

Jubilation
William Hooker (Orgmusic)
A Time Within: Live at the New York Jazz Museum
William Hooker (Valley of Search)
The Ancients
The Ancients (Eremite)
 by Brad Cohan

William Hooker's motto is "Drum Power" and those two words sum up the ethos the drummer, composer and improviser has sworn by over the course of his pioneering five-decade-plus run. Since ...*Is Eternal Life* (Reality Unity Concepts), his leader debut recorded 50 years ago, Hooker has conveyed messages of power through his intense drumming in the emotional, physical and expressive senses. This stunning recent trifecta of releases, one of which was recorded in 1977 and the other two in 2023, is a testament to his vision.

Jubilation is an emphatic statement of purpose, a joyous recording that finds the eternally youthful drummer's force, fast approaching 80-years-old, playing with his trademark vim and vigor. Supported by a remarkable group made up of Matt Lavelle (trumpet), Sarah Manning (alto), On Davis (guitar) and Adam Lane (bass), each feeds off the bandleader's thirst for sonic euphoria and soul-searching thoughtfulness on a set featuring both life-affirming solos and collaborative performances. Impeccably recorded live at Roulette in 2023, each of the seven pieces brings the very title of the record to boisterous light. Undoubtedly, Hooker is the catalyst here, manifested by the solo drum clinic showcased on "The Stare". Who but Hooker opens an album with a seven-minute-long show of percussive strength ostensibly meant to lift up and empower with a shot of joy? The vibes Hooker spreads prove infectious from there as Lane takes his own starring turn on the dizzily melodic investigation "Linking", as does Davis on the cosmic shredding exercise, "The Villages". Those solo endeavors are the sublime buildup to the entire group joining forces on the remaining four pieces, which are on another level of pure exultation.

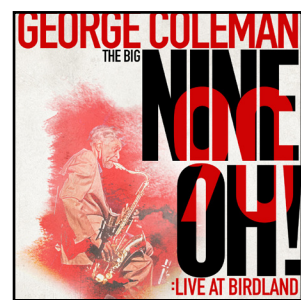
Hooker's journey to *Jubilation* can be traced some 46 years prior with the incredible discovery of *A Time Within: Live at the New York Jazz Museum*, an album recorded live but previously unreleased. Hooker, with David Ware (tenor) and Alan Braufman (alto), comprise a downtown fire-music group for the ages, and this live document is a golden loft-jazz scene era discovery (although it took place at a then-midtown venue). Dubbed the William Hooker Reality

Trio, this raw and primal recording of three on-the-rise powerhouses—each with their own singularly explosive and exploratory voices—is as *real* as it gets. Spread over eight movements, Ware and Braufman summon the spirits with their soulful, bluesy and earth-scorching conversational din while Hooker directs the spiritual traffic as the cymbal-obliterating ringleader and its wailing guiding light.

It's a revelation to listen to *A Time Within: Live at the New York Jazz Museum* then the eponymous debut of *The Ancients* back-to-back. Sure, nearly 50 years separates the two sets, but the collaborative trio of Hooker, William Parker (bass) and the young Isaiah Collier (tenor) share in a similarly-minded belief that free music is a healing force of the universe. And *The Ancients* does just that over four long-form improvised sets recorded live in 2023 (at 2220 Arts & Archives in Los Angeles and at The Chapel in San Francisco). Collier shows he's a more-than-worthy torchbearer of the late giants Albert Ayler, Charles Gayle and Ware, blaring out a bluesy maelstrom that teems with helter-skelter lines and heartrending subtlety. Meanwhile the Parker/Hooker rhythm section is steadfast in building foundational grooves and rhythms that give space for Collier to gloriously unload.

These three essential albums are proof positive of Hooker's unparalleled "Drum Power."

For more info visit orgmusic.com, valleyofsearch.com and eremite.com. *Hooker is at Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center Mar. 1 (part of OutMusic Festival), Artists Space Books Mar. 4 and Ibeam Brooklyn Mar. 18. See Calendar.*



The Big Nine Oh!: Live at Birdland
George Coleman (Key of B)
 by Ken Dryden

Although tenor saxophonist George Coleman turns 90 this month (Mar. 8), his big sound certainly seems more youthful than his years, and seemingly effortless in this live set at Birdland (recorded just this past January).

