



Duo Work
Gordon Grdina/Christian Lillinger (Attaboygirl)
by Ken Waxman

Twelve tracks of rugged and raw pressure, *Duo Work* could be the closest to a rock record from a duo who singly have been involved in multiple and diverse projects in jazz-oriented music.

Canadian Gordon Grdina, who here plays guitar and midi-guitar, is also an oudist involved in improv sessions with the likes of clarinetist François Houle. German drummer-percussionist Christian Lillinger's experience stretches from acoustic dates with vibraphonist Christopher Dell to intense electronica with keyboardist Elias Stemeseder. With the MIDI's digital interface and numerous idiophone implements involved on this album, the two almost always create textures that come from multiple string, keyboard and percussion instruments, making it sound as if there are more than two musicians. Sliding organ-like vibrations and a continuous droning undertone from the sound modules also allow Grdina to sometimes dial twist into guitar hero pyrotechnics or turn twangs and flanges into blurred fingering build-up. Meanwhile, the percussionist's constant dynamic changes move up and down the scale from restrained shuffles and palm hand claps to extended drum pummels and pounding resonations.

"Encounters" is the most distinctive and extended variant of this strategy. Stretching synthesized buzzes and wavering mechanized tones from the midi-guitar as an ostinato, Grdina is then free to fragment string stabs into multiphonic splatters played prestissimo. Lillinger's concentrated ruffs and pops similarly provide a repetitive beat while also breaking up the time sense with paradiddles and pitter-patter pops.

Encompassing enough narrative displacement into melody snippets and linear advancement, *Duo Work* never falls into the thudding repetition of some jazz-rock records. And since the group's mettle is directed more towards modification than metal, it avoids turns towards monotony and self-indulgence. But as singular as they are, the sounds on this session will also never be confused with standard mainstream jazz fare.

For more info visit gordongrdinamusic.com. Grdina and Lillinger are at Nublu Apr. 3 (with guest Tim Berne). See Calendar.



New Dawn
Marshall Allen (Mexican Summer)
by Andrew Schinder

Since 1958, alto saxophonist Marshall Allen has been a mainstay of intergalactic avant garde jazz giant Sun Ra's Arkestra, climbing its ranks until finally, in 1995, after Ra's and his immediate successor John Gilmore's deaths, Allen became, and continues, as the group's

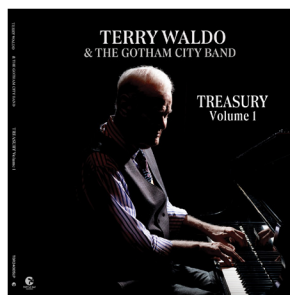
leader, collaborating with both jazz and non-jazz artists.

Now 100 years young (May is his 101st birthday!), Allen has finally released what is being considered his "debut" album as leader, *New Dawn*, which highlights aspects of his musical repertoire that may not get necessarily emphasized with the Arkestra. Though it's mostly, surprisingly, straight-ahead, staying mostly on Earth, it is a delightful exploration of Allen's versatility and his history as one of the 20th (and 21st) century's most important jazz figures. Though relatively brief (40 minutes), that short period of time still allows the leader plenty of room to reflect on his decades of artistry while providing glimpses of a bright future ahead.

After a brief prologue, "African Dream" kicks things off, marinating in a slow, mellow, Tropicália-influenced rhythm. Allen's saxophone offers a soothing vibe, with a slight electronic undercurrent hinting at interstellar voyages gone by. He is also a notable pioneer of the electric wind instrument (EWI), which appears throughout, lest the emphasis on traditional jazz themes get too bogged down by Earth's gravitational pull. On the title track, soul and hip-hop legend Neneh Cherry (whose stepfather was trumpeter Don Cherry) provides the album's only vocal, a gorgeous, leisurely rumination on the session's themes of reflection and renewal. A serene string section and Arkestra veteran Bruce Edwards' emotional guitar playing accompany her vocalized contemplations. The exploration of where Allen has been continues with "Are You Ready", a full-on New Orleans-style swing jam and celebration of his big-band heritage. Even at such an advanced age, Allen is just as interested in where the music lives, as heard in the whipsawing of "Sonny's Dance", the one true space-age free jazz freak-out of the seven tracks. Here he trades horn blasts with saxophonist Noel Scott, a longtime Arkestra colleague and collaborator. The saxophone muscle here and on the remainder of the music is simply mind-blowing.

