

setting up a sometimes turbulent undercurrent that seems to proceed at a much faster rate than Carter's discursive narratives. Parker both anchors and mediates, ensuring a solid grounding, even when in robust counterpoint.

On the opening "Sentimental Moments", Carter launches wafts of blues-tinged trumpet, before switching to tenor, where he continues in a similar vein, at the barest simmer, gradually ascending to a controlled falsetto squeal. "Vida Mia" offers more timbral variety, with a strikingly resonant introduction from Mela, complete with vocal imprecations, before a ballad feel with Carter's serene alto and Parker's breathy shakuhachi. It isn't until the final "Oh Yea T' Be Blessed" that a settled rhythm emerges. It's the format which inspires Genovese to his finest outing on the album, flowing phrases in each hand, one seeming to answer the other, while Carter has a lovely fluttering passage on flute, and later a lyrical Miles Davis-inflected trumpet. As always with Mela, his polyrhythmic beats come with a hearty side portion of vocalization, which fall partway between singing, chanting and shouting (consequently, appreciation of the whole package may depend on your appetite for his unique mode of expression).

For more info visit 577records.com. Carter is at Nublu Apr. 2 (with Luisa Muhr) and Ibeam Brooklyn Apr. 18 (with David Haney). Genovese is at Smalls Apr. 10 and Bar Lunático Apr. 16. Parker is at The Stone at New School Apr. 16-19. See Calendar.



Soul Jazz
Something Else! (featuring Vincent Herring)
(Smoke Sessions)
by Scott Yanow

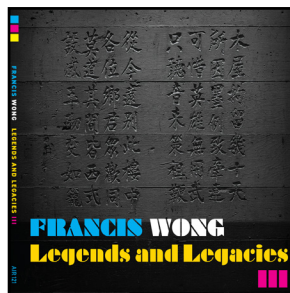
Alto saxophonist Vincent Herring organized the group Something Else! with the goal of playing some of the soul jazz classics that he heard while growing up. He enlisted quite an all-star group filled with musicians who had played together through the years in many settings and who shared a similar listening experience in their youth. The septet consists of Herring, Jeremy Pelt (trumpet), Wayne Escoffery (tenor), Paul Bollenback (guitar), David Kikoski (piano), Essiet Essiet (bass) and Otis Brown III (drums). Together on *Soul Jazz* they perform music that is on the soulful and bluesy side of hard bop, most of it dating from the '60s. The three horn players and pianist Kikoski get to solo on nearly every song, making the most of each note during their concise statements. Never merely jamming over the chord changes, they put plenty of feeling into their spots, and the rhythm section (including Bollenback who also has a few solos along the way) keeps the music grooving.

The program begins with an uptempo and driving version of Horace Silver's "Filthy McNasty", which serves as a perfect introduction to the group. It is followed by a medium-slow rendition of Stanley Turrentine's minor-toned "Too Blue", the infectious Eddie Harris "Mean Greens" (a bit reminiscent of Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance") and the always catchy Pee Wee Ellis tune "The Chicken". The set's second half consists of: "Driftin'" (one of Herbie Hancock's best soul jazz originals); Donald Byrd's classic, if rarely played, restrained blues, "Slow Drag"; Roy Hargrove's funky "Strasbourg/St. Denis" and John Coltrane's

"Naima". The latter tune may seem a bit out of place but it is memorable for its faster than usual tempo, as well as for the upbeat, rockish Bollenback guitar solo, along with Essiet's danceable bass lines.

With its emphasis on strong melodies, catchy rhythms and joyful moods, *Soul Jazz* is a particularly accessible album with its affectionate look back at a vintage style.

For more info visit smokesessionsrecords.com. This project is at Smoke Apr. 30 - May 4. See Calendar.



Legends and Legacies III
Francis Wong (Asian Improv)
by Kurt Gottschalk

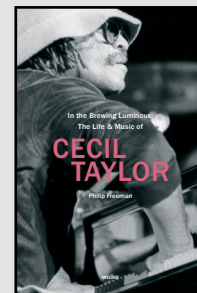
The 1990s Asian influx into the Afro-centric Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) seemed unlikely at the time, but bassist Tatsu Aoki and saxophonist Francis Wong (who both turn 68 this year, the latter this month) proved to be assets as instrumentalists as well as through their Asian Improv Records label. Thirty years on, the connections continue. Last month, Chicago's Experimental Sound Studio announced a new archive and year of events documenting the collaborations between Aoki and AACM member Fred Anderson; and Wong has released the third volume in his *Legends and Legacies* series. Continuing the composer's dedication to touchstones of Asian American history, the album features a tentet with a triple-reed front line including Mwata Bowden and Ed Wilkerson, two powerful players keeping the AACM home fire burning.

