

# SCATTERARCHIVE

IMPROVISING BEYOND ITS TRICENNIAL

BY STUART BROOMER

The Glasgow-based record label scatterArchive is a major dispenser of free improvisation that may pass under many listeners' radar. It's both a label with a long history and an immediately distinguishable contemporary identity, alive to current technology and rising mail rates, taking its presence to the internet and issuing downloads. Numerous labels, often artist-run, are doing the same thing, but scatterArchive has an astonishing catalog of around 250 recordings, dating back to the '80s. In 2024, the label's 30th anniversary, 60 recordings were released. And founder-label head Liam Stefani expects 2025 to be just as productive.

Stefani launched the enterprise as "scatter" in 1994, a physical label dedicated to musical improvisation in its many forms, with a particular focus on non-idiomatic free improv. Over the intervening three decades, this has continued to remain the primary focus. "scatter" produced six CDs: Derek Bailey, Dislocation (a Japanese noise band), Lol Coxhill and Pat Thomas, The XIII Ghosts (Alex Ward and Ben Hervey), Steve Beresford, and Tony Bevan/Alexander Frangenheim/Steve Noble. There were additionally

two cassettes by Inversion (Brian Lavelle and Caroline Mackenzie) and Dislocation. A curated series of live "scatter" events followed for a few years (late '90s to mid 2000s) including a festival of German music ("Baustelle" at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow), which included Paul Lytton/Paul Lovens, Olaf Rupp, Thomas Lehn and others. The majority of these live events were recorded (onto DAT and ADAT) and these became the source of several digital releases, as "scatter" then became scatterArchive, with an active Bandcamp page and presence for archival recordings and digital versions of the out-of-print "scatter" physical releases.

As the name changed, so did the business model. It was no longer reliant on each physical release selling enough copies to finance the next one, no longer having to wait for payments for orders to come through from distributors and shop/mail order outlets. It was now possible to remove the commercial aspect from the label, becoming a non-profit organization. Releases became "pay what you can afford" downloads with all the proceeds generated paid out directly to the artists on a regular basis. Without the physical object, it became possible to release high-quality digital work quickly, more like an online periodical publishing a new weekly issue. The direction of the label has shifted subtly over recent years to include more archival releases, such as Alan Tomlinson, Otomo Yoshihide

and others, with more to come from the Sue Ferrar and John Russell archives. According to Stefani, "We're also featuring lesser-known musicians, including the burgeoning São Paulo underground scene, improvisers collected around Eddie Prevost's (of AMM fame) regular meetings in London and venues like the Hundred Years Gallery in Hoxton, East London, run by Graham MacKeachan."

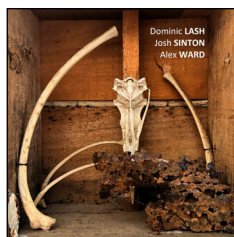
Part of the charm of scatterArchive is its advocacy of solo guitarists and other string players, among them Rex Casswell, Pierre Gerard, Brian Ruryk and several by N.O. Moore and the veteran Dave Tucker, as well as cellist Mark Wastell and harpist Rhodri Davies. With backgrounds ranging from folk, classical and minimalism to rock and noise, they represent both the quietest and loudest of the label's output. It's appropriate for a label that originally launched with Derek Bailey's *Drop Me Off at 96th*. A few years ago, Stefani launched one of Bailey's essential moments: *Domestic Jungle*. In the '90s, Bailey would sit at home and improvise along with the jungle and drum-and-bass music playing on underground radio stations. The DJs would repeat music, then suddenly drop off and talk aimlessly, all stimuli for Bailey's anarchic genius.

Major figures in improvised music and free jazz continue to release material on the label, including Pat

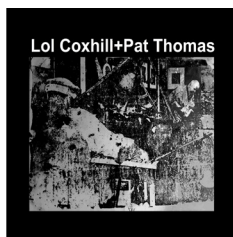
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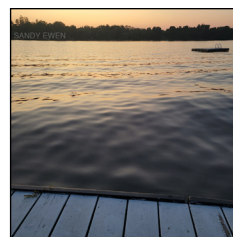
Drop Me Off at 96th  
Derek Bailey



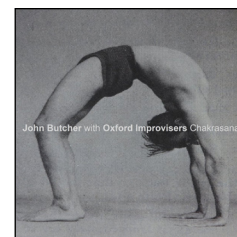
Lash/Sinton/Ward  
Dominic Lash, Josh Sinton, Alex Ward



Duo (And Solos)  
Lol Coxhill+Pat Thomas



20 July 2023  
Sandy Ewen



With Oxford Improvisers  
John Butcher

## VOXNEWS

# EXPRESSED LIVE

BY TESSA SOUTER

Perhaps more than any other genre of music, jazz has broadened into an extraordinary range of styles since its beginnings—absorbing influences from blues, classical, rock, funk, hip-hop, Latin, Indian, African and electronic music, while retaining its core identity: improvisation, swing, intelligence and emotional expression. Being a living, breathing, of-and-in-the-moment art form, jazz is probably best appreciated live—not least because the vibe of a great audience contributes to what is happening on the bandstand. And witnessing the communication between bandmembers and creative improvisations happening right in front of you is hard to beat. But, if you can't be there in person, live albums are a close second. Singer-pianist **Johnny O'Neal**'s swinging *Everybody Loves Johnny O'Neal* (Cellar Music) is a lesson in how to do it, making you wish you were there. His version of Betty Carter's "Tight"—so different from any other version—is like hearing the song for the first time. The whole album is exhilaratingly fresh, at the same time as clearly borne of his nearly 50 years as a performer.

