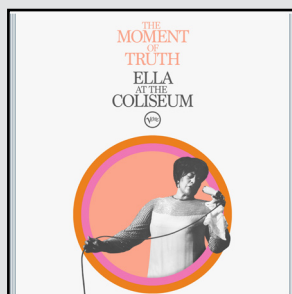


UNEARTHED GEM



The Moment of Truth: Ella at The Coliseum
Ella Fitzgerald (Verve)
by Marilyn Lester

During the summer of 1967, Ella Fitzgerald (born 108 years ago this month on Apr. 25) was mid-tour with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. This appearance, recorded at L.A.'s Coliseum, was never released until now, when the 4-track tapes from Verve Records founder Norman Granz' private collection were remastered and presented as *The Moment of Truth: Ella at The Coliseum*. The nine tracks are eclectic, and well-represent all aspects of the singer's greatness. But those expecting the Ellington presence, won't find it; at the piano is Fitzgerald's music director, Jimmy Jones, with Bob Cranshaw (bass) and now iconic DEO members Paul Gonsalves (tenor), Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet, tenor), Johnny Hodges and Russell Procope (altos), Harry Carney (baritone), Cat Anderson and Cootie Williams (trumpets) and Sam Woodyard (drums).

The album's title track opener presents Fitzgerald swinging full bore. The tune is a footnote in the diva's

band book but demonstrates how Fitzgerald could elevate even a second-rate number with her energy, exquisite phrasing, authenticity and ability to be in the moment at any given time. As *The Moment of Truth* progresses, a window into Fitzgerald's love of her audiences is opened. She is humble but also quick with an ad lib, wickedly witty, engaging and always charming. During one of the few standards on the release, "Bye Bye Blackbird", an audience member offers her a drink; she's quick to respond with "I don't dare drink, somebody might think that I'm Dean Martin's sister!" Fitzgerald was also known for her spontaneity in creating lyrics or inserting comments on the spot. On Cole Porter's "Let's Do It", she adds her own cast of characters to the tune's multiple choruses, referencing pop culture celebrities of the day: The Beatles, Sonny and Cher, Richard (Burton) and Elizabeth (Taylor) and James Bond 007. Her depth on "You've Changed" is striking as she mines the lyric's sadness via keen vocal modulation and phrasing. She ends with a stunner, an extended, high, keening spotlight on the word "changed." As for scat, Fitzgerald was non pareil. On the only Ellington material to be found on the release, "In a Mellow Tone", she scats the second chorus with her famous improvisations, pulling out all the stops and soaring into the stratosphere.

The closer could only be "Mack the Knife", one of her biggest hits. Who else could transform Kurt Weill's slinky, sinister song into a jazz barn-burner without losing a moment of its darkness.

For more info visit ververecords.com



NOW!
Marek Pospieszalski Octet (featuring Zoh Amba)
(Instant Classic)
by Ken Waxman

While Tennessee-born tenor saxophonist Zoh Amba may be the most familiar name on this choice release, the expanding skills of Marek Pospieszalski and his Polish octet is the main attraction. Pospieszalski, who plays soprano and tenor saxophones, clarinet and flute here, and who composed all six tracks of *NOW!*, has for more than a decade collaborated with international players and led different ensembles. The octet, which in the past has recorded themes from contemporary Polish composers and the leader's own compositions, is his favored configuration.

It's a tribute to Amba that her unbridled playing fits snugly within the band filled out by Tomasz Dąbrowski (trumpet), Piotr Czekci (tenor, baritone), Grzegorz Tarwid (piano), Tomasz Sroczynski (viola), Szymon Mikam (guitar), Max Mucha (bass) and Qba Janicki (drums). Still, it's Tarwid's dynamic and repetitive keyboard vamp that's especially prominent during the 14+ minutes of pure energy that's the introductory title track. Driven by piano pressure and equally powerful drum raps, the tune snakes through several sections that alternate triple-tonguing, tone-shredding altissimo

saxophone solos with stacked squeezed and slurping reed antiphony as well as brassy tongue flutters and spiccato viola slices.

