you would expect, by contrast, the label is familiar to Loren Schoenberg, who is an internationally oriented and recognized scholar, educator and musician as well as cofounder of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem. In Vancouver, jazz historian and radio host Nou Dadoun is semi-aware of Frémeaux & Associés, receiving occasional releases through Naxos distribution. "They've been quite eclectic," he says, "like the triple CD sets of Paris Musette, a collection of artists doing Kurt Weill compositions and Ray Charles live at Juan de Pins!" Dadoun adds that uniformly the booklets are informative and the sound quality excellent.

From the viewpoint of Frémeaux himself, his interest is on cultivating an audience that's "intellectual, open, cross-disciplinary and would understand this cross-cultural aspect. Such an audience typically represents 10 to 20% of the whole public." Frémeaux has further determined that America is not, "a country of history, especially in relatively recent history," concluding that aside from entities such as The Smithsonian Institution, there aren't resources within

the U.S. comparable to his catalog, whether by lack of motivation, economic constraints or a different cultural viewpoint. In its operations, Frémeaux & Associés is located in around 32 countries, represented by permanent on-site distributors; its range further covers more than 90 countries through direct distribution from the headquarters in Vincennes, which, Frémeaux says makes the company one of the few publishers to have alternative and independent distribution. Frémeaux & Associés products are distributed in over 2,000 libraries, including 150 abroad, plus 200 or so museums and that many more historical sites. They may also be found in literally thousands upon thousands of schools and universities.

Frémeaux & Associés' jazz catalog includes Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lester Young, Ben Webster, John Coltrane, Nat King Cole, Quincy Jones and a host more. French jazz historian and collector Jean-Marie Juif enthusiastically says, "This label is really amazing! Their jazz catalog is a work of art. Each CD or CD set has a very documented booklet, written by the very best authors and lots of very rare pictures. Their complete editions—Django, Armstrong, Bird—are really fantastic." Dutch historian and collector Remco Plas is also fervent about the label. "They have issued the complete Django Reinhardt on 15 double CDs. The sound is very good and the booklets are very informative and both in French and English. Their Complete Charlie Parker [12 3-CD sets and a 4-CD set] and the complete Louis Armstrong [15 3-CD sets so far] are equally impressive." Fellow historian and collector Swede Ulf Lundin adds, "The Complete Armstrong and the Complete Charlie Parker are not completely

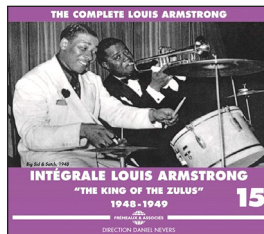
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)



The Complete Django Reinhardt 20
Django Reinhardt



The Complete Charlie Parker 13
Charlie Parker



The Complete Louis Armstrong 15
Louis Armstrong



Swing de Paris (1922-1951)
Various Artists



Drum Thing
Daniel Humair

VOXNEWS

JAZZ RETROFITTINGS

BY SUZANNE LORGE

Vince Guaraldi's scores for the animated *Peanuts* holiday specials could be responsible for introducing multiple generations of children to jazz. Jazz and cartoons have always had a symbiotic relationship—culturally they grew up together. The first animated short with sound, Walt Disney's *Steamboat Willie* (1928), is synced to a ragtime melody and the vocal mannerisms of Max Fleischer's cartoon character Betty Boop, popular a decade later, derive from the work of Harlem jazz singer Baby Esther Jones. This relationship continues today with the newly released animation to **Ella Fitzgerald's** beloved rendition of "Frosty the Snowman" from her 1960 Verve album, *Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas*. Digitally created, the animated short recalls the mid-century cartoon designs popular when Fitzgerald recorded the song; her retro cartoon character is an absolute delight. Two weeks before Ella & Frosty hit YouTube, Verve released *The Lost Berlin Tapes*. Recorded at Berlin's Sportpalast in March 1962, these tracks recall Fitzgerald's triumph in the same city two years earlier, her best-selling live album, *Mack the Knife: Ella in Berlin*. The repertoire on the later album contains some tunes heard less often, however:

a flirty "He's My Kind of Boy" and a spontaneous, wailing "Wee Baby Blues". The album covers some of her regular repertoire of the time, a burning "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie" from her 1961 album by that name (and during which she ad libs a reference to Betty Boop) and the tongue-in-cheek, crowd-pleasing "Mr. Paganini". Fitzgerald's scatting on the newly found recording is as shiver-inducing as ever.

In the '70s, journalist Linda Lipnack Kuehl was researching the life of **Billie Holiday** for a biography of the historic singer. She taped more than 200 hours of interviews: Charles Mingus, Tony Bennett, Sylvia Syms, Count Basie and the FBI agents who harassed, uh, followed her around. Kuehl committed suicide in 1978, before completing the book and without ever using the tapes. Director James Erskine remedies this omission with his documentary *Billie* (Greenwich Entertainment), which hits theaters and on-demand video on Dec. 4th. The release, an artful assemblage of colorized archival images, has a companion recording, *Billie: The Original Soundtrack* (Verve), which came out in November. On it you can hear Holiday sing her most memorable titles, like "I Loves You, Porgy", "God Bless the Child" and "Don't Explain". But the digitally enhanced film is more exciting; the modern format helps us to imagine what Holiday was like in real life. Be forewarned that this same realism makes "Strange Fruit" an even tougher listen. 92nd Street Y has Holiday-related live-streams Dec. 5th-6th.

On his latest, *All Rise* (Blue Note), **Gregory Porter**

sings so intimately that one would be forgiven for not noticing that he's backed by the London Symphony Orchestra. And a choir and horn section. Or that he's singing with full-throated fervor. Riding on an R&B groove, he introduces the album's theme of transcendence and redemption on the opener, "Concorde". He goes on to challenge injustice on funky, blues-driven "Long List of Troubles" and soothe the weary ear with the affecting "If Love Is Overrated". Closer, "Thank You", an inspirational tune crossing over from swing to gospel, sums up Porter's message to the world and the world's reflective response to this rare talent.

Singer/guitarist **George Benson**, one of the few jazz artists to turn out pop hits that feature scat solos, also recorded across the Pond; he taped his new live album, *Weekend In London* (Provogue), at Ronnie Scott's, the city's premier jazz club. The recording reprises several tunes that earned Benson 10 Grammy Awards ("Give Me the Night", "Turn Your Love Around") but also offers up one standard, "Moody's Mood"—a lesson in how to bop over a ballad and a nod to his mentor, vocalese innovator Eddie Jefferson.

Gigs in the time of coronavirus: **Cyrille Aimée** will sing at Blue Note (Dec. 3rd), one of the few in-person shows on offer this month. **Svetlana** and the Delancey Five follow with the Blue Note Holiday Brunch (Dec. 20th). If you prefer live-streams, you can catch singers **Klea Blackhurst** and **Jim Caruso** in "A Swinging Birdland Christmas" at Birdland (Dec. 18th). ❖

TOSHINORI KONDO

BY ANDREY HENKIN

PETER GANNUSHKIN/DOWNTOWNMUSIC.NET



Japanese trumpeter Toshinori Kondo, active in his country's and the international avant garde jazz scenes with numerous collaborators and dozens of his own records since the '70s, died suddenly on Oct. 17th at 71.

Kondo was born in Ehime Prefecture on Dec. 15th, 1948 and attended Kyoto University. His earliest recorded work came in 1976 in the bands of pianist Yosuke Yamashita (he had first played with him while still a student in 1970) and Evolution Ensemble Unity, a collaboration with reedplayer Mototeru Takagi. The following year Kondo would make the first of myriad international connections, appearing on drummer Milford Graves' *Meditation Among Us* (Kitty). This would be followed over the next decade—after a move to New York—with a United Nations' worth of work with Andrea Centazzo, Derek Bailey, Peter Kowald, Eugene Chadbourne, Peter Kuhn, John Russell, Roger Turner, William Parker, Paul Lovens, Tristan Honsinger, Steve Beresford, the ICP and Globe Unity Orchestras and many others.

The period also had three significant career happenings: his first work with German reedplayer Peter Brötzmann (*Alarm*, FMP, 1981), with whom Kondo would continue to work in the latter's Chicago Tentet and cooperative Die Like a Dog and Hairy Bones quartets well into the new millennium; an appearance on keyboard player Herbie Hancock's 1984 Columbia album *Sound-System*, co-produced by Kondo's longtime collaborator, bassist Bill Laswell; and the founding of his IMA band, which made nearly a dozen albums through 2018 for Polydor, Epic/Sony, Alfa, JARO Medien and Kondo's own TK Recordings.

Over the next 30 years, Kondo made more collaborative albums with John Zorn, Daunik Lazro, Borbetomagus, Han Bennink, Fred Anderson, Jim O'Rourke, Zeena Parkins, Henry Kaiser, Laswell, Honsinger, Kowald, Chadbourne and others. Over the last six years of his life, Kondo released live albums prolifically on his TK Recordings: outdoor documents under the moniker Blow The Earth, sometimes with performance artist Hiroyuki Aoki and folk musician Shobun Hoshino; solo recordings; and archival concert dates. His most recent project was the monthly *Beyond Corona* series.

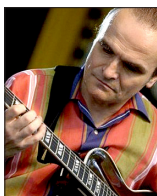
In a 2015 interview with the Polish music website *Polyphonia*, Kondo strongly defined his current and future music: "What I wanna do in music is very simple. Let's make the 21st Century's music! The 21st Century must be different from the 20th Century. We forgot how to live together with Nature in last century. Nature is the source and origin of all lives. But our human-centric society lost it. Human beings must communicate more with Nature, Earth and Space. The 21st Century's music will appear with the trinity of Nature-Spirit-Technology."



OVERTON BERRY (Apr. 13th, 1936 – Oct. 19th, 2020) The longtime Seattle-based pianist was Music Director for Peggy Lee and other performers for the 1962 World's Fair and had albums for Jaro and C E, featuring such sidemen as Chuck Metcalf and Bill Kotick, as well as several self-released CDs in the new millennium. Berry died Oct. 19th at 84.



HAROLD BETTERS (Mar. 21st, 1928 – Oct. 11th, 2020) The trombonist wrote tunes recorded by Woody Herman, Gerald Wilson and Ambros Seelos and had leader dates in the '60s for Gateway (including one co-led with fellow trombonist Slide Hampton), Reprise and his own Better Sound and H.B. Better died Oct. 11th at 92.



MARC FOSSET (May 17th, 1949 – Oct. 31st, 2020) The French guitarist was active since the late '70s, working with countrymen René Urtreger, Patrice Caratini, Michel de Villers, Stéphane Grappelli and others as well as expatriate Kenny Clarke. Fosset died Oct. 31st at 71.



ALESSANDRO GIACHERO (1971 – Oct. 20th, 2020) The Italian pianist had new millennium albums for Musicomania and Abeat and sideman credits with Silvia Bolognesi, Tiziana Ghigloni, Marco Zanoli and William Parker and was a member of T.R.E. and Sonoria. Giachero died Oct. 20th at 49.



NADI QAMAR (Jul. 6th, 1917 – Oct. 21st, 2020) The noted pianist, musicologist, composer, poet, educator and instrument builder (né Spaulding Givens) released two albums on Folkways, featuring his kalimba variant the Mama-Likembi, and recorded as a sideman with Andrew Hill, Nina Simone, Rufus Harley and Jo Grinage in the '60s-70s. Qamar died Oct. 21st at 103 of complications from COVID-19.



JOE RICO (Jul. 9th, 1924 – Oct. 10th, 2020) The legendary Buffalo-based radio DJ and concert promoter was named *DownBeat's* Top Jazz Disc Jockey of the Year and *Billboard's* Top Jazz Personality in the United States and was honored by having jazz musicians write tunes for him: Stan Kenton's "Jump for Joe", Count Basie's "Port of Rico", Don Elliott's "Rico Jico Joe", Mike Vax' "Joe's Inn" and Louie Bellson's "Buffalo Joe". Rico died Oct. 10th at 96.



VIOLA SMITH (Nov. 29th, 1912 – Oct. 21st, 2020) The drummer was one of the pioneering female musicians during the brief period in the '40s when all-women big bands were popular, founding The Coquettes and playing in Phil Spitalny's girl band (which appeared in a couple of Hollywood movies), later being a part of the Kit Kat Band, which was part of the '60s Broadway production of *Cabaret*. Smith died Oct. 21st at 107.



ACE TESONE (Jun. 5th, 1930 – Oct. 9th, 2020) The longtime tailor also made people look good onstage as a bassist in the '50s-early '60s, working with Charlie Ventura, Jimmy Wisner, Norma Mendoza, Mel Tormé and Clifford Brown. Tesone died Oct. 9th at 90. ❖

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

musicians that came from all over that would play these WMI concerts. A lot of these people had lived in Paris, which was kind of like a hub for world music in the '80s, particularly for West African music too, which was a direct link to what we were trying to do with M-Base with all these polyrhythms and layering. I had to look towards Africa, and I had to look towards the East and Arabia too, to find another perspective on how to deal with what I wanted to deal with. So, in 1990 I moved and I stayed for three years. I did move around quite a bit in Europe and I went to Africa and came back to New York several times in that three-year period. I was working with Ralph Peterson, Geri Allen and Ed Blackwell. So, I was coming to New York, but I was based in Paris because [of the influence of] the World Music Institute... One day they would have music from Rajasthan and the next day there'd be music from Morocco with Don Cherry and then there'd be Master musicians of South Asian music. I saw Zakir Hussain play with his father Ustad Allarakha Qureshi several times. It just opened my ears up.

TNYCJR: And drove you right out of the country.

GH: [laughs] Drove me right out of the country, yup. But, you know, growing up in Queens, I was exposed to world music as a kid anyway. Queens is one of the most multicultural places in the country. There are over a hundred languages spoken in Queens. So, you know, I was exposed to a lot of stuff before then, but that experience helped even more.

TNYCJR: Have electronics always been an interest?

GH: Yeah, I was always interested in processing. Two huge influences on me when I was [a teenager] were Miles and Sun Ra. I got to see both of them live several times in the '70s. I was always into processing, through them. Also, WKCR had some shows that played electronic music. Then also Bob Moog was at Queens College. But, you know, in high school, in grade school, I had friends that were messing around with synthesizers and stuff. I had a friend who was into computer synthesis and then he was also like an audiophile. He was kind of into digital before there was digital. [laughs] All I knew was that I liked the sound. Sly & the Family Stone also blew my mind. Whether it was pedals or overdriving the amp, they were processing sound and I was into that. That would have been 1969, something like that. So, that's pretty early. I was just purely drawn to the sound. I always loved films and science fiction films so I probably related that sound with some films I had seen. By the time I started getting to Sun Ra...for him, it was all about interplanetary travel and, so, it's all related.

TNYCJR: It seems like there has been an increasing number of practitioners of the Conduction® method over the years. What was your introduction?

GH: The first conductions that I did and I'm trying to remember if it was before those David Murray recordings or after, but David or Butch Morris called me and said Butch is gonna do his conduction thing for a TV series and we're gonna record the pilot. It was a TV series called *A Man Called Hawk*, starring Avery Brooks, who was tight with Butch. It was the first Black action hero that had a series on TV, kind of like a futuristic action hero guy. So, Butch did a conduction for the pilot and did the music for a while. Then I moved out of the country, so I don't know exactly how long it went before they cut it.

TNYCJR: How have you incorporated conduction into what you do?

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

(INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

GH: I’ve always been interested in orchestral composition and everything but playing with Butch I got further and further into the orchestra. This was another thing that took me in a whole other zone, a whole other direction and I became quite close with Butch. I’ve been working with conduction and conducting kind of large-ish groups. I’m looking forward to doing more. I’ve done a couple of residencies at universities and I did Banff with Tyshawn Sorey, where [we each] conducted and played. Tyshawn has taken the conduction to another place. Yes, there are more and more people that are working with conduction. So, Butch was working on the book, *The Art of Conduction*, and then Daniela Veronesi, an Italian woman who’s a friend of mine, helped him compile the notes to make the book, which was published after he died. When the book came out, Daniella came to Brazil to do a short tour of the book and she befriended Guilherme Peluci in São Paulo. He did something really interesting: several months ago, he did an online series with about 50 or 60 different people, in different parts of the world, who are doing conducted improvisation. It’s really interesting. I watched the whole series. We’re talking about trying to put together some conduction orchestra in São Paulo. Actually, I worked with Butch in São Paulo once through Nublu. Butch conducted the Nublu Orchestra every Monday night for years. We recorded and toured and we did a one-week residency in Brazil.

TNYCJR: What are you doing in Brazil now?

GH: For the moment, I’m living here in Salvador, Bahia. I was commissioned to write some music for a dance piece, so I recorded some stuff here with some folks. I gotta come to New York and mix the stuff, but then I’m coming back here. I’m really into studying the orchestra right now. I’m working on a requiem. I don’t tend to make political statements with my music, however, to some degree, I have.

Musicians, composers, performers, we’re always dealing with what’s happening. This piece is directly related to one of the most important issues that we’re dealing with now. It’s a requiem for Black men that have been killed by police. I started working on this a year ago, before George Floyd was killed. Over the course of many, many years... you can go back as far as you want, in this country... I’m aware of this problem and I decided to write this piece. It’s going to be a dedication to the slain, but I also have in mind the loved ones and families. It is a requiem for them, with a full orchestra and the chorus will be singing text in Latin and in English and there’ll be some soloists. Over the years, I’ve gotten further into composing for multimedia and that gives me the opportunity to write music for a functional purpose. It gives me a challenge that I like. It allows me to do research, it allows me to collaborate with other artists and I really like doing that.

