

Kris Johnson, we're taken to a higher plane and a piece of spiritual jazz that could have been performed in the '60s when that sub-genre was introduced.

"Destiny" also opens with a recited verse, backed by a lithesome flute: "Destiny is knocking at your door/ Will you open?" That's a good question, and Horn frames it in a way that keeps the listener rapt through its almost seven-and-a-half minute length. "Tip" is upbeat, a call to "participate," and might well become a jazz standard. On "Voicemail Blues" she literally and winsomely sings one of her outgoing messages and then plays back communication from legendary bassist Reggie Workman and others. The credits on the album are incomplete, since the flute and saxophone player(s) are not listed, but two pianists—Keith Brown and Victor Gould—acquit themselves excellently, and Philadelphia drummer Anwar Marshall deserves special mention. Under-recorded Chicago trumpeter Marquis Hill is heard on "Mysteries of Us", a don't-leave song with a long "you're the only one who understands me" recitation that name-checks Clifford Brown and Sarah Vaughan as "the soundtrack to our romance." The one standard is taken at a snail's pace and some very low and very high notes, clearly nodding to Betty Carter. Bassist Eric Wheeler offers a resonant, woody solo. It's garnish on a great album.

For more info visit artistryofjazzhorn.com. Horn is at 92NY May 10 (with Lakecia Benjamin). See Calendar.



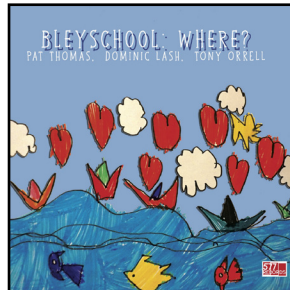
Cobalt Confidential
Iconoclast (Fang)
by John Pietaro

In reviewing Iconoclast's *Driven to Defiance* (2017), this writer held that the duo was "born of Downtown when that geographic designation meant much more than being simply below 14th Street." That statement was based on the 1987 birth of Iconoclast, when saxophonist-violinist Julie Joslyn and drummer-keyboardist Leo Ciesa founded it in the East Village, aka Alphabet City, the then underground arts capital and scene of notoriously abandoned buildings, burned-out cars and glass-strewn lots—all firm inspiration for creatives at that time. Yet, even as developers began to transform the Lower East Side into an unaffordable Oz of condos, bistros and bike lanes, some of the city's radical artists, such as Iconoclast, held ground amid gentrification. Over the decades, Iconoclast has maintained a formidable international touring schedule while releasing a dozen albums that capture the throttling core of free jazz as it walked the lonesome '80s Alphabet City. That heritage and current strain are clear right from *Cobalt Confidential's* opener "Noise of Assumption". It pairs Ciesa's effects-rich keyboard and inexhaustible drumming with Joslyn's bristling alto saxophone, fed through a seeming bank of electronics. This music has a formidable raging beauty all its own and within: the listener can't help but hear the ghosts of avant garde past.

Both members demonstrate expansive instrumental skill across the 13 selections, thriving as much in the music as the pure sound experience. Joslyn's gorgeously sad tone on alto, her terse phrasing and imaginatively dark electronic colors, are illustrated well in "Where the Blooming Shadows Roam". And Ciesa's four-way independence on the drumkit is unique to his own instrumental magic, with drums always sidled by a keyboard or two. But on "A Phrase of Mine", the drummer

deconstructs driving march rhythms with only left hand and bass drum while keeping solid time on a ride cymbal under Joslyn's somber alto melody reminiscent of a Don Cherry folk-inspired piece. "The Spy Upstairs" features Joslyn's hauntingly amplified violin. Wonderfully cantankerous in a pool of reverb, her lead lines and solo segments are filled with dissonant upbows and accented downbows, unexpected slides and dream-like wandering through a special kind of intrigue and espionage.

For more info visit fangrecords.com. The album release concert is at Michiko Studios May 17. See Calendar.



BleySchool: Where?
Pat Thomas and BleySchool (577 Records)
by Kurt Gottschalk

Pat Thomas is all-consuming and all-conquering. In his youth he was a classical piano student and reggae fan, but seeing Oscar Peterson on television stoked an interest in jazz, and soon enough he was playing professionally before he was 20. His earliest recordings were with Eugene Chadbourne, Lol Coxhill and Tony Oxley, with electronics soon added to his set-up, eventually employing samples and doing his own programming. Thomas is also a remarkable and radical revisionist. His 2008 solo piano record *Plays the Music of Derek Bailey & Thelonious Monk* suggests the breadth of his interests, as does an album of Duke Ellington compositions and, with The Locals, a set of Anthony Braxton works. Little recognized in the States (under-recognized even at home in England), Thomas is gaining notice with the stunning quartet أحمد [Ahmed], who set bassist-oudist Ahmed Abdul-Malik's music in hardcore trance and open-throttle grooves. The quartet recently made its U.S. debut (Mar. 25) to a packed house at Roulette (before heading south to play the Big Ears Festival in Knoxville, TN). Their typical extended, single-piece set—in this case, Abdul-Malik's "El Haris (Anxious)"—was followed by a surprising but fitting encore of Monk's "Epistrophy", a title that refers to poetic repetition, which the band indulges in at length. Abdul-Malik played with Monk so it wasn't entirely out of step, and maybe was a hint of more to come.

In the trio BleySchool (with Locals bassist Dominic Lash and drummer Tony Orrell), Thomas pays homage to another fine interpreter, Paul Bley. While that pianist does have some composer credits in the books, it's his contributions to albums by the likes of Ornette Coleman, Annette Peacock, one-time spouse Carla Bley, and the trio with Jimmy Giuffre and Steve Swallow, for which he's most noted. On *BleySchool: Where?* the group honors their tributee in style and substance, but not with his tunes. The first BleySchool (eponymous) album contained compositions by Ornette, Ellington, Carla Bley and an original tune. This new one repeats that Carla Bley composition ("Ida Lupino") and adds another ("King Korn"), plus a stellar "Monk's Mood", a couple of standards and an additional original. It's an exciting album from start to finish.

As does أحمد [Ahmed], BleySchool often pushes harder than did their namesake, but with respect and eminent musicality. And like Thomas, Bley was a proponent of synthesizers and electronics, something BleySchool hasn't yet touched on. Maybe they're saving that for when they get to BleyCollege.

For more info visit 577records.com

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