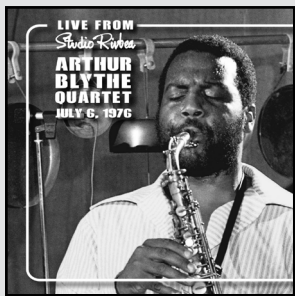


UNEARTHED GEM



Live from Studio Rivbea, July 6, 1976
Arthur Blythe Quartet (NoBusiness)
by Pierre Crépon

What would Studio Rivbea regulars have known of alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe (who passed away at age 76 in 2017; he would have turned 85 last month), when they attended this live performance in July 1976? The altoist was still an NYC newcomer—he’d arrived in the city from Southern California two summers before, working security jobs. This gig was his first as a leader at the now-famed loft, although he’d already appeared there a few times in bands led by saxophonists Charles Tyler, Frank Lowe and David Murray—musicians who had toiled in obscurity in California, as Blythe did before 1974. In Los Angeles, he’d mainly played with pianist Horace Tapscott in small group and big band settings. His other associates included pianist Raymond King, drummer Charles Moffett and drummer-writer Stanley Crouch. The saxophonist had also recorded with Tapscott, with fellow saxophonist Azar Lawrence, and had appeared, uncredited, on Black Panther Party minister Elaine Brown’s two records.

Drummer Chico Hamilton gave Blythe his New York break, hiring him in 1975 and calling him “the best saxophone player I’ve had since Eric Dolphy.” High praise, given that statement would include Charles Lloyd who immediately succeeded Dolphy in Hamilton’s groups. Blythe credited the veteran bandleader with giving him a sense of how to structure a performance to flow from point A to point B. This attention to presentation is strongly in evidence on this previously unheard, recently released archival tape. With “Spirits in the Field”, it starts with serious unaccompanied alto. Blythe sounds confident, feet firmly on the ground, playing originals without attempting to mask the nakedness of solo playing with pyrotechnics. Despite the non-hi-fi quality of the tape, his large, tenor-influenced sound on alto is absorbing. He saw the loft environment as an “alternative showcase situation” and here he makes the best of it.

After a dozen minutes of solo playing, Juini Booth (bass), Steve Reid (drums) and Muhammad Abdullah (congas) seamlessly join in for what is a “Medley of Unidentified Themes”. The music quickly picks another pace and enters denser territory it will not leave before the saxophone-percussion finale, territory situated somewhere at the frontier of free playing. The medley retains the spirit of the avant garde but seems to purposely avoid the register of harsh exasperation favored by certain players. Instead, the quartet shines in the often-neglected area of sonic balance and structural diversity. Blythe would later record much of this material elsewhere, including what is a 19+ minute rendition of “Miss Nancy”, one of his most memorable melodic originals, here anchored by Booth’s deep bass lines and expanded from the seven and a half-minute studio version released on the saxophonist’s *Illusions* (CBS-Columbia, 1980).

The fact that this concert wasn’t segmented to fit LP format limitations gives it a most interesting edge. This release again demonstrates, if need there still be, the value of a label like NoBusiness (and its *Rivbea Live! Series*, for which this release is the second volume) that favors the real deal over artificial hype.

For more info visit nobusinessrecords.com



OUT THERE
Hiromi (Concord Jazz)
by JR Simon

Hiromi’s music has always been urgent, relentless and dazzlingly complex—but what sets her apart is the sense of joy she brings to each project. Her playing is at once virtuosic and wildly fun, making you want to dance, laugh and as a listener lean in closer. On the pianist-keyboardist’s latest release, *OUT THERE*, with the electrifying band Sonicwonder—Hadrien Feraud (electric bass), Gene Coye (drums) and Adam O’Farrill (trumpet)—that joy is amplified, shared and contagious.

