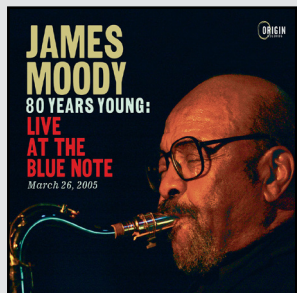


UNEARTHED GEM



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

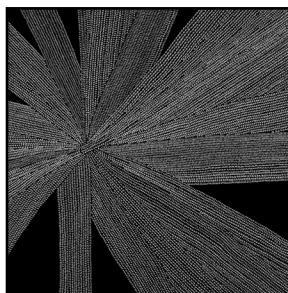
Michika Fukumori, who was born and raised in Japan, began playing the piano when she was three, and after studying classical music, switched her focus to jazz. She moved to NYC in 2000 to study music at City College and considers her mentors Steve Kuhn, Geri Allen and Ron Carter. *Eternity and a Day* 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 splendid 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,