The longtime NYC-based Memphis native recruited a new band and premiered it on this date, with Steve Myerson (piano), Leo Larratt (guitar), John Webber (bass) and Kevin Congleton (drums), giving all of them plenty of room to blow in each of the extended numbers. It is clear that Coleman is enjoying interacting with his much younger colleagues, frequently returning to play during the latter half of their solos. "Blues Inside Out" is an intense workout as the leader and the members of his band take turns in the spotlight, each building upon the theme. Coleman introduces the decades-old standard "Never Let Me Go" with an abstract solo that reaches altissimo range before settling into a relaxed, soulful groove as the full band makes its entrance.

As with many older saxophone virtuosos who have preceded him, Coleman masters the use of space in his solo, allowing the music to breathe, something many younger players take years (if ever) to learn. His soulful touch in Freddie Hubbard's infectious jazz waltz "Up Jumped Spring" has the effect of a gritty vocalist, while the deliberate rendition of the blues "Parker's Mood" brings out the saxophonist's Memphis roots (even briefly simulating a harmonica with a fluttering vamp). Larratt's superb feature reveals a potential virtuoso in the making; his playing incorporates the obvious influence of many guitar

greats. The intensity of Myerson's piano playing invites comparison to Coleman's good friend and long-time pianist of choice, the late Harold Mabern. Signing off with a furious take of the old warhorse "Cherokee", the rhythm team of Webber and Congleton provide the glue that holds everything together with their strong support (both also contribute potent solos), while the saxophonist seems like he barely breaks a sweat as he weaves around his rhythm section's frenetic support. It's clear the band is enjoying every minute.

For more info visit georgecoleman.com. *Coleman's 90th birthday album release concert is at Dizzy's Club Mar. 13-14. See Calendar.*



the piano and me
Mike Westbrook (s/r)
 by Pierre Giroux

In an era when the term "jazz piano virtuoso" often conjures up images of dazzling technical displays, Mike Westbrook (who turns 89 this month) takes an entirely different path with *the piano and me*. The initial 2023 digital release was recorded live at Dartington Hall, a medieval great hall in Devon, England on June 26, 2022. That album, the first in a set of four, has been followed by three more, available as downloads and each recorded at various locations in the UK in 2023-24. (Under the imprimatur of Westbrook Records Special Edition, the recordings can be downloaded as a set or individually.) The complete collection is not about the flamboyant showmanship of the jazz tradition but rather something equally magical: the invention of new sonic rituals. Westbrook's performances here explore timbre, space and time—a journey where the listener navigates an aural world with patience and curiosity.

Across 32 tracks and 82 song titles, Westbrook draws inspiration from his original compositions and those influenced by jazz legends such as Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Thelonious Monk, alongside pieces from the Great American Songbook and popular songs by Lennon and McCartney. By resisting categorization and drawing from these varied influences, he distills the entirety of his work into its fundamental essence: the piano and the present moment. Yet, within this simplicity lies a world of depth and complexity. Westbrook navigates these soundscapes through improvisation, crafting something fleeting yet profound.

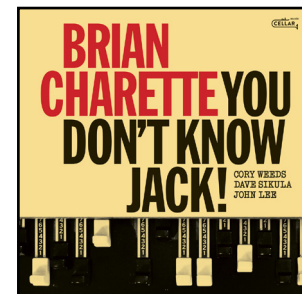
Some composers and songs are foundational, as one would expect in any musical anthology. One presumes that each composition's melody and harmonic underpinnings provide the texture, musical lines and dynamics on which Westbrook constructs his improvisations from the inside out (Monk's "Jackie-ing" and "Round Midnight" fall into this category). The angularity of his compositional style, the layering of notes and recurring motifs, provide him with the freedom to abandon conventional expectations of the composition's interpretation. By contrast is the tune "Sweet Kentucky Ham" by the ironic composer, singer and pianist Dave Frishberg. In this rendition, Westbrook captures the down-home blues underpinnings as the number unfolds with its quirky tempo. Hoagy Carmichael wrote the music for the well-liked ballad "Skylark", which has been consistently included in Westbrook's repertoire. His interpretation here is driven as much by what is

omitted as by what is included: the spaces between the notes carry as much weight as the notes themselves, and silence is not an absence but an active participant in the musical discourse. There are two rather contrasting compositions that Westbrook favors in combination: Ram Ramirez' "Lover Man" and the Billy Strayhorn gem "Blood Count". These two compositions, in their traditional interpretation, are driven by rhythm and melody; the pianist chooses to bring them to life through the recognition of themes that emerge, resolve and re-emerge in different contexts.

