



Unleashed
Altin Sencalar (Posi-Tone)
by Scott Yanow

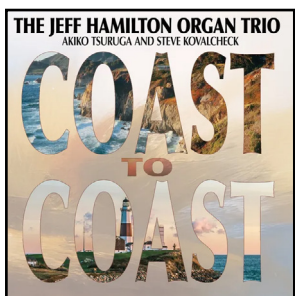
A superior trombonist with impressive technique who can play as fast and as fluid as a saxophonist, Altin Sencalar had previously led six albums including two for the Posi-Tone label. While one can hear a bit of J.J. Johnson in his playing, he has developed his own modern style within the post-bop jazz idiom.

On *Unleashed*, Sencalar performs five originals, a modernized “Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise”, and one song apiece by John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, his mentor Michael Dease, and vibraphonist Behn Gillece. The latter serves as a major part of this project, often competing with Sencalar for solo honors, yet also proving to be a stimulating accompanist for the other players. He takes the place of a pianist and often makes one think of ‘60s Bobby Hutcherson’s playing on Jackie McLean and Dolphy albums. Sencalar’s group also includes Boris Kozlov (bass), E.J. Strickland (drums) and occasionally Greg Tardy (tenor, clarinet), plus Bruce Williams (alto, soprano, flute).

The music is often in the vein of Dolphy’s *Out To Lunch*, and not just on Dolphy’s “17 West”. While connected to chordal improvisation, the playing stretches boundaries, and the chord structures are harmonically advanced. While it is doubtful that any of the originals will ever appear at jam sessions (the moods that they set are more significant than their melodies), they inspire consistently inventive playing by the musicians. Among the highlights of Sencalar’s pieces are the uptempo “Unleashed”, a relaxed “Forgiveness” and “Buenaventura”, the latter which has the feel of a tango. “17 West” is given a catchy rhythm for bass and drums and includes some fine clarinet playing by Tardy, as well as from the trombonist (who displays his wide range) and Gillece, with Williams’ flute performance a strong asset in the closing ensemble. It is also nice to hear a rare revival of Coltrane’s “Straight Street”.

The music on *Unleashed* rewards repeated listens and makes the case for Altin Sencalar being recognized as one of the top trombonists around today.

For more info visit posi-tone.com. Sencalar is at Culture Lab LIC Aug. 1, Summer Streets Festival Aug. 2 and 23, Jazz at Times Square Aug. 7 (with Gina Benalcazar Big Band), Blue Note Aug. 19-24 (with Dizzy Gillespie Allstar Big Band) and Dizzy’s Club Aug. 25 (with Nick Finzer Big Band). See Calendar.



Coast to Coast
Jeff Hamilton Organ Trio (RMI)
by Jeff Cebulski

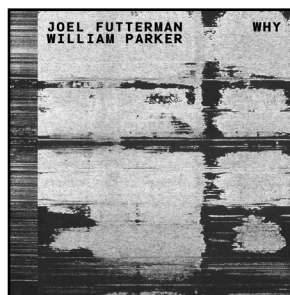
The latest version of the Jeff Hamilton Trio is something new for him as leader, pairing the

consummate drummer with Hammond B-3 organist Akiko Tsuruga (whom he accompanied on three albums) and guitarist Steve Kovalcheck. *Coast to Coast* represents the cross country distances between the three, which fortunately doesn’t relate to the recorded results. As always, Hamilton leads from a solid middle, melding the smooth blues vibe from NYC regular Tsuruga and the angular and delicate expressions from Colorado educator Kovalcheck. And Russ Miller’s pristine engineering and mix makes this one of the best sounding albums of 2025.

The renditions of three originals and five covers are as tight as could be expected. The production places Hamilton in the middle right, with his compatriots sharing the central spot. (Kudos to Miller for the vivid recording of Hamilton’s kit.) Tsuruga’s opener “Blues on Easy Street” sets the tone, as the threesome rides the leader’s beat with profound ease before “giving the drummer some.” Bud Powell’s “So Sorry Please” gets a New Orleans march cadence upon which there is a twangy sequence from Kovalcheck and a Jimmy Smith-type exclamation from Tsuruga. After a breezy version of “Bluesette”, on which the guitarist takes the center spot with organ layered underneath, Kovalcheck stays put and shines with a blues intro on his “Maypole”. The organist swings nicely on “Tuxedo Junction”; “Road Song” gets a bossa treatment, with pleasurable guitar and organ give-and-take; Tsuruga’s bopping “Tiger” receives high quality brush work from the leader (another great production mix), while album closer “Lady Luck” is a soft blues that keeps Hamilton on brushes while Kovalcheck demonstrates his Kenny Burrell-like touch. The terrific sonic quality lifts the drummer’s solo into supreme clarity before the organist slides in, cross-channel, to reintroduce the theme.