Album opener “XYZ” reprises a track from Hiromi’s leader debut *Another Mind* (Telarc, 2002). From the first downbeat, it’s clear we’re in for something special. The pace is almost frenetic, the complexity astounding. The band plays with such trust and precision that the music feels effortless. This isn’t music you brace yourself for, it’s music you dive into. The players are so tight, so completely in sync, the effect is as if one organism is breathing in rhythm. You can relax into it, knowing they’ve got your complete attention. At the heart of this release lies the album title suite—four tracks meant to be experienced as a single journey. “Takin’ Off” launches with a satisfying bass/synth unison, and from there the path is full of treasures. Feraud’s agile bass lines interweave with the leader’s kaleidoscopic textures, creating moments that are greater than the sum of their parts. Drummer Coye connects disco, funk and swing with effortless ease, as if drawing a thread that had always been there. “Orion” is lush and expansive, a showcase for trumpeter O’Farrill, whose tone is so clean and lyrical it’s easy to forget his instrument runs on breath. Hiromi moves between piano and synth with near-dizzying speed, but never loses clarity. “Pendulum” appears twice, first as a vocal track, later as a gorgeously introspective solo piano piece. The closer, “Balloon Pop”, is pure, unfiltered fun. Just try not to hum along.

For more info visit concord.com. The album release concert is at Sony Hall Aug. 1-2. See Calendar.



You’re Exaggerating!
Paul Cornish (Blue Note)
by Tom Greenland

Houston-born pianist Paul Cornish has been based in L.A. for a decade, perking up ears with his third place finish at the 2023 Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Competition and his work on Joshua Redman’s recently released Blue Note album *Words Fall Short*, plus now a major declaration of independence with *You’re Exaggerating!*, his leader debut for the same label. A team player who simultaneously manifests a healthy independent streak, Cornish enlisted Joshua Crumbly (bass) and Jonathan Pinson (drums) to bring

his original repertoire to life. Both his composing and improvisation show disparate tendencies. One is a rigorous yet organic attention to melodic development, wherein each thematic phrase serves as a seed that is carefully planted, germinated, then harvested or grafted/transplanted to a new environment. Everything grows out of something else. Nothing gets thrown away or wasted.

Working counter to this approach is Cornish’s penchant for incessant forward motion, where ideas forge ahead instinctively, leaping over rhythmic and harmonic markers in a way that challenges the logical structure of the song, introducing elements of anarchy and ecstasy. The push and pull of these contrasting yet complementary esthetics give his music vigor and urgency. The tug can occur between piano and drums, as when Pinson’s busy but never crowded accompaniment tries to patch every crack in Cornish’s dense but transparent piano parts. The tug might be written into the song, as on the contrapuntal “Modus Operandi” or the highly-syncopated “Queen Geri”. The mathematician and the ecstatic are equally present—intellect vying with intuition, restraint vying with rapture—when Cornish solos on “DB Song”, “Queinxity”, “Star Is Born”, “5AM” and “Dinosaur Song”. “DB Song”, for example, opens with a solo piano part that places right and left hands at odds with each other, followed by a climbing intervallic theme that later inverts and lengthens. During his solo, Cornish moves a related intervallic shape through a series of harmonies that resist an obvious key center or cadence, floating nebulously, triggering a climactic moment when the studio begins to sound like a house of worship. On “Queinxity”, his opening piano figure spills over onto Crumbly’s bass vamp a tad late, as if resisting the groove; for his solo, he populates a rhythmic scaffold with colorful chains of notes, then abruptly disrupts any expectations with a dramatic flourish. Guitarist Jeff Parker cameos on “Palindrome”, his warm tone and unhurried touch adding another voice and fresh perspective to the piano trio album.

