

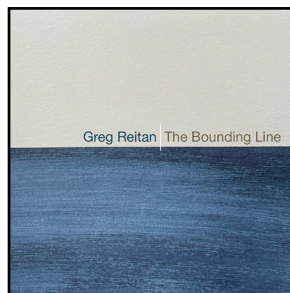
Close to Mars
John Taylor (CAM Jazz)
I Thought About You
Louis Stewart (Livia)
by Jim Motavalli

British pianist John Taylor (who died exactly a decade ago this month at age 72) was a brilliant pianist, even if an unheralded one stateside. He began recording and extensively working in the early '70s in the bands of such heavyweights as countrymen Graham Collier and Mike Westbrook, as well as with saxophonists Alan Skidmore and John Surman, drummer Tony Levin and vocalist-wife Norma Winstone: the latter three appear on Taylor's leader debut *Pause, And Think Again* (Turtle, 1971), along with trumpeter Kenny Wheeler who would become another frequent collaborator.

Recorded 35 years after his first sessions, and now newly released, comes *Close to Mars*, an estimable Taylor piano trio, which included Palle Danielsson (bass) and Martin France (drums). From a near 20-year-old Ludwigsburg, Germany recording, the music may in actuality be from the same session that resulted in the 2012 album release, *Giulia's Thursdays*, with the exact same trio, which additionally had recorded a few years prior (*Angel Of The Presence*). Both those releases were not so coincidentally also on CAM Jazz, Taylor's label of choice in the last decade of his life: he recorded at least 15 times as leader, co-leader or sideman for the label in those final ten years. This calming, ECM-adjacent album is full of mostly Taylor originals (excepting the closer, "Ever After", which is from the pen of Wheeler). The pianist's playing may be a little spikier, and a bit more angular, than some of his previous works, but reveals a veteran voice with many more years than the less than ten he had remaining.

Like Taylor, Irish guitarist Louis Stewart was a Europe-centric player, which similarly limited his name recognition in the US, as well. The two recorded with an 'A' list American rhythm section back in 1977, after Stewart had a date at London's Ronnie Scott's club, which coincided with the appearance of pianist Cedar Walton's quartet. Stewart subsequently invited Taylor, along with Walton's bassist and drummer, Sam Jones and Billy Higgins, to record with him. The result was *I Thought About You* (originally released in 1980). But Stewart, a perfectionist, wasn't happy with his own playing, took the tapes back to Dublin and rerecorded some of his solos. A fair amount of spontaneity, as well as sound quality, was lost in the overdubbing, and the resulting record didn't do well. This recent reissue (by the revitalized Livia) restores Stewart's (excellent) original solos and ironically, this album may be his finest recorded moment, as each Stewart and Taylor were audibly inspired. Chick Corea's "Litha", taken at a brisk pace, finds Stewart hurling himself right into it, his lengthy solo assured, every note cleanly articulated, while Taylor tracks him with some headlong bebop piano. Jimmy Heath's "Smiling Billy" (for Higgins) is joyous, with lovely, lyrical piano playing from Taylor. The bassist's "Unit 7" reveals a Wes Montgomery influence in the guitarist's playing (Jones of course worked extensively with Montgomery who played and recorded this composition with such regularity it's since become a jazz guitar standard). Van Heusen's "I Thought About You" is relaxed and loping, but it's on Boland-Woode's "November Girl" where the pace really slows down; in contrast, Taylor's fluid playing enlivens Stewart's take of Miles Davis' "All Blues".

For more info visit camjazz.com and liviarecords.com



The Bounding Line
Greg Reitan (Sunnyside)
by Ken Dryden

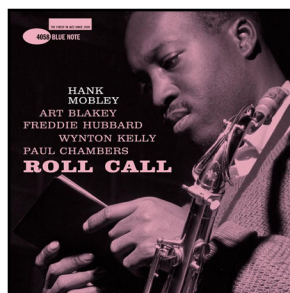
Greg Reitan emerged in the mid-2000s as one of many promising 30-ish pianists who was up to the challenge of the demanding NYC jazz scene. Over the years, his trio recordings for Sunnyside, with bassist Jack Daro (bass) and Dean Koba (drums), have showcased his considerable skills as an improviser, composer and arranger.

The inspiration for the songs on his sixth album, *The Bounding Line*, came about during his residency at the Aaron Copland House in Cortlandt Manor, NY, when much of the music for this recording began to take shape. Starting with his original "The Path", a jazz waltz with a constantly shifting center point, Reitan's laid-back introduction gives way to increasing tension, with a darting, rapid-fire right hand, fueled by his stimulating rhythm section. The pianist's "Summer Days" initially has the feeling of a nostalgic, carefree look back in time. But as the theme develops, his turbulent right hand insinuates the flood of activities that accompany the season. His "The Bounding Line" is a twisting post-bop line that constantly shifts direction, burning with energy as Daro and Koba fuel his flight.