Continuing the live recording theme, guitarist-vocalist **Allan Harris** has released his imaginative 17th album, *The Poetry of Jazz: Live at Blue Llama* (Blue Llama)—a beautiful blend of poetry (by Shakespeare, Dylan Thomas, Langston Hughes, among others), spoken word and jazz (both standards and several arresting originals). Combining Shakespeare's sonnet "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" with

"Midnight Sun" is particularly inspired. His delivery of the poems is vaguely reminiscent of Arthur Prysock's spectacular 1969 album of poetry (spoken over music) *This Is My Beloved* (Verve). More from the Blue Llama is trumpeter-vocalist **Benny Benack III**'s *This is the Life* (Bandstand Presents)—a fun romp through mostly standards, recorded there live.

A beautiful new modern jazz album, the aptly-named *Searching for Beauty* (Rogue Tone) by German-Argentinian vocalist, arranger and composer **Sabeth Perez**, features mostly her own gorgeous compositions delivered with bell-like clarity in a beautiful crystalline voice and is one for the audiophiles. Already popular with the audiophile crowd, wunderkind **Stella Cole** has a new album of standards, *It's Magic* (Decca), featuring truly stunning string arrangements by Alan Broadbent. Watch out for the new album from the always exciting Christian McBride, *Without Further Ado, Vol. 1* (Mack Avenue), featuring his arrangements of classic songs with special guests: Sting, Andy Summers (together for the first time since The Police's 2007/2008 reunion tour), Jeffrey Osborne, **Samara Joy**, **José James**, **Cécile McLorin Salvant**, **Dianne Reeves** and **Antoinette Henry**. Vocalist, multi-instrumentalist **Amanda Ekery**'s soothingly beautiful album (with accompanying book) *Arabe*, is inspired by the marriage of her Syrian great grandfather to her Mexican great grandmother; it focuses on the shared Syrian and Mexican history and culture along the El Paso, TX border. 2023 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Competition-winner, Haitian-American **Tyreek McDole**'s highly-anticipated debut album, *Open Up Your Senses* (Artwork), features some great songs by spiritual icons Leon Thomas and Pharoah Sanders, among others, with a singular voice that somehow manages to be simultaneously soft (as in

caressing) and strong. The album release concert is at Joe's Pub (Aug. 6) and the quaint Close Up (Aug. 16). Singer-pianist **Kandace Springs** has a huge hit on her hands with a remake of Billie Holiday's *Lady in Satin* (SRP). The 12-song collection is a very personal reimagining of Holiday's classic 1958 album of the same name, backed by the 60-piece Portuguese ensemble Orquestra Clássica de Espinho. Plus, the arrangements are to die for.

**SEE YOU THERE...** **Allan Harris** celebrates his new release at The Django (Aug. 2). **Nancy Kelly** presents her latest, *Be Cool* (Origin), at Birdland (Aug. 3). **Lizzie Thomas**' album release is at Drom (Aug. 8). **Tierney Sutton** will be at Smoke with Houston Person (Aug. 20-24). **Samara Joy** at Close Up (Aug. 31) will be a rare opportunity to catch her in a truly intimate space: arrive early and grab it while you can! The Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in Marcus Garvey Park presents **April May Webb** (Aug. 22) and **Georgia Heers** (Aug. 23). Don't miss the amazing **Dee Dee Bridgewater** *Elemental* (DDB/Mack Avenue) album release duo with Bill Charlap at the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival in Tompkins Square Park (Aug. 24). Pianist-vocalist **Champion Fulton**'s 19th release is *At Home* (Turtle Bay), a duo with her partner, Swedish clarinetist and saxophonist Klas Lindquist. She is at Mezzrow (Aug. 8-9). **Ekep Nkwelle** is at Dizzy's Club (Aug. 16-17). NoMad Jazz Festival (Aug. 9-10) in Madison Square Park presents **Lizz Wright** and **Michael Mayo**. The Jazzmobile Summerfest in Marcus Garvey Park presents Terri Lyne Carrington with **Christie Dashiell** (Aug. 15) in the *We Insist!* 2025 (Candid) album release concert tribute to Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach. Mount Morris Ascension Presbyterian Church presents **Milton Suggs** (Aug. 15) and **Carla Cook** (Aug. 22).