

Alter Ego (Lausanne 2022)
Marc Copland (TCB)
by Ken Dryden

Overdubbed piano recordings are nothing new: pianist Bill Evans pioneered them with three LPs (*Conversations With Myself*, *Further Conversations With Myself* and *New Conversations*), making two more multi-piano albums during his career. But Marc Copland was given an additional challenge for his duo piano session with himself, performing in the RTS Studio in Lausanne in 2022 with a small live audience. He demonstrated his mastery of self-duets over two days of recording. And while it isn't specifically stated, it sounds as if the left channel was recorded first, with the right channel blended in, in real time. Copland's effective use of the sustain pedal further adds to the depth of these performances.

Starting with his shimmering composition "Day and Night", the pianist ably demonstrates his mastery of creating two complementary lines without making them seem the least bit predictable or free from risk. His engaging interpretation of Ron Carter's "Eighty-One" brings out a new dimension of the bassist's well-known

composition, with hints of Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter influences, without quoting either of their works. Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" is the first of two songs that Evans recorded on *Conversations With Myself*, although Copland's vision takes it in a different direction, with his tantalizing disguised introduction and lush development to enhance its lyricism without losing its moody character. Monk's playful "Let's Cool One" is one of his less frequently performed works, but here its whimsical character is revealed with a blend of dissonance and twisting lines. Copland's "Talkin' Blues" is highlighted by its intensity and infectious theme, making it far from a typical blues. Like Evans, Copland thought Alex North's "Spartacus Love Theme" was a haunting melody worth exploring in a multi-piano setting. He, however, takes a different approach, with an interpretation that is more concise: its pacing bass line, which accompanies his improvisation in the right channel, at times suggests the twinkling of stars. Preceding the final track (an interview in French with Copland by Yvan Ischer) is the pianist's rhapsodic treatment of Leonard Bernstein's "Some Other Time", which serves as the perfect finale. All that is missing is a thunderous applause from the audience!

For more info visit tcb.ch. Copland is at Mezzrow Aug. 7 and Bar Bayeux Aug. 21. See Calendar.



The 10000 Things: PRAISE SONGS for the iRiligious
Mazz Swift (New Amsterdam)
by Mike Shanley

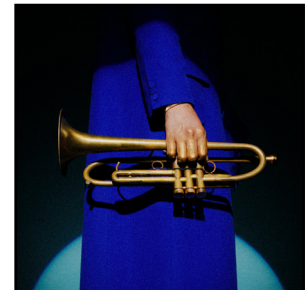
If violinist Mazz Swift had simply recorded an album that reinterpreted work songs and spirituals from the book *Slave Songs of the United States*, the effect would have been stunning, with a swell of a *cappella* vocals bringing new depth to the lyrics. At the same time, if Swift had recorded a solo album that combined adventurous violin technique with electronics, that would also have been a deeply fascinating release. But *The 10000 Things: PRAISE SONGS for the iRiligious* incorporates each concept, coming up with a program that feels both beautiful and stirring—a collection that feels very much of the moment, with both universal and, in the final track, highly personal meditations.

Sometimes Swift goes into orbit right away, unleashing a burst of frenetic violin scrapes, and cuing the traditional melody only after things settle down a bit. "SomeDay School" begins this way, with bowing that bears down hard on the strings; at one point two violins wail away in separate channels. An electronic pulse eases in, like an authentic heartbeat, and Swift sings gently the melody to "Give Up the World" over a pedal point drone. At other times, the melody comes first, as in "Eye Woke Up", which incorporates the hymn "O Brother", before keyboards, beats and spoken word excerpts take over. "Alabamy" completely forgoes instrumentation, drawing instead on three tracks of Swift's lush vocal harmonizing, even as the lyrics draw on some less-than-savory word choices.

Poet Regie Gibson collaborated with Swift for two tracks. In "BLVK Meditation" he recites a list of affirmations over a steady beat and while random words from that list also appear in the background in the album opener, "No More". The closer, "New Anthem", superimposes interviews with Swift and their sisters discussing gender and identity over the lyrics from "Sister Dolly Light The Lamp". Songs that attempt a

deeper message like this one can be a risk, especially when combined with a very modern arrangement of a traditional melody. Yet the insight offered by the siblings dovetails with Swift's strong musical arrangement, continuing the thought-provoking mood of their entire set.

