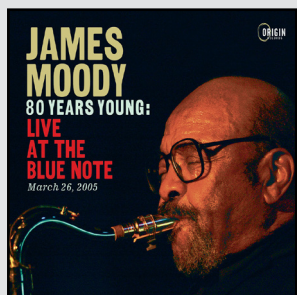


UNEARTHED GEM



80 Years Young: Live at the Blue Note **James Moody (Origin)** by Marilyn Lester

Twenty years ago, James Moody celebrated his 80th birthday with a roster of all-star guest artists at the Blue Note in a concert that has now been immortalized in *80 Years Young: Live at the Blue Note*. Throughout his career Moody played with the elites of jazz and had an unexpected 1952 hit in “Moody’s Mood for Love”, written by singer Eddie Jefferson (and originally recorded with lyrics by King Pleasure and Blossom Dearie), based on an improvised solo that Moody played on a 1949 recording of “I’m in the Mood for Love”. Moody was an institution in jazz from the late ’40s into the 21st century, whether on tenor, flute, occasional alto, and with an eccentric, showman-like vocal style of yodeling, scatting and wordless sound-making. After World War II, he joined Dizzy Gillespie’s Bebop Orchestra and began a lifelong friendship with the trumpeter. Moody toured Europe with the trumpeter and then stayed overseas for several years, working with Miles Davis, Max Roach and top European players.

To celebrate Moody twenty years on, as a benefit for the James Moody Scholarship, the Blue Note Jazz Festival presented *James Moody 100th Birthday Celebration* in a packed Sony Hall. Another all-star band, helmed by music director Renee Rosnes (piano), featured host Christian McBride and Todd Coolman (bass), Randy Brecker and Jon Faddis (trumpet), Elena Pinderhughes (flute), Terri Lyne Carrington and Adam Nussbaum (drums) and Paquito D’Rivera (tenor, clarinet). Vocalists included Madeleine Peyroux, Tyreek McDole and Roberta Gambarini. Some of these players were also at the 80th celebration: Coolman, Nussbaum, Brecker, D’Rivera, Faddis and Gambarini.

Unlike the glitzy, tightly-produced 100th birthday party, the 80th was a more intimate affair with George Wein as MC, as well as David Hazeltine and Cedar Walton (piano) and Slide Hampton (trombone) in addition to the aforementioned, with, of course, the birthday honoree himself. To hear him so preserved on his own “Moody’s Mood for Love/The Television Rap” with his delightfully playful vocalese/scat/rap rendition is priceless, as is his always-hilarious “Benny’s from Heaven”, which after a boppish musical interlude, ends with a howling, hooting vocal by the birthday boy. Prime Moody is on offer with “Birk’s Works”, “Bebop” and “Ow”. The standard, “Cherokee”, taken at its fast uptempo clip features a facile Moody on flute sticking close to the melody.

“Cherokee” was also featured at the concert, but the opener was a burner of Dizzy Gillespie’s “A Night in Tunisia” with Faddis hitting signature high notes. Moody-wise, the band played “Darren The Redd Foxx”, “Last Train from Overbrook”, and of course, “Moody’s Mood for Love”, while McDole and Gambarini handled “Benny’s from Heaven”. In listening to the newly released *80 Years Young*, a snippet of conversation: “Moody Speaks”, drives home a point. A surprised Moody had no idea the gig was planned to be special; a following chorus of “Happy Birthday” is sweet. Moody celebrated at 100 in concert is a fitting tribute, but the nostalgic *80 Years Young: Live at the Blue Note* brings Moody close with a smile to the face.

For more info visit originarts.com



Eternity and a Day **Michika Fukumori (Summit)** by Scott Yanow

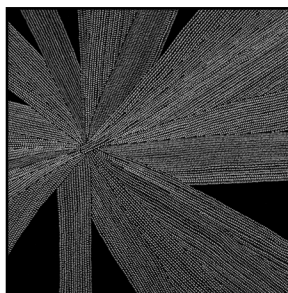
Michika Fukumori, who was born and raised in Japan, began playing the piano when she was three, and after studying classical music, switched her focus to jazz. She moved to NYC in 2000 to study music at City College and considers her mentors Steve Kuhn, Geri Allen and Ron Carter. *Eternity and a Day* is her fourth album as leader, this a trio outing with Steve Whipple (bass) and Adam Nussbaum (drums).

The set begins with seven Fukumori originals and concludes with her versions of four standards. There is an optimistic feel to much of the album, with titles such as “Another Tomorrow”, “Eternity and a Day”, “Our Future” and “There Is Always Light”. The pianist proves not only to have her own voice within the modern mainstream of jazz, but also reveals herself to be a talented composer. Her soulful melody and groove of “Another Tomorrow” recalls ’60s Horace Silver; she builds up her jazz samba “Acaso” to a passionate level and plays beautifully on “The Light of Dawn”, a melodic medium-tempo ballad. Also noteworthy are the introspective title track and “Port (The Departure)”, the latter which gives one the feeling of moving forward and with purpose.