Tarwid's forceful textures, mixed with guitar stings and electronic oscillations, may hold together other tracks such as "Community", but it's his rounded cadences surrounded by electronic crackles and hisses and horn riffs on "Bios" that demonstrates his quieter side. These adroit turns toward the refined are precise without being plodding, and confirm the octet's alternate skills, which buttress occasional fluttering trumpet grace notes, clarion clarinet trills, arco string buzzes and understated drum rattles into moderato showpieces. Positioned polyphony that briefly bring out individual musician's contributions, plus group passages that bow to European notated music history, are also part of *NOW!*'s imprimatur.

Those attracted by Amba's name, expecting to hear ecstatic free jazz, won't be disappointed in parts. However, they'll also discover aggregate sounds cunningly affiliated by a disciplined ensemble and capable composer.

For more info visit instant-classic.com. Amba is at *The Stone at The New School* Apr. 2-5 and *Le Poisson Rouge* Apr. 28. See Calendar.



Portrait
Samara Joy (Verve)
by Tom Greenland

Since winning the 2019 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, the arc of vocalist Samara Joy's artistic trajectory has been spectacular. *Portrait*, her third full-length studio release, reflects her growing confidence as a bandleader and lyricist. Like her first two albums, it features Great American Songbook standards such as "You Stepped Out of a Dream", "Autumn Nocturne", "Day by Day" and lesser-known tunes such as trombonist Donavan Austin's "A Fool in Love (Is Called a Clown)". Joy also added more adventurous fare including Charles Mingus' "Reincarnation of a Lovebird" and Barry Harris' "Now and Then", both of which she wrote lyrics for, as well as Sun Ra and Jae Mayo's "Dreams Come True", to which she appended "Peace of Mind", co-written with bandmate Kendrick McCallister.

The album also shows Joy's increased willingness to work collaboratively with her touring septet, which includes McCallister (tenor), David Mason (alto, flute), Jason Charos (trumpet), Austin (trombone), Connor Rohrer (piano), Felix Moseholm (bass) and Evan Sherman (drums). After three years on the road, the last spent working up material for *Portrait*, she and they have developed a flexible yet cohesive musical esthetic that draws on their individual strengths, with everyone except Rohrer and Moseholm contributing written arrangements to the project. The four-horn section pumps like a big band, each chair holding a skillful soloist. To recapture the immediacy of a live concert, the album was recorded like a classic Verve blowing session: everyone playing together in the same room at the same time in (Rudy) Van Gelder Studios, with no more than a few takes for each track.

Joy, front and center of this worthy outfit, continues to develop as a vocalist. In her high, head register, her strongest suit as a singer, she can render lyrics with the supple melismatic finesse and precise tuning of Ella Fitzgerald, her harmonically adroit ears finding choice

color notes, her scatted lines and ornamental cadenzas a wonder; or she can become a fifth horn in the section, singing lead trumpet parts on the tutti sections of "You Stepped Out of a Dream", "Reincarnation of a Lovebird" and "Day by Day". Other times she's deep in her warm chest register à la Sarah Vaughan, lending an old-soul quality to her readings of songs such as "Autumn Nocturne" and "Peace of Mind/Dreams Come True". Her mid-range, often belted, is more strident, adding a conversational quality to her otherwise hornlike timbre.

For more info visit ververecords.com. Joy is at Carnegie Hall Apr. 30. See Calendar.



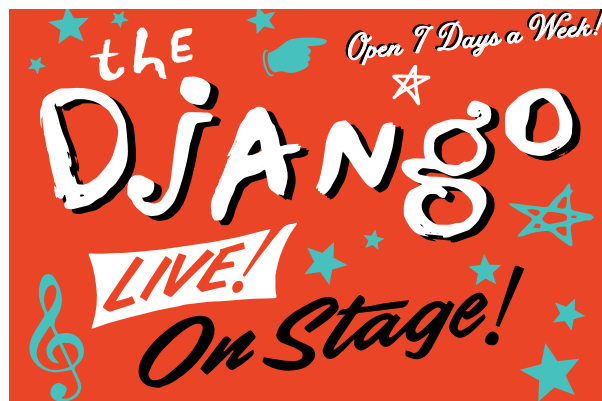
Hopium
Dayna Stephens (Contagious Music)
by Terrell K. Holmes

Saxophone titan Dayna Stephens adds another gem to his oeuvre with his new album, *Hopium*. With Aaron Parks (piano), Ben Street (bass) and Greg Hutchinson (drums), Stephens has created an album of imaginative, challenging originals that are excellent in construction and execution, with the leader's inimitable playing and composing at its heart.