TNYCJR: I’ve been having this conversation with musicians, especially ones who remember the ‘60s and ‘70s, because these murders are so much more visible since everybody’s got a video camera on them.

GH: But they’ve always been going on.

TNYCJR: Right, but it’s making a new impression on society that a lot more people are aware of it because of these cell phones. Is the window for opportunity for change open like it seemed to be 50 years ago?

GH: I would say, yes, it is. It depends on how you look at it. In one sense, nothing has changed. In another sense, things have changed. Technology has [made] problems that have been occurring over hundreds of

years more visible now, but the cause of it has not changed. I mean, the technology is just exposing something that’s always been happening. So, I mean, in terms of the window of change... There are times when we’re a little bit more ready to deal with certain issues. Everything, cosmically, has its time and place.

TNYCJR: How can the arts address the moment?

GH: I think the arts can do many things, but I think one of the most profound things that the arts do is they expose people to ideas. And these ideas go across racial lines, they go across gender lines, they go across any kind of boundaries or any kind of categories or anything. Ideas are one of the most powerful things that people make or have. And music or the arts can cut across political lines. So that’s a broad way of saying that the arts are important in these times.

TNYCJR: This article will be published in December and you’ll be streaming a performance from Roulette?

GH: I’m only going to be in New York for 10 days and the Roulette concert is the day before I come back here. It’s mostly going to be an improvised concert. I haven’t written anything for it, I’m not sure if I will. I’m gonna use my electronics and then I’m working with a percussionist. Shakoor Hakeem is a percussionist who worked with Wallace Roney quite a bit and that’s how I first heard about him. I used to play with Adam Rudolph and he had the GO: Organic Orchestra and Shakoor Hakeem played in that group. He’s a really great percussionist. He’s very grounded. He comes out of the whole Santería experience and is very high up in that. He also was trained as a classical percussionist in Philadelphia when he was younger. I was [also] going to work with Lucie Vítková. I met her a year and a half ago in New York. She’s an incredible musician, composer and inventor of instruments. She’s from the Czech Republic and we’re having problems getting her to New York. It may be that she plays virtually, or she might not even be on the gig. We’re still trying to work that out. But she’s very interesting. ❖

Haynes live-streams Dec. 4th at roulette.org.

Recommended Listening:

- Steve Coleman And Five Elements—*On The Edge of Tomorrow* (JMT-Winter & Winter, 1986)
- Ed Blackwell Project—*Vol. I: What It Is?/ Vol. II: What It Be Like* (Enja, 1992)
- Adam Rudolph’s Moving Pictures—*Dream Garden* (Justin Time, 2006)
- Graham Haynes—*Full Circle* (RKM Music, 2006)
- Oliver Lake/Graham Haynes/Joe Fonda/Barry Altschul—*OGJB: Bamako* (TUM, 2016)
- Vijay Iyer Sextet—*Far From Over* (ECM, 2017)

(LEST WE FORGET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

a great trumpeter who was very helpful if you asked him anything about improvisation or chord changes and stuff, he was very free with that.”

At about the same time Hardman was commuting to Newark, he also formed, along with bassist Bill Lee and drummer Billy Higgins, Brass Company, a 12-piece (saxophone, five trumpets, trombone, euphonium, tuba, piano, bass, drums) band with complex arrangements akin to Gil Evans that recorded one album, *Colors* (Strata-East).

He wasn’t as active in the ‘80s. According to Johnson, “He felt like he was underrated and started drinking heavy and all of that.” But in 1989 he made an excellent sextet album, *What’s Up* (SteepleChase), reuniting with Cook and adding Robin Eubanks’

trombone. At about the same time he moved to Paris, where he died Dec. 5th, 1990 of a cerebral stroke at 57. ❖

Recommended Listening:

- Jackie McLean Quintet—*Jackie’s Pal (Introducing Bill Hardman)* (Prestige, 1956)
- Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers—*Hard Drive* (Bethlehem, 1957)
- Lou Donaldson—*Sunny Side Up* (Blue Note, 1960)
- Bill Hardman Quintet—*Saying Something* (Savoy, 1961)
- Bill Hardman—*Politely* (Muse, 1981)
- Bill Hardman Sextet—*What’s Up* (SteepleChase, 1989)

(LABEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

complete but are still very worthwhile to have. The sound is very good! On the first Armstrong volume there is one of the three best reissues of the King Oliver Creole Jazz Band recordings.” Additional to the work of dedicated artists, the company issues thematic compilations. These sets include “Swing de Paris”, “Cotton Club” and the “Savoy ballroom house bands”. According to Augustin Bondoux, label manager, editorial director and A&R executive at Frémeaux & Associés, the newest release is an album by veteran Swiss jazz drummer, Daniel Humair, with French bassist Stéphane Kerecki and French composer-saxophonist Vincent Lê Quang. Coming in 2021 is a live CD of Cannonball Adderley, a boxed set on singing pianists in the history of jazz and an anthology of the work of French vibraphonist Dany Doriz. Bondoux notes that current booklets are written by French specialists Alain Gerber, Alain Tercinet, Daniel Nevers and Jean Buzelin. “Our policy, he says, “also aims to make the entire phonographic career of artists still living available to the public, such as Romane, Rodolphe Raffalli, Claude Bolling, Francis Lockwood, Raphaël Faÿs, Les Oignons and Didier Levallet. Each body of work has merit and therefore the right to exist in the long term, without being forgotten.”

Lastly, how has Frémeaux & Associés managed to pull all of this off and do it successfully for nearly 30 years? The answer is in the economic model originally set up by Frémeaux and Colombini, which has served the company admirably well. It allows a long amortization period, spread over several years, with modest sales volumes: “Our productions sell on average 1,000 copies in one year, to generally reach 2,000 sales over five years,” reports Frémeaux. It also helps to have an attitude in which the Euro is not the focus of activity. Frémeaux has been emphatic that, for him, the cultural importance of his work outshines economic considerations, although he is by no means foolish about this statement. The financials of the company have been carefully curated to be sound. Admirably, Frémeaux’ commitment is to educate as many young people as he can and “permanently and sustainably maintain the availability of our collective memory for the benefit of future generations.” It’s also no small piece of the economic pie that the operations of the company have benefitted from the changing music business; the profit-making landscape of today, with the advent of MP3s and streaming services, is far removed from the non-digital world of 1991, especially for major record companies. “Which,” Frémeaux says, “can no longer allow themselves the distribution of cultural products whose sales do not fit into their economy of scale.”

When all is said and done, Frémeaux & Associés clearly occupies an important place in the preservation of the world of sound, albeit with a very French twist. For jazz enthusiasts, the careful work of restoration and research has proven invaluable. ❖

For more information, visit fremeaux.com

ALBUM REVIEWS



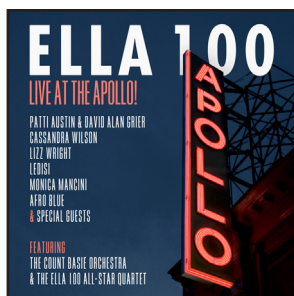
For Jimmy, Wes and Oliver
Christian McBride Big Band (Mack Avenue)
by Dan Bilawsky

This third album from the Christian McBride Big Band is both a tip of the hat to the leading bassist's history with organ player Joey DeFrancesco and a tribute to two beloved records and three legendary artists. Growing up in Philadelphia and playing together from the time they were middle schoolers, McBride and DeFrancesco formed a musical brotherhood. Another coupling—organ player Jimmy Smith and guitarist Wes Montgomery on a pair of celebrated Verve offerings with the intelligently earthy arrangements of Oliver Nelson—loomed large in their listening, providing early inspiration. Now, decades later, McBride, with DeFrancesco at his side, pays homage to those influential figures and recordings.

While *For Jimmy, Wes and Oliver* carries obvious allegiances and a few of Nelson's first-rate arrangements from this album's models—1966's *Jimmy & Wes: The Dynamic Duo* and 1968's *Further Adventures of Jimmy and Wes*—appear on the playlist, this isn't a rehash. McBride knows better than simply to follow suit. Instead, he just focuses on capturing and bottling a similar form of euphoria endemic to those sets. And by putting guitar ace Mark Whitfield out front, leaning on a tight and talented ensemble, choosing a repertoire with broad appeal and mixing quartet tracks in with the big band fare, he accomplishes his mission.

The reprised Nelson gems, a swaggering-and-shuffling "Night Train", bright "Milestones" and soaring-and-swinging "Down by the Riverside", join with McBride's arrangement of Montgomery's bossa-buoyed "Road Song" to serve as links between powerful partnerships of past and present. The quartet hits, first-rate takes on Freddie Hubbard's waltzing "Up Jumped Spring", Ray Noble's romantic "The Very Thought of You", Billy Eckstine's dreamy "I Want to Talk About You" and DeFrancesco's jaunty Don Was tribute "Don Is", embody spirit, elegance and soul. And a departing diptych in the form of Whitfield's "Medgar Evers' Blues" and the McBride-DeFrancesco high school throwback "Pie Blues" nestles right up against the other material. Cut from the same cloth as the aforementioned classics, this album truly hits the mark.

For more information, visit mackavenue.com. McBride judges Count Basie's *The Great American Swing Contest*, whose winners are announced Dec. 31st at countbasie.com.



Ella at 100: Live at the Apollo
Count Basie Orchestra (Concord)
by Pierre Giroux

It made sense to host the centenary of the birth of Ella Fitzgerald—quite possibly the most outstanding vocalist in the history of the genre, due in no small part to her mellow, clear voice and creative ad-libbing—at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, the place where her

storied career began in 1934.

It was in many way an impossible task to request performers to reprise many of the songs closely associated with her without avoiding comparisons. So, bearing in mind the Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney trope "we've gotta have a great show", the performers seized the moment. The album opens with co-host David Allen Grier recreating the night in 1934 when 17-year-old Ella Fitzgerald made her debut on amateur night. In this case it was 17-year-old singer Ayodele Owolabi delivering "Judy", the song Fitzgerald used.

The linchpin holding the music together is the Count Basie Band directed by Scotty Barnhart. They swing hard when given the chance and provide sympathetic accompaniment to the vocalists through a wide range of Fitzgerald-related material. Grammy Award winner and co-host Patti Austin is featured on five songs, especially effective on "A-Tisket, A-Tasket", "When I Get Low, I Get High" and wow-worthy on "How High The Moon" accompanied by the Howard University vocal group Afro Blue. The latter shines in its own right on "Oh, Lady Be Good". The Ella 100 All Star Quartet of pianist Shelly Berg, guitarist Brian Nova, bassist Nathan East and drummer Greg Field offers stellar support to Lizz Wright as she delivers the goods on "Love You Madly" and "The Nearness Of You". There is also a terrific version of "Cry Me A River" performed by the superbly talented Cassandra Wilson.

The final track is "People" recorded by Fitzgerald in Budapest, Hungary on May 20th, 1970. Greatness has frequently been defined as a natural ability to be better than all others. She embodied this definition.

For more information, visit concordmusicgroup.com. Count Basie's *The Great American Swing Contest* winners are announced Dec. 31st at countbasie.com.



Moods for Roswell
Duo Baars-Buis (Wig)
Tales From
Frode Gjerstad/Fred Lonberg-Holm/
William Parker/Steve Swell (Fundacja Słuchaj!)
by Steven Loewy

Saxophone/clarinet and trombone are a deadly combination, particularly in the right hands. These two recordings explore different strategies in which these horns interconnect, one in the context of a duo, the other a different take with an unusual collection of instruments. The results in each case are very distinct and largely successful.

Moods for Roswell, dedicated to the late trombonist Roswell Rudd, who died three years ago this month, displays the interaction of two giants of the Dutch scene, reedplayer Ab Baars and trombonist Joost Buis, whose years playing together in different settings lay the groundwork for compelling performances. Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn also loom large, as many of the tracks are loose reworkings of their pieces, or portions thereof, Baars and Buis explored on other albums. The abstract machinations of the duo make the melodies often unrecognizable, as they do a marvelous job of bouncing ideas off each other, often at a snail's pace and at low volume. It is tribute to their experience and technique that they accomplish the task so well. Highlights abound but things are particularly effective when infused with subtle humor, such as the compelling "Little March/ Klop", with its cute, martial melody gently dispersing into a mishmash of scintillating free-flying clarinet and trombone. "Moods for Roswell (In a Sentimental Mood)", airy as a

whisper's breath, demands authoritative precision and discipline as it gently merges soft sounds from Baars on shakuhachi flute, interspersed with light airy snippets from Buis, melding into a sleepy sentence. The two let loose for a bit on a couple of pieces, including "Cool and Gentle (Mr. Gentle Mr. Cool)", a glimpse at a somewhat more aggressive side.

Tales From is an unusual quartet of Norwegian Frode Gjerstad on alto saxophone and clarinet, Fred Lonberg-Holm on cello and electronics, William Parker on a combination of bass, tuba, cornet and flutes and Steve Swell, who turns 66 this month, on trombone. It offers busy and intense sound, exciting without losing itself, with a nod to the free-wheeling free jazz of the '60s. The recording had been planned as a trio with Gjerstad, Lonberg-Holm and pianist Matthew Shipp, but Swell and Parker were added when the latter could not make the recording. The results are a fascinating set of fully improvised pieces. Parker and Lonberg-Holm are stunning on the strings, as exemplified on "Bold", but the former is a special joy, as he shows off a rough-edged acumen on cornet (reminiscent of the late British drummer John Stevens), plus tuba and flutes. Gjerstad, too, performs as well as ever and his contributions on clarinet are bold and daring on "The Belly" while more sensitive on "The Immolation". Swell complements with one of his best performances. But, ultimately, it is the deep, dense and dark collective sound that wins the day, unmitigated, wild improvisation from experienced performers. The music throughout is deliciously busy and full of life. When it ends, you might sigh, exhausted though fulfilled.

For more information, visit stichtingwig.com and fsrecords.net. Swell live-streams Dec. 3rd at artsforart.org/onlineSalon.html.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Pierre Dørge & New Jungle Orchestra (featuring Stephen Riley) – *Bluu Afroo* (SteepleChase)
- Jon-Erik Kellso – *Sweet Fruits Salty Roots* (Jazzology)
- Andrea Keller – *Journey Home* (s/r)
- Anaïs Maviel/Michael Bisio – *Abstractions of the Human Kind* (s/r)
- Thelonious Monk – *Palo Alto* (Impulse!)
- Evan Parker/Zlatko Kaučič – *Arkosberg* (Klopoteč)
- Mara Rosenbloom Trio – *Respiration* (Fresh Sound-New Talent)
- Natsuki Tamura/Satoko Fujii/Rámon López – *Mantle* (Not Two)
- Cosmic Vibrations (feat. Dwight Trible) – *Pathways & Passages* (Spiritmuse)
- Fay Victor SoundNoiseFUNK – *We've Had Enough!* (ESP-Disk')

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

- Benjamin Boone – *The Poets Are Gathering* (Origin)
- Lucia Cadotsch – *Speak Low II* (We Jazz)
- Allan Chase/Bruno Råberg/Austin McMahon – *The Prospector* (Orbis Music)
- The End – *Allt Är Intet* (RareNoise)
- Ingebrigt Håker Flaten – *Til Anna: Confirmations and Abstractions* (Solo Bass) (Sonic Transmissions)
- Kaleidoscope Quintet – *Dancing On The Edge* (Dot Time)
- Yves Rousseau – *Fragments* (YOLK Music)
- Raymond Scott Big Band – *Hemi Demi Semi Quaver* (Real Gone Music)
- Natsuki Tamura/Satoko Fujii/Ramón López – *Mantle* (Not Two)
- Papo Vázquez Mighty Pirates Troubadours – *Chapter 10: Breaking Cover* (Picaro)

Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director



Apples & Oranges
Doug Webb (Posi-Tone)
Rippin' & Runnin'
Farnell Newton (Posi-Tone)
Like The Sun
Brian Charette (s/r)
by George Grella

Brian Charette makes every record on which he appears better. He's in a category by himself among contemporary jazz organ players, bound neither by tradition nor the avant garde, though adept at working with and responding to ideas pioneered by the likes of Jimmy Smith and Larry Young (the latter an important influence). He brings superior chops to the keyboard and has a hip, swinging, funky attitude to his craft.

He's something of the de facto house organ player for Posi-Tone. Charette's 2016 album, *Once & Future*, is an outstanding example of his own musicianship and what a label like Posi-Tone can achieve by approaching a classic style with a balance of reverence and a touch of cheek. On *Apples & Oranges* and *Rippin' & Runnin'*, Charette is a dream accompanist, playing a role something like the captain of a cruise ship, making sure everything runs smoothly so the soloists can leave their cares behind and blow.

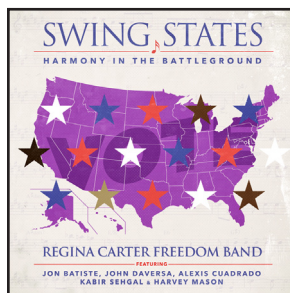
On saxophonist Doug Webb's *Apples & Oranges*, Charette is paired with drummer Andy Sanesi. They are a relaxed presence behind Webb, who plays likable ideas without ever getting too worked up or wandering too far and with a hint of dryness to his mellow tone (a

sensitive listener may feel that Webb has some subtle ideas about both Paul Desmond and Albert Ayler, an interesting combination). There's a lightness to his approach, even on "In a Sentimental Mood", which Charette and Sanesi honor, making for a pleasant listen.

