



**Solo Standards (s/r)**  
**Mirror Image (Adhyaropa)**  
**Tal Yahalom**  
by Tom Greenland

Tal Yahalom, scion of an illustrious line of New York-based Israeli guitarists such as Roni Ben-Hur, Amos Hoffman, Gilad Hekselman, Yotam Silberstein and Rotem Sivan, has lived here a decade, slowly, surely raising his profile through creative collaborations with local artists. Sure to raise it even higher are two impressive releases for solo guitar and quintet.

*Solo Standards* was brainstormed and workshoped during the pandemic, when time otherwise spent gigging and hustling was employed to develop various techniques. Each album track covers an American songbook or jazz classic, focusing on a specific approach. “My Romance”, the album opener, is a spartan, melody reading entirely executed with natural and artificial harmonics, like a carillon of noon bells chiming in the belfry of a corner church. “But Not for Me” gets its driving swing feel from Yahalom’s unusual hybrid picking technique, which uses changing combinations of stroking pick and plucking fingers to play bass lines, backbeat chords, low- or high-pitched melodies and improvisations. A similarly flexible technique is heard on “Cherokee”, where cracks in the bass line melody and low solo runs are plastered together with finger-plucks. On “Star Eyes” and “My Ideal” he juxtaposes

phrases in the upper and lower registers of the instrument to create the illusion of two separate voices in conversation; both tracks also emphasize sharp, muted, percussive attacks, something like a New Wave/punk guitarist. Thelonious Monk’s “We See” is arranged with chord clusters and connective bass lines, leaving room for a brilliant extended single-note flight delivered in a slapping, snappy style. “Skylark” and “My Ideal” are played finger style on nylon acoustic, the former a lushly harmonized jazz chord melody, the latter reminiscent of the classical guitar compositions of Francisco Tárrega or Heitor Villa-Lobos. The variability and flexibility of Yahalom’s different approaches make this album an impressive and well-paced outing.

*Mirror Image* expands Yahalom’s solo concepts to a quintet comprised of Ledah Finck (violin), Irene Han (cello), David Leon (alto, flute) and Rogerio Boccato (percussion). Even with more instruments the music remains light and transparent: bass parts are executed on guitar or cello, while Boccato eschews heavy beats for light touches on hand-held Brazilian instruments. Finger-plucked parts on *Solo Standards* are now delegated to pizzicato violin and cello. Leon’s soft but passionate alto playing, suffused with pinched notes, hoarse cries and subtle vibrato, is an apropos lead melodist and foil for Yahalom’s biting guitar. “Prelude”, written in a classical chorale texture, sets up “Hymn for Tomorrow”, a fast 5/4 romp with a spacy, postmodern theme segueing to a pounding modal drone. “KIM” layers sharp, rapid, pixelated strikes in an uneven but sinuous rhythmic pattern, a platform for hip, shredding guitar and alto saxophone solos. The leader is at his finest on “Chorinho for Tati”, where he improvises with dazzling flexibility. Leon is similarly strong on “Sleepless” and “The Boat Drifts”. “Tri-Tonal”, “Sleepless”, “Sophianic Mess” and “Dusk on Landwehr Canal” are all moody, immersive pieces that reflect Yahalom’s admiration of Maurice Ravel, pieces that invite listeners to pause and ponder.

For more info visit [adhyaroparecords.com](http://adhyaroparecords.com). The *Mirror Image* album release concert is at *The Jazz Gallery* Apr. 10. See *Calendar*.



**Sanctuary**  
**Jason Yeager/Jason Anick (Sunnyside)**  
by Scott Yanow

Violinist Jason Anick and pianist Jason Yeager have known each other since they were both teenagers growing up in the Boston area. They are both currently members of the faculty at Berklee College of Music and have played together through the years, including their first recorded collaboration on 2012’s *Tipping Point* and previously co-led 2017’s *United*.

