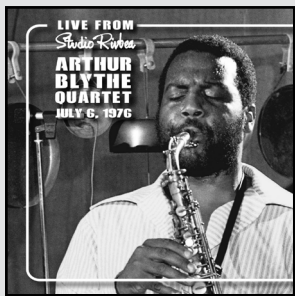


UNEARTHED GEM



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 aesthetics 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