Trumpeter Farnell Newton's *Rippin' & Runnin'*, with Rudy Royston at the kit and tenor saxophonist Brandon Wright, is idiosyncratic in comparison. The touches of compound harmonies and modulations and a slightly shifting pulse on opener "The Roots" proclaim a more modern, yet soulful, sensibility. The drummer makes a difference too; Royston plays with a tough-minded swing and he and Charette bounce a lot of energy and ideas off each other without ever growing obtrusive. Charette's solos explore a more varied harmonic palette and the album has some intriguing tension—the rhythm section sounds happy to be working with the horns, but when they're on their own, Charette and Royston seem near to making their own duo record. Solid through and through.

Like The Sun is Charette solo. He plays organ and synthesizers over preprogrammed drum and bass patterns. It's self-released and he describes it specifically as music he made working through the frustrations and anxieties of the COVID-19 pandemic, watching gigs and sessions and income disappear. Surprisingly perhaps, the music reflects the bright attitude of the title. Not surprisingly, there's more non-jazz than there is jazz, including plenty of funk, touches of Kraftwerk and world music via Joe Zawinul's legacy. On the surface, the ambition may be less than that of the Posi-Tone albums, but Charette's wide range goes farther and his personal joy in making music comes through.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com and briancharette.com. Charette live-streams Dec. 5th at soapboxgallery.org/live-stream.



Swing States: Harmony In The Battleground
Regina Carter Freedom Band (Tiger Turn/eOne)
by Monique Ngozi Nri

Regina Carter opens her first studio recording in three years with a monologue about the importance of voting. Her own, probably Ray Charles-inspired version of "America, The Beautiful" is playing in the background as she speaks. Carter enjoins us all to vote, remembering the activism of multiple generations of her family—and the various cultures she grew up around—to secure these rights. Each track is devoted to a proverbial swing state, several being the homestates of the member of her Freedom Band. The project's impetus came from a conversation with producer Kabir Sehgal, who also plays percussion and bass.

In what is now a prescient choice for the first track, The Freedom Band pumps out the swingiest version of "Georgia On My Mind", replete with brilliant solos by trumpeter/arranger John Daversa and Carter. The latter's love of her home state, Michigan and in particular Detroit, has been explored in other parts of her music. For this project, she chose to represent it with "Dancing In the Street" by Martha Reeves and The Vandellas, a song associated with the Civil Rights movement in the '60s. In a surprising turn, the song becomes Carter's tonal lament for the constant grind and resolve of trying to achieve change. Drummer Harvey Mason has a fantastic interaction with her solo.

At time the project feels like an enticing travel brochure. Pianist's Jon Batiste's "You Are My Sunshine" for Louisiana is a joyful rendition, full of the vibrancy

of living in New Orleans, as is Mason's "Home on the Range", a tribute to Kansas City, home of jazz musicians everywhere. Batiste's resounding laughter echoed by Carter's violin on "Wisconsin" and Daversa's gorgeous flugelhorn solo on the Florida state "Swanee River" track are also moments among many worthy of note.

It remains to be seen whether this project succeeded in its mission of getting people who would otherwise not do so out to vote. What is true is that it got a conversation going on social media and the caliber of the music will remain a call to take action.

For more information, visit reginacarter.com. Carter live-streams Dec. 6th at livingjazz.org/online-events/?eid=47289.

UNEARTHED GEM



Palo Alto
Thelonious Monk (Impulse!)
by George Kanzler

This is a great story. A teenager at Palo Alto High School, who will go on to be one of the West Coast's preeminent music promoters, books Thelonious Monk's quartet for a Sunday afternoon concert in October of the politically tumultuous year of 1968. A janitor, in exchange for paying to have the piano tuned, is permitted to tape record the concert. Danny Scher, the promoter, now acquires the tapes and with the cooperation and blessing of the Monk Foundation releases them, including on a 33½ rpm LP. It would be a much greater story if it had been a discovery of a tape(s) made a decade before, when Monk was leading his quartet at The Five Spot with the likes of Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane or Johnny Griffin. However, this is the quartet with Charlie Rouse on tenor saxophone, who had been with Monk throughout the '60s, and completed by two four-year veterans: bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley. It is already Monk's most well-documented quartet on records, both studio and live, so this LP adds little new or novel to Monk's discography.

In the best Monk quartets of the late '50s you could hear a palpable tension as well as cohesion among the members, that "sound of surprise" one critic identified as jazz. Nobody knew what Monk was going to do next. But this quartet is a well-oiled machine, going seamlessly through all the gears like a high-tech transmission. It's classic Monk, a little too classic. The surprises are less from him than his sidemen. Gales has a great arco feature (a technique Monk disapproved of) on "Well, You Needn't"; Riley's brushwork on "Ruby, My Dear" is a buoyant highlight. Those tunes, plus "Blue Monk" and "Epistrophy", are the bulk of the album. All can be found in better recorded versions by Monk, most even by this quartet.

I do not have perfect pitch. But the solo version of "Don't Blame Me" makes me wince. The tape speed is slightly off, as confirmed by a thread on the internet group jazz-research. Those without perfect pitch won't have much trouble with the quartet tracks, but the piano solos (there's another very short one) make the tape error obvious.

For more information, visit impulserecords.com

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1962
Ricardo Grilli (Tone Rogue)
by Marco Cangiano

Brazil-born, New York-based guitarist Ricardo Grilli is a Berklee and NYU graduate who has performed with quite a range of top-shelf musicians including Chris Potter and E.J. Strickland. This CD is a companion to 1954 (his father's year of birth), the title referencing his mother's birth year. Bassist Joe Martin and drummer Eric Harland return while the more rhythmically inclined pianist Kevin Hays takes over from the more eclectic Aaron Parks. The addition of tenor saxophonist Mark Turner gives 1962 a more postbop flavor than the earlier date.

Grilli's knack for very musical, yet not always memorable, compositions seems to inspire Turner, whose performance is relaxed and assertive. His phrasing blends particularly well with Grilli's style, which is characterized by warm fluidity, in spite of an electric edge, rendering accessible even the most complex composition.

The music and the titles are quite evocative and dense with personal references. "Coyote" and "Lunático" carry a Brazilian flavor—with the latter also a nod to the Brooklyn venue that hosted many of Grilli's performances. "1954-1962" constitutes an

ethereal bridge to the previous CD. "183 W 10th St." is an homage to Smalls whereas bop-infused "E.R.P.", bluesy "Signs" and more delicate "Virgo" are dedications to Bud Powell, Peter Bernstein and Grilli's cousin's first son, respectively. There is a consistency of moods across all the pieces despite their different inspiration, tempos and structure, with dreamy passages here and there, such as in "1954-1962" and "Virgo" and more uptempos in "183 W 10th St."

"Voyager" and "Mars" continues Grilli's fascination with astronomy found on 1954, the former also a reference to the group led by Harland. "Mars" and "Signs" are the pieces best defining this group: evocative themes, splendid solos and infectious interactions in rhythm section. This is a thoroughly enjoyable recording that bodes well for Grilli's further explorations.

For more information, visit toneroguerrecords.com. Grilli live-streams Dec. 8th at smallslive.com.



Candlelight: Love in The Time of Cholera
Juliet Kurtzman/Pete Malinverni (Saranac)
by Ken Dryden

Jazz players have regularly performed and recorded with classical musicians for decades with mixed results, the former usually having a built-in advantage

with some classical training in their formative years. Pianist Pete Malinverni's meeting with classical violinist Juliet Kurtzman is one of the rare crossovers that stands up to repeated hearings.

The secret to a successful session is a meeting of minds between the artists, picking repertoire as well as arrangements and originals that work for both musicians. The theme here is "Music from the Americas" (both North and South), including all four of cornet player Bix Beiderbecke's works for piano including his "Candlelights", in addition to ragtime, new tango and a pair of Malinverni originals.

Although it is unlikely Kurtzman had many opportunities to perform most of these compositions prior to taking part in this project, she meshes well with Malinverni in their interpretations. Argentinian bandoneon master Astor Piazzolla used violin in his small ensembles and Kurtzman's emotional playing on his "Oblivion", with precise pitch and plenty of emotion, make it feel like it has been in her concert repertoire. The loping interpretation of Beiderbecke's "Davenport Blues" has its share of humor, including Malinverni's wry detour into "Things Ain't What They Used To Be".

In a lively interpretation of Scott Joplin's "Solace" Kurtzman's singing tone in tandem with Malinverni sounds like old friends who have long played together. Malinverni sets up the Johnny Green-Edward Heyman ballad standard "Body And Soul" with a roundabout solo leading to Kurtzman's brilliant reworking of Coleman Hawkins' landmark tenor saxophone solo. Malinverni's whimsical tango "Love In The Time Of Cholera" adds to the diversity of this inspired session.

For more information, visit petemalinverni.com. This project live-streams Dec. 10th at youtu.be/5SFkpbXw-Rg.

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Who Are You?
Joel Ross (Blue Note)
by Tom Greenland

Joel Ross “has that THANG”, writes trumpeter and fellow Chicagoan Marquis Hill in his liner notes to *Who Are You?*, Ross’ sophomore release on Blue Note. The “THANG” in question is local musician slang for a special quality, or charisma, recognized by an ability to sound deeply rooted in the jazz tradition yet still be strikingly original, and certainly the 25-year-old vibraphonist embodies both of these qualities. Back with the Good Vibes quintet of his debut recording—alto saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins, pianist Jeremy Corren, a new bassist in Kanoa Mendenhall, drummer Jeremy Dutton and guest harpist Brandee Younger—this time around Ross sounds even more composed and confident. His group, a cohesive unit from the start, has matured, its individual personalities distinct yet amalgamated, like a reheated stew or lasagna that tastes even better the second day.

Stylistically, the ethos of Chicago collectivism is palpable, as are lingering influences of Bach and bop, the former in the leader’s elegant through-composed melodies rendered with hymn-like sobriety, the latter in his propulsive serpentine improvisations, which derive as much from the vocabulary of drummers as they do from melodic instruments. His ear for melody sounds similar, for this reviewer at least, to Pat Metheny’s progressive yet accessible ‘avant-Americana’ style, especially the songs “Gato’s Gift” and “Such Is Life”. Wilkins plays with a kindred musical spirit: fast, light, intelligent, like wisps of spray blowing off a wave-front, often leading the surge on themes, Ross doubling, ghosting or drafting in his wake. Corren melds rock, soul and church music into a pliable hybrid. Mendenhall’s beautifully recorded, unvarnished tone is anywhere and everywhere, Dutton’s voluble drum chatter equally so.

Younger’s iridescent strings are especially redolent on “King’s Loop”, a duet with the leader. Commendable for its team spirit and compatibility, the album, nevertheless, has instances of individual bravura: Ross’ solos on “Marsheland” and “The Nurturer”; Wilkins’ on “When My Head Is Cold”; both men’s on “Vartha”.

For more information, visit bluenote.com. Ross live-streams Dec. 9th at barbayeux.com and Dec. 10th and 17th at jazzgallery.org/tjgonline.



Prism
Conference Call (Not Two)
Intersecting Lives
Guillermo Gregorio/Joe Fonda/Ramon López
(Fundacja Słuchaj!)
Step In: Voilà la tendresse
Carlo Morena/Joe Fonda/Felix Lecaros Herrera
(Not Two)
by Robert Iannapolo

One never knows quite where bassist Joe Fonda will show up next. There are the usual suspects, groups he co-leads: Nu Band, the Fonda-Stevens Group, Conference Call. But he frequently turns up in

unexpected places, various international groups that interestingly round out his discography. Normally, he’s on three or four releases a year. Fortunately, during 2020, a year fraught with a lack of normalcy, at the end of the year we have three releases, bringing us (almost) up to date with his recent work.

Prism is the eighth album since 2002 by the co-op quartet Conference Call. It was recorded in 2016. The personnel has been surprisingly stable with Fonda, reedplayer Gebhard Ullmann and pianist Michael Jeffry Stevens. Only the drummer’s chair has changed, previously being occupied by Matt Wilson, Han Bennink, Gerry Hemingway, mostly by George Schuller. For *Prism*, we’re introduced to the newest occupant, Dieter Ulrich. Like his predecessors he drives the group ahead perfectly, knowing when to push, when to free more space for the soloists. He also knows when to lay out. Notable is the way he controls the group stasis on Stevens’ title track. The other three each provide the program. “F.J.D.” is also to be found on Ullmann’s microtone project of last year, *MikroPULS* (Intuition). This recording pre-dates that one and he’s already searching for the microtonal properties within this variation on Eddie Harris’ jazz standard “Freedom Jazz Dance”. Fonda’s “Listen To Dr. Cornel West” (also previously recorded with other bands) is, at 13 minutes, one of the high points of the disc. The theme is initially stated over a free base until Fonda’s solo after which he locks into an ostinato pattern and the band takes off with it. Everything played here is at a high level and Conference Call renews itself with a new drummer.

The most unique group situation for Fonda in this roundup is *Intersecting Lives*, a tri-continental trio with Argentinian clarinetist Guillermo Gregorio and Spanish percussionist Ramón López. All three have had lengthy careers and distinctive discographies (Gregorio since the ‘60s, Fonda the ‘70s and Lopez the ‘80s) within the avant garde yet none had recorded together before. It’s almost inevitable that these three musicians’ paths would cross. The program consists of four originals by Gregorio and four free improvs. There’s a clarity of line and purpose to the compositions. “Cosa Bara” contrasts lighter-than-air clarinet with deep, growling contrapuntal lines from the bass as percussion subtly colors and shades their dialogue. “Tres” finds Gregorio and Fonda stating the theme together before exploring the lines with graceful interaction. The improvisations have more activity but there’s still circumspect listening with each player responding to the other. The best example of this is on “Drawing In The Margins”, where López drives the other two with forward momentum for a satisfying conclusion to a remarkable disc.

Yet another tri-continental aggregation is featured on *Voilà La Tendresse*, Fonda with Italian pianist Carlo Morena and Chilean drummer Felix Lecaros Herrera. This is the fifth album Fonda has recorded with Morena. Of the three albums featured here, this is closest to the mainstream but just by a matter of degrees. The themes are melodic but once they’re doled out, the three players open up and dig in for energetic trio interplay. The title track (translated as “Here Is The Tenderness”) is a perfect case in point. It opens with a pleasant theme, vaguely reminiscent as something from later-period Bill Evans. But once they state it, the music opens into a swirling three-way chord-based improvisation. Herrera and Fonda build up the power as Morena takes off on a lengthy solo going in different directions with him trailing the rhythm section and vice versa. “Dog With No Name” follows a similar procedure and opens into a lengthy section of free interplay. Most of the album has a vigorous, lively cast and one has to wait until the end for a ballad but “Chorale” is a perfect conclusion.

For more information, visit nottwo.com and fsrecords.net. Fonda live-streams Dec. 8th at jazzhalo.be/home.

GLOBE UNITY



I’ll Be Home For Christmas
Gabriel Latchin (Alys Jazz)
Around the Christmas Tree
Randy Greer/Ignasi Terraza (Swit)
Christmas With My Friends VII
Nils Landgren (ACT Music)
by Tom Greenland

Christmas music and jazz are natural partners. Why? Because people know the songs, a prerequisite for appreciating how skillfully an improviser changes something old into something new.

British pianist Gabriel Latchin’s third album, *I’ll Be Home For Christmas*, a trio date with bassist Dario Di Lecce and drummer Josh Morrison, is an homage to the songs of Christmas past (from “God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen” to “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”) and the great straightahead jazz pianists of the ‘50s and onward. One of this record’s strengths resides in Latchin’s novel settings, makeovers, which, while steeped in the familiar musical mannerisms of, say, Bill Evans, Ahmad Jamal and/or Barry Harris, manage to add elements of interest and originality. “Winter Wonderland”, “The Christmas Song”, “White Christmas”, “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” and “Silent Night” are all notable for choice chords and lithe phrases. A second strength lies in Latchin’s refined, almost classical approach, each solo becoming an extension of the arrangement, each note carefully polished and placed.

Around the Christmas Tree is a date led by Spanish pianist Ignasi Terraza featuring vocalist Randy Greer interpreting a less obvious roster of seasonal songs (Sammy Cahn-Jimmy Van Heusen’s “The Secret of Christmas”, Frank Loesser’s “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve?”, Charles Brown’s “Let’s Make Every Day a Christmas Day”, Babs Gonzalez-James Pierpont’s “Be-bop Santa Claus”); along with originals that deftly mimic the Great American Songbook (“Christmas Time in Barcelona”, “No More Lockdown”, “Waltzing Around the Christmas Tree”, “[Nat King] Cole for Christmas”); or classic blues (“All the Blues You Brought Me”, “Freshly Squeezed”). The album features second vocalist Andrea Motis (often in tandem with Greer), conguero/bongosero Yonder de Jesús and guitarist Josep Traver, whose melodic solos jibe well with the leader’s laidback swing feel.