For *Sanctuary*, the duo wanted to comment musically on the unsettling world events that are now taking place, while providing a sanctuary for listeners. Since this is an instrumental set, their comments on the world situation are reflected in the song titles and the moods explored in their music. The two are joined by Billy Buss (trumpet), Greg Loughman (bass) and Mike Connors (drums) with guest appearances by Naseem Alatrash (cello) on two numbers, Eddmar Colón (tenor) and Jason Palmer (trumpet), on one song apiece. Their set consists of six songs co-written by the co-leaders, one number from each of them, plus Wayne Shorter’s “Lost” and Chopin’s “Raindrop” (“Prelude Op. 28 No. 15 in D♭

Major”). Anick, Yeager and Buss take expressive solos on nearly every piece and their playing is thoughtful and versatile, covering a variety of emotions.

The modern hard bop tune “Futures Past” and the friendly melody of “Nearness of Now” begin the program in an attractive and inviting fashion before the music becomes more ominous. The introspective and at times mournful Chopin piece is a contrast to the dissonance and darkness of “Persecution”, which nevertheless swings hard. Other selections include the ballad “Ephermory”, as well as some hot solos on “Lost”, including Colón’s, and Yeager’s fast boogie bass lines during the intense “AI Apocalypse”, which imagines robots getting out of control. There’s also a relatively gentle piano-violin duet on “Colorado” (co-written by Anick and guitarist Max O’Rourke), the orchestral and often-touching “Farewell” and the passionate album closing title track.

*Sanctuary* works well as a general political statement while containing many worthy originals and a number of memorable solos.

For more info visit [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com). This project is at *Weill Recital Hall* Apr. 23 (part of the *Abbey Whiteside Concert Series*). See *Calendar*.



**Forces of Nature (Live at Slugs)**  
**McCoy Tyner/Joe Henderson (Blue Note)**  
by Brian Charette

This double-LP, 180g vinyl gem (also available as a double-CD and digital download) captures an amazing supergroup from 1966, recorded live at the funky, since defunct East Village jazz club (E. 3rd Street between Avenues B and C), Slugs’ Saloon, where, incidentally and infamously for the club half a dozen years later, Lee Morgan and ultimately the venue met their untimely end in 1972.

Pianist McCoy Tyner and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson (the latter who was born 88 years ago this month) had worked for years on each other’s studio albums, but the difference here is that *Forces of Nature* showcases them in a live setting. The set was mixed from the original tape reel recorded at the concert and includes rare photos by Francis Wolff, Raymond Ross and Robert Polillo (liner notes by respected critic Nate Chinen). Also included are interviews and soundbites from modern jazz artists speaking about the music of Tyner and Henderson, as well as the amazing time period of the album, plus tidbits of folklore about the club.

The side-long 26+ minute opener is the immediately recognizable Henderson melody of “In ‘N Out” (the title track to his Blue Note album from two years prior, a quintet that included Tyner). The tenor saxophonist shreds on top of Tyner’s strong quartal chords and the ever-chugging rhythm section of bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Jack DeJohnette, the latter who explodes behind the soloists with perfect musical answers. The pianist side steps his chord comping to match Henderson’s harmonic tenor, each player dealing with the brisk tempo with ease. Tyner enters energetically with tight shapes that drift in and out (pun intended) of the key. His strong left hand always supports the rhythm and harmony of his right. On one chorus, he builds on a pedal point for the whole form, which builds in intensity and erupts into modern harmony and descending blues runs with hip metric modulations from DeJohnette.

Taken at an even brisker tempo is the 28+ minute group-composed “Taking Off” (another side-long performance). In the opening melody, Tyner interjects counterpoint, which he maintains for Henderson’s wild solo. Talk about steady: Grimes and DeJohnette never budge an inch no matter how many bombs are dropped, and with Tyner the rhythm section is always propelling the quartet to new heights without losing control. The saxophonist plays a long stretch (sans piano) as he investigates scales from far-away lands. After an intense musical exchange, Grimes and DeJohnette get right back to business, and you can hear the drummer keeping the band honest on the time, too. They sometimes dip in tempo just a tad, but he shows them right where it is and should be. The thunderous bass playing of Grimes can be heard as the pianist climbs and morphs into an odd rhythm, which DeJohnette hops right on and smashes on beat one. The masterful drummer also gets a wild extended solo. Tyner’s composition “The Believer” (which accompanies the Henderson classic, “Isotope”, for Side D) is a swinging waltz with unusual turnaround and interspersed hits in the melody. Henderson blows first, echoing the melody, then adding overblown harmonics and humorous musical surprises. DeJohnette is swinging hard with Grimes holding it down as usual. Laser-like right hand lines spill out from the pianist on his solo.