For more info visit newamrecords.org. Swift is at The Stone at The New School Aug. 1 (with Black Earth Strings). See Calendar.



Dream Manifest
Theo Croker (Dom Recs)
by Wif Stenger

Theo Croker is almost jazz nobility, having learned trumpet from his grandfather Doc Cheatham, who in turn started out under Louis Armstrong and King Oliver a century ago. Croker also studied with Donald Byrd, who bothered the jazz police a half-century ago with his mix of funk, R&B and jazz—just as Croker does now. It's unclear whether the old-time New Orleans pioneers would recognize much of Croker's music as "jazz" today, but there's still a trace of their dirty muted squawk in his broad sonic palette. The trumpeter often drenches his horn in reverb and delay. But its sound is most captivating when unadorned and vulnerable, as on the "prelude" and "postlude" segments that bookend his eighth album, *Dream Manifest*. That vulnerability draws the listener in, more than any braggadocio. It shows up in the intro and lyrics of the lead-off single, "one pillow", with its chorus of "we both have somethin' to lose."

Croker's warm, breathy sound is the key to his affinity with vocalists. As on his previous albums, they play a prominent role, including returnee Kassa Overall. His drowsy rap seduction on "one pillow", intercut with '70s R&B-style vocals from British singer Estelle, suggests a subtler version of Prince's proposition in "Gett Off". Another returning guest from the leader's last album, *Love Quantum* (2022), is alto saxophonist Gary Bartz, a former teacher of Croker's and Miles Davis sideman. He sounds brawny and assured on "light as a feather", inspiring Croker to his most impassioned playing on the album. Overall, the set offers a familiar mix of styles and tempos without radical changes from its predecessors. Pianist Mike King powers "64 joints" over a roiling undercurrent from bassist Eric Wheeler and drummer Michael Shekwoaga Ode, which flows into Kamasi Washington/Thundercat territory. Atop it all is a soulful vocal from young jazz baritone Tyreek McDole. Singer Malaya channels Janelle Monáe on "high vibrations", while Croker's final solo triggers pleasure synapses. There are few missteps, such as "we still wanna dance", which goes on too long without going anywhere, and "up frequency", a repetitious bit of pop froth.

Croker plays like a vocalist throughout, with effortless scat-like acrobatics, unrestricted by any machinery. His sensitive way of pairing with vocals parallels that of Ambrose Akinmusire, though his settings are more poppier and lyrics non-political. Together, they may be the most interesting US trumpeters since we lost Jaimie Branch and Roy Hargrove.

For more info visit domrecs.com. The album release concert is at Blue Note Aug. 14-17. See Calendar.

FREE CONCERTS
www.jazzfoundation.org

Hudson River Park
Jazz at Pier 84
555 12th Ave, 7PM
8/6 - Ginetta's Vendetta
8/13 - Clifton Anderson

Boardwalk Blues
Pier 97 at W. 57th St, 6:30PM
8/5 - Gordon Lockwood
8/12 - Beareather Reddy
8/19 - Fred Thomas of the JBs

Blues BBQ Festival
Pier 76 - 408 12th Ave, 1PM
8/16 - Blues BBQ Festival - 2nd
Stage: Jonathan Kalb, Seydurah
Avecmoi and Jimmy Hill and the
Allstarz

Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Parkway, 2PM
8/10 - Ghanniyaa Green

This project is supported in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York Legislature and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and by the Howard Gilman Foundation.

Monday Night Jam
National Jazz Museum in Harlem
58 W. 129th St., 8/25 6PM

Charlie Parker Jazz Festival
In partnership with City Parks Foundation, NYC Parks, and Ariana's List

8/20 - Pablo Rosario and his Latin Jazz Messengers
El Sol Brillante, 522 E. 12th St, 5:30PM

8/21- T.K. Blue and "Planet Blue"
Jackie Robinson Park Bandshell
116 Bradhurst Ave, 6:30PM
+ Screening of Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat at 8:00PM

8/22 - Annette St John
Harlem Rose Garden
6 E. 129th St, 5:30PM

34th Street Partnership
Plaza 33
200 W. 33rd St, 6PM
8/7 - Jack Walrath and the Masters of Suspense
8/28 - Cucho Martinez & Friends

Poster House
719 W. 23rd St, 7PM
8/1 - John Benitez and Evolution

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