Swedish trombonist/vocalist Nils Landgren’s *Christmas With My Friends VII*, the latest installment in a 14-year series, has become a tradition of its own, bringing the sound of sweet Swedish ‘soul jazz’ to churches and concert halls. Landgren, better known for his funk style, is also a sensitive crooner who sounds like a cross between Mose Allison and Phil Collins. Joined by four female vocalists, each with a distinctively expressive sound, the album boasts a variety of solo and choral tracks. Jeanette Köhn’s pristine soprano graces Schubert’s “Ave Maria”, Britten’s “Hodie Christus” and “Sweet Was the Song”, a British folk tune. The other vocalists, Sharon Dyall, Jessica Pilnäs and Ida Sandlund (who doubles on piano), blend jazz, pop, country and gospel influences to give their songs (each from a different country) an au courant feel. Landgren and saxophonist Jonas Knutsson add tactful solos.

For more information, visit gabriellatchin.com, switrecords.com and actmusic.com

Unfiltered.

Unfiltered.
Tyshawn Sorey (s/r)
by Phil Freeman

Drummer and composer Tyshawn Sorey has kept busy during the COVID-19 pandemic. He's composed and premiered numerous pieces with a broad range of ensembles, the performances streaming online and only sometimes archived. This release would be a two-CD set if it existed in physical form, but it's only available as a Bandcamp download.

The ensemble has alto saxophonist Nathan Reising, tenor saxophonist Morgan Guerin, pianist Lex Korten, vibraphonist Sasha Berliner and bassist Nick Dunston. Sorey composed all three of the tracks, which range in length from 30 to 55 minutes.

Surprisingly, despite the extraordinary duration of the pieces, this is some of Sorey's most conventionally 'jazzy' music in a while. The solos are often quite unfettered, but there are also extended passages of very beautiful postbop ensemble writing. The talented Guerin displays particular fluency in the David Murray/David S. Ware language of the saxophone, traveling from meditative phrases to hoarse, fierce cries and Korten is a lightning-fast, McCoy Tyner-esque pianist. At the beginning of the second piece, they perform a duet that's simply lovely.

The music has a weight and density that marks it as Sorey's, but the amount of latitude he gives to the other players makes it theirs, too. He's very present behind the kit, but mixed low enough never to be dominant. He's a teacher (the others are all much younger) and occasionally needs to bring them into line with a cymbal crash or a massive slam of the snare, but for the most part he's swinging in the back, giving them parameters within which they're free to do whatever they feel like, even challenging his authority at times.

As with most Sorey music, the extended duration is more than an indulgence. The point is to allow time to dissolve and become meaningless. He wants people to come into one of his performances without expectations as to what they might hear and be open to whatever is presented, riding with him and his collaborators for as long as it takes to get where they're going. Give *Unfiltered* two hours of your life. You won't be sorry.

For more information, visit tyshawn-sorey.bandcamp.com. Sorey live-streams Dec. 11th at my.dacamera.com/3112.

Though Eve was made from Adam's rib
Nine months he lay within her crib
How can a man of woman born
Thereafter use her sex with scorn?
For though we bear the human race
To us is given second place
And some men place us lower still
By using us against our will...

Seven Storey Mountain VI
Nate Wooley (Pyroclastic)
by Franz Matzner

The sixth installment in Nate Wooley's monumental *Seven Storey Mountain* reflects its evolution while also standing alone as a formidable musical and social statement against domestic violence.

Originally begun as a trio, the *Seven Storey Mountain* series has expanded toward larger ensembles over time, with 14 musicians here. And while each

iteration is distinct, connective tissue does exist. Each utilizes a combination of pre-recorded material, loops and live performance. Further, as Wooley articulates in his unusually extended and detailed notes, each *Seven Storey Mountain* begins by adapting the pre-recorded elements of the previous release to the new project, thus establishing continuity. Next the blend of textures, colors and performance are molded into the new album.

The first in the cycle to utilize live vocals (Yoon Sun Choi, Melissa Hughes, Megan Schubert), *Seven Storey Mountain VI* revolves around lyrics by singer Peggy Seeger, which pointedly confront rape, especially within the context of marriage. Parabolic in structure, the 45-minute composition opens somberly with a wordless hum at a mournful pace. Slowly the vocals fade to be replaced by austere instrumental lines, which continue forward with minimalistic steps and quiet tone. However, beneath the surface a rumble of suppressed tension begins to manifest. Additional instruments enter and fall away. Sonic effects intersect more frequently, dynamics shift and drum loops are added and removed. The effect is a constantly spiraling movement, the album's overall arc traced by individual vortices within the curve. As the composition peaks, the amalgam of sound turns progressively dissonant while the layers build into intense fury. The controlled chaos then subsides, journeying down the parabola to a bed of gentle ambience. Seeger's chilling lyrics emerge last as a chorale, unadorned and striking to the heart. Finally, all sound other than vocals fade and the piece concludes with a repeated refrain "You Can't Scare Me".

For more information, visit pyroclasticrecords.com. Wooley live-streams Dec. 11th at roulette.org.



The Intangible Between
Orrin Evans and The Captain Black Big Band
(Smoke Sessions)
by Joel Roberts

There's a spirited, celebratory feel to Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band, reflecting the Philly-born pianist's devotion to the family-like collective of musicians he likes to call "the Village". Together for over a decade, this rotating cast of older and younger artists, fresh and familiar faces, has come to comprise one of the most dynamic large ensembles around, a unit that resembles stellar groups like the Mingus Big Band or Gil Evans Orchestra in its combination of soulfulness and sophistication. For the group's fourth recorded effort, Evans assembled about 20 members of his cohort in a New York studio filled with food and fellowship to create a backyard barbecue vibe. While spontaneity was the goal, Evans brought along tight arrangements (his first for the group) and a well-defined plan for each individual musician, including longtime associates like trumpeters Sean Jones and Josh Lawrence, saxophonists Todd Bashore and Troy Roberts, trombonists Stafford Hunter and David Gibson and bassist Eric Revis.

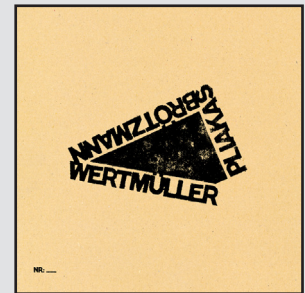
The set is an eclectic one, ranging from a rollicking, funky reading of gospel standard "This Little Light of Mine" to high-energy Evans originals like "That Too". The most ambitious tracks are compositions by a pair of legendary pianists: Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor" gets a rousing, frenetic treatment that somehow doesn't sound overcrowded despite the presence of four bassists and two drummers; "Tough Love", meanwhile,

seamlessly pairs an off-kilter Andrew Hill tune with powerful spoken word by Evans and others based on works by Philadelphia poet John "Doc" Holiday and Evans' brother Todd, also known as Son of Black.

Two heartfelt tributes form the emotional backbone of the album. Trumpeter Roy Hargrove is remembered with a moving rendition of his "Into Dawn" while "I'm So Glad I Got to Know You", Evans' poignant sendoff to late drummer Lawrence Leathers, closes the session with the entire ensemble chanting the title. A powerful finish to a deeply satisfying album.

For more information, visit smokesessionsrecords.com. Evans live-streams Dec. 11th at smokejazz.com.

DROP THE NEEDLE



Farewell Tonic
Full Blast (Trost)
by Phil Freeman

German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann can be a remarkably sensitive and thoughtful improviser, listening closely to what a duo partner or a bandmate is playing and responding in kind. Not so much with *Full Blast*, though. This long-running unit with Swiss electric bassist Marino Pliakas and drummer Michael Wertmüller, lives up to its name. Their performances take off like rockets and level audiences with overwhelming force and volume.

This LP documents the final concert at Tonic, the legendary New York venue Brötzmann played many, many times. They take the place out with a bang, delivering five untitled pieces in just under 40 minutes. The first lasts nearly 17 minutes and runs through several stages. It begins with an explosion; Brötzmann is at full roar from the moment the horn's mouthpiece touches his lips and Wertmüller is playing literal death metal blast beats. Pliakas is a distorted rumble in the middle, filling the room with a soupy, mud-like sound. Eventually the intensity becomes unsustainable though and the "rhythm section" drops away, leaving the saxophonist to take an extended and surprisingly meditative solo. Then it's Wertmüller's turn, with Pliakas creating metallic shimmers in the air behind him as he batters his way across his kit and back like an unceasing wave of percussive thunder, as if Billy Cobham had joined a Taiko troupe.

Three shorter pieces follow, running between six and nine minutes and there are moments of gentleness sprinkled here and there. Brötzmann begins the third track with soft clarinet, as his band rumbles suspensefully behind him, as though keeping a balloon in the air with patient, well-timed taps and gentle puffs of air. Eventually, though, Wertmüller begins to sound like an orchestral tympani player gone berserk and Brötzmann is emitting high-pitched screeches and long squalling tones like a baby dinosaur calling for its mother.

Brötzmann has performed and recorded in a staggering range of contexts over his nearly 60-year career, but his long-running bands allow him to express himself most completely. *Full Blast* is one of the best of these and this performance has much more than historical value to recommend it.

For more information, visit trost.at



Dreamt Twice, Twice Dreamt
(Music For Chamber Orchestra and Small Ensemble)
Ingrid Laubrock (Intakt)
by Jordannah Elizabeth

Saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock continues to compose larger-scale pieces with this followup to her 2018 orchestral album *Contemporary Chaos Practices*. Anyone who has followed Laubrock is familiar with the breadth of her experimental compositions, but it is still a bit surprising that even with such a large ensemble, Cologne's EOS Chamber Orchestra plus guests, she chooses to open her new musical offering with very minimal ornamentation.

This two-CD set is split into two unique interpretations of the same five-piece suite: "Dreamt Twice", "Snorkel Cows", "Drilling", "I Never Liked That Guy" and "Down the Mountain, Down the Mountain". This quintuplet is not only reimagined but also reordered on the second disc with a New York-based small group. This reorganization expands upon the Shakespearean verbiage of the album's song titles by creating a subtle puzzle one would have to look closely to notice.

The first CD opens quietly and spaciouly with "Dreamt Twice": haunting, whispering electronic soundscapes; careful taps from Tom Rainey's drumset; fragmented piano from Cory Smythe; and the eerie presence of horns. The nearly 10-minute piece begins to swell as Laubrock enters with fluidity and allows herself space to improvise and roam. Even though her compositions are carefully plotted, the music exudes a measure of freedom for her saxophone statements; just because a composer has access to many musicians, it doesn't mean the music needs to be heavily doused with every instrument every moment.

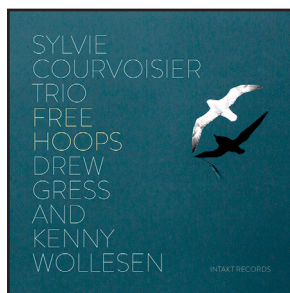
As she writes, "While the small-group versions were composed first, I did not just re-arrange those compositions for the orchestra but rather re-imagined them. As I wrote the large-scale pieces, I often zoomed in on a detail in a small-group version to generate a materially different large-group piece." The first disc is quiet and sensual more than cerebral, illustrating the dream state that is subtle yet intensely enticing.

The second disc is fuller and opens with "Snorkel Cows", which features a romantic Smythe solo reminiscent of a more involved dream state, as if the

dreamer is willing the dream to happen instead of passively allowing an unconscious fantasy to permeate the mind. Even though the ensemble is much smaller—Smythe on both piano and quarter-tone keyboard, Sam Pluta on electronics and guests Adam Matlock (accordion), Josh Modney (violin), and Zeena Parkins (electric harp)—it sounds larger than the entire EOS Chamber Orchestra. Piano flaunts accentuated trills giving the music charisma and Laubrock the opportunity to play longer, sprawling lines.

This album is all about Laubrock's compositional style, not so much particularly about songs but about musical decisions key to unlocking her imagination and understanding what the dream world truly is to her. The album is dualistic, of two visions, and creates a vibrant landscape.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch. Laubrock live-streams Dec. 11th with Nate Wooley at roulette.org.



Free Hoops
Sylvie Courvoisier Trio (Intakt)
by John Sharpe

Sylvie Courvoisier's name on the sleeve can signal contemporary classical rigor, improv unpredictability or free jazz verve. But with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Kenny Wollesen on board, the Brooklyn-based Swiss pianist drops anchor deep in the tradition and, while ever ready to leap into the abyss, even that's imbued with a sense of time. *Free Hoops* constitutes the third winning entry in the threesome's tally after the excellent *Double Windsor* (Tzadik, 2014) and *D'Agala* (Intakt, 2018).

One of her most potent settings, the trio allows full rein to Courvoisier's rhythmic drive without sacrificing the complexity and risk-taking that makes her work so enthralling. Wollesen brings an insouciant swing in which he always finds sufficient leeway to interject off-kilter accents and unexpected sonorities while Gress' ability to be simultaneously melodic, articulate and inventive shows why his diary space is in such demand. It's actually quite difficult to say when someone is soloing as the focus shifts continuously around the group and fleeting features, like Wollesen's tumbling rhythms on "As We Are", also serve as integral threads in a larger fabric.

In common with many of the pieces, the title cut comprises a series of contrasting sections, in this case a stealthily scuttling line alternated with a sunny lilt, setting up opportunities for dazzling improvisation built off the component elements. On "Lulu Dance" those ingredients include a rolling vamp, suspenseful pauses, intricate interlocking parts and abrupt hairpins.

On "Requiem D'Un Songe", a bass register motif lifted from "Early Autumn" by dedicatee Claude Thornhill (a stalwart of her father's record collection) emerges from delicate pointillism, before being subverted as sprinkles of notes become a blizzard.

Whether on the spiky textural exchanges of "Birdies of Paradise", darkly brooding drama of "Highway 1", explosive chase of "Just Twisted" or martial cadences of "Galore", what the trio achieves within the contours of Courvoisier's slyly crafted charts remains nothing short of alchemy.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch. Courvoisier live-streams Dec. 11th with Nate Wooley at roulette.org.



**CHARLES MINGUS
AT BREMEN 1964 & 1975**
SSC 1570 - 4 DISCS DIGIPAK & BOOKLET
STREET DATE 11/13/20

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

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



JOE CASTRO
PASSION FLOWER-FOR DORIS DUKE
SSC 1393 - 6 ALBUMS & BOOKLET BOXED SET
STREET DATE 11/20/20

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

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



www.sunnysiderecords.com



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Accelerate Every Voice
Cory Smythe (Pyroclastic)
by Kurt Gottschalk

Cory Smythe's 2018 Pyroclastic CD *Circulate Susanna* was as satisfying a record as it was mystifying. With a fantastically flexible trio of Swedish singer Sofia Jernberg, guitarist Dan Lippel and himself on piano and autoharp (with electronic augmentations to the instruments), Smythe executed an obscure examination and reconstruction of "Oh Susanna", of the antebellum South and of the moods the music and the history conjure, all as hazily as the divisions between improvisation and composition (which were also in play and under scrutiny on that remarkable record).

Smythe has followed that up with another esoteric take on Americana as enjoyable and inscrutable. The instrumentation is reduced to piano and percussion (plus electronics) but there are five voices this time out (Kari Francis, Steven Hrycelak, Kyoko Kitamura, Raquel Acevedo Klein and Michael Mayo) working in various arrangements of cyclic psychedelics.

As with the previous album, there's a lot at play here. There's the history of the song at the root of the project, a 1905 setting by J. Rosamond Johnson of a text by his brother, noted writer/activist James Weldon Johnson. The spiritual "Lift Every Voice and Sing" is of no small import: it has come to be referred to as "the Black National Anthem". But Smythe folds a lot of variables into that history. The many musical reference points include Luciano Berio, Bobby McFerrin, scat and vocalese and the a cappella revival of the last decade. Smythe doesn't shy away from the schmaltz and the sing-song, he just uses it, framing what's come to be seen as corny within a new setting.

That's, briefly, about half the story. After eight quick (two to five minute) tracks, the album concludes with the 19-minute "Piano and Ocean Waves for Deep Relaxation". The New Age trapping of the title may be a bit facetious but not entirely off the mark, the track is more or less what it suggests, but darker and noisier than many can find relaxing. It's not clear from listening, in fact, if there was a player involved or if the instrument was set in the tide and allowed to resonate. Either way, it's a strangely anxious sound piece.

If forced, one could suppose something about the suggestion of a dark undercurrent in American history

in the closing track. In that case, one might not be entirely far off the mark. Nothing about *Circulate Susanna* and, now, *Accelerate Every Voice*, is ever clear, however. The starting point is stated but soon becomes all ribbons and tentacles. Smythe's national portraits don't come off as indictment or celebration but as a sort of abstract observation, almost academic, but with heart.

For more information, visit pyroclasticrecords.com. Smythe live-streams Dec. 11th with Nate Wooley at roulette.org.



Time OutTakes
Dave Brubeck Quartet (Brubeck Editions)
Lullabies
Dave Brubeck (Verve)
by George Kanzler

There were two momentarily important quartets led by jazz pianists in the late '50s-60s, Thelonious Monk and Dave Brubeck's. Both—like such contemporaries as Erroll Garner, Herbie Nichols and Randy Weston—did not fall into the jazz mainstream piano tradition, having their own highly idiosyncratic styles. The height of Brubeck's famous Quartet with Paul Desmond (alto saxophone), Eugene Wright (bass) and Joe Morello (drums) was the immensely popular album *Time Out* (Columbia, 1959). *Time OutTakes* consists of unreleased outtakes: five alternate takes and two stand-alone tracks from the original recording sessions, plus a track of some "Band Banter" lacking much context.