One of the additional joys of hearing Reitan is his exploration of works by jazz masters who have been awaiting others to uncover their inner beauty. Composer Earl Zindars, whose songs were championed by legendary pianist Bill Evans, is represented by an original arrangement of the ballad "My Love Is an April Song" (recorded by Evans but otherwise seemingly forgotten). Here the thoughtful arrangement brings out the tune's nuances, a piece deserving of a lyric if it doesn't already have one. Dave Brubeck's "Rising Sun" (a hidden gem from his album *Jazz Impressions of Japan*) could easily serve as a portrait of sunrise anywhere in the world, thanks to Reitan's new perspective. The inclusion of Keith Jarrett's "Love No. 1" is a nice surprise, a tender ballad that shimmers here in the pianist's capable hands. To wrap the session, Reitan plays a brief arrangement of Copland's unjustly obscure "Down a Country Lane", transforming the composer's rural portrait into a viable jazz vehicle.

Greg Reitan's *The Bounding Line* is another important addition to the pianist's discography.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.com. The album release concert is at Dizzy's Club Jul. 23. See Calendar.



Roll Call
Hank Mobley (Blue Note)
by Jason Gross

Putting aside his tragic life, which included addiction, jail time and early retirement, tenor saxophonist

Hank Mobley (who passed away at age 55 in 1986 and whose 95th birthday we commemorate this month) was undoubtedly one of the leading lights of the bebop movement. After coming up through the ranks in groups led by Max Roach, Horace Silver and Art Blakey, he came into his own through Blue Note in the mid '50s, with a string of promising albums as a leader, then started the '60s with the well-regarded *Soul Station*, leading an all-star quartet of pianist Wynton Kelly, bassist Paul Chambers and Blakey.

First released in the summer of 1961, *Roll Call* (now in stereo, all-analog and mastered from the original tapes and reissued as part of Blue Note's limited edition Tone Poet series on 180gr vinyl) featured the same group plus then-newcomer trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, with almost all tracks composed by the leader. The ten-minute-plus title track starts with a theme that alternates between martial-sounding and jolly, as Mobley breaks out with an extended high-speed rollick before handing off to Hubbard who's similarly brisk. Therein follows a relatively calmer strand by Kelly before climaxing with a thunderous Blakey drum solo. The more low-key "My Groove Your Move" (whose riffs resemble Little Willie John's vocal rendition of "Fever") features the horn players starting a soaring theme before Mobley takes off in easy-going style, followed by a progressively screaming solo from the trumpeter and then more reflective takes from the pianist and bassist before ending with the opening theme. Beginning with a swinging, lithe horn chorus, "Take Your Pick" has the tenor saxophonist channeling a Charlie Parker-like grace as Blakey masterfully thrashes around him, and Hubbard follows again loudly, wildly ending with each member of the rhythm section deftly stepping out on their own. "A Baptist Beat" has a Miles Davis-

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Brass Danse Orchestra – *La Danse du Temps* (Yolk)
- Michael Dease – *City Life* (Music of Greg Hill) (Origin)
- Robert Dick, Stephan Haluska, James Ilgenfritz – *Time Wants a Skeleton* (Infrequent Seams)
- Agustí Fernandez – *@70: Aesthetic of Prisms*. (Not Two)
- Jordan Glenn's BEAK – *The Party* (Queen Bee)
- Alexander Hawkins – *Song Unconditional* (Intakt)
- Fung Chern Hwei's Fungal Bloom – *Free Fall* (Adhyâropa)
- Keith Jarrett – *New Vienna* (ECM)
- Izumi Kimura/Gerry Hemingway – *How the Dust Falls* (Auricle)
- Ramon Lopez – *40 Springs in Paris* (RogueArt)
- Pete McGuinness Jazz Orchestra – *Mixed Bag* (Summit)
- Gabriele Mitelli – *Three Tsuru Origami: Colapesce* (We Insist!)
- Larry Ochs, Joe Morris, Charles Downs – *Every Day → All the Way* (ESP-Disk')
- Remedy (Thomas Heberer, Joe Fonda, Joe Hertenstein) – *Hipp Hipp Hooray* (Celebrating the Centennial of Jutta Hipp) (Fundacja Słuchaj)
- Sifter – *Flake/Fracture* (Queen Bee)
- Tessa Souter – *Shadows and Silence: The Erik Satie Project* (NOANARA)
- Larry Stabbins/Mark Sanders – *Cup & Ring* (Discus)
- Luke Stewart Still Remembrance Ensemble – *The Order* (Cuneiform)
- Cecilie Strange – *Beech* (April)
- Terry Waldo & The Gotham City Band – *Treasury, Volume 2* (Turtle Bay)