

# ARCHEOPHONE

REVIVING EARLY JAZZ IN A DIGITAL AGE

BY JASON GROSS

Well-known labels such as Blue Note, Verve and Prestige already do a sterling job of excavating archived musical gems, but for some of the earliest jazz recordings ever made, there's one particular label that's excelled at bringing that music to life again. For over a quarter century, Archeophone Records has been a primary destination for reviving amazing musical history from the late 19th and early 20th centuries—music that's been rarely heard otherwise.

The label was created in the late '90s by Meagan Hennessey and Richard Martin, a married couple who were Illinois grad students at the time. Immersed in literature, history, culture and the *Billboard* pop charts, they shared a frustration over the beginnings of the recording era not being represented in the modern age. As Martin explains, "The recording industry has been around for about 135 years and the first four decades are routinely ignored." Armed with absolutely zero experience in running a label, the pair forged ahead regardless. Using labels including Yazoo, Jazz Oracle and Timeless as role models, Martin and Hennessey utilized cleaner audio from records and superior writing/research for inclusion in their releases, which are mostly done in CD format.

At the start of the label, technological means weren't within their grasp beyond declipping—removing pops and click sounds from the original source material, which were 78rpm records and wax cylinders. But around 2010, Martin began using iZotope's Rx software, which specializes in background noise removal and audio cleanup, as well as the ability to handle problems with older recordings' pitch variation (wow and flutter), all of which made the release process easier and more thorough in presenting superior audio quality. With 89 releases in their catalog to date, Archeophone boasts an impressive range of recordings, starting with 2001's *Real Ragtime (Disc Recordings From Its Heyday)*.

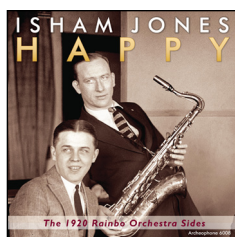
Along with some of the early and now mostly-forgotten stars of the era, such as Bert Williams and Billy Murray and singer-actress-comedienne Sophie Tucker, the label has also put out early sidemen performances, including Bix Beiderbecke with The Wolverines and Louis Armstrong as part of King Oliver's band, heard on the recent *Centennial* boxed set. Archeophone has also issued collections such as a three-CD set of early gospel music: 2016's *Waxing The Gospel (Mass Evangelism & The Phonograph 1890-1900)*, a compilation recreating old minstrel shows, an album of pre-radio comedy and sketches and even an album of "indecent" music (*Actionable Offenses*)—which forced artists to use aliases or forego being credited at all due to the profane nature of the material. Of particular pride to Hennessey and Martin are the Tucker, Oliver and gospel releases, particularly since choosing a

project to invest in depends on a title's marketability.

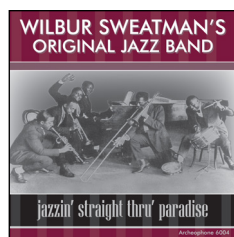
Note that Archeophone's music is not available online. Hennessey and Martin explored streaming but decided the platform's monetary return wasn't worth the effort. They're not happy with the digital world as there's no real money in it. Additionally, their digital-only multi-volume *Edison Blue Amberol Records Domestic Popular Series* elicited push-back from their customer base. "The old guys got rid of their turntables and have their CDs now," Martin explains. "They're happy with them and they don't do downloads." The label has done some vinyl releases, however, including vocal group The Unique Quartet and fiddler Louis Vassier, which Martin prizes as one of the rarest of the rare, looking to spotlight this kind of material and "give it its own place of prominence."

To understand the label's extensive process of bringing archived material to life, Martin details a July 2023 release, *The Moaninest Moan of Them All: The Jazz Saxophone of Loren McMurray (1920-1922)*, which chronicles a Kansas City player who died at 25 and who amazed his peers of the time with this bold, unique style. "This was brought to us by our regular collaborator, Colin Hancock (a trumpeter)," Martin says. "He was telling us about this guy who was unknown and not really appreciated for the contributions he made to the evolution of the jazz saxophone." Hancock had a track listing and thoughts

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Happy  
Isham Jones



Jazzin' Straight Thru' Paradise  
Wilbur Sweatman's Original Jazz Band



Centennial  
King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band



The Moaninest Moan of Them All  
Loren McMurray



Ain't Gonna Settle Down  
Mary Stafford & Edith Wilson

## VOXNEWS

# EAST MEETS WEST

BY TESSA SOUTER

This month VOXNews celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (the theme of which this year is "A Legacy of Leadership and Resilience") by acknowledging the contributions of Asian Americans to jazz.