Brubeck's "Blue Rondo à la Turk" and Desmond's "Take Five", the two tracks on *Time Out* that became a jukebox 45, are both heard in alternates. The former has the 9/8 theme sliding into 4/4 blues, with Brubeck stretching out his solo to over ten choruses. Morello's 5/4 pattern is slightly different on this alternate "Take Five", his solo more AfroLatin than on the released track. Of the other alternates, "Strange Meadowlark" is even more lyrical than the original; "Three to Get Ready (Four to Go)" swings the alternating 3/4 to 4/4 frame more and "Cathy's Waltz" offers little new. The new highlight is "I'm In A Dancing Mood", a 1936 British pop song by Al Hoffman, Al Goodhart and Maurice Sigler. In a little over three minutes, it moves through a variety of tempos, rhythms, time signatures and moods. Brubeck explained that it was designed for TV appearances where the band was expected to display its versatility. There's also "Watusi Jam", a number minus Desmond that may have been, but for "Take Five", developed into Morello's feature on the original LP. It all makes for an album much more original and interesting than most outtake sessions of historical recordings.

Lullabies is a solo piano recording Brubeck made in 2010, when he was 90. His playing is lyrical, romantic yet emotionally understated, never falling into pathos or grandeur. Half of the material is familiar tunes, fondly recalled, from classical and traditional pieces like "Brahms Lullaby" to "Danny Boy" to Great American Songbook standards such as "Over the Rainbow" to "Summertime" and, if you need something for the holiday season, "There's No Place Like Home" and "All Through the Night". There are also lovely, resonant originals like "Going to Sleep" and "Lullaby for Iola" (his late wife). There's even "Koto Song", a marvelous pianistic evocation of the Japanese stringed instrument's sound.

For more information, visit davebrubeck.com/news/brubeck-editions-time-outtakes and vervelabelgroup.com. A Brubeck centennial celebration live-streams Dec. 15th at facebook.com/NJPAC.



Out Of The Hole
Noah Kaplan Quartet (Ezz-thetics)
by Jim Motavalli

Noah Kaplan Quartet's third album, recorded at New Haven, CT's Firehouse 12 in 2012, is not an easy listen, but was never meant to be. Kaplan, on tenor and soprano saxophone, is joined in the frontline by guitarist Joe Morris, with whom he has considerable affinity. Kaplan, reminiscent of Albert Ayler but without his huge tone, dominates the proceedings. There do not appear to be tunes as such, though the liner notes deny that "for all its edgy fluency" this music is actually free.

"Ed Sullivan" is essentially the saxophonist exploring his instrument for half its length, at which point some electronics intrude. That's followed by a lengthy solo by drummer Jason Nazary, who doubles on the aforementioned electronics. It's as uninhibited as recess at a Montessori school. "Tunnel Mouth", Kaplan on tenor, puts a deep dive into microtonality on display. Morris is a full partner here, undergirding with spiky lines. Kaplan returns, volcanically, with angry cries and shrieks. Electric bassist Giacomo Meregá is upfront for "Unwelt" until Kaplan enters surreptitiously and builds into a frenzy on tenor with, again, very sympathetic support from Morris, who unleashes his own epic solo. Kaplan calls his approach "spidering" and he definitely wants to take his instruments places they haven't been before. Soprano comes out for "Aprosexia", which skitters around, chased by Morris, before heading fully out. Morris takes the idiosyncratic helm, with ghostlike whispers from Kaplan. Soon, it's a free-for-all—or just sounds like one. The title piece starts out with Kaplan slightly subdued, but as the track wears on it's like they're being forced back into the hole, rather than climbing out of it. Halfway through it slows to a crawl, with the saxophonist's found sounds becoming a coloring agent to the close.

Victor Young's "Stella by Starlight" is the odd man out here, with Kaplan on tenor to explore the well-known lines. There are faint echoes of the romanticism contained therein and the desired atmosphere is achieved. Morris plays it—almost—straight. The D.A.R. dance probably wouldn't invite him back.

For more information, visit hathut.com. This project live-streams Dec. 12th at facebook.com/UnderwolfRecords.



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Trickster's Dream
Miles Okazaki (Pi)
by Kyle Oleksiuk

With *Trickster's Dream*, available only digitally, guitarist Miles Okazaki joins the ranks of hundreds of musicians releasing non-traditional material in order to compensate for the complete annihilation of live performances by COVID-19. But Okazaki has found a new, better way to compensate. Where other artists have been broadcasting live performances—an understandable but unsatisfying way of adapting to our new, degrading paradigm—Okazaki has released an “imaginary live concert”.

In the liner notes, Okazaki explains the “imaginary live album” concept thusly: “[my] band Trickster was supposed to tour the United States and Europe for six weeks in May-June of 2020 and after the pandemic shutdown I was looking for some ways to keep the band ‘working’... I decided to make an album of what the group might sound like after a couple of weeks on the road playing material from our last album, tempos pushed, forms stretched, risks taken.” To do so, Okazaki, pianist Matt Mitchell, bassist Anthony Tidd and drummer Sean Rickman individually recorded a number of songs from their previous albums *The Sky Below* and *Trickster*, incorporated “improvised interludes” to simulate a gig and had Tidd piece together the result. (There’s also a few video recordings available to simulate the visual aspect of a live performance.)

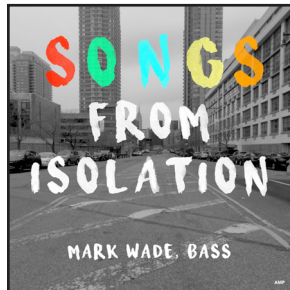
The tracks themselves sound like looser, more rambling adaptations of the tracks on Trickster’s previous two albums; where their ‘official’ studio albums sound crisp, straightforward and orchestrated, *Trickster's Dream* is hazy, flighty and improvisational. Electronic effects (particularly on guitar) stand in for the overtones and blurrier sound of live music, while the musicians—not attempting to present a definitive version of these compositions, which they’ve already recorded—freely add moments of hesitation and waterfall-like runs up and down the scales.

Trickster's Dream is essentially a studio album with live characteristics and, as a format, is extremely successful, because you don’t need to know that you’re listening to an “imaginary live album” to enjoy it. It’s just a few of the aspects of live music grafted onto a studio album. Unlike live performance broadcasts,

you’re not reminded of what you’re missing. It’s not a watered-down version of anything.

The album sounds, alternately, sped up and slowed down, and in this sense, the title is fully justified, because it has the time-distorting quality of dreams in which moments can stretch into hours and vice versa. While Okazaki may not have fully succeeded in his stated goal of emulating a live performance, the changes he made to the usual studio formula have unintentionally resulted in the band’s best album yet. It’s just a plain old enjoyable recording, designed to tingle your brain’s live music lobe. And tingle it does!

For more information, visit milesokazaki.bandcamp.com. Okazaki live-streams Dec. 13th with Ohad Talmor at viewcy.com/promote/seedsbrooklyn/ohad_talmor_trio_invi.



Songs From Isolation
Mark Wade (AMP Music)
by Scott Yanow

Mark Wade was self-taught on the electric bass, studied the acoustic bass at New York University with Mike Richmond and has been part of the New York jazz scene for the past 25 years. Along the way he has worked with Jimmy Heath, James Spaulding, Eddie Palmieri, Conrad Herwig, Don Byron and Stacey Kent among others and had previously led two albums of his own: *Event Horizon* and *Moving Day*.

During the pandemic, Wade spent his time wisely, coming up with the *Songs From Isolation* project, which features him via overdubbing on two or three acoustic basses and an electric bass. An EP with five selections (four originals plus Bob Dorough’s “Nothing Like You”), *Songs From Isolation* also includes a music video for each of the songs.

The opening “Hours Till Dawn” has Wade playing the medium-tempo jazz waltz on a soloing acoustic bass, a rhythmic electric bass and also a second acoustic bass played arco. The video alternates between showing him on each of the basses.

“Intents And Purposes” starts with electric bass ringing out harmonics and, in an atmospheric section, interacting with bowed bass. The piece becomes a swinging strut that gets cooking with Wade trading off between his basses. The film was made in purposely dark rooms and puts the focus on his various basses.

“A Conspiracy Of Lemurs” is catchy and witty. This has the most adventurous video with Wade at first looking at his phone and seeing himself playing bass. Using trick photography, one sees him walking around his neighborhood while watching the performance and often there are two or three of him, both as a spectator and as a player. “Blues In Isolation” has more basic video and is a groove with three acoustic basses (one bowed) jamming over a pattern.

The final piece, “Nothing Like You”, finds Wade joined by his wife Teri Leggio Wade, who does a fine job of singing the dissonant melody and Dorough’s lyrics. In the film, there are an impressive number of costume changes (at least six) that take place quickly; the editing is excellent while the music is continuous. Wade’s three basses include one hit percussively.

This is a fun project with Wade’s versatile bass playing always holding one’s interest.

For more information, visit markwademusicny.com. Wade live-streams Dec. 20th at youtube.com/user/FlushingTownHall/live.




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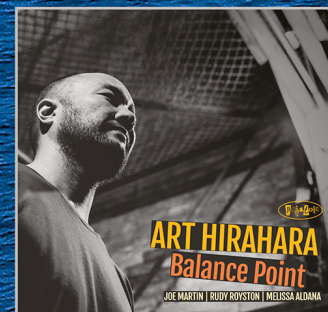
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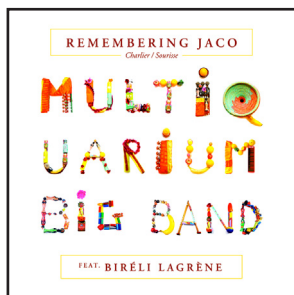
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Remembering Jaco
MultiQuarium Big Band (feat. Biréli Lagrène)
 (Naïve/Believe)
 by Elliott Simon

When Jaco Pastorius, who would have been 69 this month, removed the frets from his electric bass and expanded a player's left-hand options he gave the instrument its sensuous melodic voice. However, his first love was big band music and *Remembering Jaco*, from drummer André Charlier and pianist Benoît Sourisse's MultiQuarium Big Band featuring Biréli Lagrène on fretless bass, pays tribute to that aspect of his persona. Lagrène, who played with Pastorius and is a world class guitarist in the Romani tradition, is a strong elegant presence on these cuts drawn from Pastorius' body of work.

The MultiQuarium Big Band is exceptionally together and pumping opener "Used to be a Cha-Cha" is laser-focused fretless funk while "Barbary Coast" has never sounded better with Charlier's seamless fills, Sourisse's light touch and a clear and confident alto saxophone solo from Lucas St-Cricq. "Liberty City (Intro)/Invitation" conjures up James Bond excitement using textural bass and drum solos and Denis Leloup's superbly articulated trombone.

"Continuum" is a breath of fresh air with its quiet cool and interplay between bass and horns whereas "Kuru/Speak Like A Child" and "Teen Town" benefit from relentless drumming, tight licks and smooth transitions with the latter showcasing Stéphane Chausse's bass clarinet in perfect sync with Lagrène's bass. "Three Views of a Secret" is more loosely arranged, adding to its mystery, before the band dances at the "Palladium" and vocalist Yannick Boudruche sings a jazzed-up version of "Fannie Mae".

A delightfully soulful funky "The Chicken" is available to vinyl purchasers on a second LP as are three improvisations with a decidedly freer feel. Drummer and Pastorius rhythm partner Peter Erskine presents four spoken word segments and his reminiscences flesh out both the musician and person on this extraordinary updating of Pastorius' big band vision.

For more information, visit naiverecords.com



A Gershwin Playground
Guy Mintus (Enja)
Plays Gershwin & Kern
Erroll Garner (Mack Avenue-Octave Music)
 by Marilyn Lester

When Israeli singer-pianist Guy Mintus named his new CD *A Gershwin Playground* he wasn't kidding. He, bassist Omri Hadani and drummer Yonatan Rosen are like the proverbial kids in a musical candy store, constructing, deconstructing, pulling apart and exploring nine tracks of timeless Ira (who was born 124 years ago this month) and George Gershwin. The result is a superbly creative and thrilling ride through the pair's canon. The sophisticated work of the Gershwins pairs well with Mintus' background and training, from

his classical schooling to interest in Eastern rhythms. This latter is stunningly rendered in "I Loves You Porgy" with prayer-chant interwoven with a fairly straightforward piano approach.

A partial litany of the takes on the Gershwins goes like this: a fusion of blues, jazz, Latin and rock into "Summertime"; key changes and tempo shifts galore in "Someone to Watch Over Me"; bebop applied to an innovative medley of "I Got Rhythm/Fascinating Rhythm"; and a bluesy, slow narrative style for "It Ain't Necessarily So". On vocals, Mintus has a pleasant, if unassured, tenor but knows how to use his instrument well enough technically and his scat is impeccable. On an instrumental version of "They Can't Take That Away from Me", Hadani gets to do the melodic heavy lifting.

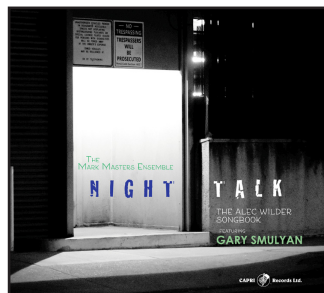
Of course, the test of a pianist is "Rhapsody in Blue" and Mintus passes with flying colors. His 15-minute rendition is both straightforward, showcasing his considerable skills, as well as dotted, mostly near the end, with creative improvisational ideas, including a riff on Russian folk/dance music. Team Mintus has created a heck of a playground.

The newly remastered *Erroll Garner Plays Gershwin & Kern* (originally released in 1976 from recordings made between 1964-67) offers four tracks not included on the original: Garner's own, pleasant "Maybe You're The Only One"; Kern's "Why Do I Love You"; and the Gershwins' "Nice Work If You Can Get It", including a few bars of an alternate take. The CD is prime Garner, a master taking ownership of the Great American Songbook, characteristically infused with the happiness quotient for which Garner was known. Even his "Old Man River" (Kern), one of the most improvisational pieces of the 15 tracks, has uplift to its gravitas.

Garner amounts to an orchestra of one, with his right hand playing behind the beat and the left supplying rhythm and musical punctuation. He plays fairly close to the melody, using cross rhythm and chord changes for variation and musical embroidery, especially on "I Got Rhythm" (Gershwins). The opener, the Gershwins' "Strike Up the Band", is not only tremendous energetic fun but also illustrates Garner's talent for telling a story, using dynamics to build a number to its conclusion.

The Kern material shows off Garner's abilities with a ballad. Kern, born in pre-jazz age 1885, wrote in a European-influenced style yet Garner handles Kern's niceties well, giving the tunes an injection of jazz that is renewing and invigorating. His swingy "A Fine Romance", a number written for Fred Astaire, conjures images of superlative dancing. In the background, subtly supporting the main attraction, are bassists Eddie Calhoun or Ike Isaacs, drummers Kelly Martin or Jimmie Smith and Jose Mangual on bongos.

For more information, visit jazzrecords.com/enja and mackavenue.com



Night Talk: The Alec Wilder Songbook
featuring Gary Smulyan
Mark Masters Ensemble (Capri)
 by John Pietaro

With *Night Talk*, the storied music of Alec Wilder, who died 40 years ago this month, graduates from the realm of standards to a particularly modern strain of the cool. In fact, these arrangements have far more in common with the early conceptions of Miles Davis and

Gil Evans than anything recorded by the Mills Brothers or Frank Sinatra. Though Wilder is recalled as a composer of standards like "I'll Be Around", he also scored films and musicals, wrote both traditional and modern classical music, lieder, chamber pieces, opera and songs made notable by Stan Getz, Bob Brookmeyer, Sir Roland Hanna, Chet Baker, Zoot Sims, Dave Liebman, Mundell Lowe, Marian McPartland, Keith Jarrett, Ben Sidran, Peggy Lee, Tony Bennett and more over a long career. Still, Wilder has been something of an anomaly by virtue of this expansive palette: his classical works were influenced by jazz while his jazz compositions carried a certain proto-Third Stream fascination. It seems about right that cabaret singers were most fond of his moving, complex and sometimes acerbic songbook.

The largely informally taught composer was immediately attracted to the improvisational core of jazz, causing him to begin work in 1938 on a lengthy series of octet pieces. So prescient were these that 10 to 20 years hence, such a fusing of jazz and classical forms became commonplace and nothing short of hip. That's where the Mark Masters Ensemble and baritone saxophone soloist Gary Smulyan come in. Masters arranged the selections, clearly with an ear pointed in Wilder's direction, and this collection swings and bops in the best *Birth of the Cool* tradition. Right from the top with "You're Free", the rich, ringing ensemble harmonies and baritone saxophone conjure imagery of Davis, Evans and Gerry Mulligan in that iconic Manhattan basement beneath a Chinese laundry, plotting a whole other view of modern jazz. Smoky sounds and the crisp, snappy breaks of drummer Kendall Kay only solidify the black-and-white visions.