*Forces of Nature* is a great showcase of all these artists in their prime in a live environment—a lovely recording that’s the perfect missing link to and companion for Henderson and Tyner’s studio albums together.

For more info visit [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)



**Live in Amsterdam 2006, First Visit**  
**Ran Blake/Dave Knife Fabris (ezz-thetics/Hat Hut)**  
by Ken Waxman

Often described as cold, difficult and idiosyncratic, the music of pianist Ran Blake (who turns 89 this month) revels in the third adjective but doesn’t warrant the others. That’s confirmed on this album of never-before-heard material, recorded 19 years ago this month for Hat Hut Records’ ezz-thetics imprint (Hat Hut currently is celebrating its half-centenary).

First chairman of the New England Conservatory’s Third Stream department in 1973, the pianist instructed the way he improvises, illustrated here in *Live in Amsterdam 2006, First Visit* (which also features guitarist Dave “Knife” Fabris). Mixing free jazz, gospel, movie themes and notated music, the numbers are pared to the bone, allowing him to perform 17 selections in less than 57 minutes, with most in the two-minute range. Blake can swing when he wants to; for instance, he ends Abbey Lincoln’s “Throw It Away” with a bluesy cadenza after stretching the melody at a pseudo-tango tempo. “Drop Me Off in Harlem/Night and Day”, which combines the Duke Ellington and Cole Porter songs on the disc’s longest track, starts off with quiet precise key plinks, then pivots to almost pure honky-tonk rhythms before adding flowery coloration to Porter’s familiar melody.

Creating his own versions of tunes as different as those from big-band arranger Pete Rugolo and film composer Bernard Herrmann, Blake reduces most theme statements by mixing precise intonation and rhythmic undertones. “Paris” (the pianist’s one original on this release) is a contrafact of “I Love Paris” that vibrates the soundboard away from the melody towards harsh

key cracks. Additional scope is given to the final eight tunes when Blake is joined by Fabris, a former student who has played everything from trad jazz to funk and whose nickname came from the pianist. With resonating thumb plucks, vibrating frails and reverberating twangs, Fabris adds connective comping and colorful sound tinctures to taunt piano forays on cinema themes. Together they nearly attain a funky groove playing Horace Silver’s “Soulville”, with antiphonic riffs between key clunks and string stings. Louder and high-pitched guitar frails meet contrapuntal piano repetition on Ornette Coleman’s “Sadness/Space Church”, giving those melodies even more unique twists.

*First Visit* is a fine introduction to Blake’s oeuvre for the novice and confirmation of his skill for the initiated.

For more info visit [werners-ezzthetics.bandcamp.com](http://werners-ezzthetics.bandcamp.com)



**Flow**  
**Jihee Heo (OA2)**  
by Terrell K. Holmes

From the moment she entered the jazz world in the aughts, South Korean pianist Jihee Heo (pronounced “jee-hee”) has earned a reputation as one of the most fiercely swinging and talented players on the scene. Her new album, *Flow*, with Alex Claffy (bass) and Joe Farnsworth (drums) confirms that reputation.

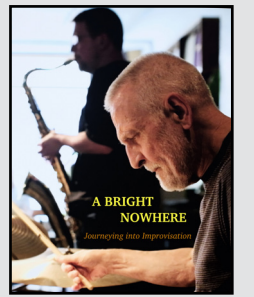
From the top, the trio captures the energy and rhythm of this sometimes maddening city on the muscular swinger “New Yorker Step”. Heo sparkles on the keys, delivering jolting clusters of crisp notes with dexterity and confidence. Farnsworth scampers on brushes and Claffy delivers a supple pizzicato. The pianist shows an impressive command of the blues as she struts on tunes such as “I Can See Only One Step Ahead” and “Extreme Noise Blocker”. On the elegant waltz “Opening the New Door”, Heo displays a lovely touch, exploring repeated figures as she builds challenging variations on them.