The standards are each given worthy treatments. “Speak Low” features the trio cooking. Fats Waller’s “Jitterbug Waltz” has sections in both 3/4 and 4/4 time, often swinging hard à la Oscar Peterson. Two performances are taken as unaccompanied piano solos: a brief “Be My Love” and a thoughtful medley of Chopin’s “Prelude Op. 28 No. 4” and Jobim’s “How Insensitive”. Otherwise, bassist Whipple and drummer Nussbaum are heard as a tight support team behind the leader throughout.

The overall results are enjoyable and inventive within the tradition, making one look forward to Michika Fukumori’s future projects.

For more info visit summitrecords.com. Fukumori is at Antique Garage Tribeca Saturdays. See Calendar.



Solace of the Mind **Amina Claudine Myers (Red Hook)** by Kurt Gottschalk

Few artists can warm your heart, still your mind and chill your bones within 20 minutes the way Amina Claudine Myers can. For decades, she has remained true to her Arkansas gospel roots and the jazz experimentation she picked up in Chicago as an early member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, pursuing each in equal measure in a rich and gradual evolution.

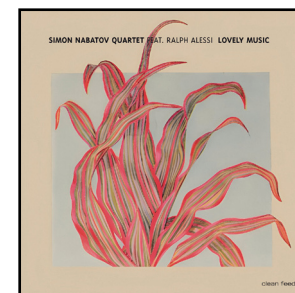
Her performances also evolve slowly. Myers isn’t afraid of space and decay. She lets notes resonate and

leaves the listener to wait. It’s 18 minutes into the new *Solace of the Mind* before her voice is heard, and then spoken over a swirling, sustained organ cloud in a brief prayer to those who’ve gone before. Her splendorous singing voice isn’t here to be heard at all, and “Ode to My Ancestors” (recorded at home) is the only appearance of organ across the 10 tracks. This is her first solo piano album since her 1979 debut, *Poems for Piano (The Piano Music of Marion Brown)*, and that recording included only one of her compositions. With the exception of the traditional gospel “Steal Away”, the compositions here are all her own.

It’s hard to say Myers’ singing voice isn’t missed, but the absence is a gift, the opportunity to appreciate. Her voice is so commanding that it’s easy to let everything else fall back. That she’s a fine instrumentalist is no revelation, but on *Solace of the Mind* Myers allows her piano to float unmoored. There are structures, sometimes formal, sometimes intuitive, and one can almost hear her moans pitching to wails at times; indeed, she’s recorded and performed several of the tracks with lyrics in the past. But the voice doesn’t come. The solace in Myers’ mind, it seems, is in her slow, purposeful, eminently logical piano, beautifully recorded at Sear Sound in midtown Manhattan by Red Hook Records founder and former ECM producer Sun Chung. There is a stunning closeness and clarity.

Myers became an NEA Jazz Master in 2024. Perhaps there’s something purposeful in releasing these October 2023 sessions and revisiting old compositions in a new way. But it’s not an album about looking back, or looking forward for that matter. Her time has never stood more still than on these wordless songs.

For more info visit redhookrecords.com. Myers is at Ibeam Brooklyn Jul. 13 (part of Brooklyn Free Spirit Festival, presented by Siren Xypher Collective with support from Alan Feller & Creative Music Studio). See Calendar.



Lovely Music **Simon Nabatov Quartet (feat. Ralph Alessi)** **(Clean Feed)** by Ken Waxman

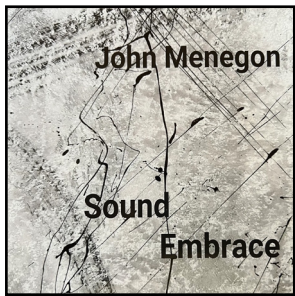
Taking time away from his more ambitious projects, such as composing musical suites influenced by modernist Russian literature, pianist Simon Nabatov, who has worked with everyone from trombonist Ray Anderson and clarinetist Perry Robinson to drummer-percussionist Gerry Hemingway, has created this exemplar of modern jazz playing and writing. Nabatov, whose path led him from Moscow to New York and who now lives in Cologne, recruited three players from that city: Sebastian Gille (saxophones), David Helm (bass) and Leif Berger (drums), plus one ringer, American Ralph Alessi (trumpet), to help interpret his nine compositions.