Alto saxophonist Don Shelton shines on "Don't Deny" and while his tone is thicker than the West Coast standard, the interplay with tenor saxophonist Jerry Pinter can't help but make one knowingly smile at that later Konitz-Marsh pairing. But *Night Talk* is far from a series of covers; this music is as listenable as it is immediate and urgent. The titular piece, darkly carried through baritone, alluring alto flute (Shelton) and the brass thicket of trombone (Dave Woodley), paints a backdrop of grays and blacks lit by a distant moon. The darkness is maintained with the bopping "Lovers and Losers", which includes solos by each horn (including the Woody Shaw-like trumpet of Bob Summers, heard strongly throughout) before settling into a unique, gripping baritone/drums duo as fresh as tomorrow while reminiscent of times far gone.

Wilder's modernisms, both apparent and obscured by shadow, are essential to the moment, even if of an entirely different breed than that to which we've become accustomed.

For more information, visit caprirecords.com

Amber Weekes

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Let Amber Weekes be "The Gathering" for your holidays this year!

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Woodland
Carmen Staaf (Newvelle)
by Dan Bilawsky

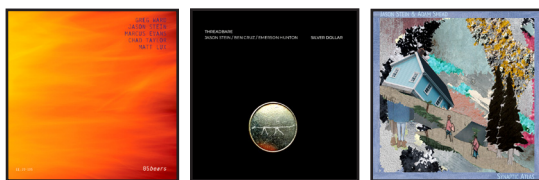
Now here's a beautifully forested set. Pianist Carmen Staaf's first outing for the Newvelle imprint—one of the six records comprising the vinyl-only, subscription-based label's fifth season—leans on the notion of strength through directness and open-eared engagement. Working with two veteran pillars of artistic permanence and flexibility in bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Jeff Williams, Staaf explores the art of the trio with tremendous heart and focus.

Pruning as they go, these three never waste a moment or a gesture. And it's that attention to concision and good taste, coupled with mirth, which carries the day. The freely-improvised "Caterpillars"—a 66-second vignette reflecting the flowing movement of prolegs—is the first example of how these three tie things together without waste. Then, in working through the rest of Side A, the trio fans out while still holding the line on brevity. "Strindberg", possibly pointing to the noted Swedish author, offers motivic draws and a notable stand from Formanek. "The Hunt" swings with style and delivers the obligatory trading of solos without the wonted language so often weighing it down. "Waltz for Julian" proves to be elegant and intriguing in its gliding form. And a solo piano performance of Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica" does the composer (and the composition's "Jazz Baroness" inspiration) proud.

Following suit, the flipside only possesses one track that sneaks past the five-minute mark. But nothing is lacking in shape or dimension(s). Staaf's haunting "Canons", foreboding and disorienting "Multiple Ultimate", morphing "Snap Out of It" and Brazilian-inflected "Evergreen" are all fully formed statements, as is Williams' chipper "Borderline" closer.

Newvelle prizes quality in every aspect of their records—from the packaging, which, in this case, showcases the photographs of Tim Barber and the words of poet Lee Upton, to the recording, mixing and mastering of the music—and an important part of that commitment surrounds the selection of artists for the roster. Staaf, showing serious smarts in channeling her energy into compact spaces ripe for expansive interior designs, is, quite simply, a perfect fit.

For more information, visit newvelle-records.com. Staaf live-streams Dec. 16th at barbayeux.com.



Eponymous
85bears (ears&eyes)
Silver Dollar
Threadbare (NoBusiness)
Synaptic Atlas
Jason Stein/Adam Shead (ears&eyes)
by George Grella

Jason Stein, who turns 44 this month, has become a prominent bass clarinetist in jazz, which, in one way can be seen as a niche via an auxiliary instrument, even in the hands of Eric Dolphy and David Murray. But Stein's place in the music is defined by his musicianship, which is damn good. He has fleet fingers, agile articulation,

a Bassett-hound like tone and, most of all, his playing expresses intelligence and down-to-earth emotion.

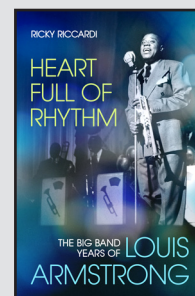
In jazz, the color of the bass clarinet hits the ears first, but Stein is a tremendously strong rhythmic player. Working on the free side of the music, he's usually anchored by a gritty, satisfying way of biting into the beat. That's what's missing on the eponymous debut from 85bears. This is an oddball record and hard to know whether to take seriously or not. The talent on it, including alto saxophonist Greg Ward and Chad Taylor, who added drums to a couple of tracks in post-production, is indeed serious. But a free jazz tribute to the 1985 Super Bowl-winning Chicago Bears...? Jokey titles and serious music can work together but what's on the record seems haphazard. There's plenty of free playing, but most of it presents a kind of homogenous mélange of runs standing in for saying something, mundane, at best, and things like "Lament for Sweetness", with Ward flying around a digital drum pattern, just don't make any sense. The band does get into a few pockets and that little bit of foundation goes a long way, but as a whole this band doesn't appear to know what it wants to be or do.

The bass clarinet-guitar-drums trio Threadbare is much more in Stein's wheelhouse. There are grooves on *Silver Dollar*, edged with plenty of metal and even punk rock ideas and a heavy feel that's a nice change of pace to the majority of modern jazz. Having the groove there, even the sludge of the title track, makes an enormous difference, bringing out the best in Stein; he may be one of many quality musical thinkers who excel when responding to the stimulus of the world around them. This band is bedrock for Stein's musicality. The strong beats and pulses bring out a subtle change in his articulation that makes for a dramatic separation between this album and the other two—stand-alone notes, or ones that initiate phrases, have a clear, measured attack, not emphasis but the energy of a band playing within structure. "Threadbare" is a critical microcosm of his qualities, with a long, free opening that moves toward and away the attention, then a crushing, complex groove that launches Stein, guitarist Ben Cruz and drummer Emerson Hunton onto a higher level. There's a sense of variety among the tracks, which make this a substantial statement from what sounds like a working band.

Synaptic Atlas is a duo album with drummer Adam Shead somewhere between the hot of Threadbare and the cold of 85bears. The three-quarters of an hour waxes and wanes between a lithe communication and flow between the two and periods where they play past each other. Threadbare has a lot of low-register, gutbucket playing while *Synaptic Atlas* often finds Stein playing in the upper register, spinning out light-toned, fleet runs. This is a relatively quiet album, interior music (meant for inside the skull?). There's refreshingly few gestures toward signifiers of free improvisation, but that means depending on invention, and from moment to moment there's plenty to hear, especially on tracks like "Intuition" and "Humility." But there's a lot of falling back on patterns and the album is almost entirely fast 16th-notes from Stein and skittering sticks on the edge of the snare and the cymbals from Shead; "Economy" is the only track with any meaningful exploration of timbre, or even a slower pulse, and it's one of the shortest on the album. Stein and Shead are skillful and there's interest in the technique of improvisation, but the two don't connect at any consistent depth. Listening to this, one recalled a frustrating duo album with Steve Lacy and Steve Argüelles, *Image*, in which the saxophonist tossed out idea after idea, only to get subdued responses from the drummer. Perhaps the concept of exploring the mind's workings pushed the two into their own personal territory, mutually disconnected. Not a failure, by any means, but not a success either.

For more information, visit earsandeyesrecords.com and nobusinessrecords.com

IN PRINT



Heart Full of Rhythm: The Big Band Years of Louis Armstrong
Ricky Riccardi (Oxford University Press)
by Scott Yanow

Louis Armstrong had three main periods in his career: innovative work in the '20s; big band years (1929-47); and decades he spent touring the world with his All-Stars. His biographer Ricky Riccardi did a superb job of covering and defending the often-maligned latter period in his book *What A Wonderful World*. Now, in *Heart Full Of Rhythm*, he brings back to life and fully covers Armstrong's generally neglected middle period.

From the opening pages in which he describes Armstrong's triumphant return to New York in 1929 for a two-night stint with the Luis Russell Orchestra, Riccardi reveals himself to be a masterful storyteller. Working at the Louis Armstrong House Museum, he is privy to a great deal of fresh information. Riccardi knows what to include and what to skip over, a valuable skill that makes this work quite memorable.

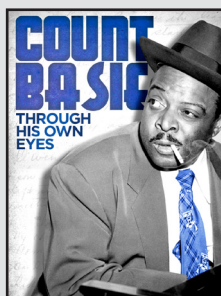
Along the way one learns about the differences between the various bands that Armstrong led during 1929-33; relationships with his managers Tommy Rockwell, Johnny Collins (who blew his chance after revealing himself to be a racist) and Joe Glaser; Satch's period in Europe; problems with his trumpet chops; and many projects during the Swing Era. Quite fascinating is reading about the constant tug of war and diverse opinions expressed by the mainstream press (who most appreciated Armstrong's showmanship), African-American press (considering him to be a credit to the race despite some misgivings) and jazz press. Many in the latter wrote surprisingly bitter and dismissive reviews of Armstrong's crowd-pleasing performances and recordings, some of which are now considered classics. Leonard Feather is portrayed as a bit of a villain, one who seeks Armstrong's friendship while at the same time writing some very negative reviews, sometimes under a pseudonym. He wanted Satch to play as he had on his 1928 recordings with Earl Hines while at the same time criticizing him for not being modern enough.

This reviewer only came across one minor inaccuracy in this well-researched book: Teddy Hill played tenor not alto with Luis Russell. Some of Riccardi's opinions are questionable (Lu Watters' influential revival band of the early '40s was not a "novelty"), he misses discussing a handful of gems of the '30s (most notably "Hustlin' and Bustlin' for Baby" and "I Double Dare You") and does not write about the connection between the 1944 Esquire All-American Jazz Concert (Armstrong playing next to future bandmembers Jack Teagarden, Barney Bigard and Sid Catlett) and the formation three years later of the Louis Armstrong All-Stars. One also wishes he gave more details on why Armstrong broke up with his second wife Lil and that he spent much more space on his third wife Alpha Smith Armstrong.

But that is just nit-picking. *Heart Full of Rhythm* does full justice to Armstrong (personally and musically) and makes the case that Satch's big band years were significant. It is a consistent delight.

For more information, visit oup.com

ON SCREEN



Through His Own Eyes
Count Basie (Eagle Eye Media)
by Alex Henderson

Bandleader/pianist Count Basie, who was 79 when he died of pancreatic cancer in 1984, has been gone for 36 years but continues to have a major impact, greatly influencing the more bluesy and R&B-ish styles of jazz. Basie's life is the focus of *Through His Own Eyes*, so named because it often quotes memoirs that he wrote in 1975. The film, however, goes way beyond Basie's musical contributions and examines everything from politics to his family life.

Through His Own Eyes features black-and-white footage of Basie in the '40s and interviews with journalists Gary Giddins and Will Friedwald as well as musicians who worked with him, including producer/arranger Quincy Jones, singer Annie Ross and saxophonist John Williams, among others. The documentary covers a lot of ground and discusses his associations with jazz and traditional pop greats like singers Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra, tenor saxophonist Lester Young, pianist/bandleader Bennie Moten and singer Jimmy Rushing.

Racism is a recurring theme and Jones, now 87, has a lot to say on that subject, recalling his experiences touring Texas and the Deep South with Basie during the '50s, when Jim Crow laws were an ugly reality. Jones remembers that he "could smell the white nationalist attitude" in the southern states and recalls seeing an effigy of a Black man with a noose around his neck hanging from the steeple of what was the largest church in Dallas at the time. Jones stresses, however, that Basie's experiences with racism were by no means limited to the South, noting how segregated the casinos were in Las Vegas during the '50s but praises Sinatra for taking an aggressive stand against racism. According to Jones, Sinatra told his associates that if "anybody even looked at Basie's band members funny, break both of their fucking legs". And he was serious."

Noting how big a hit Basie's exuberant 1955 recording of Vernon Duke's "April in Paris" was, *Through His Own Eyes* discusses his influence on pop culture. It's important to remember that when Basie's orchestra emerged in the mid '30s, Swing had mass appeal—a fact not lost on Adolf Hitler who, according to Friedwald, was furious over how wildly popular Basie and other African-American Swing stars had become in Germany. But as much as *Through His Own Eyes* focuses on racism, whether in the U.S. or Nazi Germany, Basie is portrayed as a very determined musician who refused to let it get in the way of what he wanted to accomplish.

The documentary also has a lot to say about Basie's family life, describing his marriage to dancer Catherine Morgan and disability from which their only daughter, Diane, suffered. Morgan died in 1983 while Diane is now 76 and lives in an assisted care facility in Florida. *Through His Own Eyes* digs deep, painting a fascinating picture of Basie both on and off stage.

For more information, visit eagle-rock.com. Count Basie's *The Great American Swing Contest* winners are announced Dec. 31st at countbasie.com.



The Copenhagen Concert
Enrico Pieranunzi (Storyville)
by Marco Cangiano

Enrico Pieranunzi turns 71 this month and this first-time release of a 24-year old concert by his trio with bassist Marc Johnson and late drummer Paul Motian could not be a better birthday present. Pieranunzi's association with Bill Evans' former partners is one of the most fruitful collaborations among the many he has had over a long and still expanding career.

Pieranunzi, however, should not be considered a mere Evans' follower or scholar—his book is one of the most insightful readings of Evans' complexity—since his style is quite different: a more aggressive and on-the-beat approach where Bud Powell's influence is prominent and merged with Pieranunzi's classical background, Debussy in particular but baroque as well. That said, Evans' presence is felt in this date most notably through the empathy among the musicians. Despite his many solo and larger-group recordings, the trio remains Pieranunzi's most congenial format. His long association with Johnson and Joey Baron first and Joe LaBarbera and Motian later are testimony to his world-wide reputation; to date, he is one of the very few non-U.S. musicians to record at the Village Vanguard, and with the same trio featured on this album. A comparison between the two reveals a more straightforward and perhaps even exuberant approach vis-à-vis the more pensive one of the later recording.

The Copenhagen concert features well-known standards and two compositions by Motian ("Avacus") and Pieranunzi ("The Night Gone By"). The former is the perfect vehicle to highlight the trio's interplay, Johnson reminiscent of Charlie Haden. The latter starts as a ballad but then shifts into an uptempo progression to return at the end to the lovely theme. Among the standards, Bronislaw Kaper's "Invitation" gets a brisk treatment after a delightful piano intro while the medley of "Body & Soul" (Johnny Green-Edward Heyman-Robert Sour-Frank Eyton)/"If I Should Lose You" (Ralph Rainger-Leo Robin) stands out for its capacity to re-create imaginatively well-known material.

The close affinity among the musicians and the shared connection—indirect in the case of Pieranunzi—to Evans are evident throughout and have been developed under various permutations over more than 30 years. Johnson's solos are particularly incisive while Motian is always a pleasure. A playful take on Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica" wraps up a wonderful concert. But, to paraphrase the old song, the best was yet to come.

For more information, visit storyvillerecords.com



One For 25
Posi-Tone Swingtet (Posi-Tone)
Balance Point
Art Hirahara (Posi-Tone)
Golden Year
Tony Davis (Posi-Tone)
by Ken Dryden

Long-term relationships with jazz record labels are all too rare in the 21st Century, even before the arrival of the COVID-19 epidemic. It is also less common than it

was decades ago for record companies to have the same pool of instrumentalists taking part on one another's recordings. But given so many players' loyalty to one another and their frequency in recording together for Posi-Tone, which celebrates its 25th anniversary, the chemistry must be formidable.

The Posi-Tone Swingtet was formed by producer Marc Free from the label's expansive roster of musicians, both leaders and sidemen, many of whom have appeared on each other's Posi-Tone CDs and together on gigs. The collective is trombonist Michael Dease, trumpeter Farnell Newton, alto saxophonist Patrick Cornelius, tenor saxophonist Diego Rivera, baritone saxophonist Lauren Sevan, bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Rudy Royston, with Art Hirahara or Theo Hill on piano. The spirit of collaboration is evident, with a variety of originals by the participants and several songs penned by Posi-Tone leaders not part of the recording. Dease's intricate "You Dig" is a perfect opener, fueling a string of stimulating solos following his lead. Kozlov's potent "Avalanche Suspended" showcases Hill and Sevan to good effect. Cornelius' majestic ballad "For Morgan" is a spacious affair with lush ensembles backing the composer. Amanda Monaco, a superb guitarist who records for Posi-Tone, penned the blistering "Dry Clean Only", yet another inventive reworking of the oft-used chord changes to "I Got Rhythm". Rivera, Newton and Cornelius battle for solo honors, though Dease's fluid trombone wins top prize. Buoyed by the rich horn ensemble introduction, Hirahara's pastoral ballad "Where With All" segues into a gospel air with his entrance.

Once Hirahara arrived in New York City, artists began to take notice and recruited him for gigs and record dates. *Balance Point*, his fifth Posi-Tone CD as a leader, focuses on his compositions in settings ranging from solo piano to a trio with bassist Joe Martin and drummer Rudy Royston to a quartet with tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana. The joys of listening to Hirahara include his wealth of musical ideas and interaction with his band, who sound like collaborators rather than just accompanists. There are a number of outstanding originals, starting with the lyrical ballad "Mother's Song", a solo piano arrangement almost glistening with joy; it deserves a lyric. Aldana is added for the turbulent title track, in which the full quartet gives their all to support one another. Angular blues "G-Yokoso" has hints of Thelonious Monk, with Hirahara even throwing in a bit of humorous stride piano, as the band navigates the work's many shifts in direction. The leader's solo take on Duke Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss" adds a wealth of embellishments that enhance the beauty of this jazz standard.