Another excellent plucked solo by Claffy, with Farnsworth’s lush cymbals, completes the vivid palette on the soft breezes of “Aquellos Ojos Verdes”. The redoubtable alto saxophone master Vincent Herring enhances any group he plays with, and he complements the trio perfectly on a pair of tunes: the bossa nova “The Hidden Giant” and the vigorous “The Late Bloomer”. He adds depth and color to the ensemble with concise, dynamic solos that burst with harmonic invention.

The trio’s shimmering version of Duke Ellington’s timeless ballad “In a Sentimental Mood” is the album’s highlight. After a ruminative opening, enhanced by Farnsworth’s whispering brushstrokes and Claffy’s modulated bass heartbeat, Heo doesn’t merely interpret this evergreen, she deconstructs it and explores its nuances, taking it into unusual harmonic territory. The pianist transcends the usual prescribed paths, striving not to always pause at the melodic yellow lights. Because of her creativity and talent, one will encounter this classic song as if hearing it for the first time. And that’s one of the skills that makes Heo a now first-call pianist: no matter what song she plays, or where her excursions begin or end, she always takes you to interesting and unexpected places, and this ability is what makes *Flow* a triumph.

For more info visit [originarts.com](http://originarts.com). Heo is at *Mezzrow* Apr. 9. See *Calendar*.

## ON SCREEN



**A Bright Nowhere—Journeying into Improvisation**  
**Stewart Morgan Hajdukiewicz**  
**(HajduKino Productions)**  
by Paul Gaita

One does not have to be familiar with soon-to-be 83-year-old U.K. percussionist Eddie Prévošt to appreciate Stewart Morgan Hajdukiewicz’ documentary *A Bright Nowhere—Journeying into Improvisation*. The standard punchline for such a sentence is, “...but it helps.” Yet, to know Prévošt’s long career as a founding member of the storied free improvisation group AMM, as the central force behind the London Improvisation Workshop and Matchless Recordings, and as a composer and recording artist, does provide context. Moreover, one also does not need to be familiar with improvisational jazz to enjoy this stately and affectionate documentary, which focuses on a series of four concerts given at London’s Cafe OTO to celebrate what was Prévošt’s 80th birthday in 2022. Hajdukiewicz wisely lets the music do much of the talking, and what it has to say is haunting, complex and quite frequently beautiful.

For those who are familiar with Prévošt’s career, the highlight of *A Bright Nowhere* may be a last-ever performance by AMM, in which the percussionist reteams with Keith Rowe, whose Parkinson’s diagnosis prevents him from wielding a guitar; he instead employs a barrage of densely structured tapes and loops over the drone of Prévošt’s bowed cymbals before concluding with a home recording by pianist John Tilbury, who was absent from the performance due to illness. For improvisational aficionados, the footage here is historic and elegiac, but the other performances are remarkable in their own right. Each of the four concerts were loosely anchored around ideas: Prévošt engages with a thunderous brace of saxophonists, including Alan Wilkinson and Susan Lynch; links with Ute Kanngiesser (cello) and Marjolaine Charbin (piano) for a sonorous exploration into melancholy drone; and teams with no less than 15 musicians, including Iris Ederer and Emmanuelle Waeckerlé (vocals), Tom Mills (theremin) and Ross Lambert and James O’Sullivan (guitars), for a ferocious celebration of the Workshop’s adventurous explorations.

Interviews with Prévošt, Tilbury and many of the aforementioned performers avoid the laudatory tone taken by commemorative documentaries; instead, they mull over their personal experiences in improvisational music. The general public’s hesitancy over non-traditional music is addressed (Kanngiesser advises to think of it as a painting to observe and connect with rather than music to decipher), but the most memorable comment comes from Prévošt himself, who voices what must be every improvisational artist’s concern: can I find the inspiration this music needs? As evidenced by this documentary, Prévošt can allay those fears.

For more info visit [matchlessrecordings.com](http://matchlessrecordings.com) or [vimeo.com/fondemand/abrightnowherefilm](http://vimeo.com/fondemand/abrightnowherefilm)

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