

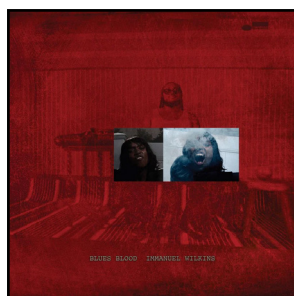
What Happens Has Become Now
Jessica Pavone (Relative Pitch)
by Mike Shanley

The liner photo of Jessica Pavone's new album depicts a hybrid instrument, the aptly-named Sword viola, built by artist and musician Ken Butler. This viola indeed looks more like a weapon than something tuneful, but Pavone brings out its musical potential, as can be heard on "Wrong Worked That Way, and It Worked Good", the second of four tracks (and the only selection featuring the specially designed instrument) on Pavone's new album *What Happens Has Become Now*. From sub-bass rumbles to fragmented sounds that vaguely evoke samples of an orchestra, she creates an intriguing recital that avoids novelty and brings credibility to the device.

On her fifth album of solo viola pieces, Pavone proves that slower, focused movement can have a greater impact than a fast pace display of technique. The three other tracks on the album feature Pavone with her usual viola, along with some effects, each working in distinctly different moods. The album opening title track begins with a contemplative melody, moving to a section where two pitches gradually melt through microtonal contrasts into a unison that resonates through her instrument; the process repeats three times. "Below the Threshold of Sensation" feels the loosest performance on the album, with low groans moving beneath a series of bowed scratches and skips. The musicality gets dense, sounding at times like two violas skipping between one another. Whatever the overall effect of that track, it offers no preparation for "Unrequited Renouncement". This final piece begins with a loud blast of electronic static, which morphs into a steady tone by the first minute. For the remainder, the sonic point of origin—bow on strings, pizzicato plucking—remains a mystery. The overall feeling might be akin to resting beneath the surface of a body of water, wherein different elements float by and add a slight wrinkle to the pulses. At one point, she gets a groove going with the drone, but lets it float away before it can spring to life.

Pavone's skill at utilizing space extends to the whole album, which clocks in at a mere 29 minutes, brief by album standards, but an ideal length for a challenging solo work like this.

For more info visit relativepitchrecords.com. Pavone is at Roulette's 2025 Gala honoring Anthony Braxton May 8. See Calendar.



Blues Blood
Immanuel Wilkins (Blue Note)
by Andrew Schinder

Suburban Philadelphia-bred saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins has spent the last decade establishing himself as one of the most preeminent young saxophonists working today. Not yet out of his twenties, he has been

a go-to sideman for Jason Moran, Kenny Barron and Orrin Evans, and has led his own quartet for the past several years. Wilkins released *Blues Blood*, his third album as a leader, late last fall, and it is an absolute tour de force, continuing the trajectory and advancement of his previous output as a musician and artist. Drawing from the canon of Black music traditions—gospel, soul, the blues—he updates each into a contemporary, vital work that challenges as often as it calms or delights. And never one to shy away from politics or activism, Wilkins calls back to the often brutal history of Black America, but also wrestles with the question of how cruel repression can produce music so beautiful, as is featured on this album.

Wilkins has found a perfect artistic partner in superstar producer Meshell Ndegeocello, and garners expert performances from Micah Thomas (piano), Rick Rosato (bass) and Kweku Sumbry (drums). It is also Wilkins' first recording to feature vocals, and each singer raises the level of the material even further. Most tracks have Thomas providing the base line layer of melody, allowing Wilkins to strategically, almost sparingly, deploy his horn's sounds in duet-like fashion with each vocalist. Opener "Matte Glaze" provides a soulful introduction to the album, with dulcet piano tones accompanying June McDoom's brooding vocals for several measures before the saxophonist, Rosato and Sumbry kick in with a restrained yet affecting jam. McDoom returns on "Motion", her soft voice offering a striking contrast to the power of Wilkins and Thomas. "Dark Eyes Smile" showcases mega-vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, with the leader mostly, appropriately, ceding to the force of her voice, while also allowing for a showcase of each the bassist's and pianist's respective prowess. The proceedings conclude with the extended title track featuring guitarist Marvin Sewell, who provides an energetic and frankly optimistic conclusion to a work that explores some deeply troubling and solemn themes, yet never allows them to bog down the beauty of the music.

For more info visit bluenote.com. Wilkins is at Village Vanguard May 13–18, and at BRIC Stoop May 4 (part of Long Play Festival). See Calendar.