On *Coast to Coast*, the wonderful recording of this comfortable trio enhances the listener’s experience and provides a welcomed opportunity to appreciate each member’s skill while exemplifying the trio’s compatibility as a unit. Meanwhile, the importance of drummers like Jeff Hamilton is reemphasized, as the wise veteran demonstrates once again how to enhance the proceedings without getting in the way.

For more info visit rmirecords.net/home. Hamilton is at Birdland Aug. 12-16 (part of “Oscar Peterson Centennial Celebration” with Makoto Ozone and John Clayton). See Calendar.



Why
Joel Futterman/William Parker (Soul City Sounds)
by John Sharpe

The first duet recording by pianist Joel Futterman and bassist William Parker has been a long time in gestation, but in its raw inventiveness and emotional volatility, it proves well worth the wait. Their rapport speaks to a deep-shared history in many formations, often under the leadership of the late New Orleans saxophonist Kidd Jordan (1935-2023), and that shared vocabulary animates the dialogue with instinctual interplay.

This set of seven spontaneous cuts dates from 2020, and may be an informal session as ambient voices bleed into some of the quieter moments, although not loud enough to detract in any way from the core material. If anything, this slight intrusion underscores the immediacy of the exchanges. Futterman’s playing bears a superficial resemblance to Parker’s erstwhile

employer Cecil Taylor with his turbulent phrasing and sometimes percussive attack. However, his terse figures follow a different logic, one more prone to brushes with melody, dives under the bonnet and variation in dynamics. He holds onto notes, and doggedly repeats motifs, until they solidify into evolving, self determined structures, conjured out of the ether. Parker is in imperious form, whether buttressing the pianist’s atonal lurching skitter with a stream of buoyant pizzicato, or acting as an accelerant when he takes up his bow, evoking a spectrum of keening colors, half-vocalized but fully embodied. But whatever the gambit, he imparts an irrepressible forward motion.

The first three tracks almost serve as dress rehearsals, clearing the path for two extended centerpieces that span ten and twenty minutes respectively. In these, the duo navigates extremes of texture and feeling without resorting to familiar free-jazz tropes—eschewing vamps, riffs or easy climaxes. Each gesture feels earned, every detour in pursuit of a profound, elusive coherence. Futterman alludes more openly to tradition in the final two selections, particularly “Why 6”, a blues-tinged meditation that briefly toys with form before exploding in ecstatic digressions, and nevertheless concluding in celebratory hues. “Why 7” opens with eerie resonances from the piano’s interior before giving way to Parker’s ruminative arco lines and a closing theme touched by Thelonious Monk-ish lyricism—an understated coda that gently reaffirms the music’s roots even as it looks forward.

For more info visit soulcitysounds.bandcamp.com. William Parker’s “Ellington in Mourning” is at Lena Horne Bandshell Aug. 15 (part of BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn!). See Calendar.

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Steve Adams, Lisa Mezzacappa, Jason Levis – *Never But Dream the Days* (Queen Bee)
- Marshall Allen Ghost Horizons – *Live in Philadelphia* (ArsNova Workshop/Otherly Love)
- Laura Anglade – *Get Out of Town* (Netzwerk Music Group)
- Ron Blake – *SCRATCH Band* (7tēn33 Productions)
- Dave Burrell/Sam Woodyard – *The Lost Session, Paris 1979* (NoBusiness)
- Dena DeRose – *Mellow Tones* (HighNote)
- Anita Donndorff – *Thirsty Soul* (Fresh Sound New Talent)
- Anne Efternøler & Lige Børn – *Brugskunst* (Hobby Horse)
- Caity Gyorgy – *Caity Gyorgy with Strings* (La Reserve)
- Sven-Åke Johansson – *Two Days at Cafe OTO* (Otoroku)
- Masayo Koketsu, Nava Dunkelmann, Tim Berne – *Poiēsis* (Relative Pitch)
- James Brandon Lewis Quartet – *Abstraction Is Deliverance* (Intakt)
- Joe Lovano – *Homage* (ECM)
- Eric McPherson – *Double Bass Quartet* (Giant Step Arts)
- Jason Moran/Trondheim Jazz Orchestra/Ole Morten Vågan – *Go To Your North* (Yes)
- Ted Rosenthal – *High Standards* (TMR Music)
- Jaleel Shaw – *Painter of the Invisible* (Changu)
- Maria Elena Silva – *Wise Men Never Try* (s/r)
- Terry Waldo & The Gotham City Band – *Treasury, Volume 2* (Turtle Bay)
- Dan Weiss Quartet – *Unclassified Affections* (Pi Recordings)