Guitarist Tony Davis makes his debut as a leader on the label with *Golden Year*, a solid outing, featuring a number of impressive compositions, with pianist David Bryant (who deserves wider recognition), veterans Dezron Douglas on bass and Eric McPherson on drums, plus several guests. This well-paced set begins with the title track, a breezy blues, Davis displaying his formidable chops with intricate bop lines. "Braeburn" has a vibrant yet soulful air, adding the considerable gifts of trombonist Steve Davis and alto saxophonist Steve Wilson. A nice twist is Davis' lyrical treatment of Jimi Hendrix' "May This Be Love", in which he trades solos with Bryant, Douglas and McPherson providing a tasty background. Another hidden gem is the Brazilian work "Sinhá", featuring Wilson's spirited flute in dialogue with the leader. Davis returns for the sauntering pianoless interpretation of Dizzy Gillespie's timeless "Con Alma" and he is generously featured before the guitarist takes the spotlight. The two vocal tracks are less memorable, as Davis' lyrics are not as strong as his melodies, though vocalist Alina Engibaryan has a potent voice and gives them her best effort.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com



Return Trip
Matt Moran Trio (Diskonife)
 by Franz Matzner

Evocative rather than provocative, Matt Moran's *Return Trip* reverberates with subtle blends and structural nuance. One notable aspect is the unusual combination of vibraphone, organ and drums. Another is the acuity of the members. Inviting without simplifying, *Return Trip* echoes with warmth, fluidity and balance.

Moran utilizes the vibraphone's melodic sophistication to express an expansive emotional range, from joy to contemplation. In lesser hands the Hammond B3 can be dominant, diverting attention from the contributions of other instruments; Gary Versace takes a controlled, integrative approach that fully participates in sculpting the album's redolent sound without overwhelming. And drummer Tom Rainey's restrained, impressionistic percussion unites with the rest of the trio, going far beyond providing rhythm.

The result is a beautifully detailed soundscape raising verdant images and inspiring meditation. The tune "Lush", for instance, proceeds at a patient pace, opening with measured reverberating notes like bells. Subsequently each voice joins, Moran and Versace's lines entwining like vines, the tune rising before folding inward to a gentle conclusion. Similarly, slow-burning "Sometimes That's OK" begins with single notes from Moran before the others enter, the tune then evolving slowly from spacious abstraction to denser textures as crackling drums grow in speed and volume and organ lays down increasingly rapid figures.

"Elfish" presents more traditional jazz forms, but in unusual ways. Absent a bass, the swing-like rhythm is set by the trio as a whole, the tune bouncing forward lithely. Another prominent aspect of *Return Trip* is the subtle way the tunes unfold, the peaks and valleys neither extreme nor predictable. *Return Trip* is defined by lucidity, confirming not only Moran's place as an innovator, but also the trio as a force of deft creative energy.

For more information, visit diskonife.com. Moran live-streams Dec. 11th with Nate Wooley at roulette.org.



Studio Sessions, Vol. 11
Hans Tammen/Jeremy Carlstedt/Stephen Gauci
 (Gaucimusic)
 by John Sharpe

Tenor saxophonist Stephen Gauci's running of the Monday night Bushwick Series has given him the opportunity to work with a range of other improvisers. This studio session, the product of alliances forged on stage in the basement of the Bushwick Public House, reunites him with drummer Jeremy Carlstedt and the electronics of Hans Tammen on a 46-minute digital download comprising six improvisations.

Gauci's style is based on an idiosyncratic repertoire of overtone manipulation and multiphonics, mixed in with the occasional fragmentary jazzy phrase, which

betrays his foundation in bop. He announces his intent right from the git-go with an unaccompanied foghorn blast, pure-toned squeals and reverberant overblowing to launch "Improvisation #1". But his mates draw him into unfamiliar territories. Tammen plays the buchla synthesizer, trading in a litany of noise, beeps and drones, but also more steady repeated patterns, which mesh well with Carlstedt, whose predilection for a pulse supplies one of the dominant characteristics of this date, grounding Gauci's flights and Tammen's coloration.

As well as instigating some grooves—he and Tammen even fashion a backbeat during an extended duet on "Improvisation #2"—Carlstedt can serve as mediator, uniting the sometimes-contrasting approaches. That's most obvious on "Improvisation #3", when he first injects rhythmic figures into Tammen's mesmeric rippling electric piano-like sonorities. Then as Gauci's scuffled murmurs cut across the meter, the emphasis suddenly changes to a choppy tenor/drum tandem, before Carlstedt eases everyone back towards meter.

Gauci reaches for some of his most intense vocabulary on "Improvisation #5", braying flurries separated by gutbucket honks, Carlstedt roiling and Tammen unleashing a fuzzy bass undercurrent, while volcanic "Improvisation #6" erupts in a final blowout. Though the setting might be new, the result is typically unconventional and uncompromising.

For more information, visit gaucimusic.com. Tammen live-streams Dec. 16th at experimentalintermedia.org.



Marching Music
Dave Douglas (Greenleaf Music)
If There Are Mountains
Dave Douglas/Elan Mehler (Newvelle)
 by Jim Motavalli

Marching Music deserves its title; it definitely has a martial air. Trumpeter Dave Douglas is nearly as prolific as guitarist Bill Frisell, with whom he shares a penchant for bedrock Americana. On this collection, "Persistent Hats" brings Stephen Foster's "Oh Susannah" to mind and "Forlorn" recalls "Amazing Grace".

The all-Douglas program, with a quartet of Rafiq Bhatia (guitar), Melvin Gibbs (bass) and Sim Cain (drums) shades into rock without ever quite getting there. Just when things get heavy, they're lightened and lifted aloft by Douglas' airy sense of musical invention. "Ten to Midnight", for instance, would seem to be invoking the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' countdown to nuclear annihilation, so no wonder it's a bit somber. But then Douglas starts playing and, like Leonard Cohen, lets a little light through the cracks.

Bhatia is a shape shifter. His playing ranges from doomy ("Lenape") to delicate ("Safe Space"), often called on to shade the atmosphere but, when thrust into the solo spot, as on "Fair Fight" and "Climate Strike", he covers a lot of stylistic ground.

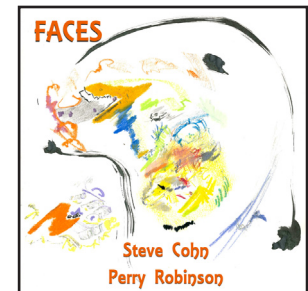
Douglas' compositions are particularly strong. Listen to the way solo trumpet opens "Climate Strike", swirling as backbeat drums come in. Douglas builds to an emotional crescendo, then Bhatia enters, spewing notes but careful where they land. "Fair Fight" has an almost child-like earworm of a melody. "Parables" is almost scary: air full of portent, two ancient armies facing each other on a dark plain. The music gets quieter and freer at the end, with found sounds recalling twittering birds in the trees, surveying the aftermath. Dave Douglas is one of our more cinematic jazz musicians.

If There Are Mountains, a co-led LP with pianist Elan Mehler, is part of Newvelle's season five boxed

set. The pair are supported by singer Dominique Eade, saxophonist/clarinetist John Gunther, bassist Simón Willson and drummer Dayeon Seok in interpretations of ancient haiku and modern poetry. And they do it with the utmost delicacy. The concept comes together spectacularly on the title composition, based on the work of Japanese poet Taneda Santōka. He died in 1940, so he's unlikely to have heard the Scottish rocker Donovan but "If there are mountains/I look at the mountains" recalls the latter's "There is a Mountain". Santōka's very simple words adapt well to Douglas' swinging composition, sung beautifully by Eade.

The rest of this record is relentlessly pretty and mostly very subdued. The compositional strength of the title piece isn't always evident. Gunther plays very lyrically while Mehler, who admits to having trouble getting grounded, finds his footing with the lovely piano introduction to "Here on the Plains". It all comes together on "With Your Singing", via the 17th century poet Matsuo Bashō. His haiku text reads simply, "With your singing makes me lonelier than ever / You solitary bird / Cuckoo of the forest". Every member of the ensemble (with Willson a standout) makes something enduring of that sad thought.

For more information, visit greenleafmusic.com and newvelle-records.com. Douglas live-streams Dec. 18th at kerrytownconcerthouse.com.



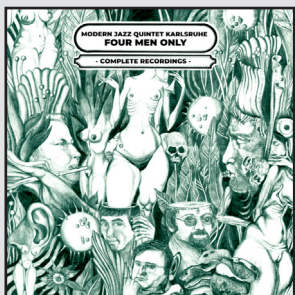
Faces
Steve Cohn/Perry Robinson (Tube Room)
 by George Kanzler

Perry Robinson, who died at 80 two years ago this month, was a clarinetist who recorded, mostly as a sideman, with all manner of jazz bands, from trad to avant garde, duo to the Liberation Music Orchestra and leaders from Archie Shepp to Dave Brubeck. He also worked in klezmer bands, jug bands and with South Asian musicians such as tabla player Badal Roy. He was game to play with anyone, in any style. Like Robinson, Steve Cohn is an eclectic musician who's worked with modern mainstream and avant garde jazz and classical musicians as well as East Asian ones. Besides piano and keyboards, he is also a master of the Japanese shakuhachi flute. Here he also plays the double-reed Japanese hichiriki, as well as trombone and drums.

This unearthed session from 2013 is a freewheeling, spontaneous free improvisation meeting of the pair, their first. The two are both listeners, who pay heed to and pick up licks from each other along the way. The first track, "Portrait", begins with clarinet and shakuhachi weaving and sparring, testing phrases and runs in scintillating duologue. Then Cohn moves to piano and the track concludes like a song abstracted. Ghosts of familiar melodies shadow the clarinet-piano opening of "Silhouette", followed by a crooning clarinet over bluesy piano that descends into squawks and clusters. "Profile", the last and longest track, is also the most diverse. It begins with swirling clarinet and drum kit, a short, barely audible conversation and a train whistle. The duet moves to clarinet and robust trombone before Cohn changes to the haunting hichiriki, finally settling on Fender Rhodes to drive the duet to an electric climax. Robinson and Cohn may be working without a net here, but they are also firmly grounded in the essence of jazz and improvised music.

For more information, visit carlbaugher.bandcamp.com

BOXED SET



Complete Recordings
Modern Jazz Quintet Karlsruhe/Four Men Only
(NoBusiness)
 by Stuart Broomer

NoBusiness has been unusually creative in finding hidden facets of early free jazz. This three-CD set presents the Modern Jazz Quintet Karlsruhe (MJQK) and its successive identities, Four Men Only and, when it became a quintet, Four Men Only + 1. It's an unusual and largely lost episode in the music's history.

The band launched as the Jazz Prophets in 1964 with pianist Helmuth Zimmer, trumpeter Herbert Joos and reedplayer Wilfried Eichhorn. In 1965 they added drummer Rudi Theilmann and bassist Klaus Bühler, becoming MJQK. The band released four LPs during their history: *Trees* (1968), *Position 2000* (1970), then, as Four Men Only, *Volume One* (1972) and added + 1 for *Eight Science Fiction Stories* (1973). All that material is here, with two 1971 live tracks.

By 1968, free jazz and improvised music ranged from American models (Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Jimmy Giuffre, John Coltrane, Albert Ayler

and Sun Ra) to the emerging Europeans: from AMM and Spontaneous Music Ensemble to Giorgio Gaslini, Alexander von Schlippenbach and Peter Brötzmann. MJQK sounds like none of these. With roots in hardbop, MJQK took another path. *Trees* includes Eichhorn's brief "Schnee Verbrennt" and its tropical rain-forest vibe, with a piping flute central, tropical bird brass and random drum rolls, while Zimmer's "Lonely Time" is marked by unaccompanied solos.

With Joos' "The Devil Is Green, Blue, Yellow" the band style begins to emerge. There are strings of composed motifs, short and long, fast and slow, a brassy fanfare, then a short dirge. It's rooted in a kind of drama and the band is very good at it. A likely influence is the Blue Note school of liberated hardbop, when Freddie Hubbard in particular and many more were stretching the label's idiom, but MJQK pushes that envelope further. "Change of Beauty" intersperses slow, reflective solos (bass and soprano) and rapid group improvisations in which the power and invention come to the fore, with Joos and Eichhorn (on soprano) cascading over the rhythm section's tumult. The CD is filled out by a live performance at Funkhaus Hannover in 1971. With a string of lengthy solos, from bass to trumpet, again using some of the same internal tempo contrasts, it demonstrates a band that's lively, interactive and able to realize a collective vision.

The second CD, *Position 2000*, has Eichhorn adding a dramatic bass clarinet to his arsenal and the rest of the band all playing percussion at times, including xylophone. There's an emphasis on power and drama, but it comes from the presence of flute and bass clarinet and later unison brass parts, as the band adds multi-tracking to its effects. Ernst

Nebhuth notes in his liner essay that "this led to scathing reviews in the press about 'leaving the trail of real/pure' Jazz", but he justifies it with the claim that this lets the band "produce their own backgrounds and horn sections", though this often occurs when the other musicians are silent.

The music's identity changes dramatically. Joos, later a member of the Vienna Art Orchestra, stretches his trumpet range with other horns, flugelhorn and mellophone. One photo has him playing a piccolo trumpet. Orchestral color will trump collective expression. Only Side A of the first LP has music composed by anyone else. Often the band seems to prefer unaccompanied or lightly accompanied solos. Bühler, a creative bassist, departs and isn't replaced. Overdubbing becomes the music's most distinctive facet. Four Men Only's first suite has a saxophone duet with only one saxophonist; a multi-tracked, largely composed brass "solo"; another background provided by multiple trumpets. Meanwhile, the record concludes with some brilliant percussive piano to end "Excess".

The group's final LP, *Eight Science Fiction Stories*, adds trombonist Wolfgang Czelusta, apt support to Joos' mellophone on the LP's second suite. It's the first, though, that demonstrates the sheer range and oddity of the band's directions. Much of it is dominated by an overdubbed trumpet riff repeated for some six minutes under a Joos solo, which, together suggests a one-man Don Ellis Orchestra. At the limits of its split personality, the next segment has Eichhorn improvising himself into a modest but thoughtful facsimile of Sun Ra's saxophone section.

For more information, visit nobusinessrecords.com

deko THE HALLS

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- 1962



ALEXEI ORECHIN
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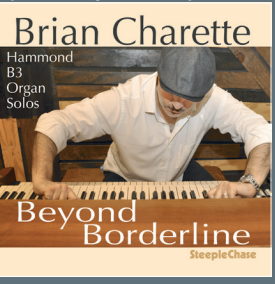
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ON THIS DAY

by Andrey Henkin



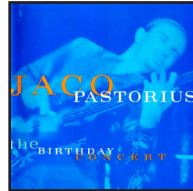
Jackpot!
Woody Herman (Capitol)
December 1st, 1955



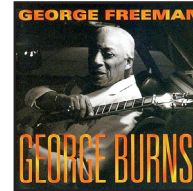
Three for Shepp
Marion Brown (Impulse)
December 1st, 1966



Questions/Answers
Stanley Cowell/Dave Burrell (Trio)
December 1st, 1973



The Birthday Concert
Jaco Pastorius (Warner Bros.)
December 1st, 1981



George Burns!
George Freeman (Southport)
December 1st, 1997

Woody Herman was the original jazz shepherd: four regular, Thundering, Swinging', Anglo-American, Big New and here Las Vegas Herd, drawn from his recently disbanded 1955 big band to work in that town's Riviera Hotel. With the clarinetist is trumpeters Dick Collins, Johnny Coppola and Cy Touff (bass trumpet), tenor saxophonist Richie Kamuca, pianist Norman Pockrandt, bassist Monte Budwig and drummer Chuck Flores on music by, among others, Milt Jackson, Count Basie, Touff, Coppola (both co-writing with Herman) and Budwig.

On August 10th, 1964, Archie Shepp recorded *Four For Trane* for Impulse. Then he and alto saxophonist Marion Brown were both on Coltrane's June 28th, 1965 *Ascension* for the same label. Fast-forward another 17 months and things come full-circle with this date, Brown thanking Shepp, one of his first employers, by recording three of his pieces alongside three of his own. Shepp does not appear but Grachan Moncur III (trombone), Dave Burrell or Stanley Cowell (piano), Norris Sirone Jones (bass) and Beaver Harris or Bobby Kapp (drums) do.

Seven years to the day that pianists Stanley Cowell and Dave Burrell split duties in New York City on Marion Brown's *Three for Shepp*, the pair are found on the opposite side of the world at Tokyo's lino Hall as a duo. The men were born in Ohio less than eight months and 200 miles apart and, collectively, were part of a large share of classic avant gardism from the mid '60s onwards on both sides of the Atlantic but this is the only document of them together, Cowell's 20:24 "Questions" the A-Side, Burrell's 19:17 "Answers" the flip.

By the time this album was released in 1995, electric bassist Jaco Pastorius had been a cautionary tale for several years, dying in 1987 at 35 specifically from a fight with a bar manager but more generally from mental illness and drug abuse. But here he was newly 30, not long after making what would be his last album as a member of Weather Report and leading a 22-piece brass- and percussion-heavy big band (featuring Michael Brecker and Bob Mintzer) in his adopted home of Ft. Lauderdale on a nine-tune program of mostly his originals.