Fervency
Pasquale Grasso (Sony Masterworks)
by Tom Greenland

Italy-born Pasquale Grasso, an NYC denizen since 2012, has caused a stir in the guitar world for his pyrotechnical prowess coupled with a prolific imagination. Employing a hybrid picking approach influenced by guitarist Chuck Wayne, pizzicato techniques learned at a classical conservatory and the generative harmonies of his mentor, Barry Harris, Grasso has raised the bar for what is achievable on a guitar, drawing comparisons to pianists Bud Powell and Art Tatum.

Fervency is his third trio release with Ari Roland (bass) and Keith Ballard (drums), a lean and clean rhythm team that swings with relaxed panache at the fast tempos Grasso favors. Although previous recordings covered popular mid-century jazz classics, this date, in addition to oft-played standards "Cherokee" and "Bags' Groove", includes rarer fare: Powell's "Sub City", Harris' "And So I Love You", Coleman Hawkins' "Bean and the Boys" and Tadd Dameron's "Focus" and "Jahbero", along with Grasso originals "A Trip with C. C." and

the title track. After the initial astonishment of hearing a guitarist perform with the speed and dexterity of a virtuosic pianist abates, what remains is an appreciation for scrupulous musicianship: Grasso's melody statements are thoughtfully harmonized, his rhythmic impetus calm but incisive, his phrases protracted yet cohesive, punctuated with short "breaths" and tasteful ornamentation, full of variety.

Though steeped in the bebop tradition, playing with impeccable craftsmanship and control, Grasso still manages to convey a sense of adventure. His lines uncoil in spontaneous chains, with occasional clicks and pops when the pick hits a string, his sense of time temporarily stretching and shrinking—all telltale signs that he's reaching for something, pushing himself, taking chances. Even on uptempo burners such as "A Trip with C. C.", Miles Davis' "Little Willie Leaps", "Cherokee", Dameron's "Ladybird" and "And So I Love You", even in his most chromatically adventurous solos, as on "Jahbero", there are no thrown-away notes, no easy-to-hand patterns injected for their dazzle effect: rather, each idea invariably arises from another, forming a coherent thread. At slower tempos, on tunes such as Davis' "Milestones", Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now" and "Focus", "Bags' Groove" and especially the title track, Grasso's ideas are even more prolific and complex, replete with contrapuntal parts and complex accompaniment figures. Roland's rapidly bowed bass solos and Ballard's clipped accent patterns during traded eights and fours sections provide apposite moments of contrast and respite.

For more info visit sonymusicmasterworks.com. Grasso is at Saint Tuesday May 7 and 21, Mezzrow May 13 and 19, Birdland Theater May 14 and 28, Midnight Blue May 16 and The Jazz Loft May 30–31. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Andy Biskin Reed Basket – *Reed Basket* (Andoor Music)
- Sharel Cassity – *Gratitude* (Sunnyside)
- Harvey Diamond/John Lentz – *How Strange The Road Should Be So Easy* (Orchard of Pomegranates)
- Gerald Clayton – *Ones & Twos* (Blue Note)
- Emiliano D'Auria – *The Baggage Room* (Viaveneto Jazz)
- The Electrics (Sture Ericson, Axel Dörner, Joe Williamson, Raymond Strid) – *Live in Vilnius* (Tilting Converter)
- Peter Evans/Petter Eldh – *Jazz Fest* (More Is More)
- Adam Fairhall/Johnny Hunter – *Play Mary Lou Williams* (Discus Music)
- Phillip Golub Tropos – *Switches* (Endectomorph Music)
- Curtis Hasselbring – *Curtis & The Curhachestra* (EST)
- Mathias Landæus, Nina De Heney, Kresten Osgood – *Dissolving Patterns* (SFAR)
- Steve Lehman Trio + Mark Turner – *The Music of Anthony Braxton* (Pi Recordings)
- Carol Liebowitz/Nick Lyons – *The Inner Senses* (SteepleChase Lookout)
- Eva Novoa – *Novoa/Kamaguchi/Cleaver Trio, Vol. 2* (577 Records)
- Adam O'Farrill – *For These Streets* (Out Of Your Head)
- Charlie Rouse – *Two Is One* (Strata-East)
- Jacob Sacks, Eivind Opsvik, Mat Maneri, Billy Mintz – *Two Miles A Day, So Depending On* (Loyal Label)
- Tony Jones/Charlie Burnham's Pitch, Rhythm and Consciousness – *Sextet* (Reva)
- Spaghetti Eastern Electro Dub – *Dub Meets Raga Meets Jazz Fusion* (s/r)
- Tal Yahalom – *Solo Standards* (s/r)