



Apple Cores
James Brandon Lewis Trio (ANTI-Records)
by Jeff Cebulski

While the album title, *Apple Cores*, refers to the *Village Voice* column by the late Amiri Baraka, the spirit of saxophonist James Brandon Lewis' new release comes from another "late great": pocket trumpet hero and cultural inquirer Don Cherry. The album doesn't reinterpret Cherry's work, but rather represents Lewis' desire to expand on the trumpeter's indefatigable drive to integrate various world music genres and rhythms into his music. More particularly, Lewis was captured by Cherry's "risk-taking" (his term) on the album *Home Boy (Sister Out)* (Barclay, 1985), where Cherry dives into African-tinged hip hop grooves and vocals. Lewis eventually began his self-described "conversation" with Cherry on his *Days of FreeMan* (Okeh, 2015) and *Apple Cores* is his extension of that project.

The tenor saxophonist and his longstanding trio — Josh Warner (bass, guitar) and Chad Taylor (drums, mbira) — respond with ten improvised selections (each under five minutes) that traverse a collection of urban rhythms, including three different versions of the title cut. With one exception, the material is driven by the

rhythm section's deeply-resonating grooves upon which Lewis displays his formidable talent, often taking off into his own interstellar space. This is best manifested on "Don't Forget Jayne", a high-powered excursion that receives the totality of the trio's energy, including Taylor's dense pounding, Warner's ponderous bass and guest Guilherme Monteiro's airy guitar, while Lewis dances and wails. The single "Prince Eugene" promenades down an Afro-Caribbean path, with Warner's reggae-ish bass line and Taylor's combination of drums and Zimbabwean mbira providing a pleasant beat as Lewis croons. "Five Spots to Caravan" (a tribute to Cherry's journey from NYC to Fort Worth with Ornette Coleman) pairs hip-hoppy beats with the leader's version of Coleman's off-center style, mixed with the tonal depth of another Texan, tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin. "Remember Brooklyn & Moki" — a soulful remembrance of Cherry's life with his artistic wife, Moki — rides Warner's jaunty electric bass lead and guitar washes. Album closer, "Exactly Our Music", has an African rhythmic lilt but with echoed chamber effects, perhaps channeling some Cherry productions.

Every James Brandon Lewis album is unique. Capable of walking into a studio with a singular vision and then encapsulating it, he has a gift for making each recording a unified, consummate experience. *Apple Cores*, both in intention and performance, continues in that exquisite trend.

For more info visit anti.com. Lewis is at Public Records Mar. 6. See Calendar.

bass tones and the occasional bit of guitar counterpoint are liberally peppered with electronic antecedents and consequents as the descent continues. The ensemble is both chorus and actor, commenting, supporting and delicately encroaching on the ever-unstable but ironically rock-solid form Golub has created.

A good recording is par for the course these days, which is as it should be, but this one is exemplary. Each sound and sonority inhabits its own space while perspective is miraculously maintained. Like those pioneering Conlon Nancarrow discs *Other Minds* has reissued, the acoustic is dry, which is just as well given the music's reliance on exquisitely gentle articulation. All involved should take pride in this, one of Golub and Greyfade's finest releases.

For more info visit greyfade.com. Golub is at The Jazz Gallery Mar. 13 and SEEDS Brooklyn Mar. 20. See Calendar.



Anchors
Jason Stein (TAO Forms)
by Mike Shanley

The history of jazz is filled with stories of musicians dealing with various ailments. Many were self-induced, but a lifestyle of playing clubs and traveling extensively can take a physical toll on anyone. So, too, can mastering an instrument. And although the liner notes to *Anchors* don't specifically mention his condition, bass clarinetist Jason Stein suffered from a physical ailment that had an impact on his playing. Having studied with percussionist Milford Graves, who saw a deep connection between music and good health, Stein worked to heal himself. Cold-water plunges and breathwork were part of the process, along with myofascial trigger point therapy, which helped him locate the source of an injury.

The music on *Anchors* is inspired by Stein's healing journey, with titles including "Cold Water", "Holding Breath" and "Crystalline", coming from different aspects of the process. Appearing throughout the album are Joshua Abrams (bass) and Gerald Cleaver (drums), while Boon (a one-named multidisciplinary artist and songwriter from Chicago, who produced *Anchors*) wrote the liner notes and plays acoustic guitar on the opening and closing title tracks. "Anchors I" and "Anchors II" are gentle meditations with the bass clarinetist echoing the guitarist's sparse, single-note lines on the first and playing in unison on the latter. "Holding Breath" finds the trio building from free, understated movement into a steady groove, allowing the leader to stretch out. For the first three and half minutes of "An Origin", he intones a single low note as bass and drums flex beneath him. When this beginning shapes into more of a structure, Stein solos in a Thelonious Monk-like manner, shaping and reshaping simple phrases repeatedly. The album additionally incorporates wild blowing, along with its more subdued moments. "Cold Water" evokes a watery plunge, with a conclusion that grasps the healing power that can be found in it. "Boon" comes off like a free ballad, while "Crystalline" is driven by Abrams' arco work and Cleaver's cymbal rolls, tempting Stein to dabble a bit in his horn's altissimo register.

Like any good concept album, the ideas behind the music bring greater understanding to the



Loop 7
Phillip Golub (Greyfade)
by Marc Medwin

There is something disarmingly beautiful about recurrence, especially when executed with this direct complexity. Composer and pianist Phillip Golub is in a remarkable position to bridge the supposed gulf separating spontaneity and repetition, which he and a wonderful ensemble here do with cool finesse.

It behooves anyone interested to listen to a very informative online interview with Golub in which he describes learning to compose with each new piece. Comparing *Loop 7*, his second Greyfade album, with *Filters*, his first, speaks to that re- and deconstruction. The methodologies behind his latest release are too complex to rehearse here, but where the earlier effort involved solo piano, we now hear two pianos in microtonal layers augmented by an absolutely astonishing take on ensemble interaction, including Ty Citerman (guitar), Aaron Edgcomb (vibraphone) and Greyfade frontman Joseph Branciforte (electronics, synthesizer). Subtlety doesn't even begin to describe the layered piano's melding of harmony and melody as it traverses what might best be called asymmetric repetitions that descend over the piece's 28-minute trajectory.

As the music unfolds, minuscule reminiscences of a "jazz" riff (as at 2:07 and many other points) float toward consciousness only to recede with equal ambiguity. The ensemble, sparse at first, gathers what might be described as density and momentum, though all ultimately remains tranquil. It is as if the ensemble blooms from the piano, erecting edifices naturally from the loops' hewn granite. Bowed vibraphone, ghostly

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