Somewhat of a misnomer if “lovely” is only defined as charming, the tracks include exquisite arrangements and easy-going narratives, but the sounds are energetic as well as engaging. The only evidence of a ballad is the concluding “No Doubt”, but even there Alessi’s squealing triplets confirm this melody is far from easy-listening territory. More descriptive are those tunes which match straight-ahead swing with unexpected and ingenious pivots. Juddering horn lines, squeaking string stops,

drum shuffles and situated keyboard comping are everywhere. Some pieces are freer still. Dramatic string scrapping on “Nature Morte”, for instance, underlines a blend of horn harmonies and piano intensity, while on “Timwork”, the slippery exposition is swiftly deconstructed with emphasis on harsh sputters and piccolo-elevated brass shakes, although swift reed flutters maintain the composition’s moderated pace. Still, the definition of how loose and open this session is compared to more formal Nabatov work is most apparent on “Old Fashioned”. Anything but what the title suggests, the extended piece gives every player solo space to express himself, revealing expanded techniques from brass note bending to reed flattement to ferocious string pumps, yet without the exposition deviating from focused linear motion and the basic melody.

Although some of the music is lovely by definition, there’s a lot more to this session. *Lovely Music* clearly underlines that the skills of the right creator can blend lyricism and invention to produce a program that can be as profound as the most carefully organized musical project without deviating too much from the jazz tradition.

For more info visit cleanfeed-records.com. Ralph Alessi is at The Jazz Gallery Jul. 11. See Calendar.



Sound Embrace
John Menegon (Valley Jazz)
by David Cristol

While New York visual artist and bass player John Menegon might not be a household name in the jazz world-at-large, he’s performed with many of the best, either regularly (e.g. saxophonists Dewey Redman and David “Fathead” Newman) or in one-off situations, mostly of the straight-ahead persuasion, but also including a stint with Anthony Braxton’s Tri-Centric Orchestra. A well-kept secret with spotless credentials, the bassist is currently working with Joe Lovano, with a recent gig in São Paulo, Brazil, and a planned September concert in Taiwan. And in the last year, Menegon has released two albums on his Valley Jazz imprint, including a vinyl reissue of the 1998 song-based *Misterioso* (featuring vocalist-wife Teri Roiger, guitarist Kenny Burrell and drummer Jack DeJohnette) as well as *Sound Embrace*, only the sixth album under his name since his 2003 leader debut (*Search Light*, which featured Redman, pianist Frank Kimbrough and Roiger).

Sound Embrace represents a collection of cunning original compositions by this tasteful and unshowy player. The *louche noir* feel and swing of opener “Hi Ho Silver”, a nod toward Horace Silver, works wonders pulling one into the music, while “The Light of Bley” refers to pianist Paul, whom Menegon met when he lived in Montreal in the late ’70s, and later played with. The Canadian connection continues, as the bassist’s quartet here features brothers Chet and Jim Doxas (tenor and drums respectively), plus their father George recorded the session at his Montréal studio. The highly dependable French virtuoso, pianist Jean-Michel Pilc rounds out the group, and each player demonstrates complete commitment and contributing inventions of their own on a variety of harmonic structures, melodic ideas, tempi and moods. The song titles often give a clue as to the underlying

concepts and effects sought, from “The New Old” to “Safe and Sound”. Solos are embedded in the compositions rather than superimposed, reinforcing the group consistency and overall flow, making for a constantly satisfying listen from beginning to end.

For more info visit valleyjazzrecords.com. Menegon is at Flute Bar Jul. 10, 16 and 30, and Lydia’s Cafe Jul. 19 (all with Teri Roiger). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Riofonic
Malfalda Minnozzi (MPI)
by Marilyn Lester

Italy-born vocalist-guitarist Malfalda Minnozzi took a trip to Brazil some many years ago and decided to stay. With a national soundtrack of the upbeat rhythms of samba and bossa nova, Brazil does emit a siren’s call. *Riofonic*, Minnozzi’s fourth outing for the US market is reliably, danceably samba happy in 14 tracks of popular bossa tunes and originals, mostly sung in excellent Portuguese and featuring a collection of notable Brazilian music luminaries, especially virtuosic guitarists (the backbone of bossa nova). Foremost of these all-stars is guitarist-vocalist-composer Roberto Menescal, now 87, who was at the forefront of the bossa movement in the late ’50s. His 1961 classic, “O Barquinho (Little Boat)” (with lyricist Ronaldo Bôscoli) is given a sweet duet here, with the master’s voice still youthful. Minnozzi, with a light soprano, has certifiably embedded herself in the bossa-samba ethos harkening back to golden age singers such as Gal Costa, Elis Regina, Astrud Gilberto, and more recently, step-daughter Bebel Gilberto.