For more info visit bluenote.com. The album release concert is at Dizzy’s Club Aug. 28 and Side Door Aug. 29. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Forward
Leo Genovese (577 Records)
Full Cream
Full Cream (Sugah Hoof)
by Fred Bouchard

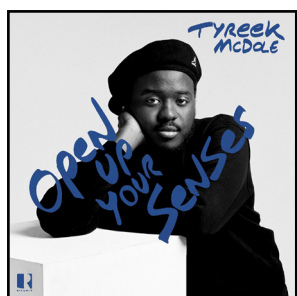
Firefly fantasia, pointillist celestial diorama, mercurial ruminations from the far cosmos—however you label it, *Forward* manifests yet again Argentine keyboard Svengali Leo Genovese’s expansive, and expanding, genius. Brilliantly exposed at solo grand piano, his supple dexterity and creative aplomb unfurl with transcendental grace. This near-hour spontaneous composition, delivered live last year in Brooklyn at the New York Forward Festival (presented by 577 Records), benefits from a filtering-out of crowd responses. Not so my initial audition, atypically yet fortuitously in the backyard at 6 am sans earmuffs; while scribbling head-notes: “Ligeti, Byard, Ives,” incidental avians respond—quizzical chickadees buzz, jays nag, balcony doves coo, a song sparrow insistently pipes. Galaxies of single notes fuse into galloping glissandi anchored by rare chords into a rhapsodic meditation.

In past inventions, Genovese’s majestic *Seeds* and wacky *Sometimes Is Like That* [sic]—both with multi-axe

complacency antagonist Dan Blake—broke fresh sonic territory with keyboard electronica and fearless writing. Keen adaptability and deep respect showed early and often (2007-24) collaborating with musical sister Berklee-ite esperanza spalding's head-spinning ensembles, the latest with sainted Brazilian divo Milton Nascimento. Since 2020, Genovese has nudged inspirations into the Pan-American pop of The Mars Volta beyond its mewling origins with canny jazz splashes. And dig: he earned a "best improvised piano solo" GRAMMY with sax god Wayne Shorter, from *Live at the Detroit Jazz Festival* (2017). Forging *Forward*, Genovese again scours the galaxy in experimental outreach; he's like a musical Mafalda (mythical Argentine comic-strip heroine), relentlessly quizzing the status quo and finding imaginative outcomes.

Sidling in as sideman is another matter with alto saxophonist Greg Ward's nominally-led *Full Cream*, which has Matthew Stevens (guitar, bass) and Ziv Ravitz (drums). Into this smooth jazz set Genovese taps lightly, his sure-fingered caution a triple-threat on Hammond B-3 organ, piano and synths. Churchy-cool on the title track, firm of foot on "Good Morning, Zebras!", spookily synthy on "Late", he adds the right lick of butterfat. And if voting for GRAMMY graphic cover art, I'd rate highly Diana Quiñones Rivera's graceful linear arabesques.

For more info visit sugahhoof.com and 577records.com. Genovese is at Zinc Bar Aug. 26 (with Ryan Devlin), Bar Bayeux Aug. 12, 27 (as leader) and Bar Lunático Aug. 28 (with Igor Lumpert). See Calendar.



Open Up Your Senses
Tyreek McDole (Artwork)
by George Kanzler

You could assess vocalist Tyreek McDole's jazz talent by listening to his tour de force delivery of the Count Basie-associated "Everyday I Have the Blues", the last vocal on his just-released debut album, *Open Up Your Senses*. His version is extraordinary, never more so than in the way he appropriates Joe Williams' classic blues phrasing and macho attitude during Williams' Basie band tenure. But McDole isn't just mimicking, he's using that version as a launching pad for his own take, a version that includes an interlude of bluesy scat choruses, and ends with melismatic repeats of the title line building in intensity like a cheerleader urging a touchdown. McDole is no one-trick pony, nor merely an adaptor of the Williams' style. The track is the only blues on the album, an album remarkable for its stylistic diversity, which includes McDole's empathetic interaction with a variety of musicians and musical settings, from hard bop combos to duets with piano and hand drums. To it all McDole brings a commanding, resonant baritone that can be dominant, warm or tender, depending on the song.