Let's hope the interstellar forces that power Allen and the rest of the Arkestra provide us with another century's worth of explorations of this planet, as well as others.

For more info visit mexicansummer.com. The album release concert is at Roulette Apr. 5. See Calendar.



Treasury Volume 1
Terry Waldo & The Gotham City Band (Turtle Bay)
by Ken Dryden

Terry Waldo, who's had a long career, is known for his encyclopedic knowledge of countless ragtime and traditional jazz works. A protégé of ragtime great Eubie Blake, Waldo has played with his mentor, along with bassists Milt Hinton and Pops Foster, and trombonists George Brunies and Turk Murphy, plus many others.

The Gotham City Band dates back to the mid '80s, one of several groups that the pianist leads. Most of the selections on *Treasury Volume 1* date from 2022, with variations in personnel and/or instrumentation, occasionally adding vocals. The fun begins with a rollicking take of "Blame It on the Blues", featuring Waldo's ragtime wizardry and Ricky Alexander's Sidney Bechet-infused soprano saxophone. Tatiana Eva-Marie's flirtatious vocal on "I Get the Blues When It Rains" has just a touch of vibrato, while trombonist Jim Fryer and muted cornetist Mike Davis add to the

fun. Jelly Roll Morton's "Wolverine Blues" has long been a favorite of traditional jazz fans and the leader's invigorating arrangement gives plenty of space to soloists and the ensemble. Likewise, W.C. Handy's "Yellow Dog Blues" has also been a reliable staple of early 20th century jazz.

Waldo's focus is on the interplay of the ensemble, though muted cornet parts and clarinets (Alexander, Evan Arntzen, Dennis Lichtman) are prominent. "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home?" is another oft-played number, especially for Dixieland bands, and this Waldo arrangement showcases a campy vocal by banjo player Jerron Paxton. Jay Rattman's potent bass saxophone is briefly featured to excellent effect here. Paxton also hams it up singing "The Frog Song", featuring some loose, New Orleans-style improvising by the horns and reeds. Of course, just about any band working in traditional jazz can play "Tiger Rag" with blindfolds in place, and this engaging interpretation does not disappoint. Waldo leads a quintet through a spirited rendition of what has become Scott Joplin's signature song, "Maple Leaf Rag", with surface noise nicely added to give the impression that one is listening to a vintage 78 rpm record. One earlier track included on the album is from 2008, featuring the then promising young jazz vocalist Veronica Swift, whose sincere, authentic interpretation belies her tender age (she was still in her early teens), as she swings and scats up a storm (Swift since went on to heights in jazz, before switching gears to contemporary/pop rock material).

With *Treasury Volume 1* and more, Terry Waldo has done a great job keeping oldies from the past fresh in the 21st century.

For more info visit turtlebayrecords.com. Waldo is at Arthur's Tavern Thursdays. See Calendar.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Nils Agnas – *Köper sig ur en kris (Moserobie)*
- Sophie Agnel – *Songs (Relative Pitch)*
- Rashied Ali/Leroy Jenkins – *Swift Are The Winds of Life (Expanded Edition) (Survival)*
- Anouar Brahem – *After The Last Sky (ECM)*
- Jakob Bro – *New Morning (Loveland)*
- The Empress – *Square One (Cellar Music)*
- Anders Filipsen Trio – *Aldebar Night of Mangos (ILK Music)*
- Frank Kimbrough – *The Call (Sunnyside)*
- Joe Fiedler Trio 2.0 – *Dragon Suite (Multiphonics Music)*
- Nnenna Freelon – *Beneath The Skin (Origin)*
- Jenny Hill – *Floating (s/r)*
- William Hooker – *A Time Within: Live at the New York Jazz Museum (Valley of Search)*
- it's me? (Jürg Zimmermann/Matthias Tschopp) – *Modular Music Machines (Unit)*
- Charles Mingus – *In Argentina: The Buenos Aires Concerts (Resonance)*
- Silvano Monasterios Venezuelan Nonet – *The River (s/r)*
- Art Pepper – *Geneva 1980 (Omnivore)*
- Noah Preminger – *Ballads (Chill Tone)*
- Avreeayl Ra, Edward Wilkerson, Jeb Bishop, Erez Dessel – *Of The Essence (Amalgam)*
- John Surman – *Flashpoints and Undercurrents (Cuneiform)*
- Tom Teasley/Dave Ballou – *Lunch Break (s/r)*