Could there be such an album as *Riofonic* without the magic team of Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes? Four gems represent, with a notable rendition of “Garota De Ipanema (The Girl from Ipanema)”, the 1964 hit that introduced America to a bossa nova craze via Stan Getz and Astrud Gilberto. Emulating that release, Marcelo Martins takes the featured Getz role, while Minnozzi contributes basic vocals. Also outstanding are “Corcovado”, with a new arrangement by Menescal; “Só Danço Samba (I Only Dance Samba)”, conceived by Menescal with a funky groove and handclaps; and album closer “Água De Beber (Water to Drink)” arranged by guitarist (and album producer) Paul Ricci, showcasing Minnozzi’s skills at percussive vocal interpretation and soft scat. Also important to foundational bossa was guitarist-composer Luiz Bonfá, who with Eumir Deodato wrote the title song “The Gentle Rain (Chuva Delicada)” for the 1965 film. Minnozzi sings the ballad in delightfully accented English, lushly accompanied by cello virtuoso Jaques Morelenbaum. Two originals from Minnozzi and Ricci are “Café South American Style” and the autobiographical “Postcard from Rio”, sung in English and featuring horns; both add a dollop of contemporary swing to the bossa foundation. There’s also a nod to Minnozzi’s homeland via Domenico Modugno’s “Tu Si ‘Na Cosa Grande (You Are Something Grand)”, delivered in Neapolitan dialect.

For anyone who loves samba-bossa nova, or who just wants to get happy, *Riofonic* is for you.

For more info visit mafaldaminnozzi.com. Minnozzi is at Jazz Forum Jul. 6, Bronx Music Hall Jul. 10 and Nublu Jul. 11. See 100 Miles Out and Calendar.

GLOBE UNITY



I Am Doing My Best
Curtis Nowosad (La Reserve)
Forever Stories of: Moving Parties
Peggy Lee & Cole Schmidt (Earshift Music)
The Slow Road
Triology (Cellar Music)
by Daniel A. Brown

Canada Day (Jul. 1) marks the milestone of that nation’s confederation and sovereignty. In that spirit, this month we explore three releases from Canadian jazz artists. From the halcyon days of bebop and modern-modal jazz to developments in fusion and improv-electronic music, our northern musical family remains a worthy ally, and jazz ally with recent albums—by Curtis Nowosad, Peggy Lee with Cole Schmidt, and Triology—maintaining that momentum.

The latest from Winnipeg-born (and longtime NYC resident) drummer-composer-bandleader Curtis Nowosad is an eight-song collection inspired by healing, parenthood and self-compassion. Heady stuff, and Nowosad and band—Joey Landreth (guitar, vocals), Andrew Renfroe (guitar), Luke Sellick (bass) and Joanna Majoko (vocals)—rise for the occasion. “We Do We”, “Mythologies (The Stories We Tell)” and “Echo Delta” all highlight the interplay between Renfroe and Nowosad; the former two evoking gritty-leaning John Scofield and Pat Metheny; while “Echo...” is a moody, postmodernist extension of John Coltrane’s “Equinox” and Sonny Sharrock’s “Many Mansions”. The lilting swing of “Carry You Home” features a duet between Landreth and Majoko, an assuring vibe punctuated by the former’s ethereal guitar.

Forever Stories of: Moving Parties is a years-long culmination between Canadian-based musicians Peggy Lee (cello) and Cole Schmidt (guitar) and a roster of 13 musicians, including Erika Angell (voice, electronics), Wayne Horvitz (piano, organ, Wurlitzer, electronics), Sunny Kim (voice, electronics) and Frank Rosaly (electronics). Over the course of the album’s 14 tracks, the assembled players deeply explore the combination of composed and purely improvised music. The pointillism of “Blame” is opened wide by the arrival of trumpeter JP Carter. “It Will Come Back” offers sweeping strings, electronic gurgles and Horvitz’ keyboard swirls underpinning Kim’s whispered recitation, while the molten “Gloop” raises the heat with metallic-gospel swagger. In total, this album is a welcome free-music addition from an ensemble of impressive players.

Formed in 2008, and taking their inspiration from the protean jazz trios of Nat King Cole and fellow Canadian Oscar Peterson, the drummerless group Triology—Miles Black (piano), Bill Coon (guitar), Jodi Proznick (bass)—is joined by Scott Hamilton (tenor) on a nine-song set, *The Slow Road*. The opening waltz of “Luna” sets the scene: a well-lit rhythmic stroll featuring a melodic dialogue between the saxophonist and guitarist, followed by tasty piano and bass solos. The music of the jazz elders is well represented. Charlie Parker’s “Moose for the Mooche” receives a staccato-driven treatment; Randy Weston is highlighted with a truly swinging version of his “Hi-Fly”. The group also digs deep into Jimmy Van Heusen’s “I Thought About You”. The session’s straight-ahead vibe doesn’t unearth any new ground but is still a worthy upgrade of the *terra firma* of traditional jazz fare.

For more info visit lareserverecords.com, earshift.com and cellarlive.com. Nowosad’s album release concert is at Smalls Jul. 31. See Calendar.