Duke Ellington's compositions are not forgotten in these recitals as three of his pieces are explored: "Mood Indigo", "I Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good)" and "Sophisticated Lady". One of the defining characteristics of this multi-sided set is Westbrook's acute sensitivity to sound itself, exemplified by these numbers. Each note is placed with precision, and every dynamic shift is carefully judged. The underlying melodies are still there to be heard, but it requires an exercise in deep listening. Homage is paid to popular music with the inclusion of a couple of Lennon/McCartney favorites: "Because" and "She Loves You". Despite its esoteric nature, the pianist's impression of these songs is warm and human, as his approach is both expressive and personal, with each piece feeling like an intimate conversation.

In this release, Mike Westbrook presents something that is distinctly his own. It serves as a testament to the lasting power of improvisation and the boundless possibilities of the piano in the hands of an artist who dares to think outside the box.

For more info visit westbrookjazz.co.uk



You Don't Know Jack!
Brian Charette (Cellar Music)
 by Scott Yanow

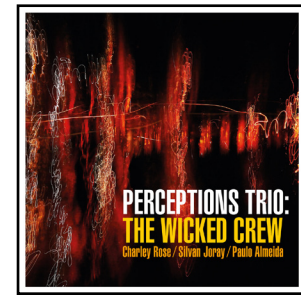
Just over 30 years ago, Brian Charette was a young up-and-coming, if struggling, jazz pianist. One day he had the opportunity to work as an organist; he winged it so successfully that he was well on his way. He soon purchased his first Hammond B3, an instrument formerly owned by Jack McDuff, who happened to be his favorite organist, and three decades later, Charette here pays tribute to McDuff on *You Don't Know Jack!*

Charette's quartet comprises the head of the Cellar Music label (and an accomplished player in his own right), Cory Weeds (tenor), as well as Dave Sikula (guitar) and John Lee (drums). Together they perform two McDuff pieces, five Charette originals and one by Weeds. The instrumentation is standard for an organ quartet, and while sometimes the musicians audibly move the music forward a bit, much of the playing fits well into the classic '60s group style. Weeds' playing often times hints at Dexter Gordon, although he has his own sound; Sikula's playing is in the tradition of guitarists Kenny Burrell and Thornel Schwartz among others; and Lee noticeably keeps the music swinging.

While there are guitar and tenor saxophone solos on each piece, Charette, who displays his own musical personality even when paying homage to his predecessor, is the lead voice and main reason for this set's success, beginning with his melodic and fairly peaceful "Early America". Following are McDuff's cooking blues "The Jolly Black Giant" and the title cut, which is also a swinging blues. McDuff's "6:30 In the

Morning" is a relaxed tune with light samba rhythms and laid-back solos that fit the piece's title and mood. "Microcosmic Orbit" is a jazz waltz with original chord changes. Weeds' "Have You Met Joan" (a relative of "Have You Met Miss Jones") has solos from all four players, including a brief statement from Lee. "Why'd You Have to Go and Lie to Me Boy" is a minor blues that features some heated double-time runs from the leader. The set's most memorable melody is on the closer, "I Like a Big Schnazolle", which utilizes rhythm changes and swings listeners to the end of this consistently enjoyable set.

For more info visit cellarlive.com. *Charette is at The Django Mar. 26. See Calendar.*



The Wicked Crew
Perceptions Trio (Charley Rose, Silvan Joray, Paulo Almeida) (Fuga/Big Wax)
 by Thomas Conrad