Legends and Legacies III opens in a series of wonderfully loose fanfares counted off by tuba player William Roper. This intro lasts just over a minute before a brief pause and the hammered strings of Yangqin Zhao's yangqin set up the slow dance of the second section. "Shanghai Stories" continues the episodic structure, a setting for an untold story of Wong's parents meeting and falling in love during the Chinese Civil War (1927-49). Aoki's bass introduces "Within These Walls", influenced by Lenora Lee, whose improvised dance in the studio guided the musicians. Her own inspiration was the detention of her parents at the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay under the Chinese Exclusion Act. "Miyoshi Sketches" is another episodic piece, leaning more heavily into Asian instruments. In addition to the yangqin, the ensemble includes another Chinese string instrument, the shamisen (played by Aoki) and a small percussion section of taiko and tsuzumi (along with Western trap drums). It's the most integrated ensemble piece of the album, with the reeds playing variations on a slow melody over plucked string repetitions.

The album concludes with a short take on an upbeat traditional tune, arranged for Asian strings and full percussion contingent. Drawing lines to the AACM might seem a bit of overreach, but the march rhythm, yelled vocals and strained clarinet solo in "Within These Walls" recall the Art Ensemble of Chicago's military settings (cf. "Get in Line") and the long drum intro to "Miyoshi Sketches" evokes the extended percussion solos of the AACM's Famoudou Don Moye. It's not derivative, it's not unlicensed lifting, it's just something in the Chicago air.

For more info visit asianimprov.org

IN PRINT



**In the Brewing Luminous:
The Life & Music of Cecil Taylor**
Philip Freeman (Wolke)
by Ken Waxman

One of improvised music's most creative figures, pianist-composer Cecil Taylor (1928-2018) was involved in controversy from his first mid '50s recording until his death (this month marks his seven-year death anniversary). Someone whose style was unique, with echoes of notated music plus expected syncopation and blues, Taylor's music became more unmetered and abstract as his career progressed, with performances mixed with poetry and dance. He still has as many admirers as there may be detractors, though. Philip Freeman is one of the former, setting himself the herculean task of producing Taylor's first-ever biography. The effort couldn't have been easy, however, despite masses of information available: more than most musicians, Taylor had many interests beyond music. He also frequently partied all night in clubs whose main attraction was champagne, cocaine and an audience for his tales. A mercurial leader, scores were obtuse and frequently jettisoned for free improv at the last minute. A master of obfuscation, his interviews, while voluble, were usually elliptical with detours into private references. Freeman spent two days hanging out with Taylor and bolstered his interview with published material.

The book becomes more valuable in its second half as Taylor, now famous, plays internationally, works with many old and multiple new associates, has unrewarding academic stints and finally is the recipient of awards and monetary grants. "He had completed the journey from insurgent to institution," Freeman writes. Earlier chapters drag somewhat, since most of the information on Taylor's rise from razzing to respect had already been frequently published. Whether the book is for the knowledgeable jazz fan, or the innocent novice, can be questioned. Freeman needlessly supplies a detailed biography of every musician mentioned, but he also provides a valuable service by meticulously reviewing all of Taylor's extant recordings. This effort gives the reader an idea of how his music evolved and how the players dealt with it. Freeman's in-person interviews with Taylor encompassed twelve hours. He also had conversations or email exchanges with other associates, and attributes some quoted material to particular publications. Despite a seven-page bibliography, most anecdotes, though, aren't sourced, nor are there indications as to whether the material is contemporary or after the fact.

The author should be applauded for the work he put into the book and the wealth of information he amassed. But insight beyond fact recitation is sorely missing. Until another major study of Taylor is written though, this will be the book to read about someone whose music is as important to jazz as Duke Ellington's.

For more info visit wolke-verlag.de