Korean American pianist Eugenia Choe enlisted the gorgeous voice of Berlin-based Korean vocalist, **Song Yi Jeon**—a protégé of Dianne Reeves in the Rolex mentoring program—to join her and vibraphonist Yuhan Su in the studio for her new recording *So We Speak* (Sunnyside). Written through the lens of an imaginary girl named Margie, the album explores the themes of vulnerability, resilience and strength. Filipino vocalist **Mon David**, who left behind a successful career as a pop singer in the Philippines to pursue jazz in the U.S., has a new album *D+N+A: Continuum* (Dash Hoffman Records)—a beautiful co-production with pianist Josh Nelson, as well as L.A.-based guitarist Larry Koonse. It's a truly heartfelt Mark Murphy-esque mix of originals and standards sung in English, Portuguese and his own native Pampango. A fascinating meld of Korean, Japanese, Persian and Western musicians, PAN Project Ensemble's new album, *Borderless Flows* (Neuma) is an entirely improvised meditative kaleidoscope of sounds featuring Korean, Chinese and Japanese instruments and the goosebump-inducing vocals of **Jessika Kenney** and **Saeyeon Jeong**. South Korean jazz vocalist **Sunny Kim** (voice, electronics) is featured on

Canadian cellist Peggy Lee and guitarist Cole Schmidt's album *Forever Stories Of: Moving Parties* (Earshift Music), along with **Lisen Rylander Löve** (tenor, electronics, voice) and **Erika Angell** (voice, electronics). *ECHO* (Sunnyside) is Brooklyn-based **Emi Makabe**'s tribute to her Japanese heritage and her father who passed away three years ago. The album includes special guests Bill Frisell (guitar), Jason Moran (piano) and Meshell Ndegeocello (MC) and gets a pre-release concert at Bar Bayeux (May 10).

IN OTHER NEWS...**Gabrielle Stravelli** will bring "Ella Fitzgerald & Oscar Peterson: Standards by Jazz Legends" to Merkin Hall with Willerm Delisfort (May 19). **Verena McBee** celebrates her third album, *Bird(S)wing* at Chelsea Table + Stage (May 2). Mexican jazz vocalist **Magos Herrera** performs at Carnegie Hall's Resnick Education Wing (May 4). Portuguese singer-composer **Sara Serpa** is at BAMcafé (May 4) as part of Long Play Festival. **Marianne Solivan** appears at The Django (May 23): listen for her latest release, *Break's Over* (Imani), featuring legendary bassist Buster Williams. **Teri Roiger** explores her bass-voice duo, with husband John Menegon, on Thursdays at Flute Bar (May 8, 15, 22). Don't miss Lakecia Benjamin featuring pyrotechnic guest vocalist **Jazzmeia Horn** at 92NY (May 10). **Eric Comstock** and **Barbara Fasano** celebrate their 20-year partnership in life and music and the release of their new album, *Painting the Town* (Human Child) at Birdland (May 5). Also at Birdland, catch jazz trombonist, GRAMMY-nominated composer-arranger-vocalist **Pete McGuinness** with his orchestra (May 25), followed the next night by the gorgeous baritone of **Richard Cortez** paying tribute to "Sinatra with Style: Hits and Rare Gems" (May 26). The Blue Note presents: the spectacular **Lisa Fischer**

(May 11) with the Orrin Evans Trio; **José James'** (May 19-22) album release concert of 1978: *Revenge of the Dragon* (Rainbow Blonde), and guitarist Fabrizio Sotti (May 26) who celebrates his 50th birthday with special guests, including legendary jazz vocalist **Cassandra Wilson**. Vocalist **Madeleine Peyroux** has two nights at City Winery (May 23-24) and is part of the James Moody 100th birthday celebration at Sony Hall (May 27). **Champion Fulton**'s new album, *At Home* (Turtle Bay), is a first-time duo collaboration with Swedish saxophonist-clarinetist **Klas Lindquist**, and features a collection of standards; Fulton is at The Django (May 22), Mezzrow (May 23-24) and Jersey City Jazz Fest (May 27). California-based **Judy Wexler** makes two rare NY appearances: at Pangea (May 14) and Nyack's Maureen's Jazz Cellar (May 16), performing songs from her latest release, *No Wonder* (Jewel City Jazz)—her first album focused entirely on the Great American Songbook. Seventeen-year-old **Paloma Chesky** previews her forthcoming debut album, *Memory* (Audiophile Society) at Drom (May 16). The mostly standards **Gillian Margot** and **Geoffrey Keezer** (MarKeez) is the vocalist's fourth release and her first vocal-piano duo album with pianist (and husband) Keezer. The album release concert is at Deer Head Inn (May 3).

Other new releases to keep your eyes and ears out for this month...**Susan Hinkson**'s debut *Just in Time* (Windfall). **Kandace Springs'** *Lady in Satin* (SRP) reimagines Billie Holiday's seminal 1958 album, complete with a full orchestra—the 60-piece Portuguese ensemble Orquestra Clássica de Espinho. Multifaceted Chilean vocalist-guitarist **Camila Meza**'s *Portal* (GroundUP) features guest spots from fellow vocalists **Gretchen Parlato** and **Becca Stevens**.