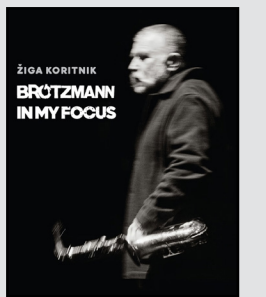
The Wicked Crew is the debut recording of the Perceptions Trio, a project with Frenchman Charley Rose (tenor), Swiss-born/New York-based Silvan Joray (guitar) and Paulo Almeida (drums). The trio's name certainly fits: the listener's perceptions of this band keep shifting with a fluid identity owing to the ways in which Rose and Joray employ their electronic effects. Pedals and black boxes and laptops are now common in jazz, but these two use technology with uncommon creativity and musicality. A saxophone might suddenly become a saxophone choir. Guitar notes might echo across a vast landscape. In the distance there might be a murmuring orchestra. Rose's effect pedals might add missing instruments, such as a bass, or imply missing chords. Often, you are not sure where sounds originate, but you don't care because the sonic environment in which you find yourself is so alluring.

There are three tunes by Rose, three by Joray, two by Almeida and two group improvisations. Joray's pieces are mostly quiet and always lyrically addictive. He finds undiscovered elemental melodies as in "Uberto"; he and Rose dwell on its theme for six minutes, taking it through myriad subtle guitar and saxophone variations and softly keening electronic permutations. The recurring four-note motif becomes an incantation that gathers power with each pass. Almeida's "Lit Candles" is also a simple melody that is repeated into a ritual. The tenor saxophonist's ideas contain more active energy, as heard on "Radio Goose Bumps". But every selection (including the improvisations) reinforce one another in creating an immersive, ambient atmosphere, deep in dark shadows and unresolved mysteries. Each track is a scene that contributes to the cinematic, episodic event that is *The Wicked Crew*.

When this music is over and you think back on it, you don't remember individual voices, even though each of these three players is a compelling soloist, including Almeida, whose drum meditations (as on "Sombra") are some of the album's most haunting moments. And that forgetfulness is largely because *The Wicked Crew* provides an evolving set of perceptions that accumulate into a unified domain of feeling.

For more info visit silvanjoray.com. *Silvan Joray is at Ornithology Mar. 19 (with Hillai Govreen). See Calendar.*

IN PRINT



Brötzmann: In My Focus
Žiga Koritnik (PEGA)
 by Francesco Martinelli

Slovenian photographer Žiga Koritnik was already interested in music as sound and as image when in 1994 he went to take photos at the Austrian jazz festival Konfrontationen in Nickelsdorf. During the set of the Die Like A Dog quartet, he had a revelation: an affinity for the weird, atonal music played at the festival—different than what he usually listened to. And since that evening he's been documenting the scene of European improvised music, traveling to festivals all over the continent—with saxophonist Peter Brötzmann remaining his major interest. In this sturdy, well-produced volume, *Brötzmann: In My Focus*, Koritnik collected around 100 of his black and white images of this towering figure of European free improvisation. For over five decades his music has been hugely influential in inspiring musicians such as Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, who is one of the narrative contributors to the book. Others include: John Corbett, Bill Laswell, Heather Leigh, Paal Nilssen-Love and Paul Lovens; there are also poems by Joe McPhee and Steve Dalachinsky. Brötzmann, who was also a visual artist, designing many record sleeves and concert posters, loved photography, and contributed to this volume before his death in June 2023 at age 82 (he would have been 84 this month).

Images of other musicians appear with Brötzmann, including Caspar Brötzmann (son), Jeb Bishop, Fred Lonberg-Holm, Johannes Bauer, Ken Vandermark, Hamid Drake, Steve Swell, William Parker and Zlatko Kaučič, depicting them in performance as well as backstage, on the road and handling the physical aspects of their sound-generating tools. Among the most striking images, there's one from the 2016 festival in Sant'Anna Arresi, Sardinia, with the saxophonist checking his telephone alone by the stage after a tense evening, and another from Berlin in 2019 where he's not with a musician but with the legendary FMP producer Jost Gebers, a longtime friend of many adventures, who passed away just a few months after the saxophonist.

Further planned photo sessions to shoot Brötzmann at home in Wuppertal, Germany could not materialize due to the declining health of the musician: the book in a way thus remains unfinished and incomplete, an improvised chronicle with a raw, dramatic ending, which is poetically appropriate to the man and his unforgettable music. One minor critique of an otherwise rich and extraordinary volume concerns the landscape format photos, which are printed on two facing pages: the size is large but they are split in a way that makes it difficult to fully appreciate them.

For more info visit zigakoritnikphotography.com