Album opener "Drive North to Find the Oranges Out West" starts right off with his signature silkiness on tenor, initially brooding within the wide spaces, searching, probing and measured. Even Stephens' high notes are somewhat even-tempered. Parks provides oblique and elegant phrasing that enhances the song's searching theme, while Hutchinson and Street engage in lively discourse, driven by the drummer's apparent impatience. The bassist's percolating intro sets the pace for the quick-tempered "Jump Start". The band works off the saxophonist's spiraling alto riffs, testing the rhythm's tensile boundaries. On the beautiful ballad "Trust", the players pick up on each other's thoughts to build seamless and cohesive harmonies. The title track, besides being a mischievous portmanteau, is a clever mashup of a tango and a military march, intense and emotional all the way up to its unresolved ending. Stephens' bluesy tenor raises the curtain on "Occasionally Cynical", but it's the persistent six-note figure and its variations that propel this song like a spaceship getting a gravity assist from a large planet. The pianist plays an internal dialogue like two people at odds with each other, while the bassist and leader sound amused at the disagreement. Parks' composition "Hard-Boiled Wonderland" is in the classic hard bop vein, and the quartet improvises vigorously over the sparkling rhythm. Guitarist Charles Altura joins the group for the closer, "As Truth Rises Above Power", adding another layer of color and harmony, and playing complex chords with fluidity and grace.

But throughout, Stephens is the unquestionable star. His composing and leadership are exemplary, and he plays his saxophones passionately without being haphazard or ostentatious, hitting flute-like high notes or getting down to the deep blues effortlessly. His playing is not about ego but about his truth. The entire quartet shares this versatility and commitment, which is what makes *Hopium* such an excellent album.

For more info visit daynastephens.net. Stephens is at *Smalls* Apr. 11 (with Ben Wolfe) and *The Jazz Loft* Apr. 19 (with Darrell Smith's Del Segno Trio). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Presenting
JASON MARSALIS
Every Tuesday This April

TUE 4/1	Jason Marsalis	7:30PM 9:30PM
WED 4/2	Oz Noy Trio The Latona Brothers	7:30PM 10:30PM
THU 4/3	Emily Braden Marius Van Den Brink Quintet	7:30PM 10:30PM
FRI 4/4	N'Kenge Jason Marshall Quartet	7:30PM 10:30PM
SAT 4/5	AC Lincoln Quintet Joe Magnarelli Quartet	7:30PM 10:30PM
SUN 4/6	Pete Malinverni Quartet Michael Kanan Trio	6:30PM 9:30PM
MON 4/7	Kali Rodriguez-Peña and Mélange Lucy Wijnands Quartet	7:30PM 10:30PM
TUE 4/8	Jason Marsalis	7:30PM 9:30PM
WED 4/9	Cameron Campbell Trio	10:30PM
THU 4/10	Chris Norton Mark Whitfield	7:30PM 10:30PM
FRI 4/11	Jason Tiemann Quartet Jonny King Quartet	7:30PM 10:30PM
SAT 4/12	Dwayne "Cook" Broadnax Quartet Mariel Bildsten Quintet	7:30PM 10:30PM
SUN 4/13	Neal Miner Quartet Sarah Jane Cion Trio	6:30PM 9:30PM
MON 4/14	Julietta Eugenio Quartet Boyce Griffith Quartet	7:30PM 10:30PM
TUE 4/15	Jason Marsalis	7:30PM 9:30PM
WED 4/16	Neal Caine Funk Unit William Hill III Groovtvet	7:30PM 10:30PM
THU 4/17	Michael Rabinowitz Quartet T.K. Blue Quartet	7:30PM 10:30PM
FRI 4/18	Richard Baratta Quintet Nick Hempton Band	7:30PM 10:30PM



DINNER, LIBATIONS & LIVE JAZZ!
IN THE ♥ OF TRIBECA

M

Manhattan School of Music

JAZZ ARTS

SPRING COMBOFEST

APRIL 15-24

FOR FULL DETAILS & UP-TO-DATE SCHEDULE

MSMNYC.EDU/SPRINGCOMBOFEST

MSMNYC.EDU