Guitarist George Freeman, youngest scion of the noted Chicago clan with drummer Buzz and saxophonist Von, was nowhere near to George Burns territory age-wise (as of this writing, he is close at 93) but we'll allow him the punny title for this peppy 11-tune set of his originals and a handful of standards. Von guests on one track, the dedicatory "Vonski", as do Southport co-owners Bradley Parker-Sparrow (piano) and Joanie Pallatto (vocals), the band behind them Lou Gregory (piano), Eldee Young (bass) and Phil Thomas (drums).

BIRTHDAYS

December 1

†Ike Isaacs 1919-96
†Dick Johnson 1925-2010
Ted Brown b.1927
†Hadley Caliman 1932-2010
†Jimmy Lyons 1933-86
Carlos Garnett b.1938
†Jaco Pastorius 1951-87

December 2

†Charlie Ventura 1916-92
†John Bunch 1921-2010
†Wynton Kelly 1931-71
†Ronnie Mathews 1935-2008
Jason Rigby b.1974
Tal Wilkenfeld b.1986

December 3

†Corky Cornelius 1914-43
†Herbie Nichols 1919-63

December 4

†Eddie Heywood 1915-89
Frank Tiberi b.1928
†Jim Hall 1930-2013
†Denis Charles 1933-98
Andy Laverne b.1947
Cassandra Wilson b.1955
Andrew Drury b.1964

December 5

†Art Davis 1934-2007
Enrico Pieranunzi b.1949
Anders Bergkrantz b.1961

December 6

†Ira Gershwin 1896-1985
†Dave Brubeck 1920-2012
†Bob Cooper 1925-93
†Frankie Dunlop 1928-2014

Jay Leonhart b.1940
Miroslav Vitous b.1947
Harvie S b.1948
Steve Swell b.1954
Jason Stein b.1976

December 7

†Teddy Hill 1909-78
Sonny Phillips b.1936
Mads Vinding b.1948
Matthew Shipp b.1960

December 8

†Sol Yaged 1922-2019
†Jimmy Smith 1928-2005
Tim Armacost b. 1962

December 9

†Matty Malneck 1903-81
†Bob Scobey 1916-63
†Donald Byrd 1932-2013
Jimmy Owens b.1943

December 10

†Irving Fazola 1912-49
†Ray Nance 1913-76
†George Tucker 1927-65
†Bob Cranshaw 1932-2016
Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky b.1933

December 11

†Perez Prado 1916-89
†McCoy Tyner 1938-2020
Mara Rosenbloom b.1984

December 12

†Eddie Barefield 1909-91
†Frank Sinatra 1915-98
†Joe Williams 1918-99

†Bob Dorough 1923-2018
†Dodo Marmarosa 1925-2002
Toshiko Akiyoshi b.1929
Juhani Aaltonen b.1935
Michael Carvin b.1944
†Tony Williams 1945-97
Bruce Ditmas b.1946

December 13

†Sonny Greer 1895-1982
†Ben Tucker 1930-2013
†Borah Bergman 1933-2012
†Reggie Johnson 1940-2020

December 14

†Budd Johnson 1910-84
†Spike Jones 1911-64
†Clark Terry 1920-2015
†Cecil Payne 1922-2007
†Phineas Newborn 1931-89
†Leo Wright 1933-91
†Jerome Cooper 1946-2015

December 15

†Stan Kenton 1911-79
†Jimmy Nottingham 1925-78
†Gene Quill b.1927-89
Barry Harris b.1929
Curtis Fuller b.1934
†Dannie Richmond 1935-88
Eddie Palmieri b.1936
†Toshinori Kondo 1948-2020
Kris Tiner b.1977

December 16

†Andy Razaf 1905-73
†Turk Murphy 1915-87
†Steve Allen 1921-2000
†Johnny "Hammond" Smith 1933-97

†Joe Farrell 1937-86
Radu Malfatti b.1943
†John Abercrombie 1944-2017

December 17

†Ray Noble 1903-78
†Sonny Red 1932-81
†Walter Booker 1933-2006
†John Ore 1933-2014
Vyacheslav Ganelin b.1944
Chris Welcome b.1980

December 18

†Fletcher Henderson 1897-1952
†Willis Conover 1920-96
†Harold Land 1928-2001
Wadada Leo Smith b.1941
Maciej Obara b.1981

December 19

†Ersine Tate 1895-1978
†Bob Brookmeyer 1929-2011
†Bobby Timmons 1935-74
†Milcho Leviev 1937-2019
Lenny White b.1949
Kuni Mikami b.1954

December 20

†John Hardee 1918-84
†Sam Falzone 1933-2013
†Larry Willis 1940-2019
Ehud Asherie b.1979

December 21

†Marshall Brown 1920-83
†Rita Reys 1924-2013
†Hank Crawford 1934-2009
†John Hicks 1941-2006
Cameron Brown b.1945

Quinsin Nachoff b.1973

December 22

†Ronnie Ball 1927-84
†Joe Lee Wilson 1935-2011
†Nick Ceroli 1939-85
John Patitucci b.1959

December 23

†Chet Baker 1929-88
†Frank Morgan 1933-2007

December 24

†Baby Dodds 1898-1959
†Jabbo Smith 1908-91
†Henry Coker 1919-79
†Ray Bryant 1931-2011
†Chris McGregor 1936-90
†Woody Shaw 1944-89
Ralph Moore b.1956
Paal Nilssen-Love b.1974

December 25

†Louis Cottrell 1878-1927
†Kid Ory 1886-1973
†Big Jim Robinson 1892-1976
†Cab Calloway 1907-94
†Oscar Moore 1912-81
†Pete Rugolo 1915-2011
†Eddie Safranski 1918-74
†Don Alias 1939-2006
†Don Pullen 1941-95
Ronnie Cuber b.1941

December 26

†Butch Ballard 1917-2011
†Monty Budwig 1929-92
†Billy Bean 1933-2012
†Brooks Kerr 1951-2018
John Scofield b.1951

December 27

†Bunk Johnson 1889-1949
†Booty Wood 1919-87
Bill Crow b.1927
†Walter Norris 1931-2011
TS Monk b.1949
Pablo Held b.1986

December 28

†Earl "Fatha" Hines 1903-83
†Al Klink 1915-91
†Moe Koffman 1928-2001
†Ed Thigpen 1930-2010
†Bob Cunningham 1934-2017
†Dick Sudhalter 1938-2008
Ted Nash b.1960

December 29

†Cutty Cutshall 1911-68
†Irving Ashby 1920-87
Jan Konopasek b.1931
Joe Lovano b.1952
George Schuller b.1958
Danilo Pérez b.1960
Reuben Radding b.1966
George Colligan b.1969

December 30

†Jimmy Jones 1918-82
†Jack Montrose 1928-2006
†Wolfgang Dauner 1935-2020
Jerry Granelli b.1940
Lewis Nash b.1958
Frank Vignola b.1965

December 31

†John Kirby 1908-52
†Jonah Jones 1909-2000
†Peter Herbolzheimer 1935-2010



JUHANI AALTONEN
December 12th, 1935

The Finnish saxophonist and flutist is arguably his country's most famed jazz export, still active today (hear him on the recent Moserobie release *The Father, The Sons & The Junnu*). His career began in the straightahead realm in the '60s, veering into more avant garde territory with countrymen like Heikki Sarmanto, Edward Vesala, Eero Koivisto, UMO Jazz Orchestra and many more, neighbors Arild Andersen, Peter Brötzmann and Graham Collier and even those from across the pond such as Wadada Leo Smith, Reggie Workman and Andrew Cyrille. His albums can be found on Eclipse, Leo, Nova and, most prolifically over the past 10+ years, Finland's own TUM Records. **(AH)**

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

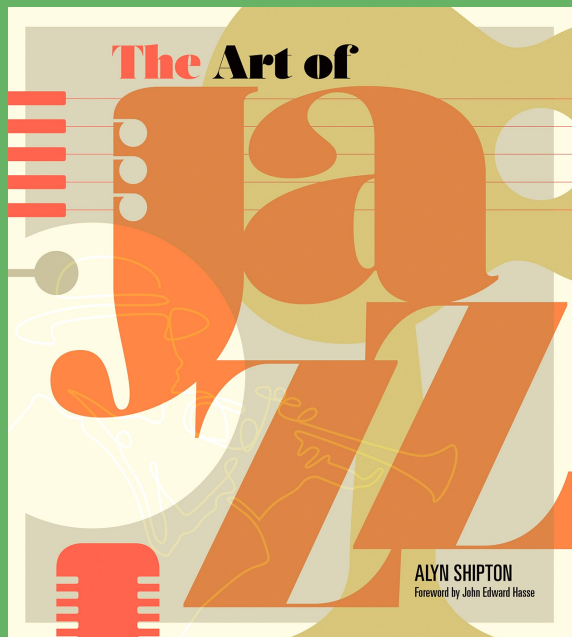
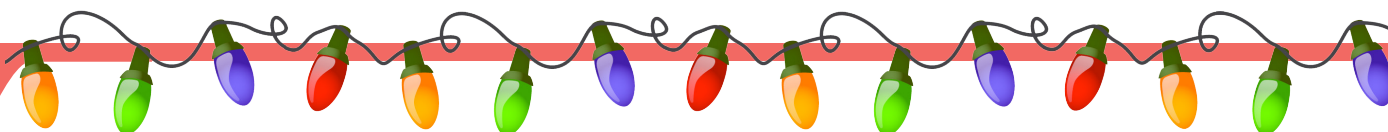
1. Fresh Coast Jazz Festival to Big Ears Festival dir.
4. Label that celebrated its 50th anniversary in November 2019
7. Amiri Baraka and Steve Dalachinsky
9. Kind of step
12. Like Alan to Wayne or Albert to Donald
13. Clam?
14. Norwegian guitarist Nils-____ Johansen
15. Brazilian pianist Weber
16. Canadian pianist, not a British luxury car?
20. Music rights org.
21. Vanguard jazz orchestra bassist, not direction to play pianissimo?
27. Molten 2011 Liudas Mockūnas/Barry Guy NoBusiness album?
28. Casiopea co-founding guitarist Issei
29. Berlin-based label releasing jazz in the '70s
31. Pianist/singer Johnny
32. "Screamin' Jay" Hawkins song "I Put A ____ On You" recorded by Nina Simone
33. Heartfelt 1971 Paul Van Gysegem Futura album?
34. Dutch drummer Cees
35. With One, rapper whose songs have sampled Stanley Turrentine, Clifford Brown, Jimmy McGriff and others

DOWN

1. Perfect vehicle for a duo tour
2. One time Lionel Hampton alto saxophonist, not a Nazi soldier?
3. El Saturn Records catalogue prefix
4. Sheepish Japanese label releasing albums by Satoko Fujii, Masahiko Satoh and others?
5. Noted '50s-60s female jazz singer, not an email recipient?
6. Singer Gayle or pianist Jason
7. Drummer Ted who needs money?
8. Swedish trombonist Holmqvist who died from COVID-19
10. Expensive part of the balcony
11. Romantic 2016 Paolo Fresu/Omar Sosa Tük Music?
17. Artie Dann-Jerry Blaine tune "____, Ipe, Wanna Piece Of Pie" recorded by Fats Waller
18. Rising Sun Records catalogue prefix
19. Sollentuna, Sweden recording studio
21. *Pink Panther* theme tenor saxophonist Johnson
22. Milt = Bags; Lionel = ?
23. Vijay Iyer and Wayne Escoffery teach at them
24. North Rhine-Westphalia jazz festival
25. Spoiled quintet of Eirik Hegdal, Kjetil Møster, Ole Morten Vågan and Ole Thomas Kolberg?
26. Dave Brubeck's wife
30. Brother Thelonious is one
31. Wild Bill Davison and Pete Fountain both tied a yellow ribbon 'round this ole type of tree

By Andrey Henkin

visit nycjazzrecord.com for answers



THE ART OF JAZZ A VISUAL HISTORY

Alyn Shipton, noted British jazz critic, author and radio presenter, whose *A New History of Jazz* is required reading, presents a survey of jazz through the lens of the visual rather than the aural, focusing on album covers, posters, photography, ephemera and the music's inspiration on fine art. Shipton starts with the pre-jazz era and goes all the way to the modern day in this 256-page tome with over 300 included images and foreword by musicologist John Edward Hasse.

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Between Sound and Space

An ECM Records Primer

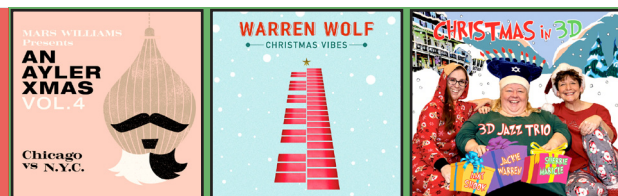
Rey Naranjo Editores

With a catalog that includes composers and performers such as Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, Arvo Pärt, Stephan Micus, John Cage, Pat Metheny, Steve Reich and Meredith Monk, and spans jazz, classical music and various hybrids thereof, ECM has since its inception been at the forefront of contemporary music and has been widely recognized for its meticulous recordings and distinctive cover art.

BETWEEN SOUND AND SPACE: AN ECM RECORDS PRIMER

In November 2019, ECM celebrated its gold anniversary and nearly 1,500 jazz, classical and new music releases. This beautifully-written tome by musicologist Tyran Grillo guides readers through dozens of albums in the label's storied history, from early recordings up to the present day, from iconic titles to those worthy of further discovery.

REYNARANJO.NET/SOUNDANDSPACE—\$40



An Ayler Xmas, Vol. 4: Chicago vs. NYC
Mars Williams (Astral Spirits/Soulwhat)

Christmas Vibes

Warren Wolf (Mack Avenue)

Christmas in 3D

3D Jazz Trio (DIVA Jazz)

by Audrey Henkin

Assuming things go back to some semblance of normal and Donald Trump doesn't decree that Christmas is canceled in any state he didn't carry in the Electoral College, we should have a holiday season. But instead of balls, trees will be festooned with masks, fruitcakes will require two weeks' quarantine and holiday cards should arrive around Easter. But, to pen a new title for the famous novelty Xmas song, "All I Want For Christmas is the COVID Vaccine".

Coming now with the regularity of gift socks from Aunt Frances in Des Moines—but much more welcome—is the annual *An Ayler Xmas* from saxophonist Mars Williams, now in its fourth iteration, subtitled *Chicago vs. NYC*. The former group is Josh Berman (cornet), Jim Baker (piano, viola, ARP synthesizer), Kent Kessler (bass), Brian Sandstrom (bass, guitar, trumpet) and Steve Hunt (drums) plus guests Keefe Jackson (baritone saxophone), Katinka Kleijn (cello) and Peter Maunu (violin) while the latter is Steve Swell (trombone), Hilliard Greene (bass), Chris Corsano (drums), Nels Cline (guitar) and Fred Lonberg-Holm (cello). For those unfamiliar with the concept, Williams and Co. combine holiday music with the equally celebratory compositions of the late Albert Ayler in often-sprawling, ever-shifting medleys, horns braying like Dominick the Donkey but with reflective moments as well. In addition to the appeal of hearing spiritual fare sutured to spiritual jazz—yielding titles such as "The Hanukkah-Xmas March Of Truth For 12 Days Of Jangling Bells With Spirits" and "Noel Omega - Change Has Come For The Three Kings Who Lit The Tiny Candles"—is comparing versions from the Windy City to the Big Apple.

Warren Wolf, built like a linebacker, could probably deliver Santa's whole inventory by himself in one night—without reindeer or sleigh—yet presents a gently shimmering take on holiday classics with *Christmas Vibes*. In addition to vibraphone, Wolf plays piano and keyboards, percussion and a host of Logic Pro X instruments like tubular bells and cello, overdubbing himself throughout the 13 tracks, supported by the acoustic and electric basses of Jeff Reed and drummer Carroll "CV" Dashiell III, plus guesting singers Christie Dashiell, Allison Bordlemay and Micah Smith. The program is an eclectic one, ranging from classics like "O Christmas Tree" and classical such as Tchaikovsky's "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" to rock from John Lennon ("Happy Xmas") and spirituals by Robert MacGimsey ("Sweet Little Jesus Boy"). For all the layering the instrumental tracks have a lovely organic feel, presciently muted for this odd holiday season, but the vocals overwhelm the music with a Broadway-style brashness. The album highlight is the aforementioned "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy", wherein Wolf translates the piece from the symphony to *Soul Train*.

Three of the elves from the DIVA workshop in pianist Jackie Warren, bassist Amy Shook and drummer Sherrie Maricle, aka the 3D Jazz Trio, offer up a rollicking set of Christmas classics on *Christmas in 3D* that could have been found in the transformed bar Nick's in *It's A Wonderful Life*, no surprise with the hard-hitting Maricle behind the kit. The band has fun with less-often-played material, such as "Up on the Housetop", with Buddy Rich-style drumming, or Shook over-doubling on fiddle for the lurching swing of "Please, Daddy (Don't Get Drunk This Christmas)". Even the more traditional material gets nice makeovers: Shook taking the melody to open "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" or "O Christmas Tree" played through the lens of Horace Silver. There is a refreshing irreverence to the reverence here.

For more information, visit marswilliams.bandcamp.com, mackavenue.com and divajazz.com. Williams' project live-streams Dec. 18th-19th at constellation-chicago.com/watch-live.