Another jazz voice McDole pays homage to is Leon Thomas, channeling his preacherly command in Thomas and Pharoah Sanders' anthemic "The Creator Has a Master Plan", on which Sanders' son Tomoki Sanders references his father's fiery tenor saxophone solo on the intro. The vocalist's versatility is also capable of suggesting jazz crooners such as Nat "King" Cole and Johnny Hartman—ever more so on his delicate, silky delivery of Carmen McRae's lyric to Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty", sung as a subtle

vocal-piano duet with Kenny Barron. He gets even closer to Swing era crooners in his smooth exposition of "Under a Blanket of Blue" with his core quartet: Dylan Band (tenor), Caelan Cardello (piano), Rodney Whitaker (bass) and Justin Faulkner (drums). The vocalist also tosses in a couple of ringers from left field. He references his Haitian roots on "Wangolo Wale", a traditional Haitian folk song, chanting it with just the hand drums of Weedie Braimah. And he includes a comically breezy take of the children's song, "The Umbrella Man", elaborating the "toodle-o-da" lyric with his own scat extensions.

Judging from this debut, Tyreek McDole, with his commanding yet flexible and supple, rich baritone, promises to be a notable jazz singer for many decades to come.

For more info visit store.pias.com. The album release concerts are at Joe's Pub Aug. 6 and Close Up Aug. 16. McDole is also at Greenwich Jazz Festival Aug. 17 (presented by Back Country Jazz) and The Jazz Club at Aman New York Aug. 19. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



The Jewel in the Lotus
Bennie Maupin (ECM)
by Jim Motavalli

Originally recorded and issued in 1974, *The Jewel in the Lotus* by multi-instrumentalist Bennie Maupin (who celebrates his 85th birthday this month) emerged during the leader's stint in Herbie Hancock's groundbreaking groups of the early '70s (including the Head Hunters and Mwandishi), and features many of those band members, including Hancock (piano), Buster Williams (bass), Billy Hart (drums), Freddie Waits (drums, marimba) and Bill Summers (percussion), as well as Charles Sullivan (trumpet on 2 of the album's 8 tracks). The release was slow to get much-needed recognition as an innovative classic but has since been reissued numerous times, most recently on vinyl as part of ECM's Luminescence audiophile series.

The recording's mood is group tone-poem music, reflecting the leader's Buddhist faith, eschewing soloing in search of an organic music with meditative intent. *Jewel in the Lotus* originally came out the year after Hancock's mega-successful and decidedly funky *Head Hunters* (Columbia), but it's light years away—aiming for the head and not the dancers' feet. The selfless approach grew out of Maupin's work a few years earlier in 1970, with his close friend, saxophonist Marion Brown on *Afternoon of a Georgia Faun* (ECM's fourth-ever record release).

The delicate "Ensenada" opens with Waits' shimmering marimba over Williams' two-note bass figure, slowly folding in Hancock's piano seasoning and the leader (on flute)—used here mostly as color. This slow-moving piece is the album's most distinctive, reminiscent of Lonnie Liston Smith's "Astral Traveling" (which was first heard on Pharoah Sanders' *Thembi* three years earlier). It's lovely. The atmospheric title song finds Hancock using some of the electronic effects so familiar from his own band, as well as his brilliant travel-the-spaceways electric piano. Williams gets his bow out and digs deep for low notes. Maupin's tenor provides forward movement, if not actual soloing. "Song for Tracie Dixon Summers" features the bassist and feels elegiac, with beautifully spare lines from the composer's horn. Maupin employs his alto flute sparingly for the

ascending "Mappo" (named after the leader's dog), with strong contributions from Hancock, Williams and Hart. This track alone explains why all three were busy back then and continue to have ringing phones now.

On this overall quiet album, "Excursion" is the album's sole cooker, emerging from Buddhist chanting that could have been recorded in a monastery (rather than a New York studio). It builds slowly, incorporating the leader's tenor shrieks, rumbling bass and the twin drummers. But it's over too soon, as is the whole album. What a shame there were no alternate takes to include.

For more info visit ecmrecords.com

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