

The result is a delightful romp, and a pure pleasure for the listener. The clarinet may be regarded as a serious instrument—both in jazz and otherwise—but Cohen injects a level of humor and whimsy into her playing that’s sometimes absent from an art form that can take itself too seriously. *Bloom* is, basically, a ton of fun.

Opener “The Night Owl” sets the tone immediately, with the leader noodling around with a quirky riff reminiscent of, appropriately, the soundtrack to a nighttime adventure around NYC’s culture scene. Right off, the song showcases her mastery before segueing into a duet with Brazilian pianist Vitor Gonçalves (who also doubles as an accordionist on the album). Tal Mashiach’s Argentinean-style guitar provides a transporting backdrop to the next track, “Paco”, which takes the vigor, but not the power, down a bit. There’s also the hilariously-titled “Superheroes in the Gig Economy” (by percussionist-vibraphonist James Shipp), which evokes images of the dance sequence it was originally written to accompany. But it is the group’s take on Thelonious Monk’s “Trinkle, Tinkle”, which provides the album’s highlight, as the members of the group take turns to fulfill Monk’s leadership role, with notable contributions by Shipp and Gonçalves.

For more info visit anzicrecords.com. Cohen’s *Quartetinho* is at Birdland Jul. 9-12. See Calendar.



Basie Rocks!
Count Basie Orchestra with Deborah Silver
(Green Hill)
by Scott Yanow

Combine the powerful vocalist Deborah Silver (who can sing swinging jazz), the Count Basie Orchestra, top-shelf arrangements (by John Clayton, Andy Farber, Kris Johnson and bandleader Scotty Barnhart) and guest spots from Arturo Sandoval, Kurt Elling, Trombone Shorty, Bill Frisell, George Coleman and Wycliffe Gordon—and what does one get? The answer, which doesn’t immediately come to mind is: eleven pop/rock songs including the Rolling Stones’ “Paint It Black”, Elton John’s “Bennie and The Jets”, The Beatles’ “A Hard Day’s Night” and Bob Seger’s “Old Time Rock & Roll”.

After Count Basie’s association with Roulette ended in 1962, his orchestra’s studio recordings (as opposed to their consistently exciting live performances) were often erratic as record producers tried for hits, releasing albums such as *This Time By Basie/Hits Of the 50s and 60s*, *More Hits Of the 50s and 60s*, *Pop Goes Basie*, *Basie’s Beatle Bag*, *Basie’s In The Bag*, *Basie On The Beatles*, *Basie Meets Bond*, and projects in which the orchestra accompanied Sammy Davis Jr., the Mills Brothers and Jackie Wilson. *Basie Rocks!* seems like a 21st century extension of those albums. While the Count Basie Orchestra remains one of the world’s few full-time big bands, still retaining its trademark sound, its recordings have been relatively few during the past decade, and often overwhelmed by guest artists. On this new project, other than a few short solos for tenor-saxophonist Doug Lawrence and a handful of brief spots, the orchestra is essentially utilized as a backup band for Deborah Silver, a passionate singer who can be quite impressive.

Silver tries her best to make listeners forget the original versions of the eleven pop songs and occasionally succeeds, but she belts out nearly every

chorus at the same level of intensity and with little feeling for the lyrics. The few instrumental solos from guests are just brief bits of seasoning, whether it’s trumpeter Sandoval hitting some high notes on “Paint It Black”, Peter Frampton remaking “Baby, I Love Your Way”, guitarist Frisell on a relatively straight ahead “Fly Like an Eagle”, or saxophonist Coleman taking a half-chorus on “Every Breath You Take”. Gordon on “Old Time Rock & Roll” and Trombone Shorty during “Joy to the World” sing much more than they are heard on trombone. It is only on the album closer, Joe Walsh’s “Life’s Been Good”, that a few of the orchestra’s players have slightly extended solos. Hopefully the next time around, Scotty Barnhart will actually showcase the mighty Basie band.

For more info visit greenhillmusic.com. Silver’s album release concert is at Birdland Jul. 20. See Calendar.



Justifiably J.J.
John Fedchock (Summit)
by George Kanzler

Last year was the centennial of pioneering bebop and modern jazz trombonist J.J. Johnson, who was born, often lived, and died in Indianapolis, IN. John Fedchock, a trombonist greatly influenced and inspired by Johnson, paid homage to his idol by presenting a quartet club concert in Indianapolis with a trio of local jazz luminaries at The Jazz Kitchen, where J.J. had often played. When the club’s sound engineer asked Fedchock if he wanted a recording from the mixing board, “I assumed it was simply to document the night,” he says. “But he actually created a full multi-track recording.” So with his bandmates—Steve Allen (piano), Jeremy Allen (bass) and Sean Dobbins (drums)—Fedchock, in his words, “let loose from beginning to end,” not realizing that “unbridled energy” would end up as the just-released *Justifiably J.J.* (A Centennial Tribute | Live in Indianapolis).

The results are one of those special, inspired live-jazz events captured in the moment for all time. The repertoire consists of eight tunes, all associated with Johnson (seven of them are J.J. originals). “Lullaby of Jazzland” was written for Johnson by Manny Albam and features a deft trombone and bass unison line on the theme. Like J.J., Fedchock largely eschews the plungers and mutes associated with jazz trombone in favor of the open horn, although his tone sometimes has the burnished edge suggesting suede. His selection of the Johnson originals showcases the wide range of styles the pioneering bebop trombonist mastered during his over half a century of performing. The opener, “Naptown USA” is a contrafact of “(Back Home Again in) Indiana”, its bebop complexities a contrast to the catchy melodic hooks of “Say When” from Johnson’s later big band years. Except for his most famous ballad “Lament”, affectionately etched, and the understated with modal aspects “Minor Mist”, the other tracks boast mid-up or higher tempos that the band romps through with gusto, many of them featuring snappy four-bar trades among trombone, piano and drums.

Thanks to Fedchock, this album is a reminder that J.J. Johnson was both a notable composer as well as a groundbreaking, innovative trombonist.

For more info visit summitrecords.com. Fedchock’s *New York Big Band* is at Dizzy’s Club Jul. 21. See Calendar.

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